

Dr. N
VS
Billion Dollar Jake

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With Forward By
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Edited and other forward by Tracy LeClere

Acknowledgments

To Tracy, for taking the time to listen to me go on and on about Dr. N and doing my editing for me.

To my family, for helping me grow and learn to live my life to its fullest potential. And even though we hit our rough spots.

To Wendy, for taking us in, in our time of need giving us a place to say.

To April, Mike, and their three boys. For being great friends.

To Butch, for being a very helpful and loving person.

To Chris, who is still a great friend.

To Doctor Steel. Who's been very kind with his help. And creating music that inspires the imagination.

Forwards.

Written with imagination, wit and no doubt speaking from personal experience, Dr. N gnaws on the chewy center of good and evil. This tale of superhero-comedy-noir provides a unique look into the inhabitants of Flatland and reminds us that things are not always as they seem.
~Dr. Phineas Waldolf Steel™

"Children are natural storytellers. Somehow, most of us lose this ability over time. How many times did you hear the command to "stop telling stories" from adults as you grew up? And so, eventually, our glorious individual worlds, our superheroes and invisible friends, the faeries and monsters who accompany us through childhood, those once beloved creatures (which adults are too blind to see) leave us. Jesse Elkins remembers how to tell a Story.

There are themes of good and evil, love and hate, the nature of what it means to be one's self, and, if you want, a really good adventure yarn. Read it as escapism, as philosophy, but most of all, read it, please.

It's a Story. Connect to an imaginary world where stuffed animals may be robots, and masked men may fly, but where even Mad Scientists can wind up unemployed. Not so different from our own world, eh?"

Tracy LeClere -

In the beginning, there where raccoons.

It was just another day in Flatville. Unlike its other counterparts across the planet, superheroes and their archenemies reside in this metropolis.

Not that its inhabitants take notice anyway. Even if the citizens did indeed notice, they would not be affected any more than they would be by weekend sports. They might place bets on the triumph of good over evil or the inevitable destruction of a major town monument.

Yet, on this warm day in Flatville, amidst the city sounds, one can hear the resonance of super powers fluttering in assorted directions.

On a street corner, next to one the city's many parking lots, stood an industrial-sized cardboard box bearing the letters "*Sold by J.J. Realty.*"

Within the box, it was furnished like a small apartment, though this abode still had the major inconveniences of rain damage and the onslaught of unwelcome intruders.

Dr. N grumbled as he tossed his newest letter of rejection onto a nearby coffee table. He could tell because the word rejection was stamped in big bold red letter all across the envelope.

It was a denial from the city of New Jersey for him to expand his laboratory underground or even be considered funding for such a ludicrous project. He was going to do it anyway, but at least this way he wouldn't have had to pay for it.

This action disturbed his small raccoon Mr. Kitty. As Dr. N aimlessly wandered around his dwelling, he caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror. He quickly noted that his body was not muscular in any sense, but he was robust enough to be considered healthy.

One could tell by looking at him that although he had a boyish face, he was a man of twenty-three with a crisp white stripe parting down the middle of his jet black hair. If one had the opportunity, one could see that his eyes were blue behind his black-rimmed 3-D sunglasses.

He shuffled his loose-fitting lab coat, baring his black tank top and blue jeans, to hastily button his coat up once more. Dr. N was a little self-conscious about the way he was dressed, but only a little.

As Dr. N turned toward his living room, he heard the shrieking sound of parting air currents. No sooner had Dr. N's lips rounded to utter the word "What?", did he realize it was the sound of someone flying at supersonic speed.

Hero blasted through the ceiling of Dr. N's lair, landing directly on the black pleather couch. Pieces of cardboard lay scattered about the floor as Hero coughed with a laugh in his voice.

"Whew! That was great!" Hero said as he wiped the shreds of cardboard off of his sleeve. With a jump, he stood tall on the plushy purple carpeting, pointing a finger at Dr. N.

"Halt, villain!" Hero yelled at him. Dr. N looked at Hero's finger then to his face.

"I am not playing this game today." Dr. N said as he sat down.

"What game?" Hero asked disappointedly and pouted. "When are we going to fight?"

Dr. N shook his head as Hero watched the top of the box began to automatically repair itself.

"Hey! That's cool... when did you put that in?" Hero asked as Dr. N took a step back from him. This six-foot man with the strength that would make even the mightiest of hero's green with envy was not what one could call the brightest bulb in the box. Or at least not that Dr. N could ever tell.

"Ever since I realized that you keep crashing into my home." Dr. N replied. "I'm not going to, nor will I ever fight you." Dr. N said with a smile on his face.

"What?" Hero asked surprised.

"I'll never fight you!" Dr. N yelled.

Hero looked around him, his eyes briefly distracted by the lavish furnishings then back to Dr. N.

"I think maybe this is a bad time! I'll come back later." Hero yelled as he took flight, tearing through the top of the box again.

Cardboard rained like confetti as Dr. N clawed his fingers at his sides in frustration. He watched yet again as the gaping hole in the ceiling immediately began to mend itself.

Not even two seconds later there was a light knock on the front of the cardboard doors. At least a light a knock as you could manage on heavily refurbished paper.

"Go away!" Dr. N shouted as he looked to his side.

Mr. Kitty; now mysteriously on the other side of the room, was sitting atop of an open book quietly reading the browned pages of an old physics theory book.

Outside, the knocking persisted until a dark brown gloved hand broke clean through the front door, prompting Dr. N to stand at the ready.

"Sorry." said the voice said from outside.

Already Dr. N was starting to feel uneasy. The door tore open a bit little more, and soon a man in a black mask stood directly in front of Dr. N.

"Who is it?" Dr. N began to ask as he walked toward the man. "Billy?" Dr. N whispered, "Are you feeling okay?"

The Masked Weirdo hastily reversed and positioned himself into a martial arts stance. His presence appeared to make him more like a bad frilly imitation of a matador than a superhero.

"Voila! Fear me, for I am The Masked Weirdo! " The Masked Weirdo screamed.

Dr. N looked at him, placed his hand on his face, and tilted his head to one side.

"I could call you Billy." Dr. N said as the Masked Weirdo returned to a normal stance.

"Don't call me that! My mother calls me that. This is my new look. What do you think?" The Masked Weirdo asked. He had an irritated tone of voice, but he sounded like a normal person, that was the scary part.

Dr. N lifted his head again and tapped his finger on his chin, taking a backwards step. "Well..." Dr. N said, "It is better than a rubber suit." He said as a shiver ran down his spine.

Images of the first time he saw Hero threatened to re-surface at him but where feverishly restrained. He turned back inside to collect his rejection letter.

"Well..." The Masked Weirdo began when a pair of black nun-chucks flew across the room, knocking him out cold. As the masked man fell to the ground, Dr. N turned around to find his raccoon sitting a few feet from them, donned in ninja garb. The appearance of innocence emanated from the raccoon, but Dr. N knew better.

"Mr. Kitty..." Dr. N began as he glanced back to see The Masked Weirdo lying on the floor with a smile on his face. "Now what do I do with him?" Dr. N asked shaking his head and staring intently at the raccoon. "I don't care if he owes you money." Dr. N said, answering a phantom question.

Dr. N poked open the cardboard door and peered outside to find that the coast was clear. A few seconds later, he emerged from his home as he hauled The Masked Weirdo out of the door by his shoulders.

"Getting a little pudgy aren't you, Billy?" Dr. N asked rhetorically as he heaved the unconscious man past the cardboard box. He took the next left toward the parking lot just outside the box. He then held The Masked Weirdo up by one arm and lurched across the parking lot. Dr. N soon spotted his busted up Festival parked next to a fire hydrant.

After what seemed to be hours...

The Masked Weirdo awoke to the fleeting sound of traffic and horns to find the wind blowing in his face. He opened his eyes and gazed into the sky. He tried to get up only to find that he had been tied to the top of a car that was barreling down the city street.

"Hey! What's going on?" he yelled.

"Keep it down up there!" Dr. N replied as he turned the corner. The Masked Weirdo's body jerked, and he yelped as the ropes tightened around his pinned body. Dr. N peered over to the raccoon in the passenger seat. Although not being one for speeds constituting to his own level of danger. Mr. Kitty stayed in place as if he wasn't even moving at all.

As Dr. N passed a large billboard and heard the sound of sirens buzzing behind him, he swore under his breath and pulled his car to the side of the road.

The police vehicle parked directly behind the Festival and soon, an unhappy looking stout police constable emerged. Dr. N having placed both hands on the wheel and positioning his head straight ahead, noticed the officer walking solidly toward him. As the officer tapped the window frame, the rear view mirror creaked then fell shattering on the street.

"We meet again, Mr. N." Officer Freeze O'Brood said in his heavy Irish accent, "Could you step out of the car please?" Officer O'Brood pulled out a little pad from his burley uniform pocket and began to write something down.

"Twenty five dollars for littering?" Dr. N asked as he received the ticket.

Dr. N noticed a twitch in his eye from behind the officer's small spectacles. The Masked Weirdo screeched again. Dr. N played with his seat belt as an innocent grin crossed his lips.

"Help me!" The Masked Weirdo yelled struggling against the ropes.

"You eh...know you got someone tied up on top of yer car, Mr. N?" Officer O'Brood asked.

"This guy is crazy!" chimed The Masked Weirdo's voice.

"Oh, don't worry, Officer. He's just an old friend from out of town. I was showing him the sights." Dr. N said with a grin.

Officer O'Brood backed up as Dr. N exited the vehicle closing the door behind him leaning against the car.

"Mr. N, yer starting to attract a crowd here. I'd throw you in jail myself. Let's not forget what a terrible villain you are." Officer O'Brood said as he pushed his hat up. Adjusting his sunglasses.

Dr. N leaned closer to the officer.
"I'm the greatest mad scientist there ever was."

Officer O'Brood stared at him for few moments before clearing his throat. "Yeah, and I'm the pope. Your fine is due by Sunday. Have a nice day." Officer O'Brood said as turned towards his squad car. With his engine blaring, Officer O'Brood tore off down the street. People in the small crowd that had gathered conversed in hushed voices and shook their heads.

"You heard the man, get me down!" The Masked Weirdo cried, and with a reluctant sigh, Dr. N pulled the loose end of the rope freeing the man on top of his car. The crowd left with disinterest hanging in their voices.

"I was just going to dump you in an alley, Billy. That's all." Dr. N said, crossing his arms. The Masked Weirdo lept to his feet and tore the ropes from his person.

"Maybe I wanted your help. Did you ever think of that?" The Masked Weirdo said as Dr. N stared at him.

"Get off my car!" Dr. N yelled.

Just to spite him, the Masked Weirdo jumped up and down on the car, giving the shocks (or lack there of) a nice work out. The busted vehicle creaked with a painful groan before the back bumper fell off.

"I don't help people." Dr. N said sighing.

The Masked Weirdo looked at the bumper for a few moments then to Dr. N. "I can promise you there is a lot of money involved."

Dr. N pushed himself off the car and glared at The Masked Weirdo, intrigued nonetheless. The Masked Weirdo took the hint, trying to find a safe way to get off the car. With a slip of the foot,

The Masked Weirdo slipped on his cape, fell off the car then landed on his back with a painful grunt.

"Money you say?" The idea of some real work invoked Dr. N's interest for if there was one thing he needed, it was money. The Masked Weirdo winced pulling himself up with a pathetic grin, and with even a more pathetic sounding noise, adjusted his posture. Dr. N rolled his eyes before walking past him.

"Come on, Shnappers is a little up the street. We can discuss this matter there in private." He concluded as he strode toward the well-known local bar.

Dr. N took a quick drink from his glass, wishing that his Long Island Ice Tea was regular old beer. Dr. N set an arm behind his head, leaning back in his chair.

"I am but a humble mad scientist, what could you possibly need my help with?" Dr. N inquired.

"You see my powers are not particularly up to par." The Masked Weirdo stuttered as he whispered in an insecure tone.

"Well, what can you do?" Dr. N asked taking another drink.

"I'm a master in martial arts, and I can hold my breath indefinitely."

Dr. N looked inquisitively at him. "You mean to tell me that you are a master of martial arts, yet you need my help?"

"I need you to help me defeat Billion Dollar Jake."

Dr. N abruptly spit his beverage out onto The Masked Weirdo's face and he gasped for breath.

"Billion-Dollar Jake?" Dr. N repeated as he stared intently at the Masked Weirdo, who was now nodding and wiping his face.

Out of the corner of his eye, Dr. N could see that Mr. Kitty was sitting on a bar table staring at the bartender.

"What do you want?" Dr. N heard the large stingy-looking bartender ask as he set a glass down in front of Mr. Kitty. "We don't serve your kind in here." The bartender growled as Mr. Kitty continued

his rigid stare. A few of the patrons playing darts laughed at the scene.

Dr. N cleaned himself up and heard a loud crash from the bar area behind him. He could make out the screams of the bartender, but paid little attention to them.

"So, you pissed off Billion-Dollar Jake. Might I inquire how?" Dr. N asked.

"It went like this," The Masked Weirdo started, "I was completing my meeting at Heroes Anonymous when this real fancy limousine drove pass. It was dark out and the only light gleaming from the street lamp gave the night an eerie and unbecoming feeling."

Dr. N pushed up his glasses with a small sigh. "Would you get on with it already?" Dr. N asked anxiously. The Masked Weirdo nodded then ducked as a bottle flew past his head.

"So his lackey gets out and yells, Hey, Six-Billion, it's that guy that owes you

money. So I look at him and I'm say *jerk* then the next thing I know Jake gets out of the limo, does his smiling thing, and flicked his damn hat."

"And then?" Dr. N asked cleaning up the rest of his drink.

"I dunno. I ran because he could break me in half like a toothpick."

Dr. N just glanced at him and listened to the bartender in the background crying for mercy. Suddenly, the crying stopped and a sound of shattering glass crashed through the building. Dr. N noticed his small fluffy companion perched atop stomach of the bartender, broken glass lay strewn about the floor.

"All right, Mr. Kitty. No more booze for you!" Dr. N exclaimed. He turned back to the Masked Weirdo feeling slightly embarrassed by the antics of his fuzzy friend, "I'm thinking of sending him to Android Alcoholics Anonymous." Dr. N explained as a deafening silence came

across the room.

"Billy, I'll try to take care of Billion Dollar Jake, but only if you promise to leave me alone." Dr. N said, trying to change the topic. He turned to see the crowd of patrons staring at the bartender then to him.

"Really?" The Masked Weirdo asked, rising from his seat excitedly.

"And." Dr. N exclaimed, he turned back to face Billy with Mr. Kitty perched on top of his head, "You pay me! In cash! Okay two things, you leave me alone and you pay me in cash."

The Masked Weirdo agreed incoherently once more then shook Dr. N's hand. "Oh, thank you! Thank you very much."

Dr. N rolled his eyes, then stood up, heading to the front door. The bartender yelped as Dr. N stepped on his gut and headed toward the dark street.

He got in his car and started the piece of junk. Soon, the pale blue car took off

down the street in a bustling roar.

Ode to a mad scientist

When Dr. N got home, he parked on the side of the road closest to his box. There was a chilly breeze in the air and his eyes wandered to an ally just down the street. As he took in the air and thought over the events of the day, he decided he could use a walk.

The alleyway was gloomy and lonesome. Rats skittered and screeched as they ran past his feet as he walked down the block.

Flickering lamp lights were his only guide to his safe haven. There was some comfort though.

Just before he returned to his miserable existence, he could hear a tuneful harmony which grew in volume as he walked closer to the source.

As he approached a worn and weary music shop, he noticed a stage within the store

where only elegant pair of feminine hands could be seen gliding delicately across the yellowed ivory keys of a dilapidated piano. A wooden crate welcomed him by the broken window as he noticed each of her fine-grained fingers plucked a haunting melody that soothed Dr. N's aching heart. Mr. Kitty was nestled snugly in his coat pocket.

"Dr. N?" the woman's voice assumed in a soft sultry tone. "It's been a long time."

Dr. N smiled as he leaned against the grainy brick building.

"I know. It's been too long."

"Still a mad scientist?" She asked in a bemused tone.

"I don't know anymore." He sighed.

He closed his exhausted eyes as the woman's nimble fingers continued to play. Then allowed the melody to engulf and ease the pain of the world around him.

"Is this song bothering you?" the woman asked eloquently holding her note steady.

"No, please..." Dr. N said with a sigh,
"...keep playing."

"A little birdie told me." The woman
began as she ended her song, "That you're
going to face down Billion Dollar Jake."

Dr. N sat up looking at the woman's
hands. "Who told you that?" he asked.

A playful laugh was all he heard.

"I have my sources, and I've grown to
like you."

Dr. N laughed. "So then you'll let me
see you soon."

Silence.

"Sorry, I should not have been so
forward." Dr. N responded.

"It's alright." The mysterious said as
she began to play again.

Dr. N looked down at Mr. Kitty, who now
sleeping in his pocket, if you could call
staring straight ahead sleeping. His little
black plastic nose was all that one could
use to distinguish him.

The strange woman's finger's began

to ballet on two low notes of the silvery keys, another tune pouring into the mix as her other fingers joined in.

"I have to find a way to defeat him, but I don't know what he's capable of."

The music of the piano picked up, as she played double handed, rounding all the energy back into simple notes.

"All the information I have states he is rich. Nothing more. Your friend is probably scared to death over something he could easily overcome."

Through the following moments of silence, she once again spoke, "Have you seen much of Vander lately?" Dr. N shook his head.

"Villains Anonymous group has become chaos. Without him, there isn't any order. That's why I left the group for a little while." Dr. N said as he listened to the woman's laughter.

"Vander is a pretty boy. A group like Villains Anonymous would bore him easily.

No matter how much he tries to play it down, he is what he is. Come to think of it, he is probably off snuggling up close to someone." She said with a light chuckle in her voice.

In the distance dogs began to bark, indicating an act of villainy in progress. The night air blew strong, but not enough to shake the dark curtain surrounding the mysterious woman.

"I am sure you'll find a way to outsmart Jake. Until then, farewell." she said as the lights from inside began to dim.

"No, don't go." pleaded Dr. N as he stood up pulling the curtain back only to find the room was dark and not a soul was to be found.

"Goodbye." He whispered in disappointment as he continued to walk home thinking that tonight he would sleep and dream of the beautiful voice behind the curtain

Right to disassemble

The next morning, he awoke on his cot weary-eyed from the night before. In his black silk lab coat pajamas, he smiled at the thought of dreams filled with a beautiful pair of hands massaging him.

He felt around his pocket and realized Mr. Kitty was gone. Dr. N rubbed his eyes to find the fiend atop of the oak table reading the newspaper. He yawned, shuttering incoherently, his arms stretched down to his sides as he rolled his neck.

"Mmm... bed." He mumbled dreamily as he walked towards the desk and stole a glance at the paper.

Mr. Kitty had disappeared again as Dr. N sat down. Off in the little kitchen, tucked away in a corner, the sound of eggs frying could be heard. Dr. N sniffed with delight, reading the newspaper.

"So, Billion-Dollar Jake is holding gala event at his mansion." Dr. N said to

himself.

"Oppenheimer house, huh? I think I have an idea." He said.

A grin crept across his youthful face. He scattered to his wardrobe to find his most villainous lab coat. It was something he managed to construct at an early age, updating it whenever he could. It was a specially designed lab coat that would let him take serious amounts of damage without being to beat up.

An intuitive feeling in his veins started to get stronger, Dr. N wandered over to the front door.

"3... 2...1..." Dr. N counted as he called to the sky.

"Villain!" Hero shouted flying into the front door. "Oh, great!" Hero yelled tripping over Dr. N's foot and landing on the hard floor, face first with a sickening clunk.

"I don't have time today Hero." Dr. N said, lifting the paper again.

"But..." Hero protested picking himself up. Diligently he dusted off his eye-burning neon blue suit with matching tights and black cape. Hero sniffed once...twice.

"I thought we were rivals?" he asked, changing the subject. Dr. N threw his paper down in a fit of frustration, walked over to Hero, grabbed him by the cape, pulled the cape down over his head and lead him to the door. Throwing him out on his butt. "Hey!" Hero called out.

Dr. N swiftly walked to the door, bending Hero over. Dr. N walked around behind Hero and kicked Hero out the door.

"Thanks!" Hero shouted as he hit the pavement outside the door. "My turn!"

"Get lost!" Dr. N shouted back at him.

Dr. N sighed once more and marveled to see Mr. Kitty sitting on a thick brown book entitled "*History at a Glance.*"

"A good idea as usual." Dr. N said to

his friend as he grabbed the book.

"I think I got it now." Hero, said standing a few feet from the doorway. The large brown tattered book flew across the pavement hitting Hero in the nose. "On second thought." Hero began as a little blood ran over his lip. "I think I'll leave." After moment of silence, Hero got the idea and left.

Dr. N grumbled as he plopped down in his chair.

"So, I get rid of Jake, and then I get money. I'm smarter than this guy." Dr. N said. His eyes soon lazed looking over to Mr. Kitty sitting on the table next to him. "Right?" he asked as an image of a gravestone flashed in front of his eyes.

The hours passed by and Dr. N had fallen asleep. It wasn't until he had awoken that he saw the sun was setting. Looking out the window, he closed his eyes briefly.

"There was something I was supposed to do today." He pondered for a moment as he stood opening his eyes. His arms stretched towards the heavens as he yawned.

"Weirdo...I mean Billy!" Dr. N cried as he walked to the door. "I forgot about him completely!"

A cold wind blew outside as Dr. N walked next door to the parking lot. A giant blue sign littered with red lettering arched above him. It was the parking lot of R.J Crouser, the lot owner and the realtor's brother.

Dr. N paced his way to his car. He wasn't in too big of a rush to put his life in danger. His car door opened like a silent mist blowing over water. His engine on the other hand, roared like a bull fighting for its mate.

As he drove down the street, thoughts of the events that could happen tonight began to roll through his head. The problem

was he wasn't actually sure how he was going to defeat Billion Dollar Jake.

He reached into his pocket as he watched the signs pass along the road. His eyes glancing every so often to the paper which bore the directions.

His car swerved down the road as cars honked in his path due to his failure to stop at the red light. His car turned left off onto a dirt track heading towards the destination. A glamorous dude ranch, complete with a large fence stretching for miles and a mansion of sorts, stood in the middle of the dry empty land.

Minutes later, another car turned down the same pass immediately following Dr. N.

Dr. N slammed his foot on the brake, bringing the car to a sudden halt. His door flew open, and out he stepped. His feet crushing the small pebbles of dirt on the road before him. He could hear them crunch, like millions of tiny planets exploding beneath his feet.

Behind him, the unnoticed second car slowed to a stop. However, Dr. N's mind was occupied with looking at the magnificently decrepit dwelling let alone the dark figure that waited behind him, watching to make its move.

With a deep breath, Dr. N tugged on his coat and headed towards the ghastly, diabolical house. In the pale moonlight, he glanced behind to see his car. As his eyes followed the trail he finally noticed that a second car had appeared without his knowledge.

Yet, he did not see a driver anywhere. So he shrugged and turned back towards the mansion. Upon arrival at the front door, he knocked briefly and entered.

"Maybe, you should turn a light on."

Mr. Kitty stated.

"Yeah, Yeah..." Dr. N said as his hands fumbled momentarily. His finger soon found a small button on the top of his sunglasses which switched on his night vision. The blue eyepiece scanned the room. From the back corner, he could see the heat signature of what looked to be a woman.

As he began to probe farther into the house his eyes danced about the walls, he couldn't accept everything he was seeing. It was a wasteland, instead of nice furniture all he could see was wall to wall junk that looked like it had been thrown in from the streets.

"Hello?" Dr. N called out before taking another glance around.

He clicked the button on his glasses once more, returning his vision to normal, walking toward the woman. He then heard a faint giggle behind the door which subsequently creaked itself the rest of the way open.

Two warning signs blinked rapidly in front of Dr. N's eyes as the door opened

completely. He noticed that she appeared only to be a simple farm girl with puckered lips and long dirty blond hair. She was a little shorter than him by mere inches. Her arms were at her sides as if she was holding something heavy.

In the blue lens of his sunglasses, a mug shot-like picture appeared. This picture bore the visage of a woman who stood 5'6" with brunette hair and the face only a mother could love. Her picture claimed that her name was Mad Mary; one of Jake's known siblings.

Next to the picture, Dr. N read a list of crimes and offenses that seemed endless. Before his red lens could get a read out of her, he heard the laugh again followed by the revving of a chainsaw.

Dr. N backed up and slowly closed the door. Moving into the main room, Mad Mary followed with a sudden twitch of her head as a saw parted the door in half. Her eyes stared directly into Dr. N's blue lens.

Mary screamed before raising the chainsaw high up in the air as only a madwoman could.

Dr. N darted out of the way just as the metal teeth came down, chewing through the couch. His heart began to race as she bellowed again. He darted back farther into the house throwing random household items behind him in an attempt to slow her down.

The Masked Weirdo, on the other hand, stood next to the front door, staring in disbelief. His smile turned into a frown when Mary's shadow arose out of the corner of his eye. As if by instinct, he too followed Dr. N with Mary chasing after them. Her saw tearing up bits of furniture and wood along the way.

Outside, Dr. N sat in his car battling it to start the engine. Mr. Kitty sat on top of the dashboard and shook his head. "I know! I know!" Dr. N bellowed.

As the car started, The Masked Weirdo ran towards Dr. N's car (leaving his own, in which he had followed Dr. N) with arms flailing. "Wait for me!" he cried as Dr. N put the car in gear and opened the passenger-side door. Mary's chainsaw barely missed them as its blades crashed onto the Festival, causing white sparks to fly about the air.

"Go!" The Masked Weirdo commanded as Dr. N peeled out of the ranch gate covering Mary with dirt.

"Mad Mary!" Dr. N said, as he tried to catch his breath. He pushed his foot on the gas pedal and caused the car to rumble as it passed through the gates out onto the highway. His hands gripped the wheel as if he were choking someone.

The Masked Weirdo inhaled deeply as he noticed the whitening of Dr. N's knuckles. "I tried to tell you it was a trap, but my

cape got caught." Billy said as Dr. N loosened his grip , his free hand adjusting one of his mirrors. From behind them, bright lights filled the car and an unexpected honk caused Dr. N to jump in his seat swerving in the road.

"Um..." The Masked Weirdo said as he pointed out the rear window.

"What now?" Dr. N asked in an irritated fashion. His sunglasses adjusted the magnification lens to the point where he could make out Mad Mary standing on top of a semi-truck holding her chainsaw up in the air. It must have been hiding behind that mansion, but there wasn't anyone driving it, it must have been remote control.

"Ah... fudge." Dr. N said as he pushed his pedal to the floor, the poor vehicle had a good lead but he was sure it wouldn't last for to much longer.

"She's getting closer." The Masked

Weirdo said, turning to face forward.

"I can see that!" Dr. N exclaimed in a frustrated tone.

The Masked Weirdo turned around placing his fingers on the radio tuner. "How about some chase music?" he asked as he turned the radio on. The semi-truck blared its horn, making considerable progress.

The radio sputtered to life: "Welcome to Fueler chainsaw world, producer, manufacture and distributor of Fuelers lightweight noise reduced chainsaws. You won't find any other saw that can cut through just about anything you can imagine."

Billy wanted to cry.

Dr. N glanced out his driver's side mirror, hoping this would all turn out to be just a nightmare.

"We need to find an exit!" The Masked Weirdo screeched like a little girl.

"Resident Hill..." Dr. N said.

The Masked Weirdo looked at him then

straight ahead.

“How far?” Dr. N grumbled mildly overwrought by his lost track of thought by the sounds of chainsaw blades clanging together.

On the side of the road, Dr. N could see the exit for Resident Hill. A large metal fence surrounding a small community was right within their reach.

“Tell me when she jumps.” Dr. N said turning Mr. Kitty around to watch out the back of the car. When the jingle for the commercial had ended The Masked Weirdo mumbled something about switching around the radio stations until Dr. N glared at him.

With an ease of his foot, Dr. N took his foot off the gas pedal, dropping the car to a slower speed.

“Now!” The Masked Weirdo cried out, then turned the radio off.

Dr. N slammed his foot on the pedal,

turned on the wheel and barely made the exit. Mary jumped off to the side, landing on the hard cold cement with the full weight of the semi-truck plummeting over her as it tried to turn the corner.

Dr. N stopped the car in the middle of the passageway and peered behind him. As the semi-truck blared on by, Dr. N turned forward and sunk in his seat.

He closed his eyes, letting his heartbeat slow to a normal rhythm. His hand inched upward turning the radio off with a sharp click.

The Masked Weirdo wiped the sweat off of his forehead, smiling.

"Could be worse, we could live in New York. I hear the villains out there are a bit more rough around the edges."

"Why do they call her Mad Mary?" Dr. N asked calmly.

"Well..." The Masked Weirdo began. "When she was twelve her father put her in a mental institution. They did all sorts of

tests on her and one day, she lost her mind and killed the entire staff. I think her brother came by and helped her escape to his mansion." The Masked Weirdo said staring at Dr. N.

The sound of Mary's giggling could be heard coming from outside.

"Anything else you want to mention?" Dr. N asked as he reached for the shifter.

"She's a freak of nature and should be avoided at all possibilities." The Masked Weirdo said gripping his seat belt.

Dr. N slammed on the gas as Mary jumped on the hood of the car. "From what I'm reading, she kind of resembles the undead." Dr. N said as he headed for the small town. Mary lifted the chainsaw above her head and brought it down through the windshield.

"Go faster!" The Masked Weirdo yelled with wide eyes.

"I can't go any faster!" Dr. N yelled back at him, swerving the car again. Mary held on tightly to the chainsaw jammed into

the windshield as they passed a large sign which read "*Welcome to Resident Hill.*"

Dr. N sped down the road, avoiding the vacant cars parked along the side of the road.

"When I say three we jump, okay?" Dr. N said, taking a sharp turn around a building.

The Masked Weirdo merely nodded as he stared out past Mary. Along every few sets of buildings he could see little red lights following the car as they moved.

"Are you listening to me?" Dr. N shouted.

The Masked Weirdo nodded, watching Mary as she held on to the car, snarling and screeching.

"Gas station!" Dr. N cried out as he grabbed Mr. Kitty and stuffed him in his pocket. The Masked Weirdo opened the door and hurled himself out onto the road.

"That's not three!" Dr. N yelled as he followed The Masked Weirdo in bailing out

of the car.

Dr. N hit the ground and rolled a few times in the dirt. The Masked Weirdo tumbled, became tangled in his cape, and clambered over to Dr. N, who was now watching the car head straight for the gas station.

As the car hit, fire engulfed the entire building, bits and pieces of car embedded themselves into nearby building lamppost, while Dr. N smiled at the amazing show of industrial combustion.

However, just when the two of them thought they had gotten rid of Mary, The Masked Weirdo pointed up to the sky to reveal that Mary was still in one piece, flying higher and higher into the air.

"Is she going to come down?" The Masked Weirdo asked.

Dr. N looked at the blazing building then back up to Mary. "My guess is she'll be up there for a few years." Dr. N said. He turned, looking out towards the ghost-like town.

It seemed the only noise coming from it was the blazing pops of the fire.

The Masked Weirdo panted as he bent over, placing both hands on his knees. "I'm done." The Masked Weirdo said as he arched himself straight.

Dr. N glared at him.

"You owe me double." he said, turning to head down the road. "In fact, your children's children owe me." Dr. N said as The Masked Weirdo quickly followed him down the street of the main road

Too hot to plot

In Resident Hill, high on a hill in a gas leaking building. fate sat in a dark office.

Mr. Ontur, an older gentleman dressed in an aged brown tuxedo. His long, gray, thinning hair was guarding his face from the light above him.

To his left was his vivacious

assistant, Mrs. Nine. With her long legs with perfect peach skin, her long blond hair covered most of her face, mysterious green eyes, and bright red lipstick, she screamed trouble. Mrs. Nine was a killer not only in her looks, but in her vocation as well.

The office was murky and stagnant, with light creeping in through the walls. Ontur's nimble fingers danced around each other in nervousness. He rested comfortably in his high black armchair.

"My boss requests confirmation that all is going as planned." a sinister southern voice said from across him.

"Please rest assured, Mr. Jake, we are doing all we can." Ontur said reassuringly.

Jake leaned forward into the light with a slight smirk. His platinum initials shone from the brim of his hat. "BDJ" glinted in the vague light.

"That's good to hear." he said as Mrs.

Nine cleared her throat.

"What is it?" Ontur asked as he turned his head slightly.

"Watch your monitors sir." She replied. Ontur turned his gaze back down and pressed a button on the side of his chair. In an instant, the top of his desk split in two with each side folding along the edge. After the press of another button, six flat screen monitors rose out of the desk, fitting into the empty gap.

Ontur reviewed the first three screens as they clicked through various street ways and building locations. His eyes seemed to be hollow, void of any human essence. He then moved his gaze to the fourth screen.

"The gas station is on fire." He said in shock.

Jake leaned back in his seat folding a long thick leg over the other. "That kind of puts a damper on your experiment, then doesn't it?" he asked.

Mrs. Nine twisted her hair in her fingers as she watched Jake. Ontur looked at the last two screens in dismay.

"Look! There's a man in a weird costume." He exclaimed and stared closer at the monitor. "And a man with a raccoon on the top of his head."

With a click of a lighter, Jake lit the end of his cigar and blew a few ringed puffs. "I suppose that's my fault. My sister can be lazy sometimes." He took a drag then blew a full horse and carriage out in a whiff of smoke. It galloped briefly before disappearing into the air.

"I can't have those two snooping around. If they find something, they will ruin the experiment. I've already got an army agent running around on the loose." Ontur said.

"Well, Tim's not my problem." Jake said, standing up to his full seven feet and stretched his arms. He adjusted his black shirt and smoothed his rugged black

jeans with chains. His belt buckle, designed as an evil skull with two handguns for crossbones, bore a wicked grin and dollar signs for its eyes glinted vociferously in the light. Ontur frowned as Jake tipped his hat and grinned in the darkness.

"You sure you don't want to add a few more to the experiment?" Jake asked, motioning with his cigar.

Ontur shook his head. "No, I already have Brad in mind. He will be adequate."

"The investors are here." Mrs. Nine interrupted again.

"I have to meet with them, just get rid of the intruders." Ontur Demanded with a sour tone in his voice.

"My pleasure..." Jake said.

As Jake left, Ontur let out a heavy sigh. "Make a note to raise the gate."

Outside, Dr. N and The Masked Weirdo wandered the streets. "This place smells peculiar, like feet." The Masked Weirdo said.

"Grungy fungus feet."

Dr. N turned around and gazed into the hilltops. There stood a building expelling some sort of green gas.

"I bet that's where the smell is coming from." Dr. N said.

"I'm not going over there. Let's see what we can find around here." The Masked Weirdo said, walking ahead of Dr. N into a nearby convenience store.

As Dr. N headed inside, The Masked Weirdo pressed his face up against the glass. Dr. N immediately walked back outside to grab The Masked Weirdo by his collar, dragging him inside.

"Hi! My Name Is Jarred!" stated the name tag on the cashier standing behind the counter of the convenience store. He was a twenty-one year old boyish youth, dressed rather plainly and not really interesting to look at. He greeted them with: "Welcome to Easy Mart." in a high and scratchy voice.

Dr. N began to look around and noticed something unsettling at the counter. He had seen there a pack of playing cards he had not seen since he was a child. His arm twitched slightly as he swallowed hard.

"Are you okay, Mister?" Jarred asked as Dr. N's hand gripped the counter. The white streak in the middle of his hair began to turn red.

"Mister....?" Jarred said as he leaned closer. By this time, The Masked Weirdo was digging through the frozen section.

Dr. N looked up at the boy as the middle of his hair turned completely red.

"I'm going to take these cards, if you don't mind." Dr. N said, placing his hands on a pack of trading cards.

"If you pay for them." Jarred replied, standing straight up and attempting to assert some kind of superiority. "Besides, those are ViraTech cards. Aren't you a little old for card games?"

He flinched suddenly, catching a

glimpse of Mr. Kitty. "What's with the stuffed animal?"

Dr. N tightened his fist as he leaned forward, knocking Jarred to the floor. The thud caught The Masked Weirdo's attention.

"Not again." He said, dropping his fish to the floor. Dr. N took several packs of ViraTech cards and opened them furiously.

"What did you do that for?" The Masked Weirdo asked as he glanced over at Dr. N's hair, "Oh, that explains it."

Dr. N growled like a feral animal as he tore apart the packs. Cards lay strewn about the counter and floor as he laughed. The Masked Weirdo took a step back as Dr. N produced a "V" shaped computer chip. As Dr. N held the chip in his hand, the red in his hair began to recede back to its original white tone.

"I found one." Dr. N growled as he put Mr. Kitty on the counter.

"You just sucker punched that kid." The Masked Weirdo observed, pointing to the

unconscious worker.

Dr. N looked over the counter then back to The Masked Weirdo.

"Maybe he won't remember anything." Dr. N said as he pushed Mr. Kitty's nose.

In an instant, a slot opened up in the raccoon's head. Placing the chip inside, Dr. N quickly pressed the button on top of his glasses as the slot closed once more. A sudden surge of knowledge splashed across his eyes.

"What are you looking at?" The Masked Weirdo asked, putting two dollars on the counter.

"Not now." Dr. N said as he grabbed Mr. Kitty while heading for the door.

The Masked Weirdo stared at Dr. N and asked "What about the kid?"

"He'll be fine..." Dr. N said as he left.

The Masked Weirdo growled, "I hate it when he's like this."

Dr. N placed Mr. Kitty in his pocket.

"Can you show me any details that are

not garbled up?" Dr. N asked. He waited a few more seconds and shook his head.

"What do you mean it's too garbled?"

Billy asked waiting for the response, Getting none he then exhaled. "I don't think there are anymore of those chips in this place."

Dr. N turned towards the door at the sound a small bell ringing. Billy walked outside, glaring at Dr. N. There where somethings he tolerated about Dr. N but other things just seemed to get under his skin.

"Don't ever do that again!" The Masked Weirdo barked at him.

Dr. N stood silent. Then hit with a heavy sock of realization he spoke. "I'm sorry. I don't know what came over me." Dr.

N said, lowering his head a bit.

“Just think next time.” The Masked Weirdo said with a smile. “When you turn evil like that, I get kind of freaked out.”

Dr. N nodded as he raised his head. “From what I can read from the chip...” Dr. N paused looking down at Mr. Kitty then back up to The Masked Weirdo. “It’s mostly phone numbers to night clubs and those sorts of things.”

The Masked Weirdo nodded adjusting his mask. “So, no news about of your uncle then, huh?” Billy asked finally getting his mask to fit right. He paused briefly for a moment picking up a stone throwing it down the street. It hit the side of a car shattering a windshield, the noise echoing throughout the street.

“If we can find more chips, then we might have a chance. Until then, we’re out of luck.” Dr. N sighed.

Without warning, the ground began to shake, knocking them both to the ground.

"Earthquake?" The Masked Weirdo asked.

"No, too sudden." Dr. N said as he tried to get up.

As quickly as it had started, the shaking ended, and Dr. N lay sprawled out on the ground.

"*What now?*" He wondered as The Masked Weirdo clung to a nearby mailbox, he turned his head only briefly squinting to see back the way they came in.

"I think we're in trouble." He said looking at Dr. N with wide eyes.

Clicking his sunglasses again, Dr. N looked down the road. "Yeah, that's the giant fence alright." Dr. N said as he clicked his sunglasses again.

"So, what now?" The Masked Weirdo asked.

From behind them, the roaring thunder of an engine echoed through the town. The two turned, facing the other direction almost in sync.

"What is that?" The Masked Weirdo wondered as Dr. N swallowed hard.

Bright white bullhorns stood out a foot above their mounting on the hood of the large mutant truck.

The tires where wrapped in what looked to be chains and barbwire. A metal grinning skull and bones stared them down from the bumper as the engine revved harder.

"Our only chance is to get to the fence." Dr. N said as he started to back away. The Masked Weirdo nodded in agreement, backing away as well. The monster truck revved its engine with a sound piercing the sky like howling hell hounds.

The truck raced down the street, tearing up the pavement beneath it's wheels. Dr. N ran up on the sidewalk, hoping any lamps it hit would slow it down.

"Help!" The Masked Weirdo cried while

he ran down the middle of the road. The side of the street he chose to pass was lined with empty cars.

"Get out of the street!" Dr. N called after him.

The Masked Weirdo turned his head to see that he was looking down the grinning skull of the monster truck. He hit the dirt as the massive truck drove over him.

The Masked Weirdo coughed, spitting dirt out of his mouth. Dr. N continued to run as the monster truck swerved up onto the sidewalk. He could hear the sounds of lampposts giving into the weight as they fell to the ground.

All of them, clanking and shattering, falling one after another. There was no way he was going to be able to make it to the fence.

Dr. N started to breathe heavily as he continued to run. Suddenly, an idea popped

into his head. He would have to time this just right if he wasn't going to be killed.

His conscience told him he was crazy, but his heart told him otherwise. Dr. N ducked out in the middle of the street with the truck breathing down his back.

"Bloody Murder!" Dr. N screamed at the top of his lungs. There was a sudden gust of wind behind him as Hero appeared.

"Halt, villain!" Hero shouted. Dr. N grabbed Hero's shoulders and placed him as a shield behind him. Immediately, the monster truck nailed Hero in the back and exploded into a million blazing pieces all round him. The Masked Weirdo smiled in triumph as he hid behind a parked car. When the flames died down, he cautiously made his way towards the two.

Dr. N stood up, exhaling tremendously, "You're a lifesaver." he said to Hero as he picked a piece of metal off of his shoulder, flicking it to the ground.

"Is it me or did it just get warm?"

Hero asked.

"Let's get to work." The Masked Weirdo said, marching off towards the fence.

Issues for One

The sun was finally starting to sink in the afternoon sky. It had taken a good half-hour, but Dr. N finally managed to bring the gate down. A strange feeling came over Dr. N and his depression was rising as the gate fell to their feet. He pressed a button on his sunglasses, turning the night vision on.

"You okay?" Mr. Kitty asked.

"Yeah, I'm okay." Dr. N replied to his antonymous creation.

A quick flood of memories spared him no room in his battering brain. The first of these memories was of his youth.

He remembered sitting in the window sill of an old Victorian house; staring outside as The Masked Weirdo and Hero played together. They where always playing together, something between those two just clicked. Dr. N would set Mr. Kitty up on his shoulder as he perched in his place at the window.

"I wish I could play with them." the young Dr. N said as he

looked to Mr. Kitty, "Mom and Dad say I'm not allowed to interact with anyone." He said, staring at the puffkin. To him it was almost as if they shared some sort of telepathic link.

Outside of his mind, Dr. N smiled almost neurotically at the fence as he remembered the girl who gave Mr. Kitty to him. Her name was Molly. She was nicest person he had ever met. It was before he got Mr. Kitty, or at least the pieces to him anyways.

Back inside his head, The younger Dr. N adjusted his face fitting 3-D glass's listening to his parent's talk about him in the other room.

"He's talking to the stuffed animal again." his mother would say, but his father waved it off.

Back on the road, Dr. N snapped out of his flashback. A pair of headlights suddenly blurred his vision. Mr. Kitty toned the night vision down for him.

"Pay attention next time!" Mr. Kitty screamed in his head. Dr. N waved him off placing his hand up to catch a ride., Dr. N could see Vander, his Villain's Anonymous coach, pulling up beside the road.

"Looks like you're headed my way." Vander said, opening the door. He had a vague snake-like look to him. His hair was short blond hair and his green eyes, seemed to have a hypnotizing

quality about them.

Dr. N grumbled under his breath as Vander opened the passenger door. "This is a one lane road." Dr. N pointed out as he turned back to see where he had just come from.

Vander paused, shaking his head, "I followed you since the bar."

Dr. N looked at him for a moment, thinking of taking him up on his offer of a ride.

"You didn't have to offer." Dr. N said as he climbed in the car fastening his seatbelt.

"I could have run you over, but I didn't." Vander said with a grin. His smile was poisonousness, he finally had Nathan where he wanted him and could strike at any moment.

"I ran into Mad Mary and had a pleasant chat with her." Dr. N said sarcastically. "Then we got chased over to Resident Hill where we were at the mercy of a monster truck on steroids."

Vander only shook his head with a grin crooking on his lips. "Sounds like fun." he commented as he changed lanes.

Vander pressed the side of his ear as the sound of a phone ringing came over the car speakers.

"Just a second." Vander said, pulling his car over to the side of the road. He looked over at Dr. N still with that snake-like grin on his face. "I have to take this phone

call."

Across the sea, in a different country, a man sat at his desk. The entire room was shrouded in a dark hue. Although this is a popular theme used by many villains, few others could pull it off so well like this man.

"Have you located my nephew yet?" he said over the phone.

Vander moved his eyes over slightly to see Dr. N then quickly glanced away as soon as he saw Mr. Kitty staring at him. He started to feel a little nervous, being stared at by cold plastic eyes, but continued to drive.

"Yes." Vander said as he took in a deep breath.

"I expected more from Jake." the man said over the phone.

"I'm sssure you he jussst got dissstracted. Besides, it sounds like he wasn't trying to get rid of the luggage. More likely, out for a joy ride, he used a remote control device." Vander said slipping into his hiss, quietly looking down at his shoes.

Dr. N was fascinated as he watched Vander, staring at his

shoes but still able to avoid traffic. He looked down to see that Vander had another mirror that let him look outside of his car incase he was distracted by such calls.

"Luggage?" the man asked over the phone.

"The luggage that you're waiting for." Vander said clearing his throat momentarily. He peeked over to see Dr. N watching him. He smiled briefly holding the phone closer to his ear.

Silence and then a grim laugh emanated into Vander's ear.

"Very well. Continue on and remind Jake I'm not very happy with him." The mysterious man said.

With that, Vander hung up the phone. He looked up and jumped in his seat, startled by Mr. Kitty sitting right in front of him, on top of the dashboard. The car swerved momentarily as he grabbed the puffkin and tossed him at Dr. N, only to find him snoring and mumbling incoherently in his sleep.

"It's a shame I have to kill you." Vander thought discreetly as he pulled back onto the road.

The sun shone brightly as the birds flew through the air. A few clouds hovered in the sky, but not enough to threaten rain. Dr. N was sleeping up against the entrance of his cardboard box. He remained, at least for the moment, blissfully unaware of anything.

"Ah ha!" Hero exclaimed exuberantly as he landed feet first in front of the cardboard box.

"Hey!" Hero said as he then poked Dr. N in the shoulder. Dr. N merely murmured, smacking his lips, snuggling up against the box.

Hero looked around, poking Dr. N again.

"It's fighting day. Come on." Hero said as he pulled a pocket calendar out from somewhere in his body suit. With a smile and a slight stomp of his foot he opened the small calendar, flipping through a few pages.

"I've marked every time you've said a little later and..." He droned off as he looked at Dr. N again. Mr. Kitty was sitting on top of his head, staring at Hero.

"Hello, creepy monkey." Hero said with wide eyes.

It was a rather abrupt way to wake up, but it worked nonetheless. Dr. N opened his eyes to see Hero lying on the ground. His clothes were smoldering as he laid face down on the pavement.

Dr. N shook his head, drawing in a deep breath. "What do you want Hero?" he asked as he bent over to pick up Mr. Kitty. Hero turned slowly onto his side, coughing momentarily. Dr. N placed

the raccoon back in his pocket.

"Don't you have anything better to do than try and fight me in the morning?" Dr. N asked him as he stretched.

Hero groaned sitting up, "No...just that..."

Dr. N held his stomach as it growled at him. "Can we hurry this up? I'm hungry."

"Its complex." Hero said, picking small rocks out of his cheek.

"Like writing a book full of droning detail complex? Or time consuming puzzle complex?" Dr. N asked.

Hero thought for a moment as the wheels turned in his brain, "Whichever one is more complex." he answered still catching his wind.

Dr. N stood waiting for what he had to say.

"Well, what is it?" Dr. N asked impatiently.

"Jake's captured the Masked Weirdo." Hero said.

"And you can't save him, because?" Dr. N said looking at him.

"Because..." Hero looked the other way, scratching the back of his head, "I dropped him on the way here, and I don't know where he is."

Dr. N nodded, not exactly understanding why fate had bore him this dilemma but he was sure to figure out the joke sooner

or later.

"So, I guess I'm asking for your help." Hero said as Dr. N's tummy rumbled again.

"After breakfast." Dr. N said as he started to walk down the street. "Jim's Diner." Dr. N announced as he stopped in front of the ragged building.

"Kind of a dump." Hero commented as he stood next to Dr. N. Inside of the diner looked very quaint.

"Kind of stereotypical to eat at a diner isn't it?" Dr. N heard as he looked to the bar.

Vander smiled from his seat at the counter, turning back towards the cook.

"Creep." Hero said as he crossed his arms.

Vander turned his head from his spot at the counter enough to catch a brief glimpse of Hero, then back to his drink. "Iron your clothes again Hero?" Vander said in a cynical tone. Dr. N shook his head, taking a seat at the nearest table.

"If you must know." Hero said as he rotated his shoulder, "I got in a fight, thank you very much."

Dr. N sighed as he ran his hands through his hair. A waitress came by to put a glass of water in front of him. His mind drifted back into a flashback of his youth.

The voices of the two bickering back and forth faded out as

his mind wandered back into his childhood.

He soon found himself sitting in front of the window of his house, staring at the playground. Dr. N could hear them fighting in their younger years. Hero was big even when he was little, and it was interesting to watch bullies try to pick on him.

He would always hold someone over his head until they started crying. Vander was one of the quiet ones who always sat in the trees. Always watching, never really interacting with anyone.

"Nathan!" A woman's voice said to him. Dr. N could hear his mother's voice coming from behind him.

"Nathan, you should come to the door." she said in an excited tone. Dr. N clutched in his hand in nervousness, following his mother to the front door. As the door opened, Dr. N squinted and before him stood a girl. In her hand, there was what looked to be another raccoon, except this one had a small pink bow on its head.

"This is Molly." she said as Dr. N smiled.

They spent almost every day playing together. It was as if they had known each other before they were born. But it would only last until one dreary dark day, when a long limousine parked out in front of his house.

Molly stood at the gates and peered in Dr. N's direction.

The door opened and a grotesque arm came out, placing its hand on her shoulder. As the hand dragged her inside the limousine, the door slammed shut, snapping Dr. N back into reality, ending his flashback.

The waitress tapped him on the head with her pen and said, "Are you going to order anything?" He looked up at her then down at the menu placed before him.

"I'll have an omelet." He said as the waiter left. "That can't be right." He thought to himself as he looked around the room. "Someone's playing with my head."

He looked around to see if he could find Hero or Vander, but the both of them were gone. The waitress came out of the kitchen after a few minutes with a piping hot omelet, setting it before him. His stomach pinched him more out of hunger than anything else, once more it pinched as he started to eat.

"Where could Vander and Hero have gone?" he wondered. Immediately following, his eyes blinked and he realized that he had completely forgotten about the Masked Weirdo. He rose to his feet and left the diner without as much as a single bite of his omelet.

Dr. N high-tailed to the corner of the street and stopped as

a vehicle pulled up to the curb. The vehicle, a ten-foot long stretch limousine to be exact, passed him and finally stopped.

The door opened slowly and the clank of spurs hit the ground.

In the open door, Billion Dollar Jake stood in his full glory complete with his dollar sign-eyed skull and handgun crossbones. His platinum initials glittered in the sunlight from the top of his black cowboy hat.

"Nathan!" Jake said in his domineering voice. He slammed the door behind him and Dr. N's hand started to shake.

"Jake..." Dr. N said as he stood his ground.

"Shall we do this then?" Jake said as he clenched his fist. Dr. N swallowed hard as the limousine drove off. He turned quickly and ran down the nearest alleyway, knowing that there was no way he could take on Jake, at least not physically. Jake followed with spurs clinking behind his boots.

"Hero! Where are you?" Dr. N screamed as he plowed through the cruddy alleyway. He grabbed the nearest trashcan and threw it down behind him.

Jake marched through the alleyway, determined to put this man in his place. Dr. N made it to the next corner as Jake

kicked the trashcan out of his way. The filthy alley formed a maze around a series of decrepit buildings.

"You're going the wrong way!" He read on his glasses. In fact, it wasn't until he looked around when he noticed he had locked himself into a corner. Tired and full of fear Dr. N looked desperately around his surroundings, until he finally heard the clanking of Jake's blood red embroidered black boots, then all he could hear was the sound of his own hart beating.

Jake now stood before his only exit. Before he could even blink, Jake attacked. He could feel every punch crunching bitterly against his body.

Dr. N tried to fight back, but it was to no avail since Jake was simply too strong and quick for him. Jake grabbed Dr. N with both hands and lifted him up over his head.

He watched wearily as Mr. Kitty fell out of his pocket at Jake's feet. Jake threw Dr. N into a pile of trash. His sunglasses hung halfway off his face, cracked and scratched.

"Help!" the raccoon relayed to Dr. N. as he tried to sit up, a trickle of blood running down the side of his mouth.

Jake dug his fingers into the stuffed animal, tearing it apart. Computer parts and stuffing lay strewn about the street, ripped to shreds.

"No!" Dr. N could barely shout as he tried to sit up.

"Your uncle sends his regards." Jake said as he tossed the head of the raccoon to Dr. N. He could feel his sustainable anger start to get the best of him as his fist shook.

The stripe down the middle of his hair started to turn a magnificent dark blue color as he stood to his feet.

From that moment, all went blurry, and the next thing he knew, he was in the hospital.

Good Help is so Hard to Kill

It was three days later, in the early afternoon, when Dr. N awoke in St. Ruth's hospital. Around four that afternoon at least that is what the fuzzy arrows on the wall looked like they where at.

Hero stood by his bedside, watching over him. "You're alive." Hero said, astonished.

Nathan only snorted in response before cringing in pain. Weakly, his eyes moved over to a bouquet of flowers lying next to

his head.

"Did you bring those for me?" Dr. N asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Uh, no." Hero said, looking at the flowers then to back at him. "The nurse said a woman stopped by here earlier, but she didn't give her name."

Dr. N smiled as much as the tubing would let him. "That's alright." He closed his eyes, "My father told me that evil doesn't care about the consequences. It only cares to survive."

Hero nodded. "True. I have to go since I still don't know where they hid The Masked Weirdo, but I'm gonna try to find him." With a brief smile, he turned out of the door.

When he was gone, footsteps came down from the hallway. Step by step, the shoes came closer. The door had been left wide open so whoever was coming wouldn't have any problem getting inside.

Vander placed a hand along the door frame and peered inside. He watched Dr. N sleep in the hospital bed with a grin on his face.

"You're something special." he said as he walked closer to the bed. His hand reached out for Dr. N's throat when he suddenly coughed. Vander's eyes began to wander as he lost track of what he was doing.

"I have to kill him." Vander said to himself. He growled under his breath as he turned facing towards the door.

Vander paused, then walked out of the hospital room and closed the door behind him.

In a warehouse, a large tank of water sat in the middle of the huge building. The water was clear lit, and The Masked Weirdo

was standing within, chained to the bottom of the tank and holding his breath. To the left was a small looking apartment. Jake turned the channel only to see the screen go black.

"Jake?" a voice came from the television. Jake grumbled, sitting up.

"What do you want?" He asked.

An unimpressed cough came from the television. "Don't forget your place. I can take your money away as quickly as I gave it too you."

"Yes sir." Jake responded in a momentarily sarcastic tone.

"Where is Vander?" the voice asked as Jake shrugged.

"How am I supposed to know?" he replied, leaning back on the couch.

"I want you to keep an eye on Vander. He's interfering too much into the experiment. You will face Dr. N again when the time comes. I hope you do better this time, for your sake." The voice said to

him.

Jake sat up, ready to rebuttal, but the television turned off.

"Having a hard time?" a woman's voice came from the corner.

The Masked Weirdo watched as she dragged a finger seductively across the glass of the tank. She was a very attractive woman with the body of a goddess, dark skin, and long black braided hair.

Her eyes were the color of fallen leaves and her lips where like golden silk. She wore a tight bodysuit of many shades of brown. She looked like someone Dr. N had described to him at some point, or maybe he had seen her on the news.

"*It's the assassin.*" he thought to himself as he struggled to get out.

Jake crossed his good arm over his broken one.

"I would have been alright if you

hadn't interrupted." he growled. The woman smiled just as Vander pushed the door open and walked into the room.

"Where have you been?" Jake asked as Vander headed to the couch, taking a seat.

"I was out." Vander said shortly, as he looked towards the woman.

"What are you doing here Asha?" Vander asked.

Asha only laughed she thought it funny when the boys decided to play tough.

"The boss asked me to come by since he wasn't sure if Jake was competent after your little talk."

"I'm fine." Jake said, "When I get my hands on Dr. N, I'm gonna kill him."

"I would imagine this would be a bigger mess if our network wasn't so tight." Asha replied.

"Well, if certain people did their job, so as not to be watched like a child," Vander said, shooting Jake a look of warning. "Then I would not need the guise

of the VA."

Jake shook his head. "You have the stupidest front job I've ever seen."

Asha, in turn, shook her head and noted "Well, a lot of us don't kiss up to the boss as much as your family did." She responded grabbing his broken arm twisting him into submission. Jake howled yanking his arm away. But her grip was strong, even stronger than his.

"Stick with the plan. You never know, Dr. N may be your boss one day." She whispered malevolently, pushing him back to the couch.

Back at the hospital, Dr. N had slipped back down the road into memory lane. He saw the old Victorian house in peak condition, with the gates surrounding the estate in a foggy haze of clouds. Dr. N could see the sun rise and set in almost an instant as he was transported into his old room.

"Daddy?" a young Dr. N asked as he tugged on his pajamas in his big kid bed, "Why do I have a stripe down the middle of my head, but you and mommy don't?"

"Well." his father replied, "When daddy was younger he got into a fight with Madame Zaeayle, a woman who came from a distant land specializing in curses, and one day after an intense battle, Daddy beat the witch. A few lives had been lost and Daddy was upset."

"She tried to curse our family before she disappeared." His father explained. The young Dr. N's eyes went wide as he listened to his father tell his story, "Your next child shall be cursed. He will never know peace and always be torn between good and evil. The only rest they will know is what fate decides for him."

"Am I really cursed?" Dr. N asked his

father as he pulled the blanket up to his chin.

His father laughed, shaking his head. "Of course not, there's no such thing as a curse." he leaned down kissing his son's forehead.

"Now, go to sleep." he said turning the light out.

"There's no such thing as curses." his voice repeated in the dark, his mind transitioning from the flashback to where he was now, his voice seeming very troubled at this thought.

Days passed into weeks and Dr. N's recovery was slow, but steady. When he could move more than a few steps, he decided to visit the sidekick recovery ward. A large half octagonal desk guarded the ward. Two people sat on opposite sides at the end with one person sitting in front.

Wrapped in bandages and a leg cast ,
Dr. N crutched up to the desk.

"Can I help you?" asked Cindy, the
nurse behind the desk. Dr. N looked down
at her name tag for a moment then back to
her face. She was a very pretty nurse with
long blond hair, cherry red lips and blue
eyes.

"Hi, Cindy! I'm Dr. N." She let out a
faint giggle placing a finger on her lips.
"What's so funny?" Dr. N asked, adjusting
his crutches.

"Are you the same Dr. N who tripped
over his shoe laces and landed on top of
the guard dog?"

Dr. N didn't say anything as she
continued to look at him.

The nurse at a corner of the desk spoke
up. "He just came back from taking on
Jake."

Cindy looked a little embarrassed and a
bit impressed as she stood up.

"Well I don't like to brag, but..."

Dr. N started as Cindy walked to his side, supporting him with an arm under his shoulder.

"Here, I'll show you inside." Cindy said as Dr. N grinned. He lifted his hand to his glasses meticulously with a smile on his face. "Who fixed these?" He asked as he started to feel around.

"I don't know..." Cindy said staring at them. "There's been some people wandering through here, but they aren't important. Let's find your assistant."

Dr. N hobbled over, following her though the swinging doors. He looked in subdued shock as the ward was full of broken and beaten people. Most of them were placed on IV tubes and some had suffered serious injuries.

"What happened to these guys?" Dr. N asked as he hobbled farther into the ward.

"Oh, most of these unfortunate souls met Jake as well."

"They'll be fine. Let's get you to your

sidekick." Cindy said reassuringly. They walked down the line of fallen sidekicks with Cindy placing a hand on his shoulder.

Half way into the room, Dr. N stopped, looking at a particularly unhappy sidekick reading a technology magazine. Cindy looked at him rather oddly, but stopped, letting Dr. N converse.

"Aren't you Hero's sidekick?" Dr. N asked as the guy looked up from his magazine.

"I was, but I've been hospitalized for three years." He said turning the page of his magazine.

Dr. N looked at Cindy then back to the sidekick.

"You got hurt that badly?" He asked. Not surprised of course, any soul unfortunate to come across Hero was bound to end up in some sort of sorry state.

The sidekick shook his head looking back at his magazine and replied. "Hero skipped out of the hospital bill, that

cheap idiot!"

"Sorry to hear about that." Dr. N replied as he moved along.

"You and me both." The sidekick mumbled flipping through his magazine once more.

"Here it is." Cindy chime in, standing next to the bed.

Dr. N hobbled over in front of the bed with a smile on his face. "Hey, buddy." he said as his smile dropped. Sitting on the bed was a small zip lock bag stuffed with computer parts and fluff.

"What the?" Dr. N said as he looked around. Frustration and anger welled up into him as a distant boom was heard in the sky visible through the ward's skylight. The clouds covered an already darkened sky and began to rain.

"Good guy ward my foot!" Dr. N cried out as he hobbled out of the hospital and down the street as the redness crawled to the front of his hair, he continued "I'm not a child!" He

clutched the bag containing the remains of Mr. Kitty close.

His own voice echoed through the night city but he received no reply. Hobbling through the streets soon found him sitting in a low class villain bar that sold cheap booze. The bag of Mr. Kitty fluff sat next to him as he took a shot of brown liquid.

Dr. N looked around as men and woman snickered and squabbled, talking about their recent dirty deeds. His head sunk slightly as the jukebox was hit for a free song.

It was a down and dreary country song about a man who drank himself to death over some woman. The bartender looked at him and set another drink before him. The door opened and in walked Hero's former sidekick.

His mind full of thoughts of Molly and getting his butt whooped, forced Dr. N eyes

to well in tears, not from the thought of getting his butt whooped, rather it being the sting in very sensitive parts of his body.

The only person who ever understood him wasn't there anymore. He couldn't do anything right. He sniffed harshly, trying not to choke on his tears. When he finally settled down, Dr, N ripped off his sunglasses, slamming them against the bar table.

"Dr. N?" the sidekick said walking towards him. Another drink was Dr. N's response.

Dr. N sloshed the glass away from him and looked at the zip lock bag sitting on the bar. With a swipe of his hand, he brushed the bag to the floor with tears coursing down his face.

The sidekick walked up to him as another man made his way to Dr. N.

"What's your problem?" The man said in a sniveling tone.

"I have no problem!" Dr. N shouted as he went to swing at the man. Dr. N missed terribly, twisting his broken leg. He would have fallen to the ground if the former sidekick hadn't caught up to him, kneeling down to catch him.

"Amateur!" the vile stranger said, returning to his group. Dr. N stood to his feet, and looking around, he limped outside as the rain began to fall. Outside, Dr. N lay face first on the muddy sidewalk, unable to pull himself up. He had caught his leg in a drain trying to pull himself up. Tears melded themselves with rain as the sidekick helped him up.

As a car drove by with its headlights bright, Vander slowed down to watch them. Dr. N limped as the sidekick tried to hold him up, helping him down the street.

"Missed him, again." Vander said to himself as he took off down the street.

They had made it to the cardboard box where Dr. N lived. He struggled to get inside.

"You live here?" the sidekick asked surprised by the ample room within the box.

Dr. N grumbled and lay on the couch in a drunken stupor.

We have a problem

Early the next morning, Dr. N awoke to see the bag full of Mr. Kitty parts lying on the coffee table.

"I fixed the television in the back room and set it up in here if you don't mind." the sidekick said from the floor. Dr. N looked up to see pictures of The Masked Weirdo on the TV.

"It has been some time." The reporter's voice said from the repaired television, "Since this hero has gone missing. No one in the community seems to know where or when he disappeared."

"What's your name?" Dr. N asked as he

held his forehead, looking at the sidekick.

"Mender." The sidekick said not looking away from the television.

"We now have a special interview."

Chimed the voice of another woman as they returned to the studio. "Vander Lae'ser of Villains Anonymous."

Dr. N shifted uncomfortably in his seat as his hand reached down to try to itch his leg in the cast.

"Some say your VA is responsible for the sudden outburst of crime in the city." the news anchor stated.

"It's more of a support group." Vander hissed slightly at her insinuation. "We take people who think they want to be vaudevillian's and try to show them a better way."

Mender stood up stretching his legs.

"Mender?" Dr. N asked as Mender shook his head.

"Just call me Chris." he replied.

Dr. N nodded slightly, setting his

casted leg up more on the coffee table.

"You weren't really hurt in the hospital, were you?"

Chris chuckled and walked over to the armchair next to the couch. He shook his head as he sat down.

"I suspected that Nurse Cindy from the hospital was playing both sides and working in the ward for someone named Arête Felder, also known to few as Azures." Dr. N's eyes developed a sudden curious gaze at Chris.

"And she is a good looking woman." Chris admitted with a small grin, "but that's one of my personal reasons."

"What about Hero?" Dr. N asked as he adjusted his sunglasses.

"Fixed those for you." Chris said as he leaned forward, "Well, seeing as he is almost nearly invincible, it kind of makes my job meaningless. I do more of damage control than anything else."

"Don't suppose you can mend me then?"

Dr. N asked with a smile.

"Unfortunately, no." Chris said, gently picking up the bag of Mr. Kitty parts. "I only seem to be able to fix stuff, not people."

Dr. N sighed leaning against the couch to exhausted to think straight.. "So why did you follow after me?" He asked.

Chris shrugged, "I dunno. You just seemed like you needed help, and maybe, part of today was fate."

"I don't need any help." Dr. N said, watching as Chris opened the plastic bag.

"Spoken like a true protagonist." Chris said as he pulled the parts out into his hands.

Dr. N lifted his shades slightly looking at him inquisitively, "What you mean by that?" Dr. N asked measuring this comment.

"Here's what I think." Chris started to

explain as he folded his hands over each other, "Supposedly, every hero has a dark side. However, if your brain is warped or you're taken over by some alien from space, that's not what makes you evil. People don't seem to understand that the point of being evil is being a creature that has no evil at all."

Chris continued as Dr. N blinked, trying desperately to follow his logic.

"In fact, what most heroes do would be considered villainy to villains. Human perception is nothing but a giant contradiction." Chris's eyes dropped slightly almost as if something was confusing, and he looked at his hands then back at Dr. N pressing harder.

"From what I saw from the other night, you're a perfect example." As he said this, a bright glow began to emanate from his hands. Chris even held his hands away from his face.

"Are you alright?" Dr. N asked.

Finally, the light subsided as Chris held out his hand. "I've never had that happen before." Chris said, revealing Mr. Kitty restored in the palm of his hand.

"No I meant in the head, are you alright in the head? You didn't have to do that." Dr. N said as a small smile forced its way across his face.

Chris set the puffkin down on the table as stood up. "I know." he said, "but it was the right thing to do. It's one thing to be good or evil, but life can be cruel from both sides when you're stuck in the middle. I have to go, but I'm sure you'll find your own way someday."

Chris headed towards the front door.

"See you later, buddy." Dr. N said with a sigh of relief. "Well thats another weirdo down."

Outside Chris let out a deep sigh. The moonlight sky ushered in a gentle breeze. He looked over to a shadowy figure standing underneath a nearby lamppost.

The figure quickly turned, heading down the street. Chris stared blankly for a moment then moved to find his own place to rest.

Back at the warehouse, Jake was sitting behind a desk in front of the water tank which held The Masked Weirdo. He seemed to be more occupied with a deck of cards, practicing card tricks and cheats, than watching The Masked Weirdo. From behind him, Vander stood watching the tank from over his shoulder.

"Still won't talk, will he?" Vander asked.

Jake only grinned, shaking his head, "This boy's smart. If he's going to hold his mouth shut forever, at least he won't say anything. Then again, if he screams for help, he'll drown." Jake completed his reasoning as he started dealing the cards in a poker style fashion.

Five cards were placed in front of him and five cards in front of The Masked Weirdo.

"Tell me again how this is supposed to be a trap for Dr. N?" Jake asked as he looked at his cards.

"Think of it more of a tactic to keep other heroes off course." Vander said as he turned back to the couch area. "I'm leaving soon to visit the Master, so I can learn what we should do next."

"Whatever." Jake said as he grabbed the Masked Weirdo's cards.

Vander scowled, walking to the couches. "First, the boss wants me to get rid of him and now he wants me to keep him around." He grumbled to himself.

The next morning broke with a buzzing noise where Dr. N slept. He awoke partially to see Mr. Kitty sitting on his chest. After

mumbling incoherently, he closed his eyes once more. The buzzing sound grew louder with a sudden snap sending electricity through Dr. N. He jumped up, rolling the raccoon onto the floor.

"I'm up! I'm up!" he exclaimed, shouting from the harsh awakening. Groggily, he finally came up with an answer to his problem. "I'll fight them both."

He looked to his desk and then to his immobilized leg, then grabbed a small bone saw laying on the coffee table. With a few sharp cuts, the cast cracked. He leaned down and peeled it away.

"Do I even want to know why you leave your saws laying around?" Mr. Kitty thought to him.

"I think I'll wash this first." Dr. N said sniffing his arm, after a less than desirable smell reached his nose he decided to head for the bathroom.

"I guess I'm not getting an answer then." Mr. Kitty thought to himself this time.

Back at the warehouse, the Masked Weirdo stared off into space. He'd been sitting there for almost a month, yet never seemed to wrinkle. Jake stood by the tank, watching him with his arms crossed.

"At least let me put some piranhas in there, that'll make it more interesting." Jake suggested.

"No!" Vander called out to him from the couch. Jake huffed over to the couch, looking for a fight. There was no way he was going to let a pretty boy tell him what to do. He grabbed Vander by the scruff of the collar and hurled him into the air. Vander reached behind him, grabbing Jake's wrists.

"Get off of me!" Vander hissed at him, but Jake paid no attention as he lifted Vander out of his seat.

"Who said I have to take orders from

you?" Jake yelled as he choked Vander a bit more.

From inside the water tank, The Masked Weirdo watched with interest as these events unfolded.

Jake gripped the back of Vander's collar before tossing him to the other side of the couch.

"Pansy." Jake said as he started walking towards the exit door, his spurs clanking with each step. "I'm tired of waiting."

Vander looked up just in time to see Jake leave. The door slammed as Vander picked himself up off the couch and walked towards the tank. The Masked Weirdo swallowed as Vander continued to walk towards him.

"This is it." The Masked Weirdo thought to himself.

Vander stopped in front of the glass, pulling a tiny remote control out off his

pocket. Vander stared at The Masked Weirdo a moment before pressing the button. The chains holding him released.

Not wasting any time, he Masked Weirdo swam to the top of the tank. As soon as he reached the surface, a long metal ladder rose up. Inhaling deeply, he pulled himself out of the tank and onto the ladder. Vander was almost to the exit door when The Masked Weirdo called out to him.

"Wait!" The Masked Weirdo called. His shoes making a sloppy wet sound every time they hit the floor.

"I have a few questions." He said as he ran up next to Vander.

Vander would have to at least amuse the stupid hero, but he would leave at his earliest chance. If Jake was going to go off and do something stupid he wanted to make sure he wasn't around to see it.

"Go on." Vander said, watching him.

"Why did you let me go?" The Masked Weirdo asked.

"My plans fell through." Vander said, crossing his arms. There was a sharp creek and then the splash of hundreds of electric eel's filling the tank. The water buzzed with the sound of electricity as Vander smirked.

"You got out jusst in time." He hissed, lying nervously. Before The Masked Weirdo could say another word, Vander left him behind.

Vander wasted no time as he drove down the highway. Pushing a button on his dashboard, the sound of a phone ringing came through his speakers.

"Hello." a voice said as Vander adjusted himself in his seat.

"I need to get to the castle now." Vander said speaking softly.

The voice didn't respond.

"This is Vander." he said.

"Oh, that's right." the voice finally

responded, " From your current position, come to warehouse A seven, near the docks. We should be able to find you a direct route." Vander pushed the button again, bracing his foot on the gas pedal.

The engine roared as he blazed down the street. He took a left at the next turn and found himself in a different part of the city. Waste factories and chemical plants lined the coast to the murky shore.

Vander soon found his destination. The large doors creaked open as he pulled into the warehouse. It was half the size of a baseball stadium.

Inside was a crew manning a docking station. A car sat on a guided track, which headed out into the lake. Vander stepped on the brake pedal, screeching the car to a stop facing sideways.

He opened the door stepping out, but before he could close the door, he was

approached by a small hunched man with red eye patches on both of his eyes.

"You made it." The hunched man said.

Vander tugged on his shirt before closing the door.

"Of course I made it." He said looking over to the track car.

The warehouse lights dimmed. The glow of machines could be seen. However, the darkness made it seem like they were operated by shadows.

The track was taller than even Jake and a set of metal stairs led up to the car door.

"So, how does this special car work?" Vander asked as he walked to the stairs.

The hunched man followed with a grievous grin on his face. "Just get in the car." The man said extending his arm.

"The tracks will pull you under water. Our advanced anti-pressure system will keep

the car from being crushed under the water's weight." The hunchback said.

Vander looked at the car, then back to the man. "Does it work?" He asked a bit unsure of this.

The apprehensive man laughed slightly, rubbing his hands together. "We haven't had the chance to test it, but our studies show that it should work."

Vander lowered his eyebrows. He didn't have much of a choice now. Their fighting would soon start, and Vander would need to be at his master's side to save his own skin. He started to head up the stairs as the creepy hunchback walked over to the control panel.

"You may want to buckle your seat belt." The hunchback advised.

Vander watched him for a moment before opening the car door. It looked a little like his car. A dark gray two door. He buckled his seat belt on as the door closed

automatically, then looked around in silence until two large bangs hit both sides of the car. On the outside, two large clamps held onto the car and screwed into the sides.

The hunchback pushed a few buttons as the machine began to whirl. With the pull of a large lever, the car took off at mach speed. Vander watched wide-eyed as the car went out the side of the warehouse.

It climbed up a semi-steep hill, then dropped straight at sixty miles an hour and with a mighty splash, hit the dark water.

Vander swallowed hard as the mechanism took him for several different twists and turns.

Vander reached forward turning the lights on so he could see where he was going.

"If you're hearing this." he heard the hunchback's voice over the radio. "Then you haven't been crushed by the water pressure yet."

The car jerked slightly, going deeper into the water then back up again.

"You're going to be going through several caverns at about eighty miles an hour." The voice said again. "You should reach your destination in ten minutes."

"I think I'm going to be sick." Vander said holding on for dear life.

All manner of sea life watched the car pass by. Its headlights twisted and turned through the underwater roller coaster.

Looking at the dashboard, Vander could see that he was gaining speed. He was almost at one hundred miles an hour as the car jerked upward from beneath the water and slowed as it climbed out of its watery grave. Finally, reaching the top of the track, the car pulled into another warehouse.

As the driver side door opened, Vander stepped out slowly, holding his stomach.

"You made it." A woman's voice said, coming from the steps below. Drops of water falling from the car could be heard with the hum of the several machines in this place.

The warehouse was like the one he had left not too long ago. As he looked down, he saw a tall, striking looking woman in a lab coat. Her hair was pulled back into a ponytail and a dainty pair of glasses accented her fierce orange eyes. She stood staring at him with her arms crossed. On her shoulder was a small raccoon with a pink bow in its hair.

"Molly?" Vander asked in surprise as he stared at her.

Can't we all just get along?

Back in the city, suspense was building in the air. Jake sat in his limousine on the streets of a hushed night. Flying far above, Hero spotted the vehicle

immediately. As Hero placed his feet on the ground, Jake stepped out of the limousine, closing the door behind him.

"It's been a long time, Hero." Jake said, as he cracked his knuckles.

"Too long." Hero agreed, standing his ground.

Back at his desk, Dr. N put a few finishing touches on his project.

"Since I've lined my coat with extra nano bots now." Dr. N said while putting his coat on. "I should be able to withstand considerable hits without having to worry much."

"I hope you know what you're doing."
Mr. Kitty's concern popped up in his lenses.

"Don't worry, my strength should be comparative. Besides, I need to show them I don't have a side. I'm a man, not a hero." He said. It was as if nothing had happened

to Mr. Kitty in the first place.

"*Or a villain.*" Mr. Kitty said to him in a sarcastic mannerism.

He tightened the coat around him and began to clear his mind. Hopefully, this would be the last fight he would ever need to get into.

"Molly." he whispered to himself as the sound of a car honking outside broke him out of his thoughts. The car continued to honk until Dr. N walked out the front of the cardboard box. Chris was seated in the driver's side of a car with his head stuck out the window.

"Thought you might want a cool ride!" he shouted as Dr. N looked over the car.

It was dark purple with silver-plated rims. Covering the hood, a jazzed up neon green N was outlined in black.

"Where did you get that?" Dr. N asked as he walked a little closer.

Chris turned the car off, taking the keys out of the ignition. "I told you I fix

stuff." Chris said opening the car door. The car was sleek and classy like the one Vander was driving. Chris had found it while poking around in Flatvill's junkyard. Which again was owned by one of J.J's relatives T.J. He stepped out, walked over to Dr. N handing over the keys with a smile.

"Did you think I stole it?" Chris asked. "Besides, you'll miss the fight."

"Fight..." Dr. N said with a heavy sigh.

Chris turned away for a second, then back to Dr. N. "Yeah, it's all over the news."

He then walked beside Dr. N placing a hand on his back, and with a gentle push shoved him towards the car.

"Better hurry." Chris advised as he took off jogging down the street, leaving Dr. N with the car.

The passenger door opened and then closed as Dr. N took his seat behind the

wheel. He looked next to him, seeing Mr. Kitty with his seatbelt on.

"Let's do this." he said, starting the car. His voice was excited but hid a deep resigned tone. Shifting the car into gear, he slammed his foot on the gas pedal and made the tires squeal takeing off down the streets.

A few blocks away the fighting had ensued. There were several large dents in Jake's limousine. A small news team stood off to the side, capturing every moment they could on film.

"Good evening! I'm Paul Shaner," the reporter said, holding his coat over his head for protection. "And this is channel twenty nine, Flatvill's local news source, with breaking news. Today, Billion-Dollar Jake and Hero have entered into a toe to toe brawl." He continued to speak as Jake flew past him

in the camera's view, behind the reporter.

"No one knows exactly what started this fight, but rumors point to a long childhood rivalry."

A woman's hand entered the picture just as Jake scrambled to his feet, running back past the reporter. She held out a piece of paper.

Paul took the note handed to him and opened it up,

"Ladies and gentlemen, I've just received word that someone else has entered into the fray."

The cameraman turned the camera to see Dr. N's car pulling into view.

Inside the car, Dr. N unbuckled his seat belt and took a deep breath.

"Put the car somewhere safe, Mr. Kitty." He said as he stepped out of the vehicle. Walking towards the two fighting men, the car started itself, backed up, and took off down the street. Hero and Jake

both stopped fighting long enough to notice Dr. N coming towards them.

"Ladies and gentlemen, it looks like the comical Dr. N has shown up, but why?" Paul said as Dr. N stopped a few feet away from the camera.

"Nathan?" Hero said just as Jake caught him by surprise. Jake picked up Hero and tossed him over Dr. N's head. Hero yelled out in surprise, his arms flailing.

Jake already looked a little worn, but that didn't stop him from marching towards Dr. N. In fact, Dr. N could only grin as he stood waiting for his chance.

The reporter popped back into the camera view with another piece of paper in his hands.

"Ladies and gentlemen, our producer has determined that this is going to fall under excessive violence, and therefore we will not be showing anymore of this brawl

on television. We now return you to your regularly scheduled programming." Paul said as the camera switched off.

The fight lasted for a good eight hours. Everything within a four-block radius was destroyed.

"Back on me." Paul instructed as the cameraman lifted his camera to survey the scene. The streets were scattered with burning paper, bricks and metal. Cars lay on their sides with broken window shards everywhere.

It was as if the worst hurricane ever imagined had torn through part of this town. Dr. N, Hero, and Jake lay scattered about the street, the camera panning to each of them in turn, then fading to another.

"Turn back to me!" Paul demanded As the camera re-focused on him. "These three men have gone toe to

toe with devastating results. It would appear that none of them have survived."

He kicked a can out of his way wading through the destruction.

"Ladies and gentlemen in all my years of reporting, I've never seen such carnage."

The camera turned to Jake, who lay face up in the street. His belt buckle had come loose in the fight, and was currently embedded in his forehead.

The camera then turned to Hero, who was sticking into the into the street headfirst with his feet up in the air. Dr. N was lying through one of the mailboxes, packages and letters scattered everywhere on the street.

Back in the mysterious castle, the cloaked man sat at his desk, watching his television intently.

"Wait! Somethings happening!" Paul's

voice came from the television, "It seems that Dr. N is standing up. He's alive!"

"Vander!" the ominous voice yelled and a meek looking Vander opened the door with his head down.

"Yes, Master?" Vander answered weakly.

The dark figure looked at him with expressionless eyes. "Dispose of Jake, he's no longer any use to us." The man said to him.

Vander nodded slightly, starting to back out of the room, but stopped as a rough hand reached out of the shadows.

"Try not to fall too hard for my protégé. We don't want you to get all emotional now do we?"

Vander's lips tightened as the hand fell back into the shadows. Molly entered the room after him, looking at Vander.

"Molly." The voice said.

"Yes sir?" she asked.

"Take Vander back and make sure to send some reinforcements. I want Resident Hill up and operational."

Molly nodded, taking Vander's arm and leading him out of the room.

In the city, Dr. N lifted the mailbox up just enough to scoot out from underneath it.

"Ladies and gentleman, Dr. N is getting up." Paul said, stumbling over a piece of lamppost trying to get to the exhausted Dr. N.

The cameraman followed Dr. N staggering to his feet, almost getting in his face.

"I just want to go home." Dr. N said as he placed his hand on the camera lens, pushing it away.

"But Mr. N!" Paul insisted.

"Not now." Dr. N replied as he fumbled his way over to a nearby beaten up car.

Dr. N stood still for a moment, then soon collapsed to the ground again.

"Lives have been destroyed and buildings have been ruined. Dr. N walks away today, siding with neither good nor evil but as his own man!" Paul yelled, pointing to the surrounding area. From a distance, the sound of an ambulance could be heard. Dr. N listened until the sounds faded into silence.

When Dr. N woke next, he once again found himself in St. Ruth's Hospital. His room was much larger this time. Mr. Kitty had been placed sitting on a nightstand next to the bed.

Across from his bed was another occupied by Hero. He seemed to have tubes and wires running out of every part of him. A large grin could be seen on his face.

Chris opened the room door and stared at the two of them.

"That was some fight." Chris commended as he walked over to Dr. N's side. He looked over to Hero's bed, shaking his head.

"They found the Masked Weirdo." Chris said taking a seat next to him, "He managed to save a nearby orphanage on his way back into the city, right before you and Jake destroyed it."

Dr. N mumbled something, inhaling deeply. Chris smiled and placed a computer chip on the nightstand. The chip was one that looked exactly like the one Dr. N found in Resident Hill.

"Let's just say the world shares a common enemy. Well, at least part of it, anyway." Chris said as he looked to Hero then back to Dr. N.

"Chrissy poo?" Came Cindy's voice from down the hall. Cindy marched into the room, her high-heels clacking. She stopped just by Dr. N's bed as Chris stood up.

Dr. N mumbled under his breath a little bit.

"I know, but after I saw her under the lamppost that day I left your house, she's changed her ways." Chris said, defending

himself and his new love.

Cindy nodded, "I'm sorry, Dr. N, but that was very brave of you to do that. I hope you can forgive me."

Dr. N mumbled under his breath again, closing his eyes.

"Well, I'm off to fix the city." Chris said as Cindy placed a loving hand on his shoulder.

"Lots of money, right honey?" Cindy smiled a faint innocent smile then ran her fingers through her hair. "I mean, lots of lives to rebuild." She quickly retorted as Chris just smiled, shaking his head.

"I'll meet you in the car." He said as Cindy nodded placing a kiss on his cheek.

Chris paused briefly, then reached into his pocket and pulled out a set of car keys. He tossed them on Dr. N's stomach and looked to Mr. Kitty.

"Your car is waiting for you when he gets up." He said with a smile. With that, he turned and headed out of the room,

closing the door behind him.

The scene of the crime remained littered with the remains of the epic battle that befell Dr. N.

Under a lamplight, there stood a tall brooding figure.

It turned enough in the light that it caught the glint from its clothes. "BDJ" was visible before the figure slouched only slightly, obscuring the letters.

These fights and these bloody hell torn battles were not over not by a long shot. The figure of Jake looked up with a grimace of hate and anger in his eyes.

His snapped his belt buckle, slapping it firmly back into place. The skull was now stained red with Jake's own blood. Next time, someone would die.

In Saint Ruth's hospital, Dr. N lay sleeping. Mr. Kitty was nowhere to be found at the moment. A figure stood in the shadows, waiting.

"You still have few things to learn if

you're going to survive..." The figure
thought to itself, watching in the dark.

To be continued...