

Crazy Compendium

The Early Writings of
Andrew Bermudez

Edited by the Author

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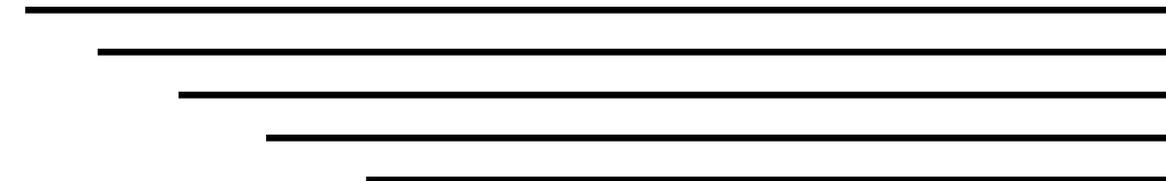
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Introduction

Author's Statement

I had always wondered if I would ever be able to share these stories with the general public, since I never really took them seriously while I was writing them. However, I feel that these writings are an important part of my education and shaping the literary skills that I have today. I don't write prose fiction these days as much as I used to (and probably as much as I should), as I'm more interested in writing movie scripts and argumentative essays. However, I feel that all of these forms of writing have some basis in the prose fiction and more that I wrote over fifteen years ago, and because of that, I feel that it is time to open the vault doors and present my first writings to the world.

Contained inside this book is a selection of my most noted works in prose fiction, poetry, haiku, and other forms of writing. For the most part, all of these writings were school projects, but these assignments hold a special place in my heart as being part of the groundwork for what I would later create. Some of these writings I enjoyed penning more than others, but I still look back at this as an important part of my life.

With that said, these writings were created at a time when my vocabulary was still, to be frank, pretty limited. Because of this, many of these writings have a lack of refinement that, if I were to write today, would be deemed childish, rushed, and poorly-written. Therefore, this volume must not be looked at as a collection of great literature (because it isn't), but rather as an archive of my early works. Through this lens of seeing these texts as foundation work rather than a final product, you'll be able to appreciate these writings better.

However, solely seeing early works without the measuring stick of more recent writings would make this volume meaningless; without a transgression from the foundation to the crowning spire. Because of this, a selection of the writings in this edition have been updated and re-imagined for the modern day, which are featured at the end of the book. If you are a fan of Mustache Maniacs Film Co.'s cinematic universe, you will be happy to know that all of these new stories are officially considered canon in the said universe.

I hope you enjoy reading and experiencing these writings, from poetry that I didn't want to write to prose fiction recounting the exploits of some of the characters created by the world's most popular toy company. Enjoy your reading!

Andrew Bermudez

Chapter 1

Poetry

I'm not going to lie: poetry is not my strongest suit. While I have improved (relatively) over the years to the point where I was able to write a poem for an advent calendar, I still will not hesitate to state that my poetry writing is not the strongest of what I have written.

With that said, I still feel that these poems were a good exercise for me. They were not something that I wanted to write, but rather something I HAD to write. Yet, by moving outside my comfort zone and trying something new, I was able to develop skills that I was then able to apply to my other writings.

Yes, the rhymes are clunky and crude. Yes, the subject matter for some may be about how I can't write poetry. Yes, my initial dislike for writing poetry may shine through some of the poems. But I feel like my skills as a writer are better for making these poems.

The Cat (2003)

Prancing like a star,
The lounging black cat looks like
A gift from heaven.

Editor's Note: Both this poem and the next one, Lawrence, were written in tribute to the late pet cat Lawrence, who passed on in 2016. He will be dearly missed with all of my heart.

Lawrence (2005)

Lawrence
Cuddly, cute
Curious, kind, quick
Small as a cubicle
cat

Fraud (2003)

I found something classical,
But it was actually optical.

New and old looks identical,
and that's comical.

You don't know it, but I'm not
a poet.

Ode (2003)

Oh Legos, you are so much fun,
even though you're made of plastic and lose your color in the sun.

You have 3,000 shapes, I estimate,
your 75 colors are worthy to appreciate.

Oh Legos, with your studs to fascinate,
your interlocking is to hesitate.

To My Brain (2002)

Oh brain, you make me
 gain weight.
Why am I saying this?
No one knows.
This is just a stupid,
 pointless ode.

The Roller Coaster (2002)

A roller coaster is like a fast car on tracks;
big, fast, high, looping, screams;
I can smell the hot dogs and popcorn;
It makes me excited and a little sick.

Green (2004)

Green is ill,
It sounds like sneezing and vomiting.
Green smells like penicillin and lime.
Green tastes bitter and sour.
Green looks sick,
But with a bit of hope.

Sunny/Rainy (2001)

Sunny
Warm, calm
Charming, humming, basking
Beach, suntan lotion, rain boots, rain bonnet
Drowning, splashing, soaking
Sad, wet
Rainy

Never Steal! (2002)

Never steal,
because if you do,
you'll become friends
 with Brickster.

And, if you become
 friends with
 Brickster,
you'll end up in jail.

And, if you end up in jail,
you'll wish you never
 stole,
because you ended up
 in jail.

A Spooky Poem (2005)

I saw a large beast,
It had a cold and couldn't breathe.
It walked two steps east,
then it caught a disease.

I began to scream.
Then, I freaked.
I tried to plead,
but then it geeked.

You don't know it,
but I'm not a poet.

The Laughing House (2001)

There is a house,
a laughing house,
where everyone is laughing.

And in that house
there is a pipe,
a broken pipe
in a laughing house,
where everyone is laughing.

And by that pipe
there is a plumber,
a giggling plumber
by a broken pipe
in a laughing house,
where everyone is laughing.

And by that plumber
there is a girl,
a chuckling girl
by a giggling plumber
by a broken pipe
in a laughing house,
where everyone is laughing.

And by that girl
there is a cat,

a smiling cat
by a chuckling girl
by a giggling plumber
by a broken pipe
in a laughing house,
where everyone is laughing.

And by that cat
there is a baby,
a clowning baby
by a smiling cat
by a chuckling girl
by a giggling plumber
by a broken pipe
in a laughing house,
where everyone is laughing.

And by that baby
there is a boy.
a joking boy
by a clowning baby
by a smiling cat
by a chuckling girl
by a giggling plumber
by a broken pipe
in a laughing house,
where everyone is laughing.

And by that boy
there is an electrician...

Can it be?
A frowning electrician
by a joking boy
by a clowning baby

by a smiling cat
by a chuckling girl
by a giggling plumber
by a broken pipe
in a laughing house,
where everyone is laughing.

A frowning electrician
who zaps the boy,
who kicks the baby,
who startles the cat,
who claws the girl,
who thumps the plumber,
who fixes the pipe,
in the laughing house,
where no one is now laughing.

Editor's Note: Nothing like finishing this chapter on a downer ending like that, I must say! I've thought about releasing this story as a children's book, but that ending has essentially been my primary roadblock for actually making it.

Believe it or not, this story was also a collaboration between myself and my brother, Daniel Bermudez. I want to say that he was responsible for the ending, but I honestly don't remember even writing this one. But who knows? If I do figure out a solution to that ending, you might see "The Laughing House" soon on store shelves. Until then, I hope you enjoyed this poem in its original form. And to wrap up this first chapter, here is one more poem.

Now that this chapter is done,
You probably now know it.
Despite all of my years of practice,
I'm still not a poet.

Chapter 2

Jokes & Humor

It's not a huge body of my written work, but I have penned some jokes. The jokes featured in this volume were apparently written in 2002, and I'll have to go on that date with faith; I honestly don't remember writing these jokes. However, another writing in this chapter, "Cure for Legomexia," stands out fairly well in my mind.

Yet, this comes as no surprise, as I love to tell jokes. It's a great way to lighten up the mood, and especially when you're having a bad day, who doesn't like a good joke? Even when I write film scripts, I always make sure to inject a sense of humor in a manner appropriate to the narrative. In fact, some of the most endearing characters that I've created revolve around humor.

In this context, these jokes take on a life of their own, becoming independent of any narrative, the author, and the culture that conceived them. They are mostly Halloween jokes, so if you thought that holiday was too scary for you, prepare to be proven wrong!

Halloween Jokes (2002)

Q: What is a ghost's favorite song?

A: "A haunting we will go."

Q: What did the vampire say when he was beat up at school?

A: "I want my mummy!"

Q: What's a ghoul's favorite holiday?

A: Fangsgiving

Q: What are a ghost's parents called?

A: Transparents

Q: What is red and white?

A: A ghost on fire.

Q: What do ghosts look through to see the moon?

A: Horrorscopes.

Cure for Legomexia (2003)

If you have Legomexia, where you get real sick with spots, drink water from the ocean and eat pepperoni and olives at the same time. You should see results immediately. But don't worry; you have to be real little and plastic to contract the disease.

Chapter 3

Editorials & Informational Writings

Over the years that I have written stories and other works, I've liked to play around with how the said story was presented. Mostly, I've presented the stories as straight stories, but other times, I've decided to write the story through a different lens. This brings us to my editorials and informational writings.

Granted, the subjects of the following writings are entirely fictional, but I decided to tell these stories in the form of newspaper articles, at least for the first two. The third story, "Unexpected Lessons," is actually a fable about why you shouldn't ever grab a beehive, just in case you absolutely need a reminder to not do that.

So turn the page and see these fictional stories presented as they would be in the Sunday newspaper... or, more likely, in your news app. And remember: don't ever go near a beehive!

Convenience Store Heist Goes Up in Smoke (2007)

Last Sunday, a heist at the convenience store at the Octan Service Station and a high speed pursuit resulted in a fire at the Legotown International Airport. “The blaze was chaos,” said Fire Chief Jack. “We would get one part of the airport contained and then another part went up.” The turn of events began when one of the criminals held up the store. “I was checking my last sale when this female crook said, ‘give me all of your money,’ and I did. All \$25 of it. She then stole a black motorcycle and got away. That’s when the police screeched into action.” The police are said to have pursued the suspect to the airport, where she drew a firearm and took a runway worker hostage. Joe Smith described the firearm as being, “Plastic-y, gray, sterile, and having an orange obstruction at the end of the barrel.” The crook and her hostage then stole a helicopter, which collided with the information center, setting it ablaze. Less than 1 minute later, an ambulance and the fire crew arrived on the scene. Fireman Bernie Down said, “That blaze was nasty. It was so harsh, our fire extinguisher ran out of foam and we had to use the one stowed in the airport fire truck.” The blaze lasted at least two hours. Witnesses reported that the blaze went as far as to damage a triceretops skeleton at the adjacent museum. Despite the damage though, the fire crew prevailed and put out the fire. The runway worker has been taken to the hospital and is being treated for 2nd degree burns and smoke inhalation. The crook was successfully captured and is being held in custody until the courthouse is built. She has been charged with robbery, speeding, threatening to take a life, and arson.

Editorial (2007)

On Monday, after the fire at the airport, Mayor Charlie Prickman dictated a decree that will go in effect next week. The decree states that 10 fire hydrants will be located in 10 key points in Legotown. Although I find it appealing that Legotown is finally getting fire hydrants, I am a bit displeased with the fact that an unfortunate incident has to happen in order to make improvements. Another example also relates to Sunday, when, as our story “Convenience Store Heist Goes Up in Smoke” said, “The crook was successfully captured and is being held in custody until the courthouse is built.” Obviously, the town was unprepared for a conviction like this one.

However, I must give the mayor credit for recognizing a future crisis, which is commuter problems on the Lego Express. He said that with an ever-growing population, the Lego Express will get over crowded and delay commuters. To solve this threat-to-be, Prickman has asked that a monorail system be built. The project is estimated to cost \$2,000.00. Despite these reforms, however, there are still structures this town needs, like an animal shelter and franchise restaurants.

Unexpected Lessons (2001)

Once upon a time, Jimmy Sting, the beekeeper, was looking for honey in the Forest. He came upon an average-sized beehive in a tree. He stuck his hand in the beehive to collect honey. A big swarm of bees flew out. He said, "Not again!" The bees flew around him. One bee stung him on the behind. He ran off into the forest as fast as he could to get away from the bees. The moral of the story is never get too close to a beehive.

Editor's Note: When it came to imparting the reader with a moral of some sort, I typically went the Captain Obvious route. Of course no one is going to get that close to a beehive, much less stick their hand in.

I also have another fable (currently lost) that is about a duck lying to an alligator about finding a food stash just to hoard some food (even though ducks and alligators have completely different diets, but I digress). The alligator eats the duck, and the moral was to never lie. The reason why I remember it so well is because some editors at the time said that the moral should have been dumb ducks deserve to die. It's morbid and an alliteration at the same time! What fun!

But that finishes up this chapter, with the next chapter starting up the heart and soul of this anthology: short stories.

Chapter 4

Action & Adventure Stories

When I think of the writings that I created in the middle grades, I immediately think of my short stories. I've always loved to tell stories, no matter the genre, so it comes as no surprise that they make up a majority of the content in this book.

As I've been a fan of LEGO's stories my whole life, most of the writings in this chapter fall under the category of fan fiction (I hesitate to call this a genre). Stories featuring Johnny Thunder, Tessa the Sea Vet, King Leo, and more graced my early works, sending these characters on brand-new adventures.

Of course, it wasn't all minifigures and LEGO bricks. It just mostly was. However, there are a few stories that trek out on their own, telling their own narratives relating to history, mythology, and more. The most notable that is featured in this volume is one titled "Young Seminole," which heavily takes its cues from Native American mythology.

Because the number of prose fictions that I've composed is massive, I've decided to select the most prominent stories and split them into various chapters based on genre. The first one is action and adventure stories, which include tales of pirates, mummies, and more!

Young Seminole (2002)

Long ago, a young Seminole set out on a journey, hunting for deer. When he saw a deer he hid behind a rock. Taking aim he was very proud when he shot the deer. Heading back to the village to get help, he wandered in circles and became lost. He looked up at the stars and prayed to the Great Spirit, "I wish I could go home." The Big Dipper swooped down and lifted the Seminole boy into the air. It carried him back to the village.

The End

Editor's Note: This is one of the few non-LEGO based stories in this book, and the one from the early 2000's that I am most proud, relatively speaking. It's simple, but it's easy to understand. From here on out are mostly LEGO stories, featuring characters from LEGO product lines.

Pirate Peril (2001)

"Help, Sally! Help!" shouted a stranded tourist. Sharks were swimming around him. A metal staircase lowered toward him. Tessa, the sea vet, climbed down onto it. She grabbed him just in time as a shark snapped its jaws. "Phew! That was a close one," said Tessa. "Let's go."

They started off toward the harbor. "According to our scanners, the harbor is northwest and we are heading west toward this island," said Tessa, pointing at the screen. Suddenly, they hit a bump and their motor stopped. They were at the mysterious Skull Island. "Good, now all we have to do is head north; then homeward bound," said Tessa. Sally announced, "If only we had power."

Tessa climbed out of the boat and saw a sword sticking out of the ground. She tried to pull it out. It wouldn't budge. She pulled it toward her and suddenly the ground started to shake. The trees shook and a wall spun around. "Tessa, where are you? Tessa!" Sally shouted, but no answer. "Tessa, Tessa!" But, still no answer.

Tessa turned on her flashlight and looked around. She looked down and not only saw the sword, but she also saw some writing. It said, "You are now hot on the trail of the treasure of Black Bart, but beware, there are traps ahead." She looked up and said, "Treasure! I'm in." She heard a loud thump. She turned and saw an open passageway.

Meanwhile, outside, "What is booty?" asked Sally. Dan said, "loot." Sally said, "That's right. Now for the next question. What were limes used for?" "To prevent scurvy." "That's right. How come you know so much?" Dan said, "My son is studying pirates in school." Suddenly, Tessa's voice came

over the radio. "I found a cavern to Black Bart's treasure." Then, the radio faded away.

Tessa stopped at a passageway sealed with an iron gate. She stepped on a rock and the iron gate opened. But, at the same time, the rock door she entered through earlier slammed shut. She had no way out. "Uh, oh! I forgot my radio!" said Tessa. "At least the iron gate is open." She stepped into a tunnel full of murals and ship parts nailed to the wall. "Black Bart sunk over 400 ships," said Tessa. She stepped on a rock and the body of Black Bart flew down at her. She screamed at the top of her lungs. She got past the body and saw a knife embedded in his back. "Yuck!" said Tessa. She crossed a rope bridge over a pit of scorpions. She made it across just in time as the bridge collapsed. She moved down the tunnel a little ways until she stopped at a dead end. She spun around and soon realized that she was trapped. Suddenly, the floor opened and Tessa fell through. She landed on gold. "I found the treasure of Black Bart!" said Tessa. Then she saw a note. It said, "You may think you found the treasure, but it still waits ahead." "Rats!" said Tessa.

Suddenly, the floor started to shake. Tessa heard a crunching sound beneath her. The floor broke open and she fell through. She landed on a rock floor. In front of her was the true treasure. Engraved on the chest were his initials, "B.B." She started to open the chest when she heard the rumbling sound again. Only this time, it came from in front of her. She grabbed some treasure. A giant boulder came toward her. Tessa was so scared her pupils shrunk and she ran as fast as she could. She ran and ran until she was stopped at a dead end. She spun around and saw the boulder coming toward her. She rattled a wooden door behind her. On the other side of the door Dan heard it clanging and ran over. He saw the door and threw it open. Out stumbled Tessa. "Are you all right?" asked Sally. "Sure," said Tessa. They headed back to the boat and restored its power and headed to the harbor.

Mummy's Curse (2002)

Johnny Thunder was sorting through the photos from their last adventure. Pippin was looking out the window. All of a sudden, Dr. Kilroy burst into the room. "I've discovered Imhotep's tomb!" Pippin picked up the papers that he spilled. "Imhotep, the famous architect? Crikey!" said Johnny. "We must get to the airport immediately!"

Later at the airport, Johnny, Pippin, and Dr. Kilroy met Mike and Harry there. "I've got some good news for you. Cane Airlines' largest plane is fixed," said Harry. "There isn't any foam coming out of the seats and the music isn't scratchy." "Time to get on, mates," said Johnny.

Across the airport, "Ha, ha, ha!" said Baron Von Baron as he climbed onto a plane owned by Tomb Robber Airlines. "The lunch meat's ready," said Lucy Pepper. "But unfortunately it expired May 17, 1989!" "I don't care about old food. I just want Johnny. Ha, ha, ha!" said Baron Von Baron.

Later, over the skies of Egypt, "I always liked Egypt," said Mike, as he tried to climb out of his seat. Dr. Kilroy pushed him back, accidentally pushing him into the emergency button and gas masks dropped. "It's Doofus 9 behind us," interrupted Pippin. They heard machine gun fire. The plane maneuvered out of the way and headed for a landing strip.

After they landed, they went to McDonald's. While they sat to eat their burgers and fries, Baron Von Baron laughed right outside the window. "Ha, ha, ha! I shall steal the hopeless Happy Meals!" "There's dirt in my soup," whined Lucy Pepper. "I wish I could have a hamburger." A city slicker walked up and asked, "Can I join your gang?" Baron Von Baron replied,

“Do you own a donkey? Because you are one!” “You’re with us,” said Lucy Pepper.

Later, at a cat mummy store, “Simply marvelous!” said Dr. Kilroy. All of a sudden, Baron Von Baron and his henchmen ran into the store. “Now to steal herbs!” said a henchman as he swiped them and some matches. But the herbs burned in his hand. “Why would some herbs burn like that?” said Johnny turning away from a magnificent cat mummy specimen. Dr. Kilroy replied, “It has been said that Imhotep strikes the evil and burns their loot.” “Crikey!” said Johnny as he left the store.

“Well, here it is mates,” said Johnny as they drove up to a boat that was made of paper. Pippin walked up to the owner and said, “How does it float?” The owner said, “Mountain Dew bottles taped to the bottom.” He climbed into the boat and it started to sink. The man grabbed some soap and took a bath in the Nile. Crocodiles jumped up and ate him. Johnny and his friends sailed up the Nile in a new boat. “I love cruising down the river,” said Pippin as she took pictures.

Meanwhile, at the Great Sphinx, “The lunch meat tastes like sour milk,” said Lucy Pepper. “What if the mummy brings his curse down on us?” “That’s just a bunch of blarney,” Baron Von Baron replied.

Back on the Nile, “I think I’m going to be seasick,” said Mike. Dr. Kilroy gave him some vitamins and he was well again. Soon they arrived at the pyramid. “Crikey!” said Johnny as he looked at the hieroglyphics on the wall. “There’s Ra, the Sun God, and there’s Bassett, the Goddess of Love. Too bad the others had to stay outside,” said Pippin. While they were walking down the corridor, they heard some evil laughs and some footsteps. Suddenly, the city slicker burped. Pippin spun around and said, “I bet you think women can’t shoot!” She drew a pistol and shot the city slicker. Suddenly, the white limestone turned blood red. “Not bad shooting mate,” said Johnny. Soon they arrived in the Burial Chamber. Baron Von Baron ran in and said, “The treasure is mine!” He set the cat mummy on fire. They searched the room for Re-Gou, a red, shiny jewel. Suddenly, the mummy of Imhotep came to life.

Baron Von Baron and his henchmen ran for their lives. Pippin started to take pictures. “Hurry if you don’t want to end up like the boat owner, mate!” said Johnny. Pippin saw something shining through the camera lens. It was Re-Gou. They ran out with the jewel.

Later at Cairo Airport, “That’s the strangest adventure yet,” said Pippin, as they took off.

The End

Editor’s Note: Well, that was random. That is literally the only thought that I have about this writing.

Castle Under Attack (2002)

It's the year 1400. In the middle of a dark forest, there stood Lions' Castle. King Leo was organizing a fair. "We shall have tournaments and plays," said King Leo. Meanwhile in the bed chamber, "I always have to do work," said Princess Storm as she painted posters for the fair. Meanwhile in the castle court, knights were setting up the fair. "We need a dancing bear and swords from Spain," said a knight. Sir Sword was putting the stage together. He struck a nail and bent his hammer. "Watt really needs to stiffen this," he said. A nail popped out of the main beam and it started falling toward him.

It dropped and dropped. He turned around and saw it falling. He quickly jumped out of the way as it struck the nail. "Phew!" he said. Meanwhile at the throne room, "we sent a ship to Spain to get swords and a dancing bear," said Sir Richard the Strong. Meanwhile deep in Witch Wood, "He, he, he, he. I will spread disease throughout the fair using heads! He, he!" "The siege machines are ready," said Gilbert. Meanwhile in Cedric's evil camp, "Bingo!" said Boris. "How about I-spy?" said Weezil. "I spy with..." "Weezil, I need you," Cedric interrupted. "I'll be right back," said Weezil. They made attack plans together. But King Leo already sent a spy to find out important information. A knight said, "The dancing bear and the swords just arrived sir." Meanwhile on the road to the village, Princess Storm was nailing posters to trees when Cedric's bulls surround her.

"Mob, take her captive. Everyone else, follow me," said Cedric. Later that afternoon, "Let the tournaments begin," said King Leo. "Soon they'll be too busy watching plays to defend themselves," said Cedric. They had plays about stories from the bible. "Charge in a line!" said Cedric. All of a sudden,

the Bulls started tripping one by one. "What is happening?" said Cedric. Storm came running out of the forest. The other knights surrounded them. "Throw them into the dungeon," said King Leo. And everyone lived happily ever after, except for Cedric and his bulls.

The End.

Editor's Note: For me personally, there's nothing particularly special here, but typing out this story did make me realize how little space three sheets of ruled paper, covered front and back, take up in this book. This story was also originally three chapters, but I decided for the sake of space to just merge them into one full story.

Breakout of Baddy-Do-Bad (2004)

One dry and hot summer night, Baddy-Do-Bad was sleeping on the bench inside the jail. He woke up, and to his luck, the guard was resting. He unlatched the bars and escaped. Baddy-Do-Bad went into hiding until morning.

Later that morning, Baddy-Do-Bad stole a parked car and drove to the bank. He snuck in and stole all the gold. Suddenly, the alarm went off, but he got away.

When Baddy got to the train station, he found an empty crate to hide in. The crate that he hid in was loaded onto the train. He got off at the harbor.

At the harbor, Baddy hid at Dock 13, an old dock. He also found a trike and he hid the gold.

Meanwhile back at the police HQ, Baddy's rival, Patrolman Bill, wondered where Baddy was. Suddenly, a voice came over the radio. The voice said, "We spotted Baddy at the harbor. We're sending in the patrol boat." Patrolman Bill said, "I'm on my way."

Later at the harbor, Patrolman Bill heard a shriek from Dock 13. Meanwhile in the dock, "Eek! A moth!" said Baddy. He saw Patrolman Bill and said, "Eek! The police!" Baddy escaped on the trike he found. Bill chased him on his trike.

When the C.S.I. truck pulled up they were long gone. They were unaware that Baddy's trike was on the other side of the truck. Baddy said, "I'm going

to crash!" And Baddy crashed! He escaped on a police trike and drove into a cave.

When Patrolman Bill drove into the cave, Baddy was in a net. Baddy said, "Drat!" Patrolman Bill said, "I have captured Baddy. I'm coming home."

The End

The Black Cat (2005)

It all begun when the Black Cat stamped around Legotown. “Help!” said a citizen. It sniffed the marina and ate all of the people. Then it licked its chops. It turned and destroyed the airport runway. In doing so, it scared itself and jumped into Legoland. A man said, “I know who can stop this; Alpha Team!”

Meanwhile at Alpha Team HQ, Dash, leader of Alpha Team, gave instructions to Flex. “Flex, I need you to go to Legotown where we have gotten reports of a giant cat.” “Yes sir,” said Flex. He went to the garage, turned the Ice Blade into a helicopter, and flew out.

Later in Legotown, Flex piloted the stealthy chopper over Legotown. By now, the cat had made his way to Lego Studios. “I need backup,” said Flex.

A few minutes later, Dash arrived in the Solar Speeder. “That beast will not harm the citizens,” said Dash. He turned the Solar Speeder into a missile launcher. Dash fired a missile and scared the beast away. “Well done,” said Dash. The pair headed home.

The End

Editor’s Note: This story was actually an adaption of a short film that I made in 2005 called “Alpha Team vs. The Black Cat.” If you ever want to see it, all that I can say is that this story is fine enough. There’s a reason that I’ve never showcased it since its release.

Time Chase (2005)

It’s a normal day at Dr. Cyber’s lab. He had invited Prof. Voltage, Dr. Kilroy, and Sarah Thunder to come so he could show his new invention. Dr. Cyber announced, “Presenting, the Time Booth!” Dr. Kilroy interrupted, “You’ve made way too many time machines.” Dr. Cyber stated, “But this one is special because...” Suddenly, the Time Booth took off and sped off across the landscape. Tim, Dr. Cyber’s assistant, continued, “It can get stolen.” Kimo, Dr. Cyber’s pet monkey, found some feathers and a note. He screeched to get everyone’s attention. Prof. Voltage picked up the note.

Dear Dr. Cyber,

I have the time booth and I shall now do my biggest crime!

Signed,

The name was smudged. Wacco, Dr. Cyber’s robot, said, “We need to report this to the police.”

Meanwhile at the old warehouse, Lord Sinister and his two henchmen wait for the Time Booth. “Where’s the Time Booth?” whined a henchman. Lord Sinister shot back, “Shut up. It’ll be here any minute.” Suddenly, it dropped out of the sky and landed on the ground. Out came the Flamingo! The Flamingo said, “Let’s go.” They all filed into the Time Booth and took off.

Patrolman Bill could not understand it. The Time Booth flying away, feathers, and a note. Dr. Cyber stated, “While you hesitate, we’ll head back to my lab to find a way to track them down.”

Later, back at the lab, “I have it! We’ll all take the Time Ship!” said Tim. They climbed into the Time Ship and they sped off. The time chase had begun.

The time ship was suddenly speeding over a wrecked city. “Tim, why is that whole city down below all wrecked and webbed-up?” asked Sarah. Tim replied, “This is the time before time.” The Time Ship landed in the Protodermis Sea and the crew disembarked. They heard screams that echoed like thunder. “They must already be here,” stated Tim. Prof. Voltage screamed, “Duck!” Everyone ducked as a Rhotuka Spinner flew over their heads. Wacco stated, “There’s a giant, spider-like creature headed this way. Run for your lives!” This creature is known as the Visorak Vohtarak. Soon, they came to a corner and around the corner was a path flooded with molten protodermis. “We’re trapped!” said Tim. Dr. Cyber said, “Wait a minute! That thing has great speed. That gives it a weakness: its ability to stop. If our timing is right, it’ll fall into the lava.” Soon, it came running around the corner. Dr. Cyber ordered, “NOW!” They jumped into some rubble as the Vohtarak tried stopping, but it landed in the molten protodermis and burned up. Sarah said, “Dr. Cyber’s plan worked!”

A henchman walked through some rubble to find Lord Sinister. “Lord Sinister!” he called out. “I’m over here,” said Lord Sinister. The henchman ran in that direction. He turned a corner and saw an Oohnorak imitating Lord Sinister’s voice. The henchman was soon hanging in a cocoon over the city.

Lord Sinister wandered around the Coliseum. He looked up and saw the cocoon that contained the henchman. The cocoon dropped and out came a creature with two heads, six arms, and a nasty attitude. In a rasping voice, it said, “I hate you!” It ran forward and jumped at Lord Sinister.

Lord Sinister pulled out his Luger and shot it three times. The mutated henchman laid on the ground. The Flamingo came out from an alley. “Are you okay?” asked The Flamingo. Lord Sinister replied, “I think so. We have

to go. This place isn’t safe.”

Dr. Cyber and his men walked through some wreckage when they saw the Time Booth overhead. “We need to return to the Time Ship,” said Dr. Kilroy. They returned to the Time Ship and followed the Time Booth.

When Richard the Brickenheart died, he divided the land between his 12 sons. The land surrounds Mt. Evil. Beyond the borders of Richard’s Kingdom lie the Moorlands, a place of unknown danger.

The reason that I’m telling you this is because this is where the Time Booth and the Time Ship landed after Metru Nui. The Time Booth landed in Morcia, the leading kingdom, and the Time Ship landed in the kingdom of Black Falcon, where the village and the Black Falcon Fortress were. Where there weren’t buildings, there was dense forest known as Witch Wood. Dr. Cyber said, “Put this on. It makes for good cover.” He handed out medieval clothing. They put it on and made their way through the forest.

Lord Sinister, Flamingo, and the henchman put on disguises. They were in the middle of Witch Wood. Sir Richard and Sir John of Lion Kingdom were riding through the forest when they found Lord Sinister and his friends. Sir John asked, “What are you doing here?” Flamingo replied, “We are lost merchants searching for a village to sell our stuff.” Richard said, “I want to know if you’re a merchant or one of Lord Vladek’s spies!”

Dr. Cyber, Tim, Dr. Kilroy, Sarah, and Prof. Voltage walked through the woods when a funny-looking cannon came through the woods. Manning the cannon were Gilbert the Bad, Naughty Knight, and some Shadow Knights. Gilbert saw Prof. Voltage and asked, “Who are you and what are you doing here?” Prof. Voltage replied, “My name is Thomas and my friends and I are looking for water.” Gilbert said, “There are some springs over there, but I’ll just have to capture you.”

Later at Cedric’s camp, Sarah asked, “What do you do with your captives?” Weezil replied, “Here’s how it’s done. Instrument Ernie, it’s your cue.” (Song

Cue: 'Cause We Are Cedric's Bulls)

Weezil: We tie them up,

Gilbert: We steal their money and smother them with mud,

Cedric the Bull: then we roll them down a very, very steep hill!

Lord Vladek: We torture them with magic from the Book of Morcia.

All: 'Cause we are Cedric's Bulls!

Basil the Bat Lord: We put cuts in your arm with my sword,

Willa the Witch: I'll use my wand to break your spinal cord,

Naughty Knight: Then we'll throw you into a mud pool.

All: 'Cause we are Cedric's Bulls!

Boris: We'll make you walk into a tree snare,

Shadow Knight: then we'll toss you around without any care.

Henchmen: We'll turn you upside down and make blood rush to your head.

All: 'Cause we are Cedric's Bulls! Yes, we are Cedric's Bulls! (End of Song)*

Sarah pleaded, "Please don't hurt us! We're worth nothing to you. All we want is water." Cedric replied, "Take them away and kill them!"

Lord Sinister, The Flamingo, and the henchman went to Lion Castle to be questioned. Sir Richard asked them, "First of all, where did you come from?" Lord Sinister replied, "We're outsiders. We come from a land outside these borders." Sir Richard and Sir John were astonished. John said, "But sir, only Sir Jayko, Sir Santis, Sir Rascus, and Sir Danju have made it through the Moorlands." Suddenly, the henchman was gone. He reappeared over by some barrels. Sir Richard yelled, "Stop!" He threw his sword and it killed the henchman. He turned to talk, but they too were gone. "Search every kingdom. Execute them as soon as you find them."

But an execution was about to happen. Cedric's gang took Dr. Cyber and his friends to a large oak tree in the area where King Mathias and Sir Jayko

*Your mind is not playing tricks on you. That is a song in this story, and it's evidence as to why I thankfully never became a song writer. But please don't put down this book. It gets better. I promise.

went hunting. Dr. Cyber whispered, "Remember the firing squad joke?" as they were lined up. Sarah replied, "I know what you're talking about." First, Dr. Cyber yelled, "Look over there!" Dr. Cyber ran off as they looked. Sarah yelled, "Look! Knights!" This went on until they all escaped.

"Look!" said Dr. Kilroy. He saw the Time Booth overhead. They found the Time Ship in no time. They chased the Time Booth again.

Lord Sinister and the Flamingo landed back in the present. So did the Time Ship. Lord Sinister yelled, "Let's hide in here." They hid in the Legotown jail and got locked in. Patrolman Bill walked over and said, "Today, you learned that crime doesn't pay. But crooks always forget that."

The End

Editor's Note: This story is actually a rewriting of a story that my brother wrote, but never completed. As for that ending, all I can say is that it was a case of "out of paper."

Chapter 5

Humorous Stories

While many of my stories were all about adventures in exotic and unusual locales, I've also had a penchant to tickle my funny bone (though not literally) with writings that are purely meant to be funny. Yes, there may be humor in almost everything that I've written, but these writings place the humor front and center.

This next chapter is, surprisingly, fairly short, consisting of only two stories, but it features some of my best attempts (in my early writings, at least) at creating humor-centered stories that played with words and, in one case, tried to get me free stuff for my own selfish ends.

So turn the page, check out these stories, and prepared to be amused... or not. Comedy is an entirely subjective concept, after all. What's funny for one group may leave crickets chirping for another. But there is one thing that both groups can agree on, though: both of these stories exist.

The Fork in the Road (2001)

One day when we got into the car, it was raining cats and dogs. I noticed my dad had to blow off some steam. Mom was a little nervous driving the car. If you think that wasn't bad enough, my sister kept getting into my hair. We drove out into the country. We came to a fork in the road. My little sister said, "Where is the fork?" My dad was madder than a wet hen because I was talking through my hat. All I had said was that I am the best in school. I was getting the best grades. It was getting dark when we came to a hotel. When the car pulled into the parking area it stalled. Mom said, "Don't cry over spilt milk." I had to hold my tongue. Instead I told dad to keep a stiff upper lip. We called for a hotel cart to bring in our luggage. When we got to our room, we stretched out on our beds to go right to sleep. I said, "Hold your horses, I left my Game Boy Advance at home!" After I said that, we all went to sleep. The next morning when we woke up, dad wasn't angry anymore. He said, "I'm floating on air. Let's get out of here."

Editor's Note: This story, like many in this book, was written as part of a school assignment. Essentially, the premise was to write a story with as many idioms included as made sense. It was a tricky balancing act: at what point would the story become just a conga line of cherry-picked idioms? At the end of the day, it turned out that it was easier to just write a story and make the idioms fit in later.

Plea for More Pieces (2006)

One day, as Papa Brickolini was strolling over to Brickolini's Pizza to open up, he saw a new pizza place open for business. He looked inside one of the windows and saw some arcade games in a corner, fancy wall decorations, and a salad bar. Papa said to himself, "The only way to beat the competition is to be the competition." So, for days and days, he bought arcade games, decorations, a salad bar, and lots more seats and tables. One day, Pepper stated, "Look at this place. All of these decorations, and no customers in sight." One week later, Mama said, "This is no good. We have to get money to keep up the place. I know, let's go to Lego Studios and help them build that Gotham City set they mentioned on the radio." But they need your help! Please donate ideas and pieces for the construction.

Editor's Note: This story was written as an easy way to get free LEGO bricks. Predictably, the ploy didn't work.

Chapter 6

Mystery Stories

Ah, my ubiquitous mystery stories. They are almost infamous in my inner-most social circles for having forced endings, with perpetrators who are introduced right at the end just so that the mystery could have a solution. Ironically, the only mystery story where I didn't do this, "Museum Mystery" (which is in the Rewritten Stories chapter), was also my first. Then again, it also was never finished, so I could attribute this phenomenon to that one if I so wish to do so.

With that said, there are some things that I feel I was able to pull off well in these stories, such as the atmosphere. While "The Lighthouse Mystery" may have an aforementioned forced ending with a character who is introduced during the unmasking, it does effectively capture the essence of an abandoned lighthouse, given my language skills at the time.

So with their atmospheric air and their cases being solved by Allen Parker Cameron (from the video game series *The Cameron Files*), there is one thing that I can say about these mystery stories: you really won't know who committed the crime until you read the solution. Seriously, you won't.

The Case of the Missing PS2 Games (2005)

It was October the third and Cameron was sitting in his office. Suddenly, the phone rang. It was Nick Noon. He sounded stressed. "Mr. Cameron. You've got to help me. My Playstation 2 games have been stolen! Come to my place and I'll tell you more."

On the way there, Cameron was at a signal. He spotted the video game store. Cameron said, "Hmm. All PS2 games \$9.99. Was \$29.99. This might have something to do with the robbery." The signal turned green and he was on his way again.

Later at the house, Nick said, " My mom, Sally, was here the whole day, taking care of my little sister, Tilla. The exploding bricks near the TV made me think Ann did it until I found out she was sick. Cameron smiled. He knew who did it.

Who stole the PS2 games? Answer below.

Sally Noon. Max couldn't of done it because he was at work. Ann couldn't of done it because she was sick. Only Sally could have done it. Looks like Nick is without a mom.

Editor's Note: Wow. That solution is as tacky as it is confusing. Why is Max mentioned in the solution, anyway? He's not a character in this story!

The Lighthouse Mystery (2005)

Pepper slowly crept through the dark, abandoned lighthouse. It used to be thriving. But when some spooky noises were heard, everyone ran for their lives! Now Pepper walked down an empty, dark corridor. Suddenly, he saw a small commotion at a window. A gnarled, white hand poked through it. Pepper ran to the other end of the hallway. "What if the lighthouse really is haunted?" he said to himself. "But I've met some really strange things in my past. This should be no different." Pepper walked on.

Pepper slowly crept down another corridor. He noticed the floor sagging ahead. When Pepper stepped onto the sagging boards, they crumbled to dust. He fell into darkness.

When Pepper landed, he noticed a small light above his head. He estimated to have fallen about 2 stories. This time he was lucky. He turned on his flashlight and scanned his surroundings. He was in a dark, damp tunnel. "If specters really are haunting this lighthouse, this passage wouldn't be here," he said to himself. "Something is wrong." Pepper walked on.

It seemed as if the tunnel was endless. The only light that could be seen was the light coming from Pepper's flashlight. Suddenly, his flashlight beam hit some strange objects that looked a lot like...

"Prank supplies?" Pepper questioned himself. When he got a little closer, he discovered that he was right. Whoopee cushions, false teeth, how-to manuals, and much more!

Meanwhile, on the shore of Lighthouse Island, Highway Patrolman Bill

was scanning the ground for clues. Suddenly, he found a slice of dirty, fly-infested pepperoni pizza. A look of disgust spread over Patrolman Bill's face. But, he took it as a clue. He contacted Pepper right away. "Pepper, did you find anything?" Bill said over his radio. "Yes. I found some prank supplies." Pepper's voice was faint but Bill could still hear him. "I found some rotten pizza," said Bill

Pepper put away his radio as he used his flashlight beam to find an exit. Suddenly, the beam hit a tall, mysterious figure. He was in a dark corner. The person threw rocks at Pepper's flashlight and knocked it out of his hands. The man pushed a button and the corner started to go up! "An elevator! Of course!" said Pepper.

Patrolman Bill had already used the clues to make a list of suspects. Rob was the local prankster and wears a brown shirt and black pants. Danny Ding-Dong was a big bully at Legotown School and wears an X-rated shirt and green pants. Both of them liked pepperoni pizza. Patrolman Bill spotted the top of the elevator shaft. Suddenly, the doors opened. Bill had just enough time to catch the person that came out of the elevator.

Who was making the lighthouse haunted?

A: Rob. It couldn't have been Danny because Patrolman Bill didn't need to cover his eyes to avoid the x-rated shirt.

Editor's Note: I had forgotten how contrived the solutions to these mystery stories were. Unfortunately, this isn't the last story in this chapter.

Revenge of the Kid's Ghost (2005)

At Lego Studios, the film crew is filming Lego Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith. James said, "Today's the big day!" as he put on his Anakin costume. Theodore Taylor, the director, led the cast and the crew to a large room. Theodore told the cast how the scene would work. Once he yelled action, it began.

There were flips and turns and cartwheels. Liam Lens used hydraulics to make it look like Anakin and Obi-Wan (played by Job Johnson) were using the force. Everything went well until...

"Cut!" yelled Theodore. "You jumped to the right, not the left." James commented, "I felt something cold so I jumped to the right." Phil Maker said, "It's probably the air conditioning." Liam continued, "Or it could be the ghost that haunts this place." Job sighed. Liam continued, "Legend says that a 7-year old kid that was riding on the tram tour fell out. He wandered through the backlot, looking for a way to his mom. He found a tram and, thinking it was his, tried to climb on. But he fell off and got run over. To this day, he wanders the studio." Job commented, "You believe that and you haven't gone to the shrink once? Wow!" Suddenly, a ghost appeared! Everyone shrieked! James said, "The legend is true! Run! I'll meet you in the lunch room."

Later in the lunch room, "I wonder if that was a real ghost or someone in a costume." Job said, "Liam is the most superstitious person ever and James is very sensitive. It was an accident." James continued, "Okay. I'll go back and do it right. But whatever you do, don't put my name in the end credits." He stomped out of the room.

The next day, Patrolman Bill and Allen P. Cameron went to Lego Studios to investigate. Cameron said, "No sign of a ghost. Besides, if the legends were true, the ghost would be out on the backlot. This is a soundstage. Soundstages are on the front lot." Liam Lens said, "He's only 7 years old. How would he know the difference?" Bill stated, "True, but he would have been seen by passengers on the tram tour." Cameron continued, "Tell me. Why is it that he hasn't been seen until now?" Liam said, "I don't know." Cameron turned to Bill and said, "We'd better stick around. Never know. He might come out again."

Two days later, a group of people went on the tram. They were driving through the town set when suddenly the ghost appeared and everyone screamed. A man yelled, "we're all going to die!" A woman pulled the emergency cord which released the side doors. Everyone ran off. The tour guide said, "It's probably a joke."

Meanwhile in another part of the town set, Steven Spielberg was filming Lego War of the Worlds. Suddenly, the people running from the ghost ran through the set. They screamed as they dodged fire, rocks, and smoke. Steven Spielberg said, "Take! That's a wrap! You're beautiful!"

Cameron and Bill were there in no time. They pulled out their pistols and started shooting at the ghost. Bill yelled, "Eat this, you transparent freak!" The ghost ran off and hid behind some boxes. They walked back there but the ghost was nowhere in sight. A stagehand walked over and said, "I need this box." Underneath was a scrap of paper. Only 3 letters were on it: O, L, and A.

Later at the front gate, Bill said, "What does it mean?" Cameron replied, "I don't know. It may be some kind of code." James, Job, Theodore, Liam, and Phil came walking in. Job said, "Anything yet?" Bill replied, "Just a scrap of paper that has the letters O, L, and A on it." James said, "We found a scrap of paper that has the letters L, E, and G on it inside the soundstage." Bill said, "Wait! I have it! Try putting the pieces together. They'll probably spell something out." Bill's idea worked! The two pieces fit! Now written on them

were the letters L, E, G, O, L, and A. Job said, "Wait! Look! They spell something, but I don't know what." Phil commented, "Wait! There is only one place that has those letters arranged in that order in that place's name: Legoland."

Later at Legoland, they all went inside. "This place reminds me of the time I came here when this place first opened," said James. Suddenly, a ghost appeared. Bill and Cameron ran forward and caught the ghost. Bill stated, "Now it's time to see who this ghastly ghoul is."

Who is haunting LEGO Studios?

Clue: Only two people do this kind of stuff: Rob the prankster and Mark who doesn't want the third Star Wars movie to come out.

Solution: Bill pulled off the mask and it was Mark. James said, "So it was you who did it, whoever you are." Bill said, "Take him away."

Later at the premiere, Job said, "Amazing!" As the credits rolled, James said, "Hey! My name's in the end credits!" Liam gulped, then James beat him up.

The Case of the Golden Dragon Theft (2005)

One day at the Legotown Museum, Janitor Ibis was sweeping the floor when a shadowy figure entered the room. She turned to see who came in. Before she could react, she fainted. Suddenly, the ceiling caved in and a winch came through and picked up the Golden Dragon with a magnet. The man picked up a radio and said, "We have it. Let's go." He walked away.

The next day, Allen P. Cameron and the police were investigating. Max said, "Look at what I found!" He held up a dart. Professor Digmous asked, "What is it?" Allen P. Cameron replied, "It's a tranquilizer dart." Dr. Kilroy said, "Look! There's a hole in the roof." Ibis was coming back to consciousness. She mumbled something that was hard to make out. "He had...black suit...fainted...I was...pain...They broke...They...Golden Dragon...Then I...out...The man's...was..." Before she could continue, she was out again. Patrolman Bill stated, "She's dying! Janitor Ibis is dying!"

The ambulance soon arrived. The paramedic asked, "Why would she die from a tranquilizer dart?" Digmous replied, "It must be the place it hit." Cameron said, "Everyone's a suspect. We can't let even one person slip by." The mystery had begun.

Patrolman Bill made a list of suspects. Dr. Kilroy stated, "It could have been Old Bone." Bill replied, "He's in the slammer." Sarah Thunder said, "Maybe it was Wineski." Bill stated, "Can't be because he went into the desert and starved himself after trying to hijack the train." "Brickzo the Clown." "He's up the river." "Lord Sinister." "Maybe." "The chimpanzee that chewed up that guy." "Animals cannot shoot darts."

"So who did it?" Bill replied, "I don't know. It could have been Lord Sinister. It could have been The Flamingo. I don't know." Dr. Kilroy stated, "I'll take this dart to my lab and study it." He took the dart and went to the lab.

Bill reviewed the suspects. He had found four clues: pink feathers, a hole in the roof, a dart, and a black suit. That led him to four suspects. Lord Sinister has a black suit, has a flying license, and loves to shoot. Flamingo has pink feathers and can only shoot. Brickster can only shoot. Bad Boy collects feathers, can shoot, has a black suit, and has a flying license. Bill stopped. "Wait a minute. I know who did it."

Who stole the Golden Dragon?
Answer is below.

Solution: Dr. Kilroy came rushing in with Bad Boy. "I caught this man trying to steal the two-headed mini-fig from the Brickley's Believe It or Not exhibit." Bad Boy said, "Here's how it went. I hired someone to fly the chopper. And what about the dart? Let's go back two years ago when Brickzo stole the dart gun and poison darts. I raised them through the ceiling. At the top, I took a dart for future use. Pretty soon, she'll be cleaning that giant floor in the sky. I disarmed the cameras by destroying the security system. Ah, yes. The guy I hired dropped my feather collection. I picked it up, but I dropped some feathers. I would have gotten away with it if it hadn't been for that meddling geezer." Dr. Kilroy commented, "I'm not old!"

Editor's Note: Looking at this solution and thinking about my other stories, I've noticed one continuous trend: any original characters have odd names that directly related to who they are. This has me thinking that, in this universe that I created for these stories, why are there people with names like Bad Boy? Did his parents always expect him to turn to a life of crime, so they abandoned all hope for their child and named him Bad Boy? The same applies to Danny Ding-Dong from "The Lighthouse Mystery," as well as several of my other stories. Oh, well. At least I thankfully abandoned this naming convention years ago.

Chapter 7

Alpha Team: The Deep Freeze

Like I mentioned in the introductions to the previous chapters, a vast majority of my work was short stories, whether it was completed or not. However, as I got older, I began to take what I had learned from these stories and exercises and apply them to much longer narratives. Thus, we have the next three chapters of this book: multi-chapter prose fiction.

The first of these, the subject of this chapter, is a straight-up retelling of LEGO's 2004-05 Alpha Team story, concerning Mission Deep Freeze and the events surrounding it. The story was entirely written in 2005, around the time that I started taking a leave of absence from writing. While it does closely follow the events of the source material, it does take certain liberties in integrating characters from my past stories, making it more personal.

In addition to the hand-written version of this story, there is also an incomplete typed version that covers the same plot points beat-for-beat. Because of that, I've decided to do something rather unorthodox: combine the two versions of the story together. A majority of the story here is the typed version, but the hand-written version does also appear to fill in the gaps. This is mainly to complete the story, but I also have carpal tunnel syndrome from all of this typing, so copying and pasting from one computer file to another is much easier on my hands. Perhaps I need to put them on ice...

Frosty Beginnings

One day in Legotown, the citizens were as happy as they could be. But the peace didn't last, for the temperature began to drop. People fled indoors to seek the warmer conditions of the indoors. But that didn't help, for blankets of frost began to grow on everything and the cool air seeped through the cracks in the window frames. Soon, the source of the cold air was discovered. It came from an orb-like object being carried by a beetle-like vehicle. No one could remember seeing anything like this before, but they were afraid. So when they first noticed it, they turned around and ran for their little plastic lives. The vehicle was too big for the streets. But that didn't stop its relentless assault. It just knocked over any obstacles in the way.

Mayor Charlie Prickman went outside to put mail into the mailbox. "I wonder why they want that much money to build a school. Oh well. After all 'A good education leads to a better Legotown,'" He muttered to himself. Suddenly, a citizen came running by, saying, "Help! A giant bug is chasing me and it's cooling everything down!" Charlie shook his head and said to himself, "I knew authorizing the construction of that bar was a bad idea." The citizen, overhearing this, replied, "I'm not drunk! Now get indoors before it eats you!" Charlie shuddered a bit and said, "You're right. It is freezing. And in the middle of July? That's strange. I'd better get inside." He turned around to reenter city hall, but it was too late.

"AAAAAAHHHHHH!!!!!" screamed Mayor Prickman. He was now being held in the clutches of the beetle vehicle! He shook his mechanical hand wildly and yelped, "Let me go, you fowl creature!" But the beetle only pinched harder. The Beetle's pilot said, in a raspy voice, "My master will be proud of me for getting him the mayor of Legotown." Prickman kicked in

protest and demanded to be let go. But the beetle spread out its huge wings and began to take flight. But Prickman still kicked and cursed in protest. The pilot said, in a harsh tone, "Don't fret, my little Butterfly. We will be there any minute now. Any minute." Prickman said, "Who are you? What do you want with me? Who do you work for?" The stranger just smiled and replied, "You'll find out the answer to all three of those questions when we get to our destination."

The next day, the police blockaded the street to find any evidence to solve the mystery to whatever happened to Mayor Prickman, where he is now, and who kidnapped him. Nick Johnson looked around for clues while an undercover officer was questioning Adam Prickman, Mayor Prickman's son. Captain Bill was already inside the building, looking for the lost mayor. A few minutes later, Captain Bill came out of the building. In one hand he carried a heavy-duty flashlight which could shine a beam that could be seen for miles around. In the other, he carried a top notch metal detector that could detect even the smallest amount of a metal. Along his side was his trusty police dog, Ruffles. Captain Bill looked down at the ground and said in shame, "He's not in the building." The undercover officer asked, "Did you check every room?" "Yes." "Every broom closet?" "Yes." "Every..." "How can he fit in the plumbing?" Adam sighed and asked, "Who would kidnap my dad? And why?" The undercover officer replied, "It might be a compulsion. People bite their nails. This man must kidnap people. But I seriously doubt it." Adam asked, "You think there's some lunatic who kidnaps people to relax!?" Nick Johnson replied, "Or he may be power-hungry, which is more likely. Take a look at what I found."

At first, no one knew what to make of the strange glowing object. Ruffles touched the object with his nose and flinched. Adam asked, "What's with him? Is it hot?" Nick Johnson replied, "No. It's cold. Very cold." Captain Bill said, "That explains the unusual weather. But who could have left it?" Nick Johnson replied, "I don't know. But I think I have a good idea who the culprit is." The undercover officer punched some keys on his laptop. "It's no use. I was checking to see if there was anything linked to this orb on the Internet, but there's..." The answer suddenly hit him like a lightning bolt. "I know

who's responsible for this. It was Ogel." Captain Bill asked, "How are you so sure it was Ogel?" The undercover officer replied, "Because he's the only one who would create something like that. I bet he's going to try to use that to try to take over the world." Captain Bill asked, "Doesn't he always?"

At his mountain fortress, Ogel was speaking to one of his head drones, who was named Mr. Bones, while he kept his pet cat, Mr. Whiskers, company. "Have you been keeping in touch with the spy I placed among the ranks of Alpha Team?" asked the black-suited person, being Ogel. The red and black creature, being Mr. Bones, replied, "Yes sir, I have. He said that they don't suspect a thing. He also mentioned that the food they serve is four stars compared to the garbage that Jalapeño Deado makes." On the hearing of that word, Mr. Whiskers hissed. Ogel looked down and said, "I feel your pain; having to eat peanut butter pizza or spicy hot pepper sandwiches."

Suddenly, another drone came into the room saying, "I have Prickman. I can bring him in if you want to." Ogel replied, "Bring him in." And with that, the drone left the room.

When the drone returned, Ogel and Mr. Bones could see that he also brought in Mayor Charlie Prickman in handcuffs. Ogel said, "Ah, at last. I finally get to meet the one and only Mayor Prickman." Prickman asked, "What do you want with me? Where are we? Are you going to use me in some weird experiment?" Ogel just smiled behind his helmet and said, "I don't really want you in person. I just want your town so that I can erect a large base. And the citizens of your town will become my slaves to help me conquer the world!" Prickman screamed out, "No! You will never take my town as long as I'm in charge!" Ogel just said, "You underestimate my power. Why, with my weapons, I could wipe out New York City and then some!" The drone that brought Prickman in said, "Sir, I should really put him into his cell." Ogel replied, "No. Don't. I've got something better in mind." Ogel motioned his arm to feel Prickman's cheek. He said, "Hmm. You seem a little warm. I think you should be cooled off." He turned to the drone and said, "Take him to my freezing chamber and put our political figure on ice... literally!" Prickman yelled in protest, but Ogel moved his arm to silence him. Ogel said

in a soft tone, "Don't worry. Once you're frozen solid, you won't mind the cold." Mr. Whiskers meowed as if saying, "I concur." Then the drone asked, "Should I take him off now?" Ogel replied, "Yes. You may take him off down to the freezing chamber. And don't freeze those handcuffs. I paid a fortune for those." With that, the drone guided Prickman out of the room.

After Mayor Prickman left the room, Ogel turned his attention back to Mr. Bones. Ogel said, "Now back to what I was saying. We we're talking about the trash... uh... food they serve here. But enough about that. Now, do you have any idea what my plan is?" Mr. Bones replied, "I do know. But if Alpha Team placed any bugs in this room, I would rather not speak of it." Ogel stated, "Good. You're learning." He turned around and looked out a window. He continued, "Ah. My plan is so cold, it's frozen solid. And not even Alpha Team can stop me!" Then he turned around, and left the room with Mr. Whiskers at his side, begging for food.

Life at HQ

On a small island off the coast of North Carolina lies Alpha Team Headquarters. It was almost noon when the agents were doing final checkups on their vehicles before heading to the mess hall for lunch.

At one of the tables, Dash and Cam, two of the agents, were conversing about reports on agent Zed's vacation. Cam asked, "Have you gotten any reports on Zed's vacation?" Dash replied, "Yes. He is currently in Orlando, Florida. He also mentioned that Walt Disney World is a blast." "What else did he say?" asked Cam. Dash replied, "Oh, he's just having fun. He told me that you won't believe the size of the Animal Kingdom theme park." Cam then asked, "What else did he say that did not relate to Walt Disney World?" Dash concentrated hard, trying to remember Zed's words, all the while unaware that Crunch was observing.

"Hi guys. What's up?," asked Crunch, who had just walked up to the table. Dash suddenly came back to reality, unaware of what just happened. Cam replied, "We were just discussing Zed's vacation, Right Dash?," It took a second for Dash's thoughts to come back together before replying, "Yes. That is correct." Crunch then replied, "I just got report from Zed. He said that, while relaxing on a beach, he was attacked by a flock of seagulls." "Why would he tell you something as frivolous as that?," Asked Dash. Crunch replied, "He said that it was very suspicious, since he wasn't eating anything at the time that the seagulls would be interested in." Cam replied, "That is odd. I'll think about if it just coincidental, or something more." But she was interrupted by yet another visitor at the table.

Their newest agent, Arrow, was standing right beside them. "You'll never

believe this. Last night Charge has this nightmare where his *Circusotopia* saga poster attacked him," boasted Arrow. Dash replied, "It comes as no surprise since that's the 26th time he's had that nightmare." Crunch said, "What's really scary is that someone thought that ripping off *Star Wars* would do them good. What were the films again?" Cam replied, "*Episode 1: The Elephant Menace, Episode 2: Attack of the Clowns, Episode 3: Revenge of the Magician, Episode 4: A New Manager, Episode 5: Animal Rights Strikes Back* and *Episode 6: Return of the Ringmaster.*" She gasped for breath, then continued, "Saying all of those titles really wears me out." Dash said, "Oh, speaking of which, you better go and finish up your rations. They get cold really fast."

Suddenly, without warning, the sirens began to wail. This alarm can only mean two things. Either the world was in danger again, or someone had accidentally swallowed a wrench in the garage. However, since everyone was in the mess hall at that time, it had to be the former. This was confirmed when the voice of the UN president boomed out over the agents. The voice said with dignity, "Good afternoon, Alpha Team. I am sorry to interrupt your lunch, but we have a situation on our hands. Spies in the CIA have reported that your archenemy, Ogel, has another sinister plan up his sleeve. He plans to use ice orbs to freeze the planet and turn it into a giant snow globe. This power has already been demonstrated in Legotown, Connecticut with the kidnapping of Mayor Prickman. Your mission: destroy the vehicles that our spies call snow crawlers, which act as transports for the ice orbs, destroy Ogel's base in Antarctica, free Mayor Prickman and capture Ogel. Good luck." And with that, the voice faded away. Agents all around were puzzled about this mission and where to start.

Ogel stood on a small balcony that overlooked an artificial lake. In the depths of the lake swam hungry sharks that wanted a bite at some flesh. Attached to the balcony was a long crane that extended out over the water. Ogel threw a sack of beef into the water while stroking Mr. Whiskers' soft white fur. Ogel then set his hook on the railing and stated to himself, "Alpha Team has surely found out by now. But my spy should lead them off on the wrong track. And if Alpha Team does manage to find their way here, their welcome will be

very cold.” Ogel pulled a lever on the control box, which caused the crane’s arm to lower so Ogel could observe the frozen body of Mayor Prickman in the crane’s grasp. Ogel then continued to himself, “Alpha Team will take the bait and my pet sharks will then have a fancy feast as I carry out my most diabolical plan. After all, who doesn’t want to save Mayor Prickman?” He then let out a soft chuckle as he left the room and as Mr. Whiskers jumped down from his perch.

Deep Chill in Death Valley

It had been agreed upon by the Alpha Team members that the best way to destroy the snow crawlers was to cover more ground. Dash had taken Radia, Tee Vee and Gearbox to Death Valley, California. Flex and Arrow went off to Arches, Utah. Charge, Diamond and Crunch went to Paris, France. Cam, however, went by herself to Niger.

Death Valley is the lowest point and one of the hottest in the U.S. However, thanks to Ogel’s Ice Orbs, it looked more like Norway than anything else. In the frozen basin of Death Valley, The Alpha Team Mobile Command Center and Tundra Tracker roared over the ground, occasionally hitting some cactus or some dead desert animal. Hitched on top of the command center was the Blue Eagle, quite possibly the fastest plane known to man. On the sides were two snow scooters; fast, sleek sleds that were perfect for a quick get-away.

However, the command center was not invulnerable to damage. As the command center came around the bend, the whole truck lurched. Dumbfounded, Radia asked, “Dash, what was that? I thought I felt something.” Dash, after looking out a window, replied, “We hit a rock and the tire’s been destroyed. We’re going to have to stop here.” The command center screeched to a halt and, with a gesture from Dash, the Tundra Tracker stopped too.

The foursome approached the wheel with caution, as if it was a time bomb, waiting to explode. Gearbox finally broke the silence by stating, “If you give me some time, I could fix this.” Dash replied, “You can fix the tire while I take the Blue Eagle to search for the snow crawlers.” Dash unhitched the Blue Eagle from its holding place and swooped off. Radia stated, “While you

take care of the tire, I'll be on the computer and see if I can get more on what we're dealing with." Tee Vee asked, "Will it be hard?" Radia replied, "It won't be hard. We've got the technology to send a blaster worm into any computer on the planet. We're capable of shutting down the whole world. If that's so, I can hack into a computer." Then, without another word, Radia went to work.

Flex was speeding off across Arches in the Ice Blade to the location of a supposed snow crawler uprising. As he sat in the cockpit, he looked back upon what Arrow had said back at camp. "I'll stay behind while you take care of the snow crawlers." Flex shot back, "Who died and put you in charge?" Arrow replied, "I'll just be here at the radio to let the rest of Alpha Team know when you brought the snow crawlers down." Then Flex remembered what he was supposed to do. He sped off down a valley.

About halfway from where he was headed, he ran into a snow bank. Flex muttered, "They've been here. I know it. But how would they know I was coming?" Suddenly, another snow bank fell into place behind him. He looked up and saw sinister snow crawlers kicking down dirt. Flex knew only one way out. He pressed a circular green button in the center of the control console. The Ice Blade suddenly began to shutter and shift as it transformed into a helicopter. He escaped in the nick of time as a freak avalanche filled the valley where he was.

He sailed over the rocks with ease. At last, he made it to the site of the snow crawler uprising. However, there were no signs of an uprising. No overturned rocks, no destroyed plants, nothing. With a million thoughts running through his head, the only thing he could do now was return to the camp.

Radia seemed worried. As she was looking through Ogel's computer, she came across the horrible, the indescribable. She ran off to a corner of the canyon and contacted Dash. She cried out into the radio, "This is Radia. I was inside Ogel's computer network when I got a hold of his master plan. His real plan. He's doing more than spreading around ice and snow. He's - No!" But it was too late. A snow crawler had crept up from behind and frozen her solid.

Giving Radia the Cold Shoulder

The Alpha Team ATV gracefully crawled along the terrain. Fortunately for Cam, who was piloting the ATV, the snow crawlers had not frozen the ground, therefore making it easy for Cam to trek along the ground. Then something struck her. "What if the snow crawlers haven't arrived yet?" wondered Cam to herself. "What if they were actually headed for somewhere else? And if they did, where would that somewhere be?" She brushed that thought off by saying to herself, "No. They're here. It's just that they haven't used their Ice Orbs yet." And then she saw it.

She came around the bend to come face to face with something far worse than a snow crawler. It sported an enclosed cockpit, six legs, two pincers, and a forty foot long tail that protruded into the sky with a stinger at the end. And worst of all, it featured a red paint job! Cam, knowing that she had to escape, reached for the stick shift and tried to put the ATV into reverse. However, it wouldn't budge. Cam gazed into the sky, stating, "O.K. Who's the author that's writing clichés into this story?" Looking down again, she realized that the stick shift was being marred by a piece of gum that had been placed there. She removed the gum, put the ATV into reverse and made her getaway, all the while wondering, with their infinite technology, why they would still use stick shifts.

The Alpha Team Bomb Squad and the Chill Speeder raced through the streets of Paris, responding to urgent reports from an artist, complaining that a snow crawler had turned his studio into an icebox before making it's getaway. Charge; in the jeep, Crunch; in the missile launcher and Diamond; in the Chill Speeder, were in hot pursuit of the snow crawler, following it's wake of destruction. Fallen bricks, shattered glass, car tires and fruit of all

sorts littered the street. At last, they managed to corner the snow crawler in a remote corner of town. However, as Charge, Crunch and Diamond stepped closer, they noticed this snow crawler was very different from the one they caught freezing Farmer Pierre's crops. This one was very small in stature, had no wings, considerably small legs, no recognizable armor protection, and could only carry one Ice Orb. Taking these concepts into consideration, Crunch aimed the missile launcher at the dwarfed snow crawler and opened fire. A hailstorm of snow crawler bits rained upon those three Alpha Team agents. However, their gaze was focused on the flying Ice Orb as it sailed down to Earth and landed with a deafening crash. Nothing happened.

Gearbox had finally fastened the last bolts for the new tire into place. After all this time, he had not heard from Radia and any suspicions on Ogel's plan. As he rounded the corner to see what Radia was up to, his eyes locked on her frozen form. He knew there was no other way than to get her out of there. First, he thought of using an ice pick to break her out, but Gearbox dismissed the idea since the ice picks they were issued were for scaling cliffs, not for freeing other agents from suspended animation. Then another idea came into his mind, and this one would not fail. He jumped into the cockpit for the Tundra Tracker and smacked a green button in the center of the console. The vehicle suddenly lurched upward and changed shape to become a powerful drilling machine. He glided over to Radia's prison and set to work.

After 5 minutes of labor, the machine finally broke open the icebox, letting Radia out. After this, he contacted Dash, informing him to come back to base, knowing that Radia's entrapment was no coincidence. After 15 minutes, Dash arrived back at the Mobile Command Center, transforming the Blue Eagle into the Ice Glider for safe landing. Dash asked, "What happened? Is everyone alright?" Gearbox replied, "Oh, everything's alright. It's just that Radia was frozen, with me helping her out. I'm guessing it's no coincidence." Radia blurted out, "It was no coincidence. I was frozen while making an important call to you." Dash asked, "What was it?" Radia replied, "It's Ogel's plan. He's not trying to freeze the world." She leaned in and continued softly, "He's trying to freeze time itself."

Race to Save Time

Dash had informed the other agents to gather at the Mobile Command Center for an emergency meeting, where they all shared stories of their adventures. Dash turned his attention to Cam when she mentioned the large vehicle. Dash said, "Most peculiar. I should look into that." However, when Radia told them all about Ogel's super plan, they all looked at each other in awe, as if they couldn't make out what they were hearing. Flex then broke the silence by asking, "Why would he want to do that? Once time is frozen, you can't do anything. I mean, you'll sit there for eons and be as still as a rock." Radia replied, "That's the most interesting part. Only Ogel and his drones will be able to move about when time has been frozen. Ogel's plan is to cast down the world leaders. And since time is frozen, there's no opposition. Then, he will unfreeze time with himself as the world's ruler." Charge asked, "Should we make our way to his base now?" Dash replied, "I don't see why not. Besides, we need to get to Antarctica before Ogel does anything. Come on, men, let's go." And, without another word, they headed off toward the south pole.

It wasn't long before they picked up two snow crawlers buzzing ahead of them. Knowing that they would serve as a threat, Dash in the Blue Eagle and Flex in the I-C 2 Helicopter, scouted ahead. Their suspicions were proven right when two snow crawlers swooped down at them. Flex fired two computer-guided rockets at one snow crawler, which then exploded on impact, but hardly left a scratch. Flex yelled, "Their armor's been reinforced! We need to turn back!" Dash replied, "Not yet. Just wait." And, with all of his might, Dash slammed into the side of one snow crawler, causing it to crash into the other one, activating the Ice Orb. Flex and Dash rejoined the others as the two frozen snow crawlers crashed to the ground.

Unaware of his unwanted company, Ogel bossed around some drones. He screeched at the drones, "More Ice Orbs! Pile them higher! Transfer their power into my time freeze ray! I will soon generate a wave of cold so powerful, time will stand still forever. Then, I will rule the world!" A drone then asked, "So, that's means were not being issued new watches?" Ogel replied, "No. Who would need them? Until then, however, I have another trick up my sleeve." He made his way to a control box and yanked down a lever that read, "Time Stream Disruption." Ogel's plan was unfolding.

The Time Portals

Several events had unfolded in Legotown since the disappearance of Mayor Prickman. Down in the transportation district, Captain Bill and Officer Max were on the beat. They were observing the alleyways for escaped convicts when they stumbled upon a bum. The bum stood upright and said, "Why if it isn't the Po po! What do you want tonight?" Max then stated, "Sir, you need to come over here to be searched." The bum just got wide-eyed and said, "Oh. You racist! You think I do all wrong just because I'm just livin' out on the streets, do ya?" Bill replied, "No, sir. We just need to check you for stolen valuables." The bum, almost involuntarily, dropped boatloads of stuff onto the ground and stated, "There. Those are my belongings. Look through them and see for yourself that I ain't no robber." The police officers scrimmaged through the pile of stuff. They found a pair of socks, an old radio, expired Legoland passes, blue French fries (don't ask), paper bags, dry ink pens, bullet casings from gang fights, empty shampoo bottles, a crystal statue with both arms missing, and a vacuum cleaner bag. All of this did not come out as suspicious to the two police officers until they stumbled upon an apparatus that looked like a modified toaster oven. Max held it up and asked, "What is this?" The bum just looked it over and replied, "I have no idea. It just came out of nowhere one day and I took it into my care." Suddenly, the apparatus began to shutter and stir as the door on the front began to open. Then, a burst of blue light shot out to form a portal. Then, out of this portal lumbered out an ankylosaurus! With one swoosh of its tail, a dumpster was swung around the alley until it came to rest inside the portal before it vanished. Not knowing what to make of this, the two officers and the bum fled from the area. However, it was no use.

Dinosaurs had invaded all of Legotown, leaving a trail of ruin in their

wake. At the soccer stadium, a T-rex was swinging the camera boom like a baseball bat. At the train station, a Triceratops was jousting with the Lego Express. Then, more portals appeared and out of these stepped humongous robots that, upon arrival, began beating up the dinosaurs. The bum then jokingly said, "Maybe we could call Toho Studios and they could make a movie out of this." Suddenly, all of the fighters, android and Mesozoic, vanished into the time stream.

Captain Redbeard and his crew had just finished burying their booty on elephant-shaped Treasure Island. "Aye, men. Let's go on the account so we can get more booty!" shrieked Hardtack Harry. They were rowing back to the ship when suddenly a robot and dinosaur appeared out of nowhere on the sandy beach of Treasure Island. Three Corned Hat, One Eyed Jack said, "Look, captain. Thar be monsters abroad!" Redbeard replied, "What are ye staring at? Give them a broadside!" The Pirates on board the ship loaded the canons and got them into position. However, when the first volley was released, it just passed through empty air and landed on the beach. The dinosaur and robot had vanished.

At last. Alpha Team had arrived at Ogel's Mountain Fortress, where he awaited. Ogel looked them over and said, "Those poor fools. All forces, attack!" The battle was long and bloody, but to keep to the Lego Company's politically correct policy, none of the agents died. In fact, the drones were easily defeated. The agents then turned their attention to Ogel. Dash yelled, "Surrender now! You can only loose. We squashed your drones like gnats and you're next." Ogel just smiled, held up the time freeze ray and replied, "Not entirely. First, I will have you fed to my sharks, then I will..." His sentence was cut off by a loud, banging noise and a shower of blue light.

Time Stream Tribulations

Out of nowhere, a robot and a dinosaur appeared and began wrestling on the icy plain. Ogel snarled and menacingly said, "I can't do anything without someone interfering! I knew giving my modified toaster oven to that bum was a bad idea." Dash soon realized the opportunity and whispered to the other agents, "Here's our chance. We can get inside without anyone noticing." They all agreed and approached the door. But before they could do anything, they got caught in a net! Regardless, agent Arrow was standing below, free as a bird. Flex snarled, "It was you! You were the one who sent me into that trap back in Arches!" Cam asked, "How do you know he's working for Ogel?" Flex replied, "If he were truly one of us, he would be in here too." Arrow replied, "Excellent evaluation Flex. We could use more men like you in this world. But it is quite a pity that you'll become shark morsels." Dash pushed a small red button on his utility belt that began to flash a brilliant red. Dash yelled out, "You may have us for now, but help is on the way." Arrow just smirked and said, "And it will come, if my mind-controlled sea gulls haven't eliminated Zed yet." Cam gulped and replied, "That's why the sea gulls attacked Zed." Arrow said, "Right again. Man, you people are smarter than I thought. It's quite a shame that you'll have to be fed to the sharks! Take them away." As the drones took down the net and hauled it inside the base, Ogel pressed a button on his Time Freeze Ray. He yelled to the trapped Alpha Team, "My portals will now reverse as time freezes solid. Now watch me take over the world!" He evilly guffawed as he went back inside his base.

Back in Legotown, all of the robots and dinosaurs had reappeared on the streets, disrupting the bum's phone call to Toho Studios. The Bum hollered, "Why can't you fight somewhere else? You've ruined my only chance to make millions!" Suddenly, without warning, all of the dinosaurs and robots

vanished again into the portals that returned them to their own time periods. A huge sigh of relief seemed to settle over the entire town. The bum turned to Captain Bill and stated, "Those people at Toho aren't very talkative. They haven't said a word." "That's because there's no one on the phone," said Officer Max, as he suspended the severed phone cable in the air. He then let gravity take control of that dismembered cord again, but it never made contact with the ground. It had almost reached the ground when time came to a halt.

Editor's Note: The typed version of this story ends here. The remainder of the story is filled in with the hand-written version, and oh boy, does the quality drop with it! You'll see what I mean.

Alert Agent Zed

Ogel had locked up Alpha Team in a big metal cage. A drone questioned, "Weren't you going to freeze them?" Ogel answered, "This idea is better." Far below the cage was a large pool. Inside were sharks that were hungry. Ogel said, "Bon appetite, my fishy friends!" The drone pulled some levers and the cage descended slowly toward the pool. Flex said, "They won't like me. I've skipped leg day!" Ogel replied, "They won't care." Dash said, "There is only one hope now: Zed."

Zed had finished his lunch when everything stopped moving. He was confused. Suddenly, Dash's voice came over the radio and said, "Attention! We need your help! Ogel has frozen time and we're trapped in a cage in Ogel's base." Zed replied, "I'm on my way." He hopped into the Ice Shark and sped off.

Reversing Ogel's Plan

Zed reached the shore of Antarctica and turned the Ice Shark into the Blizzard Blaster. He traveled a long time before he reached Ogel's base. Zed blew down the doors and went inside.

The cage was two feet from the water now. Suddenly, the cage stopped. Ogel yelled, "Dang it! We ran out of rope! Arrow, detach the cage. Let the entertainment begin!" Arrow reached out to pull a lever when a voice cried out, "Arrow! I knew I shouldn't have trusted you from that time I heard you talk in your sleep!" It was Zed. He was on top of the crane that held the cage. He continued, "You'll be sorry if you pull that lever." Zed hopped onto a chain to climb down to the cage. He said, "I'll try to get down there to see what I can do." He hopped onto the balcony where Ogel, Arrow, and the drone were. He picked up the drone and threw him into the water underneath the cage. The sharks swam over and started a feeding frenzy. Zed then pulled a lever and the pool drained. The sharks could go nowhere. Zed then said, "This will hurt. But at least you'll live." Then he pulled a lever that said, "Crane Release." The cage dropped onto the sharks and it killed them. Zed said, "Let's go." Then they all escaped.

Alpha Team got into their vehicles and escaped; all except for Zed. He said, "I'll meet up with them as soon as I destroy Ogel's Base." Suddenly, an Ice Orb struck him. Cam looked back and said, "It's the same thing I saw." Ogel called from the cockpit, "How do you like my Scorpion Orb Launcher?" Zed replied, "It's ugly." He climbed into the Thermo Blaster seat, ready to shoot.

The World is Saved Again

Zed aimed the Thermo Blaster at the Scorpion Orb Launcher. He pulled the trigger and a missile flew straight at Ogel. He jumped out just in time as the Scorpion Orb Launcher blew up. The explosion generated enough heat to unfreeze time. The others went back to see what happened. Dash said, "Where's Ogel?" Zed replied, "Look! Ogel's escaping!" Ogel escaped in his Sky Spider. The explosion also freed Mayor Prickman. Flex said, "I've got Prickman. Now let's go." Everything went back to normal. Mayor Prickman went back to Legotown and the world was safe again.

Mayor Prickman and Patrolman Bill were strolling by an alleyway when Prickman stated, "Wasn't there a dumpster here?" Bill replied, "It went back in time." Prickman said, "That is completely..." Suddenly, a portal appeared and out came a dumpster covered in prehistoric plants. Bill finished Prickman's sentence by saying, "Possible." Prickman said, "I'm afraid it's just the beginning."

The End
(For Now!)

Chapter 8

Alpha Team 2: The Dino Attack

I personally have not seen this clip for myself, but my brother, Daniel Bermudez, once told me about a moment from the TV Show “Hotel Hell,” where celebrity chef Gordon Ramsey was tasting a particular establishment’s lasagna. It was regarded as the location’s signature dish, but when asked how he felt about the flavor, Gordon Ramsey reportedly said, “It’s not bad. It’s not good, either. It’s just weird.”

Why I felt compelled to include this quote is because it describes this next multi-chapter story perfectly. It’s better than some of my other stories, but it pales in comparison to my most recent writings, so I would say that it’s middle-of-the-road. It was written in 2006, just one year after its predecessor.

But oh boy, is it weird! It’s intended to be a direct sequel to “Alpha Team: The Deep Freeze” (the subject of the previous chapter), but it’s less that and more LEGO Avengers masquerading as an adaption of LEGO’s Dino Attack theme. It’s mostly about Pepper Roni going to places like Mars, Wild West Island, Xalax, and other places to find the Dino Attack vehicles because Dash had a vision that they would save the world. Again, like what Gordon Ramsey said, “It’s just weird.”

But if you happen to like things that are weird, then read on, because who knows? Maybe you’ll find some enjoyment in this bizarre tale.

Dash's Vision

Dash, the leader of Alpha Team, swooped in with the Blue Eagle. "I spotted Ogel's base. It's in the heart of a volcano. I'm moving in. Over." Just then, a missile launcher fired and hit the right wing. "I'm hit!" yelled Dash into the radio. He tried to maintain control, but he was knocked out.

Flex was hanging a picture over his bed that said, "In memory of Agent Arrow (we never did trust you)," when Zed came rushing in and said, "You have to come see this. It's real important." Flex asked, "Did Crunch get passed that one level on the gamecube? That is important." Zed replied, "It's not that. It's indescribable. You'll have to come to the briefing room to understand."

While Dash was unconscious, he had a dream. He dreamed that he was lying on a beach and in the sky he saw images. But these images were filled with terror. They showed cities all over the world in ruins. He saw dinos ripping mail boxes, trees, and lamp posts and throw them around like toys. Then he saw five vehicles. One was small with a small gun. One was long with a roll cage. One was like a pick-up truck, but a gun was mounted on the back. One was large with two sets of treads. One was a large helicopter with lots of weapons. Then a voice said, "Only you can stop the dino attack." Then he woke up.

He was lying on a bed and Ogel was standing over him. Ogel said, "I have you now, Dash. Good thing I had Mr. Whiskers." Ogel's cat purred. Ogel continued, "You will die!" He pushed a button and a saw appeared. Ogel laughed and then left with Mr. Whiskers at his side, begging for food.

Volcano Confrontation

Zed and Flex raced to the briefing room. Radia and Charge were already there. Zed asked, "Where's Crunch? I called for him 10 minutes ago." Radia replied, "He's off playing that video game again." Zed said, "Not again. Anyway, here's our mission. Dash has been captured and is being held on a volcanic island. We need to save him and destroy the place. Radia will take The Navigator. Flex will take the Ice Blade. Charge will take the all-terrain jeep. I will take the Blizzard Blaster. Let's move out."

They made it to the island in a very short time. Zed ordered, "I need you to go underwater, Charge. See if you find anything." Charge transformed the jeep into a submarine and went underwater.

Charge followed a river toward the center of the island. he resurfaced in front of Ogel's base. He reported, "I found it. I'm going in."

The saw was now inches away from Dash's face. A drone was walking around with a cup of coffee when it spilled the drink on the control panel for the saw. The saw went haywire and fell to the floor. Ogel came rushing in and saw the mess. He stared at the drone and said, "You spill too much coffee. The next time I see this, you mindless idiot, I will personally turn you into an orb!" Dash asked, "Now that the saw's down, won't you release me?" Ogel snapped back, "NO! You and this butterfingere coffee carrier will be drowned!" The drone looked shocked. Suddenly, the left wall began to shudder and shake as the wall blew up and bricks rained down on their heads.

Ogel's New Plot

Dash and Ogel climbed out of the rubble to see Charge standing where the wall used to be. Dash said, "I've got Ogel. Let's go." He snatched Ogel by the arms. Charge stated, "This place is going to blow sky-high in 5 minutes. Let's move out." They escaped just in time.

Later in Legotown, Dash was walking with Pepper Brickolini, one of the newer agents, when they saw Ogel rattling the bars in the prison. He yelled from above, "You may think you have won, but you have no idea what you have unleashed!" Dash said, "Oh, no! The dino attack." Pepper asked, "What did you say?" Dash replied, "When I was knocked out, I saw dinos destroying cities. Then 5 vehicles came and stopped them. Then a voice said, 'Only you can stop the dino attack.' Then I woke up." Ogel stated, "Remember the time stream disruption incident last month? If you do, let me explain something. Not all of the dinos went back to their time. I took these and mutated them into monsters far beyond any legoette's nightmare!" Dash said, "We have to be on our guard."

The next day, Pepper and Sky, Pepper's girlfriend, were walking down main street, listening to music on L.E.G.O. Radio, when DJ's voice came on saying, "We have a special report coming to you live. Dinosaurs are attacking Creatorville. Half of the city is in ruins and they're doing more damage. Be prepared." Sky said, "It's probably a joke." Pepper asked, "If it was a joke, then how do you explain that smoke in the horizon?" Sky turned her head to see Creatorville go up in flames. She said, "Uh oh! We're in for some trouble."

Pepper's Quest

Pepper raced to the Information Center to tell the Infomaniac. When he got there, the Infomaniac already had the radio on. DJ's voice could be heard saying, "The Army tries, but their Abrams Tanks are put out of commission from T-Rex laser-vision attacks. The Navy tries, but Raptors protect themselves from attack with shields. The Air Force tries, but pteredons destroy their F-16s with lightning vision. Finally, the Marines try, but Mutant Lizards escape with their chameleon power. At this point, no one can stop the dino attack." The Infomaniac snapped back at the radio, "That's because I know something you don't." Pepper asked, "What are you doing?" The Infomaniac spun around and said, "You stay ou- Oh. Hi, Pepper. What are you doing here?" Pepper replied, "I came here to tell you about what you heard on the radio. What did you mean by 'I know something you don't'?" The Infomaniac replied, "I made 5 vehicles for a time like this. Their names are the Street Sprinter, Urban Avenger, Fire Hammer, Iron Predator, and T-1 Typhoon. Only with these can you stop the dino attack. I hid them so they don't fall into the wrong hands." Pepper asked, "Where do I start?" The Infomaniac replied, "You will find the Fire Hammer on Mars." Pepper got on his skateboard and went to space port.

Captain Walker got Pepper all dressed up for space flight. Pepper got into the Solar Explorer with BB, Doc, Mac, and Assistant. Felix Combo, manager of space port, shouted from the control room, "10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1. ..Liftoff! We have liftoff!" Batterbee Shaure, the space port security guard, asked, "With Assistant gone, who will work the Comlink Cruiser?" Felix replied, "You will," as he tossed the owner's manual to him.

Mars Mission

The Solar Explorer streaked toward the Red Planet. Inside, the crew talked about their adventure so far. “This day will live in history,” said BB. Assistant asked, “Why? We’ve already been there.” BB replied, “How many pizza delivery dudes have gone to Mars?” He glanced over at Pepper, who was looking out the window. Suddenly, the whole ship shuddered as a meteorite hit the hull. Pepper yelled, “We’re hit!” BB shot back, “I know! Now calm down and we’ll do everything.” Just then, the Solar Explorer made impact with the ground. Luckily, no one was hurt.

Two of the Martians, Altair and Mizar, were looking for new deposits of biodium when they came across the Solar Explorer. Mizar said, “Look. The earthlings have had mishaps again. Let’s take a look.” Altair didn’t protest. They approached the ship when Doc, Mac, BB, Pepper, and Assistant climbed out. Mizar said, “I see you’ve returned with the pizza boy you talked about.” Pepper said, “My name is Pepper. I’m here to look for the Fire Hammer.” Altair got a wild look in his eyes and replied, “I know what you’re talking about. I’ll make you a deal. If you find a good deposit of biodium, I’ll give you the Fire Hammer.” Pepper said, “It’s a deal. I’ll find a good deposit before you can say Pecky picked up Reese’s Pieces 3 times over.” Mizar said, “If you find Biodium Bugs, you’ll find a good deposit.” And with that, the astronauts set out to find the deposit.

After an hour, Mac reported, “I found something.” BB saw the landscape and said, “I don’t want to be Johnny Raincloud, but Biodium Bugs have eaten our deal.” Sure enough, the entire deposit was being eaten.

Biodium Bugs

The astronauts watched as the Biodium Bugs ate the entire deposit. Doc said, “We won the deal! Altair said we needed to FIND a deposit.” Assistant replied, “No he didn’t. He said we needed to find a GOOD deposit, not a half-eaten one.” Mac stated, “He’s right, you know.” Pepper said, “Let’s just go and search for more.”

Just then, Mizar in a Red Planet Protector shot some lasers to scare away the Biodium Bugs. He yelled at them, “Go find your own deposit, you over-sized crickets!” BB said, “You scared away the bugs, but the deposit is ruined.” Mizar replied, “Not exactly.” He used his radio to call the Excavation Searcher. Doc said, “See? I was right. It didn’t have to be a GOOD deposit.”

A few minutes later, a large four-legged robot marched into the valley. Altair rode up in the Red Planet Cruiser and said, “You should return to the Aero Tube Hanger with me to fetch your prize.”

Altair led the astronauts to the throne room at the Aero Tube Hanger. Inside, Rigel sat on his throne. Altair ran in and said, “Your majesty, I’ve brought the Earthlings that found the deposit.” Rigel replied, “Get back to work. I would like to speak to them.” The astronauts approached the throne. Pepper said, “My name is Pepper. I’m looking for the Fire Hammer.” Rigel replied, “Ah, I see. Since you found a deposit, I’ll give it to you along with some biodium.” Pepper was given everything he was promised. He said, “Thank you. I need this,” and they left.

The biodium was used to repair the Solar Explorer. After that, they took off and headed back to Earth.

A Typhoon Out West

Back on Earth, Pepper found a note inside the engine of the Fire Hammer. It said, "You will discover the T-1 Typhoon on Western Island." He got back on his skateboard and rode to the marina.

Later at the marina, he went into the boat rental shop. Pepper asked the cashier, "Can I rent a boat?" The cashier replied, "You can rent the super-boat for only \$350. Or you can rent a genuine oil tank for \$100." Pepper replied, "I don't want an oil can. I want a small boat to take me to Western Island." The cashier replied, "I've got what you're looking for. A genuine Western Island package deal. It includes everything you need on Western Island. It includes a boat." Pepper said, "I'll take it." The cashier replied, "That'll be \$500." Pepper replied, "I'll take it for \$200." The cashier replied, "You insulted me. That'll be \$10." Pepper pointed at an object and asked, "What is that?" The cashier replied, "That is a genuine Buggs Bunny doll with light-up eyes. It talks, too." He pressed it and it said, "What...what...what...what's up, Doc?" The cashier continued, "Oh yeah. I forgot. It tends to skip." Pepper replied, "I need a boat." The cashier replied, "The cheapest one is this Indian canoe. The doll is included as a set for \$150." Pepper said, "I want the canoe only." The cashier replied, "You cannot leave out the doll." Pepper replied, "Fine. I'll take the doll with the canoe." He paid the cashier and left.

After an hour, Pepper got caught in a storm. The canoe swayed with the waves and the Buggs Bunny doll fell out. A wave smashed the canoe to bits. Pepper swam and swam and swam until he could see Silver Bay. Then, he lost his breath and fainted.

Legorado

Pepper woke up lying on the white sand of Silver Bay. Next to him laid Buggs Bunny's head with scorch marks where the light-up eyes used to be. Along side it were the remains of the canoe. Pepper got up, looked around, and said to himself, "I'm still alive. I made it through the storm. But the canoe and the doll didn't. I wonder what Haney's spawn will say about this?"

Sheriff Brown and Deputy Sam were riding along on their horses when they spotted Pepper on the beach. Sam said, "You made it through the night." Pepper stated, "Hey. I'm here looking for the T-1 Typhoon." Sheriff Brown replied, "I'm not sure exactly what you're talking about. But the Indian Chief at Boulder Cliff Canyon may know. Come into town with us." Pepper followed them into Legorado, the local boom town.

As Pepper walked through Legorado, he noticed a sign at the general store that said, "New! Buggs Bunny cigarette lighters! Says sayings including, 'Doc, smoking is (puff) cool.' On sale now!"* Pepper said, "I guess Buggs Bunny is in style." Suddenly, Sheriff Brown stopped in surprise. He yelled, "The Thompson Duo has escaped! Hey, boy we found on the beach, you must go to the Indian village in Boulder Cliff Canyon to find out where those low-down varmints went." Pepper replied, "Yes, sir." He set off.

Later at the Indian village, Pepper asked the Chief, "Do you know the location of the bandits and the T-1 Typhoon?" The Chief replied, "We have T-1 Typhoon. Bandits stole sacred rug and hid in mine. Return the rug, and we will give you T-1 Typhoon." Pepper headed to the old mine.

As Pepper walked through the mine, he sprung a trap and he was captured! Nick Dollars walked up and said, "I have you now! Ha, ha, ha!"

*I have few regrets in life, but writing this sentence is one of them.

Bandit Bust-Out

Pepper found himself locked in a cage in the bandit's hideout. He could hear them say stuff like, "Let's steal those new cigarette lighters," or, "I know. Let's steal Clatter-Bones Jones." They went off to steal the stuff they talked about. Pepper noticed that the bandits left the keys to the cage and their loot unsupervised. He snatched the keys and escaped. He got all of the loot and prepared a trap.

About half an hour later, they returned with their goodies. Suddenly, they were trapped in the trap that trapped Pepper. He looked at them and said, "You should have known that trap was there." The Thompson Duo grunted.

Pepper returned all of the loot that was stolen. He tried to return the rug, but the Chief stated, "We cannot take. We now have Sacred Box." He presented a box with wires coming out of it. He pressed the top and it said, "What's up...up...up...up...BOOM!" Then it exploded into one million pieces. The chief continued, "We need sacred rug back." Pepper handed back the rug. This time, he took it. He stated, "T-1 Typhoon is yours." His medicine man clapped, and the T-1 Typhoon appeared! The medicine man said, "Good luck." Pepper hopped into the cockpit and was getting ready to fly when the Chief said, "Iron Predator is on Adventurers' Island." Then Pepper flew off and back to Legotown.

Later in Legotown, Pepper told the cashier about the canoe and the doll. The cashier replied, "Oh, no! You need to pay insurance by buying this Donald Duck voice changer." Pepper replied, "I will not buy it." As he walked away, the cashier replied, "Don't blame me when the police arrest you."

Island for Adventure

Johnny Thunder, Pippin Reed, and Dr. Kilroy were getting in the Air Zeppelin when Pepper rode up on his skateboard. He asked them, "Where are you going?" Dr. Kilroy replied, "We're going to Adventurers' Island to document all of the animals that live there." Pepper stated, "I need to go there to look for the Iron Predator." Pippin said, "I don't know what it is. But we can help you find it. Climb aboard." Pepper climbed aboard and they flew off toward Adventurers' Island.

Later on Adventurers' Island, Dr. Kilroy was reading an inscription that said, "Find the silver and gold keys that will open the vault of wisdom. You will find the Iron Predator there." Pepper asked, "Where will we find these keys?" Pippin replied, "Let's start at the mummy's tomb."

After a long jeep ride, they made it to the tomb. Pepper said, "I'll go in." Johnny replied, "Don't get killed, mate."

Pepper solved all of the puzzles easily. At last, he confronted the last challenge. A large gap laid between him and the silver key. Then he saw a pressure pad. He stepped on it and a bridge appeared! He lifted up his foot and it disappeared. He said to himself, "I need a weight." Then he remembered some rocks he passed. He got these and used them as weights. The bridge appeared and he crossed to snatch the key. Once he had the key, he returned to the adventurers.

They returned to the zeppelin to find the next key in the jungle. As they flew, a bird accidentally popped the balloon. Johnny yelled, "We're going down!" Pippin tried her best to direct toward a clearing, but she was too late. The zeppelin crashed into a group of trees.

The Underwater Key

The Adventurers escaped the wreckage of the Air Zeppelin. Pippin said, "It's beyond repair. We have to move on." Dr. Kilroy added, "There goes our expedition to document the animals. I wonder where the next key is." Pepper said, "Look what I found. It's a tablet that says, 'Follow the eastern wind to the sea to find the gold key under the waves.' We need to go east and go diving." They went in that direction until they reached the coast. Pepper said, "I'll go in."

He got into his diving gear and went underwater. He explored for some time until he saw the key on the ocean floor. He dove for it and he moved closer and closer until he had the key. He resurfaced and said, "Now that we have the keys, let's find the Vault of Wisdom."

After hours of searching, they found the vault. The vault door was a stone slab with two key holes and a stone wheel. Pepper said, "Let's put in the keys." When Pepper did so, the keys melted away, the stone wheel turned, and the door swung open! Pepper went inside and saw his prize, the Iron Predator! Johnny said, "You got what you came for, mate. Let's go."

The ferry showed up after Johnny called for one. The Iron Predator was loaded aboard and they headed back to Legotown.

Later, back in Legotown, Johnny went to the airport to tell Harry Cane, ace pilot, what happened to the Zeppelin. Harry replied, "Don't worry, y'all. I'll build a new one." Johnny said, "That's fine with me, mate." Pepper said, "Look. On this paper it says that the Urban Avenger is at Xalax." With that, Pepper rode off to the intergalactic portal.

Xalax Acceleration

Once Pepper got to the portal to Xalax, he stepped inside. He felt like he was pressed on all sides. When it stopped, he looked around.

He was inside a garage with piles of bricks here and there. A man dressed in red, white, and blue stepped inside through a door. Pepper asked, "Who are you?" The man replied, "I'm Rocket Racer and these are my friends." Suddenly, 12 little people raced inside from another door. Rocket Racer continued, "These are my Ramas friends. Snake, Rip, Pulse, Duster, Surfer, Spiky, Scratch, Shredd, Loopin, Gear, Lightor, and Warrior." Warrior stepped forward and stated, "We have seen you before, Pepper. I am a veteran racer around here. Some of the other Ramas don't seem to get the picture, though." He glanced over at Surfer who was lighting a cigar with a Buggs Bunny cigarette lighter. Pepper whispered to Warrior, "I don't really trust Surfer." Pulse broke in and said, "Hey Pepper. The championship race is taking place in the Big Dome today. Would you like to join us?" Pepper replied, "I'll make you a deal. If I win, I'll get the Urban Avenger. If I don't, I'll try again." Rocket Racer replied, "It's a deal. You can use this old car that we have. Meet us in the Big Dome for the race of your life!"

After a while, Pepper headed to the starting line. Off in a corner, some Ramas were betting on who would win. All of the racers were revving up their engines. Pepper could see the entire track from where he was. There were loops, jumps, a floor that had panels that moved up and down, tunnels, even a vertical wall! The light turned red, then yellow, then green. The cars sped off. Snake punched the gas pedal too hard and went flying into a pool of lava and died. The race had begun, but it just ended for Snake.

The Championship Race

The other racers rounded the corner with ease only to find a long jump. Loopin was the first to react by speeding up and sailing over the lava. The others did the same. Scratch rammed his car into Gear's car. Gear spun out of the control and rammed into some hay. Rip pushed a button on the dashboard and two small hacksaws popped out the front bumper. He stayed on course with Duster who was in front of him. Suddenly, the track went into a tunnel. Duster turned his car to the right and Rip was caught in the wall. The track went underground into a room full of rotating saws. Shredd tried to dodge the saws, but his car was dashed to pieces.

The track emerged at a loop. Above the track was a sign that said, "Caution: Stay at top speed on loop or else gravity will take control and you'll make heck of a mess below." Fortunately, no one made a mess.

After the next jump came the vertical wall. The racers drove along the wall smoothly, except for Spiky. He slid all the way down and gained enough momentum to go flying into the lava.

After getting past traps, the finish line was in sight. Surfer pulled out a gun and aimed it at Pepper. Just as he fired, Pepper steered out of the way and the bullet hit Rocket Racer in the arm. He stopped. Pepper snapped at Surfer, "Just for that, here's a treat!" Pepper rammed into Surfer's car and the car flew through the air, landed into the stands, and exploded. Suddenly, Pepper turned his car around and drove over to Rocket Racer's car. The announcer said, "Hey, wrong way!" But he was not listening.

Compassion

Pepper got out of his car to see the wound. He asked Racket Racer, "Does it hurt?" Rocket Racer replied, "It's nothing much. In a few days it'll be as good as new." Pepper said, "No it won't. If the bullet stays in there, you'll get infected." The announcer stated, "And the winner is Warrior! Well done." Pepper continued, "I have some tweezers in my pocket. I can use them to remove the bullet. I also have a change of socks I can use as bandages." Rocket Racer asked, "Why did you come back to save me?" As Pepper worked, he replied, "Because I realized that friends are more important than glory." Warrior walked up and said, "That was a wise decision you made, Pepper. Because of what you did, I'll give you the Urban Avenger. Return to the garage with me as soon as you're done there."

Later at the garage, Warrior threw a switch and the Urban Avenger rose through the floor before Pepper's eyes. Pepper said, "Thanks. I need this." He hopped inside and drove through the portal.

Inside the engine, Pepper found another note that read, "You will locate the Street Sprinter on Viking Island." He got back on his skateboard and rode to the Marina.

As Pepper walked through the Marina, the cashier ran out of his store to say, "I need you to buy this Zurg figure for \$50 so I can stay in business." Pepper replied, "No. And I'm going to borrow a boat." The cashier replied, "OK. If you say so."

Pepper rode to Viking Island in the Coast Watch patrol boat. Everything went well until the boat ran out of gas and a larger ship was approaching.

Nordic Seas

Pepper took a nice look at the ship. A dragon head was carved at the front, a large sail was at the center, 6 oars came out of the sides, a catapult was mounted at the front, and a cage was at the back. He didn't know what to do.

When the ship got close enough, someone on board said, "Hello, lad. What are you doing out here?" Pepper replied, "I'm heading to Viking Island to find the Street Sprinter." One of the Vikings said, "My name is Big Horn. Come with us to our fortress." So Pepper got on the ship, harnessed the patrol boat to the back, and they sailed off.

Later at the fortress, Big Horn led the way in. He said to Pepper, "We have the Street Sprinter." He pointed to a cage. Inside was the Street Sprinter! He continued, "The Fafnir Dragon stole a stash of treasure from us and hid it on Demon Island. If you return the treasure, we'll give you the Street Sprinter." Pepper replied, "It's a deal." He hopped into a small boat outside the fort and rowed off.

Later at Demon Island, Pepper wandered around wondering, "Where could this treasure be?" Suddenly, he came across a cave and he said to himself, "Maybe the treasure is in there." At the entrance, Pepper saw a skeleton with an ax. He took the ax.

As Pepper walked through the cave, he saw the treasure in a chest! He took a few steps toward the treasure chest. Suddenly, he saw the Fafnir Dragon swooping down at him.

Fighting Fafnir

Pepper knew that the Fafnir Dragon would fry him to a crisp. He could do only one thing. He needed to fight back. He clutched the ax and swung it at the Fafnir Dragon. It dodged the blows and breathed a ball of fire at Pepper. Luckily, it missed Pepper by an inch. He then realized that the only way to win was to make a distraction. He picked up a bone and threw it against the wall. The Fafnir Dragon was distracted long enough for Pepper to slash the back three times. It soon started to stumble from the lack of blood, and then it toppled over. Pepper took the chest and left the island.

Later on Viking Island, Pepper returned to the fortress. Red Richard, one of the guards, yelled, "He's returned with the treasure. Open the gate." The gate opened and Pepper entered with the treasure. Big Horn said, "I'm proud of you, lad. The Street Sprinter is yours. Open the cage." The men obeyed his order and Pepper drove off.

Pepper built a raft to park the Street Sprinter on. Then, he harnessed the raft to the back of the Coast Watch Patrol Boat and then he used oars to row off, since the boat was out of fuel.

When Pepper returned to Legotown, Charge ran up to Pepper, looking frantic. He said, "Mutant dinos have been spotted on the outskirts of Legotown. Four new agents have been hired to save the day. Their names are Digger, Viper, Specs, and Shadow." Pepper replied, "The dinos are here. Go ahead, monsters. Make my day."

The Attack Begins

Alpha Team raced to the outskirts in record time. But it was too late. The crops were destroyed, the livestock was eaten, and the barns and farmhouses were in ruins. A farmer ran up to them and stated, “The dinos have headed to Corn World.” Alpha Team set out again.

When they reached Corn World, Shadow said, “They’re here, alright. Advance!” Dash, in the Blue Eagle, swooped in on a T-rex that was ripping up the track for the Corn Coaster. He pressed a button, and the Blue Eagle turned into the Ice Glider, which was invisible. Dash yelled from the cockpit, “You’re going to wish you went back through those portals.” He fired the dual lasers at the T-rex. It fumbled around and fell down.

Over at the pueblo, JP, a park mechanic, was hitting a mutant lizard over the head. She said, “Stand back, you foul creature!” Suddenly, the mutant lizard was knocked off its feet. The Fire Hammer pulled up. Viper climbed out and said, “That should take care of things.”

But trouble was growing over at LEGOLAND. Monorail pylons tumbled, buildings crumbled, and the dino attack grew fierce. Agent Gearbox drove into the park with the Tundra Tracker. He saw Bob Longtree, a gardener, using his sit-on lawn mower to fight a raptor. Gearbox got an idea. He turned the Tundra Tracker into a drilling vehicle. He then hacked down some trees that landed on top of the raptor.

At the far end of the park, Flex in the Ice Blade sped along. But a T-rex used its laser vision to cut down a statue to fall on to Flex.

The Heat of Battle

Flex soon noticed the danger. He swerved around the statue and gained enough speed to knock the T-rex off its feet. Just then, the radio buzzed to life. The voice said, “This is Digger to Flex. The LEGOLAND Resort is secured. But the dinos are now in downtown. Over.” Flex turned the Ice Blade into the IC-2 Helicopter and flew off.

It was chaos. At one end of town, the Fire Hammer was occupied with a pterodon. In the sewer system, the Urban Avenger had a mutant lizard to worry about. Only the Iron Predator was making progress. Specs reported, “Specs to Dash. Iron Predator in pursuit of raptor.” Cam replied, “Let’s trap it and destroy it. We save Legotown today.” Specs said, “Raptor entering destroyed grocery store. Cryothermic Cannon ready. We’ve got him now.” Suddenly, a T-rex burst through the building, causing tomato sauce, carrots, and bags of candy to go everywhere. Cam said, “It was a trap. The raptor lured us here.” Zed raced up in the Blizzard Blaster and fired the Thermo-Blaster at the T-rex. It stumbled around and fell over. Another T-rex was distracted and moved over a few steps.

The battle lasted a long time. But, Alpha Team won. Suddenly, Patrolman Bill ran over and said, “The jail cell is empty!”

Later, at the cell, Dash stated, “They’re all gone.” Ogel, flying up above in his Command Striker replied, “That’s right. Even now, my dinos are crushing Creatorville.” He flew off. Dash said, “Here we go again.”

What happens next? Follow the action on www.lego.com/dino!

Editor’s Note: The story is intended to end with LEGO’s online Dino Attack flash game. If you want to play the game, it’s available to download via the Project Brick website’s LEGO game archive (part 3).

Chapter 9

Bionicle: The Great Quest for the Mighty Kanohi

Here's a brain teaser for you. What do you get when you combine one of LEGO's most successful intellectual properties with one of its predecessors and a dead fast food chain? Stumped?

The answer is, interestingly, the story contained in this chapter: "Bionicle Chronicles 3.5: The Great Quest for the Mighty Kanohi," which was written in 2004. It takes the legend of the Toa and merges their tale with a new threat: the Throwbots (or Slizers, depending on where you live) as they travel to Mata Nui's only Koo Koo Roo restaurant to find the great mask of healing.

In case you haven't figured it out yet, this story is intended to be farcical, with ridiculous jokes, visual gags, and even a complete tonal shift near the beginning of the story that I like to call, "Slapping the Tablet." You'll know what I mean when you reach that part of the story.

But now, let us return to a time before time, when the brave Toa fought to defeat the evil Makuta and his minions in order to reawaken Mata Nui and restore peace to their home. And apparently, there's a fried chicken restaurant from a now-defunct fast food chain somewhere in there.

The Tablet

Hewkii searched around for his Kolhii stick. “Where is it?” he wondered. While he searched, he remembered what Turaga Onewa said about holding a kolhii tournament in Ta-Koro and that the Po-Koro team needed to practice. That’s when he remembered what he was looking for. He searched harder.

He opened a box only to find some Ussal crab ads and a tablet with strange writing. Hewkii picked up the tablet and studied it. Then he said to himself, “I should take this to Turaga Onewa.”

Turaga Onewa was cleaning up the Suva when Hewkii walked up. Onewa turned around and asked, “Why aren’t you practicing?” Hewkii replied, “I was searching for my stuff when I found this tablet.” He showed Onewa the stone slab. Onewa replied, “I’ll see if I can translate it.” He put on a Kanohi Rau and went to work.

When Onewa finished, he said, “The tablet tells of a Kanohi Koo Koo Roo, the great mask of healing. It also says to start your journey in Ga-Wahi. You must be chosen for the task.” Hewkii said, “I’ll start my journey now.” And with that he walked off.

Makuta stood in a large chamber. On one wall was a Hau-shaped gateway. On the other wall was a door into his lair. In the middle was a pool of protoderms. Makuta said, “I must stop Hewkii from finding the Poco of Hutu or something like that. The Toa Nuva prevailed in defeating the Bohrok-Kal, but nothing can stop my Throwbots, bio-mechanical beings that can pound the Toa like gnats.” Suddenly, panels on all sides opened up to reveal hundreds of Throwbots. Makuta stated, “Go my minions. Use the shadows, and keep my brother asleep.” As if on cue, all of the Throwbots headed for the surface.

The Throwbots Strike

The Toa Nuva met in Ga-Koro for a meeting. Just then, Kopaka used his mask of x-ray vision to see movement on the beach. He said, “Look, brothers and sister. I see we have a visitor.” He shared his x-ray vision with the other Toa so they too could see the stranger.

When the figure approached, they could see it was Hewkii. Pohatu stated, “Isn’t he supposed to be practicing?” Lewa replied, “Maybe something made him afraid-scared.” Onua said, “I seriously doubt it. Let’s see what he wants.”

Hewkii was muttering to himself, “Where is that clue?” Just then, Tahu said, “What are you doing here?” Hewkii replied, “I’m here searching for a clue.” Tahu said, “What clue?” Hewkii stated, “You see, I was searching for my Kolhii stuff when I found this tablet that told of a Kanohi Koo Koo Roo and it said the first clue is here.” Gali said, “So that’s why you’re not...”

Her words were cut off by a low tremble. Lewa said, “Something is very bad-wrong.” Just then, the cliff face in front of them exploded to reveal the Throwbots. Onua said, “The legends. They’re real.” Tahu replied, “This is no time for chitter-chatter. Prepare yourselves.” Tahu shared the powers of his mask to protect them.

Pohatu used his mask of speed to run up the cliff face. At the top of the cliff, he created a pile of sand that built up in front of the tunnel. He yelled, “Tahu, seal the entrance.” Tahu replied, “It’d be my pleasure.” Then, with a blast of fire, Tahu turned the sand into glass. In that instant, more Throwbots shattered the glass and the chunks buried the Toa. The Throwbots searched around for Hewkii, but he was nowhere in sight.

The Second Tablet

Pohatu had used his mask of speed to race down the cliff, snatch Hewkii, and run off before the Throwbots could notice.

When they slowed down, Hewkii asked Pohatu, "Where are we?" Pohatu replied, "Far from those Throwbots, that's for sure. Hey! What's this on the ground?" Hewkii stared at the object and said, "Wow! The next clue. But I can't read it." Pohatu stated, "Maybe Turaga Nokama could translate."

Later at Ga-Suva, Nokama was talking to Makcu, a Ga-Matoran, when Pohatu and Hewkii walked up. Nokama and Makcu turned to see who walked in. Makcu said, "Hi Hewkii. I thought you were practicing for the Kolhii game." Hewkii replied, "You see, I was going to practice, but I found this tablet that told of a mask and I found this clue here." He showed them the tablet. Nokama said, "The tablet says that you must strike the tablet upon the sea at the squawk of the Mata Nui Fishing Bird." Hewkii stated, "Don't tell me we have to wait until tomorrow." Makcu said softly, "There's something behind you." Hewkii turned around to see a pair of Throwbots.

Learning About the Threat

Pohatu looked behind him to see the Throwbots. He said, "I can take them out." Just then, one of the creatures launched a disk at Pohatu. When it hit him, he collapsed to the ground saying, "Help me! My power! I'm losing my power!" Just then, Nokama stepped forward, saying a weird language neither Makcu nor Hewkii understood. Just then, the Throwbots scurried off. At that moment, Pohatu got up. Nokama said, "The Throwbots. The legends. They're real." Hewkii asked, "What legends?" Nokama replied, "Legends told that Makuta would unleash 6 different breeds of Throwbots. The ones you encountered right now are the Po-Bots. Their discs can drain the power of an opponent. The 5 other breeds are Ga-Bots, who use their discs to dehydrate an opponent, Ta-Bots, who use their discs to melt an opponent, Le-Bots, who use their discs to blast an opponent away, Ko-Bots, who use their discs to throw an opponent into confusion, and the Onu-Bots, who use their discs to crumble even solid rock. If the Toa don't learn of unity, they may fall before the Throwbots." Pohatu stated, "Speaking of Toa, let's see if the others are all right."

Pohatu, Hewkii, Makcu, and Nokama walked down to where the Toa laid. Just as Nokama stepped on a chunk of glass, Tahu flinched and woke up. Soon the rest were getting up. Tahu asked, "What happened?" Hewkii replied, "You were unconscious for an hour." He turned to Makcu and asked, "Can I spend the night here?" Makcu replied, "Of course you can."

The next morning, just when the Mata Nui Fishing Bird squawked, Hewkii slapped the tablet on the water. Then something amazing happened.

Yum

Suddenly, before the Toa's eyes, a giant crack appeared on the tablet. The tablet opened up to reveal something out of the ordinary.

Onua said, "Am I going crazy, or are those coupons to a restaurant called Koo Koo Roo?" Tahu said, "Yum. That fried chicken looks good." Lewa stated, "Look! The buffet is cheap-thrifty." Hewkii said, "Wait! I figured it out! The Koo Koo Roo is at Koo Koo Roo." Suddenly, the tablet reformed and the writing swirled to make a map. Pohatu stated, "I think the winking chicken represents the restaurant." Lewa said, "The place is deep-wood in my homeland of Le-Wahi." Suddenly, the water erupted to form flashing signs all over Mata Nui saying, "Come to Koo Koo Roo in the heart of Le-Wahi." Tahu said, "What are we waiting for? Let's go. After all, I am famished." As the Toa, Hewkii, Makcu, and Nokama departed, two Ga-Bots watched them go and they soon followed.

The Ambush

The air felt hotter as they headed south. Gali asked, "Oh, the heat. What can I do about it?" Tahu replied, "This is Ta-Wahi, sister. It's hot everywhere." Just then, Nokama said, "Look! Sand! The Ga-Bots have been here." They passed a flashing sign that said, "The first 300 kids to get a meal gets a Kanohi Koo Koo Roo for Free!!!" Just then, the sign turned to dust. Makcu turned around and saw two Ga-Bots. She shouted, "Ambush!" Everyone got on the ground just as a disc flew overhead. It hit the beach and turned some sand into sand. Pohatu said, "If you like stone, here's some for you!" Then, he threw a large boulder at the Throwbots. One of the Ga-Bots launched a disc at the boulder and when it hit, the boulder turned to dust. Lewa said, "How about a hurricane? Gali, I need your help on this one." At that moment, the Toa of air and the Toa of water combined powers to whip up a storm that sent the Ga-Bots flying over to Ta-Koro.

Jaller, captain of the guard, was watching a lava surfing competition when the two Ga-Bots plummeted into the lava. Everyone cheered as the two beings sizzled in the lava. Takua, Jaller's best friend, said, "That was the best trick so far."

Makuta looked down at his feet. "These Toa are learning to work together. A fried chicken restaurant is the hiding place of the, uhhh... whatever." He sneered at himself, "I must prevail." Suddenly, a cave wall burst open and out came a huge Throwbot. Makuta said, "Millenia, find the Mask of healing and bring it to me. And don't forget to also bring down some buffalo wings, too." And with that, Millenia stalked off.

The Toa, Hewkii, Makcu, and Nokama continued south. Soon, the air felt

moist and the sounds of the jungle could be heard. Suddenly, some bushes began to rustle. Gali asked, "Are you friend or foe of the Toa Nuva?" The stranger stepped out from the bush. He was a small Matoran that was all green. Lewa said, "Hi Kongu. It's nice to see you. Why are you down-tree and away from your village?" Kongu replied, "I was seek-finding the Koo Koo Roo when I got lost. Then this ever-quick being tried to get me. I ran ever-quick, the beast high-jumped to top-leaf and I was scared and I ran around until I ended up here." Onua said, "We're seeking the Koo Koo Roo too." Kongu said, "That'll be great! I'll be your way-finder." And then, they set off again, unaware of the huge being called Millenia following behind.

Hot and Spicy

Kongu led them into the forest so far, that it was easy to tell how Kongu got lost. Nokama asked Kongu, "If you're a great guide, how come you got... Wait a minute. The Ko-Bots must have thrown you into confusion." Hewkii said at once, "We're almost there." Just then, they passed a freshly-melted tree. Nokama said in awe, "The Ta-Bots have been here." Lewa said, "That lava will burn-destroy the jungle unless we can help. Gali, Kopaka, combine your powers." Then Gali covered the lava in water to cool it down and then Kopaka froze the water solid. Then Tahu said, "We need to keep on going."

It wasn't long until they turned a corner and found what they were looking for. They all cheered as they piled into Koo Koo Roo. Onua said, slapping some coupons down on the counter, "I want six soft drinks, six chicken meals, and a kid's meal." The cashier looked at the coupons and frowned. He said, "Sorry, sir, but these coupons expired last Sunday. That'll be 17 leaves and 50 pebbles." Gali created 17 leaves and 50 pebbles from water and Kopaka froze the money. Gali handed these to the cashier. He said, "Sorry, ma'am, but we don't take counterfeit money." Tahu raised one of his swords, ready to burn the restaurant down. The heat was so great, the ice money melted. Tahu stated, "We are Toa. We could take you down." The cashier said, "On second thought, you can eat for free."

As the Toa ate, Hewkii pulled something out of his meal bag. He said, "At last. The Kanohi Koo Koo Roo." Pohatu said, "Mmmm. This chicken is good." Suddenly, the whole restaurant around them dehydrated and towering above them was Millenia.

Chicken and Casualties

Millenia looked down at all of them and said in a booming voice, "I want the Mask of healing." The cashier said, "Sorry, sir, but you're too old to get one." Just then, a Le-Bot fired a disc at the cashier. When it hit, he went flying through the forest. Millenia turned his gaze back on the Toa and said, "Where's the Hoo Koo... Oh wait, that isn't right. Anyway, where is it?" Tahu replied, "We have it, but I won't tell you which one of us has it." Millenia gave a blank stare at each of the Toa in turn, then said, "I'll give you a test. I'll use a poison disc on a rahi. If the mask works, you must give it to me. If it doesn't, I'll destroy it." Suddenly, a Hoto bug scurried around. He took no time firing the disc. When it hit, the bug crippled on the ground. Millenia said, "Begin." Hewkii put on the Koo Koo Roo and went to work.

Later, Hewkii said, "There is nothing I can do. Wait. What's this printed on the mask?" Small letters on the back read, "Play Masks Inc. Model no. 357 Copyright 79 B.T." Hewkii said at once, "It's a fake." Millenia replied, "I don't believe you. You and the others now must die." Suddenly, Throwbots came out of the trees from all around. Tahu said, "Prepare yourselves." Just then, an Onu-Bot launched a disc at a tree and it blew up. Pieces fell towards the Toa, but Tahu used his fire to burn the chunks. Gali created a wave that swept some Le-Bots back into Laka Pala that Koo Koo Roo once looked over. Pohatu said to some Ta-Bots, "Here's a crashing end for you." Then, with his strength, he knocked a tree onto some Ta-Bots. One of them reacted by firing a disc to melt the tree. Millenia uprooted a tree and threw it. Onua reacted by using his strength to push the tree over his head and redirected it toward some Ga-Bots. Before they could react, the tree hit them. Another Ga-Bot snuck from behind and it launched a disc at the Toa. Nokama sensed the danger and said, "Duck!" The disc flew over the Toa when they ducked. Since the disc didn't strike the Toa, it struck Millenia instead.

The End of the Throwbots

When Millenia dehydrated, all of the Throwbots shut down. Hewkii looked down at the mask and said, "We went through all of this for a toy." Nokama stated, "Vakama called for a meeting with the other Turaga at the Amaja sandpit. I should be on my way now. Farewell." And with that, Nokama walked off. Hewkii said, "I need to practice in Po-Koro for the Kolhii game." Makcu replied, "I need to practice as well." And they both set off. The Toa were left alone in the jungle with Kongu. Tahu said, "I need to go to my village to see how the practicing is going." Then, the Toa of Fire went on his way. Pohatu stated, "We all need to head back to our villages." The rest of the Toa set out to seek their own Wahis. The only two Toa that remained behind were Lewa, because he was already in his homeland, and Kopaka, because he had a question to ask. Kopaka turned to Kongu and asked him, "Nokama said that she was going to have a meeting with the other Turaga at the Amaja sandpit. What is the meeting about? Why are they having it at the sandpit?" Kongu replied, "I don't know. But why worry-bother about that? You should head to Mount Ihu." Kopaka, "You're right. See you later." And with that, Kopaka walked away.

The End
(For Now!)

Chapter 10

Rewritten Stories

And now we reach the only chapter in this book that truly contains exclusive content: rewritten stories. It's similar to the previous chapters, except these stories make more sense and the writing isn't so cringe-worthy.

Contained in this chapter is a selection of stories both in their original form and new versions that have been rebuilt with my current skill level. This, of course, mostly encompasses my development in language skills and my understanding of their application, but also applies my understanding of the importance of selecting the right word to create an appropriate impression on you, the reader. As I learned from the character of Feste the Jester in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, word choice means everything.

However, since I also personally make a series of films that all take place in the same universe, I have rewritten these stories so that they can be considered part of that said universe. In fact, many of these stories were rewritten simply so that they can work in the existing universe. If you want to find out more, just visit us at mustachemaniacsfilmco.webs.com.

Ultimately, though, this chapter explores both the original stories and how I would tackle certain writing assignments while knowing what I do now. I'll still be confined to the rules of each assignment with each writing (if any), and if that requires copying certain passages from the old stories verbatim, then I'll look for a way to blend it into the new writing. I hope you enjoy these stories that prove, with some thought and effort, anything old can be made new again.

Museum Mystery

Original Story from 2002

Hello, my name is Professor Digmous. I run the Legotown Museum. It started out as separate buildings, but hallways connecting the buildings were added later. I'll tell you about the different buildings. The first one is Natural History. This is where you pay (duh!) plus there are lots of cool dino machines and footprints. This is also the building where we put treasure on display. The second one is Art. Many paintings are on display here, like "The Brick Chase" by Bricknet or "The Dragon's Den" by Bricasso. The third one is Brickley's Believe It Or Not. See bizarre stuff from shrunken heads to the two-headed Mini-fig. The fourth one is history, where you can find out about Legotown's history. And last, but not least, Children's Zone, where children get to dig up bones, look for treasure, and look at animal x-rays.

We once had a mystery here. It all started out at, well, you know where, Mr. Cameron's office. He was looking through some case files when he got an unexpected phone call. It was from the museum. "Hello, is this Allen Parker Cameron?" He answered, "As a matter of fact it is." It sounded as though it was urgent. The caller continued, "The night guard, Joe, was murdered and someone got away with the Gale's Eye Diamond." Cameron said, "Again?" The strange voice came back and said, "The only problem is we don't know who did it. All I heard was a scream of pain and when I went outside the door was painted red." After a pause, the voice continued, "I don't know how, but somehow, Mr. Basset accidentally turned off the security cameras. People still think he should be fired after the art building was robbed." Cameron said, "OK, I'm on my way."

Later at the museum, Cameron tried to get in, but with all the reporters it was difficult. One of them said, "Cool, blood! Zoom in!" Once he made it

through, he went to the souvenir shop. "Hello, my name is Old Bone. How can I help you?" said a man at the counter. Cameron said nothing for a minute. He was more interested in finding out what was in a box that read 'On Hold' on the side. "What's inside? It looks to be the size of a gem." The shopkeeper said, "That's none of your business." Then he walked away.

Cameron followed him wondering where he was going. Finally, they stopped in the Mayan exhibit. Old Bone pulled out some keys. Cameron hid behind a wall. When he looked back, the glass case was open, but nobody was there. On the floor were the keys. On them were the initials 'L.T.M.' He looked at the case. Everything was still inside. Cameron thought, "Maybe he is a prankster." But when he looked back, he saw that something was missing. Cameron looked around suspiciously, thinking that the robber must still be there. Someone dressed in black from head to toe fired a hook. Luckily, it hit the wall.

The strange figure ran for it. Cameron started running, but was somehow knocked off his feet. On the floor was a gold mask. "Why is a mask lying out here?" thought Cameron. He looked up and saw Lyle Nile, the assistant guard he had seen outside. "Are you all right?" she said. "Yeah, I think so," said Cameron. He got up and began to run. "Where are you going?" said Lyle. But, he was already gone.

He made an abrupt stop in front of Joe's carcass. He noticed he had scattered some ants. "What's that?" he said looking at Joe's hand. "An old pocket watch," said a familiar voice. Cameron spun around and saw Old Bone. Cameron pulled out his pistol and said, "You did it. I know you did it." Old Bone just smiled and said, "You're smarter than I thought. Well, here's how it went. Joe, the night guard, was going to do it originally, until Lyle killed him. He only turned off the security cameras. But, when he died I took his place. I was selling the diamond. That was the thing in the box. Imelda Ibis knew I was going to do it. I was afraid that she might tell Professor Digmous so I locked her in a closet." Cameron said, "Who do you work for?" Old Bone pulled out a light blue pocket watch. It had a shark skeleton on the cover. He said "Brickster." Cameron asked, "Where's the diamond? Tell me now!" Old

Bone said, "I'm afraid I can't tell you." Cameron cocked his pistol and aimed. Old Bone said, "I'm afraid you are making a mistake." He grabbed Cameron by the collar and dragged him to a closet. He opened the door and locked him inside.

"Oh, no! It's Cairo Museum all over again!" he said. The only thing he could make out was a barrel of gunpowder and a cord. He pulled the cord and a light bulb turned on. He saw a tied-up woman. He untied her. He couldn't believe it. It was Imelda Ibis. "The light bulb," she said. He looked up and saw sparks. One of them hit a Ming vase and it caught on fire. "I know a way out," she said. She opened a secret door. But Cameron remembered about the gunpowder. Once the door was closed it rattled and they heard an explosion. Cameron said, "Where does this go?" She said, "You'll see." She opened a door by an intersection. "There used to be a cardboard shack here," she said. "We got to get to the museum quickly." But the reporters were at Mimi's Cafe. They went there instead.

Editor's Note: This story is unfinished. If there ever was an ending to this narrative, and I believe there was, it has been lost to time. It's a shame, since this was my first true mystery story (looking back at the Mystery Stories chapter, you can see how well that went). Of course, there are some things here that just don't work. Allen P. Cameron is from the 1920's-set "The Cameron Files" games, but here he's in the present day. But it does introduce the notion of a deep conspiracy. It's not something that I've used in my mystery stories since then, but it is something that I do think about when writing stories in general, though to a limited capacity. Either way, I've drastically expanded and changed this story (with an ending) for the cinematic universe in an all-new rewriting. It starts on the next page.

Museum Mystery Revisited

Rewritten from "Museum Mystery"

It's getting late on Market Street as a brutal storm sweeps across the city. The rain tonight taps against the windows to my second floor office like a phantom client that promises me the case of the decade, then disappears like a dream. The only things that feel real right now are my desk, my safe, the pictures on the wall, and the scourge of nature bombarding the building. Even the pool hall directly beneath me is hard to hear in this storm.

Ace Brickman; that's my name. I'm a private detective that some say can see what others cannot. Personally, I'm just someone like yourself, using what I like to do and what I'm good at to carve my place in this society. It may not make me rich like Theodore Parkington, but it pays the bills.

Tonight, however, I'm all alone. Even if someone wanted me to find the meaning of life, they wouldn't come traipsing here in this weather. No. Tonight, it's just me and my phone.

That phone. It's been so long since anyone has used my land line to call me. Usually, if someone wanted to see me, they either came here in person, sent me an e-mail, or called my cell number. But my office phone? No. I'm tempted to get rid of that paperweight, but something tells me deep down that one day, that phone is going to ring and I'm going to get the case of the decade. But who am I kidding?

I think that gut feeling comes from the last case that I got from that thing. It was way back in 2005, back when cell phones had to be physically opened and land lines were more prevalent. It was a night much like this one.

June 8, 2005
09:16 PM

I was packing up for the night, ready to brave the storm and head back to my apartment when I suddenly got a surprising phone call. Not thinking, I snatched the receiver and thrust it to my face. Had I looked at the caller ID, I probably wouldn't have answered that thing.

"Hello? Is this Ace Brickman?" stuttered a nasally voice.

"Yes. Is there a problem?" I replied.

"Of course! Why else would I call you? This is Director James Digalot from the museum." I knew this was going to be bad news. "I know this isn't a good time, but night guard Joe Dillard was found dead by one of his co-workers just a few minutes ago and the Gale's Eye Diamond is missing. I've already called the police, but I want you here, too."

"Why do you need me? Can't the police take care of this themselves?" I could sense that the dinner I had at home was going to have to wait.

"Because I am certain that this was an insect job."

"What? Where did insects come from?"

"What?! Didn't you listen to me? Insect job!" Digalot was just as confusing as he was annoying. He continued. "I am certain that all of the doors into the museum were locked, because I checked the keys in the security office, and they were all accounted for. But I also found out that all of the security cameras were turned off during the crime, because I checked that too. I'm checking to make sure that our wax Spartan Warrior isn't enchanted."

"What?" This was all starting to sound like the evening that I hung out with my friends in the pool hall downstairs. You don't need the details.

"He's impaled on the wax figure's spear, dangling in the air. You have to

see for yourself. Come quickly, Mr. Brickman." Then the phone went dead. There go my plans for a home-made meal.

The rain kept everyone inside on a night like this, so I was able to get to the museum in about twenty minutes. Finding a place to park was tricky, as the LCPD was already on the scene in full force, including many senior officers. I must not have been the only one having a slow day.

Inside the hall of Classical Greece, the crime scene was a gruesome sight to behold. The display case for the Greek treasure, The Gale's Eye Diamond had been opened with what must have been laser-precise skill, but the corpse was such a sickening sight that some of the junior officers vomited in the near-by trash cans. Just as Digalot had described, Joe was dangling, spear thrust through his neck, from the shaft that was bound in the warrior's clutch. The exit wound of the spear in Joe's face consumed a good amount of his mouth, with the base of his nose shattered and his upper chin cleft in half. Just below that, part of his chest was caved in, blood leaking from a deep wound underneath his sternum. Poor kid. He must have been no older than thirty.

It wasn't long before Digalot came rushing into the room, frantic but very happy to see me. "Ace!" he shouted, like I was a good friend of his or something. "Now that you're here, don't you believe me that Joe was clearly killed by this statue?"

"No," I dryly replied. "It's too easy and unlikely a solution. Besides, if this statue hypothetically came to life, then where's the diamond?" I think I finally got to him, because he didn't say anything else.

"It still has to be here in the museum," replied a calm voice from behind. Over at one of the pottery displays, there crouched a low-ranking police officer. He looked new, but with a sense of potential. I moved towards him to see if he could shed some light on the situation. He saw me and nodded in my direction.

“McCain. Chase McCain.” I don’t remember that name from my past experiences. He’s definitely new.

“Ace Brickman,” I replied. “You said something about the diamond?”

“Yeah. The laser security system for the Gale’s Eye Diamond is off, so if Joe wasn’t killed, no one would have known about the diamond’s disappearance until tomorrow morning at the latest. I was examining these other display cases and discovered something peculiar: their security systems are on.”

“But Digalot, didn’t you say that the security systems were off?” Digalot look confused.

“I just said that the cameras were off. Everything else looked like it was on. Even the locks on the doors were in place. Joe had to be the only person in here at the time, which means that he had to be killed-”

“If you say enchanted statue one more time, then I’m leaving the case.” I wasn’t joking this time.

Digalot pleaded, “Okay, okay! Geez. Here.” He pulled out what seemed to be a notepad and jotted down a few notes. He tore out the paper and thrust it towards me.

“Here are the hours that everyone who was here today is working tomorrow. If you want to talk to anyone, I suggest coming back then.”

“What about the crime scene?” My answer came in the form of heavy-set, clomping boots.

“LCPD CRIME SCENE! EVERYONE ELSE, GET OUT! NOW!!!” The booming and harsh voice of deputy Marion Dunby was enough to know that my time here tonight was over.

As I drove back to my apartment for what was now going to be a late night

snack, I couldn’t get the picture of Joe Dillard’s corpse out of my mind. Poor kid. I knew that I had to take the case, or else that image would haunt my dreams forever.

June 9, 2005

10:14 AM

When I returned to the museum the following morning, word must have already leaked about the murder, because the parking lot was swarming with reporters and journalists. Getting to the museum was a chore in itself, but the inside was far more packed, especially in the Classical Greece hall. I even heard one particularly morbid reporter shout, “Cool! Blood! Zoom in!” I wonder how many people watching the news that evening ended up like some of those younger officers I saw lose their lunch the previous night.

Of course, I knew why I was here. I had seen the crime scene the night before, but I wanted answers. I wanted to talk to anyone who was working that day. Digalot still believed that the wax figure did it, but I wasn’t an idiot like him.

My first stop, or at least the first place in the museum that I could reach in a fair amount of time, was the museum shop. I was thinking that someone in security did this, but who knows? Maybe someone in the gift shop saw something.

“Morning,” sputtered an old man behind the cash register. He looked pretty up-beat in light of what just happened. “Name’s Howard Skirnkinn, but you can call me Old Bone. That’s what most people call me around here.”

“No problem, Howard. Say, were you here last night, around, say, 9 o’clock?”

“Oh, no. Someone my age needs their sleep. I was in bed, asleep, at 8. If you don’t believe me, you can see in the museum records that I clocked out around 6 yesterday.”

“Then I assume that you didn’t know Joe?”

“Actually,” replied the weathered shopkeeper, “I have met him on several occasions. It was mostly as I was leaving for the day, as he seemed to start his shift around the time I would end mine. We’ve never gotten to know each other closely, but I knew him well enough that I could pick him out in a crowd.”

“I’m guessing that his murder hit you hard, then?”

“Of course. Everyone here is devastated that Joe passed. But Digalot this morning briefed us on how we must keep the museum running and act like nothing happened. ‘Just keep the Classical Greece Hall closed for today,’ he told us. No one would notice.”

I couldn’t help but look back at the throngs of people in the museum specifically because of the night before. Digalot’s plan was working great. Howard pressed on. “When I found out that Joe had been murdered, I was stunned. For almost an hour, I was at a loss for words.”

By now, I had started to look around the gift shop, perhaps thinking that behind a box for a cheesy science kit where you dig a plastic dinosaur skeleton out of a block of plaster, I would find the diamond. I found nothing, but I still let my mind wander.

Then I returned my attention to Howard. But behind him, I noticed something I had never noticed before: several boxes were stacked behind him emblazoned with the label “ONLINE PURCHASE: ON HOLD.” “So the museum does online orders, now?”

“Yup. Last year, we started running online orders. When we get an order, part of my job is to package the item and ship it off at the end of my day. While I don’t always feel comfortable about leaving my post, it’s what I need to do to get these orders filled out.”

PING! Howard’s attention snapped to the computer screen. “Well, look at that. We just got an order from a Mr. Lawrence Graviator for a Visible Body

shark kit. Let me go grab it.”

“Sure. I was heading out anyway. I figured I could grab an early lunch at Salvador Deli before the press swarms it at noon.”

As he wished me adieu and leaned down to grab the item, I quickly snapped a photo of the packages and made a mental note to check the post office about these deliveries, as well as the validity of his claims.

June 9, 2005

11:23 AM

The surrealism-inspired restaurant was busy, but I was able to get my food and a decent spot in about ten minutes. The food is okay (the excessive mark-up comes from both the fact that this is the only place to eat in the museum and that the food items have cute names like Persistence of Rosemary and Soft Form Mashed Potatoes with Boiled Beans), but you go for the decor. All of the wall clocks appear to melt, while all of the plates, bowls, and silverware are printed to look like Meret Oppenheim’s “Luncheon in Fur” (I had to look that one up). I bet this is the only place in the city to eat where an ant infestation would enhance the ambiance.

I took a seat at the long bar table based on “The Ghost of Vermeer of Delft Which Can Be Used as a Table” (because why not) and ordered myself a Harlequin’s Carnival (brandy and lemonade with an aforementioned cute name). As I waited, I looked over some of my notes, but out of the corner of my eye, I saw someone sit down next to me. He looked about the same age as Joe, maybe older. He looked like he was going to fall to pieces.

“Just give me something to make me forget last night,” spouted out the young man. Now he had my interest.

“You were here last night?” I asked.

“I don’t want to talk about it.” With that, he gulped down in its entirety whatever the bartender gave him. If he wasn’t so anxious and broken, he

would have passed out right there.

“It’s okay. I’m here to find whoever...was in the same room as Joe last night.”

“There wasn’t anyone else in there,” spouted the young man. “I saw Joe with my own two eyes check the hall before locking up the main door in front of me. I thought that he had gone to the service exit in the hall, but the next thing I know, I could hear Joe shouting before he let out...the...the most blood-curling scream I’ve ever heard. I had to get in there, but it was too late. By the time I got the doors open, all I could see was Joe Dillard, the best friend that I ever had, the surrogate brother that I have had since 3rd grade, hanging from that javelin, dead.”

He couldn’t hold it in anymore. Where alcohol didn’t work, he drowned himself in his own tears.

I actually felt sorry for him, losing a good friend of his like that. I decided to leave him in peace, but I was able to discern one thing from his testimonial: Joe was not alone in there. But who was this somebody?

June 9, 2005
12:03 PM

As predicted, the press swarmed the restaurant around noon, which gave me the perfect opening to explore the crime scene again. Knowing that Joe was killed not by a wax figure animated by Digalot’s blarney but a real human being, I figured that I should check to see if there were any unconventional hiding spots. The man whose name I never got said that Joe checked the hall for any stragglers from operating hours and kids who didn’t want to leave, so if someone was hiding in there, they had to be well hidden.

The hall of Classical Greece was generally the same as when I last saw it; Joe’s body had been taken down and only a few police officers were on the scene, but nothing else had been changed. Still, I was more interested in the more permanent aspects of the hall, such as the walls and any forms of entry in and out.

As I passed the display case for the Gale’s Eye Diamond, something caught my eye: a glass shelf. I couldn’t stave off my curiosity. I had to look.

Running along the sides of the display case was a small shelf that must have been no more than a quarter inch thick. It blended seamlessly with the glass, justifying my missing it the first time. Only then did I realize that this case was not cut open. Its cover was simply removed.

Making note of this, I looked elsewhere. Like what I heard over lunch, there was more than one means of entry into this hall. There was only one guest entrance, but at the back of the exhibition space was another doorway, one that only employees are allowed to use. Could the murderer have used this door? It’s possible, but Digalot said that all of the museum keys were accounted for when the murder took place.

Wait. Did Digalot say that the keys were all accounted for?

Then how did Joe lock the hall in the first place? This observation that I made was filed with the one about Joe locking himself into the room that he was inspecting, even if there was another door at the other end of the hall. Something was very wrong here, something that went beyond the murder.

As I explored the hall, I discovered something else peculiar: no real tangible hiding spots were visible. Also, beyond the spear, the area where the murder took place was blood-free.

Over at the employee exit, I saw Chase McCain again. He must be dedicated to this case if he’s working through lunch.

Over and over again, I heard him mutter to himself, “Was this door locked?”

“I was wondering the same thing,” I quickly replied.

“Oh! You startled me! So, you’re back to snoop around some more?”

“Yeah. I was thinking that the culprit could have been hiding in here when Joe locked up the hall, but there’s two problems.”

“Oh, yeah? What’s that?”

“Firstly, there’s nowhere in here that could work as a viable hiding spot, and second, Digalot told me that when the murder occurred, all of the keys were accounted for in the security office.”

That got McCain’s attention. “Are you suggesting that the hall wasn’t locked at all?”

“I’m afraid so. And if that’s the case, then there goes your chance to arrest the person who stole the Gale’s Eye Diamond, because at 9:10 PM yesterday, he was killed by impalement on a Spartan Javelin.”

June 9, 2005
3:18 PM

I wasn’t held in the highest degree for the rest of the day by suggesting that Joe was the one who had performed the theft of the Gale’s Eye Diamond. Looking at access to resources alone, he was a perfect fit. Yet, I still had several questions left unanswered: Who would put such a young man up to such a scheme? Or did he do it of his own will? If so, why? Of all things, why the Gale’s Eye Diamond? Was this a scheme to eventually kill Joe? And speaking of which, who killed Joe, anyway? And where was the Gale’s Eye Diamond?

I had already reached the conclusion at this point that the murderer was someone who works in the museum and used the employee exit to enter the crime scene. I then decided to begin narrowing down my list of suspects by looking back at who was working the previous day.

I tried calling Digalot from my cell phone to see which employees were specifically working yesterday night, but none of my calls would go through.

It wasn’t that Digalot was busy or anything, it was just that I couldn’t get cell service in the museum. Oh, well. I guess I was going to have to do it the hard way.

Most of my interviewing yielded nothing beyond the fact that Howard’s story about the museum starting an Online store is true and that the security system only allows employees to use the employee exits, but by the time that the press began to clear the museum, a middle-aged woman who appeared to be dressed as a janitor approached me.

“I heard that you’re investigating Joe’s murder. I have something that might interest you. Follow me to the insect zoo.”

Wondering where this would lead, I followed her to the museum’s own playground, Children’s Zone. Predictably, because of the time of day and in light of recent events, the massive interactive exhibit hall was mostly deserted.

Running along one wall were some cages containing a plethora of insects and arachnids. Against these was where she directed me.

“I’m Lola Nelson, janitor,” she said, before turning her attention to a cockroach. “And I need to tell you about what I saw last night.”

“Go on,” was all I could muster out, as I was still surprised by this sudden turn of events.

“As you may already be aware, the only person who found Joe dead, and who hadn’t clocked out yet, was his co-worker Peter Williams.” I guessed that she was referring to the man I met in Salvador Deli, but if she claims they were the only two still on duty, that may change things.

“Obviously, I did not see the body and ended my shift around 8:30 yesterday, but I did see Joe talking to someone on the phone on my way out. Essentially, he was asking if the replica diamond was ready. I had no idea what to make of it, but now it makes sense. Joe stole the Gale’s Eye Diamond, then hid it to

later sell off.” I, at least, knew then that my assumption was correct, too. The pieces had come together. I had my killer.

“Yes,” I replied, presenting my accusation. “Joe Dillard was part of a plot to steal the Gale’s Eye Diamond in order to sell it for a high price along with another employee. Naturally, since employees need to scan their name tags in order to pass through any employee exits, his eventual murderer, a museum employee, could have entered the hall without raising any attention. This someone, whom I presume is an expert at theft and infiltration, opens the case for the Gale’s Eye Diamond and replaces the real gem with the fake one. Naturally, since Joe has already deactivated the security systems, no alarms are triggered and the security cameras are not displaying what is going on. Say, would you say that Joe was an apprehensive man?”

Lola jolted herself away from the cockroach exhibit, fixing her gaze entirely on me. “Sometimes. What does that have to do with anything?”

“Because that verifies why Joe was murdered: he hesitated. He was afraid that he would lose his job, his reputation, and his future if he aided the murderer in the theft of the Gale’s Eye Diamond. He took out the replica and tried to rectify what he then considered his mistake. That resulted in the scuffle that Peter Williams heard outside the hall. Then, with quick reflexes, the culprit throws his - or her - momentum into Joe, hoists him up, and slams his neck through the Greek javelin.”

“So, where’s the diamond?” asked Lola, sounding more like a challenge than anything else.

“It’s in the gift shop,” I replied, “under the guise of a new mail order service. While it is true that the museum opened an Online store at the time that Howard -- ahem, Old Bone, -- mentioned to me, no major establishment would carry out its Online orders in-store, especially in an establishment such as this. All of the orders would be fulfilled in an off-site distribution facility. So, to answer your question specifically, the culprit, unsure which gem was the real one, stowed them in boxes at the gift shop, hoping that Old Bone

wouldn’t notice and mail them off-site, where it could be sold.”

Lola seemed somehow amused. “That’s nice and all, but you haven’t named the killer yet.”

I inhaled deeply, then exhaled slowly. “You are right. Who is the killer? You mentioned that Joe and Peter were the only two people on-duty at that time in the museum, but that brings up two questions. First, if that was true, then why was Digalot able to report the murder so quickly if he was, according to you, off-duty, and second, at no time is an entire establishment only helmed by two people. Maybe two security guards, but there would also be managers, janitors, and the like to clean the museum for operation the following day.”

“But Digalot himself said that all of the keys were present.”

“All of the security keys. That does not mean that employees from other departments couldn’t have been on-duty. All that’s needed to open an employee door is an ID card. I’ve spoken to many employees today, but only you, Howard, and Peter have had any real connection to Joe.

“However, we must go back to the evidence of the phone call that you witnessed. According to your testimony, at around 8:30 last night, Joe was calling his partner about preparing the gem, but why would he be calling to someone outside the museum when his accomplice is a fellow employee?”

“Your not making any sense,” was all that Lola could say in response.

“But it does. Since this hypothetical partner didn’t kill Joe, then it had to be someone on-duty in the museum. In evaluating my suspects, Peter was too unstable to have been lying. Joe legitimately meant the world to him. Old Bone could have done it, but he seemed too gullible and naive. Whoever set up the mail order front must have convinced him that he was the sole distributor. And out of all of my suspects, there is only one thing that stands out.”

“What’s that?”

“Out of everyone that I interviewed, you are the only one who has expressed no emotional connection with Joe and his murder whatsoever, even though I have irrefutable evidence that you knew him personally. That, coupled with the peculiar lack of blood directly beneath Joe’s corpse and the wound in his chest, has led me to the conclusion that you are the killer!”

Lola looked both offended and shocked. The few parents that were in the hall ushered their children out into an adjacent room.

“WHAT!?!” she defensively stated. “How could you make such a preposterous claim?”

“Because,” I said, “you have lined up your alibi so tightly, that in exposing the context of the crime you committed, any average person would assume that, in shedding light on a conspiracy in the museum, you’re being a heroic whistle-blower. You may have clocked out at 8:30, but there was nothing stopping you from staying at the museum for just an hour longer. That would have been enough time for you to retrieve the fake diamond, return to the museum, and enter the hall right after Joe had ‘locked’ it up for the night. You had no plan to kill Joe, but his concern for his reputation and possibly fouling up the whole operation led you to murder him. What ultimately pointed me towards you was the lack of a blood stain and Joe’s cause of death. Old Bone couldn’t have done it because, in his elderly and confused state, he wouldn’t have the strength to hoist Joe into the air and onto the javelin.”

“I couldn’t have picked him up, either. That doesn’t incriminate me.”

“It doesn’t. But what does is the lack of a blood pool, which you must have cleaned up to cover your tracks. The other thing is the wound in his chest. By itself it made no sense, but you would have been able to hoist him up if you had first impaled his chest with a mop handle. Finally, you tried to paint the murder as an internal conspiracy to make off with the most precious

artifact in the museum, but you forgot one thing.”

“What’s that?”

“You said that Joe was on his phone to talk to his partner, but I discovered earlier today that there’s no cell service in this museum! Plus, if both diamonds looked identical and Old Bone had shipped them off, how would the buyer know which one was real? This means that the fake diamond story is also a lie, just like the rest of your testimony.”

Surprisingly, she let out a huge laugh.

“You expect me, a janitor being payed minimum wage, to have concocted this whole scheme? Besides, how would I know how to precisely cut open a display case?”

“I didn’t say,” I said, “because it wasn’t cut open. Upon further investigation, I discovered that the lid had simply been removed. Honestly, only someone working at the museum would know how to open the display cases. Anyone else would have smashed it or cut it open.”

Before I could continue, the entirety it seemed of the LCPD burst into the room, guns at the ready. Deputy Marion Dunby was naturally at the front.

“LOLA NELSON! By the powers bestowed on me by the law and my greatness, you are under arrest for the murder of Joe Dillard! Come out with your hands up!” Those families that left earlier made a good move.

There was nothing she could do. I had uncovered her as the killer, and now the biggest ego in the LCPD wanted her head. She did nothing but surrender. But how did they know she did it?

Just then, Chase sauntered up to me again. He slapped me on the shoulder and, oddly enough, pulled at my collar.

He presented me with a listening device. “Dunby doesn’t trust outside interference, so he had this stuck on your jacket last night as you were leaving. We heard everything that you said right now, so Dunby naturally ordered a search of the gift shop. As you said, the boxes were hoaxes, containing the Gale’s Eye Diamond, the lid to the display case, and a splintered mop. From there, it was just a matter of time to catch the culprit.”

I still don’t know how I feel about that revelation. Dunby’s interference like that just seems paranoid. At the same time, though, it is the listening device that finally brought Lola to justice.

And that was the case of the museum murder. Everything was quickly put back in order, Lola was fired in addition to being arrested, and by the next day, the museum was fully operational again.

However, I’ve heard that since then, Digalot has constantly worried over the Gale’s Eye Diamond, insisting that the one on display is a forgery and that the real one was destroyed by the cult of the wax sculpture. Of course, Digalot gets a lot of things wrong. No wonder he only operates a simulator now.

And like I’ve said, that was the last time I got a case on my land line. Of course, it wasn’t my last big case, but it was one of them that I remember the most. The image of Joe still haunts me, but at least I rest easy, knowing that his murderer was brought to justice.

The rain is starting to let up, but it’s 10:38 PM now. No one in their right mind would come to me this time of night. I might get a prank call from some drunk guy, but that’s it. I think it’s time to gather my things and head out into the moonlight. It’s lightly drizzling, but my fedora will keep me dry.

One last lap around the room to check everything. Safe is locked, desk is cleaned, lights are off, cabinets are closed, and I’m off to my apartment.

RING! It’s my land line.

At the Balloon Race

Original Story from 2001

On Tuesday at 8 a.m. the Annual Hot Air Balloon Race occurred. It was a cloudy day in Legotown. There were many balloons in the race. A sky-diver jumped from one of the balloons. A swarm of bees popped one of the balloons. The balloonist called for help. Both men landed safely.

Editor’s Note: There’s not much here, as this was another victim of the “out of paper” syndrome, but this was one of my earliest works, which was an assignment on writing an eyewitness account. Since I’m not actually a balloonist, an illustration was provided as a starting point for this account, which I then hand wrote. However, allow me to balloon up the size of this “account” with this story’s rewriting! It starts on the next page.

At the Balloon Race: A New Account

Rewritten from “At the Balloon Race”

On April 12, 2002, LEGO City Airport held its first and last balloon race as it proved to become one of the city’s largest aviation disasters. In a promotion of the airport’s minute aviation heritage, distinguished air balloonists from around the world were invited to the first intended to be annual air balloon race.

Early in the morning, 60 competitors from around the world gathered on the airport’s airfield to prepare their balloons. During this preparatory stage, we had the pleasure of speaking to some of the balloonists.

Jacques Mignot, aviator from France, told us about how he hopes his participation will educate the public on French aviation. “You Americans think that we’re just all about baguettes and the Eiffel Tower. But we have played an important role in the history of aviation. We, after all, were the first to recognize the worth of the airplane and were the first to rapidly adapt an aviation industry.” He, along with 39 other contestants, traveled from outside the United States to participate in the balloon race.

When the clock struck 9:00, the balloons took off for what was expected to be a routine race. However, one contestant, Jacob Billy Wicket, was disqualified for submitting his party balloon-buoyed lawn chair as a legitimate entry.

The first hour of the race was generally routine, with no apparent mishaps while in the air. However, as your humble reporter does not know how air balloon races actually work, all he can say is that he witnessed several balloons ascending and descending in the air as they traveled over the bay.

Soon after, however, the aforementioned mishaps began to plague the contestants as a bee colony living in the nearby Bluebell National Park was agitated by the race and began to attack the balloons. Witnesses on the ground did not notice the disturbance at first, but contestant reports state that the bees damaged many of the balloons and attacked several of the contestants.

Witnesses on the ground only started to notice that the contestants were in trouble when resident pilot, Frink Parker, shouted for help. Soon, other balloonists followed suit, trying to get the attention of those standing below.

One balloonist, resident pilot Harry Cane, reportedly jumped out of his balloon and parachuted into the ocean below. When later asked why he decided to abandon his balloon, he replied, “I knew that there was no point in calling for help. I mean, I’ve flown just about everything in my life, so ya know that when your in the sky, even if you have a radio, it’s just you, y’hear? I knew that if I just stayed up there, I would soon fall into the ocean and drown under the weight of my own balloon. Y’all know I had no choice.”

All of the other balloonists chose instead to steer for the airfield for an emergency landing. They all landed safely, with paramedics treating the balloonists for bee stings and other possible bee-related trauma, while exterminators were on hand to fend off any bees that trailed the balloons.

All of the balloonists have been treated both for their bee stings and to a complimentary dinner to commemorate the last annual airport balloon race.

Slyboots, Run!

Original Story from 2002

It's a lovely day in Legotown. There is an anniversary party going on at the train station. There is someone running wild in the crowd that should be up the river, behind bars. He is running off with the anniversary cake. It's Slyboots. He escapes in his Hatmobile. He stops at the Legotown apartment building and sees Questions. Questions runs up and jumps into the Hatmobile and they drive off.

Back at Captain Bill's office, Captain Bill says, "What, Questions and Slyboots again?" Then Max says, "There is only one man who can save us now!" He runs over to the phone and calls Legoman. He tells Legoman about the crime.

Legoman heads to the Legocave, runs to the Legomobile, and hops in. He drives off. Legoman says to himself, "Slyboots will really run into trouble now."

Meanwhile at the obsolete hat factory, some strange henchmen run in with a box with fragile written all over it. The first thing out of the box is another villain, Wineski. Now there is a small band of villains.

Back at Captain Bill's office, they have a recording from Questions. The riddle is: what is gray, believed to be intelligent, and lives in Africa? They stop the recording. Legoman says, "An elephant! But that's too easy and why an elephant? Wait, the zoo!" He runs back to the Legomobile and heads to the zoo.

Meanwhile at the zoo, Questions and the rest are stealing zoo passes and

leave behind a clue. Legoman pulls up. He runs into the abandoned ticket booth and sees the clue. It says, "Where would you find a baseball, a dirt field and grandstands?" Legoman immediately knows it is the baseball stadium. He runs back to his Legomobile and drives off. When he arrives at the stadium, he sees a giant hat in the parking lot. He knows it is the Hatmobile. He sees them committing a really big crime. They are stealing home runs from the scoreboard.

To Be Continued...

Editor's Note: This story is continued in the next work of prose fiction, "Riddles Everywhere & The Bad Bar." The next story, for the record, is also two stories meshed together, since this was originally a three-part story.

Riddles Everywhere & The Bad Bar

Original Story from 2002

Legoman hurried as they took away home runs. 25, 24, 23, 22... He quickly climbed up the ladder to the scoreboard. Oof, Boof, Bang, Zam! He punched Slyboots' henchmen. Legoman climbs down the ladder and runs into the parking lot. Wineski spills beer all over the place and Legoman slips. Slyboots, Questions, and Wineski get away in the Hatmobile. The beer dries up, Legoman runs to the Legomobile, hops in and drives off. He follows the Hatmobile to the train station.

At the train station, Legoman sees the bad guys stealing steam from the engine. They had taken a vacuum from the Hatmobile and suck up all the steam. He climbs out of the Legomobile and heads into the train station. He sees the villains climb into a passenger car and he climbs in after them. They have another big fist fight. Bing, Bam, Zowie, Boof, Bom! They capture Legoman and stuff him into the smokestack to be catapulted over Lego County.

Only 2 minutes left until Legoman would be puffed out of Lego County. He had to do some quick thinking. He had an idea. Legoman grabbed a metal pole and waited. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. As he came out, he swung around and slid down the pole like a firefighter. But he was too late. Questions, Slyboots, and Wineski were gone. Then he saw another clue. It said, "Where would you find money, a banker, and a safe?" Legoman said, "That's easy. The bank."

When he got there, he saw the Hatmobile. He ran inside and saw them. Then another fistfight began. Ooo, Boof, Bang, Zam, Bing, Bam, Zowie, Bom! The villains were defeated and were taken to jail.

Back at Captain Bill's office, "Congratulations, you've brought three of our jailbirds back." Legoman said, "Thanks," and went home.

Topper Robber, Run!

Rewritten from "Slyboots, Run!"

Today is a lovely day in LEGO City. At the Downtown Train Station, the gentle, good Graviator family is running a calm, celebratory charity event. But deep in the crowd is a maniacal, melodramatic, mustached maniac topped with a derby. He is running amok in the crowd, cowering behind a cheerful, colossal cake. He grabs the cake and runs off towards a towering, turbo-powered top hat. He plops the plump party cake inside and runs to the cab of his Hatmobile. It's Topper Robber, and he makes a run for Fresco District.

Meanwhile at the police station, "Captain Bill, get a run in here NOW!" shouted Chief Dunby. Captain Bill came running to Dunby's dinky doughnut-dirty desk and saluted the crummy, cranky chief. "We got a report from Downtown that someone in a derby stole the cake from the train station charity and ran off in a top hat." "What? Topper Robber is on the run again?" "Yes, and according to my most modest men, he's run off to Fresco. Find him, no matter what!" Captain Bill runs out of Dunby's office and reaches for a phone in the main reception office. He rushes his finger to the phone and speed-dials Legoman.

In his lavish mansion, Theodore Parkington perks up at the sound of the phone ringing and runs to a peculiar phone disguised as a curtain rod. "Yes, Captain Bill. I will fly to Fresco's foreclosed factories. Meet me there." After awkwardly aligning the arrow-shaped rod, Theodore runs to the Legocave, becomes Legoman, and runs to the Legomobile. He revs off into the city.

Meanwhile at a rundown, ruined, reclaimed radiator cap warehouse, Topper Robber and his men run in with the cake. Inside, they run into their cohort

in criminally crafty capers, Questions. “Is the cake ready?” asks Questions. “My men and I ran into no trouble in acquiring it,” replies the derbied, dastardly devil. “Excellent! Now we just need some ravish, reviling, riddles and flashy fireworks to make the theft of Citrus Pass Memorial Zoo’s newest acquisition, Regal the Red Panda, go off without a hitch during the big, booked birthday party tomorrow!” Both villains laugh, but are quickly cut off by the sound of the Legomobile. “Let’s run.” All of the villains run to the Hatmobile and take off.

Shortly after, Legoman and Captain Bill run inside the building, only to find it disappointingly deserted. “Legoman, are you sure you’ve secured the secret sanctuary?” “Yes,” replies the masked crime fighter. “Bits of cake have certainly clumped in the cracks. The scent has also secreted into the surroundings.” Looking around, Captain Bill discovers a riddle. Standing up, he reads, “Playing balls are white, diamonds are green, we’re committing a crime, that has to be seen. Topper Robber must be running up Questions’ alley.” Legoman stops and runs through the riddle in his mind. “Or Questions may be his ally. My guess is that the riddle refers to the baseball diamond in Crescent Park. Call celebrity cop Chase McCain and command him to come to Crescent Park.” As Captain Bill hoists up his phone, Legoman runs out of the warehouse and to the Legomobile.

Later at the baseball field, Legoman pulls up just as Chase McCain leaps out of his squad car. Legoman runs up to Chase and directs him to the field. As they run up to the bleachers, they cannot believe their eyes: Questions, Topper Robber, and their heinous henchmen are running the gambit of stealing home runs from the scoreboard!

“How is that possible?” cries Chase “There’s not even a game going on!” The henchmen hear him and run towards the bleachers. As Legoman and Chase run for the consumable conveniences courtyard, the henchmen meet them and slug it out. BAM! POW! BOOF! BANG!

As the fight forces forward, Questions and Topper Robber continue their home run heist. “Ha, ha! It appears our distraction is working!” says

Questions. “Soon, our henchmen will have stolen the celebratory fireworks from the field’s storage shed, inserted them into the cake, and swap it out with the real cake at the zoo!”

WHAM! BONG! ZWOING! Legoman and Chase are brought down by the henchmen. Seeing this, Questions and Topper Robber run up to the two defenders of justice and tightly tie them up. “Take the two to the tyke train,” says Topper Robber, “and ‘cap’ off the steamy smoke stack!”

With Chase and Legoman in their grasp, the heinous henchmen hurriedly run to the tiny tyke train and stuff the duo into the smoke stack, stopping up the boiler beneath their behinds. “Soon, this tiny, trembling train will have built up enough steam to eject you into the air and across the city! So long!” shouted Topper Robber. The villains run off, leaving the helpless children and park employees to watch Legoman and Chase endure their final, fatal fate!

Can they survive such a coarse, catastrophic, catapulting? Will the children call for help? Will the children help themselves? Can an engine as small as this one even fling our heroes into the air? Find out next time!

Editor’s Note: This story is continued in the next work of prose fiction: “Rudimentary Riddles Everywhere.”

Rudimentary Riddles Everywhere

Rewritten from “Riddles Everywhere & The Bad Bar”

As Legoman and Chase await their dire, disastrous destiny, they can feel the tiny train beneath them build up steam. Petrified, the trembling tykes can only look on with fear.

Soon, the hour of reckoning arrives and the train can take its build-up no longer. It simply must let off some steam!

FOOM! Thud.

As such a minuscule motor cannot contain the capacity of a carefully-crafted catapult, the smokestack simply dumps Legoman and Chase off to the side of the tracks. Beyond a few twigs in their hair, both defenders of justice are okay to fight another day. Legoman pulls out his Lego Rope Cutting Blade and frees the two of them.

“Why didn’t you do that sooner?” questions Chase McCain. “The small smokestack smothered my secret storage shoe,” replies Legoman as the two return to the baseball field.

When they arrive, they discover that they are in a pickle: the Hatmobile is still situated in the parking lot, but none of the heinous villains are present! “Well, any idea where they went?” asks Chase. Legoman scours the scene for secrets and solutions. “With Questions on Topper Robber’s role call, that robber’s ridiculous riddles must be residing about. They will point us in the right direction.”

Suddenly, the pyrotechnics powerhouse explodes to life, sending fireworks

flying from the field. With an explosion of confetti, the rocket litters the diamond with a mountain of riddles.

After checking to see if the riddles are still hot, Chase and Legoman investigate the pile, turning up paper after paper. “This makes no sense,” declares Chase. “These are just pictures of animals, junk food, and gardening tools.” “Remember Chase,” replies Legoman, “sometimes the simplest solution sorts itself between the lines.” They continue to look at the pile of precarious photos, pondering their purpose.

“Takin, Shovel, Ice Cream, Salamander, Burger, Rake, Hose, Beaver. This makes no sense.” Chase, in a fit of frustrated fury, flings down the photos. Adjusting his sight, he once again sees the Hatmobile, verifying that the vicarious villains are still in their vicinity. He suddenly becomes struck with a terrific thought. “Citrus Pass Memorial Zoo,” cries the celebratory Chase. “That’s where we’ll find them.”

Arriving at the zoo, Legoman and Chase scour the grounds, finding nothing noteworthy. “Are you certain that your calculations are correct?” asks Legoman. “They should be, but this makes no sense. The riddle leads here, so why aren’t they here as well?” BANG! Above the birthday abode, fireworks fill the sky, fulfilling their folly. Taking immediate notice of the distraction, Legoman and Chase race towards the source of the noise.

Within the birthday abode, tearful toddlers traverse to their parents for escape from this trivial travesty. Legoman and Chase arrive, only to find the children’s cake completely exploded. The children flock to Legoman in an excitedly empathetic rush as Chase analyses the cake’s former display location. Inspecting it carefully, he discovers burnt ash, a small hole in the table, and part of a wick. In order to verify his accusation, Chase saunters up to one of the parents and asks, “Who brought the cake?” The petrified parent, still in striking shock, stiffly replies, “No one. It was already here. Someone from out back rolled it out, lit the candles, grabbed something from underneath, and left it here. Everything was going fine, until the candles shot into the air like fireworks.” Chase, certain that he caught his incriminating

clue, clutches Legoman and whispers, "It's a ruse. They are here, but the birthday blowout was just a decisive diversion. Let's split up."

It didn't take long before Chase caught up to the criminals at the Red Panda exhibit. They had already loaded the animal into a cat carrier, yet were completely caught off-guard for Chase. He leaps into the exhibit after the crooks and engages in a fist fight with the henchmen. POW! BANG! WHOOSH! BONK! ZOING! Chase captures Questions' and Topper Robber's compatriots and chases the remaining two criminals.

Unfortunately, Chase loses sight of the two, who use this advantage to execute their escape. He eventually escapes the maze of maintenance causeways and reaches the baseball diamond parking lot, only to find the Hatmobile still there. Perplexed, he turns around to find Legoman with the two crafty criminals caught in his clean cuffs. "I've already contacted Captain Bill," says Legoman. "These two will be back in Albatross for good."

Soon, Captain Bill arrives in the police prisoner transport and hauls away the terrible twosome along with their heinous henchmen. Shortly behind Bill is a tough tow truck, ready to haul away and impound the Hatmobile. "It's nice to work with you again, Chase," states Legoman. And with a flourish of his crimson cape, Legoman hops into the Legomobile and launches away.

Cows Get Revenge

Original Story from 2002

It's a dark and spooky night. The fog is rolling in. The Lego Express leaves the station. The passengers aboard the train are tired and sleepy. Some of them head to the sleeping car. Others go to the dining car to get a bite to eat. The only sound they hear is the train rolling along the tracks. Chug, chug! Chug, chug! Chug, chug!

Suddenly, the lights go out and the train screeches to a halt. Engineer Max, in the engine, tires to figure out what caused the train to stop. Conductor Charlie runs into the engine asking, "What went wrong?" Engineer Max says, "I don't know. I was watching the countryside when the train screeched to a halt." They hear screams from the dining car.

They run to the dining car. People are running with their arms in the air bumping into each other. Someone yells, "Something just grabbed my leg!" The emergency lights come on. Everyone sees floating creatures grabbing at people and stealing their valuables. One man yells, "He just stole my Bud Lite!"

Conductor Charlie blows his whistle. Everyone stops and looks at him, even the creatures. Engineer Max, seeing the creatures, realizes they are dead cows. One looks familiar. He looks like the one his train hit last week. The leader of the dead cow gang says, "We are tired of being hit by trains. We are getting revenge. Give us your train and valuables or die."

Conductor Charlie thinks, "Why would a cow steal a Bud Lite?" He gets an idea. They may be bad guys in masks. The cow that stole the Bud Lite sneezes. His mask falls off. It's Wineski. He says, "I would have gotten away

with it if the man had been drinking a Coors.”

They unveil the rest of the dead cows. The leader is Baron Von Baron. The second in command is Cedric the Bull, and the scout is Alexandria Sinister.

Engineer Max called the police, who came and took them away. “Good heavens,” cried the man, “They still have my Bud Lite!”

Editor’s Note: The epitome of the wackiness that I had a penchant to write into my stories, “Cows Get Revenge” is perhaps one of the most memorable stories that I’ve ever written. It’s creative, funny, and unpredictable. I even proposed this as the original opening for the animated film “The Adventures of Legoman,” but it was cut out in order to refocus the story.

One thing that I don’t get, though, was my fascination with alcoholic beverages at this age, even though I was too young to drink (I’ve actually never had alcohol in my entire life). You may see this in some of my other writings from this time (the last to feature an alcohol reference was “Johnny Thunder and the Secret of Marco Polo”), but this was the most blatant reference.

In truth, this story heavily influenced me later on, to not only push the boundaries of what a story’s premise could be, but also to play around with story conventions and tropes and see what happens. In fact, I even played around with this story and brought it to the modern age. The fruit of my labor starts on the next page.

Revenge of the Ghost Cows

Rewritten from “Cows Get Revenge”

As the last traces of sunset grace the landscape, the last mingling of passengers step off from the boarding platform and make their way through the Grand Emerald Scenic Railroad. This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for many of the passengers, as this is their only way of experiencing the bygone era of steam locomotion. Yet, no one on this particular train excursion ever suspected what would befall them that night.

With a blow of his whistle, Conductor Charlie Williams signaled that all of the passengers were on-board and, stepping onto the train himself, closed the last door behind him.

With a blast of steam, the engine roared to life and gained speed through the loose pine forest. As dusk turned to night, the Grand Emerald emerged from the remnants of the forest and made its way across the flat plains. Most of the passengers gathered inside the dining car for a lavish dinner while others decided to retire to bed early. The only sound permeating through the landscape was the rhythmic chugging of the train engine.

As the passengers enjoyed their meals, Conductor Charlie made his way through the quaint crowd, making a motion to introduce himself with those who are dining. Some, eager for the added attention, would pose for pictures with the conductor.

Suddenly, without warning, the entire dining car was plunged into darkness as the train screeched to a halt. The passengers, unsure of what had happened, froze with fear.

“I do not know what happened, but please remain calm,” instructed Charlie. “I’ll consult the engineer on this matter. Just please remain seated.” Then, navigating through the darkness, Conductor Charlie left the car.

Up in the engine, Engineer Max Michaels was tampering in vain with the controls when Conductor Charlie stepped into the cab. “Good golly! What happened to the engine, Max?” an exasperated Charlie gasped. Max only shrugged. “Beats me. I was just enjoying the view as always when I noticed that the fire in the boiler extinguished itself.” “What do you mean, extinguished itself?” asked Charlie. “Just Foof! And it was out like that.” Charlie cut off Max as his ears picked up the sounds of screaming radiating from the dining car. Without a second thought, the pair bolted for the car.

Back inside the dining car, passengers scrambled and screamed in the darkness, crashing into each other and the tables. Despite his pleas for the passengers to calm down, Charlie was unable to contain the hysterical crowd. From the noise, one of the diners screamed, “Something just grabbed my leg!”

With a flip of a switch, Engineer Max restored the lights, only to find the air filled with floating creatures. As they hovered near the ceiling, they reached down and swiped at the passengers, snatching various valuables. Another man screamed, “That thing stole my Bud Lite!”

Engineer Max, looking up at the oddly bovine creatures, asked, “Are those... cows?” Almost in response, one of the creatures let out an unearthly moo, silencing the crowd. Turning to Max, the floating creature bellowed, “We, the spirits of the deceased bovine, are fed up with being hit by trains. We have now possessed your train and will make you all suffer our fate!”

The crowd panicked again as the intoxicated man wrestled with one of the ghostly cows for his Bud Lite. Engineer Max, noticing this, wondered, “How does that work? Cows don’t have opposable thumbs. Or fingers, for that matter.”

SNAP! The cow’s leg popped off like a twig, showering the drunkard with

cotton. “AH! Get this ectoplasm off me, unless it tastes like beef,” slurred the drunkard. Unceremoniously, he passed out on the floor.

The rest of the crowd looked on in disbelief as the remaining cow ghosts descended from the ceiling. The ghost cow that spoke marched up to Max with what looked like rage. “If you won’t come easy, then it’s time that you see who I really am!” With that, the leader of the gang of dead cows reared up.

ZIP! The cow’s skin fell to the floor, revealing a man inside. “And if you liked this spectacle, call Mr. Willie Swipe at (555) 234-2378 for more clever pranks.”

That number was dialed by no one that night, as everyone was too infuriated by the prank to want to be near him. “I’ve never done business with you,” shouted someone in the crowd, “but I’m giving you zero stars on Yelp, anyway!”

Perplexed, Engineer Max asked, “But how did the train engine stop, then?” Willie smiled and replied, “Why, I installed a silent fire sprinkler into the boiler. My plan worked perfectly!”

It did, until Willie discovered that one of the passengers was an undercover police officer. With Willie Swipe sent off to jail to hopefully never torment anyone ever again with his pranks, the train engine was repaired and operations resumed normally.

Everyone enjoyed the remainder of the evening, except for Willie Swipe, who became angry at the lack of appreciation he got for his clever prank. No one even knew it was a ruse until that taxidermy cow lost its leg. And besides, who else had ever thought of dead cows getting their revenge on a steam train? He knew that from now on, when he tricked someone, he’s going for literal gold.

The Big Easter Egg Hunt

Original Story from 2002

It was Easter Sunday in Legotown. Sarah Thunder couldn't wait to paint the eggs. John, Sarah's baby brother, said, "goo goo," when he saw the neighbors hiding eggs. Sarah told John that there is a big, white, furry bunny that hops through Legotown giving presents to good little Legoettes. Meanwhile, Johnny, Sarah's father, was dyeing eggs, but he didn't know it was a cheap egg decorating kit. When he put an egg in the green it came out yellow. He was confused.

Then it was time for the Thunders to hide eggs. Once all the eggs were hidden it was time to meet at the Graviator's house. Mr. Graviator gave each of them a basket. It was time for them to search for eggs. Sarah found one behind the Thunder's trashcan. She also found one in the Bimble's garden and one in the interior of the Pig's car.

After finding the eggs it was time to go back to the Graviator's house. Sweettooth didn't make it on time because he was too busy eating the eggs he found. Sarah got some hard-boiled eggs and some prize eggs. She got the egg that had the golden Sacajawea coin. Sweettooth got one prize egg; inside was candy. Sarah went home and showed her parents what she had found.

The End

Editor's Note: This was a nice, simple story to write. It doesn't have much to it, to be honest, but it was nice to write a Johnny Thunder story that shows his family's day-to-day activities. This was also the first-ever appearance of his daughter, Sarah Thunder. In the re-writing, which starts on the next page, I have given her a starring role that lets the reader see Easter through her eyes.

Sarah's Childhood Adventures: The Easter Egg Hunt

Rewritten from "The Big Easter Egg Hunt"

As the sun rises early Easter Sunday, young Sarah Thunder bounds out of bed and prepares herself for the day ahead. At the age of six, Sarah only knows about her dad's globe-trotting exploits from World Travels Publishing's monthly publication *World Magazine*, but she shares Johnny Thunder's excitement for the outdoors. So when the annual neighborhood Easter Egg hunt rolls around, Sarah is always the first kid on the block to get up, get dressed, and drag her parents out the front door for a chance to crawl in the dirt, looking for eggs.

This year, however, Johnny and his wife Pippin had just returned from an anthropological expedition to Benin, so with only their next door neighbors, the Graviators, around to watch Sarah, no time has been devoted to decorating the Thunders' home. After breakfast, however, Johnny vowed to decorate the Thunder dwelling for Easter.

"Ratbag this egg dye! It looks like someone hit the turps and technicolor yawned on my eggs!" Sarah is not that familiar with Australian slang, but she knows that when her father started using it extensively, he was in a bad mood. Knowing what was coming next, she left the room as her mom Pippin approached Johnny in the kitchen.

"Something wrong, honey?"

"It's this rooted egg dye! All of my greens are coming out sickie yellow! I bet some dip from Woop Woop made this bodgy decorating kit!"

After Johnny regained his composure at the local church's Easter Sunday

service, he was joined by the other neighborhood parents to hide all of their Easter Eggs, though Sarah could barely contain her excitement at this point. She was already imagining the adventures that she was going to have during the egg hunt.

“Ready for the egg hunt, my Sarah?” She immediately flew for the front door at the sound of her father’s voice. With his guiding hand, he directs Sarah next door to the Graviator’s driveway, where what appears to be all of the neighborhood children stand in wait. At least, almost all of them.

Lumbering up the driveway after Sarah is the bulbous Hugo Wicket, the neighborhood sweet addict. If he sees any form of candy or chocolate, it goes into his mouth. Most of the neighborhood kids mock him by calling him ‘Sweet Tooth,’ but Sarah was okay with him. He doesn’t take chocolate from anyone else or get violent about his habits. He’s just impulsive, that’s all.

“Now that everyone’s here,” starts Priscilla Graviator, “I just want to remind everyone to play nice. There’s plenty of eggs for everyone, and we’ve only hidden them in places where you can’t get hurt. So there aren’t any eggs in Mr. Thunder’s ‘eccentric’ garden.” Being very observant, Sarah can easily tell from the glare that Tommy Graviator’s mom gives to her father that she doesn’t like Johnny’s African Sage garden.

After handing Easter Egg baskets off to each of the children, the neighborhood kids fill the yards, looking for eggs. Most of the children are content with finding eggs underneath cars or inside shallow planters, but Sarah is not one for easy eggs. Climbing through planters and crawling through vegetable gardens, Sarah imagines herself being like her dad on one of his adventures that she has read about in *World Magazine*. Each egg is like an ancient relic to her that will tell her all about an ancient civilization. To her father, the dyed eggs are another reason to not buy Easter decorations at Dollar Tree.

At this time, lunch was nearing, which meant that the Easter Egg hunt would soon be concluding, but Sarah had made up her mind that she was going

to find one last egg before returning home. Because of this, she decided to venture into an area of the neighborhood that she knew no other child had explored: the jungle-like succulent garden that is planted outside Mr. Gregory Bimble’s house. Mr. Bimble, a safety inspector for entertainment venues, is said to have an obsession for plants of all varieties, and the plants in his garden match his fetish for more scenery with greater variety.

As kids typically didn’t explore his garden, Sarah first circumnavigated its perimeter, just to verify that an egg is indeed hidden here.

There. Sitting in the rocky formations is a yellow and green egg, waiting for someone to take it. Sarah, knowing which plants to avoid to stay safe, snatches the egg and makes her way home.

On her way back, however, she spies an overturned basket, with a crying Hugo sitting next to it on the curb. Curious and sympathetic, Sarah approaches him.

“What’s wrong, Hugo?”

“All of the other kids made fun of me, telling to wait until I get home to eat the candy I found! They kicked my basket and took my eggs.” Hugo resumed sobbing as Sarah sat down on the curb next to him. She reaches into her basket and pulls out the egg she just found, contemplating it.

“It’s okay. I just found this egg, but I think you should have it. I’ll let my mommy and daddy know what happened, and the other grown-ups, too. What the other kids did to you was wrong, so I want to make things right.” Hugo wipes a tear from his eye and mutters, “Thank you.”

And with that, they get up and walk back to the Graviator’s house, ready for a nice Easter lunch.

The Carter Caper

Original Story from 2002

The telephone rang at the newspaper office. "Strange, misty shapes are 'hanging' around City Hall making shrill noises!" a hysterical voice wailed.

"Carter!" yelled the night editor, "Get over to City Hall and check out this story. Maybe you'd better take a ghost-blaster with you...some weirdo thinks that there are spirits floating in the air!"

Carter drove to City Hall. While he was driving he thought about what might be making the noises. He had no idea.

He pulled in front of City Hall. He saw Captain Bill pull up as people ran in terror. They were running from shapes in the windows and spooky noises.

Carter slowly got out of his car and crept up the steps beside Captain Bill. They were both nervous. Just then, the doors of the City Hall burst open and a large group of people ran screaming, "Ghosts! Ghosts!" Captain Bill turned and ran with the crowd. Carter, still frightened, heard a man shout, "Call the army!" Carter then crept inside the building and saw mysterious figures floating around. Carter thought, "These can't be real ghosts, can they?" He walked into the secretary's office. A huge ghost drifted towards him. It had big arms, hands, claws, and glowing eyes. Carter picked up a mug off the desk and dumped the pencils out. He threw it at the ghost. It went right through it and hit the wall.

Carter turned to run and bumped into a fan, knocking it over. The fan hit a projector and it fell over. The ghost disappeared. Carter realized the ghosts aren't real. They are images from projectors. A man in a sheet crept out from

behind a curtain. Carter yelled, "I'm not scared of you." The man in the sheet tried to run out the door. He tripped over the projector and he lost his sheet. Carter recognized the man. It's Questions.

Just then, Captain Bill entered the room and pulled a gun on Questions. Questions said, "I would have gotten away with this if it weren't for that meddling reporter." The police took him away.

Carter drove back to the Daily Brick to write his story. When he got there, he discovered the night editor is a real ghost, but that's another story.

The End

Editor's Note: The first two paragraphs of this story are not my own. They were written by Marjorie Frank for the book "Complete Writing Lessons for the Middle Grades" and were intended as the start of a story that the student completes for the assignment. Honestly, most of the texts in this book were written for assignments from that book.

But what if I tackled that assignment today? What would the story look like? Because of confinement to the assignment, I have to leave the first two paragraphs alone. However, my modern day tackling has resulted in a new version of this story, which starts on the next page.

The Philip Carter Caper

Rewritten from “The Carter Caper”

The telephone rang at the newspaper office. “Strange, misty shapes are ‘hanging’ around City Hall, making shrill noises!” a hysterical voice wailed.

“Carter!” yelled the night editor, “Get over to City Hall and check out this story. Maybe you’d better take a ghost-blaster with you...some weirdo thinks that there are spirits floating in the air!”

That was the last thing that Philip Carter wanted to hear, as he was just about to clock out for the evening after finishing his article about the recent tremors surrounding Mt. Lay Gow. Still, he was getting paid to do this, right?

“Fine. I’ll be back in a couple hours,” hollered Philip towards the brash night editor. “It’s probably something silly,” Philip muttered. “And people acting like idiots is what sells papers these days, anyway.”

Being located just a few blocks from City Hall, Carter had no trouble reaching his destination, but what he did see was a sight that surprised even him.

As the city council shivered outside in terror, Philip could make out what appeared to be ghostly forms moving inside the building. He was a little apprehensive, but knew that his job required him to go inside.

Inside the foyer, he saw what were clearly ghost projections on the walls. Slumping over in disappointment, Philip muttered to himself, “I don’t get paid enough for this.”

Bursting from the doors, Philip yelled, “How on Earth did our city’s governing body fall for such an obvious prank? See if I vote for any of you next year!”

Still afraid, one of the council members replied, “Go inside the atrium and look up.” Philip, figuring that he’s still here being paid, should make the most of the council member’s words.

Back inside, he looked up into the atrium and spied a sight that caused his heart to leap. High on the third floor, a cloaked figure held the mayor’s secretary out over the edge, ready to let her fall.

“If you want her to live,” said the cloaked figure, “then you must play projector ghost hunter. Pick up the infrared gun and score 1000 points.”

Sure enough, at Philip’s feet was a toy gun with a red light projector embedded into the end of the barrel. Philip, picking up the gun, looked it over with bewilderment.

ZAP!

Accidentally bumping the trigger, the gun generated a crackling sound from its cheap speaker. Philip, to his surprise, saw the static ghost animation turn into that of a ghost falling to the ground, albeit also with static animation. As the ghost disappeared, another took its place.

Philip smirked slightly and took aim with the cheap electronic rifle at the projections, taking them down one by one. Impressed, the masked man pulled back the secretary.

As Philip left City Hall, the LCPD arrived in full force, guns at the ready. They charged in, ready to shoot any non-existent specters. “Oh well,” figured Philip. “At least that masked guy is going to be arrested.”

Chuckling at the absurdity of the whole ordeal, Philip returned to the

newspaper office to finally clock out. However, just as he was about to slide in his punch card, the night editor hollered again.

“CARTER! Did you get a good story?”

“Yeah. No ghosts, but it’s still a pretty ridiculous one. Our readers are going to eat this up!”

“Good! Now get writing! I want this article in tomorrow’s paper! We can push your Mt. Lay Gow story to the day after tomorrow to make room on the front cover.”

Dropping his punch card to his side, Philip hopelessly let his head fall as he stumbled over to his desk. As he fell into his chair and booted up his computer to write his story, he suddenly shot up in terror. With a scream that could wake up the dead, he proclaimed to no one in particular, “I never found out that masked man’s identity!”

Jim McCurdy

Original Story from 2005

Jim McCurdy isn’t a very good plumber. He was given a job to check-up on the water and gas lines underneath Main Street. His average body frame climbed down through a manhole on the sidewalk on a side street to Main Street. His brown eyes helped him find the correct water and gas lines. When he fixed them, then reconnected them, he made a dumb mistake. He mixed up the two lines. He connected the water to the gas and the gas to the water. That was the beginning of a great disaster.

Later at Mikey Millionaire’s mansion, Mikey decided to take a bath. When he turned on the bath, flames came out of the faucet. “Guacamole Roca!” said Mikey.

In the meantime at Food Haven, a baker was cooking turkey. He checked on the turkey and the meat was soggy. “What in the name of the Lego brick happened here?” said the chef. The chef put up a sign that said “closed” over the sign that said “poultry.”

Meanwhile at Lego mart, a person went to the bathroom. He flushed the toilet and flames shot out. The person said, “Help! Satan’s in the toilet!” and ran out of the store.

Later at the laundromat, a person opened a washer to reveal burnt clothes. He said, “What the heck happened?”

The next sunny morning, a legoette went downstairs to empty the dishwasher. When he opened it, he couldn’t breathe because of the smoke coming out of the dishwasher. All of the dishes were scarred black. He was

confused.

Later that afternoon, Mayor Prickman met with Patrolman Bill and the plumber that got them into the mess. "My dog, Barney, has the keys to the water and gas lines and he guards them well," commented the plumber. "It's time he learns his lesson."

Editor's Note: The story was intended to continue on from here. However, the documents that I have confirm that this story was never completed. Instead, enjoy a rather...er...unconventional rewriting of this story, which starts on the next page.

Jim McCurdy: Extraordinary Plumber

Rewritten from "Jim McCurdy"

LCPD Case Log #1580
Case Report By: Officer Max Denver
Case Date: 5/23/2006
Case File Archived: 1/19/2007
Case File Archivist: Intern Frank Honey

(08:41 - 1/19/2007) Hello, fellow officers!

I've noticed that most of you haven't paid much attention to me, but I'm Frank Honey, the new case file archivist intern. It's my job for the next five years (I guess) to make sure that all of the closed cases are sorted and properly archived in the police station's basement, probably so we can look back at some of the really ridiculous cases that we've had in our past, and oh boy, have I hit the mother load of laughs!

Apparently, mixing up pipes is a crime, because that is exactly what happened here! Some guy named Joe Wilson was working on some pipes in downtown when he apparently mixed up the gas and water lines! Ha! Like I would ever do that!

Anyway, this story is just a laugh riot, so I want you to get to the report itself. In the meantime, the girl working the requisitions desk is looking at me. I think that means that she's in love with me, so I'm going to go talk to her. Later!

Case #1580 - Downtown Water Main Mix-Up
Report Filed By: Officer Max Denver

(06:31 - 5/23/2006)

I've just received a report from Amenity Warehouse in Downtown that one of its customers is creating a public nuisance by running around the store, proclaiming that the end is nigh. I don't know why we have to escort him from the store when that's store security's job, but if that's the way it has to be, then so be it. I've already informed Chief Gleeson of my absence for this morning.

(07:14 - 5/23/2006)

I've entered the store now and have already located the distressed customer. However, any attempt to calm the customer down have been unsuccessful, as he will not stop screaming, "Satan's in the toilet! Fire and brimstone have rained on my bottom! The end is nigh!" I will try to talk to him.

(08:56 - 5/23/2006)

In an ordeal that reminded me of my last root canal, I've finally calmed down the man to a point where I can finally understand what has happened. According to him, he was using the toilet earlier that morning. When he flushed it, flames shot out of the toilet bowl, scorching his butt. I have convinced him that a, pardon the unprofessional nature of this writing, rump roast is not a sign of the apocalypse, and he is guiding me to the scene of the incident now.

(09:04 - 5/23/2006)

After smelling a gas leak near the men's restroom, I have ordered an immediate evacuation of the store. All of the store employees and customers are safe and accounted for, and I have already alerted the fire department, as well as the police chief, about the current situation. I will report back when I receive further news.

(09:46 - 5/23/2006)

I have received word that this is not an isolated incident. Throughout the Downtown area, facilities are being evacuated for possible gas leaks. In addition to this, I have also gotten word from one of the firefighters that

the gas was coming from, of all places, a bathroom faucet that someone forgot to shut off. I'm relieved that there's no leak, but the faucet revelation is both startling and a bit frightening. If there's no gas leak, and if this isn't an isolated incident, what could it be?

I'm going to go to the deli nearby for an early lunch, but I also want to test a theory that I have. It's a bit far-fetched, but I have to know.

(10:23 - 5/23/2006)

Just as I suspected! The deli only has cold cuts today! Usually, the place sells out of its famous Southern-style pulled pork sandwiches, but today a sign proclaims that they're not for sale. When I asked the cashier about this, he said its because their oven's gas lines keep on spraying out water, flooding the oven base.

At this point, I feel that it's too soon to concretely proclaim the cause of this dilemma, but I believe that someone in the sewer mixed up the gas and water lines. I do not know how someone could be this dumb, but I know just the man to fix this mess.

(11:43 - 5/23/2006)

After issuing an order to find out who was the last person to be inside the downtown sewer system, I called up my home plumber, Jim McCurdy, to see if he could weigh in on this matter. While he does not work for the city, he said that he's willing to take a look at the pipe system in downtown. I'm awaiting his arrival.

(11:52 - 5/23/2006)

Jim has just arrived and has unloaded the equipment that he needs for the job. I'm going to wait on the street while he fixes the pipes in the sewer.

(12:01 - 5/23/2006)

Jim has just informed me that the controls for the gas and water lines are behind lock and key. This is bad news. I still don't know who was the last person down there, and now I need that name more than ever!

(12:06 - 5/23/2006)

Captain Bill has just radioed in, informing me that the name of the person that I want is Joe Wilson. He runs a small plumbing company out of Pagoda district that has a contract with the city. I'll contact him right now.

(12:11 - 5/23/2006)

More bad news: Joe isn't in his office right now. I'm guessing that he's out for lunch, but I'm going to have to investigate, just to make sure. Jim said that he'll stay behind, just in case this is a sabotage job.

(12:59 - 5/23/2006)

As suspected, Joe's office is closed right now, but a sign says that he'll be back around 1:30. While I wait, I'm going to take a quick look around the building, just in case this actually is a conspiracy.

(13:34 - 5/23/2006)

After half an hour of finding nothing, Joe has returned to his office. I don't know if he noticed my squad car across the street, but he didn't seem to notice as he reentered his office. I'm going to ask him some questions and see if he can unlock the gas and water line shutoff valves for me.

(13:41 - 5/23/2006)

Not knowing about his mistake, Joe has agreed to follow me back to downtown to fix the pipe debacle. I will update as soon as we arrive.

(14:02 - 5/23/2006)

We are back at the manhole leading to the water and gas lines. Both Joe and Jim are going underground now, while I wait up above to redirect traffic as needed.

(14:51 - 5/23/2006)

Joe and Jim have just returned to the surface, saying that the pipe mix-up has been resolved. However, Joe confessed to not handling the situation properly, as he constantly fumbled with the keys, almost forgot to shut off the water

and gas lines before removing the pipe fittings, and dropping parts on the floor. Jim apparently did most of the work, including picking up after Joe. Of course, Jim said that before they left, he confirmed that they had actually fixed the pipes and didn't just start this whole mess all over again. I'll give Chief Gleeson the heads-up that the water and gas for downtown are safe to use again. Both Jim and Joe will be following me to the station.

(15:36 - 5/23/2006)

After an exchange of words with Deputy Dunby, it was made clear that Joe's contract with the city was going to be revoked and possibly be rewarded to Jim McCurdy instead. However, despite Dunby's opinion, Joe Wilson will not be charged or held for his actions, as incompetence isn't really a crime. In the meantime, I am going down to the basement to file this case. This is Officer Max Denver, signing out.

End of Record

(09:10 - 1/19/2007)

So I found out that the girl working at the desk is named Ellie Phillips and it seems that she does like me! She is friendly, so that means that I should ask her out, right?

Anyway, I hope that you got a good laugh out of this report, because I sure did! Hold on. I think someone is calling me. Frank Honey out!

(09:13 - 1/19/2007) Deputy Dunby reporting in.

Why was that idiot intern scribbling all over our case files? He only had one job, and just...Ah! Never mind. If it wasn't for the fact that his super-rich hotel magnate family would probably fly in a lawyer from New York if we terminated him, I would personally place him on the next train home! Dunby out!

Artifact Theft

Original Story from 2004

“You can’t make me go! I have had enough of this adventure business,” said Mike stubbornly, as he threw his mystery meat across the room. “We’re only going to Canada, mate,” said Johnny. “What’s up there, the golden peg leg?” said Mike sarcastically. “No, no,” said Dr. Kilroy. We’re looking for the Ice Age Gem.” “What is it, exactly?” asked Johnny. Dr. Kilroy answered, “It’s a light blue gem found inside a Canadian cave. This map was created by the Viking explorer Leif Erikson,” said Dr. Kilroy, holding up an old map. “Time to go to the airport,” said Johnny excitedly.

Later, at the airport, Harry and Prof. O’saurus, Johnny’s stepbrother, were waiting. “We’re searching for the Ice Age Gem,” said Johnny as he walked up. Prof. O’saurus, “That’s very interesting. I would like to go along.” Harry added, “I would like to go too, but I have to fix Cane Airlines again. Have a nice trip.”

They boarded the plane. “I hate third class,” said Mike. “All we ever get is hardtack, but we’re lucky compared to Prof. O’saurus here.” O’saurus groaned as he looked into his bag of birdseed. Dr. Kilroy asked a nearby stewardess, “May I have something simple, like soup?” “Of course. Would you like buffalo chips with that?” “No soup. Thank you.”

Later, starving in Halifax, Johnny and his friends went to the Mashed Potato Cafe. As they walked up to the cafe, Mike said, “this isn’t a very good part of town.” “Why do you say that, mate?” asked Johnny. “Look at the graffiti,” responded Mike. They walked into the cafe. “Oh my goodness. There’s mashed potatoes smeared on the walls,” said Pippin. “I guess that’s where it got its name.”

They all sat down and looked at their menus. “SCREEEEECH,” went the band. Mike read the menu. “Small, medium, and large mashed potatoes. Scrape it off the wall yourself. Come and see...” Everyone at the table seemed stunned. “A piece of the menu is missing,” declared Johnny. Just then, Dr. Kilroy found some paper and he looked at it. “It’s the other piece of the menu.” he handed it to Mike, who studied it and then he stated, “the Treasury of Dartmouth. It’s an advertisement for the museum.” Looking repulsed, Johnny said, “I have jerky in the SUV. Let’s have that instead.”

After agreeing that the jerky sounded like a good idea, they headed back to the SUV. While chewing on the pepperoni jerky, Johnny drove to the museum.

Later, in the museum, “Ur, Johnny, why is there just a gold coin in that display case?” asked Pippin. “Surprise!” said Lord Sinister as he walked out of the shadows. Brickzo the Clown, Stupid Sinister, and Dame Sinister followed him. Suddenly a net fell on the adventurers. Lord Sinister said, “We’ll throw them in the ocean.” He put them, still in the net, into Evil 212, his chopper. He announced, “Dame, Brickzo, fly them to the coast.”

Later in Lunenburg, “Stupid, drop the net into the water.” It rolled out of the chopper with them in it. It landed in the water just off the coast. Johnny pulled out his Swiss Army Knife and cut the net. They swam for shore. Soaking wet, they heard an engine overhead. They looked up. “It’s Cane Airline,” said Pippin. Harry, over the loud speaker, said, “I couldn’t let y’all have all the fun.” He landed in the water and picked up the adventurers.

Back at the airport, they rented another car and drove back to the museum. Johnny heard the SUV. It was gone, with the map inside. “Aye!” said Johnny with a surprised look on his face. “How can we find the cave now,” said Harry, “if Lord Sinister has the map?” Pippin pulled a photo out of her pocket. “It’s a picture of the map,” she said. “Well, let’s go mates,” said Johnny.

They arrived at the cave. Johnny and his friends put on their backpacks and entered the cave. Millions of startled bats swooped down at them. Dr. Kilroy

lost his glasses. “My glasses! I can’t see without my glasses.” He grabbed a cave column to steady himself. “Here they are,” said Mike. They continued into the cave. Pippin said, “I just thought of something. If we startled those bats, we must be the only ones in here.” “You’re right,” said Dr. Kilroy. “Lord Sinister must not have arrived yet.”

Meanwhile, “Why can I see the Statue of Liberty?” said Lord Sinister. “Oops!” said Stupid Sinister, “the map is upside down.”

Back at the cave, they continued further into the cave. They saw the gem in a room full of cave paintings. Mike walked up to and grabbed the gem. “Wait!” said Johnny. It was too late, Mike already had the gem. Suddenly the room began to shake; the ceiling collapsed. They ran for it. A wall of snow followed them. They just made it out. “Where’s Dr. Kilroy?” said Harry, as he brushed himself off. “I’m right here,” said Dr. Kilroy. “Sorry to startle you. My legs just aren’t what they used to be. Luckily I found this ancient snowboard to ride out on the waves of snow.” “Cowabunga!” said Pippin.

Back with Sinister’s gang, “Come on,” whined Stupid Sinister, “I’ve never been to the Statue of Liberty before.” “No,” said Lord Sinister, “we’re criminals, not tourists. Turn this car around and head back to Canada.” “I never get to do anything I want,” said Stupid. “Why me?” said Lord Sinister as Cane Airlines flew overhead, heading back home with the Ice Age Gem.

Editor’s Note: This story had a major influence on the Johnny Thunder films, mostly in style and character. Granted, none of those films had anything as ridiculous as the Mashed Potato Cafe, but they still have a sense of humor all of their own.

Of course, for the rewriting, which can be found on the next page, I tried to make things more accurate. Driving south in Nova Scotia doesn’t land you in New York City, and even an ancient snowboard is going a little too far, even in this story. I also did actual research on Nova Scotia and related topics, so you can be assured that the new story is grounded more in the real Nova Scotia. But of course, I couldn’t leave out the humor.

Johnny Thunder and the Winter Vessel

Rewritten from “Artifact Theft”

“Johnny, honey, where did you put those brochures I picked up?”

Johnny Thunder, famous explorer, was startled from his computer when he heard the voice of his wife, Pippin Reed Thunder, call out for him. The pair had just returned from an investigative expedition to the Swaziland city Matsapha to research a possible archaeological find that they were called in to verify. The expedition had resulted in the discovery of some pottery in the Lusushwana River that was inscribed with cosmic symbols and what looked like images of zombies. Were they myths? Cultural fables? Prophecies? Neither Johnny nor his friend from the University of Swaziland, Immanuel Twarra, could figure it out, but Pippin knew one thing: it would make for a great story for *World Magazine*.

Now, however, his wife was asking for the brochures that he picked up at the university, and he needed to find them on his cluttered table fast. Scrambling around, Johnny quickly found the brochures underneath an ad for private detective Ace Brickman and threw them to his wife.

“Here you go, mate,” Johnny hurriedly stated as his wife picked up the scattered documents from the floor. Pippin quietly muttered “Thank you,” but Johnny was too absorbed in the photos he took of the pottery to hear her. For some reason, he had a slight feeling that he had seen images like these elsewhere. But where was that? The Chamber of the Hidden Mysteries?

BANG! “Hey, John dude.”

Johnny was generally indifferent to Blake Greenton, the company’s extreme

sports junkie and travel book writer. He was seldom in the office, as he spent most of his time out in the wilderness, but everyone knew him, whether they wanted to or not. He is good at what he does, but he can also be a braggart and talk up his experiences. Some of the other office jocks like him, but everyone else just tolerates him.

As for today, Johnny had no idea what Blake wanted, but if he was going to tell the Florida alligator story again...

"I found this while I was in Nova Scotia last weekend. It looked old, so I kept it safe so you could look at it. Think it's a treasure map?" Now he had Johnny's attention.

Johnny took one look at the map and knew that he was on to something. This was no gift shop souvenir or fake. Turning towards Blake, Johnny asked, "How did you find this?"

"I was in Halifax the day before I came back, and I decided to stop in one of the pawn shops in the city. I was milling through the store when I saw this behind glass. I asked him where he got that, and all he said was that he got it from someone who looked like he was trying to get it off his hands. He refused to tell the owner where he found it. I know that I'm not an expert on this stuff, but to me, it looked real. He sold it to me for \$40."

Johnny looked over the map again, analyzing the line work, the illustrative borders that had faded with time, the slight indentations in the paper where the ink had been applied centuries before.

"I could be wrong, but I think this is Norse in origin. There is only one way to find out. Sweetie, do you have some time to head over to the museum?"

Pippin replied, "Sure. Why do you...oh. Of course."

Blake made a motion to leave the room. "I would go too, but last time I talked to Dr. Kilroy, he proceeded to tell me the entire story of the Halifax Explosion and where the pieces of the ship can be found today. Hopefully, your conversation doesn't last as long."

Later at the city's museum, the pair were able to quickly get inside and head straight for a plain door marked as "Employees Only."

"Excuse me, mate. I'm looking for Dr. Kilroy. Do you happen to know where he's at today?"

Turning toward Johnny and Pippin was a face that had only recently started to show itself at the museum. The person behind that face was Mike Milward, resident herpetologist and Dr. Jim Carew's replacement. Most people were still getting used to his presence, but he was agreeable.

"Sure," said Mike. "He's over in the cataloging facility, combing through some of our artifacts, if you're interested. Is this about your weird find in Swaziland, Johnny?"

"Actually," replied Johnny, "I need to talk to him about something else." And with a hurried swiftness, Johnny and Pippin raced through the halls.

In moments, they were standing alongside their colleague Dr. Kilroy, who was preoccupied with the thousands of pottery fragments scattered before him, as if he was ready to tackle the world's hardest jigsaw puzzle. He did not even acknowledge the arrival of Johnny and Pippin.

"Excuse me, Kilroy, but we need to talk to you."

Slightly startled, Dr. Kilroy met Johnny's eyes and replied, "Is this about the Africa expedition? I've been looking over some of the fragments that your friend Immanuel let us examine, and I think I've started piecing together what looks like a new written language comprised of dots and squares."

Johnny closely examined the fragments for any pattern, but could not draw any conclusions that convinced him of anything.

"I don't know, mate. It looks too fragmented to tell. But before you continue, I need you to look at something."

Pippin popped open the briefcase that she had carried with her and carefully slid out the ancient map. With as much care as she could, she gently placed the map on the table in front of Dr. Kilroy. Interested, he leaned down and carefully examined the parchment.

“Hmm. This appears to be a map of Nova Scotia dating from the time of Leif Erikson. But no Vikings ever settled in this part of the world. The closest that they ever got to Nova Scotia was L’Anse Aux Meadows. This makes no sense.”

Pippin quipped, “Perhaps this is from someone else who continued on, but whose name was lost to time?”

Dr. Kilroy, not paying attention to Pippin, studied the Norse runes lining the map. “Ah. According to this map, an unidentified Viking, who says that he was tasked with preserving the map to the Hidden Mysteries, was also given another task: guard a gem that has the ability to bring about winter. When Native Americans chased away Leif Erikson and his men, this unknown guardian decided to travel south, landing in what is now Nova Scotia. He said that he hid the gem on the island and that this map is the only key to locating it. If I’m reading this properly, the first clue is located on Georges Island near Halifax.”

Johnny looked more and more intrigued as Dr. Kilroy read on. This was all starting to sound like...

“An adventure!” declared Pippin, who was also gushing over the story that Dr. Kilroy dictated from the map. “Honey, we don’t have anything planned for the next week, right?”

“We have to finish that story for *World Magazine*, but we’re in a place to have it finished tonight. Kilroy, are you also interested in coming along?”

“Certainly! After missing out on the Swaziland expedition, it’ll be nice to be out and about again. I’ll have Prof. Cooke cover my shift while I’m gone.”

Johnny then spun around, pulling out his phone. He started to dial when

Pippin interrupted.

“Honey, remember that Sarah and Lance are out hiking the Appalachian Trail this month.”

“Don’t worry. I’m just calling Harry. After all, we need a way to get there and back.”

As the sun rose over LEGO City International Airport, a gang of six devious criminals snuck through the shadows of a nearby overpass, hoping to catch a glimpse of any interesting activity. These criminals in question were none other than the wanted artifact thief, Lord Sam Sinister, and his gang of henchmen comprised of Patrick Hooligans, John “Six Shots” Parker, William “Billy the Kid” Parker, and two miscellaneous Russian mercenaries. Not wanting to stick out, they were all dressed as casual tourists.

From behind a freeway pylon, Lord Sinister spied upon the terminal entrance, hoping to catch a glimpse of anything noteworthy that they could then make a move to steal. Honestly, Lord Sinister and his gang had become a shell of its former self, preying mostly upon gullible teens and seniors for food and valuables. At least Patrick wasn’t stupid enough to give them away and besides, they hadn’t been caught yet. Yet.

That was what worried Sam. It was only a matter of time before the police caught up to them, so Lord Sinister knew that it was time to leave the city once and for all. He just waited for the right moment for them to make their move. Suddenly, John hollered.

“Sinister, Johnny’s here! He’s here with his wife and that chatterbox geezer!” Immediately, Sam scanned the terminal entrance for Johnny Thunder.

Sure enough, the threesome made their way to the main terminal, hopefully in search of treasure. Lord Sinister could use some treasure. Stealing candy from babies just wasn’t the same.

Lord Sinister indicated the entrance. “Everyone, act natural. Now, we fly!”

“Fly?” asked Patrick. “But we don’t have wings.”

“Patrick, shut up.”

“Hello! I’m Frank Honey, and I’m going to screen you for any foreign objects. We don’t want you carrying anything from out-of-country!”

Lord Sinister slightly tensed up when he saw police officer Frank Honey operating as a TSA agent ahead of him. He didn’t know why a police officer would be a TSA agent, but he reminded himself to remain calm. This was just going to be a--

“Hey! I know you!” shouted Frank as Sam put his luggage on the belt for the bag screening machine. Lord Sinister tensed up again, expecting the worst.

“You’re the guy on the tin of mustache wax that Chief Dunby uses. I’ve always wanted to meet him! So, what’s it like being such a celebrity?”

“It pays the bills,” Sam replied as he stepped into the body scanner. He cleared the scan.

“Oh, I am so jealous, because Dunby just recently put me on paid leave for some reason, though I think he was having a bad day when I heard him yell about firing some idiot Honey guy. I feel so sorry for that guy he was talking about. Anyway, since I wanted some extra money while I was off the police force, I came here for the same reason you have your face on tins of mustache wax. It pays the bills.”

During this chatty monologue, Frank was oblivious to the screenings of the rest of the gang and their luggage. If he had paid attention, he would have seen several guns disassembled in the luggage. He wasn’t about to lose his job, though. Lord Sinister and his men had no intention of using them there.

“Speaking of celebrities, have you seen Johnny Thunder around here?”

“Oh, yes! He mentioned something to his wife about going to this place called Nova Scotia. I thought that was the name of a TV show.”

“I think you’re thinking of Nova,” noted Sam. “Anyway, we need to get to our flight.” And with that, they left Frank behind, ready to follow Johnny to Canada.

As Harry was ahead of his fellow adventurers, servicing his plane already at the terminal, Johnny, Pippin, and Dr. Kilroy stayed in the waiting area, ready to get the go-ahead from Harry to board.

“Fancy seeing you here, JT.”

Johnny spun around in his seat, startled to hear the voice of Miss Calliope Shaw. Unlike him and his colleagues, she was dressed for a casual vacation. Pippin and Dr. Kilroy were both surprised and confused by her appearance.

“Uh, who’s this?” asked Pippin, more with suspicion than confusion.

“Mates, this is Calliope Shaw. Years ago, before I met you, honey, we were in a relationship in college. We met in, I believe it was...”

“Anthropology 362,” quipped Shaw. “We were assigned to the same group project, and the rest was history.”

“Until you two broke up,” Pippin shot back.

Shaw added, “One night in Brisbane, we were out and about when, I don’t recall...”

“We ran into one of your other boyfriends. You got around back then.”

“A girl’s got to make a living somehow. Any who, that was the end of that. He was leaving for the states to accept the job he got at that publishing house you still work at, anyway. My, where you could have been if you stayed with me.”

Johnny took the high road and decided to ignore that blatant, and probably jealous, attack on his career. Instead, he introduced her to Pippin and Dr. Kilroy. He especially made a point to mention that Pippin is his wife.

“So, what brings you here, mate?”

“I’m going to Boston to host a lecture on the American Revolution. What about you?”

“We’re going to Nova Scotia, following a lead that could take us to another great discovery!”

“Or to nothing, like your big global tour. I thought that the Hidden Mysteries were going to be something great, but all it turned out to be was ‘Everyone must love each other!’ Ha! What kind of treasure is that?” She then walked off towards another gate, chuckling to herself.

Pippin, still slightly confused, but no longer suspicious, asked, “Why didn’t you tell us about her before?”

“That night out made me furious,” snarled Johnny. “She was part of the reason that I took the job over here. I vowed to never talk about her again.”

RING! The intercom rang out, “Gate 4 to Halifax, Nova Scotia is now boarding. Please proceed to the gate and have your ticket ready.”

As Johnny and his friends got up and made their way to the gate, a group of six college buddies, bound for the same flight, lied knocked out in a nearby bathroom. Leaving the bathroom were Lord Sinister and his men, their boarding passes in hand.

“Act natural. We need to blend in with the rest of the tourists boarding the plane.”

Patrick questioned, “Wait. We’re passengers? I thought that beat-down was flight attendant training.”

“Patrick, shut up.”

“We’re almost to the first clue, mates!”

Having arrived in Halifax/Dartmouth the day before, the adventurers pursued the first marker on the map at Georges Island. The island itself is essentially the Georges Island National Historic Site with its fortifications, and a scattering of small buildings. The adventurers, however, were more interested in the northern tip of the island, where they discovered the next clue to the treasure: an image of a shield, paired with a plum line and a lone number. After analyzing the clues, Dr. Kilroy was able to draw the conclusion that the plum line and number were directions to the next clue and the shield is the clue they seek next. Following the directions back to the mainland, the adventurers then stumbled upon...

“The Brightwood Golf & Country Club? The next clue is in the middle of a golf course?”

Hoping for something more adventurous, Johnny slumped in disappointment as the group approached the entrance to an upscale golf club. It wasn’t that Johnny was expecting to solve mind-bending puzzles or dodge deadly traps to reach this clue, it was more that Johnny was going to have to go exploring in a publicly-active area again. Oh well, he figured. At least he wasn’t having to go dig up a small part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site again.

Just then, a club patron exited from his car in the parking lot and, heading over to the main club office, noticed the group.

“Excuse me, but you seem to be in no shape to golf today.”

“It’s okay,” explained Dr. Kilroy. “We’re here to look around. I just noticed that body of water over there, and I was wondering if there is anything peculiar about it.”

“Oh.” said the patron. “Nothing unusual to see there. That’s Borden Pond, which I believe is the largest body of water in the course.”

“Uh, who are those people over at the pond? I don’t think they’re golfing.” Harry indicated an overstuffed golf cart creaking towards the pond. Two people with shovels jumped off and started digging the pond’s shore.

Looking on in terror, the patron replied, "I'll get club security. Who knows what they're doing."

Johnny narrowed his eyes and spotted a silhouette in a top hat. "Oh, I know exactly why they're here. He's found us again. Follow me. Have security tail us for back-up. This could get ugly."

Having sprinted from some bushes to a golf cart, Lord Sinister knew that he had made the right choice in hiding near the golf course's entrance to find out where the next clue was located. Now that he had his two mercenaries start excavating the lake's shore, he was certain that he finally had the upper hand. At last, after his series of humiliating defeats at the hands of his arch-nemesis, Lord Sinister was finally going to add this mythical treasure to his private collection.

"Comrade, we found it!"

Rushing over, Lord Sinister stooped over and picked up the ancient Viking shield. Time had not been kind to the wooden artifact, but the metal straps held enough wood in place to reveal a map towards another part of the island.

"Excellent!" shouted Lord Sinister. "At long last, I will finally beat Johnny Thunder to this priceless treasure!"

"But how do you know it's priceless?" asked John Parker. "We don't even have any idea what we're looking for."

Turning towards John, Lord Sinister lowered his voice.

"John, when was the last time Johnny searched for an artifact that wasn't priceless?" Unbeknown to the two, Patrick waved his hand in the air.

"The Heart of Osiris! If Slyboots wanted to sell it, then it had to have a price!"

"Patrick, shut up."

Just as Lord Sinister finished belittling Patrick, the sound of golf cart motors revving caught their attention. Racing toward them was what looked like Johnny and his friends, along with some club security guards.

"Conversation's over! Let's get this clue out of here!"

Hopping back into the golf cart, one of the mercenaries threw the shield to Patrick, who grabbed onto the cart's back as it started off towards their getaway car.

"We're too late! They have the next clue!"

While his years were catching up to him, Dr. Kilroy could still see that the villains already had what they were looking for. This naturally upset Johnny, even though this did mean that he didn't have to break the golf course's rules now by digging up the pond.

What ensued was a comically-slow golf cart chase, where neither one gained ground on the other. However, the battery on Lord Sinister's golf cart began to wear down from the extra weight.

"Jump off!"

"What?"

"I said jump off! We'll run for it!"

And like that, all of the villains abandoned their vehicle and started running for their getaway car. Patrick, being somewhat inventive (but mostly stupid), grabbed a bag of golf clubs and golf balls.

"What good is that going to be?"

"I'm going to hold them off! Go on without me!"

“But you have the clue!”

“Forget it!” And with that, Patrick pulled out a golf club and golf balls.

“FORE!”

Patrick, with quick succession, starting teeing off golf balls towards the oncoming golf carts.

WHAM! With the force of a small rock, one of the golf balls hit a security guard square in the head, badly wounding him and knocking him unconscious.

With the guard on the ground, the guard driving tried to maintain control, but it was no use.

“Abandon the cart!” she yelled. The security guards leapt off the golf cart and started running after the villains. Seeing no better option, the adventurers abandoned their cart as well.

Seeing this, Patrick flung his golf club at the oncoming pursuers and started running after his comrades. As he ran, he slowly grabbed and flung golf clubs around the course. Reaching the getaway car, Patrick disposed of the golf bag by flinging it into the air, sending golf clubs flying.

Blocked by the onslaught of sportsman’s hardware, the adventurers had to stop in their tracks as Patrick closed his door on the getaway car and rode off with Lord Sinister’s gang.

“Dang it! Without that clue, we’re at a dead end.”

Trying to lift Johnny’s spirits, Pippin asked, “No. We won’t let them win. We have to find a work-around.” Hearing this, Dr. Kilroy brightened. “I know of a place.”

The next day, the adventurers were riding in their rental van, weaving along the coast of Nova Scotia, heading southwest.

“Are you sure we should be following a hunch based on a disputed legend?” asked Harry as he looked through the car window out at the ocean. Coming into view was the town of Mahone Bay, with the mysterious Oak Island behind them.

“No, mate. That’s why we’re going into town to gather more clues. I still get the feeling that this isn’t the right way, though.”

Dr. Kilroy interjected, “But if there is any place that the next clue could be located, Oak Island would have to be my best guess.”

“But Kilroy, people have been digging there for centuries! What makes you think that we’ll find something?”

“And that is why we’re going to Mahone Bay Museum.”

As they entered town, they were soon greeted by a wall of traffic, with most of the townsfolk dressed in bold and motley sea-faring outfits from years past. As they rolled past the museum, they saw that it was closed for the day, with an advertisement pointing to a display for the museum set up at the marina.

“Aye. I forgot that this weekend is the Pirate Festival! Let’s just make this as quick as possible.”

However, deep in the throngs of reenactors are a band of six men also dressed for the occasion. One of them wore an ancient Viking shield.

“Why are we here again, partner? Did that shield really point this way?” Billy honestly wanted to know.

“Quiet, Billy. We need to blend in. We’re looking to see where we need to head next, remember?” Lord Sinister, dressed in a commendable pirate captain costume, scanned the crowd for possible clues to their next destination. Patrick, looking off through the crowd, waved around his cheap plastic cutlass.

“I argh see argh Johnny argh coming argh this argh way argh.”

“What are you trying to say?” John echoed all of their thoughts.

“Hey argh! I’m argh trying argh to argh blend argh in argh!”

“Patrick, shut up.”

Just then, Lord Sinister finally spotted what Patrick had spied: Johnny Thunder and his friends had somehow figured out to come this way. How was he able to do it? Well, reasoned Lord Sinister, Johnny was always figuring out a way.

“It’s Lord Sinister and his blokes!” yelled Johnny as he ushered his comrades towards the band of villains. Without a second thought, Lord Sinister led his men into the crowd, but it was no use. The pursuit to reclaim the shield had begun.

“Well, if Lord Sinister’s here, then we must be in the right place!” exclaimed Harry as they raced down the marina towards the water. “Just use the dock to corner them, and the clue’s ours!”

That idea worked out well, until a recreation of a pirate ship sailed in and moored at the dock, giving the villains a chance to escape. Quickly changing their plans, the adventurers leapt on to the ship after them.

“Avast ye, argh!” yelled Patrick. “You argh won’t argh catch argh me argh!” He swung out his plastic cutlass and pointed it at Johnny.

SNAP! A blinding light flashed from behind Patrick, silhouetting the silly henchman for a fraction of a second in time. Unsure of what had happened, Patrick turned around, dumbfounded.

Standing behind him was Miss Calliope Shaw, camera in hand. While Patrick had no idea what to do, Lord Sinister did not hesitate to unsheathe his cutlass and point it at her. Her presence shocked them all.

“Shaw! I thought you were in Boston! What are you doing here?”

“Just seeing the sights, JT. Now, if you’ll excuse me--”

“Aye, captain! It appears that we have farbs on our vessel!”

Everyone turned around to see a band of pirate reenactors from the festival board the ship. They were not amused at any of them, especially by Lord Sinister’s men. Meekly, Patrick asked, “Who argh are argh you argh?”

“First off,” said their captain, “no real pirate ever talked like that. Second, this ship is an authentic 18th century merchant vessel that we’ve dressed to look like it was hijacked by pirates. Because of its delicate nature, IT’S CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC! Now, I suggest that you all get off now before we have to call the police.” Leaning over to Johnny, Harry whispered, “What should we do?”

“I don’t want to cause trouble, but I’m not leaving without that shield.” Speaking up, Johnny told the reenactors what he had just told Harry.

Upon hearing this, the villains turned their attention to Johnny, pointing their swords at him. “Let me make this clear, Thunder,” said Lord Sinister. “For too long, you’ve always beaten me to the treasure to put it in some dusty, old museum. Well, no more! This time, the treasure is mine, and I will actually appreciate it in my private collection!”

During this conversation, Miss Calliope Shaw slowly crept away to return to the dock, but was spotted by Billy. With hasty reflexes, he whipped out his dual pistols.

“Stop there, lass, or I’ll bring you down like a bar room mirror!” BANG! BANG!

Both bullets narrowly missed Shaw, instead splitting the rope that tethered the ship to the dock.

“Now look what you’ve done!” shouted one of the reenactors. “That’s it! I’m

calling the police!” Quickly, he pulled out his phone and dialed as Pippin leaned over to Johnny.

“Honey, I really don’t want to get tied up in this. We didn’t ask for this.”

“But we don’t have the shield.”

“Forget it!”

Before Johnny could object, Calliope Shaw waved her camera. Johnny immediately knew what she was indicating. Before the ship could drift out into the harbor, the adventurers leapt back onto the dock, with some help lent to Dr. Kilroy. As the five adventurers returned to their cars, several police cars whisked past them. However, the police would find nothing, as the villains had already abandoned ship.

“O.K., Shaw. Let’s take a look.”

Flipping through her camera’s pictures, she settled upon a photo of the inside of the shield. Examining it closely, Dr. Kilroy was able to reach a conclusion.

“This map points to a hidden cave near Truro, which is near the center of Nova Scotia. We can take a train from Halifax that will lead directly there.”

While slightly dismayed that they traveled in the wrong direction, they at least knew where to go from here. Immediately after this revelation, all of five of the adventurers set out in both of their vehicles for Halifax, eventually arriving in Truro the next day.

Pin-pointing the cave’s exact location was a harder task for them, but they were able to visit the Colchester Historeum early in the day and examine its floor-mounted satellite image of the surrounding area. Comparing it to the image in the shield was able to lead them to the exact spot of the cave just north of the town.

As the adventurers made their way through the mossy cave, they made every intention to make sure that no one, especially not Lord Sinister or his men,

was following them. If anyone was, that could-

“AHH! BATS!” Calliope Shaw screamed and ducked as a massive swarm of startled bats flew overhead. They traveled further into the cave.

“Wait.” Pippin stopped all of them in their tracks. “If Lord Sinister has the map, why was he in Mahone Bay yesterday? Dr. Kilroy, you explicitly said that the map leads to this cave, but since Calliope Shaw startled those bats, we have to be the first ones here.”

Johnny could only imagine the trouble that Lord Sinister had gotten himself into.

“Welcome to Clark’s Harbor on Cape Sable Island! Is there anything that you need?”

Lord Sinister was already fuming at the incompetence of his gang, but this icky-sweet sailor was just about to put him over the edge.

“Yes. I want you to tell me why Mr. McMoron over here was holding the map upside-down this whole time!” Patrick had no idea what he was talking about, but was much more interested in something else.

“Hey, Sammy! They have seals here! I want to play with the seals by the seashore!”

“Patrick, no! Those are wild animals! You are not going anywhere near those things!” However, it was too late. Patrick was already gone.

Back at the actual treasure site, the adventurers had reached the treasure chamber. High above, a crack in the earth allowed light to pour onto the treasure that they were seeking: the Frost Gem. It looked like an easy grab, but Johnny knew better: if this gem had the power to change the weather, then there had to be some sort of security measures put in place to protect it.

The adventurers quickly glanced around for any traps. Seeing none, Johnny quickly snatched the gem from its resting place. Everyone held their breath.

After a minute of nothing happening, the adventurers left the cave with the Frost Gem in hand.

“You know, mates, we typically authorize to have all of the treasures that we’ve found to be temporarily loaned to the LEGO City Museum, but I think this treasure belongs here in Truro. Let’s head over to the Historeum and handle the paperwork there.” The decision seemed to shock most of them, but Pippin knew where he was coming from: she could tell that having to dig that small hole at Stonehenge didn’t set well on his conscience.

As they drove back into Truro, Harry exclaimed, “Wait. Where’s Shaw?” Everyone looked around the sedan and realized the truth: Calliope Shaw was gone.

“It’s okay, mates. I may not be her biggest fan, but she can take care of herself.” Even though Johnny had moved on, he got the sense that she still liked him, or at least enough to step in when he desperately needed it.

Finishing his thought, Johnny concluded, “At least she’s better off than a particular someone else.” Johnny grinned.

“Patrick, you idiot! Look at what you’ve done!”

Lord Sinister and his men were enjoying a leisurely ride to the nearest jail after the Royal Canadian Mounted Police caught them in the act of endangering the local wildlife.

“But I wanted to play with the seals!”

“Yes, PROTECTED SEALS! And we would have the treasure if I had someone else read the map!”

“But Sammy, if someone else had read the map, we wouldn’t have gotten this free ride!”

“Patrick, shut up!”

The Ice Cream Incident

Original Story from 2001

A lot of ice cream was spread all over the sidewalk when a man was not watching where he was going. Mr. McCurdy, a portly man with a mustache, went into Krispy Kreme Doughnuts and ordered an ice cream cone with seven scoops. Just then a news reporter pulled up in front of the food store. Mr. McCurdy paid for his ice cream and left. He was going around the corner outside the store to get into his car when a man on a bicycle ran into him from the front. The man had a large stack of cream pies. Ice cream crashed to the ground. The reporter ate all of the ice cream. Then, Mr. McCurdy grabbed a cream pie and ran.

Editor’s Note: Most of this story was written by Marjorie Frank. However, the only reason that I can include it here is because the assignment was to take a newspaper article and “fix” it by removing filler and incorrect information, as well as adding missing information.

Speaking of fixes, I’ve fixed up this article yet again, mainly to fit into the cinematic universe, but also to form the backbone of my new, re-imagined version of the infamous Ice Cream Incident. It starts on the next page.

The Ice Cream Incident: The Untold Story

Rewritten from “The Ice Cream Incident”

Dear Staff at The LEGO City Times,

Last week, on March 7, 2002, your newspaper published an article entitled, “The Ice Cream Incident,” which mentioned how a man, a Mr. Gilroy McCurdy, was knocked down by a man on a bicycle. I would like to tell you that, as the man on the bicycle, I was very offended in how your wording of the incident was intended to be an epithet towards me.

For reference, I have included the original newspaper article in its entirety just to show how blatantly one-sided and patronizing the writing truly is.

A lot of ice cream was spread all over the sidewalk in Cherry Tree Hills district yesterday afternoon when a man on a bicycle was not watching where he was going. Mr. McCurdy, a portly man with a mustache, went into the local drugstore and ordered an ice cream cone with seven scoops. Mr. McCurdy paid for his ice cream and left. He was going around the corner outside the store to get into his car when a man on a bicycle ran into him from the front. The man had a large stack of cream pies. Ice cream and cream pies crashed to the ground. All was ruined.

Firstly, how dare YOU suggest that I wasn't watching where I was going! Sure, I may have had a stack of cream pies piled on the handlebars of my bicycle that may or may not have blocked my vision, but that's what leaning one's head to the side is for. Second, I have deliveries to make on behalf of Dan K. Donuts. What was old, portly Mr. McCurdy doing? Buying ice cream to make himself more portly? He shouldn't have been eating all of that ice cream, if you ask me.

I also find it insulting that you never once mention my name! Gilroy's name is all over this article, but what am I? Some guy on a bike with cream pies who doesn't watch where he's going? It's almost like Mr. McCurdy PAID you to write this article, probably to gain sympathy on his side, in case that rumored lawsuit against me gains traction. Maybe I should sue him for destroying all of that merchandise.

But the part that pissed me off the most was the very last sentence. How do you end this article? By writing, “All was ruined.” Yeah, you're acting like all of those cream pies and that ice cream was destroyed because of ME!?! How dare you! Maybe if that mustached man wasn't so obsessed with enhancing his stomach's circumference, he wouldn't have walked into me! You know what? I hope he sues me, so that I can show those jurors what a face-saving, self-preserving bowling ball that Gilroy truly is!

You know, I'm getting really hot. I'm going to Pappalardo's for some pistachio ice cream. But first, publish this in your next newspaper, so that the world will know the untold story of the Ice Cream Incident!

Signed,
The Man on the Bicycle

Flamingo's Fowl Play

Original Story from 2006

It was a normal day in Legotown, especially for millionaire, president of the Barker Brothers Game Co., Mr. Mark Moneybricks. In a vault below his manor lies his most prized possession, the Sicilian Sparrow. But today, Mr. Moneybricks has an uninvited guest dressed in a pink raincoat. "What are you doing here? I repeat what are you doing here?" says Moneybricks. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a henchman hits Moneybricks on the head. They then head down a flight of stairs to the vault where the man takes off his pink raincoat. Gasp! It's Flamingo! The lone bodyguard is taken down by Flamingo's ticklish feathers and the vault is blown open with bird bombs! Flamingo steps forward and snatches the Sicilian Sparrow! Before security could be called, Flamingo and his henchmen escape.

Meanwhile, at the police station, Captain Bill, Officer Stanley, and Officer Max are looking at the recording from the security cameras. "What? Flamingo again?" says Captain Bill. "Yes sir," says Officer Stanley. Max declares, "First he steals ten copies of 'Ultimate Duck Hunter.' Now it's this. There is only one thing to do." He walks over to a red phone and picks it up. "Hello. Get me Legoman. The cunning jail bird, Flamingo, has flown the coop."

Meanwhile, at Swiss Manor, millionaire Dan Swiss hangs up the red phone. He runs to a hidden door behind a bookshelf and slides down the Legopole to the secret Legocave, where his butler, Albert, is waiting. "I will get the Lego Costume Putter-Onner started, Master Swiss," says Albert. Dan enters a glass chamber and Albert presses a few buttons. Soon, Dan Swiss dons his Legoman costume. "Albert, call Joey and tell him to meet me at the police station," says Legoman as he jumps into the Legomobile. He speeds off

through the tunnel.

At the police station, Captain Bill, Officer Stanley, and Joey are waiting outside. "Good to see you, Legoman," says Captain Bill. "We believe that the Flamingo has stolen the Sicilian Sparrow from Mr. Moneybricks and is hiding in the bird sanctuary." "How do you know he's at the bird sanctuary?" asks Legoman. Officer Stanley replies, "It's just an educated guess, sir, but it would be the first place I'd look." Legoman says, "Joey, get into the Legomobile. We're headed to the bird sanctuary."

Meanwhile, at the bird sanctuary, "It's an amazing thing, the Sicilian Sparrow," says Flamingo as he holds the statue up for all of his henchmen to see. A henchman declares, "And not even Sam Spade can stop us!" At that moment, the Legomobile pulls up and Legoman and Joey hop out. Flamingo asks, "How did you know where to find us?" Joey replies, "Educated guess." Flamingo then commands his men, "Get them!" A fist-fight ensues. Pow! Biff! Zwoing! Woosh! Whamo! Flamingo's henchmen manage to bring down Legoman and Joey. They tie them down to the ground as one of Flamingo's henchmen wheels over a machine. Flamingo and his henchmen escape on the Bird Bike as the machine smothers Legoman and Joey with feathers.

Is this the end of Legoman?
Will they escape Flamingo's fowl play?
Or will they resemble colonial tax collectors?
To be continued...

Editor's Note: As you may have guessed, part 2 is not included here. I hesitate to say that it was never written though, as I am certain that one exists. However, it is currently lost. Also, this was the last original Legoman story to be written before the diving point in my time as a writer, the release of "Johnny Thunder and the Secret of Marco Polo," occurred. However, I've retold this story in the most unconventional means possible to become the story of Legoman winning the trust of the police. It starts on the next page.

Flamingo's Fowl-Feathered Felony

Rewritten from "Flamingo's Fowl Play"

From the desk of Captain Bill Stewart:

For decades, the LCPD has served the citizens of this fine city with our public service outreach programs, as well as our commitment to capturing crafty criminals anywhere they rear their heads. However, this month marks the tenth anniversary of the first time that us at the LCPD came to know of the masked crime fighter Legoman. It was a colossal, confusing case covered in conflict, but that time marks the case that eventually led to our trust of Legoman (for most of us, at least).

In a recent cleaning of the basement case library, I stumbled upon what appears to be all of the phone conversation transcripts from that case. Thumbing through the tantalizing transcripts, I've revisited my first case with Legoman.

Phone Transcript 8/20/2007: Time - 7:13 | Caller - Chief Gleeson | Receiver - Captain Bill Stewart

Bill: Hello?

Gleeson: Captain Bill, is that you?

Bill: Yes. Is something woefully wrong?

Gleeson: I'm afraid so, Bill. I received a petrifying phone call from Mr. Mark Moneybricks, the mogul and magnate manager of Harker Sons Game Company. He informed me that last night, someone stole the sacred statue, the Sicilian Sparrow, from his sealed safe. He said that he doesn't have security evidence to provide us with a culprit, but he did say that left in the statue's place was a fake flamingo feather.

Bill: You're saying that The Flamingo did this?

Gleeson: I would assume so, since his heinous hallmark is the fake flamingo feather. Your partner for this case, Officer Max Denver, is already at the scene. Meet him and see if you can bring this foul-feathered felon back behind Albatross' fences.

Bill: Over and out.

- End of Call -

Phone Transcript 8/20/2007: Time - 8:26 | Caller - Captain Bill Stewart | Receiver - Chief Gleeson

Bill: Gleeson?

Gleeson: Do you have some good news, Captain?

Bill: Not sure. This insightful investigation is initiating itself nicely, but there's a problem.

Gleeson: Go on.

Bill: There's a man in a mask on the scene. He calls himself Legoman, but I call him a nuisance. I can't stop him from trespassing on to the crime scene. He acts like he owns the place!

Gleeson: Okay. This is certainly a crick in this compounding case, but let him be. I'll send--

Bill: Let him be?! I told you, this titan in tights is tackling our territory!

Gleeson: It's okay. I'm going to send another officer your way to deal with him. Just continue the case as if nothing is going on.

Bill: {Indecipherable}

- End of Call -

Phone Transcript 8/20/2007: Time - 8:42 | Caller - {Withheld} | Receiver - Chief Gleeson

Gleeson: Who is this?

{Withheld}: Just your neighborhood crime fighter, here to help.

Gleeson: Are you that Legoman guy that one of my subordinates mentioned?

{Withheld}: That would be me. Listen, you may not be comfortable with my crime-crushing character, but--

Gleeson: Why wouldn't I-Oh. This is about the incident at Moneybricks' mansion, isn't it?

{Withheld}: Yes. I am not one who is interested in retribution, but why would you call a cop to the scene to capture me, when my only crime is trying to help you crack this case?

Gleeson: Look. It's a crime scene, and because of the sensitive--Wait. Did you bash one of my officers and escape custody?

{Withheld}: Bashing? Not in my nerve! Escape custody is a correct consideration, however.

Gleeson: You--you resisted arrest!?! That's it! We're through talking!

{Withheld}: But--

- End of Call -

Phone Transcript 8/20/2007: Time - 8:44 | Caller - Chief Gleeson | Receiver - Officer Max Denver

Gleeson: Officer Max, I need to inform you about the masked man who was at the scene.

Max: You mean the man that called himself Legoman? Stanley already took him away.

Gleeson: Yes. He's escaped custody, and I'm issuing an order for his arrest. Let Captain Bill know that if he sees him, he has full authority to bring him in. (Beat) Now, about the case. How is it going?

Max: Not well. We have no idea where to go from here, though considering that our primary suspect dresses like a tacky pink lawn decoration, he shouldn't be too hard to find.

Gleeson: Keep in mind that he bases his crimes and hideouts around birds. Remember the time that he stole a flock of copies of *The Pelican Brief* and hid them at the bird sanctuary?

Max: Hold on. That gives me an idea. I'll have Bill and I go over to Bluebell's boisterous new bird barn. Send over another officer. We may need back-up, just in case Flamingo has flown the coop again.

Gleeson: Ten-four. I'll send Deputy Dunby. (Grumble) Why can't our city have normal criminals, like everyone else?

- End of Call -

Phone Transcript 8/20/2007: Time - 11:16 | Caller - Deputy Marion Dunby | Receiver - Captain Bill Stewart

Marion: BILL! Where are you? You were supposed to be here an hour ago!

Bill: Look, there was some traffic, but I just got here. Have you seen The Flamingo anywhere, or was Max's finessed fancy false?

Marion: No sign of him. Either he's flown the coop, or he's roosted elsewhere.

Bill: Are there at least any clues around?

Marion: As far as I can tell, none. I think you've fowled up this case big time.

Bill: Hold on. Max just told me that he just spotted something bright. It might be our guy, but we can't say for certain. We're going to take a closer look.

Marion: Fine. Let me know if you've caught our jailbird.

Bill: Over and--Wait. What!?! AAHH!

Marion: Bill? BILL! I'm coming!

- End of Call -

Phone Transcript 8/20/2007: Time - 11:19 | Caller - Deputy Marion Dunby | Receiver - Chief Gleeson

Marion: CHIEF! CHIEF!

Gleeson: Calm down, Dunby. What's wrong?

Marion: It was a trap! I tried to stop them, but The Flamingo and his heinous henchmen hauled off Bill and Max!

Gleeson: OK. I'll track their phones. Which direction did they head?

Marion: I can't say for certain, but I believe that they're heading for Uptown.

Gleeson: OK. Marion, I need you to return to the station, so that we can carefully craft a concise curtail of their caper. I need you here within the hour.

Marion: Over and out.

- End of Call -

Phone Transcript 8/20/2007: Time - 12:06 | Caller - {Withheld} | Receiver - Captain Bill Stewart

{Withheld}: Captain Bill! Is that you?

Bill: Huh? Who is this?

{Withheld}: Legoman. I'm trapped in the crate next to yours.

Bill: How did you get my number? (Grumble)

Max: He's more dangerous than we thought. After this, we're taking him in.

{Withheld}: If I must assemble my alibi, I intended no harm. I'm here to help

you catch this colorful and crafty crook.

Bill: If you're here to help us, then explain how you ended up in this truck with us.

{Withheld}: Few people know that, in Auburn, there is an old, absolutely obsolete aviary. After studying the clues left behind at Moneybricks' Mansion, I knew that had to be his hideout. However, his bird brains knew I was coming and captured me. They stuffed me into this crate and intend to ship me and the Sicilian Sparrow to Ankara. I'm afraid you are both bound to the same unfortunate flight.

Bill: Why Ankara?

Max: It's the capitol of Turkey. Get it?

Bill: Oh.

(A loud beep cuts through the call. The call resumes.)

Max: What was that sound?

Bill: I think Gleeson locked into our position. There goes Flamingo's plan!

{Withheld}: Not exactly. If his plan takes flight, they'll have migrated away by the time the LCPD arrives at the airport. We're going to have to deal with them ourselves. I have a device to get these crates open. We'll take them down at the airport.

Bill: Then we have to run you in. Remember that you're a wanted fugitive.

{Withheld}: If this crime-crushing cruise concludes accordingly, all that I request is a reduced sentence.

Bill: We'll see.

- End of Call -

Phone Transcript 8/20/2007: Time - 12:17 | Caller - Marcus Raven | Receiver - LEGO City Airport Security

Security: LEGO City Airport security. State your business.

Marcus: This is Cabin Coop Delivery Services. Requesting permission to enter the airfield.

(Brief Pause)

Security: I'm sorry, but we don't have you on file. Is there a mistake?

Marcus: Oh. I'm sorry. I must have called the wrong number when scheduling this shipment.

(Background Yelling. Gunshot.)

Security: Uh, is everything OK?

(Click. Chief Gleeson enters the conversation.)

Gleeson: Flamingo, stand down! I already have officers on their way to arrest you!

Security: What's going on?

Gleeson: You have The Flamingo on the line, and we believe that he has stolen cargo aboard his truck.

(Banging. Gunshots. Screaming.)

Marcus: You're not catching me! The Flamingo has flown the coop!

{Unknown Henchman}: Boss, those guys we captured are gone!

Marcus: What?

- End of Call -

Phone Transcript 8/20/2007: Time - 12:20 | Caller - {Private Number} | Receiver - LEGO City Airport Security

Security: LEGO City Airport security. State your business.

{Private Number}: I'm currently looking out onto the runway from terminal 1, and I think there's some people fighting out on the runway.

Security: Uh, okay. Are you looking east or south?

{Private Number}: In between. They're over by the hangers.

Security: OK. Got it. Can you describe the people fighting?

{Private Number}: Well, there's a guy dressed in red and black tights fighting someone dressed...is that a flamingo suit? Oh, man. When my mother told me that this city would drive me crazy, she was right. I'm too young to go crazy!

Security: It's okay. Is there anyone else down there?

{Private Number}: Well, there's two police officers also down there, fighting what looks like a bunch of guys in bird hats.

Security: OK. (Pause) I have already dispatched security to the location you described. Thank you for your contribution.

{Private Number}: It's okay. I need to get out of this lair of laughable lunacy before I likely lose my line of thought!

- End of Call -

Phone Transcript 8/20/2007: Time - 12:26 | Caller - Captain Bill Stewart | Receiver - Chief Gleeson

Bill: Gleeson? Are you there?
Gleeson: Yes. What's going on? Last I heard, you have been quickly captured.
Bill: Max and I are fine, but I have some bad news: Flamingo is getting away with the Sicilian Sparrow!
Gleeson: Well, why aren't you chasing him down!?!
Bill: He's up in the air in his Hover Hawk already. He's flown the coop, chief.
(Banging. Smashing.)
Gleeson: What's going on?
Bill: I...I-
Max: Legoman's got The Flamingo! Should I-
Gleeson: Legoman's there!?! I told you to arrest him on sight!
Bill: I'm sorry, chief, but we needed him to get Flamingo!
Max: I've got them both.
Bill: Even Legoman?
Max: Yes. He's shamelessly surrendered to our squad.
Gleeson: Good. I already have a prisoner transport on its way. Stay your ground until my contingency force arrives.
Bill: Ten-four.
- End of Call -

Phone Transcript 8/20/2007: Time - 12:48 | Caller - Deputy Marion Dunby | Receiver - Chief Gleeson

Gleeson: Yes?
Maroin: I have both that fowl-feathered felon and that tights-wearing titan in custody and am sending them back your way.
Gleeson: Thank you. It's great to have this case closed. By the way, I was just wondering, but...
Marion: Yes?
Gleeson: Why do you think he did it?
Marion: Well, there was probably some art collector in Turkey that was willing to pay ANYTHING for--
Gleeson: No, no. Not Flamingo. Legoman. Why do you think he helped us?
Marion: HELPED? That fashion-failing frolic obstructed justice! Do you not realize what he did to catch Flamingo? He punched one of our own officers and escaped custody! He intruded into a restricted area at the crime scene! He tackled the case without department approval! He doesn't even wear a

nice-looking uniform!
Gleeson: Yes, but without him, we wouldn't have The Flamingo in our custody right now, would we?
Maroin: (Sigh) I guess you're right about that. I still don't approve of his vigilante attitude, though.
Gleeson: I don't either, but I think we need to step back for a minute. Justice has been served, Legoman is going to get the punishment that he needs, as will Flamingo, and we can all rest easy.
Marion: Fine. I'm stopping at Dan K. Donuts on my way back to the station, though.
Gleeson: Very well.
- End of Call -

Phone Transcript 9/4/2007: Time - 9:18 | Caller - Chief Gleeson | Receiver - {Withheld}

Gleeson: Hey, Legoman. You're free to go.
{Withheld}: What?
Gleeson: You've served your time, and I've received approval to let you free.
{Withheld}: Wasn't my trial scheduled for next May?
Gleeson: It was, but since you did us that fantastic favor a fortnight afar of capturing Flamingo, you're sentence is up.
{Withheld}: Any parole?
Gleeson: Nope. I'm already sending officers over to open your cell. I just have one question, though.
{Withheld}: Yes?
Gleeson: Around the time you were arrested, that millionaire, Theodore Parkington, quite literally disappeared off the face of the Earth, like he never existed. Do you know anything about that?
{Withheld}: Last month, I met him at a dinner party in Paradise Sands after stopping Frog Hopper from stealing a truck full of pogo sticks and amphibian terrariums. He said that he was going on vacation to the Falkland Islands.
Gleeson: For a month?
{Withheld}: That's what he told me. But, I must thank you for this really refreshing release.
Gleeson: Okay. (Grumble) Frog Hopper? Why can't we have normal crooks?
- End of Call -

A Scary Story*

Original Story from 2007

Dust, dirt, a rat, dust, an old Victorian piano, dust, a grandfather clock, dust, several closed boxes, dust, tarps, dust, a cabinet, dust, cobwebs, dust, an old movie camera, dust, a light bulb hanging by a wire, dust, a closet no one has explored, and more dust. Let's hope you don't have an allergic reaction!

The average-sized rat scurried and squeaked as globs of dust flew from its gray fur. The musty tarp draped over an 82-keyed Victorian piano has hardened and attained a permanent shape. A small 32-watt light bulb hangs dangling by a dusty 3-foot wire. But the most frightening of all is the creaking, squeaking door at the back that leads to a dark, dark broom closet. What lies in there? A vampire? A mummy? The original cut of "Monster A Go-Go?" Boom! People shriek! Chains rattle!

March 12, 1907
08:13 PM

The masked murderer cut swiftly through a still, deep blue lake. All that could be heard was the calm slashing of water and the chirping of crickets. He rowed up to the boathouse of a huge mansion. He moored the boat with a musty rope and crept through a squeaky door.

Elizabeth had gotten tired early and decided to get some sleep. In her silk nightgown, she slept. But, unknown to her, the masked murderer silently made his way into her room. And now he unsheathed the knife, its blade

*This is not the official title for this story, but since no official title exists, I thought up this one to quickly get the idea of the story across. This is also actually two stories meshed together.

shimmering in the pale moonlight. He held the blade high and with one quick thrust, struck Elizabeth. She let out a wail that echoed through the house. Her husband, Mark, soon came stomping in, Winchester in hand, and laid three shots on the masked murderer's chest. The man slowly fell to the floor with a soft thud and all he said was, "The world will pay in 100 years." His heavy breathing soon ceased, his moving chest ever so still.

April 2, 2007
08:02 PM

A fairly small tour of about 6 was touring an old but well kept up cemetery. The tour guide, dressed in a clean tuxedo, pointed out the tombstones of famous people from the past. One of the epitaphs read, "Here lies movie actress Barbra Wilson. She shouldn't have signed on for *Monster a Go-Go*." But the most peculiar tombstone was a blank, gray, uncut slab of rock protruding from the ground. A man of about 30 asked, "Who lies there?" The tour guide replied, "It's been so long since he died, no one knows who lies there. It also remains a mystery as to why there is no writing on his tombstone." Suddenly, the earth below shook as the dark brown dirt in front of the stone slab bulged upward. The tour group leapt back in surprise as a ghostly figure lunged from the ground, knife glistening. The frightened tour group fled in terror as the figure squealed, "Revenge!" The figure raced after the tour group, picking them off one-by-one. After this, he generally made a mess of the cemetery, throwing leaves, kicking over tombstones, throwing black ash at a stark white crematorium, and spray-painting the green visitor's center. Then, the figure gently placed the spray can in the right hand of a lifeless teen who was living just a few minutes ago.

A small group of teens were shopping at the newly-decorated outlet mall, shopping for clothes and coffee at one of the many Starbucks. But in the crowd was the vengeance-minded ghost of the masked murderer. Since he discarded the knife back at the cemetery, his only weapon was a well-planted killer junto. He silently snuck up behind the first teen and brought him to the floor. The masked murderer snatched up the warm espresso from the corpse's body and flung it pell mell. One of the teens said, "Hey, bud. Don't go to waste. That cup cost us \$30." The masked murderer replied by leaning down

to the corpse's body and snatching the pocket knife. He opened it and thrust the knife into the nearest teen. He stabbed them one-by-one until his work was done. He disappeared into the crowd again with the pocket knife. Yet, without knowing, one teen lived.

Editor's Note: I do not know if this was intended as the end to this story, but if it wasn't, then this story remains unfinished. However, I've taken what exists of this story, edited it, and expanded it to Lovecraftian heights of cosmic horror! The terror will be real, the chills will make you run for your jacket, and your very existence will haunt you for the rest of your mortal life! CRASH! Monsters hiss! Doors squeak! Ha! I scared you, didn't I! Did I? This next rewriting is going to be a long one to read, isn't it? Oh, well. Story starts on the next page, prepare to be horrified, and go.

A Silent Terror

Rewritten from "A Scary Story"

The average-sized rat scurried and squeaked as globs of dust flew from its gray fur. The musty tarp draped over an 82-keyed Victorian piano had hardened and attained a permanent shape. A small 32-watt light bulb hung dangling by a dusty 3-foot wire. But the most frightening of all was the creaking, squeaking door at the back that leads to a dark broom closet. What lies in there? A vampire? A mummy? No, it is an old book, some say is older than time itself, that is said to contain the secrets of the universe. But within its pages is a story that is said to be so sadistic, the Devil wrote it with his own hand! Boom! People shriek! Chains rattle!

March 12, 1907

08:13 PM

The masked murderer cut swiftly through a still, deep blue lake. All that could be heard was the calm slashing of water and the chirping of crickets. He rowed up to the boathouse of a huge mansion on the shore of Lake Huron. He moored the boat with a musty rope and crept through a squeaking door, making every effort to remain unnoticed.

Elizabeth Moorington had gotten tired early and decided to get some sleep. In her silk nightgown, she slept. But, unknown to her, the masked murderer silently made his way into her room. And now he unsheathed the knife, its blade shimmering in the pale moonlight. He held the blade high and with one quick thrust, struck Elizabeth. She let out a wail that echoed through the house. Her husband, Mark, soon came stomping in, Winchester in hand, and laid three shots on the masked murderer's chest. The man, slowly falling to the floor with a soft thud, said, "The world will pay in 100 years." His heavy breathing soon ceased, his moving chest ever so still.

April 2, 2007
08:02 PM

A fairly small tour of about 6 was touring an old but well kept up cemetery near the town of Wicker's Brook, Michigan. The tour guide, dressed in a clean tuxedo, pointed out the tombstones of famous people from the past. One of the epitaphs reads, "Here lies Cal Pada Guard #7809. You chose the wrong side." But the most peculiar tombstone was a blank, dark gray, uncut slab of rock protruding from the ground. A man of about 30 asked, "Who lies there?" The tour guide replied, "It's been so long since that person died, no one knows who lies there. No one also knows why there's no writing on the tombstone." Suddenly, the earth below shook as the dark brown dirt in front of the stone slab bulged upward. The tour group leapt back in surprise as the ghostly figure of the masked murderer lunged from the ground, knife glistening. The frightened tour group fled in terror as the figure squealed, "Revenge!" The figure raced after the tour group, picking them off one-by-one. After this, he generally made a mess of the cemetery, throwing leaves, kicking over tombstones, throwing black ash at a stark white crematorium, and spray-painting the green visitor's center. Then, the figure gently placed the spray can in the right hand of a lifeless teen who was living just a few minutes ago.

A small group of teens were shopping at the newly-decorated outlet mall, shopping for clothes and coffee at one of the many Starbucks locations. But in the crowd was the vengeance-minded masked murderer. Since he discarded the knife back at the cemetery, his only weapon was a well-planted killer junco. He silently snuck up behind the first teen and brought him to the floor. The masked murderer snatched up the warm espresso from the corpse's body and flung it pell mell. One of the teens said, "Hey, bud. Don't go to waste. That cup cost us \$30." The masked murderer replied by leaning down to the corpse's body and snatching the pocket knife. He opened it and thrust the knife into the nearest teen. He stabbed them one-by-one until his work was done. He disappeared into the crowd again with the pocket knife. Yet, perhaps without knowing, one teen lived with a single photo on her phone.

Her name is Rebecca Fernsworth, a teenager just like you. This, of course, assumes that you, the reader, are between the ages of 12 and 18. Anyway, She is a normal high schooler, who has the problems typically associated

with being in high school, such as romance, popularity, fashion, and the homecoming prom (but nothing about good grades. Oh, well). However, this night is only the beginning of the turmoil ahead, as she is about to be thrust into a world that you thought only existed in your nightmares! Boom! Wolves howl! Insert public domain ghost wails here!

The next day, she spent her time between classes trying to scrutinize the photo that she took the night before. She was still in shock from the murderous attack, but she also wanted answers. To her, it was almost as if the murderer came from...nowhere.

But that wasn't the part that scared and confused her. It was the fact that whoever committed that horrific deed the night before had disappeared as fast as they had come. There was something off about this whole thing, and the thought of where the killer may appear next turned her stomach.

For lunch, she stayed away from the other students, even her friends. The students were commenting about this, but she didn't care. She had just watched some of her best friends drop like flies the night before. Who could blame her?

"Hey, Becky. Are you okay?" Brandon Meyers knew Rebecca well, and even had some feelings for her, so he could tell that something was off. She was quick to say, "I don't want to talk about it. Can you give me some time alone?"

"About what?" Brandon literally had no idea what she was talking about.

"Last night. I watched three of my best friends die, and I have nothing to go off of other than this photo." She showed Brandon the photo.

"What? YOU were there last night? I'm so sorry. I should leave now." And without waiting for a response, Brandon moved away, almost feeling what Rebecca had gone through the night before.

Later, as Rebecca waited for her mother to pick her up, she spied what looked like an old and withered man across the street. From what she could tell,

one eye was bigger than the other. That giant eye seemed interested in her. Creeped out more than anything else, Rebecca intentionally tried to ignore the old man. Eventually, the man walked away, muttering something to himself.

PING. Rebecca pulled out her phone to see what had happened. Brandon had invited her and some of her friends out for coffee at Starbucks. She slightly smirked and replied with, "Which one?"

At the coffee shop, Rebecca and her friends Amy, Sandra, Brandon, and Ruben were chatting about the latest in fashion and football players in school. However, there was a cloud hanging over their entire meet-up, and none dared address it. They all knew the people that had died the day before. However, the news on the TV broke their conversation with an unspeakable horror!

"This just in. At the local department store, almost all of the shoppers were mysteriously murdered by what looked like a tall man in a mask. Afterwards, he trashed the store by throwing around clothes, knocking over racks, and writing obscene phrases on the mannequins. We do not recognize the suspect, but security footage reveals his physique. There is no indication of forced entry or exit anywhere in the store. Be warned. This masked killer is still at large!" EEEK! People scream! Knives unsheathe! Hmm. Maybe that horror was speakable, assuming you're reading this out loud, of course.

"That's him." This is all that Rebecca could mutter in response. Everyone else was now interested in what she had just said.

"That's the man from last night?" asked Brandon. Rebecca nodded.

Over the next two days, despite the city declaring a state of emergency and imposing a mandatory curfew (the killer always struck after 9 PM), the masked murderer managed to claim more lives in the city, which was always followed by some lame attempt on my part to scare you. No one in the city could figure out what was going on, but everyone was very much afraid; afraid to even go to sleep at night, should the mask murderer strike them next. Everyone felt like they had targets painted on their backs, just waiting to

become one of the unlucky few to fall under the blade of the mask murderer that night! Shing! Flesh splits! Villains that are not in this story cackle for some reason! Ha! I got you, didn't I? I am so clever, oh. Back to the story.

As bodies piled in the masked murderer's kill count, a cloud of tension blanketed the town of Wicker's Brook like an impenetrable fog that obscured everyone's vision. Eventually, something was going to have to give, someone was going to lash out. Was this the masked murderer's plan?

Despite the aura of fear hanging over the town, everyone still did their best to go about their business during the day. However, near the end of that week, something diabolical and almost unspeakable occurred to poor Rebecca Fernsworth! Shock! Vampires cackle! Van de graaff generators turn on! Wait. Those aren't scary. Yes, they are hair-raising, but that's only because they emit static electricity. Ahem. Sorry. I need to stop with these tangents.

That Friday started like any weekday that week, as Rebecca went to high school, studied, took her classes, had lunch with friends (she was more comfortable sitting with them now), and waited for her mom to take her home. However, the weird old man that had watched her that past week was nowhere to be seen. Oh well, she thought. He probably got bored of watching her and decided to creep out someone else.

One hour passed, two hours passed, and her mom still hadn't shown up. At this point, Rebecca started to get worried. However, this was the least of her troubles, as the weird man lunged out of the bushes, threw her into a sack and dragged her towards his car!

Initially, she screamed with all of her might, trying to get the attention of someone around. However, after about half an hour, she realized that it was all in vain and decided to quiet down. At this point, no one was coming for her.

She had no idea how much time had passed since her kidnapping and her removal from the sack, but what she could discern was that she had traveled a great distance indeed, for she was now inside the attic of the mansion where our tale began. Some light poured in from the window, but most of the light

in the room was provided by a light bulb hanging from a wire. Standing in front of the attic's only entry was that weird old man, his giant eye looking straight at her.

"Where am I?" was all that Rebecca could muster up the courage to say. The weird man, grinning, quickly replied, "The answer to everyone's question. Look around to your heart's content, but be warned: the knowledge you may acquire will drive you mad." And with a chuckle that would sicken the Devil, the weird man left the attic and locked the door.

Naturally, the first thing that Rebecca tried to do was find a way out, but it was in vain. The solid attic door was bolted shut, and the only window in the room was not only rusted shut, anyone exiting that way would find themselves plummeting to their death on the rocky shore of Lake Huron below. The only other option that Rebecca could go with was to call the police. Pulling out her phone, she dialed 911.

After telling them roughly where she was, the 911 dispatcher comforted her by letting her know that a squad car was on its way and should be there in about an hour. She hung up, a little anxious that she would have to wait so long. But at least help was on its way.

Figuring that she had nothing else to do, she decided to explore the attic a bit. Most of what she uncovered amounted to nothing, such as the grand piano. Frequently during her exploration, she sneezed from the dust that had caked everything in the attic.

Everything, that is, except for the handle for a door leading into the only closet in the room. Why this door was the only disturbed item in the room, Rebecca did not know, but her curiosity as to what lied inside overcame her, and she crept slowly towards the door, expecting the worst.

Slowly opening the door, a rat hurried out of the darkness. Opening the door further, the light in the room poured onto a single item in the room. This item was a thick book with a silk cover. The spine was encrusted with gemstones that ran around the volume's simple title: Multiverse.

Rebecca was somewhat familiar with the theory of multiple realities, but that was mostly from science fiction and pop culture. She sensed that this was something else, though. Was this the knowledge that the weird man said would drive her to insanity? Was this book the reason that the weird man was the way he is? Careful not to suffer the same fate, she grasped the book and opened it, ready to keep her mind on the guard.

At that second, a blazing blue portal opened in the attic, revealing the form of the masked murderer! The figure leapt out as the portal closed, leaving him alone with Rebecca. Now petrified with fear, Rebecca remained motionless, expecting the worst. It was only a matter of time before the figure sank his knife into her flesh.

"Do you want to know why I haven't killed you yet?"

Rebecca did not even expect this creature to be able to speak, but now with more shock than anything else, she looked up at the masked murderer. He was a tall, slender figure with a ghostly visage and a drifting air to him. Despite what she was expecting, he wasn't carrying a knife of any kind. Instead, he was pointing to the book she was carrying, instructing her to open it.

She slowly opened the book back up, revealing a page showing dinosaurs rampaging through ruined cities. Surprised, she opened to another page, showing a mechanized city patrolled by what she could tell was a SWAT force. On another, she was thrown into total shock to see Earth imploding. And on one last page, she saw two Earths merging together.

"What is this?" she asked the masked murderer in apprehension. "Is this the future? Are these possible futures?"

"These are all of them," stated the ghostly visage, "For you see, you hold the knowledge and key to every reality in existence. Every timeline is in your grasp. You see, I come from a reality where the spiritual and physical forms are one in the same. Our souls are immortal and intertwined with our flesh, so we never truly die. We are mostly a peace-loving society, but I was met by a dark man in a top hat who introduced me to the concepts of money and

power.” Rebecca, surprised by this revelation, asked, “You don’t know what money is?”

“We had no need for it, but this baron promised me power beyond what I could comprehend if I could get this book. I did, but was driven to madness from its power! That is why I kill. It’s from the anguish of my power! And that is why the old man who lives here is mad too! But YOU.” The masked murderer pointed a visceral finger at Rebecca. “You can harness the power. You are the only one who can handle the power of the dimensions. Turn to the last page, and let its powers flow through you.”

Just as instructed, she turned to the last page to send her standing upright in shock. Inscribed on the page was the following. “Keeper of the Book: Rebecca Fernsworth.”

Immediately, her mind was filled to the brink of exploding the knowledge of every possibility and reality. She saw everything that did and didn’t happen, her parents marrying and not marrying, peace and chaos, light and darkness. She held onto her sanity as best as she could.

“Now,” said the masked murderer, “give me the book and allow me to return to my master.”

Realizing the power that she now possessed, Rebecca opened a vortex and jumped inside with the book. Before the masked murderer could react, the vortex closed again. The masked murderer looked around until he spied her outside. Noticing him, she yelled, “This house wasn’t built in EVERY reality,” then sprinted down the road. Infuriated, the masked murderer phased through the walls and, with a ghostly wail, gave pursuit! Crash! Witches cackle! Window shutters slam closed! OK. I know the shutters themselves aren’t scary, but the sound of them slamming is! Or at least it’s supposed to be. Oh, well. This story is becoming more weird than scary, anyway.

As Rebecca began to lose her breath and with the police nowhere in sight, she had only one other option: she had to banish the masked murderer herself. Stopping and turning towards her pursuer, she ran through every barren reality that she could find. At last, she found Dimension 3578: The

Torn World. A void of nothing. Concentrating, she focused on the masked murderer, who was now unsheathing his knife. With harder concentration, she at last opened a blue vortex right in the masked murderer’s path. In the blink of any eye, the inter-dimensional killer was banished to a fate of eternally falling into nothing. At long last, since she first witnessed her friends die that Monday, she was at peace.

It wasn’t long before the police showed up with her mom to pick her up. Both Rebecca and her mother were elated to see each other once again. As to why she was late to school, apparently, there was an accident that was backing up the road to campus that the weird man had caused. But both were elated to finally be back in each other’s arms.

It took about a month for the town to return to normal, sans the weird man, who had disappeared entirely. No one really knew what had happened to the masked murderer, as Rebecca did not dare tell anyone about the power that she now possessed. No one was any the wiser, and for their sake, she figured, it was probably better that way.

Beyond that, her life returned to normal both in school and at home. As the months passed, she even began to develop a mutual liking toward Brandon, who had been a little surprised that Rebecca had become more talkative all around. Maybe one day, she thought, he would be the first to learn her secret.

But far off in another reality, the weird man met with the top hat wearing man and similarly dark figures from across the multiverse, lamenting the defeat of the masked murderer. To them, his loss was their loss. They knew that their quest for one, harmonious timeline would not be an easy one, but they agreed that night to one new goal: to create their perfection, Rebecca Fernsworth and anyone she met had to die! CRASH! Werewolves growl! Screamer videos play on YouTube! Ha! You knew I couldn’t end this story without one last attempt at scaring you, didn’t you?

Quit Monkeying Around

Original Story from 2002

Susan shouldn't have been so close to the cage. All the signs at the zoo warned her not to feed the animals and not to go beyond the railing, but she found the gorillas so fascinating. They pounded rhythmically on their bristled chests, swung from branches, wiggled their backsides at the visitors, and shook all over with excitement when the crowd cheered. The big gorilla, Gonzola, seemed to beckon Susan closer. She was sure he liked her. She never considered that he might be interested in the giant box of caramel corn in her hand.

Susan didn't mean to break the rules. She only wanted to edge a little closer to Gonzola by stepping around the end of the rail. In a flash he had crammed his hand into her caramel corn. When he pulled back, his fingers got stuck in her long hair. Before she could figure out what was happening, Gonzola's hands and her hair were tangled in a mess of soggy caramel corn. As his struggle to be free became wilder, Susan's hair became more tangled.

When the gorilla, Gonzola, caught his hand in Susan's hair, three zookeepers ran quickly to help. One of the zookeepers stopped at the elephant enclosure and led a large elephant to the gorilla cage. The elephant sucked up soapy water from a bucket left behind by a zookeeper cleaning the cage and sprayed toward the gorilla's hand. Susan became soaking wet. She said, "Oh, my chiffon dress is ruined!" Gonzola, with his hand loose, licked the caramel corn off his sticky fingers. Susan ran toward the chimpanzee exhibit. The chimpanzees were playing with blocks and tickling each other. Thinking they were so cute, she couldn't help herself as she wandered too close to the cage. Did you know chimpanzees love caramel corn?

Editor's Note: Just like "The Carter Caper," the first two paragraphs of this story were written by Marjorie Frank for the book "Complete Writing Lessons for the Middle Grades" and not by me.

Susan's Sticky Situation

Rewritten from "Quit Monkeying Around"

For many years, the World-Famous Budget Zoo had run its borderline illegal establishment for the sheer means of profit. Their name was one that was never uttered in the American Association of Zoos and Aquariums (except as a curse), and inspectors always failed the zoo in inspections. The only reason that the zoo remained open was the fact that the zoo manager's brother had a seat on the local city council.

The animals in the zoo suffered a worse fate. With no connection to the association, all of the zoo's animals were stolen from other zoos and placed into dirty cages that were too small for their inhabitants. The people that visited them either delighted in their misery, were forlorn themselves, or both. One of these people, Susan, was visiting the zoo and decided to pay a visit to the gorillas after grabbing a carton of caramel corn as a snack.

All the signs at the zoo warned her not to feed the animals (as if the zoo actually provided them with decent food), but she found the gorillas so fascinating. They pounded rhythmically on their bristled chests, swung from the exhibit's only branch, wiggled their backsides at the visitors, and shook all over with feigned excitement (but mostly from hunger) when the crowd cheered. The big gorilla, Gonzola, seemed to beckon Susan closer. She was sure he liked her, but never considered that he might have been interested in the giant box of caramel corn in her hand.

Susan didn't mean to break the rules. She only wanted to edge a little closer to Gonzola by stepping around the rail circumnavigating the cage. In a flash, he had crammed his hand into her caramel corn, ready to satisfy his eternal appetite. When he pulled back, his fingers got stuck in her long hair. Before

either one could figure out what was happening, Gonzola's hands and Susan's hair were entangled in a mess of soggy caramel corn. As his struggle to be free became wilder, Susan's hair became far more tangled. Neither one asked for this, but most of the other zoo patrons found this hilarious.

Near the exhibit, a zoo keeper was tending to the elephant exhibit as best as he could when word quickly spread across the zoo about the predicament that had befallen both Susan and Gonzola. Most of the people were laughing about it, but this zoo keeper wanted to take the high road as much as possible. He decided in his mind that he was going to free the two that were entangled in a caramel corn nightmare.

The only problem was that there was no actual running water in the zoo, and all of the zoo's water was brought in by buckets. Worse, there was no water supply near the gorilla exhibit and the zoo keeper couldn't leave his post until he was done cleaning. He thought on this, then came up with a clever means to transport the water. Setting down a filled bucket, the zoo keeper instructed the elephant to suck up whatever remaining water was inside and aim at the relatively nearby gorilla exhibit. With a loud blow, the elephant showered water down on the gorilla exhibit.

Completely drenched from head to foot, Susan's hair and Gonzola's hand were at least free-ish. As Susan sprinted away, Gonzola accidentally plucked a few hairs from Susan's scalp as he licked his fingers, trying to consume what was left of the caramel corn. Thinking nothing about what had happened, the other zoo patrons cheered at this impromptu performance.

As the zoo keeper went back to his duties, the crowds began to disperse, looking at other parts of the zoo. As the zoo keeper finished up his cleaning, a brash and booming voice screamed at him, demanding to know where the monkeys were. More shocked than anything else, the zoo keeper pointed off towards the chimpanzees.

With laughs just as malicious as those that mocked Susan and Gonzola, the Rude Family walked off, stopping at a snack stand to buy some cookies.

Afterward

Looking Ahead

As you have now reached the end of this volume, I feel that it is important to not only reflect back at what I have done, but also where I will go from here. So much has happened since the first stories contained in here were originally written, and I expect many more wonders to occur as I continue on in life.

Not surprisingly, I have no intention to stop writing. On the contrary, one thing that this book has encouraged me to do is to write more. Who knows? I may even decide to pen a stand-alone novel and spur the development of an entirely new universe of characters, but that will have to wait for another day.

But no matter where I go, I will remember that I would not be where I am today without these writings. Yes, there may have been some, or many, that were not that great (or not even good), but no one can hit the target 100% of the time. The only way to hit the target is to keep trying.

In fact, I believe that in every aspect of my life. Later today, after I'm done finishing this book and editing it, I'm going out to work in my sketchbook in order to fine-tune my skills of observation, visual understanding, and recreation on paper. In other words, I'm perfecting my drawing skills.

But no matter where I end up, my heart will always be set on my purpose of being a storyteller. Whether conveying that story visually or scripturally, there is a magic to bringing a world of characters to life, which can potentially begin to take on a life of their own. The world is a complex place, and I feel that story-telling is a great way to convey that undeniable truth.

But now, I must bid you all adieu. There is always something new to learn, a skill to perfect, and a project to refine. Life is not always easy, but with the right intuition and approach, it can be enjoyable.

I would like to thank you for reading (or suffering, depending on your temperament) through this volume and seeing the journey that I have undertaken. With the most humble thanks, I wish you well.

Andrew Bermudez

Never-Before-Seen Writings!

Before he created what is now known today as Mustache Maniacs Film Co., Andrew Bermudez wrote a plethora of stories, poems, jokes, and more for both recreational and educational purposes. Many of these stories would eventually lead to many of the stylistic and written choices for his movies.

Now, for the first time ever, these original assignments and just-for-fun writings are being released for public consumption, accompanied by anecdotal notes by the author throughout, giving this anthology a conversational touch and revealing some of the thoughts that went into some of these stories.

Along with these writings, the volume also contains a selection of stories that have been re-written with a higher sense of vocabulary and narrative complexity, in order to showcase the growth in the author's literary skills.

All of this is contained in several, bite-size chapters, making this book easy to navigate and read. Read it cover to cover, or only read the writings that interest you!



About the Author

Andrew Bermudez is an aspiring artist who spends his days working on his various projects. He has a Master's Degree in Entertainment Art and Illustration from Cal State Fullerton, led a semifinalist team for Disney's Imaginations 2018 competition, and currently works at the Disneyland Resort. He continues to create ideas and make art and hopes to one day work for Walt Disney Imagineering.

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