Some Thoughts Re: Dark Destructor

Tad Williams

To: Richard Risselman

From: Edward Jamison

Re: DARK DESTRUCTOR #1—some thoughts

Just wanted to let you know we missed you, Richie. We realize that the pressures of homework, paper route, and working on DARK DESTRUCTOR #2 are keeping you jumping 24/7, but it still would have been nice to see you at the offsite.

We had to move the event from the clubhouse to Brandon’s living room because of a rain situation. Also, due to an unfortunate shortfall in the babysitting department at his house, Brandon and Kevin and I were joined by Brandon’s sister Penelope (who is a girl).

Anyway, it was a great offsite, and we shared a lot of great information. Some of it I’ll download to you in another memo—the fund mismanagement problem that led to roof inefficiencies at the clubhouse is a subject that deserves a memo of its own, although Kevin swears his dog really did eat the club treasury, and has taken a cross-his-heart-and-hope-to-die posture on this one, so I think we’re forced to accept his word on it. But I thought it was important that I get right back to you with a sense-of-the-meeting report on DARK DESTRUCTOR #1.

First off, everyone wanted to make it really, really clear that they’re totally behind you on this project, and they think you’re doing great stuff, both writing and illustrating. Everyone agrees DARK DESTRUCTOR #1 is perhaps your finest work to date, although Brandon wanted to mention that he is still a huge fan of ONAN THE BARBARIAN, and is in the market for more original art from that project, since his sister and her friend Raylene Jenks tore up his picture of Onan using his mighty weapon to batter the evil sorceress Bazoomba into submission.

Anyway, the general take on DD#1 was, as I said, extremely positive. The group did have a few comments and suggestions, though, so I thought I’d share my notes with you—I know you’ll want to be on the same page as the rest of the “team.” Please understand, we all mean this in a very supportive way.

COVER: Brandon thinks that Dolly Ride, Dark Destructor’s girlfriend, has “smaller bosoms” than was agreed on in preliminary meetings. He feels this detracts from the integrity of her character as originally conceived. He also asked whether it should be more obvious that Sandcrab is a villain, and suggests that he could have a really big black mustache to make this clearer.

Kevin wants to know if the comic, instead of “DARK DESTRUCTOR,” could be titled “DARK DESTRUCTOR OF DEATH,” which he thinks sounds more literary.

(Also, is it really necessary to subtitle it “a Richard Risselman Comic by Richard Risselman”? This seems to be an unnecessary slight on the contribution from the rest of the creative team. You know we’ve all offered huge amounts of moral support for your work, and Brandon says he loaned you his allowance money once so you could buy a fancy felt pen. I’m sure I don’t need to point out that my own commitment to your creative vision goes clear back to the “Zombie School Blows Up” and “Army Men Attack Principal Crapface Crandall” days.)

PAGE 1: There was a general consensus that spending an entire page on Rick Raymond’s home life is perhaps asking a bit much of our audience, even though his cruel treatment at the hands of his family—especially his father, who is secretly the villainous Doctor Authority (great touch!)—is of course instrumental to his becoming Dark Destructor. Perhaps we should start the story with something a bit more upbeat and zingy...? Kevin recommends a symbolic splash page of Dark Destructor bashing someone’s face really hard and a bunch of their teeth popping out—but we’ll let you “get funky” in your own way!

In any case, since Doctor Authority is not the main villain in the first issue, the sense-of-the-offsite is that perhaps we should soft-pedal Rick Raymond’s home life just a little. In particular, the long lists of all his chores seems a bit much, and although the paper-route descriptions have a very realistic feeling, it’s hard to believe Rick is really in danger of going crazy from having to get up early in the morning to throw papers. Also it seems that if Doctor Authority wanted Rick dead, he could find an easier way to do it, since he’s his dad and lives in the same house. (Kevin suggests Dr. A could put ground-up glass in Rick’s pancake syrup so that he would “spit up blood and die.”)

PAGE 2: Penelope, Brandon’s sister (and a girl), suggests that it is highly unlikely that eating special “really crackly” breakfast cereal while standing too close to the microwave oven would cause an accident of any kind, let alone one that would give someone superhuman powers, but hers was the minority position. However, while the rest of us agreed that the origin of Dark Destructor’s powers is excellent, we think you might want to consider whether he should acquire his costume elsewhere, as it does seem to be stretching it a bit to have a microwave oven explosion cause his pajamas to change color and also form a skull logo on the chest. Again, though, it’s your call, Rich— you’re the “talent,” after all...!

Kevin wanted to know if Rick Raymond shouldn’t be bleeding “real good” in panel five and have little sharp bits of the exploded microwave sticking into him. I like the image, and I’m sure you will too. Have fun with it!

PAGE 3 and 4: The section where Dark Destructor tests out his new powers is a good one, although Brandon was saddened to note that the seeing-through-walls power is no longer part of his arsenal. He wants to know whether DD could “fly into some radiation” in a later issue and gain this power and then look through a lot of people’s walls. He also notes that in such a scenario, maintaining the size of Dolly Ride’s bosoms takes on added importance.

(By the way, the line “Now that I have such great powers I must not use them for great evil but only for great heroism,” is pure poetry. You’re good, baby—you’re real good.)

PAGE 5: Penelope claims there are no such things as “Underwater Radiation Hydrogen Beams” and that this casts some doubt on Sandcrab’s origin. She also says, “Even if some radiation made this sandcrab guy get really big, why would it give him a stupid costume? And where would a sandcrab get the money to hire a bunch of criminals to work for him, and also buy them all diving suits?”

(I wouldn’t let this kind of criticism worry you too much though, Richie, since Penelope is, after all, a girl—if you know what I mean.)

Kevin did suggest that Sandcrab would be scarier if his claws were like razors, but really jagged on the part where they pinched off people’s arms and legs. He may have something there.

Oh, and Brandon wants to know if you could give DD a sidekick, perhaps a younger sister, and then Sandcrab could torture her and kill her. He suggests she be called “Annoying Won’t Shut Up Girl,” and that her powers could be to be annoying and to smell bad. Penelope, who you may remember was joining us for the day, suggested that Dark Destructor could have an enemy named “Brandon Buttface,” but her suggestions for his powers would, I’m afraid, deny us our Recess Code Approved rating. (You remember what happened when we distributed “ONAN THE BARBARIAN” without approval and then were shut down by the Raylene Jenks Committee, who called in the authorities. We took a bath on that one, and I seem to remember mouths were soaped as well.)

PAGE 6: We all love the Sandcrab’s Crab Command Cave and thought his giant monster prawn was a fabulous touch, although Penelope (who does at times seem to represent the “girl demographic” a little too strenuously, if you know what I mean) said that a real, live prawn, especially a really giant one, wouldn’t have a wooden skewer through him and would probably have a front end. We also liked Sandcrab’s Eyeball Injury Machine, and Kevin in particular was excited by this motif, although he wanted me to remind you that “eyeballs have goo in them, and if you squish them the goo will fly out.” He deeply feels the threat of eyeball-squishing alone is not enough to really move our audience, and that they must see actual goo-spurt. (Our audience surveys do show that while believable characters and compelling stories remain important to our readers, flying guts, squished eyeballs, and prominent boobies are the roots of real brand loyalty.) Kevin started to turn that funny red color while discussing this matter, so we put it aside for you to make the decision. It’s “your baby,” after all!

PAGE 7: Dark Destructor’s escape from the machine was handled very well—the Super Eyeball Defense Power caught us all by surprise— brilliant! And Sandcrab’s line (“You will never, never, NEVER escape from my trap...Awk!”) was priceless. Penelope’s complaint about why instead of just killing Dark Destructor, Sandcrab would have wasted so much time explaining about his plan to put sand in all the gears of all the bicycles in the world so kids would have to walk to school and do their paper routes on foot, was definitely not supported by the rest of the “team.” (Don’t forget, this is someone who once dismissed your seminal work, “ONAN,” as “just a bunch of wiener pictures,” and who is also—it has to be pointed out—and always will be, a girl. Do we need to spend too much time trying to please this minority section of our audience? I think not, Richie-baby, I think not.)

Brandon said to tell you he thought the “Pound sand, Sandcrab!” line should go straight to our t-shirt people, once they finish the “Flush twice, it’s a long way to the cafeteria!” project. Also, the revelation that Sandcrab is actually Rick Raymond’s P. E. teacher was a complete shock—genius, Richie! That totally explained why before he changed into Sandcrab he was working in a school and spending so much time being exposed to both “special” chlorine and the Underwater Radiation Hydrogen Beams, and why he was wearing those sweats and had the whistle around his neck.

Oh, not to bring you down, Mister Creator, you really knocked us out with this one, but one very minor complaint: Kevin said that the issue’s cover showing Dolly Ride trapped by the Sandcrab and about to have her bosoms pinched by his Sandcrab Electro-Claws did not pay off in the actual story, since other than being tied up in the Sandcrab’s Crab Command Cave and covered in tartar sauce, Dolly was never directly menaced. He seems to feel we’d be letting the readership down if we failed to deliver at least some bosom-pinching. In fact, he went a bit farther and was beginning to outline his ideas about some sort of Bosom Injuring Machine, but then his mom called and he had to go home to take his medication. He’s going to make up some sketches tonight and drop them off with you during recess tomorrow.

Penelope’s review was, and I quote, that you “Draw all right,” but that your “ideas are stupid.” Brandon said, and I’m quoting here, too, “Shut up, you’re the stupid one!” and offered further support of his own viewpoint by way of slugging her in the shoulder. She left the meeting suddenly to spend some alone time, although she says she plans to take this up with Brandon in home arbitration, and that we boys “are all sucky babies.”

Despite his sister’s issues, Brandon rates DARK DESTRUCTOR #1 an “A,” and said he’s really excited by the bit at the end where DD gets back home, turns into Rick Raymond, and then promptly falls down the chute into Doctor Authority’s Housework Hell. However (I’m just kibitzing, here, babe) can we come up with something a little more frightening than having to clean the Self-Dirtying Room? Maybe something with more sharp knives, like the Dishwasher of Death you mentioned before? Also, we love Doctor Authority, but we think we may need something scarier in the monster department for next issue than just “Hamstro, the Radioactive Giant Hamster.” (Penelope thought Hamstro was cute, which should tell you all you need to know.)

Anyway, I’ve got to wrap this up now. I’ve got some of the Fine Art people coming by later to discuss a toilet-paper installation at old Mrs. McGreavey’s, who you may recall was less than forthcoming with her contribution to last year’s Trick or Treat fundraising exercise. Work, work, work!

Looking forward to seeing you tomorrow, Rich. You’re still my main man. Let’s do lunch. I hear it’s Sloppy Joes.

Cordially,

Eddie

Edward Jamison