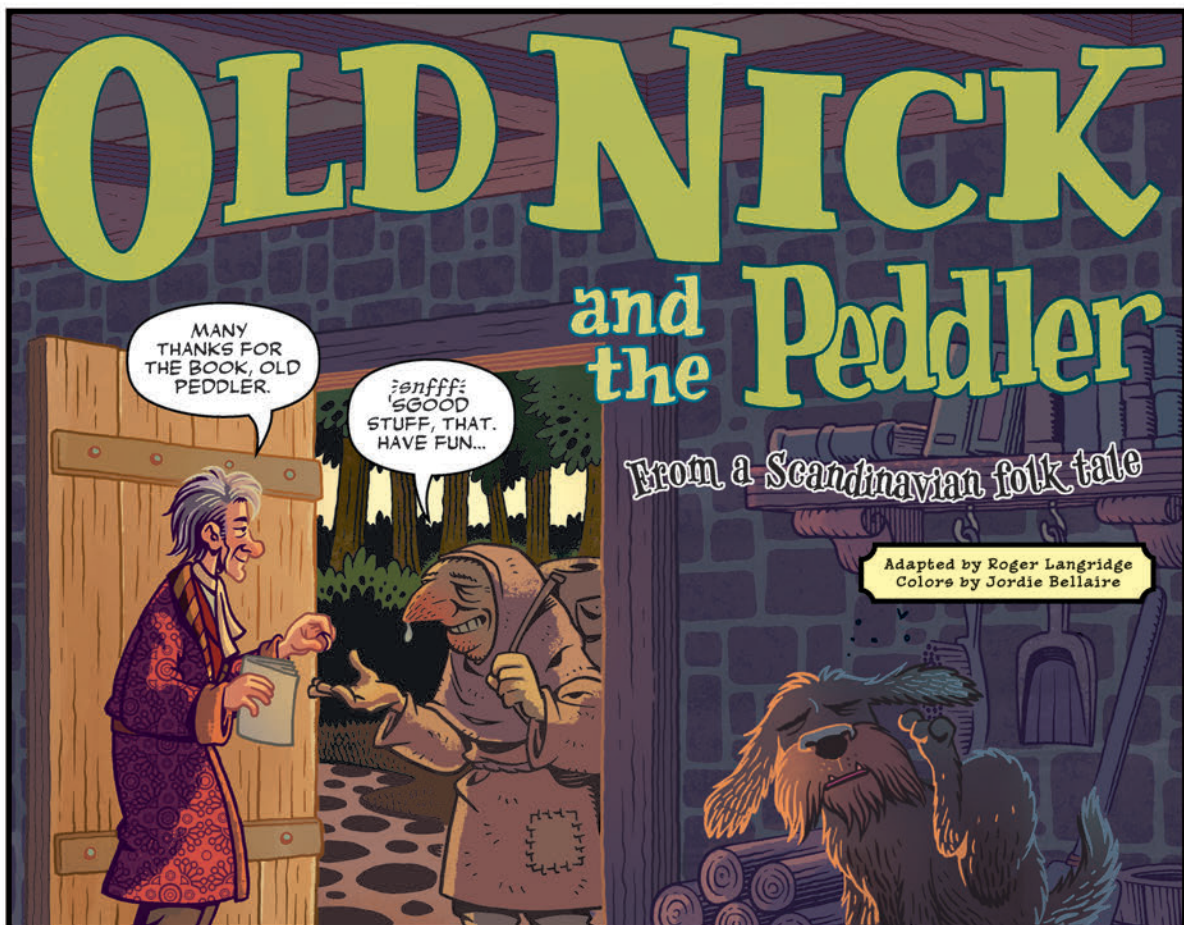


OLD NICK

and the Peddler

From a Scandinavian folk tale

Adapted by Roger Langridge
Colors by Jordie Bellaire



MANY THANKS FOR THE BOOK, OLD PEDDLER.

sniff! GOOD STUFF, THAT. HAVE FUN...



CHAPBOOKS NOW, IS IT? FILLING YOUR HEAD WITH TRASH?

OH, BEHAVE! CHAPBOOKS ARE AN ART FORM! THIS ONE IS ALL ABOUT "KATIE GREY, DEVIL-SMASHER" -- THRILLING, BLOOD-CURDLING STUFF!

AND TRUE, EVERY WORD.

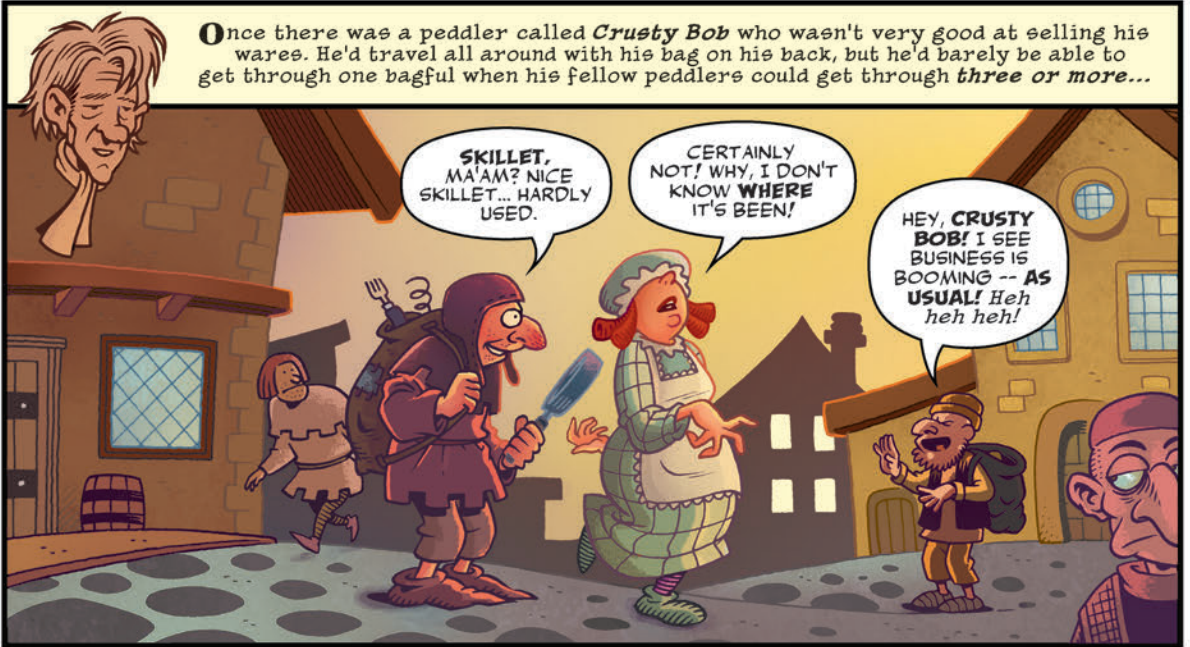


TRUE? ARE YOU SERIOUS?

ALL STORIES ARE TRUE... TO **SOMEONE**. AND THAT PEDDLER HAS REMINDED ME OF A **DOOZY**.

MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE... AS IF YOU EVER DO ANYTHING ELSE.

Once there was a peddler called *Crusty Bob* who wasn't very good at selling his wares. He'd travel all around with his bag on his back, but he'd barely be able to get through one bagful when his fellow peddlers could get through *three or more*...



SKILLET. MA'AM? NICE SKILLET... HARDLY USED.

CERTAINLY NOT! WHY, I DON'T KNOW WHERE IT'S BEEN!

HEY, CRUSTY BOB! I SEE BUSINESS IS BOOMING -- AS USUAL! Heh heh heh!

Poor Bob. Each evening he'd leave town to find a tree to lie under, his bag still as full as ever...



...that is, until one midsummer evening...



HEY, BOB. YOU LOOK LIKE YOU COULD USE SOME HELP.

WHAT...?

HOW... HOW DID YOU KNOW MY NAME, MISTER...?

CALL ME NICK. I KNOW EVERYBODY'S NAME. I KNOW EVERYBODY'S TROUBLES, TOO.

BUT ALL YOUR TROUBLES COULD BE GONE IN A MOMENT... IF YOU JUST SIGN HERE.

WHAT IS THIS?



AN IRON-CLAD GUARANTEE THAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SELL EVERYTHING YOU BUY FROM NOW ON... THOUGH I MUST WARN YOU THAT YOU MUST NEVER ALLOW YOUR BAG TO BECOME COMPLETELY EMPTY. OTHERWISE I'LL BE FORCED TO INVOKE PARAGRAPH 66, CLAUSE 6(e).

BUT I'M SURE A MAN OF YOUR INTELLIGENCE...



And so Bob signed. And from that moment, if his bag ever became completely empty... he would belong to Old Nick.



From that day forth, Crusty Bob's fortunes *changed*. Before long, people were calling him *Fancy Bob*, for he was doing so well he could afford to dress in the finest garments.



He had to buy a horse and cart to carry all of his goods, and he hired an *assistant* too, so successful had he become.

But Bob was always careful to ensure he had a little something left in his bag at the end of the day.



Then, one day...



So they went to the fair and, sure enough, sales were brisk.

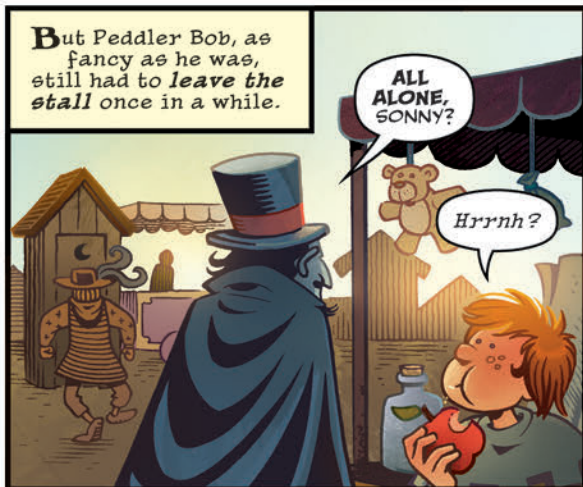
The other peddlers were left out in the cold... but there was *nothing* they could do about it.



But Peddler Bob, as fancy as he was, still had to *leave the stall* once in a while.

ALL ALONE, SONNY?

Hrrnh?



TELL YOU WHAT -- I'LL BUY THE LOT. HORSE, CART AND ALL... PLUS WHATEVER YOUR MASTER HAS IN HIS BAG. WHAT SAY YOU?

UHH... VERY WELL. THREE -- NO! SIX! SIX HUNDRED CROWNS! YUP!



The boy had not expected to *get* six hundred crowns. He was merely trying to start negotiations from a position of *strength*. But to his astonishment...

DONE. TELL YOUR MASTER I'LL MEET HIM AT THE HINNERSMESS TAVERN THIS EVENING...



... TO COLLECT WHAT'S MINE!



Presently, Bob the Peddler returned from his errand...

YOU DID WHAT?!

YUP! EVERYTHING -- HORSE, CART AND ALL! AND HE GAVE ME SI-- UHH, **FOUR HUNDRED CROWNS** ON THE SPOT!



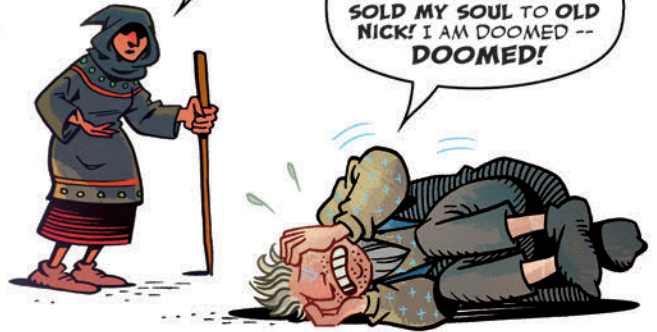
OH, WOE! OH, WOE! ALL IS LOST! FOR THAT WAS SURELY **OLD NICK** HIS VERY SELF -- AND NOW HE WILL TAKE ME AS HIS OWN! **OOOHHH!!**

MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE HELD OUT FOR EIGHT HUNDRED...



WHAT THE DEVIL IS THE MATTER WITH YOU? YOU'RE MAKING A **SPECTACLE** OF YOURSELF!

OLD WOMAN -- MY **TWERP** OF AN ASSISTANT HAS JUST **SOLD MY SOUL** TO OLD NICK! I AM **DOOMED** -- **DOOMED!**



PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER, MAN! I'VE DEALT WITH OLD NICK ON **MANY OCCASIONS** -- AND HE'S **NEVER YET** GOTTEN THE BETTER OF **ME!**

?gasp!
IT'S KATIE GREY, DEVIL-SMASHER!



TOO RIGHT IT IS. NOW LISTEN. I CAN PUT OLD NICK IN HIS PLACE FOR YOU... BUT YOU MUST DO **EXACTLY** AS I SAY.

O-O-KAY...

IT'LL **COST** YOU.

FINE. I GUESS... I GUESS I'VE GOT NOTHING TO **LOSE.**



EXCELLENT. I BELIEVE WE CAN DO **BUSINESS.**

NOW... HERE'S WHAT WE'LL DO...

