Comic Book School presents…

Creator Connections: Panel 1

An anthology based on the #8PgChallenge of 2020

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This is the very first volume of the Comic Book School 8-page Anthology: Panel 1, showcasing the talents of writers, artists, editors, and dozens of supportive comic book nerds. We put together comics from new, and previously unpublished creators with some indie makers mixed in. The result is the comic book you are about to read. We are immensely proud of the work we have put together here and the community behind the scenes.

How this all started…

When Buddy Scalera ran the Comic Book School panels at New York Comic Con, he was surprised that year after year so many aspiring creators attended his panels but never broke into the industry. Each year he’d see many of the same faces at the Creator Connection networking events, but they still seemed stuck on the outside. Buddy’s friends and industry professionals showed massive audiences exactly how the magic was made. And yet there weren’t many new comics coming out of those amazing interactions.

I met Buddy Scalera, at New York Comic Con in 2019 at the Comic Book School Creator Connection panel. I had a great time meeting a ton of interesting people. I mentioned to Buddy my lack of confidence in my ability to produce creatively. He took the time to speak with me one-on-one about that doubt. Buddy challenged me to write an 8-page comic for New York Comic Con 2020. I wrote myself a schedule and sent it to Buddy for accountability. He thought it was great, and asked me to share it with others from the networking events. Thus, the 8-page Challenge was born. But as in any great epic, the universe had other plans..

The global events of 2020 can’t be overstated: we all had a lot to deal with as our worlds turned upside down. But even with everything that happened, we succeeded and created this anthology. We built a community of creators and support for those creators. We hope to continue this 8-page challenge every year, bringing more creators into the world of published comics.

To all of our creators, your work is spectacular. I could never have guessed at New York Comic Con in 2019 that I would be reading, and reviewing such a diverse and interesting set of stories. I appreciate all of your submissions, hard work, collaboration, and determination. This anthology is for you, and I hope that it is everything you hoped it would be, because thanks to you, for me, it is.

I’d like to give a big shout out and a delayed hug to our IT support, Kevin Pei, who not only kept the council in touch but helped keep the forums up and running for this newly formed digital community. Many thanks to Arielle Lupkin for always volunteering and having something to contribute, your joy and...
enthusiasm are contagious. Cathy Kirch, thank you for being available always and for helping mentor many of us with writing and storytelling knowledge to make us all better creators. Thank you to Maryam Mark for keeping our community a positive place of learning and sharing that keeps our community welcoming to new members. And thank you to Rob Andersin for being the Comic Book Advocate around the clock and teaching us the ways of live streaming and living digitally. Kyle Rose, thank you for supporting the council, always being the voice of reason and the first to support others in their own great ideas. And thank you to Kristian Stout for helping with all the legalese that makes our heads spin; your assistance remains an invaluable asset to our community. All the thanks to Kris Burgos, Bolu Oriowou, Matthew Timpanelli, and Mike Ponce, thank you for your involvement and volunteering to get our tasks complete as this year comes to a close. Finally thanks to Grant Shorter for hanging in there with us and supporting our site and our eyes with all the visuals Comic Book School has to offer. And to all the people on the council and in the community, we couldn't have done this without any of you.

To A. A. Rubin, thank you for your experience and motivation which not only kept us on track, but brought us to the finish line. Without your tireless efforts and follow-up, this anthology would not have happened. Thank you for the idea of the Flash Fiction section, and for staying up past your kids' bedtime to get this done. Thank you.

And to Buddy, we did it; we made a comic book anthology, we built a community of Comic Book Creators, and we are published. Your continued encouragement of the people in this community is inspiring, and your faith in me has helped me more than I can express in words. You are the leader we were all hoping for and didn't even know it. Let's do it again next year.

D. Alley
Editor, Comic Book School
December, 2020

“A leader is best
When people barely know he exists
Of a good leader, who talks little,
When his work is done, his aim fulfilled,
They will say, “We did this ourselves.”
-Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching
THE BATTLE OF THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

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The Battle of the Belly of the Beast © 2020 by Boluwatife Oriowo
PREVIOUSLY ON KIP KERSTOMM MAN OF TOMORROWS YESTERDAY FROM THE FUTURE...

AN AMBUSH FROM THE DEADLY INTERGALACTIC BOUNTY HUNTERS, THE ERADIKOR!

A ROUTINE MISSION FOR KIP AND VANESSA TOOK A COMPLICATED TURN...

WHEN THEIR RESCUE OF THE PRINCE OF THE SOPSERVAN EMPIRE WAS INTERRUPTED BY...

THE CHASE CAME TO A SUDDEN HALT...

WHEN THE TWO SHIPS FOUND THEMSELVES ON THE WRONG SIDE OF A GRUBNARIAN MUNCHNER.

NOW OUR HEROES MUST STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE....

THE BATTLE OF THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

STORY AND ART BY BOLU ORIOWO
@osdserlicl
Alright, Kid.

We've lost those goons for now.

But it won't be long before they find us. Any plans for getting out of here?

Yeah, you could say I've had a gut feeling or two...

You see that, 'Nessa? Looks like a uvula.

Bet it works like one too.

You've seen those ol' holo-vids right?

Heroes stuck in a giant monster get out by getting it to sneeze or throw up.

Since we're in Tummy Town, I'm thinking the others' our go to. Even better, we're closer to our ship than they are to theirs.

We'll hit that uvula, trigger a reaction and ride the wave to freedom.

Definitely traumatizing, but possibly effective.

You've thought this through, right? You're sure you know that's its...

...where did you go?
Hey Erad-i-Dorks!

**EAT THIS!**

*ZZORCH!*

**Why'd you shoot its oooblak?**

*Was that supposed to do something?*

I was going to ask if you knew what this thing's uvula looked like... alien anatomy. Remember?

*Sigh, I'm guessing that's a no.*

Here, hold the prince. I'll give you some time to figure this out.

*An oooblak, it's a—* Why would you keep that in your stomach?
YOU HAVE FIVE MINUTES.

HERP! WHAT'S SHE GONNA-

HOORAH!

SPASH!

ZORCH! ZORCH!

WHOA.

FZRAP!
Little prince dude, I don't think this is working. If I can't find a way to make this thing blow star chunks...

...we're never getting out of here. Dah! Dah!
WAIT A MINUTE...

YOU... YOU DON'T THINK? COULDN'T BE...

EAT THIS.

????????

ZRUH?!
HOLD UP, HOLD UP, HOLD UP.

EXCUSE ME! THANK YOU!! GOODBYE!

KIP, WHAT’S GOING ON?!

REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED AT YOUR DAD’S LIFE-DAY PARTY?!
BACK TO THE SHIP, THERE’S NO TIME TO EXPLAIN!

WE’VE GOT MAYBE 10 SECONDS TO WAVE-RIDING TIME.

BUCKLE UP. IT’S GONNA BE WEIRD!

HOW Rude.

YOU’D THINK THEY’D AT LEAST DIE WITH HONOR. RUNNING AWAY IS SO PASSE.

ANYONE HEAR THAT?
Aww! Man...

Thanks for the ride, Munchie!

I hear that nibbling on mint leaves is good for that post puke-breath!

End.
BRON THE LUCKY IN... HAIL CHAOS

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Bron the Lucky in... Hail Chaos! © 2020 by Zach Herring
hail, chaos!

written and drawn by zach herring
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colored by maja opacic
@maja_colorist

story edits by mia herring

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20 bits.

... 

Or three crowns, if you have them.

I have crowns.

Hrm.

Sit wherever you like, I guess. But don’t slosh.

Bloody trolls dazu to put and slosh every whichway...

Don’t slosh, but carry yer own drink and find a seat, pick one outcome you—

Oh no.

Praise luck & chaos! ha! ha! ha!

I am returned!

Ha! Good troll, you look in need of company!

Eh, actually I was hoping...

But first, my tongue! It is bone dry!

Might I have this? I swear to you, more pints shall swiftly follow.

I guess I could use some comp-

Tsk, tsk. Try not to spill, friend.
I had spent weeks carousing my way across the glorious port here on world-goddess Illyavana.

We live in worlds cruelly dominated by imitable fate and prophecy. Illyavana's fate was to be murdered and fall into the outer darkness and endless decay.

But to quote our scriptures:

"As our clockwork universe ticks ever on, be as grains of sand in its gears."

Bedlam is my order's calling, and I was looking to sow it at Illyavana's defeat, mayhap enough Bedlam to save her.

As we set off, traversing the great void, Illyavana's grandeur receded from view.

And after a fortnight of hard travel...
we arrived at the dreaded hunter, King, the very necro-god fated to murder fair Ilyayana one thousand years ago, he began drawing his terrible arrow back... and a mere two hundred years from now, it is foretold he will loose it, killing Ilyayana and destroying all her patrons...

the mad Baron Meismen initiated our joint adventure, and he was also my guide, though he said little on our voyage...

we docked on the very arrow whose murderous arc I was determined to stop.

and those who greeted us at the port?

cromatic vassals.

manifestations of the terrible archer-godling himself.

...I sensed that his fate inexorably tangled with Ilyayana and Xolis.

If such wights greeted us at our berth, what would await us at our journey’s end?

through the grasping underbrush and gloom, we trekked onward towards the only light in the distance, the terrible visage.

I say, friend, unhand my drink!
we introduce chance by casting lots for guidance, as a holy sacrament of our order.

at every fork in our path on x6th, i casted lots as prayer, attempting to sow chaos, only to read the same boring answer...

"forward."

"forward", it read, through the stinking marshes, and collapsing bridges.

"forward", until x6th's visage blotted out the open sky.

"forward", until the ominous lights at the distance horizon revealed themselves to be a benedict sepulchre.

I wavered on casting one last time, but decided, on my own, to proceed. "forward." why ever not?
Baron Meismer!

Now? Why??

And whom has he brought?

ah, perhaps we...

ENOUGH TITERRING. ALL OF YOU.

Baron, you are early. By many decades.

We cannot act early any more than we could delay your-

PRRIENDS, PLEASE. I HAVE BROUGHT THIS HARDY ACOLYTE OF CHANCE. ALL THE WAY FROM... ILLYAWANA.

...An interesting development, Meismer. Come with us, both of you.

**they knew my companion.**

**AND SHALL WE CONSULT YOUR TRINKETS? WHAT DOES IT COMMAND OF YOU?**

**FORWARD. FORWARD! OVER FORWARD!**

**bloody thing must be broken...**

what more, I could sense — another slaughter, thank you kindly — implicit conspiracy between the baron and those dreadful worthies.

they employed me deeper into their cloisters. I hesitated and they turned my very faith against me.

with each step, I felt the fingers of fate tighten around my throat, though I knew not why.

only when reached the end of our short passage was it made clear...

so we began our descent into the necro-god itself.
The skulls we take and
pile as an offering. When
we finish our labor, The
Great Hunter takes
another celestial for the
Necrotic Hosts.

It was to be Illyvana,
the Light-Bringer
next. And Baron Meisner
was fated to be our last
sacrifice to secure her
for our host.

But here he is, early, and
with a substitute whom
Fate accepts, that
is a-

Did you tell them
we need more
skulls?

I was just
setting to
that.

ah, maybe
one
final prayer
to
determine if I
proceed further
still or-

I am to be free of
miserable fate and
an intractable
destiny.

No more
prophecies, nor
empty prayers to
tinpot baubles.

I will depart
this infernal
place, and
leave you here,
in my stead.
A fire in our inner-most chambers! Blasphemy!!

ha ha! as good as any roll, clearly a sign for chaos to be loosed!

allow me to introduce you to my faithful companion...

...“chaos.”

truly, these adventures never feel complete until I smash something.

No!

I will not come this far to die.

baron, en, parley for a moment?

No Precious Skulls!!

If your aim was ultimately to not be sacrificed to xothis, baron meismer...

I shall hazard a prophecy of my own and say...

...no sacrifices will be had in this chamber again!
Mismerrrrr...You will never be rid of us. On your deathbed, we will—

so, we ran.

we sped through the rapidly collapsing tomb, dry and untouched, went up like a tinderbox.

chaos is my calling.

It is my sacramental duty, and yet my subservience to it is in and of itself, its own form of servitude.

is every man a slave to something?

we disembarked from xothis, and I shut myself in my cabin to reflect.

on reflection, I realized... hold a moment, good troll!

as I was saying, lor in my cabin...

ho! four more! for we are only at the middle of my tale, but have completely finished our drink!
I met the torn soul once. I mean, before he was that. When he was just Camriddeon. When he was just a hero.

We didn’t know who he was. Just that he was a mage, and had been sent from Dannisfire.

But I mean, Dannisfire, the capital of the kingdom. To deal with some lonely backwater like Leighman.

Are you the one called Camriddeon?

I am.

Thank you so much. The lurker was never too much trouble. But now with a mage of your talents...

Please, I’m just here to help.

No one came to Leighman. Nobody cared about Leighman. The best thing you could do in a town like ours was leave.

It’s folks like you that make life worth living. What else could I do but drop by?
Now, the king told me that the lurker has been a nuisance for years.

Generations, seems like. It haunts the old crossroads west of here, especially at night. It used to just pull wheels off wagons, spoil eggs, soak a fine tunic, pranks.

And who doesn't enjoy a good prank?

Seems to make the world spin a little brighter.

But lately, the jokes have been far meaner, attacks, outright theft of property. At dusk, travelers can hear a wailing, driving them off the path.

Yes, um... harrumph I mean, we wouldn't summon, I mean, ask for a nage of your caliber for pranks. Please don't think that.

And at night?

No one goes near the crossroads at night.

Some did, but they never came back.
AND WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO DO ABOUT THIS CREATURE?

KILL IT, GET RID OF IT. I DON'T CARE, IT'S TIME THE LURKER WAS GONE.

CAMRIDDEON!

TONIGHT, ELDER, I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT TONIGHT.

AND HE PLAYED WITH US.

ALL DAY, AND ALL SORTS OF GAMES, HIDE AND SEEK, FOLLOW THE LEADER. HE TOLD OUR FORTUNES, MADE A FOOL OF HIMSELF.

AND WHEN IT CAME TIME TO GO OUT, HE WAS READY AND WILLING TO FACE THE MONSTER.

AND, YOUNG FOOL THAT I WAS.

SO WAS I.
The Leigman Crossroads aren't anything special. One way leads to Leigman and back out to the Western Wilderness. The other connects the Northern Icelands with Southern Royalty. Nothing for leagues. But everyone knows the power of the Crossroads. It is a place for demons, legends, and monsters.

SKREEEE!

AAAGH!
Sometimes, looking back, I feel a pang of regret.

This lurker thought that it could steal the power of the crossroads, because it was a monster.

It forgot where the power first dwelled.

In the hands of demons.

No one besides the king knew of the mage’s dark parentage.

If they did, would he be allowed to live?

Come on, let’s get you to bed.
THREE CHEERS FOR THE HERO OF LEIGHMAN!!!

HE ACCEPTED THE THANKS, AND CONGRATULATIONS, EVEN TO HAVE THE CROSSROADS RENAMED IN HIS HONOR.

DID I KNOW THAT HE HAD THAT DARKNESS IN HIM, BACK THEN? OF COURSE NOT. WOULD I HAVE SAID ANYTHING?

PROBABLY NOT.

BUT I KNEW THAT THERE WAS MORE TO THIS STORY THAN THERE APPEARED TO BE.
HE, LODOOS! ANYBODY OUT THERE?

SO YOU MUST BE THE REAL LEIGHMAN LURKER, A LITTLE BEAST HAVING SOME FUN ON THE CROSS.

AH, THERE YOU ARE. WONDERED WHY YOU FOLLOWED ME.

WEAVING TRICKS AND PETTY MAGIC FOR A BIT OF FUN, HAVEN'T YOU?

I KNOW. I KNOW. IT WASN'T YOU.

BRARRRRR......

SOME OTHER LITTLE BEAST DECIDED THAT YOUR PLAYGROUND WAS ITS HUNTING GROUND. WELL, HE'S TAKEN CARE OF.

BUT UNFORTUNATELY, IT'S YOUR TURN.
DON’T BE LIKE THAT, YOU KNOW WHAT THEY’LL DO IF THEY FIND YOU. IT’LL BE IRON, AND PURGES, AND DEATH. I WOULDN’T HAVE THAT ON MY CONSCIENCE. IT’S BLACK ENOUGH AS IT IS.

BARK! PRRRAH!

HAHAHA! YES, THAT’S A POSSIBILITY TO DISCUSS.

BUT WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE THEY’RE READY. NOW DON’T WE?

I’LL NEVER FORGET THE SIGHT OF THAT CREATURE’S EYES. IT LOOKED AT ME WITH SUCH KNOWLEDGE, SUCH REGRET. I FELT WRETCHED, LIVING DOWN TO ITS EXPECTATIONS.

IT’S NOT YOUR FAULT, SOMETIMES WE JUST AREN’T READY TO FACE THE WONDER OF THE WORLD.

I NEVER SAW CAMRIDGEON AGAIN. WE HEARD OF HIS ADVENTURES, HIS TRAGEDY. THE TEARING OF HIS SOUL. BUT I NEVER GOT TO TELL HIM WHAT HE MEANT.

THE LURKER?

WELL...

BUT MAYBE, JUST MAYBE, YOU ARE.

THAT’S A STORY FOR ANOTHER TIME.
THE CREATIVE JOURNEY

WRITTEN, LETTERED & CREATED BY - MR. ANDERSON

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PAGE 7 IS THE SCRIPT OF THE PAGE AS WRITTEN

ART FOR PAGE 8 BY - CRISS MADD

More info for this project found @ mrandersin.website/cbs-8-page-challenge
WE ALL GET INTRODUCED TO COMICS IN SOME WAY... FOR SOME OF US IT BECOMES A LIFE-LONG PASSION THAT...

BECOMES PART OF WHO WE ARE WHILE COMBINING WITH OUR VERY DNA.
That Fandom follows us through out our life, and for some of us, it becomes more than fandom, it turns into a need to create what we LOVE—our OWN comics for the world to read.

Stories told from our point of view...

Created to inspire and entertain...

as other creators have done for us.

The process of creating comics requires...
A CREATIVE JOURNEY THAT REQUIRES AN EDUCATION WITH INTENSE STUDY.

A STUDY OF THE CRAFT OF COMICS ITSELF FROM MULTIPLE RESPECTED SOURCES.

IT'S UP TO YOU TO GET AN EDUCATION!!

YOU HAVE TO ATTEND PANELS ABOUT CREATING COMICS, WATCH VIDEOS ABOUT CREATING COMICS AND YOU HAVE TO ASK THE QUESTIONS YOU HAVE TO THOSE WHO CAN GIVE YOU ANSWERS.

Your Diploma will be given to you by the fans via their support of your various projects.

Your need for a continued education will never end!

It will be up to you to continue to learn and grow as a creator.

The process will require dedication, repetition, practice and at times, sacrifice!

You will have to prioritize doing what you need to do to become successful and sacrifice some of the things you may enjoy to make the time needed to create.

- AKAPAD 2020
Despite how hard you work on your Creative Journey, Life will continue to move at its normal pace. Just because you are creating your Own New Worlds doesn't mean the one you live in will slow down for you so you can create. You will have to live in both the World around you and the ones you are creating at the same time and keep on track in all these worlds you belong to. Life has a way of getting in the way just like in your stories. And a lot can happen to you on this Journey You May Decide to Tie the Knot.

For many of us at the beginning, we will have to keep working a day job to pay the bills and keep us creating. That will... include all the stresses of having a job and coming home after to work on our Creations.

Bad things will probably happen to you, some of which may change your life in negative ways. You will have Setbacks and Suffer some Losses along the way. That’s Life.

It will become about what is NEXT that will shape Your Creative Journey. Every experience in your life can- and often will- shape your creations. Even Crippling loss can be later used to tell a story of a broken system or even

Give Hope to Those who May NEED it MOST!
There will be moments in your Journey that will change you, motivate you, excite you and inspire you to change the world around you. You may become a parent and see the world in a new way. That moment can inspire in you a change that you never see coming, until, you hold that lil’ human in your arms and feel that responsibility of making the world better for them. You may be inspired by a scientific discovery that is so interesting to you it inspires you to make something never seen before.

You may leave behind all you know and start a new life in a new place. You may be inspired by New LOVE or maybe a reconnection to the Love you already had and took it for granted for too long.

Life itself will be the thing that inspires you in ways that you will not see coming, and it will be for you to express through your creations even when you reach a painful end. As a creator that is fuel for Creation. You have to learn to tap into your life for Inspiration!
HARNESSING ALL OF THAT LIFE, WE CREATE NEW WORLDS, TO SHARE WITH THE WORLD

AND THAT CREATION MIXED WITH EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE LEADS TO MORE CREATIONS...

AS THE QUALITY OF THE WORK IMPROVES...

THE DRIVE TO CREATE BECOMES SECOND NATURE...

UNTIL ONE DAY WE BEGIN TO BELIEVE IN OUR CREATIONS AND TAKE THE NEXT STEP.
NARRATION FOR TOP OF PAGE and rectangle Panels that should slash an arrow that points toward the goal and outcome:

“All That Hard Work you do on YOUR JOURNEY leads to big Changes”

for this page 3 rectangle splits of from fan to creator Panel 1 row 1 Rectangle TOP NARRATION:
“You go from From Fan to Creator...”

SCENE:
“From a computer screens buying a ticket to buying a table.”

Panel 2 row 2 Rectangle TOP NARRATION:
“You go from From walking in the front door to walking Through the loading Dock with a hand truck full of totes with my son Jaxx with me.”

SCENE:
“From walking in as a fan to walking in the back with a hand truck full of comics to sell with your son.”

Panel 3 row 3 Rectangle TOP NARRATION:
“You go from from standing in front of a table to being behind one talking to your fans.”

SCENE:
Have meeting a creator from in front of the Table shaking their hand to me standing Behind it shaking a fans hand. Jaxx next to me when I am behind the table and cane in my free hand and have it so I am back to back to myself

Panel 4 row 4 Rectangle TOP NARRATION:
“You go from From their Fan to their Fan, Friend and fellow creator.”

SCENE:
Show a Pic of me shaking Buddy’s Hand to giving him a pound hug.
The journey never ends, though your role changes as you pass what you learned on to a new generation, you remain a student of the industry but you become a teacher, an inspiration, a leader and...

There will be only one of you in all of time, so go out there, and tell your story to the world!

You pass it on because we rise together. It's your panels & it's your turn to help mold the future of comics.

So what are you gonna create?
THE LEMONADE STAND
FEATURING HIBAGON

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For more visit: https://www.comicbookschool.com/about-buddy/

Penciller/Inker/Colorist: Andy Seabert

For more visit https://andyseabert.com

Mid-Life Crisis © 2014 Buddy Scalera & Andy Seabert
THE VIRUS DIMENSION

Somewhere amongst the countless dimensions of the multiverse known as The Meatbucket, the gigantic interdimensional spaceship, The Archaeopteryx, travels through the vast expanses of time and space.

The crew of this ship is the rag-tag group of female mercenaries/pinup models, known as the Megadames.


Alright, I.O. We are all present.

What are we dealing with this time?

Virus!

An uncontrolable pan-galactic virus is taking over the multiverse!
KNOWN AS THE SHOGOTHIC VIRUS.

IT CAUSES ITS SUFFERERS TO RAPIDLY MUTATE INTO GROTESQUE, BULBOUS, PULSATING MASSES OF TENTACLES, TEETH, EYES, AND OTHER BIOLOGICAL APPENDAGES...

IT'S HIDEOUS!

AFFECTING BOTH BIOLOGICAL AND INORGANIC BODIES ALIKE, THE AFFECTED MASSES CONDENSE TOGETHER AND GROW INTO SINGULAR ORGANISMS UNTIL THEY TAKE OVER THE ENTIRE PLANET...

IT'S UNSTOPPABLE!

THEN EVEN THE PLANETS THEMSELVES BEGIN TO JOIN TOGETHER INTO INTERSTELLAR NETWORKS OF THESE GIGANTIC BEINGS AND CONTINUE TO GROW AND SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE COSMOS.

IT'S A GIANT SPACE BOOGER!

THE EPICENTRES OF THESE OUTBREAKS SEEM TO JUST BE INEXPLICABLY POPPING UP IN SEEMINGLY RANDOM PLACES DISPERSED THROUGHOUT THE MULTIVERSE WITH NO POSSIBLE MEANS OF CONTACT TO EACH OTHER.

EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT THE VIRUS IS OF INTERDIMENSIONAL ORIGIN, LEAKING THROUGH THE FABRIC OF THE MULTIVERSE INTO OUR DIMENSION.

IT HASN'T AFFECTED US PERSONALLY YET, BUT IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE IT TAKES OVER THE ENTIRE MABUCKET COMPLETELY!

YOUR MISSION IS TO TRAVEL TO THE VIRUS DIMENSION AND ERADICATE THE PLAGUE AT ITS SOURCE.

EXCELLENT! I LOVE ERADICATING!
THESE BIOHAZARD SUITS ARE DESIGNED TO KEEP ANY VARIUSES FROM HAVING CONTACT WITH YOU.

THEY CONTAIN A POCKET OF OUR SPACETIME AND THE FABRIC BLOCKS THE FLOW OF DIMENSIONAL REALITIES.

SO, WHILE WE ARE WEARING THESE SUITS, WE ARE TECHNICALLY STILL IN THIS DIMENSION?

THAT IS CORRECT, ESSENTIALLY.

BRACE FOR INTERDIMENSIONAL JUMP IN 1-MINUS 3... EII!

B-ZAPP!

WE HAVE ARRIVED!

WOAH! TAKE A LOOK AT THIS PLACE!

IT'S SO PRETTY!

YEAH, PRETTY DISGUSTING!

NOW EVERYONE, THIS PLACE IS CRAWLING WITH DISEASE, SO TRY NOT TO TOUCH ANYTHING IF YOU CAN HELP!

FIDGET!! PUT THAT DOWN!

BUT... BUT... BUT...

...AWW.
WELL, YOU CAN'T TALK! YOU'VE CAUGHT THE VIRUS!

GASP!

WE ALL HAVE!

No, it's not that the suits are useless, but we are technically still in our own dimension while wearing them.

So the virus has now completely taken over the Meatbucket and we caught it from there!

That's what I said; they're useless. There's no point wearing them now.

So, what are we waiting for?

Let's destroy this place!

Woah! Well, that didn't work!

We're just making it worse!

It's no use trying to destroy everything from here-

This whole place is the virus!

We need to find the heart of this place and destroy it at its core!

Our mutations are only happening inside them!
Oh, we've been trudging for hours! When's it gonna end?

I see something!

You seem from the outside have come into my domain...

What is the purpose of this intrusion?

You are the master of this realm?

Then we have come to destroy you!

Say cheese! Fancypants!!

I am Nyarlathotep. I am the genesis of this dimension and all the beautiful life forms within it are my children.
HA HA HA! You cannot destroy me! I am this realm!

We exist outside of your puny comprehension. As part of the very code of reality.

And we simply keep returning back in this dimension.

But my children are free to travel out of it and multiply as they please.

This inter-dimensional rift allows us to transcend the barriers to appear anywhere in time or space across your entire multiverse.

Urk! Does this goon ever shut up?

It is right! It’s irreducible in this dimension!

Our only hope is to stop it from leaking out.

We’ve gotta use the biohazard suits to contain that rift.

But we ditched the suits! They’re floating in a pile of goo, who knows where in this dimension.

Argk! And we can’t move away from this sludge!

Ha ha ha! You are too late! Already you have been overcome by my virus and entirely assimilated into the reality that is I!

I’m gonna rip this goblin a new-bloog-bluh.

Blup... Blup...

No, scythe, we’ve been over this. We can’t -bluh-bluh-blup...

Blup...

Blup... Blup... Wait! If we are all part of the same organism that is this entire dimension, that means...
...we already have the biohazard suits in our grip!

...and we are already at the rift!

Alright! We can move around the virus!

Wherever the virus is, so are we, because we are part of it.

And while we still have any control at all, we will use it.

Now we are this realm too!

Take that, leather-uggs!

Nooo!!

There! We have contained the inter-dimensional rift!

High-five!

Ahem.

Yess!

So... Now what do we do?

I suggest we go back to the ship, and get extracted from this goop...

...somebody's touching my ganglion...
THE VIRUS HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY ISOLATED IN ITS OWN DIMENSION AND NO NEW CASES HAVE STARTED!

ALL CHRONIC SYMPTOMS ARE SIMPLY DISSOLVING AWAY FROM EVERYONE AFFECTED BY IT.

I'M SURE YOU HAVE NOTICED THAT YOU HAVE ALL BEEN RESTORED BACK TO YOUR FARTHER SELVES!

AND HOORAY TO THAT! I NEVER WANT TO GET SICK AGAIN!

HEAR HEAR!

YEAH, IT'S GOOD, BUT I DIDN'T GET TO DESTROY ANYTHING

A-CHOO!!

I DID SOMETHING BAD...

...TURNS OUT MY PRETTY FLOWER IS HORRIBLY CONTAGIOUS AFTER ALL!

FIDGET!!!

AGH! FIDGET! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR HEAD?

A-CHOO!!

END.

We hope you enjoyed MickMacks' Meatbucket Megababes in the Virus Dimension! See more of Jarrod Elvin's art and comics at www.mick-macks.com and check out the Megababes on Patreon at www.patreon.com/MeatbucketMegababes. Thanks for reading!
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF MR. STUPENDOUS

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A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

MR. STUPENDOUS

STUPENDOUS.

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A. A. RUBIN

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WE'RE RUNNING LOW ON CONCEALER.

I'LL HAVE TO REPLACE IT BEFORE CAROL NOTICES.

TRY TO BE HOME ON TIME TONIGHT, HONEY.

I HOPE HE'S NOT CHEATING ON ME.
Hold the doors!

Stupendous.

I can't be late again...

Gotta hurry.

Plop!

Plop!

Plop!
STUPENDOUS.

You look like hell. What's Carol doing to you?

I don't kiss and tell.

At least he's on time today.

You better have the Harris file done by five.
I should have gotten lunch while I was out there.

4:30 already? Good thing I have super-speed.
HELP, HELP!

THIS LOOKS LIKE A JOB FOR...

GOTTA FIND A PHONE BOOTH.

...A JOB FOR...

...A JOB FOR...

...A JOB FOR...

...A JOB FOR...

STUPENDOUS.

...MR. STUPENDOUS!
ONE MOVE, AND I DROP HER.

MR. STUPENDOUS, ALWAYS LATE!
I WAS, UM, USING THE RESTROOM.

WANNA GRAB A BEER?
I CAN'T TONIGHT, I'VE GOT TO GET HOME.
YOU'RE THE MOST POWERFUL MAN IN THE WORLD...
...but you're powerless when your wife calls.

CÔMBIÊN?

Meet me on the roof in half an hour.

How did you--

SHH! Every romance needs its secrets.

It's just... stupendous.

Gotta hurry. She'll be here soon.

FIN.
PARASOMNIAC

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Parasomniac © 2020 by Matthew Timpanelli
HOWL!

PARASOMNIAC
Written by Matthew Timpanelli
Illustrated by Sam Purata
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EARLIER THAT NIGHT AT AN OPEN MIC...

YOU MAY HAVE SEEN ME AROUND, BUT THAT WASN'T REALLY ME...

YOU AND I HAVE HAD A CONVERSATION, BUT THAT WAS NOT MY VOICE...

WE HAVE BEEN CLOSE FRIENDS FOR YEARS, BUT I AM LIGHT YEARS AWAY...

YOU HAVE SEEN RIGHT THROUGH ME, BUT I WAS TRANSPARENT...

I WAS NEVER ACTUALLY THERE...
I AM NOTHING, AND SO ARE YOU.
Don't be afraid.
THE NEXT MORNING...

YOU KILLED IT LAST NIGHT. AFTERWARDS WE WERE ALL TALKING ABOUT IT.

NAME?

DAWN.

YOU OK?

JUST HAVEN'T GOTTEN MUCH SLEEP.

YAWN?

YOU SHOULDA STUCK AROUND.
THAT NIGHT...

HAHAHA HA!!

STAY WITH ME.
NOOOOO!!

IT'S OK, I'M WITH YOU...

WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER.
THE NEXT MORNING...

HEY LIL’ BRO. HOW YOU HOLDING UP?
I HAVE BEEN HAVING THE STRANGEST NIGHTMARES.

ARE THERE ANY DISTINCTIVE SYMBOLS IN THESE DREAMS?

THERE IS A WOMAN...

I’M WITH YOU.

JUNG THEORIZED THAT ARCHETYPES ARE EMBEDDED INTO OUR CONSCIOUSNESS.

DID YOU JUST...

I SUGGEST KEEPING A DREAM JOURNAL.

NEVERMIND.
LATER THAT DAY...

CHECK IT OUT. YOU'RE VIRAL!

AND SO ARE YOU.

I AM NOTHING...

TO BE CONTINUED...
RAGNAROK COME

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This was a mistake.
This is wrong.
Men have no place battling among gods and monsters.

Bárrnarok is not for us. It's for them.

What in hel are we doing here?
Forty warriors wiped out in barely a passing of the sun. We didn't stand a chance.

We never stood a chance.

To fight beside the gods we should be in Valhalla. No man will even make it to Valhalla fighting these... things...

There's not enough of a man remaining.

These creatures, the grotesque state they leave even the fiercest warriors in...

Surviving the Midgard has only left me alone, no brothers in arms. Nobody to see my body corrupted into a ravaged corpse when it's my time.

And now my axe is gone. My sword shattered, and my shield splintered.

And once the sun passes that mountain peak...

Wait!
-Something stirs!

Who's that?!
damn the gods for this...

I will not be worn down by their taunts. This deception of Loki, a trick of the eye, there was no hand. there was no apple.

If the gods were kind, and offered me an apple, I'd gladly eat it.

I'm a fool in Hel, now running toward my own end. running to see if there is hope in a hand and an apple.

Oh, Idunn, maiden of eternal life, what to do to fall for me.

Forgive me brother, I can do you no good now. Pray for death to be swift.

I am fated to survive a little longer, as a coward who runs from battle would.

Left alive to watch the slaughter of everyone around me, to see the deaths of those I know and those I love.

The gods will keep me alive until there are no witnesses left to see my demise.

Even should I finally find help or a weapon and the courage to fight and die in battle as a norseman should.

the gods will make certain these is no testament to secure my seat in valhalla.

even if there is someone, I can't do anything for them.

I can't do anything for myself.

Do I risk battlecry and have all these monsters come down on me?

nay.

SPURR! CRACK!

KRUNCH!
I pray that my appearance catches whoever it is unaware—

Who is there?!

I am damned.

What does he want?

hello. Are you alone? Are you by yourself?

Stay away.

She's scared. That makes two of us.

You can put that pinsticker away. I won't harm you.

Chill, is there anyone else here?

Leave me alone.

No.

Damn. What are you doing? How long have you been here?

Gods, she's been hiding for three days.

Since it started.

You need to run. Staying here, the creatures will find you eventually.

I came with some scouts to—

Try and assist the village. I'm the last one, like me.

Huh.

He is here to help!

The great warpack I came from awaits in the east forest. When the sun sets, they will slay you and destroy your entire village.

And hopefully every foul monstrosity within it.

You need to run before the sun comes.
I will be a fool today.

I can take you to weapons!

Kala.

Well, Kala, I am Gunnar. Take me to the weapons.

I can! The armor is on the way to the east forest! Please!

She is brave.

Surviving as long as she has with no weapon.

What's your name, child?

Kala.

Yes, child, you're better on your own. I'm weaponless, I can't.

Why did I bring her with me?

If we stay together, we can get through this.

So I just get to the weapons and then give her up?

He'll protect me. I know it. I can get us the weapons and then he can clear the path out of here.

Thank the gods for bringing him to me.

She must wonder why I am running around, cowering, instead of dying to revenge our people.

I will not hold it against him. Everybody was scared.

The way his hands were shaking when he entered the home.
after my brother was killed by the monsters, I've been so alone.

after all, I must still get to the warpack and tell them the village is doomed.

I'll be doomed with the village if we do not get to this mucker's home quickly.

I thought the worst, but now, I have hope.

she has been true to her word. how can I ever get into valhalla with these thoughts?

soon, we'll be out of this nightmare.

quickly, get inside!
the girl came through! If we get out of this, we will sacrifice to Odin.

true to a northman, plasma a sword in his hand and an axe for his belt seems to have brought his spirit up.

see! this is the armorer's home.

GRRRRRRRRRRRR

what's that sound? we are not alone.

choose something to replace that knife, but make haste. we must be on our way before anything finds us.

get down, Kai!

Grunn! Look out! another one!

ARGH!

a swift death, foul beast!

too late, I should have been ready.

CRASH
Dammit! It’s got me! This is how I die, again, the gods laugh.

Kala, run! Save yourself!

I cannot let the child watch me die, to be embarrassed out of this life.

Gods, what can I do? I can’t let him die.

Valhalla doomed.

and a chance to strike!

Back to hell, monster, die!

again, the girl gives me hope.

Chunk

the child saved me, showed me strength.

Freya bless you, Kala.

I was a coward, but I will not fail again.
We need to leave, Gunnar.

No child,
we are surrounded.

She understands me, and I'll not leave her.

Now, we fight together.

Look! Odin smiles on us.

She has reminded me what it is to be of the northern tribes.

"The fury of the mightiest warpack in midgard is coming to destroy them all."

"Are you certain?"

"Yes, child."

"Gunnar, I don't want to die."

"Imagine, drinking from golden cuplets, eating the finest meats and apples. Laughing with your family again, dies feasting in Valhalla next to the gods sounds nice?"

"It does."

"Then let us live forever!"

and let us make glorious sacrifices of these hellish bastards so they hold the gates open for us!
UH... HEY, MIKEY, WHERE ARE WE GOING?

WE'RE GOING THIS WAY...

OKAY, BUT WHY THIS WAY?

BECAUSE IT'S THE OPPOSITE OF THAT WAY.

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT'S THIS WAY?

NONE, WHATSOEVER, KID.

SO WHY THIS WAY THEN? IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE JUST GETTING LOST.

YOU KNOW WHAT, ERIC? YOU'RE RIGHT. LET'S JUST WAIT HERE AND ASK FOR DIRECTIONS...

HMMM... NOPE, I DON'T SEE ANY SIGNS.

WELL, I DON'T SEE ANYBODY ACTUALLY.

HOW ABOUT YOU WAIT HERE, AND I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN FIND.

20 MINUTES LATER...

DON'T KNOW, I DON'T SEE ANYTHING YET.

JUST SAYING.

20 MORE MINUTES LATER...

I'M HUNGRY.

JEZUS H... I SWEAR, GIVE ME THE STRENGTH NOT TO HURT THIS CHILD...

YOU'RE NOT HUNGRY? WE'VE BEEN WALKING FOR A LONG TIME.

AND I DON'T KNOW THIS WAY.
I've been sent on a quest to save a teddy bear from a world so ominously titled Nightmare! by my community of peers, and all I step into the void...

Which many have deemed a special type of hell...

I tell a boy, it's so to sleep, this doesn't concern you.

To which the child replies, listen as if he were just attacked by Strangefellows' Doochild the night before.

And jumps into following me into this world, with all his fears and personal calamity.

Mind you, I'm not a protector. I don't want any part of battling the forces of darkness or defending children from the hideous creatures that come from this bear's world under your beds.

You want me to summon my spirit? The weapon of light that pierces through the darkest black to defend the innocent? huh? That makes two of us. pal, cuz I can't, I never learned!

Yet, here I am, in the middle of this dangerous world, on this dangerous quest, to rescue my father, who while being one of the most boss teddy bear protectors ever, couldn't defend himself from being bear-anatomized, and I have no clue how to find him. Save us, alone! I am responsible for a kid who's a little too curious for himself and who decided to follow me into this dangerous hellhole. Probably I won't see some weird playtime with his stuffed bear that he just discovered can talk!

I don't know, I think I'm a little chipper, you tell me why I'm angry!!

A DOGGED!... I never thought of Alexander being your father.
Ya'll seem new 'round here. Where ya headed?

Mike came to save Alexander. I followed him we've been lost and walking for hours.

Alexander hurt. I didn't know no Alexander. And I'm guessin' that was Mikey. Just stowed outta here...

Well, he's right. This ain't a safe place. Specially for a youngin' like yourself. Why'd ya follow him?

Because... because I wanted a friend.

I just found out teddies are alive and amazing and, and my parents didn't believe me. They never believe me. None of them ever believe me.

Sounds to me like you got a lot of parents.

I'm with my third foster family. I thought they would be the ones. But...

But then I find out about all this.

Now they probably think I'm crazy. They never adopt me.

And now my own stupid stuffed doll doesn't even like me.

Well, call me crazy, but I'd say you're in need of a friend.

I'll be your friend.
STUPID KID, HE'S GONNA GET HIMSELF HURT, OR EVEN KILLED!

AND I'LL BE TO BLAME.

HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO HELP HIM IF I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU ARE. I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE I AM, I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'M DOING, AND THIS PLACE... UGH, TALK ABOUT A REAL TORDO WET DREAM.

I KNOW I WAS HARD ON HIM; I'M JUST FRUSTRATED, I'M NO PROTECTOR AND YOU, YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE OUR "CHAMPION".

I JUST CAN'T LOSE ANOTHER KID.

AND WAIT TILL THE MONSTERS START TO COME AFTER US, THEN YOU'LL REALLY SEE HOW MUCH OF A FAILURE I AM. IF EVERYONE BACK HOME COULD WATCH THEY'D SEE...

THEY WERE RIGHT, I REALLY AM A WASTE OF COTTON.

AND HERE I AM, JUST TALKING TO MYSELF. IT'S NOT EVEN LIKE ALEXANDER'S HERE WHEN I NEED...

HELP!

ERIC?!

I LEAVE THE KID FOR 5 MINUTES!

ERIC?!

MIKEY!

ERIC?!

WHERE ARE YOU?

WHERE?!
I'm comin', Kid!

"So Charlie would play a lot of games with Joe. Roulette was a famous one."

KEEP MAKING—

"My favorite was the one with the knives."

SHUNK

"See, every Charlie musta been some kinda cool, cuz they all knew how to use knives."

MIKEY!!!

SHUNK

"And Charlie would take turns throwin' knives."

HE'D TIE THE JOB UP.

"The goal was to make as much of a mess wit' Joe... without killin' him."

PLEASE! PLEASE STOP!!

"They'd make bets on how much they could make Joe blush, before he'd expire."

NOISE...

"It was an art."

WHAT THE MESS! IS THIS PLACE?

"Charlie was a sick @$$, but I'll be goddamned if he wasn't a killer artist."

HELP!!

"I learned so much from him over the years. Became quite the artist myself."

AHHAH!

"Only one way to get good, though..."

AHAAAA!!

HAHAHAHA!!
GEEZ, WHAT WERE THEY SHOOTING?

THAT'S QUITE THE HAMMER. WELL, NOT THIS WAY.

WHAT'S AROUND THIS CORNER?

WAY TO CHEAP SHOT A TEDDY WHEN HE'S NOT READY.

NOW WHERE DID YOU TWO CHUMS COME FROM?

HELP ANOUCHE IS OVER HERE!!

DON'T YOU WORRY 'BOUT OL' MIKEY NONO.

HE'S GOT HIS OWN FRIENDS TO PLAY WITH.

HAHA!!

IT HAD TO BE CLOWNS.

WOW, THOSE ARE SOME SHARP TEETH. YOUR DENTIST MUST LOVE YOU.

I'LL BE RIGHT THERE, ERIC. JUST TALKING WITH THESE UPSTANDING, SILENT, SATISFYING-LOOKING GENTS HERE.

CAN'T WE ALL JUST BE FRIENDS, WHILE I-

RUN!!
I'm so screwed. Killer clowns and knives.

I always knew the teacup rides were an idea from hell.

What would the old bear do?

He'd pull out his mammoth sword and cause some mayhem. I don't have a mammoth.

Booyah!

Haha!!

BOOM!

Haha!!

Hold off on the clean up. I still got another mess to make.

You're next, bear.
Hey, I'm still no certified protector or nothin', and I ain't gonna be your knight in shining armor if the apocalypse rains down on us, but while you're here, I'll watch your back and we can be friends. It's not like you haven't been playing with me for years already. Anyway, right?

Hey, I'm still no certified protector or nothin', and I ain't gonna be your knight in shining armor if the apocalypse rains down on us, but while you're here, I'll watch your back and we can be friends. It's not like you haven't been playing with me for years already. Anyway, right?

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ANACHRONAUTS: TRAPPED IN TIME

Writer/Penciller/Inker/Colorist:
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Anachronauts © 2020 by Philip Burnette
WHEN YOU TOLD ME THAT WE COULD TRAVEL BACK IN TIME TOGETHER...

I WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED WITH LAST WEEK!

SOMETHING WENT WRONG, WE AREN'T SUPPOSED TO BE HERE NOW!!

SOMEHOW WE WOUND UP IN EUROPE DURING THE MIDDLE AGES!!

CAN'T YOU TAKE US BACK???

IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE! I NEED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WENT WRONG WITH THE TEMPORAL MATRIX!

I'M GOING TO PRETEND THAT ANY OF THAT MADE SENSE!

BEFORE, I DON'T THINK THE NATIVES WILL CARE MUCH EITHER WAY!

Trapped In Time

Story and Art by Philip Burnett
LETTERING COURTESY OF BLAMBOT
PHILIPBURNETTE@HOTMAIL.COM
DEAD END!!

LOOKS LIKE WE'RE OUT OF OPTIONS!

WELL, WE TRIED IT YOUR WAY!

NO!! DON'T SHOOT!

THEY COULD BE ONE OF OUR ANCESTORS!

EXCUSE ME?

NO TRESPASSERS!
YOU ARE STANDING ON THE LANDS
OF LORD MICHEL DU LUFE!
YOU WILL SUBMIT YOURSELVES TO
OUR CARE OR BE PUT TO DEATH
WHERE YOU STAND!

WHAT SAY YOU?

YOU HAVE MY WORD THAT NO HARM
SHOULD BEEP ALL YOU IF YOU PROVE
TO BE INNOCENT!

HOWEVER I'VE RECEIVED
REPORTS OF FOREIGN SPIES
IN THESE LANDS.

GUARDS!
ARREST THEM!

MY NAME IS XANDRA,
THIS IS MY FRIEND
MATTIAS.

WE ARE MERELY TRAVELLERS
PASSING THROUGH YOUR LANDS!
WE MEANT NO TRESPASS!

MIGHT WE BE PERMITTED
TO UNPASS THROUGH?

REST ASSURED.
WE WILL DISCOVER THE
TRUTH ABOUT WHY
YOU ARE HERE!
Well, it appears that you have arrived just in time to claim your lands, Lord Michel.

Your stewardship of them has been greatly appreciated, Emond, especially since my father's assassination.

One must be ever vigilant, my lord. Your enemies crouch in wait at every turn!

Lord Emond—

To my eyes these ones seem unlikely to be spies. What do you make of their bizarre clothes?

Respectfully, you are still young, my lord. These costumes befit a spy precisely because they are so conspicuous.

So we know that they're spies because they do what no spy would ever do?

Exactly!

Amazing that they were able to find us in the forest so fast.

Yeah.

Almost like they knew we were coming.
PER OUR ARRANGEMENT, THE PRISONERS ARE IN OUR DUNGEON UNMOLESTED.

THE BOY, AS YET, SUSPECTS NOTHING.

TEL ME, HOW DID YOU KNOW WE WOULD FIND THEM IN THE FOREST?

ALL THINGS IN TIME, LORD EMOND. SUFFICE IT TO SAY, THERE IS NO PLACE THAT GIRL CAN GO THAT I WON'T BE ABLE TO FIND HER.

AS PROMISED, I BRING YOU THE TOOL THAT WILL ALLOW YOU TO RULE THIS LAND UNCONTESTED.

THIS IS LIKE THE DEVICE THE GIRL'S COMPANION CARRIED——

A WEAPON THAT CAN DEFEAT ANY FOE. ONCE I HAVE THE GIRL, I'LL SHOW YOU HOW TO OPERATE IT.

YOU SHALL HAVE THE GIRL, AND WITH YOUR HELP I WILL AT LONG LAST PUT AN END TO THAT WHelp MICHEL. SOON HE SHALL JOIN HIS FATHER, AND I WILL CLAIM THESE LANDS AS MY OWN!
SO THE MIDDLE AGES. ABOUT WHAT I EXPECTED.

YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT HELPING, RIGHT?

SINCE WE'VE GOT A MINUTE, DO YOU MIND TELLING ME WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON?

DO YOU REMEMBER HOW I TOLD YOU ABOUT THAT PROFESSOR THAT I WORKED WITH?

HE CREATED THE DEVICE WE USED FOR THE TIME TRAVEL. HE WANTS IT BACK. HE'S PLANNING SOMETHING BAD WITH IT.

I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YET, BUT HE DOESN'T SEEM TO CARE ABOUT CHANGING HISTORY.

THAT'S WHY I TOOK IT. THAT'S WHY WE CAN'T LET HIM GET IT. THAT'S WHY I NEED YOUR HELP, TOO.

I CAN'T BEAT HIM BY--

NO!!

THIS IS HOPELESS!

PERHAPS I COULD HELP?

WE'LL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL, THE GUARDS HERE ARE LOYAL TO LORD EMOND.

BUT I THINK I CAN GET US OUT OF THE CASTLE AND TO SOME HORSES, AT LEAST.

WHY ARE YOU HELPING US?

LET'S JUST SAY THAT I NEED ALL THE HELP I CAN GET IF I EVER HOPE TO SEE JUSTICE FOR MY FATHER.

AND IF THERE'S ONE THING I KNOW, IT'S THAT YOU TWO ARE DEFINITELY NOT SPIES!
I think you'll be needing these.

Take those stairs, that's the way out.

Sieze them!

Other way! Other way! Other way!

So now we're back to my original plan...

This way! In here!

No!! There's no telling what could happen!
That should keep them out, at least momentarily.

Wait! How do we even know we can trust this boy?

He makes a fair point, you're responsible for our imprisonment!

Break it down!!

Now!!!

Since time is short, I'll be direct--

On my honor--

I solemnly swear that I shall defend you against all who seek you harm, so long as my heart still beats, or such time as you see fit to release me. On my father's blade, I so swear.
NO DISRESPECT INTENDED, BUT--

THAT'S ALRIGHT, I HAVE OUR EXIT!

HAAMMMMN!

THAT DOOR WON'T HOLD LONG!

BLESSED MOTHER!

THIS SHOULD TAKE US JUST OUTSIDE OF THE CASTLE!

COME ON!

BY THE SAINTS!!

MY CALCULATIONS!

NO!!!

YOU WERE SAYING?!!

To Be Continued...
In the battlefield of the lowlands of Rave-Lagh, it was the orcs who lit the ritual bonfire of truce in the sacred place.

"...an age of famine, pescilence and desolation shall set upon the world by your own hand, as you ravage, slaughter and usurp."

"and you shall inch towards the end of the world, but the noise of deception and that of brothers killing brothers will not let you hear the doom that is coming."

"should all that devastation not suffice, I shall send two final signs..."
TELL ME ORC, WHY SHOULD WE HELP THE ENEMY THAT WE DESPISE?!

BECAUSSE OUR VILLAGESSS ARE BEING LEVELED AND OUR ELDERSSS AND INFANTSSS ARE BEING RAVAGED BY A MONSTROUSSS CREATURE THE SSIZE OF A MOUNTAIN WHOSSSE CRY HAUNTSSS OUR NIGHTSSS.

BECAUSSE OF HISSS FOUL TEMPER, I WILL BE DOING ALL THE TALKING.

GUNUNGWANGI? BUT HOW COULD THAT BE?

THE PROPHECY?

SILENCE!

A BEAST ERADICATING YOUR ILK FROM THIS WORLD? SOUNDS LIKE AN ANSWER TO OUR PRAYERS!

THE QUESTION REMAINS, WHY SHOULD WE HELP YOU?

THE FIRST SIGN: GUNUNGWANGI THE IMMORTAL SEVEN-HEADED DRAGON, BORN IN HELL FROM SERPENT AND FLYING BEAST, BIG LIKE AN OCEAN, HAS A SHRIEK LIKE THUNDER, AND ITS APPEITE, LIKE A VOLCANO, IS NEVER SATISFIED.

ONCE NO MORE ORCS OR GOBLINS, WHO THE BEAST GOING TO FEED ON?

WE'D RATHER TAKE OUR CHANCES

HOLD YOUR TONGUE, GENERAL! WE HAVE AGREED!
WE CAN RETURN CAPTURED PRISONERS OF WAR TOO...

YOU IDIOT!

THISSS BLUFF HASSS NOW TURNED VERY RISSSSKY...

THIS SMELLS BAD. I DON'T TRUST THEM. IT HAS TO BE A TRAP.

I AGREE. BUT HOW ELSE CAN WE GET OUR PEOPLE BACK ALIVE?

WE AGREE TO HELP YOU. UNDER ONE CONDITION.

RELEASE ALL THOSE YOU'VE KIDNAPPED, IMMEDIATELY.

HALF OF THE PRISONERS NOW, HALF WHEN THE JOB ISSS DONE.

WE NOT STUPID!

VERY WELL. WHAT DO YOU NEED FROM US?
“gunungwansi; the eater of worlds...”

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO STOP THIS DEMON.

“the destroyer of civilizations...”

WE CAN PROVIDE THE BEST OF RAW MINERALSSS.

“the extinction of species...”

“knows no defeat...”

AND WE NEED ELF’S MAGIC SO THAT WEAPON CAN KILL... EH, IMMORTAL CREATURE.

“stops not to rest...”

BUT WE NEED THE DWARF’S SKILL AT FORGING WEAPONS.

“and needs not feel hungry to eat.”
AS SIGN OF APPRECIATION FOR YOUR HELP, WE HAVE DECIDED TO THROW BANQUET TO REUNITE YOU WITH YOUR LOVED ONES.

TO GAIN YOUR TRUST, WE WILL EAT FIRST.

ENJOY!

THE FOOD IS VERY GOOD, ORC.

THANK YOU.

Indeed.

BUT I'M GROWING IMPATIENT. WHERE'S MY SON?

ON THIS TABLE...

DON'T RECOGNIZE TASTE OF YOUR OWN FLESH AND BLOOD?
"...only by surrendering to the beast and allowing it to devour your wives and sons in front of you, will you stay the second and last sign."

CAPTAIN!

AIM AND FIRE AT WILL!
ALL IS LOST...

NOT ALL IS LOST.

AVENGE YOUR SON!

IT'S AN HONOR TO DIE AT YOUR SIDE, MEVEL.
"the second sign: but if
the sun becomes black
in the middle of the
day, you will know that
you have failed, for this
is the last sign."

"and i will sweep the
earth with the broom
of destruction, and
the whole land shall
become a desolate
wasteland forever."

"...for peace shall
only be obtained
when no creature
remains alive."

"and the responsibility
shall be yours and not
mine, for i am divine."

I HATE
COCKROACHES.
ALL OF LIFE IS SUFFERING.

WE ARE BORN, WE SUFFER ...

YOUR SACRIFICE WAS ACCEPTED.

GO IN PEACE.

WE GROW OLD, IN THE BEST CASE, AND THEN WE DIE.

THE HUB IS BROKEN, AND THE WHEEL SPINS OUT OF CONTROL. USUALLY, ALL THINGS CRUMBLE AND ARE REBORN ONLY AFTER MANY AEONS. BUT UNNATURAL CREATURES HAVE CORRUPTED THIS PROCESS, AND NOW THE UNIVERSE DIES AND IS REBORN EVER FASTER. SOME CAN SURVIVE A RESET, BUT ONLY BY USING THE ESSENCE OF LIVING SENTIENTS. THE END IS NEAR... AGAIN.

I BELIEVE IT IS INCUMBENT ON ALL OF US TO ALLEVIATE SUFFERING, ELAINE DISAGREES.

CALL ANOTHER SACRIFICE.

SHE TAKES THEIR ESSENCE AND TURNS IT INTO THE SAP THAT POWERS HER EVIL CIVILIZATION.

I AM GOING TO STOP HER.

MR'IM, THE TANKS REMAIN EXPOSED.

PERHAPS THIS IS NOT A WISE COURSE.

OF COURSE NOT, MR'IM.

DO YOU DOUBT MY WISDOM?

BUT FIRST I NEED TO SURVIVE.

AND FOR THAT, I NEED THE SAP SHE'S BEEN STEALING.
Ma'am,
It's time.
I've taken the bait.

Damn! It's time.

He has clogged!
NOT... QUITE... YET...

WHAT'S THIS?

NOW! DO IT NOW!

BUT MR'AM!

SHIT!

IT'S A TRAP!

CAPTURE HIM!

Ma'am, it's time.

he has taken the bait.
Gotta move.

I have just enough sap to make it through the next reset.

If I had just a little more I could jump out of here.

They don’t look so tough. Maybe I can take them?

Goddamn! That hurts!

Fighting isn’t an option.

I need to lose them down this ...
DEAD END!

ONLY ONE OPTION NOW.

I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO DO THIS.

THEY ARE FORCING MY HAND.

GET HIM BEFORE HE DISSAPEARS...

AGAIN.

NEWT DRINED ITS SAP AND JUMPED AWAY.

PUT THAT OUT OF ITS MISERY.

IF HE HAD TO DO THIS; HE MUST BE VERY LOW ON SAP.
I didn't have a choice.
I had to drain it.
And I have just enough to survive the next reset.

It's not like I drained a human.
Those are just...

Things.
If I can make it through the next reset, I finally have enough to stop them once and for all.
It was a sacrifice for the greater good.

Why... oh... I see.

Elaine wouldn't take us.
She would only give food for our son's sacrifice.
We were so hungry.

I'm not like her.

Ugh!
I'm so sorry! I didn't see you there.

I'm not like her.

Ew... zaaaaaaaap!

Hold still.
Later that day...

All Aboard

All hands,

Prepare for launch.

The trap was not sprung in time.

He would have been caught if... we... had acted sooner.

He has harassed us for a long time.

And mysteriously always manages escape.

I hope that family makes it.

But I've been lucky so far, who knows.

I might not.

Maybe I can sneak onto their ship?

Ugh, not enough now.

The trap was not sprung in time.

He would have been caught if... we... had acted sooner.

He failed! If I made a mistake it hardly matters.

I'm fourth p, sixth t, fifth n, fifth t.
GUESS I'M NOT GETTING ON THEIR SHIP.

NOT MUCH LONGER NOW.

I HOPE YOU MAKE IT.

MAYBE I'M WRONG...

AND ELAINE HAS IT RIGHT.

MAYBE THE ONLY ONE I CAN SAVE IS MYSELF.

I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT.

I'M NOT LIKE HER.
FLASH FICTION

Why Are There Flash Fiction Pieces in a Comic Book Anthology?

Words and pictures have been intimately connected since human beings began telling stories. As many comics pros have been quick to point out, some of the earliest recorded stories—painted on the caves of France and Indonesia approximately 44,000 years ago, were, essentially, sequential storytelling art. To use a more modern word, comics.

But the history of words and pictures complementing each other is not exclusive to comics or sequential art. From the illuminated manuscripts of the middle ages, to the literati paintings of the Ming and Qing dynasties, to Gustave Dore’s unforgettable woodcuts for Dante’s Inferno and Coleridge’s Rime of The Ancient Mariner, images and text enhanced and illuminated each other even in the most serious literature. Some of the world’s greatest artists, such as Edouard Manet (Poe’s The Raven) and Eugene Delacroix (Goethe’s Faust) illustrated editions of some of the great literature of the 19th Century. Charles Dickens, arguably the greatest novelist ever, worked closely with illustrators on all but two of his novels.

It is only during the 20th Century that illustrated writing—at least for adults—was banished to the funny books and science fiction pulps. Why did this happen? The most common answer is that readers’ tastes, led by literary critics who felt that illustrations placed a barrier between the reader and their experience of the text, changed. A more cynical analysis suggests that as books became widely available, they were produced cheaply for the mass market. Art costs money, and pocket-sized, inexpensively-printed, paperbacks are not the best format for presenting illustrations anyway. Either way, by the second half of the 20th Century illustrated prose, with a few notable exceptions like Hunter S. Thompson’s creative non-fiction, was exceptionally rare.

These days, however, things are changing. We live in a world where illustrated literature is respectable once again. Watchmen appeared on many “Best Novels of the Last 100 Years” lists, and many younger readers are more likely to remember reading a graphic novel for class than one of their teachers confiscating a comic book which they read, surreptitiously, inside the book that they were supposed to be reading. Hollywood has mined the pages of graphic literature to create some of the most popular movies and television programs of our time, bringing the genre out of the counterculture and into the mainstream. At the same time, ebooks
(like this one) are now the least expensive form of publication, and have eliminated the cost-related concerns associated with printing illustrations. Still, with the exception of young adult literature, pictures in prose books are still not as popular as they used to be.

They are, however, making a comeback. Many literary journals print art to accompany their selections. Interest in books as art objects, which often contain fancy, illustrated book plates, have become more popular, as well.

It is into this changing landscape that Comic Book School presents the creators who completed the Flash Fiction Challenge. Inspired equally by the classics mentioned above, the old pulp magazines, and early Ray Bradbury short story collections that drew on both traditions, writers and artists from our online community were challenged to create stories that married one page of prose with a single, full-page illustration.

The results speak for themselves. From D. Alley, who like William Blake, wrote and illustrated her piece, The Rescue; to George Dawkins II and Philip Burnette, whose powerful prose and black and white illustrations for The Black Knight are reminiscent of the great 19th Century engraved bookplates; to Mike Ponce, the master of backgrounds, who, like Paul Kibdy did with Terry Pratchett’s Discworld, somehow pulled together the surreal genre mash-up with which I presented him in The Duel.

In each of these stories, the marriage of art and writing enhances the reader’s experience beyond what either could do on its own. We invite you to join us on the vanguard of this revival.

A. A. Rubin
Prose Editor, Comic Book School
December, 2020
The Black Knight

Writer: George Dawkins II

For more info: https://desertfoxcomic.weebly.com
On Instagram: @thedesertfoxcomic
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Penciller/Inker/Colorist: Philip Burnette

For more info: http://philipspace.deviantart.com

The Black Knight, Story © George Dawkins II, Art © Philip Burnette
My name is Absolon. I am the Black Knight. I was born on a ship which held others like me. I do not know where we came from, but I do know that we were in bondage. When I was a boy, the ship was seized by the man who would become my master, Sir Henryk the Noble. He was one of the greatest knights in all the lands, but, to me, he was my teacher, father, and closest friend. He was in exile when he found me, and it was during that exile that he taught me the ways of the knight.

My steed, Noir, is a creature like no other. Sir Henryk was teaching me how to ride horseback when I first met Noir. He was just a colt back then. Henryk told me that a knight’s horse should be a mirror into his soul, and when I saw this black beast running free, I saw my reflection and knew that this was to be my steed.

My sword was forged from the ore of a falling star, and as a result, it is dark in color as well. It, too, is unique, a weapon like no other. Henryk told me that a knight’s sword should be a weapon that defines his character, and when I came upon a ball of fire that had fallen from the heavens, I knew that this was to be the material used to construct my righteous tool of justice.

It was Sir Henryk’s last wish for me to see the land of his origin in the flesh. From what I see, this land has lost its way. The knights here have no honor, and I believe that there are darker forces at play that I do not see yet. If Henryk could see all this now, he would no-doubt be ashamed and beside himself. I have come to save this land. I will honor Sir Henryk’s teachings and be a noble knight that he would be proud of. No matter what challenges or prejudice may come during my quest, I will do whatever it takes to save this land.
Two wizards stare at each other across the dusty road. “This town ain’t big enough for the two of us,” says one, his dusky robe billowing in the wind.

His white-clad opponent says nothing. He just spits in the dirt.

The air crackles with kinetic magic as a lone tumbleweed rolls by. In the distance, a coyote howls.

Everything is still save for the sun, which inches towards its apex across the azure sky, and the hands of the tower clock, which mimic that arc with the steady tick, tick of doom.

Presently, the first chime sounds reverberating across the plain, followed by another, and another.

At the ringing of the twelfth bell—high noon—each wizard throws back his cloak and swings his staff toward his opponent. Magic explodes from the orbs atop the yew-wood which strains beneath the power of preternatural energy.

Each wizard’s aim is true. The bolts crash midway across the road. The jolt crackles and sparks where the beams meet, and—bang—the point explodes with the force of creation. The feedback reverberates outward, and each mage’s boots slide backward through the dirt as he fights to hold his footing.

Horses rear up desperately trying to break free from their reigns, dogs scurry away with their tails between their legs, and even the vultures stop circling, and search for safe perches.

Through it all, the wizards remain resolute, their eyes fixed forward, toward each other, through the glowing orb of pure energy which grows between them.

The wizards stumble forward, their staffs dim, their powers spent. All they can do is watch as reality warps, bending toward the abyss, collapsing inward toward the rend they tore in the very fabric of spacetime.

The locus convulses, belching forth reality. The world bends once again, this time in the opposite direction. The town fragments and shimmers, refracting around the spot midway between the two wizards, twisting and shifting, in surreal, kaleidoscopic glory. Buildings fold outward, refracting around themselves in every conceivable prismatic formation, shifting and spinning with the force of the universe, folding ever outward from nothingness into reality.

It is over as quickly as it had begun. The still sound of silence fills the town again. The wizards rise and people open their shutters—but, when the single chime marking the hour strikes, it strikes in stereo, two bells clang, identically, from two clock towers, across the street from two general stores, two brothels, two sheriff’s offices, and, yes, two wizards standing in front of two identical saloons, on opposite sides of a crossroads, between two identical main streets.

“Now,” the dark wizard says. “This town is big enough for the two of us.”

The white wizard inclines his head and touches the brim of his hat.

Each wizard turns away and walks down the dusty road to an identical magical workshop. Beneath the high sun, two tumbleweeds roll in their wake.
Marco laughed when Eddie reappeared on the upper decks with an annoyed expression. Still grinning, he confirmed for his returning first mate that all the crew were aboard, and all the salvage was secure. They set sail south. There was no wind for the first hour, so the intense heat remained an issue, like a hot poker branding every inch of the tanned leather skin on Eddie’s face, neck, and back. But coming into the Trinity Current, the wind picked up toward the old gulf pushing the ship toward its new destination.

Eddie was still amazed at the transformation of this old-timey sailing yacht into something out of an 18th century pirate novel. The original stern and cabin had been set into a larger ship base and served as the rudder and third sail, but the entire rest of the ship was built up from salvage of other ships, cars, even old highway lamp posts. Once they were finally moving at a good pace, Marco leaned toward Eddie for a laugh.

“How badly did the Captain yell at you for waking her up?” Marco grinned, but avoided eye contact.

“I think Peter got the most of it,” Eddie said, shaking off the irritation.

“But she still got you,” Marco said laughing, “I saw your face, oh man, I would not want to be you at sundown.” He made several pretty vulgar gestures which Eddie wasn’t sure how to interpret, so he tried to ignore him. “Come on man, it’s been three years! How do you not get it by now?”

“Watch the bow, we’ll come up on the contaminated waters before you know it.”

“Man, you are still soo stiff.” Marco smiled, “You need to loosen up you wanna go to Pleasure Isl—”

“I get it, Marco, I’m just worried about this call,” Eddie said, working out his thoughts as the ship sped south. “But they don’t normally do rescues, I doubt they even thought to second-guess if it was genuine. Headed into a contaminated zone for a frikkin’ bomb shelter? After all this time?” Eddie stopped for a moment. It just didn’t sound plausible.

“But who would wanna mess with the Cowbells?” Marco asked looking up at the sails. “They are just farmers.”

“Exactly, but who do they sell to?” Eddie asked, putting the pieces together in his own mind as the younger man followed this new train of thought.

“Traders, shippers, and…Us?” Marco said, not getting to Eddie’s final point. Eddie looked at Marco and smiled, knowing they might be headed right into a trap.

“Right, us…Pirates.”
A Final Word from the Publisher

This anthology turned out better than I'd expected. Yes, really. Better. This entire project—to host a comic-creation challenge—was not supposed to turn out this good. And yet, here it is.

What you have on your screen is something special. It's proof that we can (quoting Neil Gaiman here…) “make great art” when times are bad, when the conditions are wrong, and when nobody is really asking for what we’re making.

It’s proof that no matter how bad things are (and 2020 was very, very bad) you can still make great art.

I’ve been working professionally in comics for 25 years. I’ve seen important trends that have shaped the business: Boom years, bust years, controversies, feuds, and shady business deals.

And yet, we persist. This is the thing that fascinates me most: The persistence. Making comics as a career choice doesn’t really seem practical, if you think about it. The industry itself is rather small, but the talent pool is global. The odds of succeeding as a comic book creator are, statistically, rather low. This is particularly true if you want to be a writer or editor. There just aren’t that many jobs out there, so you must be persistent.

The medium of comic books is enjoying something of a golden moment. Big screen movies and innovative TV shows have made people aware that there are some great comic books being published. The world thinks comics are kind of cool.

Unfortunately, that enthusiasm hasn’t exactly turned those moviegoers into comic book buyers. Sure, sales are up for some fortunate publishers, but overall, comics are not exactly a promising career path. There may be movies based on comic book characters that have $200 million budgets, but there are no comics with even $2 million budgets.

So that's why this anthology is so remarkable. Despite the odds against success and the lack of financial incentive, we produced a really good comic book anthology.

In some ways, however, 2020 was the best possible year for making comics. The lockdown from the pandemic forced many of us to stay in the house. It gave us back a precious resource: time.
It also gave us time to reconsider our priorities. We had to set priorities that we’ve never had to consider before. In 2020, we had to consider the very real possibility of food shortages, household supply shortages, medication shortages, and even death.

We started this anthology project before we had even heard of COVID-19. We continued it through global unrest, a crashing economy, and massive unemployment. We continued it through a contentious Presidential election.

We finished it because it was important to us.

We had every reason to stop working. Nobody in our lives would have even questioned us if we decided that we could no longer carry on making our comics. Everyone would have understood that 2020 was, well, 2020.

But against all odds, we finished it. The people who worked on this did it for their own reasons, but ultimately because they were committed to telling their stories. They blocked out the noise and met their deadlines. That’s what professionals do.

We also rallied together as a creative community. People didn’t just focus on their own stories. They offered help to other people making comics. They came together for the production of this anthology, which was much larger than we’d expected. There was a lot of work, but somehow, we had enough hands to get everything done.

To the people who worked on anthology, thank you. I am truly grateful for the many ways you came together to make this happen. It’s one of those magical moments that I will never forget. This means more to me than you can know.

For those of you who download this as a PDF and read it, thank you. We’re grateful to have you as our audience. We need you because, without you, this would feel a bit less special. We make comics for passion and love, but we also make them for you.

For those of you who are out there dreaming of making comics professionally, you are not alone. This comic is proof that you can make comics with people who share your dream. We are your people and we will read your comics.

Dream big, do the work, and never give up.

Buddy Scalera
Founder, Comic Book School
December, 2020
Do you want to...
Make Comics?

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