

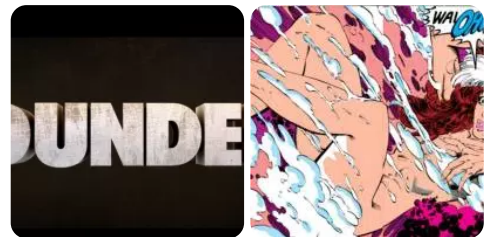
OG Interviews Kyle Starks, Creator of Rock Candy Mountain

BY FABIENNE PAYET · PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 24, 2017 · UPDATED FEBRUARY 24, 2017

Outright Geekery recently had the pleasure of interviewing Kyle Starks for his upcoming debut comic Rock Candy Mountain. It is a wonderful comic, and I am looking forward to the next installments!

Get to know the man behind the comic here. There is also a review of the comic as well which you definitely should not miss.

Bio: *Kyle Starks is a comic creator (artist, writer) living in Southern Indiana. He's married to the most beautiful woman and has two wonderful daughters. He was nominated for an Eisner Award (Best Humor Publication)*



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for Image Comics Sexcastle which was optioned for film by The Workaholics and Russo Brothers. For the last year he has been the ongoing writer (and occasional artist) for Oni Press's adaptation of the Adult Swim cartoon Rick and Morty.

Outright Geekery: How did you come by the idea of the subject of Rock Candy Mountain?

Kyle Starks: *I had gotten into a run where I was watching a ton of martial arts movies, especially the genre called wuxia, which are these sort of magical realism, slight fantasy, punch 'em up, journey movies and I thought "What would be the American version of that type of story?" And I thought about, what to me, is a sort of Very American visual of riding the rails and how hobos are, sort of, off the grid and, you know, maybe that world is where the things that are myths or legends or "magic" exist. Anyway, all of that got me really excited – I came up with a pretty epic story and here we are!*

OG: What sort of research have you done for the story?

KS: *I have read a TON of hobo books. And, honestly, there aren't THAT many of them. But yeah, I've read a ton. I'm fascinated with the hobo culture, it's history and heritage. I think after having done all the research I have it's clear now that what is sort of the stereotypical image of hobos – goofy hats, half eaten cans of baked beans – isn't it at all. They were migratory workers with a really intense code.*

OG: Will the story focus only on Jackson or will we get to see more of Marion Flimbo?

KS: *Jackson is definitely the protagonist of the story, with recently hobo'd Pomona Slim as his cohort and sort of the readers entry into this hobo culture. Issue One won't be the last time you see Marion Flimbo or the Hobo Mafia, though, for sure.*

OG: How many more chapters can we expect?

KS: *The coy answer to this is "as many as it takes to tell the story" but the realist answer is "as many as the economic landscape will allow." So if people like it – buy it!*



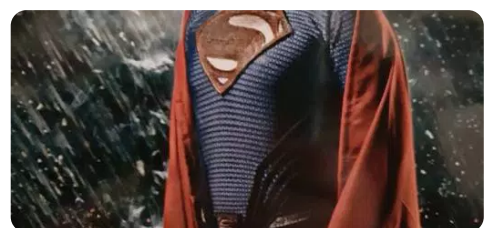
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OG: Who or what inspired you for the artwork of the comic?

KS: *Man, I have so many inspirations this is always a super hard question to answer. I think, via my inspirations, I've cultivated an original aesthetic but I've been surely inspired by Swedish cartoonist Jason, Evan Dorkin, Jack Kirby, Naoki Urasawa, Scott Campbell, my colorist Chris Schweizer I think is one of the best cartoonists in America, uhhhhh I'm sure there are a ton more? I mean, everything can be an inspiration to your art, really. But it's all Me now. It's that Kyle Starks draw draw!*

OG: Aside from the story, what is your take on Hobo lore/traditions?

KS: *Like I said earlier, I really earnestly love the hobo tradition. I think the idea of such immense freedom backed by a strong blue collar work ethic is so provocative and worthy of respect. We print the consense "Hobo Code" in issue 2 (I mean, you could google it) and you'll see – like the hobos were for real. So, even outside of that base – here are these hard working dudes seeing the world, you know it was an existence rife with danger and obstacles. It's really fascinating to me.*

OG: Can you share some more about the song of "Big Rock Candy Mountain" and it's significance?

KS: *Well, my good friend Dr. Eric Newsom writes a really great write up about the Harry McClintock song but also about it's early versions and how they represent that community- and I don't want to step on his toes. It's a GREAT essay. But the gist is that it's a folk song about a sort of utopia for hobos – and this idea of a heaven for sinners has existed throughout history in different forms. In the case of my book, our hero Jackson believes not only that this place is real but he knows where is and that he's going to go there. We'll slowly reveal why that it is and if it's true and what's up with these dudes issue to issue. So in my book that song represents, maybe, a real legend.*

OG: Would you find the existance of a hobo appealing back in those days?

KS: *Man, you know, my colorist Chris Schweizer would definitely have been a hobo at some point. He's a big,*



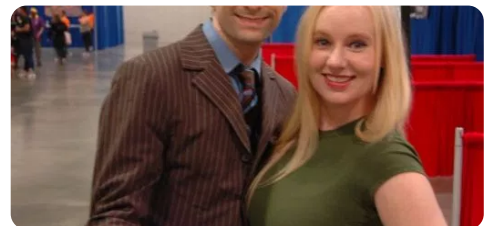
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smart, burly dude who's had a million different interesting jobs and gone to a million different interesting places. I like my couch a lot. I like walls a lot. So I probably wouldn't've have – but conceptually, absolutely. I think about a hobo sitting a top a boxcar as it plows through the pacific midwest, looking across a forest as the sun sets. That sounds pretty amazing.

OG: There is a lot of history in the background of this story, will we learn more along the way?

KS: Surely. I'm not trying to shove the setting or period of the book down anyone's throat but the story takes place in a specific time period (post World War 2) and therefore references and information are going to come out.

OG: After this series, do you already know what will follow?

KS: I for sure have some other stuff happening this year that hasn't been announced yet and I'm on Rick and Morty at Oni Press until they tell me to stop, I suspect. I am hoping that I get a chance with this book to tell it's story and what the next book is will almost assuredly be decided by if comic fans love semi-magia, kung fu fighting hobo adventures.

If this got you interested in Rock Candy Mountain, don't miss out on our review.

Interested in learning more about Kyle Starks? Check out his [Twitter](#) and [website](#).

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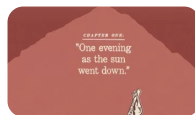
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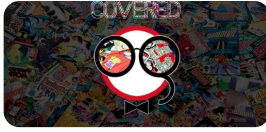


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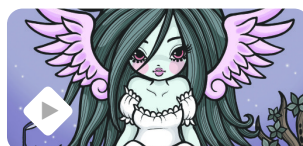


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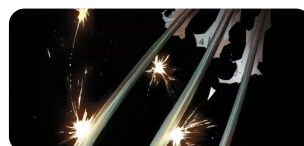


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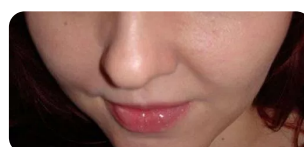
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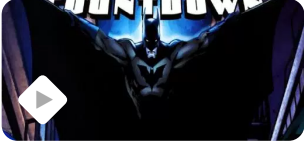


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