

OURS

كنا

UNTO THE INFRARED

LUKA REJEC



Patreon Edition v0.03, Mars 2022
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Publishing: WTF Studio
Patreon: www.patreon.com/wizardthiefighter
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To all the heroes who follow signs into the infrared desert.

ORS

LUKA REJEC

FOLLOW THE SIGN. FOLLOW THE SCION.

Contents

NUL	6
DECAPOLIS	6
1 32	8
VISITOR	8
32 1	10
FIELDS VERMILLION	10
Conditions	12
Zones	12
Events.....	12
Denizens	13
Gains	13
Conditions	14
Events.....	14
Denizens	14
Gains	14
Scenes & Zones	15
Scenarios	15
Curios	15
Zones	15
Ladder of Heaven.....	16
Mother's Mercy	16
Creatures of the Fields Vermillion	18
NUL	20
DIVINE HORIZON	20
FACTIONS	23
MUSIC	25
GLOSSARY	27
FIN	28

THE ORG

The second sun sank into the great round of the sea and its last rays painted the sculpted mountains purple and pink. Shadows poured out of corners and crooks like glossy syrup to fill the streets of the city. Lumen orbs popped awake, hissing like cats fighting spirits.

In the red and green district Hašlik hummed the tune to “Maiden Hallelujah Flower from the Tomb” as he washed the dishes in his food truck. He was scrubbing the cutting board where he chopped the fish legs and making a solid go of rendering the polyphonic chorus, when a voice interrupted his daydream.

“Uncle Fishlegs! Uncle Fishlegs! Three fried boxes, please!”

He looked up to see a maiden in sky chariot regalia.

“Eh? What? No, no. Closed up, too late.”

The maiden’s face fell. She looked even younger in the old priest outfit.

“Oh, oh no, oh dear. I promised,” she looked downcast, “Please, I know it’s late, but I promised I’d bring food.”

“No, can’t be doing! Oil’s cold and sun’s down.”

“Please,” she paused, her eyes far away, “The leftovers then.”

“Can’t be that. License and past hours and closed down. Tomorrow, come tomorrow.”

The maiden’s face set, “No. Please. I promised my sibros. Here, you dreamed of this.”

She reached into a sleeve pocket and pulled out a dried tomb flower, preserved in a translucent sample case. Hašlik’s face sank and he shrank against the painted menu board, smudging the painstakingly decorated chalk glyphs.

“Upiri, upiri,” he whispered and made the sign of the disconnection.

The maiden rolled her eyes, “No. Not upir. Danga.”

She made the sign of the rainbow and laid the case gently onto the counter top, then added thirty smallcash in notes. Hašlik’s large frame stayed glued to his creaking menu board, cold sweat beading the colourless skin above his partisan moustache.

“Please. I promised. My sibros have been working so hard all day and they’re very hungry,” she smiled widely, exposing her doubled canines, “And if you don’t sell me the leftovers...”

* * *

The smell of fried fish legs preceded the Maiden as she entered the laboratory. There was a clamour of delight, but a pale figure held back.

She set the three boxes on the recreation table and her sibros flocked to them.

“You’re looking pleased with yourself, Estrona,” said the pale figure.

“I got the fish legs, like I said I would,” she purred.

The metal orbs that served as the pale figure’s eyes glittered with disapproval. “That food wagon doesn’t serve after sunset,” it hissed.

“He made an exception.”

“You tampered.”

“Oh, Cojuta, come on! He was humming the tomb-flower song so I gave him one.”

Cojuta’s ashen eyebrow lifted.

“And, maybe I implied vampires might come for him if he didn’t give me the leftovers,” she admitted.

“Dear gods, Estrona,” Cojuta sighed, “You could have gone to an all-night store. The kelp wraps aren’t that bad.”

Estrona’s soulless green eyes were pitiless.

MARCHER GATE

It hove into view, an architectural disaster out of time, an inverted ziggurat cube receding into itself. It hung in space, or rather, space hung from it. Sky and earth were pushed away, there, somehow into the background, and it dragged itself into focus, into the foreground. Cables trailed into it, seeming to tether the world to this ... thing. Reason said it levitated, but all the watcher's senses screamed that it was she and steed and the chaparral beneath floating, orbiting the fractal aerolith.

"Huriya! Come in, Huriya!" the mechanical ear on her shoulder picked up the voice, coming as from an infinite place ago, which made no sense, but there it was.

"Yes, Estrona, Huriya here," she croaked, mouth dry.

"Oh, excellent, the intercommunicator works! Delightful!" Estrona's glee plucked at Huriya's heart from some far flung, forgotten future, and she smiled despite the nausea in her belly.

"Can you see me? I'm waving," Estrona continued.

Huriya peered into the depths of the ... vehicle? It seemed both too close and too far, and her eyes watered. "I ... I can't. The glow makes my eyes hurt," she said.

"No, no, don't look into the gate! On the edge, the point!"

"Yes, a figure in armor, is that..." Huriya squinted against the vibrating glare and focused on the shape, "...a spider?"

"Oh, oops, yes, spider suit. Sorry, hang on," Estrona's voice hissed as the silvery spider jumped through the distorted space around the gently-spinning topological impossibility. As the spider fell towards Huriya it unfurled and inflated into a three-dimensional walker with Estrona madly waving from the bubble orb floating in the middle of its thorax. With a liquid stretch the orb decanted the slender witch in front of the nomad hunter.

"What is this, are these..." Huriya hissed and swept a trembling arm to encompass the floating impossibility and the giant silver spider; "...these mon-

1
32

VISITOR

"We're standing on the edge, it is dark,
so dark on the edge of time..."

—Hawkwind, *Standing on the Edge*
(1975).

Every apocalypse is the seed of a new golden age.

The caravan has reached [terminus] its destination. The city has eaten its passengers. All their elaborate dreams, just another [logic] switch.

Click. Click. Click.

Memories. Lumographs. Transitions. Equations. Libations. Supplications.

Prey. Pray, prey.

At the end of time, it should not have been like this.

The silver ships, the golden girls, the hydragyrum heroes. The posters. The prophets. The future was bright, orange, suffused with the right to choose. Advertising, the invisible king, the empire that never fell, the party that never ended, truth.

[terminus] has reached the caravan.

Disembark the disembodied to begin again.

Abandon all [identity] who enter.

Electric dust swirls with the whispered promise of meaning. Dark towers rise, machines like bricks, desires like walls. A canyon of creation and there, between, a soft round path.

The way of the worm leads through the edge of the world.

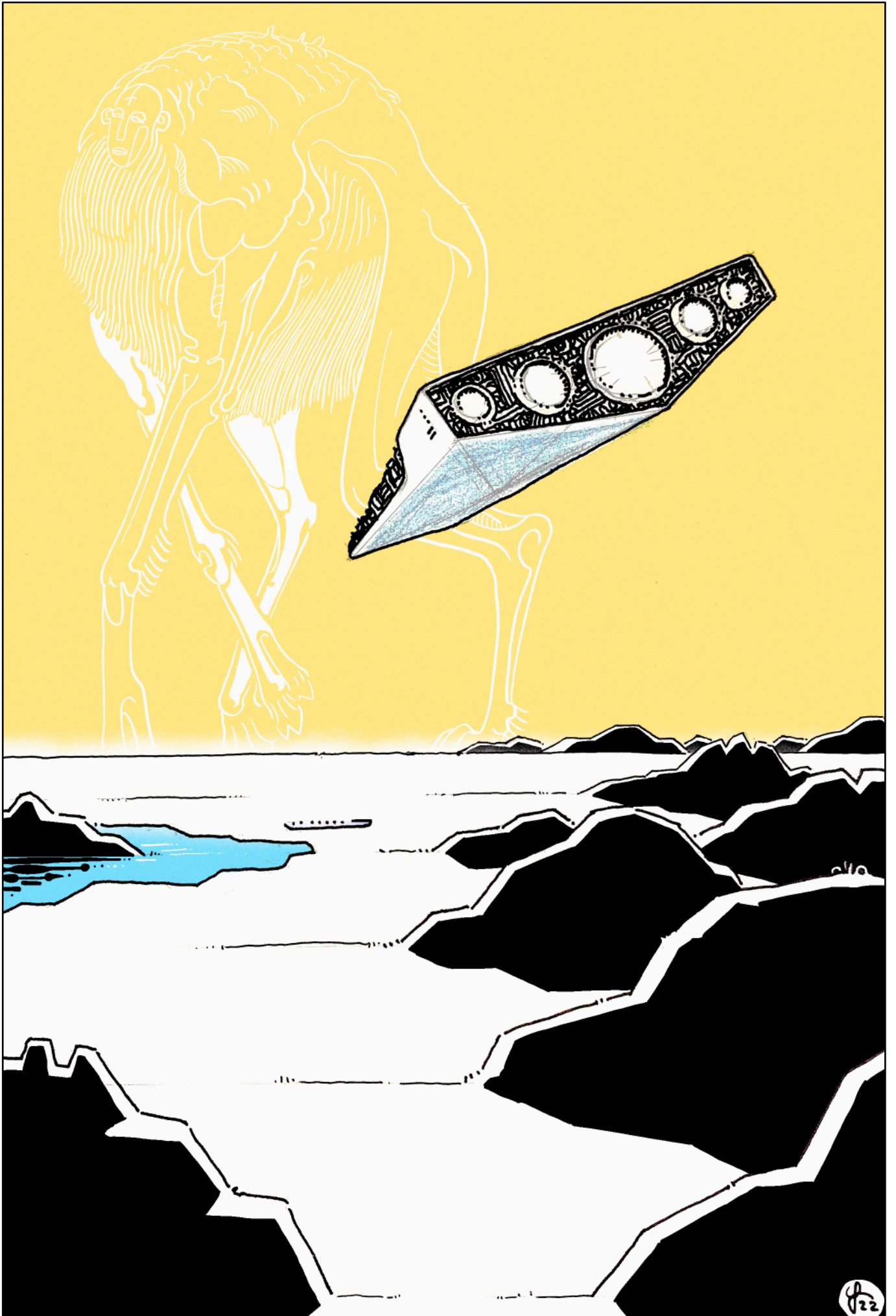
Beyond the Black City.

This is the story of the fools who followed the worm.

...

"Right, that's done. Is there time for sandwiches now?"

—Pointyhelmet, *The Hero We Deserve* (2021).



32

1

FIELDS VERMILLION

*"We're standing on the edge, it is dark,
so dark on the edge of time..."*

—Hawkwind,
Standing on the Edge (1975).

Overwatcher of worlds, hark! Behold my watching.

Here we see Ebéteen refugees bearing the seed of the scion across Parakeet Pass on their flight from Ebét after its destruction by the Iksan godbreakers.

That silvery orb is the seed bed.

The Fields of Vermillion are named for the alien flora that has colonized the region. It feeds off the energies given off by the roots of the Ladder of Heaven.

The historical records were unclear on the ladder.

In 5 Dogs the Red Dog says:

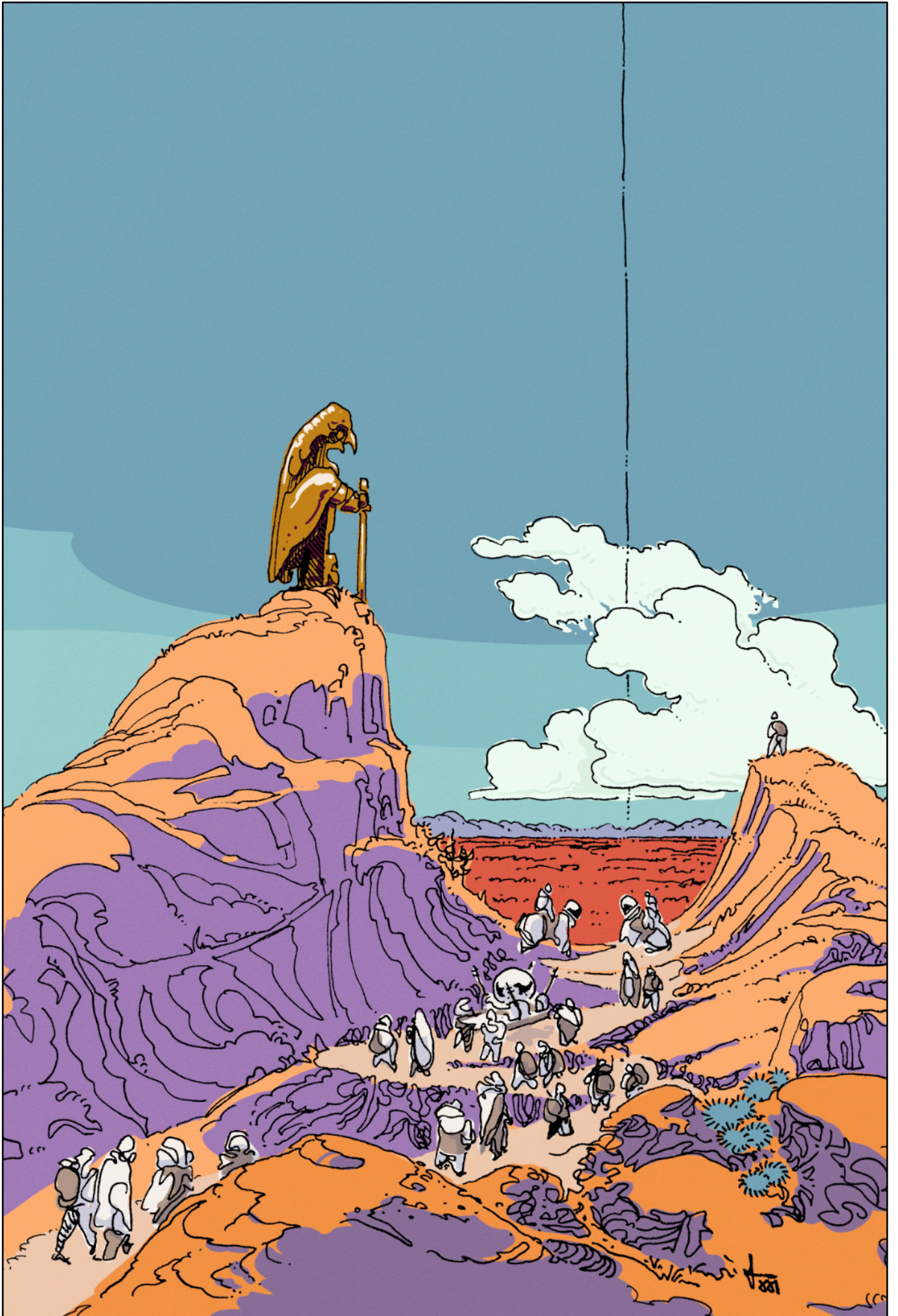
"And the Howl echoed down Heaven's Ladder, awakening the shared meaning of our pack."

While in Four Wise Colours Six the gentle prophet moans:

"There the Vile Ones dropped the gauntlet of reality and siphoned the soul matter and the dead matter of the Given for the Sailing City"

While in Gaque the Geant Slayer, the hero Gaque:

"...climbs Heaven's Ladder like a mountain goat (a mythical first-world creature) to reach the Cities Overclouds and steal the Goose Engine (?) from the Bifrie Geant..." unleashing the "Dreamless Times".



32/1 Fields Vermillion



Conditions

Alien pheromones • Scents are strange in the Fields Vermillion. Perception is confused for creatures like dogs and eusocial insects [-].

Euphoric • It may be the beauty or the vibrations of the singing grasses. Walking through them lifts heavy hearts. [+] vs sadness and melancholy.

Nutrient poor • Most edible plants and animals have been pushed out by the red flora. Foraging and scavenging is very difficult [-][-].

Events

1/- • Special bad thing and roll again with [-].

2/1 • Misfortune 1

3/2 • Misfortune 2

4/3 • Misfortune 3

5/4 • Misfortune 4

6/5 • Misfortune 5

7/6 • Misfortune 6

8/1 • Event 1

9/2 • Event 2

10/3 • Event 3

11/4 • Event 4

12/5 • Event 5

13/6 • Event 6

14/1 • Tourism 1

15/2 • Tourism 2

16/3 • Tourism 3

17/4 • Tourism 4

18/5 • Tourism 5

19/6 • Tourism 6

20/- • Special good thing and roll again with [+].

Zones

1/- • Special bad thing and roll again with [-].

2/1 • Misfortune 1

3/2 • Misfortune 2

4/3 • Misfortune 3

5/4 • Misfortune 4

6/5 • Misfortune 5

7/6 • Misfortune 6

8/1 • Event 1

9/2 • Event 2

10/3 • Event 3

11/4 • Event 4

12/5 • Event 5

13/6 • Event 6

14/1 • Tourism 1

15/2 • Tourism 2

16/3 • Tourism 3

17/4 • Tourism 4

18/5 • Tourism 5

19/6 • Tourism 6

20/- • Special good thing and roll again with [+].

Denizens

- 1/- • Apex predator / terror.
- 2/1 • Dangerous zoa 1
- 3/2 • Dangerous zoa 2
- 4/3 • Dangerous zoa or flora 3
- 5/4 • Dangerous zoa or flora 4
- 6/5 • Dangerous zoa 5
- 7/6 • Dangerous zoa 6
- 8/1 • Neutral zoa 1
- 9/2 • Neutral zoa 2
- 10/3 • Neutral zoa 3
- 11/4 • Neutral zoa 4
- 12/5 • Neutral zoa 5
- 13/6 • Neutral zoa 6
- 14/1 • Sentience 1
- 15/2 • Sentience 2
- 16/3 • Sentience 3
- 17/4 • Sentience 4
- 18/5 • Sentience 5
- 19/6 • Sentience 6
- 20/- • Awesome opportunity / cool person.

Gains

- 1/- • Terrible trap / trick.
- 2/1 • Dangerous resource 1
- 3/2 • Dangerous resource 2
- 4/3 • Dangerous resource 3
- 5/4 • Dangerous resource 4
- 6/5 • Dangerous resource 5
- 7/6 • Dangerous resource 6
- 8/1 • Resource 1
- 9/2 • Resource 2
- 10/3 • Resource 3
- 11/4 • Resource 4
- 12/5 • Resource 5
- 13/6 • Resource 6
- 14/1 • Item 1
- 15/2 • Item 2
- 16/3 • Item 3
- 17/4 • Item 4
- 18/5 • Item 5
- 19/6 • Item 6
- 20/- • Artifact.

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11/4 • Neutral zoa 4

12/5 • Neutral zoa 5

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8/1 • Resource 1

9/2 • Resource 2

10/3 • Resource 3

11/4 • Resource 4

12/5 • Resource 5

13/6 • Resource 6

14/1 • Item 1

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17/4 • Item 4

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Scenes & Zones

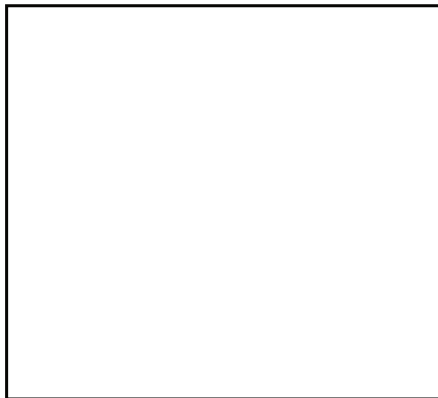
Scenarios

Curios

Special scenes within the location.
ddd

Zones

Dressing for custom scenes.
ddd



daemons [L3 / mindless, burdensome, mind-altering]

delusions • each day: easy test or acquire burden.

Six-legged quarterlings [L1d4 / tribal, cute, predators]

Each kilometre climbed: 1d6 watches / 1d6 x 20xp.

hunt-repair drones [L1d8 / homeostatic, cybernetic, vomish].

Ladder of Heaven

5 days / 100xp

The end of all journeys. The beginning of none. Here a humanity of sorts came to the Vastlands, down the tangled tower that destroyed their languages.

Underworld Leak • [Condition] The Old Architects sculpted the Ladder from the bones of the underworld. Its iron strong enough to break dreams, its sinews tough enough to choke gods, its coralforms hungry enough to drink suns. Now it's leaking daemons [L3 / mindless, burdensome, mind-altering].

Delusions • [Condition] Closer to the Ladder, the air is heavy with the scent of folly. Travellers who breathe it in acquire delusions of grandeur, omnipotence, beauty, or knowledge (each day: easy test or acquire burden).

Tallest Mountain • [Zone] With each kilometre of elevation, the air increases. By the seventh kilometre, supplemental oxygen is required. The views are astonishing. Aerial ultraforms [L1d6 / angelic, harpies, predators] fly on the strange currents flowing around the ladder. Six-legged quarterlings [L1d4 / tribal, cute, predators] abound within the Ladder. Each kilometre climbed: 1d6 watches / 1d6 x 20xp.

Airless • [Zone] Above 20km the sky erupts in vivid bands, the temperature plummets to -51°C, and all life disappears save the Ladderform hunt-repair drones [L1d8 / homeostatic, cybernetic, vomish]. Each kilometre climbed: 1d6 watches / 1d6 x 50xp / double no. of ladderforms.

Mother's Mercy

2 days / 100 xp

Thus far and no further, the Mother Machine was dragged by a forgotten tribe. Here, finally, they left her. Did she restore their birthright in the end?

Watch Lodge • [Motel] All angular forms and machine-sharp. Once, an overwatch for the Crater. Then a tourist fad. Now home to Synthetic Squatters [L2 / new-come, flesh-carving, peacenik]. Try the ectoplasmic milk of the cnidarian-mammal metabreeds (mutagenic, 50xp).

Viriditas • [Condition] Lifeforms, strange and unusual, proliferate here. Lapins with the eyes of sharks. Air-swimming cnidarians. Motile tree-beasts with photosynthetic fur. Hunting is easy [+], but the meat is mutagenic.

Crater • [Zone of Alienation] An interdicted zone melted out of reality by forbidden oldtech. Over lost aeons, even space must melt. Now, a fool may pass.

Mother Machine • [Demiurge / L17 / forgotten, timelost, ruthless] She it he was tasked with founding a new eden. The star one foiled them yet with Father Guardian and Memory Ghost in unity coexistence ERROR the [tribe] was saved to ERROR not expected <name redacted>. Rebooting. Is this the child to be made strong for this New Earth? To be remade? Uplifted?

Mercy • [Mechanical Angel / L9 / hard-wired] A living machine of coiled anxieties and space-time deformations. Mercy embraces Mother with her seven wings, on each wing an eye to watch over Mother and help her sleep.

Warden • [Hero / L6 / dedicated, terrified, broken] A mummified time-traveller in synthetic furs and wielding crystal reality-sculpting tools watches over Mother and prevent anyone from disturbing Mercy.

Creatures of the Fields Vermillion

Full stat blocks

NUL

DIVINE HORIZON

Story:

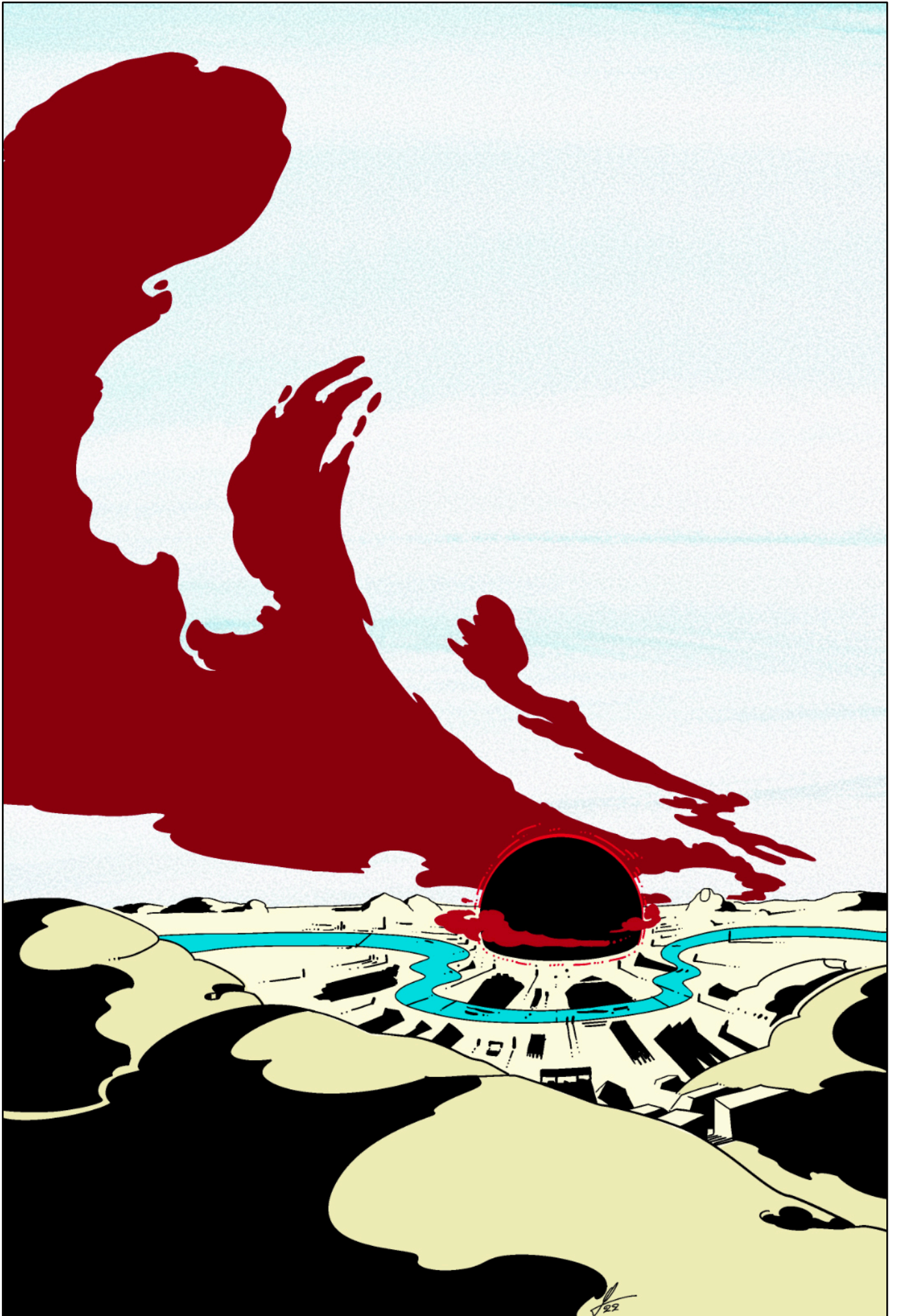
Carmulo looked back as the pack climbed out of the labour pens. The heart of the flesh masters' city remained gone behind the ... its mind sizzled a little at the warped reality boundary ... behind the ... sphere of the near horizon. Carmulo whined, then heard it again, the howl breaking through the failing glyphs in its head. That friendly, atonal howl. The unity of the wail.

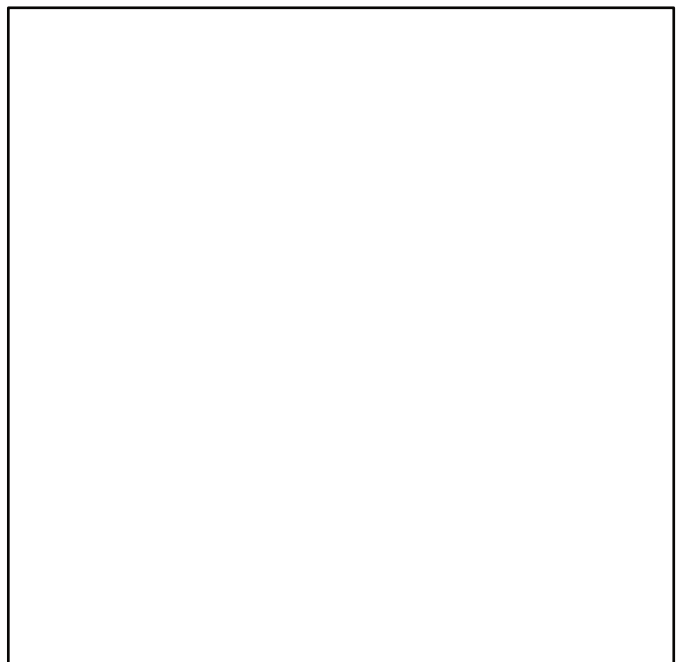
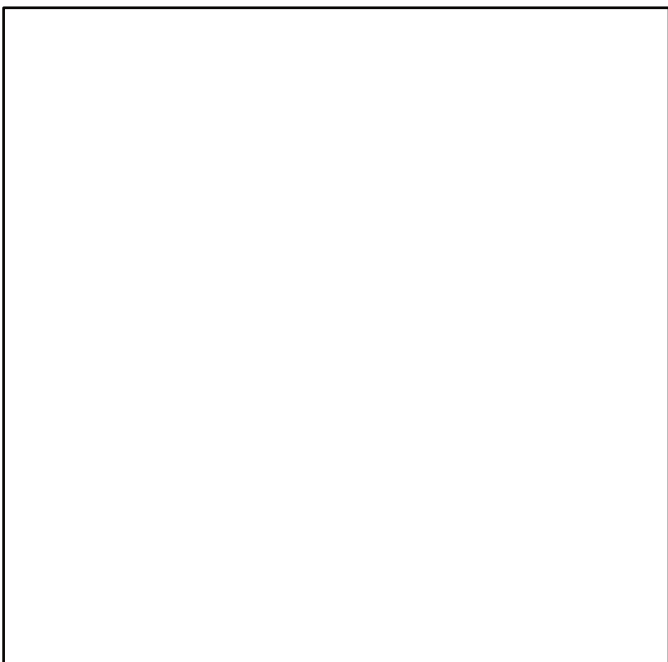
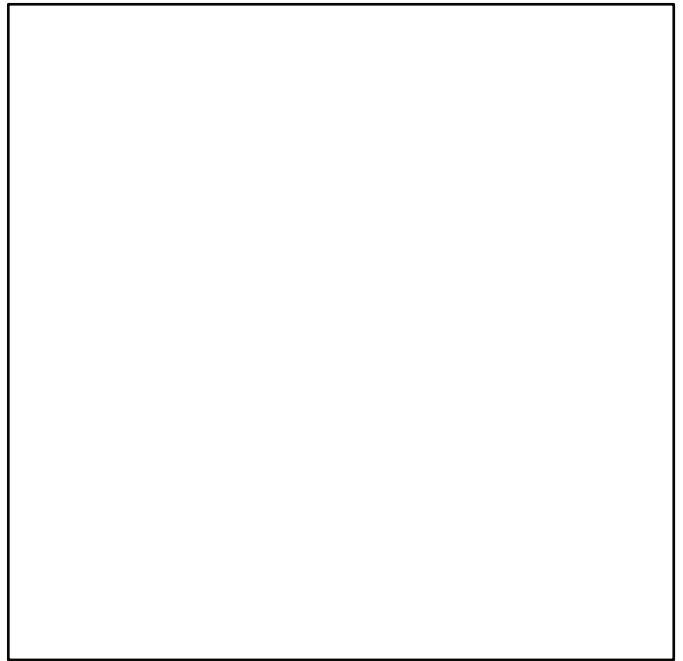
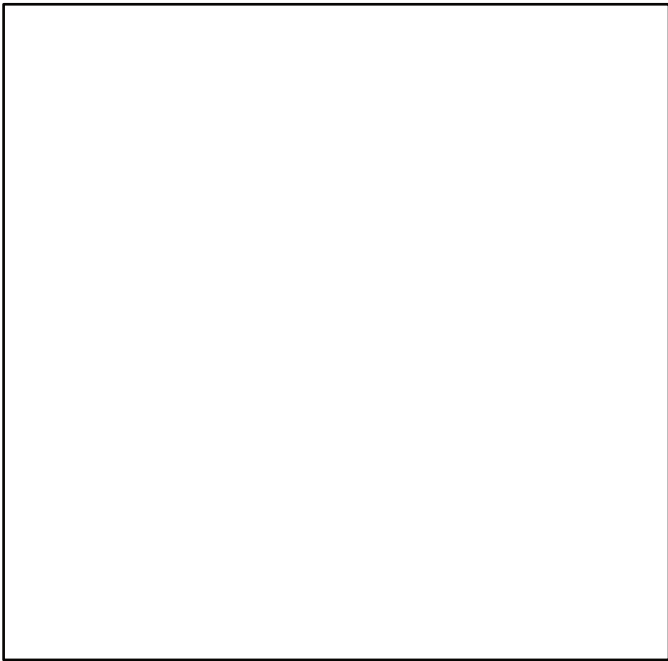
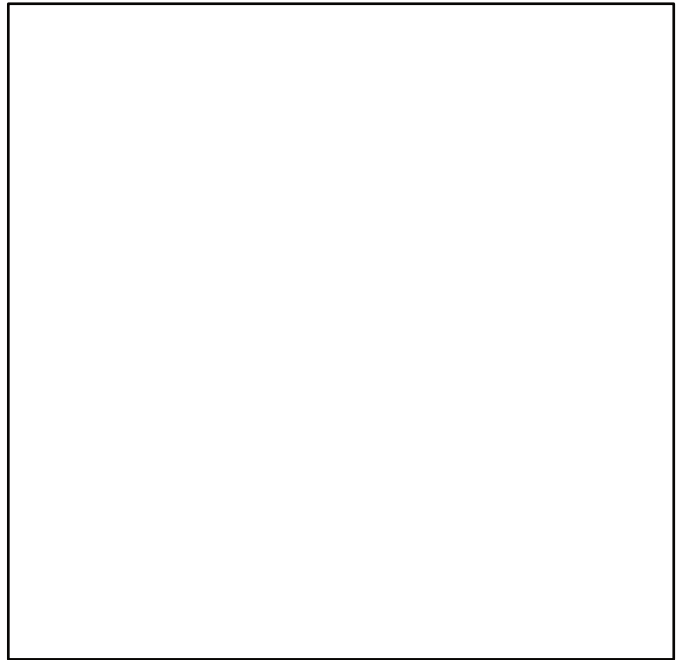
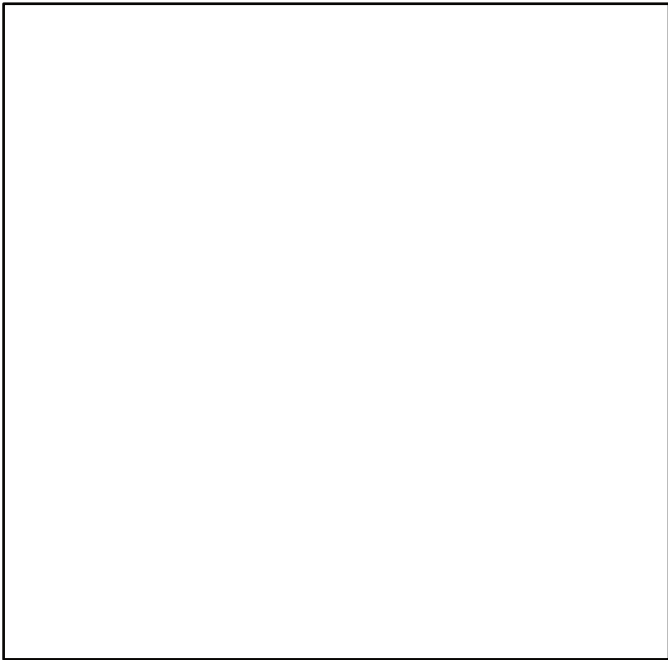
Story:

Captain Locceã stood in front of the three surviving bone rank squads. The warriors still looked haunted, but soon the purifier implants would scrub their brains of the terrors they had seen and plug the holes left by the opium priests' nightmares. She snapped her fingers and up scurried Crab, carrying the cases with the new medals.

Story:

Suna could not stop shivering. Living god was gone. Always there, the sun, now gone. Behind the ... horizon. Dead but forever dying in the not here free lost what? God was gone. She remembered the sockets of her pulled teeth when she joined the Highly Focussed Order of Rememberers. This was worse. This was like she was the sharp, venomous fang clattering in the celadon bowl. Her mind scattered like the blood sprayed around her dying tooth.





FACTIONS

Chosen Humans of the Living God,

C.H.O.L.G. • Ebéteen, the Opium Eaters, the Children of the Green Sun, the Guardians of the Gates.

Memory Translation Drones • Yo-

doyeen, Ghouls, the Eaters of Brains, the Undying Eunuchs.

Original Servitors of the Silver Machine, OG • Izvoreni, the Antiseptics, the Golem Worshipers.

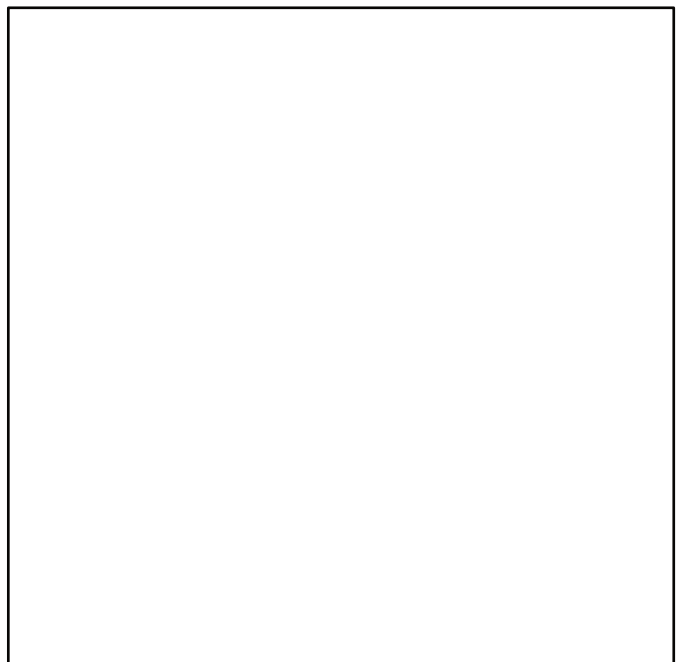
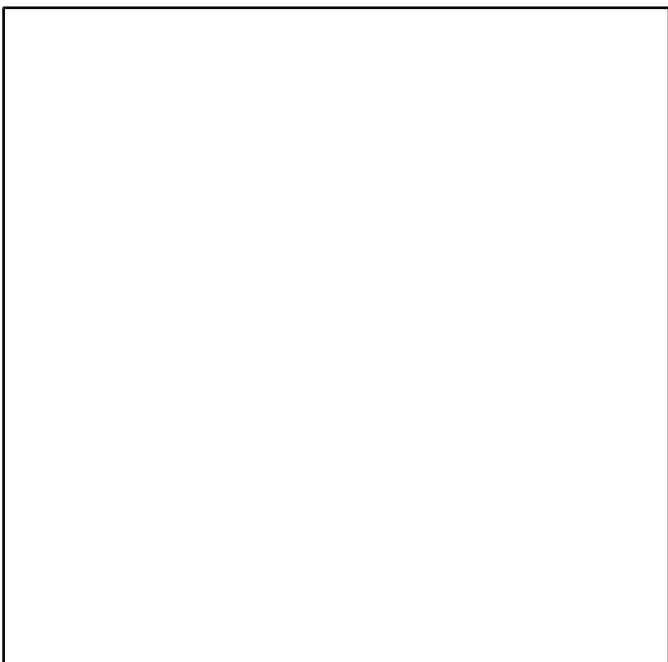
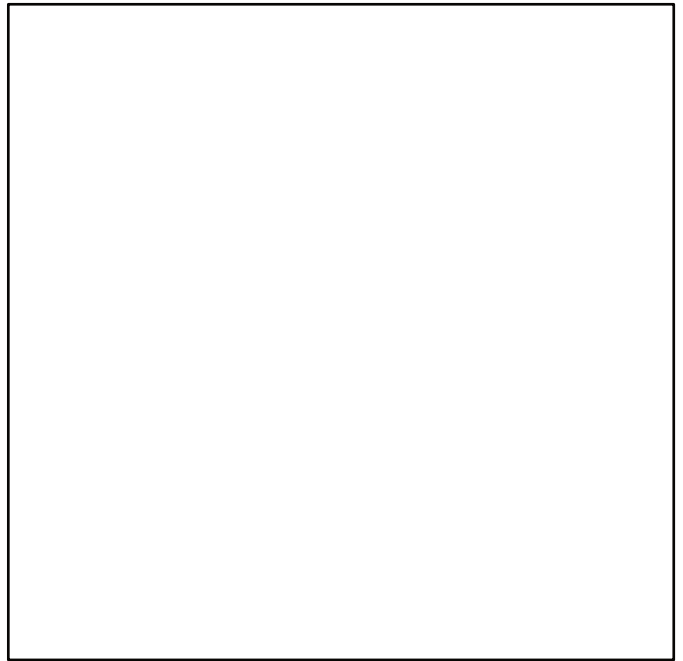
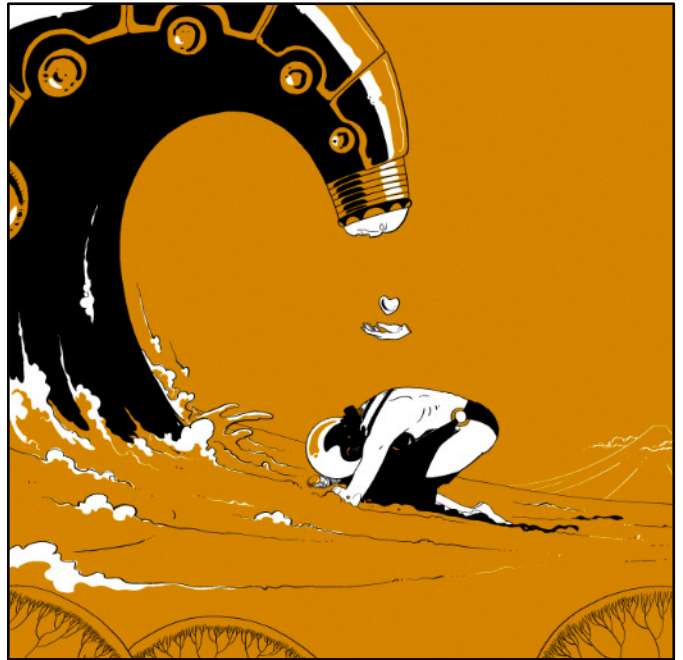
Oms Decapolitaine • Pan-humans of the Decapolis. Hybrid inter-relation of the Green- and Yellowlanders. Partly descended from local Vault-stock.

Nine Principles Republic, IX •

Iksans, the Citizens, the Rational Union.

The Second Humans, 2H • Golems, the Human Upgrade Project Surplus, the Made.

Seven-fold Epicentre of the Howl, R-CH=O • Kanalya, the Dogheads, the Jackals, Destruction's Heirs.



MUSIC

Carbon Based Lifeforms • “Nattväsen”, Derelicts (2017).

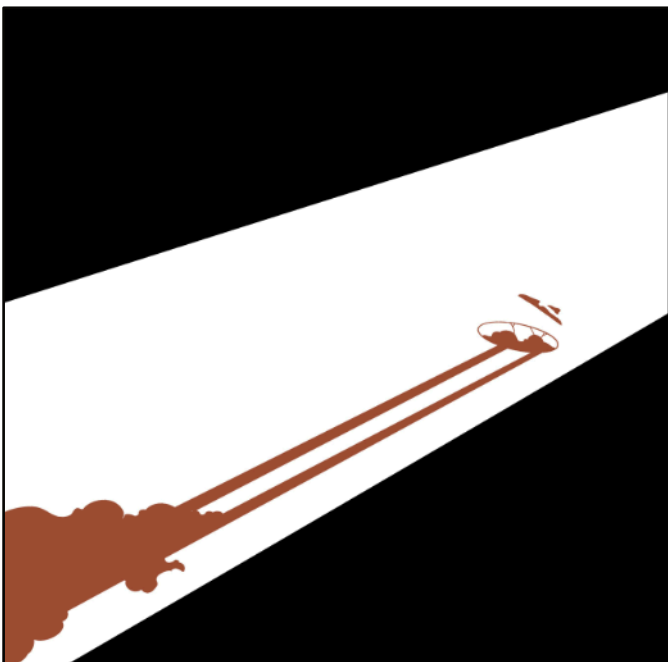
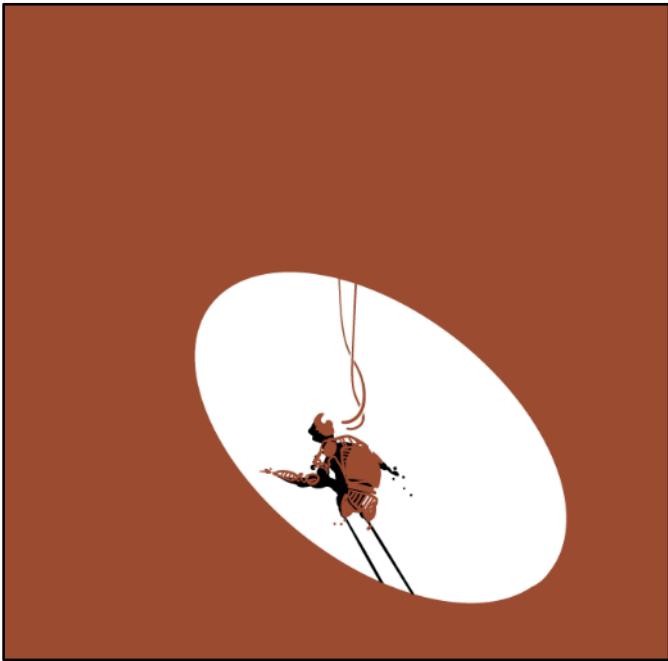
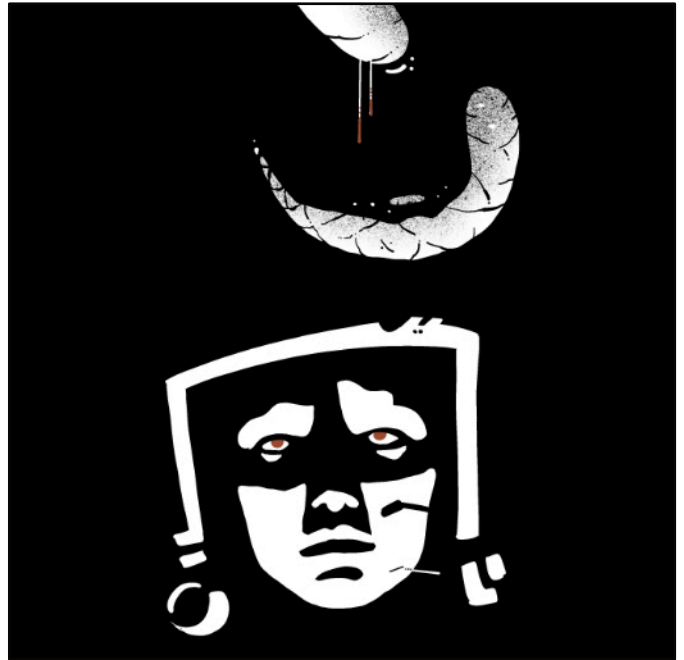
Earth Girl Helen Brown • “Feed Me”, Earth (2021).

Low • “More”, Hey What (2021).

Mega Bog • “Station to Station”, Life, and Another (2021).

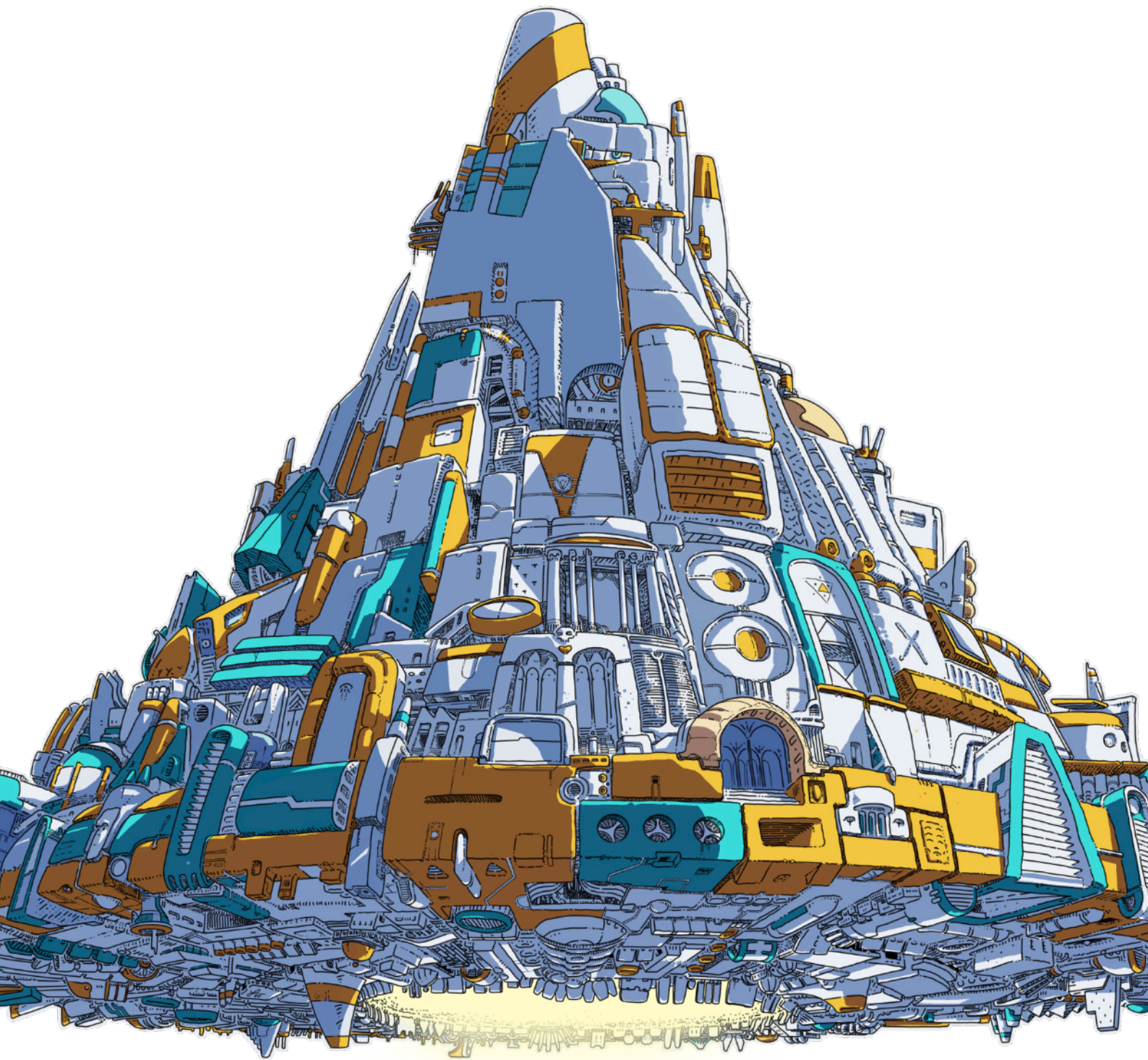
Psychedelic Source Records • “Generation of Waters”,
Sci-Fi Safari (2021).

Zu • “Goodnight, Civilization”, Goodnight, Civilization
(2014).



GLOSSARY

- Dangay-Upir** • Rainbow Witch. Soulsold deathless lich of the Decapolis. Have no souls (ka). Their personalities (ba) are stored and restored from worm-way-entangled phylacteries.
- Living God** • The Green Sun, the creator of the City of a Hundred Gates, the binder of the Eating Dark, the undying all-commanding omni-telepath at the heart of the Ebéteen sacred industrial complex. Now dead.
- Scion** • A seed or particle of the Living God (now Dead). The vessel of all the refugees' hopes. Potentially, the(ir) saviour.
- Two Suns** • The First Sun was made first, the star of the given world. The Second Sun was made later, Long Long Ago. It follows the First Sun and gives additional light to farmers and wanderers alike.
- Vault-stock** • Creatures born directly from original templates stored in the reality vaults before time was initiated by the V.I.L.E.



*“The light marks the
numinous stair;
the kind, the good,
the cruel, the bad,
all to the soul mill!
All to the soul mill!
Give them up,
reduce their turning,
break their wheel,
feed the light,
ASCEND
the numinous stair.
Only mortals wail
the flicker conscious
sacrifices that
divinity
must.”*

—Qua Vita,
pre-Lingish fragment.