

Written by Antony and Ezra King

Illustrated by Michael Hong

Edited by Krysti Sanders



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# The Oh Force: Begins!

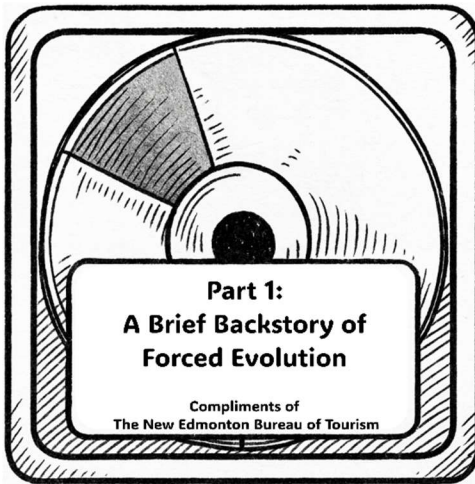
The remastered editor's edition.

3 Parts:

Part 1: The Ohorigin Story: A Purpose & A Hotdog

Part 2: The Fortress of Cubicles: A Literal Hostile Takeover

Part 3: Super Holy Poisonous Punch Captain Oh!



Three novellas coming together  
to make up ONE... less than graphic novel.

In Memory of:

Fred Chilton for believing in me before I believed in myself.

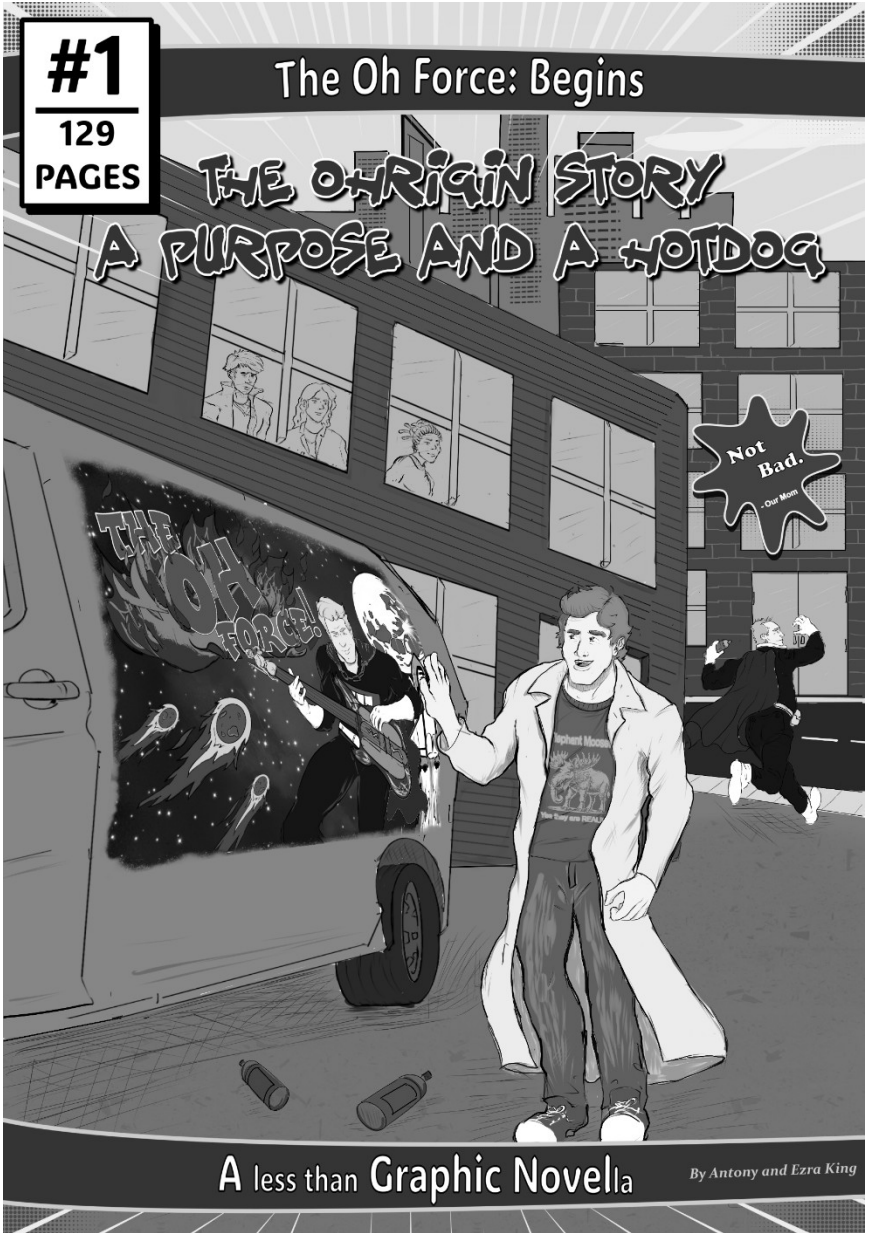
And Pops. You always wanted to write a book. This one's for  
you.

**#1**

**129  
PAGES**

The Oh Force: Begins

# THE OH-RIGIN STORY A PURPOSE AND A HOTDOG



A less than **Graphic Novella**

By Antony and Ezra King



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**10  
PAGES**

## The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog

### **PRELOQUE: A BRIEF BACKSTORY OF FORCED EVOLUTION**

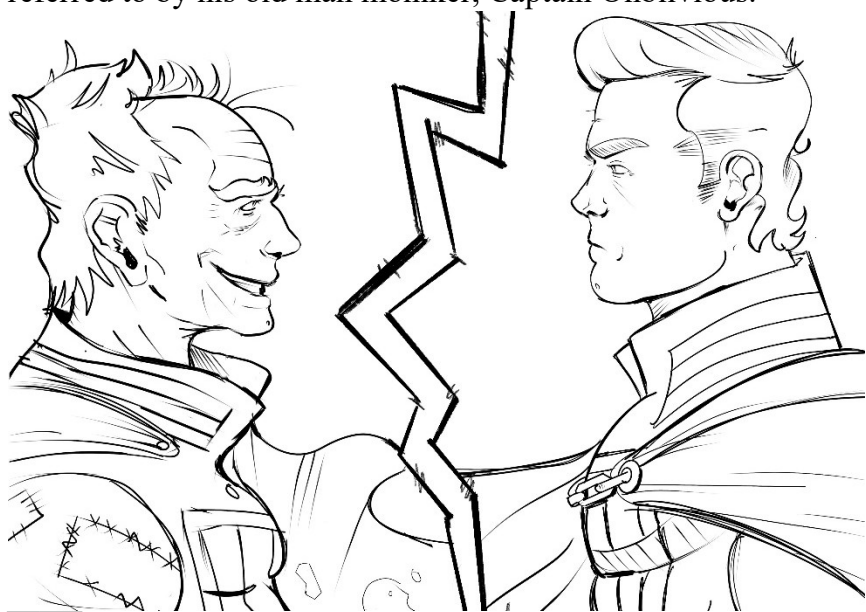
A big bomb, with a lovely terrifying stencil showing that its contents are of the radioactive variety, glides gracefully towards the Earth. Written on its side in an uptight vermilion and gold font are the words ‘толстый мальчик’.

As the more-than-likely nuclear warhead sails through the sky, it emits a screaming whistle that drops in pitch as it heralds its inevitable impact with the surface below. An explosion erupts just behind an opulently lit billboard, welcoming you to what was once (as of a few moments ago) Las Vegas. It is not long before the sign flickers out as the mushroom of glowing doom expands, removing any possible doubt that it was anything other than a weapon of mass destruction.

Captain Ohblivious stares as the death cloud grows on every screen across a display wall filled top to bottom with televisions. 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, his eyes never drift from the devastating destruction.

The shriveled man has a less-than proportionate paunch with hair that encircles his not-so-shiny, heavily sun-spotted dome. The hair he *does* have is coarse and wild, genuine bedhead that has not been tended to in quite some time. Although 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. He dons an ill-fitting, well-worn superhero jumper that now better resembles an old bedtime onesie. In its current state, it would not be fitting of the person that was once the world's first and only superhero, Captain Oh.

The fact that he was the only one at the time, did not diminish the god-amongst-men status he 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 justice. 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.



Bunker's Bargain Buys has the feel of a shopping mall that has had all its walls removed. Rather than coming together as a cohesive concept, each of the sections present themselves more like individual marketplaces. 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 televisions on display featuring the film *A Brief Backstory of Forced Evolution*. He absentmindedly displaces an endcap stuffed with miscellaneous theater treats in his endeavor to get the office chair in just the right position. He plops into the seat as he stares at the screens like a child on Saturday morning.

An oddly lighthearted melody, at least by comparison to the stark footage, fades in from the surrounding speakers.

“Farewell Sin City.” A strong, disembodied female voice begins to provide narration for the dystopian imagery.

A vertigo-inducing spin draws out a gut-wrenching, eye-dilating reaction from its viewer. Las Vegas shrinks into oblivion as it is replaced with a view of the entirety of the United States. A few balls of fiery doom sprinkle the map, only to be joined by more of their friends in various, seemingly random locations. The illusion of randomness is due to the fact that it is a topographical map with no points of reference.

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

The view continues to zoom out, showing the global impact of the calamity as it develops. Toxic clouds depicting radioactive death start to spread like a bad case of the mumps in an unvaccinated community.

Captain Ohblivious stares longingly at the puffy yellow explosions that represent the demolition of entire cities. The oddly popcorn shaped icons make his gut grumble.

Using his hands to feel about in the snack-strewn chaos, he grasps a box and pulls it into the path of his peripheral vision. “Nope, maybe next time.”

Ohblivious throws the box of Bunkers Bulky Beef Bites over his shoulder. He resumes his digging, taking only another moment before he finds the object of his stomach’s desire.

“Ooh! Popcorn!” he says in a voice that is gruff with age, yet full of excitement, not unlike a toddler playing with a bag of flour.

Captain Ohblivious drags his fingernails along the box, trying to break into the movie munchables. The Captain’s eyes never waver from the screen as a weatherman steps out rigidly. The reporter is unable to mask his shocked expression at the unimaginable sight that unfolds in front of 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.

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

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 his chair and begins slowly backing away from the TVs as if he has done something wrong. As he does, he drops his salty snack into the stolen seat.

The Captain raises his arm like a child in primary school, eager to be picked to answer a question. “Present! I’ll tell you what’s gonna happen next! I’m gonna find me some radiation in the form of a microwave.”

A poorly rendered strand of DNA spins lackadaisically against a glaringly white backdrop as the smooth tone of the narrator returns to the forefront. “Although the true cause is still yet to be determined, either the radiation, sewage runoff, or both, caused our genes to mutate.” The DNA subtly shifts some nucleotides here and there. “Most of us were lucky enough not to get deformities.”

Replacing the overly processed 3D image, a patchy-haired man gives an enthusiastic thumbs up. He is scrawny and missing one of his arms. 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 with a dented microwave. He clears off the remainder of the endcap with a whisk of his arm and tosses the microwave into the newly vacated space. He attempts to push the 30-pack of popcorn into the still closed microwave while glued to the array of TVs.

The commotion has alerted the department's sole employee, who has been aimlessly searching around for his station's office chair. He follows the path of destruction through his section, spotting the source of the noise and the purloiner of his pilfered seat.

He touches an earpiece, calling in reinforcements. "Uhh, hey Nora? Yeah, it looks like someone has taken over the entertainment section... Well, there's a huge mess and he's changed all the channels... No, it's nothing inappropriate. It's a weird documentary, I think."

The Captain picks up a remote, turning up the volume to drown out the department lead. "The vast majority of people gained extra-human 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've gained."

The video now shows a man that looks a little jaundiced in his complexion. Otherwise, he's just your standard out of shape, middle-aged man. He climbs into his already active shower, quickly whisking the yellowing shower curtain closed behind him. It is not long before a muddled scream cuts

through the white noise of the flowing faucet. The wails from within no longer sound human, but more like a sentient hippopotamus half-drowned in brackish water. A bulbous hand slinks over the top of the shower bar, yanking it down. 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. His entire body is engorged and seems to expand with every drop that touches his now spongy, porous exterior. He cries out for help, but the words dissolve into a wet, warbling gurgle.

The manager of Bunker’s Bargain Buys, Nora, rushes over to survey the mayhem that was previously her pristine electronics department. She looks at the screens to see the waterlogged folds of the squishy man. “This isn’t inappropriate to you?”

“It wasn’t earlier,” the employee responds meekly.

The store’s employee attempts to deflect the anger by pointing out the captivated customer and his recent redesign. Nora catches sight of the once venerable Captain Oh, who is oblivious to their chatter. His undivided attention remains glued to the questionably educational content. She 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 from the various displays. He even goes as far as moving his head from screen to screen as if he is going to miss something. He grunts at the manager who is so rudely blocking his view.

On the TVs, the bulbous blob that was once a man lifts his leg, attempting to throw the swollen appendage over the lip

of the tub. The porcelain whines under the weight, objecting to its 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 porous flesh. 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 1. Flip over for part 2: Welcome to New Edmonton’.

Captain Ohblivious comes out of his trance just as Nora is weighing her options. The Captain begrudgingly extracts his keister from his commandeered chair.

Nora moves in, recognizing her opportunity. “Captain, sir, we don’t allow for customers to -”

Ohblivious ignores her and stumbles his way to the arrangement of sleek entertainment pads that span the shelves below the displays.

Realizing that her pleas have fallen upon deaf ears, Nora shouts with much more authority in her voice. “STOP!”

Captain Ohblivious does just that, freezing as he grasps a well-worn copy of *A Brief Backstory of Forced Evolution*.

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

Ohblivious incredulously gives her the stink eye. “I’m afraid I’m going to have to ask *you* to leave! *I’m* not finished here.”

Now having the full attention of The Captain, Nora 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!” Nora repeats.

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

Nora looks at the very worn and used diskette that is clearly not part of the store’s inventory. “Sure.”

Captain Ohblivious reaches to grab the box of microwave popcorn. Nora’s eyes go dark with fury.

The Captain thinks better of it and grabs just a single bag of not-yet popped corn. “And this!”

“Fine.” She mutters, just wanting the human hurricane to move on, “Just get out of my store.”

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

“Absolutely not!” Nora says firmly.

Captain Ohblivious's 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.



**#0****5****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 as he passes a realty sign that proclaims, ‘Open House’. The house is one of those 3D-printed homes, a modern marvel of symmetry and simplicity. Its curvilinear façade is a blend of smooth stucco and glass with a landscaped garden that looks like it’s been plucked from a catalog. The community is filled with these cookie-cutter homes. ‘For Sale’ signs are posted in every front yard, giving the neighborhood an eerie stillness. Without a second thought, The Captain flings open the woodgrain-finished metal door 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 blue bow. Captain Ohblivious snatches up the pompous gift basket as he slips by an intentionally distressed table cluttered with the kind of tchotchkes you’d expect from a bed & breakfast. He rips off the bow with little care for its contents and drops it next to his muddy footprints on the faux wood floors.

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

He chucks the brand-new disk over his shoulder, sending it clattering into the kitchen. Captain Ohblivious

scratches his head with his well-used diskette as he ponders a place for his posterior. Ohblivious hops up in the air and flops into an oversized recliner. The puffy taupe chair creaks its disapproval at being so cruelly mistreated. He banks his diskette off a flat white wall onto a wood-grain-colored silicon entertainment pad. The diskette emits a very soft and calming glow that spins around the exterior in a lazily throbbing track. A spray of color erupts onto the wall from an ultra-short throw projector built into the entertainment center.

The Captain rummages through the gift basket, raising a bright red, suspiciously shiny apple to his mouth and taking a bite. He tosses the wax apple aside after finding it quite unpleasant to his palate, spitting out the remaining piece. Captain Ohblivious turns it over in his hand, inspecting it before quickly tucking it into the neck of his super-suit. While struggling with the gold foil wrapping of one of the chocolates, the TV displays an older, yet very stunning, woman. Her porcelain white hair is styled in a classy pixie-bob, providing contrast for her alabaster skin. The slender actress is announced as Leslie Nielsen III via a white text overlay. She strolls through a beautiful Canadian landscape wearing a flowing, eggplant purple pantsuit.

As she speaks, the warm strong voice from the previous video emanates from unseen speakers in the ceiling. “Hi, I’m Leslie Nielsen the Third, and I would like to introduce you to *New Edmonton*.”

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 similar to Edmonton, but with a much more crooked river zig-zagging its way north to south through the center.

The image pulls out further, revealing Leslie standing in front of the map. “We’ve rebuilt the city 180 kilometers west, down the Yellowhead Highway, near a small place called Entwistle.”

Leslie slaps a pointing stick onto the map directly over a comically thick wall that spans the western border of the city. “As you can see, we have also redesigned the mall to nearly fifteen times its original size. It doubles as an excellent barrier from the Americanadians that now inhabit Old Edmonton.”

Leslie shudders in disgust at the mere mention of the Americanadians. “Dirty American refugees.”

The camera shakes ever so slightly as the director chimes in, trying 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 suit, rummaging around near his belly button.

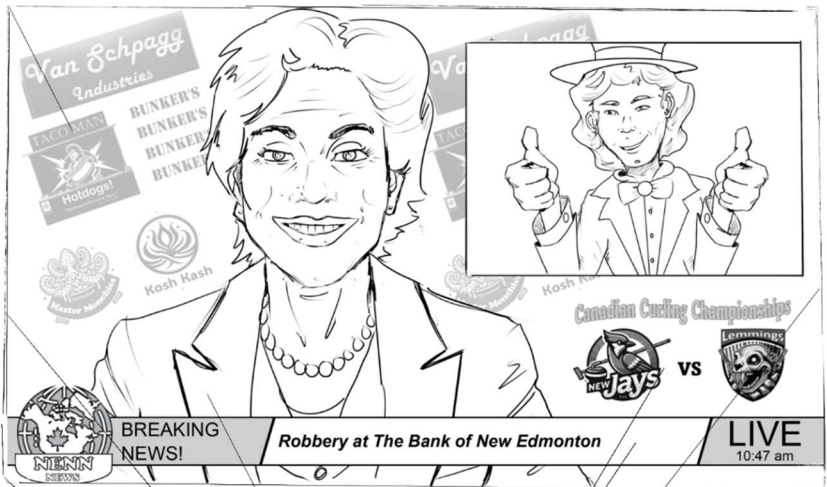
The Captain excitedly pulls the package of microwave popcorn out from inside his suit and holds it in the air in triumph. “This is getting good, I’m gonna make some popcorn.”

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 little pep 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.

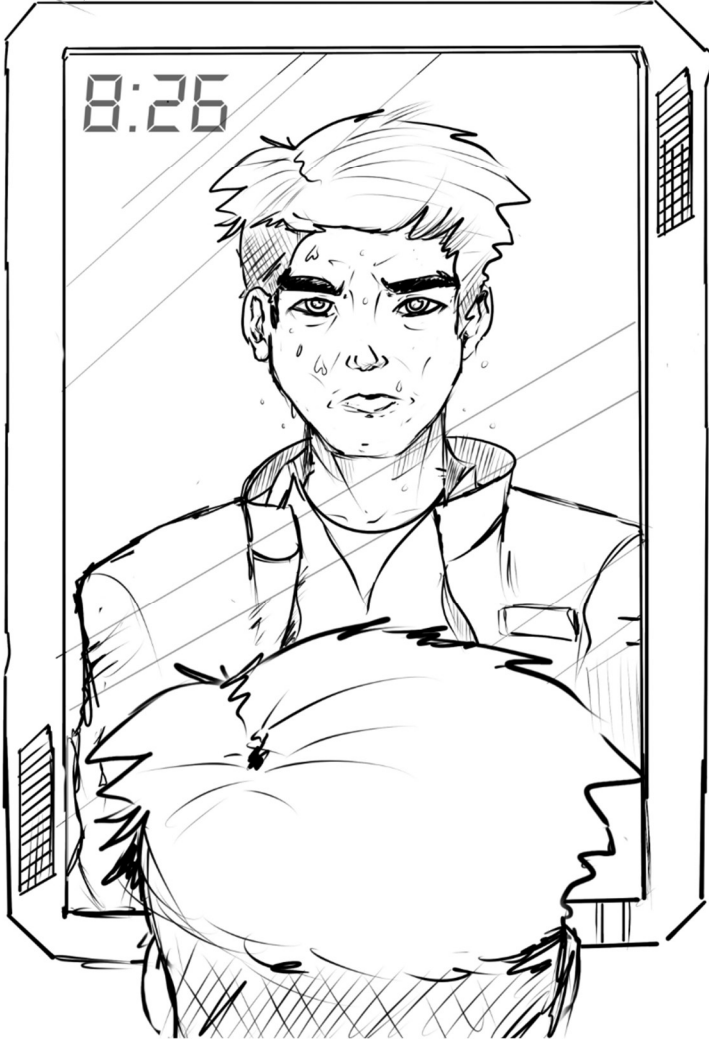
“A robbery at The Bank of New Edmonton!” Leslie exclaims as if Mr. Happy had said nothing.



**#0.5**

**38  
PAGES**

The Ohrigin Story: A purpose & a Hotdog



**#1****7****PAGES****The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog****GROWING OLDER,  
NOT GROWING UP**

Two boys, around the age of eight, sit in a poorly lit room playing a video game. The TV casts an unhealthy glow over their passive faces. The taller of the two, Jason Ankoku, has pale skin, dark hair, gaunt features, and an epicanthal fold. Sitting cross legged next to Jason is his best friend, Andy Williams. Andy's round freckled 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. Though his hands move about in the air as if he were wielding one. Andy's size has now eclipsed that of Jason, no longer only in girth but also 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 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.

Jason's zombie-like expression 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 pizzazz. Basically, Criss Angel if he 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. The coat is tattered a little at the ends from dragging on the ground as he walks, quite a feat considering the man is 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 this whole time seem very likely, as she definitely doesn't 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 ponytail. 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, litter-strewn coffee table. The phantom

controller knocks over a pop can as it bounces across the surface, adding a few new dents to the worn wood. A few drops of clear liquid spill out of the purple can as it clammers 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, “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 have 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. “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. He gives it a quick once over while trying to retract his fingers from its oddly damp surface without dropping it. His face scrunches in disgust as he 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 Jason explored this more, he discovered that he could not speak, or the item would cease to exist. Very complex items were outside of his reach, unless he had a cursory knowledge of how they worked. He also discovered that it was much easier to mime out the motions if he pulled the item from a container. This has led Jason to carry a nearly empty satchel almost everywhere.

In lieu of having the satchel, the pocket did the trick. He pads the incorporeal cloth across his face and the quaff of hair that nearly comes into his eyes. The tiny beads of water that litter his visage disappear as the towel swipes across his skin.

Jason returns to his friends with purpose, keen on breaking the monotony that has defined his existence. Andy has not moved a muscle, still thoroughly enthralled with his game. Kirby, on the other hand, has been rummaging around in their scantily populated fridge. The interior of the icebox contains little more than bread, cheese, and beef flavored Proccoli. The only things it does contain in copious amounts are a variety of unhealthy drinks and individually wrapped condiments from various restaurants.

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’s time I do something else.”

“Drink?!” 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.*

Jason shakes his head in protest. “No, Kirby you're not listening-”

“Driiink...” Kirby sings as her grin widens, tilting the bottle like a baton in the parade of bad decisions.

Thinking that a little liquid lubricant may be just what he needs, Jason succumbs to peer pressure. “Sure.”

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

Jason massages his eyes giving a half-wag of his head, his internal thoughts not being conveyed clearly through his 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, kitchen.

Andy draws out his name like a plea less for input than agreeance. “Jaaasoon?” He continues trying to garner support a little bit more desperately. “Kirby?!”

Kirby rinses out plastic shot glasses that clearly have some dried-on remnants adorning the bottom of the glass. She

takes a sniff, her face squinching up in repulsion. Shrugging, she turns and places a few on the table.

Kirby's eyes level with Andy, giving him a very serious gaze. "Get the hat!"

With a giddy gait, Andy prances off to get the aforementioned accessory. Kirby turns back to get their 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 extra-human ability prior to puberty, as it came with a physical tell at birth, a large gash down the center of her chest. It did not take her long, even as a baby, to discover that she could open and close this fleshy aperture at will. The problem is, within this meaty chasm lies a miniature black hole. This allows her to pull in most things, weighing less than her, that aren't nailed down.

She lifts her sweatshirt so as not to restrict the flow. Beneath is a leather vest with an oval metal screen that she uses to prevent items from being lost forever. She puffs out her chest for dramatic effect and pulls in the stack of cups, along with some random bits of refuse: 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. She snatches 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 cups as the one on the bottom reads 'Andy!' in big, black, poorly drawn letters.

The video game, feeling abandoned, goes to sleep. The TV searches for another active input, scanning through available devices. It finally comes to rest on Input 3, showing a Vodcast of a cheery, baby-faced man in his forties. The lights of the studio beam off the near plastic sheen of his strawberry-blond hair. Yet, the glint from his lacquered locks pales in comparison to that of his fluorescent red, velour tracksuit. A neon banner that looks straight out of the 1970's introduces the Vodcast as 'LODCAST'.



**#2****6****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 with flushed cheeks and an impish smile. His overly clean-cut appearance gives him an air of never having worked a day in his life. He sits in a studio, masquerading as a disco era talk-show host. He addresses his audience in a rather unique pompous British accent.

His inflection and mannerisms are reminiscent of 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 a computer chair that has all the modern accoutrements, but in a Victorian style. He flippantly discards enormous headphones that match the blinding color of his garish garments. They come to a rest precariously on the edge of a marble and mahogany, half-circle desk in front of him. He waits impatiently as the green screen behind him retracts into the ceiling, revealing 6 people in various stages of boredom. The gallery is filled with uncomfortable fold-out chairs that have cold metal armrests.

The Lord of Dance picks up a comically large conch from his desk, waving it out in front of him. “Okay everyone, ideas?”

The Lord of Dance surveys his audience, spurring the Replicating Stogie to freeze like a border collie. The boulder of a man acts as if he sits still enough, he will not be noticed. 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 gaze, to avoid being picked.

The Lord of Dance stops on Uplink, a little irritated at her lack of attention. She is an emaciated Hispanic girl who uses her hacker name over her given one. Her eyes twitch beneath closed lids as if she were in REM sleep. A wonky cord snakes out of her finger to a massive, briefcase-size laptop with the screen closed. The scarred skin around the port on her pinky is rough and damaged, like a botched attempt at a cybernetic implant. This homebrew abomination upgrades her neural ability to interface with digital systems.

Finding no takers, Lord of Dance haphazardly tosses the white seashell, that has a tinge of pink peeking out from its interior, to Jesus Mateo German Rodriguez. Jesus catches it in a large metal arm that is disproportionate in contrast to his sinewy right arm. Although the replacement of his left arm was elective, it was not a fashion choice. His extra-human ability allows him to manipulate titanium with just a touch of his unobstructed skin. He dresses to match his moniker, the Mechanic, in an armless denim jumpsuit that sports a patch declaring, 'Ti Be LiFe!'

The Mechanic twirls the seashell in his metallic limb, showing that it is capable of far more motion than anyone else's

regular meaty paw. “Well, Apollo, I think that we need some expendable income.”

The Lord of Dance flashes 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.”

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

“You tell ‘im, Boss!” Brad excitedly responds in a thick cockney accent, ready to brown his nose when he can.

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. She soundlessly taps the thick sausages that she calls fingers on the armrest of her chair. Soft blue sparks emit from the tips of her fingers as they retract from the metal, showcasing her ability to create electrical charge within her body. She is the epitome of an Amazon from legend. Her bulky frame nearly matches the stature of the Replicating Stooge in both height and girth.

Lord of Dance points fiercely at the conch as he finishes staring Brad down. He quickly turns back to the Mechanic, returning to his jaunty demeanor.

The Notorious LOD playfully taps his now tented fingers in a manner that would be akin to fingertip applause. “Am I hearing bank job?”

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 at their flamboyant figurehead.

“Boss,” The Mechanic adds in contempt.

The last remaining occupant of the room seems entirely uninterested in the whole affair. Blair 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 house. 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 glosses over the Mechanic’s more sophisticated idea as he excitedly quips, “Jesus! Why would we steal a bunch of computers? You already had me at Bank Job.”

The Mechanic purses his lips at the mispronunciation of his name. The Lord of Dance, however, finds it hilarious to use the Anglican name for the Son of God instead of the traditional Mexican inflection with a hard H. The fact that he constantly finds a way to use it as an exclamation only adds injury to insult.

The Mechanic stops fiddling with the conch in his galvanized grip. “But I didn't say -”

“Pass the conch.” The Lord of Dance interjects, cutting off any further discussion.

“Ey, Boss?” Brad points to a red and white glowing sign behind The Lord of Dance that says, ‘On Air’. “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! Jesus! Pass the conch.”

The Mechanic notices what Brad is trying to express and begins to hand the conch to Brad.

“But not to Brad.” The Lord of Dance is quick to add.

The Mechanic glances from Brad to the conch, debating between duty and dereliction. He scans the others, searching their faces for input. With nobody willing to take up the task, he looks back to find the Lord of Dance grasping at the air like a child begging for a cookie.

Just before passing the conch back to the Notorious LOD, 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 with both 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!” The Lord of Dance puts his hand up to his ear, daring Brad to defy him once more. Satisfied with the silence, he happily turns to place the silly shell on the half-circle of a table. “Ah, where was I? Oh yeah, Bank Job.”

He leans back in his chair quite pleased with himself. That’s when he notices the blinking green light emitting just from the right of his lens. The Lord of Dance freezes mid-smirk, like a statue sculpted of his own hubris.

“Oh gods, I’m still streaming! Why didn’t anyone tell me?” Lord of Dance lunges over his desk at the camera.

The Mechanic gleefully shakes his head and rolls his eyes in one impressive motion.



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

## The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog

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

Back in the apartment, Andy, Jason, and Kirby are past the point of considering tomorrow's consequences for today's instant gratification. Andy dons a poorly assembled stovepipe hat made of cardboard, colored in black streaks. The table is strewn with an eclectic set of seemingly random items: a toppled deck of cards, a handful of dice, several piles of bottle caps, marbles, rubber bands, a few uninflated balloons, a couple sets of chopsticks, some plastic spoons, an elastic headband, and a dinged up wooden egg resting in a mini Slinky. The glass lazy Susan, which is built into the modest sized table, is lit up with a few options. The interactive menu prompts them to select a card suit. Andy holds four cards facing away from him. An egg timer slowly ticks by as Jason stares at the table, twirling a mostly empty plastic shot glass in his hands.

Andy notices that Jason has not even glanced at the cards. "What's the matter, Jason? You're normally more into this."

"I've just been thinking. We need to do something." Jason stops fiddling with the flimsy shot glass and pushes it away.

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 unsuspecting ear and whispers loudly, “Schmeg me, Jason.”

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

Jason’s eyebrows knit together. “No Andy...” He pushes himself back, keeping his eyes on the table. “What I’m saying is I think it’s time we finally did something with our lives.”

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, I mean it’s been 3 *years* since we graduated.” Jason points to the wall behind him. “We’ve got degrees. We might as well use ‘em.”

Andy scrunches up his face and lets out a long raspberry. “Pfffft, all I’ve got 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 switches to shaking her head at Andy. This draws a smirk from Jason.

Kirby reassures Andy. “Nnnooo...”

Jason takes 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 -”

“I got it!” Andy contorts his face. “No wait, maybe I don’t” Andy slides back in his chair as he gasps, putting his hands into his floppy red locks. “Nope! I definitely got it!” Andy pauses to build anticipation for his grand idea.

Jason waits on the edge of his seat while Kirby just sighs as if to say, ‘get on with it.’

Andy spreads his arms wide in a big tada. “We could be *super* heroes!”

Andy leaves 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 stares 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 his diminished brainpower is being diverted entirely to thought.

Having their attention, Andy continues. “Like REAL superheroes! 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?”

“Right, Kirby? I know!” Andy wildly flails his arms at Kirby.

Kirby leans away, beginning to question if it is safe for her to continue to mess with Andy. Jason, on the other hand, strokes his chin, truly considering the idea.

Andy excitedly carries on, “It's like we've got these abilities and everything. Why don't we ever use ‘em for like... good stuff?”

“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, superhero names! I'm thinking The Man of Metal. Metal Man. Meta' Man!”

Kirby and Andy go back and forth 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 comes back to the present, full of skeptical, yet hopeful, intrigue. “Andy, are you *really* serious about this?”

“Uh, yeah!” Andy sticks his head out toward Jason with an implied duh.

Kirby shakes her head as she reprimands Andy with her eyes. When Jason looks in her direction, she enthusiastically nods her head without missing a beat.

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

Jason, feeling like he finally found a purpose, jumps headfirst into the conversation. “I really like the Illusionist. I think it has a mysterious ring to it.”

Kirby bobbles her head in indecision. “I don’t know. I’m kind of feeling Mime Man. Your powers are... mimey?”

Andy pops to his feet, still wearing the ridiculous hat, and picks up a dry erase marker off the table. The hat nearly skims the ceiling as he stumbles to the refrigerator, swiping off all the magnets. “Alright, pros and cons!”

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

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

Andy scrawls the words directly onto the fridge in his newly created whitespace with reckless abandon.

Kirby raises her hand and speaks nearly at the same time. “Con, Andy, you’re an idiot.” She judges herself harshly as she quickly retracts her hand.

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.”



**#4****5****PAGES****The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog****THIS IS A BANK  
ROBBERY!**

The interior of the Bank of New Edmonton is unlike any bank you would find in the Common Era. Generally, one would expect a financial institution to 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 vault door leads to a safety deposit room, and one lonely desk sits outside of the bank manager's scant office. 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 Kosh Kash, which has become the primary cryptocurrency in Canada.

People scatter when The Lord of Dance and his minions burst through the doors. The Notorious LOD is flanked by Brad and Blair, with Uplink and The Mechanic trailing close behind. His entourage wears white, fluffy earmuffs while they escort Lord of Dance, who is draped in a taupe toga. Upon his head sits a circlet made of maple wood and adorned with golden maple leaves. Brad steadies his right hand in his left, pointing his index finger out like a child playing cops and robbers. Due to his cochlear implant, Brad has no need for silly earmuffs.

Brad leans in close to his boss. "I don't know if this is a good idea. Are we sure about stealing from the Duke?"

The Mechanic overhears and speaks up. “Brad has a point. The Baron frowns upon infighting among Founders.”

The Lord of Dance waves them off, strutting further into the bank. “Bosh! The Bureaucrat’s already given me the green light. So, stop your worrying!”

Although instructed not to, the Mechanic is unable to hide his worry. Brad shrugs and hurries to keep up. The Lord of Dance opens his mouth, preparing to showcase the ability that inspired his namesake. Before he can, Brad interrupts, showing why people call him the Nailer.

“This is a Bank Robbery!” Brad fires off his nail with a flesh-ripping twang into the ceiling.

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

“Oh,” Brad sheepishly slinks back, “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 sends another nail into the wall just between two kiosks, frightening a couple nearby.

This time, he is forced to use his middle finger. Although his keratin may grow back rapidly, it’s not that fast. The Lord of Dance whirls about and stalks toward Brad.

He glares at Brad, his words come out in an unsettling calm. “Am I going to have to kill you, Brad?”

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

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

The Lord of Dance strikes a flourishing pose, clearing 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 him. Jesus shakes his head slowly from side to side and then bolts over the counter towards the safe.

The Lord of Dance resumes his musical mayhem. “Dance then whoever you may be. I am the Lord of the Dance, says me. You will dance whenever I will sing, and if you don’t it’s your doom I’ll bring. Now daaaaaance! Just daaaaaance!”

Everyone not wearing the garish earmuffs begins to Riverdance. Bewitched by the buttery tones of The Lord of Dance’s voice, they respond like manic marionettes.

The Mechanic, now at the vault, places his bare hand on the safe as his metal hand morphs over the large combination dial. His metallic fist twists and flips until it comes to a stop. The Mechanic drops his other hand from its perch onto the lever, swinging the door open. The inner barred gate bows out of the way with just a touch from his fleshy hand. He passes through the oval hole and into the vault, moving to the box labeled 0001. With his shiny hand, he lets the metal flow from

his finger into the keyways. Only a second later it clicks open. He swiftly slides the metal case from the confines of its locker.

In the lobby, the song from the Lord of Dance starts 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 daaaaaance! Just daaaaaance!”

As the song loses its rhythm, the dance moves of the bank patrons become sloppy and uncoordinated.

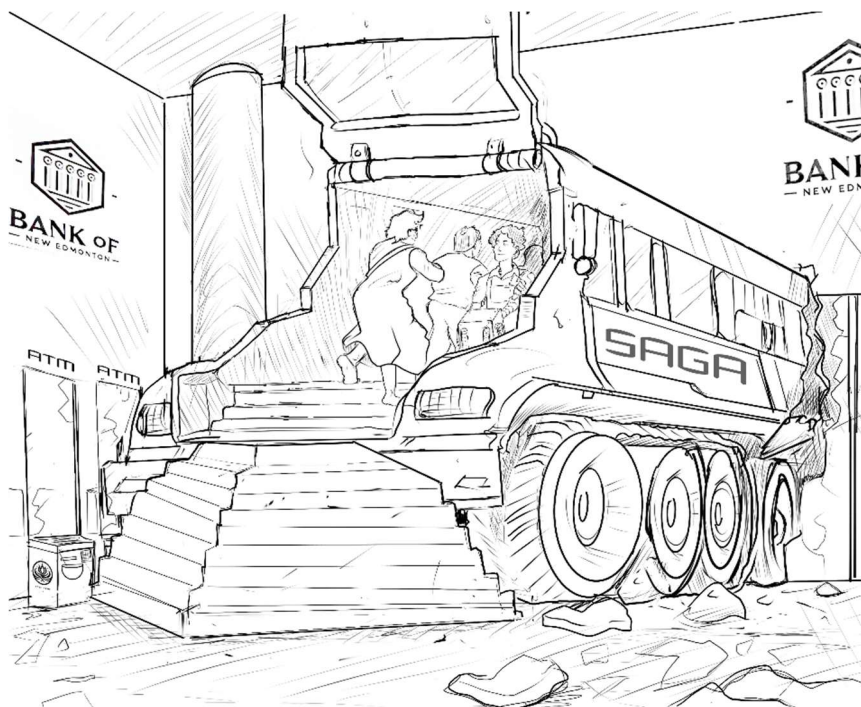
The Mechanic rushes through the gap in the bars and vaults over the counter. He holds out the safety deposit box, dangling it in front of him. “Done, boss.” He speaks into his right hand like a telephone. “Call SAGA.”

A loud hum reverberates and crescendos just before a large half-track armored vehicle smashes through the revolving doors. SAGA’s metal exterior has the same sheen as the Mechanic’s metallic limb. Its shape is akin to that of a bastard child between a bullet train and a Labock Rhino Runner. The front pops open like a hatchback, sending plaster everywhere as it crashes into the ceiling. Lord of Dance and his posse ascend the stair-shaped cowcatcher and into the cabin.

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

The Mechanic rolls his eyes, showing disdain for his name being pronounced incorrectly for the umpteenth time. He stands in the cockpit that seems to have no chair. The Mechanic falls back into a plushy red seat that swings in from the side as the front entryway closes.

The Mechanic's metal appendage slinks into a gear filled tube built into the armrest. His arm morphs and spins, filling all the available space within. SAGA lurches back causing even more damage to the façade of the battered bank. Flanking either side of the armored vehicle is an orange army of autonomous transports. The bulbous AutoCabs sit at a complete standstill as if they are just waiting for the opportunity to proceed along their pre-programmed routes. The Mechanic pays no mind to the clutter of cabs as he pulls into the center of the roadway, taking up most of the available space. He places his right hand on the ceiling and SAGA begins to warp and shift under his gentle touch. The titanium tank grows wings, launches into the air, and flies away into the mid-morning sun.



**#5**

11

**PAGES**

## The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog

**IS HE SCHMEGGIN'  
SERIOUS?**

As the morning light pours in from a window, signaling the dawn of a new day, Jason merrily bobs along to some melodic instrumental music. Scrambled eggs float in the air over a burner, hovering 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 not eggs could easily be mistaken as eggs since they look exactly like real eggs, shells and all.

The apartment itself does not look much different, as it was in shambles before their heavy night of egg schmeggin'. It just 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?' Lists of potential superhero names flank the pros and cons scribbled in the center. At the bottom, there's an oddly convoluted list that would be far better as another type of chart. The jumbled mess appears to be an attempt at a competing pros and cons list entitled, 'A Pros and Cons Showdown: Mime Man vs The Illusionist'.

Andy lays awkwardly over each arm on the ragged rust-red couch that is not much larger than a loveseat. His skin now lacks life, having been replaced with a dull metallic sheen like the less shiny side of aluminum foil.

In middle school, Andy found that he had the ability to manipulate his molecular make-up, shifting into a light-weight impervious metal. When danger reared its ugly head, Andy didn't fight, flee or fawn. Instead, he froze like a metal statue, quite literally. Over time he was able to control his power and change at will, his clothes included. Unfortunately, he was never able to find a way to move under his own power. However, others can easily move him as he only weighs about two kilograms in his altered state.

Although locked in an awkward metallic sprawl, he does look far less uncomfortable than Kirby. She lays face down on the rough industrial weave that the landlord, far too loosely, refers to as carpeting.

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 into the couch. He groans in annoyance, rubbing his eyes. He's 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 smushes 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 News of the Day.' The program is hosted by a man that can only be described as an over-caffeinated Muppet that wished to be a real boy.

In a rapid speech pattern with over-the-top enthusiasm, Mr. Happy reads from the teleprompter. "- has resulted in three deaths at the lemming farm. Speaking of lemmings, don't

forget to get tickets for the Lemmings VS the New Jays next month.”

This entices a groan from Kirby, who rouses to discover her unfortunate predicament. “Andy that’s messed up…”

Andy strolls past Kirby, accidentally stepping on one of her loose dreads.

“Bush!” She rubs her head and hastily wraps the stray hair back into her bun. “Andy, watch where you’re stompin.”

Andy does not register the boisterous complaint. He waddles toward the dining area, much like an old timey movie zombie. “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’s meant for a turkey. He begins singing along at the top of his lungs to the wordless music. “Wake up! Gotta put the eggs upon the table! Something, something, something, something, fable!”

The pan ceases to exist upon the utterance of Jason’s first syllable, allowing the – what we will just refer to as eggs from here on out – to drop onto 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 eggs. Jason plops the plate down in the center of the small table accompanied by three forks.

Kirby, finally having enough, scrambles to her feet. “Fine!”

She grumps over to the fridge with deliberate, heavy steps like an upset toddler. She yanks open the door and grabs a gallon size jug labeled, ‘Hair of the Mutt 1/90.’ Its tagline reads ‘1% alcohol + 90% hydration = 100% feel better juice.’ She slumps into her chair with a gelatinous posture. Too lazy to reach out for a cup, Kirby sucks one in along with several bottle caps and cards from the table. She plucks the cup from her chest, inspecting the label that reads ‘Jason’. She shrugs and opens the pale brown bottle.

Jason beams with excitement. “Now that you’re both awake-”

“Up. Awake is an overstatement.” Kirby pours the milky tan liquid into what used to be Jason’s cup, filling it nearly to the brim.

Jason does not skip a beat and continues. “Fair enough. So, back to what we were talking about last night. We need to find a way to look legit. I found a place that’ll give us private detective licenses for next to nothing.”

Kirby thumps the large glass jug on the table, sloshing the contents of her cup. 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 and pay a modest subscription. I really think it'll give us the credibility we need.”

Kirby flops her head to the side to look at Andy. He seems just as confused as she is, with a tiny piece of egg dangling 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 magically appeared overnight.

Andy's eyelids retract as realization stretches across his face. “Oh, yeah.”

Jason heads towards his room. “Let me 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. Andy points with his fork to the fridge. Kirby is slow to react, so Andy grabs her head with his other hand and turns it for her. The text instantly brings back memories from the night before.

“Oh... yeah... Jason is taking... this-” She gestures at the scribbles. “-seriously. I think we might've taken this too far.”

The biggest mischievous grin forms on Andy's face. "I'm going to tell him."

Kirby panics, searching around the room to make sure that Jason hasn't returned. "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. He holds out his COMM, a Cloud Operated Mobile Microcomputer, as if seeking approval. Jason slides the band over his wrist, flipping the latch to fix it in place. He reaches down and raps his knuckles on the massive Lazy Susan. The tabletop lights up with input from his COMM, displaying a poorly built P.I. licensing site.

Andy looks longingly at Kirby. "But I wanna..."

Jason snatches onto the statement, taking it as a sign of agreement. "Oh, thank goodness! You seemed so excited last night, I wasn't sure you'd still be up for it in the morning."

Kirby lets out a little groan as she tries her best to put on a positive outward demeanor. "Yeah... of course we are..."

"We are?" Andy blurts out in surprise.

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! Of course we are!”

Jason throws his head back in elation, as Kirby reminds Andy to stay in his lane with nothing more than her eyes.

Kirby turns to Jason, feigning concern. “But...”

Jason snaps his head to Kirby, caught off guard by her objection. “But what, Kirby?”

Kirby is taken aback by Jason’s sudden movement and his intense attention. She attempts to keep her composure, but even with her best effort, she can’t look Jason in the eye.

Kirby aimlessly searches around the room for a plausible answer. “Well... if we're going to do this and be *Super* Heroes... We need someone... else. You know uh -” She 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 brain while the other two wait in anticipation. Andy has clearly been enjoying this exchange, hungrily waiting for the opportunity to burst the bubble.

Jason nods, rapping his knuckles on the table. “You know what, you’re right. If we had somebody more famous, that would bring us instant recognition. Do you think Libby would join us?”

Kirby is visibly startled by the casual namedrop of her twin sister. She does her best to mask her discomfort. “Yes. But no. But yes, like that. But not that.”

Jason forges ahead, failing to pick up on Kirby’s distress at the mere mention of her much more successful sister. “Yeah, we need to find someone that’s... somebody!”

Kirby finds a way to slouch even more into her seat. The notion of popularity over substance causing her to fall into a moment of uncomfortable self-reflection.

It’s important to note that while Kirby and Libby have been the best of friends since birth, they have simultaneously been envious of one another.

Libby was born with an extra-human ability that radiates a subtle glow from her exposed skin. This radiance can enamor those around her, especially those who find her attractive. Whereas Kirby’s ability is literally personified by the gaping gash in her sternum. Having a sibling (and a twin at that) gifted with skin that can captivate anyone who looked upon it, has not been great for her general mental health.

Little does Kirby know, Libby’s jealousy stems from a longing to be treated like a normal person and forge true friendships. Although she recognizes the struggles that Kirby faces in her shadow, she would gladly trade places 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 have 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. "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 onto the train of thought that Andy has kept alive. "Right!"

Jason slams his hands onto the table far more forcefully than he intended 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. He is disappointed that she did not see the effort he put in 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 endured. "You encouraged him."

Andy reiterates his earlier point. "No, Kirby, *you* encouraged him. *I* wanted to tell him."

“Let’s not play the blame game, Andy.” Kirby ponders her life choices before mumbling out, “What are we going to do?”

Andy’s thoughts pass straight through his lips without any filter. “Well, we could always do it. What else are we going to do? It might be fun, right?”

Kirby gives Andy a sly smirk. “Who’s encouraging now?”

“I’m still down for telling, him. I’ll call him right now.” Andy pulls his slate from his pocket.

“No...” Kirby says in defeat. “You win. But I’m not doing that.” She points at the table. “So, where do we start?”

Andy absent-mindedly begins reading the website. He starts to scroll down with a visible distaste growing on his face. The built-in display flashes a distance threshold warning and then abruptly disconnects. He sighs and peers up at the TV, getting distracted as he often does.

The deep soothing voice of Leslie Nielsen the Third 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 unknowingly points at the screen. “How about there?”

# SHOULD WE BE SUPERHEROES?

## SUPERHERO NAMES

ERBY  
 VIBES OF VIBETOP  
 VIBES VIBEN!  
 THE SUCCESS  
 BULKY BADE  
 VIBES CLASS  
 BULKY BEATING

No!  
 Just Kirby

JASON  
 THE LUSONIST  
 MASTER OF MINE  
 MINE MAN  
 THE LUSONIST

## PRO

- WE GET TO MAKE PRO/CHESS
- N.Y. IN THE EGG
- IT WON'T BE BANNED
- WE CAN BE A COOL CUTE GUY
- ANYONE BOLD FOR THE CITY
- WE CAN DO THAT
- I GUESS SO
- EXTRA MONEY
- FEELS BET AT LEAST WE GET TO CHOOSE
- WHAT IS THE NAME TO CHOOSE
- SUPERHERO NAME

## 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 WOULD MAKE FOLK OF OURSELVES?
- WE WILL LIKELY MAKE FOOLS OF OURSELVES
- PRIDE, TIME, COULD GET WED, GETTING MARRIED, MY SANITY, TAKE YOUR OWN
- OH PLEASE NO

## SUPERHERO NAME ANDY

- METAL MAN
- MAN OF METAL
- MAN OF SHIELD
- THE METAL MAN
- METAL MAN
- THE STIFF
- STEEL STUD
- THE STEEL DUD
- LEAD TO SCOTTY BARRON
- METAL ME
- ALUMINUM AVERAGE
- TIN FOL LAD
- SILVER SMOTHER
- KIRBY CLUB

## 4 PRO/CON SHOWDOWN: MINE MAN VS THE LUSONIST

### MINE MAN

#### PRO

- IT'S FUNNY
- IT'S APT
- IT DENIES YOUR POWER
- YEAH THAT'S HOW IT GOES

#### CON

- I DON'T LIKE IT
- IT'S INSULTING
- SHUT UP
- CAN BE WORK ON SOMETHING ELSE

### THE LUSONIST

#### PRO

- I LIKE IT
- BUT IS MY NAME
- YEAH BUT THEY GET PICKED UP
- OH

#### CON

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

A  
M  
N





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. A large banner declares in loud, 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 ADVIC



**#1**

76  
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 makes his way back into the living area of the model home. In his unsteady wake, he leaves a trail of popcorn from his overflowing bucket. On the wall, Mike Foehn stands in front of The Bank of New Edmonton. Mike is a short man with dark brown hair that pairs nicely with his melanin rich skin. His shortened stature and geeky exterior are accentuated by an ill-fitting 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, showing that it was meant to be affixed to a counter. He uses the pilfered pen like a microphone. His *oh-so glorious* ability allows him 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.

Popcorn tumbles to the floor as Captain Ohblivious proceeds to the partially caved in recliner. He sends kernels flying everywhere as he leaps over the arm, landing hard on the already defeated chair. The recliner takes its final breath, succumbing to its injuries from the onslaught of punishment. While destroying a perfectly good seat, he also manages to crack the remote. Ohblivious wriggles in the remnants of the recliner, mangling the buttons of the remote with his backside.

He knocks the gift basket off the end table as he clears the way for his now mostly empty popcorn bucket. Digging under his derrière, he successfully retrieves the bent remote from beneath his booty. The wall changes back to the correct input while rewinding a bit at the same time. The Captain thrusts the questionably functional remote above his head in triumph. He points it at the wall, and presses play.

Leslie slaps a pointing stick onto the map directly over a comically thick wall that spans the western border of the city. “As you can see, we have also redesigned the mall to nearly fifteen times its original size. It doubles as an excellent 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.” Leslie shudders in disdain.

Ohblivious scours the bottom of the bucket for what is left of the popcorn, shoving it with little regard into his greedy mouth hole. Half of his handful tumbles down his chest and embeds into the cracks of the crumpled cushions.

“Dirty American refugees” she says through gritted teeth.

The Captain soldiers on through the last remaining kernels, scooping up what is left of his snack and pressing the meager remnants into his face.

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.”

In contrast to the previous footage, Leslie looks rather uncomposed. Enraged, her face wrinkles in disgust. “C’mon who kills a moose for a ‘lucky moose foot!?’ Not the rack, nor the meat, nor the fur, but a *foot!*?”

Ohblivious scrounges in the corners of the bucket, searching for more buttery goodness, but coming up empty.

The Director pleads with Leslie. “Leslie.”

Leslie looks perturbed and stares into the camera. “Fine. THE END!” She storms off the screen.

The Captain sticks his whole face into the bucket. “Popcorn, are you in there?”

Captain Ohblivious turns the bucket upside down, waiting for something to drop out. He conveniently overlooks all the popcorn that is scattered about.

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

The clip ends with white text on a black background stating, ‘To learn more about how we got here. Flip Over to Side One: A Brief Backstory of Forced Evolution.’

Ohblivious’s eyes shift between the wall and bucket in quick succession. “Wait, is that it?”

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

Captain Ohblivious quickly tries to stash the empty popcorn container under the end table. This does little more than send the bucket in one direction and the table toppling over in the other. “No? It’s probably just the TV... or stuff..”

Louis 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 the man himself. “What have you done to my beautiful house?!”

Lou is one of those people that epitomizes the definition of a dad bod. He has a tasteful amount of facial hair that culminates in a full, yet light, beard. His suburban working man’s look is completed by a causal outfit, a pair of khakis and a polo in an unthreatening shade of light pastel mint.

Lou throws his hands up in frustration. “How did you even get in here?”

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

Lou continues to assess the damage to his model home as Captain Ohblivious takes the opportunity to creep backwards toward 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 Ohblivious slowly opens it, sliding a handful of popcorn into the top of his onesie.

“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?”

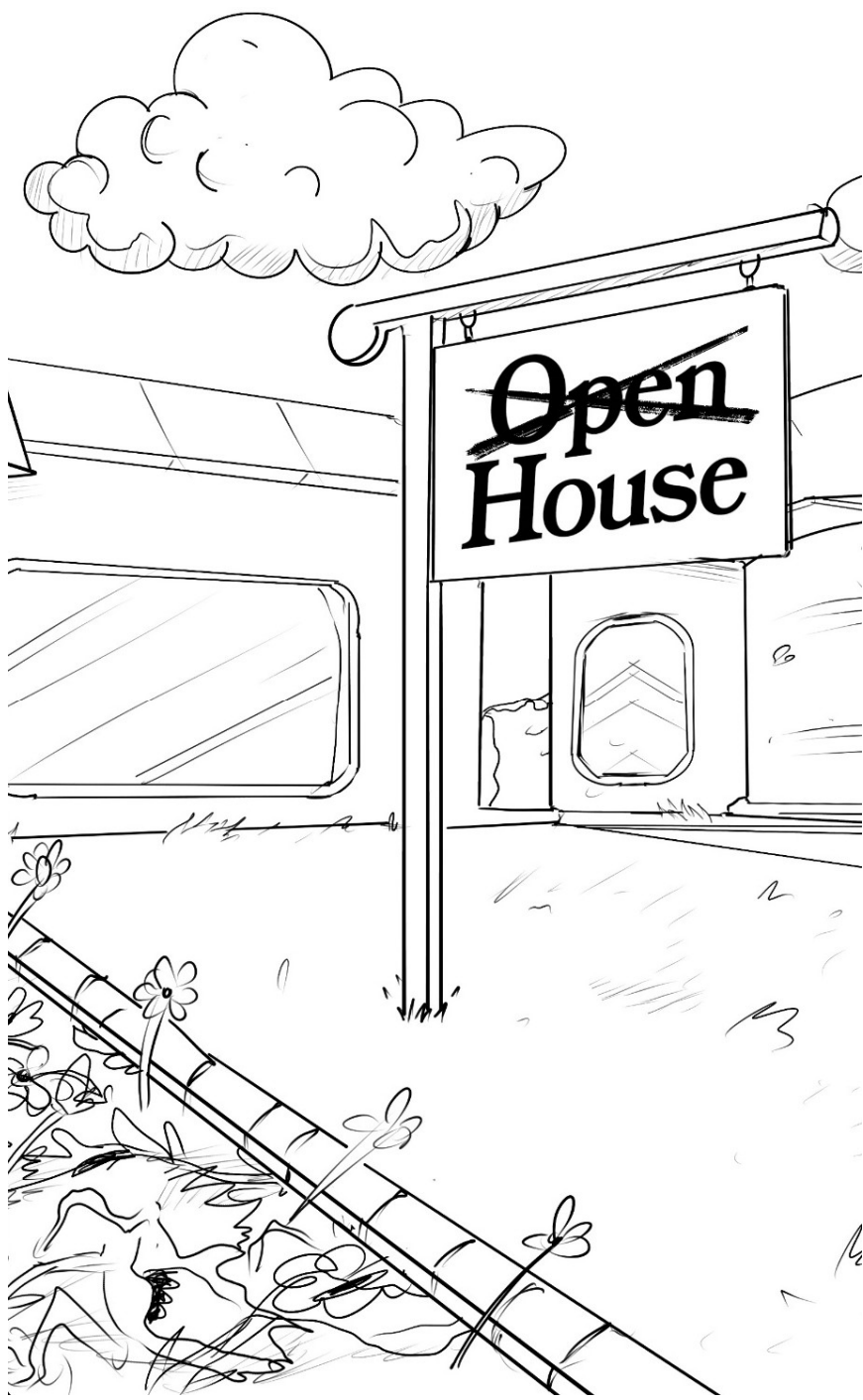
Lou catches The Captain most of the way through the front door. Ohblivious freezes for a moment, shocked, as he did not expect to get caught.

Ohblivious begins providing answers to the questions at a rapid pace. “Not as much as I’d like to. The Door. Because. Yes. No... Maybe? Away, bye-bye!”

As Captain Ohblivious leaves the home, he slams the door with a loud thunk. He races down the sidewalk towards the street, doubling back and whipping a marker out of his fanny pack. The bumbag is haphazardly strapped on his hip like a poor-man’s version of a utility belt.

The Captain scribbles a wonky X over the word “Open” on the sign. “There won’t be any false advermatizements on my watch.”

Ohblivious 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 for a name that he recognizes. He scrolls past a few people that he knows are way out of his league, trying to find someone feasible for their little start-up. His nose is glued to his slate as he wanders the desolate roads of New Edmonton. The foot-traffic is scant and even the numerous AutoCabs that zoom by are mostly empty.

Although no expense was spared in the development of this futuristic city, it is still more of a prototype than a finished product. The 3D printed skyscrapers, the Ferrock roads, and the litany of holographic displays all use bleeding edge technology. However, there is one thing that seems to be missing, the population. This pristine metropolis was built for millions, but currently only a few thousand residents call New Edmonton their home.

Lost in their own thoughts, Jason and Captain Ohblivious head towards one another in opposite directions. Jason attempts to multitask on his slate while walking, and Captain Ohblivious dwells on his recent run in. They drift past like ships in the night, neither one ever even aware of the other.

Captain Ohblivious mutters to himself, looking down at the empty popcorn bucket. “Pfff, Stupid not-that-open open house. At least I still have you, bucket.”

Jason taps his slate, searching for a potential candidate, and following the line that will take him to his intended destination. An ad fills the screen, proclaiming ‘Süp Energy! Coming Soon!’ Jason looks visibly upset about the unwanted ad, but clearly not enough to pay monthly for an ad free version of the application.

“Drumpfin’ ads!” Jason whispers to himself.

He attempts to hit the X icon to close the ad, but of course it opens instead. Jason’s treated to a cacophony of buzz words and flashing colorful images in seizure-inducing movements. The advertisement has flavors that would not be your first choice in an energy drink. It is not that they don’t 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 with Clobbered Greens, The Beans Knees Chili Jubilee, and PRoColli & Cream.

Jason angrily pounds the back button on the thin, fragile-looking device. “Bush!”

The slate snaps back, predominantly showing a map with a dotted line leading to The New Edmonton House of Multi-Denominational Faiths. Above the map is a sliver of 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, boasting support for those that are trying to come back from a life of illegal crime fighting. Jason directs the bottom section of his slate to look for more extra-human celebrities in New Edmonton.

As Jason closes in on the church, it becomes evident this is not your standard house of worship. It's oversized, under-designed, and radiates the aesthetic of a furniture warehouse that perpetually claims to be going out of business. The only clue to its sacred function is the tone-deaf neon sign reading 'The New Edmonton House of Multi-Denominational Faiths.' But even that does little to identify this as a spiritual sanctuary.

The dotted path continues inside the building, guiding him to a room with a central projector hanging from the ceiling. Its beam scatters light in every direction, plastering the walls with holographic posters. Each one flaunts a kitschy catchphrase you'd expect to find in a waiting room at a children's therapist: Hang in there, The paint is always greener on the other slide, Happiness is mandatory (just kidding, but it is highly recommended), This way to the top, Rise above it all and fly.

As Jason enters the room he is flooded with an overwhelming sense of belonging. Even though he was very nervous just moments ago, he now feels comfortable, relaxed, and quite hungry. It's at this moment he realizes he didn't actually eat any of the food he cooked this morning. He surveys the room as he makes his way over to the meager snack table, in hopes of poaching someone for his super squad. As he does, he comes to find that the smattering of guests sitting in a circle have stopped, interrupted by his late entry.

One attendee in particular catches his eye, the Dehydrator. The raisinesque figure sits in stark contrast to a vicar seated to their right. The Dehydrator evokes comparisons to the mythical figure Famine from the four horsemen. He could've sworn they were in jail after accidentally causing

wildfires in Old Edmonton. Jason quickly averts his gaze, meeting eyes with the Holy Man.

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. Basically, he looks like an elder Gary Busey who turned his life around by becoming a priest. He is surrounded by an invisible aura which is the cause of Jason's mild euphoria. This bubble of bliss incites spiritual satisfaction in those around him.

Jason closes the distance between him and the snack table. The offerings are pretty much what he anticipated, a handful of individually packaged pastries with a few drink options. The setup is exceptionally plain by any standard. Above the table, formulaic black lettering upon a drab tan background announces: 'Today's Snacks are brought to you by Bunkers.' The dull branding on the sign is mirrored throughout the refreshment wrappers below.

Doctor Kanji leads this band of legally questionable individuals in their session. She dons a white lab coat over a white blouse with a comfortable looking pair of black slacks. Dr. Kanji maintains a quiet authority, frequently jotting notes on a yellow legal pad. Soft features lend her a classically handsome appearance, with a powerful jawline framed by a

shoulder-length jet-black bob. Her emotionally passive expression gives no hint to her current demeanor.

She motions to the speaker that was interrupted by Jason's arrival. "Richard. Continue." She says in a flat, even tone.

Richard Givens is shabbily dressed in worn but clean clothes. His ratty white shirt and faded jeans are clearly past their prime, but still show a level of care and dignity despite having limited resources. At first glance, he might appear down on his luck, but then there's the lump. A softball-sized bulge juts from the right side of his neck. The bulbous bump sports its own dull brown hair, distinctly unlike the golden blond atop his head. To make matters worse, the large lump has a full-sized pair of wonky eyes and crooked teeth. Its mouth is not framed by lips, but rather by flaps of skin smeared with glossy red lipstick. Though visibly hesitant, Richard regains his composure.

He glances at the unsightly growth, as if waiting to see whether it might object, before proceeding in a rich and full-bodied voice. "Dr. Kanji, I'd always strived to make the world a better place. But the more my aspirations grew, the more self-serving my actions became. Ultimately, I ended up hurting the people I had sworn to serve."

The lump on his neck twitches and wobbles. 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. “Wanda, I’m talking about the path *I* was on, and not-”

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

Jason opens his snacks slowly, trying to quiet the crinkling of the paper packages. He spills the contents onto a paper plate as he listens in earnest to the unfolding drama. He’s equal parts impressed and disgusted with how Wanda can make Richard sound like a swear, akin to the shortened version of the name.

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

Godfrey Simmons IV sits next to Richard, giving Richard’s leg a soft reassuring pat. Although in a well-tailored suit, the broad man is covered in hair like one of those teddy bears with a human face. His forehead is split into two distinct ridges, shaped by the extra calcification you’d expect from someone mockingly dubbed ‘Neanderthal Man’ by his foes. His bespectacled face glows with genuine, unfiltered interest.

Wanda un-contorts and ripples in a delighted pattern. “Well, I’m happy you acknowledge that, Richard.”

Richard opens his mouth, but before he can utter a word he is cut off by his... other half. “Alright, we are done.”

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

“You were a terrible excuse for a human being, we met, now you are marginally better. The End. Okaaaay, Richard!” She says in a tone that dares him to defy her.

Richard, utterly defeated, mumbles out a dejected, “O-K...”

They sit in silence for a few moments, which makes Jason very happy that he has finished with his noisy packages. He takes a deep breath as he pours himself a cup of coffee, savoring the aroma.

Dr. Kanji completes her notes. She surveys the circle before quickly turning her attention to a very young man playing alone in the corner. “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?”

Julian Wong is thoroughly disheveled, the kind of man who inspires pedestrians to cross the street. His black hair hangs in matted clumps, some of which appear to have sprouted seedlings. He dresses in layers that look like they were laundered in mud. Despite the grime, it’s his physique that makes him truly intimidating. Veins ripple across his arms with the intensity of Stallone in *First Blood*. The effect only makes his inexplicable belly paunch more baffling by contrast.

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. I could blame the war. I could blame the loss of my assets. I could blame the lack of fight in me. But really, it all went downhill after the massacre.”

Jason stops putting the final touches on his morning meal, freezing in place. He stares at his plate, only just now realizing he may have made a very large 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.

Jason says, more audibly than he likely meant it to come out, “Nope!”

This cues the rest of the room to take a keen interest in 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, failing to hide his discomfort and mistake.

He stumbles backwards in a desperate scramble to the exit. Just as he feels that he is within reach of his escape, he turns 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 soft as his gravelly voice will allow.

Julian puts his arm over Jason's shoulder, ushering him over to an empty pair of chairs. 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 whispers, wallowing in the misery of his own making. “I’m really regretting my poor life choices right now.”

Julian slaps his hand down on Jason’s thigh. “It’s okay man, we were all a little squeamish our first time.”



**#3****6****PAGES****The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog****THE TOWER OF SCHPAGG:  
MASQUERADING AS  
MERCENARIES**

While Jason gets his comeuppance, Kirby and Andy blunder down the streets in Andy's van, attempting to avoid the numerous AutoCabs. The van looks to be rather out of place, 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. Andy dives across three lanes and comes to a stop, slightly on a curb, just outside of a gaudy skyscraper.

The massive monolith looms over New Edmonton, a citadel masquerading as a company headquarters. From the central hub, two vast wings unfurl into a stark V, asserting dominance over the skyline. Its obsidian skin gleams with veins of dark bronze, a gilded armor adding opulence to its otherwise foreboding façade. Matte-black windows swallow the sunlight, denying any glimpse of the world within. Projected high above the V-shaped spire, 'Van Schpagg' hovers in radiant gold, like a corporate constellation attempting to rewrite the stars in his own image. Beneath it, tacked on like an afterthought, the word 'Industries' lingers.

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

"This is faster... and cheaper!" Andy pops out of the vehicle triumphantly, tapping the hood of the van thoughtfully.

His satisfied swagger is short lived as he is forced to rush out of the road, to avoid the onslaught of AutoCabs.

Kirby raises an eyebrow as she stares at his van. “Debatable, and illegal.”

Andy walks past Kirby and shrugs. “We may never know.”

Kirby catches up with Andy “No, we *know* it’s illegal. That’s why you painted it orange. And poorly I might add.”

Andy smiles and shrugs once more as they pass a three-story high, polished bronze effigy of the company’s namesake. Although anatomically correct, the face is obscured as if no artist could ever do it justice. The daunting double doors swing towards them as they approach.

The interior is a stark contrast to the exterior, featuring white marble throughout. They enter the expansive space filled with roman columns, reaching from floor to the absurdly high ceiling. A single curved counter-height desk sits in the center, polished with a dark, 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 they are greeted by a sleek kiosk on wheels. The 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. Its suit 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’m Automaton! How may I assist you today?!”

“Yeah, we’re mercenaries.” Kirby casually leans on the desk with her elbow.

Andy confidently begins to back her up. “Yeah, we’re...” He then stares over at Kirby, puzzled by 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 behind itself, its voice sounding far too cheery for the statement that follows. “Directions have been sent to your devices! Please follow the dotted lines! Any deviation will likely result in your removal by automated security, with force!”

They begin walking towards the doors, careful not to stray from their provided path. 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 golden doors into a fancy parlor with red leather furniture, dark wood tables, white marble floors, and black wood paneled walls. 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 knee-high table in the middle. A large couch spans across a far wall with several tables set along its expanse. 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.

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

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

Automaton is kind enough to provide a voiceover. “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 Van Schpagg Industries!”

After a brief pause showing a glinting company logo, the advertisement restarts 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 continued, annoyance. “Let’s just hope it’s a short trip.”

As the advert 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, vibrating in irritation. “Shuuuut uuuuup!”



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

From the top of Van Schpagg tower, the entire city looks more like a town through the tinted glass. Although the room is bright with a white motif, it has a sterile coldness about it. The vast space seems inviting, but like the lobby, its emptiness gives it an eerie feel. The only real feature that sits in the center of this massive room is a circular desk big enough for four people. The main monitor is one continuous ring, except for a one-meter gap that allows its occupant a way out. Projected from above, the desktop is lit up with various charts, calendars, spreadsheets, and other mishigas of that sort.

Tyson Phist, better known as Ty, relaxes back in his chair, pounding away on a stenographer's keyboard. His fingers move in a blur as they expertly hit every mark. He is slight in every way with the exception of his Slenderman-like height. Draped over his dirty blond hair rests a single-ear headset. Sticking out of his other ear, is a bulky Bluetooth earpiece like what a performing artist would wear on stage. He snaps one hand over to a separate number pad then back to his keyboard 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 a spider-like hand he spins it to the image of a turtle.

He touches his earpiece as he speaks in a soft, almost-timid British accent, "Yes, Duke, I am calling them now."

Ty taps the Bluetooth device once more and passively stares at the curved monitor. He uses the video window as a mirror to adjust his tie a millimeter to the left.

The call is answered by an overwhelmed woman, trying her hardest to remain calm, “Thank you for calling the Bank of New Edmonton. This is Priya. How can I help you today?”

“Yes. I'd like to speak with your manager, please.” Ty states, as if placing an order at a restaurant that he calls every day.

Priya fails to hide how perturbed she is with such a request, clearly busy after the events earlier today. “May I ask who's calling?”

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

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

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

The bank manager, Larry, pops onto the screen, clearly flustered. He straightens himself up preparing for the call he has been rehearsing all day, or at least since 10:30 this morning. “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 Van Schpagg Tower-”

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

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

“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 as Larry babbles on.

He then fixes his gaze on the monitor, 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 my little problem?’”

Larry tries to get back on script with his predetermined 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.’” Ty furiously pounds on the keyboard that moved with him, the screen flashing from one thing to the next in rapid succession. “I'm buying your bank and reducing it to ashes. Literally.”

Ty's shoulders tighten as his fingers fly faster. "No sir, I'm not quite done yet... Yes, sir, I'll go faster".

Ty picks up the pace even more, to an astonishing speed. His digits duplicate, appearing in multiple places at once as the manic clacks from the keyboard coalesce into white noise.

Larry takes this opportunity to try to pipe in. "Uh? Mr. Phist, Sir I really don't think that's-"

"The Duke says, 'You're fired. Check your email and read the memo.'" Ty's hands hang in the air over his keyboard in a mini moment of triumph.

Larry looks down at his fingers as he slowly pecks the keys on his keyboard. "Uh. I don't have a memo."

Ty slaps a few keys at such a rapid rate it almost sounds like a single click, cocking his head to the side of the earpiece. "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 speaks to The Duke. “Yes Duke, I also love when your words spontaneously come out of my mouth.”

The white elevator doors in front of him illuminate with a video call projected upon the smooth surface.

The Lord of Dance smiles proudly into his camera as he joyfully sings along with the ringing tone, bobbing his head from side to side with glee. “Ringading ding dingaling ding ding. Dinga dinga ring ring ringading dong.”

Ty turns the Elevator Speed Control to an even slower setting of a snail. “You know we can hear you right?” He answers 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.”

The Lord of Dance changes his tune rather quickly, flopping a dismissive hand at the camera. “Then I love it! Metatron! I need to talk to The Duke.”

“He's busy at the moment.” Ty doesn't bother to apologize. Not only because he doesn't want to, but also because he knows the Duke wouldn't appreciate it.

“What!?” The Lord of Dance squeaks. He slams his hands down on his desk, lurching toward the camera.

Despite attempts to slow down its arrival, the elevator dings. Ty grins wickedly as he makes a show of putting *The Lord of Dance* on hold.

Ty turns in his seat, thumbing an analog stick built into his armrest. “Yes, Duke, I put him on hold while I greet our guests.” The chair rises to an appropriate height for his considerable stature, making it easier for him to stand. “Yes, he does look deliciously upset. Thank you, sir. I knew you’d like that.”

He takes off his headset, places it next to the keyboard, and glides through the exit. He moves without any need for speed around his massive accommodation, picking up a manilla envelope from a stack on the edge of his desk. He centers himself in front of a growing gap forming between the elevator doors. They part at a painful pace, sliding like a snail on their metal tracks. Clearly the occupants were never meant to have an opportunity to leave the lift. In the narrow slit, two sets of desperate eyes plead for a change of scenery.

The eyes retreat as Ty forcefully shoves the package through the small slot. “The Duke says, ‘Get out there and bring back *my* safety deposit box.’ You’ll find all the details you need here. Good luck.”

Ty jabs the button next to the doors, causing them to abruptly slam shut.

Not even the closed doors can block the collective cry from the miserable mercenaries. “Noooo!”

Ty returns to his desk, putting on an amused grin as if this is one of the most satisfying parts of his job. “Yes, Duke, they’ve been sent on their way. I’ll let you know if anybody else shows up.”

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 playfully dangles the locked safety deposit box back and forth. “Are you sending those after little old me? I could save you all this effort if you’d just put me through to the Duke.”

“Nope.” Ty Phist succinctly responds.

“WHAT!?” The Notorious LOD grinds his teeth as he leans forward. “I’m done playing with Van Schpagg’s puppet. Put me through.”

“That’s Dr. Van Schpagg.”

Lord of Dance scoffs, “DDS.”

“The Duke says-” Ty hangs up and goes back to his work. “Yes sir, I hung up on him... We did get his location and I’ll have the other Founders on the line shortly.”



**#5****3****PAGES****The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog****THIS IS NOT A SECRET LAIR.  
I'M JUST RETIRED**

Captain Ohblivious shakes his fist up at a tree in anger on the outskirts of an expansive park. 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. Captain Ohblivious glares between the branches as if daring the squirrels to argue. He hangs his head, turns away, and mopes towards the sidewalk. On his way, he kicks up a clump of grass leaving a large divot in his wake.

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

Ohblivious spins back around in a huff, shuffling down a nearby alley. He mumbles to himself, “Stupid tree rats.”

He yells over his shoulder in the direction of the park. “That’s right, I called you tree rats!”

The Captain staggers up to a door halfway down the alley. Although the building mimics the appearance of a brick-and-mortar exterior from the streets, its sides do not try as hard to disguise the 3D printed roots.

Across the wall is a colorful cascade of crude chalk drawings that look like they were made by an eight year old with a ladder. The outline of a single-story home almost centers itself over the door. There is not a lot of detail aside from a couple of windows with curtains drawn and a whisp of smoke rising from the chimney. In poor penmanship scrawled just above the threshold, read the words ‘Not A Secrete Lair’.

The door itself has two distinct signs that are not a part of this art installation. The one at the top declares this is a ‘Public Restroom’ free for all to use. The lower of the two is just a paper sign which reads ‘Out of order’, its tattered appearance makes it clear that it has been there for quite some time.

Captain Ohblivious throws open the door to reveal a giant pile of fluff. “Lair, sweet lair. You’d never eat my popcorn.”

The fluff is just that, a mound of cotton that fills the entirety of the doorway from top to bottom. Ohblivious dives headfirst into the off-white abyss with a delighted sigh. The door softly swings shut behind him with a quiet click.



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

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

As the gaggle of eclectic ex-crime fighters turn right, Jason turns in the opposite direction as nonchalantly as he can. Unfortunately, this fools nobody. It's rather evident that he is just trying to escape.

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

“Uh... No. I'm in AA too.” Jason keeps a blank face. Although, he's kicking himself in his head for such a ridiculous reply.

Godfrey pulls a pair of tortoise shell glasses with a light tint from his pocket. With a hairy hand, he sets them on the bridge of his nose. “Oh. So am I. I go Thursdays, you?”

Dumbfounded, Jason just chooses to turn away from the conversation. He incoherently babbles something that vaguely seems to imply he attends online.

Julian pipes up in Jason's defense, "Everyone's first day is hard. You know how it is. Let's give the kid a break."

Jason turns a corner and takes a deep breath, attempting to reset after his self-inflicted therapy session. Although the idea seemed sound at first, in hindsight, he probably should have known that this was the more likely outcome. He looks down at his slate and scrolls through his contacts, pausing for a while on a particular name.

Jason gazes at the sky as if to ask for forgiveness. "Sorry Kirby."

He selects Libby from the list and taps voice call only. The line rings but all he can do is stare at his hands like they have betrayed him.

A soft voice emits from the speaker. "Jason?"

Panicking, Jason hastily pulls the slate up to his ear. "Hey Libby, I just wanted to chat about something that your sister and I are working on. Do you have a few moments... Great, want to meet for coffee... Sure, which one?"

Jason waves down an Auto Cab and starts to climb inside the bubbly looking vehicle. "You got it. I'm 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, stands in the center mocking the pose of the statue outside. Kirby exits the bathroom, wiping her hands on her pants to remove the remaining water from her damp digits.

Andy turns back into his flesh and blood body, gleefully sauntering 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. “Good for you, Andy.”

Andy shrinks back from Kirby’s slightly moist touch. 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 for Kirby, who is no longer standing in front of him. Kirby has slithered her way out of the elevator doors that have opened just wide enough for her to escape.

“Hey, wait!” Andy chases after her and tries to squeeze through the space that is not quite big enough for his considerable mass. “Did you *really* go in there to take a big dump, or were you just trying to avoid talking with me?”

Kirby walks backwards to the front exit. “Oh, Andy. Can't it be both?”

Kirby turns and pushes open the entry doors. She pulls the rolled-up envelope out of her back pocket and extracts a thin, clear plastic sheet from within.

Kirby begins swiping past dossiers and other documents that appear on the digital transparency. “So, I was looking over this a little bit ago and-”

“A little bit ago? Ew!” Andy’s long legs close the distance between them.

Kirby starts to hail an AutoCab. “Don’t get your panties in a twist. It’s washable.”

“Did you wash it?” Andy redirects her towards his van.

Kirby bemoans a little as she is practically strapped into the seat by Andy. “If I said yes, would you believe me?”

“No!” Andy slams the door on Kirby then walks around the van, climbing into the driver’s seat.

“Then let’s just get on with it.” She holds out the paper display to Andy.

On the device is a satellite image centered on The Lord of Dance’s headquarters. On the top of the building, is a big pulsing red dot. Andy pulls a napkin from the center console and uses it to tap a button on the map, starting the navigation to their destination.

“Now routing you to your-” Automaton’s voice cuts off abruptly as Kirby slaps the map frantically to turn off the audio.

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

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



**#7**

4

**PAGES****The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog****THE BIG RED DOT**

The Lord of Dance's headquarters are a monument to his bad taste gilded in wealth. It is less a base of operations and more a showroom of excess scattered across an unfinished void. Most of the floor is just cold concrete, like a high-rise abandoned mid-construction. Here and there, islands of indulgence shine under carefully staged lights: a forty-seat banquet table with an ornate chandelier, a conversation pit sealed off by a ring of couches, a tech bunker lit only by the feverish glow of monitors, a four-poster bed built for a King and his entire court, a carpeted shrine to his shoes and clothes, and two bathrooms: one marked 'Mine' that takes up more than its fair share of allotted space, the other a shrunken box resigned to 'Whoever.'

Smack dab in the middle of the expansive floor, the Lord of Dance lounges in a plushy, oversized recliner. The chair has a very throne-like feel to it, not only from the ornate stylings, but due to it being raised on a platform with stairs leading its elevated perch. His slate chimes, piquing his interest as he picks it up. It takes only a moment to review before leaping to his feet.

Skipping steps as he descends the dais, he rushes to the bank of monitors. "What do you mean there's a big red dot on my roof?"

The Lord of Dance swivels his head between the monitors, trying to locate the surveillance feed for the roof. Uplink wordlessly gestures to one of the monitors, helping him find the right one.

Brad kicks himself across the floor in a rolling office chair, coming to rest next to Uplink. “Maybe they tracked us, Boss.”

The Lord of Dance snaps his head over to Brad, swiftly pointing to where the large pink and white seashell rests on a froofy table near his throne. “Brad, what have I told you about the conch?”

Brad shuffles out of his seat, intent on getting to that conch. His confident stride slackens as he sees that someone else has beaten him to the punch.

The Mechanic scoops up the conch in his shiny fingers. “Likely Brad, but that doesn’t explain the big red dot.”

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 as Brad runs over to the window, looking down at the parking lot next to them. He stares down in fear as his small, blue self-driving sedan grows closer to the concrete walls of their headquarters. It is not that

the vehicle has spontaneously decided to drive towards them, but rather that the building is slowly inching its way into the parking lot.

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 grasps at the air frantically. 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 on the screens. They watch the building painfully plow into Brad's vehicle. The distant wailing of his alarm echoes from below as his vehicle is crunched beneath the creeping concrete. The portly Londoner goes limp and falls back into his seat beside Uplink, who provides him with a sincere expression of pity.

The Lord of Dance plops the conch onto Brad's lap, mockingly ruffling his hair. "What a good boy! I knew you could do it, Brad."

The Lord of Dance grasps the back of Uplink's chair as he leans in to watch the live feed. "Well, would you look at that. They found us quicker than I thought."

The big red dot begins to form in the newly vacant lot. They sit, rapt in curiosity, watching the red light slink off the building and onto the Ferrock below.

Brad, who is now more curious than upset, sits up in his chair. "What do you think it is?"

The Mechanic plucks the conch from Brad’s lap. “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 hands in a single pop. “Welp, it was fun while it lasted. It’s time to go. Before we do, let’s slow down the AutoCabs. You know, to buy some time.”

The Lord of Dance grabs for a dial exactly like the one for the elevator in Van Schpagg Tower. He spins it from the horse all the way down past the snail, to an image of a sailing stone.



**#8****8****PAGES****The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog****THE BLUNDERS CONTINUE IN  
BUNKERS BEAN BARN**

Libby Bertino lounges back in her chair, wearing an outfit that is red-carpet ready but surprisingly still works for everyday use. The clothes fit her curves in all the right places, showing off the tailormade cut of her bespoke garments. 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's empty. She lifts her head up and takes in her surroundings. The coffee shop has a faux country feel, like that of an old saloon that was designed by Starbucks. A girl in her early twenties runs over and sets a new cup of coffee in front of Libby, staring starry eyed and brimming with excitement. The young woman is 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, meeting eyes with the beguiled barista. “No, I'm good right now. And you can just call me Libby.”

The girl shutters, blushing a bit as she stammers on her words. “Can I? Really? Wow that's so cool, *Libby*. I'm Charlotte”

Charlotte cannot help herself as she lets out an involuntary giggle after calling Libby by her first name. Libby looks down at her data pad and takes another drink of her coffee, trying to kindly indicate that the conversation is over.

Charlotte doesn't take the hint and jumps right back in with the question she's been dying to ask. “And, uh, now that we're on a first name basis, can I have a selfie?”

Libby glances over at Charlotte, who is wagging her slate slightly side to side like a visual aid. Charlotte's face is plastered with a pleading grin, trying to mask her nervous energy. Sadly, this does little more than expose her anxious desperation.

Libby gives her 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!”

Trying to hide her embarrassment, Charlotte spins around. She makes her way back to the counter, trying to figure out why those were the words that slipped past her lips. Libby smirks as she goes back to her coffee.

Jason bumbles into the coffee shop and surveys the room frantically. He notices Libby glaring at him with

simmering fury lightly veiled in her gaze. He waves at her as he hurries over to the table.

Libby stifles a sneer, speaking under her breath with a touch of annoyance in her tone, “Where have you been?”

Jason checks over his shoulder for a quick moment and then returns his attention 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. When no additional explanation is presented, she throws her hands up a tad perturbed. “That's how cabs are supposed to work, isn't it? The key is to get in the cab earlier so that you don't leave someone waiting by themselves at a coffee shop. For an hour!”

Jason motions to the windows as an AutoCab inches along so slowly that pedestrians easily pass the vehicle. A person in the back of the vehicle sobs, pleading with the cab to let them out.

Libby nods to Jason, now with more understanding. “Well, you could've at least called to let me know you were running late.”

“That would've been a clever idea, but I was basically doing what that guy was doing.” Jason tips his head towards the man stuck in the automated hostage mobile outside.

With a wave of her hand, Libby lets it go. “So, how have you been?”

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's been a long time since I've felt this driven-” He makes eye contact 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. “I'm not giving you any money.”

At first, Jason appears a little hurt. Then he recalls all the times in the past where this immediate response would be apt. “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 holds her cup with two hands, like she is warming them with it. “So, you're starting a cult?”

She 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. “So, what are you guys doing? And spare me the sales pitch.”

Jason beams confidently over to Libby, placing his hands together and parting them in a wild hand gesture as he proudly states, “We're 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? Aww 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, full of pride at his own cleverness, 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, unable to meet Jason’s gaze full of excited anticipation. “I can’t really get involved in something like this right now. If it 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 to generate buzz and provide us with some legitimacy.”

Libby stops tapping on the top of her cup “I thought I told you to spare me the sales pitch.” She raises her now narrow

eyes up at Jason, a serious expression of contempt on her face. “Tell me one thing. Does Kirby even want me there?”

Jason 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.” Exhausted with where this conversation has gone, Libby purses her lips.

Libby stands up, gathering up her data pad and stuffing it into her designer leather purse. Without another word to Jason, she swiftly strides towards the exit.

Jason jumps up, trying to chase after her. “Libby, wait!”

Libby brushes him off as she continues on her path, her mind already out the door. Jason doubles back to pick up his coffee.

Charlotte tries and fails to keep the disappointment out of her voice as she watches Libby leave. “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.”

Jason cranes his neck, glancing around her at Libby standing on the sidewalk. “What?!”

Charlotte, in a calm but firm tone, lets him know just how she feels about the topic. “You cost me a selfie, and now you’re 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.

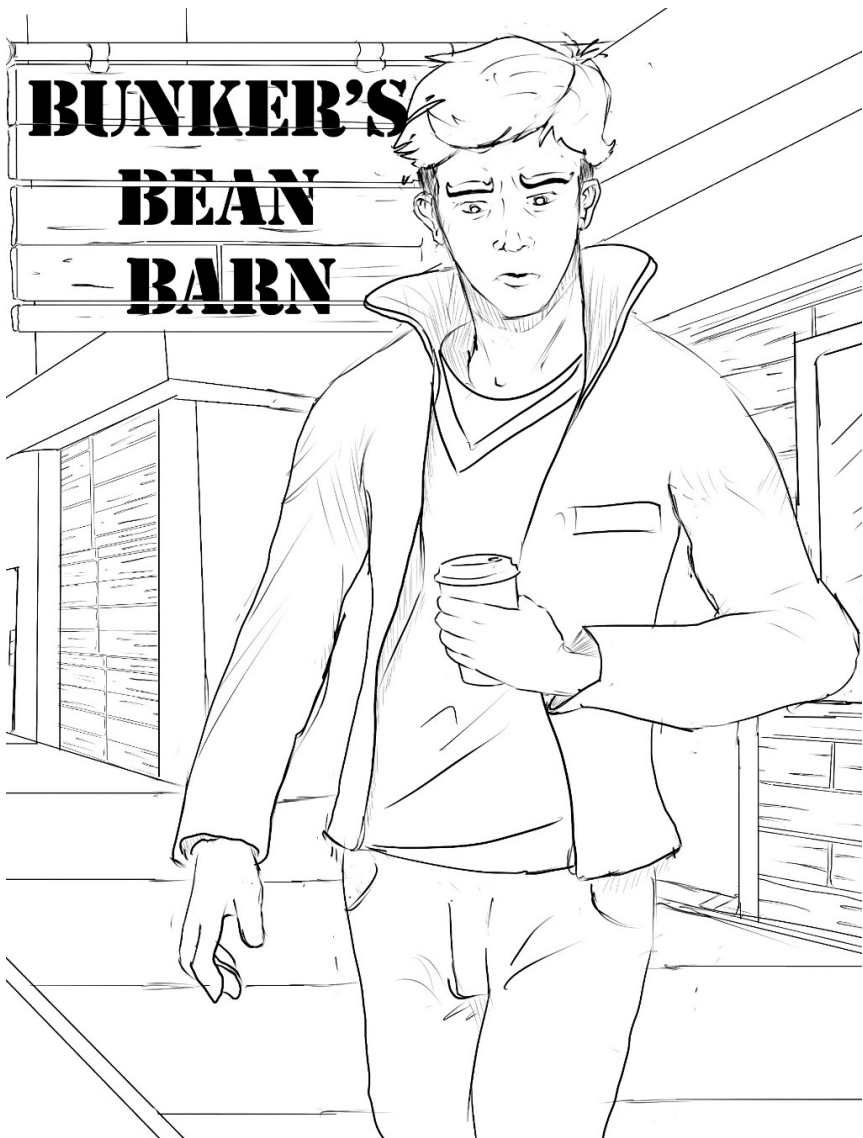
Charlotte responds flatly, “That’ll be 43 dollars. Or 21.50 Kosh Kash.”

Jason looks down at his cup and thinks about the one that Libby was holding. He sniffs his coffee trying to sense the reason for the outrageous amount. “What kind of coffee is this?”

Charlotte gives him an impish grin. “The kind that comes with a hundred 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. He thinks better of it as he sees the screaming stranger, still trapped in the cab, not even a block away. Jason 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 where the Lord of Dance's headquarters used to be. He takes up two spots that are intended for perpendicular parking. As the vehicle lurches from its sudden stop, the missile in the newly vacant lot explodes with an earth-shattering boom.

Kirby scurries out of the van in a hurry, attempting to escape any potential catastrophe. She takes a few steps back, trying to find the cause of the thunderous sound that she has attributed to the vehicle.

After seeing that there is no new damage, she looks at Andy who has leaped out of the vehicle himself. "What did you hit?!"

"The brakes?!" Andy scratches his head, frantically inspecting the van for the source of the issue.

Afraid to get any closer to the vehicle, Kirby kicks the passenger door shut. "Yeah, a little too hard, don't you think? Sounds like your van agrees with me."

Not willing to admit it, but feeling like Kirby's probably right, Andy sighs. "Well, whatever it was, we've got to get that looked into."

Kirby gapes incredulously at Andy. “What ‘we?’ It’s *your* car!”

“Wh.. the.. proverbial we? And it’s a *van*.” Andy drops to his hands and knees inspecting the undercarriage.

Kirby stares at Andy for a brief moment and then turns, walking 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. 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 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 Van Schpagg Tower as the captive client cries, “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 are visible as a loud and sustained “NOOOOOOO!”, echoes down the barren roadways.

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



Kirby, who did not pay attention to Andy's antics, alternates from analyzing the map to the smoldering crater in the lot in front of her. "Are you sure this is the right place, Andy?"

Andy comes up beside her as she holds out the map for him to review. They both inspect 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."

"Who is this *they* you're talking about?" Kirby says as she gestures air quotes.

Andy grins widely. "The proverbial they. Obviously."

Kirby rolls up the map and bops Andy on the side of the head. "Fine smartass. Then where's all the debris?"

Andy feigns being hurt, rubbing his temple. "De-bree?"

He waits in grand anticipation for the punchline of an ongoing joke he has been running for years. Since childhood, he's found it extremely hilarious to pronounce certain words incorrectly. To add insult to injury, he pretends not to understand them unless pronounced in that way.

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 from the relocated hideout next door. The Notorious LOD sneaks out 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 the Lord of Dance trying to slink away. Andy shrugs and stands on one leg, tucking the other up like a flamingo. He freezes like a croquette mallet fit for the queen of hearts. Kirby casually picks him up, so casually that this seems to be a very normal activity for them. She stalks towards Lord of Dance, giving her Andy club a few test swings. Kirby sucker-smacks the Lord of Dance upside the back of his head, making a lovely resounding *bink*.

She stands over the now prone plutocrat. “You're not a super villain, you're just a bored rich guy.”

“Semantics.” The Lord of Dance chimes back without moving a muscle.

Surprised that he is still conscious, Kirby begins repetitively kicking the Lord of Dance, switching it up with a swing of Andy every now and then. She starts giggling after she is satisfied that he has truly passed out. Her giggling only

intensifies when she puts Andy 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. “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 Secrete Lair’ and back out into the alley. He lackadaisically makes his way to his feet with his head hung low. With slumped posture he drags his feet as he shuffles down the alley.

“I used to be the biggest thing since easily toasted sliced bread. Now look at me!” He stops and looks at the back-alley hidey-hole 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. He pulls a partially smooshed pink cupcake with a lit candle out of his neck pocket. His neck pocket is just the inside of his suit that he is known to use for additional storage.

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. “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 crushes the once only slightly squished baked good, leaving nothing more than a smudge of frosting oozing through his white knuckles.

Ohblivious thrusts his frosted fist up in the air as he finishes his thought. “Passion!”

The Captain 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. The glorified vending machine is tackily painted red and yellow with a weather worn decal 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. This does 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. 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. His last ditch effort to salvage the day is thwarted when his slate makes an angry beep, running out of battery and shutting down. 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's. He sees Captain Oh standing at the curb, impatiently waiting for the AutoCab to make its way past.

Jason stands 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 into his pocket 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'm 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.”

Realizing this is the opportunity he’s been searching for all day, Jason steels himself and begins hinting at his true goal. “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 doesn’t seem to notice the lack of acknowledgement, 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 awkwardly 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. “It’s becoming far too common that people use their powers only for what benefits themselves instead of others.” Jason speaks from his heart, finally finding his voice. “I’m just so passionate about doing

something good for this community, rather than just watching it all fall apart.”

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

Once the AutoCab is fully clear, Captain Oh jogs swiftly across the road toward the hotdog stand. Jason stammers as he watches the last chance to make something of his day walk away. He blurts out an incoherent statement that could be summed up as inviting The Captain over to meet them when he’s ready.

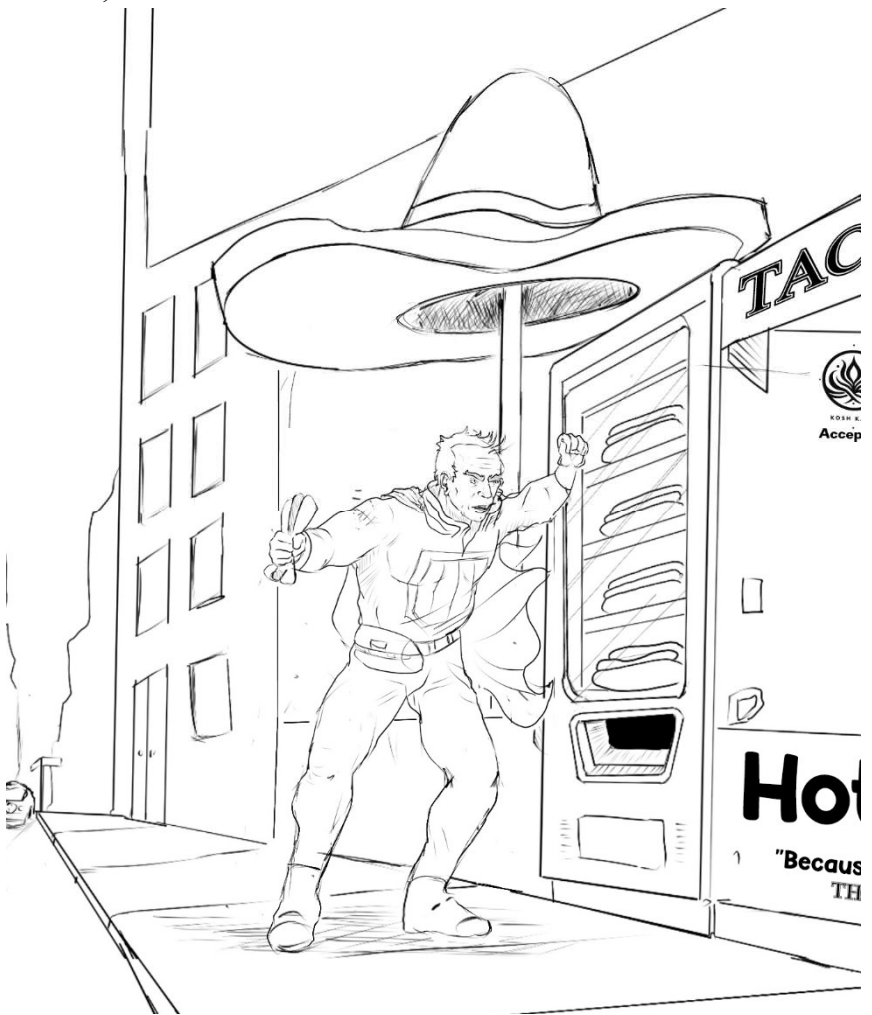
Jason finishes the babble with just one succinct statement, “We could call it The Oh Force!”

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. With a reluctance best suited for an execution, he begins to walk back up the street.

Captain Oh pulls a dingy looking COMM that resembles an old flip phone off his utility belt. 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 Oblivious stares at the single hotdog in his hand with a hefty helping of disappointment. “Where is the rest of it? Where are your friends?” He opens the foil wrapper, gawking at the lonely, plain hotdog. “Where’re your accessories?!”

The Captain begins rapidly pressing the hotdog button, attempting to convince the machine to give him what he wanted, not what he asked for.



**#11****7****PAGES****The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog****FROM DOWN AND DEJECTED  
TO BEWILDERED BRILLIANCE**

The sun tips just below the horizon as Jason trudges up the stairs to his apartment. With every step, the weight of his failures drag him closer to an uncomfortable conversation. His mind plays the events of the day on repeat. Not trying to find out how he could have done things differently, but rather, dwelling on the disasters of his defeat. He stops and stares at the apartment in front of him, considering whether he should open the door or just run away in shame. With a heavy sigh he grasps the handle, ready to face the music.

Jason is greeted by the cheery voices of his roommates who both speak in unison as he reluctantly opens the door. “How’d you do it?”

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

“What d’you mean, what?!” Andy motions to the kitchen.

Captain Ohblivious shuffles out of the dining area over to the living room with an armload of hotdogs and a bottle of ketchup, leaving the fridge slightly ajar. Jason watches in shock as Andy scooches closer to Kirby, making room for Ohblivious. The Captain bends forward like he might put the literal hug full of hotdogs on the coffee table. At the last moment he flops back, sending the majority of the hotdogs

tumbling to the floor. Salivating, Andy reaches down to pick up a tubular treat.

Captain Ohblivious quickly slaps Andy's hand. "It's not your birthday!"

Andy rubs his hand and looks at the state of their floor. He knows he's likely better off not eating it, even though it's still in a wrapper. Kirby gives Andy a dirty look as she wriggles her way up onto the arm of the sofa.

She turns to face Jason, who remains standing in the doorway with a dumbfounded look on his face. "I don't know how you did it, but I don't care cause it worked!"

"I care! I want to know how he did it." Andy leans back to crane his neck around Kirby.

Feeling the pressure from their eager eyes, Jason gives the only plausible answer his mind is able to put together. "Persistence... maybe?"

Jason finally moves forward into the room and attempts to close the door behind him. When it doesn't budge, he glances over his shoulder to find Libby lingering in the hall.

Libby rests a hand on Jason's arm to nudge him out of her path. "Kirby, I saw what you did on the news today. I must say, not bad!"

Andy frantically grabs for the remote on the table. "What?! On the news?"

Andy is unable to contain his excitement, fumbling with the remote and accidentally changing it to the audio settings.

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

Libby closes Jason’s dropped jaw as she skirts past, sparing him any ridicule.

Andy aimlessly flitters through the channels, trying to figure out which one the news is on. Libby flings something from her slate to the TV. Leslie Nielsen III sits behind her news desk as a banner at the bottom of the TV briefly states, ‘Now Streaming from Libby’s COMM.’

Captain Ohblivious whines out his disappointment through a mouthful of hotdog. “Aw, this show sucks.”

“Today we had a rare television appearance by Dr. Alex Van Schpagg. For this we go to Mike from earlier today.” Leslie looks at a feed that pops up over her ad splattered background.

Mike Foehn stands between the simmering crater and the Lord of Dance’s headquarters to make his report. Just behind Mike, two police officers lead the Lord of Dance into the back of a paddy wagon. The Notorious LOD scowls as his shackles force him to waddle but cannot voice his displeasure due to a thick strip of tape covering his mouth.

Mike holds the pen from earlier up to his lips. “Thank you Leslie! Just moments ago, the ringleader in the robbery of

The Bank of New Edmonton was apprehended by- Dr. Van Schpagg?!”

A matte black limousine, emblazoned with the text ‘Van Schpagg Industries’ and bearing the license plate ‘Schpagg1’, pulls up behind Mike. Mike scurries across the street, eager to get an exclusive.

Kirby scrunches up her face in distaste as she hears Van Schpagg’s name instead of her own. Andy and the others shift closer to the screen to get a better look, with Ohblivious being the exception. The Captain tries to pile his mountain of hotdogs on the side table 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, holds out the pen towards Ty. “Of course!”

Ty leans down playing into the microphone charade. “Dr. Van Schpagg says ‘I am grateful today for 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 at the time of recording.

Kirby bursts into laughter as Andy just stares at the TV in confusion.

Hurt, Andy swings his head over to Kirby, “Sidekick?!”

“That’s all that Dr. Van Schpagg has for you today. Thank you very much for your time.” Ty proceeds to hurriedly get back into the limo.

Mike turns back to his camera as the limo speeds out of sight. “Wow, Dr. Van Schpagg, not in the flesh. Back to you Leslie.”

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

Andy looks rather perturbed, now realizing that Kirby had a chance to correct them. “I hate you.”

Kirby nearly falls off the arm of the couch laughing 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!”

“Not anymore, you’re not! I saw it on TV!” Kirby can barely get the words out through her laughter as she swipes on the screen of her slate.

Leslie touches a 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 a contact labeled ‘Leslie from the TV.’

Jason slaps the back of the couch in disbelief. “Oh, my Gods! She’s literally texting Leslie right now!”

Usually, Andy would have found this rather hilarious but the fact that he has been referred to as a sidekick still hangs heavily on his mind. “Yeah, she sucks.”

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

Kirby glances up from her slate to her sister, but only for a second before returning her attention to the news. “Well, I wasn’t, then that happened. *That happened*,” Kirby vigorously gestures to the TV.

“And then *that* happened.” Kirby points at Captain Ohblivious, who is happily finishing off his pile of hotdogs.

Ohblivious tosses another wrapper over his shoulder, adding to the mound behind the couch.

Kirby turns her head up to Libby, hesitant yet hopeful. “Then this happened, right?”

“Hey, I’m just here to support my sis.” Libby says, affectionately resting her hand on Kirby’s shoulder.

The corners of Kirby’s lips turn up with mischievous intent, “So, can I have some money?”

“No!” Libby pulls her hand back and smacks Kirby upside the head in one swift motion.

Kirby shrugs it off with body language that heavily suggests ‘I had to try,’ looking rather pleased with herself. She then surveys the others in the room who only provide glares of complete contempt. Captain Ohblivious, however, pays her no mind, dropping to the floor on all fours.

He begins scouring around like a dog searching for crumbs. “Aww. I lost all my friends. At least I still got you, accessories!” The Captain snatches up the bottle of ketchup, lifts it to his lips, and knocks it back.



**#12**

**2**

**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. Jared releases the final lock and swings the door open. The Lord of Dance stands at the far end of the rear compartment, facing the pair of police.

When he doesn't move, Jared beckons to him, "C'mon. Let's get you inside."

The Lord of Dance flashes them a toothy and roguish grin. At this moment, Bob realizes that the duct tape they put on his mouth is now lying on the floor. Bob freezes, his eyes widening as Jared unclips the holster for his taser.

The Notorious LOD's smile doubles in size. "Who wants to hear a song?"



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

Ty Phist stands on the sidewalk next to a gas can, watching gleefully as The Bank of New Edmonton is swallowed by flames. Apparently, the Duke was not speaking figuratively when he made his threats earlier that day. Ty takes a deep breath as he closes his eyes, basking in the brilliance of the blaze. A soft ring in his ear brings him back to the present. He tosses the safety deposit box into the fire, smiling as it disappears into the raging inferno.

He touches his ear as he speaks softly. “Yes sir, I’ve made the deposit. I’ll send pictures... The Bureaucrat wasn’t happy at first, but he never is. With the addition of Captain Oh, I’ve convinced the rest of the Founders to give them a trial run... Yes, sir, it makes me happy when you’re happy.”





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

Ohblivious shifts his gaze nervously, like a kid trying not to get caught doodling on their desk. "It's important to remember that property damage is not a victimless crime."

He punctuates his graffiti with an exclamation point. "Unless it looks cool!"

Andy bursts outside, nearly tripping over his own feet in his rush to confront the vandal. "What are you doing to my van?"

Startled, Ohblivious flings the spray can skyward, giggling as he scampers away.

Andy inspects the, surprisingly, well-painted mural on the side of his van. “You know what, I kinda like it. It’s better than all the names I came up with.”



#2

105  
PAGES

The Oh Force: Begins

THE FORTRESS OF CUBICLES:  
A LITERAL HOSTILE TAKEOVER

FORTRESS  
OF  
CUBICLES

Scabs Don't  
Do Stairs!

Another  
One?  
-Your Mom



A less than Graphic Novel<sup>1a</sup>

By Antony and Ezra King

Previously on The Oh Force!  
-By The Captain

My Dearest Digital Diary,

I made new friends! I thought I was too old for that stuff. They say you can't teach an old dog to make new friends, how wrong *they* are. The first one I met was one of those silly quiet French clowns! Although, he doesn't wear as much make-up as you'd think. His name is like, James I wanna say? He's not much of a talker but he sure is a moper.

Andy is cool though! They say it's not a party until someone's taller than you. Boy does Andy bring the parties! He does kinda stiffen up when he gets frightened, but when he's all squishy he's a pretty goofy guy, and I like that!

I don't know about that Kirby fella though. She kinda sucks. Hehehe. But for reals, I just don't quite get her yet. Sometimes she's funny and other times she's mean. She says she has this interdimensional blackish holeish thingy in her chest, but she won't let me see it! And I'm pretty sure she stole one of my hotdogs. Andy wouldn't do that. He can be taught!

And finally, there's Libby. I really don't know her. Apparently, she's related to Kirby somehow? I think they're like twin cousins or something.

So, what happened was I don't live in my not a secret lair anymore, I have a superhero team named after me, we stopped Lord Fancy Pants from stealing Mr. Rich Guy's stuff, and we'll all live happily ever after. The End!

**#1****9****PAGES****The Fortress of Cubicles: A Literal Hostile Takeover****THE LAST STRAW:  
I'M JUST WAITING FOR  
SOMEONE TO SAY...**

The Fortress of Cubicles is oddly silent, with the exception of keyboards rattling off their percussive beats. The painfully generic office building is eight stories of wall-to-wall cubicles. Each massive floor has little creativity in design, favoring function over form. The formulaic grid-like pattern of bland workspaces repeats over and over across the expansive layout. The industrial chic ceilings stretch up six meters from the carpet, giving the perception that this was intended as a warehouse rather than office space.

Florence Enza sits in one of these cookie-cutter cubicles typing manically on her mechanical keyboard. Her outward demeanor suggests that she is underpaid and underappreciated, despite the body of her work. She wears a wrinkled, pastel purple blouse and a flared-leg pair of loose-fitting pants, her dark hair put up in a messy bun. Her well-manicured nails are tipped in a subdued shade of pink and gracefully flow across the keyboard, with little need for the backspace key.

Her typing slows, tilting her head to the side as she notices a swishing sound coming from the walkway behind her. A bit flustered, Florence stops her work and stands, the sound intensifies as it grows near. She steps over to the far edge of her undersized cubicle, standing on her tippy toes to peek over the meter and a half tall wall. She scours the aisle, trying to locate the source of this mysterious sound.

A blurred shape flies in from the entryway of the cubicle, sending her off balance. She catches herself against the wall as she watches the phantom figure make a speedy retreat. Her chair slowly spins in place as her desk drawer slides shut with a soft click. Florence takes an uneasy step forward, grasps the drawer, and begins to pull it out. She reels back when her fingers find something sticky, moist, and malleable underneath.

Dropping to her knees, she inspects the underside of her desk to find a rectangular piece of white, putty-like material. “Ew, is this gum?”

A tall, broad man seems to pop into existence, filling the opening of her workspace. His alabaster skin gives the impression that he’s never felt the touch of the sun. He is large, with a well-crafted physique like a gym rat, but hides it beneath an outfit befitting someone in IT. His tie shines bright red with thin, white diagonal stripes cascading down. It obscures the buttons on the well-tailored, short-sleeved white shirt that hugs his bulking form. Upon his hips, blending in with his pleated slacks, rests a matte black fanny pack that is flanked on either side with utility pouches. His perfectly sculpted blond hair is cut high and tight, matching his rigid personality. Underneath his single breast pocket, naturally sporting a pocket protector, a tag reads, ‘Cubicles’. To ensure that his name invokes similarities to a Greek demigod, and not an office fixture, it is quickly followed by a phonetic pronunciation ‘(kew-bih-KLEEZ) He/Him.’ The next line of text announces he is the office’s ‘Efficiency Consultant.’

In a mechanical motion he raises his arm, flicking up his index finger and preparing to mansplain the sticky substance.

“No Florence, that is handy tack!” His face remains passive despite his jubilant tone.

From her knees, she stares at him with a question in her eyes and a hefty bit of indignation. “Ok, but why on the underside of my desk?”

Cubicles gently smirks as he quickly explains his actions. “Convenience, Florence, convenience.”

He disappears from the entryway to her cubicle, whooshing down the aisle in a nearly imperceptible motion. Although one might assume that Cubicles possesses super speed, it is actually his super strength that allows him to move so quickly. Unfortunately, this immense strength comes with reduced flexibility, causing his movements to be rather rigid.

Florence pulls herself out into the aisle as she meekly turns to head in the opposite direction.

Worried that the new Efficiency Consultant might be omnipotent, she mumbles quietly to herself. “Uh, Ok... Weirdo. And I told you before, I prefer Flo.”

She makes her way towards an alcove that is slightly smaller in size than a couple of cubicles put together. A placard mounted to the side of the entryway simply states, ‘Copy Room.’ In one corner, two people stand on either side of a watercooler having a quiet conversation.

On the far right of the tiny nook is a shelf stuffed full of reams of paper wrapped in non-descript tan packaging. Beside that shelf are cubbies, separated into slots, with stacks of paper.

Each cubby is labeled with the number of pages in each slot. Every increment increases the page count by five, with one large slot reserved for singles. Oddly, there does not seem to be any copy machine present in the room that bears its namesake. Instead, there is just a podium with a data pad that is about the size of an A4 sheet of paper.

Flo enters the duplication station to find Stuart Placaté, a man in his mid-twenties sloppily dressed in the minimum clothing suitable for an office environment. Standing next to him is Robert Poroso, a balding jaundiced man. He might look familiar to anyone who has watched *A Brief Backstory in Forced Evolution*. His claim to fame consists of him bearing his porous caboose while displaying what happens when he is subjected to copious amounts of water.

Stuart spots Flo and tosses a question in her direction. “Hey Flo, Bob and I were talking. Do you think Cubicles is running out of things to do around here? I mean, he organized the files chrono-alpha-numerically. I don’t even know what that is. And he took my chair!”

Flo tugs one of the little brown paper cups from the tube attached to the side of the watercooler, quietly contemplating if this is the right place to air her grievances.

Bob pipes up with thoughts of his own as he dips his finger into his half-filled cup. “Yeah, Stu’s right. It’s only been a week since he was hired to organize things and all he’s brought is chaos.” Bob swings his head back over to Stu. “Wait, he took your chair?!”

Flo chimes in with her own gossip before Stu can respond. “Did you two catch his latest accomplishment?”

Bob and Stu both turn their heads to look at Flo as their responses overlap.

“No.”

“What did he do now?”

Flo listens carefully for the sound of Cubicles whooshing about in their general area before continuing. “He stuck poster putty under all the desks. For *convenience*.”

Flo air quotes the word convenience to really emphasize her disdain, as the other two let out a weary laugh. Bob bends down and refills his cup.

As if sensing some modicum of joy that needs to be snuffed out, Cubicles appears amongst them. “Stuart, your fifteen-minute break is over.”

A tense silence fills the air with Cubicles’s sudden appearance. Cubicles, completely unfazed by their startle, whips out a stapler from a holster on his belt and staples Stu’s cup shut. Stu drops his now unusable cup into a recycling bin before begrudgingly making his way to the other side of the room. Stu breathes a heavy sigh, feeling rather silly that this Efficiency Consultant requires him to stand behind the stupid podium at all times. Bob sticks his finger back into his nearly full cup of water.

Cubicles turns his attention to Bob. “And so is yours, Robert!”

Cubicles staples Bob's cup around his finger. Bob waggles his finger with the cup dangling side to side. He imbibes the water using his absorbent skin, causing his finger to expand and burst the cup. The dilapidated demitasse drops into the bin.

Paul E. Mortimer, Mort, raises his hand to give Bob a wave as he enters the alcove. He retracts the greeting when he notices the expression on his co-worker's face. Bob sulks out of the room as he rolls his eyes at Mort. Intentionally avoiding eye contact with Cubicles, Mort heads over to Stu's station. Flo takes a slurping sip of her water that echoes in the pregnant pause.

Mort presents Stu with a form that looks like a standard office document that serves little purpose other than recording every little interaction. “Hey Stu, can you copy this for me please?”

Stu grabs up the piece of paper. “Sure, Mort, how many copies?”

Mort's demeanor comes off even more timid than usual with Cubicles looming just behind him, but he attempts to give a friendly reply. “Ten please.”

Stu grabs a stack off the top slot in the cubby labeled ‘Ten’ and closes his eyes, helping him better concentrate on the task at hand. His eyes shift from left to right beneath his lids as the form and its contents replicate to the blank bundle. He

places the first sheet onto his newly minted copies, and hands the slightly warm documents back to Mort.

Like a coiled snake, Cubicles expertly strikes out. “Here, let me staple that for you, Paul!” He clips the papers with precision in the top-left corner as they transit between the two men.

He then briskly points his stapler back over at Flo before twirling it around one finger and sliding it into its holster. “Florence, since you wasted a bit of your break earlier to use the lavatory, you should leave in 2.5 minutes to make it back to your station on time.”

A bit disturbed that their Efficiency Consultant seems to know how much time she spent in the restroom, Flo accompanies Mort out of the copy area. The sheer amount of micromanaging that it would take for him to have those numbers causes her to shudder as goose pimples form on her skin. Mort stares at the well-placed staple on his stack of single page forms that were never intended to be affixed together.

He fiddles with the metal fastener, trying to loosen its grip as he sighs out, “Cubicles’s really stressing me out. I’ve been shifting like crazy lately.”

Flo bobs her head in agreement, as she whispers in an effort to make sure Cubicles will not overhear. “Yeah, I’m just waiting for someone to say strike.”

A person in the cubicle next to them stands up excitedly with a questioning, but clearly happy, expression. “Strike?”

A couple of the people around the worker then stand, look at each other, and in a statement, as if they are seeing who else is up for the idea. “Strike.”

Everyone in the office stands up and begins moving out of their meager workspaces. Picket signs suddenly appear in the sea of exasperated employees as if people have very much been anticipating this. They begin marching towards the exit doors chanting, “Strike! Strike! Strike!”

Stu walks towards the exit of the copy room. Cubicles jumps in front of him and pushes him back in. “Call in the scabs, Stuart!”

Stu looks back at Cubicles with a hint of terror and a fair amount of confusion. “But... strike?”

Cubicles focuses his glare on the only person immediately in front of him. “There is no time for that Stuart! We must replenish the workforce!”

Stu glances past Cubicles with a longing look at his other coworkers who gleefully make their way to the exits. The palpable fear of the large, angry consultant outweighs Stu’s instinct to make a break for the door. He sadly slinks back to his podium, putting on the kind of headset you’d find in a cheap call center.



**#2****7****PAGES****The Fortress of Cubicles: A Literal Hostile Takeover****BREAK-FAST:  
THERES NO TIME FOR  
TOAST?**

Captain Ohblivious flops an ordinary piece of white bread limply onto a cheap looking paper plate. He shoves the meager meal, plate and all, unceremoniously onto a rack in a questionably clean toaster oven. The Captain forcefully slams the door to the oven closed with a loud clank.

The crackling of breakfast in progress catches the attention of the easily distracted geezer. Jason wields his invisible skillet with professional precision as he intentionally punctures the imitation yolk. He expertly flips his morning meal without the need of a spatula. Andy pours a box of Generic General O's cereal into a flimsy plastic bowl. The circular puffs of grain softly plop out of a box adorned with what looks like Wilmer Valderama cosplaying as Captain Oh.

Ohblivious eyes the egg that begins to crisp around the edges. "Are you making an egg?"

Andy glances up from the subject of his stomach's desire before making a sarcastic quip, since Jason cannot. "No, he's making a chicken."

Captain Ohblivious closes one eye, staring intently at the egg with the other one. "That's a chicken?!"

Kirby walks into the room just in time to respond, beating out Andy. “It could’ve been. If he wasn’t incubating it so quickly.”

Kirby looks over at Andy with a smug grin, knowing that she has stolen his line. Andy seems deep in thought as he tries to come up with a rebuttal, slowly chewing his mouthful of cereal to provide him time.

Kirby continues toward the fridge, opening the bottom half to pull out a pizza flavored chimichanga from the freezer as she shouts over her shoulder, “Yo Mime, get the door for a lady?”

Jason pretends to ignore her, pursing his lips hard and trying to make certain that he does not lose his breakfast.

Captain Ohblivious’s eyes bounce from Jason to the egg to the microwave, ultimately landing on Kirby. “I think you need glasses. That’s James!” he shouts as he opens the door to the microwave.

Kirby expertly slings her not breakfast burrito into the microwave from across the room, mouthing to no one in particular ‘*James?*’

Andy grins as he finally crafts a clever comeback to the chicken vs egg scenario. His smile lowers with his finger as he realizes that both eggs and chicken, along with practically every other foodstuff that they can afford, are made of PProColli. PProColli is a new miracle substance that contains all essential nutrients and can be printed into a myriad of different textures and shapes. And no, it’s not people. So, the not-egg

could have conceivably become not-chicken. He sighs and goes back to noshing on his Generic brand cereal.

The Captain can't remove his eyes from the sizzling faux-vum. Kirby kicks the freezer closed, struts to the microwave, and then presses the rapid cook button. While Ohblivious is distracted, Jason takes the opportunity to try to sneakily extract the paper plate from what would be certain fiery death. An old school cordless phone rings from a table next to the entry.

Andy stands up and moves to answer the newly added business line in their now even more overcrowded apartment. "I got it!"

Andy's exclamation breaks Captain Ohblivious out of his trance. Seeing that Andy is closing in on the phone he puts a finger up in the air and shouts, "Not before me you're not! Spurts of Justice!"

The frail looking old man transforms into the hero of yesteryear. Captain Oh swoops out of the kitchen to a long table near the door that holds the receiver with a data pad next to it. He snatches the handset, tossing it into the air, before looking back at Andy with a smirk as he shrinks back into his primary persona. Andy just shrugs and heads back to his cereal.

Captain Ohblivious's triumphant expression turns perplexed when the phone fails to land in his hand. He looks up at the ceiling trying to figure out why the phone never came back down. "I didn't think I threw it *that* hard. Stupid other me."

He looks back to see Libby, who must have grabbed it out of the air, already taking notes with the caller.

“What was his name... How do you spell that?” Libby asks.

Ohblivious grumbles rather loudly, upset that he was bested even in his throwback form.

Libby boxes him out of her vision by turning her back ever so slightly to him. “Like cubicles? But it’s pronounced Cue-bih-clees? Okay.”

Captain Ohblivious scrambles towards the kitchen when he hears the ding of the toaster oven. He sees the empty plate sitting on the counter, staring at it for a long moment. The Captain picks up the sheer paperware, and begins searching for the bread that was on there just moments earlier. He looks around suspiciously at the others in the room, attempting to find out which of these greedy pirates pilfered his toast.

Libby hangs up the phone and addresses the room. “Looks like we’ve got a job. There’s been a hostile takeover.”

The curious crew concentrate on Libby, except for Ohblivious, who searches dangerously close to the stove-top for his missing munchable. He stares down the silent chef as he lifts Jason’s plate quickly off the counter, peering underneath. Not finding what he’s looking for, he turns his suspicions to Andy and stalks over to the table.

“Doesn’t that happen every day?” Kirby retorts.

Libby shakes her head. “Not quite like this one.”

As Jason tries to abide by Libby’s call to action, he gazes at the countertop, not finding the plate he left there. He pivots, finding that The Captain now has two plates and is staring down Andy. Jason spots the misplaced toast lingering in the toaster oven. Giving it only a moment’s thought, he makes sure Ohblivious can’t see him and stealthily extracts the browned bread. He tilts the not-pan, sliding the not-egg onto not-his-plate, and then tosses the ethereal cooking vessel into the sink with a clatter.

Libby looks a little perturbed that nobody has made any attempt to stop doing what they are currently doing. “We don’t have time for breakfast. You want to get paid, don’t ya?”

Jason folds his toast like a taco. “Fine with me.”

Just then the microwave finishes with a satisfying ding as Kirby gleefully yanks it open to retrieve her pizzarito with a little giggle.

She takes a large greedy bite, immediately letting out a cry of pain. “Ah, augh, lava!”

The food falls, dribbling from her mouth and onto the linoleum. Jason, just about to shove his own food into his mouth, thinks better of it after seeing Kirby’s reaction.

Jason blows on his food while locking eyes with Kirby. “What’d you expect?” He takes a greedy bite of his own.

Kirby looks at him with sad puppy-dog eyes. “Foood?”

Jason decides to be a good friend and grabs a Bunker's Breakfast Bar off the counter, handing it to Kirby.

Libby, already looking a little impatient, claps her hands together rapidly. "C'mon people, we gotta go!"

That seems to light a fire under the others in the room. Captain Ohblivious, however, actively ignores Libby. He goes to grab a replacement for his missing bread. Realizing that both hands are preoccupied with plates, he combines the two together and places a new slice on top of the more rigid platter. He slides the stack onto the metal rack of the toaster.

Libby only notices Ohblivious when he turns up the dial with a loud click. "You too, Oh. There's no time for toast!"

The Captain starts to make his exit, running in a direction that is not the way to the front door. "No time for toast?! You sound imperious!" He then proceeds to smash through the kitchen window, shattering the glass. "Let's goo-Oh Force!"

His cries echo in the alley as he plummets toward the Ferrock below. Jason stops chewing on the remainder of his breakfast taco, staring at the demolished window.

Kirby, deciding that the door is a far better option for an exit, rushes forward and flings it open. "Not it!"

Libby sighs. "Well, now we really need this job."

Andy follows Kirby, bringing his bowl with him. “You could have been more clear.” He says through a mouthful of cereal.

Libby puts her arm around Jason’s shoulders and ushers him towards the door. “We’ll figure it out later.”

Jason stays silent, still not finding the power to chew. He turns off the thermostat, flicks off the light, and closes the door on their way out. The only light left in the room is the ominous red glow of the toaster oven.



**#3****2****PAGES**

The Fortress of Cubicles: A Literal Hostile Takeover

**DUMPSTER DIVING  
FOR JUSTICE!**

The Oh Mobile, formerly known as Andy's van, pulls up next to a dumpster in the alley. Captain Ohblivious sits on a mound of trash with just his head poking out above the lip of the garbage bin. The oblivious Captain wields a circular pizza box as a steering wheel, attempting to drive away in the refuse receptacle.

Ohblivious does a double take on The Oh Mobile, slamming his foot down in a 'pedal to the metal' attempt. "Try to catch me now!" A noticeable boot shaped dent forms in the side of the bin.

Kirby and Andy begrudgingly exit the Oh Mobile, meander over, and try to pull The Captain out. After a few moments of struggling, Kirby grabs the dumpster and begins rocking it back and forth. Without having to voice her intent, Andy picks up on her plan and begins helping with the endeavor. Kirby gives Andy a swift nod as the bin picks up momentum. They give it a final yank, toppling it over onto its side. The trash and Ohblivious spill out onto the Ferrock in the alleyway.

They drag Captain Ohblivious out of the rubbish and into the van through the sliding door. Andy and Kirby sit back in their seats, leaving The Captain laying on the crusty carpet. Jason wields an invisible steering wheel so that their ride better

resembles the kind of self-driving vehicle that is legally required in the city. He gives them a dirty look over his shoulder. Kirby rolls her eyes as she and Andy pry Ohblivious from his prone position and prop him up in the rear facing seat. All the while, Captain Ohblivious grasps his pizza box, trying as hard as he can to drive away.

As Jason starts to pull out onto the street, The Captain begins excitedly bouncing up and down. This does not do any favors for Andy, who's been trying incredibly hard to strap him in. Andy finally gives up, realizing how unnecessary a seat belt would be for a man who is nearly invulnerable. Instead, he takes a seat next to Ohblivious and buckles himself in.

Captain Ohblivious intensifies his focus on driving. "Now we're really moving!"

Ohblivious looks down and to his side with a puzzled look on his face. "Wait, I think I have it in reverse!"



**#4****10  
PAGES**

The Fortress of Cubicles: A Literal Hostile Takeover

**SEND IN THE SCABS**

Outside The Fortress of Cubicles, a swarm of picketing employees has formed. They shout in front of the drab concrete structure featuring windows more like what you'd expect on a prison than on an office building. A handful of people stand at the periphery of the crowd, looking quite out of place. As soon as the picketers notice the newcomers they stand aside, making no attempt to bar the crossing of their picket line. The jeers of the crowd playfully taunt the scabs as they move towards the glass and metal security doors.

Bob Porosa can be heard above the crowd, "Have fun in there."

To which Mort, adds, "Good luck! Cubicles'll take *real* good care of you!"

A very slight and diminutive kid, Íre Tator, smiles and waves at the mob. He has the appeal of a teenage Rick Moranis and the soft features of an even younger Macaulay Culkin. His wave and smile seem to be genuine, like the world has not yet touched his innocence.

Íre leans towards his less than enthusiastic compatriots. In a cheery tone with a speech impediment that sounds like a combination of a lisp and a slur, "I'm sad we don't get to work with these guys. They seem really nice!"

Bob smiles an almost devious grin back at him as he passes. “Oh, you’ll be out here with us soon enough!”

Along with Íre there are four others, a girthy man, an aging secretary, and two more that seem to have no place in an office environment outside of janitorial work. This curious collection of individuals makes their way inside to find a large lifeless entryway. This foyer serves little purpose other than to corral people into its lonely elevator. A small, square bit of yellow paper hangs limply on the metal frame just above the elevator buttons.

Íre removes the Post-It note from its perch and reads aloud, “Scabs report to floor four. The elevator shall not be used at this time. Please take the stairs.”

The very large gentleman, Barney Flaherty, could easily be mistaken for the comic store guy from the Simpsons. His gut hangs out at the bottom of his septuple XL t-shirt. A ponytail protrudes off the circlet of hair that he calls his manly mane. He wears a hiker’s backpack that is stuffed to the brim with odds and ends. Strapped to the side of his pack is a camping chair built for two.

Barney about-faces in a twirl with more grace than his size would suggest possible. “I’m out.” He begins shuffling slowly back towards the front doors.

The rest, who need money more than they hate stairs, head to the nearby stairwell. As they ascend the first flight, a variation of the same muzak that is ever-present in elevators and AutoCabs throughout the city, plays softly in the background before it is rudely interrupted by a commercial.

The voice of Automaton cheerfully, and in a far louder volume than would ever be necessary, echoes through the reverberating concrete chamber. “Feeling a little run down?! Do you need a little pick me up at the beginning of the day?! Splooshie has got you covered! Try our new frozen energy drink made with our milky goodness! We have co-branded with ProEnergy to bring you a buzz that will keep you buzzing away like a well-focused data analyst on Adderall! Pick up your pick me up today at any location where Splooshies are sold! Just hit the ProEnergy button prior to pouring a cup of your favorite frozen milky treat!”

The group soars up the steps, trying to escape the onslaught of unwanted advertisements. As the first one to reach the fourth floor, Íre frantically grabs the door. He greedily pushes on the door, intent on fleeing the stairwell and ridding himself of the unsolicited solicitation.

Automaton continues, rambling off the small print, so to speak. “Splooshie is lactose free and does not contain any animal by-products! Please press the ProEnergy button only once a day as it adds a proprietary blend of stimulants that includes 800 milligrams of extended-release caffeine! If you are pregnant or think that you may be pregnant, please refrain from pressing the ProEnergy button altogether! This product should not be consumed by children, people under 55 kilograms, or small animals!”

Íre pushes on the door to the fourth floor with all his might. “I think it’s locked!” Íre yells out as the soothing muzak begins from where it left off.

Another man, the human equivalent of a slide puzzle that has been put together by a 3-year-old who gave up halfway through, stands by, much more reserved in his demeanor. He has no arms where you would expect them but does boast a well-toned, yet wiry appendage attached just above his forehead. The out of breath Íre releases his pressure ever so gradually as his frail body fails him.

Íre backs up from the door to give it a good once over as if trying to solve a riddle. Just below the sound of the muzak, an annoying nose whistle fills the air. Apparently, it is happening not only when Íre is breathing in, but when he is breathing out as well.

The man with one hand squeezes by Íre and bows slightly. Íre bows in kind, assuming this must be a greeting of some sort. He straightens back up as he realizes that the other man was just leaning over to get an easier grip on the handle. With a soft tug, the one-handed man pulls the door open towards him. Íre stands dumbstruck as the others file through the threshold. He comes out of his stupor, catching the door before it swings shut in front of him.

As he rushes forward, he collides with the backs of the others, who have stopped in awe. Their necks crane back, looking up at the triple-stacked cubicle walls that create a barrier across the enormous floor. The padded panels rise four and a half meters into the air, leaving a small gap between them and the high ceilings. At the ground floor, one of the partitions has been removed, creating a small entry into the office beyond.

Standing next to the child-size opening in the foreboding fortification is an equally imposing figure, Cubicles. He impatiently taps on a data pad, popping his head up as the door closes behind Íre. Íre walks up to him, a bit hesitant but proud to display the sticky note he grabbed from downstairs. Cubicles stares at the Post-It note on offer from Íre.

Íre tries to put on his best smile. “Íre Tator at your service!” He emphasizes the pronunciation of his first name, which sounds more like the name of one of the great lakes than the expression of contempt suggested by the standard spelling.

Íre looks a little self-conscious as Cubicles continues to gaze down at his outstretched hand, “...sir?”

Cubicles lets out an involuntarily shutter at the shrillness of Íre’s voice, “Oh, you are annoying.”

Íre nods, “Yes sir, I know.”

Cubicles glares at Íre with contempt in his eyes. “Since you so unnecessarily took my sticky note, *you* get to take up that job.”

Íre studies the yellow piece of paper in his fingers. “Can’t I just put it back on the door?”

Cubicles yanks the paper out of Íre’s hand, shaking it vigorously. “You know these things never stick twice!” He deftly slaps the Post-It note onto Íre’s forehead, spins him around, and gives him a light push towards the stairs.

Íre drops his hand in defeat. “OK,”

Cubicles raises his voice, enunciating his words slowly and firmly to make sure they are understood. “Remember to keep the strikers out, only let scabs in, and whatever you do, do not let anyone in the elevator!”

Íre turns back with evident confusion fixed on his face. “Isn’t the elevator down?”

Cubicles thrusts a hand out, pointing a single stiff digit towards the stairwell. “To. Your. Post!”

Íre takes the hint and scurries away.

Taking a deep breath as the door closes behind Íre, Cubicles turns his attention to the other three, his face settling back into his normal passive expression. “The rest of you, I am now the manager of this establishment, Cubicles. Kew-bih-KLEEZ.” He deftly taps each syllable on his name tag as he emphasizes the pronunciation. “Let me show you to your workstations.”

Cubicles crouches down and shuffles through the hole, stopping just inside. Feeling like adults trying to get into a child’s blanket fort, each member of the group employs their own tactic to find a way through the gap, which is only about a meter and a half tall. On the other side, they are greeted by a corridor made from cubicle partitions. After the last of the group makes it through, Cubicles picks up a wall that was set aside. He places it over the one gap in the otherwise formidable barrier. It makes a soft clicking noise as it pops into place.

Cubicles slightly turns his head in the direction of his scabs. “Follow me. Stay close so you do not get lost.”

Cubicles takes off down the corridor. The others, quickly realizing that he is not going to wait for them, break into a sprint to keep up with his brisk pace.

“Remember the following sequence. Left, right, right, right, left, left, right.” Cubicles bellows, keeping his eyes forward as he effortlessly rushes through the maze.

The trio of temps trip over each other as they struggle to keep up with him. They nearly run into their large office manager when he abruptly stops in front of an opening. He surveys the three of them and ushers a small, dim looking boy, possibly even younger than Íre, through the entryway labeled ‘Files.’

The boy wears a simple shirt that contains several stains in various stages of setting in. His jeans are definitely a few sizes too big and worn as if they have been handed down a few times too many. Instead of a belt, the battered old denim is being held up by a zip tie. It weaves through two of the front belt loops, with the fabric in between bunching in a hasty mess. Although his skin has a youthful tautness indicative of his age, his hair is a patchy mess. He either lost a battle with a set of hair clippers, or he has early onset Alopecia Areata.

“This maze is designed to keep you safe from the strikers. Do not reveal your sequence for security reasons.” Cubicles points at the only one of the bunch that appears to have any familiarity with an office setting. “Name?”

The woman straightens up, trying not to give the impression that she is surprised by the sudden call out, “Susan Pernova, but everyone calls me Sue.”

Sue wears a pant suit with an ageing pair of what-used-to-be-black slacks that have lost a lot of their luster and could easily be mistaken for dark grey. Her faded, floral-pattern jacket hangs loosely over a drab off-white blouse. She looks rather nervous, like she could explode in a fiery ball of discomfort at any moment.

Cubicles nods, grabbing one of her hands that dangle limply at her side. He gives it a forceful shake before returning it back under her control. “Susan, we work on a first name basis here. Full first names, mind you. It is still a professional environment.” He jets down another passageway. “To the S section.”

The two remaining scabs are a little better prepared this time. The man with one hand rushes as Cubicles begins providing additional instruction, with Sue trailing in the rear.

“Right, left, left, right, right, left, left, left, right.”

They stop in front of a cubicle. Stu is on the floor curled into a fetal position crying under his desk.

“Susan, meet Stuart. You will be working across from him. If you have any questions, feel free to ask Stuart.”

“It’s nice to meet you, Stuart. I’m Sue-” Sue nervously glances at Cubicles. “I mean Susan.”

Cubicles gives Sue an approving bob of his head while looking down at his watch. “Stuart, you have 15 minutes remaining for your lunch break. I suggest you get this all out of your system so that it will not affect your work.”

Stu whimpers out a sobbing statement that seems to be more to himself than anyone in particular. “I want to go on strike.”

Cubicles chooses to ignore Stu’s pleas and motions to the one-handed man. “I have a special assignment for you.” With just a few steps, he makes it to the end of the hall and starts to turn the corner. “Right, left, right, right.”

After a long straight path of partitions Cubicles darts through a gap in the walls. The man with one hand finally makes his way to the opening as Cubicles comes out with a 4-pack of LED tube lights.

“Take these up to the 5th floor. There are a few lights out.” Cubicles shoves the box of bulbs into the face of the man with one hand. “Change them and then come back. I have another assignment for you, in the restroom, with a plunger.”

The one-handed man slowly rotates in place and stares at the daunting maze with a healthy helping of apprehension. He gets up the courage to move as he senses Cubicles’s eyes boring into the back of his head. He makes it to the first intersection, looking left then right. He starts towards the corridor on his right.

Cubicles shouts, “No, left!”

The one-handed man turns, glancing back at Cubicles. Lifting one finger off the box of bulbs, he points to the left. Cubicles gives him a nod and shoos him away as he slides a cubicle wall marked ‘Manager’ aside like a pocket door, covering the entrance to his office.

He mutters under his breath, “Of course the reverse is backwards. Scabs.”



**#5****5****PAGES****The Fortress of Cubicles: A Literal Hostile Takeover****THE FORTRESS OF CUBICLES  
OR  
THE FORTRESS OF CUBICLES?**

The Oh Mobile deftly dodges two AutoCabs, pulling up alongside a red marked curb. It parks near a Fire Zone sign in front of The Fortress of Cubicles. Captain Ohblivious bolts from the vehicle and joins the crowd.

Jason climbs out. “Are you sure we can park here?”

Andy waves off his worries. “Of course! They said it was an emergency.”

As The Oh Force nears the barrier of bodies, they are pleasantly surprised to find that the people move aside, allowing them through.

Captain Ohblivious mumbles along with the chant as he wades his way through the sea of strikers. “We won’t work, fire that jerk.”

Kirby and Andy attempt to pull Captain Ohblivious from the masses while Jason and Libby continue toward the building. The realization dawns on the strikers as they gawk at the members of the Oh Force in their midst.

“Isn’t that The Oh Force?” exclaims a voice from the mob.

Flo looks quite excited by the prospect of their help. “Yeah, they helped Dr. Van Schpagg.”

Jason and Libby make their way to the doors just as two people walk out of the foyer. On the right is Wain G. Petelin. She is an average size woman with a majestic pair of white wings that fold elegantly over her back. She wears an expensive Bertino suit in a subtle shade of heather gray. She exudes a commanding presence, though it could just be the wings.

Wain walks up to them with her finger pressing on a wireless earpiece. She gives a slight tilt of her head to indicate she is speaking with the person in her ear, “Hold on one moment.”

Wain turns to Jason and Libby, making eye contact with them. She plucks the headset from her ear and tosses it to the man at her side, Anthony Turney. He is a squat, well-dressed gentleman in a pinstripe suit. He has an air about him that makes it clear he is not just an executive assistant. His vibe gives off big lawyer energy.

Wain proceeds to introduce herself. “Hi, I’m Wain G. Petelin from Bunker’s Business Solutions.”

Libby cringes as she watches Anthony Turney shove the earpiece into his earhole and begin quietly mumbling into the microphone. Wain shakes Jason’s hand.

Wain walks away from the building with the clear expectation for them to follow. “I’ve called you here today because our efficiency consultant has taken over the building. Our employees won’t go back to work until he’s out.”

Wain stops just past the picketing protesters and stares stoically at Jason. Libby nudges Jason lightly with her elbow to try to get him to respond.

After waiting a few awkward seconds, Libby jumps in to salvage the conversation, “Yes. You gave me a brief overview when we spoke earlier.”

Wain switches her focus to Libby. “Oh, good I won’t have to repeat myself. I need you to go in there and get him out. I really don’t care how. Just try not to cause too much damage.”

“Understood,” Libby gives a singular bob of her head as she pulls her slate from her pocket. “Can you tell us what floor he’s on?”

Wain massages the bridge of her nose. “His *security guard* won’t tell me a thing.” She holds up one hand to reassure Libby that the frustration is not directed at them. “And yes, I’ve already called Cubicles to let him know that he’s been terminated. But he insisted that *I* am a striker and *he* could not be fooled.”

Libby jots a few notes down on her slate. “Alright. We’ll have a word with this security guard and go from there,” She looks up as she slides the slate into her pocket. “Thank you.”

Kirby and Andy drag Captain Ohblivious out of the crowd to join the rest of their team. Libby extends her hand in a parting gesture.

Wain peers down at Libby's hand and reaches into her jacket, pulling out a check. "Here's your advance. You'll get the other half when the job is complete, as negotiated."

Libby rolls with it and takes the check. "Thanks again. We'll let you know when we're done."

The Captain takes off running for the door, ripping himself away from Andy and Kirby. He yells as he zooms by, "You can cook all you want, but I'm going to get this job finished."

"I like the enthusiasm," Wain gives an approving nod, "I'm glad we hired The Oh Force. Check floors four through six, they're the occupied floors. You're bound to find something."

Wain turns away and gets into the back of a limo, whose door is being held open by Anthony Turney's leg. He furiously wipes down the earpiece with a disinfecting wipe before handing it back to Wain.

Jason breathes a sigh of relief as the limo pulls away. The thought of Captain Ohblivious fielding the call earlier fills him with a sense of unease.

The Captain moves too quickly for the crowd to make way, forcing him to awkwardly zig-zag through the mob. "Scuse me! Pardon me! Coming through!"

Andy takes Kirby by the wrist, following after Ohblivious. "C'mon, let's go get him... again."

Kirby yanks her arm back, but begrudgingly follows anyway as she whines, “Why are we always on Oh duty?”

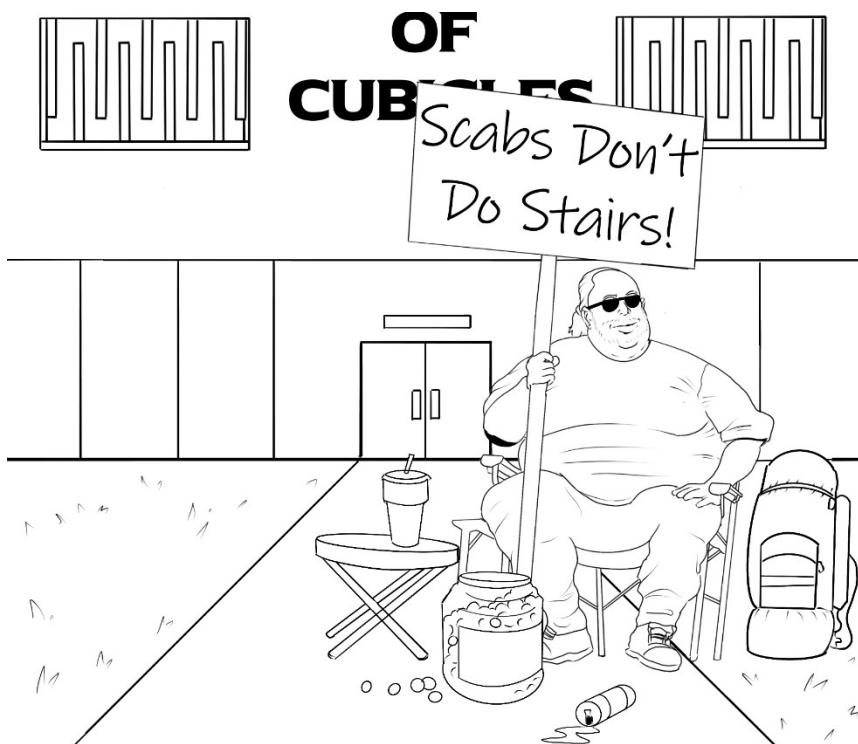
“Because,” Andy giggles, “Doody.”

Kirby’s face squinches up in disgust. “Ew. Grow up.”

“You first,” Andy quips back over his shoulder.

Kirby gives a slight tilt of her head, recognizing a fair point when one is made. “Touché.”

They walk past Barney, who sits in his oversized camping chair under the shade of the building. He sips from a cup that reads ‘Stilled Lemonade’. He holds a hastily made sign that states 'Scabs don't do stairs'.



**#6****12  
PAGES****The Fortress of Cubicles: A Literal Hostile Takeover****ÍRE TATOR AND  
THE ELEVATOR OF  
DOOM!**

The Oh Force enters the building to find Captain Oblivious mashing the buttons for the elevator with Íre hanging from his outstretched arm. Íre holds one hand firmly over the sticky note on his forehead, hiding the floor number from the intruders.

Íre desperately pleads with The Captain. “The elevator is down, and I can’t tell you what floor they’re on unless you’re a scab!”

Captain Oblivious peers down at his arm and sluffs off the scrawny boy with one quick fling, as if only now realizing he was there. “I’ll show you scabs.”

Íre scrambles to his feet and begins dusting himself off. He points at his forehead, trying to emphasize the words written on the sticky note that his hand is clearly covering. “I keep telling you! It’s DOWN!”

“Then why aren’t the doors open yet!?” Captain Oblivious slaps a hand on the elevator doors, demonstrating his growing agitation.

“What aren’t you understanding?!” Íre Tator says, attempting to break through The Captain’s tough layer of ignorance. “The elevator. Is. Down!”

Captain Ohblivious rolls his eyes and throws both hands out dangerously close to Íre’s face. The Captain further escalates his tone, “Yeah, I heard you the first-time, nerdling! If it’s *down here*, why isn’t it open?”

Íre freezes as he mulls over the question. He flutters his eyelids as he processes the information. Regaining his composure, he states more calmly. “Ok. I guess I could have said that better. The elevator is out of order.”

“You’re out of order!” Ohblivious screams in response as he starts to press the call button once again.

Kirby, Jason, and Andy seem perfectly entertained watching the spectacle laid out before them.

Libby shakes her head and moves forward to intervene. “As entertaining as this is, we’re paid by the job not by the hour. Let’s act like adults.”

“Yeah, you two!” Ohblivious whips around and snaps at Andy and Kirby. “Don’t make me turn this car around!” He then goes back to incessantly mashing the button.

Having enough, Libby steps forward and rolls up her sleeves. Although this is usually a sign that someone is about to get their hands dirty, for Libby it is how she shows off her extra-human ability. Normally, she uses a combination of clothing and concealer to keep her power from causing any undue influence. Libby strives to make certain that people know her fame and fortune do not come from the allure of her spellbinding skin, but rather, the content of her character. Íre’s

captivated gaze is a clear indication that her careful measures are a vital component to achieving this goal.

“Hey cutie. You’re going to let us past, aren’t you?”  
Libby purrs.

Íre stares slack-jawed, fixated on the flashy flesh of her forearms, “Uh-Huh.” His arm relaxes, but his hand remains fixed to his noggin.

Libby tries to hide her irritation with his short unhelpful reply. “And what floor did you say Cubicles is on?”

“Fourth floor” Íre replies in an almost hypnotized voice as his hand drops to his side, revealing the message underneath. “You’ll have to take the stairs. The elevator is down. I mean out of order.”

Libby winks and rolls down her sleeves. Íre comes out of his trance. He slaps his hand over the note once again, wincing in pain at his self-inflicted injury.

“Ow!” Íre quickly realizes he’s been manipulated. “Hey, y-you tricked me!”

The Oh Force begins heading to the stairwell, just as the elevator lets out a soft ding. Captain Ohblivious about-faces and rushes past Íre, who gapes at the open lift.

Andy looks over at Kirby. “Should we risk it?”

Kirby shrugs and heads into the elevator. “Beats climbing four flights of stairs.”

Jason glances at Libby for direction.

Libby is already moving towards the lift. “We shouldn’t split the party. That’s never a good idea.”

Jason apprehensively joins the others. Íre waves his arms frantically as Captain Ohblivious pounds the door close button.

Íre pleads with a sense of urgency in his voice. “I’m not supposed to let anyone in the elevator! It’s out of order!”

As the elevator doors begin to close between them, Captain Ohblivious gets in the last words, “I told you, *you’re* out of order.”

The doors silence any attempt Íre would have at a comeback. The Oh Force are left listening to the elevator muzak - the same tune as always.

Jason nervously picks at his nails. “Are you sure we should risk it? I mean, a little exercise never hurt anyone.”

“Exercise has hurt *plenty* of people,” Kirby leans back, lounging against the wall.

As they begin to slowly go up, Jason cannot help but feel a mite worried. “Not more than plummeting to our deaths. Afterall, he did say the elevator was down.”

Captain Ohblivious slaps Jason on the back. “Don’t worry my pasty-faced magic clown, things can only go up from here.”

Before Jason can respond, the elevator chimes as they reach the second level. The group looks around at an empty floor. Then they notice that all the buttons have been pressed. Captain Ohblivious puts his hands on his hips in pride, smiling at them with a smug expression of accomplishment.

After another pointless stop on another empty floor, the doors open on the fourth floor, revealing a boarded-up entryway that appears to be a bunch of cubicle walls fixed in place. Andy cocks his head to the side while staring at the unusual sight. He pushes on the wall to see if it has any give.

After discovering that it is surprisingly solid for being made of cubicle partitions, he gives up and takes a small step back. “Fifth floor?”

“Is there any other option?” Kirby gestures at the controls.

Captain Ohblivious represses all the buttons with an exaggerated swipe of his hand. “Gotta keep giving it orders so it doesn’t run out.”

Andy glances over at the lit-up buttons on the elevator panel. “Yeah, all of ‘em... eventually.”

Jason takes in sharp, short breaths in an effort to calm his nerves. Libby puts a comforting hand on his shoulder.

“Oh, come on,” Kirby rolls her eyes. “This is why it’s out of order.” She gestures to the blockage in front of them as the doors begin to close.

Kirby proceeds to jump up and down, attempting to make her point. This does very little to alleviate Jason's anxiety, whose breathing rapidly increases. Libby shoots an admonishing glare at her sister as they stand in silence. A tense, yet short while later the doors open to the fifth floor and Jason dashes out into a large empty room. The only thing in the room is a ladder and an empty box of Bunker's Bright Bulbs.

The awkward silence follows the hesitant team as they meander out into the barren office space, adding to the eeriness of the unlit floor. They naturally gravitate to the nearby stairwell, but stop when they hear a soft dinging warning. The sound is akin to what you hear when you forget to shut off the lights in your car. As they search for the source of the noise, they find Libby standing frozen in place, blocking the elevator doors from closing. She slowly scrutinizes the vast nothingness of their surroundings.

Jason's concern for the safety of the elevator has been replaced by concern for his friend. "You OK, Libby?"

Libby snaps out of it and makes her way to the rest of the group, while suspiciously surveying the floor. "Wain said that this was one of the occupied floors, so..." she trails off as she meets up with them near the stairwell, giving a wave of her hand across the empty expanse.

"Oh yeah," Andy takes a second look, as realization registers on his face. "Isn't this supposed to be the Fortress of Cubicles? Like, wall to wall cubicles or something. You've seen the commercials, right?"

Jason ushers Libby into the stairwell as she takes in the room one last time.

“It is not what I was expecting either.” Libby says as the doors swing closed behind them.

Just then the calming muzak cuts out as Automaton seems to realize there are people in the stairwell who can be subjected to unwanted advertisements. “Clean air! Blue skies! Majestic mountains! The United State of Alaska has it all! We’re here whenever you’re ready! Just come on over!”

“Maybe it isn’t rented out?” Jason yells over the commercial.

“Tourism packages starting at low affordable rates! Be it hunting, fishing, hiking, – if you’re lucky – whale watching, or even all the above! We promise you will enjoy yourself!” The ad continues.

Kirby anxiously skips down the stairs, tossing caution to the wind in an attempt to escape the obnoxious barrage of propaganda word salad. She barks up at them from the lower landing as she frantically opens the door to the fourth floor. “The hen outside said four to six.”

The recording continues in a quieter, rushed tone, “Hotel and airfare are not provided! We are not responsible for any injuries or dismemberment on your trip! The United State of Alaska no longer has resources for search and rescue, please be careful! Paid for by the United State of Alaska Tourism Board!”

Kirby pauses in the entryway, momentarily stunned at the sight of the triple stacked wall of privacy panels. She stands there staring at the collection of cubicles.

Andy comes up behind her with quite the opposite reaction, brushing her aside. “Wow! This is truly a Fortress of Cubicles. Or should I call it the Fortress of kew-bih-KLEEZ?” His ADHD train jumps tracks as he bolts forward like a dog chasing after a squirrel. “I’m gonna climb it.”

Andy begins trying to scramble up the side, pressing his face against the wall as he searches for a grip.

The Captain giggles, frolicking forward. “You can climb it all you want. I’m gonna pet it.”

Libby and Jason join Kirby in the doorway.

“I guess we found the missing cubicles,” Jason says.

Kirby bares her teeth at Jason with a mischievous grin, “It’s like cubicle mating season!”

Libby scoffs at her sister. “Grow up.”

“You first,” Kirby quips.

Libby shakes her head and starts walking towards the fortress within the fortress. “Unlike some people, I did.”

“Touché” Kirby shrugs her approval.

Libby stops a few meters from the wall, trying to ignore Andy and Ohblivious. “Are they trying to keep us out, or keep everyone else in?”

“Probably both.” Jason walks past Libby and towards Andy, who has yet to find a handhold on the barrier. He begins rummaging in the satchel that he carries with him everywhere.

Captain Ohblivious slowly pets the fuzzy surface, watching Andy with amazed curiosity. “Don’t worry, he’ll run out of energy soon.”

Andy takes a step back, feeling the judgement from Jason. “What? You think you can do better?”

Jason nods silently and proceeds to pull out a long tubular object that is, of course, invisible. He props it on the wall, rolling out the tube and maneuvering it like a ladder against the rampart. He is momentarily jostled as Ohblivious slams up against the fortification like a battering ram.

“Of course I can do it better, side-kick!” The Captain proceeds to rub his face against the fuzz, making a soft hum of pleasure with every stroke of his face. “Mmmm. I told you he’d give up soon.”

Andy starts to take offense, but the sight of Captain Ohblivious smearing his whole body against the cubicle barrier makes him self-conscious and a little disgusted. He wonders if this is what he had looked like the entire time. Andy doesn’t dwell on it for long, though. Taking a deep breath, he lunges forward determined to beat Jason to the top.

Jason tears his eyes away from The Captain and goes back to steadying his ladder before climbing up the incorporeal rungs. Andy slips backwards, flopping to the floor. His clumsiness wobbles Jason on the ladder. Thinking that Ohblivious was the one who caused him to fumble his footing, Jason shoots a glare at him. Andy springs to his feet, pretending nothing happened, and searches with his foot to steady the ladder for Jason. Jason gives him a nod of appreciation before finishing his ascent. He pulls an invisible telescoping spyglass out of his vest pocket, extends it, and gazes out across the maze. Wisps of smoke rise in the distance.

“I want to see! Can I go next?” Andy whines, “C'mon, please!?”

Jason slides down the ladder and onto the floor next to the others, who have congregated next to the barricade. Andy releases the ladder and turns to him expectantly. Jason gives a single jerk of his head in the direction of the ladder and Andy excitedly starts climbing.

“Sure, go for it.” Jason says with a smile.

Andy's face falls to a frown as his feet flop to the floor. “That was such a bush move. I would expect that from Kirby, but not from you.”

Jason is surprised by how deep Andy's rebuke really hit home. He contemplates pulling the ladder back out but decides that they probably don't have enough time.

Jason chooses instead to address those that were amused by his antics. “Well, it's a maze.” He raises an eyebrow in

confusion. “And I think somebody’s smoking?” He confidently gestures along the wall in front of him. “I can see a pretty clear path to the smoke from the wall here. Maybe whoever it is can give us directions.”

Kirby stares at Jason expectantly. Jason just stares right back, like he knows that he must have missed something based upon her expression but cannot put his finger on what.

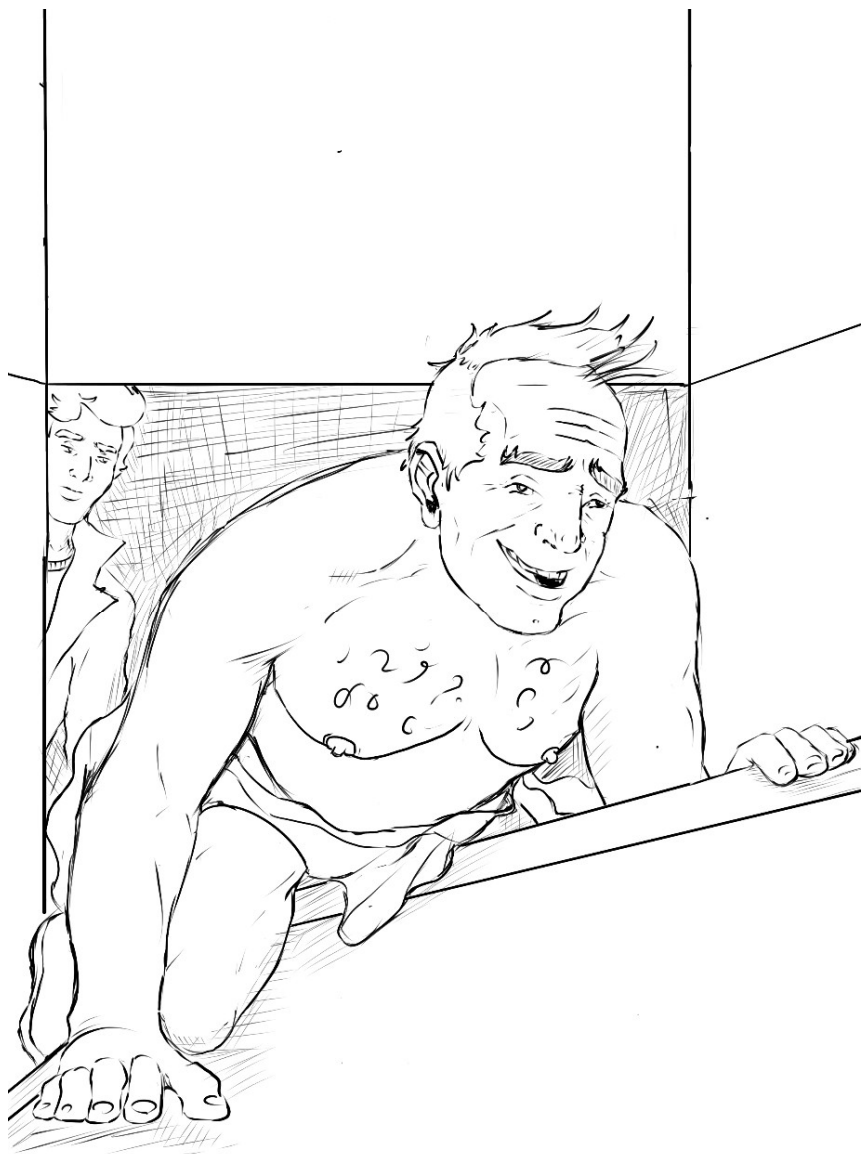
Kirby knocks on the wall. “How do we get in?”

Jason spins around to find a now half-naked Captain Ohblivious sliding his body back and forth across the fuzzy sound proofing. He recognizes his oversight just as The Captain goes to embrace another section. This panel falls in, revealing a path beyond. This does not deter Ohblivious from fondling the fallen partition on the ground.

Jason points, “Right there, obviously.”

Kirby rolls her eyes at him, smirking as she walks past. “You didn’t know that was there.”

“I might have, you’ll never know,” Jason hurries to take the lead, holding his hands up in front of him like trying to mentally picture what he had seen from above.



**#7****9  
PAGES****The Fortress of Cubicles: A Literal Hostile Takeover****A PICTURE IS  
WORTH A  
THOUSAND TURNS**

Captain Ohblivious shuffles his feet at the back of the pack as the team wanders down a long corridor in the labyrinth. He hums softly as he trails his right hand along the fuzzy wall, never breaking contact. Kirby and Andy mill along in the middle of the group, growing less certain with every change of direction that they make. Jason and Libby take up the lead. Jason's initial confidence in being able to navigate them to the source of the smoke wanes with every step. They round a bend to find a wall blocking any further progress. Jason shakes his head slightly and starts doubling back the way they came.

Libby lets out a long, drawn out, sigh. "Are you sure you know where we're going?"

Ohblivious follows the wall all the way around the U-turn, keeping his hand on the partitions. Pulling a permanent marker out of his fanny pack, he makes a larger 'X' over a smaller one on the dead end. This is likely not their first encounter with this particular location.

The Captain turns the corner. "I know exactly where I'm going. My furry friend shows me the way!"

Andy has been keeping an eye on Ohblivious, as captain wrangling has become one of his duties. He sees the writing on

the wall. “I’m pretty sure we’ve been going in circles. This looks familiar.”

“Of course it looks familiar, we just turned around,” Kirby raises an eyebrow in judgement.

Jason stops, swiveling around. “C’mon you guys. Let me concentrate. This isn’t as easy as it looks.”

“Oh, don’t worry. You’ve made it look *far* from easy,” Kirby snarks.

The Captain lashes out, getting frustrated that everyone keeps ignoring him. “It *is* easy! *James* just don’t know that what *I’m* doing is how you do it!”

The insistent criticism, and being called James, has taken its toll on Jason. His heated hand gestures make it obvious to the rest of the team. “Okay, fine! I’m doing my best. And my name is JASON! What do you want from me?”

“A picture when you were up on the ladder earlier would’ve been helpful,” Andy murmurs loud enough to make sure the others can hear.

Libby focuses inwardly as if truly letting the comment sink in. “That would’ve been a good idea.”

Jason eases back on his aggression, understanding that this point would be hard to refute. “I didn’t think of it at the time.” He thinks of a way to shift the blame and glares at The Captain. “I was a little distracted by *someone* rubbing their body all over the wall.”

Ohblivious sends a similar scowl over to Andy, shifting the blame even further. “Yeah sidekick, get your act together. Stop distracting... Jason?”

Andy decides not to acknowledge the comment clearly directed at him. “Why don’t you just go up there again and get a picture now?”

“There’s no frame of reference like there was at the beginning of the maze,” Jason wags his head, this thought having already occurred to him.

Andy gives him a deadpan stare. “Soo... why don’t we just go back.”

“Do you know where back is?” Jason thrusts his hands out as if to say ‘by all means, lead the way.’

Ohblivious raises his hand ready to answer the question.

It sinks in for Andy that they are truly lost. “Man, you really should’ve taken a picture at the beginning.”

Jason flips around and storms off to the nearest intersection. “Shut up.”

Andy does just the opposite. “I would’ve taken a picture if you’d just let me use your ladder.”

Dejected by not being selected, Ohblivious puts his hand back down, and caresses the wall forlornly, “I keep trying to tell them, but they won’t listen to you like I do.”

Kirby, the only one who's been paying attention to The Captain, starts to get curious. "Who are you talking to?"

"Nobody from the looks of it," Ohblivious hangs his head, "Just using the advice of the wall to find the way through."

They meet up with Jason at the intersection. Feeling the expectations upon his shoulders, and not wanting to field any more questions, Jason chooses a path at random. Captain Ohblivious's gaze bounces around in consternation. He watches Jason walk down a hallway that is clearly marked with multiple L's, then looks at the unmarked passageway to his right.

Captain Ohblivious has had enough of them ignoring him. "I keep telling you, if you're stuck in a maze, the walls will show you the way." He takes a right, marking the support beam on his way around the corner.

"Oh gods. I can't believe I understood that," Kirby says, voice mixed with awe and concern at having followed Ohblivious's train of thought for possibly the first time. She starts after The Captain. "I'm following Oh."

Libby tosses a dirty look at her sister, but it is short lived as she finds Kirby redirecting her attention to the mark on the support the way Jason is headed.

As much as Libby wants to install Jason as the de facto leader, she also doesn't want to be misled. "Fine, we can try it another way."

Jason scurries back to the crossroads not really having words to convey his confusion. He looks over to Andy for support.

“Sorry,” Andy rests a large hand on Jason’s shoulder, “Libby said not to split the party. The majority has spoken. I might’ve taken your side if you’d let me climb your ladder.”

Andy lingers for a moment before hustling after the other three. Jason gapes, still in shock as he watches the others amble down the corridor. He finds his feet and chases after them as they turn a corner. “Hey guys, wait up!”

The team twists their way through the maze until they reach another unmarked intersection. Ohblivious plants his feet, sniffing about in the air. His body bends with his neck as he makes little snuffling noises like a dog who’s been roused from a deep nap by the scent of sustenance. Captain Ohblivious falls on his lead foot in the last direction his head was pointed, as if his nose has taken up the reins. It’s not long before The Oh Force comes upon an area that resembles something more akin to your standard office spaces.

Jason notices the smoke rising at the end of the corridor, mumbling to himself. “I could’ve just climbed the ladder again and looked for the smoke. C’mon Jason, you’re smarter than that.”

The Captain starts to reel off a series of military hand signals. He holds his hand out for them to stop and look up. After the rest of the team notices the smoke rising in the air, they return their attention to Ohblivious. He then indicates the point of entry and instructs them to move forward. While they

didn't understand the sign for 'point of entry', Libby and Andy still get the gist of it. They creep towards the opening, leaving an uninterested Kirby and a mopey Jason in their rearview.

Libby and Andy peer into the workspace. Stu Placaté crouches in a corner, bobbing his head. His face has warrior stripes painted under his eyes in ash. He spins a pencil quickly against a cubicle partition that is lying on the floor. Tendrils of smoke steadily rise from the fabric surface as he attempts to start a fire. This doesn't appear to be his first attempt as there are several partially burned patches on the flame-retardant surface.

Stu rocks back and forth on his heels. "Must... stay... warm. Must survive."

Captain Ohblivious frantically motions for the other two to move forward and back up their companions. Jason and Kirby begrudgingly join their teammates, if only to make sure they don't get hit in the face by The Captain's flailing limbs.

Libby knocks gently on the metal frame of the entry, trying not to spook Stu. "Uh, excuse me?"

Libby's attempt not to startle Stu fails miserably as his unhinged eyes gawk at them, like a raccoon caught eating trash. He leaps onto a cubicle wall, scrambles up, and disappears over the other side.

"*He* didn't need a ladder," Jason gives Andy a playful grin.

Outraged, Andy points in the direction of Stu's escape. "He's half my size!"

"And who's fault is that?" Kirby pats Andy's belly with the back of her hand.

Andy covers his belly with his own hand, getting a tad self-conscious. "Genetics."

Captain Ohblivious, having gone back to his usual distracted self, inspects a golden glob of earwax hanging on the cap of his permanent marker. He gives it a little sniff, finds it unpalatable, and wipes it on the wall. Ohblivious whirls around, panicked that someone may have witnessed his unsanitary activity when a voice butts in from behind.

"Don't mind Stuart. He's been like that since I got here." Sue gives them an apprehensive wave. "I'm Sue. I mean *Susan*."

Libby recovers quicker than the rest. She raises her hand, returning the greeting. "Uh, hi. Do you happen to know your way through this place? We're looking for the Efficiency Consultant."

Sue gives them a knowing nod of her head. "You must be talking about Cubicles. He's probably in the *C* section."

The Oh Force vacantly gazes back as an awkward silence fills the space between them.

Not getting the reaction she expected, Sue elaborates. “You know this is the S section, so there’s probably a C section... like... babies”

They continue to stare at her passively.

“I don’t have a clue where he is, it’s a maze after all,” Sue shrugs with her hands. “He only showed me how to get *here* from the entrance. And I’m so scared of getting lost that I’m pretty sure this is where I live now.”

Libby shakes her head, looking perturbed, “All that to say ‘I don’t know.’ Thanks.” Libby turns her back on Sue, addressing the group, but mostly Jason. “So, what do we do now oh fearless leader?”

Captain Ohblivious raises his hand in reply, as if Libby’s question was directed at him. He holds his ear to the wall, listening intently. Feeling ignored, Sue sits back down at her desk muttering an offensive rant rife with expletives too quietly to be heard. As she settles in at her desk, her personal space is invaded when Ohblivious barges in. He clambers onto her desk, shoving the side of his head against the partition. His eyes track back and forth as he seeks the wisdom the wall may provide.

Sue picks up her keyboard to fend off The Captain. “You’d think with all the money you guys had, you could afford some manners!”

Captain Ohblivious pats the wall reverently before bolting out of the cubicle and down the hallway. “It’s this way!”

After noticing the marks on the wall, Ohblivious flips around. Having realized this was the way they came from, he runs in the opposite direction. “And by this way I mean this way!”

Andy shrugs and trails after Captain Ohblivious. “Eh. Why not? He’s got us this far.”



**#8****6****PAGES**

The Fortress of Cubicles: A Literal Hostile Takeover

**LOST IN THE LABYRINTH:  
SO SUE ME**

The team meticulously makes their way through the maze. They search methodically about, trying to discern their next best move. Captain Ohblivious's approach is like that of a dog. He's compelled to examine every nook and cranny of the convoluted collection of cubicles, marking the walls as he goes along.

Ohblivious stops at an intersection and glances over his shoulder to find Andy, who is trying to keep his distance, quickly averting his gaze. Andy pretends to be as nonchalant as possible, knowing that The Captain might act unpredictably if he suspects that he's being watched. Captain Ohblivious rushes to his right, breaking Andy's line of sight. He flattens his body up against the wall, waiting to see what Andy's reaction will be. His suspicions are confirmed when he spots Andy peering around the bend.

"Why are you following me?" Ohblivious eyes him angrily as he strikes a defensive pose.

"I'm not following you," Andy gives The Captain a placating smile as he closes the distance. "I'm just trying to make sure we don't get separated."

Captain Ohblivious narrows his eyes. “That’s just a fancy way of saying you’re following me. Well, follow this!” He then speeds off. “If you *can* follow.”

Andy runs after him shouting over his shoulder to the others, “He bolted, try to keep up!”

Captain Ohblivious’s voice grows fainter with every additional meter he puts between them. “You try to keep up!”

Andy uses his long legs to the best of his ability, but he is no match for even the elder Ohblivious’s superhuman speed. It is almost like The Captain is playing with him. Just when Andy thinks he has lost him, Captain Ohblivious takes off from a workspace, doubling back the way they came. He leads Andy in circles, reminiscent of a chase sequence from Scooby Doo.

Kirby, Libby, and Jason do well enough to keep Andy in their sight, or at least in ear shot. They find that the padded partitions provide significant sound suppression. This muting effect is exponential with every turn, making even the loudest noises difficult to discern unless they have a direct line of sight.

Out of the corner of his vision, Andy spots movement entering one of the office spaces. He creeps up to look inside, discovering Stu ripping off his shirt and tying the arms over the neck hole to create a makeshift bag. Stu hastily stuffs supplies from the desk into the sad, sweat-stained sack. Andy backs away as softly as he can, attempting to go unnoticed by the deranged office worker. He backs into someone that is squishy, yet immovable. Andy slowly turns his head to see a giddy Captain Ohblivious.

“Tag, you’re it!” Captain Ohblivious flies past, slapping Andy, hard, right on the rear.

Kirby laughs but realizes it was the wrong reaction as it emboldens Andy to continue his pursuit. Kirby tries to follow, calling out in annoyance, “Andy!”

Eventually Libby, Jason, and Kirby find Andy lying on his back. He is splayed out on the floor, breathing heavily.

Libby puts her hands on her hips and taps her foot expectantly as she looks disappointedly down at Andy. “Are you proud of yourself?”

“No, sorry.” Andy rolls himself over, propping himself up in a sitting position before lumbering to his feet with a sheepish grin. “I got caught up in the chase.”

Libby shakes her head. “Well, now we’ve lost our bearings. Do you know where we are, or where we came from?”

Kirby slaps her thigh rhythmically. “Where do we go? Where did we come from cotton-eye-”

Libby gives Kirby one of her signature glares. Kirby immediately stops singing mid-beat.

Jason shrugs and begins walking towards an intersection. “This labyrinth probably won’t be solved with logic unless we want to spend all day on it. Maybe he did us a favor.”

Andy nods emphatically, deciding to take the out that has been offered to him rather than dwelling on how silly it was to think he could catch The Captain. The remainder of the team turn to follow Jason, who has stopped in his tracks staring into a cubicle with a blank look of defeat on his face. The others meander over to see what has him so deflated.

“Well, we’re back to square one,” Jason says.

Inside the cubicle is a smirking Sue with her arms smugly crossed in front of her. “Looks like somebody got turned around.”

Andy’s mood sinks as his body follows suit, plopping his bottom to the floor just inside the cubby. “Hello Sue, can’t say I’m happy to see you again.”

Libby takes Jason gently by the arm over to Stu’s desk and begins rummaging around the mess, searching for paper and pens.

Sue gives Andy a mocking frown. “What am I, chopped *Sue-y*?”

Kirby enters Sue’s cubicle and decides to spur the conversation, knowing that Andy enjoys a good pun. “Wow that was corny, a play on chopped liver. What else you got?”

“I have an a-pun-dance of material.” Sue smiles at Kirby.

Kirby gives her a little nod of respect. “OK, let’s do this. Andy, you’re up.”

“I’m not feeling quite up to a battle of puns. I’d rather sit here and pout.” Andy waves off Kirby’s suggestion, choosing to ruminate on his role in their recent failures.

Kirby sits down next to Andy and shifts far too close to him. “Are you saying you just want to pun-ish yourself?”

Andy begins losing focus on his misery but tries to hold on. “No, Kirby, I just need a moment.”

“Give yourself a break,” Sue rolls her chair slightly forward. “Sometimes we just need to take a minute to get our fraughts in order.”

“True,” Andy bobs his head as he watches Sue slide out of her chair and join them on the floor. “Thanks for not letting me kick myself and joining me while I’m down.”

Sue smiles. “No problemo, I was just distracting you while your friends wandered off.”

Andy raises a single eyebrow at Sue, questioning where the pun was before locking eyes with Kirby in fear. They hop to their feet, searching around for Libby and Jason. Sue has pulled herself from the ground and grins mischievously as they frantically skitter about.

Kirby gives Sue a disdainful look. “I would ask you where they went but you would likely lie to us.”

Sue puts her hands out and motions them as if attempting to compare the weights of two objects. “You know what they say, hope in one hand and in the other *shift-y*.”

Kirby and Andy shake their heads at the ill-conceived pun and start off down the path without another word to Sue.

“But they went this way or was *this* that way. Oh, I don’t know. It’s so easy to get turned around in here it’s a-maze-ing.” Sue calls after them.

Andy and Kirby disappear into the maze, leaving a gleeful Sue behind. Sue spots Libby and Jason coming up the corridor from the opposite direction of where the other two went, distracted by a piece of paper in front of them. Sue hurries back to her workstation, trying to look busy. The pair comes into her cubicle looking around on the floor for Andy and Kirby.

“Where’d they go?” Jason asks.

Sue swivels around, giving them a convincing expression of bewilderment. “Why, they went after you when they realized you had left.” Sue’s grinch-like grin grows three sizes as Libby and Jason take off back the way they came. “I have to say, this has been a pretty fun temp job.”



**#9****9  
PAGES****The Fortress of Cubicles: A Literal Hostile Takeover****ROUND AND ROUND WE GO  
WHERE WE STOP?  
CAPTAIN OH KNOWS!**

Libby races through the catacomb of cubicles, tugging Jason around by the front of his shirt. She calls out her sister's name at the top of her lungs, barely taking breaks to breathe. They aimlessly search from corridor to corridor, hoping to stumble across their lost companions. Although they are covering a significant amount of ground in their haste, no rhyme or reason guides their blind pursuit.

Jason clammers forward, trying not to lose his shirt. "You really think this is the best way?"

"Yes!" Libby takes a break from screaming to respond. "I have to hold on to you so we don't get separated!"

"No," Jason softens his tone in an attempt to calm Libby. "I meant the yelling part. You're more likely to lose your voice than find them. That's kinda what these walls are for."

Libby stops cold. Her eyes dart back and forth as she is lost in thought.

Jason side-steps to avoid running into her. "Are you okay Libby?"

Libby comes out of her trance. “Yeah, I’m just thinking this is likely what Kirby would be doing too. But, you’re right about the walls.” She glances up at the top of the maze, then swivels back to face Jason. “Jason, you’re a genius!”

Even though his first reaction is to respond with ‘I know’, Jason waits passively as he’s not quite sure what she’s giving him credit for.

Libby releases her grip on Jason’s shirt, shoving him back slightly in the process. “The walls may block the sound down here, but it can still travel above them. You mind doing your thing?”

“You going to go up there?” Jason raises an eyebrow at her, “I can’t call out to them without hurting myself.”

“I’m not getting on that thing,” Libby scoffs. “Just go up there and listen. If she’s calling out like I think she is, we’ll at least have an idea of where they are.”

Jason gives her a mock salute, eliciting a well-deserved eye roll from Libby. He proceeds to pull out his invisible ladder once more and climbs up. Upon reaching the top, he leans his body over, stretches his head out, and cups his ear, as if a few more inches will give him some advantage.

“You hear anything yet Jason?”

Jason nods.

“Which way?”

Jason, a little upset that he is trying to listen only to have Libby filling the air with her voice, points down at her. He then raises his hand to his face, silently zipping his lips. Libby pouts, clearly offended, but she chooses not to voice it, having understood his point.

Jason listens closely once more, trying to hear anything over the noise of the industrial AC units. He reaches into his vest pocket as he thinks he hears the faint sound of Kirby calling *his* name, a fact that he will never tell Libby. He looks down at her as he pulls out the imperceptible spyglass. Libby looks like she wants to speak, but Jason silences her with just a wag of his head.

Jason scans over the maze and finds Andy's metal body bobbing along above the cubicles. The frozen figure holds his hand just over his eyebrows like he is trying to protect them from the bright LEDs as he searches. Andy swivels about like a periscope, showing that Kirby is actively trying to increase his field of vision. When Andy is facing his direction, Jason waves. Even though he doesn't move, Jason knows that Andy mentally waves back. The act of physically waving would completely destroy Kirby upon the rapid descent of his fleshy body. Jason stays quiet, since shouting would send *him* plummeting to the solid floor below. So, they both watch each other as silently as two ships passing in the night. Jason, hoping that Andy can see him, points to a large opening in the center of the maze.

Jason uses very exaggerated ASL, praying that it will translate across the distance. "Meet me in the large center."

After figuring out a decent enough path to where he indicated they should go, Jason starts climbing down his ladder.

He stops halfway down and scurries back to the top, taking out his slate and snapping a picture. He slides down the ladder to where Libby waits impatiently. She throws her hands out as if to say, what did you see?

Jason gives Libby a thumbs up. “I think I got ‘em. Follow me.”

Jason walks off confidently in the direction that he had plotted, sneaking a peek at the image on his slate.

### MEANWHILE

Kirby walks along the corridors with her hand raised above her head, holding up Andy. She turns him from side to side every so often as she hollers out Jason’s name.

Kirby puts down Andy after keeping him in the air far too long. She takes extra care to make certain that she puts him in an awkward position. She places him precariously on an empty desk to ensure that he falls when he unfreezes.

When Andy realizes that she is just going to leave him there, he flops to the floor. Kirby giggles like she will never stop finding that funny. Andy seriously considers that he may just unfreeze in the air next time to teach her a lesson. He quickly disregards this intrusive thought. He understands the laws of physics well enough to know that a two-meter fall would not be pleasant for a man of his size, let alone the person beneath him.

“Every time,” Andy pulls himself up from the carpet and sets off, weaving his way through the web of workspaces. “Every single time. I’m *so* happy you find it *so* funny!”

Kirby chases after him, stumbling on her laughs. “Did you see anything?”

Andy nods but responds in a sarcastic tone, “Yeah, I saw Jason up there. We had a little talk. We’re gonna go meet up with him right now.”

Kirby takes it at face value knowing the idea was a long shot.

Andy adds, this time seriously, “But for real, I did see him a while ago, and he said we should head to this large area.”

Kirby alternates between Andy and the top of the wall. “What do you mean *he* said?”

Andy signs to Kirby. “Remember, we know sign language.”

Kirby stares back at him blankly before realization sets in. “You know I never learned those magic hand spells.”

Andy replies with a simple familiar gesture.

Kirby follows him, furiously exclaiming “Rude! That’s not even sign language!”

## ELSEWHERE

Captain Ohblivious has found that he can move the walls around, rearranging them any way he sees fit. He has pulled in office furnishings from all over to make a large, relatively comfortable, lounge area. He lays out on some couch cushions stacked upon several partitions, making up a platform bed-like structure.

He perks up, giving his full attention to the opening of his makeshift man-cave as he hears footsteps approaching. He watches as Jason and Libby hurry past his hidey hole. Captain Ohblivious leaps up to follow them.

Libby watches over Jason's shoulder as they stop. "I think we're lost again, there was a junction back there that wasn't on your picture."

"How?" Jason traces his finger along a hand-drawn line on the picture of the maze that he took earlier. "We walked to here, we took that turn, then we've been walking along here and this is all different."

They inspect the corridor, questioning the many random gaps where walls should be. It would appear that a lab rat has decided it's easier to burrow through the maze rather than solve it.

"You say tomato I say potato," Ohblivious startles them as he puts his finger forward and starts drawing on Jason's slate. "It's not different, it's better!"

Captain Ohblivious traces a new line, that is far more direct, to the circled area in the center of the maze. “C’mon. I’ll show you.”

Libby follows The Captain through one of the holes in the maze, much to Jason’s dismay. “Surprisingly he hasn’t led us wrong yet.”

Jason bends down, peering through to see another hole off to the right a bit. Captain Ohblivious grabs him by the jacket and pulls him through.

Ohblivious points down the hallway to the water coolers in the center of the large area. “Ta-Da!”

Jason stands dumbfounded, staring down the hall. “I would have gotten us here too.”

“Eventually,” Libby pats him on the shoulder, trying not to seem too condescending.

Jason solemnly looks down at his slate. “But I had a picture this time.”

“I didn’t need a picture,” Ohblivious knocks on his noggin. “I had it in my flesh drive.”

Libby shudders at the ill-conceived combination of words. “Kirby and Andy should be here by now, right?”

Ohblivious snaps his head around, only just now realizing the other two aren’t present. “Oh yeah, where is my sidekick?”

“They were over that way somewhere,” Jason says, halfheartedly waving his arm in the direction he thinks he had seen them.

“That doesn’t help,” The Captain pokes at the picture on Jason’s slate. “Where were they from where you were when you saw where they were?”

Jason bobs his head, as if going from word to word, trying to piece together the nonsense that just came out of Captain Ohblivious’s mouth. After solving the riddle, he circles his finger around an area on the maze. “Right about here-ish?”

Ohblivious slaps Jason on the back, far harder than necessary. “See! That’s better Jame- son. I’ll go get ‘em and be back faster than you can say two shakes of a lamb’s jiffy.”

Once Captain Ohblivious disappears through another one of his mole holes, Libby and Jason make a beeline to the watercooler. They start slugging back paper cone after paper cone. Soon after their thirst has been satiated, Ohblivious pops back out with Andy and Kirby in tow.

Libby sees Kirby and puts her arms out, looking to embrace her sister. Kirby hurries in her direction with excitement in her eyes.

At the last second, Kirby veers off in the direction of the watercoolers, staring down Jason. “Now *he* made that look easy.”

Libby is a bit disappointed, but not surprised, when Kirby passes her up in favor of the water. Andy fills the void with a genuine hug. Libby shrugs and decides just to go with it, nuzzling into Andy's chest.



**#10**

**5**

**PAGES**

The Fortress of Cubicles: A Literal Hostile Takeover

**GETTING A HAND  
WITH THE LAY OF THE  
LAND**

Andy, with a water cup in each hand, quickly empties them both into his mouth. The contents overflow, dripping down his chin and cascading onto his shirt. Jason sips from a cup calmly, while Kirby drinks directly from one of the spigots.

Jason defers to Captain Ohblivious. “Fine. You obviously know your way around better than I do, Oh. Did you find anything while you were rearranging the maze?”

The Captain throws his arms up in the air before spreading his hands out wide. “I found many somethings!”

Jason shakes his head knowing that he shouldn’t have expected anything more from Ohblivious.

Andy’s eyes go wide as he wipes the remaining droplets off his face with the sleeve of his oversized overcoat. He voices the brilliant time saving idea he just came up with. “Why don’t you just transform into Oh? Then you can easily find Cubicles!”

“What are you talking about, I am Oh!” Ohblivious anxiously pats himself down to make sure he’s real. “You had me scared there for a moment. And if you’re talking about the spurty thing, I already did that today!”

Water spills out of Kirby's nose as she laughs at the poor choice in words.

Andy just shudders. "Wait, you can only do it once a day?"

"Yup," Captain Ohblivious doesn't skip a beat as he heads towards the water coolers. "Or twice if I have a very long nap or a very splendidiferous poo."

Andy decides this is where the conversation should end as The Captain grabs one of the water jugs and begins chugging it.

Ohblivious gets about halfway through the half-filled 20-liter bottle before he drops the jug and grabs his crotch. "I have to do my other spurty thing now!"

Libby's face contorts in disgust from this statement as Captain Ohblivious runs past her. He heads down the longest corridor they have seen thus far with a sign marked 'Lavatories'.

Andy looks down at the empty paper cone cups in his hands, then towards where The Captain had fled. "Yeah, I think I'll have to do the same."

Libby and Jason hurriedly refill their cups.

"Spurt stop!" Kirby nods her approval.

Libby glares at her sister as she reluctantly follows after the others. "*Please* don't make that a thing."

Jason swings back to fill the cup to the brim, like he may never see water again. His calm and cool composure disappears, now that Libby is no longer watching. He brings his lips to the cup, rather than the other way around, and heads towards the potty passageway.

The group parts ways, entering their respective restrooms. Andy and Jason are greeted with a disgusting wet sloshing sound. Jason looks around the large bathroom inquisitively, trying to find the source of the sound in the echoey chamber. Andy immediately locates the origin of the nausea-inducing noise, heading to the stalls to investigate. He walks up to peek through the crack in the door of stall number two and recoils in surprise. Jason looks under the stall, sees no feet, and decides to open the door. Inside, the one-handed man is standing on the toilet seat, vigorously plunging away. Surprised, the man with one hand swings his head around to look at them. In doing so, he sloshes water onto the stall wall as the plunger remains in the hand that is firmly anchored to his dome. Luckily, the two intruders avoid being sprayed with the tainted toilet water.

Jason, a little embarrassed, instinctively uses sign language as he speaks aloud. “Umm... Directions?”

As Andy and Jason leave the lavatories, the moist echoing of the plunger resumes. Jason stares at a couple strips of toilet paper with drawings on them. The toilet tissue map has their current location at the restrooms and a list of turns that need to be made in order to get to Cubicles. Libby exits the ladies’ room absolutely livid, her face turned up in an expression of revulsion. Kirby stumbles after her, nearly falling over from laughter.

“We got an odd surprise,” Jason reaches out, holding the map towards Libby without looking up from it. “I’m so glad he wrote this out for us. It was impressive.”

“Especially since he only has one hand! He didn’t even drop the plunger,” Andy adds, disgust and awe tinging his voice.

“We would’ve never remembered all those lefts and rights. He also gave us directions back to the stairs.” Jason finishes his sentence.

Libby carefully takes the paper from Jason, looking it over. “Far better than the surprise we got.”

“Speak for yourself!” Kirby huffs, trying to catch her breath between uncontrolled laughs.

Ever curious, Andy peeks into the restroom to find Captain Ohblivious with his suit around his ankles in a stall with the door wide open. A horrible splooshing sound bounces around the tile room. He ducks back out with a shudder, nodding in understanding to Libby. Libby shoots him a look of appreciation. As soon as Libby returns her attention to the map, Andy’s jaw drops in a wide, open mouthed grin that he directs towards Kirby. A loud groan emanates from the open women’s room door.

“C’mon, I wanna get out of this maze. We’ll come back for him,” Libby says, having finally had enough. Under her breath, she adds, “maybe.”

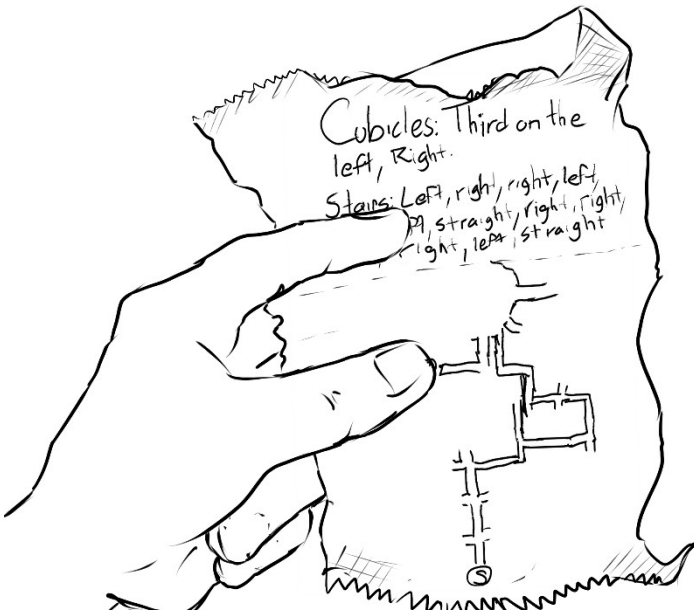
Libby scans the faces of the group for any objections. Kirby tries to cease her laughter and stick up for The Captain, but Libby is quick to end the conversation before it starts.

“Alrighty then.” She points to an exit that is just right of a large central corridor and hands the map back to Jason. “Lead the way oh fearless leader.”

Andy scoffs, as he takes offense to her statement. “Hey, this was all my idea, technically that would make *me* the leader. Right, Kirby?”

The rest of the group ignore him and start walking off in the direction that Libby indicated.

Andy yells after them, “Right, Kirby? Kirby?! KIRBY?!” He hurries after them, so he doesn’t get left behind. “Fine, I’ll lead from the rear.”



**A CALAMITOUS CLASH  
WITH CUBICLES**

After a relatively short walk from the water coolers, the group is confronted with a long hallway. The imposing efficiency consultant stands at the end, reading over a document.

Cubicles looks up from his papers, gives them a quick once over, and goes back to reading. “Hello. Are you the new scabs I ordered? It is great that you are showing such initiative.”

Andy takes a step forward to take the lead. “No way!”

Kirby giggles a bit, “Maybe you *do* look like you’re meant to work here.”

Andy scrunches his face while Cubicles looks on waiting for him to finish. Andy obliges after regaining some of his composure, “Wain G. Petelin sent us.”

“You are with the strikers!” Cubicles immediately shifts his posture, snapping into a combat ready pose. He grabs the wall next to him, ripping it away as easily as if it was made of paper. “Excuse me, I need to borrow this!”

Through the newly created gap in the wall, Sue stares in shock. Cubicles tosses the document he was reading onto her desk. “I will be back for this important report.”

Cubicles menacingly advances towards The Oh Force, minus their namesake. Sue reaches out to nonchalantly pick up the report. Cubicles quickly turns back to Sue, jabbing a finger in her direction. “Do not touch it!”

He then, in one swift motion, steps out of view. Sue looks at the document and cranes her head, attempting to read it without touching it. Only the title page is visible, which plainly states, ‘Long Term Plan’.

Cubicles methodically inches forward, holding the heavy partition wall with just his left hand as the other reaches down to pull the stapler from its holster. The team nervously shifts as Cubicles stops and plants the barrier at his feet. He peeks over the improvised bulwark, striking the stapler against the top in rapid succession. The tiny metal projectiles fly with a surprising amount of speed towards the group. Andy does what he always does in times of peril, transforming into his shiny metal form. The staples ricochet off The Human Shield in several directions, one of which sinks itself into the meaty leg of Kirby.

Bewildered, she stares down, stunned by the little paper fastener embedded in her thigh. “Who shoots a stapler?”

Kirby checks on Libby and Jason. Jason has his hands up in a protective motion as if he were holding up an invisible wall in front of them. Kirby glares at them as staples bounce off their barrier, clearly upset about not being included in the protective box. She returns her attention to Cubicles, who is now focusing his fury on the only one the staples may work against, her. Behind him, Sue leans over her desk to get a glimpse of the action. Her head just barely sticks out as

Cubicles sends a fresh volley of staples in the direction of Kirby. Kirby sucks them into her metal filter. Several papers and Andy come along for the ride. She grabs Andy, and, without thinking, chucks him at Cubicles.

With just a flick of his arm, Cubicles easily deflects the metal man missile and begins closing the distance between them. Andy bounces off the corridor walls, narrowly missing Sue's head as she quickly retreats into her cubicle. Andy's light weight frozen frame pings off the barricades, skidding down the hallway. Kirby retreats as Cubicles continues his assault with another onslaught of staples.

"Ow! Ow! Ow!" Kirby yells out as she receives several puncture wounds in her fleshy bits. She ducks around Jason, seeking shelter behind the invisible shield.

Cubicles braces both arms on the partition and charges forward, intent on barreling over the intrepid intruders. Jason's jaw drops in shock as his eyes grow huge inside the invisible fortification. Libby wraps a hand over Jason's mouth, preventing him from yelping and dissolving their defensive dome. Libby checks over her shoulder to find that Kirby is already gone. She breathes a sigh of relief at her sister's choice to hightail it out of there. Libby swivels her head back to the elephant in the room, the man expertly wielding office equipment in an exceedingly violent manner.

Jason's eyes somehow manage to go even wider as Cubicles slams the shield into his invisible box. Libby winces as she slaps her other hand over Jason's mouth, reinforcing the one that's already there. Although she knows that one peep from Jason will surely be their end, she also knows that the

same restrictions do not apply to her. From the confines of their clear casket, Libby begins inaudibly shouting enough for the both of them.

The box jostles backward, sliding alarmingly fast along the industrial carpeting as Cubicles presses forward. Cubicles pounds the pair into the wall behind them before shifting his captives to the left. He spots Kirby ducking into one of Ohblivious's short-cuts to his right. He pauses for a moment, upset that his maze has been tampered with. Cubicles whisks down the hall, unable to fit through the gap with his unwilling passengers in front of him. Kirby starts to realize that using The Captain's network of holes is not enough to compete with Cubicles's knowledge of the maze. His efficient navigation enables Cubicles to cut Kirby off at every turn, forcing her to dive from Oh Hole to Oh Hole.

Andy, finally unfreezing, tries to navigate the maze using the sounds of Kirby's cursing as his guide. He is relieved to find Kirby, and his other friends, in the central hub. He leans against the wall, taking some deep breaths as he watches Kirby frustrate Cubicles. Kirby exploits one of Cubicles's few flaws by running in circles around the water coolers. The stiff supervisor's super strength impedes his ability to move in a parabolic path and he's unable to close the distance between them.

Andy bursts out into laughter at the ridiculous sight. "If you keep it up, Kirby, this square will have to change his name from Cube-icles to Circules!"

Off in the distance Sue let's out a single resounding "HA!"

Cubicles stops cold and slowly turns his head in Andy's direction. The rest of Cubicles's body shifts with military precision, lining up with his menacing glare. Unfortunately for Libby and Jason, they come along for the ride. Andy's expression turns grim, as it dawns on him that he has given away his relative safety in exchange for a cheap chuckle. Kirby, who never stopped running, slams into the backside of Cubicles. She bounces off him as though he was a stone pillar holding up the building.

Andy moves to the opposite side of the watering hole, keeping the coolers between him and Cubicles. Rather than arcing around the water coolers, Cubicles shifts sideways allowing for a straight shot directly at Andy. Cubicles bullrushes forward, but Andy dives out of the way at the last second like an inexperienced matador. Andy decides to take a page from Kirby's playbook and just stick to running around the central hub.

Andy rushes past Captain Ohblivious, who has wandered in from the direction of the restrooms.

Ohblivious steps out into what has now become the colosseum of cubicles with our less than glad-iators. "Are we still playing tag?"

Andy doesn't seem to have the time nor the breath to respond. Captain Ohblivious cocks his head to the side watching Andy. Ohblivious unknowingly steps out in front of Cubicles and the transparent tank of prisoners who rush up from behind. Libby and Jason are slammed up against the opposite side of the box when the previously unstoppable Cubicles meets the immovable Captain.

Libby lets go of her death grip on Jason's face as she is sandwiched between him and the box. Jason lets out a grunt as he falls on top of Libby. Cubicles stumbles as the impenetrable prison dissipates. Libby grabs Jason and rolls out of the way as Cubicles lurches forward. Confused, Captain Ohblivious turns around in time to see the cubicle-wall shield bump him in the chest and face. Ohblivious takes a step back, a little perplexed as he did not remember seeing a wall there just a moment ago. The wall jiggles a little bit and starts moving forward tentatively.

The Captain's eyelids disappear as an expression of fearful understanding washes over his face. "The walls are moving! I have angered them with my moving them without them asking to be moved!"

Captain Ohblivious shoves back with both hands against the makeshift shield, knocking Cubicles to his butt. Ohblivious turns and runs away, knocking down the nearest partition before mowing his way through the maze. Cubicles flops his shield to the ground beside him. He struggles to stand as he watches Captain Ohblivious run amok through his orderly design. The meticulous maze tumbles down with each subsequent wall The Captain destroys. The fuzzy boards clamor to the floor in a domino effect, exacerbated by all the missing supports that were pulled out to make Ohblivious's man cave.

Cubicles has only managed to make it as far as his knees, unable to bring himself fully to his feet. He throws his head back and lets out a guttural cry. "Noooo! Diisooorder!"

Andy continues his sprint as the primary threat has changed to the wave of cascading walls. He finally freezes, going into his metal form as the bedlam of barricades bury him.

Kirby finds herself in the same boat, except she doesn't have the ability to freeze and evade the danger. Instead, she scrambles to avoid the chaos. She breathes a sigh of relief as she spots the stairwell door through the hole Captain Ohblivious made in the ramparts. She trips on a broken panel, surprisingly turning it into a dive and executing a perfect battle roll.

Kirby springs to her feet before turning around to check on her compatriots, and to see if anybody witnessed her unbelievable stunt. "Tell me you just saw tha- Ah!"

Her friends become much less of a concern as she watches the barrier bow with the weight of the collapsing cubicles. Kirby pushes open the door and dives inside just as the dam bursts, releasing a flood of broken partitions. She catches her breath, gets up, and opens the door, only to be greeted by an impassable heap.

"Bush!" Kirby says as she resigns herself to the stairs. As she takes the first step, Automaton joyfully spews out his sponsored content, much to her chagrin.

Having stayed at the central hub while the walls collapsed around them, Libby and Jason stand over Cubicles, gawking at the aftermath. All around them the decimated dividers spread outward like ground zero of a massive impact crater. Jason bends down and attaches invisible shackles to the Cubicles's wrists and ankles. He uses an invisible chain to pull

Cubicles to his feet and towards the elevator, that is now clear of the cubicles that blocked its entrance. The Captain scurries over to meet them as they walk past a very large pile of debris with a metal hand sticking out from under it. The hand turns to flesh, which is immediately followed a blood curdling scream before it quickly turns back to metal.

Captain Ohblivious stops, looks down as heroically as he can, and reaches out. "I'll get you young lady!"

Ohblivious grabs the metal hand and yanks Andy out, sending cubicle parts flying.

"Eh?!" The Captain looks at the mangled expression on Andy's frozen metal face and back at the pile.

He tosses Andy over his shoulder and starts rummaging through the debris, looking for the non-existent lady. While Captain Ohblivious rips cubicle walls apart trying to locate the source of the scream, Cubicles sees the utter disregard for office equipment and begins bawling. The Oh Force, minus Kirby and The Captain, make their way to the elevator to see Sue, the one-handed man, and the dim-looking youth standing there waiting for them. Libby lets out a piercing whistle as the doors begin to open. Captain Ohblivious takes the hint and quickly makes his way to the elevator. They pile in, a little uncomfortably given the number of them, to then become far less comfortable as Captain Ohblivious forces his way in with too much haste.

Shortly after the elevator begins its descent, a hand pops out of a nearby pile. Stu, bloodied and only half clothed, emerges from the aftermath. He looks side to side and sits back

down, trying once more to spark a fire by rubbing a pencil in a spinning motion against one of the downed walls.



#12

5

PAGES

The Fortress of Cubicles: A Literal Hostile Takeover

## THE ELEVATOR PITCH

Back in the elevator, the muzak is drowned out by Cubicles's blubbling. "No one is ever going to hire me again! Look at this disaster! Would you hire me?!"

He traces his eyes from one person to the next, indicating this is not a rhetorical question. They all steadfastly avoid meeting his gaze, with the exception of Captain Ohblivious, who looks him straight in the eyes while vigorously digging in his nose. He stops to look at his reward up close, notices Libby's disgust, and thinks better of eating his prize. Instead, he slowly draws his hand down to his side and sneakily wipes his finger on the elevator wall. The Captain looks down in thought, noticing the fanny pack on Cubicles's waist.

"Yeah, you can come work for us! You recognize a good utility belt when you see one, and that's good enough for me." Captain Ohblivious nods as he pats his own fanny pack.

Jason rolls his eyes, but a glimmer of hope shines in those of Cubicles. The elevator dings open as the doors slowly part on the ground floor. Íre is now armored up in an array of office supplies, his small frame wrapped in clip boards held on by packing tape, amongst other accoutrements. The sticky note on his forehead now looks to have grown in length. Íre has

placed a blank sticky note on top of the original one covering up the portion that reads ‘Scabs are to report to floor four’.

He wags a finger at Kirby who has already made it down to the ground floor. “See! I told you that the elevator was down. *You* had to take the stairs. You shoulda listened to me.”

“You’re right about that, nerdling!” Captain Ohblivious says as he gestures out the following words. “Elevator, ground, equals down.”

Íre rolls his eyes, choosing not to get into another debate he would probably lose as Kirby pats him condescendingly on the head.

She shoots a look at Andy and the rest of the group, but mostly Andy. “Took you long enough. I’ve been stuck here listening to this one babble on. I think he’s lonely.”

Íre begins to take offense and then shrugs, knowing that Kirby is probably not far off the mark. He makes eye contact with his now shackled boss, straightening up his posture.

Seeing Cubicles’s hands ethereally bound in front of him, the gravity of the situation finally dawns on Íre. “Hey!”

“It is over for me annoying one.” Cubicles says dejectedly, seeming to have better composed himself during their short elevator ride.

Íre attempts to take in the statement as the gaggle of people filter out of the elevator and towards the building’s exit.

Íre looks back up with a sense of concern. “Does this mean I'm fired?”

The Oh Force pauses only for a half second before continuing towards their pay day outside without a word back to Íre.

Íre looks even more baffled, and more than a little hurt. “Hello?!” Íre considers his options for a moment before posting himself back in front of the elevator doors.

As they exit the building, the crowd outside seems a little apprehensive at first. However, at the sight of the defeated look on Cubicles's face and the yank of the invisible chain that pulls him forward, they let out a loud cheer. Wain is shaken out of her heated conversation on the phone by the joyous crowd. She makes a beeline to The Oh Force, staring wide-eyed at Cubicles's tear-ridden face.

Wain seamlessly pulls out their second check from her pocket as she yanks the earpiece out, shoving it into the waiting hands of Anthony Turney. “Good! I can get everyone back to work now.”

“Uh, I think you're going to want to clean up first.” Jason apprehensively glances back at the building before returning his attention to Wain.

Jason puts his hand over his mouth as the chains dissolve from around Cubicles's hands and feet. Cubicles turns his hands over, staring down at his unshackled limbs before catching the frantic reaction from Jason.

As Cubicles realizes all eyes are on him, he puts his hands over his face and runs off. “Don't look at me!”

People shift out of his way, choosing to slam into those around them rather than be trampled by the large man. Wain turns to watch him with a hint of concern.

Captain Ohblivious points off in the direction Cubicles ran. “Yeah, he made a lot of mess!” Then Ohblivious gives an overly exaggerated wink to Jason. “Wink! And I didn't knock down any walls or move them without their consent!”

Jason quickly changes the subject to avoid her reading too deep into The Captain's statement. “As promised, Cubicles has been removed from the building.” He plucks the check from Wain's hand and stuffs it into his pocket. “Nice doing business with you!”

Jason starts to walk off with the others quickly following his example. Wain turns back with the intention of admonishing them only to discover that they are gone. She chooses to ignore any perceived slight from their quick exit, reaching out to Anthony Turney for the earpiece.

“We should celebrate. Maison De Lou?” Kirby drapes her arm around Jason.

Libby snatches the check from Jason and then looks incredulously at her sister. “Not on this payday. How 'bout Master Monchies?”

“Works for me. You...” Andy trails off as he stares at the fire lane where his van used to be. “Wait, where's my van?!”

Jason shrugs. “I guess the city didn’t think it was much of an emergency.”

Kirby moans out her discomfort “Aww, we’re gonna have to walk to Master Monchies? Can’t we just take an AutoCab?”

Jason, Andy, and Libby all respond simultaneously. “No!”

Captain Ohblivious grabs his groin, looking a little concerned, “We better start steppin’. I gotta pee!”



**#13****4  
PAGES**

The Fortress of Cubicles: A Literal Hostile Takeover

**MASTER MONCHIES  
HOUSE OF CRUNCHY  
MONCHIES**

The team gathers at a long counter with copious amounts of random food laid out in front of them on mismatched crockery. The place looks like a dive bar had a one-night stand with a Chinese food restaurant, and this was the resulting bastard child.

An older gentleman stands behind the bar with a smug look upon his face as he takes requests for outlandish orders. Master Monchie's House of Crunchy Monchies is known for one thing, there is no menu. The jovial Asian man has an open policy, allowing patrons to ask for whatever they want. If for some reason he cannot accommodate, it means you are the only person in any dimension who has ever wanted that particular meal.

The success of the Oh Force's first real mission together demands celebration. The fanfare seems like it is louder than it needs to be, as if trying to drown out the unpleasant amalgamation of moans and splooshing emanating from the restroom.

Andy decides to soldier forward for the sake of fun. "Let's see what else Master Monchie can pull off today. How about... calamari covered in nacho cheese? I'll call them, Calamachos!"

Master Monchie smiles and he pulls his apron forward. To the discerning eye it is more of a slit in his apron, exposing a fleshy pocket in his midsection. He reaches down, rummaging around in the extradimensional space he lovingly refers to as his Monchie Marsupium. He pulls out a plate of fried calamari smothered completely with a heaping amount of steaming nacho cheese. He plops it on the counter with gusto.

Andy claps his hands in utter amazement, “He's good.”

The toilet flushes and Captain Ohblivious leaves the bathroom far too quickly, making the others believe that the exit has been much less hygienic than anybody would like.

The Captain wipes his hands on his tattered onesie announcing to no one in particular, “Tuna!”

“Ah, tuna sandwich,” Master Monchie responds in a far more understanding way than you’d expect from such a flippant request.

Ohblivious sits on one of the stools, spinning around joyously. “Yeah! And make it a big one!”

Master Monchie reaches back into his interdimensional munchie pouch and pulls out a meter-long tuna sandwich. He presents it to Captain Ohblivious with a flourish, setting it down softly in front of him.

The Captain’s eyes grow wide with the challenge laid out before him. “It must be Boxing Day!”

The restaurant goes silent as Ohblivious consumes the sandwich in a fashion that can only be described as incredible and incredibly disturbing.

Libby closes her eyes to avoid seeing the spectacle of Captain Ohblivious attempting to shove the sandwich down his throat. Though this provides little reprieve, as the sounds take her imagination somewhere far worse than reality.

Although finding it abhorrent, enthralling, and slightly hilarious, Kirby endeavors to take Libby's mind off the disgusting chaos. "Aren't we supposed to be celebrating? How about a couple bottles of champagne? I mean cham-pag-nee." She takes a large bite of a lasagna-filled burrito.

Andy gives her a thumbs up while grasping a handful of Calamachos, acknowledging the acceptable pronunciation of *champagne* and his approval of the idea.

Libby opens her eyes, putting her hands up in protest. "Sparkling wine, and I'll go no further."

"OK!" Kirby waves down the chef. She stumbles over her words through a mouth full of food, "You heard the lady, a bottle a piece." Kirby waits to see if her sister will object.

Libby shakes her head as she pushes away her much more sensible meal, seafood gnocchi with alfredo sauce. "You think that's a good idea?" She gestures her head at The Captain without turning her eyes in his direction.

Kirby sees Captain Ohblivious shoving the last half of his absurdly long sandwich down his throat, much like a goose trying to eat a fish that is far too large.

Kirby looks back at Master Monchie and quietly says, “Aaaand carbonated grape juice in a bottle with no label for The Captain.”

Master Monchie nods his head, as if that was already a given, but also a nice challenge.



**WE SHOULD HAVE MADE  
TIME FOR TOAST.**

The Oh Force stumbles down the well-lit street. Andy and Kirby have their arms draped over each other's shoulders, singing in a less than unified manner, but loud enough to make up for any inadequacies.

"Dance then whoever you may be. He is the lord of dance says he. We dance..."

The song trails off as they begin to diverge on what the next lyrics should be, the words becoming quite incomprehensible as they loudly sing over one another.

Andy smiles a rather satisfied grin, "Wasn't he a funny guy? He was a funny guy."

Kirby and Andy giggle to one another, swaying back and forth as they trip over their own feet. Libby and Jason take up the rear with Captain Ohblivious strung between them. Ohblivious mumbles to himself, slurring his words as if he is also drunk. Libby nurses a nearly full bottle of sparkling wine as she labors under the dead weight of The Captain.

"His was non-alcoholic!" She whispers to Jason.

Jason, who is obviously trying to take more of Ohblivious's weight to save Libby the trouble, smirks back

with mischievous intent. “I wonder what would happen if we let him drink.”

“Don't even think about it!” Libby hisses, overwhelmed with just the thought of what that would entail. She passes the bottle to Jason who takes a quick drink.

The Captain stirs between them in a restless and belligerent manner. “What you talkin’ bout bossy lady?! I'm drunk! You need to stop looking at your own skin.”

Libby immediately sluffs off the arm of Captain Ohblivious, yanking the bottle back from Jason. Jason does not hesitate to do the same, not just because he seconds Libby’s reaction to Ohblivious’s inappropriate outburst, but out of self-preservation. He watches as The Captain topples over onto the ground, knowing that, had he not acted fast enough, he would have shared the same fate.

Libby shakes her head indignantly. “Rude!”

Jason looks back incredulously at Captain Ohblivious, who is sprawled out on the ground with his face planted against the pavement, his rear end skyward. If it was a yoga pose, it would be called the stink bug.

“Why would you say something like that?” Jason asks.

Captain Ohblivious flops onto his side and rolls onto his back. “That’s what Kirby tells me when they don’t agree on stuff ‘n things.”

Libby looks back at Captain Ohblivious only briefly, then to Jason for confirmation. Jason sheepishly shrugs, half-heartedly trying to stay out of trouble. Libby turns up the bottle and takes a long drink before pursing her lips in frustration.

“Mmm. What’s that glorious smell?” Captain Ohblivious sits straight up like Dracula rising from a coffin as he sniffs the air. He bolts to his feet and takes off running as realization strikes. “My toast!”

Captain Ohblivious shoots past both Jason and Libby, practically flying down the street. Only practically though, as *actually* flying has never been in his repertoire. Leap buildings in a single bound, maybe, but not fly. Libby and Jason exchange a weary glance.

Captain Ohblivious runs up on Kirby and Andy who stand stunned, looking dumbstruck at the smoldering remnants of their headquarters and home. The Captain joins them in gawking at the fire that somehow decided to destroy only their apartment, leaving the rest of the building intact.

Andy rolls his alcohol laden noggin over to Kirby “I guess we can think of this as a positive”.

“How is any of this a positive? We don’t have insurance,” Kirby scoffs.

Andy shrugs “At least we don’t have to fix the window.”

Captain Ohblivious dramatically collapses to his knees and starts bawling. “To-oo-aa-ast!”



*\*See, we told you not to do it at home.*

**#15****4****PAGES****The Fortress of Cubicles: A Literal Hostile Takeover****WAIT.  
ANOTHER ONE?**

Íre stands steadfast in front of the elevator as if Geppetto had returned him to his original wooden form. He remains clad in the pilfered protective provisions, which he scrounged from his surroundings. Surprisingly, he's still able to maintain a decent level of attentiveness, despite the numerous hours stuck in one place. The Post-It notes flap on his head as the air kicks on. Íre crosses his eyes as he attempts to stare at the yellow pieces of paper on his forehead. With every tap above his eyes, his resolve dwindles. Íre angrily rips the notes from his face, peels them apart, and slaps the original note over the call buttons for the elevator. He removes his hands like he is waiting for it to drop, but after a few seconds of it showing no movement, he puts his hands on his hips in triumph.

He shakes his head and says mockingly, "You know these never stick twice."

Íre turns about and begins walking towards the exit, quite proud of himself. He glances behind to take one last look at his handiwork, just in time to watch the note flutter to the floor. Íre rushes back and inspects the piece of paper laying limply on the linoleum. He picks it up with a fair amount of difficulty, as his makeshift office armor is not very malleable. He slams the note back in place, taking additional time to rub his finger over the front side of the adhesive area. Íre hesitantly pulls his hands back, hovering them over the flimsy piece of

paper as if willing it to stay in place. Right as he starts feeling confident again, the glue loses its grip on its metal perch. Íre manages to catch the paper, avoiding another awkward attempt at collecting it from the ground.

A few more tries and several apt curse words later, Íre resigns himself to placing it back on his forehead, where it falls off near immediately. He tries again to snatch it out of the air, haphazardly wrangling it onto his chest. When he pulls his hands away, the note stays affixed to his shirt. Íre stares down at it for a few minutes, baffled that it could possibly stick to a fabric surface after refusing to adhere to a smooth one. His face slowly turns to an expression of moue as he realizes he is right back where he started. Íre's attention on the frustrating memo falters as he notices a scent in the air. His nose whistle lets out a resounding whine as he sniffs heavily, trying to identify the odor.

Íre crinkles his nose as he deduces the likely cause of the scent. "This is a non-smoking building!"

Íre's taken aback when three firefighters in full gear burst through the entry doors. They quickly make their way across the room to a stunned Íre. The firefighters fan out to see if everything is alright on this level.

Íre, knowing something is now very wrong, tries to make sure the record is straight, "It wasn't me!"

"See if there's anyone else in the building." One of the firefighters directs the other two towards the stairwell.

“Hey, thanks for believing me.” Íre looks relieved as the firefighter comes his way with a sense of purpose and determination.

The firefighter shivers at the sound of Íre’s voice and, without a word, picks up Íre and roughly tosses him over his shoulder. He runs through the lobby and out of the building. As they emerge outside, Íre can see that several floors above him are engulfed in flames.

Íre gazes in amazement at the flames above, and not knowing what to say, just lets out a quick swear, “Oooh <bleep>!”

The firefighter walks past Wain, who looks like she just got there, feverishly pounding on her slate with a tense finger. The automated fire truck, which is simply an oversized water tank on wheels with a cannon on top, begins flooding the topmost floor with water.

“I hope there's time to cancel that check,” Wain mutters to herself.

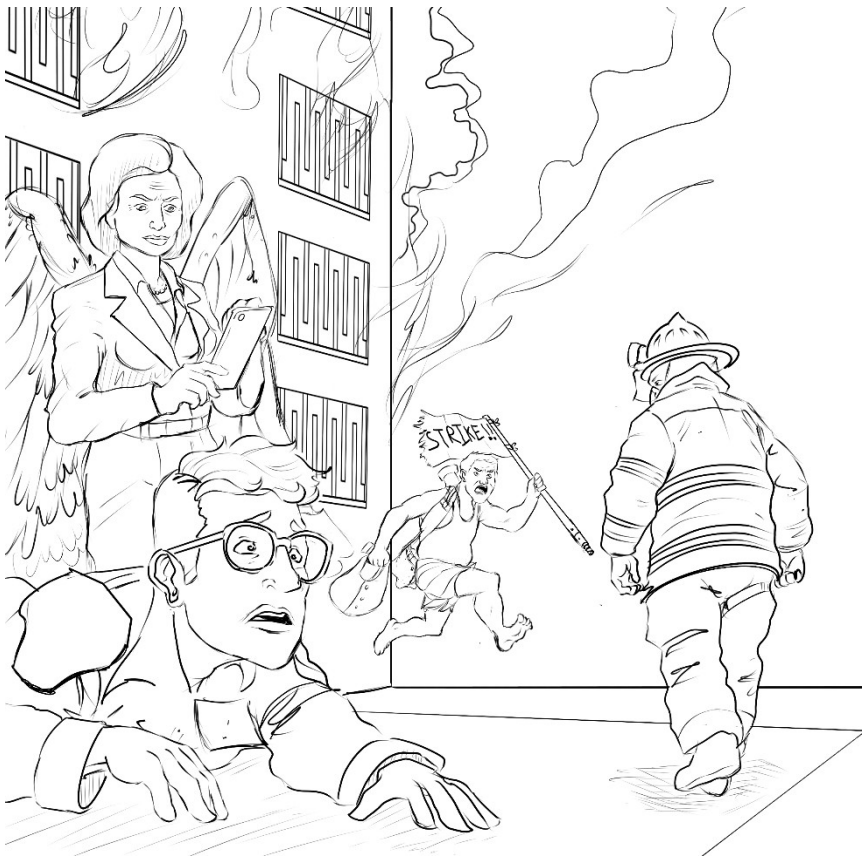
Feeling safely far enough away from the blaze, Íre taps the firefighter on his helmet. “Can you put me down now?”

“Oh! With pleasure.” The firefighter shudders as he sluffs Íre off his shoulder, dropping him to the ground with a loud wet thud.

“Thank you,” Íre softly moans with the last bit of breath that is still left in his chest.

Stu bursts through the front doors of the building, being chased closely by a firefighter in full gear. Stu is nearly unrecognizable. He waves a flag that has been fashioned from his cut-off shorts – which, once upon a time, were his pants. To cover his unmentionables, he has crafted a loin cloth using tape and a tattered piece of carpeting. He swings his shirt-sack at the firefighter, who has now decided that it's just not worth it and ceases his pursuit.

Stu lets out a battle cry, screaming at the top of his lungs. “STRIIIIKE!”



**#16****3****PAGES**

The Fortress of Cubicles: A Literal Hostile Takeover

**POSTLOGUE:  
THEY'LL BE OPEN IN  
THE MORNING**

Captain Ohblivious stands in a drab motel alcove lined with various glowing vending machines. He stares at one in particular, not quite sure what he's looking at.

“What's a Charcuterie?” he shrugs his shoulders and reaches into the neck of his suit, pulling out a piece of paper. “Eh, no time like presents!”

He tries to shove the paper, that is obviously not a bill, into a slot on the machine. Not only is it not a bill, but the slot he is attempting to put the paper into is meant for a credit card. He presses his hands against the bottom of the paper and tries forcing it into the card reader. He slowly pulls his hands back, only for the paper to come shooting out of the machine. As he snatches it back out of the air, it becomes clear that this is not a normal piece of paper, but rather the check they received from Wain G. Petelin.

He looks at the machine and back at the check. “Man, this must be really expensive. And with a fancy name like charcuterie I bet it's tiny too.”

He frowns, lowers the check to his side, and walks out of the alcove. He perks up, noticing what looks like a food truck without the truck part. The small boxy structure is almost completely made out of glass and stationed on the periphery of

the motel parking lot. A sign with bright yellow insignia reads, 'Stilled Lemonade'. The Moonshiner runs on a treadmill inside the windowed container. Hanging from the ceiling is a human sized hamster bottle partially filled with a yellow liquid.

The spectacle would be out of place in most instances, but the fact that the man is scantily dressed in only a pair of speedos gives an extra level on the oddity scale. The treadmill is suspended over a kiddie pool, and the treads are full of little holes to allow for his manly moisture to drip into the vessel below. Captain Ohblivious runs up to the stand and whips out the check holding it over the counter as far as he can.

Ohblivious waves the check at The Moonshiner. "Do you take checks? The Food ATM machine doesn't want to eat it."

The Moonshiner breathes heavily, but tries to help out the best he can. He points his glistening arm, that is dripping in sweat, down the street. "Just Kosh Kash and the good ol' Canadian Dollar. The Bank is just down the street. They can take care of you down there."

The Captain rushes off before hurrying back. "Thank you!"

Full of gusto, Captain Ohblivious briskly skips down the street in the direction of the bank. He makes his way to the doors, but just as he reaches forward, he realizes this single door is the only thing left standing. On the ground a heavily scorched sign reads, 'The Bank of New Edmonton'. The check that was once upright and ready in his hand, droops to follow suit with his head.

“Aw.” His disappointment is short lived as he turns away from the rubble. “Meh, the door says they’ll be open in the morning.”





Captain Ohblivious turns around in circles, like a dog trying to catch its own tail. But instead of a tail, he is grabbing his left arm around the elbow with his tongue sticking out to its full length.

He finally flops onto a nearby bench still holding his arm.

“If there is one thing I have learned today, elbow grease doesn't taste very good, and breakfast is the most important meal of the day. So, you should always make time for toast!”



#3

108  
PAGES

The Oh Force: Begins

SUPER + HOLY  
POISONOUS PUNCH  
CAPTAIN OH!



A less than Graphic Novel<sub>1a</sub>

By Antony and Ezra King

Previously on The Oh Force!  
-By The Captain

My Dearest Digital Diary,

We went on our first real mission as a team. I found out the Mime guy's name is Jason! Who woulda thunk it? My day started off terrible. First Libby told me there was no time for toast, and then she made me jump out a window! She's kinda bossy. I can see why Kirby doesn't say nice things about her.

We had a race to the job site, I totally won by the way, and there was an angry mob that I tried to infiltrate before infiltrating the building. There was an angry little man and I had to explain the difference between the elevator being down and the elevator being broken. He was totally out of order!

Eventually we ended up making it to this big fuzzy maze thing and I discovered the secret entrance. Then I played Hide and Seek with Andy. It was a whole lot of fun but eventually he couldn't find me anymore. The maze was kinda stupid so I fixed it. Then I hunkered down and made myself a nice new secret lair.

I found out the reason why no one was looking for me is that everyone got lost. So, I helped them find each other and man were they thirsty. After a quick bathroom break, I came out to find that they were playing with a guy named, I kid you not, Cubicles. I thought the name of the building was because of the cubicles, but I guess it was because of him? Anywho, we arrested him, and then he got away. We went and celebrated at Master Monchies. Then we stumbled home to find out that my toast had burned down. The End!

**#1****8****PAGES****Super Holy Poisonous Punch Captain Oh!****TIC-TAC-JOB**

The team sits around a standard, double queen motel room with a well lived in look. It has clearly been worn down by its current inhabitants, who are probably too embarrassed at this point to allow housekeeping to do their jobs. Kirby and Andy lounge on one of the beds with the classified section of the *Newsie News* sprawled out across the unmade bedding. Kirby methodically circles one of the listings and Andy quickly crosses out another nearby. On the other bed, Captain Ohblivious lays spread eagle in a pair of tattered tighty-whites. His chainsaw-like snore, that has sadly become the background track to their unexpected change in headquarters, seems to not bother the other two. They are so enraptured in their activities that they don't seem to notice the faint beep that indicates the door has been unlocked.

Jason slides in through the barely opened door with an armload of mail. He drops the entire haul onto a stack of cardboard boxes marked 'Generic Merchandising Services' next to the chest-of-drawers. He picks through the mail sorting it into the already established piles. Although the largest of them appears to be made of untouched junk mail, there are several other stacks littering the table. Once finished a single letter remains in his hand, an envelope stamped in bold, red lettering declaring it 'IMPORTANT.'

Jason holds up the crisp white envelope. “We got some interesting mail.”

Kirby and Andy scramble, like squirrels caught in the pantry, not realizing that Jason had entered the room until he spoke. Kirby gathers the pages of the tabloid that are strewn about on the sheets and attempts to inconspicuously fold them behind her back.

Jason looks excited and intrigued. “Wait! Did you find something?”

Kirby tries to shuffle the hastily folded paper underneath her backside. “No.”

Andy snickers as Jason zig-zags his way across the garbage minefield on the floor.

Jason tosses the letter onto the bed and reaches around Kirby to grab the paper. “C’mon what is it? Is it that good?!”

Kirby tries to make it as difficult as possible for him to extract the paper from beneath her behind.

Hoping he will back down, she tries to make him as uncomfortable as possible. “Hey hey, uh you don’t have a ticket to goose this caboose.”

Andy opens his trench coat, pulling his wallet from the inside pocket and shaking it suggestively at Kirby. “I didn’t even know I could buy one of those!”

Kirby shoots him a dirty look. “Andy, you’re not helping.”

Andy, realizing this is a lost cause, continues taunting Kirby. “Oh, I’d be happy to help. Jason, you need another hand?”

Jason continues fighting against Kirby, ignoring Andy as his curiosity grows. “Let me see it!”

Kirby wiggles her butt in place trying to undo all the progress that Jason has made “Oh, you wanna *see* it now?”

This comment has the opposite effect of what Kirby intended. Jason shoves her over onto the bed and picks up the paper that is now free from the confines of her cheeky endeavor. He shakes *The Newsie News* out as he glares at Kirby. Her face scrunches up like a 4-year-old trying to keep a secret. He reads over the paper only to be greeted by a defamatory headline that completely distorts the facts surrounding their current misfortunes. Sadly, this has become a trend in recent weeks.

Jason’s mood turns glum as he mumbles, reading the long-winded headline. “The Oh Force stays suspiciously silent. Are they snuffed out? Or will they rekindle the flame? Other than their reputations, what will they burn down next?” Jason sighs. “Well, thanks for trying to spare me from this, I guess.”

Kirby and Andy lock eyes conspiratorially. “Yeaah...” They say in unison.

Jason slumps down onto the bed next to Kirby and Andy. This motion causes the classified section to become dislodged and flutter down to the floor at his feet. He bends down to pick up the job listings. He slowly scans over the page, his brow furrowing as it dawns on him that they had not been working on finding a new job at all. Instead, they have blanketed the help wanted ads with the nostalgic pattern of tic-tac-toe.

Jason tosses the paper to the floor before throwing his hands up in the air. “Oh c'mon, Anne said that if we don't get our rent paid, we're out of here!”

Andy's bemused expression changes to one of playful confusion. “Rent? This is a hotel.”

“Motel.” Kirby raises a finger to correct Andy.

Andy nods and corrects himself, “Motel.”

Jason scoops up the recently discarded letter and points it at Andy in frustration. “Well, fine, pick up our bill then! Is that better?”

Andy gives a soft smile trying to raise Jason's spirits. “Yeah, much.”

Jason just shakes his head. “Back to the interesting mail, we got a letter from Cubicles.”

Jason taps the side of the envelope on the nightstand, attempting to shift its contents to one end. It takes a good bang to accomplish his goal. He holds the envelope up to the light to

ensure there is enough space before tearing off the opposite edge.

Andy, genuinely curious, blurts out the question on his mind “Isn't he supposed to be in jail?”

Jason attempts to slide out a card that snugly fits inside the envelope.

Andy repositions himself, trying to look over Jason's shoulder. “Is it from jail?!”

Giving up on the possibility of extricating the communiqué from the envelope's entrapment, Jason begins ripping it apart. Confused, he stares at the laminated postcard in his hand.

“Aww, he wants a pen pal.” Kirby mockingly brings her hands to her face and merrily kicks her feet as they dangle just above the floor.

Jason fiddles with the edge of the lamination in disbelief, hoping to be proven wrong about his current assumption. He slowly wags his head and rolls his eyes. He turns over the, for some unknown reason, laminated postcard that was superfluously stuffed in an envelope. Completely consumed by the unnecessary stationery, Jason is unable to pay any attention to the other two.

Jason holds the card out in Kirby's direction. “But why?”

Kirby groans as she sits up to inspect it. “Because he’s Cubicles.”

The picture on the front is that of a large white cube surrounded by grass. Andy cocks his head “It kinda looks like a prison.”

Jason turns the postcard over and reads it out loud. “‘You are cordially expected at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Canadian Upper Branch of Enforcement.’ Eh, I think we’re going to miss that one.”

Kirby gives a thumbs up of approval and lays back down on the bed. “Yeah, that has to be some sort of trap.”

Andy bobs his head. “I’m going to have to agree with you on that.”

Jason’s stomach rumbles as he continues to peruse the rest of the message. He glances up at the other two with an apprehensive, yet gleeful expression. “Well, there is free food.”

Captain Ohblivious stirs in the bed next to them. The mere mention of a meal on someone else’s dime proves to be enough to cut through his slumbering stupor.

Kirby shoots up straight and grabs the card out of Jason’s hands as if it could somehow instantly appease her appetite. “On that note, I think we should risk it.”

Andy leaps from the bed and starts to take his shirt off as he moves towards the stack of boxes near the door. “I think I’m going to have to agree with you on that.”

Captain Ohblivious, between one moment and the next, is already dressed and ready to go. “You had me at free food.”

Andy pulls a new shirt from the box, that looks identical to the one he was just wearing. It sports a flaming *The Oh Force* logo, similar to the one that Captain Ohblivious took it upon himself to plaster on their van.

Andy grabs a stick of deodorant from the dresser. “Just gotta freshen up first. Can’t be smelling like Kirby for a playdate with our nemesis.”

Kirby inspects her own crusty attire, pulling her shirt up to her nose. “You wanna toss me one of those too?”

Jason snatches back the laminated card as a shirt comes flying in towards Kirby followed by the stick of deodorant.

Andy pulls another shirt from the box and wiggles it at Jason. “You want one too?”

Jason’s face scrunches up as he goes to tuck the card into his breast pocket. “I want nothing to do with that debacle.”

Andy drops the shirt back into the box. “*Suit* yourself.”

Jason chooses not to acknowledge the pun as he notices the card would fit as snugly in his shirt as it did in the envelope. He slips it into the much bigger pocket on the back of his pants as he makes his way to his feet.

Andy grabs the motel phone, “I’ll call Libby’s motel roo-”

“Hotel.” Kirby interjects, pulling the shirt over the top of her filter vest.

Andy sarcastically rolls his eyes, “*Hotel* room and tell her to meet us in the lobby. Better?”

Jason decides to pipe in, “Yeah, much.”



**#2**

7

**PAGES****Super Holy Poisonous Punch Captain Oh!****THE ANNABELLE HOTEL,  
MOTEL, AND CONVENIENCE  
STORE**

The Oh Force enters the Annabelle Hotel, Motel, and Convenience Store lobby from the parking lot. The faux fancy foyer is very pleasing to those with less refined taste. A discerning eye, on the other hand, would likely notice where the corners have been cut. Although the front desk appears to be marble, the seating area leather, and the gleaming chandelier above brass, pretty much everything is plastic or laminate.

The front desk is really more of a kiosk with screens on each side so that multiple guests can check in at the same time. It stands alone in the center of the room with the seating area in one corner behind it. In the other corner is a café, sponsored by Bunkers Bean Barn, with a two-meter-tall robotic barista. The elevators to the hotel portion are placed in such a way that guests are forced to walk past the café. The Barista Bot emits artificial scents that lace the air with bold notes of coffee and pastries. On one side of the room there is an entryway to the neighboring fully automated convenience store. On the other, there is a door to the gym and laundry area.

Captain Ohblivious jumps up onto an oversized, ceramic-looking planter before he sinks his teeth into a fake rubber tree. Annabelle Fetamine, the proprietor of this haphazard establishment, comes streaking out of nowhere with a rolled-up newspaper. Anne looks like a stick figure clad in Canadian formal wear, a flannel shirt and a pair of blue jeans.

Her flimsy frame combined with the graying pixie cut makes her head seem much larger than it should be. Energetically, she sweeps across the lobby, twisting the paper in her hands to bolster its batter-ability. Although she looks to be in her mid-60s, Anne is barely pushing 35. Her aged appearance is a side-effect of her extra-human ability that prevents her from ever sleeping.

“Quit slobberin’ on my tree!” Anne brandishes the paper, swinging it heavily into the nose of Captain Ohblivious over and over again. “No, no, no!” Anne whacks The Captain once more.

Drool drips from his lips as Ohblivious ceases his chomping on the artificial bark. “No? But they said the food was free!”

Anne, who was already headed back to her post, whirls around, pointing the newspaper at Captain Ohblivious. “Ain’t nothin’ free here, boy! Ya eat it, ya pay for it! One rubber tree, ten dollas! Read the Sign!”

Anne points at a sign over the entrance to the convenience store that states ‘You touch it, you buy it. It costs half with Kosh Kash.’

Jason shakes his head while taking a quick glance at his slate and the far-too-empty balance. “We’ve only got fifteen bucks for five of us. I think we’ll have to wait for the buffet.”

Captain Ohblivious searches around excitedly before setting his sights on the convenience store next door. “There’s a buffet?!”

Running off, Ohblivious disappears through the doorway to the adjacent shop. Libby exits the elevator, staring longingly at the café as she walks towards the group.

Kirby looks at her sister, annoyed with her more popular sibling. “Well, aren't you five minutes too late.”

Libby gives her sister a jestful grin, “Awww, looks like someone woke up on the wrong arm of the recliner.”

Kirby’s expression darkens as the words, that are far more accurate than she’d like to admit, sink in. She mumbles, “Shut up” unable to come up with a witty retort.

Libby turns her attention over to Jason much more cheerily, “Gimme some cash. I need a latte.”

Jason recoils a bit, pulling back his slate. He tightens his grip over what is left of their operating budget. “What? That's like five bucks, even from this place. We only have fifteen for all of us.”

Libby returns his gaze with one of more determination. “Alright, then give me 3 bucks. Now.”

Kirby seizes the opportunity to get in a quick quip back at her sister. “You don't need our petty cash. You've got purse dog money.”

Libby doesn’t take her eyes off Jason as she responds to Kirby in a flat and even tone, “I'm part of the team. That's my money too.”

Jason thinks about what Kirby said for a moment and then puts on a brave face. “No.”

Libby loses her composure, her flat and even tone now laced with determination and contempt. “It’s. My. Money. TOO!”

Jason’s arm quivers as he holds out his slate.

Libby taps hers against his, cheerfully chirping “Thanks!” as a ‘cha-ching’ sound emits from the devices.

Libby gleefully skips over to the Bean Barn branded, barista-shaped vending machine.

Automaton pipes up through the feminine visage of the metallic server in his all too cheery voice, “Hi, I’m your Barista Bot! What can I get for you today?!”

Jason and Kirby both glare at Andy who looks back at them with befuddled belligerence.

“How is this my fault?” Andy raises his hands in a placating motion. “I wasn’t even in the conversation! Did I enjoy it? Yes! Did I participate? No.”

Kirby shakes her head at him. “It’s *entirely* your fault.”

Andy starts to get even more defensive, throwing his hands out and waving them erratically with every syllable. “What do you mean?!”

Jason takes a step forward, pinches the front of Andy's shirt, pulls it out, releases, and snaps it against Andy's chest. "Do you remember your brilliant merch idea?" His tone becomes one of mockery "We're gonna make so much money, Jason."

The confusion drops from Andy's face as realization sets in. "Hey, it was a good idea at the time." He points an accusatory finger at Kirby. "And don't you be shaking your head at me. You're wearing one too!"

A loud ruckus comes from the convenience store, sparing Andy any further criticism. Pulling out her slate, Anne checks the security feed to figure out the cause of the commotion.

Anne sprints towards the doors yelling at the top of her lungs, "No! What are you doing?!". She snatches up a broom before hurrying through the sliding glass doors.

Remembering that Captain Ohblivious is not amongst them, Jason, Kirby, and Andy scramble to catch up and see what's going on.

Anne's enraged shouts reach them before they get to the doors. "Did you break my machine? STOP drinking my Splooshie!"

As the trio bursts into the convenience store that teems with vending machines, they find Anne pummeling Captain Ohblivious with the broom. He is awkwardly perched under a giant drink machine that is affixed to the wall. A sign above reads, 'Splooshie, A Flavor Explosion of Milky Goodness'.

Ohblivious looks only mildly distracted, but ultimately undeterred, by the beating from the broom as he holds down the lever. He greedily slurps at the spigot, making a sickening suckling sound.

Anne stops her futile flurry of blows, giving The Captain a swift kick in the rear. “Fine! You get a brain freeze! See if I care!” She wheels around making a beeline to Jason.

Blue Splooshie starts to flow from Ohblivious’s nose as her words set in. He stops in one sudden motion, his pupils dilating as he falls to the floor, holding his head in agonizing pain. “Owww, my noggin is shivering and it hurts!” He writhes on the ground, blowing blue Splooshie out of his nostrils.

Anne smugly shouts over her shoulder. “You got what you deserve!” She then turns back to Jason, staring directly into his eyes. “Give me that fifteen dollars. He drank half my machine!”

Jason holds out his slate, showing her the screen. “But I only have twelve now.”

Anne zips out her COMM, a small round device about the size of a poker chip attached to a retractable lanyard, and forcefully taps the slate. “That’ll have to do. Now out, get out of my store! Don’t you come back until you’re ready to pay your rent!”

A disappointing cha-ching echoes in the silence as the remaining balance is drained from their account. Jason looks down at his slate, feeling much like his balance, a zero. Kirby

and Andy trudge up to The Captain, each of them grabbing one of his ankles.

As they drag Ohblivious towards the door, they pass Jason who whispers, “She called it rent.”



**#3****12  
PAGES****Super Holy Poisonous Punch Captain Oh!****WAIT.  
YOU KNEW THIS WAS  
GOING TO HAPPEN?**

Captain Ohblivious wriggles on the Ferrock as Kirby opens the sliding door to The Oh Mobile. She carelessly pushes aside a box of the misguided merchandise that they could not afford to take into their already cramped motel room. The box collides with another and topples over, spilling several shirts and hats into the rear section of the vehicle.

The Captain grabs Andy's ankle as he screams, "My brain is angry! It needs more free food!"

Andy reaches down and grabs Ohblivious by the wrists, nodding to Kirby to grab the other end. They both lift him off the ground and begin swinging him back and forth.

The Captain smiles for a moment and then remembers that he's supposed to be in pain. "This would be fun if my head wasn't so hurty."

With that, the duo releases Captain Ohblivious sending him sprawling into the van. Libby joins them and begins to open the front passenger door.

Andy leaps into action, and the front seat. "Shotgun!"

Libby is left momentarily speechless, and Andy is quick to point out, "What? It's my van."

Andy grabs the open door and closes it quickly to have something between him and the growing wrath in Libby's eyes.

"It's okay," Kirby walks up with a big smile on her face, puts her arm around her sister, and ushers her towards the sliding door. "Jason's not much of a conversationalist anyway."

Jason smirks at that one and nods his head. "Don't forget to buckle in Oh."

Kirby goes to obey but recoils back as she is swatted by a flailing limb from The Captain. "Ow! But he's impervious."

"And sticky." Libby cuts in.

Kirby nods in agreement. "And sticky, he'll be fine."

The twins sit in the rear facing seats while Jason climbs into the driver's door, taking a deep breath. He decides it's not worth the argument before pulling out an invisible steering wheel and shoving it into the steering column. Andy's stomach rumbles so loudly that it drowns out the moaning of Captain Ohblivious.

Kirby knocks her head back, headbutting the headrest of Andy's seat behind her. "Andy, shut your gut. We're all hungry."

Ohblivious squashes his face between both hands as he squirms on the floor in visible discomfort. "Get it out!"

Andy replies meekly, "I can't help it."

Captain Ohblivious mewls in pain once more. “Aaah my brain!”

Libby sips at her drink lackadaisically and seems to ignore The Captain, like the rest of the team, while addressing Andy, “It is not that bad, Andy.”

Andy mutters under his breath, “You got a latte.”

Libby nods matter-of-factly as she takes another small sip from her cup with a quick smirk. “I’ve had just as much money as you guys, I just spent it better. You know, like a nice hotel room, some warm food. Something more than wishful thinking.” She lightly kicks one of the boxes that litter the rear passenger compartment.

Andy twists himself around, looking over the bench seat. “Hey! It was a good idea... till it wasn’t.”

Libby just shakes her head condescendingly. “I’m not saying it wasn’t a good idea. Just poorly executed. That’s what print on demand is for.” Libby points at herself. “You even know somebody who owns a company that specializes in just that. And that someone, would’ve probably given you a pretty nice discount.”

Andy turns back to face the front. “I told you; we need the merchandise on hand to give out freebies. Don’t worry, it’ll pan out...” He starts speaking under his breath. “Eventually.”

Feeling ignored, Ohblivious springs up and grabs Kirby with such force that it engages the seatbelt lock. He gives her a shake. “I have Splooshie in my brain!”

Kirby looks shocked by the sudden contact but also a bit amused. “That's not possible, strawman. You don't have a brain.”

In a playful gesture, Libby flashes a side-eyed glance at her sister. “Cold.”

Ohblivious crumps his face in a mixture of befuddlement and brain freeze induced agony. “Euh? Euwaawah.”

Kirby turns to Libby inquisitively. “Pun intended?”

“No, but the best ones never are.” Libby says.

Jason comes to a stop in the middle of the street as Kirby and Libby share a laugh at The Captain’s expense. Although Andy enjoys a good play on words, he seems transfixed by what’s on the other side of the windshield.

Jason taps on the dash but cannot get the attention of the amused twins. He looks down at a button that has been quite hastily hot-glued onto the dashboard. The button has a label written in sharpie on masking tape reading ‘Horn.’ He thinks better of it as he rolls his eyes and removes his hand from his invisible steering wheel.

Jason swivels his head and bangs on the seat with his elbow. “Hey, look!”

Captain Ohblivious stops shivering and clammers up to his knees to see what all the fuss is about. His eyelids disappear as he stares out the windshield, having forgotten all about his

perceived pain. “Oh no! I hope they haven’t eaten all the free food.”

Kirby and Libby crane their necks to look between the two front seats. Closing in on the van is a comically large crowd, as if everyone in town has been invited. Interspersed in the mob is a handful of camera crews trying their best to brave the sea of civilians. The Oh Force overflows with a gamut of emotions: fear, bewilderment, suspicion, excitement, astonishment, angst, a bit of claustrophobia, a touch of awe, and ever-growing disappointment. They begin to suspect that they may not have been specifically invited, but it was instead a general invitation to the whole city.

Mike Foehn is the first to make it to their vehicle. He opens the sliding door, and gestures them to step out onto a red carpet which his crew is rushing to roll out. He holds an oversized pair of golden scissors, and speaks into them, “Our honored guests have arrived in their grand attire. Everyone is dressed... uh... propriately for this gallant event.”

Baffled and disoriented, yet relieved to find they were not just another invitee, The Oh Force begins to hesitantly pile out. Mike drapes his arm over Captain Ohblivious's shoulder, who now has completely forgotten about any pain in his head. Mike leads The Captain down the carpet. Andy’s brain turns back on as he pushes past Libby and Kirby who are attempting to navigate their way through the barrier of boxes. He scoops up one of the half empty boxes of shirts and starts stuffing hats into it.

As Andy begins making his way down the carpet, he tosses shirts and hats to the crowd. “See, I told you we needed freebies.”

Libby scoffs. “We all know there’s no way you knew this was going to happen.”

Andy gleefully grins as he chucks items randomly from the box. “Nope. But it’s working out, so I’m going with it.”

Mike and Ohblivious continue to gain distance, leaving the others behind. “Captain Oh, it is so nice to see you again. It is my pleasure to be here hosting this ceremony today. These golden scissors represent-”

“Those sure are some shiny snippers.” Captain Ohblivious interrupts.

Mike, thrown off by Ohblivious’s comment, stumbles out a reply as he looks down at the giant scissors in his hands, “Y-Yes, they are.”

Andy pauses with a fistful of promotional products, angling his head ever so slightly to Jason whispering, “What’s going on?”

“I have no clue,” Jason whispers back, pulling a bow tie out of his pocket, before popping up his collar, and tying it in the front of his shirt. “Just go with it.”

Andy, no longer whispering, blurts out, “Wait, you have a bow tie in your pocket?”

Andy nearly trips over himself in utter confusion at the appearance of a bow tie around Jason's neck.

Jason pops his collar back down and gives a curt nod. "One of the few tangible items I carry."

Andy lifts one eyebrow speculatively, "Why?"

In response, Jason gestures to the mass of people as they approach.

Andy's speculation shifts to surprise. "Wait. *You* knew this was going to happen?"

Jason has now gotten into the spirit of things with a wide grin across his face. "Nope! But it's working out so I'm going with it."

Andy turns back to Kirby for support.

Kirby completely ignores him, tilting her head to the right, sizing up the building in front of them. "Didn't the postcard show a cube? It's called The C.U.B.E. but it's not a cube?"

The facility in front of them has a flat white exterior with no visible windows. If one didn't know better, they'd probably assume this was some sort of art installation or monument. The only hint that it is a building is the faint outline around the white doors that blend in with the rest of the structure. A simple pathway leads up to a short stairway on the front. Flanking the pathway on either side is a wide-open greenspace that is covered in grass and dotted with trees. The

complex rises four stories up but is a little short to live up to its name.

Libby joins the conversation “I thought you guys said we got a letter.”

“Yeah, a letter with a postcard inside.” Kirby motions to Jason’s back pocket with the postcard peeking out.

Libby reaches down, pulling out the unnecessarily laminated card. Jason jumps slightly as her hand grazes his backside. He turns around angrily, thinking that it was Kirby. Upon seeing the postcard in Libby’s hand, Jason’s expression softens.

Jason gives Libby a coy smile “Hey, you don’t need a ticket to goose my caboose.”

Libby gives him a confused yet bemused stare before taking a subtle glance back at his junkless trunk. “Okay...”

Kirby doesn’t know what to say with Jason stealing her improvised line from earlier.

Andy is more than happy to add to the conversation. “Okay!”

Andy’s hand flashes down but is swatted away by Jason before it can reach its intended destination. Jason stares at Andy before tipping his head towards the crowd, reminding Andy that all eyes are on them. Andy takes the hint, straightening himself up to project more professionalism.

“Okay, later then.” Andy whispers and gives a quick wink, slinging a hat into the crowd.

The team looks up to see that they are still about 10 meters away from Mike and Captain Ohblivious who have already reached the front steps.

Mike holds the scissors between them as they ascend the stairs, “Captain Oh, please give us a few words on this giant leap forward for Canadian law enforcement.”

Libby comes to an abrupt stop, terrified at the prospect of Ohblivious speaking on their behalf. “Oh, please Gods no.”

Captain Ohblivious steps forward, without caution or thought, and accepts the offer to speak. “Sure. This is the biggest present I’ve ever gotten. And toast, I would like to thank you for making this all possible. Thank you.”

Mike brings the scissors back to his lips. “A toast of toasts ladies and gentlemen. Let’s get this ribbon cutting started,” Mike holds out the scissors, “shall we?”

Captain Ohblivious reaches out to greedily grab them. Instead, he forcefully slaps them out of Mike's hands. The scissors spin through the air, slicing the ribbon near perfectly down the center. They ricochet off the doors – without as much as a scratch being left in their wake – before launching towards the unsuspecting crowd.

Kirby instinctively opens her chest-hole, exposing the black-hole within. The scissors immediately start flying towards her along with other bric-a-brac from around them.

Kirby's mouth-hole drops open in horror upon realizing that the scissors are flying directly at her, pointy end first.

Andy throws his hands up to make himself as large as possible causing the tchotchkes to cascade across the concerned crowd. He prematurely jumps in front of Kirby, freezing in midair. Libby is forced to catch him to keep him in position to intercept the pointy projectile. The scissors rebound off the Human Shield, but Jason is already bringing down his satchel to knock them out of the air.

After a brief moment of surprised silence, a joyous cheer erupts from the people around them. Kirby plucks the scissors from the ground and partially sheathes them in a surprisingly large pocket for a woman's pair of pants. Libby drops the Human Shield into Kirby's arms.

Kirby cradles him with a mischievous smile. "Thanks!"

Libby starts waving at the crowd and whispers to the others, "Just go with it."

"Oh, I'm going with it!" Kirby raises Andy up into the air waving him back and forth. The final contents of the cardboard box spill out into the crowd.

Kirby is giddy with the knowledge that Andy must be mentally cursing her out. Jason simply uses his hand. The team tries to pretend like this was a demonstration and not a desperate scramble for survival.

The immense doors open, and Cubicles stiffly saunters out. He smiles and waves at the crowd, enhancing the illusion

that the spectacle was planned. He looks directly at Captain Ohblivious with respect and gratitude.

Cubicles addresses The Captain quietly and with an overtone of admiration. “Rupert, thank you for this great opportunity.”

Jason locks eyes with Kirby and mouths “Rupert?”

Kirby shrugs and leans the Andy club on her shoulder as the rest of the Oh Force approach the main entrance. “Just go with it.”

Cubicles looks over the team affectionately, more so than they thought possible. “Andrew, Jason, Kirby, and Libby. Let me show you what we have accomplished.”

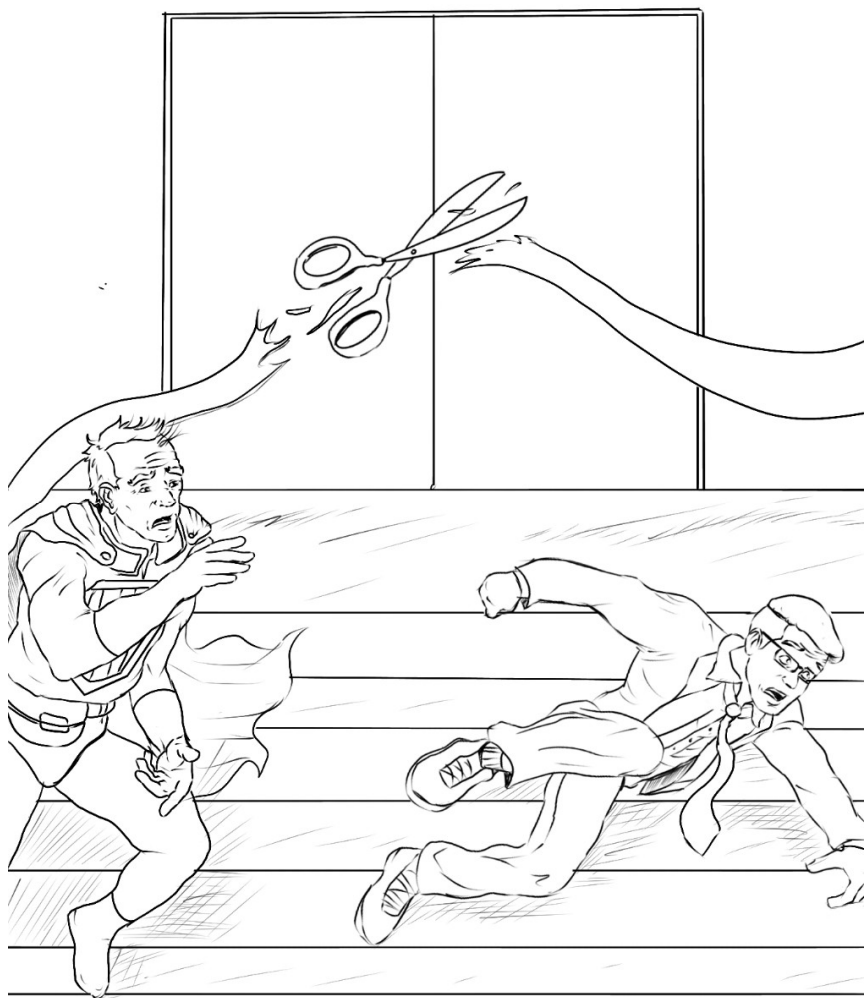
Kirby stares directly at Cubicles with a healthy helping of skepticism and a tinge of apprehensive glee. “We?”

Cubicles nods, “Oui” taking no notice of their bewilderment as he guides them through the noticeably thick doors.

Mike, who has been trying to figure out why his fingers are suddenly sticky, regains his composure and resumes his address to the audience. “A ribbon ceremony with a cryptic message from Captain-”

Jason jolts forward in shock as the doors swiftly slide silently shut behind him, effectively dampening all the noise from the outside. Where once there were cheers of the crowd, street noise, and Mike trying to talk over it all, now the only

sounds that can be heard are the soft shuffle of their footsteps on the hard marble floors.



**#4****8  
PAGES****Super Holy Poisonous Punch Captain Oh!****THE C.U.B.E.  
THE CANADIAN UPPER  
BRANCH OF ENFORCEMENT**

The team patters down a hallway that is at least 3 meters wide and seems to span the length of the building. Although there is no obvious source of light, the hallway is lit nearly as bright as the outdoors. It is almost as if the light emanates from every surface. They stroll down the hallway, Kirby dragging a still frozen Andy behind her. His head scrapes across the smoothly buffed, white tile flooring with a muted sound not unlike that of a knife drawn across a whetstone. Similarly, their steps are muffled by the acoustic dampening foam blanketing the walls. These panels are well camouflaged and mimic the appearance of matte finished stone. The team follows Cubicles – who they so recently thought of as their nemesis – in uncomfortable quiet as they venture deeper into the, apparently, not-so-cubic structure.

Andy, no longer willing to entertain Kirby, unfreezes. Kirby’s relaxed grip on his ankles releases and he flops onto the floor as she continues walking without looking back at him. She does, however, grin ear to ear.

Andy climbs to his feet, mockingly having a conversation with himself, “Thanks for saving my life, Andy. No problem, Kirby. Anytime. Jerk.”

Cubicles looks around the hall as his camera-ready smile fades to a more familiar resting blank face. He moves

slowly as if taking into consideration the others' casual walking speed but maintains his rigidity in doing so.

Cubicles's tone is very methodic, as if each syllable he speaks is carefully crafted. "Since you hired me in the elevator, we have been working diligently on this project."

The Oh Force exchange glances with one another, trying to see if anyone knows what he's talking about. Only Captain Ohblivious nods along as if he genuinely understands. Cubicles leads them down the large corridor to a heavy metal door on the left that is 3 meters tall and just as wide. The door is emblazoned with the acronym S.H.i. with Cubicles's head blocking the final letter.

Cubicles jumps right into his tour of the facilities. "On the ground floor we have two units." He holds up two fingers before lowering one. "This is unit one, the CUBE U Indoor Training Facility for our *Super* Heroes in Training."

Cubicles puts his hand on a nearly imperceptible hand scanner, and the massive door slides open, disappearing into the wall. In the hallway three ragged-looking young people and a larger-than-life behemoth stand in front of the doors to their respective rooms. Their tense stillness gives the impression that they were goofing off moments ago and must have just snapped to attention.

Cubicles motions to the people within. "This is Team Two."

Captain Ohblivious waves to Team Two, Andy leans forward to peer into the hallway like he recognizes one of the

people, but the sliding door quickly whisks shut. Cubicles moves on down the four-lane highway they call a hallway.

“Does that make us Team One?” Andy asks, speedily recovering from a near miss with the sliding door.

Cubicles stops just in front of an even larger set of double doors. He shoots Andy a puzzled look before turning his attention to Jason. “Jason, did you not get my emails?”

Jason blushes as the others focus their attention on him. “After the Fortress of Cubicles burned down, we got about ten thousand emails. So, we had to get a new address.”

Libby shakes her head, adding some gravity to Jason’s statement. “I’ve never seen so much hate mail.”

Kirby mumbles, “That’s because you have interns to filter that out for you.”

Cubicles’s eyes light up as he whips out his data pad. “Oh good. I had feared my email bot did not work. So, Jason, what is your new one?”

Jason seems rather hesitant to provide it, but after looking at the others for support or input and receiving zilch, he reluctantly states, “It’s TheOhForce@NE.AL.CA”

Cubicles jots it down on his pad and asks, “Is ‘it’s’ part of the address?”

Jason shakes his head ever so slightly. “No, it’s is part of the statement.”

“This kind of semantic misunderstanding is exactly why I never use contractions.” Cubicles makes a couple more taps on his screen. He picks his head back up from the pad as Jason’s slate chimes with a notification.

Cubicles motions to his left. “Let me introduce you to the lady on my left, Mary Ficelle. She goes by the code name The Master of Marionettes.”

The Oh Force follows Cubicles’s gesture.

Captain Ohblivious glances around at head level, oblivious to the fact that the others are looking down. In the end he settles for staring at the wall. “That's a weird name for an invisible man.”

A deep feminine voice with a Slavic accent replies, “I guess my height does give me a bit of an advantage-”

“Wow-whoa!” Ohblivious jumps, startled by the sound of a voice coming from below his sight line.

“-when I am on an op.” The voice finishes.

The Captain finally looks down and notices a rugged woman with dwarfism wearing a top hat and cape. Her body is that of a Russian gymnast from the early 60s with a gnarled muscular physique. A large scar over the left half of her face completes her overall intimidating demeanor.

Cubicles proceeds with the introduction, “As our Combat Master, Mary heads the training program at Cube U

and is your back up when necessary. Now there is still a lot for us to see, so let us move on.”

Cubicles continues down the corridor with The Oh Force in tow.

Master Ficelle throws her hands up in frustration. “Wait, is that it?”

“Yes Mary, that will be all for now.” Cubicles answers without looking back.

Master Ficelle rubs her forehead. Kirby respects the gesture and finds a bit of affinity for the woman.

Cubicles leads them to a series of large, frosted windows. He presses a button next to one of them and it becomes transparent so that the team can see inside. Through the glass Dr. Kanji, the woman who leads the Vigilantes Anonymous group, looks far more clinical in a pristine white lab coat. Around her is a semi-circle of chairs holding four others dressed in standard blue scrubs with an empty chair flanking the doctor on either side. Andy immediately spots Susan Pernova and Stuart Placaté, waving at them emphatically. Looking away, Jason hides his face with his hand to avoid being recognized by Dr. Kanji and Max.

Andy, misunderstanding Jason’s discomfort, points at Jason while yelling loudly. “Hey Jason! Look! It’s Sue and Stu! Hi guys! Hey... I don’t think they can hear us.” Andy raises a hand up to bang on the window.

“No!” Libby and Cubicles both speak in unison.

Libby reaches out to stop him, but before she has an opportunity to intervene, Cubicles snatches Andy's wrist in the blink of an eye.

Andy glances at the chiseled fingers clutching his arm with a firm and solid grip. "I just wanted to say hi..."

When Cubicles feels Andy's muscles relax, he releases his hold. "They cannot see you, Andrew."

Andy deflates. "They can't see us?"

"No, Andrew. It is a one-way mirror." Cubicles responds apathetically.

Kirby raises her hand, thinking that she has caught a slip up by Cubicles. "Aren't they called two-way mirrors?"

Cubicles focuses his attention on Kirby. "Yes, Kirby, but I refuse to use that terminology as it is misleading."

Kirby raises a singular eyebrow. "Why?"

Cubicles touches the glass. "Because, Kirby, that nomenclature implies it should be mirrored on both sides."

Kirby tilts her head to the side, considering his logic. "Huh, I guess you're right."

Cubicles gets back on track, raising two fingers. "This is our second unit, the Mental Ailments Department. We have devoted twenty-five percent of the first floor to assist those who struggle with their abilities." Cubicles leans towards Captain

Ohblivious and lowers his volume. “Plus, it is a great tax write-off, Rupert.”

Ohblivious grabs his head and wriggles uncomfortably. “Tell the voices in my tummy to stop!”

Andy’s stomach grumbles as if agreeing with The Captain. “So, yeah... about that free food.”

Cubicles perks up, remembering what they’re there for. He quickly taps the button again, turning off the viewing window. “Oh yes, lunch.” He holds up three fingers. “First, we need to go to floor three to get you signed in with security. We will head to the ceremony shortly after.”

Cubicles and the team head towards the elevator with a sense of purpose.

Kirby clarifies “All you can eat ceremony, right?”

“Yes, Kirby, there is a buffet.” Cubicles replies with bland indifference.

Andy quickens his pace with a little pep in his step. “Sweet!”

**S.H.i. Depa**



**#5****5****PAGES****Super Holy Poisonous Punch Captain Oh!****GROUP THERAPY IN THE  
MENTAL AILMENTS  
DEPARTMENT**

Sue sits in the uncomfortable looking chair chewing on her nails. Her sarcastic veneer has been stripped away, revealing the bundle of nerves beneath. Stu is a mess, wearing a not so fresh-looking straitjacket adorned with a warning label ‘Beware, he bites’ where a nametag should be. Max sits engrossed by some pudding cups on a little utility table in the center of the room. These therapy sessions are not really meant for Max. However, as the ward of Dr. Kanji, he goes wherever she does.

Olivia Athimos sits next to Max, between him and the empty chair beside the Doctor. Her jet-black hair and pale complexion are accentuated by her crystal blue eyes. Her posture is a slouched slump complete with a textbook example of manspreading.

The space is drab, such that you would expect from a group therapy room in a clinical setting. It is a white room with white floors, white walls, and white folding chairs. Even the stainless-steel utility table has a powder coating of white.

Doctor Kanji gestures to Sue without looking up from her data pad, “Well Sue, if you ever want to talk about your dangerous ability, we’re always willing to listen.”

Sue fiddles with her cuticles. “I’m just afraid that if I let it out, I’ll blow up and never put myself back together again. Kinda like Humpty Dumpty.”

Dr. Kanji gives her a knowing nod. “I really wish you wouldn’t hide behind your humor, Sue. Everything seems insurmountable until you take that first step. We’re happy to provide you a safe place whenever you’re ready.”

The doctor turns her head slightly in the direction of Max without taking her eyes off the pad in front of her. “Max, do you have anything you’d like to share with the group today?”

Max stands up and excitedly struts over to the snack table. “Mom can I-”

“Now Max, when we’re in sessions it’s Doctor.” Dr Kanji interrupts him.

“Okay, Doctor Mom can I share the pudding?”

“I don’t know Max. *Can* you share the pudding?”

“I sure can! Thanks Mom. I mean Doctor Mom!”

Max holds his hands out in front of him and raises them, causing the pudding cups to float up into the air. He turns to the rest of the group with his hands spread, sending the sweet treats across the room. As he drops his hands to grab the pudding in front of him, the others fall into the laps of their intended recipients. Max pries the plastic utensil loose from the lid as he saunters back to his seat.

Dr. Kanji's COMM, which looks like nothing more than a normal wristwatch, starts beeping. "Olivia, it's time for your appointment with Dr. Smith." She taps her wrist bound COMM to turn off the chiming.

Olivia stands in a way that seems a little eager, considering what her outward demeanor would suggest. She begins folding her chair to place it against the wall.

"We were supposed to have another woman joining us today but," Dr. Kanji looks at her pad once more, "it seems Camille Young was unable to attend."

"Uh, excuse me," A little squeak of a voice comes from the empty chair to the Doctor's left.

It startles almost everyone in the room, even prompting Dr. Kanji to look up from her data pad. Max does not seem to be phased. Instead, he methodically digs in the corners of his pudding cup to extract the last of its creamy contents.

With all their eyes searching for a voice, they find there's now a person in the previously unoccupied chair. She's an average looking young female with one of those faces that is not easy to remember, even after you've met her a few times. This easily overseen woman's unlucky ability prevents her from being noticed unless she makes her presence overtly known. Camille struggles to make strong human connections due to her condition; her meek nature only exacerbates the issue.

Dr. Kanji studies Camille’s face as she intentionally triggers the young woman’s fears. “My apologies. I didn't see you there.”

Camille’s face scrunches into an expression near tears as she whimpers, “No one ever does.”

Max takes notice and reaches his hand out in front of him.

“I am sorry for having to force this issue, but with an extra-human ability like yours you will never be noticed unless you put yourself out there. Right now, you’re imprisoned in a shell of your own making. You’ve taken a huge step today and I’m proud of you.” Dr. Kanji provides Camille with her full undivided attention.

One of the remaining pudding cups floats off the table.

Camille loses it and begins bawling. “Thank you.”

Dr. Kanji rises from her seat and follows the pudding cup over to Camille. The Doctor places a reassuring hand on the young woman’s shoulder. Before it even touches Camille, incorporeal wisps reach out from her hand like tendrils and draw the elevated emotions out of inconsolable teen.

Although Dr. Kanji cannot feel any emotions, she has the ability to absorb them from others, but only in limited amounts. Once her capacity is full, she must dispose of them, but only into another human host. This is unfortunate for all her interns whose job descriptions include being a vessel for

emotion disposal. You can imagine that, although a very well-paid position, her interns do not last long.

Dr. Kanji provides calming words with a flat and even tone. “We can’t get anywhere without taking small steps in the right direction. It’s best to focus on the next goal at hand instead of the problem as a whole. If you keep moving forward, you will complete your journey before you even know it.”

Camille’s elevated state abruptly begins to subside as Olivia makes her way out the door of the room and into the hallway. Oddly the entire room seems to get a little more optimistic with the absence of Olivia.

Camille starts to settle and looks over at Dr. Kanji with true affection through her tear-soaked face. She smiles as she plucks the pudding out of the air “This is all I’ve ever wanted. It’s nice being seen. Thank you.”

Max pipes up as he deftly tosses his empty pudding cup into a garbage bin from across the room. “You’re welcome!”



**#6**

4

**PAGES****Super Holy Poisonous Punch Captain Oh!****SINGLES SESSION  
WITH DR. SMITH**

The door slides closed behind Olivia with a thunk. She is surrounded by a deafening silence due to the acoustic padding lining the hallway, only adding a sense of isolation to her already depressed state. Unlike most people, her depression stems from her ability. Ever since puberty, Olivia has been afflicted with an aura of suppression that impacts receptors for serotonin and dopamine. This causes a chemical imbalance in her and everyone within her general vicinity, instantaneously sending them into a mental pit of despair.

As Olivia starts to trudge down the hallway, the only sounds are her heavy breathing and her muted footsteps. There isn't an echo as her feet softly pad on the smooth sterile floor. Her every exhale comes out as a sigh, but the space between each begins to quicken. The beat of Olivia's heart becomes more prevalent as it speeds up with nervous energy. She begins to walk with a sense of urgency as she gets closer to the end of the hall.

Olivia pauses before a door with a soft wood grain. It stands out against the clinical theme of the Mental Ailments Department. She hesitates a bit, pulling her hand back from the shiny metal knob as if internally asking herself, 'Are you ready?' She clenches her hand once more to summon the courage to proceed. Moving with haste, as if afraid she might chicken out, she grabs the knob and turns it swiftly. Olivia

gives it a soft push allowing it to slowly creak inward. Its lackadaisical pace is a welcome reprieve from the standard automatic sliding doors that are ever-present in the facility.

As she enters the room, the aura of depression emanating from her dissipates and she is immediately flooded with a warm fuzzy feeling. The wood paneled room is lined with bookshelves on either side. Only half of the shelves are filled with books and the rest covered in knickknacks and various awards. Keeping with the motif, a wooden desk at the end of the small room has two chairs on either side. Dr. John Smith occupies the one behind the desk.

Dr. Smith is a rather average man. His receding brown hair, brown eyes, and astoundingly average proportions almost make him stand out for just how truly average he is. His attire does not help dispel his bland features, even though his scruffy beard plays well with his casual cardigan. He gestures to the chair across from him without a word.

Olivia sits down, accepting the implied invitation. Her posture and demeanor change considerably. Where once she was disinterested and detached, she's now attentive and somewhat perky. This radical shift in personality is a direct result of Dr. Smith's ability. Much like his average appearance, his aura has a similar effect on those around him, making them average by nullifying their extra-human abilities.

Dr. Smith gives Olivia a kind and endearing smile. "Welcome back, Olivia. We have some exciting news for you today."

He stands up from his chair and reaches his hand over the very average sized desk to offer his greeting. She grasps his hand ever so gently, almost in awe of being in his presence. And for the first time in what seems like a very long time, she smiles with true appreciation for the man across the desk.

The words sink in as Olivia’s nerves flare up in apprehension. She shifts in her seat uncomfortably. “Exciting is subjective. What’s the news Doc?”

“Before we get to that,” Dr. Smith sits back down, examining the screen embedded in his desk. “I want to go over a few things. How are you feeling right now?”

Olivia sits deep in thought, reflecting upon her current disposition. “Well, actually, I've been depressed this entire week. But right now, I feel pretty amazing!”

“That's great!” Dr. Smith grins with just his lips as he clasps his hands together in a singular pop of applause. “I'm so glad to hear it. I've been reviewing your file, and I believe you are an excellent candidate to graduate from our program here.”

Olivia is taken aback by this new revelation, feeling a bit stunned. She frowns in disappointment at the prospect of leaving the care of the facility. She had just begun getting comfortable with the structure this environment provided. She posits the possibilities of what this will mean for her.

“We better get started if you want to be out any time today.” Dr. Smith grabs a substantial stack of discharge papers from a cubby on the outskirts of his desk.

Not quite sure of what to say, she blurts out, “I wouldn’t mind if it takes all day.” She blushes, realizing that sounded a little more desperate than she anticipated.

Dr. Smith chuckles as he reaches over to grab a second stack of paperwork that is substantially smaller. “Cubicles doesn’t really know the meaning of brevity, at least when paperwork is concerned.” He waves the less daunting documents at her. “It’s okay, I have a CliffsNotes version.”



**#7**

9

PAGES

Super Holy Poisonous Punch Captain Oh!

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS  
THEN WE EAT**

Cubicles leads The Oh Force into the multipurpose room, which is basically just a gymnasium that has been repurposed. The room's slate gray floors contrast nicely with the cool gray walls. The flooring is made of a sturdy, self-healing material to absorb and repair the damage done by the *Super* Heroes in Training. White lines crisscross the floor in different patterns for various sports and activities. The scent of a brunch buffet wafts in the air and activates the salivary glands in the team. Their urge to rush up to the tables with all due haste is tempered by the presence of several people in chairs in front of a simple stage.

A few of the people in the chairs are familiar from various news outlets. Leslie Neilsen III and the *NENN* crew take up the entire front row. In the second row, there are other notable bloggers, vodcasters, and influencers. There is one representative from paper news media amongst them. Barney Flaherty slouches in one of the chairs on the edge, wearing a white shirt with 'PRESS: Newsie News' printed in Arial bold on the back. Seated in the third and final row, trying his best to be conspicuously inconspicuous, the Lord of Dance sits wearing a flannel shirt with a denim jacket and jeans. He completes his Canadian tuxedo with reflective sunglasses and an ushanka. Looming behind the Notorious LOD, wearing the basic bodyguard ensemble, is Warwick Percell: the Replicating Stooge.

Cubicles tries to wrangle the hungry heroes and usher them towards the stage, past several cafeteria style tables with fold down benches attached to them. Captain Ohblivious ignores him, staring longingly at the spread spanning the length of the room. Deciding it is probably for the better, Cubicles leaves Ohblivious to his own devices. The Captain begins searching around for somewhere plop his bottom while Cubicles guides the rest of the team up to the stage. Cubicles takes a spot behind a singular podium. The others notice labels projected on the floor behind him. They take their positions with a hefty amount of uncertainty. Andy hurriedly tries to dust himself off, hoping his clothes are not sullied from flopping on the floor.

Cubicles gestures for the room to be quiet and presses an earpiece. “Alright I think that we are ready to get-”

A loud screech reverberates through the mostly empty room as Captain Ohblivious noisily drags one of the cafeteria tables up to the buffet. Had he not been so oblivious, The Captain may have noticed that the fold-down benches were also present on the buffet tables themselves.

Cubicles waits for what seems to be an endless grind to stop. When it finally does, he continues speaking to the person in his ear. “We are ready to get start-”

Several more shrill squeals come from the back of the room as Captain Ohblivious adjusts his seat into the perfect position, preparing to nom upon the smorgasbord of noshables.

Cubicles finally addresses Ohblivious. “Are you done yet, Rupert?”

“Done?!” Ohblivious calls back over his shoulder as his grubby hands start fondling a stack of sandwiches. “I’m just getting started!”

Cubicles takes a deep breath and waits a moment for Ohblivious to get lost in his food fervor. “*I believe* we are now ready. Let us go live.”

Distracted by a rustle behind him, Cubicles glances back to find Andy fiddling with his rumpled trench coat. “Andrew, it is time to begin.”

Andy stiffens up, looking forward as Cubicles starts addressing the audience.

“We would like to thank all of those who came out today, in person or online, for this press ceremony. This is a momentous event not just for New Edmonton, but for Canada. And one day, the world. This will be a proof of concept to show that our extra-human abilities will be an asset for law enforcement. With the backing of our investors – and approval from the Canadian Government – today I am excited to present to you our inaugural team of superheroes, Team Oh.”

He gestures behind him while training his eyes onto the Lord of Dance. “They have been assembled to address the rising threats within our great city.”

The Lord of Dance chuckles as applause is pumped in through the speakers. Barney looks around at the other press who are doing nothing more than a golf clap if anything. He’s unsure if the applause is from the online audience or simply an

audio track. In the event it is real, Barney hesitantly begins clapping.

Cubicles starts gesturing with his hands to quiet the room again, and the applause through the speakers slowly fades down. “And now we will take some questions. Leslie Nielsen the Third?”

Leslie’s crew jumps into action as she stands. “Thank you for allowing me *two* questions. First, I’d like to address all the fires. Is this going to be standard operating procedure?”

Barney starts angrily scratching out the only thing written down on his notepad as he mutters under his breath. “I lay all the groundwork.”

“That is an excellent question, Leslie.” Cubicles nods in understanding. “The fires were not started by Team Oh: the bank was unaffiliated, The Fortress of Cubicles was burned by a disgruntled employee, and their prior headquarters was burned down by an electrical mishap.”

The rest of the team looks over at Captain Ohblivious who is blissfully stuffing his face with food. The table directly in front of him looks to be significantly emptier than it was just moments ago.

“Mmmm it’s so good!” The Captain leans back in his chair, rubbing his belly and moaning loudly. “You guys don’t know what you’re missing.”

Kirby purses her lips with disdain and starts taking a slight step forward. Libby gives her a swift elbow, nodding her head at the cameras.

Leslie waves dismissively. “The second question I have for you is quite simple.” She gestures to the room around them. “Why all of this?”

Cubicles jumps back in, as the newly rebranded Team Oh begin to believe that they are merely props. “Infrastructure is important. Starting with a strong foundation is a recipe for long-term success. This facility was not only built as a beacon of hope for New Edmonton, but also as a training center for our *super* heroes of tomorrow.”

Cubicles motions for Leslie to take a seat and then calls out, “Next question, Charlotte Montgomery.”

Charlotte, the barista from Bunker’s Bean Barn, stands up with her vlogging camera on a stick. “Yeah, my viewers would like to hear from Libby. So, you’re running multiple fashion brands, constantly modeling, and even have a book coming out this year. Where will you find the time to take on these new responsibilities?”

Cubicles steps aside allowing Libby to take the mic. “Diligence, hard work, and perseverance go a long way. It really comes down to the desire to be successful in everything you do. Every day I strive to be better than the day before.”

Kirby rolls her eyes at the cliché comment. Jason evens out the pain on Kirby’s other side with a quick nudge to her

ribs without even looking. It's as if he instinctively knows that she would be doing something unprofessional.

Cubicles smiles approvingly at Libby as Charlotte speaks back up to ask another question "Will you be designing the outfits?"

Cubicles steps back in, taking the mic from Libby. "I am sorry. We have limited time today and each person will only be allowed one question."

Charlotte looks confused. "But... she got two." She points at Leslie who smirks in response.

Cubicles nods once. "Yes, it is in her contract. Barney Flaherty, you are next."

Although he has managed to jot down several random topics next to his crossed-out question, Barney just blurts out the first one that comes to mind. "Is the city really that bad that we need more cops?"

Cubicles stares at him for a good moment before responding. "Yes, we have *two*." He emphasizes this by raising two fingers. "They could really use the extra support. And I must clarify that we will not be police officers. Our teams will serve as a tool that the Law Enforcement Agencies will have at their disposal."

Cubicles lets out an exasperated sigh. "Apollo."

The Lord of Dance gracefully rises from his seat, waves his arm across the room, and takes a ceremonious bow as if his

every action is performance art. He has traded out his pompous British accent for an offensively fake Canadian one. “Yes, I’d like to hear from Jason, eh. I saw you listed as The Illusionist but on *NENN* you were reported as being Mime Man. Can you clarify that for us, bud?”

Kirby starts to step forward to take the mic, but Jason jumps in front of her, pushing her out of the way. “That was just a general misunderstanding.”

Lord of Dance pipes back up. “So which one is it, eh?”

“Only one question per person, Apollo.” Cubicles smiles as he retakes the podium from Jason. “Now we will take a question from our virtual attendees. Next, we have Judy Li with Toronto Today.”

A female voice comes over the speakers. “Yes, I have a question for the hunky one.”

Andy and Jason both try to move for the mic at the same time. As they bump shoulders, they stare at one another in disbelief. Cubicles glares at two albinos that sit in a corner near a laptop. They have definitive familial traits and androgynous features. They both have heterochromia with one eye that is blue and one that is green, but their eyes are oppositely colored. They shrug in unison.

Captain Ohblivious wipes his hands on the tablecloth. As he stands up, the table slides back with another horrible screech. He throws one hand up in the air. “Present!”

Judy's flirtatious voice continues through the PA system. "Well, the tall one obvi. So, I have to ask. Who is the leader of your superhero team?"

Andy looks down at Jason, quite pleased with himself. He starts to step up to the mic as he hears Captain Ohblivious yell, "Spurts of Justice!"

In a matter of a second, Captain Oh the venerable hero of yesteryear, stands in front of Andy at the podium. Realizing that he still has food in his mouth, Oh picks up a clear plastic cup with the label 'Cubicles' from under the podium. As discretely as possible he spits the food into it, attempting to make it look like he is taking a drink and sets it back down. Cubicles grinds his teeth as he watches the once immaculate beverage become a spittoon.

Captain Oh postures up to his full height which is still not taller than Andy. "I'll address this one. Of course I'm the leader. It's called The Oh Force. What a stupid question. Next."

Cubicles takes the mic from Oh as he transforms back into Ohblivious. "That's enough for our panel today. *Team Oh* has important duties to which they must attend." Cubicles motions towards the buffet.

Ohblivious struts off the stage with purpose as he pulls a foil wrapped hotdog out of his neck pocket. "Damn right I do."



**#8****6****PAGES****Super Holy Poisonous Punch Captain Oh!****A PERFECTLY AVERAGE  
ENCOUNTER**

Team Oh comes out of a side passage looking like they could use a siesta after gorging on the buffet. Captain Ohblivious falls further and further behind, struggling to keep up with the rest of the group. He seems to have gained a couple pant sizes in the gut region. His stomach distends to the point that if he was wearing a T-shirt instead of his signature onesie, his belly would be peeking out for some fresh air.

Dr. Smith and Olivia enter the other end of the hallway, heading towards the entrance of the CUBE. Team Oh meanders towards them on a beeline to the elevators at the opposite end of the corridor. Olivia, now in street clothes, wears a pair of intentionally distressed black capris and a black T-shirt. Centered over her chest with pink stitching is the mischievous mascot for Goodbye Batty. The cartoony, chibi bat, caters to the youthful crowd who don't want to fit in. So, they all dress the same in a dark motif.

As the two groups close the distance between them, The Captain stops in his tracks after spontaneously changing into his younger more virile form of Captain Oh.

Dr. Smith looks down at his paperwork. "There's a few more things I have to check, but I believe we're all finished."

Olivia perks up a little when she learns there is a possibility, no matter how remote, that she may be allowed to stay.

Olivia and Dr. Smith continue past Cubicles and Team Oh, not looking up from the clipboard in John Smith's hands. No one notices that Captain Ohblivious, who has fallen behind due to his party paunch, has become Captain Oh. Oh tries to quantify what has just taken place, staring at his hands and body. He turns, looking back at Dr. Smith and Olivia who are continuing towards the CUBE entrance. It is at this point that he realizes that an outside element has transformed him without his consent. He whips around to face the rest of his team pointing one finger in the air to make a declaration. Just as Captain Oh opens his mouth to speak, Dr. Smith moves far enough away so that Oh is no longer under his aura's influence. The Captain's body withers around him, his posture slumps, and his food baby has been replaced with his standard beer belly.

Confused, Captain Ohblivious glances up to his hand, raising an eyebrow. "Why are you up there?" His face scrunches as he attempts to remember what he was about to declare.

A movement in his gut roars its displeasure, almost forcing him to double over. Any previous thought he might have had evaporates as he begins to realize there is a far more pressing issue. He extends his arm to its full length, keeping his finger up.

He blurts out, "I gotta poop!" certain that this must be what he intended to announce.

This exclamation seems to have no effect on any others in the corridor. It is at this time that Ohblivious realizes how far he is from the others. He whisks down the hallway toward the rest of the team, who have begun shuffling into the elevator with Cubicles.

On the other side of the corridor, Olivia and Dr. Smith head out the front doors to find the courtyard much less congested. There are a few people mingling amongst a still sizable amount of news crews, but it is barren of the thousands that were in the area just a couple hours ago. Olivia is quite apprehensive as she scans the large, open space, having become comfortable with the tight confines of her room in the CUBE.

Dr. Smith gives a little nod as he looks over to Olivia, who is already ready to meet his gaze. “We’re good to go! Here’s your COMM and your Slate. Here you’ll find a list of PLACE facilities to help get you on your feet. We’ve also preloaded it with some money for food and other essentials.”

Olivia tentatively takes the devices from his outstretched hand. “Thanks...”

Dr. Smith puts his hand out. “You’re welcome! You have a great rest of your life, and you know where I work if you ever need anything.”

Olivia only returns a half-hearted smile as she shakes the outstretched hand of Dr. Smith. Dr. Smith gives her a wink, one last smile, turns back to the entrance, and heads inside.

Olivia waits like a sad puppy as she watches the Doctor enter the building. When the doors silently slam shut, an

overbearing gloom drops on Olivia as suddenly as darkness fills a room when a light is extinguished. After staring at the doors, longing for them to reopen, she turns with a heavy sigh and trudges down the stairs. She slumps with every step, feeling the weight of the world once again upon her shoulders. Her complexion blanches as the sun comes from behind a cloud, beaming off her pale white skin. Everyone around her has also taken up her broody mood, as if reflecting on the ugliest parts of themselves.

Hearing laughter through a nearby window she turns, seeing the storefront for *The Innovator's Exotic Pets*. She watches a little girl giggle at an animal unlike anything in the known world. It looks similar to a racoon mixed with a Pomeranian. The inability to smile at the little girl's joy only sends her deeper into her own thoughts. These thoughts revolve around what you would call such a silly looking creature. Would it be a raccaranian or a pomeroon? Unfortunately, these thoughts do little to distract her from the dark dread growing inside of her.

She mopes away towards a bench in a small green space near the sidewalk. As she sits down underneath the covered seating area, a hologram pops up on one of the glass walls of the sun shelter.

The smiling face of Automaton takes up the majority of the display. His ever-cheery voice comes out of speakers built into the bench. "Are you feeling depressed?! Do you feel the need for salvation?! Come down to The Church of Multi-Denominational Faiths on the corner of 23rd and Keanu Boulevard!"

Just as the message begins to repeat itself, she looks down at the slate in her hand. The device lights up showing the list of PLACE (Providing Living Assistance, Community and Empowerment) facilities. Such facilities are managed by the city to help those that live on basic find housing arrangements. In this case, she finds that the church is also the PLACE she is looking for.

Olivia puts her slate down on her lap, staring at the heavily targeted advertisement with a wistful gaze. In a moment of unfettered determination, she jumps from her seat and waves her hand in the air, hailing an AutoCab. Within a matter of seconds one of the automated vehicles comes to a sudden stop in front of her. The door slides open and she climbs into the safety-orange colored transport. The door hisses closed, muting the sounds from outside.

Once more, as with all things in New Edmonton, Automaton greets her with an unsettling inquiry, “We noticed that you hailed a cab after hearing our advertisement! Would you like to go to the Church of Multi-Denominational Faiths?!”

Olivia takes one last look at her slate before meekly answering. “Yes.”

“Fantastic! Please keep your arms and legs inside the vehicle while you are transported to your destination! You may purchase beverages and snacks from the terminal in front of you! If you don’t find anything to your liking, you can also have other refreshments meet you at your destination! Enjoy your ride!”

# Don't Conform.



In stores  
Mostly  
Everywhere

Only Wear  
GOODBYE  
BATTY

**#9****8****PAGES****Super Holy Poisonous Punch Captain Oh!****BITS, BOTS, AND A BUNCH  
FAR TOO FAMILIAR**

Team Oh and Cubicles have made their way to the second floor of the CUBE. They stand in front of a red door in a stark white hallway.

Cubicles pats the door affectionately. “This is our new headquarters.”

Andy tilts his head, staring at Cubicles quite puzzled. “*Our* new headquarters?”

Cubicles puffs out his chest ever so slightly in pride. “Yes, once I found our headquarters had burned down,” Cubicles waves his hand, as if trying to encapsulate the entirety of the building around them. “I built this as our new base of operations.”

This only makes the puzzled look on Andy’s face spread to the others in the hall, with the exception of Captain Ohblivious who is too busy dancing around, holding his colon through his gut. Jason fidgets with his fingers, trying to put the pieces together.

Andy chimes in again, this time much more accusatorily motioning to everyone but Cubicles, “After *our* headquarters burned down.”

Jason quickly pipes in, trying to avoid having it seem like they are looking the proverbial gift horse in the mouth. “Really?! Wow.”

Cubicles smiles just a tinge as he turns to open the door. Libby nods at Jason in approval for stepping in when he did. Cubicles puts his hand once again onto a nearly imperceptible hand scanner to the right of the door. The door slides open with a quick thunk, revealing the biggest shock as of yet: a clean version of the kitchen and living room from their old apartment.

Cubicles continues to look very pleased with himself, at least in regards to the limited emotive capability he possesses. “You were so productive in our old environment, that we have replicated it perfectly.”

Kirby rolls her eyes at Jason and states mockingly, “Really, wow.”

Andy pokes his head in, filling the doorway. “Wow. No, but really, wow! How’d you get it so... eerily similar? It’s like you just bought new versions of all our old stuff.”

Cubicles places a hand onto Andy’s shoulder. “Yes, Andrew! It is amazing, is it not?”

Andy looks rather uncomfortable with the unwanted contact from Cubicles. “Amazing isn’t really the word I’d use to describe it.”

“More like creepy.” Kirby finishes his thought.

The team notices that not everything is the same. For one there is a new backless bench in the corner of the entry way, where Íre Tator sits quietly. On the coffee table in the middle of the room is a thick hardcover book with the title *Official Heroes Handbook - Edition Zero* next to two sizeable stacks of paperwork. The biggest difference is that the hallway and all the bedrooms are nowhere to be seen.

Andy takes a few steps into their new-old headquarters, staring at the wall where his bedroom used to be. “So, do we like go back to the hotel-”

“Motel” Kirby pipes in to correct him.

“Motel.” Andy continues. “Because I don’t think Anne will be too happy to see us. Afterall, we still can’t pay the rent.”

Jason joins the conversation. “See, you called it rent.”

“She called it rent!” Andy attempts to defend himself.

“I called it rent.” Jason says smugly.

Libby decides that this is where the discussion should end. “I think we can all agree. It’s called rent.”

Captain Ohblivious barges past everyone into the room jittering and now holding his bottom. “I don’t care what it’s called! You guys jibber jabber about nonsense all the time. Let’s talk about something important like where’s the bathroom?!”

Cubicles raises an eyebrow at him. “It is where it has always been, Rupert.”

Ohblivious scrunches his face trying to wrap his head around the statement. “Are you talking about my secret lair? That’s all the way across town and it’s out of order!”

Cubicles tries to state things in a way that Captain Ohblivious can understand. “This headquarters has the same floorplan as our old headquarters. You will find the lavatories in the same place as they were before. The exception to this is the bedrooms. You have all been given your own personal accommodations.”

Libby breathes a sigh of relief. “Oh, thank the gods.”

The Captain nods and hurries over to a door on his left.

Libby notices that Ohblivious is heading to the wrong door, and her sigh of relief transforms in a moment of panic. “That’s the closet!”

Captain Ohblivious alternates between Libby and the door. Libby helps him out by pointing to a door on the right.

Ohblivious scampers towards the correct door while chiding, “So not everything is where it used to be.”

Libby’s face twists in disgust as she realizes that the apartment burning to the ground may not be the worst thing to have happened in its history.

Cubicles knocks on the table, redirecting the team's attention to the matters at hand. "Please make sure you read the handbook thoroughly before you sign your contracts."

Kirby lets out a groan befitting a teenager having been asked to clean their room for the fifth time that day. "But reading is so boring. Do you have an audiobook version?"

Andy nods his agreement while everyone else just ignores Kirby's childish protest.

Libby picks up one of the contracts and begins thumbing through it. After reading the first line on the contract, 'By signing this contract you agree to all terms as outlined in the handbook,' she also picks up the handbook and sits down on the couch.

Andy inspects the formidable forms and the leather-bound book. "How many trees do you think were killed for that book?"

Cubicles beams and raises a pointed finger. "None, Andrew! We only use recycled paper that comes from landfill mining."

Andy raises an eyebrow in a playful manner to Cubicles. "But *that* paper came from trees, right?"

Cubicles cocks his head to one side giving Andy a considering look. "I suppose so, Andrew."

Andy grins contentedly, "So what's your guess? How many trees?"

Cubicles stares at the book and papers intensely as a small boxy robot rolls through the room on tracks. The BOT has a webcam for a head and emits a strange humming sound.

Kirby picks up the TV remote and starts poking it. “I really don't remember having one of these?”

The BOT lights up two arrows on its back that point to a slot with a cartridge fused inside. In a monotonous robotic voice, nowhere as cheery as Automaton, “I'll show you where to stick it.”

Kirby stops poking and looks uncomfortably at the remote in her hand and then back to the BOT. “Well, that's kind of rude.”

Libby leans over the arm of the couch to get a glimpse of the robot, letting out a light chuckle.

The BOT once again says, “I'll show you where to stick it.”

Libby is intrigued as well as a bit put off by the phrase. “That time it didn't even make sense.”

Cubicles, Jason, and Andy join the ladies around the BOT. Well, ladies may be too strong of a word when referring to Kirby, so let's change that to women. Cubicles, Jason, and Andy join the women around the BOT.

“Ah, yes, this a post war prototype appropriately named Basic Operations Tool.” Cubicles points to the cartridge slot. “It is perfectly functional with the exception of the voice

modulator that only says one phrase. It will take care of your household duties.”

Kirby changes her tone as she now looks admiringly down at the mechanical maid. “Is it too early to say I love you?”

The BOT again says, “I’ll show you where to stick it.”

Libby shudders as she whispers in Cubicles’s direction, like she is trying to ask something that she doesn’t want the BOT to hear, “Can we unplug the voice box?”

The camera that makes up the BOT’s head swivels rapidly to stare at Libby, clearly indicating it heard her.

Cubicles pauses excitedly, “No!”

Libby scooches over to the other side of the couch to put more space between her and the BOT.

“I’m gonna name it!” Andy kneels in front of the BOT, staring directly into the camera. “Do you have a name little guy?”

“I’ll show you where to stick it.”

“That’s a little long, let’s come up with something a bit shorter.”

The rest of Team Oh quickly disperse and begin exploring their not-so-new headquarters. Andy reels off a series

of names in quick succession, every once in a while, asking the bot for its input.

**Botbert**

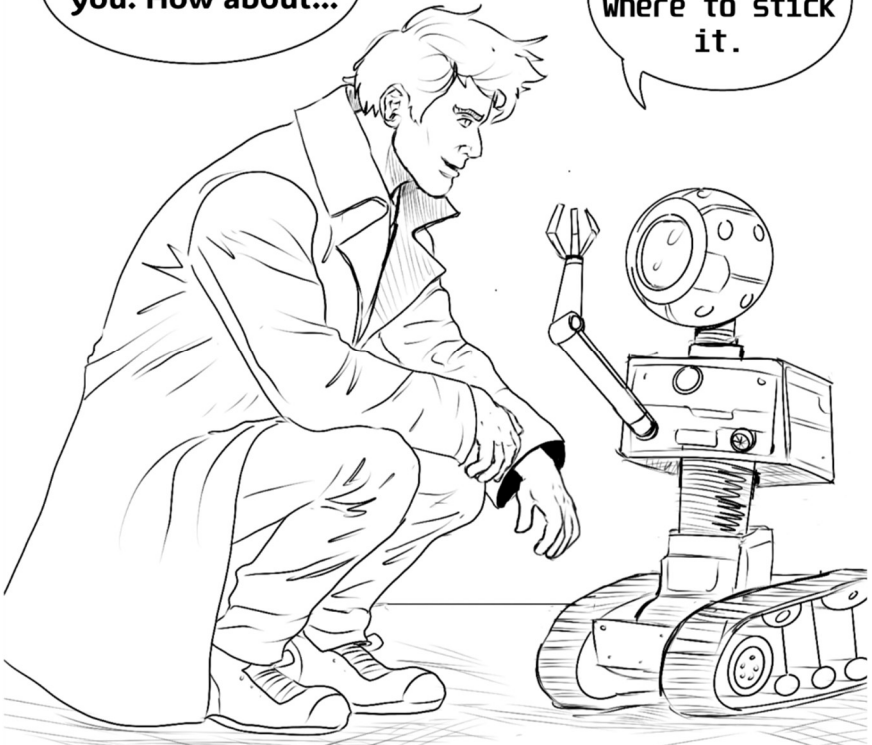
**Frederick  
Bottington**

**Botty  
Crocker**

**Botty  
the Botler**

**Yeah, Yeah. I heard  
you. How about...**

**I'll show you  
where to stick  
it.**



**#10**

**9**

**PAGES**

Super Holy Poisonous Punch Captain Oh!

**AND THE DISAPPOINTMENT  
CONTINUES**

Captain Ohblivious stands up from his porcelain throne, pulling up his underwear through his butt flap.

The Captain surveys the room and nods his approval. “This is definitely not the same as the last one. It is so much bigger. The last one was like a closet.”

Ohblivious pulls the towel from the top of the toilet tank. “And they kept all this weird crap in there. There wasn’t enough room for *my* crap.” He chuckles at his intentional pun. “Oh, I miss you, bucket.”

Captain Ohblivious wipes his hands off on the towel without washing them first, chucking it back to its regular resting place. The Captain heads out to join the others, looking back over his shoulder and trying to fasten the last button on his butt flap. Out of the corner of his eye, he spots the BOT. His mouth drops open as he freezes, inspecting its boxy form.

Kirby tries to sit next to Libby who is cross-referencing things between the needlessly large contract and equally needlessly large book. Kirby jumps up uncomfortably as she is nearly impaled by the giant scissors sticking out of her pocket. She unsheathes the shears from her pants, moseys into the kitchen, and begins looking in the drawers for a suitable place

to store them. Not finding anywhere they will fit, she opts to put them on top of the refrigerator.

Jason moves to the far-right wall as he notices a difference in the textures. He slides his hand over the shiny metal panel of the wall, giving it a little knock and receiving a hollow sound in reply.

Jason turns back to Cubicles “What’s this thing?”

Cubicles pries himself away from the name game after hearing Andy’s latest terrible suggestion, Sticky McBotface.

“I’ll show you where to stick it.”

Andy looks around for approval. “See, it kind of works.”

He slows at the end of his statement when he realizes that the rest of the group has decided to actively ignore his shenanigans. He shrugs, going back to stare at the BOT.

Cubicles, now over with Jason, places his hand on another nearly invisible panel on the wall. The shinier section of the wall moves, revealing it was a door all along. “It is an elevator with a biometric scanner. It was designed for easy access to the operation floors.”

Cubicles probably didn’t have to state that it was an elevator as it is quite evident by the musak emanating from within.

Jason searches for the scanner on the wall, still finding it hard to spot even with Cubicles's hand on top of it. "Did you have to hide the scanners?"

"No, Jason. I did not." Cubicles replies flatly.

Kirby shuffles up to stand next to Jason, whispering loudly enough to make certain Cubicles can hear. "Is he being sarcastic?"

Jason's eyes almost seem unfixed just before regaining his composure. "I don't think he *can* be sarcastic."

Cubicles looks to Andy. "Andrew, roughly seventy-five percent of a small tree and about point one five percent of a cow."

"And..." Jason rolls his head over to Kirby. "He just made my point."

Andy spins about and stands from his knees. "Huh?"

Cubicles addresses the room expectantly as he heads into the elevator. He holds a button to keep the doors open. "Let me show you the other floors."

Libby lifts from the couch with her eyes glued to the contract.

Captain Ohblivious takes one more look at the BOT. His eyes go wide. "I now know what you made me know! My toast!"

Captain Ohblivious jolts off in the direction of the kitchen.

Cubicles releases the button, unwilling to wait for The Captain's antics. Andy sticks his arm out to hold the doors, as he never tires of The Captain's antics.

Cubicles yanks him back and reaches out to press the 'open door' button. "Do not do that, Andrew! The doors do not stop for anything unless the button on the inside is pressed."

Andy stares at his arm in shock and then over to the button.

Libby finally pulls her attention from the contract. "Wouldn't that be a bit dangerous?"

"It is, Libby" Cubicles acknowledges this with a little nod, "but some things need to be sacrificed in the name of security."

Kirby joins Andy in looking at his arm, mostly just curious about what would have happened, but attempting to put on a concerned face.

Cubicles glances at his watch then out through the living room and into the kitchen. "Rupert?"

Captain Ohblivious comes bounding in shoving something into the top of his outfit, otherwise known as his neck pocket.

Cubicles releases the button holding the door open, taps B1, and then prods the one to close the doors. They slam shut with an alarming amount of haste, like a horizontal guillotine. Andy flinches while everyone else just stares in terror at his fragile forearm. There is an uneasy silence as the seconds pass, the group feeling like corpses cramped inside the confines of their collective coffin. All of them begin to contemplate the unknown dangers that Cubicles may have in store for them in their new work environment.

The tension is broken when Andy begins to hum along with the synthesized bossa-nova tune. Although the muzak has many variations, this ubiquitous background track retains the fundamental melody regardless of the genre.

Andy stops himself, shaking his head. “We’ve been riding way too many elevators recently. They all have the same stupid song and it’s too catchy.” Andy has an abrupt change in thought, whirling about to address Cubicles “Wait!” His eyes trace over to Captain Ohblivious. “Rupert?”

Ohblivious shoots him a thumbs up. “That’s my name, don’t wear it out.”

Cubicles nods, knowing this was a question directed towards him and not The Captain. This is why Cubicles chooses so often to use the first names of the people that he is speaking to, for the sake of clarity.

Cubicles claps a hand on the back of Captain Ohblivious. “That is correct, Andrew. This is a semi-formal professional environment. We call people by their full first names.”

Andy looks back at Captain Ohblivious, giving him a once over from top to bottom and back again, as if he is trying to see if the name fits.

Libby shakes her head. “You really don’t listen, do you Andy?”

Kirby scoffs “He’s said it like six times already.”

Cubicles raises his mansplaining finger. “Correction, Kirby. I have said Rupert five times so far today. This would be the sixth time.”

“See! Six times!” Kirby retorts.

Andy continues eyeing The Captain and finally says what’s on his mind. “But... Rupert? It really doesn’t seem to fit Captain Oh, the world’s greatest superhero!”

Ohblivious glares back at Andy with belligerent offense, poking him in the chest with his index finger. “It fits just fine! No captain goes by their first name. It’s Captain Kidd, not Captain Billy. And my other name has too many word parts, so I took some off!”

Andy rubs the sore spot in his chest where Captain Ohblivious jabbed him. “Your other name?”

The Captain looks at Andy with a dumbfounded face, as if everyone should know the answer to that question. “Yeah, my *sir*-name weirdo. Ohlemacher, DUH!”

Realizing this is a lost conversation, Andy just lets out a simple, “Oh...”

“I said don’t wear it out!” Captain Ohblivious yells at him as the elevator stops with a light ding.

The doors slide open just as quickly as they closed. The repetitive tune of the elevator muzak is drowned out by the sounds of pneumatic impact drivers, plasma cutters, and the drone of an air compressor.

They exit the elevator into a cement parking structure unlike any other they have seen. It looks like one part chop shop and one part mechanic bay. There are several projects in various stages of completion. Some seem like they may belong more in a hangar, while others appear to be more for military use. In the middle, sitting under a large light, is what looks suspiciously like Andy’s minivan. AKA, the Oh Mobile.

Cubicles points over his shoulder in its direction. “Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you the Oh Mobile Mark Two, TOR.”

Team Oh doesn't look very thrilled as they hear the name of their *new* ride especially when it looks exactly like their *old* one.

Kirby frowns, visibly upset, but hopeful for automatic driving. She says unenthusiastically, “So, like the headquarters, the van is going to be the same?”

“Please tell me there’s at least some modern updates,” Libby continues Kirby’s train of thought as only a good twin can do, “Like wireless connectivity instead of a tape deck.”

“It’s an 8 track, and it’s awesome.” Andy responds protectively.

Jason butts in. “You only have one working tape!”

Andy smiles thinking he came up with a witty come back. “Hey, it’s not elevator music and it doesn’t say I’ll show you where to stick it, so I think we’re good.”

Jason rolls his eyes. “It’s Men Without Hats!”

“And it doesn’t even have The Safety Dance on it.” Libby adds.

“It does,” Andy continues defending his derelict device, “program one just got worn out.”

Kirby rubs her chin. “So, if you can’t listen to it, does that mean you still have it?”

Andy stumbles as he is running out of excuses. “Yeah, it just doesn’t work. You know just because you have a flat tire doesn’t mean it’s not still there. And shut up!”

Cubicles has been watching them this whole time, very confused by their reaction. His eyes dart from person to person, trying to calculate the series of events that led to this argument.

He looks behind him, noticing the van that they were all focused on. “Ah! No, that one *is* your old van. It was parked in the middle of the street. We had to move it in.” He takes a few steps and grabs the edge of a blue cloth tarp covering a far larger vehicle just behind the Oh Mobile Mark One. “I was talking about this one.”

Their reactions change to surprise as Cubicles rips away the sheet. They seem rather stunned by the reveal, but that is quickly replaced by a curious disgust. They turn to confront a strange crunching sound that has risen above the noise of power tools in the background. They see Captain Ohblivious eating a piece of horribly charred toast. Charred to the point that only the mere shape of it suggests what it could be, other than a piece of charcoal. With the attention on him, Captain Ohblivious lowers the toast and slowly puts it into his neck pocket.



**#11****6****PAGES****Super Holy Poisonous Punch Captain Oh!****WHEN POWERS COLLIDE  
A CORRUPTED CONFESSION**

In a small, enclosed space with poor lighting, Olivia sits on a padded wooden bench covered with a crimson and brown argyle pattern. A little door slides open on the wall next to her, with mesh covering the hole. On the other side sits The Holy Man, less obscured by the mesh as it is brighter on his side of the confessional booth. Olivia immediately feels quite comfortable with him as his presence fills her with a bit of confidence, due to the Holy Man's aura of enlightenment.

“How can I help you today?” The Holy Man asks in a gruff voice that sounds not unlike Nick Nolte.

Olivia averts her eyes from his as if he can see her as clearly as she can see him. “I was told I could find salvation here.”

The Holy Man tries to shake off the overwhelming sense of despair that is flooding into him, so that he can remain professional. He gives her a little nod. “You can my child, what troubles you?”

Olivia, feeling an odd combination of empowerment and depression, is able to force a smile that comes off a little menacing. “I'm just depressed. All the time.”

The Holy Man looks up from the book he is reading. Instead of reverting to her default of avoiding eye contact, Olivia stares through the thin mesh with sincere interest.

The Holy Man takes off his thin pair of reading glasses and gives her a little reassuring smile. “You must find what truly makes you happy and hold on tight. Do you have anything like that in your life?”

Olivia gives his question some deep thought. Her smile transforms from subtly menacing to unsettling and outright manic, as though her true self has been overtaken by a darker alter ego. “Well, there is a man that makes me feel normal and being normal makes me feel happy.”

“We all need someone in our lives that sees us for who we really are,” says the Holy Man, shaking his head a bit, “But we can’t base our happiness on others. We need to search *within ourselves* to find what makes us happy.”

Olivia’s smile fades and her expression turns into one of brooding contempt.

The Holy Man takes notice, “This is not to say that you can’t seek him out and tell him how you feel. The key to happiness *is* truth. So, what you really need to do is find a way to love yourself and be the person you want to be.”

Although this information should be self-empowering, Olivia’s current state of mind interprets it very differently. She realizes that she can’t be the person she wants to be without being in the presence of John Smith.

A look of determination forms on Olivia's face. "Ok, I think I know just what to do."

"Now you have a goal, something to work towards," the Holy Man puts back on his pair of reading glasses, "So go with God and come back on the weekends. And if it doesn't work out, you know where to find me."

Olivia exits the booth into the nave, which looks rather confused about its identity. It sports a hodge podge of religious icons spanning the spectrum. In the center of the wall is a massive cross flanked by stained glass windows of Nordic, Greek, and Roman gods. The more you look across the sanctuary, the more the imagery borders on blasphemy. Opposite the confessional is a small alcove with symmetrical niches on either side. On the left is a golden effigy of The Angel Moroni while on the right is a bust of L. Ron Hubbard enshrined in bronze. Filling the space between the two is a Crescent Moon with a Star of David within.

Olivia is stopped in her tracks by what appears to be the sudden appearance of a group of shrouded figures. The small mob stands in front of her, their heads bowed in reverence. The hoods of their large flowing black robes obscure their faces as they kneel before her.

"She's here! The one we've been waiting for," one man calls out, raising his hands in prostration. "What is your bidding, our dark goddess?"

Olivia is stuck in place as her mind tries to catch up with what she's seeing before her.

The Holy Man exits the booth, surveys the crowd of kneeling people, and then looks angrily at Olivia. “What are they doing? Who are all these hooded people?”

The man from earlier speaks up as Olivia does not seem to be able find the words, let alone her voice. “We have been drawn here by the promise of salvation through servitude.”

Olivia feels a dark energy swirling around her as The Holy Man closes in. It is at this time she realizes that their two auras, one of depression and one of enlightenment, have combined. She stares at the hooded figures, now understanding what has inspired them to follow her with cult-like thralldom. A mischievous grin grows on Olivia’s face as she has been handed a simple solution to achieve her newly discovered goal.

“Get out of my church with this madness!” The Holy Man, feeling more frustrated than he thinks he should, points to the exit. “This is no place for these shenanigans. This is a house of the Gods!”

Olivia puts a soft hand on his shoulder as her grin grows teeth. “Oh, we’ll leave your church, but you’re coming with us.”

The Holy Man blows a raspberry. “No, I’m not!”

Olivia raises her finger to point at The Holy Man with malevolent intent while looking at her demented devotees. The crowd silently rises and slowly moves past her, over to The Holy Man. The man who has been speaking pulls a squashed roll of duct tape from his robes and rips off a strip. The figures surrounding the Holy Man grab him, holding his limbs secure.

The Holy Man struggles in vain against their overpowering numbers. He yells out with desperation in his voice, “What are you doing! Get off me!”

Olivia watches as the hooded man irreverently caresses the sticky strip across The Holy Man’s lips, then pats him gingerly on the head.

In a moment of vanity, she turns and examines herself in the reflection on a polished brass urn engraved with a depiction of Anubis holding the scales of judgement. “This’ll do.”

She and her followers make their way to the streets with The Holy Man taped to a cross. They unceremoniously shove the desecrated crucifix through the glass moonroof of an AutoCab. Olivia climbs into the self-driving taxi, setting the destination. Her followers surround her chariot, walking in front to ensure that it will stay with their procession. As they march toward the object of her desires, and with each building they pass, more hooded figures join the mob. As the coerced collective expands, their sphere of influence stretches further, drawing individuals from blocks away to join the flock of faithful followers. In the back of the group emerges a mass of people carrying a ridiculously large, uprooted tree, as if anticipating the needs of their diabolical deity.

They round the corner to reveal their destination as the CUBE. When they reach the front doors Olivia gracefully pulls herself through the improvised sunroof to stand on top of the AutoCab. She puts her arm around The Holy Man who is struggling against his bindings. With an elegant wave of her hand, Olivia parts the crowd without so much as a word. She throws her arm forward and instinctively the people

brandishing the improvised battering ram charge the doors. As the roots collide with the metal clad barrier it sends splintery bits off in all directions. They pull back the siege engine and prepare to heave it forward for another blow. Olivia plants a soft kiss on the duct tape covered cheek of The Holy Man before throwing her hands forward, heralding her horde to advance once more.





#12

10  
PAGES

Super Holy Poisonous Punch Captain Oh!

## AN ALARMING TURN OF EVENTS

A LITTLE WHILE EARLIER...

Libby and Cubicles work over her contract, completely ignoring the team's newly revealed battle wagon behind them. Libby flips through the contract while Cubicles uncomfortably hovers over her shoulder.

Libby takes a pen from Cubicles's breast pocket and crosses out a paragraph titled *Divestment of Interests*. "That's a non-starter. I'd never do that to my company."

"It was worth a try." Cubicles nods his head. "Most people do not even read these things."

Libby smiles and starts to cross out another paragraph labeled *Waiver of Medical Rights*.

Cubicles grabs the contract to stop her. "That section is non-negotiable. The research into our extra-human abilities is nascent. We need to cover our liabilities."

Libby looks at her now empty hand. "That's too broad of a definition. Are these negotiations over or is there opportunity to amend?"

There is a tinge of glee in Cubicles's eyes. "I think amendments can be arranged. This *is* a bilateral contract after all."

"Good." Libby holds out her hand. "Contract?"

Cubicles holds it out for her to read but doesn't relinquish control over the document. With a soft smile, Libby rolls her eyes and leans in to continue reading.

Behind them the many lights on TOR flicker on and off in random sequences, like a bad DJ got control of the stage lighting. TOR is a large torpedo shaped vehicle. The front of it resembles the Herkimer Battle Jitney with a large cattle plow attached to the bumper. The rear of the vehicle does not have wheels and instead has large tracks. The front wheels look almost like tracks, but they are round. It is outfitted with enough cameras, lights, and sensors to rival The Louvre. Strangely, there is no windshield on the vehicle.

Jason, Andy, and Kirby are inside TOR tinkering around with their new ride. Jason lounges on a bench in the rearmost compartment, reading the manual. Across from him, on a large wire equipment rack, Captain Ohblivious is crashed out and snoring loudly.

Kirby has taken up residency in the cockpit and found a way to connect her slate to the large screen that wraps around the entire spherical space. Kirby spins around in the captain's chair with a wide toothy smile as she plays a game on the immersive screen. The chair is clad in every possible control that the driver would need to pilot the landship.

Between the cockpit and the large space where Jason and Ohblivious are, is a command-and-control center. Here, Andy sits at a panel that seems to be from another generation. He randomly pokes at the various buttons, switches, knobs, and anything else he can get his grubby fingers on.

Although they are clearly labeled, he keeps speaking to himself as if they are not. “What’s this one do? What’s this one do? What’s this one do?”

Andy presses a button and Automaton’s voice comes over the interior speakers. “Launching drone assistance!”

“No no no no no, stop that, I don’t want drones!” Andy starts freaking out, pressing buttons and switches at random to try to take it back. “Are they armed drones? Wait, is this a drone strike? I can’t turn it off!”

Jason lets out a frustrated sigh as he dog-ears a page and closes the manual. He calmly sets down his reading material, stands up, and strolls over to where Andy is frantically smashing every control in sight.

Jason reaches out with casual nonchalance and presses the button that Andy originally pressed. “They’re labeled. And they’re toggles.”

“Cancelling drone assistance!” Automaton cheerily announces.

Jason stares at Andy, waiting to be certain that his easily distracted friend makes eye contact with him. Feeling Jason’s

eyes burning into the side of his head, Andy sheepishly turns to meet his insistent gaze.

Jason smirks and then states with a belittling tone, “They turn things on, *and* off.”

Jason leisurely pads back to peruse the pages of the operations manual. Andy scoffs at him then hesitantly looks at the control panel in front of him. His childlike curiosity gets the better of him and he goes back to randomly pressing buttons.

As Andy flicks a switch, an alarm starts to blare throughout the garage. He flicks the switch back to its original state, but the air raid siren continues to wail.

“Ah, c’mon! I have to resync?!” Kirby exclaims from the cockpit.

Andy squints at the single switch, as if staring harder might change the current state of auditory affairs. While Andy is aware that there is a label, he lacks the attention span to read it.

Andy tilts his head in the general direction of the rear cabin. “Uh... Jason? Did we not call off the drone strike?”

Andy attempts to move the switch to its central position, hoping that it has some hidden third state. The switch just snaps back down. Jason huffs as he gets back up from the bench, only just having found where he had left off with his reading material.

With more haste, Jason returns to Andy's side and looks at the panel. "Which button did you press this time?"

Andy flips the switch again. "It was a switch, and it's this one. It doesn't work. I think it's broken."

Jason reads the label on the switch out loud. "Cockpit Override."

"C'mon you glitchy drumpf!" Kirby yells out from the cockpit. A loud clambering erupts in the forward chamber as she mumbles out additional curses.

The door to the cockpit slides open and Kirby steps out. "Well, the cockpit's broken." She stares at the ceiling as if just noticing the alarm, and then back down to meet the concerned expression on Andy's face. "What did you do?"

Captain Oblivious, having been roused from his slumber, throws a boot at Andy. "What *did* you do?"

Andy searches his brain for an answer. "I... don't... know?"

Jason – far more observant than Mr. Easily Distracted, Mr. Oblivious, and Ms. I Don't Care – realizes that the sound is obviously coming from an external source. "For once, I don't think this was Andy's fault."

"It's not my fault! I just flipped a switch." Andy says.

"Yeah," Jason looks down at him with contempt. "And pressed every other button."

“Maybe it’s uh...” Kirby snaps her fingers and points to the board enthusiastically. “Like an old pop machine. Yeah, you know where it enters a special mode if you press the buttons in a certain order.”

Ohblivious, feeling left out of the conversation, sees his way in. “That’d make it Andy’s fault. So... that would mean... it’s... Andy’s fault!”

Jason stares at Captain Ohblivious and decides he no longer wants to be part of this asinine conversation. He slaps his hand against the wall next to the door. Andy, being 90 percent certain that it wasn’t him, gets up to stand behind Jason.

After waiting around for a few moments, Jason begins sliding his hand up and down on the wall trying to locate the biometric scanner. “Why are they so hard to find?”

“For security, Jason. Security,” Andy pipes in from behind him, using his best Cubicles impersonation.

“But it’s on the inside!” Jason retorts.

“Prisoners?” Kirby adds, unhelpfully.

Jason does not dignify this with a response and continues searching for the hidden hand scanner, cursing under his breath. It only takes a couple seconds before Andy gets bored and decides to climb the central ladder in the forward cabin.

The door slides open as Jason successfully stumbles upon the pad. “Finally.”

As Jason escapes the exasperating escapades, the room is filled with flashing red lights to accompany the scream from the surrounding speakers. He finds Cubicles watching something on his data pad. Libby stands at his side, trying to get a glimpse of the screen over his bulky forearms.

Andy flips open the roof hatch and pops his head out. “Hey, Cubicles, what's going on?”

Cubicles’s gaze flits rapidly back and forth, scanning his data pad. “Andrew, we are... under siege.”

Kirby meanders out of TOR. “People really hate you, don't they?”

Cubicles’s eyes trace to Kirby without any humor behind them. “It is unfortunate.”

He looks back down at his pad to watch the tree wielding sycophants take their final plunge into the front doors. They break through the barrier, flooding into the corridors of the brand-new facility.

Andy leaps to Cubicles’s defense as he ambles down the ladder. “That's kinda drumpf man. I wouldn't say something like that.”

As Andy exits the vehicle, Jason shoots him a dirty look. “Yes, you would. She just beat you to it.”

Andy gives a little nodding shrug as he passes Jason. “You’re not wrong.” Then, without warning, swiftly swipes out, slapping Jason’s rear end and giving it a pinch.

Jason jumps away. “Hey-Hey! What was that about?”

Andy gives Jason a goofy grin. “You said we didn’t need a ticket.”

Libby stares down at the carnage unfolding in Cubicles’s meaty mitts. “When you’re done feeling each other up, can we do something about this?” She circles her finger over the data pad.

Libby surveys the group to see if someone will take the lead, not comprehending that none of them have any idea what’s going on.

It is Captain Ohblivious that jumps into action. “Red means go people! C’mon, it’s an emergency! Big flashy lights and everything!” He bolts from TOR with a leap that leaves the vehicle rocking from side to side. “The Oh Force to save the day!”

Cubicles’s brow furrows as he remains focused on the people filtering into the building. “You are Team Oh now, not The Oh Force, Rupert. However, he is right. You are the last line of defense for the CUBE.”

Andy looks down at his shirt and then at Kirby as they rush to the elevator. “He can’t rename us like that, can he?”

Cubicles is quick to answer his question following close behind, “That is your designation within the CUBE, Andrew.”

Andy continues his inquiry. “Wouldn’t we be Team One then? Since the other one is Team Two.”

“No, you are Team Oh as in zero,” Cubicles corrects Andy.

They pile into the elevator. Once everyone is inside, Andy presses the lobby button.

Andy scrunches his face like a toddler trying to comprehend calculus. “Zero? Who starts counting at zero?”

Cubicles replies halfheartedly as he swipes through his data pad. “Programmers, Andrew, programmers.”

Andy tries to grasp why they are not Team One but gets stuck on the statement about programmers. “But why?” He takes notice of the doors as they slowly start to shut. “And why are the doors moving so slowly, I thought they all closed scary fast?”

“You can ask me later, Andrew.” Cubicles’s hand shoots out and taps the door close button, causing them to slam shut. “To answer your second question, the doors only close quickly when you press the door close button.”

Andy opens his mouth to speak again but Cubicles is quick to cut him off. “There is no time for this, Andrew. We must hurry. They have breached the front doors.”

The Team stands there uncomfortably. Even the stagnant musk seems to be quieter than ever before.

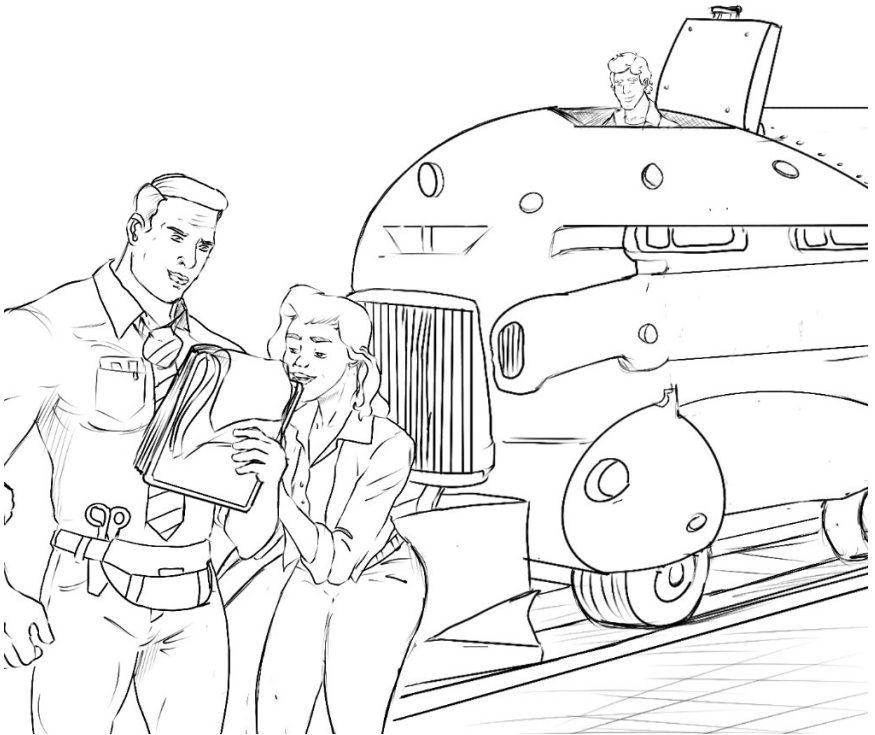
As the elevator painfully ascends, Kirby breaks the unsettling tension. “Who’s they?”

Cubicles turns the tablet so they can see the hooded figures attempting to break into every available door within the main hall. “Them.”

Andy nudges Kirby, whispering, “The proverbial they.”

Kirby sighs. “You still don’t know what that means do you?”

“Nope!”



**#13**

7

PAGES

**Super Holy Poisonous Punch Captain Oh!****IS THIS REALLY ENDING  
WITH ANOTHER FIRE?**

The Elevator opens and Team Oh is now clad in black cloaks of their own, except for Captain Ohblivious.

The Captain looks around at his compatriots trying to figure out when the wardrobe change happened. “Oh, we are going to infiltrate them in their own stuff. Would’ve been nice for someone to tell *me*. Ooh! Or is this a flash mob? Am I being flashed? I’ll put one on just in case.”

He reaches into the neck of his outfit and pulls out a less than black robe of his own. The team makes their way down the hall and opens the door into the main corridor. Ohblivious considers disrobing before rerobering, thinking better of it after catching eyes with multiple miscreants in the brainwashed bunch. He starts to pull the sullied and faded robe over his head, getting stuck in the process.

Olivia’s mob looks a lot more organized than before, now standing in neatly packed lines. She has them queued up, with each of her followers trying their hand at opening the doors to the Mental Ailments Department. The Holy Man and his cross are leaning up against one of the observation windows. He has given up struggling, choosing instead to slump against the bindings that hold him tightly to his ironic perch.

Olivia notices Team Oh entering the corridor and snaps her fingers. They obediently walk up to her.

“Bring me John Smith!” Olivia screeches.

Cubicles looks at her with his ever-passive face, his voice even more monotonous than usual, “Which one, Goddess?”

Olivia pauses for a brief moment before clarifying, “What do you mean which one? Obviously the one that works here.”

“There are three John Smiths that work here.” Cubicles flatly responds.

Olivia pounds on the door to the Mental Ailments Department. “The one that works in *here!*”

Captain Ohblivious bumps into Cubicles while flailing his arms around like one of those inflatable waving tube people. It is at this point, he realizes that he has been trying to put the robe on upside down this whole time.

Cubicles replies with just a one-word response, “Two.”

Olivia flips her hair around like she is trying to shake off the anger. “The brunette one.”

Cubicles gives a tiny nod and, as if stating why didn’t you just say so, “Oh yes, *Doctor* John Smith.”

Although The Captain has figured out his initial mistake, he has found ways to make new ones. He turns his robe around after discovering he has put it on backwards and then flips the hood up over his head.

Olivia brings her face inches away from Cubicles and points at the door. “Fetch.”

Ohblivious perks up. “Fetch?! I’m in, it’s like catch but I get a treat for doing all the work! Spurts of Justice!”

As he transforms the robe falls to the floor, leaving Captain Oh standing in his full glory. And no, that doesn’t mean naked. Oh bolts down the hall with purpose. Slamming through doors that are not supposed to open that way. He rushes through the Mental Ailments Department, and into a back office. Dr. Smith sits at his desk typing up some reports.

Captain Oh walks over to Dr. Smith’s side of the desk. “I need to borrow you for a second.”

Dr. Smith looks at Captain Oh quite skeptically as Oh waits for an answer. The Doctor apprehensively opens his mouth. “Uh, OK.”

Captain Oh grabs up Dr. Smith, throws him over his shoulder, and hurries out of the office. As they run down the hallway, for a brief second, a young Asian man of an indeterminate age appears from nowhere, as if popping into existence. He stumbles, losing his balance, and leans up against the wall. He watches them pass, completely astonished by the presence of other people.

“Wait!” the young man yells out.

Just as he becomes aware that his entire world has changed, he vanishes once again as the pair run out of sight.

Captain Oh slides to a stop in front of Olivia. As he does, she perks up and the hooded figures stir, glancing around in confusion. Olivia nuzzles into Dr. Smith and holds on for dear life. The cult comes out of their stupor and starts to disperse, as Dr. Smith’s nullifying effect takes hold.

Libby tries to quickly remove the robe with disgust. “What am I wearing?!”

“That’s what you’re worried about?” Kirby scoffs, motioning frantically to the meandering mob. “What the heck was all of that?”

Cubicles rips the robe from his body, happy to see that he still has clothes underneath after his hasty decision.

Andy pulls the hood back from his head and runs his fingers through his messy rust colored hair. “I think she just defeated herself.”

Jason fixates on Olivia clinging to Dr. Smith as he carefully pulls the robe over his head, trying not to mess up his hair. “Seems like this is the end goal she was shooting for. So, I think she won? Should we do something about that?” He points at the pair as Olivia pulls her feet off the ground, wrapping her legs around Dr. Smith. “I don’t think it’s consensual.”

Captain Oh has been standing heroically, waiting to change back into Captain Ohblivious. He decides to roll with it. “Restrain the prisoner and take her to the holding cells!”

Mike Foehn fights his way upstream against the droves of people trying to leave the CUBE, his drone floating behind him. Jason moves forward and starts trying to pry Olivia from Dr. Smith. She clutches tighter like a finger trap.

Captain Oh puts his arm out and effortlessly slides Jason back from the two entangled bodies. “Don't upset her again!”

Dr. Smith looks quite worried about the implications of this statement, “But?”

Captain Oh wheels on Dr. Smith, but it doesn't seem to faze Olivia in the slightest. She is just happy to have her aura of depression suppressed.

“Are you questioning my authority? To the holding cells!” Captain Oh calls out.

Very uncharacteristically, Cubicles gives a knowing grin and picks up the pair, lugging them toward the elevator.

Mike, finally making his way through the throng of people, holds up an unlit torch like a microphone. He gives his drone a thumbs up.

“We take you to inside The CUBE for this very special breaking news. Captain Oh, congratulations on another job well done. A few words for the camera?”

Captain Oh smiles at the drone as Cubicles enters the elevator with his captives in tow. “Sure. I'd like to say that this new facility is going to do wonders for this community. Tonight is just a testament to this fact. Our next phase of cleanup starts with-”

Captain Oh turns back into Ohblivious as the effects of Dr. Smith cease with the slamming of the elevator doors. “Snacks! I did the thing, now I'm supposed to get a treat.”

Captain Ohblivious takes the remaining part of the burnt toast out of his shirt and takes an obnoxiously large, loud bite.

Mike turns to the drone. “Well, I guess they worked up quite the appetite on this one. Back to you, Leslie.”

In the news studio, Leslie Nielsen III takes the handoff from Mike, “There you have it folks. It looks like The Oh Force...” She touches her ear. “Correction, Team Oh have begun to show the value they can provide to this community. Day one and they have already thwarted a mysterious mob. I, for one, can't wait to see what they do next. And now back to Mr. Happy's Happy Holiday Hexagon.”

The camera stays on Leslie for a few seconds. She sits placidly before her eyebrows knit.

Leslie impatiently throws her hands up. “That's all, I'm done. Punt it over to him.”



**MR. HAPPY'S HAPPY  
HOLIDAY HEXAGON**

Mr. Happy stands in front of a ridiculously oversized hexagon with little slivers in all sorts of colors, each titled with a different name of a holiday. Mr. Happy is a spectacle in and of himself. To describe him, he would best be summed up as a Muppet that wished to be a real boy. His purple suit, lavender tie, and matching pocket square accentuate his look.

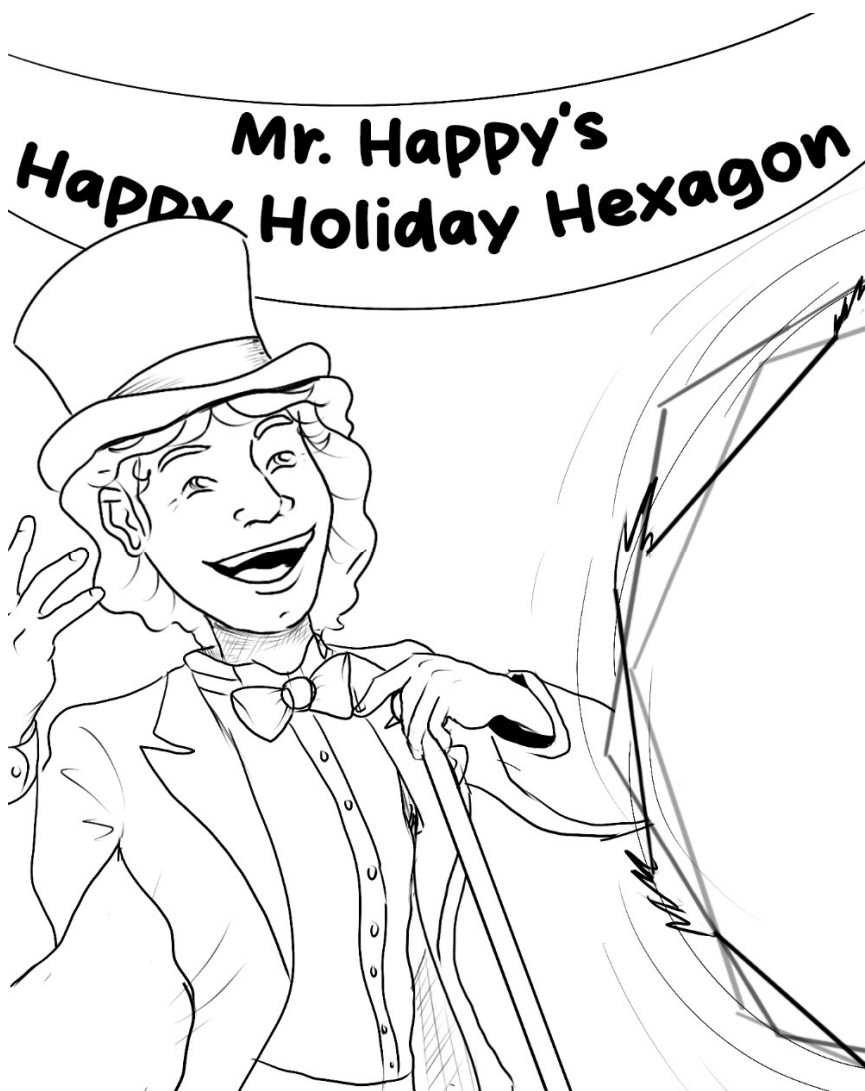
He exclaims in a high-pitched, squeaky voice that is fitting of his ridiculous mascot-like appearance, “All right folks, are you ready to find out what holiday we’ll be celebratin’ this next month?”

Mr. Happy grabs the hexagon and spins it with all his might. It spins rapidly in a vertigo-inducing whirl, the pointer bobbing in and out to accommodate for the non-circular shape. It spins and spins for an abnormally long period of time, as if the channel is just trying to fill space in its nighttime schedule.

Mr. Happy watches very excitedly, dancing about into different poses as time lapses. He does not say a word just gesturing to the hypnotic, ever-spinning shape. With each pose the ticking slows. The Hexagon finally comes to a stop on *Heritage Day*.

Mr. Happy throws his hands out with the flourish of a tap dancer at the end of their performance. “And there it is,

Heritage Day! Don't forget the Barbeque! Mm. My favorite part of Heritage Day. See you there, folks.”



**YOU'RE STILL  
HERE?**

Íre Tator has moved very little from his spot on the bench inside Team Oh's headquarters and appears close to sleep, if not already there. His position looks incredibly uncomfortable. His chin pins down against his chest with his body slumping against the wall like a sack of potatoes. The door whisks open and Cubicles steps into the headquarters holding a cup of tea. Íre perks up and snaps to attention as quickly as possible. He tries to pretend that he was not sleeping to pass the time, wiping some drool from his chin.

Íre kicks his dangling feet as he sleepily asks. "Is it time for my interview now?"

Cubicles cringes a bit at the sound of his voice and then takes a sip from the steaming mug in his hand. He pauses and looks at Íre Tator with an excited expression, or at least as excited as Cubicles can outwardly project. "No!"

Íre stops kicking his feet and hangs his head. "Aww."

"Oh yeah," Cubicles strokes his chin. "That is what I came in here for."

He shuts off the lights before he exits. The pocket door swiftly slides shut, leaving Íre alone in the dark.

Íre mutters to himself as his tummy grumbles. “He may not know how to express sarcasm correctly, but he can be cruel.”



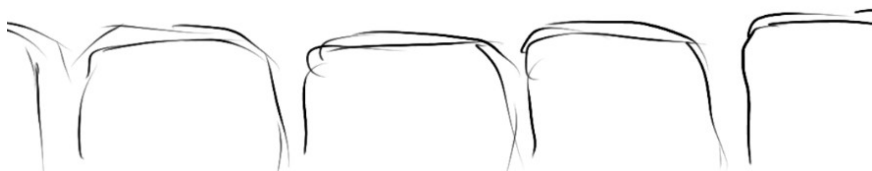
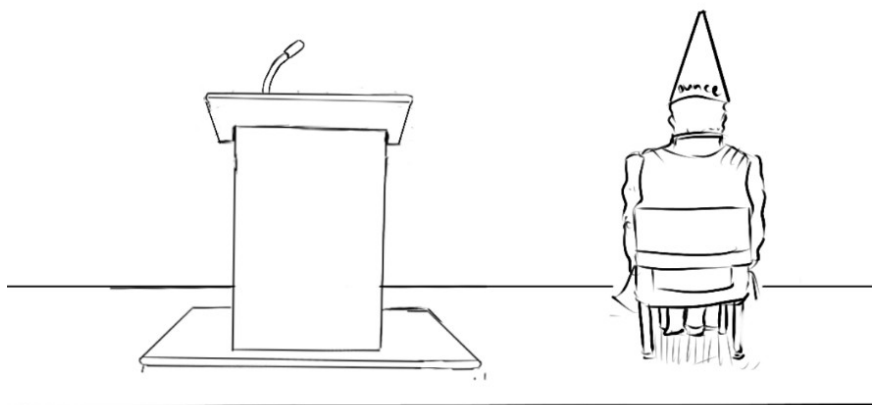


Captain Ohblivious walks on to the stage, not looking as happy with himself as he usually is. He mopes to the podium passing a stool off to the right. He looks out as if staring down a camera.

“Discipline is important, and this is going to hurt me more than it hurts you.”

He walks over to the stool in the corner of the stage and sits down with his back facing the non-existent audience. He places a dunce cap on his head as if from nowhere. His face is uncomfortably close to the matte white wall.

“Now, I’m going to sit here until I learn my lesson.” Under his breath he mutters to himself unintelligibly. “This will teach me not to speak before I think. Or at least think about thinking before I speak.”



“End!”