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STARWARP
CONCEPTS
MAGAZINE



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FREE
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THE SAGA OF PANDORA ZWIEBACK™



STEVEN A.
ROMAN

ELISEU
GOUVEIA

INTRODUCING
THE NEW DARK
URBAN-FANTASY
NOVEL SERIES
FROM STARWARP
CONCEPTS!

SHE'S A SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD GOTH WHO'S JUST DISCOVERED THAT HER NEW YORK CITY HOMETOWN IS THE STALKING GROUND FOR EVERY MONSTER AND GHOUL OUT TO RAISE A LITTLE HELL. BUT WITH THE HELP OF AN IMMORTAL MONSTER HUNTER NAMED ANNIE SHE'S GOING TO PROTECT HER CITY AND THE WORLD FROM THE FORCES OF DARKNESS...AND MAYBE EVEN HAVE SOME FUN DOING IT!

STARWARP CONCEPTS PRESENTS:



"WELCOME TO GOTHOPOLIS"

STEVEN A. ROMAN
WRITER

ELISEU "ZEU" GOUVEIA
ART AND COLORS

MIKE RIVILIS
DESIGN AND LETTERING

PANDORA ZWIEBACK CREATED BY
STEVEN A. ROMAN
AND URIEL CATON

PANDORA ZWIEBACK LOGO BY **BOB LARKIN**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT OUR WEB SITES:
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HEY,
THERE.
I'M
**PANDORA
ZWIEBACK**

AND I'VE GOT
A QUESTION
FOR YOU.

DID
YOU KNOW
THERE ARE
MONSTERS
IN THE
WORLD?

REAL
ONES,
I MEAN.

'CAUSE
IN MY SERIES
OF DARK
URBAN-FANTASY
NOVELS FROM
STARWARP
CONCEPTS

**THE SAGA OF
PANDORA
ZWIEBACK™**

I
SEE THEM
ALL THE
TIME...





PARANOID
WEREWOLVES--

--AND
"GOTHIC
LOLITA"
VAMPIRES.



ROCK-STAR
DEMONS--

--AND
FLESH-EATING
GOBLINS.



SOUL-STEALING
SUCCUBI--

--AND
SUGAR-
ADDICTED
ZOMBIES.



ALL THE THINGS
THAT GO BUMP IN
THE NIGHT--

--INCLUDING
THE ONES HIDING
UNDER YOUR BED.



THE
WORLD IS
FILLED WITH
MONSTERS--

--AND
ONLY
I CAN SEE
THEM!



EXCUSE ME?

Oh, okay...
ONLY ME--AND
SEBASTIENNE
MAZARIN.

ANNIE'S A
MONSTER HUNTER
WHO'S TEACHING
ME *EVERYTHING*
THERE IS TO KNOW
ABOUT FIGHTING
GHOULS AND
GHOSTS.



SHE'S ALSO
A *SHAPE-
SHIFTER*--
AND OVER
FOUR HUNDRED
YEARS OLD!

FOUR
HUNDRED YEARS!
ISN'T THAT,
LIKE, TOTALLY
INSANE?

THAT MEANS
SHE'S BEEN
DOING THIS
MONSTER-
HUNTING STUFF
FOR, LIKE,
FOREVER!



~sigh.~
YOU
MAKE ME
SOUND LIKE
SOME OLD
HAG...

Oh,
DON'T WORRY
ABOUT IT.

TRUST ME,
ANNIE--YOU
LOOK TOTALLY
HOT.

...FOR AN
OLD *HAG*,
I MEAN...



Hmmf.

SO...

WANNA
SEE WHAT I
SEE...?





PRETTY
WILD, HUH?
AND THE FUN
ALL STARTS
IN THE FIRST
NOVEL:

BLOOD FEUD

THAT'S
WHERE ANNIE AND
ME WIND UP IN THE
MIDDLE OF A WAR
AMONG RIVAL **VAMPIRE
CLANS**, WITH THE
SAFETY OF THE WHOLE
WORLD AT STAKE!
(no pun intended)

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HEY,
ATTENTION
WHORE!





THE END...?

THE SAGA OF PANDORA ZWIEBACK · BOOK 1

BLOOD FEUD

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PARANOID WEREWOLVES.
SUGAR-ADDICTED
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STEVEN A. ROMAN
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE CHAOS ENGINE TRILOGY

JKR 08

BLOOD FEUD

THE SAGA OF PANDORA ZWIEBACK, Book 1
BY STEVEN A. ROMAN

Sixteen-year-old Goth girl Pandora Zwieback has a major problem: she's just discovered that her New York City hometown is the stalking ground for every monster and ghoul out to raise a little hell (literally!)... BUT she's apparently the only one who can see them. That means she can't tell her friends or family about the dangers around them—not unless she wants to end up locked away in a psychiatric ward. Again.

But before Pan has a chance to make sense of her increasingly weird life, she finds herself in the middle of a war among rival vampire clans. Elegant Gothic Lolitas from Japan on one side, silk-suited London vamps on the other, leather-clad hunters from Eastern Europe in the middle, and all after the same prize: a mysterious crate recently delivered to the horror-themed museum owned by Pan's father.

What is the terrifying secret of Item #179? How do its contents tie into an incident from the blood-drenched past of Pan's new friend, a 400-year-old, shape-shifting monster hunter named Annie? Would releasing its contents *really* set the biblical Apocalypse in motion?

Most important of all, though: Will Pan survive long enough to get any answers?

[NOTE: *What you're about to read are excerpts from an uncorrected proof. Please do not quote for publication without checking against the final, printed book. Enjoy!*]

Prologue

Stromboli
Tyrrhenian Sea
November 20, 1820

“Oh, for the love of God, would you just die already?”

A man. A woman. A star-filled, moonlit night. Under normal circumstances they would be the classic ingredients for a romantic evening . . . except there was little that was either normal *or* romantic about the combination of these ingredients on this particular night. Not when the full moon that hovered over the rocky, volcanic landscape glowed ominously with the color of freshly spilled blood, the woman was an immortal monster hunter standing on a plain littered with the corpses of human and otherworldly combatants, and the man she had run through with a sword wasn't just an ex-lover but a former heavenly messenger recently added to her “to do” list. And certainly not when said messenger had designs on unleashing hell on earth in a mad attempt to take revenge on God Himself.

As break-ups went, this one probably ranked just short of the long-prophesied battle of Armageddon.

But not by much.

Ebon wings spread wide behind him, the handsome, dark-skinned angel took a moment to glance down at the sword protruding from his bare, sculpted chest before turning his attention to the beautiful, black-haired woman who was attempting to shove the remaining two feet of steel through his rib cage.

"I hope you won't take this the wrong way, dear Sebastienne," the angel commented glibly, "but if this is how you *normally* show affection to your lovers, I'm beginning to understand why you live alone."

"Go to hell, Zaqiel," she sniped. "Or go back to heaven, if He will have you—I don't care which it is. But your madness ends here. Tonight." Gripping the ivory hilt with both hands, she threw her weight against the sword, grunting loudly from the exertion as she tried to force the blade deeper. The night air echoed with the nerve-jangling rasp of metal scraping against bone.

"Do you want me to say it tickles more than the whisper of your sweet breath caressing the nape of my neck?" he asked with an infuriatingly playful grin, which quickly evaporated into a sneer. "It doesn't, actually. It's rather quite painful."

"Good," Sebastienne snapped through clenched teeth. "I'm just getting started."

"No, I rather think you've had enough fun for one evening," Zaqiel said. "You can stop now."

Her only response was to dig her boot heels into the earth and push even harder on the weapon. Sweat beaded on her temples as she strained, but the blade wouldn't penetrate any farther.

"No, really," he insisted. "Stop."

"Shut up and die," she growled.

The fallen angel sighed melodramatically—and then smashed her across the face with a backhanded strike. Caught off guard by the savage blow, Sebastienne lost her grip on the sword and staggered back a few feet before crashing to the ash-covered dirt on her rear end. Too dazed to move, she could only sit and watch numbly as the former prince of heaven wrenched the blade from his chest. The wound healed instantly.

Zaqiel hefted the blade in his left hand—his fighting hand—and nodded appreciatively. "Good balance . . . well crafted," he commented, "but not a very effective weapon against the Almighty's favorite children—"

"The Almighty's rejects, you mean!" Sebastienne countered. "Admit it, Zaqiel, that's what you really are—you and Lucifer and all the other traitors He cast out! You're an embarrassment to your creator. That's why he banished you Watchers to that stinking pit for the rest of eternity—so He wouldn't have to look at you anymore . . . so He wouldn't have to remember you ever *existed*." She flashed a wicked smile. "Forgotten by all . . . mourned by none."

Zaqiel's lips pulled back in a snarl; a flash of lightning in the ever-rising pyroclastic cloud above them gleamed off razor-sharp fangs. She'd hit a nerve with that remark, her caustic words doing far more damage to him than her useless sword ever could. She hoped at least *they* had left a ragged scar on his heart, as his betrayal had left on hers.

"Perhaps you are right," he growled. "But I escaped the crucible, did I not? While God looked the other way and busied Himself with offering salvation to his monkey-children I regained my long-denied freedom—unlike my brothers who still beg Him for release!" He pointed up toward the rim of the volcano. "And now I have returned to free them!"

Zaqiel strode toward her, his fighting hand gripped tightly around the sword's hilt. "And yet who should arrive at my hour of triumph, to disrupt my plans? The lowly *beast* I had the poor judgment to choose as my lover—and who now has turned on its master. A mongrel that doesn't know whether it should be human or animal!" He sneered. "And you have the temerity to speak to *me* of God's rejects."

Sebastienne blinked back the tears that threatened to spill down her cheeks. Her words might have cut his heart, but his tore at her soul. "Damn you, Zaqiel . . ." she whispered hoarsely.

"*I am already damned!*" the angel roared, and raised the sword above his head. "*But I will not suffer alone!*"

The blade swept down, and she screamed.



If there was a spot on the face of the Earth more craptacularly boring than the town of Schriksdorp, New York, Pandora Zwieback had never heard about it. Oh, sure, there were probably reference books she could browse through at the library, Web sites she could check out by running a Google search, maybe there was even an article she might find in an old *National Geographic* magazine that profiled it as “The Dullest Place in America,” but she’d never been able to work up enough interest to go look. Besides, she already knew any information she’d gather would only confirm her own findings: that the town she liked to call *Schriksdork* was the Suck Capital of the Universe.

And she, unfortunately, had been condemned to live there—for *the rest of her life*.

All right, maybe that was being a little *too* dramatic. It wasn’t like she was locked up in prison, after all. She had her learner’s permit, which meant she’d soon be able to try her hand at navigating her mother’s Toyota 4Runner, and Mom gave her a fair amount of freedom to live her life. Sure, there were rules she had to follow—helping around the house, letting Mom know where she was going when she went out, stuff like that—but there were no guards at the doors, no bars on the windows, no attack dogs patrolling the grounds. And as long as her grades were good and she didn’t get mixed up with things like smoking (a really disgusting habit, in Pan’s opinion) or drugs (absolutely *not*) or drinking alcohol (well, not anymore), she didn’t have to worry about Mom getting on her case . . . too much. Besides, in another two

years she'd turn eighteen, and then she'd be able to make her own decisions about where she wanted to live. And no offense to Mom, but Schriksdorp wouldn't even make it onto the list of eligible places, even if the English translation of the name for this former Dutch settlement *was* the admittedly intriguing "Terror Village."

So, no, she wasn't really "condemned" to a life sentence in Stinkville, USA, but there were times when it sure *felt* like it.

Maybe it was the environment that bothered her. She was a Queens, New York girl, born and bred, used to the grit and the grime and the frantic pace of urban living, and the idea of being surrounded by so much Nature was just a bit . . . unsettling. There were too many trees, too much fresh air and wide-open spaces, too much overall peace and quiet. She missed the noise of the city, the feel of unyielding concrete under her boots, the smell of air laden with the grease of Chinese takeout places, the smoke of street corner shish kebab, and the steam of overboiled hot dogs. Hard to believe, but she had even started to miss the nostril-singeing odor of stagnant water pooling in a street gutter on a hot summer day.

Okay, that last one was stretching the truth a little, but still . . .

Or maybe it was just because she was an outsider: a teenager with a penchant for occult-themed jewelry, black clothing, and even blacker hair dye (although she kept a streak of the natural blond coloring she'd inherited from her mother as a highlight) who was also a whopping big fangirl when it came to all things horror-related, whether it was movies or literature, comics or television, toys or games. A Goth girl trapped in a land of preppy, blond-haired and blue-eyed suburban kids who dressed in the latest oh-so-hip and trendy styles, courtesy of the Gap and H&M and Abercrombie & Fitch. It sometimes made her feel like she was caught in a reality show version of *Disturbing Behavior*, that movie where disobedient kids got their brains rewired by the adults in their town to make them "perfect" sons and daughters. And if she was a stand-in for Katie Holmes's character in that movie . . . well, then Mom must be sort of like Nicole Kidman in that remake of *The Stepford Wives*, where women were forced to become "perfect" wives for their husbands. The difference was, no one had gotten around to rewiring Pan's and Mom's brains—yet. Unless, of course, Mom had already been rewired when she was a kid . . .

Not such a crazy idea, when Pan thought about it. It would certainly explain why Mom had pressed so hard for her to move to Schriksdorp with her: she was hoping to get her daughter "fixed." Get her to wash

out the dye and have her shoulder-length locks styled into something a tad more ladylike. Suggest tossing out her battered black leather jacket, the cuffs and back panel of which Pan had painted with images of damned souls burning in the fires of hell. Convince her to trade in the combat boots, black T-shirts, and distressed jeans she always wore for tasteful pumps and a bright, frilly sundress.

Like *that* was ever gonna happen. At least not without a fight to the death first, and then Mom could dress up her corpse however she wanted for the funeral. Pan wouldn't care by that point, anyway, just as long as she'd gotten in the last word before she croaked. A clever declaration like *You can take away my Morbid Threads and my T.U.K. boots, but you'll never take . . . my freedom!* Only not, y'know, such a direct swipe from *Braveheart*. Something a little more original.

On the other hand, maybe some mental fine-tuning was just the thing she needed to finally put an end to the psychotic episodes she'd started experiencing . . . again.

The psychosodes—her therapist, Dr. Leslie Farrar, had preferred calling them “visions” (probably because it didn't make Pan seem quite so crazy)—weren't as bad as the ones she suffered during that tumultuous period when her life was being torn apart by her parents' disintegrating marriage and her equally disastrous relationship with a boy named Amadeus Sheridan, but the early warning signs were all there: the creeping sense of unease; the feeling she was being watched (the doc had filed that little tic under “paranoid delusions”); and, worst of all, the occasional flicker in the corners of her eyes, of shadowy, blurred *things* that lurked on the edge of her vision, only to disappear as soon as she turned to look directly at them. And yet, even though those fleeting glimpses of otherworldliness had always tended to freak her out, even though there was every indication that her personal demons were clawing their way back into her psyche after a blessed eighteen-month reprieve, she hadn't been able to work up the nerve to tell anybody it—not even her mom.

Besides, Pan thought glumly, nobody had ever *really* believed she could actually see monsters . . .



Her mother, Karen Bonifant—she'd dropped the *Zwieback* and gone back to her maiden name after the divorce was finalized nine months ago—pulled the Toyota 4Runner up to the curb in front of the main

entrance to the Albany Mega-Mall. “Okay, then, sweetie. I’ll see you tonight. If you need to reach me for any reason—you have your cell phone?”

“Right here.” Pan reached into her the right hip pocket of her jeans and pulled out the cell for Mom to see, then opened her door and stepped out of the vehicle. “Have fun with the big kids at work.”

Karen rolled her eyes. “Fun. Right.” Pan closed the door and Mom drove away, waving good-bye with her left hand out the window as she pulled into the street.

Pan waved back, chuckling as the 4Runner roared across three lanes of traffic to the passing lane, cutting off two delivery trucks and a minivan. Mom might have been born upstate, but her aggressive driving skills were pure New York City.

The rain began falling harder, and Pan walked briskly toward the mall entrance. She turned her face to the roiling, green-tinged sky and smiled as warm, fat drops splashed against her eyelashes and the tip of her nose. So it was raining; so the weather was going to make this a miserable day—who cared? As far as she was concerned, all was right with the world and not even a heavy downpour was going to spoil her good mood.

She eased into the throng of dampened inbound shoppers, ignoring the flickering images that danced at the corners of her eyes.



Want to know what happens next? Then be sure to ask your local bookstore owner or comic retailer to stock BLOOD FEUD, or order a copy directly from Starwarp Concepts!

ABOUT THE WRITER



STEVEN A. ROMAN is the bestselling author of *X-Men: The Chaos Engine Trilogy* and *Final Destination: Dead Man's Hand*. His short fiction has appeared in the anthologies *The Best New Zombie Tales 2*, *The Dead Walk Again!*, *Doctor Who: Short Trips: Farewells*, *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*, *The Ultimate Hulk*, *If I Were an Evil Overlord*, and *Tales of the Shadowmen 4: Lords of Terror*. He also wrote the graphic novels *Lorelei: Building the Perfect Beast*, *Stan Lee's Alexa* and *Sunn*, and co-wrote the direct-to-DVD animated short *X-Men: Darktide*.

Steve's current writing projects include the *Saga of Pandora Zwieback* dark-fantasy novel series, the science-fiction novel *Doctor Omega and the Megiddo Factor*, and the Mature Readers graphic novel *Lorelei: Sects and the City*.

ABOUT THE ARTIST



ELISEU GOUVEIA (a.k.a. **ZEU**) is the acclaimed creator/writer/artist of the comic book *Infiniteens* and the online comic strip *Lady of the Horde*. He is also the artist of such comics as Moonstone's *The Phantom* and *Vengeance of the Mummy*, Strange Matter Comics' *Project Elohim*, General Ginjur Comics' *Charlatan*, Cloud 9 Comics' *Genie*, and the Image graphic novel *Cloudburst*.

Zeu's current projects include providing frontispiece illustrations and cover sketches for *The Saga of Pandora Zwieback*, and drawing the graphic novel *Lorelei: Sects and the City*. Check out *Lady of the Horde* and some of his other work at: eliseugouveia.deviantart.com.

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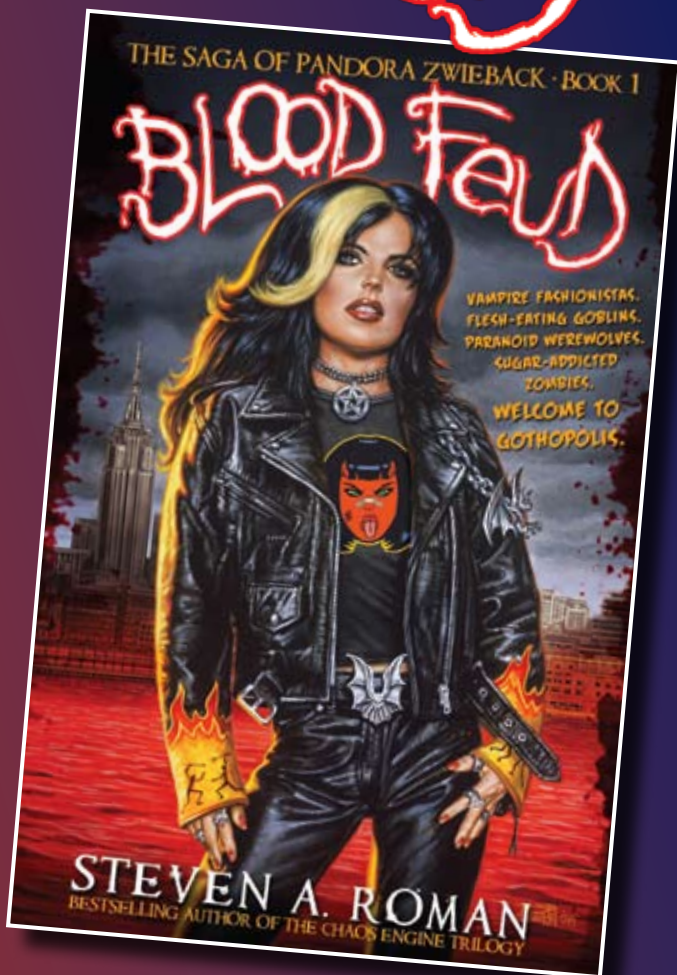
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OF *X-MEN: THE CHAOS
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*FINAL DESTINATION:
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