= Concerned =

Concerned : The Half @-@ Life and Death of Gordon Frohman is a webcomic created by Christopher C. Livingston , parodying the first @-@ person shooter video game Half @-@ Life 2 . The comic consists of game screenshots , with characters posed using Garry 's Mod , a tool which facilitates manipulation of the Source engine used by Half @-@ Life 2 . The first issue was launched on May 1 , 2005 . The comic completed its run on November 6 , 2006 with a total of 205 issues .

While Half @-@ Life 2 follows protagonist Gordon Freeman in a dystopian future , Concerned follows a similar path through the eyes of " Gordon Frohman " , a dangerously clumsy character who arrives in the setting of the game a few weeks before Freeman does . The webcomic 's dark humor is derived from its contrasts with the game and through references to the game 's shortcomings . On several occasions in the comic , Frohman becomes the cause of various disastrous circumstances that Freeman will later encounter .

Concerned has been well received by critics and fans alike . Several reviews praised the attention to writing and presentation , as well as the comic 's humor . Livingston has also reported uniformly positive relations with personnel at Valve , the developer company of Half @-@ Life 2 , who were pleased to have a comic based on their game .

= = Background = =

Christopher Livingston started working on Concerned as a hobby . He had previously considered developing a webcomic that would parallel the storyline of the original 1987 Legend of Zelda , for the Nintendo Entertainment System , from start to finish . He chose the Half @-@ Life 2 game world as the scene for his comic because he was a fan , and because the availability of Garry 's Mod eliminated the need to draw by hand . He always intended the plot of the comic to end at the same point as the game .

Livingston thought a comic would be a good way to introduce humor to the game , which he has described as " mysterious , moody , [and] immersive " .

Well , I thought Half @-@ Life 2 was a great game , but there simply weren 't enough jokes about toilets in it . So , I thought a comic would be a good place to get some humor into the game . I came up with the idea for Frohman , a complete idiot , to play all the way through the game , just like Freeman only instead of being a hero , he 'd be a complete fool .

= = Publication history = =

The first issue of Concerned was released on May 1 , 2005 , the comic completing its run on November 6 , 2006 with a total of 205 issues . The characters in the comic were posed using Garry 's Mod , a tool which facilitates manipulation of the Source engine used by Half @-@ Life 2 , and the comic frames were assembled using Photoshop 6 .

The webcomic derives its name from one of the propaganda broadcasts by Wallace Breen in Half @-@ Life 2 , in which he is reading a letter supposedly written by a citizen , signed ' Sincerely , a concerned citizen ' , and begins his response with ' Thank you for writing , Concerned ' . Throughout the comic the main character , Gordon Frohman , sends several similar letters to Dr. Breen , Livingston 's intention being to suggest that Frohman was the author of the letter read by Breen in Half @-@ Life 2 . The name " Frohman " is derived from the last name of Gordon Freeman , the protagonist of the Half @-@ Life series . According to the credits on the comic 's website , this name was suggested to Livingston by Sam Golgert , an acquaintance of his .

Livingston has also employed the assistance of other people , notably Michael Clements , founder of the Half @-@ Life 2 comics repository PHWOnline , and creator of SKETCH , another comic based on Half @-@ Life 2 . Clements aided him in enhancing the presentation of Concerned . Greg Galcik , creator of SpinnWebe , also assisted in site maintenance , and Livingston later offered him a " guest week special " , in which Galcik wrote and published three issues for Concerned . A similar set of three issues have also been published by Joe Yuska , during a week when Livingston was

unavailable .

As stated by Livingston in several interviews , his relation with Valve , the developer company of Half @-@ Life 2 , was a good one , the company being pleased to have a comic based on their game . According to Livingston , Valve also intended to collaborate with him to produce printed copies of Concerned . However , this was never finalized as the resolution of the comics was too low for printing .

Livingston has said that the comic will not continue through Half @-@ Life 2 : Episode One , the first of an episodic series following Half @-@ Life 2 , as the game " doesn 't really lend itself to the type of comic [he wants] to do " .

= = Synopsis = =

= = = Background = = =

In Half @-@ Life 2 , the player takes on the role of Dr. Gordon Freeman . Throughout the game , the player follows the story of a dark , dystopian future in which mankind has been enslaved by the Combine , a mysterious alien enemy . In contrast , Concerned follows the same general path through the story established by Half @-@ Life 2 , but instead follows the adventures of Gordon Frohman , a hapless , lethally clumsy oaf who arrives in City 17 a few weeks before Freeman . Frohman is incredibly naïve and , unlike the other citizens , seems to enjoy living under the rule of the totalitarian administrator , Dr. Breen , and the Combine . He holds an insane reverence for the latter , even going to the point of having a plush doll of a Combine soldier .

= = = Plot = = =

The early phases of the comic have Frohman excitedly arriving in City 17 . Eventually he takes a job at the Combine 's headquarters , the Citadel , under a Combine Elite named Mr. Henderson . As most of his human colleagues become Combine soldiers , he realizes that Henderson has no immediate intention to do the same for him , citing his incompetence . Demanding to become one with the Combine , Frohman willingly sets off to Nova Prospekt , an alien security and detention installation , for invasive surgery to convert him . Meanwhile , he selects Ravenholm as a residence where he can commute to and from City 17 , but lacks proper transport with which to get there . After a failed attempt to reach Ravenholm using Dr. Isaac Kleiner 's teleporter leaves him stuck in a Counter @-@ Strike : Source server for a week , he seeks Ravenholm by foot instead . Traveling through City 17 's canals , Frohman arrives , badly injured and dazed , at Black Mesa East , the headquarters of the human resistance , where he is welcomed as a helper . His stay there is cut short because he causes trouble in the base , and also irritatingly overuses the gravity gun . He is fooled into leaving the base , and finally heads toward and reaches Ravenholm .

On Frohman 's arrival , Ravenholm is depicted as a peaceful , bright , and cheerful place devoid of any Combine elements , but " terrorized " by Father Grigori . After adjusting , Gordon becomes accustomed to the town , but unintentionally discloses the town 's location to Dr. Breen , who immediately orders his forces to " bomb the shit out of them " . The town is fired on with headcrabs , killing many and turning others into zombies . Frohman himself is attacked by a headcrab and turns into a zombie too , yet retains his free will ; and after a while his headcrab dies of malnutrition , which is attributed to his lack of intelligence . With Father Grigori 's help , Frohman escapes Ravenholm , now the zombie @-@ infested nightmare seen when Freeman visits it in the game , and presses on to Nova Prospekt . After surviving several more hazards , he reaches the coast . Here , after passing the final resistance base and an Antlion @-@ infested beach , Frohman encounters an Antlion Guard , which is killed by a Vortigaunt , an alien race helping the humans in the game . This allows Frohman to retrieve bugbait from the dead creature , with which he can control the Antlions .

Frohman , accompanied by several bugbait @-@ controlled Antlions , eventually reaches Nova

Prospekt , only to be turned away as he does not have an appointment . He gives up and returns to City 17 in the following strip , as Gordon Freeman finally arrives in the city , linking the comic 's time frame with the start of Half @-@ Life 2 . He is then drafted into the resistance after failing to disrupt its operations , and unintentionally signals the start of the resistance 's uprising after one of his Antlions accidentally kills a Combine police officer . During the fighting , he accompanies Freeman himself and mingles with resistance members , aids the Combine in the capture of Alyx Vance , one of Freeman 's allies , and reunites with Norman Frohman , his long @-@ lost assassin twin brother , only to promptly witness his death at the hands of a Strider , a large tripodal assault synth .

Following this , Gordon returns to the Citadel , unwillingly aiding Freeman in his journey up the Citadel and influencing the plot of the game . As Freeman is pursuing Dr. Breen to his teleporter , Frohman is about to kill Freeman ? but he pauses to come up with the perfect one @-@ liner for the occasion , causing him to run out of time ; Dr. Breen 's teleporter explodes and Frohman is flung off the Citadel peak by the explosion . Dr. Breen also survives , having fallen from the Citadel onto a pile of dead Combine soldiers . However , Frohman falls right onto Breen , killing him . Gordon himself is only seriously injured . Baffled by his ability to survive , he realizes through a flashback that he has been under " Buddha Mode " , a cheat code which prevents his health points from dropping below one throughout the comic 's duration . Frohman inadvertently turns off the mode , and even spoils an opportunity to be rescued by a group of Vortigaunts , as both Gordon Freeman and Alyx Vance are at the start of Episode One . In the end , Frohman dies unceremoniously , while survivors of the City 17 uprising find him dead .

= = Themes = =

Livingston stated that the comic was a good way of pointing out several shortcomings of video games and first @-@ person shooters in particular . He emphasized the presence of various objects throughout the levels of games which were intended to aid the player , but would have little chance of being found in the real world in a similar manner .

There 's a lot of elements about video games to poke fun of , especially in first @-@ person shooters , which all have a lot of things in common , such as health kits , ammo , and barrels filled with explosive material strewn about levels for no practical , real @-@ world reason . It just seemed like a good setting to make jokes .

Much of the comic 's dark humor is derived from its contrasts with Half @-@ Life 2 : in a depressing , dark vision of a conquered humanity 's future , Gordon Freeman becomes a hero and savior ; the similarly named Gordon Frohman , on the other hand , is just an average person , improbably cheerful to the point of stupidity , and somewhat naïve as to what is actually going on around him . For instance , Frohman fails to realize that his return @-@ addressed letters to Doctor Breen reveal his location , and so result in that location being invaded , bombed , or otherwise compromised .

The comic contains many references to events and objects in the game . In one comic , Frohman makes a clerical error that causes the Combine to order far too many explosive barrels , thus suggesting an explanation for the barrels ' ubiquity throughout City 17 and beyond . In another , he writes a letter to Dr. Breen asking why using his flashlight reduces his ability to run , a reference to Half @-@ Life 2 's flashlight and sprint functions using the same power source . In a further strip , the town of Ravenholm becomes the headcrab @-@ infested ghost town seen in Half @-@ Life 2 after Frohman writes to Breen expressing his happiness with being there , giving away Ravenholm 's location . Indeed , Frohman causes (intentionally or accidentally) many of the disastrous circumstances that Gordon Freeman runs across . He accidentally gives Breen the idea of headcrab shells while on a radio , and sets up all of the traps in Ravenholm himself in an attempt to catch Father Grigori .

It is also revealed that , at the Black Mesa Research Facility , Frohman causes the resonance cascade that allows for alien forces to invade in Half @-@ Life by accidentally delivering a wedge of cheese , instead of the intended test sample , to the test chamber where the cascade flashpoints . Half @-@ Life : Decay , however , indicates that Dr. Gina Cross is responsible for this task . Livingston admitted he did not play Decay , and thus was not aware of its storyline . He also stated

that the comic takes place in the PC version of the Half @-@ life continuity , and since Half @-@ Life : Decay was never published for the PC , it does not affect the comic .

= = Reception = =

The comic has had positive reception from both the public and editors of various gaming magazines . The Globe and Mail stated the comic " stands out from most other gamics (comics consisting of game screenshots) by virtue of the quality of its writing and presentation " . Online magazine GGL.com said that " Concerned is one of the funnier online gaming comics , and perhaps the best single @-@ game parody in the bunch " , and The Irish Gamers described Concerned as a " hit webcomic " . Computer Gaming World called the comic " funny " , while PC Zone described it as " mildly amusing " . The comic had also caught the attention of reviewers outside the United States and the United Kingdom ; the Romanian magazine Level said the comic is " a recommendation to every fan of the game and anyone looking for a good daily laugh " .

The comic 's popularity , as well as the fact that Livingston stated he does not intend to continue the comic through Half @-@ Life 2 : Episode One , led to the appearance of an unofficial sequel to Concerned , entitled Concerned 2 : A Concerned Rip @-@ Off : The Continuing Adventures of Gordon Frohman , and created by Norman N. Black , although it is currently on an undisclosed hiatus since November 28 , 2010 .