

Noah Park
EN40SL
December 17, 2018
Ms. Smith

The Battle of 26/01/2018

The bitter-pungent tang of black coffee coated my mouth that day, taken forty-five minutes beforehand to maximize the effects of the caffeine. The hallway, packed with skittish students, shoulder to shoulder like a tin of sardines.

The all too familiar cafeteria doors tentatively swung open, then, like a gopher popping its head out of its burrow, the head of our chemistry teacher, Mr. Wiebe, appeared from the doors. All the students' solemn skulls snapped to face the open door. The stern, booming voice of Mr. Wiebe filled the hallways, instructing all the students where they are supposed to be seated in the cafeteria, concise and accurate as a drill sergeant.

I entered the cafeteria. However, before going to the battle site, I placed my bag onto the mountain of other bags on the tables at the end of the cafeteria. I fished out my pack of mint gum and my utensils of combat, then popped two pieces of gum in my mouth, followed by vigorous chewing to tame the nerves that come with every exam. With my instruments of war in hand, I entered the battlefield. I procured my position and hastily set up my battle station. Five gleaming, metallic mechanical pencils, locked and loaded with 0.5 mm graphite; a fresh, pure white eraser, the new recruit in the platoon, and old reliable, my Casio FX-991MS calculator, the veteran of the group. I was ready for the primary onslaught of questions.

Mr. Wiebe started to recite the familiar hymn that is the standard rules of the examination process. My nerves dwindled and my confidence rose. After the overall briefing to all the students, Mr. Wiebe briskly jaunted over to the back left-hand corner of the cafeteria, where my class and I were situated, and told us with beady eyes and a hushed tone, "It's okay if you guys don't finish." The whole class, confused and perplexed about the advice Mr. Wiebe spouted.

Mr. Wiebe trudged through the aisles with an enormous stack of papers in hand, distributing them to his students. Each package, the size of the Encyclopedia Britannica, landed in front of each of my classmates with a monstrous slam. As the packages dropped from Mr. Wiebe's grasp to the tables, the hearts of my friends and I were dropping down into our stomachs. Watching the confident and courageous faces of my cohorts of Enriched Chemistry 30S turn into blank stares of shock and awe. The thud of the exam package slowly got louder and louder, until the mortar finally landed in front of me. I blankly stared at the package, despair and doubt crept into my thoughts. With barely enough time to recover from the primary volley of artillery bombardment, Mr. Wiebe instructed us to begin.

Every shell-shocked soul in the back left-hand corner of the cafeteria frantically charged into battle. The initial skirmish was with the multiple choice questions. The sheer amount of questions was ludicrous, as well as the difficulty of each question. Each problem required, at least, half a page of scratch work to produce even a glimpse of an answer. It seemed as though the multiple choice section was never ending, infinite. 112, 113, 114, 115, 116...etc.

Suddenly, as if the angels of heaven were granting me salvation from this torturous moment, a page break emerges. My heart and soul, reinvigorated to know that the multiple choice section is finally done, bringing me back from the brink of despair, into the shining light of hope.

After a short pause, I sat up straight in my chair, ready to take on the next frontier. However, my best friend, Aaron, who sat beside me, started to chuckle. Not a chuckle of jubilation, but, a chuckle of defeat, puffs of air that were dry as the Sahara desert exited Aaron's body. A chuckle that sounds as if he was about to burst into tears. As I turn the page, my pass to the Garden of Eden was taken from me, instead I got a one way ticket to the bleak abyss of Abaddon. **THE PAGE BREAK WAS A RUSE!!!!!!** There were more multiple choice questions. Slowly, the dry chuckle started to commence within myself, eventually both Aaron and I were laughing like a pair of hyenas in the plains of the Serengeti.

I felt defeated, all of the reinvigoration that was inside me faltered, leaving me to become an empty husk. I was ready to call it quits. This was not possible, Mr. Wiebe even said beforehand that we didn't need to finish the whole exam. If he wasn't expecting people to complete the exam, then isn't it impossible? I sat there, staring at the artificial fluorescent bulbs, contemplating, should I surrender and raise the white flag?

As I was about to stand up and hand in the incomplete exam, a thought came into my mind, as if a higher power has smitten me with a thunderbolt of wisdom. If I quit now, then I will surely regret it later, imaging the mark that I would receive if I were to hand it in. *Well, even if I don't finish the whole exam, I'll make sure to milk as many points as I can.* I snap back into focus and reentered the front lines, doubt still plagued my mind.

I eventually make it to the long answer questions. With only one hour left and the effects of caffeine dwindling, I mustered up my remaining mental energy and continued to fight, though it may be hopeless. The long answer problems composed of convoluted compound questions, alien-like diagrams, and multi-stage enigmas. This was the elite four in Pokemon, but, for chemistry and without any full restores or max revives. As time ticked away, I charged forth.

I finished the exam with fifteen minutes to spare, my head pulsating and writhing in pain. My hand muscles mimicked the consistency of halfway thawed raw chicken breast. I was unable to even double check the first question. But, to my surprise, I finished. The insurmountable task was surmounted.

The clock struck 3:30. Mr. Wiebe instructed us to hand the exams back. Some students, like Aaron and I handed the exams with a sense of pride and accomplishment, going through the path with vigour, even if it was laced with caltrops. However, many others had heavy hearts and expressions of defeat, knowing that the inevitable guillotine that will fall upon their grades.

From that day forth, the students of Enriched Chemistry 30S, with consolation cookies from Mr. Wiebe in hand, announced that this perilous event would be dubbed, The Battle of 26/01/2018.

