

[Cloven Pine Games](#) presents:

Face Front, True Believers!

An epistolary game about comics and fandom for 3–6 players

This game takes place through letters. Sending actual, physical letters is recommended.

One of you is the writer. You write a superhero comic book series with a small but devoted fandom. In this game, you will answer fanmail in the comic book's letters column.

The only problem? You have no idea what's going on in the comic book. Your only hints about it come from the comments and questions included in your readers' fanmail.

Why is this the case? Roll a d4:

1. You wrote the comic under the influence of mind-altering substances, and have no recollection of your own creative process.
2. You have fallen out with your artist and collaborator, and so you now add dialogue to pages you never scripted and hope it all comes together.
3. You are a ghostwriter tasked with keeping up appearances, as the original writer is enmeshed in a lengthy, hush-hush legal dispute with the comics company.
4. You enter a fugue state while writing, channeling some authorial voice that is not your own. You have no idea why or how this happens but you roll with it as people seem to like the comic book.

To keep your editors happy, you must answer reader questions and interact with fans without giving away that you don't know what's going on in the book. Unfortunately, you have to print and respond to every letter you receive to fill the column, because only a small subset of readers are actually writing in.

Type up the letters you receive and your responses to them. If you're very lucky, two letters will speak so directly to each other that you can simply juxtapose them with a "Nuff said." But otherwise, you'll have to respond to the letter-writers, trying to sound like an assured comics artist and not show your hand. Mail out the letters column to your readers and pray no one sees through you.

In every letters column, you may give away one "No-Prize" to a lucky reader. Ostensibly, this prize is for a reader who puts forward a clever solution to a continuity gnarl, but you have broad discretion to hand it out however and to whomever you want. The "No-Prize" has no monetary value. If you wish, send the winner an empty envelope in the mail, with a congratulatory message about the "No-Prize" inside written on the envelope front.

The other players are readers writing in to the letters column.

Each reader has their own agenda in writing to the letters column. All of them are faithful and close readers of the comic book. The details they invent in their comments and questions immediately become canonical descriptions of the comic book—their particular interpretations might not be correct, however.

The first two readers are the most important.

Reader 1

You love this comic book, but you've grown increasingly worried by continuity errors. Some apparent paradoxes could be resolved, of course, but others looked like carelessness on the part of the writer! You are committed to helping the book by whatever means necessary...and if that means proving in the letters column that you, rather than the writer, should be the one writing this book, then so be it. *Your drive is to make it undeniable that you should replace the writer.*

Reader 2

You are convinced the writer of the comic book is an unacknowledged genius. Despite its four-color trappings, this book is truly a treasure-trove of political allegory, social commentary, and insight into the truths of existence. All that is needed is a clear-sighted interpreter—like you. *Your drive is to prove that you understand the writer's true brilliance in a way that other readers do not.*

The following readers are bonus options if the first two readers are chosen and there are more players in the game.

Reader 3

You are in love with one of the other readers who frequently writes in to the letters column. You have been slowly working up the courage to drop bigger and bigger hints to them. You would be mortified if they do not return your affection, so you have to maintain a shred of plausible deniability. *Your drive is to woo the object of your affection under the guise of discussion of your shared love of this comic book.*

Reader 4

You are a precocious child, far younger than the comic book's target audience. You devour this comic and write into its letters page because it provides crucial insight into the adult world. Other grown-ups don't want to tell you about social issues, relationships, and S-E-X, but the comic book writer is willing to respond to you! You just can't let on you're just a kid. *Your drive is to learn as much as possible about the realities of life, through the lens of the comic, without giving away your age.*

Reader 5

You are a harried script doctor working on the Hollywood adaptation of this comic book. You know the book has a dedicated and persnickety fanbase, so you are convinced that capturing the essence of the original book is the key to a successful script. But you can't quite make heads or tails of the comic book itself, so you need to use the letters column to draw out the comic book's true themes. *Your drive is to uncover what you need to write the best possible adaptation and so make your name in screenwriting circles.*

Once you've chosen who is playing the writers and the readers, the writer should create a title for the comic book by rolling 3d6:

1. The Adventures of	1. Duke	1. Curiosity
2. Challenge of	2. Mister	2. Phantasmic
3. Tales from	3. The Family	3. Prehistoric
4. Shadow of	4. Professor	4. Undying
5. House of	5. Queen	5. Avalanche
6. Who Killed	6. Corporal	6. Starlight

Readers, kick the game off by writing in letters, expressing your thoughts and theories on the latest issue of the book.

Writer, after you've published the first letters page with responses to readers, roll a d6. That's the number of issues you have left to wrap up the series before a cancellation and/or a reboot. Announce the news in the next letters page.

After the last letters page is published, whichever reader received the most "No-Prizes" writes a brief epilogue in the form of a retrospective on the comic book and its fandom, to be published on a comics blogging site. Email it round to the writer and your fellow readers. (If multiple readers are tied, each of them should write a retrospective.)

Alternate venue: The game can also be played as a series of online forum posts. The editors insist the writer interact with fans on this forum. "Likes" or "Upvotes" from the writer constitute "No-Prizes" in this venue.