

# **THE GENERAL NOISE**

**Issue 4. Volume 2.**

**June 2011**

IN THIS ISSUE

ON FILM BY LYDIA COLLINSON

WHY DRAGON BY DR. MEG FOX

THE PERFECT SONG BY GABRIEL CHAZAN

GUARDIANS OF THE STARS BY NOAH LISTER STEVENS

POEMS BY VARIOUS

PHOTOGRAPHS OF LIFE AT DRAGON AND STUDENT ARTWORK



Yes, this is the final issue of this year/don't just stop and cheer/submit pieces next

year/we will still be here



## Why Dragon by Dr. Meg Fox

Ah the strange relativity of time! Like the school year itself, high school seems to go on and on, until all of a sudden you realize, with a great flurry and panic, that it's almost over! When I look at many of my grade twelve students, it's like a pentimento, where the artist has painted over a portion of the canvas, but then in time the previous work shows through. I can see traces of who they were through who they have become.

Because of course this journey through time (six year!) is a transformational journey, from child to adult, physically and emotionally, from a student in a more or less conventional school to a Dragon scholar. These are deeply idiosyncratic metamorphoses, of course, and every one of the Dragon grads is a remarkable individual. But there are some common threads, and I'd like to talk about them a little.

Why come to The Dragon? I get asked this question by prospective students and their parents constantly. Certainly, one motivation is that the student has been unhappy somewhere else (after all, The Dragon is not the mandated next step after ANY elementary school). What made them unhappy? They were in a big school, where they felt invisible, or were slipping through the cracks. They were bored, underwhelmed, unchallenged, turned off. The teachers left them cold, the material of the classes seemed trivial, routine, irrelevant. They were isolated. There was no one there with whom they could connect. They felt weird, unpopular, alienated. They were picked on or disgusted with watching others be bullied. They did not want to conform, and their individuality made them targets. They were anxious. They felt they were drowning under pressure to produce, to perform. The standards made no sense to them.

And then they came here, to join and to form our community. What did they find? Room to talk, to dispute, to question. Their voices were heard, their silences and privacy respected (okay, not by me, so much, since I can't resist teasing and intruding, but you know what I mean). When they did something good, even if it wasn't what was assigned, it was recognized. When they got in trouble, it was discussed rationally, with consideration for all sides. There was faith in their ability. Pressure was exerted, but it was to make them join the process, to be tolerant, to be giving and responsible. Their teachers were engaged and engaging. People were passionate and forthright. There was trust. There was respect. There was affection.

In the afterparty for the Tenth Anniversary Gala, what did we do, really? We sat around together, for hours and hours, teachers and students together, talking, laughing, teasing. Some of us got up and danced. Some of us played chess. At the end of the evening, without rancour or resistance, we worked together, cleaning up, and went our ways. It was that lovely time of night, my favourite, the wee hours. I was in a wonderful mood. I'd been with my people, my family. And yours.



## **The Perfect Song** **by Gabriel Chazan**

I was thinking about music as a soundtrack. I've been working on a novel and when I write I always use music in the background. I do always try to be slightly strategic with what I choose. Sometimes my choices are pretty eclectic. In writing, I've used everything from Patti Smith to Adele as background music. Why I was thinking about this today was because I was listening to Stars' new (old) album, *The Bedroom Tapes* and I found myself writing largely inspired by the mood set by the music.

Luckily, the music suited what I was writing about very much but what if it hadn't? What if I'd been listening to 'Walking On Sunshine' while writing a break up scene? As well, is it positive for a book to be written while blasting music rather than cloistered in a small room like a monk tediously working on my manuscript. I would say that music helps a story. The Beats were famously influenced by jazz, aiming to have their music move with that rhythm and energy.

As well, authors like Nick Hornby and Neil Gaimen have even collaborated on albums writing lyrics. When I write, I want my book to have the power of the songs by Stars so I find it appropriate to listen to them. I had another weird thing with that album though. I was listening to one of the tracks yesterday and I found that the song echoed one of the recent plot twists in my novel nearly exactly. I guess what I'm trying to say in the end is that I think that being careful about what you listen to while writing is important.

SOUNDTRACK (June 2011)

- 1: Seeker, Lover Keeper-Light All My Lights
- 2: F\*\*\*ed Up-Turn The Season
- 3: Stars-The Worst Thing (Whitey Jam)
- 4: K. T. Tunstall-The Punk
- 5: Lissie-Wedding Bells
- 6: Tuneyards-You Yes You



## On Seeing A Chick Flick by Lydia Collinson

It's official. I have finally seen a "chick flick". Bridesmaids. It was, umm, interesting, to say the least. But let me tell you, it wasn't an experience I'll be in any hurry to repeat. Why? Well, let's start at the beginning of the movie. It starts out with a sex scene! I kid you not. Honestly, who starts a movie with a sex scene? It's obviously an attention grabbing ploy, but it also gives you a bit of a bad impression of the movie. Is that how chick flicks usually start?

As is usual in these Hollywood knock-offs, the characters were flat and extraordinarily dull. They were just stereotypes – the innocent artistic one, the stereotypical female best friend, the trophy wife, the tough one, the evil popular cheerleader type who was too perfect and beautiful for words, and the one with no personality (the main character). They were flat, dull, forgettable characters – in fact, I can't even remember the main character's name. I think the evil one was Helen. I think.

The male characters were no better: you have the shallow playboy, and his arch-nemesis, Mr. Perfect. Don't even get me started on the main character's roommates... They're very one-dimensional, and like most of the other characters in the movie, you've seen them before – they're shallow, not too intelligent, and mean to the main character. Ringing any bells? However, I think the acting is fairly good, and I think the actors did the best job they could with what they had.

The other issue I had with the characters was how dense and overdone they were. I especially find this with the lead – she's Bella Swan with blonde hair. She's extremely overdone and ridiculous, and she overreacts to absolutely everything. There's this one scene where she gets really annoyed at the evil girl and goes and completely trashes the party the evil girl was throwing for the bride-to-be. Really? Not going to happen.

I also really dislike how much of a push over she is. She just lets people walk all over her, and does nothing to stop them. I think she needs assertiveness counselling or something! The other characters had the same problem: Helen complains that her husband is out all the time, and she just sits at home and does nothing. Go get a job, or something! The trophy wife (I think her name was Rita) complains about how much she hates her kids, her husband, her sex life – her life in general. Well then, go do something about it! They just wouldn't stop whining about their inane, easily solved problems! They were extremely hard to relate to, and even harder to like.

The plot was, of course, completely overdone. I guess you could say it's relevant – I mean, it's a movie about conflict, right? Everyone faces conflict. But it is extremely overdone, and it's so predictable! Honestly, the minute you meet each character you know exactly what's going to happen. The minute you meet the evil perfect cheerleader, she doesn't even need to say anything – you know she's evil. The minute you meet Mr. Perfect, you know that he's going to start dating the main character. You know exactly how the whole wedding drama is going to work out. There are no surprises! It just gets to the point where you stop caring, and you're just begging for it to be over.

The last thing that really bugged me about this movie was the long, awkward scenes. I think they were supposed to be funny, and to be honest, some of them were. The movie had its funny moments, and there were definitely laughs. But a lot of the moments weren't the least bit funny, and they dragged on for ages! It made for an awkward, patchwork-seeming film, and it didn't flow very well.

Of course, there is one other crucial thing I don't like about the film. That, of course, being the whole anti-feminist aspect. Despite its fun, happy, bouncy, friendly atmosphere, this movie had some real issues in the feminist department – weird, considering that this is supposed to be the new wave in female comedy – they're still beating you over the head with the same ideas. You see, there's this scene in the movie near the beginning, at the Bride's engagement party, where the main character looks around at all the married couples in the room, and when men keep coming to stand next to her, and people keep asking "Oh, is that your husband?", and giving her strange looks when they find out she isn't married. The other bridesmaids are all completely focused on meeting the needs of their husbands, and seem incapable of doing anything for themselves. Yech... Yet another lovely movie promoting the idea that women are meaningless unless they're married.

This movie was promoted as being a new, innovative twist on female comedy. It was supposed to be something nobody had ever seen before, something creative, something interesting. It wasn't. I've never seen a "chick flick" before in my life, but I walked out of Bridesmaids feeling as if I had already seen it thirty-odd times. It isn't new, creative, or innovative. It's just the same old thing Hollywood has been feeding us for years. Don't bother seeing it, it's just yet another remake of the same movies our grandmothers were watching in theatres as teenagers – only in colour, with modern scenery, and with a bit more sex.



## The Elegant Universe review by Lydia Collinson

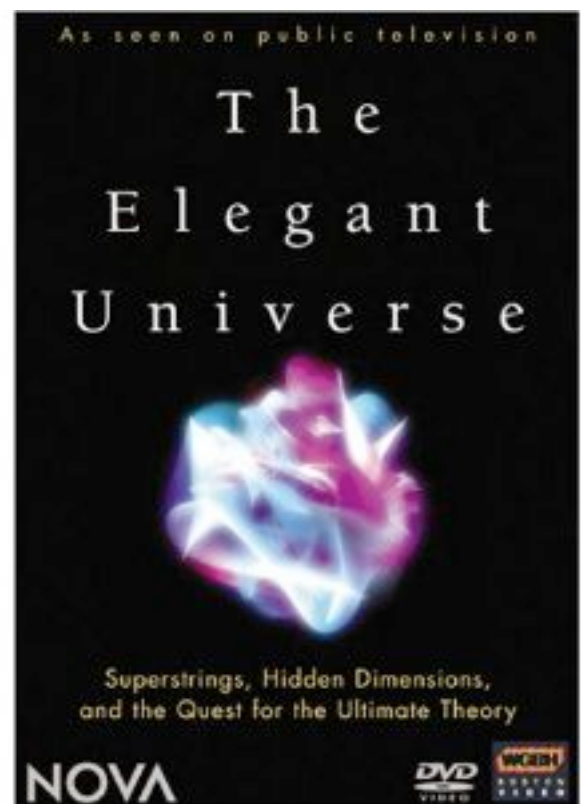
The Elegant Universe is a three-part television series. It's based on a book by the same name by Brian Greene, who narrates the show. It wouldn't be that exceptional, if it weren't for the topic. You see, the Elegant Universe is about String Theory. Yes, you heard me correctly – I am talking about that wacky theory of physics that states that everything is made up of little tiny strings. So, you're probably thinking: "STRING THEORY? AAAAHHHHH!!! MY BRAIN IS MELTING!!!!" Well, that's what's great about this show. It explains String Theory so it doesn't make your head explode! No, seriously. It somehow manages to make String Theory comprehensible to someone who hasn't even finished Grade 10 math, and believe me, that takes some doing.

What's really unique about this show is how inventive, enjoyable, and comprehensible it makes String Theory. What's really smart about it is that it doesn't go into the hideously complex math behind the theory, it just explains what the theory really means, and how it affects our world view. It brings in multitudes of experts who understand the theory, and are able to articulate it in a meaningful, fairly understandable way. I'm not going to try to explain it here, as I won't do as good a job as the film and will likely just manage to confuse you, but the series makes it understandable, though not exactly easy to picture...

Of course, to explain String Theory well, you need good examples and portrayals of what's going on. The series has many clear, easy to understand examples to explain the workings of different aspects of String Theory, which is great, because it would be a really boring show if it was just some guy standing there giving a lecture. They have different ways of portraying things – such as explaining the laws of quantum mechanics by bringing them to life on a larger scale, and making pictures and cartoons to explain how electro-magnetism is stronger than gravity. It really helps to bring the ideas to life, and makes you feel much more connected to them while improving your understanding.

One of the great things about this show is, of course, the host. What's a show without a good host? Brian Greene is extremely knowledgeable on the subject of String Theory, and is also extremely good at connecting with the audience without being totally ridiculous. He's also a rather good actor, and the way he acts during an example or an explanation makes it seem more realistic, and occasionally even funny.

The last great thing about the Elegant Universe is how it uses humour to make the show more interesting and to help the audience more involved. Now, you're probably thinking: "String Theory isn't funny? Yuck!" However, the Elegant Universe has done the impossible. It makes String Theory funny, and manages to ensnare its audience, keeping you interested the whole way through. So do I think you should watch it? Yes, I most certainly do. Seriously, it's a whole lot better than Bridesmaids...



## SERIEL: Guardians Of The Stars part 3: An Unlikely Confident by Noah Lister-Stevens

The bridge of the Valorous was silent after the computer spoke those words. Axel stared at the screen with eyes as large as golf balls. Richard's face was so full of rage his skin had turned a light purple in color. Those few seconds were the shortest eternity the resistance had experienced in a long time.

"WHAT?!" Axel roared in disbelief, blinking to see if he'd heard wrong.

"Blast it out of the sky!" Richard said loudly, his hands shaking in anger at the memories of the kredor.

"Captain, if I may, something's wrong here" the man said, squinting at the screen as if he was double-checking something.

"What??" Richard asked, still shaking with fury.

"The kredor hasn't attacked yet. Most could attack us long before we picked them up on our sensors" the man said, turning around with a quizzical look on his face.

Axel frowned, walking down to the man and staring at the screen hardy. "He's right. But this makes no sense! The kredor are berserkers! They'll attack anything without the command of a hive mind"

"Who cares?! Blow that thing to pieces! That's an order!" Richard roared in hatred.

"Wait!" Axel yelled, holding up his hand. "Let's see what this thing is up to. Put it up on the main screen. If it tries ANYTHING, shoot it down"

"Yes Commander" The man said, not without reluctance. Clearly he remembered the last invasion of the swarm as well as everyone else.

The Valorous's rear flank appeared on the screen, nothing showed up at first, but after a minute or so, a small shape appeared flying along the ship's length slowly.

"Commander, this is NOT a good idea letting a monster like this get too close to

us!" Richard said, his eyes so full of fury it actually frightened Axel.

Richard had been especially affected by the invasion of the swarm. His family had been slaughtered when the kredor had attacked and nearly destroyed a colony in the Carbon system. He was born on that colony no less, leaving him with nothing left except the rebel group.

"I'm willing to see what it's up to" Axel said, looking at the screen.

"I didn't think you were capable of this, old friend" Richard spat.

Richard stormed off the bridge in anger, the doors shutting behind him. Axel frowned. He couldn't really blame him, but Richard should know when to trust his commander's judgment.

"Commander, the kredor is approaching hangar 4C, arming neutron blasters now." Said the man sitting at the command station.

"I want two dozen marines with fully loaded weapons at the ready in that hangar! Target it with all our weapons, don't let it get any attacks off. I'll meet this thing personally" Axel said, walking off the bridge.

The commander walked down the hallway, the elevator already waiting for him. Pressing the button, the laser-encoded metal plate read his thumbprint and sent data back to the main database. Approving the print, the elevator moved, shooting down to the fourth level of the starship.

Axel practically ran through the hallways to the hangar, his hand straying to his belt and touching his personalized pistol. It was a special model, a Neutron-Magnum 001. It could fire off all of its 12 rounds inside in a second. Those bullets were special too, MK-XIII Penetrator Rounds, made with additional aerodynamic capabilities that allowed it to punch straight through three feet of Hypersteel.

Axel stormed through the doors into the hangar. Unsurprisingly, the crew on the bridge had ordered all the starships out

of the hangar, leaving the floor barren. At the rear of the chamber a blue aura that was the air shield kept the oxygen from leaving the ship and allowing the vacuum of space to enter. Ships could pass out of the shield at will, but unless they were authorized, no ship could re-enter.

However, if the shield were to shut down, seven meter thick blast doors would shut off the hangar and would remain closed until the shield was operational. Biological creatures were an exception. Anything that was not metal could pass through the shield unharmed. It wasn't a huge problem since neither humans nor kredor could survive in the vacuum of space for long. Although the kredor did have an advanced respiratory structure that allowed them to hold their breath for hours and breath in deadly conditions to humans, they couldn't last terribly long since space sucked the air from their lungs.

Behind Axel, the marines he ordered charged into the hangar, carrying huge rifles the length of a small child. All the marines nowadays wore battle suits, armor that was designed to stop bullets and provide maximum protection. Granted, it was pretty heavy and slowed its driver down, but it allowed troops to fight in conditions that would be impossible, like airless planets due to the suit's supply of oxygen.

The suits were constructed of Hypersteel, an alloy created by the smelting of normal, earthen steel and a high-density form of carbon found almost everywhere else in the galaxy. The soldier inside was protected from most forms of gunshots, save for shots to the face, where only a visor that came down over their face protected them.

"Commander" one of them said, the symbols on his suit showing he was a lieutenant. "We're ready and waiting, just give us your signal to fire"

"Thank you lieutenant" Axel said, walking down the steps onto the hanger floor, the marines flanking him and moving alongside their commander.

For a solid minute, all was silent. Then, it appeared. The kredor flew on huge wings that were folded back, clearly it had gained a lot of momentum before entering space and was now drifting along peacefully. It drifted through the air shield and into the hangar, its huge wings unfolding and flapping once, sending it shooting through the air.

The marine behind Axel raised his rifle, pointing it at the creature anxiously. Axel felt like ordering him to lower it, but he wasn't sure what it wanted yet. The kredor landed on the steel floor with a resonating crash. For a moment all you could see was a bowed head, its body was nearly entirely covered by demonic wings. Then, slowly, it stood up.

It was huge, standing almost if not seven feet tall. It stood on powerful, huge legs ending in four-toed stomping feet with claws for toes. As Axel's eyes traveled up its body, he saw that this had once been a human, given the body structure. The arms were smaller than the legs, but were covered in muscles that Axel assumed weren't just for show. The hands were the same as the feet, and although five fingers remained, they were now thicker and ended in talons.

The kredor's infection had turned the infected human's natural white skin black as night, with the white veins thrusting up against the surface. All over the arms and legs, wicked white spines thrust out of the skin menacingly. The creature's face was something out of a nightmare. It was half human, with the same general shape and structure, but the kredor's infection had turned the skin into a nightmare, making it enlarged and furious.

Two, curled back horns crowned the monster's head, which had been sharpened to ensure maximum damage. But the most terrifying feature was the eyes. The pupils were crimson, and glowed a terrifying red, that made even the most battle-hardened marine shiver.

The kredor looked at the marines and their commander in front of it, and bared its teeth, showing that the human's teeth had been replaced by sharpened teeth not unlike that of a shark. The tongue slid out of its mouth, showing that it was also sharpened like a snake tongue.

Axel stepped forward, his hand hovering over his gun. The kredor stayed where it was, looking at the commander with its red orbs. It spoke, in a deep voice that could cause children to shake in fear. "I seek Axel Doomson"

"That's me" Axel said, silently dumbfounded it knew English. "What is your purpose here?"

"I wish to speak to you, Axel Doomson, alone" the kredor said again, its facial expression unchanged.

Axel frowned. "And what reason do I have to trust you?" he asked, raising an eyebrow.

The kredor smiled, a sight that reminded Axel as the kind a predator would make just before making a kill. "You cannot. I could kill you now, but I do not because I wish to speak to you, and if you did not wish to hear me, you would have killed me already"

Axel's eyes widened ever so slightly. Not only was it fluent in English, it was shockingly intelligent. Axel had believed that kredor were like insects, unable to think independently. Considering the creature's request, Axel slowly nodded. "I will agree. But you will be escorted to a room where we will talk in private"

The kredor nodded its huge head slowly. "Very well Axel Doomson. But what I have to say, I believe will be of great importance to you"

Axel nodded again, turning to the lieutenant. "Take him to the interrogation center, don't waste time binding him. Keep your weapons on him, but don't shoot him unless he attacks"

The lieutenant nodded inside his suit and two other marines walked beside the kredor and on a silent command, it started to walk. Axel walked out of the hangar, and was confronted by Richard, who was so full of rage he was shaking. "Are you out of your goddamned mind?!" he hissed, barely preventing himself from yelling.

Axel's face was neutral. "I'm going to hear it out Richard. I want to hear what..."

"I didn't sign up for my commander negotiating with MONSTERS" Richard

spat at his commander.

Now it was Axel's turn to snap. "You signed up to follow my orders! Now either start doing that or GET THE HELL OFF MY SHIP!" Axel roared in his second-in-command's face, attracting the attention of the rest of the hallway.

He stormed to the elevator and slammed the button, the elevator shooting up to the prison core, the Guardian's holding cell. As the elevator came to a screeching halt, Axel entered the long hallway whose walls were nearly entirely cell doors. Most were empty, but some housed traitors to the resistance, spies for the United Forces and prisoners of war. Further down the hall, closed doors with normal walls represented interrogation rooms.

As Axel walked down the hall, ignoring the cries of prisoners, the opposite elevator opened and the marines from the hangar walked out. The huge kredor stepped out beforehand, the marines pointing assault rifles at its back. Axel knew they weren't kidding. Kredor were tough, no doubt, but those rifles fired sixteen shots a second, so high powered they would punch through the toughest armor.

Axel threw the door wide and entered one of the rooms, sitting down. The room was bare, save for two chairs and a table. On the far wall, a tinted window allowed the interrogators to watch their prisoner without him seeing them back.

The kredor was pushed through the door, two marines taking up a defense behind their commander. Axel gestured to the seat, silently telling the creature to sit. The kredor sat on the steel chair, the metal groaning at its weight.

"So" Axel said, drumming his fingers on the table. "You wanted me, here I am"

"Tell your drones to leave. I will speak then." The kredor said in its menacing voice again.

Axel frowned, but then looked behind him and tipped his head, telling the men to leave. They did so without hesitation, walking into the back room to watch.

***to find out what happens next check out the extended version under Happenings on the Dragon Academy's website***



# Poems

## **The Partisan's Lament by James Ross**

The bitter taste of malcontent  
The smell of gin and cigarettes

We all debate, and some make bets  
The children lie awake in bed

Stone cold tea keeps us awake  
Applause rings out when glasses break

Your history's not mine to take  
Your enemies not mine to make

We sit and argue all night long  
The cognac keeps my body strong

A gramophone breaks out in song  
For sky and golden wheat fields gone

We sit and eat their pre-sliced bread  
My shirt was made in Bangladesh

Tobacco smoke still hurts my head  
Stand vigil for the countless dead

## **Thirteen Things that Make Me Smile by Mary Spreen**

The sound of children's laughter.  
Walking by freshly roasted coffee beans.

Isis.

A new pair of gorgeous heels.

Using all my senses to take in uncharted territory.  
Realizing the complete serenity felt when surrounded  
by those I love.

My head finally hitting the pillow after a long day.

The adrenaline of taking a giant risk.

A dress of silky perfection.

Anticipation felt during the climax of a good book.

An elderly couple holding hands on a leisurely walk.

Seeing a chaotic mess turn into artistic quintessence.

A breakthrough in thought.

## **Poem by Jonathon Dan**

In real life, you are one

You start with no continues, no none

And sometimes one hit is fatal for you

When it happens there is nothing you can do

But even then, many make it to the end

And some have to start the game dead

Hope is your walkthrough

It'll take you to the end for you.

## Sense Impression Poem by Mary Spreen

It hits with a blast of effervescent chypre  
Bubbly, the champagne scent  
It's new and joyous, waiting for experience  
Life starts anew  
Then the berries, so perfect for spring  
Recall the parks, the fresh faces, the content air  
Subtle violet and fleurs blanches arise  
'Tis classic, but oh so unfamiliar  
Threw out the plan, along for the ride  
Cedar-wood grounds  
Supporting the chaos  
Guiding ghosts, they've got you  
It will all be ok, give in.

## Memorial by Gabriel Chazan

"These flowers are a kind you can only find here. They originated in Europe but they died out there. They're rare here as well." "Do you think it's wrong that I suddenly want to steal one?" "Yes, but that just makes it feel right." "Will you kill me if I do?" "No." "OK, I'm taking one." (take) "You know, in twenty years, maybe less, you might have the last figment of this flower." "What's the flower called?" "High Leaves." "What does that mean?" "Well, in one of the wars, the army found that if these were burned and released into the air, they would cause everyone to get really high which would stop the fighting. Then all the teenagers started stealing them. That's why they're dying out here." "Oh." "It's sad really. People take a lasting part of the landscape for a minute of fleeting pleasure then it's all gone."

"Everything's a memorial here. Everywhere I go there's a memorial for someone." "Who's this one for?" "I don't know." "I think it says somewhere." "Oh. It's just covered by the moss." "Yeah." "Let me try to pull the moss." (yank) "That's it." "Rest in peace Alan Gordon. 1850-1930" "Does it say anything else?" "Yeah but I can't make it out. Let me put on my reading glasses." "Okay." (silence) "Okay, it says 'father of Suzanne. husband to Antigone. You are remembered.'" "Is he?" "There aren't any flowers here and the grave's covered with moss." "Well, his wife has to have died and his daughter's got to be at least eighty by now." "Why do you think she doesn't visit?" "She probably is in an old age home or something. Maybe she can't leave." "But she must remember him right? She's got to." "She could have Alzheimer's." "That's true. Well, I'll remember him now." "Who?" "Remind me the name." "See! I was just testing you. All memory fades. In fifty years we won't remember today or this conversation at all. Goodbye Alan Gordon"





Editor In Chief and Designer: **Gabriel Chazan**

Copy Editor: **Lydia Collinson**

Advisor: **Sarah Grigsby**

Special Thanks To: **Sarah Beatty and Dr. Meg Fox**

Published by: **The Dragon Academy**

