

Fall 2012

# Rambunctious

The Jamesville-DeWitt High School  
Magazine for Literature and Art

# *A Letter from the Editors*

Dear Students and Staff of Jamesville-DeWitt High School,

The Rambunctious Staff is pleased to release the Fall 2012 issue of Rambunctious, composed of art, poetry, and short stories (prose) by the students of J-D High School. We're thrilled with each and every submission we've received, and we hope that this issue will inspire you to share more of your work with us in the future.

Because nobody could have done this alone, we'd like to thank our staff members for the hard work they put in to get the magazine together. For all of his advice and guidance on the first issue of the year, we'd also like to thank Mr. Phillips, our faculty adviser. A big thanks to the PTG and school board for all their support, as well as the English and Art departments. And last but not least, we'd like to thank both the readers of and contributors to the magazine; we'd be nowhere without your talent and dedication.

Please enjoy the Fall 2012 Rambunctious Magazine and be on the lookout for more issues throughout the year!

Sincerely,  
The Rambunctious Staff

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# Poetry

## *God Has Left Us*

By Charles Scheftic

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

We have more on our minds than worshipping gods.

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.”

Everything created is now “sacred”.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”

No one is here to hear us.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

Days are not known.

“Honour thy father and thy mother.”

It is hard to honour the diseased.

“Thou shalt not kill.”

We kill to survive.

“Thou shalt not steal.”

Theft is all we know.

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.”

Trust is nonexistent.

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s goods.”

There is no envy; if we want, we take.

God has left us.

## *Accidental Lies*

By Samantha Jaffe

Lies are not told on purpose  
They lay like a blanket over the truth  
Too cold and frightened to be exposed  
Truths are smothered  
Like a fire fighting for survival  
But often burn a silent death



Olivia Jasinski



*Someone Like You*

By Zach Liebmann

Every time I gaze  
Into those beautiful brown eyes  
My heart skips a beat  
And breath disappears.

Every time without fail  
I fall into a trance  
Falling deeper and deeper  
And I can't escape,  
But it's ok  
Because I could just look at them  
All day,  
Every day.

Maybe someday.

I want someone who I can  
Walk in the pouring rain with,  
Hold that won't let go  
Who will tell me when I'm being stupid,  
And who will tell me what they think.  
Someone who I can be honest with,  
And who won't judge me  
But will love me  
For all that I am.

Someone that jams out to music  
And sings every word to a song  
In the middle of a parking lot  
With everyone watching.  
Someone who is who they are  
Who doesn't put on a mask  
For anyone.

And for me  
That someone is you.

Who knows what could happen  
With you and I  
So why not give it a chance  
Ill fall for you, you fall for me  
And let me get lost  
In those breathtaking brown eyes.



Nicole Tanquary

***Foundations***

By Lizzy Burnam

my fortress  
begins to crumble  
boulders  
pebbles  
dust  
breathe them in  
choke on them  
I hope they linger  
in your throat  
sore for days  
tearing  
scratching  
scarring  
they won't  
go down  
easy  
try to force them  
they'll rip you  
from the inside  
savor the  
bitter aftertaste  
because it's all  
you'll get  
from me

Klaire Moller

***Green***

By Dori Bergman

A glistening tree frog  
hides beneath a blanket of leaves  
that hover over a mossy trunk  
in the depths of a forest.

It leaps lightly onto a neighboring branch,  
uncoils its tongue to catch a fly,  
then abruptly stops to listen  
to the evening jingles of its home.

Through its own eyes  
everything lies as peaceful  
as an untouched canvas,  
patiently waiting to be decorated.



*A Story of a Mixed Kid*

By Harrison Franklin

My teacher told me  
tell me your story  
as well your journey and how you got here  
tell me its worth and how it came to be

What a question I thought  
I'm not even sure of who I am  
one who has been taught  
built up like a blockade  
keeping in knowledge and treasure  
grand that not one could measure  
but I couldn't be wise or that intelligent to know  
Truthfully I don't even know how to grow

I think late at night listening to my music  
letting the synthesized beats vibrate in my brain  
orchestrating moves with rhythm and speed  
creating a story of a man on a journey  
but no that's a complicated way of thinking  
I take some more time to ponder what this story could be  
I sit and think about what really matters to me  
Family is really meaningful to me

I remember back to when I was naive  
happiness was key I had brothers to spend hours with  
playing soccer building forts and climbing trees  
But now there's no time for childish matters

I remember my parents more-so one to be exact  
my mother who took charge as a matter of fact  
she did what she could and instilled a religious foundation  
to strengthen relationships and start new ones on my own  
she did what was best the only way she could

*(Continued on pg. 5)*



Morgan Gunther

*A Story of a Mixed Kid*

*(Continued from pg. 4)*

My father a man of great wisdom  
absent but present in the act of our disobedience  
teaching discipline like roots to a tree providing the necessities  
but one thing he did give was  
an appreciation to his music  
Songs with smooth rhythms synth beats and sensational soul  
This now I thought was becoming a story

As years passed things went for the worst  
out of work in debt and still surviving at first  
Change was in for a chance to move  
start up and make new  
the process became long and the worst grew worse  
till every last piece we had dispersed  
we finally moved into a young's new territory  
an old man's past with another story

we began life and a new chapter  
with everything from the past dwindling away  
there was still one last piece that wasn't okay  
one day they split he's left me my mother said  
and there went that last piece  
now with each other the four of us hold on  
for the new ride in this journey  
that one must face

then I stood up and looked at my artwork  
I knew it was finished my craft has been made  
not to be diminished but here to stay  
here be the story the teacher asked of  
and I finished with not one day for a last



Holly Deng



*Safe Haven*

By Elizabeth DiGennaro

Sometimes.  
Deep into the twilight  
When the night is cruel and black  
And the stars are full of shadows,  
Reality fades away  
and I am one with the memory.  
Suddenly, I am there.

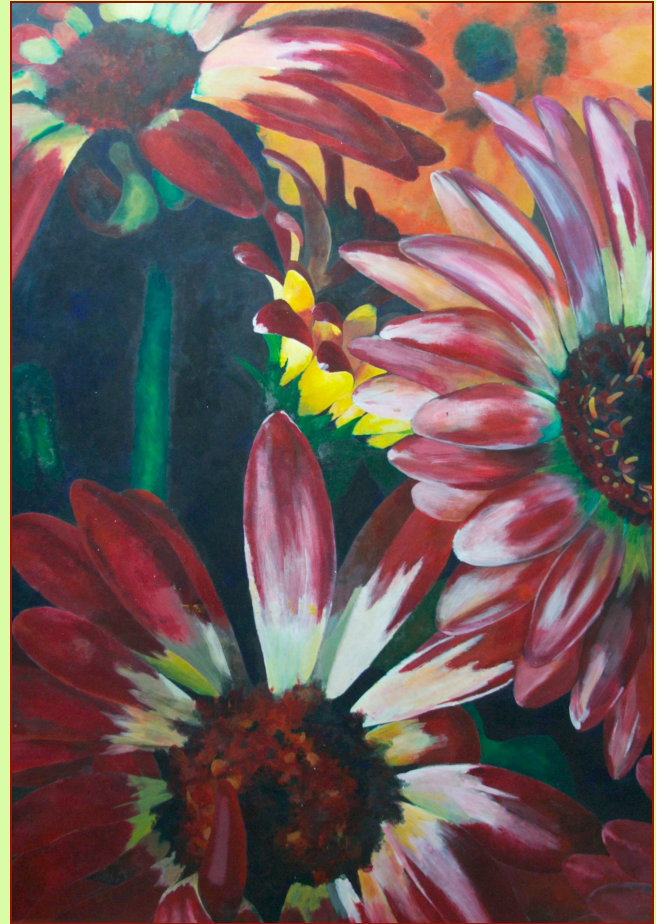
I have found my safe haven.

Somewhere under the sun,  
It protrudes from the soil,  
nestled in dreams  
and enclosed in sweet sound.  
It is life at its fullest,  
Love at its purest,  
Hope for those otherwise misunderstood.

Then, through the mist, their faces find me,  
and a thousand worlds away, the tears begin to fall.  
For those loved,  
for those lost,  
for those who did not believe.

Their voices are like fire,  
Full of flame, I burn.  
I am ablaze.  
I am free.

As the night grows old, the fantasy fades,  
and I must face the bittersweet moment of return.  
I am left with only a spark  
Until my safe haven and I are together once more.



Ali Emmel

*Fly*

By Manpreet Singh

Let go  
Fly  
Lift your wings and soar  
Far away  
You are now free  
To be whom you want  
Leave the sadness behind  
No more tears  
No need to cry  
As long as you go  
Far away  
There will be  
No absolute way  
Finding you would be impossible  
But life would go on  
And I would be stuck  
I wouldn't forget  
I'd need you to help me  
Take each breath  
Move each step  
I'd look for you forever  
And when time would be up  
I would be gone  
And your name would be the last  
on my lips.



Simranjit Grewal

*The Crow*

By Molly Sherwood

Wings – the power of possibility  
to soar  
Soar above fear, anguish, doubt, pain  
The light fluttering sensation identifies all freedom  
Yet, how ironic, a symbol of despair, hopelessness, death  
Be immune to death's kiss  
Looked upon with envy,  
For the world poses no threats  
No restraints on the simple fluttering  
Life an endless breeze  
Soaring high above the burdens of every man  
Displaying his place



Shannon Nesterowicz



# Prose

## *Her Autumn Day*

By Emily O'Brien

On the very first day of our rivalry, I found her roaming in my gardens, a woven basket entwined in the paleness of her thin fingers- fingers quite discontinuous with the stealthy, robust hands groping the toils of my labor and placing them contentedly in the endless abyss of that woven basket. Her eyes remained equally exploitative as her hands, sweeping over the aisles and aisles of shrubs that had previously gone unnoticed to her curiosity, but, coupled with the sensory of touch, reached such an intensity that she could not restrain herself to her own lands.

On the first day of our rivalry, I watched her, passing unnoticed, except for that subconscious inkling relevant to the paranoia of humanity, which sub-sequentially caused her to turn round a few degrees, and aim her gaze towards the glass panes of the window from which I obtained my vantage-point. Here, the light of the autumn afternoon worked in my favor, being familiar with my toils, and provided the necessary shadow to secure me from her roving pupils.

I chose to remain in place.

On the second day of this finite competition, she returned once more, this time her active hands were now preoccupied with two carry-ons: one was the criminal basket of the previous afternoon, only emptied of her thievery and prepared to repeat the events of yesterday. The other was much more incriminating: a box-like contraption in which there existed no type of architecture to provide me with the knowledge of its contents. Disgustingly fascinated, I waited for her to wade her way through the depths of my gardens, until she found herself once again in the place she had started. Satisfied, she placed the box of confined mystery on the ground beneath my berry bush, and merrily carried her basket down the short dirt path that led to her lodgings. With a rush that astonished even my own cynical nature, I maneuvered myself from the familiarity of my window perch, and waded continuously deeper into the garden until I stood erect over her box. For a moment, I stood there regarding it with the common form of horror and curiosity that possesses even the best of our feeble minds: this apparatus was active.

On the second day of this finite competition, I crouched to the level of the present my neighbor had so kindly left me. Opening it by untying the simplistic string wrapped around it, the sole item keeping the three-dimensional sides together as one. To my utmost shock, a creature of unknown origin uncoiled itself, its skin as taugth and smooth as a corrupt form of porcelain. For one horrifying moment, its fangs were poised at the base of my ankle, and completely struck with fear, I made no movement: instead, I fixated my



glance on its repulsive body and the smoothness with which it conducted its being. In this event, an understanding existed that I cannot attempt to convey in the most complex of words, for it will never capture the weight of this circumstance in its entirety. Instead, the creature slithered away to conceal itself, like so many of us wish we could, in the safety of the vegetation, content with the mutual agreement achieved.

On the second day of this finite competition, she became our enemy.

On the third day of my blossoming resentment, I returned the favor. Dressing in my whitest of gowns, and pulling my hair away from my face, I made my presence painfully aware to anyone I encountered. I followed, with the same monotony, the dirt path that led to her lodgings. At the time of my arrival, she was sitting on a small, wooden stool on the porch of her entrance. I knew upon what her gaze was fixed.

"Lilith, my dearest neighbor," she commented quietly. I noticed the innocence of her countenance, the susceptibility of her posture, and the nativity of her rosebud cheeks and dark, billowing hair. Deceptions, deceptions all of it! "You have a most extraordinary garden, Lilith. What is it that you use to grow such vibrant life? Ah, the daisies, and the orchids, the consistency of color! How does it go so unnoticed?"

"I have brought you a gift," I replied, curtly.

She had not the courtesy to turn her head, or move any fixture of her body. Instead she blinked twice, as if in acknowledgement, and then continued to pervade the sentiments that I found so aggravating.

"And the berries. The berries are truly divine, Lilith. How is it that you are always inside?"

"A gift, for you."

"For me?"

"For you, good neighbor."

"How lovely," she murmured. She was now rocking gently upon that ridiculous stool. One could tell from her motion that she found it to be of the most exceptional craftsmanship, when in reality it was an ugly little thing: I have owned pots more creatively arranged.

I bent over so that my hair brushed against the peg of her beloved seat, and placed the present beside her: like the one she had graciously left me, it was an active thing, with the same three-dimensional steel sides and feeble string to tie it all together. The only difference was that I was not so unkind as to conceal its contents from any onlooker. No, instead, there were gaps between every few columns of metal, providing a perfect view of the beautiful, winged creature that flitted around within.

It was retribution.

At this point, being unaccustomed with the act of revenge, or even unfamiliar with the artificial communion, I did not await any sign of thanks.

On the fourth day, she, being so dissatisfied with her own gift, ventured to the front of my house to deliver my own. I expected she was looking to surprise me, as she was dressed in an unconditional black, concealing her even further from the color of my garden.

"Lilith," she said brightly, as she climbed the steps of my porch. That basket was swinging in the crook of her left arm.

I stood in the center of my doorway, obtrusively blocking her path inside. She smiled, as if she was keen to my motives, and began to feign an air of exhaustion.

"Lilith, good neighbor," she struggled. She pulled down her hood, and continued, "I have walked quite a distance today, and it looks like rain, does it not? Perhaps we should talk inside."

"There is nothing fearful about rain," I answered. I was not prepared to say much else to her, especially in the presence of her inanimate criminal.

On the fourth day, she ignored my inattentiveness, and handed me her basket, *that* basket. What it was filled with, I will never forget, because in all of my gardens I could never find a color or a texture that quite matched its own. All in all, they were interesting little creatures, with stems shorter than the breadth of my fingernail, and rounded, tight skin the color of the inside of the sun. They held a certain allure, though, like that of a fire; beautiful, full of warmth, but deceiving. I asked her if she had ever tasted one. Smiling, she said no, she had only come across them a few hours ago. She believed that they would be more to my taste. I replied that I ate nothing that had never been tasted before, and hurriedly handed her the offensive basket.

On this fourth day, after she had left, it began to rain. To pour, would more accurately describe the event. So heavy was this downfall, that my own soul became tired and weary, and seeking something else to destroy other than myself, I grabbed the basket she had left quite annoyingly on the back of my steps, and threw it with the majority of my strength out the front door. Almost instantly, my chest began to tighten, my eyes watered to their brims, and I felt as if I would collapse from the lack of weight. Whatever was holding me to this earth was no longer. I denied myself the cause of this ailment for quite some time, suffering in silence until the pain overtook my countenance, and with a loss of pride, I wandered into the torrents of rain myself, crawling against the muddied ground until my hand reached its prize: a single, red fruit that I had previously rid myself of. Its physique went unharmed by its disastrous surroundings. Gasping in pure relief, I began to straighten myself out, but in the process, my eyes caught a sickly, green vegetation inching its way up the trees of oak I had planted at the forefront of my garden- the barriers between my land and hers- the guardians of everything pure. In a rage, I dug my nails into this intruder, attempting to pull its life-sucking form from the bark of my beloved tree, but for every inch that I pulled, a new inch grew beneath.

Across the path, I saw her, in this rain as I was, sitting on that stool, with her eyes fixed on my garden: fixed on this fungus. In her mind, it was already hers.

On the fourth night of my hatred, I stormed back to my home, placing the apple safely outside, under the leaves of the bushes that ended my garden. With a ferocity I did not recognize as my own, and heaving in the oxygen surrounding me, I began to start a fire. I did not start this fire in the loneliness of its place, instead, it began on the ground of my wooden floor, spreading to the straw roof of my house so quickly that the rain itself could not stop this monstrous creation. It was not long until it had spread, devouring the toils of my labor, the berries, the orchids, and the daisies, the blues and the whites alike with the starvation of my disdain. I watched this event unfold. In truth, I felt as if its flames succeeded in the mere span of seconds, but in reality I knew this to be untrue: hours passed, and the rain gradually ceased, until this destruction reached the forefront of my gardens.

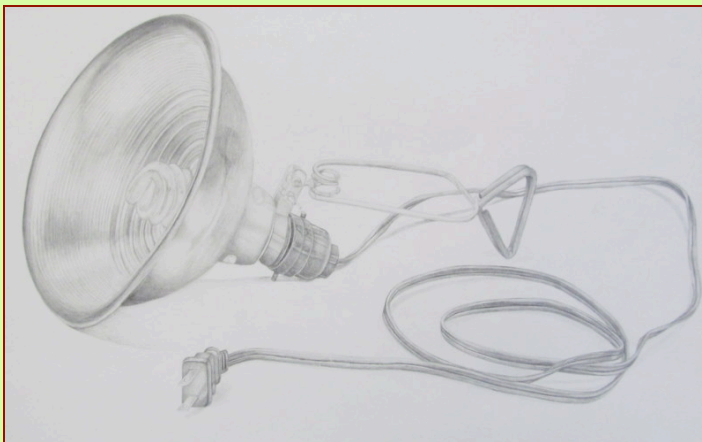
On the fourth night of this insane hatred, I circled the remnants of my life, the alluring red plant tucked into the pocket of my cloak. I noticed that the fungus-ridden trees were the only things to have survived my destruction, the flames themselves too cautious to devour something that innately destroyed life itself. Eyeing these trees, I stooped to the center of what had been, where the soil was still fertilized, and I produced a knife to slice open the present she had so kindly left me. The miniature, carriers of life inside shone with a certain intelligence, so much so that I found it somewhat difficult to dig up the ground and place them beneath the earth. I poured a cup of water upon this spot, and patted the soil with my own hands, knowing that I would not be there to heed its result.

Glancing down that insipid dirt path, I did not see my dear neighbor Evelyn.

I balanced that basket in the crook of my right arm, and placed the shell of that oh-so-rare plant on top of its seeds, which were to be beneath the earth until they blossomed themselves.

To leave caused me no pain or resentment. There would one day stand a tree where my life had been.

What a lovely beginning to an end.



S. Lee

## *Mystery Out of the Mist*

By Stela Janku

Across a vast area of utter destruction and under a sky so gray and gloomy one could barely see anything, there stood a group of men, all dressed in long, black coats that went to their knees and wearing black hats. They were observing a scene of destruction in front of them so great and so inhumane like nothing the world had ever seen.

Everywhere around them mutilated bodies lay and corpses with missing limbs and horrified expressions that they must have worn before death stole them away. It was impossible to be in that place and not feel sick to your stomach or not question the goodness of mankind.

There was one particular man, slighter in build than the other ones, who was looking around with a horrified expression. The other men, however, were very analytical. Some even had happy grins on their faces, happy that their experiment had been successful. At that moment, one would truly come up with a negative answer about the good that resides in humans. No one would have ever thought that the pale, slight man, who looked like he was going to faint, was actually the leader and the one who had given the order that had started the slaughtering of thousands of people. He stood separate from the others, who looked like they were trying to determine the effects of their new weapon of destruction afterwards.

That man was General LaMay.

Then out of nowhere, an old woman with a small child of about four holding her hand were walking in their direction. They appeared out of the black mist like they were part of the other worlds: ghosts coming to seek their revenge. The small child was holding a dirty, old doll that had no head.

But no, they were very much alive, but one can't say in good condition. The child was bleeding so badly from her neck. You could see the blood pouring down and straining further her dirty clothes. It was amazing how she could still walk even though she was losing blood like that. Yet, the girl was not crying. She was only looking down and walking.

The old woman had an expression on her face like she couldn't see anymore what was in front of her. She wouldn't see. She only stared straight ahead and yanked the little girl by the hand. Her face showed no expression even when the men were close enough to be seen. She just kept limping forward as it was all she could do. The entire left side of her face was burned as was her neck and shoulders. She was a frightful sight to see.

Every man turned around and stared at the old, odd lady. They were shocked that there would even be civilians here. That took them by surprise, but after they recovered themselves, some of them went to stop her approach. The men didn't know how to deal with her, whether to be rough or gentle, or what to even say. They never intended for anyone to have survived. The men were left to puzzle over what she had said.



One of the soldiers moved forward to stop her. "Hmm, what are you doing here, ma'am? You know you are in a restricted area. You are not supposed to be here. It's dangerous." The soldier said in a loud, monotone soldier-like voice, despite the fact that he was confused by the actions of the old lady. His body was hovering over the starved, frail body of the woman.

The old woman did not respond. She just kept walking with the soldier right on her heel. The others followed behind, their faces showing the shock.

The old woman appeared to be unaware that there were people around her. She simply tried to continue her path, but the officer now having enough of her odd behavior, put himself in front of her, blocking her path holding her back.

General LaMay saw this and decided that he would try to speak to her rather than the rough soldier. Seeing all the destruction that his invention had created, he was feeling uneasy about hurting someone today.

"Are you looking for something, ma'am?"

Again the woman did not respond.

The commander now seeing closely how much the woman was bleeding from the left side of her face put his hand on her shoulder and asked in a concerned voice. "Are you feeling alright?" For a second he forgot that she was supposed to be the "enemy."

At that moment something snapped inside the old woman and brought her back to reality because she was suddenly very focused, turned her head very slowly to face the man who had given the order to destroy everything that she held most dear. "Am. I. Alright?" The old woman said in a voice that was so raspy that it appeared poisonous. It seemed like she had breathed so much smoke that her voice was forever ravished in a brutal way along with the rest of her. She pronounced each word clearly as if to assure herself that what she heard had been actually said. She stared at the general with eyes of another world, half-dead, half alive. "Do you think I would be ok after having every single member of my family, friends, neighbors, city perished thanks to you? My life ended, and that was decided over tea and biscuits thousands of miles away from people who wouldn't give a second thought about everyone else. Do you think I am ok, sir?"

The men didn't know what to say. The General wished he had never come to this place, never gotten involved in this mess of a war, never having been born.

The old woman started to walk again and this time no one stopped her.

The little girl who everyone had ignored completely suddenly yanked her hand off the old woman's and ran back and stood in front of the general.

General LaMay looked down at the child who was staring up at him. The eyes of the child were coal black. There was no light in them. They appeared to be infinite. One could get lost in her deep, bottomless eyes forever.

"Someday you will pay for everything you did. Everything that comes around, goes around."

Then the little girl ran back and disappeared into the thick, dark gray mist.



Brian Cieplicki

## *Lieu Tap Terra*

By Tom Hays

Month: 7      Week: 2      Day: 5      Time: 20:08:15

Each day on Lieu Tap Terra, I wake up from the same dream, the same nightmare that terrorizes my conscience. I repeatedly feel the same wall of fire engulfing the tenements, and hear the same cries and shrieks of agony in my mind. I see members of the Shadow League setting fire to the factories and markets. I see men, women, and children racing through the streets like bulls on rampage, while Shadow members fight off police drones in the streets. And in every dream, I think I see my boy Gabe, but as soon as I try to focus in on his face, I wake up with my heart pounding and cold perspiration draped over my forehead. These events are yet to happen, but I can't help but feel like they will happen.

Each day the tension between the Shadow League and the 1% worsens. Protesters are becoming more violent and the police units are becoming harsher. Grölnå, the corrupt capital, is passing more laws to ensure their safety and make sure that the uprising is suppressed. Tighter curfews are being enforced and capital punishments are becoming increasingly severe. As far as the politicians in Grölnå are concerned, whatever happens to the people of Lieu Tap Terra doesn't matter as long as they're still collecting their heavy checks from the 1%.

Looking back 7 months, it is truly amazing how far I have come. I've learned that the Shadow League is much more complex than I had previously expected. Part of the reason they're so effective is because they have mastered the art of concealing identity and minimizing attention. They have no central meeting location and no single leader, yet they function like clockwork. They go by nicknames and aliases, and conceal their faces to prevent authorities from catching on to them. After my first five months of infiltrating the league, I was able to gain enough trust to reach the leaders of the organization. Since then, I have learned that one of their main leaders goes by the alias "The Cobra". Over the past few weeks I've learned how he got that name – it's all in his character. He seems calm, yet confident as he walks among other league members, but when it comes to arguments, he has quite the temper. He will stand back for a while and wait for issues to settle, but when they don't, he will attack it quickly and fiercely without mercy. Once, I saw him get into an argument with a member about his ability to lead the league. The Cobra took it well at first, but once he had enough and heard something that upset him, he attacked the other member with a red hot anger. He bashed his brains against a stone wall and ripped his eyes out with his bare hands. After he was clearly dead, The Cobra continued to desecrate the lifeless body, ripping it to shreds beyond recognition. No one dares to question the Cobra, and no one will. As I looked at the defiled carcass of the man on the floor, I couldn't help but worry if my identity would remain safe or if they would ever learn about my informative leaks to the press.



The protection of my identity is vital to my success and my safety. If they were ever to discover who I am, my family would be in jeopardy and all of our lives would be on the line. It is hard for me to stay on this foreign planet for months at a time while my family is back home on Earth enjoying fresh air and the green grass that covers the plains. I long to return home, but my work is yet to be finished. I couldn't bring pictures from home to Lieu Tap Tappa, for fear of my cover being blown, but I could take the watch my wife bought me for our tenth anniversary. It reminds me of her lasting love and it counts each painful minute that we are away.

The date of the uprising is still yet to be determined. I've heard rumors of it being sometime within the next 2 to 3 months, but no one knows for sure. That's the power of the Shadow League: no one can identify them, no one knows what's going to happen, where it's going to happen, or when, but we all know that it *will* happen. Ambiguity is their strength and it's why they're called the Shadow League.

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Katherine Soffietti





Jackie Halpin

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***The Countdown***

By Urmi Roy

A waiter stood in the corner of the restaurant, hidden behind a large, plastic tree. His black-and-white clothed body was tensed with anticipation as he leaned closer and closer into the leaves, his breathing coming in short puffs as he strained to listen to a conversation that was happening several meters away.

“Oh, truly, Anne, I insist that you come with me!” a woman wearing a rose-colored dress was saying across the table to her friend. “Alessandro D’Amore is absolutely sensational! And he is here, performing *here*, tonight! I can’t imagine how fabulous he will be as Hamlet!” She gave a high-pitched, dreamy sigh. “I saw him in *Les Miserables*— oh my, he gave me these splendid chills running down my back! Listen, Annie, I *know* you have nothing to do at eight, so—”

“Frank will be back before eight,” Anne replied somewhat exasperatedly. “He doesn’t want me out so late.”

“Frank?” the woman in the rose-colored dress scoffed. “He has become *so* unpleasant lately. Who does he think he is, your father?”

“But the *children*, Clarissa,” Anne continued firmly. “They cannot be without me for such a long time.”

"It's only two hours, Annie." The woman in the rose-colored dress— Clarissa, the waiter assumed her name was— winked across the table. "I don't particularly care what Frankie wants of you. You're a woman! It is women's nature to get all dolled up and go to the theater!"

"Clarissa—"

"And what's more," Clarissa interjected, "Alessandro's handsomer than your husband by a long-shot!"

Behind the tree, the waiter clamped his hand over his mouth. His body shook with silent laughter.

"Oh, Clarissa, you're delusional." Anne shook her head, smiling slightly. "I don't know. If he is as good as you say he is..."

"Oh, please, Anne? *Please?*" her friend begged, and hiding behind the tree, the waiter bit his lip.

There was a moment of tense silence, then Anne finally relented. "Oh, very well. I'll go, but I'll have to find a nanny first."

The waiter nearly toppled over the tree in his delight. With a grin stretched on his face, he reached inside his waistcoat and pulled out his pocket watch. *Perfect! I have five minutes!* he thought. *That should be more than enough.* Tucking the watch back into his coat, he ducked out from out under the foliage and strode elegantly toward Clarissa and Anne's table. Like any other server, he bowed politely and said, "Good evening, Mesdames. Would you like a refill of that champagne?"

Clarissa glanced up at him briefly, and waved her hand. "We're fine, thank you."

The waiter cleared his throat. "I was clearing the table over there, and I couldn't help but overhear your conversation about Alessandro D'Amore. He is quite the actor, is he not?"

It was at this that Clarissa looked up. She seemed initially surprised, but then responded enthusiastically. "Oh, yes! He's brilliant! I'd love to get an autograph from him tonight, but I'm pretty sure I won't be able to catch him. He disappears after every show—oh, isn't that perfectly infuriating? No one knows where he lives, and even with all my connections, I, Miss Clarissa T. Buxton, cannot even lay my hands on his manager's telephone number!

*That would be because he doesn't have a manager, sweetheart.*

The waiter pursed his lips downward into a sympathetic frown. "I'm sorry to hear that."

"Wait." Clarissa froze and stared at the waiter, her eyes lingering uncertainly on his face. "Have I seen you somewhere?"

His mouth turned up, smiling mechanically. "I don't think so, Madam. I'm just a waiter."

"But I swear you look *exactly* like— but that can't be possible!" She furrowed her brows. "What is your name, boy?"

"Adrien," he replied, his voice as smooth as silk.

*Of course she will buy it. After all, do I look anything more than a humble waiter?*

"Adrien?" Clarissa shook her head. "I'm sorry, I thought you resembled..." She shook her head again. Then she shrugged and threw a napkin on her empty plate. "I'm finished, so to the theater, Anne. If we don't get there before they introduce the characters, I shall be desolate!

"I will get your coats," the waiter said, bowing. He hurried off to the coat rack.

Once the women had gone, Adrien took a deep breath and retired to the staff-only lounge. Meeting those two lovely ladies had been like a fresh air! It had been such a coincidence, he thought with a chuckle, that they had been talking of Alessandro in *this* restaurant, right when it had been *his* shift. Coincidence, indeed. Then he stiffened, as if suddenly remembering something incredibly important. He plunged his hand inside his waistcoat, pulling out the golden pocket watch. One look at it, and his jaw dropped in dismay.

*I should've been gone minutes ago!*

He ran out of the lounge and into the storage room. It was where the cook kept the packaged pasta and lard and other things, but it was also where Adrien hid his street clothes. In a frantic hurry, he extracted a dirty bundle of fabric from behind a container of peaches, and began ripping off his fancy waistcoat and white button-down shirt. But then he paused. It was at that moment that he had heard voices, and these weren't voices from the hallway. They were from the adjoining room. Frowning a bit, Adrien poked his head out of the storage room and looked sideways at the next door down the corridor. It was the restaurant manager's office.

*That's strange, he thought. Mario hardly ever has visitors.*

"The boy with dark hair! Where is he? You're tellin' me you don't know him?" a man shouted from inside the room. Adrien froze in the act of putting his fedora on. A deep thread of remembrance twanged in his heart.

*It can't be him.*

Mario's voice was shrill and panicky. "T-There are many boys with dark hair, sir! Perhaps some de—"

"Russo, his name is Russo!" the man yelled hoarsely. There was a *bang* of something crashing into the floor. "Adrien Russo!"

*It really is him, Adrian thought, panic seizing him. He crept up to the door against his better will. He had to listen. He had to know what was going on.*

"Adrien Russo! Son of Antonio Russo, the man who looted the Brotherhood! I took care of Tony ten years back—but the boy still lives! I don't want filth like that breathing on my streets!"

Adrien drew back, clutching his mouth. They were *still* after his blood? Oh, good Lord.

"Yes, there is a boy with that name." the restaurant manager squeaked nervously. "He's always in a great hurry to leave every night. I don't know if he's Tony's son, though!"

"Every night?" the other man said quickly. "Does he go to the theater?"

Adrien couldn't believe his ears. *How does he know about the theater?*

"Tell me, man, does he go to the theater?"

"I don't kn— *No, don't point that thing at me! I'll go find him! He's probably still here!*"

The door flew open and Mario stumbled out. Seeing Adrien, he cried out in shock. "Y-You!"

"Yes, it's me. Didn't you recognize old Tony's son when you hired him?" Adrien's voice was effortlessly calm. A giant of a man had walked into the hallway. He had coarse facial features and there was a furious, red scar running down the side of his face, from the corner of

his eyebrow to the bottom of his chin. He held a metal pipe in one hand. Adrien at him stared coolly. “Long time no see, Stangone.”

“Likewise, Russo.” The gangster gave him a slow, diabolical smile. “Going to the theater tonight?”

There was a pause and the two men’s gazes met, and then Adrien ran for his life.

The back door was the closest, so he slammed into it and stumbled into a dark alleyway. *Drat. It’s a dead end.*

“Game’s up, Russo,” Stangone sneered in a low voice. He twirled the metal pole like a baton. Taking his chances, Adrien ducked and tried to swerve past him, but the mobster grabbed him by the collar, dragging him back. “No you don’t, boy. You’re dead.”

“You won’t get me!” Adrien spat, grappling with Stangone’s arm. It was like wrestling with a tree trunk.

“Give up, Russo. *No one* stays alive if the Brotherhood targets them!”

With all his strength, Adrien rammed his fist into Stangone’s abdomen. Stangone doubled back, releasing him. Adrien flew back, toward the entrance of the alleyway. “I’m flattered, actually. I’d never have thought that your little Mafioso gang—oops, I mean, the *Brotherhood*, still remembered me—oh, and I didn’t even notice that you brought a metal pipe! How lovely!”

“Quit acting,” Stangone snarled.

Adrien plastered a grin on his face, and for a moment he felt rather deranged. “Don’t hold it against me. Acting is what I do best— after running away from thugs like you, that is. Ever heard of Alessandro D’Amore, the newfound theater virtuoso? Of course you have, or you couldn’t have traced me back to Adrien the serving boy. As a matter of fact, how *did* you find me out? Oh, let me guess, the newspaper? Yes, I should not have let them publish my picture—that was frankly careless of me. But then again, I didn’t know that you mobsters got the paper, I didn’t even know you people could *read*—”

“You’re a copy of your dear pops —taunting everything left, right, and center.” Stangone snorted, tossing the pipe from hand to hand. “He didn’t last long.”

Adrien responded with a cold smile. “I pride myself on any similarity with my father, thank you very much. He didn’t want to work for your godforsaken gang anymore, Stangone. Because you hoods chased me and my ma and threatened to kill us.” Adrien stopped, because his voice was becoming thick. “H-He wanted to take us and leave, but you didn’t let him go!”

“Don’t kid yourself. Old Tony was worse than all of us put together. He wanted to scam ‘cause the coppers were after him— but the Brotherhood couldn’t have that, could they?” Stangone laughed inhumanly and lashed out with the pipe sideways and it connected with Adrien’s elbow. He fell to the ground with a shout, clutching his forearm.

Stangone loomed over him, raising the pipe. His voice was filled with relish. “This is where I say goodbye, Russo.”

*Not yet!* Adrien thought through the pain hazing his mind. He suddenly lashed out a foot and kicked the mobster right behind the knee. The man stumbled backward for a moment,

giving Adrien time to jump and deliver a swift chop to the nerve cluster at the back of his neck. Stangone dropped like dead-weight to the alley floor. With his good hand, Adrien undid his belt and bound Stangone's feet and arms behind his back.

"You won't be able to move your limbs for the next couple of hours," Adrien told him grimly. It had been a delicate hit, the one to the back of the neck. If he had stuck too hard, he could've broken the man's neck.

Stangone moved his jaw up and down slowly, his words coming out slightly slurred. "I knew you didn't have the guts to kill me."

"I don't need to," Adrien said quietly. "I'm going to leave you nice and packaged for the coppers."

There was no point in killing Stangone. The Brotherhood would come looking for him anyway.

Stangone spat on to the ground. "They know where you'll be. They'll find you."

"I know."

*I'll be on the stage as Hamlet.*

"You can run." Stangone's voice was shrewd. "Run now, while you can."

Adrien turned away. A thick lump had appeared in his throat. "But I won't."

*I can't ruin the show.*

"You're a stupid kid."

"I know." Adrien checked his pocket watch. *Only thirty minutes left.* "Goodbye, Stangone."

Adrien entered through the back entrance of the theater and navigated through the costume racks until he came to his dressing room. It was labeled 'Alessandro D'Amore' in golden lettering. It was with some difficulty that he managed to put his costume on, because his left arm hung at his side at an awkward angle.

"Alessandro, you son of a gun!" A young man walked into the room, similarly dressed in a tunic and tights. He played Horatio, Hamlet's closest companion. He clapped his shoulder, and Adrien winced horribly as pain shot down his arm. "Where in the world were you? You do realize that we have only ten minutes before— Hey! What happened to your arm? Did you get in a fight?"

"No," Adrien said in strained voice. "Just got a little mangled."

"Christ! A little mangled? It looks broken..." Tentatively, the young man reached out and touched his forearm. Adrien flinched in pain. "There's no way you can perform."

"Of course I can still perform!" he snapped. "It's just sprained. I tripped and fell on it by accident." With his good hand, he dug around in the pocket of his bomber jacket and pulled out a piece of paper. "Want to do me a favor? Deliver this to Miss Clarissa T. Buxton after the show."

The young man arched his eyebrow. "And who's Miss Clarissa T. Buxton?"

"A diehard fan of Alessandro D'Amore's." Adrien smiled weakly. "Watch out, she might maul you."



"You're insane, man. You talk about Alessandro D'Amore as if he's another character you're playing." The young man paused. "That's not your real name, is it?"

"No." And as he said it, world-weariness swept into his bones. "You can call me Adrien."

Horatio looked thoroughly taken back. "That's...your name?"

"Yeah. Pretty boring compare to 'Alessandro', isn't it? I have no need to keep my identity hidden anymore. Just tell me one thing. If something happens to me, can you take over tonight?"

"Don't be ridiculous! What'll happen to you?"

Adrien pulled out the golden pocket watch and examined it. His expression tightened. *The show starts in five minutes. I have only five minutes of being Adrien Russo left.*

"Adrien?"

He turned to the man. "Will you promise me something, Horatio? Promise me that you won't let the show fail?"

"Of course I won't!" the man spluttered. "Don't worry, man. I got your back no matter what happens."

In his mind, Adrien spoke some of Hamlet's last lines.

*Horatio, I am dead;*

*Thou liv'st; report me and my cause aright,*

*To the unsatisfied.*

"Thank you," Adrien breathed. He clutched the pocket watch close to his heart. *One minute left.* "I don't know how tonight will play out, but no matter what happens, the show must go on."

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