

House of MYSTERY



Matthew
STURGES
Luca
ROSSI
José
MARZÁN, JR.
Darwyn
COOKE

VERTIGO



03611



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DESOLATION

PART ONE OF FIVE

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36 Jun '11

suggested for
mature readers

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THESIS

CHAPTER ONE: NOON AND BOREON

I was just a regular girl. No, that's a lie. I wasn't regular, but I tricked myself into believing I was. I was an architecture student, failing out of my senior year. I was unhappy with my life. Also, I liked to draw pictures of an odd old house.

One night, a strange couple broke into my house trying to abduct me. When they grabbed me, the house literally collapsed. I ran, they pursued, and I ended up in a place called The House of Mystery.

The House of Mystery was a bar located at a crossroads between the many worlds. It was also the odd old house I kept drawing. People came and went and they paid for their food and drinks by telling stories. There was a catch, of course: the people who worked at the house, the staff, couldn't leave. And guess what--I was the newest employee.

There was Harry the bartender, who I just fell for like a ton of smitten bricks. There was Cress the waitress who was a giant bitch who'd sleep with just about anyone. There was Ann the lady pirate, who was the bouncer, and then there was Post, poor, poor Post, who cooked.

I tried everything I could to escape, but no dice. When I couldn't escape I flipped out and fell apart--and so did the House. Again, literally. I ran out of the House only to be met by my asshole father--and that strange couple, The Pair of the Conception, waiting for me. So I stayed.



CHAPTER TWO: LOVE STORIES FOR DEAD PEOPLE

I got this crazy idea that we could escape through the basement. But, this house being what it was, the basement was perhaps the scariest place that you could possibly imagine. Seriously--other basements were afraid of this thing. It was also impossibly big: it went on for what seemed like forever.

And the basement wasn't empty, either. There were these, um, weird deer baby things, which were creepy and sad. And there was Miranda, a gal who used to have my job upstairs, who had since gone totally batshit crazy and was married to an evil nightmare (literally--it was a living nightmare, and it was evil).

I did manage to find my way out of the maze of the basement, and at the end was a door leading into the real world. It actually led to my dad's study, which was weird. My dad was there

waiting for me. But my friends had been attacked by the evil nightmare dealer and I had to run back to help them. My dad followed. Chaos, as they say, ensued. So there I was, right back where I started, except now my asshole dad was there, too.

CHAPTER THREE: THE SPACE BETWEEN

Okay, back up a little. There was this gal named Rina, who left the House of Mystery right before I showed up. She was carted off by this mysterious Coachman fellow and delivered to the Conception, who are the villains of the piece. Sort of. They wanted to use her to get at me, for reasons I had yet to understand.

Anyway, here's my dad at the House, and he tells this wild story about how he and I are descended from these people in The City in The Space Between, and that we have special powers that allow us to "fold," meaning we can make the world go all squishy and then end up someplace else. Like you do.

Harry and my dad got in this big fight because of me, and my dad did his "folding" trick, and they ended up out in the ruins of a Goblin Market near the House. Harry immediately became very ill, and that's when my dad sprung the news on Harry that Harry wasn't actually a real person, and was actually part of the House, and that he'd die if he didn't get back to it. Just to be clear: my boyfriend? Not an actual person. Can I get an amen, ladies?

Easier said than done because between nasty goblins. There was some fighting just in time for the Conception to attack! a dragon and he dragoned them long enough a big clusterfuck because the whole House ended up stuck in The Space Between, which is where my dad said we were from.

Also, it turned out that this Coachman guy was actually Cain--the House's original owner--all along. It was a big deal at the time.

then and the House were various monsters and some and so forth and they made it back to the House. Fortunately, my friend Overhill turned out to be for me to try my hand at "folding," which was



CHAPTER FOUR: THE BEAUTY OF DECEAY

We were stuck in The Space Between, and everything had gone to hell. The House was falling apart, and Harry was turning into wood, and the whole place was surrounded by ghosts that wanted to eat us. I went with Jordan and my dad to this place called the Pathfinder's Academy to see if we couldn't find a way out. But that sucked because my dad went nuts and tried to kill Jordan, who I kind of liked.

And then, wouldn't you know it? Cain showed up with this creepy Conception Administrator named Coorel, who wanted to catch me. So they're after me, my dad is nuts, my friend Peet accidentally gets killed, and Rod Cannon gets eaten and Simon the punk rocker dies and everything basically is shit. Finally the Pair of the Conception showed up and told me that they'd let us go if I made a deal with them. The deal was that I would have to give up everything I loved—including Harry--and then come join them willingly after a time. I reluctantly agreed, and the House disappeared again, this time reappearing in the Goblin Market.



CHAPTER FIVE: UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

So now Cain and I were sort of co-managing the House of Mystery, and I was using Jordan as rebound guy, which wasn't really fair to him. And things were at least tolerable...until my brother Strawberry showed up. The thing was, I didn't even remember having a brother.

Strawberry was kind of a psycho who had some creepy pseudo-incestuous ideas about me, and as a result I had sort of made him disappear and made everyone forget about him entirely. That may sound harsh, but if you knew the guy you'd understand. He attacked me, and we had to lock him up in the liquor cabinet. Where he was murdered. I didn't know who killed him, even though Cain's brother Abel took the rap for it. (It turned out it was Jordan who did it, but I didn't find that out until later. Poor Jordan.)

CHAPTER SIX: SAFE AS HOUSES

This one is a long story, so I'm just going to boil it down to the gist of it. A witch queen named Diana showed up asking the goblins to help retake her witch kingdom back from the Thinking Man and his robots.

Diana tricked me into believing that she really liked me like I was a daughter, and I wanted to believe her because--as you can imagine--I was pretty fucked up by this point, and my real mother was a frigid bitch.

Long story short: we went to the witch kingdom, got captured, got rescued by my childhood stuffed rabbit named Walden, and then I killed a monster with a big flying roll of toilet paper that came from a little universe I created with my brain. That helped the witches and the goblins win the fight with the robots. Plus, also my friend Tursig became the first gay Goblin King, which was nice.



CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCEPTION

But it was only a matter of time before everything went to shit again. The Pair of the Conception showed up in the Goblin Market, telling me it was time to go with them. But I wasn't really into that, so I hauled ass out of there and ran and hid in the House. And to just about everyone's surprise, the House jumped up off its foundation and leapt out into space, with just me and Cain inside.

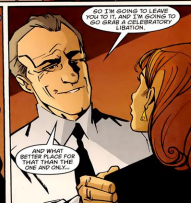
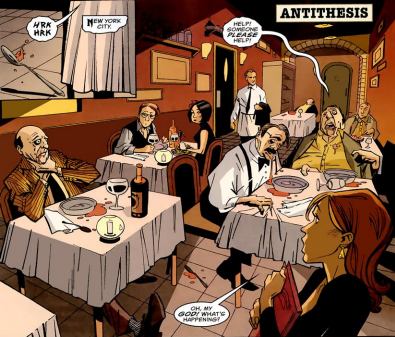
Meanwhile there was this whole other cool part where my great-grandfather Keels and my dad and my dead brother went to hell and bought new bodies and then came and found Harry, who'd been relocated to New York City by the Conception. And they had a grand adventure trying to find me, with dinosaurs and everything. But inside my bedroom in the flying House, I found another, smaller version of the House. Cain and I went inside and we found another, even smaller version of the House. And along the way we were treated to flashbacks of my youth, where Cain got to see how I hated my mom and had fits and then ended up in a psych hospital and then I created the Conception. Wait. What? I created the guys who are trying to catch me? How does that work?

Finally the House landed, and it landed right in the homeworld of the Conception. And this happened just as my dad and Harry and my brother and my great-grandfather also showed up there trying to find me. Or so they thought, because just as I was about to be reunited with Harry, my great-grandfather Keels (who really, really hated the Conception because they ruined his whole life) blew up the House of Mystery, for reasons I didn't understand at the time. The Conception captured all of us, and we were dragged off and it looked like everything was pretty much screwed at that point.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DESOLATION

So there we were, captured. And I had to

ANTITHESIS



Life is like a story told in
dreams of angels, their
unconscious fears flowing
into a stream of memories.

Or maybe life is like a songcastle full
of voles writing poems that no one
can read because no one speaks the
hidden language of voles.

Or whatever.

Is that the kind
of bullshit I'm
supposed to
say here?

That's what you come here for, right?
That self-absorbed, touchy-feely wair
spewing pseudointellectual nonsense?

Maadlin crap that sounds
deep? Maybe you'll get
a tattoo of it on your
forearm.

fuck
you.

**DEAD
END**

DESOLATION Part 1 of 5

MATTHEW LUCAS JOSÉ LEE TODD ESAD
STURGES: ROSSI: MARZÁN, JR. LOUGHRIDGE: KLEIN: ANDREWS:
writer pencils inks colors letters cover
GREGORY LOCKARD: assistant editor SHELLY BOND: editor



Welcome to my world. I
am the spider and you,
poor you, the fly.

I am Lotus Blossom, and I am
the jewel in the motherfucking
lotus, and I put the O in *O*me
*ma*ni *ped*mae here.

This is mine.

EVENING,
ALL.



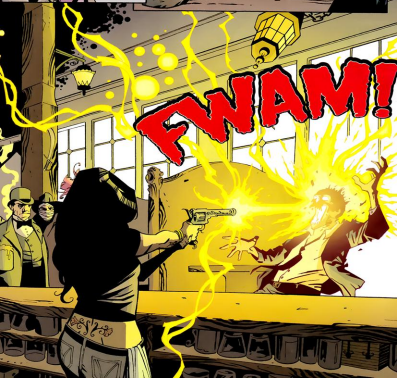
HI. WELCOME
TO THE **HOUSE OF
MYSTERY**. FIRST DRINK
IS ON THE HOUSE.



THIS IS
THE GUY.
THIS IS
HIM.

IF YOU
SAID SO, I'D
JUST DON'T
DO ANYTHING
STUPID.







**AUTO PILOT
ENGAGED**

"FIRST LAW: BODIES
AT REST TEND TO
REMAIN AT REST, AND
BODIES IN MOTION
TEND TO REMAIN IN
MOTION...

**ZERO GRAV
ENGAGED**

"WE ARE GLAVES
TO INERTIA, EXCEPT
WHEN WE ACT WITH
SUFFICIENT FORCE.

"SUFFICIENT FORCE TO
BREAK AWAY FROM
GRAVITY AND FLING
OURSELVES INTO
INFINITY."

HOW DO
YOU LOVE ME,
LINDA?

**ALERT
HULL BREACH**

"SECOND LAW:
FORCE EQUALS
MASS TIMES
ACCELERATION.

"IT WAS A SIMPLE
ENOUGH EQUATION.
WE WERE TO SEE THE
FIRST VOYAGE TO
ANOTHER STAR.

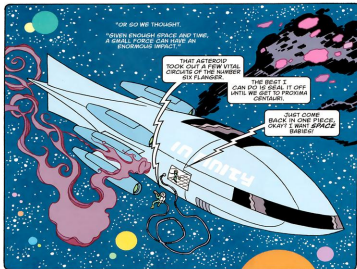
"LINDA AND I,
INCEPABLE AND
ETERNAL, THE LOVE
THAT KNEW NO
BOUNDS.

"IT WAS EASY MATH.
OURS WAS THE LOVE
THAT LITERALLY
DEFIED THE LAWS
OF PHYSICS."

**ALERT
HULL BREACH**

**ALERT
HULL BREACH**

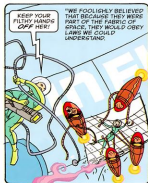
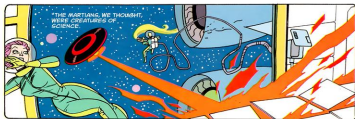
LARGER
THAN SPACE,
AND LONGER
THAN TIME.
THAT'S
HOW.



THE LEWS OF MOTION

Matthew Sturges: writer Darwyn Cooke: artist Dave Stewart: colors Todd Klein: letters Gregory Lockard: assistant editor Shelly Bond: editor









"I REALIZED MY MISTAKE THE INSTANT
I LET GO OF THE LASER WELDER."



"THIRD LAW: FOR
EVERY ACTION..."



"...THERE IS
AN EQUAL AND
OPPOSITE
REACTION."



"I SHOULD
HAVE THROWN
IT IN THE
OTHER
DIRECTION."



end





ALL WORK
AND NO PLAY, ET
CETERA.

FROM THE MAG
AND HUNGRY GORLIN
THAT INTO RAGE WOULD
REND YE--

AND THE SPIRIT THAT
STANDS BY THE NAKED MAN
IN THE BOOK OF MOONS
DEFEND YE...



HI, LOTUS BLOSSOM!
EVERYTHING BACK HERE IS
PURRING ALONG LIKE A
KITTY CAT ON ROLLER
SKATES.

GLAD YOU'RE
ENJOYING
YOURSELF.



BUT I **AM**
ENJOYING MYSELF.
I LIKE THE FEEL OF THE
WATER AND THE DISHES
IN MY HANDS.

AND I LIKE
CHOPPING THINGS AND
WALKING AND BOILING
THINGS IN POTS?

ENTHUSIASM:
NOTED.



YES--AND I
OWE IT ALL TO YOU.
YOU DID THIS FOR
ME.

WELL...
YOU'RE WELCOME.
JUST, YOU KNOW, STOP
EMOTING ALL OVER
THE PLACE.

IT'S CREEPY.

I'LL
TRY!

YOU
DO THAT,
GISH.



HOW ARE
YOU DOING LUNA
BLURRY?

ZIPPINE
I'M FUCKING PEACHY
I'M PEACHES AND CREAM
WITH COPACABANA
SAUCE.

YOU DON'T
LOOK LIKE YOU USED
TO!

I HATE
TELLING YOU AND
YOU KEEP NOT LISTENING—
EVERYTHING SHOULD CHANGE
TO MY PINK TIGHTS
AND FINGERES.

OH, RIGHT
AND I'M DABBING IN
POWERS THAT I DON'T
UNDERSTAND. I'M IN OVER
MY HEAD AND DUE FOR A
CONSEQUENCE ON
ACCOUNT OF MY HABITS
AND BRAIN
NAUGHTS?

ALICE THAT
THIS IS THE IDEAL
WORLD WE'RE LIVING
IN.





AND
THIS GIRL
WANTS HARRY
SAILEY.



LOOKS LIKE
YOU'VE GOT HIM. THE
QUESTION IS, WHAT ARE
YOU GOING TO DO
WITH HIM?



I DON'T KNOW. I
HADN'T ACTUALLY
THOUGHT THAT
FAR AHEAD.

I'M
A LITTLE
SCARED.



LET
ME SHOW
YOU.



HOW'S
THIS?

MMM.
THIS IS MY
FAVORITE
PART.

SYNTHESIS

AUSTIN, TEXAS.

TAP
TAP TAP
TAP



FIST
COME TO
BED.

JUST
A MINUTE,
BARE.



THIS ISN'T
WHAT HAPPENS
NEXT.

SCRINKLES



THE SHEETS
ARE SO VERY COLD
AND LONELY WITHOUT
YOU, MY LOVE.

YOU
CAN FINISH
LATER.

I'M
A-COMIN'. I'M
A-COMIN'.



LET'S TRY
SOMETHING NEW
TONIGHT. WANT
TO?

To Be Continued ...

House of MYSTERY

HOUSE of MYSTERY #38

SHELLY BOND EDITOR GREGORY LOCKARD ASSISTANT EDITOR

Dear Matthew, Luca, Shelly, and Everyone Else,
Thank you for HOUSE OF MYSTERY. It's been one of my favorite books since it launched, and my commitment to it only grows as the story becomes more nuanced and complex. In particular, I like how the "tales" have become a way for Matthew and the guest artists to comment on the main story, either directly or indirectly. You've managed to fold all the spontaneity and variety of anthology comics into a stable monthly title, two great tastes that taste great together. Here's to another thirty-three issues!

Aaron Block
Boston, MA

Thank YOU for the compliments, Aaron. I agree that the short stories are a nice facet to the House motif. It gives Matt a chance to write stories in a variety of genres. It allows us to give artistic up-and-comers a chance in the spotlight. And it affords us the opportunity to work with superstar illustrators (like this month's fab Darwyn Cooke!) who might be too busy to commit to a regular series but welcome the chance to hang out in our humble abode for a brief cocktail or two. As for the candy metaphor, I'm a total Eurosnob when it comes to chocolate, but I must confess a soft spot for a Reeses in the freezer every now and again...

Shelly,

I'm excited that letter columns are coming back! I consider myself an old-fashioned Silver Age kind of guy, and I miss comics on newsprint with crappy printing and letter columns. But now letters are coming back! Yay! Looking forward to hearing what our readers have to say! While I'm here writing, I'll also mention that I'm also thankful for a chance to work with you and everyone else on HOUSE OF MYSTERY. It's fun and inspiring to work with pros such as yourself, Matt, Luca, Lee and Todd. I was always a fan of the old HOUSE OF MYSTERY series, and after 20+ years of working for DC it's great to be able to work on these great and classic characters. Who doesn't love Cain and Abel? And...do we consider The House a "character"? Hmmmm....

I always enjoyed the old series' short stories, and now take pride in helping continue HOUSE OF MYSTERY's mix of horror, adventure, comedy and, of course, mystery.

Thanks and start writing in, folks!!

Jose (your House inker)

What an amazing letter, Jose. How much time away from the inking table did you spend crafting it? Just kidding! It's totally worth it to hear you put your thoughts back here, which is basically a watering hole for house teammates and readers alike. And you heard the man,

People! PLEASE start writing in! Believe me - you do not want me to resort to printing letters from my friend (yes, that was intentionally singular) and relatives....

Dear Mrs. Bond,

I just started reading this series last month with issue #34 and I'm completely confused! Can you explain it all in a sentence or two, so that I don't have to put hot poker in my eyes?

Isabod Laney
Detroit, MI

Dear Icky,

No! Not the hot poker!!!! Unfortunately, you tried to jump into the series with the penultimate issue of a storyline—no wonder you were confused! Sit down, relax, and I'll sort you out. You see, the HOUSE OF MYSTERY is a place where you can go for a drink or three. But you have to pay your tab with a story. Most people who enter the house come from a variety of planets/decades/lifeforms and once they down a few rounds, they can leave. But there are five people who are stuck in the house for what seems like forever and they're forced to maintain the house as barstaff, cooks, cleaners, etc. We've collected five storylines of this series so far and I highly advise you to pick up the first trade paperback, Room and Boredom, to get the initial skinny on the series. Lucky for you right now, though, because this issue is the start of "Desolation", a brand new storyline: new house, new location, new owner, etc. And while regular readers will see a few familiar faces (in different places), we've intentionally made this issue "new reader friendly" so that we can bring people like you into the mix in an instant. Hope I've helped. We look forward to hearing from you again soon!

Dear Shell,

No, I will NOT write a letter for you to publish in a comic book letter column. I STILL don't understand what you do for a living and SOME of us have your father's dry cleaning empire to run. Maybe if you stopped tap dancing and listening to David Bowie and all the other weird music you inflicted on me since childhood, you'll actually amount to something. Like your sister has. You know, dad's favorite....
Love,

Randi Roeberg-Brandt
Blandon, PA

How did she get in here? Can someone call security? And for the record, SHE was the one who kept a jar of peanut butter under her bed...next to her lipstick-stained David Cassidy poster....

SPOTLIGHT ON: The Cover Artist

One who gets his cover sketches snipped and his original artwork vandalized (on occasion...like this month's cover!)

NAME: Esao Andrews

Favorite House character and why:

Byzantium Mack. Like a retired/stoned sorcerer he just pops up occasionally and seems to stroll out of any stressful situation with his hands in his pockets...barring any random acid flashback, that is.

What's your tonic?

Overbrewed-bitter beer, L.P.A.

Music to keep you company as you watch the paint dry:

The Sigur Ros album "Gobbledigook" has the most plays in my iTunes and I don't even know what they're saying.

To submit a letter to the editor go to:

www.dclatterspage.com

Letters may be sent by regular mail to this address:

Letters to the Editor

DC Comics

1700 Broadway

New York, NY 10019

ATTN: VERTIGO

Please include your full name, address, and telephone number for confirmation purposes. Letters should be no longer than 500 words and should not include attachments. Letters may be edited for length or clarity and may be published in any medium. Letters become the property of DC Comics. Unpublished letters will not be returned or acknowledged. Published letters may identify the writer by first name, hometown, state or country.

Pulp artist extraordinaire Aaron Campbell of Green Hornet fame enters the house for a short stay. Meanwhile, Lotus Blossom continues to wield impossibly odd weapons created out of thin air that creep everyone out. Bring a bodyguard for extra armor (and amore?) as **DESOLATION** part two kicks you in the throat in 30!

-Shelly

House of Mystery #37



VERTIGO

SUBMIT YOUR LETTERS TO:
WWW.DCLATTERSPAGE.COM

THE HOTLIST



STRANGE ADVENTURES #1

From the far reaches of space to the not so distant future, it's a collection of short stories by the very arbiters of strange. Featuring some of the greatest comic book writers and artists of our time including Peter Milligan, Brian Azzarello, Dennis Cowan, J.H. Thompson, Scott Snyder, and Jeff Lemire! Existing new talents make their Vertigo debut in this 80-page. Plus, the Eisner Award-winning team of 100 BULLETS, Brian Azzarello and Eduardo Risso, reunite to bring you the first chapter of their upcoming new series **SPACEMAN**!

Cover by Paul Pope with a variant cover by FABLES artist Mark Buckingham.



SWEET TOOTH #20

NEW STORYLINE! Gus reluctantly joins Jeppord on a hunt for the missing girl, but the tension between the two continues to grow. Meanwhile, Singh and Johnny come face-to-face with a deadly new threat, and Lucy and the girls meet Winter Fish, an enigmatic survivor who may have more to offer than meets the eye. Don't miss snowmobile gangs, yetis and more as the new story arc "Endangered Species" kicks off with a bang!



HOUSE OF MYSTERY #36

NEW STORYLINE! "Desolation" starts here, with a short story epic of outer space romance and adventure illustrated by the one and only Darwyn Cooke!

AARON AND AHMED
AMERICAN VAMPIRE #14

AREA 10

CINDERELLA: FABLES ARE FOREVER #3 (OF 6)

DMZ #64

FABLES #104

FABLES VOL. 15: ROSE RED

HELLBLAZER #278

HOUSE OF MYSTERY #36

ZOMBIE #12

THE NEW YORK FIVE #4 (OF 4)

NORTHLANDERS #39

OTHER LIVES

THE SANDMAN VOL. 5: A GAME OF YOU—NEW EDITION

SCALPED #48

SWEET TOOTH #20

TRANSMETROPOLITAN VOL. 9: THE CURE—NEW EDITION

THE UNWORTEN #24

VERTIGO RESURRECTED: HELLBLAZER—BAD BLOOD

Y: THE LAST MAN DELUXE EDITION BOOK 5

04.11
THE HIT LIST

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LEDGE

BY JAY CANTOR

The morning the planes slammed into the Towers, I was already watching TV. TV is a pal I like to waste a little time with some mornings before (I swear) I walk to my study to work on my novels. That morning, though, the images stopped time, stopped thought. It was fury that got my mind moving again—except that it didn't feel much like my mind anymore. I wanted to gouge out the eyes of the bastards who'd done this. I was on the ledge all right, and I longed to leap down at their throats.

I turned away from the screen, made coffee, asked some questions, because having questions made me feel more like myself. What could transform men into death-machines? What could turn me into a man who wanted to torture? I felt there were forces at work as strong as the potions and spells in fairy tales or comic books, powers that can turn men into meat puppets.

I began to dream the story of **AARON AND AHMED**. I already knew it would also be about love, because when you know that forces can take over your mind, I think you also pray that there might be one small thing that belongs to you alone—your choice of who to love. Supposing even that belongs to you.

I tried, but I couldn't find a way to tell the story in words. I put it aside. Years later, Pornsak Pichetshote called from Vertigo to ask if I wanted to try writing a graphic novel. I found myself eager to take up **AARON AND AHMED** again—to tell the story not just with words, like my novels, but with pictures, too. Maybe that was because it was pictures on the TV that had driven me mad that morning. I'd bet when the terrorists had dreamt of those images, they knew they'd change us in just that way. Then they could say to the world, look, our American enemies are monsters. I'd bet, too, they'd known that images could take over our minds because—along with the powerful words of old-time religion—some phantasmagoria was at the heart of what had made them murderers in the first place.

My faith was that the poison could also be the cure. The antidote for the pictures and words that program us would be the right pictures—like those of James Romberger—linked to (I hope) the right words. Maybe that could introduce some questions into the mix, get the mind working again, help bring us back from the ledge. The result of my hopes is **AARON AND AHMED: A Love Story**.



JAY CANTOR

is the author of three previous novels, *The Death of Che Guevara*, *Procyon*, and *Great Rock* as well as two books of essays, *The Space Between Literature and Politics* and *On Giving Birth to One's Own Mother*. A MacArthur Prize Fellow, Cantor teaches at Tufts University and lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with his wife, Marinda Marble, and their daughter, Grace.

IN MEMORIAM

DWAYNE McDUFFIE

FEBRUARY 20, 1962 – FEBRUARY 21, 2011

We remember him for his groundbreaking work at Milestone Media, for the powerful characters he created and their resonant stories, and for writing about race and ethnic diversity in a way that has been inspirational to us all.

The world of comics has lost a true and influential talent. Our deepest sympathies to his family, friends and fans.



art by Diego Coreson

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