

BUSIEK & PACHECO
ArrowsmithTM
MERINO • SINCLAIR • COMICRAFT



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• CONTINUING THE SAGA OF •

Arrowsmith

• CHAPTER FOUR • LA VIE EN ESCADRILLE



War rages in Europe, between the Central Powers — Tyrolia-Hungary, Prussia, Bavaria and their allies — and the forces of Gallia, Britannia, Muscovy, Naples and others. Nations throw men, creatures, and all that sorcery and technology can offer into the fray.

One combatant is young Fletcher Arrowsmith, late of Herbertsville, Connecticut, in the United States of Columbia. After hearing tales of the war from Rocky, a rock-troll refugee who works at his father's blacksmith shop, Fletcher and his best friend, Jonathan, join the Overseas Aero Corps, a volunteer group of airmen who are trained in the sorceries of flight to make them each nation's hawks of the air.

Fletcher and Jonathan are swiftly trained in their new skills, and shipped over to Gallia, where they are desperately needed. In the process, they make friends and enemies, including Grace Hilliard, volunteer ambulance driver and daughter of an industrial-magic magnate, and Mitch Taggart, a belligerent fellow trainee.

At long last, Fletcher and Jonathan arrive at the front, and their first real mission as airmen. But things do not go as expected. Not remotely as expected...

BY KURT BUSIEK & CARLOS PACHECO

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RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT, LETTERS

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A MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR THE ADVENTURER & HERO

*Near Exton, Gambia
August 1963*

Dear Mom,

*I don't know if
you've been told,
Jonathan is dead.*

*One minute he was behind me,
and the next he was gone, falling.
He was hit by an incoming bullet.*

*And, Mom, I told you about him.
His throat was cut. He managed to get
a protection spell cast, and it might
have done some good, but he'd stumbled
into gun range by then and before he
recovered, he'd been blown to*

*It was our first patrol,
just the night before, and I don't*

*I can't read this,
I can't read this.*

*God, I can't
even write this.*

Dear Mom,

*How are you? I'm all right.
I guess the C.M.C. has let the
Kings know about Jonathan's
death by now.*

*I will write to them myself soon,
but in the meantime please let them
know how sorry I am. We don't
fighting for freedom, and all the
way to the end of the road.*

*I'm sorry, I'm being selfish
and getting enough to eat. Sometimes
it's very quiet over here, believe
it or not. Sometimes, of course --*



-- it's not.

AAAAA

We're doing something
worthwhile, though.
Something that matters.



But it's not like I thought
it would be. It's not like
I thought it would be at all.

AHH!

JOHNSON!
JOHNSON?!

We fly and we die and we
fly again and it never ends
and I had no idea I wasn't
ready and I dream about
Jonathan and—



Damn it.

Damn it damn it
damn it.

MY
SWORD --
I DROPPED
IT --

C'MON, HILDA,
WE CAN DO THIS.
JUST HOLD IT TOGETHER.
DON'T PANIC -- WE KNOW
WHICH WAY IS DOWN
WE CAN ORIENT
KEEP FOCUSED --

WATCH OUR
BACK WATCH ABOVE
AND BELOW --





NO! HE SWERVED! HE --

PTAM

CH-CH!



V-WAS...?



AAAH
AAAA



NOT SO SMUG NOW! YOU SAUERBRAUT-FOR-BRAINS BASTARD, EH?

JUST HOLD THAT POSE, CHUMMY, WHILE I BLOW YOU INTO A MILLION --



AH-AH. LEAVE IT, DAVIS. THE PRUGGIANS ARE PEELING OFF -- THE RAID IS OVER. BUT --

HE'S OUT OF THE FIGHT, DAVIS -- ONLY ENOUGH SPELL-RESISTE TO LET HIM FALL SAFELY.

ARROWSMITH! VERY NICE SHOOTING -- TAKING THE DRAGONET BUT NOT THE MAN!

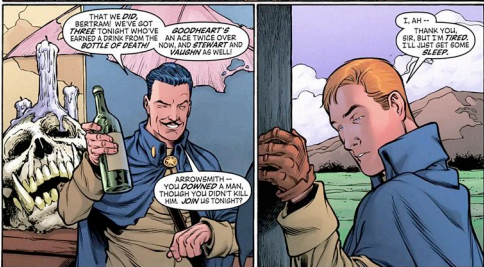
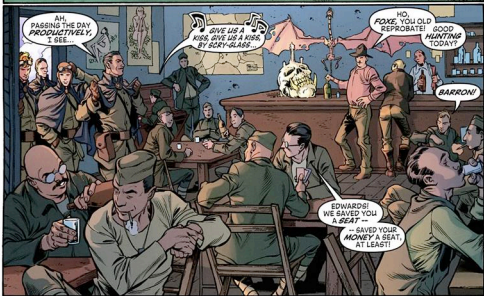


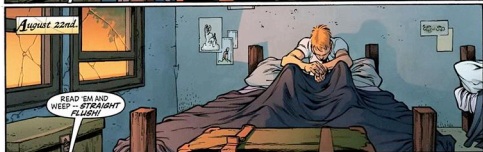
I MISSED, SIR -- I WAS AIMING FOR --

IT'S RESULTS THAT COUNT, SON. YOUR SWORD.



HIM TODAY. US TOMORROW -- THERE'S NO NEED TO BE BLOODTHIRSTY ABOUT IT. NOW COME ON, LADS -- LET'S GO HOME.





September 26th.

ISN'T IT JUST A GLORIOUS DAY?
OH YES, IT LOOKS LIKE RAIN!
ONLY A SHOWER THAT PASSES AWAY...
...AND THEN COMES ON AGAIN!

-- AND SO I
COME OUT OF THE
CLOUD AND THERE HE
IS, FAT AND SLOW
AND STUPID --

SHNNE

I THOUGHT
YOU SAID YOU COULD
PLAY POKER...

Dear Gretch,

Happy Birthday.
Sorry I missed it.

I guess it's hot over
there, right? It usually
is, this time of year.
Not here.

I'm sorry I haven't
written in so long, but
things have been

I'm sorry it's been so
long, but it's been very



NNH!
HILDA!



AT LEAST
SOMEONE'S
HAVING FUN.

CH!

STAY WARM.
I'M JUST GOING
TO STRETCH MY
LEGS.



ARROWSMITH.

YOU'VE BEEN
FLYING VERY WELL,
SON. BETTER AND BETTER
WITH EVERY MISSION. ONE
OF OUR STEADIEST
MEN OF LATE.

YOU'LL
MAKE ACE SOON.
I WARRANT.

I, AH,
THANK YOU,
CAPTAIN FOXE. IT'S...
VERY NICE OF YOU
TO SAY SO.

I WAS
NERVOUS, AT
FIRST, BUT I'VE
BEEN TRYING--



-- AND THE ESCADRILLE'S FULL OF GOOD PILOTS. I'VE LEARNED A LOT.

YOU'VE DONE MORE THAN THAT -- FLETCHER, ISN'T IT? WHEN YOU FIRST ARRIVED, I DOUBTED YOU'D LAST A WEEK, BUT NOW ...



TELL ME, FLETCHER, YOU NEVER JOIN THE MEN FOR A DRINK OR A CARD GAME IN THE DAYROOM. YOU NEVER GO TO THE VILLAGE...

IS THAT... AM I DOING SOMETHING WRONG, SIR?



JUST CURIOUS.



I THINK ABOUT IT. BUT -- I CAME HERE WITH A FRIEND, A BOY I GREW UP WITH. WE JOINED UP TOGETHER.

HE'S DEAD, SIR. HE DIED THE FIRST DAY.

AND IT SEEMS -- I DON'T KNOW, WRONG SOMEHOW -- DISRESPECTFUL --



YOUR FRIEND MAY BE DEAD, FLETCHER. BUT YOU? YOU'RE ALIVE, EVEN IF IT DOESN'T MUCH FEEL LIKE IT.

IT WON'T DO HIM -- OR ANYONE -- ANY GOOD IF YOU ACT LIKE YOU'RE DEAD, TOO. IT WON'T BRING ANYONE BACK. WON'T EASE YOUR PAIN...

IT'LL JUST WEAR AT YOU UNTIL YOU MAKE A MISTAKE IN FLIGHT. OR WORSE, IN COMBAT.



LISTEN TO ME, ARROWSMITH.

YOU'RE YOUNG, YOU'RE ALIVE -- YOU NEED TO LET OFF STEAM, ACT FOOLISH -- IF ONLY TO REMIND YOURSELF WHICH SIDE OF THE GRAVE YOU'RE ON.

AFTER ALL, WE MAY ALL BE ON THE OTHER SOON ENOUGH.

THE RAIN SHOULD END BY AFTERNOON. SOME OF US ARE HEADED INTO THE VILLAGE. JOIN US. HAVE A DRINK, LOOK AT A GIRL. YOU'LL FEEL BETTER.



WELL.
THERE IS
ONE THING I NEED
TO DO...









NA, NA,
YOU WAS RIGHT,
VLECH. DAT WHY
I JOIN UP.

DESE PEOPLE,
DIS WAR -- DEY
GOT TO BE STOPPED.
TINGS IS GETTING
VER' BAD.



MY PEOPLE,
DEY SAYING -- DE
OLD GODS, DE GODS
OF DE NORT -- DEY UPSET
'BOUT DIS WAR. IT HURT
DE LAND. HURT DEM.

IT GOT
TO BE ENDED --
BEFORE TOO MUCH
HURTING DONE
TO FIX.

THE
GODS...OF THE
NORTH?
HOW
DOES IT...?



SAY,
ARROWSMITH!
GOOD TO SEE YOU
OUT AND ABOUT,
SON!

CAPTAIN
FOX!
GRACE,
ROCKY, THIS
IS --



NO, NO --
DON'T GET UP. YOU'RE
NOT ON DUTY, AND WHO AM I
TO INTERRUPT A PLEASANT
AFTERNOON WITH
FRIENDS?

DON'T BELIEVE
HIS LIES, YOU TWO.
HE'S ONLY SAVED THE
WHOLE SQUADRON
THREE TIMES,
NOT TEN --



-- AND HE'D
ONLY HAVE SEVEN
POUR LE MERITE MEDALS
IF HIS COMMANDING
OFFICER WASN'T
HALF BLIND.

HOPE TO
SEE YOU LATER
THIS EVENING,
FLETCHER. BRING
YOUR FRIENDS.



WELL.
HE'S...QUITE
SOMETHING,
ISN'T HE?



I CAN'T
DISAGREE, GRACE.
WHEN I WANTED TO JOIN UP,
THAT'S WHAT I DREAMED
OF BEING -- JUST
LIKE HIM.

HE'S
THE BEST
WE HAVE.

EVEN NOW,
MOSTLY WHAT I DO
IS WATCH HIM IN THE
AIR, TRY TO DO WHAT
HE DOES.



HEH.
HE'S BEEN
TELLING ME I NEED
TO LIGHTEN UP. NOT
BE SO SERIOUS ALL
THE TIME...

WELL,
MAYBE HE'S
RIGHT.



AND IF
YOU'RE IMITATING
HIM IN THE AIR, AND IT'S
WORKING OUT...

...IT MIGHT
NOT BE SUCH
A BAD IDEA TO
IMITATE HIM ON
THE GROUND,
AS WELL.



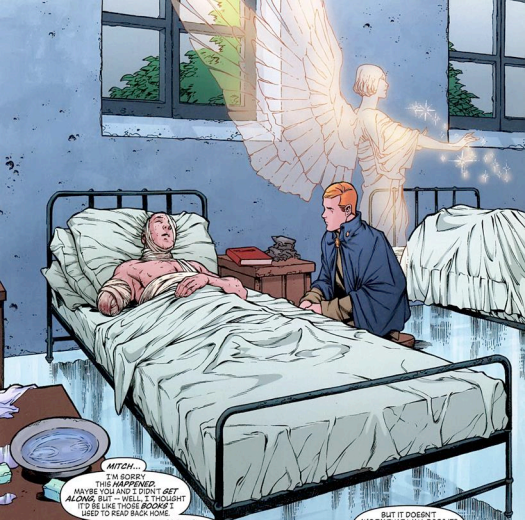
TRUE,
TRUE.

LOOK, IT'S
BEEN GREAT SEEING
YOU BOTH -- REALLY
GREAT -- AND WE SHOULD
MEET UP AGAIN FOR
DINNER LATER --

-- BUT RIGHT
NOW --

-- I HAVE
SOMETHING
I NEED TO
DO.





MITCH...
I'M SORRY
THIS HAPPENED.
MAYBE YOU AND I DIDN'T GET
ALONG, BUT -- WELL, I THOUGHT
IT'D BE LIKE THOSE BOOKS I
USED TO READ BACK HOME.

THOSE BOYS'
ADVENTURE NOVELS.
THERE'S ALWAYS ONE GUY
WHO STARTS OUT AN ENEMY.
BUT THEN HE AND THE HERO
COME TO RESPECT EACH
OTHER, AND...

BUT IT DOESN'T
WORK THAT WAY, DOES IT?
YOU'RE NO ENEMY. I'M NO
HERO. AND IT'S NOT LIKE
THOSE BOOKS AT ALL.

AND NOW
YOU...







AND HEY
PRESTO -- THAT'S
ONE LESS SUPPLY LINE
THE CENTRAL POWERS
CAN USE.

NOW LET'S
GET BACK TO THE
OTHERS -- THEY'VE HELD
THE PRUSSIANS OFF LONG
ENOUGH, HM?

NICE
BOMBARDMENT, BY
THE WAY, KEEP IMPROVING
LIKE THIS, YOU'LL HAVE
MY JOB.



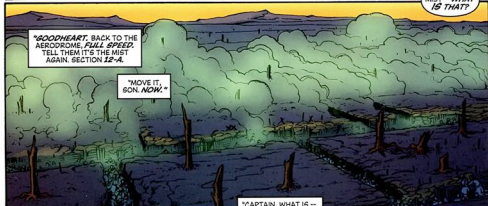
THANK
YOU, SIR...
...BUT I
DON'T THINK I'LL
EVER GET USED TO
ALL THIS.



SOOP.

LET'S HOPE
NONE OF US
DO.









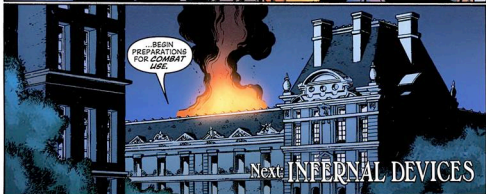
"... WE WOULD NEVER,
NEVER USE THEM."

SO, IT
WORKS, THEN?
IT'S BEEN FULLY
TESTED?

THIS
WAS THE **FOURTH**
TEST UNDER CONTROLLED
CONDITIONS. THE
RESULTS HAVE BEEN
CONSISTENT.



BRIGHT
VERY WELL,
THEN...



...BEGIN
PREPARATIONS
FOR **COMBAT**
USE.

Next: **INTERNAL DEVICES**

Arrowsmith

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Arrowsmith has made me more excited about comics than I can remember within the past 10 years or so. Thank you so much. Here's hoping for a long, long run.

In the meantime, I'll be spreading the word, urging people to pick up this book.

Thanks!

Daryl Lantz
daryl@charterm.net

I picked up *Arrowsmith* #1 on something of a whim. Despite (or maybe because of) the fact that I read 60-plus comics a month, I'm a bit reluctant to pick up some new titles. But it is hard to pass up a book with the names Busiek and Pacheco on it. I thoroughly enjoyed #1 and immediately added it to my pull list.

But this letter is supposed to be about #2. I'm a real sucker for alternate history/world type stories, and the inclusion of magic and creatures such as trolls, dwarfs, etc. really clinched the deal. I love the subtle touches of things that are just a bit different from our world (like the Statue of Liberty—or does it have a different name here?) and the fact that some things don't change—i.e., the bigotry towards other races shown by Binnie Atherton. On a side note, what's the origin of the word "hunkies" that she uses? I encountered that word this summer in the novels of James T. Farrell.

I'm very interested to see where this is going (well, Europe, but other than that...). I also like the class difference between Fletcher (Fletcher Arrowsmith, what a great and perfectly redundant name) and Grace. His small town upbringing shows through in this issue.

I really like the maps that show up in the back of the book, as well. I always thought that fantasy books with maps in the front were the best ones. I'll even forgive you for placing me somewhere in the northern reaches of Texas, so close to the border with North Virginia.

Pacheco's art, as always, is stunning. I was mesmerized by the two-page spread that opened this issue.

I really look forward to the rest of the series. I hope it does well for you. Any chance we'll see further stories set in this same world?

The plan is definitely to do more mini-series following Fletcher's adventures and exploring more of his world, Daryl—and the support we've gotten for *Arrowsmith* so far puts those plans very much on track.

According to wordorigins.com, the word "hunky" dates to 1909, and is probably derived from "Hungarian"—the term is usually used to refer to people of Slavic ancestry, though Binnie uses it a bit more broadly.

And hey, nothing wrong with living in North Texas—just think what I have to deal with, telling my friends and neighbors they're now Californians!

Matt Fields
459 Westminster Ave
SLC, UT 84115

I was pleased to see your map of North America in *Arrowsmith* #2. I would love to see a story that explores the State of Deseret in this magical world. I'm a great fan of alterni-historians who recognize that it was only the might of a federated United States that encouraged Brigham Young to join the Union rather than fighting to make his own country.

The story I would be most interested in does not seem appropriate for *Arrowsmith*. Most interested in a story that the original plans for Deseret included a seaport—San Diego in our world. Brig sent colonists there specifically to establish a Mormon port. I would love to see how California and Deseret resolved disputes over this land.

We've received a lot of comments on the maps, curious about one or another aspect of *Arrowsmith*'s history or geography, and all we can say is—give us enough time, and enough mini-series, and we'll get to 'em all!

And I'll admit, the idea of a Mormon seaport in heavily-Spanish California has a lot of possibilities. Who says they ever did resolve it?

Tue Sorensen
sorensenian@get2net.dk

I thought *Arrowsmith* #1 was so-so, but #2 stood out to me as a much stronger story. First and foremost, there seemed to be more story in #2. I was more interested in the characters, and I thought the events gave Carlos a lot of great opportunities to show just how fantastic an artist he is. He does facial expressions as well as, or better than, any artist I've ever seen. The aerial scenes also were spectacular.

Seeing *Arrowsmith*'s magical world in more detail was exciting and gratifying. My sole complaint is that the colors are too rich. I think this title needs a more realistic, down-to-earth (well, not literally) look.

But I enjoyed this issue a lot, and really look forward to the next. You've got a good thing going here—another one!

Actually, we think Alex Sinclair's coloring is more down-to-Earth than most (and influenced, as well, by early 20th-century magazine illustration) and perfect for the book. But we're delighted to hear you like more of the book than you don't—and I hope #3 continued our climb upward in your estimation.

Next issue, Fletcher goes on a key mission—a mission that'll change everything, both for him and, in many ways, the war. Don't miss it—we'd miss you.

—Kurt Busiek



MASKS: TOO HOT FOR TV!

ON SALE 12/31

Mainstream comics these days seem so darn serious. That was what was on my mind when I was having an enormous plate of nachos with Scott Dunbier one day last spring. "Let's do a superhero parody of COPS," I said. "An anthology one-shot, with funny writers and cool artists, and just laugh at the genre using the framework of COPS or GIRLS GONE WILD, stuff like that. Sort of like that TROOPS thing, but with superheroes instead of Storm-troopers. Something just to have some fun with."

He thought about it for a second and then said, "That sounds cool." And I mostly forgot about it after that.

But two months later, Ben Abernathy is on the phone giving me the artist line-up: Richard Corben, Doug Mahnke, Whilce Portacio, Amanda Conner—all favorites of mine, plus a guy named Tony Akins whose art blew us both away. Then we've got the writers: Patton Oswalt, who I think is one of the funniest men alive, Judd Winick and Marc Andreyko, both of whom crack me up regularly, and Jill Thompson whose script made me laugh so hard I could barely write my own afterward.

Now the final product is done and I have to say, everyone got very into just having some fun and turned in really great work. So if you're looking to laugh at the superhero genre this December, I can't imagine there's a better book for you than MASKS: TOO HOT FOR TV!

—Ed Brubaker



Need more Brubaker in the month of December? The critically acclaimed SLEEPER, with art by the incredible Sean Phillips, ends its first season with a BANG. Check out the project that made Wizard Magazine exclaim, "Wake up and smell the goodness, people!" For new fans of the book, the first trade paperback SLEEPER: OUT IN THE COLD debuts December 17th and collects issues 1-6. Whatta deal!



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