



Peyo

**GNAP!**



# the SMURFS<sup>TM</sup>

## ANTHOLOGY



PAPERCUT<sup>TM</sup> 

INTRODUCTION TO

# THE PURPLE SMURFS

BY MATT. MURRAY, SMURFOLOGIST

What's in a **color**? When talking about *The Smurfs* the answer can be “quite a lot.”

Their particular shade of blue was given a great deal of thought by the series' original colorist, Nine Culliford, who took into account that red represented anger, yellow was unlucky, and that green skin would get the characters lost in the woodland scenery they inhabited. The Smurfs remained blue from their first appearance in the pages of *Johan and Peewit* (more on that later) throughout their cameos in that comic, until 1959 (about a year after their debut) when they were given their own spin-off series and a major, albeit temporary, cosmetic makeover.

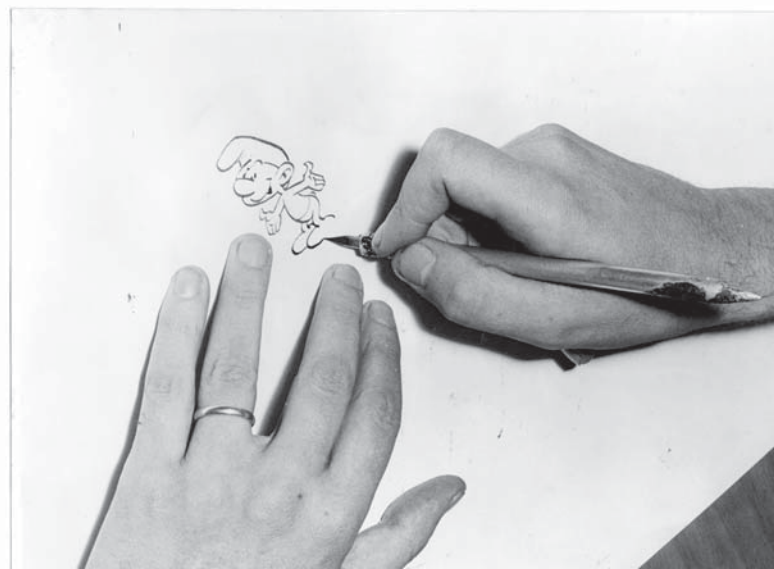
Their first solo adventure, “The Black Smurfs,” (or “*Les Schtroumpfs noirs*,” as it was originally published in French) had the entire village battling an epidemic straight out of a modern-day zombie movie. Bitten by an infectious “Bzzz Fly” one Smurf (who would later be identified as Grouchy, due to some lingering aftereffects of the bite) becomes an angry monster intent only on biting his brethren and converting them into carnivorous creatures capable of saying one word “GNAP!” The disease spreads across the entire village until... Well, I've already given too much away, so let's leave the rest of the story to Peyo and get back to the introduction.

Besides their mindlessness, there was one other factor which set the infected apart from the healthy Smurfs: getting bitten would turn their skin pitch black. As this story was written in Europe, prior to the American Civil Rights movement, no thought was given to the negative connotations of depicting an angry Smurf as “black.” In fact, the color is rooted in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century stories of the Bubonic Plague, which pre-date the African slave trade.

Often called the “Black Death” due to the high mortality rate incurred by the disease — which manifested itself

as black growths on the carrier's skin, the Bubonic Plague wiped out close to 50% of Europe's population in a few short years, a fact that's perhaps more commonly known amongst Europeans than Americans. The Black Death is the only intended reference in regards to the look of the title characters and would be the only one made until the late 1970s when the Smurfs made their journey across the Atlantic Ocean, into the American market first as plastic and stuffed collectibles, then as the long-running (1981-89) animated series produced by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera.

Many of the first season's episodes were based directly on THE SMURFS comics, and in some cases changes had to be made to suit a different set of sensibilities. One such change was making the black Smurfs purple, as not to offend any young African American viewers who may not be familiar with the Black Plague and would only see a different colored Smurf behaving badly, then being treated as an enemy and something in need of a cure. (On a side note:



Purple may have been an arbitrary color choice for the animators, but interestingly enough, I've heard it told that it is the color a Smurf would turn if choked — in answer to *that* age-old question.)

In 2010, when Papercutz published the first American English translation of the comic, Smurf-in-Chief Jim

Salicrup had an inclination similar to that of Hanna-Barbera, and used their fix from almost 30 years before, and in doing so has tried to shed the story of any inappropriate racial controversy and give the audience a great, all-ages, zombie adventure tale. •



COMPOSITION

1<sup>re</sup> SÉRIE

3 Histoires de Schtroumpfs - par Peyo

LES

SCHTROUMPFS

NOIRS

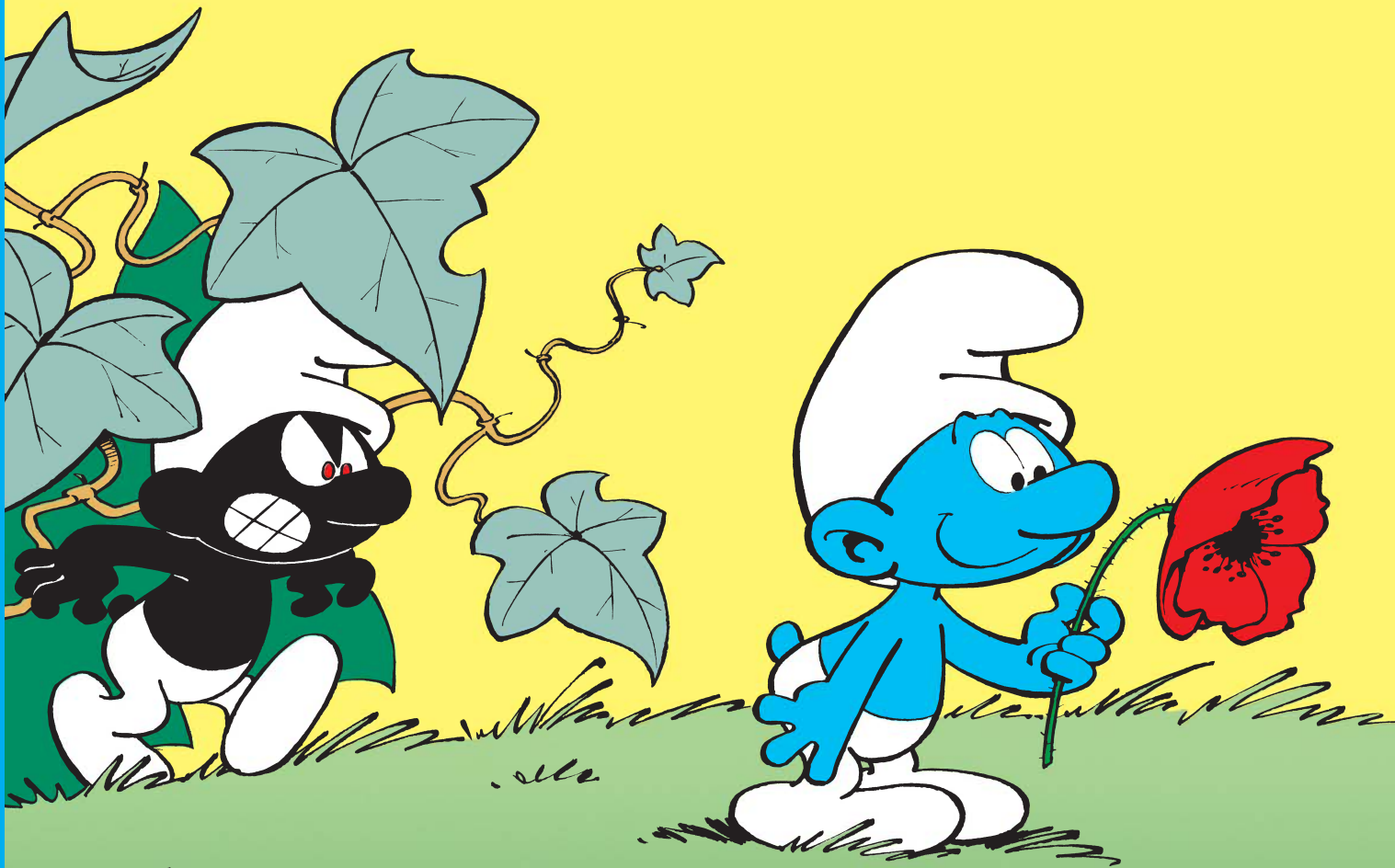


1<sup>re</sup> SERIE

3 Histoires de Schtroumpfs

par Peyo

# LES SCHTROUMPFS NOIRS



**LE SCHTROUMPF VOLANT**  
et **LE VOLEUR DE SCHTROUMPFS**



# THE PURPLE SMURFS

