

A Short Story by Thomas, Howard, Ungart, and
Standardly Bobpop

My Neighbour

ZURICH



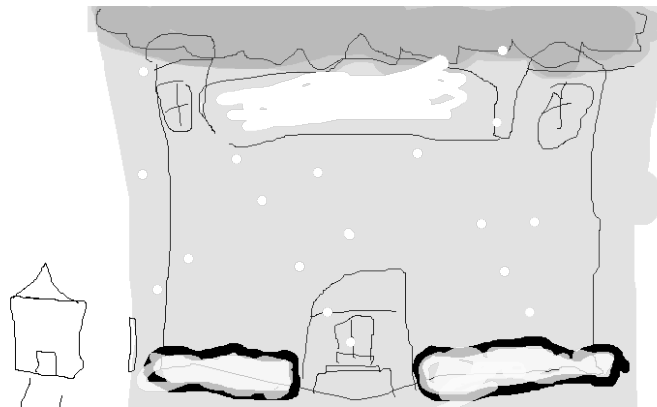
Ungart found peace within his soul and now can rejoin with his brethren.

Chapter One

Do they wish to ride?

Mr. Machiavelli's eye was immediately drawn to the enormous mansion adjacent to his modest cottage he was moving into. And it wasn't the size of the mansion that drew him in, though its size in ratio to all the other buildings in the neighborhood was astounding in and of itself. And the place just felt so, well, magical wasn't really the only way to describe it. For one, Machiavelli had just moved to this cottage in Tchamba and it was the middle of the Summer, so he did not expect snow to be falling down on the mansion. And yet it was, falling from a small cloud hovering not far above the mansion, incredibly landing on the outskirts of the property so no snow should go over the boundaries of his yard, irritating the neighbors with its presence.

So, as soon as Machiavelli had settled in and made sure he was actually hired at his job at the Hotel S'wah Sa S'wah, he decided he *had* to pay his next door neighbor a visit. Yet he never seemed to find the time for such a short visit to the enchanting house. He had retired from being a sewage worker in Lisbon, Portugal five years prior, but he had spent all of his funds through agreeing on paying for a dozen weddings for friends met on the internet. But, in any case, the truth was that he needed to be employed and there was no better place than the Hotel S'wah Sa S'wah, even if it was in a country he had never heard of. This job was pretty decent, as it required hard work for a total of seven or so hours a day, but after one particularly long day, he was far too tired to greet his neighbor. And yet, he was incredibly drawn in by the parties hosted at his neighbor's house, noting he was a host of many festivities. He'd discovered that his neighbor's name was Zurich, through one partygoer, a name almost as mystical as the house itself. So, one day when his boss screamed at him and shouted at him to leave, as he did every day, Machiavelli actually followed the advice given to him that afternoon, steeling his iron nerves as he walked up Zurich's driveway. His house looked like this:



Zurich opened the doors just before Machiavelli had reached them.

"Greetings, neighbor. It is time we talk," he said, leading them into his mansion.

"Uhh.. howdy?" Machiavelli responded. The inside was much bigger than he could believe.

"Come. I have something to show you. It will forever change your life."

"Okay," Machiavelli said, following Zurich down the corridor. Then, he entered a dark room full of maps. Machiavelli gaped. "Wow!"

Chapter Two

They ride on the shoulder.

Mr. Machiavelli sat jostled at the edge of his seat. As Zurich unfolded a map, an extraordinary ruckus began outside, the red shift effect rendering it deeper in pitch until the moment it could be made out to be the grumble of 7 motorcycles. Mr. Zurich, to the dismay of Machia velli, began speedily to fold the map back up and tuck it away. Not a moment after the map disappeared from sight, the infamous Kadj Urban Association, seven motorcycles carrying thirteen people, burst through the doors of Mr. Zurich's mansion. They were fine young men of Togo, generally well-built and amicable. Four years back, they had embodied the hopes and dreams of Tchamba by winning an all-expenses paid trip to Paris, sponsored by some NGO.

Mr. Zurich stood up and gracefully bowed to the intruders, deliberately not noticing the chunks of drywall and brick splattered across the room.

"You have smashed my walls in," noted Zurich, acknowledging the damage.

"I don't wanna start no trouble!" pleaded Mr. Machiavelli, as though he was the one who had smashed in Mr. Zurich's wall. The scene looked like this:

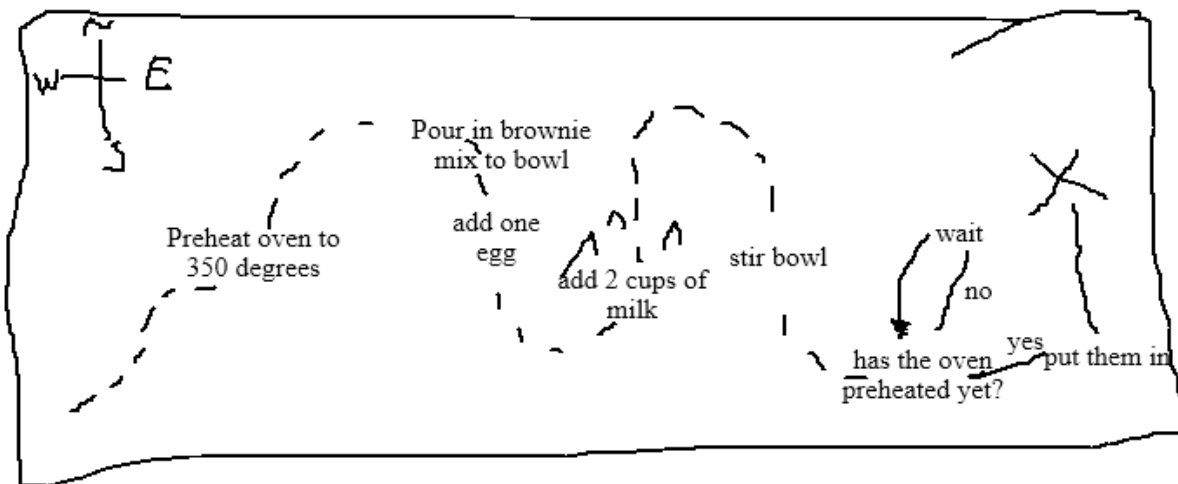


"You'd better come back later," boomed both Zurich and the Kadj Urban Association. Mr. Maciavelli's intent was not to stir trouble, so he expediently left, walking back onto the streets of Tchamba.

Chapter Three

The shoulder that broke the camel's back.

Machiavelli trotted to the Hotel S'wah Sa S'wah the next morning for work at the pace of a stallion. Too engrossed by the mystery of his neighbor, Mr. Zurich, to sleep the night before, he was unusually energetic—What could be on that map? Anything from a brownie recipe to a classified government document, but since it was a map, the brownie recipe would have to look like this:



Anyway, Machiavelli then entered the Hotel S'wah Sa S'wah and noticed a cold bite in the air of this adult world he'd been in for fifty years that had never seemed welcoming to him. The boss said, "15th or so day is when everyone quits." Machiavelli couldn't imagine why until he found secret notes in invisible ink where one startled employee wrote about a serial killer that went around stabbing hotel concierges for sport. That was *just* great. Naturally, Machiavelli thought about quitting and then realized that with the right combination of cleaning agents in the closet, he could make a hallucinogenic drug, but took this thought back when he realized the excesses of fortune and absurdity as his strange, disquieting neighbor, Mr. Zurich would far surpass it in worth. So he figured the job wasn't worth it and quit. It was, metaphorically, like this:



Chapter Four

The camel who knew the chapter had 285 words in it.

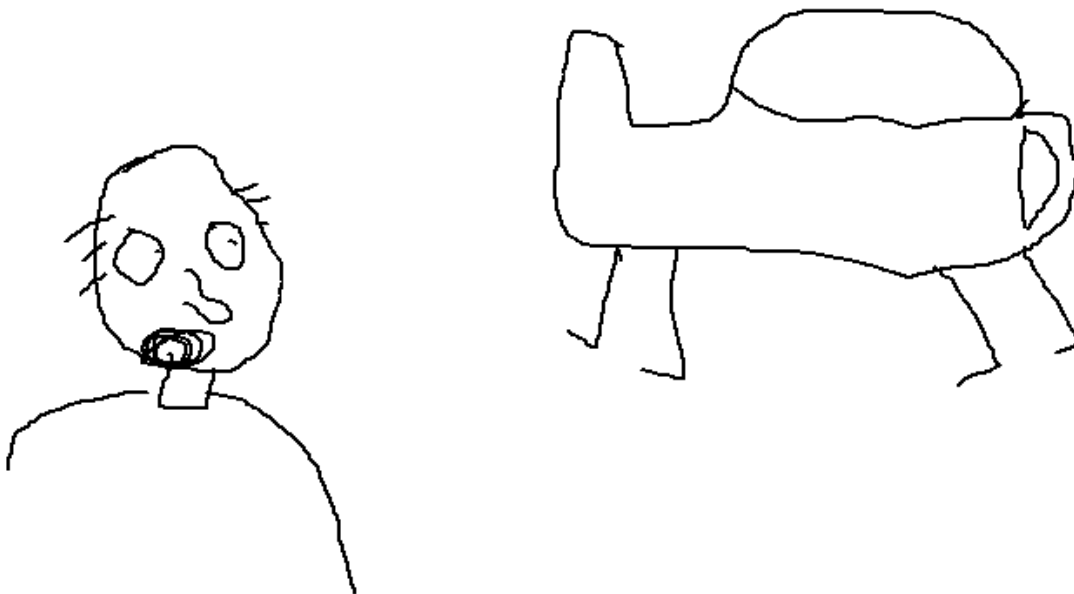
Now that Machiavelli was unemployed with little money to show for it, he supposed the best course of action was to leave Togo and find another job in Portugal. Or live with his parents and be concerned about doing chores every day. Yet Zurich in the end interested him too much for him to go. One day, Machiavelli was getting exceedingly angry about his loss at the Geometry Dash level Back on Track when he heard a knock at the front door. He stood up and answered it, seeing Zurich standing on his porch. "Come," Zurich said. Machiavelli, surprised, stumbled after his neighbor into his house, which for some reason had no holes in it. Zurich let him into the same room with the maps and ushered him towards a certain map hanging on the wall. Its contents were unfamiliar to Machiavelli and he wanted it. Zurich said he had travelled the world(s, in his exact words), and had seen unseen places.

"Place your hands on it," Zurich commanded, and as soon as Machiavelli did, Zurich gripped Machiavelli's pinkies.

"Ow!" Machiavelli complained, as he proceeded not to notice what was happening, until he found that he did not know where he was. He had never seen anywhere so annoyingly light blue, like cotton candy, but more eye damaging. Machiavelli stood, spouting out "What?"

"It will all make sense in a moment."

What happened next was unexpected: nothing. Unless an enormous teapot strutting over counted as something happening; Machiavelli certainly didn't think it did.



"I am never leaving here again," Machiavelli affirmed.

"There will be a time when we must depart," Zurich said.

Machiavelli looked around. "Why? You're still here!"

"Okay, the time to go is maybe sooner than I thought."

Machiavelli ignored his mystical neighbor, instead continuing to stare at the terrible blueness that surrounded him.

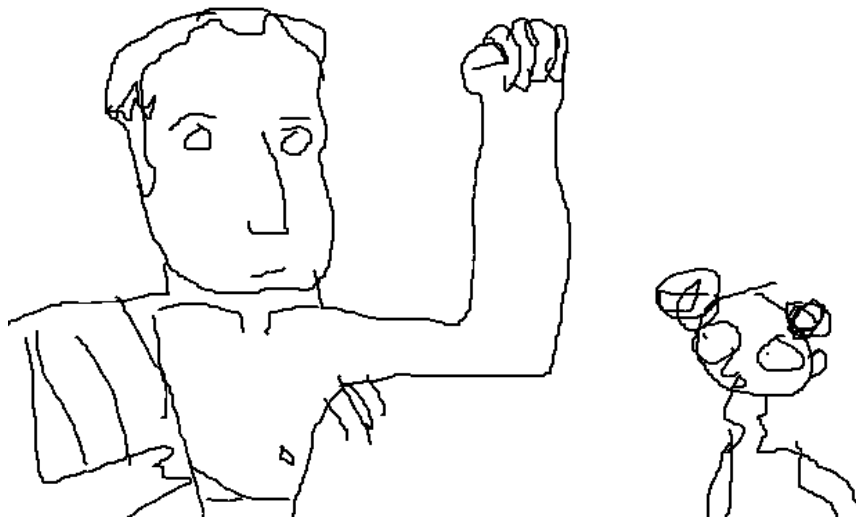
Chapter Five

Ils Ne Savent Pas Qu'on Est Des Noussis, 285 People Constitute as "They", To Be Exact

Mr. Zurich soon took Machiavelli's hand. "It's time to go on," said Zurich, gracefully.

"No! Why should you get to decide?" Mr. Machiavelli countered. But soon, he left with him to another land anyway, because he was a weak-willed man. Zurich secret-ed the map and secreted another, this one with strong Greek designs. They looked and found themselves in a marble hall full of statues of Julius Caesar!

Each marble Julius was surrounded by an army of backstabbers. Mr. Machiavelli gazed into one of the Julius Caesar statues' eyes. It was inspiring. It looked like this:



After what seemed like an hour of staring, Machiavelli found he could not make out of the face of the statue for the onsetting gloom of a groaning storm. Julius felt the first drops of rain because Machiavelli was short. Thunder sounded in the distance, illuminating rows of statues surrounded by back stabbers. Machiavelli began to run, dashing for shelter beneath a small crumbly arm of the arch. In stride, Zurich followed. "We must go home," he said. "I just remembered I left something at a neighbor's house." Machiavelli complied.

In the map room, Zurich said, "Please do not touch any of my belongings while I'm out. I will be back in five minutes at the most."

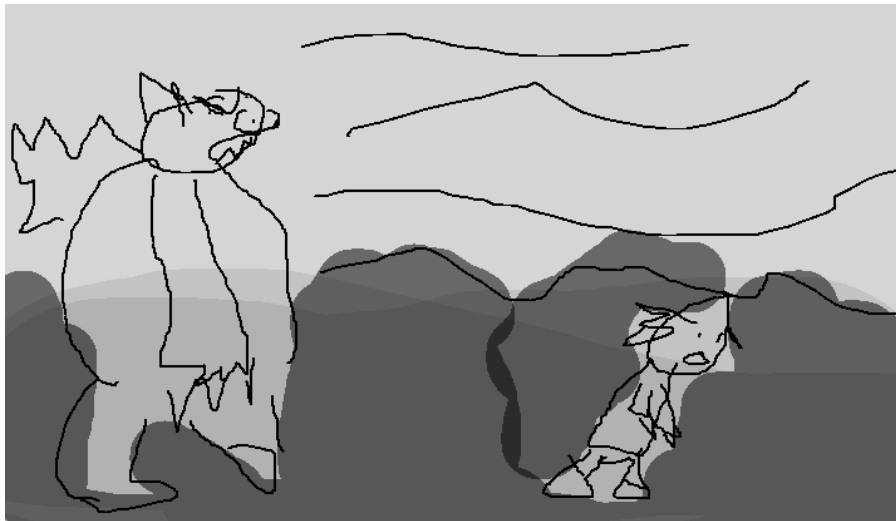
Chapter Six

The Tragedy of Noussis—A Story of Gargoyles and Lawncare

Machiavelli was a man of little thought. It was better that way sometimes. So when Machiavelli was left alone in this room full of maps that transferred him to other realms, he didn't think too hard about it. He forgot Zurich's words of warning and stared real hard at a nice looking map filled with gargoyles and lava. As he stared, he started to feel dizzy. He wasn't sure whether or not it was hallucinatory drugs or magic, but soon, Machiavelli found himself in a large cavern, or so it seemed. The land, he thought, looked like it could really use some lawn care. The grass should have been more green, for it was hard and gray. He noticed a large statue standing in the middle of the cavern. Machiavelli noticed that the large statue was a gargoyle.

"Hello, I couldn't have helped but notice that your landscaping is in bad shape. You should probably invest in lawncare," Machiavelli said, helpfully.

"What," asked the gargoyle, evidently confused. This clearly didn't happen very often. The gargoyle decided, like Machiavelli had, not to think too hard about it. The gargoyle started to attack Machiavelli. He missed by several feet, then tried again, before realizing that he was several feet away, which looked like this:



Machiavelli started to feel dizzy again. He found himself in the map room, as if nothing ever happened. Machiavelli felt envious: why did his neighbor get to have a magical room for maps when he didn't? Why was his neighbor a charming man of mystery and picturesque quality when Machiavelli wasn't? He walked home.

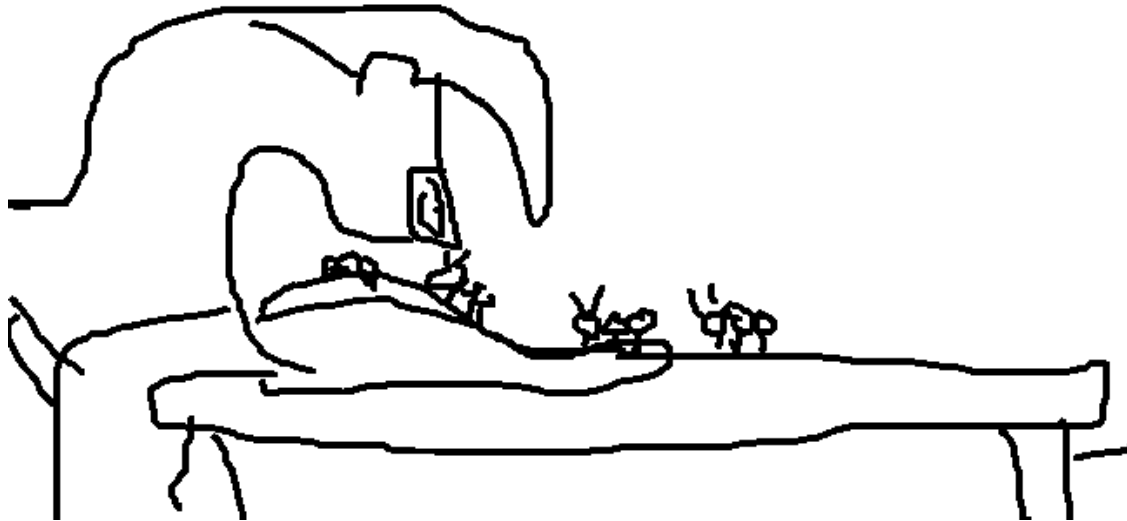


Chapter Seven

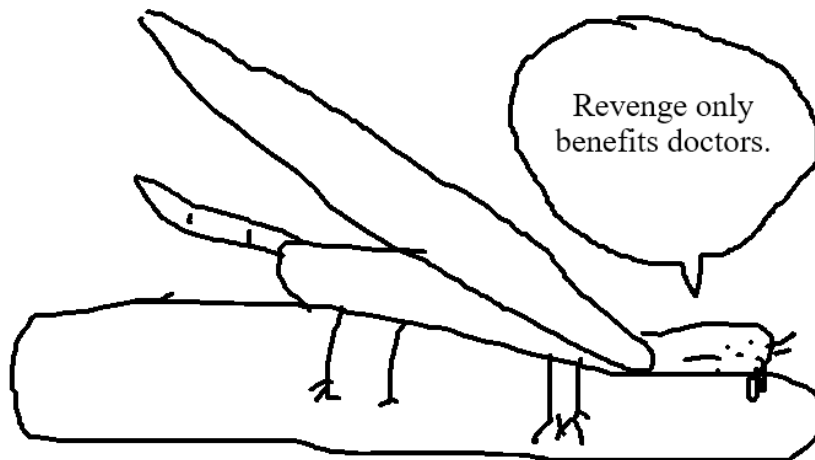
The Gargoyle of Julius Caesar II

Machiavelli was invited to Zurich's home only one more time. If Zurich had known what was coming his way, he never would've let him through those large, elegant, oaken doors. "Shall we travel once again," Zurich asked, "Since you abruptly left, last time."

"One *last* time," Machiavelli said. He thought a very dark thought in his head: *I will kill Zurich*. But then he thought about this other completely unrelated thing for no reason, which looked like this:



A large mousetrap with a mouse severed in two lay no more than three feet ahead of him. The mouse said something that Machiavelli thought was beautiful. The mouse said:



That almost changed Machiavelli's mind, but then he thought about a fish carrying a crew of people in his mouth labeled "Property of Dutch East India Company." They left that world without second thoughts.

Chapter Eight

The Great Caesar, The Great Machiavelli, the Ride of a Lifetime

In the map room, Machiavelli withdrew a pocket knife. When Machiavelli left the house and went home, the floor of the map room looked like this:

