

Story Building



Art by Mara Coman

Comic Script

When writing a comic script, it is good to break up the action to pages, then panels for scene and dialogue. This is especially important if someone else is doing the art for the comic or you have a specific number of pages to work with.

Grandpa

Writer: Bevan Thomas

Artist: Reetta Linjama

NOTE: This is an autobiographical comic about myself and my grandfather. Almost all of these panels are drawn as if the reader was looking through my eyes. You never see my face.

NOTE: It would be good to exaggerate some of the imagery here, increasing the dream-like strangeness and grotesquerie that I was feeling at this time. A little playing with perspective or proportions would increase that feeling here.

Page 1

Panel 1

I'm sitting in a chair in the living room in Nana's house during Grandpa's wake. There's a simple buffet in the dining room.

I'm watching everything milling around: my aunts and uncles (Uncle Dan and Aunt Kitty, Uncle Ed and Aunt Laura, Aunt Judith), cousins (Caleb, Anna, and Massimo), brothers, parents, Grandpa's friends & neighbours, and Nana.

Caption: I can almost feel it.

Panel 2

Same image, but this time we can see a silhouette of Grandpa moving through the group.

Caption: His ghost gliding through the crowd.

Panel 3

Close-up of the silhouette.

Caption: No, it's not a ghost. It's a him-shaped hole cut out of the world.

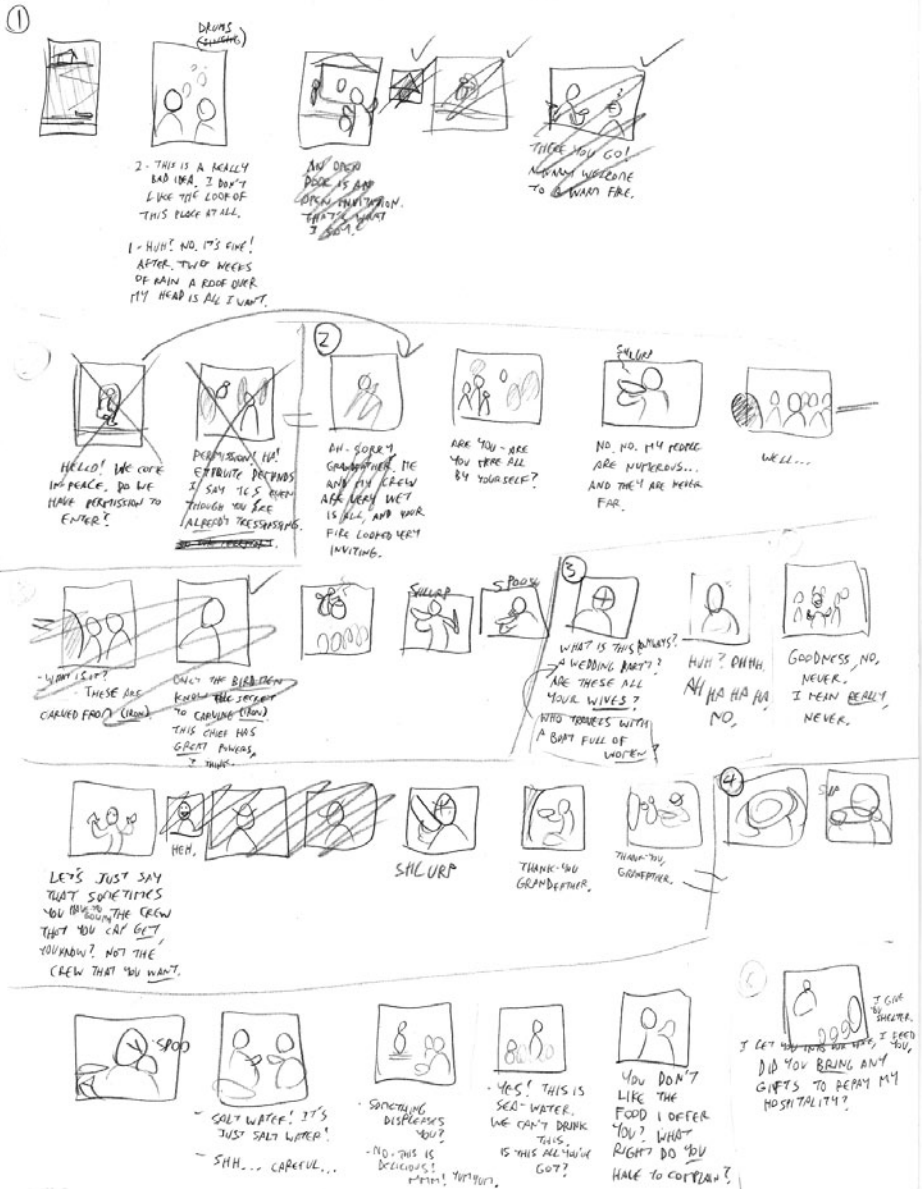
Panel 4

The silhouette has vanished, so there's only the other people milling around.

Caption: He's gone and we'll never see him again. I'll never see him again.

Thumbnails

Designing a story can be done with pictures or gestures to indicate what the writer has intended for the comic. These can be very rough or very detailed, depending on the artist.



By Jonathon Dalton

Excerpt from *Waterlogged* Anthology

The top set of thumbnails are the script for the penciled page below it.

PAGE 15



PAGE 16



(MEGANE)

K- I hope there's at least
someone to pick us up
this time.



A- KKKL~SAN? FURU~DU?

K- YEAH?



A- I'm kind
of a picky
school, you know
your trip?

-Page 17



F- FINE?

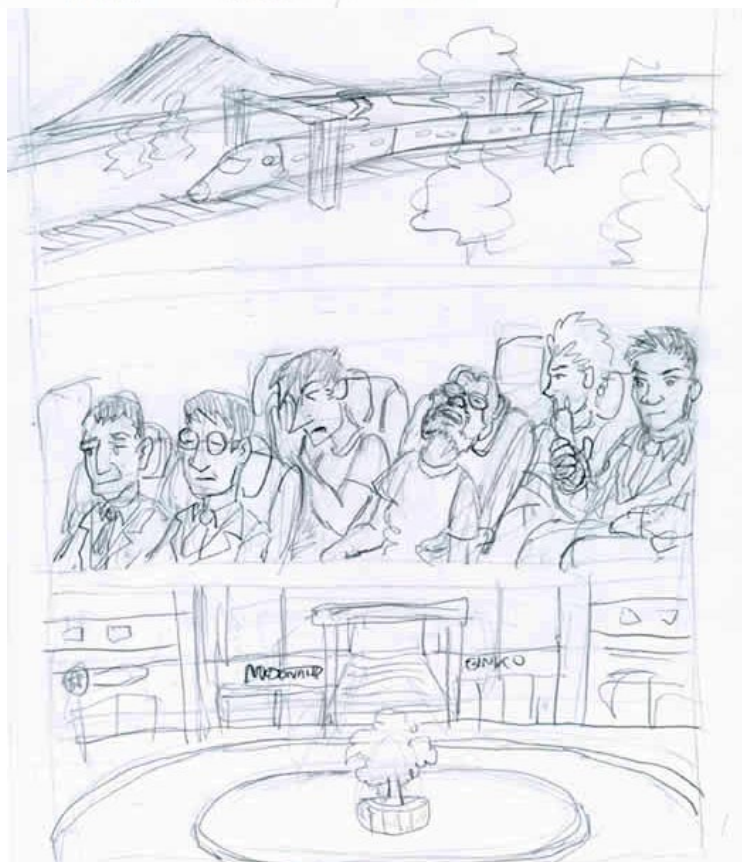
A- We'll stop by
the school first
if that's okay.
K- Oh-oh.



A- Joe from
the school
was supposed
to be here too
so strange it's
not here.



K- Do we have to
take another
train?



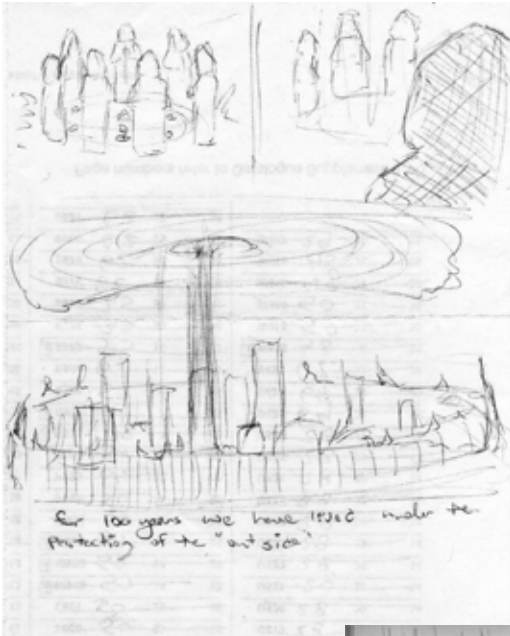
Story by Jeff Ellis & Jonathon Dalton. Art by Jeff Ellis
Exert from *Teaching English in Japan* webcomic

Short comedy strips rely on the punch lines and generating a certain emotional attachment to the characters instead of in-depth world and story building. A background plot and story arcs help to support the on-going comedy.



By Ed Appleby
Exert from *Ed's R Us* webcomic

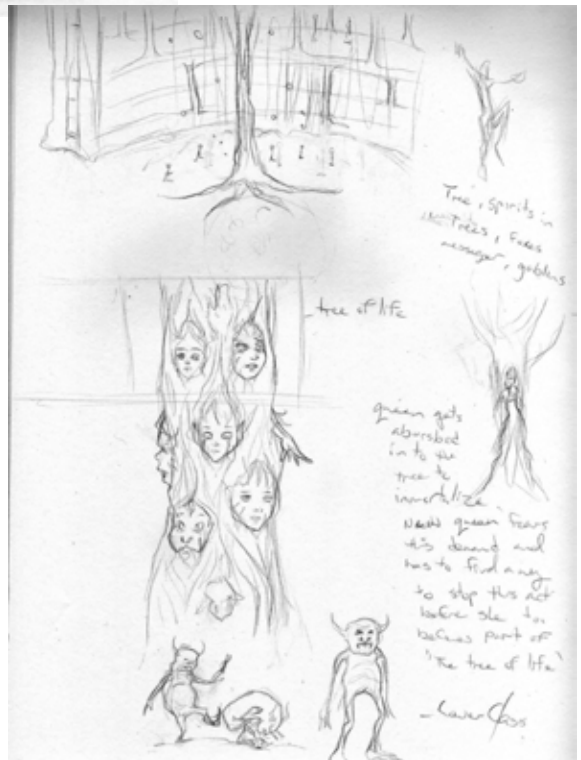
Generating Story Ideas and Development



Drawing rough sketches of imagery from the story being developed helps to capture those initial ideas and inspire the story further. Sometimes one picture inspires a whole story to be created.

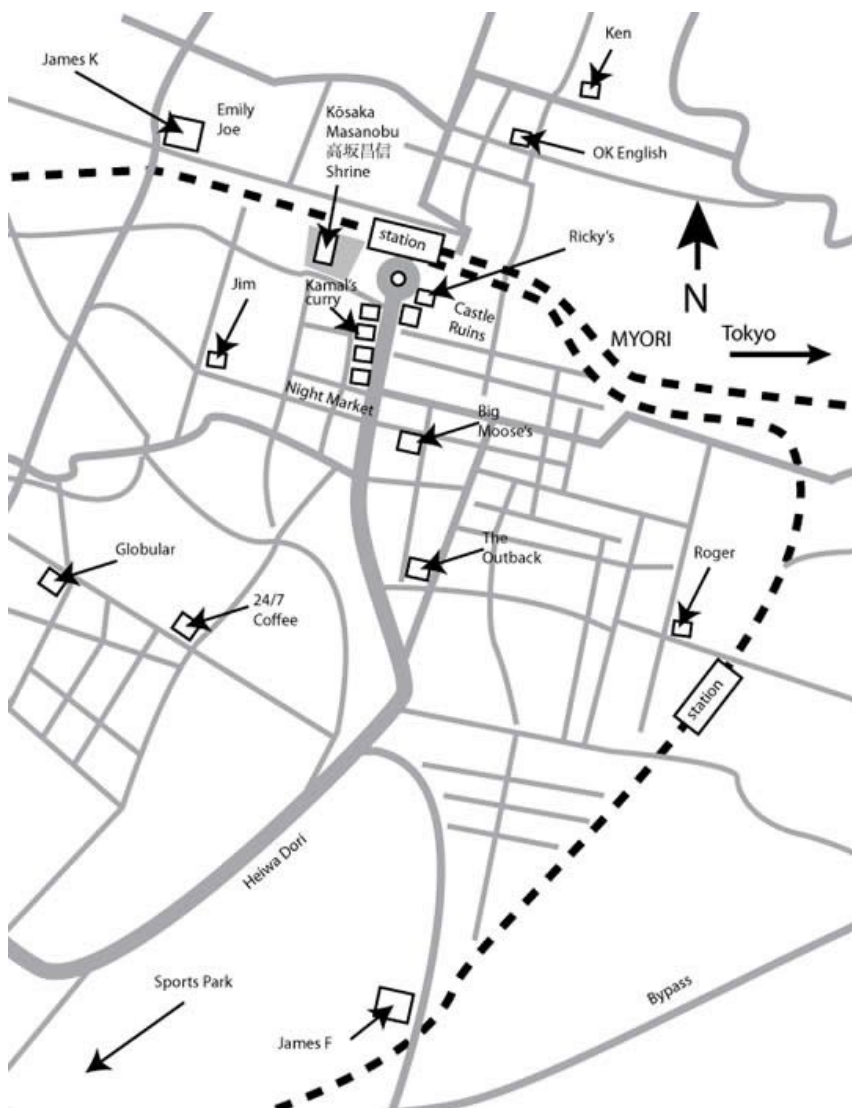
This works with writing as well by pouring out an idea when you have it, even if it's in pieces, then going back and doing the editing after.

Always carrying pen and paper is a great idea. You never know when an idea will strike and sometimes if you don't make note of it then, it will forget details and you won't be able to capture it the same.



Art by Christine Eberle

Long intricate stories become more believable if they have continuity and purpose. Many artists choose to create everything from room layouts to world maps, history, languages, and mythology in order to make their world as believable as possible. Real world references can be pulled and adapted to even the most fantastical places. While some of these references will never make it into the actual comic pages, they help create solid stories.



Story by Jeff Ellis & Jonathon Dalton. Art by Jeff Ellis
Exert from *Teaching English in Japan* webcomic

Panel 1

Close-up of Jeff in 2007. He is at the Comics Jam, working on his panel in the collective comic. Some other people have already completed panels before him.

We see various other people at the Comics Jam, including Jackie Klobucar, Ed Brisson, Colin Upton, Jason Turner, and Jack Hume.

He has a pint of beer with him.

Jeff looks distracted. His focus isn't on the Jam. His mind is elsewhere.

Jeff (thought bubble): This jamming is fun, but with so much talent here, we could be doing so much more.

Caption: It all began one day in 2007 at the Vancouver Comics Jam....

Panel 2

Jeff continues to think.

Jeff (thought bubble): If we formed some sort of collective or society or something and met to discuss and work on projects, it could be really productive.

Panel 3

Jeff leaps-up, yelling at the top of his voice and pumping the air in excitement. People are startled, especially the ones on either side of Jeff. Jackie spills her drink in surprise.

Jeff: Yes! I say we do it!

Panel 4

A Cloudscape meeting at the Grind.

Jonathon Dalton, Angela Melick, Jackie, Scott Ritching, Leanne Riding, and Jeff are there and working at various projects.

Jonathon is sketching while he talks to Angela. Angela looks really sleep-deprived. She has her sketch book in front of her and is clinging desperately to her highly caffeinated drink.

Jeff is on his cellphone, talking with someone to figure out how much would it cost to make the book.

Jonathon: 3-point perspective is easy.

Angela: Too much work. Why would you do that?

Jeff: This is Jeff, we talked before. I'd like to ask you some hypothetical questions about printing our book.

Here you can compare the script to the finished comic. A certain amount of artistic liberty will always exist between the script writer and the artist. Finding people who you can collaborate with will make for strong comics that both parties are happy with.



THE SECRET ORIGIN OF CLOUDSCAPE



Story by Bevan Thomas. Art by Colin Upton
Excerpt from *The Secret Origin of Cloudscape*

My City

by Bevan Thomas

Page 1

Panel 1

We are in a fantasy city. It looks really strange, with massive skyscrapers that look like crystal spires, other bizarre buildings, and numerous peculiar people, including ones who are moving through the air, either flying under their own power or riding magic carpets or fabulous beasts such as dragons and griffins. The city is inside a bottle, but there's not hint of that here, except that the sky looks a little strange and glassy. The bottom half of the bottle is in a paper bag, making the bottom half of the glass dark.

This panel is a close-up of one of the fantasy people who is seated in lotus position and riding a magic carpet. He holds a bottle in his hand and it has something in it, but because of the way his hands are positioned around it, we don't know what's in the bottle. It's possible he has his own city in a bottle. We can only guess.

As this is a close-up of the person, this panel suggests he is be the narrator speaking in the caption, but we later learn that is not the case.

Caption: This is my city. I love it so.

Panel 2

We zoom out a little to see various people who are flying around him, and now get a better view of the city itself with its strange buildings.

Caption: Every person...

Panel 3

We zoom out farther. Now we have a good view of the whole strange neighbourhood.

Caption: ... every street...

Panel 4

We zoom out even farther and now can see almost the entire city. So far no real hint that it is in a bottle except the sky looks definitely glassy, almost translucent.

Caption: ... every breath and whisper.

Zoom-out even more. We now are looking from outside the bottle, and so see that the city is behind glass. We also see the very tips of the fingers holding the bottle, but cannot see anything else of the person or anything about the person's location. We also cannot see the top of the bottle, so don't know what exactly the container is that the city is in. The bottle is partly inside a paper bag, and we see part of the bag here.

Caption: It's all mine.

Panel 2

This panel takes-up most of this page. We can see that the person is a vagrant lying in the doorway of some slum. He is wearing stained, tattered clothing, and has a tattered sleeping-bag with him and not much else. He looks a lot like the man inside the bottle in the first panel.

He cradles the city-in-the-bottle against himself as carefully as some would cradle a baby. We see the paper bag that covers the bottom part of the bottle.

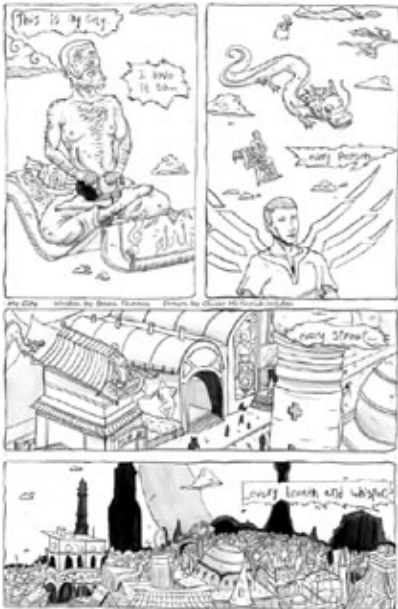
Caption: Mine.

Panel 3

The man kisses the bottle.

Caption: I love it so.

The End





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