CRAB 5 Round 1 Votes

Hello! Welcome to Agent Snow-anon's votes for Round 1 of CRAB 5. I'd like to start by saying that, despite being a benchie this time around (for kinda dumb reasons on my part), I've been enjoying myself a lot! I've been putting out my best work since CRAB 3. Let's see where the adventure takes us!

My priorities for voting, what I think makes an entry good, can be separated in several criteria, in order of importance:

- Writing: What's the story actually about? How's the pacing? How are the characters explored, and what's the dialogue/action balance like? Does this fit the beats of a hero's journey? Are there any interesting twists? The most important part of ANY CRAB story, no matter the format, character or art style, is the story.
- Accuracy: A lot of Crabs often neglect to be accurate to their prompt, discarding the theme to do something else entirely. It's not bad to twist the concepts you've been given, but that has to be done with finesse. At the same time, writing your opponent accurately is also relevant.
- Visuals: This has far less to do with how an artist draws and more with the final image they've created. Is there an interesting aesthetic? The panels, shot composition, colours, animation if present, and also the readability. If the entry is hard to read or understand, or is lacking in polish, that'll take away points in my book.

With all that said, let's begin!

TRAIN A HELLHOUND
Vote: Chad
Both were funny, charming entries focused on humour and visuals. Ultimately I think Chad takes it, the character himself is pretty fun and I think the direction was smart with the Pokémon battle. Coolhound is awesome, I hope he comes back! I think Doe Deerly's was also fairly enjoyable, the art is cool and the joke where Doe gets mistaken for Satan was neat. I just thought the humor was better on Chad's entry.

REDEEM THE SINNER
Vote: Blossom
Honestly very close match. They both had advantages and disadvantages on the writing front. Blossom's entry is mostly just her and Liddell talking until Blossom confronts her past self, and Liddell's entry had a lot more action (plus, the ending was very fitting). I think in the end, the character study and development of Blossom did it for me. I'll say that Blossom-anon had a smarter twist on the prompt, while Liddell-anon fumbled a little. Yeah, Blossom is still the character that's being judged by an angel, but the sinner that's being redeemed in Liddell's entry seems like an afterthought to a degree. They just take him to the angel and call it a day, where's the actual redemption for that guy?

HIGHWAY TO HELL
Vote: Natum
I think there's two kinds of CRAB entries at large: PVPs and team-ups. Team-ups tend to be weaker in narrative in my opinion, but in this case it was the opposite. I really like how Natum

stood up for Locket against Satan (BTW, most interesting Satan design goes to Natum-anon!). Plus, the aesthetic was OFF THE CHARTS! John Blanche had a love child with the Mad Max movies. Very cool. Although I do think Locket could've been a little more jokey? I also liked Locket's entry, it was funny and the art was great, although I think Natum was mischaracterised as a one-dimensional bad guy and the CUM cameo spam could've been dialed back a little.

ESCAPE
Vote: Junko
I feel conflicted because Skater Stick is SOVL but Junko-anon's grown a lot from last year! There's a lot of varying art power levels and draftsmanship skills in CRAB, but trying is what matters. I like Junko as a character and I wanna see where her antics go, also hopefully she learns to like her team? The writing is funny here and there and I appreciated just how far Junko-anon went with the scenery and framing. Good work to both!

FIDDLE CONTEST
Vote: Simments
This one's tough. I think S.H.A.E. told a good story, a well-paced story with solid beats and something I would've probably written myself. But ultimately I'm going with Simments for several reasons: first, S.H.A.E.-anon dropped the fiddle contest concept pretty quickly in favour of a race, which is kind of a weak inversion of the concept. In both stories neither of the characters are skilled with a fiddle, but Simments' entry had him providing more entertainment to Satan by making a fool out of himself, which I liked. Also, I feel like in S.H.A.E.'s entry Simments was fairly out of character. You read both entries and it's almost like they're entirely different people. That said, the art was great in both! I just think Simments' entry had less narrative pitfalls.

RUNNING WITH THE DEVIL
Vote: Uprise
REALLY tough vote. First of all, neither of the entries used the theme very well, I felt like? Mind you, I think there's a lot of great stuff in both. I loved Sonata's Goku-isms, and I generally love Sonata-anon's nostalgic manga style. I also liked the more focused fight approach, but I felt like it was still divorced from the prompt. Uprise's entry actually had some form of devil, and featuring several characters is neat. With two VERY close entries, I'll give it to Uprise for the accuracy factor.

GATES OF HELL
Vote: Stub
Wow, both monster draftsmen in this one. The mood was fairly similar in both, funnily enough, but you know how this goes: Bethany's entry lacks text in half of it, and the art itself isn't super readable to me (albeit it looks awesome) so I can't quite understand what's happening in some of it. This is probably my fault to a degree. Bethany… eats Spud, and then Spud blows up inside Bethany's mouth, and then he's surrounded by demons? I really wish the text had been added (on time), but oh well. Spud really surprised me! Fairly straightforward story, but Bethany felt like a looming monster, constantly keeping Spud on the backfoot. Giant eldritch monster VS little kid kino.

LIMBO
Vote: Vaire
Eh… I was torn with both. Flower had a pretty neat animation, but narratively it doesn't do much. I don't like voting for novellas and I REALLY wanted to see Vaire-anon cooking up a comic because their art style is awesome, but I guess time constraints called for a novella. More narrative content, so I vote. Seeing Plato and Aristotle there was kinda neat I guess

COLLECT THE SOULS
Vote: Gary
I think Gary did something really funny by turning the souls thing into a Pokémon battle. That's a thing people like to collect, yeah. Pretty funny, well, both were funny, but I was mostly bothered by the mischaracterisation of Gary in Janny's entry. He's apparently very Christian! Janny still did really well, though. Classic Janny humor, and that MS Paint art never gets old.

SNOWBALL'S CHANCE
Vote: Edward
This was a little awkward to vote for, but I'm choosing Edward because Mimi didn't reference Hell too much and it felt like it could've been about something else. Cool art style though, kinda reminds me of John K (I know he's persona non grata but his shows are still cool). Edward's entry had the classic grounded humor and emotion I've come to expect from Edward-anon. I liked the little anecdote about the time he spent Christmas with the scientists. Poor guy.

BABYSIT THE ANTICHRIST
Vote: Rachel
Rachel's story was so wholesome. It was pretty cool to see the usually brash, unkempt Rachel actually caring for a child. She came to love the literal Antichrist as her own baby! I love how she became a mama bear fighting for her kid even after momentarily neglecting him. By comparison, Zakal's story felt very "and then" – the Antichrist doesn't show up until half-way through, and then they do a bunch of babysitter tasks, and Zakal outperforms Rachel because he's more… firm? I guess? It's a very "and then this happened" story, most of the meat of it was a montage and then Zakal wins. Great art from both though, I just think Rachel's entry did a better job at showing her engaging with parenting as a character, with her own faults too.

KING OF LIES
Vote: Leon
I'm impressed! This was honestly fantastically paced. Leon-anon made the absolute most out of the 15 pages they had, and their version of Hell was super fleshed out with interesting locations. The Leon and Edric dynamic is pretty solid across both entries, but they have a LOT of dialogue here, which I liked. The ending with beating Satan at poker was also pretty cool. I love the Gustave Doré style, very fitting! Edric-anon also did a nice job with a more comedic, fast and bold entry.

DEMON SLAYING
Vote: Illwill

I'll preface by saying I was actually blown away by Bucket-anon's action. For a sequence where there's no words and it's all action, it was super cool! I just happen to think that Illwill's story was super interesting. He posed as Bucket just to get away from the challenge! I like seeing the consequences of CUM still weighing heavily on Illwill, and I can't wait to see where it goes.

LABYRINTH
Vote: Ash
Uuuuh… this was a weird one. Ash had a very nice-looking, straightforward entry. I liked how Tobias couldn't just fly away because there were also flying demons. In comparison, it's a shame because Tobias-anon's idea seemed really cool, but he seemed to get demotivated by the circumstances at the end and there's a really jarring 4th wall break. It sucks, I genuinely wanna see Tobias-anon make something really cool next time.

FEAST OF THE DAMNED
Vote: Saki
The story in Lotte's entry was pretty bizarre, even with some very good art. Both were very well drawn, actually, I just think Saki's made more sense. I also don't really like cameo spam most of the time, but the Atta cameo was very well chosen.

SUCCUBUS MAKEOVER
Vote: Maple
Maple's had a very cool setup with Maple being recruited to beat 17ling in succubus numbers, and I liked the panelling in general. 17ling's had some nice humor, but it kinda seems like it ends right when it's gonna get going? I expected to see both of them go on an AIDS-spreading spree, but 17ling just pukes on Maple's feet and that's it.

MAKE A DEVIL CRY
Vote: Ocho
Best comedic writing in all of Round 1, hands down. Bravo to Ocho-anon, it was well paced, both characters had things to do, the fight at the end was cool, and the resolution at the eye doctor was pretty funny. "Eye'll Be Damned" is a great name for an eye doctor's clinic in hell. Nobody pulled any Devil Triggers though???? I liked Trixxy's too, the action was pretty neat and the ending was emotional but I feel like the demon character wasn't super well set up for the resolution? It's a tough prompt to take literally, Ocho's strength was in taking it as a joke. But I salute the effort to play it straight anyway!

WAKE THE BEAST
Vote: Clarity
Another VERY tough call to make. Clarity's entry was just more complete. I like the humor, even if that panel where Clarity talks Jev's ear off slowed the pacing down it was funny and very in character for Clarity. Jev's entry I thought was going super well, I loved the Houndclops cameo, but then… they just kinda decide that Houndclops will fight the beast and it ends in an Invincible joke and that's it. I liked how Jev and Clarity actually fight the beast in Clarity's entry. That said, I thought Jev's entry had very cool shots and backgrounds, there's a lot of good in both.

HELL'S BELLS

Vote: Captain Cheddar
Very tough choice to make. I think there's strengths in both: I really liked how Kablooie's entry was more grounded in writing both characters, with Kablooie's hellish heritage and Captain Cheddar being kinda oblivious about a lot of things. However, the story kinda ends half-way through. I would've liked to see a version that's a little better paced, where Kablooie rescues Captain Cheddar from the satanists and there's a more established ending. By contrast, Captain Cheddar's story was more organised and better paced, with a proper ending (funny jokes at the end, too). The art was great in both, and ultimately I have to give it to the Gamemaster for picking very close matches this year. Very good matchmaking.

DEVIL IN DISGUISE
Vote: Cooler
I think Cooler made most out of the prompt, and his story and art are pretty neat, although I do kinda object to the fact that the story didn't seem to revolve around a challenge that either character had to win, and rather had Cooler and Foxglove at odds for different reasons that also involved Hell and the concept of the devil in disguise. That said, I would've liked to see a more traditional GM-given challenge approach (the romance/harem thing was funny though). Foxglove's art is actually super cool, I just thought the story was weaker.

BENCHIE COMMENTS

I couldn't forget my good friends, the benchies! Here's my feedback for you all.

CONQUEST
I mean… it's the same narrative as my entry, mine's a sequel of Pier-anon's. BUT! I wanted to take the time to thank him once again for collaborating so much with me this time around. The Piersnow/Snowpiercer story wouldn't be what it is without him. Also I kek'd way too much

FAMINE
Flipnote kino. Very quick, very sovlful. I like that she actually built the horse. I'm intrigued to see just how far you can carry Flipnote going forward, my friend.

WAR
Woah, you could do that the whole time??? Seriously, Steel-anon, invest in this 3D skillset! You can do a lot with this. Also, pretty good comedic timing. I hope to see more out of this in the future!

GATHER THE HORSEMEN
I like the art, although I would've liked to see a more complex narrative. That's okay though, I understand what was keeping Gato-anon from it and I've seen his other WIP comics so I'm sure we'll see a more complex comic next time. Very cool effort either way