

**ATENEO COMICS APPRECIATION, PUBLICATION AND EDUCATION SOCIETY
(CAPES) First Anthology**

Writer: Victoria Vizcarra

PAGE ONE (4 panels)

Panel 1. *POV of partly-open eyes. Their vision is hazy, but what little they see, they can hazily make out figures of beakers and test tube racks towering over head.*

CAP: THE CHLOROFORM WAS STARTING TO WEAR OFF.

Panel 2. *Overhead view of a frog pinned to a corkboard in a pan, his limbs angled painfully as he thrashes against the pins holding him down. A jagged incision runs down the middle of his stomach, pulled back to reveal his innards. In the foreground, we see ominous hands holding the scalpel responsible.*

CAP: AND IN SPITE OF THE GAPING HOLE IN HIS CHEST, OR MAYBE IN AN EFFORT TO IGNORE IT, HE STRUGGLES. LIKE WE ALL HAVE, FOR ALL THE GOOD IT DID US.

STUDENT: “GROSS, MINE’S MOVING AGAIN!”

CAP: HE WOULDN’T MIND ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE LITTLE COTTON BALLS RIGHT ABOUT NOW.

Panel 3. *Larger panel, where we see that none of the people’s faces are captured in the frame. Establishing shot of the science lab with rows and rows of heads bent down in careful study of their respective frogs. Their wizened teacher stands up front with a scalpel in hand. To their right, the entire wall is lined with shelves holding preserved specimen.*

TEACHER: “WE’RE ALMOST DONE HERE, ANYWAY. TAKE YOUR SCALPELS, AND WITH IT SEVER THE ARTERY TO THE HEART. QUICKLY, BEFORE THEY GET TOO RESTLESS.”

Panel 4. *Medium shot at ground level, close up on the frog’s head upside-down and the obsidian of its eyes. A shot of the specimen shelf looms over him in the background. He lies still now.*

CAP: THE PAIN EBBS, SO DOES HIS HEARTBEAT.

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PAGE TWO (6 panels)

Panel 1. *POV from the inside of the specimen shelf looking out into the laboratory. From this point we can also see some glass jars on the ledge, among them one of a preserved eight-month fetus floating in yellowish formaldehyde. Voices from off-panel come on. For argument's sake, let's call them Rai and Abby.*

RAI: (op) "I'M THINKING A DIAGRAM OF THE SKELETON OR SOMETHING. THAT SHOULD SCORE ME AT LEAST A C+."

ABBY: (op) "WOW. INSPIRED."

Panel 2. *Same angle as the previous panel, but two schoolgirls in matching plaid uniforms have stopped right in front of the jar, their faces cut out of the frame. One of them has her arms folded in mild exasperation while the other has an old mayonnaise jar tucked under one arm, her dead frog inside.*

RAI: "SHUT UP. I DON'T HAVE TIME TO COME UP WITH ANYTHING BETTER BY NEXT WEEK!"

ABBY: "AT LEAST WHEN YOU'RE BOILING IT, YOU WON'T HAVE TO LOOK AT ITS FACE."

Panel 3. *Same shot as above. The second girl takes notice of the specimen jars, craning her neck slightly to the side.*

ABBY: "HEY, CHECK THAT OUT."

CAP: WHY THEY SURROUND THEMSELVES IN OPEN GRAVES AND GAWK AT THEIR DEAD TROPHIES, I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND.

Panel 4. *Large panel. Abby brings her face close to the jar, tapping at the surface with a finger curiously, as if the fetus could even be aroused into movement. A closer look at the label from the side reads: HOMO SAPIEN, 7 MOS., 1992. While Rai stands behind her, we can just about see the inside of the jar. The frog's eyes are dull, a murky shade of gray.*

ABBY: "HUH. LOOK AT THAT. IF THIS LITTLE GUY HAD LIVED, HE'D BE OUR AGE BY NOW. YOU EVER NOTICED?"

CAPTION: AND AT 28 WEEKS AND 15 OUNCES, I NEVER WILL.

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PAGE TWO CONTINUED

Panel 5. *Medium shot of the opposite side, where we can see the ledge from the front. However small, its face is in view: eyes shut, it looks serene and fragile. On a table nearby, the jar sits in the corner.*

RAI: (op) “YEAH, FASCINATING, WHATEVER. NOW CAN WE PLEASE GET OUT OF HERE? THIS PLACE SMELLS FUNNY.”

ABBY: (OP) “WHAT ABOUT YOUR FRIEND?”

RAI: (OP) “UGH, LEAVE IT. I’LL WORK SOMETHING OUT TOMORROW.”

Panel 6., *Same view as panel above. The shelf is flooded in darkness as the school locks up for the night. Off-panel, light from outside shines in through the window’s blinds, casting diagonal beams along the table surface.*

SFX: CLICK!

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PAGE THREE (4 panels)

Panel 1. *Angle on the specimen shelf and its occupants. With three ledges, on the topmost are the stuffed animals, each frozen in a particular pose: An eagle with its wings outstretched, a falcon perched on a pole, and an iguana poised on a branch. The middle ledge holds the collection of preserved jars, including the one with the fetus. And next to it, a larger jar with an albino snake coiled inside.*

CAP: THERE USED TO BE MORE OF US. THE OTHERS,
THEY DON'T TALK MUCH ANYMORE. OR AT ALL,
LATELY.

Panel 2. *Close up on the Falcon from the side. Its wings are tucked neatly behind it as it looks out meaningfully into space. The date on his label at the base of his pole reads: 1979. It explains the somewhat shabby state of his plumage.*

CAP: FALCO SPARVERIUS. THE FALCON. THE MAJESTIC POSE
IS WASTED ON THOSE WHO SEE IT UP CLOSE. EVEN
TAXIDERMISTRY CAN ONLY DO SO MUCH.

Panel 3. *Close up on the preserved albino snake among the jars, whose coils sport bright yellow spots on top of its pale white back. On its label is written: ALBINO CALIFORNIA KING SNAKE, 1963. One of the oldest specimens there, as evidenced by the liquid he's soaked in.*

CAP: LAMPROPELTIS GETULA CALIFORNIAE. YOU CAN TELL
HOW LONG SOMETHING'S BEEN PRESERVED BY THE
YELLOW TINGE TO THE CHEMICAL.

CAP: I'M WONDERING IF HE'S STILL WHITE UNDER ALL THAT
FORMALDEHYDE.

Panel 4. *Finally, we come back to the fetus, curled up in its jar.*

CAP: BUT AT LEAST, THEY HAD A TASTE OF IT. LIFE. WHICH IS
MORE THAN CAN BE SAID FOR SOME OF US.

**ATENEO COMICS APPRECIATION, PUBLICATION AND EDUCATION SOCIETY
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PAGE FOUR (6 panels)

Panel 1. *Long shot of the teacher's worktable fronting the blackboard, where next to the sink a preserved frog sits inside a jar on the end of the table. Voices ring out, gritty and with an otherworldly quality to them.*

SNAKE: "EH, I'D SAY THIS ONE'S A C+. CUT'S A LITTLE SHAKY."

Panel 2. *Top view of the jar lid, with a bit of the Frog below peeking into the frame.*

FALCON: (op) "MAN, YOU'VE BEEN DRINKING YOUR OWN PICKLE JUICE. THAT'S TOTALLY A B."

Panel 3. *Side view of the jar, where a webbed hand suddenly slides down the surface, leaving a smear of greenish slime on the glass.*

SNAKE: (op) "HOW WOULD YOU KNOW? I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF ONE OF YOUR GLASS EYES WAS ROLLING AROUND THE FLOOR AGAIN."

FALCON: (op) "I RESENT THAT."

FROG: (groans) "URGHHH....."

Panel 4. *Frog has both hands pressed on the glass, looking up in awe and fascination at the specimen shelf of which he is the object of conversation. To him, the shelf seems to stretch on upward forever.*

FETUS: "WELL, LOOK WHO'S FINALLY AWAKE."

FROG: (weakly) "Y-YOU! I SAW THE KNIFE, AND I THOUGHT... I THOUGHT THEY WERE GOING TO KILL ME. BUT, YOU..."

Panel 5. *Shot of the specimen jars. The Fetus has its head turned expectantly to the Snake, who has managed to remove the lid off its jar. Part of his body is draped over the edge of the jar, almost like an arm. He looks down on the newly-deceased Frog with heavy, half-lidded eyes.*

SNAKE: "WHAT ABOUT US? I'VE BEEN DEAD LONGER THAN YOUR WHOLE LIFETIME."

FETUS: (mutters) "BUT THEN, WHO *ISN'T* AROUND HERE?"

**ATENEO COMICS APPRECIATION, PUBLICATION AND EDUCATION SOCIETY
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PAGE FOUR CONTINUED

Panel 6. *The Frog leans his back against the glass, his hind legs plopped down on the base, so that looking down he finally gazes with horror at the serrated stitches running down his stomach.*

FROG: “AUUUUGGGHHHHH!”

ATENEO COMICS APPRECIATION, PUBLICATION AND EDUCATION SOCIETY

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PAGE FIVE (5 panels)

Panel 1. *The Falcon, now off his perch, teeters on the edge of the shelf, bending his head down over the ledge to address the Fetus.*

FALCON: "I THINK HE'S TAKING IT PRETTY BADLY."

FETUS: "CAN YOU BLAME HIM? LET THE PRESERVATIVES SINK IN. HE'LL BE FINE."

Panel 2. *Shot looking up at the Falcon as he peers down on the scene with one wing outstretched. There are a few bald patches on the tip and on the side of his head. Up close, his feathers are faded and filthy from years of gathering dust.*

CAP: THE ONLY ONE OF US OUTSIDE THE CONSTRAINTS OF A GLASS JAR, THE FALCON RISKS BREAKING OFF A LIMB EVERY TIME HE MOVES.

FALCON: "EASY, KID. WE'RE ALL SAWDUST ON THE INSIDE AND FALLING APART ON THE OUTSIDE. SEE?"

CAP: STILL, HE THINKS HE CAN FLY.

Panel 3. *Flashback. Several decades back, in a thick pine forest. A view of the treetops, it is well into the afternoon, the sun high in the sky. A gunshot echoes through the woodland; the blast cuts clear through the leaves.*

SFX: BLAM!

CAP (FROG): "YOU TOO?"

CAP (FALCON): "DON'T WORRY 'BOUT IT. I DON'T REMEMBER MUCH OF IT, ANYWAY."

Panel 4. *Flashback continues. In the distance, frenzied birds fly off one of the trees, scattering into the air.*

CAP (FROG): "HOW IS THAT, WHEN I CAN STILL FEEL THE BLADE CUTTING THROUGH ME?"

Panel 5. *Large frame. The Falcon lies face up in the grass, his wings still spread and eyes wide open. Blood trickles from the shot square on his chest. A few meters away, a pair of boots stand behind him.*

CAP (FALCON): "I DID FEEL A BULLET."

**ATENEO COMICS APPRECIATION, PUBLICATION AND EDUCATION SOCIETY
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PAGE SIX (4 panels)

Panel 1. *Front shot of the Frog with both hands pressed up on the walls of his jar, from which his stitches can be seen.*

FROG: "ONCE, I SAW MY BROTHER LYING ON THE ROAD. HE DIDN'T MOVE, EVEN AFTER I WAITED. I WAITED THE WHOLE DAY."

SNAKE: (op) "WELL, WE CAN'T ALL BE AS FORTUNATE, NOW CAN WE?"

Panel 2. *Side view of the two adjacent jars from the ground level; the Fetus' in the background and the Snake's in the foreground. We see the rest of its body curled inside. There are thin yellow veins of formaldehyde along the surface of the glass, pooling down into a puddle.*

SNAKE: "IT'S JUST ANOTHER KIND OF DYING. ONLY THIS TIME YOU GET TO WATCH YOURSELF ROT."

CAP: SO SAYS THE CROWN JEWEL IN THIS LITTLE COLLECTION. YOU WON'T SEE MANY OF THEM IN DISPLAY. THERE ARE LAWS NOW, LAWS AGAINST HUNTING HIS KIND.

CAP: HE DIDN'T MAKE THE DEADLINE.

Panel 3. *Front shot of the shelves and the table facing it, as the Snake talks down on the Frog. One of the Snake's coils is still hanging over the edge of the jar, while he also rests his head lazily on the rim.*

FROG: "THAT'S IT? THAT'S *ALL*? THEN WHAT?"

SNAKE: "WE WAIT IT OUT. UNTIL WE'RE NO LONGER MOVING, TALKING. LIKE WE SHOULD BE. IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE IT'S MY TURN."

Panel 4. *Close in on the shelves, where the Fetus looks up at the Snake from their separate jars.*

FETUS: "DON'T SAY THAT. YOU'RE JUST... YOU'VE BEEN FEELING *SOGGY* IS ALL."

SNAKE: "HMPH."

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PAGE SEVEN (6 panels)

Panel 1. *Close up on the Falcon leaning on the back wall, who has stopped from leisurely preening his worn feathers long enough to reassure the Frog.*

FALCON: “YOU JUST IGNORE HIM, HE DOES THAT ALL THE TIME. BUT YOU’RE ONE OF US NOW. HEY, IF YOU’RE LUCKY, MAYBE YOU WON’T END UP LIKE THE A’S.”

Panel 2. *Frightened, the Frog huddles on the edge of the jar.*

FROG: “L-LIKE THE WHAT?”

Panel 3. *Same shot as above. It occurs to the Frog to look to the side cautiously, at what lies just outside his glass walls...*

Panel 4. *Larger panel. View pans a little to the left, the other ‘finished’ projects come into frame: small coin purses made out of frog hide. Stretched and tanned, their mouths have been outfitted with zippers. Horrified, the Frog sidles as far away from them as the jar will allow.*

SNAKE: (op) “THEY’RE NOT A VERY TALKATIVE BUNCH...”

FROG: (panicked) “THEY CAN’T! NOT ME, PLEASE! I WON’T LET THEM, I WON’T!”

Panel 5. *With all the weight shifted to one side, the jar topples over the table counter. The Frog looks genuinely shocked during the fall, as if it’s slipped his mind that it’s already dead.*

Panel 6. *The jar is in a hundreds pieces on the tiled white floor. The Frog crawls out from under the lid, dragging himself through the mess of broken glass. As he does, he smears some blood across the floor. His limbs are hang heavily from his sides; he’s*

CAPTION: IF HE DIDN’T BEFORE, HE FEELS IT NOW: THE DEAD WEIGHT OF FLIGHTLESS WINGS AND BRITTLE BONES. BURIED UNDER LAYERS OF FLESH, YOUR SKIN WEARS LIKE A YOKE.

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PAGE EIGHT (5 panels)

Panel 1. *View of the Frog at ground level as he crawls away, his back turned to the shelf and his newfound companions, who are calling out after him. It appears as though he's bent on leaving them behind.*

FETUS: "JUST WHERE DOES HE THINK HE'S GOING?"

FALCON: "KID, COME BACK! THERE'S NOTHING FOR YOU OUT THERE."

SNAKE: "OH, LET HIM GO. THE JANITOR'LL COME AROUND ANY SECOND. HE WON'T GET FAR."

Panel 2. *A shot of the Frog from behind – he seems to be moving slowly towards the door leading outside, although how he's going to open them is anyone's guess. He leaves a trail of grime and who knows what else in his wake.*

FROG: (mumbling) "THEY CAN'T... I WON'T STAY..."

Panel 3. *Close up on the Frog's face as he reaches his destination. A look of relief crosses his features. Behind him, he and the shelf are divided by a sea of white tile. At least, it would so seem to the Frog, who has drowned out the Falcon and his attempts to pacify him.*

FALCON: "HEY, HOLD ON! JUST LISTEN—"

Panel 4. *The Frog is out of the frame. There's an electrical shortage off-panel; the panel is completely dark, save for the sparks that shed some light on the room and the specimen shelf on the far wall.*

Panel 5. *Same scene as that of panels 3 and 4. The lights come back on. Gray waifs of smoke, curling and uncurling, rise into the foreground. While the rest watch in stunned silence, the Falcon speaks up in the distance.*

FALCON: (softly) "... KID?"

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PAGE NINE

Whole page shows the Frog slumped in front of the electric socket, which is located just next to the door. His back is slightly singed. The wall around the socket is also scorched black, with thin wisps of smoke hovering above it. Two pairs of feet surround the Frog, in telltale plaid skirts and sensible black shoes. The room is brighter to indicate daytime.

CAP: I SHOULD BE THEIR AGE BY NOW. BUT I'M NOT. THIS IN-BETWEEN FROM DEAD TO DEAD AGAIN, AWAKE BUT NOT ALIVE, IT ISN'T SO BAD. I PROMISE.

ABBY: "UM, MAYBE IT WASN'T AS DEAD AS YOU THOUGHT?"

RAI: "IT SURE AS HELL *LOOKED* IT. GREAT. WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO NOW?"

CAP: WE'RE STILL WAITING.

BOTTOM CAP: THE END.