

GEEK FIGHT

A TEN MINUTE MONOLOGUE

By Bradley Walton

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CAST: The CONVENTION ATTENDEE, who may be male or female.

AT RISE: *The CONVENTION ATTENDEE on a bare stage. HE or SHE is dressed all in black and has a backpack slung over his or her shoulder, or the backpack may be mimed.*

CONVENTION ATTENDEE

Five days of crushing mobs; greasy, bad-tasting overpriced food; and stinky, sweaty people. I'd saved up for this over the space of two years and when I arrived, I discovered that the money was just going to be the iceberg's tip of what this venture was really going to cost me. It has been a test of endurance, willpower, time management, smart budgeting, and luck. But it's been worth it. There are movie stars, famous directors, rare action figures, and a thousand other wonders. But most importantly, there are comic books. All filling the San Diego Convention Center with a pressure and intensity that threaten to pop the roof off the place like a giant, festering zit, much like the ones covering the faces of half the people here. This is Comic-Con International. The great Mecca of popular culture. Ground zero for all things sci-fi, fantasy, and comic book-related. And a geek magnet the likes of which the world will hopefully never be able to replicate.

I love comic books. The fusion of words and pictures on the printed page has the ability to bring to life the most intimate of personal stories or the most epic of visions on a scale that Hollywood can only rival with sums of money large enough to buy third world countries. To create comics, you don't need a one hundred person special effects department. You don't need a catering crew. You don't need to go on location to parts of the world nobody in their right mind would care about. You just need the imagination and skill to get your vision onto the page. That's it. Mission accomplished.

I spend far more money on comic books than I probably should, a reality to which my mere presence at this convention is unquestionably the ultimate testament. The freshly-purchased rare comic book now nestled in a Mylar sleeve and tucked away in my backpack is a close second. I am not ashamed of this. I am not a geek. I have a life and a family. This is simply my hobby, and I thoroughly enjoy it.

As much as I love comics, however, I avoid the company of many of the people who read them. Individuals who live vicariously through the exploits of fictional characters. Adults with no social skills who go to online message boards and make snide comments about Spider-Man's web shooters from the safety of their parents' basements, hiding their identities behind screen names like "Mr. Taun-taun 47." People who have heard of soap, but have never actually used it. These individuals have nothing worthwhile to say on the Internet. They have even less worthwhile to say in real life. And at this very moment, two of them are standing in front of me, having a heated argument over who would win in a fight between Daredevil and Boba Fett.

The guy arguing in favor of Daredevil is dressed as a character from some anime that I hope I'm never able to correctly identify, although I have a suspicion that it may be *Sailor Moon*. Japanese schoolgirl costumes all look alike to me. There are those who might accuse me of cultural apathy or maybe even racism for my lack of aptitude in grasping the nuances in question. Those people need to get a life. What I find particularly striking about the specimen in front of me is how the color of his two days' worth of beard growth clashes with the shimmering, iridescent blue strands of the wig that cascades down his back like millions of radioactive Smurfs who made their last, desperate stand against Gargamel in a pasta factory and lost.

Arguing in favor of Boba Fett is an obese Stormtrooper, his armor splotted with bizarre color patterns that I don't recognize. I wonder if he modeled his paint scheme after some obscure trooper squadron from a comic book or video game, or if someone simply barfed orange soda on him at the concession stand. He speaks with a fire and brimstone passion that would make most Southern Baptist preachers quiver with inferiority. It's like listening to Martin Luther King, Jr. speak of jet packs, flame throwers, and wampa wrestling, all laced with a steady string of F-bombs that would make Kevin Smith proud, delivered with a faint muffle behind the unmoving mouthpiece of one of the Galactic Empire's finest.

It seems that Boba Fett's ignominious demise at the hands of the blind Han Solo in *Return of the Jedi* did not escape the notice of the gentleman in the short skirt and long blue wig. He argues, not unreasonably, that if Han Solo, bereft of his eyesight, could take down Boba Fett without having the super power of Daredevil's radar-like 6th sense, then Daredevil himself could certainly accomplish the same task without breaking a sweat.

(as guy in dress) So I'm telling ya Boba Fett's a big wuss. Having a radar sense means you got radar and nobody can whack your jet pack

with no pole without you knowing about it and if Boba Fett got himself whacked with a pole, then he's whacked and that's all there is to it. Han was blind and didn't have no reflexes and Daredevil got killer reflexes so if Han ain't got no reflexes and they both can't see, then Daredevil oughta be able to do the same and if you can't see that then maybe you need to grow a brain and some eyeballs that actually work.

(as self) The obese vomit trooper disagrees, citing with instantaneous recollection and rigid conviction that Boba Fett escaped from the Sarlaac Pit in issue number 81 of the Marvel Comics *Star Wars* series that was published when he was of an age that he was still proud he did not have a girlfriend. His exact words cannot be repeated in polite company, so I shall substitute the name of Anakin Skywalker's slave master from *Star Wars Episode I*, "Watto," in place of any non-family-friendly words that he may have employed.

(as trooper) Watto that Watto! Wattoing Daredevil ain't got half the Wattoing style of Wattoing Boba Fett. Boba Wattoing Fett oozes Watting cool from every Wattoing pore of his clone body. Ain't no Wattoing body gets the drop on the Wattoing Fett. Wattoing Han got one lucky cheap shot and it didn't even count because the Fett, he got the Watto out of that Watto. So Watto you!

(as self) I watch in a mixture of amusement, alarm and disgust as the conversation at first progresses, and then escalates, like some geek cold war, except instead of a proliferation of nuclear weapons, the parties involved dig deeper into the résumés of the fictional characters whose virtues they espouse. At first I'm convinced that this is a contest that the man in the dress will surely win, Daredevil having debuted a good fourteen years before Fett, and therefore having had more time to accumulate a history. However, the knowledge of the vomit trooper is vast. It soon becomes apparent that there is no novel or comic book that has gone unread, no video game unplayed, no action figure uncollected, no tab of a pop-up book that has gone unpulled, and all committed into a database of memory so vast and efficient that if it could be packaged and sold, it would make a truly desirable Wal-Mart door buster on the morning after Thanksgiving, if it were priced cheaply enough.

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