

Writing & Art Contest Winners, Summer 2008

Short Story winner

Sean

Poetry winner

Stephanie

Short Story Runner ups:

Danielle & Madeleine

Poetry Runner up

Makayla

Art Contest Winner

Maya

“The Legend of Tom Tim Tatallin”

By Sean, age 15

It was the beginning of autumn, and the forest was filled with vibrant colors of yellow and red. The sun was rising and one could see the steam come off the ground from the morning’s dew. Under a giant oak tree stood a man with a long white beard wearing tattered clothes. His yellow shirt was frayed and dirty. The velvet blue vest was stained and discolored and on his head was a musty, red, steeple hat with a feather in it. This man was Tom Tim Tatallin. He was just finishing his breakfast, which consisted of fruit he gathered the previous day, and mounted his steed, a beautiful brown horse named Bernard.

Tom rode Bernard down a dirt road gazing at the scenery when suddenly a large group of peasants wielding a variety of makeshift weapons tumbled out of the bushes along the side of the road.

“What is this? I am but a humble traveler and mean you no harm,” said Tom calmly.

“Do you?” asked one of the peasants, “You dress in fine clothes. All who wear such fine trappings are aiding our enemy.”

“You call these fine clothes? They are but the trappings of an unsuccessful merchant,” responded Tom with a chuckle.

“Does it matter?” remarked the peasant annoyed. “Take him to the camp.”

Tom did not resist capture but rather went willingly. The peasants took Tom down a narrow dirt trail to an encampment nestled in the woods. There were a few large buildings but it was mostly makeshift tents and huts scattered throughout the encampment. The peasant that arrested Tom led him to one of the larger structures in the center of the encampment. Inside, there was a large redheaded man, cloaked in green, looking down at a map surrounded by other men. The peasant was taking Tom to him.

“Excuse me, Fredrick, I found this man spying on us,” said the peasant pompously.

The man looked up and was surprised to see Tom.

“Tom? Tom Tim Tatallin? Is that you?” asked Fredrick excitedly. “I haven’t seen you since... since the battle of Port Gallyway!”

“What?” said the peasant dumfounded.

The two men embraced. Then Fredrick turned to the peasant and said, “John, this is the man who defeated the Traza Raiders of the North, during the war.”

“That’s impossible! That war was twenty years ago!” responded John.

Fredrick ignored John’s comment and said, “Why did you arrest him?”

“Well you told me...” started John defensively.

“It isn’t a problem,” said Tom modestly, “I would have done the same thing and follow my orders.”

Tom looked around then said, “You have quite the set up here.”

“We are preparing to fend off Lord Alz-ghoul,” replied Fredrick grimly.

“Lord Alz-ghoul?” said Tom softly, “the same one that brought the Traza’s in the war?”

“No, it’s his son, but the alliance remains the same.”

“What sort of defenses does he have?” asked Tom as if he was a military officer at war once more.

“Lord Alz-ghoul’s city is located on a hill not far from here over the bridge,” said Fredrick. “Inside he has hundreds of garrisons including some of our old Traza friends. An open-field battle is not an option as they our professional soldiers while we are no more than a gathering of men with sticks.

Tom gazed at the map, pondering how to approach the situation then said, “What if we do”

The next morning Tom saddled up Bernard. Fredrick and John were with him.

“Will your plan work?” asked Fredrick.

“The Traza haven’t seen me since the war, and I have changed enough since then that they won’t recognize their old faceless nightmare.”

“Just be ready with a signal,” said John skeptically.

“Don’t you worry,” responded Tom, “Just be ready when it’s sent.”

John just rolled his eyes.

Tom kicked Bernard and ran into the wilderness. When Tom reached Lord Alz-ghoul’s city he saw giant gray brick walls stretching high into the sky. The top of these massive walls were dotted with the shiny silver armor of the sentries who could see miles in every direction, except into the dense forest. When Tom entered the threshold of the city, he was greeted by grimy worn out buildings with an equally as appealing mood. Tom rode toward Alz-ghoul’s manor and entered.

Tom was brought to Alz-ghoul’s audience chamber. Sitting there pompously on his throne was a man with skin as pale as a snake, and black oily hair. It was Lord Alz-ghoul, and he was surrounded by the Traza. The Traza were cloaked head to toe in black hiding their faces. Rumors run wild wherever they go as to what is beneath their veils. Tom knew that these rumors were entirely false and most were invented by the Traza themselves but that did not make them any less dangerous.

“Who dare disturbs me,” said Lord Alz-ghoul in a low gravelly voice.

“I am but a lowly traveler milord,” stated Tom.

“Do you think we care!” hissed a Traza.

Tom ignored him and continued, “Milord, I have been held captive for days by an army deep in the woods plotting against you.”

“What!” exclaimed Alz-ghoul. “Please do tell.”

So Tom told Lord Alz-ghoul and the Traza an elaborate tale about this well trained army with legions of men waiting for the perfect time to strike and how Tom escaped his captors.

“I will prepare my forces at once!” exclaimed Lord Alz-ghoul. “We will attack tonight when they are unprepared. If what you say is true then this will be my greatest victory.”

Then he turned to Tom and said in a condescending voice, “You shall stay here as a little... reward.”

“Oh, milord, you are too kind,” said Tom graciously.

That night Lord Alz-ghoul gathered all his men including Traza and left, leaving behind only a small century force to hold the city. Tom crept out of the manor with a torch. He climbed up a wall facing the forest and waved it twice.

Meanwhile at the edge of the forest, Fredrick waited near the bridge with the makeshift army and saw Tom's signal.

"Well," said Fredrick, "here they come."

A few hours passed before they heard the pounding of hooves on the earth and across the wooden bridge. Lord Alz-ghoul's army had arrived and disappeared as quickly as they came. Fredrick and his army went across the bridge and then burned it. Then they headed for the city and captured it, with little resistance.

When Alz-ghoul arrived at the encampment, he was greeted with dying fires and an empty encampment. He turned his army around to return but when he reached the river and found no bridge he was flung into a fit.

"How dare they do this to me?" Alz-ghoul cried!

He turned to address his army and said, "They mock us by luring us out here and burning my bridge, but we will have the last laugh and ford the river."

The Traza turned around to leave Alz-ghoul. Alz-ghoul looked shocked and shouted, "Where are you going! You can't abandon me!"

One of the Traza turned to face Lord Alz-ghoul and hissed, "We are not your slaves, nor do you own us. We go, for you have already lost."

Lord Alz-ghoul cursed at them till the last Traza left. Then Lord Alz-ghoul tried to ford the river, but the river was too deep and the current too strong. Lord Alz-ghoul and his army were dragged and the weight of their armor brought them to the bottom where they drown.

The next day there was a grand celebration in the liberated city, but Tom was not there. No one knew where he had gone when the city was claimed, but he was immortalized for his deeds and passed into legend.

“Shadows and Darkness”

By Madeleine, age 13

It really is a beautiful thing, watching the sun set. The grace at which it sinks down, brushing the bay with a spatter of gold hues to upset the deep blue tones which its water gives off, turning the brilliant, endless sky pinks and purples, oranges, and near the other side of the horizon, a deep, inky indigo.

But now, as Catherine sat watching the golden orb sink lower and lower into the firmament, she noticed that it was twilight, a time where the earth gave off a peculiar sadness, as if mourning for all the corrupt and wicked things in the world, and mixing the bright tones of the day into the dark, poignant world of night. Twilight only lasted for a flicker of time every day, but every day at that time, just the same, sounded quiet and lost, as if time itself stopped and the moment lasted forever.

Well, that's how it felt to Catherine, and she mused over this fact in an asphyxiating silence, sitting at the edge of the grassy ridge overlooking the water's edge, her small feet dangling. The waves crashed onto the rocky cliff and the wind brushed her hair back over her shoulder, but she paid no mind. She only thought of the matter at hand. And anyway, it's not like she could fill the silence with her own voice. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't do it. It was impossible.

Besides, she couldn't pass up an occasion to watch the sunset. It gave him some time to catch up to her, anyway.

She heard him coming. She always did. Usually his footsteps were soft and hesitant, because he knew she could hear him coming and he didn't like that piece of information, and was trying to masquerade it by making his trail sound like the rustle of leaves that were stirred up in wind as he searched, almost desperately, to bring her back to the house.

But this time, she wasn't going back with him.

She had always speculated when she would snap, when she would know that she had enough and that she would wander away, away from everything, from him, from that house, from the sun. Her sun.

She had always known, too, that she would go when she had found somewhere to go *to*. After all, why would she leave when she had nowhere to end up?

"Cat!" She heard his familiar drawl – she heard it every day. But now, she chose to ignore it, and closed her eyes, savoring the delight of feeling the cold breeze on her face one last time.

"Cat, why didn't you answer me?" he demanded, and she looked up to see a pair of tan legs, standing in a haughty way, hands placed on hips, a tan face staring her down, and brown eyes narrowed beneath a mop of russet hair. *You wouldn't be able to hear me anyway...*

"I was enjoying the last of my time here, Brandon," she signed wistfully, averting her gaze back to the brightly glowing celestial sphere in the sky that was plummeting lower and lower with every minute.

"What?" For once, Brandon was speechless. Hadn't he once told her that would be a sign that the apocalypse was coming, if he ever was silent for more than a minute? So far it was four.

So? Hadn't you told him the world would end once you decided when to leave? She thought with a gloomy sigh. Maybe we're going to perish in this world along with the entire human race, side by side. Death of pollution, malnutrition, disease, the federal government scamming us...

"Cat?" She was pulled out of her thoughts to see Brandon sitting beside her. "Why are you leaving? Where will you go?"

She shrugged in response, fiddling with the khaki backpack strap that was slung over her thin shoulders. It held nothing. Nothing of importance, anyway. A few packages of ramen noodles that she managed to steal from the kitchens, a few sets of clothing, three to be exact – that was all she owned – a hair and toothbrush, a flashlight, some bandages, sheets of paper, and a few pencils, probably broken by now, or worn down so much that they were rubbish.

"Answer me, Cat. If you really are going to go, I deserve an answer," he said, tugging on the sleeve of her black hoodie sweater. She looked down at her legs that stuck out from under short-shorts, deathly pale legs – along with the rest of her body. She pulled the elastic from her raven hair.

Her hands moved wildly as she sought for an answer, circumspectly evading the answer in question.

"...Have you ever noticed that the only omnipotent thing in this world is the Sun?" Brandon said slowly, repeating what her hands said. "Scientists say that they're going to find out everything that is to be known to man, but that is only what they know they don't know. What about the things they don't know they don't know... What about – Cat, what does this have to do with anything?" he narrowed his eyes at her and stood up. "You're stalling, aren't you?"

You know me too well, Brandon.

She stayed sitting, but held up the universal sign for the other to hold on and wait. She started signing for a second time as he repeated.

"Let me finish. You know what – I don't want to, anyway. I think I was only stalling. It doesn't matter anymore, does it?" she signaled with her hands. "I'm tired of living there, and I found a place to go. It's in a nice, small town, and if I help out in the store, they'll let me stay there for free. It's also got a very remarkable view of the ocean." At this, Brandon gave a short laugh, knowing her love of the sea.

"Will you tell anyone? I don't want to play emissary when you're gone," he grunted, squatting down next to her.

"*Whatever do you mean?*" she asked with a sweet smile, in that sickly way that made him gag. She knew it annoyed him; nevertheless she still smiled like that whenever he was around.

"I mean that the old bat will have me go out to find you!" he shouted; she recognized the sign that something inside him snapped. "Fine, you know what, leave, leave and don't come back for all I care. Go live right by the ocean, on top of it for all I care, where you always wanted to, instead of going a mile to our cliff to watch the sunset. Go and don't come back. See if I care." He turned to leave, but felt a hand on his shoulder. She signed.

"*Yes, you are concerned – exceedingly much so.*"

"So?" he retorted haughtily, looking into her cerulean eyes and stood up.

"*So? So come with me,*" she grinned. He gave a sad smile as she held out her hand. Clasp it, she shouldered her knapsack as he helped her off the ground.

"Yes," he whispered. He took a step towards the forest, and she nodded, signaling that that was the correct trail to follow – the one that went away from the house. Away from everything.

They walked into the trail that was dark as night, into the forest, away from everything. They didn't look back.

Behind them, the sun sank below the horizon and ensnared the world into a land of darkness and shadows, with only the light of the moon to guide.

"Carving Sympathy"

By Danielle, age 15

The pride of the Cutler family, Jason, has gone off to college to continue with his education as a junior. At the top of his class, the suspected valedictorian was doing well in school until he received a note from home. His sister, Elizabeth, was concerned about their father's recent reactions toward his newly prescribed medication. He had been suffering from abnormal side effects. Elizabeth claimed that their father had been talking of weird occurrences or dreams in which he had sworn that he had seen their dead brother, Jacob. Elizabeth detailed in her emails that even as an aspiring medical doctor, she had never seen anything like it before and that it was impossible to describe his behavior.

Jason realized that he could not possibly leave college in the middle of the semester and he remained there for the rest of the term. Dismissing and deleting his sister's letters and emails, Jason could not bear the pain of hearing that his father was not getting better. Elizabeth was becoming more concerned and desperate to reach him with each passing day.

Ignoring everything that his sister sent him, Jason did not visit Elizabeth or his father when they needed him most. After a few months of disregarding the situation, Jason started seeing someone. He believed that he had met the love of his life; his college sweetheart. Jason's situation with his father had never come up in conversation until one day when they were planning their wedding. His love, Rebecca, knew that something was bothering him when she had mentioned that he should invite his family. Jason could not stand the thought of making contact when he knew that he had burned several bridges. He rejected the thought that he could possibly fix the situation in time for his family to make an appearance at his wedding. Rebecca, without knowing the circumstances, persistently tried to convince him that he needed to make things right. That night Jason began his journey which was several years overdue.

As Jason's first step, he decided to come back to his suburban hometown by train. On the train he pondered what might await him. Since he broke contact with his sister, he did not know what to expect when he returned "home." Approaching his former front door, he found that there was an old eviction notice nailed to the door. He wept at his lack of communication with his family. Remembering that he still had an unopened letter from Elizabeth, he decided to read it discovering that his father, at the time, was taking an extended business trip while his mother and sister decided to reside at their current residence in the city.

Contacting the hotel the father was staying in, Jason finds that his father's room was checked out since he was reported missing. Frustrated and determined Jason wonders what could have happened to his father. He walks into the police station to see if there was a missing file report of some kind concerning him. What Jason finds at the police station is a disturbing photo of a smashed car and a commercial truck. He asks the police officer to explain.

Jason is told that the man in the photo had gotten into a serious car accident due to the careless truck driver who had a high BAC level at the time. The person in the car resulted with a head injury which triggered short term memory loss. Jason also learned that the person in the car was his father who can not remember anything after the accident

and that every morning he wakes up asking why he is in a recovery center. This news troubles Jason, especially, when the police officer explained that he has been put on a lot of medication which made him a completely different person in a negative way. Some of the medication was also given to get rid of the visions he had of Jacob exclaiming to "stay away from mother."

Jason thought about why his father would be thinking of Jacob telling his father to stay away from his wife. It seemed awfully strange to him. It turned out that Jason's father was influenced by the recurring dream of Jacob and one day he spontaneously divorced his wife, for her safety, but he did not remember that he did the following day. Jason's mother had moved on and married again.

As a result, Jason's father still cried out mercifully for his wife and kids. Jason was determined more than ever to find his father.

Jason later found his father in an insane asylum, but wished to have his father set free. He pulled it off by pretending to be a well trained doctor that could cure the man out of his emotional illness. When released, Jason's father is weak, but still overjoyed to see his son.

From being released, Jason thought that his father was not mentally ill at all, but he was wrong. His father still suffered without his ex-wife. Jason convinced Elizabeth and his mother to visit him back from college for a day not mentioning anything about his father.

When the ladies arrive, there is chaos. There is chaos since Jason's mother brought her newlywed husband, Michael. Jason's father is furious when he saw that his ex-wife, whom he thought was still his wife, was with another man. He was so frustrated that he actually found his old hunting shot gun in Jason's garage and shot his former wife straight through the heart. Then, he turned and shot her husband through the head.

Elizabeth and Jason did not even have to dial 9-1-1 since the neighbors had already been listening to the commotion and called for an investigation. When the police were taking Jason's father into the cruiser he said how Jacob was right. He should have stayed away from mother.

Jason is incredibly disappointed with his father for committing these crimes. He realized that he probably should not have found his father and should have remained out of his family's affairs when he was focusing on his law practice at Harvard. Thinking of Harvard again, Jason decides to return for another year of college and this time, Elizabeth joins him.

“One Spirit”

By Stephanie ,age 14

One spirit was all I needed to lift myself from the ground and into the heavens. All too soon it consumed me and controlled me. Creating something I was not. I try to scream but am frightened by the spirit's taunting whisper which dwells in my mind. A bell tolls in the distance, I feel myself letting the fear possess me. Everything around me begins to fade as I fall to my knees. Now I am begging you, PLEASE! Do not let the spirit take me.

“I Miss How Things Used To Be”

By Makayla, age 13

When cartoons were Scooby Doo and not all this stupid samurai stuff.
When people would actually talk on the phone than use AIM.
When laughs were heard and not just noticed by a “lol”.
When relationships were started in person and not over the computer.
When the news talked about special events not tragic ones.
When it was fun to run through the sprinkler.
When gas was only \$1.75.
When love was about sharing it not making it.
When friends actually helped each other out instead of talking behind each others’ backs.
When drama was just another word of the dictionary.
When pictures captured a true art and not how you look in your bikini.
When guys looked at a girls’ face and not her body.
When someone could actually trust someone else.
When stereotypes weren’t existent.
When showing affection in public wasn’t considered “making a scene” but showing the other person how much you love them.
When marriage was a thought out process and not just a mistake made when people are in Vegas.
When I could turn on the TV and not have all these reality shows.
When parents stayed together than get divorced.
When people didn’t lie.
When people didn’t cheat.
When someone repaired your heart rather than breaking it.
When war was just a card game.
When the Earth was healthy and not crashing.
When you actually got fined if you littered.
When Global Warming was just a theory not a threat.
When more kids were above the influence rather than under it.
When compliments were given and were meant instead of just said to make someone like you.
When someone actually believed in me...

Maya, age 13

