

TOP COW TALENT HUNT FALL 2013

We are looking to hire four writers and four artists from anywhere in the world to do paid work for the company in 2014/2015. The goal of the Talent Hunt is to find four previously UNPUBLISHED writers and four previously UNPUBLISHED artists and give them a chance to expose their work to the comic industry in the printed and digital formats. The comics industry is an awesome one to work in...both Marc Silvestri and I thought about this and realized that at some point someone gave us a chance. We're looking to do the same for a few people. 8 people may not seem like a lot but we don't actually publish that many books so it is a LOT for us. Marc and I both strongly believe in expanding the presence of women creators in comics, and because of that, one writer slot and one artist slot will be specifically reserved for women.

We will also be offering 10 runner-up writers and 10 runner-up artists an opportunity to write/illustrate a short story in an annual type anthology story. This will also be paid work. For writers this will NOT be the story you submit but a new one once you've been chosen that will be directed by our editorial team. If anyone that is selected as a runner-up opts to NOT participate we will simply move down the list and offer it to the next in line.

Some of the conditions and restrictions that you read in this document may seem a bit draconian, but we need to be very specific about what we want/need and protect ourselves from unintended liability. Ultimately, we're trying to do a good thing here by giving people a chance that have yet to receive one.

So onto the rules:

Your submission will ONLY feature NON-PRESENT DAY VERSIONS of the Top Cow Universe characters using the 13 Artifacts from this list and possibly a brief appearance by Sara Pezzini (Witchblade) or Jackie Estacado (The Darkness) who will narrate the story (read details below):

Witchblade
The Darkness
The Angelus
Heart Stone
Wheel of Shadows
Coin of Solomon
Ember Stone
Pandora's Box
The Glacier Stone
Spear of Destiny
The Thirteenth Artifact
The Rapture
The Blood Sword

Here's the rub, we're looking for people to write and draw stories based ONLY on these characters. We don't care how your *Batman* looks and neither should you for this. We have always been a company that proactively creates new and original characters within its collective universe spearheaded by *Witchblade*, *The Darkness*, and Tom Judge from *Artifacts*. Now we are extending this opportunity to all of you creative hopefuls bursting with fresh ideas to join the party and get your voices out there. That's right, this is your chance to make an indelible mark upon more recently introduced or lesser-known characters in the Top Cow Universe. Step up, show us what you've got and take this once-in-a-lifetime shot at breaking away from being an unknown.

You need to submit art samples and story samples ONLY based on these characters listed above. Any submissions that do NOT feature these characters or that feature these characters AND other characters not on this list will not be reviewed and the submission discarded.

UNPUBLISHED

What does this mean? I'm going to narrow it down specifically that if you've done work for any of these companies or any of their affiliates, divisions or imprints you can't participate:

Marvel Comics
DC Comics
Image Comics (all imprints)
Dark Horse Comics
IDW
Dynamite Comics
Boom!
Valiant Comics
Zenescope
Oni Press
Viz Media
Avatar
Fantagraphics
Aspen Comics
Random House
Hachette

This competition is open to all international participants and I don't have the space to list out all of the non-English companies so as a rule of thumb if the company is in the top 5 based on market share for your country then you can NOT participate. If you have a question on this you can ask me directly.

WRITERS

You need to submit a 22 page full script of the story you are pitching (panel breakdowns, dialogue, etc.) and ONLY a 22 page full script. This does NOT mean 22 pages in a word document, it means 22 comic book pages broken down by script and panel descriptions. This may take you more than 22 word processing pages. One tip is that you need to do a page break between comic book pages, each PAGE 1 or PAGE 20 followed by Panel 1 should be at the top of a page. If you don't follow these simple instructions this will disqualify you and your submission will not be reviewed and will be discarded. If you don't know what a FULL SCRIPT format should look like, there are plenty of resources available online. This is a good one: <http://www.comicbookscriptarchive.com/archive/>

From last year I can tell that a lot of people wrote their pitch as the first part of a long arcing story. THIS IS NOT WHAT WE WANT. It needs to be a self-contained story with a definite beginning, middle and end. No cliffhangers, this isn't a pitch for you to write a "100 issue" arc of something for us. Doing that will only result in you being tossed in the no pile.

This story should be using a historical or future bearer of the listed Artifacts NARRATED by the present day version of either Sara Pezzini or Jackie Estacado (we'll note that these are pre-events of Darkness 116 and The Death of Jackie Estacado graphic novel when they get published). So the "story" is told from the modern day Sara or Jackie perspective and they can be featured in the opening and closing scenes if you want to do that to set the narrative. I realize this is a very specific way of doing it, that's the point.

Also, please note that we do NOT want a synopsis this year. You'll write a full 22 page comic book script and you should email only that and a copy of the signed submission agreement.

Repeatedly last year I was asked if writers could create new characters. I left them out as it complicates matters, but I've amended that this year so yes you can do this. You need to be CLEAR and VERY AWARE that by doing so, this is considered DERIVATIVE work under the SUBMISSION FORM you have to sign to participate and you are creating these characters FOR TOP COW and you will not own them or be entitled to any future compensation. Bottom line, if this bothers you at all either don't create new characters or don't participate. There are plenty of historical Artifact bearers you can use. Throwaway supporting characters to move plot along, like a driver, a bartender or cop is fine.

Personal note from me on this; if you've had a character your whole life that you've wanted to bring to the world and you want to try and use this opportunity to toss the Witchblade gauntlet on their hand or whatever, please DON'T do this. You can, but I STRONGLY advise against this. This is not the time to expose that character to

the world, this is a time to expose YOU to the world using OUR characters so that you can fulfill that other dream later.

Also, yes you can use more than one historical Artifact bearer in your story, but this is also discouraged. Focus on the one character and the story you want to tell with that character. If you use all 13 in one story I can almost guarantee you that NONE of the characters will stand out.

Do NOT cut and paste your script into the body of an email, it MUST be an attachment in a MICROSOFT WORD document, a PDF or a Final Draft document.

ARTISTS

We are looking for four artists who do finished pencil work, pencil to color work, digital painting or pencil/ink/ink wash combo appropriate for black and white publication. If you are an inker or colorist you can submit your work to Top Cow through regular submission channels but they will NOT be considered for this Talent Hunt. What you can do is troll the forum we created for this and see if you can find a person who is just penciling and try and team up with them. If you are part of a pencil/ink/color team and want to submit together we will accept that but you submit as one final piece of finished/colored or B/W art. There will be SAMPLE SCRIPTS posted up online with the rules that you can use for this.

Last year we discouraged PENCILLERS from submitting just pencils. We're amending that this year to accepting pencils. Note if you win, we will assign you an inker you will not be able to "choose" who inks or colors your pages. You will be consulted, but the decision will be ours.

The Talent Hunt will run through 01/31/14 and all submissions received on or before 01/31/14 that have included a signed Top Cow Submissions Agreement form will be reviewed. This signed agreement MUST be included or your submission will not be looked at.

FEEDBACK

You will NOT receive a review of your work or why it was not chosen. Last year I offered feedback to writers, unfortunately that was FAR harder than I intended and became so time consuming as near impossible to complete. As of this new launch there are still some people waiting feedback from last year. We're working on it and it will come. We have created specifically a feedback forum on our topcow.com website at this URL: <http://thebarn.freeforums.org/talent-hunt-2013-f44.html>

We will be checking these boards and commenting and talking with people regarding this on here so it is highly recommended that you join the forum. If you see me at a convention or comic book store happy to talk to you in person, but with the volume of entries don't expect me to remember it. Your best bet is to bring a

printed out copy so I can skim it real quick when we're chatting and then I'd be happy to talk to you about it. If you follow our social media feeds or the calendar on our web site you'll see where I'm going to be. If you try to show up to places I check in to via Foursquare, Facebook or Twitter to try and catch me you should know that a) this may piss me off if I'm with my family and b) I check into places as I leave so you're not going to find me anyway. All of my "appearances" are posted and well publicized on our feeds.

POSTING OF YOUR SUBMISSION

Writers, if you do not win, you are free to post your submission anywhere you want as long as it is not for monetary gain and solely for the purpose of review. If you post your submission script prior to the winners being announced you will be automatically disqualified. The reason for this is if you WIN we don't want people reading the script before it's published. Artists, you're welcome to post your submission at any time, including on the forum we've created to support the Talent Hunt. Strategically, I'm not sure it's a good idea for you to do so, but it won't have much bearing on who we pick and it's not the actual art that will be published so go for it if you want to.

SLIGHT REDESIGNS OF CHARACTERS

This is okay for both artists and writers as long as it is within the scope of the spirit of that character. I've included this solely because a lot of people have asked this. Personally, I think it's a risk not worth taking and sticking with the existing designs is the way to go...but we're okay with this as an option.

Why do we need a Submissions Agreement form signed by you?

We have the absolute highest regard for creators and for the ownership of original properties, and this agreement should in no way be misconstrued as license for us to appropriate your creations. This agreement protects Top Cow from any liabilities involving coincidental similarities to works-in-progress or other submissions. Any submissions received without a signed agreement will be discarded without review.

IMPORTANT OTHER STUFF

*I will be attending a lot of conventions and signings this Fall. You can show me your work at these and I'm happy to talk to you about it. Look online and through Top Cow's and my social media feeds and it will show where I'll be. I (Matt Hawkins) am the ONLY one reviewing Talent Hunt materials at signings so please do NOT attempt to get reviews from anyone else working or signing at the Top Cow booth.

*All submissions will be accepted via DIGITAL MEANS ONLY. We will NOT accept mailed submissions. You need to scan your work, downres it to an appropriate size

and email it or a link to it at submissions@topcow.com. This account is set at a MAXIMUM 10mb attachment size, bigger than that and it will be rejected. If you send us each page as a 10mb file that will annoy us greatly. That email address will NOT answer any questions you may have. When you send your submission to this email address please include Top Cow Talent Hunt in the subject line.

*Do not send or drop off original art of any kind, your submission will not be returned to you.

*We only have a few people on staff so if you spam us with questions or be overly annoying we reserve the right to block you and not accept your submission.

*If you are chosen, you will not be hired as an employee nor will you be given a long work commitment, this will be a published one shot to start off with that you do willingly on a 100% work-made-for-hire basis. Who knows where you can go from there? That's up to you.

*Given the expected volume of submissions, please do not harass the small Top Cow staff to check on your submission or it's standing. NO results will be given or posted until after 01/31/14 so it is STRONGLY ENCOURAGED that you take your time and do the best work you can and submit only when you're ready.

*We want your submission and every received submission that follows the rules and includes a signed copy of the Submission Agreement will be reviewed.

*If you've been published by one of the publishers I've listed, please do not submit. If you do not disclose that you've been previously published and we find out, we will not review your submission and it will be discarded.

*Submissions must be in English (sorry I can't read it otherwise).

*You have to be 18 years of age to participate.

*We will NOT provide you any direct reference for this, but there are a lot of resources available online for free and here is a list of books that are the most appropriate that you can find and read/study:

Best reference:

Artifacts Volumes 1-4

Broken Trinity

Broken Trinity Pandora's Box

Darkness (any but 75 and 100 are good reference)

First Born

Tales of the Darkness

Tales of the Witchblade

Witchblade (any, but 92 and 100 had historical bearers)
Witchblade Distinctions trade is all historical bearers
Universe

If you want additional information you can post a question on the message boards we've set up on our web site (<http://thebarn.freeforums.org/talent-hunt-2013-f44.html>) or you can hit me up on my twitter feed I check that pretty regularly @topcowmatt. We're trying to not get our regular business emails overwhelmed with email about the Talent Hunt and when I'm checking twitter I usually have a few minutes, please allow some time for response if you don't hear from me in a few days hit me again.

Thanks for reading and I look forward to looking at your submission!

Best,

Matt Hawkins (Top Cow)