



the zine

Issue #7 | 2013

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Welcome to the latest issue of The 'Zine!

Upcoming Events

AGM

Easter is approaching and as such so is our Annual General Meeting. This is your chance to control how the society is run, and by who!

This year our AGM will be occurring in the last week of the Spring Term, on Monday 18th March, 7:30pm C27 and Wednesday 20th March, 7:30pm E126. If you are a Full Member of the society (a paid member who is not either an Associate or Staff) you'll be able to vote on either day.

City Run

On Saturday 16th, we're holding an event called City Run. Basically what you have to do is to get into groups of 4 and you are required to do as many tasks as possible on your tasks sheet given to you at the beginning of the game. Each task has a certain number of points in which you will have to accumulate. The group with the highest score will, of course, win the game.

As always, keep an eye on your emails/facebook/the forum for more information and new events.

Editor Recommendations

Read This!

THE NIGHT WATCH BY SERGEI LUKYANENKO

'Walking the streets of Moscow, indistinguishable from the rest of its population, are the Others. Possessors of supernatural powers and capable of entering the Twilight, a shadowy parallel world existing in parallel to our own, each Other owes allegiance either to the Dark or the Light.

The Night Watch, first book in the Night Watch Trilogy, follows Anton, a young Other owing allegiance to the Light. As a Night Watch agent he must patrol the streets and metro of the city, protecting ordinary people from the vampires and magicians of the Dark. When he comes across Svetlana, a young woman under a

powerful curse, and saves an unfledged Other, Egor, from vampires, he becomes involved in events that threaten the uneasy truce, and the whole city...'

Watch This!

CRIMINAL MINDS

'Their job is to catch criminals. Their specialty is to think like them.'

Based in Quantico, Virginia, the Behavioural Analysis Unit (BAU) is a subsection of the FBI. Called in by local police departments to assist in solving crimes of a serial and/or extremely violent nature where the perpetrator is unknown (referred to by the Unit as the unknown subject or unsub for short), the BAU use the controversial scientific art of profiling to track and apprehend the unsub.'

Play This!

TOMB RAIDER (2013)

'Tomb Raider is an open world game that combines action-adventure, platforming, exploration, and survival mechanics. It explores the origin story of Lara Croft and her ascent from a frightened young woman to a hardened survivor.'



by Graham Moore

Having some spare time on my hands awaiting feedback on my thesis, I took it upon myself to rewatch all of *The X-Files*. This is no easy task – there are over 200 episodes. For the uninitiated, *The X-Files* is a science-fiction/fantasy series about two FBI agents, Fox Mulder and Dana Scully, and their investigations in crimes encompassing paranormal phenomena. The tone ranges from drama to horror to mystery and even comedy.

There are two types of episode; those about the continuous story focusing on aliens, government conspiracies and Mulder's missing sister that spans all the seasons (AKA “mytharc”) and the stand-alone episodes that require little or no previous knowledge of the series (AKA “monster-of-the-week”). In my opinion (and that of many fans), the stand-alone episodes are far better. They are generally simpler, more concise, more interesting and more entertaining.

I've picked out some of my favourite episodes for you to consider (re)watching. I have tried to make the descriptions spoiler-free but I am giving a SPOILER warning just in case.

20. Folie à Deux (S5E19)



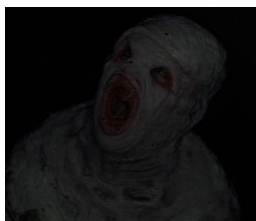
I like this one because it manages to pack a fair bit into its run time. A call centre worker believes his boss is a giant insect making a colony out of his co-workers and takes extreme actions to stop him. Is he merely hallucinating or is there truth in his madness?

19. How the Ghosts Stole Christmas (S6E6)

One of two Christmas episodes of *The X-Files*, and it manages to be funny and very creepy. Mulder and Scully enter an abandoned house on Christmas Eve, following a legend that ghosts appear there once a year. However, getting out is not as easy as getting in.....



18. Agua Mala (S6E13) & The Host (S2E2)



As both of these involve aquatic, parasitic monsters and I've decided to give them a joint entry. *Agua Mala* is an atmospheric episode surrounding a group of people trapped in an apartment building, trying to avoid watery tentacles that are appearing from the drains and plumbing. *The Host* (unrelated to the Korean horror film) is about a humanoid fluke monster that is terrorising the sewers and is easily one of the more horrifying monsters of the series.

17. War of the Coprophages (S3E12)

Even by the standards of *The X-Files*, this episode is weird, but all the better for it. Mysterious deaths seem to be occurring, involving cockroaches that seem to be both organic and mechanical.



16. Redrum (S8E6)



After the end of Season 7, the series as a whole goes downhill. Mulder becomes relegated to a secondary character, new characters are thrown in like crazy and the writers' imaginations start to run a bit dry. However, I will give this episode a mention as it features Joe Morton (*Terminator 2*, *Speed*) awaking in a prison, apparently having committed a murder he does not remember, and to add to the confusion, he appears to be moving backwards in time. Can he figure out what happened and prevent his fate?

15. Small Potatoes (S4E20)

After several women in the same town all give birth to children with tails, Mulder and Scully investigate and find an unusual man who is responsible. There's a few twists here to keep the viewer watching with a fair bit of humour as a bonus.



14. Humbug (S2E20)



A murder at a travelling carnival attracts the attention of the FBI. This is a mostly comical episode, interesting in that it stars real-life carnival freaks, but also finishes on a creepy climax. This was the first (of four) written by the dark comic genius Darin Morgan – the other three also appear on this list (#17, #8 and #1).

13. Unusual Suspects (S5E3) & Three of a Kind (S6E20)

These two get a special mention as they prominently feature The Lone Gunmen, three computer hackers/conspiracy theorists whose appearances in any episode of *The X-Files* are always a welcome treat. These two are no exception and give the fans more backstory and more antics of the Gunmen.



12. Pusher (S3E17)



Pusher concerns a man who can mentally force people into committing suicide and makes one of the show's most intimidating adversaries. *Kitsunegari* (S5E8) continues the story two seasons later.

11. Dreamland I & II (S6E4,5)

The first two stand-alone episodes of Season 6 mark the overall lighter tone of the series from here on, but it is this season that contains some of my favourite episodes. Here, Mulder and a man in black switch bodies and attempt to understand each other's lives, while trying to convince others of what has happened. It also contains one of my favourite lines in the entire series - "You think being a man in black is all voodoo mind control? You should see the paperwork...."



10. The Amazing Maleeni (S7E8)



It should come as little surprise that the episode of *The X-Files* that focuses on magicians is one of my favourites. It features real-life magician Ricky Jay as the The Amazing Maleeni, who performs a magic trick in which he rotates his head 360 degrees and appears unharmed.... yet he is found dead by decapitation minutes later.

9. Squeeze (S1E3) & Tooms (S1E21)

A series of victims are found dead in rooms with no easy access points with their livers removed. *Squeeze* was the very first monster-of-the-week episode and one of the best known. It's original and certainly among the scariest of *The X-Files*.



8. Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose (S3E4)



This episode is notable for winning two Primetime Emmy awards. A serial killer appears to be targeting fortune tellers and psychics; Mulder and Scully find themselves seeking the aid of a man who appears to be a psychic himself to help catch the killer.

7. Ice (S1E8)

Bearing some minor similarities to *The Thing* in that the story revolves around polar research stations and paranoia. A previously healthy research group based in the Arctic are found having violently murdered one another. Mulder and Scully investigate and worry that they may have become infected with the same thing that caused the first murders. The episode *Firewalker* (S2E9) bears some similarities to this one and is also one of my favourites.



6. Terms of Endearment (S6E7)



Probably inspired by *Rosemary's Baby*, this features a pregnant woman who has a dream of a devil stealing her baby (born with horns and a tail), only to find her baby really is gone when she wakes up. The story works well because it gives away a twist early on only to hide a better one later. Did I mention it also has Bruce

Campbell as the father?

5. Darkness Falls (S1E20)

Mulder and Scully are stranded in the woods investigating deaths caused by a dangerous breed of insect (*it seems a lot of my favourites involve insects...*). You're safe, as long as you can stay in the light.....



4. Monday (S6E14)



Groundhog Day and *Run Lola Run* combined to make an episode of *The X-Files*. A young woman is reliving the same day of her life as she tries to prevent a disastrous bank robbery, and Mulder may be the only one who can help her....

3. Field Trip (S6E21)

A brilliant episode that works so well because it knows how to play with the fan's expectations. After the skeletons of a couple are found in a field, Mulder and Scully



attempt to determine the cause of death, each apparently confirming their own suspicions, but the truth turns out to be far more disturbing.....

2. Bad Blood (S5E12)



Along with the number 1 entry, this episode abandons the usually serious tone of the series and opts for an all-out comedy. Mulder and Scully each retell their experiences dealing with murders seemingly caused by a vampire, but they both have a slightly different spin on the story, and can't resist lampooning one another in the process.

1. Jose Chung's "From Outer Space" (S3E20)

This is the favourite of many fans of *The X-Files* as its unusual format and humour make it stand out from the rest of the series. A writer interviews Scully about a case she was investigating, and the bizarre stories she has heard from the suspects. Two teenagers are abducted by aliens, who are then themselves abducted.



Video Game Review: *DmC Devil May Cry*

by Graham Moore

Platform: Windows 8/7/Vista/XP (requires Steam account), Xbox 360, PlayStation 3

Release Date: January 2013

Call Me a Devil's Advocate

Devil May Cry is a series of extreme combat action games about the half-devil, sword-and-gun-wielding, white-haired, wisecracking demon-hunter Dante and it's had a bit of a shaky history in terms of how well the games have been received.

The first *Devil May Cry* began life as a new *Resident Evil* that eventually became its own game and was among of the best new titles for the PS2. It was hugely fun to play and allowed quick, stylish Matrix-style fights with effortless interchanging between shooting and melee combat. Its sequel, *Devil May Cry 2*, is among the most disappointing in video game history – the game was too easy and repetitive, and the story seemed totally unrelated to its predecessor while also making little sense in its own right.

Surprisingly, *Devil May Cry 3* effectively fixed all these problems – the combat was pretty good, the story was coherent and interesting, and the game was hugely replayable. The main criticism was just how hard it was – the player would spend a lot of time dying on the first few levels as you had to come to grips with the controls in the middle of a fight. *Devil May Cry 4*, while a decent game, took a few steps backwards in terms of the story, its biggest sin being replacing the hero Dante with the perplexingly similar looking Nero.

So when Capcom announced that a new developer (UK's own Ninja Theory) was developing the next game in the series, and that it would be a reimagining of the series with a new Dante and a confusing name, the fans were understandably pessimistic. Perhaps Ninja Theory listened carefully to the fans however, because *DmC: Devil May Cry* is actually pretty damn good.

With the previous series having written itself into a corner, the plots of DMC 2 and DMC 4 screwing with any sort of flow the story of the other two titles had developed, it actually makes sense to reboot the continuity. Here, the story takes place in Limbo City, a paradigm of a hedonistic, media-dominated contemporary society with the new Dante (now looking like a boy band reject) discovering he is half-devil and half-angel, or Nephilim as the game calls them (note for religious mythology enthusiasts: this is not what a Nephilim actually is). He then teams up with his long-lost twin brother Vergil to take down the reign of the demon Mundus; both based on characters of the same names from the first game.

The story, while functional, isn't the main selling point of the game. New to the series though is its substantially darker tone, prolific use of profanity and a degree of social satire. While traversing the demon dimension Limbo, damning messages taunt Dante, along with more subtle ones such as "OBEY", intentionally reminiscent of *They Live*. Propaganda and sensationalism in the media along with financial trouble and corruption in corporations are also subjects of parody – something completely absent from its more fantasy-based predecessors.

But down to business – how does it play? In short, excellently. The fast-paced combat isn't just alive, it's on steroids. You can switch between all weapons without the need to go into the main menu and rack up combos against multiple enemies with absolute ease. There are five melee weapons, all of which have multiple moves and combos and all have their own niche in fights, making switching between them quickly to be quite necessary; certain enemies only take damage from demon weapons (axe, gauntlets) while others only take damage from angel weapons (scythe, ninja stars).

For this reason, I can say from personal experience that playing the PC version of the game with a keyboard is almost impossible – moving, switching weapons, attacking and evading in a split second requires Korean god-like reflexes. I would recommend investing in either a Microsoft controller or a generic USB controller in conjunction with a MS controller emulating program. Also, the game's technical specifications were a wake up call for my ageing 2007 computer – although the game ran with only a small amount of lag, in a game like this, that can mean the difference between receiving and avoiding a hit, and consequently, a victory or a game over.

The Devil Bringer from DMC 4 is back in the form of chains, which can either pull you quickly towards an enemy or vice versa. Each enemy has its own attack pattern and certain combinations of weapons and moves work better than others. There are also three guns; the trademark handguns, a shotgun and an explosive dart thrower. However, there is much less emphasis on ranged combat in this game; it wasn't until after two playthroughs that I got the "Killed 50 Enemies with Guns" achievement while I had long killed over a thousand enemies with melee weapons. The staple Devil Trigger, where Dante transforms into a more powerful being is back but it feels somewhat unessential in this instalment. Unlike previous games, it doesn't give you extra moves, just stuns enemies, makes you more stronger and regenerates your health. It also takes longer to charge – often only in time for the final battle of the mission.

While the combat manages to stay varied and thrilling, the rest of the game largely consists of platforming sections – jumping, chaining and boosting your way to the next location, with only a few unremarkable puzzles. There are plenty of secrets to be found, and exploring the more complex rooms of the game will reward you with secret missions. The design of the early levels is initially "fine" and then from the midpoint onwards, ramps up to "amazing". Dante finds himself in

labyrinthine floating rooms, a psychedelic gauntlet in a nightclub, a car chase where time periodically slows down, and a news broadcast-inspired boss fight, in all of which I spent a short time simply admiring the work that must have gone into creating the scenery.

However, for fans of the series, probably the biggest let-down of the game is its length and difficulty. There are frequent checkpoints and some levels only take a few minutes to get through. I strongly advise playing on the hardest difficulty setting (Nephilim) from the outset or you will breeze through the game. Even the notorious “Dante Must Die” and “Hell and Hell” modes were blitzed in a few days and I was able to get “SSS” rank on all Nephilim missions with only a few replays (for comparison, I rarely got above a “B” on DMC 1).

But in any case, the game is very accessible for newcomers and for the fans, its a logical successor for the previous entries. It's creative, highly replayable and still bucketloads of fun. For once, the devil you don't know may be better than the devil you do.



Kuroko no Basuke: A 10 on paper, a 100 in my heart

So a while back I did something fairly monumental. I upgraded my score for Kuroko no Basuke on MyAnimeList from a 9 to a 10. Why, you ask? Well that's what I'm about to tell you. Warning: hyperbole may be employed. First of all though, there are probably some people out there who don't know what Kuroko no Basuke (or 'The Basketball Which Kuroko Plays') is. When I first started watching it last spring I thought the plot was literally 'They play basketball'. Now I know that basketball is, for a fact, the coolest thing ever.

So the premise for the story is that there is this middle school that is insanely good at basketball, and one year they managed to recruit a squad of unbelievably talented players - the so-called "Generation of Miracles". These prodigies each had their own unique basketball talent, ranging from 'being able to copy any play that they see' to 'just being really, really tall', and naturally they became an unstoppable force in the world of middle school basketball - a world which is surprisingly well publicised in the universe of this series. The kicker is that there was another player in this squad, a "phantom sixth man" if you will, who excelled at passing and teamplay rather than cultivating insane individual talent like the others. This was, of course, Kuroko. So the story kicks off in the year after the Generation of Miracles graduated from middle school and they've each gone off to play for different high schools, and we follow Kuroko who's joined a new and relatively unknown team. He and his new teammate, recently returned from America, Kagami begin their quest to defeat the Generation of Miracles and become the best damned high school basketball players in Japan!



Needless to say there are a whole load of twists and turns along the way which I don't want to spoil, but now you have the essential premise. So what makes the series so good? To be honest that's a question I'm still wrestling with, even now long after the first season of the anime finished airing (a second season has just been confirmed for spring this year - huzzah!) and 202 chapters into the manga. I think there are definitely multiple facets to the answer though, so I'll take a swing at it. One of the first things to pop into my head when I ask myself that question is "the adrenaline rush", and it is certainly a major factor. When I was watching the anime (and subsequently when I was reading the manga or rewatching the show at least another 8 or so times) every single week's portion of Kuroko no Basuke felt like a dose of some sort of basketball drug - I couldn't get enough; I wanted more. The thrill of seeing each new episode uploaded was greater than that given by any other series in recent times, and each episode left me pining in eager anticipation for the speedy release of the next one, mainly due to the extraordinary amount of adrenaline flowing through my bloodstream. "They just play basketball" held no meaning for me anymore - basketball is now what gets me pumped up!



How does Kuroko no Basuke manage to get so intense? Well put simply it's because it's purely and unashamedly shounen - it delivers the thrills and spills that a battle manga gives from fights that progress far beyond the boundaries of logic, people leveling-up at every turn due to the unstoppable power of friendship, shocking twists and impossibly outrageous abilities! In other words it gives you that hit of senseless violence - or in this case I suppose 'senseless basketball' - which the mind needs to keep ticking over. The basketball court in essence becomes a battlefield; *that* is why basketball is suddenly exciting to watch. This comparison becomes even more prominent in the manga where, not too far past where the anime got to, players start naming their basketball moves and we're treated to gorgeous two-page spreads full of SFX and toner. By no means does the anime slouch in comparison however and all the features of the medium, especially music (which in this case is a phenomenal blend of overdrive guitar, synth and pseudo-dubstep), are used to exceptional effect when it comes to building tension and accentuating the key moments. So I guess my first reason as to why Kuroko no Basuke is so good comes down to "It's a series which makes it hard to sit still." I've even had urges to go out and play basketball because of this show. As in, actually play sport. Naturally I didn't, but you get the point right?



What's the next facet to delve into then? At this point I'm tempted to say it's the characters. Now I wouldn't go so far as saying that I've never found the characters in generic shounen appealing or entertaining, but I like to think myself not easily charmed by half-baked character design or the like, and in fact a series' cast of characters is often what heavily influences my judging of its quality, but Kuroko no Basuke has a wealth of absolutely fantastic characters - I find it incredibly hard not to root for everyone! It starts out with a relatively small group of actually developed characters in the form of the Generation of Miracles and, to an extent, the members of Kuroko's team, but I believe at some point it must have twigged in the mangaka's mind that the massive selection of side-characters that comes from having so many teams of at least five people leaves a lot of room to up the quality - in terms of lovable familiar faces and more in-depth character interactions - because as the series progresses all of these previously minor characters become fleshed out and we even delve into their motivations. Of course a lot of characters are still left with very one-dimensional personalities, but this usually then just goes to serve some of the fantastic comedy which is often amiss in sports series. There are so many unique, and even completely contrasting, characters that I somehow find myself loving equally, which is highly unprecedented. As a matter of fact I'm so taken that, in the wake of this new obsession of mine, I found myself following a good number of Kuroko no Basuke fan pages which ended up making my newsfeed look like some fangirl's BL/yaoi treasure trove with all their posts, and yet for some reason I don't care!



The last facet I'm going to talk about is what amounts to "lasting appeal" I suppose. A little while back there were a couple of polls published where anime fans were asked which shows that were currently popular they thought would still be remembered in 5, 10, 20 years time. Well I was rather surprised by the results of this, specifically that Kuroko no Basuke placed 2nd in the "Which series do you think will be forgotten soon?" category (it also placed somewhere reasonably high up in the "Which series do you think will not be forgotten?" category, but that's not the point >.<). I'm surprised because the series has already had a pretty significant effect on my life, and I don't see that stopping any time soon. Now of course I'm not saying Kuroko no Basuke has changed who I am or has led me to better life choices or anything like that, but it's always been lingering in my mind ever since the anime finished airing back in summer. Anyone who knows me will be no doubt aware of this new obsession I've acquired, and I think the amount of people I've recommended it to or forced to watch it over the last few months exceeds even my cumulative Angel Beats badgering over the last couple of years!

This sort of lasting effect has surfaced in a number of ways, but I'll take a couple of specific examples. The first and easiest one would be this review in itself - Kuroko no Basuke has FINALLY got me writing something which I haven't managed to do in quite some time, putting a fair amount of time into it too! But I think the real telling point is the moment in this last term where I realised that I was spending *literally* (and this isn't hyperbole for once)



a majority of my waking hours thinking about, watching, pondering, reading, contemplating and most of all discussing the series and how AWESOME it is, along with those to whom I'd introduced it. It's that sort of level of "lasting appeal" that I'm talking about, and I think that when it gets to that point it's impossible to deny that we're talking about an exceptional series here - to consume me to such a degree - even if one can't pinpoint what it is in fact that makes it so great! It looks like I've given you lucky people a real look into my psyche here, and it's probably pretty worrying...

Mike Begg ("Anime Mike")

Poems

UNTITLED BY HELEN WORRALL

On that rare day you feel good about yourself.
On that day when you can forgive yourself for all the little imperfections
And for the big ones,

It is a good day
It is a miraculous day.

Yes, it is the rest of the time you've got it wrong!
I feel kinder to myself today than I have in quite a while
And I feel kinder to the rest of the world too - really, this is who I am.

Not a bundle of wrongness and mistakes
Nor an unworthy lump
But a real person, a human being goddamnit
and I've got as much to offer
as the next dazzling, two legged
nerves flesh and wonderfully flawed
homosapien falloping around this
quirky little planet.

I know it is a cliché,
but I'm sure, just between the two of us, you'll let it slide this one time,
You See:
We have to love ourselves. It's good for us.
You loving you is good for you.
And for her. For him too.
In fact it does the whole bloody lot of them good.
Does me good too, come to think of it.

So I treasure days like this.
It's all the other days I get it wrong.

Stories

WHEN THE MOON IS FULL BY LAURA BEACH

Previous chapters in Issue #6.

Chapter three: Challenge

Elourhay threw his bed covers to the side and stood up, every muscle in his body tense. John moved to stop him, but was frozen by the intense glow in his roommate's emerald eyes.

"Where are you going?" John asked cautiously.

"I'm going to see if Windsong is alright. Then I'm going to take a walk to calm down. Don't follow me."

John slowly backed away to the wall, increasing the distance between himself and what appeared to be a very angry elf.

"Windsong...he's your brother right?" John ventured, his voice beginning to shake. Elourhay has never been this angry, ever. What has gotten in to him? Come to think of it, his behaviour on the bus, confronting Vlad like that...so unlike the usual pacifist bookworm of the last two years...

Elourhay only nodded before leaving, slamming the door behind him. John slid down the wall, landing on his rear with a thump. His hand came to rest on his chest, trying in vain to steady his racing heart. Never before had he found a reason to fear Elourhay, his one and only true friend in the magical world. Just one glare was enough to turn his blood to ice and trap his breath in his lungs. He could never defend himself if Elourhay turned to magic...

"Whatever is wrong with you, I'll find a way to fix it." he whispered.

It was a good two hours before John found Elourhay again. It was in a distant part of the academy grounds, an area neglected by the groundskeeper and left to grow semi-wild. The young forest here provides ample cover for anyone wishing to avoid contact, and thus that particular area has found itself a special place in many reclusive students' hearts, Elourhay included.

He was singing to himself, gathering energy around his limbs in the form of a glowing mist, and firing spells at anything within sight. One spell landed close to John's position and he flinched as a small bed of flowers appeared in an explosion of multicoloured sparks. At least Elourhay wasn't being destructive...

Hearing movement, Elourhay knelt to the ground with an exhausted sigh and gently lay down on the soft carpet of grass and moss underfoot.

"I know it's you John. It's ok, I'm not that angry anymore." He called, closing his eyes as a gentle breeze ruffled his hair. The air here smelt so clean and fresh, just the scent of the trees, shrubs, flowers (in the right season) and the occasional animal.

He didn't even open his eyes as he heard footsteps rustling through the undergrowth toward him. This spot was just perfect. If only he could stay like this forever, just him and the earth itself.

"You've been here all this time?" inquired a kind voice that could only be Johns.

"I came here as soon as I saw that Windsong was ok. He's settled into his room ok and everything and he wasn't hurt when the bus tipped. He always was the lucky one."

Elourhay opened his eyes when he felt a comforting hand on his shoulder. John's gentle smile, always soothing, seemed to have an even stronger effect in the dappled forest light.

"I can see you're stressing out right now, and I don't know what it is that has you so worked up, but if you ever need to talk about it, don't forget your room mate ya hear?"

Elourhay returned his friend's smile with one of his own as he pushed himself up into a sitting position.

"I would talk about it John, only I don't know what it is myself. I just feel...so..." Elourhay tried gesturing with his hands, unable to find the words he was looking for. He was forced to continue when his friend's eyes registered no comprehension at all. "It's like I'm a rubber band, only someone has taken me at both ends and twisted me up until, if they let go, I'll just shoot off into the distance somewhere. I just feel tense and restless...maybe Cedric was right, I am worrying myself to death."

"Cedric?"

Elourhay's face lit up at the blonde's innocent question. Eyes sparkling with excitement he clasped his hands together in his lap and began talking at an inhuman speed.

"Oh my gosh I forget to tell you I have a unicorn! My father has been begging me to get a mount for ages now, either a unicorn or a winged horse were the best choices, but I've always had my heart set on a silver unicorn like his. The only problem is they are so rare. He told me to settle for a bay or a black. Even a grey if I could find one, but I was determined to wait for the perfect unicorn, stallion or mare I didn't mind as long as they had the right personality to match mine so we could bond and the right colour coat. I searched everywhere, and then over the summer, when I was out in the woods collecting herbs the most beautiful stallion that I had ever seen limped into the clearing. Some orcs had shot him with a bow. I spent all night with him healing his wounds. He would have died had I not saved him. Father got so worried he sent out a search party. We became really close that night and Monoceros, I call him Cedric for short, decided that he wanted to bond with me as his master! It even turns out that my father's stallion is Cedric's father! What are the chances of that!?"

Elourhay took in a deep breath, having forgotten to breathe throughout most of his speech.

"Slow down there!" John chuckled. "Elves may be magical, but you still need air!"

"I'm just so exited about it I can't help myself! Besides, you're magical too." Elourhay retorted, his hands still clasped together but held higher. The effect, along with his long pointed ears, reminded John of a mad Gerbil...

"I'm only a human; my magical ability is so weak that I need a wand to magnify my powers." John's voice trembled a little as he tried not to laugh at the mental image he was conjuring from the sight before him. "You are naturally powerful and thus can cast bare handed. Good grief if anyone gave you a wand..." At this John's composure finally broke. A hyperactive elf casting flower spells with a wand? That was something he wished to see...

"What's so funny?"

"A mad gerbil...turning everyone...into flowerbeds...with a wand!" John gasped, his words interlaced with his hyena like cackle.

Shaking his head, unable to understand what caused his friends mind to wander so far off topic (yet again), Elourhay turned his head to the sky. It was cold for the time of year, term starting near the end of September rather than the beginning, but the sky was remarkably clear. Not even a bird was marring the perfect expanse of blue.

"Looking at the sun I'd say it was about time I got going to the prefects meeting." He sighed, running his fingers through his soft ebony locks.

John had always admired Elourhay's hair, jealous of how it behaved perfectly, never seeming to frizz or tangle. His roommate in fact often got away with not brushing his hair properly in the mornings for several days at a time when there were exams looming on the horizon. Even the two braids just in front of those pointed ears, a marker of Elourhay's status as a pure blooded elf, didn't have a single stray hair despite being pulled back and banded together behind his head to keep the rest of his hair out of the way while he was working.

John's on the other hand, if he didn't care for it properly for just one day, he would end up looking as though he was permanently attached to a van de Graff generator...

"I'll go watch if you like. None of us have any lectures until tomorrow and I have nothing better to do."

"No." Elourhay politely declined. "They never allow any bystanders in case things get a little hectic. I've been reading up on it since my first year."

"It's going to be that kind of fight?" John gasped, immediately worried about the fragile (and recently injured) elf.

"I'll be fine. I'll just keep out of the way. The older prefects won't be that serious about battling it out for the top spot hopefully. I'll just let them sort it out on their own while casting a few shield charms to make sure I don't get cursed with cat ears for a week like the previous head prefect did..."

"I think he should've kept 'em. They made him...less intimidating." John mused, his serious expression soon breaking into a hearty chuckle.

“Yeah, they kind of suited him actually. See you later then...I’ll let you know how it went.”

“TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF YA HEAR!” John yelled at Elourhay’s swiftly retreating back. Elves sure can run fast compared to humans, but then again even they have nothing on a werewolf...

John began his own slow journey back, making a detour on the way to visit the library. Perhaps they have some medical textbooks that would shed some light on Elourhay’s problem?

The first prefect meeting of the academic year always takes place in the duelling room, an old room in the main building of the academy that had been magically reinforced to withstand almost any magical battering possible. It was originally made for teachers and other staff members so that any ‘disagreements’ could be settled without risk of harming the students (or destroying the building itself).

Elourhay waited outside nervously. He could have waited inside (it was a classroom like any other, no rules forbid students from entering and utilising an unused room), but the atmosphere in there always gave him a prickly feeling down his spine and made his hair stand on end. It just felt like there was someone watching him from the very walls themselves, and whoever they were, they weren’t friendly...

Even out here he felt a presence, as though someone was creeping up behind him...

“Gotcha!” came a voice from behind, before he could scream or turn around Elourhay found himself restrained, someone’s arm tightly wrapped around him locking his arms to his side, and the other hand over his mouth, silencing any cries for help.

He struggled violently, but to no avail. How could his assailant be this strong? He couldn’t be human. This wasn’t good...Elourhay tried to calm himself, taking deep measured breaths, now wasn’t the time to panic. He became still, using the technique he was taught at home by his combat trainer to find an inner calm. As soon as there was an opening, he was going to escape...

“Oh shit, not dead are you Ellie?” Of course...who else could it have been? Swiftly taking advantage of his opponent’s distraction Elourhay freed himself, using his strength to fling the restraining arms over his head while spinning to deliver a well measured kick, just to make sure he inflicted some pain in the process.

“Vlad, what the hell are you playing at?” Elourhay muttered angrily, just loud enough so only Vladimir could hear.

“I could ask you the same question.” The vampire replied, rubbing his side where Elourhay’s kick landed. “That’s an impressive kick; I daresay it might even bruise. Going still like that though, I thought you’d died of fright.”

“It would serve you right if I had! Sneaking up on people like that, you being a prefect as well. It’s disgraceful!”

At those words, a smile spread across the vampire’s thin lips, his eyes flashing an even brighter crimson as he began to chuckle.

"That's where you've got it all wrong Ellie." He crooned, ignoring Elourhay's wince at his old nickname. "Sneaking around during patrols is what it's all about. First years won't break the rules again if they get the shock of their lives now will they?"

Elourhay turned his head away in disgust, all that being ever wants is to cause pain and suffering to others.

"Now now boys play nicely." Said a short woman in billowing robes, her chestnut brown hair tied loosely in a bun on top of her head, with multiple strands having freed themselves, framing the kindly round face that could only belong to the academy's head mistress.

"Why miss Baggs, lovely to see you as always."

"Oh Vladimir you charmer!" she giggled as the handsome young vampire took her hand in his and gently kissed it. "Enough of that you naughty boy, lets go inside and wait for the others shall we?"

"Why of course, lead the way head mistress." Vlad replied, gesturing with his free hand towards the door.

"Flirt." Elourhay muttered, this time careful to ensure that the vampire didn't hear.

It wasn't long before the others arrived. Elourhay sat next to his fellow Dragon house prefects, Shuck (the older of the two, a fifth year werewolf) and Luke (a fourth year wizard). They were friendly enough, Elourhay having met them before. It was hard to imagine Shuck as a junior prefect now, given the amount of confidence he had gained over the past two years. Luke was still his usual cheerful, if somewhat haughty, self.

"It's about time we had a prefect with some firepower!" beamed Luke, giving Elourhay a hearty slap clap across the back, causing the fragile elf to slam to the floor with surprising rapidity (and a rather satisfying thump).

"Oops, sorry newbie." Shuck apologised, offering his hand to help Elourhay up. "Luke forgot that your kind can be a little...delicate."

"Don't worry, my roommate has been knocking me flat for two years, I'm used to it."

"What's your name anyway?" Shuck asked once Elourhay was back on his feet dusting himself off.

"It's Elourhay."

"Ell...Ellor...ah forget it I'll just call you newbie." Stammered Shuck, waving his hand as if dismissing the hard to pronounce name.

"Newbie it is then!" Chimed Luke, ignoring Elourhay's exasperated sigh. Can no one get his name right? It wasn't that hard to pronounce, John got it right away. Maybe it was his slight elven accent making it harder for them?

Suddenly the door flew open with a loud crash, making the students jump. The hinges creaked as the door slowly began to close, a mark left on the wall where it collided. The culprit was already half way across the room, heading for the corner where the headmistress was sitting.

“Kazuki, do you really have to cause so much havoc when you’re in a bad mood? You frightened the students half to death.” She sighed as professor Yagami sat down in the chair next to hers.

He simply huffed and turned his head away, his violet eyes closed to the world around him, allowing his long eyelashes to catch the light revealing a slight purple hue within the black.

There was only two words needed to describe professor Yagami, deathly beautiful. His figure was lean, almost feminine, much the same as Elourhay’s although the older man stood almost a good head taller. His hair was also long, often reaching just above his knees before he thought of getting it cut, and then he only trimmed it to waist level. Like his eyelashes, his hair was black, but had a purple hue in the right light. His skin was paler than Elourhay’s, more similar to Vladimir’s pasty shade. To complete the look, he always wore flowing robes of varying shades from black to light lilac (depending on mood).

The one thing that Elourhay always admired about professor Yagami was no matter how much he looked like a girl, no one ever commented or chastised him for it. Then again, given that he was a master of dark magic, was there anyone who would even dare?

Seeing that she wasn’t going to get much more than the odd glare from he colleague, and that the prefects were all present and paying so much attention to her particular little corner, the headmistress stood up and began to introduce the session.

“Well we all know what we’re here for.” She began. “Separate into your houses and attempt to disarm your opponent. No dark magic allowed only defensive spells to incapacitate. We don’t want anyone doing themselves a mischief or hurting anyone else now do we? Kazuki...”

“That would be professor Yagami or Yagami sensei to you students.” He interrupted, eyes still closed.

“As I was saying, Kazuki is here to keep an eye on you all and to step in if anyone breaks the rules. He will set up barriers to separate the houses so you don’t have to worry about stray spells from the others. Don’t get scared if you’re new. Just do your best and laugh it off ok dears? Ready now? BEGIN!!!!!!!!!!!!” She cheered, conjuring a large flag and a whistle over her head to signal the start of the competition.

Elourhay immediately ducked as the older two dragon prefects both sent a spell his way. Seems like the plan was eliminate the new guy, then duke it out between the two of them...

He began to sing softly under his breath, feeling power begin to gather inside of him. Elves cast magic by directing the latent power within themselves via song. It’s more complicated, but much more flexible than saying an incantation whilst waving a wand. The only restriction is that the lyrics of the song have to associate with the desired effect in some manner, the stronger the link the

stronger the spell but even this is flexible as the interpretation of the lyrics can be a very personal thing.

Elourhay's current goal was a shielding spell. The others were only firing bog standard binding spells or the odd prank (he could swear that he saw a trip charm amongst them), but he still didn't want to dodge all of the time.

"The newbie's quite light on his feet eh Shuck?" laughed Luke, but his laughter faded when Elourhay stopped moving, any spells aimed at him seemed to disappear in mid air. "What the hell?"

"Wow." Muttered Shuck. "An absorbing barrier from a third year? Looks like someone's been reading ahead, eh bookworm?"

Elourhay smiled as an idea struck. Changing some of the lyrics, but keeping the same melody he redirected the emphasis of the magic without breaking the spell. The older two had begun the only method of attack against an absorbing barrier. The one tries to overwhelm it with spells while the other searches for the correct counter charm. It was soon their turn to run as their own spells began to reflect back at them.

"What the fuck is with this guy!" Luke cursed as he dodged a reflected binding spell, hiding behind an upturned chair.

"It's called spell weaving." Shuck panted, joining the other with his own chair to make a larger shelter from the onslaught. "Elves can cast two, maybe even three spells at once with the right song."

"WHAT? Oh now were done for..."

"Not really, he can't keep it up for long. Think about it, he still has to use the same amount of energy to cast the spells, so casting two at once he's going to tire himself out really fast."

Elourhay couldn't believe his eyes. He had the two older prefects on the run! It wasn't going to last forever, they were only surprised he knew, but maybe he could disarm just one of them.

The other third year prefects were lying around immobilised in various configurations, some bound with ropes, the Kelpie newbie (notably Vlad's doing) having been strung from the ceiling somehow. If he could disarm one of the older prefects, maybe he could impress professor Yagami enough to let him in the classroom with his fifth year students rather than him finishing his dark magic course on his own with very little practice before the assessed practical (dark magic only being allowed in the dark magic room for reasons of 'health and safety').

Raising his arm, he changed song again, this time letting the barrier drop. He began to gather his magic in the palm of his hand...just a few more seconds...

Hearing the change of song, the other two decided to break cover and renew the attack. They froze at the sight before them.

Elourhay gasped as he felt a strange sensation in the pit of his stomach, almost like he had downed a warm drink. Suddenly his blood began to burn in his veins as a huge amount of magical

energy rushed down his arm. He barely noticed the others break cover as he tried to release the spell before all that energy hit but it was too late. With a huge flash a massive beam of light fired across the room, the resulting shockwave sending Elourhay flying into the wall, leaving him gasping, defenceless and winded, on the hard wood floor.

Hearing footsteps he opened his eyes to find none other than professor Yagami standing over him, a dark mist rising from the older man like steam...

Art and Crafts



DALEK HAT BY ALICE HILDRETH



CSI HAT BY HOLLY POWNALL



THE HOBBIT INSPIRED DWARVEN RUNE HAT BY HOLLY POWNALL



DINOSAUR BY HOLLY POWNALL



JAEHAB AND GINA BY JONTY LEVINE

It's almost time for a new committee, so this is goodbye from me. I leave you with this amazing photo of Alice and myself.



THAT'S ALL FOLKS!