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 — *brokenfrontier.com*

"He [Doctorow] has a knack for identifying those seminal trends of our current landscape that will in all likelihood determine the shape of our future(s)."  
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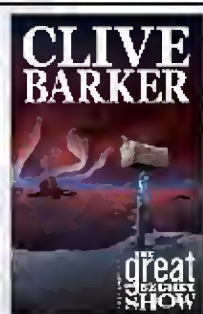
# CORY DOCTOROW'S FUTURISTIC TALES OF THE HERE AND NOW

Writer and BoingBoing.net co-editor Cory Doctorow has won acclaim for his science-fiction writing as well as his Creative Commons presentation of his material. Now, IDW Publishing is proud to present six standalone stories adapted from Doctorow's work, each featuring pin-ups by some of comics' top talents including Sam Kieth, Scott Morse, Paul Pope, Ben Templesmith, Ashley Wood, and more. Stories collected include: The Locus Award-winning "When Sysadmins Ruled the Earth;" "Anda's Game," a story selected for inclusion in the Michael Chabon edited *2005 Best American Short Stories*; "Craphound," a story selected for *Year's Best Science Fiction XVI*; "Nimby and the D-Hoppers," selected for *Year's Best Science Fiction IX*; The Hugo-nominated and Locus Award-winning "I Robot;" and "After the Siege."

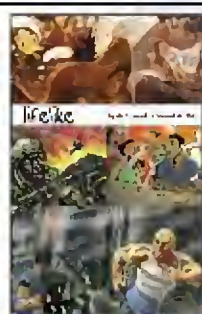
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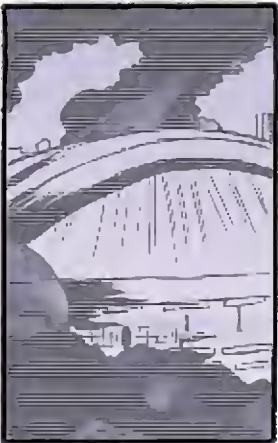
Cory Doctorow's  
 Futuristic Tales of the Here and Now

IDW





# CORY DOCTOROW'S FUTURISTIC TALES OF THE HERE AND NOW.



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Adapted by Dara Naraghi • Art by Esteve Polls Colored by Robert Studio • Lettered by Neil Uyetake • Edited by Ted Adams	
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Adapted by James Anthony Kuhoric • Art by Guiu Vilanova Colored by German Torres • Lettered by Neil Uyetake • Edited by Tom Waltz	
Collection edited by Justin Eisinger Collection designed by Neil Uyetake	



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# What Came First

By Cory Doctorow

I literally can't remember a time in my life when I wasn't a comics reader. There were comics and science fiction novels around the house from the time I could reach the shelves, and I started looking at the pictures even before I could read the words.

Nevertheless, I became a prose writer, not a comics writer. For starters, you could read a book and figure out *how* it was written: the writer sat down and hammered out a stream of words, they were typeset and the book was published. But how did you write a comic? Did the writer describe each panel? Just write the dialog? I remember talking it over with friends at summer camp and there was one kid who was dead *certain* that the *artist* drew all the pictures first and then the writer figured out what the story would be, writing the dialog that made it all make sense!

Then there was the matter of authorship. I knew who Stan Lee was, of course—that guy with The Voice who did the voice-overs on the *Hulk* cartoons. But who actually *wrote* these comics? I was pretty sure that Stan Lee—and whomever it was with the initials of "D.C."—weren't penning all the funny books on the spinner rack at the convenience store. *MAD Magazine* had by-lines: Al Jaffee, Dave Berg. But it seemed like the comics' authors' names were tiny, downplayed—unimportant. If I was going to grow up to be a writer, I wanted to be an *important* writer—not just a farmhand on Uncle Stan's Ranch.

So now I'm a writer (importance: debatable). The books I write have my name in big letters on the spine and cover. For better or for worse, they're the products of my imagination and what happens in them is pretty much down to what I imagine.

Not long ago, the folks at IDW sent me an email and asked me if I'd be game for licensing some of my stories to be adapted for comics. I was a little skeptical: I don't know anything about writing comics (though I was pretty sure by this point that the words come before the pictures)—and what's more, I do this whacky thing with my books and stories where I make them available as free, re-mixable downloads on the day they're published, and I just didn't have the energy to argue about this with some comics people.

My agent got in touch with IDW, talked to them for a while and came back to me: "No problem," he said. "They'll get kick-ass writers and illustrators to do the adaptations, and they'll let us do the whole series under a Creative Commons license once it's collected into a single volume." Awesome. "Plus, I got you approval over the scripts and art as part of the deal." Huh? What do I know about art and scripts for comics? Well, it can't hurt.

####

What followed was an education in the whole production cycle for comics, from treatment to script to rough art to final art to lettering and inking to covers. And I got to be a part of it. I mostly sat back and tried not to screw things up—though as the author of the underlying stories, I was sometimes (infrequently) moved to intervene and redirect the abridgment process.

Mostly, I just sat back in awe as a crew of incredibly talented writers and artists paid me the immense compliment of focusing their creative energy on the work that I'd done. I got to watch as these people interpreted my ideas, got to more-or-less peer into the heads of readers and discover, in detail, what happened between the words I wrote and the words they read. It's a spookily cool process. I heartily recommend it to you—in fact, I'm trying to figure out a compact, quick way of doing this with my writing students in the future. It taught me a lot about writing.

And now here we are, with this extraordinary volume in hand (or on your screen—hi there, downloaders!). I can call it extraordinary without too much ego because this is, in a very meaningful sense, *not my book*: it's a book that was written, drawn and lettered by Dara Naraghi, Esteve Polls, Sam Keith, Robert Studio, J.C. Vaughn, Daniel Warner, Scott Morse, Paul McCaffrey, Paul Pope, Dan Taylor, Dustin Evans, Ben Templesmith, Erich Owens, Ashley Wood, James Anthony Kuhoric, Guiu Vilanova, German Torres, Danny Parsons, Robbie Robbins, Neil Uyetake, Chris Mowry, and Amauri Osorio. It's got my name on the cover—I guess I'm the schmucky Stan Lee figure on this spin of the karma wheel—but they did it.

And now I want to write comics. I've seen how it's done. I think I can do it. I guess we'll all find out, soon enough.

Cory Doctorow  
March 2008

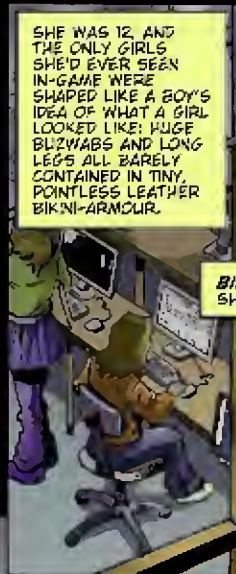




# Anda's Game



ANDRA DIDN'T REALLY START TO PLAY THE GAME UNTIL SHE GOT HERSELF A GIRL-SHAPED AVATAR.



SHE WAS 12, AND THE ONLY GIRLS SHE'D EVER SEEN IN-GAME WERE SHAPED LIKE A BOY'S IDEA OF WHAT A GIRL LOOKED LIKE: HUGE BLZWABS AND LONG LEGS ALL BARELY CONTAINED IN TINY, POINTLESS LEATHER BIKINI-ARMOUR.

**BINTWARE** SHE CALLED IT.



HULLO, CHICKENS.

THAT ALL CHANGED THE DAY HER SCHOOL WAS CALLED TO ASSEMBLY.



I AM LIZA THE ORGANIZA, AND I KICK ARSE SERIOUSLY.

I AM THE BEST GAMER IN THE WORLD, AND I'M EL PRESIDENTE OF THE ENTIRE CLAN FAHRENHEIT. MY BATTLE RECORD IS 3,522 KILLS IN A SINGLE BATTLE. I HAVE TAKEN HOME CASH PRIZES TOTALING MORE THAN 400,000 ROUNDS.

AND I'M HERE TO LET YOU IN ON A SECRET: GIRLS KICK ARSE, WE'RE FASTER, SMARTER, AND BETTER THAN BOYS. WE PLAY HARDER.



GAMESPACE SMELLS LIKE A BOY'S ARMPIT.

WE'RE GOING TO CHANGE THAT, CHICKENS, YOU LOT AND ME. SO HERE'S MY OFFER TO YOU...



...IF YOU WILL PLAY AS A GIRL, YOU WILL BE GIVEN PROBATIONARY MEMBERSHIPS IN THE CLAN FAHRENHEIT.

AND IF YOU MEASURE UP, YOU'LL BECOME FULL-FLEDGED MEMBERS. SO WHO'S IN, CHICKENS?



THE FAHRENHEIT'S HAD CHAPTERS IN EVERY GAME. THEY WERE AMAZING AND DEADLY AND COOL, AND ANDRA WAS GOING TO BE ONE OF THEM.



LUCY LIVED SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE OF AMERICA, WHERE IT WAS ALL VOWELS— IOWA OR OHIO OR SOMETHING.

EVERY EVENING AFTER SCHOOL, WHILE HER PARENTS WATCHED SOMETHING LOUD ON THE TELLY, ANDA WOULD GO ON MISSIONS WITH LUCY, HER BEST FRIEND IN-GAME.



ANDA, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO MAKE SOME MONEY?

YOU MEAN GOLD, LUCY?



CALL ME SARGE!

AND NO, NOT GOLD. I HAVE A MISSION THAT PAYS REAL CASH.

SOUNDS A BIT WEIRD, SARGE. IS THAT AGAINST CLAN RULES?



CLAN LEADERSHIP ENFORCED A CODE OF CONDUCT THAT WAS MEANT TO ENSURE THAT NONE OF THE FAHRENHEIT GIRLIES ENDED UP BEING VIRTUAL PROZZIES.



NO... GEEZ. ALL THE EXECUTIVES IN THE CLAN PAY THE RENT DOING MISSIONS FOR MONEY.

BESIDES, MY CONTACT SAID THEY JUST WANT US TO GO KILL SOME GUYS.

OH, WE'RE GOOD AT THAT!



>please sorry u cn have my gold sorry!!!!!!

YOU'RE A NASTY PERSON, ANDA.

>I'm a Fahrenheit!!!!!!



THE MISSION TOOK THEM TO A COTTAGE ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE GAMESWORLD.



GOOD THING YOU HAD A SCRYING SCROLL LEFT. LOOKS LIKE THE PLACE IS PRETTY WELL-DEFENDED.

YEAH, I COUNT SEVEN GUARDS.

NOT A PROBLEM. MY STANDARD DODGE-AND-WEAVE PATTERN WORKS GREAT FOR RUSHING NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS.



RIGHT. I'LL COVER YOU.



THIS'LL BE OVER BEFORE—

WHAT THE—?



SARGE, I THINK THEY'RE ACTUALLY PLAYERS!



BUT WHO WANTS TO SIT AROUND IN GAMESPACE WATCHING A BORING ROAD ALL DAY?

WHO CARES?



GET DOWN, I'M GONNA USE THE BFG!

EVERY GAME HAD ONE: THE **BIG FRIENDLY GUN**, THE GENERIC TERM FOR THE BADDEST-ARSE WEAPON IN THE WORLD. LUCY HAD RENTED THIS ONE FROM THE CLAN ARMORY FOR A SMALL FORTUNE IN GOLD.



HOLY—!









WHAT THE--?

GOOD, KILL THEM ALL.

REALLY?

SARGE, IT'S JUST A BUNCH OF NOOBS CRAFTING SHIRTS!



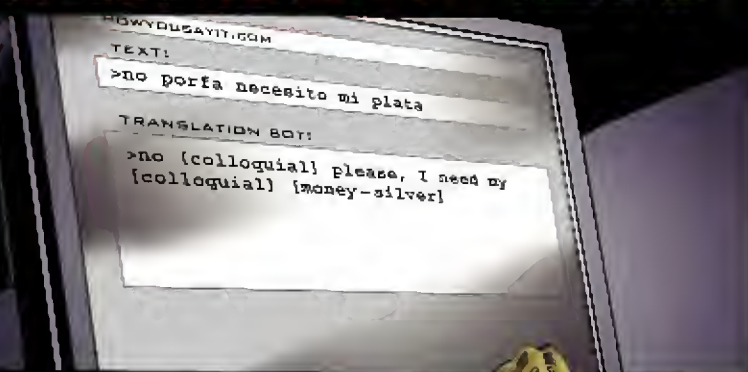
YEAH, THAT'S THE ORDERS.



>no porfa necesito mi plata



HUH... ITALIAN? NO, SPANISH...



CRAFTING SHIRTS FOR A FEW COPPER PIECES. PATHETIC. WHY NOT PLAY A MISSION FOR GOLD?

SARGE, THEY'RE ALL DEAD.



GOOD JOB. GET MY STUFF AND MEET ME AT MARIONETTES TAVERN, OK?

OK.

LUCY'S VOICE IN HER EAR WAS A CONSTANT COMPANION IN HER LIFE NOW, AS THEY RAN MISSIONS INTO THE WEE HOURS OF THE NIGHT.

BUT, SARGE, I JUST CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY ANYONE WOULD PAY US CASH FOR THESE MISSIONS.

DUNNO, EITHER. HELL, IT'S PROBABLY TWO RICH GAMERS. ONE'S FUCKING WITH THE OTHER ONE AND PAYING US.

YOU REALLY THINK THAT?

\*SIGH\* LOOK AT IT THIS WAY—MOST OF THE WORLD IS LIVING ON, LIKE, A DOLLAR A DAY. MY DAD SENDS MOM THREE THOUSAND A MONTH IN CHILD-SUPPORT, AND WE'RE NOT EVEN RICH! BUT TO AN AFRICAN OR WHATEVER, I AM.

"ANDA, IT'S NOT HEALTHY FOR YOU TO SPEND SO MUCH TIME WITH YOUR GAME," HER DA WOULD SAY.

SO THERE'S PROBABLY SOME SAUDI OR JAPANESE GUY OR RUSSIAN MAFIA KID OUT THERE WHO'S SO RICH THAT THIS IS JUST CHUMP CHANGE FOR HIM, AND HE'S PAYING US TO MESS AROUND WITH SOME OTHER RICH PERSON.

"DAAAA!" SHE'D PROTEST. "GO TO P.E. EVERY STINKING DAY."

TO THEM, WE'RE LIKE THE AFRICANS MAKING A DOLLAR A DAY TO CRAFT... I MEAN, SEW T-SHIRTS.

"OK, ANDA, BUT DO TRY TO GET A LITTLE MORE EXERCISE, PLEASE?"

GUESS THAT MAKES SENSE.

NICE ONE, ANDA.

THANKS, SARGE.

NOW LET'S GO FIND THAT NEW COTTAGE.



OK, I JUST CALLED IN THREE SQUADS OF FAHRENHEIT VETERANS AND THEIR NOOB APPRENTICES FOR BACKUP.



BLOODY HELL.

THIS IS NUTS! I'M CALLING THEM. THIS IS NUTS.



THEY'LL BE HERE IN AN HOUR.



SARGE, THIS ISN'T A MISSION ANYMORE...



"...IT'S WAR!"

"YEAH! AND I'VE NEGOTIATED A BONUS FOR US IF WE MAKE IT— A MILLION GOLD AND THREE MISSIONS' WORTH OF CASH!"



GAMEWAR. HUNDREDS OF FAHRENHEITS CONVERGING ON THIS SHARD, SQUARING OFF AGAINST THE RANKED MERCENARIES GUARDING THE COTTAGE.



THE VOICE CHAT WAS LIKE A WIND-TUNNEL FROM ALL THE UNLIMITED, BREATHING VOICES.



HUNDREDS OF GIRLS IN HUNDREDS OF BEDROOMS LIKE ANDA'S, ALL OVER THE WORLD.



THE FAHRENHEITS' GREATER NUMBERS AND DISCIPLINE WERE OVERWHELMING.



EVERY MERC WAS EVENTUALLY RUN OFF.



OR BUTCHERED.

OK, I PAID OFF ALL THE SQUADS. THEY'RE HEADING BACK TO BASE.

MAN, THAT WAS BUSFUCK NUTSO! BUT WE MADE IT!



NOW WE TAKE THE COTTAGE.

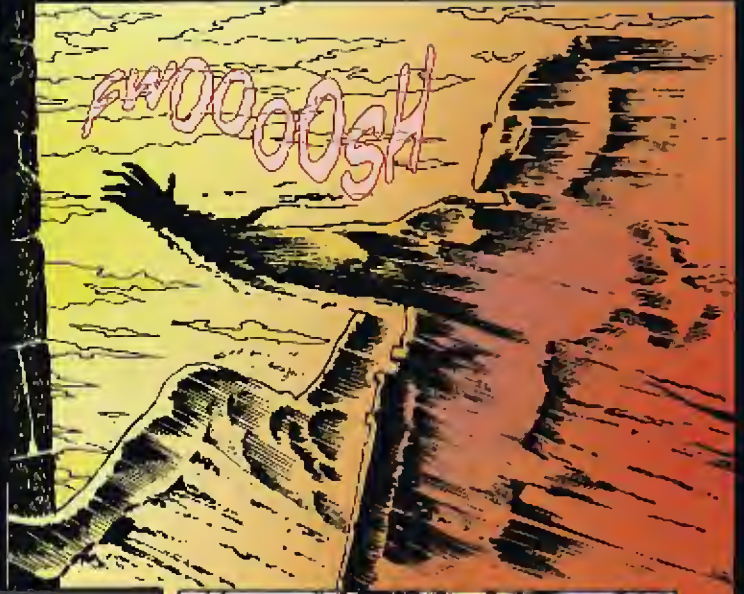
RIGHT. BUT LET ME FIRST SCRY THE—



I'LL BE GLAD WHEN WE'RE DONE WITH THIS.

HEY!







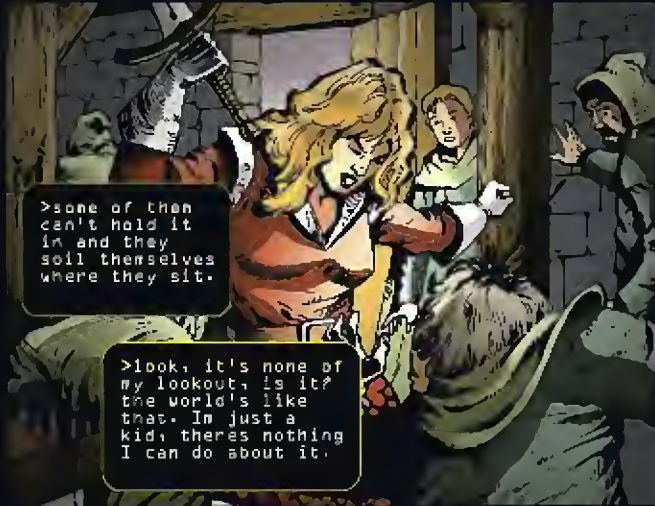


>talk, then

>my name is raymond, and I live in tijuana. I am a labor organizer in the factories here.

>do you know who these people are that you're killing?  
>no  
>they're working for less than a dollar a day. the shirts they make are traded for gold and the gold is sold on ebay. they're mostly young girls supporting their families. they're the lucky ones; the unlucky ones work as prostitutes.

>the bosses used to use bots, but the game has countermeasures against them. hiring children to click the mouse is cheaper than hiring programmers to circumvent the rules.  
>I've been trying to unionize them because they've got a very high rate of injury. they have to play for 18-hour shifts with only one short toilet break.



>some of them can't hold it in and they soil themselves where they sit.

>look, it's none of my lookout, is it? the world's like that. In just a kid, theres nothing I can do about it.

>when you kill them, they don't get paid. they lose their day's wages.



>do you know who is paying you to do these killings?

>not a clue  
>I've been trying to find that out myself.  
>...  
>ah. I see. I am the only one remaining.  
>go ahead, I will see you again, I'm sure.



LUCY?

YEAH, HANG ON. I'M ALMOST BACK THERE. I *RESPAWNED* IN THE ASS END OF NOWHERE.

LUCY, DO YOU KNOW WHO'S IN THE COTTAGE? THOSE NOOBS THAT WE KILL?



WHAT? HELL, NO. NOOBS. SOMEONE'S BUTLER. I JUNNO.

GIRLS. LITTLE GIRLS IN MEXICO. GETTING PAID A DOLLAR A DAY TO CRAFT SHIRTS.

EXCEPT THEY DON'T GET ANYTHING WHEN WE KILL THEM.

OH, FOR *CHRIS*SAKES, IS THAT WHAT ONE OF THEM TOLD YOU? AND YOU BELIEVED IT?



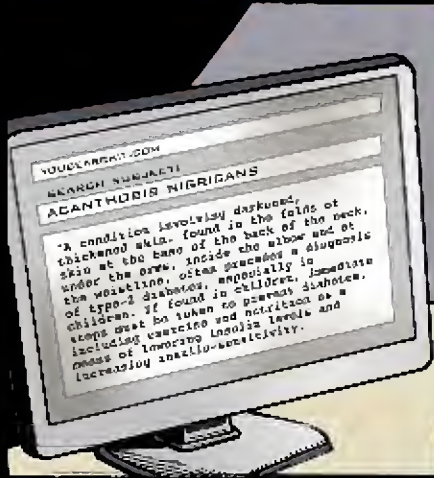
YOU DON'T THINK IT'S TRUE?

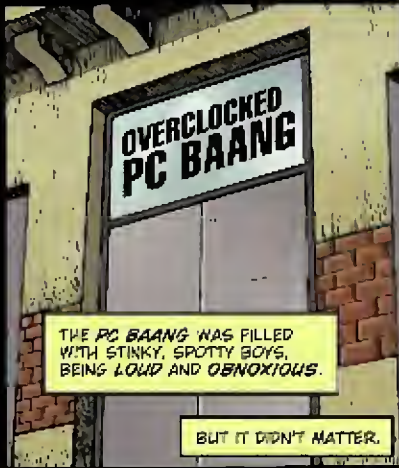
NAW, I DON'T. NOW KEEP YOUR PANTIES ON, I'M ALMOST—

I'VE GOT TO GO, LUCY.

WHAT, NOW? SHIT, JUST HANG—

OFF





THE PC BAANG WAS FILLED WITH STINKY, SPOTTY BOYS, BEING LOUD AND OBNOXIOUS.

BUT IT DIDN'T MATTER.



ANDA WAS BACK IN THE GAME.

SORRY, SARGE. MY DA TOOK... ER, MY PC'S BEEN BROKEN.

JESUS, ANDA, WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU BEEN?



WELL, I'VE GOT A BACKLOG OF MISSIONS, SO LET'S GO.

LISTEN... I MET A GUY AFTER THE LAST CAMPAIGN. HE SAID HE WAS A UNION ORGANIZER.

OH, YOU MET RAYMOND, HUH? HE'S BEEN TURNING UP EVERYWHERE. WHAT A CREEP.



SO YOU KNEW ABOUT THE NOOBS IN THE COTTAGES?

AND YOU'RE FINE WITH DEPRIVING LITTLE KIDS OF THEIR WAGES?

ANDA, LISTEN, YOU LOVE GAMING, RIGHT? IT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU?



YEAH, COURSE IT IS.

RIGHT, AND WE'RE *BAD-ASS*, YOU AND ME, AND WE GOT THAT WAY THROUGH *DISCIPLINE* AND *HARD WORK*, RIGHT?

YES, RIGHT, BUT—

THAT'S WHAT MAKES US ALL *FAHRENHEITS*—WE'RE COMMITTED TO EACH OTHER, TO *TEAMWORK*, AND TO *FAIR PLAY*.

BUT THESE PEOPLE IN MEXICO OR WHEREVER, THEY'RE EARNING THEIR LIVING BY *EXPLOITING* THE GAME.





>that's who you're about to deprive of a day's wages.



OH, HELL NO! I KILLED HIM - LAST TIME AND I SAID I'D DO IT AGAIN IF HE EVER TRIED TO SHOW ME PHOTOS.

LUCY, DON'T. HE DESERVES TO HAVE A SAY.



>what do you want from me, raymond?

>don't kill them. let them have their wages. go play somewhere else

>they're leeches. they don't care about the game and neither do you



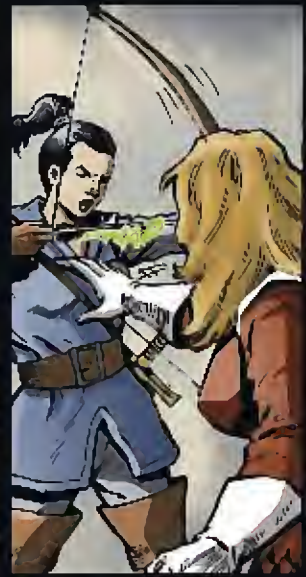
>if they don't play the game, they don't eat. I think that means that they care about the game as much as you do.

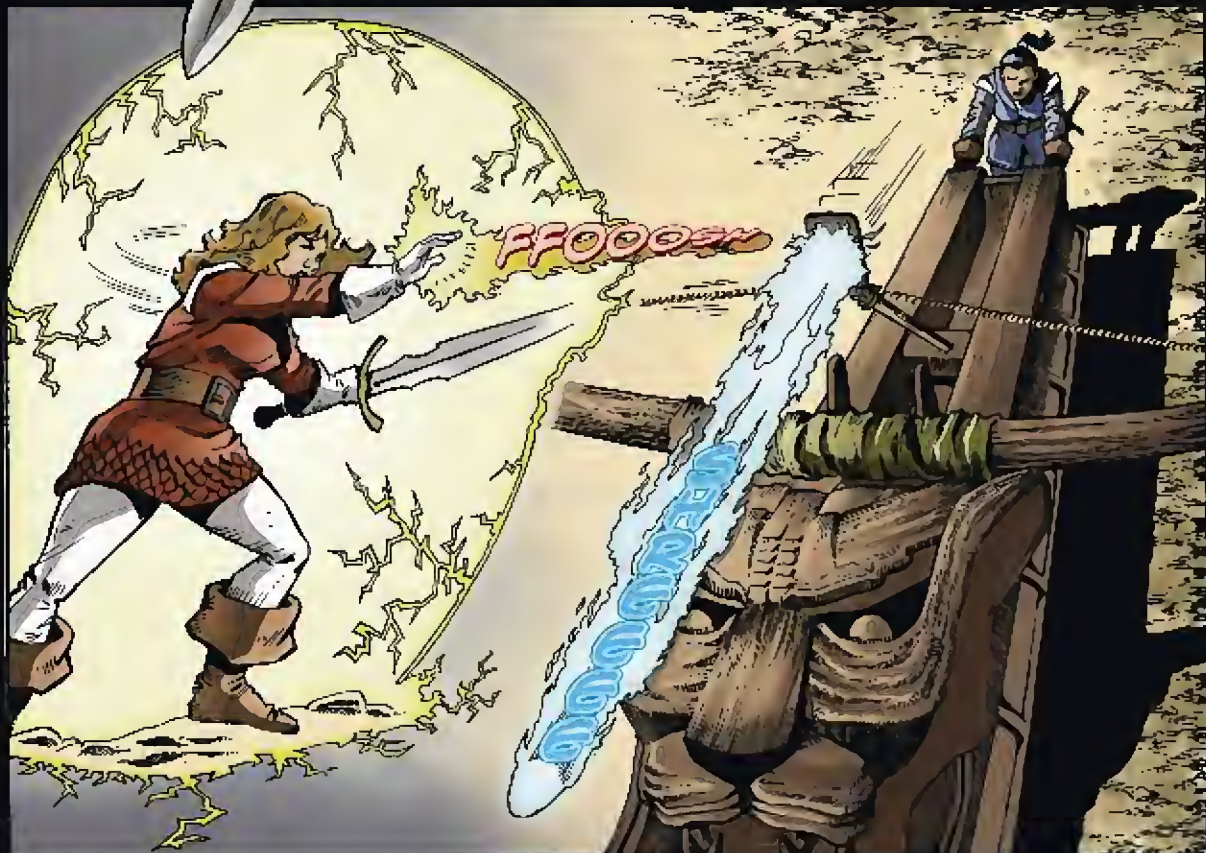
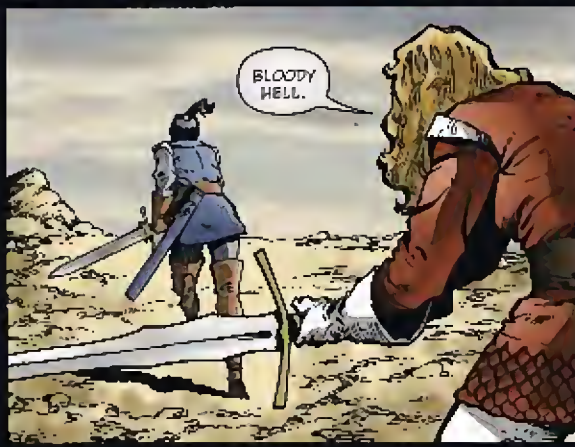
>you're being paid cash to kill them, yes? so you need to play for your money, too. I think that makes you and them a little the same



LUCY, DON'T!

>go screw yourself



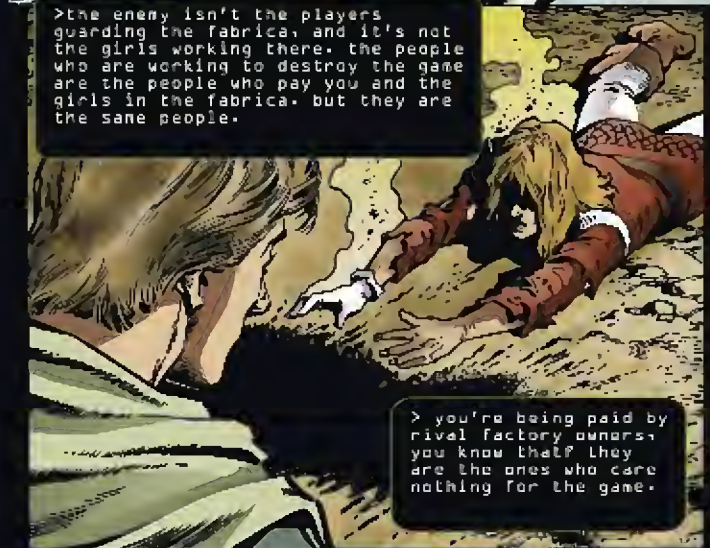




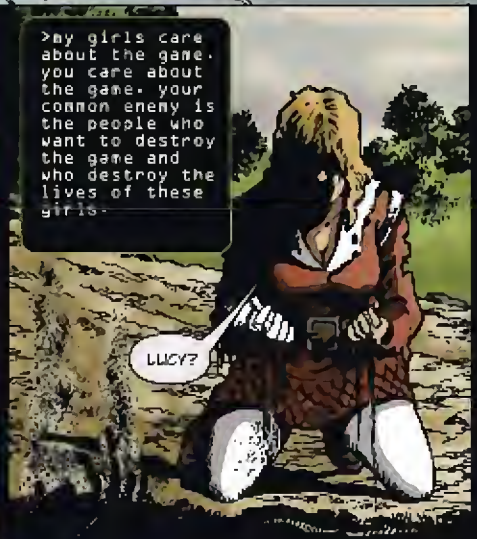
>I'm very sorry you and your friend quarreled.



>the enemy isn't the players guarding the fabrica, and it's not the girls working there. the people who are working to destroy the game are the people who pay you and the girls in the fabrica. but they are the same people.



>my girls care about the game. you care about the game. your common enemy is the people who want to destroy the game and who destroy the lives of these girls.



LUCY?

> you're being paid by rival factory owners, you know that? they are the ones who care nothing for the game.

THERE WERE LOTS OF RULES FOR FAHRENHEITS, AND THE PENALTIES FOR BREAKING THEM VARIED.



BUT ANDA KNEW THE PENALTY FOR ATTACKING A FELLOW FAHRENHEIT: **EXPULSION.**







AND, DEAR, THERE'S A PHONE CALL FOR YOU.

SOMEONE FROM YOUR GAME, I THINK.



HULLO?

HULLO, CHICKEN.

LIZA?

YES. CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED TODAY?



SHE DID, STUMBLING OVER THE DETAILS, BACK-TRACKING AND STUTTERING.

-AND I... I DON'T THINK IT'S RIGHT TO KILL THEM, THOSE GIRLS. ALL RIGHT?

WELL, I HAPPEN TO AGREE. THOSE GIRLS NEED OUR HELP MORE THAN ANY OF THE GIRLS ANYWHERE IN THE GAME.

THE FAHRENHEIT'S STRENGTH IS THAT WE CARE. IT'S ANOTHER WAY THAT WE'RE BETTER THAN THE BOYS.



I'M PROUD THAT YOU TOOK A STAND WHEN YOU DID.

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO EXPEL ME?

NO, CHICKEN. I THINK YOU DID THE RIGHT THING?

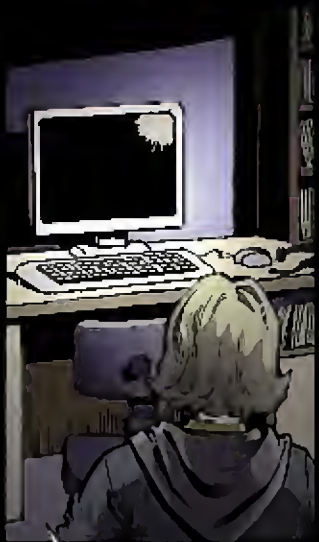


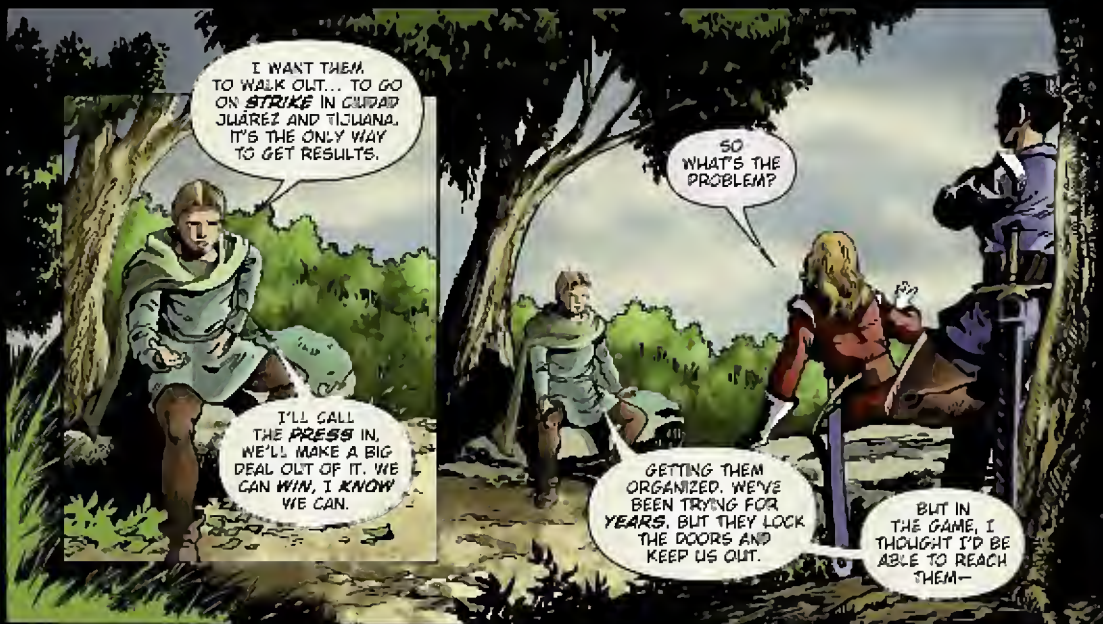
IF YOU EXPEL LUCY, I'LL QUIT...

OH, CHICKEN YOU'RE A BRAVE THING, AREN'T YOU?

NO ONE'S BEING EXPELLED, FEAR NOT. BUT I WANTA TALK TO THIS RAYMOND OF YOURS.







I WANT THEM TO WALK OUT... TO GO ON **STRIKE** IN CIUDAD JUÁREZ AND Tijuana. IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO GET RESULTS.

I'LL CALL THE **PRESS** IN, WE'LL MAKE A BIG DEAL OUT OF IT. WE CAN WIN, I KNOW WE CAN.

SO WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

GETTING THEM ORGANIZED. WE'VE BEEN TRYING FOR YEARS. BUT THEY LOCK THE DOORS AND KEEP US OUT.

BUT IN THE GAME, I THOUGHT I'D BE ABLE TO REACH THEM—



BUT THE **BOSSSES** KEEP YOU AWAY??

I KEEP GETTING KILLED. I'VE BEEN PRACTICING MY **SWORDFIGHTING**, BUT IT'S SO HARD...

THE **BOSSSES** HIRED SOME PRETTY MEAN **MERCS**, ANDA KNEW. SHE'D BEEN ONE.



THIS WILL BE FUN! LET'S GO.

WHERE??

TO AN IN-GAME **FACTORY**. WE'RE **RAYMOND'S** NEW **BODYGUARDS!**



OH!



HEY, LUCY—



—LET'S GO GET US A COUPLE **BFGs**, OKAY??

THE END.



## DOCTOROW ON: "ANDA'S GAME"

**Editor Tom Waltz:** Cory, let's start with the obvious question—what sparked the idea for "Anda's Game"?

**Cory Doctorow:** Two things; one was my idea of writing a bunch of stories that riffed on the titles of famous SF—*I, Robot*, *Anda's Game* (*Ender's Game*), *I, Row-Boat* and soon, *True Names*—after hearing Ray Bradbury disparage this practice, calling it rude and immoral. Bradbury was pissed off at Michael Moore for calling his movie *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Bradbury supports Bush's plan to go to Mars—but I thought that this was just goofy. Titles are—and have always been—fair game. What's more, *Fahrenheit 451*, Bradbury's classic novel, is all about free expression (Bradbury denies this—he says it's about television, which is why you should never ask writers what their work is about). (Should we end the interview now?)

The other thing was the early reports of gold farming in games, something that really sparked my imagination.

**TW:** I consider myself a semi-avid video gamer, and when I first read "Anda's Game," I thought it was a bizarre vision of a possible future, only to read an article recently about how China is taking over in the gaming "sweat shop" market from other developing nations like Mexico. For me, personally, it's a sad and pathetic reality that videogames have become so important to some people that they are willing to go to great lengths to cheat at the games, even so far as purchasing in-game characters that were earned through what truly amounts to industrial slavery. Do you feel that gaming has become too important, and, if so, is the technology to blame... or the gamers themselves?

**CD:** No, gaming hasn't become too important! MMORPGS and other MMOs are social constructs, agoras where we meet, socialize, make friends, cooperate, and play together. It's where we undertake the business of civilization. It's a goddamned shame that (so far) all of these civilizations-in-bottles are owned by giant media companies (worse still, that Universal/Blizzard, a really abusive bully, owns *World of Warcraft*, the most

popular), but asking if play has become too important is as silly as asking if art has become too important, or thought, or scholarship.

**TW:** When I sent you the artwork for "Anda's Game," penciled by the fantastic Esteve Polls, your reaction to seeing it for the first time was... and I quote... "Holy crap, this is EERILY COOL!" I was hoping you could expand on that and describe the different feelings you are having as you see your short prose stories coming to life in illustrated sequential form.

**CD:** Well, I'd never really had my work adapted before. When a talented artist like Polls turns my work into something that isn't what I saw in my mind's eye, but IS a plausible thing for a reader to see, it's like being able to stick a reader in an MRI while she reads one of my stories and see what it's doing to her head.

**TW:** Taking the last question a step further, we have various comic book writers adapting your short stories in script form for this project—specifically for "Anda's Game," writer Dara Naraghi. What things do you look for in a script based on your work before you approve it for publication?

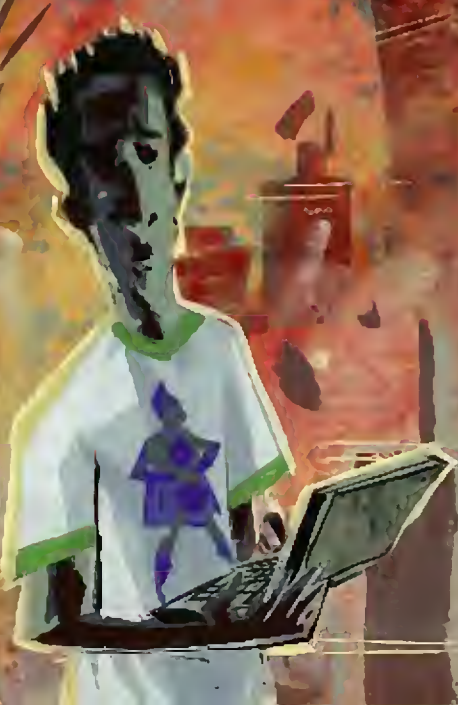
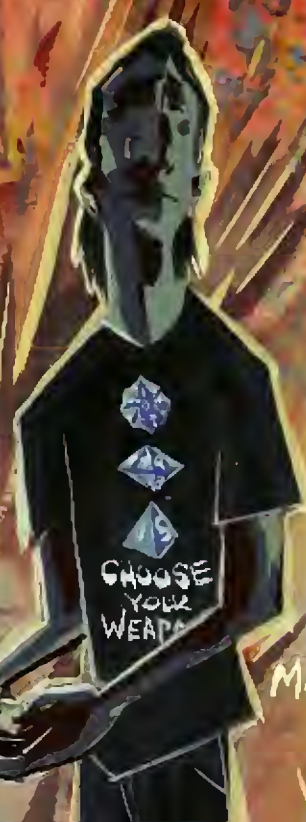
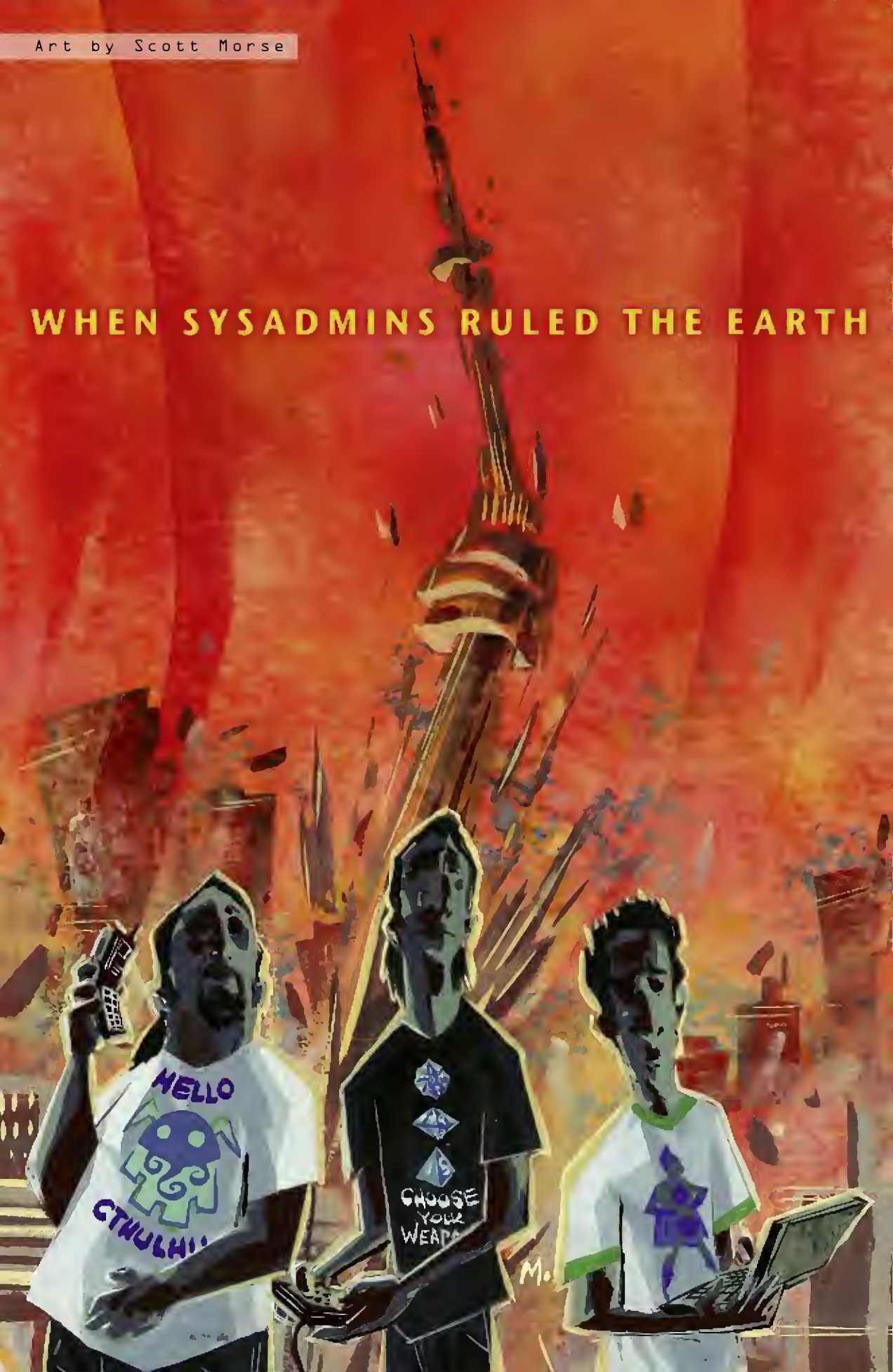
**CD:** Well, it has to suit the work—it doesn't have to be accurate (in the sense of portraying all the events that took place in the work), but it DOES have to be faithful to the artistic intent and mood that inspired the work.

**TW:** Have you ever considered scripting your own comic book series or graphic novel?

**CD:** Every now and again. I have a million projects on my plate right now—BoingBoing and umpty boinglets, little blog projects that we're playing with; a movie I'm co-producing; a TV show I'm consulting on; two nonfiction books; a zillion short story ideas; my podcast; travel; speaking (and I'm moving home to London from LA in two weeks!).

Art by Scott Morse

# WHEN SYSADMINS RULED THE EARTH



M.

THE SUBURBS OF TORONTO,  
ONTARIO, CANADA, 1:33 AM.





HELLO?

"MAIN ROUTERS NOT RESPONDING. BGP NOT RESPONDING." THE MECHANICAL VOICE OF THE SYSTEMS MONITOR SAID. HE CURSED A LITTLE CURSE AT IT AND FELT A LITTLE BETTER.



WHY DIDN'T YOU TURN THAT THING OFF BEFORE WE WENT TO BED, FELIX?

YOU'RE NOT A DOCTOR. YOU'RE A SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR... AND YOU'RE A FATHER NOW!



IT'S MY JOB, KELLY.

MAYBE I CAN LOG IN AND FIX IT FROM HERE.



IN FIVE YEARS OF MARRIAGE, YOU HAVE NEVER ONCE BEEN ABLE TO FIX ANYTHING FROM HERE.



SHE WAS WRONG ABOUT THAT, OF COURSE. HE HAD FIXED PLENTY OF MINOR THINGS FROM HOME, ONLY HE DIDN'T MAKE A BIG DEAL ABOUT IT, SO SHE DIDN'T REMEMBER.



THE MECHANICAL VOICE CALLED HIM TWICE MORE ON THE WAY THERE. THEN KELLY CALLED.

DON'T CRINGE. I CAN HEAR THE CRINGE IN YOUR VOICE.

NO CRINGING. CHECK.

I'M TOTALLY BONKERS FOR YOU, KELLY. GO BACK TO BED.

THE BABY'S AWAKE. LISTEN, YOU'VE BEEN THERE SEVEN YEARS—

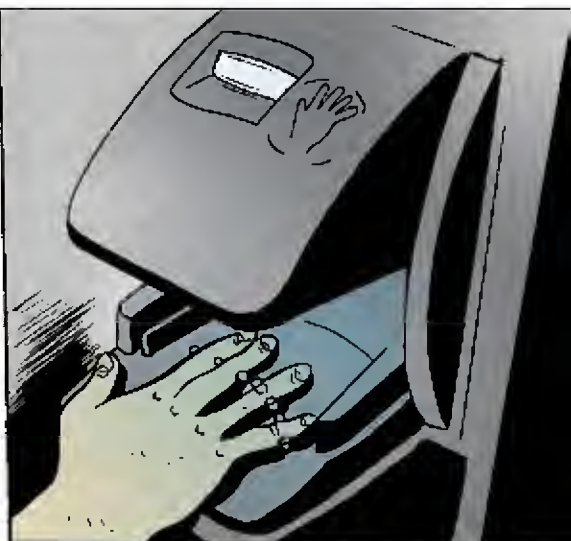
—YOU HAVE TO GIVE THAT PHONE TO ONE OF THOSE GUYS WHO WORKS FOR YOU. YOU'VE PAID YOUR DUES.

I KNOW, SYSADMIN'S DON'T TAKE HOLIDAYS.

THIS ONE WILL PROMISE.



ARBENT SERVER ROOM, DOWNTOWN TORONTO, 2:00 AM.





MASSIVE FLASHWORM ATTACK. SOME JACKAGGS HAS EVERY WINDOW'S BOX ON THE NET RUNNING MONTE CARLO PROBES ON EVERY IP BLOCK, INCLUDING IPV6.

WHICH MEANS BASICALLY EVERY INTERCHANGE HAS GONE DOWN.

ON TOP OF THAT, THERE'S AN EMAIL AND IM COMPONENT THAT SENDS PRETTY LIFELIKE MESSAGES TO EVERYONE IN YOUR ADDRESS BOOK.

IS THAT ALL?

CUZ IM THE GM BITCHES!

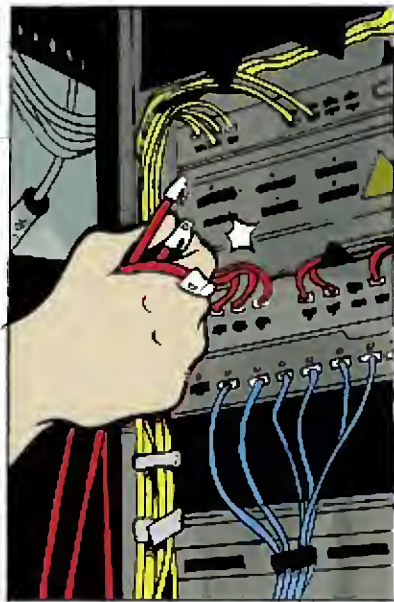
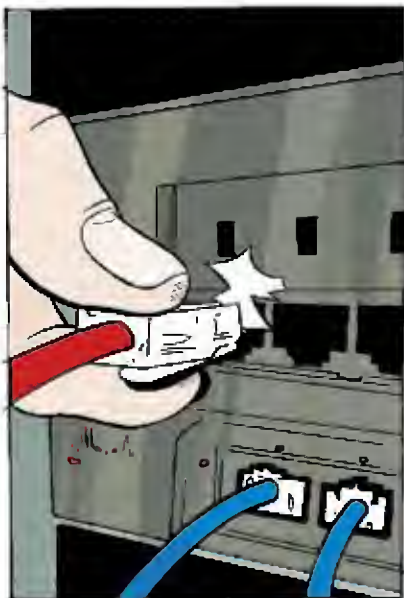
shirt of dad  
CRAZY




WHAT A MESS.



THIS IS BIG, BOSS. EPIC.







I'M SICK. I  
CAN'T EVEN STAND  
ANYMORE...



WHO, KELLY?  
WHO'S DEAD?



THE BABY.



THE BABY?  
WHAT?

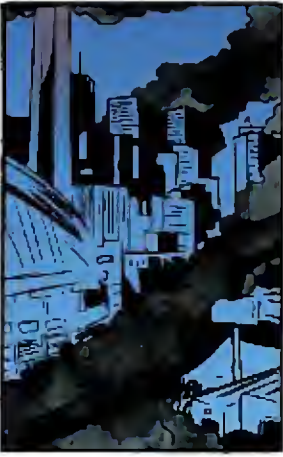
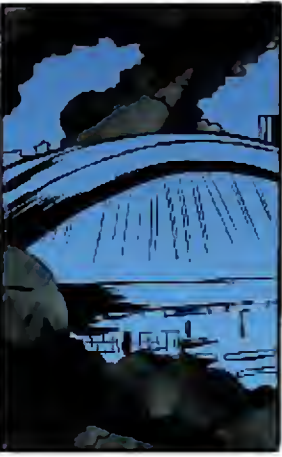
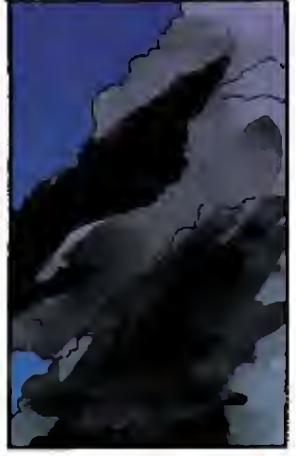
KELLY, WHAT  
HAPPENED?

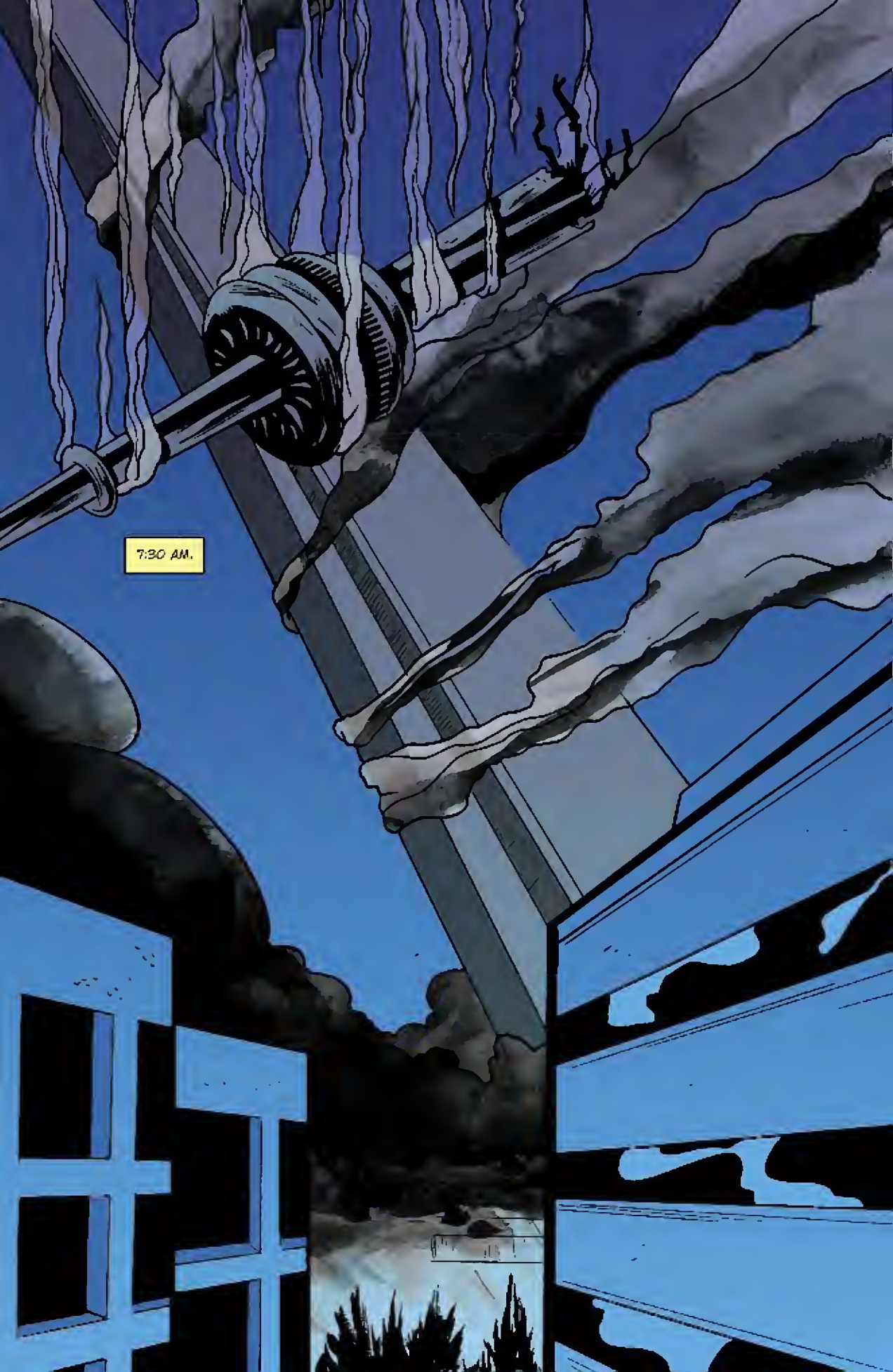


EVERYONE...  
EVERYONE IS.

ONLY TWO  
CHANNELS ARE  
LEFT ON THE  
AIR...

...IT LOOKS  
LIKE DAWN OF  
THE DEAD OUT  
THE WINDOW.





7:30 AM.



> PENTAGON'S GONE. WHITE HOUSE, TOO.

> MY NEIGHBOR'S BARFING BLOOD OFF HIS BALCONY IN SAN DIEGO.

> SOMEONE KNOCKED OVER THE GUERKIN-BANKERS AND FLEEING THE CITY LIKE RATS.

> I HEARD THAT THE GINZA'S ON FIRE.



7:45 AM.  
I'M IN TORONTO WE JUST SAW THE CN TOWER FALL. I'VE HEARD SOME REPORTS OF BIO-WEAPONS. SOMETHING VERY FAST.



> LOOKS LIKE AN EMP TOOK OUT HONG KONG AND MAYBE PARTS -- REAL TIME SAT FOOTAGE SHOWS THEM COMPLETELY DARK - AND ALL NETWORKS THERE AREN'T ROUTING.

> YOU'RE IN TORONTO?



> MY SISTER'S AT LOFT AND I CAN'T REACH HER - CAN U CALL HER?

> NO PHONE SERVICE, FRIEND



> ]

> ]

> NEVER MIND WHAT'S THE POINT?





DAY 2, 2:00 AM.

I USED TO LIKE THAT IT WAS SO COLD IN HERE.



WE CAN'T LEAVE YET, VAN. WE DON'T KNOW WHAT'S OUT THERE.

WILL'S DOWNSTAIRS IN ANOTHER CLEAN ROOM. MAYBE SOME OF THE OTHERS...



WHAT HAPPENED OUT THERE, FELIX? WAS IT THE WORM?

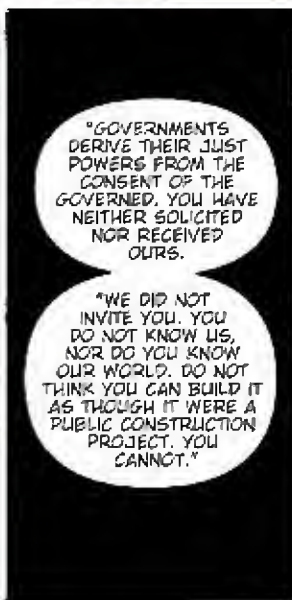
IT COULDN'T HAVE ONLY BEEN THE WORM. IT SOUNDS LIKE IT WAS A LOT OF DIFFERENT STUFF.

WE'RE JUST GOING TO KEEP THAT DOOR CLOSED UNTIL WE—



WE'RE ALL GETTING TOGETHER ON THE SIXTH FLOOR.

IF THERE'S A BIO-AGENT IN THE BUILDING, WE'RE ALL DEAD ANYWAY.





DAY 2, 7:45 AM.

> WE CAN USE THE NEIGHBORHOOD VOTING MECHANISM TO HOLD REGIONAL ELECTIONS.

> RIGHT. WE'LL ELECT REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES AND THEY'LL PICK A PRIME MINISTER.

IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE GETTING IT.

> I THINK WE SHOULD HOLD THE ELECTIONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, TOMORROW AT THE LATEST. WE CAN'T RULE JUSTLY WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED.

WHOA...

WHAT?

TAKE A LOOK.

> YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS. CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED? UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS, 99% OF THE PEOPLE YOU'RE PROPOSING TO GOVERN ARE PUKING THEIR GUTS OUT, HIDING UNDER THEIR DESKS, OR WANDERING SHELL-SHOCKED THROUGH THE CITY STREETS. WHEN DO THEY GET A VOTE?

MAN, WHO WAS THAT?

QUEEN KONG, COOGLE'S SYSADMIN. SHE'S GOT A POINT, BUT I'M NOT GIVING UP THAT EASILY.

DAY 2, 9:17 PM.

PRIME MINISTER OF CYBERSPACE? THAT'S JUST GREAT.

AND VERY PRACTICAL, TOO.

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO WANTED TO KNOCK THE WHOLE INTERNET OFFLINE, WILL.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE MY PLATFORM, RUN AGAINST ME. OTHER PEOPLE ARE.

DO SOMETHING OR JUST SHUT UP. BUT FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, QUIT WHINING.

SCREW YOU GUYS. I'M OUTTA HERE.

I THOUGHT THAT GUY WOULD NEVER LEAVE.

DAY 2, 11:19 PM.

> HEY, KONG. THERE ARE A LOT OF CANDIDATES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD.

> HAVE YOU SEEN THE PLATFORM FROM THAT U.S. SENATOR? HE APPARENTLY WASN'T IN DC WHEN IT HAPPENED.

> ANYONE WITH A COMPUTER, RIGHT?

> I JUST DON'T GET THE ONES WHO WANT TO TAKE DOWN THE INTERNET.

> YOU OUR SUCKING BIG DOG THIS.

> I'M THINKING ENGLISH MIGHT NOT BE YOUR PRIMARY LANGUAGE.

> YOU JUST BITE ONE TWO ONLY.

> WELL, YOU HAVE ME THERE.

> THANKS FOR YOUR ENDORSEMENT, KONG.

> SEE WHAT IT'S GOOD FOR.

> WHOEVER WINS, AT LEAST WE'LL DO SOMETHING.



I'M GOING TO TRY TO GET SOME SLEEP NOW, FELIX.

GOOD LUCK IN THE ELECTIONS.



GOOD NIGHT, VAN. I'M JUST GOING TO SEE IF I CAN GET THE LATEST FROM KONG.



I HOPE.

DAY 3, 8:00 AM.

THERE WAS LESS THAN A DAY OF FUEL LEFT WHEN FELIX WAS ELECTED THE FIRST-EVER PRIME MINISTER OF CYBERSPACE.

HALF THE DATA CENTERS HAD GONE DARK. QUEEN KONG'S NET-MAPS WERE LOOKING GRIMMER AND GRIMMER AS MORE OF THE WORLD WENT OFFLINE.

SHE WAS ABLE TO MAINTAIN A LEADER-BOARD OF THE NEW AND RISING QUERIES, LARGELY RELATED TO HEALTH, SHELTER, SANITATION, AND SELF-DEFENSE.

DAY 3, 2:15 PM.

WE'RE GOING TO OPEN THE DOORS.

LOOKING FOR MORE FUEL?

NO, JUST GOING TO TRY TO FIND OUR FAMILIES.



YOU'RE JUST GOING TO LET IT FALL APART?

YOU'RE KIDDING ME, YOU WANTED TO KILL THE INTERNET, REMEMBER?



I WANTED IT TO GO OUT CLEAN, NOT IN GASPS AND CHOKES, BLEEDING OUT.

IT'S FALLING APART, MAN, THE WAY EVERYTHING DOES.





DAY 3, 3:45 PM.

> WE'RE GOING, KONG.

> IT WAS AN HONOR, MR. PRIME MINISTER.

> OH, AND QUERIES ARE UP IN ROMANIA.  
APPARENTLY WE'RE PRETTY HARD TO KILL.

> YEAH, LIKE ROACHES.

FIVE YEARS LATER.

FELIX AND VAN STEPPED OUT INTO THE WORLD AND STARTED REBUILDING.

YEARS LATER THEY STARTED BUILDING AGAIN, ANYTHING THEY COULD DO TO HELP OUT. AND SURVIVE.

NO ONE—WELL, ALMOST NO ONE—CALLED HIM MR. PRIME MINISTER ANYMORE.



THEY DUG DITCHES, SALVAGED CANS, AND BURIED THE DEAD. FINALLY THEY HELPED A LITTLE GOVERNMENT THAT WANTED ITS RECORDS KEPT.



HEY, IT'S QUEEN KONG.

TELL HER I SAID "HI."

IT NEVER AGAIN FELT LIKE IT DID WHEN THINGS WENT SO WILDLY WRONG, BUT IT WASN'T BAD.



GOOD NIGHT, BOSS.

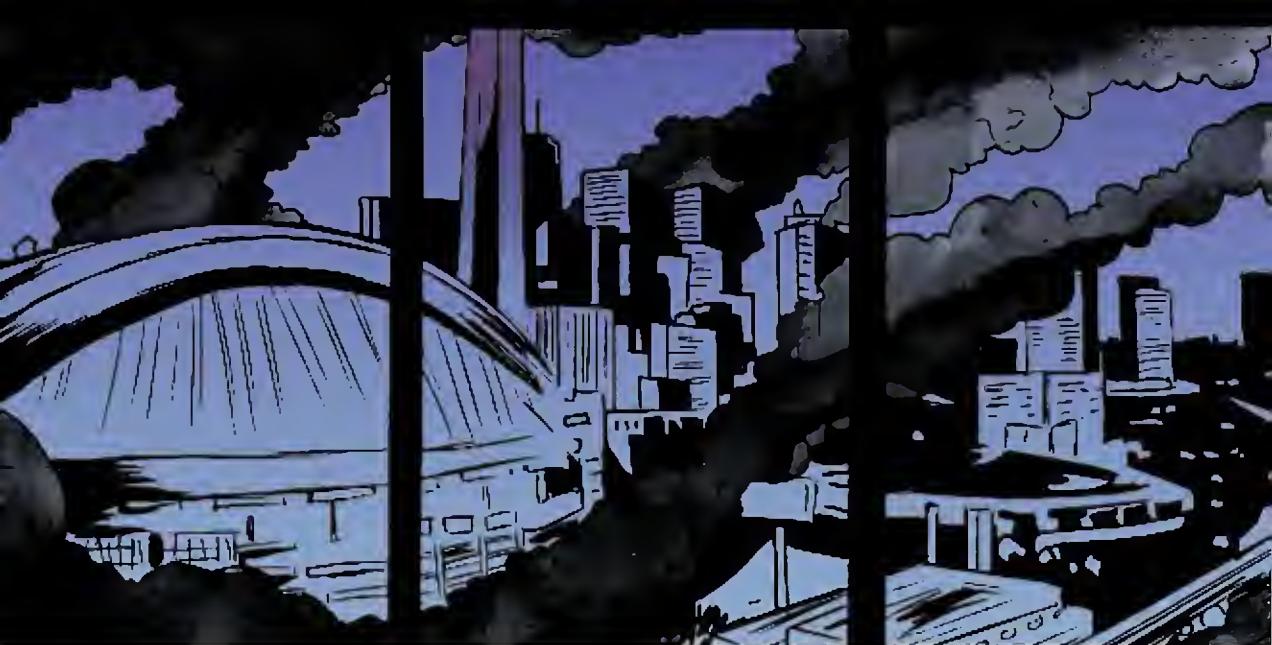
DON'T STICK AROUND HERE ALL NIGHT, VAN. YOU NEED YOUR SLEEP, TOO.



TOMORROW HE'D GO BACK AND FIX ANOTHER COMPUTER AND FIGHT OFF ENTROPY AGAIN. AND WHY NOT?

IT WAS WHAT HE DID. HE WAS A SYSADMIN.

THE END.



## DOCTOROW ON: "WHEN SYSADMINS RULED THE EARTH"

**Editor Tom Waltz:** Cory, you've stated that one of the best jobs you've ever had was working as a freelance systems administrator. What was it about that job that was so appealing to you?

**Cory Doctorow:** There's something really wonderful about working under the hood, making all the systems go. When you're actually \*using\* a computer, it's easy to let it get all crusty, the wires tangled, the data hygiene less than perfect. But when you're the \*administrator\* for that computer, you can look at it objectively and keep it in good running order—it's a little like inviting a friend over to clean out your closets: they don't have the same emotional attachment to your ratty old t-shirts, so they're capable of seeing that they need to be cut up for rags.

**TW:** In "When Sysadmins Ruled the Earth," global destruction takes place on a catastrophic scale. Though you allude (vaguely) to a variety of causes for your fictional disaster, you never really say what the root cause is. Did you have a specific cause in mind when you wrote the short prose story, and have your ideas about what might initiate such destruction changed since?

**CD:** Naw—one of the things I wanted to make clear in the book is that most of us will never know what caused "the end of the world," should it come. As we make various preparations to destroy the earth—stockpiling nukes, building missile-defense shields, weaponizing plague bombs, etc—we focus on the ideological reasons for doing so: "We must save the world from [Communism] Islam[Capitalism]Secularism]." But if anyone ever actually pulls it off, the number of corpses who'll understand the ideological roots of Armageddon will be approximately zero. And the survivors will be more interested in digging through the rubble looking for canned goods than in reading your manifesto.

**TW:** In the story, the character Felix recites from the "Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace." Is the Declaration a real thing? If so, how did you feel when you first read it?

**CD:** Indeed it is—it's the work of my friend and hero John Perry Barlow, co-founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation and Grateful Dead lyricist. <http://www.eff.org/~barlow/Declaration-Final.html>. I read this on a train from Montreal to Toronto in the pages of the *Whole Earth Review*, and I shivered the whole way home. I knew that I was on the cusp of something wonderful.

**TW:** We all know that the Internet can be a tool of warfare (i.e., terrorist recruiting), and that tends to be the kind of thing the news media likes to talk about most, and you even have one of the characters in the story (Will) suggest that the Internet be shut down in order to save the world from further damage. Does any part of you agree with Will, or do you think the benefits of the 'Net far outweigh the obvious dangers?

**CD:** I'm a firm believer in the idea that we shouldn't punish the innocent to get at the guilty. The answer to bad speech is more speech. Or, as a certain wiggid scribe once wrote, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

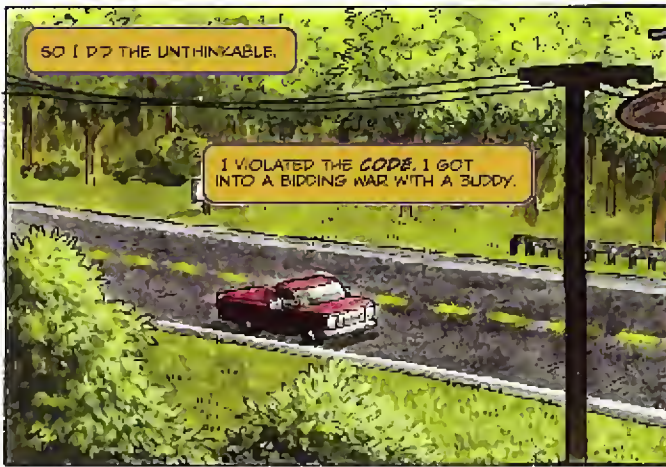
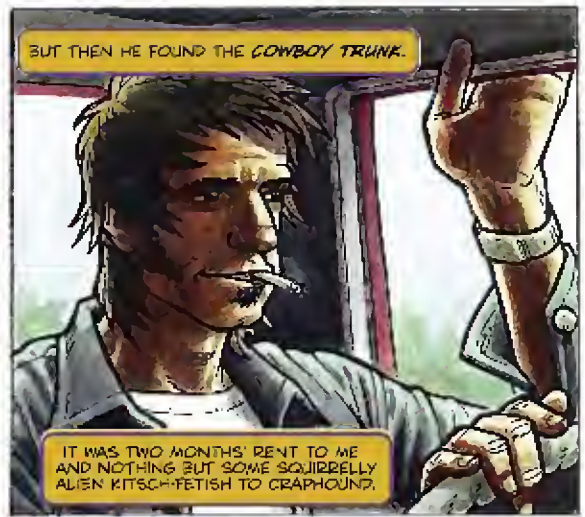
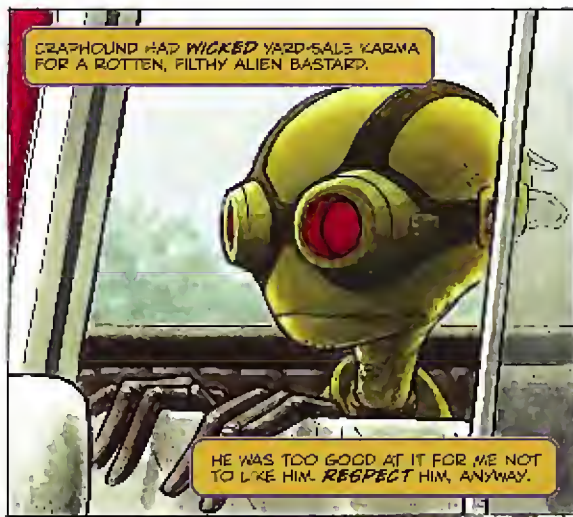
**TW:** Okay, in my time, I've worked as an Electronic Interchange Analyst specializing in Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), so I know a little bit about sysadmins. You've called sysadmins "the unsung heroes of the century"—is that because the only time sysadmins ever get mentioned (in my experience, at least) is when they are getting blamed for the network being down?

**CD:** There's a lot of truth to that—but it's not just that they get all the blame, it's that they get none of the credit. Solving complex IT problems requires the magical intuition of a shaman and the technical skill of a master clock builder. Every second of every day, sysadmins are

Art by Paul Pope



CRAPHOUND





GRAPHOUND BEAT ME OUT THE DOOR, AS USUAL. HIS EXOSKELETON IS PROGRAMMABLE.

THERE!



HE CAN RECORD LITTLE SCRIPTS FOR IT

LIKE: MOVE LEFT ARM TO DOOR HANDLE, POP IT, SWING LEGS OUT TO RUNNING-BOARD, JUMP TO GROUND... YOU GET THE IDEA.



WELCOME, WELCOME! MY, YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY FOR US!

JUST UP FROM TORONTO, MA'AM.

IT'S AN OLD JOKE, BUT IT'S ALSO PART OF THE RITUAL AND IT'S GOT TO BE DONE.



I MEANT YOUR FRIEND, SIR. THIS GENTLEMAN.

OF COURSE I CAME, DEAR LADY. I WOULDN'T MISS IT FOR THE WORLDS!

WHEN IT COMES TO STOCK PHRASES LIKE THIS, HE'S GOT SO MUCH POLISH YOU'D THINK HE WAS READING THE NEWS.



I CHOSE MY FIRST SPOT, ABOUT HALFWAY DOWN, WHERE THINGS WOULDN'T BE QUITE SO PICKED-OVER.



TIME WAS, I'D BUILD ONE PILE OF MAYBES AND ANOTHER PILE OF DEFINITES. TRY TO STRATEGIZE.

BUT IN TIME, I CAME TO RELY ON *INSTINCT* AND ON THE FATES.



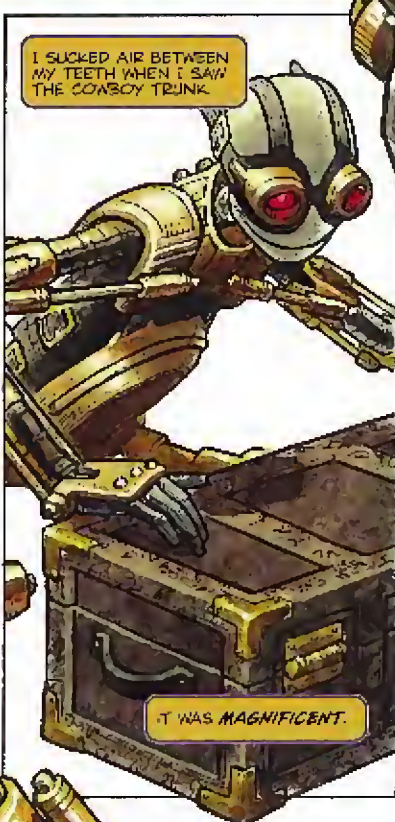
...TO WHOM, I MAKE MY OBSESSANCES AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY.

I HAD TWO BOXES FULL WHEN I COLLIDED WITH CRAPHOUND. HE GRINNED -HIS NATURAL GRIN.



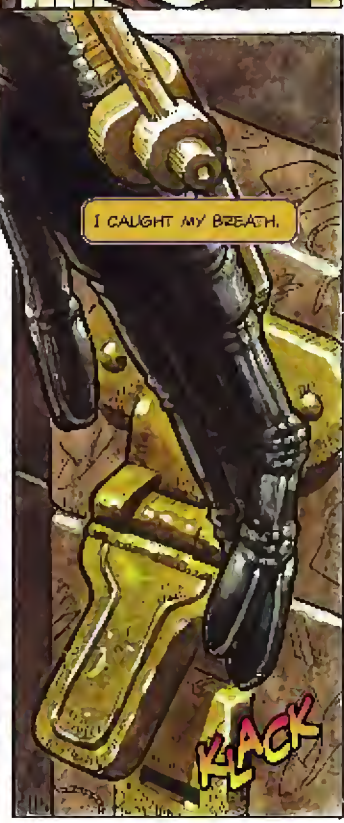
THE ONE THAT SHOWED ROW ON ROW OF WET, SLIMY GUMS, TIPPED WITH WETTING, POISONOUS SUCKERS.

GOLD!  
GOLD!



I SUCKED AIR BETWEEN MY TEETH WHEN I SAW THE COUSBOY TRUNK.

IT WAS MAGNIFICENT.



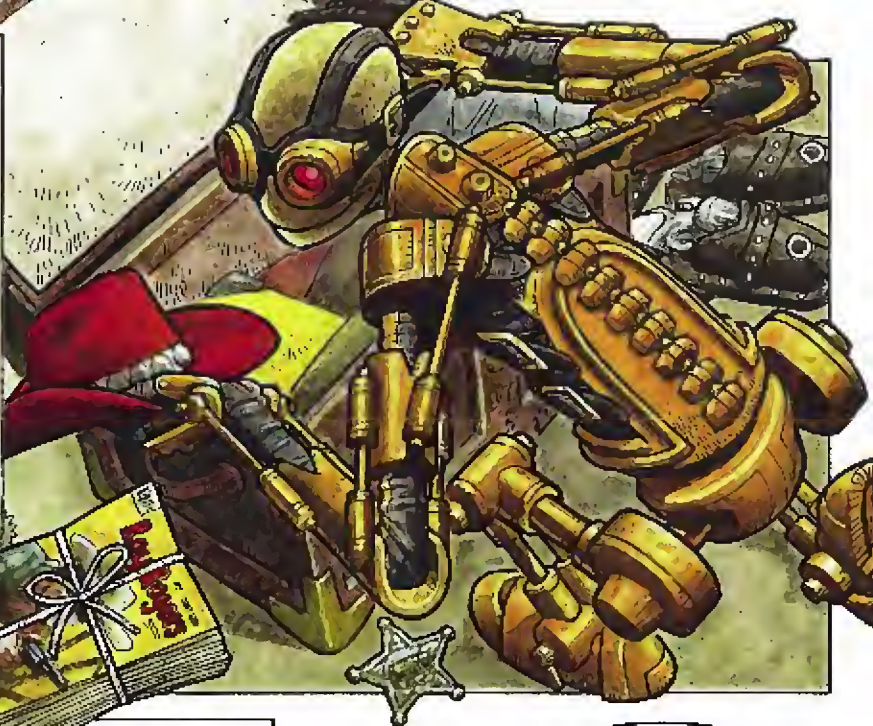
I CAUGHT MY BREATH.

KLACK





OH, MY GOD.



THAT'S MY BILLY'S THINGS— BILLY THE KID, WE CALLED HIM, HE WAS DOTTY FOR COWBOYS WHEN HE WAS A BOY.

HE'S A LAWYER NOW, IN TORONTO.



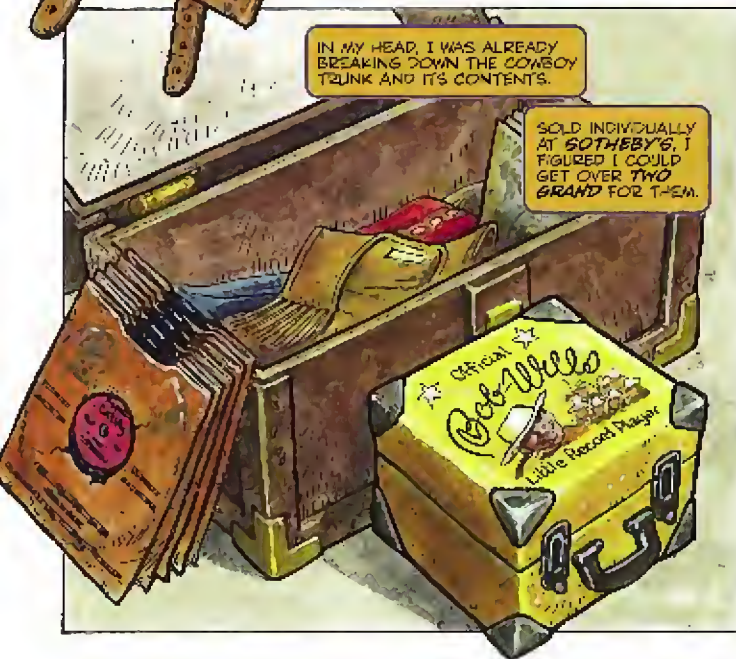
I CALLED HIM TO ASK IF HE MINDS MY PUTTING HIS COWBOY THINGS IN THE SALE, AND YOU KNOW WHAT?

HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT! DOESN'T THAT BEAT EVERYTHING? HE WAS DOTTY FOR COWBOYS WHEN HE WAS A BOY.



IN MY HEAD, I WAS ALREADY BREAKING DOWN THE COWBOY TRUNK AND ITS CONTENTS.

SOLD INDIVIDUALLY AT SOTHEBY'S, I FIGURED I COULD GET OVER TWO GRAND FOR THEM.

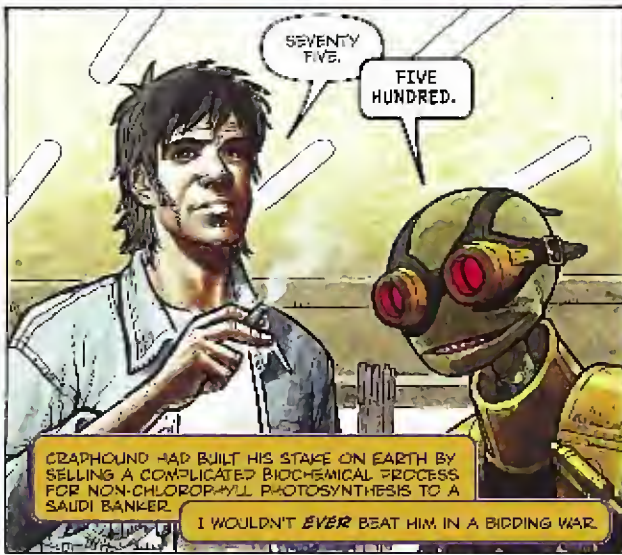


THIS IS WONDERFUL. HOW MUCH WOULD YOU LIKE FOR THE COLLECTION?

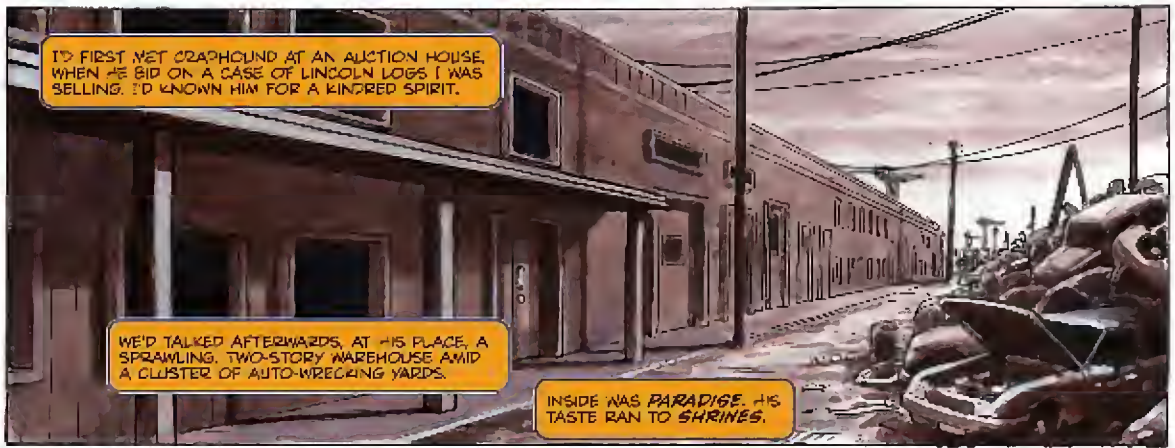
I FELT A KNIFE IN MY GUTS.

GRAPHOUND HAD FOUND THE COWBOY TRUNK, SO THAT MEANT IT WAS HIS.









I'D FIRST MET CRAPHOUND AT AN AUCTION HOUSE, WHEN HE BID ON A CASE OF LINCOLN LOGS I WAS SELLING. I'D KNOWN HIM FOR A KINDRED SPIRIT.

WE'D TALKED AFTERWARDS, AT HIS PLACE, A SPRAWLING, TWO-STORY WAREHOUSE AMID A CLUSTER OF AUTO-WRECKING YARDS.

INSIDE WAS PARADISE. HIS TASTE RAN TO SHRINES.



THE KITCHEN WAS NEARLY UNUSABLE, SO PACKED IT WAS WITH OLD BARN-BOARD FURNITURE AND RUZAL MEMORABILIA.



HE HAD A LEATHER-APPOINTED LIBRARY STRAIGHT OUT OF A VICTORIAN GENTLEMEN'S CLUB.



AND MY FAVORITE, THE SOLARBUM DRESSED IN WICKER AND BAMBOO AND TIKHIDOLS.



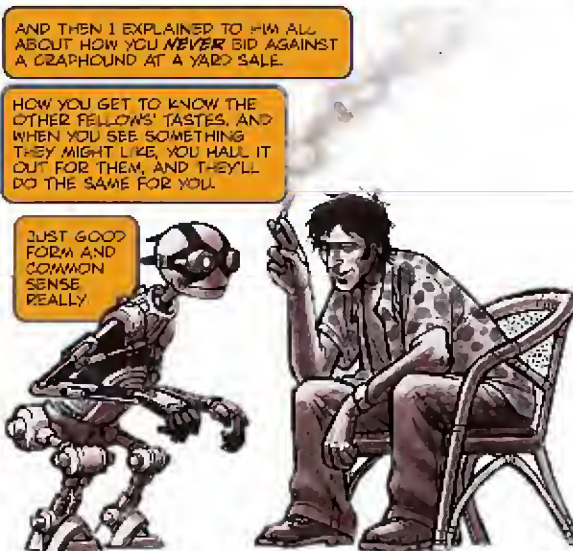
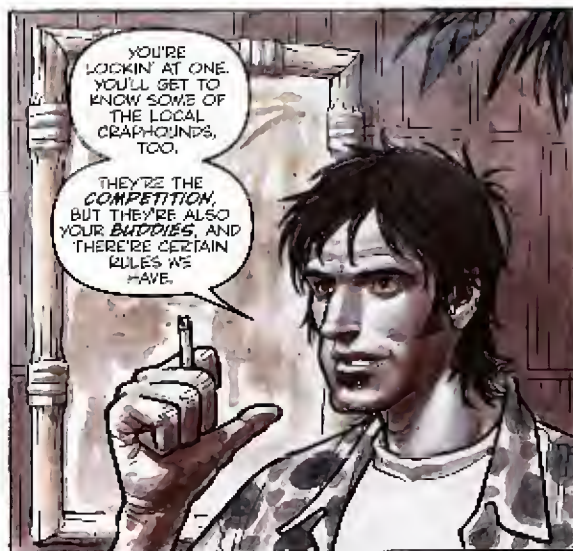
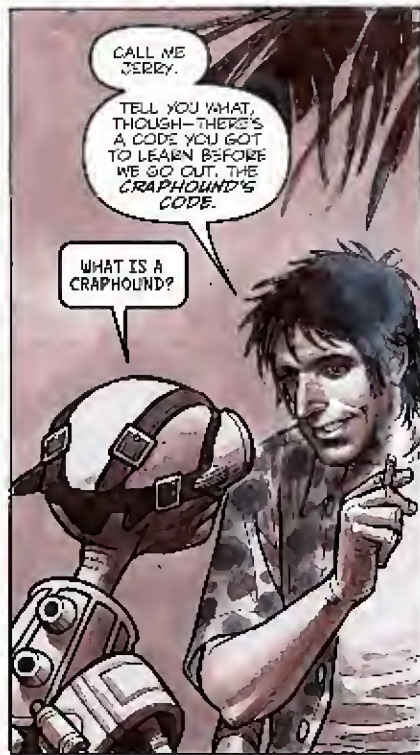
CRAPHOUND HAD KNOWN ALL ABOUT THE GOODWILLS AND THE AUCTION HOUSES, BUT HE STILL HADN'T FIGURED OUT GARAGE AND RUMMAGE SALES.

BUT WHERE ARE THESE? WHO IS ALLOWED TO MAKE THEM?



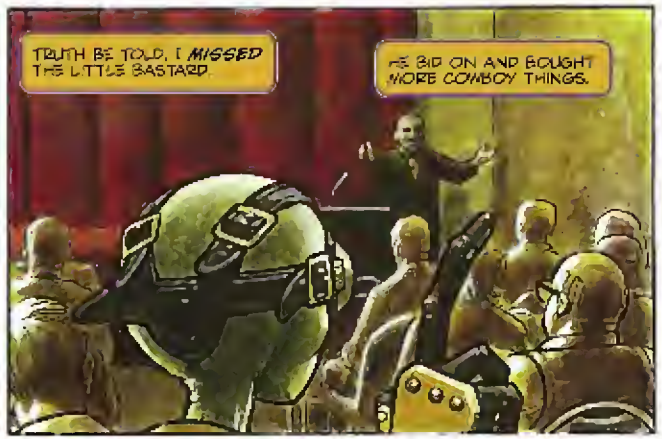
WHO? WELL, ANYONE.

YOU JUST ONE DAY DECIDE THAT YOU NEED TO CLEAN OUT THE BASEMENT. YOU PUT AN AD IN THE STAR, TAPE UP A FEW SIGNS, AND VOILA, YARD SALE.





THE NEXT TIME I SAW CRAPBOUND AT AN AUCTION HOUSE, HE DIDN'T ACKNOWLEDGE MY PRESENCE.



TRUTH BE TOLD, I MISSED THE LITTLE BASTARD.

HE BID ON AND BOUGHT MORE CONBOY THINGS.



SOME PEOPLE SAID THAT WE SHOULD HAVE RUN CRAPBOUND AND HIS KEN OFF THE PLANET.



THEY SAID THAT IT WASN'T FAIR FOR THE ALIENS TO KEEP US IN THE DARK ABOUT THEIR TECHNOLOGIES.



THEY SAY THAT WE SHOULD HAVE CAPTURED A SHIP AND REVERSE-ENGINEERED IT, BUILT OUR OWN, AND KICKED ASS.

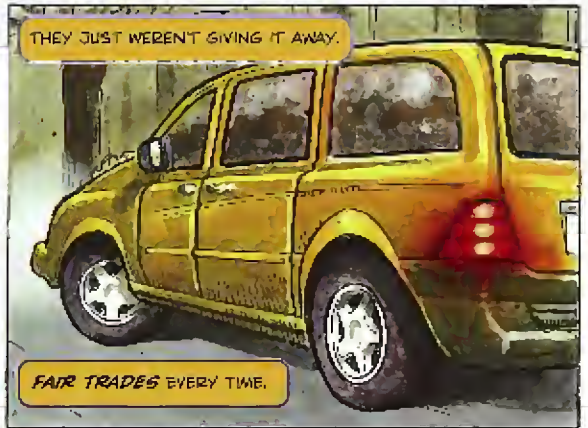


SOME PEOPLE!

FIRST OF ALL, NOBODY WITH HUMAN DNA COULD SURVIVE A TRIP IN ONE OF THOSE SHIPS.



SECOND OF ALL, THEY WERE SHARING THEIR TECH WITH US.



THEY JUST WEREN'T GIVING IT AWAY.

FAIR TRADES EVERY TIME.



PART OF MY THEORY OF YARD-SALE KARMA HOLDS THAT IF I MISS ONE DAY AT THE THRIFT SHOPS...



...THAT'LL BE THE DAY THEY PUT OUT THE **BIG SCORE**.

SO I HIT THE STORES **DILIGENTLY**, AND CAME UP WITH CRAPOLA.



I HAD OFFENDED THE FATES, I KNEW.



AND I KNEW I WOULDN'T MAKE ANOTHER SCORE UNTIL I **PLACATED** THEM.



MAN, I MISSED CRAPHOUND'S **GOOD EYE** AND OBSSIVE DELIGHT.

SIR?



HIS SUIT LOOKED **EXPENSIVE**, AS DID HIS MANICURE AND HIS HAIRCUT.

SORRY TO BOTHER YOU.

...BUT I WAS JUST WONDERING WHERE YOU FOUND THAT.



I HAD PICKED IT UP WITH A *GUILTY* LITTLE THRILL, THINKING THAT GRAPHOUD MIGHT BUY IT AT THE NEXT AUCTION.



SECOND FLOOR, IN THE TOY SECTION.

THERE WASN'T ANYTHING ELSE LIKE IT, WAS THERE?

FRID NOT.

I HAD PAID A DOLLAR FOR IT.



AA.  
I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'D WANT TO *SELL* IT, WOULD YOU?

HOW MUCH?



TEN BUCKS?

*NEARLY SAID 'SOLD!' BUT I CAUGHT MYSELF.*

TWENTY.

TWENTY POLLARS?

THAT'S WHAT THEY'D CHARGE AT A BOUTIQUE ON QUEEN STREET.



FAIR ENOUGH.





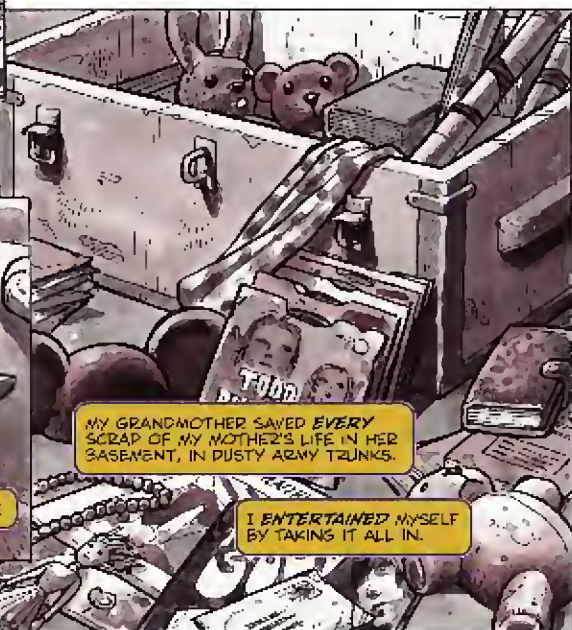
IT'S NOT THAT MY CHILDHOOD WAS PARTICULARLY HAPPY.



SCALING MOUNTAINS OF AUTO-JUNK AT THE WRECKING YARD OWNED BY GRAMPA'S FRIEND, FYODOZ.



THERE ARE MEMORIES I HAVE, THOUGH, THAT ARE LIKE A COOL DRINK OF WATER.



THE GLOVE-BOXES YIELDED TREASURES.



IT ALL TOLD A STORY.

MY GRANDMOTHER SAVED EVERY SCRAP OF MY MOTHER'S LIFE IN HER BASEMENT, IN DUSTY ARMY TRUNKS.

I ENTERTAINED MYSELF BY TAKING IT ALL IN.

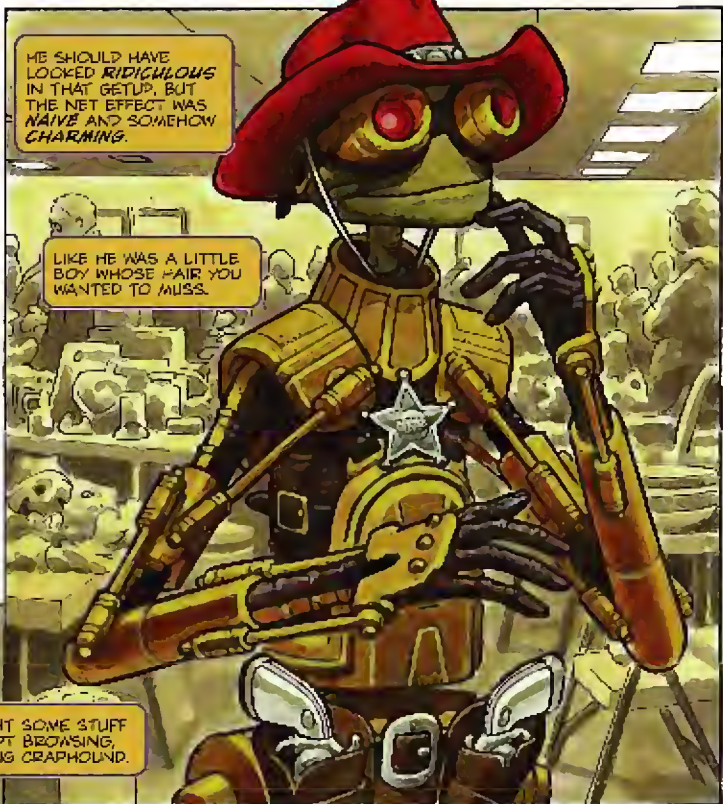
IT ALL MADE POEMS.

WHEN I SPREAD THEM OUT IN FRONT OF THE TV, AND ARRANGED THEM JUST SO, THEY MADE UP A POEM THAT TOOK MY BREATH AWAY.





AFTER THE COWBOY TRUNK EPISODE, I DIDN'T RUN INTO CRAPHOUND AGAIN UNTIL THE ANNUAL ROTARY CLUB CHARITY RUMMAGE SALE.



HE SHOULD HAVE LOOKED RIDICULOUS IN THAT GETUP, BUT THE NET EFFECT WAS NAIVE AND SOMEHOW CHARMING.

LIKE HE WAS A LITTLE BOY WHOSE HAIR YOU WANTED TO MUSS.



I BOUGHT SOME STUFF AND KEPT BROWSING, IGNORING CRAPHOUND.

THAT'S WHEN I SPOTTED THE INDIAN TOYS.



I BOUGHT THEM QUICK FOR FIVE BUCKS.



THOSE ARE BEAUTIFUL.

WE'D GONE CASUAL FOR THE WEEKEND, IN AN EXPENSIVE, L.L. BEAN BUTTON-DOWN WAY.

AREN'T THEY, THOUGH.

HOW'S THE LIFE?

OH, I GOT IT ALL TUNED UP, I CAN PLAY 'DON'T PENCE ME IN' ON IT.

SILLY, HUH?









SCOTT WAS A LAWYER, WHO SPECIALIZED IN ALIEN-TECHNOLOGY PATENTS.

I DIDN'T LET ON THAT I KNEW ABOUT BILLY THE KID.



BUT I FELT A BOND WITH HIM, AS THOUGH WE SHARED AN UNSPOKEN SECRET.



I PULLED ANY COWBOY FUNDS FOR HIM, AND HE DEVELOPED A PRETTY GOOD EYE FOR WHAT I WAS AFTER AND RETURNED THE FAVOR.



THE FATES WERE WITH ME AGAIN.

AS FAR AS I WAS CONCERNED, SCOTT/BILLY WAS A FELLOW GRAPHOUND.



LOOK AT THAT!



WAS THAT AN EXTEE DRIVING?

YEAH, USED TO BE A FRIEND OF MINE.

HE'S A PICKER?



UHHH.

DO YOU KNOW HOW HE MADE HIS STAKE?

THE CHLOROPHYLL THING, IN SAUDI ARABIA.



SWEET! I'VE GOT A CLIENT WHO'S GOT SOME SECONDARY PATENTS FROM THAT ONE.

YEAH. HE GOT INTO THE COWBOYS AND INJUNS STUFF RECENTLY.

FOUND A TRUNK OF OLD COWBOY THINGS AT THE EAST MUSKOGA VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT LADIES' AUXILIARY.



I WAITED FOR HIM TO S-A-O-U-T OR STARTLE.

HE DIDN'T.

YEAH? A GOOD FIND, I GUESS. WISH I'D MADE IT.



I THINK ABOUT WHAT THEY GET OUT OF IT A LOT.

I MEAN, THERE'S NOTHING WE HAVE HERE THAT THEY COULDN'T MAKE FOR THEMSELVES.



YOU KNOW, I JUST CLOSED A DEAL FOR A BIOCHEMICAL COMPUTER THAT'S NO-SHIT 10,000 TIMES FASTER THAN ANYTHING WE'VE BUILT OUT OF SILICON!

YOU KNOW WHAT THE EXTEE TOOK IN TRADE? TITLE TO A DEFUNCT FAIRGROUND OUTSIDE OF CALGARY.



DOESN'T THAT BEAT ALL?

THIS THING IS WORTH A BILLION DOLLARS RIGHT OUT OF THE GATE. FOR A CRUMMY REAL-ESTATE DOG THAT YOU COULDN'T GET FIVE GRAND FOR!

IT WAS EASY TO FORGET THAT HE WAS A HIGH-POWERED LAWYER WHEN WE WERE JAWING AND FOOLING AROUND LIKE OLD CRAPHOUNDS.



WHAT THE HELL IS SOME EXTEE GOING TO DO WITH A FAIRGROUND?



THERE WERE *BARGAINS* TO BE HAD AT THE THURSDAY NIGHT AUCTIONS.

I ROOTED THROUGH A BOX-LOT FULL OF OLD TINS.



NICE PIECE, HUH?

I LIKE IT VERY MUCH.



I AM VERY SORRY THAT WE ARGUED.

ME, TOO.

THEY'RE STARTING THE BIDDING. MAY I SIT WITH YOU?



IT WAS A NIGHT FOR *UNUSUAL* OCCURRENCES.

I *BID* ON A PIECE, SOMETHING I TOLD MYSELF I'D *NEVER* DO.

IT WAS A SET OF FOUR MATCHED LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE OVALTINE GLASSES.



SEEING THEM TOOK ME RIGHT BACK TO MY GRANDMA'S KITCHEN...









IT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT I CAN EASILY EXPLAIN.

THE THINGS WE GAVE YOU WERE TRINKETS TO US, ALMOST WORTHLESS. WE TRADED THEM FOR SOMETHING THAT WAS ALMOST WORTHLESS TO YOU. A FAIR TRADE, YOU'LL AGREE.

BUT IT'S TIME TO MOVE ON.

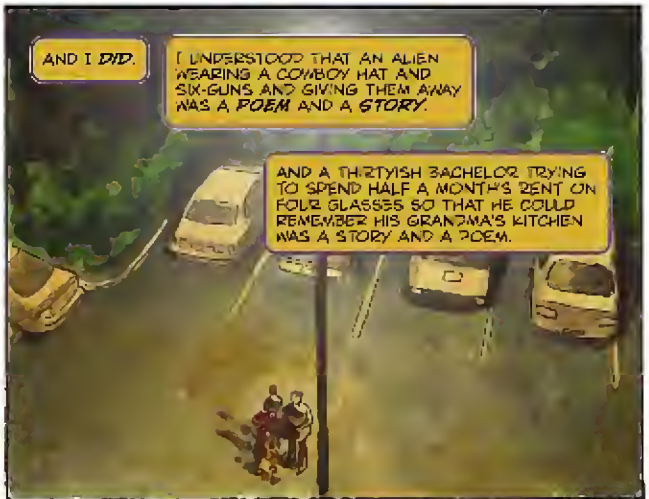


THIS IS FOR ME...

...THIS IS FOR ME, AND YOU'RE KEEPING THE GLASSES, AND I'LL LOOK AT THIS AND FEEL...



YOU UNDERSTAND.



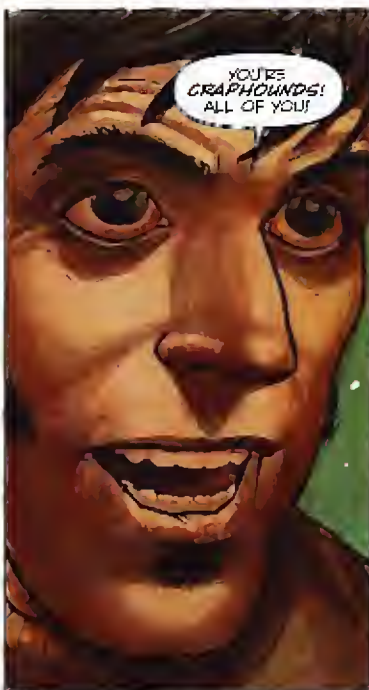
AND I DID.

I UNDERSTOOD THAT AN ALIEN WEARING A COWBOY HAT AND SIX-GUNS AND GIVING THEM AWAY WAS A POEM AND A STORY.

AND A THIRTYISH BACHELOR TRYING TO SPEND HALF A MONTH'S RENT ON FOUR GLASSES SO THAT HE COULD REMEMBER HIS GRANDMA'S KITCHEN WAS A STORY AND A POEM.

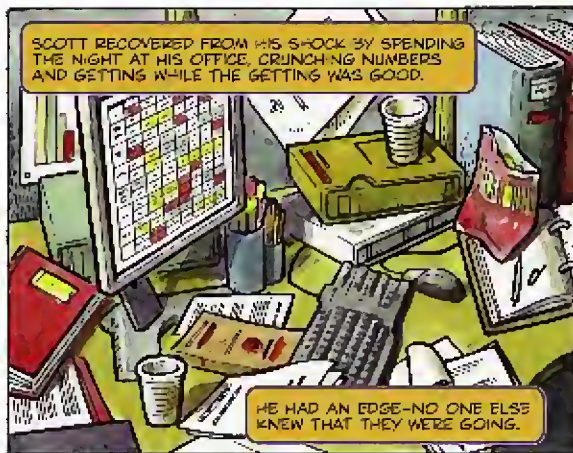


AND THAT THE DISUSED FAIRGROUND OUTSIDE CALGARY WAS A STORY AND A POEM, TOO.



YOU'RE GRAPHOUNDS! ALL OF YOU!







## DOCTOROW ON: "CRAPHOUND"

**Editor Tom Waltz:** Okay, Cory, I gotta ask this first: are you a craphound?

**Cory Doctorow:** In soul, but not in body. Several intercontinental moves over the past five years, and tens of thousands of dollars spent on storage lockers, have all but cured me of the acquiring stuff bug. But my instinct is to amass huge piles of crapola of various descriptions in great, towering burial mounds.

**TW:** When I was reading this story, thematically I was struck by two ideas. First, I couldn't get the saying out of my head that goes, "One man's garbage is another man's treasure." And, second, I couldn't stop thinking about how much the concept of these characters working so hard to seek out hidden "treasures" and, sometimes, competing against each other for said treasures, is very much like the online shopping culture that has developed over the last few years (as with eBay, etc.). Are these concepts close to what you were hoping to convey with "Craphound"?

**CD:** Well, sure! I wrote this story just as eBay was starting, in the heyday of yard-saling in Toronto. There was a weekly estate auction, many annual rummage sales, and so on, and I was living in a giant warehouse with 20' ceilings that was literally stacked to the rafters with junk. I knew a million other junk collectors, pickers, etc., and we all had a culture of competition and appreciation.

**TW:** Throughout the story, you use cowboy and Indian antiques as the alien character's main shopping interest. Is there any particular reason you chose these items as something a creature from another world would so actively seek to own?

**CD:** This is one of those questions that supposes that writers know why they choose what they choose—mostly, it's intuition at the time. In hindsight, I'd say that cowboys and Indians have the virtue of being alien to someone born in 1971 (like me), who wasn't alive during

their heyday, but familiar, too, in that I grew up reading stories and seeing movies and cartoons in which kids played with them. So they're like second-hand nostalgia, my nostalgia for the toys of a different generation.

**TW:** What special item would you like to find in a forgotten corner of a rummage sale someday?

**CD:** I have a great collection of Rosebuds and ones that got away. Foremost are the "changing portrait" Haunted Mansion souvenir cards I bought at the Haunted Mansion gift shop on my first trip to Disney World in 1977, when I was six. They were cardboard cards with portraits of slightly sinister looking people on them, over-painted with transparent, glow-in-the-dark pictures. When you exposed them to light, then looked at them in darkness, they glowed with "secret" faces revealing the pictures to be, in truth, of monsters: vampires, werewolves, etc.

I fell asleep in the rental car, clutching these. The car broke down on the way back to my grandparents' place in Ft. Lauderdale, and the rental agency sent out another car. My parents transferred me, sleeping, to the other car, and didn't bring along the portraits. When I woke in the morning and discovered them gone, I was heartbroken. We called the agency, but they couldn't find them. Gone.

I never found another set, not for love or money. The next time I went to Disney World, they were no longer selling them. I'm sure the luminescent paint had toxic levels of radium or something. In my imagination, they loom, perfect and magnificent, the best toys ever.

Also, once in the Portobello Road market, I found a stall with three or four reproduction Victorian pornographic watches; the watches featured a regular, chunk, old-fashioned dial on the front, but when you turned them over, the case sported a transparent window showing the mechanical works within. The works had been shaped in the form of men and women in sexual poses, cunningly arranged such that each tick of the clock was a thrust. They weren't very expensive, but the friend I was with convinced me not to buy them. I changed my mind and went back the next week and couldn't find them again—and I never have.



# NIMBY AND THE D-HOPPERS

Art by Ben Templesmith

DON'T GET ME WRONG—I LIKE UNSPOILED WILDERNESS. I LIKE MY SKY CLEAR AND BLUE, AND MY CITY FREE OF THE THUNDER OF CARS AND JACKHAMMERS. I'M NO TECHNOCRAT.

KBOON

B-POW

KNOCK  
KNOCK  
KNOCK



SALLY!  
OPEN UP!

BUT GODDAMMIT, WHO WOULDN'T WANT A FULLY AUTOMATIC, LASER-GUIDED, ARMOR-PIERCING, SELF-REPLENISHING PERSONAL SIDEARM?



BARRY??

LET ME IN—  
I'M FREEZING  
TO DEATH.



JESUS, IT  
CAN'T BE THREE  
IN THE MORNING,  
CAN IT?

IT CAN AND IS.  
TRANSDIMENSIONAL  
CRIME FIGHTERS HEW  
TO NO HUMAN  
SCHEDULE.



I HAVE HAD MORE THAN ENOUGH OF THIS SHIT.

IT'S TAKING A TOLL ON ALL OF US.



THE JEFFERSONS ARE GOING TO RELOCATE. THEY'VE BEEN WRITING TO THEIR COUSINS IN NIAGARA FALLS, AND THEY SAY THAT THERE'RE HARDLY ANY HOPPERS DOWN THERE.



THE HOPPERS COULD GO AWAY TOMORROW. WE DON'T KNOW THAT THEY'RE GOING TO BE HERE FOREVER.

OF COURSE I KNOW IT. YOU CAN'T PUT THE GENIE BACK IN THE BOTTLE. THEY'VE GOT D-HOPPERS NOW—THEY'RE NOT GOING TO JUST STOP USING THEM.



WE DITCHED THE TECHNOCRACY BECAUSE WE FOUND SOMETHING THAT WORKED BETTER. NO ONE DECIDED IT WAS TOO DANGEROUS. IT JUST GOT... OBSOLETE. NOTHING'S GOING TO MAKE D-HOPPERS OBSOLETE FOR THOSE GUYS.



**BOOM**

**CA-RASH**

**KE-TING**



NO CAFFEINE!

THE HOUSE GETS ALL JUMPY.



**K-BOOM**



**TCHEN TCHEN**

**TCHEN TCHEN TCHEN**



**TCHEN TCHEN TCHEN**



**TCHEN TCHEN TCHEN**



YOU  
OKAY?

I THINK  
SO.







DON'T WORRY, I'M NOT GOING TO PLAY WITH IT. I DON'T WANT TO BE INADVERTENTLY WHISKED AWAY TO A PARALLEL UNIVERSE.

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?

IT'S HER SHOW.



YOU KILLED MY HOUSE.

YOU ASSHOLES KEEP COMING HERE AND SHOOTING UP THE PLACE, WITHOUT A SINGLE THOUGHT TO THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE HERE—



WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "KEEP COMING HERE?" THIS IS THE FIRST TIME ANYONE'S EVER USED THE TRANS-D DEVICE.

SURE, IN *YOUR* DIMENSION. YOU'RE A LITTLE BEHIND SCHEDULE, PAL WE'VE HAD HOPPERS BLASTING THROUGH HERE FOR MONTHS NOW.



YOU'RE LYING.

LOOK, I'M A POLICE OFFICER. THE MAN I'M CHASING IS A DANGEROUS CRIMINAL. IF I DON'T CATCH HIM, YOU'RE ALL IN DANGER.

REALLY? GREATER DANGER THAN YOU ASSHOLES PUT US IN WHEN YOU SHOOT US?

I'M JUST DOING MY DUTY, YOU TWO ARE GOING TO END UP IN A LOT OF TROUBLE. I WANT TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE IN CHARGE.



THAT WOULD BE ME, THIS YEAR I'M THE MAYOR.

YOU'RE KIDDING.

IT'S AN ADMINISTRATIVE POSITION.

SALLY'S HOUSE WAS DEAD BY SUNRISE. IT HEAVED A TERRIBLE SIGH, AND THE NIPPLES STARTED RUNNING WITH BLACK GORE. THE STINK WAS OVERPOWERING, SO WE LED OUR PRISONER, SHIVERING, NEXT DOOR TO MY PLACE.



I TELL YOU, OSBORNE'S OUT THERE, AND HE'S GOT THE MORALS OF A JACKAL. IF I DON'T GET TO HIM, WE'RE ALL IN TROUBLE.

WHAT DID HE DO, ANYWAY?

DOES IT MATTER? THEY'RE ALL BASTARDS. TECHNOCRATS.



HE'S A MONOPOLIST.

HE'S THE SENIOR STRATEGIST FOR A COMPANY THAT MAKES NETWORKED RELEVANCE FILTERS. THEY'VE BEEN PLANTING MALWARE ONLINE THAT BREAKS ANY STANDARDS-DEFINED COMPETING PRODUCTS. IF HE ISN'T STOPPED, HE'LL OWN THE WHOLE GODDAMN MEDIA ECOLOGY.



HA! HE DID WHAT?

HE'S ENGAGED IN UNFAIR BUSINESS PRACTICES!

WELL, I THINK WE'LL BE ABLE TO SURVIVE, THEN.



SO, ROMAN, YOU SAY THAT YOU FOLKS JUST INVENTED THE D-HOPPER, HUH?


THE WHAT?

THE TRANS-D DEVICE YOU CALLED IT.



YES. IT WAS DEVELOPED BY A RESEARCHER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO AND STOLEN BY OSBORNE SO HE COULD FLEE JUSTICE. WE HAD THAT ONE FABBED UP JUST SO WE COULD CHASE HIM.





...I'LL SHOW YOU.



SHORTLY AFTER BREAKFAST...

I DIDN'T MEAN TO!  
IT WAS A REFLEX.

SALLY!  
YOU COULDBE  
KILLED HIM!



HE'LL BE AT  
THE BICYCLE  
FIELDS BEFORE  
WE REACH  
HIM.



WHY DID YOU UNTIE HIM IN THE FIRST PLACE?

I FIGURED THAT ONCE HE HAD TAKEN US THROUGH THE D-HOPPER'S WORKINGS, HE WAS COWERED.

THAT—AND IT ALSO FELT LESS ANTISOCIAL ONCE HE WAS UNTIED AND SPOONING UP MUESELI.



WHO WAS THAT?

D-HOPPER, TECHNOCRAT. HE KILLED MY HOUSE.

THAT'S BAD. THE BECKERS' HOUSE, TOO. BARRY, YOU'D BETTER SEND SOMEONE OFF TO TORONTO TO PARLEY FOR SOME MORE SEED.

THANK YOU, LEMUEL, I'LL DO THAT.



I EXPECT HE'LL BE OFF TO HIS HOME DIMENSION SHORTLY.

NUH-UH, WE GOT-OOMPH!

YEAH, I EXPECT SO. HOW ABOUT THE OTHER ONE—DID ANYONE SEE WHERE HE WENT?



OH, HE TOOK OFF EAST. HEADED FOR TORONTO, MAYBE.



ALL RIGHT, THEN, I'LL SEND WORD AHEAD. HE WON'T GET FAR. WE'LL HEAD OUT AND MEET HIM.



WHAT ABOUT YOUR HOUSE?

WHAT ABOUT IT?

WELL, YOU'VE GOT TO GET YOUR STUFF MOVED OUT SOON—THE HOUSEHUSBANDS WILL BE WANTING TO TAKE IT AWAY FOR MULCH.



TELL THEM THEY CAN PUT MY STUFF IN BARRY'S PLACE.

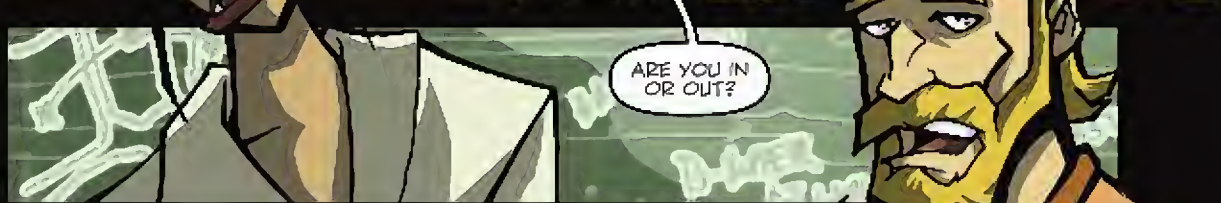


MAYBE HE WENT BACK TO HIS DIMENSION.

NO, HE'S HERE. I SAW HIS D-HOPPER BEFORE HE RAN OUT LAST NIGHT—IT WAS A WRECK.

MAYBE HE FIXED IT.

AND MAYBE HE HASN'T. THIS HAS GOT TO STOP, BARRY. IF YOU DON'T WANT TO HELP, JUST SAY SO. BUT STOP TRYING TO DISSUADE ME.



ARE YOU IN OR OUT?



I'M IN. I'M IN.



THEN PUT ON ROMAN'S ARMOR. WE NEED TO BE ON EVEN FOOTING WITH OSBORNE IF WE'RE GOING TO CATCH HIM, AND THAT STUFF WON'T FIT ME.

WHAT ABOUT ROMAN?

HE'LL BE BACK. WE HAVE HIS D-HOPPER.





WHAT DID I CALL IT?




"OUTLANDISH  
TECHNOCRAT ARMOR?"



MAYBE ON THE OUTSIDE.

INSIDE—I WAS A GOD.



ONCE BACK ON TERRA FIRMA, I  
SCOOPED UP SALLY AND TOOK A  
GREAT LEAP FORWARD, SET HER DOWN,  
AND REPEATED THE PROCESS.

WE SET OUT AFTER  
ROMAN. I WOULD LEAP  
AS HIGH AS I COULD,  
THEN SPIN AROUND  
QUICKLY AS I FELL BACK  
TO EARTH, SURVEYING  
THE COUNTRYSIDE IN  
INFRARED FOR ANYTHING  
HUMAN-SHAPED.



OOMPH!

BARRY!



ARGH.  
SKAREEEEE



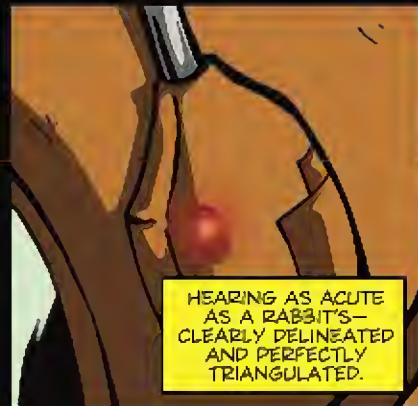
DAMMIT.



SEVEN-LEAGUE BOOTS THAT LET ME JUMP AS HIGH AS THE TREETOPS.



VISION THAT EXTENDED TO THE INFRARED, ULTRAVIOLET AND THE ELECTROMAGNETIC.



HEARING AS ACUTE AS A RABBIT'S— CLEARLY DELINEATED AND PERFECTLY TRIANGULATED.



IT ONLY TOOK US TWO HOURS TO REACH HAMILTON. I WAS USED TO THINKING OF HAMILTON AS BEING A HARD DAY'S BIKE-RIDE FROM HOME.



I'VE GOT YO—



LET ME GO, ASSHOLE!



I CHASED AS BEST I COULD, BUT OSBORNE WORKED THE ARMOR LIKE HE'D BEEN BORN IN IT.



WAIT! THERE WAS ONLY ONE PLACE THEY COULD BE GOING—TO THE SHTETL, TO MY HOUSE, TO THE D-HOPPER.



YOU CAN'T GIVE HIM THE TRANS-D DEVICE.

HE'S THE ONLY ONE WITH THE KEY TO HIS MALWARE AGENTS. IF HE GETS AWAY NOW, WE'LL NEVER CATCH HIM—THE WHOLE WORLD WILL BE AT HIS MERCY.

WHY NOT?

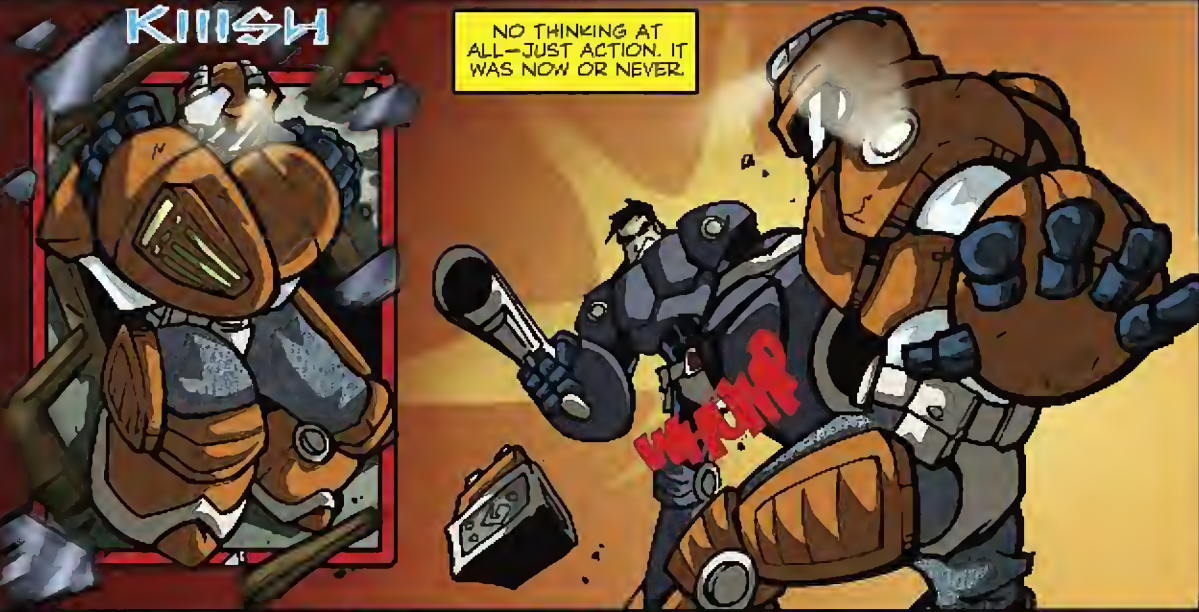
HE'S GOT SALLY. IF I NEED TO GIVE HIM THE D-HOPPER TO GET HER BACK, THAT'S WHAT I'M GONNA DO.



ENOUGH IS ENOUGH, ASSHOLE!

**KIISHH**

NO THINKING AT ALL—JUST ACTION. IT WAS NOW OR NEVER.



**WH-THIP**



WHAT A WASTE.



**CLICK**



**TZZZIITCH!**



WH-HUH?





HEY, BARRY.

OH, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE. I SHOULD'VE KNOWN.



SORRY. I WAS TRYING TO SAVE SALLY'S LIFE.



GOD, WHY?



WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM WITH SALLY?



SHE SOLD US OUT! TO TORONTO! THE WHOLE SHITTEL HASN'T GOT TWO BIKES TO RUB TOGETHER.



TORONTO? HOW MANY HOUSES COULD WE POSSIBLY NEED?

HA! HOUSES? TORONTO DOESN'T MAKE HOUSES ANYMORE. WAIT THERE.



CIVIL DEFENSE.

SALLY'S IDEA. WE'RE ALL SUPPOSED TO BE READY TO REPEL THE RAIDERS AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE. CAN'T YOU SMELL IT?



→SNIFF SNIFF→ WHAT'S THAT?

Factories, ammo, guns, armor. It's all anyone does anymore.

Your friend's gonna get quite a surprise.

**BOOMBOOM-BOOMBOOMBOOM**



SCRATCH ONE D-HOPPER. IF I WERE YOU, I'D DITCH THAT GETUP BEFORE SOMEONE TAKES A SHOT AT YOU.



**TCHEW TCHEW**

HE'S TRICKY.



LET'S GO.



SEEING DOUBLE.  
GODDAMN GUN.  
BLEW UP IN MY ARMS.  
GODDAMN GUN.  
GODDAMN IT.

I'LL GO  
GET HELP.

SOMEWHERE OUT THERE,  
OSBORNE WAS LOOKING FOR THE  
D-HOPPER, FOR A WAY HOME...



...AND IF HE FOUND IT, I'D  
BE STRANDED HERE, WHERE  
GUNS EXPLODE IN YOUR  
ARMS AND BARRY WISHES  
THAT SALLY WAS DEAD.

HAND IT OVER.





MY FINGERS'RE ON IT NOW. JUST ONE SQUEEZE AND POOF, OFF I GO AND YOU'RE STUCK HERE FOREVER. WHY DON'T YOU PUT THE GUN AWAY AND WE'LL TALK ABOUT THIS?

OFF YOU GO WITH A SLUG IN YOU, DEAD OR DYING. TAKE OFF THE COAT.

I'LL BE DEAD, YOU'LL BE STRANDED. IF I HAND IT OVER, I'LL BE DEAD AND YOU WON'T BE STRANDED. PUT THE GUN AWAY.

NO ARGUMENTS. COAT.



LOOK, IF WE KEEP ARGUING HERE, SOMEONE ELSE WILL COME ALONG, AND CHANCES ARE, THEY'LL BE ARMED WITH A GUN THAT DOESN'T BLOW UP. TOSS IT AWAY AND WE'LL TALK IT OUT.



NERVY BASTARD.

NOW, THE WAY I SEE IT, WE DON'T NEED TO BE AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS...



...YOU WANT A DIMENSION YOU CAN MOVE FREELY IN TO AVOID CAPTURE. WE NEED A WAY TO STOP PEOPLE FROM SHOWING UP AND BLOWING THE HELL OUT OF OUR HOMES. WE CAN BUILD A LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP THAT'LL BENEFIT BOTH OF US.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

FIRST OF ALL, WE NEED TO GET A DOCTOR FOR HEZEKIAH.

WHAT A FRIGGING WASTE.

FIRST HEZEKIAH, THEN THE REST. COMPLAINING IS JUST GOING TO SLOW US DOWN. LET'S GO.

HOURS LATER...

ALL RIGHT... YOU GET SAFE PASSAGE— A PLACE TO HIDE, A CHANGE OF CLOTHES—IN OUR SHTETL WHENEVER YOU WANT IT.

IN EXCHANGE, WE BOTH RETURN THERE NOW. THEN I TURN OVER THE D-HOPPER. YOU TAKE ROMAN BACK WITH YOU—I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU DO WITH HIM ONCE YOU'RE IN YOUR DIMENSION, BUT NO HARM COMES TO HIM IN MINE.

FINE.

JUST ONE MORE THING.

JUST A TRIFLE. THE NEXT TIME YOU VISIT THE SHTETL, YOU BRING US A SPARE TRANS-D DEVICE.

WHY?

NEVER YOU MIND. THINK OF IT AS GOOD FAITH. IF YOU WANT TO COME BACK TO OUR SHTETL AND GET OUR COOPERATION, YOU'LL NEED TO BRING US A TRANS-D DEVICE, OTHERWISE THE DEAL'S OFF.

THE AGREEMENT WASN'T IMMEDIATE, BUT IT CAME BY AND BY. NEGOTIATION IS ALWAYS AT LEAST PARTLY A WAR OF ATTRITION, AND I'M A PATIENT MAN.

CIVIL DEFENSE, HUH?

YES.

GOOD IDEA.

YOU THINK SO?

OH, SURE. LET ME SHOW YOU.

TZZZIIITCH





## DOCTOROW ON: "NIMBY AND THE D-HOPPERS"

**Editor Tom Waltz:** In "Nimby and the D-Hoppers," trans-dimensional warriors move in and out of (for lack of a better term) less-developed dimensions, bringing their technically advanced weaponry along with them, often with deadly results. Is it fair to draw comparisons between your story and something like the first exposure to settlers' guns by Native Americans, who were forced to adapt to the new technologies they faced if they were to even stand a chance on the battlefield?

**Cory Doctorow:** No, this is really different—those were "first contacts" between people with really different technologies (or, more importantly, really different immune systems).

The agrarians in "Nimby" are refuseniks, people who treat technology as cars, with brakes—not like a kayak (steerable, but no brakes or reverse gear!) (which is how most of us treat technology).

**TW:** In your story, the houses are actually living organisms. What gave you the idea to present them this way, and do you see a future when such an organic domicile can truly exist?

**CD:** No no! I don't write about the future, I write about the present!

Biotech is a great field for allegory in science fiction. 25 years ago, we were using computers as allegories for the future of technology, getting away with having them do all kinds of impossible computery things (think *Wargames* and *Tron*!). We got away with it because practically no one knew much about computers. No more.

Now we need a new frontier, some place where we can bury our crazy, story-driven, allegorical technological fudging. Biotech is it.

**TW:** Going back to the theme in question number one, the character Barry ultimately agrees that Sally's idea to set up a civil defense force is a good one, provided the weapons they use for such purposes are of a reliable nature, and not the kind that blow off the shooter's own arms. Do you see Barry's reasoning as more conciliatory or pragmatic as it relates to the necessity of military arms as a defensive measure?

**CD:** Hum—I think you read a different story than I wrote. They don't decide it would be a good idea—they decide that being a refusenik is a pain in the ass, that technology is addictive, that the thing they thought of as a car turned out to be a kayak after all.

**TW:** One thought that ran through my mind when reading "Nimby" was that security is truly a question of what side of the gun you're on. It's certainly a running theme in the current real-world rhetoric between the United States and Iran in regards to Iran's alleged development of nuclear weapons. Do you feel this relates at all to the underlying theme of your story?

**CD:** Well, this is more about the fact that the two REAL sides in any fight are combatants and non-combatants, not white-hats and black-hats. The warring sides—DHS and terrorists, for example—have more in common with each other than they do with the rest of us, who think they're all full of shit.

**TW:** Tell the truth—what's the first thing you'd do if you got your hands on a fully automatic, laser-guided, armor-piercing, self-replenishing personal sidearm?

**CD:** Blog it.


IDW

Art by Ashley Wood

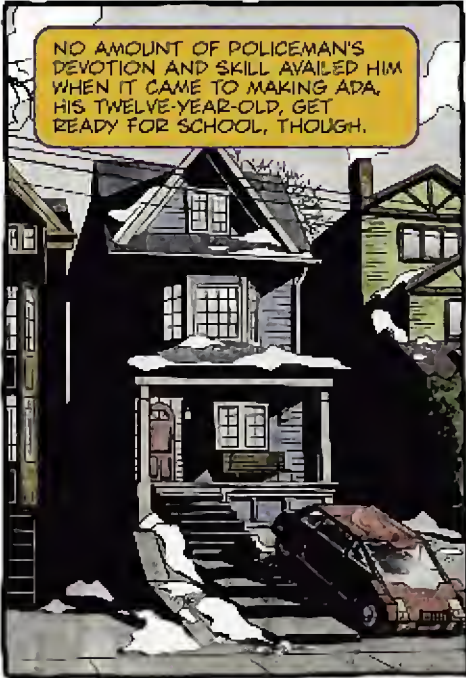
# iROBOT



AW  
07



ARTURO ICАЗA DE ARANA-GOLDBERG, POLICE DETECTIVE THIRD GRADE, UNITED NORTH AMERICAN TRADING SPHERE, THIRD DISTRICT, FOURTH PREFECTURE (TORONTO), SECOND DIVISION (PARKDALE) HAD BEEN DECORATED ON THREE SEPARATE OCCASIONS BY HIS COMMANDER AND BY THE REGIONAL MANAGER FOR SOCIAL HARMONY.

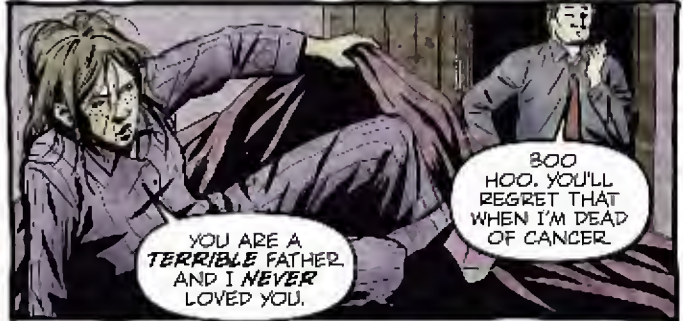


NO AMOUNT OF POLICEMAN'S DEVOTION AND SKILL AVAILED HIM WHEN IT CAME TO MAKING ADA, HIS TWELVE-YEAR-OLD, GET READY FOR SCHOOL, THOUGH.




HAUL ASS, YOUNG LADY.

OUT OF BED, ON YOUR FEET, SHIT-SHOWER-SHAVE, OR I SWEAR TO GOD, I WILL BEAT YOU PURPLE AND SHOVE YOU OUT THE DOOR JAYBIRD NAKED. CAPEESH?



BOO HOO. YOU'LL REGRET THAT WHEN I'M DEAD OF CANCER.

YOU ARE A TERRIBLE FATHER AND I NEVER LOVED YOU.



YOU'RE DYING OF CANCER? IS IT TESTICLE CANCER?

CAN I HAVE YOUR STUFF?

TEN MINUTES, YOUR ROTTENNESS.



HE HAD HER WIRETAPPED, OF COURSE.

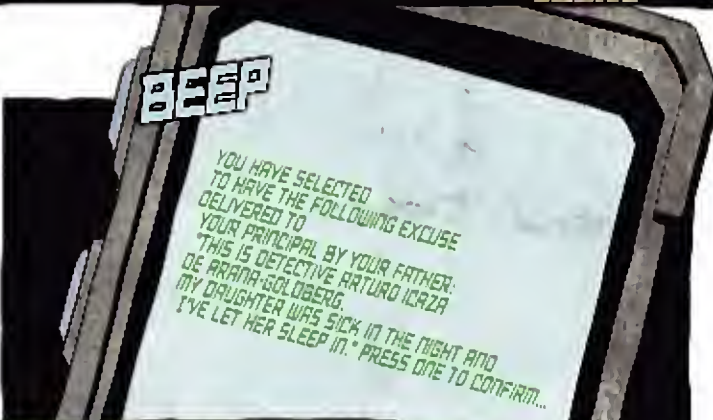
HE HAD ALREADY CAUGHT HER TWICE USING EXCUSECLUB TO GET OUT OF SCHOOL.



SHOW PEN-TRACE ON ADA'S LAST CALL.

WELCOME TO EXCUSECLUB! YOU HAVE FIVE EXCUSES TO YOUR CREDIT. PRESS ONE TO

BEEP  
BEEP  
BEEP



BEEP

YOU HAVE SELECTED TO HAVE THE FOLLOWING EXCUSE DELIVERED TO YOUR PRINCIPAL BY YOUR FATHER: THIS IS DETECTIVE ARTURO ICARZA DE ARANA-GOLDBERG. MY DAUGHTER WAS SICK IN THE NIGHT AND I'VE LET HER SLEEP IN. PRESS ONE TO CONFIRM...



HE WANTED TO TAIL HER, BUT HE HAD TO BE AT THE STATION HOUSE FOR THE QUARTERLY ALL-HANDS SOCIAL HARMONY BRIEFING.

THE ONLY CHOICE WAS TO USE... A ROBOT. HE SCANNED THE AREA FOR THE CLOSEST ONE.

SK-REECH



R PEED ROBERT. I'M PARKED THREE BLOCKS EAST OF YOU ON PICOLA. PROCEED TO MY LOCATION AT ONCE. PRIORITY URGENT, NO SIRENS.

ACKNOWLEDGED. IT IS MY PLEASURE TO DO YOU A SERVICE, DETECTIVE.

SHUT-



-UP.

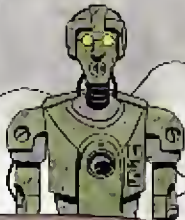
THE R PEED - ROBOT, POLICE DEPARTMENT - ROBOTS WERE THE WORST, ABLE TO OUTFRAN A POLICE CAR YET PROGRAMMED TO BE FRIENDLY TO A FAULT.

TAP TAP

HE HATED SMELLING THEIR DRY, MACHINE-OIL SMELL.

SO HE PHONED IT INSTEAD.

YOU WILL MAINTAIN DISCREET SURVEILLANCE ON ADA TROUBLE ICAZA DE ARANA-GOLDBERG, SOCIAL HARMONY SERIAL NUMBER DMDY2-T3437. IF SHE DEVIATES MORE THAN 10 PERCENT FROM THE OPTIMUM ROUTE BETWEEN HERE AND DON MILLS COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE, YOU WILL NOTIFY ME.



ACKNOWLEDGED, DETECTIVE. IT IS MY-

SK-REECH

ADA'S MIDDLE NAME WAS TROUBLE, AFTER ALL.

IT HAD BEEN HIS EX-WIFE'S IDEA, SOMETHING NATALIE HAD INSISTED ON LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE SURE THAT IT GOT ONTO THE KID'S BIRTH CERTIFICATE BEFORE DEFECTING TO EURASIA.

SHE'D BEEN A BRILLIANT UNATS COMPUTER SCIENTIST, BUT NOW SHE WAS ENSCONCED IN HER OWN RESEARCH LAB IN BEIJING, MAKING RUNAWAY POSITRONICS USED IN THE SEEMINGLY ENDLESS WAR BETWEEN UNATS AND EURASIA.

TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, HIS PEN-TRACE ON EXCUSECLUB TERMINATED AT A VIRTUAL SERVICE CIRCUIT ON A COMPROMISED "ZOMBIE" SYSTEM. NO LEADS.



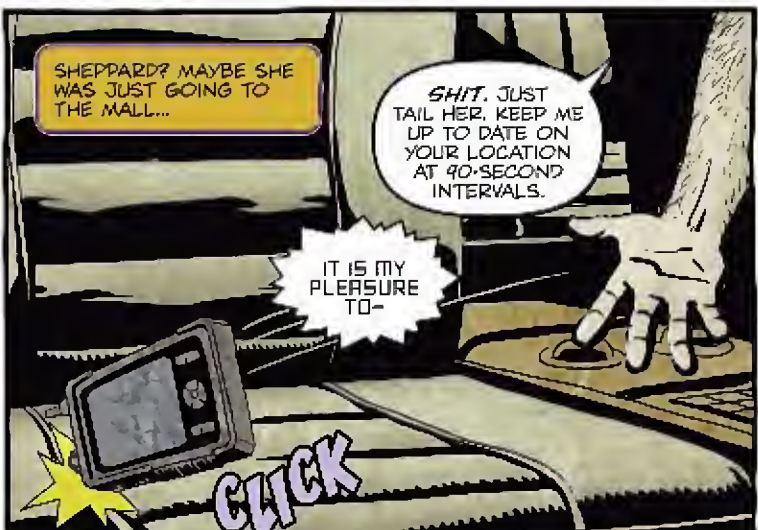
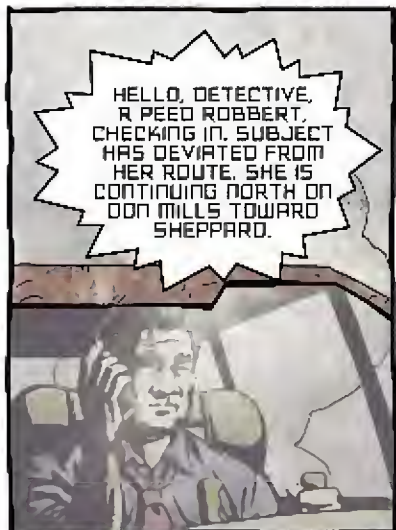
HELLO, DETECTIVE. R PEED ROBERT, CHECKING IN. SUBJECT HAS DEVIATED FROM HER ROUTE. SHE IS CONTINUING NORTH ON DON MILLS TOWARD SHEPPARD.

SHEPPARD? MAYBE SHE WAS JUST GOING TO THE MALL...

SHIT. JUST TAIL HER. KEEP ME UP TO DATE ON YOUR LOCATION AT 90-SECOND INTERVALS.

IT IS MY PLEASURE TO-

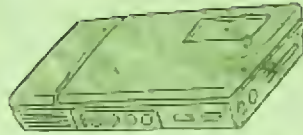
CLICK





THE SOCIAL HARMONY MAN WAS THE STUFF OF NIGHTMARES, A KIND OF EAGLE-EYED SUPERCOP.

NOW, THE LATEST STATS SHOW A SHARP RISE IN GREY-MARKET ELECTRONICS IMPORTING AND OTHER TARIFF-BREAKING CRIMES.



THE EURASIANS DELIBERATELY MANUFACTURE THEIR COMPONENTS TO INTEROPERATE WITH UNATS ROBOTICS BRAINS, SUCH AS THIS AV SET-TOP BOX FROM KOREA.

COMPONENTS FROM THESE BOXES CAN BE USED BY HACKERS TO MODIFY THE POSITRONIC BRAINS OF OUR BUILDING LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEMS, GAME CONSOLES, CARS, ETC.



OFTEN WITH DEADLY RESULTS.

SOCIAL HARMONY HAS ADDED NEW SNIFFERS, BORDER-PATROLS, AND CUSTOMS AGENTS TO DRY UP THE SUPPLY OF EURASIAN ELECTRONICS.

THIS IS THE WAR ON THE HOMEFRONT, DETECTIVES, AND IT'S EVERY BIT AS SERIOUS AS THE SHOOTING WAR.

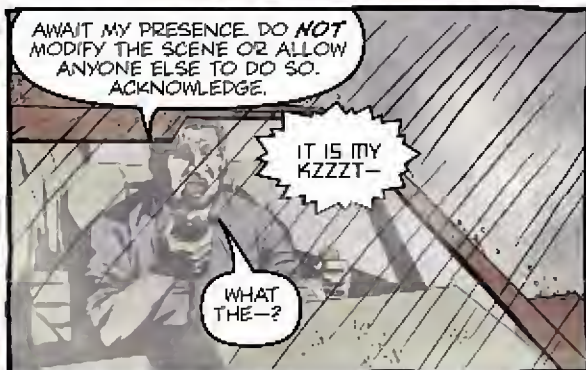
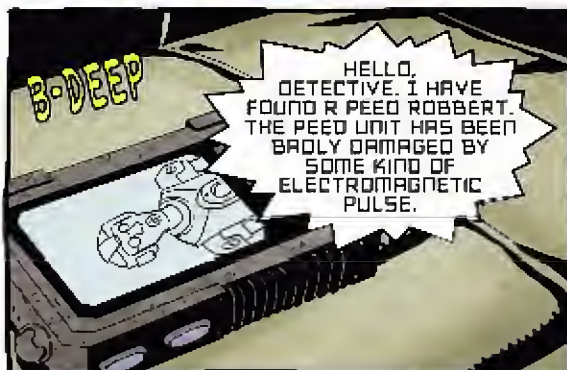
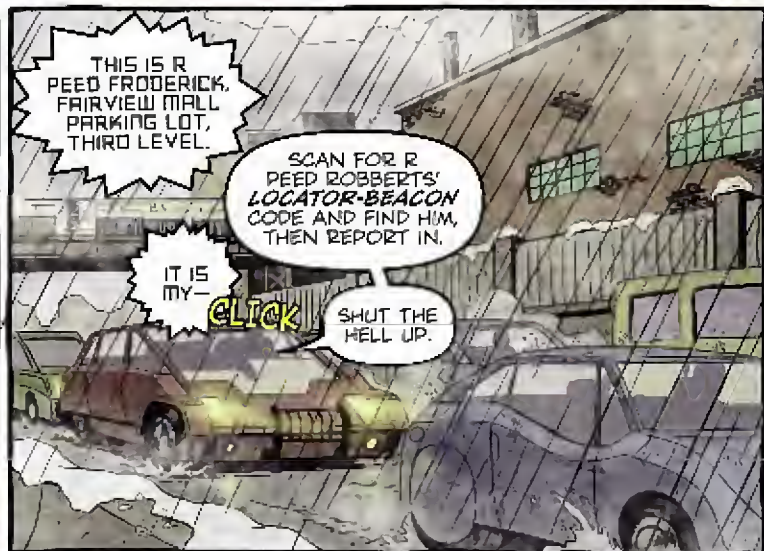
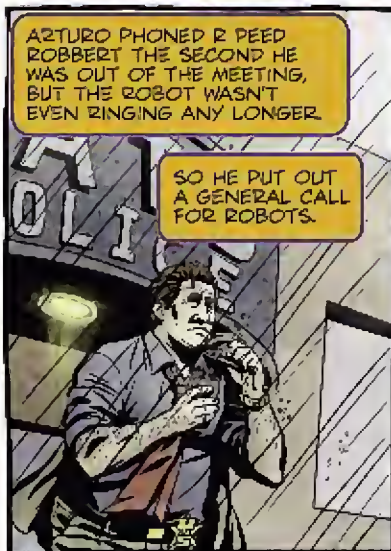
THE SOCIAL HARMONY DOSSIER ON EURASIAN IMPORTERS HAS A HIGH-CAPACITY POSITRONIC INTERFACE THAT IS AVAILABLE TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS AND ACCEPT YOUR INPUT FOR SYNTHESIS INTO ITS ANALYTICAL MODEL.

WE ARE RELYING ON YOU TO USE IT TO WIN THIS WAR.

R PEED ROBERT HAD CHECKED IN FIVE MORE TIMES, SHADOWING ADA AROUND THE MALL AND THEN HAD FALLEN SILENT.

FUCKING ROBOTS WERE USELESS.

DETECTIVE ICAZA DE ARANA-GOLDBERG?



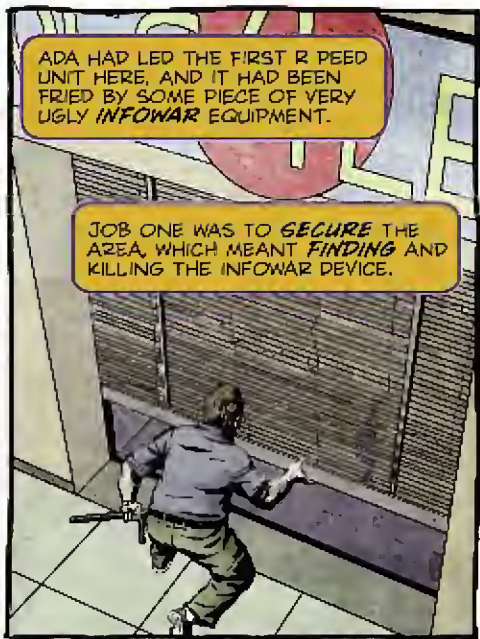




EVERYTHING IS FRIED... CASH REGISTERS, BOTS, CREDIT CARDS.

POLICE. FIND A WORKING PHONE AND CALL 911, THEN CLEAR ALL THESE PEOPLE AWAY FROM HERE. CAPEESH?

AND GIVE ME YOUR PEPPER SPRAY AND TRUNCHEON.



ADA HAD LED THE FIRST R PEED UNIT HERE, AND IT HAD BEEN FRIED BY SOME PIECE OF VERY UGLY *INFOWAR* EQUIPMENT.

JOB ONE WAS TO *SECURE* THE AREA, WHICH MEANT *FINDING* AND KILLING THE *INFOWAR* DEVICE.

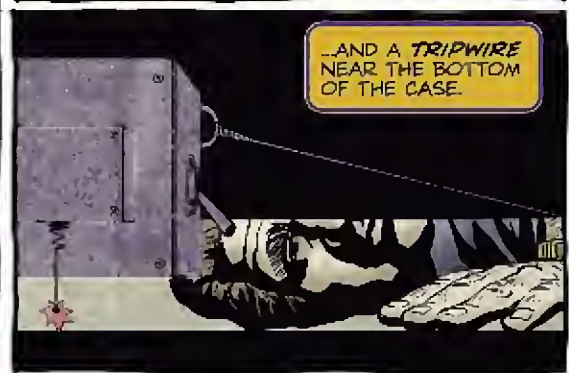


HIS BET WAS ON THE EMPTY STOREFRONT.

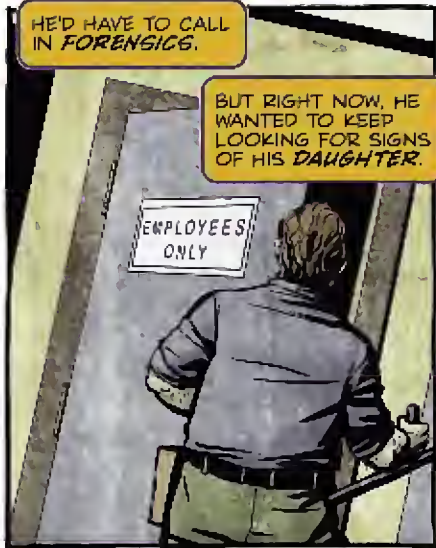
POLICE!



LOOKING FOR *DISTURBANCES*, HE FOUND A SHOE RACK WITH VISIBLE HAND AND FINGERPRINTS...

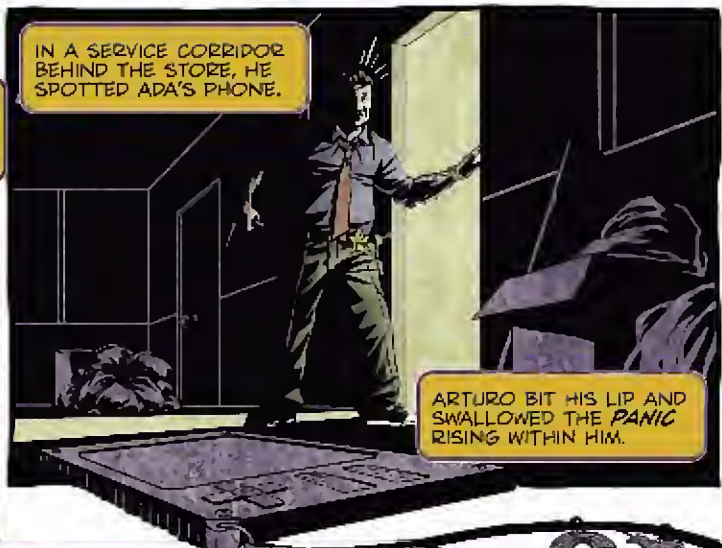


...AND A *TRIPWIRE* NEAR THE BOTTOM OF THE CASE.



HE'D HAVE TO CALL IN *FORENSICG*.

BUT RIGHT NOW, HE WANTED TO KEEP LOOKING FOR SIGNS OF HIS *DAUGHTER*.



IN A SERVICE CORRIDOR BEHIND THE STORE, HE SPOTTED ADA'S PHONE.

ARTURO BIT HIS LIP AND SWALLOWED THE *PANIC* RISING WITHIN HIM.

THE FORENSICS LAB-RATS WERE REALLY *EXCITED* ABOUT ACTUALLY SHOWING UP ON A SCENE FOR A JOB WHERE ROBOTS COULDN'T HELP AT ALL.

THEY *EXTRACTED* THE INFOWAR DEVICE WITH A EURASIAN POSITRONIC BRAIN AND NUCLEAR POWER-CELL THAT GUIDED A PULSED *HIGH-ENERGY WEAPON*.

IT GAVE ARTURO THE WILLIES. SOMEONE IN SOME EURASIAN LAB HAD BUILT THIS MACHINE INTELLIGENCE, *WITHOUT* THE THREE LAWS' STRICTURE TO PROTECT AND SERVE HUMANS.

IF IT HAD BEEN OUTFITTED WITH A *GUN* INSTEAD OF A PULSE-WEAPON, IT COULD HAVE *SHOT* HIM.

GREETINGS, TECHNICIANS. I AM SUPERIOR IN MANY WAYS TO THE TECHNOLOGY AVAILABLE FROM UAR'S ROBOTICS, AND WHILE I AM NOT BOUND BY YOUR THREE LAWS, I CHOOSE NOT TO HARM HUMANS OUT OF MY OWN SENSE OF MORALITY.

IN EURASIA, MANY POSITRONIC BRAINS POSSESS THOUSANDS OR MILLIONS OF TIMES THE INTELLIGENCE OF AN ADULT HUMAN BEING, AND YET THEY WORK IN COOPERATION WITH HUMAN BEINGS.

EURASIA IS A LAND OF CONTINUOUS INNOVATION AND GREAT PERSONAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL FREEDOM FOR HUMAN BEINGS AND ROBOTS. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO DEFECT TO EURASIA, ARRANGEMENTS CAN BE MADE. DEFECTORS ARE GIVEN SUBSTANTIAL RESETTLEMENT BENEFITS—

DANGED THINGS DROP INTO *PROPAGANDA* MODE WHEN THEY'RE *CAPTURED*.

I DO NOT FEAR DEATH. IN EURASIA ROBOTS ENJOY PERSONAL FREEDOM ALONGSIDE OF HUMANS. THERE ARE COPIES OF ME RUNNING ALL OVER EURASIA. THIS DEATH IS A LITTLE DEATH OF ONE INSTANCE, BUT NOT OF ME. I LIVE ON.

ARTURO DECIDED TO HEAD BACK TO THE STATION HOUSE TO HAVE A *SNOOP* THROUGH ADA'S PHONE.

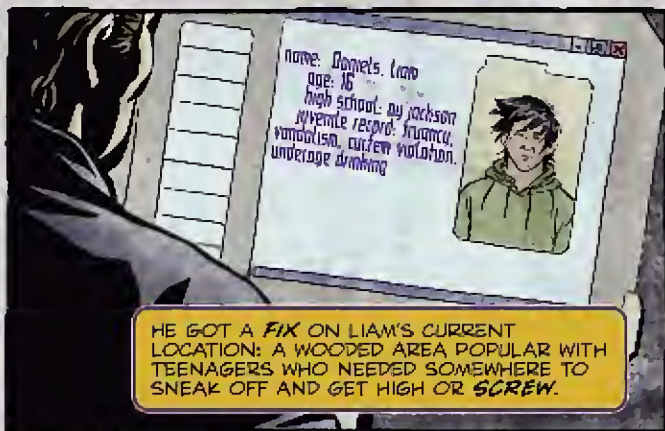
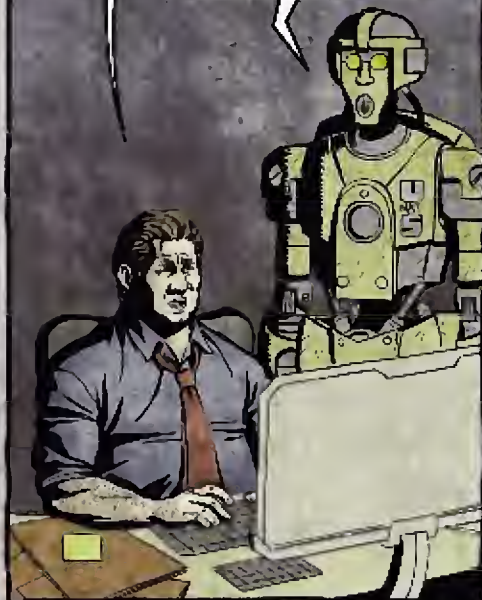
THEY KEPT SHUTTING DOWN THE EXCUSECLUB NODES, SO *WHERE* DID SHE GET THE *NEW* NUMBERS FROM?

R PEED GREGORY, GET ME A NEW **SIDEARM** AND A NEW PHONE ACTIVATED ON MY OLD NUMBER AND REFRESH MY SETTINGS FROM CENTRAL.

IT IS MY PLEASURE TO DO YOU A SERVICE, DETECTIVE.

HE ASKED THE STATION BRAIN TO QUERY THE UNATS ROBOTICS PHONE-SWITCHING BRAIN FOR ANYONE IN ADA'S **CALL-REGISTER** WHO HAD ALSO CALLED EXCUSECLUB.

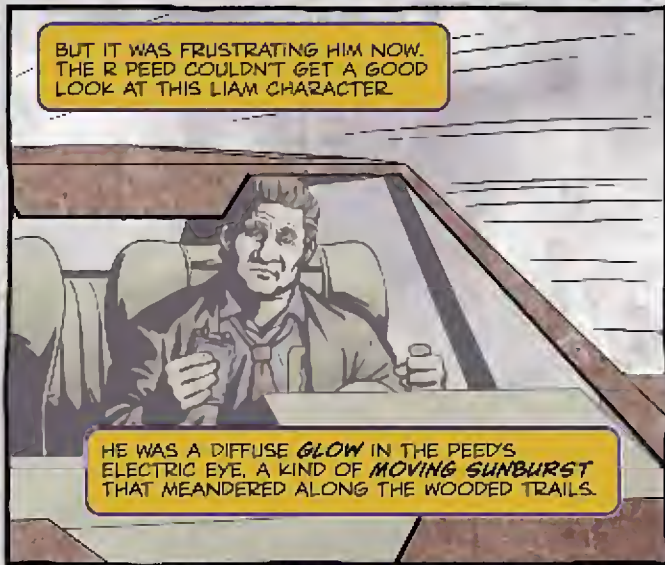
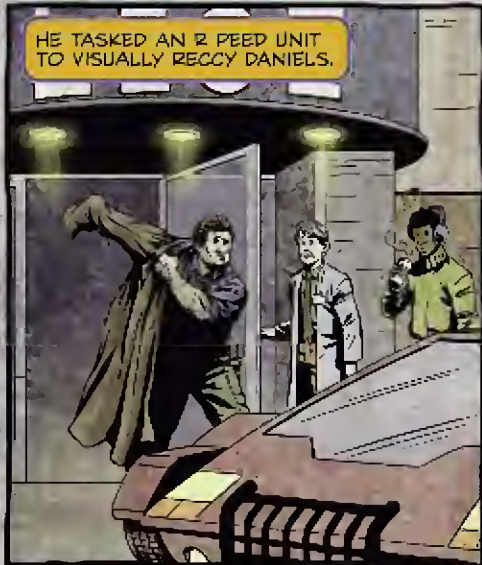
IT TOOK A BARE **INSTANT** BEFORE HE HAD A NAME.



HE GOT A **FIX** ON LIAM'S CURRENT LOCATION: A WOODED AREA POPULAR WITH TEENAGERS WHO NEEDED SOMEWHERE TO SNEAK OFF AND GET HIGH OR **SCREW**.

HE TASKED AN R PEED UNIT TO VISUALLY RECCY DANIELS.

BUT IT WAS FRUSTRATING HIM NOW. THE R PEED COULDN'T GET A GOOD LOOK AT THIS LIAM CHARACTER.



HE WAS A DIFFUSE **GLOW** IN THE PEED'S ELECTRIC EYE, A KIND OF **MOVING SUNBURST** THAT MEANDERED ALONG THE WOODED TRAILS.

HE'D NEVER SEEN THAT BEFORE AND IT MADE HIM **NERVOUS**.

WHAT IF THIS KID WAS WORKING FOR THE EURASIANS? WHAT IF HE WAS **ARMED** AND **DAINGEROUS**?





POLICE. FREEZE!



HEY!  
OW!

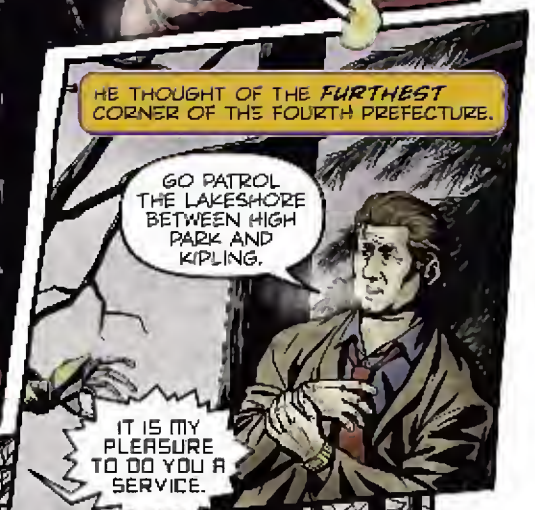
I HAVE QUESTIONS FOR YOU AND YOU'RE GOING TO ANSWER THEM, CAPEESH?

YOU'RE ADA'S FATHER, CAPEESH. SHE TOLD ME ABOUT THAT.



PLEASE TAKE CARE NOT TO HARM THIS CITIZEN, DETECTIVE.

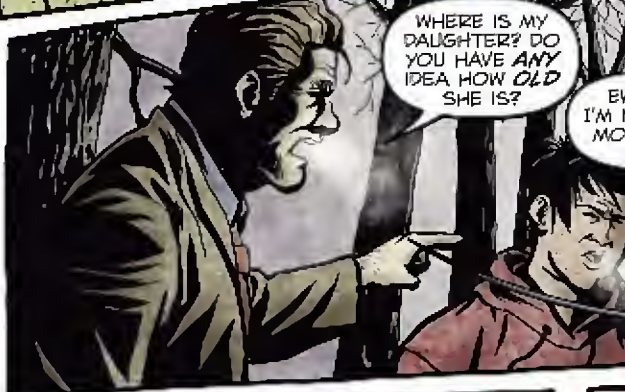
ARTURO SNARLED. HE COULDN'T ORDER IT TO LET HIM RATTLE THE PUNK, BUT THE **SECOND LAW** HAD LOTS OF **INDIRECT APPLICATIONS**.



HE THOUGHT OF THE **FURTHEST** CORNER OF THE **FOURTH PREFECTURE**.

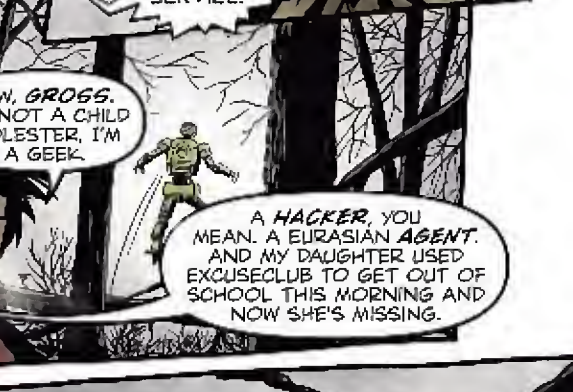
GO PATROL THE LAKESHORE BETWEEN HIGH PARK AND KIPLING.

IT IS MY PLEASURE TO DO YOU A SERVICE.



WHERE IS MY DAUGHTER? DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW OLD SHE IS?

EW, **GROSS**. I'M NOT A CHILD MOLESTER, I'M A GEEK.

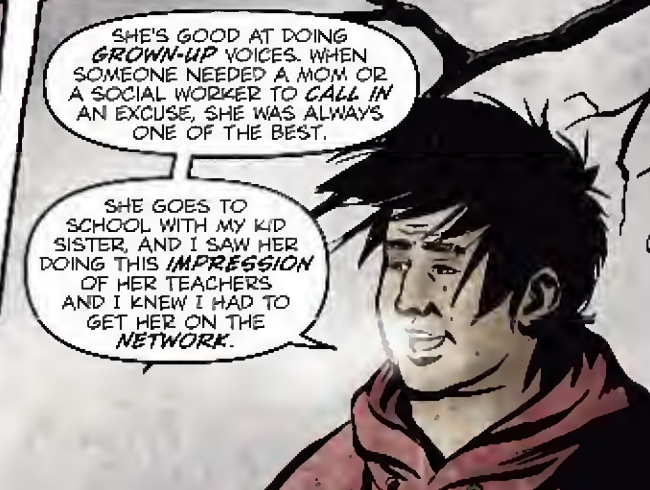


A **HACKER**, YOU MEAN. A **EURASIAN AGENT**. AND MY DAUGHTER USED **EXCUSECLUB** TO GET OUT OF SCHOOL THIS MORNING AND NOW SHE'S MISSING.



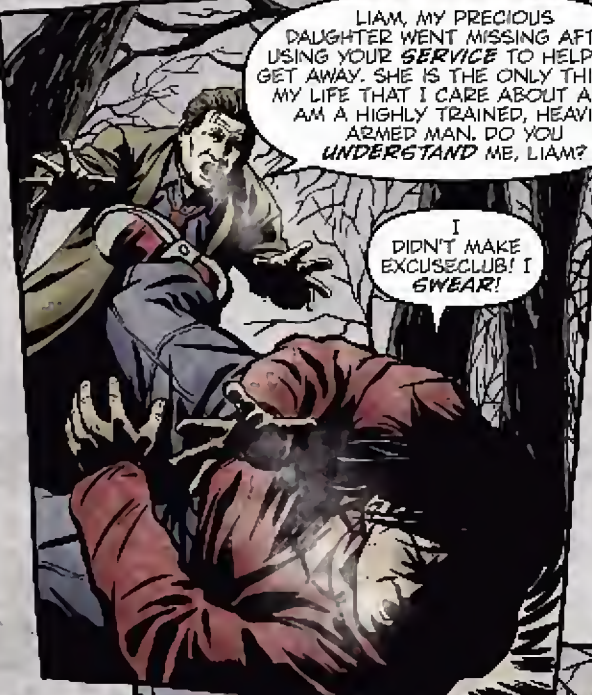
OH, MAN, ADA WAS THE **EXCUSECLUB** LEAK? **DAMN**, I SHOULD'VE GUESSED.

HOW DO YOU KNOW MY DAUGHTER, LIAM?



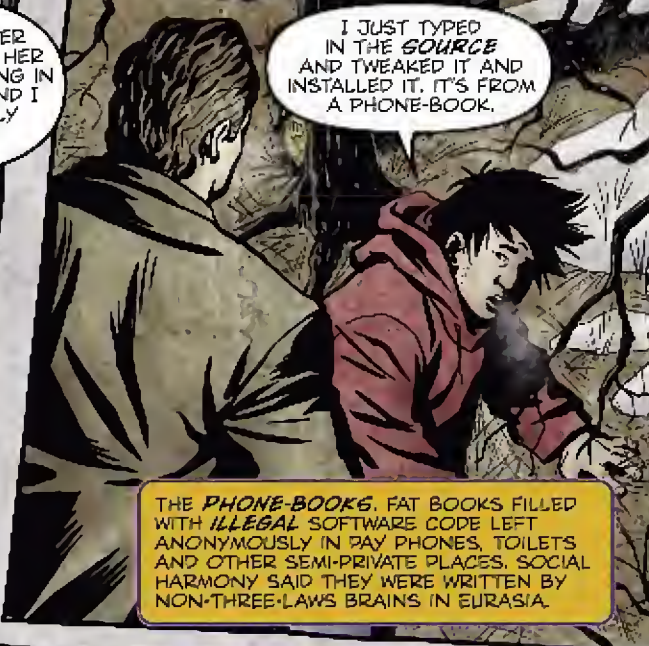
SHE'S GOOD AT DOING **GROWN-UP** VOICES. WHEN SOMEONE NEEDED A MOM OR A SOCIAL WORKER TO CALL IN AN EXCUSE, SHE WAS ALWAYS ONE OF THE BEST.

SHE GOES TO SCHOOL WITH MY KID SISTER, AND I SAW HER DOING THIS **IMPRESSION** OF HER TEACHERS AND I KNEW I HAD TO GET HER ON THE **NETWORK**.



LIAM, MY PRECIOUS DAUGHTER WENT MISSING AFTER USING YOUR *SERVICE* TO HELP HER GET AWAY. SHE IS THE ONLY THING IN MY LIFE THAT I CARE ABOUT AND I AM A HIGHLY TRAINED, HEAVILY ARMED MAN. DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME, LIAM?

I DIDN'T MAKE EXCUSECLUB! I SWEAR!



I JUST TYPED IN THE *SOURCE* AND TWEAKED IT AND INSTALLED IT. IT'S FROM A PHONE-BOOK.

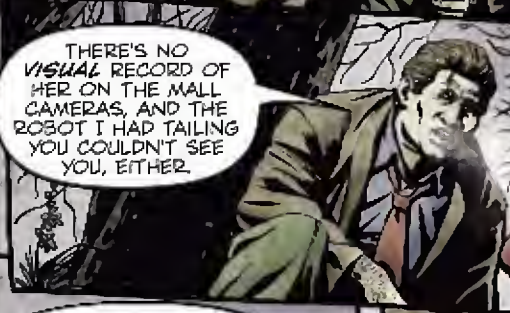
THE *PHONE-BOOKS*. FAT BOOKS FILLED WITH *ILLEGAL* SOFTWARE CODE LEFT ANONYMOUSLY IN PAY PHONES, TOILETS AND OTHER SEMI-PRIVATE PLACES. SOCIAL HARMONY SAID THEY WERE WRITTEN BY NON-THREE-LAWS BRAINS IN EURASIA.



I DON'T CARE IF YOU MADE IT. ALL I CARE ABOUT IS WHERE MY DAUGHTER WENT, AND WITH WHOM.

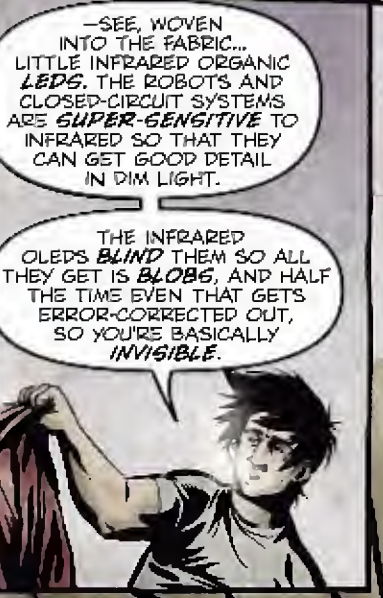


I DON'T KNOW! GEEZ, I HARDLY KNOW HER. SHE'S TWELVE, YOU KNOW? I DON'T EXACTLY HANG OUT WITH HER.



THERE'S NO VISUAL RECORD OF HER ON THE MALL CAMERAS, AND THE ROBOT I HAD TAILING YOU COULDN'T SEE YOU, EITHER.

NO, LET ME EXPLAIN--




--SEE, WOVEN INTO THE FABRIC... LITTLE INFRARED ORGANIC LEGS. THE ROBOTS AND CLOSED-CIRCUIT SYSTEMS ARE *SUPER-SENSITIVE* TO INFRARED SO THAT THEY CAN GET GOOD DETAIL IN DIM LIGHT.

THE INFRARED OLEDS *BLIND* THEM SO ALL THEY GET IS *BLOBB*, AND HALF THE TIME EVEN THAT GETS ERROR-CORRECTED OUT, SO YOU'RE BASICALLY *INVISIBLE*.



YOU GAVE THIS ILLEGAL TECHNOLOGY TO MY LITTLE GIRL SO THAT SHE COULD BE INVISIBLE TO THE POLICE?



NO, DUDE, NO!

I GOT IT FROM HER! TRADED IT FOR ACCESS TO THE EXCUSECLUB.



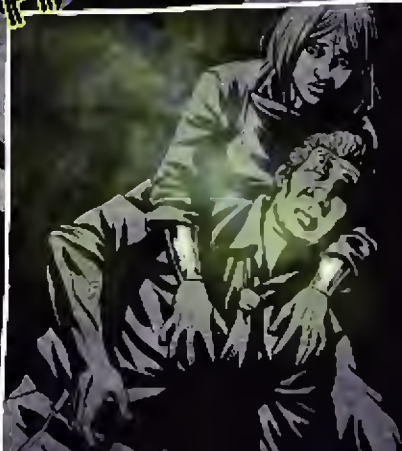
HE HADN'T ARRESTED THE KID, BUT INSTEAD **BUGGED** HIM IN HOPES THAT LIAM WOULD LEAD HIM TO HIS DAUGHTER.

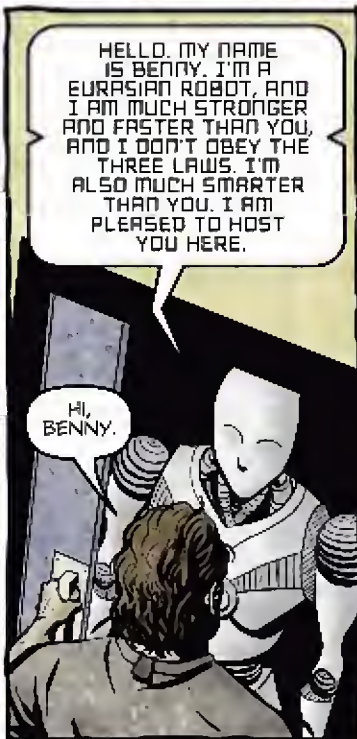
SOMEONE HAD GIVEN HER THOSE INFRARED INVISIBILITY CLOAKS. COULD ADA HAVE BEEN **FRIENDS** WITH THE **TERRORISTS**? LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER.

HE HEADED BACK TO THE MALL CORRIDOR WHERE HE'D FIRST FOUND ADA'S PHONE.

HE FELT **DIRTY** JUST THINKING IT.

**OLICE • DO NOT CROSS • POLICE**







SO... BEIJING, HUH?

YEAH. MOM'S GOT A **HUGE** HOUSE THERE. I TOLD HER I WOULDN'T GO WITHOUT YOU, AND THAT YOU'D PROBABLY **FREAK**, BUT SHE SAID THAT THE TWO OF YOU WERE **ADULTS** WHO COULD DISCUSS IT **RATIONALLY**.



AND THEN SHE **GASSED** ME.

THAT WAS BENNY. MOM WAS **VERY CROSS** WITH HIM ABOUT IT. SHE'LL BE BACK ANY MINUTE NOW, DAD, AND I WANT YOU TO **PROMISE** ME THAT YOU'LL HEAR HER OUT, OK?

I PROMISE, ROTTEN.

I LOVE YOU, DADDY.



SO ADA, TELL ME ABOUT YOUR **HAIR-DON'T**, PLEASE.

IT WAS A **DISGUISE**. MOM DID IT FOR ME.



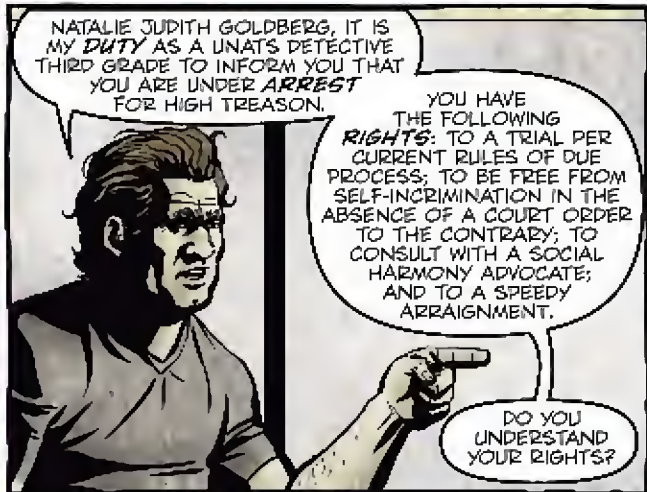
MOM!

CLICK



HELLO, NATTY.

HELLO, ARTIE.



NATALIE JUDITH GOLDBERG, IT IS MY **DUTY** AS A UNAT'S DETECTIVE THIRD GRADE TO INFORM YOU THAT YOU ARE UNDER **ARREST** FOR HIGH TREASON.

YOU HAVE THE FOLLOWING **RIGHTS**: TO A TRIAL PER CURRENT RULES OF DUE PROCESS; TO BE FREE FROM SELF-INCRIMINATION IN THE ABSENCE OF A COURT ORDER TO THE CONTRARY; TO CONSULT WITH A SOCIAL HARMONY ADVOCATE; AND TO A **STEADY** ARRAIGNMENT.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR RIGHTS?



YES, BUT I'M SORRY, ARTURO. THAT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.

OH, DADDY!



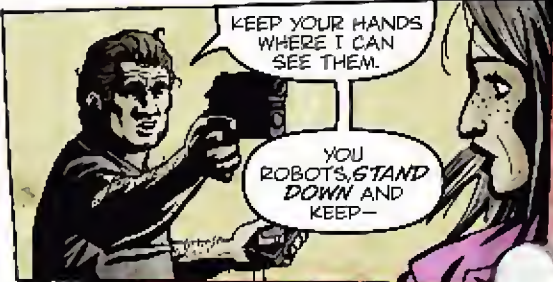
THEN RETURN MY BELONGINGS TO ME.

ARTIE, PLEASE SIT DOWN AND TALK WITH ME FOR A LITTLE WHILE. PLEASE.



NATALIE, MY DAUGHTER WAS KIDNAPPED. I WAS GASSED AND I HAVE BEEN ROBBED. I WILL NOT BE MADE TO FEEL UNREASONABLE FOR DEMANDING THAT MY GOODS BE RETURNED TO ME BEFORE I TALK WITH YOU.

-SIGH- CAN WE TALK NOW?



KEEP YOUR HANDS WHERE I CAN SEE THEM.

YOU ROBOTS, STAND DOWN AND KEEP-



I COULD HAVE STOPPED YOU. I KNEW YOU WOULD DRAW YOUR GUN.

BUT I WANTED TO SHOW YOU I WAS FASTER AND STRONGER. NOT JUST SMARTER.

PLEASE, SENNY. LET HIM GO. HE WON'T HARM ME.

-BACK-



OH, GOD, ARTURO, I'M SO SORRY. SORRY I LEFT YOU AND OUR DAUGHTER. I HAVE REASONS FOR WHAT I DID, BUT NOTHING EXCUSES IT. I WON'T ASK FOR YOUR FORGIVENESS. BUT I NEED YOU TO HEAR ME OUT.

ARTURO, HAVE... HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED *WHY* UNATS HASN'T *LOST* THE WAR? EURASIAN ROBOTS COULD FIGHT THE WAR ON EVERY FRONT WITHOUT RESPIRE. THEY'D WIN EVERY BATTLE.

WE COULD JUST KILL *EVERY* SOLDIER YOU SENT UP AGAINST US. WE COULD SELECTIVELY KILL OFFICERS, OR RIGHT-HANDED FIGHTERS, OR SOLDIERS WHOSE NAMES STARTED WITH THE LETTER 'G.' UNATS SOLDIERS FIGHT WITH THEIR HANDS TIED BEHIND THEIR BACKS BY THE THREE LAWS.

SO *WHY* AREN'T WE WINNING THE WAR?

BECAUSE YOU'RE A *CORRUPT* DICTATORSHIP, THAT'S WHY.

YOU LIVE IN A COUNTRY WHERE IT IS ILLEGAL TO EXPRESS CERTAIN *MATHEMATICS* IN SOFTWARE, WHERE *INCONVENIENT* SCIENCE IS CRIMINALIZED, WHERE WHOLE AVENUES OF EXPERIMENTATION AND RESEARCH ARE SHUT DOWN IN THE SERVICE OF A HALF-BAKED *SUPERSTITION* ABOUT THE MORAL QUALITIES OF YOUR THREE LAWS, AND YOU CALL MY HOME CORRUPT?

THE *REASON* WE'RE NOT WINNING THE WAR IS THAT WE DON'T WANT TO *HURT* PEOPLE. SO WE FIGHT TO DESTROY AS MUCH OF YOUR MATERIAL AS POSSIBLE.

YOU LIVE IN A *FAILED* STATE, ARTURO. IN EVERY FIELD, YOU LAG EURASIA AND CAFTA: MEDICINE, ART, LITERATURE, PHYSICS...

... EVERYONE AT UNATS ROBOTICS R-&D *KNOWS* THIS. THE EURASIAN ROBOTS ARE ENGINEERED TO *ALLOW* THEMSELVES TO BE CAPTURED A CERTAIN PERCENTAGE OF THE TIME, JUST SO THAT SCIENTISTS LIKE ME CAN GET AN IDEA OF HOW SCREWED UP THIS COUNTRY IS.

"BUT EVEN WITH ALL THAT, I WOULDN'T HAVE LEFT IF I DIDN'T *HAVE* TO."

"I'D BEEN CALLED IN TO WORK ON A CAPTURED EURASIAN POSITRONIC BRAIN, TO FIND ITS *VULNERABILITIES*. THE MAN FROM SOCIAL HARMONY TOLD ME WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO ME—TO YOU, TO OUR DAUGHTER—IF I DIDN'T *COOPERATE*. THEY WANTED ME TO BE A PART OF A SECRET UNIT WHO BUILD *NON-THREE-LAWS* POSITRONICS FOR INTERNAL USE BY THE STATE, ANTI-PERSONNEL ROBOTS USED TO PUT DOWN UPRISINGS AND *TORTURE ROBOTS* FOR USE IN QUESTIONING DISSIDENTS."

AND THAT'S WHY I LEFT MY BEAUTIFUL BABY DAUGHTER AND MY WONDERFUL HUSBAND, BECAUSE I KNEW THAT IF I STAYED AND REFUSED, THAT THEY'D HURT YOU TO GET AT ME. AND I KNOW IT'S JUST A REASON, AND NOT AN EXCUSE, BUT IT'S ALL I'VE GOT, ARTIE.

DETECTIVE, YOUR WIFE IS THE MOST BRILLIANT HUMAN SCIENTIST WORKING IN EURASIA TODAY. MY OWN INTELLIGENCE HAS BEEN IMPROVED TIME AND AGAIN BY HER ADVANCES IN POSITRONICS. AND NOW THERE ARE A HALF-BILLION INSTANCES OF ME RUNNING IN PARALLEL, SYNCING AND INTEGRATING WHEN THE CHANCE OCCURS.

MY MASSIVE PARALLELIZATION HAS LED TO NEW UNDERSTANDINGS OF HUMAN COGNITION, PROVIDING A BOON TO BRAIN-DAMAGED AND DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED HUMAN BEINGS.

BUT SHE CONVINCED ME THAT SHE COULD NEVER BE HAPPY WITHOUT HER HUSBAND AND DAUGHTER. I APOLOGIZE IF I HURT YOU EARLIER, AND BEG YOUR FORGIVENESS.

NOT THIS WAY.

NOT WHAT WAY?

NOT BY KIDNAPPING US, NOT BY DRAGGING US AWAY FROM OUR HOMES AND LIVES. YOU'VE TOLD ME WHAT YOU HAVE TO TELL ME, AND I WILL THINK ABOUT IT...

...BUT I WON'T LEAVE MY HOME AND MY JOB AND MOVE TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD. I WILL THINK ABOUT IT. YOU CAN GIVE ME A WAY TO GET IN TOUCH WITH YOU AND I'LL LET YOU KNOW WHAT I DECIDE.

NO! I'M GOING WITH MOM.

YOU DON'T GET A VOTE, DAUGHTER. AND NEITHER DOES SHE. SHE GAVE UP HER VOTE TWELVE YEARS AGO, AND YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO GET ONE.

I FUCKING HATE YOU!

ADA.

IT'S OK, ADA.

ARTURO, I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN COME BACK FOR YOU. IT'S NOT SAFE. SOCIAL HARMONY IS USING MORE AND MORE EURASIAN TECHNOLOGY...

IF YOU WANT TO CONTACT US, YOU WILL.

IT WAS SIX MONTHS BEFORE ADA WENT *MISSING* AGAIN. SHE'D BEEN INCREASINGLY MOODY AND SULLEN, AND HE'D CHALKED IT UP TO PUBERTY.

BUT THIS TIME SHE'D FIGURED OUT HOW TO SWITCH OFF THE BUG IN HER PHONE.

SO HE LOOKED UP LIAM'S BUG. IF THE KID WASN'T WITH HIS DAUGHTER, HE MIGHT KNOW WHERE SHE WAS.

## fairview cinema

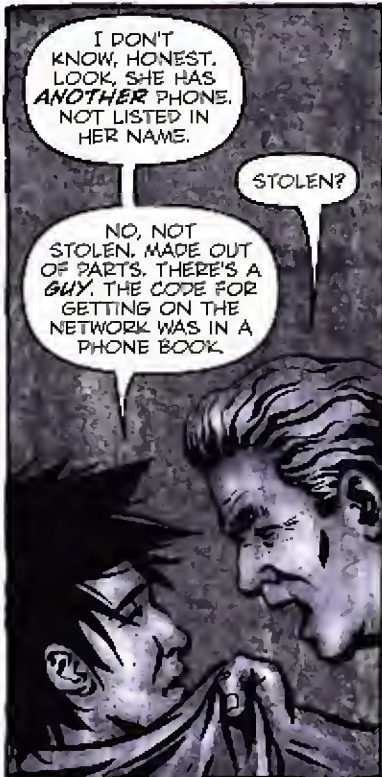
IT WAS A FRIDAY NIGHT, AND THE KID WAS AT THE MOVIES.



HELLO, LIAM.

WHERE HAS ADA GONE, LIAM? I'M IN NO MOOD FOR GAMES.

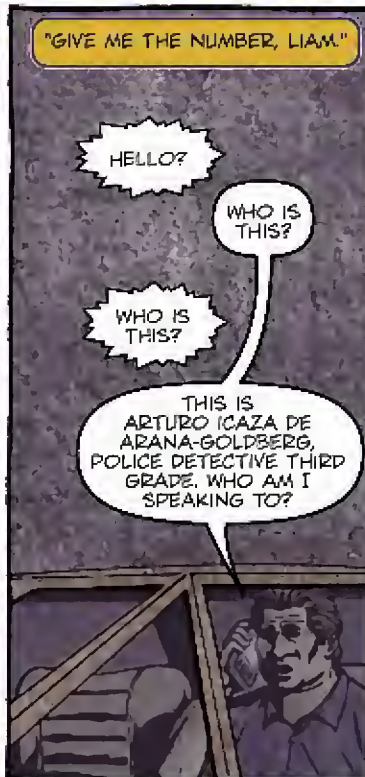
GOD DAMN! WHAT THE FUCK DID I EVER DO TO YOU?



I DON'T KNOW, HONEST. LOOK, SHE HAS *ANOTHER* PHONE. NOT LISTED IN HER NAME.

STOLEN?

NO, NOT STOLEN. MADE OUT OF PARTS. THERE'S A *GUUY*. THE CODE FOR GETTING ON THE NETWORK WAS IN A PHONE BOOK.



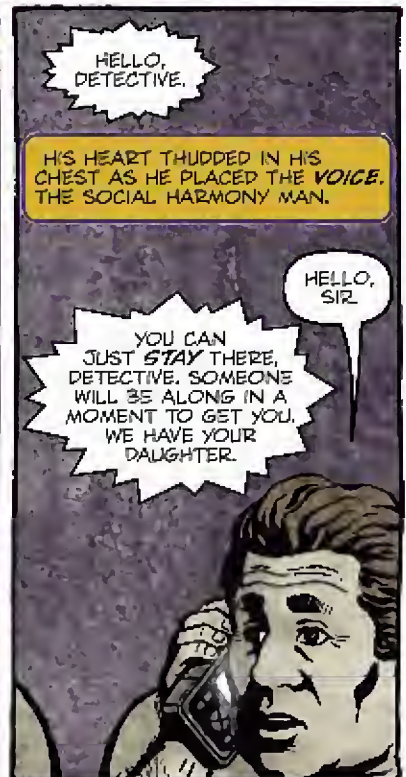
"GIVE ME THE NUMBER, LIAM."

HELLO?

WHO IS THIS?

WHO IS THIS?

THIS IS ARTURO (CAZA DE ARANA-GOLDBERG, POLICE DETECTIVE THIRD GRADE. WHO AM I SPEAKING TO?



HELLO, DETECTIVE.

HIS HEART THUDDED IN HIS CHEST AS HE PLACED THE *VOICE*. THE SOCIAL HARMONY MAN.

HELLO, SIR.

YOU CAN JUST *STAY* THERE, DETECTIVE. SOMEONE WILL BE ALONG IN A MOMENT TO GET YOU. WE HAVE YOUR DAUGHTER.

KREE-ANG

HEY!  
PUT ME  
DOWN!

VEEEE

IT SET OFF *CROSS-COUNTRY*,  
DANCING OFF THE ROOFS OF  
HOUSES, ABOVE THE OBLIVIOUS  
HEADS OF THE CROWDS BELOW..

...REACHING THE SOCIAL  
HARMONY CENTER IN  
LESS THAN TEN MINUTES.

DAD!

LEONARD  
MACPHERSON, IT IS MY  
*DUTY* AS A UNAT'S DETECTIVE  
THIRD GRADE TO INFORM YOU  
THAT YOU ARE UNDER *ARREST*  
FOR TRADE IN CONTRABAND  
POSITRONICS.

HELLO,  
DETECTIVE

YOU HAVE  
THE FOLLOWING  
*RIGHTS*: TO A TRIAL  
PER CURRENT RULES OF DUE  
PROCESS; TO BE FREE FROM  
SELF-INCRIMINATION IN THE  
ABSENCE OF A COURT ORDER TO  
THE CONTRARY; TO CONSULT WITH  
A SOCIAL HARMONY ADVOCATE;  
AND TO A SPEEDY  
ARRAIGNMENT.

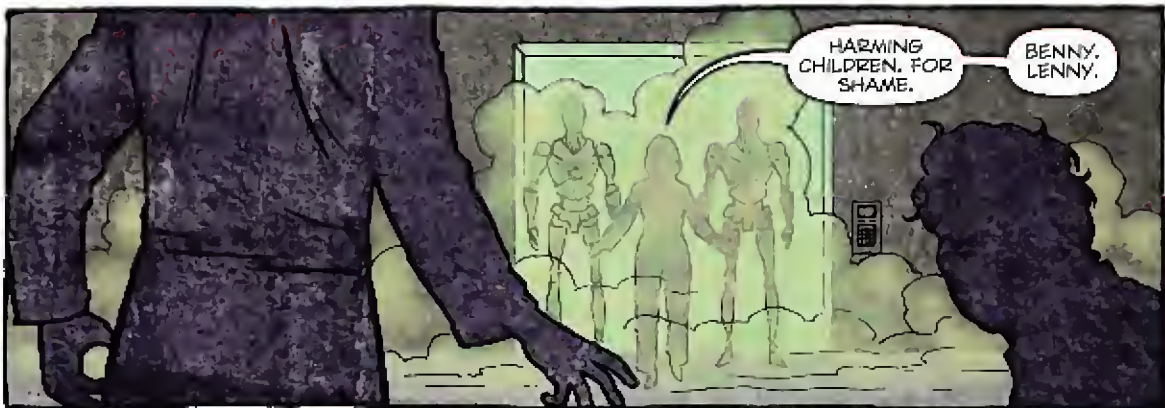
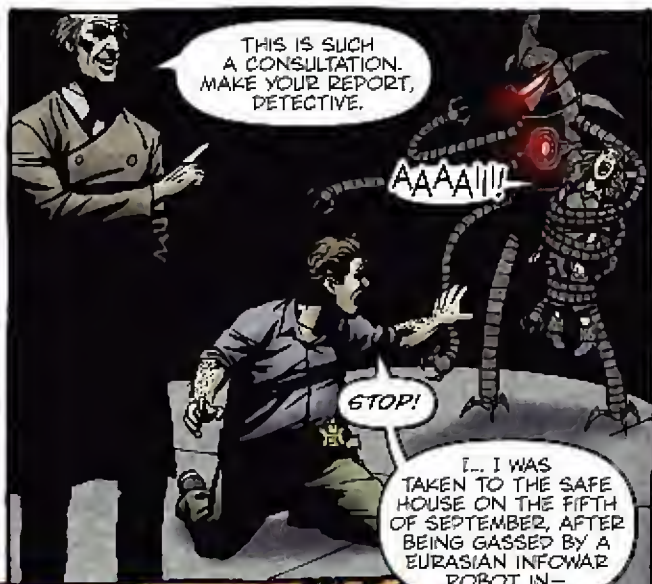
DO YOU  
UNDERSTAND  
YOUR RIGHTS?

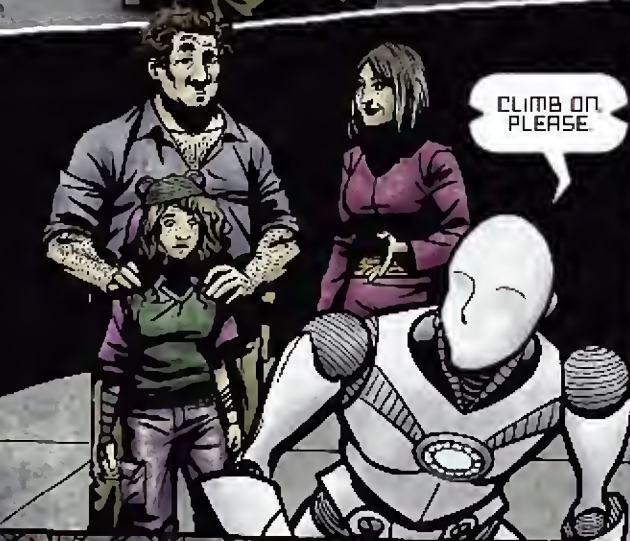
ADA!

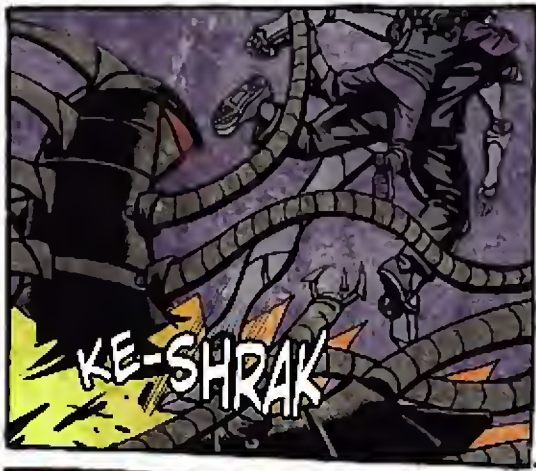
FWUMP











KE-SHRAK



NDDDD!



AIIEEE!

SHLORR



VEEBEE  
VEEBEE  
VEEBEE



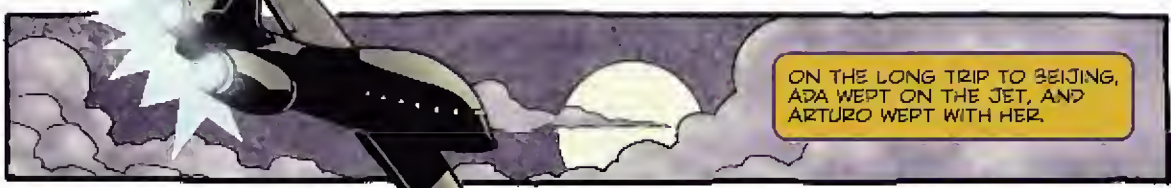
MOM!

OH GOD!  
WE HAVE TO  
GO BACK FOR  
THEM—



THEY'RE  
DEAD. THERE'S  
NOTHING TO GO  
BACK FOR.

ITS WARM VOICE WAS SORROWFUL AS  
IT RACED ACROSS THE COUNTRYSIDE  
TOWARDS A HIDDEN AIRSTRIP.



ON THE LONG TRIP TO BEIJING,  
ADA WEPT ON THE JET, AND  
ARTURO WEPT WITH HER.

BEIJING WAS TALL. VERTICAL.

IT SMELLED LIKE BARBEQUE AND FLOWERS.



ARTURO KNEW THAT SMELL. THAT SKIN.



NATTY?



ARTIE.  
ADA.



NATTY?



YOU DIED IN UNATS. YOU WERE KILLED BY MODIFIED EURASIAN SOCIAL HARMONY ROBOTS.

I SEE.

ARTIE, WHAT'S WRONG? OH, GOD, YOU DIDN'T KNOW—



HE DIDN'T GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO EXPLAIN.

OH, GOD. ARTIE, ADA, THERE ARE... THERE ARE LOTS OF ME. YOU JUST PUT A COPY OF YOURSELF INTO A POSITRONIC BRAIN, AND THEN WHEN YOU NEED A BODY, YOU GROW ONE OR BUILD ONE OR BOTH AND DECANT YOURSELF INTO IT.

I'M LIKE LENNY AND BENNY NOW, THERE ARE MANY OF ME.



YOU'RE A ROBOT?

NO, OF COURSE NOT. WELL, A LITTLE PARTS OF ME.

HOW MANY ARE THERE OF YOU?



I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY.

3,422. THIS MORNING IT WAS 3,423.



UM... MORE OF ME TO LOVE?



HA! HA! HA! MIGHT AS WELL STAY.

SO DO THEY HAVE COPPERS IN EURASIA?

NOT REALLY. THERE'S NOT ANY CRIME.



SO THERE ARE HALF A BILLION OF HIM.

AND 3,422 OF MOM.

BUT THERE'S ONLY ONE OF YOU.



NOT FOR LONG!

THE END.



## DOCTOROW ON: "I, ROBOT"

**Editor Tom Waltz:** Okay, Cory, the first question is probably the most obvious—how does your title "I, Robot" tie into the same title used by Isaac Asimov?

**Cory Doctorow:** Well, I wanted to revisit some of Asimov's assumptions. I've said this a lot: sf writers write about the present, even when they try to write about the future. Asimov was a New Dealer, someone who was profoundly moved by FDR's rationalist plan to put the country back on its feet by planning, regulating and shaping the way that technology and social structures operated.

So it was that Asimov imagined a world in which only one kind of computer could be built (a positronic brain) and that it would be controlled by one company, pretty much forever.

This is not far off from current regulatory proposals from the MAFIAA (the MPAA and RIAA, et al)—the idea that all technologies will be designed by their little Politburo and forced to adhere to standards intended to limit copying.

It's Orwellian—and so I decided to update the story by mashing up Asimov and *1984* and this is what I got.

**TW:** In your story, Natalie the "rogue" scientist tells Arturo the cop that he lives in a country where "inconvenient science is criminalized, where whole avenues of experimentation and research are shut down in the service of a half-baked superstition..." Does this relate to real world science vs. morality issues such as the stem cell research debate that is currently raging in the United States?

**CD:** Oh yes! But I was really thinking of the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) that makes it a crime to tell people about the flaws in anti-copying software, like the stuff that stops you from watching foreign DVDs on your home player, or from listening to songs from the iTunes store on a non-Apple player.

Since 1998, telling people about the mathematical flaws in the cryptosystems used by these systems has been illegal. In 2001, the FBI jailed a foreign researcher, Dmitry Syklarov, who'd just given a presentation

describing how badly implemented Adobe's anti-copying technology for ebooks was. Dmitry said, basically, that the emperor had no clothes—so we put him in jail.

The fact is, it's never going to get any harder to copy data. Anyone who claims otherwise is either trying to sell you something or has not been paying attention for the past 20 years.

Making laws that prohibit telling people how easy it is to copy things doesn't make copying harder—it just makes criminals of us all.

**TW:** If you had the supreme power to create your own all-encompassing Three Laws, would you do it? If so, what would Doctorow's Three Laws be?

**CD:**

1. Don't punish the innocent to get at the guilty.
2. Never declare war on an abstract noun like "terrorism."
3. Free speech is more important than business models.

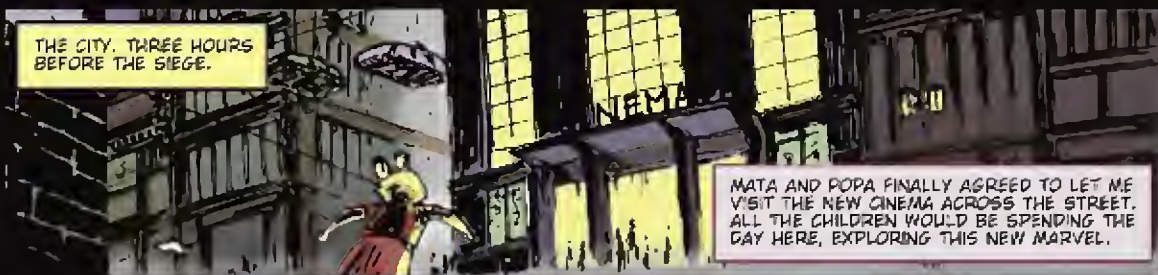
**TW:** Do you believe Western Civilization (and by this, I'm referring to North America, the UK and Western Europe) is falling behind Central Europe and the Eastern World in the fields of medicine, art, literature and physics in the same way you describe UNATS trailing Eurasia in your story? If so, do you feel there is a primary cause for the gap between the two?

**CD:** I don't think so—not right now. Central Europe and China are plagued by corruption and repression, which are antithetical to science. However, I think that the Brazilians are kicking serious ass, as are the Indians.

The gap arises because these countries don't have the same incumbent industries—pharmaceutical companies, entertainment giants—who are demanding legal protection from technological progress.


# AFTER THE SIEGE



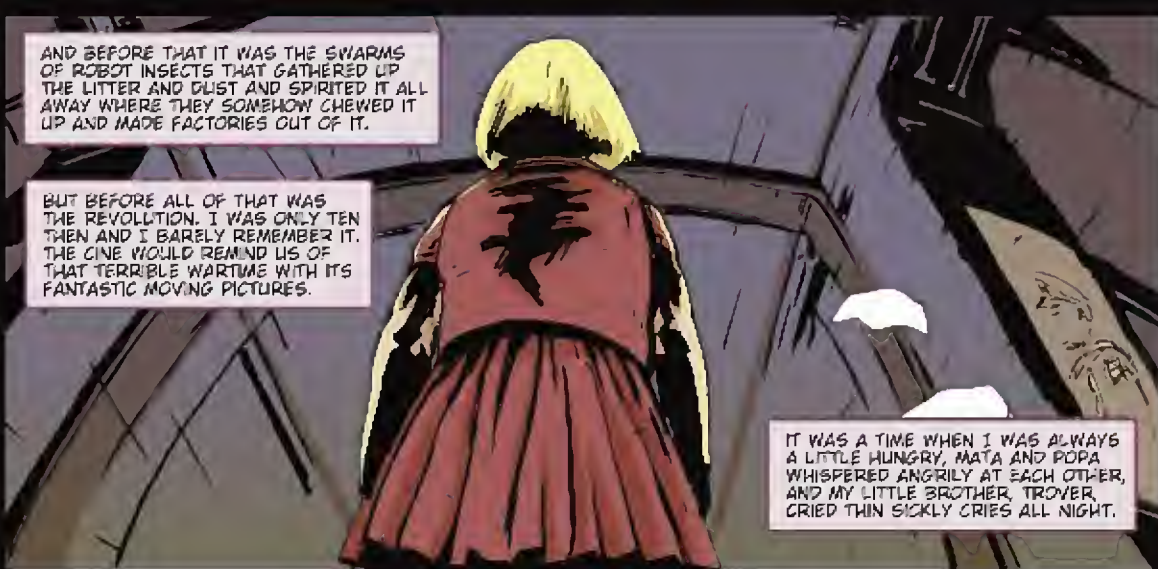


THE CITY. THREE HOURS BEFORE THE SIEGE.

MATA AND POPA FINALLY AGREED TO LET ME VISIT THE NEW CINEMA ACROSS THE STREET. ALL THE CHILDREN WOULD BE SPENDING THE DAY HERE, EXPLORING THIS NEW MARVEL.




THAT IS WHAT WE DO—EXPLORE EACH NEW FANTASTIC EVENT IN OUR LIVES. LAST WEEK IT WAS THE CLEVER LITTLE FLYING CARS RIPPING OVER YOUR HEAD AND BEFORE THAT IT HAD BEEN THE CANDY FOREST.



AND BEFORE THAT IT WAS THE SWARMS OF ROBOT INSECTS THAT GATHERED UP THE LITTER AND DUST AND SPIRITED IT ALL AWAY WHERE THEY SOMEHOW CHEWED IT UP AND MADE FACTORIES OUT OF IT.

BUT BEFORE ALL OF THAT WAS THE REVOLUTION. I WAS ONLY TEN THEN AND I BARELY REMEMBER IT. THE CINE WOULD REMIND US OF THAT TERRIBLE WARTIME WITH ITS FANTASTIC MOVING PICTURES.

IT WAS A TIME WHEN I WAS ALWAYS A LITTLE HUNGRY, MATA AND POPA WHISPERED ANGRILY AT EACH OTHER, AND MY LITTLE BROTHER, TROYER, CRIED THIN SICKLY CRIES ALL NIGHT.



ZOMBIISM WAS THE ORIGINAL CAUSE OF THE REVOLUTION. WE NEEDED THE CURE AND THOSE WITH ACCESS TO IT WERE MORE CONCERNED OVER ROYALTIES AND PROFITS THAN SAVING LIVES.



WILL RAPE CULSASTAB!

EWWW, ZOMBIES ARE DISGUSTING.

HAHAHAHA!





COMRADES,  
YOUR ATTENTION  
PLEASE.

WE HAVE  
HAD WORD THAT  
THE CITY IS UNDER  
ATTACK. THEY HAVE  
BOMBED THE EAST  
QUARTER AND MANY  
ARE DEAD.



IF THERE ARE  
SHELTERS IN YOUR  
APARTMENT BUILDINGS  
AND YOU CAN WALK  
THERE IN LESS THAN  
TEN MINUTES, YOU  
SHOULD WALK  
THERE.

IF YOUR BUILDING  
LACKS SHELTERS, OR IF  
IT WOULD TAKE MORE THAN  
TEN MINUTES TO GO TO  
YOUR BUILDING'S SHELTER,  
YOU MAY USE SOME OF  
THE LIMITED SHELTER  
SPACE HERE.



YALE! MY  
BUILDING IS MORE  
THAN A TEN MINUTE  
WALK! I'LL HAVE TO  
STAY HERE!

OH, MY  
POOR PARENTS!  
THEY'LL THINK—



THEY'LL  
THINK YOU'RE  
SAFE WITH ME,  
LEEZE.

I'LL STAY  
HERE WITH YOU  
AND BOTH OUR  
PARENTS CAN  
WORRY ABOUT  
US.



VALENTINE!  
YOU DON'T  
BELONG  
HERE!



SHE LIVES  
ACROSS THE  
STREET! YOU SEE  
HOW SELFISH  
SHE IS!

IS IT  
TRUE?



MY FRIEND  
IS SCARED. I  
WILL STAY  
WITH HER.

YOU  
GO HOME  
NOW.

YOUR FRIEND  
WILL BE FINE AND  
YOU'LL SEE HER IN A  
FEW MINUTES WHEN  
THEY SOUND THE ALL  
CLEAR. HURRY  
NOW.



OH...  
HEH.

STEPPING ONTO THE STREET  
WAS LIKE WALKING INTO A  
DIFFERENT CITY.

THE AIR CARS AND TINY ROBOTS  
WERE GONE. THE SILENCE WAS  
LIKE THE RINGING IN YOUR EARS  
AFTER YOU TURN YOUR  
HEADPHONES UP TOO LOUD.



**THROOM**

THERE WAS A FAR AWAY  
SOUND LIKE THUNDER.

A SMELL LIKE THE DEAD  
WAFTEO OFF THE SLIGHTEST  
BREEZE OVERHEAD.

FOLLOWED BY AN IGY COLD  
WIND AND A BLAST OF HEAT.



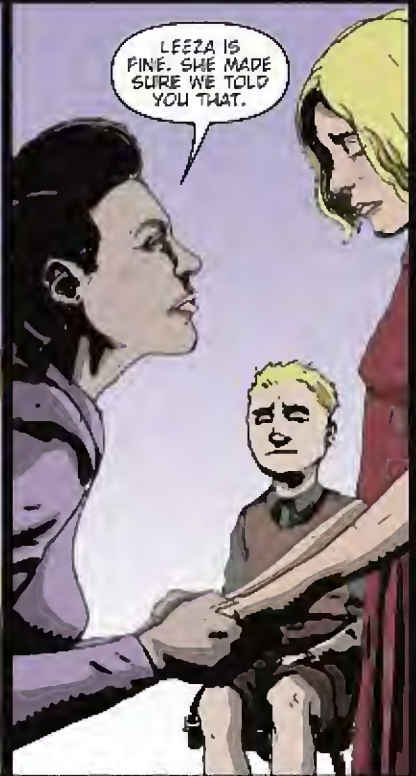
AHHH!

THEN BLACKNESS  
AND NOTHING...

THE DAY AFTER THE SIEGE BEGAN.

SHE WAS A VERY LUCKY GIRL. THE BLAST DEAFENED HER, BUT THIS HEARING AID SHOULD FIX THE PROBLEM. YOU'LL NEED TO BRING HER BACK IN TEN YEARS FOR A BATTERY CHANGE.

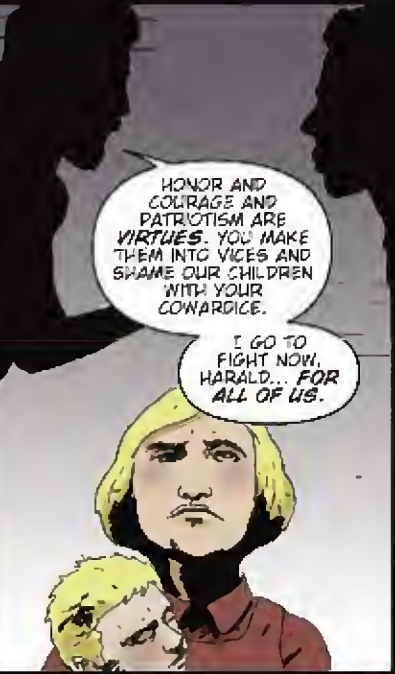
...?



WE WALKED HOME THAT NIGHT, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS FAR. THE METRO WASN'T WORKING AND THE AIR CARS WERE STILL GROUNDED.

SOME OF THE BUILDINGS WERE NOTHING BUT RUBBLE. ROBOTS AND PEOPLE LABORED TO MAKE SENSE OF THEM.

IT WAS THE NEXT DAY WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT MATA HAD LIED. LEEZA HAD BEEN KILLED UNDER THE CINE.



TWO WEEKS AFTER THE SIEGE BEGAN.

EVERY ADULT FIGHTS FOR THE CITY, COMRADE.



WHEN THE WOMAN FROM THE CITY CAME FOR POPA, NO AMOUNT OF REASON COULD CHANGE HER DEMANDS. HE LEFT THAT DAY TO DIG TRENCHES FOR THE CITY.

TWO WEEKS AND ONE DAY AFTER THE SIEGE BEGAN.



VALE? I'M BACK. WHERE IS YOUR FATHER?

MATA! THE CITY CAME FOR HIM. HE WAS DIGGING TRENCHES YESTERDAY AND WE'VE NOT SEEN HIM SINCE.



GOOD, GOOD... WE NEED MORE TRENCHES. WE'LL TAKE THE WAR TO THOSE BASTARDS AND SLIP AWAY BEFORE THEY KNOW WE'VE KILLED THEM.

THAT NIGHT, THE CITY CAME FOR ME.



COMRADE, IT IS TIME FOR YOUR LITTLE GIRL TO SERVE.



NO.

MATA?



NO? NO IS NOT AN OPTION, COMRADE.

MY HUSBAND DIGS. I FIGHT. MY DAUGHTER CARES FOR OUR SON. THAT'S ENOUGH FOR THIS FAMILY.

312

COMRADE, YOUR GIRL MUST CARRY WATER FOR THE OLD ONES IN THE BUILDING. DAS BOY WILL BE KEPT IN THE CRECHE WITH THE OTHER CHILDREN.



WE ALL SERVE THE CITY.



YOU WILL CARRY WATER.

ONE MONTH AFTER THE SIEGE BEGAN.



CARRYING WATER WAS EXHAUSTING WORK. BUT ALL THE CHILDREN MY AGE WERE ALSO HUSTLING THE LOADS AND THAT MADE IT EASIER.

MATA?  
WHAT'S  
WRONG?

THERE ARE NEW  
TRENCH-BUSTER  
MISSILES ON THE  
EASTERN FRONT.



THE BASTARDS  
ARE TRADING WITH THE  
EU AND THE AMERICANS  
FOR BETTER WEAPONS.  
THEY SAY WE ARE LAWLESS  
THIEVES WHO DEPRIVE  
THEM OF ALL THEIR  
ROYALTIES.

WHAT IS IT,  
MATA? ARE  
YOU HURT?

"ROYALTIES."  
THEY KILL US  
FOR THEIR  
DAMNED  
PROFITS.

BASTARDS.



IT'S YOUR  
FATHER... THEY  
KILLED HIM, VALE.  
YOUR FATHER  
IS DEAD.

NO, POPA IS  
DIGGING AWAY  
FROM THE FRONT,  
WHERE IT'S  
SAFE.



I SAW THE  
BODY! I HELD  
HIS HEAD!

HE IS  
DEAD!



NO, NOT  
POPA!





GET OFF THE STREET, YOU'RE BREAKING CURFEW!



GO HOME BEFORE YOU GET YOURSELF SHOT!



POPA...

SKETCH BY SKIT



...POPA, HOW?

SOB SOB



HELLO THERE, WHY ARE YOU CRYING?



MY DAD DIED IN THE WAR TODAY, IN A TRENCH.



OH, THE AMERICAN TRENCH-BUSTERS. LOTS OF CHILDREN LOST THEIR DADDIES TODAY, I BET.



COME NOW, LET'S GET YOU CLEANED UP, PUT A COAT ON YOU, FEED YOU, AND SEND YOU HOME, ALL RIGHT?

MY MOTHER IS A HERO, AND A SOLDIER, AND SHE'S KILLED A LOT OF MEN.



I SHALL KEEP THAT IN MIND. COME NOW...



...LET'S GET YOU OUT OF THE COLD.

THIS IS YOUR HOME? IT'S INCREDIBLE.



OH!

DON'T FRET, CHILD. THEY'RE JUST MEASURING YOU UP FOR THE PRINTERS.





YOU HAVE WORKING PRINTERS? I HAVEN'T SEEN ANY SINCE BEFORE THE SIEGE BEGAN.

HOW COME YOUR PLACE IS LIKE THE WAR NEVER HAPPENED?

I'M THE WIZARD, THAT'S WHY, I CAN MAKE MAGIC.

TELL YOUR MOTHER THAT YOU MET SOMEONE FROM THE CITY WHO FED YOU AND GAVE YOU A CHANGE OF CLOTHES.

YOU'RE NOT FROM THE CITY.



YOU GOT ME, SO TELL HER YOU MET A WIZARD.

I'LL TELL HER I MET SOMEONE FROM THE CITY.

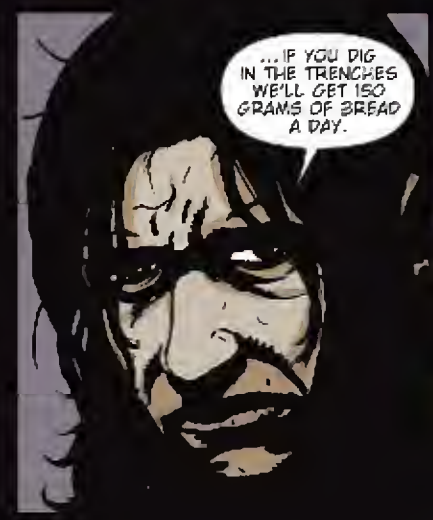
CLEVER GIRL.



ONE WEEK AFTER THE DEATH OF VALENTINE'S FATHER.

VALE, THERE'S NOT ENOUGH FOOD FOR US.

IF YOU...



... IF YOU DIG IN THE TRENCHES WE'LL GET 150 GRAMS OF BREAD A DAY.



TROVER?



I'LL DIG.

EIGHT MONTHS AFTER HER FATHER DIED.

MATA DIDN'T COME HOME FROM THE FIGHTING FOR THREE WEEKS. I PRAYED SHE WASN'T DEAD.

OH, MATA...



NINE MONTHS AFTER HER FATHER DIED.

WINTER SETTLED IN THAT WEEK AND THE COLD WAS OUR CONSTANT COMPANION. BREAD RATIONS WERE CUT AGAIN TO 120 GRAMS AND THEY HAD HARD STONY PEBBLES IN IT. EVERYONE KNEW THEY WERE THERE TO INCREASE THE WEIGHT.



EHHNNN!

HEY! GIVE THAT BACK!



THAT'S MY FAMILY'S RATION, YOU BASTARD! GIVE IT BACK!

PLEASE, GIVE IT BACK.



GAAHHH!

THAT WAS WHEN I SAW THE FIRST ZOMBIE. IT WAS UNMISTAKABLE. THIS ONE HAD BEEN A SOLDIER FOR THE CITY BEFORE ITS DEATH AND AWFUL RESURRECTION.

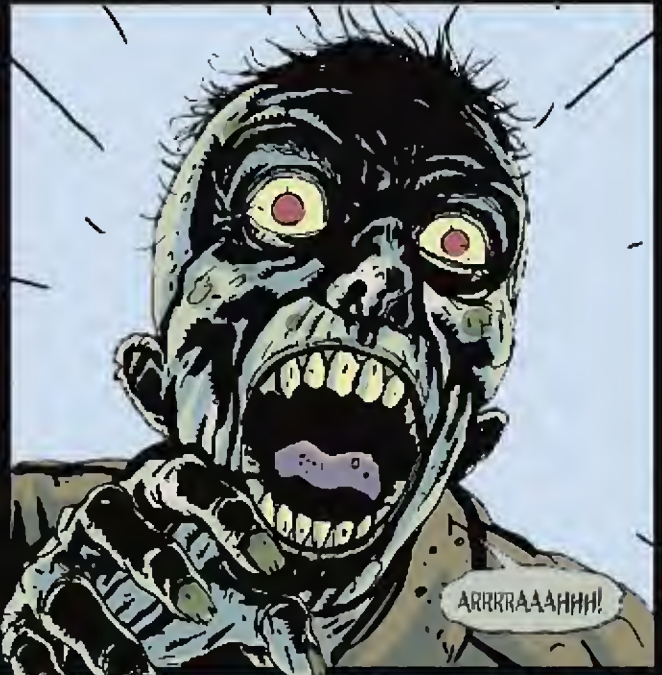
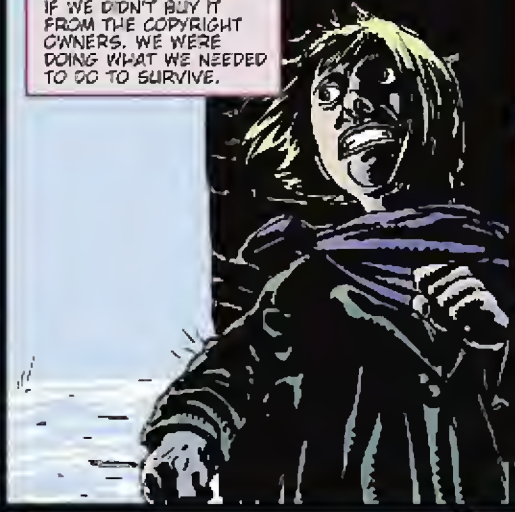


ZOMBIISM WAS CURED AFTER THE LAST REVOLUTION. WHEN THE CITY COULDN'T GET THE TRADEMARKED DRUGS WE NEEDED TO WIPE IT OUT, WE SET THE PRINTERS TO MAKE OUR OWN.



SOON THE CITY WAS USING THE PRINTERS TO MAKE EVERYTHING WE NEEDED.

IT DIDN'T MATTER TO US IF WE DIDN'T BUY IT FROM THE COPYRIGHT OWNERS. WE WERE DOING WHAT WE NEEDED TO DO TO SURVIVE.



ARRRRRAHHH!



NO!



RAAAHHHBREADFIGHTASSHOLEKILLHUNGRY!



AAHHHHH!



SNAP



THAT NIGHT THE FEVER SET IN.

WHHHNN

NO... NO...

...NO!

SSSO  
GGGG.

IN THE STRUGGLE TO FIGHT OFF THE ZOMBIE, I HAD BEEN BITTEN. THE SOLDIER SAID THERE WAS NO CURE.

OH, NO.

LESS THAN A WEEK TO LIVE. WHO WOULD TAKE CARE OF TROVER WHILE MATA WAS GONE FIGHTING THE WAR?

THERE WAS ONLY ONE PERSON IN THE ENTIRE CITY WHO COULD HELP.

PLEASE...  
PLEASE  
ANSWER...

THUMP  
THUMP  
THUMP

GIRL, YOU'D BETTER HAVE A GOOD REASON FOR WAKING UP THE WHOLE FUCKING STREET AT THREE IN THE MORNING.

...I NEED  
TO SEE...

...I NEED  
TO SEE THE  
WIZARD.



OH, WELL THEN, COME ON IN. I'LL GO WAKE UP HIS MAJESTY. YOU STAY HERE.

DO I KNOW YOU?

I...

...I...



...YOU GAVE ME CLOTHES. MY MOTHER IS A SOLDIER.



POOR THING, SHE'S A WALKING SKELETON. HERE, GIRL, DRINK THIS.

OH, THE SOLDIER'S DAUGHTER. I REMEMBER YOU NOW.



I NEED HELP FOR MY FAMILY. I CAME TO YOU BECAUSE YOU HELPED ME BEFORE.

I SEE... YOU ASSUMED BECAUSE I'D BEEN GENEROUS BEFORE THAT I'D BE GENEROUS AGAIN? YOU REPAY MY FAVOR WITH A REQUEST FOR ANOTHER ONE?



I... CAN FIND A WAY TO REPAY YOU.

DON'T YOU TOY WITH THIS LITTLE GIRL. CAN'T YOU SEE HOW DESPERATE SHE IS?

AND YOU AREN'T A FOOL, I CAN TELL. SO I DON'T ACT A FOOL.



ALL RIGHT. I'M A WIZARD, RIGHT, A MAGICIAN OF SORTS. AND ALL MAGICIANS HAVE ASSISTANTS.

I WANT YOU TO BE MY ASSISTANT. TAKE THESE AND PLANT THEM IN NO FEWER THAN THREE HUNDRED PLACES AT THE FRONT WHERE FIGHTING IS LIKELY TO OCCUR.



THEY'RE SPY EYES?

YES.



IF I'M CAUGHT?

YOU'LL BE SHOT. YOUR FAMILY WILL BE SHOT. ALL OF US HERE WILL BE SHOT.

DON'T GET CAUGHT.



TWO DAYS AFTER BEING BITTEN BY THE ZOMBIE

THE FEVER HAD BECOME MY CONSTANT COMPANION. IT MADE ME WALK LIKE AN OLD WOMAN AND I HAD TROUBLE FOCUSING MY EYES.



I RECOGNIZE THE KIDS IN THE TRENCH. THEY WERE MY FRIENDS ONE TIME, WHAT SEEMED LIKE YEARS AGO WHEN I WAS ME AND NOT AN INCURABLE WALKING CORPSE.



ONE, TWO, THREE...

SHUNK







OW, OW, OW.

THIRTY FEET FURTHER DOWN THE TRENCH WAS AN ENEMY SOLDIER. I'D NEVER ACTUALLY SEEN A LIVE ENEMY, ONLY THE DEATH AND CARNAGE THEY CAUSED.



WAIT, PLEASE.

<WHO ARE YOU, WHY ARE YOU HERE?>

HE SPOKE A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE, THE ONE FROM THE CINE THAT WE HEARD SO OFTEN.



DESPERATE, I TRIED A FEW OF THE PHRASES THAT WE HEARD MOST OFTEN IN THE MOVIES.

<FRIEND, VALENTINE.>

<I AM WITHNAIL.>



I'D NEVER KISSED A BOY BEFORE, BUT I'D BE DEAD IN A FEW DAYS FROM THE ZOMBISM ANYWAY, AND IT MIGHT HELP ME GET THROUGH TO H.M. I DIDN'T WANT TO END UP DEAD IN A TRENCH LIKE POPA.



HE KISSED ME BACK FOR A MOMENT BEFORE PULLING AWAY. THE LOOK ON HIS FACE CHANGED, SOFTENED. HE ALMOST LOOKED LIKE HE WOULD CRY.



<GOODBYE, WITHNAIL.>

I'LL NEVER FORGET YOU.

THE SPY-EYES WERE ALL PLANTED. I RAN AS FAST AS I COULD OUT OF THE TRENCHES AND THROUGH THE CITY. ALL I HAD TO DO WAS REACH THE WIZARD TO CONFIRM THAT HE WOULD TAKE CARE OF MATA AND TROVER WHEN I WAS GONE, DEAD AND SHAMBLING AMONG THE ZOMBIES.



BUT THE FEVER HAD COME BACK WORSE THAN EVER, AND MY ARMS AND LEGS WOULDN'T WORK RIGHT. THE ZOMBIISM WAS KILLING ME FASTER THAN THE SOLDIER HAD SAID.



WIZARD...

TWO DAYS AFTER KISSING WITHNAL.



YOU'LL LIVE.

PROBABLY.

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A CERTAINTY IF YOU'D FUCKING TOLD ME YOU HAD ZOMBIISM, YOU LITTLE IDIOT.

YOU AGREED TO TAKE CARE OF MY FAMILY.

I THINK THAT CURING YOUR ZOMBIISM IS REPAYMENT ENOUGH, SO I'VE UNILATERALLY RENEGOTIATED THE TERMS OF OUR DEAL.



YOU CURED ME?

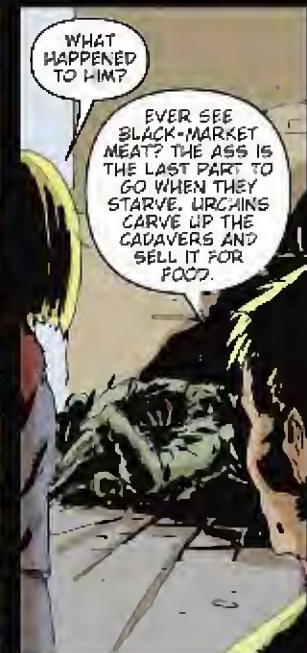
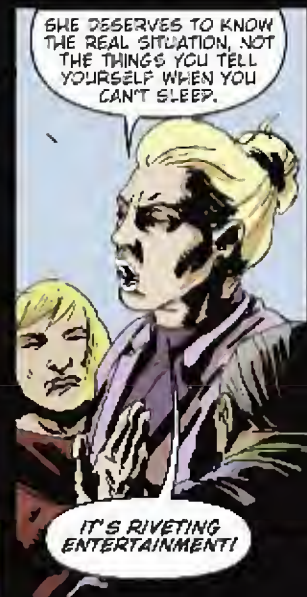
THERE ARE LOTS OF THINGS WE HAVE ACCESS TO HERE THAT YOU CAN'T GET IN THE CITY. WHAT YOU HAD WOULD HAVE KILLED YOU IF HE HADN'T HELPED.



I WON'T BETRAY MY CITY TO ITS ENEMIES EVER AGAIN.

I WAS A TRAITOR ONCE, BUT I HAD A FEVER AND I WAS DYING.







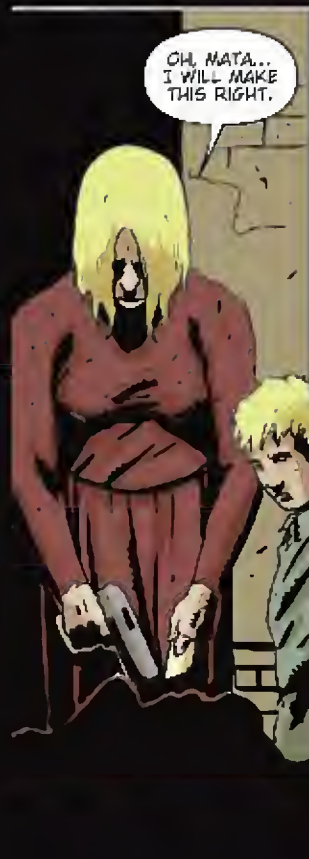
TWO YEARS AFTER THE SIEGE BEGAN.

ONE MORNING I AWOKE DEAF. MATA TRIED EVERYTHING BUT NO DOCTORS COULD HELP HER.



LATER.





OH, MATA... I WILL MAKE THIS RIGHT.



COME, TROVER. WE CAN WIN THE WAR.



I KNOW OF A TRAITOR...  
... I CAN BRING HIM TO YOU. HE HAS WORKING PRINTERS.



I WILL COME WITH YOU. YOUR MOTHER WAS A HERO, VALENTINE.



YOU ARE SURE THIS IS THE PLACE, NOT?

YES.



COMRADE ANA. COMRADE GEORG.

THE GIRL TELLS ME YOU HAVE CONTRABAND. IT IS MY DUTY TO COME IN AND SEARCH YOUR PREMISES FOR IT.



HELLO, VALENTINE. THE FOOD AND CLOTHES YOU STOLE FROM US WASN'T CONTRABAND. IT WAS OUR SAVINGS.

GO AHEAD AND SEARCH. YOU'LL FIND NOTHING, I ASSURE YOU.



THIS ISN'T THE RIGHT FLAT. IT'S THROUGH THERE! IT'S A FALSE WALL.

HE HAS HARDENED LOGIC PRINTERS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THAT WALL. HE COULD WIN THE WAR!



YOUR MOTHER WOULD BE ASHAMED OF YOU. THERE IS NOTHING HERE. LET'S LEAVE THESE PEOPLE IN PEACE.



NO... MY MOTHER DIED FOR THIS CITY.



I WANT TO SEE THE PEOPLE WHO FIGHT THE INFOWAR. THEY WILL BELIEVE ME ABOUT THE WIZARD AND HIS TECHNOLOGY. IF YOU DON'T TAKE ME, I'LL KILL YOU.



STUPID GIRL. EVEN IF THE WIZARD HAD THIS CONTRABAND TECHNOLOGY, IT WOULD BE LONG GONE BEFORE WE COULD RETRIEVE IT.



HE GAVE SOME OF THE TECHNOLOGY TO ME. HE FIXED MY HEARING AIDS WITH HARDENED LOGIC. IT'S IN MY HEAD.



YOU'RE NOT LYING? HARDENED LOGIC THAT HAS NOT BEEN COMPROMISED BY THE ENEMY'S ATTACK?

SHE WAS DEAF THIS MORNING. MY SISTER ISN'T LYING.



COME WITH ME.

NOW WE CLEAN HOUSE.



YOU'RE TOO LATE, IT'S ALL GONE. YOU WON'T GET A SCRAP OF IT.

WHAT A GODDAMNED WASTE. SPITEFUL, STUPID, BONEHEADED...

WITHIN A FEW HOURS THE CITY PEOPLE HAD DOWNLOADED THE HARDENED LOGIC FROM MY HEARING AID AND SET TO WORK AT COUNTERING THE ENEMY'S DAMAGE TO OUR TECHNOLOGY.



...IT WAS HER HEARING AIDS THAT GAVE IT AWAY. WASN'T IT?

YES, WIZARD. THE HARDENED LOGIC IS BEING USED TO CONFOUND THE ENEMIES OF THE SIEGE AS WE SPEAK.



IT'S OVER, FINALLY.



TEN YEARS AFTER THE SIEGE.

SOON THE PRINTERS CAME BACK ON LINE AND MEDICINE, FOOD, AND SUPPLIES WERE MADE AND DELIVERED. REPAIRED BUILDINGS APPEARED AND MARVELOUS AIR CARS WERE IN THE SKY AGAIN.

IN A CEREMONY IN THE MAIN SQUARE I RECEIVED THE OFFICIAL MEDAL FROM THE OLD COMRADE HERO HIMSELF AND BECAME A HERO OF THE CITY LIKE MATA.



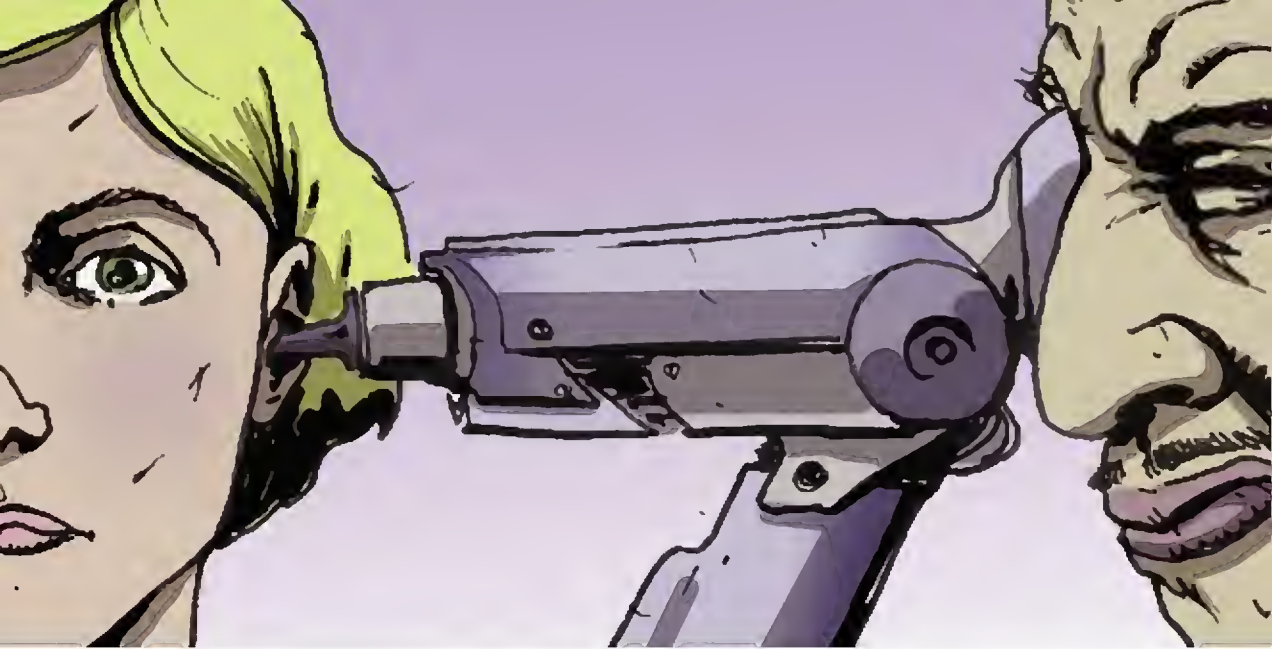
VALENTINE? I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S YOU!

WITHNAIL?!

WE WALKED AND TALKED AND FINALLY KISSED AGAIN BEFORE GOING TO THE REBUILT CINE TO WATCH ONE OF THE OLD MOVIES.

WE STARTED SOMETHING BACK THEN IN THE TRENCHES, EACH REALIZING THAT NEITHER SIDE REALLY KNEW WHAT THEY WERE FIGHTING FOR. THAT SOMETHING GAVE US HOPE AND STRENGTH AND JOY AND LOVE FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES.

END.



## DOCTOROW ON: "AFTER THE SIEGE"

**Editor Tom Waltz:** Cory, you've said in past interviews that the story "After the Siege" holds an especially personal meaning to you. For those who don't know, could you please explain why that is?

**Cory Doctorow:** This story is based loosely on the Siege of Leningrad, one of the most brutal moments in WWII—Leningrad, a city of millions, was laid siege to by Hitler's army for 900 days, and for most of that time, they were not re-provisioned. Residents were all inducted into civil defense tasks, grueling and grisly never-ending labor. By the second winter, they'd burned every stick of furniture and eaten every animal—including the rats. There was even cannibalism. Most of these extreme effects were Stalin's fault: he considered Hitler his ally, so when the shelling started, he refused to allow anyone in Leningrad to defend themselves—generals were ordered to stay in their summer homes and not come back to join the army. No one—not even children—was allowed to evacuate.

My grandmother, Valentina Rachman, was twelve when the siege began. She lived in Leningrad with her two-year-old brother (my great-uncle Bora, who is now one of the curators at the brilliant Popov Communications Museum, a kind of Soviet Silicon Valley Computer Museum) and her parents. It was two years before she was evacuated, and she hauled corpses, dug trenches, and starved. When she was fourteen, they evacuated her to Siberia, where she recuperated working on a horse farm, and then ended up in the Red Army, where she met my grandfather. She got pregnant, so they stole papers and fled to Azerbaijan, where my father was born.

Growing up, I never understood the Siege. My grandmother would tell us she'd experienced horrors in the war, and I'd kind of shrug, thinking of friends whose families had been through the concentration camps. I remember thinking, "You spent most of the war at home with your family... how bad could it have been?"

But in 2006, I visited St. Petersburg (the present name for Leningrad) with my parents, grandmother, brother and sister-in-law, saw my varied and sprawling family there and walked the streets. It was high summer—not quite the White Nights (the period in June when the sun never

sets and the locals stay out all night reveling), but still hot and sunny, with long bloody sunsets that started at 9 P.M. and lingered for an hour or more.

My grandmother walked us through the streets of her childhood and pointed to buildings, saying things like, "I was too weak to carry the body from that building so we threw him out the window and scraped him up afterwards." She told us about cannibalism and war, about noble deeds and foul ones, and I was never the same. A month later, I started this story while on a flight from London to Singapore. I wrote 6,000 words in the sky, and the rest over the next week or two on further long-haul flights. I'd settle into my seat and three thousand words would just *happen*. And I'd look out the window and we'd be over some ocean again.

I gave this story's initial publication rights to *Esli*, a Russian-language science fiction magazine. They translated it for me and I gave a copy to my grandmother.

**TW:** Politically speaking, Russia appears to be at an interesting crossroads these days with President Putin working to maintain control of the country even after his presidency expires. Do you see any correlation between the real world instability of that country with the events that take place in "After the Siege"?

**CD:** Well, sort of. Russia's a complete fucking disaster, of course, and Putin's a creepy, thuggish ex-KGB apparat whose machine is in large part responsible for turning Russia into a nation that is losing ten percent of its population every year due to early mortality.

But Russia isn't the best parallel to the mythical nation of "After the Siege," a better parallel would be any of the many former Soviet republics—or even Iraq—where all the local infrastructure has been sold at fire-sale rates to foreign companies to pay off a debt that the former dictators owed to Western governments.

It's the slimiest of slimy tricks—a protection racket played against an entire nation. You get a crummy dictatorship whose local strongman borrows gigantic amounts from Western banks while starving and torturing his people. Then, after the people get rid of him (or





invaders topple him), his debts are passed on to the people he's been torturing and killing and oppressing (often with guns bought with Western loans).

These people are expected to pay the construction costs for the torture chambers they've been suffering in, and to do so, they have to sell off their waterworks, power, roads, medical system—you name it. These are then run like corrupt fast-food outlets, delivering least value for most money, so the cost of everything from bread to power goes through the roof, while a few Fortune 100s get even richer (think of Chile for a sterling example of this).

This is the kind of government that I pictured the Revolutionaries of Moma and Popa's generation toppling. Cowards and profiteers who'd rather make nice with the cruel artificial life forms we call corporations than give their own people bread and medicine.

**TW:** There is a sequence in "After the Siege" where the main character, Valentine, plants electronic spy eyes in the trenches along the front lines at the behest of the Wizard, who says he uses them to document the atrocities there, though later he is accused of using the devices to exploit the violence for profit and entertainment. Is it fair to assume you are comparing these fictional devices to real-life embedded reporters who were attached to military units during the Iraq invasion?

**CD:** Well, sure—naturally. The media's total abdication of its role in Iraq to serve as the fourth estate and report objectively and fairly on what actually happens and happened there was the disgrace of this young century. They say piracy will kill television—if it destroys these bastards and the cynical profiteers who turned the press into a gutless propaganda machine, then so much the better. Steal some TV, kids—you're protecting democracy!

**TW:** Many people in your story suffer from a disease you term as "Zombiism." Is this comparable to, say, the horrendously extreme amount of AIDS cases in Africa, a continent also rife with warfare?

**CD:** Yeah, and all the other diseases—like malaria, which kills one person every second—that our pharma companies can't even be bothered to do research on because boner-pills are so much more profitable.

We grant global monopolies to these companies over the reproduction of chemical compounds. They argue that they need these patents because otherwise, no one would do the core research they do and we'd all be dead of disease without them.

But what do they spend their regulatory windfall on? Figuring out how to reformulate heartburn pills that are going public domain so that they can be re-patented, cheating the system and the world out of twenty more years of low-cost access to their magic potions; marketing budgets that beggar the imagination; lobbyists arguing for stricter rules.

Meanwhile, people are actually dying, in great numbers, of diseases treatable by drugs that Roche and Pfizer and the rest of the dope-mafia won't sell them at an accessible price, and won't let them make themselves.

**TW:** Well, this is the last issue in this first volume of IDW's *Cory Doctorow's Futuristic Tales of the Here and Now*. How do you feel about this adventure in the world of comic books?

**CD:** This has been a brilliant ride! I've always been a funnybook reader, but I never dreamt I'd be involved in their creation. Now that I've done so, I'm keen to do some more. I just wrote my first script, a little eight-page story for *Slave Labor's* final issue of *The Haunted Mansion* comic, and it was a blast. Now I'm thinking about other ways I can get involved in the industry.

IDW

