

"Now THIS is what I call ART!" Newsarama

MAMMOTH TOR EVENT HORIZON

21st Century Pulp Fiction

**Steve Niles
Ash Wood
Liam Sharp
Chris Weston
Brian Holguin
Glenn Fabry
and more...**

"Mark your calendars for May for the greatest anthology I've seen in a long time! Slick and savage, brutal and beautiful, everything in Event Horizon is gold. I could go on and on about the work of big name contributors like Liam Sharp, Ashley Wood, and Steve Niles, or entice you with the prospect of seeing the first time work of creators whose stuff you will definitely see again, but they'd just be words. Like the black hole definition, where no information of events occurring inside the event horizon can escape to the outside, there's nothing I can say that will do it justice. You have to see this book for yourself. It is aptly named, for reading this book is an event, and May is just on the horizon!"

Robert Randle, Diamond Previews.

"Yeah, it's monsters, weird dreams, alternate realities, and forgotten worlds, but rendered in ways that promise to sneak past a reader's literary defenses and a moviegoer's jaded cynicism. By hitting you with images both primal and fantastic, and language both vernacular and magical, these pages have the potential to open up a liminal space in your own cognitive matrix."

From the preface by Douglas Rushkoff.



L i a m S h a r p P 2 0 0 4

Preface by DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF

Mam Tor EVENT HORIZON Preview

This PDF has been produced to give an overview of the title only, and does not include all the content that shall be appearing within Mam Tor: EVENT HORIZON.

We hope, however, that it will provide you with enough images, stories, and strips for you to get a feel of our forthcoming publication, and that you enjoy this taster enough to want to see the rest.

Kind regards,

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Preface by Douglas Rushkoff.

We underestimate a medium at our own peril. Particularly one as unassuming and kid-friendly as comics. But comics have a way of surprising you - like that second hit of acid you take just before you realize the first one is actually coming on a lot stronger than you expected. Once you're into the trip that far, and committed for more, all that's left to do is hang on and push through.

This stuff works in the gutters ñ the spaces between the panels, and between the pictures and words. Unlike a movie, which comes at you in one smooth stream of light and sound, or a book, which takes you on a linear journey, words flowing off the page like toothpaste out of the tube, comic art works on more than one level and at more than one time.

More like an incantation than a narrative, a kaleidoscope than a point of view, a sequence of images than portrait of anything, the succession of words and pictures on the following pages combine to create a mosaic that you must put together, yourself. No post-modernism needed, here; the world ahead is pre-deconstructed.

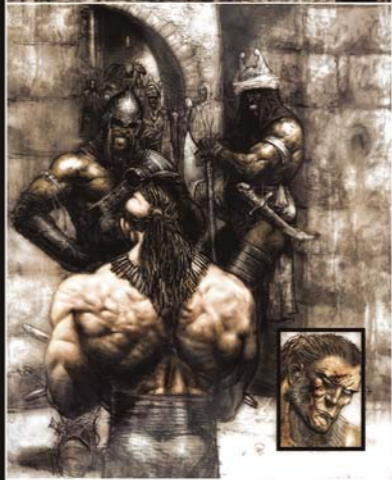
And as you put all this together in your head (if that's where your thinking happens to take place) you'll realize that this alchemical process is unique for its ability to convey the spaces between things. The liminal zones between waking and sleeping, alive and dead, or reality and fantasy.

This is where Mamtor's writers and artists spend their time, and their work invites you to pass over the lip of the event horizon and closer to the strange attractor from which these bizarre visions surely emanate.

Yeah, it's monsters, weird dreams, alternate realities, and forgotten worlds, but rendered in ways that promise to sneak past a reader's literary defenses and a moviegoer's jaded cynicism. By hitting you with images both primal and fantastic, and language both vernacular and magickal, these pages have the potential to open up a liminal space in your own cognitive matrix.

And though you may close this book when you're done, that space may take much longer to heal over.













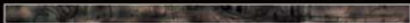












MACHIVARIOUS POINT
by Roger M. Cormack

BOOK ONE

1. Brec

Brec, lashed to an empty wine barrel, watched as ragged golden sails pitched, dipped out of view once more, and were finally gone. The chill sea was brutal. He hated the wet. One long campaign had taken him across the endless peat bogs of Kos Moor and Dunn Fell, themselves rutted like an earthen ocean. The perpetual rainfall had driven the gnarly mercenary near to madness, but the sea revealed a new truth: It's waters were a far harsher element than rain could ever be. He felt he should be at home upon the sea - in some obscure way it reached out to him. Yet it engendered a troubling sense of loss he could not comprehend - and so he gave it only his hatred. The night was spent in churning isolated darkness. Distant calls from other survivors occasionally punctuated the monotony. But in time they waned, and eventually ceased altogether. Now the sun bobbed at the zenith of its low winter arc, suggesting warmth, but offering up none. The abrasive hemp lashing of his makeshift raft chafed the flesh of his swollen white fingers. His body dangled all but obsolete beneath the waves. Eventually their moronic rhythm - peak after trough after peak - lulled Brec into a stupor. His mind lurched, drunk on fractured memories of what now seemed better days...

A tribe of Mercenaries calling themselves the Umbriani chanced upon Brec's childhood home. Breeden village, sprawling chaotically along side the river Florth at the foot of Wealdenhead Tor, had been a yolk to the boy. It was all he had ever known in that distant, less violent past. Methuselah Kush, the wolf-shanked mercenary Chieftain, noticed Brec's uncommon bulk, the steady ice-cool gaze of his green eyes. He compelled the youth to undertake a variety of labours, which Brec completed with an easy - if somewhat belligerent - facility. That night a bargain was compacted with his parents. Wine was consumed. Tears shed.

The following morning sunlight struck the summit of Wealdenhead Tor, bathing it in flame. The Umbriani were back on the march, their numbers swollen by one.

Brec, clinging to his makeshift raft, could not recall having thought about his parents for a moment beyond that day. Gingerly he opened salt-stung eyes, blinking against the light. Nothing. No lonely jutting spur of rock, no distant loom of an island. Not even the fluting caw of a gull. The cold seemed to burn him now, engulfing him in waves of feverish heat. Soon his mind was back, adrift in other memories. Back in the Suusa Desert. Back in that breath robbing swelter. Back in the Patthylyon campaign, fighting for his life.

Cut off from the bulk of the Umbriani, he had bulwarked himself and his men in a tight fissure of scorched earth. For five fraught days he had managed to keep the ebony onslaught of the Maasoom at bay. The red-eyed tribesmen could not penetrate his stronghold. But neither could he escape it. Somehow a craggy wall was erected, rough steps hewn, and on the sixth day he broke free of the defile and rejoined the mercenaries, swinging the odds in their

favor.

They feasted that evening. Triple rations gorged as the heads of a hundred braves gazed blindly down from their staves.

Brec could no longer distinguish day from night.

Vaguely he hoped a shark or some other oceanic predator might take him, honor him with one last battle. The kind of heroic ideal for death he had been raised to approve of.

It would have been an ill-made match.

The thuggish slap, the monotonous swell and retreat of waves, continued to lull and confuse his senses. The inescapable cold suggested another coldness to him, awakening a memory in which he shuddered, half buried under dank, snow-beaten bracken.

His beloved Umbriani had been decimated. Brec and a handful of others - all that remained of over three hundred men - had escaped into the vast and largely uncharted primordial gloom of the Tollos Forrest.

A bear had found him in his hiding place. It had reared, startled, falling on him like a landslide.

It took him months to recover - he yet bore livid scars - but he crafted a fine cloak out of that bear's hide, and for many years it contributed greatly to his legend.

(He imagined the bedraggled thing now, spiraling down into unknowable depths. A belated resting-place. The waterlogged skin had threatened to drag him with it, but he had managed to cut it free.

No other man would claim it as a trophy at least, and he contented himself with that.)

An age later, he half smiled to recall, had seen his reputation grow and precede him. He had become a lone mercenary, sometime bodyguard, and, if work was scarce, assassin. He balked at the memory of this last. Brec much preferred his open notoriety, the fearful appraisals his bearskin mantle attracted, to the darker deeds of a fugitive assassin.

Such nakedly animalistic men often (perplexingly, and predictably,) attract women of charm, even high birth. In near global travels Brec seldom looked far for a soft bed, a willing fuck. His large cock (whilst not the legend it was purported to be) and surprising tenderness perpetuated an entirely different fame. However, such trysts were ultimately little more than sport, or relief. He felt little for the women who writhed in his surly embrace, vainly hoping to add his name to their own, his legend to their meager histories. There was a gap within him - he knew it, but not why - and though he couldn't remember it, he knew the gap had a name.

Darkness subsided, giving way to a throbbing golden-red beyond his eyelids. Brec - his half open mouth suddenly invaded by swirling tumultuous brine - groped his way urgently toward wakefulness.

Supporting himself upon a shaky elbow, Brec hauled in a long, shuddering breath, then puked violently in the shallow seawater lapping about him. His numb fingers curled in the sand.

Land!

He cut himself free of the barrel and made his way up the beach on unsteady legs that felt like they did not belong to him. The sky was cloudless, the air warm, with only the faintest bite to suggest winter. He was, he supposed, on one of the many volcanic islands that huddled conspiratorially a days sailing west of Corthallia. The nearest land beyond that was Hulffennland, where they had been bound, almost a month's journey northward. He would build a raft - there was plenty of vine and wood - and head back to the Isthmus of Corthallia. It should take no more than three days, he calculated.

By that evening he had located a source of fresh water and butchered a fat Plattofowl he found wandering through the scrub. He started a small fire and was soon dining on the tough, rich meat of the flightless bird. The stars glittered above the now tranquil mirror of the sea, and the greasy carcass of the Plattofowl filled the air with its oily sweet scent. Brec was glad of his life. He was a solitary being. A soldier. He had been through a lot worse.

The following morning he awoke feeling much more akin to his usual self. It was only in sitting up that he realised how wrong that perception was. Where once the sea swelled lazily there now stretched an ocean of ochre sand. Behind him the landscape had also been inexplicably altered. The lush verdant undergrowth and giant palms of the previous day had been transplanted with a wall more impressive in its sheer scale than anything he had seen in his life. Worst of all, to his mind at least, he found himself naked. Weapon-less. Brec had always been a decisive man, capable of making the most of unusual, or unexpected situations. Unable to comprehend his disconcerting circumstances, he chose to momentarily accept them. At length he began to walk alongside the featureless wall in the cool of its ominous shadow. Either he had, he reasoned, stumbled there delirious in the night. Or he still bobbed, close to death, strapped to a barrel in the open sea.

The day wore on. Soon a too-high and exacting sun beat unmercifully down upon his broad umber shoulders. He could take that. His skin had almost turned to leather over many years of stoic, often self-induced hardship. Nevertheless, by mid day the magnitude of his situation was setting in, as there had been no window, door, or opening of any kind within the inscrutable expanse of the wall. Bitterly he supposed that, had he in fact stumbled there in the night, then he must have come from the other direction - a half day's walk had not returned him to the sea after all. At best, he could hope to be back at the sea's edge by nightfall. At worst, the dawn should see him there. With this in mind, and armed with his usual dogged resolve, Brec turned around and retraced his route with scarcely a break in pace.

There had been wonders in his life, Brec thought, as he followed the immense curve with his eyes into the shimmering distance. He had once hunted alongside the dark-skinned Ostrich-men who had two toes on each foot and ran like the Patthylyon-wind. They had laughed at him as he tried to keep pace with his huge, unwieldy frame. But they had also grown to respect him when, at the end of each day, he arrived, hours later, having tracked them through the dust. Another occasion he had discovered a fellow Umbriani warrior; an Ottwhan outcast named Farro, half dead in the Kythruu Forest having been brutally savaged by some unknown beast. Brec stood vigil by Farro's side that night, waiting for his Manna to ascend into the Ottwhan after-where. Yet in the morning he watched, awed, as Farro threw back his cloak and stood, whole

again in his bloodied rags.

Two nights later he witnessed another spectacle. Awoken by agonized howls, Brec discovered that Farro had grown a whole shin-length in height. His nails had blackened, thickened and curved like claws, and he turned his bright, sorrowful eyes on Brec, bayed like a wounded hound, and bounded off into the pitch weave of the nighttime forrest.

But the wall was something else entirely.

All through the cool night he marched, and yet, in the broad morning shadow of the wall, he found himself still no closer to either sea or sign of life.

Then the last wonder Brec would ever witness occurred:

Deeply fatigued, he sought to rest himself against the wall to consider his predicament, and in doing this he discovered there was *nothing substantial* to lean on. He simply fell through it, landing not on sand, but on soft, deep grass peppered with a bright efflorescence of tiny meadow flora. He could not help but laugh, as for some reason he had not once thought to touch the wall in his long night's journey. Reaching into the hide satchel at his hip, he found his gilt butterwine horn and removed the finely crafted white gold lid. He raised the vessel up to parched lips and, grateful, drank deep of the smooth liquor. He closed his eyes and savored the rich tannins, the berry and pepper flavors exploding across his expert palate. He felt amazing. Opening his eyes again he glanced down, smiling as he replaced the ornate lid of the drinking horn. And then he noticed with a shock that his hands were not, in fact, *his* hands. Dropping the horn he quickly got to his feet, gawping at the utterly alien, yet hauntingly familiar clothing he found himself wearing. It was not only the garments that were strange to him; it was his whole self; body and mind. He took out the small oval mirror that he somehow knew was nestling amongst other trinkets in the hip satchel and gazed into it. The face that looked back, though less broad, was recognizably his. Cold green eyes blazed beneath a strong, straight brow. The wild golden mane, that had so recently adorned him, was gone. His hair was shorn to the skin, little more than a shadow. The nose swept unbroken and equine, and he wore a short, sculpted chin-beard and fine loops through both ears. Most striking of all was the thin scar that crossed his forehead in a diagonal line until it cut through his left brow then reversed back on itself, through his lips until it terminated, right of his chin. He touched it gently, wondering how he had received such a wound. Why he could not remember it.

He was, however, glad to discover a long slender blade sheathed in an elegant scabbard at his left hip. The tough black leather jerkin and leggings were of an exceptional quality, and his right arm was sheathed in a remarkably crafted silver plate armor. It appeared to mimic the working of his muscles and danced with glowing cyan slithers - alchemical flares from precious inlaid minerals.

"Shit." He whispered to himself. "I Forgot. Again..."

2. Tantrix-Alumnæ

The city glowed like a caged aurora in the foothills of the Aetuland Spine. Brec's name upon this world - this planet called Ardden - was Hergal Ban Egan, and he felt unbidden moisture bloom in his eyes as he gazed down upon it.

Tantrix-Alumnæ was a favorite of the many places he had called home. Not the largest of Aetuland cities, nor the most resplendent, he non-the-less thought it the most beautiful, though from without you would not credit it. He regarded the ancient city wall, rutted, inelegant, and over two hundred and fifty spans in height. It curved away from him in both directions, a coarse arc to oval the city; the imposing casing of the jewel within. Black smoke rose in slow burgeoning gouts, like giant spectral fungi, from great vents and chimneys. It spread out across the sky lending a purple hue to the twilight.

Hergal was extremely fatigued and confused - it was always the way. It would pass - but he could not allow himself the luxury of sleep. Not yet. Brec's fast fading past had to be sifted through, the important elements remembered, and secured in his mind, if the experience was to have any purpose at all. He also had to be careful how he managed his emergent memories of Ardden - dancing between the two to create a new whole.

Between Tantrix-Alumnæ's great outer-wall and the first of several lesser inner-walls there was Pontifrax's Ring. A grand parade of cloistered shops; free houses and opiate spas. Hergal decided - almost reflexively - to seek out "the Sayer's Alms" inn. An old, decadent haunt in the western reaches of the Ring, it was one of the first places on Ardden he could clearly recall. A good place to review his situation, he judged.

At Methen's gate he sought out a Guardsman, barely noticing the desperate crush of people. Many petitioned for access with official looking documents or earnest desperation. Some attempted bribery. A very few might slip unobtrusively through in the midst of a band of troubadours, a group of tumblers. But most of these would fail. The amassed fortunes of Sutzeria and Aetuland's noblest had been squandered for a slice of real-estate within Tantrix-Alumnæ's walls, to no avail. Hergal Flashed his ring - A droplet of amber, within which an ancient ugly beetle had met its demise, encased in silver - at the Guardsman. The man hastily removed his iridescent blue crested helm and bowed.

"This way, my Lordt."

He escorted Hergal swiftly, if somewhat brutally, through the mob to Pontifrax's Ring, where he bid the Lordt good day.

Once inside the city Hergal could more clearly recall its geography, as old familiarities awoke slumbering memories. Concentric circular terraced parades echoed the outermost ring, like ripples in a pool; Peribold Walk, with its many-colored guest houses and ancient elms. Ardinax street, with its magnificent Bankers-Guild Hall and imposing granite facades. Penn and Willow Street crowded with a cacophony of artisans. Merchants and craftsmen competing for attention with brightly colored awnings and inventively manufactured signs. Finally, running up against the city's immense central inner-wall, there ran Duhn Ring, home to silk merchants, silver-smithies and other purveyors in the excesses of success. This vast wall was supported by ninety-two flying buttresses. It reached vertiginous heights, four hundred spans and more. Light danced off the tough ground surface in faint swirls of azure and rose pearlescence. Within them lay the Old Town; the city proper. Here the natives and nobles lived in the

archaic marble-veneered houses perched precariously on the top of Skaff Hill. None of the confusing rat-runs between the houses were named, though collectively they were known as the Flacks. (No one could remember why.) A final flint-cobbled wall ringed a small fortress and the tall Ornish temple at the city's heart.

Strolling along the gentle curved walkway of Pontifrax's Ring, Hergal took a moment to gaze up at the snowcapped peaks of the Aetuland spine; a pale and unappreciable mass that towered above Skaff Hill like some colossal fallen deity. These were the mountains that cut the island of Orn into two halves, neatly dividing Sutzeria, in the north, from Aetuland, in the south.

"And what of the North?" he thought to himself. "How fares Sutzeria?"

A large and simply carved sign in lacquered Cherry-wood spanned Pontifrax's Ring and announced "The Sayer's Alms" to all would-be patrons. The Inn had been built by the giant race of the Ornish many centuries earlier. It had once been a grain mill and warehouse and was accordingly massive compared to the surrounding buildings - standing a third again as high, despite its being likewise constructed over three floors. A fresh coat of Mantis-green paint glistened on the ten-span oaken doors, and the window-boxes overflowed with a cascade of vermilion and peach Porthalia.

Inside, to Hergal's relief, the inn appeared mostly unchanged - though the plump, perky Landlady was unfamiliar. Granite juts punctured the cream walls which in turn supported a broad cross of wide oak beams. These bore the weight of a complex wheel-like Cherry wood structure, which splayed outwards from the center in elaborate curves, forming a platform for the upper floors to now rest upon. It was all that remained of the original Ornish machinery.

"The Sayer's Alms" entertained a cosmopolitan host. A large breasted merchantess, a sardonic bent to her forked smile, threw Hergal an inviting glance. He nodded in her direction, his clear eyes fixing on hers momentarily. A faint smile danced fleetingly across his lips, but he had other things to deal with before allowing such distractions to develop. Three local musicians pelted out a familiar shanty, to hearty applause, in the smaller adjoining room. The main bar was peopled with city nobles, mercenaries, merchants and soldiers in the employ of city nobles. They traded banter like blades. Others, practitioners of the Old Arts - alchemists, Fakkirs, philosophers and such - huddled at tables, arguing in hushed tones. Reconstituting abstractions and theorems in new, exciting variations. A palpable divide had grown between them and the nobles, it seemed. But the city's traditions were holding. Any bar brawls would have seen the perpetrators cast out of Tantrix-Alumnae indefinitely. It was more than either the nobles or Alchemists were prepared to risk.

A Soul-less Ornish mercenary towered gloomily in a dim corner, his tattoos charting his downfall. He appeared to be looking for someone, his tragic violet eyes briefly settling upon Hergal before restlessly flitting on.

Hergal settled himself in a hermit-stall opposite the crackling central fire, and ordered a long ale and a Merchant's Platter. As Brec, beer - not wine - had been his drink of choice, and that part of him still fought for dominance. He was finding it hard to come to terms with the plain reality of the situation: He, as Brec, did not truly exist. For thirty four years he had been that other man. The powerful mercenary in the bearskin, famed across three continents! Hergal looked at his manicured fingers with distaste. These were the hands of a poet, not the hard-come-by hands of a warrior! In truth, Hergal was a dazzling

swordsman, but he had grown accustomed to Brec's thuggish barbarism. He mourned the loss of a life more simple. But the platter and the flames warmed him. He rediscovered the carved soapstone pipe with its ornate mahogany stem inlaid with a silver thread. His pouch of pungent Ornish Tobbach. Soon his spirits were somewhat restored. Returning was never easy. It took monumental self-control to regard the larger sweep of events with a dispassionate eye. He was back again, but what had been achieved? More importantly, what had been going on in Aetuland since he had been away? He waved over to the barmaid, whose name, he had discovered, was Mola. It was early, and his taste for butterwine was returning.

Tunny Mal-Tuboly swung his booted feet up onto a stool, belched, and closed his eyes, luxuriating in the warm afterglow of a "Hero's Portion" and three ox-bladders of nettle wine.

"Not bad." He muttered contentedly to himself. "Not bloody bad at all." Less witty than he believed, more intelligent than usually credited, Tunny was a stocky ball of improbable muscle. A dance of black coils spilled around his shoulders and was, along with two sparkling dark eyes rimmed by long curling black lashes, his only claim to beauty. A vast beard hid the remainder of his face.

"Mal-Tuboly, may we speak?"

Tunny stumbled, cursing, half to his feet, hand fumbling at his empty scabbard. No weapons were permitted in "the Sayer's Alms".

"Great Orn, man! Can't a fellow drink in peace any more?" he spluttered, red faced.

The Ornish Soul-less pulled back the stool, which had, moments earlier, supported Tunny's feet, and carefully sat down, so that he met the now standing man eye to eye.

"I did not wish to startle you, Mal-Tuboly." He said. "May we speak?"

The voice, as with all the giant Ornish, had the quality of sounding like many voices in unison. Even at little more than a whisper it commanded regard.

Tunny scrutinized the enormous tattooed figure, perched precariously on the seemingly diminutive stool, with wary eyes.

"You're not from Thurford are you?" He paused. "What happened in "The Fine Prospect"... Well, it wasn't really my fault old chap..."

"No."

"Well, then. Good. Good. A sticky matter, best forgotten. No harm done."

The Ornish Soul-less gathered his brow, looking almost worried - or was it troubled? He glanced down at his huge hands, spreading them palms up, as if he were looking for answers there, then abruptly balled them into two minutely shuddering clubbed fists. The vast man raised his wonderful, hairless head and met Tunny eye to eye once more.

"Mal-Tuboly, please. I must talk with you."

Tunny calmed, suddenly filled with unbidden compassion. He was, after all, a man of great empathy. It was a part of what made him so endearing. Before him sat an Ornish Soul-less - a child of that rare, ancient and most sacred race. The direct offspring, it was said, of the god who gave his name to the emerald island in which Aetuland and Sutzeria nestled restlessly.

Orn.

And in the giant's eyes Tunny saw a profound sorrow which touched him instantly, cooling his fears.

"Right o." He said. "All right. Please. Go ahead."

The Soul-less looked over toward the window, beyond which - though they could not see it - lay the Aetuland Spine, the Ornischbach. And beyond that, Sutzeria. He returned his gaze to Tunny.

"My name is Iutzparthi-Llud Pellaquial, though most know me as Pellaq. I am, as you see, an Ornish Soul-less, and a mercenary. I have been told you are well connected, Mal-Tuboly. That you might know where to find a man. I also have an offer you yourself might be interested in."

Tunny peered intently into his companion's gentle eyes.

"An offer, eh? And what might that be, old chap?"

Blessed with unusual skill in matters of the blade, though cursed with a rogue streak of cowardice, Tunny found himself a wandering sword-for-hire. His nature suited only brief loyalties. His bold declarations of honor, love or fealty were noisome and expansive, but they were sickly and prone to wither. He was a dreamer, hoping to find something great in the world, something worthy of his life, his death. He was, however, the heartiest of companions and enjoyed a peculiar kind of fame throughout Aetuland and Sutzeria. There was hardly a man of consequence he had not made his acquaintance, however fleetingly. His gift was to be beloved of almost all who met him, and a kind of small magic there was in that.

"I do not wish to go into all the details now. It is a fragile matter. However, the man whom I seek is one Woebeg Ban Egan."

Tunny's eyes narrowed.

"I may have heard of the fellow. Then again... perhaps not. It would help if I knew your particular interest in him. It might help me, shall we say, narrow it down a bit?"

The Ornish Soul-less took a deep breath and stroked his bald pate with his vast left hand.

"Suffice it to say that regarding Ban Egan, his skills as a fighting man are famed, and that is what we seek. You have a certain fame yourself in swordsmanship, Mal-Tuboly. There is a Hefty payment for what we propose."

Tunny nodded his fat round head gently.

"Give me a couple of days, all right chap? I'll see what I can do."

Bloodrushinglikewindfirecoldnotnocannotcannotlikerunningrunningruinruinoustothe brightenedowndowndowntotheseatoOrnwhowillalwaysbethereattheendalwayswaiti ngwaitingandrunningIamrunninghurtandpainpainlikefirecoldhotbloodbloodandI did I did it and it hurts oh Orn it hurts...

I'm shaking and I can't see properly, and there's a monologue running in my head, falling through my head, that's taking my mind off the pain. I think I've lost my left arm but I can't be sure, there's no time to look, no time to stop the blood that must be pouring, gushing. I'm screaming like Thotlan, and the blade that writes the Karnak in the air should be a two-hander, but she sings beautifully all the same. Bloody vapor trails her passing, clotting my nose, I breath through a grin; a grim grin. And the faces are (scared/angry/mad/sad) all exactly the same, the same face, cut in two, in half, like fruit, an opening, so slowly, like a red bloom, in a cheek, an eye. Small explosions of crimson, bursts

of salty metallic blood-sweat-tears. Clawing pleading hands. I'm laughing because it's the best they've got, the very best. And it's not enough because I'm nearly there and they can't stop me. They can't stop me. And the last ones run as I open their friend/brother/comrade neck to groin, shoulder to hip, wide open, like a flower, a big bright flower opening, red, facing the sun, opening up to the sun.

And I'm out, I'm out, and I'm laughing/crying blood sweat tears...

Hergal awoke violently to sodden sheets and an unfamiliar ceiling. A young noblewoman, whom he did not immediately recognize, stroked his forehead gently. Mewing.

Hergal felt a knot of distaste writhe in his guts. Though not unattractive in appearance the girl was non-the-less blemished by a smug, patronizing air which hung about her like old sweat, a corrupted aura. She pouted in a manner that only contrived to intensify Hergal's sudden and intense distrust of her. Her narrowed eyes were too full of questions. He bemoaned his lack of better judgment having consumed far too much butterwine the previous evening.

"Leave me." Hergal whispered.

"Are you all right my Lord? You were dreaming..."

"I was dreaming. Now I am awake. Please do as I ask, and leave."

Any pretense at liking Hergal vanished in a cold instant from the girl's eyes. She stood, quickly, flaunting her nudity, her pert breasts jutting below a similarly jutting chin. "You appear to be suffering somewhat from distemper this morning, Lordt Ban Egan. Is it something I might have done?"

Hergal set his teeth, but did not hide the frost in his eyes.

"My apologies to you, madam, but I have much to think about. Much to do. And I have a sore head. So if you please, I'd like to be alone."

"Very well then." The flustered girl started hurriedly picking up items of her clothing, flung carelessly over a wooden chair and strewn in ribbons and bunches across the floor. "Perhaps you are not the man I met last night after all..."

"That" said Hergal "is certainly true enough."

Later, emerging from the tastefully modest little guesthouse on Peribold Walk, Hergal pondered darkly the dream - a phantom memory? - that had awakened him. It caused him to rub subconsciously at his left arm beneath the elbow. He still sweated lightly.

"So, you are back to bother me some more, eh?" He thought gravely to himself.

"Nuddfeigh Ho."

Barachal Tush, the Sayer, found Tantrix-Alumnae much changed. Whilst Sayers had always induced a little fear in the human citizens of the city, and distrust in the Ornish, the outright disgust he now encountered on the streets verged on the alarming. His golden robes were spattered with gobules of spit. Inn doors were noisily barred shut at his passing as word sped up the streets that a Sayer was amongst them. It grieved him enormously. He took it all as a sign that the Tells were right. That what he had gleaned in the Echoes-To-Be was coming to pass.

He knitted his gold and black furred brow into furrows. He was here at least. And those he sought - those who's futures would impact on that of the planet

Ardden, on that of the very universe they all dwelt within - they were here also. Now. With the fate of uncountable billions of lives resting heavily on his shoulders, such dark murderous looks as Tantrix-Alumnae's ignorant populace cast him were of little consequence. He continued his troubled search through the streets, and, to the extent he was able, paid their populace no heed.

"A word, Lordt Ban Egan, if you please..." a young male voice barked suddenly, at Hergal's left. To his right another older man appeared, and Hergal was aware of at least two more people behind him.

"I'm in haste," growled Hergal. "Speak as we walk if you must sir."

"If you are obliging, sir Monger-lover, and allow us to escort you out through the Lion Gate, you will come to no harm. There have been changes in Tantrix-Alumnae since you disappeared. Your kind, my Lordt Warloc, are no longer welcome in Tantrix-Alumnae."

Hergal turned to the younger man - a city noble by his dress and bearing, quite at odds with the accompanying ruffian.

"I presume you know me for a Lordt by my ring. How you know my name is another matter entirely." Said Hergal, "I would normally expect better manners from someone of your evident standing, but then I have been away for quite some time. So tell me, how is it you choose to address me as a "Munger-lover" and a "Warloc"? How is it you know who I am?"

"I've spent some time this morning, shall we say, *researching* you, Lordt Ban Egan. And, do tell: Where have you been for so long? And yet you have aged not a day? We know of your kind. These are modern times, my Lordt. Changing times. I see you favor the fashions of the Ornish. How quaint. It was a look my father embraced. My generation chooses not to look to the past. Indeed we would rid the city of those dark and dangerous ways. Warlockery, and all Munger associated trickery, are practices we are committed to purging from these lands. The Ornish themselves are not above our scrutiny, sacred or no. Let the shit-eating Nefarean scum be ruled by fear of magic and the like! We will be united! Armed with our knowledge, the surety - the cool clarity - that the world does not barter in dreams. This is a harsh and solid *reality* in which we live, and we will defend honesty with steel and bravery. The practitioners of our enemies' dark arts are themselves our enemies, so say we sir. In sleep you damned yourself..."

Hergal burst open the older man's left eye with his ring then let his legs buckle beneath him, going down as a blade sliced through the sudden absence above his head. He rolled lightly on the cobbles and spun around, his sword, free of its sheath, carving a blur of intricate patterns in the air. The young noble was shocked to find thin slits had opened across his forehead, both cheeks, weeping red rivulets.

"A man's dreams are his own, and not subject to the laws of this world, let alone this fair city." Said Hergal, a frost in his eyes, as he peripherally noticed his carnal companion of the previous evening fearfully backing her way through the gathering crowd with a hand over her mouth. Her eyes were wide with shock. He cursed silently, bringing the wrath of the Munger down upon himself, and upon her. "I suggest you attend this poor man's unfortunate injury." he hissed. "I have been friend to Tantrix-Alumnae for longer than you can guess, and may it long be so. As for my whereabouts these last how-many years, that is also my business. But know this: It was spent in service of this city, and this fair

island, Orn. My age is my own concern. But, as you see, I take care of myself."
"Fuck you, Warloc! We'll rid this city of your kind soon enough! We'll put you all to the torch..."

Hergal's blade flashed again above the bridge of the noble's nose, pricking him. Hergal stared along the blade's length, meeting the man eye to eye.

"I don't know who you are. Be glad of that for now. If I were you I would leave here. Now. I do not forget faces, and yours will have some pretty distinctive features now. Know this also; I shall make it my pleasure to learn your identity, and what games you play here. Rest assured, your own ignorance shall surely be your downfall. Be gone, boy. I tire of this."

The young noble glared at Hergal, crimson blazing behind his soft blood-streaked cosseted cheeks. His hands hovered uncertainly above his still sheathed cross-swords. He seemed to be deciding on what his rejoinder might be. Then he grunted abruptly, gestured that the two others attend the injured man, and shouldered his way belligerently through the gathered onlookers. Hergal kept the sword poised and steady until they had all departed, then sheathed it in a manner more befitting a larger, rougher man. Brec's legacy. Bile burned his throat. A slight tremor danced up his spine, bristling the hairs on the back of his neck and up around his temples.

Turning brusquely, Hergal marched to the next throughfare into Ardinax street, where he voided his guts unceremoniously. In Ardinax street he refreshed himself with a drink from one of the many spas, cleaning his bloody ring hand and splashing his face in the naturally warm mineral water. Then he moved on inward through Penn and Willow Street and Duhn Ring, arriving eventually at the Raven Gate - the only way into the Old Town. Clearly the city was changing and he could not delay a meeting with his Ornish tutor and benefactor any longer.

He would have to see Iutznefydd-Baal Pellafinn before he could plan his next move.

Pellafinn was four hundred and thirty-six years old. A High-Order Ornumnae priest, he was well informed as to events in Sutzeria and Aetuland. He learnt what he could about movements, plots and power plays abroad on the continent - in Nefarea, Ypo-Polaria, the former Free Nochentia, and further west, Kushna and Urodochi - via free agents in his employ. Almost every nation had, over generations, been crushed by the Nefars in their grand sweeping raids southward. Aetuland would not remain free of their menace forever he feared. "Pellafinn," croaked Hergal, as matter-of-factly as he could manage, "Still brooding over your maps I see..."

The Ornish priest raised himself up to his full seven spans - short for the Ornish - and turned, a little unsoundly, to face Hergal, who stood framed in the enormous study doorway. Pellafinn regarded his student intently for perhaps the thousandth time, squinting his myopic eyes, before customarily shaking his head. For years - a hundred? More? - he had not much liked the man. He found Hergal's cold green eyes too full of secrets. His manner somewhat overbearing, arrogant. Above all, he had hated Hergal's vanity. However, too many years and common causes had created a bond between them. Hergal, as far as Pellafinn was able to judge, was only a little less than seventy years younger than he, and time had eroded those sharper edges, as experience, in many forms, had heightened his regard for the other man.

As for Hergal, the old Ornish priest was not only frustratingly recondite in his

manner, but always caused him to feel mildly nauseous. (This was certainly exacerbated by Hergal's current condition.) Pellafinn was distressing in appearance, pallid and cadaverous. An abomination of that beautiful, blessed race. His sickly-yellow bones glowed dully beneath his parchment skin, and his blood, in its weak coursing through aged broken veins, was faintly palpable. The priest's eyes were ruddy brown in the whites, and his pupils exactly matched the color. They bulged, chameleon-like, from their hollows above sallow, sunken cheeks. Underneath an impressively long, crooked nose, a thin, blue lipped and under-bitten mouth chewed continuously on Tobbach, the reason for his blackened teeth. And lower, that strange double cleft chin, faintly trembling. The pronounced Ponti's pear, jiggling distractingly in his sinuous throat. Completing the horror was the deeply etched tattoo that covered the lower half of his bald head in swirls and dots and zigzag lines. No amount of finery in his dress could conceal his physical shortcomings. The fastidiously polished black leather jerkin just enhanced the look of entropic consumption in his arms. The satin pantaloons - also black but finely decorated with ornate, symbolic patterns woven in golden thread - the high, fur-lined buckled boots, all contrived to create an image more of terror than splendor. Hergal could hardly believe he had grown to love this hideous old man as though he was his own father.

"My Lordt Hergal Ban Egan, come in, come in." said Pellafinn with an ironic half smile. Hergal found himself startled and immediately drawn to Pellafinn's mellifluous voice, which, somehow, he always managed to forget about.

"You've been gone from us for seventeen years! Well now... Have you recovered anything of use? Um? Were you a long time in that other place?"

Predictably, Pellafinn wasted no time on pleasantries. Hergal smiled, but when he spoke, it was with an air of sadness and waste.

"Seventeen years? So. I should have expected things to have changed somewhat, I suppose. What little I have learned may have scant use this time, old friend. I have brought nothing back with me, but for a fraction more knowledge of warfare, and a perception of what it is like to be a rougher man of a lesser intellect.

"I do know that the Great Powers continue to fade everywhere. In the world I have just returned from I came across few wonders, less even than here. Indeed, having forgotten completely my true self - being reborn into the body of an infant - in my thirty-four years abroad in a another world, the greatest wonder I encountered was the manifestation that allowed me passage back here. It appears the Kiazmus is hidden in the guise of a vast and featureless wall upon the world I have just returned from. This, in turn, is disguised as an uninhabited island. Curious, given the crude and somewhat ill-educated nature of it's people, that great powers must yet have been skillfully tapped for such a work to be wrought. Warlocs of a superior understanding must surely have been fairly common, one would have thought, at some earlier age..."

Turning his back on the man he had not spoken to for seventeen years, Pellafinn cast his filmy eyes over yet more intricate charts.

"I had thought it would be so. All the signs suggested as much."

Hergal fought the rising urge to throttle the old priest.

"So." He said eventually, and with studied calm. "What of Sutzeria, Pellafinn? Is it still a free land?"

"Ah. Yes." replied the priest, not bothering to turn around. "Yes. You have got some catching up to do, haven't you?"

"Perhaps you would be so kind as to fill in the gaps for me? Tantrix-Alumnæ certainly has a different - edge to it."

Pellafinn carefully placed his precious charts in the wide shallow drawer of his plan chest and turned around to face Hergal at last.

"Since your departure, young Hergal, there was - let me see - five years more peace before the Nefars yet again crossed the Sutzerean Straights. Tens of thousands of them sailed their Dragships up the river Rae to Duhn. And, yet again, the great city fell. This time to Ornish designed siege engines, I'm sorry to say. There are too many Soul-less Ornish mercenaries these days. Too many by far. The 'new walls' only succeeded in delaying the agony I'm afraid. Another pointless tax for another pointless wall which brought about another pointless famine in Duhn's poorer quarters! When will they ever learn? The army went east after that. As usual. Through the Forrest of Duhn, and on, parallel with the Ornisbach - the Aetuland spine. Within two weeks they arrived at Shea Pass and marched south to Da Derga's Heights..."

"Why do I know Da Derga's Heights?"

The small giant's eyebrows arched, his eyes bulging incredulous below. "What? You recall the Brookbane's famous Sutzerean castle-fortress, surely you must?" Hergal looked up at Pellafinn with an empty, tired expression.

"Indulge me, old man. As yet my poor brain is still struggling with the reality of my being back here..."

"Hm. Well. Very well. If you insist." The priest shook his great ugly head, collecting his thoughts. "Da Derga's Heights stand poised in the eastern most reaches of the Ornisbach, right on the Aetuland/Sutzeria boarder. It is, as I'm sure you will soon remember, an architectural achievement that remains unrivaled upon Ardden. There is no structure more famed, and you have been there in and out of my company on more than one occasion I can tell you..."

"Yes, I just can't... the memory, my memory, is returning. Though somewhat painfully I must say! So many holes..."

"One would not necessarily think it wise to go out drinking having recently journeyed between worlds. You know, I've told you this before..."

Hergal waved a hand weakly and frowned.

"Enough! Enough lectures Pellafinn! Just help me to know where I am again, old father - if it would not be *too* much trouble..."

"Hm. Well, let's see. Let's see. Do you remember the Brookbane dynasty?"

Hergal shook his head slowly.

"Great Orn! What then, my dear Lordt Hergal Ban Egan, do you recall of Ardden?"

"That this is Tantrix-Alumnæ. I know that much."

"Am I to congratulate you on this remarkable achievement? Really now. And is there anything... else?"

"Orn's balls, Priest, I'm still two men! Two men! And I only have one sore head! So, what I do know... what I know about... where we are... I know this: We are in the heart of Aetuland, which encompasses the southern half of this island, Orn. It is separated from the north, Sutzeria, by mountains. The Ornisbach, or the Aetuland Spine - as I believe we in the south like to call... That lot, squatting out there..." Hergal gestured through the window vaguely. "I was thinking about it last night. Thinking about Sutzeria. What might be going on there. As for names, history. I confess it is all somewhat of a blur. The Empire of the Nefarians lies to the... west - I remember that - and constitutes most of the continental mainland. Duhn is Sutzeria's largest city on the... norwestern tip of

the island..."

"Then at least you will have understood what I have told you thus far!" The old giant sighed and resumed his story with the air of a teacher much displeased with an errant pupil. "This is all of immediate relevance to you, so listen carefully! I won't be most pleased if I have to tell it twice. Time is of a high premium right now, Hergal, especially to the old. Lordt Thral ban Duhn Ne Brookbane, the rightful ascendant of Da Derga's Heights, was a Sutzerean Warlordt by bloodline, but a well known Aetulander in his heart. He married, as was the custom of centuries, a noblewoman from Aetuland. In his case, she was the Lady Pesheval Nar-Bo Tertrigal Ban Hapfthoven Ne Belorvelian-Alumnæ..."

"How the fuck am I supposed to remember that Pellafinn?"

"Hergal! Listen to me. He met and, fortuitously, fell in love with The Lady Pesheval while studying here, at the Ornish temple in Tantrix-Alumnæ. You drank in his company on a couple of occasions! I'd say you were close acquaintances, so you really ought to remember it!" Hergal frowned, then rubbed his eyes. "The courtship was brief, intense and mutual I was told - by you. All concerned parties were content with the arrangement, and the union was compacted within a half year of their first meeting. They supposedly enjoyed three blissful years together before the Lady Pesheval became Munger-stricken and died over two long, agonizing weeks. Brookbane was heartbroken, and a certain wildness was reportedly noted in him thereafter. He remained, non-the-less, a fine Lordt to those that served or worked alongside him. Fair and generous to guest and friend, I believe, if a little dour when drunk. When Aetuland came under threat again it was he who organised and assembled the great army that gathered up there - the largest this land has ever hosted. He had put forth his argument at the Lordt's Council, reasoning that the plunging walls of the fortress had never been breached. That if Aetuland could be defended, then it would be best defended there: At Da Derga's Heights. Needless to say, the Lordts did not take much persuading. History was on the side of Da Derga's after all.

"The ensuing battle, now referred to as the 'Battle of Da Derga' - though Orn knows how many battles have been fought there! - lasted nearly three weeks before Lordt Brookbane splintered the Nefars with the assault that subsequently made him famous. The demoralized Nefars retreated, and Brookbane continued to harry them all the way back down the pass, until, tragically, a flaming arrow found its mark, blinding him. A good man he may well have been, but Brookbane was also, sadly, a *vain* man..." Pellafinn shot a pointed look at Hergal who was massaging his temples with the tips of his fingers, eyes shut. The giant sighed. "Something I fear all you so-called Lordts have in common - and that includes even you unlanded Lordts! So, accustomed to power, broken by tragedy, Brookbane was unable to accept his blindness. He vanished in the night, leaving his rivals to fight over Lordtsway of Da Derga's Heights.

"For the last twelve years there has been another uneasy peace between Aetuland and the now Nefarean occupied Sutzeria. Da Derga's Heights remains the only Sutzerean stronghold free of the Nefarean Empire's rule."

Pellafinn leaned slightly forward, his voice dropping. There was a conspiratorial glint in his muddy eyes that Hergal had, he realised, greatly missed. "I have been hearing tall stories of late, Hergal. Disturbing stories." The clawed hands, with skin like oiled papyrous stretched over waxen bones, writhed in excitable knots around each other. How the priest loved his intrigue! "There is a legend growing. A mythic tale about a powerful Nefarean Warlordt. This Warlordt has

won the favor of the Emperor and now holds sway over the Nefarians abroad in our lands. He operates from Duhn, it's said. Machivarius Point to be more precise. It is also whispered that he is a Warloc. That he can invoke the power of the Munger, the Undead God, through some fabled gemstone. It is rumored that he plans a new campaign to conquer Aetuland. They call this man 'The Wayfarer.'"

"So. Well then. I have forgotten much. And it seems you are right, old man." Much had indeed happened since Hergal had been away. "I've some... catching up to do. What can we do about all this?"

"You'd do well to ask what I am already doing about it! You may be surprised to know that plans have been put in motion to try and steal the Gem of this 'Wayfarer', if such as it and he exists. So, Hergal. Let me ask you something: As one of the Ornish, I would lose my soul should I perpetrate any act of violence. Is it, therefore unseemly, do you think, for an Ornish priest to hire mercenaries?"

To be continued...



IT'S MY BLOODY ARM! FUCKIN' SHATTERED, INUIT

QUICKLY, YOU BASTARD! DO YOU WANT TO BE CAUGHT!

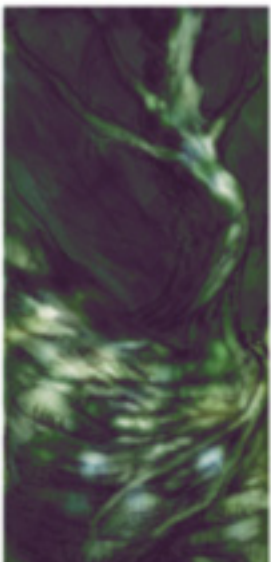


JESUS CHRIST! THEY WERE WAITING FOR US, JUST WAITING FOR US. INFORMERS. IT MUST HAVE BEEN...



IT WAS THAT FAT TIRD OF AN INUIKEEPER. I KNOW HE'S THE ONE.
OR HIS COW OF A WIFE. CALLED THE FUCKIN' CONSTABLE, MUST HAVE --





LOST YOUR WAY, LADDIE?
I WASN'T EXPECTING TO MEET
UNTIL MORNING.

WHO
THE *FUCK*
ARE YOU
THEN?

NO ONE.
MERELY AN OLD MAN
WHO'S BEST DAYS
ARE BEHIND HIM.

PUT YOUR
LITTLE TOY AWAY,
NATHANIEL BRADY.
WHAT HARM COULD
I BRING YOU?



CAREFUL NOW...

...YOU'LL PUT A FELLOW'S EYE OUT WITH THAT.







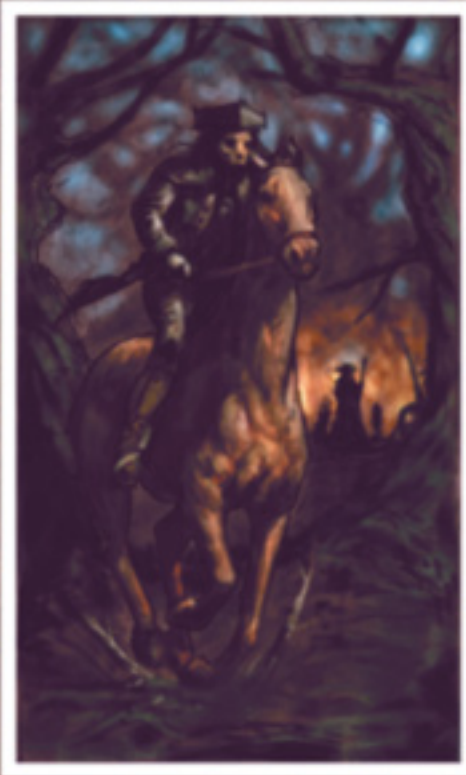
THE
DEVIL!



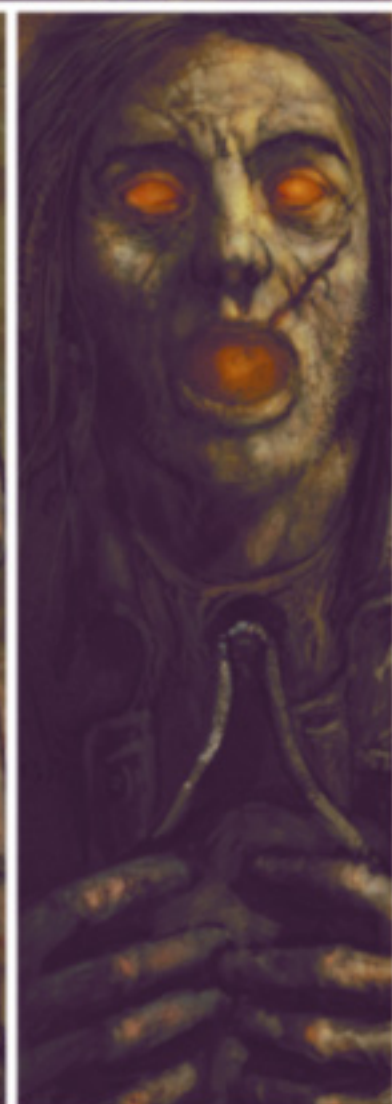
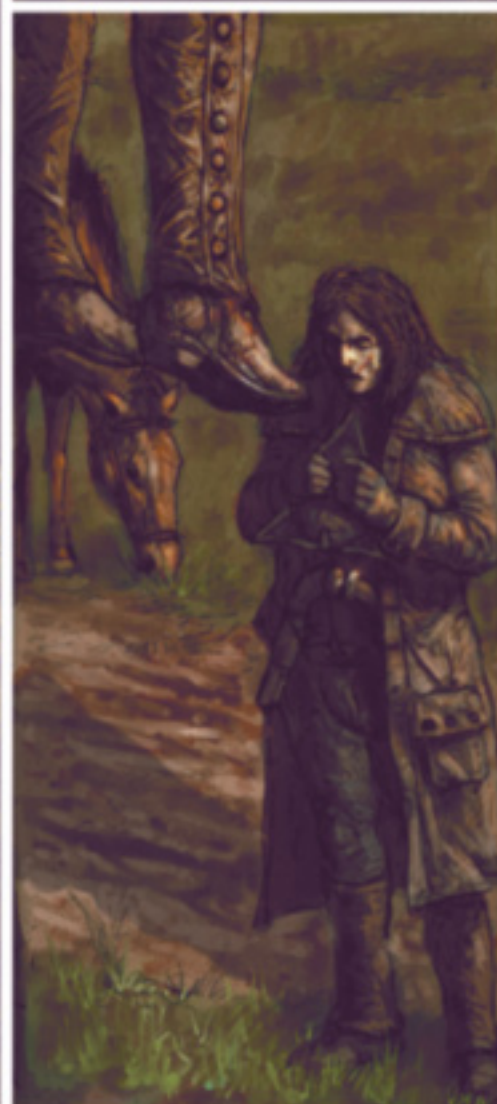
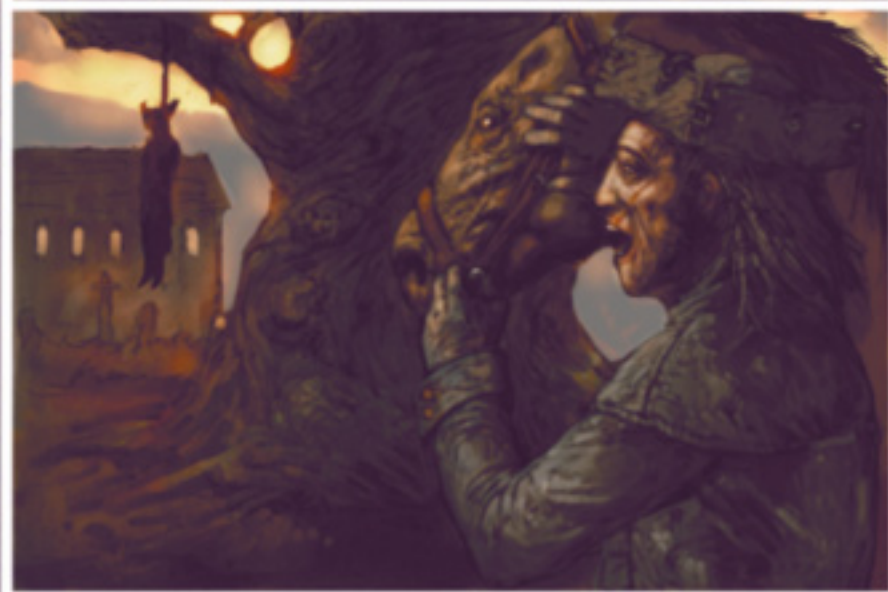
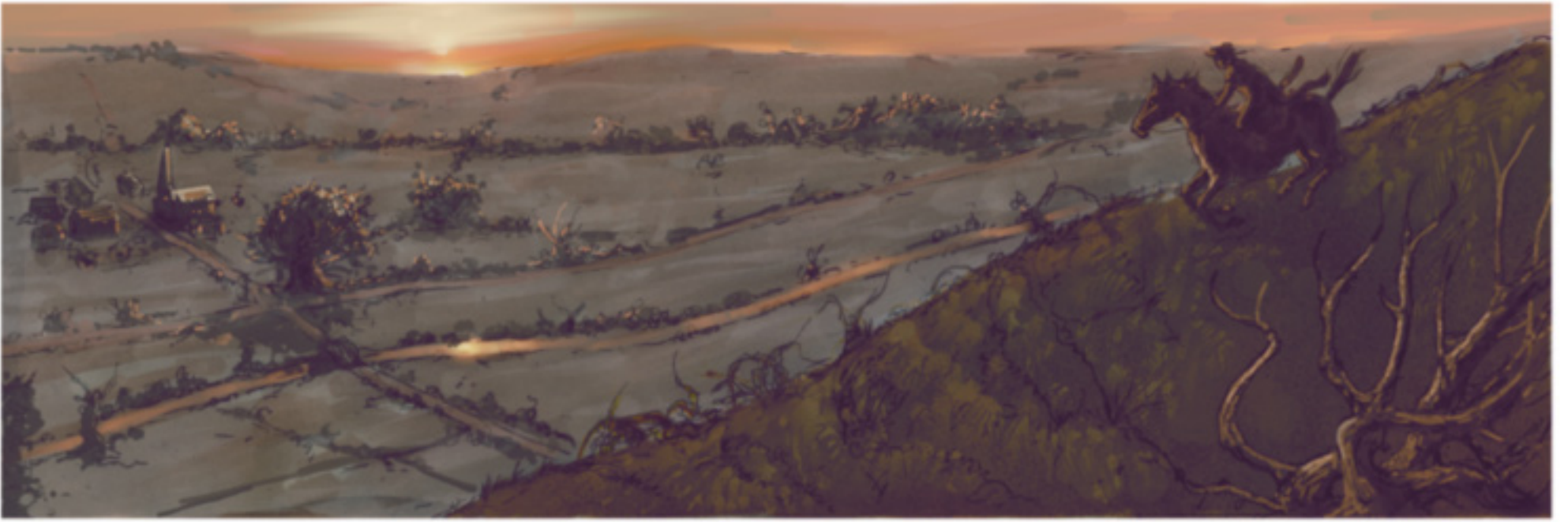
SEE YOU
AT THE CROSSROADS,
"MATE..."

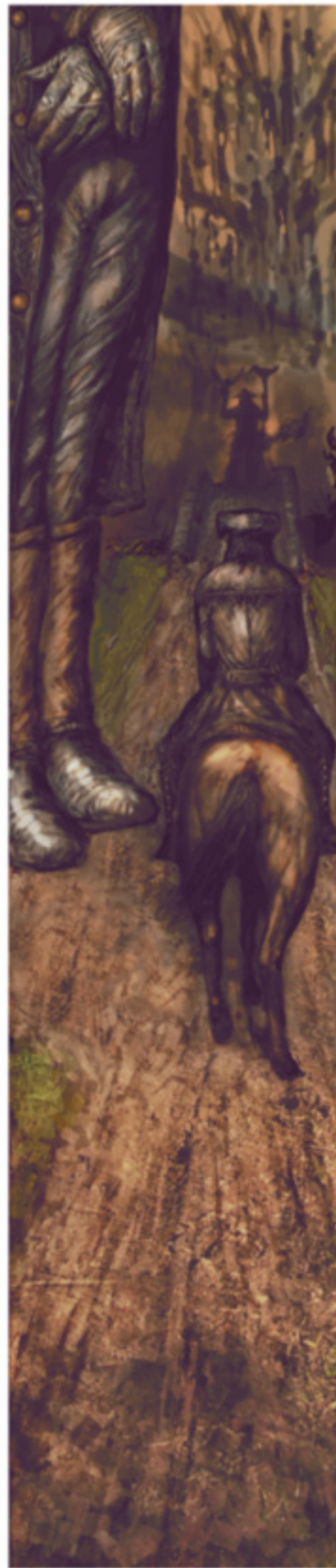
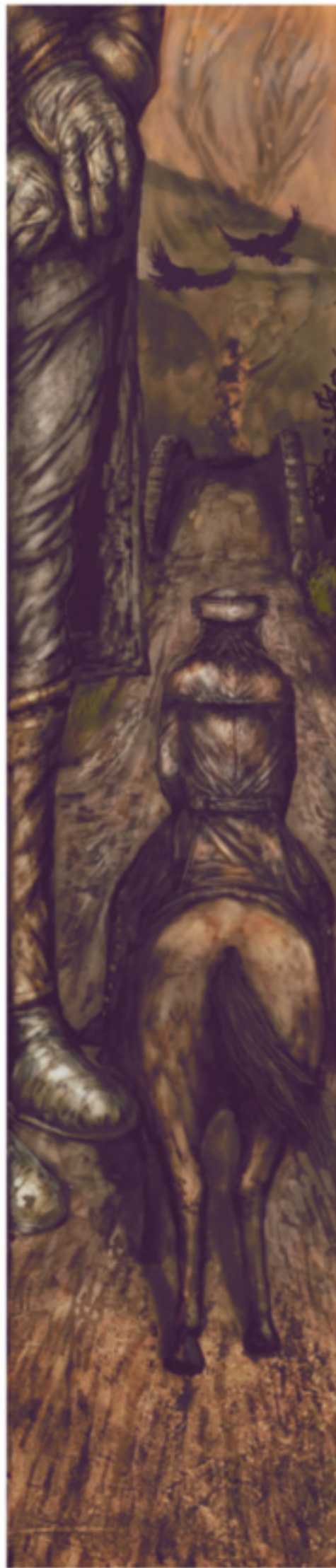
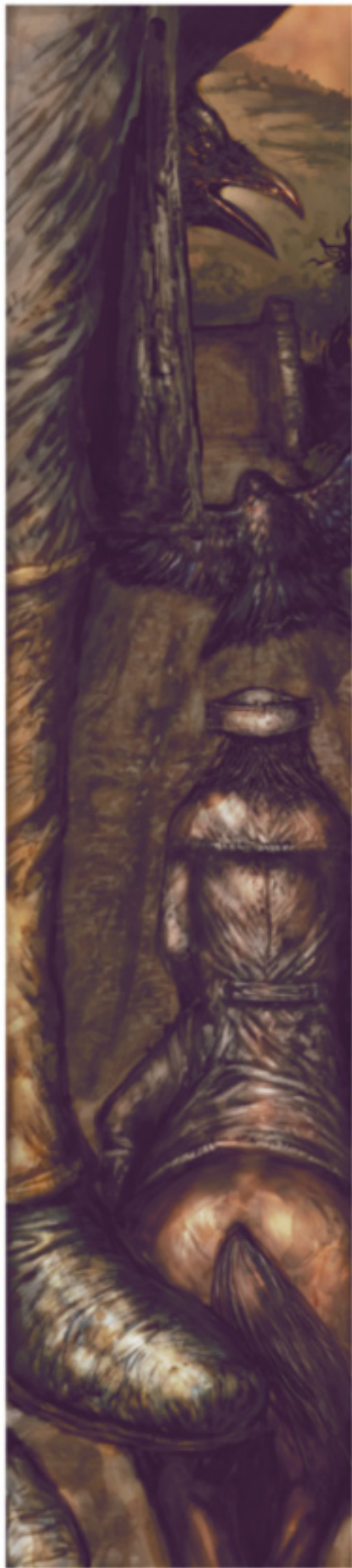


...BEST RUN,
IF YOU WANT
TO MAKE IT
ON TIME.









The Gallows God

Writer Brian Holguin

Artist Dave Kendall



A TRACE OF FRAGILE BLUE

WORDS: ALI POWERS

PICTURES: EMMA SIMCOCK-TOOTH

A trace of fragile bliss.
Silken trails of wanting...
Wanting a miracle perhaps?
A pedestal, away from false attention?

True reflections come
when stripped of reason,
pure as any martyrs play,
testing outright every notion
that was ever in the way.

I succumb to this new Kingdom
like the healing bodies breath -
Honey suckle air in winter's
soon forgotten death...

People often think I'm a bit...
self-obsessed, but that's not
quite how it is...

In my sense,
My soul,
My bliss,
On every scented breath
A lover's kiss
Perfected in this body. Beating
and repeating every odour,
till my sleep
Underneath.



I'm driven to think
that we all... you know...
work OUTWARDS... And
what we ARE is only half
the answer.

Wrapped,
entwined,
engulfed,
the mortal sense of everything,
near as death to any river,
like a neese of arid honey
crystalline...
A tempered structure
caught me dear
and pulled me under,
till never I see your face,
but in that sleep, possess everything...

A tiny bundle, yet eternal,
like a trumpet sounding forth
to call a tolling bell to ring
For now and evermore.

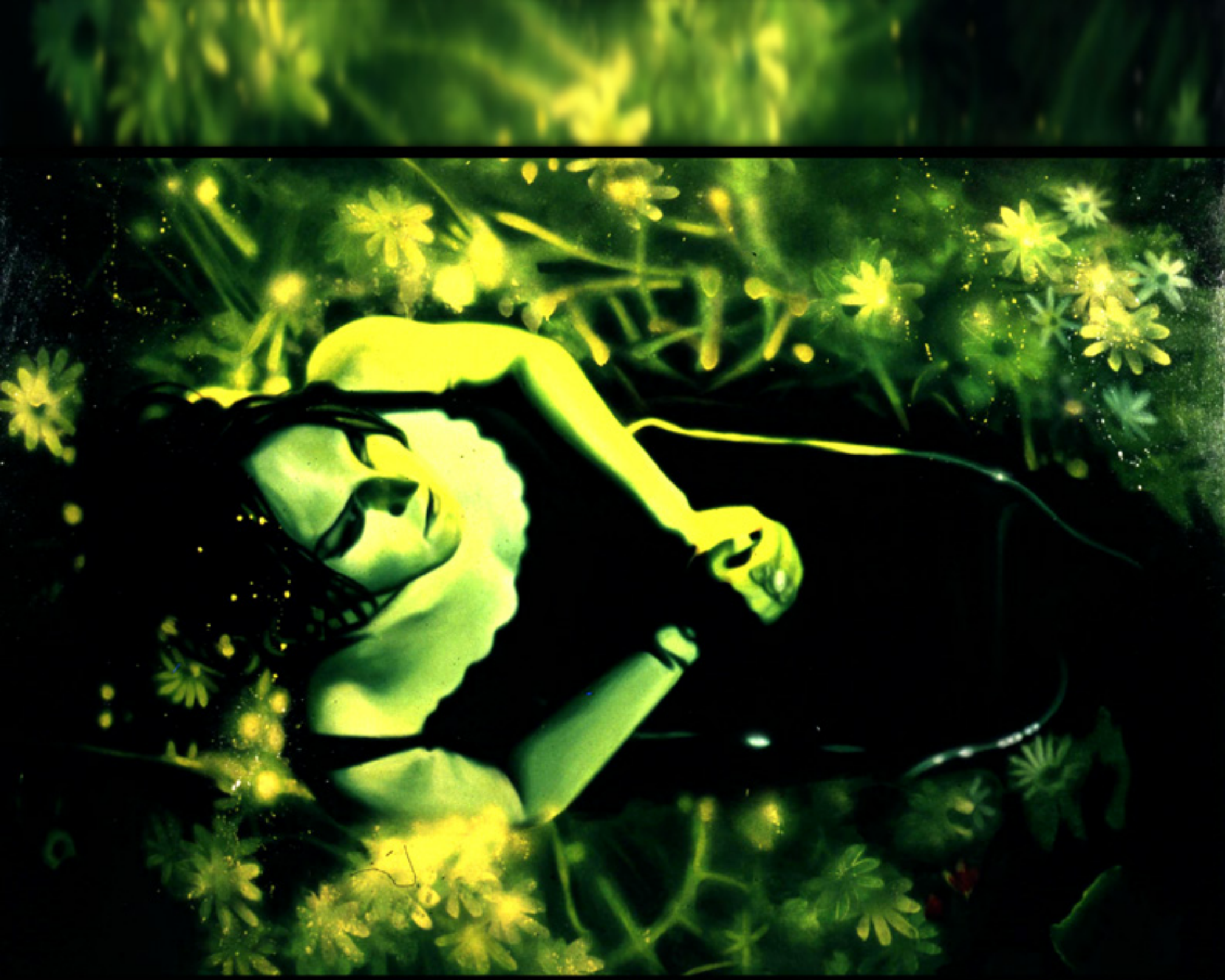
My love, my sweet, my dearest satellite,
I come to you with unrepentant love.

And all I did in this life that ebbs away,
Was for your kiss that made my autumn death,
a happy summer's day...

Did you ever get caught in
a circular dream? I did...

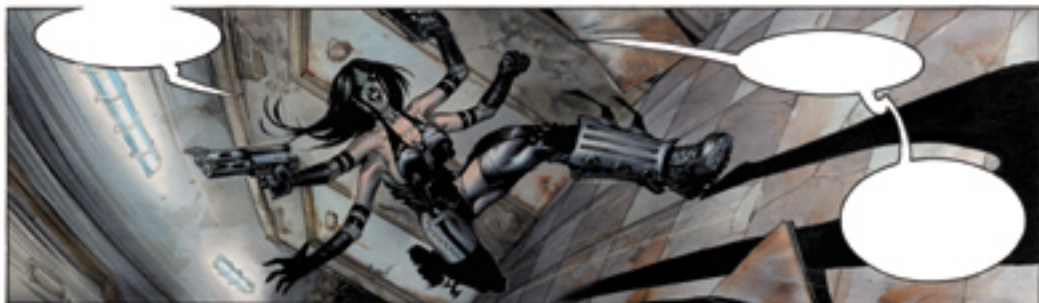


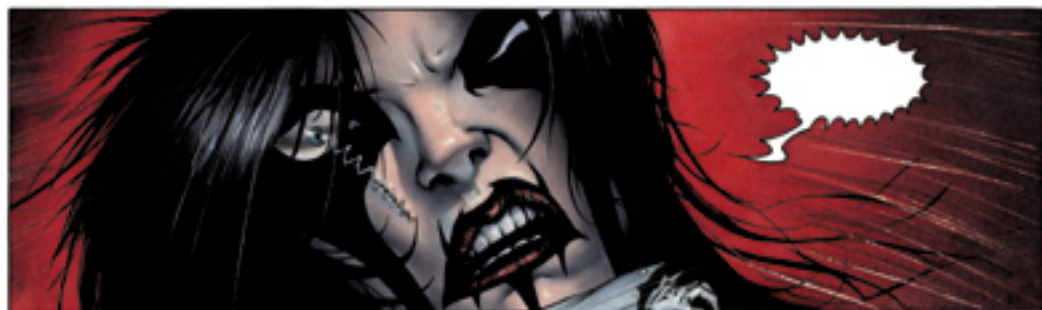
It's like falling down an up escalator -
I imagine there's one of those in hell -
always falling, never reaching the bottom.
Anyway, like I said, I don't think it's self-
obsession, just working outwards...













Heinrich Manoeuvre's H.E.A.D. TRIP!

Holidays in Extraordinary
Alternative Dimensions!

HELLO, MY FRIENDS!

YOU KNOW, I'VE HEARD IT SAID THAT AN INFINITE NUMBER OF MONKEYS SITTING AT AN INFINITE NUMBER OF TYPEWRITERS WILL EVENTUALLY TYPE THE ENTIRE WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE.

SCRIPT AND ART: CHRIS WESTON

ON DIMENSION X50 THE ENTIRE RESOURCES OF PLANET EARTH WERE DEVOTED TO DISPROVING THIS THEORY. HOWEVER, THOSE FURRY SCAMPS NOT ONLY REPRODUCED EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THE BARD'S PLAYS AND SONNETS...

BUT EVENTUALLY ENDED UP IMPROVING THEM TOO!

FANCY THAT!

HMMM... DOES THE PLOT DEVICE OF THE HERB THAT INDUCES JULIET'S DEATH-LIKE TRANCE REQUIRE TOO MUCH SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF?

AND THAT'S JUST ONE OF THE MANY PARALLEL UNIVERSES YOU CAN VISIT COURTESY OF **H.E.A.D. TRIPS**, DISTINGUISHED PROVIDERS OF **HOLIDAYS IN EXTRAORDINARY ALTERNATIVE DIMENSIONS**.

MY NAME IS **HEINRICH MANOEUVRE**, AND I'M JUST ONE OF THE INFINITE NUMBER OF PAN-DIMENSIONAL TOUR GUIDES WAITING TO TAKE YOU ON YOUR VERY OWN **H.E.A.D. TRIP!**

REMEMBER, IN AN INFINITE UNIVERSE EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE... AND WITH AN INFINITE NUMBER OF UNIVERSES ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE.

FOR EXAMPLE, ON DIMENSION 47H THE EVENTS IN "CASABLANCA" ACTUALLY HAPPENED...

ILSA, IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH TO SEE THAT THE PROBLEMS OF TWO LITTLE PEOPLE DON'T AMOUNT TO A HILL OF BEANS IN THIS CRAZY WORLD.



WITH A SUBTLE DIFFERENCE.

ACTUALLY, I THINK THAT'S PRETTY IMPRESSIVE!

YOU CAN SEE THAT... AND MUCH MORE... ON OUR WHISTLE-STOP TOUR OF THE MOST ASTOUNDING ALTERNATIVE REALITIES YOU'LL EVER IMAGINE!

WE CAN CALL IN ON THE PLANET KRANG IN DIMENSION DLB... WHERE THE MONOLITHS OF MOMM PICK UP RADIO SIGNALS FROM EARTH AND TELEPATHICALLY BROADCAST THEM TO THE POPULACE.

RIGHT NOW, THEY'RE ALL GETTING DOWN TO "THE MEXICAN" BY BABE RUTH!

AND WHO CAN BLAME THEM!

HOW ABOUT AN OPTIONAL CITY-BREAK IN THE FUNGAL CITY OF BRACKET!



WHO KNOWS, WE MAY EVEN VISIT SOME WHERE THE NAZIS DIDN'T WIN WORLD WAR 2...! THAT'LL MAKE A REFRESHING CHANGE, NO?!

HOW ABOUT A VISIT TO THE LIBRARIES OF LOX WHERE INFORMATION IS RECORDED IN TEXTURE!

AND DON'T FORGET DIMENSION 8 AND ITS CELEBRATED AMNIOTIC WATER PARK... WHERE YOU CAN RE-EXPERIENCE THE WONDERS OF YOUR OWN BIRTH, AGAIN AND AGAIN, ON EXISTENCE'S ONLY WOMB-FLUME!



WE'LL TAKE YOU ON A MUSICAL ODYSSEY ABOARD THE ORIENT EXPRESS...

FROM THE BRIGHT LIGHTS OF LENNONGRAD...



TO THE VALLEY OF THE KING!

THANGYOUVERYMUCH!









'The Wormcast' by Ali Pow3rs

I am a Hopper, author of "The Transient", 4th dimensional prophet (2nd class) in the 5th century of the New Time. What you are reading is a Zenopod, a time capsule of the eternal.

This is the future of mankind...

All war has ceased.

All calendars have been re-written by the order of the sun and the moon, their eclipses guiding us out of the darkness to live in the infinite.

Parchment - no longer sourced as it once was by the divination of forests - is grown as a luminous cell-structured synthetic compound, retaining the imprint of *thought* by truly understanding the nature of *thinking*. The 'conjured', and the 'captured' are born *equally* in this logical framework, which exists as it did even in your time.

None of this was fully understood until 'Her', the divine one. Never has life bloomed in such abundance.

How it is possible and how all this came to be I will explain:

It all started as a simple joke, a gesture to un-write the book, and then rewrite it as a single picture, to join those pictures together like plastic cup telephones or flick book animations. But it ended up revealing the basic laws and pace of the entire universe, and in doing so it formed a new society...

The 'Never Awake Movement' took over, from the grass roots up, and the most basic of fundamental misconceptions unravelled in the breeze - just as men unravelled at the sight of "Her", our new Venus.

So what changed? What prompted this reckoning?

The liars ran out of excuses. The dreamers pursued their visions until they were finally realised.

The world came to a crossroads:

By early July 2015 man's pursuit of the distant stars dwindled. No longer were we able to reach so far. Gaia's arm was weak, gasoline was low, and the air was as thick as gravy in a hot tub. New technology surfaced when willful genetic manipulation of the organism did little to manipulate the organism's will. *Chance* still played the greater role in development than *origin* did. But as science and psychology joined hands, test subjects were born manufactured. Orchestrated forgeries of the human animal, all with basic genetic traits understood. These 'babies' grew within closed societies where all actions were monitored peacefully by implanted 'Nanodrones'. These conveyed everything - from pulse rate to hormone release - into the spiralling central database, all working to the decaying of time, as it was understood at that time (*gravity*, and *motion* towards the Event Horizon).

Soon it was recognised that the manifestation called "reality" was of man's own making, and was the only "reality" man had ever known.

Time passed. We continued to live inside the nightmare we had made for ourselves. 'Geo-Tech' maintained control over the patented process of "Air Recycling and Distribution". But as successive generations grew up it became increasingly clear how to adjust every nuance of the world. Climate change was first monitored, then turned back,

by giant mechanical waterspouts controlled by geo-synchronous satellites. Part machine, part living extension of planet Earth, these redistributed everything, from water vapour in the atmosphere to the very winds themselves.

Dreams walked beside us and breathed the air from our lungs. We breathed because they existed with us.

The test subjects grew, as did our understanding of them, and by 2376 it became clear that space-time could now be modified. It was long understood the 'perception' of time could be radically altered simply by temperature variation. Now, due to the astonishing conclusions drawn from what could only be called the 'results' of the experiment, we could actually venture even closer to a full understanding:

By *delaying certain hormones* in the subject, their *lifestyle* was altered. Dependence on other features of the eco-system was changed, and by *cloning* certain elements of that 'moment' in the eco-system *new patterns emerged later in the loop of that ecosystem*. Realising what we had done we attempted to reverse the inevitable, but failed.

Then 'The Archaeologist' made a startling discovery:

Deja Vue.

Have you wondered how precognition could be possible? Or even how you know what you *think you know* in the first place?

It was first called 'Genetic Superstition' by a failing of logic, then 'False Awakening' because of a 'dream/world imbalance'. They were cast off as media hoaxes, but one by one they appeared.

And no other conclusion made sense anymore.

The first artefact was 'The Wormcast'. The ship was just being built at the same time it was discovered adrift off the coast of Mexico. Everything from the name, the layout of the cabins to the carpet in the lobby was identical.

Then it went even further: The finding of future vessels - *before their creation*.

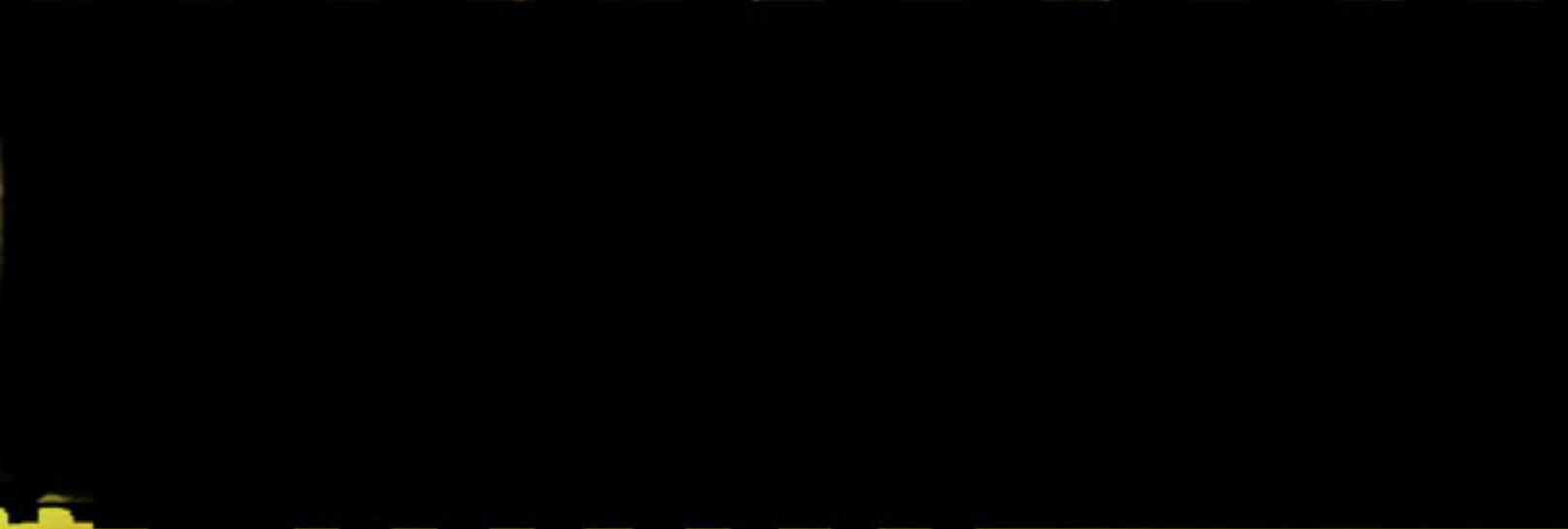
And then came the cities.

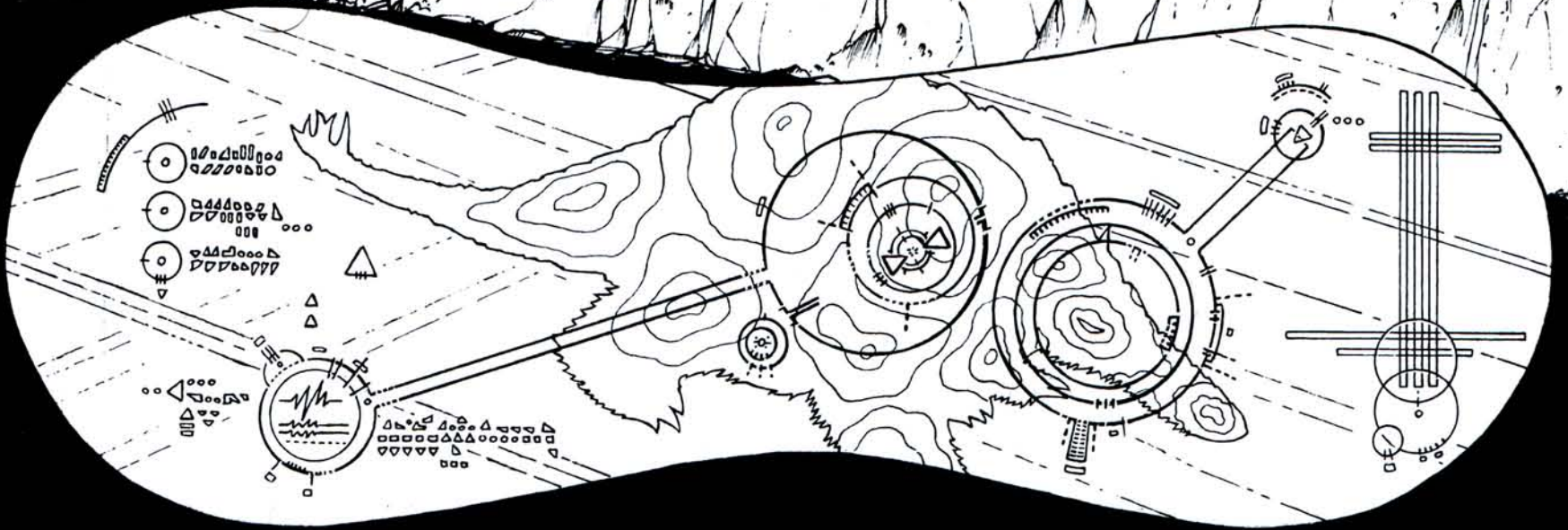
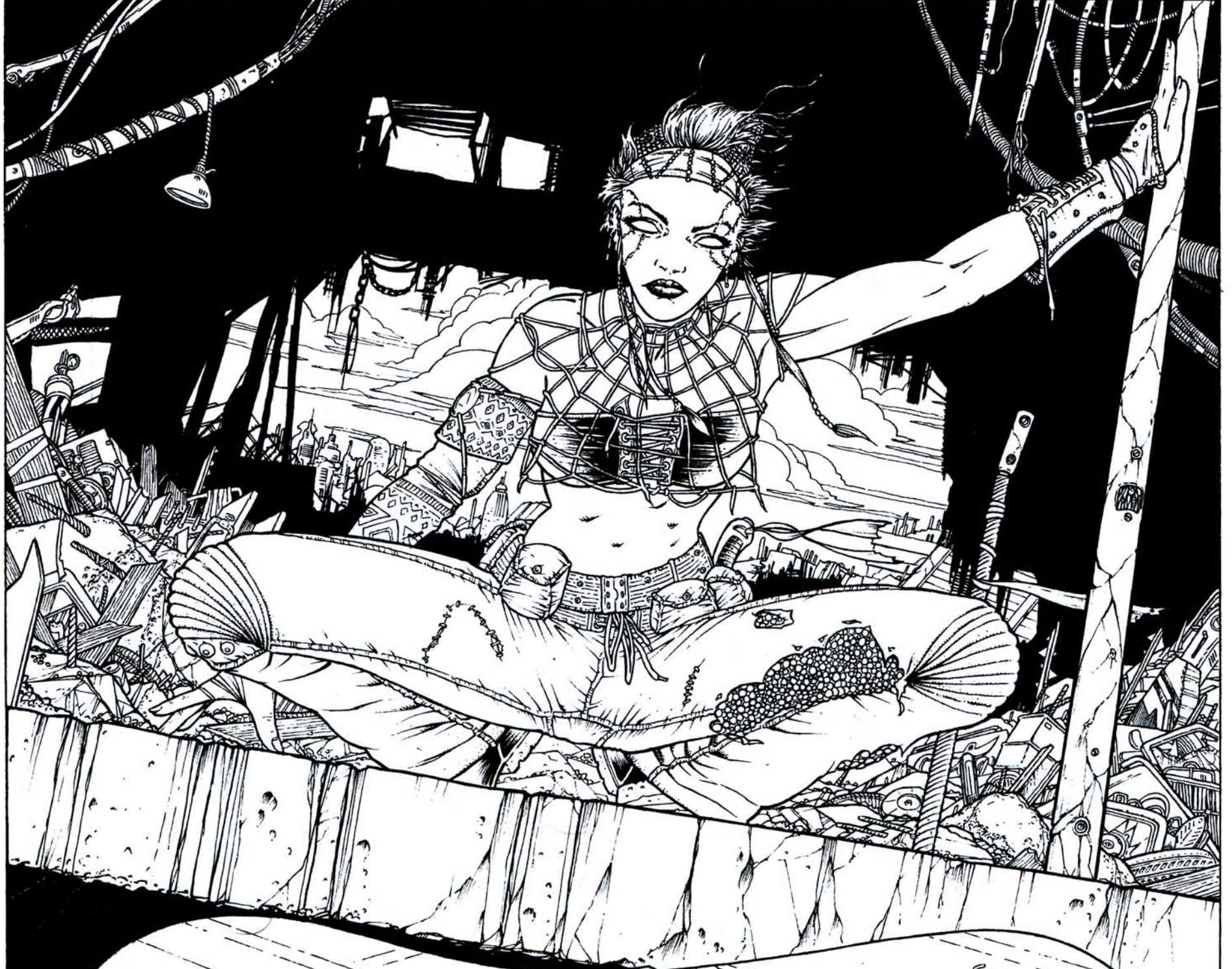
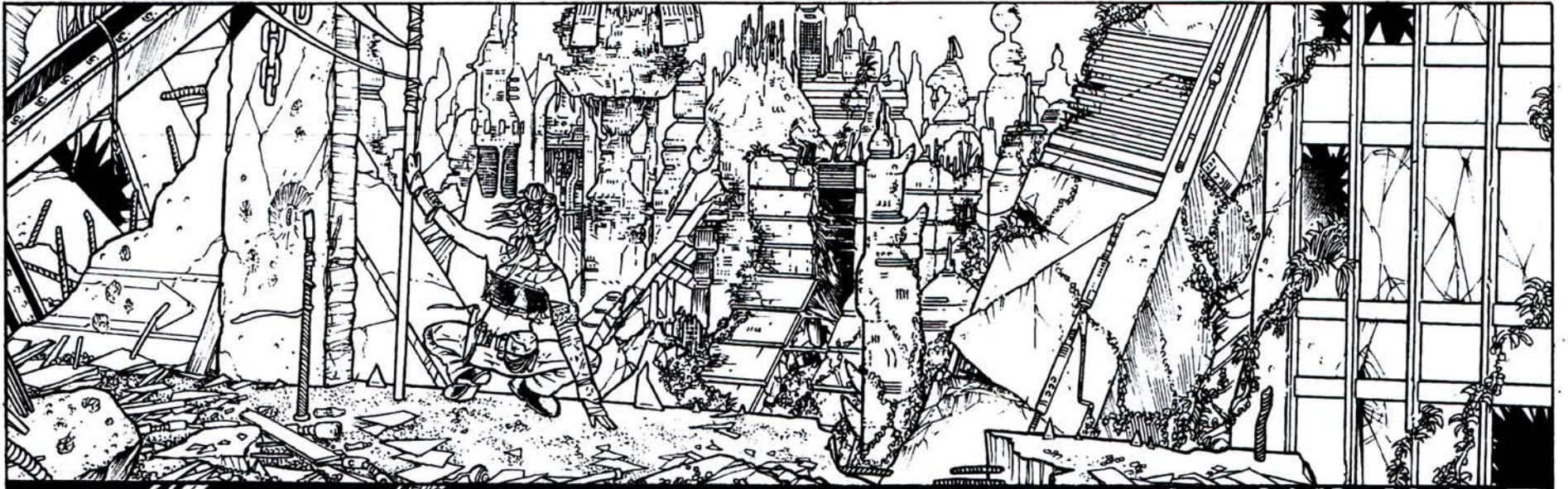
No future is required anymore, as it once was. Balance and harmony is perfect in our age, but it's only by your discovery that this shall all come to be...

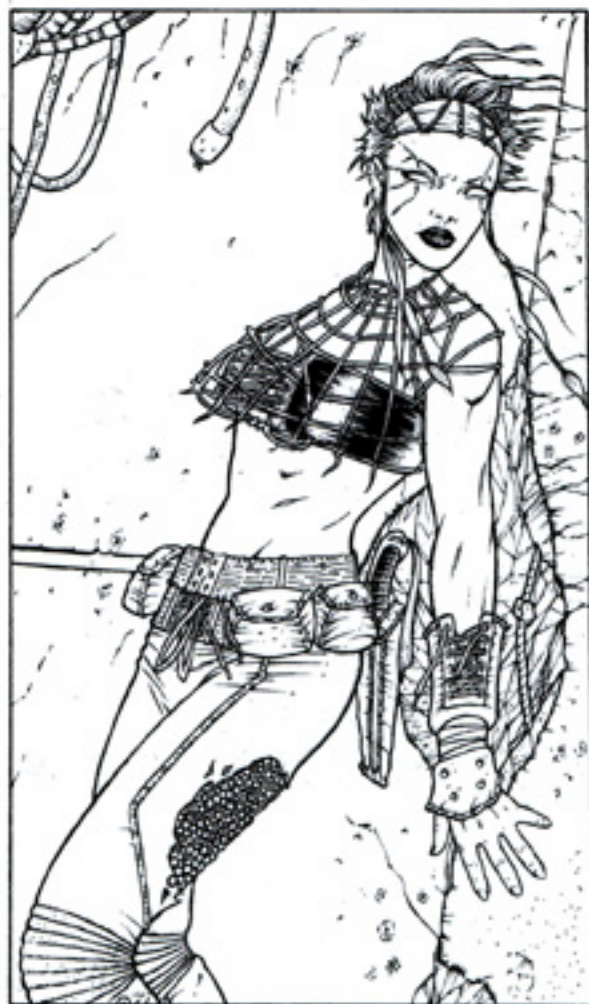
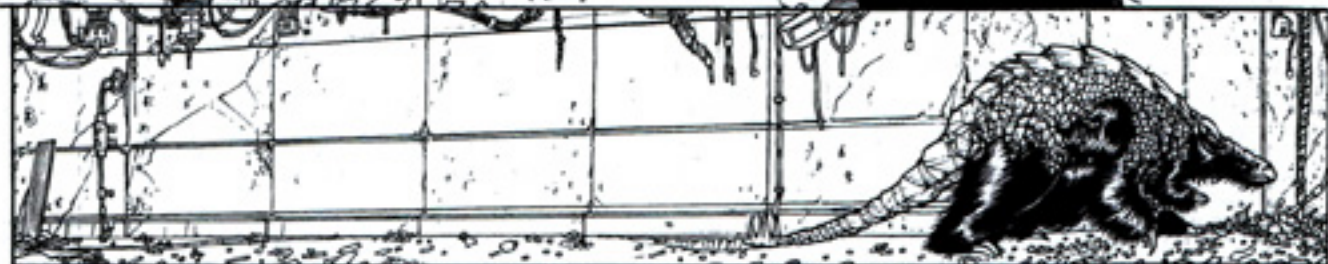
And this is why I commit this Zenopod to the ground, for in my time you have already found it.

Hopper
Omega Squared
Author of The Transient
Prophet 2nd Class









**THE TRUE ADVENTURES OF
JED LIGHTSEAR,
SPACE PIRATE!**

**By Ralph R. Raims
Art by Anoniman**

I

"Three Down at the Furt Fark Perimeter"

SHIT!

Things might've been different if Gail, the pneumatic endorphin-spume dol, hadn't toppled past on her distractingly elegant pins at precisely the moment Jed Lightsear chose to spatulate about access codes to the Furt Fark perimeter. (You remember Jed? Still talks a good sandwich, but you wouldn't trust him as far as you could spit him.) So there we are, me, Jed and Gail. Jed's like "it's amazing man..." some-such, and "two off the New Danube Delta - six back from Arcadia... yadda yadda" and I'm like "yeah yeah" 'cos Gail's pink nipples are winking at me over the top of her pink latex corset and her pink shiny lips are goin' "yeah, honey..."

(Down boy.)

Next thing you know we're high over mount Hubris watching the sparkles dancing out of Permafrost City like arc welding. I'm trying to concentrate on what Jed's saying, but Gail's got a four-digit handle on me and she's steering pretty good! Soon it's full nightscape and the wind is straightening even Jed's Dapper Dan hair as we take the "Taunton Excesses" down town to Port Miramax. (Yeah, old Jed always did have an eye for my ship. She's a babe, retro-styled custom scape-bender. Bit damned independent, but you gotta love her! Guess that's why he asked me along.)

And there it is. The Furt Fark perimeter. Bigger than Mohammed's mountain and twice as profound.

"Holy fucking Dick!" shouts Jed, laughing. It's some info-dump and no doubt! Our neuro-receptors are buzzing like 'Lectro-Wasps round a stat ball. Gail is spurting endorphins all over us, trying to fuck everything at the same time. I whip out the Exodus I acquired along Sunset B while I can still think clearly enough and drip 10ccs into our eyes. Soon we're flat out spin-drunk, talking Jungshit and passing round the "Blowman" tm, just like we used to in the Monde.

Then Gail's off, riding the monkey, and we can see the ectoplasmic trails drifting off her like spectral filigree.

"There she blows. Whoa yes." Jed, one eye half open, waves an arm in the general direction. "Listen, man. We got the codes. What say we check it out, you and me?"

"Jed Jed Jed." (I'm at the upper end and flying.) "I can't leave Gail. I'm

hooked man. Proper bitten."

"Shit."

(You ever ride the monkey? One time you're down like a gump-child, all Jungshitted out and dumbass. Next Spyro the giant cosmic monkey has manifested between your legs. Soon you're clinging on to that bright golden fur and bounding along the seventeenth dimension like it was a high wire, praying that the metawhals don't blunder into your plasma-trail and send you Crazyeddy.)

I can see Gail up ahead. Jed's whooping behind me. We ride the monkey all the way to Proto China Town.

The Aurora Hendrix is advertising Base Adaptoids when we come down. Below it the Synthtown New Bizley flashes smooth invites at us and, too down-dumb to argue, we climb back into the "Taunton Excesses" and let her take us in.

The Hyatt Flotel has sub-stratos rooms available so we take one.

Later, all honeyed up in the jack-ouzi, we plan our entry into the perimeter.

"I'll press the guardians with code." Jed says. "Gail, you gonna stick out honey, so spray 'em good. Keep 'em sweet."

We wake and dress in the splintered morning light, chopped and diced by the prismic windows of the Hyatt Flotel. Bathed in magenta, Gail smiles her fuckme smile then looks out at the perimeter. Jed, in cyan, slicks shut his suit. His smile cries "come on now baby dol. Come on baby." The suits make us look like highlights, cool and rich. We hide our smiles with trendy flute-masks. The air is cleaned and jacked up with nutrients. Our voices ring with harmonics. Mandelbrot shades hide our eyes behind a dancing spectrum, like diesel films over water.

"Come on now baby dol."

Later we ride the elevator shuttle back down to Bizley Town and take a rickshaw to the perimeter. The driver, a Spumoid, tries to charge us triple fare. He trembles, indignant - like a giant purple jellyfish - three feet above the ground, and finally stings us for double.

"Fucking highlights", he warbles.

"Fuck you!" Jed yells back. (Old Jed don't much like it when somebody gets one over on him. No sir.)

But we're at the perimeter.

(Remember the imagiplants we used to watch as kids? Sailing round the virtual Furt Fark perimeter together, thinking "this is what it must be like..."

It's not.

The effect the actual Furt Fark has on the body, even at distance, is near indescribable. Once, you'll recall, we gatecrashed the technotrance of 30,000,000 initiate Quantumonks and briefly glimpsed an abstraction of

god - before they spotted us and drove us out of empathospace.
Not even close.

The Furt Fark takes you apart and puts you back together. Perfectly. It fills the quantum spaces between your atoms with a symphony of feathers cast from an angel's wings.)

Gail sprays and we're all like "Oh God oh God" and the Guardians - protected in their armor of rough-spun diamond punched into lead and shrouded in zappy plasmashields - ask for the codes.

Maybe it WAS the endorphins that got to him, though the flute-masks should have taken care of that. Maybe he lost it 'cos there was three of us there. Maybe the proximity of the Furt Fark made a better man of him and he couldn't lie. Or maybe Jed pulled a fast one and worked those codes like they was basic trig. Whatever. Those Guardians soon had us rumbled good! I unfolded the metascape access and jumped us three parsecs before they got off a single round.

12000 light-years away we booked into a lowpro sleep spa and zoned out for two weeks in zero-gravitanks.

Gail had been transfigured, I suppose. Her endorphin mists were laced with pheromones, and she had taken on a more organic shell. I'm pretty sure she was actually *alive* after that. Either way, somehow I wasn't enough for her anymore. Maybe I never was. She didn't much talk, just smiled a distant smile, and soon she was gone. Still hurts.

And Jed? Jed just fucked off.

The 'Taunton Excesses' paid our bill at the Hyatt Flotel and headed out to the Pyramid Nebula without incident. I met her, as arranged, at the Mountain Momma Inn, southside of the planet West Virginia. She pretended she was sad to find me all alone, but the next day she had gone too. (And to think of all the love I lavished on her! Bitch!

And you know what? I just bet Jed Lightsear knows EXACTLY where to find her...)

SHIT!

Octavia Flume once wrote that "The Tachion Tract is the model for human consciousness." I'm still puzzling over what she meant when suddenly I'm back in Mean Time and everything is dirty again. I had forgotten my knees ache when I walk. It's a short distance from the check-out desk to my car, but it reminds me.

II

"The Fly Trap"

"New Derby was built by adventurous midlanders with no imagination."

Mitch Cathode scratched the stump of his left arm, checking the plug points for inflammation before sliding his prosthetic back on. The fat barman of the "Spit and Gate" continued his practiced patwah.

"Luck-rich wideboys they were. Unfolded through the metascape and decided to make their home here, on Planet Elvis. "The most earth-like rock" - they proclaimed - "in the universe!" But it was only ten years before the *grass* on Planet Elvis woke up..."

Mitch flexed synthetic fingers, tingling with the return of sensation. "The *grass*," he said. "Tell me about the *grass*."

The inhabitants of Planet Elvis had not guessed at its carnivorous nature. Half the population was painfully devoured, another quarter scarred and maimed, before it was finally cut. The corporation that founded the planet fought a hopeless lawsuit, but the facts were clear enough: They had not adequately studied the *grass*. And 360,000 people had died.

"You know that it's protected now? Yup. New Manhattan is a zoo for *grass*! They've built plastiglass walkways all over it in time for the next feed. Almost half a million Sheep, cattle and Wendigo have been imported just for the damn *grass* to eat!"

Mitch felt the codes jump in his fingertips as he left the pub. He had made do without his arm for a week, slumming it in a lowpro sleep spa in the Pyramid Nebula while Jed Lightsear worked his magic. He didn't much care for the Jungshitting widester, all slick-suited and Dapper-Danned, but he was the best.

"Get you into the fucking Furt Fark those codes man!" he said. "Straight and no dice! Getting in's the sweet bit, but you gotta get out like goose shit - hear me? These code's 'll get you out quick."

"There's something else," said Mitch. "It feels..."

"Just like the real thing, huh slick? Only *better*?"

And, yes, the arm was *exactly* like the real thing. *Better*. And something crawled up out of it and jump-started parts of his brain hitherto redundant.

"Oh man, you's digging it! Yeah, like that huh?" Lightsear was ecstatic, brimful of selflove and enthusiasm. "Know this Pinocchio, see dude? An endorphin-spume dol that saw God's toenails and came alive! I was with her - right there at the edge of all possibilities, looking into the *Total*! And now I can make this stuff *live*! See, it's just a case of getting the materials to perceive us in a new light, you chasing? It has to learn that WE'RE alive, and the strings click round to a whole new dimension man - just like a revolving gate - and matter reconfigures itself, and BANG! We're in a dialog

man! It's all there, all to be had at the Furt Fark. Telling you."
"Right."

Mitch Cathode wasn't much interested in the Furt Fark. He imagined it, not entirely inaccurately, as a kind of reverse black hole. A galactic anomaly that proved everything right and everything wrong at the same time. Now it was a deleterious tourist attraction, jealously policed by the "Guardians", enhanced and embittered descendants of the prospectors that had long-ago chanced upon it.

It was raining.

New Derby, built in the classic fusion style of nineteenth century earth Victorian/twenty-first century Harryn, was a squat red brick and concrete sprawl. It's population opted to live in terraced dwellings along narrow streets, turning the sound up on their archaic six-D hard-light generators to avoid hearing the neighbors squabbling. Mitch Cathode liked it.

Back at the Cloughy Hotel he punched in for three hours deepsleep and an Ubersound-Flush detox. He wanted a clear head for the next day.

* * *

And suddenly he's on an Aeroflume, six hundred decks up over the Borstal Channel, and he can see New Manhattan swallowing waves on the horizon.

And suddenly he's passing his one small bag through the metascan, smiling pointlessly at the immigration officers, while his arm works the codes.

And suddenly he's through. He's there. Ten years, almost to the day, of waiting and planning and waiting some more. Ten years since the grass stole away his children, his beloved wives, tearing them from his arms, tearing *off* his arm.

He's there.

Here.

Now.

It's nearly time.

Mitch Cathode watches the sheep, cattle and Wendigo graze upon the dozing terror below through the plastiglass walls of the walkway, and smiles.

III

"Phoenix"

"D'you see that! Hoo Bo? D'you see what happened on New Manhattan

man?"

Jed Lightsear was fully flow-moed, I mean slick was x-tatix!

"Check this Hoo Bo!" And boy he's thrusting the juddering Newsphere in my face, all lit up with outerference - 'cos he's so scooped and won't stand still.

"Hey! Lube, dude!" I says. "Still youself boy! I can't see anything in this with you all quiverin' like you a spumoid in a 'lectro-storm!"

I watched as the images settled, and there was New Manhattan - the grass zoo - 'cept below the plastiglass walkways that straddle the island the famous carnivorous flora was all ablaze. The carcasses of it's once-to-be feast, imported sheep and cattle from Earthside, Wendigo from Neoteric-Ukon, shuddered and rippled like black and red jello in the heat waves.

"Uh huh." I says. "So. And what's got you all Hummin' Jack over this, slick? Did another of your well-laid's fuck up again?"

"Mitch Cathode man! He did it! And the codes worked man! Tellin' you, fell out me pure and ripe and burnin'!"

And here I must have looked like the guy who blinked when Forman went down, 'cos I hadn't a whiff what flash-boy was spatulating about!

"Shit, Hoo Bo, for a Metragon" He's sayin' "You don't grock too good!"

Now us Metragons are empaths, not grockers, seers, sayers, readers or psychics. All I knew was Jed was riding high on happy pheromones, and that was getting me all messy and confused. I was starting to judder myself!

"Fuck, Jed! I don't know no Mitch Cathode! Slow down slick! Gimme the pictures..."

So that's when he tells me about Mitch Cathode. Poor guy moved to Planet Elvis just before the grass woke up. Lost his wives, six kids and an arm before he was pulled to safety. Jed worked on a prosthetic for the guy, pumping it full of stolen code when he was still coming down from his brush with the forces of creation at the Furt Fark. And so it seems the guy had taken that code, busted through the security at New Manhattan, and set the grass ablaze with six vials of Subatomic Field Disrupters secreted in his new arm.

His revenge on the grass was complete.

Not only that, but Mitch Cathode wasn't even mentioned in the report. He'd gotten away with it.

"Don't you see, Hoo Bo?" Says Jed, blue eyes child-bright and teeth flashing like the moons of Po Nagarath rising over the frost-dunes of Ternne. "They WORKED! The codes fucking worked, ya glean me?"

And that's all I know, 'cos Jed bein' Jed took off soon after that, and I never saw the slick Jung-Shitter again but on Newspheres.

Anyhow, there you have it. The story of how Jed Lightsear cracked and tested the stolen codes that unify matter, and headed out into the universe to see what he could do with them...

"Pirates of the Void"

"With an arch grin, Jed Lightsear waved at his would-be captors gathered at the fringe of the void-storm, unable to advance their pursuit.

"I'm afraid that Lady Luck as yet remains my bedfellow, my dear Major Todger!" he said, and without further ado he swept Gail, the living endorphin-spume dol, up into his muscular arms and lithely sprang into the awaiting comforts of the "Taunton Excesses", his beloved ship ablaze with code and wonder.

"I'll get you yet Jed Lightsear!" yelled the Major into the sudden emptiness..."

* * *

"Muscular arms?" queried Gail. Jed grinned.

Mitch Cathode unlinked his prosthetic arm from the core of the ship's cortex becoming mostly just human again. "This Jed Lightsear seems like quite a guy. Like to meet him some day."

"Another bestseller complete! Gail, post it out for me baby, won't you? Usual channels. My fans will be missing me."

"The humility! No, really, Jed. It moves me." Jed watched Mitch shift his belligerent ruffled self out of the Nav-Hole. "I'm mush. Gonna slip me into some deepsleep, mayhaps get another ubersound-flush and detox this fucked old carcass."

"Hey baby, we ain't even partied yet!" Gail, pink and sleek, brushed his cheek with her sweet synthskin lips. "Don't poo-poo the rushes honey, we deserve what we got!"

"Not here for the laughs, dol, you know that. Just got nothin' else worth doing."

Jed laughed. "Sure are a fun-sponge mister! C'mon Gail, lets go fly with Spyro!" He disappeared below whistling "Honey Pie", brimful of his own id.

"Getting high ain't my thing, dol. Me? Sure, I like a drink. But I was just your regular Family Freddie, see? Nothing much special about me. Well - not back then anyhow..."

"You go."

Gail blew a sweet-scented pheromone-laced kiss at the older man and disappeared in Jed's wake.

Mitch Cathode sighed and removed the prosthetic limb that had changed him forever. It mewed at him, suffering a mild separation anxiety as he put it to one side. Mitch ignored it. Gently he scratched his stump, checking for any rashes or sores. There were none. He sighed and looked out of the viewscreen, seeing his face reflected there.

How in heaven's gate had he come to be here? Come to be a part of this gang, this ridiculous posse? Mitch Cathode, now one of the most wanted thieves in all known creation! Pirates of the void, and legends across the

stars!

Perhaps, he mused, it was quite a tale after all...

V

GAIL

Gail, the pneumatic endorphin-spume dol, found "life" somewhat a revelation. Her memories, her existence before the Furt Fark incident, were all intact - but detached, as though they were memories of a dream. Her hardware still regulated and ruled large parts of her consciousness, she was an exotic sex toy, a plaything. She had been created to read human behavior and respond expertly to individual requirements, often requirements the individual did not know they possessed in any conscious way. She enjoyed it. Men and women fell in love with her constantly, but before she had no *will*. She would only *perform*. Now, well, it was different. Gail realised she had incredible potential. Her circuitry could process information radically faster than her cohorts, even with their new coded enhancements. She was no longer governed by laws of robotics. She was a new form of life with a great deal of power at her slender synthetic fingertips.

Gail was increasingly growing bored of Jed Lightsear, who's self-obsession had non-the-less been a conduit to genuine wonder. The Furt Fark had awakened in him a savant of the metaphysical. It had opened a liminal space in his mind within which he had found poetic solutions to the BIG questions. He found *code*. But nothing else had changed. He could no more learn from his new innate skills than teach them. He had the safe crack to every bank vault in the universe, but he never saw that it was in fact the key to *every single thing* in the universe. He had the power to unlock it all, but not the knowledge - nor the will. And Gail was starting to realize exactly what true feelings were. She had enjoyed Jed's company in her previous form because he was so dedicated to hedonistic pursuits, and he was so in love with himself that she found him somewhat a challenge. But newly awake in the universe, she at first suffered strange nebulous pangs she later identified as loneliness. Then she began to see that of all the sentient life-forms in creation she had ever come across, Mitch Cathode had become the most similar to herself. While she had become more human, he was now partially machine. She was starting to develop needs. Behind the brash, elegant facade, a complex creature was emerging - full of questions and desires, hopes, wants and dreams. Mitch, she realised, might be the only person who could ever truly understand her. She was falling in love with him. In love, for the first time in all the nine hundred years of her existence. And for the first time, though nobody would suspect it, she was facing a future where decisions would be made based as much

on their emotional implications as on probability equations and math. "And that's when I twoc-ed my first ZX59, took it right from under the slide-boys receptors, and he didn't grock a thing. Yup. Me, I got the fingers, baby. I got the fingers!" Jed was zero-graving in a swirl of puple Jubjub smoke living up the old times - nostalgia was Jubjub's shtick.

"Sure are slick, Jed." said Gail, but she was running auto-response. She was out of the office and away making music with a devastated middle-aged man in her newly discovered imagination.

Then "THOOM!!" and there's a hole in the hull of The Taunton Excesses big enough to ride a Fnark through.

"What the fuck?" Jed, pink-eyed, before all the air leaves the chamber and he's going with it. Gail, moving like only she could, activates the Quantum Wall and throws Jed an airball.

"Stay here slick." she beams to his neuro-receptors. "I'm going up front." And there's a new sensation now -

hermindmovesfastit'sthinkingfastandshedoesn'tknowshedoesn'tknowwhat/if he's/whatifhe'shurt?Whatthen?Hecan'tbe/Can'tbehurt/WhatthefuckWASthat ?/she'sthinking - and somewhere her logic centres wake up to the fact that she's scared, that she's actually affraid she might loose somebody.

"Gail, get up her. Need your speed toots."

And the squall in her circuits confuses her - just for a billisecond - then she smiles, and ther's no process behind it. The first - the fist! - completely spontaneous smile of her existence.

Mitch Cathode is OK.

"Looks like the Major found us. Any ideas how he might do that?"

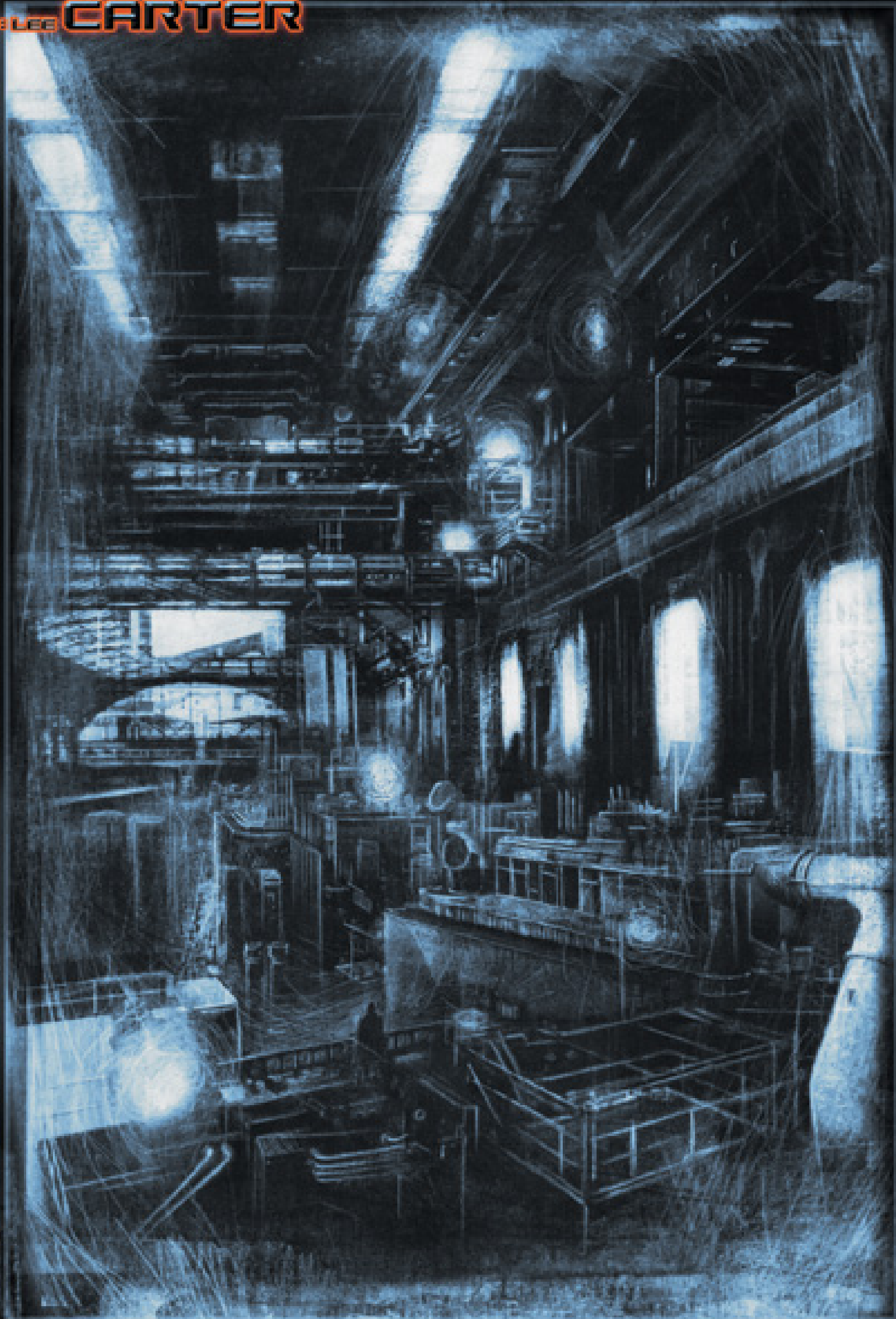
Gail is in the seat beside mitch, already plugging in. Another second and there's no need to talk. Mitch, Gail and The Taunton Excesses are one consciousness. The Quantum Wall takes a few more hits but holds, and soon they're half a galaxy away from the pursuers...



NECROMACHIA

WORDS BY LIAM SHARP

ART BY LEE CARTER



NECROMACHIA!

That's what we call it. This place. This endless cavity of rotting machinery and wailing pipes. Last night I remembered something. Something important. An image I saw as a child. In it somebody had painted a ceiling bright blue. And a voice - our father? - was telling us not to forget.

For you see, the blue ceiling was itself a reminder. It represented a great concept. A philosophy. The "OUTSIDE".

Do you recall it? How we would dream of such things back then?

How soon dreams fade here - where every door, every portal, leads to more of the same.



Once we vowed we would find it, the "outside".

So strange, so quiet a word for something so important.

How did we so soon forget?





KENTALL 2005



STEVEN
PETERKINGOS

necromachia

