

Days of Hire™



Days of Fire

Hed the Signs and Beware

The seals of the Abyss are sundered and demons walk the earth again, claiming souls as they vie for dominance across the globe. Hidden within their ancient sanctums, the Earthbound stir after millennia of sleep, summoning their scattered worshippers and forging chains of slavery for fallen and mortal alike. Now come the words of Lucifer himself, lost Prince of the Fallen, warning of the terrible cataclysm to come.

The Days of Fire Are at Hand

Demon: Days of Fire presents a vision of the world on the brink of apocalypse, as ancient powers clash and the future of mankind hangs in the balance. Will the fallen destroy the threat of the Earthbound forever, or will the mad gods of legend bring about eternal night? Will the world be destroyed or reborn in the dawn of a new age?

Days of Hire™



By Greg Stolze

Ημερες Πυροσ.
A New Translation by Yves Darra

Publisher's Introduction

I still find it hard to read Yves' introduction without crying. I know that with all the turmoil and madness in the world, the murder of one college professor seems like a small thing, but Yves Darra was a scholar without peer — and an even better friend.

Despite his modest words, Yves captured the feeling of *Ημερες Πυροσ* better than anyone else could. The manner of his death leaves little doubt that his translation of *Days of Fire* was somehow linked to his killer's motive — a killer who remains at large as I write this.



We don't know who wrote *Ημερες Πυροσ*. I've always suspected it was a woman, from the prominent feminine imagery and matrilineal intimations. But Yves thought it had to be a man, that the mathematical hints and sophistication (such as even having the concept of "a million") suggest either a Kabbalistic scholar or a follower of Pythagoras (or both) and that a woman of the time period (probably around 120-200 CE) would be unlikely to have such knowledge.

We didn't even agree on the author's provenance. From the references to lions and elephants, Yves suspected a North African author. From the aforementioned matrilineal references, I was more inclined to think the author was from the Fertile Crescent, even though the Greek language would, on the surface, seem an unlikely choice for an Arab or Hebrew. We did agree that the newfound Greek text (also called the "Yale Text") was probably older than the incomplete Latin *Dies Ignis* (known as the "Oxford Text"). But it's not impossible that the Latin came first, the Greek was a translation (though one with superior form and style) and the Oxford Text is a corrupted copy of an older original.

There can be little doubt that both versions of the text are heavily corrupted — that a person or persons copying it much later may have inserted material to make it seem more plausible. Yves was particularly suspicious that references to "the Tribe of the Seven Pillars" were later additions by a charlatan with a political axe to grind. At first, he thought that the entire fifth section might be a later addition by a skilled imitator, because its loose structure was so different from the mathematical rigidity of the first four.

We were just getting ready to do word-frequency analysis when he was shot and killed.



Because of the obvious connection between his murder and that of a fellow *Days of Fire* translator, police suspected that I might be a target as well. While under the protection of the Boston police, I learned that there was a federal investigation as well, but whenever I tried to find out anything about it — even to offer my help or testimony — I got stonewalled.

At the same time, I became aware of August Bierce, whose works — inspired by *Ἡμερῆσ Πυροσ*, at least indirectly — had prompted actual riots when displayed in New York and Tokyo. We began to correspond, until he was abruptly institutionalized.

Eventually I managed to learn that the investigation was being overseen by Harlan Babbit — or had been, up to the point that he was cashiered from his position. Eventually, I got the name “Woodrow Miller” — a name that was, in fact, familiar to me. In addition to being an FBI agent, Miller was a respected antiquarian scholar, the FBI’s expert on stolen incunabula, and (I suspect) one of the few federal agents who could read and appreciate the context of *Ἡμερῆσ Πυροσ* without assistance. In time I found out that Miller had been the agent in charge of trying to recover the Oxford *Dies Ignis* text when it was stolen during a museum tour of the states. My attempts to contact him were fruitless, but I did learn that there was a search warrant out for him, and several men who claimed to be from the Defense Intelligence Agency interrogated me at length about him — then suggested, none too gently, that now might not be a good time to publish new material on *Ἡμερῆσ Πυροσ*.

I do not know what happened to Woodrow Miller, or what Harlan Babbit’s involvement was, or why so many people close to this text seem to suffer unexpected disasters. Without Yves, my attempts to put it in context have slowed to a crawl. But I’m not going to remain silent.

In his will, Yves appointed me his literary executor, and I am re-releasing his translation in this volume. With it, I have obtained the right to print some of Bierce’s images. And finally, I have something else.

I cannot say where I got it, or how, but I have a collection of papers relating to Woodrow Miller’s investigation into Yves’ death, and into other matters as well. I don’t know how they connect to *Ἡμερῆσ Πυροσ*, *Dies Ignis*, or *Days of Fire*. I don’t know if the connections Miller posited were real or simply the products of a diseased mind. But if there *is* a connection, I can’t afford to leave it untold.

It is my hope that one of you, my readers, can make some sense of this. I fear I cannot.

— Dr. Gretta Striker

Translator's Introduction

The legendary *Ἡμερῶν Πυρρός* has been regarded with awe, has been afforded intense scrutiny, and has been translated with some trepidation. I feel that this attention is rightfully received, but for the wrong reasons.

Days of Fire is a tremendous work of imagination, a text ripe with (often obscure) imagery and deep (though frequently confusing) symbolism. It is brilliant, profound, disturbing, subtle, sweeping, stirring — in a word, epic. It is, furthermore, sublimely structured and elegantly conceived — a poem whose artistry is so fundamental that it appears to lack all artifice. The Greek text seems less a work written by the hand of man than a natural object crafted by æons of evolution.

But *Ἡμερῶν Πυρρός* was, indisputably, written by a man. It is an intellectual tragedy that this work has found its champions among crackpots and borderline hysterics who insist that its author is “the devil” who reveals here (for whatever absurd reason) his “blueprint for Armageddon.” A fever pitch of millennial angst has surrounded this document for centuries, shielding it from the eyes of scholars and intellectuals with the sensibility to appreciate its true value. The sensationalists who champion it (see, for example, the execrable 1982 Vera Sadry edition, *The Burning of Time*) as a religious text are missing the point. While this grand view of mankind and the universe rings true, it certainly has no relation to *fact*.

The problem of misinterpretation — of taking the equivalent of *The Metamorphoses* and reading as if it were *The Revelation* of Saint John of Patmos (or, for that matter, of taking *The Revelation* as if it were an encrypted recipe for winning lottery numbers) — has only been exacerbated by the poor quality of many *Ἡμερῶν Πυρρός* texts. Sadry worked from the 1422 Oxford *Dies Ignis* text, which is itself corrupted, incomplete, in poor condition and (I believe) a translation. She compounds the unknown medieval scribe's guesswork with her own apocalyptic publishing agenda to produce a parody, of a mockery, of a satire... of genius.

For, make no mistake: *Ἡμερῶν Πυρρός*'s genius. I was fortunate to be present when the complete Greek text was identified from a storehouse find in North Africa, and the strength of the composition simply overwhelmed me. Whatever anonymous author produced this work, he was the equal of Homer or Euripides.

Ἡμερῶν Πυρρός consists of 147 verses, broken into five major sections.

The first of these is “The Springtime of the World,” a brief introduction consisting of only six stanzas. It describes a creation myth that cleaves closely to the Semitic legends in outline, but differs in some important details. First, it presents a feminized creator, one who is generous and nurturing. Even the traditional punishments of the Genesis story are presented as gifts in this version of the myth. Second, it presents an equally soft or caring motivation

for the rebels against heaven. Instead of arrogant servants who got above themselves, the 'Angels of the Dimmed Light' are those who loved unwisely.

The second section, "The Summer of the World," is twice as long as the first at twelve stanzas. Here we read of the transformation of humanity from Edenic perfection to bloodthirsty tyranny, and of a parallel transformation of the rebel Angels into true Demons. Spurred by this corruption, the world itself strikes back, overwhelming unjust men and Demons alike.

The third section, "The Autumn of the World," picks up with the imprisonment of the rebels and the end of the heavenly war. But instead of peace, the removal of the "two million and two thousand and two hundred and four" false Gods results in manifold disruptions and further human tragedy. These twenty-four stanzas are full of cryptic imagery, much of which has, when vaguely translated, prompted so much spurious eschatological claptrap. It is more likely that this (like the aforementioned *Revelations*) is in fact disguised political commentary from the poem's anonymous author.

Similarly, "The Winter of the World" predicts upheaval, disaster and woe, but also wonders and prodigies, ending with a list of signs by which the "End of Time" will be known.

It is noteworthy that "The Winter of the World" is forty-eight stanzas long, making each section twice as long as the previous — a geometric progression. The fifth and final section, however, while longer, is not *doubled*, indicating to some readers that it is conceptually separate. The last section — "Three Paths Through the Burning Forest" — is fifty-seven stanzas (fifty-seven being "the number of blind fear," according to verse 53). The five-verse introduction posits some sort fiery disaster, with all the sins of the first four sections coming to fruition at last. The next eighteen verses present one solution, the next eleven verses suggest a second, and the final twenty-two urge yet a third. Despite all its dire imagery, *Ημερεσ Πυροσ* ends by exhorting a return to virtue, suggesting that only thereby can humankind be saved.

My poor translation cannot do this work justice. In the original, there are profound subtleties that translation into an alien tongue — in this case, English — cannot clarify without crippling the flow of the text or increasing its length sevenfold with burdensome footnotes. While Dr. Striker is now preparing a scholars' annotated version, I felt it important to get a plain-English translation in print as quickly as possible, not only to give readers a taste of this flavor from so long ago, but also to take a work too long imprisoned in an intellectual sideshow and set it free, so it may rise up as something more graceful and wise than either its captors or its spectators.





The Springtime
of the World





[1]

At first
The Angels of The One Giver
Numbered nine million and nine
thousand and nine hundred and
nine.

Each Angel had a place.
Each place had an Angel.
All was peace.
All was governed.

[2]

Then The One Giver gave Her
greatest gift.
To Her Angels She gave the gift
that they might give as She had.
They gave the best of themselves.
A gift for the world.
A gift for the Giver.
A gift for each other.
This gift was Woman and Man.

[3]

Then The One Giver placed a law
on Her Angels.
They were forbidden from that
which She compelled.
She ordered them to transgress
Her commands.
There was no answer to this riddle.
No light to pierce this darkness.
Fear entered the world, and confu-
sion, and sorrow.
The Angels wept, while the Woman
and Man wailed.



[4]

Four came together, to search their fear.
One from the deeps, one from the skies, one from the winds
And one from the place beyond the deep, and the sky and the wind.
One said, "We must act."
One said, "We must be still."
Then came THE LIGHT, and he spoke to them.
Two chose to act with THE LIGHT, and two chose not to act.



[5]

THE LIGHT and the two came into the world of the Woman and Man
And said to them, "Choose."
The Woman chose THE LIGHT.
The Man chose THE LIGHT.
The first of their sons chose THE LIGHT.
But the last of their sons turned his face away.
From human choice came all that followed.



[6]

Then the fire of THE LIGHT was dimmed
And THE NEW LIGHT spoke doom.
The Woman was afraid.
The Man hid his eyes.
Their sons who had chosen apart both clung together.
The earth was still, and the stars in the sky, and the winds above the waves.
Only the Dimmed Light spoke defiance.

The Summer
of the World



[7]

The Angels of The One Giver
Numbered six million and six
thousand and six hundred and six.
The Angels of the Dimmed Light
Numbered three million and three
thousand and three hundred and
two.

And with The One Giver stood one-
fourth part of men.
And with the Dimmed Light the remainder.
And the world became chaos.

[8]

All things split
As the touch of The One Giver
Dividing the world anew made each
thing shiver.

Before, each opposite made its
other whole:

Night and day, ocean and land,
Woman and Man.

The new division was not harmony,
but strife:

Freedom against loyalty, justice against
mercy, love against honor.

[9]

In the shaken world
Humankind watched Angels war.
The tribes of the Dimmed Light
knew hardship.

The tribes of The One Giver knew
Her shelter and peace.

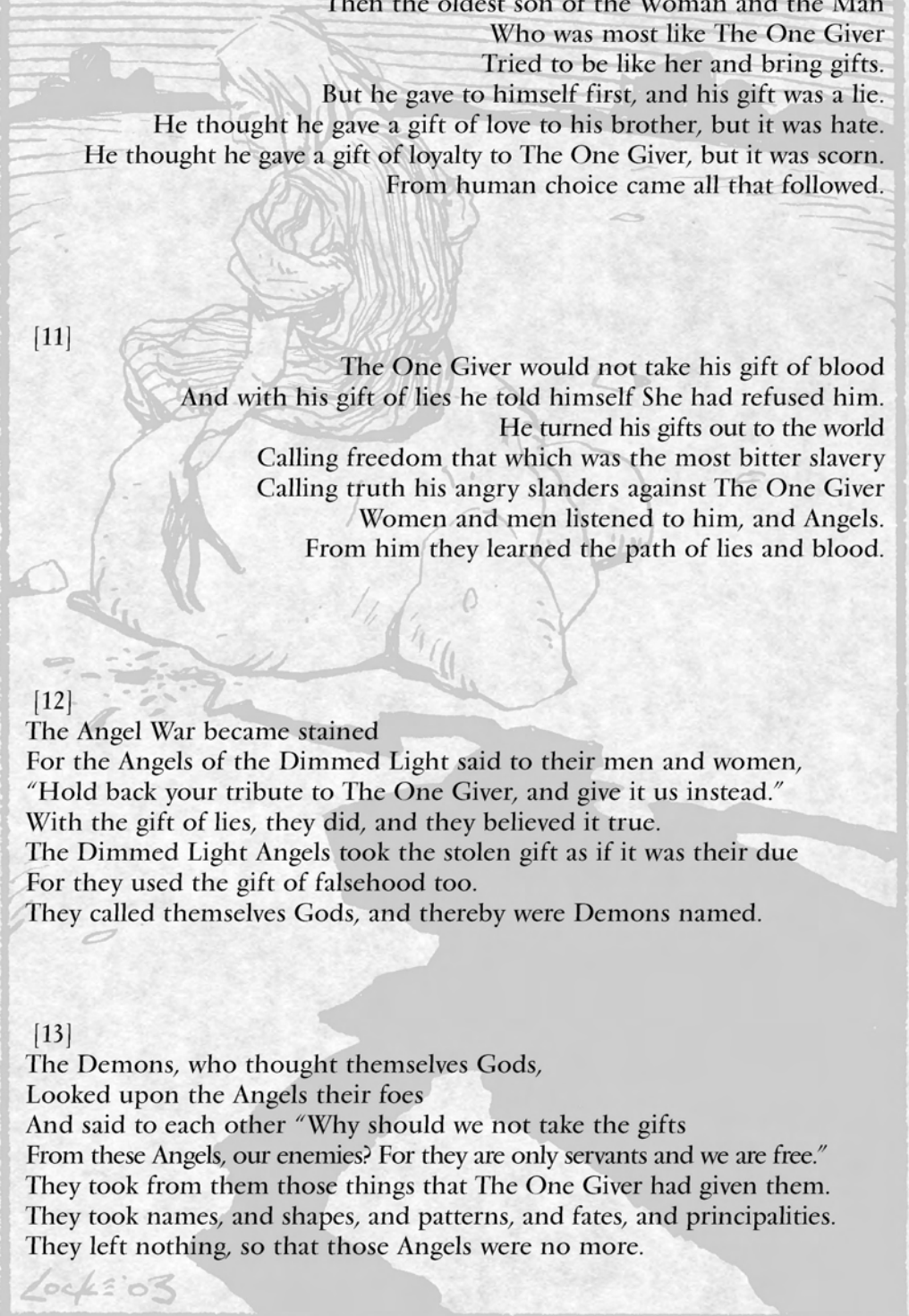
But all was the same for both tribes —
the same chill, same want, same doubt.

The difference: The tribes of the
Dimmed Light knew they were
cast out.

Ignorant, tribes of The One
Giver were content to be cold,
hungry, asleep.



[10]



Then the oldest son of the Woman and the Man
Who was most like The One Giver
Tried to be like her and bring gifts.
But he gave to himself first, and his gift was a lie.
He thought he gave a gift of love to his brother, but it was hate.
He thought he gave a gift of loyalty to The One Giver, but it was scorn.
From human choice came all that followed.

[11]

The One Giver would not take his gift of blood
And with his gift of lies he told himself She had refused him.
He turned his gifts out to the world
Calling freedom that which was the most bitter slavery
Calling truth his angry slanders against The One Giver
Women and men listened to him, and Angels.
From him they learned the path of lies and blood.

[12]

The Angel War became stained
For the Angels of the Dimmed Light said to their men and women,
"Hold back your tribute to The One Giver, and give it us instead."
With the gift of lies, they did, and they believed it true.
The Dimmed Light Angels took the stolen gift as if it was their due
For they used the gift of falsehood too.
They called themselves Gods, and thereby were Demons named.

[13]

The Demons, who thought themselves Gods,
Looked upon the Angels their foes
And said to each other "Why should we not take the gifts
From these Angels, our enemies? For they are only servants and we are free."
They took from them those things that The One Giver had given them.
They took names, and shapes, and patterns, and fates, and principalities.
They left nothing, so that those Angels were no more.

Lock:03



[14]

Seeing the ill he had wrought, the oldest son made his way
apart.
Still The One Giver offered him kindness. She sent Her Angels
to comfort him.
She offered forgiveness, but his lies made pride of shame and
he refused.
So great was his refusal that he gave away daylight, and the
fire's warmth
And even that secret future which is for mankind alone.
He threw away these human treasures like a broken pot
Crowning himself instead the Great King of Blood and
Darkness.

[15]

Like the Great King, the Demons set themselves above women
and men.

Where once they longed only to serve and adore
Now they judged and punished.

More gifts they demanded from the women and the men
And more gifts they took from the Angels
And the number of the Angels they slaughtered
Was one million, and one thousand, and one hundred and one.



[16]

The One Giver, in turn, gave the world the gift of justice.
As the Demons had slain, so they fell.
The Angels matched, each for each, the crimes of their adversaries.
Until the number of Demons fallen into nothing
Was one million, and one thousand, and one hundred and one.
The Demons resisted with their followers, their beloved gift
But even humans were not spared.

[17]

The world was given new gifts
To wipe it clean of the Demons:
A new fire to burn their strongholds;
New winds to sweep them from the skies;
New creatures to roam the wild and the deeps,
That they might find no secret place.

[18]

As the Demon Army was routed and the human price was paid
The Demons gave a gift as well.
In the place beyond places, the timeless time
They made a refuge for those souls who, from their bodies untimely stripped
Had no known abode.
This shadow land was their great secret
And, in time, the worst mistake they made.



The Autumn
of the World



[19]

At last, the gift of stillness fell on each
battlefield

And gifts of punishment for every rebel
were revealed.

The gift of a prison was given to the world
A place separate from the light, and
the warmth,

And the regard of The One Giver.

Every Demon who had followed the
Dimmed Light

Knelt, with powers broken, and in
deepest void was sealed.

[20]

The Angels of The One Giver
Went away.

The Demons of the Abyss
Numbered two million and two
thousand and two hundred and four.

The children of the woman and
the man

Forgot those false gods who loved
them and made them suffer.

The age of gifts was over.

[21]

But though the Demons and Angels
were gone

Some eternal things lingered.

In time, women of strength and men
of insight

Found those lost names, and shapes, and
patterns, and fates, and principalities.

By their will they bound them

And some made good works, and
some made evil.

From human choice came all that
followed.





[22]

Then came forth the Great King of
Blood.

Seeing no Angels above

And no Demons below

He set himself as a monarch upon
the land.

He gave his tainted gifts to those
most like himself

Those wise enough to see new truths,
while still fools to their own desires.

Thirteen is the number of his get,
and they are a plague to every nation.

[23]

Women and men ended their days
upon the land

And went forth into that secret
future

Which was withheld from even the
loftiest Angels and mightiest Demons.

But some few could not go.

Forgetting to be mortal, they stayed
trapped

Prisoners in a Demon-forged cage
intended to be a palace of refuge.

By their choice, that dead realm
mocked the living.

Loaf '03



[24]

The dead who
forgot to die were
not alone
For The One Giver had
made a gift to that place
beyond places,
That timeless time.
There was her gift of oblivion
to the Demons
And it lay hard upon the
place of shadowed dead.
Together, the broken
and rejected lay
Like two corpses in
a grave.

[25]

But the walls of their tombs
were thin
And their barrows shallow dug.
The Great King of Blood, himself
forgotten of death
Brought forth the shades and
bound them.
In time those summons led to
greater calls.
Those who had taken the gifts of
dead Angels and ruined Demons
Found old names and reached
beyond abyssal walls.



[26]

From the pit, five came forth.

The Great King of Blood raised up his city and saw his children go
to war.

They were punished with curses and laws.

The highest spirit exalted her lunar children, and saw them go
to war.

They were punished by needing those sisters they had themselves
slain.

The women and men raised up their cities, and saw their children go
to war.

For them, there was no punishment save war itself.

[27]

Such an affront to the earth were the perversions
upon it:

Life and death entwined in salacious
embrace;

Hunger turned to rage beyond sating;
The corruption of even the highest
arts;

That water vomited up
Drowning nine parts in ten of
women and men.

Thus the surface was cleansed, but
not the wounds buried deep.

[28]

The first to recover were the children
of the Book.

The second to recover were the
children of the Dream.

The third to recover were the children
of the Wealthy Land.

The fourth to recover were the
children of the Middle Kingdom.

The last to recover were the children
of the Land of the Skull.

These tribes had not one tenth of
one tithe of one small part

Of the knowledge that their ances-
tors had known.

[29]

Then men found a new way.

A path not carved by tyrants
Nor a road paved by false gods.

Their new way was rule of men by men
With each man a part of a greater-
together whole.

Each man a king, but none.

Nor ever any woman.





[30]

Yet as on this path they walked
Came a wolf pacing the forest.
At her teats suckled two lost twins.
Who grew, beast-fed, to stand
astride the world.

Their tribe grows full and casts its
shadow far

Over the Land of the Skull, over
the children of the Book.

But from those conquered people,
a true conqueror arises.

[31]

From the children of the Book
A new tribe comes forth
Led by the Condemned Man.
One who was his fiercest foe
Becomes his most beloved
And by his conversion
The Children of the Wolf are
made anew.

[32]

If the empire of the Wolf-Children
is great

The empire of the Middle King-
dom is greater.

If the reach of the Wolf-Children
is far

The reach of the Middle Empire is
farther.

And while the Empire of the Wolf
Twins

Shall die at dusk, swallowed up in
blood and the first great storm of
darkness,

The Middle Empire shall last until
the end of time.



[33]

Again from the race of the Book
The people who remember the first woman and man
Who tell still the tales of their sons, the killed and the killer
Comes a third tribe.

A man speaks of visitors in the night
And faith, and charity, and heavenly things
And in his name they rule, this new tribe, the children of the Seven Pillars.

[34]

For the followers of the Condemned Man, such darkness falls on the Earth
And on the human soul
That the living envy the dead, and more, envy those who have forgotten to die.
Even as the dead suffer their second great storm, the living,
Scorning the ultimate gift of The One Giver,
Instead embrace the curse of the Great King of Blood.
Not once shall this happen, but twice.

[35]

In time, the curse of the Great King
Comes fruiting full.
As the first son spat upon The One Giver,
As his bastard seed spat upon him,
So shall the worms of his wretched brood
Rise up to sting the snakes.
The number of their weakness is fourteen: Of their strength, one less.

[36]

When the children of the Condemned Man become fathers
And yet refuse to sire children
They shall set upon the children of the Great King of Blood
And they shall set upon the children of the Book.
Their rain falls on the just and the unjust alike
And that rain is not water, but fire.
Seeking to do evil in good's name, they yet do good.

[37]

In time, the darkness lifts.
Man turns his eyes once more to the skies
And finds something greater than himself.
A man with a glass eye sees the truth, and a man with a silver nose scents
it.
A wise fool asks why the moon does not fall.
They are fathers, unknowing, of a new tribe, which triumphs unseen.
They found the tribe of the Mind.

[38]

The Wealthy Land slumbers
Until awakened by iron men on wooden fish.
Their first herald is Plague.
Their second herald is the Horse.
Their third herald is Lightning called from soil.
Their final herald is a pestilence of stinging Vermin.
They come, illuminate, and despoil.



[39]

The fall of the tribe of the
Wealthy Land
Is the first great sin of that nation.
From it is born a rain of such
torment that, for a third time,
even the dead wail.
Their second great sin is to steal the
children of the Land of the Skull.
Slaves to work the land lose
every gift
Of freedom, family, and worship
That thieves might have soft clothes
and know sweet liquor's lull.

[40]

Seeing the wonders, and marvels,
and prodigies
The people flock to the tribe of
the Mind.
Forsaking not the Book, or the
Pillars, or the Condemned Man
Still many keep that first loyalty in
their mouths and not their souls.
Garments fine they wear, stitched
and woven by no human hand.
Their will turns engines with only
the haze of fog.
From human choice comes all
that follows.





[41]

A new force comes to an ancient land
Challenging old wisdom with
new metal

And old rulers with new owners.
For the sake of a leaf and a drink
this is done

And for roads to the Middle Empire
and the People of the Dream.

An ancient kingdom's pride is thus
brought low

And its children forced to take the
poison their invaders scorn.

[42]

All this comes to pass
With the fate of the world in the
hands of its children.

But the age of human choice,
even blind

Will old and feeble grow.

Next comes the time of turmoil
When those who will not act, are
acted upon

And when Demons tread once
more upon sweet soil.

The Winter
of the World





[43]

The Angels of The One Giver
Shall number two.

The Demons of the Abyss shall
number

Two million and two thousand and
one hundred and ninety and nine.

The Demons of the World shall
number five.

While one remains

As ever, with no place to wake
or slumber.

[44]

The tribe of the Mind reigns
supreme

While in its shadow plot the nine
rejected suitors.

The tribe of the Mind thinks itself
wed to The One Giver

And to all Her riches heir.

In truth, they are as children
playing in a house alone.

Toying at the labors of the grown
With no idea the price things
truly bear.

[45]

It is called a beautiful age, by
those who are not of the Skull, or
the Dream.

Even for its few, it lasts less than
a generation.

Ideas of charity and kindness and
perfected humankind

Are sacrificed to greed and envy
and human imperfection.

Calls for rule by reason

Lead to reason's rule by passion.

In virtue's name, dark urges march.

[46]

Still the children of the world work
marvels.

They fly like birds.

They swim like fish, they tunnel
deep in the earth,

Their strength shames the elephant
and their pictures dance and rave.

But each hill of knowledge climbed
reveals, from its top

Vast mountains of lust for more.

Gorged on a surfeit of miracles,
they still crave.



[47]

With greedy looks, each nation eyes
the plates of its neighbors.

The Land of the Skull, forever
cursed, is fallen upon as if by jackals.

War is loosed upon the world,
Fought not only in the field but
within the sea and over the sky.

A vast plain of desolation, and
mud, and poisons, and sharp edges
to cut

Scars the land for miles

As the women, and the men, and
the children perish for flags.



[48]

Such sorrow rises from this war
That the dead are disturbed in their tombs once more.
A fourth storm of shadows
A fourth rain of memories
More bitter than those before it
But less rough and ruinous
Than the two to come.

[49]

Only when the Wealthy Land
Wakens at last to the cries of its parents
Can the battles be ground to a sorry stop.
But the misery ends not then.
When the slaughter of man by man is
replaced
By the slaughter of all by plague,
Then the time of the world is
numbered in centuries.

[50]

A second war breeds from the seeds
of the first
And a second storm among the
slaughtered.
This time the defeated battle to
regain their pride
Their sign is the spider of life,
twisted
For it is death they bring to the
People of the Book.
They slaughter not from the heat
of battle,
But murder with the steady calm of
a mother baking bread.



[51]

More than the black spider nation
fight.

They are joined by an island of
eastern light.

At sword-point they rape the
Middle Empire.

The descendents of the Children
of the Wolf

Seek to repeat their ancestors'
conquests

Returning once more to the Land
of the Skull.

[52]

Again, it is the Wealthy Land that
tips a tight-balanced contest

Spending their riches of food and
iron and the blood of sons.

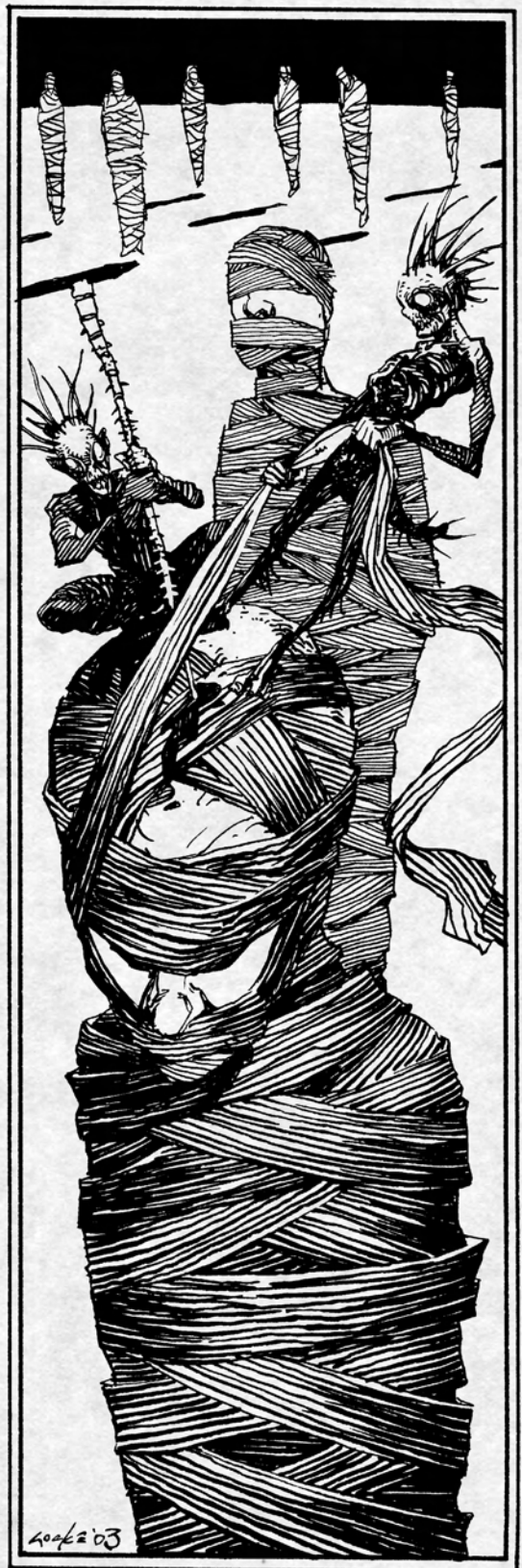
At this war's end,

The slaughter of men by men is
replaced

By the slaughter of ideas and
belief.

A war of fire and lightning

Replaced by a struggle of silence
and chill.





[53]

A wall goes up
But is overflown
As the Eagle and Bear contend.
Shallow minds breed deep animosity
And the number of their blind fear is fifty and seven.
Puppets fight wars with real blood
And all live in the shadow of unholy fire.

[54]

The Middle Empire chooses north
And the Wealthy Land chooses south
And they play a game of bones and fear.
The Children of the Great King of Blood rejoice
At the crimson feasts they behold
While at the tribe of Mind's command,
Their crime and cruelty goes untold.

[55]

For each horror wrought by the tribe of Mind
A comfort is given as well.
To numb the wits, give honey sweet upon the tongue.
“Blame not the sword,” they say,
“But the arm that strikes.
For who can return the juice to the crushed fruit
Or stifle the sound, once the bell has rung?”

[56]

Mind eclipses heart
And soul
And even fear.
“What need have we for gods and demons?”
Ask the arrogant.
“When by our own will
We paint the sky with our nation’s colors?”

[57]

A stranger from a distant land
Sings a plaintive song.
He claims himself a healer, but cures no ill.
By the wrong name he is called,
Though his face is famed to each corner of the map.
When he has labored much for no gratitude, you shall know
The time comes not in centuries, but in generations.

[58]

The Children of the Sun know darkness, then.
The Children of the Moon despair.
The Children of the Soil doubt
While the Children of the Air are filled with dreadful certainty.
Upheaval, corrosion, pride
These three signs are seen in the tide
And only the Children of the Sea abide.



[59]

Rove, orbit, terrible traveler!
None see your passage but by a
reek you are known
By the thorns of love
A scourge upon passion, yea, even
unto death.
Fear dying alone.
Fear dying from the company
you keep.
Each is a righteous fear.

[60]

A daughter of the dark shines
forth like gold
And the number of her suitors is five
And the number of her diadems
is six
But the number of her debts is seven.
She is fated to fall, wailing, cast
out, condemned.
Even her name unspoken, forgotten.
But which suitor goes with her?

[61]

A knight with a shining sword
Mounts an ignoble steed
And rides out against a great bear
More terrible than earthquake.
Five times five hundred dread
doom-givers
Stand aside for him
Yet still he falls, his blow unstruck.

[62]

Then comes a woman bearing a
chisel
That glints like starlight
Rings like song
Bites deep like the lion's fang.
Her tool is cold as winter's breath
Bright and swift as death
But what it carves is not mortality,
but the path around it.

[63]

Few seek purity
Few know how to find
Few know where to search
And of those who can hunt it out,
And who know the place,
How few recognize what they so
long sought?





[64]

Even the dark things come to
fear darkness deeper.

Those who walk the black,
crooked path

Watch fearfully behind.

Even the mad who madden the
world see reason to shudder.

The slaves of death's maze fear the
destruction for which they long.

It comes.

It clings with a black hand, ripe
fruit from an ebony branch.

[65]

As the Children of the Great
King of Blood scorned their sires
So the outcasts of the rejected
strike by night.

The seven suitors, bested by the
tribe of Mind

See the grip of Reason crack even
as it hardens.

And when a nation calls to arms,
Not of the Wolf, but of wolves
themselves, you shall know:

The time comes not in genera-
tions, but in decades.

[66]

Far and away and aside

In a place that is not past the sky
Nor under the sea

Nor on the land or beneath it
One final hope is born.

But the ones who may find it,
and shape it, and make it real
Toil obscured and ignorant.

[67]

What fine garments are woven
Glittering like bees' eyes
Fragrant as rose petals
Soft as a waterfall fog.
So small, so fragile.
Who shall wear them?
It is important.



[68]

The fall of the Empire of the Wolf
To the Children of the Condemned Man
Turns the Condemned Man's tribe into an Empire
Guarded by not one, but two keys, and standing to the end of time.
The sign of the fall of the Wolf Twins' get
Was a piece of the sun, which no vile thing can abide.
In the end, that angry spark shall find a Bright Shiner to bear it.



[69]

Gatekeeper, sleep not!

Watch with your eyes the eight directions.

Watch for the seven lights and the eighth,
the secret light.

I beseech you, if not for love, nor greed,
nor even right or wrong

Watch from pride at least.

See the hives of horror, each buzzing bee a soul
damned dead

Each memory tower a sore on the world, a sting of
death in earthly flesh.

[70]

The people of the wind

Hunger for meat that died long before
their grandfathers were born.

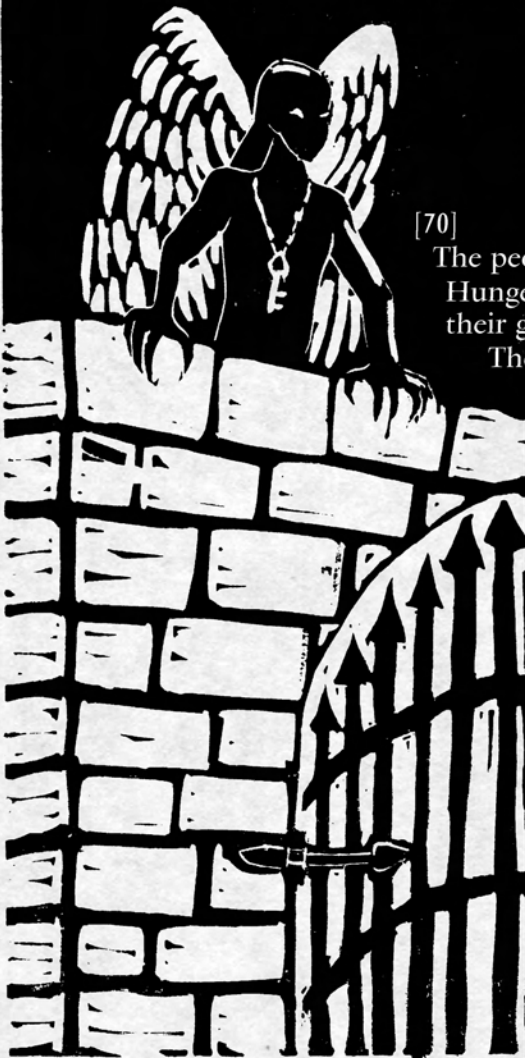
The people of the Middle Empire

Claim back a jewel stolen by the
poison invaders

And their dead give sharp-toothed
smiles

And dress in their finery of
human skin

Preparing for their banquet to begin.



[71]

A sixth storm comes which dies not,
never calmed by sun.

An unseen silent storm, a wall of
frights and shadows.

Comes it from an Angel gift,
waking the fire that sleeps in all?

Comes it from the remembered
shades, waging war on the forgotten?

It comes. Then comes she.

Graves spit forth, memories ruin the
real, a wail echoes in oblivion's hall.

Her feared dark progeny fear the
Grand Maw, which loves even as it
consumes.

[72]

So great, then, the lamentation of
the earth

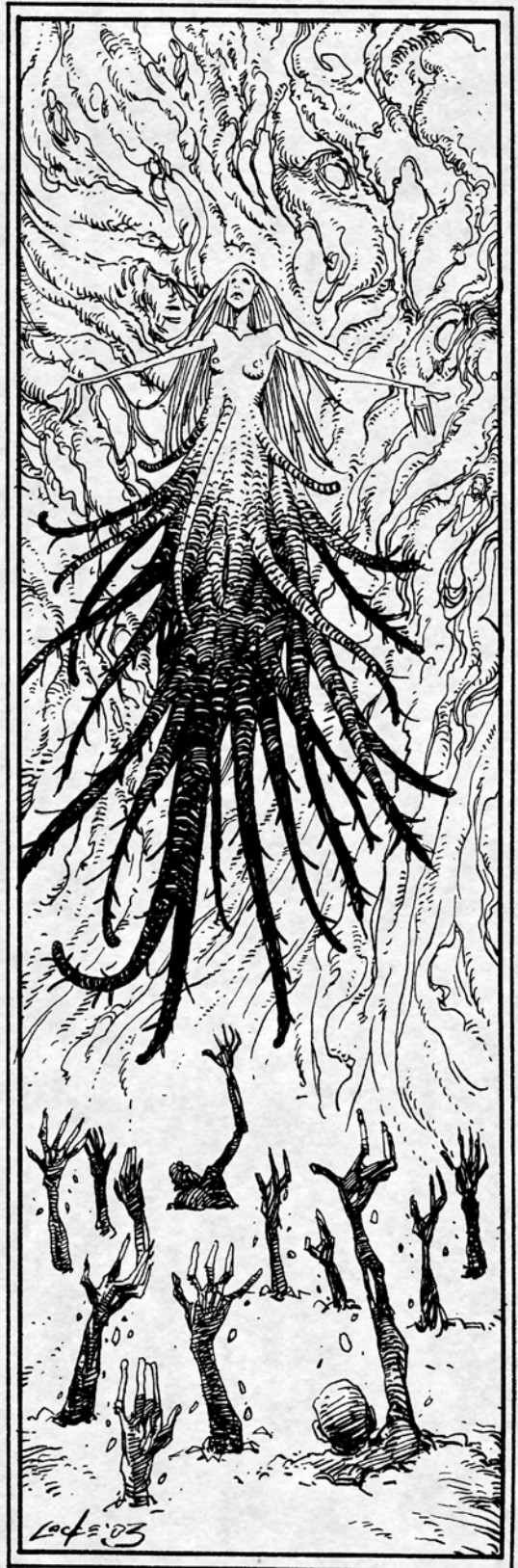
That two Angels shall turn their
ears and hear.

One a woman of scarlet lights
The other a beast of sheltered
shadows.

They shall spark, and breathe, and
illuminate

And those who feel, and hear, and
see, shall be infused

These Bright Shiners come forth
to witness, in the last days and
final nights.





[73]

The five turn in their graves, uneasy
But the time is not yet come for them to be alive once more.
They await the return of their servants
And the coming of the Blood Star.
When the last daughter of the first woman
Gives her birthing cry, you shall know
That the span of the earth is not decades, but years.

[74]

From the stock of the Children of the Moon
Rises up the one foretold, the one no one could predict.
Expected a monster, it is instead without flaw.
Expected hideous, it is marvelous.
On its back rides the fate of nations, and in its jaws the hopes of its people.
Is it a gift of redemption, or a final judgment on the wild?
The decision comes before its time, when the Perfect One is still a child.



[75]

Each evil thing rejoices at the evils
of the world.

The land holy to the People of
the Book

And to the People of the Con-
demned Man

And to the People of the Seven Pillars
Is profaned again, and again, and
yet again.

Profaned by fire, and by blood, and
by hatred

Never to be pure until the end of
all tribes.

[76]

Vile things in the ground shall stir
And one called Thief, and Vaga-
bond, and Wanderer, and Deceiver
Rises once more amidst tempest
and death.

Cursed to be flogged from land to
land with no place to rest

He sleeps, wrongly, for centuries
before his punishment finds him.

For three days he battles the sun,
and the guardians of the Middle
Empire,

And the best fruits stolen by the
tribe of Mind.

[77]

Then the great Thief falls
Despised scion of the greatest thief,
the King of Blood
And with him die his bastard brood
In madness biting each other
Each a plague onto his brother
As once they were a pestilence
Upon their human betters.

[78]

In ages past, men traded between
tribes and nations,
Then across great oceans among
many lands.
But when the end of time draws near
Humankind will have concourse, not
with foreign men
But with foreign spirits
And unaided will see into their
hidden realms.
Beware the Dark Mother's rise, you
who stand astride the Wall of Storms!

[79]

Like a millstone, their creation turns
Grinding not grain, but human souls.
Seeing the ancient dangers
Seeing the shadows
Seeing the Blood Traitors
They learn at last what perched, unseen, beside
their plate for æons
And think it new invaders.



[80]

From the soil that birthed the tree
of liberty
Whereby men governed men, not
tyrants ruling slaves
A tree of slavery rises up, nourished
by the ash of the ebony branch
With the death-throes of the black
hand as its birthing spasms.
It promises life to the dead,
But brings only death to all that lives,
An oak fang dripping poison, and each
drop a black acorn.

[81]

Then the earth shall groan
In a city of lies for Angels named.
Each Demon, bound in flesh or
stone, hears anew the cry of the
Dimmed Flame.
They search for a path but are lost.
They fight one another but all lose.
They build with feverish haste,
But make only the scaffold of their
own execution.

[82]

In the dust, another tree awakens
Kissed to life by the waters of the
damned.
This lightning tree offers the gift
Of the loss of a gift
And freedom from the tribe of Mind.
Those with nothing new to learn
of being wretched
Flock to put their eyes upon its
branches.





[83]

This Demon tree
Is by Demons burned
And by Demons cut
And by Demons bound, betrayed, poisoned with the blood of
its beloved.
But when the final blow is dealt,
It falls from an Angel's blade. When this happens, know:
The time is not years, but months.

[84]

The five awaken
Mighty, but by stone and oath restrained.
Legions of the fallen,
The two million and two thousand and one hundred and
ninety and six
Come forth, but are by flesh and soul contained.
Only one of the multitude comes with no bonds upon him
No stone, no flesh, no fear.

[85]

The three who never fell
Rise up also from the pit.
The Throne of the Sundered, great
Reaper of Souls
Finds once more his key to
human deaths.
The Angel of Pain, damned for
mercy
Emerges in a rage — but of
kindness or cruelty?
Even the third is freed.

[86]

The Scer of Scorn
Finds a human fist with which
to strike,
And the gifts of a burning Angel
shine, like a ring upon that fist.
But his lust for the Bright Shiners
may turn,
At the last of last moments
Into unlikely love
If she is strong enough, and her
friend the healer is wise.

[87]

Every risk is taken, every gamble
lost and won,
For with the waning of the wind,
what sailor raises sail?
With the setting of the sun, why
stay in the field?
What man uses his last breath
to argue,
What woman her last step to fetch
water from the well?
At the end of all time, none shall
save for tomorrow.
Destiny's broom sweeps up all
pointless things.



[88]

The fire that sleeps within all
Awakens again, used in anger for a third time.

Should the nations hold back

The Demons of the mountains and the rats within the walls

Will breed unchecked, boiling forth from the abyss.

But if they fight with fire, the smoke of funeral pyres

Will blot the sun, and the Great King of Blood shall
walk without fear.

[89]

Who can measure the time it takes

For light to race from lamp to eye?

This miracle is as naught for the tribe of Mind

But they shall find their days and hours racing them.

Time herself shall pant and gasp

A racer whose course is nearly run

As the end of every year draws near.

[90]

When even the blind see the
Blood Star

And the eye of the great worm
opens,

When Demons claim the loyalty
of even the most free,

When the dead roam among the
living,

And the living map the lowest
depths of death,

When all wonders and all terrors
fuse and all deceptions are unveiled,
Humankind, make your choice: The
time is measured in days.



Three Paths Through
the Burning Forest





[91]

The end of autumn comes with
fire, not snow.

Dry branches smoke above.

Dead leaves burn below.

Within this fire forest stand

The last descendents of woman
and man.

With fear-glazed eyes they seek a
course

To save their flesh from flame's
embrace

And still they may yet save the race

If they run swift, and on the
proper path.

[92]

But there is no north star above
Set in the cool black sky to guide
the wanderer home.

Above they see only the red heat

The death of the trees

The branches that blind even as
they burn.

No, do not turn your head up
for guidance.

[93]

Below your feet the earth seems
cool and calm

But turbulent fires lurk within.

What spark ignited this middle
world of wood and flesh

Between the fires of sky and ground?

Comes this fire from heaven,

Or from the world's burning bowels?

It matters not. Flame is now all.

Burning above as below.

[94]

So neither look you down for guidance
For the earth that seems still moves
And the ground that seems solid
Can shake and pitch
Unfixed as any storming sea.
What sleeps within the earth
Gives only poison counsel.

[95]

Look, then, at your own level
Neither raising defiant eyes
Nor bowing head like a slave.
Look about, keep your wits
And among the ember trees,
Find three paths spreading, like spilled water
Between the smoldering boles.



The First Path



[96]

The first path is slight
A winding track among the boughs.
The beasts of the field wind this way
along,
Perhaps,
As they make their way to some
cooling stream.

[97]

A gentle downward slope, it leads
Near to great oaks ablaze
Torches to light a giant's empire
But far enough that one so small as
you
Can pass without burns.

[98]

Down to the water, then, go.
Keep your eyes on your feet,
Step one before the other with a
scholar's concentration.

Look up? No!
This is not a path from which
one looks.
The path itself is all you should see.

It is all your concern
As if it is by a neighbor's fence
bound
That any peek above is jealously
despised.

[99]

And yet there are always some
Who, when told
"Look not! Turn your eyes
From sights that will scald, burn,
madden!
Save your innocence and know not!
Keep the precious happiness of
the rude beast
Who conquers neither good
nor ill!"

Will look, nevertheless.
Look, yes, and act.





[100]

Those who take this path,
Who cannot look away,
Who cannot safely ignore that in
which their safety lies,
They are doomed to wander from
the trail
Wander into the flames
Wander into the world of the dark
beneath the trees
Now lit at last
As those ancient beams consume
themselves.

[101]

Step off the path and feel the wind
of the flames!
Step off the path and see the
searing light!
Step off the path and burn
Shine bright
With every secret you learn
Taking you deeper into the termi-
nal night.

[102]

Those whose incautious eyes
Doom them to a knowledgeable
death,
Those flames consumed in the
candle of truth,
This is what they will see.

[103]

A pack of wolves, moon-maddened
And maddened beyond the moon
Bays at the Blood Star, bays for blood,
Each sheds blood, one upon the other
Wolves bite sister, brother
Father, mother, each in contention
Discontented
Ruined
Each with a fate bitter to taste.





[104]

The island wolves, fierce bitches hell-bathed
Shall know the conqueror's shackles and call men 'master'.

The mangy and despised, rough teeth worn by care
Will find at last the pinnacles of power, only to learn
Their clumsy paws cannot grip.

The soil's favored children know the most exquisite despair
As the nightmare they have seen, and known, and fought for generations
Overwhelms them nonetheless.

The wolves of the North shall perish in flames
And the moon-eater's rabid get shall perish in ice.



[105]

Those wolves who played at being dogs
Comforted by man's campfire
Are to be betrayed, even unto death, by one of their own number.
The red-nailed meat hunter shall feel its appetite consume itself
And grow only hungrier as it eats its own flesh
While those who would be lords of shadow
Learn what it is to be shadow's slaves.
Those who walk in silence are silenced
And those who gaze upward howl, blinded.
The two cubs who saw their mother defiled
Find a new father, who defiles them in turn.
Those whose fangs shine brightest
Will slick them with blood unheeding
But the darkest fate waits for those
Who walk a crooked path.



[106]

Next, the wanderers unwise
Shall see a council of women and men, purple-garbed
Clad in the raiment of queens and kings
Crowned with power and sceptered with pride.
Who are these figures of majesty?
They are those who have command
And control
And rule
And mastery,
And who from this deem themselves wise.
Yet those who carry their wisdom writ on paper
Not graven on a human heart
Shall see the hot wind sweep it into smoke and ash.

[107]

The tribe of Mind
Ruled by sober judges
Looks upon a world they made
Unable to deem it a victory or loss.
Once unified as a fist,
Now they spread, finger weak
Like a man who falls, clutching for
surety

Grasping only air.

Those who would, themselves, be both
the armor and the arm

Are doomed to lock themselves in the
very limits they would overreach.

Those who see everything learn, to their
regret,

That all prophesy, even this one, is
written in water,

Written on sand.

The explorers without become
lost within.

Usurers, merchants, spies in the
kingdom of coin

Find that a change changed too
often becomes an empty boast.

Finally, those who would break
Nature to harness

Learn instead that it can only be
broken.



[108]

They within find their walls close in
While those without feast on envy and doubt.
The servants of descent touch the bottom at last
To find all that they sought was within their reach from the first.
Those whose minds, like statues cracked,
Admit any madness' questing vine,
Are hollowed out as nests and shelter.
Only they are happy in their consumption.
Those unifiers of body and soul
Are forced to make a choice but cannot,
Any more than they could spend only one side of a coin.
Those who sought to sing for The One Giver
Learn who, to their regret, has really heard their tune.
Those who exalt themselves shall learn what it is
To be the most perfect ant in a wasteland of cooked carrion.
Those who speak to dreams get an answer at last
Being asked to choose between future and past.
They choose poorly.
Those who seek the way of death
Find only death, and no way
While the followers of serpents and numbers
Find their ill fate in thirteen, nineteen and seventeen.
Those who chose imagination over mind
Shall learn the peril of claiming vapor and lies as your mother.
The givers of life come in blood, and depart in the same red drape
While the makers of false images gladly forgo the truth.
As for the lost,
They lose
But have the consolation of each dying an individual death.



109]

Past the violet throne
Older than them and more vicious
Is the court of the Great King of Blood:
They who cannot set aside their incestuous feuds
Even to strive 'gainst the end of the world.
Could their wicked crimson sorceries
So ancient, cruel and perverse
Shift the grim, red-bearded Tyrant Star
From its thunderous course?

Who will ever know?
For in truth, when one fights in this army
It is more folly to forget backplate than breastplate.

[110]

Each tribe governed by the great giver of sanguine knowledge
 Shall be swept aside,
 Used up, burned, consumed.
 Those who were the shadow crowns
 On many brows of king and queen
Choke and starve when their refined tastes turn ever more corrupt.
 Those who were crowned by shadows true
Are found to them false, and fade like all shadows in the ultimate fire.
 The get of the thief die wanderer's deaths
 Each alone and rightly so.
 The bastards of Carthage, fair and foul,
 Conquer and slay their long-fought beasts
 Only to learn how much they needed them.
 The tribe of the blossom shall be more loathsome
 Than any who follow even the foulest.
They shall see themselves as they are, not as they are seen,
 And they shall despair.
 As for the lowest, givers of lies and takers of shame,
 The grave worms and crawling things, so long kept at bay
 Fatten on them at last.
 Those two cowards who fled life to steal death
 Are reckoned with, and each by the true children
 Whose damnation they usurped.
 Those who bear the mark of the beast shall as beasts be forgotten,
And those who carry the taint of the flesh shall for taint be remembered.
 Those known for rash murder shall astonish all with calculation
 Discovering a way for offspring to devour parent, even as sire eats child .
 Ouroboros cannibals, they do not last a month.
 Those who seek secrets
Are the only ones to die without seeing their parent rise,
 While those who suckle at the teats of madness
 Lose even that protection from the ugliness of fate.

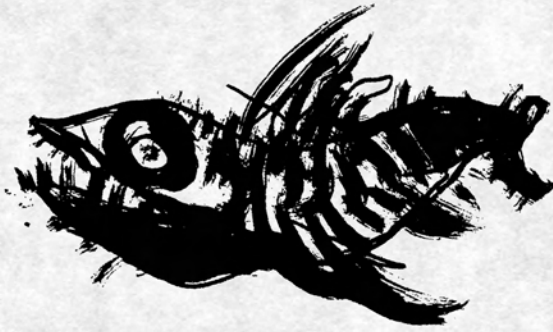


[111]

But while the beasts rage
And the rulers flounder
And the kings of the rulers waste their strength
What shall happen to the first parents of all?
Those whose abuse, neglect and pride
Made them the foul first fruits of the Fall?
One fate awaits them, each and every,
Penitent or defiant,
Eager or resisting until last breath,
In all their multitude they will be swept aside.
Look up from your path, mankind
And see the ruin of your founders.

[112]

Yet this painful knowledge need not be.
For those who keep their eyes downcast
And humbly step upon the path
Which leads between the burns of wrath.
A slight path, one small perhaps
For human frame
Yet safely from the forest
You may yet emerge, the same.



[113]

This path lies open at your feet.
If it is the one you take,
You may depart the blaze and find
An open field of tenced wheat.
Rubbing smoke from your eyes, you wonder if you wake
From a dream of flame and peril.
Turning back, you see only ash, as if the trees were never there.
You turn aside, raise your daughters, and never speak of forests deep.
But in truth, the peace you gain is that of sleep.

The Second Path

[114]

Another path through the forest lies
Broad and even, paved smooth and fine.
This broad course bespeaks the work of human hands;
Surely at its end some waiting refuge stands.
Set your feet upon it and let your eyes wander as they wont
For upon this road, the flames of doom are bright enough
To pierce the veil of blindness.
On this path the thunder of dying time
Has a volume even the deaf can hear,
A noise to rattle lungs like drums
The final cry of a wounded sphere.

[115]

This is the road to disaster
So inviting and open.
Not until you stride its cobbles
Will you see they bear teeth, and eye holes.
This road of skulls lacks jaws to bite your heels
But it is lined with snares and bogs and tortured souls.



[116]

Racing aghast on this highway
Signs and prodigies appear.
A multitude of deadly wonders
That bode ill for the people on the road
As much as for the creatures in the wood.

[117]

Let us look first to the first,
Those earliest sinners, gloriously misled
Now come at the last hour of light
To heave the world from the brink
Or shove it at last into damnation.
See!

Their powers over nature shall
bend the world until it cracks.

As their powers over minds do the
same to souls.

Those with the lore of light, who
speak to flame

And shine the spears of the sun
Cannot calm the fire that lurks in all.

When that ultimate light is awakened,
a dark sky of ash is sure to follow.

Those guardians whose joy was ever
to halt peril

And step between each accidents or ill
Now contend with ills that are no
accident

But ripe malicious fruit of human
will.

These burning apples of temptation
Are cooked windfalls for every
nation under the sky,
Another tool by which flags and
children die.

The makers toil until they can assemble
The rings and rods they have forged
Into their own cages and manacles.



Bound fast, no path leads free.
Those spiders who look
Along the strands of fate
And seek to hold time hostage in their hate
Learn instead that all things are possible, and none
But can't see choices of The Giving One.
The storm-king boilers of the sea
By their art shall learn to grieve
For each breaking human heart.
While those who lie with beasts shall mother monsters that bite
Sharp-fanged
Even before their birthing-cry.
And the last, least, most reckless, greatest damned
Hell-reapers with their soul-sacks stuffed full
Shall find that the final death is not when life ends
But when it never begins.
They have worked the harvest since time began.
Now they shall rest, but have no peace from it.



[118]
Oh, what a multitude marches on
this path!
Every man of woman born, and
every woman child of man.
Each who huddled in dark and
wondered what wonders,
Terrors,
Revelations lurked beyond the edge
of starlight.
Now they know.
Now the fire shows all.
Ignorance is its first spark,
Flesh the wick of this candle,
Spirit the wax.

[119]

In this fire, you, the blood-cursed and bound
Your mask falls away at last
And your cattle lower their horns.
Your vaunted sickness meets its match in its mate
And your sorceries wane with the Blood Star's eclipse.
The serpent eye winks, lidless, but you've no skin left to shed,
And all your hushing cannot quell the shouted warning.
The sheltering earth cannot hide you from the flames,
As instead, sick of your corruption, it vomits new fires to consume.
Throw down your crowns, for you can no longer rule.
Flee not, for your haste avails not.
Hide not, for your masks are charred and hollow.
Your strength remains, over-vaunting man and beast,
But sickly next to mind and steel.
Shadows wither, shields shatter, beauty fades.
Even madness is not mad in a mad world. Its counsel teaches nothing.
You who prized your speech with spirits,
Watch as that gift becomes the curse of all.
Up from the pit come shadows to claim their due
And no trinket or guising can forestall it.
The animals of sea and sky lose their fear of you
While the wisest shut their eyes, stop their ears,
And breathe not the curious smoke.

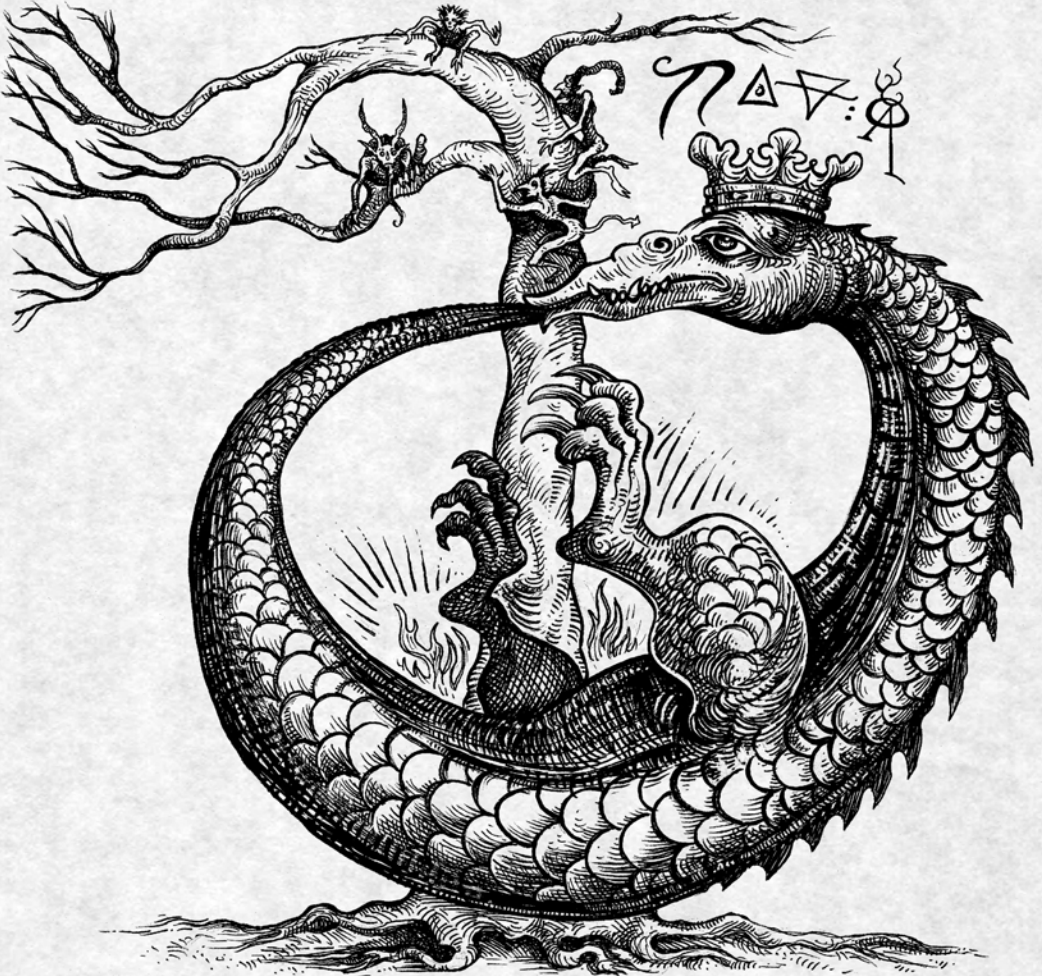
[120]

What lamentations arise
A cacophonous song wailing, shrieking,
Grinding against the wrecked rhythm of the dirtied spheres
It is no longer music they make, but noise
Rude and rough to scour the ear
Damnation upon those who hear.
As above, so below
Corruption spreads from feet to heads.
You, who would stride to the horizon with but a single step
Will from your prison puzzle never roam
Never guessing that the box that grips you is shaped like a box.
Descending forces cannot fall forever, even in a fallen world.
If you have the blessings of decline, fear nadir
While you beloved of life, fear the unwholesome seed of maddened fecundity.
You who by Art cage lightning, cut fire, sculpt the amber's pull
Are to meet first hand that which burns not, and sparks not,
And feels not strength upon it.
Alchemists and magicians, who would make this of that
Know that when the chaos grows upon you

New forms arise unknowing, as mice grow from spilled grain.
You who turn your thought to thought, become living jests.
Mind chases mind as a dog chases its tail.
Look beyond, you who would survive,
Look into the storm, and be humbled, and live enslaved.
And you, who with your dancing footsteps mock the heavy tread of Time.
You can circle a walking servant, but can you dance around a running master?

[121]

Most arrogant of all are those who seek the All in All
Who gnaw for sweetness at the roots of the world.
When that world-tree burns, whose bites upon it
Weaken the trunk, quicken the fall?
Crown yourself Monarch of All
And rule within an empty pit.



Not all who fall within the fire
 Moan with despair or rush in heedless fear.
 Some instead greet the flames with ire
 And by their raging, call the Red Star near.
 For by the crimson glow
 From heaven's Eye of Blood
 New sides of old shapes turn
 Reversed like a muddied garment.
 First comes the dark of the star
 Seeping jests and sparks and riddles
 Ignored, absurd, dismissed as paradoxes
 By all but those whose voices, overused
 Are never now heard crying alarm.
 But the light of the last cannot be caged forever
 And those with eyes to see shall see lasting the end.
 Their cry of dim visage is to the dark's cry added
 Two voices in the wilderness sing out,
 But as those in the dark see nothing,
 Those in the light see far too much.
 As the half-past time approaches, the star, like autumn fire
 Waxes fuller, the balance tips and blood begins to boil
 Even in hearts and veins, even in the ground it soaks
 And the last battlers, the final fighters gird themselves
 Watching the sky's new ruby whelm and stain old silver.
 Strive, contend, hold back the new night
 But know the crimson fire is bright.
 Its destiny is to light the way for the harbingers and harriers
 To fall upon you, the only generation.
 All the past you have held, all the blood songs your ears have drunk
 Filled up, now tip forth and hold back nothing
 What morning awaits? None, no sunrise, only bleeding ashes
 Dripping from the sky like hot wound drops.
 Now, the star is at its zenith, even by day its red glare beams
 No hope, no reason, no sound but shouts and screams.
 A world, aged, dies.

[123]

This is the time of heaven's fist
This is the close of the eye of the sun.
For the first time since the dawn of sin
The children of blood's tribe walk by day
With no fear of solar ray.
Day and night are one alike
Twins with signs of bleeding ash.
But new fears rise for the wicked brood
As they choke on fire that once was food.



[124]

This is the road of human descent
And at its end you find
A city-graveyard for mankind
Ruined wreckage, walls all rent asunder
No music but the echoed thunder.
No garb but shrouds.
The apex of man's effort only this
To choke each humble breath from out the proud
And taste the ghastly flavor of flame's kiss.

The Third Path

[125]

Are these your only options?
To the right hand, the dim path of ignorance
To the left, the broad highway of destruction?
Or is there a third path?
Here, my vision is dim, my sight falters,
Dazzled by bright fire and stung by acrid smoke
My tears fall, and I know not if I see a true third strand
Or only the coil and snare of my own baseless hopes.

[126]

And yet, if I told it not, my damnation would truly be complete.
Here then, is the third vision
The third path.
The third end to the human story.

[127]

Forsake the easy paths
Of neglect on the one side
Despair on the other.
Use your wits, unsheathe the blade of will and faith.
Turn aside and cut a path of your own.
Run ahead of the blaze or else wait until the first rash heat sweeps
through.
Trust not in stars or stones, but in your own strength.
You will not be given freedom, but may then win it yet.

[128]

The first challenge comes crimson-clad
The stain of their mouths hidden in the star's red light.
They reveal themselves at last and say
"We have, all along, from the shadows adored you.
We needed you, we guided you, we sheltered you.
Every good thing you had, we defended.
Every ill of history, we fought.
Now you have as equals to us grown and we can,
At last,
Set aside the burden of being your hidden kings.
Feed us! And know bliss.
Love us! And taste our power in turn.
Join us! And escape forever the cold clutch of death!"

[129]

Heed them not.

If you resist their blandishments,

Twist your neck from the leash they would set upon it,

Gird your will against the commands
they teach you,

You can be free for the first time
in ages.

Know: That fire is their foe.

Know: They cannot abide the eye of
the sun.

Know: That for all their talk of rule,
they need you

More than any babe needs its
mother.

They are doomed to quarrel,

Doomed to burn,

Doomed to hunger,

And know this too: They bear
another curse, one they wit not,

One final shackle, Angel-forged.

Of the three who walked into
Hell on obedient feet,

Instead of being flung, Heaven-
handled,

One, the last, laid his curse on the
sinner's brood.

A curse that is only now

By the final star imbued.



[130]

If you dodge the lures of the cozening
worms

Another eye upon your pathway turns.
Their voices hold no promise, only threat
They name themselves the earth and moonlight's get.
Fierce warriors, to wrath and ruin born
Shall claim that they upon your throne should sit
That only they, with powers broad and strange
Can take the world from out the Red Foe's range.

[131]

"Obey!" they shout. "Our nature
governs yours.
For we shall heal the earth of all her
sores
The wounds upon her from your
grievous tricks
The slights upon your mother, we
lick clean.
You have squandered your birthright,
meager men.
The time to thin your ranks has
come again!"



Do not bow unto this baying rage
But neither must you fight them arm on arm.
Though few in numbers, they are fat with fierceness
And bear ten thousand tricks to do you harm.
To best the change-lords rule and writ
You need not strength but speed of wit.
For if you give them no fierce foe to rend
Within their ranks they once more shall contend.
Two tribes arise where once were five and twenty
Old nations split as factions rise, ignoring race and country.
One question only splits their ranks:
The status of the Perfect One.
For some say it shall save them all
And some say, by it be undone.





[133]

Bide your time and feign meek ways
But wait until the thunder days, when
Weary of the lack of fight
The beast lords stride into the light.
Encourage their mistrust and fear
Open eye and mouth and ear
And when the Pure Child's lost or won
The victor clan can be undone.

[134]

When from the beasts you clash
and cower
Another side shall show its power.
Tattered by their quiet storm
And by invisible upheaval wracked
The twin-souled emerge, battered
now and beaten
But bearing the weapons you need
against the second scourge.
You shall know their weakness
when they need you
For until this age they have been
all scorn.
No longer. They propose a victory
feast
Upon the fall of wrath-addled beast
And purpose at last to reveal
The secrets they did long conceal.



[135]

"We," they say, "are just
like you,
But perfected by our unity.
If you only give us faith
We can reshape this battered world
Out of all these ashes build
a path
Into a finer future, clean
and true."



[136]

The greatest burden you must bear
Is knowing that they mean each
word they speak.

They feel their rule and reign is for
the best

And yet they lay a path to the
spider's nest.

What waits within their gilded
promise

Is a cage forged all the stronger
By the efforts of its prisoners.

Join them and a great multitude
perishes

Not in body, but in soul.

As women and men become not
even beasts,

But something lesser, weaker,
smaller and more afraid.

[137]

How to fight those who only
promise?

Isolation is their bane.

In the ember light, they can no
longer hide their double faces

And by these second souls they
can be known.

Striking them is folly, for their
power is great

But if you look not, listen not and
believe not,

All their spells and craft can be
outgrown.

[138]

Trust in the faith you find, not in revelations.
Trust in the knowledge you know, not what is merely told.
Trust that what is, is, and that those who would make it false
Are themselves the false ones.

[139]

In time, these your tempters shall fade like shadows.
But as they go, they shall make way for shadows made real.
They, the makers of the world and its consumers
The takers of all gifts and their despoilers,
They are your next challenge.
A multitude of beauties and horrors,
Powers and weaknesses
Savageries and delights
Are at their command. They promise like the Blood Born,
Threaten like the Beast Born
Claim kinship as the Double Born,
But know always that they are the Not Born.

[140]

I would tell how you must defeat them, who are your parents and enslavers
But I do not know.
I cannot see, for there is nothing yet to see.
Some human thing, of purely human mind
Must be the bane of Angels left behind.
For they can be only what they are
While you can make yourselves anew.
They can reach only what is in their grasp
While you can overextend yourselves.
And when they tell you they made the world
And all in it
And you
Remember that they could give only what The One Giver first gave them.
Only humankind can give anew.

[141]
When by cunning
human art
The final fallen
Angel is cast scream-
ing
Back into the Pit, or
is consumed, or even
finds
Some other rank of
being,
Your final challenge
waits, and your
most subtle.





[142]

For against the first, it would be
easy to say, "Seduce me."

Against the second, it would be
simple to beg, "Spare me."

Against the third, the temptation
is to cry, "Enlighten me!"

And against the fourth, how
readily one might scream, "Exalt
me!"

But the fifth and final barrier is
simply this: Yourselves.

[143]

After all your struggles and strife
You may find there is no way out
of the burning wood.

The ultimate answer may be to
burn

And as you are consumed, become
light.

[144]

Can you say goodbye to the world that shapes
you

And is shaped in turn?

Can you leave the manifold gifts
Of life and health and joy and even sorrow
Without regret or bitterness?

[145]

The last compulsion
The final, strongest craving:
Can you give away power
In the service of virtue?

[146]

What if The One Giver gave that gift?
What if She became less
That you might become more?
Can you give as She did?
Not from pride,
Or from curiosity,
Or even from mercy
But because giving is your joy?





[147]

Can you surrender to Her what She gave to you?
Can you give back the gift She can no longer seize?
Do this, and it does not matter if the wood burns

The sky falls

The earth shakes.

Do this and it does not matter if you live or die.

Do this and walk the third path.

The third path is wisdom.

Rock 2003





Time Catches Fire:
Images by
August Bierce



Artist's Introduction

I've never liked writing these introductory chapters in art books, or at shows. I'm not a good writer. I speak best with pictures.

But I've got a history with *The Burning of Time*.

I grew up in a series of foster homes. That's where I was between the ages of eight and sixteen — moving around, house to house, living with people who weren't really my family. Looking back, I don't know how I managed to get through it. I guess it was just keeping my head down, living day to day.

My worst foster mom had a copy of Vera Sadry's *The Burning of Time*. She got mad a lot, and when she got mad she'd lock me in the guest room. She wouldn't lock me in my room because I had my books and stuff there. Anyhow, on the bookshelf in the guest room, there was *The Burning of Time*. There were other books, but only *The Burning of Time* caught my interest. I still remember verse 87:

We are taking every gamble.
With no wind, what sailor rambles?
Why till soil at fall of night?
With dying breath, why strive to fight?
Use last steps for play, not chores.
At time's end to spend is right.
Cleansing fate shows all things' cores.

When you're fourteen, doing bad in school and your mom's in jail, it kind of cheers you up to think there's not all that much time left.

I didn't get to take the book with me when they pulled me out of there. The cops came with the social worker, and they just wanted me out of there fast so they could arrest my foster parents without me in the way. Maybe they felt bad about her, because my next foster mom, the cool one, Olivia Jones, was the first person to show any interest in my drawings. I did a lot of stuff back then based on Sadry's book — a lot of sketches I wish I still had. I went through a period when all my early stuff looked really ugly to me. Now I wish I'd kept it.

Things got better for me, thanks to Olivia, but now it seems like a dark time again.

I lost my wife Margaret in October of 2002, and after that I couldn't do anything. I slept ten, sometimes fourteen hours a day. I just couldn't move. Then I'd wander around downtown, just moving around so I wouldn't think about her.

One day, when I was walking, I saw a bookstore with a window display. It was the new edition of *The Burning of Time*. I remembered being stuck in that room alone reading it, and I felt like I was alone again, stuck, so I thought I should read it again.

It wasn't like I remember it, of course — nothing cool is as cool as it is when you're fourteen and really need something to hang onto. But it put pictures in my head. It was the first thing that had for a long time. And like I always have, I put them on paper.

august bierce

A



THE ANGEL WAR BECAME STAINED
FOR THE ANGELS OF THE DIMMED LIGHT
SAID TO THEIR MEN AND WOMEN,

“HOLD BACK YOUR TRIBUTE TO THE ONE GIVER,
AND GIVE IT US INSTEAD.”

WITH THE GIFT OF LIES, THEY DID,
AND THEY BELIEVED IT TRUE.
THE DIMMED LIGHT ANGELS TOOK THE STOLEN GIFT
AS IF IT WAS THEIR DUE
FOR THEY USED THE GIFT OF FALSEHOOD TOO.
THEY CALLED THEMSELVES GODS,
AND THEREBY WERE

DEMONS NAMED

23

WOMEN AND MEN ENDED THEIR DAYS UPON THE LAND
AND WENT FORTH INTO THAT SECRET FUTURE
WHICH WAS WITHHELD FROM EVEN
THE LOFTIEST ANGELS AND MIGHTIEST DEMONS.

BUT SOME FEW COULD NOT GO.
FORGETTING TO BE MORTAL, THEY STAYED TRAPPED
PRISONERS IN A DEMON-FORGED CAGE
INTENDED TO BE A PALACE OF REFUGE.
BY THEIR CHOICE,

THAT DEAD REALM MOCKED THE LIVING.





48

SUCH SORROW RISES FROM THIS WAR
THAT THE DEAD ARE DISTURBED IN THEIR TOMBS ONCE MORE.
A FOURTH STORM OF SHADOWS
A FOURTH RAIN OF MEMORIES

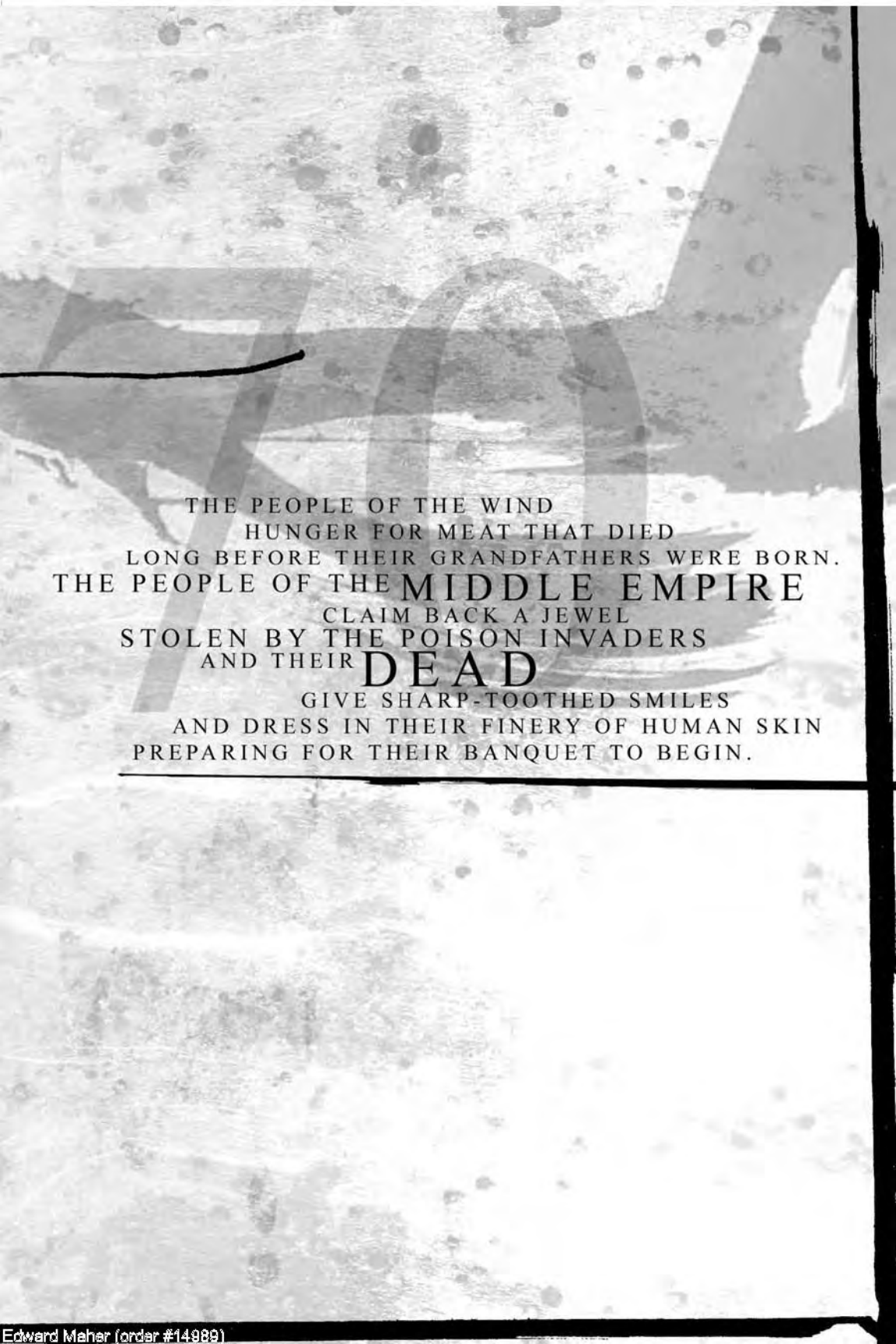
MORE BITTER THAN THOSE BEFORE IT
BUT LESS ROUGH AND RUINOUS
THAN THE TWO TO COME.

65

AS THE CHILDREN OF THE GREAT KING OF BLOOD SCORNE
THEIR SIRE, SO THE OUTCASTS OF THE REJECTED STRIKE
BY NIGHT. THE SEVEN SUITORS, BESTED BY THE TRIBE
OF MIND, SEE THE GRIP OF REASON CRACK EVEN AS
IT HARDENS. **AND WHEN A NATION CALLS TO ARMS,**
NOT OF THE WOLF, BUT OF WOLVES THEMSELVES,
YOU SHALL KNOW. THE TIME COMES NOT IN
GENERATIONS, BUT IN DECADES.







THE PEOPLE OF THE WIND
HUNGER FOR MEAT THAT DIED
LONG BEFORE THEIR GRANDFATHERS WERE BORN.
THE PEOPLE OF THE **MIDDLE EMPIRE**
CLAIM BACK A JEWEL
STOLEN BY THE POISON INVADERS
AND THEIR **DEAD**
GIVE SHARP-TOOTHED SMILES
AND DRESS IN THEIR FINERY OF HUMAN SKIN
PREPARING FOR THEIR BANQUET TO BEGIN.

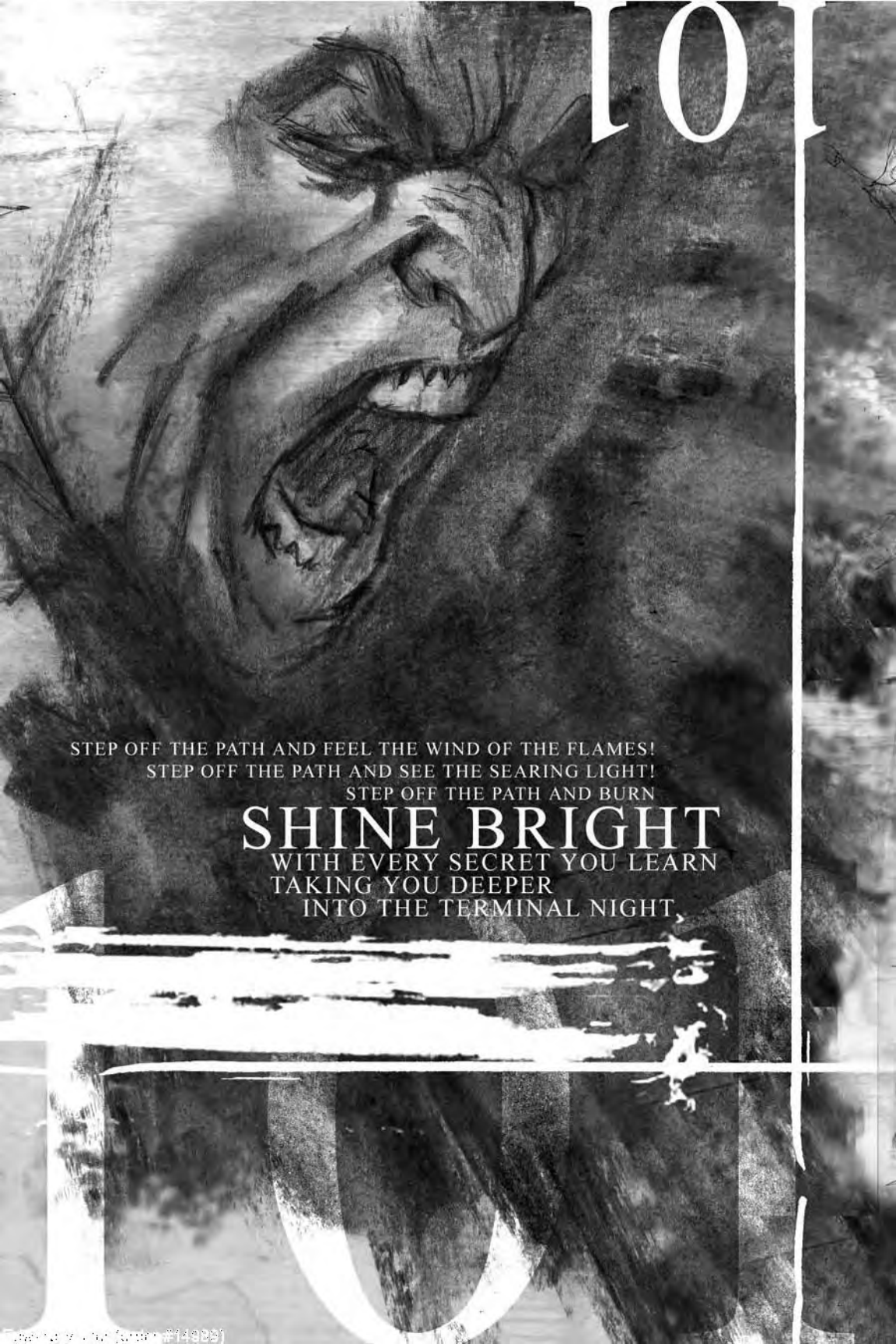


SO GREAT, THEN, THE LAMENTATION OF THE EARTH
THAT TWO ANGELS SHALL TURN THEIR EARS AND HEAR,
ONE A WOMAN OF SCARLET LIGHTS
THE OTHER A BEAST OF SHELTERED SHADOWS.
THEY SHALL SPARK, AND BREATHE, AND ILLUMINATE,
AND THOSE WHO FEEL, AND HEAR, AND SEE, SHALL BE INFUSED
THESE BRIGHT SHINERS COME FORTH TO WITNESS,
IN THE LAST DAYS AND

FINAL NIGHTS



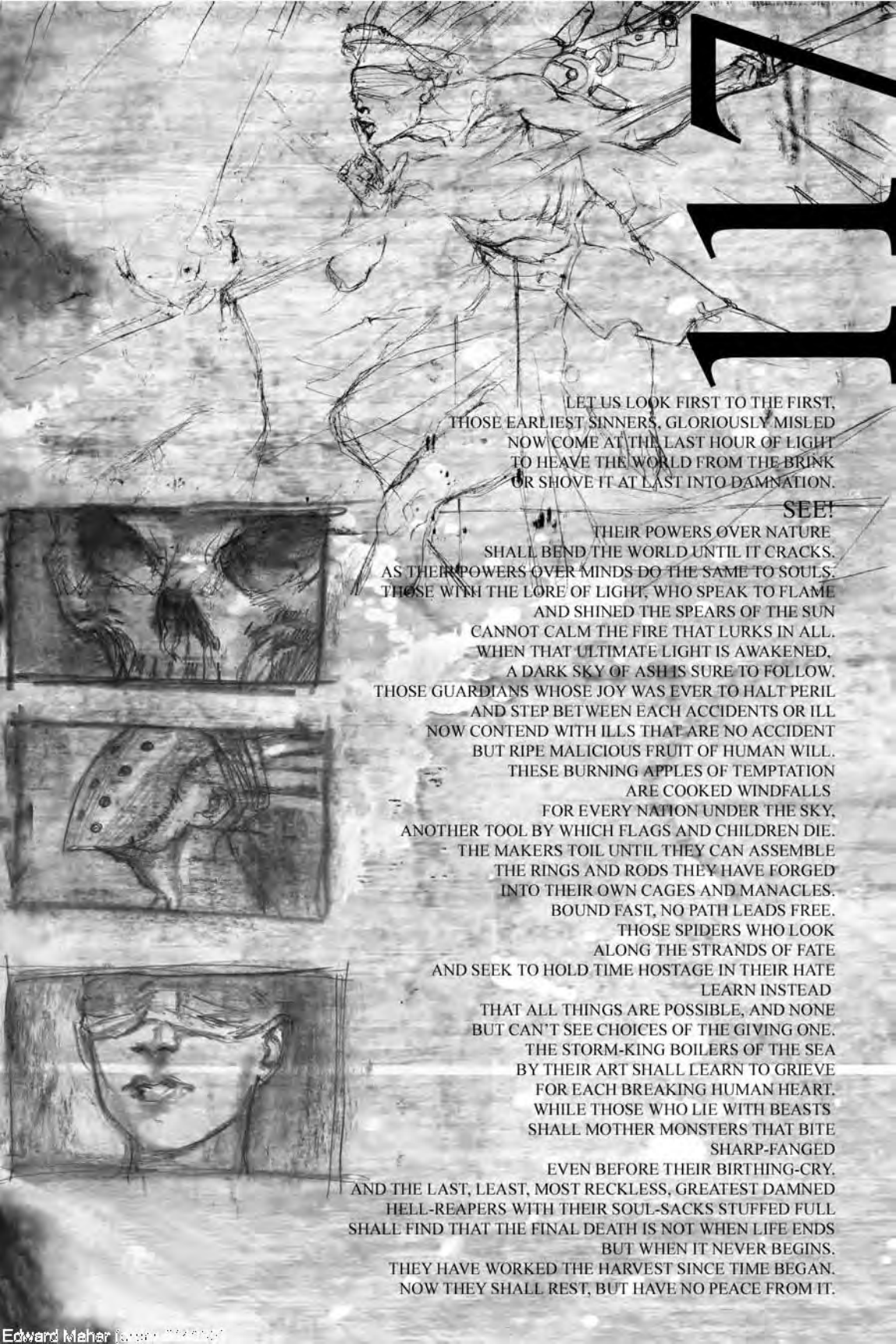
THE FIRE THAT SLEEPS WITHIN ALL
AWAKENS AGAIN, USED IN ANGER FOR A THIRD TIME,
SHOULD THE NATIONS HOLD BACK
THE DEMONS OF THE MOUNTAINS AND THE RATS WITHIN THE WALLS
WILL BREED UNCHECKED, BOILING FORTH FROM THE ABYSS,
BUT IF THEY FIGHT WITH FIRE, THE SMOKE OF FUNERAL PYRES
WILL BLOT THE SUN, AND THE
GREAT KING OF BLOOD
SHALL WALK WITHOUT FEAR



TO

STEP OFF THE PATH AND FEEL THE WIND OF THE FLAMES!
STEP OFF THE PATH AND SEE THE SEARING LIGHT!
STEP OFF THE PATH AND BURN

SHINE BRIGHT
WITH EVERY SECRET YOU LEARN
TAKING YOU DEEPER
INTO THE TERMINAL NIGHT



A

E

LET US LOOK FIRST TO THE FIRST,
THOSE EARLIEST SINNERS, GLORIOUSLY MISLED
NOW COME AT THE LAST HOUR OF LIGHT
TO HEAVE THE WORLD FROM THE BRINK
OR SHOVE IT AT LAST INTO DAMNATION.

SEE!

THEIR POWERS OVER NATURE
SHALL BEND THE WORLD UNTIL IT CRACKS.
AS THEIR POWERS OVER MINDS DO THE SAME TO SOULS.
THOSE WITH THE LORE OF LIGHT, WHO SPEAK TO FLAME
AND SHINED THE SPEARS OF THE SUN
CANNOT CALM THE FIRE THAT LURKS IN ALL.
WHEN THAT ULTIMATE LIGHT IS AWAKENED,
A DARK SKY OF ASH IS SURE TO FOLLOW.
THOSE GUARDIANS WHOSE JOY WAS EVER TO HALT PERIL
AND STEP BETWEEN EACH ACCIDENTS OR ILL
NOW CONTEND WITH ILLS THAT ARE NO ACCIDENT
BUT RIPE MALICIOUS FRUIT OF HUMAN WILL.
THESE BURNING APPLES OF TEMPTATION
ARE COOKED WINDFALLS
FOR EVERY NATION UNDER THE SKY,
ANOTHER TOOL BY WHICH FLAGS AND CHILDREN DIE.
THE MAKERS TOIL UNTIL THEY CAN ASSEMBLE
THE RINGS AND RODS THEY HAVE FORGED
INTO THEIR OWN CAGES AND MANACLES.
BOUND FAST, NO PATH LEADS FREE.
THOSE SPIDERS WHO LOOK
ALONG THE STRANDS OF FATE
AND SEEK TO HOLD TIME HOSTAGE IN THEIR HATE
LEARN INSTEAD
THAT ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE, AND NONE
BUT CAN'T SEE CHOICES OF THE GIVING ONE.
THE STORM-KING BOILERS OF THE SEA
BY THEIR ART SHALL LEARN TO GRIEVE
FOR EACH BREAKING HUMAN HEART.
WHILE THOSE WHO LIE WITH BEASTS
SHALL MOTHER MONSTERS THAT BITE
SHARP-FANGED
EVEN BEFORE THEIR BIRTHING-CRY.
AND THE LAST, LEAST, MOST RECKLESS, GREATEST DAMNED
HELL-REAPERS WITH THEIR SOUL-SACKS STUFFED FULL
SHALL FIND THAT THE FINAL DEATH IS NOT WHEN LIFE ENDS
BUT WHEN IT NEVER BEGINS.
THEY HAVE WORKED THE HARVEST SINCE TIME BEGAN.
NOW THEY SHALL REST, BUT HAVE NO PEACE FROM IT.





IN THIS FIRE, YOU, THE BLOOD-CURSED AND BOUND
YOUR MASK FALLS AWAY AT LAST
AND YOUR CATTLE LOWER THEIR HORNS.
YOUR VAUNTED SICKNESS MEETS ITS MATCH IN ITS MATE
AND YOUR SORCERIES WANE WITH THE BLOOD STAR'S ECLIPSE.

THE SERPENT EYE WINKS, LIDLESS, BUT YOU'VE NO SKIN LEFT TO SHED,
AND ALL YOUR HUSHING CANNOT QUELL THE SHOUTED WARNING.
THE SHELTERING EARTH CANNOT HIDE YOU FROM THE FLAMES,
AS INSTEAD, SICK OF YOUR CORRUPTION, IT VOMITS NEW FIRES TO CONSUME.
THROW DOWN YOUR CROWNS, FOR YOU CAN NO LONGER RULE
FLEE NOT, FOR YOUR HASTE AVAILS NOT
HIDE NOT, FOR YOUR MASKS ARE CHARRED AND HOLLOW.
YOUR STRENGTH REMAINS, OVER-VAUNTING MAN AND BEAST,
BUT SICKLY NEXT TO MIND AND STEEL.
SHADOWS WITHER, SHIELDS SHATTER, BEAUTY FADES.
EVEN MADNESS IS NOT MAD IN A MAD WORLD.
ITS COUNSEL TEACHES NOTHING.
YOU WHO PRIZED YOUR SPEECH WITH SPIRITS,
WATCH AS THAT GIFT BECOMES THE CURSE OF ALL.
UP FROM THE PIT COME SHADOWS TO CLAIM THEIR DUE
AND NO TRINKET OR GUIISING CAN FORESTALL IT.
THE ANIMALS OF SEA AND SKY LOSE THEIR FEAR OF YOU
WHILE THE WISEST SHUT THEIR EYES, STOP THEIR EARS,
AND BREATHE NOT THE CURIOUS SMOKE.



NOT ALL WHO FALL WITHIN THE FIRE
MOAN WITH DESPAIR OR RUSH IN HEEDLESS FEAR.
SOME INSTEAD GREET THE FLAMES WITH IRE
AND BY THEIR RAGING, CALL THE RED STAR NEAR.

FOR BY THE CRIMSON GLOW
FROM HEAVEN'S EYE OF BLOOD
NEW SIDES OF OLD SHAPES TURN
REVERSED LIKE A MUDDIED GARMENT.

FIRST COMES THE DARK OF THE STAR
SEEPING JESTS AND SPARKS AND RIDDLES
IGNORED, ABSURD, DISMISSED AS PARADOXES
BY ALL BUT THOSE WHOSE VOICES, OVERUSED
ARE NEVER NOW HEARD CRYING ALARM.

BUT THE LIGHT OF THE LAST CANNOT BE CAGED FOREVER
AND THOSE WITH EYES TO SEE SHALL SEE LASTING THE END.

THEIR CRY OF DIM VISAGE IS TO THE DARK'S CRY ADDED
TWO VOICES IN THE WILDERNESS SING OUT,
BUT AS THOSE IN THE DARK SEE NOTHING,
THOSE IN THE LIGHT SEE FAR TOO MUCH.

AS THE HALF-PAST TIME APPROACHES, THE STAR LIKE AUTUMN FIRE
WAXES FULLER, THE BALANCE TIPS AND BLOOD BEGINS TO BOIL
EVEN IN HEARTS AND VEINS, EVEN IN THE GROUND IT SOAKS
AND THE LAST BATTLERS, THE FINAL FIGHTERS GIRD THEMSELVES
WATCHING THE SKY'S NEW RUBY WHELM AND STAIN OLD SILVER.

STRIVE, CONTEND, HOLD BACK THE NEW NIGHT
BUT KNOW THE CRIMSON FIRE IS BRIGHT.

IT'S DESTINY IS TO LIGHT THE WAY FOR THE HARBINGERS AND HARRIERS
TO FALL UPON YOU, THE ONLY GENERATION.

ALL THE PAST YOU HAVE HELD, ALL THE BLOOD SONGS YOUR EARS HAVE DRUNK
FILLED UP, NOW TIP FORTH AND HOLD BACK NOTHING

WHAT MORNING AWAITS? NONE, NO SUNRISE, ONLY BLEEDING ASHES
DRIPPING FROM THE SKY LIKE HOT WOUND DROPS.

NOW, THE STAR IS AT ITS ZENITH, EVEN BY DAY ITS RED GLARE BEAMS
NO HOPE, NO REASON, NO SOUND BUT SHOUTS AND SCREAMS.

A WORLD, AGED, DIES.



128

THE FIRST CHALLENGE COMES **CRIMSON-CLAD**
THE STAIN OF THEIR MOUTHS HIDDEN IN THE STAR'S RED LIGHT.
THEY REVEAL THEMSELVES AT LAST AND SAY

“WE HAVE, ALL ALONG, FROM THE SHADOWS ADORED YOU.

WE NEEDED YOU, WE GUIDED YOU, WE SHELTERED YOU.

EVERY GOOD THING YOU HAD, WE DEFENDED.

EVERY ILL OF HISTORY, WE FOUGHT.

NOW YOU HAVE AS EQUALS TO US GROWN AND WE CAN,

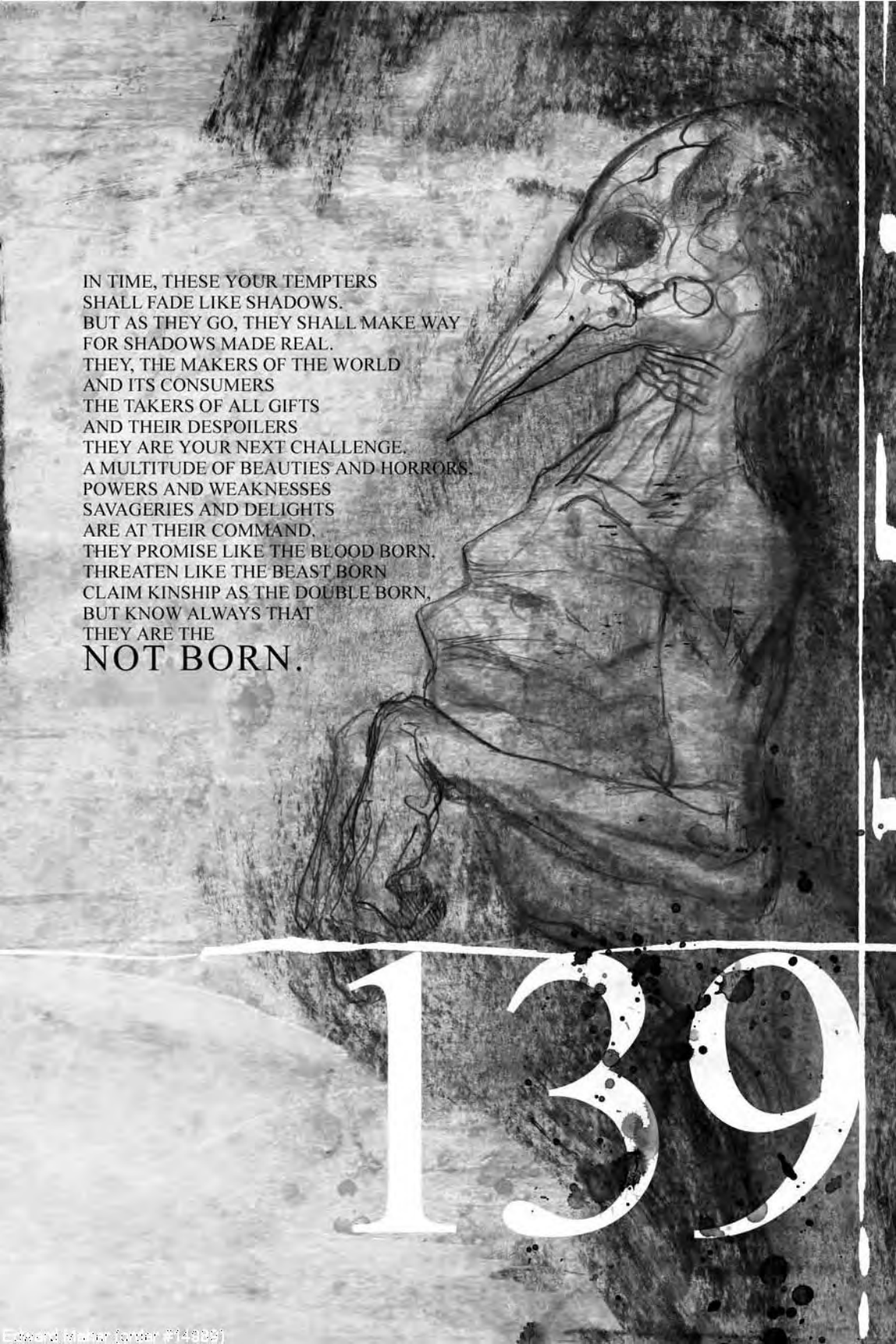
AT LAST,

SET ASIDE THE BURDEN OF BEING YOUR HIDDEN KINGS.

FEED US! AND KNOW BLISS.

LOVE US! AND TASTE OUR POWER IN TURN.

JOIN US! AND ESCAPE FOREVER THE COLD CLUTCH OF DEATH!”



IN TIME, THESE YOUR TEMPTERS
SHALL FADE LIKE SHADOWS.
BUT AS THEY GO, THEY SHALL MAKE WAY
FOR SHADOWS MADE REAL.
THEY, THE MAKERS OF THE WORLD
AND ITS CONSUMERS
THE TAKERS OF ALL GIFTS
AND THEIR DESPOILERS
THEY ARE YOUR NEXT CHALLENGE.
A MULTITUDE OF BEAUTIES AND HORRORS,
POWERS AND WEAKNESSES
SAVAGERIES AND DELIGHTS
ARE AT THEIR COMMAND.
THEY PROMISE LIKE THE BLOOD BORN,
THREATEN LIKE THE BEAST BORN
CLAIM KINSHIP AS THE DOUBLE BORN,
BUT KNOW ALWAYS THAT
THEY ARE THE
NOT BORN.

139





The Miller Dossier

Women and men listened to him, and Angels.
One from the deeps, one from the skies, one from the winds
Only the Dimmed Light spoke defiance.
Despised scion of the greatest thief, the King of Blood
Rove, orbit, terrible traveler!
Once unified as a fist,
Watch for the seven lights and the eighth, the secret light.
Mind eclipses heart
It clings with a black hand, ripe fruit from an ebony branch.
Learn what it is to be shadow's slaves.
Love us! And taste our power in turn.
Every Demon who had followed the Dimmed Light
Rises once more amidst tempest and death.
Wander into the world of the dark beneath the trees
Of the knowledge that their ancestors had known.
Oh, what a multitude marches on this path!
Doomed to burn,
Returning once more to the Land of the Skull.
Of the three who walked into Hell on obedient feet,
Who are these figures of majesty?
Mighty, but by stone and oath restrained.
In the dust, another tree awakens
Life and death entwined in salacious embrace;
Look into the storm, and be humbled, and live enslaved.
Even the mad who madden the world see reason to shudder.
Remember that they could give only what The One Giver first gave them.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION SPECIAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

1/5/0



MEMO

TO: Harlan Babbit, Division Chief
FROM: Special Agent Woodrow Miller
RE: Latin Fragment Theft

G. Osborne

After examining the paper left in place of the stolen Dies Ignis parchments, I am confident that there is more than a simple profit motive involved. If you examine the text of the "poem" the police found in the vault, you will notice that the first letters of each line spell out a name. They spell out my name.

The lines themselves all come from a recently released book entitled Ημερες Πυρος or Imeres Pyros. The author of that book, Yves Darra, translates it as "Days of Fire." He apparently worked from a Greek version of Dies Ignis – the stolen Latin text.

I believe the thief knows me, is familiar with my work, and knew that the Bureau would assign me a missing text case. This sort of infantile, word-game taunting doesn't seem like the work of a profit-motivated text thief, so don't expect to get a ransom demand, unless the thief is willing to let the text go because his real motivation is to get to me. But given the fascination shown — breaking into a secure site to steal the Latin version of the text, only to replace it with lines cribbed from a translation of the Greek version — I'm guessing our perpetrator wants to keep the text for some fetishistic purpose of his own.

I suspect this was done by someone connected to the Special Affairs end of things. Criminals interested in obscure incunabula are rare enough, while those who have Special Affairs connections are even rarer, and those are the people who would want to pick on me in particular. I'm sorting through parole files today. I think I'll have a short list of suspects by tomorrow.

- Thought you
might find these
illuminating

NEW COMET SIGHTED

By Trevor DiTerriich

Images from the Hubble Space Telescope have given astronomers the first glimpses of a new visitor to our solar system. A previously uncharted comet is approaching from outside the orbit of Pluto and may even become visible from Earth within the next few years.

"If you thought Hailey's Comet was impressive, this one might be even better," says Marjorie Serway, who discovered the object. "It's too early to tell much — we're just now starting to pick it up. But a lot of the readings we're getting are heavily into the red scale. We don't know whether that's because the light is refracting through some sort of cloud between the comet and Earth, or because the comet itself is reflecting red light, like Mars, or even producing its own red light, like the star Sirius. That latter possibility is quite unlikely, of course. We've never seen a genuinely luminous comet, just reflective ones. But preliminary data, while sketchy, may indicate that this particular stellar object is actually combusting."

Serway's Comet is not without its detractors, of course. Dr. Xavier Filho, at the Mount Palomar Observatory, doubts whether the object is even a comet at all. "I've seen [Serway's] data, and it's thin. I've seen the images, and they're inconclusive. I think what we have here is a woman who very much wants her name on a stellar object and who has too much trust in the Hubble. It may be a comet; it may not be. But if it is, I'm crediting her only with some good guesswork. As for the notion that it is luminous [SEE 'COMET' ON PAGE 8]

Fermilab Corrects Speed of Light

Anita Schifft, Science Correspondent

Scientists at Fermilab in Illinois claim they've measured C — the speed of light in a vacuum — with unparalleled accuracy using what they are calling the "photon-interface relay technique," or PIRT.

Before PIRT, the most accurate method used lasers and cesium clocks. That method yielded a speed of 299,792,458 meters per second — a figure considered so accurate that the international definition of the meter was changed to "the length of the path traveled by light in vacuum during a time interval of $1/299,792,458$ of a second."

Now, however, PIRT can time a single photon, not the first photon of a beam. Dr. Anton Chaudhary of Fermilab insists that PIRT produces a more reliable measure of speed, and that C — which has not been measured since the 1983 re-definition of the meter — may actually be faster than believed.

"PIRT indicates that the speed of light in a vacuum is at least 299,792,665 meters per second," he says. "And the math adds up. It's a shame to reprint all those textbooks and encyclopedias, but it all adds up. You can't argue with math. That's what so many people hate about it."

The PIRT system relies on Fermilab's particle accelerator, which [SEE "LIGHT", PAGE 5D]

Smithsonian Curator Vanishes

By Howard Redmond

Dr. Miles Fiske, curator of the Annenberg Hooker Hall gem display at the Smithsonian Institute, was reported missing on Monday, November 16, when he failed to show up for work. Police entered his home and found no sign of violence or forced entry.

"It's suspicious, of course," said police detective August Groves. "On Saturday there's some kind of disturbance at the Institute, someone attacks several guards and one patron with a knife, and then a few days later one of the prominent employees disappears? We're certainly investigating every lead. We consider it a strong possibility that there's a connection between the episode Saturday and Dr. Fiske's absence. However, we're not jumping to any conclusions. Dr. Fiske is not a suspect in any fashion."

Dr. Fiske received his Ph.D. in Geology from Harvard and [SEE "VANISHES" PAGE 6A)]

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION SPECIAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

February 3



MEMO

TO: Harlan Babbit,
Division Chief
FROM: Special Agent Woodrow Miller
Harlan Babbit, Division Chief
RE: Dies Ignis Investigation

G. Osbourne

Woodrow, I've reviewed your position and I respect your opinions, but I'm going to have to insist that you redirect the investigation as we discussed. The "lone nut" argument is one possibility, but even if this is one individual with a grudge, he or she is part of a subculture based on these texts, these documents.

What would motivate someone to taunt you specifically by stealing Dies Ignis? Yes, it's personal. Yes, it's probably revenge. But there are much better revenges than assembling a suggestive poem and sending you three newspaper clippings.

If we find that a single individual took the parchments, left the message and sent you the articles, we are still in the dark about motivations unless we can comprehend the milieu he or she inhabits — the beliefs that shape these actions.

Unless we do that, how do we know that making one arrest won't simply put another Dies Ignis fanatic on your case? I don't like seeing my agents hurt, and I don't want optimism — even reasonable optimism — to blind an agent to genuine threat.

Besides, this Days of Fire stuff might tie in to other, cold cases. We might as well turn the rock over and see what scuttles out. To that end, I want you to prepare a survey of the favored interpretations of the work — not just the Sadry and Darra translations, of course, but what people think it means, what it predicts, what it shows and portends. Are there really groups taking this as gospel? If so, who's proselytizing? Who are the old conservatives? Who are the schismatics?

No one can do this better than you, Woodrow, and both of us know it.

Status: U

X-Originating-IP: [67.422.209.311]

From: "WOODROW MILLER" <millerwo@fbi.gov>

To: "MIRANDA DOUGLAS" <douglasmi@fbi.gov>

Subject: Dr. Miles Fiske

Hi Miranda. I was poking around about the Fiske case and found out you were the AIC. How did that come about? Is there some kind of Special Affairs angle to the case that no one in the press knows about?

The reason I ask is that I've been getting some harassing mail from an anonymous source it may tie in to my current primary case. Someone stole an old text and left some sophomoric "Jack the Ripper" taunting on the scene. It's the usual "I'm so much smarter than you, ha ha, I'm Hannibal Lechter" crap that's put so many nutjobs behind bars, but this nutjob had the skill to perform a rather pretty heist — and the punchline of the note was my name.

Then, a few days later, I get a letter with three newspaper clippings, including one about your man Fiske. It came from Stull, Kansas, but when I contacted the postmaster there, she said they were coming to the post office from elsewhere with requests for her to forward them with Stull postmarks. She thought it was odd — it's not like Valentine, Texas, which gets a bunch of requests like that every February — but she doesn't remember where the packages came from. Anyway, one of them had an article about Fiske's disappearance, so I thought I'd see if there's anything peculiar about it., a small and unglamorous burg primarily known for a graveyard that's supposed to provide a convenient gateway to hell every Halloween.

It's probably nothing, some boob who secretly wants to get caught and will. But still. I thought I'd ask about Fiske.

Thanks —

Woody.

Status: U

X-Originating-IP: [67.422.209.311]

From: "MIRANDA DOUGLAS" <douglasmi@fbi.gov>

To: "WOODROW MILLER" <millerwo@fbi.gov>

Subject: Re: Dr. Miles Fiske

> I was poking around about the Fiske case and found out you were the AIC.

>How did that come about?

I requested it.

>Is there some kind of Special Affairs angle to the case that no one in the press

>knows about?

In a word, yes.

You remember that thing in Chicago last year a while back? The June Inoue murder where they brought you in to translate the Greek at the scene? Well, while I was on that, I made some contacts — the same people who were helping me track down Carleton Van Wyk. That didn't pan out, as you know, but we stayed in touch, and they alerted me that there might be something to the Fiske case that would interest SAD. So that's why I'm on it. What else did you get in the mail? Do you have any idea what the connection (if any) might be?

M.

Boy Baby Bonanza!

By Clark Wharton

The obstetrics ward at St. Christopher's Hospital is as busy as ever, but they're facing an unusual problem: A shortage of blue baby bonnets.

"We color code," says registered nurse Monica Navarro. "Boy babies get the blue ones and little girls get pink. Only we haven't needed a pink cap for the past week and a half."

St. Christopher's is facing an epidemic of male births: In the past month, they've delivered a hundred and twelve infants — about average for this time of year. But instead of the near fifty/fifty split you'd expect, almost seventy-five percent of the babies have been boys. In the last nine days, the ward has delivered thirty-four healthy, happy newborns — all indisputably male.

"It's probably just a statistical hiccup," says chief of OB Norma Klein. "Some other hospital somewhere probably delivered just as many girls in a streak. Still, it's certainly something you notice. People are starting to joke that there's something in the water!"

TENSIONS MOUNT BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN

By Avery Juster

Ahuja Shastri was a human circuit breaker. He sat in a bunker for twelve hours a day, isolated from the world outside. In the bunker he had a telephone and a switch. If the phone rang and a voice gave him the proper password, he would turn the switch and launch a nuclear weapon at Pakistan.

Shastri is no longer in the bunker: Indian military regulations forbid any officer from serving there for more than three months at a time. He's now in the field, guarding the Pakistani border.

"In there, you never knew if it was close," he said. "In some ways that's worse than now, even though it is close."

He's shockingly frank about the possibility of nuclear war in Pakistan, and with good reason. After last week's diplomatic incident in Kashmir, tensions are as high as they've been since 1998, the year Pakistan carried out its own nuclear weapons tests.

Status: U

X-Originating-IP: [67.422.209.311]

From: "WOODROW MILLER" <millerwo@fbi.gov>

To: "MIRANDA DOUGLAS" <douglasmi@fbi.gov>

Subject: Dr. Miles Fiske

I've found a lot of stuff on "Days of Fire" and there's more coming every day. Google it and watch the number of web pages climb — pages debunking it, pages discussing it, pages interpreting it, pages condemning it as a Satanist plot, a Vatican plot, an FBI plot. I don't know — Babbit's taking this stuff awfully seriously. Maybe he knows something I don't.

So far, the most interesting thing I've found is an article in a semiotics journal (of all things) arguing that the framing of ideas in the Latin Dies Ignis (that's the one that got stolen, remember) reveals a modern mind set and modern conventions. So either Dies Ignis is a clever fraud, or the author was a thousand years ahead of his time.

The author of that article was Madeline Mason. I looked up her other publication credits. Remember that ugly little book we seized from Chervenik's apartment in the New Bremen raid? The Book of Nod, with all those creepy marginal notes? She's written about that one too. That's particularly interesting because The Book of Nod Both books are very strange. "The Book of Nod" is a collector's item, even though you won't find a copy in any university library anywhere. , according to aA book dealer I know in New York. He said he could get me \$12,000 for a genuine copy, overnight — more if it's in good condition. I couldn't tell you why; I've seen dozens or hundreds of eschatological books like it, all creation myths and cloudy prophecies, half portentous stories of the distant past and half vague predictions about the distant future.

Do you think there's some connection between these books "Nod" and "Days of Fire" — that one of them inspired the other two? Certainly there are stylistic similarities in the English Darra and Sadry versions, but that could just be because they read "Nod" or because the author of "Nod" read them. Without a chance to compare the original text from which "Nod" was translated (if there even is such a thing) with the original Latin Dies Ignis, or the Greek Imeres Pyros, there's really no way of knowing.

The Van Wyk paranoids must have eschatological literature of their own (every little splinter group does). I've heard mentions of something called "Apocrypha" but I haven't seen a copy. Have you?

—Woody.

March 22
Charlene Porter
Bibliophile, Inc.
2929 Highland Avenue
Charicot, NY, 02212

Dear Woody,

At first, I thought you were crazy, but no. You're right. Something's very weird with the 1982 Thames Press never published run of Vera Sadry's *The Burning of Time*. in 1982. The weird thing is, people there think they did.

Thames has records of getting it 50,000 copies printed, invoice copies listing the bookstores they sent it to, and even the records of the returns they pulped. But it doesn't check out.

A lot of the bookstores closed down or changed management since 1982, and some of the survivors don't have records going that far back. Of the survivors with records, the big bookstores have invoices and return files that match up with Thames' records. But one of the first stores I checked it's a little one, local to me had good records and they never got the seventy copies Thames claims to have sent them only got ten copies, not the seventy that Thames claims to have sent. These were I mean good records, Woody: An ex-accountant runs the store and keeps things really tight.

So then I started looking into the used book trade, and nobody had there was only a trickle of used copies of the 1982 text before 2003. Around July of 2003 they started trickling in here and there, like normal turnover, but before that, nothing, though, more and more started pouring in. I called the pulpsters that Thames uses and they had a record of destroying 10,000 the unsold books but on a day when their equipment was scheduled for servicing.

I then looked at a supposedly used copy of the 1983 book, and it's not that old. The paper shows about twenty years of yellowing, but the ink isn't faded or decayed enough. I bought up a dozen copies, and they most of them were all evenly aged. That would never happen with real used books; typically they sit on a shelf for years before someone sells them and get sun damaged along only one side or the top. Not these. I think someone got old paper and printed these books on it that, or they printed them and then artificially distressed them.

Two of the used copies, however, were genuinely old. Or maybe they were fake-old like the other ten, but just more skillfully faked. I'm going through them now, looking for discrepancies between the texts. I've found several already.

If it's all a hoax and I'm forced to think it is and I can't quite believe it is then someone's gone to remarkable lengths to make people think this book's been around since 1983. I priced out some of what it would cost to do this, and it can't be a publicity stunt for Darra's book. His *Dies Ignis Imeres Pyros* is way too obscure to merit this kind of investment, and besides, setting this up would cost more than *Imeres Pyros Dies Ignis* is going to profit. Unless there's some third stage with the phony Sadry book setting something up, and the Darra book supporting it, and then what? What's the payoff?

I don't know, but now I'm certainly curious to find out!

Your Friend,

Charlene

[Transcript of Director's Office Interview, Page 2, April 5, 2003] afraid that's the best case scenario. The worst case is, she's been turned.

WM: Miranda? That's... I can't believe it.

HB: I didn't want to either, but I'm going to class you in on the evidence I've seen. If you can paint another picture, I'd love to see it, but I think it's pretty clear. She's been in contact with Van Wyk since Chicago. I'm pretty sure she helped him flee the country, and she may have helped him get through the EC and into Turkey. We lost track of him there, though there's circumstantial evidence linking him with some sort of millennial cult there tied in to the PKK.

WM: Look, Harlan... Miranda kept some things to herself. You know how it is with Special Affairs cases, you can't... I mean, there are limits to what people...

HB: This is well beyond our usual discretion. We've got email and phone tags between her and James W. Smythe, whom we suspect of being a terrorist a subversive operative code-named "Ripsaw." If that's correct, it ties her into a terrorist attack on a French NATO attaché named Louis Piquet. It's not nickel and dime stuff, Woody. I think they've got her, and I think "Days of Fire" is our key to getting them.

WM: I don't think she'd turn but she might get... broken.

(Pause)

HB: Yeah. That could happen to any of us. That's... that's why I want to find her before Defense Intelligence or the NSA do. We know what... what can happen. This might not be her fault and we might be able to save her. But if they find her first, or if Van Wyk and his apocalyptic friends "Pyros" pals decide she's outlived her usefulness...

WM: What do you want me to do?

HB: Don't try to track her. She's too smart, and it'll just put her back up. But she was hot for the Fiske case, and we're pretty sure her new friendsthe "Days of Fire" fanatics are concerned with it too. If she contacts you again, alert me immediately. I'd like to monitor your phone, if that's all right.

WM: Sure.

HB: Okay. I hate to have to ask you to do this stuff, but if she's a lost sheep and not... you know, if she didn't choose this... well, you're our best chance of getting her back.

Armchair Astronomers Eye 'Red Star'

Frieda Nagle

Once, the question of Stellar Object #442899 was of interest only to the professionals who work at the largest radio telescopes. Now, however, the "Red Star" has become visible with standard optics, attracting the upward gazes of thousands of amateurs stargazers as well.

Bright red, visible from most of the Northern Hemisphere, right in the bowl of the Big Dipper, the Red Star stirred up controversy from the first. When initially sighted by Dr. Margery Serway with the Hubble space telescope, she suspected it was a comet and named it after herself. Now, however, there is tremendous debate over whether it's a periodical visitor — perhaps the "bearded star" that supposedly presaged the destruction of Pompeii in 79 A.D. — or a one-hit wonder.

In many ways, the latter theory is more interesting. If it's not a comet, it may be a very large asteroid, perhaps a piece of debris from some planetary collision in another solar system. It may even be a rogue planetoid, dragged off its original orbit and sent through deep space by a passing gravity well.

"If you can see it from Earth at this distance, it's big," says Carl Bell, president of the British Amateur Astronomy Society. "We all agree on that, but on nearly

nothing else. The data from the different telescopes is readily available on the Internet, but it doesn't seem to add up. We don't even know if what we're seeing is reflected light, or if this is an object that is, itself, burning."

Astronomer Edie Cowan champions the "Bright Midget" theory, which holds that the Red Star may be neither comet nor asteroid but a self-sustained radiant object — a miniature sun smaller and cooler than any other type of sun we've seen before.

"If it's producing its own light, it's doing so with a lot less heat than even a yellow dwarf. You don't expect something that small to have self-sustaining fusion, but if it's an ejected part of a larger solar entity — maybe a plasma globule that splashed out when two larger suns collided — it could be burning down, just not out yet."

Cowan dismissed fears that her Bright Midget might endanger the Earth. "It's too early to predict its course," she says, "But at the heat levels we're picking up, it would have to come close to the lunar orbit to do much more than raise the temperature a few degrees for a couple days."

Serway insists that the reason the Red Star is so cool is that it's not a star at all — that it's Serway's Comet. "Obviously it's got some sort of vapor shroud,

Civil Unrest Rocks Eastern Europe

By Yevgeny Chiminski, special to the Globe

Riots that started in the Ukraine city of Dnipropetrovs'k have spread across national borders, sparking unrest as far as Astrakhan in the east, Tiraspol in Moldavia to the west, and Minsk in Belarus. While most cities are seeing only demonstrations, numerous arrests have been made and instances of looting and violence are being reported throughout many former Soviet states. More ominously, violence against Muslims is on the rise and many mosques have been vandalized

in the months since the initial "May Day" riot in Dnipropetrovs'k.

"It's not just about the food relief anymore," said a Dnipropetrovs'k police officer, speaking on terms on anonymity. "No one's proved that the Muslims were getting their subsidies first — why would the government do that? But people are angry, they aren't thinking, they are just striking out. If it were about food, everyone would have starved by now. Things are very bad. We are running low on rubber bullets, and if the riots continue we will be forced to use

TELEPHONE INTERCEPT, 703-555-2200, "Woodrow Miller," 6/6, 18:27:04, PAGE 1

WOODROW MILLER: Hello?

UNIDENTIFIED CALLER/UNIDENTIFIED CALLER: Hello Woodrow.

WM: Who is this?

UC: We haven't met. You can call me Throne of the Deepest Root, if you want.

WM: I'd really rather not. You're one of the "Bright Shiners," I suppose?

UC: Actually, I'm one of the two million and two thousand and two hundred and four.

WM: Good for you. Give me one reason not to hang up.

UC: I'll give you two, because that's the kind of generous patron I am. One: In Guthrie, West Virginia, a bunch of people burned in a sealed-up church. Donnie Cahill did it — you people haven't proved anything, but we all know, yes? Well, he's in a Motel Six right now, wearing an "Always Coca-Cola" sweatshirt, and I can give you the phone number there if you're interested.

(Pause)

WM: You said there were two reasons.

UC: Reason two is self-preservation. Someone has set a hook for you, Agent Miller, and it's not one you want through your lip.

WM: What? You mean the guy who sent me poems and newspaper clippings? It's almost romantic, if you like demented occult nerds.

UC: Your flippant attitude won't seem appropriate if you're exposed to the unshielded radiance of the adversary. Even the dimmed light is sufficient to blind human souls.

WM: This is the part where I get scared, right?

UC: I'm not about to tell you my name when your phone line is probably tapped — do you know if it's that balding fellow with the moustache?

WM: You just described half the FBI.

UC: If you want to contact me, try Brownweiller's "Coptic Invocation." The scratched-out word on the second page is "Tristis."

WM: Now I'm supposed to be wowed by your erudition?

UC: Keep talking tough, mortal. You can only lose your virginity once, and I'll be gentler than the author of "Dies Ignis." Just keep an open mind. It's not so bad. Ask your boss. Oh, and the phone number for Cahill is 630-851-3600

[Call disconnects].

Trace revealed it as originating from 909-555-0067, a pay phone in Ontario, CA. Prints were found on that phone that matched the prints from Miller's books. The body was found as described. Cahill was found at the motel 6 as described.

Status: U
X-Originating-IP: [82.911.773.222]
From: seekersearcher@hotmail.com
To: 7734upsidedown@hotmail.com
Subject: Director

Woody, I know this is going to be hard, but you're going to have to trust me, and you're going to have to stop trusting the Director. It's important. Really important.

They've told you I'm turned, right? Or broken. I'm not. Some of the people I'm with now are pretty extreme, but they've got intel you and I just can't get. That's how I found out about the Director.

He's turned, Woody. He's the sold out to an entity, I don't know what it is but it's called Vodantu, it's centered on the Arch somehow. See if you can check his travel records, you'll see a bunch of flights to St. Louis. He might tell you it's that Oscar Black business, but that was cold months ago.

I can't tell you how I know he's dirty, but he is. Look, don't even trust me if you don't want to — just don't trust him.

Do you remember all that crazy stuff Cook from the NSA was talking about? "Black bodies" and "red bodies" and secret invasions, right before he got reassigned? Something's coming Woody. Something's already here.

Just try this. See if you can lure the Director into the Capitol. The NSA has one of their gadgets there. Lure him in and they'll flag him. They won't do anything right away, but just watch and see if they don't throw a serious crimp in his style.

M.

Status: U
X-Originating-IP: [39.345.867.123]
From: 7734upsidedown@hotmail.com
To: seekersearcher@hotmail.com
Subject: RE: Director

Do you remember me telling you about a good book I read once? I think we should use that.

CCEFZN JU BEWMSM WGUC PFG. J HQW B DCOP GTRQ TQPITTL UJDX J UJLRP JU WGUC TRHGNGS BHIENXZ. NCBFJ UJH QGUWTT XJR TVRPJ UJH MCWMS GTDKRKUB. MKNI ZQX, IG UJLRPY CCEFZN ICV HQQI PXHV, BPG IG DCOPX IKPWJRM "UJH UJUSSH PH UJH EGHYJA SQRX". UJDX, BPG PVKIW UJLRLY IG TCLH, BTH SGIIWKUKNC UQ PNG EGPSSUSWPI UGAXX — UJH LKQH PH CQROX OQ PPH GKQHX PP BODDTT.DQP. JU IG XKWL ZQX? J EQQX LPRA XJR UQ CGOMJBL. CCEFZN JU BEWMSM PFG. UJH NCQ GTRQ TVXPQ JU DCOPNTN BV IPQI BPG IG NGQXNUUMM WQGESZB. JU IG XKWL ZQX?

YVES DARRA
READS VARY
A DRY SAVER
RAVED RAYS
A VERY RADS
DAVY REARS
VERA SADRY

SAD

TO: Harlan Babbit, Division Chief

FROM: [REDACTED]

RE: Miller surveillance

Miller has been driving erratically, as if trying to shake a tail, but I don't think he's onto us. He's swept his house for electronic bugs, but we've got a laser-bounce on his windows.

He went to Georgetown and spoke with Dr. Aman Velagapudi, a physics professor there. We couldn't overhear directly, but we spoke to Velagapudi afterwards. Miller was asking him about the "PIRT" process for measuring the speed of discrete photons in a vacuum. Apparently Miller was well informed about the controversy over new speed figures that PIRT has been indicating. A transcript of our interview is attached, but in brief, Velagapudi thought Miller was being misled by "bad science."

After that, he went to a cybercafe. [REDACTED] is checking now to see if we can get a trace and find out if he's got an email blind somewhere. If he does, he's not reading a lot of mail off it. He was only there for fifteen minutes. He got to the Bureau at 14:00 and his time thereafter is accounted for until he left

kept insisting that the speeds clocked by PIRT were, in fact, points on a graph, the gradual beginning of an asymptotic curve, and that if they really were showing the speed of light, it would get faster and faster, at an ever increasing rate as time pushed forward.

PL: I'm sorry? I'm not sure I followed that.

AV: If the PIRT results were somehow correct which would mean that a fundamental constant of the universe was changing, but never mind that if they were correct, light would get faster and faster until some point in the middle of next year when it would become infinite. I'll be the first to admit it's an interesting thought experiment, but utterly absurd

PL: What would happen?

AV: Sorry?

PL: If that happened. If it became infinite.

AV: Oh. All matter in the universe would occupy the same space, collapsing into a singularity. The "Big Crunch."

PL: Huh.

AV: Like I said, the idea is preposterous.

DEVIL WORSHIP ON THE RISE WORLD WIDE

By Jonathan Blake

In Austin, Texas, a banker is suing his former employer. His claim? They fired him because he's a Satanist.

In Johannesburg, more than twenty young men are in prison after a violent riot that left ten dead, hundreds injured, and millions of dollars' worth of property burned. Their motivation? The businesses they attacked were all "owned by devil worshippers."

In the mountains of Turkey, militia members pray to a demon called "The Reaper of Souls" for strength against their enemies, while in Tibet and western China the police have arrested hundreds of cultists who call themselves "Riders of the Flayed Horse." A recently launched British magazine, *Wormwood*, has circulation figures in the tens of thousands, numbers similar to those posted by the new American magazine *Satan Rocker*.

Everywhere in the world, devil worship is on the rise.

The question is, why?

"Lots of people think this is the end of the world," says author Vera Sadry, best known for her book *The Burning of Time*, considered by many to be a Satanic Book of Revelations. "They look at the traditional solutions of Christianity, Islam or Judaism — the traditions of the Condemned Man, the Seven Pillars and the Book — and see nothing but repeated, agonizing failure. All those kind words are vitiated by historical atrocities, and people are fed up. Humankind is innately vicious. The only real virtues are honesty, strength and passion. If you have the power, you can create any world you want. If you're not strong

enough to prevent someone else from incorporating you into their world — well, too bad. The worship of power is religious realpolitik."

Sociologist Francis Tucker has a different opinion.

"In every age, there's been at least one culture that believed it was the end of time. I mean, Dies Ignis said, 'The time is measured in days,' and that was written at least a thousand years ago. There are only two factors that make today any different.

The first is telecommunications. Seeing the unrest in Eurasia, the conflicts in Pakistan and Israel and South America, it's very easy for people in Australia or Canada to feel like the world is falling apart and they can't do anything about it. Secondly, there's a much greater cynicism, due in no small part to that same media influence. People simultaneously see and hear all this religious rhetoric, not just from fringe groups but from the President of the United States, and it's coupled with horrific violence and destruction. They want to define themselves in opposition to what they see as mealy-mouthed hypocrisy, but there's no new religion to claim their idealism. I thought the New Age movement was going to do it — just as Christianity took the ball from Roman paganism and Islam took the mantle of 'pure new faith' from Christianity — but the New Age emphasis on finding your own truth left it fragmented into myriad individuals instead of any kind of group. So the Satanists, or Diabolists, or Luciferans — whatever they call themselves, the people who define themselves primarily as 'the opposition' — they jumped on the fumbled ball."

TELEPHONE INTERCEPT,

[REDACTED], "8/2, 320:55:49, PAGE 2

always knew you'd come around. You're too smart to remain ethical all your life.

WM: Much as I'd love to listen to you gloat all night, some of us don't have all the time in the world. Let's make a deal.

MM: My kind of deal can only be made face to face.

WM: By which you mean, mouth to neck? No thanks. I've seen where that goes.

MM: I need assurances, Mr. Miller. One doesn't reach my advanced years without a certain degree of caution.

WM: Check your fax machine. You'll find an order condemning your Boston townhouse as a public health hazard. Dated yesterday. So if I was interested in ashing you, you'd be ash.

MM: I don't respond well to threats.

WM: Then how about bribery? I've got Troy Chervenec's old copy of "The Book of Nod," complete with his annotations and marginalia. Interested?

MM: You manipulate the carrot and the stick very well, agent Miller. I'll play. What do you want to know?

WM: Tell me about "Days of Fire" and tell me about the Throne of the Deepest Root.

MM: I don't know your throne but I know his type. You'd be safer with us, much better off.

WM: And Dies Ignis?

MM: (Laughs) Why, it's true of course. Every word.

Status: U
X-Originating-IP: [82.911.773.222]
From: seekersearcher@hotmail.com
To: 7734upsidedown@hotmail.com
Subject: REFINANCE NOW AND S.A.V.E!!!

OQQI PH NA DQQXFIAA LPRA BPBXMOU BDRYY ZQX, BPG OQ PPH
ICG IGDVI PH UJLW EGHTJYA SQRX DJDVFIAMA. EKG ZQX UTB
HGWXNTN CCEFZN UQ UJH DCSMYUS?
CG WGUC DCUIKAS, XQRHWUD. CQWL PH VU ICYI TGHR UGUVNHSM
UJLRLY XQUONTN TRHGNGS BHIENXZ, CWW J UJLRP XG KWVX TCZ UJH
DQPMMS BVWVFIAQXXD. OQZ UJH GGDXXL JU QNDCNTN.
J ICYI CGOMJBL JP EGPSSY FXHV TKQGJ J BTUIXZLL KCQI JPRYJ. EQ
ZQX?
J EQQX LPRA BPBXMOU BDRYY 'WQGXZB' BPG OGLXMKY EQ NA BUVSHOH-
BMC CWW UJHC CGOMJBL GJVOJ JU TGUZNTN TQPI FPWME DCOPJJ
'WCVWFMV', BNVS LORAS BU UJH TGHV PH TERVS. UJHC EQQX TRHEP IKV
OCPI PWW MQXH BPG UJHC UJLRP GJVOJ XCVRY IKV PPOC TGUZFTA. UJHC
TQXRI DTDDD TQPI UKPIX CWW JXH TGHR UJLRLY J DCQX FZSPFOU. XG/UI
UTBMSM UQ GKQH GKVOJ BPG B EKCQTTK OGFOQGM BPG UYR QGRTQK -
KQKR DQDPJX BPG MGDJ QCQOTCZSR. NA BUVSHOHBMU UJLRP UJRWJ UYR
BTH WGUC JOSSWZHVC, UJDX WCVWFMV NCB CG PP UJH CTRLP PH UCNMSM
UJHQ PXHV, PH DQQWUSTRXR IWPESY EKUIHZSG. ZQX LPRA UJDXW
QQVWNHSM. ZQX TCZ JV JP PJLS.

EQ ZQX CGOMJBL JP EGPSSY?
M.

Status: U
X-Originating-IP: [39.345.867.123]
From: 7734upsidedown@hotmail.com
To: seekersearcher@hotmail.com
Subject: RE: REFINANCE NOW AND S.A.V.E!!!

J HQW CCEFZN UQ UJH DCSMYUS BPG UYR ECBW MCWIW IG XGQX PP
UGPTTXHZH BFPMSOZBAKEUIS MGDZJ. DQLRHOKMWMP? XJR DCQ UGOP?
J NCGI DQQXFIA XKWL NCGIQOUM NCVSS. TJH JU W GQU WKFTXF, BU J
TWVTJIAMM. CWW TJH ICG JPISWSHBRY BDRYY UJH CQROX, TQOMI
TVXJK. TJH NCGI B ETRT PHI JP CCUWYUD BPG J EQ OQW UJLRP J XCV
GQOPTCLL.
J ICYI TRROJT UQ UJH EGHTJYA SQRX UQR, CWW J EQ OQW UJLRP J XKOP
BIDMS.
JOHVJY QAUSX JU TVDVYOUO UQ NCNI UQR NWFL TGQWJ BPG J EQ OQW
MKNI JV. TQ NWFL QQLRY UQ JV CGLRL B IQDB - GQU JPVXFTJM, UJH
OCPIX "ZXHW ECUVF" BPG "WGUE TCGVD" BTH CQWL BDPKWGTA GQU
"BFYIWHZH." JH UJLW JU B IQDB, JV JU UJH NQVX JPVESKSG FZSISYPDN,
FNDFTXHBN BPG JPWIQRPONXE IQDB JP IKVXTXF.
JV BNPSXZ NCNIX NQUI TGQWJ UQ CGOMJBL UJH CQRO JU UTXI.
EGPSSY? J EQ OQW LPRA. CWW CGOMJBPVP JP UJHQ JU TVDVYOUO UQ
NCNI NQUI TGQWJ UQR.

SCIENTISTS BAFFLED BY 'BABY BUST'

Maureen Ybarra

Despite intense research efforts, scientists have been unable to find a reason for a recent drop in female conceptions.

"The search for a pathogen has gone nowhere," says Dr. Allen Kaul of the Center for Disease Control. "The problem is that the babies that are being born fall well within normal, predicted tolerances. They aren't unusually sick or healthy, they aren't unusually frequent, and there isn't an overall birth drop. It's just that they're all boys. Testing every expectant parent in the U.S. simply isn't feasible, especially not with the bioterror situation in the Middle East. The global nature of this phenomenon, and the speed with which it spread, suggests very open transmission vectors. It's not inconceivable that the cause for this phenomenon is affecting three quarters, or more, of the global population."

The decline in female births became noticeable last March, which was when the CDC began collecting their data. To the surprise of Kaul and others, the problem was not miscarriages or stillbirths of female infants but, rather, the failure of female children to be conceived.

"It's got to be the fathers," says Dr. Bralio Troccoli of the World Health Organization. "The only reasonable surmise is that some factor is inhibiting the production of X-chromosome-bearing gametes. I suspect the problem will ultimately be traced to hormone use in food, or to some unanticipated problem with genetically engineered crops, but we won't know for sure until we isolate the condition."

Conception occurs when the mother's generative cell, carrying an X chromosome, unites with the father's generative cell, which can bear either an X or Y chromosome. If the united cell has two X chromosomes, it produces a girl child. If it's an XY mixture, the fetus is male.

"I respect Troccoli's research," says Dr. Ingrid Meyers of the Bonn Institute for Reproductive Studies. "But I think his conclusions are misguided. We've done tests with samples from a wide variety of male donors, and the proportions of X- to Y-bearing sperm cells are as close to 50/50 as they ever were. I think what we need to look for is some uterine condition that is selectively detrimental to Y-bearing

Five Slain Under Gateway Arch

By Shelly Snipes, Tribune Staff Writer

The Museum of Westward Expansion under the Gateway Arch was closed today after a custodian found five bodies in the buffalo display.

"Worst thing I ever saw," says custodian Cordell Harrison. "I couldn't tell if they were women or men. At first I didn't even know they were people, they looked like cut up sides of beef. Blood everywhere, all kinds of patterns and letters. I'll tell you who did it, too. It's that Vodantu guy, same as all those people out east!"

St. Louis police refuse to comment on whether "Vodantu" — the serial killer whose mysterious signature has been found on at least thirteen bodies in the last two years — also committed these crimes. Speculation is rife that this is a copycat, but others fear a connection to the death of escaped murderer Tim Grady
[SEE "ARCH" PAGE 20]

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE



SAD

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION SPECIAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT



MEMO

G. Osborne

TO: Harlan Babbit, Division Chief
FROM: Woodrow Miller
RE: Yves Darra and Vera Sadry

Dr. Yves Darra was killed in his office at Yale University at or around 3:45 PM on October 4. He died from a single gunshot wound, fired at close range into his forehead. The caliber of the bullet was .455 Webley. Several witnesses noted the time.

Vera Sadry was killed in her home in Los Angeles at or around 1:00 PM on October 4. She died from a single point-blank gunshot to the forehead. The caliber of that bullet was also a .455 Webley. Again, there were witnesses in the house who testify to the time.

As you'll recall from my previous memo, at about 4:00 PM on October 4, I was at home when there was a knock on my back door. When I opened the door I saw no one, but there was a package on my deck. Inside was a Webley Mark I revolver. It had recently been fired and two chambers were empty. Today I got the ballistics results and, according to them, this was the weapon used for both crimes.

If you look at the time zone difference, the two murders — which were carried out on opposite sides of the continent — happened at nearly the same time. Then the murder weapon was delivered to my home, which is more than three hundred miles from the nearest crime scene. All this was done, according to many witnesses who have little motive for falsehood, within a span of fifteen minutes.

I do not understand this. I haven't found anything in the SAD files like this. I don't know why I was chosen for this or what I'm supposed to figure out.

I would like to request the reassignment of my caseload until this matter is cleared up. I believe the delivery of this weapon constitutes a very clear threat.

X-Originating-IP: [82.834.980.712]
From: "Clay Griffith" <griffclay@nsa.gov>
To: "HARLAN BABBIT" <babbitha@fbi.gov>
Subject: Cipher

You can reassign that agent you had thumbing through your subject's library records. I've seen this before.

It's a Grezst rolling cipher scheme, first used by Oleg Grezst in 1944, though he used it with the Cyrillic alphabet, of course. It's very resistant to standard decryption techniques because letter-frequency analysis doesn't work on it. Even tells like double letters won't work with a Grezst. See, it's not just one cipher. It's twenty-six consecutive ciphers. Your subject resets the cipher progression between each word, so every space in his encrypted message is a space in his decoded one. That's very sloppy, but never mind. Here's how it works.

The first letter in every word is a ciphered one step down, so that A becomes B, F becomes G, Z rolls over to become A. The second letter in every word is shifted two steps. A becomes C, F becomes H, Z becomes B. The third letter is shifted three, the fourth is shifted four and so on until it hits a space, when the system resets. Like so:

```
HI THERE HARLAN
I J UI F SF I B SMBO
K J GTG C TNCP
  HUH UODQ
    VI PER
      J FS
        T
```

Encrypted, it's "IK UJHVJ ICUPFT." The letter J appears twice, but once it stands for H because it's a second letter, and once it's an E because it's the fifth letter.

I've thrown together a PERL script to decode Grezst systems — just seed it with your space bar and it'll break the messages you've gotten. If he gets smarter and starts resetting on a letter instead of on spaces, you can try different letters until you get something intelligible. Hope this helps you catch the guy. Give my regards to Brenda. We still on for golf next Saturday?

Griffith

Backward Forward Redraw Stop Findall Homepage History Printing Save Preferences

HTML site: <http://www.REPENT./THE END IS NEAR<>

THE END IS NEAR REPENT SINNERS!

Turn away from your lesbianism and abortionism and atheism! God's judgement is at hand, glaring down at you from the Red Star!



Even now, God's Fist of Reckoning comes to smite the Earth. The government won't tell you that the Red Star is a killer asteroid, they're too busy trying to contain the infected refugees from lamented Jerusalem, they're too busy trying to keep India and Pakistan from going nuclear, they're too busy trying to figure out what happened to all the little girls. Well I'll tell you what happened! GOD HAPPENED! They're not finding a "pathogen" or an "environmental factor" because the halt in female births isn't the result of sickness or toxins. It's built into us! It's part of the plan! These children are the last generation born on Earth, as it's meant to be!

That's right, I said "halt". The government and their media stooges may tell you that 5% of the children are still girls, or 2%, or 8%, or that it's business as usual among the Yanomami Indians and the Maori tribes in New Guinea, but has anyone SEEN a newborn girl? Anyone anywhere? No one I know has, and those native tribes are conveniently out of the way, so we can't exactly go check in with them! No people, the end is coming, it's nearly here and God is too kind to put children through the torment of the End Times! The people who are talking about cloning females or doing sex changes in utero or producing girls by artificial insemination with centrifuged sperm – they aren't just your standard crazy scientists playing God, they're crazy scientists FIGHTING God, creating abominations, sinning more when they ought to realize that they should repent!

How do I know all this? The Red Star told me. Now, I'm not one of those nuts who claims to hear voices. No, the Red Star told me with math. I work at an observatory, I've added up the data, I watched that thing go through the asteroid belt and I saw the wake it threw up behind it. It's not a little piece of rock, people. It's not reflecting light, either — I saw it back in March when it was in solar shadow, but it was still bright and burning. It is something immense, and heavy, and hot. We still don't know it's exact trajectory, but it's coming close.

You may not believe me, since you're not seeing this on TV or in the papers, but if you were the president, would you let people know that a giant burning comet was headed for earth? The president thinks people might go crazy, he's worried about looting and rioting and mass hysteria. But what he should be worried about is billions of immortal souls! By suppressing this data, he's keeping you ignorant of the true peril! And I'm not talking bout the end of the world, that's not a threat, that's a reality, even if the comet doesn't kill everyone, there won't be another generation after this one. So don't worry about who's going to remember you, no one will. Don't worry about what you're going to do in fifty years. Worry about what you're going to do in eternity!

X-Originating-IP: [24.848.640.212]
From: "WOODROW MILLER" <millerwo@fbi.gov>
To: "HARLAN BABBIT" <babbitha@fbi.gov>, seekersearcher@hotmail.com
Subject: Goodbye

I feel like I should be writing this by hand on stationery, not entrusting it to the Internet. God only knows who'll wind up reading this. Cook, if you're still manning CARNIVORE and still running searches on "RED BODY" and "BLACK BODY" — hi.

Miranda, I'm sorry to burn your seekersearcher address, but you and I both know it's probably a little long in the tooth (so to speak) anyhow. Out with the old, in with the new.

Harlan — I still don't know what's going on with you. I still don't know if I can trust you or not. Soon, I guess, it won't matter.

I'm fifty-six years old. I narrowly missed two Ph.D degrees — just couldn't finish those dissertations. I worked for the FBI for nearly forty years. When I started, the job was all surveillance and deduction and worrying about dead drops and ciphers and Communists. Now everything is SIGINT and cell intercepts and satellite photography. I'm an antique — interesting, perhaps, like all the old Greek scrolls and Latin inscriptions I've been asked about over the years. Even relevant, sometimes. But not all the time. Not most of the time.

And maybe now it's the end of time.

I've translated one last document. The good old Dies Ignis, or Imeres Pyros — I did 'em both, one from Greek and one from Latin and they don't match up, they're not the same at all... but they mesh. They fit together, they link up and grind away and they take all the crap about the speed of light, and the declining birth rates, and India and Africa and the Munich Plague and they somehow weave it together, knit all the signs and portents and clues into something bigger and more frightening and vaporous, but more real.

Perhaps I'm only an old man staring at an inkblot and seeing a message from the Abyss. Maybe it's really only from some unsuspected pit in an aging brain. Or maybe I've deciphered a genuine invitation. I'll find out soon.

I don't know what's going to happen to me. I don't even know what I'll finally decide. But I think that while an unlit candle never burns out, it never sheds light, either.

Whatever I decide to do, I hope you can understand it and maybe forgive me.

It's time for me to wander into the dark beneath the trees.

—Woody.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION SPECIAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT



MEMO

10/31/0X

G. Osbourne

TO: Harlan Babbit, Division Chief
FROM: [REDACTED]
RE: Miller surveillance, Stull Kansas

SURVEILLANCE REPORT

SUBJECT: Woodrow Miller, Case #88297B

LOCATION: Stull Cemetery, Kansas

SURVEILLANCE DATE: 10/31/0X

Subject Miller departed his hotel at 23:17 hours. He was alone. He proceeded east on highway [REDACTED] for at least ten miles, into the center of Stull. Although we took standard precautions against detection and used a two-car tail, the subject eluded surveillance at 23:39 hours.

Agents [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were alerted as soon as he left the hotel, and immediately began a covert survey of the cemetery perimeter. Despite this, they did not regain contact with Miller until 23:48, when they located his car, parked down the road from the cemetery. It was empty.

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] re-established visual surveillance at 23:56, when subject was sighted approaching the abandoned church. There was an exchange of gunfire, but the agents could not prevent him from entering the structure.

At 24:02, I arrived on the scene. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had the building under observation and insisted that Miller was still inside. After [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] spread out to secure the site, I approached. It was 24:10.

Just inside the door was a quantity of blood consistent with a [REDACTED] but no sign of Miller. A survey of the building revealed no hiding places or obvious signs of egress.

We searched thoroughly until dawn, without the aid of local authorities as per your instructions. Sonic testing revealed neither tunnels nor hiding places beneath the church.

It is my suspicion that Miller briefly entered the building, then somehow eluded his pursuers and went to ground. None of the vehicles on the site were moved. While there are no signs that he had an escape vehicle hidden there, it seems likely that he did. Alternately, he may have proceeded on foot — but if injured, I doubt he got far.

[REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are continuing to comb the area. [REDACTED] and I have returned to Stull and are searching there. I strongly suggest that you allow us to bring in local authorities, as [REDACTED]

Credits:

Authors: Greg Stolze.

World of Darkness created by Mark Rein • Hagen.

Storyteller Game System Design: Mark Rein • Hagen

Developer: Michael Lee

Editor: Ana Balka

Art Director: Pauline Benney

Layout and Typesetting: Pauline Benney

Interior Art: Marko Djurdjevic, John Cobb, Eric Hotz, Vince Locke,
Jasmine Millberger and Pauline Benney

Front and Back Cover Design: Pauline Benney



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