

COMIC
BOOK
SCHOOL

#2

SECOND
ISSUE

CREATOR CONNECTIONS:

PANEL TWO

"THE TIME INN"

EIGHT
ORIGINAL
COMICS

ELEVEN
ILLUSTRATED
FLASH FICTION
STORIES

FOREWORD BY
BRIAN PULIDO

AFTERWORD BY
JAMAL IGLE

A SPECIAL NOTE
FROM OUR FOUNDER
BUDDY SCALERA



**AN AWARD-WINNING
ANTHOLOGY FEATURING
THE #8PAGECHALLENGE!**

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COMIC BOOK SCHOOL PRESENTS... CREATOR CONNECTIONS: PANEL TWO

An anthology based on the #8PageChallenge of 2021

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FOREWORD:

ARE YOU CRAZY OR WHAT?

So, you want to be an independent comic book publisher? You're crazy—but so am I! My name is Brian Pulido, an independent comic book publisher with over three decades of experience under my belt. I'm most known for founding *Chaos! Comics*, creating *Lady Death* and being the publisher of *Coffin Comics*.

I'm not going to sugar coat it. Independent comic book publishing is like a roller coaster. There are many ups and downs, even a few spins! However, it can be very rewarding to express yourself on your own terms and if you are willing to put in the work, you may find success.

So, what does it take to “make it” in independent comic book publishing? There are a host of skills, traits and behaviors that will help you succeed, but there are a few “tentpole” traits that can make you stand out and I'll lay them out here.

First up, have something to say. Why in the world would you take on such a monumental task as publishing comic books unless you had a burning desire to communicate something to the world? Certainly, you're not doing this for fame or big money. It's got to be about the work and what you want to say. Also, be original. Be yourself. Don't follow trends.

Next, educate yourself and amass skills. This is an ongoing process. So many individual skills funnel down to help you thrive as a comic book publisher and they do take time to master, but to name a few—learn how to write, draw, balance a checkbook and operate software. You get the gist. The list goes on!

In the beginning you will only have a small circle of fans and they are likely to be your friends and family, so you'll need to be your own marketing firm. It is incumbent upon you to “widen the circle.” Tell everyone you know about your work. Go to comic shops. Go to comic book conventions. Meet people. Seduce others with your passion.

Be consistent. Be responsible. Be methodical. Ever feel down in the dumps and uninspired? Get up and do the work anyway. Ever feel like crawling under a rock due to self-doubt? Take the first step anyway. Don't feel like doing “it” today? Do it anyway. I cannot stress enough that being consistent—and dealing with all the behaviors that derail you—makes all the difference in the world.

In the end, perhaps the most important trait to have if you want to be a comic book publisher is to have fun. Having fun is infectious. People like to be around fun people. Consider seeing your career as a comic book publisher as an aspirational journey that you invite others to be part of. You will be surprised at the results you produce.

These are just a few of the traits that could help you on your journey as a comic book publisher. I hope they are of service to you!

Good luck — Go get crazy!

Brian Pulido of Coffin Comics



**FROM
BUDDY SCALERA
&
DONNY
HADIWIDJAJA**

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KICKSTARTER



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EDITORIAL: STEPPING UP AND FOLLOWING THROUGH

This is an absolute trip. Being part of the *award-winning* Comic Book School community, working with *award-winning* indie and mainstream creators, and being able to tell stories *and* have them published under an *award-winning* indie label; it's all a trip. Oh my god. *Award-winning*. I left out the "multi" because that sentence would have looked really long and awkward, but yes, CBS's first anthology, *Creator Connections Panel One*, was actually a *multi-award-winning* anthology.

One might think there's some inherent pressure for the next individual who wanted to lace up the captain-bootstraps and helm the next anthology this community put out— *Double* the pressure because it's in the second year of a global pandemic. You can even *triple* the pressure if that person has never managed an anthology or anything more than their own small indie title. *That* specific person might be a glutton for pain and more aptly referred to as a *nutcase*.

Hi, my name is Kris. You may call me nutcase, *Señor Nutcase*.

Joking aside, being an editor and project manager on the second volume of CBS's *Creator Connections* has actually been an incredible ride, complete with its hurdles, twists, and turns, and I truly appreciate the opportunity Buddy Scalera has given me in trusting me with the reins. Coming up with schedules for thirty-plus creators to adhere to and hunting down deliverables from those same *internationally-located* creators is something I can now add to my resumé *and* handle with pride (Without the crying or rocking blanket-wrapped in the corner to boot!). On a side note, who knew *not* everyone was in New York's time zone? It's blasphemy I tell you, but it's incredible knowing I am literally reaching all over the world for this project's content.

I did mention there were some hurdles and my fellow editor and last year's lead, D. Alley, did an amazing job at showing me how to steer the boat and showing me the path, and I'm eternally grateful for everything she taught me to get me through this process. But it's exactly like anyone will say about preparation: "you can't prepare for it all."

It's funny in a horrible way, but one of the things that I can see possibly making last year's anthology easier, is that people lived in *fear*. Creators locked themselves in their homes to stay safe from the outside world, and there was a strong focus on creating killer content in a world where there wasn't much else to do. And sure, after the success of last year's anthology, we initially had people chomping at the bit to partake in this year's iteration. But I wasn't prepared for when the interaction on the message boards slowed and many of the creators, both new and returning, dropped out, and I had my own period of fear kick in. Was I not doing what I was supposed to, to keep people engaged? What am I doing wrong that people are dropping out?

Thank you Rob AnderSIN for keeping me enlightened of what the world was like outside the NYC pandemic paranoia and its declining covid-positive test rates. The fear people spent the last year controlled by gave way to the extreme buildup of cabin fever as everyone was itching to get out of quarantine. Indie creators specifically, were going back to 9-to-5s as backlogs of bills and rents stacked up, and friends and families were itching to see each other. And after the vaccines arrived, some creators were doing whatever they could to do anything *except* create.

Continued...

...Continued

Of course, there were definitely cases where creators were directly impacted by the second wave of the virus. The artist on one of my own anthology stories was set back when his 6-month old caught it. Thankfully she pulled through, but I'd like to send my condolences to anyone who was affected.

And then there are *The Others*. The folk who pulled out of the anthology challenge because they wanted to see some sun or had other priorities. There's absolutely no problem with them. Everyone has their own priorities, but thank you, Rob, for being the straight shooter who made me realize that if people *want* it enough, they'll (f)n do it and it wasn't *my* fault if they didn't.

With that said, I'd like to seriously thank all of the creators who kept their focus and made it to the end of this challenge to make this anthology whole. I truly feel that *Panel Two* is something fresh and exciting that rivals last year. With this second edition, there's another fun, fantasy romp from creators Jack Holder and Evan Scale with *Lost Inn Repose*. Jarrod Elvin's unforgettable *MeatBucket MegaBabes* return for more of their zany space shenanigans. Mark Phipps and Philip Burnette bring a military-style, post-apocalyptic action tale with *Cyanide*. Looking at the Flash Fiction, Chris Durston's *Innfinity* is bound to make sci-fi heads spin while Emily Ansell's prose will have readers questioning reality in *Untethered*. There's so much talent in this collection, from industry vets Darren Sanchez and Buddy Scalera to single-name superstars Jok, Roi and KDS, the stories and artwork will have readers on the edge of their seats.

For anyone who fell out of this project, or was timid in trying to take part, or are thinking about getting in next year's, I want you to look at another editor on this project, A.A. Rubin. Look at how prolific this guy writes. He does it all, prose, poetry, comics...and he places it everywhere, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, *Amazon*. He's always promoting a new anthology he's in or a new book he's releasing. It's truly awe-inspiring how much content he produces and not just the amount of content, but good content. Reading his stuff and knowing that I'm going to be working with him as an editor challenged me to be better with my writing and stories and to be a sharper editor. I mean the guy's an English teacher *and* a fellow martial artist. Pretty *baller* and intense if you ask me.

So look at the creators who are in this anthology and community. Look at other creators you know. Get inspired. *Create*. Take part in your own trip. I look forward to seeing you next year joining ours.

Kris Burgos of Tales Beyond
Managing Editor 2021

**FEATURING
A. A. RUBIN
&
EVAN SCALE
OF**



**STRANGE CLOUDS ON THE
HORIZON HERALD THE
COMING OF THE SWARM.**

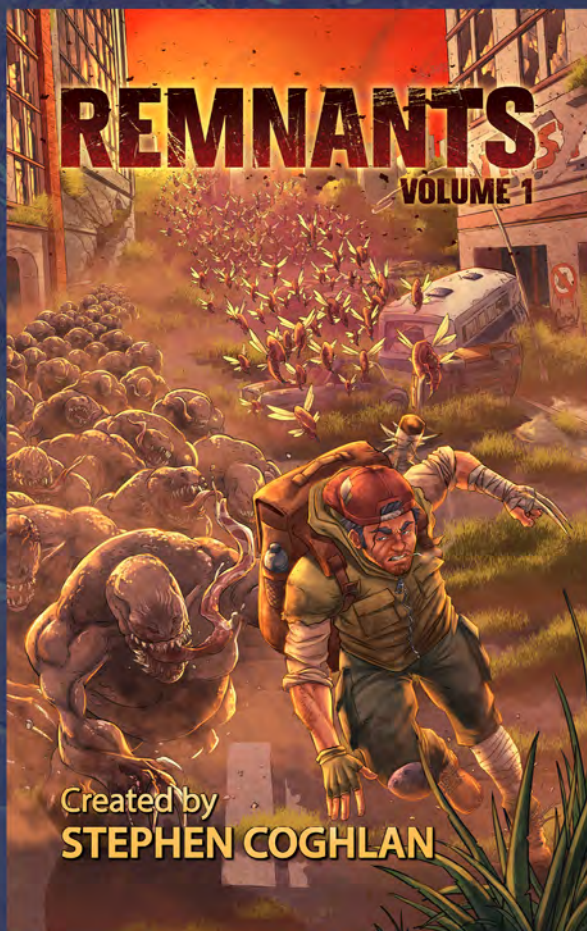
**THE UNDULATING MASSES
OF THE HORDE CANNOT BE
STOPPED.**

**TERRIFYING CREATURES ROAM THE EARTH, SEEMINGLY WITH
NO AIM BUT TO DEVOUR ALL THAT STANDS BEFORE THEM.**

**EXPERIENCE THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT WITH
THESE SEVENTEEN TALES OF HORROR, SURVIVAL, AND HOPE.**

**THE WORLD ENDS IN A FRENZY OF DEATH AND MIASMA OF
TERROR, BUT WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE REMNANTS OF
HUMANITY?**

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EDITORIAL: LEARNING TO FLY

The great science fiction writer, Ray Bradbury, advised people to “jump off the cliff and learn how to make wings on the way down. If we listened to our intellect,” he said, “we’d never have a love affair. We’d never have a friendship. We’d never go into business, because we’d be cynical...Well, that’s nonsense. You’ve got to jump off cliffs all the time and build your wings on the way down.”

Bradbury’s words come up often here at Comic Book School (much to the consternation of our editor, D. Alley) and, really, they are the perfect metaphor for this anthology: unlike a traditional anthology where creatives submit finished stories which are either accepted or rejected, our *Creator Connections* anthology accepts any creator who wants to contribute, as long as they are willing to follow our process of feedback and development, and are able to stick to our schedule of professional deadlines. Armed with nothing but the prompt, “The Time Inn,” creators were pushed off the proverbial cliff and told to build the wings that would let their stories soar. Not everyone made it—growing wings while falling is a difficult task—but those who did built the strange and wonderful things that comprise the anthology you are reading presently.

If the anthology, generally, is imbued with Bradbury’s spirit, the flash fiction is inspired by Bradbury more concretely. Last year, I took Sam Weller’s wonderful *Ray Bradbury and Creative Storytelling* class at Columbia of Chicago Online, and I was struck by the way Bradbury worked with illustrator Joseph Mugnaini on *The October Country*, his seminal collection of gothic horror short stories. Each story in the collection is accompanied by a Mugnaini illustration, which is printed in the book facing the title page. The collaboration between Bradbury and Mugnaini was typical of the era, when science fiction pulp magazines often commissioned artwork to accompany the stories that they published.

At that time, I was working on my comic story for last year’s anthology, and approached Buddy Scalera, Comic Books School’s founder and the publisher of this anthology, about including an illuminated Flash Fiction in the book. He liked the idea, and with a firm shove off the cliff, he volunteered me to build it on the way down.

Last year, with, to continue the metaphor, a very quick descent, we published three flash fiction stories. This year, with a bit of a longer fall, we have 11. Our creators range from mainstream industry professionals like Scalera and Darren Sanchez, to fledgling creators on their very first flight, like Beatriz Villares, Julia Porto, Julio Sergio Machado, and Fernando Carvalho the four artists from Lipe Diaz’s Studio and School of Graphic Art, who generously donated their work to our anthology. Our diverse flock includes prose writers like Ted Vician and Emily Ansel, as well as comics creators like Andy Seabert, Joel Jacob Barker, and Alex Sapountzis, all of whom took that leap of faith together and grew their wings on the way down. The stories they created are weird and wonderful, ranging from the hard science fiction of Chris Durston, to the horror of Kris Burgos and Jok; from the poetry of James McGill, to the folk magic of Christoff RDGZ.

And so we invite you to join us on our newly-minted wings through “The Time Inn” in all its myriad of permutations throughout the multiverse, from the portal magic of the hotel in the story Barker illustrated for me, to the horse ranch where Kevin Pei and Arielle Lupkin’s tale occurs, to the cryptid bar featured in Glen T. Gottilla’s work.

Join us as we soar the thermals found by those creators who took Bradbury’s leap of faith, and travel on their wings to places we guarantee you’ve never been before, places you can only reach on wings that were made on the way down.

For information regarding the Bradbury quotes in this article, visit:
<https://quoteinvestigator.com/2012/06/17/cliff-wings/>

A. A. Rubin,
Prose Editor 2021

LOST INN REPOSE



LOST INN REPOSE

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YEAR ONE OF
THE ARGUMENT.

LIFE IS BEST
EXPERIENCED BY
THOSE WHO ARE IN
THE BEST POSITION TO
UNDERSTAND ITS
PLEASURES.

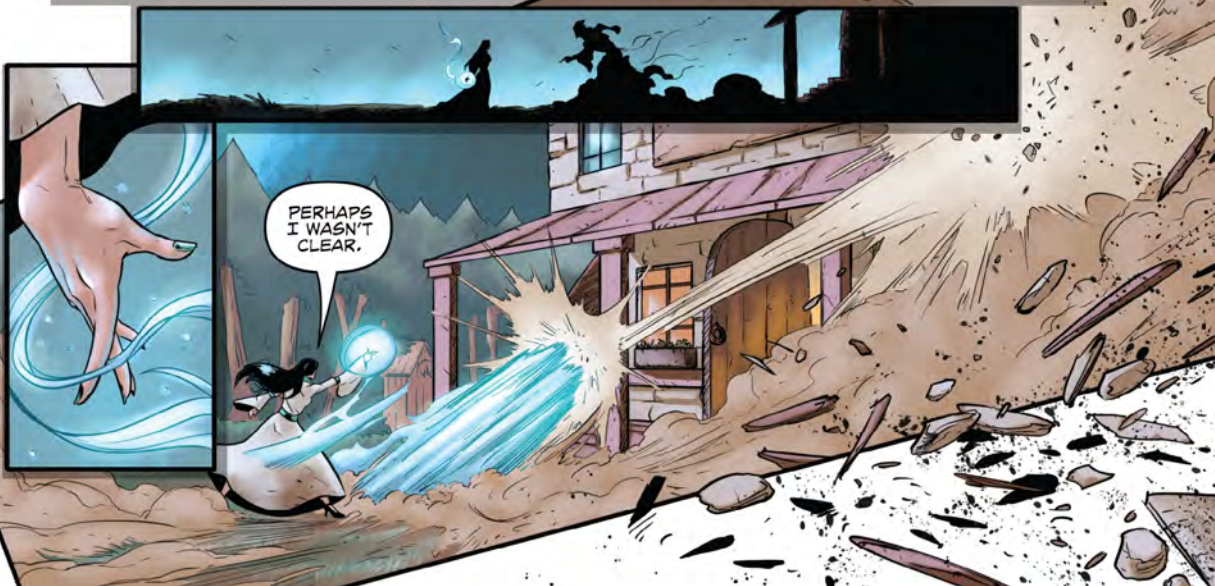
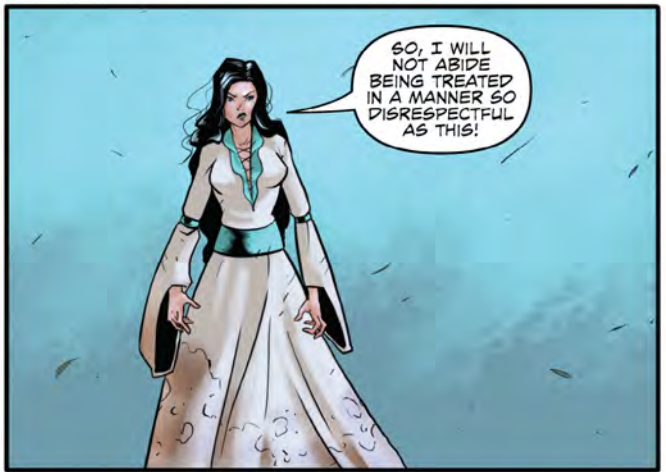
NEW LIFE IS
TO BE EXPERIENCED
IN JOY, AND LAUGHTER.
AS OLD, IDOLIZED RUINS
WITHER AND DECAY,
THEY MUST BE
REPLACED.

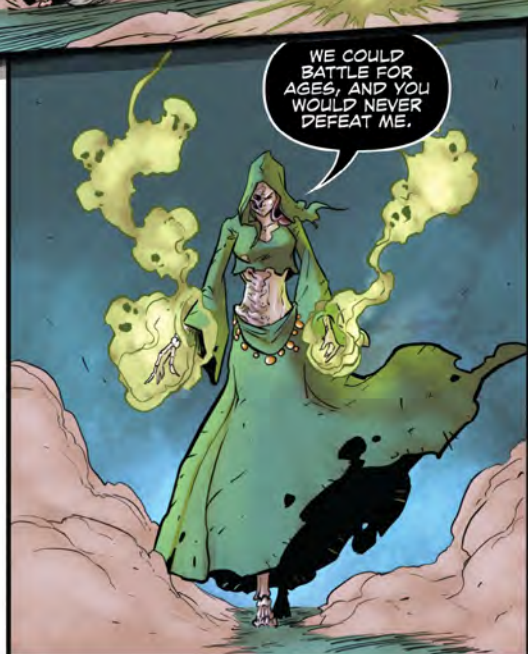
GET
OOOOOULUTT!

WHETHER
THEY WANT
TO BE OR
NOT.

LOST INN REPOSE

WRITTEN BY: JACK HOLDER
ILLUSTRATED BY: EVAN SCALE
LETTERED BY: MICAH MYERS
EDITED BY: JOHN ROBINSON





YEAR TWO OF
THE ARGUMENT.

LEAVE
ME TO MY
SOLITUDE,
PRINCESS!

YEAR THREE.

I WILL NOT
BE DICTATED
TO BY SOMETHING
THAT SHOULD HAVE
LEFT THIS MORTAL
COIL DECADES
AGO!

YEAR FIVE.

HARPY!

YEAR NINE.

SKELETON!

YEAR TWELVE.

PRISSED-UP
PILLOW!

YEAR SEVENTEEN.

POOR
EXCUSE FOR AIR
FRESHENER!

YEAR TWENTY-THREE.

ENOUGH!





I AM NOT
THE ONLY PERSON
WHO DOES WRONG
IN THIS WORLD!



NOR AM I,
SEVRINE. NOW,
CAN'T YOU JUST
LEAVE ME IN
PEACE???

THAT'S
NICE.

NO!



THAT'S RIGHT.
NICE. THE SPOILT
PRINCESS IS "NICE," AND
"PRETTY," AND WOULD BE
EVEN BETTER FAR OUT OF
SIGHT. OUT OF MIND, WELL,
I FINALLY WENT THERE,
BUT NOBODY WANTS
ME HERE, EITHER!



OH, GODS! ANOTHER
PITY PARTY? I KNOW YOUR
PROBLEMS, SEVRINE. YOU
SCREAMED IT AT ME ALL
THROUGHOUT OUR TIME
TOGETHER. YOU HAD A BAD
MARRIAGE, DIDN'T GET THE
CROWN, LOST EVERYTHING,
AND NOW YOU WANT TO BE
ANGRY AT THE WORLD
BECAUSE IT HATES YOU.



AND *YOU* ARE AN UNDEAD
WITCH WHO DECIDED THAT LIVING
FOREVER WAS BETTER THAN HAVING
ANYONE ELSE AROUND. THAT IS WHY
YOU SETTLED IN THE MIDDLE OF
NOWHERE, SO YOU WOULD
NEVER HAVE TO FACE THE
WORLD AGAIN!



YOU WERE
LISTENING TO
MY RANTS?

HARD
NOT TO
HEAR.

YOU WEREN'T
EXACTLY SILENT
YOURSELF,
PRINCESS.



BUT YOU'RE RIGHT. I'VE BEEN TIED TO THIS INN FOR FIVE HUNDRED YEARS. KILLED ANY HUMAN WHO CAME CLOSE.



COULD BE WORSE. YOU COULD BE THE REASON YOUR WHOLE KINGDOM FELL.

YOU HAVE A HORRIBLE HUSBAND TO BLAME THAT ON.

DO NOT REMIND ME! HE WAS DEPLORABLE!



AND NOT JUST HIM! THE WHOLE KINGDOM. THEY WANTED ME TO BE SMART, BUT NOT A PRODIGY, PRETTY BUT NOT BEAUTIFUL. BUT MOST OF ALL THEY WANTED ME TO BE.

SILENT.

YES!



SORRY.

DON'T BE. LIFE HAS DEALT US BOTH A BAD HAND, AND IT SEEMS ONLY NOW THAT WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO DISCUSS IT...



SORRY IT TOOK US THIRTY YEARS TO REALIZE IT. TRUCE?

TRUCE.



LOATHSOME WITCH! UNHAND THAT FAIR MAIDEN!

SWEET MAID, I HAVE HEARD OF THE GREAT ICE LICH THAT HAS SUBJECTED YOU TO HER TERRORS. BUT REST ASSURED THAT I AM HERE TO SAVE YOU!



NO BOYS
ALLOWED!

NO BOYS
ALLOWED!



THE ABSOLUTE
NERVE OF THAT
MAN. MAID, PFAH!
AND HELPLESS,
TOO.

AND
LOATHSOME?
I MEAN, I
MAY HAVE LOST
A FEW POUNDS
OF FLESH, BUT
LOATHSOME?



SERIOUSLY,
SEVRINE. AM I THAT
HIDEOUS?

YOU LOOK
RATHER FETCHING,
ELLIE. THOUGH
THE TWO OF US
COULD PROBABLY
USE A SPA DAY
AFTER THE LONG
WORKOUT.

SPA,
HA, AS
IF ANYONE
WOULD WANT
US.



ELLIGOEL,
WE MAKE OUR
OWN SPA DAYS. WE
MAKE EVERYTHING
THAT WE WANT. THAT'S WHAT
THIS PLACE WAS
ALWAYS SUPPOSED
TO BE.

THIS WAS ALWAYS
SUPPOSED TO BE A
PLACE WHERE I
COULD DISAPPEAR. BE
SOMEONE DIFFERENT
THAN I WAS BEFORE.

JUST DIDN'T REALIZE
HOW WONDERFULLY
LONELY IT COULD BE
WITH A NEW FRIEND.



THE TIME INN

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Website: <https://redheadeded.com>

THE TIME INN

WRITER: TED VICIAN / ARTIST: DARREN SANCHEZ

Tonight, Marcy is serving a table with a Fae, a shapeshifted dragon, and Thor. She spins her hand in a circle to signal they want another round. I turn, start pouring their orders, and stack them on a tray for Marcy. Thor's already a couple of horns deep in the storied past. It's all snow and sea, fire and conquest for him. The Fae keeps mixing it up: shots of dangerous pasts and drafts of alternate futures. The dragon is drinking Starbirth, my oldest vintage. If they keep on like this, they're going to get rowdy later, but they always pay for the damage. Usually, it's the dragon who ends up paying. I suppose it's the one with the hoard.

When I finish pouring, I turn back as the door swings open. Out of the dark steps a vaguely humanoid character with a bluish glow. "What would you like, friend? I got time by the glass or in a bottle."

The stranger stands looking at me, apparently confused.

"Look, it's not that hard. This is the Time Inn. I got people trying to buy time or just borrow it. A desperate few even show up looking to sell it."

"You are please understanding," he says, "From a non-entropic universe I am. This is my first experience with 'time.' I will have two bottles."

"First time, so to speak."

"I am replying, 'yes.' Sorry, did I already say that? This linearity is very difficult to keep of track."

"Tell you what. I'll give you a glass of 'forwards' and one of 'back.' Drink this one now, then the second one should return you."

"Like being 'there' and then 'here.' Space my universe has, but no time. I am here or there, depending on where I wish to be."

"Sounds about right."

"Thank you." He drains the first glass and pops like a blue bubble.

"Now look here!" shouts Thor. I look over at the group. They're getting loud. Immortals get kind of weird, if you pour enough years into them. "Of course, I know more about time than you lot. I've got a whole day named after me."

"On one planet, and a backwater at that," replies the tall, dark Fae. "No day named for a buffoon like you in Faery, that's for sure."

Thor's eyes narrow and he glances down at his hammer. "Not just me. My mother and father, as well. So have some respect."

"It's unfortunate the humans don't appreciate your brother the same way. There really ought to be a Loki's-day," says the dragon quietly.

That's going to do it.

Thor's chair slides backwards as he stands up. "You dare mention that scoundrel!"

"I am Draco. I am written in the stars. I do not dare anything." Fire crackles, forming wings behind his shoulders.

Lightning sparks as Thor squints. I slide out from behind the bar, carrying my persuader. It's a little something Hephaestus made for me, out of a branch from the first tree. It's indestructible and handy for straightening out just about anyone.

Marcy steps between them and pushes Thor back into his chair. "That's enough. Be nice or be gone, I don't care. I don't need this crap from any of you. I got other customers to take care of, too."

They're all quiet, stunned. She starts collecting the empty glasses and putting them on her tray. "Draco, you got gold for all this? Or are you having another round?"

Before anyone speaks, the air flashes blue and something drops onto the table. The blue humanoid rolls off the edge of the table, into the Fae's lap, sending them sprawling. "Oberon's twiggy beard!" he shouts while scrambling to his feet.

"Well, that was certainly something," says the blue creature as he stands. "I am back here, or I suppose, *now*. I shall bring some friends to experience this in the future, or the past."

He's catching on to this time thing pretty quickly.

END



THE RESERVATION AT THE TIME INN

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Twitter: [@Blakgambit](#)

Artist: Beatriz Villares

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Website: <https://www.behance.net/bvillares>

Note

THE RESERVATION AT THE TIME INN

WRITER: JAMES MCGILL / ARTIST: BEATRIZ VILLARES

Upon entering you smell the odor of old wood with a little bit of rot.
A few more steps in, you pick up on other scents you weren't expecting, such as sawdust and plaster.
Running your hand over the wall, it feels as if nothing had been dusted in months.
But breathing in, it feels as if all the windows were open and everything is as clean as spring.
Walking towards the front desk, each footstep sounds crisp as if walking on the hardest of oak flooring.
With each step though, the same flooring creaks, as if it would break at any moment.
The items furnishing and decorating the room confuse your eyes.
They appear to be new but as you get closer, you can see their age.
Small bits of paint flake off the art, small cracks web themselves through the furniture.
You think that if you were to sit in them, they would disintegrate to dust.
But then a guest takes a seat in one and nothing happens.

You get to the front desk and ring the bell.
The bell emanates a clear sound for a short while, as if new, then abruptly stops like it is damaged.

A young Asian woman appears at the desk, who doesn't look older than 28.
But you can tell she has more wisdom in her eyes than any person her age should.
She welcomes you with a smile and your key without even asking for your name.
She asks for your voucher in exchange.

A week ago, an old man came across your path and for some reason, you had lunch with him.
All you remember about him is the conversation and the gift he gave you.
You pull out the piece of paper that, you realize, is just as confusing as the Inn itself.
It looks brand new but feels extremely delicate as if it were an ancient scroll.
If asked, you would be unable to describe the voucher.

At the bottom of the page are two boxes and a hole.
The woman behind the desk takes the voucher and punches a hole in the second box.
She informs you that the third box will be punched if you have any guests during your stay.

She hands the voucher back to you along with your key.
The woman walks back into her office and closes the door.
You realize you forgot to ask where the room was.
You head to the elevators and push the up button.
10 minutes later you discover yourself in front of a deep green door with the number "1996" on it.
You realize you walked here as if you knew the way all along.
Suddenly, you suffer a severe case of Déjà vu looking at the door.
You decide to push the oddities out of your mind and enjoy the area, maybe the beach.

A shower, change of clothes, and 30 minutes later, you find yourself outside the Inn.
Just as you choose to go left, you realize you don't have your wallet.
You berate yourself for the absentmindedness that is your genetic legacy.
Then you feel a tug on your shirt.
Looking down, you see a small boy about the age of 8.
He explains that he had been separated from his parents because he had stopped to pet a cat.
As his parents had been in a hurry, they hadn't noticed.

Continued...



Prime Inn

THE RESERVATION AT THE TIME INN

...Continued

You bring the boy into the hotel, and go up to the main desk to speak to the woman from before.
She agrees to help by contacting the local police station.
Then you hear a click.
The receptionist has clipped the third square of the voucher.
Realizing what your act of kindness has cost you, you berate yourself a little more for not realizing.
You bring the boy with you to retrieve your wallet.

As you head up to your room, you see the boy follows you.
You realize he's hyper-focusing due to the adrenaline spike from getting separated.
When you reach the room, you have the boy stay outside while you retrieve your wallet.

While you are in the room, you hear a sniffing coming from outside.
Upon exiting the room, the boy is on the floor crying while cross-legged.

You sit down in front of him, in the same pose, and tap him on the shoulder.
"What's wrong? I'm sure your parents will be here shortly."

"I'm an idiot. I can't do anything right. I can't even follow my parents for 10 minutes."
His cheeks are glistening from tears and you feel a drop in your stomach.
"No way." You say quietly to yourself as a memory clicks in your head.
The Déjà vu goes away as memory becomes crystal in your mind.

"Yes way! I can't keep my thoughts straight."
Then you look him in the eye and say the words that helped you.
"You're not an idiot. Your brain works differently, that's all.
You're not going to be able to understand why just yet, but I promise you, understanding will come.
Do not let what you're feeling now be your standard.
When you feel this way, feel it.
But then move past it.
Hope is a better way to live than despair.
Hope for the best, expect the worst."

You stand up and take the boy's hand.
Two hours later his family finds him and lovingly scolds him for getting separated.

You decide that you don't want to tempt fate with a place like this and get your things.
When you get to the front desk, you apologize and ask if it would be okay to check out now.

She completes the check-out process and thanks you for staying at the Time Inn.
Attached to the bill is the voucher, but all three boxes are empty.
The woman behind the desk explains that she had made a mistake when you brought the boy in.

You are getting a new one to correct the mistake.

END





MEGAD Dabes



Steve Meyers

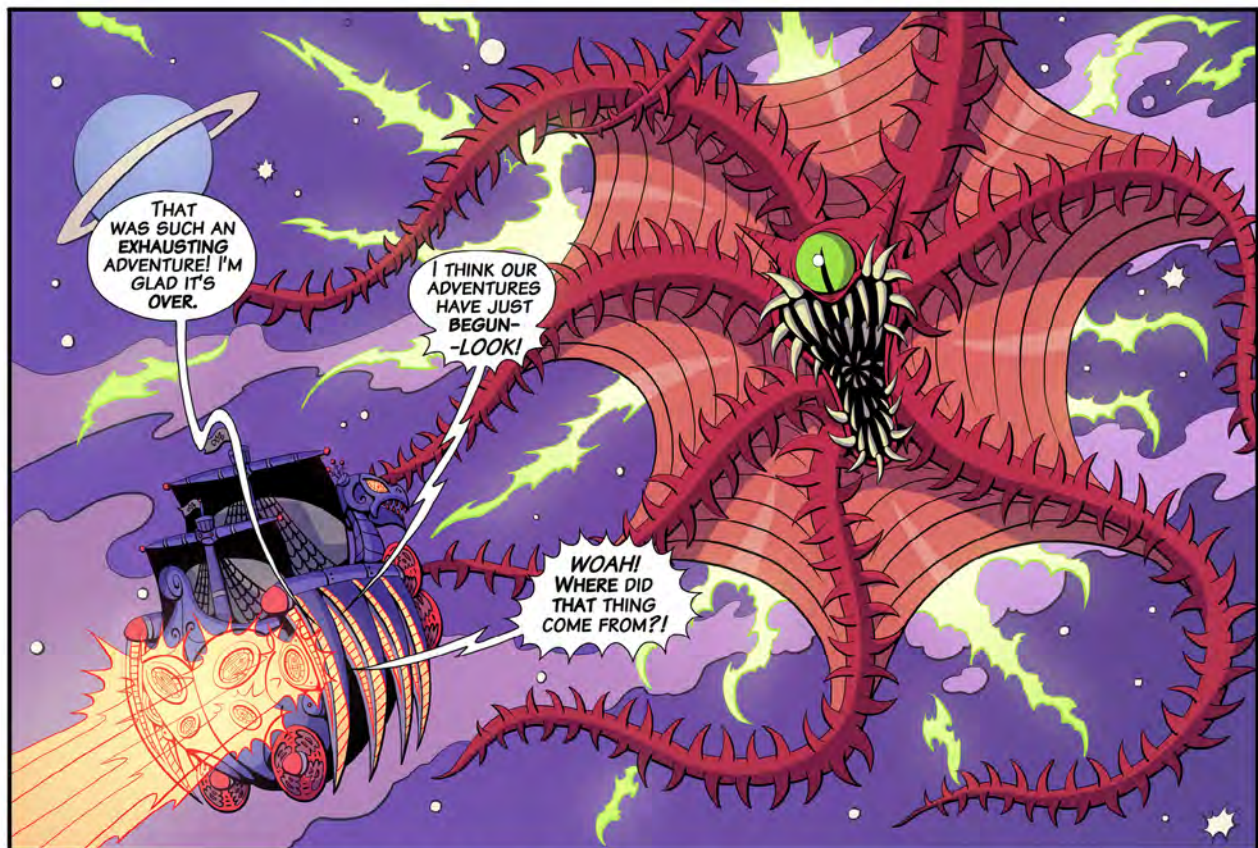
MEATBUCKET MEGABABES: "TIME OUT AT THE TIME INN"

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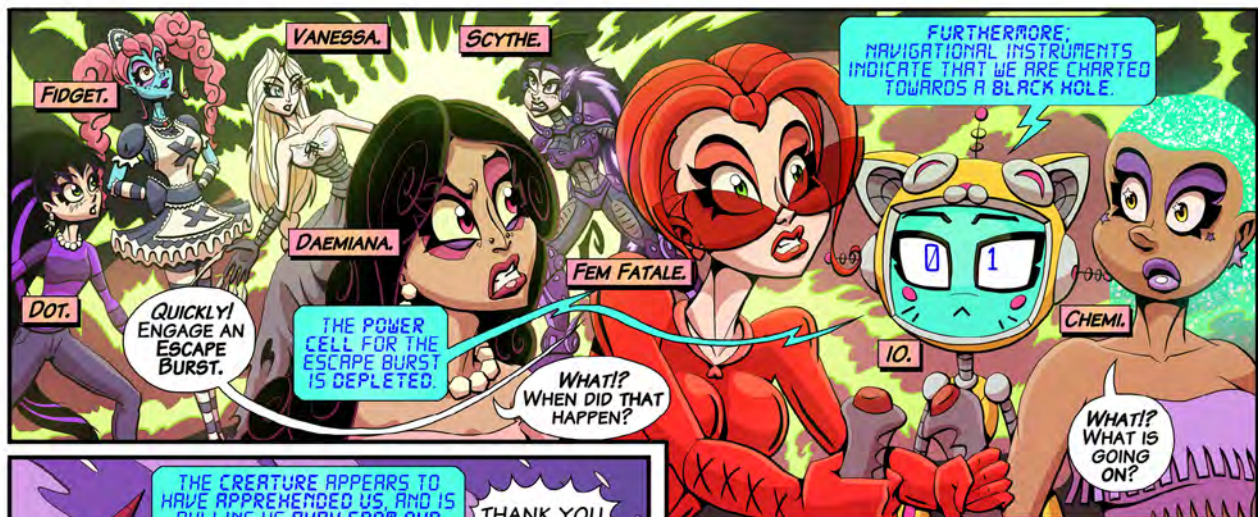
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THAT WAS SUCH AN EXHAUSTING ADVENTURE! I'M GLAD IT'S OVER.

I THINK OUR ADVENTURES HAVE JUST BEGUN--LOOK!

WOAH! WHERE DID THAT THING COME FROM?!



FURTHERMORE, NAVIGATIONAL INSTRUMENTS INDICATE THAT WE ARE CHARTED TOWARDS A BLACK HOLE.

FIDGET.

VANESSA.

SCYTHE.

DOT.

QUICKLY! ENGAGE AN ESCAPE BURST.

DAEMIANA.

THE POWER CELL FOR THE ESCAPE BURST IS DEPLETED.

FEM FATALE.

WHAT!? WHEN DID THAT HAPPEN?

CHEMI.

WHAT!? WHAT IS GOING ON?



THE CREATURE APPEARS TO HAVE APPREHENDED US, AND IS PULLING US AWAY FROM OUR CURRENT TRAJECTORY.

THANK YOU CAPTAIN OBVIOUS!

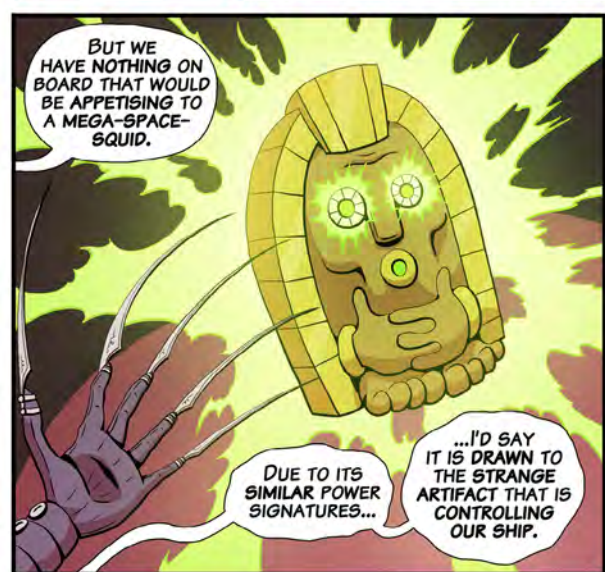
AWW, IT'S GIVING US A SPACE-HUG AND SAVING US FROM THE BLACK HOLE.

THAT'S SO NICE!

SOMEHOW, I DON'T THINK IT WANTS TO BE OUR FRIEND, FIDGET...

...I THINK IT'S TAKING US SOMEWHERE TO EAT US!

OH. THAT'S SO MEAN!



BUT WE HAVE NOTHING ON BOARD THAT WOULD BE APPETISING TO A MEGA-SPACE-SQUID.

DUE TO ITS SIMILAR POWER SIGNATURES...

...I'D SAY IT IS DRAWN TO THE STRANGE ARTIFACT THAT IS CONTROLLING OUR SHIP.



PRESENTS

MEGA BABES

IN TIME OUT AT THE TIME INN

STORY & ART
BY JARROD ELVIN

THIS
LOOKS LIKE
A NICE
PLACE...

HOW
CONVENIENT
WE WERE IN
THE AREA.

THE
TIME INN
STAY A NIGHT
FOR THE
REST
OF YOUR LIFE!

WELL, WELL,
WELL, IF IT ISN'T
THE MEATBUCKET
MEGABABES!

RETURNED FROM
A TRIUMPHANT
ADVENTURE,
I PRESUME?

YOU
KNOW
US?

BUT OF COURSE! I
COMMISSIONED YOU
TO GO UP AGAINST
THE BLACK-HOLE
DWELLING SQUID
MONSTER...

...FOR THE REWARD OF
A NEW POWER CORE
FOR YOUR SHIP, DON'T
YOU REMEMBER?

RIGHT. SORRY, OUR
MEMORY HAS BEEN A
LITTLE FUZZY LATELY...

NOT TO
WORRY, THAT IS
QUITE COMMON IN
THIS NEBULA.

I TRUST YOU
HAVE RETRIEVED
MY STOLEN
ARTIFACT?

OH!
OF COURSE!
WE SURE
DID!

...UH, I'M
AFRAID IT WAS
BROKEN
LIKE THIS
WHEN WE
FOUND IT. SORRY.



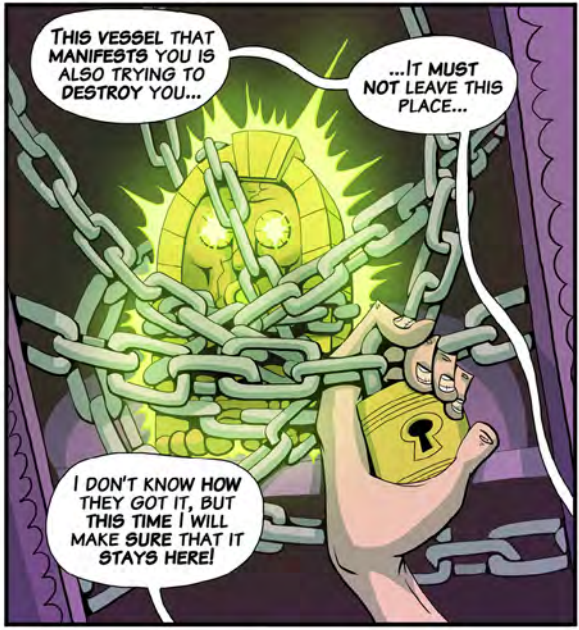


HA HA HA!
THEY BROUGHT YOU
RIGHT BACK TO ME,
MY LOVE!

OR SHOULD I SAY;
YOU BROUGHT
THEM RIGHT BACK TO
US?



THIS TIME,
WITH THEIR MEMORY
TO FEED OFF, YOU
MIGHT BE STRONG
ENOUGH TO SURVIVE.



THIS VESSEL THAT
MANIFESTS YOU IS
ALSO TRYING TO
DESTROY YOU...

...IT MUST
NOT LEAVE THIS
PLACE...

I DON'T KNOW HOW
THEY GOT IT, BUT
THIS TIME I WILL
MAKE SURE THAT IT
STAYS HERE!



THIS TIME I
WILL KEEP YOU SAFE
AND WE WILL BE
TOGETHER AGAIN
AS ONE FOR
ETERNITY...



...AND THE
MEATBUCKET
MULTIVERSE
WILL BE OURS!
HA HA HA!

HEE
HEE
HEE?

OK, NOW WE ARE DEFINITELY LOST, I CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER WHERE WE STARTED.

HOW ARE WE GOING TO FIND OUR ROOM?

HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET OUT?

...LOST
...ALL
LOST...

...THE
HOUSEMOTHER
AWAKES...

...WHAT IS
YOUR LIFE BUT
A SERIES OF
MEMORIES...?

OH SHUT
UP YOU
FOOLS!

WELCOME BACK,
MEATBUCKET
MEGABABES.

WHAT
THEY!!

YOU DO NOT
REMEMBER ZACAT,
AND YOU SHALL
NOT THE NEXT TIME
AROUND EITHER...

WHO
ARE
YOU?

HAVE YOU
WORKED OUT
YET THAT THIS
WHOLE THING
LOOPS ON
ITSELF?

OK,
SOMEBODY IS
CLEARLY
LOOPY, BUT I
THINK IT IS
ME!

THIS ARTIFACT
WILL LEAD YOU
OUT AND FREE
THE LOST
SOULS.

IT HAS
BEEN IN MY
POSSESSION
FOR AEONS.

WHAT THE
HECK IS THAT
WEIRD THING?



EVERY TIME, YOU
GET SO CLOSE,
BUT INEXORABLY
FAIL...

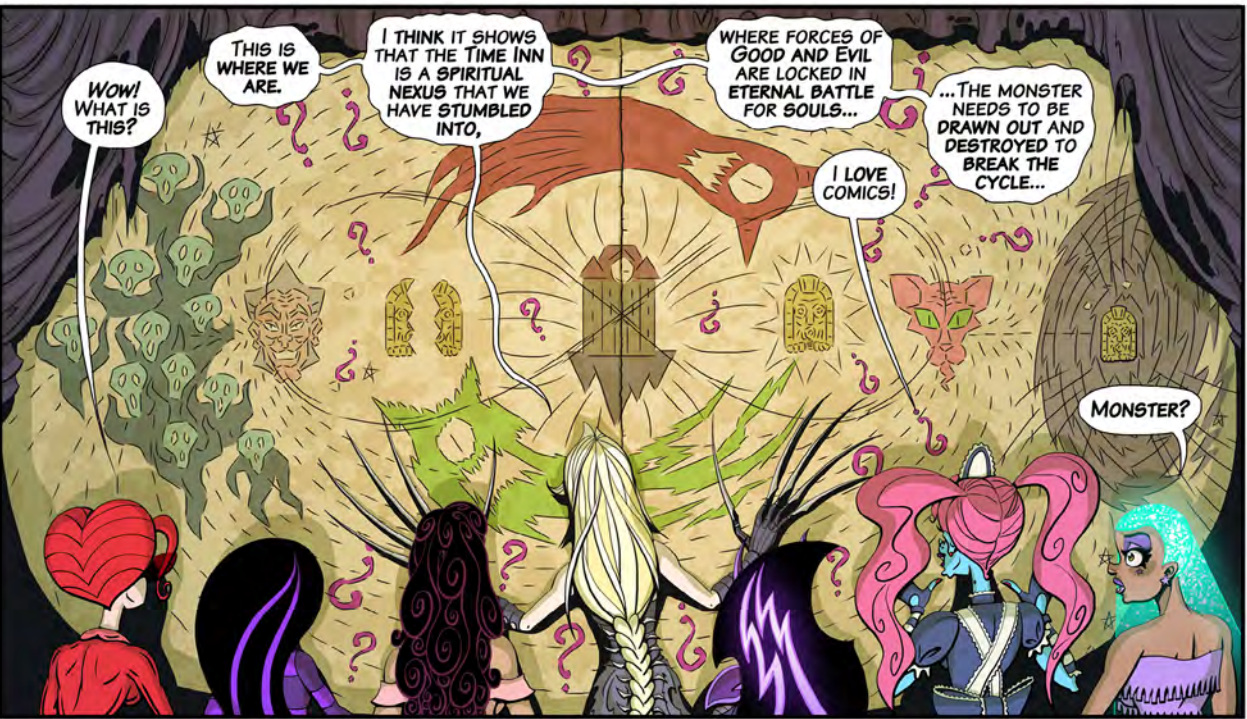
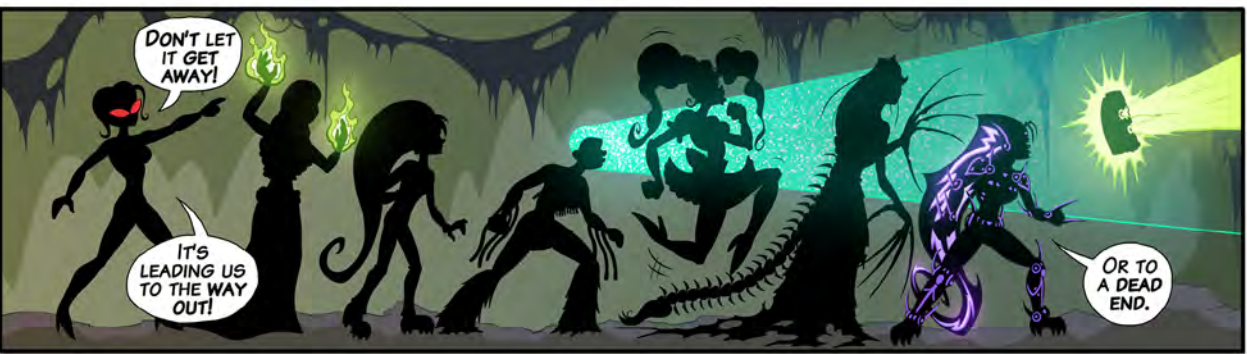
IT IS IMPORTANT
TO KEEP TRYING
UNTIL YOU
SUCCEED...

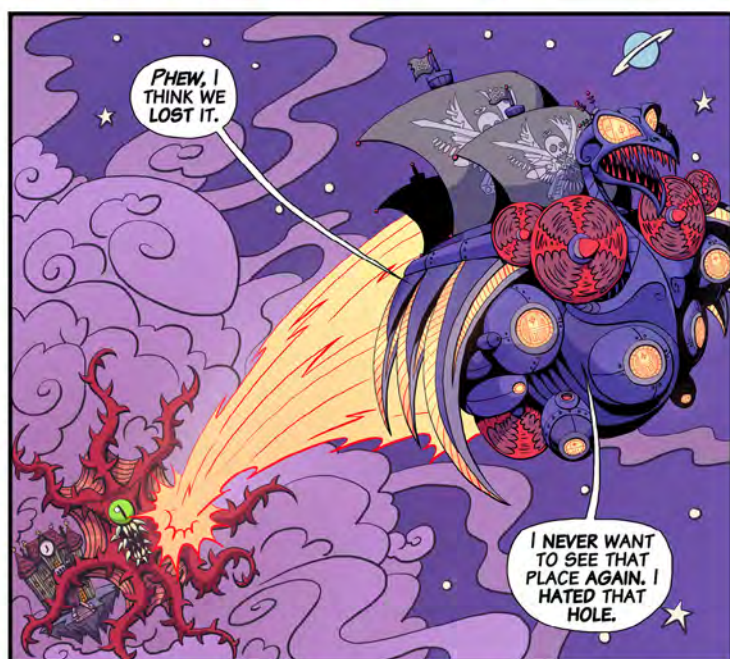
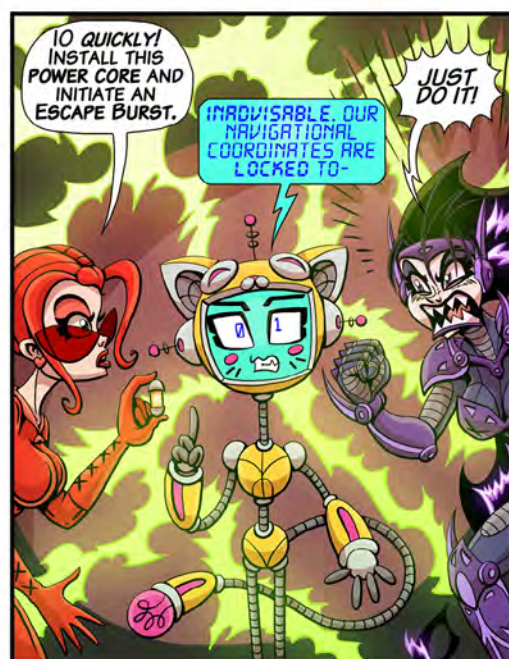
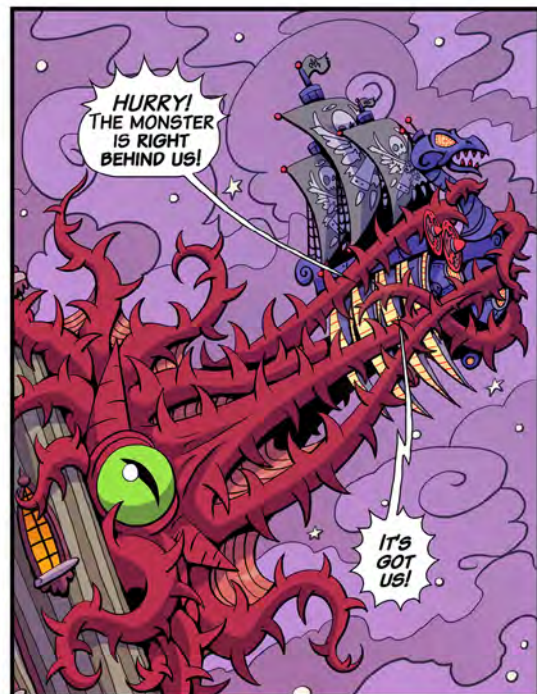
YOU MUST TAKE IT FAR
AWAY FROM HERE, BUT
BE VERY CAREFUL WITH
IT UNTIL IT REACHES ITS
FINAL DESTINATION.

THE ARTIFACT
WILL TAKE YOU
WHERE IT NEEDS
TO GO...

I HAVE
NO IDEA
WHAT JUST
HAPPENED.

I THOUGHT
IT WAS ALL
PERFECTLY
RATIONAL!
-C'MON!!





FROZEN CARNAGE:

A CF-1 TALE

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FROZEN CARNAGE : A CF-1 TALE

WRITER: KRIS BURGOS / ARTIST: JOK

The burning cinders running through my veins are engulfing my senses. The unrelenting skewering within, like shattered glass scraping at my bones and organs, is paralyzing. Is this shock?

War never prepared me for this. Am I dying? I'm not dying. I wouldn't be standing. But I can't move. Everything around me has stopped. Or has it? I can't move my eyes. Can't blink. Nothing in my peripheral is moving. My gun is in my hand. I'm aiming forward, but I can't move it. Help me. What's wrong with me?

A scream. Jesus, it's a horrific shrill. Violent. Completely caught me off guard, scared the remaining life out of me. But I can't even flinch. I can't find cover. I want to hide. Someone grunted. It's fading now, no, not fading...dying. A gurgling end. I've heard men make the same retching sound as they choke on their own blood. The final fight for breath is unmistakable.

There! Across the room. A heaping mass just crashed to the ground. Knocked over a pole. A sign? A construction sign. "Mythos...?"

Wait. What fell? Is that a body? It dropped something, but I can't...it's like a pipe... decorated with a silver star! Oh God, no. The star rests on the stock of a *Remington model 870*. I know that gun. Nicholas. My comrade. My brother. What happened? Why are you lifeless on the ground?

Why can't I run to you? Why can't I help you? I'm completely frozen in time. A witness to the world around me but not a participant.

I have to try, try to...remember. Remember. What in Hell is going—

What?

What is that?

What's that sound?!

Something's *moving*. *Sliding* across the floor, no, *slithering*. Like a snake. The lumbering pace...it's *heavy*. And now another sound. It's subtle, like a hollow pipe venting air. But the air is moving, going in *and* out of the pipe...the pipe is *breathing*.

But, are there more?

Hold my breath. Listen.

Yes. It's minute, but it sounds like there *are* many. I have to run. Get to Nicholas and... the sign! "Mythos" Yes!

I remember...

We're at the Mythos Inn. They're renovating, something about getting this ancient dump up to par with the fancy hotels in the area. My team was called in when all Hell broke loose...someone started killing indiscriminately. Some-*thing*. Whatever it is, it's down here in the basement. We're trapped down here with it. It won't let us go. And most of my team is now dead.

Gunfire! Erupting in fully-automatic bursts.

Get it! Kill it!

That piercing shrill again. Something small just flew across the room, splattered against the wall. Another weight just crumpled to the ground but I can't see it. It's to my right. I just—

Silence.

Sweat is dancing in my eye. I still can't blink. More burning, on top of the fire racing through my nerves.

I hear it again. The slithering. The heavy creeping is getting closer. I can hear the pipes again. Their breathing intensifies as they get closer. My own breathing is hastening. It's the only thing I can do. I must control it! Pretend I'm not not here...

It's behind me. The convoluted pipes breathe on my neck. Tens of them.

Something's touching my arm. It's cold. Rough, but damp. I can't see it clearly, but it's getting sharper. It's, oh no, it's sliding up my arm! I can feel it ripping open my skin on its slow, agonizing path up my sleeve as easily as a zipper. My arm is draining onto the floor. I can hear the droplets turn into a steady stream.

Continued...



FROZEN CARNAGE : A CF-1 TALE

...Continued

Now something's on my leg. It's wrapping itself around my ankle. Climbing my thigh. It's squeezing. I can feel the pulse in my leg is being tested.

Wet sandpaper is brushing up my neck. A heavy pant tickles the front of my ear while the slightest of nips pinch the back. I feel an uncontrollable bile rise up in my mouth. This is Hell.

Steps! Coming down the stairs. No! Don't come down here! Run! Wait. They aren't stepping. They're *rolling*. I see it ahead, a metal ball rolling down the staircase.

The pressure on my arm and leg is releasing. The lumbering mass is ignoring me! It's charging toward the stairs, but I can barely make it out in the shadows.

A flash at the bottom of the stairs! A deafening pop. Through the blinding fire, the serpentine body of my tormentor is finally clear. But, that makes no sense. It has no legs. It's just a thick tail drawn by a massive naked body. Grotesque and covered in scales, it's stumbling! It's confused! Mammoth arms are flailing. It's hair stands, moving on it's own, like individual fingers lashing out at the bright light.

It's... defending itself? From what? The ringing in my ears is subsiding. Gunfire! Thank God! Holes are erupting throughout the creature's body! They got it! I'm saved!

All clear.

Positive ID. Serpentes Gorgonea, ladies and gents. First catalogued sighting in over a thousand years. Dammit. I would've loved to have it in my lab. You know, with a pulse. Rules of engagement dictated putting it down.

Must've been sealed in here for a long time. Probably released during the renovations. Jesus. These bodies are everywhere.

Help me.

*I know, right? Talk about needing a cleanup on aisle fu—
Stow it. I think this one's alive.*

I am! Help me.

Damn. Dude's seen better days.

Let me get a look.

Is he breathing?

Yes... But other than that, he's unresponsive. Brachial artery is wide open, he's lost a lot of blood. He doesn't have long.

Help me. Please.

Son of a— put him down and get a team in here for cleanup.

What? No, I'm still here! Get that gun out of my face!

Sorry soldier.

Stop! Save m—

END.



TO BE ALONE

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TO BE ALONE

WRITER: JOEL JACOB BARKER / ARTIST: ALEX SAPOUNTZIS

"It's always been my get away," Julian thought as he placed his loafers by a lake's edge. "Then why does it feel like I've gotten away from nothing?"

Barefoot, Julian stepped onto a dock. An old, sturdy dock like the boards which mazed through his grandparents' house. Each step took him closer to when his grandfather found the knife and Julian's lifeless, childhood pup.

"It wasn't my fault!" Julian blurted.

Wait, a figure? No one else dared to be here at this time. It's why Julian chose it: to be by himself.

He couldn't tell. This morning's fog was thick. Julian ignored the hallucination and sat down, his toes above the serene water.

"Darn that boy taking his sister's toy," Julian muttered. He turned the gold band on his left ring finger. "I'm always warning him that his sister freaks out—and then his mother!"

The figure shifted. He shaded his eyes and looked. "Hello?"

The figure stood up and faded into the fog.

Julian crossed his arms. "Jeez, another cold Memorial weekend."

"That's right." He squeezed his shoulders. "Damn office is freezing—even the winter!" Julian slammed and bruised his knuckles as he shouted across the lake. "If I ran that office I'd turn up the heat on my lazy bum co-workers, too!"

Startled, Julian noticed that not only had the figure returned, but that it mimed him.

"Hey!" Julian leapt up. "What's the deal?" He scurried to shore, and headed to the other side of the lake, worried. "Maybe they found out who burned up those reports."

The figure paused. Julian sniveled, "I was upset—scared I'd lose the project!"

The figure turned and vanished into the fog once more. Julian reached the other side and discovered another dock. He looked back, the figure was now on the very dock he had just left.

"Who is this guy, if not a spy?" he thought. "It ain't too popular of a resort!" Julian stamped a foot. The figure mimicked him.

Julian walked back.

The figure mirrored him.

He stopped and writhed his fists.

The figure shadowed.

Julian ran to the end of the closest dock.

The figure did the same.

Both of them jumped from their identical docks. They trudged the water, closer to the other. Julian's face became crimson with rage, but fear overtook him. The figure was inches away.

A chill ran through him.

Not because he was soaked to his bones.

The figure was not where he was.

Julian closed in on the other dock. He reached the edge, and had no strength left. He labored onto the dock.

Slumped, he breathed deeply.

Julian hoisted his head as the fog cleared.

The sun lit the dock he had just left. Medics rushed to aid the resort manager on the lit dock. A body was lifted out of the lake, and the EMTs went to work. A group gathered. Julian yelled. No response. He screamed. The manager turned to Julian. A minute passed, then the manager looked back down at the body.

END



MR. STUPENDOUS



TWO OF
THEM?
STUPENDOUS.

Featuring
**"IN THE CLUTCHES
OF DOCTOR
WHEN!"**

--A STUPENDOUS STORY
OF TIME AND SPACE!



MR. STUPENDOUS:

IN THE CLUTCHES OF DOCTOR WHEN

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MR. STUPENDOUS

In The Clutches of DOCTOR WHEN

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Cover art and original

character design by

ARIELLE LUPKIN

DOCTOR WHEN

character design by

JEREL MOTOS



UPON FOLLOWING
THE **SINISTER DOCTOR**
WHEN THROUGH THE
TIME PORTAL,
OUR HERO FINDS
HIMSELF
TRANSPORTED TO...

...COMICS'
GOLDEN
AGE!



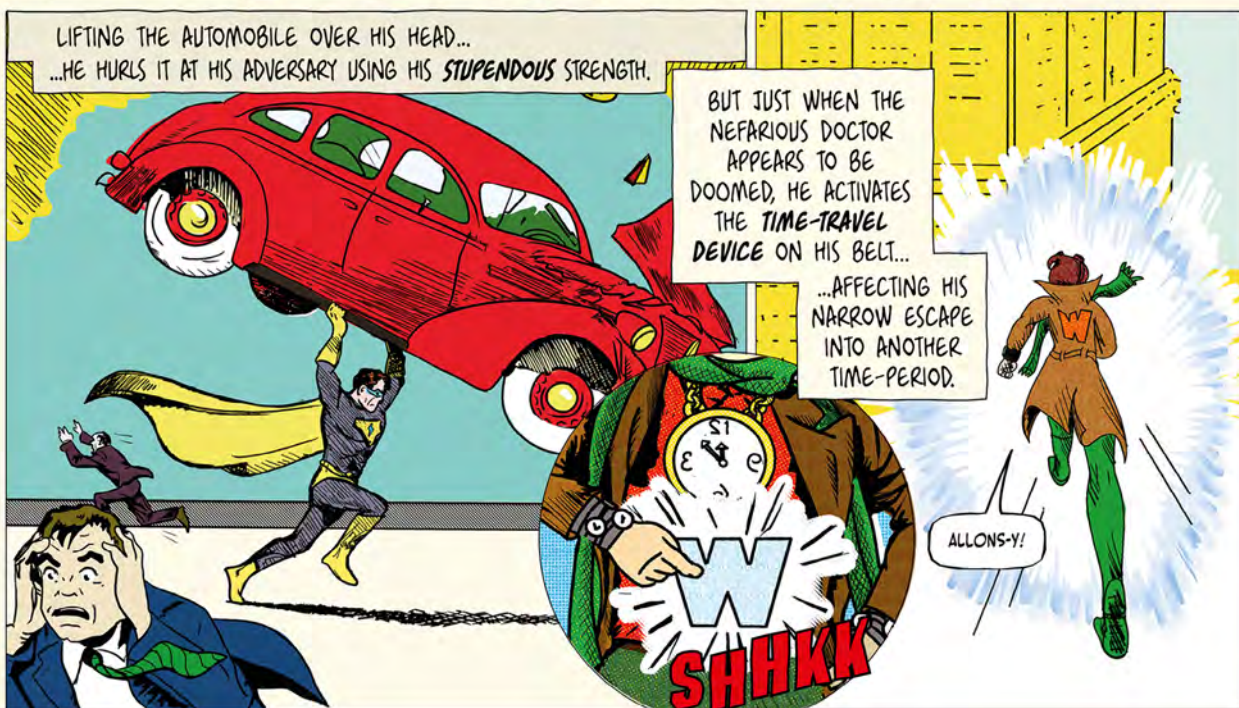
I DID. I AM THE **NARRATOR**.
I DESCRIBE YOUR ADVENTURES
TO THE READER WITH INIMITABLE
VERVE AND FLAIR.



MOMENTARILY DAZED BY THE IMPACT OF HIS
ADVERSARY'S BLOW, CIRCUMSTANCES CONSPIRE TO GIVE
OUR HERO A **STUPENDOUS** IDEA...



LIFTING THE AUTOMOBILE OVER HIS HEAD...
...HE HURLS IT AT HIS ADVERSARY USING HIS **STUPENDOUS** STRENGTH.



EXCELSIOR, TRUE BELIEVERS! DEE ALLEY DID A STUPENDOUS JOB WITH THE FIRST TWO PAGES, BUT NOW WE GO TO THE BULLPEN FOR THE MIGHTY **MICHAEL GRASSIA! ED.**



ANOTHER TIME JUMP! I'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY TO GET AT THAT DEVICE. PERHAPS HE'LL BE DISTRACTED BY SOME WITTY REPORTEE.

YOU MAY HAVE RUNG MY BELL WHEN YOU THREW ME INTO THAT CAR...

THE TIME INN



...BUT NOW IT'S MY TURN TO CLOCK YOU.

OOF!



THIS GAME WAS FUN WHILE IT LASTED, BUT IT SEEMS YOU'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME.



THERE IS NO SUCH THING, MY BOY...

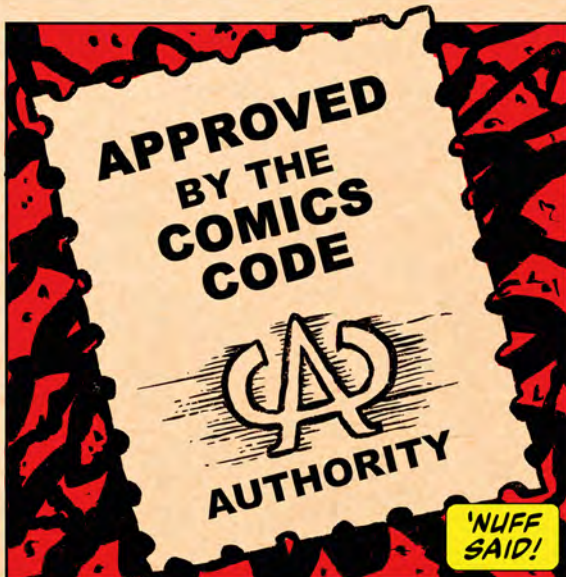
...FOR I AM A LORD OF TIME!

LORD OF TIME? HOW UNORIGINAL. YOU'RE JUST COPYING THAT OTHER DOCTOR.



TIME IS RELATIVE. WHO'S TO SAY WHO IS COPYING WHOM.

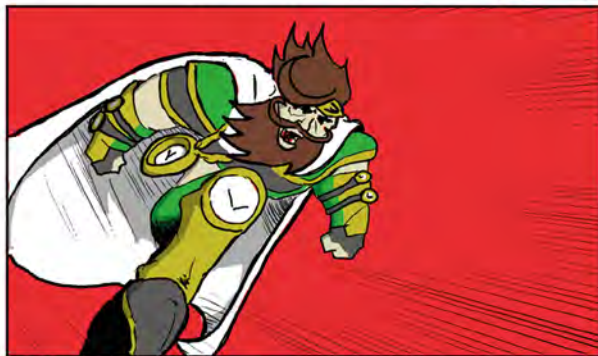
WHAT A BUNCH OF BULLS--

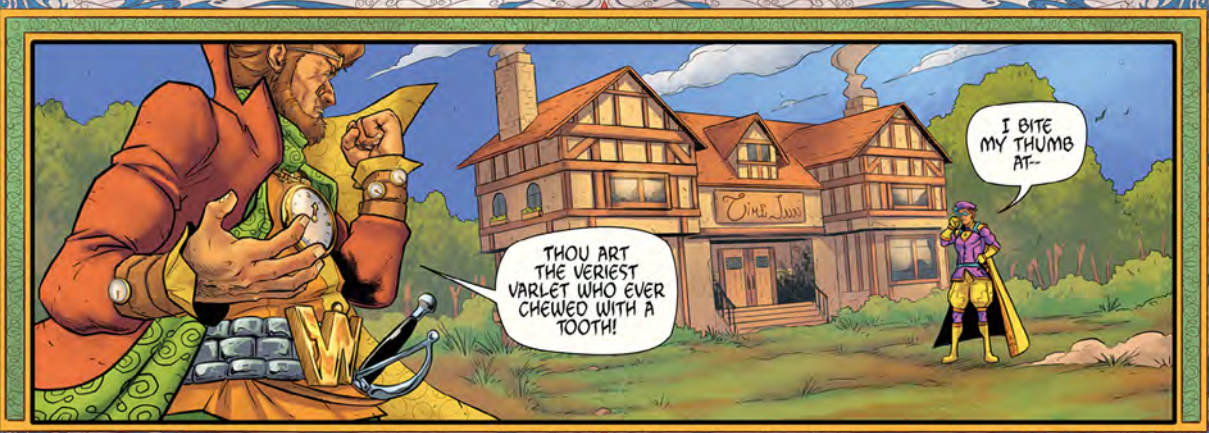


APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE

CA
AUTHORITY

NUFF SAID!



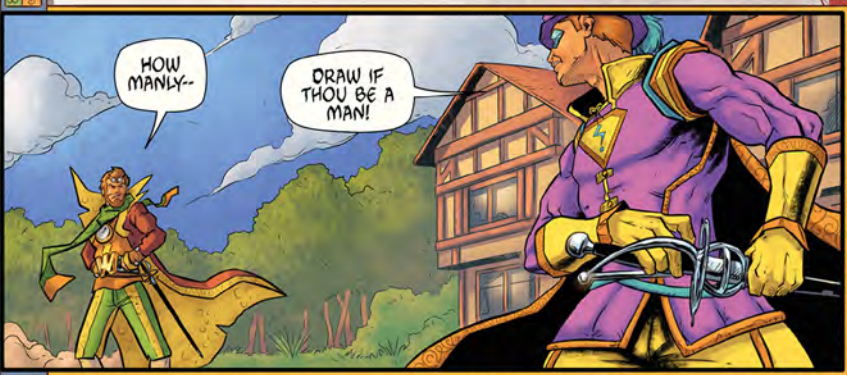


THOU ART THE VERIEST VARLET WHO EVER CHEWED WITH A TOOTH!

I BITE MY THUMB AT--



OW! THAT REALLY HURT.



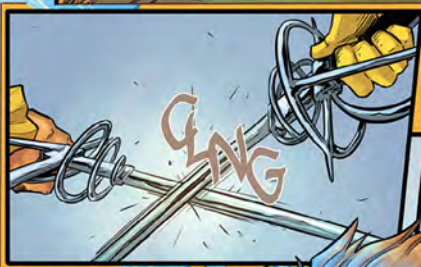
HOW MANLY--

DRAW IF THOU BE A MAN!

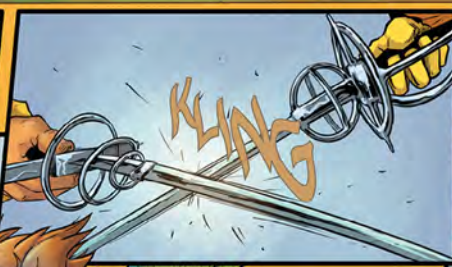


EN GARDE!

GERONIMO!



CLANG



KLING

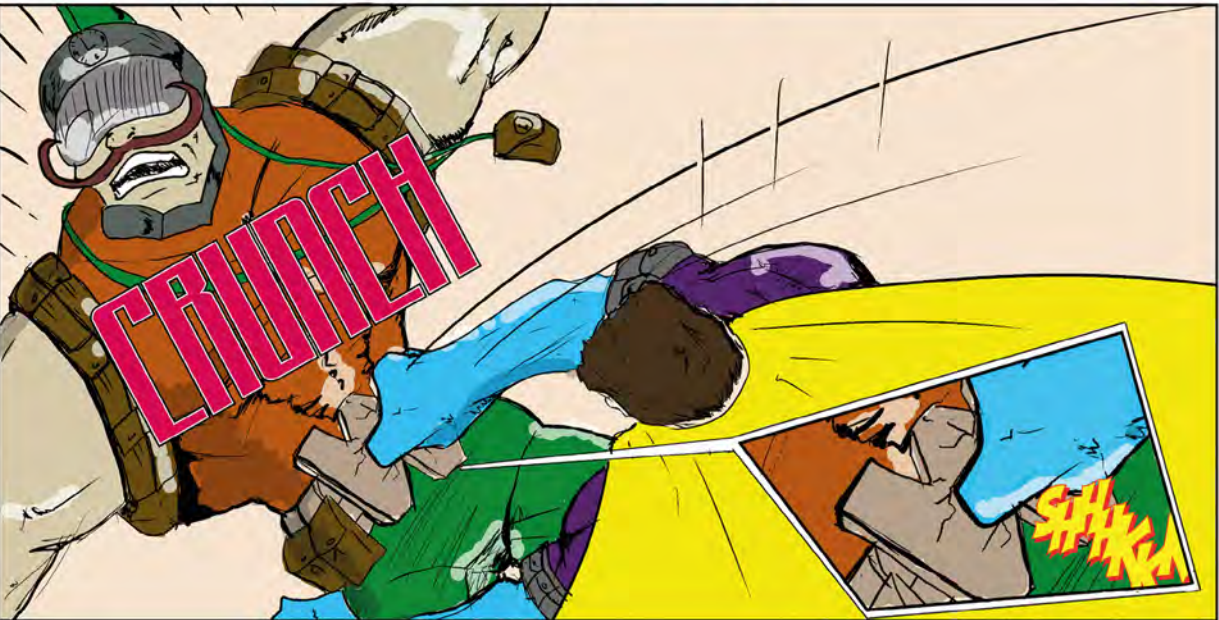


SHHH KHL



FIGHT ME, CRAVEN.

DISCRETION IS THE BETTER PART OF VALOR.







FIN.

UNTETHERED

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UNTETHERED

WRITER: EMILY ANSELL / ARTIST: ISRAEL RODRIGUEZ

People who say a knock to the head can mess up your day, don't know the half of it. But you're here for the story, not to listen to me wax philosophical.

I was here in the city on business, headed down to a pub for lunch. No, I'm not going to tell you which pub. We don't need a bunch of louts and conspiracy types showing up and causing trouble.

How'd it happen? I don't really know. I was minding my own business. I heard some ruckus behind me. And next thing I know I'm waking up on the floor.

"You alright, fella?" The voice starts far away, but gets closer as my vision clears. It's the bartender, heavy eyebrows knit into a frown.

"What? What the... Why am I on the floor?"

"You took one of those big glass tankards to the back of your skull. Guy just learned his buddy was sleeping with his girlfriend. Bouncer didn't get 'em quite fast enough. We've called you an ambulance."

"Oh. Okay."

The ambulance came and went. They said I didn't have a concussion, but told me to take it easy. They took down my name and I promised to call if I had any worsening symptoms.

The bartender put me in a booth, and returned with a cup. "Sorry lad, we're switching you to water after that. Just in case. Gonna bring you some food, too. On the house. You just sit there as long as you need."

"Okay. Thank you."

A server brought the food a few moments later. A steak sandwich with half a cow's worth of meat and chips cut so thick they looked like bananas. I tucked in, and after that I felt a lot better. I tipped the waitress and the bartender and headed out.

I made my way back down the street toward the Neoclassical building on the corner. A couple passed me; both had blue hair and wore very little apart from their tattoos. But there was something *off* about them, something odd about the patterns they wore on their skin. I shook it off as I climbed the stairs into the building. I didn't have time to worry about heebie-jeebies.

The woman behind the reception desk was different. She smiled. "Can I help you, sir?"

"Thank you, but I'm just heading upstairs for the investors meeting." I pulled out my ID badge and held it out to her.

She frowned. "I'm sorry, that isn't one of ours."

"Pardon me? I was here all morning!"

"Perhaps you're mistaken? This is a library."

"What?"

"Can I give you directions to where you need to be?"

"Where is here?" I demanded.

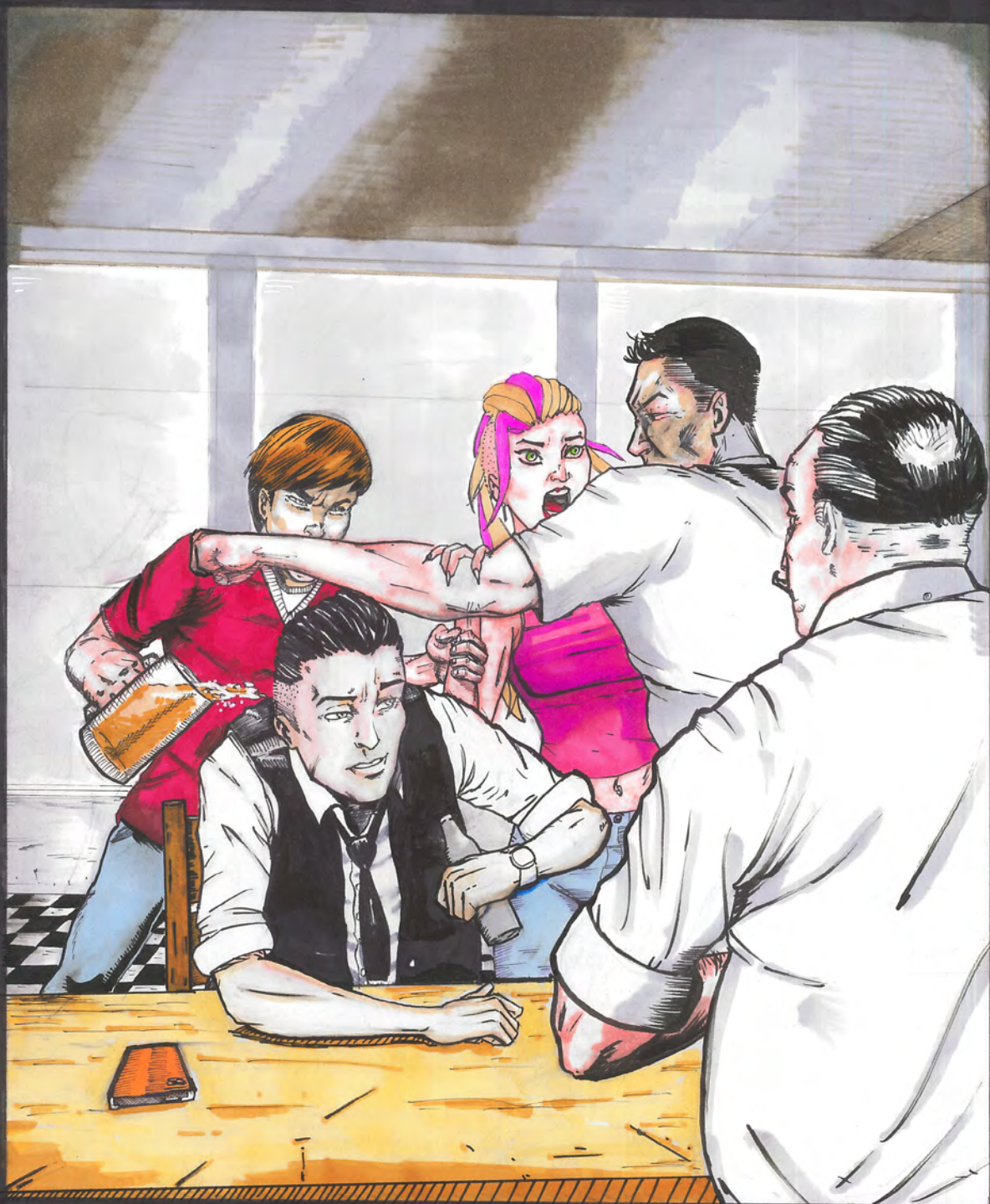
"This is The Amelia Earhart Presidential Library and Museum. There *is* a sign." She pointed above her. I stepped back and there it was, emblazoned in bronze letters. I turned, greeted by a large portrait of a serious-looking woman, familiar yet older than I'd ever seen her. On a plaque underneath the letters M, X, C, V, I, and L were arranged in some kind of pattern.

Deep, stabbing prickles ran up my spine into my skull and down my limbs. I backed up slowly.

"Sir, are you alright?"

Continued...

THE UNTEATHERED



UNTETHERED

...Continued

"This isn't... this can't...!"

I saw her picking up her phone. Security? The hospital? The cops? I wasn't willing to risk it.

Back out on the sidewalk, I looked around. The street looked no different than how I'd left it; how could the building have changed? Then I began to see them. Other people, like that couple. Clothes, hair, body mods; all familiar things, but all the patterns and symbols unfamiliar. All somehow *wrong*.

"You okay, buddy?" A man at the counter of a newspaper stand was watching me closely.

"I...don't know. Wait!" I snatched up one of the magazines, staring at the faces of the man and woman on the cover. Underneath was scrolled *The Princess and Queen Talk Their New Charity Venture*. The cover date was last week.

"What the...?"

"Hey, you gonna buy that?"

I threw some money on the counter and dashed off. Back to the pub. That's where this had started. Maybe if I went back, I could fix it.

The bartender's head came up as I burst through the doors. "Everything okay, fella? Did you forget something?"

"Yeah, my sanity. I came in here and things were normal. I go out there and Amelia Earhart was President?" I held up the magazine. "Freddie Mercury and Princess Diana are still alive? I..."

I looked around. The patrons had all changed.

"What do you see?" The bartender asked.

"The people in here. Some in regular clothes, those ones look like they came out of *The Matrix*. Those three are... Vikings? And, Native Americans? I don't even know *what* that couple is. They look... like dinosaurs. And... they all *overlap*."

"Aw, my boy. You're seeing them. I should've realized."

"Realized what?"

"You've become Untethered."

"I don't understand."

"The science guys can explain better, but basically, you're not bound to one dimension anymore, you're part of all of them. At least all the ones that intersect here. That's why you can see everybody, you're part of this Universal Constant now."

"What?"

"So, time-space is thin here. The multiverses insect on this spot. And in a lot of multiverses, there's a pub here. Or a bar, or an inn, or whatever. We call it the Time 'N Space Inn." He chuckled. "Where're you from, kid?"

"Carthage."

"Ah, Punic Confederacy. Should've known. But you're here now, and we'll find something for you. What were you before?"

"Before?" The word had such a finality to it. "I was a banker."

"Well, maybe we can find you something like that. If all else fails, we'll teach you bar. You're one of us now, and we take care of each other. Come on round back, I'll introduce you."

I looked down at the magazine again, then followed him through the 'Employees Only' door.

END



EXTENDED STAY AT THE TIME INN

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EXTENDED STAY AT THE TIME INN

WRITER: BUDDY SCALERA / ARTIST: ANDY SEABERT

I lose track of time. Centuries have blurred together for me. Except for a few all-too-brief interactions with a few creative space travellers, I'm alone up here. Waiting for the world to end.

Humans have long-since fled Earth. If my equipment is correct, they've left this entire galaxy. I haven't seen a flicker of light from colonies on Mars or even Venus. No radio waves, no photon-light trails. Nothing but darkness and the remnants of a 10-year intergalactic war.

The view isn't bad from the Time Inn, my personal space hotel. In continuous low-orbit around Earth, I have a decent view of the planet. My external tech is working, including my telescopes and navigation, so it's not bad.

That this is the third Time Inn space satellite since I started this mission. The first was a claustrophobic death trap with dangerously primitive technology. I'm surprised they even let me launch the damn thing, but I suppose they had no choice. By the year 2047, anyone with enough cash could launch into low orbit. I certainly had enough cash.

When you're immortal, money is easy. You buy a few stocks and some plots of land, hold for a few hundred years, and that's it. Slow, steady wealth that normal humans can't achieve.

Of the 10 original immortals, only five of us survived. I am the only immortal left in this galaxy, which may or may not make me the last living immortal. As long as I am not struck by a fatal blow, I'll live forever.

This is my gift and my curse.

The original idea was to just stay on Earth until the eventual—and inevitable—end of the planet. Eventually, Earth will die, and someone should be there to witness it. When we learned in 2035 that the Earth was—like all of the planets—a living thing, we also discovered that it was dying. Like, really, honestly, truly, can't-believe-it, dying.

We focused on getting to Mars, Venus, and then out of the galaxy. It turned out to be easier than we'd expected. We finally got all of the countries to work together on the technology to get us off the Earth. That was nice.

For a while there, it was fun making light jumps between planets. After a while, it became obvious that we needed to get out of the galaxy, since “the end is nigh...” as they say.

The immortals agreed that one of us would stay behind to bear witness to the end of the Earth. I volunteered to stay behind.

As life on Earth declined, it became obvious that I was not going to be comfortable on any of the drowning continents. The endless storms and boiling oceans made it...how do I describe it...uncomfortable. Hot, wet, and uncomfortable.

I bought the first Time Inn satellite, launched into orbit, and waited.

Fortunately, (I can't say enough how lucky I was) my fellow immortals returned not once, but twice with upgraded satellites. The original Time Inn had long since fallen into disrepair. The second was much better, but small. This one will see me to the end.

Questions? No, I don't need to eat or drink. I feel some hunger and thirst sometimes, but that passes fast. To be honest, I miss eating, even if I don't actually need it to survive.

Continued...



EXTENDED STAY AT THE TIME INN

...Continued

Yes, I feel hot and cold. No, I will not die from radiation exposure. A bullet to the head or a knife to the heart? Yes. Those would kill me, and have killed a few of my immortal brothers and sisters.

I wonder about the remaining immortals. Did they survive? Are they also staked out as final witnesses to something? Is someone just outside the edges of this galaxy waiting for it to end? I wish they had left me better communications equipment.

The Earth boils and burps far below me. I have nothing for documentation, other than my own memory. I count time in centuries, and watch as this poor, round creature slowly wheezes toward death.

I keep a cursory watch on the other planets, as well as the sun. They interest me less, but provide for an occasional light show. Earth is my mission, so I will remain focused.

Earth will die and I will bear witness.

You know what I miss? Music. My music players have long since disintegrated. I would prefer a single song over a complete meal.

Other than the patter of space junk and solar storms on my ship, there's not much to listen to. I can't even make music anymore, since my instruments have also fallen to pieces. Glue, rubber, and plastic seem to last a long time compared to a typical lifetime, but to me, nothing lasts long enough.

Eventually I will leave. But humanity owes the Earth too much to leave now. Earth is dying. I am here to hold its hand.

I've committed myself to this mission. I will bear witness to the death of the Earth. It does not know I am here. I am small and insignificant to a living planet.

I will bear witness to the end of the Earth. Then I will do something else. Go somewhere. Maybe even listen to music again.

Until then, I wait.

END





SPACE TIME CONTINUUM

ST CONTINUINN

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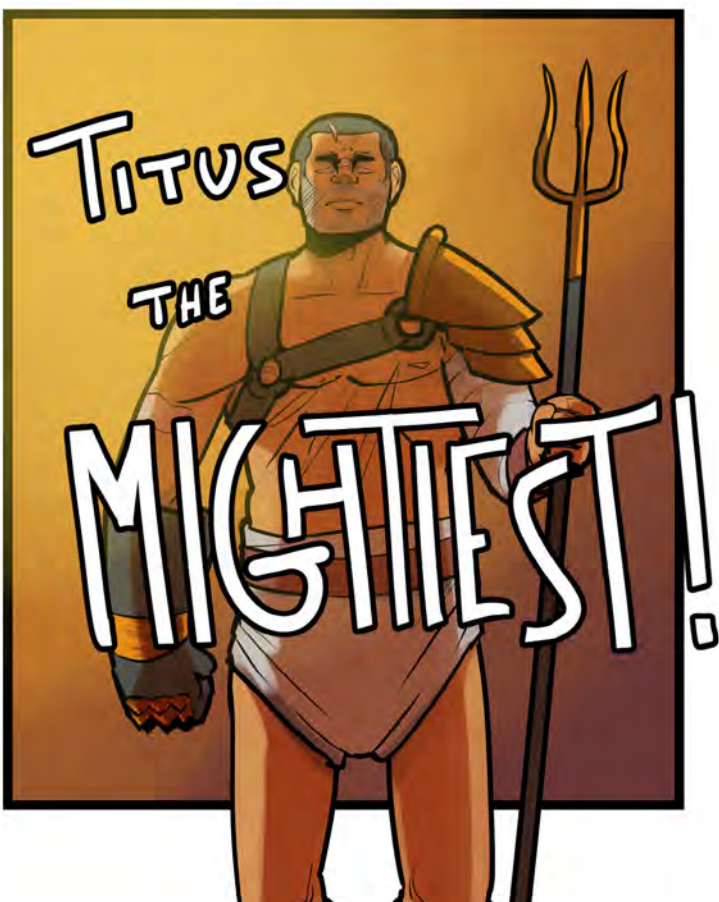
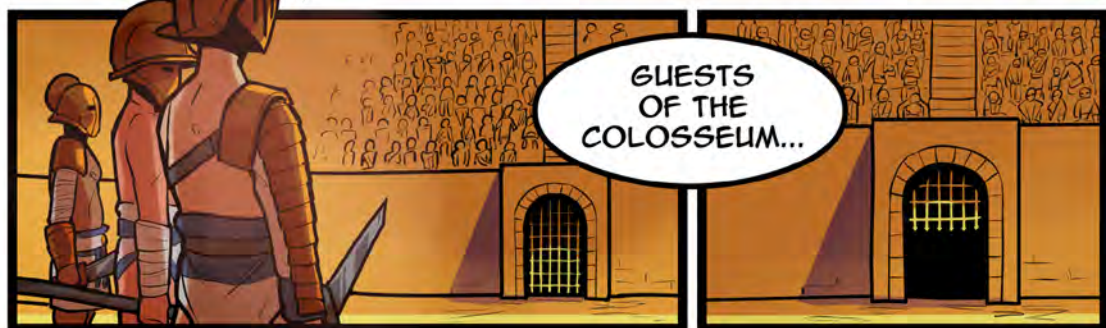
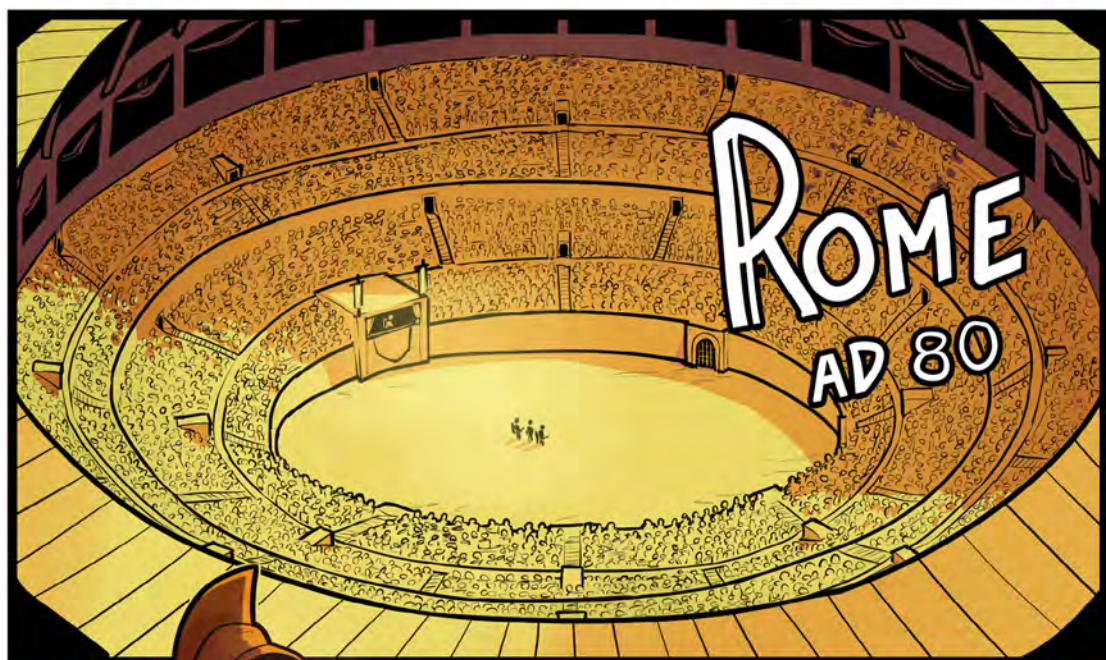
Facebook: [@george.dawkins.10](#)

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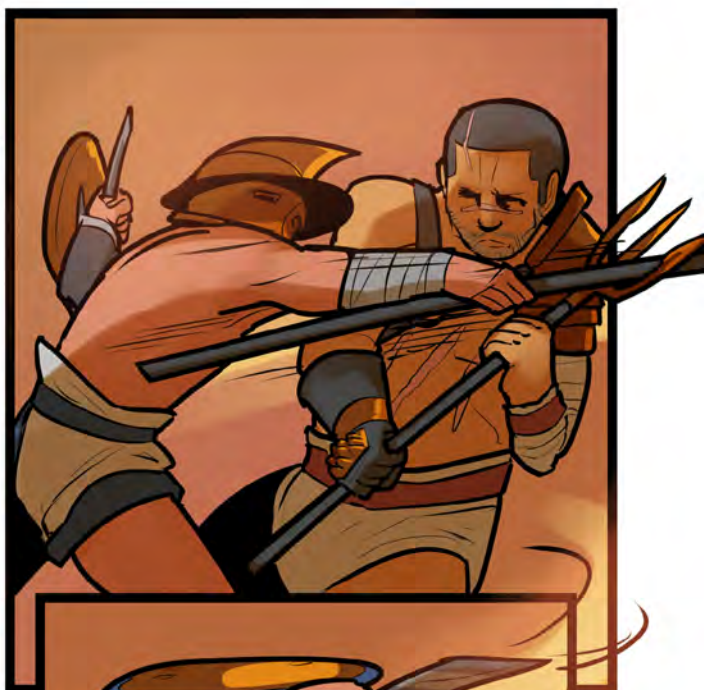
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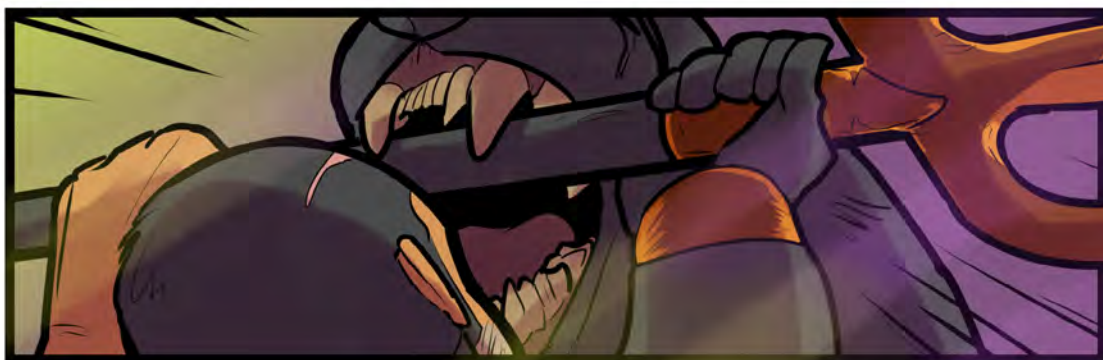
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GOAT FEET

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**Student of Lipe Diaz's Studio and School of Visual Arts*

GOAT FEET

WRITER: CHRISTOFF RDGZ / ARTIST: JULIA PORTO

I still remember the night I met with old man Duncan Macnab. I had been waiting for about two hours, sitting at my usual spot in The Time Inn, indisputably the most iconic and underrated pub in the whole city.

As a regular, I was frequently granted permission to stay a little after closing, and that, mixed with the best pints in town and incredible live music, made this my favorite place for interviews. But it was getting late, and I was starting to feel nervous.

My job was at stake since my boss told me I was losing readers. It's no easy task at all to keep everybody's attention at a paranormal stuff magazine week after week, you know. I knew I couldn't save myself again with a last minute story about UFO sightings and weird lights in the sky. I would need something special to deliver this time, something...unusual.

You need to connect with the audience at a personal level, they say.

But it's not just that, trust me. You need to sound believable. It's a matter of confidence in the end, you know. And there's nothing better than a good testimony to back a crazy story.

So, after a bunch of phone calls and collected favors, the name of old Macnab popped out.

Honestly, I can't remember who told me about crazy old Macnab, a retired academic Scotsman with a melodic accent, known for his travels around the globe—an old-fashioned adventurer, with a lot to tell.

You'll see, after the third pint, Duncan will start talking more and more and I guarantee you, some of his stories are remarkable! I recall somebody saying.

It was just after the bartender screamed for everybody to finish their drinks when the old man appeared. We only had twenty minutes—maybe less—to talk. I thought it was his way to limit the questions and create a sort of mysterious atmosphere around himself, you know. I was in no position to complain, anyway, I had contacted him just a few hours before, and he agreed to meet without any conditions. He was a quick drinker, so I didn't need to wait too long for him to start getting into the matter.

At the very beginning, it was a bit hard for me to follow his words, but after a while I started to get used to his accent and felt totally hypnotized by his jokes and anecdotes.

Suddenly, he changed his tone drastically, stopped, and looked at me very seriously with a look in his eyes that could freeze blood.

"Would you like to hear the story about how my brother and I had an encounter with a Goat Feet?" he asked.

I looked at him trying to figure out if it was another of his jokes, but I didn't have the time to think about it because he started to speak.

"You'll see, young man, what I am going to tell you is the truth and nothing but the truth," he said.

After a long drink he started talking about how he and his brother took a long trip to South America, about how much they wanted to visit The Patagonia and The Land of Fire, and how they managed to travel knowing just a few words in Spanish, using almost no maps.

"It was the early seventies, you know," he said.

I was a bit sleepy and my attention was slipping when his tale became more interesting. I quickly jumped back to it the moment he mentioned Jules Verne and how both of them wanted to reach San Juan De Salvamento's lighthouse—The Lighthouse at The End of The World—it sounded fascinating.

Continued...



GOAT FEET

...Continued

He continued the tale saying that before they could cross to The Land of Fire, they got lost in the middle of nowhere. It was just a straight, narrow muddy road. It was the middle of the night and there was some fog. It was mid September, close to Springtime but still cold, and there was snow all over the place.

"We lost track of our own steps, my boy, and we needed to stop for a while to recover our legs. So, there we were sitting over a flat rock at one side of the road, when we saw her," he said.

"You saw who?"

"The nun," he said.

I was hooked by his tale so I heavily tipped the bartender and ordered another round.

"Yes, my new friend, a nun; she came out of nowhere. We couldn't determine her exact age because she was under a heavy hood and wearing a long cassock. She asked what we were doing there.

"'Andan perdidos?' [Are you lost?] she asked.

"Lost was one of those words in Spanish my brother knew well, so he nodded and the nun offered us shelter for the night at the cloistered convent.

"'No se sabe qué puede andar por ahí,'

[Nobody knows what could be around] she said.

"I was too tired to say anything, so I started following my brother who was just behind the nun. I noticed we were undoing our steps, but I assumed she would know the area better. Thing is that I started to feel uncomfortable, you know. A freezing chill was traveling through my entire body. Something was definitely not right."

I might have thought the old man was adding some extra drama to the mix, but the way he was shaking while grabbing the glass made me change my mind.

"Don't ask me how, but a thin beam of moonlight illuminated the three of us and showed one of her feet shyly peeking out from her cassock. It was a goat's one! I swear I couldn't even think; I grabbed my brother by the shoulder, and we ran like hell was claiming our souls! Sometimes I can still hear her sharp laugh, you know," he said.

After walking Duncan to a taxi, I ran home to start writing the story. It was the beginning of a prolific relationship since it was not the only story that crazy Macnab told me.

END



CONSEQUENCES OF JOURNALISM AND THE CHANGING TIMES

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**Student of Lipe Diaz's Studio and School of Visual Arts*

CONSEQUENCES OF JOURNALISM AND THE CHANGING TIMES

WRITER: GLEN T. GOTTILLA / ARTIST: JULIO SERGIO MACHADO

It was once called the Lil' Ale' Inn, but now it is called the Time Inn. This happened because the new owners loved time travel movies and hated aliens. The regulars knew this, but no one else cared. Noah looked at the new sign, then entered the dive bar expecting to see UFO nerds, bikers, and desert trash. This was Nevada, after all.

Everyone looked at Noah with shock as he walked slowly, looking for his friend. "Hey Dr. Zayas, over here big guy!" a familiar voice called.

Noah sighed, then looked over at the middle-aged biker who was staring. Noah made eye contact with him and said, "What! You never saw a Sasquatch sigh before?"

The shocked biker replied "Nope."

Noah lifted his hairy arm and said, "Get out of here."

He lumbered to the bar and found his friend. Noah spoke: "Aaron, I thought I told you not to call me that! Would you like it if I called you Elv—"

A thin arm in a yellow jacket reached up, and a hand covered the Sasquatch's mouth. "Don't you dare call me that. I am?c just his clone," Aaron replied.

The bartender, a redheaded, twenty-something, smiled and said "I thought you looked like an Elvis impersonator."

Aaron snapped his head over to her, giving her a good look at his pouty lips, black hair and icy blue eyes. "Clone."

Noah, the Bigfoot, sat next to Aaron and introduced himself: "Sorry, my friend is sensitive. He is, in fact, the clone of Elvis Presley, and I am Bigfoot."

He held a hand out to the bartender. "Pleasure to meet you."

"Jane, here. Would you like a drink?"

Jane tried to shake Noah's hand. It was much bigger than hers. "No. Well, not yet," Noah replied. "We're waiting for a friend."

"Who?" Jane inquired, secretly hoping to see the Loch Ness Monster try and squeeze into the bar. It would make one hell of a Bar picture: an orange haired Sasquatch, a clone of the hot Elvis, and a Plesiosaur. She had a tattoo of it on her back, which she could show Nessie.

"Barry, he was also known as the Wombat kid," Noah said.

"Kid my ass," Aaron interjected. "He's 32."

A four-foot-tall round figure wearing jeans and hoodie walked up to Aaron and pushed him into the bar.

"Why do you have to be such a jerk Aaron?" the figure asked in a whiny tone.

"Easy buddy, I am teasing," Aaron replied.

The figure flipped back its hood to reveal a face that was a perfect combination of a bear and groundhog.

"You must be the Wombat Kid," Jane said, with amusement in her voice.

"Please, call me Barry," said the Wombat Kid as he handed her his license. "Beer please."

Jane looked at his I.D., "Wow, you are 32."

"Wombat Man, makes me sound like a superhero." He patted his stomach then confessed, "and I am not built like one."

"Don't be so hard on yourself. You're pretty cute." Jane returned his license.

"See Aaron, I am pretty cute!" Barry boasted as Jane went to get Barry's beer.

"So why are you guys all here?" Jane finished up pouring Barry's beer. "Because this feels like a bad joke."

Continued...



CONSEQUENCES OF JOURNALISM AND THE CHANGING TIMES

...Continued

All three of them gave her the annoyed side eye. If this was a joke, none of them found it funny. Jane gave Barry his beer then said, "Or not"

Noah looked at the bartender. "The Truth is we were each, at one point, the biggest tabloid stars on Earth—"

"—And then we weren't, and now it sucks," Barry finished.

Aaron chimed in with "Me and Noah over here hated it, we got no peace. Barry, on the other hand, loved it."

"It's been a decade since we last graced the covers of those rags, and we want to know why," Noah continued.

Jane looked at them and then asked, "What will that accomplish?"

"Someone to blame and sue for the royalties," Aaron said. "And now we have a name: J. Nolan Kirkland. He was the 'journalist' who stalked us all."

"We heard he haunts this place and we are here waiting for him," Barry said as he slammed the glass on the bar.

"'Haunts,' funny word guys," said a sullen-looking middle-aged man with pale skin, brown eyes, and graying mustache.

The trio looked at him. Aaron said, "It's him!"

A bald, middle-aged man with a thick mustache and cheap, plaid leisure suit stood next to them; It was Jonah Nolan Kirkland.

Kirkland shrugged his shoulders and said, "Yeah it's me, and sorry I stalked you guys. I should have contacted you and made things legal. But it won't matter. The tabloid went out of business, and then I had my heart attack"

"I am so sorry," Noah said.

"Hey man I am sorry too," Aaron added.

Barry looked at Kirkland. "Really? I thought they made money off celebrities?"

"No," Kirkland said, sadly. "Haven't you boys heard? Print is dead." He reached for Barry's glass and his hand passed through it. "Yeah, print is dead and so am I."

END



CYANIDE

WARRIORS OF THE APOCALYPSE



**HARD KNOCKS AT
THE GOOD-TIME INN**

CYANIDE: WARRIORS OF THE APOCALYPSE: HARD KNOCKS AT THE GOOD TIME INN

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It started bad enough. Successive global pandemics regressing society. People afraid to leave their homes, afraid of each other, afraid of the invisible. Fear brought division, shattering families and communities.



Global trade screeched to a halt. Failed supply chains led to famine, food rioting, and civil disruption. The poorest, as always, suffered the most. Starvation became the number one cause of death in a nation that had once sang of its "amber waves of grain."

Desperate to control the chaos, administrations became increasingly authoritarian, promising a return to prosperity if only the right rules were followed. Tyranny led inexorably to factionalism, insurrection and war.



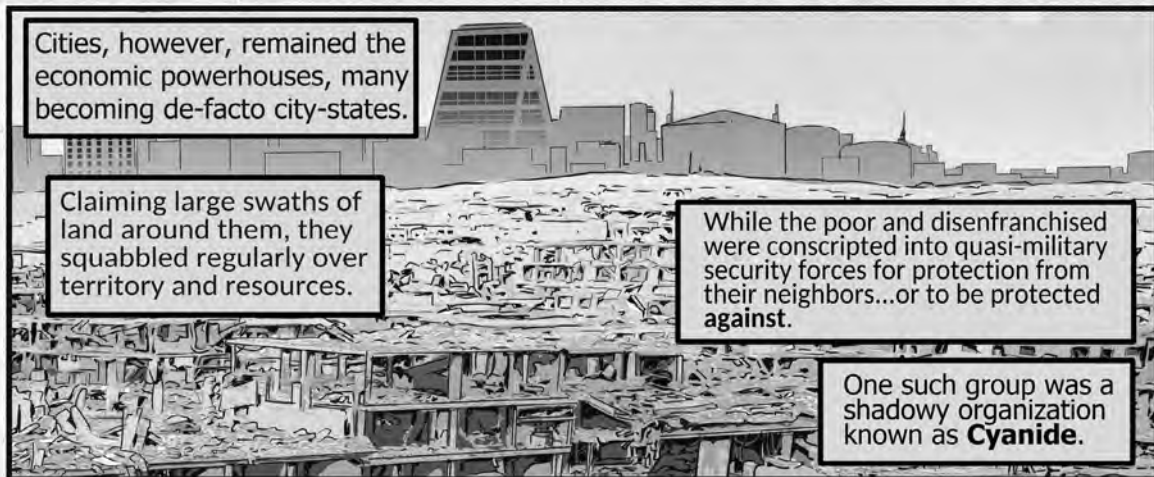
Between crushing national debt and a crippled economy, the United States government was forced to declare bankruptcy, collapsing with a wimper, not a roar. The resulting wars would be fought over resources, not ideology.

Cities, however, remained the economic powerhouses, many becoming de-facto city-states.

Claiming large swaths of land around them, they squabbled regularly over territory and resources.

While the poor and disenfranchised were conscripted into quasi-military security forces for protection from their neighbors...or to be protected against.

One such group was a shadowy organization known as **Cyanide**.



Steelhawk's
Journal:

WEASEL, WHERE'D
YOU EVEN PICK UP
THIS JALOPY?

We received word that a research scientist,
Dr. Victor Lazlo, was abducted from his
lab this morning by serious-looking mercs.

We got lucky
for once.
They were
spotted by
one of our
own assets.

WILD WILCOX. HE SHOULD
TALK TO HIS BOYS ABOUT WHERE
THEY STASH THEIR **KEYS**.

The intel stated that he was being
held in a safehouse just inside
the scavlands awaiting extraction.

WE AREN'T SURE WHO'S ON-SITE,
SO WE'RE KEEPING IT NON-LETHAL.

HEADBANGER, WHAT ARE
YOU SO HAPPY ABOUT?

I'M JUST HAPPY
WE'RE DOING
SOMETHING
POSSIBLE FOR
ONCE! HA! HA!

YOU KNOW YOUR JOBS.
LET'S MAKE IT HAPPEN.

CHECKPOINT SIERRA.

HOME, SWEET HOME.

Since time was short, we were
pulled off our training cycle
to retrieve the local asset.



The safehouse was a motel that had seen better days.



As a temporary hideout, guards were few...



But the security was high-end.

WELCOME, DR. LAZLO. DON'T MIND THE DECOR, BEGGARS CAN'T BE CHOOSERS.

IN CASE ESCAPE CROSSED YOUR MIND, THAT EDD* WILL POP YOUR HEAD LIKE A ZIT AND WE WON'T EVEN HAVE TO DODGE TEETH.

SO IF THE UNPLEASANT PART OF OUR DISCUSSION IS DONE, TIME IS LIMITED UNTIL WE ARE PICKED UP.

*ESCAPE DETERRENCE DEVICE

The local warlord lets them operate here for a weekly stipend.

SO WHY DON'T YOU BE A GOOD LITTLE BOY AND SING FOR ME...



BEFORE MY FINGER STARTS TO TWITCH?



We're a mixed group. Misfits who don't fit in with regular units.

ALMOST IN POSITION.



CHECKPOINT TANGO.

And we would have limited time to execute.



WE HAVE THE DRONES.
LOOPING FEED NOW.



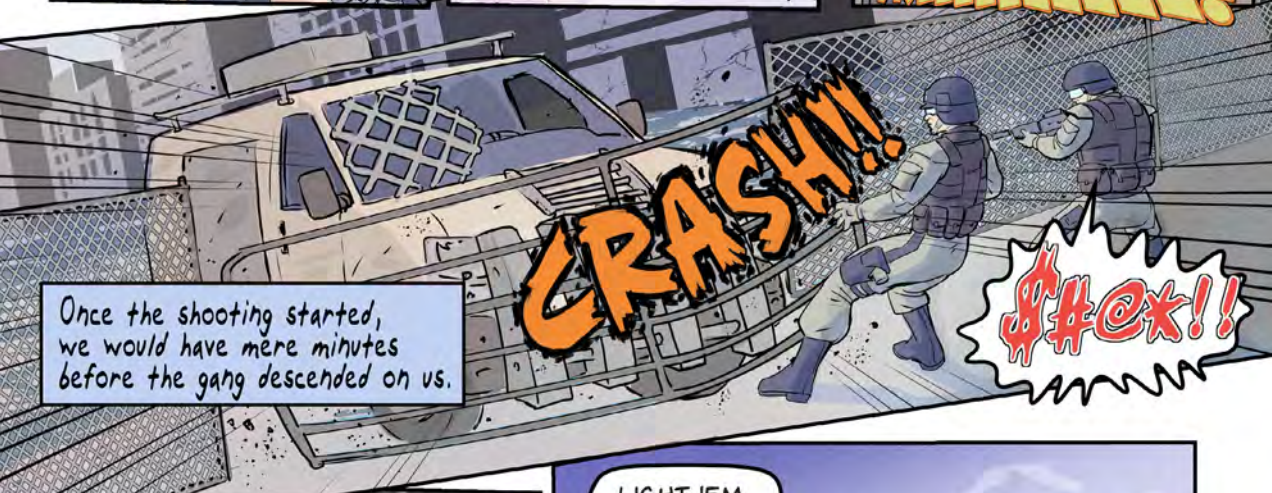
"DRONES ARE OURS.
WEASEL, YOU ARE
CLEAR FOR ENTRY."



HEY, ISN'T THAT ONE
OF WILCOX'S VANS?

I THOUGHT
WE PAID
HIM ALREADY.

WEEEEEEEEEE!



Once the shooting started,
we would have mere minutes
before the gang descended on us.

#\$@x!!



ARE YOU CRAZY?
TRY TO RUN MY ASS OVER???



LIGHT 'EM
UP, CARL!



Silencer and 45 were on point.
Nonlethal weapons to keep the
long-range vital alerts from spiking.

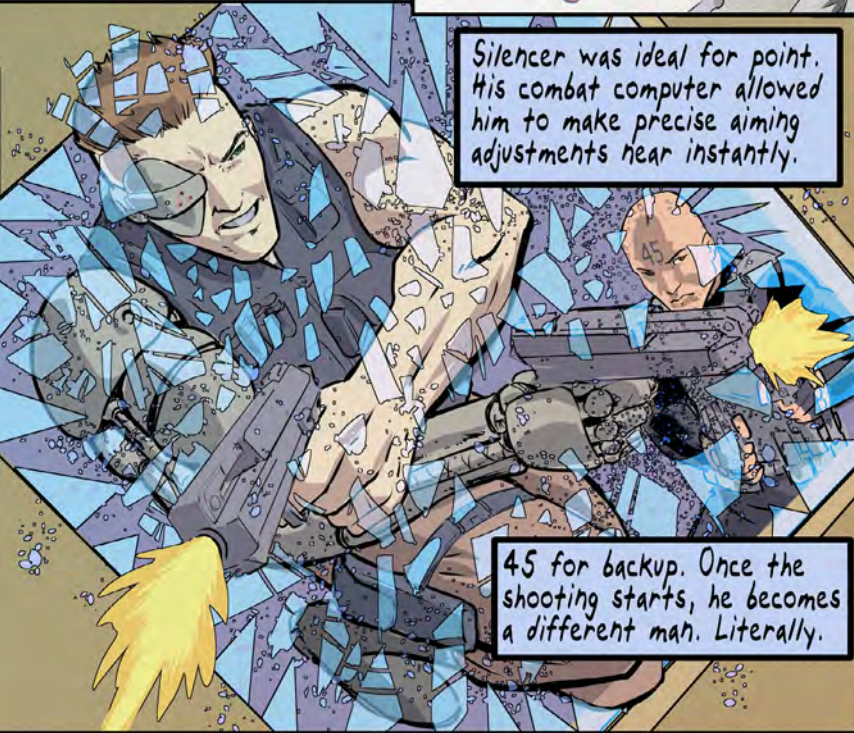
NOT TODAY,
BOYS.

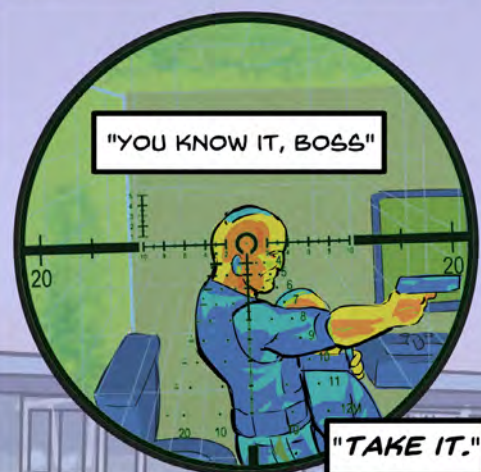
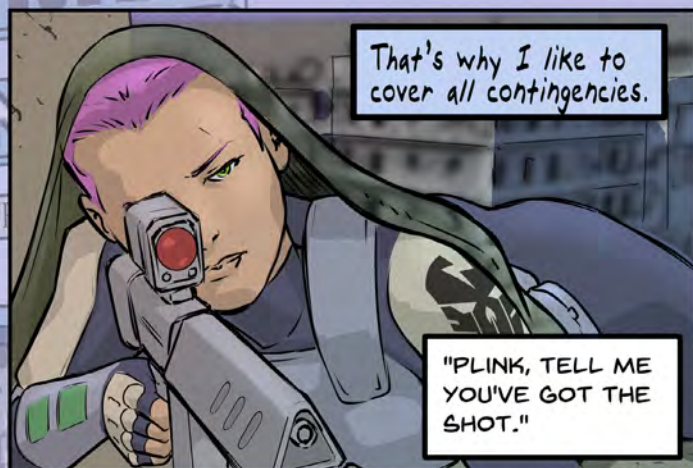
ZAP



As long as we moved fast
enough, we could end this
before reinforcements arrived.

BREACHER UP!





Shooting through walls is tricky. Plenty can go wrong, and the change in trajectory can turn an easy hit to a messy miss.



Not for Plinkerbell though.

The whole operation took maybe a minute and a half.

GET ANY INTEL YOU CAN AND GRAB THE DOCTOR SO WE CAN EXTRACT.

WHAT DO WE HAVE *HERE*?

OHMYGODOHMYGOD

I'M NOT SURE THE DOCTOR'S EXTRACTION WAS ENTIRELY INVOLUNTARY. THESE ARE FULL TECHNICAL FILES.

JOHN, HE MIGHT BE A **TRAITOR**!

But something always goes wrong. It's a lousy rule, but still the rule.





NO!



And the intel you don't have is the thing that gets people killed.

I'll never escape them now...



FUMP!



BOSS, IT'S TIME TO GO! I HAVE PLINKERBELL WITH ME AND TECHNICALS INBOUND!



"AND THEY DON'T LOOK HAPPY."



EVERYONE TO THE VAN! PLINK! ON ME IN CASE OF A HOT EXTRACT. MOVE IT!

Final assessment: Package KIA, but we retrieved valuable intel backtracking a high-level defector.

All in all, not the worst day we've ever had.

FIN

THERE ARE NO GHOSTS HERE, ONLY MEMORIES

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THERE ARE NO GHOSTS HERE, ONLY MEMORIES

WRITER: A. A. RUBIN / ARTIST: JOEL JACOB BARKER

Before I begin my rounds, I open the locket I wear around my neck. I look at the picture of my son, a moment stuck in time, a memory trapped in amber. I give him a kiss and hope he can feel it, wherever he is.

I am a chambermaid at The Time Inn—the ninth wonder of the modern world—where our patrons vacation not in space, but in time. People come here to revisit their pasts and to escape their present, to research their roots, and to fulfill their fantasies. It is somewhere you can go to escape, to spend a night or two somewhen else. Our guests often have trouble deciding which room to experience. Those of us who work here experience them all, every day.

I push my cart through the door of room 1924, careful not to let it slide across the marble floor. The stone is durable, but if I lose control, it might damage the molded lambris below the sculpted stucco bass relief, or knock one of the ornate, Tiffany torch lamps into the alcove which houses the silk-upholstered couch. I dust the crevices in the sculpted wooden plinth and wipe down the columns. I pick my tip up off the ornate side table and laugh as I read the thank you note which accompanies it. It is signed, “Gatsby.”

Stay away from the pool, I think, as I run my hand over the gilded moldings on my way out of the room.

It is the eve of the revolution, and I pick up a wayward tricorne from the plank-board floor of room 1776. A scholar stayed here last night, you can always tell by the small anachronisms. The papers scattered about the room are printed on a modern computer, not yellowed with age, and the dirty glass left on the desk smells of scotch, not rum.

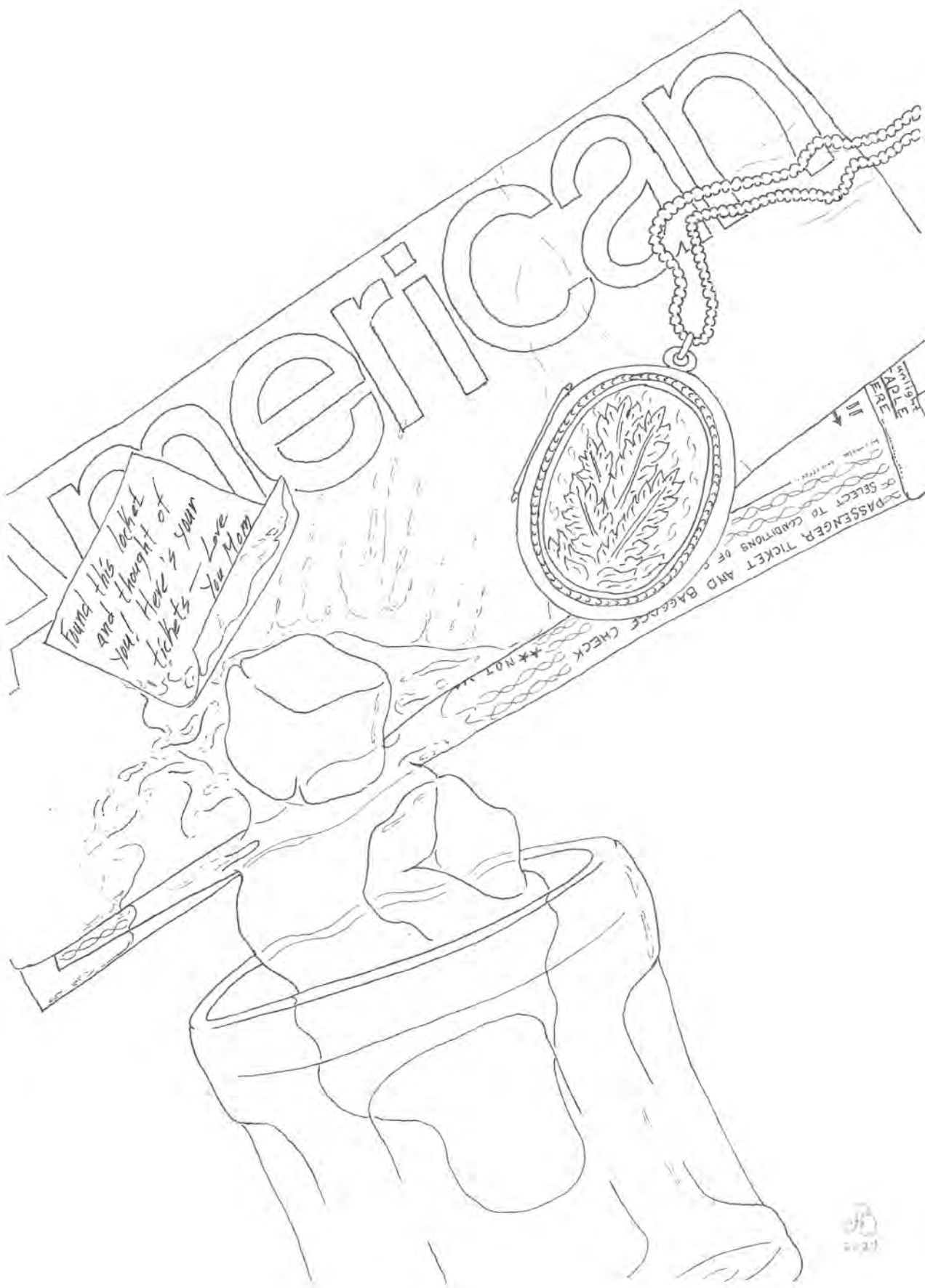
I collect the glass in my cart to return to housekeeping, but am careful not to disturb the scattered documents. I’ve learned from bitter experience, that despite my inclination to straighten the place up, scholars hate it when you move their stuff.

The fetishists, on the other hand, are exact in every detail. As I enter room 1845, I see the remnants of torn petticoats, blue velvet brocade, and broken shards of whalebone strewn across the floor. It seems a shame to have gotten all gussied up, only to ruin it by tearing it off in a night of ribald debauchery. I hope she found the effort worthwhile.

Room 1969 is one of the most popular rooms in the hotel. It is difficult to push the cart because of the thick, bright green carpet. I dust off the Janis Joplin record they’ve left on the record player, and dump the stubs of marijuana cigarettes from the ashtrays. Most nights, we get boomers who want to relive the Summer of Love, except for July 20th, which is booked solid for the next fifteen years by enthusiasts who want to watch the moon landing on live TV.

The trashcan in room 1992 is filled with tissues stained with tears and mascara. A dog tag lies on the floor next to the nightstand. I pick it up and replace it next to the clock radio. I see variations on this theme many times a day—1971, 1812, 1415, 490 BCE.

Continued...



THERE ARE NO GHOSTS HERE, ONLY MEMORIES

...Continued

The year changes; the grief remains the same. I wonder whether a mother or a widow stayed here last night. Without thinking, I touch the locket that hangs around my neck. There are no ghosts here, only memories.

One time, a guest left my tip in Spanish Galleons. Normally, it's annoying when customers tip in ancient currency. It's a pain to change into contemporary cash. Not many banks will do it, and those that do charge exorbitant fees. Not this time though. Those coins were pure gold. They would have made a nice college fund or nest egg. If only...

Room 1976 features a picture-sized bay window. I pause in the middle of vacuuming the shag carpeting and part the curtains to look out on the bell-bottom-clad pedestrians who move up and down the street. I wonder what would happen if I opened it and walked out. How far does the magic go?

There is one final room before I complete my rounds. I always save it for last. It is one of our cheaper rooms, one of relatively recent vintage. The décor is nearly contemporary, but if you know what you're looking for—or if, like me, you had time for extended looking—you'd notice subtle differences in the color choices, the shape of the desktop computer, and the style worn by the ghosts who flicker across the flatscreen TV.

I stick my head out the door, and look up and down the hall to make sure nobody is watching, then flip the placard which hangs on the doorknob to the side that reads, "Do Not Disturb."

I take my shoes off, sit on the bed, reach inside my blouse, and pull out the locket. I open it and stare at that picture, at that moment trapped in amber.

I cry until my tears run dry. Only then do I pick up the phone and dial his number.

END



RILEY'S JOURNEY

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RILEY'S JOURNEY

WRITER: KEVIN PEI / ARTIST: ARIELLE LUPKIN

"Oooh, look, there's a show happening at the Academy Inn!" Charlotte exclaims at Riley and Violet while staring at an ad in the inn lounge for the Claremont Riding Academy. The poster is for a local horse show which offers both English and Western equitation. "All three of us should enter, they have both disciplines, there's something for all of us!"

Violet inspects the advertisement, "But the poster doesn't say where the show is." Reacting hastily, Riley turns toward the lounge for attention, "Does anyone know when the show is?"

Charlotte points at the poster, "Not sure, but there is a phone number, maybe we can look it up? We need to let them know by the end of the day today."

The rest of the day flies by as the three friends fulfill their chores around the barn. Riley, however, has a familiar pit forming in his gut. Trying not to let himself be too distracted, he decides to take Forrest, his horse, out for a hack. He hasn't ridden Forrest in a while and he decides that getting in the saddle is a good way to clear his mind. While trotting around aimlessly, the feeling of unease settles firmly within Riley.

Charlotte pulls up next to Riley on her horse. "You've been out here for an hour, riding in circles. Blank stare. What's bothering you?"

Riley continues silently. Huffing, Charlotte pulls her ride in front of Riley, locking eyes with him as she cuts him off. He gives in with a sigh. "I chose to be different, okay. I chose to take a path less travelled by...guys."

Charlotte's nose wrinkles in disbelief, "And you chose a sport that is dominated by females. Years ago, so what? Why is this bothering you *now*?" Riley tries to break eye contact but Charlotte doesn't allow it. "Listen, you work at a barn where you often watch top riders and *usually* get to ride with them. You also *own* your own horse which most of them can't even attest to *and* you *teach* riding. You've been doing this for, what, ten years now?"

Riley shrugs. "I was just thinking back to when I first started riding and how much I've grown I guess, thinking about if I fit in."

Charlotte nods, "Well, you've accomplished a lot over the years, despite being a dude. And you've got some great friends who'll keep pushing you to be better. Accept it. It's awesome. You're awesome."

The sun begins to shine on Riley's face, "Thanks Charlie, you're totally right."

Charlotte smirks, "I know."

"Hey peeps!" Violet speeds over to the duo on her own steed. "Listen up, I just got off with the show organizers. It's during spring break so we would have plenty of time to show *and* still be normal teens."

Charlotte pumps her fist. "Well that settles that, we're all entering the show! Right Riley?"

Riley nods, "Yes. Definitely."

Violet looks at the two of them, "Did I miss something?"

"Yeah, just Riley being a dude."

"Yup. Me being a dude."

Violet chuckles "You've *always* been a dude. It's awesome."

"I told him that."

"She did."

All three burst into laughter.

Riley postures himself in the saddle, grips his reins and gives a slight tug on Forrest, "Sweet. Let's sign up and get ready to ride!"

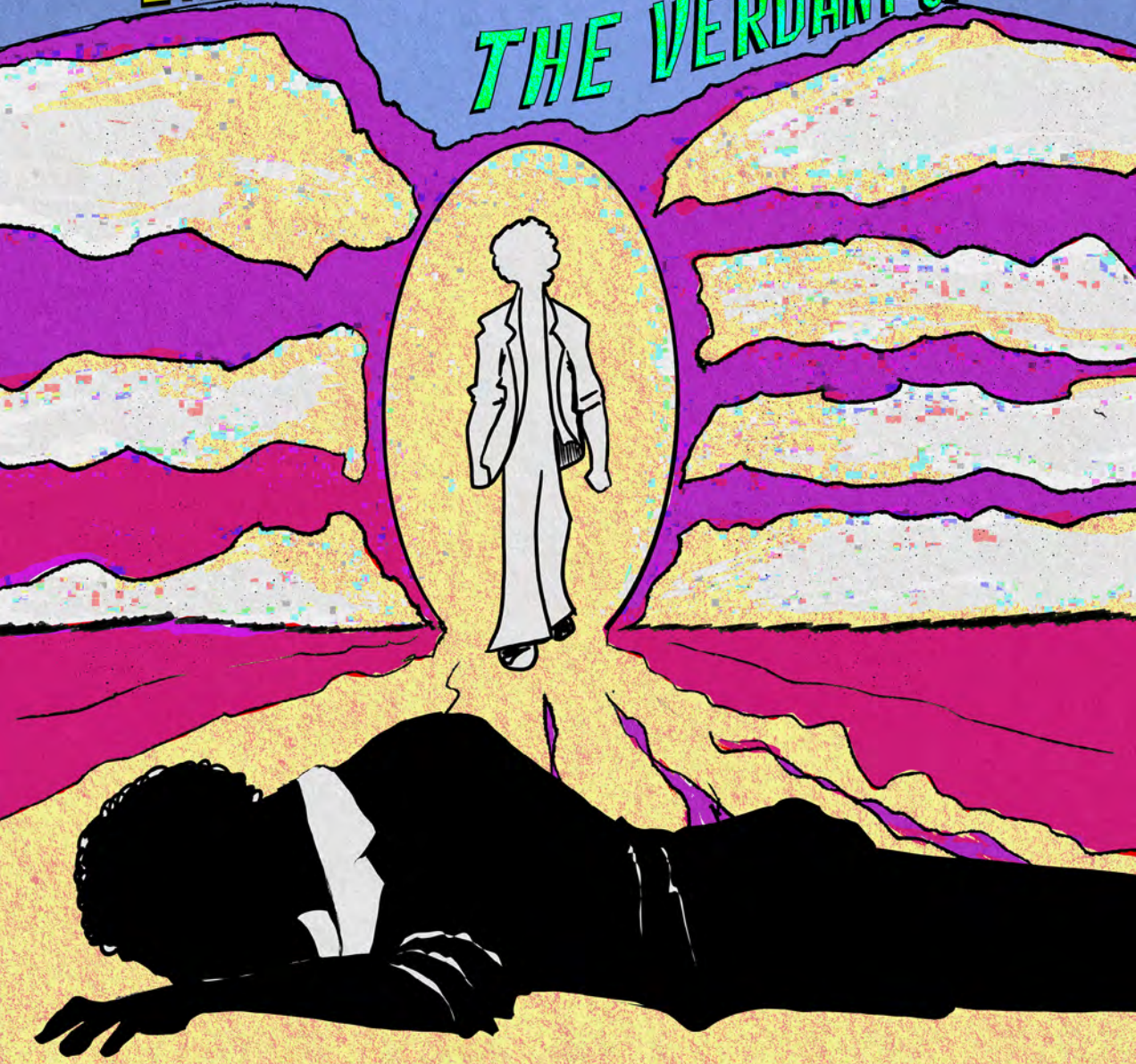
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INTERSTITIAL

THE VERDANT SEEKERS



INTERSTITIAL: THE VERDANT SEEKERS

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NOW...



INSPECTORS!!



OPEN UP!

A FEW WEEKS AGO...

"NATURAL CAUSES."

"HANG ON A SEC."

"OR-- DRUGS."

"DRILLBILT, WOLDER, ANOTHER DROPOUT."

BENNIE AND I ARE INSPECTORS. **MOSTLY**, WE JUST INSPECT DEAD BUMS WHO DIE WITH A PEN IN THEIR ARM FOR **NO GOOD REASON**.

AND-- HOLD ON.

JUST HIT SAVE ARIC.

HMMM, THIS IS WEIRD.

HEY COOL. HE HAD AN OLD YO-YO.

AND **MOST** OF OUR INSPECTING IS TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE PROPERLY RECLAIMED BY **RECYCLING**.

HE'S MISSING A SCAR.

SO WHAT? SURGERY.

IT'S NOT EXACTLY A **SATISFYING** JOB. SOMEHOW BENNIE DOESN'T SEEM TO MIND.

A HOMELESS GUY? GOT SURGERY?

MAYBE?

RECYCLE THE YO-YO.

KEEPING IT.

HALF THE TIME I CROSS ALL THE T'S JUST TO ANNOY HIM.

DROP-OUTS **DON'T** GET RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY. DRILLBILT **KNEW** HE WAS DYING WITH A PEN IN HIS ARM.

SPEAKING OF ARMS--I FOUND SCAR TISSUE IN A **STRANGE** PATTERN ON HIS RIGHT FOREARM, RIGHT OVER HIS I.D.

THE IMPLANT WAS INTACT AND HIS GENOME MATCHED ITS SIG. BUT THE SCAR TISSUE PATTERN LED ME TO THE **OTHERS**--DROP-OUTS WITH SCARRED ARMS AND INEXPLICABLE HEALING, APPARENTLY UNTREATED BY ANY HOSPITAL UNDER THE DOME.



Drillbilt, Wolder.
DECEASED.

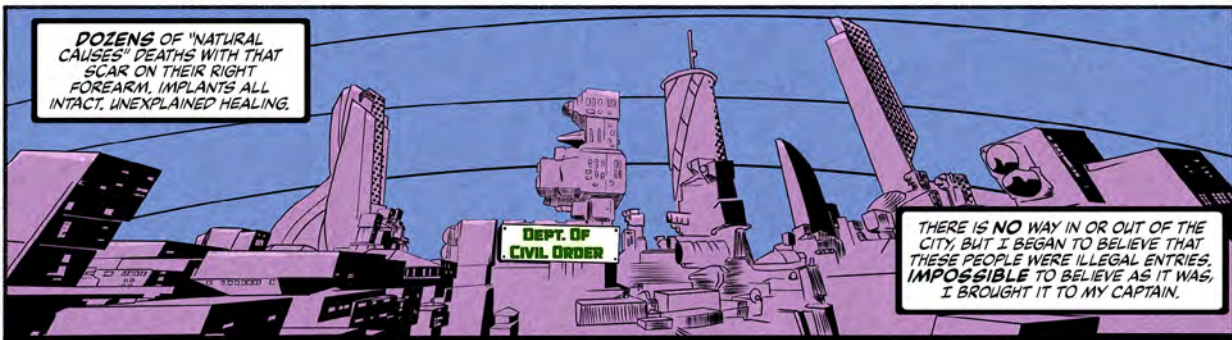
A GUY WHO SUPPOSEDLY LOST A LEG AS A KID, FOUND WITH **TWO** HEALTHY BIOLOGICAL LEGS WHEN HE WAS TAGGED.



A LADY WHO WAS MISSING AN EYE IN HER FILE, YOU **GUESSED** IT, HAD THE EYE WHEN SHE WAS RECYCLED?



DOZENS OF "NATURAL CAUSES" DEATHS WITH THAT SCAR ON THEIR RIGHT FOREARM. IMPLANTS ALL INTACT. UNEXPLAINED HEALING.



THERE IS **NO** WAY IN OR OUT OF THE CITY, BUT I BEGAN TO BELIEVE THAT THESE PEOPLE WERE ILLEGAL ENTRIES. **IMPOSSIBLE** TO BELIEVE AS IT WAS, I BROUGHT IT TO MY CAPTAIN.

"CAP DOESN'T BELIEVE YOU EITHER?"

CAPT. PROGGER

"NOPE"



TOLD ME TO TAKE TIME OFF--

CLEAR MY HEAD.

YOU AIN'T TAKING TIME OFF ARIC.

DON'T SEEM TO HAVE A CHOICE.

YOU HAVE ANY REAL LEADS ON THIS?

A HOTEL, THE TIMELESS. THEY ALL SPENT TIME THERE



I STILL THINK YOU'RE CRAZY--

BUT I'LL CHECK THIS PLACE OUT WITH YOU.

BENNIE **MIGHT** BE A **SHALLOW**, UNCURIOUS BOOZIE WITH NO WORK ETHIC, BUT HE'S NOT **ALL** BAD.



SO WHAT NOW?

FOR WHAT? POP PEOPLE ROOM SERVICE?

HARSH.

WE WAIT.

FUNNY GUY. YOU EVER GET TIRED OF BEING A JOKE?

ME TOO, I'M A JOKE. YOU WEAR THAT DUMB COAT

LIKE AN ANTIQUE COP. WE AREN'T COPS. WE'RE JOKES.

I'VE GOT A GUN.

IT'S A STUNNER. DOESN'T COUNT.

IT SHOOTS. THAT'S REAL ENOUGH.

I LET HIS MEDIOCRITY BOTHER ME MORE THAN IT SHOULD.

I GET IT. EVERYTHING IS **BENEATH** YOU. WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO?

LIFE IS PRETTY EASY. AND IT'S **GOOD**. IF YOU LET IT BE.

LIKE THIS "CASE" -

LET'S **ASSUME** THIS PLACE FOUND A WAY TO COMMIT ILLEGAL ENTRY. WHO **CARES** ANYWAY?

I CARE. IT'S MY JOB.

LATER...

WE WAITED HOURS. I WAS ON THE VERGE OF GIVING UP AS I DOZED OFF. THE LOW HUMMING WAS ALMOST EASY TO MISS. BUT ONCE IT SUNK IN I WAS AWAKE IN AN INSTANT.

THRUMMMM-HUMMMM

BENNIE! WAKE UP!

THE PULL HUM AND BLOOD RED GLOW
PUSHED THE WORLD AWAY FROM ME.

THIS IS WHAT I'D BEEN
LOOKING FOR, I KNEW IT.

AR--
WUS--
GOIN' ON?

NOW...

INSPECTORS!!

REVENGE!

OPEN
UP!

NO!

AND THEN IT ALL STOPS--THE
HUM THE LIGHTS--AND I PANIC.

TURN IT BACK
ON! NOW!

CRASH

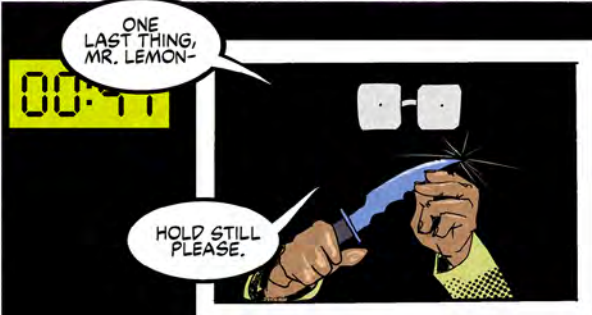
AS I KICK IN THE DOOR I
FEEL SOMETHING GIVE.

SHOW ME
YOUR HANDS!
NOW!

DAMMIT!
WE DON'T HAVE
MUCH TIME!
LEAVE US
ALONE!

LITTLE BY LITTLE, THIS CASE REVEALED
WHO I AM, MORE THAN I WANTED,
EVEN, I DON'T JUST HATE MY JOB, I
HATE EVERYTHING HERE, I NEED TO
STOP THEM IF THEY FOUND A WAY OUT
BECAUSE I'M POISONED WITH ENVY.
I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE LAW. I
JUST WANT REVENGE.





MORNING...

~SNOOORE~

AR! AR!

UGH! STOP
YELLING
BENNIE.

WHAT
HAPPENED IN
204 ?!

FINISH
WAKING UP,
BENNIE.

YOU WERE
YELLING AT
THE COUPLE
AND I WAS--

HAVING QUITE
A NIGHTMARE.

YEAH...

I GUESS.

I'M GONNA
WASH MY
FACE, THEN WE
CAN TAKE
OFF.

SO NOTHING
HAPPENED?

WELL, WE GOT
A GOOD NIGHT'S
SLEEP.

WE'RE DONE
THEN? WITH THE
CASE?

YES
I'M QUITE
SATISFIED
NOW.

FIN.

INNFINITY

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INNFINITY

WRITER: CHRIS DURSTON / ARTIST: FERNANDO CARVALHO

The sight of the first coach over the hill inspired mixed feelings among Innfinity's staff. On the one hand, more business was always good—what's a business *for*, if not to do business? But, on the other, the nature of their business was frequently a logistical nightmare.

Indeed, the foremost bus proved to be only the first of an infinitely long line. Several of the housekeeping staff started stretching in anticipation of the workload to come.

The front door swung open and a chap with the unmistakable smile of a man who arranged bus tours for a living entered the sumptuous foyer.

The receptionist inclined his head. "Welcome to Innfinity."

"Ta...Davey," said the newcomer, peering at the receptionist's badge (which read "David") and plonking a heavy sheaf of papers on the desk. "Guest info," he said, nodding down at the stack. "I'm Nige. Liaison."

David raised a neat eyebrow. "This appears to be finite, sir."

"Got 'em alvl to write really small," said Nige, as if that explained anything. "Go on, then. Always wanted to see the move."

"The...move, sir?"

Nige blinked. "Infinite hotel, infinite guests? The...thing?"

"Oh, I see." David adjusted his tie, which was already perfectly straight. "We no longer move guests in space."

Nige opened his mouth to respond, then closed it again.

"As you know," David went on, obscenely polite, "Innnfinity has infinite rooms.

When every room is occupied by a guest and a new infinitely large group of guests arrives, we—"

"I know this one," Nige butted in. "Shunt all the existing guests to the room that's their current room number times two, so only the even-numbered rooms are occupied, then stick the new lot in the odd ones. 'Cos both of 'em's infinitely big, innit?" He beamed, showing off little strings of saliva connecting his whitened teeth.

"We *used* to do that, sir," said David, "but as I'm sure you can imagine, it was an *awful* lot of hassle to ask an infinite number of guests to move. The guests in lower-numbered rooms tended not to mind too much—number ten would just be down the hall from number five—but the ones required to make some truly staggering journeys were, understandably, unenthralled."

"Makes sense," said Nige, crestfallen. "So you don't do that anymore?"

"We do not."

"Shame. Woulda been funny to watch 'em all bumbling around." Nige sighed.

"What about the one where there's a car in one room and all the others are goats? Still do that one?"

"Different thing entirely, sir."

Nige sighed again, tapping his fingers on the desk. "So if nobody's moving, where're *we* gonna go?"

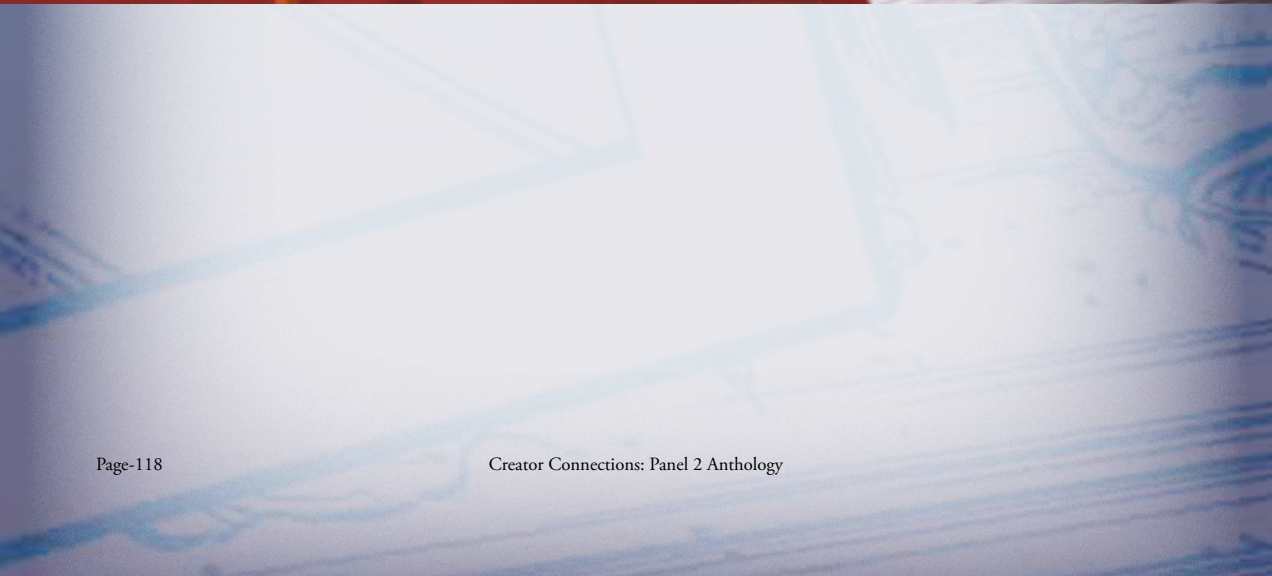
"Well," said David, with the picture-perfect smile of the proud host, "we no longer design hotel experiences in space, but in *time*. Why only use three dimensions when so many more are available?"

Nige's eyebrows crawled down his forehead until his eyes were almost invisible. "Time."

"Indeed. Which is, of course—"

"—an array of skewed cones, yeah," Nige interrupted. "We all know that, Davey, c'mon. Time's wasting." He frowned. "Unless it isn't."

Continued...



INNFINITY

...Continued

"Oh, we *never* waste any times," said David.

Nige nodded as if he understood perfectly, frowning in a way that suggested he wasn't understanding at all. "Look," he said, patting the pile of paper, "been a long journey, so can you just get us all booked in, yeah?"

"Of course, sir." David fed the stack into a contraption resembling a cross between a photocopier, a binding machine, and a bottomless abyss. "It's very finely calculated," he said as the appliance whirled. "Each party's cone is placed such that it never overlaps with any other, providing a bespoke chronological experience for every group with both internal continuity and inter-party discreteness."

"Course," Nige agreed.

"Thus we maintain the singular delight of the Innfinity experience for all who visit," that practiced smile again, "while ensuring the Evertime remains at peace."

"Oh, yeah." Nige cleared his throat. "Obviously *we* all know, Davey, but...maybe best explain again, just in case anyone's listening who hasn't heard of the Alltime somehow."

"Evertime," David corrected, immediately but with precise politeness. "The entity whose time cone contains all others."

"Ah," said Nige, eyebrows on the move again. "That."

"Keeping the Evertime appeased is Innfinity's most vital function," said David, glancing at the paper-processing machine as it finished with a merry click. "Let's see when you've been allocated." He checked a readout crammed with scribbles, then adopted the expression that was universal hospitality code for *we're very sorry but there's a slight issue*. "Well, we've got your destination," he said, "and what are the odds? Well: infinity-to-one."

"Eh?"

"Well, there is a precisely infinity-to-one chance of any given group of guests being assigned any specific location in time, since there are infinite locations. Yours is the most prestigious and exclusive of all: the Evertime!"

"Right," murmured Nige. "Only we were hoping for...maybe a beach or something."

"There may be beaches," said David. "Who knows?"

"Shouldn't *you* know?"

"Oh, this is unprecedented," said David. "We always knew we would one day sacrifice infinite people to the Evertime to keep it eternally at peace. I never thought *I'd* be the one, though, since Innfinity only has to make one infinite sacrifice in all of infinite time." He smiled, then pressed a button.

"Might just go to a normal hotel," muttered Nige, and then the floor of Innfinity's spectacular lounge exploded into asynchronous, anachronistic, unchronometrical catastrophe. In moments that were aeons, the Evertime swallowed the entire contemporaneity before vanishing into untime as if nothing had happened—which, in most ways that mattered, it hadn't.

Elsewhere in Innfinity's timeline, the roster of staff closest to the event—and thus first to be notified—sighed with relief: housekeepers at having one less group to do infinite work for, middle managers at not having been the ones to be obliterated out of temporality, and the financial director at the fact that the party had already paid in full.

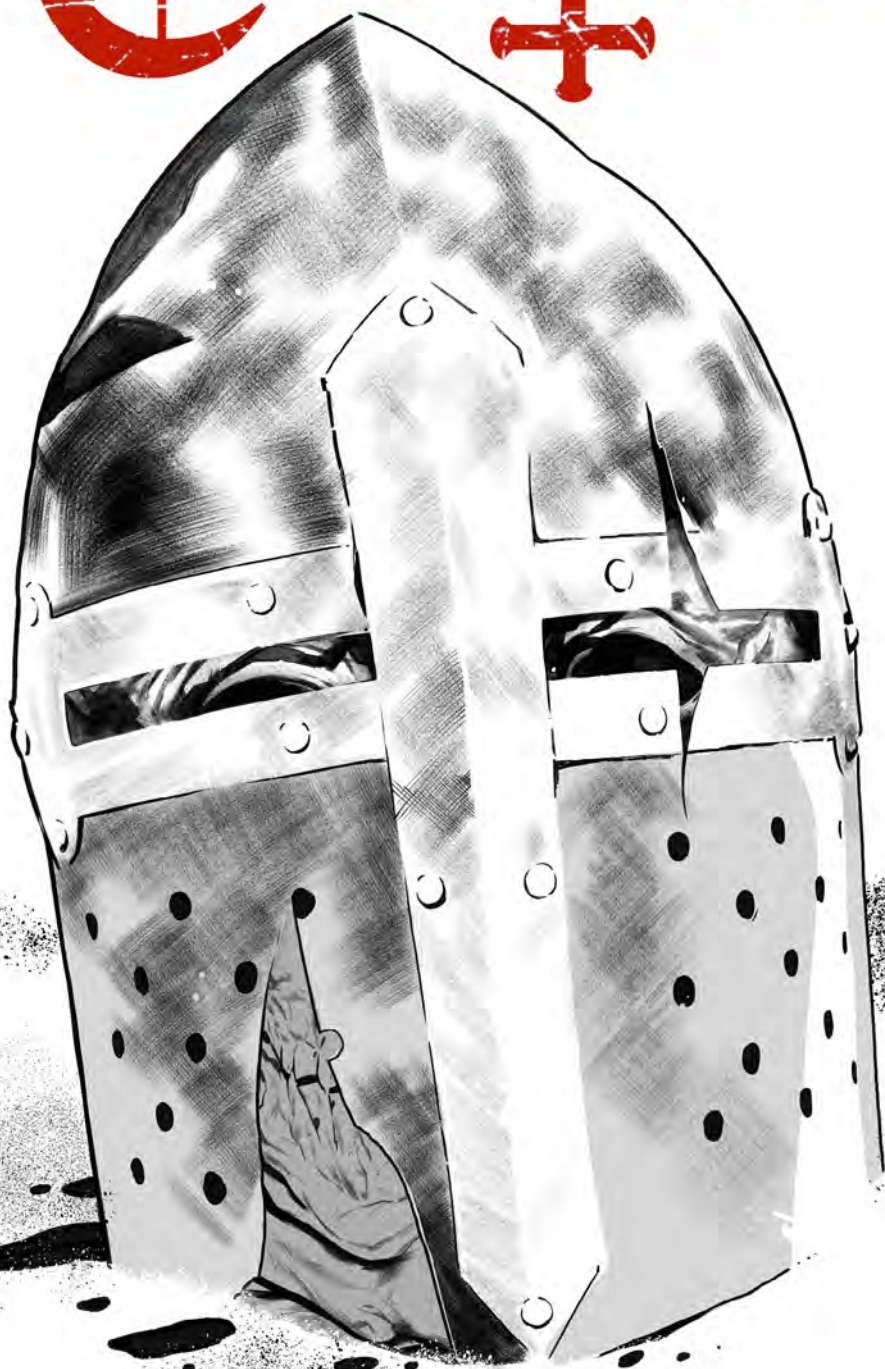
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TALES
BEYOND

HORROR
SHORTS

THE Corrupted



**ASSASSINS
IN A
TAVERN**

THE CORRUPTED: ASSASSINS IN A TAVERN

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1096 C.E.
THE MIDDLE EAST.
THE FIRST CRUSADE.

PHILOSOPHY STARTED WITH A
SIMPLE QUESTION...

WHY?

WHY ARE WE HERE?
WHY DO THINGS HAPPEN?
WHY ARE THINGS THE WAY THEY ARE?

MAN'S ANSWERS BOIL DOWN
TO POINTS OF VIEW. BELIEFS.

IN THE BEGINNING, POLYTHEISM
EXPLAINED EVERYTHING. THERE
WAS A GOD FOR EVERYTHING.

THE SUN.
THE MOON.
THE STARS.

AND THEY GAVE US
EVERYTHING WE KNOW.

THEN SOMEONE ASKED...
'WHY DID THESE GODS DO IT?'

CLINGING TO OUR SUPERSTITIONS, MAN
HELD ON TO THESE GODS, BUT SLOWLY
BEGAN USING SCIENCE TO GIVE REASON
TO THINGS.

WE WERE ACTUALLY MAKING
PROGRESS, MOVING AWAY
FROM GODS AND MONSTERS.

THEN SOME NUTJOB SAID THERE
WAS ONLY ONE GOD AND THAT GOD
SET EVERYTHING INTO MOTION.

TIME AND AGAIN, THOUSANDS OF YEARS
LATER, DESPITE UNDERSTANDING THE ATOM,
EXPLAINING THE STARS, AND EXPLORING THE
MOON... MAN STILL FIGHTS OVER THIS
ARCHAIC CONCEPT.

WE NEED TO EMBRACE SCIENCE.

WE NEED TO ACCEPT THAT
MONSTERS DON'T EXIST.

OR AT LEAST UNDERSTAND THAT
WE ARE OUR OWN MONSTERS.

1272 C.E.
THE LAST MAJOR CRUSADE.

MANY YEARS AGO,
SOMETHING HAPPENED.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS.

NO ONE DOES.

MAYBE IT WAS
PROOF OF GOD.

MAYBE IT WASN'T A POINT
OF VIEW OR A BELIEF, MAYBE
IT WAS THE ANSWER.

THE ANSWER TO "WHY?"

WHATEVER IT WAS, I'VE BEEN RAISED
TO ACCEPT THAT IT HAPPENED.

EVERYONE BROUGHT UP IN THE
ORDER OF EXECUTORS, FOR THE
PAST THOUSAND YEARS, HAS
VOWED TO PROTECT AND DEFEND
THE TRUTH OF WHAT HAPPENED.

BECAUSE WHATEVER IN THE COSMOS
IT WAS, IT WAS JUDGED TOO HORRIFIC
FOR MAN'S REALITY.

IT WAS SO DREADFUL THAT
MEN PURGED IT FROM THE
WORLD'S MEMORY.

ENTIRE CULTURES WERE WIPED OUT, TENS
OF MILLIONS OF LIVES WERE SNUFFED,
KNOWLEDGE DIED, ALL TO HIDE THE TRUTH.

AND MANY MORE CONTINUE TO DIE
BECAUSE WE ARE ZEALOTS AND IT IS
OUR SICK DUTY TO SILENCE ANYONE
WHO SEARCHES FOR WHAT HAPPENED.

DOUBT IN EVEN OUR OWN DEVOTION, IS A DEATH
SENTENCE WE MUST EXECUTE UPON OURSELVES.

WE ARE THE KEEPERS OF A FORGOTTEN
TRUTH, BUT AFTER A THOUSAND YEARS,
WE ARE FINALLY DYING OUT.

THERE ARE SO FEW OF US LEFT, I FEEL
LIKE MY DAUGHTER AND I AM ALONE IN
THIS WORLD, PRIVY TO THE IDEA THAT
MAN FACED A NIGHTMARE AND STUCK
OUR HEAD IN THE SAND AFTERWARD.

BUT WE CONTINUE OUR CHARGE
AND RIGHT NOW OUR MISSION
FACES THE GREATEST THREAT IT'S
ENCOUNTERED IN CENTURIES.

DR. DAVID MICHAELS...

ASSASSINS IN A TAVERN

CREATOR, WRITER
& LETTERER
KRIS BURGOS

PENCILLER
& INKER
ROI

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THE Corrupted



... A MAN WHO
MUST **DIE**.

TODAY.
JERUSALEM.

<THEY SET UP
CAMERAS?>*

<I CAN'T
BELIEVE THIS
DUMP DID
THAT.>

<EVEN DUMPS
LIKE THIS HAVE
TO CHANGE WITH
THE TIMES.>

<WELL THERE
GOES WALKING
UP TO HIM AND
OPENING HIS
THROAT.>

<YOU WEREN'T
GOING TO DO
THAT.>

<NO, I
WASN'T
GOING TO
DO THAT.>

<I'M JUST SAYING... I
LIKE **OPTIONS**, AND
KNIFING THE GUY IS
OFF THE TABLE.>

<AT LEAST IF YOU
WANT TO KEEP A
LOW PROFILE...>

<...WE **ARE**
TRYING TO
KEEP A LOW
PROFILE,
RIGHT?>

ISABEL.

<I KNOW **FATHER**. I'M
ANXIOUS. THE CHURCH
HAS A LOT OF PEOPLE ON
THIS ONE. **AND** THEY'RE
RIGHT ON **TOP** OF IT.>

<ALL THE MORE REASON
TO TREAD **CAREFULLY**.>

<OR WE COULD JUST GO
TO THE SITE AND
SLAUGHTER THEM ALL.
SEND A **MESSAGE**.>

<**EXPOSING THE ORDER** AND
INITIATING OPEN WAR WITH THE
SINGLE LARGEST INSTITUTION OF
OVERPOWERED LUNATICS
ON THE PLANET?>

<THEY DON'T KNOW
WE EXIST. OUR DUTY
IS EASIER IF WE
KEEP IT THAT WAY.>

<PLEASE, DEAR,
YOU'RE BEGINNING
TO SOUND STUPID.>

*TRANSLATED
FROM SPANISH



<WHAT WAS THAT
FRENCHIE'S
NAME? TWO
YEARS AGO.>

<I TOOK HIM
INTO THE
BATHROOM-->

PHILIPPÉ.

<-RIGHT! PHILIPPÉ.>

<I COULD JUST
SEDUCE THIS POOR
AMERICAN AND DO
THE SAME THING.>

<YOU KNOW THOSE TACTICS
MAKE ME UNCOMFORTABLE.
YOU'RE **TRYING** TO MAKE
ME UNCOMFORTABLE.>

<WHY?>

<I'M NOT
STUPID,
FATHER.>

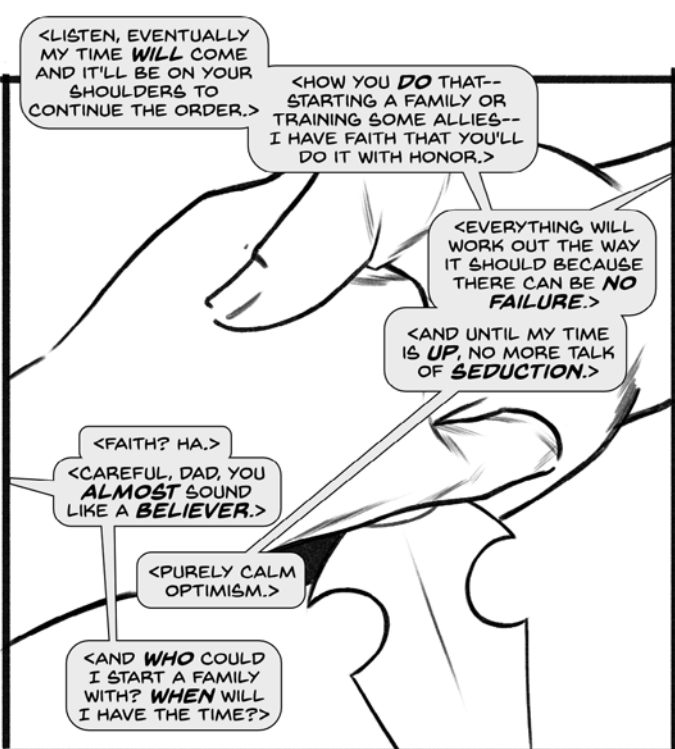
<NO, ISABEL, YOU'RE
NOT STUPID. I'M SORRY.
TALK TO ME. WHAT HAS
YOU RATTLED?>



<THIS IS SERIOUS. THEY'VE **NEVER**
BEEN SO CLOSE. WHAT IF WE FAIL?
WHAT IF WE ATTEMPT THIS AND
SOMETHING HAPPENS TO US?>

<OR TO
YOU?>

<I CAN'T BE
LEFT ALONE.>



<LISTEN, EVENTUALLY
MY TIME **WILL** COME
AND IT'LL BE ON YOUR
SHOULDERS TO
CONTINUE THE ORDER.>

<HOW YOU **DO** THAT--
STARTING A FAMILY OR
TRAINING SOME ALLIES--
I HAVE FAITH THAT YOU'LL
DO IT WITH HONOR.>

<EVERYTHING WILL
WORK OUT THE WAY
IT SHOULD BECAUSE
THERE CAN BE **NO**
FAILURE.>

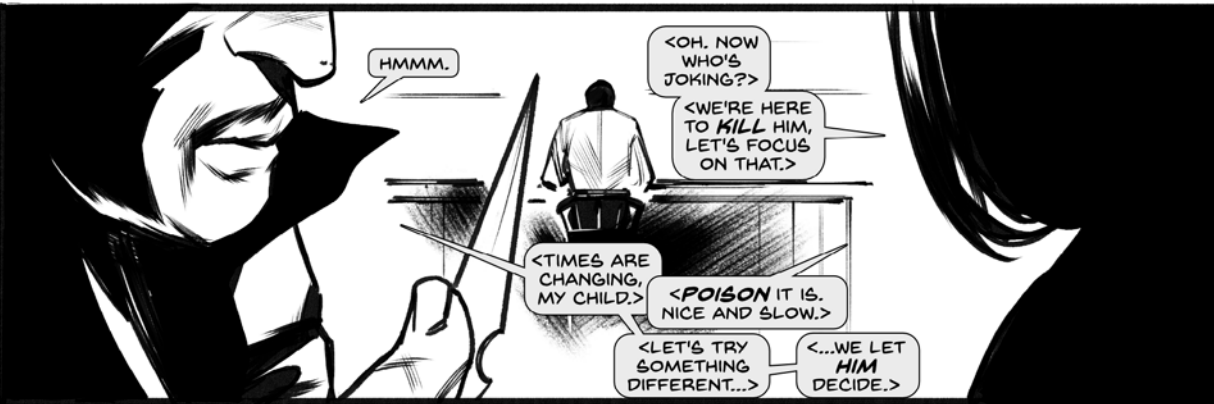
<AND UNTIL MY TIME
IS **UP**, NO MORE TALK
OF **SEDUCTION.**>

<FAITH? HA.>

<CAREFUL, DAD, YOU
ALMOST SOUND
LIKE A **BELIEVER.**>

<PURELY CALM
OPTIMISM.>

<AND **WHO** COULD
I START A FAMILY
WITH? **WHEN** WILL
I HAVE THE TIME?>



HMMM.

<OH. NOW
WHO'S
JOKING?>

<WE'RE HERE
TO **KILL** HIM,
LET'S FOCUS
ON THAT.>

<TIMES ARE
CHANGING,
MY CHILD.>

<**POISON** IT IS.
NICE AND SLOW.>

<LET'S TRY
SOMETHING
DIFFERENT...>

<...WE LET
HIM
DECIDE.>

TO DO THAT, WE FIND OUT
WHAT KIND OF **MAN** HE IS.

OOF.

OH,
EXCUSE ME.
SO
SORRY.

WE SEE WHAT **DRUG**
HE TAKES WITH HIS
MORNING COFFEE.

BUMP?

WHACK

YOU DROPPED
THESE, ALLOW ME.

Michaels,
David, J.
LUXOLITINIB 200

I DIDN'T
MEAN TO
INTERRUPT
YOU.

COMPLETELY
MY FAULT--

CANCER.

**THIS MAN IS
ALREADY DEAD.**

IT'S FINE,
JUST AN
ACCIDENT.

A LOT OF READING
GOING ON. SEEMS
IMPORTANT.

OH, IT
POTENTIALLY
IS. COULD BE
HISTORIC.

WELL, WITH A RIVETING
CLAIM LIKE THAT, YOU
MUST ELABORATE TO
YOUR CAPTIVATED
AUDIENCE.

VALENTÍN
RAMÓN.

VALENTÍN,
IT'S NICE TO
MEET YOU.
DAVID
MICHAELS.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE
CONTENTS OF THE
DOCUMENTS YOU SEE SO
CASUALLY SPREAD
AROUND FOR ANYONE TO
READ, ARE ACTUALLY
MEANT TO BE KEPT
UNDER WRAPS.

THEN YOU'VE FAILED
YOUR AUDIENCE, SIR.
AND YOU MUST PAY--

ISABEL IS GROWING IMPATIENT.

I SHOULD HAVE KEPT HER KNIFE.

NOW, SHE WANTS TO PLAY GAMES.

UM, SORRY FOR THE DISAPPOINTMENT.

IT'S NOT LIKE I REALLY CARE ABOUT ADHERING TO THE RULES OF THIS PARTICULAR CLIENT.

ACTUALLY, I'M JUST WAITING FOR MY DRIVER. HE SHOULD BE HERE ANY MINUTE.

MY FRIEND, THIS IS MY DAUGHTER, ISABEL. FORGIVE HER, SHE LIKES THROWING THINGS...

NICE AIM. IT'S A PLEASURE.

COFFEE, PLEASE.

HI.

CLEARLY, THESE DOCUMENTS ARE FROM THE VATICAN--

THOSE SEALS ARE UNIVERSAL--

YOUR CLIENT IS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, IS IT NOT?

I'VE BEEN HIRED TO FIND WHAT THE CHURCH THINKS IS OUT HERE.

OR NOT.

FOR ME, IT'S JUST SHOW AND TELL.

THEY'RE GONNA SPIN SOME STORY TO FIT THEIR AGENDA REGARDLESS.


HMM.

THIS MAN IS DIFFERENT.

THOSE JERKS JUST WANT THE WORLD TO DROP ON THEIR KNEES FOR THEM. IT'S NOT ABOUT GOD OR JESUS OR LOVE THY NEIGHBOR ANYMORE.

HASN'T BEEN FOR YEARS.

BUT YOU STILL WORK FOR THE CHURCH.



I'VE **GUTTED** DOZENS OF MEN OVER THE YEARS, SITTING IN THIS VERY CHAIR, FOR BEING THE **POWER-DRUNK ZEALOTS** HE'S SPEAKING OF.

I'M WITH THEM TO SEE AN OLD FRIEND.

MAKE AMENDS YOU COULD SAY.

A PEEK AT MY LITTLE BOTTLE OF RADIOACTIVE JOY WOULD TELL YOU I DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME LEFT FOR THAT.

CANCER IS A **HORRIBLE** WAY TO GO.

THE AMOUNT OF TIME WE HAVE ON THIS EARTH IS PRECIOUS.

WE COULD BE DOING HIM A **FAVOR**.

LET ME TELL YOU, I AM A RELIGIOUS MAN. **USED** TO BE CATHOLIC, BUT I TEND TO FOLLOW MY **OWN** IDEALS NOW.

SO, AS LONG AS I'VE MADE **PEACE** WITH MY IDEA OF GOD, AND AS LONG AS I CAN MAKE IT TO THIS **DAMN DIG** AND DO RIGHT BY SOMEONE I WRONGED YEARS AGO-

I'LL BE **SET** FOR WHEN MY TIME COMES.

NOT EVERYONE CAN **HONESTLY** SAY THAT.

DAMMIT. THIS IS A **GOOD** MAN.

AND IF I CAN **STICK IT** TO THE VATICAN ONE LAST TIME BEFORE I GO...

...LET'S JUST SAY I'LL BE BELLY UP WITH A **SMILE**.

MAYBE HE CAN **HELP** US.

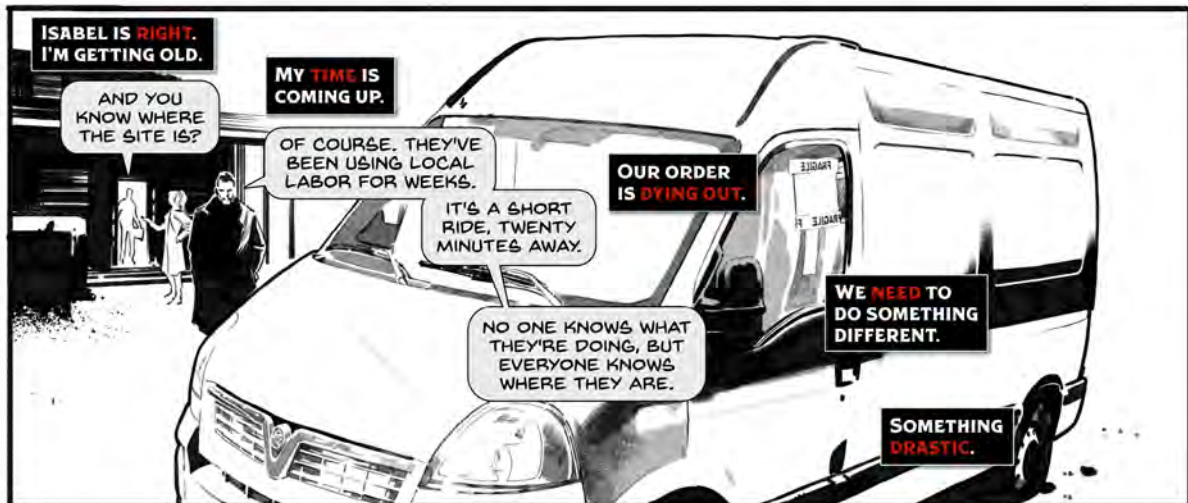
WELL, YOUR DRIVER IS **OBVIOUSLY** RUNNING CARELESSLY LATE AND YOU HAVE THINGS THAT NEED TO BE DONE.

WE HAVE A VEHICLE. ALLOW US TO GIVE YOU A RIDE.

AS LONG AS YOU'RE NOT TAKING ME OUT BACK TO KILL ME, I'LL DEFINITELY ACCEPT THAT OFFER.

SHH. YOU'LL SPOIL THE **SURPRISE**.

HABA. YOUTH AND THEIR **TESTS**.



ISABEL IS **RIGHT**.
I'M GETTING OLD.

AND YOU
KNOW WHERE
THE SITE IS?

MY **TIME** IS
COMING UP.

OF COURSE. THEY'VE
BEEN USING LOCAL
LABOR FOR WEEKS.

IT'S A SHORT
RIDE, TWENTY
MINUTES AWAY.

OUR ORDER
IS **DYING OUT**.

NO ONE KNOWS WHAT
THEY'RE DOING, BUT
EVERYONE KNOWS
WHERE THEY ARE.

WE **NEED** TO
DO SOMETHING
DIFFERENT.

SOMETHING
DRASTIC.



PLEASE,
ALLOW ME
TO SIT IN
THE BACK.

BUT YOU'RE
THE GUEST-

YOUNG
LADY,

LEGROOM IS A PRECIOUS
COMMODITY
AFTER A
FOURTEEN
HOUR FLIGHT.
I **INSIST**.

CALL IT
A **MAN'S**
WISH.



I'VE NEVER TAKEN A **CHANCE**
LIKE THIS BEFORE.

HIS DISTASTE FOR THE CLERGY
IS ENOUGH TO **FEED** ON.

I HAVE **FAITH** THAT
THIS **GOOD MAN** CAN
HELP US DO A
MONSTROUS THING.

BECAUSE WHAT WE
DO IS **MONSTROUS**.



WE'RE A **NECESSARY**
EVIL FOR A SECRET
THAT HAS TO BE KEPT.
AND I **ACCEPT** THAT.

I'M A **MONSTER**.

I'VE MADE MY
DAUGHTER INTO
A **MONSTER**.

IF I MAKE THIS GOOD
MAN INTO A MONSTER,
MY **DAMNATION** WILL
BE COMPLETE.

WE NEED TO **ACCEPT**
THAT **MONSTERS** EXIST.

OR AT LEAST
UNDERSTAND
THAT **WE** ARE
OUR OWN
MONSTERS.

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EVERYTHING

A NOTE FROM OUR PUBLISHER:

"WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON?"

If you're a comic book professional, that's the standard question. "What are you working on?"

Comic books are commercial art that depends on constant output. If you're a working professional, your fellow pros will assume that (a) you're working on something and (b) you probably have something on the stands or hitting the stands soon. The assumption is that you are making comics.

Getting started making comics is difficult. It takes time to develop your style and your quality. The time of practice is crucial, since you need time to explore the medium and improve your technique. Getting to the point where you have something new on the shelves on a consistent basis is even more challenging.

Last year, during the height of the pandemic, I pulled together a group of ambitious, scrappy creators who worked together to create an amazing publication. Thirty-plus creators banded together over email, message boards, and live chat to create an award-winning anthology. This was the first significant published work for 80% of the contributors.

The anthology topped out at 144 pages of comic stories and prose. It was a full-color package that was (and still is) available for free download. We agreed as a community that it would be more beneficial to our creators to increase circulation of our anthology than to try to profit from it financially.

To date, the anthology has won three awards. Think about that for a moment. A group of first-time creators are now part of an anthology that won multiple awards. That's not a bad way to start your career in comics.

So, of course, we decided to capitalize on the momentum. What you have here is our second annual anthology. It was unanimously decided that we should continue to give new and developing creators a platform to develop their craft and build their respective audiences. As with the first anthology, this will be free to download.

The second anthology picks up with the first one left off, except it is separate and unique in several ways:

We started with a creative prompt. In this case, we chose "The Time Inn" as a creative prompt. We encouraged our creators to interpret the prompt and use it as part of their stories.

We encouraged more prose stories. As it turns out, there are a lot of really good prose writers who have a passion for comic books.

The editors produced this anthology largely without me. I'm still the publisher, but a group of very talented editors produced this themselves.

In the first anthology, I was a guiding editor. I offered limited, but constructive feedback to individual creators. In this anthology, I provided the creative prompt (The Time Inn) and left the community and the editors to drive everything else.

This is a big step for the community and the individual creators. It shows that several members (check the masthead of this anthology) are now capable of editing a large anthology with many different creators and types of stories. That's a big and relevant step, since it makes all of them more marketable to publishers who need these kinds of skills.

Continued...

...Continued

Since the first anthology, many of our creators have continued their professional growth. Some are self-publishing their own comics, while others are contributing to other publishers. Most have also learned the value of ongoing personal branding in social media channels, as a way of building and maintaining a professional platform.

I developed Comic Book School on the simple premise that experience and a strong network can help many creators reach their professional goals. I focus on shared, community-based experience around the craft and business of making comics. This second anthology continues to provide those craft and business experiences.

It's worth noting that several NY-area creators met at the *EternalCon* on Long Island just prior to the publication of this anthology. We hosted educational panels and set up two tables in Artist's Alley. This was a growing experience for our creators, as some of them had never tabled and most of them had never led a panel specifically at a comic book convention. As I've mentioned, we focus on both the craft and the business side of making comics.

There are so many people to thank for their support, including top pros who contributed their time and advice to help nurture our community. Some of these creators have actually contributed to this anthology, as a way of lending the gravity of their names and fan base to help us attract new readers.

Special thanks to our contributing educators and guest lecturers:

[Frank Patz Batista](#)

[Michael Dolce](#)

[Jamal Igle](#)

[Joseph Illidge](#)

[Tom Peyer](#)

[Brian Pulido](#)

[Darren Sanchez](#)

With some luck, we'll be back at live events again to celebrate the comic book business. I'm looking forward to seeing old friends and making new ones.

And, thanks to some determined creators of current and next-generation professionals, this anthology is the answer to a very important question:

"What are you working on?"

Buddy Scalera

Founder

[Comic Book School](#)

August, 2021

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is the second volume of the Creator Connections #8PageChallenge Anthology: Panel 2, we showcase those individuals who to commit hard work and prioritize dedication to the craft and business of making comics. Many new and returning creators contribute to this great anthology. The people that have come together to make this second book inspire me. I am so proud of the Comic Book School Community for this great accomplishment.

The hope for 2021 to be “a better year” was often repeated to me with a tired sense of resolve. Some people worked to advance with determination, others are still dealing with the results of the last few years. Comic Book School is no different: always teaching, always learning about all the aspects of making comic books. This year presented some amazing new opportunities. We began streaming shows with industry professionals. We showcased our creators’ successes, made friends, and promoted each other’s projects. We even trended on social more than once. And of course we began on our second anthology. So as the press for Panel 1 came to a close, my co-editor A. A. Rubin, and I began to talk about how we would start the next 8-page challenge: Panel 2.

It wasn’t easy. Returning to this project and inviting new participants was, actually, more of a challenge. A precedent was set about what this community could do, and we, as a community, had to rise up and meet those expectations. We had to learn more efficient ways of doing things, to improve, and hopefully, become excellent. There was much to discuss: what we did well, and how to improve. We invited more people to help with the business and production of the book, something most beginner creators know little about. And that added a new, steep learning curve to our production process.

This year, we used a theme suggested by our publisher and founder, Buddy Scalera; “The Time Inn”. There was a lot of discussion about whether we should restrict our first-timers with a prompt, how it could be used as a learning tool for working in the industry, and what it would mean to use such a loosely-defined variable in this process. Our creators rose to the challenge with many innovative stories. Some even expressed this helped to push them through creative blocks, and improve their skills. The new theme, and guidelines helped each of us find new ways to express ourselves.

And so once more, we jumped into a crazy, mixed-up year of online communication and creating comics. There are so many people I’d like to call out in appreciation. First and foremost, Buddy Scalera, our founder and mentor in the Comic Book School community, a man dedicated to helping others achieve their comics dreams. Thank you for being a guide and friend who is committed to our success by giving us the knowledge and support we need to make more comics.

To all our industry professional friends and guests, thank you for taking the time to speak with us, work with us, and share your wealth of knowledge in the hope we can one day be where you are, especially: Darren Sanchez, a contributor to the anthology and a friend of the community, Jamal Igle and Tom Peyer for multiple guest appearances and invested follow-up on our community boards, Brian Pulido for your insight and honesty about the comic book industry and all the knowledge that comes from it, Mike Dolce for your excitement and enthusiasm for this visual medium and all the ways we can apply it, Frank Patz-Batista for welcoming us back to our first in-person con, Joseph Illidge for your sharing the history and amazing journey of your career in comics, and Howard Chaykin for making yourself available to our community through your *Talent Talk* chats, and all the follow-up that came after. A special thanks to Lipe Diaz, and all the amazing art from your students, which made our anthology even more inspiring. To all the people who support us, it means the world to us that you share, thank you.

Continued...

...Continued

To our promoters, press advocates, and friends of the community without whom, our community and our anthologies would still be a small project done during the quarantine, you are the best examples of what it is to be a comics fan. We appreciate your time and effort you telling our story and share our work with the same passion and excitement we had in making it. Specifically: Michael Grassia, Sebastian Bonet, Meredith Loughran, Jerel Motos, Jorge Medina, Sam Vera, Matthew Kund, and George Michail

To the Creative Team, for the header graphics, the live streams, the press, and the social media. It was a year of firsts for our team to put out branded content and make Comic Book School a more professional, cohesive endeavor. To the Tech Team for your time and knowledge, we appreciate all you do to keep us up and running. To all the people in the Council of the Willing, thank you for jumping into the fray. We couldn't continue to build this awesome community without your help. Especially: Bolu Oriowo for your amazing voice, both in speech and copy, you are going places, don't stop. Jarrod Elvin, for making all the calls and the graphics from the other side of the world, you are more talented than you know, my friend. Kristian Stout your dedication to the arts, your talent is electrifying. There are just so many more...Joel Jacob Barker, Mike Ponce, Arielle Lupkin, Philip Burnette, Evan Scale, Jack Holder, George Dawkins II, Kevin Pei, James McGill, Kyle Rose, Cathy Kirch, and Maryam Muhammad.

Rob Andersin is our cheerleader, live stream support, and motivational champion. He ran the *Independent Creator Awards*, and continually supports all indie comic book creators and their endeavors to make this medium better. We can't thank you enough for standing up, holding us accountable, and being present with a clear and determined voice in the council. You are a true comic book advocate.

The most sincere thanks to A. A. Rubin. We did it again! I feel like this one is somehow more significant because we had a better idea of what needed to be done. And without your tireless accountability, and late hours promoting and connecting with our partners and our community this just would not have happened. I don't know how you find the time to be all the things that you are and accomplish all that you do at the level of greatness you achieve, but it never stops inspiring me. Keep it up, my friend.

And to Kris Burgos, our 2021 Project Manager: I feel like I may have thrown you into the fire without warning, but you survived! Time and again you came through and always finished the calls and recaps with a smile. Your trial by fire is over, and you have come through alive and kicking. You did us proud, so stand tall—and put this on your resume; then let me know what job you want to try next year, because I know whatever it is you will succeed.

A big thank you to all the people who participated, and supported us in the live streams, calls, social storms and our comics journeys. We appreciate you and, your feedback, and we are so happy to share our work with you. We hope you love it. Finally, to all the contributors to the book, the site, and the community, this comic book anthology is for you.

-D. Alley, the Redheadeded

“Learning is not attained by chance; it must be sought for with ardour and attended to with diligence.” —Abigail Adams

NOTES AND ADDITIONAL CREDITS

ANTHOLOGY COVER SUBMISSIONS

Cover Submission 1

Artist: Bolu Oriowo

Instagram: [@aesthetic_derelect](https://www.instagram.com/aesthetic_derelect)

Twitter: [@aesderelect](https://twitter.com/aesderelect)

Website: <https://boluoriowo.wixsite.com/oriowoportfolio>

Cover Submission 2

Artist: Israel Rodriguez

Instagram: [@izmoney10000](https://www.instagram.com/izmoney10000)

Facebook: [@israelkrodriguez](https://www.facebook.com/israelkrodriguez)

Website: <https://www.deviantart.com/izmoney10000>

Cover Submission 3

Artist: Philip Burnette

Instagram: [@philip.space](https://www.instagram.com/philip.space)

Website: <https://deviantart.com/philipspace>

Website: <https://philipburnette.wixsite.com/cyanidewota>

NOTES AND ADDITIONAL CREDITS

Foreword by Brian Pulido

Website: <https://www.ladydeathuniverse.com/>

Website: <https://coffincomicsshop.com/>

Twitter: [@thebrianpulido](https://twitter.com/thebrianpulido)

Afterward by Jamal Igle

Website: <https://jamaligle.com/>

Twitter: [@jamaligle](https://twitter.com/jamaligle)

Special Thanks to Lipe Diaz and the Studio of Visual Arts

Website: <https://www.lipediaz.com>

AFTERWORD

It dawned on me the other day, that I've been working in comics for the last 30 years. I've been in love with comics for much, much longer than that of course. That said, my involvement with the medium of comics has been long lasting and I believe fruitful.

Over the years, I've not only have had the privilege of working with legendary creators as an artist, but as an editor and art director as well. My journey wasn't always easy. Comics can be a demanding mistress. The deadlines and the demands to be not only consistent as a creator, but to be innovative as well can be somewhat daunting.

Like any creative endeavor, the reader doesn't see the hours spent in front of the computer or a desk, in front of glowing screens or under hot lights. Time passes with every key stroke, every line drawn. Yet, I still love the effort, the uncertainty of every page coming together. I still love comics. All comics, every part of the process of making a good, or even great comic.

One of the best parts of my love affair with comics has been the discovery of up-and-coming talent. I really enjoy not only seeing a new creator burst onto the scene but watching their creative evolution.

The thing about creators is, often where they begin is never where they end. What I mean is, as a creator, we enter our world as a sum of our influences, coupled by whatever training we've undertaken prior to getting to the point where we are ready to produce. Everything we've seen, heard, read, experienced becomes a part of our "style." As a friend once said to me "Style is made up of the things we've learned and the mistakes we make." So as new creators begin to learn more about what works for them creatively, they also learn to do the best work they can within a tight timeframe and collaborate with other creators. Then, something happens...they begin to also observe things in different ways. They look at new influences, they bring in new experiences and their style changes. It can be subtle, it can be a dramatic shift as they discover someone who is completely unrelated to the medium. Still, it happens.

It's that growth that drives me more. I've watched my own work change and grow over three decades, sometimes subtly, sometimes very dramatically. I know that's something that most creatives share. The thrill of evolution.

Evolution is inevitable, but I love seeing that initial spark and watching them grow. Sometimes, that spark needs help fanning the creative flame, and that's where Buddy Scalera comes in. Buddy watched my spark burn. I've known Buddy almost as long as I've been working professionally and his Comic Book School program is giving these new creators a platform to learn, to grow. I love seeing their enthusiasm and I hope they continue on their journeys, no matter what form their evolution takes.

Jamal Igle



Variant Cover #1



Variant Cover #2

13



Variant Cover #3



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EVEN FOR SOMETHING ALREADY OUT IN THE WORLD.**

**THE CONTINUUM IS ABOUT ALL THIS AND SO MUCH MORE,
BECAUSE WHAT THE CONTINUUM REALLY IS, IT'S EVER
EXPANDING CREATIVE POSSIBILITIES,
WITH NO END IN SIGHT.**

**MOST IMPORTANTLY THE CONTINUUM IS ABOUT
ENTERTAINING COMIX FANS AND PROVIDING THEM WITH
AN ESCAPE FROM THEIR UNIVERSE TO THOSE
WITHIN THE CONTINUUM.**

-CONTINUUM CREATOR- ROB ANDERSIN



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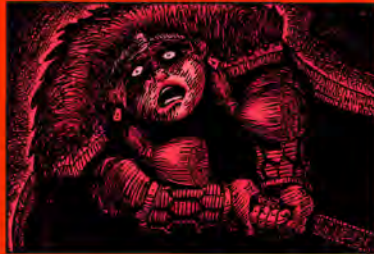
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