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## William Gibson has written a comic, and you should read it

One of our favorite authors is working in a new medium, and the results are grand.

by Jonathan M. Gittlin · May 29, 2016 4:00pm UTC

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Warning: this post contains minor plot spoilers.



The cover of *Archangel* issue #1.



We're in an exciting time for new comics right now, and I'm not talking about Captain America's reveal as a Hydra agent. No, ditch those superheroes. Authors like Greg Rucka (with Michael Lark and Eric Trautmann) and Brian K. Vaughan (with Fiona Staples) have been knocking it out of the sci-fi park with *Lazarus* and *Saga*, respectively. Now we can add one of Ars' favorite authors to that honor roll: William Gibson has made the leap from prose to picture books, collaborating with Michael St. John Smith and artist Bruce Guice to give us this week's first issue of new IDW series *Archangel*.

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"It's an alternate-history/cross-worlds story," Gibson writes in the back matter. "And I wouldn't want to spoil too much of the frame, because that's an inherent part of our narrative. But I will say that one of the first verbal tags we had for the material was 'Band Of Brothers vs. Blackwater.'"

*Archangel* begins in February 2016, but it's a very different 2016 to the one we know. The world is in ruins. The White House relocated to the ominous-sounding National Emergency Federal District in Montana. They have technology that far outstrips our own.

A father and son occupy the new White House as President and Vice President. We never meet dad, but his son—an evil jerk by the name of Junior Henderson—has been surgically altered to resemble his grandfather, because Junior is about travel to an alternate Earth in 1945 to take grandpa's place, with the intent of remaking that world more to his liking (and, presumably, to prevent whatever it was that laid waste to the one we start off in).

All is not lost, though. A pair of tattooed Marines go back in time to stop him, but things start to unravel when their stealth plane materializes in a formation of B-17s in the skies above Berlin. It's here that *Archangel*'s genesis—an unsuccessful pitch to a German TV company involving foo fighters and ghost rockets—becomes clear.

The rest of the first issue plays out in 1945, in which British intelligence officer Naomi Givens is tasked with finding out what just fell out of the skies of Berlin. The Russians recover the wreckage, while the Americans nab the two Marines from the future. Even though the three nations were wartime allies, no one is keen on sharing any more than necessary in the aftermath of Germany's defeat.

Givens is a characteristically Gibsonian protagonist. Don't read *Archangel* expecting boring, anatomically-impossible ladies in revealing outfits. As with Rucka, his female characters hinge on strong wills and personalities, not looks. "I have a certain kind of over-the-top female character who just never gets killed," Gibson writes. "They may not be realistic, but I love them, and a lot of people evidently do."

Along with Forever Carlyle (*Lazarus*) and Velvet Templeton (*Velvet*), I have a feeling Givens is going to kick major ass in coming issues, although the first issue doesn't really give much more away. We know Junior is up to something, but we'll have to wait for future issues to find out just what his nefarious plan is—and whether or not anyone in 1945 or 2016 is capable of stopping him.

Now comes the frustrating part. Having to wait at least a month for the next 20-odd pages is going to seem like an eternity. *Archangel* evidently hit a chord, though. Publisher IDW sold out the initial run in just a few days before [announcing it would print a second run](#). But seeing as we live in our non-dystopian 2016, *Archangel* is [also available in PDF and ePub formats](#), which suffer no such restrictions. If you're fan of thought-provoking science fiction, of Gibson's oeuvre, or even World War II spy thrillers, you ought to check it out.

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