

Baptism by Fire

(A 2013 Top-Cow talent search submission)

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PAGE ONE (SIX PANELS)

Panel 1

We open on 17th century London engulfed in flames -- The same scene depicted in [the famous painting](#).

TITLE OVERLAY

London - 1666

Panel 2

We push closer -- detail of the city burning.

Panel 3

Push in closer. We see the faint shape of a man, standing amongst the flames.

NARRATOR (OFF PANEL)

Since we first slithered out of the muck we've been branded.

Panel 4

We see the man clearly now, it is TIMOTHY FARRINER (21), he has DARKLINGS sprouting out around him. The demonic faces nip at the flames.

NARRATOR (O.P.)

Those unable to harness the Darkness are misled into pitiless chaos - incapable of ever truly knowing themselves.

PANEL 5

CU on Timothy's face -- angry and enraged.

NARRATOR (O.P.)

There are endless stories to tell... Misery, death, etcetera... all mostly banal - but some of these stories - some of them have hooks.

Panel 6

This panel is all flames.

NARRATOR (O.P.)

This is one of those stories.

PAGE TWO (FIVE PANELS)

PANEL 1

This panel is all flames, mirroring the last panel from the first page.

PANEL 2

Flames still - but we also see an unclear object, hovering above the flames.

PANEL 3

We pull back to reveal we were 'inside' a large, free-standing, wood burning oven - a man pulls a pastry out on a baking peel.

PANEL 4

Wide establishing shot -- we're in a small bakery. It's pre-dawn and one man, Thomas Farriner (56), works alone.

TITLE OVERLAY

18 hours ago

PANEL 5

Shot of a wooden table with a glass of milk, the fresh, steaming-hot pastry and a small, handwritten note which reads "Happy Birthday".

PAGE THREE (EIGHT PANELS)

PANEL 1

Thomas looks at the table setting and smiles warmly.

PANEL 2

CU of a bell above the door ringing as someone enters the bakery.

SFX

DLING-DING-DLING-DIIINNNGGG...

PANEL 3

A young Timothy Farriner has entered, he is agitated, sweaty -- not himself at all.

PANEL 4

Thomas beams and stands with his arms outstretched.

THOMAS

Happy Birthday, Timothy.

PANEL 5

Timothy doesn't even glance at his father, he stumbles past him, into a back room.

PANEL 6

Thomas stands in the doorway, looking in at his son.

THOMAS

Dear me -- drink? Did you overindulge
with your friends last night?

PANEL 7

Thomas goes to a nearby water trough and wets a cloth.

THOMAS

I have told you; those spirits are of
the devil, son. They will not serve you
well in any respected pursuits.

PANEL 8

Thomas attempts to apply the wet cloth to Timothy's forehead, but Timothy violently slaps his hand away.

TIMOTHY

Back away!

PAGE FOUR (SIX PANELS)

PANEL 1

Thomas looks shocked.

THOMAS

Now see here, boy, it does not matter
how sick you are, you will show me
respect.

PANEL 2

Timothy looks up at his father, brow knit, sweating and
pale.

TIMOTHY

I'm - I, I...

THOMAS

Son?

PANEL 3

Timothy bolts upright.

TIMOTHY

Son... sun...

PANEL 4

Timothy rushes out the front door of the Bakery as his
father yells to him.

THOMAS

Timothy! Son, wait!

PANEL 5

Thomas closes the front door that Timothy left open as he
ran out.

PANEL 6

Thomas looks to the table with the pasty, the milk and the
note - he frowns.

PAGE FIVE (SIX PANELS)

PANEL 1

We are in Timothy's bedroom, he has the drapes drawn and a small oil lamp burns at his desk, lighting the otherwise dark scene in flickering bursts of orange and yellow. Timothy sits, slumped at his desk, looking confused. Demonic voices converse with him.

DISEMBODIED DARKNESS VOICE
This is your birth rite..

DISEMBODIED DARKNESS VOICE
Your destiny..

TIMOTHY
Why? Have I been cursed?

DISEMBODIED DARKNESS VOICE
Gift - not curse - gift for all
humanity.

PANEL 2

Thomas has followed his son home. We see chairs knocked over, papers, etc. a mess, which leads straight back to Timothy's bedroom.

PANEL 3

Thomas puts an ear to his son's door and hears voices emanating from within.

TIMOTHY (O.P.)
My father... he looked at me with horror.

DISEMBODIED DARKNESS VOICE (O.P.)
He is not your father.

TIMOTHY (O.P.)
He is my father.

DISEMBODIED DARKNESS VOICE (O.P.)
...Cannot be... You carry the Darkness
bloodline..

DISEMBODIED DARKNESS VOICE (O.P.)
Your true father died at the moment of
your conception.

CONT'D.

PANEL 4

Thomas, still with his ear pressed to the door, gasps at what he is hearing.

TIMOTHY (O.P.)

Who then is he?

DISEMBODIED DARKNESS VOICE (O.P.)

The baker? A filthy baby snatcher.
They've all lied to you.

TIMOTHY (O.P.)

(Speechless)

--

DISEMBODIED DARKNESS VOICE (O.P.)

Think of the power we have shown you in
such a short time - you are destined
for things of great import. You must
embrace the darkness.

TIMOTHY (O.P.)

I... I want to... Show me.

PANEL 5

Thomas has heard enough and he bursts into the room.
Timothy stares Thomas down with a wicked look.

THOMAS

Son - who are you talking to?

TIMOTHY

"Son"? Who are you? Why would you
snatch me away from my birth rite?

PANEL 6

Thomas looks scared as Timothy closes the distance between
them, still scowling.

THOMAS

Timothy - cease this nonsense, what in
God's name has happened here.

TIMOTHY

God is not my father either, Thomas. I
revoke his name just as I revoke yours.
The Darkness envelops all.

PAGE SIX (TWO PANELS)

PANEL 1

SPLASH PAGE! Timothy begins to construct a large Darkling out of his right hand that gutturally growls at Thomas. A medieval version of the Darkness armor begins to cover his body.

PANEL 2

This is a small panel on/within the large splash image - a reaction shot - CU on Thomas' face as he gazes upon Timothy in sheer terror.

PAGE SEVEN (FIVE PANELS)

PANEL 1

Thomas backs away and while nervously fumbling behind him, he grasps at the curtain covering the window.

PANEL 2

Thomas yanks the curtain down and the dawn sunlight streams into the room. The Darklings shriek and begin to disintegrate. Thomas is horrified.

PANEL 3

Timothy looks at the man who raised him with a sense of confused horror.

DISEMBODIED DARKNESS VOICE
...out... of... the... light...

PANEL 4

Thomas runs to the door to escape, with his hand on the handle he turns to Timothy, who is still ineffectually writhing in the sunlight.

THOMAS
I promise, son. I will find help. We
will defeat this demon, which has taken
hold of your soul.

PANEL 5

Thomas runs out of the house and into the street.

PAGE EIGHT (FIVE PANELS)

PANEL 1

Thomas is in the backroom quarters of the local church, speaking with the vicar. There is a single stained glass window in the room - the only source of sunlight, next to the window sits a large armoire. The conversation dominates each panel.

VICAR

...Many times we think we have seen the face of Satan, yet when reflected upon, we realize it was just the evil of man clouding our judgment.

THOMAS

Yes, I agree - yet, I witnessed things, which could not be ascribed to man's own terribleness.

PANEL 2

VICAR

Such as?

THOMAS

I heard him converse with these demons before I entered the room - he spoke to them as if they were men.

VICAR

What did they speak of?

PANEL 3

THOMAS

They told him I was not his father - yet "The Darkness" was.

VICAR

Is this true, concerning his lineage?

THOMAS

It is true, father. Yet, there is no way Timothy could have known this.

CONT'D.

PANEL 4

VICAR

True that may be - yet still, my son -
hearing is not seeing.

THOMAS

But I did father, oh, dear Lord in
heaven, I did.

VICAR

You actually saw these... demons - with
your own eyes?

THOMAS

Yes, when I entered the room, Timothy
was engulfed - ghastly faces spat at me
and growled demoniac chants.

PANEL 5

VICAR

You're quite certain of this?

THOMAS

More certain than I dare comprehend.

PAGE NINE (TWO PANELS)

PANEL 1

THOMAS

I tore down the window sash in my panic
and as the morning sun filled the room,
the beasts began to fall apart before
my eyes.

VICAR

... Good Lord in heaven.

PANEL 2

As Thomas recounts his story the panel changes and the
backdrop behind the two men talking has become a fuzzy
flashback as Thomas remembers what he saw. We see Timothy
standing with darklings sprouting everywhere, looking even
more evil than they did when it actually happened. Thomas'
memory has also made Timothy more bestial and horrific.

THOMAS

I promise you now, these were not of
man - these were of Satan himself.

VICAR

We must act quickly. Your son is all
but lost, that much is certain.

PAGE TEN (THREE PANELS)

PANEL 1

The vicar places an ornate key into the lock of the large armoire, which sits next to the window.

VICAR

I have cast unclean spirits before - we must prepare accordingly.

PANEL 2

The armoire is filled with church paraphernalia - large crucifixes, robes, incense burners, bibles, etc. The Vicar grabs an aspergillum and a vial of Holy Water.

VICAR

Satan is a cowardly beast supporting himself only with trickery and impotent threats.

PANEL 3

The vicar fills the aspergillum and begins to bless it.

VICAR

My tears have been my meat day and night: while they daily say unto me, Where is now thy God...

PAGE ELEVEN (SIX PANELS)

PANEL 1

Just as the vicar crosses his hand across the aspergillum in blessing, Timothy bursts into the room.

TIMOTHY

A liar seeks the council of a charlatan! Pathetic.

VICAR

Get thee behind me, Satan!

PANEL 2

The Vicar raises the aspergillum to splash Timothy with the holy water.

TIMOTHY

Where is this coward God of yours now, Vicar?

VICAR

He is within us and around us at all times. He is a mighty God and you will bow before him.

PANEL 3

The Vicar shakes out a healthy dose of holy water right onto Timothy - no effect.

TIMOTHY

(Wiping away the water from his face)
I am finished with bowing, you fool.
Your god is a coward - a silent, hidden worm.

VICAR

Blaspheme! You will recant this vile slander and Christ will rebuke the darkness smothering your soul!

PANEL 4

The Vicar looks nervous that his holy water has no effect on Timothy, yet continues to splash him with it.

TIMOTHY

Ha! Your worm - he infected humankind with his own cowardice. I spent the first twenty years of my life in bondage and in fear of this pitiful idea, which you call God. Then the Darkness reclaimed me... woke me.

PANEL 5

Timothy has circled his way towards the back of the room - right next to the large armoire, which held the Vicar's paraphernalia.

VICAR

You are possessed, child! Satan has gripped your mind and made it sick. We must exorcise these fitful demons from within you. Your eternal soul is at risk.

PANEL 6

Timothy grips the armoire and begins to push it in front of the window -- Each panel on page twelve shows the light in the room progressively shrinking into an ever-narrowing beam.

TIMOTHY

I lived an existence of lies. I was distracted, led away from what was living within me.

PAGE TWELVE (FOUR PANELS)

PANEL 1

The light diminishes, narrower and narrower as Timothy pushes the armoire in front of the window.

THOMAS

Timothy - please, son - stop.

TIMOTHY

I am not your son. You tried to bury my life within your own sorry mediocrity.

THOMAS

I gave you a home, food - you are my son.

PANEL 2

The light diminishes, narrower and narrower as Timothy pushes the armoire in front of the window. Timothy stands in the half-darkened part of the room as he pushes, and Darklings begin to emerge from his back.

DARKLING

Liar - child snatcher - filthy man..

TIMOTHY

Child snatcher! You do not own children simply because you feed them!

THOMAS

I saved you - your mother was lost to fever, your father was unknown.

VICAR

Do not negotiate with this fiend! He is not your son and he must be destroyed before he may loose his evil upon the earth in full!

CONT'D.

CONT'D.

PANEL 3

The light is almost gone completely now, just a dim glow as the sunlight becomes a tiny beam across the face of the Vicar.

DARKLING

Him first... worm of the cloth..

TIMOTHY

You first, Vicar. Your golden jewellery and silken robes will not help you.

PANEL 4

The Vicar raises his crucifix and begins to shout - yet is cut off by a small Darkling forcing its way into his mouth and down his throat.

VICAR

Get Thee Behi--

TIMOTHY

-- You've got the Devil in you, Vicar.
I'll let him out.

PAGE THIRTEEN (FIVE PANELS)

PANEL 1

Timothy has constructed a large demonic claw on his right hand and he violently guts the Vicar in one quick motion, pulling his hand upwards from gullet to jaw.

PANEL 2

The Vicar's head rips away from his body and his guts spill out onto the floor. Timothy holds the Vicar's decapitated head in his hand as Thomas screams behind him.

TIMOTHY

(RE: Thomas)

Do not worry old man. I have not forgotten you. I wanted you to watch your pathetic god-man reap what he has sown from the life-long stifling of the true spirit of man.

PANEL 3

Timothy turns to face Thomas just in time to see him running out of the door.

TIMOTHY

Cat and mouse? Fine - I'll play.

PANEL 4

Timothy exits the church and the sunlight destroys the Darklings - looking to where Thomas is running he notices that the old, cobblestone London alleyways are small and confined, providing plenty of shadow for him to travel through. He makes chase.

TIMOTHY

You want me dead - even though you think of me as a son... how very biblical of you!

PANEL 5

Timothy steps into a shadowed alleyway, right on Thomas' heels - as soon as he hits the shadows, Darklings pop out of him and growl.

TIMOTHY

You cannot stand that I have stepped
out of your shadow.

PAGE FOURTEEN (SIX PANELS)

The chase continues and Timothy is continually running between open, sunny streets, and shadowed alleyways, as he does so the Darklings disintegrate, and reform repeatedly. Throughout the entire page, this alternates every other panel: sunny/no Darklings to shaded/many Darklings.

PANEL 1 (SUNNY)

TIMOTHY

You only stave off the inevitable, old man!

PANEL 2 (SHADOW)

The Darklings growl loudly as Timothy passes a street vendor who cries out in terror upon seeing them.

PANEL 3 (SUNNY)

Thomas leans against a sunny stone wall, trying to catch his breath.

PANEL 4 (SHADOW)

A man pulls his daughter into their house as Timothy passes by.

DARKLINGS

...Meat from bone...

PANEL 5 (SUNNY)

CU on Timothy - he is sweating profusely - he has lost sight of his father.

TIMOTHY

(Whispered)

I know where you will run...

PANEL 6 (SHADOW)

DARKLINGS

From limb to limb!

PAGE FIFTEEN (SIX PANELS)

PANEL 1

Thomas runs in the front door of the bakery and slams it behind him.

PANEL 2

Thomas throws the bolt lock on the door into place.

PANEL 3

Thomas rushes around the room opening all the shutters on the windows so that sunlight fills the bakery.

PANEL 4 (CONT'D. FROM PREVIOUS)

Thomas rushes around the room opening all the shutters on the windows so that sunlight fills the bakery.

PANEL 5

Thomas is exhausted, in shock - he sits in the center of the room, right in the sunlight, and he passes out.

PANEL 6

This panel is all black

PAGE SIXTEEN (SIX PANELS)

PANEL 1

Thomas' POV SHOT as he wakes up - everything is fuzzy and ill defined through the slit-like viewpoint of his opening eyes.

PANEL 2

We focus on a window - it is dark outside now.

PANEL 3

Thomas suddenly snaps back into full consciousness and realizes he has slept all day - all the sunlight is now gone. He begins to panic.

THOMAS

No, no, no...

PANEL 4

Suddenly from behind him, Timothy speaks - he is in the room with him.

TIMOTHY (O.P.)

I'll start a fire - you'll need some light in here..

PANEL 5

Thomas is scared. He whips around with a look of pure fear on his face.

THOMAS

I love you, Son - despite what you may think - I only tried to do my best for you.

PANEL 6

Timothy glances over his shoulder while lighting the wood burning stove.

TIMOTHY

People who love their children do not beat them - do not force them to stay on their knees while real life passes them by.

PAGE SEVENTEEN (FIVE PANELS)

PANEL 1

Thomas frowns and stands up.

THOMAS

It is not easy - I promise you that. I made mistakes. I only wanted --

TIMOTHY

-- You only wanted to infect me with your own fears. Your life was dreary and aimless, so you hoisted that filthy cross onto my back as well. You wanted someone to suffer right along side of you like a pet. You took all your anger out on me - a child!

PANEL 2

The two men face each other in the darkened room as the light from the fire dances across their faces.

THOMAS

That is not true at all. I did what I thought I should... what is normal.

TIMOTHY

What is "normal" is death to the superior man.

PANEL 3

Darklings sprout out around Timothy.

DARKLINGS

Beyond superior - incomprehensible power.

TIMOTHY

You beat me, you bind my mind - you turn me into the worm you see within your own heart...

PANEL 4

Timothy forms big, fierce looking Darklings out of his hands.

TIMOTHY

...But I outgrow you, I emerge from my
worm cocoon transformed into a god
which can do what yours cannot -
administer justice.

PANEL 5

Thomas is backing away from Timothy toward the wood burning
stove.

THOMAS

I see it now. Your soul has been
overtaken - my son is dead.

TIMOTHY

You never had a son to begin with.

PAGE EIGHTEEN (FIVE PANELS)

PANEL 1

Timothy grabs the stovepipe and tips the whole stove over, spilling burning wood out, all over the room.

THOMAS

Moreover, it seems your true father is indeed this Darkness.

PANEL 2

A nearby pile of crates ignites and the fire begins to spread quickly.

THOMAS

May the flames of hell consume you back into itself!

PANEL 3

Timothy creates armor for himself and begins to laugh.

TIMOTHY

Hahahahaha -- nothing you do can harm me anymore!

PANEL 4

A Darkling picks up a stack of burning crates and hurls them across the room - the entire place is on fire now.

TIMOTHY

For me this is not a death, this is a baptism. Only your death exits within these flames.

PANEL 5

The two men stand in the 'eye of the storm', surrounded by flames.

THOMAS

(To the sky)

Forgive him lord, for he knows not.

PAGE NINETEEN (FIVE PANELS)

PANEL 1

The Darklings sprouting out around Timothy smile at Thomas' platitudes. In the background we see the table, set with Timothy's birthday paraphernalia, on fire.

TIMOTHY

Oh, I know, all too well in fact. I know you still cling to that filthy fraud we nailed to a piece of wood, even in your last minutes.

PANEL 2

The fire closes in on the two men in the center of the room.

THOMAS

You know nothing! You have been led astray into a dark madness!

TIMOTHY

I know you are still a coward! Afraid to face your death without the pretense of something looking out for what remains after the flesh is charred away.

PANEL 3

CU on Timothy's eyes -- dark and unforgiving.

TIMOTHY

The truth is that nothing else remains - all is Darkness.

PANEL 4

We see a burning support beam right next to Timothy - Thomas eyes it.

TIMOTHY

You bury your young in emotional garbage while they still breathe - You shackle their identities and drown their ambition.

THOMAS

I have one thing you do not, "superior"
demon. I have pity; pity for your poor
tormented soul.

PANEL 5

Thomas has nowhere to go; the flames have almost engulfed
the entire room.

TIMOTHY

Your pity is misplaced, and worthless
at that.

THOMAS

(Resigned)

I hope you find rest, son.

PAGE TWENTY (SIX PANELS)

PANEL 1

Thomas lunges at the support beam - tackling it and bringing the flaming roof down on top of them both.

PANEL 2

We cut to an ext. shot, above the bakery - the roof has caved in and the entire place is engulfed in flames - we can see the neighboring buildings have also caught fire.

PANEL 3

Int. shot of the Bakery - a mass of flames and wood.

PANEL 4

Timothy bursts out from underneath the burning wreckage - Darklings surround him and he wears Darkness armor in full.

TIMOTHY

NO! You cannot deny me retribution!

PANEL 5

Timothy begins digging through the burning rubble, Darklings toss huge burning piles to the side.

TIMOTHY

Where are you?

PANEL 6

There he is - Timothy has uncovered his father's body, his skin is half bubbling off and we see charred bone. He is quite dead already.

TIMOTHY

Damn you!

PAGE TWENTY ONE (SIX PANELS)

PANEL 1

One of Timothy's Darklings picks up the burning body of Thomas and angrily flings it through the air, out of the bakery.

PANEL 2

WIDE EXT. OVERHEAD SHOT as we see the body land miles away and light the other side of the city on fire.

PANEL 3

Timothy is enraged and starts flinging burning debris everywhere - it flies through the sky like meteors - landing all around the city, causing the fire to begin engulfing all we can see.

TIMOTHY
AAAAAARRRRGGGHHHH!!!

PANEL 4

Timothy marches down the city streets, his armor is now gone and the city is engulfed - people run through the streets screaming - it is fiery pandemonium all around him.

PANEL 5

This panel is an exact copy of page 1, panel 4: "*...has Darklings sprouting out around him. The demonic faces nip at the flames.*"

PANEL 6

This panel is an exact copy of page 1 panel 1: the depiction of the famous, anonymous painting.

PAGE TWENTY TWO (SIX PANELS)

PANEL 1

This is a similar panel to the last one, a copy of the famous painting - although this one is differently colored and has... texture to it... brush strokes.

NARRATOR (O.P.)

Chaos. Madness. Weak souls made weaker still through the sudden allowance of unimaginable power.

PANEL 2

We have pulled back to reveal we are in a museum. A man sits on a bench in front of the painting that depicts the 1666 fire, looking at it with his back to the camera.

TITLE OVERLAY

PRESENT DAY

NARRATOR

Who am I kidding... For as advanced as our society has become, for all the apparent sophistication, we're no wiser today.

PANEL 3

We turn to face the man sitting on the bench head on -- it is JACKIE ESTACADO.

JACKIE

Hell, it isn't just one city... no, now - the whole goddamned world is on fire.

PANEL 4

He begins to walk out of the museum, as he walks we see artworks adorning the walls. In this panel he passes in front of a collection of Surrealist works, such as Max Ernst's *The Elephant Celebus* - Rene Magritte's *The Human Condition* (1933), etc.

JACKIE

Needless destruction on a global scale, enacted with the split-second push of a

button - that's where we are today. A
more... abstract and detached madness.

PANEL 5

...He passes in front of Picasso's *Guernica*

JACKIE

These people can't seem to remember
that we slithered out of the muck. They
need a reminder...

PANEL 6

...He passes in front of some large Francis Bacon paintings
(pick your favorites!) on his way to the exit - outside the
door it is completely dark.

JACKIE

Good thing the world has me now...

THE END