

Adventures for Boys

**Feature Article:
Life in the Coast Guard**

**Short Story:
The Metal Mollusk**

**Freddy the Pig
Blog Post**

June, 2018



A large, vibrant firework, identified as 'Fire Phantom', is shown exploding in the night sky. The firework has a long, thin tail that leads to a large, spherical burst of light. The burst is composed of many fine, radiating lines of light, primarily in shades of white and yellow, with some hints of purple and blue. The background is a deep blue night sky. In the lower portion of the image, a city skyline is visible, with lights from buildings and streets reflecting on the water. The horizon is marked by a thin line of orange and yellow light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise.

Fire Phantom

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There's no better way than buying Fire Phantom fireworks.
Fire Phantom! Making your 4th of July bigger and brighter!
Buy for only \$2.99 at the local firework shops.

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About the Author

Born and raised in Southern California, Tidus Pinkham lives with his mom, dad, brother, two sisters, and his dog, Sky. With his free time, Tidus likes to think of stories, write short stories, and draw comics.



A Haiku by Tidus Pinkham

I move my knight wrong
My opponent gets checkmate
I regret my move

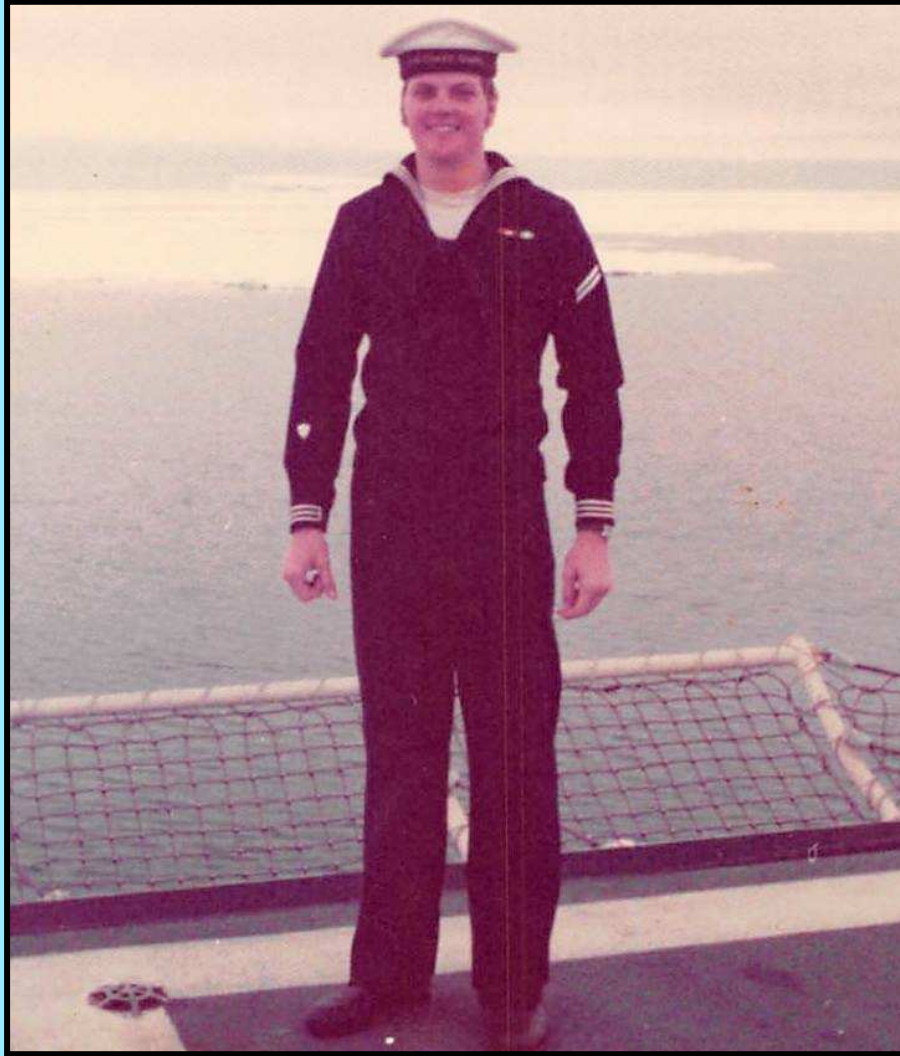
A photograph of a baboon sitting in a forest, looking to the right. The baboon has light brown fur and a darker face. The background is a blurred green forest.

The Monkey from Egypt

A Limerick
by
Tidus
Pinkham

There once was a monkey from Egypt
Who punched a soldier equipped
The man shot his rifle
The cry was a stifle
From the stunned monkey of Egypt

Life in the Coast Guard



Roger Feenstra, age 17, on board the *Glacier*

Article by Tidus Pinkham

The wind whipped at the stern, threatening to tear it apart.

Waves thrashed both sides of the ship, causing spray to hit the faces of the captain and crew of the *Glacier*.

One deck hand, Roger Feenstra, age 17 and the youngest of the crew, clung to a rope for dear life. As the spray kept coming and as lightning flashed across the sky over the Strait of Magellan, he thought back to what inspired him to board this Coast Guard vessel in the first place.

The little motorboat skipped across the water like a water strider. Its old sides were rusty, and some of the paint was peeling off. But if you looked close enough, you could see a word painted near the front of the boat. It read: *Frosty*. This was the name of the motorboat. Young Roger Feenstra and his father Casey were on a little trip down the Colorado River, and Roger's parents owned the old boat.

So there they were on old *Frosty*, cutting through the white waters and enjoying the momentary sights along the banks of the great river.

All of a sudden, there was the sound of another motorboat

right behind them. Cutting across the water just a few yards away from them was a white motorboat. Roger looked at it and saw the words *Coast Guard* on the side. He was intrigued. He had heard of the Coast Guard and how they worked to save and ensure the safety of the people around the coasts of rivers, lakes, and even oceans. It was also a branch of the military, and he liked playing military games as many boys his age did. So there was the Coast Guard boat zooming past *Frosty* until it was too far away to see. But the momentary sight of that boat was all Roger needed to become interested. He thought it over for a while and decided

“ Roger Feenstra, age 17 and the youngest of the crew, clung to a rope for dear life.

that he liked the idea of joining the Coast Guard.

Dawn rose over the horizon, casting brilliant colors across the sky. As the *Glacier* moved on through the water, the crew checked over their supplies, and concluded that nothing was lost during the storms that had hit their ship a few days ago in the Strait of Magellan.



Far ahead, Roger could barely make out the shape of the great ice sheet of Antarctica ahead. Luckily, the *Glacier* was an ice cutter, and would cut a pathway through the ice sheet for other boats to bring supplies to the military base located in Antarctica. Another Coast Guard ship called the *North Wind* was with them, and would help them slice through the ice layer.

“Fire!”
“Fire in the smokestack!”
“Action stations!”
That night on the *Glacier* was a frightful one. A small fire was in one of the smokestacks, and Roger and some other coast guards had to rush to their action stations and wait for further orders. Fortunately, there was a fire-fighting crew

on board, and they were able to put out the fire before it spread. Only minor damage had been done, and the crew could put it back together in a matter of days before they reached Antarctica. At that moment, Roger thought about the day he had left Long Beach, and he hoped he would be able to make it home soon.

A few days later, the two cutter ships made it to the great ice sheet and began forcing their way through it. The big wheels on the back of the ships kicked up seaweed, plankton, and other tiny sea creatures as they continued cutting through the ice.

Roger looked at them through his binoculars. He saw their big fluke tails slapping behind them. Every once in a while, he also saw their faces, all black and white. A few times he took a break from looking at the whales and looked along the massive ice sheet. Then he saw something slowly making its way across the ice. It came close enough for him to see without binoculars. Walking across the ice was a tall, black feathered and yellow-chested Emperor penguin. During a holiday, the crew was allowed out onto the ice, and walked over to see the little penguin groups. These penguins had never seen humans before, and allowed the coast guards to walk right up to them. As Roger took some pictures, one of the penguins peered into the lens curiously.

Days went by, and the ships were nearing the military base. They finally cut their way through, unloaded the supplies with a crane onto the ice, and the supplies were transported across to the base. Roger and some other shipmates went to a gift shop at the base and Roger bought a cool license plate that said “Antarctica” on it. After the voyage, he would give it to his father. He also picked up a couple of icy rocks that were in a pile of other rocks cut from a mountain. The rocks had some strange and beautiful minerals in them. The next few days were fun. Roger and some of his friends hiked up a mountain together. At the very top was a mysterious looking cross that had been hammered into the ground. No one knew when it was made or where it came from.

One of the friends took a picture of Roger standing by the cross. After examining the cross for some time, they started back down the mountain again. A few days after that, the *Glacier* made its way back toward the north, toward home.

After many more days of sailing, the ship sailed near South America and then Mexico. The *Glacier* stopped in Mexico for a little while, and Roger received many letters from home. Most of them were from his dad. Others were from family members and friends. At last, after the long, long days at sea, after overcoming storms, mountains, and ice bergs, the ship finally made its way into the harbor of Long Beach. Some fire-fighting boats saluted the Coast Guard ice cutter by firing their water cannons. They then escorted the ship to the dock. Some ropes were thrown from the ship and were tied to the dock. Then the sailors began to get off.

Near the gangway, waiting in anticipation, were his parents, Casey and Marjorie Feenstra, and his brother and sister, Alan and Julie. After waiting and waiting, they finally saw him. There, walking down the ramp, Conqueror of the Strait of Magellan, Discoverer of the Mysterious Cross, and Friend of the Penguin Tribes, was Roger Feenstra. An emotional reunion occurred on the dock, and after that, they went home.

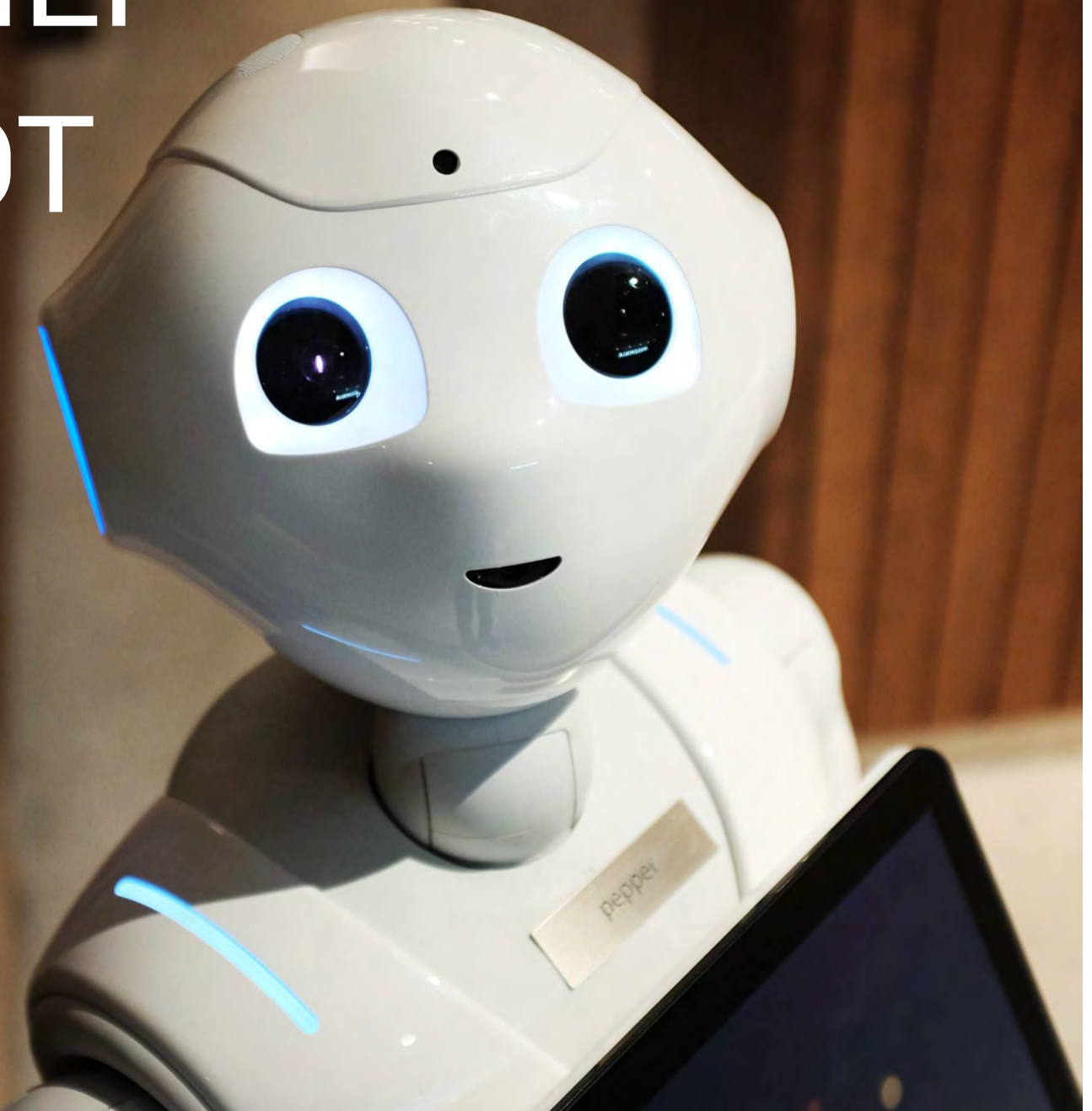
I will not talk about them in detail, but Roger went on other Coast Guard adventures on the *Glacier*, except he had a different job each time. His second time was much easier, and he worked in an office on the ship. The third time, he stayed in Long Beach, but worked at an office near the harbor.

“I was inspired to work in the Coast Guard not only because I heard about it during the trip on *Frosty*, but because my family was in the military. My dad was in the army during World War II, and my brother was in the Marines during the Vietnam War,” Roger told me, “I was also inspired from watching war movies and playing army when I was a boy.”

Years went by, and eventually, Roger had two beautiful daughters with his wife, Carol. The older daughter, Kelly was then married to Timothy Pinkham. Three years later, Kelly gave birth to a healthy baby boy. Roger Feenstra had his first grandson. This is the grandson that has written this amazing chronicle.



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Blog Post: Freddy the Pig series

One of my favorite book series is the Freddy series written by Walter R. Brooks. It is about animals that live on a farm called the Bean Farm run by Mr. Bean and his wife Mrs. Bean.

There is something peculiar about the animals that is different from other animals. All the animals on the Bean property, and even in the forest nearby, can walk and talk like humans can. Mr. Bean is a little uneasy when he hears animals talk. But Mrs. Bean is perfectly fine with them talking, and the animals often do little chores for her around the house.

There is one pig in particular who is the smartest animal on the Bean Farm and the one who comes up with songs and poetry. He has his own office in the pig-pen, he helps run a newspaper that the animals created together, and he is the president of the First Animal Bank that they run on the Bean property as well.

But the thing Freddy is most gifted at is solving mysteries. He decides to become a detective, and book after book, he solves many strange and sometimes spooky cases.





An Acrostic

by Tidus Pinkham

In the depths of the Amazon, a figure runs
Neither stops to rest, or nap or even make puns
Dozens of them are coming for him, horrid beasts
Inca Zombie Apes, rushing for their feast
Another few minutes or two, and the monsters will get him.
Now jump, brave adventurer, swing across the river on a vine.
And foil the Apes' whim

Jaguars nor snakes can stand in his path
Only can he survive physically, no need for math
Not afraid to take on the dangers of the wild, or the big boa
Endlessly adventurous, resting on his head a fedora
Sarcastic yet never vain since he is Indiana Jones!

The Metal Mollusk

by
Tidus Pinkham



The house on Eastwood Ln. stood quiet. It was a townhome with two other houses connected on each side of it. Along the sidewalks, a few passers-by walked, either with their dogs or just out on a daily stroll. It was sometime late in the spring, when the days began to grow longer and the sun grew hotter.

So there the house stood, quiet and lonesome amidst the joy and gladness surrounding it. Out on the bright green lawn, a beautiful woman with flowing blonde hair and emerald green eyes stood with a white puppy on a harness and leash.

She looked at her Fitbit watch. Half-past two. In a few minutes, her youngest child would come home from school. She had four children. Her eldest son was thirteen, her second oldest son eleven, her third oldest daughter nine, and her youngest daughter seven.

The seven-year-old came home the earliest from school. She was a very precocious and mischievous sort, always following her craziest whims. The thing the girl was mostly interested in was science. She had set up her own little lab in her room, and liked to perform experiments in it.

The little puppy started barking. The girl, with her mother's blonde hair, came down the path and walked across the lawn to the door. Mom waved.

"How was school today?" she asked.

"Good," was the short response, and the girl opened the door and went inside. The puppy's ears were flat, its tail wagging happily to see the girl home again.

Mom listened to the footsteps of Addy Vernham going upstairs to her room, and knew the first thing Addy would do. She would start on an experiment.

And before Mom could move a muscle from where she stood with the puppy on the lawn, there was a deafening BANG! from the upstairs window and a flash of light.

Instantly, all the people on the sidewalks going about their daily strolls looked up with startled expressions on their faces.

Mom's face grew dark. "Not again," she groaned.

The school bell rang like an alarm clock magnified ten times more. Only three more weeks before summer vacation began.

Kids ran out of their classes in massive throngs to get back to their homes.

One boy around thirteen years old walked away from the stampede and sat down on a bench to wait for his other two siblings. His name was Tyler Vernham, and one of his favorite pastimes was drawing and writing comics.....

He waited as the throng of students continued to move out. His patience was nearly at an end. Usually, his siblings didn't take this long. Maybe they were just taking a while to pack up.

"Hi, Tyler!"

The boy looked up. He saw a girl his age with flowing, nutmeg hair coming toward him with a pink backpack. It was his friend Helen. He felt she was the only one besides his family that understood him and his quirks.

"Hi, Helen."

His greeting hadn't sounded enthusiastic although it was meant to be. Maybe it was because of the bad mood he had been in earlier when he'd tried to explain his lack of studying to his teacher after being handed a bright red "F" on his test.

"What's the matter?" Helen asked, sitting beside him on the bench.

"Take a look," he said, handing her the page without looking up at her. She received it and looked at it closely.

"Ohhh, that's bad. An 'F'?" Are you serious?"

"Yes! Can you believe that? I tried to explain to my teacher about why I couldn't study, but he wanted no excuses."

"You mean why you *didn't* study," Helen replied, handing the paper back to him.

"I wanted to! Seriously! But my textbook was totally destroyed! I couldn't do anything about it!"

"Destroyed?" said Helen, startled, "Destroyed by who?"

"By my annoying seven-year-old science whiz of a sister, Addy!" Tyler spat in disgust.

"Addy?" asked Helen, "Are you sure? Last I saw her, she was an adorable toddler who liked to build blocks."

"Yeah, but that was four years ago," said Tyler, adjusting his glasses, "Ever since my Mom and Dad got her all those science kits for her birthdays, she's been insane! My textbook was damaged because she poured hydrochloric acid all over it. Some of the pages were eaten away." He looked down in frustration.

"Oh. I'm so sorry," Helen said, touching his shoulder, "Want to come by my house sometime? We could have a movie party or something."

"Sure," he said, brightening up a little, "I'd love to. Oh, there are my siblings. I gotta go. Bye!"

"Bye!" she said, waving.

The siblings strolled back towards home.

"What was that you and Helen were talking about on the bench?" asked Ellie, spinning a fidget-spinner in her right hand.

"I don't see why that's any of your business," said Tyler, trying to push away the thoughts of anger boiling inside of him.

"I just want to know," Ellie pressed on.

"Come on, Ellie, give him a break," said Trevor, tossing a baseball in his hand as he walked along.

"I can tell you," said Tyler reluctantly, and he briefly told them about his conversation with Helen about the school incident.

"Why did she say you could come by her house sometime?" inquired Trevor.

"Cause she's his *girlfriend*," teased Ellie.

Tyler tried to ignore her.

"Want to go to our clubhouse?" he asked, trying to change the subject.

"Yeah," said Trevor, "Let's go!" All three of them raced away.

Tyler got to the clubhouse first. It was a little shed in the far corner of the yard. The shed had never been used, so the kids decided to move their special club into it, including all their special club stuff, such as maps, secret files, and other interesting things. They even had a telescope mounted through a crack in the roof of the shed to look at the planets and stars. Trevor and Ellie came panting up behind Tyler.

From a window in the house, the white puppy began to bark excitedly when it saw them. Their mom waved at them through the window.

The three kids waved back and continued on toward their clubhouse.

"So, what's our meeting going to be about today?" Tyler asked as they approached the door.

"I think we should work on a new comic issue," said Ellie, "One that will keep our readers in suspense."

"We can discuss it more inside," said Trevor, pushing open the door.

By coincidence, they all stepped in at the same time. The instant they all stepped inside...GGGGGZZZZAAAAPPP!!!! They all received a terrific electric shock! They all yelled at the same time. When the shock passed, some of their hair stuck up, buzzing with static electricity.

"What the heck?!" spluttered Trevor.

"Look!" said Ellie pointing at the ground. Where they had stepped, there was a strange pad that spread across the entire entrance to the doorway.

"That wasn't there before," said Ellie, mystified.

"I think we can get to the bottom of this," said Tyler, lifting up the pad. Underneath, there was a complex array of electric wires!

They led up along the edge of the doorway, along the edges of the ceiling, out of the window, and led all the way over the lawn and through the window of-

"ADDY!" all three yelled in unison.

They all turned back toward the house after getting rid of the wires to talk to Addy upstairs, but they didn't have to. Down the front steps of the house came the scheming seven-year-old science whiz. She was carrying a burnt-out cluster of wires and batteries. She threw them in the outside trash nearby.

All three of them marched across the lawn toward her.

"Hey Addy," Tyler blurted out, unable to contain himself any longer, "What's the deal with shocking us all? Why do you have to be a pain?"

"Yeah, Addy," agreed Trevor, "Do you have respect for any other people beside yourself?"

"What are you talking about?" Addy snorted.

"You know what we're talking about!" Tyler yelled, "You shocked us!!!"

"It was only a 3211, 5-volt battery test," she said, brushing past them with her nose in the air.

"Addy, that was mean what you did," said Ellie, "I'm telling Mommy."

"Why did you do that, Addy?" said Trevor.

"Yeah, why are you such a brat?" said Tyler.

"Blah, blah, blah," Addy chided, "I did it because you won't let me into your club."

"Oh yeah," Trevor said with sarcasm, "Now we'll *really* let you into our club."

"You guys are so weird," said Addy, turning around and disappearing into the house.

The other three looked at each other in shock and anger, shaking their heads.

"Let's go back to our clubhouse and get on with the meeting ASAP before I lose my mind!" Tyler grumbled.

That night at dinner, the family had roasted chicken drumsticks.

"Can I feed Cloud her food, Mommy?" Ellie asked.

"Yes," said Mom.

Cloud the puppy wagged her tail appreciatively as two scoops of dog food were poured into her bowl and fresh water added to her water bowl.

"Addy," called Mom, "you can come out of the Break-Spot now."

"OK," came the response from up on the stairs landing.

If any of the kids were bad, either of the parents could make them go up on the landing to have a time-out. They liked to call it the Break-Spot. The kids had told their parents about what Addy had done to them, so they had made her go to the Break-Spot until her heart had changed. From other times she had been there, Tyler saw no improvement as far as he could see. But the parents nevertheless kept trying.

"I really ought to start homeschooling them," the mom said to herself as she sat down at the table.

"Yeah," said Ellie, "and Daddy could be the principal."

"Yeah," agreed Dad, "then I could whip all you creatures into shape." They all laughed at that, and continued to eat.

"Oh, by the way," said the mom, "Trevor's birthday party is coming up in a few weeks. I'm starting to plan for it. Would all of you like to participate?"

"Sure!" they all cried.

"Can it be a water party?" Trevor pleaded, "Pleeeeeeaaase?"

"You'll have to wait and see," said Mom.

"Dang it," Trevor said.

"I can fill all the water-balloons," said Ellie, excitement in her voice.

"I can draw out some little comic strips for the guests to read at their tables," said Tyler almost as excited.

"And I can perform some of my experiments on the guests," said Addy.

"*Little* experiments, mind you," she said when everyone stopped eating to look at her.

There was a long moment of silence. Tyler began murmuring to himself under his breath. Trevor and Ellie traded annoyed look with each other. The parents fidgeted uneasily in their chairs.

"What?" said Addy, sitting up straighter in her chair with a concerned expression on her face, "Can't I perform some experiments?"

Dad finally spoke up.

"Addy," he said, "you must listen to me when I tell you this. You can perform experiments *as long as* you don't try them on other people."

"But Daddy-"

"No," said Dad, calm, but firm, "You can't try them on people. It's not going to be fun for them if you try stuff on them."

At these words, Addy's face grew dark, and her brow furrowed.

"OK, fine!" she blurted out, "I guess I won't have any fun then! I won't even be a PART of it!"

For some reason, just the sound and the way she spoke made everybody start laughing.

"I HATE YOU ALL!!!" Addy shrieked, and shoved her chair aside, stood up, and stomped angrily upstairs to her room, where she buried her face in her pillow and sobbed. She cried for a good long while, but then she stood up and looked over at the table where her lab stuff was set up.

"I'm going to have fun at that party no matter what anybody says," she said in a determined tone. She then pulled on her science goggles and got straight to work, gathering supplies to make experiments.

She toiled for quite some time, and then, after trial and error, she was ready.

Standing before her on the table was a strange robot about three feet high, and three feet across. It was made out of metal, and it had eight legs. It had two red eyes with a thin film over both of them. Addy pressed a button on the robot's head. Instantly, it came to life, rattling its legs and blinking its eyes a couple times. Addy picked up a remote and spoke into it: "Roboctopus 7, it's time to roll!"

Ellie was up late, working on some hard math. As she was turning math tables over in her head, she suddenly heard a small clanking sound. She began to feel uneasy, but decided that it was just Addy working on another mad experiment in her room. Reassured, she turned around and went back to work on her math. Then she lifted her head up. There it was again! That same clanking sound!

Ellie sat up straighter.

Then, out of the blue, without any warning, a small, metallic robot came scuttling into the room.

Startled, Ellie scrambled out of her chair and backed up into a far corner of her room. It looked like some sort of robotic octopus. The metal creature scrambled onto her table and looked down at her math book.

"Target acquired!" it beeped, "Annihilate!" With a flash, two dazzling lasers fired from the robot's hideous red eyes onto the math book! There was a loud crackle, like the sound of a firework going off, and then silence.

Ellie watched in horror. White smoke billowed from her table. The robot hopped off of it and scuttled out of the room as fast as its legs could carry it.

With great caution, Ellie tiptoed over to her table. Waving some of the smoke out of her face with her hands, she had a clear view of the damage that had been done.

Her book was mess.

The pages were charred and black, and when she picked it up, the binder fell to ashy pieces onto the carpeted floor.

"Addy," she said to herself, angry tears rolling down her face. She then climbed in bed and fell into an uneasy sleep.

In the boys' room, Tyler and Trevor were on their beds, reading books to themselves. Tyler was reading something by A. A. Milne, while Trevor was reading a baseball stats book. Trevor was crazy about baseball. He even went to a few baseball games at Dodger Stadium every year. He also played Little League baseball.

Tyler was a different type. If there was any world he liked better, it was the make-believe world, where he could imagine wonderful stories of epic adventures and quests of talking animals, or magical creatures, or awesome men with swords or ray-guns. Sometimes, he could be a real grouch if he had been in his own made-up world for a while and then someone came upstairs to tell him to come downstairs.

So there they were, on their bunks, reading as usual every night.

Trevor was looking over some baseball stats, when all of a sudden, a multi-colored ball sailed through the door and exploded on the art table in rainbow smoke!

Trevor and Tyler yelled in surprise, and Trevor fell off his bunk.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Addy's voice laughed through the billowing smoke, "I bet you couldn't have caught *that* fastball!"

"You're mean, you know that?" Tyler yelled, climbing down the ladder from his bunk.

"Blah, blah, blah," Addy huffed, stepping into the boys' room, a remote control in her hand.

"Stay away from our stuff, Addy," Trevor said, sitting up from where he had fallen.

" 'Stay away from our stuff, Addy,' " Addy mimicked. She then flipped a trigger on the remote. A hidden canister opened in the ceiling, and a nozzle poked out, squirting silly string all over the room.

"Helllllp!" the boys yelled, spinning around as silly string was sprayed all over them.

Fortunately at that moment, Mom came upstairs and picked up Addy.

"That's it, young lady," she scolded, "bedtime for you." And she walked away towards Addy's room, with Addy wriggling in her mom's arms.

Mom woke up instantly at the sound of her husband's call.

"Babe, are you there? COME DOWN HERE!!!"

Mom got out of bed and tramped downstairs in her pajamas. Dad was standing in the kitchen, next to the frying pan which was on the front-right burner. At his feet was a strange tangle of luminescent, multi-colored stringy things. In his hand was an empty eggshell.

He pointed at the eggshell.

"I was going to make myself breakfast. I opened this eggshell, but instead of an egg yolk, *this*—" He gestured towards the luminescent, multi-colored strings on the ground, "This is what came out instead. I think we should have a talk with Addy after school."

Days passed, and those days turned into weeks, and by the end of three weeks, the school year had ended and summer had arrived.

Everyone was in high spirits. The temperature grew rapidly, and the days seemed as if they were zooming by so fast, and yet there seemed no end to them.

Every boy and girl was as happy as they could be, riding on bikes and trying to chase the ice-cream truck as it drove through the neighborhood.

And so, one of these bright summer days came shining down upon the Vernham family as they were setting up tables on their lawn and getting water games ready and blowing up the inflatable pool for Trevor's birthday party. They would also use the hose to squirt each other with. The dad and the girls were filling up water pistols, Trevor and the mom were laying tablecloths out on the tables and setting up umbrellas, and Tyler was inside the clubhouse writing out comic strips to lay at each spot on the table. He felt quite pleased with how he did it. After drawing out a strip, he would fold it up in a napkin, tie up the napkin with blue ribbon, and put it at each chair for all the tables. Addy had also been helpful. She had been very good for the past three weeks after putting the chemical bomb in her dad's egg, and had not given any hint that she was up to anything.

"All right, we're all set," said Dad, satisfied as the last water pistol was finally filled up.

"Yay!" cheered Ellie and Addy.

"Hey," said Tyler, "here come the first guests!"

Sure enough, up the street, the first car arrived. The mom, Tyler, Trevor, and Ellie ran over to greet them.

As Dad's back was turned, Addy looked around twice to make sure no one was looking, and then ran up to her room. She came back out with a small vial of blue liquid in her hand. Her family was already over greeting guests. Good. She was still clear. Careful not to attract attention, she walked over to the hose and unscrewed the nozzle. She then unscrewed the vial and dumped the blue liquid into the hose. Seeing Ellie and some friends coming over, she quickly hid the vial away in her dress and screwed the nozzle back onto the hose. Everything was set. Now the party could begin.

"OK, everybody," said Mom through a megaphone, "We're going to play the 'Hose Tag' game!" All the kids and adults cheered.

"Here's how the game works," Mom began to explain, "One of the kids is 'it.' In this case, our birthday boy will be 'it' first!" she pointed to Trevor and everyone let out another hearty cheer.

"When he's spraying the hose, all the other kids will try to duck and not get hit by the water. Whoever he gets will be the next tagger!"

All the kids advanced onto the grass. Trevor picked up the hose, and Dad stood by to turn on the hose. Each kid took a position.

"ON YOUR MARKS—" Dad reached for the crank to turn on the hose.

"GET SET—" The kids began to fidget with excitement.

"AND—" Trevor readied himself with the hose.

"GO!"

Dad turned on the hose. Instantly, massive plumes of blue smoke shot from the nozzle. It enveloped the entire lawn, making it hard for the guests and kids to see. Everywhere was blue smoke. Tyler accidentally tripped over someone's foot and fell flat on his face.

"SCIENCE-ER-RIFICO!" came the voice of Addy, "It worked! Don't worry people," she said, running over to the hose crank, "I assure you, the formula ingredients are completely natural! There's nothing toxic!"

She then turned the crank, and the blue smoke began to fade away, and everyone started to see better.

Once the smoke had died down, everyone looked at Addy in shock.

"Is something wrong?" she asked innocently. She then felt two hands clamp down on her arms with great strength. One arm belonged to Dad, and one belonged to Mom. They both dragged her inside the house. When they were inside, Addy tried to make an excuse for herself, "Why are you mad? I didn't do anything dangerous. Aren't you glad about that? At least it wasn't something lethal, it was just blue smoke! What's the matter with you?"

"Addy, we are going to discuss this very thoroughly upstairs in your room once the party is over," said Mom, "Oh, and by the way, you can't play with your lab anymore. You're grounded."

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!" Addy screamed.

Even after the birthday party and Addy had been grounded for two weeks, reports from individual people kept coming in on strange scientific disasters happening to them.

Hussein Achmed, the Middle-Eastern neighbor a few houses down reported a strange cluster of ten-foot tall venus-flytraps in his backyard garden gobbling up his pet gerbils and his pachira tree.

Paul and Nora Wilson on the other side of Eastwood Ln. came to Mom with complaints about taxidermized frog heads on little poles stuck into the dirt of their lawn.

Day by day, reports got worse and worse. The people next door on either side of their house reported hearing scratching sounds on the roof in the night, and the people a few blocks down complained that a glow-in-the-dark skeleton had been hung up outside their kitchen window.

Each time her parents confronted her, Addy denied having done anything. And although none of the others knew it, she was actually telling the truth.

Finally, after one day when a torrent of green blobs had caused a lot of damage to the backyard of Jared Baker on Mcfly St., the parents trudged up to their daughter's room.

"Addy," said Dad, "This behavior is very unacceptable. How do you keep finding your science kit? Tell us, so we can find a new place to hide it."

"I'm afraid we're running out of hiding places," said Mom, exhausted.

"I'm not doing anything, I *mean* it!" Addy said through tears.

"We're not necessarily saying it was you, Addy," said Dad, putting his arm around his daughter, "but people keep coming back with reports of things similar to what you have done in the past and we don't know what to do."

Mom heaved a deep sigh and tried to look Addy in the eyes.

"Addy, I know it isn't you who's been doing all this stuff lately, but I want to ask you something."

"What is it?" the girl asked, trying to wipe away her tears.

"A while back," Mom began, "Dad and I saw how creative you were with everything you did and saw how interested you were in seeking knowledge. So we decided to give you science kits for you to have fun with and discover interesting things through them. But then you started to use your science stuff to play pranks on your siblings and do things to them to get under their skin."

"Why do you like to?" asked Dad.

Addy sat in silence for a while, thinking over how to best word what she was about to say.

Finally, she spoke: "I just feel smaller than them if I don't do anything to them."

"I understand," said Dad.

Addy nodded.

"You don't have to worry, Addy," said Mom, "You don't have to be afraid of your siblings. If you treat them well, they might treat *you* well."

"OK," said Addy. Her parents both hugged her.

"Don't worry," said Mom, "We think you are almost over with your punishment."

"Really?" said Addy.

"Yes," said Dad. After hugging a second time, the parents walked out of Addy's room and closed the door behind them.

It was late at night. Tyler woke up at around two in the morning. He climbed off his bunk-bed and shook Trevor awake. Then they woke Ellie and snuck downstairs and into the garage.

Tyler looked around on a shelf, rummaging through boxes.

"Is it on there?" Trevor whispered.

"Hang on," said Tyler, "Yeah, I think I got it!" He pulled a box out from the shelf and opened the lid. In it were a bunch of science tools, beakers, and bags of strange chemicals and other interesting things.

"Addy's science kit!" Ellie whispered in excitement.

"SSSHHHH!" the others warned her.

They then walked out of the garage, out onto the dark lawn, and toward their clubhouse.

When they were inside, they turned on the light and took out all the objects in the kit and set them out on the table.

"Just because Addy is banned from using her kit doesn't mean we are banned as well," said Ellie.

"Exactly," said Tyler, sitting down in a chair, "The question is though, what are we going to do with all of it?"

"We can't just throw it in the trash," said Trevor.

"How about using it to clean the floor and make the house look better?" said Tyler and Ellie at the same time.

"That's an idea," said Trevor, "And anyway, what if whoever has been using Addy's stuff to terrorize the neighborhood comes back for it? It's safer here in the clubhouse than it is in the garage."

"And we've installed a special password lock on our door so that only we can have access to the clubhouse," added Tyler.

"Great," said Trevor, "Let's start looking through all this stuff – here, I've got a small bag here with green powder. It's labeled: *Totum vaccam*."

"Those sound like Latin words," said Ellie, "coincidentally, we have a Latin dictionary somewhere around here." She rummaged through some books on a nearby shelf and found it.

"Here it is!" she exclaimed. Together they leafed through the book and found the words they were looking for.

"Here's one," said Tyler, "*Totus* means whole, or entire. *Totum* is the neuter-singular version."

"I found the other one," said Trevor, "*Vaccuus* is a verb. It means to clean, or make whole."

"So if we put them together," said Ellie, "the substance in this packet must mean that it is capable of entirely cleaning our house. If we sprinkle this stuff all over the house on every surface, and then go over it with vinegar spray and paper towels, the house will be good as new!"

"There's one thing though that the substance cannot clean," Tyler said, "All our toys and knick-knacks and other things scattered about the house."

"Maybe we can use Roboctopus 7 to clean up all that stuff," Trevor said.

"Good idea," Tyler remarked, "I'll go out and get him."

"Make sure he isn't on!" Ellie warned, "He's got eyes that shoot laser-bolts!"

"I'll keep it in mind!" came the response as he walked out the door.

When Tyler returned a few minutes later without Roboctopus 7 in his hands and Addy at his side in her pajamas and her hair all out of place, Trevor and Ellie stood up.

"What's *she* doing here?" Ellie demanded.

"She'll spoil everything," Trevor complained.

Tyler pulled out a chair and sat down. Addy, her eyes blinking in the light of the bulb strung from the ceiling, sat down on the edge of the table.

"I caught her following me around," said Tyler, "It appears she had been listening to our plans last night and wanted a part in it."

They started rummaging through the science packets, finding the things necessary to get the house into shipshape.

"By the way, Tyler," said Trevor, "Where's Roboctopus 7? I thought you were going to get it."

"I did look," said Tyler, his face becoming solemn, "But when I did, I saw that the box he was stored in was torn to pieces, and he was nowhere to be found."

"That's weird," said Ellie, "Would it be too much to think that *he* ripped up the box himself?"

"That's ridiculous," said Tyler, "Roboctopus 7 wouldn't know how to rip open a box all by himself. Or would he? Addy?"

"Well," Addy said, "I did build him from some titanium parts. With those strong arms, I'm pretty sure he could rip open a cardboard box. But his programming is very limited, so I don't think he'd just randomly tear up the box he was in."

"Well, that's a relief," said Tyler not actually feeling reassured at all, "Oh, I just remembered. I need to get some paper. I need to diagram the house for when we start cleaning it."

"We can come with you," said Ellie.

"Sure," said Tyler reluctantly, "You can come." They all walked out of the clubhouse into the early morning dew.

"We'd better hurry," said Trevor, "The sun will come up soon."

As they walked toward the house, however, little did they know that a dark shadow spied on them through some tall grass nearby.

It took a while for the kids to find the papers they needed, but eventually they found them and made haste back to the clubhouse. A hint of pink stood out on the horizon which made them all the more determined to finish their plan.

They all raced back onto the lawn and rushed over to the door of the clubhouse. They stood there a while, catching their breath.

"You know," said Trevor, "wouldn't it be cool if our club had our own baseball team? We could make hats and jerseys with the club symbol on each of them!"

"Good idea," said Tyler, "Except it will be the girls' job to sew them on."

"Hey!" said both girls at the same time. Chuckling to himself, Trevor punched in the code on the door and pulled the handle.

Nothing happened.

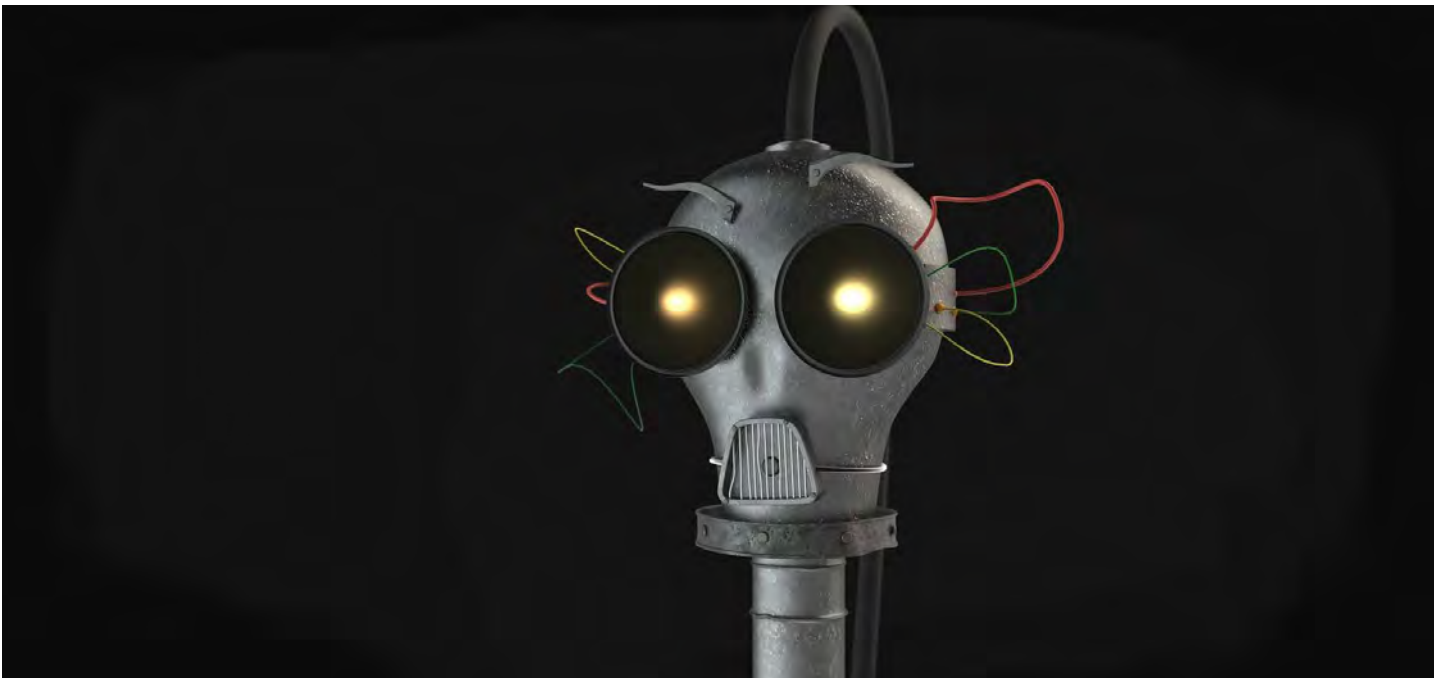
"Well," said Addy, "Are we going in, or what?"

Trevor tugged on the handle with all his might, "It won't budge!"

"Here, I'll help," said Tyler. But even after pulling with all their strength, the boys couldn't get it undone.

"This isn't working!" Tyler groaned.

"Hey," said Ellie, "What's that?" Pressing their ears to the door, they could faintly hear a strange clanking sound coming from inside. It seemed oddly familiar to Ellie, but she couldn't put her finger on it.



"Let's try the window," Tyler suggested, "I'm pretty sure we could all fit through that. And anyway, it's pretty close to the ground."

They went around to the left side of the clubhouse and saw that the windowpane had somehow been pulled out of its place and set down on the ground. Feeling a little nervous now, the four kids clambered through the window and landed one by one into the clubhouse.

They could not believe what they saw.

There was Roboctopus 7, eyes crimson and flashing with solar energy, mounted on the table, trying to rip open one of the packets of chemicals with two of his silver, titanium arms.

"Roboctopus 7, what is the meaning of this?" Addy said, stepping forward. The instant she spoke, the robot spun round and fired laser-bolts from his eyes, blasting the floor out from underneath Addy, and sending her toppling into the other three. They all struggled to get to their feet again.

"Stand up, all four of you and keep your hands where I can see them. Do not make any attempts to resist, or you will be eradicated," Roboctopus 7 ordered through his voice grill, *"You are under my control. My mission must not fail."*

"Roboctopus 7," Addy said in an angry tone, "This behavior is unacceptable. I order you to deactivate."

"I am no longer under human service," the robot beeped in a most controlled tone, *"My programmed function has been obstructed. I am my own master. No one can control me."*

"Addy, what's the meaning of this?" Tyler hissed in her ear.

Addy was astonished, "One time I plugged him into the computer to recharge," she explained, "He must have somehow logged onto the internet and undid the limited programming I restricted him to. Now he has his own thoughts and his own ideas, and has chosen to be a jerk for some bizarre reason!"

"Your observations are most clear," Roboctopus 7 spoke, *"You used to call me Roboctopus 7, but I shall no longer tolerate that ridiculous name. I am now, 'The Metal Mollusk!' I am capable of annihilating an entire fortress with powerful lasers. I am stronger than 100 men. Do not force me to cause you harm as I did for the denizens of the neighborhood with my mad experiments."*

"So it was YOU who caused all those giant venus-flytraps to eat all of Mr. Achmed's gerbils and pachira tree!" said Tyler.

"Then it was you who stuck up those taxidermized frog heads in Mr. and Mrs. Wilson's yard on little stakes!" said Trevor.

"Then it had to be you who made those scratchy sounds on the roofs of both our neighbors' houses and stuck up that skeleton in the house of that family a few blocks down!" Ellie added, fuming.

"Yeah," said Addy, "Oh and there were also those big, green blobs that wrecked Mr. Baker's yard too. Was that you?"

"Quite correct," said the Metal Mollusk, *"I remember the blob incident very well. It took a great deal of meddling with several chemicals and arranging everything to exact precision to make it admirable."*

"But why?" Ellie asked, "Why are you doing all this? Why did you want to cause all those people trouble? They weren't doing anything wrong!"



"Doing the denizens of the neighborhood harm gave me the time I needed to exercise my given abilities, so that for the formidable future, I could be well-prepared to make even more complicated works of my scientific, disturbing art," the Metal Mollusk explained, *"I saw potential in what I was capable of. I am now prepared to take on more than just this pitiful neighborhood. I shall take on your city next, and after that, the entire state, and so on and so on until I have taken dominion over America. And then, after that-"*

He never had time to finish. Tyler lunged at the robot and tore the bag of chemicals from his grasp. Although small in stature, the Metal Mollusk was quite strong. As Tyler was about to make a dash for the door, the Metal Mollusk wrapped one of his titanium tentacles around his right leg, and pulled his legs out from under him, pulling him to the floor.

Trevor grabbed a baseball bat from the corner of the clubhouse and swung it with all his might against the robot's head.

The impact of the blow knocked the Metal Mollusk off the table, but the bat caused no damage. It smashed into a dozen wooden splinters.

"That was my best bat!" Trevor groaned. Ellie and Addy tried to get a hold of the Metal Mollusk, but he grabbed them both with two of his arms and threw them out the window.

"This isn't working!" Ellie gasped, as she got up from the ground and helped Addy to her feet, "We need to shut him down somehow."

"Wait!" Addy said, "I think I have an idea! The boys need to drive him out towards the entrance to the clubhouse."

Ellie called in through the window to give the boys the message. They were busy fighting against the Metal Mollusk, but they got the message and started trying their best to drive him toward the doorway.

Meanwhile, the girls ran upstairs to Addy's room.

"Remember a while back when I used that electric experiment to shock you guys when you went into your clubhouse?" she asked, "I was thinking we could use the same thing against the Metal Mollusk! The electric shock would overheat his circuits and power him down."

"That's great!" Ellie said, "Come on, let's get to work!"

Tyler hurled a broken table leg at the robot. It bounced off his titanium head.

Trevor slammed a baseball against the robot, which didn't cause any damage, but forced him a little back towards the doorway. They had been at it for a while now, and they were slowly but surely forcing the Metal Mollusk toward the door. Just a couple more feet.

The Metal Mollusk grabbed Trevor and Tyler and rammed their heads together. They both stumbled about, dazed.

"My mission must not fail," came the robot's voice, more irritated this time, *"Once I have dominance over North America, I shall build an army of robot meccas to conquer the other six continents! I shall rule Planet Earth!"*

"We'll see about that," Tyler wheezed, climbing to his feet, wincing in pain. He and Trevor were battered and bruised. They couldn't keep it up for much longer. He picked up a broken tennis-racket to hit him with, but the Metal Mollusk merely blew the racket to burned plastic with laser-bolts and knocked Tyler off his feet with another blow from one of his tentacles.

Tyler was too exhausted to fight anymore.

So was Trevor.

"How pathetic," the evil Metal Mollusk observed, *"It appears you are no longer capable of keeping up a struggle. I almost pity you. But now, this chapter concerning us must come to an end."*

He picked up the science kit with one arm and clattered over to the door.

"I believe I shall leave you two to your recovery," he said, *"By the time the sun has risen, I will be well on my way. Goodbye, Tyler and Trevor Vernham. I bid you good day."*

With that, he opened the door and prepared to clatter out.

"Ready?" Addy asked when she looked out the window of her room and saw the door to the clubhouse opening.

"Ready," Ellie said. She lifted up the remote control she was holding and extended the antenna to stick out the window so that the electric wires in the clubhouse would receive a clear signal.

"Now!" Addy yelled.

Ellie pressed the button.

The instant the Metal Mollusk set one of his tentacles out on the entrance, there was a loud *zap!*

A blinding flash of light followed and the boys had to cover their eyes. A small explosion followed the flash of light, and then . . . silence.

The boys opened their eyes. Where the Metal Mollusk had been were streaks of ashes on the floor, and pieces of burned metal and plastic. The door to the clubhouse had also been blown to pieces when the Metal Mollusk exploded.

It was around dawn, now. Some neighbors came out of their houses to see what was going on.

Mom and Dad came out too, and the girls explained to Dad and the neighbors what had happened, while Mom took the boys inside to tend to their bruises and cuts.

The incident that had happened at the Vernham house was on the city news the next day, and everyone was shocked when they read that a robot designed by the youngest of the Vernhams had tried to terrorize the city and to take over the world.

It was even on Drudge Report, and after that, tons of kids on the block wanted to spend time with the four Vernham kids.

Some of them even joined the club, and they all worked together with some parents to build a new door for the clubhouse and a new key-pad to punch in the secret password.

All four of the kids had changes in their lives too.

Tyler finally had his comics published, Trevor was the pitcher on a good Little League team, Ellie and Addy had found a new hobby for baking yummy things, Dad had been given a raise, Mom had decided to homeschool all of her kids, and Cloud the puppy was just the way she had always been.

So everyone was happy, and had found ways to make their lives better.

Everything was as it should be.

A photograph of a calm lake under a heavy, grey mist. In the center, a small, tree-covered island is visible, its reflection clearly mirrored in the still water. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape of trees and hills, also shrouded in mist.

A Found Poem

by Tidus Pinkham

based on "The Most Dangerous Game"

by Richard Connell

The howls from the hunting hounds stopped,
And Rainsford felt frozen on the spot.
They must have reached where the knife was poised.
He climbed excitedly up a tree,
But to his disappointment, he saw General Zarrof still alive
Down below, and Ivan lying still in the thicket.
So the knife had not altogether failed when
Driven by the recoil of the springing tree.



How to Catch a Frog and Eat its Legs

1. Find a swamp or marsh where everything is very wet and slimy.
2. You can tell if frogs live in the water by looking for small little bumps sticking out of the water. the bumps are the little heads of the frogs.
3. Bring a fairly large net with you.
4. Once you see a frog in the water, very slowly push your net through the reeds sticking from the water, in order to camouflage it.
5. When you have positioned the net above the frog's head, wait a few seconds, and then as fast as you can, bring the net down over the frog.
6. The frog will flip around a bit in the net, but that's okay. Out on your porch, grab a cutting board and a good, sharp knife. Carefully cut the frog's head off and then cut off and skin the legs you want to eat. Be sure to clean up afterwards.
7. Sprinkle bread crumbs and spices on the legs and fill the pan with butter. Then put the frog legs in the pan and turn them around a little bit.
8. Wait for a few minutes and then take the legs off the pan and put them on a plate. Enjoy!

Disaster During a Drive to Burger Boss

by
Tidus Pinkham



Here are directions for how to get to Burger Boss and how terrible it could turn out.

1. Our family decides one day that we should go to Burger Boss for dinner. We decide to bring our dog with us. So we pile into the car and head east on Santa Margarita Ln.

2. Our dog poos in the car as we turn left onto DeLong St., and it's too late to turn back now to get bags. Then we turn right on Walker.

3. As we're driving down Walker, one of our windows is open for our dog to look out of, and a group of teenagers throw water balloons at cars. Some of them come sailing in through the window and drench us. And it's worse with our dog's droppings rotting away in our car.

4. We turn east on Orange and start driving down it, when all of a sudden, a raccoon falls on top of the windshield, and starts coloring with a red marker all over it, making it hard for our parents to see where we're going. My mom turns on the windshield wipers, and squirts the raccoon in the face, making it fall off the car, but there is still some marker left over.

5. As we head south on Valley View, we have to plug our noses, because our dog's dung smells terrible now. My sisters are complaining, and my brother has to go to the bathroom. Then we're stopped by a red light and my brother cannot hold it in any longer.

6. By the time we turn right into the shopping center, we are a wreck. We go into Burger Boss, order our burgers, and decide to eat them at home, because no one wants to be near us, for we smell terrible.

7. When we try to start the car, it doesn't budge or respond to anything my parents do. We realize it has run out of gas, so my parents have to call a tow truck.

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