

**RICK
GRIMES**

VS

**MARVEL
ZOMBIES**



#3

BY LUKE PORTER



Rick stands up, and somehow he has a right leg again. And he feels no pain, even though he has been bitten repeatedly. He watches as the green soul gem soars across the room under its own power, and secures itself to the gauntlet. This causes a shock wave that pushes the walkers across the room. The Infinity Gauntlet is complete.



Doom attacks Rick with the same blue lightning that fried Dr. Strange. Rick sees it happening in slow motion, and raises the Infinity Gauntlet. He finds himself wishing that the lightning would simply bounce off the gauntlet, and electrify the walker on his left. Rick knows that this walker is named Kraven the Hunter, but he doesn't understand how he knows this. The energy blast ricochets exactly as Rick wanted.



Dr. Strange was Rick's only ticket home, and Doom took that away from him. He took away Rick's only chance to ever see Carl again. Rick wishes that Doom could be torn apart for that. His wish is channeled through the gauntlet, which makes it happen instantly.



Rick is starting to realize the potential of the Infinity Gauntlet. He uses it to restore his shredded body and clothing. He can somehow see the infection spreading through his cells like a black wave. With a simple thought, he purges it from his body.



Kingpin thinks that Rick is distracted by reforming his body, and he lunges for the gauntlet. Kingpin is huge, and Rick finds himself wishing this lumbering walker was much smaller. With a flash of blue light, Kingpin hovers in mid air and begins shrinking. Rick shrinks him down to the subatomic level, and leaves him there to float away.



Only Red Skull remains. Rick realizes that he can see each individual molecule in the walker's decaying body. Rick twists and bends him like soft clay.



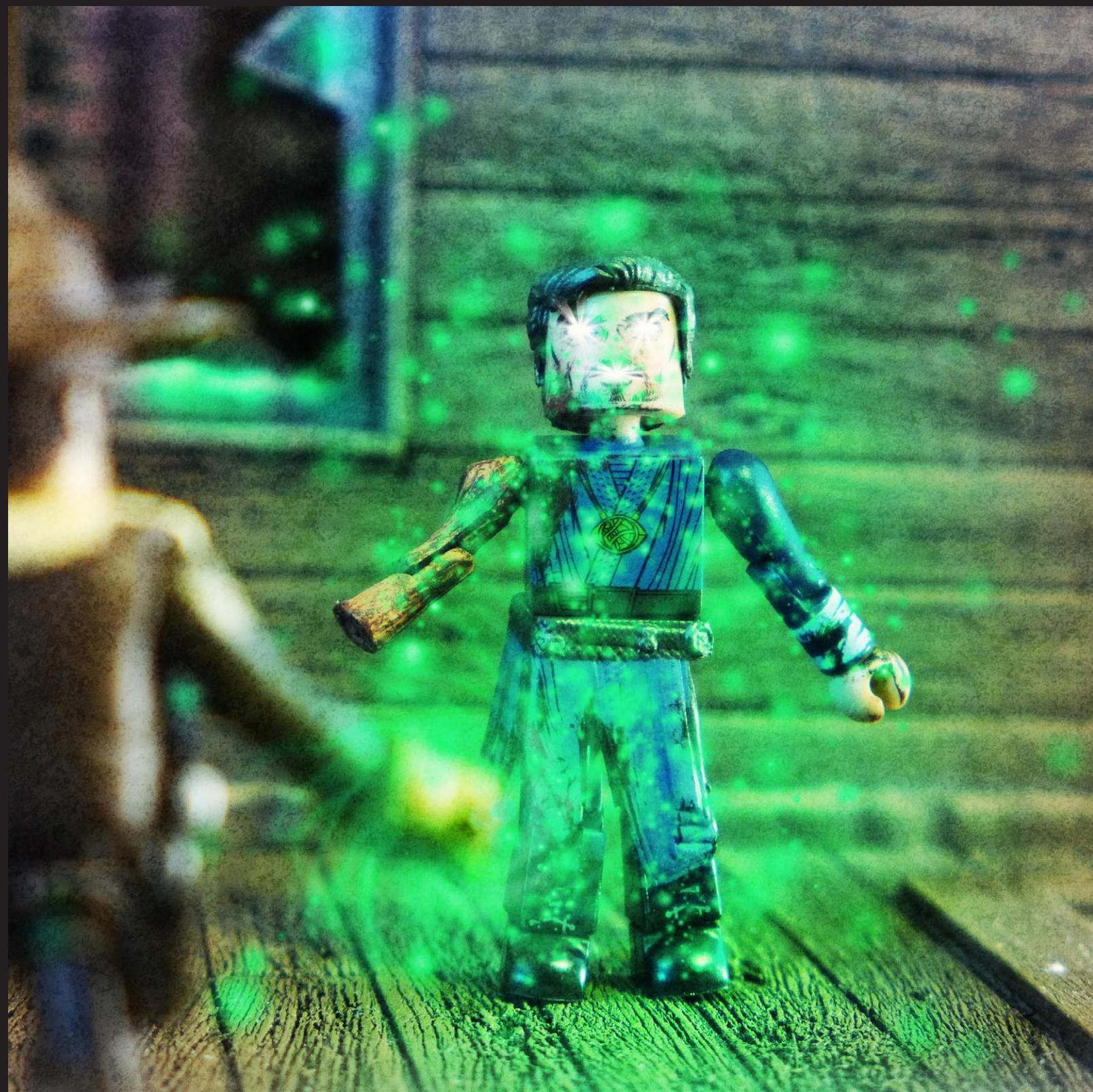
These walkers are no longer interesting to him, and he wishes them out of existence. He does the same thing to the slower walkers who were still crawling or limping towards the cabin. He realizes that he can see every walker on the planet. He eliminates them all, as well as the infection itself.



Rick opens up his mind, and through the gauntlet he can see the entire history of this universe. He can see strange alien worlds in far away galaxies. And he can see the harmony and the balance between all living things. It would seem like too much information for the human mind to contain, but the gauntlet itself stores and filters the information.



Rick turns his attention to the gauntlet itself. He explores the powers of each gemstone individually. He sees the long history of these gems, and he watches the choices made by those who wielded the glove before him or played a part in how the glove was dismantled and reassembled. He can understand why no one would want to give up this power.



Rick needs to know if the gauntlet can truly bring the dead back to life. He gazes into the metaphysical realm, and finds the recently added soul of Dr. Strange. He pulls the soul back into this world and rebuilds Strange's body around it exactly as it was before he died. This means that Strange is still infected, but Rick will take care of that later. He watches the soul spread through the body like wildfire. Dr. Strange is back.



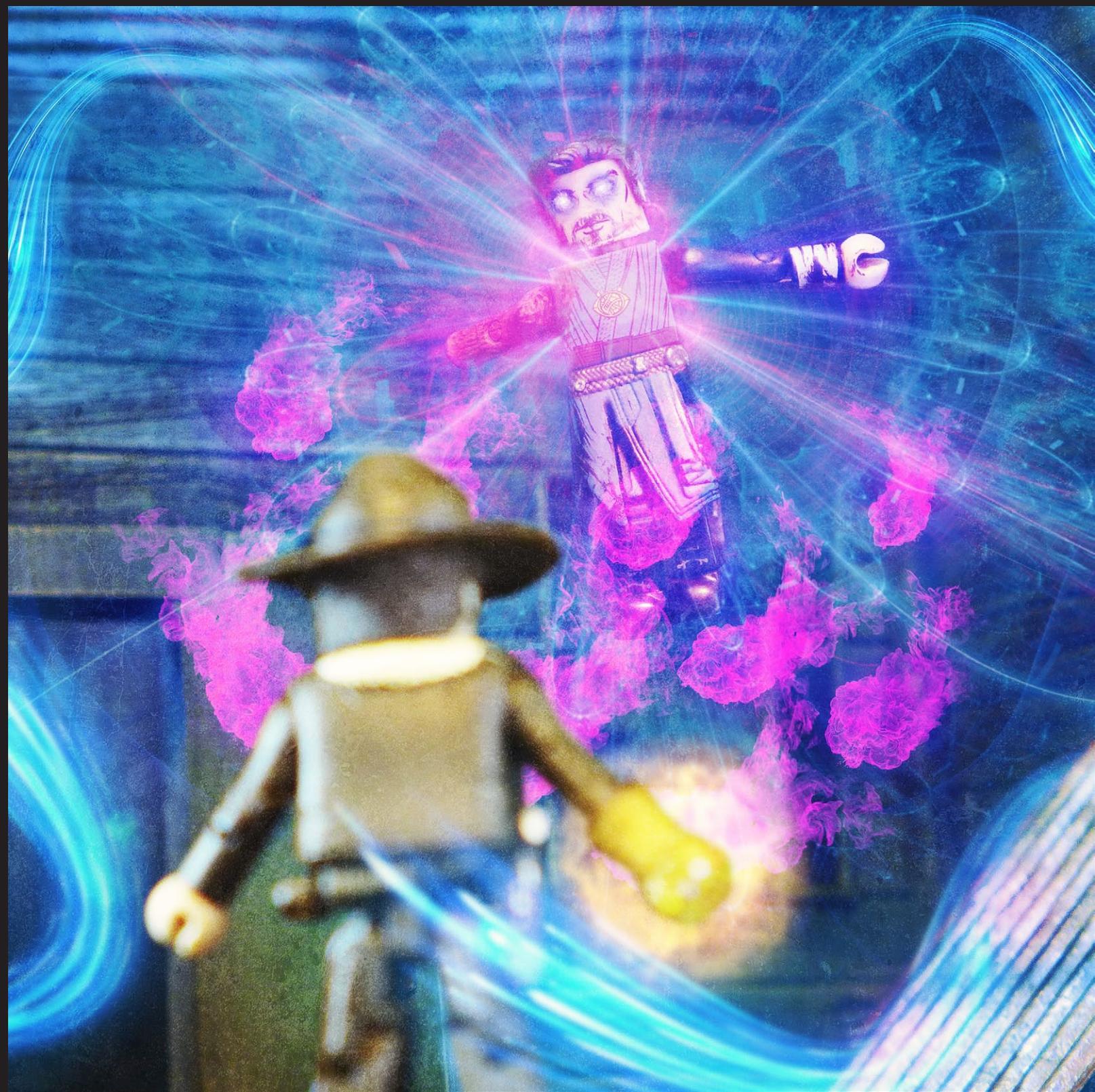
Dr. Strange looks at Rick with a combination of fear and awe. "Rick, you've done it! I am sorry that I lied to you about the true nature of the cure - I needed you to fight your way here at all costs. Now give me the gauntlet and I will send you home."



"No," says Rick, "I will be keeping the gauntlet." Strange says, "Rick the gauntlet is not meant for mere humans like us. It will destroy you. I can use it to fix this world, and then I can fix yours. Then I will dismantle the gauntlet - I promise. You must give it to me."



When Rick refuses again, Strange attacks him with his quickest spell - hoping that Rick has not adapted to the gauntlet's power yet. Rick deflects the blast with a mere thought.



Dr. Strange brings his full power down on Rick and tries to overwhelm him with attacks. Rick could create an impenetrable shield, but instead he chooses to slow down time itself. He is intrigued by Strange's magic, and in the time that it takes for each blast to arrive, Rick learns the nature of the attack and the appropriate defense. Rick counters each attack in turn - fighting magic with magic.



The gauntlet has the power to save Rick's family, his friends, and his entire world. Strange tried to take that power away. Rick can't trust him to fix his world, especially after Strange just attacked him. Rick won't kill him, but he will make sure that Strange stays away from him and his universe. Forever.



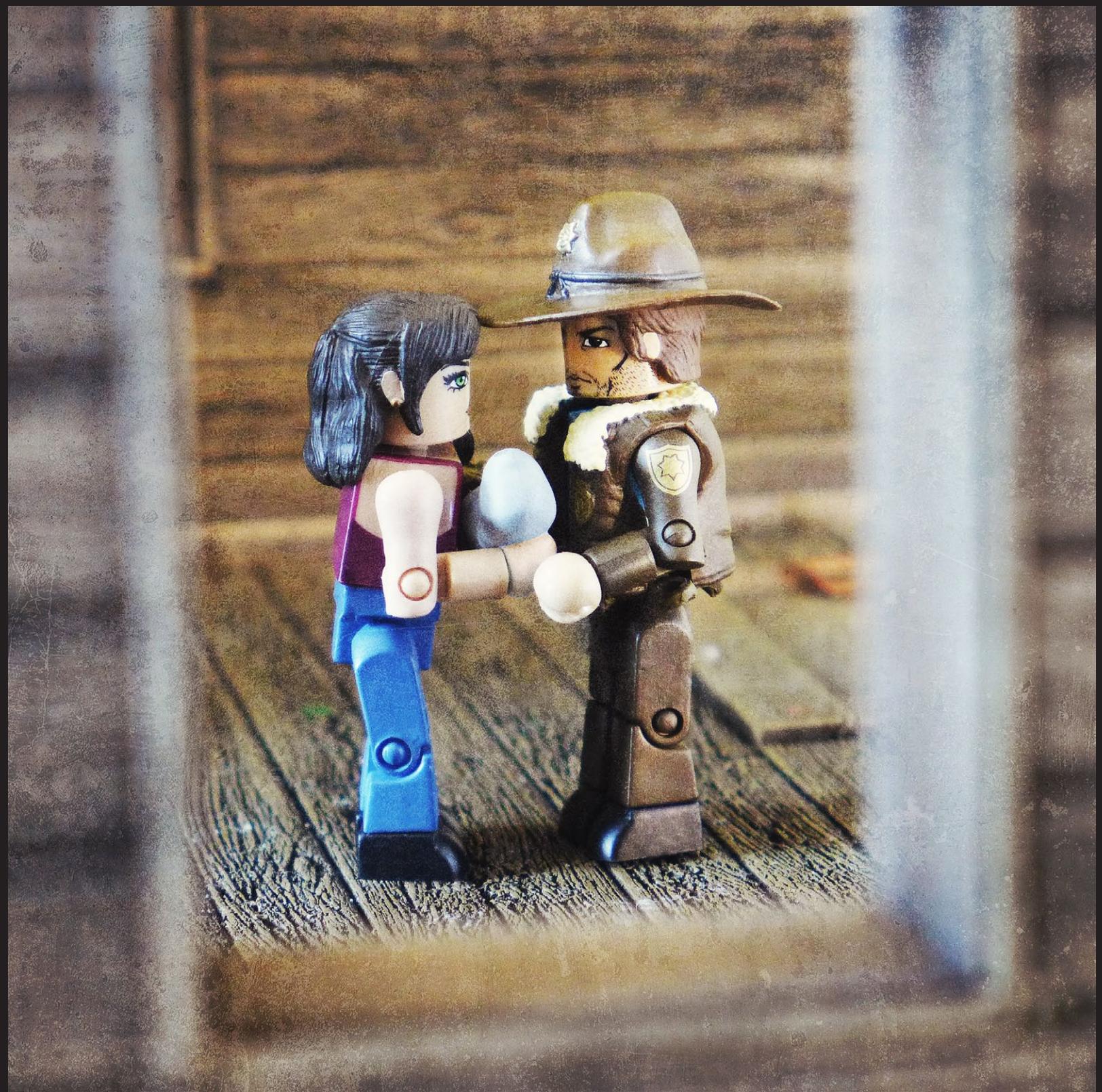
Rick is angry, and he leaves Strange stuck in zombie form forever, but removes the hunger from his mind. Rick also blocks him from ever being able to access Rick's universe again. He teleports him to his friend Black Panther, who has been eagerly awaiting his return, although not exactly in this manner.



Rick wants to fulfill his ultimate wish before doing anything else. He opens a portal to his universe, and then another portal inside of that one, which leads to the metaphysical realm of that dimension. He is looking for two very specific souls...



Rick finds what he is looking for, and pulls the two souls through both portals and into the cabin. After being apart from them for so long, Rick is finally reunited with his wife Lori and his daughter Judith. He doesn't want Lori to be in the bloody prison clothes from the day she died, so he gives her the outfit she was wearing before the outbreak happened. When the world wasn't broken.



Rick embraces them and feels a different kind of fulfillment than the omnipotence he gets from the gauntlet. He missed them both so very much. In this moment, the gauntlet is merely a shiny glove to him.



Rick tries to explain his powers to Lori, and how he is going to save their world, but she doesn't understand. He takes her hand and the floor rises into the air. First they soar around this walker-free world, and then he takes her to see spectacular cosmic events and even the movement of molecules at an atomic level. And while she stares in awe at these amazing sights, Rick's focus stays on her.



Lori looks up at Rick with tears in her eyes and says, "This power is absolutely incredible, Rick. But after you fix our world, I want you to give it up." Rick starts to speak, but she cuts him off. "Listen to me - you have me back, but I don't have you back yet. Not as long as you are wearing that gauntlet. I want my Rick, not some cosmic god. You're not yourself."



Rick can't imagine giving up the Infinity Gauntlet, even for Lori. He takes a moment to use the gauntlet in a way that no one ever has - he uses it to explore himself. He watches his own history unfold, and the choices he made in his own life. The gauntlet shows Rick his true self, which is a staggering sight for any person to see. And finally, it shows him the unlimited futures that he could have if he kept the gauntlet.



Rick makes his decision and brings them back to the cabin. He changes the cabin door into a portal that leads to their world. He looks at Lori and says, "The gauntlet showed me every possible future that I could have. And you know what? The future that I want is a normal life with you and our kids. You have my word - after our world is fixed, I will give up the gauntlet." He holds out his hand, and she takes it. They step through the portal together.



The portal brings them to a road that leads up to the community. Rick wants to wipe out the infection and eliminate the walkers before they go back to the others. He wants to bring Lori and Judith through the large front gate of the community, so everyone can welcome them together. After suffering so many losses since the infection started, they can finally turn the tides.



Rick holds up the gauntlet and imagines the walkers around them vanishing. Nothing happens. Rick concentrates harder and tries to feel the power of the gauntlet. He feels nothing. The Infinity Gauntlet has stopped working.



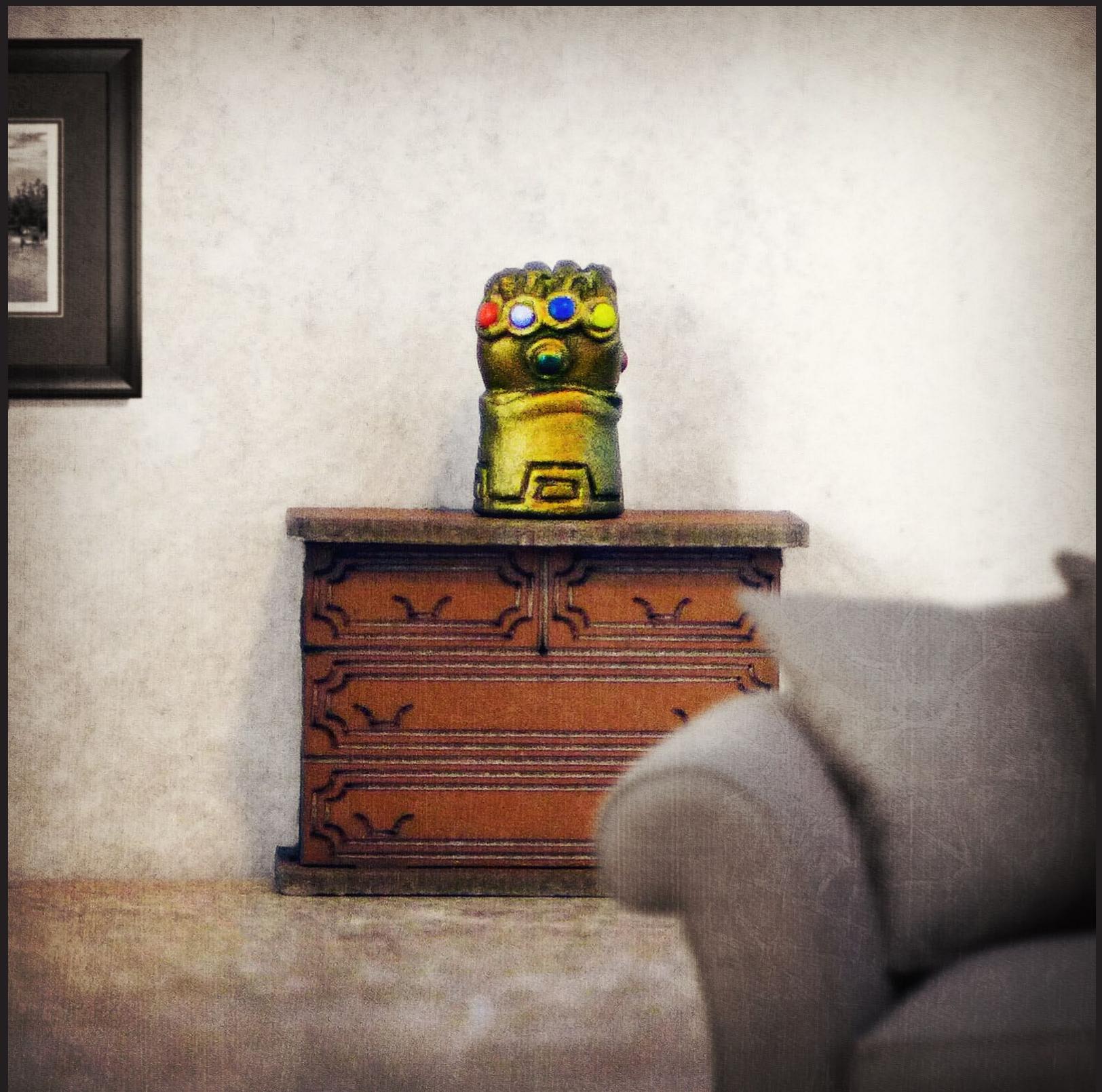
Rick thinks back to the long history of the gauntlet. What was the one thing that the other gauntlet wielders never tried to do? They never took it into a different universe. It must only work inside of its own universe. Rick realizes that he can't save this world, and it crushes him.



The walkers converge on them. Lori screams, "Rick!" and snaps him out of his trance. Gauntlet or no gauntlet, he is still Rick Grimes. He draws his magnum and fires four quick shots. Each one hits a walker dead-on in the middle of their forehead. In this world, a headshot stops a walker every time.



Rick, Lori, and Judith start heading towards the community. Even though he has just lost the power of a god, Rick smiles. He has the rest of his family back. And he is never going to let anything happen to them again. His predecessors felt a deep sense of loss after losing the gauntlet, but Rick feels complete. He can't wait to see the look on Carl's face.



And that is the story of how the Infinity Gauntlet became nothing more than a shiny glove on a dresser. Rick only brings it out when one of his friends or neighbors wants to hear the story of what happened in that other universe. Otherwise it sits and collects dust. Rick doesn't miss the power or the knowledge. He has everything he needs already. The only thing he misses sometimes is that Iron Man gauntlet. That thing was fun.



PROLOGUE: The zombified Dr. Strange walks through a swirling portal and finds the Infliction Strange in his usual location. "I nearly had the gauntlet, but the zombie killer put the pieces together first. I know where it is in his world, but it has been blocked to us. Before he left mine, he sealed his universe so no one can teleport there." The malignant Strange says, "There is always a way. I think it is time we assemble the Consortium of Stranges."

THE END... FOR NOW