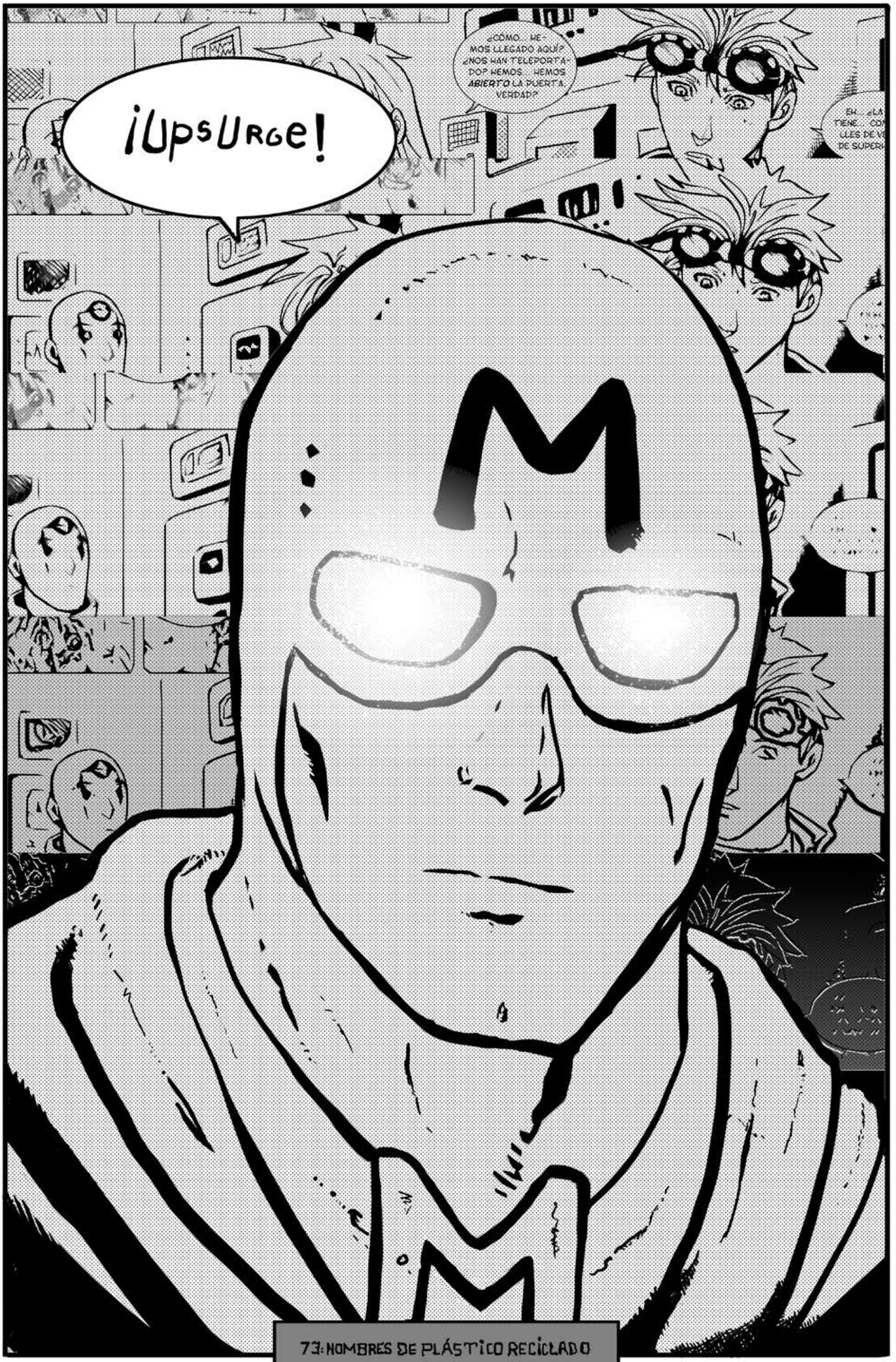

¡UPSURGE!
¿CÓMO... HEMOS LLEGADO AQUÍ? ¿NOS HAN TELEPORTADO? NEMOS... HEMOS ABIERTO LA PUERTA, VERDAD?
EH... ¿LA TIENE... CO... LLES DE V... DE SUPER...
M

SIMON M.
SCRIPT
PANEL LAYOUT
COVER
(+illustrations by Atana)

ATANA S.
PENCILS
INK

TRANSLATION
(SORRY, ENGLISH SPEAKERS)

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WEBPAGE: WWW.UPSURGE.ES/ENGLISH

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...WHERE-VER YOU STEP, GRASS NEVER GROWS BACK.

?

...

YOU HEAR ME? DUDE, EVERY-THING'S GOING TO HELL! THERE'S LIKE... *SUPERLIGHTNING* IN THE SKY!

...JUST NOW, HUH?

IS THAT ALL YOU HAVE TO SAY?

HEY. ADAM.

ADAM!

WELL. THE CIRCLE IS DESTROYED. WE HAVE TO FIND ANOTHER WAY...

WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR...

...HUH?

HH...?

ADAM, IS THE CITY FUCKING WITH YOUR MIN...?

!?




Unstable!
AGH!
WHAT...?
SHIT! WHAT NOW...?
SHOULDN'T DO SOMETHING?
URGH
WAS IT... WHAT WAS THAT?
SHOULD WE? I MEAN, THEY'RE TE-

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
UH... WHERE... IS THIS... THIS ISN'T WHERE WE...?
THE HEREMITE IS ON THE LOOSE ARE QU... OF L...
NO IDEA.
Y-YES. THIS... IS THE CITY...
...FALLING APART?
M-MAYBE I'LL READ HIS MIND... JACOB'S, I MEAN... ...AVE TO ...E ON ...
OH, MAN! YOU'RE HERE TOO!
GLAD TO SEE YOU ARE STILL ALIVE. WELL, ONE OF YOU.
I'... SHO... M...
JAC... ID... GET ... STORY... SHIN...
...OU A ...NI- ...T?
DID YOU CAUSE THIS?
US? NO.
THE HEREMITES ACCOMPLISHED THE MISSION, BY THE WAY.
...ING ...S ...LS LIKE BEING DRUGGE...
LOOK, I'VE FICED MY INV... LOCUST T... SOME OF... BUT Y... TAKE... FILTH ... LLED
NO IDEA. I GUESS... IF I'M HONEST, JACOB, I'VE BEEN DOING A LOT OF THIN-KING...
DOESN'T SURPRISE ME. WE'VE BEEN ONE STEP BEHIND ALL THIS TIME.
THIS IS JACOB'S DOING, I THINK. I CAN... FEEL HIS PRESENCE.
WHAT? HE'S UNCONS-CIOUS.
WELL, I SAW YOU ABOUT TO DIE. THAT PART OF YOU THAT'S GONE... IT LEFT YOU VERY **WEAK.**
THAT PART... I THINK IT'S THE IMPLANT, CLA-RISSE TOLD ME THAT IT BEHAVES ALMOST LIKE A LIVING ENTITY...
NO. THERE IS A PART OF YOU IN THAT THING. A PART THAT DOESN'T WANT TO SEE.
...SHOULD BE DOABL... TRACK IT, CONNEC... TO IT AGAIN, AND FORCE IT BACK INTO YOUR BODY.
WELL, LOOK AT THESE BACKGROUND IMAGES.
IT'S LIKE WE'RE LOOKING AT HIS MEMORIES. AM I THE ONLY ONE WHO SEES IT AS COMIC BOOK PAGES?
DUNNO. I SEE A FUCKING BOOK. BUT IF I FOCUS, I PROCESS THE TEXT IMMEDIATE-LY.
YOU ARE SOMEONE VERY IMPORTANT TO ME. I SEE THAT BALD HEAD OF YOURS AND I SAY, WOW, I WISH I COULD POLISH IT SO I COULD LOOK AT MY FACE IN IT, SWEET LITTLE MIRRO... WITH A PINK...
HUR'S CAN'T THE UST ...HERE, ...S
...YOU TO KE... ALI...
HOW IS HE DOING IT?
IF IT'S REALLY HIM.

WHY AM I SEEING THIS? IT'S...
LISTEN, WE DON'T HAVE TIME, BUT... MR. MAGICK...
WILL YOU STOP IT, ADAM! THE CITY IS DYING! IF WE STAY HERE... I GUESS... I GUESS WE'D DIE, WOULDN'T WE?
THESE VISIONS... ARE FROM... MY OTHER HALF? HOW? IS THAT... ISN'T THAT THE ATOMIC BUILDING FROM THE BEGINNING? BUT IT LOOKS DIFFE-RENT...?
LISTEN. LET'S FOCUS. THESE VI-SIONS... IT'S GOT TO BE YOUR PARTNER. MAYBE HE'S GOING TO GIVE US INFORMA-TION THAT WE CAN...
WAIT. THIS... I ...E... THE ...ENCE...
...IT IS ... ...T T... ...DIATES ...NARY ...TERN... ...BE EN... ...CODED A... ...VES TO ... ...MANITY ... ...THE ...NETIC ...B... ...OUGH.
I THINK MY STUDIES ON THE SUN WERE RIGHT, ... THEY ARE FROM ... PRE-CATACLYSM W... THEY ARE... MEM... THE CATACLYSM ... NED, AND THIS ... WORLD AFT...
LINEAGES OF HEROES BRIN-GING THE GIFT OF THEIR TALENTS TO THE PLANET. EVERYTHING SEEMED TO BE GOING WELL...
...WAS ... ...ED BY DEM... GODS.
MY HY... POTHESIS... IT'S NOT THAT ...
THE HEREMITES CONFIRMED BALDIE'S IDEA. AN ENDING WOULD CREATE A WAY OUT. THEY MANAGED TO OPEN A PORTAL... AND TOOK A SYLLABLE FROM THE VERSE. IF WE FIND A WAY TO ***CLOSE THE STORY...***
HOW?! THERE'S NO STORY LEFT, IS THERE? RESCUE JACOB? IF THESE VISIONS ARE HIS, HE'S THE ONE DOING THE SAVING... YET HERE WE ARE. IF THE HEREMITES HAVE ES-CAPED WITH THAT VERSE SHIT, SAUNIÈRE TOOK THE FIRE ELE-MENT, ELECTRICBRAIN ISN'T EVEN HERE... IS THERE ANY FUCKING STORY LEFT?
...WAY OF ... ...RISK A... ...EMPE... ...NCIP... ...ONE... ...NE... ...HO ... ...APP... ...RLD...
AND IF HE ... REPRODUCES, ... OF "HEROES" IS ... ...TED, OF PEOPLE ... ...TIC GIFTS. A LEGA... ...RE ... HEROISM IS ENGR... ...IN THEIR GENE...
UNTIL THAT BEING APPEARED... HE CALLED HIMSELF "BEING-...ROM-THE-SUN-B... ...HE SA... MA...
LET'S NOT LOSE PATIENCE, AND FOCUS ON JACOB'S ME-MORIES!
HHH-!

YEAH, YEAH. LET US PRAY THAT THIS IS INDEED FROM JACOB, AND NOT THE CITY DYING.

LOOK WHAT'S AROUND US. OF COURSE IT'S HIM! HE'S HAD AN ASTRAL JOURNEY. AIDED BY THAT DEMON, HE PURSUED THAT SHADOW THROUGH OTHER AREAS OF THIS PLACE...

TAKE A GOOD LOOK. THAT SHADOW SEEMS TO HAVE FOLLOWED THE MEMORIES OF THAT HERO, ELECTRICBRAIN...

DO YOU THINK THERE'S SOMETHING THERE? ELECTRICBRAIN? ESSEX'S RIGHT, WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING WITH THE VERSE, NOR THE FIRE ELEMENT. MAYBE ELECTRICBRAIN IS THE KEY?

THAT SEEMS TO BE THE IDEA OF THIS CITY, DOESN'T IT? LOOK AT JACOB'S VISIONS. THERE WAS A LOSS OF MEANING. HEROISM DEGRADED, THE APPEARANCE OF HEROISM WITHOUT ***REAL VALUES...***

ELECTRICBRAIN AND HIS FAMILY, MR. MAGICK... THEY ARE THE ONLY HEROES WE'VE SEEN, RIGHT?

GUYS, OVER HERE.

DON'T KNOW IF THIS IS GOOD NEWS...

IT'S AS IF ONLY HIS PERCEPTION OF US HAD LEFT ITS MARK ON THIS PLACE, I WOULD NOT HAVE TOLERATED THIS. EVEN ACCEPTING HIS CRITICISM...

I KNEW IT. I KNEW MY SUSPICIONS...

BUT... WE ALREADY KNOW THIS, DON'T WE? SAUNIÈRE STEALS THE ELEMENT OF FIRE, AND THAT REMOVES THE MAIN *BATTERY* OF THIS CITY. ALL THE EVENTS, THE FICTITIOUS CHARACTERS THAT WE MEET... ARE PART OF A SPELL THAT HAS LOST THE OBJECT THAT KEPT IT ACTIVE.

NO, BUT FOCUS ON THE SPELL. I THINK I CAN... HM. IT REALLY IS FICTION.

WHAT?

THIS PLACE... IT BARELY HAS ANY ***MATERIALITY.*** IT'S REALLY... THE SPELL COULD ONLY PRESERVE IT AS A... HOLOGRAPHIC STORY.

YES? GOOD FOR YOU. AND WHAT A *COINCIDENCE* THAT YOU ARRIVED JUST WHEN I WAS HERE. FROM EARTH!

AH... SAUNIÈRE... AND THE ELEMENT OF FIRE...

...AND ELECTRICBRAIN'S THERE TO SEE IT? HOW... CONVENIENT?

WAIT. EVERY TIME I'VE BEEN IN ONE OF THESE, THE ELEMENTS HAVE BEEN USED TO KEEP THE CITY ALIVE. AND ELECTRICBRAIN, RIGHT THERE AT THAT MOMENT? AS IF THE CITY NEEDED TO... ***PROTECT*** ITSELF?

OH... THE CITY... THE CITY IS A STORY, RIGHT? AND THE CHARACTERS... SAUNIÈRE SAYS ELECTRICBRAIN IS THE *ONE WHO KNOWS*... THEY ARE THE SAME. HE WAS THERE BECAUSE THE CITY NEEDED...

HONESTLY, WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE? WHAT THE FUCK CAN WE DO? WE CAN'T ***REVIVE*** THEM, NOR...

STOP TALKING AS IF THEY WERE REAL PEOPLE!

GO BACK AND TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT THE SPELL THAT GAUNIERE DAMAGED BY REMOVING THE ELEMENT OF FIRE! THIS IS WHAT JACOB WANTED TO SHOW US, THE SPELL IN ITSELF! THE CITY IS NOT A CITY!

THE CITY IS A STORY, AND IT WAS PRESERVED THROUGH THE CREATION OF FICTIONS. *DO YOU UNDERSTAND?* THE CHARACTERS OF THE CITY ARE THE TOOLS THROUGH WHICH THE CITY REPRODUCES!

IN A NORMAL SITUATION, OF COURSE WE COULD REVIVE CHARACTERS, THEY ARE NOT BIOLOGICAL ENTITIES. BUT GAUNIERE TOOK AWAY THE ELEMENT OF FIRE. THAT'S WHY THE CITY IS BECOMING EMPTY! THERE IS NO ***ENERGY*** TO SUSTAIN THIS ILLUSION!

FUCK. ELECTRICBRAIN TOOK HIS FAMILY? THE GUY... HE DISAPPEARS HERE, RIGHT? WE DIDN'T SEE HIM...

WE... MAY HAVE SEEN HIM, COMING OUT OF HIS SHIP THERE WERE DEAD BODIES, HIS FAMILY, MULTIPLE VERSIONS...

WHY DID HE KILL HIS FAMILY? DID HE DO IT ON HIS OWN, OR GAUNIERE, WITH HIS ELEMENT...?

...

JACOB, IT'S OVER. YOU HAVE TO GO BACK TO YOUR BODY. NOW.

YES. I HOPE PASSING ON THE INFORMATION WAS HELPFUL...

UH... DO YOU HEAR SOME-THING?

k r k

UH...

a o o

a k

WE... ARE BACK?

THE THUNDER, GOD...

a

k

THE CITY... IS...

A... STORY...

GHH.... WE'RE BACK! WE'VE GOT... WE, UH... I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE HAVE TO DO, BUT THIS IS GOING TO HELL AND I DON'T WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN WHILE IT'S GOING TO HELL!

CALM DOWN. I DON'T THINK... THINGS AREN'T...

ADAM! DON'T FUCKING TELL ME YOU'RE STILL WITH THAT SUICIDAL PARSIMONY!

THAT'S NOT IT! LISTEN, I THINK THE CITY... IS USING ME, BUT NOT THE WAY YOU THINK!

KRRAAAK

"I THINK THE SUN... THE CITY... IS USING ME TO ***SURVIVE!***"

BEING HERE, WITH THE SUPER-HEROES, AND WITH YOU... MADE ME THINK ABOUT THE PAST, BUT...

I THINK... I THINK I KNOW WHERE WE'RE GOING. THE *STORY* OF THIS PLACE... FOLLOWS THE *HISTORY* OF AMERI-CAN COMICS, I KNOW WHERE WE'RE GOING. THE ERA ***AFTER*** THE DARK ONE...

THAT HEREMITE... I THINK HE GAVE ME THE KEY. THAT AND... MISTER MAGICK.

WHAT?

LET'S GO, WE'LL NEED YOUR HYPNO-SIS.

REMEMBER WHAT MR. MAGICK SAID WHEN HE GAVES US THIS CARVED STONE? "BOB, UMBRELLA". UMBRELLAS ARE FOR STORMS, RIGHT?

THIS ATRIUM IS ONE OF HIS MAGIC TOOLS; IF YOU PUT AN OBJECT...

OKAY, WHATEVER, BUT GO, THE HOUSE IS COMING DOWN ON US.

ATRIUM OF OKRAMENTOS, OPEN A DOOR TO THE TIME THAT EXPLAINS WHY THIS STONE GAINED THE NAME OF BOB.

THIS IS THE PROBLEM OF HAVING AN ATOM AS YOUR SYMBOL.

THE ELECTRON, PERPETUALLY GRAVITATING AROUND THE NUCLEUS. I GUESS HE THINKS HE'S MOVING FORWARD, BUT IN FACT...

STOP GIBBERING, STRANGER! I... HAVE COMPLETED MY JOURNEY! I'VE DISCOVERED THE TRUTH.

I AM NO LONGER ELECTRICBRAIN, LEADER OF THE ATOMIC FOUR! I AM THE *PENITENT*, AND I HAVE COME TO FINISH WHAT THAT BEING IN THE SUN BEGAN! HIS WILL WAS THE TRUE ONE!

I HAVE ALREADY INITIATED THE FIRST SEQUENCE OF LOGA-QUANTUM PATTERNS IN COMPUTER 23, THE ONE THAT SPANS THE SUBATOMIC REALM OF QUINTUM! NEGAELECTRIC STORMS!

SOON, THUNDER WILL BREAK EVERYTHING! AND AS SOON AS THE SECOND SEQUENCE IS ON...

I WILL SAVE THE WORLD FROM THIS FARCE, AND I WILL RESTORE ITS DIGNITY, EVEN IF IT MEANS DEATH!

HEY... IS HE...?

BOB, YOUNGER, RIGHT? HE'S.. WITH ELECTRICBRAIN?

IF IT'S LIKE SAUNIÈRE WITH JACOB... HE WON'T SEE US.

CAN I TALK TO YOU FOR A SECOND, BEFORE YOU EXECUTE THE REST OF YOUR PLAN?

WHY?

YOU WANT TO TRY TO CONVINCE ME? OR IS IT BECAUSE YOU NEED TO CLOSE A STORY TO ESCAPE?

YOU KNOW THE TRUTH BETTER THAN I. WHAT A HUMILIATION. "MY SUPERBRAIN", AND YOU... YOU ***KNEW*** FROM THE BEGINNING.

YOU MEAN THE NATURE OF THIS WORLD?

YES. WE ARE NOT EVEN A PLACE. A STORY. A COLLECTIVE HALLUCINATION. AND ON TOP OF THAT, I LET HIM...

"I MEAN, HOW CAN I KNOW IF THE ME I AM NOW IS THE SAME AS BEFORE THAT FIRE WAS RIPPED OUT FROM THE SUN?"

EVERY DAY I WOKE UP KNOWING THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG AND WHAT WAS WRONG...!

...WAS THAT THOUGHT ITSELF! THE SUN THING, THERE WAS NO...!

I TOO WAKE UP WITH A FEELING THAT THERE IS SOMETHING I WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO FIX.

...

YOU KNOW, I HAVE A FRIEND WHO DREW YOU.

WHAT?

WELL, I ASSURE YOU, IT'S NOT THAT DIFFERENT FROM OUR EXPERIENCE EITHER.

YES, A COUSIN OF MINE.

HE USED TO DRAW FOR *WONDER COMICS*, HE WOULD PASS ON THE COMICS THAT WERE GIVEN TO HIM.

I WAS THE LITTLE BROTHER AND NOBODY PAID ATTENTION TO ME, SO COMIC BOOKS WERE MY ONLY REAL COMPANY...

AH, AS A CHILD, YOUR STORIES, THEY WERE SO BEAUTIFUL. THERE WAS REAL ENERGY, THERE.

MADE ME WANT TO GO ON ADVENTURES, HELP PEOPLE. THAT'S WHY I ENDED UP IN THE OCCULT, I GUESS.

AND THEN, WHEN THE GOING GOT TOUGH, I'D GO BACK TO THOSE COMICS, AS IF THEY WERE PHYSICAL ***SHELTERS*** FROM THE STORM.

BUT... SOONER OR LATER, YOU REALIZE THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG, RIGHT? WITH OUR STORIES. EVEN THE ONES THAT DON'T END AS BADLY AS THIS ONE....

IT'S AS IF WE WERE TRAPPED IN AN INFINITE LOOP. EVIL RISES IN THE FORM OF A VILLAIN, THE HERO DEFEATS HIM, AND IN TWO DAYS, HE'S ESCAPED AGAIN.

IT'S AS IF, COLLECTIVELY, OUR IDEA OF HEROISM WERE VERY... LIMITED.

I THINK... THAT'S WHY YOU DO WHAT YOU DO.

YOU... HAD AN INKLING, RIGHT? ABOUT THIS PLACE.

YOUR ADVENTURES... YOU USED THEM AS ***DISTRACTIONS,*** BUT YOU GOT SO CAUGHT UP IN THEM...

...THAT IN THE END THE TRUTH RETURNED THROUGH THEM.

YOU CANNIBALIZED YOURSELF.

...I...

...WHEN WE WENT TO THE SUN, I... IT'S LIKE IT WAS A DREAM. YOU WANT TO THINK THAT, THIS TIME, THE ADVENTURE WOULD...

...I... I-I DIDN'T QUITE KNOW... THE TRUTH. I MEAN, I GUESS PART OF ME KNEW, BUT... *NOT ME.*

...I WANTED TO THINK THAT THE BEING-FROM-THE-SUN-BEFORE HAD IMPLEMENTED ITS BIASED VISION, THAT I COULD FIX IT...

BUT THEN YOU RAN INTO SAUNIÈRE... HE ATTACKED YOU TELEPATHICALLY, DIDN'T HE?

YES, HE... WELL, NOT JUST ME... MY FAMILY. HE SHOWED US THE TRUTH. THE SPELL I CAST WITH THE BEING-FROM-THE-SUN-BEFORE... WAS LIMITED.

IT COULDN'T CREATE A PLACE, WE ARE... A META-STORY. I, FOR EXAMPLE, AM... "THE ONE WHO KNOWS". BE IT SUPERHERO OR KNIGHT OR SPACE TRAVELER...

...MY FUNCTION IS TO ***KNOW.*** BUT BECAUSE OF THAT... IN THE LONG RUN, I'M BOUND TO END UP HOLDING THE ENTIRE CITY IN MY HEAD.

...IF THIS IS A STORY, AND I'M BOTH PART OF IT BUT ALSO THE ONE DESIGNATED TO REMEMBER MOST OF IT... SOONER OR LATER, I RECOGNIZE TOO MANY PATTERNS AND END UP IN THE SUN, REDISCOVERING THE TRUTH.

...I WAS SO ASHAMED OF WHAT WE WERE. IN MY HEAD, BEFORE THE CATACLYSM, I THOUGHT WE WERE... DEMIGODS. ENTITIES WHO EMBODIED JUSTICE.

THAT KNIGHT... TRANSPLANTED HIS PERCEPTION TO US. HE SHOWED US WHAT WAS THERE, ON THAT MAGIC PEDESTAL FROM WHICH HE EXTRACTED THE SOLID FLAME.

NOT JUST ME. I DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT I KNEW MY FAMILY WAS SEEING THE SAME: THAT WE WERE NOTHING, AN EMPTY, INSUBTANTIAL TEMPLATE FOR THE VISITORS.

THE ONLY CONSTANT IS THAT WE WERE EXPLORERS. DOESN'T MATTER IF WE WERE BLOND, TALL, FASCISTIC, IF WE WERE ARROGANT OR MELANCHOLIC OR ROMANTIC...

WE ARE NOT PEOPLE; WE ONLY TALK ABOUT WHAT IS USEFUL FOR OUR ADVENTURES; WE DON'T TALK ABOUT POLITICS OR THE HAIRDRESSER'S HUSBAND OR THE ICE CREAM TRUCK.

THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERED WAS OUR FUNCTION AS A VECTOR TO GENERATE STORIES.

AND NOW MY FAMILY KNEW. WHILE I WAS ALSO DISCOVERING SOMETHING ELSE.

I HAD BEEN USING MY FAMILY'S IGNORANCE TO BELIEVE THE LIE TOO, AND NOW IT WAS GONE. NO MORE ADVENTURES WHERE I CAN BELIEVE IN MY WIFE'S SMILE.

I... DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I COULD DO A ***PSYCHIC PULSE.***

BUT I AM NOT KILLING ANYONE, BECAUSE NO ONE EXISTED IN THE FIRST PLACE.

AND YET, IT HURTS YOU SO MUCH THAT NOW YOU WANT TO ***DESTROY*** THE WHOLE CITY BECAUSE OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

...I... HAVE NO WAY OUT.

I'M... SICK. MY JOY WAS IN NOT KNOWING. THE EXCITEMENT OF KNOWING THE TRUTH WAS SOMEWHERE, JUST NOT HERE. BUT MY FUNCTION IS TO BE THE ONE WHO KNOWS.

...IT'S OVER. I DON'T WANT TO REMEMBER ANYTHING, EVER AGAIN.

BUT... IF YOU'RE THE "ONE WHO KNOWS", ISN'T YOUR OBLIGATION TO RETAIN AS MUCH KNOWLEDGE OF THIS PLACE TILL THE VERY END?

KNOWLEDGE? THIS EMPTY, CIRCULAR GARBAGE?

THAT THING ABOUT THE HEROIC PATTERNS AND THE SUN? THAT WAS MY BIGGEST LIE! OUR "SUN" IS WHERE THE SPELL THAT NARRATES US WAS HIDDEN, IT'S NOT REAL!

MAYBE. BUT MAYBE THERE IS KNOWLEDGE THERE FOR OUR WORLD?

YOU CAN STILL STOP YOUR MACHINE. I SUSPECT THAT, EVEN WITHOUT THE FIRE, THIS STORY MAY GO ON FOR A WHILE LONGER.

WHY DO YOU WANT ME TO KEEP THIS CITY ALIVE? WHAT'S THE POINT?

...WHY NOT? THE ONLY ACT OF HEROISM I SEE AS PLAUSIBLE IN THESE COMPLICATED WORLDS WE LIVE IN...

...IS TO HAVE ENOUGH COURAGE TO SEE ONESELF.

AND YOU DRAGGED PEOPLE WITH YOU. IF YOU HAD HAD THE FORTITUDE TO OBSERVE YOURSELF...

YOU PURSUED ADVENTURES TO PERFORM AN IGNORANCE THAT WASN'T GOING TO LAST...

...YOU WOULD HAVE KNOWN THE FUTILITY OF THAT ADVENTURE. BUT YOU CAN STILL DO THAT.

YOU CAN STILL BE A HERO.

HERE.

ACCEPT THIS GIFT. A REMINDER.

...

I DON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR NAME.

...

YOU CAN CALL ME BOB. LIKE THIS STONE, YOU CAN READ IT BOTH WAYS.

...WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

EVERY DAY, THE SUN RISES AND YOU TRY TO BUILD SOMETHING.

AND EVERY NIGHT YOU GO TO SLEEP KNOWING IT'S ALL BEEN FOR NOTHING. JUST LIKE THIS ROCK...

...THAT CAN BE THE PROOF OF YOUR LIFE IN RUINS, OR THE FOUNDATION STONE OF YOUR REBIRTH.

BOB? MASTER?

...

...HEH.

I LEAVE THE GIFT HERE. ON THE FLOOR. IT'S NOT A STONE LIKE THE OTHERS, OKAY?

LOOKS LIKE... I CAN GO.

DON'T MISTAKE IT.

BOB? DO YOU HEAR ME?

APPROPRIATE FOR THIS SHITTY DAY, I GUESS.

BOB?

TSK, USELESS. HE CAN'T HEAR YOU.

ANYWAY. ELECTRIC, YOU DO SEE US, DON'T YOU?

...

WHAT DO YOU WANT? I'M TIRED. ***IT'S OVER.***

HA. SO WHAT? IT'S TIME FOR EVERYTHING TO DI...

IF YOU DESTROY IT, THE LAST REMNANTS OF YOUR FAMILY WILL GO WITH IT. WHAT IF WE OFFER YOU AN ***ALTERNATIVE?***

YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT TRUE. THE ADVENTURES... *THEY NEVER END.*

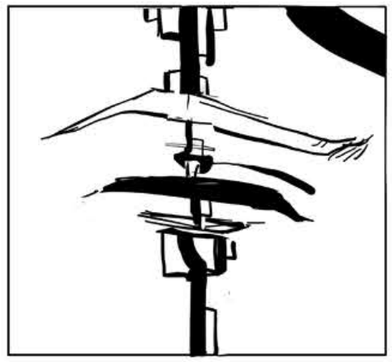
THIS CITY IS THE PLACE WHERE YOUR FAMILY LIVED.

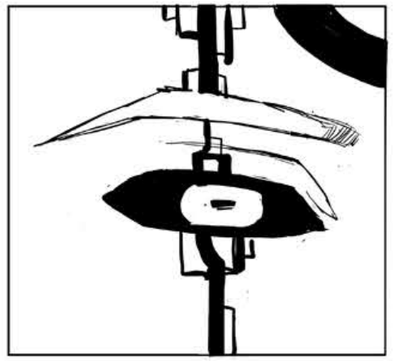
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"WHAT IF THERE WAS A WAY FOR YOU TO SEE THEM AGAIN FOR THE FIRST TIME?"

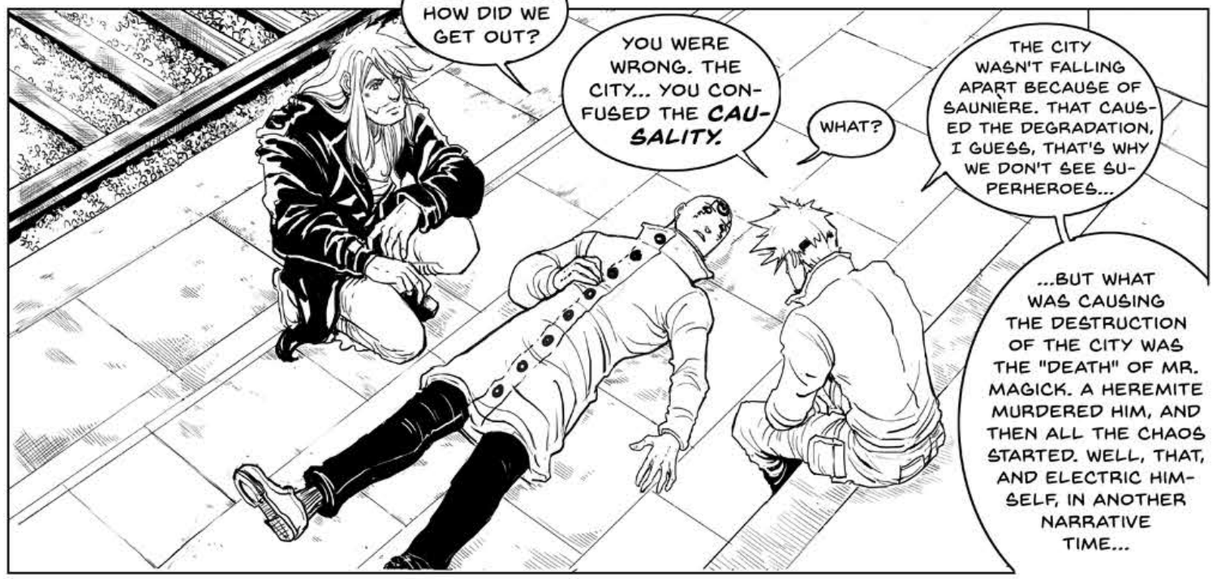
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WHAT...? WE... ARE... BACK?
YES. ADAM AND SIGURD, APPARENTLY. THEY SAVED US.
HOW ARE YOU DOING?
...I THINK IT'S TIME FOR ME TO CLOSE THE SECOND DOOR RITUAL.
YOU THINK? I'D SAY YOU CAN TAKE IT SLOW.
I DON'T... YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I'VE TRIED. BUT WHENEVER I TRY TO CLOSE IT, NO WORDS COME OUT. I DON'T KNOW WHY.
DON'T GIVE IT A THOUGHT NOW, JACOB. AT LEAST WE GOT OUT ALIVE. IS ABADDON STILL THERE?
NO. THE TRIP BACK TO MY BODY WAS THE LAST I HEARD FROM HIM.
YOU SURE? I DON'T WANT THAT CUNT SP...
BELIEVE ME. I COULD FEEL HIS PRESENCE PERFECTLY.


UGH... HOW... HOW DID WE GET OUT?
YOU WERE WRONG. THE CITY... YOU CONFUSED THE CAUSALITY.
WHAT?
THE CITY WASN'T FALLING APART BECAUSE OF SAUNIÈRE. THAT CAUSED THE DEGRADATION, I GUESS, THAT'S WHY WE DON'T SEE SUPERHEROES...
...BUT WHAT WAS CAUSING THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITY WAS THE "DEATH" OF MR. MAGICK. A HEREMITE MURDERED HIM, AND THEN ALL THE CHAOS STARTED. WELL, THAT, AND ELECTRIC HIMSELF, IN ANOTHER NARRATIVE TIME...


YOU'RE PULLING THAT OUT OF YOUR ASS, OR DID YOU FIND...?
WELL, THE WHOLE CITY REVOLVED AROUND HEROIC MYTHS, RIGHT? BUT THERE WAS ONLY ONE HERO LEFT.
ALL THAT REMAINED WAS... DOCUMENTS AND TESTIMONIALS, CENTERING AROUND ELECTRICBRAIN AND HIS FAMILY. BUT ELECTRIC WASN'T THERE...
I DON'T KNOW, IT ALL ADDED UP. IF THE ELEMENT OF FIRE NO LONGER SUSTAINS THE CITY, WHAT DOES? IF THE CITY IS A STORY... LIKE THE ILIAD. IT LIVES ON THROUGH MEMORY, AND THERE'S A CHARACTER WITHIN THAT STORY WHO IS KNOWN FOR HIS SUPERBRAIN. AND HE'S BECOMING AWARE OF WHAT THIS PLACE IS...


HAH. LIKE THE DRAWING OF THE HAND DRAWING ITSELF. AND YOU GOT ALL THIS OUT OF THIN AIR?
NO, IT WAS A SERIES OF CLUES.
ONE, THE TRUE IDENTITY OF MR. MAGICK. AFTER HIS DEATH, I REMOVED HIS MASK. HE WAS... ELECTRICBRAIN.
TWO, THE HEREMITE PRIEST. HE SAID ONE THING.... "ONLY STORIES WITHOUT AN ENDING ARE ETERNAL". ERGO, IF THIS SPELL IS A STORY...
HE LEFT ME AND SIGURD HERE, BUT IT'S LIKE... WELL, THEY SAY THEY'VE BEEN USING ME, AND SIGURD... HE LITERALLY WORKS FOR THEM... HE WASN'T JUST GOING TO LET US DIE, RIGHT?
YOU THINK HE WAS HELPING YOU.
YES. AND WHEN YOU SHOWED US YOUR MEMORIES... IT ALL CAME TOGETHER. THE CITY... I GUESS IT WAS DIFFERENT BEFORE SAUNIÈRE REMOVED THE FIRE ELEMENT, BUT...
I UNDERSTOOD THAT THE CITY WAS USING ELECTRICBRAIN AS A WAY TO SURVIVE, BUT THAT WAS NOT ENOUGH... TO KEEP IT ALIVE, THIS STORY HAD TO BE LEFT UNFINISHED, WITHOUT AN ENDING.

BUT WHAT DID YOU DO?

WELL, ELECTRICBRAIN HAD BECOME A VILLAIN, ESSENTIALLY.

I THINK HE WAS UNINTENTIONALLY EXHIBITING THE LACK OF FIRE ELEMENT IN HIS BEHAVIOR, AND HE WANTED TO CLOSE THIS WHOLE STORY BY DESTROYING IT.

AND YOU STOPPED IT?

SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

MEANING...?

WE CLOSED THE LOOP. WE HAD TO CONVINCE ELECTRICBRAIN TO BECOME MR. MAGICK.

THE FACT THAT MR. MAGICK WAS... WELL, MENTALLY LIMITED, MADE ME UNDERSTAND HOW WE COULD "SEDUCE" ELECTRICBRAIN.

HIS SUPERBRAIN MAKES HIM TOO CONNECTED TO THE TRUTH. BUT HE CAN'T BEAR TO KNOW IT. THAT'S WHY HE KILLED HIS FAMILY. HE DIDN'T WANT THEM TO KNOW ABOUT THE TRUTH... BECAUSE THROUGH THEM, HE LIVED THE ILLUSION.

YOU OFFERED HIM OBLIVION. RIGHT. YOU AND SIGURD. ANOTHER COSTUME, ANOTHER IDENTITY.

YES, THE ONLY WAY TO SUSTAIN THE BRAIN THAT SUSTAINS THE CITY IS TO MAKE HIM FORGET THAT HE IS THE BRAIN. WE GAVE HIM SEVERAL ORDERS, ONE OF WHICH WAS TO GO BACK TO THE "PAST" WHERE THE ATOMICS ARE STILL ALIVE.

HA. THAT'S WHY HE COULD OPEN PORTALS. HE IS THE PSEUDO-NARRATOR OF THE STORY, SO HE CAN CHANGE SCENES.

THUS, HIS STORY ENDS IN NEITHER VICTORY OR TRAGEDY, AND ALLOWS HIM TO KEEP GOING, WHILE SERVING AS AN ENDING FOR US, BECAUSE WE HAVE SOLVED THE PUZZLE.

YOU LOOK QUITE SAD, EVEN THOUGH YOU SAVED US.

ME?

...NAH.

ELECTRICBRAIN. **GET INTO A TRANCE!**

CITY, CAN YOU SPEAK THROUGH HIM? ARE WE RIGHT? IS ELECTRICBRAIN HOLDING THIS PLACE WITH HIS MEMORIES?

THIS IS THE... UHN... ONLY THING LEFT OF... US... YES.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF HE "DIED"?

YOU ARE... S-SEEING IT. HE IS THE LAST REMAINING TEXTUAL STRONGHOLD COHE... RENT... ENO...

B-BUT... IT'S THE FACT THAT... HIS INTELLECT KNOWS WHAT WE ARE... THAT SUSTAINS US... IT'S BREAKING THE MAG-G-G...

AS WE SUSPECTED.

YES. YOU WERE RIGHT. I'LL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL.

SIGURD, GO.

ELECTRIC, FROM THIS MOMENT ON, YOU WILL FORGET YOUR TRUE IDENTITY.

YOU WILL PRESERVE THE MEMORIES OF THE CITY BURIED IN YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS, BUT YOU WILL NOT HAVE ACCESS TO THEM.

FROM NOW ON, YOU'LL THINK YOU'RE MR. MAGICK, AND YOU'LL GO BACK TO THE BEGINNING OF YOUR SUPERHEROIC CAREER.

WITHOUT COMING OUT OF THE TRANCE, TELL ME IF ANY OF THESE ORDERS IS NOT FEASIBLE.

THEY ARE FEASIBLE. MY BRAIN MAY REQUIRE SEVERE LIMITATIONS IN MY CONSCIOUS STATE...

...BUT THAT WOULD ALLOW ME TO PRESERVE THE REMAINING MEMORIES OF THE CITY IN MY SUBCONSCIOUS.

CITY, WILL PORTALS OPEN FOR ALL OF US?

I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE THE REST BEHIND...

WHEN ELECTRICBRAIN BECOMES MR. MAGICK AND SEES HIS FAMILY FROM AFAR, THE MAIN CHARACTERS AND THEIR SECONDARY CHARACTERS WILL BE.

...R-RET-RETURNED, CHANGED FROM THE ADV-VENTURE.

OKAY THEN.

HEH.

MAN, LOOK HOW WELL WE WORK TOGETHER.

...

WE ARE ***CONDEMNING*** HIM, SIGURD. BOB OFFERED HIM A CHANCE...

WE ARE GIVING HIM A NEW DISTRACTION. HE'S LEARNED NOTHING. IF ANYTHING, HE'S REGRESSING.

"BUT THIS WAY WE COMPLETE THE LOOP, RIGHT? IT'S WHAT THE PRIEST SAID. AN INFINITE STORY".

FINALLY, THE EXIT.

"ELECTRIC DIES TO GIVE NEW LIFE TO MR. MAGICK, WHO DIES TO GIVE NEW LIFE TO ELECTRIC".

"YES... YEAH. I HATE IT. WHY DO YOU THINK I COULD SEE IT COMING? I'VE READ THIS BEFORE. THIS OBSESSION COMICS HAVE WITH NOT LETTING THINGS END".

"WHEN I WAS A KID, COMIC BOOKS WERE ONE OF THE FEW THINGS YOU AND I HAD. SEEMED LIKE THE REAL THING, RIGHT? AND WHEN I DISCOVERED MAGIC... I THOUGHT THAT..."

"IT WAS AS IF MY LIFE HAD ENTERED THAT WORLD. BUT IN THE END... WHAT YOU REALIZE... WHAT I'VE DONE WITH MY LIFE, WITH YOUR LIFE, THE FUCKING DAY I DECIDED TO SHARE WHAT I KNEW WITH YOU..."

"I'VE ***CONDEMNED*** US ALL. THIS SPIRAL OF SHIT. AND YOU, SIGURD... I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO SAY TO YOU. I DON'T... *I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO SAY*".

"BUT, DUDE... IF YOU WOULD LISTEN TO ME... WE WORK WELL TOGETHER. YOUR PROBLEM... YOU CLING TO AN IDYLLIC WORLD, TO AVOID THE REAL ONE, AND..."

"SIGURD. ALL THAT SHIT ABOUT THE SUN AS A LIVING ENTITY? IS IT REAL?"

"I MEAN... HAVE YOU HEARD OF IT--THE SUN, INCITING PEOPLE TO...?"

"NO IDEA".

"IN THE EBI OR THE HEREMITES, YOU HAVEN'T HEARD..."

"NO".

"WELL, THERE'S THIS THEORY THAT SOLAR CYCLES AFFECT HUMAN BEHAVIOR... BUT I NEVER THOUGHT IT WAS SOMETHING SO... I DON'T KNOW, DELIBERATE, I THOUGHT IT WAS LIKE... A SIDE EFFECT".

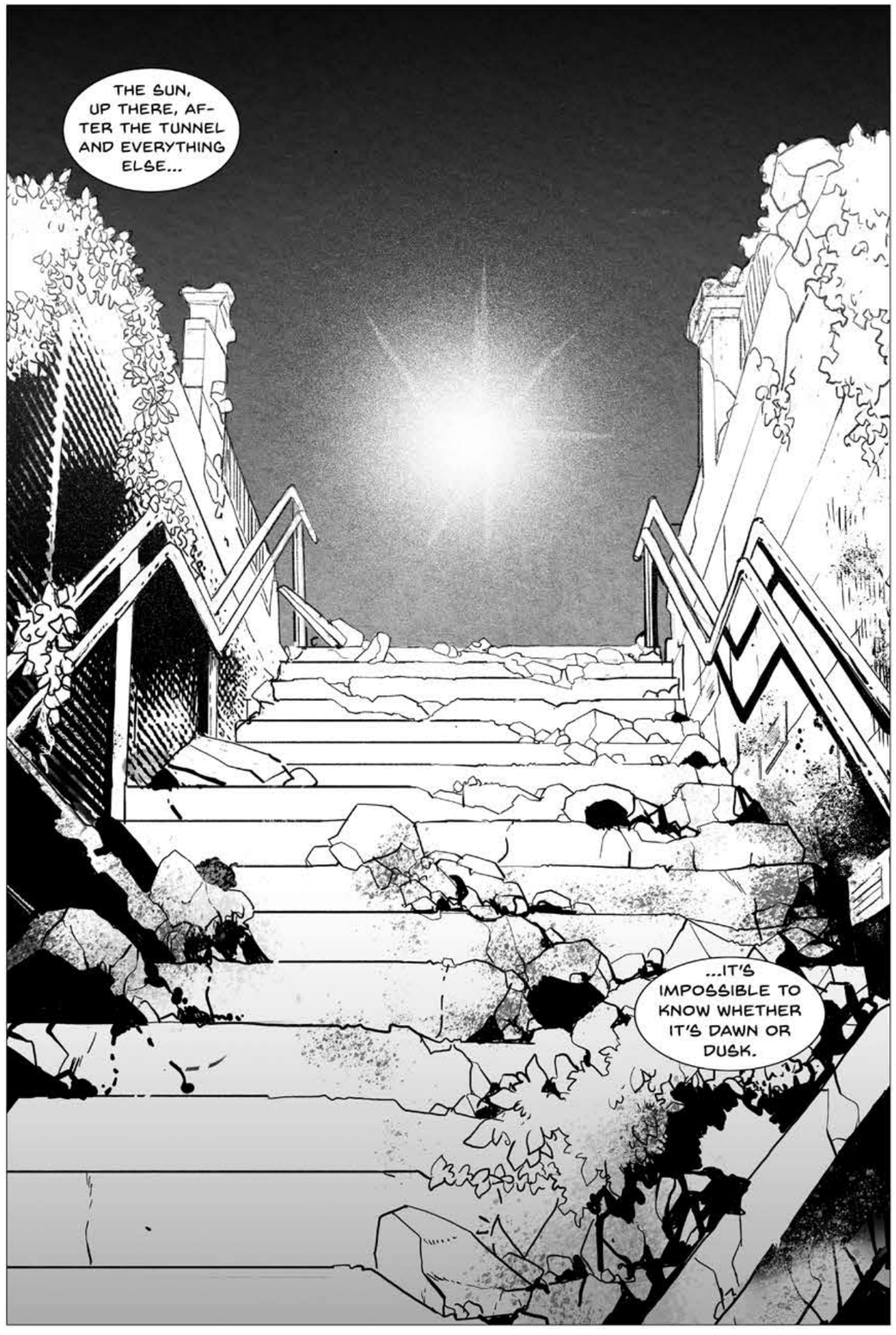
"OKAY, OKAY. LOOK, THE PORTALS. HOPEFULLY YOUR GROUP AND MINE WILL APPEAR ON THE OTHER SIDE AT DIFFERENT TIMES".

"WHY? I'M NOT LYING TO YOU, ADAM! I KNOW *STUFF* HAS HAPPENED, BUT I'M TRYING TO..."

"AGH. *STUFF*. YEAH, WHATEVER".

"***WE*** ARE THE ONES IN AN INFINITE LOOP".

JACOB. ESSEX. *LOOK*. IN THE SKY.



...TO BE CONTINUED

SEE YOU IN ABOUT ~~60~~ 50 DAYS (IDEALLY; SOME ISSUES IT'S 60 OR, UHM, MORE). WE KEEP THE RELEASE DATE UPDATED ON THE FACEBOOK FIXED POST. IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING US SO WE CAN GET ISSUES OUT FASTER AND GET ***DRAWINGS/SKETCHES*** OF FUTURE ISSUES, ***EARLY ACCESS*** TO A WORK-IN-PROGRESS VERSION OF THE NEXT ISSUE, OR ***VIDEOS*** SHOWING HOW WE DRAW A PAGE, PLEASE CONSIDER HELPING US THROUGH PATREON (LINK BELOW). IF WE GET ENOUGH HELP, WE MAY BE ABLE TO MAKE UPSURGE A MONTHLY SERIES. THANKS!

ah I wish...

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