

HEROES AND VILLAINS ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS

# NETHERWORLD



2



Digital  
Edition

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HILL • LEVIN • SHASTEEN • MCCAIG



PREVIOUSLY IN

# NETHERWORLD



**RAY PARKER** is a bounty hunter who just wants to do his job and be left alone. He's contacted by two different parties to find a missing girl named **MADLINE**.



Ray doesn't want the job, but he knows if these people are looking for her, then **MADLINE** is already in danger.



By the time he finds her, she's already being harassed by a group of thugs outside a bar. Ray steps in to help...

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... but before the fight ends, one of the thugs turns into something **INHUMAN**.



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**Netherworld. ISSUE TWO, June 2011. FIRST PRINTING.** Published by Image Comics, Inc. Office of Publication: 2134 Allston Way, Second Floor Berkeley, CA 94704. \$3.99 US. NETHERWORLD © 2011 Top Cow Productions, Inc. "Netherworld," the Netherworld logos and the likeness of all featured characters are trademarks of Heroes and Villains Entertainment and Top Cow Productions, Inc. All rights reserved. Any resemblance to actual persons (living or dead), events, institutions, or locales, without satiric intent, is coincidental. No portion of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the express written permission of Top Cow Productions, Inc. Printed in the U.S.A. For information regarding the CPSIA on this printed material call: 203-595-3636 and provide reference # EAST - 378076





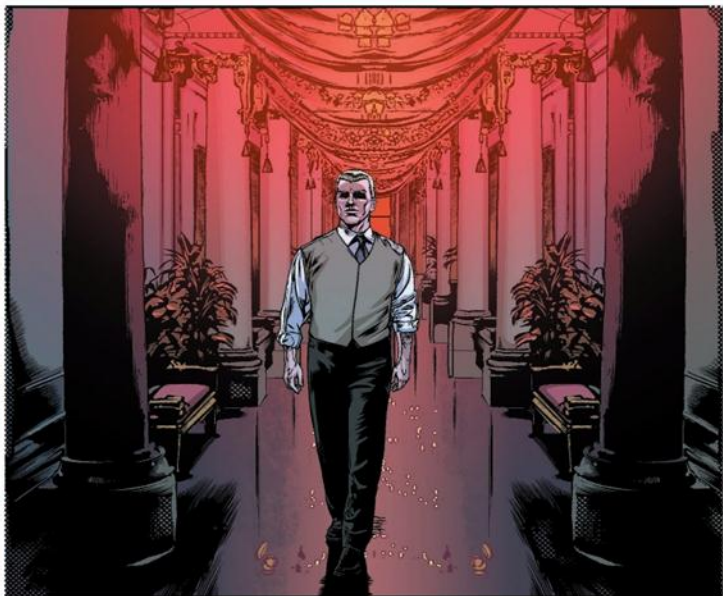






























"OUR WORLD IS  
IN JEOPARDY."



THE GATE  
IS AMONG  
US.



THAT THING WASN'T  
HUMAN. IT BLEED LIKE  
US. IT SCREAMED  
LIKE US. BUT...

WHAT I SAW IN THAT  
ALLEN DIDN'T MAKE  
ANY SENSE.

I THINK IT DID.  
THERE'S THE RUB.  
ARE YOU READY FOR  
THE TRUTH?

WHO IS THIS  
GIRL, AND WHY  
DOES EVERYONE  
WANT HER?



YOU CAME HERE, RAY, OF  
YOUR OWN VOLITION: YOU  
WERE GIVEN A CHOICE, AND  
YOU CAME HERE.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT  
THIS TELLS ME?

I'VE GOT  
A THING FOR  
STRAYS?

THAT  
YOU FEEL  
IT.



I KNOW YOU DO, OR YOU WOULDN'T  
BE HERE. IT'S THAT WHITE HOT NAIL  
IN YOUR MIND, THE SENSE OF  
SOMETHING BEYOND THE REACH  
OF MEMORY.

THAT'S YOUR  
REAL LIFE. THE  
ONE BEFORE THIS  
ONE.

NONE OF US CAN  
REMEMBER WHO WE  
ARE. NOT HERE.







AS I SPEAK, REBELS SEEK TO PROTECT HER. TO DELIVER HER. BUT THIS SHALL NOT PASS.

THEY WANT TO OPEN A WOUND IN OUR WORLD AND SIPHON OUR POWER.

THEY WANT TO DESTROY WHAT WE HAVE BUILT HERE.



THIS PLACE...THIS CITY...

YOU'RE DEAD.

MADLINE'S DEAD. I'M DEAD. EVERYONE HERE IS DEAD.



THIS WORLD IS FREEDOM FROM HELL AND HEAVEN. OUR FREEDOM. THEY WANT TO FORCE US BACK TO OUR KNEES.



SO THIS IS HELL? THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.

NO. NOT HELL. IT'S A PLACE BETWEEN HELL AND HEAVEN. BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN IT WAS CALLED PURGATORY. A PLACE WHERE SOULS COULD REDEEM THEMSELVES. NOW IT BELONGS TO KANE.

SOMEHOW, HE'S TAKEN IT OVER.



KANE.

HE'S GATHERING SOULS UNDERNEATH HIM. BUILDING HIS OWN KINGDOM.



"I NEED YOU NOW. MY FLOCK."

"I NEED YOU TO PROTECT OUR VISION."



EVERYONE HERE IS A SLAVE BUT THEY DON'T KNOW IT. THAT'S WHY WE NEED MADELINE.

SHE CAN BREAK THE SEAL. SHE CAN CREATE A GATEWAY BACK TO HEAVEN.

SHE'S BEEN CHOSEN. THAT IS WHAT WE BELIEVE.









































TO BE CONTINUED!



**NEXT ISSUE**



**ON THE RUN!**



# WE ARE ALL LOST...

I remember when comics didn't give a \$@#!.

Thirteen years old, heading into my favorite comic shop (Star Clipper in Saint Louis, Missouri) with ten bucks of allowance and coming out with three or four 22 page fever dreams, genre stories that took the world head-on and didn't make any apologies for doing so. These were the days of KILLING JOKE and BATMAN: THE CULT and that first WOLVERINE mini-series (you know the Frank Miller one with all the ninjas and angst).

Comic books, back then, didn't push the envelope. They didn't recognize the existence of it. For all of us who knew what lay inside those issues, the act of reading a comic was the act of getting brilliant stories from some of the most challenging minds in pop-culture storytelling, a literary oasis from complacency and capitulation. A no-banality zone.

Then came Hollywood.

Hollywood started making terrible movies from comics (but the checks cleared) and then they started making better movies (and the checks kept clearing) and when publishing dollars shrank, comics got co-dependent on Hollywood-Land.

And the risks stopped being taken.

I work in film. I write screenplays. I have a production company (PRIMAL PICTURES Los Angeles) and I'm co-producing two features right now, straight up in the Hollywood-Land system. I'm even prepping my directorial debut. In the business of film, I expect capitulation and storytelling by committee. When you have 50 million dollars of skin in the game, that's 50 million reasons not to take a risk. I get it.

That's why I wanted to write comics. To free myself from that culture of fear. But the world of comics isn't the oasis I thought it might be. Hollywood's money has come with Hollywood's fear and now the same conversations I have with film executives, I often have with comic book publishers.

Everyone wants something safe.

The bitch of it is we all know that new, safe things rarely find audiences. Why read a new safe thing when you could read Spider-Man and get 50 years of safe, the safe you've grown up with, the safe your kids love, the safe you've already let into your heart, your DVD player and your XBOX?

If it's something new, people don't want safe. They want something evocative. Something that makes them feel something. Anything. The clarion call that cuts through the banality of day to day life.

So when Rob mentioned NETHERWORLD to me, my first question was: "It doesn't have to be safe, does it?" And he told me "No, it doesn't."

I didn't believe him.

I didn't think he was lying (Rob's one of the most direct people I know and I admire that about him), but I thought that inevitably the fear would creep in and even though we have a story about Hell and the darkest, most primal, most dangerous parts of human nature...we'd still have to make sure we didn't scare Hollywood-land out of possibly writing that check.

But Rob was right. During this process with Heroes and Villains (working from their story) and Top Cow (working with their editorial hand), fear never came through our emails. We got to interpret the story Heroes and Villains had, the most honest way we could, and from that place we wrote.

NETHERWORLD isn't safe. Hopefully it makes you feel something. Yes, it may indeed make some people a little uncomfortable, but this is a comic book, dammit.

And this comic book doesn't give a \$@#!.

Bryan Edward Hill  
2011