



FROM GRAD SCHOOL TO DC COMICS TO A NEW NOVEL!

for

VENDITTI

ROBERT VENDITTI '01MA AND THE ROUNDABOUT WAY HE'S ACHIEVED SUCCESS AS A WRITER.

ONLY
63¢

STORY BY NATHAN HOLIC '02 '07MFA • ILLUSTRATED BY KAGAN MCLEOD

1999

By day you're working at the Borders bookstore in Winter Park, surrounded by the sorts of novels you hope to someday write.

A NOVEL.

The ultimate goal
for a fiction writer.

By night, you're workshoping
your writing at UCF. You're
drafting short stories for
your graduate thesis.

If you can just get ONE
of these stories published,
maybe that will be enough.

A small literary journal.

No one even needs to read it.

2001

You graduate from UCF.
An acceptance letter arrives
from Berkeley Fiction Review!

Your first publication!

This is what you've wanted.

Or is it?

2007

You receive a piece of fan mail.

It's a photo of your comic,
The Surrogates, on the McMurdo
research station in Antarctica.
You now have readers on all
seven continents.

2008

And now you're in Boston, visiting
the set of a movie — the movie
based on your graphic novel.

That's Bruce Willis over there.

BRUCE. WILLIS.

2015

Students are writing theses on your
work. Your name is cited in academic
journal articles. Something about
post-humanism in *The Surrogates*?

2017

Your thesis is still up there in the UCF library,
still on the long shelves where old graduate
theses are stored and forgotten.

Much like the
movie itself,
this — your
work studied in
academia — is
proof that an
artist cannot
have too rigid
a plan.

Sometimes...
things just happen.

It's there, and anyone can read
it, and there was a time when you
thought that this — these stories,
getting JUST ONE publication —
would be enough.

BUT IT WASN'T, WAS IT?

2002

You're living in Atlanta with your wife, reading comics more and more.

They're fascinating to you.

You didn't grow up with comics, and so every page — the entire medium — presents possibilities you'd never considered.

So you volunteer at Top Shelf Productions, a comic publisher in Marietta, Georgia.

Anything to interact with the people who make these books.

Anything to learn more.

At first, you're packing boxes.

Then you're driving across the country to conventions, unloading boxes, setting up tables,

selling comics in musty exhibit halls, flying home, trudging back to your full-time job at the bookstore...

You're learning more about comics. Reading more. You're thinking that maybe this is something you can do.

You're writing a script, scribbling notes on stolen printer paper during work hours at the bookstore,

drafting dialogue in between transactions at the register.

You're in Top Shelf's warehouse when the contributor copies of *Berkeley Fiction Review* arrive.

From acceptance to publication, mere months have passed, but as a writer, **EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED.**

Now you're thinking, a published story is nice...

But what about a comic?



2005

Thousands of boxes packed and unpacked, and you've finished a script for a graphic novel.

The Surrogates.

And Top Shelf will publish it.

Your comic, in print!

It doesn't even need to sell.

No one needs to read it.

You just want to hold it in your hands.



2005

Your new comic is out,

and you're setting up the Top Shelf booth at another convention.

This time it's the San Diego Comic-Con.

Suddenly there are producers in front of you, REAL HOLLYWOOD PRODUCERS, asking if the movie rights to *The Surrogates* have been sold yet.



You've published your second graphic novel, *The Homeland Directive*.

You're talking with students at Wheaton College.

At Georgia College & State University.

At UCF.

You're talking about the "life of the writer."



2013

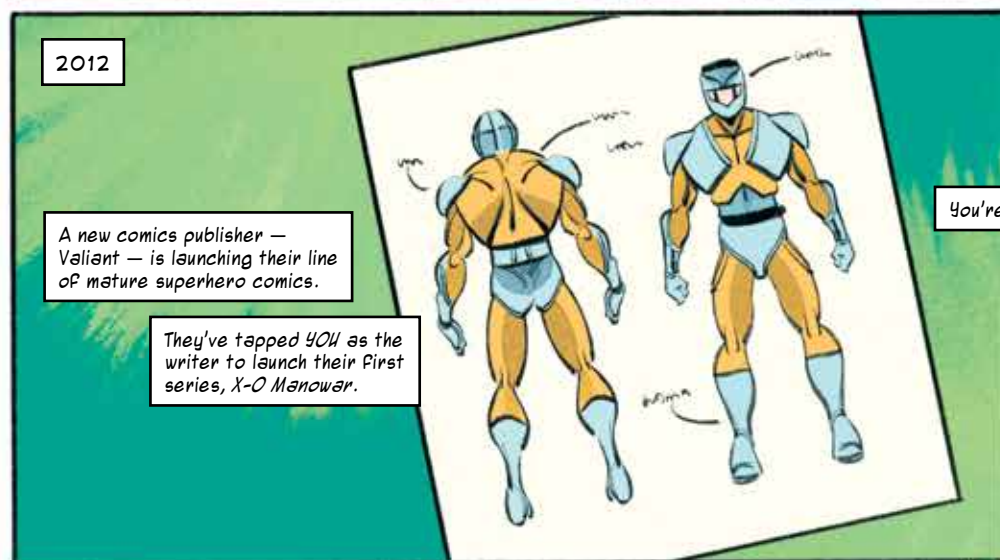
You're working with DC Comics, one of the "Big Two" comic publishers.

You're writing *The Flash* and *Green Lantern* —

iconic characters, recognized across the globe.

There are readers who come back every month, who know you and praise you (or curse you, depending upon the story).

If you'd pursued only that novel, would you have all this?



2012

A new comics publisher — Valiant — is launching their line of mature superhero comics.

They've tapped YOU as the writer to launch their first series, *X-O Manowar*.

You're thinking, THIS IS BIG.

But you're also thinking, please please please, let's just get to 12 issues.

X-O Manowar makes it to 50 issues before...

2016

DC Comics taps you to work on the DC Rebirth. EVERY SINGLE DC TITLE is getting rebooted,

and you've been entrusted to create a brand-new title, a book called *Hal Jordan and the Green Lantern Corps*.

Critics love it. Readers, too.

2017

It's summer, and DC Comics has given you the freedom to create your own character, YOUR OWN TITLE.

Damage, it's called, and it won't even be out until October, but somehow it feels like everything's built toward this.

But then again, it feels like everything had built toward Rebirth in 2016, too, and that everything had built toward 2010, when —

2009

You're adapting the first book in the massively popular *Percy Jackson* series into a graphic novel.

Years ago, you trusted a Hollywood studio to adapt your work, and now here you are, entrusted by someone else.

2010

Adaptation was never your goal, but somehow it seems that everything you've done has prepared you for this.

Your editor for *Percy Jackson* asks if you have any ideas for a novel of your own.

THIS IS YOUR SHOT!

A novel.

The ultimate goal for a fiction writer.

Right?

You're imagining the story of a kid named Miles who becomes a superhero.

The book will start as traditional text, but when Miles dons his golden cape, the pages will turn into comics.

2015

Miles Taylor and the Golden Cape is published.

And it's a novel you never could've written back in grad school,

never could have imagined.

You're starting to see that a career — a life — is not a straight-line trajectory, a tidy origin story and a hero's journey.

Everything rests upon everything else.

FOR NOW...

...what's next is what matters. What matters is that you keep building. It certainly isn't finished yet.

YOU AREN'T FINISHED YET.

ATTACK OF THE ALIEN HORDE

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