The Witch Next Door: A Webcomic

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The Witch Next Door: A Webcomic

by

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Abstract

This project is an original short story told through comic format and published through the web. The challenges presented by this project were in the creation of the comic itself and the pacing of uploads. The comic consisted of writing the story, hand-drawing the pages, and finishing it using Photoshop. With webcomics the rate at which the work is updated must also be considered as part of the storytelling process. These aspects created a unique challenge and a great learning opportunity.
Creating *The Witch Next Door*

*The Witch Next Door* was a story that evolved from the sudden meeting of multiple ideas. Characters such as The Oracle (who goes by Ms. Williams), Miles (the witch familiar), and The Shade were relatively established in design and history before this particular tale came to be. While they all existed in the same universe their stories did not come into focus until the creation of Melody. Melody instantly became the lens through which the world of these characters came into focus. This story, however, began as a ghost story.

The initial framework of *The Witch Next Door* was that of a supernatural mystery. Ms. Williams was the loner neighbor with odd habits and strange voices heard through the wall at night. Unfortunately, this story lacked a strong arc. Aside from the revelation of magic and monsters there was no conflict and thus the resolution was unfulfilling. Knowing the time limitations of the project, it turned into an introductory tale.

Melody and her mother filled the role of the audience; they know nothing about the conflicts of the magical community and so ask the questions needed to move the story forward. The ending conflict with the bookstore owner came about by pulling something from the established history of Ms. Williams and The Shade: her husband’s kidnapping. Pulling in Miles as the triggering event rounded out the major themes and set the stage.

Once the basic idea was founded, the technical work began. An outline was developed using sticky notes and PowerPoint. From there a script was written and it was at this point where the publishing platform came into play. Webcomics have a story rhythm somewhat different from classic comic books and even weekly episodic newspaper comics. Using the web, the artist can choose the rate at which the story is updated. Many choose once a week, some
update as much as three times a week. From a story perspective this is key. The plan going in for this was that it needed to be able to update as frequently as necessary to get it done, but in a way that a break between updates wouldn’t kill the pacing. This resulted in the necessity for each page to carry enough of the story to be engaging but end solidly. Conversations carried over multiple pages had to finish one idea before the page was up, or leave enough room so that a pause did not seem jarring.

One of the major challenges in the artwork was framing. Each page was composed of multiple panels, each of which had to be correctly framed. Issues came up with how much background to include, how detailed it should be, where the characters and speech bubbles were placed, and which direction the scene was viewed from. The placement of the panels also helped to convey the story. Spacing gave the feeling of timing and the size of the panels relative to each other could help convey feeling. Coloring also had to be taken into account. Only three shades of gray were used in conjunction with black and white to color the panels. Keeping a contrast between the characters and their surroundings, while also keeping the surroundings consistent was no simple task.

Many things were learned in the process of making this comic. There is now a better understanding of the effort necessary to produce a webcomic and a better grasp of storytelling. It was an enjoyable experience that has set the stage for future projects of a similar kind.
The Witch Next Door
By Allison Peusch

"I can't believe you're making me stay with her."

"Come on, it'll be fine."

"But I better not hear you calling her a witch again."

10-2016
and just this week?

Unless you become ~best friends~

Just remember
She can’t see very well.

Wait - I thought she was blind.

No, but close.
Morning, Ms. Williams!

Thank you again for doing this.

No problem!

See you tonight, kiddo!

10-2016
What's with the necklace?

Wha-

Oh!

They're from the places I've lived.

Wow!

Oh, let me tell you how I got this one...

10-2016
I guess it was alright.

So she's NOT a witch?

A nice witch.
Imma use the bathroom.

Old One!

Please hear me out-

Aaah!

11-2016
Get.
Out.

Try to understand! You cannot be here! Especially now. Why is this an issue? Because she's here.

11-2016
Well, I suppose I should.

Oh no you don't.

You're helping.
Ok, why does he talk?
He’s not a real crow.
Umoh!

He’s a witch familiar.

So you ARE a witch!

Wha-?

Witches can imbue magic into objects, This magic can persist beyond death.

Not so for the Old One.

11-2016
So...

What does that make you?

She's classified as a "brute."

Which

I suppose sounds terrible.

Oh, you think?
Hey! Where you going, kiddo?

I don't have work today.

I - uh

had some questions for Ms. Williams.
What kind of questions?

Don’t be shy.

Can I see?

I knew you two would be-

... friends.

Where does magic come from?
How many witches are there?
Why does Miles call you Old One?

11-2016
Melody!

But Mom! There was a talking crow!

Melody, that's enough

I expected better than this.

Miles! I wish to speak with you!

11-2016
Melody!

How may I be of service?

11-2016
Thank you for buying lunch, Andrea.

No problem! I just figured... I mean with everything...

We should catch up?

So...

Why does Miles call you "Old One"?

Sorry. It's been a while. I'm older than I look.

How old are you?

Very.

11-2016
So your husband was... normal?

**What?**

You said your husband died a while ago...

Oh. He's not dead.

He's... missing.

It's just easier.

Oh I'm so sorry.

It's alright. Plus your own has passed.
Was this before or after India?

Wait.

Have I told you about India?

No, Melody told me.
Is there someone down there?

No?

Did you see something?

I—I don’t know.

11-2016
I have a message.

What is it?

It's a Flashdrive.

IDENTIFY YOURSELF

Identification

The Oracle
Hello, Old One.

Trish, How are you?

I’m doing well, thank you.

I thought the wifi was broke.

It is.

We searched the area you indicated but we couldn’t find anything.

However...
Given your record, we'll continue to keep an eye out.

But please

Let us handle it.

11-2016
Morning

Ms. Williams? A moment, please?

I understand a lot is going on.

but Melody does not get involved.

I understand

11-2016
When will we hear back?

Not sure. Could be a while.
Can we... go out for lunch?

Where?

Main Street Cafe?

Umm

The - uh - I like their grilled cheese?

Ok. I'll call a car.

11-2016
Hi! Can I help you?

You have something of mine.

Sorry?

Give me the Shade, witch.

11-2016
Please don’t do this.
You have no idea.

11-2016
Give up now.
I'll let you leave.
No.

Fine then.
You missed!

CRASH

Oh god

What have you done?

11-2016
Woah!

What was that?

That, Melody

Was my husband.

11-2016
THE END
(FOR NOW)

Man, I can't wait to tell Mom about this.

11-2016