

Frission Comics Presents:

KNOCK KNOCK



A Horror Compilation
Creature Feature



The Creatures of the Right...

...What music they make...

Over the following pages be prepared to be led, by our dear contributors, on many merry dances to their beastly tunes...

Waltz with a werewolf and his long-standing grudge

Shimmy with swamp-monsters through acres of sludge

Tango with the Tamica

Moonwalk with the Momo

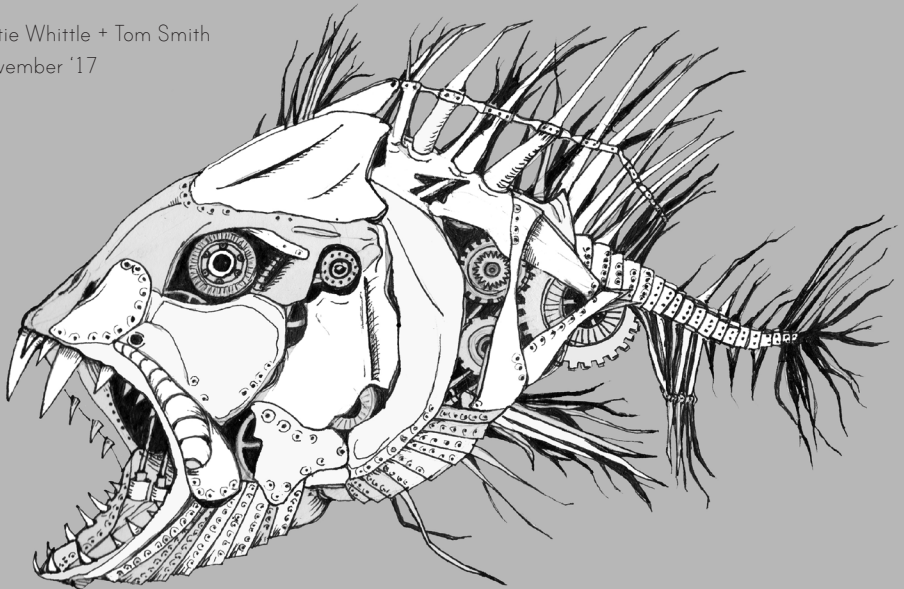
Twisting with a tree-beast is always a no-no

Foxtrot with forest spirits

Boogie-men that'll eat ya

Get down with your bad selves for this season's Creature Feature...

Katie Whittle + Tom Smith
November '17



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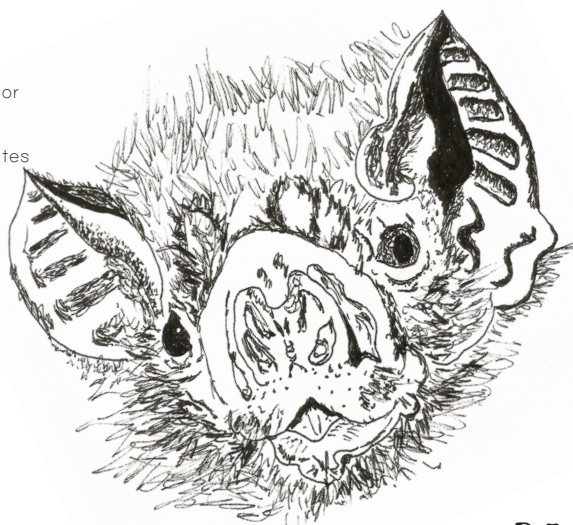
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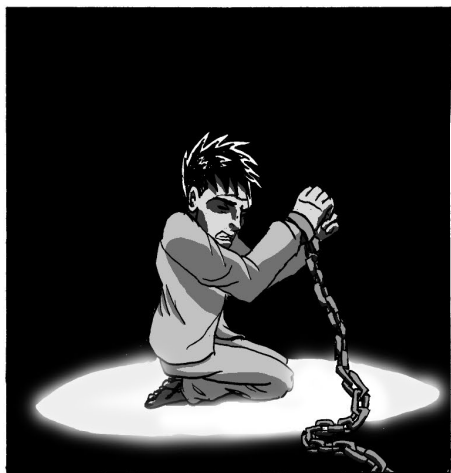
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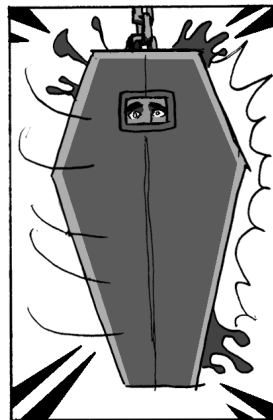


BOOGEYMAN

Story and art by Nathan Bennett
Special Thanks to Matt Smith









Follow Nate Bennett on
Instagram (@n8bennett)
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THE QUIET LIFE

Dan Whitehead

The turd, he noticed, had gathered a thin layer of glittering frost. It must have lain there, slowly crystallising in the night air, since the early hours of the morning at least. Despite the rising wave of anger twisting his intestines, he had to admit that, as the mysterious turds went, this was an impressive specimen. A good ten inches from end to tapered end.

"Damn" hissed Benedict, crouched in his driveway, hugging his dressing gown against the November morning. He looked up and down the street in vain.

Behind him, the bedroom curtains twitched. He turned and faced the window, hands on hips. "Bastard's done it again, Rosie". He stomped back inside, his muttered swears visible only as mist in the bitter air, ill-fitting slippers clip-clopping on the concrete as he went. The turd, now steaming in the weak morning sun, waited patiently for him. The slam of the garage door signalled Benedict's return to the battlefield, armed with a plastic bag and a small trowel. For a moment, they faced each other across the driveway like gunslingers. Benedict looked at the turd, then his tiny trowel, and back to the turd again. Shaking his head, he headed back to get a shovel.

Crumbs rained down on the table as he demolished his toast, more out of rage than hunger. Benedict was convinced he could still sense the offending stool taunting him, buried at the bottom of the trashcan, out of sight, but not out of mind. Rosie busied herself washing the breakfast plates; subconsciously hunching her shoulders against the outburst she knew was coming, as surely as night followed day. She could hear his teeth grinding together, his neck muscles turning to rock, the crack of fingers curling into a fist. Even so, she still jumped when his fist pounded the table, sending the salt shaker tumbling to the floor.

"Fuckin' deliberate, I swear", Benedict snarled, wrapping his hands around his "World's Best Janitor" coffee mug, trying to strangle the life from it. At 53 years old, he still had the bulk and presence of a younger man, if not the muscle tone. "Someone's trained their mutt to shit on our driveway. Big bastard too, by the looks of it". Rosie scrubbed harder, muttering meaningless agreements. This had been an escalating source of fury for the best part of five weeks, and every night she prayed for an end to it. Early retirement was supposed to be the quiet life, and yet here they were, held ransom by a recurring piece of shit. She'd laugh at the absurdity of it all, if she wasn't so disturbed by the whole affair.

The start of the faecal siege was still fresh in her memory. Benedict had actually kicked the first one, a powerful field goal kick, thinking it was a tree branch blown down by the October winds. The stain and the stink had never come out, and he was forced to throw out his favourite slippers, which had warmed his feet since Reagan was in the White House. Since that fateful day, every morning, along with the tightly rolled copy of the newspaper on the driveway, there had been a fresh dog turd – monstrous and thick, goading him with its defiant act of just being there.

Benedict was big on respect. You had to have people's respect, or what was the point? Those foolish enough to be sucked into conversation on the topic, usually over a pitcher of American beer at McGinty's, soon learned that this was the problem with kids today. Thirty one years cleaning up after the increasingly rowdy youth of Cedar Point High had simply proven this point time and time again. He had

taken great pride in his willingness to inform the school board which kids spent the recess drinking or smoking joints. He had even exposed one or two members of staff who failed to respect the rules, dating ex-students or hiding gin bottles in stock cupboards. All told, he had been the catalyst for twenty three expulsions, four sackings and more detentions than he could even remember. He may not have been liked, but he was respected, goddammit. Deliberately leaving dog shit on a man's driveway, well, that was just about the most blatant and vile affront to his domain he'd ever encountered.

"Nobody fucks with Benedict Harris. No-fuckin'-body", he glowered from beneath knotted eyebrows. "It ends tonight".

Rosie carefully regulated her breathing to give the illusion of sleep, even though it was the last thing on her mind. In the blue-black darkness, if she strained her neck against the pillow she could just make out the side of Benedict's shoulder in the wardrobe mirror. When she had last dared to roll over and peek, Benedict had been standing, one eye pressed to the gap between the curtains, his baseball bat swinging impatiently in his hand. The clock had shown something past two. By her reckoning, that had been at least an hour ago. She could still hear the gentle swish-thwap of the bat tapping against his leg.

"Come on, you bastard", whispered Benedict.

Even though his legs had gone uncomfortably numb, Benedict resisted the urge to sit down. He knew instinctively that the minute he turned away, the phantom crapper would appear with their dog and strike. And besides, how was Rosie supposed to respect him if he didn't stand strong? He settled for a slight shifting from one foot to the other, trying to ignore the cramps that had sunk their fangs into his muscles. On the windowsill in front of him stood an empty thermos, now drained of strong black coffee. Ever prepared, Benedict had now taken to munching the dry coffee granules straight from the jar. He wasn't sure if his hands were shaking from the cold, or if he was having some sort of caffeine induced seizure.

Scooping up the final coffee grains, he almost didn't notice the figure walking onto the driveway below. With a start, he grasped the bat more firmly and squinted through the gap in the curtains. The figure was pacing around in a circle, right on the spot where the crime had been committed. So what now? He hadn't thought much beyond this point – catching them red handed. He toyed with the idea of opening the window and scaring the guy away, but where was the respect in that?

He tip-toed down the stairs, as if the mysterious trespasser might somehow be able to hear through brick walls, and slowly crept outside. It was raining, the sort of misty rain that was only visible against the light of a distant streetlamp and as a damp tingle on his exposed shins. The figure had gone but, sure enough, he had left a large dog squatting on the drive, its long fur shifting in the breeze. Its ass, though hidden in shadow, was visibly quivering as it dropped its payload.

Bolder now, the righteously indignant Benedict began his approach, hefting the bat and trying to see through the gloom, aware that the dog's owner was still around, somewhere. The dog finished its business, and straightened up, pulling up its trousers and wiping its hands on its thighs.

Benedict did a double take.

The creature turned around to face him. Coarse brown hair hung from its head, spreading down alongside a feral nose and around a tooth-filled mouth that protruded slightly from the face. He saw now

that the werewolf – for even a guy like Benedict had to accept that a werewolf was precisely what he was seeing – was wearing sneakers, a hooded sweatshirt and jogging pants. Hair poked through at the neck and cuffs, and spilled over the front of the shoes. As if to complete the surreal image, at its feet lay two thick, fresh turds.

"Lost for words?" asked the werewolf, the words coming from somewhere deep in its throat.

"Wha...?" gasped Benedict, suddenly realising he'd been holding his breath.

"Not what you expected, eh?" continued the wolfman. "It came as a surprise to me too. I mean, when you settle down in the woods for a night smoke and some beers, being attacked by a fucking werewolf isn't usually the first thing on your mind".

"Guh..."

"I know. I know. I didn't believe it at first either, but then I started changing. That kinda forces you to deal, you know? I mean, dude, it's like something out of a comic book, right? I spent about two weeks just running around town, howling at the moon like Michael fuckin' Jackson".

"But..."

"Stupid, right? So I thought, I've got these powers, I should do something a bit more constructive, you know. And that's why...", the wolf gestured at the giant sticks of crap. "Not the most imaginative stunt, but then my school life was cut tragically short. My imagination ain't what it should be. I mean, you can't really blame me, after the shit you pulled".

"Who...who are you?" Benedict spluttered.

"You don't even recognise me? I don't look that fuckin' different, you asshole. Ricky Chavez? You got me busted out of school for dealing weed last year".

Then Benedict remembered, a snot-nosed little punk who dealt reefer from his locker. No muscle, no personality, just a cousin out of state who grew the stuff and a bad attitude the size of a Buick. He hadn't thought twice about reporting the contents of his locker to the school board.

"The school called in the cops, I got community service and a fucking record. I can't even get a job at a soup kitchen. Christ, you don't even got the respect to remember me after ruining my damn life. Dude, the first thing I thought when I started with this wolf thing was payback time, you snitching shit. So you know what, fuck you man. Fuck you."

Benedict gawped in disbelief, rooted to the spot. His mind wrestled with the evidence of his own eyes, trying to find a way to incorporate this turn of events into the solid, reliable world that had so frustrated him for half a century.

As he stood and stared, he felt his chest growing tight as sharp pains danced down his left arm and back again. He tried to gulp down breath, to no avail. Confused stammering gave way to panicked choking. Decades of righteous indignation, sealed and stuffed deeper and deeper into his curdled heart seized their chance to be free, and escaped down his veins.

He was dead before he hit the ground, his baseball bat clattering next to him, impotent.

With that, it was Ricky's turn to be caught off guard. "Dude, fuck..." he muttered. He shuffled on the spot, reached out a toe to prod the body, but then thought better of it. After nervously looking around for witnesses, the werewolf bounded away up the street and into the last fragments of night, sending trash cans clanging across the sidewalk as he went.

The turd, impressive as it was, simply lay there and waited for the rain to turn to frost.



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It Came From Next Door

Christopher Stewart

It was the sort of afternoon that was made for doing nothing. The grass was warm and comfortable, there was a nice breeze blowing and there was just enough clouds in the sky so the sun wasn't shining right in your eyes. The distant hum of lawnmowers and the chirping of birds was a calming soundtrack for this moment of relaxation. The only thing that could make this moment perfect was a cold drink but the strenuous effort to get one would rob it of its perfection. I was content in just relaxing out in the garden. It was just so peaceful.

I must have nodded off because I closed my eyes for just a second and when I opened them the sky was a moody grey. That perfect balance had been shifted by an oncoming storm. A heavy raindrop struck me hard right between the eyes, quickly followed by half a dozen more. They soaked straight through my shirt as I pushed up off the ground. I struggled to get up on my feet, still lost in a post-nap daze. As I ran up to the door to the house, I rummaged in my pockets for keys. I came up empty. They must have fallen out on the grass. I ran back to where I had been lying but after a few minutes of panicked searching, trying to dodge the raindrops with little success, I went back over to the house, shoes squelching with every step.

The overhang of the roof gave me a little shelter but the breeze had turned bitter cold and I was shivering in my wet clothes. I searched the contents of my pockets again, just to check that I hadn't missed my keys the first time. Definitely no keys. My wallet was there, but my phone was also missing. I swore under my breath and gave the door a kick. Even though I was pissed off I didn't put much force into the kick and yet my toes stung a little from the blow. Did somebody take my phone when I was sleeping? It didn't make sense for my phone to be gone but not my wallet. If they did take my keys too, were they in my house? I peered through the windows by the door and made my way around the house, glancing through every window. I couldn't see anyone. I was going to have to phone the police to add to my frustrations, just in case whoever took my keys came back. If anyone had actually taken my keys. I felt like such an idiot.

My moment of self-loathing quickly faded when I remembered that I gave a key to my neighbour, Mrs Knowles. She was old and had apparently lived in the house next door forever. She would have probably forgotten where she had put it but the thought of searching for a lost key in a warm dry house was preferable to searching for one shivering in the rain. I squelched my way over to her door and knocked loudly. Her hearing wasn't the best and neither was her top speed these days so it wasn't too worrying when she didn't answer the door immediately. I banged on the door again, just to make sure she heard it and waited impatiently for another minute. I began to suspect the worst, she was old, she could have fallen. It might just be her time. I really didn't want to find a dead body today but the thought of her lying there while her cat, Freddy, nibbled away at her chilled me. I started my way around the side of the house, checking in through windows, tapping on the glass. I was about to enter her back garden when I saw a figure standing there with their back to me, their face up towards the rain clouds. I stepped back, something wasn't right and something inside me knew I shouldn't be seen.

I peered from around the corner at whoever was standing in Mrs Knowles' garden. It wasn't her, I could tell that immediately. The figure was stick thin and looking about five feet tall. It seemed to be naked, lean with muscle. The skin was an unnatural grey, glossy and slick. The rain was rolling straight off of it. It lacked certain human features, genitalia, hair, only three toes on each foot. The creature looked back towards the house. The facial features were minimal. Small black dots for eyes, spaced far apart. A long mouth with thin, almost non-existent lips ran just under the eyes. Small flaring nostrils sat in the middle, two pairs of them, one above the other. I ran my hands through my wet hair as I stared at this thing from my hiding spot. The grey creature hunched down in a stance, prone to pounce, and edged towards the french doors to Mrs Knowles' kitchen which were open wide, the wind blowing the curtains around the edges. It moved slowly, it's nostrils constantly sniffing and flaring. That was when I heard it.

It was faint over the sounds of the storm and the beast's snuffling, a tiny bell was ringing and accompanied by the distinct tapping noise of claws on wooden flooring. I could feel my heart sink with dread as the mental image of whatever that thing in the garden was, feasting on little Freddy. The bell rang a little closer and I saw a glimpse of white fur against the green grass. It was inches away from the monster. My heart caught in my throat as I saw Freddy close the gap and rub against the slick grey legs of the beast. He purred loudly. The creature looked down at Freddy, it's long mouth open wide, baring three rows of sharp teeth. I froze, horrified in anticipation, eyes locked on Freddy. Freddy, however just meowed loudly and strutted off into the bushes. I pulled on my hair and sighed with relief. My hands shot to my mouth, like clamping it shut would pull the noise back inside. How loud was that sigh? My eyes darted around Mrs Knowles' garden but I couldn't see the creature. I edged closer to the corner of the wall but before I could peek round, I heard that loud sniffing sound. It was right on the other side of the wall. I fell backwards and burst into a sprint. I rounded the corner towards my own house. On the ground, just off the path I caught sight of a bright blue dolphin keyring, jutting out from a patch of grass. My keys. I snatched them up without stopping, running passed the door to my house and instead to the car.

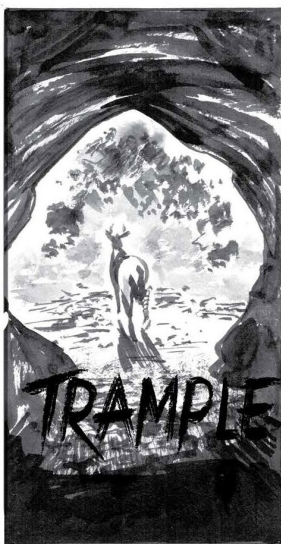
I pushed the button on my keys and scrambled into my car, hammering on the button to lock the doors behind me. I jammed the keys into the ignition when a thud on the driver side door shook the car. The keys fell down into the footwell and I flailed my arms trying to recover them. Another thud at the door made me look up. The grey face of the monster was pushed up right against the window. The skin around it's little black dot eyes pulled back unveiling large round eyes with fiery orange irises that looked like windows into hell. My hand clasped around the keys and I quickly started up the engine. I looked over my shoulder to reverse out of the driveway, all clear except for Freddy darting across. I glanced once more out the driver side window. The creature had moved. I didn't care where, I sunk the peddle to the floor and my car bolted out of driveway and I took off down the street. I heard a rattling noise come from under the car. I screamed and sharply turned the steering wheel, mounting the curb, hoping to knock the creature from under the car. I turned my head to see if it had fallen off and turned back just in time to see the back of a parked pick up. I must have blacked out for a second because the next thing I remember was a deflated air bag sitting in front of me, the firemen with big tools cutting away at the door and a sound from the boot that sounded like the exhaling of four nostrils.

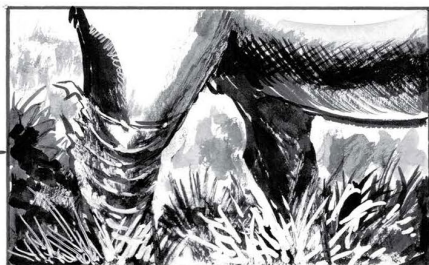
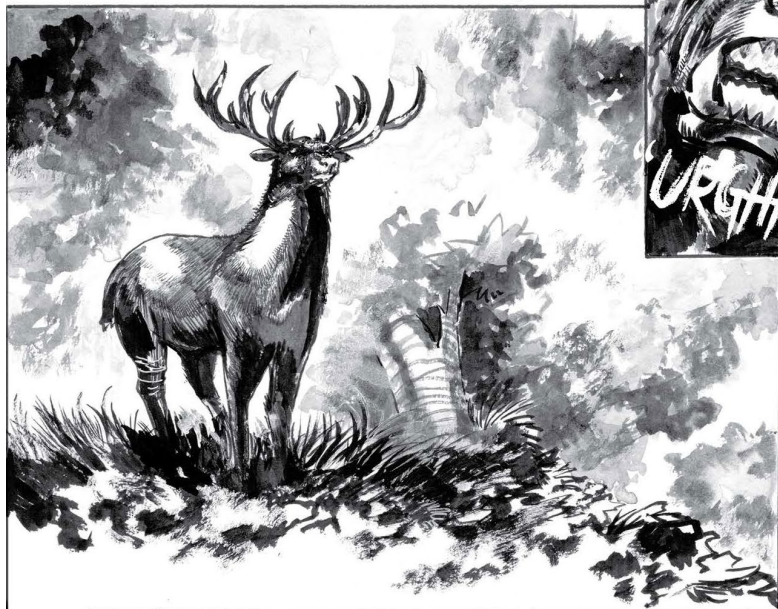
















Oh Christmas Tree

By Pippa Bailey

"Run!" Julie screamed.

She dodged the swinging branches and slammed into a deep bank of snow. A wave of frozen white engulfed her as it collapsed. Bitter cold seeped through her jeans and hoodie.

She lay still, and held her breath. Gloved hands pressed tight against chapped lips. Footsteps thundered past her, firing crystal spears from the pine spindles overhead. She winced, body tense. Ice javelins pierced the encircling slush. A lucky escape.

Thunderous footsteps were deadened by fresh snow. No longer able to hear their pounding on frozen ground. Her lungs screamed for oxygen. Whoosh, she released the stale air in a hot cloud that clung to tiny hairs on her face.

She needed out of this woodland maze.

Derrick, her workaholic husband, had decided this was the year they would cut down their own Christmas tree. After a few unhappy online hunts for local venues, he had decided to take the matter into his own hands. Dragging Julie and the kids along. She was less than impressed, but let him have his moment. He'd been watching Bear Grylls' adventures on T.V recently, and she'd decided this was at least better than him copying the piss drinking.

She didn't see which way Derrick ran when the creature hurtled towards them a second time. From the first axe swing the energy in the forest changed. Shifted. Like a shadow bore down on the frostbitten pines. It blotted out the winter sun, and quelled all sound, save the blow of blade on wood.

She knew it was too late for their children. With a single blow it had swept them from their mother's side. Their bodies like ragdolls that spewed blood upon impact with thick branches. They tumbled against rough bark, smashing through waves of white and green. Barbs of wood found soft skin, tore at bare flesh, flayed those children alive. Clouds of red filled the air. Chunks like confetti exploded, showering the surroundings in a thick slather of pungent gore. Their bodies crumpled to the ground. Roots snaked, clawed at them, claimed them for their own. Children reunited with the earth.

The trees in this forest didn't like to be touched, didn't like to be cut.

She'd tried to warn Derrick about the damaged sign on the roadside. Private Property. Tres ... be felled. Half the sign obscured by snow.

Derrick, assuming it was practically an invite to take his pick. Dumped the car and dragged the four of them down the winding path into the forest. Julie knew better now. Trespassers will be felled.

Tear stains had scorched crimson lines in her frozen skin. She pulled herself from the snow bank, and padded towards path. Desperate to find Derrick, to get out of there.

She walked a short way, dodging between hunched trees. Each twig crack made her shudder. She couldn't tell which way she'd run. Turned around when she'd hit the snowbank.

Footprints...

That was it, she could follow the footprints. Her size six prints were easy to spot, amid snow-covered detritus. But where were Derrick's? He'd run in this direction, she was sure of it. Backwards indentations turned from crisp white, to pink. Bloodstained. Still no Derrick.

She found bloody remnants, gouges in the ice that surrounded the roots. Tufts of blond hair peeked from below. Their bodies now entwined with the forest. Hot sour vomit splattered on the ground, frozen in place. She heaved again, leant against the tree, and wept.

Dark air hung low amid the trees, the sun a soft pink glow through the murk. She couldn't bear to leave them again. Pulling off a glove she stroked the wisp of blond. Like a vacuum they too were sucked beneath the ground. Nothing left. She collapsed to her sodden knees, judders of dry sobs wracked her body.

"Julie?" A voice called in the distance.

She turned her head to source the voice. It was becoming too dark to see far through the trees.

"DERR-ick?" She shouted. Stifling the call with a glove, for fear of disturbing the creature again.

"Over here," he said, running towards her.

Julie spun around, unsure of his direction. Strong arms scooped her from the ground, held her close. His warmth, the only thing she could feel.

"We need to get out of here," he whispered, warm lips pressed against her ear.

"I can't leave—"

"They're gone baby. There's nothing we can do."

"But the trees—"

"I know, I know. I need you to stay quiet. Okay?"

She nodded solemnly. Biting down on her gloved fist, she let him lead her from the tangled grave.

"I can't do this."

"Yes, you can. You have to," he grabbed her tight around the waist and pulled her between bowing trees. CRUNCH. Something shifted behind them, fallen branches snapped, and creaked. Shadowed mist hid its master, but she knew that sound.

BOOM. Another footstep echoed in the distance. Somehow it heard them. Fear stole her strength. She slumped against his chest. Hands dropped from her waist, looped her arm, and almost yank it from the socket. She yelped.

BOOM. It was speeding up.

They ran, zig-zagging through trees. Her eyes bounced in their sockets, she tried to focus on the direction, but could see nothing through the thick black. Ground shuddered beneath them, torn asunder by the creature that chased them.

"We're close," Derrick shouted, pointing ahead to a clearing. His car's yellow pierced the mist.

She nodded, heart screaming in her ears.

A knotted root coiled out in front of her, tripping them both. Sprawled on the ground she kicked at the earth, pushing herself backwards to the forest edge. To freedom.

Derrick didn't move.

A trickle of blood slithered from a gash above his eye, droplets resting on his brow.

"Derrick. Get up!"

Nothing.

BOOM... It had reached them.

She scrambled to her feet. Snow rained from shaken branches. A thick blanket coated his body. Blood seeped from the wound.

One great dead hand reached for him, a gnarled twist of sticks. They bunched around his body, encasing him.

"No!"

She stumbled towards the creature that crumpled his body between its spindly wooden hands. It ignored her pleas, hands squeezed tighter.

Pop. Snap. She heard his body break.

There was no scream, no howl of pain. Maybe he was dead before the creature scooped him up. She bellowed at it.

It wrung its hands, and peeled them apart like shelling a pistachio. A mass of crushed bone spikes hung from mutilated flesh. It swirled its fingertips about the bloody remnants, extracting a length of sodden bowel. With a flick of its hand, it coiled the hulk of intestines around its tree-like body, spiralling upwards through branches that littered its chest. Next were the organs. It slipped a pointed finger into the soft flesh, and dangled the offal from tips of spines that stuck out at odd angles. His slivers of bone like a scattering of ornaments were sprinkled about its needled torso.

Julie's slack jaw quivered. Breath caught in her throat at the sight of this tree-beast adorning its body with the remnants of Derrick's. She couldn't process what she was seeing. A tendril of drool, slopped from her mouth down the front of her bloody torn hoodie.

The skin came last. Shredded flaps stuck to its hands. It yanked the skin free and raised it high above its featureless face. Spreading the layer flat before pinning it between two protruding sticks, like a winged angel.

It shuffled in place, the ground beneath its feet splitting. It sank. Planting itself. This newly decorated Christmas tree.

Her heart gave out. She would be fodder, a feast for the worms. Looked upon by the tree who felled man.



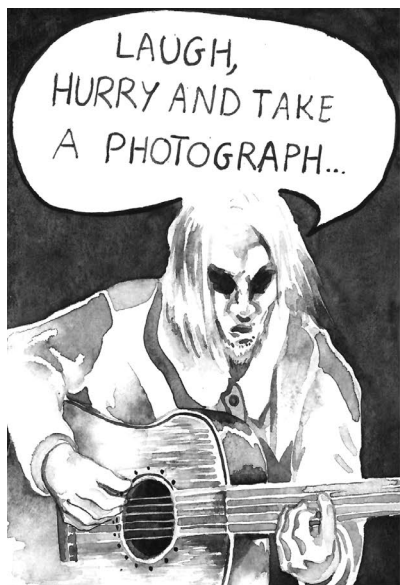


The Tamica

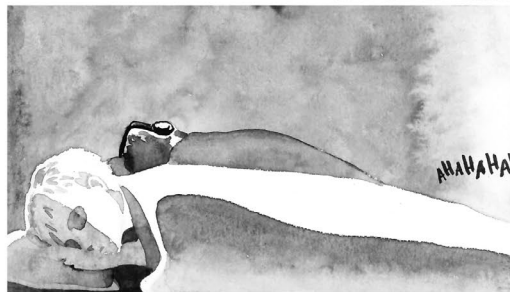
Eyes as bloody as they come
curly tentacles above
needles' points instead of fingers
quietly waiting for midwinter

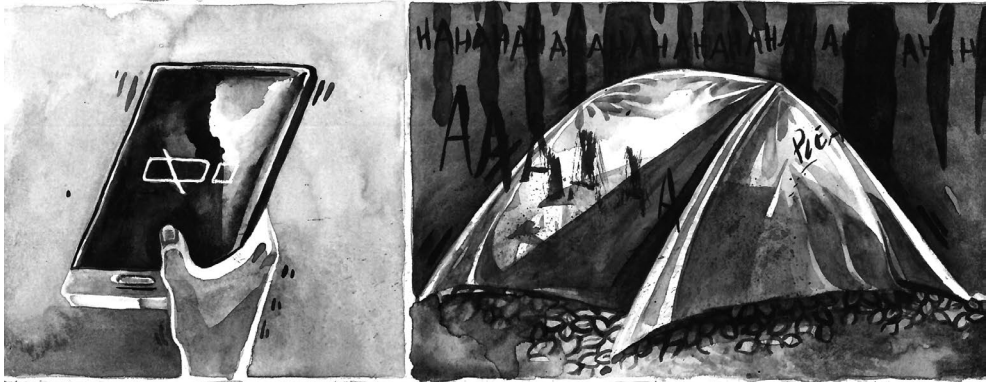
When the day turns into night
when the cold begins to bite
in the dark Tamica strikes
nice and bad children alike

If your life you still hold dear
if in you there's honest fear
when you hear her piercing laugh
hurry and take a photograph







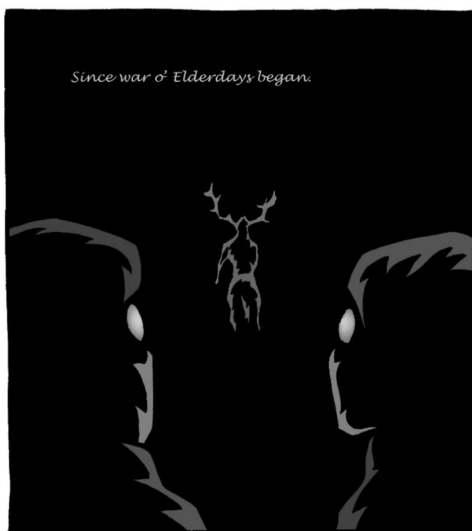














*Text excerpted From *Backwoods* (c. 1503) by Alfred A. Shipmann





EPILOGUE

WRITER: EMMET O'CUANA

ARTIST: DAVE DYE



AND THAT LONG HOT SUMMER
DAY IN '86 ENDED UP CHANGING
THE COURSE OF THE
BOLTHOLE GANG'S LIVES IN
WAYS THEY NEVER COULD
HAVE GUESSED.

LOUIS LEFT HOME AND SIGNED UP AS SOON AS HE COULD. THE SOUND OF BULLETS DROWNED OUT HIS MEMORY OF THE SCREAMS.



WHETHER FACED WITH THE METASTASIZING CHAOS OF THE BALKANS, OR THE GRIM LEGACY OF AFRICAN COLONIAL NATIONS —



— THE GUN ONLY GAVE HIM BRIEF REPRIEVE.

BRYAN SEEMED TO HAVE IT FIGURED OUT. GRADUATED TOP OF HIS CLASS.



BECAME A LAWYER. GOT MARRIED IN HIS 20'S AND EVEN HAD A COUPLE OF KIDS.



BUT THEN THERE WERE LONG ABSENCES FROM THE HOME. HIS WIFE ELLEN GOT USED TO DRUNKEN CALLS AT 3a.m. THEY STAYED TOGETHER, FOR THE KIDS.

WHERE DID IT COME FROM? HOW HAD IT DIED?



SMELL OF ROTTING MEAT IN THE SUMMER HEAT.



THEY RAN FOR HOME. FOR SAFETY. SHOUTING FOR HELP ALL THE WAY OUT OF THE WOOD.



THEY CAME AND TOOK HIM. HIS FRIENDS NEVER SAW TROY AGAIN.

TROY'S FAMILY VANISHED NEXT,
THE PEOPLE OF THE TOWN LEARNED
NOT TO TALK ABOUT HIM.



IT WAS LIKE NOTHING
HAD HAPPENED.

AND THAT WAS WHAT
HAUNTED THE BOYS
MOST AS THEY
ENTERED ADULTHOOD.



THEIR FRIEND WAS
ERASED SO EASILY.

SALLY
BECAME A
VETINARIAN.



YEAH. THE LESS SAID
ABOUT THAT THE BETTER.

MYTHICAL CREATURES

Kevin T. Rogers

Mason Oak was a Big Game Hunter out of time – and not a nice man. He had been sacked from his last post – culling overpopulated herds – after being discovered in the sale of rhino horns, leopard pelts, and just about any other nasty but profitable trade that his official position could mask. And then deported back from Africa to the UK.

He just couldn't understand it – why were people so sentimental about animals – they ate them didn't they? Inexplicable. But here he was, fifty years old, an unemployed and unemployable scourge of wild-life – no money – no prospects. Until .

*

It was like something out of a movie. His 'phone rang (which was remarkable in itself, because he hadn't paid the bill for six months) and a man with an Americam accent enquired if he were speaking to: 'The animal guy who got busted?' Which, of course, he was. But then things got strange. Had he ever heard of, 'The Sasquatch – you know – Big Foot?'

Oak barked that he was not going to waste his time talking about some 'bloody mythical creatures,' and was about to slam the receiver down, when the voice mentioned the one thing guaranteed to change his mind – money . . .

*

Hiram Spender was a producer of cheap and largely straight-to-DVD TV shows concerning all things strange and paranormal: 'Was Jack the Ripper an Alien?' – that sort of thing. All totally unproveable – all absolute nonsense. But working in this line did mean that he had made certain business contacts. And one who had owed him a favour had paid off his debt in kind: A mass of old video tapes – haunted houses, UFOs – and amongst it – a short sequence, shot in a remote arboreal forest on the West Coast of Canada.

It began with a deer grazing in a clearing. And then suddenly on screen, emerging from the deepest undergrowth – two unmistakeably genuine Bigfoot! They were large hulking monsters, covered in straggling rust-brown hair, with off-white faces that looked somewhere between human and neanderthal. And Hiram knew they had to be real because even if these were just a couple of jokers in gorilla suits, they'd still have to be at least eight-and-a-half-feet tall! Plus, the way that they had seized the deer, torn it apart and eaten it, left little doubt that this was no prank. Still, he'd instructed his camera people to check the tape – and it had passed all tests – it appeared authentic.

So, here was the deal he put to Oak: Hiram wanted someone to go out to this secret location, film some footage, and if possible actually bring back one of these animals alive. But there was a problem: The area was a place of almost untouched natural beauty, and potentially of great environmental – and cultural – significance. For it had been denied access to all except a very small tribe of Yellowknives who had long made the forest their home, and who had been allowed to remain there in order to preserve their traditional way of life. So Hiram needed someone to find a way in – someone who wasn't too concerned about laws and regulations. Someone, for instance, like an out-of-work but experienced – and totally unscrupulous – Big Game Hunter . . .

*

And now six months later, Mason Oak had done just that. He might have been nasty, but he was cunning. So befriending the unsophisticated, simple-living Yellowknives had been easy. And now, acting

on information that he'd wheedled out of them, he was making his way up a rocky ridge over which, it was said, the last four Sasquatch in the entire region had made their camp. He smiled as he recalled how the tribal Medicine Man Lakolee, had described the Bigfoot as sacred beings, crucial to his tribe's survival. And how without them, misfortune and sorrow must surely follow.

Oak hadn't believed a word of it - he was still not convinced that these beasts even existed. He'd seen the video, of course - but he'd also seen King Kong - such things could be faked. In fact, he fully expected to cross the hill and find - nothing. But he was being paid well either way, so it mattered little. Mind you - if Bigfoot did show its ugly mug, he had no intentions of filming it nor taking it alive - much too dangerous! He'd just shoot it and return with the carcass. Surely a dead Sasquatch was as good a piece of evidence as a breathing one?

He gripped his semi-automatic rifle, attained the ridge-top, and looked down. MY GOD - it was true! There they were - all four! Two seated on a log and two standing - possibly scenting the air? Yes - and the scent they detected was Mason Oak's! They turned as one, let out a blood-curdling yell, and began to tear up the hill. Another person might have run, but not Oak - he'd been charged by rogue elephants - so he didn't flinch. He merely waited till they were within range, opened fire and emptied his magazine. They didn't stand a chance - in less than a thunderous minute, each lay dead and bloody on the ground. While Oak stood breathing hard but already composing himself, and beginning to consider the best way of getting these beauties home. He kicked each to confirm the kill, and allowed himself an ironic chuckle: 'So much for "mythical creatures!"'

'What have you done, what have you done?'

Oak turned quickly to find Lakolee standing at the head of the other Yellowknives. They'd somehow approached without being heard, but they held no fear for the brazen killer. He knew the young men of the village were days away on a hunting expedition, leaving only the young women, children, and elderly of the tribe. He glanced at his ammo belt and judged that if they tried anything, he'd be able to reload and fire before they could reach him. But he didn't need to.

The old man looked despairingly at the bodies. 'You have slain the holy ones!' he almost sobbed.

Oak was dismissive. 'Look,' he growled, 'I don't want any trouble - just go home and leave me to my business.'

'You tricked us!' Lakolee suddenly roared. 'You lied and now you've ruined everything!'

This senile idiot was becoming annoying - Oak snapped back: 'Don't play the hypocrite with me - your hunters are out killing animals as we speak - what's the difference?'

Lakolee shielded his eyes and glanced upwards as if searching for something. 'No,' he said, now in a hushed tone, 'there is a difference!'

'Yes,' Oak responded half-smiling, 'the creatures I killed were only mythical.'

He waited for some reply - but there was none. Lakolee and his people were all staring skywards, awe and fear etched in to their faces. Then he heard it - a heavy rhythmic beating, descending immediately from above. And fast - so fast that he didn't even have time to raise an eye, before something ripped into his shoulders and hoisted him up off his feet! Up beyond the trees, up beyond the ridge, up beyond the Yellowknives who watched with mounting terror.

Oak pivotted left and right and trembled at the ripping talons that held him, then groaned as the

downward flap of two powerful wings obscured his vision and battered his ribs. Until they swung back upwards and revealed the terrible head of a gigantic eagle – with its yellow eyes, its clacking beak – all impossibly huge! But even stranger – even more terrifying – he could now also see that the creature’s body was not that of any bird! No, it was muscular and featherless, but covered in golden fur with a thicker, darker mane around its neck – like some mighty beast of the jungle . . .

Oak still held his empty weapon – but his torn and restricted arms were unable to reach for a new clip to reload. So he screamed for help instead – and could just about make out Lakolee’s receding voice, calling back.

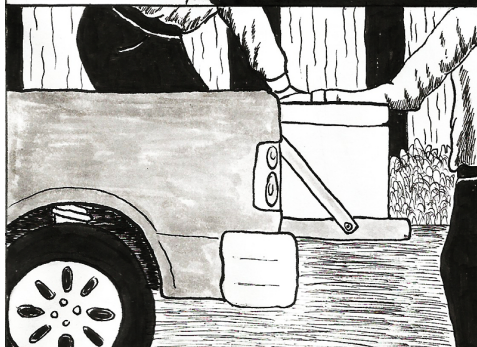
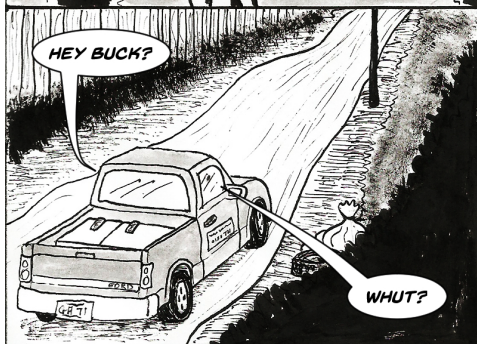
‘Ignorant! Like all of your kind – you are a fool!
Have you never heard of the Balance of Nature? Can you
not see? The Great Spirit left the Sasquatch here to keep the Griffins away!’

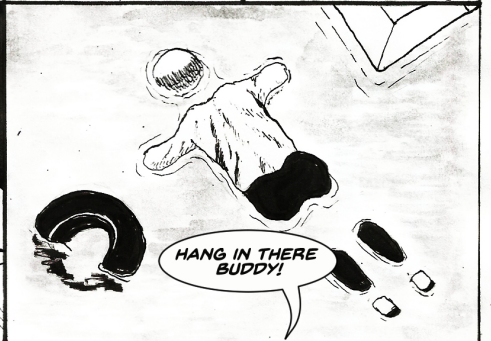
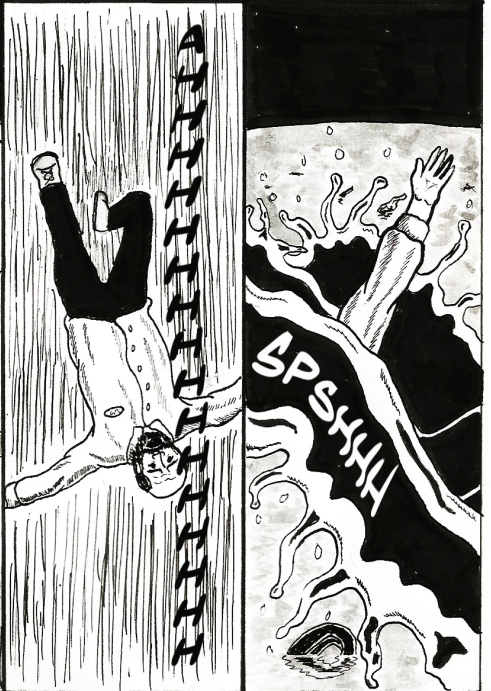
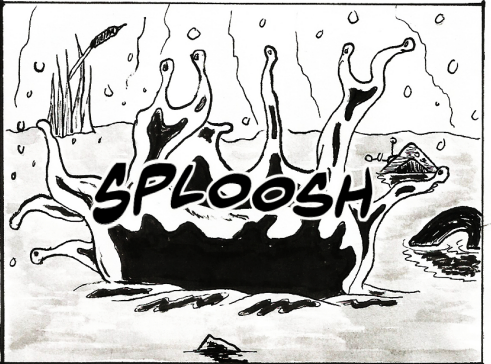
Oak couldn’t answer – not now – not ever. But his
blood-drenched rifle fell from a very great height and smashed on to the rocks below – and then echoed
his silence above . . .

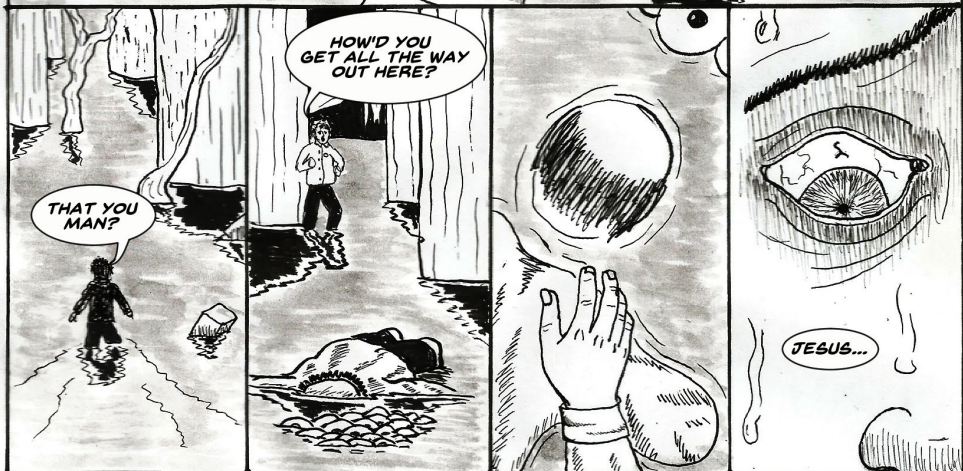


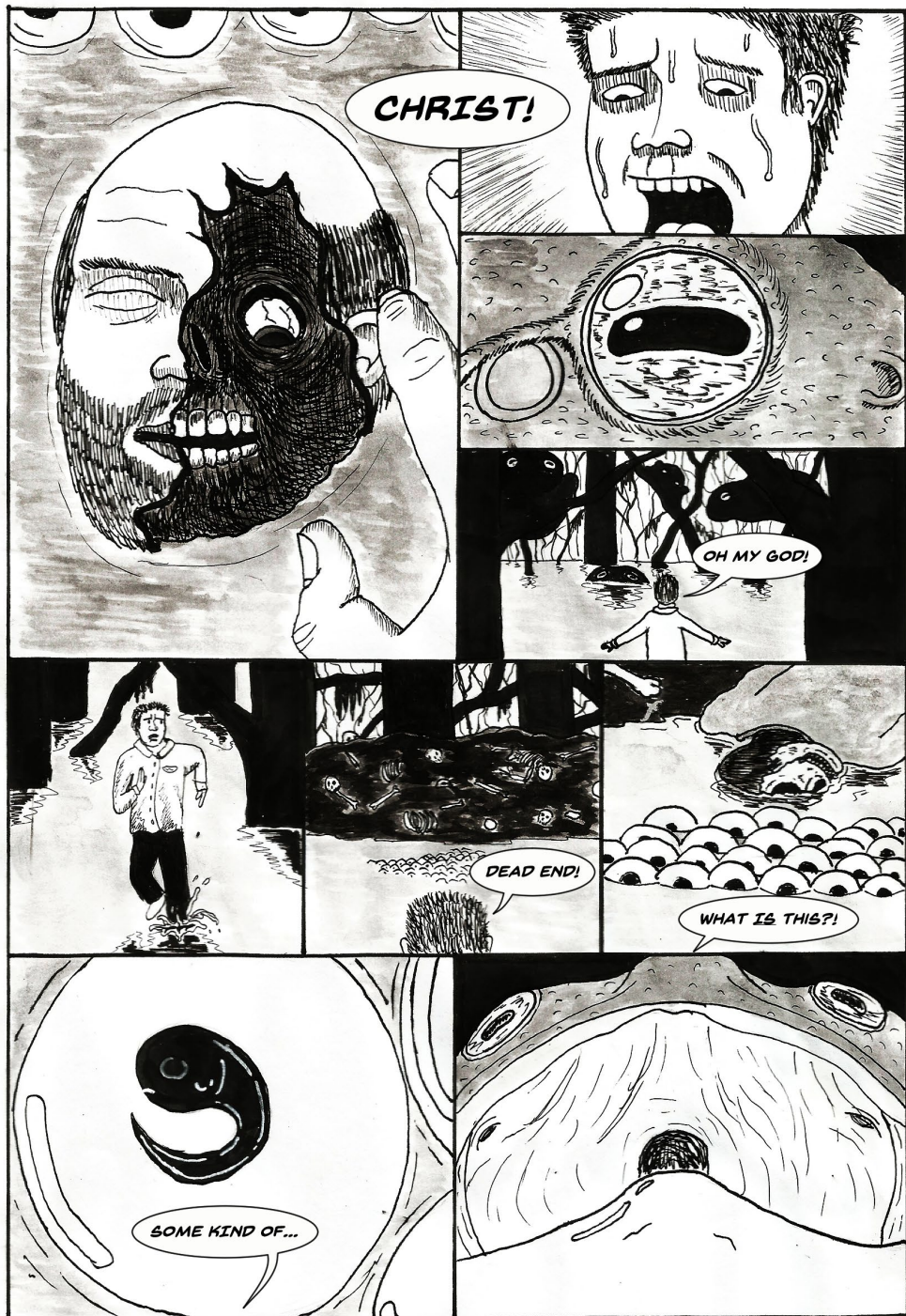
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WRITTEN AND DRAWN BY TOM SMITH











UGH!



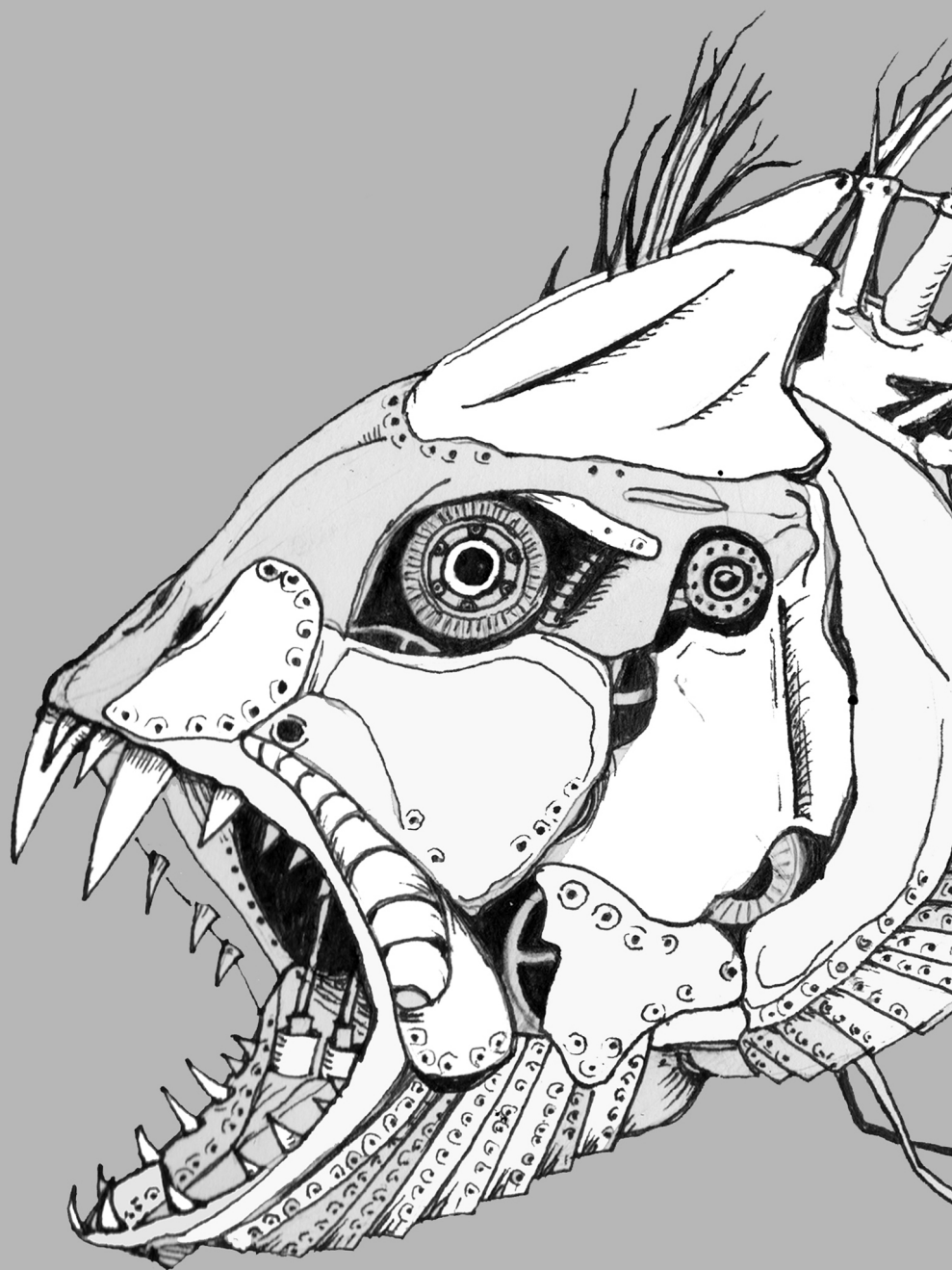
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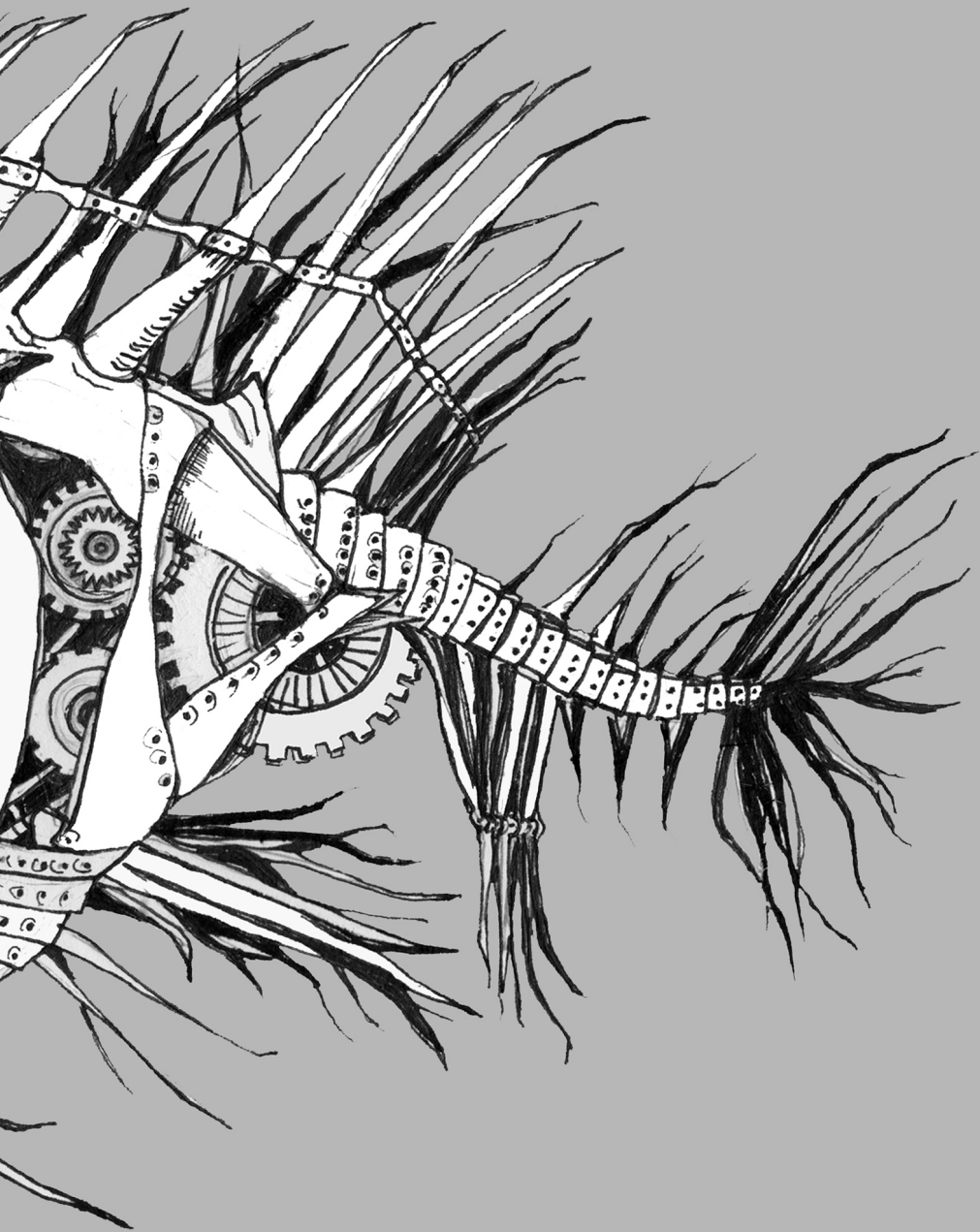


LEVI









**SMITH
V
SMITH**

DREAMS OF THE BOOGEYMAN

BY MATT SMITH!
SPECIAL THANKS TO NATE BENNETT

EVER SINCE I WAS
A LITTLE KID, I
HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE
TO SLEEP UNLESS
EVERY PART OF MY
BODY WAS COVERED.



IF ANY LIMB WAS
EXPOSED, THE
BOOGEYMAN COULD
GRAB ME...



AND DRAG
ME DOWN TO
HIS PIT OF
HORRORS.



BUT SINCE I MARRIED EMMA,
IT HASN'T BEEN AN ISSUE.



I THINK IT'S BECAUSE
SHE MAKES ME FEEL
SAFE AND PROTECTED.

...ALSO SHE DOESN'T LET ME
TURN THE AIR CON PAST "LOW."



IT'S HOT AS **BALLS** EVERY NIGHT!

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Edited by:

Tom Smith and Katie Whittle



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