

MERMAIDS OF THE CHICAGO RIVER



A VIRTUAL WORLD COMIC BOOK
BY ANDREW OLEKSILIK



MY NAME IS
TI ...



... AND I
AM A
MERMAID.



A MERMAID WHO
LIVES IN THE
CHICAGO RIVER.



REALLY.



THE CHICAGO RIVER HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN IMPORTANT WATERWAY...

... LINKING LAKE MICHIGAN TO THE DES PLAINES AND ILLINOIS RIVERS.



NATIVE AMERICANS PORTAGED CANOES BETWEEN THOSE WATERWAYS FOR CENTURIES.



THE NEXUS AT CHICAGO CONTINUED TO REPRESENT AN ENORMOUS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR THOSE WHO CHOSE TO SETTLE NEAR THE CHICAGO RIVER.

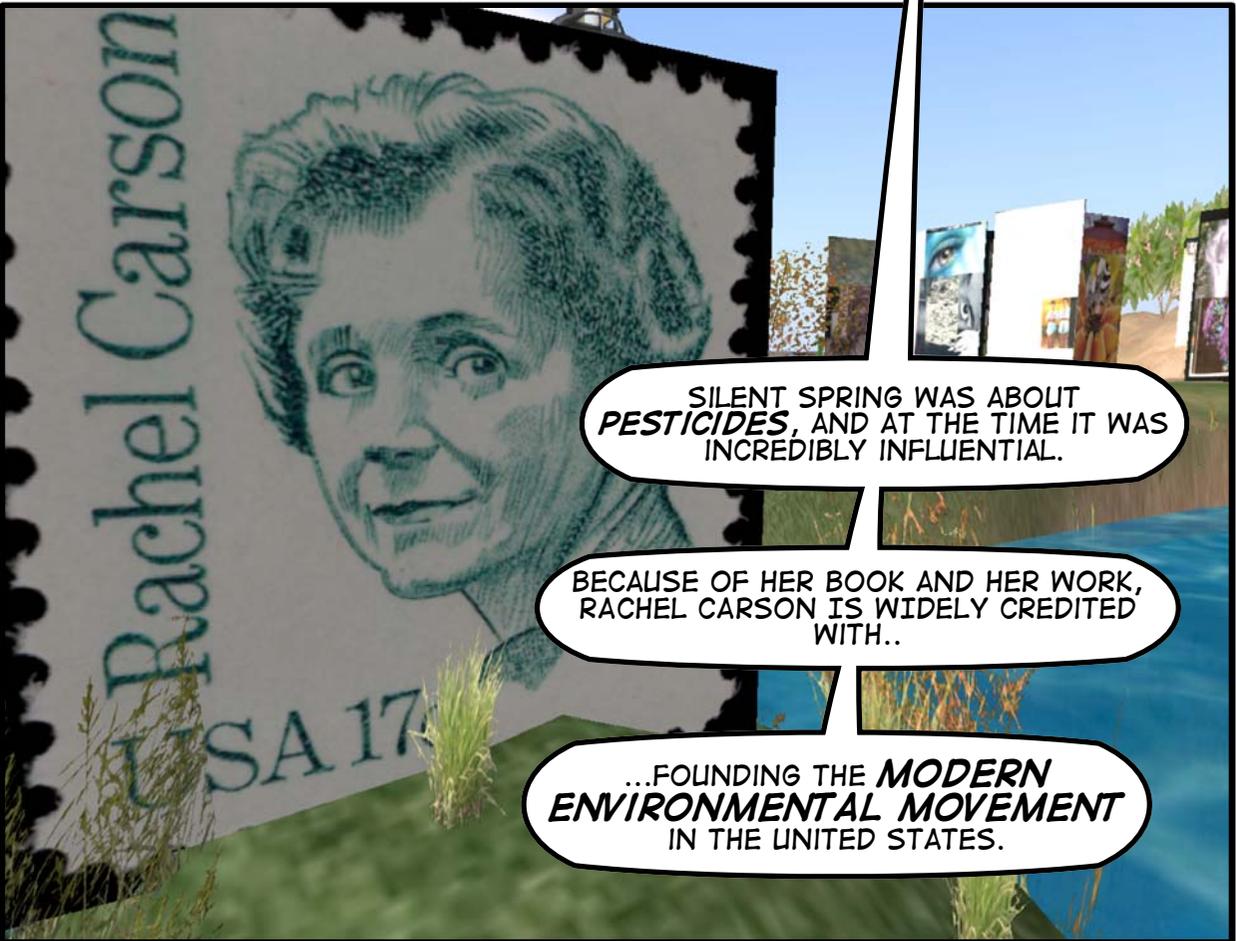


BUT BEFORE I GET TOO FAR INTO MY STORY...

I SHOULD TELL YOU THAT THIS COMIC BOOK WAS INSPIRED BY A WOMAN NAMED **RACHEL CARSON**.

SHE WAS A **MARINE BIOLOGIST** AND A WRITER AND, WELL, HUMAN.

IN 1962 SHE WROTE A BOOK CALLED **SILENT SPRING**.



SILENT SPRING WAS ABOUT **PESTICIDES**, AND AT THE TIME IT WAS INCREDIBLY INFLUENTIAL.

BECAUSE OF HER BOOK AND HER WORK, RACHEL CARSON IS WIDELY CREDITED WITH..

...FOUNDING THE **MODERN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT** IN THE UNITED STATES.





BECAUSE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, **HUMANS** LIVE NEAR THE CHICAGO RIVER.

LOTS OF HUMANS.



IF YOU LIVE NEAR CHICAGO, YOU'VE PROBABLY DRIVEN OVER THE RIVER ...

... IN YOUR CAR.



BUT NOWADAYS, VERY FEW PEOPLE ACTUALLY CARE ABOUT THE RIVER.



MY POINT IS THIS ...



CHICAGOANS
CAN DO A LOT
MORE TO
CARE ABOUT
THEIR VERY
OWN RIVER.



IT'S THE
RIVER THAT
MADE THIS
CITY **GREAT.**



BUT
MERMAIDS
LIKE ME AND
OTHER
IMPORTANT
PLANTS AND
ANIMALS ARE
LEAVING THE
RIVER AND
NOBODY
SEEMS TO
CARE.



DO YOU?



THE RIVER HAS
A LIFE OF ITS
OWN THAT
SHOULD BE
CARED FOR AND
NURTURED.



THE CHICAGO RIVER
COULD BE AN
IMPORTANT HABITAT
FOR PLANTS AND
ANIMALS.



BIODIVERSITY,
LOTS OF DIFFERENT
KINDS OF PLANTS,
FISH, BIRDS AND
OTHER ANIMALS IS
IMPORTANT FOR THE
LIFE OF THE RIVER.



BUT BECAUSE HUMANS HAVE
FRAGMENTED THE CHICAGO
RIVER IN SO MANY WAYS,
THERE ARE NOW FEWER
KINDS OF FISH AND OTHER
ANIMALS IN THE RIVER.

YOU'VE HEARD OF
BIODIVERSITY,
HAVEN'T YOU?



LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY ISN'T SOMETHING THAT JUST HAPPENS IN RAINFORESTS AND OTHER **FARAWAY** PLACES

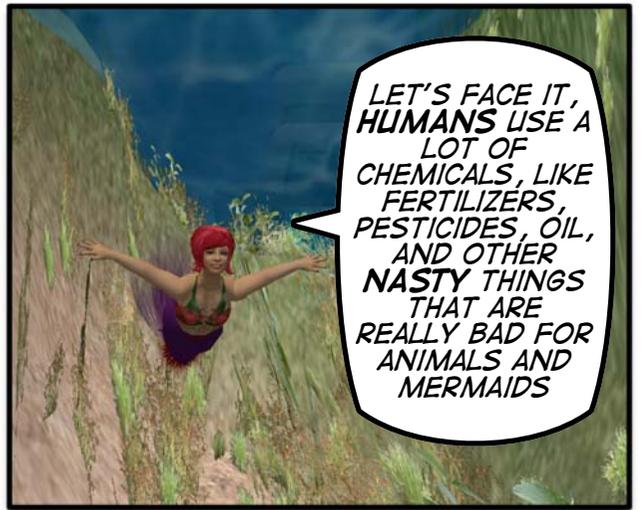
IT CAN HAPPEN RIGHT HERE AT **HOME**



PART OF THE REASON THESE HABITATS HAVE BEEN RUINED IS BECAUSE OF **TOXINS**.

TOXINS AND POISONS, OFTEN IN THE FORM OF CHEMICALS GET INTO THE WATER FROM **HUMAN INDUSTRY**.

TOXINS TEND TO ACCUMULATE IN ANIMAL TISSUES, AND TOXINS KILL PLANTS, ANIMALS AND MERMAIDS.



LET'S FACE IT, **HUMANS** USE A LOT OF CHEMICALS, LIKE FERTILIZERS, PESTICIDES, OIL, AND OTHER **NASTY** THINGS THAT ARE REALLY BAD FOR ANIMALS AND MERMAIDS





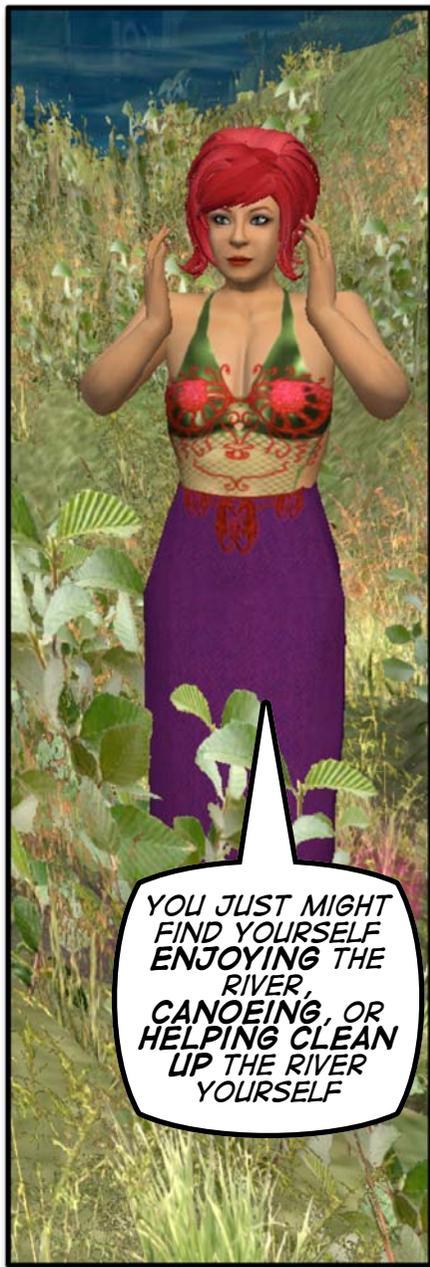
ONE GROUP THAT IS DOING A LOT TO HELP **IMPROVE** THE WATER QUALITY IS ...

FRIENDS OF THE CHICAGO RIVER.



THEY'RE A BINCH OF **FRIENDLY FOLKS** THAT WOULD URGE YOU TO VOLLINTEER, BECOME A MEMBER, AND EDUCATE YOURSELF ON THE CHICAGO RIVER AT THEIR WEBSITE...

CHICAGORIVER.ORG



YOU JUST MIGHT FIND YOURSELF **ENJOYING** THE RIVER, **CANOEING**, OR **HELPING CLEAN UP** THE RIVER YOURSELF





MERMAIDS OF THE CHICAGO RIVER WAS CREATED FOR THE **KNOWLEDGE VIRUS RESEARCH STATION** IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE **BIOLOGICAL AGENTS SHOW** IN OCTOBER 2008 AT **GALLERY 400, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO**. **MERMAIDS OF THE CHICAGO RIVER** WAS CONCEIVED, WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY **ANDREW OLEKSIUK**. IT IS BASED ON AN ORIGINAL INTERACTIVE BUILD IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD, **SECOND LIFE™**. **FRIENDS OF THE CHICAGO RIVER** CAN BE REACHED AT **CHICAGORIVER.ORG** FOR EDUCATIONAL AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES. SPECIAL THANKS TO THE **INTERACTIVE ARTS AND MEDIA DEPARTMENT** AT **COLUMBIA COLLEGE CHICAGO** FOR USE OF THE VIRTUAL CHICAGO RIVER AS IT APPEARS ON "I AM COLUMBIA" SIM. **SECOND LIFE™** IS A TRADEMARK OF **LINDEN RESEARCH, INC.**