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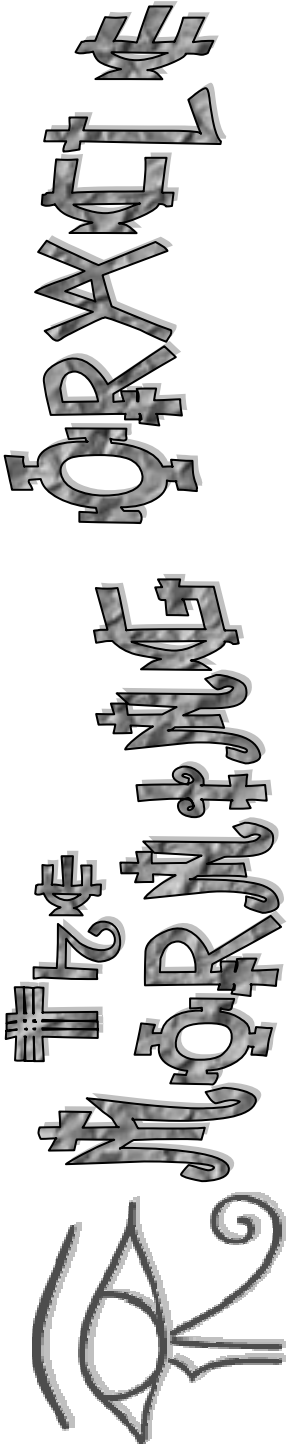
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Volume 309, Issue 139

Friday, May 19, 2006

SECRETARY FALSTAFF ASSASSINATED!

Unknown Dark Wizard or Witch Still At-Large Department of Magic Baffled

By *Absolom Guthrie*
 Exclusive to *The Morning Oracle*

SALEM, Mass. – Amid the chaos at Department of Magic Headquarters here, a disturbing chalk outline was clearly visible in the middle of Secretary Filbert Falstaff's office, as Auror C.S.I. units busily worked investigating the scene. Falstaff, 104, was found dead in his office early Thursday evening as the cleaning crew came through.

A spokesperson for the Department of Magic issued a statement to reassure the wizarding public late yesterday evening. "All of us at the Department are extremely saddened by the loss of Secretary Falstaff. In his 37 years of service to the Department, he won many admirers. He also clearly made some enemies.

"While we have not yet identified a suspect, please rest assured that our Auror force is investigating every possible lead. We hope to have more information by this time tomorrow. Secretary Falstaff's as-

sassin will be brought to justice and tried before the Wizengamot.

"While we mourn Secretary Falstaff, the important business of leading the affairs of American wizards and witches cannot go unattended. The Council of the Wise will convene a special session on Friday to select the next Secretary."

AGrispy Crime

Department spokeswizards refused to release details about the murder, but this reporter has learned from confidential sources that the Secretary appears to have been tortured relentlessly by the Cruciatius Curse for several hours, before finally meeting his end with the Killing Curse. Whoever this unknown assailant may be, he or she was apparently attempting to extract information from the Secretary before killing him.

Most unclear is how the murderer slipped past the Secret Sorcery Service. In the wake of the break-ins experienced by England's Ministry of

Magic several years ago, wizarding governments around the world have beefed up their security protocols.

While the Department is refusing comment on the possible identity of Falstaff's killer, one wizard was quick to offer opinions – Clark Dowling of the Dark Hunters. The vigilante group leader and, according to some, woefully under-qualified Headmaster of Avistrum Academy of Sorcery, told us, "There can't be any doubt as to the assailant. This is clearly the work of Persephone or one of her minions."

The Department of Magic has steadfastly refused to publicly acknowledge the existence of a witch named Persephone, labeling her a "complete fiction." Dowling's continued insistence that she is real has become a running joke among Department staffers.

While Dowling has offered his group's assistance to the Department in hunting the killer, the Department has so far declined. This refusal has

(Continued on page 2)

New Faculty, Staff Appointments At Avistrum Academy

By *Janus Broomer*

DENVER, Colo. – Avistrum Academy of Sorcery officials released their pre-term list of faculty and staff appointments and changes yesterday, prior to the start of their 309th year of magical education.

Professor Adante Avarra, 105, has been selected as the new History of Magic teacher from a short, but exceptional, list of applicants. Avarra, a satyr originally from Greece, was a foreign exchange student at Avistrum from 1912 to 1917. No details on his activities since that time were released, though the public record indicates he's traveled the world on numerous Top Secret assignments over the years.

Mistress Evangeline Craefter, Professor of Practical Magics at Avistrum, and close friend of Avarra, told us, "Adante will be an amazing asset to this institution. I couldn't be more pleased. His breadth of experience and travels, as well as his

knowledge of American magical history, is unsurpassed. That he was also a top student while he was here 90 years ago speaks volumes about his abilities."

The school also announced the appointment of Mr. Mordecai Argiletum to the position of School Librarian, a post vacant for over 25 years.

"Mr. Argiletum is a Certified Librarian of Wizarding Libraries, which we sorely needed here at Avistrum. He has already made a significant impact here by returning our library to its former glory. He is certainly a welcome addition to the staff," says Headmaster Dowling.

The exact circumstances of Argiletum's arrival at Avistrum were not disclosed. Unnamed sources, however, have stated that he arrived under suspicious circumstances, possibly related to the recently disclosed Ver dibog attacks at the Timmermak Wizarding Academy for Boys in Nova Scotia.

Poetry Corner

Who am I? By *Wanda Rinchew*

When fall comes I re-appear,
Somewhere new but never near.
I stand here tall as time goes by,
Who am I?

When winter comes my halls grow cold,
Warmed only by a fire so bright and bold.
The weather changes, but I remain,
Who am I? Do you know my name?

If my walls could talk they'd tell you much,
They'd tell of failure and triumph and such.
Emotions felt, the magic cast, I've seen it all,
Who am I? Do you feel my call?

When the end comes I disappear,
Only to come back another year.
Some call me a school, some a home,
Who am I? ... The old rustic castle left never to roam.

The Battle By *Signa*

All is silent, I stand alone,
Waiting for one with a heart of stone.
My wand at the ready, as a soft wind blows,
The time has come to face my foes.

An echoing crack is heard behind,
I quickly dodge and look to find.
A green flash just misses my head,
I turned to try my luck instead.

A blue flash from my wand this time,
His wand flies from his hand to mine.
Another flash he hits the ground,
Unconscious, unaware of any sound.

I have him now, tied and bound,
He and I will soon be found.
He will be sent to a place of stone,
All is silent, I stand alone.

apparently done nothing to dissuade the Dark Hunters, however, as several of them were spotted in the area late Thursday evening, tracking down supposed leads.

Likely Successors

Having helmed the Department of Magic for 37 years, and still only middle-aged at 104, by all accounts Falstaff did not groom a successor for the Secretary's job. Early speculation centers on Hugo Hartford, Falstaff's Undersecretary for Wizarding Transportation and liaison to the International Wizarding Confederation. However, Hartford is young at 58, and is reportedly not well liked by senior wizards on the Council. Falstaff himself was the youngest Secretary ever elected at the age of 67.

Other possible candidates include Elliot Rumbleton, 92, head of the Auror Squad, and George Casserly, 74, Undersecretary for the Management of Dangerous Creatures.

Following the tremendous wave of popularity he achieved after his capture of Nikolai Matado 3 years ago (to which many credit his appointment as Headmaster of Avistrum), Dowling himself might once have been considered a candidate for the job, despite his tender age of 26. However, his continued insistence on pursuing the fictional Pterophone now makes that a preposterous suggestion.

Funeral Arrangements

The Secretary's body is scheduled to lie in state at Department Headquarters until Tuesday morning, when the funeral will be held in his hometown of Dubuque, Iowa.

Anticipating large groups of mourners, the Department is limiting arrivals in Salem by Floo Networking for the next few days, and is arranging special portkey sites instead. Further details can be obtained by owl from the Department of Magic.

Police & Fire

The Fire Department was called to the cottage of Mistress E. Craefter early Wednesday morning.

Apparently, she was attempting to brew a simple pot of tea when she was distracted by Headmaster Dowling's sudden appearance in her workshop. She became so deeply involved in his dilemma that the tea pot boiled dry and exploded. No injuries were reported and damage was minor.

When asked about the incident, Craefter responded, "Sometimes it's the simplest of tasks that can cause the most problems."

✱

Billy and Bobby Dunderbean, 16, were caught behind the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Flatterknox on Thursday and charged with trespassing.

It is suspected they were attempting to steal away the classic Lunarbolt 1000 broom locked away in their security closet. The Lunarbolt 1000's were produced in 1918, and only 1000 of them were made.

Bloodthorne's HorrorScopes

By *Professor Kraven Bloodthorne*

♈ **Aries (Mar 21 - Apr 20)**

The opportunity to become a politician will present itself. Take it. No one likes you anyway.

♉ **Taurus (Apr 21 - May 20)**

Why do birds suddenly appear, every time you are near? It's because of your car.

♊ **Gemini (May 21 - June 20)**

You have the ability to motivate people. They all seem to run away really fast.

♋ **Cancer (June 21 - July 21)**

Shower.

♌ **Leo (July 22 - Aug 21)**

Sing in public. It will give everyone else something to laugh at.

♍ **Virgo (Aug 22 - Sept 21)**

Today you will learn to fly a broom. Now leave.

♎ **Libra (Sept 22 - Oct 22)**

You will make a new friend today and

find that you have many things in common. You are both lonely people without purpose in your lives who have never had a friend before. This relationship will be short.

♏ **Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)**

Your milkshake does not bring all of the boys to the yard. In fact, the milk has soured.

♐ **Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 20)**

You should just leave this place, and travel far away, thus saving the human race from your existence.

♑ **Capricorn (Dec 21 - Jan 19)**

You will learn to confront your fears. But you will never be heard from again.

♒ **Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)**

You will arrive at your destination after a long trip, and realize you weren't invited.

♓ **Pisces (Feb 19 - Mar 20)**

You will look around you and find that you are surrounded by idiots.

StarFest 2006 Art Contest: The Word is “Winna!”

By *Frenchy Curvatus*

DENVER, Colo. – This year’s StarFest featured sights and sounds aplenty to sparkle the eye and entrance the ear.

The Avistrum fan table was no exception, proudly displaying works of art created by the student body. The students spent many hours conceptualizing and creating these wonderful works of the imagination to share with all the StarFest patrons.

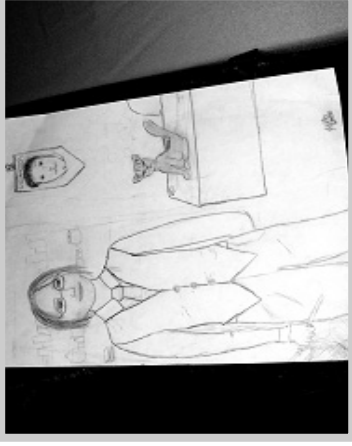
Three pieces in particular were rewarded for their creativity and artistic merit. Paul, the Grand Prize winner, submitted a beautifully hand-crafted wand made from natural birch wood. He received two all-weekend passes to StarFest 2007.

Kate took second place, with her amazing sketch of Headmaster Dowing in his office. She took home a

beautiful mahogany wand, courtesy of Alivan’s Fine Wandmakers.

And Bella, the third place winner, entered a colored portrait of herself in Professor Kobyayashi’s Charms class at OPUS 2005. Bella won an assortment of Harry Potter merchandise, courtesy of Sage Moon, Inc.

Congratulations to all the winners, and to everyone who participated in the StarFest 2006 Art Contest!



StarFest 2006 Art Contest winners: 1st Place, Paul (left); 2nd Place, Kate (top); 3rd Place, Bella (above).

Guess Who?

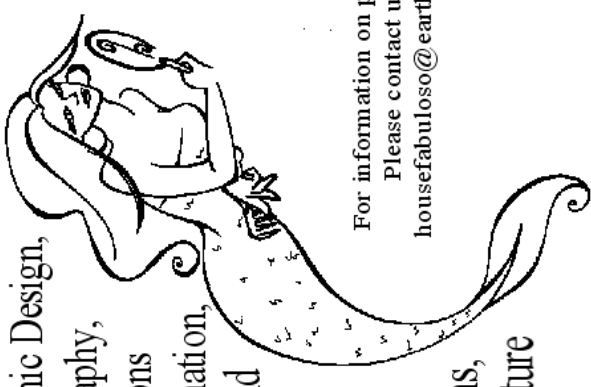
1. I can tell you of a possible future. However, I may not always be willing to share it. I am the Head of Colubrae and have but one mood ... bad. *Who am I?*
2. I track down and retrieve ancient magical relics for the sole purpose of protecting them from dark minds. I will do anything to ensure that all people, especially Avistrum students, are kept safe and well trained to defend themselves should the need arise. *Who am I?*
3. I love to invent things in my cottage, although I do, admittedly, make quite a mess at times. I patch up the rips and tears of the everyday student as well as a certain professor’s repeatedly torn coat. *Who am I?*
4. I help to heal many wounds and illnesses, even the most reckless of injuries. One professor worries me most when he goes out alone. *Who am I?*
5. I am the Enigmus house ghost. I have been known to answer in riddles, but ask me the right question and I will tell you what you want to know. *Who am I?*

ANSWERS: Headmaster Clark Dowing (3) Mistress Craefer (4) Nurse Robin Kayenta (5) Lady Viola Fey.

Professor Kraven Bloodthorne (2) Head-

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