

First Place Winner, 1998 Young Writer's Contest

Tinkerbell's Hell

By Marian Rosenberg

"C'mere Tink. Ti-ink, where are you? Ti-ink? Ti-ink?" the little boy called. "C'mon Tink. I know you're here somewhere." Up in the trees above his head a tiny figure watched. After he left she'd follow him back to camp. That was if she felt like it. Tinkerbell didn't like the Lost Boys. They weren't as bad as the pirates on the other side of the island, but that didn't make her like them any more. They were dirty and noisy and all sorts of other things. Every little boy's dream, but not hers.

The pirates were worse than the boys, but not by much. Whoever had designed this hell had made all the details perfect. The pirates reveled in bloodlust and death, drinking, smoking, and booty, great big piles of it everywhere. Gold coins, jewelry, and gems, just lying there like trash. She hated it here, but long ago in a former life, she had broken a promise to a little boy and he sent her here. Oh how Tinkerbell hated Peter.

Peter had been her best friend, her confidant, and everything a little girl could want. On his seventh birthday, the year before he died, she had promised that when she grew up, she would marry him. They had been tree climbing when he fell. A long fall that she re-lived for years after, a long fall broken only by the screams of a little girl as she realized that Peter would never grow up.

That wasn't the last summer of her childhood but somehow it always seemed that way. Fifteen years later, her boyfriend had lifted the veil covering her face and kissed her. Their first kiss as man and wife. It was also their last. She had fainted and awoken here, condemned to this hell by Peter. She'd seen him here twice in the time she'd been here, and all he'd said was this was for breaking her promise. He still lived in his little boy's world, and now so did she. Condemned forever to the childhood fantasies of a little boy, Tinkerbell pined for her lost life and for Scott.

"I'm here to visit my wife." The tall man stood at the desk, a sad smile on his face. The dark-haired receptionist looked up, "Name please?"

"Kotzky, Belle Kotzky."

Her fingers flew across the keyboard. "How do you spell the last name, sir?"

"K-O-T-Z-K-Y."

"She's in room 247." The receptionist handed him a badge with the word 'visitor' in bright letters on the front.

"I know."

The man walked briskly towards the elevators. He'd have an hour to sit there and hold her hand. Scott didn't want to lose any time with her. Each day he came

and sat with her, each day he brushed her long blond hair. Even though she couldn't hear him, he always told her how much he loved her. Scott missed Belle; it had been two months since that fateful day. Sure he'd been nervous, but when he lifted her veil, everything had been perfect. He'd kissed the new Mrs. Kotzky she had fainted. Belle still hadn't awoken.

"Now Tink, y'know better than to hide. What if the pirates had found ya?" A voice came from behind her. Belle whirled, sitting on a tree branch behind her was a small boy. The redheaded child was seven years old, maybe eight at the most. Tinkerbell fluttered her gossamer wings and flew over to him, "Oh, hello, Petey."

"...So he just sits there everyday and holds her had, pining away with unrequited love," the nurse finished in a low whisper.

The other nurse whom she had been talking with sighed, "That is just so romantic. Don't you wish your man was like that?"

"If my man were *that* loyal to me, I'd rather be around to enjoy it."

"Don't I know it."

"What's wrong with her?"

"When she fainted, she hit her head and went into a coma."

"Poor dear," the nurse sighed again.

Peter smiled, a big gap-toothed smile. "Hiya Tink! How d'you like it here so far?"

"You know I hate it, why won't you just send me home?"

"You broke yer promise," he pouted. Every motherly instinct in Belle made her want to reach out and comfort him but he was so much larger than she. Instead, she perched on his nose. He went cross-eyed to look at her.

"Petey, how was I supposed to keep it?"

You made a promise, cross yer heart and hope t'die, stick a needle in your eye. Y'promised me, Tink."

"Petey, we were children."

"Were children?"

"Petey, look at me."

"Yah. What's different?"

"I'm sorry Petey, but I grew up. I couldn't help it."

Scott laid the long-handled brush down on the bedside table. He would keep his beauty looking

beautiful. Even with tubes in her arm to feed her, and a pallor from lack of sunlight, she was beautiful.

A nurse leaned into the room, "Visiting hour is over, sir. You'll have to go."

Scott leaned over and kissed his wife on the cheek, "I love you, Belle." Then with a sad look, he put his coat back on and walked out slowly.

"How could ya have grown up" I didn't." Peter crossed his arms angrily and stared at Tinkerbell.

"No, Petey, you didn't. You'll never grow up."

"That's cause I'm Peter Pan."

"Yes," she nodded weakly. "You're Peter Pan, Petey, but I'm not Wendy. Can I please go back to my life, Petey? Please?"

"Y'sure y'wanna go back t'bein' a grown-up?"

"Yes, Petey, I do."

"Alright, but remember me, 'kay?"

"You know that I always will."

Scott Kotzky was brushing out his wife's hair as he always did before the end of visiting hour, when Belle's large blue eyes fluttered open. Sure that he was dreaming, he shook his head, but it was no dream. She tried to speak, but her vocal cords, unused for two long months, wouldn't work.

"Nurse! Nurse! Come quickly!" he called.

The nurse hurried into the room, afraid that something was wrong with the patient. When she saw Mrs. Kotzky sitting up in bed, she gasped. It took over a week before the doctors were confident enough to let Belle leave the hospital and go on her delayed honeymoon.

On the island with the Lost Boys, Peter Pan fought his pirates and waited for Wendy to come.

Second Place Winner, 1998 Young Writer's Contest

Stalag

By John Stoddert

It was dawn on the Ork home world. The morning mist now wafted across the barren and unforgiving wasteland, and the green sky now dissipated in the view of the vermilion orb so cleverly disguised as a sun. Creatures of this wasteland started waking up and tended to their morning routine. From my barred window, it was a start of another dull, ugly day.

I couldn't sleep. I could never sleep in this mildewed cell. Ever since I got in here, it has been impossible to sleep. I have spent so many days and nights in this musty cell. How many years? I wouldn't know. I lost all memory of life outside the barren walls, and so much the better. If I could, I'd probably die in my slumber. Now, it was a coward's death. It wasn't that I disliked a coward's death, for any death was better than this hellhole. It was just the thought of what would happen to my body. Would it end up as refuse in some Ork rubbish bin? Would it become a snack for the squigs?

I looked at the fungus that had built up on the wall, and the red marble that has shown tremendous amounts of wear. This cell has outlived many tenants, and it would probably outlast this current occupant.

The days passed either so lightning fast or excruciatingly slow that it was difficult to keep time here. A few times, I wondered what brought me here to this God

forsaken place. Then I remembered. It was one of those blood red Ork transports. *No, that wasn't the question, I thought. What did I do to deserve this? Some ghastly crime against humanity?* I thought of the many things I could have done. Heresy, perhaps? What about treason? Insubordination? No, I couldn't be that bold. I did everything I had been told. I fought for the Emperor, I killed enemies of the Empire, and I even took the oath for total loyalty, no matter the cost. How was I different from my comrades? Well, I got caught.

I stared again at the opposite wall. I was bored again, but comfortable.

Well, I should have been content after this long. I had made myself immune to the noxious smell of the prison and of the quite unfriendly disposition of my Ork captors. Not much happened around the prison camp, so there was little reason to get excited. The confined quarters I called home were sufficient enough. I coughed and hacked violently as I considered the surroundings for the fifth time today. One thing I couldn't dispute was that I lost a tremendous amount of weight during my stay. It was partly because of the smell, or maybe because the Ork prison fare wasn't exactly edible, let alone palatable.

Of course, nobody but Orks could consider blood worms haute cuisine.

That morning, my thoughts were interrupted by a grating squeak, then a metallic clank as my cell door thumped against the adamite wall. I looked a moment at the direction of the sound, but after finding it was only those noisy guards again, I returned to staring blankly at the wall.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw two Ork wards with their stub guns strapped to their shoulders. Another Ork, wearing the uniform of a high-ranking officer accompanied them. The odd looking party stopped in front of the doorway, and looked around, as if searching for someone.

"Prisna' twenty-tree?" the officer inquired.

I didn't look up immediately. I barely raised my head, and stared at the guards blankly.

"Ya Prisna' twenty-tree?" the officer repeated, with more emphasis and irascibility. I gave a slight nod to show I acknowledged him.

He grinned, and pointed out the door. "Git up, ha humie! We go fo' a liddle wak!"

I still did not move, since I was currently occupied with looking at the wall. The officer was furious at my lack of respect, and he kicked me rather hard in the shin. "I said get up, ya stoopid git! We go now!!" he yelled with unbridled fury.

I rubbed my injured shin and got up slowly. "Are we going outside?" I asked feebly.

The Ork guards behind the officer snickered. "Ya'll see," said one of them. "Get movin'."

I didn't really care, so I walked out of the cell with them. I needed the fresh air, although on this planet, the definition of "fresh air" turned out to be a hot and humid collection of carbon dioxide with hints of methane. It was better than spending the time in the stale, toxic air of the cell.

"Are we going to be walking for a while?" I asked one of the guards.

The guard looked back. "Nah. We not be gon' too long, humie. We hav' ya bak in jiffy."

The entourage passed through the catacombs of the camp for a while before they emerged into the spacious courtyard. It was an expansive place, surrounded by white plasteel walls. Near the end of one of those walls were two posts, strangely riddled with small holes. The officer stopped and faced me. "See dat pos' over dere?" he asked, motioning to one of the more ragged of the posts. "Go an' stan' by it."

So, I went over and stood at the side of the post.

"No, no, no! In *fron'* of it!"

"Sorry," I mumbled, as I repositioned myself.

"Much betta'." The officer wildly gesticulated towards one of the wardens.

"Send dem in," he growled.

Promptly, six Gretchin came into the courtyard, giggling and wielding red autoguns. From a distance, I watched as the Orks conferred with the new arrivals, as if giving them instructions. But for what? Was this a drill I've been forced to watch? I decided to ask what was going on. "Hey, I cried out. "Hey, excuse me. Ork guys?" The Orks turned around, rather upset at being interrupted.

"Whad ya wan'?" one yelled back.

"I was just wondering. Could you tell me what's going on?"

The officer looked confused and looked at one of his guards. "Ya didn' tell 'im?"

"Errrrrrr. No," the guard responded. "We thout ya telled im' alreddy."

"It shooty trainin' fo da Gretchin," the officer replied, and the Orks returned to briefing the rather unruly gunners.

Oh, I thought. Target practice. Yes, they'd really need that. Gretchin were lousy gunners. They need all the practice they could get and... Suddenly it dawned on me. What were the Gretchin shooting at? I glanced quickly to my left and right. No targets. I decided to tell the Orks about it.

They stared at me inquisitively. "Targit?" they asked.

"Yes, targets. Shouldn't there be some hanging around?"

"Why we need dem?"

"You're supposed to shoot at stuff, aren't you?"

"Whad ya takin' 'bout, stoopid git? We told ya we hav' shooty trainin', didn' we?"

"Then where's the bleeding target?!"

"You da targit."

The bitter truth sunk in. "This is an execution?"

"No duh, ya git," replied the officer with a sneer.

"Don't I get a say in it?" I whined.

"Shuttup!" yelled a guard. "We start now!"

"FIRE!" the officer yelled, and the courtyard echoed with the staccato rhythm of the Shooty Boyz' autoguns. I closed my eyes and prepared to meet the Emperor at last. The icy cold fingers of death raced up my spine as I prepared for the impact of the bullets against my stomach and entrails and rip through me. My entire life passed before my eyes, except for the parts when I was drunk or sleeping.

But nothing came. There was silence. A long silence. I opened my eyes. Nothing changed. I was still in front of six Gretchin gunners. All mirth had disappeared from their faces. They had missed.

"Ow ya miss?!?" the officer screamed, "Ow in Mork's name ya miss?!?"

The Gretchin stood unsteadily and shuffled around, desperately trying to avoid eye contact. "E move," one of them lamely suggested.

"Shuddup! Go an' practiz!"

The chastised gunners walked slowly back to their barracks. I was alive! Alive! At least for another day, I could enjoy the wonders of my dreary, boring life. The Ork officer briskly apologized for what had happened, and

the guards threw me back into the cell. As I collided with the opposite wall, I heard the guards say, "Nex' time, definitely!" and marched off. From outside, I heard growling sounds accompanied by pitiful squeals for mercy and an occasional dull thud, as if someone was hurling ripe melons against a bad USO performer. Automatically, I assumed that the Ork officer was lecturing his gunners.

After a while, the cell door opened again. It was the Ork officer, carrying his stub pistol. I rose out of my bunk and stood against the wall, fearing that the Ork would take the matter of execution into his own hands. Instead, he sat down on the bench in front of me.

Of course, I definitely wasn't prepared for what he told me.

"Teach the Gretchin?" I squealed. "You want me to teach them marksmanship?"

The Ork nodded. "Yah. Da las' git who taut 'em died long time ago. Eva since den, the liddle runts 'ave 'ard time shootin'."

"But why me? Can't you teach them?"

In a sincere tone (if you could call an Ork sincere), the Ork expounded in detail the problems of teaching a Gretchin. He admitted to me that Orks were pretty bad marksmen, and the Gretchin... well, they made Orks look like experts. It was incomprehensible for an Ork to teach anybody, let alone six Gretchins with itchy trigger fingers, the brain capacity of a toddler, and the comprehension skills of a Tyrannid on amphetamines. It made sense to me, and I complimented my captor on his skill of persuasive speaking.

"Well," I said, resting my head on the wall, "what's my incentive?"

The Ork gave me a toothy grin. "Dat'll depend on 'ow well ya do. If ya do really good, we won' shoot 'ya. If ya don't, den we shoot ya."

I narrowed my eyes at him. "How long do I have?"

"Wun day."

"One?" I yelled, "why only one?"

"Well," the Ork grinned, "Ya really wanna teach 'em longa?"

He had a good point there.

The next morning, I found myself face to face with the six Gretchin who tried to end my life. They weren't as full of spunk, and I noticed most of them bearing swollen eyes and missing teeth, evidence of the tutorial the officer gave them yesterday. So, I began with the basics of rifle mechanics. The hard part about teaching this to Gretchin is that you have to be careful about using large words. So, as you would expect, I spent a long time with it.

While I was talking, one of the Gretchin raised his hand.

"When we start shootin'?" he asked impatiently. Like the rest of his colleagues, he wanted to blast something. I had to control this instinct if the Gretchin were supposed to be expert marksmen.

I scowled at the trigger-happy demon. "You won't start shooting until we go over how we shoot accurately. Any stupid animal can shoot a gun, but it takes an experienced soldier to shoot it right."

"Well, can we practiz now?" he moaned.

"No, let's go over how we aim, first." I paced back and forth like my drill sergeant in order to intimidate them, and to make sure they weren't going to sneak up behind me. That's the problem with Gretchin. You can't turn your back on them.

"Now, you see that ridge on top of your guns?" I asked. The Gretchin only looked at me like I was a madman.

"Look. Let me show you." I reached for one of the Gretchins' guns, but he yanked it away. As I tried to grab it again, he snatched it out of reach, as if he were protecting his child.

"It's okay," I promised him. "I won't shoot it."

The Gretchin thought otherwise, and emphatically shook his head. "Don't trust ya," he growled.

I stared straight in the face of him. "Let's get this clear," I growled. "Either you give me the gun, or I rip that little spine of yours out from your body."

That was convincing enough. He handed me his gun.

"Now," I said. "You see this flat thing here? Look down that bit, then you fire when the pin is in the center of the target." I pointed out the sights to them confidently in order for them to fully appreciate their guns.

One of the gunners scratched his head. "Why dere?" he demanded.

My face fell. "What do you mean why? You can't hit something if you can't aim!"

After a while, I got them familiar with marksmanship, but it took the entire afternoon. Eventually, the Ork officer came by and asked to see a demonstration tomorrow. Obviously, I couldn't refuse. If the Gretchin did well after my crash course, I'd be saying good-bye to the old stalag.

In the morning, I was led into the courtyard again. Immediately, I started walking towards the wooden post. This time, one of the guards stopped men.

"No, ya don'," he ordered. "Lessee 'ow good da Shooty Boyz ar furst." As I watched, two other guards dragged in a sack of... I don't know what it was, but it was definitely a sack, in front of the post. Then, the Gretchin came in and aimed at the sack.

"FIRE!" The officer yelled.

Nothing.

The Gretchin looked at their guns curiously. "Awrite! Whad gives?" The officer bellowed.

"Shooty tings won't go boom-boom," one Gretchin shouted.

"Whad ya mean?"

"Shooty tings not go boom-boom," another repeated.

The officer put his head in his hands. "For da luv of..."

Then I remembered. *The safeties!*, I thought. *I forgot about telling them about the safeties!* If the Gretchin couldn't figure out how to turn them off, I'd get shot.

"Did ya load da things?" one of the guards asked the Gretchin.

"Yeah! Put lotsa bullits in!"

I rushed up to the group. "Did you turn the safeties off?"

The whole group stared at me blankly.

"The safeties! Those switches near the triggers!" I yelled, wildly pointing at their guns.

"On da shooty tings?"

"Yes!"

Then, one of the Gretchin finally understood. He flipped the switch and pulled the trigger.

Unfortunately, the gun was pointed at one of his comrades, who flew back against the wall, splitting the imp open. For a long time, we all stared at the remains, as it started smoldering in the toxic atmosphere.

The officer looked both at the Gretchin, then at me. He walked back to his position, and dismissed the gunners. "Dat's da firs' ting dey hit in weeks," he said to me as they went out. "Ya wun da bet."

I sighed. "Thanks," I remember telling him. "I'll work on them tomorrow."

Third Place Winner, 1998 Young Writer's Contest

(Untitled)

By T. J. Peterson

It was approximately 6:45 pm, and Professor Von Schniekel was working late, trying to perfect his new formula for a thought-enhancing drink. He had been working on it for the past year, and the executives at Tasty-Corp™ were becoming impatient. They had given him an ultimatum to have the product finished within a week, or he would be looking for a new job. The deadline was the next day so the doctor had to skip a few tests. At about 11:00 pm, he had finally finished. He poured the green goop into a small flask, took in a deep breath, and drank it. And waited. And waited some more. By about three in the morning, there were no conclusive results, so the professor decided to go home and start looking through the classifieds.

"What a long day," he said to himself, "I guess I'm just not cut out to work here." After getting in his car, and finally finding his keys after a 10 minute search, he turned on the ignition. The car made a sound, but did not turn on. He looked at the dashboard and realized that the problem was an empty gas tank. The professor sighed to himself as he looked at the clock. It was now 3:47 in the morning. His home was almost an hour away driving, so it would be pointless for him to walk home. He headed for the nearest gas station, bought some gasoline and walked back to the parking lot.

"It must be 4:30 by now," the professor groaned to himself. After filling up the tank, he climbed in the car and drove off. The clock read 3:47.

"Now the clock's broken? Cripes, what's next?" Once he arrived home, Von Schniekel climbed right into bed. He woke up a little later and the clock read 8:30.

"Now I gotta go to work!" he bitterly moaned, "I wish it was just five and I could get some more sleep.

Suddenly, the room became dark. Not just dark when a cloud covers the sun, but dark when it's midnight.

"What the he..was I dreaming?" the professor said. He looked at the clock and it read five o'clock. So he went back to sleep. That morning when he wok up, he started to brew a hot cup of coffee for himself.

"This takes too long," he thought, "I wish it was done now."

Immediately after he said that, the coffee was done.

"How odd..." he remarked.

After a day of strange occurrences like this, the professor started to realize something. Apparently, his creation had not been a complete failure, though it did not work the way that he had planned. It did indeed enhance a person's mind, but not overall intelligence. It gave Professor Von Schniekel the ability to control time.

When the Professor walked into his home that day, he decided to test out his new ability. He watched television to see the local lottery number. Then he returned to the previous day, purchased a ticket with those numbers, and traveled forward to the next day to claim his prize. It worked!

"With this power, I don't need those jerks at Tasty-Corp™," the professor shouted to himself, "With this ability, I could run the company!"

And with that, he set off devising a plan. One second later, he jumped into his car and sped off towards Tasty-Corp™. On the highway, there was a huge traffic jam, and he realized he could bypass this situation. The professor stopped time, and all the cars immediately stopped. The expressions on people's faces were frozen along with their bodies, Von Schniekel drove in between cars until he arrived at his destination, and then resumed

time. Before he went inside, he decided to test his time-controlling capability and it seemed a bit lacking. Professor Von Schniekel thought that maybe he needed a refill.

So he first went up to his lab and drank another vial of his elixir. Then he poured some into a large jar. He knew this wouldn't last him long enough, so he wrote down his recipe and kept it in his wallet.

"Now the fun begins!" happily thought Von Schniekel.

He sprinted up the stairs and burst into the room where the executives were having their meeting and proclaimed loudly "Now I will be the one calling the shots around here! I'm taking over this company!"

He started to put his plan into action, however, he couldn't quite seem to change the flow of time. It was moving back and forth between the minutes, and occasionally pausing. He concentrated harder, but it wouldn't work. So he concentrated more, and more, until his head felt like it would explode.

"What's happening?" he asked himself.

He could no longer keep up the strength to continue and he plopped down on the floor panting.

"Is something the matter, professor?" asked one of the executives, smugly.

"Yes, you seem a bit tired," added another.

"How did...what's...you..." said Von Schniekel, trying to catch his breath.

"After you were fired, the janitor went to clean out your lab and decided to taste your elixir. He showed us how he could stop time and move all around us. Each of us tried the drink, and realized we could take over the business world and become the largest corporation on Earth. We made short work of the janitor, and set to work on accomplishing this goal.

"Well then, since I did help make the drink, ya know, maybe you could let me help you achieve all the power you want," said the professor nervously.

"Haven't you read this morning's paper?" asked one of the men.

The president handed the professor the front page of the Post and it read: **Tasty-Corp™ buys Microsoft™. Super company's net worth now over 900 billion dollars.**

"So you see," remarked the president, "I've got no need for anyone."

With that, he pulled a magnum out of his jacket and grimly executed all eleven executives. Then he coolly blew the smoke from his gun, pointed it toward Von Schniekel, and said "Now for you."

The professor pushed the gun up toward the ceiling and knocked the president out of his chair. Then he jumped up and dove out of the room while a bullet flew right over his head.

"It's no use running!" shouted the president.

"What's going on sir, why..." the secretary started to say before her cranium was split from point blank range.

As the professor was running down the hall, the president suddenly appeared before him! So the professor stopped time again, knocked the gun out of his hand, and fired all the bullets. But the president was able to resume time and knocked down Von Schniekel. Both were playing a game of mental tug o' war, trying to affect time their own way. It was going back and forth, and stopping, and back and forth. They were no longer striking, but trying to out-concentrate the other. The blood vessels in their heads began to throb, and sweat poured out of their heads. Then the professor began to notice a hole open behind the president. It was filled with darkness and was moving toward them. It was a rip in the space time continuum! With only seconds to act, the professor dove out of the way as the small hole ripped through the president's torso, and disappeared. His body, what was left of it, fell to the ground. Only trickles of blood were found, as the rest was sucked into the hole.

Professor Von Schniekel sat back against the wall and sighed. He pulled out the drink that he had been saving and smashed it against the wall. Then he took out the recipe, ripped it into a hundred pieces and ate it. The professor had learned that the laws of time and space were too much for a man to control, and decided to make sure that no one else could try, at least for the time being.