

THE BEACON TO INDEPENDENT STORYTELLING

CATALYST

ISSUE 02 - APRIL 2021

ANDERSON - LUETH
BIJEDIC - YOUNG
SHORT - YOUNG
ZUJOVIC

COMICS
PROSE - POETRY
GALLERY - TIPS
INTERVIEWS

LATE, BUT FREE. SO CAN YOU EVEN COMPLAIN?

CATALYST

CATALYST MAGAZINE BROUGHT TO YOU BY NEXUS STUDIOS, INC.

Welcome back!

I'm not going to lie, I didn't think that it would be possible to be later than I was last time.

However if I am a master of any one thing, it's procrastination. In addition to the holidays, as well as putting off the legwork for this issue, I personally had to deal with some choice paralysis, which I discussed in a video on the T3G Media YouTube channel if you'd like to see me work through that problem.

Now to this issue, we are coming in a bit shorter than previous issue, but with some new content with a poetry entry from Celeste. This delay put my mind in a place that allowed me to write an entirely different chapter in the Wolfpack Universe series than I had originally intended. So in the end, I win with a much richer story which I have—fun fact—decided to make into an illustrated novella with my editor and business partner Celeste Short. I will be creating new art for the novella, and may even commission some pieces.

I've already started the legwork on the next issue, so things going my way, that should arrive on time. Or did I say that last time, too?

Read on, friends!

-Dalibor



COVER ARTIST

The Horsemen

by Jiba Molei Anderson

Edited by Dalibor Zujovic

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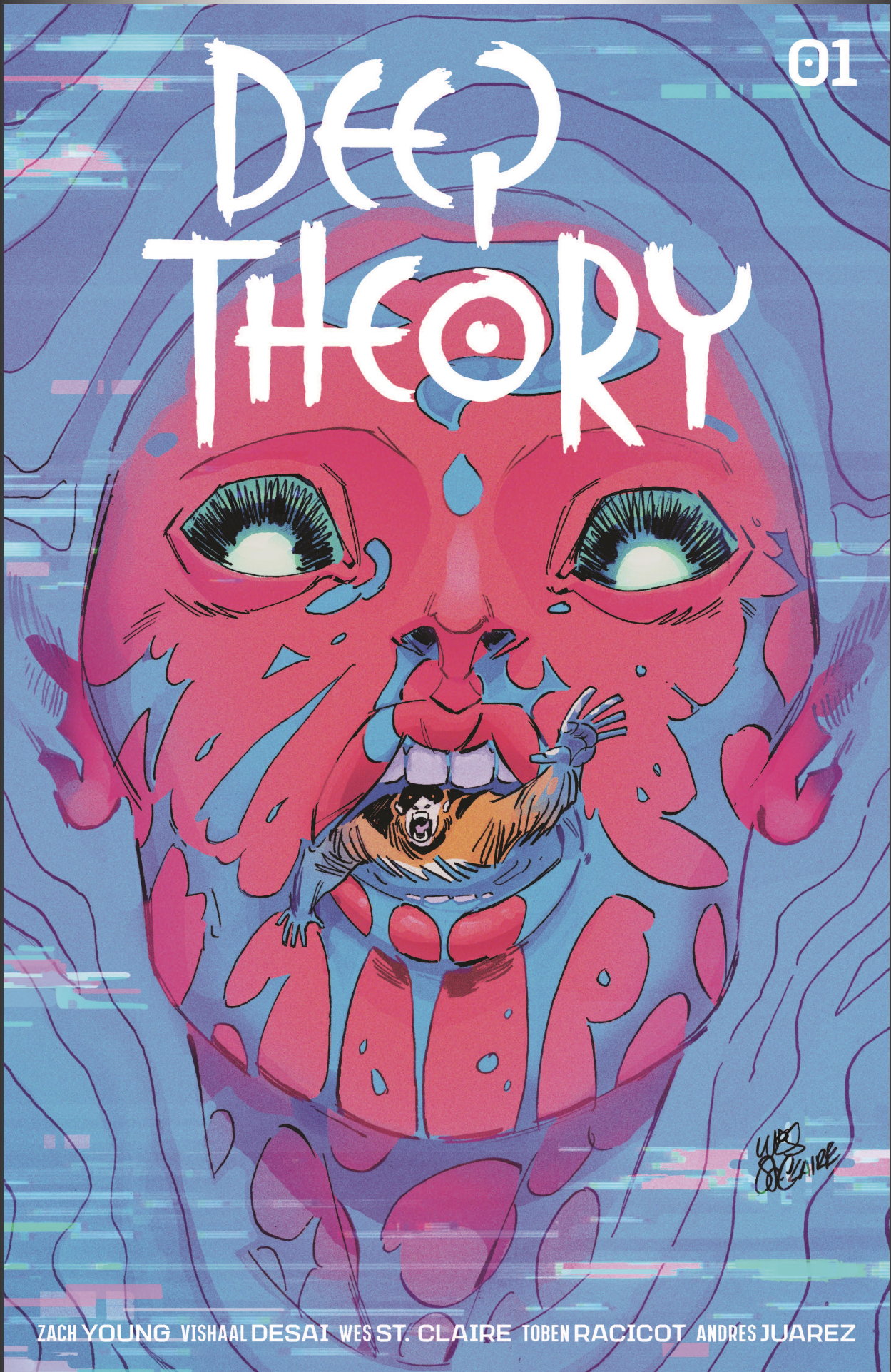
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DEEP THEORY



WES ST. CLAIRE

ZACH YOUNG VISHAAL DESAI WES ST. CLAIRE TOBEN RACICOT ANDRES JUAREZ



**ZACH
YOUNG**
WRITER

**VISHAAL
DESAI**
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RACICOT**
LETTERER

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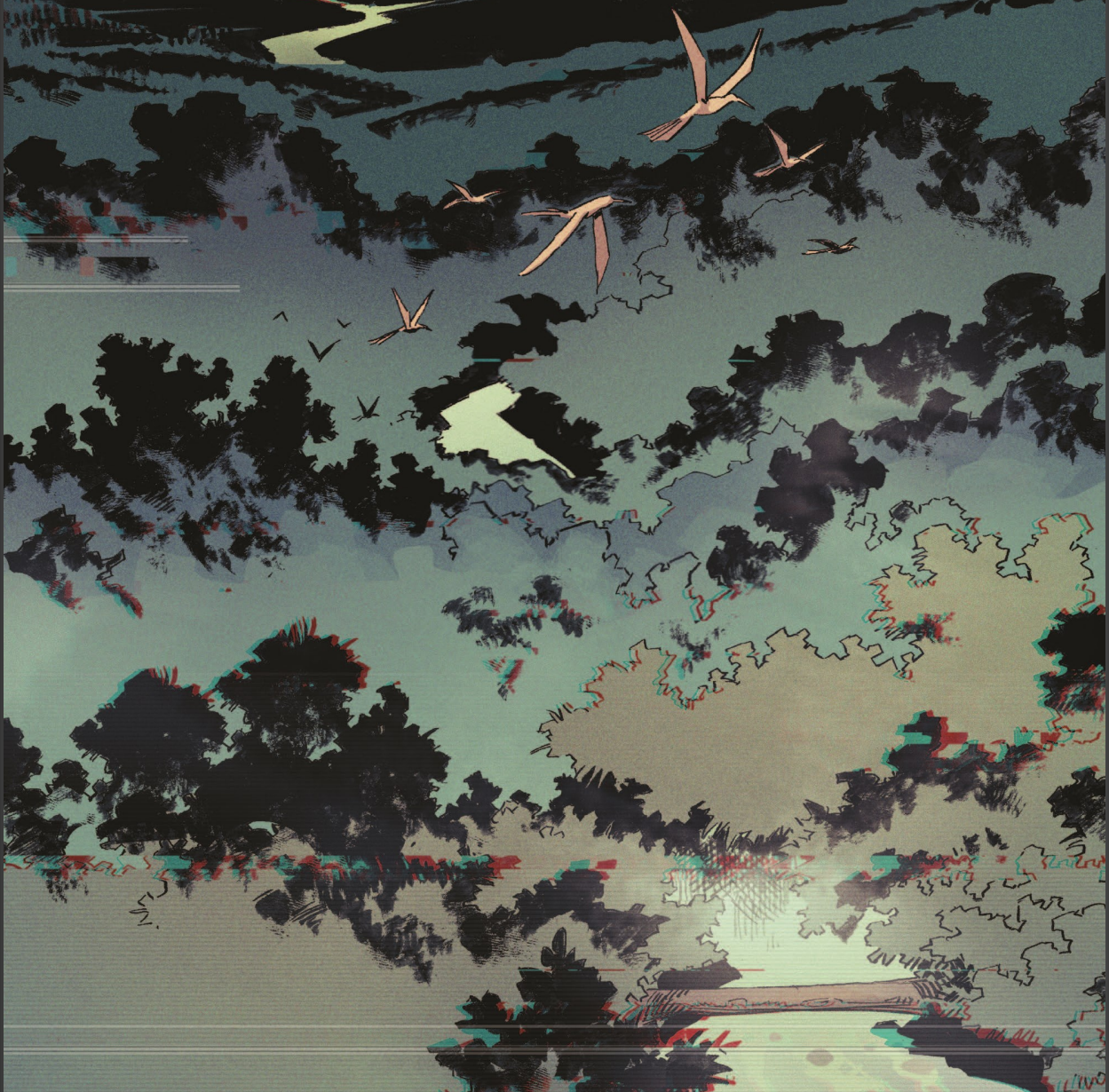
THE Q METHOD
BACKUP STORY ARTIST

DEEP THEORY
CREATED BY
ZACH YOUNG
AND
VISHAAL DESAI

DEEP THEORY #1 (2021).
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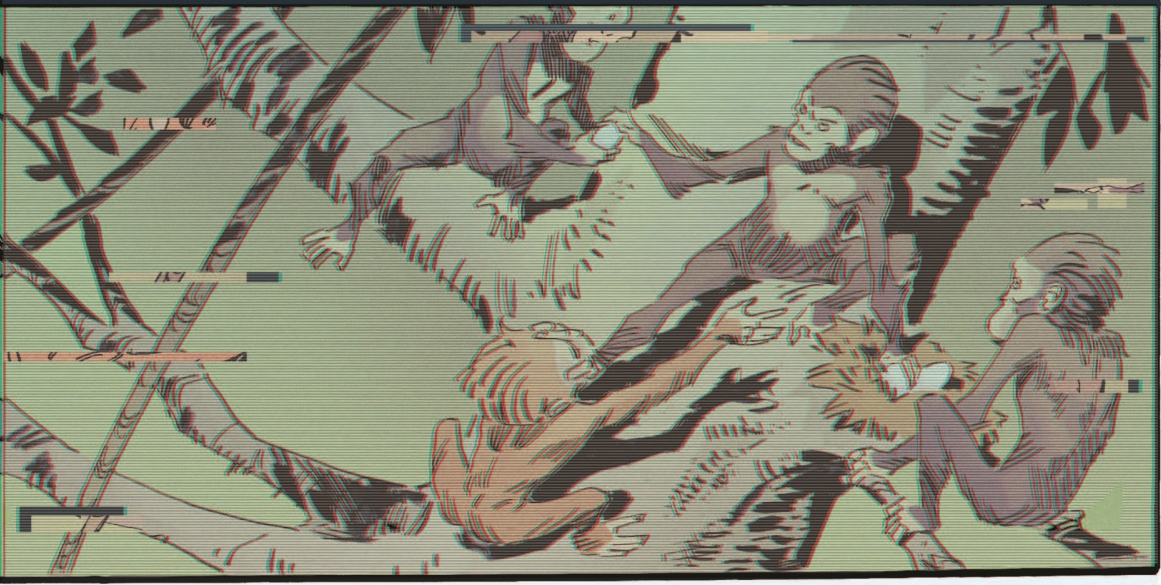
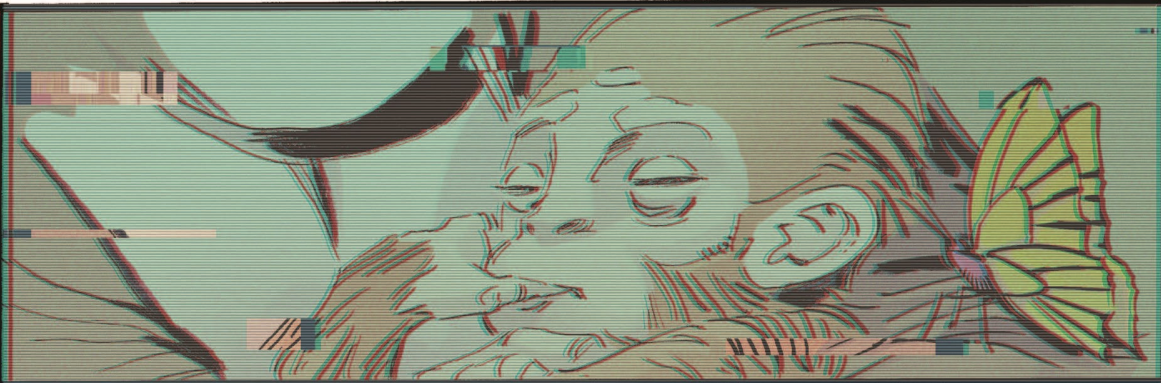
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YEARS AGO.
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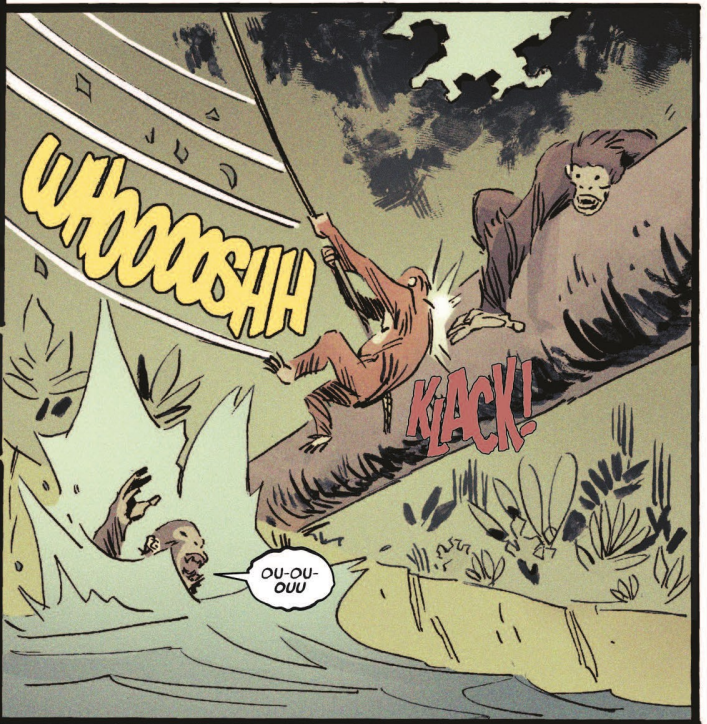
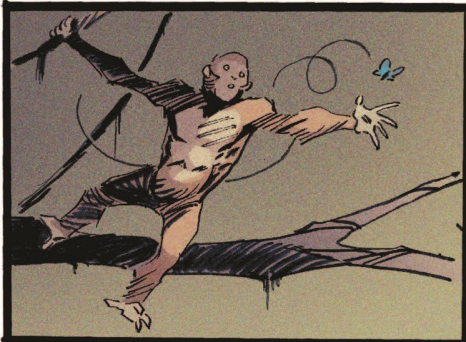
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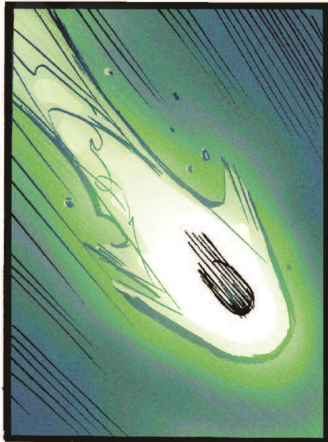




MORNING.









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Check out this preview for the cover of the second issue of Deep Theory coming soon!



NEXT TIME ON...

Deep Theory #2: The Knightmaere!

*"Fear is the mind-killer!
Fear is the little-death
that brings total obliteration!"*

-Frank Herbert, Dune

Fear is... the Savior? Zane Bosomean finds himself plunged into a dimensional war that has been waging on in secrecy for eons. What seemed to be a simple case of Sleep Paralysis, was actually the start of Zane's journey into entropy, pitting him against the evil entities that would see to our worlds eventual demise.

Track our progress on the next issue and sign up for our newsletter at deeptheorystudios.com

INTERVIEWS

I joined several groups on Facebook for independent and aspiring comic creators, and I came across a post which introduced me to the already-in-progress Kickstarter for Deep Theory issue 01: Ardipithecus. I saw the preview images and the intriguing trailer and was immediately hooked. The co-creators joined me on #TheTangentsPodcast, and I wanted to get a more coherent look into their process to our readers. Zach was kind enough to participate in the already-classic Catalyst rapid-fire interview format.



The first issue of Deep Theory is a fantastic read. How soon can we look forward to the next issue, and is there a planned schedule for the series?

We're planning to launch another Kickstarter for issue 2 later this year, possibly around the same time as the last one in November. We would like to pick up the pace being that this first project was a bit of trial and error. There's not a planned schedule for the series yet but ideally, considering the process of launching any Kickstarter project, we'd like to have all 6 issues out in 2 years.

Do you have a planned length in mind, or is this ongoing as long as stories keep coming to you?

The stories will always come to us so we'll always be creating but for this series we're shooting for 6 issues. Since each issue is its own story, it's been challenging to compress such heavy concepts into an arc and into one issue (24-32 pages). When we come up with an idea, it naturally expands itself which can be a positive problem only a bit of a nuisance to fit it into so many pages. But at the same time, it does lend an opportunity for issues to branch off into their own series down the road.



You've mentioned that the original concept for this went through several re-structuring phases. What have you found to be the biggest challenge when moving to a new iteration? Is it tougher giving up characters, changing themes, or something else?

The biggest challenge when moving to a new iteration is letting go! It's tough when you put so much thought and work into one idea and then the more it becomes something the less possibility it has to become something else. It's like if you had a blank canvas in front of you, the possibilities are endless. But once you lay down your first brush stroke and then another and eventually a few more, it becomes this thing that you either like or you don't like; something that works or doesn't work. But that's all a part of the process and we do have to remind ourselves that what we're working toward is learning about what makes something good and applying what we've learned to make it better. So scrapping something we've worked incredibly hard to come up with is less burdensome when we adopt a mindset of believing that it's an opportunity to make better stuff. So even though we may fall in love with certain concepts, characters, themes, we know that it'll only work if it harmonizes with all of the other moving parts--the other stories we want to tell, the concepts, the reader's perspective--even though it can't be perfect, all of these variables affect the outcome of what we want to convey. And when it comes down to it, what we're exploring is the possibilities of mysterious truths and how they connect us in each of our individual and universal realities. Plus, the stuff we scrapped isn't lost forever. There's always a chance to resurrect it, and that's exciting.

What has been the most challenging thing about publishing independently?

Aside from the challenge of making one-shot stories, self-promotion has been the toughest part. There's a polarity between being a creator and being a self-promoter, of art and business. The artist wants to create and share their creations with the world. To share something it's going to cost something so they must sell their art in order to share it, in order to keep creating. The challenge is that

artists just want to create and sometimes don't know how exactly to reach out to a wider audience, which is why there exists people who manage the business aspects of such matters--but we're not there yet. And it's great. While it is a challenge, we get to experience all parts of the process and really humble ourselves to learn as much as we can so we can also share what we've learned, it's the beauty of creation to grow in selflessness. It helps that we are two heads so it's lessened the stress immensely.

Do you have any influences and if so, who are they and why?

Alan Moore, Tom King, Jeff Lemire, and also comic book designer Tom Muller are just the few of many individuals who have influenced us throughout our early career so far. They have all collectively played a pivotal role in showing us the true power of the comic book medium. Alan Moore's "The Saga of the Swamp Thing" is a perfect example of a mind bending, gothic-romance-horror masterpiece, that truly transcends the limitations bound by the structures of a comic book. Jeff Lemire and Tom King have both shown us that it's okay to write intimate and personal stories, and that not all comics have to be action packed cape tales, with evil super powered arch nemesis's. Tom Muller showed us another aspect of comics that we also feel is severely under appreciated, and that is the design aspect of comics, both inside and out. How your cover is designed, and how the interior cover pages flow with the rest of the book are absolutely integral in creating a consistent and also beautiful looking book. We have nothing but appreciation for all of those who continue to write and design; they inspire us day in and day out.



DEEP
THEORY

GALLERY



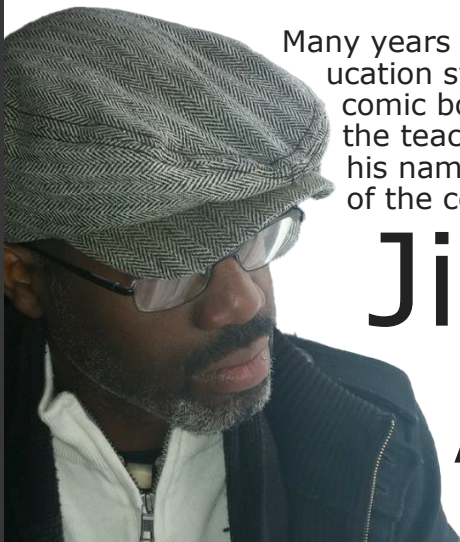
As mentioned in the first issue, I think you have to promote family when you make a magazine that promotes independent creators. I give you my cousin Haris Bijedic's photography. Now he does not consider himself to be a photographer, merely using this as an outlet for his creativity while focusing on building his cars and working towards a career in racing. I love his photos though, so I wanted to show him some love.











Many years ago, during one of my dances with the for-profit education system, I met a teacher who had published his own comic book series. He wasn't my teacher, but he had been the teacher of my girlfriend at the time, and she mentioned his name and comic to me. She had the original four issues of the comic *The Horsemen: Divine Intervention*. Created by

Jiba Molei Anderson.

Even better, he was just a few classrooms away from me several times a week. When I met him, I was blown away with how approachable he was—I mean this guy makes comics, who am I to take up his time? But he was and remains to this day a top gent to talk comics culture and creation with.

Jiba was gracious enough to provide one of his outstanding *Horsemen* pieces for our cover this issue, and I managed to take up some more of his time with this interview here.

[DALIBOR] I'm speaking from my own perspective of course, but *Horsemen* was the first indie comic, and really the first comic book at all that I got my hands on that was being told from a noticeably different perspective. Part of that I'm sure is just reading something besides the mainstream, but I feel a large part was that it was my first true exposure to Afrofuturism. How does it feel to be the Afrofuturism pioneer in the comics space?

[JIBA] "How does it feel to be an Afrofuturism pioneer in the comics space?" It feels a little weird honestly. When I created *The Horsemen* way back in 1997, I was looking to fill a hole and make my mark in the comic book industry. I was inspired by the pioneers of the Black Age of Comics in the 90s. **Milestone Media**, **Brotherman** and **Tribe** showed me the value in carving a space that didn't really exist before. It just so happened that I was influenced by science fiction, politics and mythology. It just so happened that I wanted to infuse the world I was creating with a West African / African American sensibility.



The term Afrofuturism didn't really enter my radar until 2005 though it had been around since 1996 or so. I was just doing my thing. I even tried to separate what I was doing from what I thought was a certain aesthetic. Eventually, I had to admit to myself that I was an Afrofuturist, which didn't happen until, like, 2014. So, even though one could call me a "pioneer," it's still taking some time for me to accept that appellation... But I'm getting used to it.

When you sat down to write the first *Horsemen* comic, did you think it was going to be this multi-volume epic series? Has the original plan shifted or

the idea changed at all?

I always knew that *The Horsemen* was going to be an epic saga. I also know that I did not have the wherewithal, resources nor time to make it a monthly series. I was heavily influenced by Mike Mignola's *Hellboy* in terms of how to get this concept out to the wider market. The idea of "series of mini-series" and one-shots was something that I could manage when it came to production. It turned out to be a great production model, one that I haven't changed since *The Horsemen* was first published back in 2002.

Is there a project that you've never gotten around to, but still want to write?

Other than more *Horsemen* material, not really.

You also produce an anthology series called *4 Pages, 16 Bars* that's just successfully kickstarted a new volume. Besides that and the upcoming new volume of *Horsemen*, what other projects are you working on that people should look out for?

Well, in addition to running Griot Enterprises, I've also been doing a lot of writing for role-playing games. I just completed writing content for *Tales of Depravity* and *They Came From [CLASSIFIED]* and currently doing some world building for Onyx Path's *Mage: The Ascension*. I'm also finishing up illustrating an album cover for Wu-Tang affiliate *Killah Priest*. [How cool is that?!]

The new installment of *The Horsemen* is coming later this year.

Stay tuned via social media and on the official [Griot Enterprises](#) website!



Visions in Plastic

by Celeste A. Short

Imagine if we cared for things,
really cared for them. Learned their
little foibles, trusted their long-term efficacy, and made a fucking effort to take
some sort of responsibility for what we create.

What does that even look like? A vintage world of 80s Lycra and 50s cars, life lived
in the technicolor of ten different decades or more? A new world order, focused on
demonstrating wealth as
Oldsmobiles and oil slick fabrics?

Maybe the streets become cleaner, people scouring gutters for that perfect piece
of plastic to show people

Yes, I am a Material Girl

I am the product of these years of

Mindless wealth and freedom and day glo colors.

But

I am capable of stopping violence,
capable of retaining this item forever. Showing you
that I can care and be cared for.

Would there be suits made of old wire? Knights of the new age, copper wire coated
in red/yellow/white/red of the houses of AUX, VGA, and USB?

Dresses, an homage to food handling, gauzy plastic cut of shimmering fruit bags
cleanly covering breasts and bellies
instead of plums and peaches?

Maybe the trash heaps finally become the Mecca of our new desire to

Reduce

Reuse

And

Recycle.



"Five months, three days, and four hours."
Wolfpack Universe Chapter 2 accompanying art

WOLFPACH



THE COST OF INFORMATION

Written by Dalibor Zujovic

Edited by Celeste A. Short

CHAPTER 2

Dripping with sour sweat, Brian strokes the beard he has grown during captivity. He tries to estimate how long he has been silently exercising in the dark of his prison cell- weeks, certainly, maybe even months. A sense of normalcy has been established by working out twice daily until he can't anymore, muscles trembling with the effort- each bout of exercise is followed by a tepid, unsatisfying shower using the provided in-ceiling shower head and drain, like a chemical shower in a lab. He keeps track of the "days" using this rhythm, but there's no way to know for sure. The only light comes from a single fixture running the length of the stone hallway, ending at his cell. There is a turn about 100 feet away, but it's too dim to see more.

Brian imagines his freedom 100 feet at a time, mentally turning that corner countless times. But every time he does, he remembers that his first obstacle is getting on the other side of the cell's bars. There's also no door on the bars.

"Fuck."

The sound of his voice surprises him. He realizes he cannot remember the last time he spoke. He has tried fruitlessly to engage the guards that bring him his food. Still lost in thought, he takes a long drink from the utility sink, and relieves himself using the provided toilet.

No expense spared. The height of luxury and privacy right here, Brian thinks ruefully, staring at the rough-hewn rock wall in front of him while standing at the toilet.

Faint footsteps - maybe a longer hallway beyond the turn? – approach at a near-robotic pace. Brian zips up quickly and walks to the bars expectantly. The guard this time is an average-looking male dressed in featureless dark fatigues. He attaches a plastic tray to the cell bars and steps back into rest position- arms behind his back, feet slightly more than shoulder width apart, thousand yard stare. He refuses to meet Brian's own gaze. Brian must eat through the

bars while the guard watches intently from his peripheral vision. The food, always unseasoned, provides only enough nutrients to get him to the next meal. He long ago adjusted his workouts to account for this, but Brian has still watched his body transform from comfortably sleek bulk into wiry muscle, not an ounce of fat to spare.

When Brian finishes eating, the guard waits for him to step back, takes the tray, then turns with military precision, returning down the same path. This happens twice a day, without fail. He tried a food strike once- he woke the next day to an IV stand of fluids and tubes, placed in sight but out of reach, just beyond the bars. The guard that day arrived with a man he presumed to be a doctor, judging by the lab coat and stethoscope, wearing a blindfold. It was the only time a guard had ever met his eyes, and the meaning behind that glance was clear: Eat the food, or you will be sustained by other means. Since then he has participated in the routine.

Brian finishes eating and steps back. The guard unclips the tray and leaves, tucking the square of plastic under his arm as he goes. Brian undresses and moves toward the shower area, letting the routine anchor his sanity. Warm water flows as soon as he is under the showerhead. At first he hated it, but now the mild temperature is a welcome change. Scalding water used to wash away dark deeds, if only for a little while. During his time in captivity, he has come to understand that he cannot wash away the darkness.

Exiting the shower, he prepares to go to sleep. Lying down, his mind is blank. Every aspect of this place has been committed to memory a long time ago, and he will remain in captivity until someone determines otherwise.

The next day, Brian wakes to find the light in the hallway is now painfully bright. It shines as if powered by the sun itself, nearly impossible to look at.

His heart starts racing.

Is this it? Is this my last day alive?

A noise comes from the wall perpendicular to the bars- a latch releasing. Air enters the room, new smells and sounds pouring in. Seams appear in the wall, and a section of rock moves away and out of sight.

Nobody enters.

His eyes still adjusting, Brian walks cautiously toward the opening. He catches glimpses of the sky through a window opposite his cell - he's on the top floor of a very large building, overlooking Rio de Janeiro.

"Well, fuck me." Brian turns and squints. Someone stands silhouetted against the light of another window, holding a martini glass.

"I imagine you thought you were in some cave somewhere." The man sips his drink.

“Congratulations. Most people never discover the location of these...accommodations.”

A slim man in his forties, the man is wearing a white, expensive-looking suit.

“I hope your stay was not too uncomfortable.” Brian moves to speak, but the man motions him to stop.

“My employer wishes to extend their deepest apologies for the inconveniences you have experienced. I and the rest of the staff are at your disposal, should you need us in resolving any difficulties returning to your intended destination and plans. To answer a few obvious questions, you have been in our care for precisely five months, three days, and four hours. Your belongings have not been touched and are on the table in front of you.”

Brian moves to the table, recalling his mission. He sees that his briefcase has not been tampered with. The lock was installed by a spook who wanted a test dummy for the system. You would have to blow your way in without the appropriate combination of biometrics and code.

“Why?” Brian looks back with a determined face. He has made sure to remain fit, so he’s confident he can take out some frustration on this person, add some color to his suit.

“I’m afraid this has been a rather embarrassing case of mistaken identity.” Brian uses every ounce of restraint he has left to not kill this man where stands. “The unfortunate circumstances that led to your detainment did cause quite a larger situation that needed resolving elsewhere. We have just returned to Brazil ourselves today. Please, take some time to clean up and prepare yourself. This suite is stocked with any manner of clothing you may need, as well as local and foreign currencies, and a selection of new, untraceable electronic devices. The suite phone will dial directly to me, so just let me know when you are ready, and we will get you back on your way. My name is Renee should you have any questions.”

Brian watches him turn toward the door and says “I’m looking for an American ex-pat. Former intelligence. Five months, three days, and four hours ago they were confirmed to be in Rio, selling information to the highest bidder.”

Without turning Renee notes, “Ah, I believe I know them. We can bring them here if you’d like?”

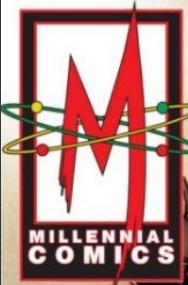
“No. I’d like to leave this place as soon as I’m ready.”

“Understood. We’ll have a car ready to take you to the library.” He pauses and turns. “The irony of selling information at a place where it is found freely.”

“This kind of information is never free.”

November 14, 2011

To Be Continued...



Delta Dogs

ISSUE #1



VONNELL
YOUNG
FELIX
MORALES
MARVIN
MARVIDA

Delta Dogs



VONNELL YOUNG
WRITER

FELIX MORALES
ARTIST

MARVIN MARVIDA
COLORIST

FELIX MORALES
COVER

MARVIN MARVIDA
COVER COLORIST

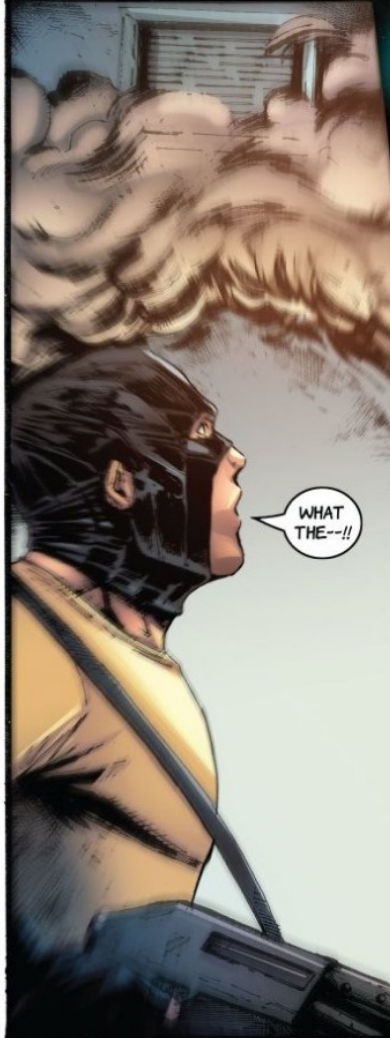
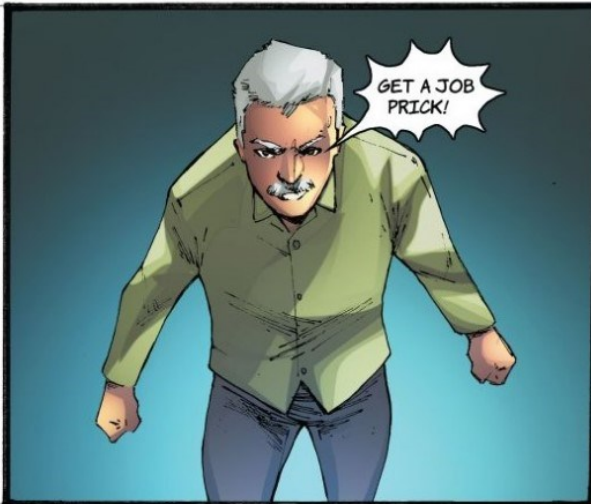
MARK MARVIDA
LETTERER

CREATED BY VONNELL YOUNG

Millennial Comics Entertainment • Visit our website @Millennialcomic.com
Special thank you to: Curtis Young, Curtis Jordan, Ronnie Grimsted, and Charles Alexander!





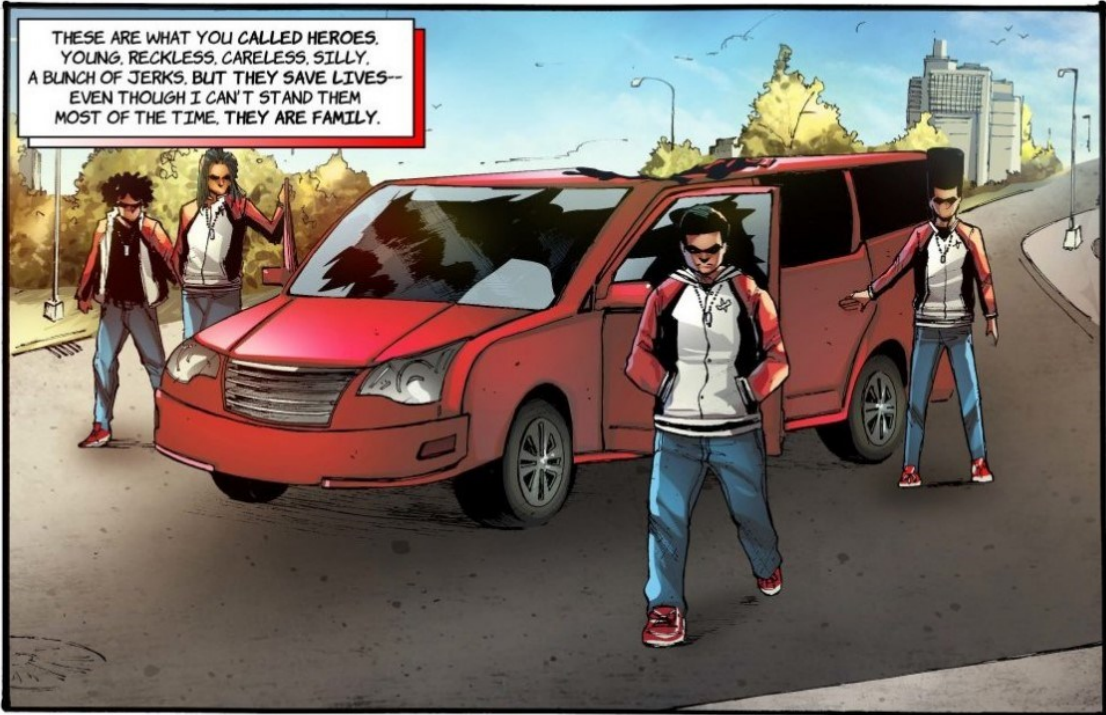














...I'M USING MY GIFTS AS A SECRET SINCE I CAN'T USE THEM. THEY WON'T EVEN LET ME ON THE TEAM. SAYING I'M TOO YOUNG. YEAH I'M JUST ELEVEN BUT I HAVE POWERS TOO! LIKE COME ON! THAT HAS TO PUT ME AT LIKE 15! I KNOW I'VE MADE A LOT OF MISTAKES... AND I'M NOT AS STRONG AS THE OTHERS BUT...



...HAVING THIS NORMAL LIFE JUST ISN'T ME - NOT ANYMORE. WHEN I KNOW I CAN DO A LOT MORE THAN JUST SITTING IN THIS CLASS ROOM. THINKING ABOUT IT THOUGH. MONTHS AGO, WE WERE JUST GOING TO OUR YEARLY FAMILY REUNION.



MONTHS AGO

...ME AND THE SECOND TO YOUNGEST, "MY BROTHER CURTIS" GETTING READY FOR THE REUNION. WE THOUGHT OUR DAD WAS GOING TO TAKE US. BUT OF COURSE HE HAD TO WORK LIKE ALWAYS.

Like it?

Check out the series on

www.millennialcomic.com

& digitally on Comixology!

Sometimes you realize you're behind on what other people have already seen and is successful. This was my realization with the title Delta Dogs, the opening of which you just read. I have had a feature named Black Creator Spotlight running (albeit inconsistently) for the last several months, and in searching for creators to spotlight I found Millennial Comics, producers of . I read a few issues and was hooked, so I bought the remaining issues and finished the first season in its entirety. I bring to you a Catalyst interview with its creator, Vonnell Young.

DELTA DOGS

The first arc of Delta Dogs was outstanding. You've mentioned that this is not even 1/10th of the story online, so what is the planned length of the series?



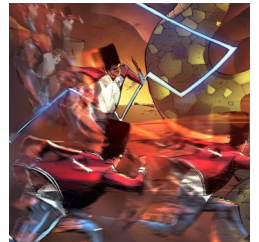
I can't give a definite number of books for Delta Dogs because it can end at any moment! So keep your ears to the floor and expect for more!

Now, I'm behind on the Delta Dogs phenomenon, so catch me and anybody reading this who is just finding the series up to speed. How did this series come to be? Was it something you worked on for a long time or was it divine inspiration?

Depending on how you look at it, it can be a little bit of both. This story is about my cousins (Older brother included) and my experience with them growing up.

What has been the most challenging thing about publishing independently and are you opposed to partnering with an Image, Dark Horse, or one of the other major publishing groups to get your series to a wider audience?

Distribution and promotion are really challenging because I'm only a writer but a challenge worth facing because I love what I do. As far as partnering with the other companies, anything could happen but my main focus is developing the next generation of heroes and villains, and whoever wants to support that is my ally.



With such a long series planned, are you just ironing out details and cruising along or do you still come up against roadblocks?

Ironing out details and just enjoying the ride. Everything is already written and I already know the beginning, middle, and end but I am always learning and growing my craft and so will my stories as well.

Check out and buy Delta Dogs on the Millennial Comics website, www.millennialcomic.com and digitally on ComiXology.





\$4.99 **0**

Taylor Sterling
Eugene Argent
Jaxen De Nobriga
Francisco Perez

JUL 2015

COVER
A

OKEMUS



Taylor Sterling
MSP

www.redarciscomics.com

OKEMUS

Created by TAYLOR STERLING

PRELUDE TO A DREAM

Issue 0

IN THE FAR DISTANT FUTURE, THE PLANET EARTH HAS BECOME A DESOLATE SHELL OF IT'S FORMER DECADENCE. ONCE GREAT NATIONS NOW LAY IN RUIN. MONSTROUS SUBHUMAN CREATURES CALLED MECHAI ROAM THE EARTH TERRORIZING, FEEDING, AND KILLING ANY LIVING THING IN THEIR PATH. WITH EACH DAY THE HUMAN POPULOUS DWINDLES.

ENTER CALE....A TIME TRAVELING WARRIOR WHOSE BODY IS INHABITED BY A SYMBIOTIC CREATURE, THAT AT A MOMENTS NOTICE CAN TRANSFORM HIM INTO A SUPERPOWERED FIGHTING MACHINE.

CALE'S QUEST TO DETERMINE HIS HERITAGE AND SOURCE OF HIS MYSTERIOUS ABILITIES PUTS HIM IN DIRECT CONFLICT WITH THE MECHAI. AFTER YEARS OF WARRING AGAINST THEM CALE DISCOVERS THAT THEIR ORIGINS ARE INTERCONNECTED BY ONE THING.....A MYTHICAL CITY COMPLEX KNOWN ONLY AS OKEMUS!

NOW CALE MUST JOURNEY TO OKEMUS IN AN ATTEMPT TO DISCOVER THE SECRETS OF HIS OWN BEGINNINGS AND SAVE HUMANKIND OR LOSE BOTH FOREVER.

Story

Taylor Sterling

Words

Eugene Argent

Pencils

Taylor Sterling

Inks

Jaxen De Nobriga

Colors

Francisco Perez

Letters

Taylor Esposito
of Ghost Glyph Studios

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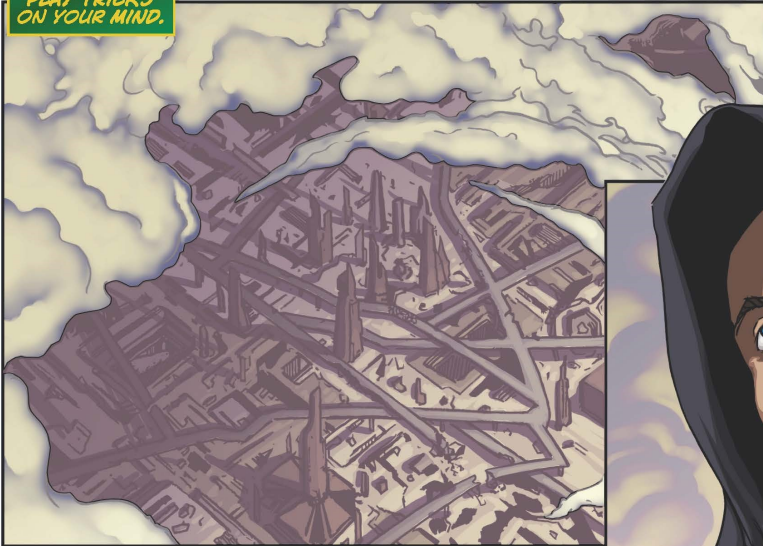


Cover A
by Taylor Sterling
and Ellis Clark



Cover B
by Taylor Sterling

THESE LONG WALKS CAN PLAY TRICKS ON YOUR MIND.



THEY MAKE YOU THINK OF THINGS YOU'D RATHER FORGET.



MAKE YOU LOOK AT A WORLD YOU'D RATHER NOT SEE.



3021.



HEH. IT'S ALMOST FUNNY. I'VE BEEN HERE FOR THREE YEARS AND I'M STILL NOT USED TO ANY YEAR THAT DOESN'T BEGIN WITH A TWO.

I'M SO THANKFUL... THANKFUL THAT MY FORMATIVE YEARS WERE NOT SPENT IN THIS HELLHOLE.





--A WORLD THAT HAS SEEN THE RISE OF GENETIC ABOMINATION AND THE FALL OF ONCE GREAT NATIONS. A WORLD THAT HAS MADE SLAVES OF MEN--AND BEGGARS OF PRESIDENTS.

KABOOOM!

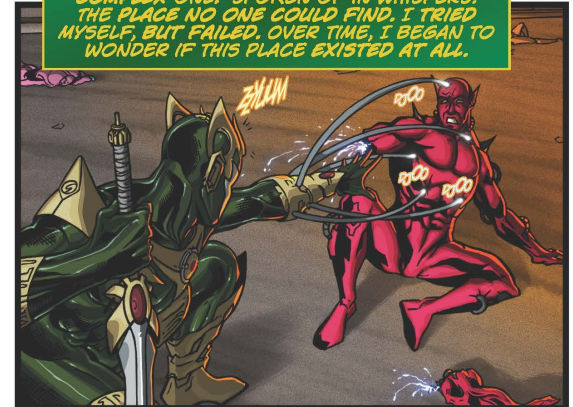
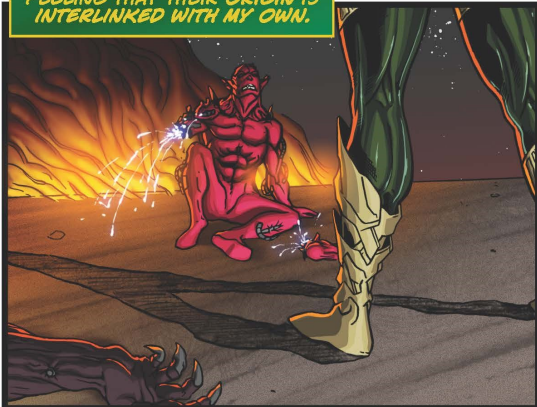
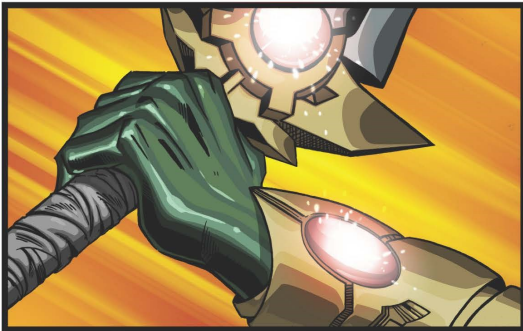
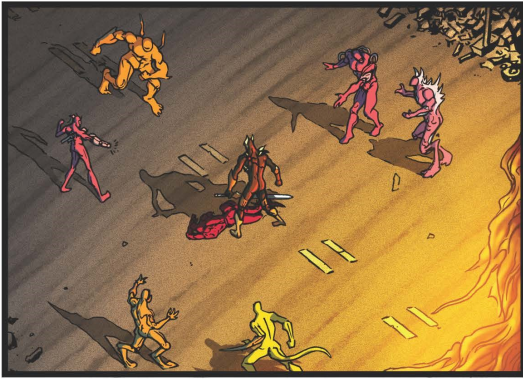
TO GROW UP IN THIS WORLD IS A FRIGHTENING THOUGHT.

BUT THERE IS SOMETHING WORSE: THE THOUGHT THAT NO ONE HAS A SOLUTION.

WELL I HAVE A SOLUTION. I'VE EXERCISED THAT SOLUTION FOR THREE YEARS.

THEY'RE CALLED THE MECHAI. NOBODY KNOWS WHERE THEY CAME FROM. FOR YEARS, THEY HAVE SPREAD ACROSS THE GLOBE, CAPTURING VAST TERRITORIES AS THEIR OWN. THEY ARE A BRUTAL, POWERFUL SUB-SPECIES, A CURIOUS MIX OF MAN AND MACHINE.





MY HOPES WERE RECENTLY REKINDLED, HOWEVER, WHEN I RECEIVED INFORMATION ON A MECHAI THAT SUPPOSEDLY KNEW THE LOCATION OF OKEMUS.

HIS NAME WAS BARNABAS, AND HE WAS A REAL MONSTER. I CAN NEVER SPEAK OF THE ATROCITIES THAT HE COMMITTED. NEVER DESCRIBE WHAT I SAW IN THAT DYING MECHAI'S HEAD.



BINK
BINK
BINK

WLOUSHH

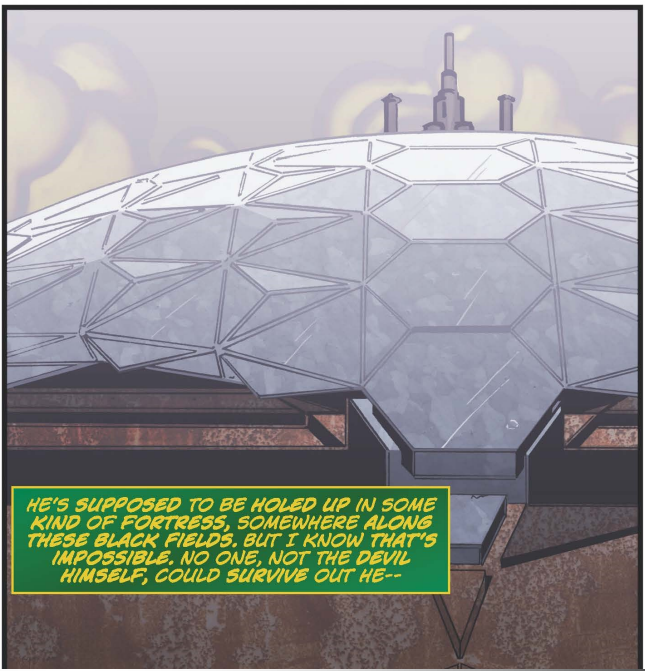
DJOO
DJOO
DJOO



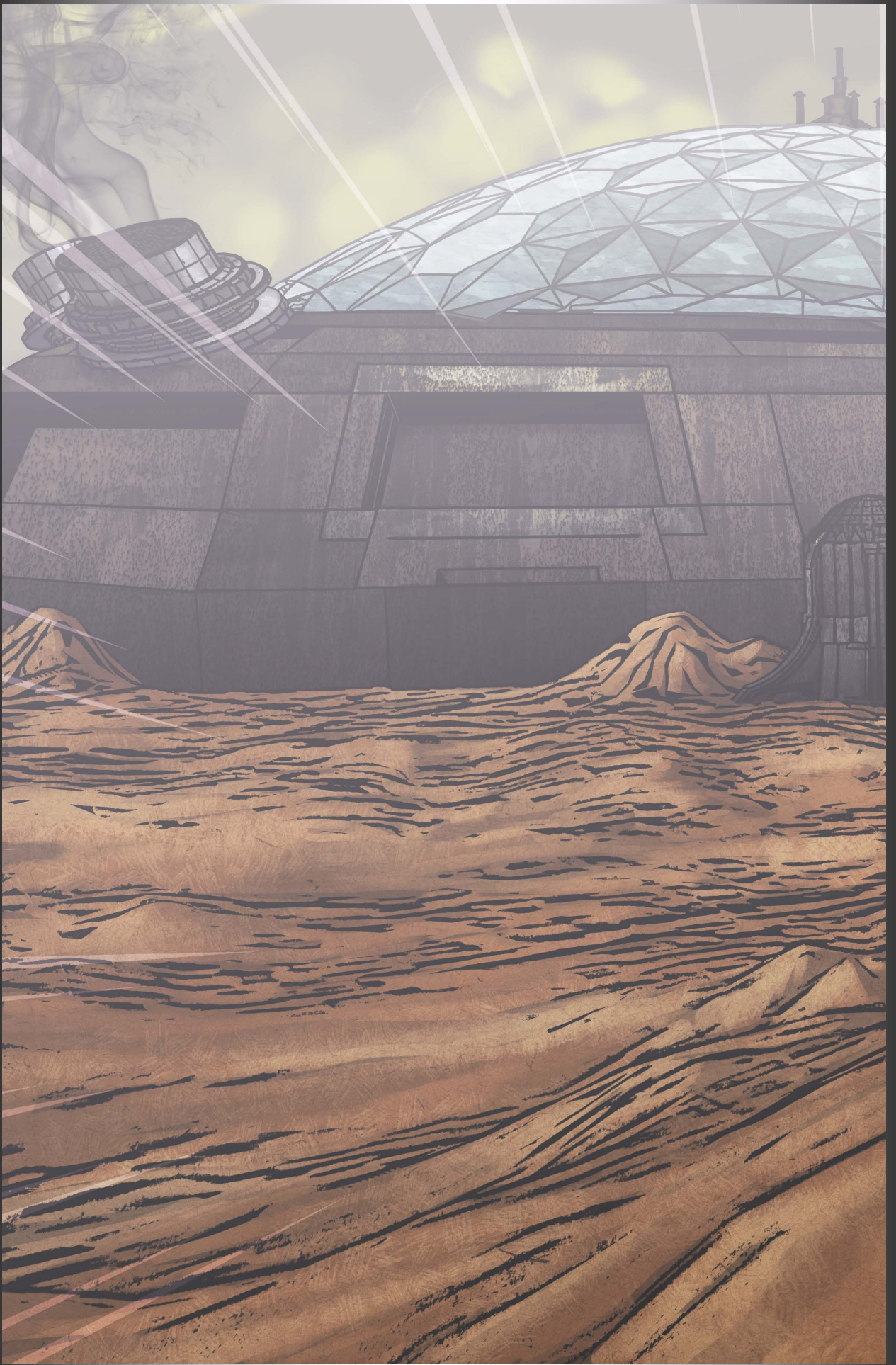
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME, I AM AFRAID.



BUT I WON'T BACK DOWN. BARNABAS WILL GIVE ME THE INFORMATION I SEEK ONE WAY OR THE OTHER-- ASSUMING I EVER FIND HIM.



HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE HOLED UP IN SOME KIND OF FORTRESS, SOMEWHERE ALONG THESE BLACK FIELDS. BUT I KNOW THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. NO ONE, NOT THE DEVIL HIMSELF, COULD SURVIVE OUT HE--





I STAND
CORRECTED!

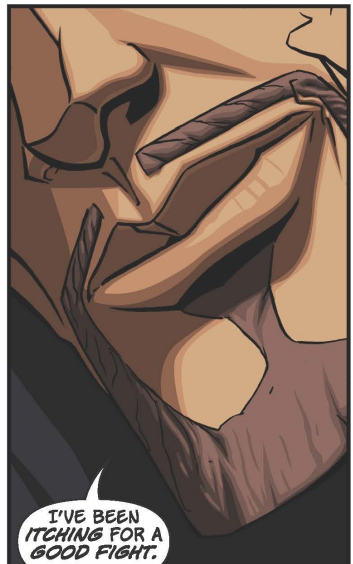
SENTRIES.
TOUGH ONES, BY
THEIR LOOKS.



THIS
OUGHT TO
BE FUN.

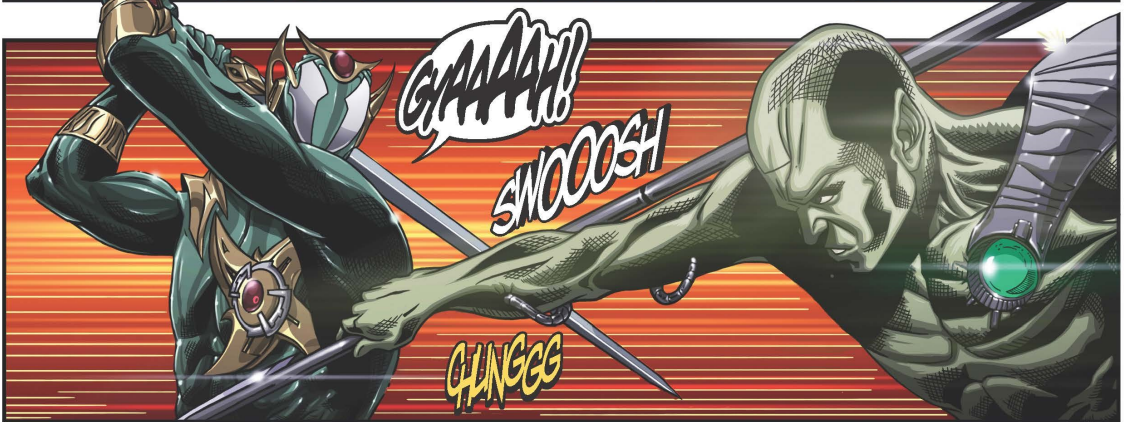
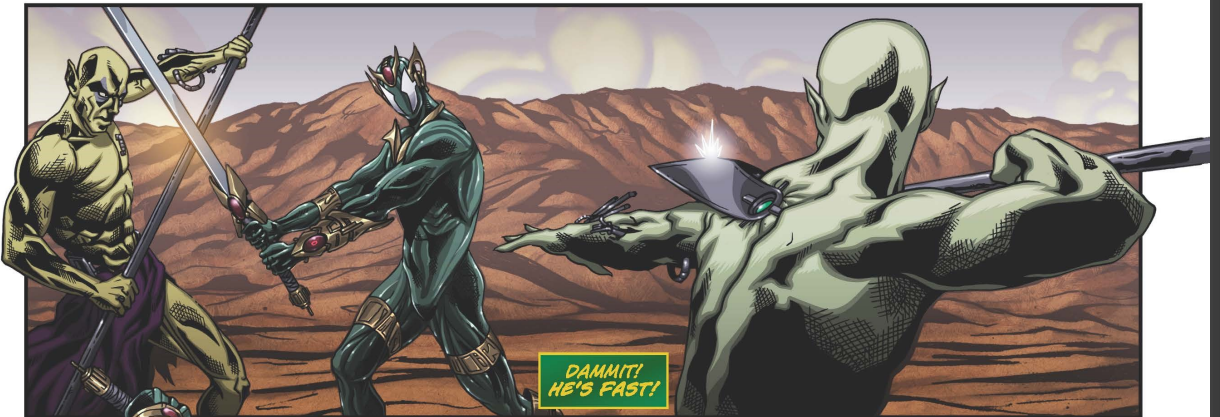


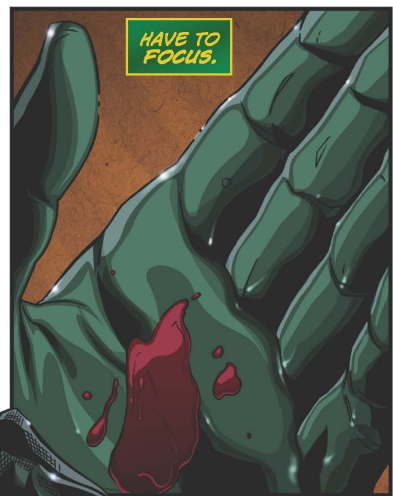
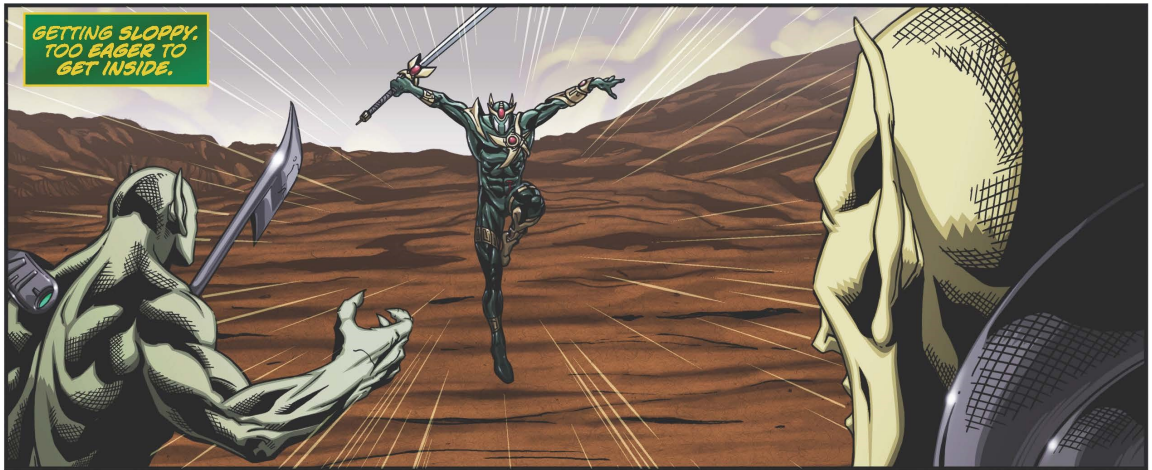
NO
ONE SEES
BARTABASI
TURN AND GO
OR WE CUT
YOU DOWN!

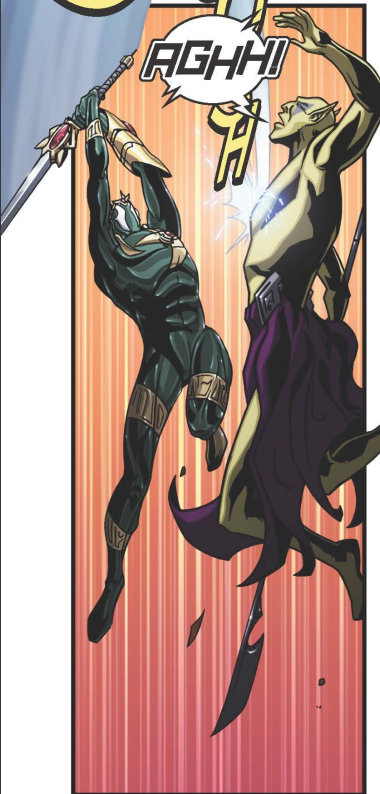
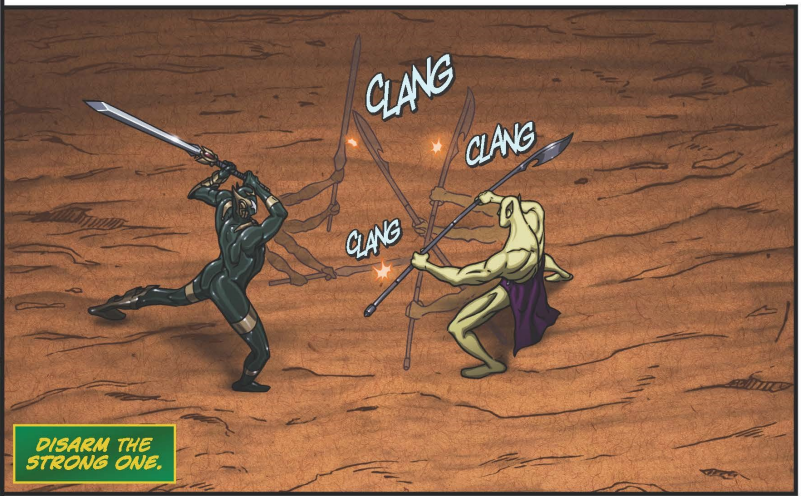
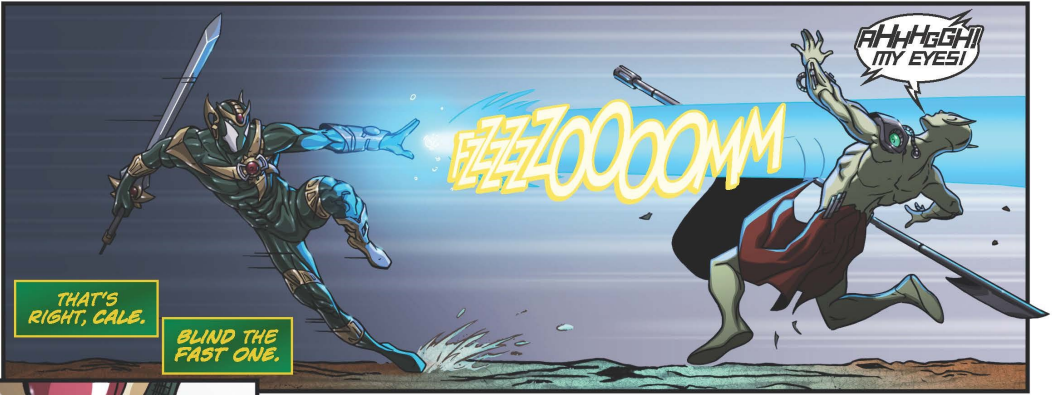


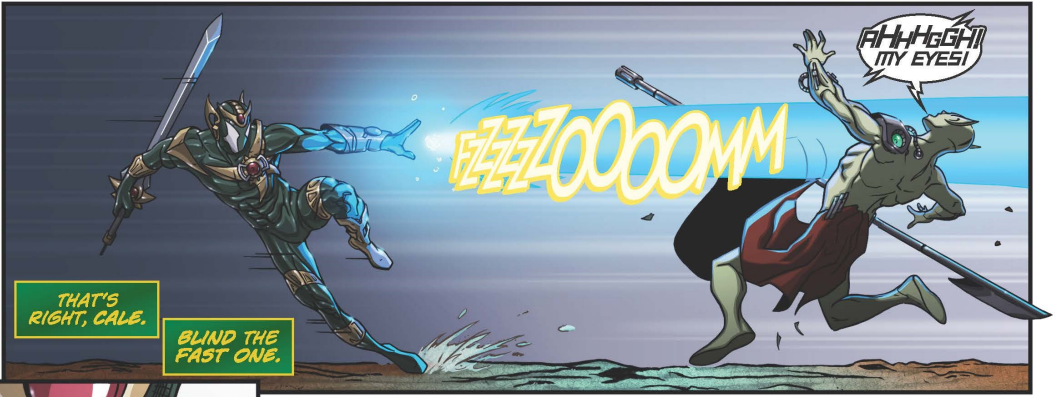
I'VE BEEN
ITCHING FOR A
GOOD FIGHT.



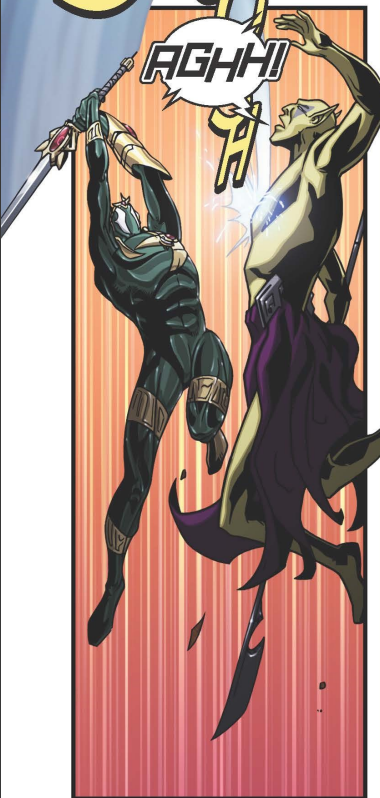
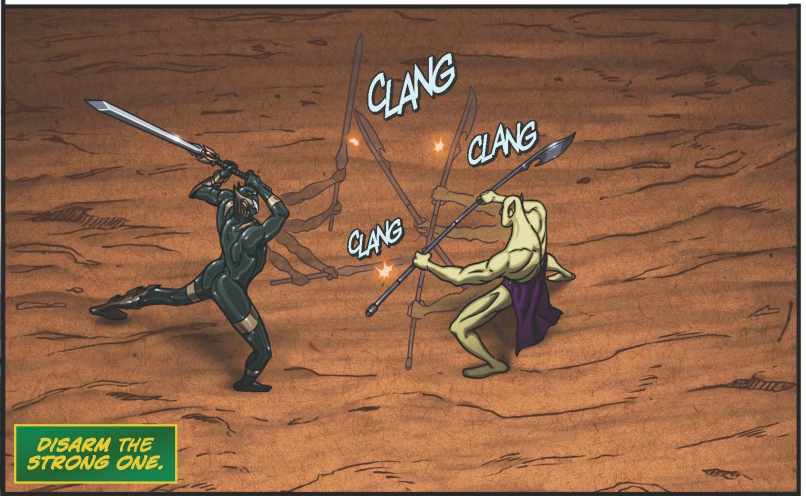


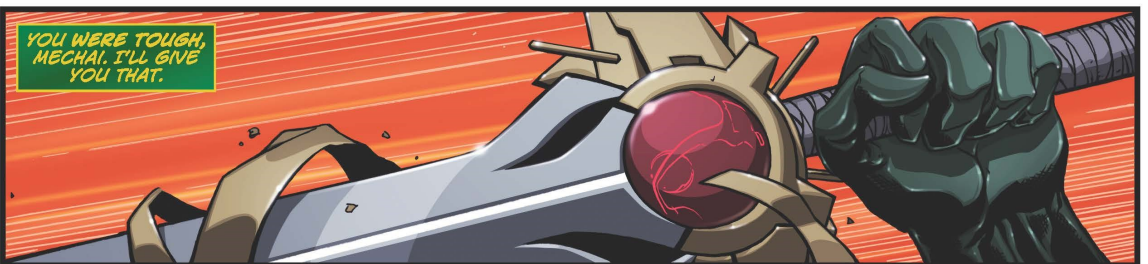
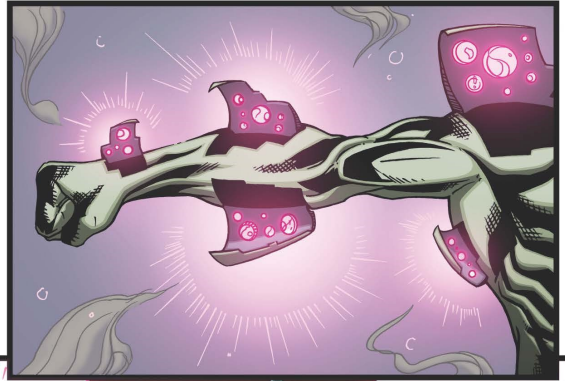


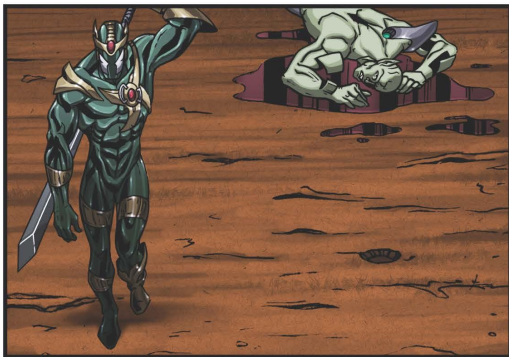




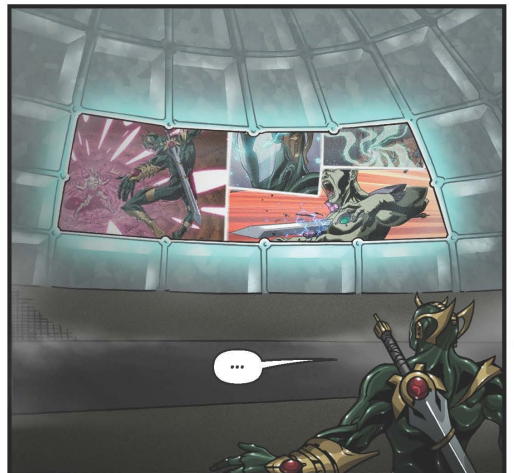
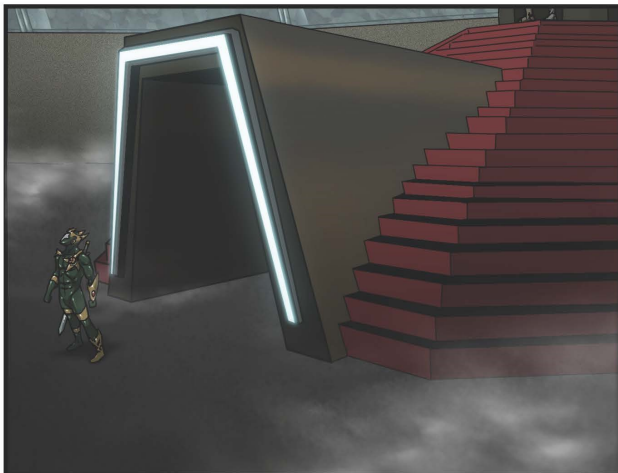
THAT'S RIGHT, CALE.
BLIND THE FAST ONE.











What have we here?

You've just read a little more than half of the introductory ZERO issue of OKEMUS. As described by it's creator,

OKEMUS is a sci-fi manga sentai-esque action epic about a young man named Cale who unknowingly possesses a latent super-human ability that could potentially save the human race. Enter the Okemus Hunters four villainous bio-mechanical warriors who have traveled from a dark desolate future to our modern day time period to acquire this ability and use for there own evil purposes.

Like the sound of that? The series has five issues currently including the zero issue, with more on the way. I had an opportunity to speak with the creator, T.J. Sterling last year as the Kickstarter was wrapping up, and

Check out www.RAecomics.com and buy physical or digital copies to get caught up to the story of OKEMUS!



RAECOMICS™

LUETH

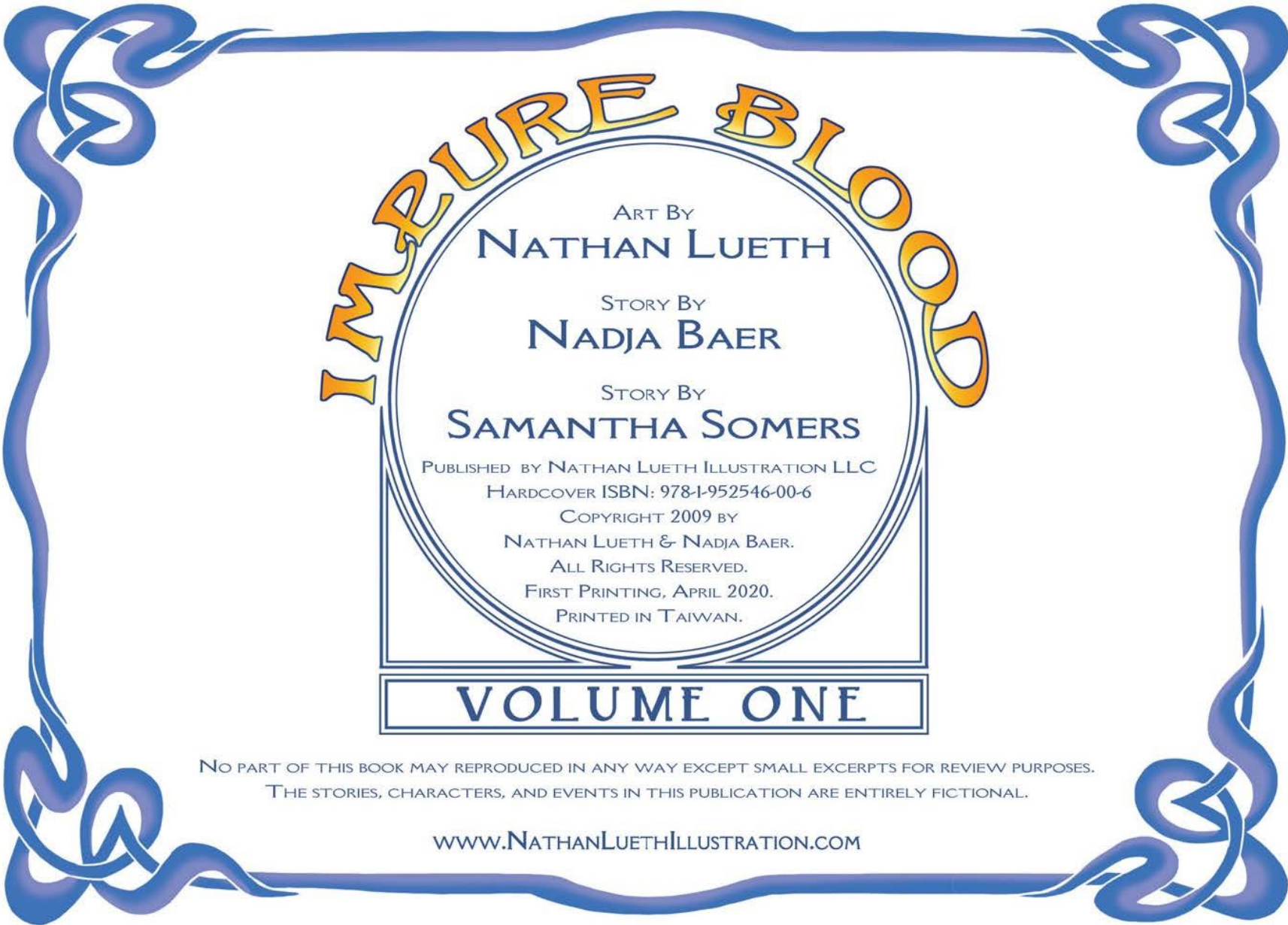
BAER

EMPERE BLOOD



VOLUME ONE





IMPEURE BLOOD

ART BY
NATHAN LUETH

STORY BY
NADJA BAER

STORY BY
SAMANTHA SOMERS

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VOLUME ONE

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THE STORIES, CHARACTERS, AND EVENTS IN THIS PUBLICATION ARE ENTIRELY FICTIONAL.

WWW.NATHANLUETHILLUSTRATION.COM



THAT'S TWO
DOWN!!

ONLY THREE
CHALLENGERS
REMAIN FOR THE
REIGNING CHAMPION
OF VERESTA
STADIUM...

THE ABOMINATION!!

THE VERESTA KEEPERS
WOULD LIKE TO REMIND
YOU THAT ALL BETS
ARE FINAL!



DEFAULTERS
WILL BE PUT IN THE
RING TO FACE THE
ABOMINATION
NEXT WEEK!

... AND THE
ABOMINATION TAKES
DOWN ANOTHER
CHALLENGER!!

ANOTHER
COURAGEOUS
ATTEMPT! BUT HE'S
LEFT HIMSELF
OPEN!

OOOOH!!
AND HE PAYS
THE PRICE!

NINGGGGAAAAAAAAHH!!!

SKRUCH!

TAH!

SKRUCH!

THE CHAMPION
IN WOUNDED!!
COULD THIS BE THE
END OF HIS TERRIBLE
REIGN?!?

ELNOR,
BRIBE THE
GUARDS
AT-

"AT THE
NORTHEAST
UNDERGROUND
EXIT."

I KNOW
LORD
CASPIAN.

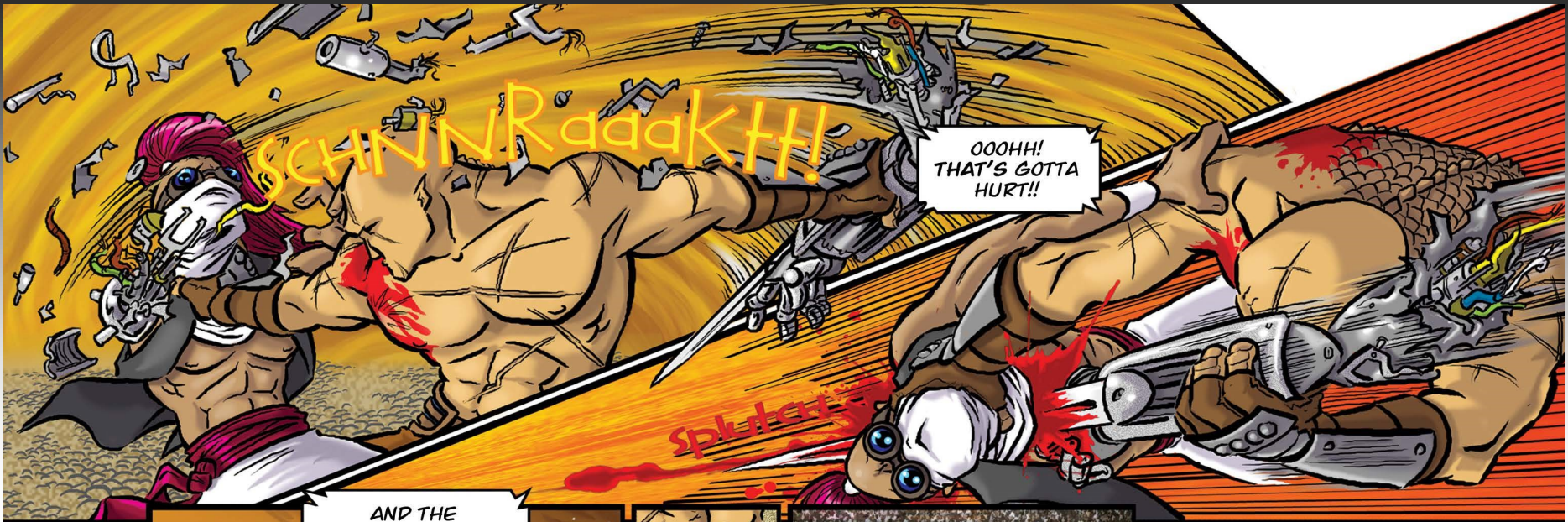
THEN GO.
IT'S TONIGHT OR
NEVER!

IS THERE
A REASON
YOU'RE STILL
HERE?

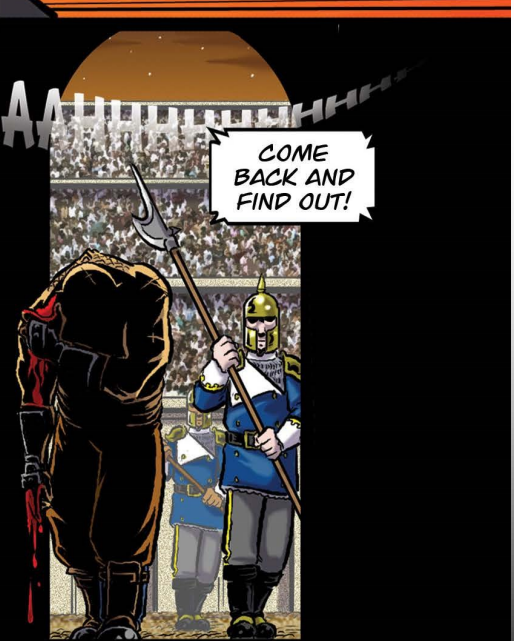
THIS
FIGHT IS ALL BUT
OVER. GET TO THE
GLADIATOR'S
CELL.

***we know where it is**

TONIGHT
OR NEVER
...



AND THE
ABOMINATION LIVES
TO SEE ANOTHER
FIGHT!





WHO'S THERE?

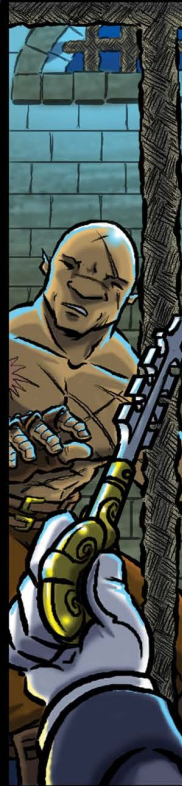
I CAN SMELL YOU. SHOW YOURSELF.



ISN'T IT PAST YOUR BEDTIME?

I HAVE SOMETHING YOU WANT.

I HIGHLY DOUBT THAT, CHILD.



I WILL ONLY MAKE THIS OFFER ONCE.

SOMETHING IMPORTANT HAS GONE MISSING.

IN EXCHANGE FOR YOUR HELP IN RECOVERING IT, YOU WILL EARN YOUR FREEDOM.

AGREED?



YES!! OF COURSE! I GIVE YOU MY WORD ON MY HONOR!

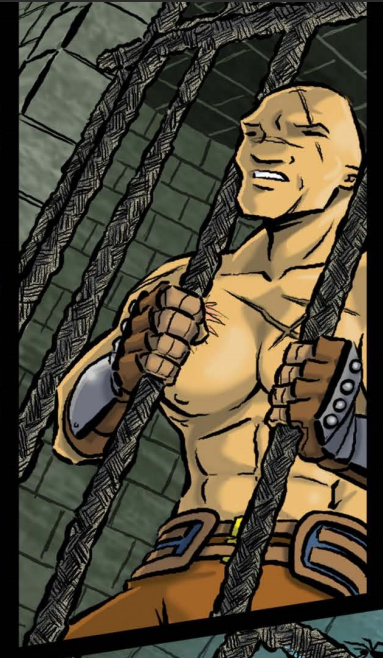
I DON'T KNOW YOU, OR YOUR HONOR.

ON THE HONOR OF MY FAMILY LINE THEN!

AS FAR BACK AS IT CAN BE TRACED!



TO THE
BEGINNING OF
THE BLOOD?



HOW DO
YOU KNOW THE
SACRED OATH OF
MY PEOPLE?

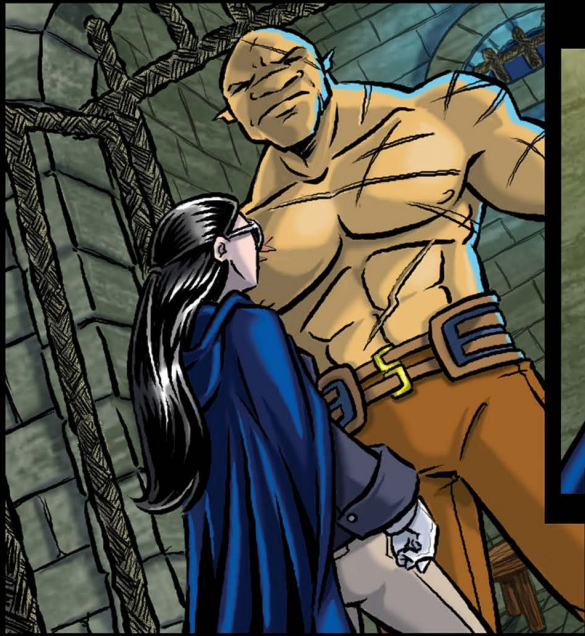
SWEAR
IT.



TO THE
BEGINNING OF
THE BLOOD.



Schlakt





ELNOR?

YOU WERE JUST SUPPOSED TO BRIBE THEM.

WHAT..?

THEY GOT THEMSELVES A NIGHT THEY'LL NEVER FORGET.

...OR REMEMBER.

DO YOU KNOW THE LAWS OF VERESTA STADIUM?

YES. I MUST PASS THE CITY GATES BY SUNRISE TO EARN MY FREEDOM.



THEN LET'S NOT WASTE MOONLIGHT!



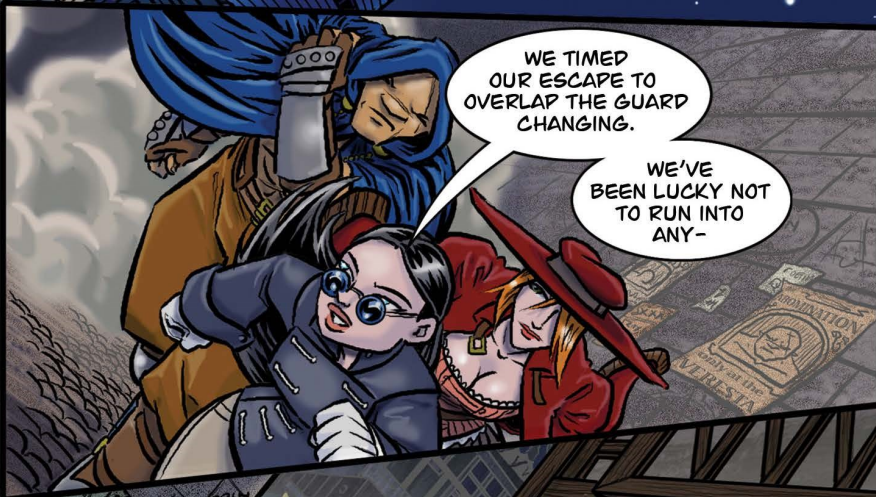
DIDJU SHEE THE BIG RED THING IN THE SHKY...?

HIC

UHR... MAYBE IT WASN'T RED...



THE STADIUM WAS BETTER GUARDED THAN THE REST OF THE CITY.



WE TIMED OUR ESCAPE TO OVERLAP THE GUARD CHANGING.

WE'VE BEEN LUCKY NOT TO RUN INTO ANY-

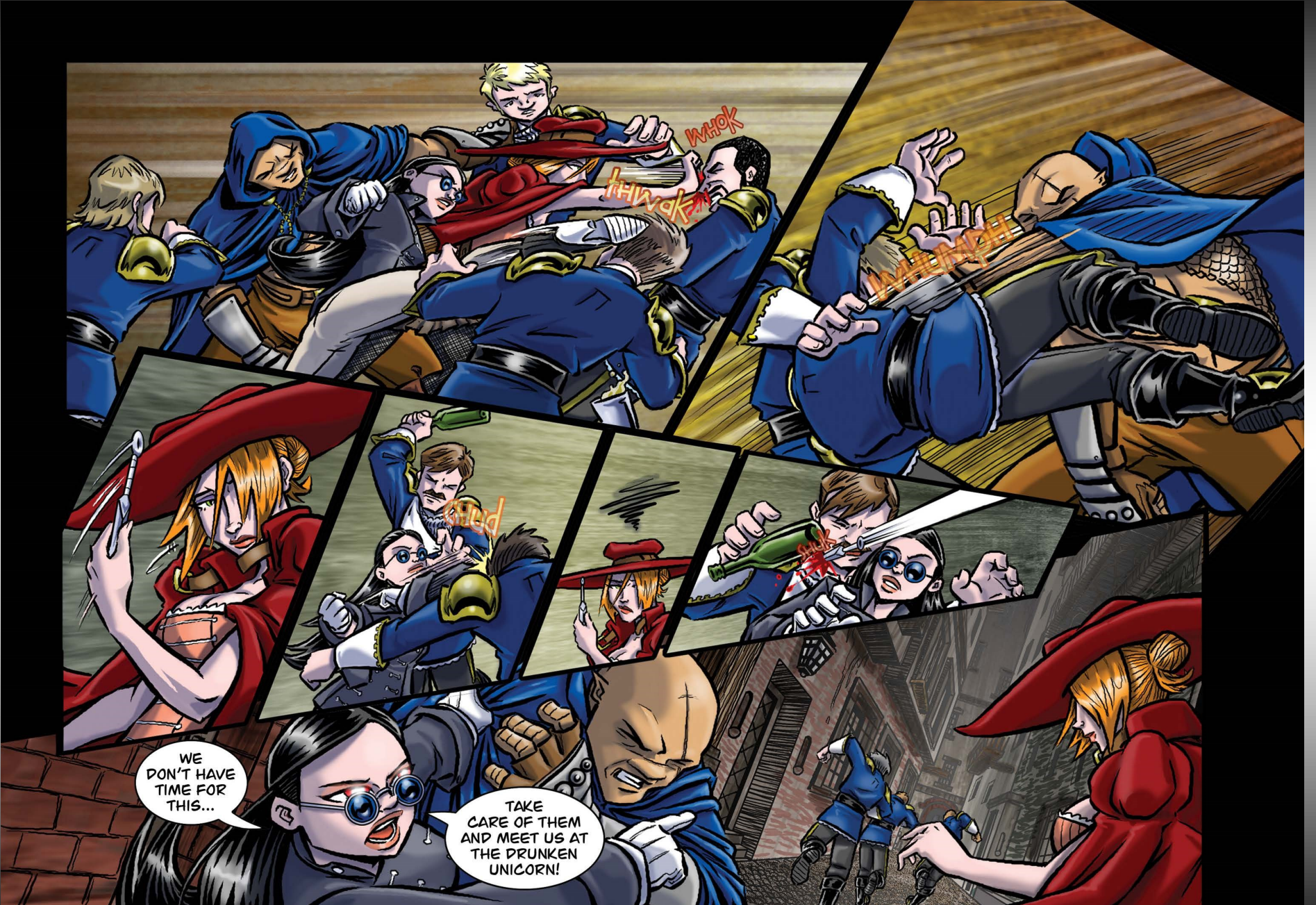


HAPPY BIRTHDAY RODNEY

STOP STOPPIN FROM ME ALL THAT

JULIUM'S CHROMATIC COLAN!

VANGUARD



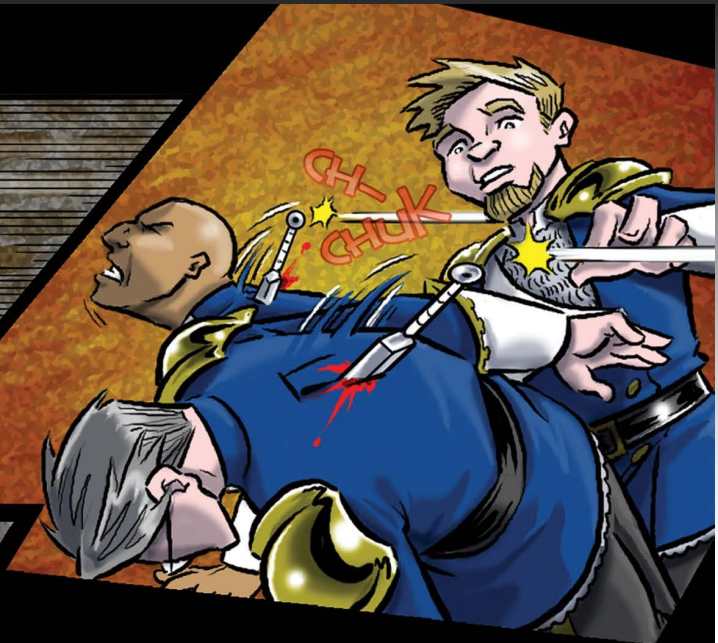
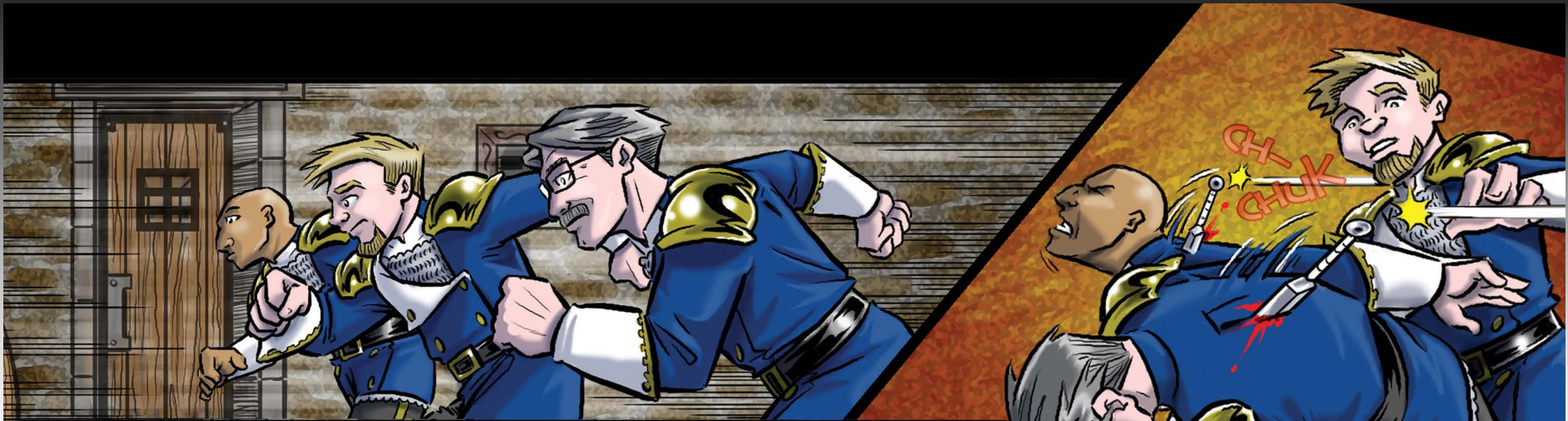
WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS...

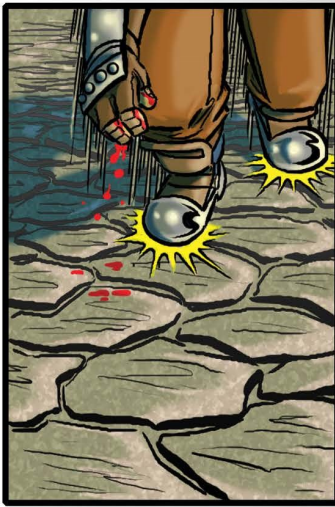
TAKE CARE OF THEM AND MEET US AT THE DRUNKEN UNICORN!

WHOK

thwack

thud





...TASTES
LIKE
DIRT...
*



...DANGEROUS CREATURE...
 ...ESCAPED THIS MORNING...
 ...ONCE SAW HIM RIP A MAN'S ARM OUT OF IT'S SOCKET...!
 SCARY!
 ...NO ONE'S SEEN HIM LEAVE TOWN...
 ...MUST BE HIDING OUT SOMEWHERE...
 ...YOU'RE KIDDING...



...FURTHERMORE, THAT THING IS THE PROPERTY OF THE VERESTA STADIUM!

IF YOU DON'T HAVE IT RETURNED AT ONCE YOU WILL ANSWER TO THE KEEPERS.



WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE ESCAPE?

DON'T TRY TO DENY IT, SON.

RETURN THE GLADIATOR AND I'LL KEEP YOUR NAME OFF THE RECORDS.

...AGAIN.

YOU HAVE NO PROOF, FATHER. I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.

YOU'VE BROKEN ONE TOO MANY LAWS, CASPIAN.

IF YOU DON'T RETURN HIM, THE KEEPERS WILL-

THE KEEPERS WILL WHAT?



NO WORD FROM THE GREAT WATCHMAKER IN THE SKY?

YOU SHOULD BE LESS CONCERNED ABOUT MY WATCH THAN THE WELL-BEING OF YOUR CHARGE.

DARA CAN TAKE CARE OF HERSELF IN A ONE-ENTRANCE ROOM.

BESIDES, NOBODY'S GOING TO GO BARGING IN ON "THE ABOMINATION" UNANNOUNCED.



THAT'D BE SUICIDE.

KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN!

THE WHOLE TOWN DOESN'T NEED TO KNOW WE'RE HARBORING THAT MONSTER.

OHHH... THEY'LL FIGURE IT OUT SOON ENOUGH.

THERE'S NO HIDING SOMETHING THAT BIG.



IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I BELIEVE THERE'S A DRINK AT THE BAR I'M JUST DYING TO MEET!

WE LEAVE BEFORE DAYBREAK TOMORROW. BE READY.





KNOCK
KNOCK



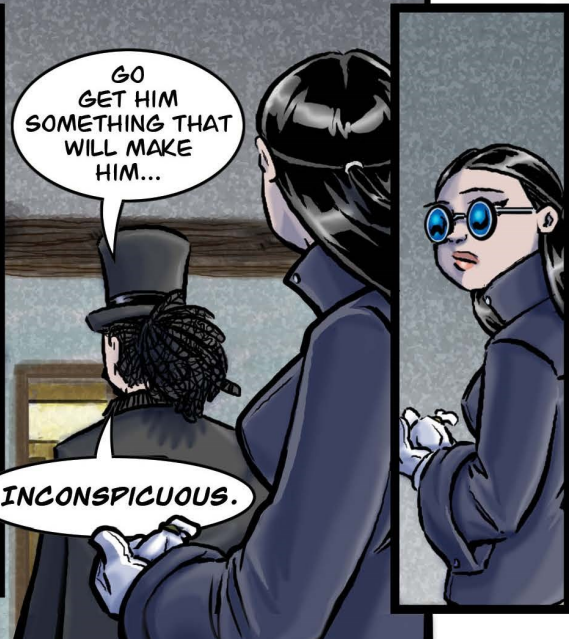
K-CHK

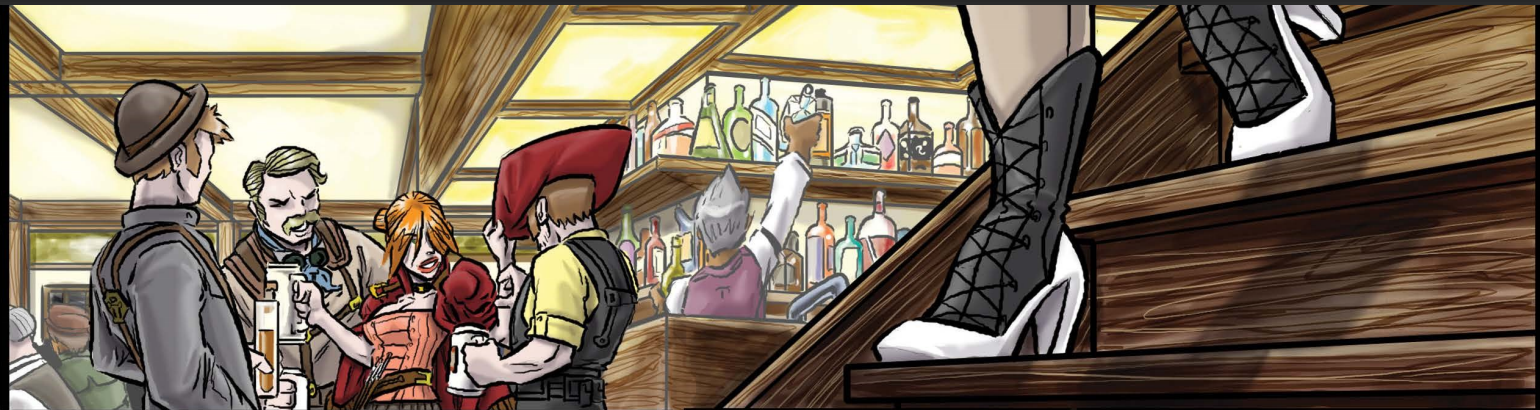


IT'S OPEN.



IT'S OKAY.
HE'S UNCONSCIOUS.
HE CAN'T HURT
YOU.





KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN!

NO ONE NEEDS TO KNOW WHO I AM!



LOOK
AROUND,
PRINCESS!

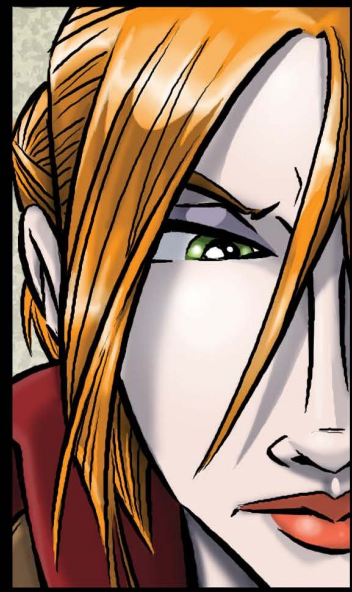
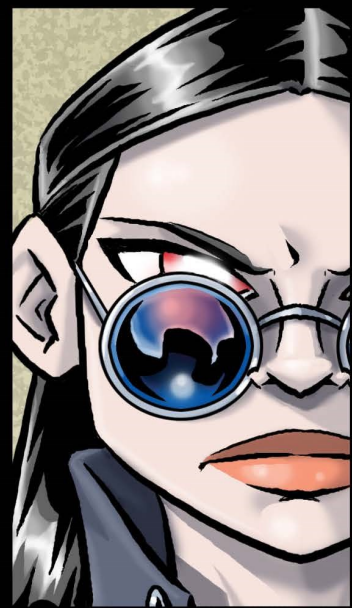
NOBODY
CARES WHO
YOU ARE.

THEN YOUR
SERVICES WON'T
BE REQUIRED,
WILL THEY?

AH, BUT
YOU'RE NOT
THE ONE WHO PAYS
MY FEE, ARE
YOU?

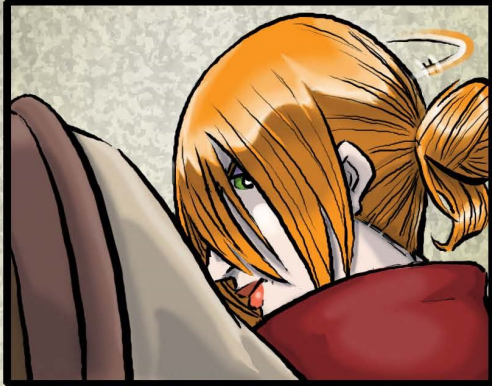
IF YOU
WANT TO FOLLOW
ME OUT INTO THE RAIN,
THEN BY ALL
MEANS.

I THINK
I CAN MANAGE
A WALK TO THE
CLOTHIERS ON
MY OWN.



THERE
YA ARE, LITTLE
LADY!

C'MON
BACK TO THE BAR,
NOW! I GOT A NICE
HOT WINE WAITIN'
FOR YA!



GLORIFIED
BABYSITTER,
THAT'S WHAT
I AM...

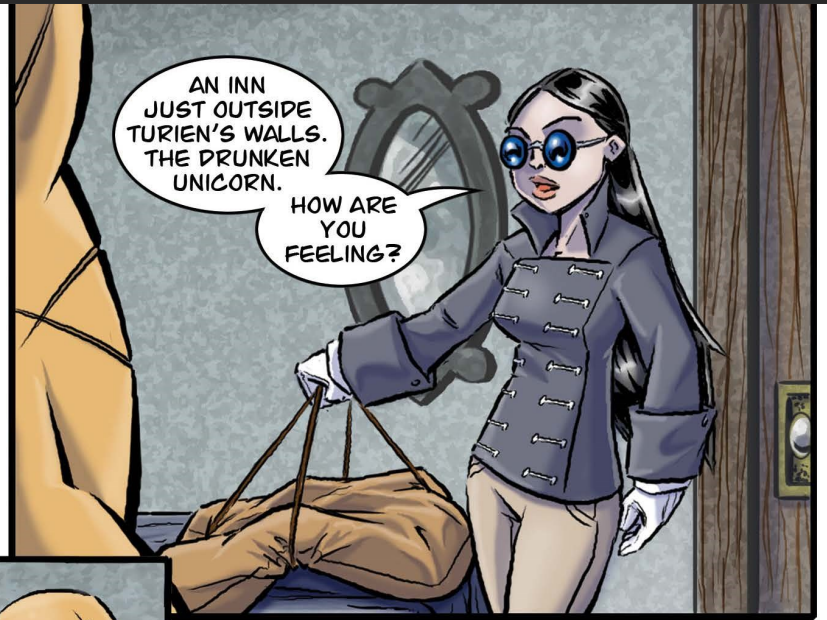


HOW
ABOUT THAT
DRINK?





WHERE ARE WE!?



AN INN JUST OUTSIDE TURIEN'S WALLS. THE DRUNKEN UNICORN.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING?




HOW DO YOU KNOW THE OATH OF THE ANCIENTS?



I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU.



AND I'LL FORGIVE YOU FOR NOT THANKING ME FOR YOUR FREEDOM.



SO LONG AS
I AM BOUND TO
YOU, I AM STILL
NOT FREE.



YOU GAVE
ME THE OATH OF
YOUR OWN FREE
WILL.

THE
REST IS JUST
SEMANTICS.



WHAT
DO YOU NEED
ME FOR?



YOU'RE
GOING TO
HELP ME FIND
THE LAST TRUE
ANCIENT.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN "THE LAST TRUE ANCIENT"?



I MEAN WHAT I SAY. HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE BLOOD THAT FLOWS IN YOUR VEINS?



ENOUGH TO KNOW YOU HUMANS CALL ME ABOMINATION.



YOU KNEW ENOUGH TO RECOGNIZE THE OATH...



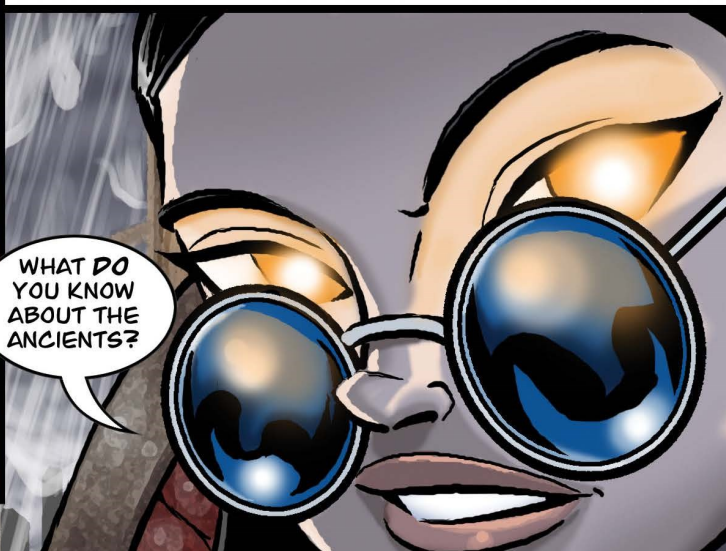
SO DID YOU.



HRRM...

I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT REAL ANCIENTS.

MY MOTHER WAS A HALF-BLOOD. SHE DIDN'T KNOW ANY OTHERS LIKE US.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE ANCIENTS?



I KNOW THAT COMPARED TO ANCIENTS, HUMANS ARE WEAK, PITIFUL CREATURES.

THE ANCIENTS DEFENDED HUMANITY AGAINST THE BLACK ARMIES OF ILHENDOR.

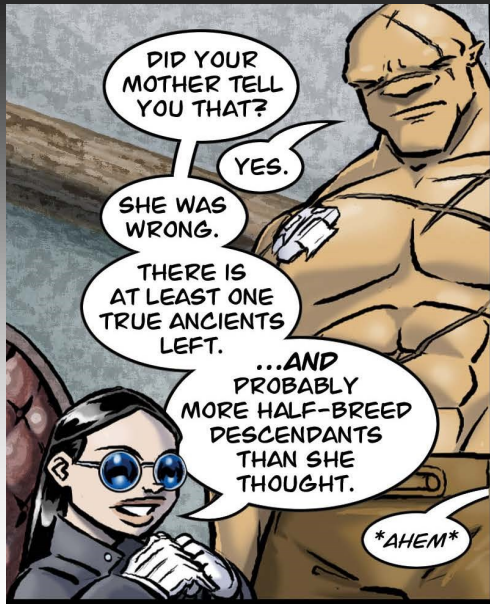
...AND IN THANKS, HUMANS BETRAYED, HUNTED, AND MURDERED THEM.

IN AN EFFORT TO PREVENT THEIR EXTINCTION, THE ANCIENTS MIXED THEIR BLOOD WITH HUMANS, BUT IT DIDN'T HELP.

THERE ARE NO TRUE ANCIENTS LEFT.

...ONLY A FEW SCATTERED HALF-BREEDS LIKE ME.

THE ANCIENTS ARE DEAD.



DID YOUR MOTHER TELL YOU THAT?

YES.

SHE WAS WRONG.

THERE IS AT LEAST ONE TRUE ANCIENTS LEFT.

...AND PROBABLY MORE HALF-BREED DESCENDANTS THAN SHE THOUGHT.

AHEM



I SEE IT HAS RECOVERED ...



JUST MAKE SURE WE'RE READY TO LEAVE BEFORE SUNRISE.



AND YOU... DON'T SHOW YOURSELF IN PUBLIC WITHOUT A DISGUISE AS LONG AS YOU'RE WITH US.

EVER!





What is the device? What is Caspian up to? Who is the last Ancient?

Well you'll just have to go and read the book!

Pick up Volume 1 and Volume 2 from www.NathanLuethIllustration.com, and sign up for the Mailing List, because the ALREADY FUNDED Volume 3 is on Kickstarter now (with the option to buy Vol 1 and 2) and Volume 4 will be coming soon in hardcover!

If you can't wait for the hardcover, you can pick up paperbacks on Amazon:

[Volume 1](#)—[Volume 2](#)—[Volume 3](#)—[Volume 4](#)

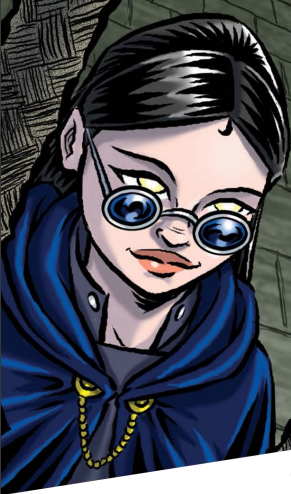
Check out the [Impure Blood Vol. 3 Kickstarter!](#)



Sometimes you come across great stuff just strolling along the information super-highway. That's how I found Impure Blood. Vol 1 was in pre-order, and I actually think I found out through Instagram. I reached out to put in my order with

Nathan Lueth.

I'm already on board for Vol 3 (Currently on Kickstarter!) so you know how that has gone. I'm thoroughly enjoying the series, so I posed a few questions to the creator himself.



[Dalibor] I decided a long time ago that my work was not public-ready, so I don't really share my art. What was your first piece that you felt was ready for public consumption?

[Nathan] I don't think I ever faced that particular challenge. I remember briefly trying to []keep my sketchbooks to myself in high school but, for better or worse, people were always looking over my shoulder. When I went to art college, every class started with a group critique, so everyone saw everything the others were doing. My first art job out of college was drawing caricatures in the Mall of America and at fairs where, not only did I constantly have random passersbies looking over my shoulder, but seeing me in action was the best advertising. Short story long, hiding has never really been an option for me and, for the most part, people have been positive and supportive.

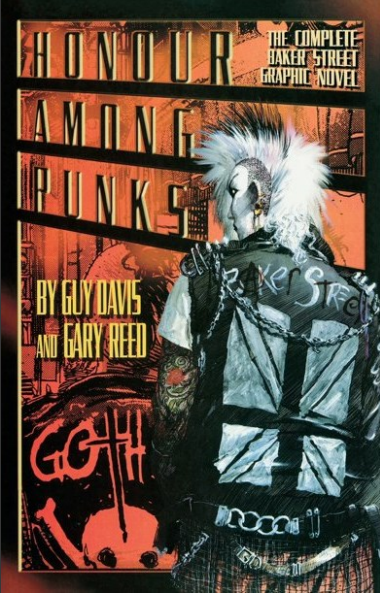
You have been working on Impure Blood for over a decade (at least according to Facebook). When you started it, and more generally when you begin work on a project, are you seeing the final product in your head and just working to get there, or do you approach it in more of a free-form workflow?

I think it's important to have a destination in mind but leave room for exploration along the way. I'm a strong believer in endings. Nothing is worse than when a story starts to drag and you realize that the creator is trying to stretch it out further. That said, I think it's important to not be married to arbitrary things like X number of issues or pages. Constraints like that are important, but if something needs an extra page here or there to let things lay out at a natural tempo, then I say let them play out. With Impure Blood specifically, we always knew what the final destination/conflict was going to be and that it was going to be four, 100(ish) page books. That said, once we got to the final battle, I pushed for a little more space and extra pages so that we could give the climax the attention it deserved.



INDIE FINDS

This is a short list of indie books I read since the last issue and have loved.



I'm a fan of Sherlock Holmes. I bet you didn't think this was going to open a description about a series called Honour Among Punks, right? Well read on, friend.

Set in an alternate universe London, this series is a loose take on Holmes, with a lesbian woman as the investigative genius, told (at first) through the eyes of a visiting American woman.

I'm only a couple chapters in and I'm having a blast. I know little about British and even less about punk culture, so having this perspective on both is interesting. It's a bit wordier than I'm used to, so I'm taking my time with it. It's out of print, but I got a really good copy on Amazon.

You can use [this link](#) if you'd like to check it out.

This series was an easy buy for me. I am a huge fan of Tom Raney's art, and high-action god stuff is very much in my wheel house.

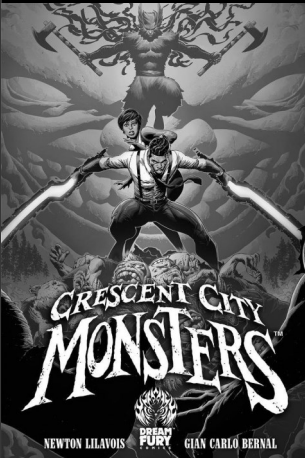
I paid full price, I waited normal shipping times, only to find it is just VOLUME ONE!

Now I did definitely confront Ron Marz on twitter about this—like the jerk that I am—and he did confirm very graciously that there are plans for more in this universe.

This is a very solid chapter one. Like a great 2-part series opener that absolutely leaves you wanting more.

And in no uncertain terms, I WANT MORE.

Purchase via www.ominouspress.com, [Amazon](#), or digitally on [Kindle/ComiXology](#).

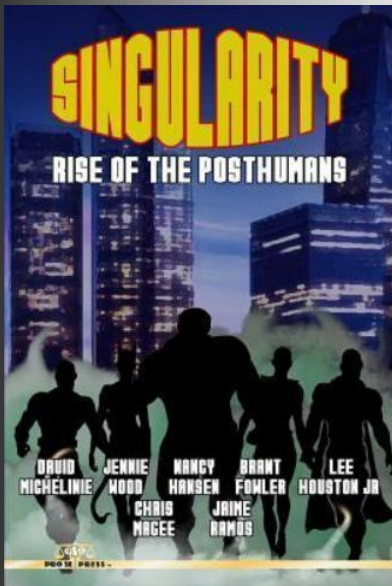


I found this book on Instagram, and bought all three current issues on the strength of the art alone. Sometimes it's good enough to have outstanding artwork in your book to get the sale. Now, that's not to say that story is not important, because I would not be writing about this book if the story was not OUTSTANDING. Civil Rights Era New Orleans, Magic, and obviously—monsters. And that's just the first issue!

Plus—the digital copies are on sale for only \$1.99! At \$2.99 they were priced appropriately. At this price that is a DEAL!

You've spent \$6 on much less awesome things, trust me.

Check out the books on the [Dream Fury site](#).



I bought this years ago from Jennie Wood at a convention. I'm a fan of her comic Flutter, so I was interested in other things she'd written. Picking this up after a few years I literally didn't know anything about the book, besides what's on the front cover. I figured it would be an Anthology of sort, but what kind? Steampunk.

The assembly of authors in this does a fantastic job in weaving an interconnected tapestry of isolated stories. I'm three stories in and they've each been wonderful character explorations with really solid action beats. I'm going to give you give you some descriptions, and you let your fingers do the walking [to this link](#) to buy it:

Cyborg police force. Mechanized giant war dogs.

I backed this book ages ago on Kickstarter, and have just recently backed the third volume, all in hardcover and even got the collector's edition slipcase. Fun fact? I just read the series a couple weeks ago. On the strength of the art alone, along with the Kickstarter experience with the first volume, I was convinced to be part of the whole series.

In a post-apocalyptic world devoid of humans, the animals fight to survive. Natural predators are plenty to worry about, but what happens when the suburban food supply runs out?

Buy at www.easypreyentertainment.com or via these Amazon links:

[Book 1 Physical](#)—[Book 2 Physical](#)—[Book 3 Physical](#)
[Kindle/Comixology Digital](#)



This is a prequel series for a traditional novel that's been out for a while, but I'm glad I came to this universe now. I prefer to read in chronological order, which admittedly has me absorbing a lot of information about this story all at once.

Earth is in a post-technological age, with a planetary embargo preventing the introduction of technology in defense of the "natural order."

The protagonist is The Marshall, who must (quite brutally) use technology to prevent the spread of it.

I'm definitely interested to see where this series goes.

Sign up for the next Kickstarter [here](#), or check out the novel Frontier Forever—[Under the Shadow of the Plateau](#) on Amazon.

TIPS 'N' TRICKS

Every issue, I'll be asking our featured creators to share their tips and tricks for navigating the creative markets.

First up this issue is Zach from Deep Theory Studios:



Tip #1 - Be organized! As cluttered as most of our minds have probably been during these hard times, it's always helpful to have not only an organized workspace, but also organized notes, outlines, ideas, etc. This will keep your mind clear, and allow for you to continue churning out new ideas and concepts without hitting writer's block.

Tip #2 - Study scripts written by some of the greats. Now we're not saying to copy them, and we're not saying that you should try and emulate one of your favorite writer's styles. Go out and read a script by say... Grant Morrison, or Jason Aaron... and you'll see how much fun these guys are truly having. You'll realize that not all scripts need to be written by a robot; and at the very root of it all, comics are about sharing the stories that have been growing in our heads since birth, all the way into adulthood.



Tip #3 - Have trust and try to build a relationship with your artist. While we aren't Eddie Brock--and we don't have our own Venom symbiote suit to mold our thoughts together--a symbiotic relationship with your artist would certainly make life easier. Try to get your artist involved early on in the comic creation process. Ask their thoughts on the story. Give them the freedom to adjust things here and there as they may see fit. With this trust, you will essentially be fusing two great minds together, which can truly lead to even greater things to come.

Bonus Tip - Pay it forward. We took many steps to get where we are but it wouldn't be possible without the many great minds that spared their own time, energy and expertise. Even if you feel you don't have enough experience to help someone, build a relationship with them and ask them what they find out so that you both can benefit from each other's journeys.



Next, Vonell from Millennial Comics drops a powerful gem:



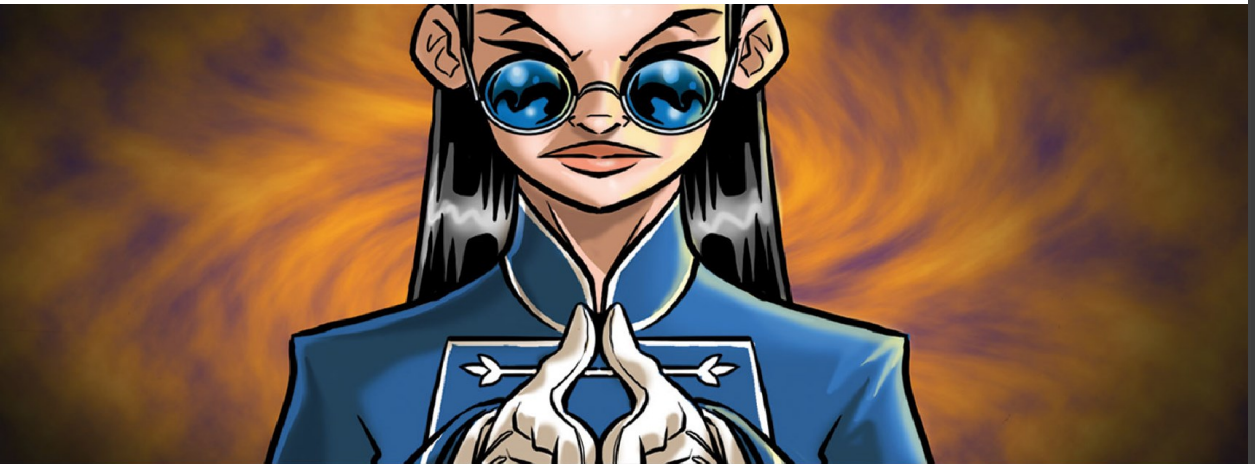
Focus on what "you're" good at and become the best that "you" can be. You are your own person with your own style that no one can copy. So stick to your guns and find your audience that is waiting to read your story but always be willing to grow!



Our gracious cover artist Jiba gives us the blueprint for success:

1. Study the craft.
2. Be aware of the world beyond you.
3. This game isn't a sprint. It's a marathon. So train accordingly.

And finally Nathan gives us a mix of practicality and mindset:



Less is more. The best artwork in the world does a lot with just a little.

Keep your destination in mind. It's OK to move laterally to it, just so long as you're always moving towards it in some fashion.

The visual is visceral. Don't tell what you can show.

As for me, I'm very tempted to just copy-paste last issue's recommendation to avoid procrastination, but it would absolutely be disingenuous, as this magazine is a full quarter late. I could come up with excuses, but I don't want to. The tip this time will be the simplest mantra I keep: Do the damn thing.

Don't wait for the right time of the year, or a day when you have the time—make the time. Do the thing. Whatever it is. A high school acquaintance of mine recently started a wonderfully written blog, with accompanying audio. She's got a family to take care of and she's [11 posts deep](#). I've had a podcast for years—without a script—and I've put out less than half as many podcast episodes in the same amount of time. Make the time. Do the damn thing.

-DZ

EDITORIAL

REDEFINING COMICS

Single issue print comics for \$5 are not going to cut it.

I don't think there is a market that exists that will continue to exist to my single comic book issues for \$5. I think it is unreasonable for Marvel or DC to ask \$5 for a single 22 page issue of a comic.

However when an independent creator does the exact same thing on a Kickstarter I am absolutely much more inclined to pay that \$5. The difference - I think - is that I know Marvel makes money outside of that. I know DC and there are multiple parent companies make billions of dollars every single year. Especially licensing the properties that they are trying to make money off of through print. But the independent Creator typically is not. Independent creators are just trying to make their dream come to fruition.

Now if for example someone like Fabian Nicieza made a Kickstarter proposal that said "hey Marvel will let me do this X-Men story if I can get (x) amount of pre-orders, I'm pretty sure I would pay for it. He's one of my favorite writers. If they allowed us to decide on a per project basis I would say most people would have no problem paying \$5 per issue or whatever the trade paperback price was. I remember a fanfic story from ages ago by an author named Lady Yann, who predicted the coming of Laura Kinney, and had a lovely X-Men fic series that I would pay for if it were possible to make it. I don't particularly need Marvel proper to make me X-Men stories. I just love the X-Men, and if a Claremont, Nicieza, or Logan_Fan_181 were to pitch an X-Men story, if the pitch was good, I would be down. I made that name up up, not sure if that's a real alias. Can you imagine if we could have gotten the pitch for Axis or New 52 and simply got to decide if it succeeded or not by volume of pre-orders? We could have been spared a ton of heartache.

So I guess that's where I'm going with this is - it better for the comic book industry to start following a pre-order model? Creating perhaps a special variant cover for each issue of a miniseries that's about to come out exclusive to Kickstarter or however platform they want to use and using that money to fund the print run but to be able to keep the price of that print run down to two to three dollars to minimize the barrier for entry?

I'm probably going to expand on this in a longer form on a podcast, but i feel like i need to get an insider or two to have the conversation with me.

-DZ

CREATOR INDEX

The whole point here is to get you the reader to interact with, consume, and ideally spend money with the creators I've spotlighted in this magazine. Below you will find a list of everybody's websites and social media tags. Go buy something you bums!

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