

Subject: English 225H.001 [REDACTED] NO FLINCHY
Date: Thursday, November 3, 2011 1:46:12 PM MT
From: [REDACTED]
To: stephen.gibson@uvu.edu

Someone knocked on Daisy's door.

She was in the middle of chopping an onion, which for many people is a bother. But for Daisy, food was music. It was a symphony of crispiness, sounds and layers. Even now, when her knife cut through the crust of the onion, through the juicy innards, the thud onto her chopping board was her percussion.

"Coming," she called, wiping her hands onto her apron.

It was James, the motorcycle mechanic from across the hall.

"Do you mind if I sit in here while the bug guys fumigate?" James asked. This was a lie, a small one he stammered out so he could justify finally knocking on her door.

Daisy nodded and creaked her door open. A patch of flour was speckled on her nose.

James walked into her apartment. "Nice view," he commented, watching the Manhattan skyline slowly alight, now that it was eight o'clock.

"Same view you have," Daisy said.

"You're cooking?" James asked. He had counted on this. Daisy rarely went an evening without cranking her music up and preparing some delicious dinner for one. James would sit with his macaroni and cheese, picturing her dancing around in her kitchen, eating dessert alone.

Daisy and James had been neighbors for one year. They had polite conversations in the hallway most nights when Daisy returned home from work.

He took a seat on the stool at the counter. Daisy shyly picked up her knife.

"You can take off your coat," she said. James draped his thick leather jacket onto the back of his stool.

"Don't let me interrupt you," James said. "Continue." He caught a glimpse of her legs as she turned to wash off her knife in the sink.

Daisy, as a rule, conversed as little as possible with attractive members of the opposite sex. Life as a thirty year-old single woman in Queens had taught her that men preferred wafer-like women--thin, breakable, with little flavor. She was the opposite, a robust, savory woman with orange hair and a goose-call laugh.

"I'm just going to make some frosting while this cooks," Daisy explained, wishing she owned a tube of lipstick so she could hide and dash some onto her mouth.

James turned the knob on her radio up. Some sweeping, minor-keyed song blasted from the speakers in full orchestration.

Daisy picked up the whisk and added some cream to a mixing bowl. She beat to the tune of the composition, then the strings suddenly swelled. She whisked and whisked, her wrist on fire. Her body hugged the bowl, curling around it like clay. She whisked the cream, taking in the arpeggio.

The phrase ended, and her frosting was finished. As the piano sorted out its countermelodies, Daisy iced the cake, the music shooting her into a state of bliss.

James witnessed this with his mouth open. He couldn't think of anything that made him feel as passionate as Daisy felt about her music, or about her food. "Who is this again?" he asked dumbly.

"Rachmaninoff," Daisy answered. With a twirl, her hands brought down the confectioner's sugar. She sprinkled sugar snow on the chocolate cake. "Dum dum de dum," she foolishly sang.

This was an exact replica of the first night they met. A year ago when she moved in, James introduced himself in the hallway. He was underwhelmed by her. She spoke to him in shy garbles about school and work, no makeup on her face.

Later that evening, he had walked past her window and spied on her in her kitchen. She was

barefoot and plump, with a halo of powdered sugar around her. He stood and watched her cook for a full ten minutes, watched her swirl the food all over the counter with the symphony her soundtrack.

Hours later, he had laid in his bed, reeling with that image of Daisy sweaty and covered in sugar. He had wanted her ever since.

Daisy's oven door shut with a slam, jarring James back to the present.

One song on the radio ended, and another, a softer piano solo, faded into the room.

"Who's this now?" James asked while Daisy sprinkled garlic powder onto the meat.

"It's still Rachmaninoff," she said. She placed a bowl full of sweetly glazed meat and vegetables in front of James.

"Oh, that's okay--" James began.

"No, please," she said. "This recipe is a dish a du."

"A what?"

"A duet, you know? A dish meant for two?"

James, keeping his eyes locked onto Daisy, lifted a forkful of meat to his mouth.

It was... unpleasant. And spicy. Chewing, James peered at the dish. It was some kind of beef, with onions and carrots, very French. But something was off.

"Oh no," Daisy said, leaning to sniff at her dish. "No!" She seized the powder she had just added to the meat.

"I used sambar powder instead of garlic powder," she said, her cheeks burning.

"It tastes fine," James said, and tried to eat another bite. But the sambar was too spicy for him, and he immediately gagged.

Daisy understood now how a raw egg felt when it was dropped into boiling water.

"I'm so sorry," she mumbled, sliding a glass of water to him. Her fingers brushed against his.

Ignoring the water, James linked her finger into hers, like hooking a fish.

Daisy waited. James smoothed her lips with his lips. She smelled like honeysuckle. She pressed back. They kissed, andante.

In silence, James pulled her away from the counter and vertical, onto the couch.

Daisy didn't feel inhibited by her ample body. James eyed it with the greedy gleam of a starving man about to feast.

Subject: 225H.001 Story Fragment [REDACTED]
Date: Thursday, November 3, 2011 2:10:20 PM MT
From: [REDACTED]
To: stephen.gibson@uvu.edu

The Adventurer grew numb in the bitter cold, the symphony of winds shook him not as he trekked up the seldom-used mountain path. Folks from the last town said it flew this way and from that point on his mind and soul was fixed on slaying it. He is but a puppet fulfilling his role in a prophecy that only the Gods understood. The very foliage seemed to claw at him in protest but still he trod through. After what seemed ages he came upon a small mountain community. *I better ask around to see if anybody has seen it*, he thought.

Deciding that the tavern is usually the best place to get information and warm mead, he strode inside and sat in a fur-adorned chair next to the fire. His skin prickled as the warmth seeped into his chilled body. The Adventurer orders warm mead which is brought to him in a metal stein. Suddenly, his ears hone in on a conversation happening at a table across the room.

"I'm not lying! I saw it with mine own eyes, it's wingspan had to be at least as wide as this room. Maybe bigger!" The bar patron yelped in response to his skeptical comrade.

"I don't doubt your sincerity," the cunning-eyed elf remarked, "but you need to consider the fact you were using skooma at the time."

"This was different, I could hear it!" the defendant snapped as he wiped his ale-soaked beard on his sleeve. "The beating of its massive wings made my bones shake!"

"Dragons have been dead for ages, its a simple matter of logic. What is more likely? That these beasts roam Tamriel once more or that the skooma was playing tricks on you?"

Finishing off his ale with one final swig, the Adventurer arose from his seat and approached the men.

"Where did you see it last?" he asked.

Subject: 225H.001 [REDACTED]
Date: Thursday, November 3, 2011 3:08:53 PM MT
From: [REDACTED]
To: stephen.gibson@uvu.edu
CC: ebryce17@comcast.net

Fragment (Untitled)

Wow, this is really boring, I thought to myself. So you want to know what I did, I just continued to stare blankly at the cork board-like ceiling. Those teeny tiny man-made holes had been mocking me all night. I bet this place had been rented out to some kids before us and they probably thought it'd be 'real cool' to put them there. The repair man really needs to fix that... like everything else in this building.

I suddenly felt our apartment room getting really chilly, like the winter wind found a secret passageway into our somewhat cozy little place. I felt ice sickles begin to bite down hard on my feet. They just didn't want to let go. In attempt to shake them off, I turned violently and in consequence ripping the covers off the left side of my body. *Okay, now that was stupid*. Now I'm even colder than I was before...

I turned to find my roommate dead asleep in her bed, all frumped up. Cotton mounds twisted and turned to surround her entire frame, you couldn't even see her freckle stained face under that frowzy pile. Another thing about Liz is you couldn't wake her, you just couldn't. You had a better chance of stumbling into a cemetery and waking the dead. Which is rather impossible, so you see the predicament I'm in? But boy did I wish I could wake her now... she wouldn't stop snoring. It was the kind of sound that sent shivers clawing right down your spine, like abnormally long finger nails on a chalk board. I tried to focus on anything but her grandfather-like snoring. I began twiddling my thumbs, wrapping them around my bed head hair. I bet if I looked in the mirror, it would look like a cat had gone at it.

I heard nearby sounds from the city. Banging, clambering, rich people thinking they were too good for the likes of me and Liz kept chiming in and out of overly common chit chat. Chicago was great for this kind of thing, the night life. But me and Liz rarely went out. I looked to the window and bright vibrant flashes of pinks, blues, and reds flowered all along the window seal. I heard blues playing in a nearby bar; the sound was drizzling into my ear. *Wow, I wanna go to a club...*

That's what I'll do! I'll go to club. The only problem was that the best club for people my age was twenty miles that-a-way... and I didn't own a car. I was also broke, the little money I had left was lying helplessly on the mahogany dresser and that was solely for rent. Dammit. You know what, screw it I'll walk. It can't be that bad of a stroll through downtown at 2:30 am

Subject: English 225H.001 [REDACTED]
Date: Thursday, November 3, 2011 3:33:27 PM MT
From: [REDACTED]
To: Stephen.Gibson@uvu.edu

Trees waved gently to each other as they quietly said goodbye to their older leaves. Currents were warm and graceful as they carried the adventurous adult leaves unto the world. Some fell and lived with other leaves as roommates in apartment buildings called gutters, others lived on the street as bums near cars and boxes, but this was okay because today was a beautiful day. The sun was bright and yellow, the sky was clear and blue, and birds were singing angelic like in this heavenly neighborhood.

"Oh my God, what are we doing!?" Cried Tim with blood soaked hands.

"How did we go from microwaved meals...to this?"

His friend, Mark, forcing down raw meat soaked with blood and fluids, punched Tim on the shoulder leaving a bloody fist print on his green sleeve.

"Tim, shut the %@\$ up, I'll agree, what we are doing is...bad, but it's either this or die!" Mark said hastily.

Tim gazed at his now bright red hands with chunks of flesh under his finger nails, accompanied with a stench most foul to make sailor's blush. He cried and wept as he tried to not eat what was once a living person. Mark glanced over at Tim, while chewing on a tendon, and placed on his friends' hand a heart.

"Look...we have to eat; it's been two whole weeks since we had anything. I wish we could just down some crackers or chicken, but that doesn't do the trick anymore, we have to—"

A loud moan came from behind the two kneeling festers. Tim shook with fear as he slowly turned his head towards the right, Tim's eyes met with Mark who was more annoyed than scared as both proceeded to look behind. A zombie was running towards them and groaned with hunger; Tim was struck with fear as they watched the disfigured zombie lean down and take a giant bite out of their main course.

"Do—do you think he can understand us, or are we the only ones?" asked Tim in fright.

"Only one way to find out," Mark replied.

Mark slapped the interloping zombie on the back of the head so hard that the decomposed cannibal was choking on his piece of meat.

"Hey, retard," he called

"Can you understand us, or are you just another @!#\$%^& stupid zombie?"

The zombie coughed and coughed until a chunk of meat flew out. The abomination turned his head towards Mark and hissed for five seconds then turned his head towards Tim who was shaking with fear. The zombie examined him like a child examining a box with a dumbfounded face that turned into a smile.

"Oh my gosh, Mark, I—I think he's smiling at me," Tim Whispered

"This zombie, it's...it's smiling at me."

Mark continued to hit the zombie from the back of skull as he kept asking it questions. The zombie gave Mark its full attention but hissed at him every time which resulted in Mark cussing up a storm. It was hopeless and Tim knew this, Tim slowly started to rid of the fear that was shaking him, gaining control over himself he decided to try something he knew wouldn't work in hopes to make him and Mark laugh.

"Hey, if you can understand us, will you please let us know?" Chuckled Tim

"OoOoOokaaaay."

".....that's not funny, Mark." he snared.

"What, I didn't say anything?"

Both Mark and Tim froze with horror; they looked at the zombie with eyes wanting to explode and let out a high pitch scream.

"AAAAAAAAHH!"

Subject: English 225H-001 [REDACTED] No Flinchy Fragment
Date: Thursday, November 3, 2011 4:12:04 PM MT
From: [REDACTED]
To: stephen.gibson@uvu.edu

"Come on, please?" He asked again. "You wouldn't deny a guy this chance, would you?" She smirked as she snapped another photo. "Chance to do what? Dance with the wedding photographer, who also happens to be the bride's best friend? Come on, Andy, you're the best man! Half the girls in the room are probably dying to dance with you." She flashed him a toothy smile, softening the scorn that edged her voice.

Andy grabbed Laina's elbow, and her eyes finally met his without looking away. The eyes looking back at her from under furrowed brows were the color of chocolate. "Laina, I barely even know you, but I can tell you haven't had even a little bit of fun tonight."

"Sure I have!" She gave her camera a little shake. "I adore taking pictures for weddings."

"I never said you didn't." He raked his hair with one hand while a little blush stained his cheeks. "It's just...the wrong kind of fun. For a beautiful woman like yourself, I mean."

Her eyebrows went up over that remark, but she didn't comment, only crouched down a bit to take a few more pictures of the three-tiered lacy wedding cake from yet another angle.

Andy let her be for a moment before lowering his open hand to help her up. "Just one dance." The way the corner of his mouth kicked up just a little bit broke down a tiny piece of Laina's resolve. She scrunched her mouth to one side but didn't say anything. He let her think.

She twirled a piece of mahogany hair between two fingers before her mouth straightened into a small smile and her eyes moved to meet his. "Just one? Then I can take as many as pictures as I want...uninterrupted?" Her brows rose as she said it.

He swiped a finger in an X next to his boutonniere. "Cross my heart."

A slow song started just as Laina put her camera in its case. She shook her head at the timing and turned to take Andy's outstretched hand, ready to dance.

Subject: Engl225H.001 [REDACTED] Fragment 2
Date: Thursday, November 3, 2011 5:04:26 PM MT
From: [REDACTED]
To: Stephen Gibson

Six elevators sat in a circle in the center of sector forty-one. Women formed lines to each, like spokes coming out from a hub on a wheel. Mais and Aileen made up the end of the line that traveled down the center of their street. Aileen gripped her mother's hand tightly and held her breath in attempt to suffocate her panic. The elevators lowered deep into the ground taking twelve women each. Aileen watched the giant, cylindrical clock that hung above the center of the elevators. Blue numbers ran around the cylinder counting down from ten hours. There were only a few minutes left on the clock. Aileen's heart began to pound faster. Being the last in the elevators was dangerous enough without being late. Aileen looked to the men operating the elevators; she didn't recognize them. There were a few men who operated the elevators that Aileen would never forget for the awful things they had done to her mother as punishment for being late. A pang of guilt and fear prickled through Aileen. If they were late it would be her fault. If they beat her mother it would be her fault. Again. As she had on many other curfews Aileen began to regret fighting her mother. Her fear of the dark always blinded her to the consequences of her actions. Suddenly Aileen willed the line to move faster as the memories of men beating and violating her mother's body flashed before her eyes. The clock calmly counted down. There were too many

The Inked Page

By: [REDACTED]

He hadn't had a real name until this day. Awaking in his bed surrounded by nurses and doctors, a language that was foreign to him was shouted into his ear. He shook his head in an attempt to shake the pounding inside his head. But that only made it worse; again a language was spoken that the nameless patient couldn't understand.

"What?" he said as though learning to speak all over again. The doctors looked up and spoke amongst themselves. Finally one of the nurses looked down at him, in very broken English she asked

"How are you cope?" thinking she was asking how we was coping with the situation the man merely nodded. They doctors looked up and spoke amongst themselves for a short while. The nurses hurried about pulling machinery and tubes out of his body. Finally a bad was presented and in a flash the nameless man was back on the street. No bill, no documents, no further checkups. They simply gave him a bag with clothes and the same nurse told him to "wear his clothes on please," the bag contained two changes of clothes, a wallet with \$200 inside, no I.D., no credit cards, nothing with his potential name.

This was not a case of some cliché amnesia. The man remembered his life, he remembered growing up privileged, and he remembered the trip to Dubai he was making when he was attacked by his own security guards. Did I ever even have a name? He thought to himself. The alley he stood in was deserted, but beyond the edge of the building was a bustling world he had never experienced. When his legs began to wake up he stood and took a few shaky steps out into the world. Just as he was looking about he heard a voice call out to him. It was the same nurse who had spoken to him only twice.

"Man of age leaves this book here so you take and look at." She held a moderately sized leather bound book. She had only spoken to him three times, and yet he felt a connection to her. Was she the only person he had spoken too?

"Please wait, where are we?" he said quietly. She looked at him turning an ear in a signal for him to speak up. "Where are we?" he said again pointing down to the ground. She looked down and thought for a second.

"This hospital," she said smiling and waving to him as she quickly walked away. He wanted to yell after her but couldn't. Turning his attention to the book in his hand he opened it slowly. The books title page merely said

To my son, from a father who will lead you through a normal life, read and follow the admonitions of this book and you will be able to exist in the real world, and you will live as a strong man, one who others will look to in times of need. Do this and you will be rewarded.

Signed, Father

Looking around the busy streets the man was confused. He had no idea where to go. His arms became heavy and fell heavily to his sides. A small piece of paper slipped from within the pages. On it was simply written.

You, my son, are named Daniel. Make that name one that is synonymous with charity.

You will be rewarded.

Signed, Father

With little more than those words the man now known as Daniel lifted the book to his chest and opened the first page. It detailed his first steps on a long quest that he was determined to complete. If

only to find the man named Father whom he had never met, seen, or heard. He took a confident step forward into the massive throngs and disappeared into the crowd.

Subject: ENG 2250.001 - [REDACTED] - No-flinchy short story
Date: Thursday, November 3, 2011 4:36:03 PM MT
From: [REDACTED]
To: DrStephen GibsonUVU

Bewildered by her sudden mood shift, he clumsily wipes away the tears from her acne-scarred cheeks with his slightly soiled handkerchief. Preoccupied with watching the crowd of people walk by on the sidewalk, he doesn't pay particular attention to his task at hand and accidentally pokes her eye.

"Please stand still, dear. I'm trying to help you," he says. She replies, "That's the trouble with you: you're *always* trying to help me. Maybe I don't need your help!" She glares at him while brushing her bleached hair away from her weary eyes. Even with her flaws she is an attractive woman. He is almost handsome, with naturally blond, wavy hair and a slightly crooked nose.

"Ok, Katrina, let's start this conversation over. What's bothering you? Let's fix whatever problems are complicating your life. What has been done or said that has hurt your feelings?"

"Oh shut up! What do you know about feelings, Dan? Do I have to wear a painted-on-smile every waking hour of my life? Am I not allowed to feel emotions other than exuberant gratitude for your saving my life? "

"Don't be so dramatic, my helping you get a job and stay sober hasn't saved your life... yet."

She tightens her white coat, of faux fur, around herself and removes a dead, brittle leaf which the autumn breeze had carelessly dropped on her fluffy collar. After clenching her teeth she says, "I thank you for your help. But I'm a big girl and I don't need you to hold my hand every time I cross an intersection in life."

"Ok, I understand. I'm listening," he says while watching the

smoky traffic pass by in the urban artery of the city. He playfully reaches to hug her and says with a laugh, "Tell me more about your plans for self-improvement."

"I hate you, Dan!" she exclaims while forcefully pushing him away. He awkwardly stumbles backwards and crashes into a black-and-white painted mime, whose cash box of donations bursts open and noisily showers coins on the sidewalk while dollar bills delicately fly away in the wind. Dan breaks his right arm in the fall and is taken to a hospital by Katrina after she quickly hails a grimy yellow cab.

Their relationship is relatively calm and stable for the next few weeks, as she pampers him like a mother while his broken bone knits together. During an unusually warm winter day, like a spring day without flowers, they have dinner at a restaurant. While waiting for their food, Dan grins mischievously while putting something in her coat pocket. She reaches into her coat and retrieves a tiny white box with a make-shift bow consisting of an orange pressed leaf and Scotch tape. Inside the box she finds a beautiful cubic zirconia engagement ring.

"I want out of this relationship," she flatly responds as she returns the gift and slides off a hard plastic chair. He doesn't follow her as she calmly walks out of the fast-food Mexican restaurant. Responding to his order number, suddenly called out over an intercom, he walks to the cashier's counter and picks up a tray of tacos. After absentmindedly grabbing a handful of salsa packets from a rubber basket, he returns to his table and eats the equivalent of two meals. Unaccustomed to the spiciness of the salsa he had randomly chosen, he soothes the burning in his throat with several refills of Fanta grape soda.

He never sells, loses or reuses the engagement ring. He never sees Katrina again.

Subject: ENGL 225H [REDACTED] Short Story for Class
Date: Thursday, November 3, 2011 4:52:38 PM MT
From: [REDACTED]
To: stephen.gibson@uvu.edu

He stared at her through his bedroom window. As she stepped off her Ducati, his eyes hungrily explored her body. Her black stiletto boots and tight leather pants made her legs seem to go on forever. He caught a glimpse of her flat stomach as she reached up and pulled her helmet off, shaking her head so her perfectly curled blonde hair swished as it fell into place at her lower back. Her hot pink tank slowly came into view as she unzipped her leather jacket and set it on the seat of her bike next to her helmet. She picked up the backpack she had discarded, ran her fingers through her hair and walked to his door, her hips swaying alluringly. He heard the doorbell and stepped away from the window. As he hurried down the stairs, he heard her open the door and call, "Bryan!" He rounded the corner as she stepped into the entryway and closed the door behind herself.

"Sicily...uh... what are you wearing?" he asked, walking towards her.

Her smile brightened and she laughed. "What a welcome. I walk into your house and the first thing you say is 'what are you wearing'?" She walked past him into the kitchen, taking a seat at the bar. She opened her backpack and started searching through it. He followed her into the kitchen and sat next to her.

"What are you looking for?" he asked, trying to see into her backpack.

She was muttering almost intelligibly, "...it's here... I know... forget... time... Ah ha!" She sat up straight and pulled out a set of headphones. "Thanks. These were a life saver! I finally finished the demo," she said as she handed them to him. She stood up, slung the backpack over her shoulder, and headed back to the front door. "I have to run, I just wanted to bring those over before I forgot that I still had them."

"Where are you going?" he asked, following her to the door.

"A few friends and I are going on a ride up the canyon." She smiled and continued. "We try to do this at least a few times a month."

"Is that your bike?" he asked, incredulously.

She opened the door and walked out towards the driveway. "Yeah. I have only had this baby for about 6 months," she said, dropping her backpack and picking up her leather jacket. "I used to have a Suzuki but my brother crashed it." She put on her backpack, climbed onto the bike, picked up her helmet and turned to look at him. "I'll see you later. The guys are meeting me at the gas station and they are probably--" she paused as her phone went off. Not even bothering to pull it out, she laughed. "See? They are waiting for me already." She pulled up her hair and put her helmet on. She waved at him, cranked the throttle, and took off. He watched her cruise down the street and zip around the corner. He stared after her long after she had gone. Sicily wearing leather just blew his mind. He was shocked that she could actually be attractive. He shook his head and went back in the house. He had his work cut out for him. After spending weeks explaining to her that he was not interested in dating, he had had a change of heart. Now he was VERY interested in dating. The question was was she?

Subject: Fragment for Monday

Date: Thursday, November 3, 2011 4:58:33 PM MT

From: [REDACTED]

To: stephen.gibson@uvu.edu

To an extent, I can rightly say that I don't know what I'm doing here. When I look out the window, it almost looks as if it's snowing but it's only the cotton from the trees, and then I remember that I'm not home anymore. How many times, honestly, do I forget that I'm in Illinois. I'm tired of this town and this house and...OH dude, my phone is ringing.

I check the ID and see that it's just my mom. It's just my mom, so I set it back down and continue to listen to the ringing until it stops.

"TALLIS!"

What in the hell? I hear my name from outside the window. I pop my head out, expecting to see another homeless man roaming around rambling and yelling to people that don't exist, (maybe he even knows my name by now?) but instead I see the girl I met at the park yesterday, whose name I don't even remember..

"Oh hey...Mia?" I call out. "What? What are you doing out there? How do you even know where in the hell I live?"

The wind blew across the shutters outside the winds, whipped up the leaves. The light from the street glared into the bedroom, and Antony watched the glow, the orange making severe shadows in the worry lines on his face. What was out there? Some primal sense and the smell of that half orgasm that comes with sneezing filled his nose, like cold dust on the soft flesh lining, sent his hairs on end. He could hear it without sound. See the movement without a figure; shoulders working back and forth as something climbed.

Antony gripped the sheets, arms outstretched and rigid. A shadow rose up and darkened the orange glow on his face.

Opaque skin extended over the sill and slapped on the glass, illumined like a paper lantern. Bones extended inside the thin flesh. The whole effect was an elongated human hand with batwing flesh webbing. It suckered to the window, pawing, undulating as if grasping the smooth surface.

Antony tensed. The fear sweat out of him, only awe and self preservation left, a cold sharpness of instinct in his bowels coiling his muscles. He slid the sheets off. A shoulder peaked over the bottom of the window. The thing was rising. Antony, hysterical crying just within his teeth like a tickle in his throat, jumped off the bed.

The thing lifted its head up just in time to look Antony in the eye. Orbs with the reflective seashell glow that animals have when light shines in them. These cold lights above a grin without lips. A long neck stuck the face right up to the window so fog from the creature's breath spilt over the glass. Antony was in the hall when he heard the glass brake, the face pushed back in his mind for a more appropriate time to freeze with fear.

The stairs were hard dark wood. Antony's feet flapped down them. The shuffling behind him: the thing was in the room. Something scraping over the carpet. Antony jumped the last five steps and barreled into the front door. The knob turned, the door remained closed. Antony pulled back to slam the door open, his hand still gripping the knob. The cool air from outside rushed in, the glow of the street lamp running over the floor and walls and lighting the sweat on Antony's face. He ran out.

His bare feet scraped over the concrete sidewalk. The air entered his lungs in chilled waves going in, hot tides going out. There was a house.

Rational thoughts seeped through the tight stress ball of his mind. His friend's house, his neighbor, that was where he was going.

Why?

And the face with bat features and no lids on its shining eyes flashed in a snapshot over Antony's vision.

He stumbled, big toe snagged a sidewalk crack. Two steps his staggered to gain balance. He walked into the grass, digging his foot into the soft green, hissing, grabbing his knee.

A breaking glass. A tumble of wooden furniture. Antony looked over his shoulder and saw the shadow of something on his bedroom ceiling. Eyes dilated, panting through his thick lips like a race horse, he continued through the grass, running and hobbling. He may have stubbed his feet more on the porch steps, but he didn't notice. The white door with square indentation designs was behind a screen. Antony banged on the screen, to the wood. He yelled his friend's name.

He stopped after five rounds of pounding. Listened. The silence, then the creak of someone upstairs, someone running down some stairs.

Antony waited, and beat again on the door. The thing was looking at his back from the window, and the hairs of Antony's neck were raised.

The Chapel Discussion.

"I wanted a son!" yelled the Baron.

"But my liege, with a daughter we can finally forge peace with the Marquis of Linton!" retorted the advisor.

A cold biting wind blew through the chapel. The priest had come in from the outside and locked the giant doors behind him. The Baron went to the holy symbol of Bran, a scale balanced on the tip of sword, kneeled and began to pray. *You son of a bitch! By the lips of the priest you promised me a son! We'll see how many come and worship you when this place is destroyed!*

"My liege," said the priest in his decaying voice. "I come with the most unexpected news!"

"Yes, I know! My consort has given birth to a daughter." The Baron rose, towering over his subjects.

"My liege was at her side not a moment ago and saw her birth," said the advisor.

"Perhaps the priest has come to say that it was the will of Bran, the great Justifier!" said the Baron mockingly. "Yes Bran! He who always keeps the balance in the world! He who divides asunder the plans of Evil!" His fist was shaking at the symbol.

"My liege," begged the priest, "be weary of mocking Bran. The great Justifier can see things from beginning to end! He also has the patience to listen to an old man when he says he has unexpected news!"

"Spit it out old man, before I put you on the scales of *my* justice!"

"Twins, my liege. Your consort gave birth to twins!"

"Is the other-?"

"A son my liege."

The Baron collapsed on the floor of the chapel. His blood red robe fell open onto the floor revealing the royal blue night shirt he was wearing. Another stab of wind moved his clothes. It looked like the mixing of blood on water.

"Bran, forgive me for my haste!" he cried.

"Aye lord, now things are as we have planned," consoled the priest. "You shall keep this valley and, if your son takes after you, the river country to the south as well."

"Aye!" he rose. "I can finally forge an alliance with the Duke of Iliam. My son shall marry one of the many daughters of the good Duke. Then we shall conquer the northern hills. That damned Marquis shall die."

"Yes my lord, but we must have patience, for your son has but left the womb. Let us feign friendship with the Marquis, keep the child's birth a secret to all outside the city walls. Then, when the child comes of age, we shall march on the Marquis!"

"Yes, patience is the key. But how long must I suffer that heathen dog to eat at my table?"

"Worry not my liege, all shall come to pass."

The door once again burst open, letting in the chilling wind. There stood the advisor, his face twisted with rage.

"You decrepit old *fool!!!*" he shouted.

"When did you leave?" asked the Baron.

"When I heard the great news sire, I went to see with my own eyes the truth."

"And?"

"Indeed my liege you have an heir. But he is not whole."

"What do you mean?" asked the priest.

"Hold your tongue snake! Or was it your plan to deceive our good lord?"

"What is the meaning of this! I demand explanation!" The Baron stood and lifted himself.

"Your son my liege, is blind."

"You can't know that!" shouted the priest.

"Is it true my friend?" pleaded the Baron.

"I saw his eyes my lord. Pure white as the snow that falls."

The Baron fell into one of the benches. "The Duke will not marry one of his daughters to a blind. My only recourse is to ally myself with the Marquis. Damn it all!"

"No my lord, there is still a way," pleaded the priest.

"No! I shall hear no more lies from your forked tongue!" The Baron rose and made his way to the door. He began to push, "Councilor! Remove the priest's snake tongue. I shall not hear treason against my new ally."

"With honor my liege."