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PAGES

The Oh Force: Begins

THE OH-ORIGIN STORY A PURPOSE AND A HOTDOG



A less than Graphic Novella

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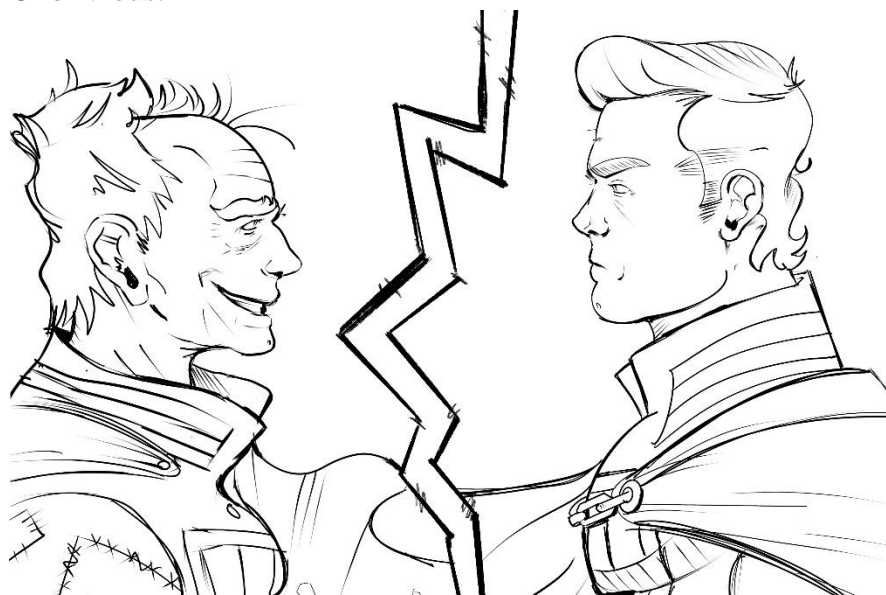
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**PRELUQUE:
A BRIEF BACKSTORY
OF FORCED EVOLUTION**

A Big Bomb, with one of those lovely terrifying stickers showing that its contents are of the radioactive variety, glides downwards toward the ground. On its side, written in a bold, and somehow uptight, vermillion and gold font are the words ‘Тучный мальчик’ (for those of you who do not speak Russian that translates to Fat Boy). The more-than-likely nuclear warhead speeds towards the earth, accompanied by a screaming, high-pitched whistle that drops in pitch – not unlike the sound bombs make in an old cartoon – heralding its inevitable impact with the surface below. An explosion erupts just behind an opulently large, lit-up billboard welcoming you to what was once (as of just moments ago) Las Vegas. It is not long before the sign flickers out as the mushroom of glowing doom expands towards it, removing any possible doubt that it was something other than a nuclear weapon.

Captain Ohblivious stares as the nuclear death cloud grows on the television screen. He is an elderly man that seems surprisingly spry for being somewhere in his mid to late 80s. He blatantly ignores a sign stating, ‘Employees only beyond this point,’ and saunters into the forbidden area. He snatches a chair from the employee workstation and begins pushing it noisily across the floor of Bunker’s Bargain Buys, miraculously without ever taking his eyes off the screen.

The shriveled man with a less than proportionate paunch, has hair that encircles his not-so-shiny, heavily sun-spotted dome. The hair he does have looks coarse and wild; bedhead that has not been tended to in quite some time. Although plain and unkempt in appearance, he has an air about him that prompts a few double-takes from passersby. This is most likely due to his choice in everyday attire, the ill-fitting, worn superhero jumper that now better resembles an old bedtime onesie than an outfit befitting the person that was once the world's first, mightiest, and overly marketed superhero, Captain Oh. The fact that he was the only one does not diminish the god-amongst-men status he once held. He was that guy, a true superhero by comic standards: super strength, super stamina, super speed, impervious, and the All-American poster boy for goodness. But that was over 30 years ago and The Captain is a husk of his former glory. A patriot without a country, roaming the northern lands of Canada and more often referred to by his old man moniker, Captain Ohblivious.



The store has the feel of a shopping mall that has had all its walls removed. Each section presents itself more like individualized marketplaces rather than a single combined shopping center. For example, the meats department looks like a large butcher shop, homewares looks like an upscale furniture retailer, and the farm and feed supply even has livestock for sale with an onsite veterinarian. There is something somewhat disconcerting about how close the livestock is to the butcher's station.

Captain Ohblivious rests the ill-gotten chair in front of the bank of unfathomably thin television screens on display featuring the film *A Brief Backstory of Forced Evolution*. He absentmindedly displaces an end cap stuffed with miscellaneous theater treats in his endeavor to get the office chair in just the right position. He plops into the chair as he stares at the screens like a child on Saturday morning.

An oddly lighthearted melody, at least by comparison to the stark footage that has just been depicted, fades in from the surrounding speakers.

A strong, disembodied female voice begins to provide an explanation for the dystopian imagery on the screens. "Farewell Sin City."

In a vertigo-inducing spin that draws out a gut retching, eye dilating reaction from its viewer, Las Vegas shrinks into oblivion as we are treated with a view of the entirety of the United States. A few balls of cloudy fire sprinkle the map, only to be joined by more of their friends in various, seemingly

random locations when given very little reference – as states on a topographical map have no lines.

The narrator continues, “And pretty much the rest of the world.”

On what looks like a weather map, complete with a weatherman, toxic yellow cloud icons depicting radioactive death are starting to spread like a bad case of the mumps in an unvaccinated community.

Captain Ohblivious stares longingly at the puffy explosions that represent the demolition of entire cities. The oddly popcorn-esque shape of the icons makes his gut grumble as he begins to look around for popcorn, conveniently spotting some just out of arm’s reach on the end cap that he had clumsily pushed out of his way.

“Ooh! Popcorn!” he says in a voice that is gruff with age, yet full of excitement like a toddler playing with a bag of flour. His voice cracks with the occasional break often associated with puberty.

Captain Ohblivious attempts to grab the popcorn without taking his eyes off the screen where the weatherman stands in shock watching the unimaginable sight that is unfolding behind him.

A news ticker meanders across the bottom of the screen stating ‘CHCA News Archival Footage’ stopping when the text is centered in the middle.

The rich voice of the narrator states ominously. “Fortunately, Canada was not a nuclear power and avoided the brunt of the bedlam, or so we thought.”

The weatherman gestures to the map behind him in a look that can only be described as abhorrent amazement. In a rapid, yet still professional manner – akin to that of a 1950’s era news reporter – the weatherman rattles off: “With the combination of radiation fronts moving in from the South, and landfill toxins seeping into the water supply, the real question is, where is Captain Oh, and what will happen next?”

Captain Ohblivious wriggles out of the chair and begins slowly backing away from the TVs as if he has done something wrong. He raises his arm like a child in primary school eager to be picked to answer a question. He shakes his hand, wildly flinging a bulk-sized box of microwave popcorn precariously from side to side, while trying his best to keep his eyes on at least one of the screens.

“Present!” He proclaims.

An enlarged, overly 3D processed strand of DNA spins lackadaisically against a glaringly white backdrop.

The smooth tone of the narrator returns to the forefront. “I’ll tell you what happens next. Although the true cause is still yet to be determined, either the radiation, sewage runoff, or both, caused our genes to mutate. Most of us were lucky enough not to get deformities.”

On the screen, replacing the DNA, is a patchy-haired man who gives an enthusiastic thumbs up. He is scrawny, but for the most part normal looking, with the exception that he only has one arm. Yet it is not the lack of one arm that highlights his mutation, but rather that the arm he *does* have sprouts from just above his forehead.

Captain Ohblivious shuffles back to his seat with a microwave and the over-sized box of popcorn. He clears off the end cap with a whisk of his arm and tosses the microwave into the newly vacated space. He attempts to push the far-too-large box of popcorn into the still closed microwave while glued to the array of televisions. The commotion has alerted the department's sole employee, who has been aimlessly searching around for his station's office chair. He pulls his microphone up to his lips, calling in reinforcements as he spots the source of the noise and the purloiner of his missing chair.

"The vast majority of people gained new abilities. But just like a sixth finger," The narrator pauses as the imagery cuts to a hand that grows a fully formed sixth finger spontaneously, mid-digit, on its ring finger. "We may not want the new abilities we have gained."

The video now shows a man that looks a little jaundiced in his complexion, but otherwise your standard out of shape middle-aged man. He climbs into his already active shower. He quickly whisks his yellowing vinyl shower curtain closed behind him. It is not long before a muddled scream – such that you would expect from a sentient hippopotamus that is still partially submerged beneath the surface of a large pool of water – emerges from within. A bulbous hand slinks over the top of the shower

bar, yanking down the whole setup. As water gushes from the hand, it returns to a more-normal size and shape, only to re-inflate itself upon contact with the cascading water from the shower head. His entire body is engorged with water and seems to expand with every drop that touches his now spongy, porous exterior.

He exclaims in a muffled, overtly moist way, “*Help!?*”

As the film continues, a manager for Bunker’s Bargain Buys rushes over, surveying the mayhem that was previously her pristine entertainment section. She catches sight of the once venerable Captain Oh, who is oblivious to the going on around him, with his full undivided attention wrapped up in the contents on the screens. The store’s employee motions to the distressed manager, pointing out the captivated customer that has personally taken it upon himself to redesign the entertainment section. The manager tries to get the attention of Captain Ohblivious, starting with waving her hand in front of his face. However, The Captain is fixated on the footage presented to him from the various displays, even going as far as moving his head from TV set to TV set as if he is going to miss something, while trying to avoid the hand of the manager that is so rudely blocking his view.

On the screens, the bulbous blob that was once a man lifts his leg, attempting to throw one of his swollen appendages over the lip of the tub. The tub seems to whine its objections to being subjected to such unseemly working conditions. The man, who is slowly becoming more of a sponge than man, succeeds in turning himself to face the wall with his backside on display for all to see. He musters just enough momentum to swing his water-laden leg out onto the floor beyond. His foot hits with a wet thud on the

tile, erupting in a fountain of water. As he brings his other leg out of the shower to cautiously join its buddy, water slowly oozes from his disproportionate porous leg. He flexes, and the water pours out of his body, splashing out onto the floor in a sudsy, puddled mess. The screen flashes to a black background, where white text displays: “End of Diskette One. Flip Over for Part Two: Welcome to New Edmonton.”

Captain Ohblivious comes out of his trance just as the manager is weighing her options. The Captain begrudgingly extracts his rear end from his commandeered chair, and the manager of the store moves in, recognizing her opportunity.

“Captain, sir, we do not allow for customers to - ”

Captain Ohblivious ignores her and stumbles his way to the arrangement of sleek entertainment pads that rest on the shelves spanning the length below the displays.

Realizing that her pleas have fallen upon quite deafened ears, the store manager proceeds forward with much more authority in her voice. “STOP!”

Captain Ohblivious does just that, freezing as he grasps the desire of his hyper focused concentration, a well-worn copy of *A Brief Backstory of Forced Evolution*.

The manager has had enough. “I’m afraid I’m going to have to ask you to leave.”

Captain Ohblivious, holding the display diskette, incredulously gives the manager the stink eye. “I’m afraid I’m going to have to ask *you* to leave! *I’m* not finished here.”

The manager, now having the full attention of Ohblivious, puts her hands on her hips. “Oh yes you are. Get! Out!”

“Fine! Might be turning away a might be paying customer.” The Captain has a certain way with words. His relationship with words is like an adlib; he gets most of them for free, but the ones he has to choose are not necessarily the right ones.

“Get Out!” the manager repeats.

“Fine, I’ll get out. But I’m taking this.”

The manager looks at the very worn and used display disk that is clearly not part of the store’s inventory. “Sure.”

Captain Ohblivious reaches to grab the box of microwave popcorn. Upon recognizing the look in the manager’s eyes, he rapidly changes his movements and grabs only a single package from within the box.

“And this!” The Captain says as he holds up the individual bag of not-yet popped corn.

“Fine.” She states now completely exasperated, “Just get out of my store.”

Captain Ohblivious grabs the chair and starts rolling it away. “And this!”

“Absolutely not!” the manager says firmly.

Captain Ohblivious’ fingers linger on the chair for a second before he slowly drags them off. He hangs his head down sadly as he laggardly stomps out of the store like a toddler throwing a temper tantrum.



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PAGES

The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog

PROLOGUE: WELCOME TO NEW EDMONTON, CAPTAIN OH!

Captain Ohblivious tromps through a well-maintained flower bed past a realty sign that proclaims, ‘*Open House*’. The neighborhood is filled with cookie-cutter homes with ‘For Sale’ signs posted in their front yards. Without a second thought, The Captain flings open the metal door with a woodgrain finish and strolls right in. In the foyer – that is trying too hard to be chic – he finds a gift basket with chocolates, fruit, candies, and a brand-new copy of the welcome diskette from the New Edmonton Bureau of Tourism. The basket is topped with a glossy, oversized, bright red bow. Captain Ohblivious snatches up the pompous gift basket as he slips by an intentionally distressed table filled with the kind of clutter you’d expect from a bed & breakfast. He rips off the bow with little care for its contents and drops it onto the once clean and polished, but now caked with mud, faux wood floors.

He compares the diskette to his own. “No! This one said flip to disk two, not you!”

He chucks the brand-new disk over his shoulder and banks his well-used diskette off a flat white wall onto a wood-grain-colored silicon entertainment pad just beneath. The diskette emits a very soft and calming glow that spins around the exterior of the circular plastic disk in a lazily throbbing track. The large, flat white wall erupts in a brilliant spray of color as a laser from

an ultra-short throw projector comes out a narrow slot within the entertainment center just behind the pad.

Captain Ohblivious hops up in the air and flops into an oversized puffy taupe recliner that creaks its disapproval at being so cruelly mistreated. He rummages through the gift basket, until he raises a bright red, overly shiny apple to his mouth and takes a bite. He tosses the wax apple aside after finding it quite unpleasant to his palate. He spits out the remaining piece and inspects it, before tucking it into the neck of his super-suit. While he struggles with the gold foil wrapping of one of the chocolates in the wicker basket, the TV displays an older, yet very stunning, slender woman with white hair in a classy pixie cut. She is announced as Leslie Nielsen III via a white text overlay. Her eggplant purple pant suit playfully accents her alabaster skin as she strolls onto the screen with a beautiful Canadian landscape in the background.

“Hi, I’m Leslie Nielsen the Third, and I would like to introduce you to *New* Edmonton.” She says with that warm strong tone from the previous video, which emanates from unseen speakers in the ceiling.

She gestures to the pristine wilderness behind her in a graceful manner that commands your attention. “Here in New Edmonton, we have a state-of-the-art air and water filtration center. So, without sewage in the water, or a cloud of radiation, New Edmonton is an ideal place to live. Come, let me show you around.”

The images from the projector zoom out from the beautiful landscape to a satellite image of the city. On first

glance, the city looks pretty much the same as Edmonton, but with a much more crooked river working its way through the city, along with the addition of what almost looks like a wall – that wanted to be a real building – set along the eastern side of the city. “We’ve rebuilt the city 180 kilometers west, down the Yellowhead Highway, near a small place called Entwistle.”

A pointing stick slaps onto the screen directly over the comically thick wall that extends in a half circle around the right side of the map. Leslie stands in front of a map hanging on what looks like an old-school cork board with red push pins in the corners holding it fast. “As you can see, we have also redesigned the mall to twice its original size. It also provides an excellent Eastern barrier from the Americanadians that now inhabit Old Edmonton.”

Leslie shutters in disgust at the mere mention of the Americanadians. She cannot help herself but utter, in a disdainful tone befitting a condemnation of vermin that will not leave despite your best efforts, “Dirty American refugees”

The camera shakes ever so slightly as the director chimes in to try to right the ship. “Hey Leslie don’t make this political, stay on script. We only have one take at this. Per *your* contract.”

Leslie looks over, just to the right of the camera with eyes lit up in rage. No longer able to contain her complete contempt. “C’mon who kills a moose for a ‘lucky moose foot!’? Not the rack, nor the meat, nor the fur, but a *foot!*?”

A pause emblem takes center stage on the wall as Captain Ohblivious attempts to place the now-mostly-empty gift basket

onto the side table next to him. In the process, he knocks over a counterfeit Tiffany lamp and a mason jar with fake flowers, causing them to crash to the floor. As the basket haphazardly lands on its side, the last few remaining contents spill out to join the lamp and plastic posies. He reaches deep into the neckline of his shirt, digging down near his belly button and rummaging around.

The Captain excitedly pulls the package of microwave popcorn out from inside his suit and holds it in the air in triumph. “This is getting good, I’m gonna make some popcorn.”

As Ohblivious begins to wriggle his way out of the almost certainly damaged recliner, he mashes his hand on the TV remote, much to its dismay. The projection tries to keep up with the random inputs as Captain Ohblivious successfully extracts himself from the recliner and makes his way to the kitchen with a bit of hurry in his step. After the projector has finished with the random input of commands, it settles on NENN, the New Edmonton News Network.

The now oh so familiar white-haired lady takes up the wall from a digitally cluttered news studio. “Alright we take it back from Mr. Happy for this breaking report.”

“That’s A-OK!” proclaims an overly excited voice from off camera.

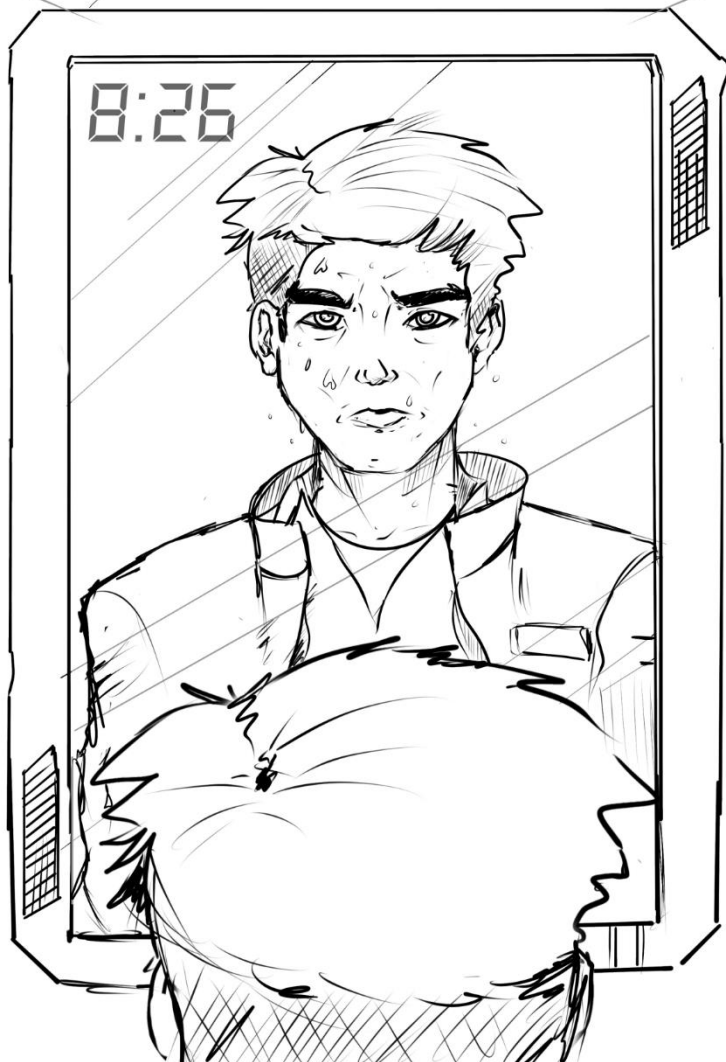
“A robbery at The Bank of New Edmonton!” Leslie exclaims as if Mr. Happy had said nothing.



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PAGES**

The Ohrigin Story: A purpose & a Hotdog



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PAGES****The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog**

GROWING OLDER. NOT GROWING UP

Two young boys sit in a very poorly lit room with the glow of a fighting video game prominently casting a rapidly changing, unhealthy light over their passive faces. The taller of the two, Jason Ankoku, has pale skin and dark hair with gaunt features and an epicanthal fold that is indicative of his heritage. Sitting cross legged next to Jason is his best friend, Andy Williams, whose round white face adorned with messy red hair is complemented by an equally round body.

The years roll by as do their surroundings, but the stoic teenagers stay glued to their screen. Jason is still playing the video game, but no longer holding an apparent controller, just manipulating his hands as if he were holding one. Andy's size has now eclipsed that of Jason, both in girth and in height. One day, when they look to be in their late teens or very early twenties, Kirby Bertino walks by the open door to their unkempt dorm room. She wanders in, wearing sweatpants that have never seen the inside of a gym, but apparently have seen their fair share of food. Her ensemble is topped by an intentionally worn NEU, New Edmonton University, tee. Kirby has tawny colored skin with her dark hair twisted into dreadlocks. Her slovenly appearance fits right in as she sits next to the boys on the floor.

A modest apartment becomes their new backdrop, as the three continue to play more video games. Degrees have appeared,

haphazardly push pinned to the orange-peel textured walls for each of them. The furniture around the room is an eclectic collection of items that look like they were harvested from the side of the road. The aesthetic is that of a frat house after a couple of good parties with no cleaning. The kitchen and dining area, which is only differentiated from the living room by cheap linoleum, has a small round table and four plastic folding chairs. The dishes have piled up so much that they'd be better off just buying new ones at this point.

The zombie-like expression for Jason falters as though he is coming out of a trance. Now in his mid-twenties, he has settled on a look akin to that of a half-Asian Criss Angel without the makeup or the pizzazz. More so as if Criss Angel had gone into accounting rather than magic.

Andy has grown into a very bulky, tall young man that dwarfs the others around him. His style, if you can call it that, is large baggy clothes covered in an extremely oversized beige trench coat that looks like it is tattered a little at the ends from dragging on the ground as he walks – quite a feat for a coat on a red-haired man approaching the 2-meter mark.

Kirby is still in the same outfit from the first time she came into the picture. The chances that she has been wearing it since entering that dorm room years back seems very likely, as she definitely does not look to have taken the best care of herself. A smudge of something yellowish has crusted to her cheek. Her dreadlocks are now pulled up into an untidy pony tail. She is fairly attractive in a less conventional manner but does not seem to notice nor care.

Jason slowly removes himself from the sofa. He throws his hand out and something unseen clatters onto the not-intentionally distressed and litter strewn coffee table, knocking over a pop can in the process. A few drops of clear liquid spill out of the purple can as it clambers to a stop.

Jason turns away from his friends. "I need a break."

Andy replies without looking away from the screen, but still tilts his head, as if trying to provide a modicum of attention, in Jason's direction. "Want me to pause it?"

Kirby chimes in now with her own assessment of Jason's sudden and unexplained movements. "Aww... what's the matter, Jason, tired of losing?"

Jason speaks under his breath in a defeated state that accidentally reveals his internal thoughts in an outward mumble that is not fully perceptible to those around him. "Sure... Really just tired of being a loser."

Andy straightens his head as he shoots a glance at Jason. "What?"

"Nothing." Jason responds, obviously depressed as he lumbers to the bathroom.

Jason splashes water on his pale skinned face that nearly glows in contrast to his jet-black hair. His lifestyle of video games and aversion to the outdoors has greatly contributed to his ghost-like complexion. He stares at himself in the mirror as if trying to see into his own soul rather than his reflection. "I think

it's time to grow up, Jason. Now walk out there and tell them you're leaving.”

Jason picks up a questionable towel from the back of the toilet, gives it a quick once over while trying to retract his fingers from its oddly damp surface without dropping it, and disgustedly tosses the sullied hand towel back onto the rear of the toilet. He reaches into his pocket wriggling out what can only be described as an invisible towel.

Jason discovered his extra-human ability around puberty, just as most enhanced individuals do. During a game of charades while he was miming out playing a slide whistle, he found that the item became real, albeit invisible. Needless to say, this startled him and Andy a great deal. As he explored this more, he discovered that he could not speak, or the item would cease to exist. He also found that he could not create very complex items unless he knew how they worked and that it was much easier to mime out the motions if he pulled the item from a container, rather than thin air. This has led Jason to carry a nearly empty satchel with him almost everywhere.

He pads the incorporeal cloth across his face and the quaff of hair that nearly comes into his eyes, soaking up the tiny beads of water that littered his visage. He opens the door and tosses the incorporeal cloth behind him.

Andy is still enthralled with the video game while Kirby begins rummaging around in their scantily populated fridge with little more than bread, cheese, beef flavored Proccoli, and copious amounts of drinks.

Jason looks between the two of them before taking a deep breath trying to get up the courage to tell them he is out. “I think it is time I do something else.”

Kirby turns with a perky expression on her face and a bottle of Madd Mutt 40/40. The tagline on the bottle reads, *40% alcohol + 40% "flavor" = 100% awesome*. “Drink?!”

Jason shakes his head in protest as Kirby eyes him with great anticipation. “No, Kirby you're not listening- “

Jason attempts to stand his ground but is interrupted by a melodic reissuance of Kirby's previous question that is now more of a statement. “Driiink...”

Thinking that a little liquid lubricant may be just what he needs to have this conversation with his compatriots, Jason relents in a less than enthusiastic manner. “Sure.”

Andy abandons his game, plopping the controller on the seat next to him. “Wanna play Schmeg the Egg, Jason?”

Jason massages his eyes giving a half-wag of his head, not giving a clear enough indication of his internal thoughts through outward expression. This is exactly the sort of thing that he wants to put in his rear view.

Andy is already halfway into their somehow sticky looking dining area in the middle of the kitchen.

“Jaaasoon?” Andy draws out his name like a plea less for input than agreeance. In response, Jason moseys over and turns

off the video game, prompting the screen to search for another active input.

Andy continues to try to garner support for his drinking game a little bit more desperately. “Kirby??”

Kirby, who is already rinsing out plastic shot glasses that clearly have some dried-on remnants from at least one prior occasion adorning the bottom of the glass, takes a sniff and her face squinches up in repulsion before shrugging and turning to place a few on the table.

She rests her hands on the table, looking Andy dead in the eye with a very serious gaze. “Andy, get the hat!”

With a giddy gait, Andy prances off to get the aforementioned accessory while Kirby turns back to get their drinking cups, but stops in her tracks when she sees some imitation red Solo cups stacked just out of reach. Rather than moving over to pick them up, she does what she always does when something is out of reach. She grabs the hem of her sweatshirt preparing to unleash her ability.

Kirby is one of the few who discovered their ability prior to puberty as it came with a physical tell that was quite evident shortly after birth. This is because it is represented by a large gash down the center of her chest. It did not take her long, not even as a baby, to discover that she could open and close this fleshy aperture to expose a black hole dimension in her chest.

She lifts her sweatshirt so as not to constrict the flow, revealing a leather vest with an oval metal screen affixed to the

center that she uses to prevent items from being lost forever. She puffs out her chest for dramatic effect and pulls in a stack of cups along with some random bits of refuse between them; a twisty tie, a paper straw wrapper, and an empty Bunker's Buttery Bubbly can. As she closes her chest-hole, the items fall from her metal chest filter, and she catches the cups out of the air completing her performance with a bit of a flourish, even if only for her own amusement. Clearly, these are reused disposable red plastic cups as the one on the bottom reads 'Andy!' in big black poorly drawn letters.

The screen in the living area settles on Input 3, showing a Vodcast of a cheery baby-faced man in his forties wearing a garishly red velour sweat suit with the banner introducing the Vodcast as *LODCAST*.





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PAGES

The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog

LODCAST LIVE AND UNSCRIPTED: AN ILL-CONCEIVED CAPER CAUGHT ON CAMERA

The Lord of Dance looks directly into the camera. His boyish features are accentuated by his husky round face. His cherubic appearance and overtly clean-cut look gives him an air of never having worked a day in his life. He sits in what looks like an audio studio quite similar to one that you would expect from an upscale radio host. He addresses his audience in a rather unique pompous British accent that would fit right in from a time when it was ok to refer to people as peasants.

“Alright, now it's time for the Lord of Dance to sign off. And remember, sing like nobody's listening and dance like you're on the graves of your haters. Ha-Ha n' Ta-Ta!”

Lord of Dance swivels around in his computer chair that looks like it was designed in the Victorian period. He flippantly discards his enormous, blindingly red headphones so that they come to a rest precariously on the edge of the half-circle table. He waits impatiently as the green screen behind him retracts into the ceiling. As it does it reveals 6 people in various stages of boredom filling up a quarter of the available, unpleasant looking seats in the gallery.

The Lord of Dance picks up a comically large conch from his staged desk and haphazardly tosses it to Jesus Mateo German Rodriguez, The Mechanic. He catches it in his disproportionately

large metal arm in contrast to his slender sinewy right arm. He intentionally replaced his left arm with one made of titanium because his ability allows him to manipulate the specific metal with just a touch of his unobstructed skin. The rest of his look is that of his moniker, an armless denim jumpsuit that sports a patch in place of a name tag that declares, *Ti Be LiFe!*

“Okay everyone, ideas?” The Lord of Dance addresses the room.

The Lord of Dance surveys his audience, spurring Warwick Percell, The Replicating Stooge, to prop up to a bodyguard like pose from his hunched posture in his ill-fitting chair. He looks like a giant with dwarfism (due to his proportions and not the fact that he is, without question, over 2 meters). He is dressed in a cheap, but well-fitted, standard black suit. He stares off into the distance with a military glaze to avoid being picked. Like a border collie, he acts as if he could sit still enough, then the boulder of a man would not be noticed.

The Lord of Dance stops on Uplink, an emaciated Hispanic girl who uses her hacker name over her given one. She sits passively with her eyes shut, but still moving, beneath her twitching eye lids. The Lord of Dance looks a little irritated at her lack of attention. Uplink is unresponsive as she is currently hooked up to her massive briefcase-size laptop with the screen closed. She appears to have a cord wonkily inserted into her pinky finger, in what looks more like a botched attempt at making a USB powered digit then a cybernetic implant. This was added as a homebrew solution to facilitate her ability to interface mentally with electronic systems.

The Lord of Dance sluffs it off and now looks at the man twirling the white seashell with a tinge of pink peeking out from its interior in his metallic limb, showing that the metal arm is capable of far more motion than that of anyone else's regular meaty paw.

The Mechanic chimes in. "Well, Apollo, I think that we need some expendable income."

The Lord of Dance looks back in an expression of jovial condemnation as he wags his finger at The Mechanic. "Ah, ah, ah! You call me Lord, The Lord of Dance, Lord of Dance, The Notorious LOD, or Boss. It's in your contract."

The Nailer, Brad Nailer, retracts a long fingernail from his nose quickly enough to cause concern for his nostril. He is a balding man in his late fifties or early 60s closely resembling a Liverpool knock-off of Bob Hopkins. He looks like his idea of fancy attire would be jeans and an unsoiled, white, crew neck tee-shirt.

Brad excitedly responds in an attempt to gain favor. "You tell him, Boss!"

The Lord of Dance turns slowly, and with much disdain, towards Brad. He yells just a single word. "CONCH!"

This elicits a smirk from Force Shield, Jabella Silva. She soundlessly taps her thick sausages that she calls fingers on the armrest of her chair, with soft blue sparks emitting from the tips of her fingers as they retract from the metal showcasing her

ability to create electrical charge within her body. She resembles the epitome of an Amazon from legend in her bulky frame that nearly matches the stature of the Replicating Stooge in both height and girth. Lord of Dance points fiercely at the conch in The Mechanic's hands. He quickly turns back to The Mechanic with a much jauntier demeanor, playfully taps his now tented fingers in a manner that would be akin to a fingertip applause.

“Am I hearing Bank Job?” he asks in his melodic accent.

The Mechanic does his best not to roll his eyes, but only fractionally succeeds. “I was thinking of something more along the lines of a clever computer heist.”

Brad nudges The Mechanic while gesturing with his head to their not so fearless leader.

“Boss.” The Mechanic says in contempt.

The Notorious LOD surveys the room, looking for his next victim, only to find the last remaining occupant of the room entirely uninterested in the whole affair. Blair N. Cieren softly files her already well-manicured nails as she ponders something else entirely; possibly what she will be having for lunch. She projects an aura of decorum and would not be out of place in an opera as the one who would sing last. She is a large woman of Sudanese descent who dons a luxurious yellow and blue gown that contrasts splendidly with her obsidian skin tone.

Lord of Dance seemingly ignores the last statement that The Mechanic has said as he excitedly quips, “Jesus! No more words needed; you had me at Bank Job.”

The Mechanic stops fiddling with the conch in his metal grasp. He is more than a little perturbed with The Lord of Dance always saying his name in the Anglican pronunciation for the Son of God rather than the traditional Mexican inflection with the hard H, and constantly saying it as if it was exclamation. “But I didn't say –”

The Lord of Dance interjects partially through The Mechanic's objection. “Pass the conch.”

Brad points to a red and white glowing sign behind The Lord of Dance that says, ‘*On Air*’. “Ey, Boss? You know that little light over there?”

The green light on the camera blinks steadily to confirm Brad's fears. The Lord of Dance looks at Brad indignantly. “Do you have the talking conch, Brad!? I do *not* think so! Pass the conch, Jesus!”

The Mechanic notices what Brad is trying to express and begins to hand the conch to Brad. The Lord of Dance is quick to add “But not to Brad.”

The Mechanic looks down at the conch in his hand, looks at Brad, then back to the conch. He looks around the room to the hesitant others before seeing the outstretched hands of The Lord of Dance beckoning the return of the conch. He passes the shell back to Lord of Dance. Just before letting go of the conch, The Mechanic looks at Brad.

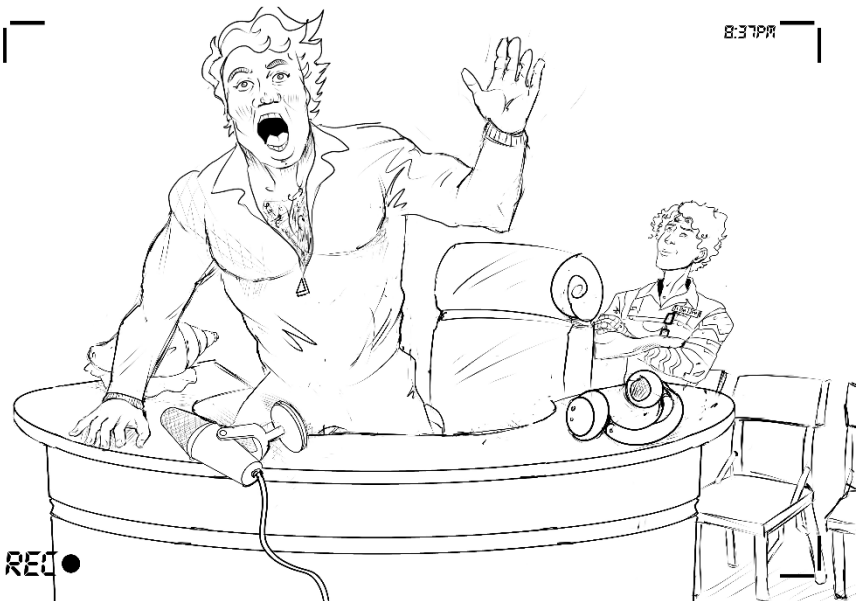
“Sorry, Brad.”

Brad is visibly distressed as he points at the sign. “But the light!”

The Lord of Dance snatches the conch out of The Mechanics hand using both of his hands as he leaps from his chair. “Wait your turn, Brad! We live in a civilized society. We even have a fancy talking conch and everything! Ah, where was I? Oh yeah, Bank Job.”

The Lord of Dance, happily satiated with his thrashing of Brad, turns to place the gigantic conch on the silly half circle of a table. He notices the green light and quickly directs his attention to the red and white sign declaring that they are still on air. “Oh gods, I’m still recording! Why didn’t anyone tell me?”

The Lord of Dance lunges to turn off the camera as The Mechanic shakes his head and rolls his eyes in one impressive motion.



**THE BOOZE ARE GETTING THE
BEST OF THEM**

Back in the apartment, Andy, Jason, and Kirby are showing signs of being on the edge of quite handily drunk. Andy dons a poorly assembled stove pipe hat made of cardboard that is streakily colored black with a sharpie. The table is strewn with an eclectic set of seemingly random items; a deck of cards toppled near the center, a couple handfuls of dice, a pile of bottle caps in front of each person, marbles, rubber bands, several uninflated balloons, a couple sets of chopsticks, some plastic spoons, an elastic headband, and a dinged up wooden egg in the center resting in a mini slinky. The glass Lazy Susan that takes up the majority of the modest sized table is lit up with a few options to select the card suit and number. Andy's hands hold a set of 4 cards facing away from him. An egg timer slowly ticks by as Jason stares at the table in front of him, twirling an empty plastic shot glass in his hands. Andy takes notice that Jason is not looking at the cards that are being presented to him.

“What's the matter, Jason? You're normally more into this.” He asks.

Jason stops fiddling with the flimsy plastic shot glass and pushes it further out in front of him. “I've just been thinking. We need to do something.”

Kirby gestures to the table in front of them with more gusto than would ever be necessary. “We are doing something. We’re schmeggin’ the flippin’ egg!”

Andy grins an alcohol-induced smile. “Haha. I’m the egg.”

Andy slowly leans his hefty frame over and puts his face far too close to Jason’s. Giggling, he puts his lips just millimeters from Jason’s unexpected ear and whispers loudly, “Schmeg me Jason.”

Jason shutters and tilts his head away from the warm breath of Andy’s words on his face as Andy slinks back to his seat quite pleased with himself.

“No Andy... what I’m saying is I think it’s time we moved on.” Jason says.

Kirby contemplates his words for a moment before replying, “Like, stop living on basic and get a job?”

Jason looks up at Kirby with purpose, nodding his head. “Yeah, well it has been 3 years since we graduated, Kirby. I think it’s time we put our degrees to good use.”

Andy scrunches up his face and lets out a long raspberry. “PFFF All I have is a liberal arts degree. I don’t want to work in a cubicle. Could you see me working at the Fortress of Cubicles?”

Kirby nonchalantly nods her head at Jason. Andy looks over in her direction and Kirby seamlessly changes to shaking her head at Andy. This draws a smirk from Jason.

Kirby reassures Andy. “Nnnoooo...”

Jason takes in a deep breath and downs the drink in front of him. He rubs his hands over his eyes. “Ok, I am just going to say it, I think we need to –“

Andy slides back in his chair as he gasps, putting his hands into his floppy red locks. Kirby and Jason are both stopped in their tracks as Andy begins to sound out his reason for his sudden actions. “I got it! No wait maybe I don’t... Nope, nope I got it. Jason, Kirby, WE could be *Super* Heroes.”

Andy puts his hands out waiting for the other two to see how brilliant of an idea it is. Kirby rolls her eyes and head at Andy. Jason slowly looks up past Andy off into the distance, pondering the idea. Andy desperately tries to get them to at least entertain the possibility. “No, no, no, no. Guys, hear me out.”

Kirby looks over at Andy with a pandering, not-authentic-in-the-slightest, nearly irritated interest. Jason listens intently but his eyes are unfocused as if the brain power for his eyes is being diverted to thought. Andy continues. “Like real comic book heroes. Like Captain Oh back in his prime.”

Kirby decides to play along with the thought game and have a little fun with it. “Why don’t more people do that?”

Andy wildly flails his limbs at Kirby, who in turn leans away from the potential of inadvertent strikes from the clumsy motions of Andy’s arms. Jason’s face emotes itself into a shape of true consideration.

Andy excitedly carries on, “Right, Kirby? I know. It's like we've all got abilities. Why don't we put ‘em to use?”

“Heh heh heh. But mine kind of sucks.” Kirby chuckles, now having fun with the new path the night is headed. She punctuates her joke by gesturing a sting in the air.

Andy laughs at Kirby's aptly applied self-degradation. “I know, right? Alright. Super Hero Names! I'm thinking The Man of Metal. Metal Man. Meta' Man!”

Kirby and Andy go back and forth for a while as Jason tries to think things through.

“And I will call myself, Kirby.”

“Jason could be The Illusionist!”

“Or we could just call him The Mime.”

“OOH! Mime Man! Wait just Kirby?”

“Yeah, it seems very... me.”

Jason looks over to Andy with a serious yet hopeful intrigue. “Andy, are you really serious about this?”

“Uh, yeah!” Andy replies.

Kirby shakes her head as she looks at Andy. Jason looks at her and she starts enthusiastically nodding her head.

Kirby responds in a not-sarcastic-enough tone to convey her insincerity to a drunk Jason. “Absolutely!”

Jason really starts to get into the idea. “I really like The Illusionist. It has a... mysterious ring to it.” He rambles out as he rubs his chin thoughtfully.

Andy pops to his feet and picks up a dry erase marker off the table. Still wearing the ridiculously tall hat that nearly skims the roof as he stumbles to the refrigerator, he swipes off all the magnets, and everything attached to those magnets, onto the floor. “Alright, pros and cons!”

Kirby flops back in her chair in a show of protest. “Ugh!”

“Pro, we get to make a pros and cons table.” Andy continues, unphased by Kirby’s antics.

Andy scrawls the words directly onto the white space on the mostly white fridge with reckless abandonment.

Kirby raises her hand and speaks nearly at the same time. She quickly retracts her hand as she realizes how pointless it is, judging herself quite harshly in the process. “Con, Andy, you’re an idiot.”

Andy turns back to Kirby with a silly grin on his face and states rather matter-of-factly while pointing the marker at her. “No Kirby, I’m the *egg*.”



**IS HE SCHMEGGIN'
SERIOUS?**

As the morning light pours in from a window signaling the dawn of a new day, Jason merrily bobs along with some melodic instrumental music while cooking eggs in an invisible pan. He appears oddly cheery, given the late night schmeggin' that could not have ended more than a few hours ago. The carton on the counter reads '*I Cannot Believe They're Not Eggs*' the contents of which could quite easily be mistaken as eggs since the not-eggs look exactly like real eggs, shells and all.

Andy is passed out on the ragged rust-red couch that is not much larger than a loveseat, laying awkwardly over each arm. His skin has gained a new luster as it now lacks the lively tones which have been replaced with a dull metallic sheen, similar to that of the less shiny side of aluminum foil. In middle school, Andy discovered that he had the ability to manipulate his molecular make-up into a light-weight impervious metal form when he was accosted by a girl much larger than him, at least at that time. When it came time to fight, flight, or freeze; Andy literally froze. Just like his response to a perceived threat implies, Andy is unable move when he is in his alternate form. Although stiff and rigged, he does look far less uncomfortable than Kirby. She is face down on the rough industrial weave that the landlord far too loosely refers to as carpeting.

The apartment itself does not look much different, as it was in shambles before they began their heavy night of egg schmeggin'. It looks like a dirt devil came through and deposited more than it took. The fridge is coated in a semi-unintelligible pros and cons list entitled: '*Super Heroes: should we?*' Flanking the pros and cons on either side, the scribble bounces around between various superhero names. At the bottom is an oddly convoluted section that would have been far better as another type of chart but has been jumbled into something resembling a competing pros and cons list of '*A Pros and Cons Showdown: Mime Man vs The Illusionist*'.

Jason drums on the counter loudly, almost in time with the music but not quite, music was never his strong suit. Andy's rigid metal body flops into its natural fleshy form and sinks further into the couch. He groans in annoyance, rubbing his eyes. He is ready to give Jason a piece of his mind until his nasal cavities awaken and sense the essence of sustenance wafting in the air. He smooshes the remote that has fallen between two couch cushions as he gracelessly rolls off the sofa and on to his feet.

The screen settles on '*Mr. Happy's Happy News of the Day*', a program that is hosted by a man that can only be described as a coked-up Muppet that wished to be a real boy. His rapid speech patterns and over the top enthusiasm entice a groan from Kirby, who rouses to discover her unfortunate predicament.

"Andy that is messed up..."

Andy strolls past the sprawling Kirby on the floor and catches the mangled thick black mass that Kirby refers to as her hair on his way by.

“Oooow! Andy, that’s bush man,” She says.

Andy does not register the boisterous complaint lodged against him as he waddles, much like an old timey movie zombie, towards the dining area. “Mmmmm... foood...”

Kirby petulantly rolls over on her side with a bit of a wiggle as if she could make the flooring more comfortable. She closes her eyes tightly.

Jason picks up the pan and holds it over an oval serving dish that looks like it is meant for a turkey. He begins singing along at the top of his lungs to the wordless music. “Wake up! Why’d you go to sleep inside your make-up? Something, something, something, something, shake-up!”

The pan ceases to exist upon the utterance of Jason’s first syllable, allowing the – what we will just refer to as not-eggs from here on out – to drop on to the platter.

Kirby lets out a loud grouchy grunt that sounds a lot like “Shut up!”

Andy is already patiently waiting in his seat for the hot pile of not-eggs as Jason plops the plate down in the center of the small table accompanied by three forks.

Kirby has finally had enough and scrambles to her feet. “Fine!”

She grumps over to the fridge with deliberate, heavy steps like an upset toddler. She yanks open the door to the fridge, grabs

a gallon size jug labeled, '*Hair of the Mutt 1/90*' with a tagline '*1% alcohol + 90% hydration = 100% feel better juice*', and slumps into her chair.

Jason beams with excitement. "Now that you are both awake-

Kirby, too lazy to reach out for the cup just out of reach from her gelatinous posture, sucks in the cup, along with several bottle caps and cards from the table. While raising one of her hands in protest, she plucks the cup that reads 'Jason' from her chest. "Up. Awake is an overstatement."

She pours the contents of her murky pale brown bottle into 'Jason's' cup.

Jason does not skip a beat and continues. "I know we were talking about being superheroes, and we need to start somewhere. I found a place that will give us private detective licenses for next to nothing."

Kirby deposits the overly sized bottle next to her cup that is filled to the brim with the tan milky liquid. She stares at Jason with a rather puzzled look on her face.

Jason carries on, "You don't have to take a test or anything. You just fill out a form. I think that'll make us sound a little bit more credible."

Kirby flops her head to the side so that now she is looking at Andy, who looks just as confused as she is as a tiny piece of egg dangles free from his lips.

Andy continues to stare at Jason but whispers in the direction of Kirby with a half full mouth, “Just go with it.”

Jason springs from his chair and looks around on the counter. The two stare at him, still perplexed by what is happening. Andy’s eyes drift to the fridge’s text ridden exterior, giving it a once over as if it had magically appeared overnight.

Andy’s eyelids retract from the pupil as realization stretches across his face. “Oh yeah.”

Jason turns back and begins leaving towards his room. “I’ll go get my COMM. Be right back.”

Andy taps Kirby on the shoulder trying to get in cahoots with her before Jason gets back. Kirby looks at Andy with a bewildered expression as Andy, with his hand that is not glued to his fork, points to the fridge. Kirby is slow to react, so Andy stops pointing and turns Kirby’s head for her. Kirby finally understands what is going on now.

“Oh... yeah... Jason is taking...” She gestures at the scribbles on the household appliance. “This seriously. I think the joke's gone too far.”

Kirby turns back to Andy who has the biggest mischievous grin across his face.

“I’m going to tell him.” He says.

Kirby is awash with panic, searching around the room as if to see if anyone else is listening in.

“Andy, don't you dare. I haven't seen him this excited about something in a long time.”

Jason reels back into the room with what looks like a standard smart watch dangling from his fingers – his COMM, a Cloud Operated Mobile Microcomputer – held high, as if looking for approval for the wonderous deed of finding his device. Jason slides the band over his wrist and flips the latch to fix it in place. He reaches down and raps his knuckles on the massive Lazy Susan, at least by sheer ratio of table to glass. The table top lights up with input from his COMM displaying a poorly built detective licensing website.

Andy looks longingly at Kirby. “But I wanna...”

Jason snatches onto the statement as an assumed signal of agreement. “Thank you, Andy! I wasn't certain if you'd still be into it the morning after. I'm so excited!”

Kirby lets out a little groan as she tries her best to put on a positive outward demeanor. “Yeah... we are too...”

Andy looks over at Kirby in surprise. “We are?”

Kirby stares daggers at Andy catching eyes with him in one swift motion. Jason looks only at Andy, missing Kirby's emotive outburst completely. Andy attempts to backtrack his previous inquiry in the most supportive manner he can muster. “Oh, yeah! We are too!”

Jason throws his head back in elation, as Kirby reminds Andy to stay in his lane with nothing more than her eyes. Kirby then turns to Jason feigning concern. “But...”

Jason snaps his head to Kirby, baffled as to the reason for the sudden push back. Kirby is taken aback by Jason’s sudden movement and his intense attention. “But what, Kirby?”

Kirby attempts to keep her composure, but even with her best effort, she cannot look Jason in the eye.

She aimlessly searches around the room for an answer. “Well... if we're going to do this, and be *Super* Heroes... not just detectives. We need someone... else. You know uh -” Kirby finally finds what she is looking for in her arsenal of lies and confidently states. “A hero of note.”

Jason allows the idea to process through his sleep-deprived head while the other two wait in anticipation. Andy has clearly been enjoying this exchange, hungrily waiting for the opportunity for him to pop the bubble.

Jason, with a sense of purpose, looks to the others. “Yeah. If we had someone more famous with us, that would bring instant recognition for our team. Do you think Libby would join us?”

Kirby is visibly startled by his casual utterance of her twin sister Libby, but is trying her best not to show it. “Yes. But no. But yes, like that. But not that.”

Jason forges ahead unaware of Kirby's discomfort with the mere mention of her much more successful sister. "Yeah, we need to find someone... that's a somebody!"

Kirby clams up at the notion of popularity over substance, her face bearing a fair dissatisfaction with her sister being lumped into this conversation.

At this point, it's important to note that while Kirby and Libby have been the best of friends since birth, they have simultaneously been envious of each other.

Libby was born with an ability that radiates a soft glow from her unexposed skin. This radiance has those around her bent to her whim, especially those who find her attractive; whereas Kirby's is literally personified by the large chasm in her sternum. Having a sibling (and a twin at that) gifted with skin that enamored anyone who looked upon it, while her own seemed more a deformity with modest suction ability. Needless to say, this has not been great for her general mental health.

Libby's jealousy for her sister stemmed from a longing to be treated like a normal person and forge true friendships; although she recognizes the struggles that Kirby faced in her shadow, she would have traded it all in for that in a heartbeat.

A schism between them started to form when they went to separate colleges. They each cultivated their own lives with Libby going on to become a world-famous fashion mogul while Kirby was just happy existing. Unfortunately, they never learned to open up with one another about their true feelings.

Andy attempts to cut the noticeably thick tension that is starting to arise between Jason's cluelessness and Kirby's growing discomfort. Andy promotes the idea that Kirby was trying to lay down while also trying to redirect Jason's train of thought. "Yeah. You do that, then we'll bring 'em over for a planning session. Right, Kirby?"

Kirby snaps out of her own personal hell and on to the thought train that Andy has kept alive. "Right!"

Jason slams his hands onto the table far more forcefully than he intended to, but still grabs up his COMM in the process as he stands abruptly to his feet. "Alright! I'm on it."

Jason snatches his keys off the counter and excitedly hurries out the door. Kirby looks over to Andy with an exacerbated look. "Way to go, Andy."

Andy looks back at Kirby with a face conveying both annoyance and hurt that she did not see the effort that he had put forward in an attempt to spare her the embarrassment she was clearly feeling. "What?!"

Kirby rubs her face, still trying to get her head in the right place after the night they had just endured. "You encouraged him."

Andy, in the most Andy way that he can, strives to make his point to an earlier reference he made. "No, Kirby, you encouraged him. I wanted to tell him."

Kirby ponders her life choices before mumbling out, “What are we going to do?”

Andy thinks about their predicament for a quick moment. “Well, we could always do it. What else have we got going on?”

Kirby mulls it over for a few seconds. “Where do we even start?”

Andy absent-mindedly begins reading the website that is still displayed on the glass table. He starts to scroll down with a visible distaste growing on his face. The screen flashes a distance threshold warning and then abruptly disconnects. He sighs and peers up at the TV as he endeavors to come up with an answer.

The deep soothing voice of Leslie Nielsen the 3rd fills the silence. “Alright we take it back from Mr. Happy for this breaking report.”

“That’s A-OK!”

“A robbery at The Bank of New Edmonton.”

Andy looks to the video stream with a glancing interest while almost unknowingly pointing at the screen. “How about there?”

SHOULD WE BE SUPERHEROES?

SUPERHERO NAMES

KIRBY
 VIBES AS VIBRANT
 VOICES VIBES
 THE SUCCESS
 BREAKS BACK
 VIBES CLASS
 CONTINUED BEATING

No!
 Just
 Kirby

JASON

THE ILLUSIONIST
 MASTER OF MINE
 MINE MAN
 THE ILLUSIONIST

PRO

- WE GET TO MAKE PRO/CON LIVE
- NO, I'M THE EAGLE
- IT WOULD BE BORING
- WE COULD BECOME COOL
- DUTIES
- RUNDY, KIRBY
- I'M THE EAGLE
- WE CAN DO THAT
- I GUESS SO
- EXTRA MURDER
- TONS, BUT AT LEAST WE'VE GOT MY SAVING, THEE YOURS TO LOOSE
- SUPERHERO NAMES

CON

- AMY YOU'RE AN IDIOT
- WE LAZY
- COULD BE DANGEROUS
- ANDY YOU'RE AN IDIOT
- CAN WE GO BACK TO DRIVING?
- WE'LL PROBABLY FAIL
- WHAT IRIDE MAKE FINE OF OURSELVES?
- WE WILL LIKELY MAKE FINE OF OURSELVES
- PRIDE, TONE, COULD GET USED, GETTING MIND, MY SAVING, THEE YOURS
- OH PLEASE NO

SUPERHERO NAME ANY

METAL MAN
 MAN OF METAL
 MAN ON SHIELD
 THE METAL MAN
 IRIDE MAN
 THE STIFF
 STEEL STUD
 THE STEEL DUD
 LAD TO GET THE BURNING
 METAL AGE
 ANTI-MAN AVERAGE
 TUFF LAD
 SILVER SMOTHER
 KIRBY CLUB

4 PRO/CON SHOWDOWN: MINE MAN VS THE ILLUSIONIST

MINE MAN

PRO

- IT'S FUNNY
- IT'S APT
- IT'D BE BEES YOUR POWER
- YEAH THAT'S HOW IT GOES

CON

- I DON'T LIKE IT
- IT'S INSULTING
- SHUT UP
- COULD BE DONE ON SOMETHING ELSE

THE ILLUSIONIST

PRO

- I LIKE IT
- BUT IS MY NAME
- YEAH BUT THEN GET PICK THEIR OWN

CON

- OK CHESS AMBLE
- NO, IT'S YOUR SUPERHERO NAME
- WRONG AGAIN THE MEDIA USUALLY PICKS IT

A

M

N



**#5**

5

PAGES

The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog

**THIS IS A BANK
ROBBERY!**

The interior of the bank is unlike what someone would tend to expect from a bank. Where generally it would have tellers, several cubicle-like office spaces, and a few actual offices, instead there are just a bunch of kiosks that look like glorified ATMS, a safe to a safety deposit room, and one desk outside a single small office for the bank manager. The bank is part of the AutoIndustries family of companies that are nearly fully automated. One of the kiosks allows you to transfer your money into cryptocurrency with the primary currency being Kosh Kash.

A few people scatter once their attention is jostled away from their kiosks by The Lord of Dance and a few of his minions as they burst into the bank. He is flanked by Brad Nailer and Blair N. Cieren with Uplink and The Mechanic trailing behind him. His entourage wears white fluffy earmuffs while they escort Lord of Dance, who is draped in a white toga, complete with a circlet about his head made of maple wood and adorned with golden maple leaves. Brad steadies his right hand with his left, as he points the abnormally long fingernail that protrudes from his index finger.

The Mechanic leans in close to The Notorious LOD. “Are you sure you want to steal from The Duke? I mean, he is another founder.”

Brad overhears and speaks up. “Jesus has a point. The Baron might also get mad.”

The Lord of Dance brushes them off. “I know what I’m doing, not to worry.”

Although instructed not to, Brad and the Mechanic do look a bit worried. Brad shrugs and moves quickly after The Lord of Dance. The Lord of Dance goes to open his mouth but before he can, Brad raises his finger to the roof and fires off his nail with a flesh ripping twang into the ceiling yelling- “This is a Bank Robbery!”

The Lord of Dance looks at Brad incredulously with a glare that could say more than the words could ever do. “You were supposed to wait until after I start singing!”

Brad looks a little sheepish as he slinks back. “Uh.. sorry, boss.”

Lords of Dance composes himself, clears his throat and begins to belt out a jaunty tune. “Dance then who- “

“This is a Bank Robbery!” Brad yells out.

The Nailer shoots off once more, this time from his middle finger, as the first nail he shot is still growing back. His keratin grows back rapidly, but not that fast. The nail pings into the wall just between two kiosks, frightening a couple to its left. The Lord of Dance whirls about and stalks towards Brad.

In a calm flat tone, The Lord of Dance stares down at Brad. “Am I going to have to kill you, Brad?”

Brad seems to think about it and looks back at Lord of Dance with an expression that shows that he does not quite understand the gravity of the situation. “Uh, I hope not, boss.”

The Lord of Dance places a hand on Brad’s, lowering Brad’s hand until it is pointing at the ground. Lord of Dance turns and saunters back towards the perplexed bank customers. “Now where was I... Oh yes!”

The Lord of Dance strikes a flourishing pose, clears his throat much more loudly this time as if to hold off Brad. Brad lifts his hands once more, but The Mechanic catches eyes with Brad, shakes his head slowly from side to side, and then bolts over the counter towards the safe. The Lord of Dance begins once again.

“Dance then whoever you may be. I am Lord of Dance says me. You will dance whenever I’ll sing and if you don’t it’s your doom I bring. Now Daaaaaaance! Just Daaaaaaance!”

Everyone in the bank who is not wearing the garishly adorned earmuffs begins river dancing to the melodic tones of The Lord of Dance’s voice.

The Mechanic, now at the vault, places his bare hand (the right one) on the safe as his metal hand (the left one) morphs over the large combination dial. His metal hand twists and flips until it comes to a stop. The Mechanic drops his other hand from its perch, onto the lever, and swings the door open. The inner barred

gate is bent out of the way with just a touch from The Mechanic's right hand (the fleshy one). He passes through the oval hole and into the vault. He moves over to the box labeled 0001. With his left hand (the shiny one) he lets the metal flow from his finger into the keyway. Only a second later it clicks open. He quickly slides out the box. With his right hand, he flicks out his middle finger, gives it a little waggle which gets it to ignite a plasma torch on the pad of his finger.

In the lobby, the bank patrons are starting to get rather sloppy in their dancing as the song from the Lord of Dance begins to devolve into a less-than-put-together set of lyrics.

"Everyone is dancing, and they are really happy. Hurry up I'm running out of words you lackeys! And Daaaaaaance! Just Daaaaaaance!"

The Mechanic moves out of the vault and hops over the counter. He holds up the safety deposit box.

"Done, Boss." The Mechanic holds his right hand to his face like a telephone. "Call SAGA."

A loud hum reverberates and crescendos just before a large half-track armored bus that is made of a material similar to that of the mechanic's arm – and looks more like a bullet train than a bus – smashes through the revolving doors and part of the window to the left of them. The front opens like a hatchback sending additional glass flying as it raises into the panels above. Lord of Dance and his posse climb up stairs shaped like a snowplow from a train engine.

The Lord of Dance lets out a sigh. “Jesus! About time.”

The Mechanic rolls his eyes as he shows his disdain for his name being pronounced incorrectly for the umpteenth time while he climbs into the cockpit. As the vehicle’s front entryway closes, a plushy red chair swings in from the side. The Mechanic satisfyingly sits back into the seat and puts his metal appendage into a half cylinder – filled with what would be gears if they had their other half – attached to the armrest. As he presses down on the convex tube, the other half clamps over, encapsulating his left limb that has seamlessly become part of the contraption, giving it the appearance of a single piece. The tube whirls with the sound of spinning cogs as the vehicle backs out of the bank. The Mechanic places his right hand on the ceiling. SAGA grows wings and they fly away into the mid-morning sun.





Like the ending to any good episode of GI Joe, the need to impart a lesson to your audience is important. After each part, there will be words of wisdom shared by the World's First Superhero, Captain Oh.

Captain Ohblivious waddles out on stage as if he has a stick up his butt in front of a large banner declaring in loud and boisterous manner: 'Captain Oh's Advice of The Day.'

Captain Ohblivious starts to impart his wisdom. "There is a lot of pain in this world kids, so I am going to save you some, this book should not be used as toilet paper; especially the digital one. That could get expensive."

And he waddles back off.

TAIN OH'S ADVICE



#1

**75
PAGES**

The Ever So Exciting Conclusion



**#1****6****PAGES**

The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog

**BUT THE SIGN OUTSIDE SAID
IT WAS AN OPEN HOUSE!**

Captain Ohblivious clumsily, but tentatively, makes his way slowly back into the room, leaving a trail from the overflowing popcorn bucket behind him in his unsteady wake. On the wall Mike R. Foehn stands in front of The Bank of New Edmonton. Mike R. Foehn is a short man with dark brown hair that pairs nicely with his melanin rich skin. His shortened stature and geeky exterior is accentuated by an ill-fitted suit draped upon his wiry frame like a teenager who borrowed one from his father. He holds up a pen, that has a chain attached to it as if it was meant to be affixed to a counter. He uses the pilfered pen like a microphone. His *oh-so glorious* superpower is the ability to broadcast his hearing over radio waves.

“With the preponderance of evidence against him, will The Lord of Dance get away with this again? Back to you Leslie.” He says with a deep, rich, and soothing voice that sounds like it was made for NPR.

The popcorn tumbles about the floor as Captain Ohblivious proceeds to the partially caved in recliner. He sends kernels of popcorn flying everywhere as he leaps over the arm, landing hard on the already defeated chair. The recliner, taking its final breath, succumbs to its injuries from the onslaught of punishment from Captain Ohblivious. While destroying a perfectly good recliner, he also manages to crack the remote in

the process. Captain Ohblivious tries to get comfortable, wriggling in the remains of what used to be the recliner while mangling the buttons of the remote in one less than smooth process. He knocks over the gift basket as he clears the way for his now mostly empty popcorn bucket on the end table. He digs under his backside to retrieve the bent remote. The wall changes back to the correct input while rewinding a bit at the same time.

Captain Ohblivious thrusts the questionably functional remote above his head as he successfully extradites it from under his posterior. He points it at the wall, and it proceeds from a time just a bit before he paused it.

Leslie stands with the pointing stick firmly in place over the map. “As you can see, we rebuilt the mall to twice its original size. It also provides an excellent Eastern barrier from-”

The Captain mindlessly retrieves his popcorn from the side table, strewing even more of the dwindling contents out of the bucket.

“-the Americanadians that now inhabit Old Edmonton.” She says in a less than approving tone.

Leslie shudders in disdain as Captain Ohblivious scours the bottom of the bucket for what is left of the popcorn, shoving it with little regard into his greedy mouth hole, only managing to achieve about half of what he intended.

“Dirty American refugees” she says through gritted teeth.

Captain Ohblivious soldiers on through the last remaining kernels. The camera shakes slightly as the director pipes up. “Hey Leslie, don’t make this political, stay on script. We only have one take at this... per *your* contract.”

Leslie looks off camera just to the right, enraged as The Captain scoops up what is left of his snack and presses the meager remnants into his face. “C’mon who kills a moose for a ‘lucky moose foot!?’ Not the rack, nor the meat, nor the fur, but a FOOT!?”

Leslie looks rather uncomposed in contrast to how she has been through the previous footage. Captain Ohblivious scrounges in the corners of the bucket trying to find more popcorn that is not there.

The Director pleads with Leslie. “Leslie.”

Leslie looks perturbed and stares into the camera. “Fine. THE END!”

Leslie storms off the screen as Captain Ohblivious looks down at his popcorn bucket that is failing to provide the popcorn he has been expecting. Captain Ohblivious turns the bucket upside down looking for any popcorn to drop out but at the same time overlooking all the popcorn that is scattered around the room.

In an exacerbated sigh The Director states, “I guess that's it. Just....cut.”

The clip ends with white text on a black background telling us, ‘To learn more about how we got here. Flip Over to Side One: A Brief Backstory of Forced Evolution.’ Captain Ohblivious looks to the wall, and back to the popcorn bucket; alternating between the two in quick succession. “Wait, is that it?”

In the kitchen emanates the voice of another person in the Open House. “Hello, is someone there?”

Captain Ohblivious quickly tries to stash the empty popcorn container under the end table doing nothing more than sending the bucket in one direction as the table topples over in the other.

“No? It's probably just the TV... or stuff..”

Lou Miniss, a man in his early forties cautiously enters the room. His face is more focused on the aftermath of the Captain’s antics than that of the man himself. He is one of those people that epitomizes the definition of a dad bod with a tasteful amount of facial hair that culminates in a full, yet light, beard. He completes the suburban working man’s causal Friday outfit with a pair of khakis and a polo in an unthreatening color of light pastel mint.

“How did you get in here?”

Captain Ohblivious looks a little confused at the question. He looks at the door before glaring back at Lou with petulant confidence. “How did *YOU* get in here?”

Lou is still taking in the damage to his model home as Captain Ohblivious takes the opportunity to back slowly towards the exit. Lou is baffled by the state of the unit. “Why? There’s popcorn everywhere?!”

Lou picks up the wax apple that is missing a sizeable chunk. The front door creaks as Captain Ohblivious slowly opens it while he slides a hand full of popcorn into the top of his onesie. Lou is stuck on the fake apple.

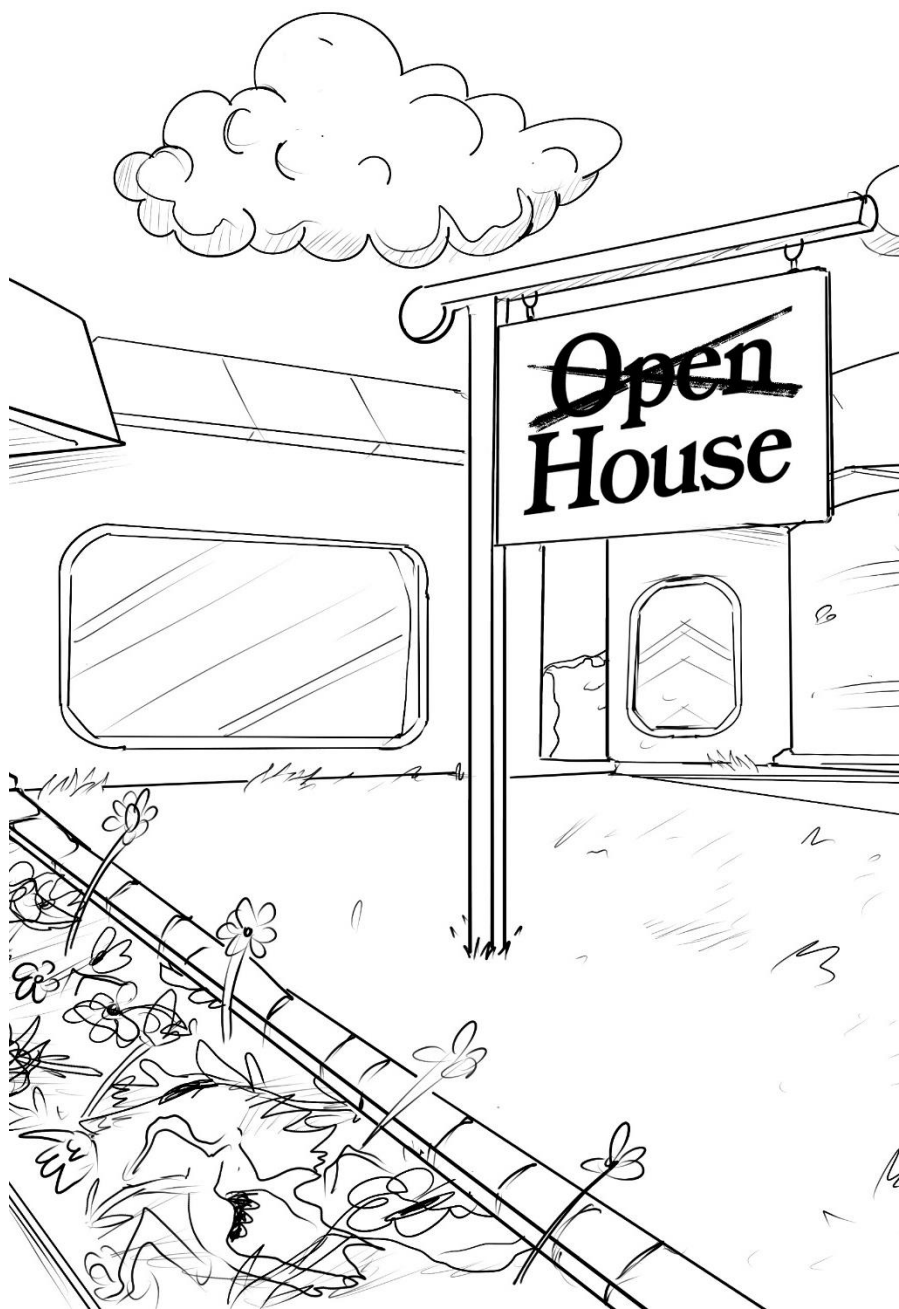
“Did you take a bite from a wax apple?” Lou looks up from the apple and around the room trying to locate the culprit. “Wait, where’d you go?”

Lou catches The Captain most of the way through the front door. Ohblivious freezes for a moment, shocked, as he did not expect to get caught.

He begins providing answers to the questions at a rapid pace. “The Door. Because. Yes. No... Maybe? Away, Goodbye!”

Captain Ohblivious steps the final step out of the home, slams the door with a loud thunk, and races down the sidewalk towards the street. He doubles back and whips a marker out of his fanny pack, likely intended to be a poor man’s superhero utility belt. In his fairly illegible handwriting, he scribbles a wonky X over the word “Open” on the sign. “There will not be any false advermatizements on my watch.”

He scurries off in all due haste as he hears the front doorknob begin apprehensively clicking open.



**#2****10****PAGES****The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog****A PLAN BEARS NO FRUIT:
AN AWKWARD ADVENTURE**

Jason wanders down the sidewalk staring at his slate, aimlessly searching to find a name that he recognizes who he could feasibly get to join the team. The founders of the city spared no expense. The buildings, roads, and lighting all use cutting edge technology. Everything appears quite like what you would expect from any large city except for the population. This city looks like it was built to house a thousand times its current number of residents. The foot-traffic consists of only a handful of people here and there. Even the numerous AutoCabs that zoom by seem to be mostly empty.

Jason passes Captain Ohblivious carrying the empty popcorn bucket, lost in his own mind. Despite narrowly avoiding bumping into one another, neither notices the other.

Captain Ohblivious mutters to himself, still quite annoyed by his recent encounter. “Pfff, Stupid not-that-open open house. At least I still have you, popcorn.”

As Jason taps his slate trying to multitask; walking, searching for a potential candidate, and following the line that will take him to his intended destination. An ad fills the screen of his slate proclaiming *Süp Energy! Coming Soon!* Jason looks visibly upset and completely frustrated about the unwanted ad,

but clearly not enough to pay the monthly amount for an ad free version of the application.

“Drumpfins’ ads!” Jason mutters under his breath.

He attempts to hit the X icon in the top right corner of his phone to repel the ad from his sight, but of course it opens the ad instead, taking him to the advertiser’s site. The site is a bunch of buzz words and flashing colorful images in constant movement that could induce seizures in just about anyone. The advertisement has flavors that would not be your first choice in an energy drink. It is not that they do not seem appealing, but that they have no place in a carbonated beverage. A pun on its namesake, Süp Energy Drinks come in a variety of savory flavors like: Cream of Awesomeness, Beefed Up Bisque, Moose Bacon Chowder and Clobbered Greens, The Beans Knees Chili Jubilee, and PProColli & Cream. Jason angrily pounds the back button on the thin, fragile-looking device, trying with all his might to convince his slate to take him back.

“Bush!” Jason exclaims.

The slate snaps back to the split screen showing the map complete with a dotted line to follow to his destination, The New Edmonton House of Multi-Denominational Faiths. Above the map, there is a digital flyer for a support group labeled, ‘*Vigilantes Anonymous*.’ The poorly put together flyer looks like it was made in the early ages of the internet and boasts support for those that are trying to come back from a life of illegal crime fighting. Jason directs the top section of his slate to look for more superhero celebrities in New Edmonton.

The dots take him to the church that looks less differentiated from the buildings around it than you might think. It takes more than its fair share of space, with the appearance of a discount department store. In fact, it easily could have been mistaken for a department store, if not for the neon sign reading, *The New Edmonton House of Multi-Denominational Faiths*.

The dots continue on, on the inside of the building, taking him to a room with a central projector that sends its light in all directions, littering the walls with holographic posters that have kitschy, cliché catch phrases that you would expect at a group therapy session: Hang in there, The paint is always greener on the other side, Happiness is mandatory (just kidding, but it is highly recommended), This way to the top, Rise above it all and fly, etc.

As Jason enters the room an overwhelming sense of belonging comes over him. Even though he was very nervous just moments ago, he now feels comfortable, relaxed, and quite hungry. Realizing that he did not actually eat any of the food he cooked this morning, he makes his way over to the meager snack table befitting these types of events. He surveys the room to see if he can recognize any of the participants in hopes of poaching someone for his super squad.

The room contains a smattering of guests sitting in a circle with a couple of free chairs. The attendees have come to a halt with his late entry to the meeting.

One in particular catches his eye, The Dehydrator. Jason quickly averts his gaze. He would have sworn they were in jail after what they had done to all those people. The sight of the Dehydrator brings images to his mind, invoking Famine from the

four horsemen of the apocalypse, if the mythical figure had shriveled up like a raisin. They sit in stark contrast to a vicar in the seat next to them.

The Holy Man wears a deep purple button up shirt with a clerical collar tucked neatly beneath. He looks like exactly the sort to be presiding over a church that is as unflattering as this one. He is an older gentleman whose personality is as coarse and flat as the exterior of the building. With a full and luxurious head of white hair that may not have been brushed in over a week, it is evident that his appearance does not matter to him. His look is finished with a grumpy, wrinkled face befitting an old man that was forced into a retirement home by his grandchildren that did not want to take him in. Really, if an elder Gary Busey was a vicar, he would personify this man. He is surrounded by an invisible aura which is the cause for Jason's mild euphoria. This bubble of bliss incites a spiritual satisfaction in everyone in his near proximity.

Jason closes the distance between him and the refreshments table. The offerings are pretty much what he anticipated, a smattering of individually packaged doughnuts/pastries with a few single-serving drink options. The set up is exceptionally plain by any standard in its presentation. Above the table a sign is projected upon a drab tan background with a formulaic black font that reads: 'Today's Snacks are brought to you by Bunkers.' The dull branding on the sign is mirrored throughout the individually packaged morsels below.

Doctor Kanji leads this band of legally questionable individuals in their session as she dons a white lab coat over a white blouse paired with a comfortable looking pair of black

slacks. She completes her in charge look with a yellow legal pad, on which she frequently jots notes. Her features are soft, yet classically handsome. Her powerful jawline is accentuated by her shoulder length jet black bob cut. Her demeanor is hard to read on her emotionally passive face. She motions to the speaker that was interrupted by Jason's late entry, who looks a little apprehensive to continue with a new person that he does not know now present in the room.

“Richard. Continue.” She says in a very flat tone.

The Deadbeat, Richard Givens, is shabbily dressed in worn yet clean clothes. The ratty white shirt and jeans combo, that have seen better days, appear to be a reluctant lifestyle choice rather than anything that was planned. He may just seem like he is down on his luck, if it were not for the giant lump that protrudes from his neck and collar bone on his right side. The protrusion has a full head of neck-length hair of its own – a dull brown color not anywhere similar to the golden blond hair on his head – a pair of full-sized eyes that (even given the angle of the bulbous protrusion of flesh) seem wonky at best, and a set of teeth that do not have lips but rather flaps of skin over and under. To make matters worse, the flaps of skin have hastily applied, glossy red lipstick smeared about them. He regains his composure before glancing down and over in the direction of the unsightly growth on his neck before proceeding to answer, as if waiting to see if it would object.

He picks up from where he left off in a rich and full-bodied voice, “Dr. Kanji, I always aspired to make the world a better place. I definitely took it to an unhealthy level, and it started hurting people.”

The lump on his neck twitches and wobbles about, as a grating voice emerges from its maw, sending chills through everyone in the room. “Richard, you haven’t mentioned me once in this entire story.”

Richard drops his head like this was only a matter of time, but clearly dreaded all the same. “Uh, Wanda, I’m talking about the path I *was* on.”

The Lump, that will now be referred to as Wanda, scrunches up her wad of flesh around her eyes. “Well, I’m the one who got you off your path, Richard. Doesn’t that merit a mention?”

Jason opens his packages slowly, trying to make as little sound as possible with the paper coated foil wrappers, spilling its contents on a nearly sheer paper plate as he listens to the drama unfold. He seems equal parts impressed and disgusted in how Wanda can make Richard sound like a swear akin to the derisive word associated with the shortened version of the name.

“Yes, it’s true that after I met you, sweetheart, my life changed” Richard says, nodding in acknowledgement.

Neanderthal Man sits next to Richard and gives Richard’s leg a soft reassuring pat. Although in a well-tailored suit, he looks much like his namesake, a tall man that is well covered in hair with a large forehead separated in two parts by the extra calcification that you would expect from a man nicknamed Neanderthal Man. His bespectacled face is alight with true and sincere interest for the speaker.

Wanda un-contorts and ripples in a delighted pattern. “Well, I’m happy you acknowledge that, Richard.” Richard goes to open his mouth but is quickly cut off by his... other half. “Alright, we are done.”

Richard looks flustered, his face protesting that he has more to share. “But I –”

Wanda is having nothing of these pleas. She digs back into Richard. “You were a terrible excuse for a human being, we met, now you are marginally better. The End. Okaaaay, Richard!”

The Deadbeat looks utterly defeated, mumbling out a dejected, “O-K...”

They sit in silence for a few moments, which makes Jason very happy that he has finished with his crinkly packages and moved on to making himself a cup of coffee. Dr. Kanji completes her notes. She surveys the circle before quickly turning her attention to a very young man playing alone in the corner, a person that Jason was not even aware of until Dr. Kanji singles him out.

“Are you doing alright over there, Max?”

Maximilian Mesta, Max, is a pre-teen with Down Syndrome. He works on a colorful variety of clay, and has been completely unphased by all of the drama in the room. His attention is acutely focused in manipulating the malleable material with contagious glee. Max wears jean overalls with a bright yellow shirt covered by a dark green smock in the front.

His hands fluidly float over the surface, concentrating intensely, as he uses a form of telekinesis to sculpt the putty. He pauses for a moment, looking over his work, before giving a thumbs up over his shoulder. “I made a little man.”

“Good Job, Max, Good Job.” Dr. Kanji casually turns back to the rest of the group. “Okay, so should we hear from Julian next?”

The Garbage Man, Julian Wong, looks completely disheveled; with long, matted, black hair, a heavily soiled set of multilayered clothing, and a dark air about him, like a man that makes others consider crossing the street to avoid him. His build is the most intimidating thing about him. He looks like Sylvester Stallone from the original Rambo movie, complete with all the veins rippling about his arms, which only serves to make his odd belly paunch all the more confounding.

The Garbage Man, who will henceforth be referred to as Julian, begins speaking in a voice that sounds like Karl Urban auditioning for Batman. “Yep, I’m ready. It used be... I had it all. Then the war hit, and all of my assets were gone. But you know, it was going wrong way before that. I went from a real hero to a real zero. It really all went downhill after the massacre.”

Jason stops putting the final touches on his morning meal, freezing in place. He looks at his plate then to the room and back to his food. He begins to realize he may have made a mistake.

Julian continues, “Their faces still haunt me to this day. Every time I close my eyes, I see the people I murdered.”

The Holy Man makes the sign of the cross before turning his head up to the sky with his hands outstretched as if offering a silent prayer to those lost.

Jason slowly slides the plate of snacks and coffee off the edge of the table into the trashcan. Unfortunately, it makes a loud noise as it thumps into the bottom of the empty bin. Julian searches, trying to find the source of the wet thud just as Jason says, more audibly than he likely meant it to come out, “Nope!”

The rest of the room turns to look at Jason, except for Max who is hyper focused on getting the face to look just right on his mentally molded man. Jason, whose usually pale complexion is now flushed with embarrassment, tries to make his way out of the meeting in a less than graceful shuffle.

“I am so sorry; I don't belong here.”

Dr. Kanji lifts her hand up from her notepad in a calming gesture. “Everyone is welcome here.”

“Oh... No... I really need to go. I'm... not ready....” Jason waves his hand in a far more frantic fashion, trying to indicate his discomfort and his mistake, as he stumbles backwards towards the exit. He turns to finish his escape, only to find Julian looming in the doorway.

“Just sit down and listen. You don't have to tell your story until you are ready. For now, you can listen to mine.” Julian says as calmly as his gravelly voice will allow.

Julian puts his arm over Jason's shoulder and ushers him over to an empty chair next to him. Jason restlessly settles into the seat trying to figure out why he thought this was going to be a good idea in the first place.

Jason mutters, half under his breath, "I'm really regretting my poor life choices right now."

Julian slaps his hand down on Jason's thigh, causing Jason to sit more still than he ever has in his entire life. "It's okay man, we were all a little squeamish our first time."



**THE TOWER OF SCHPAGG:
MASQUERADING AS
MERCENARIES**

While Jason is getting his comeuppances, Kirby and Andy blunder down the streets in Andy's van, attempting to avoid the numerous bulbous orange AutoCabs. The van looks to be rather out of place in the pristine, technology-driven city, not only because it requires a driver, but because it looks to be from an era before the turn of the Millenia. They narrowly miss an AutoCab that has suddenly pulled over for a passenger, and another traveling in the opposite direction, to finally come to rest slightly on a curb just outside of a gaudy skyscraper.

The massive building juts out of the landscape dwarfing all those around it. Two wings branch out at forty-five-degree angles from the central portion of the main building. It has the appearance of a V shape that is evident even from ground level. The obsidian tower is gilded with dark bronze lines throughout. The windows, with their matte black finish, do not give away anything of the interior. Emblazoned in a pompous golden font the words '*Van Schpagg*' scroll across a vast majority of the front face followed underneath by '*Industries*' as if it was added on only as an afterthought.

Kirby hastily makes her way out of the vehicle visibly upset about the trip. "Andy, can't we ever take an AutoCab?"

Andy pops out of the vehicle triumphantly, but quickly has to rush out of the road to avoid the onslaught of self-driving vehicles that resemble Cinderella's chariot prior to her fairy godmother's spell. He taps the hood of the van thoughtfully. "This is faster... and cheaper!"

Kirby raises an eyebrow as she watches the AutoCabs whiz by. "Debatable, and illegal."

Andy walks past Kirby and shrugs. "We may never know."

Kirby catches up with Andy as they work their way through a set of open doors in the center of the opulent structure. "No, we know it's illegal."

Andy smiles and shrugs once more. The building's interior is a stark contrast to its exterior, featuring white marble throughout. They enter the enormous and mostly empty room, filled with roman columns reaching from floor to the absurdly high ceiling. A single curved counter-height desk sits in the center of the expanse, polished with a dark and rich wood finish. Stanchions line a long red carpet that leads from the entryway to the desk. The clearly marked path wraps around the desk to two sets of gargantuan golden doors, embossed with a floral pattern that does not seem to repeat. In the center between them is a small plain white door with a placard that states: 'Employees only'.

They stroll up to the front desk, where there is what looks like a kiosk that dreamed of being a real robot when it grew up. As they approach, the sleek, boxy machine's surface illuminates

with a human-esque figure. The feature's face is quite high quality, but the rest is far less refined, with a suit that is reminiscent of an avatar from the early days of the virtual reality craze.

An upbeat, cheery, and semi-robotic voice rings out, "Welcome to Schpagg Tower. I am Automaton. How may I assist you today?"

"Yeah, we're mercenaries." Kirby leans on the desk with her elbow.

Andy confidently goes to back her up. "Yeah, we are..." He then stares over at Kirby, seemingly puzzled on whether he heard her correctly. "Mercenaries?"

Kirby nonchalantly points up to a sign that reads '*Mercenaries Report for Hire*' with an arrow pointing down to where they are standing.

Automaton gestures to them and then behind itself. "Directions have been sent to your devices. Please follow the dotted lines. Any deviation from the dotted lines will likely result in your removal by automated security, with force!" His voice sounding far too cheery for the statement.

They begin walking along the red carpet, careful not to deviate from the path, towards the doors. Andy looks quite apprehensive as he backs away from the desk.

"What does that mean?" Andy whispers.

The doors slide open in a slow but graceful manner. Kirby shrugs. “I don’t know, but I know I don't want to find out.”

They walk through the large doors into what looks like a fancy cigar lounge with red leather furniture, dark wood tables, white marble floors, and black wood paneled walls on the sides. The rearmost wall is one contiguous gigantic mirror, making the room seem to double in size. In the center, there are two loveseats facing each other with a table in the middle. A large couch spans across a far wall with quite a few tables set along its expansive size. Several pairs of oversized chairs are neatly placed on the other side of the room, with a few of them half circled around a fireplace. A door on the opposite wall has a placard that reads *Restrooms*. The two so-called mercenaries gape.

Automaton breaks the silence. “Please take a seat while you wait.”

Andy and Kirby take opposing sides of the central sitting area.

“But not there.” Automaton chimes in as soon as they relax.

They get back up and move to a set of chairs near the fireplace. Andy leans his head in Kirby’s direction without taking his eyes off the room. “This is a waiting room?”

They tentatively sit down in their newly selected seats as the doors finish closing. As soon as their bottoms hit the hide, the whole room feels like it is being whisked away into the sky.

“No, Andy, I think it’s an elevator.” Kirby’s grip tightens on the armrests.

An operatic melody playfully emanates from unseen speakers all around. On the door, Van Schpagg Industries propaganda is projected to its captive audience.

“Here in Schpagg Tower, everybody matters. How could we not care about people in the city that we own. Schpagg Tower is the heart and soul of New Edmonton. Because there's nobody that cares about you more than The Van Schpagg Corporation.”

After a brief pause showing a glinting company logo, the advertisement begins again as if on a loop. “Here in Schpagg Tower everybody matters. How could we not care about people in the city that we own.”

Kirby turns to Andy with a pleading gaze and quite the worried look on her face. “Oh, please no.”

Andy gives Kirby a smile that is not appropriate for the scenario, as if he’s going to enjoy every moment of Kirby’s current, and to be continued, annoyance.

“Let’s just hope it’s a short trip.” Andy says as the message completes again.

As it starts up once more, Andy chimes in mimicking in his own cheery and annoying voice. “Here in Schpagg Tower everybody matters. How could we not care about people in the city that we own.”

Kirby places her head into her hands, shaking it ever so slightly. “Andy, shut up.”



#4**8****PAGES****The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog****THE DUKE SAYS...**

Although the room is bright with an overly white motif, it has a hard coldness about it. It seems like a space that was trying to be inviting, but its façade broke when taking in how vast it is, yet so sparse in its accommodations. The only real feature that sits in the center of this massive room is a workstation that has a circular desk big enough for four people. The main monitor is one continuous ring around the desk, except for the entry/exit to the workstation. Additional surfaces on the desktop are lit up with various charts, calendars, spreadsheets, and other mishigas of that sort being projected from above the desk.

Tyson Phist, better known as Ty, relaxes back in his chair, ferociously pounding away on a stenographer's keyboard at a speed where his fingers blur as they expertly hit every mark. He is a spindly man and slight in every way, with the exception of his Slenderman-like height. Draped upon his dirty blond hair sits a one-ear headset over his right ear and a Bluetooth earpiece sticking out of his left. He snaps one hand over to another keyboard, then back to the one that is placed in front of him with effortless precision. A soft ringing emits from his headset. He looks over at the elevator doors and reaches for a knob marked *elevator*. With his spider-like hand he spins it to the image of a turtle.

In a soft, almost-timid British accent, he says, “Yes, Duke, I am calling them now.”

Ty makes a quick flourish over the number pad and then readjusts the Bluetooth earpiece as the call that was ringing from his headset now displays on the larger curved monitor in front of him. A little picture in the upper right-hand side of the screen indicates it will be a video call. The line picks up with an overwhelmed voice on the other line that you can tell is trying their hardest to remain calm, “Thank you for calling the Bank of New Edmonton. How can I help you today?”

“Yes. I'd like to speak with your manager, please.” Ty calmly and passively states, as if making a call to place an order at a restaurant that he calls every day for lunch to ask for the same thing.

“May I ask who's calling?” The representative on the other end attempts to hide how perturbed she is with such a request on a day like today.

Ty gets a little smirk across his face. “The Duke would like to speak with your manager, please.”

The rep looks directly up at the camera in panic before looking back down, hurrying to honor the request. “Oh! One Moment.”

Ty puts a finger to his earpiece. “Yes Duke, I'm on hold right now.”

The bank manager, Larry, comes on to the screen. He is clearly flustered even though he looks like he has been rehearsing this call all day.

“Uh, yes? This is Larry, manager at The Bank of New Edmonton, how can I help you?”

Ty does not hesitate for a second, “This is Tyson Phist with Schpagg Tower-”

Larry cuts him off, trying to stem the bleed, “Oh. Yes. We've been expecting your call. I'm so s—”

It is Ty's turn to interrupt Larry in his still tranquil demeanor. “The Duke says, ‘Don't tell me how sorry you are, or I'll show you how sorry you're going to be.’”

“Uh.. but Mr. Phist, uh, tell Dr. Van Schpagg...” Larry stumbles over himself, as he did not plan this to be a one-sided conversation.

Ty leans his head slightly to the side of his Bluetooth as Larry babbles on. He then fixes his gaze on the monitor in front of him, not caring to look in the direction of Larry as he speaks.

“The Duke says, ‘Don't Dr. Van Schpagg me. What are you going to do about our little problem?’”

Larry tries to get back on script with his preordained talking path. “I just want to start out with I'm very sorry...”

Ty whisks around in his circlet of technology, turning his back on the monitor with the camera.

“The Duke says ‘That’s it.’” As he continues to speak, he furiously types on the new keyboard while the screens in front of him flash from one thing to the next in rapid succession. “I’m going to buy your bank, and I will be burning it to the ground.”

Ty touches his Bluetooth while his other hand takes up the task solo. “No sir, I’m not quite done yet. Yes, sir, I’ll go faster”.

Ty picks up the pace to an astonishing speed, a bit more manic than before.

Larry takes this opportunity to try to pipe in. “Uh? Mr. Phist, Sir I really don’t think that’s...”

Ty pulls his hands back suspended in air in a moment of triumph. “The Duke says, ‘You’re fired. Check your email and read the memo.’”

Larry looks down at his fingers as he slowly pecks the keys on his keyboard. “Uh. I don’t have the memo.”

Ty starts typing at such a rapid rate it almost sounds like a single click as he cocks his head to the side of the Bluetooth and asks, “I’m fired?!”

Larry refreshes his screen and slumps down dejected, “Oh, there it is.”

Ty breaks his ridged hunched pose as he relaxes back into his chair. “Ah. Not fired.”

Larry perks back up for a moment. “I’m not fired?”

Ty swiftly swivels back to the section with Larry and looks directly into the camera for the first time. “No, you’re fired! Oh. Uh, The Duke says.”

Ty disconnects the call. He has a contented smile on his face as he talks to The Duke through his earpiece. “Yes Duke, I love it when your words spontaneously come out of my mouth as well.”

The elevator doors in front of him illuminate with a projected video call with The Lord of Dance smiling proudly at him. Ty Phist turns the Elevator Speed Control to an even slower setting of a snail.

The Lord of Dance joyfully sings along with the ringing tone. “Ring... Ring... Ring...”

“You know we can hear you right?” Ty Phist picks up with an irritated, yet still-level tone.

“Well, whose idea was that?” The Lord of Dance retorts, clearly aghast that his antics were on display for everyone.

Ty Phist rolls his eyes. “Yours?”

“Then I love it! Metatron! I need to talk to The Duke.”

“He's busy at the moment.”

“What!?”

The elevator dings with its arrival and Ty puts *The Lord of Dance* on hold.

Ty speaks into his Bluetooth, “Yes, Duke, I put him on hold. Yes, I knew you'd like that.”

Ty slides back in his seat, raising it to an appropriate height for his considerable stature, thereby making it easier for him to stand. He takes off his headset and places it on the desk as he glides through the one exit in the desk and makes his way around his massive accommodations. He centers himself in front of the gap that is developing in the elevator doors as they begin to part painfully slowly. Clearly the lift's occupants were not meant to have a single opportunity to get out of the elevator. In the narrow slit, two sets of desperate eyes look out at him.

“The Duke says ‘Get out there and bring back his safety deposit box.’ You'll find all the details you need in this package,” Ty states.

Ty forcefully slides a manilla envelope to Kirby through the 5-centimeter gap. He presses the button next to the doors and retreats back to his desk, tossing out a quip over his shoulder, “Good luck.”

The doors abruptly close in front of Kirby.

Not even the closed doors can block the collective cry from the elevator passengers. “Nooooo!”

Ty Phist puts on an amused grin as if this is the most satisfying part of his job. “Yes, Duke, I shooed them away.”

Ty slides back on his headset, hits a single key, and The Lord of Dance appears on the elevator doors once again.

The Lord of Dance dangles a locked safety deposit box back and forth as he waits, with an air of playful annoyance. “Were those for me? With all this trouble for little old me, I really think he'll want to talk.”

The Lord of Dance grins as Ty Phist succinctly responds, “Nope.”

“WHAT!?! You tell Van Schpagg to get on the line right now!”

“That's Dr. Van Schpagg.”

Lord of Dance giggles, “DDS.”

“The Duke says-“ Ty hangs up the line with The Lord of Dance and proceeds to type. “Yes sir, I hung up on him. Yes, sir, we got his location. I'll get The Bureaucrat on the phone right away.”



#5**3****PAGES**

The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog

**THIS IS NOT A SECRET LAIR.
I'M JUST RETIRED**

Captain Ohblivious is on the outskirts of an expansive park, shaking his fist up at a tree in anger. An empty paper bag lays on the ground at his feet. The bag has a circus clown prominently featured on its front.

The Captain growls, “Stupid Squirrels stole all my popcorn.”

Ohblivious punches the tree, causing it to noticeably sway in protest. He clearly still has a significant amount of power within him. He glares a moment longer before turning away and kicking at the dirt as he begins to mope down the sidewalk.

Under his breath, he mutters, “You build a new city and the rats still come back.” He turns back to the tree with his fist extended in the air flailing it about. “Yeah, you heard me, I called you rats!”

Captain Ohblivious turns swiftly around, back down his path in a huff, just before shuffling down a nearby alley. He mumbles to himself, “Stupid tree rats.”

He turns his head back in the direction of the park. “That’s right, I called you tree rats!”

He staggers up to a door halfway down the side of a building. Although the outward appearance on the street mimics that of a brick-and-mortar exterior, the sides do little to disguise their true form of just a concrete slab structure, lined with marks from its 3D printed roots. Across the wall is a cascade of color made up of crude chalk drawings. A full outline of a single-story home, complete with windows, curtains, and a rough sketch of the interior through the chalk windows. A sign scrawled above the door reads '*Not A Secrete Lair*'. The door itself has two distinct signs that are much more familiar. The one at the top declares this is a '*Public Restroom*' free for all to use; whereas the lower of the two is just a paper sign which reads '*Out of order*'. The tattered appearance of the lower sign makes it clear that it has been there for quite some time.

“Lair, sweet lair. You’d never eat my popcorn.”

The Captain throws open the door to reveal a giant pile of fluff. The fluff is just that, a mound of cotton that fills the entirety of the doorway from top to bottom. Captain Ohblivious dives headfirst into the off-white abyss with a delighted sigh. The door slowly swings shut behind him with a soft click.



**#5****3****PAGES****The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog****YES, IT'S STILL CHAPTER 5:
EMBARRASSMENT, EXCUSES,
AND AN ESCAPE**

Jason Ankoku exits The New Edmonton House of Multi-Denominational Faiths surrounded by The Vigilantes Anonymous crowd. Jason is visibly unsettled as he attempts to avoid eye contact with any of his current company.

Julian Wong gives Jason a bone rattling pat on the back. “Man, you’re a great listener, Jason.”

As the gaggle of eclectic ex-crime fighters turns right, Jason turns in the opposite direction as nonchalantly as he can, but it is rather evident that he is just trying to make his escape.

Julian sweeps his arm around Jason and spins him around. “We’re all going to get a drink together. You want to come with?”

“Uh... No. I am in AA too.” Jason keeps a blank face, although in his head he is kicking himself for such a ridiculous reply.

Neanderthal Man pulls a pair of tortoise shell glasses with a light tint to them out of his pocket and exchanges them for the set he was wearing. “Oh. So am I. I go Thursdays, you?”

Jason is dumbfounded and just chooses to turn away from the situation while incoherently babbling something to the tune that vaguely seems to imply that he attends online.

Julian pipes up in Jason's defense, "Hey guys, everyone's first day is hard. Give him a break."

Jason turns a corner to take a deep breath, attempting to reset after his self-inflicted therapy session had gone in a direction that he should have known it would go. He looks down at his slate, scrolling through his contacts. He pauses for a long time then looks up to the sky as if to ask for forgiveness. "Sorry Kirby."

He presses the name Libby in his contacts and selects the option for a voice call only. He does not even bring the slate to his ear until the line picks up, staring at his hands like they have betrayed him.

"Hey Libby, I just wanted to chat about something that your sister and I were working on. Do you have a few moments... Yeah. Okay, want to meet for coffee? Yeah, which one?"

Jason waves down an Auto Cab and starts to climb inside the bubbly looking vehicle. "Great, I am headed there now."



**#6****3****PAGES**

The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog

ARE WE THERE YET?!

The elevator doors open at the ground floor of Schpagg Tower with a satisfying ding. Andy, having frozen solid in his metal form, is standing in the center of the elevator mocking the pose of the statue outside. Kirby exits the bathroom wiping her hands on her pants to get off the last of the remaining water.

Andy unfreezes and turns back into his flesh and blood body. He gleefully saunters over to Kirby. “See I told you I could hold the pose the whole time we were in the elevator.”

Kirby slyly grins at him and gives him a light condescending pat on the cheek. Andy shirks back at the touch of Kirby’s slightly moist digits. “Good for you, Andy.”

The giddy joy on Andy’s face has melted away as he ponders the series of events for the second half of their elevator trip. He comes to, and searches the elevator for Kirby, who is no longer standing in front of him. Kirby has made her way out of the elevator doors that have opened just wide enough for her to escape through while Andy was lost in thought.

“Hey, wait did you go in there to take a big dump like you said, or were you just trying to avoid talking to me?” He asks as he squeezes his mass through the gaudy doors.

Kirby turns, now walking backwards towards the front exit. “Oh, Andy. Can't it be both?”

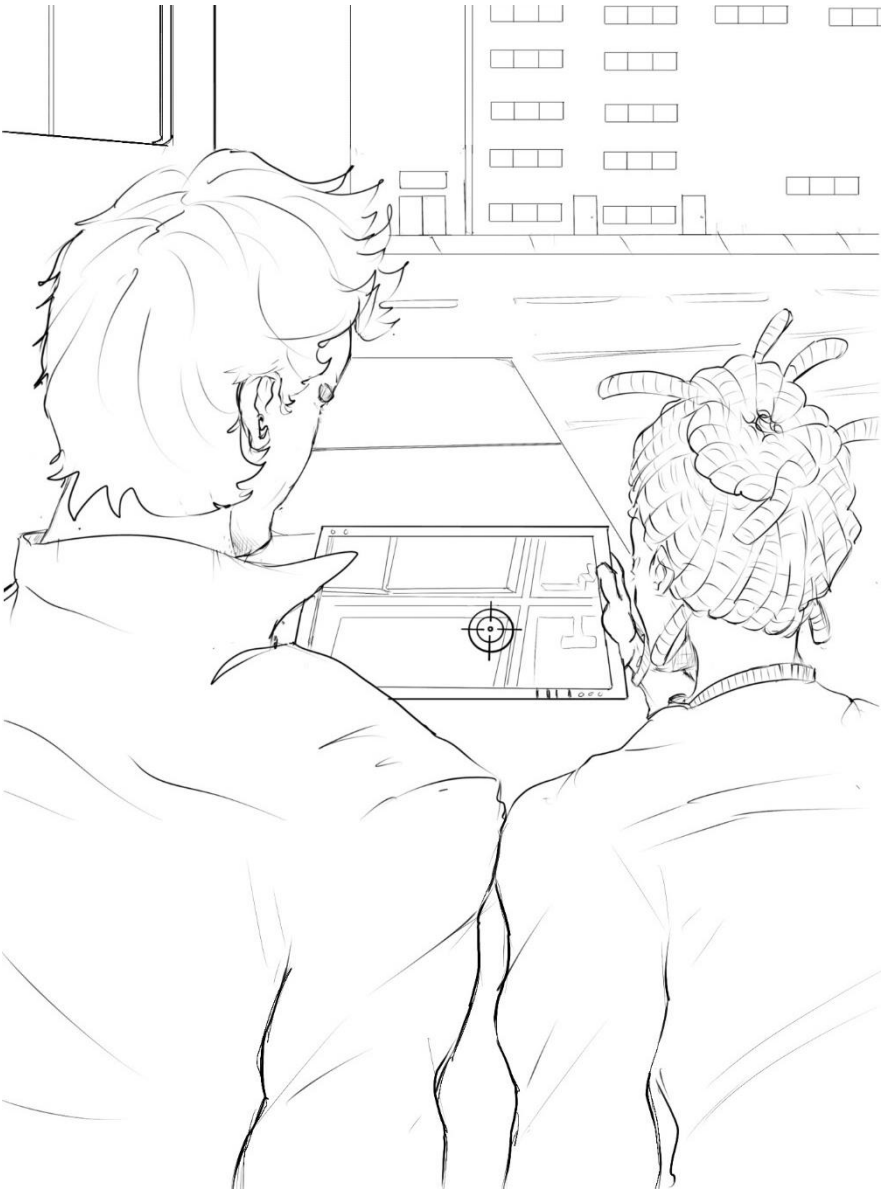
Kirby turns back around and pushes open the entry doors. She pulls the now crumpled envelope out of her back pocket. She opens the envelope just as Andy's long legs have closed the distance between them. In the package is a digital map with a satellite image centered on The Lord of Dance's headquarters. On the top of the building, is a big pulsing red dot. Kirby goes to hail an AutoCab, but Andy ushers her reluctantly over to the van. Kirby moans her disapproval as Andy practically puts her into the car and buckles her up. Andy pops in the driver's side and slides the hexagonal shaft of the stowed steering wheel into the steering column. He grabs up the map from Kirby and presses a button on the legend that shows a path from where they are to their destination.

“Now routing you to your-“ Automaton's voice cuts off abruptly as Kirby slaps the map with her hands frantically to turn off the audio.

Andy smiles from ear to ear looking directly at Kirby “Here in Schpagg Tower, everybody matters.”

Kirby holds a single finger up to Andy and says everything she needs to with her eyes.

“Understood.” Andy says as he starts up the vehicle and lurches forward into the swift traffic.



#7**4****PAGES****The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog**

THE BIG RED DOT

The Lord of Dance's headquarters seems very particular in how it is furnished and designed. For the most part, the floor is sparse like an unfinished floor of a high rise, with only patches of opulence or utility. The choice in lighting is dedicated to these islands of life within the drab surroundings, highlighting each one as individual aspects rather than parts of the larger room: a 40-person dining table fit for a banquet hall in a palace complete with a chandelier, a conversation pit with wrap around couches that do not look to have a clear entry into the fully encircled area, a dimly lit spot that is surrounded by all sorts of monitors and tech (more lit up by the screens and peripherals than any additional lighting), a full bedroom set with a four poster bed that is enormous enough to hold a king and his entire court, a carpeted area sporting racks of clothes with several shelves displaying ample amounts of shoes, and two boxy bathrooms that are not anywhere near equal in size with one labelled 'Mine' and the far smaller one with a sign just stating 'Whoever'.

In the final section, the Lord of Dance lounges in his oversized chair smack dab in the middle of the expansive floor. The chair has a very throne-like feel to it, not only by the ornate stylings, but due to it being raised on a platform with stairs that ascend to its elevated perch.

His slate chimes, piquing his interest as he picks it up, taking only a moment to review it before leaping from his chair. He rushes down and over to the bank of monitors towards the westerly side of the building.

“What do you mean there’s a big red dot on my roof?” He asks.

Uplink is reclined in her chair and wordlessly points to one of the monitors to help The Lord of Dance find the right one.

“Maybe they tracked us, Boss.” Brad chimes in.

The Lord of Dance snaps his head over to Brad and then swiftly points over near his chair where the ever-familiar large pink and white seashell sits on an equally froofy table. “Brad, what have I told you about the conch?”

Brad shuffles out of his seat, intent on getting to that conch. As he makes his first strides in that direction, he spots The Mechanic already in the process of grabbing the shell in his metal fingers. “Likely, but that doesn’t really explain the big red dot though Brad.”

Brad gives a large shrug, silently conceding his position. The Mechanic walks over to a titanium pole that spans from floor to ceiling just behind the throne, tactlessly surrounded by two rows of seating. He places his bare hand on the pole. “But, how about we move just to be safe?”

The building begins to shake. Brad runs over to the window looking down at the parking lot next to them. There is a

car that looks like it is slowly growing closer to the building, However, it is not the car that is in motion, but the building itself. A sense of realization washes over his face as it dawns on him what this will mean for his car. Brad turns back around and opens his mouth to speak, only to realize that The Notorious LOD is standing just behind him, now holding the conch. Brad gestures frantically as The Lord of Dance holds tight to the conch, beaming a mischievous smile at him. Lord of Dance raises his eyebrows in a combination of both curiosity and mocking empathy as he turns his focus to the screens, watching the building painfully and slowly plow into Brad's vehicle. Brad's near flailing comes to a rapid stop as he hears the crunch of his vehicle against the wall, cautiously swiveling about to see the quite avoidable carnage unfold. Brad goes limp and falls back into a seat beside Uplink, who provides Brad a sincere expression of pity.

The Lord of Dance turns and plops the conch on Brad's lap. "See, now that's what I'm talking about Brad."

The Lord of Dance grasps the back of Uplink's chair as he leans in to watch the live feed as the big red dot begins to form in the newly vacant lot. "Well, would you look at that."

Brad, who is now more curious than upset, sits up in his chair as they all watch as the red light slinks off of the building and onto the Ferroch on the ground below.

"What do you think it is?" Brad asks.

The Mechanic comes over and takes the conch out of Brad's hands. "I think it would be a--"

Just then a shiny metal tube with blackened fins sinks itself into the newly empty lot. The Mechanic nods, with his suspicions now confirmed. “That.”

The Lord of Dance looks at the missile for only a moment before clapping his hand in a single pop. “Welp, they know where we were. It's time to go. Let's slow down the AutoCabs to buy some time.”

The Lord of Dance grabs for a dial – rather similar to the one for the elevator in Schpagg Tower – and moves it past the snail to an image of a Sailing Stone.



**THE BLUNDERS CONTINUE IN
BUNKERS BEAN BARN**

Libby Bertino sits at a table with two cups of coffee. Her style looks like a runway outfit that actually works in public. Her curvy figure is accentuated in all the right places, giving her a very elegant look. She looks identical to Kirby in only a few specific ways; they share the same face and height, but really that is where the similarities stop. Libby's clean and well-manicured appearance is a stark contrast to the unkempt chaos that is Kirby.

Libby raises her coffee cup to take a drink only to discover that it is empty. She lifts her head up and takes in her surroundings. The coffee shop has a faux country feel to the place, like that of an old saloon that was designed by Starbucks. A girl in her early 20s runs over and sets a new cup of coffee in front of Libby, staring starry eyed and brimming with excitement. The barista is a blond with a few light freckles speckled on her cheeks.

"Can I get you anything else, Miss Bertino?" She says in a light Dixie accent.

Libby takes a sip of the new latte and glances up to the girl. "No, I'm good right now. And you can just call me Libby."

The barista shutters as she blushes a bit. She stammers on her words even though she has grown more courage. “Can I? Really? Wow that's so cool, *Libby*. I am Charlotte”

Charlotte cannot help herself as she lets out an involuntary giggle after calling Libby by her first name. Libby goes to take another drink but is pulled back into conversation as Charlotte gets a little more bold and begins talking once again. “And, uh, now that we're on a first name basis, can I have a selfie?”

Libby looks over to Charlotte, who is wagging her slate slightly side to side like a visual aid while sheepishly grinning a hopeful smile.

Libby gives her back a soft smile. “Maybe after my coffee date, Charlotte.”

Charlotte beams with anticipation and the fact that *The Libby Bertino* just used her name. “It’s a Date!”

Charlotte then turns around quickly, unsure of why she just said that. Libby smirks as she goes back to her coffee.

Jason bumbles into the coffee shop and surveys the room frantically. He notices Libby eyeing him with a simmering fury from a booth in the furthest corner of the shop. He waves at her as he hurries over to the table.

Libby is visibly annoyed as she inquires, “Where have you been, Jason?”

Jason looks over his shoulder and out the window for a quick moment and then back to Libby. “I think there's something wrong with the AutoCabs. I got in one and it wouldn't let me out until I got here.”

Libby reviews Jason's face, clearly waiting for the punchline. She finally asks in a perturbed tone when no additional explanation is presented, “That's how cabs are supposed to work, isn't it? The key is to get into the cab earlier so that you don't leave someone waiting by themselves at a coffee shop.”

Jason points over his shoulder as an AutoCab inches along so slowly that pedestrians are passing the vehicle. A person in the back of the vehicle is sobbing like they are pleading with the cab to let them out.

Libby nods to Jason, now with more understanding. “Oh. You could've at least called to let me know you were running late. So, what's going on?”

Jason gives her a contented nod and stares off into the distance while his brain tries to figure out where to start.

“Truthfully, I'm doing really good. It has been a long time since I have felt this driven-” He makes eye contact with Libby with genuine enthusiasm. “I think I found a purpose in life. That's actually what I came to talk to you about.”

Libby's face drops as her demeanor darkens slightly. “I'm not giving you any money.”

Jason looks a little hurt before thinking about all the times in the past where this immediate response would be apt and shakes off her quick dismissal.

“What? No, that's not what I wanted. Your sister came up with a really good idea to enrich and fulfill our lives. And the lives of everyone in New Edmonton.”

Libby's expression becomes more playful as she smirks while holding her cup with two hands, like she is warming her hands with it. “So, you're starting a cult?”

Libby lightheartedly bats her eyes at a dumbstruck Jason as she brings her cup to her lips to hide her growing amusement.

Jason seems to get a little sensitive about her incredulous assertion. “What is wrong with you?”

Libby lets out a little laugh and she asks, “So what are you guys doing? And spare me the pitch.”

Jason beams confidently over to Libby, placing his hands together and parting them in a wild hand gesture as he proudly states, “We are going to be *SUPER* heroes.”

Jason pauses waiting expectantly for Libby to respond.

Libby puts her coffee cup on the table. “Like a Detective Agency? Awww are you going to find people's lost kitty cats and spy on cheating spouses?”

Jason does not sense the sarcasm and continues forward. “No, no, no, no, I mean, *real* superheroes. We have these powers and right now we're not doing anything with them. We might as well use them to do some good.”

Libby stares at Jason like she is waiting for the other shoe to drop. When he just stares back looking for a reaction from her, she blurts out, “You're joking, right?”

Jason is quick to dispel any hint of comedy. “No! Kirby's quite excited about this idea. I haven't seen her this excited about anything in years.”

Libby taps the top of her cup with a wooden stir stick, mulling over what has just been presented to her. Her eyes remain fixed on her hand fiddling with the cup, unable to meet Jason's gaze full of excited anticipation.

“I can't really get involved in something like this right now. If this works out for her then that's great. But if this turns out to be another juice cleanse business... I just can't do that again.”

Jason rushes into his next statement like he knew this would be her response. “But you don't really have to *do* anything, that's the best part. All we need is for you to endorse it. Put your name and face in front of it to give us some notoriety and provide legitimacy.”

Libby stops tapping on the top of her cup and raises her now narrowed eyes up at Jason with a very serious expression of

contempt on her face. “Tell me one thing. Does she even want me there?”

Jason is only pauses for a moment before allowing his thoughts to go directly from brain to mouth. “Yeah, of course! I mean she doesn't know that she does, but she will.”

“Thanks for wasting my time, Jason.” Libby, exhausted with where this conversation has gone, purses her lips, upset by Jason’s admission.

Libby gets up to leave and moves towards the door. Jason gets out of his chair quickly to go after her. “Libby, wait!”

Jason doubles back to pick up his coffee. Libby is nearly out the door already. Charlotte tries and fails to keep the disappointment out of her voice as she watches Libby walk out the door.

“Have a great day, Libby! You don't have to pay for that.”

Jason desperately tries to catch up to Libby but is stopped by the outstretched arm of Charlotte. She snaps her fingers and makes a hand motion indicating that she wants payment from him.

“YOU have to pay,” she says.

Jason looks over at Libby standing on the sidewalk. “What?!”

Charlotte, in a calm but firm tone, lets him know just how she is feeling about the topic. “You cost me a selfie, and I’m not gonna pay for it.”

Jason watches as Libby gets into a limo, promptly speeding off through the sea of meandering AutoCabs. Charlotte continues to stare down Jason with a look that suggests one part expectation and three parts fury.

“What’s the damage?” Jason asks.

Charlotte responds flatly, “That’ll be 43 dollars. Or 21.50 Kosh Kash.”

Jason looks down at his cup and thinks about the cup that Libby was holding. He sniffs his cup of coffee trying to sense the reason for the outrageous amount before glancing out the door to where Libby was just moments earlier. “What kind of coffee was that?”

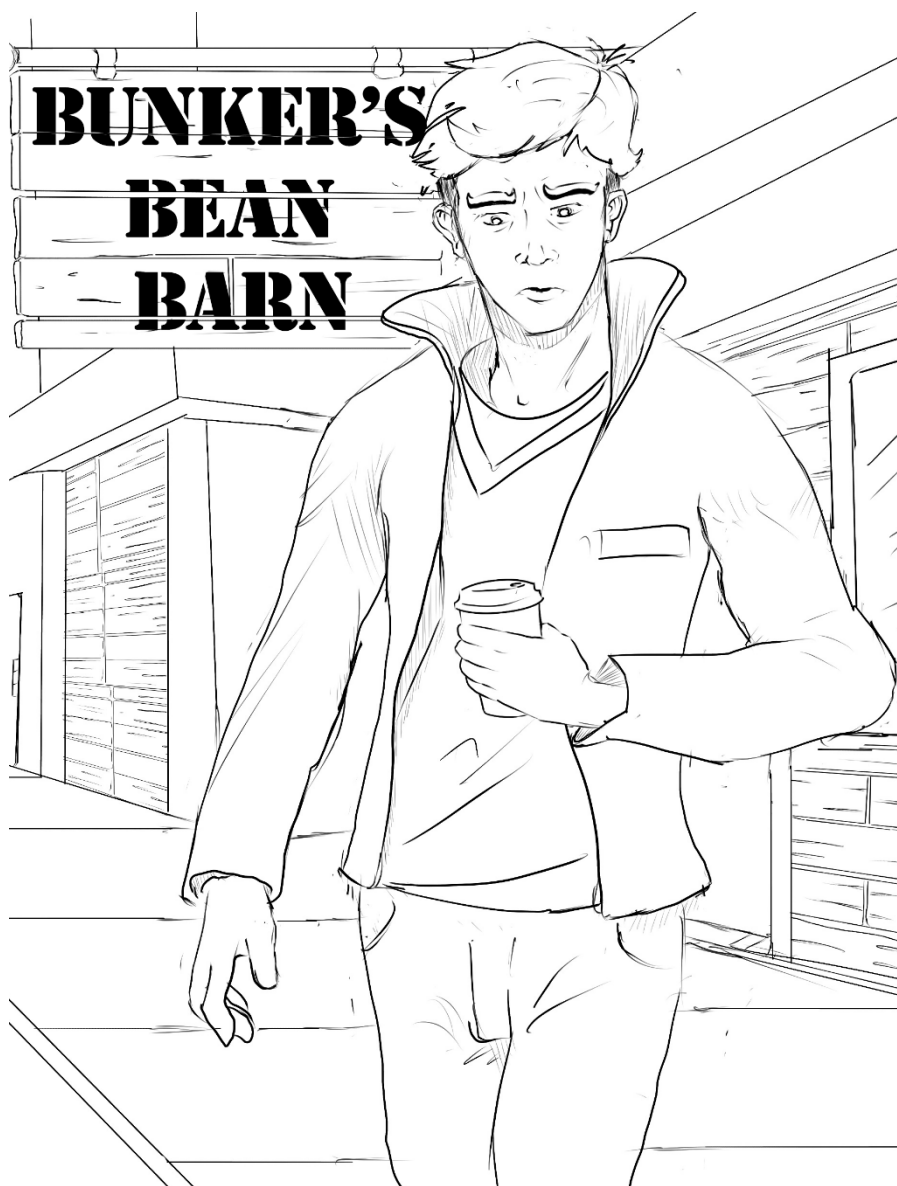
Charlotte smirks impishly back at him. “The kind that comes with a 100 percent gratuity.”

Jason sighs in reluctant understanding as he taps his COMM on the counter, paying for the drinks. He exits the coffee shop and takes a sip of his very expensive coffee.

“This coffee’s a lot like my day. Cold, bitter, and somehow exactly what I should have expected.”

He goes to wave down an AutoCab that creeps along at a pace more befitting a shopping cart being pushed by a soft breeze

than a mode of transportation, but then thinks better of it. He turns down the street and begins his long journey home on foot.



#9**6
PAGES****The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog****ANDY AND KIRBY
VS
LORD OF DANCE**

Andy's minivan comes screeching to a halt along the curb in front of the empty lot, taking up two spots that are intended for perpendicular parking. The missile in the vacant lot where the Lord of Dance's headquarters used to be explodes with an earth-shattering boom as the minivan comes to a jarring stop.

Kirby scurries out of the van in a hurry, attempting to escape any potential catastrophe that may result from the thunderous sound that she has attributed to the vehicle. She searches around trying to find what Andy has hit now. After seeing that there is no apparent damage, she looks at Andy who has leaped out of the vehicle himself and is frantically inspecting the van for the source of the issue.

Andy scratches his head after failing to locate anything of note, he remarks to Kirby, "Well, that is new. We've got to get that looked into."

Kirby gapes incredulously at Andy. "What 'we?' It's *your* car! I don't even like being in it!"

Andy drops to his hands and knees inspecting the undercarriage before responding to Kirby's question. "Wh.. the.. the proverbial we? And it's a *van*."

Kirby stares at Andy for a brief moment and then turns to walk towards the coordinates on her map. “Define proverbial and we’ll talk about it.”

Andy appears a little slighted before perking up trying to look at the bright side of the situation. “At least we were faster than the AutoCabs.”

Andy motions to an AutoCab that is slugging along. In the back is the same person that Libby and Jason saw outside the coffee shop. It looks like he has given up on pleading with the AutoCab and has moved to sheer panic, banging on the windows trying to get free.

That annoyingly cheery automated voice rings out as it tries to calm down its frantic passenger. “You have not yet reached your destination. It is unsafe for you to leave the vehicle while it is in operation. We care too much about you. Please try to relax and enjoy some calming music.”

The AutoCab begins playing the same music from the elevator at Schpagg Tower as the passenger screams, “No, no, no, not again!”

The AutoCab pipes back, seemingly more happy than before, “That is a quadruple negative implying you would like to hear it again. Please enjoy.”

The AutoCab rolls away slowly enough that each of the individual spokes in the sleek rim is visible as a loud and sustained “NOOOOOOOO!”, resonates about the streets from its captive client.

“See, Kirby, I told you we can't trust ‘em.” Andy states emphatically as he makes his way to his feet.



Kirby, who did not pay attention for one second to the events in the roadway, is alternating from analyzing the map then back to the smoldering crater in the lot in front of her. Andy comes up beside her.

“Are you sure this is the right place, Andy?” She asks.

She shows Andy the map, and then inspects the smoking indent in the earth laid out before them. Kirby tilts her head in Andy’s direction, unable to take her eyes off the oddity.

“Isn't there supposed to be a building here?”

Andy rolls his eyes as he fixes them on Kirby. “Duh, they blew it up.”

Kirby responds to Andy’s less than cordial rebuke of her assessment. “Where’s all the Debris? Not to mention who is this ‘they’ you are talking about.”

Andy grins widely. “De-bree?”

Andy waits in grand anticipation to an ongoing joke he has been running for years about the pronunciation of particular words, and his childish refusal to recognize them unless presented to him in the way he would like them said.

Kirby closes her eyes and shakes her head as she massages the bridge of her nose. “Where’s the de-briss?”

Andy's goofy smile, for making Kirby intentionally mispronounce a word, fades as the information truly sets in. "Oh, yeah. Where are the leftovers?"

A gentle squeak comes to the right of them. The Lord of Dance sneaks out of his hideout next door with a briefcase cuffed to his waist like the worst cod piece in existence.

"It can't be that easy." Kirby points in his direction.

Andy follows Kirby's finger to see Lord of Dance trying to slink away. Andy shrugs then stands on one leg with the other tucked up like a flamingo as he freezes in a bulky club-like pose. Kirby casually picks him up - so casually that this seems to be a very normal activity that the two of them regularly participate in - and stalks towards Lord of Dance. Kirby takes a swing, making a lovely resounding *bink* as she sucker-smacks The Lord of Dance upside the back of his head. She looks down at The Notorious LOD, now prone on the ground.

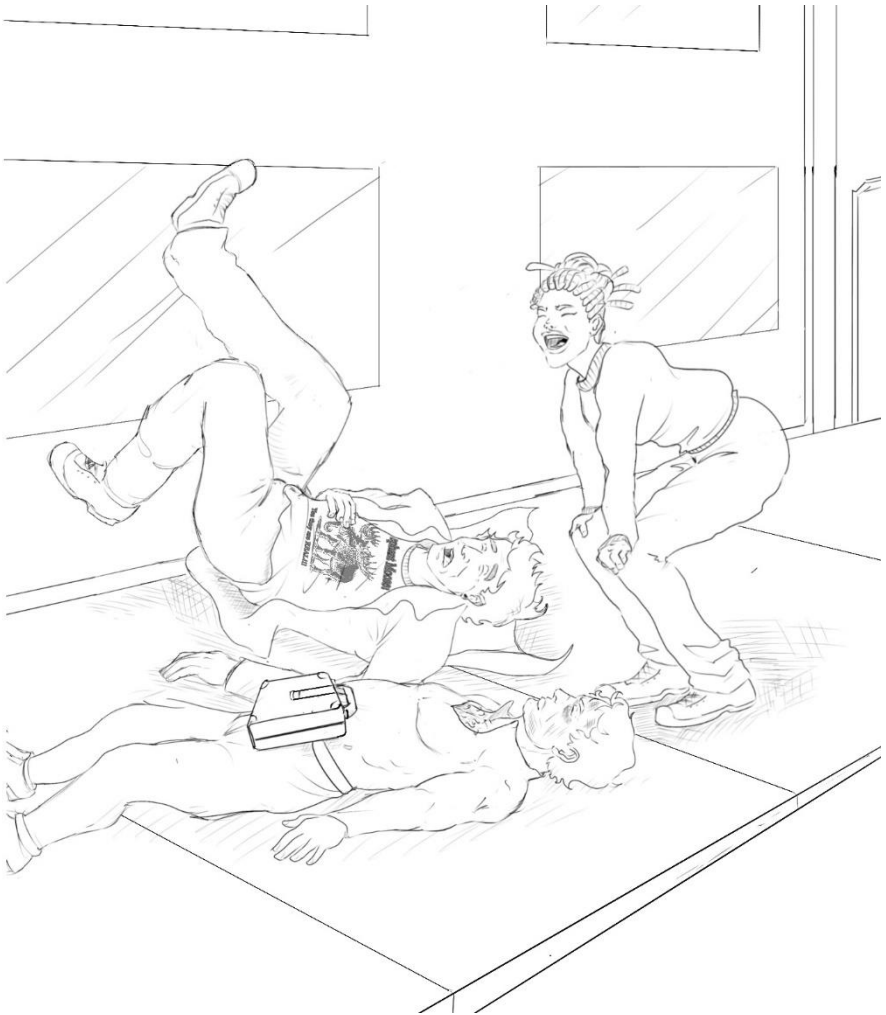
"You're not a super villain, you're just a bored rich guy."

Without moving a muscle Lord of Dance chimes back. "Semantics."

Kirby startles from the motionless body making humanly sounds; she would have sworn he was unconscious. She begins repetitively kicking The Lord of Dance, switching it up with a swing of Andy every now and then. Kirby starts giggling after she is satisfied that he has truly passed out. Her giggling only intensifies when she puts her Andy club down headfirst, leaning him up against the wall.

Andy changes back to his squishy and unbalanced self, crumpling to the ground from his precarious position against the wall. “Oof. There’s something wrong with you.”

Kirby’s giggle turns to a full body laugh as she doubles over with tears of joy now trickling down her cheeks. “Yeah, probably.”





#10

6

PAGES

The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog

PLACE TITLE HERE

Captain Ohblivious rolls out of his Not a Secret Lair and back out into the alley. He lackadaisically makes his way to his feet with his head hung low. He mopes down the alley in a slumped posture.

“I used to be the biggest thing since easily toasted sliced bread. Now look at me!” He stops and looks at his back alley hidey hole that he calls home. “It’s not-not a secret lair. It’s a toilet. And it doesn’t even work!”

He points, wagging his hand with anger at the weathered, halfcocked *Out of Order* sign on the door.

“You’re out of order.” He turns and continues back down the alley even more solemnly than before. “It’s all out of order.”

Captain Ohblivious trudges up near the end of the alley. Ohblivious pulls a partially smooshed pink cupcake with a lit candle out of his neck pocket – the inside of his suit that he is known for using as additional storage – and sighs as he looks down at it.

In a sobering and sad tone, he sings just the final notes of the song, “Happy Birthday to me.”

Captain Ohblivious blows out the candle on the cupcake with a halfhearted puff. He stares at the cupcake as he speaks out his birthday wish to no one but himself. “My Birthday wish on this birthday, I really wish I could find someone that was the way I used to be when I was what I was. All that deep down burning of goodness that makes you feel mmmm inside.”

Captain Ohblivious contemplates the cupcake as if it is a metaphor for his plight. He clinches his hand, squashing the once only slightly squished baked good. There is nothing more left but a smudge of frosting oozing from his white-knuckled fist. “Passion!”

Captain Ohblivious looks up and notices the Taco Man's Automated Hotdog Stand across the street. The slogan ‘*A Taco is a Taco*’ is printed on the side of the tackily painted red and yellow taco stand that is more of a glorified vending machine. The stand has a weather worn sticker that reads ‘Kosh Kash Accepted’. Ohblivious drops the remnants of the cupcake on the ground, wiping his hand on the wall of the building opposite his not a secret lair – doing a far better job of cleaning his hand than you would have thought possible.

“Ooh, ‘n a hotdog!” Captain Ohblivious raises his fist up in the air and strikes a decently gallant pose as he shouts, “Spurts of Justice!”

As he bellows out his heroic cry his voice deepens in pitch. In an instant, Captain Ohblivious changes from an old withered man into a young, virile, blond-haired, blue-eyed Captain Oh; although when slowed down, the transformation is like a mishmashed combination of a Sailor Moon and a He-Man

transformation sequence. The golden boy of yesteryear moseys toward the curb across the street from the hotdog stand. He stops, waiting for an AutoCab to pass.

MEANWHILE...

Jason walks down the street scrolling through his slate, much more lackluster than before, but still at least trying something to salvage the day. His slate makes a final bleep as it turns itself off, running out of battery. He lets out a defeated huff as he slides the gadget into his pocket. As he turns his eyes to the path in front of him, they grow as large as an anime schoolgirl when he sees Captain Oh standing at the curb impatiently waiting for the AutoCab to make its way past him. Jason stands quite still, frozen in place at the sight of the world's first superhero.

“Oh, my Gods! It's Captain Oh!”

Jason pulls out his slate instinctively and presses the photo button, too shocked to remember that it's dead. He slips the device back as he anxiously approaches the venerable hero. He attempts to casually stand next to Captain Oh as if he is also waiting to cross the street.

As the AutoCab inches along, Jason works up the courage to speak, “Hey. You're Captain Oh, aren't you?”

Captain Oh stands there stoically. “Obviously.”

Jason tries hard not to fan girl out, freeze up, or run away as his body goes through all the fight or flight responses. “I am such a huge fan.”

Captain Oh looks a little annoyed, less by Jason and more by the infuriating pace of the AutoCab. “Most people are.”

Jason works up more courage realizing this could be his elevator pitch moment. “I’ve been really inspired lately to start a classic superhero group here in New Edmonton.”

Captain Oh is fixated on the AutoCab, completely disregarding Jason’s words. He glances down at his barren wrist, tapping his foot impatiently. “Do they always move this slow?”

Jason does seem to notice the lack of acknowledgement of his statement and nonchalantly replies, “Usually only when people are in a rush.”

Captain Oh glares at the AutoCab and then turns his gaze on Jason, but with more of a look asking ‘Are you serious?’ Jason meekly shrugs and nods. Captain Oh, with silent rage, swings his hate-filled eyes back at the AutoCab.

Jason loses a bit of his composure having the ire of Captain Oh in his general vicinity. They stand there in awkward silence as the AutoCab continues to pass them at a painfully slow speed. Jason looks at Captain Oh nervously trying to figure out how to ask him to join their team. “I’m just so passionate about doing something good for this community.”

Captain Oh chooses not to respond right away as he impatiently waits for the final few inches of the AutoCab to move out of his path. “That’s great. I’m a little busy.”

Once the AutoCab is fully clear of the cross-walk, Captain Oh jogs swiftly across the road toward the hotdog stand. Jason stammers as he sees his one last chance to make his pitch walk away without seeming too needy.

He blurts out an incoherent statement that is definitely five sentences or more, finishing the babble with just one succinct statement, “We could call it The Oh Force!”

Captain Oh, undeterred by Jason's pleas walks up to the stand and presses the button for a plain hotdog. Jason's head flops down as he realizes his chance is over and, with a reluctance best suited for an execution, he begins to walk back up the street. Captain Oh pulls a dingy looking COMM off of his utility belt that resembles an old flip phone. He proceeds to swipe it across the scanner. The cart quietly whirs as it works on the order. Captain Oh slides the COMM back into its holster and seals the Velcro flap. He inspects his fingers with a look of disgust as he notices that there is a sticky residue left on them. The cart dings as it dispenses the tubular taco wrapped in aluminum foil. A surprised Captain Oh, who seems to feel that his task was not completed, turns back into Captain Ohblivious.

Captain Ohblivious stares at the single hotdog in his hand with a decent amount of disappointment. “Where is the rest of it? Where are your friends? Where's your accessories?”

He begins rapidly pressing the hotdog button attempting to convince the machine to give him what he wanted and not what he had asked for.



**FROM DOWN AND DEJECTED
TO BEWILDERED BRILLIANCE**

The sun is setting as a deflated Jason trudges up the steps of his apartment building. With every step through the halls, the facts sink in deeper. He can't help but dwell on his desperate bumbblings about the city and his utter failure. He stops and stares at the apartment door, considering whether he should open the door or run away in shame. Eventually the thought of sleeping on the streets over just telling his lifelong friends of his ineffectiveness gets the better of him and he grasps the handle. He meanders into the room only to be greeted by the cheery voices of his roommates who both speak in unison.

“How'd you do it?”

Jason stops cold in the threshold, clearly confused by their reaction to his unceremonious entrance. “What?”

Andy motions to the kitchen. Jason slowly turns his head to see Captain Ohblivious waddling out of the dining area over to the living room with an armload of hotdogs and a bottle of ketchup as the door to the fridge is left slightly ajar. In shock, Jason can't say a thing. Captain Ohblivious scooches down to sit on the couch next to Andy and Kirby, who look at Jason in anticipation. Captain Ohblivious bends forward like he may put the literal hug full of hotdogs on the coffee table only to flop back onto the sofa sending the majority of the hotdogs scattering

about. Salivating, Andy reaches down to pick up a hotdog on the floor, but his hand is slapped away by The Captain.

“It’s not your birthday!” The Captain yells as he scolds Andy.

“Jason, you outdid yourself.” Kirby looks over at Jason with a true sense of admiration.

Andy rubs his hand and takes the high road. Given the state of their floor, he knows he is likely better off not eating it even if it is still in the wrapper.

Andy reiterates his question with a little more insistence in his voice. “*How did you do it?*”

Jason ponders how to answer the question. He had honestly thought upon entering the apartment that his day was a complete waste of his time.

Jason simply says the first thing that comes to mind. “Persistence... Maybe?”

Jason finally moves forward into the room and attempts to close the door behind him when the door is caught by another person in the hallway.

Libby Bertino pulls the door back to make her way inside. “Kirby, I saw what you did on the news today, and I’m really impressed.”

Kirby smirks as Andy frantically grabs for the remote on the table. Andy exclaims, “What?! On the news?”

Andy fumbles around on the remote as Libby skirts by a slack jawed Jason. Libby is kind enough to close his maw for him before he turns back around. Andy slows down, being more deliberate with the controls, getting the TV to respond.

Captain Ohblivious looks rather excited about the prospect, “Oooh, TV!”

Andy gets the channel changed over to NENN just as Libby flings something from her slate to the TV by sliding her finger upwards across the device. A banner at the bottom of the TV briefly states ‘Now Streaming from Libby’s Mobile.’

“Aw, this show sucks.” Captain Ohblivious whines out his disappointment.

Leslie Nielsen III appears on the set sitting behind her news desk.

“Today we had a rare television appearance by Dr. Alex Van Schpagg. For this we go to Mike from earlier in the day.”

Leslie looks up at the left upper hand side of her screen as a pop up comes over her overly digitized background. Mike R. Foehn stands between the simmering crater and the Lord of Dance’s headquarters to make his report. Just visible behind Mike are two police officers, who lead a handcuffed Lord of Dance into the back of a paddy wagon. The Notorious LOD scowls at the duct tape covering his mouth.

“Thank you Leslie! Just moments ago, the ringleader in the robbery of The Bank of New Edmonton was apprehended by- Dr. Van Schpagg?!”

The camera pans slightly to the side, as a matte black limousine, emblazoned with the text “Van Schpagg Industries” and bearing the license plate “Schpagg1”, pulls into the lot. As it finalizes its stop, Kirby scrunches up her face in distaste, clearly disturbed that they stated Van Schpagg’s name instead of theirs. Andy and the others shift closer to the screen to get a better look at the TV, with Captain Ohblivious being the exception. He tries to pile his mountain of hotdogs on the side table next to the couch as he practically swallows one down whole.

Ty Phist steps out of the vehicle and announces, “Dr. Van Schpagg would like to say a few words to your viewers.”

Mike, seemingly unphased by the appearance of Ty Phist over Dr. Van Schpagg, gives Ty the go ahead to speak. He holds out the pen towards Ty. “Of course!”

Ty leans down playing into the microphone charade. “Dr. Van Schpagg says ‘I am grateful today to all the individuals that retrieved my safety deposit box with the utmost care. So, I say thank you to Kirby Bertino and her sidekick Andy Williams.’” He nods towards Kirby who was standing just out of view from the cameras.

Kirby tries to stifle a laugh as Andy is clearly hurt by the implication.

He shoots Kirby a sideways glance as he softly inquires, “Side...Kick?”

Their attention quickly returns to the TV. Ty proceeds to hurriedly get back into the limo. Very shortly after, Mike turns back to his camera, as the limo speeds away and out of sight.

“Wow, Dr. Van Schpagg, not in the flesh. Back to you Leslie.” Mike says.

“Thank you, Mike.” Leslie Nielsen III says before looking back into her central camera. “We caught up with Kirby Bertino earlier to confirm these reports. Their newly formed superhero team will consist of herself, Kirby, and her sidekick Andy Williams, The Human Shield.”

Andy looks rather perturbed by the second dose of being called a sidekick on New Edmonton’s preferred news network. “I hate you.”

Kirby smiles broadly as Leslie continues.

“And they will be joined by their mysterious friend Jason Ankoku, The Mime Man!”

Jason stands up straight from the hunched position he had taken over the back of the couch, “WHAT!? No! I- I’m The Illusionist!”

Kirby laughs loudly at her own joke as she replies, “Not anymore you’re not! I saw it on TV!”

Leslie Nielsen III touches her finger to her ear on a nearly invisible ear bud, “This just in, they will also be joined by Captain Oh and Libby Bertino!”

Jason throws his hands up in the air as he realizes that Kirby is texting on her slate to a contact labeled ‘*Leslie from the TV.*’ He looks to Andy for support. Andy looks back at him and replies with a gesture that can only be summed up as ‘did you expect any less from her.’

“Yeah, she sucks.” Andy confirms.

“You’re really excited about this aren’t you?” Libby asks, sidling up to Kirby.

Kirby glances up from her slate to her sister, but only for a second before returning her attention back to the TV.

“Well, I wasn’t. Then that happened. *That happened,*” Kirby vigorously gestures to the TV. “And then *that* happened.”

Kirby gestures to Captain Ohblivious, who is happily finishing off his pile of hotdogs, adding to a pile of discarded wrappers over his shoulder behind the couch.

Kirby turns her head over to Libby with a hopeful, yet hesitant, gaze. “Then this happened. Right?”

Libby looks back at her sister with a loving reply, “Hey, I’m just here to support my sis.”

Kirby's expression changes ever so slightly to one of mischievous intent, "So, can I have some money?"

Libby's face darkens, "No!"

Kirby shrugs it off with body language that heavily suggests 'I had to try' as she looks rather pleased with herself. She then surveys the others in the room who only provide glares of complete contempt for her recent actions; with the exception of Captain Ohblivious, who has just polished off the final drops of the bottle of ketchup directly into his mouth. He begins scouring the floor for any potentially missed hotdogs that he had dropped earlier, like a dog searching for the last crumbs that went astray.



#12

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PAGES

The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog

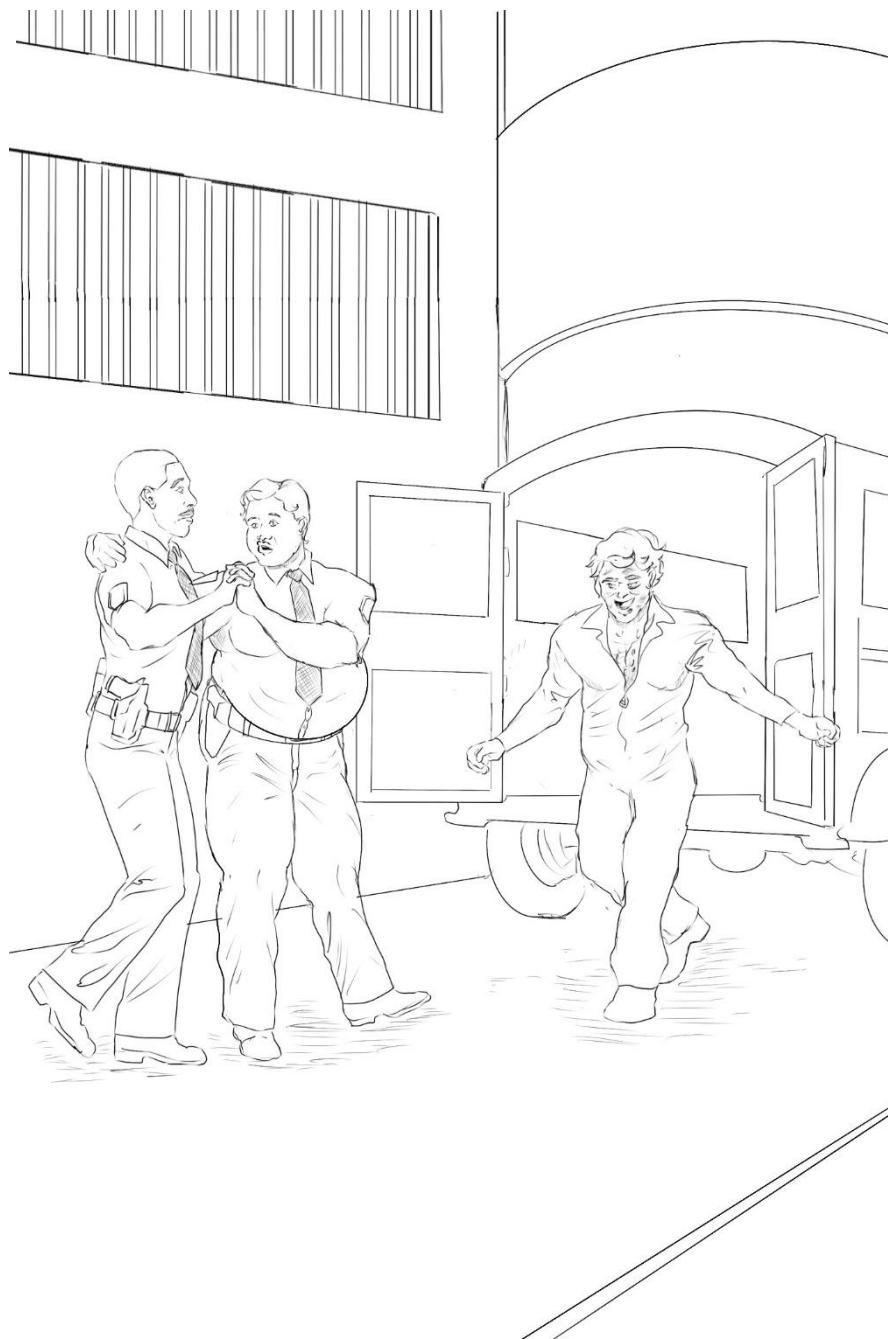
THE MUSICAL "MASTERMIND" MAKES HIS MOVE

A man with rich ebony skin, Officer Jared, walks up behind a paddy wagon and begins unlocking the doors. Officer Bob, a portly gentleman whose uniform hugs his figure a little tight in all the wrong places, joins him at the rear of the vehicle. Bob releases the final lock and swings the door open. The Lord of Dance is standing at the far end of the rear compartment facing the two police officers.

When he does not move Jared beckons to him, “C'mon. Let's get you inside.”

The Lord of Dance smiles a toothy and roguish smile, alerting Bob to the fact that the duct tape they put on his mouth is lying on the floor next to him. Bob’s eyes widen as Lord of Dance’s smile expands in turn.

The Lord of Dance lets out a melodic warble. “Who wants to hear a song?”



**POSTLOGUE:
IT MAKES ME HAPPY
WHEN YOU'RE HAPPY**

Ty Phist stands next to a gas can on the sidewalk watching almost passively, but with more glee than we have seen thus far. The building in front of him is engulfed in flames. It looks like The Duke has made good on his threat as The Bank of New Edmonton quickly burns to the ground. Ty tosses the safety deposit box into the raging inferno. He smiles as it disappears into the rippling blaze.

He touches his ear as he speaks softly. "Yes sir, I've deposited it. The flames are beautiful I'm sending you pictures now. I agree. I do think they'll do. I've notified The Bureaucrat. He wasn't happy, but I convinced him to at least give them a trial run. Yes, sir, it makes me happy when you're happy."





Captain Ohblivious wields a spray can, tagging Andy's minivan with The Oh Force super imposed over retro 80s flames.

“It is important to remember that property damage is not a victimless crime.”

Captain Ohblivious punctuates his graffiti with an exclamation point.

“Unless it looks cool!”

Andy hastily lumbers outside in a huff. “What are you doing to my van?”

Ohblivious startles, dropping his spray paint can. He giggles as he rushes away.

Andy inspects the handiwork of Captain Ohblivious.
“You know what, I kinda like it. It’s better than all the names we came up with.”



“End!”