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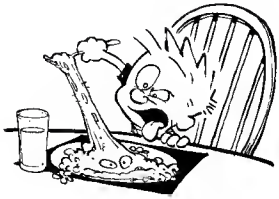
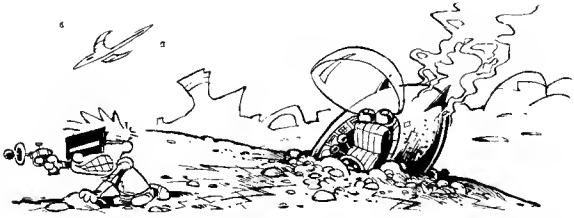
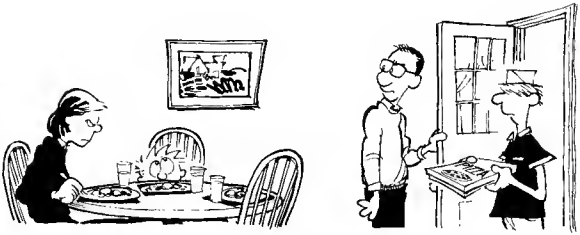
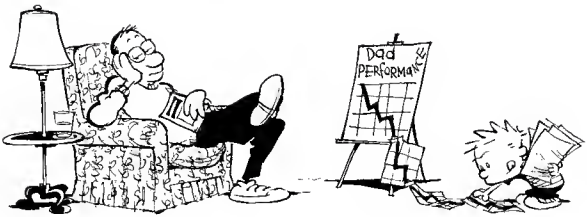
The following strip appeared in some newspapers on 11-28-1985 and has not appeared in any collections since.


ZZZ..UNK..
GZ..YOW..ZZ..

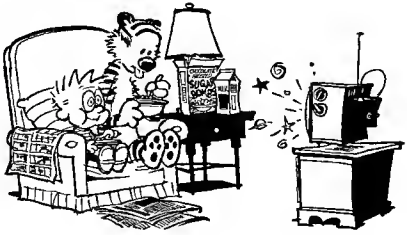


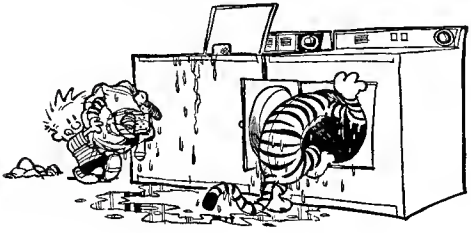


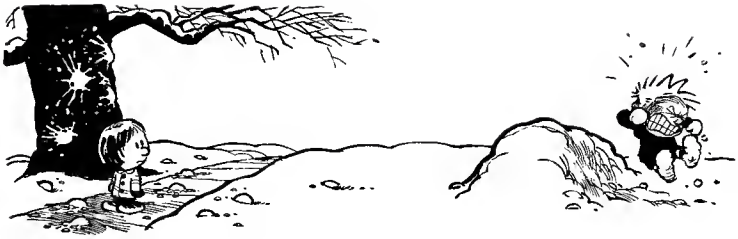



Dad
PERFORMA

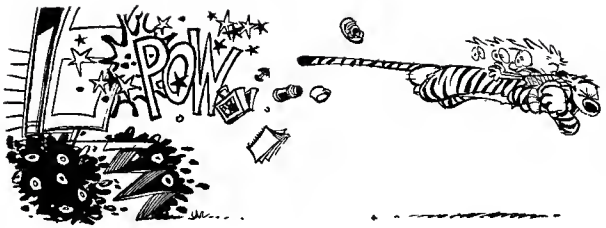

TREASURE
MAP





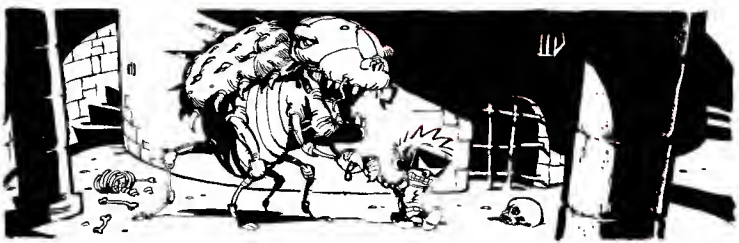



AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA


POW

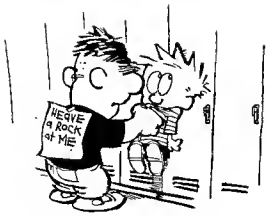

BOOK REPORT
"TREASURE ISLAND"


BOOK REPORT
"TREASURE ISLAND"

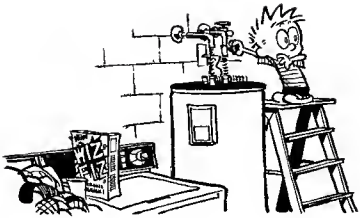


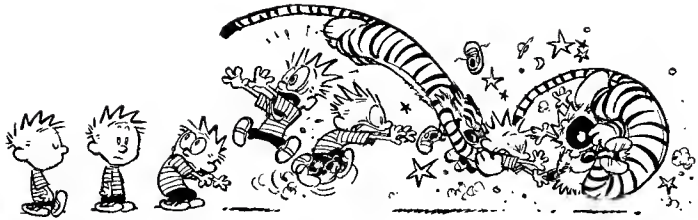

HELP! I'VE BEEN KIDNAPPED! CALL THE POLICE!

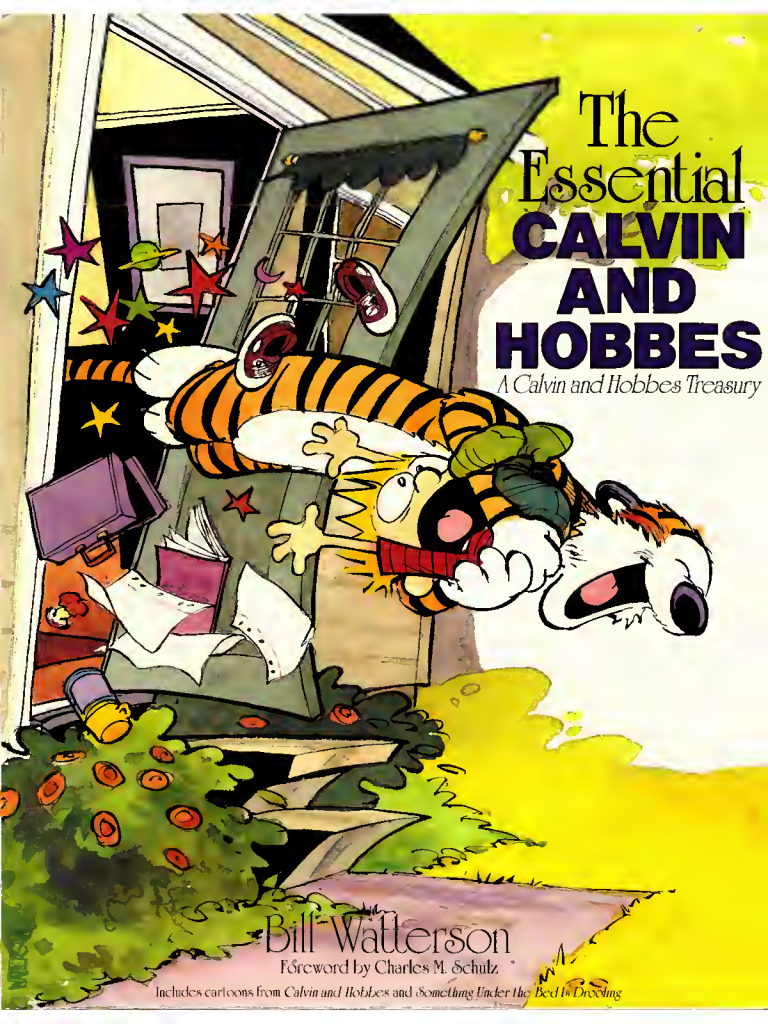

BON VOYAGE DAD

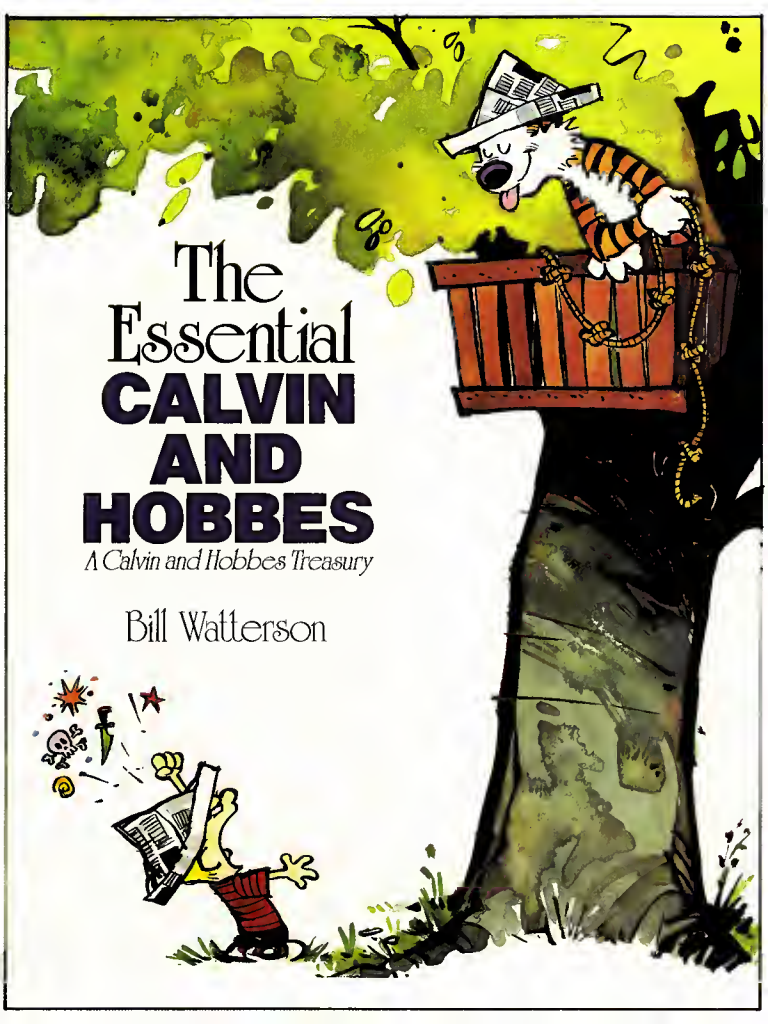

HEAVE A ROCK at ME


Z






The Essential
CALVIN AND HOBBES
A Calvin and Hobbes Treasury
Bill Watterson
Foreword by Charles M. Schulz
Includes cartoons from Calvin and Hobbes and Something Under the Bed Is Drooling



The Essential CALVIN AND HOBBES

A Calvin and Hobbes Treasury

Bill Watterson

Foreword

Bill Watterson draws wonderful bedside tables. I admire that. He also draws great water splashes and living room couches and chairs and lamps and yawns and screams, and all the things that make a comic strip fun to look at. I like the thin little arms on Calvin and his shoes that look like dinner rolls.

Drawing in a comic strip is infinitely more important than we may think, for our medium must compete with other entertainments, and if a cartoonist does nothing more than illustrate a joke, he or she is going to lose.

Calvin and Hobbes, however, contains hilarious pictures that cannot be duplicated in other mediums. In short, it is fun to look at, and that is what has made Bill's work such an admirable success.

— Charles M. Schulz

To Tom

A NAUSEOUS NOCTURNE


From the darkness, by the closet
Comes a noise, much like a faucet
Makes: a madd'ning drip-drip-dripping sound.
It seems some ill-proportioned beast,
Anticipating me deceased,
Is drooling poison puddles on the ground.


A can of Mace, a forty-five,
Is all I'd need to stay alive,
But no weapon lies within my sight.
Oh my gosh! A shadow's creeping,
Ominous and black, it's seeping
Slowly 'cross a moonlit square of light!

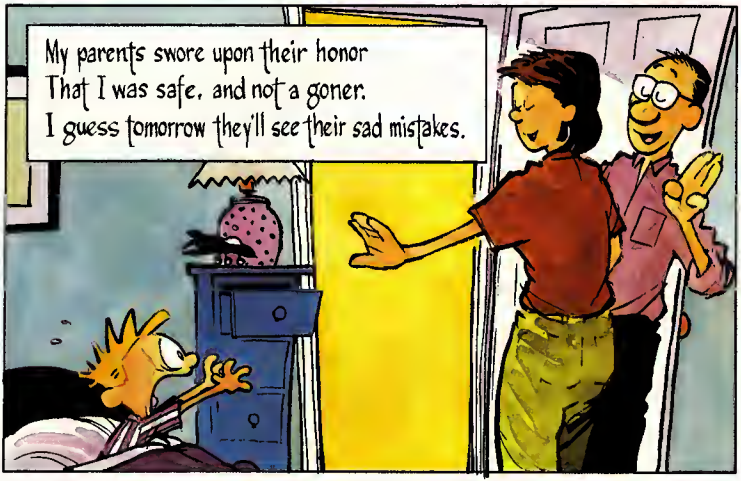

Suddenly a floorboard creak
Announces the bloodsucking freak
Is here to steal my future years away!
A sulf'rous smell now fills the room
Heralding my imm'nent doom!
A fang gleams in the dark and murky gray!

Oh, blood-red eyes and tentacles!
Throbbing, pulsing ventricles!
Mucus-oozing pores and frightful claws!

Worse, in terms of outright scariness,
Are the suckers multifarious
That grab and force you in its mighty jaws!

This disgusting aberration
Of nature needs no motivation
To devour helpless children in their beds.
Relishing despairing moans,
It chews kids up and sucks their bones,
And dissolves inside its mouth their li'l heads!


SCARY DEATH
GORE
I know this 'cause I read it not
Two hours ago, and then I got
The heebie-jeebies and these awful shakes.


My parents swore upon their honor
That I was safe, and not a goner.
I guess tomorrow they'll see their sad mistakes.

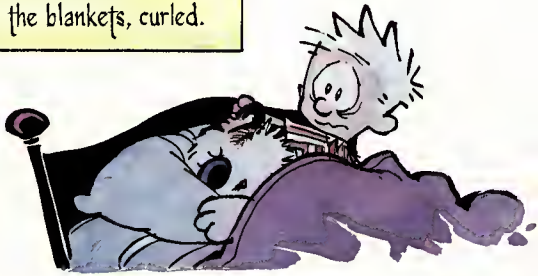

In the morning, they'll come in
And say, "What was that awful din
We heard last night? You kept us both from sleep!"
Only then will they surmise
The gruesomeness of my demise
And see that my remains are in a heap.

Dad will look at Mom and say,
"Too bad he had to go that way."
And Mom will look at Dad, and nod assent.

Mom will add, "Still, it's fitting,
That as he was this world quitting,
He should leave another mess before he went."

They may not mind at first, I know.
They will miss me later, though,
And perhaps admit that they were wrong.
As memories of me grow dim,
They'll say, "We were too strict with him.
We should have listened to him all along."

As speedily my end approaches,
I bid a final "buenas noches"
To my best friend here in all the world.
Gently snoring, whiskers seeming
To sniff at smells (he must be dreaming),
He lies snuggled in the blankets, curled.



HEY! WAKE UP, YOU STUPID CRETIN!
YOU GONNA SLEEP WHILE I GET EATEN?!
Suddenly the monster knows I'm not alone!

There's an animal in bed with me!
An awful beast he did not see!
The monster never would've come if he had known!

The monster, in his consternation,
Demonstrates defenestration,
And runs and runs and runs and runs away.

The End.

The End


Printed in U.S.A.
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The Calvin and Hobbes
LAZY SUNDAY BOOK

A Collection of Sunday Calvin and Hobbes Cartoons

by BILL WATTERSON

The Calvin and Hobbes
LAZY SUNDAY BOOK

A Collection of Sunday Calvin and Hobbes Cartoons

by BILL WATTERSON

A dreaded Naggon mother ship fires a bolt of deadly destructo ray that sends a small, red spacecraft reeling towards an unknown planet! Inside that spacecraft is our hero, the intrepid...

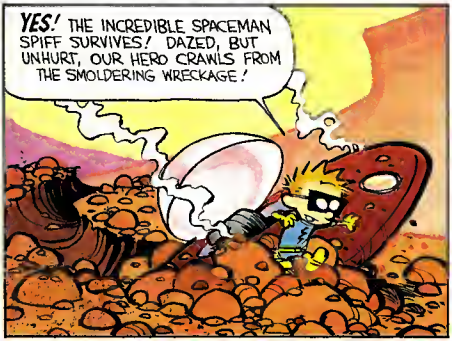
SPACEMAN SPIFF

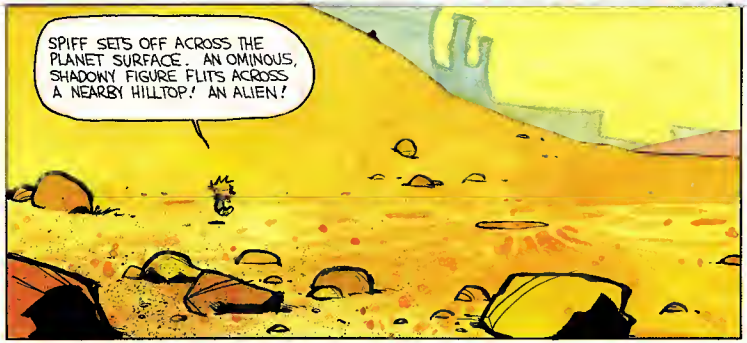
INTERPLANETARY EXPLORER EXTRAORDINAIRE!

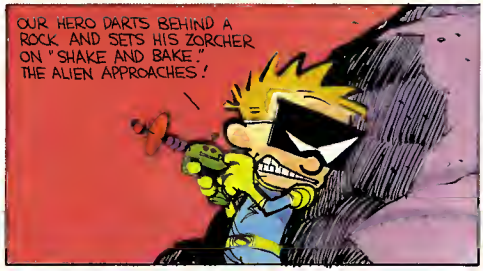

OUR HERO WRESTLES THE CONTROLS, BUT THE ALTITUDITRON REFUSES TO RESPOND!
WITH EVER INCREASING VELOCITY, SPIFF ROARS TO HIS DOOM!


SPIFF'S ONLY HOPE IS TO ATTEMPT A THOUSAND MILE-AN-HOUR LANDING!
OUR HERO LOWERS THE LANDING GEAR AND LEVELS OUT! WILL HE MAKE IT??


HMPH.

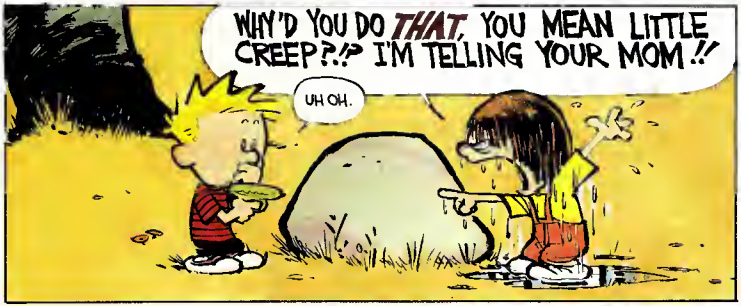

YES! THE INCREDIBLE SPACEMAN SPIFF SURVIVES! DAZED, BUT UNHURT, OUR HERO CRAWLS FROM THE SMOLDERING WRECKAGE!

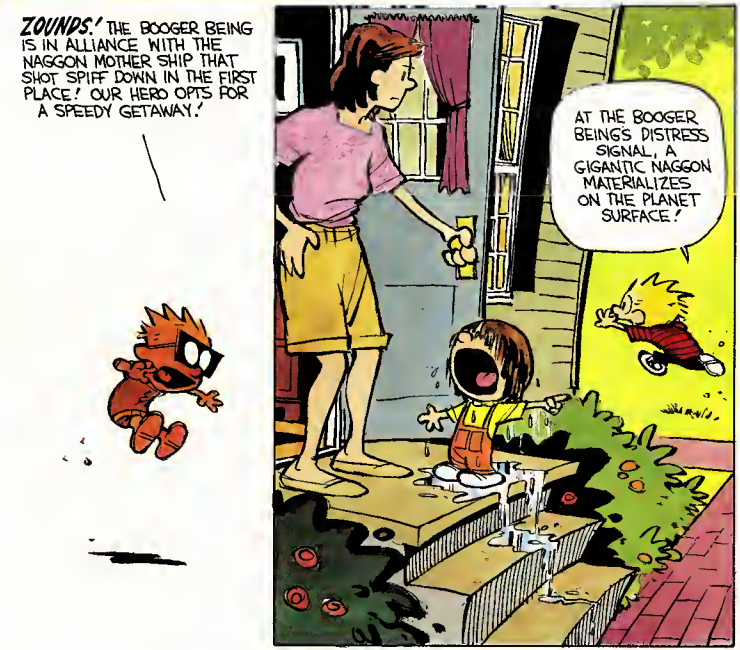

SPIFF SETS OFF ACROSS THE PLANET SURFACE. AN OMINOUS, SHADOWY FIGURE FLITS ACROSS A NEARBY HILLTOP! AN ALIEN!


OUR HERO DARTS BEHIND A ROCK AND SETS HIS ZORCHER ON "SHAKE AND BAKE." THE ALIEN APPROACHES!


HI CALVIN! I SEE YOU, SO YOU CAN STOP HIDING NOW! ARE YOU PLAYING COWBOYS OR SOMETHING? CAN I PLAY TOO?


IT'S A LOATHESOME BAT-WEBBED BOOGER BEING... A REPULSIVE LEECH-LIKE CREATURE THAT ATTACHES ITSELF TO YOU AND NEVER LETS YOU ALONE UNTIL YOU'RE DEAD!!
GREEP GORK! GOOP GOOP!
OUR HERO SPRINGS INTO ACTION!
KISS YOUR PROTONS GOODBYE, BOOGER BEING!!
SPIFF FIRES REPEATEDLY... BUT TO HIS GREAT SURPRISE AND HORROR, THE ZORCH CHARGE IS ABSORBED BY THE BOOGER BEING WITH NO ILL EFFECT! INSTEAD, THE MONSTER ONLY BECOMES ANGRY!

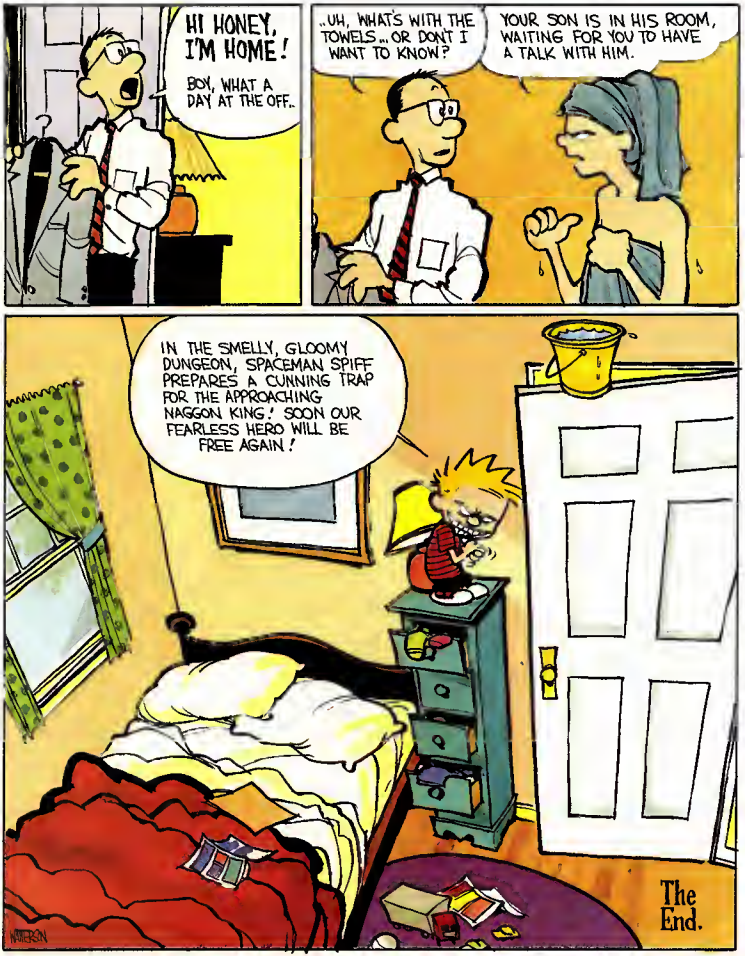

WHY'D YOU DO THAT, YOU MEAN LITTLE CREEP?!? I'M TELLING YOUR MOM!!
UH OH.


ZOUNDS! THE BOOGER BEING IS IN ALLIANCE WITH THE NAGGON MOTHER SHIP THAT SHOT SPIFF DOWN IN THE FIRST PLACE! OUR HERO OPTS FOR A SPEEDY GETAWAY!
AT THE BOOGER BEING'S DISTRESS SIGNAL, A GIGANTIC NAGGON MATERIALIZES ON THE PLANET SURFACE!


WITH A GROUND-SHAKING LUNGE, THE NAGGON IS AFTER SPACEMAN SPIFF!


OUR HERO LEAPS INTO A CREVICE! KNOWING HIS ZORCHER WOULD BE USELESS AGAINST THE BEHEMOTH, SPIFF ARMS THE DEMISE-O BOMB HE KEEPS IN HIS BELT FOR JUST SUCH AN EMERGENCY!
THE NAGGON ROUNDS THE CORNER! SPIFF HEAVES THE BOMB!


HA HA! DEATH TO NAGGONS!
CALVIN, DON'T YOU DARE THROW THA..
THE MONSTER IS ONLY STUNNED! SPIFF QUICKLY TRIES TO ARM ANOTHER BOMB!
IT'S TOO LATE! THE NAGGON HAS HIM! WHAT WILL HAPPEN NOW!?


HI HONEY, I'M HOME!
BOY, WHAT A DAY AT THE OFF..
..UH, WHAT'S WITH THE TOWELS... OR DON'T I WANT TO KNOW?
YOUR SON IS IN HIS ROOM, WAITING FOR YOU TO HAVE A TALK WITH HIM.
IN THE SMELLY, GLOOMY DUNGEON, SPACEMAN SPIFF PREPARES A CUNNING TRAP FOR THE APPROACHING NAGGON KING! SOON OUR FEARLESS HERO WILL BE FREE AGAIN!
The End.
WATTERSON

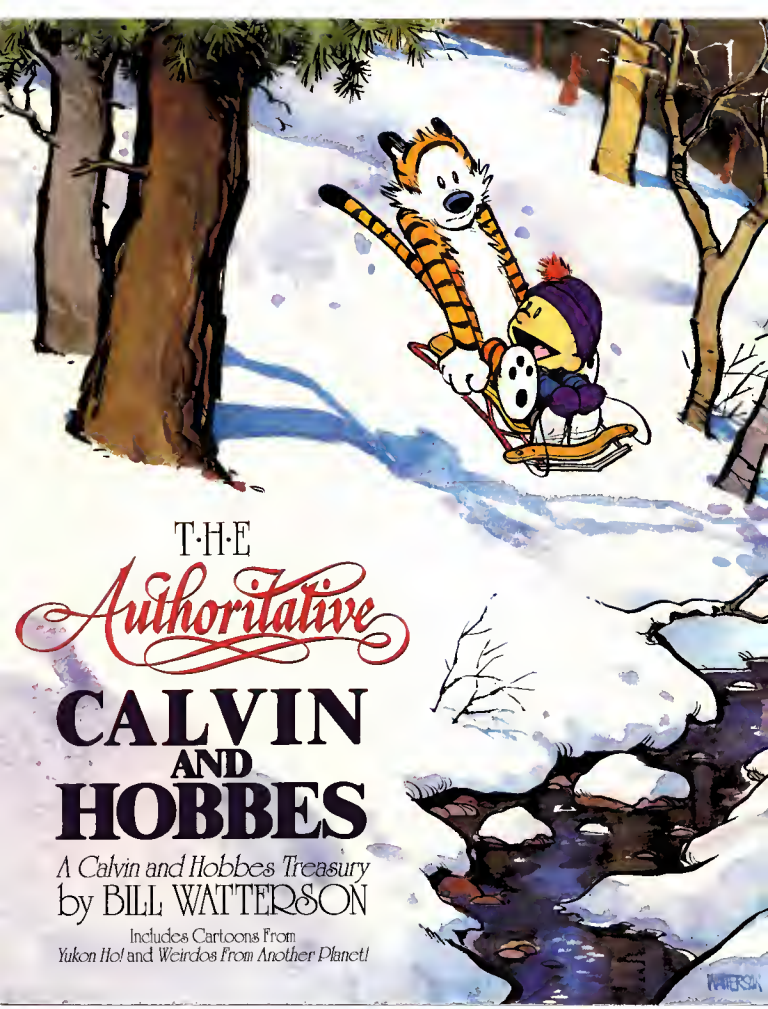
AFTERWORD

Long ago the Sunday comics were printed the size of an entire newspaper page. Each comic was like a color poster. Not surprisingly, with all that space to fill, cartoonists produced works of incredible beauty and power that we just don't see anymore, now that strips are a third or a quarter of their former size. Whereas Little Nemo could dream through 15 surreal panels back in the early part of the century, today it's rare to see a Sunday strip with more than six panels—especially if the characters move. All the things that make comics fun to read—the stories, the dialogue, the pictures—have gotten simpler and simpler in order to keep the work legible at smaller and smaller sizes. The art form has been in a process of retrograde evolution for decades. For those of us trying to return some of the childhood fun we had marveling at comic drawings, the opportunities today are discouraging.

Cartoons can be much more than we've been seeing lately. How much more will depend on what newspaper readers will demand. One thing, though, is certain: little boys, like tigers, will roam all the territory they can get.

—BILL WATTERSON

The End



T·H·E

Authoritative

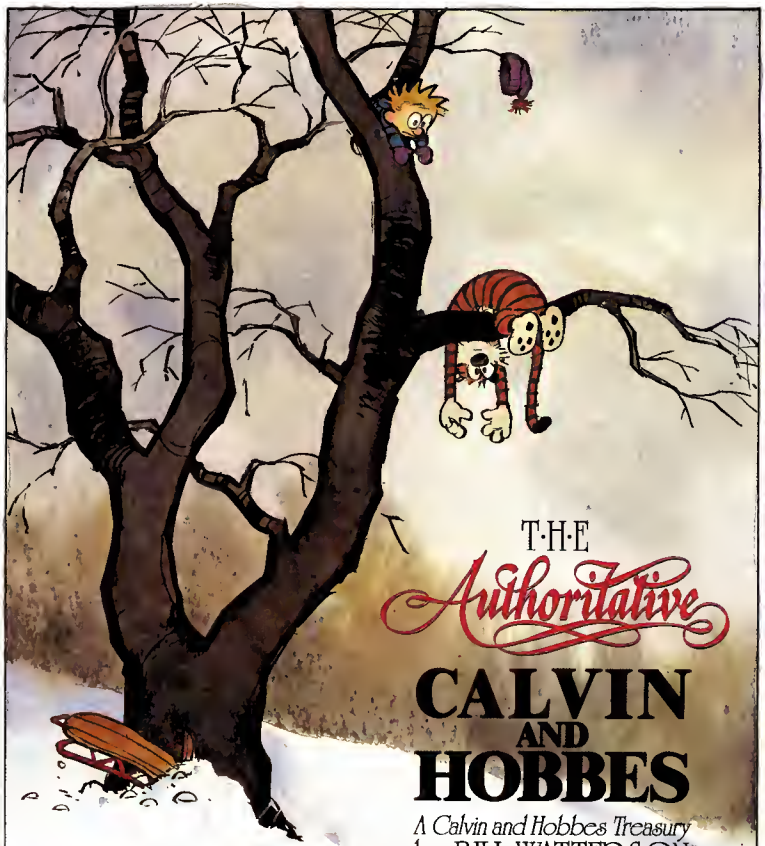
CALVIN AND HOBBES

A Calvin and Hobbes Treasury

by BILL WATTERSON

Includes Cartoons From
Yukon Ho! and *Weirdos From Another Planet!*


WATTERSON



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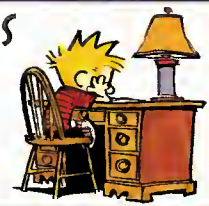
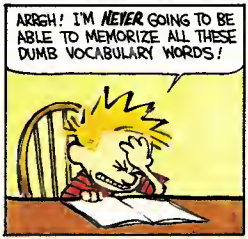
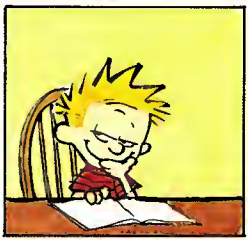
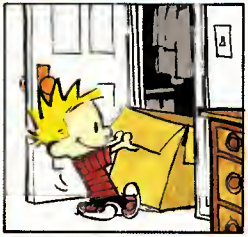
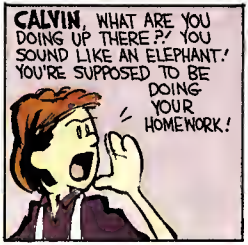
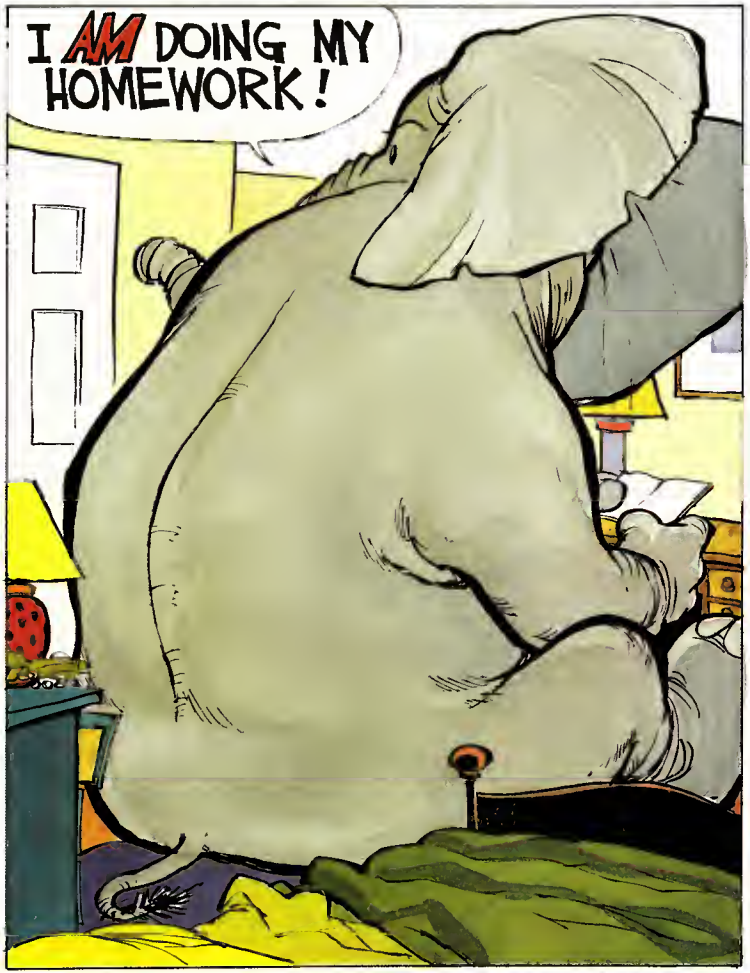




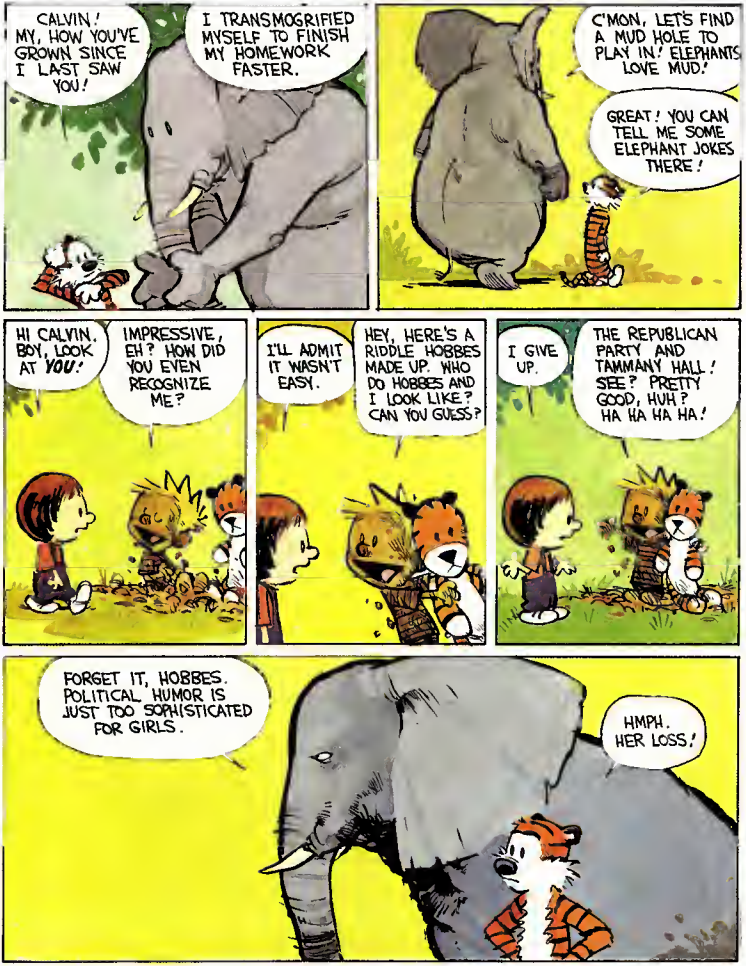







I AM DOING MY HOMEWORK!

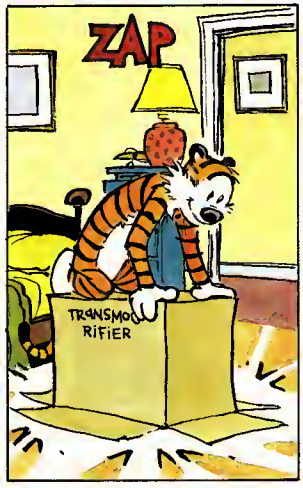

HA! WHAT A GREAT IDEA! ELEPHANTS NEVER FORGET, SO MEMORIZING THIS WAS A SNAP! I'M ALL DONE!
NOW I CAN GO OUT AND PLAY!
Z
HEY HOBBES, GUESS WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT ME!
AUGH!

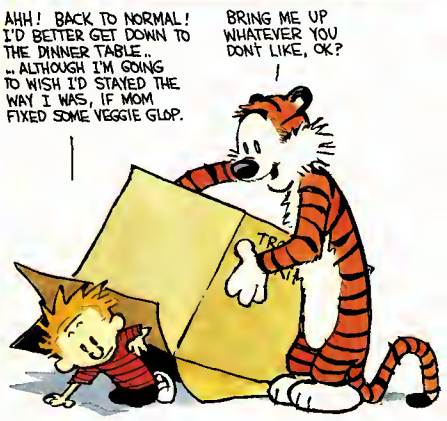

CALVIN! MY, HOW YOU'VE GROWN SINCE I LAST SAW YOU!
I TRANSMOGRIFIED MYSELF TO FINISH MY HOMEWORK FASTER.
C'MON, LET'S FIND A MUD HOLE TO PLAY IN! ELEPHANTS LOVE MUD!
GREAT! YOU CAN TELL ME SOME ELEPHANT JOKES THERE!
HI CALVIN. BOY, LOOK AT YOU!
IMPRESSIVE, EH? HOW DID YOU EVEN RECOGNIZE ME?
I'LL ADMIT IT WASN'T EASY.
HEY, HERE'S A RIDDLE HOBBES MADE UP. WHO DO HOBBES AND I LOOK LIKE? CAN YOU GUESS?
I GIVE UP.
THE REPUBLICAN PARTY AND TAMMANY HALL! SEE? PRETTY GOOD, HUH? HA HA HA HA!
FORGET IT, HOBBES. POLITICAL HUMOR IS JUST TOO SOPHISTICATED FOR GIRLS.
HMPH. HER LOSS!


CALVIN, TIME FOR DINNER!
UH OH. MOM WILL HAVE A FIT IF I GO TO THE TABLE AS AN ELEPHANT.
YOU'D BETTER TRANSMOGRIFY BACK TO A KID.
THE TRANSMOGRIFIER IS STILL IN MY ROOM. WE'LL HAVE TO SNEAK UPSTAIRS! SHHHH!
CALVIN, DID I HEAR YOU COME... OH NO!
CALVIN, YOU... AUGH!! WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING?!
IT'S OK, MOM! THIS ISN'T PERMANENT! I WAS JUST GOING TO TRANSMOGRIFY MYSELF BACK TO THE WAY I USED TO BE!
I'LL SAY YOU WILL! WHAT A MESS! GET INTO THE TUB THIS INSTANT!

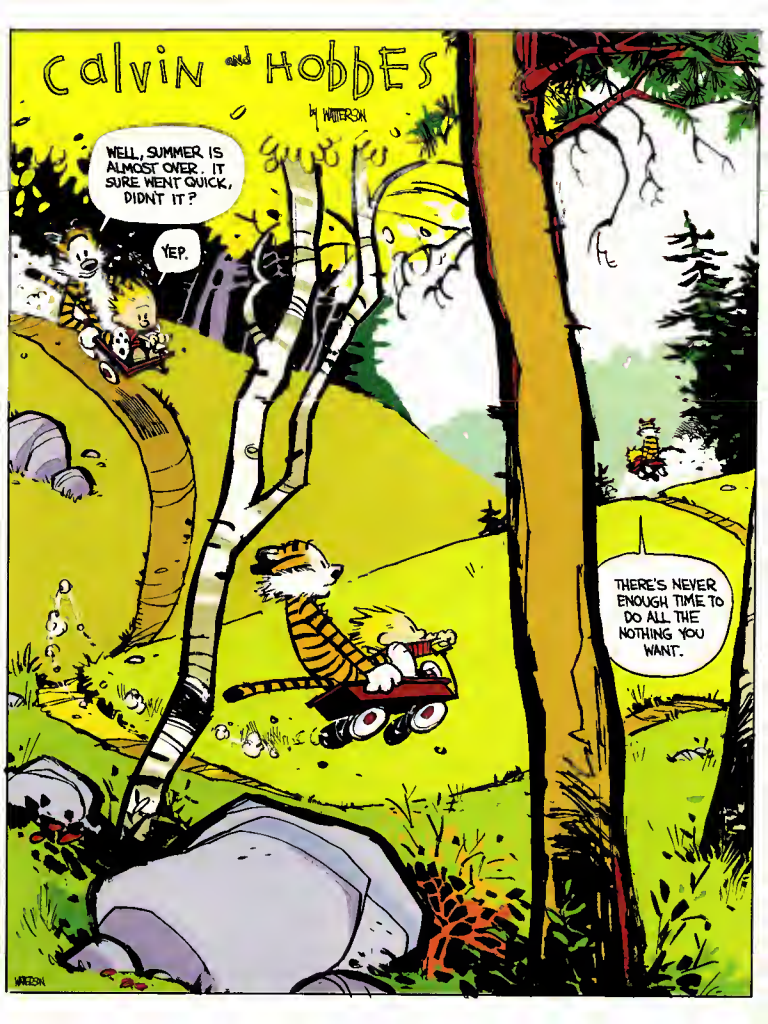

THERE. I HOPE *THIS* MAKES MOM HAPPY! HAND ME A FEW MORE TOWELS, AND THEN I'LL GO TRANSMOGRIFY.


OK, THE DIAL IS SET FOR "CALVIN." READY?
READY!

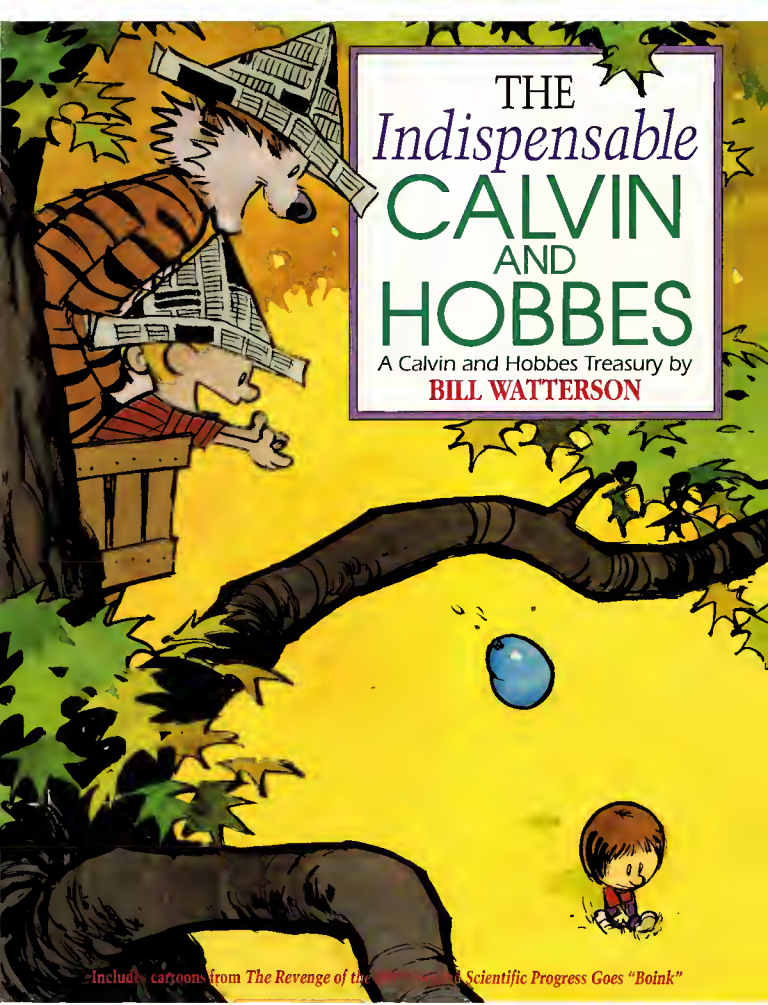

ZAP
TRANSMOG RIFIER


AHH! BACK TO NORMAL! I'D BETTER GET DOWN TO THE DINNER TABLE.. .. ALTHOUGH I'M GOING TO WISH I'D STAYED THE WAY I WAS, IF MOM FIXED SOME VEGGIE GLOP.
BRING ME UP WHATEVER YOU DON'T LIKE, OK?


SO LET'S HEAR ONE OF THE VOCABULARY WORDS YOU LEARNED.
OK. UM, LET'S SEE... ONE WAS..UH, HMM... WELL, UH...
I THINK YOU'D BETTER SPEND A LITTLE MORE TIME WITH YOUR BOOK AFTER DINNER, HMM?
NO,NO, I REMEMBER THEM WHEN I'M AN ELEPHANT.! I JUST DON'T KNOW THEM NOW! DON'T WORRY, I'LL TRANSMOGRIFY MYSELF BEFORE SCHOOL TOMORROW, AND I'LL DO FINE! REALLY!
YOU KNOW HOBBES, IF IT WASN'T FOR YOU, I'D NEVER HAVE ANY FUN AT ALL.
DON'T MENTION IT. I'M LEARNING SOME GOOD WORDS THIS WAY! MMM, YOU KNOW, THESE BEETS AREN'T BAD. ..AND THEY'RE CERTAINLY "SALUBRIOUS."
The End.


Calvin and Hobbes
by Watterson
WELL, SUMMER IS ALMOST OVER. IT SURE WENT QUICK, DIDN'T IT?
YEP.
THERE'S NEVER ENOUGH TIME TO DO ALL THE NOTHING YOU WANT.
WATTERSON

The End


THE
Indispensable
CALVIN
AND
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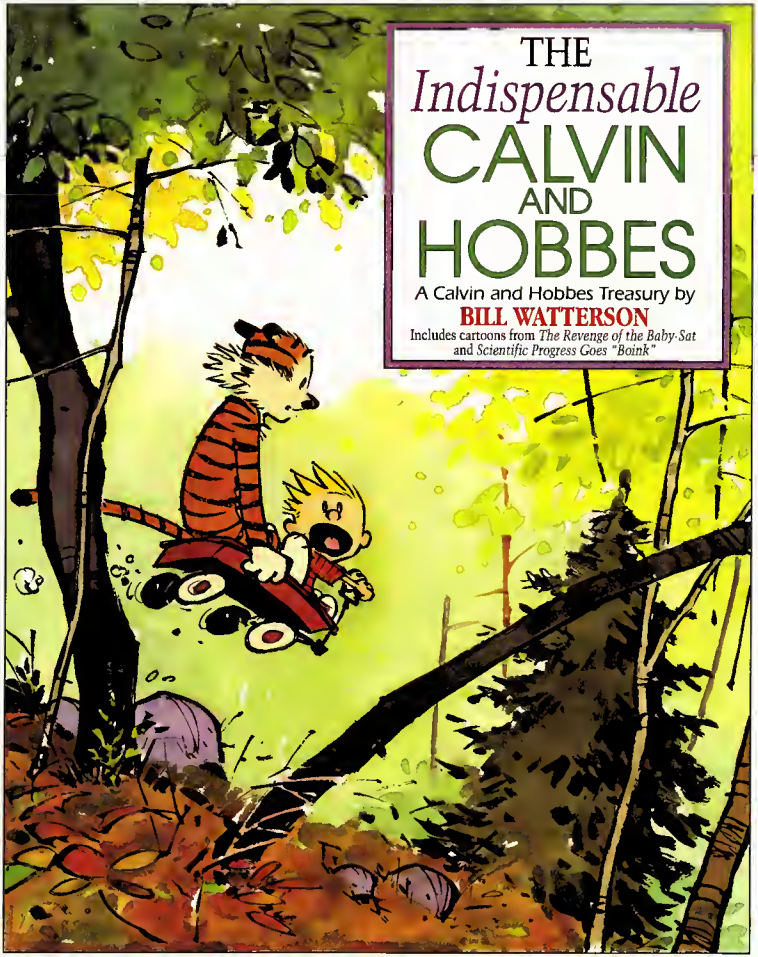
A Calvin and Hobbes Treasury by
BILL WATTERSON
Includes cartoons from The Revenge of the
Scientific Progress Goes "Boink"


THE
Indispensable
CALVIN
AND
HOBBES
A Calvin and Hobbes Treasury by
BILL WATTERSON
Includes cartoons from The Revenge of the Baby-Sat
and Scientific Progress Goes "Boink"

I made a big decision a little while ago.
I don't remember what it was, which prob'ly goes to show
That many times a simple choice can prove to be essential
Even though it often might appear inconsequential.

I must have been distracted when I left my home because
Left or right I'm sure I went. (I wonder which it was!)
Anyway, I never veered: I walked in that direction
Utterly absorbed, it seems, in quiet introspection.

For no reason I can think of, I've wandered far astray.
And that is how I got to where I find myself today.

Explorers are we, intrepid and bold,
Out in the wild, amongst wonders untold.
Equipped with our wits, a map, and a snack,
We're searching for fun and we're on the right track!

My mother has eyes on the back of her head!
I don't quite believe it, but that's what she said.
She explained that she'd been so uniquely endowed
To catch me when I did Things Not Allowed.
I think she must also have eyes on her rear.
I've noticed her hindsight is unusually clear.

At night my mind does not much care
If what it thinks is here or there.
It tells me stories it invents
And makes up things that don't make sense.
I don't know why it does this stuff.
The real world seems quite weird enough.

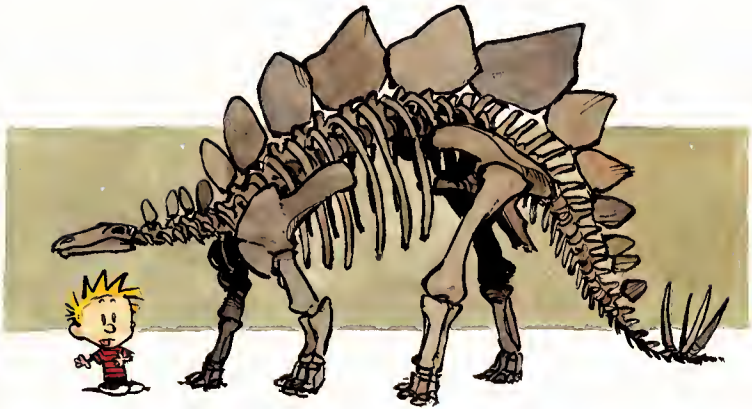
What if my bones were in a museum,
Where aliens paid good money to see 'em?
And suppose that they'd put me together all wrong,
Sticking bones on to bones where they didn't belong!

Imagine phalanges, pelvis, and spine
Welded to mandibles that once had been mine!
With each misassemblage, the error compounded,
The aliens would draw back in terror, astounded!

Their textbooks would show me in grim illustration,
The most hideous thing ever seen in creation!
The museum would commission a model in plaster
Of ME, to be called, "Evolution's Disaster"!

And paleontologists there would debate
Dozens of theories to help postulate
How man survived for those thousands of years
With teeth-covered arms growing out of his ears!

Oh, I hope that I'm never in such manner displayed,
No matter HOW much to see me the aliens paid.



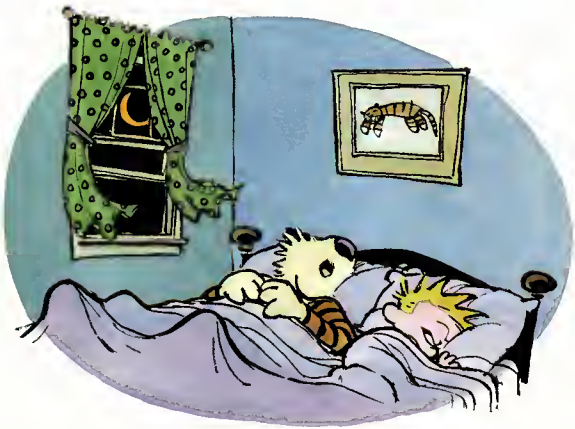
I did not want to go with them.
Alas, I had no choice.
This was made quite clear to me
In threat'ning tones of voice.

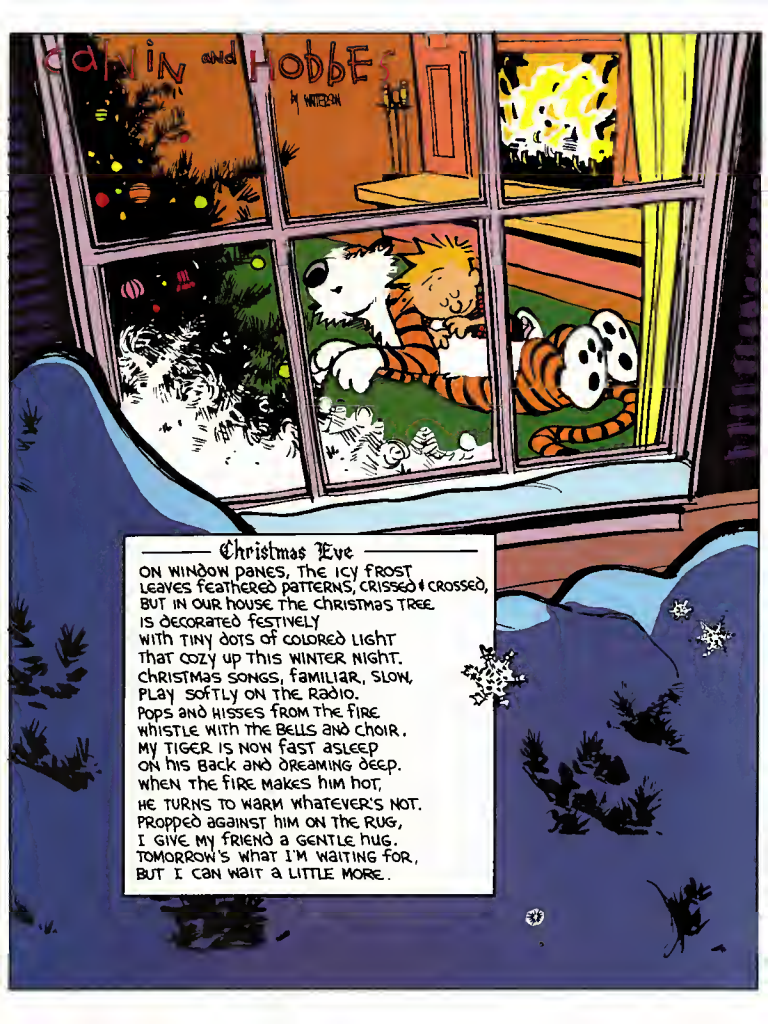
I protested mightily
And scrambled 'cross the floor.
But though I grabbed the furniture,
They dragged me out the door.

In the car, I screamed and moaned.
I cried my red eyes dry.
The window down, I yelled for help
To people we passed by.

Mom and Dad can make the rules
And certain things forbid,
But I can make them wish that they
Had never had a kid.

Now I'm in bed,
The sheets pulled to my head.
My tiger is here making Zs.
He's furry and hot.
He takes up a lot
Of the bed and he's hogging the breeze.




Calvin and Hobbes
by Watterson
Christmas Eve
On window panes, the icy frost
leaves feathered patterns, crissed & crossed,
but in our house the Christmas tree
is decorated festively
with tiny dots of colored light
that cozy up this winter night.
Christmas songs, familiar, slow,
play softly on the radio.
Pops and hisses from the fire
whistle with the bells and choir.
My tiger is now fast asleep
on his back and dreaming deep.
When the fire makes him hot,
he turns to warm whatever's not.
Propped against him on the rug,
I give my friend a gentle hug.
Tomorrow's what I'm waiting for,
but I can wait a little more.

The End

Acknowledgments

As flattering as it is to have a lavish book like this, it can be a little disturbing to see one's own career embalmed in a box, so I would like to thank this book's designer, Michael Reagan, for cheerfully nudging me along. His willingness to indulge my aesthetic whims and his handling of all the publishing complexities made this giant project much simpler for me.

I'd also like to thank Universal Press Syndicate, which took a chance on my cartoons twenty years ago that no one else was willing to take. Universal worked tirelessly to get my strip in newspapers and took the heat on my behalf whenever I outraged editors. I am grateful for Universal's long and energetic support of my work. John McMeel, Kathy Andrews, Bob Duffy, the sales staff, Jake Morrissey, Sue Roush, and, especially Lee Salem have helped on the business side of all this.

When I was growing up, very few comic strips were regularly collected in books, so I've always been thrilled to publish *Calvin and Hobbes* books. My publisher from the beginning, Andrews McMeel, has been attentive and accommodating, always ensuring that my books were just what I wanted them to be. I'd like to thank Dorothy O'Brien and especially Tom Thornton for their help over the years. I couldn't ask for a better publisher.

I want to thank my friend Rich West for thirty years of encouragement and for always tossing a provocative letter or book my way just before my brain emptied out.

I also want to acknowledge the lifetime of support I've received from my parents. They bought me *Peanuts* books and drawing tables when I was a kid, paid for my college education, and never demanded I get a "real" job. And their peculiarities certainly gave me things to write about. Thanks to Mom for being the test audience of all my early cartoons and thanks to Dad for the all the legal advice, even though I ignored most of it. Thanks as well to my brother Tom for joining me on desert canyon expeditions. That landscape inspired a lot of Spaceman Spiff strips, and there's no one with whom I'd rather be lost, dehydrated, and reeling with vertigo on the face of a cliff.

All of *Calvin and Hobbes* was drawn for my wife, Melissa, who contributed more to my work than anyone will ever know. This book is dedicated to Melissa and Violet, who are the sun, moon, earth, and stars to me.

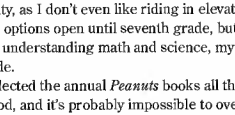
—Bill Watterson, 2005

INTRODUCTION

BEFORE CALVIN AND HOBBES

I've loved comic strips as long as I can remember. As a kid, I knew I wanted to be either a cartoonist or an astronaut. The latter was never much of a possibility, as I don't even like riding in elevators. I kept my options open until seventh grade, but when I stopped understanding math and science, my choice was made.

I collected the annual *Peanuts* books all through childhood, and it's probably impossible to overstate the influence *Peanuts* had on me. The strip's subtleties went right over my head, but I loved the expressive drawings, and Charles Schulz's economy of line perfectly suited my lack of patience and minimal drawing skills. I spent a lot of time drawing, but I don't recall that I ever attempted much realism. Like most kids, I wanted instant results, not a learning process. Cartooning kept drawing fast and fun. A diagonal zigzag says "staircase" just as much as a detailed architectural rendering in three-point perspective—and who cares what a real staircase looks like anyway? My little comics were a natural way to depict the things I thought about at that time, such as Batman and how annoying my brother was.



THIS IS A PANEL OF A BATMAN COMIC I DREW AT AGE EIGHT OR NINE. THE TWENTY SECONDS I SPENT ON IT CLEARLY TAXED MY PATIENCE.

In my early teens, I discovered Walt Kelly's *Pogo*, which also became a huge influence. The lush brushwork and animated quality is almost the opposite of Schulz's spare penwork, and it pushed me to try drawing things from something other than side-view once in a while. The humor in *Pogo* is usually found in the long-winded dialogue more than in punch lines, and I think that stayed with me, too. I drew comics to amuse myself and my family, and by high school, I hardly let a sheet of paper get by me without putting a cartoon on it. I illustrated my homework essays, I drew comics, posters, and cards, and I published cartoons in the school newspaper and yearbook.

During my senior year of high school, I even got a couple of political cartoons printed in the local suburban weekly newspaper as well. At Kenyon College, I was pulled more toward political cartooning

I DREW THIS CARTOON FOR MY HIGH SCHOOL NEWSPAPER. HAVING LONG SINCE FORGOTTEN THIS, I USED THE SAME IDEA FOR CALVIN FIFTEEN YEARS LATER, ON NOVEMBER 5, 1990.

by the talent and success of *Cincinnati Enquirer* cartoonist Jim Borgman, who had just graduated from Kenyon. Borgman was generous and encouraging, offering advice and constructive criticism for many years as I tried to follow in his footsteps. Because political cartoons typically have bigger, more complex pictures than the gag cartoons and comics I'd done up until then, I soon realized just how limited my drawing skills were. Even worse, despite having grown up in the Vietnam-Watergate era, I somehow never paid much attention to government, history, politics, or for that matter, the news, in my eighteen years of life. I see now that this was rather a liability in choosing political cartooning as a career path, but ignorance breeds courage, and Borgman's example made it all seem possible. To address my lack of knowledge, I majored in my weakest subject, political science, where I read some Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke. I found this provided very little insight into the '78 gas crisis, but one of those authors gave me the name for a comic character several years later. In the meantime, I drew political cartoons every week in the college paper for four years. In that opus of work,

HERE IS A CARTOON I DREW FOR MY COLLEGE YEARBOOK.

there were perhaps six cartoons that made sense, so I sent these off to random newspapers a few months before graduating, hoping to find a job.

In what can only be described as a freak twist of bad fate, I not only landed a job as an editorial cartoonist, but I landed at the *Cincinnati Post*, competing, if you can call it that, with Jim Borgman. The job was a disaster from the very first day when, after several rough ideas were rejected, I submitted increasingly bizarre sketches in the frantic hope of making the deadline, until the editor finally came out of his office, walked over to my desk, and told me to call it a day. It went downhill from there. I was completely out of my depth, rarely got published, and within a few months, the fraud that was my career was over. Embarrassed and demoralized by the experience, I turned back to comics. At least in comics, if you don't understand what's going on, you can make stuff up.

In 1980, Senator Kennedy challenged Jimmy Carter for the nomination. This is one of the more intelligible cartoons I did for the *Cincinnati Post*.

Unemployed with no prospects, I drew up a comic strip about a loudmouthed spaceman and his dimwitted assistant, based on characters I'd drawn for a German class in high school. I sent the strip off to the newspaper syndicates, and about six weeks later, as my savings continued to dwindle, I opened the form letter rejections of my work. By the fall of 1981, I was living with my parents again, trying to come up with a different comic strip. At this point, I had four years to go before drawing *Calvin and Hobbes*.

Four years is a pretty long time, especially when there's no indication that the story will end well. On weekdays, I designed car and grocery ad layouts in the windowless basement office of a free weekly shopper for minimum wage. I learned a bit about design doing this job, but one might charitably say the boss had rage issues, so the office environment was dreary and oppressive, except when enlivened with episodes of fire-breathing insanity. For relief on my half-hour lunch break, I read books in a cemetery. On weekends, I drew editorial cartoons ($25 each) for the local suburban newspaper, where my specialty was weather commentary. My used car frequently needed repairs of the engine-removal type, and so on. Such were the prime years of my youth. After a certain amount of this sort of life, a reasonable person cuts his losses and opts for a different career, but I don't recall that this ever seriously crossed my mind. In the free time I had, I drew up more comic strips.

THE CHARACTERS IN THIS HIGH SCHOOL GERMAN CARTOON WERE THE BASIS OF MY FIRST COMIC STRIP SUBMISSION TO NEWSPAPER SYNDICATES.

In hindsight, all this failure was my good fortune. I'm honestly grateful that all my early strip submissions were flatly rejected. This was not a case of syndicate editors failing to recognize latent genius. My strips had serious flaws, so I'm very lucky I didn't get stuck trying to make one of them fly. The hard part of coming up with a comic strip is finding strong characters that come alive and "write themselves," suggesting new material as you go. Newspaper cartooning is an endurance sport, and you need characters and situations that won't run dry in a few months. My early strip proposals were unevenly written—an occasional good character surrounded by flat ones, put into limited or clichéd worlds beyond my experience. These are common mistakes, but the only way to learn how to write and draw is by writing and drawing. The good thing about working with almost no audience was that I felt free to experiment. Nobody cared what I did, so I tried pretty much anything that came into my head, acquired some new skills along the way, and gradually learned a bit about what worked and what didn't.

As I say, that's what I think in retrospect. At the time, it all just seemed like banging my head against a wall. To persist in the face of continual rejection requires a deep love of the work itself, and learning that lesson kept me from ever taking *Calvin and Hobbes* for granted when the strip took off years later. But in the midst of repeated failure, some self-delusion about your abilities also comes in handy.

Eventually, one syndicate expressed some interest in my work. They didn't like the strip I'd done, but they liked one of the secondary characters—a boy with an imaginary stuffed tiger. The syndicate gave me a contract to develop them into a comic strip of their own. I knew these characters had more life than any of the others I'd done, but I'd always resisted the idea of doing a "kid strip," partly because of the long shadow that *Peanuts* cast over the whole genre. The more I wrote, however, the better the boy seemed to be, and I had the sensation that the strip was "clicking." The syndicate had mixed reactions to it however, and eventually rejected it. This was as close as I'd ever gotten, so it was quite discouraging.

In a bizarre footnote to the story, the syndicate called me back a few months later and flew me to New York to consider a proposal. They had obtained the rights to a propeller-headed robot character, for

which they were gearing up a big licensing program. The idea was to get the plush dolls rolling by starring him in his own comic strip. Would I be interested in working the robot into my strip about the little boy? If so, they would definitely take my strip, and I'd finally be a nationally syndicated cartoonist.

As badly as I wanted the job, it was hard to decide which offended me more—writing and drawing material for a character that wasn't my own, or creating a comic strip for the purpose of advertising

THIS IS AN EARLY VERSION OF *CALVIN AND HOBBES*. MY EDITOR LATER MADE THE OBVIOUS SUGGESTION TO SHOW THE EYES OF MY CENTRAL CHARACTER.

a commercial product. I turned the syndicate down and went back to my miserable job laying out grocery ads. The experience was a lesson in how the cartoon business works sometimes, and this little episode undoubtedly fueled some of my later outrage at the prospect of licensing *Calvin and Hobbes*.

Back to square one yet again, I sent my rejected strip about the boy and tiger to two other syndicates. One of them rejected it, but Universal Press Syndicate asked to see more samples. Desperate to impress, I called Jake Morrissey, the editor who had written me, and asked what the syndicate was looking for, what I should try to do. His answer was a total surprise: just do more of what I liked. I drew up another month of strips, and after waiting on pins and needles, I was offered a contract.

Getting the job of course is just the beginning. I was thrilled and scared to death at the same time. In the following months, the weaker strips were edited out, and I redrew the rest, getting the hair out of Calvin's eyes. Suddenly I had to come up with some Sunday strips, too. The work was packaged up in a sales kit and taken on the road to newspaper offices. And while this was going on, I started trying to write some new material. In November 1985, *Calvin and Hobbes* launched, appearing in about thirty-five newspapers.

Now we were all going to find out what I could do, and I had no more idea what that was than anybody else.

THE FIRST SAMPLES OF *CALVIN AND HOBBES* WERE PUT IN THIS FOLDER AND TAKEN TO NEWSPAPER EDITORS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

THE *CALVIN AND HOBBES* YEARS

When *Calvin and Hobbes* launched, Lee Salem, my editor at Universal Press Syndicate, advised me not to quit my day job anytime soon. It was good advice. Most new comic strips fail within a few years. Often the strip never quite connects with an audience, and even if it does, it's not uncommon for the cartoonist to run out of gas after a few hundred ideas and start losing readers and papers. Either way, the new strip is first in line at the chopping block when the next new strip comes along, since the rest of the page is usually filled with popular strips that have been around for decades. It's a cutthroat

business at the bottom, and early sales can quickly become cancellations.

Another reason to keep the day job is that it takes a fairly large number of newspapers before the cartoonist earns a salary he can live on. Luckily for me, my day job paid so poorly that within three months, *Calvin and Hobbes* equaled it. The minute that happened, I ignored Lee's advice and quit my layout job. I figured that if *Calvin and Hobbes* went bust, it wasn't going to be because I was only working on it evenings and weekends.

For the first couple of years, I submitted my rough ideas to my editors at the syndicate. Back in the '80s, this was done by mail of course, which meant it took a week or more to find out which strips were approved for inking up. In the earliest days, many ideas would come back marked "no." This was always sobering, not least because I then had to write replacement strips (and get those approved) just to get back to where I thought I was on the deadlines. Occasionally I disagreed with the editors' vetoes, but I decided never to argue on behalf of one of my ideas. Any strip that needed a defense wasn't something I wanted published. I basically trusted my editors' judgments, and having them as a safety net, I often submitted ideas I wasn't sure about, just to see what reaction they got. Keep in mind that when the strip first appeared, I had written only a couple of months' worth of material and I hardly knew who my characters were. Little decisions can change the feel of the whole strip.

For example, I remember trying a couple of jokes that played with the conventions of the comic strip—where the characters made reference to being in the comics, and so on. These ideas got axed, and I still get a wave of relief just thinking about it. That kind of humor was all wrong for this strip—if Calvin's imaginary world is to be believable, it's idiotic to remind readers that the whole strip is a bunch of artificial drawings—but I hadn't thought that sort of thing through at the beginning.

When I first came up with the characters, Calvin was little more than a mischievous loudmouth and

OUR CAT SPRITE INSPIRED MUCH OF HOBBES' LOOKS AND PERSONALITY. SPRITE WAS A SWEET CAT WITH AN UNNERVING TENDENCY TO COME OUT OF NOWHERE AT HIGH SPEED.

Hobbes was simply his somewhat more sensible friend. As the characters expanded, Calvin's and Hobbes' personalities became more like my own. Their words and actions are fictitious, sometimes the opposite of what I would say or do, but their emotional centers are very true to the way I think. Hobbes got all my better qualities (and a few quirks from our cats), and Calvin got my ranting, escapist side. Together, they're pretty much a transcript of my mental diary. I didn't set out to do this, but that's what came out, and frankly it's pretty startling to reread these strips and see my personality exposed so plainly right there on paper. I meant to disguise that better.

A few new newspapers signed on each month. My hometown paper didn't take the strip for about six months, so until then, my strips seemed sort of like those space probes whose signals never reach home as they veer out of the solar system. It was a thrill when I finally got to see *Calvin and Hobbes* in print every day. I finally felt like a real cartoonist.

After a little more than a year, the first book collection of the strip was published and became a long-running best-seller. Newspaper sales started to climb at a greater rate. As happy as I was that the strip seemed to be catching on, I was not prepared for the resulting attention. Cartoonists are a very low grade of celebrity, but any amount of it is weird. Besides disliking the diminishment of privacy and the inhibiting quality of feeling watched, I valued my anonymous, boring life. In fact, I didn't see how I could write honestly without it. A year later, I moved out west, got an unlisted phone number, stopped giving interviews, and tried to fly as low under the radar as possible. Of course, some reporters took this as a personal challenge to intrude, but in general, my quiet life let me concentrate on my work.

There's no denying that comic strip cartooning is a very strange job. It's extremely solitary work, so it helps to be pathologically antisocial. I worked in my home and mailed the strips away, so I never had much sense of an audience reading my work. This was fine with me, as it let me preserve the idea that I was drawing the strip primarily to entertain my wife. For me, the world of *Calvin and Hobbes* was very small and private.

My goal was to keep it this way, even as the strip became a hit. Writing and drawing are slow, deliberate activities, so I tried to keep distractions to an absolute minimum, and I did everything myself. I liked this control, as it fostered a sense of craftsmanship. There was great personal satisfaction in attending to detail and quality, and I remain very proud of the standards the strip met day after day. I also liked the responsibility of knowing that, succeed or fail, it was all my own doing. And most importantly, this approach kept the strip very honest and personal—everything having to do with *Calvin and Hobbes* expressed my own ideas, my own values, my own way. I wrote every word, drew every line, and painted every color. It's a rare gift to find such fulfilling work and I tried to show my appreciation by giving the strip everything I had to offer.

There was a downside: Work and home were so intermingled that I had no refuge from the strip when I needed a break. Day or night, the work was always right there, and the book-publishing schedule was as relentless as the newspaper deadlines. Having certain perfectionist and maniacal tendencies, I was consumed by *Calvin and Hobbes*. I wasn't looking for a balanced life in those days, and needless to say, I sure didn't find one. That decade of my life is pretty much a blur. Still, I wouldn't have done things this way if I didn't love the work.

My attitude toward the strip's production also put me in a strange position when the pressure built to license *Calvin and Hobbes*. On the one hand, it provided a simple clarity in the decision to forgo all merchandising. I didn't think greeting cards, T-shirts, or plush dolls fit with the spirit or message of my comic strip, and I didn't like the idea of using this hard-won, precious job to peddle a bunch of trinkets. I wanted to draw cartoons, not run an empire, so the offers and requests were not tempting in the slightest. On the other hand, none of my reasons for declining involved business considerations, so these arguments were not particularly persuasive to my syndicate, which flat-out owned the rights to my work and stood to split the immense wealth these products likely would have generated.

Over the years, I've come to realize that it's almost impossible to make anyone understand why, five years into the culmination of my life's dreams, I was ready to quit the strip and lose everything, rather than get appallingly rich off *Calvin and Hobbes* products. All I can say is, I worked too long to get this job, and worked too hard once I got it, to let other people run away with my creation once it became successful. If I could not control what my own work was about and stood for, then cartooning meant very little to me.

In hindsight I see that, with so much money at stake, the artistic issues I argued about were irrelevant. In the end, it was simply might makes right. I was an unknown cartoonist when I started, and my contractual disadvantage reflected my nonexistent bargaining power when I got the job. Five years later, I was a big enough gorilla that I could turn the tables. Even though I finally got my way, the whole mess is depressing to recall, even all these years later. The fight was personally traumatic. For several years it poisoned what had been a happy relationship with my syndicate, and in my disillusionment and disgust at being pushed to the wall, I lost the conviction that I wanted to spend my life cartooning. Both sides paid a heavy price for this battle.

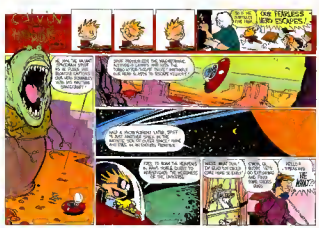
I spent most of 1991 on a sabbatical (three months of which I sat on a grand jury!) and tried to recharge my batteries. Now that the licensing threat was gone, I wanted to give the strip my full attention again. I privately expected that *Calvin and Hobbes* would be ending in a few years, and that was

another incentive to reinvigorate my work. Anything I wanted to do with my strip, I had to do now.

I had become enthralled with George Herriman's *Krazy Kat* full-page Sunday strips of the '20s and '30s, and I proposed changing my Sunday strip format so that I could design my panels with a similar freedom. Basically, I wanted to draw panels that fit the writing and drawing instead of cramming everything into little predetermined squares that editors were allowed to delete, reduce, and rearrange. As my drawing abilities had improved over the years, I thought I could create a bolder, better-looking comic that would be more fun for people to read.

Universal supported me and sold the strip as a half-page feature, but newspaper editors were livid that I would presume to attach conditions to the sale of my work. Coming on the heels of my extended vacation, the new Sunday format demands left me open to the indictment of being an outrageously pampered egotist. I won't deny the charge, but the new format presented all sorts of new creative opportunities and challenges, and I doubled my efforts to make the Sunday strips special. I think it sent the strip in a new direction. The last few years of the strip, and especially the Sundays, are the work I am the most proud of. This was as close as I could get to my vision of what a comic strip should be.

As the strip approached ten years in print, I felt I had done everything I had set out to do, and



THE NEW SUNDAY STRIPS OFTEN TOOK ME TWICE AS LONG TO DRAW, BUT IT WAS EXCITING TO CUT THE STRIP LOOSE AND SEE WHERE IT WOULD GO.

my interests were shifting. I did not want *Calvin and Hobbes* to coast into halfhearted repetition, as so many long-running strips do. I was ready to pursue different artistic challenges, work at a less frantic pace with fewer business conflicts, and not incidentally, start restoring some balance to my life. *Calvin and Hobbes* was in over two thousand papers and I felt confident that I'd done the best comic strip I could do. It seemed a gesture of respect and gratitude toward my characters to leave them at top form. I like to think that, now that I'm not recording everything they do, Calvin and Hobbes are out there having an even better time.

CALVIN AND HOBBES AND AFTER

The voluntary ending of successful comic strips is something new. More typically, a strip ceases production only when it's such an anachronistic, formulaic, and irrelevant shadow of itself that readers abandon it.

Aiming for the widest possible audience, comics have traditionally relied on broad character types, stock situations, and fairly predictable gags and stories. Once established, these strips can run on autopilot for decades, often with nameless assistants doing much of the work. But the most interesting strips have always been those with a genuine sensibility—a quirky, individual take on life—and this is something that cannot be duplicated or endlessly recycled.

The comics have always been a commercial entertainment product, but a few strips have pushed into the realm of deeper personal expression and art. I used to lament that so few comics were original, thoughtful, and beautiful to look at, but having seen how the business works, now I marvel that great comics come along as often as they do.

Different comics appeal to different tastes, and the goal of the comics section is to have something in it that appeals to anyone with fifty cents for a newspaper—and their children as well. The comics audience is anything but elitist, and the comics' lack of pretension is part of what makes them fun. I think comics are something like folk art—sometimes breathtakingly kitschy, sometimes kooky and charming, and once in a while, as interesting and significant as any "fine" art.

I didn't start out thinking of cartoons as *any* kind of art. Growing up, art seemed impenetrable. Who makes art? What does it mean? Who is it for? I had no background, no access, and no interest. Cartoons were just the opposite—anyone can make pictures like these. I liked cartoons because they *weren't* art—they were just funny.

I gradually took cartooning more seriously as I went along, but it was only years later, as I drew *Calvin and Hobbes*, that the issue of art had any urgency. When I saw that editors would squeeze, stretch, and cut my drawings to fit the space they allotted, and when I saw that I had no final control over whether my characters appeared on boxer shorts or not, I was stunned that publishers would mess around with someone else's creation. Suddenly I was defending my writing and drawing as an art.

And at the same time, the novelty and beauty of my new surroundings in the desert pushed me to take up painting. With no technical background beyond a few drawing classes in college, I fumbled about with watercolors and later oils, growing more and more interested in painting and art history. Reading in a random way, following my interests wherever they went, I gradually developed a real appreciation for painting and enjoyed studying it. So much so, in fact, that I eventually wanted to

I PAINTED THIS TINY OUTDOOR OIL SKETCH IN THE LAST YEAR OF THE STRIP. I'M GUESSING ONLY A COMIC STRIP CARTOONIST WOULD USE A 4 X 6 INCH BOARD FOR AN EIGHTY-MILE VIEW.

spend a lot more time painting than my work on *Calvin and Hobbes* allowed.

Since ending the strip, I've put my energies into painting and a similarly remedial study of music, but it's been a humbling experience to go from proficiency and confidence in cartooning to awkwardness and doubt in most everything I do now. On the positive side though, seeing how long it takes to build even the most basic skills, I don't take my facility on *Calvin and Hobbes* so much for granted anymore.

Cartooning and painting are quite different to do. In cartooning, there is neither the time nor the space for much drawing. These limitations can force an elegant shorthand that is the beauty and strength of the medium, but sometimes after writing a few thousand haiku, one longs for a real paragraph. If you're interested in perception and rendering, painting lets you do all sorts of things the comics can't.

Then again, I don't think paintings do such a good job of storytelling. Even the wonderful Old Master illustrations of Biblical events can be fairly perplexing if you don't already know the stories. A single picture can't show the passage of time, so all you can depict is a dramatic moment that has to stand for the whole. And with no words except for titles, it's difficult to convey an idea with real specificity. Symbols, gestures, visual juxtapositions, and certain conventions have to suffice to get the meaning across. If you're interested in narrative or getting across precise ideas, the multiple panels and words of a comic strip let you do all sorts of things traditional painting can't.

Then there's the issue of the work's impact. Comics reach an audience of millions, and people from all walks of life. Better yet, and unlike most any other art form, a newspaper comic offers the cartoonist daily contact and a long-term relationship with his audience. I think that this day-in, day-out aspect of the comics gives them surprising power. People invest only a few seconds reading any strip, but the cartoonist can talk to readers for years on end, and that's an incredible amount of access to people's minds. It's an exceedingly rare privilege to have your work read by people every day, year after year. If you're inclined to go beyond jokes and say

something heartfelt, honest, or thoughtful, you have a tremendous opportunity. And best of all, because the comics are generally regarded as frivolous, disposable entertainment, readers rarely have their guard up.

I love comics and I love painting, but each has different strengths. In teaching myself to paint, I think I've found a new life's interest—but it doesn't offer me the same voice that cartooning did. Neither offers me the perfect answer, and actually, that seems about right.

The older I get, the more weighted and complex everything seems, so I'm learning new skills, hoping to expand my range of expression. Ten years after *Calvin and Hobbes*, I still don't know where this is going, but I have a basic faith that eventually some good will come of the process. Drawing has always been the way I get at whatever I'm thinking about.

In *Calvin and Hobbes*, I used my childhood—sometimes straight out of the can, sometimes wildly fictionalized, and sometimes as a metaphor for my twenties and thirties—to talk about my life and the issues that interested me. Without exactly intending to, I learned a lot about what I love—imagination, deep friendship, animals, family, the natural world, ideas, ideals . . . and silliness. These things make my life meaningful, and having the opportunity to consider it all at length through the medium of drawing was the most personally rewarding part of *Calvin and Hobbes*. Giving words and form to what had previously been jumbled, half-conscious thoughts, I occasionally felt like I hit some truth, and in doing so, got to know myself a bit better.

Of course, the *Calvin and Hobbes* phenomenon was one of those times when the planets all lined up. Somehow everything came together, and readers were ready for the strip at the same moment I was ready to draw it. I certainly never again expect to duplicate the strip's success or wide appeal. To be honest, seeing the planets in a row sort of freaks me out anyway, and once is probably enough. But the experience of writing and drawing *Calvin and Hobbes* changed my life, and that level of challenge and engagement will be my goal in whatever I do. I truly loved drawing this comic strip, and I'll always look back on *Calvin and Hobbes* with great pride and affection.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