



## HEY, JOHNY!

Original Graphic Novel  
Written by: Alex Dvorak  
Art by: Orhan Gökcek

*“And these children that you spit on, as they try to change their worlds... are immune to your consultations, they’re quite aware what they’re going through...”* — David Bowie

**Concept:** Prague, 1972. Tanks on the streets. Politicians missing without a trace. Soviet soldiers smoking cigarettes in their camps. An ever present reminder that your home is no longer your home.

The Russians ban all semblance of Western culture so as to put Czechoslovakia back on its “righteous” communist path. But, beneath the oppressive occupation is a culture of teens — who by listening to David Bowie on pirate radio, secretly trading Kurt Vonnegut books, and partying at a puppet theater turned rock and roll disco — are starting a revolution.

In walks Johny, the teenage hustler single handedly running Prague’s black market. Johny can move anything you need: Marlboros, denim, even diamonds. But with a target on his back, his operation gets out of hand, and he must finally take the leap and escape to free America.

**Genre:** Historical Thriller — Based on a true story

**Format:** Original Graphic Novel

**Target Readership:** Adult

**Personal Note:** What makes a refugee? When is someone willing to leave their country, their family, and all they’ve ever known? Who is willing to risk their life for freedom? My dad. The character of Johny is inspired by the true stories of my father’s upbringing/rebellion in Prague. He escaped at nineteen years old with a suitcase, a fake passport, and the American Dream.

**Tone:** HEY, JOHNY! Is a thrilling cat and mouse game with themes of crime, mistrust, and rebellion. The story is alive with the energy of teen boys determined to stick it to the man. The man, in this case, just happens to be the Russian army and the Czech secret police.

**The Story:** When entrepreneurial 16-year-old Jan (pronounced Yahn) is left alone to raise himself in Russian-occupied Prague, he hustles his way to opportunity, friendship, and ultimately freedom.

Jan’s operation, selling lip gloss to girls at school, starts out of necessity. He’ll die if he doesn’t get his hands on David Bowie’s new album. So, he makes cold hard cash — his only ticket to opportunity in this

communist society — by smuggling goods from Poland and hiding the contraband in the ceiling compartments of the train. After all that work, he blows his earnings on drinks for girls at the disco. Can't say I blame him. But he needs to re-up quickly because he discovers an underground record exchange group, his first real lead on Bowie.

Jan supplies his entire high school with denim textbook covers (denim being Western, ostentatious, and frowned upon by the regime) and his principal is forced to rat him out to Milan, the power hungry, Czech secret police officer who puts a target on Jan's back. Let the cat and mouse game begin.

With Bowie finally in his hands, Milan catches him, and feeds him to the Russian soldiers. Jan is battered and bruised, but it only fuels him more. Jan transforms into Johnny, a black market mastermind supplying every bar in town with Marlboro cigarettes, with his band of brothers by his side. But after a heist gone wrong, a falling out between Johnny and his childhood best friend Vasek, forces him to reconsider who he can trust. It doesn't help that Milan bugged Johnny's apartment and is whispering in everyone's ear.

Johnny realizes it's not about girls and rock-and-roll anymore. He wants out.

Johnny has been creating fake visas to get people out of this oppressive world, and now he has to do it for himself. Milan finally has enough to nail him for his treasonous crimes. Almost caught, Johnny and his friends vow to escape together, but only Johnny makes it to free America, a place all but legend up until this point.

At the heart of this story is the American Dream.

**Alex Dvorak Bio:** Alex is a multicultural (Latina & Czech) graphic novelist, screenwriter, and journalist published in *The Washington Post*, *HuffPost*, *Business Insider*, *POPSUGAR* and many more. She is writing a YA graphic novel with Mad Cave Studios set to be published in 2024. Her TV pilots are on the prestigious Red List and have won official selection at The Big Apple Film Festival. As the daughter of immigrants from clashing cultures, a teenage cancer survivor, and a former runway model, Alex writes stories of teen rebellion based on real-life experiences with authenticity, dark humor, and heart.

**Orhan Umut Gökçek:** Orhan is an illustrator and comic book artist based in Turkey where he co-founded Hayali, an award-winning animation company. He is an Aftershock artist on a yet-to-be-announced project. His original graphic novel "Button" was released in 2019 with Baobab Publications and his short comics have been published in several anthologies. Orhan is currently raising money with his art for relief aid for the victims of the recent earthquake in Turkey and Syria. He lives in Ankara with his wife and little daughter, Zeldä.

