

Whistles



Chapter 2

a Clown Flees with the Clown-fes

By Andrew Hussie

AGAIN, MASTER AND HIS LOYAL PROTÉGÉ HAVE BEEN UNITED. WHISTLES THE CLOWN, IN AN ACT OF MARVELOUS GALLANTRY, HAS MANAGED TO SAVE HIS BELOVED PENDLECOAT FROM AN UNGRATEFUL MOB.



NOW, AS THEIR TRANSPORT HAS BROKEN DOWN, THE COLD WINDS OF THE DESERT NIGHT KEEP THEM COMPANY. THOUGH WHISTLES IS WOUNDED, HE SELFLESSLY SUMMONS ALL HIS STRENGTH TO HELP HIS BELEAGUERED MASTER. PENDLECOAT'S VIGOR, HOWEVER, IS SLIPPING AWAY.



'COUGH!'
MY BOY...
I SAY...

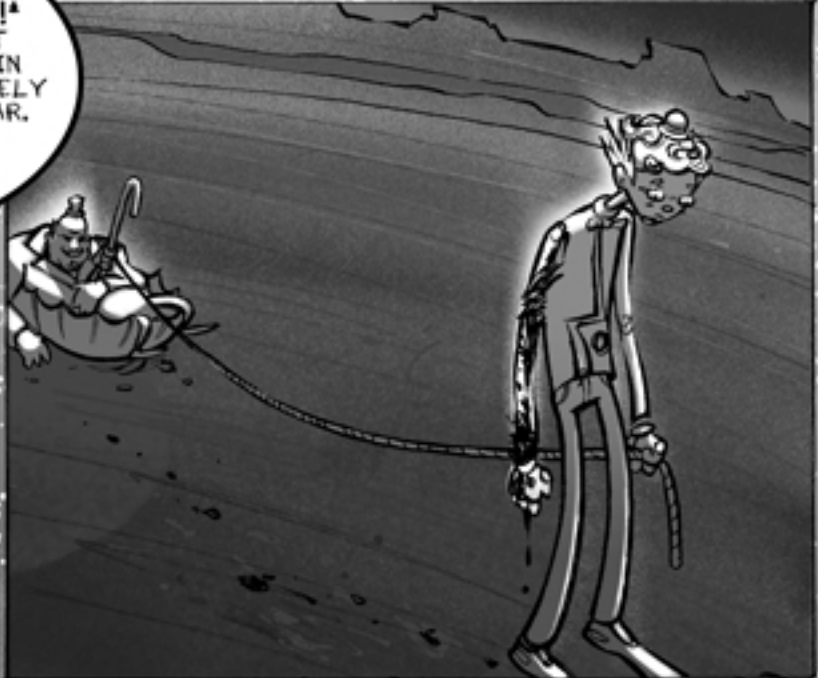
MASTER,
PLEASE, DON'T
TRY TO TALK.

MY BOY, I CAN'T
GO ON! MY WOUNDS I
FEAR PROBE DEEPER THAN
THE FLESH. I'VE NOT AN
OUNCE OF FORTITUDE
TO MY WHOLLY
SHAMED NAME.

OH, MASTER,
DON'T SAY
THAT...



'COUGH COUGH!'
AND NARY A DECENT
MEAL BETWEEN US IN
DAYS! FAMINE IS SURELY
MY BUNKMATE, I FEAR.
I CAN TAKE IT NO
LONGER, MY
GOOD LAD.



BACK AT AN EMBATTLED
STARLIGHT CALLOPPE.

GUMBLIN,
WHERE WILL
YOU GO?

THE CIRCUS IS FINALLY
FREE FROM TYRANNY.
THOUGH THIS RELIEVES
ME, I CONFESS MY CHAGRIN
AT HAVING DISMISSED THE
PREVIOUS WARNINGS. MY
APOLOGIES, DOODLEBEAN.

BUT THE HEINOUS
SCOURGE, MASTER
PENDLECOAT, IS HIDING
SOMEWHERE OUT THERE.
IF I MAY BRING HIM TO
JUSTICE, PERHAPS I
COULD BEGIN A LONG
JOURNEY TOWARDS
REDEMPTION.

OH, IT'S OK,
GUMBLIN. IT REALLY
WASN'T YOUR FAULT.
BUT WHO WILL TAKE
CARE OF THE CIRCUS
WHILE YOU'RE
GONE?

YOU
WILL.

ME?? I...
WOW.

I AM APPOINTING
YOU AS STAR OF
THE CIRCUS IN THE
INTERIM. I KNOW
YOU'LL NOT
DISAPPOINT.

I'LL DO MY
BEST, GUMBLIN.
GOSH... STAR?

IN THE MEANTIME,
I WILL CONSIDER A WAY
TO ADDRESS THE DELICATE
SITUATION WITH OUR
ESTRANGED STAR, WHISTLES.
OUR LAST ENCOUNTER WAS...
NOT PLEASANT.

WHISTLES??
YOU'RE GOING TO
FIND WHISTLES?

YES, NOW
THERE IS NO MORE
TIME TO SQUANDER.
TAKE CARL, YOUNG
FRIENDS.

OH, I HOPE
HE'S OK.



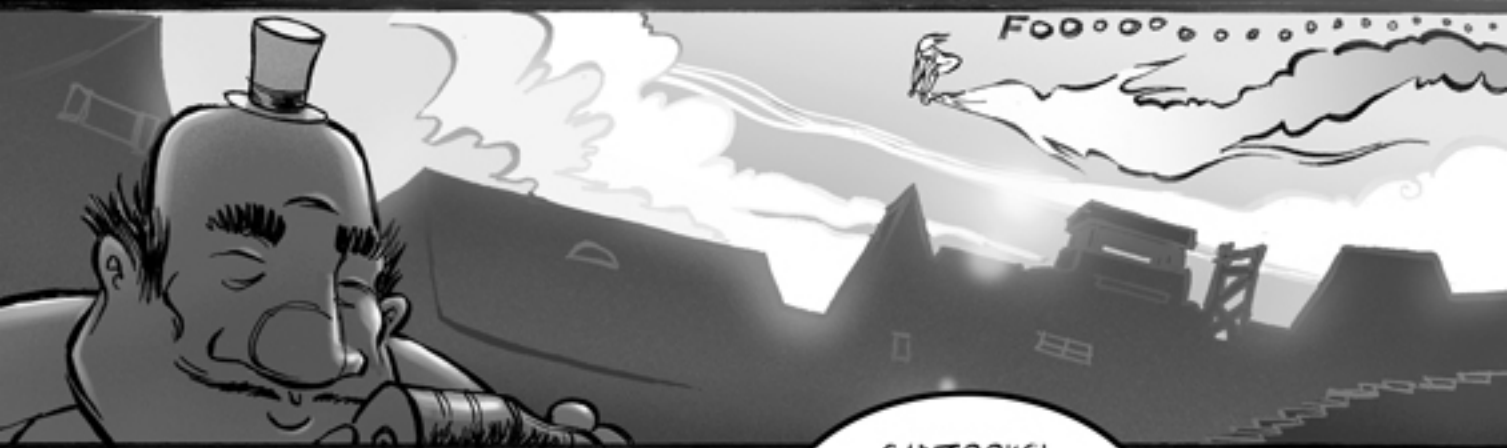


MY BOY! GIVE THE OLD ACT A REST A MOMENT AND PULL YOURSELF UP TO SOME INDIGENOUS HOCK! I SAY, A MITE GAMEY, BUT SERVICEABLE TO THE PLAINTIVE GULLET!



THIS IS CALLED JUGGLING. WHEN YOU ALL GROW UP AND JOIN THE CIRCUS, YOU WILL LEARN THIS TOO. EXCEPT YOU WILL JUGGLE PRETTY BALLS INSTEAD OF FUNNY PLANTS!

ooooooooooh!



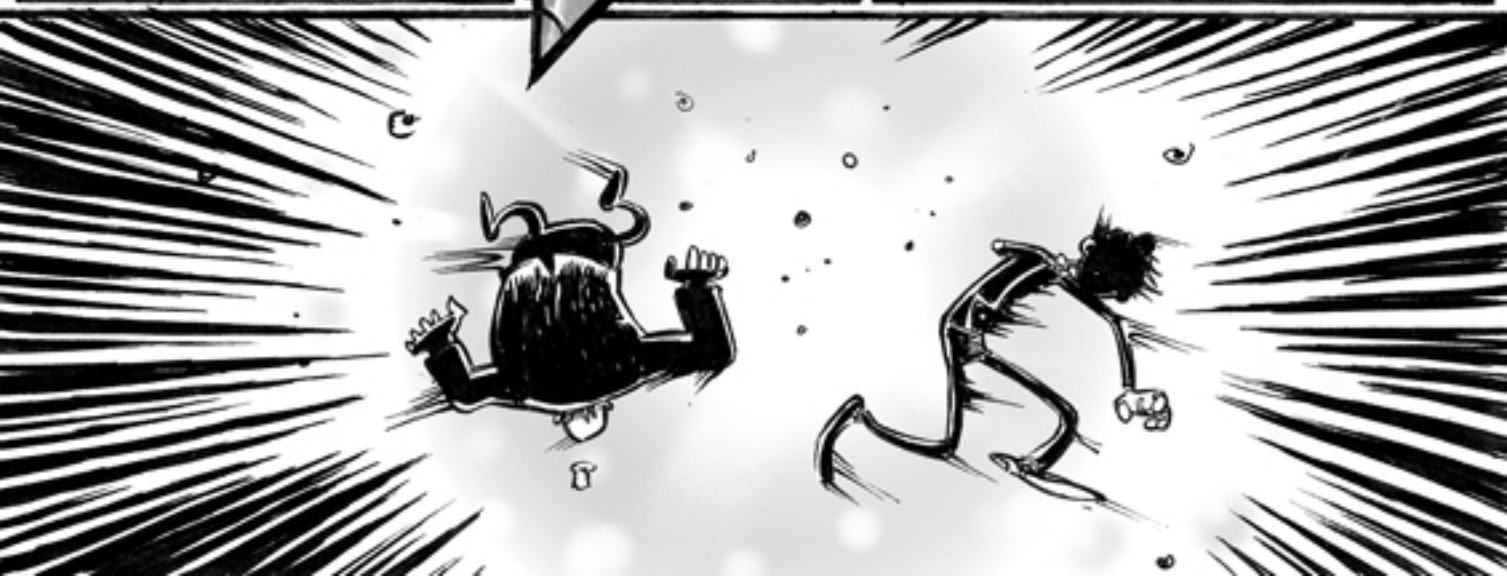
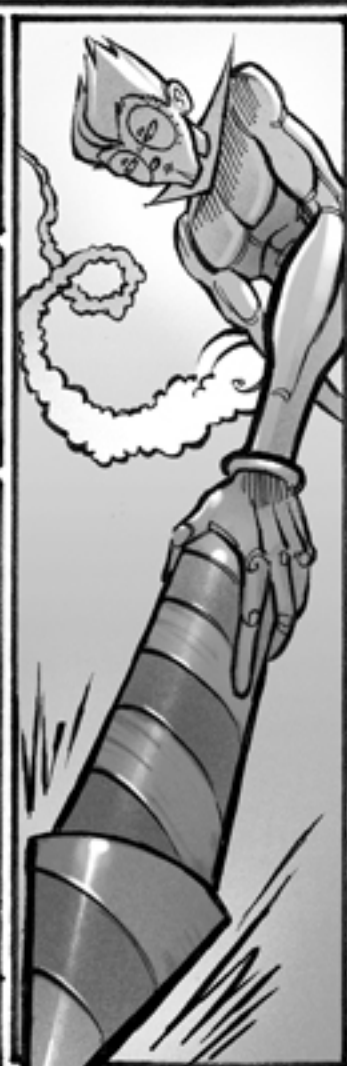
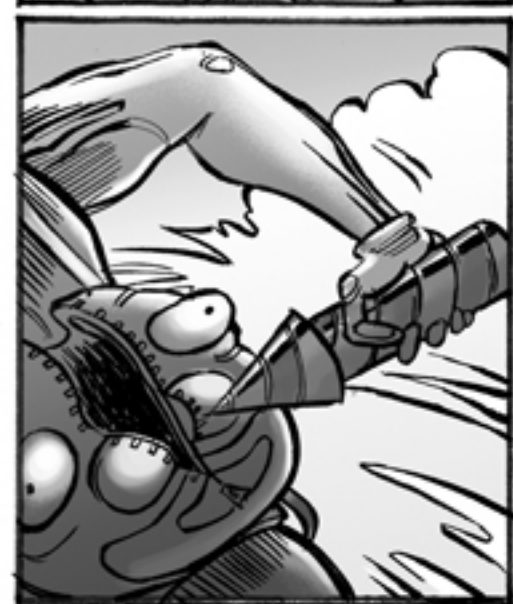
GADZOOKS!
I SAY, LAD, PACK AS
MUCH CURED TORSO AS
YOUR LIMBS CAN BEAR!
ER, LIMB, THAT IS!
THERE'S HASTE
TO BE MADE!

WHAT? WHY?

AN OLD CUSTOMER,
MOST UNFRIENDLY!

OH, IT'S
GUMBLIN, THE
NEW STAR! HE'S
GREAT!







HI, GUMBLINI!
WHAT ARE YOU
DOING HERE?





WHISTLES.



YES. HI!



YOUR ACTS OF TERRIBLE INSUBORDINATION ARE UNFORGIVABLE, WHISTLES. ARE YOU EVEN AWARE OF THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY YOUR BRAZEN INITIATIVE?

MY WHAT? OH, I SAW MASTER WAS HURT, AND I WENT TO HELP HIM. HE'S A LOT BETTER NOW!



NO, WHISTLES. YOU...

HMM...

YOU DON'T SEEM TO UNDERSTAND YOUR ACTIONS AT ALL. YOU SEE, WHEN YOU SAVED MASTER PENDLECOAT, YOU HURT MANY INNOCENT PEOPLE. BECAUSE OF YOU, HE'S BEEN GIVEN THE CHANCE TO INFLECT MORE HIDEOUS ATROCITIES. YOU WERE AIDING AND ABETTING A RUTHLESS FELON.

I WAS??
OH NO!
WHO?

SNEAK



'SIGH'



FLUFF-BOOM

NOW, LAD,
NOW, I SAY,
MY LAD...

I AM NOT
YOUR LAD.

I SAY, MY GOOD...
WHY, MY OLD CRUMB! WE
MOST CERTAINLY
BEGAN ON THE WRONG
HOOF, METHINKS!

WHAT WE NEED IS TO SORT OUR DIFFERENCES OVER TEA.
WOULD YOU CARE FOR THAT BIT OF LEVEL-HEADEDNESS?
YES, MY LAD, LET US ALL HAVE A BIT OF... FRIENDLY...
NON-THREATENING... LUSCIOUS...



I'M SURE YOU
KNOW CLOWNHOOD HAS
ITS BOONS ALONG WITH
ITS CURSES.





THIS IS ALL SO OVERWHELMING, FLIPPY. RUNNING THE SHOW IS A BIG DEAL TO BEGIN WITH. BUT PICKING UP THE PIECES SINCE THE BIG DISASTER, TOO? THERE ARE SO MANY WOUNDED. I DON'T KNOW IF GUMBLIN MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE.

YOU'RE OW... DOING FINE OW... DOODLEBEAN. BE CAREFUL WITH THAT ICE PACK. THAT'S A MAJOR BURN THERE.



SORRY. I MEAN, I'M GLAD THAT AWFUL PENDLECOAT IS GONE. WHAT A MONSTER. BUT DID IT HAVE TO HAPPEN LIKE THIS? AND POOR WHISTLES. IT'S TERRIBLE THAT HE'S OUT THERE BY HIMSELF. MAYBE HE'S HURT!

POOR WHISTLES?? DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT HAPPENED?

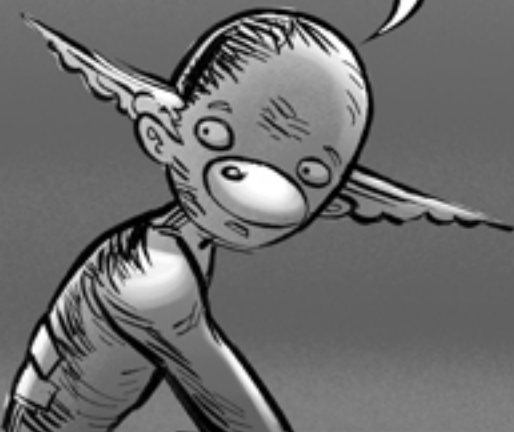




WELL, I THINK SO. I DIDN'T GET TO SEE IT. WHISTLES JUST WANTED TO HELP HIS MASTER. YOU CAN'T BLAME HIM THOUGH. HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON.



OH, DOODLEBEAN. YOU KNOW I LOVE WHISTLES, TOO. BUT WHAT HAPPENED THAT NIGHT... HE KIND OF WENT BANANAS.



OH, I JUST DON'T KNOW. ANYWAY, I'M STILL WORRIED.



HEY, THAT SMELL. SMELLS GOOD, LIKE SOMEONE'S COOKING.



SNIFF
SNIFF



EWWWWWW!!!



WHISTLES! I MUST STRESS UPON YOU THE NEED FOR RESTRAINT! YES, YOU FEEL HURT AND ANGRY. YOUR LOYALTY TO YOUR MASTER IS PROFOUND, AND THAT IS ADMIRABLE. BUT FOCUS. HE WAS A MISERABLE TYRANT, AND HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO JUSTICE. SOMEWHERE INSIDE YOU, YOU MUST KNOW IT IS RIGHT.

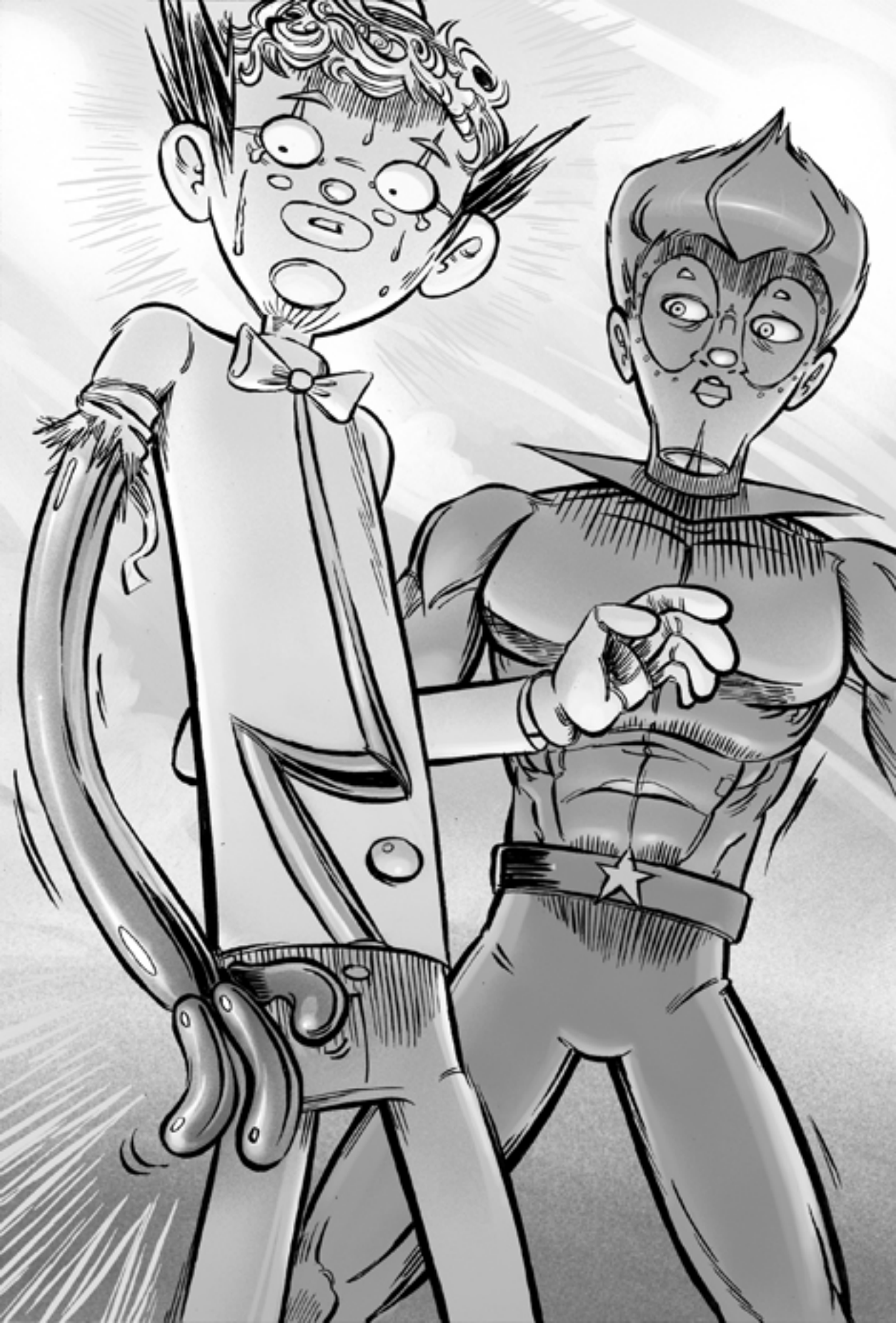
MASTER!
NO, MASTER...
ERG!



THERE IS A GREAT POTENCY THAT RESIDES IN EVERY CLOWN, WHISTLES. THAT POWER IS SURELY EXCEPTIONAL IN ONE AS GREAT AS YOU. THIS POWER SHOULD BE FOCUSED, HARNESSSED RESPONSIBLY, SO WE MAY FULFILL OUR DUTIES. THIS REQUIRES A CLEAR MIND, AND TRUE DISPASSION, EVEN IN TIMES OF EMOTIONAL CRISIS.



ERG...
RAAARGH!





UM, THIS POWER I MENTIONED, I DID NOT MEAN IT WAS QUITE SO STRANGELY LITERAL. MORE IN TERMS OF INTANGIBLES, SUCH AS COURAGE AND DISCIPLINE, WITH WHICH TO BETTER ENTERTAIN.

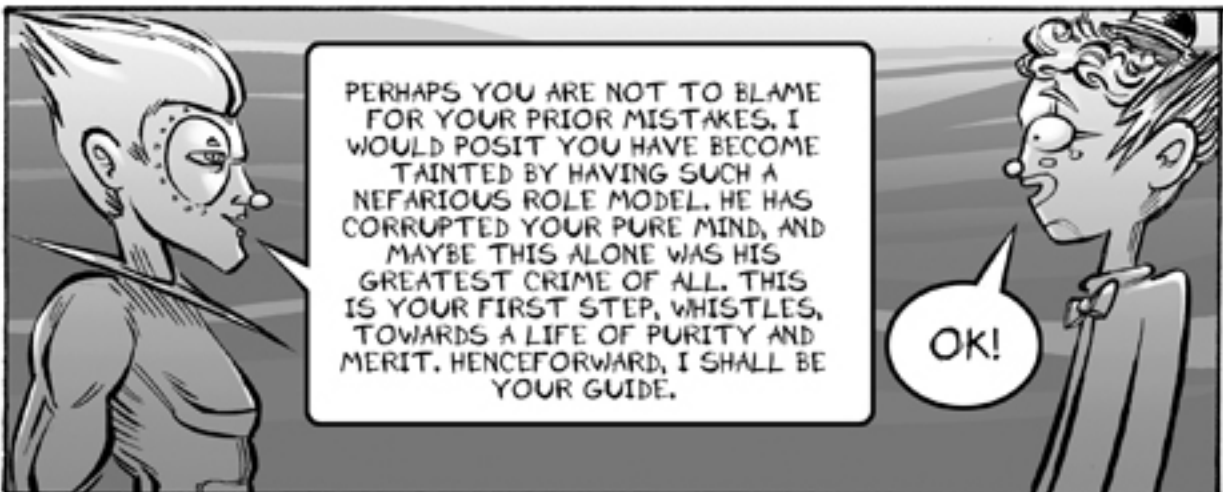


HA, HA!
NEAT!



NEVERTHELESS, YOU HAVE SHOWN WONDERFUL RESTRAINT, WHISTLES, YOU SHOULD BE PROUD.

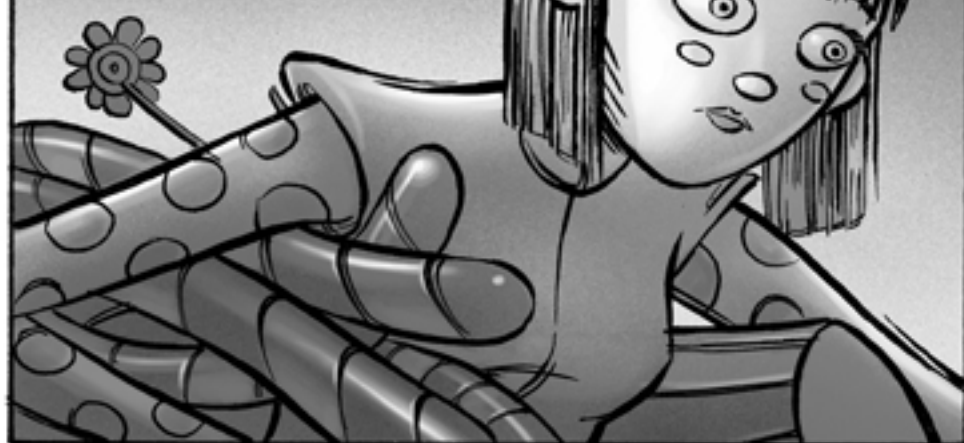
REALLY?
THANK YOU!



PERHAPS YOU ARE NOT TO BLAME FOR YOUR PRIOR MISTAKES. I WOULD POSIT YOU HAVE BECOME TAINTED BY HAVING SUCH A NEFARIOUS ROLE MODEL. HE HAS CORRUPTED YOUR PURE MIND, AND MAYBE THIS ALONE WAS HIS GREATEST CRIME OF ALL. THIS IS YOUR FIRST STEP, WHISTLES, TOWARDS A LIFE OF PURITY AND MERIT. HENCEFORWARD, I SHALL BE YOUR GUIDE.

OK!

THE SHOW'S BIG REOPENING IS ONLY IN A FEW NIGHTS, AND I HAVE SO MUCH TO DO. THIS IS SO HARD. OH, WHISTLES, HOW DID YOU EVER MANAGE THIS JOB SO WELL?



SIGH...



I'VE ADMIRED HIM AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER BEING AT THE CIRCUS. THOSE DAYS, WHEN HE WAS THE STAR... THEY WERE SO SIMPLE AND FUN. EVERYONE LOVED HIM, AND THINGS WERE GREAT.



THEN AS I STARTED GETTING OLDER, AND LEARNING ABOUT WHAT AWFUL THINGS WERE HAPPENING AT THE CIRCUS, I STARTED BECOMING AFRAID. THOSE WONDERFUL TIMES WERE JUST AN ILLUSION THROUGH A CHILD'S EYES. PERFORMERS WERE LIVING IN FEAR, AND RANDOMLY DISAPPEARING. I FEEL SICK THINKING ABOUT IT.



BUT THROUGH IT ALL, WHISTLES STAYED HIS USUAL, WONDERFUL SELF. HIS PERFORMANCES WERE ALWAYS AMAZING, AND HIS SPIRIT WAS ALWAYS BRIGHT. NOTHING FAZED HIM.





THEN, WHEN HE MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEARED THE FIRST TIME, IT BROKE MY HEART. HE WAS THE ONLY GOOD THING ABOUT THE CIRCUS, AND I BEGAN LOSING HOPE. OUR EFFORTS TO OUST PENDLECOAT ALWAYS SEEMED TO GO NOWHERE.



AND IT MIGHT HAVE STAYED THAT WAY, IF WHISTLES HADN'T COME BACK AND SOMEHOW FIXED EVERYTHING. I DON'T KNOW HOW HE DID IT! HE'S SO GREAT.

AND THEN HE VANISHED AGAIN. I JUST WISH I COULD HAVE SAID ONE THING TO HIM BEFORE HE LEFT. AT LEAST GOODBYE. OH, HURRY BACK, GUMBLIN!



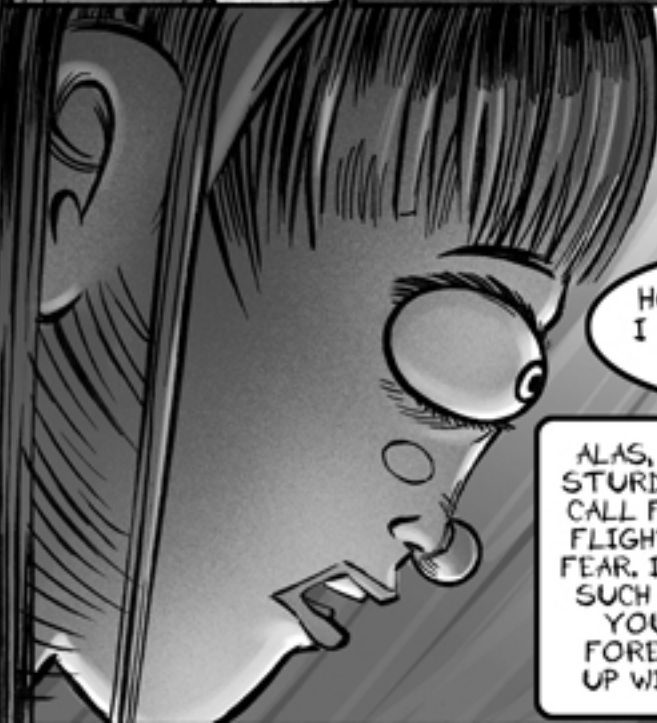
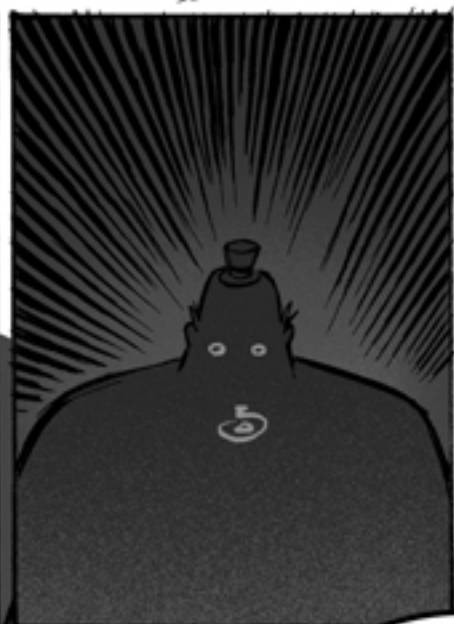
OH, LOOK AT THE TIME! SO MUCH TO DO. I HAVE TO GET THESE PROPS TO THE STAGE FOR REHEARSAL!





THESE DARN THINGS. DARN!

MIND YOUR BACK, MY LASS! STRAIGHTENED VERTEBRAE ARE SURELY A KEY TO SWIFT WORK!




YOU!!

AYE! WHO ELSE, MY DEAR?


HOW DID YOU...? I THOUGHT YOU WERE GONE?!

ALAS, A RINGMASTER'S STURDY SCHEDULE WILL CALL FOR A GOOD MANY FLIGHTS OF ABSENCE, I FEAR. IT HELPS TO HAVE SUCH A NIMBLE DOE AS YOURSELF AT THE FOREFRONT TO KEEP UP WITH THE CHORES!






ER... THANKS.
I GUESS.




LASS, I SAY!
GIVE THE FREIGHT
LITTLE SLACK FROM
YOUR BOSOM! SHOULDERS
SQUARE, ELBOWS BENT
LIKE THE MIGHTY
MANTISI!




IF YOU'LL
LET AN OLD
MAN SHOW
YOU...

OH. UM...



OH, YES,
THAT IS
NICE...




WHY DEAR, I'D NO IDEA
SUCH AN IVORY FAWN
WAS TO BE FOUND IN
MY TENTS! SUCH
SUPPLENESS. WITH THE
RIGHT DISPOSITION
TOWARDS DUTY, A
STARLET LIKE YOU
WILL ENJOY FAMES
UNTOLD!


UGH, THAT
BREATH.

OH, GOD!
CAN YOU PLEASE
LET GO OF ME
NOW?







I'VE LEFT THE CIRCUS
IN EXCELLENT HANDS WITH DOODLEBEAN.
BUT I EXPECT FULLY YOU WILL BE
ANOINTED ONCE MORE AS THE STAR.
THE CROWD WOULD INSIST
ON NOTHING LESS.



I CAN'T WAIT
TO GET BACK TO THE
CIRCUS! I'VE MISSED THE
SHOW SO MUCH. I'VE EVEN
BEEN THINKING OF SOME
NEW ACTS WHILE I
WAS GONE!



INTRIGUING. I'VE OFT
WANTED TO PICK YOUR BRAIN FOR
YOUR PHILOSOPHIES ON ENTERTAINMENT.
DO TELL ME YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE
FLUID DYNAMICS OF PIE FILLING, OR
THE SEVEN YOGAS OF AEROBATICS,
AS ASCRIBED IN ANCIENT
TEXTS?




I WAS THINKING
OF DRESSING SOME
LIONS IN FUNNY HATS, AND
JUMPING OVER THEM
IN A TINY CAR!



PHENOMENAL.





CHEERS, THEN. I LOOK FORWARD TO THIS RENAISSANCE. TWO PERFORMERS, SIDE BY SIDE, EACH IMMERSSED IN THE PINNACLE OF HIS CRAFT, BLESSING THE PUBLIC WITH FEATS OF MAGNIFICENT...


WOW, LOOK!

COME SEE


the **Starlight Calloper**

A NEW MYSTERY STAR

?



IT'S MASTER! HE'S OK!



IT APPEARS SO...

ANOTHER NEW STAR? I THOUGHT YOU SAID DOODLEBEAN WAS THE STAR?



SHE IS.



WHOA,
WHERE ARE
WE GOING?

TO THE STAR-
LIGHT CALLIOPE.
DOODLEBEAN IS IN
GREAT, GREAT
DANGER.



Next Chapter:
Roflgangers



FOR DESKTOP WALLPAPER, GO TO:

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NAME: whistles

PASSWORD: fluffystuff

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