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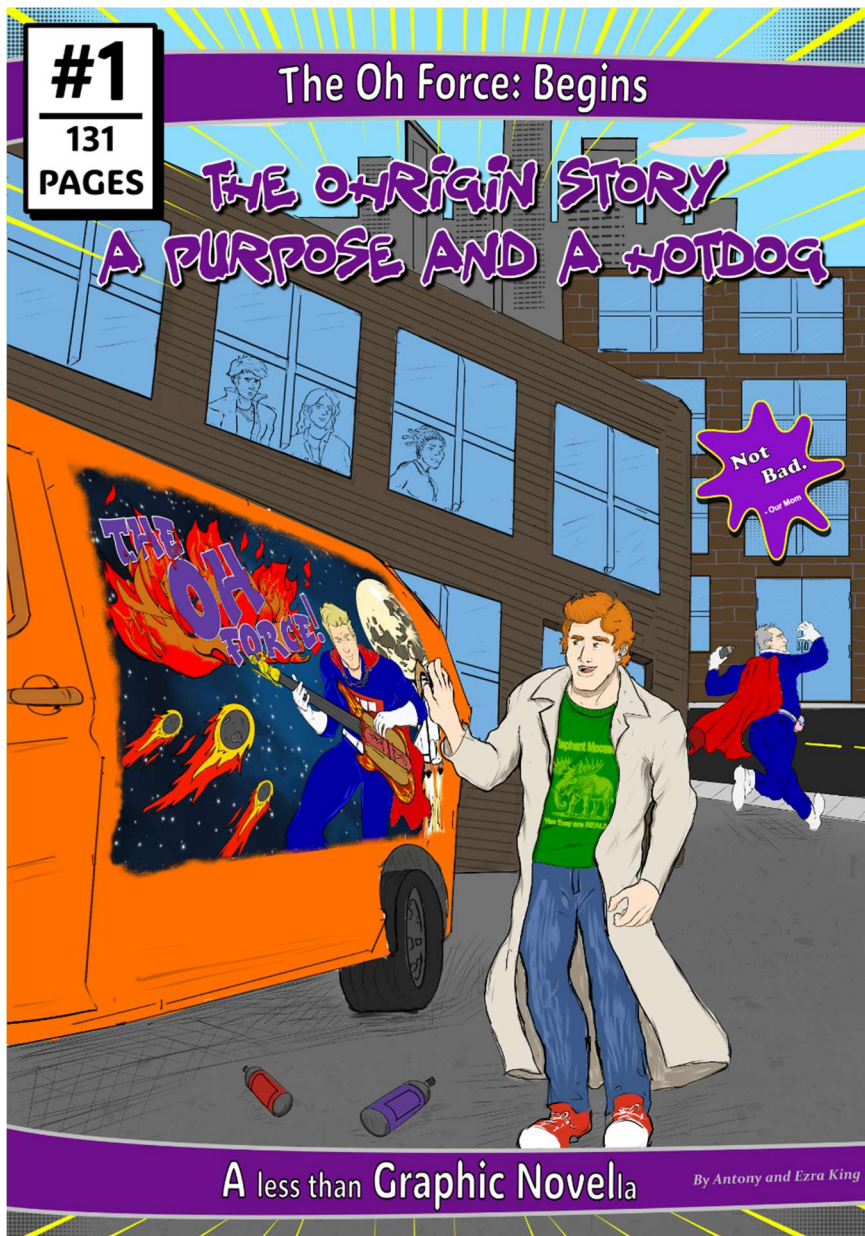
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#1

131
PAGES

The Oh Force: Begins

THE OH-ORIGIN 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

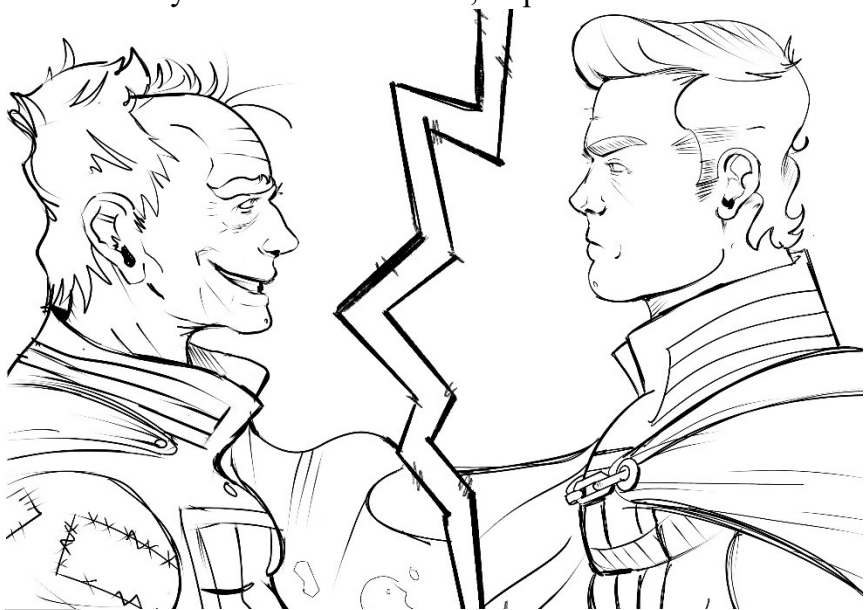
A big bomb, with a lovely terrifying stencil showing that its contents are of the radioactive variety, glides gracefully towards the Earth. Written on its side in an uptight vermilion and gold font are the words ‘толстый мальчик’.

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.

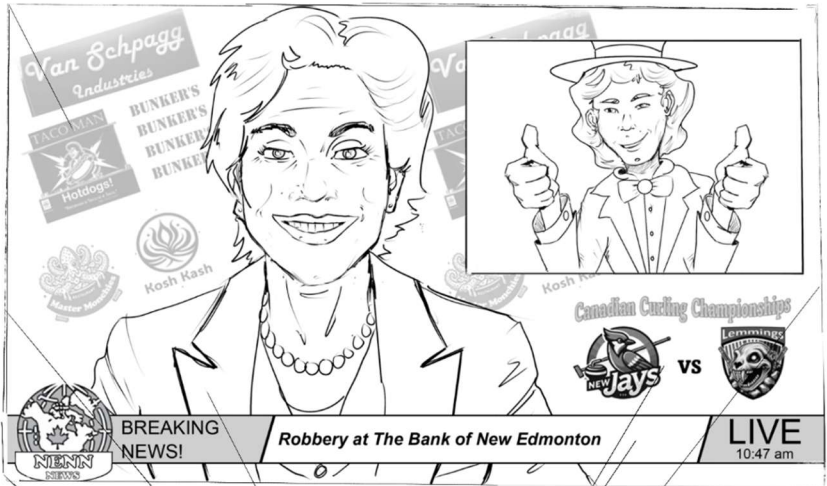
The Captain excitedly pulls the package of microwave popcorn out from inside his suit and holds it in the air in triumph. “This is getting good, I’m gonna make some popcorn.”

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.



Van Schpagg Industries



BUNKER'S BUNKER BUNKER



Kosh Kash



Canadian Curling Championships



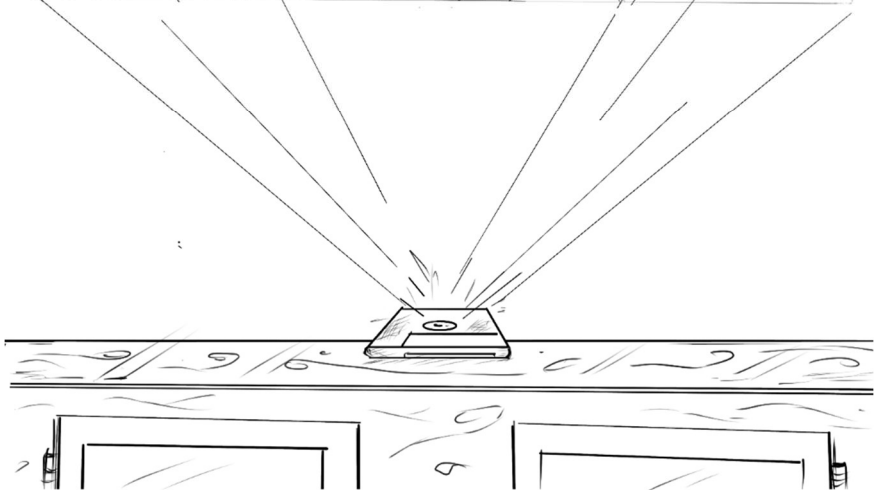
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BREAKING NEWS!

Robbery at The Bank of New Edmonton

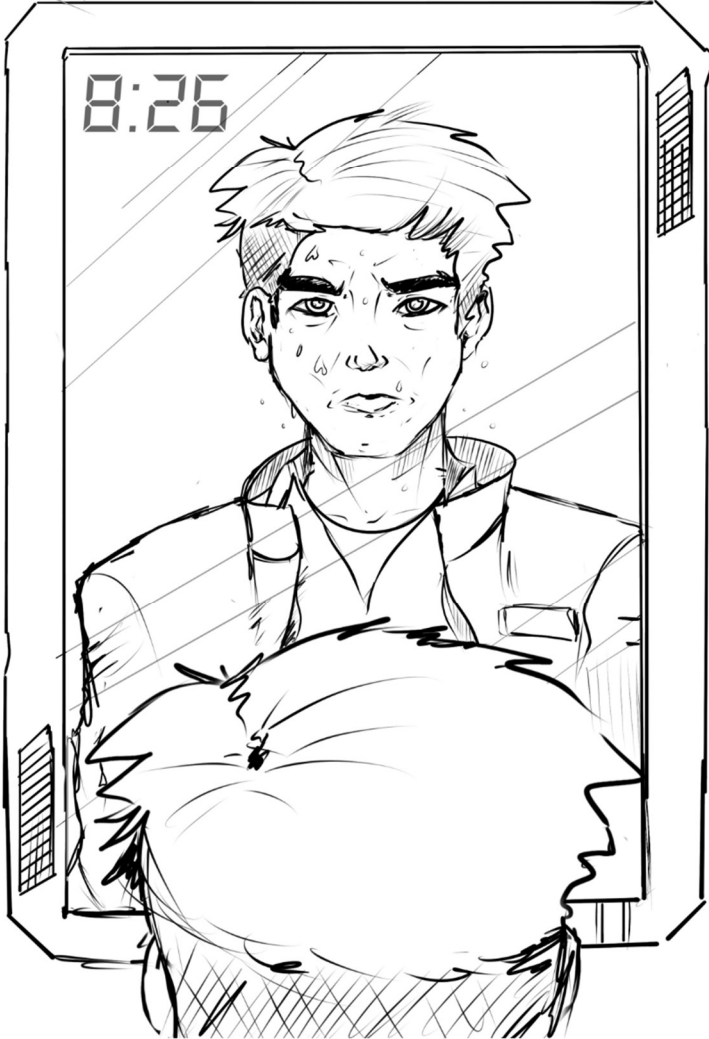
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**38
PAGES**

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 clambers to a stop.

Jason turns away from his friends. “I need a break.”

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

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

Jason speaks under his breath in a defeated state that accidentally reveals his internal thoughts in an outward mumble, “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.”

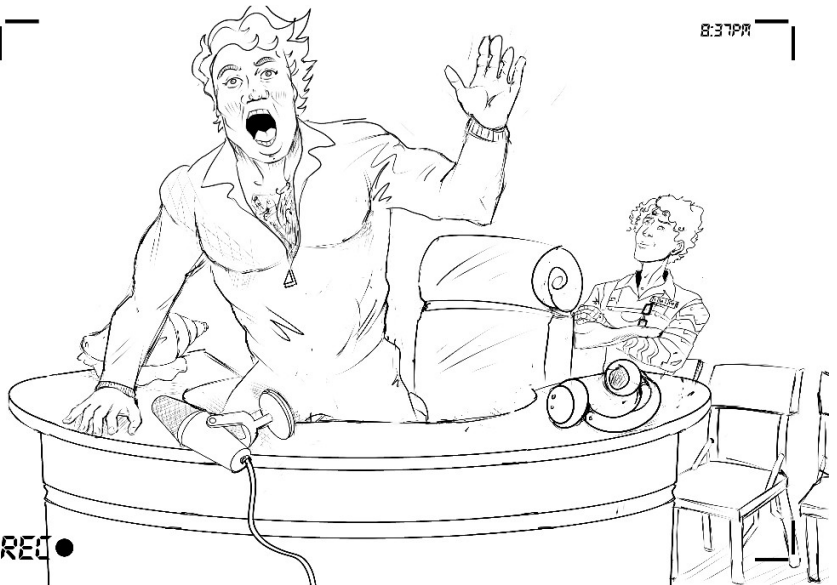
Brad is visibly distressed as he points at the sign. “But the light!”

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.

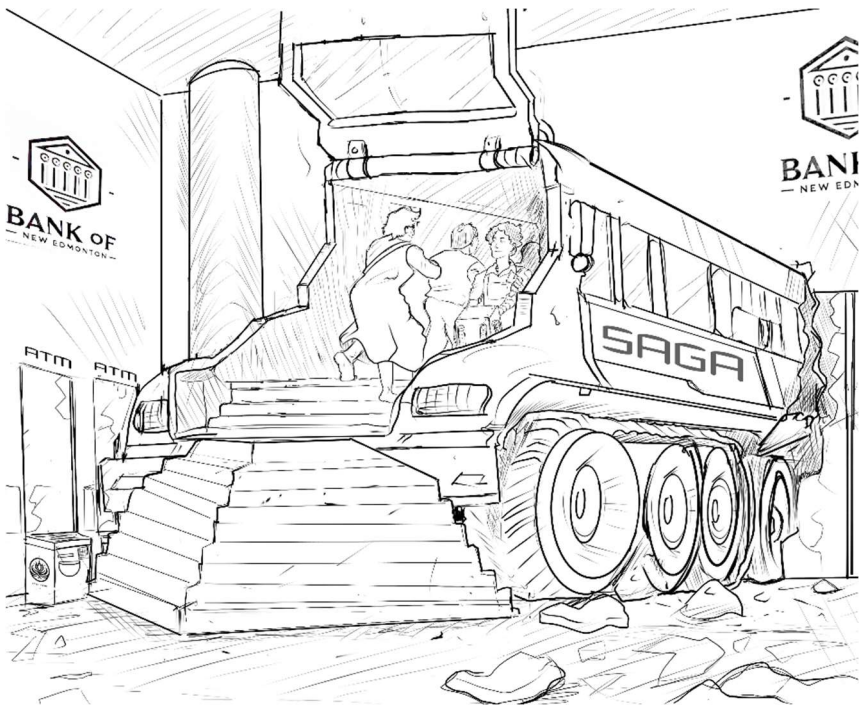
The Mechanic rushes through the gap in the bars and vaults over the counter. He holds out the safety deposit box, dangling it in front of him. “Done, boss.” He speaks into his right hand like a telephone. “Call SAGA.”

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

~~ERRY~~
~~VIDEAL~~ ~~UNDETER~~
~~VEDER~~ ~~VIDEN!~~
~~THE SUCCESS~~
~~BLUES~~ ~~BADE~~
~~VIDEAL~~ ~~CLASS~~
~~BARTON~~ ~~DEARNO~~

No!
Just Kirby

JASON

THE LUCONIST
 MASTER OF MINE
 MINE MAN
 THE LUCONIST

SUPERHERO NAME ANDY

METAL MAN
 MAN OF METAL
 MAN OF SHIELD
 THE METAL MAN
 MERA MAN
 THE STIFF
 STEEL STUDD
 THE STEEL DUD
~~LEAD TO SCOTTS BARRACKS~~
 METAL ME
 ALUMINUM AVERAGE
 TIN FOL LAD
 SILVER SWAMMER
 KIRBY CLUB

PRO CON

PRO
 • WE GET TO MAKE PRO/CHESS
 • NO, NOT THE EGG
 • IT WON'T BE BORING
 • WE CAN BEA COME OUT OF IT
 • ANYWAY, WE'RE IN THE CITY
 • WE CAN DO THAT
 • I GUESS SO
 • EXTRA MONEY
 • FEELS BETTER
 • LEAST WE'RE NOT WHAT PA WENARD TO LOOSE
 • SUPERHERO NAMES

CON
 • AMY YOU'RE AN IDIOT
 • WE LAZY
 • COULD BE DANGEROUS
 • ANDY YOU'RE AN IDIOT
 • CAN WE GO BACK TO DRUMMING?
 • WE'LL PROBABLY FAIL
 • WHAT WERE MADE FOOLS OF OURSELVES?
 • WE WILL LIKELY MAKE FOOLS OF OURSELVES
 • PRIDE, TIME, COULD GET OLD, GETTING MARRIED, MY SANITY, TAKE YOUR PICK
 • OH PLEASE NO

A PRO/CON SHOWDOWN: MINE MAN VS THE LUCONIST

MINE MAN

PRO	CON
• IT'S FUNNY	• I DON'T LIKE IT
• IT'S APT	• IT'S INSULTING
• IT DEFINES YOUR POWER	• SHUT UP
• YEAH THAT'S HOW IT GOES	• CAN WE WORK ON SOMETHING ELSE

THE LUCONIST

PRO	CON
• I LIKE IT	• OK CHESS ANGLE
• BUT IT'S MY NAME	• NO, IT'S YOUR SUPERHERO NAME
• YEAH BUT THEY GET PICKY ABOUT THEM	• 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.

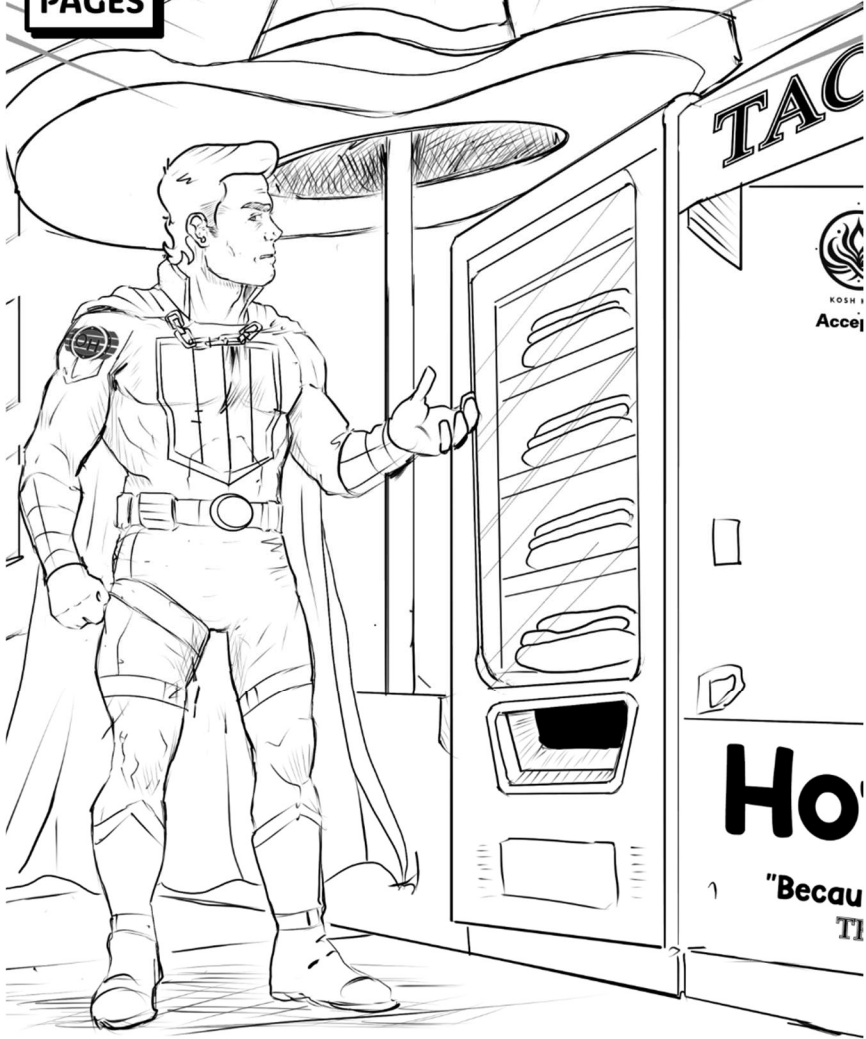
TAIN OH'S ADVIC



#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?”

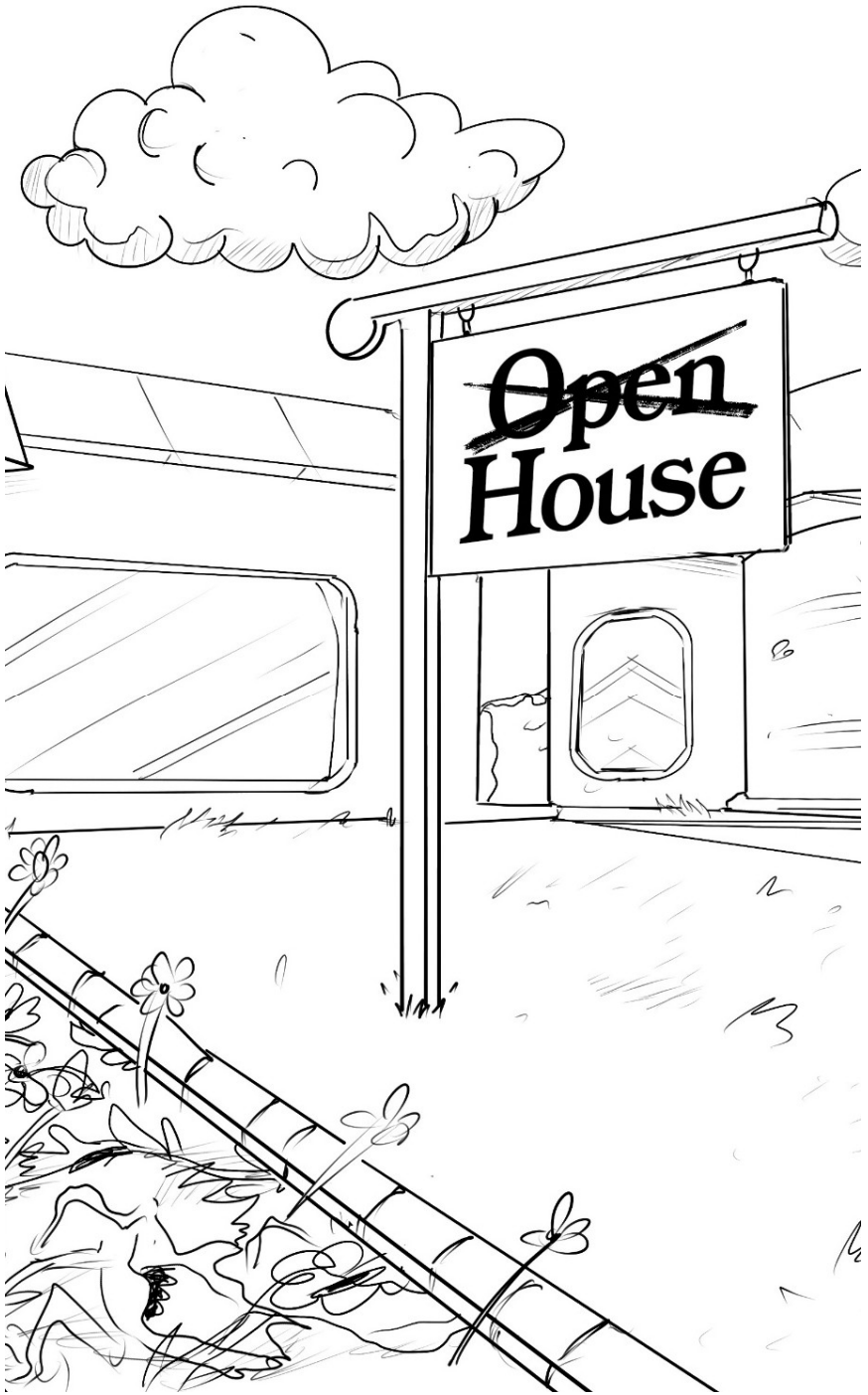
Lou catches The Captain most of the way through the front door. Ohblivious freezes for a moment, shocked, as he did not expect to get caught.

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

The Ohrigin Story: A Purpose and a Hotdog

8

PAGES

**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.

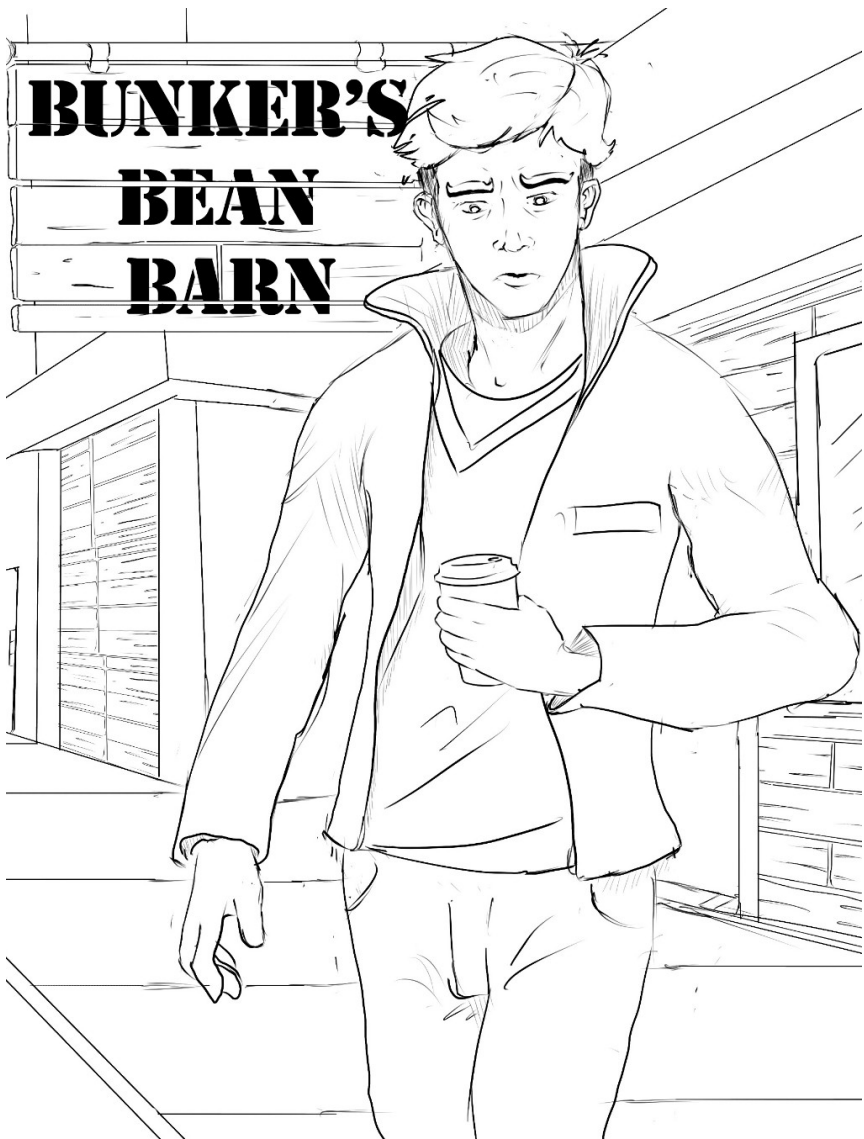
Charlotte responds flatly, “That’ll be 43 dollars. Or 21.50 Kosh Kash.”

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.

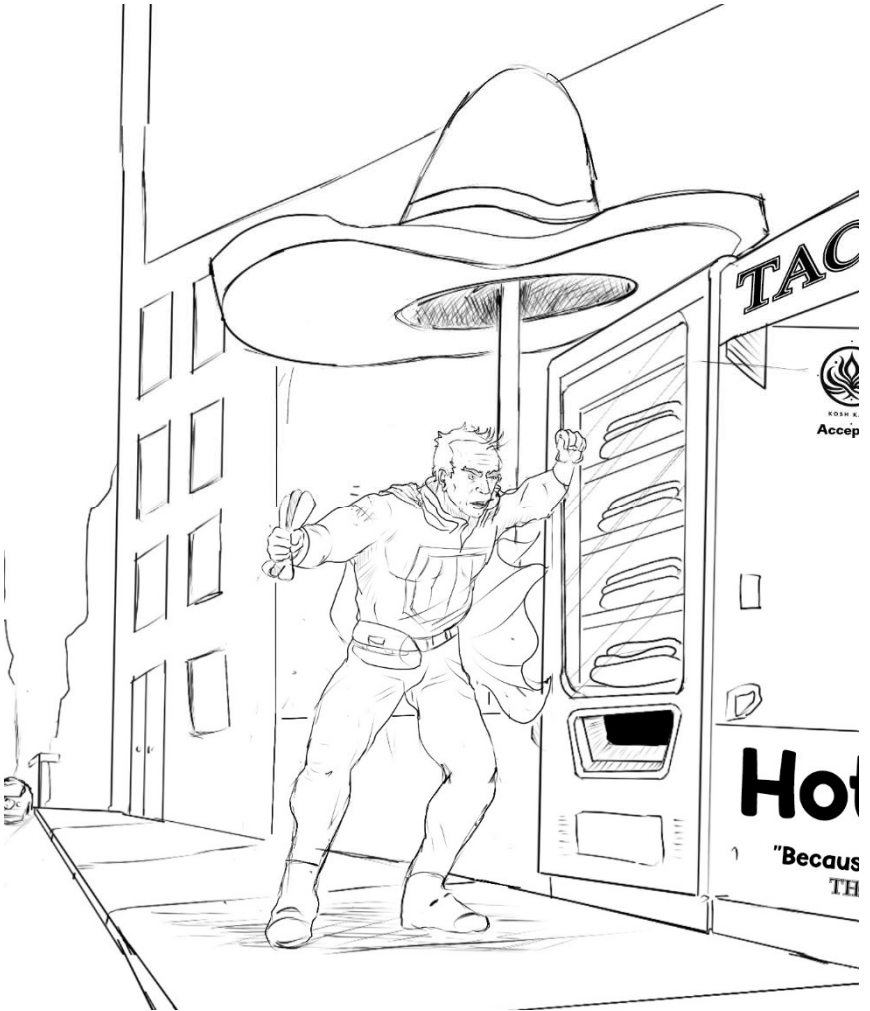
Jason finishes the babble with just one succinct statement, “We could call it The Oh Force!”

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.”



“End!”