

A  
STARWARP CONCEPTS  
MAGAZINE



# THE SAGA OF PANDORA ZWIEBACK

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RESALE



**INTRODUCING  
THE NEW DARK  
URBAN-FANTASY  
NOVEL SERIES  
FROM STARWARP  
CONCEPTS!**

**STEVEN A.  
ROMAN**

**ELISEU  
GOUVEIA**

**S**HE'S A SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD GOTH WHO'S JUST DISCOVERED THAT HER NEW YORK CITY HOMETOWN IS THE STALKING GROUND FOR EVERY MONSTER AND GHOUL OUT TO RAISE A LITTLE HELL. BUT WITH THE HELP OF AN IMMORTAL MONSTER HUNTER NAMED ANNIE SHE'S GOING TO PROTECT HER CITY AND THE WORLD FROM THE FORCES OF DARKNESS...AND MAYBE EVEN HAVE SOME FUN DOING IT!

**STARWARP CONCEPTS** PRESENTS:

**THE SAGA OF  
PANDORA  
ZWIEBACK™**

**"WELCOME TO GOTHOPOLIS"**

**STEVEN A. ROMAN**  
WRITER

**ELISEU "ZEU" GOUVEIA**  
ART AND COLORS

**MIKE RIVILIS**  
DESIGN AND LETTERING

PANDORA ZWIEBACK CREATED BY  
**STEVEN A. ROMAN  
AND URIEL CATON**

PANDORA ZWIEBACK LOGO BY **BOB LARKIN**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT OUR WEB SITES:  
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HEY,  
THERE.  
I'M  
**PANDORA  
ZWIEBACK**

AND I'VE GOT  
A QUESTION  
FOR YOU.

DID  
YOU KNOW  
THERE ARE  
**MONSTERS**  
IN THE  
WORLD?

**REAL**  
ONES,  
I MEAN.

'CAUSE  
IN MY SERIES  
OF DARK  
URBAN-FANTASY  
NOVELS FROM  
**STARWARP  
CONCEPTS**

**THE SAGA OF  
PANDORA  
ZWIEBACK™**

I  
SEE THEM  
**ALL THE  
TIME...**





PARANOID WEREWOLVES--

--AND "GOTHIC LOLITA" VAMPIRES.



ROCK-STAR DEMONS--

--AND FLESH-EATING GOBLINS.



SOUL-STEALING SUCCUBI--

--AND SUGAR-ADDICTED ZOMBIES.



ALL THE THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT--

--INCLUDING THE ONES HIDING UNDER YOUR BED.



THE WORLD IS FILLED WITH MONSTERS--

--AND ONLY I CAN SEE THEM!



EXCUSE ME?

Oh, OKAY... ONLY ME--AND SEBASTIENNE MAZARIN.

ANNIE'S A MONSTER HUNTER WHO'S TEACHING ME *EVERYTHING* THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT FIGHTING GHOULS AND GHOSTS.



SHE'S ALSO A *SHAPE-SHIFTER*--AND OVER FOUR HUNDRED YEARS OLD!

FOUR HUNDRED YEARS! ISN'T THAT, LIKE, TOTALLY *INSANE*?

THAT MEANS SHE'S BEEN DOING THIS MONSTER-HUNTING STUFF FOR, LIKE, *FOREVER*!



☹️ sigh.☹️ YOU MAKE ME SOUND LIKE SOME OLD HAG...

Oh, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

*TRUST ME, ANNIE--YOU LOOK TOTALLY HOT.*

...FOR AN OLD HAG, I MEAN...



Hmmf.

SO...

WANNA SEE WHAT I SEE...?





PRETTY WILD, HUH? AND THE FUN ALL STARTS IN THE FIRST NOVEL:

# BLOOD FEUD

THAT'S WHERE ANNIE AND ME WIND UP IN THE MIDDLE OF A WAR AMONG RIVAL VAMPIRE CLANS, WITH THE SAFETY OF THE WHOLE WORLD AT STAKE! (no pun intended)

IT'S ON SALE RIGHT NOW AT ALL ONLINE BOOKSTORES THAT HAVE REALLY GREAT TASTE--



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HEY, ATTENTION WHORE!



YOU ABOUT *DONE* PIMPIN' YOUR BOOKS?

THIS FOG MACHINE IS GIVIN' ME *HELLACIOUS* CHILLS!

YEAH, AND THIS STUPID MONSTER COSTUME'S MAKIN' ME *ITCHY*.

I THINK IT'S GOT *BEDBUGS* OR SOMETHING...



DON'T MIND THE *DRAMA QUEENS*.

THAT'S JUST MY BOYFRIEND, *JAVIER MALDONADO*, AND MY BEST FRIEND, *SHEENA MCCARTHY*.

THEY'RE WHAT YOU CALL "SUPPORTING CHARACTERS"--KINDA LIKE MY BUMBLING COMEDIC SIDEKICKS.

WELL... AT LEAST *SHEEN* IS...

HEY! I'M STANDIN' RIGHT *HERE!*



SO, THAT'S IT. BUT I HOPE YOU'LL JOIN US ON BOARD THE *FUN HEARSE* FOR ALL MY ADVENTURES.

THE "FUN HEARSE"?

*REALLY?*

Ah, FORGET IT, ANNIE-- SHE'S ON A ROLL...



IN THE MEANTIME...

*PLEASANT SCREAMS...*

**THE END...?**

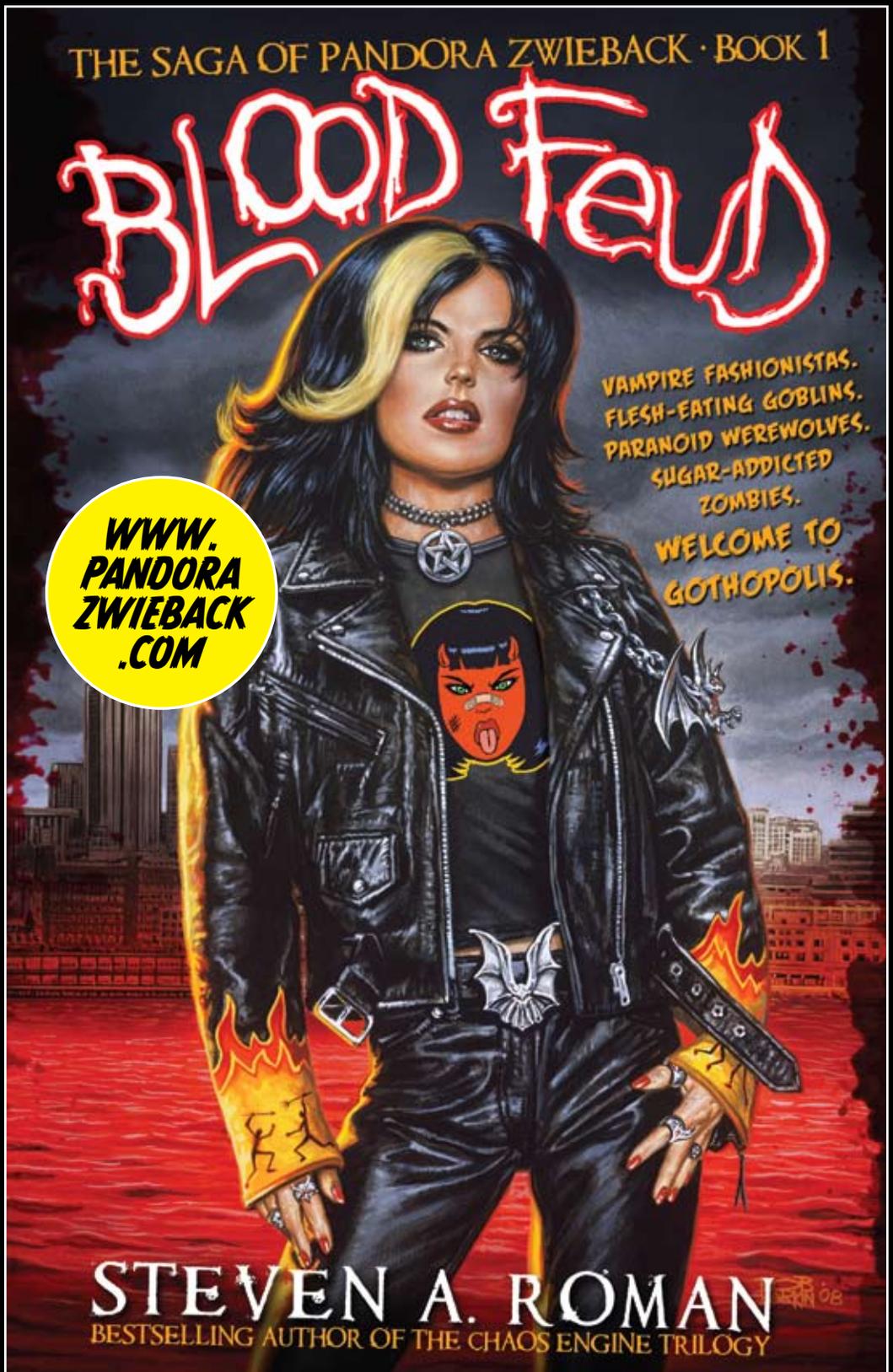
THE SAGA OF PANDORA ZWIEBACK · BOOK 1

# BLOOD FEUD

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FLESH-EATING GOBLINS.  
PARANOID WEREWOLVES.  
SUGAR-ADDICTED  
ZOMBIES.  
WELCOME TO  
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**STEVEN A. ROMAN**  
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE CHAOS ENGINE TRILOGY



# BLOOD FEUD

THE SAGA OF PANDORA ZWIEBACK, Book 1  
BY STEVEN A. ROMAN

Sixteen-year-old Goth girl Pandora Zwieback has a major problem: she's just discovered that her New York City hometown is the stalking ground for every monster and ghoul out to raise a little hell (literally!)... BUT she's apparently the only one who can see them. That means she can't tell her friends or family about the dangers around them—not unless she wants to end up locked away in a psychiatric ward.

But before Pan has a chance to make sense of her increasingly weird life, she finds herself in the middle of a war among rival vampire clans. Elegant Gothic Lolitas from Japan on one side, silk-suited London vamps on the other, leather-clad hunters from Eastern Europe in the middle, and all after the same prize: a mysterious crate recently delivered to the horror-themed museum owned by Pan's father.

What is the terrifying secret of Item #179? How do its contents tie into an incident from the blood-drenched past of Pan's new friend, a 400-year-old, shape-shifting monster hunter named Annie? Would releasing its contents *really* set the biblical Apocalypse in motion?

Most important of all, though: Will Pan survive long enough to get any answers?

**[NOTE: *What you're about to read are excerpts from an uncorrected proof. Please do not quote for publication without checking against the final, printed book. Enjoy!*]**

SKETCHES FOR PANDORA

HAIR  
ON  
ONE  
SIDE!



*Early concept sketches  
of Pandora Zwieback by  
co-creator Uriel Caton.*

# Prologue

*Halja's Island*  
*South Pacific Ocean*  
*November 20, 1820*

*"Oh, for the love of God, would you just die already?"*

A man. A woman. A star-filled, moonlit night. Under normal circumstances they would be the classic ingredients for a romantic evening . . . except there was little that was either normal *or* romantic about the combination of these ingredients on this particular night. Not when the full moon that hovered over the rocky, volcanic landscape glowed with the color of freshly spilled blood, the woman was an immortal monster hunter standing on a plain littered with the corpses of human and otherworldly combatants, and the man she had run through with a sword wasn't just an ex-lover but a former heavenly messenger recently added to her to-do list. And certainly not when said messenger had designs on unleashing hell on earth in a mad attempt to take revenge on God Himself.

As breakups went, this one probably ranked just short of the long-prophesied battle of Armageddon—but not by much.

Ebon wings spread wide behind him, the handsome, dark-skinned angel took a moment to glance down at the sword protruding from his bare, sculpted chest before turning his attention to the woman who was attempting to shove the remaining two feet of steel through his rib cage.

"I hope you won't take this the wrong way, dear Sebastienne," the angel commented glibly, "but if this is how you *normally* show affection to your lovers, I'm beginning to understand why you live alone."

"Go to hell, Zaqiel. Or go back to heaven, if He will have you—I don't care which it is. But your madness ends here. Tonight." Gripping the ivory hilt with both hands, she threw her weight against the sword, grunting loudly from the exertion as she tried to force the blade deeper. The night air echoed with the nerve-jangling rasp of metal scraping bone.

"Do you want me to say it tickles more than the whisper of your sweet breath caressing the nape of my neck?" he asked with an infuriatingly playful grin, which quickly evaporated into a sneer. "Because it doesn't, actually. It's rather quite painful."

"Good," Sebastienne snapped through clenched teeth. "I'm just getting started."

"No, I rather think you've had enough fun for one evening," Zaqiel said. "You can stop now."

Sebastienne dug her boot heels into the earth and pushed harder on the weapon. Sweat beaded on her temples as she strained, but the blade wouldn't penetrate any farther.

"No, really," he insisted. "Stop."

"Shut up and die," she growled.

The fallen angel sighed melodramatically—and then smashed her across the face with a backhanded slap. Sebastienne lost her grip on the sword and staggered back a few feet before crashing to the ash-covered dirt on her rear end. Too dazed to move, she could only sit and watch numbly as the former prince of heaven wrenched the blade from his chest. The wound healed instantly.

Zaqiel hefted the blade in his fighting hand and nodded appreciatively. "Good balance . . . well crafted," he commented, "but not a very effective weapon against the Almighty's favorite children—"

"The Almighty's *rejects*, you mean! Admit it, Zaqiel, that's what you really are—you and Lucifer and all the other traitors He cast out! You're an embarrassment to your creator. That's why he banished you Watchers to that stinking pit for the rest of eternity—so He wouldn't have to look at you anymore . . . so He wouldn't have to remember you ever *existed*." She flashed a wicked smile. "Forgotten by all . . . mourned by none."

Zaqiel's lips pulled back in a snarl; a flash of lightning in the ever-rising pyroclastic cloud above them gleamed off razor-sharp fangs. She'd hit a nerve with that remark, doing far more damage than her useless sword ever could. She hoped they left a ragged scar on his heart, as his betrayal had left on hers.

"Perhaps you are right," he growled. "But I escaped the crucible, did I not? While God looked the other way and busied Himself with offering salvation to his monkey-children I regained my long-denied freedom—unlike my brothers who still beg Him for release!" He pointed up toward the rim of the volcano. "And now I have returned to free them!"

Zaqiel strode toward her, tightly gripping the sword's hilt. "And yet who should arrive at my hour of triumph, to disrupt my plans? The lowly beast I had the poor judgment to choose as my lover—who now has turned on its master. A mongrel that doesn't know whether it should be human or animal!" He sneered. "And you have the temerity to speak to *me* of God's rejects."

Sebastienne blinked back tears. Her words might have hurt his pride, but his tore at her soul. "Damn you, Zaqiel . . ." she whispered hoarsely.

"*I am already damned!*" the angel roared, and raised the sword above his head. "*But I will not suffer alone!*"

The blade swept down, and she screamed.

*Albany, New York*  
*United States*  
*Present Day*

If there was a spot on the face of the Earth more craptacularly boring than the town of Schriksdorp, New York, Pandora Zwieback had never heard about it. Oh, sure, there were probably reference books she could browse through at the library, Web sites she could check out by running a Google search, maybe there was even an article she might find in an old *National Geographic* magazine that profiled it as “The Dullest Place in America,” but she’d never been able to work up enough interest to go look. Besides, she already knew any information she’d gather would only confirm her own findings: that the town she liked to call *Schriksdork* was the Suck Capital of the Universe.

And she, unfortunately, had been condemned to live there—for *the rest of her life*.

All right, maybe that was being a little *too* dramatic. It wasn’t like she was locked up in prison, after all. She had her learner’s permit, which meant she’d soon be able to try her hand at navigating her mom’s Toyota 4Runner, she could leave the house when she needed to, and her mother gave her a fair amount of freedom to live her life. Sure, there were rules she had to follow—helping around the house, letting Mom know where she was going when she went out, stuff like that—but there were no guards at the doors, no bars on the windows, no attack dogs patrolling the grounds. And as long as her grades were good and she didn’t get mixed up with things like smoking (a really disgusting habit, in Pan’s opinion) or drugs (absolutely *not*) or drinking alcohol (well, not anymore), she didn’t have to worry about Mom getting on her case . . . too much. Besides, in two years she’d turn eighteen, and then she’d be able to make her own decisions about where she wanted to live. And no offense to Mom, but Schriksdorp wouldn’t even make it onto the list of eligible places, even if the English translation of the name for this former Dutch settlement was the admittedly intriguing “Terror Village.”

So, no, she wasn’t really “condemned” to a life sentence in Stinkville, USA, but there were times when it sure felt like it.

Maybe it was the environment that bothered her. She was a Queens, New York girl, born and bred, used to the grit and the grime and the frantic pace of urban living, and the idea of being surrounded by so

much Nature was just a bit . . . unsettling. There were too many trees, too much fresh air and wide-open spaces, too much overall peace and quiet. She missed the noise of the city, the feel of unyielding concrete under her boots, the smell of air laden with the grease of Chinese takeout, the smoke of street corner shish kebab, and the steam of overboiled hot dogs.

Maybe it was just because she was an outsider: a teenager with a penchant for occult-themed jewelry, black clothing, and even blacker hair dye—although she kept a streak of the natural blond coloring she'd inherited from her mother as a highlight—who was also a whopping big fangirl when it came to all things horror-related, whether it was movies or literature, comics or television, toys or games. A green-eyed Goth girl trapped in a land of preppy, blond-haired and blue-eyed suburban kids who dressed in the latest oh-so-hip and trendy styles, courtesy of the Gap and H&M and Abercrombie & Fitch. It sometimes made her feel like she was caught in a reality show version of *Disturbing Behavior*, that movie where disobedient kids got their brains rewired by the adults in their town to make them “perfect” sons and daughters. And if she was a stand-in for Katie Holmes's character in that movie . . . well, then Mom must be sort of like Nicole Kidman in that remake of *The Stepford Wives*, where women were forced to become “perfect” wives for their husbands. The difference was, no one had gotten around to rewiring Pan's and Karen's brains. Unless, of course, Mom had already been rewired when she was a kid . . .

Not such a crazy idea, when Pan thought about it. It would certainly explain why Mom had pressed so hard for her to move to Schriksdorp with her: she was hoping to get her daughter “fixed.” Get her to wash out the dye and have her shoulder-length locks styled into something a tad more ladylike. Suggest tossing out her battered black leather jacket, the cuffs and back panel of which Pan had painted with images of demons and damned souls burning in the fires of hell. Convince her to trade in the combat boots, black T-shirts, and distressed jeans she tended to wear for tasteful pumps and a bright, frilly sundress.

Like *that* was ever gonna happen. At least not without a fight to the death first, and then Mom could dress up her corpse however she wanted for the funeral. Pan wouldn't care by that point, anyway, just as long as she'd gotten in the last word before she croaked. A clever declaration like *You can take away my VampireFreaks T-shirts and my T.U.K. boots, but you'll never take . . . my freedom!* Only not, y'know, such a direct swipe from *Braveheart*. Something a little more original.

On the other hand, maybe some mental fine-tuning was just the thing she needed to finally put an end to the psychotic episodes she'd started experiencing . . . again.

The most recent psychosodes—her latest therapist, Dr. Nicole

Farrar, preferred calling them “visions” (probably so it didn’t make Pan seem quite so crazy)—weren’t as bad as others she’d suffered through over the past decade, and were nowhere near as bad as the ones she’d had during that tumultuous period when her life was being torn apart by her parents’ disintegrating marriage and her equally disastrous relationship with a boy named Curtis “Amadeus” Sheridan. But the early warning signs were all there: the creeping sense of unease; the feeling she was being watched (the doc had filed that little tic under “paranoid delusions”); and, worst of all, the occasional flicker in the corners of her eyes, of shadowy, blurred things that lurked on the edge of her vision, only to disappear as soon as she turned to look directly at them. And yet, even though those fleeting glimpses of otherworldliness had always tended to freak her out, even though there was every indication that her personal demons were clawing their way back into her psyche after a blessed eight-month, med-free reprieve, she hadn’t been able to work up the nerve to tell anybody.

Besides, nobody really believed she could see monsters . . . not even Pan herself.

“Penny for your thoughts, Panda-bear?”

Pan turned to face her mother. Karen Bonifant—she’d dropped the *Zwieback* and gone back to her maiden name after the divorce from David was finalized nine months ago—sat behind the wheel of the 4Runner, lightly tapping the tips of her fingers against the rim in time to the song on the satellite radio.

“A penny? That your best offer? And I thought we were done with that ‘Panda-bear’ stuff. It’s so embarrassing.”

“I thought you liked it when your dad and I called you that.”

“I did—when I was five.” Pan gestured at herself. “Hello? I’m sixteen now, Mom. ‘Panda-bear’ was a long time ago.”

“Not that long ago . . .” Mom remarked wistfully.



Karen pulled the SUV up to the curb in front of the main entrance to the Albany Megamall and glanced at her watch. “Yipes! I’m gonna be late. I’ve gotta run, sweetie.”

Pan grabbed her demon-decorated messenger bag from the backseat, gave Karen a quick peck on the cheek, and opened the passenger-side door. “Love you, Mom.”

“Love you, too, honey. And I’m sorry about the ‘Panda-bear’ thing. It’s just . . . sometimes I forget you’re a young woman, now. I don’t mean to embarrass you.”

Pan felt her cheeks redden. “That’s okay, Mom—I know you don’t.” She glanced around to see if anyone was close enough to overhear

them, then leaned forward and whispered, “And, y’know, it’s . . . okay if you do it once in a while.” She raised an eyebrow and smiled slyly. “Once. in. a while.”

Karen chuckled. “Okay, okay, I get the message.”

“Have fun with the big kids.”

Karen rolled her eyes. “Fun. Right.” Pan closed the door and Mom drove away, waving good-bye with her left hand out the window as she pulled into the street.

Pan waved back, chuckling as the 4Runner roared across three lanes of traffic to the passing lane, cutting off two delivery trucks and a minivan. Mom might have been born upstate, but her aggressive driving skills were pure New York City.

A rumble of thunder caught Pan’s attention as she walked toward the mall entrance. She turned her face to the roiling, green-tinged sky and smiled as warm, fat raindrops splashed against her eyelashes and the tip of her nose. So it was raining; so the weather was miserable. Who cared? As far as she was concerned, all was right with the world—at least for the time being—and not even a heavy downpour was going to spoil her good mood.

She eased into the throng of dampened inbound shoppers, ignoring the flickering images that danced at the corners of her eyes.



*Want to know what happens next? Then  
be sure to order a copy of **BLOOD FEUD**  
from your favorite online retailer, or order  
directly from **StarWarp Concepts!***

## ABOUT THE WRITER



**STEVEN A. ROMAN** is the bestselling author of *X-Men: The Chaos Engine Trilogy* and *Final Destination: Dead Man's Hand*. His short fiction has appeared in the anthologies *The Best New Zombie Tales 2*, *The Dead Walk Again!*, *Doctor Who: Short Trips: Farewells*, *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*, *The Ultimate Hulk*, *If I Were an Evil Overlord*, and *Tales of the Shadowmen 4: Lords of Terror*. He also wrote the graphic novels *Lorelei: Sects and the City*, *Stan Lee's Alexa* and *Sunn*, and co-wrote the direct-to-DVD animated short *X-Men: Darktide*.

Steve's current writing projects include the *Saga of Pandora Zwieback* dark-fantasy novel series, the science-fiction novel *Doctor Omega and the Megiddo Factor*, and the Mature Readers graphic novels *Lorelei: Building the Perfect Beast*, Books 1 and 2.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST



**ELISEU GOUVEIA** (a.k.a. **ZEU**) is the acclaimed creator/writer/artist of the comic book *Infiniteens* and the online comic strip *Lady of the Horde*. He is also the artist of StarWarp Concepts' illustrated classics *Carmilla* and *A Princess of Mars*, the graphic novel *Lorelei: Sects and the City*, and the comic book *The Saga of Pandora Zwieback Annual #1*.

Zeu's current projects include providing frontispiece illustrations and cover sketches for *The Saga of Pandora Zwieback*, and drawing the graphic novel *Lorelei: Building the Perfect Beast*, Book 2. Check out *Lady of the Horde* and some of his other work at: [eliseugouveia.deviantart.com](http://eliseugouveia.deviantart.com).

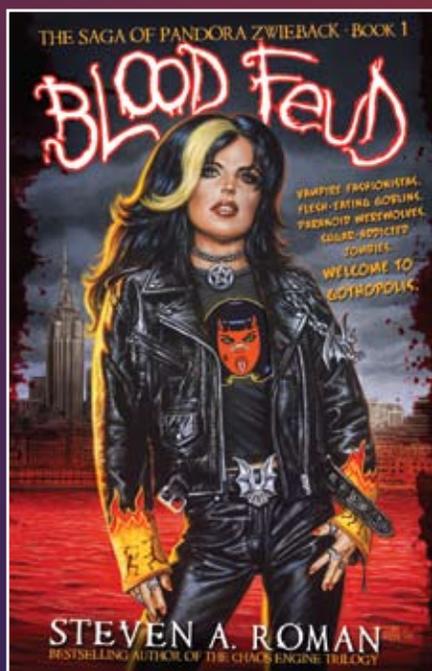
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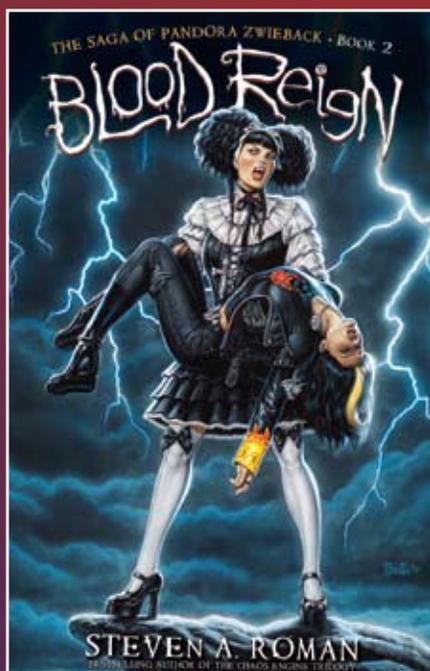
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