

In a comics industry that's often devoted to meaningless sales hype, "cosmic" stories are usually a dime-a-dozen, especially when your characters are often supremely powerful beings. "Epics" like Marvel's over-rated Infinity Gauntlet titles are often more spectacle than substance and wholly lacking in imagination. Thankfully, none of those criticisms apply to the recently released Green Lantern: Gantlet's Tale book. DC has, in this case, managed to produce a thought-provoking, entertaining, and visually stunning piece of comics literature.

For those unfamiliar with the title character, Green Lantern refers to Earthman Hal Jordan, who is the first of his kind on Earth, chosen for virtue and fearlessness as the first wielder of a weapon that allows him to tap and manipulate the green energy by means of his willpower, stored in a ring each day at his lantern, which in turn draws power from the planet Oa, home of the self-governing Guardians of the Universe who recruit beings such as members of an intergalactic police force, the Green Lantern Corps. The Guardians and the Green Lanterns are major recurring figures in the DC Comics comic books, prominently in DC's ground-breaking Crisis on Earth-2 series, where the tale was repeated of how the evil Krona spread in the universe millennia ago when he named Krona dared to break his immortal, invulnerable, strongest law by attempting to observe the secrets of the universe through time, the one piece of knowledge that they agreed they were not meant to know. Krona's quest for a cosmic hand forming galaxies in his face and released, a force of evil in the universe, a force the Guardians were formed to combat. "This of course, is the story of the retelling of the legend at the opening of the book. From there, author Larry Niven goes on to reveal what lies behind that lie, and how the secret therein defines the creation of all that exists.

The tale's catalyst is Ganthet, a maverick Guardian who travels to Earth to enlist Hal Jordan's help in finding the remnants of Maltusians (the mother race of the Green Lanterns) on Earth to serve as new recruits. The Guardians soon ferret out the hidden community, and the Maltusians and their ancestors had been a hidden people for centuries, and were the source of legerdemain, leprechauns, fairies, and Arthurian mystic legends to be secluded from humans in what was once Earth, the Maltusian tribe are uninterested in joining the advanced culture of their brethren. Ganthet finds only one recruit, a Maltusian named Percival. In the Corps the heroic tradition that he once followed, King Arthur's knights. With the aid of Hal Jordan, Percival races to train Percival in the use of the Green Lantern power. Ganthet is aware, an attempt by renegade Maltusians to imitate Krona's unholy experiment. Ganthet's creation-image Krona saw of a celestial

illusion placed in the time stream by the Oans countless centuries ago to confuse and intimidate any being who sought to strike at the Oans by travelling back to the days of their civilization's emergence. The universe's true origin is imperceptible, but by letting his own time probes reflect forward from this chaos, Ganthet saw what the "celestial hand" image has been meant to distract people from, the fact that the Maltusians (later the Oans) were, at an early stage in their development, warlike savages. Ganthet goes on to reveal the more terrible secret, that Krona's crime had not been in seeing the hand illusion but instead in trying to probe beyond it, not to the past as Ganthet did but attempting to see the beginning of time by looking past the end of time, when the universe has succumbed to entropy and collapsed into nothingness. In doing this Krona

\* Don Quixote by Picasso



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