

FINNEGAN

by

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Finnegan tells the rebirth story of Michael Finnegan and the Glacier Stone. Although a rebirth tale, the events take place in the same universe set up after his death in *Artifacts*. The universe that Jackie created after the thirteen converged, where Hope is eight and Jenny is her mother.

The story opens in the fifth dimension Hell on a hopeless Finnegan who is wallowing in self-pity. He gives the reader insight to his past and makes it clear that he has succumbed to his eternal sentence of perpetual misery. But his pity party is cut short when Tom Judge arrives in Hell to retrieve him. He reunites him with the Glacier Stone but more importantly, gives him hope. When he does so, Finnegan is reinvigorated and willing to get back to the dimension of the living. Both Judge and Finnegan then spend the bulk of the first issue trying to escape Hell.

Their plan is to get to the train station where the Conductor will return them to the dimension of the living. However, that plan is quickly derailed when the owner of Finnegan's soul alerts the demon population that the Rapture has arrived. This triggers a demon brawl - a slew of demons vs. Judge and Finnegan.

It is in this initial battle where the reader, and Michael Finnegan, realizes how the power of the Glacier Stone has changed. He can no longer become a frost giant and wreck everything in sight without consequence. The power is limited now and it must recharge after use. This causes Finnegan's fight style to become more of an agile improvised, ice-weapon, based form of combat. He now needs to employ more thoughtful ice play to outsmart and defeat his enemies, rather than rely on his hulking physical combat and endless frost power of old.

After defeating the first wave of demons, Judge and Finnegan are confronted by another wave. But when this wave goes in for the attack they freeze in place. Judge and Finnegan soon realize Sabine is behind the strange phenomenon. She makes it known that she wants the Glacier Stone and temporarily subdues Tom Judge (in Rapture form). She gets her shadowy tendrils around Finnegan's neck and begins to age him. The sides of his black hair gray but the aging process is cut short when Judge incapacitates Sabine, buying him and Finnegan time to escape.

Sabine quickly returns to action and pursues Finnegan and Judge, teleporting around - continually staying one step ahead of them. When Judge realizes that they will not be able to shake her, he quickly improvises a solution.

Judge and Finnegan lead Sabine to the Gates of Hell where the caste warrior who retrieved the Wheel of Shadows for Sabine is present. She now rides the skeletal remains of Cerberus and has a troop of other skeletal demon riders at her command. Sabine is shocked to see her as the caste warrior and her minions quickly descend upon Sabine. Judge and Finnegan then manage to slip away down an alley from the melee unnoticed.

And just as Judge and Finnegan thought they were in the clear, they realize that a sea of awaiting demons blocks their path to the train station. The demons rush in for attack causing Judge and Finnegan to quickly turn tail back down the alley from which they came - as the demons flood into the alley behind them in pursuit.

Judge contacts Tilly and instructs her to resort to plan B and fire up the Gimp. As Judge and Finnegan continue to flee from the pursuing demons they arrive back to the Gates of Hell. There they are shocked to find Sabine standing in the middle of a massive pile of bones. She has dispatched the caste warrior, Cerberus, and her skeletal minions. She is now ready to reengage Judge and Finnegan. But just as the pursuing demons from the alley attack from behind and Sabine attacks from the front, Judge and Finnegan are teleported back to the dimension of living.

After Finnegan and Judge finish recovering from the teleport, Finnegan is introduced to Tilly in an abandoned warehouse that

houses the Gimp and Tilly's wall scribbled equations. Judge and Tilly then explain the new world they live in and inform Finnegan why they retrieved him. Tilly has foreseen (or calculated as she would point out) Glorianna Silver and Sabine retrieving the Glacier Stone and using it to unlock Pandora's Box to share joint custody of its power. Judge stresses that Pandora's Box should never be opened, especially in this upside-down universe that Jackie has created. Judge wants Finnegan to help him and Tilly retrieve the box and ensure its safe keeping. When Finnegan asks where the box is, he realizes that Tilly has yet to solve that equation. Finnegan then realizes that all of the artifacts and bearers are back in play in this world so he informs Judge and Tilly that while Tilly narrows down the box's location, he will be heading off to settle a score. To Judge's disbelief, Finnegan thanks them for rescuing him and leaves.

The final page of issue one exposes Ian Nottingham asleep in a subway station. A transit cop tries to awaken him and finally does with a forceful nudge of his baton. And to both the cop's and Nottingham's surprise, Nottingham disarms the cop and uses the baton to strike him in the groin and breaks it over the back of his head, all in one fell swoop. Nottingham is confused. He has no idea how he did what he just did, nor how he ended up at the subway. In fact, he can't even remember who he is. He ruffles through his pockets and finds his wallet. He looks at his id and reveals to the reader that he is indeed Ian Nottingham.

If granted the ability to do more than a one-shot, the second issue would flip and center on Ian Nottingham's quest to piece together his past and discover how it led him to Chicago. He uses the past calls, texts, and search history on his smart phone to begin his investigation. The clues eventually lead him to Chinatown where he finds himself inexplicably drawn to a dojo that secretly possesses the Blood Sword. The Artifact was given to them for safe keeping by the Chicago branch of the Yakuza.

When Nottingham arrives at the dojo entrance, he is overcome with a great yearning that he cannot place. The feeling is

beckoning him forward, urging him to enter. When he does so, he is confronted by the Senseis of the dojo. They deny his entry but Nottingham insists. He quickly overstays his welcome and finds himself in a showdown with the school's students and their masters. This triggers a kung fu flavored fight scene of both armed and unarmed combat.

When Nottingham defeats all who had challenged him, he finds himself drawn to a section of the mirror that surrounds the dojo's walls. He shatters the mirror panel and behind it, finds the Blood Sword displayed on a sacred altar. Flashes from Nottingham's past wielding the Blood Sword flood his mind - especially one where he is slaying the frost giant Michael Finnegan.

As he quietly exits the dojo unnoticed, he sees a police squad car parked at the entrance of an alley. This piques his interest so he goes in for a closer look. Upon further investigation he spots Sara Pezzini and her partner Patrick Gleason conversing with one another (that is if these characters are allowed - they would only be used as a catalyst to trigger another vision from Nottingham's past). The image of Sara triggers another flashback for Nottingham where he sees her kiss him then it jumps to her throwing him in jail. The vision causes Nottingham to pursue Pezzini and Gleason further.

He witnesses them come across a demon behind an industrial Laundromat. When Sara activates full Witchblade armor, a flood of images come rushing back to Nottingham. Visions of her, Jackie, and all of the other Artifacts swirl about his mind. It all comes back to him - who he is and was, his connection to the Blood Sword, the previous universe - everything. And just as he draws the Blood Sword ready to go execute a surprise attack on Pezzini, the issue ends with him being confronted by an ice katana wielding Finnegan... "Greetings from Hell ya limey prick."

The third issue would primarily be an action packed confrontation rematch between Finnegan and Nottingham - one that

ends up being interrupted by Glorianna Silver. Silver subdues Nottingham and then she and Finnegan have an epic brawl of their own. And from the looks of the battle, it seems that the Ember Stone's power is now limited as well.

Finnegan ends up offing Gloriana with the Blood Sword when the power of the Glacier Stone runs dry and he finds himself within the sword's reach. Once the killing blow is delivered and the Blood Sword's immediate need for death is satisfied, Finnegan recalls the addiction and possessive power that the Blood Sword carries with it. He quickly separates himself from the demon blade, tossing it aside and hoping its seductive power had not the chance to take root within him.

He is however drawn to the Ember Stone that he takes note of on Glorianna's lifeless body. He squats down and grabs hold of it realizing that he now holds the key to Pandora's Box. As he contemplates what to do with the Ember Stone, Nottingham attacks him with the Blood Sword. Finnegan turns and his eyes widen at the sight of Nottingham's surprise attack. But Nottingham himself is surprised to be suddenly speared through the gut by a darkness tentacle. Finnegan then watches Nottingham be tossed aside like a ragdoll by Jackie Estacado. Jackie then looks at Finnegan and says, "You must have a lot of questions old friend." (Again - ONLY if the use of Jackie is allowed. This would solely be a quick cameo for what it's worth.) This is how issue three would end.

The fourth and possibly final issue of the mini-series culminates with Finnegan returning to Tom Judge and Tilly, as Tilly had already calculated of course. Tilly has finally determined the location of Pandora's Box. The three of them venture off to retrieve it, and along the way Judge learns about Finnegan's search and his confrontation of Ian Nottingham. Finnegan does however leave out any and all mention of his confrontation with Glorianna Silver and the Ember Stone.

When they approach the location of Pandora's Box, found deep inside an Egyptian archaeological site, Sabine confronts them

and gets the rematch she has been waiting for. We learn she has been patiently tailing them the whole time. She mocks their stupidity for leading her right to Pandora's Box. Judge (as the Rapture), Finnegan, and Sabine battle it out. Sabine subdues Finnegan but Tilly revives him while the Rapture and Sabine continue their fight.

At some point Sabine's shadowy tendrils wrap around the Rapture and become too much for him to fight off. They squeeze tighter and tighter, like mini boa constrictors, causing pieces of the Rapture's brimstone shell to break off - exposing the flesh of Tom Judge below. Just as Sabine is about to deliver her killing blow, a swirl of booming sound and light grabs her attention. When Sabine and Judge look over at its source, they see Finnegan hovering in mid-air at the center of a powerful dark energy vortex.

They realize that Finnegan has opened Pandora's Box and become empowered by its madness. When the power shift is complete, he wears both the Glacier Stone and Ember Stone around each wrist and swirling red spirits continuously wrap around his body like a ghastly armor. Sabine shoots forth her tendrils at him and he catches them with one hand. He yanks her by the tendrils into his arms. He grasps each side of her head and quietly asks, "Have you ever looked into the eyes of madness my dear? What you see will set you free." This line and the gaze of his now all black eyes seem to hypnotize Sabine. Finnegan kisses her lovingly and gently motions her away. "Now be gone child. You must do what is right." Sabine walks away like a zombie and in instant - she breaks her own neck and falls lifeless to the ground.

Tilly gasps in horror and Finnegan encases her in ice. The Rapture has morphed back into an utterly confused Tom Judge and asks Finnegan why he opened Pandora's Box. Finnegan explains that he will spare him for saving his life but that he is, was, and always will be loyal to Jackie Estacado. He failed him once; he aims to never fail him again. If this is the universe Jackie wants, then this is the universe Finnegan will help him keep. Finnegan notes that he won't be so merciful next time if Judge tries to interfere.

Finnegan then turns into a large flaming phoenix and flies away as Judge stands there in shock, watching Finnegan fly away - left speechless and dumbfounded by the events that have transpired.

THE END

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