The creators of the pioneering anthology of Asian American comics, SECRET IDENTITIES, are excited to announce that work is now underway on a second volume of all-new tales set in the grand tradition of heroic graphical fiction: SECRET IDENTITIES VOLUME 2: SHATTERED, targeting a 2012 publication date.

The first volume was one of the year’s best-selling books for independent publisher The New Press, which quickly expressed interest in continuing the series. Now, a generous development grant from the Vilcek Foundation has ultimately made a new volume possible — one that we intend to make even bigger, better and more boundary-breaking than the first.

In Volume One, we focused on using superheroes as a lens through which to expose and celebrate Asian American history and culture. This time, we want to expand our perspective to the darker side of the SECRET IDENTITIES universe, while also incorporating a broader range of comic genres — from hard-boiled pulp to martial arts, adventure and science fiction.

The idea was originally seeded when, at SECRET IDENTITIES’ New York Comic Con panel in 2009, an audience member noted that as exciting as the project sounded, it was easy to tell stories about heroes — the real challenge is to tell stories about villains. It was then that the SI team began to consider the possibility of exploring the nefarious, sinister and menacing side of the good guy/bad guy equation in order to upend, reenvision, reimagine — to shatter — distorted or negative images that have shadowed Asian Americans since the earliest days of our arrival in this country.

The idea of putting a focus on stories that showcased strong and vivid interactions between heroes and villains — even stories with the 'villain' as protagonist — opens up interesting ways to question the power of perception to shape reality. It also inspired the team to conceive of a narrative that will serve as the framing story for the book — a single long tale whose multiple episodes will introduce each book’s chapter, while allowing us to continue the stories of some of our favorite characters from Volume One.
The framing story will follow the aftereffects of an unfortunate mystical accident perpetrated by the protagonists of Volume One's "Driving Steel" — Jimson Fo and his young friend (and future American legend) John Henry — which releases a quintet of archfiends into the world, each with the power to reshape reality to conform to its image: The Manipulator, The Temptress, The Brute, The Brain and The Alien. The immortal Fo then takes it upon himself to pursue the demons across the ages, collaborating with heroes of each time period to defeat and destroy these infernal nemeses.

The chapters that follow each introductory installment will contain stories that find new and distinctive ways to tell real, three-dimensional tales to replace cartoon stereotypes, or by disrupting them with satire and humor.

In these stories, Secret Identities: Shattered will continue to explore superhero convention, while expanding into other genres in the comic book milieu, with the only criteria for creators being that their stories focus on Asian American heroes (and, villains) and explore or subvert one of the archetypes outlined above.

Contributors

So here's where you come in. It took us three long years to finish Volume One. We'd hate to wait that long for Volume Two to be completed. Fortunately, we have a little more experience in how to handle a project of this scale now, and good (and patient) friends in the form of our publishers at The New Press, who were very encouraged in the success of Volume One. Just as importantly, it received terrific coverage in the mainstream and publishing industry press, spotlighting the key issues the anthology sought to push forward — bringing our history and issues as Asian Americans into the mainstream. And it's increasingly being adopted as material for courses as well, in colleges and even in high schools.

Volume Two is a critical companion for the first book in two ways — it extends the types of stories being included into other comics genres beyond superheroes (allowing more diversity of storytelling and breadth in the types of topics and ideas addressed), and it focuses explicitly on deconstructing and disrupting stereotypes, which readers of the book and audiences at our tourstops have been strongly focused on in their feedback.

This is what we're looking for from you. If you were part of Volume One and interested in contributing (and we hope you are — we really need you!), the drill this time is similar. If you're newly being invited for this volume, here's how SI works:

- Writers: Tell us your pitch. A couple hundred words of description is all we need — we don’t want a completed script. Include details about the characterizations,
the plot, the setting, and yes, the genre. We’re looking for all the classic comics "hero genres" this time out: Crime, horror, Westerns, martial arts, sci-fi and adventure tales ... and yes, superhero stories. (We say hero genres to distinguish from, say, romances, high-school slice of life comedies a la Archie, or funny-animal stuff in the vein of Harvey comics or Disney; we'll save those genres for the future!). Of course, the primary characters and context of those stories should involve Asian Americans — and in the course of telling a fresh, original story, challenge or invert expectations and cliche images of those genres.

- You can tell a story that brings new **humanity** to the old caricatures of these images. *(What does an anonymous Asian henchgoon like Oddjob do on his off-days, when not assisting crazed supervillains in their quest to take over the world?)*

- You can **invert** or **reverse** or **remix old ideas**. *(What if it turned out that Ming the Merciless was the real hero of the Flash Gordon epics, but was subject to bad PR? What about the Dragon Lady's little-known male counterpart, the Dragon Lad?)*

- You can tell **straightforward genre stories**, but ones that **add texture and backstories and motivations** that eliminate the one-dimensionality of the way these characters are traditionally depicted.

- And, of course, there’s always **satire**!

- But we **don't** want you to be **blunt** or **didactic**. If it’s not a cool, unique, **entertaining idea**, it won’t make the cut, no matter how enlightening or educational it might be. **Originality** and **freshness of perspective or plot twist** will win the day.

- If your pitch is accepted, we'll **pair you up with an artist** to flesh out and graphically interpret your story (assuming you’re not one already, or don’t have one you already want to work with).

- **Artists**: If we haven't seen your work yet, point us to representative work you've done online, or email us samples. **Show us the range of styles and genres you're comfortable with.** This will help us partner you with the best possible fit of collaborator.

Artists will be expected to pencil and ultimately ink their own work. The book is all in **black and white, other than 16 pages of color pinups**. Pinup contributors
will be asked to color their work as well. If you are illustrating a story, note that most stories in this volume will be 8 to 16 pages long (though there will be some shorter 1 to 4 page pieces, mostly humorous works, as well as 1 page pinups).

We are considering having a single artist **letter** all of the book’s stories; however, if your art style incorporates hand-lettering, we will accommodate your preferences.

- **Writer/Artists:** Please feel free to indicate that you want to do both writing and art, or just one or the other. If you submit a great story idea but we have an artist whose work we feel will match your concept well, we may still ask you to collaborate; we’ll do similarly if we don’t feel your story is a fit but love your art.

**ALL SUBMISSIONS SHOULD BE SENT TO:** submit@secretidentities.org

Feel free to email us with any questions or feedback! We're really looking forward to your submissions!

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The Framing Story

At the turn of the 19th century, Jimson Fo — a Chinese railworker with an unusual secret — and his young African American companion, John Henry — a boy who'll later become a legendary steel-driving hero — have taken refuge in a small mining camp in Northern California. But the Chinese and Japanese miners working the seams of the mountain seem haunted by secrets of their own, which they refuse to share with the two outsiders. Jimson and John offer to pay for their shelter with work, and are given some menial tasks to perform, with the caveat that they should avoid a particular abandoned shaft in the course of their labors.

But young John's curiosity gets the better of him, and as a full moon rises over the mountains, he enters the forbidden shaft and breaks the seal to a strange portal he finds within it. Behind that doorway is a bare room containing a single object: A full-length mirror that oddly seems to reflect nothing in the room ... until John steps into its view.

Jimson, following his missing friend, arrives to find John transfixed by his visage within the glass, as a hideous set of transformations reshape his face and body. Jimson leaps forward and smashes the mirror with his fist, only to watch in grim horror as five shadowy beings rise up from the broken glass.

They are the Darkglass Demons, infernal beings that steal the souls of those they possess by transforming their hosts into ugly, twisted mockeries of reality, until the people around them believe those images to be true. And though Jimson’s quick reaction has saved his friend, it has also unleashed the demons to wreak havoc upon the world. Jimson and John watch in horror as the quintet of incubi escape the mineshaft and flee in five different directions, each seeking a human host — a carrier for the spread of their plague of lies and illusion.

Given their proximity, it’s the residents of the town around them who suffer the fate of possession by the five, ensuring that their false images become irrevocably associated with Asian Americans for generations to come. And so Jimson, whose true identity is that of an immortal ifrit from the mystical "Flaming Mountain" (Fo Jim Saan) of Western China, has no choice but to spend the decades ahead trying to fix the mistake he has made, capturing the escaped demons and erasing the taint he’s accidentally released upon humanity ....
The Long Arc

In the "long arc" that runs through the book — a single storyline whose installments serve to introduce the five chapters of the book — the immortal Chinese īfrīt Jimson Fo (first seen in "Driving Steel" in volume one of "Secret Identities") accidentally releases five incubi that each represent one of a quintet of virulent archetypes:

- **BO-KWUN (THE MANIPULATOR):** The archetype of the evil controller: The megalomaniacal puppeteer seeking world domination through nefarious conspiracy — Fu Manchu, Ming the Merciless, Dr. No, R’as Al Ghul, the Mandarin. The very definition of the Yellow Peril.


- **KUM-SAU (THE BRUTE):** The archetype of the violent, amoral thug, who places no value on human life (not even his own) — embodied by cartoon depictions of yakuza, punks, tongs and triads, and cannon-fodder minions who die screaming by the dozens.

- **ZHI-LIK (THE BRAIN):** The archetype of the preternaturally intelligent mind without a body; sexless, heartless, friendless, the self-hating prodigy more comfortable socializing with machines than people. Math geeks and mad geniuses, otaku and social outcasts — they may rule the world, but they’ll never get the girl.

- **YI-HEUNG (THE ALIEN):** The archetype of the perpetual foreigner — enigmatic, inscrutable, of suspect loyalty and secret agenda; sleeper cell terrorists, illegal immigrants, unassimilable outsiders with weird customs and heathen religious practices.

The installments of the long arc will feature Jimson teaming up through the decades with other heroes from the first volume of *Secret Identities* to hunt down the incubi and erase the shadow they’ve cast over the community that serves as their host; the purpose of the long arc is to extend the ongoing continuity of the SI Universe while providing introductory context for the standalone stories contained in each chapter.