



# **Teen Zine**

## **Summer 2019**

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## The 700 Club (Part 10) – by Melanie Andersen

### Chapter 15

Friday night, and a bittersweet feeling is creeping up through my stomach, almost making me nauseous. Gigi ordered a pizza for us to eat to celebrate my break from school, and I'm munching on a large slice as I'm searching on my laptop for any information about other kidnappings. I know the 700 Club has most media and police outlets wrapped around their finger, but there has to be someone else out there desperate enough to get *something* out into the web, no matter how insignificant it might seem.

Gigi is finger painting on a canvas that's resting on her lap, not paying attention to me, which honestly is preferred, so I can focus on researching what the 700 Club might be up to. She and I have completely gotten past the spat from yesterday, and since she's been quite supportive of my decision, though it's pretty obvious she's worried for me. And why shouldn't she be? This is a potentially dangerous situation, but I'm determined to figure this out if it kills me.

It just might, as I've been searching Clovis and Dynah's names for the past twenty minutes and nothing useful has come out of it. I decide to switch my tactics and look up Enchanteds losing their powers. Twenty articles immediately pop up about mega dialoids and how one would extract them – something that most likely aided in helping Clovis to take them away from Amorie. But after a bit of digging, I come upon something interesting.

NOT SO ENCHANTING ANYMORE: A YOUNG ENCHANTED GOES MAD AFTER LOSING POWERS.

It was published two days ago in Wooden Creek, a small, charming town about an hour and a half from here, one state over. I think I found where Clovis went.

"Hey, Gigi?" I ask, waving her over to my computer. I want to see if I can get her input on whether or not this is a solid lead. She doesn't get up, but turns her head to take a peek at the laptop that's sitting on my desk.

"What's up?" she asks, peering at the screen. "Wooden Creek? Isn't that the place your friend Lauren moved to?"

"You're right," I say, a light bulb going off in my head. "I can stay with her when I go there."

"You're going there?" Gigi squints to get a better look at the article, skimming it. "A kid went crazy? Are you sure this is a good idea?"

"Five-thousand dialoids," I whistle, not believing my eyes. "This kid, Ryan Kisher, had five-thousand dialoids of telekinetic magic and he's only fifteen! He could have gotten even more by eighteen if his mega dialoid wasn't taken out. No wonder he's going insane; he could have seriously relied on his magic to get through life."

"Wait a moment," Gigi says, looking away from the screen to survey how I'll react to what she's about to say. "If he had even more dialoids than Amy, and Amy remembered a decent amount of what happened to her, do you think he'll remember even more?"

My eyes widen. "You're a genius!" I shout, but then reality comes butting its way into my brain. "How am I going to speak with him? Amorie was at least an old friend of Amy's. I don't know this kid at all."

"Whoever wrote this article obviously got to speak with him. I guess Clovis didn't bribe them enough," Gigi points out. "Just say you're from the newspaper and want a follow-up article or something. If you act confident, they'll probably believe you."

"Sounds good to me," I reply, closing my laptop. Gigi laughs.

"It always amazes me how brave you are, and how you just go with stuff like this. You're quite confrontational, aren't you?"

"What can I say? I prefer tackling problems head on. Now, I've got to go call Lauren and ask if I can stay with her," I inform. Gigi gets the hint and pops in her earbuds despite the paint on her hands, then turns back to her painting.

Lauren answers on the second ring, almost as if she is expecting me.

"Alexis, how are you? I've been worried about your family. I've wanted to call but I was afraid you would be too busy dealing with everything. I really didn't want to intrude in your family's personal business..."

"You're okay," I laugh. "Amorie's alright, too. She's home safe and sound. But I do have one thing to request of you."

"Anything at all."

"This might sound like it's coming from nowhere, and you're free to turn me down, but I'm coming to Wooden Creek later tomorrow and I really need some place to stay," I say, bracing myself for her answer.

As a college student, I really can't afford to have her turn me down, since I've got practically no money as it is. I'm going to be taking my emergency funds with me, which in total is about three hundred dollars, but I really can't use all of it up trying to find a place to stay. Still, I try to sound polite about it. I don't want to force her into anything.

Luckily for me, Lauren agrees straight away.

"Of course you can stay with me! May I ask why, though? And for how long?"

"I'm not really sure, honestly. Hopefully I won't need to stay there longer than a week or two. And I need to go there because..." I ponder what I should tell her. If she were closer to me, maybe I could tell her the truth, but I really don't think she'd want someone who's hunting down a club full of kidnappers staying in her house, no matter if we were good friends in high school or not.

Lauren waits patiently for me to make up my story. Surely, there's got to be something suspicious in my obvious hesitation, but she says nothing.

"I've got a break from school for a bit, and I want to go visit my grandmother in the retirement home to spend some time with her. It's been awhile since I've seen her, and she's not doing too well these days."

Well, that was an outright lie. I was hoping to incorporate some speck of truth in order to ease up my conscience a little bit, but that's not even close to what's actually happening. In fact, my grandmother died five years ago.

"Oh, I see. I'm sorry. You can stay as long as you like," Lauren agrees. It just occurred to me that maybe Lauren's heard about the kidnapping of Ryan Kisher. If she has heard about it, I wonder why she isn't bringing it up.

"Thank you very much," I reply. "Honestly, this is so nice of you."

"No problem. It'd be nice to catch up with you again. Just a quick warning for you, though: I live with my boyfriend, and he's quite messy. He's going away on business for a week starting Sunday though, so he shouldn't bother you much," Lauren informs.

Lauren is the type of person most lazy girls who want money aspire to be. She's only twenty-two, but she's living with her rich boyfriend, Joshua McKinney, who spoils her with basically anything she asks for so she doesn't have a job. He's the son of some successful businessman who I never cared to learn the name of, so he's got money to spare and a house that reflects that.

Lauren met him while she was on vacation in Paris last summer, and they hit it off right away. Somehow, she convinced him to move to Wooden Creek to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city he used to live in, but it's probably really inconvenient for him since he has to fly to his apartment in the city every couple of weeks so he can work in his father's office building and not from his computer at home. It's only a matter of time before he puts his foot down and demands that they move closer to his job together, and I keep warning Lauren of that, but she always just laughs and says she'll worry about that when the time comes.

Which is fair enough, I suppose. In the meantime, she gets to enjoy her private getaway in the biggest house in Wooden Creek.

"That's fine. I'm just glad you'll have me," I say sincerely. "I'll pay for my own food. I'll pay for your food, even. I promise not to be a bother."

Lauren laughs. "I think we both know that's not necessary. There's a reason you want to stay with me, right? That's because I can cook you up with a house that's just as good as any hotel – not that you could find one here – at no cost. You're a smart girl, Alexis, and Joshua and I would be more than happy to house you."

At least Lauren's honest with herself enough to know that a lot of people probably ask to stay with her or go to her house not to hang out with her, but just to be in a fancy building. That's not exactly the reason for me, as I really don't know where else I'd go, but the fact that Lauren's boyfriend is rich is definitely a plus.

She doesn't seem to mind at all, either, probably due to the fact that the reason she got with Joshua in the first place was partially because of his money. She sort of embraces the idea of buying her friends at this point, and I can't blame her.

"Thanks again. What time do you want me to come over tomorrow?" I ask, glancing at my dresser. I wonder how long it'll take to pack, and how much I need to bring.

"Any time is fine, but if you arrive around one I can make you some lunch and then we can catch up in the den." She laughs again. "You hear that? Den? I'm so fancy now. Before I got with Joshua, dens were only places for lions to sleep."

"Aren't you pleased as punch?"

"Mm-hmm. I look forward to seeing you, Alexis. And don't worry about a thing when you come over here. I got you covered," she replies, giggly and excited. I roll my eyes, but grin. Lauren may be a lot of things, and she does have a lot of undesirable traits, but she's definitely entertaining.

"Thanks. I'll see you then," I say, hanging up. I glance over at Gigi, who is still smearing paint all over the canvas in her lap with her fingers. She's always been an adamant supporter of finger-painting, claiming that paintings made using that method can turn out just as well, if not better, than paintings made using the traditional brush style.

I've got to admit, she's right. The face of a pained young woman she's painting right now looks just as realistic as anything else I've seen.

I feel myself smile and decide to start packing. I have an old leather suitcase shoved under my bed from when I first moved here, and though it's not large and admittedly kind of ugly, it'll have to do for now.

Gigi watches as I pull it out and wipe the dust off of it before setting it down on my bed. She doesn't say anything, but turns back to her artwork with a small smile on her lips.

What should I even bring? Clothes, obviously, but what else? Blankets, pillows? Surely Lauren's got those, right?

I stress over what to pack for the next half hour before I end up shoving my toiletries, laptop, and as many clothes as I can fit in there. Satisfied, I zip up the suitcase with some difficulty because it's practically overflowing.

Gigi wipes off the paint on her hands on the apron she's wearing, then holds up the painting to me, careful not to let her hands touch any wet spots.

"Like it?" she questions, beaming. She's always very proud of her art right after she finishes it, but in a week or so she's going to look at it again and practically rip her hair out since she'll think it's so ugly. But to me, her work is never ugly.

"Another masterpiece," I compliment. "Where are you going to put it?"

"Oh, I don't know," she says, feigning deep thought. "I was thinking it'd look quite nice on the floor once it dries."

"Most of your art does wind up down there, which is kind of sad since you put so much effort into all of your work."

"Meh, fame is fleeting and so is the space on this nasty floor." She shrugs, then gets up off of her messy bed to place the painting on her desk. She takes off her paint-smudged apron and tosses it onto the floor, much to my dismay. Gigi's mess is something that I won't miss terribly once I'm in Wooden Creek.

I must be making an annoyed face, because Gigi pouts.

"Aw, don't be so upset. This is how creative genius happens," she defends, plopping down on her bed face first and letting her pillows engulf her.

"It happens through mess?"

"For me, it happens when I'm comfortable in my surroundings," she grumbles, being drowned out by her pillows.

"I'll miss you a lot, silly," I say, pulling the suitcase up off my bed and placing it by the door.

"I'll miss you, too, dork," she replies, still sounding muffled.

"I don't suppose you'll want to drive me to Wooden Creek, do you?" I question, half-joking. I'd rather not make the long drive there all alone, but it's a long shot to expect Gigi to do something like that.

"You're a funny girl, Alexis. If you want to leave, you're driving yourself everywhere. Unless you're staying under this roof, I don't owe you anything."

"Fair enough." I sit down on my bed as Gigi turns around, gasping for breath after having it taken away from her by the pillows. "Will you be able to let me go? I'm a little concerned about what the state of our dorm will become."

"Don't flatter yourself so much; I'll be able to manage. In fact, I'll be glad not to have you ruining my art all of the time."

"You leave it on the floor."

"You don't watch where you're going."

"Shut up."

We both grin at each other in silence. This is going to be my last night in Belheart, and frankly, I'm excited. Clovis, prepare yourself, because I'm heading straight for Wooden Creek.

Driving by myself is boring, but it allows time for my mind to wander. Before I left my dorm this morning, I called Andrew and Amorie and told them what was up and where I was going. I also let Professor Lontelle know I was leaving town, since after class on Thursday she gave me her number in case I needed her opinion on something again. She also told me that since I'm not in class anymore, I can call her by her first name, Katlyn, but that's a bit too weird for me to do since I respect her so much. Still, I appreciate the offer.

Gigi didn't shed any tears when I hugged her goodbye, not that I really expected her to since it's only for a month. She held herself together well, but there was still fear in her eyes. I know everybody is scared for me, but I need to channel their fear into energy to help me track down the 700 Club. I'm going to be a lot more careful than I was in the past, and now I can spend all my time on this rather than fighting to keep my grades afloat amongst such an important crisis.

Lauren also called me this morning to confirm when I was coming over, and that was a wake-up call to me. And now, sitting in my car, I'm even more awake to what I'm about to do.

I'm really leaving my college to stay with an old friend while I try to track down a group of criminals who are stealing magic from Enchanteds. This is what I get for being a magic major, I suppose. Would I have felt so inclined to protect the Enchanteds if my past and future weren't so intertwined with them?

Probably not, but it's for the best. Even if I am just a nosy twenty-one-year-old, I've got more stubbornness in me than a girl my age probably ought to have, and I'm going to use it to my advantage.

Admittedly, I'm a little bit nervous about meeting Ryan Kisher. From what I've gathered – which isn't much, considering I only found one obscure article about him, and it seems as if Lauren doesn't know anything even though their town is relatively small – Ryan is a football player for Wooden Creek High, and he's got quite the temperament on him.

Apparently in the past his parents sued the school because initially he wasn't allowed on the football team due to his telekinetic powers, but ever since the Enchanted School Inclusion Act King Anton put into practice two years ago, legally the school isn't allowed to do that. But he still obviously uses his powers to cheat, and that's why he became the school's star player, because he can manipulate objects and no one has any real way of proving that he was the one who made the ball move that way.

Or at least, he *could* move objects, and now he's left with absolutely nothing. I suppose that's why he's going a little crazy, too, as his life probably centers around football and this is the first time he's realizing that he's not even good at it, his powers are.

But I'm not only scared to meet this kid who is supposedly crazy, I'm a little afraid of meeting his parents. Whoever interviewed them to write the article definitely got a lot of information out of them, which is nice, but from what I can tell by the picture of them that went along with the article and their quotes in the article, his parents are typical soccer mom types, which is quite frustrating to work with.

After all, I can't really afford to screw this up. Ryan's the key to getting the 700 Club in a world of trouble, and if I lose his lead then I've basically got nothing and I've thrown away a whole month of education for it. Yeah, that's not happening.

\* \* \*

It's pretty easy to tell once I've entered Wooden Creek. For one, it sure does live up to its name; there's trees *everywhere*, practically trapping the town in a circle of forest. There's no buildings larger than two stories and overall the town gives off the general feeling that a sweet old lady baking cookies lives inside of every house.

Another reason I'm fairly certain I've wound up in Wooden Creek is because I pass a large sign that says so.

Unfortunately for me, it seems as if Lauren's house is on the other side of town, because I have to pass by quite a few cozy homes and small businesses before I see a large house atop a hill. There's really no other houses nearby, and I have to pass through a gate in order to park my car in the driveway.

The house itself looks like an oversize log cabin, but through one of the windows up high I catch a glimpse of a chandelier, so I imagine it doesn't look like one on the inside. Either way, I'm excited to be staying in Lauren's small mansion, if only for a little while.

I slowly drive up the winding road that leads to the gate and stop in front of it, confused. I roll down my window, hoping some sort of robot will buzz me in. I've seen enough movies to know that something along those lines usually happens.

Much to my dismay, no robot speaks to me and opens up the gate, but rather a short and frazzled-looking man rushes out from a small shack not too far from the gate. I presume it's his breakroom.

"I apologize, miss," he says, tipping his black hat to me. "And what is your name?"



"Alexis Fowell," I answer. He nods at me.

"You've been given clearance. You're staying for a bit, aren't you?" he asks, pressing a button on a remote he's holding, which causes the gate to open. I try not to stare at it.

"Yes," I reply, then lower my voice. "I really don't mean to be rude, but are you their butler?"

The frazzled man laughs, causing him to look a bit less tired and a bit more joyful.

"No, but I do watch over who enters and exits the building. They do not have any help, but they do like their security," he informs, tipping his hat to me again. "They are expecting you, so I wish you a good day."

"You, too," I say, rolling up my window and pulling into their driveway. I park my car and its shoddiness compared to Lauren's red convertible almost has me laughing. It's sort of ridiculous what this girl got herself into. But if she's happy, I suppose I have no right to judge.

I exit my car and head to their grand front door, ringing the bell. I hear it chime from the inside, and not a moment later the door flies open and Lauren's smiling at me, looking quite pleased.

She doesn't look like she's aged a second since high school, which is both concerning and admirable. Her blond hair frames her face, but it's cut short, only about chin length, which is a large difference from when she was younger. Her hair used to almost reach her belly button.

Lauren has a pixie-like quality about her, something youthful and cute that probably makes it really easy to attract men like Joshua who are looking for someone to spoil rather than a committed partner. Her blue eyes glitter as she pulls me inside without a word besides, "Alexis!"

I was definitely right about the inside. Through the walls and floors are wood, the rest of the furniture looks like it belongs to a photo taken straight out of a magazine, which honestly it probably has. Everything is neat and there's not a single thing in disarray – not a speck of dirt on the grand staircase I come face to face with as soon as I walk in, not a crooked coat hanging on the rack by the door, and not a misplaced pillow on the couch to my right. Even the blanket that's lazily thrown upon it doesn't look lazy at all; I wouldn't be surprised if Lauren hired a design consultant to splay it out on the couch the way it is. After all, she's definitely got the excess money.

(to be continued...)



Dude 2 – by Tucker Bradley

## Princess for Rescue (Days 5-9) – by Samantha Andersen

It's been over a week that Eve has been with us. Over a week and she is still here, much to my relief. She has turned down every guy who had attempted to save her.

And I don't know why.

Could be the simple fact that she is really particular on things and choosing a husband would be no exception to that. In fact, it would be what she should be most picky about. However, it's not like she's really studying them and deciding if they would make a good couple. No, by now she just kinda glances their way and then permits me to get rid of them.

It almost seems like she *wants* to stay in the Underland, and that anyone trying to rescue her is more an annoyance than a potential future husband. Not that I'm complaining, because honestly, I feel the same way. And I guess in some way I can see why Greg sent her down here. There are so many hollow heads it's understandable why he'd want to weed out those people.

After all...Eve deserves someone who's gonna make her really happy.

And what do you want to bet that person isn't our newest intruder?

"So, who is this one?" I ask Eve.

"I do not know yet. He's too far away to tell," she replies from behind the bars.

I tap my staff against the ground in impatience. "He sure is taking his sweet time to get over here."

"Maybe he is scared? You can be intimidating from afar."

"Just from afar?"

"Yes. Once you open your mouth and make all of those weird faces of yours it is hard to feel threatened." She says this with a smirk. I think she learned smirking from me.

"Oh, really?" I counter, moving closer to the side of the cage. "Would you like me to make you feel threatened? I could try harder."

She leans forward and, without missing a beat, purrs, "You could try as hard as you want. You can't scare me."

"Oh, really?"

"Really."

"Really?"

"Really."

I push the cage slightly and it goes swaying. Eve yelps. "Azazel!"

"You seem a little scared now."

"Stop this cage this instant!"



I laugh at her reaction, but reach my hand out to still the cage. Eve lets go of the bars she was holding onto for dear life and manages to flick my forehead.

"Be nice or I'll send it moving again," I threaten, pushing the cage away from me while still holding onto the bars to make sure it doesn't go rocking again.

"No!" she whimpers. Her hands latch onto my own, and she practically throws herself against the side.

I pull the cage back safely in place, but keep my hands where they're at. "Hey, you don't have to freak out. I would sooner drop myself into the lave before I let you fall."

It takes us both a minute to realize what I just said, and man do I wish I kept that thought in my head.

Eve lets go of my hands, and I just as quickly pull mine away like they were burned. I steal a glance at her, but she turns to block any view of her face.

Way. To. Go. Azazel.

"So, are you going to get rid of him?" she asks after another minute. We lock eyes. Her cheeks are dusted pink.

"You want me to get rid of him?"

"Yes."

"But you haven't even seen him." I have no idea why I'm stalling.

She grabs onto one of the bars again. "I don't need to see him to know he isn't the one. Besides, he is taking forever. The chains holding this thing up will most likely rust before he reaches me. And I know you promised not to let me fall, but knowing you, what will mostly likely happen is that you'll fall in while trying to save me...and I think it is best to avoid that situation altogether." She smiles warmly at me. "So, could you get rid of him for me?"

I blink once before returning her smile. "Your wish is my command, Princess."

And so I take my staff and banish another random pretty boy.

"You are getting very skilled at being menacing," Eve compliments as I release her from the cage.

I pass my staff to Aamon who rushes off to put it away. "Thanks. I get a lot of practice what with scaring off good-looking men every day."

She laughs a little, but it's one of those that-wasn't-funny-but-I'll-laugh-anyway-because-I-don't-know-what-else-to-do laughs. "Will you walk with me down by the magma fall?"

Her face is still lightly pink and I'm hoping my dark skin doesn't make my own blush obvious. "Uh...yeah, sure."

We walk along in silence for a few minutes. Well, besides Eve's heels. Those things make it impossible for her to sneak anywhere.

She's the first to speak. "Does it bother you?"

"Does what bother me?" Whatever she's asking about probably doesn't bother me. At least, not anymore.

Her voice is a lot softer than it usually is. "Having to get rid of all of these strangers who invade your home. And knowing that the only reason they are invading your home is because of me?"

"Oh, that..." Okay, think before you answer this time. We don't need a repeat of earlier. "It doesn't bother me that much...anymore. It's kind of fun scaring people off. Definitely is more exciting around here."

She smiles a bit at that, so I guess my answer was alright. "Does it bother you that I am around all the time? Invading your home?"

Why is she asking such tough questions? "It did. Mainly I was annoyed with Greg interrupting my life like I wasn't doing anything better."

She looks down. "I'm sorry."

Great, now she's feeling guilty. "You don't have to apologize for anything. It wasn't your fault. In fact...having you around has been kind of nice."

"Really?" Her face lights up like the sky in the Land of Light.

I scratch the back of my neck. "Yeah, you can be, uh, good company, I guess."

She's quiet for another minute as we continue strolling along. She's got a bounce in her step. "Would you ever get married, Azazel?"

The question catches me off-guard, so I stop walking. She takes a few paces before noticing that I have stopped. "Is something wrong?" she asks so innocently, I nearly blurt everything out right now. Not that I even know what everything is.

"Yeah..." I resume walking and catch up to her in two strides. I feel her eyes weighing on me and I know I can't get out of answering the question. "I've never entertained the thought before. Marriage was just...well, I guess it just wasn't for me."

It *wasn't* for you, or it *isn't* for you?" She stares at the side of my face and I suddenly feel like I'm being interrogated under a bright light.

I shrug in what I hope is an indifferent manner. "I don't know. Why do you care, anyway?"

Now it's her turn to be quiet. "I do not care. I was merely wondering."

"It's not like anyone would want to marry me anyway." I laugh at my own self-deprecation.

"Why not?" she questions with what seems like genuine confusion.

I give her a look. "I'm a hideous demon king of the Underland. Who in their right mind would want to marry me?" I'm not sure I like where the conversation is turning, but I'm far too curious to see where it ends.

"I believe lots of people would want to marry you. You have much to offer," she states formally.

"Oh, yeah? Like what?"

"Well, you are a king for one thing. You are humorous and friendly...sort of. Tall, dark, and mysterious – girls like that. And you are quite generous."

I scoff. "Yeah, right. For one thing, I'm not generous; I'm just lazy. Another, girls don't like tall, dark, and mysterious when it comes to a literal demon king. And last, even though I'm a king, I'm not so great at my job as you can probably tell."

"Well, maybe she can help you," she insists. "You could marry someone good at delegating."

"Like you?"

Aaaaaand there goes my mouth again. Why can't I learn to just shut up.

"What?" Eve blinks up at me.

Backpedal. Backpedal. "Like you – as in I should marry someone *like* you. Not that I should marry *you* because that...would be – oh, look! We made it to the magmafall!"

Eve watches me as I rush over to the edge of the pond. "You know, I have always liked this area. Very scenic."

And it is, with the giant waterfall made of, well, magma, rushing down into a giant pool of lava. It's warm and comforting, while still so intensely powerful. Like the blond princess scooting up to my side.

"It is very lovely. That's why I had Aamon put a bench right over there, for better viewing."

I look six steps behind me and, sure enough, there's a wooden bench in the perfect spot to watch the magmafall.

"Come. Let's sit." Eve guide me over to the bench and we relax onto it. Well, as much as I can relax having her this close to me.

"So, do you think you'd like to be married?"

Man, this girl does not quit. I rub my eyelids, suddenly tired. "Why are you so interested in my love life all of a sudden?"

"I'm not!" she defends. My disbelieving look throws that out the window. "Well, maybe I am a little curious. I merely want to know if you will be looked after once I go."

A chuckle escapes me. I have been doing that a lot more recently – laughing. "How thoughtful. I think I will manage though. Besides, no one can compare to the level of 'looking after' you provide me." It's supposed to be a tease, but that stupid sincerity creeps into it.

Eve leans into my shoulder and she's got this wild, desperate look in her eyes and it's kind of freaking me out. "Would you miss me if I left?"

Her hand is on my arm. *Her hand is on my arm!*

My mind is jumping from so many thoughts that I barely register her use of the word "if." "I-well-I...yeah, sure I would. I like you and-"

"You like me?"

Where in my sweet, sweet Underland is this conversation going?

"Yes."

And why do I keep making it worse?!

Her smile is blinding. I'm afraid I'm just going to combust from all the heat. It doesn't help that this is going down right next to a giant mass of lava.

"I like you, too."

Wait, what?

Wait...

WHAAAAAAAAAT?!

"You...you do?" My voice is shaking harder than the rest of my body. And how has my heart not exploded by now? I'm pretty sure it's not healthy to have it beat this fast.

Eve nods with that smile of hers still plastered on her face, and she's just so close, and I'm just so happy I do the unthinkable...

I kiss her.

She pulls away after a few seconds. The smile has slipped off her face and in its place is a horrified expression.

Not the reaction I was going for.

"Why...did you kiss me?" her voice is quiet, but I worry it's that dangerous quiet girls' voices sometimes become before they rip you to shreds.

"Be...because that's what's supposed to happen after a confession of mutual feelings, right?"

Her perfectly sculpted eyebrows knit together. "Mutual feel- Azazel, what are you talking about?"

"I said I liked you! And then you said you liked me back!" She said it and then she confirmed it with a nod. I swear, that's what happened. My dreams never feel this real.

"Yes, I did say that. I like you...as in a friend. As in I don't view you as a strange fake kidnapper anymore, but someone I can relax and have fun with. I have never had many friends before and so I like that I have you as one."

"Friend..."

"You thought...you thought I meant romantically?"

I think I'm going to jump into that pit of burning magma right now and never surface again.

She blinks a few times trying to process everything I assume. Meanwhile, I am trying to find ways to end my entire existence. "Wait, you...you like me romantically?"

"No, I was just kissing you as a friend." Try as I might I can't keep the pain out of my voice. Shrieking Souls. Rejection hurts worse than a third-degree burn.

Eve frowns. "That is your sarcastic voice. You do like me."

I really need this conversation to be over with. "Yes! I like you! I think you'd be a great queen and you're really pretty, and your smile makes my stomach do flips, and you smell like flowers, and your laugh is sunshine and...and-"

"Stop it! Stop saying those things..." She's teary-eyed and it breaks my heart even further. But it also ticks me off. Why is she the one crying. I'm the one who just made a fool of myself and got rudely shut down.

She shakes her head and wipes her eyes. "I am sorry. I didn't mean to cry."

I can't seem to do anything anymore. I can't move or speak and the fact that I'm just standing around makes me feel even worse.

Eve takes a step closer and bites her lip while she looks up at me. I can only stare back into her misty eyes. "I need a little time to think about everything, alright?" she asks.

"Think about what?" At least I can manage to speak again.

"To think about everything that has just transpired. I will see you in the morning. Goodnight, Azazel. Thank you for the walk."

Women are brutal.

"Another one, Aamon!"

Aamon guards the bottle of pomegranate juice protectively. "Are you sure, Sir? This will be your sixth one."

I slam my empty glass down. "Do it!"

"Y-yes Sir." He shakily pours me another glassful and I down it in one gulp. "Perhaps you could repair things with Miss Eve?"

I drop my head onto the table top and keep it there. "No! You don't understand. I told her I liked her! I kissed her!"

Aamon lowers the bottle onto the table just out of reach from me. "You kissed her, Sir?"

I say something undecipherable even to my own ears, yet somehow Aamon seems to understand. "Did you like it, Sir?"

My eyes try to find him, but my vision has gone a little fuzzy. "Yes! I did until she pushed away. She probably hates me now. I'm so stupid!"

"I am sure that's not the case, Sir. And you aren't stupid."

I slam my glass down again. "Another one!"

"No, Sir. I am cutting you off!"

"Aamon!"

He takes the bottle and the glass out of my hand. "Go to bed, Sir. You need some sleep."

"Never!" But he's already walking away, leaving me alone just like Eve did. Why does everyone leave me? I keep my head plastered to the table awhile longer before deciding I should probably go to bed.

Standing up is a lot harder than I remember, and the walk back to my room feels longer than I remember too. I guess maybe I shouldn't have had all that juice.

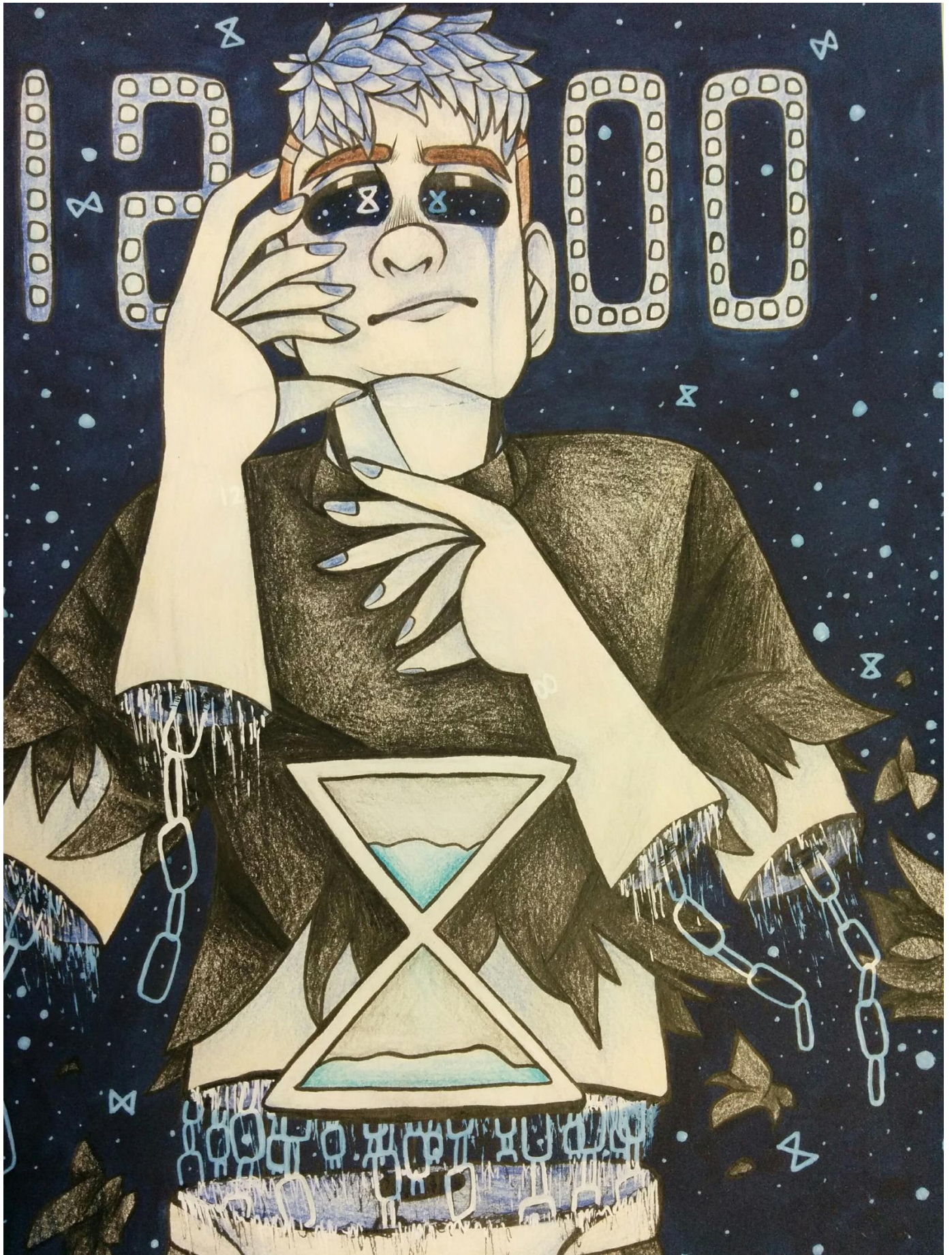
I enter my room and crawl into bed. There's a nagging feeling at the back of my head, but, honestly, I'm too exhausted to figure out what it is. For now, it can match the other horrible feelings coursing through me. (to be continued...)





Dudes 1 & 3 – by Tucker Bradley





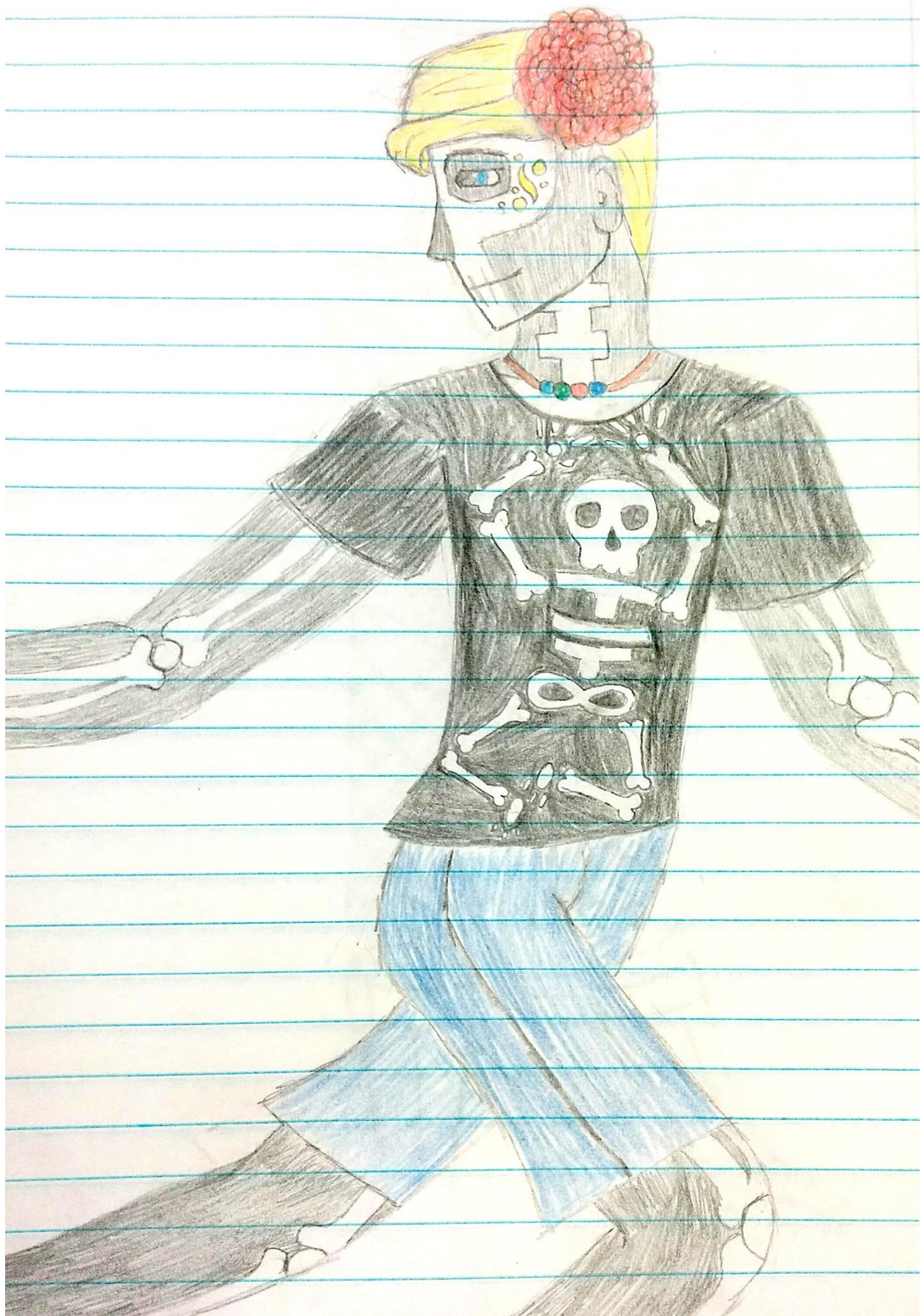
Midnight – by Cory Poirier





**Photos – by Melanie Andersen**



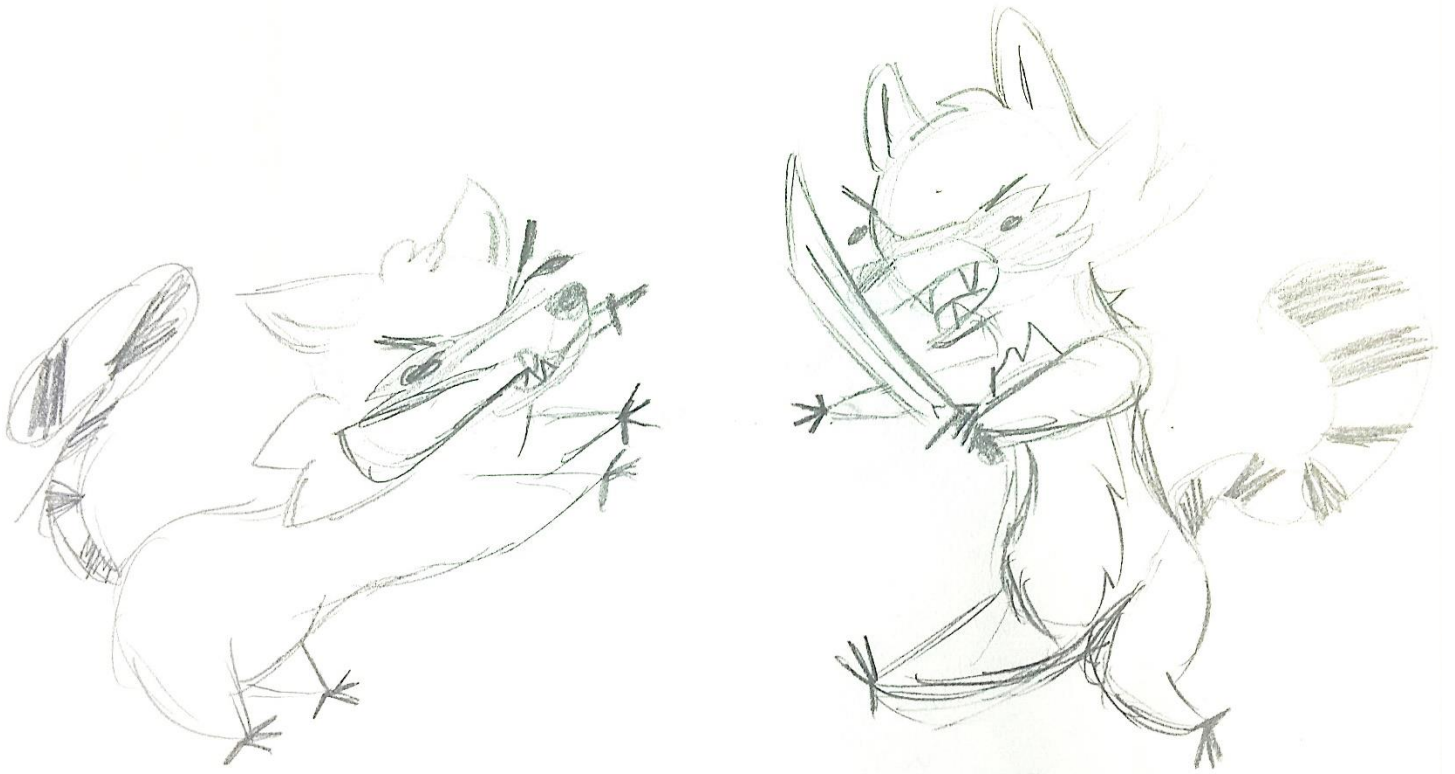


**Sugar Skull – by Olivia Schlossmann**



**Aamon (from "Princess for Rescue" story by Samantha Andersen) – by Tucker Bradley**





**Sword-Fighting Raccoons – by Tucker Bradley**

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## **teen zine** contributors:

**Melanie Andersen, Samantha Andersen, Tucker Bradley, Taylor Bradley, Ashton Miller, Cory Poirier, and Olivia Schlossmann**

**Please join us at our next meeting!**

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**teen zine** is a publication of the Huntley Area Public Library's teen writers' club and includes members' work as well as submissions from area teens in grades 6 – 12. If you would like to submit your writing or artwork for review and possible inclusion in a future issue of the zine, please fill out a submission form (available at the library's Information Desk), or use our online submission form: [www.huntleylibrary.org/teen-zine](http://www.huntleylibrary.org/teen-zine)