WHO WANTS TO WRITE COMICS?

Subquestion: Any artists here?
New Question:
WHO HAS PUBLISHED STUFF SO FAR?

What have you done?
Let’s Talk Story

Do you have an idea or a story?
What if Batman was the villain? - that’s an idea
How could a foot cop assigned to protect ‘Bruce Wayne’ beat a villain as smart and fluid as Batman? - that’s a story
Let’s Talk Story

Your story will make me care, it’ll have character at its heart and be about their change.

Your idea will make me smirk and nod, but not pay attention for 5 issues.

Think about BLACK SCIENCE
Let’s Talk Story

Is your story interesting enough?
Has it been done before?
Is it predictable?
Will it shock me?
Is it awesome?
Does it make sense?
Breaking Story

Take your time breaking story - the first narrative choices aren’t always the best. Try many avenues before you commit to what happens next. Are your character’s making true choices?
Planning V Pantsing

Some people *plan* and some people *pants*. I am most definitely a planner. Here’s what a story plan usually looks like for me.
bill"s friend, "Max." He has a shy, quiet personality. He lives in the next door house with his parents and two younger siblings. Max enjoys reading and is passionate about literature and storytelling. He often visits the local library to Borrow books and spend time lost in the stories within its walls.

Max: "I love spending time there. It's a sanctuary for me. The quiet atmosphere and the smell of old books always transport me to a different world."

May: "Yes, Max. The library is such a special place. It's a haven for all book lovers."

Max: "When I was a child, I didn't like reading. But one day, my father took me to the library, and I was instantly captivated by the stories. That day, I knew I wanted to be a writer."

May: "That's wonderful. Writing can be a powerful tool for self-expression and emotional healing."

Max: "Exactly. And the library has been my sanctuary for so many years. It's where I find solace and inspiration."

May: "I hope you keep writing. The world needs more stories like yours."

Max: "Thank you, May. I will keep writing and sharing my stories with the world."

May: "I know you will. You have a gift, Max. Keep pursuing your passion."

Max: "I will, May. Thank you for believing in me."

May: "You deserve all the success in the world, Max."

Max: "I hope so."

May: "I know you will. Now, let's go back to the library and continue our search for the perfect book."
1. Shane tells about the "big" CC - insert page of direct debit.
2. Shane kills Linke away.
3. Max runs - EMP
4. Max enters the house and stabs a car.
5. Shane walks through town - EMP attacks begin.
6. Shane flies up - CC is ended up.
7. Max - travel/ripping.
8. "He is an old man".
9. "Standing in the middle of the fifty thousand people."
10. "Tears pour down his face."
11. "The sky is ash colored."
12. "Tears pour down his face."
13. "Standing in the center of the crowd, he heard the voice."
14. "Max checks the sky."
15. "Max visits a SUBWAY."
16. "Max says goodbye."
17. "Max runs - EMP.
18. "Max runs - EMP.
19. 300.
20. Shane looks outside the window."
21. "The sky is ash colored."
22. Shane leaves his bike in the street."
23. "There are a lot of people to feel pain."
24. "Tears pour down his face."
25. "Standing in the center of the crowd, he heard the voice."
26. "Max checks the sky."
27. "Max visits a SUBWAY."
28. "Max runs - EMP."
I’ll write my story outline anywhere from 3-12 times. Each time, shuffling pages, or what I think I can fit into a page.

I like to get this tight before I start scripting. Then, once it’s tight, I start the script...
Let’s Talk Deep Script Chat

If you want to write a comic then you need to learn how to script it because this isn’t prose, or poetry, or even the movies. This is sequential narrative.
Writing A Comic Script

It is hard…
But anyone can do it…
And there are lots of ways to do it…
But there are universal rights and wrongs to the doing of it.
Here goes…:
Having An Idea

I’ll assume you have an idea.
If you don’t have one, make it up.
Even just a scene.
This isn’t going to be published.
Dear lord, don’t publish your first comic script.
Script Formatting

There’s no set industry standard to formatting your script.
This is awesome and it frees you…
While it also cripples you with doubt.
It’s fun.
Let’s look at some.
This Ed Brubaker script was the first script I found online. It hung over my desk for years. It is a good format.
DAREDEVIL #98
To the Devil, His Due Part 4 of 5

PAGE ONE

1—In some office/warehouse type of criminal establishment. We’re looking over the shoulder of OX (from the Enforcers) but we don’t see who he is yet. It’s not that big a deal, but we’re mostly focusing on the guy who’s walking past some crowded shelving towards him. It’s Turk, out of jail, and back in regular clothes, without a nappy hair-do. He’s looking sharp, for Turk, more like he was in the Miller era.

OX: Is it done?

TURK: Yeah yeah... it’s done.

TURK: Got Chico an’ Merv makin’ deliveries all over the Kitchen.

2—Turk stands, hands on his hips, looking at the stolen boxes of merchandise on the shelves. It’s computers, dvd players, all kinds of electronics. This is the storage for stolen stuff warehouse that all organized crooks have in comics.

TURK: Should be some serious trouble once a bunch’a thugs get high on that $#@%...

TURK: Any idea what it is?
Breaking Down The Panel

Brubaker states the page (CAPS)
Then he states the panel number (numbered)
Then the panel description (for the artist)
Then the dialogue (indented - for the letterer)
Most scripts operate, somewhat, like this. Let’s quickly look.
1- Ext. Queens Street- day

Big action. Its a car chase!!

Its a big police car chase right in the city, right in broad daylight. A beat up black hummer with a sun roof is careening down the street right for us.

Behind them three cop cars, sirens a blazing are tearing right after them.

The driver of the beat up black hummer is sweaty wide eyed panicked. He is driving like a maniac and shitting in his pants.

The SHOCKER is poking his torso out of the sunroof and blasting away.

This is the Shocker. In costume. Any costume will do. He’s a running gag of completely terrible supervillian cliches and abilities.

Check past appearances. His costume and weapons get more and more outrageous and more and more about trying to mask his complete inability to get away with anything.

Shocker's vibro units are heated up and launching back at the coming cops cars.

People on the street are jumping out of the way. Cars serving off the street and onto the sidewalk to get out of their way.
1.1
1/12 PANEL: ON A TV-SCREEN IMAGE OF MARA, she of TEENAGE MUSIC INTERNATIONAL, striking some vogue-ish pop-star pose. Her outfit, some kind of PVC number with zippers and an inappropriate gloss, reveals the bare flesh of her middle, quite round with child. She’s pregnant.

1 MARA (w/ music notes) I was seventeen... and I was bad...

1.2
1/12 PANEL: ON A TV-SCREEN IMAGE OF MEI, also of T.A.M.I., also dressed in a manner woefully inappropriate, and also pregnant. She too strikes a preening star pose as she sings:

2 MEI (w/music notes) With the first boy... I ever had...

1.3
1/12 PANEL: ON CASANOVA QUINN. He looks different now. And he looks sick. Really sick. Pale, sunken; he’s wearing a paper hospital gown with some dull and dumb little pattern all over it. His chin tucked, he stares AT CAMERA from the tops of his eyes like a character in a Stanley Kubrick film. Unshaven. A mess. This is the sickest, unsexiest, uncoolest we’ve seen Casanova.

3 CAP (CASS) I think I’m dying.
ONE:
Looking at a TRANSPORT COFFIN as used by the United States Army for moving dead soldiers from the field. The COFFIN is actually a large rectangular box, gunmetal gray. The AMERICAN FLAG is draped over the coffin.

The COFFIN sits alone in an empty hangar. Heavy shadows.

1. CAPTION/Hill: “Commander Rogers?
2. CAPTION/Hill: “I have the casualty figures from the operation in Broxton.

TWO:
SIX SOLDIERS - mix gender and ethnicity, please - wearing DUTY FATIGUES (probably current digital camo) carry the COFFIN out of the hangar into the daylight. They carry the body with respect.

They pass other SOLDIERS, likewise in DUTY FATIGUES. Everyone has come to a stop, facing the coffin. ALL are SALUTING, right hands crisply to their foreheads.

4. CAPTION/Hill: “Only one KIA. Body was found in a barbershop on Main Street..."
Night. Mance and Hazel are struggling to walk through deep snow, wind whistling past, nothing but bare trees all around. They’re both shivering cold, ice clinging to their noses, looking like they can’t go much further. They’re wearing coats and both are wrapped in blankets and quilts, but they’re still not dressed warm enough to be walking around in this kind of weather.

Tight on them. Hazel looks like she’s about to collapse. Mance has his arm around her, trying to keep her moving, but he doesn’t look like he’s got much left in the tank either.

HAZEL: Mance…
MANCE: Hazel, we gotta keep moving… We’re almost…

Hazel collapses, pulling her husband down with her.

MANCE: Hazel!
Paragraph 1:

"Alright, I'm parched, I've got blood up to my elbows, vies in my teeth and my helmet and knees pad securely pasted. Let's get out there and make trouble. This first page is a series of vertical jumps that take us up in a straight progression from a minute and microscopic detailed view of the gutters of New York up to a panoramic shot looking down upon the rooftops of this familiar and yet curiously alien cityscape. In this first panel, we are looking straight down at a drain opening in a perfectly ordinary gutter, to the benefit of the picture. The actual gutter wall of the curb drops down away from us like a miniature cliff. Over towards the left, down at the bottom of the picture, we can see the old and worn metal of the drain cover with its solid darkness visible between its slats. Up at the top of the picture, we can just see the dirty gutter running down towards the mouth of the drain below.

There are only two elements that separate this view from a standard everyday close-up of a drain, and the first of these is the unusual amount of blood which is gushing down the aforementioned aperture in the first picture. In the second the blood is similar in fullness to the gutter, yellow as it last there, in the gutter. Smiling up at or against a background of liquid blood, it has somehow lodged itself in the gutter so that it won't go down the drain, and simply remains stuck there, staining up at its vaguely image expansion, a small splash of crimson staining the front of the gutter. A single tiny spatter across one black cartoon eye of the face on the badge. That's basically the whole opening image, unless you want to stick a candy wrapper that's about to float down the drain, in which case we have a packet of multivitamin, which are lick treats (English) or gum in (American) only with little brightly colored atomic symbols on the wrapping only include candy wrapping if it doesn't distract from the simplicity of the image with the gutter, blood and badge, though, because this image is pretty important. It gives us the blood spattered smiling badge, which is a fairly workable symbol of the mystery of the comic's murder which runs throughout the entire series, and it also gives us a paint subliminal projection of the ending with its image of the gutters of New York washed with blood. Anyway, see what you think and leave out things like the sweet wrapper if you think they're even slightly distracting. We'll have plenty of time to get all our cute brand names in Latin or on in the series. The actual text upon this first page is all taken from Rorschach's journal, which will be a monosyllabic continuing feature of the narrative throughout the series. I mention this in case you think it might be nice to visually differentiate between Rorschach's journal and any other caption boxes that might occur by giving it a specific color, a specific shape or something like that. In case you think it might be nice if we could actually get over some of the character of Rorschach himself by the way his journal is written, although I suppose a suitably warped, locked style of handwriting might be off puttingly disorganized to read or too consuming and difficult to maintain. Maybe you could suggest a sort of scuffiness without getting too elaborate, though. Perhaps a more ragged edge or a paint spattering of messy ink blots in the boxes here and there if they'd been lettered by, a pen or the like. Whatever, the options are yours, so just do what you want. In fact, if you're anxious to see anything that even breaks off before it's finished, then feel free to make Rorschach's boxes the same as everyone else's and rely upon the text in them to let them apart from other captions without imposing any visual gimmicks. Okay, that's the pre-amble out of the way. So give it all you've got and let's see some good drain art here.

Cap: Rorschach's Journal, October 12th, 1955

Dog does not care at all this morning, he's been on bent stomach. This city is about fat. I have seen it true face.
1. We open on Tank. He is at some sort of air show out in the fields amongst a throng of onlooking ponies. Applejack’s orchards frame the backdrop/horizon. He is hovering in the air and waving a flag emblazoned with “Go Rainbow Dash!” as a loud speaker announces the parade.

   Announcer: Here’s the moment everypony’s been waiting for, the reason for the season, the moment of bliss that looks like this...

2. The Wonderbolts fly over the crowd gathered to watch the show.

   Announcer: THE WONDERBOLTS!

3. The crowd goes wild.

   Announcer: And now the patron of this Summerfell Festival, the light refraction of satisfaction...

4. Rainbow hits a sonic RAINBOOM above the crowd as she slashes down on her guitar with her goggles on. The clouds disperse around her.

   Announcer: RAINBOW DASH with her always amazing, forever trailblazing SONIC RAINBOOM!
Establishing shot of Cheviot Beach in Victoria. It’s a nice December day and standing on the edge of the water is Harold Holt in his swimming dick stickers. He’s tiny in this pic. The waves are choppy.

Caption: 1967
Caption: Harold Holt
Caption: Australian Prime Minister

Holt wades into the water - he’s up past his knees.

Caption: Strong swimmer and skin diver.

Holt starts swimming freestyle through the choppy waves.

Caption: Missing at sea and presumed dead while still holding office.
It’s All Different

So long as you follow the method of:
   State the page (CAPS)
   State the panel number (numbered)
   Panel description (for the artist)
   Then the dialogue (indented - for the letterer)
you should be safe
HOWEVER - DIALOGUE ADDENDUM

Very recently, some letterers told me that indenting is a pain for their formatting and not to do it.

So, the more you know :D

I won’t be indenting again.

HOWEVER, then others said it didn’t matter :|

Do whatever you want :)
Script Toolbox

Once you know the format, there are plenty of little tools to help you along the way. Let’s unpack some...
Script Toolbox - Dialogue

Is what the characters say authentic and necessary?
Or are they just saying things to push the story where you need it to go?
Your characters should each sound different.
Script Toolbox - Dialogue

Feel free to give your characters different things to fill their speech balloons. Punctuation (!?) works well, as does an ellipsis (...) or just an empty balloon. Feel free to think outside the box.
Script Toolbox - Captions

Captions can be:
- nondiagetic - setting the scene, time, etc
- inner monologue - basically replacing the old thoughtballoons
- omniscient narrator

None is right or wrong. But your story should match what you choose.
Script Toolbox - Silent Panels

Don’t be afraid to use them. Your words don’t need to be everywhere. Personally, though, I like to consider the symmetry, and flow, of the page. Because I’m an idiot.
Gutters are the spaces/gaps between panels. You can use the gutters to let readers assume what happens between two images. This means you don’t need to do ABCD storytelling.
A Script is for the Creative Team

Warren Ellis has written that the script needs to be a set of instructions that present the story with clarity. Format helps this. And your word choices help this.
Format

We’ve covered it.
Though I will add…
Put a page break between each page.
This helps to find pages easily.
CTRL+ENTER
Panel Descriptions

Only give what you need for the artist to be able to do their job.
Don’t clog it up with superfluous information, or purple prose.
In other words...
Be Like Greg Rucka...

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TWO:
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Not Like Alan Moore

WATCHMEN ISSUE 1.
"AT MIDNIGHT, ALL THE AGENTS..." (26 PAGES)

PAGE 1.

(PANEL) 1.

Apocrypha states that one of Moore’s scripts asked the artist to show a man from behind, and then later in the same description asks us to be looking into his face.
One panel on your page should be one moment in time. The best moment to help move the story.

But it has to work with the entire page. So, before you write the first panel...
Think of the Whole Page

When planning a page, I like to think about the whole thing before I start. Know where your page starts and ends. Once you know ALL that will go in the page, you can spread out what needs to be shown to deliver that bit of story.
Page Structure

There are many ways to structure a page:

- Splash page - one panel
- 2-5 panels - kinda the norm
- 6-10 panels - dense storytelling
- 11+ panels - pushing the friendship
Let Story Inform the Page

You’ll come to know how much story is needed on the page...
And how much real estate each moment needs.
That first image has to pop. It has to matter. Think of your opening panel as being the contract you establish with the reader. This sets the tone, timbre, and meter of the entire story. Dan Hill is writing amazing things about opening panels at The Weekly Crisis in his Opening Contract column.
If you don’t have perfection, just start scripting anyway.
It’s a first draft.
You can always edit, shuffle, tweak, massage, and change later on.
Some Tips

Some writers plot out the action first, balloons second.

Some writers write the dialogue of the scene out, then split it between panels.

Choose what suits you and the scene.
Writing is Rewriting

No one publishes their first draft.
Take a week away from your script.
Then read it and flag the parts that make you pause. You’ll know them.
Make them better.
When Editing

Look to see if you can crop a panel - can two things be merged? Can one thing be dropped altogether?

Avoid ABCD storytelling, use your gutters. - the reader will fill in the gaps between.
Writing is Rewriting

Don’t be afraid to rewrite a scene completely. Change the setting, or the POV character, or just write something else (something better) entirely.

Headspace #6
Finding Artists

Good.
Luck.
Seriously.
Finding Artists

I went years unable to find artists. Or at least, the right artists for my projects. It can feel really difficult because you’re no one starting out.
Where To Find Artists

Sites like DigitalWebbing and such exist for the purpose of hooking you up. Artists use DeviantArt and Tumblr and their sites to host their art. Browsing can take hours/days/your entire life.
My Tip

Find a rad artist - one good enough to already be making some comics and who charges a page rate - and then pay them to draw a short story of yours.

You’re paying for: professionalism, hitting deadlines, quality, and their fanbase.
Breaking In

Put your 60 issue epic away. Seriously, put it away. Now. No editor will look at a 60 issue treatment seriously from you. Editors will only look at completed comic work.
Complete Your Comic Work

Start off by doing short stories:
5 page stories are hard to write, are fantastic at honing your skill, and are more likely to be drawn by an artist.
Then put them up online for free.
Murder Book - Clockwork
One-Shots

A single issue story is hard to tell right, and great when pulled off. It shows editors you’re able to close. You’ll get an artist to commit. It’s been done by Sam Humphries, Becky Cloonan, and Paul Allor really well.
Progression

After making some shorts (online for free and all to see) and a one-shot or two (maybe even online for free there, too) and this could take YEARS -- then get it in front of the right eyes.
Sharing Your Work

Never spam anyone. Ever.
Seriously.
It’s unprofessional and pretty much never ever helps.
I know you’re excited, but don’t do it.
Sharing Your Work

Share your book with creators you admire who it is reasonable to put into their hands - people on your level or maybe one step above.
Give the book to creators at cons - or take cards and email/link later.
Meeting Editors

Our best bet at meeting editors here is:
  Passing chat on social media
When they come to our cons (relatively often)
Through other creators
Meeting Editors

Don’t be pushy.
Always ask.
Be nice.
Follow up politely.
Remember, you matter little to them right now.
Oh, and do good work.
Realistic Expectations

I’ve been taking my writing game seriously since 2008.
Writing semi-regularly since 2004.
Writing to some degree all my life.
And that first stuff all stinks. Nearly all of it.
But it’s great practice.
Getting Paid Gigs

Do years of decent stuff.
Be nice.
Get lucky in the right place at the right time.
Ghost Town op.
MLP op.
Headspace op.
Inspiration

Walk away from the writing. Read books, comics, articles, everything. Watch movies, TV (oh, man, TV right now!), stuff online.
BUT!
Always create more than you watch.
Every Day

And write every day.
Even if just ten minutes at lunch.
Write every day and every day it gets easier.
I Could Go All Day

There are so many things we could discuss or debate about writing today. I have presented what I believe to be the basics and I hope they help you.
Are There Any QUESTIONS?
WRITE.

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