

RICK GRIMES VS MARVEL ZOMBIES



#2

BY LUKE PORTER



Dr. Strange opens a blinding white portal, and Rick steps through. He feels the ground change from the hard concrete of the plaza to dirt and twigs. The portal closes and Rick sees tall pine trees all around him. Now that the sounds of the portal have faded away, Rick can hear walkers moving in the forest.



Dr. Strange briefly fades in, only to hoarsely say, "Cabin... west... hurry..." When he flickers out of view, Rick sees something out of the corner of his eye - something flying towards him from deeper in the forest.



Rick hits the ground just as the zombified Green Goblin roars past where he was standing. "Great," Rick mumbles to himself, "now they can fly." He reaches for his gun, then remembers his new Iron Man gauntlet.



The Goblin swerves through the trees to make another pass. Rick raises his gauntlet and takes aim. He doesn't hear Vulture coming up behind him until it's too late.



The Vulture grabs Rick and lurches skyward. He carries Rick high above the forest - intending to get in a quick bite for himself before the other zombies arrive.



Ricks gets his gauntlet arm free, and raises it behind him, directly against the zombie Vulture's face. He fires. Wet blood sprays everywhere, and Rick begins free falling. He is at least 50 feet up. This is going to hurt.



Rick swings Cap's shield in front of him and braces for impact. He breaks through dozens of tree branches, which slows his descent, and finally lands with a dull thud. The side of his head hits the shield and starts to bleed, but otherwise he is unharmed. Maybe this shield is more useful than he initially thought.



The Green Goblin swoops down at Rick, hoping to knock him out with the front of his glider. He ran out of pumpkin bombs a long time ago, and his mind has been too clouded by the hunger to make more.



Rick is still dazed from his fall, but he manages to raise one arm and fire another blast. The discharge clips off the glider's wing, and then the Goblin's leg.



Behind Rick, the Green Goblin's glider hits a tree and explodes. Pieces of the glider and the Goblin fall around Rick as he heads for the cabin that Dr. Strange mentioned.



One of the faster zombies, Sabretooth, begins catching up with him. Rick can hear him, but he has never been the kind of guy who shoots wildly. He keeps moving and waits for the walker to get a little bit closer...



When the moment is right, Rick turns and fires. Sabretooth's reflexes are slower from the infection, but he still manages to turn in mid-air and avoids most of the blast. It maims his left arm, but he is already swinging his right clawed arm down at Rick's throat.



Rick pulls his shield up and Sabretooth crashes against it. The first claw attack misses his neck by less than an inch. Sabretooth is more ruthless and savage than anyone he has ever fought. Rick needs both of his hands just to hold the shield as the zombie thrashes and rips apart his jacket. Rick can't get a shot in. If the claws pierce his skin, will he get infected?



Another vicious claw attack rips the entire sleeve off Rick's jacket, exposing his bare arm. Sabretooth leans his head around the shield and lunges forward to bite him. Rick makes a split second decision and blasts the shield with the full power of his gauntlet. It launches both the shield and Sabretooth up over the tops of the trees.



Rick doesn't like leaving his shield behind, but he also doesn't want to face Sabretooth again. He removes his tattered jacket and heads for the cabin, with the cure in-hand.



The cabin looks old and abandoned. Rick can still hear walkers moving in the woods behind him. He hopes that this cure will work quickly on Dr. Strange, and that he can teleport the walkers away, or perform some other wizardry.



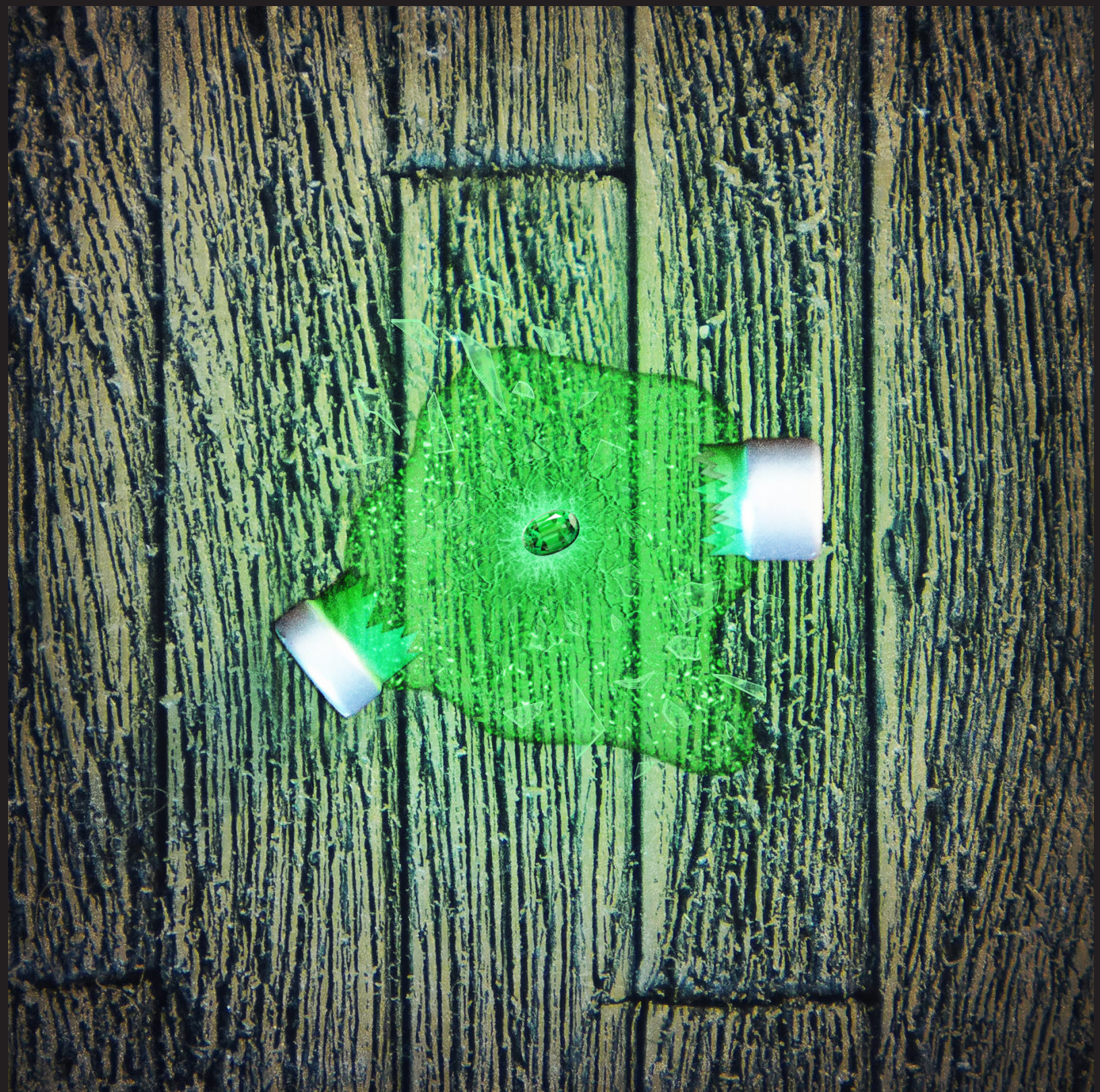
Rick knew that Strange was in trouble, but he didn't expect to see this. A female walker is crouched behind him, eating his right arm. Strange isn't moving...



Elektra starts to lunge at Rick, but he quickly blasts her through a nearby window and into the woods. He prays that Strange is alive. Rick needs to know how to administer this cure. Is Strange supposed to drink it? Is Rick supposed to inject it? If so, where?



The sound of Rick's blast muffles the sound of Sabretooth running up the steps and through the doorway. He slams into Rick from behind, and the cure flies from his hand.



The cure vial shatters, and the green liquid runs along the wood grooves in the floor. But there was something else inside the vial - a shining green gemstone. Usually nothing can break Rick's intense focus, especially when he is fighting a walker, but he briefly becomes transfixed on this glowing stone.



Rick's temporary loss of focus costs him dearly, as Sabretooth sinks his teeth deep into his calf muscle. Rick has never felt the bite of a walker before now. He screams and his vision blurs.



After all these years of surviving in his world, Rick can't believe he was bitten here, in another universe. The anger flares up inside of him, and he shoots Sabretooth in the face until there is nothing left to shoot.



Rick isn't sure if that green gem is part of the cure or not, and he doesn't have time to find out - he is infected. In his world, there is only one way to stop the infection from spreading. He points the gauntlet at his lower leg, and fires.



Delirious from the pain, Rick drags himself along the cabin floor towards the green stone. He doesn't know what else to do. Strange has not moved or made a sound. Rick keeps thinking about Carl. Is he ever going to see him again?



Just as Rick is about to reach for the gem, he hears Dr. Strange stagger to his feet. He has turned. And he is hungry.



Rick tries to talk to him, but Strange cuts him off, and says "No more talk. I need to eat." He staggers towards Rick and his hand begins to glow with energy. Rick doesn't want to have to kill Strange - there has to be another way.



Rick's first plan is to shoot Strange's arm off so he can't cast a spell. But then he remembers his severed leg and foot - it won't be too infected yet for Strange to eat. And as disgusting as this is, it actually works - Strange is able to think clearly for a while. He says, "Rick, I am sorry for how things transpired. I don't have much time. First of all, that gemstone is something called an Infinity Gem, and it is very powerful, but you must not touch it."



Before Strange can continue, a blast of blue lightning erupts through the doorway. It coils around Strange in jagged bursts, and Rick can hear and smell the burning flesh. The force of the blast pushes Rick backwards, and knocks the Infinity Gem out of sight.



Doctor Doom enters the room and says, "No, Strange, this meal is ours." He is followed by four other zombies - Kingpin, Red Skull, Kraven, and the Blob. Although Rick doesn't know their names, the armored guy is clearly the one who shot Strange, so Rick raises his gauntlet to kill him first.



Just as Rick is about to fire, another blast of blue lightning erupts from Doom's hand and destroys the Iron Man gauntlet. It explodes like a small grenade, and while most of the shrapnel is blown behind Rick, several pieces get lodged in his arm.



Rick grabs his gun off the floor and makes his last stand. He knows his bullets would bounce off Doom's armor, so he targets the other walkers. He slows them down, but they keep coming, and soon he has run out of ammo. He doesn't even keep a bullet for himself.



The walkers are on top of him, and he feels two more of their infectious bites. Rick keeps fighting - kicking them and beating them with the butt of his gun. His stump arm comes down hard on a floor grate, and when it does, a bright light briefly glows around the cracks of the grate.



Rick's attackers see him opening the floor grate, but they don't care. They are completely driven by the hunger, and they continue with their meal. Rick knows that this is the end for him, but he reaches into the hole, hoping for another Iron Man gauntlet so he can finish them off - and then himself.



Rick feels an intense euphoria spread from his hand to his entire body. He leans back, and from within the grungy hole in the floor, he pulls out the Infinity Gauntlet, which is missing only the green soul gem.

TO BE CONTINUED IN ISSUE #3