PRESENTS:

Boxcar Tales
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A showcase of cartoonists and other like-minded artists in and around the Triangle.
Boxcar Tales
Published in 2024 by the Triangle Comics Creator Network

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INTRODUCTION

The Triangle Comics Creator Network, or TCCN, provides infrastructure and support for a community of comics makers and artists of all ages.

It was created by Durham County Library in 2018 as an offshoot of Amy Godrey’s Durham Comics Fest.

Boxcar Tales is the second anthology created by TCCN. This collection features works from 8 North Carolina artists with a variety of art and storytelling styles.

This anthology was made possible thanks to the generosity of the Durham Library Foundation.

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I wanna go in the car.

Stupid train.
IMAGINE ALL THE MAGICAL STORIES THIS TRAIN COULD TELL.

NO.

STUPID SMELLY TRAIN.

GUESS YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT.

WHAT?

THE SECRET OF COURSE.

REALLY, MOM?
I’ll prove it.

Tell me what you see.

Guy with funny head.

Sleepy grandma.

Grumpy man.

Now put these on.
WOW.

NOW LOOK OUTSIDE.
THERE ARE MAGICAL STORIES EVERYWHERE.

YOU JUST HAVE TO KNOW HOW TO LOOK FOR THEM.
IT'S BEEN AWHILE SINCE I'VE BEEN HERE

EVEN WITH THE REDECORATION IT FEELS....

NOSTALGIC.
The first time was with my parents coming back from Florida.

But I wanna see the brown bears.

Those are cows.

Now sit down.

It isn’t lady-like.

Bleh.
WE USED TO RIDE THIS TRAIN TOGETHER.

WE WERE JUST KIDS THEN.

AND WE WERE THE BEST OF FRIENDS

YOU SAW ME WHEN OTHER PEOPLE DIDN’T.

YOU PROTECTED ME FROM A LOT.

THAT’S WHY I WAS ABLE TO SURVIVE THROUGH IT ALL.
THE WORLD’S A WASTELAND.

BUT I’M STILL HERE.

BEING WITH YOU MAKES ME STRONG.

BUT EVEN WITH THAT....

THE THOUGHT OF SEEING THEM AGAIN GIVES ME A PIT IN MY STOMACH.

IT SCARES ME MORE THAN ANYTHING.
THE LAST TIME I WAS ON THIS TRAIN IT WAS AFTER AN ARGUMENT WITH THEM.

THEY WANTED SOMEONE ELSE.

NEW YORK 11:15

SO I LEFT.

AND I WENT TO A PLACE I COULD BE MYSELF.
I'm not that scared girl anymore.

I can defend myself from all kinds of monsters.

I wonder if they'll look at me the same now that there are real monsters.
I still remember the way he looked at me.

He looked at me the same way I see people look at zombies, with horror and disgust.

Even now I can feel their eyes looking through me.
What's that face for?

I just...

I don't know if I'm ready.
I’m sure you’ll be just fine.

‘Sides it’s the end of the world. They’ve got bigger things to worry about.

But what if they don’t like me?

I’ve changed.

A lot’s changed. Maybe they have too.

Besides, I like you.
This is pretty neat.

By Melinda Box

Thanks, Grandma.

Oh, you’re welcome, dear.

and they stopped in a station, they would pour their coffee into the saucer...

... to cool it off fast enough to drink...

... before they left the station.

knuckle lost in railroad accident
Well, John Henry was the greatest steel driver that ever lived, and one day a steam drill came to replace the workers on the railroad.

But John Henry knew he was better than the drill.

So he started to race it.

He swung two hammers and pounded through the mountain...

... he collapsed ... and he died.

Oh, my.

Yeah, Johnny Cash sang a song about it.

Oh, did he? Isn't that something?

~~sigh~~

Once again I feel like such an oddball...

... even in my own family.

I don't know if I'll ever fit in.
SIR?

EXCUSE ME, SIR?

HUH, WHAT?

CAN'T YOU SEE I'M TRYING TO SLEEP?

I'M DEAD TIRED.
I'm sorry, but we have to change your seat.

Why?

We're adjusting the seating in this section.

A passenger has... expired.

Someone died?

Shhhhh.

We try and handle these situations as discreetly as possible.

Ahh, I see.

Wait, is this some kind of trick to give me a crappy seat in the back?

No sir, you're being upgraded.
YES.

PLEASE COME WITH ME.

FINALLY!

SOME GOOD NEWS ON THIS TRIP!

YOU'RE NOT GONNA TRY AND ADD THIS TO MY BILL LATER ARE YA?

OF COURSE NOT SIR.

HEEYY... WE ARE HEADED TO THE BACK!

I READ IN ONE OF THOSE CRAPPY DINING CAR MAGAZINES THAT THE BACK IS FOR CARGO... AND OTHER THINGS.

THAT'S WHERE YOUR SEAT IS SIR.

CORRECT SIR.
LET ME GUESS... IT'S WHERE YA KEEP THE DEAD BODIES?

PRECISELY SIR.

HAHAHA HAHAAAA

I MUST BE REALLY TIRED!

YOU ALMOST HAD ME!

THAT'S SOME FANCY SECURITY. THIS MUST BE AN EXCLUSIVE CAR.

VERY EXCLUSIVE SIR.

FEW PASSENGERS EVER GET UPGRADED TO THIS CAR.
IS THIS SOME KIND OF JOKE?!

THE SEATS ARE MADE OF WOOD.

HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO REST ON THOSE?

THERE'S DUST EVERYWHERE...

...AND THERE ARE NO WINDOWS IN THIS CAR!

SHUT!! LOCK!!

IS THAT SOMEONE NEW?
DID YOU DIE ON THE TRAIN TOO?

HEY!!! OPEN THE DOOR!!!!

BANG BANG BANG

SETTLE DOWN THERE, PARDNER.

TAKE A SEAT AND REST A BIT...

...YOU LOOK DEAD TIRED.
WOULD YOU LIKE TODAY’S PAPER?

WHY THANK YOU.

HMPH, CHILD’S PLAY...

SCIENTISTS CREATE ARTIFICIAL HEART

bump

bump

bump

DO YOU MIND IF I SIT HERE?

NOT AT ALL.

POW
MAY I SEE YOUR TICKET, SIR?
HERE YOU ARE, MY GOOD MAN.

THANK YOU, MR. LANGSTON.
"LANGSTON"

IT'S ACTUALLY PROFESSOR LANGSTON. HUGH LANGSTON! I'D THOUGHT YOU LOOKED FAMILIAR!

KNOCK KNOCK
THAT'S RIGHT! ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH MY WORK?

HARDLY. I REMEMBER SITTING NEXT TO YOU IN COLLEGE.

AH, AN ALUM. WHAT WAS YOUR MAJOR? GENETICS? BIOCHEMISTRY? BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING?

I SHOULD ANSWER BEFORE YOU NAME EVERY SCIENCE.

LITERACY.

SO YOU'RE A WRITER. PERHAPS YOU WOULD LIKE TO WITNESS MY PRESENTATION.

I PROMISED THE PRESS A SIGNIFICANT BREAKTHROUGH!
WHAT KIND OF BREAKTHROUGH?

CRASH

AN ACHIEVEMENT IN HEREDITY—NEIGH, HUMAN HISTORY...!

A STEP INTO OUR FUTURE, IF YOU WILL. MY APOLOGIES. IF I COULD CONVEY MY POINT WITH A QUESTION: WHAT IF INSTEAD OF MAKING ONE BETTER...

YOU COULD MAKE A BETTER "ONE"?

GASP!

HAVE I STARTLED YOU, MY DEAR?

klik

AH.
I see you have escaped.

Attempting to stop me, no doubt?
LUCKILY, I'VE PREPARED FOR SUCH AN INCONVIENCE.

I WOULD ADVISE YOU TO RETURN TO YOUR CHEST.

BANG
SOON...

A RATHER UNUSUAL CASE, CHIEF.

IT LOOKS LIKE A REGULAR HOMICIDE TO ME.

SO IT WOULD SEEM...

THE SUSPECT SHARES A STRANGE RESEMBLANCE TO THE VICTIM.

THAT IS UNUSUAL. 'ANY CLUES?

THERE IS THIS NOTEBOOK--OR "WAS". IT WAS BURNED AFTER THE DEED WAS DONE.

BLAST... THAT WOULD LEAVE OUR WITNESS.

I DON'T THINK I'D BE MUCH HELP, CONSTABLE.

I HARDLY KNOW... KNEW HIM...

WOULD YOU AT LEAST TELL HOW YOU KNEW THE VICTIM?

HE...

HE WAS A SCIENTIST.
FIDGET HERO

By Mirelys Colón
TAKA
What??

TAKA
No...!

TAKA
TAKA

TAKA
TAKA

TAKA

TAKA
TAKA
TAKA
TAKA
TAKA
TAKA
Taka - Taka - Taka

Taka - Taka - Taka - Taka
Need a fidget?

A... what?

A fidget! Something to do with your hands!

This one spins, see?

Here, give it a try!
Yeah!
Like that.

You can keep that one.

My girlfriend says I have too many, haha!

She's totally right, though.

Now unboarding: Jacksonville...
Oh - that's me!

Have a safe trip!

Bye! Thanks for the fidget!

END.
IT WAS THE LAST WAR THAT DID US IN. IT ENDED EVERYTHING IN A DAY.

THE NEW MISSILES USED WITH UNTESTED FUSION ENERGY, TEARING HOLES INTO NEIGHBORING DIMENSIONS.

OPENING THE WAY FOR THE MONSTERS TO POUR INTO OUR UNPROTECTED WORLD.

TWO GENERATIONS HAVE PASSED, FINALLY WE HAVE A WAY TO REACH SAFETY, AWAY FROM THE MONSTERS.

TRIAL BY FIRE

STORY/ART: PARREN ROCHE
HUMANKIND LEARNED HOW TO HARNESS THE POWER OF LIVING ELEMENTAL ENERGY, PROVIDING UNLIMITED POWER TO THEIR DEVICES.

HELD DORMANT INSIDE SPECIAL CONTAINMENT TUBES FOR SAFE KEEPING.

THE OLDER TECHNOLOGY OF CAST IRON AND STEEL SEEMED TO WORK BEST WITH THE FIRE ELEMENTAL.

THE BEST STEAM ENGINE OF ITS DAY WAS RESURRECTED TO HOUSE THE POWERFUL BEING, THE SAVIOR OF HUMANKIND.

COMBINED WITH OLDER TECHNOLOGY, HUMANITY WAS ABLE TO CRAFT A TRAIN WITH THE POWER OF A FIRE ELEMENTAL INSIDE IT.

WHEN AWAKENED, THEY ARE VERY DISORIENTED, OFTEN AFRAID OF THEIR CONFINEMENT.
THE HOLDING AREA
THE ENGINE COMPARTMENT
OF THE OLD STEAM ENGINE.

THE ELEMENTAL BEING
THE SOURCE OF POWER
FOR THE ENGINE AND
WEAPONS SYSTEMS OF
THE TRAIN.

ONCE INSTALLED
THE POWER WAS CONNECTED
FROM THE ENGINE ROOM TO
THE REST OF THE TRAIN.

THE LOADING OF PASSENGERS
AND CARGO COMPLETED,
THE TRAIN IS READY TO DEPART
ON ITS MISSION.

THE POLITICIANS MADE
THEIR SPEECHES.
THE SURVIVAL OF HUMANITY
HINGS IN THE BALANCE.
THE SUCCESS OF THE TRAIN
BEING PARAMOUNT.
The train conductor is linked mentally to the train through a complex interface of cables.

Once linked in, the conductor readies themselves for the additional mental connections to their body.

The burning power of the elemental, the strength of iron and steel of the train.

All of it at their command. Power mortals are rarely able to handle.

Cerebral connection 100%
Jaw opener 100%
Train integrity 100%
THE DEEP PROTECTIVE TUNNEL RUMBBLED WITH THE THUNDEROUS VIBRATIONS OF THE POWERFUL LOCOMOTIVE ENGINE.

BUILT BEFORE THE WAR IT WAS THE PERFECT PLACE TO LAUNCH THE TRAIN FROM.

THE ANCIENT RAILWAY SYSTEM OF THE MAGINOT LINE, CONSTRUCTED TO PROTECT FRANCE IN WORLD WAR II.

THE BLAZING LIGHT OF THE LOCOMOTIVE ENGINE SEARING AWAY THE DARKNESS.

THE RUMBLLINGS FROM THE EARTH SHATTERING THE PEACEFUL QUIET OF THE SURFACE WILDERNESS.

ECHOING EXPLOSIVE POWER REVERBERATING FOR MILES AROUND THE TRAIN EXPLODES FROM THE TUNNEL, EXIT INTO THE WILDERNESS.

TAKING TO WING, THE MONSTEROUS INHABITANTS OF THE TOWN COME ATTRACTED TO THE NOISE THEY FLY TO INVESTIGATE.
PUSHING TO FULL POWER, THE TRAIN RACES DOWN THE RAIL LINE.

DRIVEN BY HUNGER, THE GARGOYLES ATTACK!

RAILWAY WHEELS FOLD UPWARDS, TO LOCK INTO THEIR ENGINE HOUSING. THE ROAR OF STEAM POWERED THRUSTERS PUSHING THE MASSIVE ENGINE INTO THE SKY.
THE CONDUCTOR MENTALLY ASKS THE ELEMENTAL FOR HELP.

THE ELEMENTAL FLARES WITH POWER, ENRAGED BY THE REQUEST FROM HIS CAPTORS.

POWERFUL SYPHON INTAKE VALVES SUCK AWAY THE EXCESS POWER.

WEAPON PORT COVERS OPEN, ALLOWING THE CANNONS TO FIRE ON THE ATTACKERS.

THE CONDUCTOR, BEING ABLE TO SEE OUTSIDE OF THE TRAIN WITH HIS EXTENDED SENSES, GUIDES THE MISSILES.

IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS THE LAST ATTACKER IS SHOT FROM THE SKY.
ROUNDS
AT TRACE
TO TARGET

THE TRIAL BY FIRE WAS A SUCCESS! HUMANITY WOULD SURVIVE THIS AGE.

AS FOR THE FIRE ELEMENTAL

COAL RELEASE

FROM BEHIND THE ENGINE THE COAL CAR CONVEYOR BELT RUMBLES TO LIFE

THE HUNGRY FIRE ELEMENTAL HAPPILY MUNCHES AWAY ON ITS REWARD.

MANKIND HAD A NEW DAY AHEAD OF THEM. WITH THE AID OF A FIRE ELEMENTAL AND THEIR PASSED INGENUITY THEY WOULD SURVIVE.
I KNEW WHERE I WAS GOING
BUT WHO
WOULD I BE

WHEN I
GOT THERE
CONTRIBUTORS

MELINDA BOX is an aspiring comic artist with a passion for graphic memoir. When not slaving away on her art, she works in the dangerous and daring world of laboratory safety and hopes one day to create a comic about it.
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ALL ABOARD!!

TAKE A TRAIN RIDE THROUGH THIS COLLECTION OF STORIES BY EIGHT NORTH CAROLINA ARTISTS. EACH STORY TAKES PLACE ON A STEAM ENGINE!