THE BUCKEYE

May 2008

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Montgomery Bell Academy
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At 10:32 a.m. in the town of Spring City, Iowa, the Internet connections fell. Not an unusual thing, by far. This haven for computer programmers often was overloaded. The businessmen of the town were sending a petition to ditch the old workings of this monstrous server. Jeff Manden, a seasoned programmer for MetapedeTM Search Engine and co-inventor of solid-state external probes, just made the trek to the fridge, popped another beer, and waited. Five minutes went by: normal. Ten minutes went by: still normal. But by the time the Internet was out for three-quarters of an hour, Manden could already sense something was wrong. These meltdowns were so common that the programmers could usually get things working again in fifteen minutes flat. Just as Manden was about to leave and get another beer, his Gateway caught his attention. Random spools of digits were rapidly being printed on the screen:

ER_2342JXT8_7AJSL77797SJ_GJ_09SAD7A0_7AGKGAJ_SAGJ_8AMODEL825VX_PARADIGM

Yes, something was very wrong. As the cursor blinked, he whipped out his phone and snapped a picture of the monitor before it blanked. He sent it to Alden Ward, head of programming at Metapede, hoping he knew what to do.

He never should have bothered.

************************

In WaterCrest Hospital of Dublin, Ireland, Mr. Timothy Burbon was receiving a triple bypass. The surgeon’s name was Animatronic Model Number SX6590. Over 1,050 miles away, in the Max-Plank Institute of Medicine in Berlin, Dr. Jane Schrodinger was using a new remote surgery robot capable of communicating via Iridium satellite Internet.

She was surprised at how smooth the motions of the arm were, how ‘bodily” the arm felt, almost as though it was a part of her through her VR helmet and gloves. From the brute strength of breaking open the ribcage to the precision of slicing the arterial wa– Dr. Jane Schrodinger’s thoughts were cut off in mid-sentence as a loud droning sound filled her ears. The piezo pressure chips in the gloves started to throb. Suddenly, her view screen flashed white, and everything was still.

************************

By 2:45 that day, America was in a state of confusion. The Internet had been down across the country for over four hours. None of the major Internet-based establishments were working: e-mail, airports, the Stock Exchange. And then, just as suddenly as it went off, the Internet popped on again.

And then it happened.

Exactly thirteen minutes later, every single Internet-connected computer on the globe flashed a single message: Paradigm

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Then went the hospitals. At the Carnegie Institute of Medicine in Pennsylvania, a patient was receiving an
electronic stimulation to correct his severe schizophrenia. The Russian Therapy device delivered short bursts of
electricity to stimulate the temporal cortex, offering a treatment for mental disorders with no known side effects.
As Mr. Burnsweger lay on the hospital bed with wires pasted to his head, he started to smile as the machine
stimulated his emotional centers.

The nurse standing by had gotten minimal training, as the machine was run by an “advanced” program that
was able to solve problems using the enormous processing power of Internet servers. It had already been tested in
a physical therapy machine with flying colors.

But then something seemed to go wrong. The patient’s arms and legs started to jerk, similar to an epileptic
fit. The nurse was horrified. This was much like Gahlov’s frog experiments; the electrical shocks had gotten into
Mr. Burnsweger’s motor cortex and were literally controlling his every move. Then, as the shocks increased over
all of his brain, Mr. Burnsweger articulated his last word: Paradigm

******************************************************************************

The Department of Homeland Security was in a crisis. The job of handling hackers had recently been
transferred into their own hands. Everyone was wondering the same thing: what was going on?

Department Chair Andrew Harris had called a “level F-5 meeting.” Whatever that was supposed to mean.
Of course, all of the officers seated around the enormous oak table knew what the meeting was about.

Harris started his prim speech: “Good evening, gentlemen,” as he winked at his secretary, Miss Georgia
Pascal. “I am sure that you all know what this meeting is about. Starting at about ten this morning, the Internet
has been conquered by some gigantic and powerful virus. Now, everyone needs to calm down a bit. Our hardest
hacker yet was Potatoes203, and all of you know how that went. Jiggs, run that sourcing sequence.”

As the slide screen lit up with a list of numbers, the members all stared as if they knew what they meant.
Harrison glanced at the screen: “What the hell…”

Vincent Schipani

Harris Elledge
“Sir?” Pascal said.

“What the hell?”

A deathly silence.

“So what does all of this mean?” someone finally blurted out.

“Well,” he said, “this program seems to be distributed across the entire network. Across the world. Literally every single node, every single IP has simultaneously created this. And that, of course, is utterly impossible.”

More silence.

“Almost like the nerve endings of a central nervous system,” someone muttered.

“Pardon me?”

“I said almost like nervous system. Back in the twenty-teens I did a paper with Jeff Manden. At that time companies like Google were noticing that a couple bytes of information would be randomly generated every so often by their then considered huge servers. The paper proposed that, as the Internet grew larger and larger, more and more information could be generated, until a fully autonomous entity would be spontaneously created. Of course, no one took us seriously. They all smiled and said that they would immediately put in the security measures that we suggested. None of it ever happened. Those first transmissions, those droning sounds reported, were “It”s birthcry. As “It” gained intelligence, Its activities became more damaging and, in some instances, even deadly. And now, we are stuck in doomsday with man’s greatest innovation since genetics hot on our heels.”

“And you said that there are well documented instances of this?” said Harris.

“Yes.”

“Well, this seems like our best theory yet, as absurd as it is. Jones, you will have to deliver me a copy of that paper, and we need to figure out what security implications your ideas hold. DISMISSED!”

Sergeant Anderson Miles got a letter. It was from a man – something Harris, Chair of the DHS. He didn’t know who he was--no one cared about the Department of Hearty Soup after 9/11 died down – and that was nearly forty years ago. He read the letter, took him about twenty minutes. A living organism that exists on the Internet? Who do you think I am, Harrison? Some kind of a nut— Miles was interrupted by his BlackBerry. The message read: Th1nk aga1n paradigm1001110101

David Chambliss needed to cash a check. It was payday at Steve’s Heating and Plumbing, and he needed to support his pregnant wife and preschool daughter. He pushed through the enormous crowd, not knowing what

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any of this was about. After being shouted at numerous times: “Hey buddy, I been here since four in the morning!” he finally got to the front desk, just as the clerk said, “Sorry, we cannot do service today. Our computers seem to be malfunctioning. Come back tomorrow.”

This reminded Chambliss of something he had learned in high school, something like the Great Suppression. Damn right, the banks better open tomorrow. On his way coming home empty-handed, he passed a man carrying a Molotov cocktail, headed for the bank.

Marcia Williams began the slow descent from thirty-thousand feet. She was a veteran pilot, flying a 747 with ease. She flashed the fasten seatbelts light, lowered the throttle, and leveled the plane. “Requesting permission to land,” she said into the loudspeaker. Static – she shrugged it off. She tried it again – nothing. This was okay; she once had to land a jet with a broken radio once before. She circled low, waiting for the tower to notice her. Strangely, there seemed to be no activity on the runway. Suddenly, her copilot shouted, “Look out! Aircraft at twelve o’clock! Pull up! Pull u—

***************************

“Daddy, I want to play Magic Fairy Flower Garden,” said Jeff Manden’s five-year-old daughter.

“No, Olivia, the Internet is down right now. Why don’t you play it a little later,” said Manden.

“But Daddy, I want to play Magic Fairy Flower Garden, now.”

“But Olivia, it’s not working.”

“But Daddy, it is.”

Manden leaned over. “What the heck?”

***************************

“Dr. Manden,” Jim asked his college professor of computer society class, “Do you remember the paradigm monster of 2035?”

“As a matter of fact, I do,” she said. “I was five years old. Back then, of course, we still had the solid-state monstrosity known as the Internet. Everything relied upon it, and when the Internet went down for the near half-year that it did, the world had to totally rebuild society. However, the monster vanished after a couple days.

“Well, then how was it defeated?” asked Jim.

“It wasn’t. It just vanished. We think that it realized it could not survive if it destroyed us. Just like a virus dies if it destroys its host. Of course, with Allied Intranet, nothing like this could ever happen again. For instance, have any of you heard of something called a computer hacker?”

The bell rang for class. So did Dr. Manden’s PolyChroma. It read: 1m back Paradigm1001110101
The Three Children
by Henry Beveridge

Along a quiet path
Three young children gather on the shepherd’s lap
Like a clock that sits on a wall
They measure infinite time

Under the shade of the holly tree
The children ask questions with hopeful anticipation
As the shepherd smiles back at them
He is a perfect companion

The children cling to the shepherd’s robe
As if he might leave them
He will never leave; He will always love them
As a mother loves her newborn son

The parents’ grief cast in stone
The weary pestilence of that house has surrendered
To the shepherd’s love
He will always sit with them upon the rolling hills within the cemetery
My Woods
by Matt Anderson

The leaves crack under my feet
The mockingbirds produce an incessant beat
The trees are tall, like towers in the sky
And the gentle fall wind makes a soothing lullaby

I cross over the dry creek bed
And wonder what stories this land has bred
I hear a distant tree branch quake and groan
And suddenly I wonder if I am truly alone

What are you, land of mysterious secrets?
From the moment I arrived you captivated me
Your trees lulled me into magical enchantments
What a joy you were for my eyes to see

When I was alone, you were my companion
When I was sad, your comfort was a lovely song to sing
Your wonders, unchallenged like the Grand Canyon
And in your magical land I became your king

Someday, when I am old, I will return to this land
And enter its kingdom, with a cane in my hand
Still it will greet me, without delay
As if I had only been gone a day
I have not lived, though I have tried,
I have not murdered, though I have lied,
I feel blind, though I can see,
I fear there are things I shall never be,
I am not triumphant, though my head is high,
I am not optimistic, but my hope shan’t die.

I am not full, though most are not pure,
I shall fail at times, but my countenance is sure,
I am often aloft on earth that is sound,
I am searching for something that is not to be found,
I have journeyed through sun set and sun risen
I sail like a schooner without mainm’st or mizzen,
I see the highest of mountains from the lowest of peaks,
My year has been live as fifty-one weeks,
I have felt as the loneliest son,
I am the loser of what I have won.

I am the heir to a perished throne,
I have lived where all others are gone,
I am the image of a man I can’t know,
My misery and sadness still shall not show,
I am the next of a singular line,
I am the only thing worldly that’s mine,
I am the only thing that stands with me,
I am, at times, my worst enemy,
I am the one who on the morrow shall say,
“All shall change and change it shall stay.”

Honorable Mention Poetry

**Untitled**
by Wills Brooks

For Sale: baby crib,
Brand new; never used
Call 234-5674
My life changed dramatically after that terrible fall. Throughout my whole life I had been the star of the basketball team, and on one play, I remembered all of my greatest moments. That play was also my last. I remembered hitting the game winning 3-pointer against St. Francis. I remembered holding up the state championship trophy. The trophy read, “White Creek School Division 1 AA state champions 2003.” I remembered my first dunk--over Drake Jones; he never again guarded me on the basketball court. Both he and I will never forget that amount of owenage. But then there was that moment. We were playing George Station at home and we were winning easily. It was like a cake walk. Coach was going to pull me out of the game after half time, but I asked him if I could play a little more because my mom was watching. My mom did not live in Tallahassee like Pops and I did. My dad and mom have been divorced ever since I can remember. My mom did not like basketball because she thought it was too rough, and it made two schools hate each other, which in her eyes was a terrible thing. But my mom wanted to support me, so she made an effort to come and watch me play.

I had a good first half with fifteen points, four assists, three steals, and a block. I was so happy to look up in the stands and see her cheering and watching. Going into half time life was good: my mom was watching, I had a good first half according to the score board, and our team was winning. But what was going to hit me was coming like a bullet train. George Station came out hot in the second half scoring nine unanswered points. We had to get it together if we wanted to win the game. Once again I looked up in the stands, and I saw my mom. I was not going to let this game have a huge momentum swing while she was watching. I turned it on and hit three three-pointers which regained our team the lead. The following possession after that last three-pointer, I landed a huge dunk on a fast break. A player on the other team could not believe that a foul was not called on the other end of the court. Then the ref gave him a technical foul, which hurt their team bad. The next time I came down the court, he was waiting there like a hungry lion about to pounce on its prey. I was ready for him and drove to the basket. I went up, I shot, and then I fell. He had taken my legs out from under me. I landed and heard a crack as loud as a gunshot. Then the pain came rushing through. The whole gym got quiet, and I began to feel incredible pain. I never cried because my dad would not let me when I was a little boy. My coaches and all of my teammates ran off the bench and tried to help me up. There was no way I was getting up. They knew it too, and I heard a lady say, “Somebody call 911, that’s my boy!” That lady was my mom. After ten minutes of excruciating pain on the gym floor and my greatest moments going through my head, a stretcher raced in, and before I knew it, I was off in the ambulance. Next I remember the ringing bells of the ER. Everything was spinning in my head. The spinning was the last thing I remembered that day.

The next thing I remembered was waking up the following morning. My parents were standing beside my bed. I asked them what happened.

“I am so sorry, baby. The doctor told me you shattered your hip and some small surrounding bones,” she said.

“Am I ever going to play ball again, momma?” I asked.

She then began to cry, and I already knew the response. I had spent my whole life thinking that I was put on the earth to play ball, and to have this taken away from me was devastating. I had never done anything my
whole life except play ball and work. It was like I had lost all my purpose. I did not know what to do or say, so I cried. Pops did not stop me this time.

“Did we win the game, Mom?” I asked.
“They did not score another point,” she said with pride.
“Are any of the boys here?” I asked.
“They have been here all night,” she said.
“Do it for Andy! Andy! Andy!” all the fans had screamed. My mother told me this.
“Momma, am I ever gonna walk again?” I asked, waiting to hear the answer with great nervous.
I knew I had a second chance at something, something other than basketball.

Because of my critical condition, my teammates were not able to come into my room. This was a letdown because they had always been there for me.

I missed five days of school because I was in the hospital. I was told I would have to be in a wheelchair for a month, and then I would be on crutches for three more months. After my body somewhat healed and I was able to stop thinking about the fall, I began to wonder what I was going to do with my afternoons after school. I experimented with the spirit club, but that brought back too many sad memories. Then I tried the community service club which was fun, but it was not something that I loved like basketball. Finally, my math teacher asked me to come and visit him after school on a Tuesday afternoon. Once again, my life changed, but this time it was for the better. Mr. Walker was a teacher whom I had not known well, but I decided to give him a chance. Mr. Walker was also the drama teacher at our school. He asked if I would consider joining the drama club and the upcoming school production, Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. I decided I would give it a shot. Two weeks later, the main role tryouts took place. We had to read from a selected piece, sing, and display some basic fundamental drama skills.

My whole life I had never considered joining a drama production because it ain’t cool where I am from and most of my friends don’t like ‘em. The only setback was I had to clean up my grammar and stand up straighter. My teammates still supported me, which was a big confidence booster. Mr. Walker had recently told me that I had been chosen for the lead role in the production. All I said was thank you and that I was very excited. I collected my script, and then I went home to practice my lines. Once practice became part of my daily routine, I realized how much I really enjoyed drama and all productions. I began to look at my colleagues as friends rather than people who were weird that I would never consider giving a chance. Both acting and basketball had many similar traits. Both required discipline, commitment, and hard work. I dedicated myself to the play, and I was excited to take the stage on March 4, 2003. My former teammates had all made promises to be at my performance.

Then came the night. I took the stage, and I nailed the performance! The crowd roared when I took my bow following the show. That bow reminded me of the game-winning shot against St. Francis. I went on to do four more productions in the two years I had left in high school. I even did a production in college at Florida State. From my productions and my fall, I learned that you must give every activity and every person a chance because things are more closely related than you realize, and you might just find a new love.
Lieutenant Charles Stevens hefted the small, cold barrel of the M4 Carbine in his quivering, calloused hand. His years of enlistment in the U.S. army were all coming to a head in his final field mission before his promotion to a stuffy, boring desk job. He looked at his team, most of whom were no older than twenty-five years, with himself as the exception at thirty-six. A short two weeks ago when he first met them at the sun-bleached headquarters just outside Tehran, he never would have imagined these roughnecks to be in his squad, much less him leading them. However, since the death of Sergeant Rivers on a previous attempt to kill the same target, he was placed as squad leader of unfamiliar, unwilling, and grieving young men who had just lost a leader and dear friend. He had realized, of course, that since the beginning these boys would be unwilling to cooperate with a higher-up like himself. One of the surlier guys, Private First Class Ryan Freise, immediately told Stevens once he left the briefing tent, “Don’t think for one second you have our respect just because you have a pretty track record. So did Sarge, but a track record will get you nowhere if you’re on the wrong side of a bullet.”

Charlie responded coolly, “Son, don’t talk to me about taking bullets. I’ve been shot at with more bullets than you’ve ever seen in your life, and just because your squad leader died doesn’t mean you have any right to try and take Rivers’ place. Now go sit down and shut up.”

The young man, now thoroughly embarrassed by the lieutenant, quietly went and sat back on his crate stack and glared coldly at his new squad leader.

Two weeks later, concealed in a small building about 300 meters from a rally for the newest dictator of Iran, Freise was the most loyal member of the unit to Stevens and the squad. There were never any contradictions out of him anymore; he simply obeyed Charlie’s order with no complaint.

He now said, “Sir, target is approaching the stage. Should me and Baker move on up?”

“Negative Freise. Wait for the signal from HQ. Thanks for the enthusiasm.”

At this the whole squad chuckled, but soon got serious as they realized once again why they were here.

About two days after his confrontation with Freise, Charlie sat alone enjoying a rationed meal of what might have been meatloaf and cheap mashed potatoes when Todd Baker, the youngest of the squad, sat beside him.

“Lieutenant, I wish to apologize for my squad member’s grievous behavior two days ago. He was severely reprimanded for his actions, and we hope it will not happen again.”

Stevens lowered his fork and looked Baker in the eyes.

“Son, if you want to apologize, don’t use some cheap speech you wrote down on the back of your hand, just go ahead and say you’re sorry.”

Baker looked somewhat unnerved, then quickly changed his approach.

“I’m sorry, sir. Command gave me that speech to recite in front of you, but I really am feeling bad that we didn’t stop Freise from harassing you. Ryan and Sarge were real close is all, and he hates to see anyone else in command, especially someone new to the squad.”

“Well, thank you for coming over here, Private --?”

“Baker, sir.”

“Thank you, Private Baker.”

“No problem, sir.”

Now Stevens looked at Baker without his apologetic mask on, and he saw a truly dedicated squad member who knew the weight of their mission and his role in it.
“Sir, the speech is going to end soon and we still haven’t received orders from Command. Permission to move in?”

The sound of Baker’s voice snapped Charlie back into the present.

“Denied again, private. We can’t risk this mission.”

Suddenly, a voice crackled over the radio that the Lieutenant was carrying.

“Green light to engage target at his residence. The hotel two hundred meters southeast of your position, over.”

“Affirmative, Command. Proceeding to engage.”

The entire squad got up off its hands and knees and began to prep their weapons for any possible combat. Of course, they knew that there would be combat. It was just a matter of how much for how long. The squad slowly and stealthily filed out of the small, abandoned apartment building and proceeded to the hotel. As soon as they entered the hotel, two bodyguards of the dictator immediately fired off rounds from their small but deadly 9mm pistols. However, John Kaster, a small, usually timid southern boy, finished them off with a single burst each from his M4.

“Lobby clear, sir.”

Stevens looked quickly to the elevator, pointed at Freise and Baker, and motioned for them to take the first, and the others to take the second. Everyone quickly filed in and headed for the fifth floor, where Intel said this so-called liberator of the people would be. It seemed strange to all of them that the seven of them, dressed in full army gear, were sitting in an elevator listening to cheap jazz. As soon as the doors opened, the squad checked for hostiles, and then set out looking for the target’s room. Corporal Hamilton soon spotted their target: Room 514. The squad once again prepped their weapons and burst into the room. Quickly there was what sounded like: “Who goes there?” from a large Iranian security official, who went down after being hit over the head with the butt of Stevens’ rifle. Hamilton took a grazing shot to the leg before taking out the second bodyguard. The now dismal dictator pleaded in an unfamiliar language to please spare him and he would resign, or so Stevens assumed. A quick shot to the head by Baker made the poor man fall to the floor, lying in a growing pool of blood.

Weeks later, at Stevens’ promotion ceremony, General Arnolds congratulated the Lieutenant on a successful mission. All six of his squad members attended due to an anonymous request to let them see the induction.
Hunter Tidwell
Scholastic Gold Award

Christian Sargent
Scholastic Gold Award

Aaron Ardisson
Scholastic Gold Award

Greylon Gawaluck
Scholastic Silver Award
“Yes, he’s going to be fine,” the nurse said. “He will just have to wear a cast for a few weeks.” That was the best news I had heard all week.

“Can I see him now?” I asked. I needed someone to talk to.

“I don’t see why not,” the nurse said. I was led into his room.

“Hey, how are ‘ya holdin’ up?” I asked.

“I’ve been better,” Jack said. “So, what actually happened two days ago?”

“You already know, don’t you?” I was hoping he would not bring up that subject, though it was the reason he was here.

“I don’t know the whole story. Tell me everything that happened starting from the minute you woke up.”

* * *

It was your regular Monday. I woke up to the sun shining on my face through the only window in my one-room apartment. I turned over to look at the clock. 9:34. Dang. Overslept. I had again failed to set my alarm last night. My head was pounding, typical of a Monday. After all, Sunday is the only night I get to drink. What exactly did happen last night? I know I went to some bar, but that’s about all I can remember.

No! What am I doing still in bed?! Mr. Ross threatened to fire me if I was late again. I jumped out of bed, no time for a shower. I dressed and brushed my hair, and then I was out the door. I need a good excuse, I thought, as I was running down the street. What to say, what to say? If I lose this job, I might lose my apartment. I’m already struggling with the bills as it is. Man, I’m almost there, and I’ve still got nothing.

I work on a construction site about a ten-minute walk from my apartment. It doesn’t pay much, but it puts bread on the table. We’re building some big skyscraper for a phone company. Don’t ask me which one. I was still preparing my excuse when I walked over to the punch clock. I reached for my card only to find I was already punched in. I made a mental note to thank Jack later. It wasn’t the first time he had saved me from Mr. Ross.

The day passed without incident, but throughout it, I kept trying to remember what happened Sunday. I kept seeing a face, a man in his forties, a three-day beard, strong beady eyes, and a generally unpleasant appearance. I could not, however, remember what its significance was or who it belonged to. By the time my shift was over, it was already dark. I said goodbye to Jack, who lives on the other side of town, and began to walk back to my apartment.

As I was walking, I remembered the face belonged to a man at the bar, I believed he was sitting next to me. I was pretty sure we conversed, but what about I could not recall. I was walking along and thinking, when suddenly, I heard a faint sound, a far off gunshot. Crime wasn’t uncommon in this part of the city, but it always put me on edge. This particular occasion, however, I was unusually unnerved. I could feel that this time was different, significant. I quickened my pace. It was just then I remembered the face of last night again. It did not wear the stern image I remembered earlier, however, but now had an angry expression. At that moment I felt a sharp pain in my head, my splitting headache returning. I still could not tell why the man was angry, but I felt I had caused it.

I was now particularly alarmed, practically running the fifty more feet to my apartment building. I got to my room, and locked my door, which was unusual for me. I tried to tell myself it was nothing, that I was just imagining things, but the pain in my head was increasing, and every time I closed my eyes, I kept seeing that face.
and feeling the anger it emitted.

I went to my fridge to find out what I would be having for dinner. Cold pizza…excellent. I grabbed two slices and went to sit down in my easy chair in front of the TV. Nothing on but a Simpsons rerun. It’ll do. I wasn’t paying attention to the show, but instead my mind was wandering, catching on this and that but quickly moving to something else, which happens when I am nervous.

Susan said I should replace those curtains. This wallpaper should probably go too. When am I going to learn to cook and stop having to eat this junk? Maybe I should go back to school so that I can get a decent job. I’ll probably get fired in another week or two anyway. That reminds me, I need to set my alarm for tomorrow. Nah, I’ll remember later. I’m going to need to replace this chair soon too. Where did I even get this thing? That’s right; mom gave it to me along with that mirror across from the window. Why did I put it there, instead of the bathroom, anyway? Wait, what’s that in the mirror? A man?

I got up and looked out my window. Sure enough, I saw a figure, dressed in all black, looking up at the apartment. I could not see well at all, but I could tell he was looking for someone. He noticed me in the window and gazed up at my apartment unceasingly. I started to panic. What could he want with me? I looked back again but he was gone. I tried to calm myself but to no avail.

A minute later I heard a terrible quiet rasping sound of metal scratching metal. I looked over at my closed and locked door. Before my eyes, the lock clicked open. My head was pounding. The door slowly opened to reveal a man, gun raised, dressed in all black. It did not take a hard look for me to recognize the face from last night. The pounding was unbearable. I remembered everything.

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“So, what do you do?” the man asked me.
“I work in construction. On the new skyscraper on the east of town. What da’ you do?”
“I’m a carpenter.” Just then our drinks arrived.
“So, have you lived here a long time?” I asked.
“Bout five years.”
We hit it off okay, but several minutes and drinks later, a young woman no older than twenty walked up to us.

“There you are,” she said. “I’ve been looking all over town for you.”
“Who are you?” I asked.
“This is Ann,” he said.
“I’m his girlfriend,” she replied matter of factly.
“Seems more like you could be his daughter!” I said with a laugh.
“What are you saying?!” The man asked me angrily. “I happen to find her very attractive!”
“I can see that. I just don’t understand what she sees in you.”
“I don’t have to take this from anyone!”

The man lunged at me, knocking me to the ground, wrapping his hands around my throat. I could see the pure malice in his eyes. I was squirming around on the ground moving my arms wildly, trying to land a hit on the man. I got lucky and struck him in the right ear. He cried out and released his grip on me.

“You monster!” Ann screamed at the man. “How could you do this?! You promised me no more fighting! I never want to see you again!” She shouted storming out. I was up on my feet now, if just barely. The man looked stunned. He was gazing off into space, until suddenly, he stared straight at me.

“You! This is all your fault!” I’m going to make you pay. He too stomped out the door. I stood for a minute, stunned like him, until my legs gave way under my weight and my head hit the floor.

* * *

“I told you I’d make you pay!” He had me backed up against the wall, my head throbbing so hard I couldn’t think straight. This is it, I thought. It’s over. My life sacrificed for a couple of cheap laughs in a bar.

“It’ll be fun killing you,” the man said. I shut my eyes. Just let it take one shot, I prayed.
I heard the gun fire. No pain. So this is what it’s like to be dead. No. I can still feel move my body. Could he have missed?

I opened my eyes. There was the man, lying lifeless on the floor. I looked toward my door. Jack was standing in the doorway, his right hand holding a gun, the other clutching his right shoulder. He smiled at me before collapsing to the floor, probably fainting from blood loss. The pounding in my head was gone. I was still trying to comprehend the fact that he had just been shot and saved my life in a matter of an hour. I looked down at him, but everything was beginning to look fuzzy. I reached for the phone, and was barely able to press the 9 and the 1 twice before I too passed out.

* * *

“And the next day I woke up in my bed.”
“So I risked my life to save you from a man that you insulted in a bar?” Jack looked at me in his special way that says ‘Why do I bother?’
“Pretty much.”
“You’re lucky we’re such good friends or I might have to sue or something.”
“By the way, how do you think the court hearing will go?”
“I’m not worried; I’ll easily prove it was in self defense.”
“Good. So, what did the man ask you before he shot you?” I was dying to know.
“He asked if I knew you and where you lived. I told him your room number, but that was because I
thought he was some relative of yours. Then when I asked why, he began to get mad, pulled his gun, and told me
I should run along home before I got myself killed. I panicked and began to run. He hit me with a bullet right
here, and then was gone.” He pointed to his right shoulder. “I lost a lot of blood before I was able to get up, but
I then ran home to get my pistol. He obviously took his time getting to your place; otherwise, I wouldn’t have
made it in time.”

The nurse walked in and said I should probably wrap up the conversation and that Jack needed his rest. I
said that was fine.
“Get well soon,” I told him.
“Don’t overdo it,” he replied to me.

Now no day is my drinking day. I managed to keep my job, once I started setting my alarm. I’m planning
to find a place out a bit from the city and buy a car, once I save enough money. I visit Jack every day after work.
It’s the least I could do.
It was a perfect summer morning in the Adirondacks. It was the summer of ’98, and Dave and I were on a canoe trip. We were attempting to canoe 100 miles from Saranac, New York, to a lodge in the middle of the wilderness. There we would meet up with a few more friends and drive back through Saranac after a couple of nights at the lodge to New York City for the weekend. I got out of my sleeping bag and looked around. There was a layer of fog lying across the lake, and it was hard to see a few feet in front of you. You could hear the trout leaping out of the water for flies. Dave was now up and preparing a fire to cook the last of the ready breakfast we had brought. There were thirty miles between the lodge and us. If we continued at a good but easy pace, we should have been able to make it. We ate the meals and packed up our camp, making sure to put the fire out. We loaded the canoe and pushed off into the lake. We had been paddling for about fifteen minutes when the lake narrowed, and we entered a river. It was a pretty easy river, easily navigated with a few small rapids. We continued on the river for about two hours when we reached another lake. Out where we were, it was like a chain, a lake to a river to another lake and so on. We entered this lake and by our map, we could tell that it was pretty big. We paddled on for while and stopped to eat lunch. We decided to save the last ready-made meal and go fishing for lunch. We had brought three fishing rods along with our sleeping bags, bed rolls, tent, and two .22s just in case. We took a fishing rod each, turned over a log, and found some bait. After several minutes, we had each caught a beautiful rainbow trout and begun to cook them. That was when the trouble began.

While we were cooking our trout, two moose wandered up no more than twenty feet away. We did not notice the moose until they were too close. It was then that we made our first major mistake. Instead of remaining calm, Dave jumped, causing the moose to become very scared and run over our canoe. The damage did not look very bad until I went to inspect it and discovered several punctures from the moose’s hooves. The canoe would no longer work, and it looked like we would have to walk the rest of the way. We had a map of only the water route so we would have to walk along the bank.

We started on our trek and it was a lot harder than canoeing. We were not going to make it on time as we had expected. We set up camp and ate our last ready-made meal. While we were eating, Dave kept getting up and pacing around. I asked why he was so nervous, and he asked me to come look. I got up to go look and saw to my amazement a campfire. This could either be really good or really bad. First of all, no one in his right mind would be walking out here where there were no trails. However, they might just be lost from their canoe, or maybe even the same psycho moose attacked them. Dave told me that we should probably be careful because in the past, several big-time criminals had been caught right around here. We decided to stay up and check their campsite out and see whom it could possibly be.

At around 1 a.m. we snuck away from our campground to check theirs out. We brought the .22s just in case. What we saw will never leave either of our minds. Lying around the campfire were Jerry Chaplan and Jose Franciocio, two of the FBI’s most wanted. Right next to them were an automatic machine gun and a pistol. As if this were not enough for our minds, Jose had a sawed-off shotgun. I suppressed a yell, and we both tore off in the direction of our campsite. Behind us we heard one of the criminals wake up, but at this point nothing could stop us. We quickly packed up and sprinted for what seemed thousands of miles but was really only about two miles. We stopped to catch our breath, and Dave turned to me saying, “I hope we don’t have to use those rifles, but it is a good thing we brought them.”

I replied, “Really, if we get in a gunfight we are dead, what with all their heavy arms.”

We decided not to light a fire so as not to be seen. We then put only our sleeping bags on the ground in
case we had to make a quick getaway. We were really scared, and I think anybody in our position would be. We sat in our sleeping bags not wanting to go to sleep, each holding a fully loaded rifle on safety but ready to shoot at the first thing that moved. At every sound either of us heard, we would jump and get very scared. At one point I thought I heard voices. “Dave do you hear a-a-anything?” Dave did not answer and I got pretty scared. I asked him again and again, but he did not answer. I slowly moved closer to him and much to my relief found he was asleep. Sometime in the next hour or so, I too fell asleep.

The next morning Dave woke me up, and we quickly headed on our way. It was then that we made our second mistake. We had forgotten to cover any of our tracks or our campsite. If either of the criminals found those tracks, they would come after us. We decided to run and walk in intervals. We did this for about an hour before we decided to rest. We started to light a fire but decided against even stopping because at that moment we heard a gun shot and voices. There were plenty of illegal hunters in these woods, but I had a slight suspicion that Chaplan and Francido were on our tail. Following us would be quite easy on the side of a lake where the ground is moist and footprints show up very easily. We started to run like there was no tomorrow. It looked like all those football wind sprints and conditioning would finally be useful. However, we did not underestimate our pursuers who were both ripped and had their freedom, maybe even their lives, on the line. At about six o’clock we stopped to make camp. We ate some berries and drank some purified water because lighting a fire would be like asking to die.

I drifted off at about nine o’clock with Dave taking the first watch shift. Our only chance was that some sort of a rescue team had been sent out because we were an entire two days late to the lodge where our friends were. There was also the outside chance that the FBI had sent some agents into this area to look for any criminals. At ten o’clock, July 26, 1998, Dave told me to get up. He said the last possible thing I wanted to hear at that moment: “I just heard footsteps and voices; I think Chaplan and Francido are looking for us.” We decided it was too late to move and stayed very still in hope of the criminals not finding us. We could tell they were circling us and ever so slowly making the circle tighter. They were professionals. In no time at all they were going to find us unless some kind of miracle took place.

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We waited to be killed for about an hour when we heard a shotgun cock and Jerry Chaplan say, “Get up kids,” in a rather brutal and intimidating way. We got up because he had a gun aimed at us, and we put our hands in the air. They led us to their camp at gunpoint, and then we were tied up and roughly thrown against a tree. Jose Francido started to yell at us and ask all sorts of rhetorical questions. We could tell this was not good and that they were very mad. They led us back to their main camp several miles away and threw us into a hut. This camp had been built to survive the winter weather and be a permanent hideout for two notorious criminals. It looked as if we had stumbled across their operating headquarters. We could hear them arguing in the other hut on how to kill us. Their ideas ranged from making us dig our own graves and then shooting us to tying rocks to our feet and drowning us. All of their ideas did not sound in the least bit enjoyable.

They came to get us and were leading us blindfolded to our deaths. Suddenly, there were three gunshots, and I fell over. I could not feel any pain and could not find any wounds. I heard one of our captors cry out in pain. That is when I realized we had been saved. I ripped my blindfold off and saw Jerry Chaplin on the ground with bullet holes in his stomach, chest, and head. Needless to say, he was dead. I turned around and saw Jose pointing his shotgun at two very tough and professional looking FBI agents. I saw Dave sitting next to a tree that looked eerily familiar. I realized that we were in the campsite where we had been captured and left our supplies, including the .22s. I went over to our stuff and grabbed a rifle. I switched the safety off and pointed the gun at Jose. I said, “Put your gun down,” in the bravest voice I could muster which was very shaky. Jose realized he was defeated and laid his gun down. The officers took him away and out of the woods. Next came a rescue team followed by our friends.

I think it is safe to say the rest of our vacation was a little bit different than what we had planned. Besides sorting the legal issues out in New York City, it was better than we had expected, way better. We were so grateful to be alive and with our friends that we made the most out of our time together. Both Dave and I decided that we would never take life for granted again and to always make the most of it. In fact, the next summer we hiked half of the Appalachian Trail, but that is a totally different story with its own adventures. To this day Dave and I have remained close friends and try to do something every summer, each time making the most of it because you never know when life will end.
War Medals
by Brandon Sauermann

These old brass medals sit in a wooden box
Waiting to be opened

Like priceless diamonds
They are cleaned and kept neat
The blazing glimmer in the sunlight
Reflects in my eye.

These old brass medals sit in a wooden box
Reminding me of my beloved family member.

Taking me to times of hardship and death
Where sun and ash command the sky.
These memories lost in my mind
Until the rise of another sun.

The Golf Cart
by Bryan Oslin

The dirty four-wheeled buggy,
Squeaking like old wooden floors.
With an installed automatic break,
It travels unaccompanied behind the John Deere
The cart lives in my garage,
Sucking in the electricity to ride again.

Many parts get replaced,
From performing illustrious doughnuts---
Burnt rubber flowing through the gentle fall breeze,

And having aching heartbreaking spills,
“Bam” against the cold cruel ground,
With filth and dirt and leaves a’ flyin.

I enjoy the ride,
Swinging my legs to touch trees.
My face soaked in wind and airborne insects.
I feel as though I am above all others, while driving my precious golf cart.
The day dwindles down, so I must go home.
To ride again tomorrow.
When I Met You
by Vaughn Hunt

When I met you were different than today
You were like an average person to the eye of
everyone
But to me you were extraordinary
Your big hands taught mecraftsmanship
But now those hands are gone

Ever since that day you have been different
My hands are as big as your hands now
You were once mobile
But now you are imprisoned inside your motion
less body
Some people think you will never be the same
But I think there is still hope in getting better
One Day

Brandon Sauermann

A Walking Stick
by John Elam

Slim, sleek and shiny, it leans against my wall
It helps me keep my balance, so I don’t slip and fall
Like a bannister on a stairwell it keeps my nimble knees
Safe from falling over on the rough hard ground
It’s as stable as a rock foundation holding fast, won’t let me go
It helps me get around to places especially in the snow
But my father, he’s fifty-two you know, needs it more than me
But it helps me too on hikes in the woods
It’s very special to me, because I carved it up myself
With a spiral design and a smooth-waxed surface
It is one of my most prized possessions
It helps me pass the time away to deal with my obsessions
Of carving walking sticks to help guide me on my path

Daniel Bellet
The Rose and the Clock
by Ryland Close

On my wall hang a rose and a clock
To the outside eye
This is all that they see
But there is a deeper meaning for me

The golden clock shines like her aged smile
And the rose still smells of the other’s welcoming perfume
When I see these beautiful things I recall, just for a while
When I could see, touch, or smell them in real life

The old clock’s hands tick like her heart did
Tick-tocking, tick-tocking its young life away
This clock I can see
Its time is running low
And then gracefully
Its life stops to flow

Her skin is like the petals of the rose
Pale, withered, and soft
As the rose fades; so does she
But in my mind remain the memories

But now these two treasures are all that is left
And this fact that I hate
I must learn to accept
They left me no time
To stop, think, or wait
This horrible fact I cannot debate

I will look to these objects
And I will utter a smile
All these fond memories
Trapped in my head for a while

These memories stuck in my head oh so well
The hugs, the food, the sparkling eyes through thick glasses
Her laughter rings in my head like a bell
Ringing to dismiss classes

I see the clock smiling down on me
And smell the rose; reminders of her glee
And with the withered rose and the old golden clock
Images of them I still can see

Their wise eyes now watch over me
From those dreamed of shining gates
They will forever and always love me
No matter what my mistakes

Ross Martin

Logan Standard
Soldiers on a Hill
by Vince Panvini

I can see all of the soldiers up on a hill
Waiting to die, waiting to kill.
Why are they there? Nobody knows
They are dreaming about going back home.
They are like dogs waiting for some little treat
But all they get is dried fruit and sleep.
BOOM! Off goes a cannon in the middle of the night
The soldiers on the hill are nowhere in sight.
The war begins, the guns start to roar
The soldiers on the hill are feeling sore.
Shot in the arm, shot in the head
Everything is quiet, the soldiers are dead.

Love
by Paul Moore

It starts as a spark within the heart,
That grows and grows,
That if true turns into a burning flame,
That grows with the passion,
For you look in her eyes,
That are as blue as the skies,
For you look at her
Smile that drives you wild,
For now that the passion is burning like the sun,
Now I know she is the one.

Terror Ride
by John Powell

Happy as can be,
Jacqueline by his side.
Smiling faces everywhere to see,
On a soon-to-be terror ride.

Crowds forming like geese to bread
And see their beloved roll past
Watching him, the one that has led
Whose journey is soon not to last.

Suddenly a booming sound,
Shook the people in the head.
Number thirty-five excluded from the round
For he has fallen solemnly dead.
I’m Just a Boy  
by Robert Papel

From the point of view of a boy in the 1960’s

I’m just a boy, that’s it,  
I just happen to be black,  
Nobody should care,  
But people do.

So, I have to sit on this bench,  
In a place they call school,  
But how can it be school,   
In this tumbledown shack!  
There are holes in the door,  
There cracks in the walls,  
And ants that crawl all over the floor.

There are barely any supplies,  
Mainly white school throwaways,  
But it’s all that I’ve got,  
I’ll just make the best of it,  
Because waiting outside is the summer paradise with  
fruits that are sweeter than cake.

Night’s Sky  
by Penn Murfee

More things are hidden in a night’s sky,  
Than many ordinary people’s eyes  
Can see

Diamonds in the black abyss,  
Surely no eye can miss  
This scene

The moon a dimmed sun,  
No one can absolutely be done  
Looking at thee

A blanket covered in sequins,  
True people hope this never ends  
On this eve

More things are hidden in a night’s sky,  
Than many ordinary people’s eyes  
Can see
The Buckeye is a magazine of writing and art from seventh and eighth grade classes at Montgomery Bell Academy. The title was inspired by the buckeye tree that stood in the grove on the north end of campus. It was once a familiar gathering place for both faculty and students.