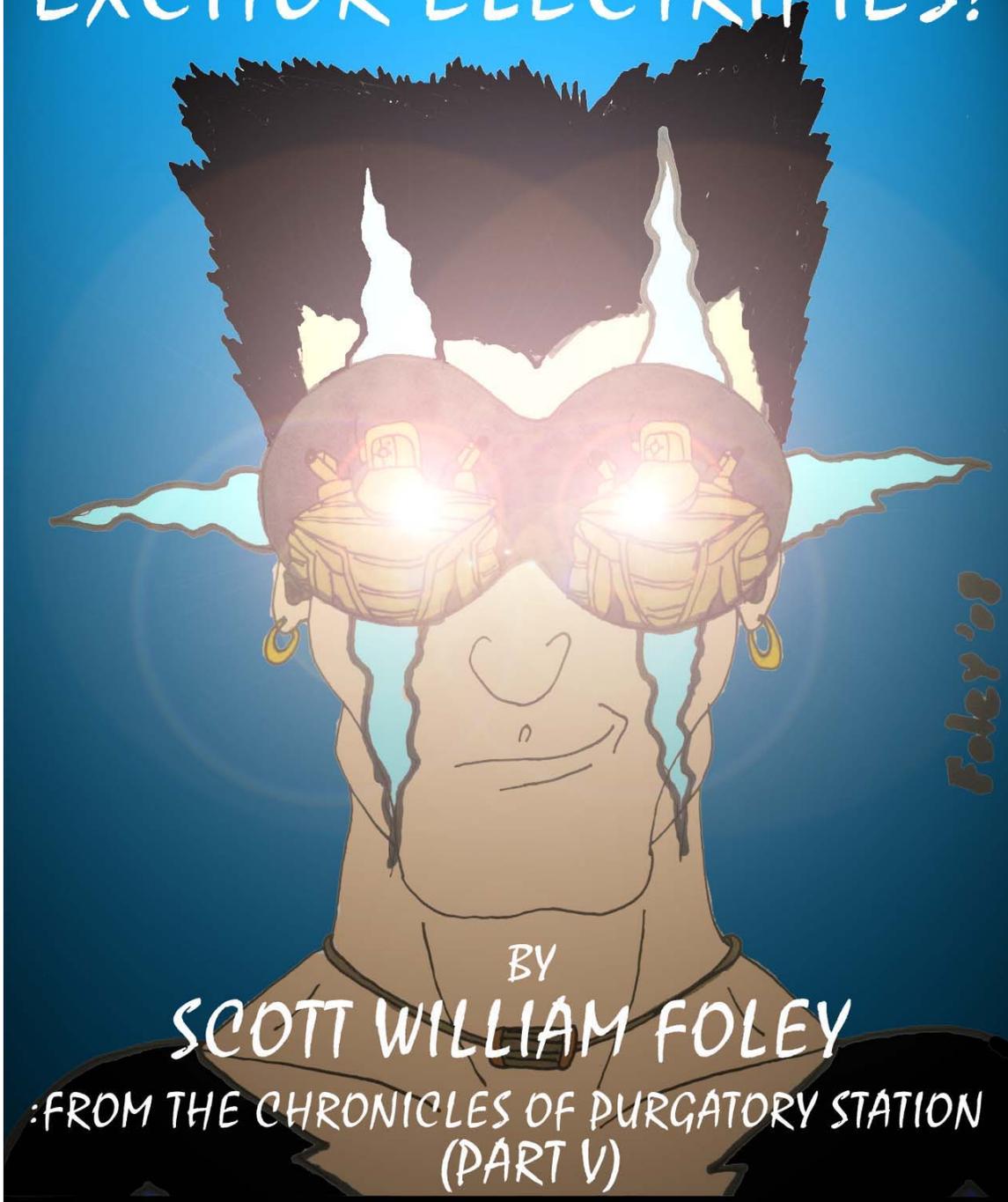


EXCITOR ELECTRIFIES!



BY

SCOTT WILLIAM FOLEY

:FROM THE CHRONICLES OF PURGATORY STATION
(PART V)

Foley '08

Excitor Electrifies!

by

Scott William Foley

This is a big day for me.

Before I walk into *The Purgatory Station Chronicler*, the city's biggest newspaper, I check myself out in the reflection of the window.

Hair looks good, face looks great.

I get the electricity jumping from eye to eye before I put on my shades.

Those blue sparks look cool behind the dark lenses.

Never been in *The Chronicler* before, so I figure I should head to the front desk. I walk up to an old lady sitting there and say, "Hey. I'm Purgatory's newest Colossal. I want an interview."

The lady looks at me kind of funny, then says, "Oookay. Let me give Albert Jordan a call."

I watch her pick up the phone before I say, "Who's that?"

Looking over the top of her old lady glasses, she says, "He's our crime beat reporter. He handles most Colossal stories."

"No—no way. I want Kristina Carlock."

"Who?" the woman asks.

This lady's annoying. "Kristina Carlock. She should be around my age."

After searching her directory, she tells me, "Listen, Mr. Colossal. We don't have anyone on staff by that name."

“I didn’t say she was on staff. She’s an intern. That’s who I want to interview me.”

Lightning bounces from hand to hand as I wait on Kristina to make her way down. I don’t like the way the old lady’s looking at me, like I’m a poser or something, so I figure I’ll show her a bit of what I can do with my blue and white juice while I kill time.

I can tell she’s impressed.

Who wouldn’t be?

Finally, I hear a voice say, “You wanted to see me?”

And there she is. Kristina Carlock. I say, “How’re you doing, Kristina? I’m Excitor.” Then I pull down my shades just a little, making sure my eyes glow, and wink before I say, “But, you can call me your big break.”



The old lady reams me out for almost starting a fire, so we head out to a nearby outdoor café. Kristina looks uncomfortable. Probably because she looks a little drab in her work clothes compared to me. I look like a rock star—a rock star with wicked powers. People are staring.

We have a seat with the rest of the midmorning crowd and order some drinks.

After the waitress leaves, Kristina looks at me kind of funny, then says, “You’re for real?”

“What?”

“You’re a Colossal and you’re handpicking me to be your interviewer?”

“You know it.”

“I’ve never heard of any ‘Excitor.’”

“I’m new.”

“How new?” she asks.

“Just got in from Chicago.”

She smiles, as though maybe having some good memories, before she tells me, “I’m from Chicago.”

“No kidding.”

“Where’d you go to high school?”

“Don’t know,” I answer before taking a swig of my iced tea.

“What do you mean you don’t know?”

I can’t help but look away when I answer, “I mean I don’t know. I don’t even know who I am, much less where I went to high school.”

She finally takes out her notepad and starts scribbling. She asks, “You have amnesia? Seriously?”

“Yep.” This is a little tricky. Probably the less said the better.

“Were you a Colossal in Chicago?”

“Nope. First thing I remember is waking up on Navy Pier in the middle of the night and realizing I had awesome powers. Not much after that I headed for Purgatory Station.”

“But Chicago has Colossals,” she says. “Lots of cities have Colossals. Why Purgatory Station?”

“Because Purgatory Station has all the best Colossals, and I’m going to be the best of the best.”

She laughs at me—flat out laughs—and says, “We’ll see about that. Pretty cocky for a no-name.”

I knew she’d laugh at me at this stage of our relationship. I’m use to that sort of thing. She’ll find out sooner than later that I’m the real deal.

“I’ll have a name pretty quick,” I reply.

Her brown eyes narrow as she furiously scrawls something across her paper. “Busted any Mega-Mals?”

“That’ll also be coming pretty soon,” I answer with a grin.

Lowering her pad, she looks at me like I’m an idiot. “You’re going to get yourself killed.”

Shrugging my shoulders, I smile at her before I sip from my drink.

“So why me?”

“What do you mean?”

“Why pick an intern instead of a real reporter?”

“Get out of here. You’re a reporter. I read your obits.”

“I only get to write the obits because no one else wants to.”

“Well, you’ve got a real way with respecting the dearly departed. You’re the right woman for me.”

I watch her roll her eyes.

“Let’s get this thing moving along,” she mumbled. “So, what, you can pop electricity out of your fingers or something?”

“It’s sweet. I can do all kinds of cool stuff with electricity. And it comes right out of me—I make it. The other day I cooked a hot dog.”

Why did I say that? Get a grip, man! You were doing so well! Get it together—the less said, the better!

Oh, no. I’ve seen that look in her eyes before. For real.

“So you juiced a hot dog,” she says. “But you haven’t taken on any Mega-Mals. How about regular crooks? Muggers? Jaywalkers?”

There’s that old sarcasm.

I can’t do anything but shake my head. Then I say, “All in due time, right? I mean, I just got here. First I settle in, then I start cracking heads.”

Stuffing her notepad and pen into her purse, she huffs, “You know, I’m really busy. I’m trying to earn my way onto staff at *The Chronicler*. This sort of thing really makes me look bad. I can’t have guys in leather pants and shades picking me up at the office.”

“What are you talking about? This is an interview!”

She stands up and leaves, saying, “No, it’s not an interview. An interview denotes something newsworthy, and you’re not news.”

I watch her walk away.



“Dude, she just ditched you?”

“Yeah, man, can you believe it?” I respond into my headset. It’s later that same day, and I’m playing the latest rage with my boy, Percy, who lives back in Chicago.

“Actually,” Percy says, “I can believe it. She was always nice, but man, she never put up with any guff, bro. You know what I’m saying?”

“Yeah, I hear you—Dude! Watch out! You almost got us killed!”

“Sorry, man.”

Percy’s not half the gamer I am. It’s cool, though. This is as much about getting stuff off my chest as it is beating my best score.”

We take care of his misstep in the game, then he says, “So the morning went pretty lousy?”

“Without a doubt.”

“I told you it was too bold, bro. Waltzing into a newspaper office like you were all that. You should have waited to take out a bad guy first.”

“Yeah, I know. You were right, dude. I should have listened to you.”

“I go to Northwestern. Only wicked smart people get in here. You should *a/ways* listen to me.”

Man. And Kristina thought I was cocky this morning.

“So, you got a job yet?”

“No,” I sigh. “Seeing Kristina again was my first order of business. Making a name for Excitor is my second. Doing the wage-slave thing is third.”

“Where are you living then?”

“West side, near the highway. Studio in the building’s basement. Cheapest place I could find. They say Turf drives by pretty regularly on his patrol, though, so that’s cool, right?”

“Yeah, man. That’s cool ... You tried applying to PSU yet?”

“Dude, I didn’t come here to go to school. I came here for Kristina!”

“I know, man, but ... you need to go to school, dude. It’s hard enough with a college degree, much less—”

“I appreciate it, Percy. Really. But I have this talk plenty with my mom and dad, all right? I’m kind of burnt out on the whole thing.”

“Okay, man. I get it.”

“Besides, these powers—they should make me rich, right? I mean, if basketball players get endorsement deals, why can’t Colossals, right? I don’t need college!”

Especially since my GPA sucked and I can’t get over a 16 on the ACT, even though my parents made me take it four times now. Besides, I think east coast schools want the SAT, and there’s no way I’m studying for another stupid test.

“Just don’t get yourself killed, all right? We don’t know enough about these powers of yours.”

“I know all I need to know, Percy—they freaking rock! I’m the luckiest guy in the world. To crawl out of bed with lightning in my hands—Kristina’s the only thing that can top it, and before long, she will.”

“When do you plan to tell her who you really are?”

“After she falls in love with me. Once she loves Excitor unconditionally, she’ll be okay with who Excitor really is.”

Just then Percy manages to get us both shot dead. Man, I was just about to win the game, too.

“Smooth move, Percy.”

“Sorry, bro. Hey, I need to go anyway. I’ve got an econ test tomorrow.”

“Cool, man. Good luck with that.”

“Thanks,” Percy says. “Later, Todor.”

“Yeah. Later.”



“Whas tha—!”

Explosions. Gunfire. Screams.

I wake up to these horrible sounds and realize this is my chance to debut. This is the moment for Excitor to join the ranks of the big boys.

Jumping out of bed, I pull on my leather pants; blue, sleeveless shirt; black, fingerless gloves; black boots; and shades.

Actually, I’ll leave the shades off until my fireworks get going. Kind of hard to see in the dark, otherwise.

Running out of my studio apartment, I fly up the stairs and out the back door of the building. I can see bursts of light and hear the sounds of gunfire on the overpass of the highway. I’ll need wheels if I want to beat the other Colossals to the scene.

Propping my sunglasses on my forehead, I scan the area and find a kid's bike against a dumpster.

It'll have to do.



After peddling like a madman, I ditch the bike and climb up the embankment to the overpass. When I leap the guardrail, I can't believe what I see! Some dude outfitted in bronze armor with gun barrels mounted all over it is tearing into some sort of a convoy. He's shredding them!

The convoy's got guns as well—big ones—but their bullets are just bouncing off the dude. And he keeps taking them down like nothing! The guy's got the power of a walking tank!

I've got to put a stop to this.

With the Mega-Mal's back to me and safely out of the way of any flying bullets, I drop the shades, light up my eyes, and yell out for him to stop.

That is, I try to yell out for him to stop.

When I open my mouth nothing comes out.

God ... I'm terrified. What if I get killed doing this? Is Kristina really worth dying for? She doesn't even remember me!

"Help us!" one of the convoy guards screams after noticing my glowing eyes and hands arcing with blue electricity. He's lying on the ground, bleeding out from bullet wounds.

The armored man turns, faces me, and actually chuckles.

His voice booms out through a speaker, "I wondered when one of you morons would show up. I don't know you, pipsqueak. Got a name?"

Swallowing hard, I'm mortified when my voice cracks as I answer, "Excitor."

With smoke wafting from the gun barrels mounted on his shoulders and forearms, the man continues laughing at me. "That's a dumb one. Where do you guys come up with this stuff? You sound like something for ED."

I have no idea what ED is, but I don't like his tone. "Yeah?" I yell back. "Well, what's your name? Captain Metalpants?"

Uh-oh.

I seem to have genuinely miffed this guy off.

"You don't know who I am, you little punk? I've been in the business of killing people half your life! Name's Barrage!"

Like his name implies, he lets loose with a volley of bullets. I feel something give way in my bladder and figure this is the end of the road; I'm finished before I even got started.

But before I know what's happening, his artillery gets zapped right out of the air by instant, crackling lightning.

I look around for some other Colossal, but then realize it must have been me. My instinct took over my powers, saving my life!

"You gotta be faster than that, dude!"

With my confidence soaring, I let this guy have it. I open up on him. It's hard to keep from smiling as I watch blue and white electricity leap from my hands to his tin suit. He's practically a lightning rod.

Or so I thought.

"This isn't my first rodeo, newbie. I insulated my suit a long time ago because of idiots like you."

He lifts his arms to fire at me once more, but I beat him to the punch.

"Let's try this again!" I bellow. Then I go at him full throttle, but this time, I concentrate on finding the seams and cracks in his armor, feeling it out as though my own fingers were searching him, then, after finding what I wanted, I go in.

His armor buzzes with my electricity, a brief scream issues through his speaker, then Barrage just stands there with smoke coming off his metal hide.

I shorted the loser out.

As the police, ambulances, and reporters roll up, I turn my back to them. Part of me wants to check on the guards from the convoy—a lot of them look in a bad way, some even dead—but I've got this little patch of wetness on my pants that could be pretty embarrassing.

Instead, I head for the guardrail.

"Wait!" the reporters holler. "Who are you? Where do you come from?"

They're all asking questions at the same time, but once I look over my shoulder, careful to keep my back to them, they quiet down in anticipation of my reply.

“You want the scoop?” I begin. “Go talk to Kristina Carlock at *The Chronicler*. She knows everything about me.”

Then I leap the guardrail.

Pretty cool, right?

It is, except then I have hide in some bushes until they go so they won't see me riding away on a bicycle.

That part's not cool.



I walk into *The Chronicler* a few days after Kristina's interview with me is published. Since she hadn't asked much in the way of questions, she spent more time describing me as a “toned, confident, dark, tall, and handsome man with an electric personality.”

Rad.

The same old lady's working the front desk, but this time her eyes light when she sees me and she says, “Mr. Excitor! We're so glad you came to us for your first interview!”

“My pleasure,” I say with—literally—an electric smile. “I need to see Kristina.”

“Right away, sir!” the woman says. Her withered fingers can't dial the numbers fast enough.



Kristina and I make our way back to the outdoor café where we first spoke. We had to stop quite a bit so I could sign autographs, which was cool for me but, more importantly, seemed to make a good impression on her.

This whole thing is going a lot easier than I planned.

After we sit down yet again with the midmorning crowd, we order drinks. She then says, "So I guess I should thank you for the interview. You're the hottest thing going right now. They already put me on staff even though I haven't graduated yet!"

"My pleasure, Tina."

"Tina?"

"Yeah. I thought I could give you a nickname, you know, since we're going to be exclusively working together now."

"No, Tina's fine," she stammered. "It's just ... no one's called me Tina since high school." She studies me for a few moments, then says, "Are you sure we don't know each other? You know, from Chicago?"

I feel sweat break out under my arms. "Yeah," I say, trying to sound relaxed. "Pretty sure."

"Take off the shades."

"Can't."

"Why not?"

"Secret identify."

“You told me you have amnesia, dork. You said you don’t even know your own name. Which makes no sense, by the way. How do you get by? Driver’s license, credit cards, rent, they all want a name and soc number. In fact—”

I take off the shades more to interrupt her line of thought than anything. I’m not ready to tell her the truth—not yet.

This could go either really badly or—

“Oh,” she sighs, looking me right in the eyes. She doesn’t say anything for a few seconds. Then, she kind of grumbles, “I guess we don’t know each other after all.”

Crap.

“So anyway,” she begins, pulling out her notepad. “A reporter for WPUG News, Sidney Attwater, got in touch with me.”

“Nope. You’re the only reporter I talk to,” I say before replacing my sunglasses.

“I told her the same thing. She doesn’t want to interview you, though. She’s got a relationship kind of like ... ours ... with a less conspicuous Colossal by the name of Devil Woman.”

“Never heard of her.”

“No one has,” Kristina replies. “Nonetheless, Attwater said Devil Woman wanted a meeting with you on behalf of The Nocturnal Knight.”

I nearly spit out my drink! “No way!”

“I know! Incredible, right?”

“He was one of the Absolutes!”

“I know!”

“Totally!” I say. “I’m way into it! Set it up!”

“All right!” Kristina exclaims while reaching into her purse. “And you’ll give me all the details, right? No holding out on Tina, right?”

I smile.

Earlier there, for a second, she had me worried. But she really has no idea who I am.

“Every juicy bit, Tina. I’ll tell you everything you want to know.”

She hands me a prepaid cell phone. “To keep in touch,” she says. “Sidney told me to call her if you said yes and she’ll get us the details. I’ll call you when I hear something.”

“Done.”

“Don’t lose it, ‘Excitor.’ I don’t want you forgetting about me.”

I look at her and say, “Tina, I couldn’t forget you if I tried.”



I’m not really one for costumes, you know? I got all my gear at regular stores. So when I see Devil Woman in her red body suit; black, thigh high boots; and big “DW” belt, I kind of laugh. If she didn’t have such a smoking-hot body, she would have looked pretty lame. Most of these costumes Colossals wear are beyond me.

She tells me, “I’m putting together a crew for The Nocturnal Knight. He wants us to help him take down the Shadow Serpent.”

“The serial killer?” I instantly regret how stupid that sounded.

“Yeah,” she smirks. “The serial killer.”

“Cool. Are we the new Absolutes?”

She looks off to the city skyline and says, “That’s up to the Knight. You in?”

“Like Flynn.”

“Good. Meet us on the roof of First Redeemer, five nights from now, at eleven. Keep it quiet, too, got it?”

“Got it.”

Yep. This whole deal is a cake walk. Things are most definitely looking up.

To Be Continued ...

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