

## Of Mice and Martians #1

Jason Burnett, jason.burnett@starfleet.com

PO Box 18496, Minneapolis MN 55418

Welcome to the first issue of my latest fanzine! This will be (not counting APAzines) my fourth title. I'm hoping that it will be my first title (again, not counting APAzines) that doesn't end being as a one-shot. I've spent the last couple of months brainstorming titles, trying to find one I felt like I could live with for a while, and planning what sort of zine I wanted it to be. I think I've got that figured out, but even so I'm expecting sort of a shaking-out process in the first few issues.

### DC Comics hates me<sup>1</sup>

Even before the recent cancellation of *Legion of Super-Heroes*, it seemed like DC is determined to drive me away as a customer. Every time I start liking one of their titles, they either cancel it or do something incredibly stupid. The latest casualties are:

- *Ame-Comi Girls*: This was a fun title. Alternate versions of the DC characters that were fun to look at, weren't horribly grim, had exciting adventures, and that I actually wanted to read about. So of course they canceled it.

---

<sup>1</sup> This originally appeared, in slightly different form, in issue 3 of *The Adventures of New Kid*, my zine for Interlac, the Legion of Super-Heroes APA.

- *Green Arrow*: I've lost track of how many second chances I've given Green Arrow since the debut of the New 52. I love the character, love the backstory, hate what they're currently doing with the title. They had finally reached a point where they were starting to tell a coherent story, then left the story in mid-arc for September's Villian Month gimmick<sup>2</sup>, and starting telling a new story, coming completely out of nowhere and set 5 years in the past. Couple these monkeyshines with an increase in cover price, and they've successfully driven me away.

This leaves the number of DC titles I still read at one: *Wonder Woman*. I've read that a lot of fans think the current version of Wonder Woman is miles away from the classic version, and since I never read Wonder Woman prior to the current incarnation I'm even willing to concede that they're probably right. But at least they're managing to tell a coherent story that makes me want to buy the comic each month, and that's more than I can say for any of the other New 52 titles.

---

<sup>2</sup> Hey, let's call it what it is!

## In Defense

When I started mentally composing this article, it was going to be in defense of licensed novelizations, but as I put the pieces together, I realized that everything I had wanted to say applies just as much to fanfiction and comic books, hence the more general title.

Over half of the comics I read are licensed titles – the *Star Trek* comics, the *Doctor Who* comics, and *My Little Pony* comics<sup>3</sup> – and I don't enjoy them any less than I enjoy comics that were originally created as comics. Likewise I've been reading a lot of *Star Trek* and *Doctor Who* novelizations, and I don't enjoy them any less than I do novels that are created “from scratch.” And I think what it comes down to is the difference between “world-building” stories and “story-telling” stories.

Some stories require the author to create a new world to tell them in. *Dune*, for example, couldn't have been told in just any universe. The planet itself was as much a part of the book as any of the characters. Many other stories, though, don't require a unique world in order to tell the story the author wants to tell. You may have a story to tell of a starship crew conducting an initial survey of a planet and first contact with the alien species they find living there. Besides the crew and the planet, you also need the background of the universe and the organization that sent your intrepid explorers out on this mission of discovery. Basically, you need Starfleet. But unless you want to write

---

3 In my opinion, *My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic* is one of the best comics being produced today in any genre.

your story as a fanfiction<sup>4</sup> or else go through the process of trying to sell it as a licensed product<sup>5</sup>, you are left with no other option but to attempt to create your own universe, with your own version of Starfleet, which is like the original in the places where it matters to your story, but different enough to keep litigious license-holders off your back. It often ends up being a lot of work for no real effect – everyone involved, from the author to the reader to everyone in between, still recognizes that this is a Starfleet vessel trying to deal with the implications of the Prime Directive<sup>6</sup>, but the author has had to invest time and energy in doing world-building that wasn't necessary to tell the story they wanted to tell, just to meet the legal requirements of copyright.

At their best, fanfiction and licensed-world fiction can be just as good as completely original fiction. And, yes, at their worst, they can be complete and utter tripe. But hey, some people like tripe.

## Survival on Television

In issue #9 of his fanzine *Inca*, Rob Jackson published a collection of short articles on the theme of survival. Since one of the most common genres of television watched in my house is survival reality shows, I decided to do an article of

---

4 And thereby eliminate your chance of getting paid for it.

5 Which, from what I understand, makes the process of writing and selling a novel infinitely more difficult.

6 Or a Timelord dealing with a temporal paradox, or a new student going to Hogwarts, or whatever fictional universe you prefer. I'm just using *Star Trek* as a shorthand here.

mini-reviews of our favorite survival shows.

One of our favorites is *Dual Survival* this features primitive survival expert Cody Lundin partnered with Dave Canterbury (in earlier episodes) or Joe Teti (in later episodes). Given that Cody is a tree-hugging hippie<sup>7</sup> and both of his partners come from the military, the show provides not only a variety of approaches to tackling each particular problem, but also a lot of entertainment from the personality clashes.

We also enjoy *Survivorman*, or any other show by Les Stroud. The particular gimmick for Stroud's show<sup>8</sup> is that he goes out into the wild completely unsupported. Instead of having a camera crew follow him around, who he then pretends aren't there, Stroud takes a variety of small battery-operated cameras with him and films everything himself<sup>9</sup>. Stroud has filmed everywhere from the Arctic to Africa, and I particularly like that he's honest enough to include his mistakes. We see him spend 9½ hours trying to light a fire. We see him get an infection in a cut on his foot. We see him leave his shelter and rush by torchlight to a nearby village when a jaguar is circling his camp in the Amazon. And because he doesn't attempt to appear superhuman, the viewer is left with the feeling that he could survive if he had to.

---

7 He is always barefoot, no matter where they go, and lives in an off the grid hobbit hole in Arizona.

8 There seems to be a rule that every survival show must have a gimmick.

9 Even when this causes him extra work, such as when he'll set up a camera on a tripod at the top of a hill, leave it running to film himself climbing down the hill, then have to climb back up the hill to retrieve the camera, then back down again to get to where he was originally going.

One that we watch more for the entertainment value than for the educational value is *Man, Woman, Wild*. Myke Hawke is a former Green Beret. His wife Ruth is an English television reporter, whose previous concept of roughing it appears to have been staying at inferior hotels. Naturally, when Myke takes Ruth into the wilderness and attempts to teach her survival skills, hilarity ensues<sup>10</sup>.

One of the more competition-based survival shows we watch is *Naked and Afraid*. Two people (one man and one woman) are dropped off in a survival location, naked, with only one piece of survival equipment each that they selected beforehand, not knowing what their partner was going to pick<sup>11</sup>. They then have to attempt to survive for 3 weeks, before making it to their designated extraction spot. One interesting observation we've made from this is that people whose survival training comes from the military tend to do less well than those who've picked up the skills on their own. This military guys, as one of the guys admitted, are used to being out in the field with a massive support system behind them, carrying every piece of gear they could possibly ever need, and so attempting to survive in primitive conditions is completely foreign to their usual way of doing things.

Finally, a recent discovery that's rapidly becoming a favorite is *Ultimate Survival Alaska*. This is multistage race,

---

10 In her defense, though, she does learn, and rapidly becomes more competent in the wilderness as the series progresses.

11 There seems to be some sort of coordination by the show's producers, as we've never seen a pair show up with redundant tools (each carrying a knife, for example).

through a variety of terrain throughout the state of Alaska, with 4 teams<sup>12</sup> who use the equipment they carry, their survival skills, and whatever they can hunt, find, or scrounge along the way. It's not a pure survival situation, because of the race elements, but it's more interesting than a standard endurance race because of the variety of techniques the teams use to get where they're going and to get food, fire, and shelter along the way.

Those of you who came into this article with any knowledge of survival reality shows will notice a glaring absence from the list above: Bear Grylls. That's because we don't watch any of his shows. And not, as you might think, because of the revelations that he slept in hotels, choreographed his stunts, and otherwise faked his shows. No, the reason we don't watch Bear Grylls is because he goes out of his way to make things look difficult, to play up the “yuck” factor of the things he eats, and to otherwise sensationalize the things that he does<sup>13</sup>. This doesn't do his viewers any good if they should find themselves in an actual survival situation, and it just makes his shows generally unpleasant to watch.

So how about you: If your car broke down on the way home from a con, leaving you stranded in the wilderness with a dead cell phone, an almost-empty bottle of whiskey, a pair

---

12 Moutaineers, Endurance Athletes, Woodsmen, and Military.

13 As someone who's eaten a mealworms and crickets under the best possible conditions (cooked into other foods, by someone else), I can attest that there's really no need to attempt to dramatize the eating of these sorts of things. Either they taste okay (mealworms) or they taste bad enough on their own that no dramatization is necessary (crickets). Either way, he's doing his viewers a serious disservice by playing up the “yuck” factor.

of steampunk goggles, and a DVD boxed set of season 3 of *Star Trek: Voyager*, could you survive until rescuers find you or you find your way back to civilization?

## Fanzine listings

Starting next issue, this will be a listing of fanzines I've received and read since the previous issue. I had planned to do it for this issue but ran out of time<sup>14</sup>. I do want to note, however, that Steven H. Silver released *Argentus* #13 as I was putting this issue to bed. *Argentus* is always a good read, and only comes out once a year, so I wanted to be sure to mention it. Check it out at [efanzines.com](http://efanzines.com).

## Lettercol

And here's where you're letters will be in future issues. What have you been up to recently? Did anything in *Of Mice and Martians* inspire any thoughts? Have you been reading, watching, playing, or listening to anything that you think I'd enjoy?

## And... Happy New Year!

Unless someone living to the east of me has gotten ambitious, this is the first fanzine of 2014<sup>15</sup>. May you all bring forward what you liked from 2013, leave behind what you didn't, have a fine and fannish 2014!

---

14 See “And... Happy New Year!” below.

15 Which is why this issue is so small – I was dealing with a deadline. Self-imposed, but still a deadline.