

the



west 4th

# THE WEST 4TH

Edited and Published by

Jack Konarinis

Send Writing and Inquiries to  
thewest4th@gmail.com

follow us on Instagram @thewest4th

and check us out on the WEB at thewest4th.net



Vol. II May 2026 No. 4

## Contributors

EADLIN JACK.....
RIDOLY MAJUMDAR.....
HENRY BAKER.....
ADAM BREIER.....
JACOB PRINCE.....
JON SWISS.....
JACKIE BECK.....
CHARLES STACY.....
ALEX WOLF.....
PARKER OTTO.....
ELLIS HORN.....
M.E. LINK.....

Cover artwork and sketches by Ellis Horn



### From the Editor

**O**ur website is officially live! Now it feels like this little dance that we do every month is really a real thing, set in the proverbial stone of the asthmatic and omnipresent specter of the, yes, "Interwebs." Go to [thewest4th.net](http://thewest4th.net) to download a copy for yourself. You might be reminded of an old love, a past thought, an ancient whizz you took in the street, or something else consequential to you. Ahem. Isn't .net way better than .com for some reason? I think it sounds quaint, more homegrown.

You are all crazy and you are good writers. Thank you for all you do. Sorry if I hound you too much, but there's too much to be said and preserved for us to be just sitting around languidly, lugubriously, um... lopsidedly....

If anyone would like to read my recently defended MA thesis, please email me or project sounds at me with your mouths at the Music Inn. I would love to share it with anyone that might be interested in the 1600s and MERCHANTS. That is all. Prosper.....

### Change is Inevitable

Charles Stacy

**C**hange is inevitable and continuous. Where there is a hill, there's a trough. We are unaware of most changes, even when we are responsible for them. Choosing to act is not an imposition of will as much as it is a temporary tethering to the undercurrent of change that simmers beneath the surface of every interaction.

Every single moment - now - is an opportunity to engage with the flow of transformation. Your path is yours alone, and it is in your hands. Doing nothing is also a choice, the awareness of which is a transient phenomenon, often muddled with misperception. We are all occupied by endeavors that develop over lifetimes. But we are creatures with limited capacities to retain these multitudes in our focus through the relentless velocity of existence. 'Nothing' seems like a default state for most of us. We often consider ourselves too weak to survive continuously changing circumstances - but this is what we are made for.

What makes us special is our determination to adaptively refine our ability to take action in the pursuit of a higher purpose. What gives us will is how we feed the soul. And where light guides you, wind takes you there. And you swim through oceans of potentiality to find me standing here crying out for love, to give me peace in the ministry of your presence. You no longer wish for change because it is always already happening - unbeknownst to and because of you, despite your best efforts, except we weren't ever enough and the waves came crashing down, and I was standing there, waist deep in the tides of your trauma wondering why I was no longer trying to change anything. Until I realized it was already happening, and I let go of the tether.

And now I can feel this ever-present torrent eroding the shells of my youth, sculpting my form into something powerful. I can see the contours of my decisions, whimsical and warped. I smell the petrichor of drying eyes. You nurtured me until my shape outgrew your containment. And when the floodgates opened, it was my choice.

### Lyrics from "Nightmare Sequence"

Ridoly Majumdar

**I**t's half past midnight, I don't know where you are. It don't bother me, I'm playing my guitar. While I count the lines and cracks up in the ceiling, I'm laying down with a restless feeling. Lightbulb flicker makes a static sound. It tells me all about the things you do downtown. And all the faces that you've taken now. I'll be waiting til you come back around. No, it's fine, I'll be waiting all night. 'Cause really I don't even mind. Don't wanna know this time. Just tell me where you been tonight, or don't answer, it's alright. I watch the paint dry. Watch the candle burn. Counting my heartbeats until you return. It's half past midnight, I'm trying not to care. If I cross your mind tonight, would I linger there? No, it's fine, I'll be waiting all night, alright, I'll be waiting all night. Cuz really I don't even mind. Don't wanna know this time. Just tell me where you been tonight, or don't answer, it's all right. Found me face down on the highway again. Must've been out sleepwalking. I can quit anytime I want. But she knows I'm only snoring. There's no need to look so concerned. Yeah I know what I'm doing for sure, man. Walking the highway like a wire. Faces up on the wall, in a basement dirty and small. I don't recall anything. No, not the smallest thing, I'm not afraid of anything. Nothing at all. Voices echo from the hall in a place where I don't belong. And I don't recall anything. No, not the smallest thing, I'm not afraid of anything. Nothing at all. Well they see me through the walls. Don't you believe me? It's not in my head at all. Can't you hear them voices talk? No I'm not dreaming, it's really me they want. Haven't been the same since I saw the Shadow Man last night. Said he lives inside a dream. And he's always watching me on a giant TV screen. I know there's someone there. Tell me, who will I be by the end of this glass? I find somebody new after each night is past. I turn the TV on and they're saying stuff. I turn the TV off cuz I've had enough of these whirlwind thoughts inside my brain. Children of the holy and profane. While the world keeps spinning round and round and my world keeps slowing down and down. Thought you were happy. You've gotten so good at fooling yourself. Whatever distracts me. Because it's easy, because it helps. All you wanted was a big house in the sun. Someplace up in the sky to look down on everyone. But you won't, you won't fool me this time. So go and, go and play that game you like, I won't bite. I won't bite. Well they called it off, no execution now. You always find someone, some sucker to keep you out the ground. But you won't, you won't fool me this time. So go and, go and play that game you like, I won't bite. I won't bite.

# MCG+01-02-015, or, The Loneliest Galaxy

By Jacob Prince

Ann was going to visit the astronomer. His reputation for oddity had been proven even as early as their first email correspondence. Her baby, due soon in the next three weeks, had been kicking, and, unable to still him by his usual glass of water and hard boiled egg, she had stolen down into the basement to tend to something that had been weighing on her mind. In the faint blue light of the computer screen, she had drafted an email and sent it around midnight.

She had heard of the astronomer during her undergraduate days at the small local college. It was known broadly amongst the small faculty that Professor Lieman had turned up in their town with a Ph.D. from an elite school somewhere on the coasts many years ago. He taught only one upper level physics course and was not known to have a family. Those few who had been to his home told stories of strange, foreign cocktails and odd but wholesome fare. It was also known that, aside from his professional and academic responsibilities, he offered a rarely utilized service of astrological consultation.

Ann had hidden away that night under cover of darkness to request his services as she hadn't wanted her husband to find out. Allen was a blue collar man at heart. He had carried an auto shop, factory-line mentality all the way from high school into his career as an engineer and had not been stirred by any of college's tempting pathways to eccentricity. He was kind, simple, of the material earth, and did not treatise much with religion or philosophy. The email that slipped silently away from Ann's computer would have disturbed him, and she had thought it better if he didn't find out. Ann hated to keep secrets, but the quiet spirituality that she had harbored all her life had risen to the fore those few weeks before her first child's birth, and she could not hold it back any longer.

Though she kept her mind focused on the most important tasks at hand in life, Ann had always kept a percentage of her time available for what she felt was a compulsive wandering. A nagging feeling would bubble up at odd times. A visit to the waterfalls in the hills would appear in her schedule. Little read books would seem to pop off the shelves to her. She kept records and combed through the dollar shelves for new material. Connections appeared between foreign doctrines. When she'd hit send that night, she'd felt a new and curious avenue towards that same old thing that she couldn't understand opening. Satisfied, she had begun to walk slowly back towards the stairs when the computer pinged from back across the room.

"You are invited," Lieman's email read, "with most gracious mind, to render visit at my home this Thursday evening of the week. Please, as payment, port with you en viennant a sheaf of mint as harvested from my plot at Ardloe Park, as well as a pack of Muji inkpens procured from the adjacent bookstore. The total should not rise over twenty-five dollars. I am honored to make your acquaintance. Yours, C.L."

These things were easily acquired Thursday evening. She had told Allen that she was stepping out to run some errands and had driven first to the bookstore and then Ardloe Park. The metal gate of the community garden was cold in her hand as she pushed it open. The sun had not quite burst through the winter that March,

and the day had been in the forties. A small wind blew and freshed the blooming pink and yellow flowers on the ground. She could smell them strongly when she knelt to harvest a small bouquet of mint from his plot, her bare knees sinking into the chill earth from under her maternity gown. Sweet, layered arrangements of floral incense, cut with the sharp, silver mint, coursed through the light current of air over her skin and through her hair. Ann's son seemed to kick, or shift into comfort at the smell - as though he found that winter air did not only bear austerity.

The sun had begun to sink as she drove to the Astronomer's home. The GPS system on her dashboard was guiding her in a cool blue river of winding country lanes into the forested hills forming the edge of the countryside. She passed familiar trailheads in the gloom that she knew led to small waterfalls and quaint views of the town. The radio, turned down low and sewn with static, began to flicker with sound as the receiver lost the town's top pop channel and picked up some smaller local frequency. A faint and unfamiliar concerto began to softly overcome the static. A lonely horn emanating from some great distance found commiseration in the hearts of the string section, and they let out their grief together in a gentle minor key.

The stars shone very clearly in the country sky above her. Their part of the state was renowned for its dark sky. In August, during the Perseids, families would lay out blankets together in Ardloe Park to watch lights fizzle and burn like fireworks of silver, blue, and green in the night sky. This, she had been sure, was what had brought Professor Lieman from the coasts.

She found herself winding up a steep country road to the top of Eve's Mound, an oft-remarked member of the local hilly skyline. Along each side of the road, mailboxes leant out from precipitous driveways which disappeared into dark forest beyond her headlights. Near the top of Eve's Mound, the deciduous trees gave way to conifers. Even higher, the conifers gave way to stony heath. It was there, on a pedestal beneath the sky, that Ann parked her car and took a look at Lieman's home. It was an ample house, styled like a tudor cottage. Its white plaster walls between wood beams were dyed blue by the moon and starlight. Behind its foremost eve there rose a great rounded roof with a cylinder jutting out like a pestle at 35 degrees. Professor Lieman had constructed an observatory.

A light broke out from behind the opening front door and a man's silhouette just filled it. Its hand cast a dark wave before the light and Ann returned it from the gloom inside her car. She opened the door and the cool wind took her hair again. Her car door thudded shut and all was silent except the careful timbre of the wind.

"Hello," Lieman spoke as Ann's slow tread brought her down an even dirt parth towards the door.

"Good evening," she replied as she came into the light.

"Ah. Sic," Lieman said when he could see her, "quod erat demonstratum. You are pregnant."

Shaking off the Latin and the winter, Ann said, "Yes. It's our first child, Allen's and mine."

Lieman ushered her inside and shut the door.

"Please, have a seat," he said. "We can get started presently."

He laid a cushion from the couch in the living room

on an antique wooden chair at the table and gestured for Ann to be seated. She thanked him and settled down. The home was casual and erudite. A clock ticked quietly from above a small table full of dried winter plants and a lamp in the living room. A soft rug laid out across the floor and ended by the door to the small dining room in which Ann sat. The professor returned from the kitchen, across the main hall, with two small brown mugs of steaming liquid.

"It's an herbal green tea blend. Shouldn't keep you up," he said.

She thanked him again and took a sip.

"I brought your items," she said, placing the mint and the pens on the table. "And if you want more payment it's no problem, I can—"

"*Il ne faut pas,*" the Professor replied. He took a sprig of mint and minced it with his fingers, sprinkling it through the steam into the mug. "It's more than enough." "Yours will be a winter child, then?" he continued, "It must be due quite soon." "Yes, we're expecting him sometime around the 12th."

"Congratulations," the Professor smiled warmly. He was a refined man of his late middle age. His hair was dark and well combed and he wore glasses. "...and your birthday?" "Last Thursday," Ann replied.

"Your husband's?"

"October thirteenth."

"Well, at least you will have some company," he said, standing. "Would you like to accompany me upstairs?"

"Sure," Ann said, picking up her steaming drink.

"Good," he said. "We have a great deal to discuss."

Professor Lieman led Ann back into the main hall and up a flight of stairs onto the second floor. Here was a hall with several adjacent rooms, a long persian runner, photos of odd nebulas and star clusters, and a collapsable stairway to the attic hanging down from a trapdoor in the ceiling.

"Please excuse the state of things," Lieman said, "Single men just do what's simplest." Ann laughed politely but grasped tightly at the wooden handrail as she slowly climbed the steep and narrow passway into the attic. She was winded and nervous when she finally made it through to the attic. There, Lieman walked a path of narrow boards over pink insulation towards a metal spiral staircase from which blue and orange light fell. Faint music could be heard. The scene began to feel real to Ann. Her breath reminded her of engagement in the moment. Life was no longer passing her simply as it did in the normal hours, but had taken on a character unique to her inner senses. She felt, as Liemann smiled at her ascending the staircase with the steaming mug in his hand, that her search had been met with an engagement with the Object - some inexplicable, pervasive force that would shine out, at times, from all aspects of the moment. She could feel its presence in the faint music, the light, the cool of the stairway, the ringing of her feet upon the metal, and the weight of her body as she rose slowly into the expanding scene of the observatory.

The orange light before had come from a series of candles burning at odd places around the circular room. The blue light shone down from the stars and moon. It was cold, the winter stealing in from the open telescope-aperture in the tall, rounded ceiling.

"Here," Professor Lieman said, handing her a

neatly folded blanket from a counter piled with star charts and papers. "Little to be done about the heating," he laughed. "Welcome in." He was flicking through notebooks piled in front of a central desk at the base of the telescope, the seat covered in a blanket poised just before the eyepiece. "It's good luck that your child is being born at the end of the season - I have had the last month to pore deeply over Pisces." He settled on a page in the notebook and smiled, tapping it with his right forefinger. "That's the thing, there," he said. He looked at Ann, smiling. Whether the new light in his eye shone from the candles, the stars, or his passion, Ann couldn't tell. "Pisces is an enigmatic sign," Lieman said, a slight breeze flicking the candle-flames. "Many find those such born to be distant and strange." He whisked to his one of the star-charts, only faintly visible in the candlelight, roved his finger across it, tapped at a specific location, and glided back to his desk into his seat, pulling the blanket over himself and typing at his computer quickly. He punctuated this rhythm with a tap at the enter key and took a sip of his tea while the computer loaded.

Ann jumped as the whirring of machinery filled the space around them.

"Of course," Lieman said above the sound, "Every person is unique; the miniscule arrangements of the stars assign each person their own pursuits, but..."

The telescope, a frightening assembly of glistening cannon-bore tubes, had begun to slightly move and rotate towards a minute place in the sky. It stopped with a clang, and Lieman continued, "...this is MCG+01-02-015." He angled the eyepiece to his place at the chair and peered through it. "There is not another telescope within five hundred miles of here that can see it like we can, tonight." He gestured towards Ann to take his seat and she took a sip of the tea as she pressed her eye to the lens. Before her, a misty white disk levitated alone in some far corner of the universe.

"What is it?"

"MCG+01-02-015," he repeated, "the loneliest galaxy in the universe."

Ann pulled her face away, her brow in a knot.

"What can you mean by that?" she asked.

"The sign of Pisces is mapped over and around the edge of some vast emptiness,, hundreds of millions of lightyears away, the 0049+05 void," he gestured with a pencil in his hand to a diagram that read 'Nearby Galaxies.' She could see how the glittering diamonds of galaxies and stars shied in one place, like Chicago from Lake Michigan, away from some great darkness where no light shone.

Professor Lieman plunged his pencil tip into the void:

"That," he declared, "is MCG+01-02-015."

"But there's nothing there," Ann said.

"There is," he said, "and you've just looked at it."

Ann looked through the telescope again.

"Void galaxies are generally sparse collections of dim blue stars," he said, "but this one, as you can see, is quite structured; it's a spiral, like our own Milky Way."

Ann continued looking into the telescope. The pale, misty galaxy emanated there, somehow overcoming the silence and distance of the night and universe to lurk softly in her eyes, tendrils spinning all the while at some incredible, though invisible, pace.

"But what can it mean? What does it have to do with my son?" she asked. "MCG+01-02-015 is isolated from all possible camaraderie in the universe by 100 million lightyears in any direction," he said. "Looking out from that galaxy, there are no stars. There is only nothing; only nothing in a way that we can't understand. This loneliest of galaxies shines faintly down upon the northwestern hemisphere only during Pisces

- only during the late cold of the winter. During this time, whether we know it or not, the plants feel micro-alignments of gravity, the tide is microscopically moved, and the atmosphere is caressed by the faintest cosmic emissions from this galaxy, though it be in some microscopic way. Though its light is faint, as it is distant, its message is singularly felt in this season, as its composition is so radically different from all of the other inputs from the stars. You and your son, both, came and will have come into the world at the end of winter, under the mark of the loneliest galaxy in the universe. In the silver starlight that falls onto the green world in the night and into this room now, the faintest tint of silver falls from the galaxy which you there behold - a structure completely inaccessible, completely alien, completely distinct, and yet still present, suspended in ancient space, devoid of dust, extant." He paused.

"There is no greater gift from the heavens."

Ann looked one more time at the pale vague spiral with a yellow light at the center, the dusty cobweb on a lightbulb, and sighed.

"Thank you," she said to the astronomer. He nodded.

On the drive home, the lonely concerto was still playing. Ann's son was no longer kicking. When she pulled into the driveway, she exited the parked car and looked up at the night sky in the cold breeze. She thought for a minute, feeling the faint light from above on her skin, and smiled wearily at the heavens before shuffling slowly back into her house.

**Poetry Public Service Announcement**  
*Parker Otto*

You are living the days for which you will soon grow nostalgic

**Money money money**  
*Jackie Beck*

Mint julep, please  
On my EBT,  
Money, money money,  
Fiend, fiend, fiend,  
Money money money,  
Cream cream cream,  
Spend spend spend  
Goes the ATM,  
Sent goes the money  
Sent sent sent  
Sex and money sex, and money,  
bent bent bent

**If a woman's shopping cart says**  
*<< I fought boysex >>*

*Eadlin Jack*

She might be having her Larry David moment on the train.

In her mind, which has a different accent than yours, she emphasizes *boysex*

as to mean boy-centered.

It validates the existence of virginity, and penises in vaginas as a holy matrimony.

She likes vulvas against vulvas or hands up skirts and lips on throats or riding like a cowgirl and being free and first.

She likes lipstick over blush

Or maybe she likes

To watch something homemade and sincere(r than Perfect Redhead Daughter Fucks Step Dad<sup>1</sup>) in her private browser.

To take and be taken, seriously,

*Like agents*

*Like men*

*Like*

Contemptuous. Covetous of pleasure. Seeking various lips and streams of power.

She loves what is wrong and queer and can't bare to share a liberating feeling.

This woman might live six months of the year in The Plaza.

She pushes the cart to command the gaze and threaten your gesture. Her most dominant form of sexual exhibit.

---

<sup>1</sup>) The Title of the First Result on the Pornhub Homepage. Accessed on January 26, 2025 16:05 1 EST



## Enchanted by Strings

Parker Otto

With the pluck of her fingers, the harp  
player commands attention  
She silences a room  
No one says a word  
We stare and dream awake  
We see through walls  
In clouds  
Every corner of the room turns towards her  
She strums and plucks and glides  
Then all is silent  
The song is over  
But no one dare break the air  
No one lets the moment end  
Until a bell rings  
A new song sings  
And once more we find ourselves  
Enchanted

## 4/23 The Corner

Ellis Horn

all our cells are new cells  
are we still that same baby?

the axe is a new axe  
once you replace its head and body  
though it has the same name

did you hear about the replica ark in  
kentucky?  
they were so precise with the measurements  
but it doesn't even float, what a joke!

i say we can call this park the corner  
but he thinks it deserves a better name,  
if anyone has any ideas

she likes to look up at great heights  
like mountains. a song is a living thing  
and you will never hear the same one again

## Punching Through

Adam Breier

The fog  
dense with doubt  
full of fear  
heavy, weighted with whispers and judgement  
distracting from what you feel  
but cannot see, on the other side  
the pure  
the ecstasy  
waiting for you, but obscured  
by noise  
unless you can  
tune out  
hone in  
plant your heels, and  
inflict the quiet you require  
to claim what's yours  
without being fooled by the fog  
into  
punching through  
when all you need is to  
reach.

## Livin Roofs

M. E. Link

I have dreams I cannot  
quite recall, hauntin me  
back-of-mind as I go  
about my days, tho they  
so swiftly pass me by.  
Slingin bags of soil  
40-pounds-at-a-time,  
high enough to see the  
empire skyline. In the  
stairwell I yearn to sing  
with my confrères in  
grimacin unison, sing  
out how, at long last,  
meadows will grow  
again on Manhattan.  
The next cuppa jo down  
the hatch. Another day,  
make some dough, itch  
a scratch. Toilin atop  
glass & steel, to put a  
pasture upon a man's  
protrusion.

## Is This It

Henry Baker

Is this it, of scoundrel pie  
Of filthy air  
Of the street baker's wand

Juliet, Oh Juliet  
She don't like you  
Juliet, Oh Juliet  
You know she don't like you  
She won't give you a Christmas present,  
come time the holidays  
Juliet, Oh Juliet  
How will you get home in the rain

Juliet, Oh Juliet  
The subways will flood, and you will die  
Solemnly taken, solemnly dying  
How will you ever get home in the rain

*I waddled on over  
I walked through the rain  
I love your dog  
But have no food to feed it treats with  
My pants are wet  
And I am toothridden by our mother  
And dampened by the city*

Juliet, Oh Juliet

I wish you liked me  
Juliet, Oh Juliet  
I wish you could tie my head on straight  
Juliet, Oh Juliet  
How will I get home in the rain

## After Poem with Orpheus Oral History Belongs with Dionysus

Eadlin Jack

no devil out of that dictionary is a lively Sport—  
nary a demon is birthed before homogenous matter writes the  
Child  
nor sinks forward on any modern Ark  
which opens others towards Others  
only destroys all fields. One dark, present + Dimension +  
unravels under some immortal number without Awareness  
only generation. Any time after that Line,  
rejects gravity, remembers radiation. River as Theory of Form  
imbedded in such quaking land Anchored  
static time capsule in the anthropocene. Here starting + Images +  
excluding previous + first + this + pause + Here +  
we stay. Probability sheltered our Sentiments.  
Science necessarily rips that feeling through the public  
Space-time.  
Such songs couldn't breath eons Ago  
until abstraction deserted. Literal Units scrambled + Everywhere  
+  
at C into vacuums between these Cosmos  
pulling together one weightless bacteria. Space Automates  
+ unconcerned + of your + Satan + joining + all of us + nor +  
++happenstance vulner++ When energy ignores the neatly  
wrapped Algorithms  
supposedly the same as itself mass mistakes instinct for Beauty  
opposed to someone reimagining birds above clouds, freely  
Eagled.

This last point isn't apart from Nihilism,  
small screen capitulation that only I need to Disregard—  
no manual defends false Correlation  
as the human spirit. After we mystified us we Forwarded  
our material life until Brains and Revolution Hovered,  
but did not hear, leaving Personhood There  
in a dense textbook, as morallless Incidents,  
no self-justified yearning for Anything.



## ELSEWHERE, UNMARRIED

*Alex Wolf*

There is a place  
Where whisper turns to go,  
And become Echo;

Wherein also lies God  
and other guessing games,  
(or so you say)  
a body;

Plain and unwashed  
on the streets of  
Somewhere, once wandered,

Deliverance, delivered,  
in eclipsed satisfaction,  
Full of promise which does not hold.

Owing not to what wasn't  
but, in all regard,  
to what once was.

A cathedral  
Of youth,  
Underscored in knuckle brash,  
And holy spit,  
And cheap liquor,  
Swallowed to excess,

Will, by noontime,  
Tomorrow, become full  
of a different kind of prayer.

Morning's kiss  
a-glow, asked the girl:

How many years  
it had been,

Since she last lived  
In a city of churches?

Midday sun on bare, birds  
do sing  
a different song,  
this side of sea;

A space  
between collapses,  
Haunting shadows  
over daylight dreams;

Warbled lilt of sundown,  
Now, a bell chime.

Elsewhere, unmarred,  
may find, someday,  
a virgin vein,

To sink, grateful,  
Into the arms of slumber--

Still now,

Full of hashish,  
And cedar smoke,  
Slanted eye of Santa Giulia, or  
Still, better yet,  
by the river,

There is a place  
Where Echo becomes Nothing,  
And turns to die.

## Wax-based poetry

*Eadlin Jack*

when i think of myself beautiful, I think of  
paleness, somehow even though I'm in my  
skin which shines a golden brown from  
head to steel toe boot. I'm not sure how to  
reckon. Stroke the hair of that little girl  
obsessed with straightening brush and yet  
in denial, I whisper, red stained lips

there's something radical in me.

still there's that pale sheen— Pearlescent

like something on my tongue and thoughts  
that poke her out in pictures, be nasty be  
pure

i write this in my own filth, am i filthy?  
not like girls who i keep in folders, revisit  
memories that are not mine

when i think myself beautiful, i think white  
girls are out of my head i think dipped in  
black wax, candle flames, and burn baby  
burn to grey ashes.

## Tuesdays at the Old Bar

*Parker Otto*

Line up those whiskeys

It's Tuesday

The perfect night for a drink

I can't stand the weekend crowd

Paper dolls cut from the same mold and by the same  
scissors

They're frightfully boring

But it's Tuesday

It's quiet

It's cool

It's nice as the light glimmers through all these blasts  
of amber nectar

The silence is broken by an old timer

He takes a dollar bill from his beaten baseball cap

Tattered and frayed, it's a wonder the thing can still  
cover his head

Into the jukebox the dollar slides

The sound of Roy Orbison twinkles in this dormant  
ale house

"In Dreams"

I take the first shot back

I hope it's a good night

## Grim Considerations

*Adam Breier*

I stood  
on the edge of a crowd  
next to death  
among the living, watching  
wondering

whether the fallen man's enemy  
was cloaked and hooded  
hovering and ominous  
or  
clothed  
in a shiny, blinding  
orange jacket  
punching his chest  
kissing air  
through his lips  
without any consent

whether he'd walked through the turnstile  
into his eternal festival  
or  
could still see our  
impermanent Earthly trials  
and if yes, did they make him  
giggle  
or cry  
or both

and, if any  
or  
all of it  
was true  
who was the first to use  
grim, for the reaper  
and  
why can't we kill  
words  
that are better  
dead  
than  
alive.



# O' GENERAL

A PLAY BY JON SWISS

## ACT ONE

*The King and the General are concluding an intense conversation — King Raphael wants to “invade.” The General, is attempting to persuade him not to.*

**General Xavier:** [*confused, in disagreement*] What say'st thou, my Lord? O' great sire—master of men—I plead thee to rest afoot thy own territory; close must ye keep it—for otherwise will't it surely eat itself, like the snake who devoureth his own tail, out of boredom, but also of that curiosity which maketh man both degenerate and improve alike.

**King Raphael:** O' worthy and valiant general who hath—upon my very banner, conquered the deepest trenches and valleys of the realm of Satan, and who so hath climbed unto the shining peaks of God's glory—I plead thee to trust me...

War is the sap from which civilization is molded—blood; my dearest General—fertilizer to the plant of life—now, my general, listen carefully:

Ride to Sicily, and bring with thee the company of ten of my royal guard, and declare to the tyrant that his kingdom shall be promptly obliterated should he yield not to my majesty (for I am thee.)

**General Xavier:** If such think'st thou to be correct; then as shall I—for ye do I owe my life, master. Safety be upon thee. [*exeunt*]

*Enter General Xavier, alongside ten of the royal-guard, through the palace gates unto Tyrant Zales' extravagant court, where, having already been notified of Xavier's arrival by a messenger, is sitting atop a luxurious chaise, being fanned by twenty servants while covered from shoulder to foot with thick purple robes and exotic furs —upon his head, an incredible golden diadem ornamented with thick jewels—in the heat of the summer.*

*The Tyrant's guards suddenly encircle the eleven men, with their spears out and their shields steady.*

**Tyrant's guard:** Halt!—Move'st neigh a step further, for otherwise shall we render thee bloodless in a matter of seconds—for our spears, as ye certainly must acknowledge well, are crafted by the hands of the utmost incredible craftsmen known to the entire world—fools thou think'st yerselves to meddle with such might!

**General Xavier:** Perhaps you are correct, my dearest sire; however, forget'st thou ultimately that a blade is but as worthy as he who wields it—*Excalibur*, whom we all know from the fairytales of our youths, in truth, was nothing special—tis' in my opinion that the only actual power in such a case therefore was the very force of Arthur himself, the valiant artist who, among smoke and death played the music of fate upon his instrument: *Excalibur*.

**Tyrant's guard:** [*Angered*] Will'st thou then to find out such a truth, O' general? Ye who hath mine uncle killed, and mine province of youth, wherein such tales of adventure of which thee speak'st I received into mine brain with an utmost of joy, that very province which ye hath to the ground burned and my culture destroyed?—gladly will I unto your heart stick my sharp spear, and rejoice at the death of thee—ye mortal enemy of my race.

**General Xavier:** Of what province speak'st thou, sire? I recognize thou not.

**Tyrant's guard:** Of Todavia, General—remember'st it in thy memories? Or obscured has it become by all of the harm caused by thy lunatic rage?

**General Xavier:** Of course that I remember such a place—*where the breeze blew softly and the women were fair.*

I remember the night well—such was nineteen years ago, before even mine King was master of my realm, and he and I, among fifteen of our troops, were passing through the land in search of the dark wizard, Catarsia, whom we were convoyed to destroy, for he was, in fact, not a sorcerer, but rather a dangerous infector of minds—a leader of a cult in which his followers idealized himself in their very own minds as God, and beginning to infect the people of our own kingdom—something needed to be done.

Anyway, so as Raphael and I, and our men found ourselves on the seventh day of our journey, without having had much luck in finding him, we, over-tired and hungry, mutually decided, betwixt ourselves, that a hot meal and a bed needed we direly, and so stopped we upon an inn in a small town which, to our beliefs, appeared beautiful and innocently untouched by contemporary civility.

Into the tavern we all moved, and, although I will admit that the first hour was such a pleasant time that I whispered into the ear of mine now King that “perhaps Dionysius is looking down upon us in enchantment.” But as I so uttered these words, the front doors of the tavern flew open, and entered about seventy men, armed with such spears as those which thou presently attempt to intimidate us with, led by the very man of whom we were in search of. “Kill them all!” The so called sorcerer yelled, and they proceeded to swarm us with warlike eyes and shouts of death.

So quickly, we assembled our gear and readied ourselves to obliterate them that they paused for a second, perhaps having not expected such an ability for haste, which, to their detriments, we utilized as a temporal bridge to render them lifeless.

With an almost supernatural valiance, one after the other, we cut them down to but thirteen men, whom all scurried away into the surrounding forests, leaving us alone with the so-called sorcerer, until, suddenly, a group of perhaps thirty women and children, all armed with knives and bats and other improvised weapons, charged at us from out of seeming nowhere with that same look of death in their eyes. Knowing not what to do, for to destroy such innocent people would be dishonorable, and would cause such guilt that only death could ever alleviate, we broke through the tavern wall, like some sort of divine beasts, and, quickly mounting our horses, fled into the night.

**Tyrant's guard:** [*Enraged.*] Thou lies't!—my uncle, who hath raised me entirely—in fact was one of those very men of whom thou say'st fled into the surrounding forest, was murdered a month later, when ye and all yer foul men rampaged through our village, killing all, even women and children, and our constructions to the ground did'st thou burn. Today nothing remains of the place of my youth.

I, alone, was able to escape into the fields of nature, although that I did so to the backdrop of the crackles of Hecate's ghastly fire and the screams of the spoils of her war. I saw the banners with mine own eyes—they were of thy kingdom—and one day pay'st ye shall dearly for this, hopefully by mine own hands.

**General Xavier:** [*Confused.*] What say'st thou is false, *entirely*. Never have I, nor my banner such an act committed—thou art completely incorrect.

**Tyrant Zales:** [*Loudly, as if God were speaking down from the heavens.*] Enough! Silence! Bring mine enemies forward that my eyes may speak to them.

*The Tyrant's guards, at the sound of his voice, all go astute and, almost as if perfectly choreographed, take the men, a couple of steps further, unto the master of the palace and land therein.*

**King Zales:** The General is correct, little worm of mine, he hath killed not your uncle.

**Tyrant's Guard:** [*Confused.*] How is't true, my Lord? I saw't with mine own terror the banners of the west.

**King Zales:** 'Tis' true, in fact, for they were all killed, thy family, thy uncle—thy culture, by mine very own command: *I killed them.* [*He smiles to himself, while turning to the general*]

O' General, thou care'st too much about thy people—to me, they are but sheep, they are a means to myself—they are me, although am I not they. They are dispensable—as I said, sheep, and the fields which they graze are the hairs on my back, their clumsy clatter, upon my greatness, renders acupuncturally, they are my little flock which I regulate—and tell me, my noble sires, is death not the quintessential fabric of regulation [*General Xavier thinks here to himself: but is it not equally therefore: life?*]*—ha!—aye!—tis' I who slaughtered thy family, who killed thy village, who destroyed thy race.*

*The Tyrant advances suddenly to the young guard and draws from his hands, his spear, pointing it at his head with eyes of folly. He winds it back as if to destroy him.*

**King Zales:** Ha! [*He puts down the spear.*] Know'st thou for what reason I shall not obliterate ye from existence? What's thy name, boy?

**Tyrant's guard:** Michael, my Lord.

**King Zales:** My dear Michael! Ye art a trophy to me!—now that I know from whence come ye, any time that I shall ever see thou, will I be reminded of mine own greatness—reminded of the power which I wield—reminded that, at any particular time, I may take thy life, and thus end thy race—forever. [*He mounts again the spear, readying a fatal blow, putting into it all of his strength. He throws it violently in front of him.*]

**Another Guard** (standing directly beside Michael): Ark!—master, thou hast slewn me! Out of sheer surprise, like this? I have served ye loyally, valiantly, honorably, for all the years of my life—O' Raphael—King of freedom—how I wish thou success—how I wish thou victory against this coward—against thou...thou monster! [*He dies.*]

**King Zales:** [*To the young servants*] Little sheep! Clean this mess up thoroughly or shall I send ye to the gallows—as fresh meat for the men...Ha, ha!

As was I saying, tis' the absolute truth, Michael, as ye are called—tis' I who, to erase such a a stain on my royal flag, having caught wind of our here General's slaughter of our men, or rather said, the ease with which he did so, was I faced with no option other than to remove the blemish entirely. Should I have done so under mine own colors, of course, would I have had to face the worst of backlash—for mine own people—my sheep, would have hated me, and so I took it as an opportunity to propaganda against thy majesty's reign, making my people despise thee—such an act played them tighter into mine very palm—for tis' the truth that people love he who tells cause: he who provides blame.

**General Xavier:** Thou hast great wisdom in that corrupt and disgusting mind of thy own—it is a shame that the corrupter be none other than thyself, almost as if ye were divided into two—as if ye were: thee, and thou, both, and furthermore, that one of the two be an evil tyrant who opresseth yer other half; who perhaps and most

unfortunately, now entirely dead is.

**King Zales:** Watch thy tongue!—remember'st where thou art presently—thou art in mine house, and it is in a person's home whence he deserveth respect. So watch it, general, or I shall destroy thy physical existence. Although, I will admit that that which thou say'st is rather interesting—for I find myself at times in such fits of rage that I know not what else to do but plunder villages and destroy lineages. I am the eater of their souls, and such is all which my frenzy-clouded brain craves in such a state.

I sometimes wish that I were never made King, that I could freely roam the world, perhaps with a fine maiden, with whom many intimate and illustrious adventures might be had betwixt the two of we, and experience that thing called “life” of which I know nothing, of which I comprehend naught, and it is thus when I typically sit myself upon a seat of some sort and feel a deep sense of sorrow accrue upon my brow, almost that I could cry—*cry for what could have been...*but then, it is as if—ha! Exactly as thou say'st—that I become corrupted by another half of myself—and it is therefore whence I emerge into insanity; into rage—at my weakest, I become my strongest—and it is therefore that I must destroy: to feel alive—for it is the closest thing in my reach to that little sprite called “life” of which I understand naught.

*The Tyrant, upon saying this, returns to his chaise and from under it grasps a bow, which he aims at a group of servants, loading unto them shots from his weapon. A scream of sorrow engulfs the scene.*

**Servant:** [*Devastated and angry.*] My daughter hath been killed!—mercy be upon us!—everything ever which I have done, for her—now decimated by the arrow of her very master's twisted desire—curse you, horrible Tyrant, thou art none other but the devil! May death be upon thee!” [*He charges insensibly at the Tyrant, who, after missing his arrow-shot, has him eliminated.*]

**King Zales:** [*Calmly, strategically.*] Take the cadaver and dump it in the city square and write “traitor” on his forehead, that the people take it as a warning—that they think the death to have been caused by someone among themselves, and that they become paranoid of each other—for: why control them myself, when I can have them do it autonomously?

**Michael:** Aye, my Lord.

**King Zales:** Nay, not thou—have the others take him, I want thee close, Michael, for ye shall herein become my jester of death—wherein I desire destruction and chaos for my entertainment, ye shall record and serve as messenger to me of all events which I need to know: it shall be thy utmost duty to relay to me such events as amusingly as possible; otherwise, Michael, will I end thy race.

**Michael:** Aye, my Lord.

**General Xavier:** O' King Zales, thou hast become incomparable in thy meanness and hatred—none may deserve to call themselves “the most horrible” as thou, mighty king, as ye say that thou art. I came here to declare war on yer territory—on thou!—I originally had wanted to perhaps avoid such a thing—somehow convince thou to some sort of peace, but thou deserveth neigh to live, for to live be to experience life—that thing of which thou comprehend'st naught—thou can'st but thyself experience, and for ye it too late is; thy stomach is overfilled with the spirits of thy victims, all of whom thou hast slewn in thy years alive, and they desire peace to be upon them—they desire, not redemption, not revenge, but that thou, and all related to thee may begone eternally, that no others may suffer such monstrosities as thou hast caused unto even yer own people—yer “sheep” as thou say'st.

Ten golden legions, with mine very King himself, have already set course, and shall arrive upon thee in less than two days: whence thy reign shall be terminated forever, ye foul

creature of Satan's womb! As the man hath said: May death be upon thee, tyrant!

**King Zales:** [*Angered.*] Under what moral spell art thou under that ye must tamper with mine way of doing things? What care doth thee posses about that which concerneth thee not? Dost thou lay awake in thy bed, dreaming in fear of my doings and happenings so far away from where thou live'st?

**General Xavier:** Under the spell of that very thing of which thou comprehend naught: adieu, madman—I shall see thou again: with my blade in thee, and thy power: stripped.

**King Zales:** [*Furious.*] Guards, kill them all—make haste, let them not make it out alive!

*Twenty seven guards in all charge at the eleven men, who, in almost a blink, arm themselves for the battle which they know they must endure to escape alive. The battle is intense, and five of the eleven men are killed. They are very close to the giant gate which enables entry into and out of the property.*

**King Zales:** [*Furious*] By Apollo! Let the door fall! Close the damned gate! For God's sake! [*The gate begins lowering slowly, and the Tyrant's reinforcements arrive from inside another part of the palace.*]

**Royal guard:** [*Brushing off mud and blood*] O' General! We made it! To the forest over there, whence await us our horses!—what a beautiful idea that was, to hide them, and come afoot! [*Sadly.*] Rest in peace to our brothers befallen, it seems that some of we hath been destroyed. [*The portcullis begins closing more and more rapidly.*]

**Another Guard:** Amen.

**Different Guard:** Sir! General! Look yonder ahead! Timaus hath not made it out, observe how far is he, outnumbered—more an artist, of a fragile disposition is he, joined only into the guard to appease his father—who always calls him weak and pathetic for being an artist, which, is largely regarded as a thing for women, or weak men.

**General Xavier:** Thou talk'st too much when thee must rather act. May God bless us all; I shall meet thee at the horses. Adieu. May none be left behind. [*Xavier runs back into the castle walls*]

**Another Guard:** But General! The gate is already halfly closed! Thou art insane?

**General Xavier:** [*From a distance*] I said, Adieu!

*In the battle scene, the reinforcements are about to arrive unto Timaus, who is already surrounded by four men.*

**Tyrant's guard:** Thou possesseth no more chance, boy! Ready thyself to perish by mine sharp spear on which is writ thy name. [*Charges at Timaus, but suddenly falls to his knees.*]

I have been slain, who hath killed me in so surprisingly a manner? [*Dies.*]

**Timaus:** [*Amazed.*] General Xavier! From where come'st thou? [*The general quickly obliterates the three other men and, grabbing Timaus by the arm, thrusts him forward and begins running alongside him.*]

[*Panting.*] My valiant General, I think'st not that we shall make it—we are doomed, our souls: to be consumed by this madman! Why did'st thou return for me? Thou art absurd, O' General! I cannot run any faster; go without me, but will I slow thee down and lead ye to an untimely death—nay, let me alone, O' General!

**General Xavier:** [*Triumphant.*] Thou can'st go faster—I know it, by God—Faster, boy! Thou musn't speak whence thou need't act! Speech is illusion—action: all which we have—now by God, faster, boy!

**Timaus:** [*Three quarters of the way there: destituted.*] I shan't make it! —I shan't!

**General Xavier:** [*Still triumphantly.*] Shut up, boy! Make haste, for otherwise shall my death be upon yer conscience—hurry, boy!

**Timaus:** [*Engulfed with fear, exhausted.*] You're a madman! We shan't make it! We shan't!

**General Xavier:** By Apollo, shut up boy! We're just about there! —don't think: just act! Hear me, boy: slide through the gate, on yer stomach—get ready, boy!—on three: one...two...three!

*The gate shuts and makes an incredible sound, which the rest of the royal guard, at the site of the horses, are even able to hear.*

**Timaus:** [*On his stomach, covered in dirt stuck to his sweaty and bloody armor and garment.*] O' sir!—we, we, we...we made it out!—Ye beautiful human being!—Ye art, verily, the most valiant, the most honorable, the most—[*He is cut off by General Xavier.*]

**General Xavier:**—It's not over yet, boy! Riseth thou and beseech the glory of life, let us make haste to our saddles, and report back to our beloved King the immanency of such doom unto which must be unfolded the name of justice. Beware, boy!—look, incoming!—let us go immediately. [*A group of about fifteen guards appear from the side of the castle.*]

*General Xavier and Timaus, fastly arrive at the horse-site, where waiting for them are the other soldiers. The men all part in the direction of the King, and bring with them also the horses of their fallen brothers.*

## ACT TWO

*The General and his men are approaching the very place where the king, along with his ten golden legions, is to be camped in anticipation of the planned siege against the tyrant.*

**General Xavier:** [*Confused.*] Where is everyone? By God, let us return to the royal palace—where we shall discern what truthfully hath occurred herefore. [*Exeunt to the royal palace.*]

*The King is found to be auditing a public school lesson, for he is said to have been in want of better curricula than what the schools were teaching at that moment. Seeing the general's slashed face through the doorway, he leaves the classroom and meets General Xavier in the hallway.*

**General Xavier:** Master! Art thou in good health? What hath become of the war which thou hast directed me to enforce upon thy behalf? I, with my men, arrived at the place where the camp-site was to be, although empty was the state in which we discovered it.

**King Raphael:** Trouble ye no more on the subject, my wondrous general who's might unparalleled goes, I have changed my mind: thou werest right all along. I have no reason to meddle in such affairs which are not mine, besides, have I my own kingdom to govern, for what reason must I go about starting wars and avenging the wrongs of the entire world, when my very kingdom, my very people suffer yet? Crime, hunger and the antagonists of justice befall our beautiful banner, and such must we uphold highly if we wish to ever let it cast a shadow on other peoples—now, let us worry about ourselves, Xavier, beauteous friend of mine. Enough fighting! Have we not been through enough as it is? Let us uphold the peace in our own lands before we save the world, my General. Now, tell me—what happened to thy face? Art thou alright, mine noble Xavier?

**General Xavier:** Thou hast changed thy mind? What of that? Nay, my lord, am I not at all alright. Five of mine men were chopped down by none other than that lecherous tyrant Zales, the rest of we barely 'een having escaped alive—o' my King!—how horrible that man truthfully is; never have I encountered anyone so terrible, so disgusting in all of my life—he hath killed

of his own people, innocents, out of his boredom—he an absolute lunatic is, a maniac, and my King, believe me when I tell thou that ye were right all along, and I, completely wrong and ignorant to the truth of the matter, this tyrant must be killed, and his army destroyed. He must, Raphaël, my noble friend and King, he must, he must, he must.

**King Raphael:** Say it isn't so? Five men thee say'st? Nay, nay, nay — must we honor them with due diligence: I am angered, but let's face it, Xavier, I shan't go to war over such a doing, we needn't loose any more men, let bygones be bygones, or so they say, and make peace with ourselves. Willst thou eat, Xavier? Thou art surely famished after such an ordeal...

**General Xavier:** [*Panicked*] My King! Thou art committing a grave mistake! Must thou invade as ye were planning on doing—ye must attack as fast as possible, obliterate them into the realm of non-existence, my Lord—hear me thus! Do't precisely as thou had planned, a fool—a great fool was I to think against thy beautiful ideas and plans—let us assemble the legions: at once!—yes, yes!

**King Raphael:** [*Unstirred, apologetically.*] My noblest and dearest, Xavier, take a rest [*he puts his hand upon the general's shoulder.*] Thou need'st neigh intoxicate yerself so with worry and anger, such is what the tyrant wants of ye anyhow, and such is the case for not only the tyrant of kingdoms, but equally of marriages, and friendships, and so on, and so forth —his desire is to be validated in the world by being conceptualized in the brains of whomever he so offends, whomever he so oppresses—for from whence deriveth he his very power, from betwixt a spectrum of idealization and idolatry: understand'st thou, mine dearest and noblest knight of the kingdom of Apollo? Thou must, as is often said, not let it get to thou. We will morn the loss of our befallen brethren and figure out how to best go about the journey which is tomorrow.

**General Xavier:** My Lord, please! Do me this favor! [*He drops unto his knees*] Thou must neigh neglect this fine opportunity to convict the wrongs of the present in the presence of God. Thou shalt be blessed a million—[*The general is cut off by the King.*]

**King Raphael:** —brother, Xavier, thou thyself art a Lord—the greatest which the battlefield hath ever known: thou art Odysseus incarnate, but it is time that thee retire: with thy family, thy wife and children: might thou still be able to experience such a life while in the golden time which it potentially for thou can be—when was the last time that thou hast seen thy boys? Seven months? Six? Spend time with them, Xavier, they art not yet too old—put down the sword and take thy life into thy hands—live the life which thou could'st not while at war being a God, now rest up, my dearest Xavier, and alleviate thy brain from such thoughts of revenge and redemption.

**General Xavier:** But my Lord!—[*The king is called away on an urgent matter.*]

King Raphael: Adieu, my valiant General. [*Exeunt*]

**General Xavier:** [*To himself.*] How hath he changed his mind?—Nay, how could he? He who sent me there in the first place, but for nothing—my brothers slain, and all for what? Nothing! He is a traitor to himself! Then so be it, I will myself go, in the two days of which I spoke to the tyrant, and alongside many friends: will I obliterate the existence of that terrible Zales, decadent of justice. I shall, from my position and title, methinks be able to acquire a calm sum of two legions, which, given their illustrious training, will equate them rather to be worth six, or even seven. Firstly, however, I require a visit to that realm about which we understand nothing called: the dreamworld, and, in fact, indeed am I rather famished from my ventures—let me go. [*Exeunt*]

*General Xavier enters into his beautiful house, he knows not whether anyone is home. As the King before said, he had not been home in many months.*

**Lady Xavier:** [*Triumphantly.*] Halt thou precisely where thy standeth, thief! Knoweth thee to whom belongs this abode?—the illustrious General Xavier, and thou art rather idiotic should thee think'st that I, his wife, should not possess the ability to defend mine self as well as any member of the guard, now turn around, slowly, with thy hands in the air, whence I may see them and be delivered of the fear of the threat of your possible mischief. [*He turns around.*]

[*She, immediately recognizing him, runs to her husband.*] O' my valiant sun which never doth not shine!—mine beautiful husband and general of my wondrous nation! [*Hugging him.*]

How have I, have we, missed thee, my noble Lord! Shame be upon me!—what kind of a lady reconizeth neigh her very husband in the flesh? O' general, how long thou hair hast grown—how changed thou appear'st to me herein! I love thee...my love? Willst thou say anything in reply? Art thou alright, my King?

**General Xavier:** [*Sadly.*] I am of an ill disposition, fine lady whom thou verily art—and thou do I love everstill, although, to the pledge of honor and servility to which I am bound, may I not speak to thee about such matters, as thou art a women, and would not be able to handle at all the tragic things which trouble me so terribly, which haunt my every move, whom'st in my ears whisper madness.

**Lady Xavier:** Mine Lord, tell me, I can bear't full-forced, now out with it—expression is to the heart sobriety, which to the mind makes't clear: what troubleth thou presently mine love?

**General Xavier:** [*Annoyed.*] As have I said, thou art a women, should'st thou fall sick, or perhaps faint from the hearings of my misfortunes, I should forever feel such guilt upon my conscience—it is for the own safety of our women that we protect them in this manner.

**Lady Xavier:** Mine Lord, stop it with this nonsense. Thou know'st me well, am I so really weak? I who, alone, out from my captivity broke? Nay! Surely forget'st thou who presently finds herself in front of thee—O' my General! Art thou thus so ill of spirit that thou forget'st thy own wife?

**General Xavier:** O' Cynthia! Forgive me! Look at me, here, with a slashed face and a distant temperance, trying to conceal what is visible to all but me! It matters not my lady—how blind I can be! All which I need is right here, my beauteous wife [*kisses her*]... and say? Where art the kiddies? Should they not by now already be returned from the academy?

**Lady Cynthia:** My general, how I love thou so dearly! And about our little ones; Zachary and Fredo, the King hath extended the time of their lessons—they shan't be home for at least another hour...it hath been so very long since thy hands I have touched; your heartbeat, felt upon mine; willst thou perhaps...unwind, a little?—shall I demonstrate to thee the new sheets which I recently purchased for our gargantuan bed in which I lay alone every night, crying—awaiting thy return? [*She puts her arm on his chest and begins kissing his neck.*]

**General Xavier:** Thou whore! Get off of me! [*Peels her off of him.*] Remember that thou art not some ordinary maiden—thou art the wife of the most noble General alive, and ye must act the part. Neigh may thou be so indecent as to suggest such a thing to me; it is I, the man, who must initiate anything of such a nature. I'm off. [*Begins to leave.*]

**Lady Cynthia:** [*Grabbing his arm*] What hast become of thou? Hast thee completely altered in the course of but a meager six and a half months? Might it be that terrible corrupter, Vilanos, with his traveling vagabond of lies and gags, selling superiority at the price of misogyny, who hath into your strong mind entered and infected with his cheap tricks and petty schemes? I thought that thou were'st the General to the most powerful nation on Earth; but fall'st thou victim to such stupidity? I shall believe't not—nay, nay nay!

Remember'st thou not, that tyrannous preacher, O' so many years ago, whom ye hath slewn in the name of justice—for doing precisely the same thing; albeit that he used the colors of people's skin to cause his chaos: of which he profited mightily?

And remember'st thou not the speech, shortly thereafter which thou hast gave at the royal court regarding that which thou called: "A scapegoat for deep sadness and emptiness inside?" Little Zachary; who, now, is not so little anymore; just the other day came home with thy very words upon his lips; having studied thy very work in his school lesson. Now, enough with such fooleries; let us go. *[She grabs his hand and leads him away.]*

*Time passes; the General and his wife lay together in bed, he, caressing her hair.*

**General Xavier:** O' queen of my heart, templar of my destiny! Thou art entirely correct, too long have I spent among savages: that am I become one myself—art thou at all hungry, mine angelic wife who from heaven come'st?

**Lady Cynthia:** O' General! How wonderful to see thou returned to thyself herein!—come'st with me, mine love *[they get out of bed and dress themselves.]*—let us check in with the servants. *[Exeunt into the kitchen.]*

*[Joyously.]* Mine heavenly servant!—what cook'st thou presently that my nostrils become intoxicated so?

**Servant:** 'preciate thy kindness; my lady! I saw that the General hath returned, and thus unto the market I went, having come back with the ingredients for his loyalty's most favorite dish. Should be ready in 'bout fifteen, my Lords.

*The door suddenly flies open, and in run Zachary and Fredo, who, having observed their father's horse outside, and his sword on the mantle, visibly are engulfed with excitement.*

**Zachary:** Is't true, mother? Art father really returned to us? *[He is suddenly swept off of his feet and thrown into the air, the boy laughs.]* Father! It art verily thou! How I have missed thee! *[He hugs him, and is smothered in return with kisses.]*

**General Xavier:** How olden ye look'st to me, mine eldest son—how have I missed thee! And whomever might be this small creature presently, attached to mine foot like a metal shackle tight? Might this perhaps be a mystical creature which picked I up, somehow, in my ventures? *[He lifts up his other son (detaching him from his leg), and unloads unto him a bombardment of love.]* Thou art become much heavier, mine boy! How hast thou grown! *[Kisses him again.]*

**Lady Cynthia:** *[with her hand on her cheek.]* How happy tis' to see ye all as such—how I love thee; mine beautiful family!

**Fredo:** Father! Father! Can'st thou tell us again that story of when ye were young and hast destroyed that terrible Tyrant with uncle Raphael when was he yet king? *[Xavier begins to subconsciously feel anxious.]*

**Zachary:** Nay, Fredo! Father, can'st thou rather recount to us the tale of how thou hast defeated, single handedly and without a weapon, the eight-foot man whom all called the Giant? *[Xavier subconsciously feels better.]*

*The family spends altogether a wonderful evening. After eating, and the sun fully setting, Xavier, on the bedside of his children, keeps them up two hours past their sleep-times telling them of his many wondrous stories. He returns, afterwards to his wife, who, by that point is in bed, asleep awaiting her lover. He accompanies her there, and after entering under the covers, blows out the candle and goes to sleep with her hand in his.*

*The general is on the battlefield, surrounded by uncountable men whom he is slashing through. He suddenly sees the Tyrant Zales, eyeing him from a chaise behind a number of men. General Xavier, supernaturally makes his way through the men and delivers his blade unto the tyrant.*

**General Xavier:** Thou art killed, monster! *[Fear-stricken.]* What?—

How? *[The tyrant, from inside of his chest removes the sword with ease and tosses it away. The general, sensing someone behind him, turns around to behold an eight foot man, who's face, is that of the Tyrant, and suddenly he realizes; that all of the men on the battlefield wield his face too; that in this war of twenty-thousand men, therefore are present but only two; the general, and the Tyrant. Upon realizing this, he somehow manages to flee alive and return to the royal palace to consult his King.]*

*[Panicked.]* Mine noble King! Thou would'st not believe what hath just herein occurred to me...master? Art thou alright? Will'st thou turn around to face me, my King? *[He turns around, facing the General.]*

*[He gasps.]* What? How? *[The King's face is too that of the Tyrant, who draws from his side a short-sword and charges at him. He puts up his arms in defense, but the blow of the short-sword is suddenly intercepted by someone else's spear spear which makes a loud, clinging sound. He beholds the wielder of the spear, and it is his wife: He awakens.]*

**Lady Cynthia:** *[Very worried.]* My lord? What become'st of thee? Thou yell'st and moveth 'round in thy sleep—ye art scaring me, my love—thou clearly art not alright, what hath happened to thee during these days during which we together were lost? Privy tell me, mine King, I cry for thou! *[She begins crying.]*

**General Xavier:** *[Reassuringly.]* Twas' but a nightmare my sweet flower of life: worry'st thou not of me; I shall be fine. *[Caressing her face.]* Know'st thou how much I love thee, noble Queen o' mine? Thy worry of me worries me, and therefore the best thing that thou can'st do herein is to halt such worry altogether. Give me thy hand, my love *[Kisses it].* Song of my life; my luminous sun, how beauteous thy appear'st to me herefore in the moonlight.

Lady Cynthia: O' my King, how have I missed thee! *[They Kiss, and pull over them the covers.]*

*A little while later, the General lay anxiously awake cuddling his wife, who soundly and peacefully is sleeping. He lay there, gazing out of the window unto the moon unable to sleep. The moonlight dies and turns orange, it is dawn, and Cynthia, now alone in bed, is suddenly awakened by the sound of loud boot-steps.*

**Lady Cynthia:** *[Halfly sleeping.]* My love? Is't thee who in front of me is dressed in armor as if he were't about to go to war? What dost thou at this early hour of morning before even the sun hath half-way risen? *[General Xavier bends over her, laying in the early light of dawn, and kisses her on her forehead.]*

**General Xavier:** My queen, thou look'st absolutely incredible in this morning light—not even could Athena compare herself to thee in her right mind—but mine beautiful wife; hear me thus: for I am returned home but to kiss thee and the kids before I part to battle—*[Cut off by Cynthia.]*

**Lady Cynthia:** *[Panicked.]* Battle? What? Tell me everything, my Lord.

**General Xavier:** All which thou need'st know, my lady, is that this, and mark my words—shall be my last fight—thereafter shall I retire to the rest of mine life...to the children—to thee: but I must make haste, and part thee to thus summon my allies for battle, for justice: for the King hath denied me mine very own troops. I haven't much time. Adieu, my love. *[Exeunt, she follows him out of the room to the front door.]*

**Lady Cynthia:** *[Crying, yelling.]* Nay!—thou shan't leave me now — after all this time, nay! Thou shan't; thou shan't! Of what justice speak'st thou? For all which I feel is wronged! Nay, nay, nay!

ACTS THREE AND FOUR TO FOLLOW NEXT MONTH