

# *Gristle-Butter*



A LITERARY 'ZINE PERPETRATED BY THE  
CHS CREATIVE WRITING GROUPS

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## **Gangly Grasshopper Groupies**

The grass growls with grasshoppers as my boot trudges.  
A grave silence grows as one, two, greet the grim palms.  
Nothing near grief grin the grasshopper greed.

Gangly greasers graffito the grate.  
A girl grasshopper groupies' gathering GROWS.  
Gratia gracia(s), the grungy grasshoppers gripe.

Crouched, the cougar cried for the Caelifera.  
A chorus of chirps crackled chromatically.  
A commentary of condors were covered in crape.

Groves of gorse grunt towards gravity.  
A grueling grudge a guillotine won't gash.  
Gaze (a)gain at the gruff, gruesome,  
Great green grasshopper  
Ground.

*– Satya McCarthy-Rotella*

# Epoch

by Madeline Dillon

The air reeked of cedar and age, a dusty perfume that made it difficult to take in a solid breath. Wimward sneezed, quickly rubbing the back of his corduroy sleeve across an irritated nose. In his opposing hand, the left, he fiddled with a turkey quill featuring a nervous energy that did not quite suit his public facade. Luckily, however, this was no public matter. He sat at a creaking desk, burdened by the weight of irrational stacks of paperwork, his gaze glued to a tiny window that let in the faintest breath of rain. A clap of thunder rattled the shutters, whose paint was chipping away like petals from a wilting flower. There was a knock at the door where Wimward's name was engraved like an epitaph, a familiar perfunctory patter that announced the arrival of his superior. Wimward sighed and gave a quiet "come in," knowing full and well his approval was irrelevant.

"Elector, you know damn well what I'm about to say to you," Amebia hissed, emphasizing her speech with the characteristic *thunk* of another box of papers on the sofa. She sat down next to her delivery, crossing her heeled legs with an air of repugnance.

Wimward placed his head between his hands, smearing leftover ink across his pale jawline. He, indeed, knew damn well what she was here to critique him on, and by critique he supposed he meant hatefully criticize. Groaning quietly, he steeled himself and looked back at Amebia with an obviously forced smile. She snarled and tapped the edge of the box, ebony hair slipping from a rather extravagant bun.

“You’re late,” she snapped, the tapping rising in tempo like the storm outside. She leaned forwards, her amber eyes resembling that of a cat on the prowl. “Too late, in fact. I don’t know what your problem is lately, but it’s completely inexcusable. We depend on you to complete your work in a timely manner, not let it pile up into mountains of obvious neglect. If you continue with this bullshit charade your titles will be stripped faster than a woman of the night.”

Wimward nodded, his gaze slipping back to the window. This seemed to further peeve Amebia, who stood and struck him across the face. He yelped and covered his stinging cheek, feeling the warmth of the contact linger beneath the pain. His silence was obviously all the more frustrating, as she stomped down a heel with a resounding crack and fumed, “Am I understood, *Elector*?”

“Yes ma’am,” Wimward nearly whispered, hissing off the end of his S. He pulled his hand away and clenched it into a fist, his knuckles whitening in the shadows where Amebia could not see.

“Good,” she breathed, her voice raising again as she announced, “I want thirty documents presented *neatly* by tomorrow afternoon. If you fail, you can kiss your pay goodbye. There is no time for a dusty, worn out loafer in this office!”

*This office*, Wimward thought, hearing the rattle of the door as Amebia slammed her way out. Why was he so keen on staying in this insufferable place? He knew he was unhappy from the core of his being to the tips of his nails. Despite all of his questions and lack of answers, he found himself returning to the papers with a sense of desperation. This place, no matter how agonizing, was all that he knew.

Yet, as he caught himself peering at the rainy sky, he was unable to prevent himself from imagining a better life. Somewhere out there he could be happy, but he had no idea where he would even begin looking for that place. He did not even know if he had the will to try. When he spoke before crowds he almost felt alive, gazing out at a sea of smiling admirers who hung onto every word he uttered. It was remarkable that so many would be willing to listen when within these dim walls he was treated like such a wretch.

Wimward pushed his stool away from the table, standing to go and stick his sniveling nose out into the cold air. Somewhere down there, hidden within rows of comfortable yet simple homes in the shadow of the castle where he was expected to serve, a child laughed. Whoever that was, they were happy. In such a simple place with such a simple status, that child had a reason to be happy! Perhaps being young comes along with plentiful ignorance, but so what if one has to spare a bit of knowledge if it makes them alright? He dragged a hand down his face, feeling the swollen bags beneath his eyes, the pain still radiating in his cheek, the untamed stubble corrupting his chin, and for a moment he felt like nothing. The stacks of papers began to close in around him like angry sentinels and he found himself falling apart as if he had never been there to begin with. Every moment, every bit of knowing, everything he thought he should live for seemed so inconsequential and insignificant. Why did he do this? For money? For *fame*? No, Wimward never cared if the masses knew his name.

Without a second thought, he shoved the stacks from his desk, sending a flurry of papers across the room and out the window like autumn leaves. He snatched his stool and used it to bat other piles down, the floor becoming slick with paper upon paper, ink upon ink. His quill rolled against the wall, the ebony vial next to it spilling across layers of old parchments like an abstract artwork. He nearly screamed, slamming the seat down with a sickening snap as the wood gave out and fell to pieces. The door slammed open again, an unfamiliar face staring in bewilderment at the almost deranged man. It was a maid, her eyes wild as she closed the door back and ran to tell someone of the incident. Unrestrained, Wimward made his own escape from his regulatory box, down the opposite side of the hallway, ink prints soiling the carpet from his polished shoes. Some part of him recoiled at the display, but nevertheless, he moved forward.

The hallway rushed past in a blur of wallpaper and gold, of doors and paintings, of servants and nobility. Before Wimward could fully process his decision, he burst through a limited access door and felt the rain drip down onto his face. He looked at his shaking hands, feeling both

overwhelmed and absent. Before him, the city seemed to grow, the distant woods calling out like an old friend. Were they an old friend? When was the last time he had explored anything other than lists of names and dates and laws and parties? And Amebia- what was she to think of his sudden outburst? Well, perhaps her opinion no longer mattered. Regardless of what he did next, there was no way in hell he would set another foot in that dreary, desolate room. He felt he would sooner die than be dragged back into the place where so many years were burnt away with a quill and an absent mind.

Wimward cast another wide gaze around the vastness of the scape before him, hearing his name called from inside. He took a brave step forwards, the will suddenly surging within him like a soldier to the beat of a drum. He tore off his golden decals, the useless jewelry, the valueless valuables from his pockets. Each shimmering artifact fell into the mud as he began to run, the wind sweeping through his hair with a crack of thunder. A horse whinnied as he rushed past the royal stable, down through the marketplace, past people rocking on their balconies as they breathed in the soaking air. He could not hear whether he was being followed, so he ran as if the army were nipping at his heels.

A young woman stepped out from behind a building, her head bowed towards the squelching dirt around her. On her back was a bushel of hay as golden as her locks. She glanced up, her mouth gaping through the haze of freedom as she realized who was running towards her. Wimward collided with her directly, spinning around to leave her standing and uninjured as he continued speeding onwards. As far as the townspeople were concerned, that was the last sighting of Mr. Elector.

The legends say that night he ran to the cliffside and howled at the foggy moon like a beast. Others say, more reasonably, that he moved a few villages over and settled in with a nice young woman by the name of Annette. The next morning a brief search was conducted that confirmed he was nowhere near his original post, that his sliding escapade had let him far beyond the mossy walls of the town. Soon he was forgotten almost entirely, replaced like a broken cart.

What the people did not know, and what they were not bothered to discover, was that Wimward had, in fact, fallen into a rushing river while storming through the woods. A young man called Lars, in no way an Annette, happened to be in the area as Wimward's unconscious body floated downstream. By some miracle of existence, he was face up and his heart was beating, albeit slowly. Lars pulled the poor fellow from the water and forced him to sputter out as much liquid as possible, carting him back to his own village where a nurse was put to work keeping him alive.

Unfortunately, she failed. The nurse was forced to reveal that, after three days of unbroken sleep, Wimward's consciousness seeped somewhere that humanity could not see. Somewhere that books and quills and loose sheets of parchment could not taint. He was gone, completely and utterly, the physical remnants of his time buried or burnt after they were soiled by his inky outrage. On his tomb, no name was inscribed, marked by a smooth and entirely blank headstone that was placed by strangers. His only audience were passing mourners, looking for their family members rather than himself. His death was believed to be a mix of hypothermia and a sharp impact which fractured a rather large segment of his skull. In the castle, Amebia shredded the feather of his quill with a strange conglomerate of grief and pure rage. Deep down, no matter how she treated him, she knew a great asset had been lost - presumably dead, as it was and as it would be: the end of a story.

Turquoise Dreams  
Absent from the world  
She knows but little words  
Her friends drip in precocious wonderment  
Humid air bites her awake  
Screams flood the heavy air  
Turquoise dreams fields of peace  
A contrast to they grey skies  
Worried by wonder, but she wakes  
It's a scrap  
The leftover remnants melt away  
drip drip drip drip  
A melancholy pattern  
drip drip drip drip  
Lulling her to sleep  
Turquoise dreams of yellow shutters  
Amongst the mutters  
They are fluttered by the others  
Turquoise breaths the yellow butter

– *Annabelle Buyck*

## **The Last Blue Dot in the Sky**

Flying furry fish swam in these seas,  
Dying, dirty and diseased they now float bloated.  
Potent political power could easily put out fires but instead they  
Lavishly, lovingly launder their illegal funds through a tower.

Sordid, siphoned, and silenced some of us are while others are  
Viciously and violently vocal in their lies and mess up all the  
Tenacious and trivial truth that is left in the world until  
Lovely, luscious lies are all that remains.

Wonderfully wicked worms wriggle around in the ground as they  
Gleefully and grotesquely, gorge themselves on the remains of the  
dead who  
Longingly and listlessly lived a full and happy life why do we so,  
Dreadfully and diametrically detest their feast?

Carfuls of carnivorous clowns prowl the streets and the  
Polite and pertinent protesters must depart or the  
Marrying, malevolent monsters will stuff them in their cars and  
Frantically feast fully upon their freedoms and bones.

Leave the last lollipop of liberty and hope on a doorstep with a  
Fetid filter of flies then douse them both in  
Gallons of gaseous gasoline so that no light shall shine on them  
again.  
This titanic terrible task is the only action left to take.

Too bad for the treacherous trees for they are too nice to be saved  
by the  
Wilting white weathermen with big hard hats and little umbrellas.  
Bad baggage boasts as it boards the final plane to the final plain  
and it waves  
Salivating salutations to the sailors of the last blue dot in the sky.

– *Xan Whitt*

# 1

*Subject Log: 12/04/97, 11:42PM*

SUBJECT 152

11:42:17: SUBJECT IS SEEN DRIVING NORTHWARDS, TOWARDS DOMICILE.

11:42:39: SUBJECT APPEARS FRIGHTENED UPON SEEING CLOCK.

11:43:33: SUBJECT APPLIES BRAKES AND HALTS VEHICLE. TWO VEHICLES ARE STATIONARY AHEAD OF HIS. SUBJECT IS VISIBLY AGITATED.

11:43:58: UNKNOWN SUBJECT, (SUBBED 152-A HENCEFORTH) APPROACHES SUBJECT'S VEHICLE.

11:44:12: 152-A EXPLAINS THAT HE IS THE OWNER OF THE RED VEHICLE IN FRONT OF HIM. THE OWNER OF THE BLACK VEHICLE FURTHEST AHEAD COLLIDED WITH A DEER, WHICH APPARENTLY HAD ESCAPED. THE OWNER PURSUED.

11:45:02: SUBJECT BECOMES LESS AGITATED. REQUESTS 152-A MOVE VEHICLE TO ALLOW PASSING. 152-A AGREES.

11:45:53: 152-A MOVES VEHICLE, ALLOWING SUBJECT TO PASS BY. SUBJECT GAZES INTO FOREST WHILE DRIVING.  
END LOG

# 2

**You Won't Believe What the Guy Who Had to Stop His Car on the Way Home Has to Say!**

**Joining us today is Eddie Reinhard. We'll be asking him some questions submitted by viewers and hopefully you,**

**the public, will get a better idea of what happened that night he had to stop his car.**

**So, Mr. Reinhard, what were you doing before encountering those trucks that night?**

Well, Al, I was really rushed that night. My favorite show was comin' on in 15 minutes and I'd be cutting it close to the show starting without me.

**That's a real shame. Just to remind our viewers, what exactly did happen after that?**

Heh, well... I'd been driving for about five minutes there, and these fellas, they uh, one of 'em was in a red truck. The other had a black one. Well, they were stopped in the middle of the road there, so of course I'm mad as hell. I didn't know what was goin' on at the time so, I mean, you couldn't really blame me, could ya?

**You said they were in their trucks, I thought that one was already out in the woods at this point?**

Oh yeah, the fella in the black truck had already run off into the woods to catch a sight that deer, make sure it's okay. Yeah. Apparently, when he was drivin' he had hit the damn thing. Wasn't enough to kill it though. It ran off into the woods so he went out there too. That's what the kid from the red truck told me anyways.

**Yes, well, do you remember what happened after that?**

I sure do. After the man from the red truck told me what was goin' on I asked him to move his red truck a bit so I could get along.

**And did he?**

Why yes he did. Yes. I did wonder afterwards though, where exactly did that deer go?

**Well, thank you for your time, Mr. Reinhard. It's been a pleasure to have you on.**

Thank you too.

### 3

#### **From the bushes.**

Alright, alright, alright, here he comes. Wow, only about 15 minutes 'til the show's on. He must be in a rush. Almost feel real bad for him. I think... he's seen the trucks. Yeah, he's stopping now. Ooooooh he looks downright angry! God he's about to throw a fit! Wait, what's that noise? Ah, looks like the guy in the red truck's gettin' out of the car. Wonder what he's doin'. Looks like... he's headed towards ol' Eddie's car. Hope this doesn't go too bad.

Yeah, they look like they're talkin' it out. Eddie doesn't look too mad no more. Shit, did he see me? Wait, nah, I'm good. He's just heading back to the truck... Oh, looks like he's moving it! Alright, there Eddie goes. Bet he's wonderin' where that deer went. Heh.

– *Grayson Hendrix*

# THIS IS A threat

This is not in writing, nor is it written.  
Even, it is not a writing.  
This a threat.

I'm enraged, and I am prowling.  
Hunting in lurk.  
This is a threat.

THIS IS NOT IN WRITING

This is not my word

KET

Syncope My Cigarette

My ashes BURN through your NECK

This not IN VERSE

THIS IS YOUR RESTING BED

must you **expire** for putting me on edge?

This not a song  
its a threat

Its a  
letter of regrets  
threat

the blade  
my neck

fore i rest  
words

the people that  
i meet

This not a song  
its a threat

Its to the people that i meet  
my final words

fore i rest  
my neck

Its the blade around my neck  
my final words fore i rest

This not a song its a  
threat

Its to the people that i meet  
my final words fore i rest

This not a song its a threat  
Its my hope that your dead

This not a song its a threat  
Its my hope that your dead

This not a song its a threat  
Its a letter of regrets

Its the blade around my neck  
Its the blade around my neck

Its to the people that i meet  
Its to the people that i meet

This not a song its a threat  
Its my hope that your dead

This not a song its a threat  
Its my hope that your dead

This not a song its a threat  
Its a letter of regrets

Its the blade around my neck  
Its the blade around my neck

Its to the people that i meet  
Its to the people that i meet

This not a song its a threat  
Its my hope that your dead

Its the blade around my neck  
my final words fore i rest

This not a song its a threat  
Its a letter of regrets

Its my hope that your dead  
This not a song its a threat

This not a  
man



The last half of his heart was left chained to his Hair  
Button eyes sewed with braided locks of dried bleach  
He has a leather tunic

Where he keeps his needles and thread  
He uses to make his dolls  
Red haired flat faced  
Orange nosed  
Voodoo Dolls

– *Reuben Miller*

## **Eunoia**

Dried flower resides in an evaporating pill bottle:  
Looking outside hollow exoskeletons.

The man who concocts the meads is invented,  
To see the blossoms inside crustaceans.

As dusk grows a night sweat,  
prescribe the inscriptions birds speak of.

Make the brain crunch like the leaves I decimate.  
Hold my hand I stole from a neighbor.

And as I shiver of cold whispers,  
Remind me that I don't know anything.

– *Satya McCarthy-Rotella*

# A POLITICAL TIMELINE OF DISTLEFINK, PA 1789-1860

*Charlie Angleberger*

**DISTLEFINK** was first a Welsh settlement under the auspices of William Penn known as Bala Gyalyushya, circa 1690. By 1740, the name had changed to Distlefink to attract the influx of German settlers. Two of these men, Matthias Freilinghuysen and Münzen Trouserüß (later Trouser), quickly became important figures in imperial politics, thanks to impressive amounts of brown-nosing. After the Revolutionary War, Distlefink was represented by Unterbahn Freilinghuysen in the Continental Congress of 1781-89. The Trouser Uprising that attempted to steal power from Freilinghuysen was a major reason for the drafting of the Constitution. As the timeline will show, the history of Distlefink is the history of the families Trouser and Freilinghuysen, and the history of Trouser and Freilinghuysen is the history of America.

**1789**-Distlefink votes unanimously to elect George Washington president and the Federalist (F) John Adams vice-president. Adams later comes to town to show his thanks for their support. One hour into his speech, Distlefink is a Democratic-Republican (D-R) stronghold.

**1790**-As an alternative to the Federalist and Democratic-Republican saloons, a nonpartisan, politics-free saloon known as the “Sword and Cheese” opens. It lasts all of 3 seconds before Galusha Freilinghuysen (F, Eighth Cousin of Theodore Freilinghuysen) says something positive about Adams which has been lost to the mists of time, and the owner explodes.

**1791**-The Federalists and the D-Rs engage in a game of Capture the Flag. Douglas Trouser (D-R) nearly breaks free with the flag before Galusha Freilinghuysen leaps out of a tree and tackles him. A time-out and lengthy discussion of the rules follows.

**1792**-The mayoral term of George Glass, who was elected during the last days of the reign of the Articles of Confederation, expires. Trouser and Freilinghuysen go head to head to take his place in a blaze of publicity and name-calling. Voting tickets are thrown about willy-nilly, and fights break out in the streets. Finally, John Adams returns to town to make a speech in favor of Freilinghuysen, and Trouser wins in a landslide. Washington wins the presidential election, but Distlefink votes for George Clinton as Vice President.

**1793**-The Damn Everything Party is founded and gains a measure of popularity among the cynics of the community. Unfortunately, none of its members can vote and their moms coerce them into being more positive about life.

**1794**-Douglas Trouser's wife Mathildha gives birth to a son, Thomas Trouser. So jealous is the bachelor Freilinghuysen of the publicity this brings the Democratic-Republicans that he steals a child of his own, who will become young John Freilinghuysen.

**1795**-The first political think tanks are founded to try and accelerate the respective contestants in the political race to potty train Thomas and John. The race is close until Trouser tapes his son to the toilet and gives him a laxative. "That's a big bowel movement for Small Government!" cries Trouser to the cheering throng.

**1796**-Partisan Politics have taken off in earnest on the National level. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson duke it out for the presidency, and both Galusha Freilinghuysen and Douglas Trouser are candidates for Pennsylvania Electors *and* Mayor. Populist Campaigning by Jeffersonites helps deliver the goods for Trouser, but Adams wins the presidency by three votes. Freilinghuysen gloats so much over this that he is temporarily kicked out of town.

**1797**-Freilinghuysen starts a campaign to recall Trouser, but Trouser remains in office. Trouser gloats so much over this that he is temporarily kicked out of town. This sort of thing is irritatingly common over the next five years.

**1798**-Not much. Some record of a ballot box explosion and a mooning, but most is lost to history.

**1799**-Upon hearing of the death of Washington, the first Federalist president, Freilinghuysen rides to Mount Vernon, cuts off the arm of the corpse, rides back to Distlefink with the arm, tracks down Trousers and slaps him with the arm, yelling “LOOK WHAT YOU’VE DONE TO GEORGE! LOOK WHAT YOU’VE DONE!”

**1800**-During the presidential election, Jefferson and Adams tie in Distlefink, a crucial city in the battle for Pennsylvania. The tie is settled by wrestling; Thomas Trouser, “The Crusher,” manages to throw John Freilinghuysen, “The Amizin’ Huysen,” in the twentieth round, allowing a Jeffersonian victory. Trouser is elected Mayor once again. Distlefink finally receives a State Representative, which goes to Trouser’s puppet candidate Junco Blornzen.

**1801**-Hubert Zuckermann leads the new Farmer’s Party (Fm), which advocates “Farm Promoting” tariffs and monthly beer rations for the Old Order families, and stands against the attempted Trouser and Freilinghuysen dynasties. Trouser and Freilinghuysen both hire early hitmen to deal with the newly popular Zuckermann, but the hitmen just wind up murdering each other when they realize they are after the same man.

**1802**-Zuckermann defeats Blornzen and Freilinghuysen’s puppet, Hungrich Maiburg for State Representative, and the Farmer’s party goes state-wide, winning four seats in the State House and one in the State Senate.

**1803**-Scandal rocks the Farmer’s Party when letters surface revealing that Lancaster representative Gunther Backpfifengesicht (Fm) had bribed the vote counters to add an extra fifty to his totals. A few long-winded political cartoons later and the Farmer’s Party is doomed.

**1804**-An eventful year. None of the Farmer’s Party congressmen are reelected, and Zuckermann dies later that year. Nationally, it’s another big year for the D-R’s, with Jefferson reelected as President. It’s the same in Distlefink, with Blornzen once again State Representative and Trouser reelected Mayor. So fed up is Freilinghuysen with being shut out of the Mayoral Chair that he announces his bid for the Governor’s Mansion the next year.

**1805**-Freilinghuysen is indeed named the Federalist Gubernatorial Candidate against incumbent Thomas McKean (D-R.) Freilinghuysen somehow wins by co-opting the platform of the defunct Farmer's Party and instituting the slogan "He ain't surprising--vote Freilinghuysen!" Rep. Blornzen dies of a laughter-related heart attack upon hearing the slogan.

**1806**-The main event is an early special election to replace Blornzen. Young John Quincy Adams makes an impassioned speech for the Federalist Maiburg. Unfortunately for Maiburg, the crowd finds this new Adams as annoying as his father, and Blornzen's uncle is elected instead.

**1807**-A scandal breaks that Thomas Trouser may not be his father's child, just as he announces his gubernatorial candidacy. This is disproved through identical moles on the shoulders of the two men, though traces of brown ink are found on a blotter in the Trouser household, throwing all into confusion just in time for the 1808 presidential, mayoral, congressional, *and* gubernatorial elections.

**1808**-Any hope Freilinghuysen had of a Federalist rout in 1808 is vanquished when his slogan "He's still not surprising--Vote Freilinghuysen!" fails to impress. The Mayoral Chair is given to Unterstung Hasslich (D-R), the Governor's Mansion to Trouser, and Blornzen's Uncle takes the Congressional seat. Federalists carry Distlefink in the presidential race, but only because the D-R votes are split between James Madison, the official candidate, and George Clinton, the candidate of the conservative D-Rs called the Tertium Quids. Madison still wins the presidency overall.

**1809**-Freilinghuysen finally marries in a ceremony at the Distlefink Methodist Church. Unbeknownst to him, his wife is actually Trouser's cousin Bessie Hosen. At the wedding, Trouser bursts into the church and screams "THAT WOMAN IS MY COUSIN, YOU FEDERALIST! PREPARE TO DIE!" and whips out a dueling pistol. Fortunately for Freilinghuysen, he too has a dueling pistol. Both men are mildly wounded, and Trouser has to pay for the church carpet. Such amusing incidents alleviate the burden of a historian.

**1810**-The Tertium Quids are on the rise in Distlefink due to growing disgruntlement against James Monroe. When asked what “Tertium Quid” means by the populace of Distlefink, the reply is usually “I guess you’re too unenlightened to know, peon!” This, though quite rude, wins them a surprising number of supporters. The representative seat once again goes to Blornzen’s Uncle.

**1811**-Another gubernatorial race. Freilinghuysen loses the Federalist primary to William Farmhead (F). Trouser wins the D-R primary, but not the election. The Quids claim Trouser is a Madison-Lover and run their own Bubbus Williams. The split allows Farmhead to win the election.

**1812**-The election season takes place under the shadow of growing tensions against the British. James Madison made a brilliant speech at Distlefink, winning back many D-Rs from the Quids and allowing the reelection of Unterstung Hässlich and Blornzen’s Uncle to their representative seats. The remaining Quids and Federalists rally behind De Witt Clinton (D-R), but to no avail, as Pennsylvania goes for Madison.

**1813**-America is well into war now, and few records of any elections remain. Both Thomas Trouser and John Freilinghuysen are old enough to go to war at the Canadian Border. While fighting, the two become good friends, much to the dismay of their fathers. Freilinghuysen decides to steal a different teenager, Galusha Freilinghuysen Junior, to succeed him in the political game.

**1814**-The Quids are put to rout, and the era of Good Feelings is beginning, as evidenced by Trouser winning the gubernatorial race and Geoffrey Glungzen (D-R) taking the place of Blornzen’s Uncle in the representative’s chair. The White House is burnt down by British troops, and the US Capitol temporarily relocates to Distlefink. The tavern business skyrockets, and no less than 30 attempts are made by the last remaining Quids to kill the young congressman Henry Clay.

**1815**-Preparations are made by the last Federalists for a final drive to pack the General Assembly of Pennsylvania. During one of these meetings, Freilinghuysen looks out the window and flatly says “If we fail, we are doomed, gentlemen, but at least we will be doomed as one.” He then spins around and asks “Anyone find that deep?”

**1816**-James Monroe is the D-R candidate for president, and so wildly popular was his career as War Secretary during the War of 1812 that the Federalist Candidate, Rufus King, had not a chance in Pennsylvania, nor any attempt by the state Federalists to pack the General Assembly. A full slate of D-Rs is elected to the various Distlefink offices, and even Freilinghuysen changes his allegiance to the Liberal Faction of the D-Rs by the end of the year. Federalism is dead.

**1817**-The New Farmer's Party (NF) is formed by Muden Hesskassel to try for the Governor's Chair. The party's goal is to make sure that the new prosperity of the farmers does not wind up in the hands of the wealthy.. Freilinghuysen and Trouser both run as D-R Candidates. Most of Trouser's rural constituency votes for Hesskassel allowing Freilinghuysen to take Philadelphia.

**1818**-The main interest, politically, is the election for State Representative. Incumbent Glungzen takes on Ysplanti Jamersly (D-R, Liberal) and Muden Hesskassel (NF). There are enough farmers in Distlefink to elect Hesskassel, and his cause is only helped when Jamersly is found "adding his own" to the town dungheap.

**1819**-The panic of 1819 sends Distlefink into an uproar. Though there are no major elections, Hesskassel returns to town and makes a rousing speech against the wealthy D-R mainstream. The New Farmer's Party seems well poised for the new decade.

**1820**-Though the Era of Good Feelings is beginning to end in Pennsylvania, Madison still carries that state in the 1820 election, but due to unrest in Distlefink, the New Farmer's Party is handed the mayor's and governor's offices, and Hesskassel is also reelected as State Representative. Freilinghuysen and Trouser must form an alliance to get power back to the mainstream. At their first few interviews together, they can hardly look at each other without vomiting. Many bags later, however, they have developed a begrudging tolerance of each other.

**1821**-No major election, but records indicate that Trouser and Freilinghuysen met weekly and held their discussions late into the night. It is decided that they will run young Galusha Freilinghuysen, Jr. for State Representative, and Thomas Trouser for State Senator, in order to

appeal to younger voters, and that the young men will raffle themselves off to young ladies in a publicity stunt.

**1822-**Two young ladies, Juliana Ululator and Roberta Lardrender, are selected in the contest. Fortunately for political decency, love letters between the winners are found and it is revealed that the mothers of the two ladies entered their daughters in an attempt to “straighten them up.” Hesskassel has a field day with this information, and the New Farmers win a House majority and much of the State Senate. It seems that the dynasties have run their course.

**1823-**Hesskassel finally attains the Governor's Chair, solidifying the New Farmer's reign. After the 1822 disaster, Trouser and Freilinghuysen go their separate ways, Trouser supporting the radical Andrew Jackson for President, and Freilinghuysen supports John Quincy Adams for the same office.

**1824-**The tables turn on the New Farmers and Freilinghuysen. Jacksonism is large and in charge, and Trouser becomes state representative due to his embracement of Old Hickory. Young Horg Glynwood (D-R), from the Welsh Quarter of Distlefink takes the Mayor's chair. Even though Jackson loses thanks to the infamous bargain between Henry Clay and Adams, the traditional D-R base is fired up anew.

**1825-**Despite the panic of 1825, Thomas Trouser finally holds elected office, riding the wave of Jacksonian popularity all the way to replace Hesskassel in the governor's chair, selling doom for the New Farmers. Says Hesskassel, “I shall miss my power not a bit, but will always regret not doing more when I had it. Now, who wants some of this Defeat Cake?”

**1826-**Douglas Trouser is reelected State Representative. Meanwhile, Freilinghuysen journeys to Kentucky to consult the aid of Henry Clay. The liquor flows like Niagara Falls, but Freilinghuysen wins the confidence of Clay somewhere among the bourbon. (Some brandy survives from that fateful night, and damn good it is, too.)

**1827-**With no major election, the old camps of Freilinghuysen and Trouser slowly plot their courses for the Governor's chair, with Galusha Jr. and Thomas competing the next year. Meanwhile, Clay and Adams

begin to form the National Republican Party, drawing an end to even the Era of Sorta OK Feelings.

**1828**-Andrew Jackson of the new Democratic Party (D) is elected in a landslide. This spells reelection for Governor Thomas Trouser (D) and his representative Father (D), but the spurned John Freilinghuysen picks up the Mayor's chair as an independent, much to his father's surprise.

**1829**-Freilinghuysen entertains Clay at his mansion to discuss the new National Republican Party. (NR) Freilinghuysen is so disgusted with Jacksonian principles that he joins the NRs and paints all his walls in the NR color of light yellow. "Doesn't that seem a little excessive?" asks Clay. "The color is my life now," says Freilinghuysen. "It is my blood, and other bodily fluids." Clay leaves the next day after this, frankly, disgusting statement, claiming that his house has burnt down. Meanwhile, the new Anti-Masonic (AM) party is on the rise.

**1830**-Trouser is defeated in the State Representative race by Bunther Buntherton (AM.) Clay begrudgingly returns to Distlefink to form an alliance with Buntherton and other Anti-Masons, solidifying what will become the Whig Party.

**1831**-Galusha, Jr. runs as an Anti-Mason, riding a wave of fear to replace Trouser in the Governor's Chair. He will, however, lead with Anti-Jacksonian principles as well. There is much excitement over the Anti-Masonic convention in Baltimore, one of the first to be held publicly. Cracks are beginning to form in Jackson's popularity.

**1832**-Democrats in the form of Trouser reclaim the representative's chair as Jackson re-electrifies the people of Pennsylvania, helping him land a second term. Clay and the NRs are disappointed, but there is hope for the Anti-Masons, as their candidate William Wirt carried Vermont. John Freilinghuysen is reelected Mayor.

**1833**-With partisan tensions on the rise, Freilinghuysen and Trouser hold a debate mostly remembered today for the "Oboe Incident." Of course, we all remember this historical event, so further comment will not be needed.

**1834**-Douglas Trouser is reelected representative. Galusha, Jr. convinces Anti-Mason leaders to hold their 1835 convention in Distlefink

instead of Harrisburg. Local Masons hold a small protest, but everyone just laughs at their hats.

**1835**-Galusha Jr. is reelected Governor. At the big A-M convention, all are shocked when, instead of going with William Henry Harrison of the new Whig Party, party brass instead choose Galusha Freilinghuysen, Sr, with Buntherton as Vice President. Henry Clay is disheartened by this news at first, but realizes it is crucial to the 1836 Whig Strategy of running as many candidates as possible so that Congress may choose the victor.

**1836**-The Whig Strategy succeeds. Galusha Freilinghuysen carries Pennsylvania, and the US congress chooses William Henry Harrison as president and, to appease the Anti-Masons, Bunther Buntherton as Vice President. He is replaced as state representative by Jorgas Glue (AM). John Freilinghuysen remains Mayor.

**1837**-With a happy and healthy Harrison pushing a Whig agenda, things are mostly peaceful in Distlefink. It is the last days of the Anti-Masons, who are all but merged with the Whigs and change their alliance within the year. "It was a silly grudge, anyway," said Buntherton.

**1838**-Jorgas Glue (W) is reelected under his new allegiance. He is, however, recalled and replaced with Cheese Buntherton (W), when he is discovered unconscious on the streets of Harrisburg wrapped in a massive sheet of ham.

Galusha Freilinghuysen, Sr. is elected Governor.

**1839**-John Frelinghuysen prepares to not seek reelection and instead campaign for governor in the next two years. He will face an uphill battle against the newly popular Whigs. However, he is confident with his slogan "Frelinghuysen: He Wraps Himself in No Ham Blanket." Galusha, Jr. peacefully adopts a child, Henry Clay Freilinghuysen.

**1840**-The Whigs do not need multiple candidates anymore, with Harrison a wildly popular president thanks to the Rolling Ball parades. One such parade comes through Distlefink on its way from Harrisburg to Philadelphia. Unfortunately, the gigantic cast-iron ball gets loose and rolls into Town Hall, flattening it. Nobody is injured, and the Whigs are newly popular for giving the town the greatest spectacle since the Sword

and Cheese explosion of 1790. Harrison is elected President, Cheese Buntherton Representative, and Rutledge Hasslich (I) mayor. So persistent is Whigmania that, to the delight of children everywhere, one of America's first theme parks, Whigworld, opens in Distlefink, with its chief attraction the "Rolling Ball" ride. Romulus the Racoon is the park mascot.

**1841-A** three-way race for Governor, with all three candidates Distlefinkers. Thomas Trouser runs for the Democrats, Galusha Freilinghuysen Sr. for the Whigs, and John Freilinghuysen against his ex-father. John's talent for speaking, especially against his father and the Whiggish Establishment, wins him the Governor's chair.

**1842-Cheese** Buntherton and Douglas Trouser are the main candidates for representatives. Trouser tries to break up the Whig majority by insinuating that Buntherton keeps a blanket of ham at his house, like the disgraced Glue. Buntherton not only wins the election, he also sues Buntherton for libel and wins a handsome amount.

**1843-With** nativist sentiment on the rise, the Pennsylvania Irish-German Coalition (PIGC) is founded in Distlefink "to deny elected office to any man who goes against the rights of immigrants." Both national parties must please this block if they wish to take Pennsylvania. At the same time, however, the Know-Nothing or Native American party (KN) is solidifying in New England. Of course, the PIGC response to any Know-Nothing argument is easy: "How can you trust a man who claims he knows nothing?"

**1844-Henry** Clay is anxious to win Pennsylvania against James K. Polk and prevent a return to Jacksonism. Thus, he picks Galusha Freilinghuysen Jr, a man who is younger, of German stock, and also Pro-Catholic, as his running mate. Thankfully for him, the Know-Nothings are little more than edgy teenagers at this point. The strategy succeeds, and Clay wins Pennsylvania and New York handily, securing the election. Buntherton is reelected Representative, and old Galusha Sr. wins the mayoral election. John Freilinghuysen is outed as Governor by the new burst of Whigmania, and succeeded by newcomer Yunje Gunthertherson. Thomas Trouser gives birth to a son, Zeus Trouser.

**1845**-After a flurry of insults and insinuations over the ownership of a sawhorse, Galusha Freilinghuysen Sr. and Douglas Trouser face each other on the dueling field. Both men are such good and quick shots that they are both killed, ending an era in Distlefink politics. Vice-Mayor Samuel Hyggenten (W) succeeds Galusha Sr. upon his death.

**1846**-Cheese Buntherton resigns due to constipation, so keeping the Representative Chair Whiggy is up to his replacement, Increase George (W). The Democratic candidate, Drear Pooson, puts up a good fight and sways a few voters, but the Wiggish mass still goes for George. Galusha Jr. convinces Clay to place the headquarters of the government owned National Telegraph Company in Distlefink, helping to secure Distlefink as a Whig stronghold.

**1847**-Henry Clay is wildly popular in Pennsylvania, and when he officially endorses the incumbent governor Gunthertherson, Gunthertherson wins in a landslide. Thomas Trouser attempts to win Democratic votes with a gigantic cheese, but to no avail, as Romulus the Racoon breaks in and engorges himself of the 2-ton cheese, after which he cries “Hurrah for the Whigs!” and collapses. If one is feeling a Whig overdose, may I suggest two aspirin and a Tums?

**1848**-Henry Clay managed to enshrine a 1-term presidential limit into the Constitution, so Galusha Freilinghuysen, Jr. runs for the Whigs. Once more PIGC is influential in winning Pennsylvania, and Know-Nothings have no real grasp on New England. Freilinghuysen wins enough of the South to finally attain the presidency. John Freilinghuysen takes the Mayor’s chair back, and Increase George is reelected to the State House.

**1849**-Memorials to Galusha Freilinghuysen, Sr. and Douglas Trouser are at last raised in the City Park, where they still stand today, flipping each other off for eternity. Meanwhile, in New England, the Know Nothings are becoming more powerful. The next Whig candidate will have to tread carefully between PIGC and the Know Nothings. Meanwhile, Slavery is being hotly contested in the Whig ranks.

**1850**-Increase George is reelected as predicted, and the Whigs keep the governor’s chair with party newcomer Hudgelich Tchantlemoaping-

lurghuy and the slogan “Tchantlemoapinglurghuy: A Name To Remember.”

**1851**-Galusha Freilinghuysen Jr.’s days in the White House are coming to an end. He embarks on a speaking tour of the south to shore up Whiggian support and unify the party by next November. Unfortunately, the Know-Nothings are in full force in New England, even producing merchandise such as Know-Nothing Swaddling Clothes and Know-Nothing Smoking Hemp. If the Whigs do not please the Know-Nothings, the Know-Nothings will surely cast their lot with the Democrats.

**1852**-Deep within a smoke-filled room at the Whig’s Distlefink Convention, the decision is made to cast over New England for New York and Pennsylvania. A plan is hatched that Henry Clay Freilinghuysen shall ride incognito to the KN convention, and convince them to run as a third party. They nominate Millard Filmore, and New England nativists bolt to the party. Enough votes are stolen, and enough Southern Whigs are roused, that Whig candidate William Seward, Filmore, and Democrat Thomas Trouser deadlock and the election goes to Congress, though not until the next congressional session due to a fumigation issue. Unfortunately for the Whigs, independent Know-Nothings meant Know-Nothing congressmen, who cooperated with the Democrats to give Thomas Trouser the White House. Distlefink and Pennsylvania remain a Whig hotspot, however, with Increase George representative, though John Freilinghuysen is mayor once again.

**1853**-Governor Tchantlemoapinglurghuy is caught making Nativist statements to Romulus the Racoon of Whigworld. Outrage over this is so great that PIGC runs its own candidate, Timothy MacManus of Altoona, who manages to win enough voters from the Whigs and the Democrats to win the Governor’s chair and dampens the Whigmania.

**1854**-The new PIGC party proves popular in Distlefink. Part of this is the response of Pro-Slavery Southern Whigs to the Kansas crisis. Distlefink is mostly an Anti-Slavery party, and the headlines about Whigs bolting to Kansas to turn it into a Slave State is the opposite of what the Whigs need. Thus, PIGC’s own Ulrich Hungadunga takes the Representative’s seat.

**1855-**The Whigs are splintering nationwide, but at their last Distleflink Convention they make their final national agreement: John C. Fremont, adventurer and statesman, will try for the presidency.

**1856-**PIGC continues its control of the Governor's and Representative's chairs with McManus and Hungadunga reelected. The Southern Whigs do not deliver nationally, and support for Fremont is confined to the North, allowing Democrat James Buchanan to win. The Whigs will fall swiftly apart over the next four years. John Freilinghuysen wins another term as Mayor.

**1857-**The breakup begins with what was supposed to be a respectful debate between Galusha Freilinghuysen, Jr. and Southerner Haunches Joshland (W). It erupts into a fistfight over the Kansas question, and the possibility of a Whig split looms.

**1858-**The Whigs split. The new northern Republican Party (R) plays it safe by appealing directly to PIGC and nominating Hungadunga for a third term as representative. The Southern Whigs have yet to reorganize into their own party. (Finally, a different party to write about!)

**1859-** Pennsylvania has its first Republican governor. McManus's son Tooka McManus defeats Thomas Trouser's last campaign before his retirement the next year. The Republicans also choose Abraham Lincoln as their first presidential nominee.

**1860-**The Southern Whigs become the Constitutional Union party (CU). Whigworld accordingly splits into Republicanworld and Constitutionalunionworld. Romulus the Racoon is now only allowed to speak on the Bank Issue, which has been dead and thus non divisive for many years. With the South now solidly democrat, the North disillusioned with Northern Democrat pick Stephen Douglas, and the CU controlling the Border States, the Republicans carry New York and Pennsylvania, as well as most of the North. They have the White House, but rumblings of secession begin from South Carolina. Henry Clay Freilinghuysen wins the Mayor's office against Zeus Trouser, signalling that the twin dynasties of Freilinghuysen and Trouser will continue for many years to come.

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## C

The man staggered into the ballroom. He stared at the multitude for an instant, then lurched farther inside. He could hardly see because it was dark, but despite his best efforts, he did not trip much. He knew there was a crowd that night, as he kept crashing into them, but he couldn't make out their features. He was so excited he was getting disoriented. He could tell by his injuries that the floor was made of jagged, bumpy stones. It was a long, painful walk and he nearly succumbed to bloody exhaustion, but he played host to a sense of dread that more pain was to come. He knew not who he was to meet on the other side, even after his long, bruise-laden journey. He desperately hoped it would be worth it as he fell down once more, and then he hoped that whoever it was would be pleased with his bedraggled self. Soon he found that he was getting nearer to the end of the room, and this was confirmed when he crashed into the wall. He could finally see who he was to meet, sitting in the largest and softest chair he had seen since leaving his house. She barely stirred, throwing him off so much that he vomited a little. He wanted to talk to her, but the pain and the crushing nervousness made him fall to the floor once again, and he spoke not as a result. He barfed from sheer embarrassment at her proud silence. Eventually she spoke words so crushing he begged her to take them back. But she never did.

## A

The man hesitantly stepped into the cavernous room. He squinted, trying to see the wall, then began the walk. He could barely see, barely enough to keep his bearings. He had heard of The Event, but he recognized nobody due to the pale lighting. His excitement overwhelmed him. He noticed the cold stone of the floor. The room was long and the walk exhausted him, and his nervousness nearly made him give up. He wondered who he had come so far to see, but knew they sat at the far end of the dank chamber. He hoped his hunch was correct, but worried that it was horribly wrong. Finally he could see the distant wall. Finally he saw the lady he was looking for, sitting on a throne that barely illuminated her. Her stillness frightened him. He said something, but was so filled with fear of offending the woman on the throne he silenced herself. More unnerving than her stillness was *her* silence. Finally she spoke, and he wished she had said anything else. But his fate was sealed..

–*Ynarldo*

## Clipped Monologue

Inside my gray box  
The living spirit  
sliced the feudal skin  
Between our rib bones,  
Shaping cravasses even  
Higher.  
The libraries of surgeons  
Creak without complaint.  
Who drinks the broth of our  
Stomachs as we rot?

– Satya McCarthy-Rotella

Mobile tattoos  
Cancerous as they grow  
Spreading and crawling  
With each elbow  
Corrupting the flesh  
No way back  
No cure  
No hope  
More soap  
No.  
They fill with greed  
Quick movements distract them  
Did they see us  
On the cable tv  
Idiot!  
You move with illness  
You reek with benevolence  
You fool!  
He spat bits of rot from his mouth  
To survive  
You mustn't be dead  
You mustn't tread those feet  
He cries  
Furcifer!  
you'll get us killed  
You don't speak that tongue  
Shhh  
You hear?

The whispers  
The serpent  
He laughs  
And he morphs  
Venom drips  
on the tile  
Scales scraping  
The inner casing  
He waits for no one  
And then he is gone  
But  
Not without  
Leaving  
A mobile tattoo  
Covered in booze

– *Annabelle Buyck*

## **Oh It's Humble.**

Oh it's hard to be able to hum  
It's hard to daze a disco of dizzying disastrous daisies  
A wiley wild wonderland of wondrous wiggling worms

Welcome to the garden  
The warden is hardened to the cartons of milk waiting at the gates  
It waits to waste, it chokes with they're salty waking meat hooks

Five smaller pegs on the metacarpus of a losing campaign  
Their determination never wanes though weakens with Thymes  
Lips numb from wordless songs

Disagreements of twisted lip  
Knees bent like a hunchbacks'  
Oh it's a hard to keep track, when the flaming whip cracks

A hand that deals in controversy, handles in hordes  
Hannibal lecturer lectures a kindergarten class  
"Don't run with Scissors Edward!"

Goodbye to the garden  
The animals jargon inconceivable, knows  
You can't see it over the fog from the turtle snapping dogs

*– Reuben Miller*

## **Dr. Murder 3: Lëtzebuerg Virun Allem**

*Grayson Hendrix*

One Earth was not enough for the great Dr. Murder to conquer. He had spent days and days in his presidential palace (a giant statue of Murder converted into a building, on the former location of the UN Headquarters) pondering how to quench his insatiable thirst for putting flags on dirt. Naturally, he looked to the past for guidance. He had died in his conquests many times before: crashing into a “tree,” getting shot by a vengeful Frenchman, getting trapped under a pool tarp, the Pepsi™ incident, *salmon*, and a particularly messy jaywalking fiasco. Yet, his loyal crew of Murderist followers always knew just the right Necromancer to call. Or exorcist, if he accidentally turned into a ghost. His boys down in that fearsomely frightening village of Salem, Virginia seemed to be in contact with the black magic type. So, he theorized: If they could bring back a dead man, exorcise a ghost, and somehow convince him that trees were real, then they could do anything! What he needed was a way to conquer more land, on a different Earth.

Murder took the train to Salem; he had ordered the construction of high-speed rail across the US after President Landgrab (a horrible person, by the way) signed the treaty of surrender to Greater Luxembourg. I mean, what kind of country as important as the US wouldn't have a decent, functioning high-speed rail program. It'd be ridiculous! Very, very ridiculous. The locomotive he was in was his personal “KinnekZuch” train, outfitted with a protective layer of tons and tons of steel. So much steel in fact, that the train could barely even move. To solve this he used his genius “pretend there is no problem and wait a long time” technique. After about 18 hours, he could tell that he was approaching Salem due to the atmosphere of complete evil and ancient fury that began to permeate the air. Knowing better than to go undisguised, he donned a top-hat, cigar, and morning dress: a typical outfit for a

Salem resident. When he stepped off the train and into Salem's Neville Chamberlain Memorial Station. There, president of the Salem Murderists, John McAfee, greeted him with a hug and a-

“Welcome to Salem, home to many different parasitic worms and the finest Hardee's in Greater Virginia!” Murder calmly responded,

“John McCoffee, I need wizards to help me find more dirt.”

“Wizards, eh? I know a couple. Say, meet me at Edward Heath Memorial Diner at 6pm, they've got pie that'll kill ya!”

And so, to waste the couple hours before 6 o'clock, Murder spent his time creeping around this dismal, decrepit dungeon of a city. He witnessed the horror of an “Old Dominion” music show at a seedy joint known as a “Civic Center” and almost had a run-in with a local paramilitary known as the “Salvation Army.” Finally, the clock struck six, and it was time to meet the magicians who would help him further the Empire.

The Edward Heath Memorial Diner was one of the few safe places in Salem, Murder thought. He had been there once, during MurderCon 2019, but he had not heard of these pies that could kill him until John McAfee told him about them. So, as he carefully mosied in, he braced himself for fatal pie action. Luckily, instead of murderous pie, there was a table waiting for him, with John McAfee and two mysterious others. He took his seat and examined the two figures that sat across from him. They were both dressed in the Dr. Murder Fan Club official uniform, which included neon green basketball shorts and a slightly ripped Slayer t-shirt, the outfit he wore during his famous battle with the entire population of Utah.

One of the two, a short woman, started, “Listen, Mr. Murder, we, as members of your highly esteemed fan club, have a solution to your predicament of having conquered the entire Earth. Here is our proposal: time travel.”

“How is time travel going to get me more land?” replied Murder.

“It’s simple, if you travel back in time, before you were born, you can conquer then, and go further back, and conquer more! It’s foolproof! Here, take this, I’ll tell you how it works.” the woman handed Murder an oblong wooden object with various symbols on it, and a few buttons.

The lady continued, “What you’ll want to do after you’ve prepared your invading army is don a protective helmet, recite the oath of mur-”

Before she could finish her explanation, Dr. Murder had pushed a few buttons and spoke some latin he remembered from 9th grade and was now being transported across time to the far off year of 2003, 34 years ago. A man of his talents needed no army, especially in such a rudimentary time. He himself had no idea what year it was. Suspecting he may have been transported to ancient days, he began to wander around the old Salem. He doubled down on his suspicions after he noticed the remarkable condition of the city. No longer did the stench of misery and trout stick in his nose, and the buildings were all intact. It was as if something that was keeping the universe pure and holy hadn’t quite left yet. In fact, he had an immensely strong feeling that something was going incredibly right in the world. What could it be? He ran up to a stranger and yelled,

“Sir! What year is it? And what godly beings are guarding your settlement?” questioned Murder.

The old man, dressed in khakis, replied, “Er, uh, 2003 and no godly beings in particular protect Salem except maybe... God. Are-are you doing a Back to the Future bit here?”

“No! I hate the 80s and everything to do with it. Good riddance, you are no longer needed!”

Murder marched forward as he began to remember something. 2003... that was the year he finally decided to pursue the art of bloodlust and conquest... but why? Something happened this year, something awful. He just had to figure out what. His first

stop would be Washington, D.C. Maybe something bad was happening politically...

—

“I firmly believe that we can have peace between humans and fish.” said George W. Bush, speaking to a crowd of reporters. Dr. Murder was in the crowd too, observing.

“Certainly, this must be it!” he thought to himself, “The greatest power in the world signed a humiliating peace treaty with fish, how could that not send you down a spiral of eternal rage?” Dr. Murder ran on stage, and shouted for the whole world to hear.

**“Bush! Don’t you dare surrender to those cowardly fish!”** The audience gasped in awe of the insane man that had stumbled on stage.

**“Since its beginnings, the US has surrendered to no foe! Lost no wars! Except for maybe the war on drugs, pretty sure drugs won that one, but uh we are a proud nation! One whose people shall never give in to the demands of the subhuman fish! So I say, take arms, citizens! To the front lines! Let no fish be left swimming!”**

Most of the audience thought this was absolutely batshit crazy, but all of them cheered anyway. With such fire and passion in his speech, how could you not? Ignoring the fact that Bush was giving a speech about dam removals, he made a good point! Dr. Murder used this time to escape by hiding under the stage until Secret Service left, a tactic which proved surprisingly effective. He was sure that this would stoke the fires of war. Still, the feeling that something was wrong hadn’t left him. It was telling him something... no, *somewhere*... a most hideous city in fact. A place worse than Salem, much worse, a place he hated with all of his heart and soul. **New York City.**

He had taken the Amtrak to NYC, imagining it would be similar in quality to the rails he had built after completely annihilating all infrastructure in the US in an attempt to please libertarians. It was not. With high prices, miserable state of tracks, and overall lack of care, this was a new kind of hell, a monument to his sins, he thought. He also thought he might be too upset over a train of middling quality (he wasn't, Amtrak is objectively something you should be crying and screaming about). Never in his life had he been this disappointed. Except for in 2003. When something awful happened. Presumably in New York, where most awful things happen.

He arrived in Time Square, and could barely contain his disgust. The people, the ads, the "entertainers." It was sickening. Regardless, he knew what he sought had to be close. He was certain, only partially because of his Dr. Murder Fan Club™ Unfortunate-Event Locating Ring™. He began to walk around this hideous city when after a few minutes he stopped dead in his tracks as he saw where he needed to be. He remembered it all now. He checked the date on a newspaper, April 13, 2003. Oh god, he had to get there quick. Without hesitation, he flung open the doors to MTV headquarters and rushed inside.

—

Three men sat at a desk, discussing current affairs while signing papers.

"So, Bush declared war on fish now, eh?" A tall man said.

"I guess it's what the public wants..." A much more reasonably sized one replied. The three men were getting ready to sign a document labelled "Cancellation of Clone High." Before they could, a man burst through the door and shouted to them,

**"Don't you dare sign that paper!** I came to this land and time to conquer! But, I had forgotten why I felt the need to. Clone

High is a perfect and pure television comedy series! If you sign that paper, a younger, more angsty version of me in Luxembourg will earn his doctorate in murder, and conquer the world!" The men all looked at each other for a moment, before laying down their pens. One man spoke up.

"My name is Tim, these are my brothers, Vinny and Michael. We are the founders of MTV, and the creators of the Murderist ideology. We didn't expect to see you here, or this... old, Mr. Murder."

Dr. Murder was stunned, what were they even saying? Why didn't Michael speak first so they could keep the order of MTV, instead of introducing them as TVM?

"We cancelled Clone High in order to cause chaos in **your** life. A show so perfect doesn't deserve to be cancelled. It has witty dialogue, stylized animation, and lovable characters, all available in a DVD boxset releasing in 2004 with two discs and special features, for only \$14.99! What's not to love? But, we had to kill it. So that you would go mad. You see, we are psychologists. We knew this would break you. We had studied many people, and you were the right candidate."

"Candidates for what?" Murder asked.

Michael spoke up, "Well, you see, we thought that it would be really **FUNNY** if you-"

Dr. Murder took out his Clone High themed pistol and shot all three of them before they could finish. It was getting boring, to be honest. He had done good. He had saved the world. Maybe, he didn't need to conquer at all...

Suddenly, the Earth began to shake. Buildings began tearing themselves apart outside and floating. Random parts of reality folded in on themselves. What was happening? And on top of that, Michael had survived the shot, but barely.

"You idiot! Now we can't cancel Clone High, all three of us needed to sign that!" Michael screamed.

“Uh, good? What the hell is going on?” Murder replied. For once in his life, he felt fear.

“You changed the timeline too much, you cretin! Now you’ve caused a paradox. If you never get upset about Clone High ending, you never conquer the world, and if you never conquer the world, you never time travel, which means... paradox! This universe can’t exist! Now all of time is going to collapse because of your love for Clone High! You boob!”

As the universe began to fade to a black nothingness and static, Murder pondered to himself: had all the conquest, blood, shenanigans, and humorous escapades been worth it? Yes, yes it was worth it. It was really funny. In seconds, time itself unraveled and the universe as we know it was ended by Dr. Murder.

And the moral of it all? Amtrak fucking sucks.





# Featuring:

Grayson Hendrix

Reuben Miller

Annabelle Buyck

Satya McCarthy-Rotella

Ava Sackett

Charlie Angleberger

Xan Whitt

Madeline Dillon

*Cover image by Lucy Burnett*

Community High School  
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November 2020