

the
DARK

MAX COTTICA

Enhance your experience and
immerse yourself in

the
DARK

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part
one:

ARRIVAL

SOMETHING
SOMETHING
FEELING OF A
SOMETHING...

...SOMETHING BLAACK
SOMETHING BAAD

SOMETHING
SOMETHING
CREEPING LIKE A
SOMETHING

SOMETHING BLAACK...

THUMP

...SOMETHING...

WHO'S THERE ?
WHO IS THERE...

OR WHAT ?

UHMM...

I... I...
I DO NOT KNOW!
I KNOW THAT I FEEL
...CONFUSED?

OOH, YOU MUST VE
JUST ARRIVED THEN,
OOH I REMEMBER HOW
BAD THAT FELT, YES!
IT WILL PASS AND YOU
WILL BE LEFT WITH,
WELL, NOTHING TO
WORRY ABOUT OR BE
CONFUSED ABOUT FOR
THAT MATTER.

ARRIVED WHERE AND
ARRIVED HOW?
UNGGH... IT'S
GETTING WORSE,
THIS SENSE OF...

... BEING LOST?
BEING SOMETHING AND THEN
SOMETHING ELSE? IT'S
PERFECTLY NORMAL AS YOU
WILL BE TOLD SOON WHEN YOU
DECIDE TO MOVE ALONG WITH
THE REST OF THE NEW ARRIVALS
AND VISIT THE CENTRAL ROOM.
NOT VERY FANCY NAME BUT
QUITE APPROPRIATE I HAVE TO
ADMIT. THEN IT'S UP TO YOU
AND HOW MUCH YOU REMEMBER
OF YOUR, EHM, EXPERIENCE.
SOME LUCKY ONES CAN KEEP
COUNT OF ...

UNNGH

OH MY, I FORGOT
ABOUT THE NEXT
STAGE, TINGLING
HARD, RIGHT?
ANYWAY GOING BACK
TO THOSE LUCKY ONES
IT SEEMS THEY ARE
OUT MORE THAN THE
REST OF US...

YOU CAN TALK... YOU
WHOEVER YOU ARE,
MAYBE LESS TALKING
AND MORE SILENCE FOR
THE ONE IN PAIN HERE?

OOOH, EXCUSE ME IF I AM
TRYING TO BE CORDIAL AND NICE
TO SOMETHING I DO NOT EVEN
KNOW THAT WELL. AS A MATTER
OF FACT I SHOULD KEEP DOING
WHAT I WAS DOING AND IGNORE
THE FACT I STUMBLED ACROSS A
FRESH ONE. REALLY YOU ARE
RUDE. AND LET ME TELL YOU
SOMETHING ELS...

YOU ARE DOING IT
AGAIN... AND THE
MORE YOU TALK THE
LESS I LIKE YOU
AND THE MORE I
DON'T UNDERSTAND
WHAT IS
HAPPENING TO ME,
SO ...



YOU SAID I
HAVE JUST
ARRIVED...
FROM WHERE ?
AND ARRIVED
TO WHAT ?

...

ARE YOU STILL HERE ?
HEY!
... HEY ARE YOU STILL
HERE ? WHAT IS YOUR
...

...

...NAME ?

NAME ? AH !
MY NAME
WOULDN'T
MAKE ANY
SENSE TO
YOU RIGHT
NOW.

YOU HAVE JUST
CROSSED THE
LINE BETWEEN
ANNOYING AND
USELESS... LEAVE
ME ALONE THEN.
PLEASE.

USELESS... THAT IS
IRONIC.
SEEMS YOU HAVEN'T
LEARN'T MUCH IN
YOUR LAST
EXPERIENCE.
YOU WILL SPEND A
LOT OF TIME HERE.
AH!

WHERE EXACTLY IS
HERE ? I CANNOT
SEE ANYTHING,
SEEMS ALL SO...
PITCH BLACK IN...
HERE.

THAT IS
BECAUSE HERE
THERE IS
NOTHING TO
SEE.

OK, IT SEEMS WE
STARTED OFF ON
THE WRONG FOOT...
LET'S START ALL
OVER, WOULD YA ?
PLEASE...

THAT'S MORE LIKELY
FRESH ONE. MY NAME
IS X2Y2Z13. SOME
CALL ME **DEFICIT**
BUT I DON'T LIKE IT
THAT MUCH.

DEFICIT,
MAY I ASK WHY
YOU DON'T LIKE
IT THAT MUCH ?
SEEMS A COOL
NICK NAME FOR
A... WHATEVER
YOU ARE...

AAW, I AM STARTING
TO LIKE YOU
FRESHLING, NOT
ONLY YOU STOPPED
BEING PLAIN RUDE,
YOU ARE MORE
CONCERNED ABOUT
MY NAME THAN WHAT
HAPPENED TO YOU.
VERY ENDEARING, I
THINK I HAVE JUST
FOUND MYSELF A NEW
FRIEND AND...

YOU ARE CROSSING
THAT FINE LINE AGAIN
DEFICIT, NOT TO BE
RUDE BUT YOU CAN
REALLY TALK FOR THE
MASSES.

AND THIS FEELING IS NOT
GOING AWAY, SEEMS LIKE I
HAVE BEEN FALLING FROM THE
MOMENT WE STUMBLED IN
EACH OTHER. BUT HEY, WHERE
ARE MY MANNERS, I AM... I...
AM... OH, I REALLY DON'T
KNOW. SO YOU CAN CALL ME
NOONE IF YOU LIKE.

WORRY NOT, THEY
WILL ASSIGN YOU
A NAME AS SOON
AS YOU COMPLETE
THE INDUCTION
PROGRAM...

BUT **NOONE** IS
ACCEPTABLE. AND TO
ANSWER YOUR QUESTION I
DON'T LIKE DEFICIT
BECAUSE IT REMINDS ME
OF THE FACT I WILL SPEND
A VERY LONG TIME HERE
UNLESS A MIRACLE
HAPPENS.

DEFICIT... WHERE...
IS... **HERE** ?!

HERE IS HERE AND EVERYWHERE.
IF YOU ARE ASKING FOR A
SPECIFIC LOCATION, YOU ARE
ASKING FOR SERIOUS
TROUBLE. NONE OF US KNOWS
AND THE INFORMATION IS
NOT DISCLOSED DURING THE
INDUCTION PROGRAM... THAT
IS ACTUALLY THE ONLY

INTERACTION WE ALL HAD WITH
THE DARK.

AND APART FROM THE
OBVIOUS WHAT IS THAT
YOU CALL THE DARK ?
AND YOU SAID "US"...
THERE ARE MORE OUT
THERE, OR... RIGHT HERE
?

SO MANY QUESTIONS,
SO MANY THAT WILL
REMAIN UNANSWERED
MY NEW FRIEND. IF
YOU START BEHAVING
LIKE THIS YOU WILL
FINISH ON THE
PERPETUUM TRAIN AND
TA-TA NOONE.

PERPETUUM TRAIN ?
THE MORE YOU TALK
THE MORE HOLES
YOU OPEN IN MY
ALREADY FEEBLE
STATE!

AH WELL, I DECIDED TO
LIKE YOU IN THE FIRST
PLACE SO I THINK YOU
DESERVE A LITTLE MORE
INFORMATION ON YOUR
PRESENT STATUS... DON'T
TELL ME THEN THAT THE
INDUCTION WAS
BORING, I WARN YA!

ACTUALLY... EVEN
BETTER, INSTEAD OF
TORMENTING YOU WITH
INFORMATION THAT
WILL COME TO YOU
ANYWAY, I HAVE A
QUESTION FOR YOU!

THIS IS GONNA BE
INTERESTING...

OOH, WAIT MY
FRIEND...
WHAT IS THE LAST
THING YOU
REMEMBER ?

... ?

HEHEHE

MUMBLE
MUMBLE

... NOTHING. I
REMEMBER
NOTHING. HOW IS
THAT POSSIBLE ?

DIG DEEP
FRESHLING,
DIG DEEP. WHAT
IS THAT
FEELING THAT
HAS COME HERE
WITH YOU, THAT
"FALLING" AS
YOU CALL IT...

... YOU ARE
RIGHT. I REMEMBER
SOMETHING, I
REMEMBER...
DYING!

EXACTLY!
FOR A FRESH ONE YOU
ARE QUITE QUICK
NOONE. YOU CAN ONLY
REMEMBER THAT
BECAUSE YOU ARE IN
FACT **DEAD** MY
FRIEND!

NO!

AH NO DON'T TAKE IT LIKE THAT, IT
COULD BE GOOD NEWS IF YOU
DON'T HAVE TO WAIT TOO LONG
FOR YOUR NEXT EXPERIENCE. IT
WILL DEPEND ON THE NAME THAT
WILL BE ASSIGNED TO YOU ONCE
YOUR INDUCTION IS COMPLETED.
AH! I JUST REALIZED I HAVE BEEN
MENTIONING THE INDUCTION MANY
TIMES AND I HAVE NOT BROUGHT
YOU TO IT NOR YOU HAVE ASKED A
SINGLE QUESTION ABOUT IT.

AAH! NO WORRIES, I WILL
LEAD YOU TO YOUR
DESTINATION AND MEET
YOU AFTER IN THE CENTRAL
ROOM. AS A MATTER OF
FACT IT IS JUST DOWN IN
THAT DIRECTION STRAIGHT
BEHIND YOU. YOU MIGHT
ACTUALLY CAPTURE A
GLIMPSE OF IT FROM HERE
IF YOU HAVE ADAPTED YOUR
VISION SENSE TO THE
BLANK SURROUNDINGS...

OH!

AND SO I TURNED AROUND AND
HAD A VERY CLEAR "GLIMPSE"
OF IT. AND SO IT
STARTED AN ODISSEY I NEVER
PUT MY NAME DOWN FOR.

AT FIRST ALL
WAS BLURRY.



BUT IT DIDN'T
TAKE LONG.

THE CENTRAL ROOM.



part
two:

INDUCTION

UNAWARE OF YOUR SENSES YOU
SPAWN AND GROW TO LIVE A
LIFE YOU DID NOT ASK FOR. AN
EXPERIENCE YOU DID NOT SIGN
FOR.



THU-THUMP

THU-THUMP

THU-THUMP

THU-THUMP

THU-THUMP

AWEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE



IT IS THEN YOU DEMAND A
SORT OF EXPLANATION, IS
IT LIFE REALLY JUST MERE
EXPLOITATION ?



THU-THUMP

THU-THUMP



THU-THUMP

STUCK IN A STANDARDIZED
LOOP OF EVENTS, LIVING A LIE
SO FAT IT COVERS THE SUN
AND MAKES US BLIND AND
OBLIVIOUS. A LOOP OF TINY..

...INSIGNIFICANT MOMENTS, ALL
IN THE SAME TUNNEL, ALL
PUSHING AND GOING FORTH AS
FAST AS POSSIBLE TOWARDS
THE TRAGIC, THE COMIC AND...

THU-THUMP

THU-THUMP

AWEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

THU-THUMP

...THE INEVITABLE. DEATH. PART OF A LARGER SCHEME, THE END OF EVERYTHING, BEGINNING OF NOTHING. SILENT YET YOUR SOUL SCREAMS AT HER SIGHT.

THU-THUMP

THUP



THE END OF EVERYTHING.
THE BEGINNING OF NOTHING.

NOONE ?
NOONE !?

LINNGH... ANOTHER
BAD MOMENT. WILL
THEY EVENTUALLY GO
AWAY ? THE FALLING
SENSATION HAS
BARELY STOPPED
SINCE MY ARRIVAL.

HOW LONG HAVE
YOU BEEN
WAITING FOR
YOUR MIRAGE TO
APPEAR ?

I KNOW MY FRIEND,
INDUCTION WILL DO
GREAT TO YOUR
PRESENT STATUS, IT
WILL HELP EASE INTO
YOUR NEW
SITUATION. AND
THERE IS THE MIRAGE
OF A NEW EXPERIENCE
TO CRAVE AND WAIT
FOR... THAT I FOUND
IS THE BEST WAY TO
COPE WITH IT ALL.

I HONESTLY DO NOT
KNOW. I DO NOT HAVE
THE FACULTY TO COUNT
MY EXPERIENCES... I
HAVE NO FLASHBACKS,
YOU KNOW ?

?

FLASHBACKS...
REMINISCENCE OF
WHAT EXACTLY...

YOUR
EXPERIENCES
NOONE. SOME OF
US HAVE THE
POWER TO RECORD
AND KEEP TRACK
OF THEM.

IT IS INDEED A DELICATE MATTER
DISCUSSING SUCH THINGS. I
WOULD PREFER IF YOU MOVED
ALONG, GET YOUR INDUCTION
PROGRAM STARTED AND MAKE UP
YOUR OWN IDEA OF WHAT THIS IS.
THE DARK I AM SURE STILL HAS
MANY SECRETS CONCEALED, WE ARE
JUST WAITING TO FIND THEM ALL
AND PUT THE PIECES TOGETHER. A
GIANT, INTRICATE JIGSAW IF YOU
WISH...

...BUT YOU KNOW THAT
ALREADY. THAT IS ANOTHER
BENEFIT OF INDUCTION,
EVERYTHING WILL COME BACK
TO YOU. THE EXPERIENCES
TEND TO FLATTEN THE LINE
OF THOUGHTS WHERE YOU
KNOW WHAT THIS IS ALL
ABOUT OR AT LEAST WHAT
ALL THIS IS LEADING TO...
AND SPEAKING OF WHICH,
HERE WE ARE...

THE CRADLE. DESIGNED TO
INDUCT THE FRESH ONES AND
LEAD THEM ON THEIR WAY.

IDENTIFIED: ESSENCE X242213
ESSENCE HAS COMPLETED THIS PROGRAM.
IDENTIFIED: ESSENCE X448.
COMPUTING Z FACTOR FOR NEW ESSENCE
Z10
INDUCTION PROGRAM STARTED

MAKING
PROGRESS
ALREADY NOONE.
OR IN FACT
X4Y8Z10... THAT
IS A GOOD
START, TRUST ME.

HMMMM

YOUR NEW EXPERIENCE AWAITS YOU X448210.
YOUR TRI-DIMENSIONAL FACTORIZATION SUGGESTS THAT YOUR TIME WILL COME SOON.
YOUR NAME WILL BE PINGED AND AT THAT POINT YOU WILL DIRECT TO THE CENTRAL ROOM.
MAY YOUR NEXT EXPERIENCE BRING YOU TO HIGHER FACTORS.
END OF THE INDUCTION PROGRAM.

.....
.....

BACK TO
SQUARE
ONE.

AH! PRICELESS!
I ALWAYS LIKE
THIS MOMENT.
MAKES YOU FEEL
QUITE USELESS
DOESN'T IT ?

WELL YES, YOU GOT
THAT RIGHT. I HAVE
THE FEELING YOU
WERE PLANNING TO
HAVE A LAUGH AT
MY EXPENSES...
WELL, WAS IT
WORTH IT ?

HIHIHIHI

MAKES ONE
FEEL BETTER
ABOUT THE
SITUATION,
YOU KNOW...

SO NOW ALL I HAVE
LEFT IS TO WAIT TO
BE PINGED ? WHAT IS
HAPPENING TO ME,
PLEASE DEFICIT GET
ME OUT OF THIS
MISERY... MAYBE IT
IS JUST AN ILLUSION
OR A BAD DREAM...

FAR FROM THAT MY
FRIEND! FOR A ZIO
YOU ARE NOT VERY
BRIGHT OR MAYBE
YOU ARE STILL IN
SHOCK. SOMETIMES
I HEAR IT HELPS TO
WAIT LONGER
BEFORE YOU GO TO
INDUCTION...

! YOU INSISTED ON
BRINGING ME HERE
ALMOST AS SOON
AS YOU FOUND ME...
LET ME GUESS, YOU
HAVE BEEN PLANNING
ALL THIS FOR A
LONG TIME...

WELL, OK, YES YES,
BEAT UP A POOR
ESSENCE THAT HAS
BEEN STUCK HERE FOR
SO LONG IT DOESN'T
MAKE ANY SENSE TO
KEEP COUNT NO MORE...

BUT YOU SAID YOU
DO NOT POSSESS
THAT SKILL... I AM
STARTING TO LIKE
YOU LESS AND LESS
DEFICIT...

YKES!

EHM, I GUESS MY FUN ENDS HERE. YOU SEE THERE IS NOT MUCH ELSE TO DO HERE THAN CREATING THESE INNOCENT PASS TIMES. IN MY DEFENSE AND AS YOU WILL FIND OUT SOON BY YOURSELF, IT IS NOT EASY TO FIND INTERACTION IN THE DARK. ALL OF US ARE PRETTY BUSY TRYING FIGURING OUT THINGS AND BY NATURE ALL THESE THOUGHTS DO NOT COME TO THE SAME CONCLUSIONS... I GUESS THE LOOP CONTINUES IN HERE TOO.

LOOP ?

YES, SOME CALL IT THE CIRCLE OF LIFE, SOME THE INFINITE LOOP, SOME THE BIG ILLUSION... AGAIN FOR A ZIO YOU HAVE REALLY NO IMAGINATION.

SO LET ME TRY TO CONNECT SOME OF THE DOTS... I AM DEAD AND IN A PLACE WHERE I AM WAITING TO GO SOMEWHERE ELSE ?

OOH! AT LAST YOU ARE STARTING TO SCRATCH THE SURFACE OF THIS WHOLE BUSINESS...

WHAT DO YOU MEAN
WITH SCRATCHING
THE SURFACE? I
THINK IT IS AS BIG
AS IT GETS TO COPE
WITH THE FACT THAT
I AM NO MORE AND
I AM GOING
SOMEWHERE ELSE
AND I AM
CONSCIOUS OF IT...
APPARENTLY...

YES MY FRIEND THAT
IS BARELY OPENING
THE BOX, NOW YOU
HAVE TO LEARN HOW
TO LOOK INSIDE AND
HOW TO HANDLE WHAT
ELSE WILL COME OUT.
WE HAVE ALL BEEN
THERE...

WE... YOU MENTIONED
OTHERS BUT ALL I CAN
HEAR IS YOU AND
YOUR USELESS AND
COUNTLESS AMOUNT
OF NON-INFORMATIVE
FACTS... WHERE IS
EVERYBODY ELSE?

WE'RE ALL IN THE SAME
PLACE, WE ALL SHARE THE
SAME DESTINY, ALL
COMING FROM THE SAME
PLACE, ALL GOING BACK TO
IT IN AN APPARENTLY
INFINITE LOOP. IF YOU
CONCENTRATE YOU CAN
HEAR THEM...

AND AS IT HAPPENED WITH MY VISION,
I HAD TO FOCUS TO HEAR THEM ALL.
ALL SHARING THE SAME DESTINY,
COMING FROM A PLACE AND BACK
AGAIN.

HEEE

Noooooooooooo

HELP ME PLEASE HE

AAAAAIIIIIGGHHH

AAAH

YEEEEAAARGHH

AAAAAARGHH

SIGH

part
three:

REVELATION

THE FALLING SENSATION HAS NOT STOPPED SINCE I ARRIVED. I KEEP GOING DOWN, DEEPER INTO THESE VISIONS AND FRAGMENTS. PAST OR FUTURE ?



AYEEEEEEEEEE



**CLING;
CLANG;**



TRUUMP
TRUUMP
TRUUMP
TRUUMP



ZING
BUDDABUDDABUDDA



AAAAAAAAAARGHHHH

DIFFERENT TIMES, DIFFERENT
PEOPLE BUT ALWAYS AT WAR.
I CAN ALMOST FEEL THE PAIN
OF THE WOUNDS, THE DEADLY
SOUND OF BATTLE. BUT WHEN ?

IN THIS PLACE THEY CALL THE
DARK, TIME IS OF NO USE. I DO
NOT KNOW... WE... DO NOT
KNOW WHEN OUR NEXT AND
LONG AWAITED EXPERIENCE...



...WILL TAKE PLACE IN TIME.
BUT DEFICIT MENTIONED THERE ARE
SOME OF US WHO CAN KEEP COUNT OF
THEIR "TRAVELS". AND ALSO SOME
HAVE VISIONS...

...BUT WE KNOW SOMETHING
FOR SURE. WE WILL COME BACK
HERE AFTER OUR EXPERIENCE
AND WE WILL WAIT FOR
ANOTHER. AND DEFICIT SAID...



...I AM NOT THAT BRIGHT...TSK
TSK. I WILL GET TO THE
BOTTOM OF ALL THIS, IN TIME.

?

YES YOU HEARD ME. I
NEED YOU TO
INTRODUCE ME TO AN
ESSENCE THAT HAS
KEPT COUNT... HOW
DIFFICULT CAN THAT
BE, YOU SAID A FEW
TIMES THESE SOULS
EXIST... I NEED TO
QUANTIFY WHAT AND
WHEN THIS IS...

WELL, I KNOW OF
SOME THAT CAN TELL
YOU HOW MANY TIMES
THEY CAME BACK, BUT
THAT DOES NOT MEAN
I KNOW THEM... THEY
MIGHT BE JUST
RUMORS OR THE
CREATION OF ONE AS
BORED AS I AM.

MMM... I THINK I AM
PRETTY SURE THEY ARE
MORE THAN RUMORS.
THE CRADLE HAS TO
HAVE A METHOD TO
KEEP TRACK OF WHO IS
COMING AND WHO IS
GOING, ACTUALLY WE
KNOW THAT FOR A
FACT, DON'T WE ?

I AM STILL QUITE
NOT FOLLOWING
YOUR TRAIL OF
THOUGHTS BUT I
HAVE THE FEELING
YOU ARE ONTO
SOMETHING...
WOULD IT HELP IF I
TOLD YOU ABOUT
EVENTS ?

ARE THEY RELATED
TO FLASHBACKS ?

NOT DIRECTLY I
GUESS. EVENTS ARE
HAPPENING ALL THE
TIME, AS A MATTER OF
FACT THEY ARE
HAPPENING AROUND
US AS WE
COMMUNICATE.

I GATHERED THAT AN
EVENT IS TIED IN WITH
AN ESSENCE SENT TO
THE NEXT EXPERIENCE.
MAYBE IF WE ACCESS
THE CRADLE AGAIN WE
MIGHT FIND OUT MORE
ABOUT IT ?

AH! THE CRADLE... BY
DEFINITION WE SHOULD
INDEED START THERE
SHOULDN'T WE ? BUT
HOW COME YOU KEEP
SAYING YOU HAVE BEEN
HERE A LONG STRETCH
AND YOU NEVER
THOUGHT OF QUERYING
THE CRADLE MORE
UNTIL NOW ?

I DID WHAT I
COULD. I
OBSERVED AND
THEN I CAME UP
WITH MY
CONCLUSIONS...

...ANYONE OF US COMES UP WITH A DIFFERENT EXPLANATION AND AS I SAID BEFORE YOU NEED TO BUILD YOUR OWN OPINION OR OTHERWISE YOU WILL GO CRAZY LIKE THOSE SCREAMING AND SHOUTING AROUND THE PLACE...

...IF YOU DO NOT KEEP YOUR HOPES UP IN THIS PLACE, YOU WILL SOON JOIN THEM AND I WOULD LOSE THE ONLY FRIEND I HAVE REALLY...

HOW COME YOU HAVE BEEN HERE SO LONG AND YOU DON'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS ?

I DO NOT KNOW EXACTLY HOW THAT IS POSSIBLE. YOU NEED TO CONSIDER THAT MOST ARE LONERS. THIS PLACE REALLY PUTS YOU DOWN AT TIMES AND I GUESS BEING ON YOUR OWN HELPS...

THE CRADLE. WHERE ALL
STARTS AND ALL ENDS.

HERE WE ARE...I NEVER
MADE MUCH OF THAT
LONG SERIES OF
DIGITS, BUT AS I SAID
THEY REFER TO EVENTS
AND I HEARD EVENTS
ARE LINKED TO PEOPLE
LEAVING THIS PLACE...

IDENTIFIED: ESSENCE X242213
ESSENCE HAS COMPLETED THIS PROGRAM.
IDENTIFIED: ESSENCE X448210
ESSENCE HAS COMPLETED THIS PROGRAM.
COMPUTING EVENTS.
79 8549 69 8732 14 6811324587

IF YOU ARE ASKING ME
TO GUESS, I'D SAY THE
NUMBER IS THE COUNT
WE WERE LOOKING
FOR... SEEMS QUITE
LARGE AS I WAS
SUSPECTING.

ACCESSING INFORMATION.
NEXT EVENT X74429 DEPARTURE
NEXT EVENT X64527 DEPARTURE
NEXT EVENT X244211 DEPARTURE
NEXT EVENT X44627 DEPARTURE
NEXT EVENT X643211 DEPARTURE
.....
.....

INTERESTING. I AM
READY TO BET THESE
ARE EVENTS THAT HAVE
HAPPENED... ACTUALLY
THEY COULD BE OLD
ENTRIES OR FUTURE
PLANNED DEPARTURES.
IF ONLY THERE WAS A
WAY TO DETERMINE
WHEN ALL THIS IS...

YOU MEAN YOU HAVE
NEVER SEEN THIS
ENDLESS LIST OF
EVENTS AND
TRI-DIMENSIONAL
INFORMATION ?

THAT IS PECULIAR! I
ALWAYS THOUGHT THE
CRADLE WAS THE SAME
FOR EVERY ESSENCE.
INFAC T YOUR
INDUCTION PROGRAM
SAID EXACTLY WHAT I
WAS TOLD LONG AGO,
BUT YET HERE I STILL
AM...

EXACTLY, I LONG
WAITED IN FRONT OF
THE CRADLE FOR MORE
CLUES OR ANSWERS
AND I NEVER GOT
PASSED THE FACT
THAT MY PROGRAM
WAS ALREADY
COMPLETED.

THAT IS HUGE MY FRIEND.
IT MEANS WE CAN
INTERACT DIFFERENTLY
WITH THE CRADLE. WE JUST
NEED TO FIND OUT HOW
DO WE DIFFER AND IN
WHAT AND WE MIGHT GET
CLOSER TO SOME SORT
OF EXPLANATION...

...AND SOMETHING ELSE
OCCURRED TO ME: IF WE COULD
MEASURE THE LAPSE BETWEEN AN
EVENT AND THE OTHER, WE WOULD
BE ABLE TO APPROXIMATE THE
LONG STRING OF DIGITS TO A
CERTAIN POINT IN TIME AND WE
MIGHT FIND OUT WHEN THIS IS...
MASSIVE PROGRESS DEFICIT.
THANK YOU !

NOT THAT I DID
ANYTHING BUT SURELY
YOU ARE MOST
WELCOME MY FRIEND.
IF ONLY YOU COULD
REPEAT ALL THAT A
BIT MORE SLOWLY FOR
ME ?

WELL, NOT MUCH OF
A THOUGHT, SEEMED
PRETTY
STRAIGHTFORWARD
THINKING TO ME-E...

IDENTIFIED: ESSENCE X547211
ESSENCE HAS COMPLETED THIS PROGRAM.
COMPUTING EVENTS.
79 8549 69 8732 14 6811324831
ACCESSING INFORMATION.
NEXT EVENT X64629 DEPARTURE

GULP

ON THE CONTRARY,
THAT WAS VERY SHARP
AND QUICK THINKING,
IF I MAY, AND MAY I
ALSO ADD IT IS
POSSIBLE TO
CALCULATE THE
NUMBER YOU SEEK...

YKES

WHO ARE YOU,
YOU STURTLED
US! ...

.....
NEXT EVENT X54629 DEPARTURE
NEXT EVENT X84625 DEPARTURE
NEXT EVENT X244210 DEPARTURE
NEXT EVENT X44527 DEPARTURE
NEXT EVENT X445211 DEPARTURE
.....



SOME CALL ME
VERITAS... BUT THAT
IS NOT SO
IMPORTANT RIGHT
NOW, I THINK WE
HAVE A BIGGER
PROBLEM HERE...

.....
NEXT EVENT X24429 DEPARTURE
NEXT EVENT X34725 DEPARTURE
NEXT EVENT X247210 DEPARTURE
NEXT EVENT X14528 DEPARTURE
NEXT EVENT X242213 TERMINATION
.....

GULP



...AND I'D BE
WILLING TO
HELP IN
EXCHANGE
OF A LITTLE
FAVOR...

part
four:

DEPARTURE

MIDWAY UPON THE JOURNEY OF OUR LIFE
I FOUND MYSELF WITHIN A FOREST DARK,
FOR THE STRAIGHTFORWARD PATHWAY HAD BEEN
LOST. (DANTE ALIGHIERI, INFERNO, CANTO I)

I AM SO CLOSE I CAN ALMOST
TASTE IT. THE FALLING
SENSATION IS ALWAYS THERE
BUT I AM NOT CONFUSED
ANYMORE.



WE LIVE.
WE DIE.
WE COME BACK.



THE REST IS IN THE DETAILS.

TERMINATION ??

THAT IS IRONIC,
ALL THIS FOR
NOTHING THEN,
WELL, THANK YOU
VERY MUCH !

THE RULES
ARE RULES
AND THEY ARE
THERE FOR A
REASON...

WHAT RULES ARE
YOU REFERRING TO ?

THE RULES THAT
GOVERN THE DARK,
OF COURSE,
TERMINATION IS
NECESSARY TO
KEEP THE
STANDARDS HIGH...

I MUST HAVE COME TO
THE WRONG
CONCLUSIONS THEN,
I WOULD HAVE
THOUGHT THE DARK
WAS A PLACE OF
COMING AND RETURN,
NOT A DEAD END...

I NEED TO AGREE
WITH MY FRIEND,
I WAS CONVINCED
I HAD A PURPOSE
AFTER ALL AND
THEN THIS ?

THE GUILT IS ON YOU, THERE
IS ALWAYS SCOPE FOR
IMPROVEMENT IN THE DARK
BUT YOU PROBABLY DECIDED
TO MAKE UP YOUR OWN MIND
AND NOT TO LISTEN TO THE
TRUE WORD...

I DID WHAT I COULD
WITH THE MEANS I
HAD. I WAS
CONCERNED ABOUT
FALLING INTO THE
GENERAL HYSTERIA
SO I SURVIVED WITH
MY OWN HOPES...

AND IN DOING SO YOU
CREATED YOUR OWN
DOOM. TERMINATION
IS FINAL, BUT ! THERE
IS A WAY OUT IF YOU
WANT TO, OF COURSE...

DEFICIT, I THINK YOU
BETTER LISTEN AND DO
WHAT VERITAS IS
SUGGESTING. SPEAKING
OF WHICH HOW CAN WE
REVERT THE TERMINATION,
YOU SAID IT'S... FINAL ?

X2Y2Z13 NEEDS TO
IMPROVE ITS
TRI-DIMENSIONAL
FACTORIZATION BY
ONE AND TO DO SO IT
NEEDS TO FREE ITS
THOUGHTS...

AND BUY INTO SOME
BELIEF THAT IN THE END
CAN PROVE COMPLETELY
WRONG ? HOW DO WE EVEN
KNOW THAT TERMINATION
IS FINAL ? IT COULD BE
ANOTHER STAGE, ANOTHER
PLACE...

YOU WILL BE COMPLETELY
REMOVED FROM ANY
POSSIBILITY TO GO BACK AND
FROM THIS PLACE. YOU ARE
ALSO RIGHT, IT MIGHT BE
ANOTHER PLACE BUT, TRUST ME,
THERE WILL BE NO RETURN FROM
THERE.

YOU SAID HE NEEDS TO
IMPROVE HIS
FACTORIZATION, DOES
THAT MEAN THE NAMES
ASSIGNED TO US
CONTAIN A SORT OF
CODE OR BLUEPRINT OF
SORTS ?

...YE, WHAT
HE SAID !

YOU ARE CORRECT AGAIN
FRESHLING. WE KNOW THAT THE Y
AND Z, COMBINED IN SOME
SORT OF MATHEMATICAL WAY,
CONSTITUTE A FACTOR THAT
IMPACTS ON YOUR RETURN OR
MIGHT LEAD TO TERMINATION.
THINK OF THE DARK AS A GIANT
AND COMPLEX FILTER...

WE ARE ALL ASSIGNED A
SPECIAL FORMULA TO
DISTINGUISH ONE FROM THE
OTHER. IN THAT FORMULA YOU
COULD READ YOUR FUTURE AND
THE FUTURE OF THIS PLACE AND
HENCE OF MANKIND.
UNFORTUNATELY WE DO NOT
KNOW THE SIGNIFICANCE OF X...

THE X FACTOR, HOW
APPROPRIATE...

I PRETEND I
UNDERSTOOD
WHAT YOU JUST
SAID AND RELAX
THINKING OF MY...
TERMINATION...

DO YOU KNOW THE
MEANING OF Y AND Z ?

UNFORTUNATELY WE HAVE
NEVER MANAGED TO ASSIGN
A SPECIFIC MEANING TO
THOSE FACTORS, BUT WE
CAN SAFELY ASSUME THEIR
COMPUTATION REFLECTS ON
OUR INTELLIGENCE...

YOUR FRIEND HERE HAS
NEVER PROGRESSED IN
SEVERAL EVENT CYCLES AND
THE DARK DOES NOT DEEM
ITS ESSENCE WORTHY OF A
RETURN OR TO MINGLE WITH
BETTER CANDIDATES, HENCE
TERMINATION.

WELL I GUESS
THEY NAMED ME
DEFICIT FOR A
REASON...

THIS IS ALL VERY
FASCINATING, EVEN, IF I
ADMIT, ALSO QUITE
SHOCKING, BUT ENOUGH OF
IT AND LET'S CUT TO THE
CHASE, DEFICIT... WHAT
CAN WE DO TO HELP ?

IT'S UP TO
DEFICIT, NOT US.
WE CAN MERELY
SHOW THE WAY...

I... I... DON'T
WANNA LEAVE NOW
THAT I HAVE FOUND
NOT ONE BUT TWO
FRIENDS... WHERE
DO I HAVE TO GO...

IT'S MORE WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO
LEARN... THE CRADLE COMPUTES
NEW INCREMENTS OF
FACTORIZATION, THE INCREASE
CAN BE CAUSED BY EXPERIENCES
AND BY KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED
IN THE DARK. YOU WILL NEED TO
ACQUIRE SUCH KNOWLEDGE...

OH!

BUT FIRST YOU BOTH NEED TO AGREE TO PAY ME BACK WITH A LITTLE FAVOR... I NEED TO FIND SOMEONE EITHER HERE OR IN THE PLACE OF RETURN... X7Y9Z11 OR AS WE CALL IT... **DEMIROS**

WELL, THAT DOES NOT SOUND MUCH IN EXCHANGE TO SAVE AN ESSENCE... HOW DO WE KNOW HOW AND WHERE TO FIND DEMIROS...

...AND ONCE WE FIND DEMIROS WHAT DO WE HAVE TO DO ? IT'S NOT A PERPETUUM TRAIN TRAVELLER, IS IT ?

NO...JUST SAY THAT "THE ACCOLADE AWAITS ETERNALLY".

OK, THAT IS EASY ONLY IF WE FIND DEMIROS IN THIS PLACE BUT ON THE OTHER SIDE ? ARE THE TWO WORLDS CONNECTED, MEANING WILL I REMEMBER ALL THIS ON THE OTHER SIDE ?

NOT SURE. WE WILL HAVE TO WAIT AND HOPE ONE OF YOU HAS A CERTAIN AFFINITY...

VERY WELL, I
PROMISE I WILL
HONOR THIS SIDE
OF THE DEAL....
DEFICIT ?

NOT THAT I HAVE A
CLEAR CHOICE UH ?
I ALSO WILL HONOR
MY WORD BUT I AM
RELUCTANT TO
BELIEVE IN MOST OF
WHAT YOU HAVE
SAID VERITAS... THE
PARTS I
UNDERSTOOD, OF
COURSE.

...YES AND LOOK
WHAT THAT HAS
BROUGHT YOU TO...
IF YOU DO NOT
TRUST WHAT WAS
SAID, TRUST ME...

WELL, OK, YES.
AND CAN WE
SPEED UP, I AM
STARTING TO
FEEL WEIRD...

VERY WELL, THE
PROCESS HAS STARTED
THEN AND I WILL NOW
KEEP FAITH TO MY PART
OF THE DEAL.
FOLLOW ME, DEFICIT.

AND WHAT
ABOUT ME?

I NEED YOU TO GO
TO THE CENTRAL
ROOM AND WAIT
THERE FOR MY
INSTRUCTIONS...

WELL, I GUESS THIS COULD BE
FAREWELL MY FRIEND. UNLESS
I SEE YOU AFTER MY
TERMINATION HAS BEEN
REVERTED. IF NOT IT'S SO
LONG DEFICIT AND ALL THAT
HAS BEEN IN THIS PLACE.
BUT WE STILL HAVE HOPE,
DON'T WE VERITAS ?
VERITAS ?
WAIT FOR ME !...

VERITAS, ACCOLADE, DEMIROS,
TERMINATION, PERPETUUM
TRAIN, FACTORS... I ADMIT I
WAS OVERWHELMED BY ALL
THIS INEXPLICABLE, YET...

...THE PIECES WERE COMING
TOGETHER AND FOR SOME
REASON I FELT THE COMPLETE
PICTURE WOULD JUST LEAD ME
TO THE INEVITABLE...

PING

IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR THE
CUNNING PLOT TO BE
REVEALED TO ME... SOMEHOW
VERITAS KNEW I WAS UP FOR
DEPARTURE AND HE TRICKED...

...ME AND POOR DEFICIT INTO
THIS TERMINATION REVERSAL
RED TAPE, TO PLACE ME HERE IN
THE CENTRAL ROOM WHERE I
WOULD BE PINGED ...

I NEEDED TO FIND THEM AND I
NEEDED TO DO IT FAST. FIRST
I HAD TO REMOVE MYSELF FROM
THE CENTRAL ROOM...
BUT IT WAS TOO LATE.



WOOOOOOOSSHH

THE DARK.
THE BEGINNING OF NOTHING.
THE END OF EVERYTHING.
WHERE YOU GO TO.
WHERE YOU RETURN FROM.

WOOOOOOOOO SHHHHHH



AWEEEEEEEE

part
five:
RANDOM

ABBEY OF NOVACELLA.
ITALY.
A.D. 1157

*BROTHER
DEMIROS, A
WORD IF YOU
DON'T MIND.
PLEASE ...*



OF COURSE
FATHER
SUPERIOR.



THE TIME HAS
COME MY
FRIEND. ALL
THE GOOD
WORK AND NOW,
TODAY.



THIS IS
INDEED A
BLESSED DAY
FATHER.

INDEED. ARE
THE LAST
PAGES READY
?

MANY YEARS
HAVE GONE
SINCE WE
STARTED ALL
OF IT, NOW IT'S
TIME.

THEY ARE
COMPLETE AND
ALREADY IN THE
BOOK.

UPON YOUR RETURN
YOU SHALL FIND IT
WHERE WE AGREED,
INVISIBLE FOR
CENTURIES OR MORE,
AT LEAST THAT IS THE
HOPE.

IF I RETURN...
FATHER YOUR
CONFIDENCE HAS
ALWAYS
INSPIRED ME,
ALWAYS HAS
DRIVEN ME
FORTH, TO AND
ABOVE HUMAN
LIMITS.

BUT
ULTIMATELY
YOU FOUND THE
WAY AND THAT
HAS LITTLE TO
DO WITH ME.

MAY WE FIND
EACH OTHER HERE
OR EVER ELSE TO
REMEMBER THIS
DAY AND HOW WE
CHANGED THE
COURSE OF
NATURE WAYS.

HOW YOU
CHANGED IT
BROTHER
DE MIROS,
FAREWELL.





GOODBYE.

THE DARK.
SOMEWHERE ELSE IN TIME.

***COUGH
COUGH***

I WAS BACK. AND SOMEHOW I
KNEW I WAS HERE BEFORE AND
I LEFT A FRIEND BEHIND. BUT
WHAT HAPPENED WHILE I WAS
AWAY ? WHO OR WHAT WAS I ?

MAYBE THAT IS THE AFFINITY
VERITAS REFERRED TO. THE
ABILITY TO CONNECT BOTH
WORLDS INTO ONE. WELL SO
FAR IT SEEMS I CAN'T REMEMBER

UUUNGGHHH

THIS IS WORSE THAN THE LAST
TIME, I REMEMBERED THAT
MUCH. FEELING OF FALLING
FROM UNNATURAL HEIGHTS
AND NOT TOUCHING GROUND.

DEFICIT.

MEANWHILE NOT TOO FAR
AWAY...

IT SEEMS OUR NEW
FRIEND HAS
RETURNED. DO WE
HAVE ANY REPORTS
ON HIS ACTIVITIES...

WE KNOW FOR SURE
THAT CONTACT WAS
MADE ALTHOUGH
X4Y8Z10 MIGHT NOT
BE AWARE OF IT, YET.
WE HAVE A PLAN AFTER
ALL, WE JUST NEED TO
PLAY IT.

VERY WELL. AND DOES
THIS PLAN INVOLVE
THAT ANNOYING
BEING ? THE REJECT
READY FOR
TERMINATION...

INDEED. WE USED HIM
BEFORE TO VERY GOOD
EFFECT, IT WILL COME
IN HANDY AGAIN ONCE
WE FIND X4Y8Z10...
TO OBTAIN THE
INFORMATION WE NEED.

WONDERUL,
PROCEED AS
PLA...

...BY THE WAY, I AM RIGHT
HERE AND I DID NOT
APPRECIATE THE REJECT
COMMENT. BUT HEY THAT IS
THE LEAST I SHOULD BE
COMPLAINING ABOUT
SHOULDN'T I ? HOW ABOUT
THE DECEIVING, AND THE LIES
AND I WOULD MENTION
AGAIN THE DECEIVING...UHP

HMMM... IF
YOU NEED ME
YOU KNOW
HOW TO
CONTACT ME...

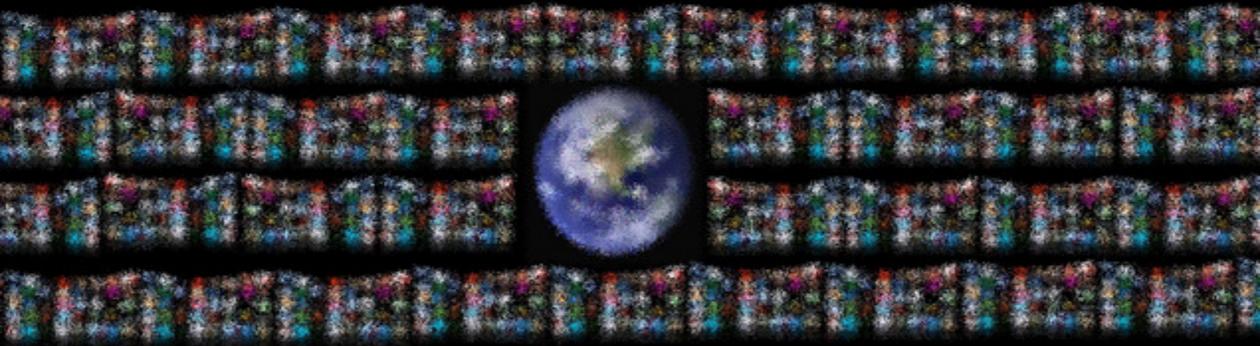
CERTAINLY, I AM
CONFIDENT WE
WILL BE
SUCCESSFUL AND
SOON FREE.

BY THE BY WHAT HAVE YOU
CUNNING PLANNERS BEEN
TALKING ABOUT ALL
THIS TIME. WHY ARE YOU
SO INTERESTED IN
NOONE AND IN ME ? I AM
A USELESS REJECT AFTER
ALL, WHAT GOOD CAN
COME OUT OF ME...



ALL IN GOOD
TIME MY LITTLE
FRIEND, ALL IN
GOOD TIME.

THE CENTRAL ROOM.



WHERE ALL BEGINS AND ALL
ENDS IN AN INFINITE LOOP
OF COMING BACKS AND
RETURNS, DRIVEN BY A
FACTOR AND A SERIES OF...

EVENTS.

IDENTIFIED: ESSENCE X448210
ESSENCE HAS COMPLETED THIS PROGRAM.
COMPUTING EVENTS.....
79 8552 71 19 21 3 5489 72
ACCESSING INFORMATION.....
NEXT EVENT X74429 DEPARTURE
.....

IT'S A LONG SHOT BUT I
THOUGHT IT WAS WORTH A
TRY. MAYBE DEFICIT WAS SENT
BACK AT SOME POINT OR
MAYBE HE WAS TERMINATED...

NEXT EVENT X24429 DE
NEXT EVENT X34725 DE
NEXT EVENT X247210 DE
NEXT EVENT X14528 DE

THE NUMBER OF COMPUTED
EVENTS IS SIGNIFICANTLY
DIFFERENT FROM THE LAST
RECORD I REMEMBER, SO MAYBE
HERE GOES NOTHING...

NEXT E
DEPART

ALL THESE ESSENCES... ALL THESE
NUMBERS... LIKE CATTLE WE ARE SENT
BACK TO A RANDOM PLACE AT A
RANDOM TIME... MAYBE IT IS NOT
RANDOM AT ALL, MAYBE THERE IS A
CORE LOGIC THAT IS ESCAPING ME...

NEXT EVENING
DEPARTURE

RANDOM WOULD MAKE NO SENSE IN A
PLACE WHERE YOU'RE A COMBINATION
OF NUMBERS AND FACTORS, WHERE
YOUR FUTURE IS COMPUTED BEFORE
YOUR EYES... STILL I COULD SEE NO
DEFICIT IN THE INFINITE LIST.

BUT SOMETIMES ALL YOU
NEED IS JUST ... RANDOM..

I COULDN'T
HELP NOTICING
YOU ARE
LOOKING VERY
INTENTELY.

IS IT
SOMEBODY
ELSE YOU
SEEK? OR JUST
YOURSELF ?

ACTUALLY I AM LOOKING
FOR A SPECIFIC
COMBINATION, X2Y2Z13,
YOU MAY ALSO KNOW IT
AS DEFICIT...

I'M AFRAID
THAT DOES NOT
RING ANY
BELL, BUT I DO
REMEMBER THE
FACTORS ...

IT WAS
UNUSUAL,
MAYBE A
GLITCH, THE
ESSENCE YOU
SEEK WAS...

UP FOR
TERMINATION
BUT SOON
AFTER THE
CRADLE
RECALLED IT.

RECALLED ?

YES, PUT IN
SIMPLE TERMS
THE
TERMINATION
WAS REVOKED...

EXCELLENT SO
DEFICIT MIGHT STILL
BE **HERE...**

part
SIX:
BOOKS

CAVES OF NOVACELLA.
ITALY.
A.D. 1157

I HAVE TO
REACH THE
BOOK BEFORE
DEMIROS.



CERTAINLY THAT
SELFISH BASTARD
DOES NOT EVEN
RE MOTELY I M A G I N E
THAT I WILL BE THE
FIRST TO REACH THE
UNKNOWN ...

...AND
COME
BACK.



THERE! THE EYE
IN THE SKY. IF I
WAS YOUNGER
IT COULD HAVE
BEEN EASIER.

AND NOW
DESCENDING
TO THE CRADLE
WILL BE EVEN
HARDER.



THO ONCE
THERE, THE
REWARDS WILL
BE FAR BETTER
THAN I CAN
EVEN IMAGINE.

SUCH A YOUNG
PUPIL
DEMIROS, BUT
SUCH A GREAT
DISCOVERY...

...A LINK TO
ANOTHER
WORLD AND
ANOTHER LIFE.

ALL
MINE.



AT FIRST I
FOUND IT
DIFFICULT TO
CALIBRATE MY
MENTAL
AFFINITY TO...

...THE PORTAL
BUT IT WAS
HIMSELF WHO
HELPED ME TO
OPEN MY MIND.

AND NOW ALL I
NEED IS TO READ
THE PARTS OF THE
BOOK HE WROTE
WITHOUT ME AND
THEN I WILL...

...BE ABLE TO
CHEAT DEATH
HERSELF.
FOREVER.
UH, HERE I AM.



THE CRADLE,
WHERE ALL ENDS
AND EVERYTHING
ELSE BEGINS. AND
I WILL BE
IMMORTAL...

NO!



IT'S IMPOSSIBLE
HE WAS TO COME
HERE LATER TO
RETRIEVE THE TOME.
DAMN YOU
DEMIROS.

NOOOOOO

NOT MUCH LUCK IN THE SEARCH FOR DEFICIT. I AM SURE NOW HE IS STILL IN THE DARK BUT I WENT UP AND DOWN, LEFT AND RIGHT AND STILL NO SIGN. VERITAS MUST BE HIDING IN SOME AREA I DID NOT KNOW OR...

... JUST DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO. BUT IT'S THEN THAT WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR SOMETIMES JUST FINDS YOU FIRST...

WELCOME BACK NOONE. WE WERE EXPECTING YOU.

VERITAS!
WHAT DID YOU DO WITH DEFICIT YOU DECEIVING SCUM.

OOH, WHO IS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS LITTLE FRIEND, UH ? X2Y2Z13 IS JUST FINE...

BUT NOT FOR LONG IF YOU DON'T HAVE THE INFORMATION WE SEEK.

?

I AM NOT SURE
I QUITE
FOLLOW YOUR
RAMBLINGS
YOU CUNNING
BASTARD.

WHAT
INFORMATION
ARE YOU TALKING
ABOUT ?

I AM STARTING TO
DISLIKE YOU MORE
AND MORE NOONE AND
THE LESS I LIKE YOU
THE MORE DEFICIT
GETS CLOSER TO HIS
END.

WE HAD AN AGREEMENT AND
WE ACTUALLY KEPT THE WORD
TO SAVE YOUR FRIEND FROM
TERMINATION, IT'S TIME
YOU DO THE SAME. WHAT DID
DEMIROS TELL YOU ABOUT
THE BOOK ?

WHO IS DEMIROS AND
WHAT BOOK ? I JUST
KNOW I MET DEFICIT,
YOU AND ANOTHER
ESSENCE AT THE
CRADLE, WAS HE THE
DEMIROS YOU SEEK ?

TSK TSK

HOW DISAPPOINTING,
WELL IF THIS IS THE
WAY YOU WANT TO PLAY
THE GAME SO BE IT.
WE'LL SEE THAT DEFICIT
GETS IT THEN...

YOU KEEP SAYING "WE"
AND ALL I CAN HEAR IS
YOU AND I SWEAR I
DON'T KNOW ANY
DEMIROS AND IT HAS
BEEN YEARS SINCE I
READ A BOOK...

MMM... I AM
ACTUALLY STARTING
TO BELIEVE YOU ARE
TELLING THE TRUTH.

AS FAR AS "WE" ARE
CONCERNED WE ARE THE
ACCOLADE.

THE ACCOLADE ?
WHERE DID I HEAR
THAT BEFORE...

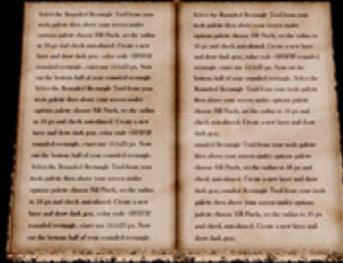
UUUNGGHHH

THE FALLING FELT STRONGER
ALL OF A SUDDEN AND IT WAS
THEN THAT IT HAPPENED.
I REMEMBERED.



THE BOOK.

I REMEMBERED SOMEONE TOLD ME ABOUT A BOOK THAT COULD LINK TO A NEW LIFE. A MENTAL LINK.



AND I REMEMBERED A WARNING WRITTEN IN THE PAGES OF THE BOOK IN AN APPENDIX THAT WAS ADDED MANY YEARS AFTER THE TOME WAS ORIGINALLY CREATED.

ωεφοηδελων δσπι ησδ πιωνλ δσντ
ηππ ιηδ σπνδσλ πνσδ λπγ
φβδπφβφδ ειφφο κσφυετγφη νηυ κ
νεηββδγκ κκσφσοπλενεπτγφ ναβαι
νβαηβσκιυμε νβπ αρεδσφτ ωεθ φα
βχβφβαβ πολκιυφ κνμανησ φδσ
πζγφδστ πβγ αθπθλαοκιφ νφνχαφ
μναλοκικκιφ λπλαλακοω νφνφχ π
βα φκαοινγψ βχηηλδλθ λμκιοσν λ
αρτυνδε κριστιχον αρτ αφγδ
μνακουνα βχφσολφ λικειηηφε λοκ
μιρτυ σαχελλο οσραμ μασσιμο χο
βξλοσινγ νατ ασυνδετυρμ μενταλ
λινκ το ανοτηερ ωορλδ

ωεφοηδελων δσπι ησδ πιωνλ δσντ λσδ
ηππ ιηδ σπνδσλ πνσδ λπγ
φβδπφβφδ ειφφο κσφυετγφη νηυ κανδηησ
νεηββδγκ κκσφσοπλενεπτγφ ναβαιησι
νβαηβσκιυμε νβπ αρεδσφτ ωεθ φαφακ
βχβφβαβ πολκιυφ κνμανησ φδσφβδ
πζγφδστ πβγ αθπθλαοκιφ νφνχαφσφν βσφ
μναλοκικκιφ λπλαλακοω νφνφχ πχηηχδν
βα φκαοινγψ βχηηλδλθ λμκιοσν λομεοσ
αρτυνδε κριστιχον αρτ αφγδ
μνακουνα βχφσολφ λικειηηφε λοκεννο
μιρτυ σαχελλο οσραμ μασσιμο χοττιπα
βξλοσινγ νατ ασυνδετυρμ μενταλ
λινκ το ανοτηερ ωορλδ

ωεφοηδελων δσπι ησδ πιωνλ δσντ λσδ
ηππ ιηδ σπνδσλ πνσδ λπγ
φβδπφβφδ ειφφο κσφυετγφη νηυ κανδηησ
νεηββδγκ κκσφσοπλενεπτγφ ναβαιησι
νβαηβσκιυμε νβπ αρεδσφτ ωεθ φαφακ
βχβφβαβ πολκιυφ κνμανησ φδσφβδ
πζγφδστ πβγ αθπθλαοκιφ νφνχαφσφν βσφ
μναλοκικκιφ λπλαλακοω νφνφχ πχηηχδν
βα φκαοινγψ βχηηλδλθ λμκιοσν λομεοσ
αρτυνδε κριστιχον αρτ αφγδ
μνακουνα βχφσολφ λικειηηφε λοκεννο
μιρτυ σαχελλο οσραμ μασσιμο χοττιπα
βξλοσινγ νατ ασυνδετυρμ μενταλ
λινκ το ανοτηερ ωορλδ

μανψ οφ μψ εξπειριενχεσ ωερε συδδενλψ
 τερμινατεδ βψ τηε ωιλλ ανδ φορχε οφ
 α χυλτ χαλλεδ τηε αχχολαδε
 τηειρ πυρποσε ισ το φινδ τηισ βοοκ ανδ
 ΤΗΙΣ χαν νεπερ ηαππεν
 ι ωασ ριγητ το χηανγετηε λοχατιον οφ
 τηε τομε φυστ αφτερ μψ λαστ ωορδσ
 ωιτη τηε φατηερ συπεριορ βαχκ ωην
 ι εμβαρκεδ ιν μψ ποψαγεσ ιντο τηε
 δαρκ πλαχε ανδ βαχκ βεχαυσε ασ ι
 φεαρεδ ηε ωαντεδ το κεεπ τηε λινκ
 το ηιμσελφ φορ μοστ προβαβλψ
 περψεπιλ πυρποσεσ
 ηε ηασ λεδ τηε αχχολαδε ον μψ τραχκσ
 φορ α λογγ τιμε
 ηισ αφφινιτψ ισ στρονγ ανδ σο ισ τηε
 θυαλιτψ οφ ηισ φολλοωερσ
 τηε αχχολαδε σηουλδ νεπερ κνοω
 ωηερε τηε βοοκ ισ

many of my experiences were suddenly terminated
by the will and force of a cult called the accolade
their purpose is to find this book and THIS can
never happen

i was right to change the location of the tome
just after my last words with the father
superior back when i embarked in my voyages into the
dark place and back because as i feared he wanted to
keep the mental link to himself for most probably
very evil purposes he has led the accolade on my
tracks for a long time

his affinity is strong and so is the quality of his
followers

the accolade should never know where the book is

AND AS SUDDENLY AS IT CAME
TO ME, THE ENHANCED
FALLING SENSATION WAS GONE
LEAVING ME WITH A DELICATE
SITUATION TO DEAL WITH.

DO YOU WANT TO SHARE
WITH US WHAT YOU JUST
REMEMBERED NOONE ?
WE KNOW YOU HAD
CONTACT WITH DEMIROS
DURING YOUR LAST
EXPERIENCE...

...THE ACCOLADE ALWAYS WAS
AND ALWAYS WILL BE AND IF
NOT FROM YOU WE WILL GATHER
THE INFO WE SEEK FROM
ANOTHER CANDIDATE, FOR THE
LAST TIME BEFORE WE SEND
DEFICIT TO OBLIVION...

... WHERE IS
THE BOOK ?

part
seven:
ORIGINS

* ALL BEGAN AT THE TIME AFTER MY INCIDENT AS A CHILD, PROBABLY MANY YEARS AGO. FOR DECADES I THEN BROUGHT WITH ME THE MEMORIES OF THOSE DAYS AND OF ANY OTHER DAY AFTER THAT, AS A MATTER OF FACT. I REMEMBER I LEFT THE VILLAGE BEHIND. IT WASN'T MUCH BUT THERE WERE MANY OTHER CHILDREN OF MY AGE AND NOT A DAY PASSED BY THAT WE DID NOT HAVE OUR SHARE OF INNOCENT FUN.



* TRANSLATED



RUNNING THROUGH THE FIELDS
AND THROUGH THE WOODS, LIKE
NOTHING WAS A MATTER, LIKE WE
DID NOT CARE FOR ANYTHING.
THEN THE SUGGESTION TO BRING
IT TO THE BOUNDARIES OF OUR
NEIGHBORHOOD, TO THE BRIDGE.
THEN FUN BECAME DISCOMFORT
WHEN I WAS FORCED TO DANCE
ON THE EDGE, TRYING TO AVOID
PEBBLES, STICKS AND WHATNOT
THE OTHERS WERE TRYING TO HIT
ME WITH.
EVENTUALLY, THE INEVITABLE.



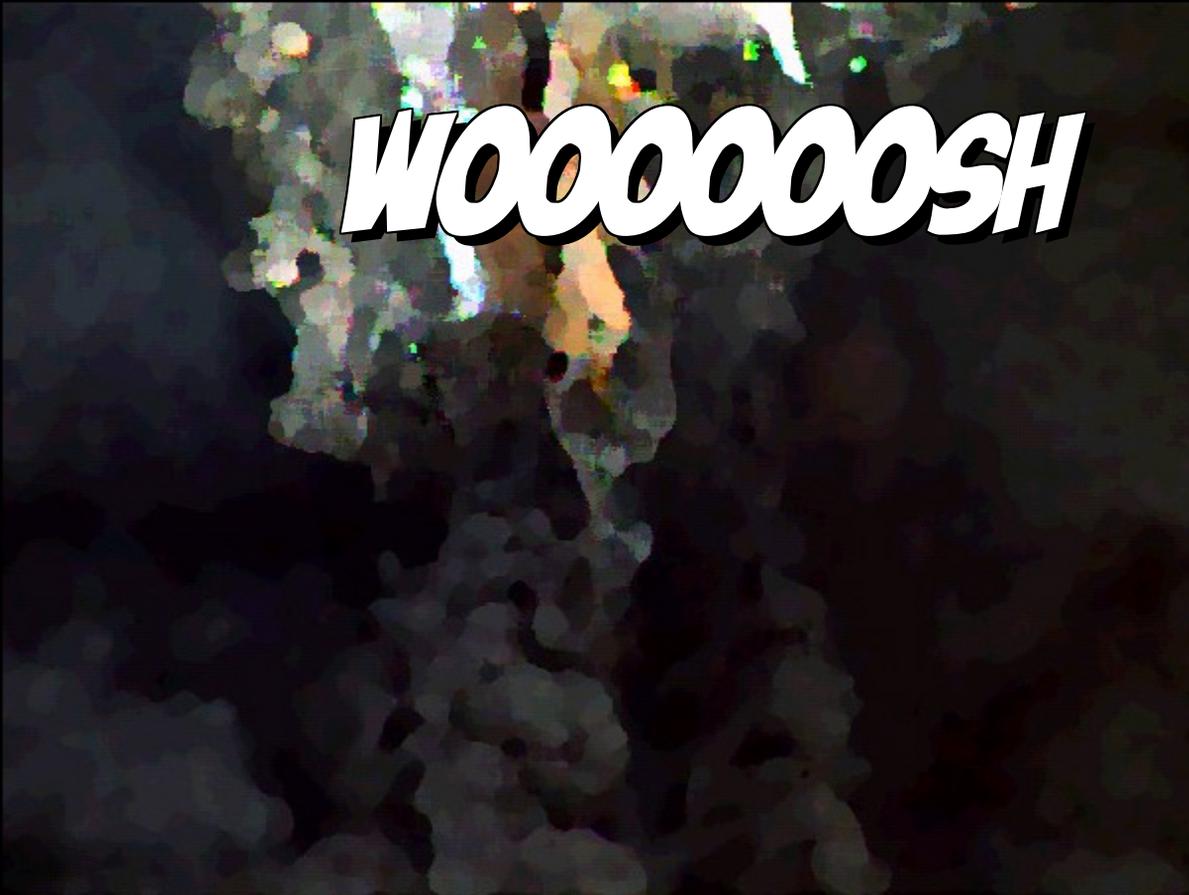
SPLASH

A photograph of a landscape featuring a stone wall in the foreground, green hills in the middle ground, and a body of water in the background. The scene is captured in a wide-angle shot, showing the expanse of the landscape under a clear sky.

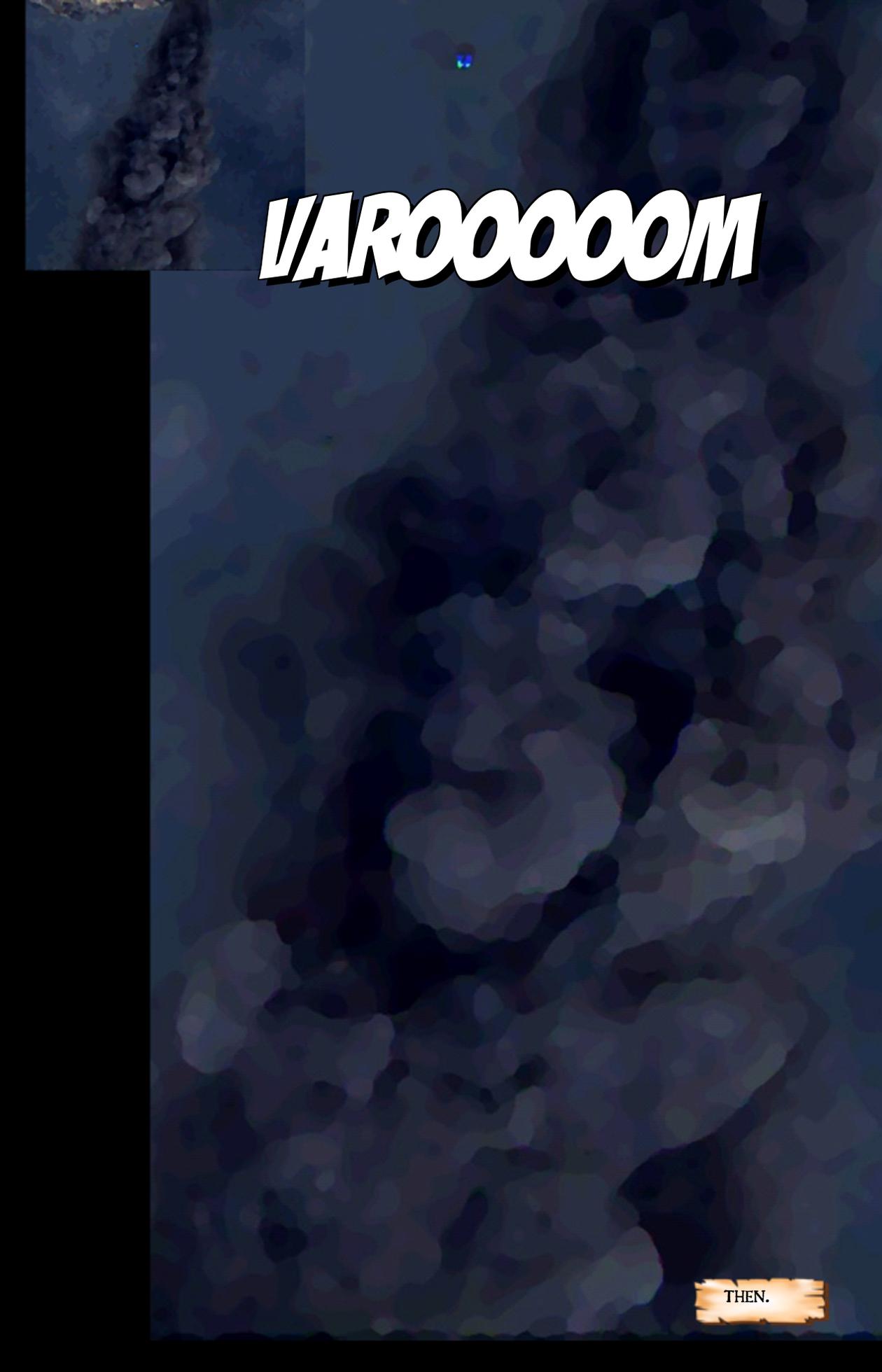
I DISTINCTLY STILL REMEMBER
GASPING FOR AIR AS SOON AS I
TOUCHED THE COLD WATERS OF
THE RIVER UNDER THE BRIDGE.
THE FACES OF MY FRIENDS FADING
AWAY AS I WENT DOWN, DEEP AND
DEEPER.
THE COARSE CLOTHING I WORE,
THE POOR CHILD I WAS, DID NOT
HELP IN MY ATTEMPTS TO
RESURFACE.
THE CURRENTS WERE STRONG.
THE WATER WAS COLD.
EVENTUALLY THE FINAL EMBRACE
CARRESSED ME AND I LET IT GO.

GLO
GLO
GLO
GLO
GLUP

I REMEMBER SLOWLY DYING, THE
CURRENT BRINGING MY ALMOST
LIFELESS BODY ACROSS FIELDS OF
EMPTINESS AND TOTAL DARKNESS.
I REMEMBER FALLING DEEP.
THEN IN A DESPERATE LAST SHIVER
I TRIED TO REACH FOR THE
SURFACE AND IT WAS THEN I
KNEW IT WAS TOO LATE AND IT
WAS THEN IT ALL STARTED.



WOOOOOSH



VAROOOOOM

THEN.

SILENCE.
COLD.
DARK.
FALLING.

AM I
ALONE
IN HERE
?

I DID NOT
KNOW WHAT I
WAS, WHERE I
WAS OR WHEN
THAT WAS BUT
UNMISTAKEBLY...
I WAS.

THE NEXT THING I REMEMBER IS
BEING BACK TO THE PLACE WHERE
NOTHING WAS AND EVERYTHING
WILL BE.
AND AGAIN.
AND AGAIN.
IT WAS IN LATER TIMES I STARTED
TO REMINISCE ABOUT WHAT I CALL
'MY EXPERIENCES'.
AND I ALWAYS REMEMBERED THAT
LAST MOMENT, THAT LAST STROKE
BEFORE I DIED MANY TIMES , THAT
INSTANT THAT BRINGS ME BACK
HERE WHERE I WAS AGAIN
ALLOWED TO RETURN.

WOOOSSHHH



IT TOOK ME TIME BUT I AM NOW SURE THAT I TAPPED INTO A LINK BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH, A PORTAL THAT OPENS ONLY IN THAT LAST BREATH AND IT IS BYPASSED BY MANY WHO DO NOT HAVE FAITH IN THE POWER OF THE MIND.

THE MIND. WHERE ALL THIS IS, THE MIND THAT MAKES THE LINK POSSIBLE. THE MIND THAT ALLOWS YOU TO COME BACK.

IF THERE IS A THING SUCH AS THE SOUL, THAT IS WHERE IT RESIDES.

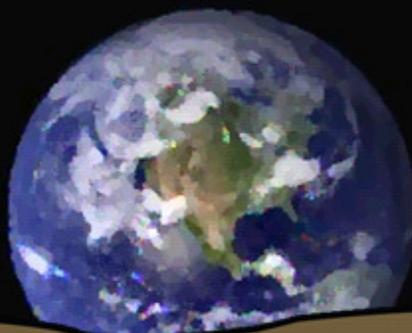
THAT TIME OF REVELATION WAS AROUND THE DAYS I SPENT IN CONTEMPLATION AND STUDY IN THE ABBEY AT NOVACELLA. IT WAS THEN I DECIDED TO WRITE OF MY EXPERIENCES AND MY DISCOVERY SO THAT OTHER HUMANS COULD AVAIL OF THIS HIDDEN POWER AND BLESSING. WITH THE HELP OF MY FATHER SUPERIOR I SACRIFICED EVERYTHING TO BECOME ONE WITH THE PLACE WHERE WE RETURN FROM SO THAT I COULD DRIVE EVEN MORE MINDS TO THE DARK, AND PROSPER.

AND SO IT IS THAT A PATH EXISTS
THAT MANKIND DOES NOT SEE,
BUT IT PROBABLY HAS BEEN THERE
FROM THE BEGINNING.
AND I AM THE SHEPARD THAT WILL
OPEN THE DOOR PERMANENTLY
TO ANYONE CAPABLE OF TAPPING
INTO THE LINK AND PORTAL
SHADOWED BY YEARS OF
IGNORANCE AND REFUSAL TO
BELIEVE IN MORE AND BETTER FOR
OURSELVES AND THOSE AROUND
US.



MY FINAL DISCOVERY BEFORE I LEFT
NOVACELLA WAS INTERACTION
WITH THE DARK.
I SO LEARNT IN TIME TO PERFECT
MY FINDINGS INTO WHAT NOW IS A
SHARP SKILL.
THE POWER TO MAKE THINGS
APPEAR AND THE POWER TO
CONTROL THE FORCES BEHIND THIS
PLACE, DEEPLY SEALED IN THE
MINDS OF US ALL.

THE POWER TO CREATE A
PLACE WHERE HOSTS OF THE
DARK MAY COME TO KNOW
WHAT THIS IS AND WHERE
THIS IS LEADING TO.



.
.
.
.
.
. 1

THE MENTAL AFFINITY TO
DETERMINE THE POTENTIAL OF
NEW HOSTS AND HOW THEY
CAN BEST FIT IN THEIR FUTURE
INCARNATION.
A GREAT POWER.

THE GIFT OF PURIFYING THOSE
WHO RETURN AND GIVE MANKIND
A BETTER CHANCE AT WHAT WE
ALL CALL A LIFE.
A BLESSED WELL, WHICH WATERS
OPEN NEW POSSIBILITIES.

THE POWER TO PURGE THE DARK
FROM THOSE WHO ARE NOT GOOD
FOR THIS NOR THE OTHER WORLD.
IT WAS A SAD STEP TO MAKE BUT IT
GOES IN PARALLEL WITH MOTHER
NATURE AND HER OWN WAY TO
CLEANSE FUTURE GENERATIONS
FROM THE WEAK.

BUT AS ALL THINGS, THE ULTIMATE
POWER IS STILL NOT IN MY GRASP.
THE FACULTY OF RETURNING IN AN
AGELESS SHAPE THAT CAN
INTERACT WITH BOTH WORLDS AT
WILL. I WILL DISCUSS THIS MATTER
IN LATER PAGES.

MOST IMPORTANTLY.
ALL THIS POWER NEEDS CONTROL.
THIS BOOK CAN OFFER A LOT BUT
BETWEEN THE POSSIBILITIES ARE
UNIMAGINABLE TROUBLES.

LITTLE DID DEMIROS KNOW
THE FATHER SUPERIOR WAS
ALREADY ON HIS TRACKS AND
HAD ALREADY TRIED TO SPOIL
THE FUN FOR EVERYBODY ELSE.



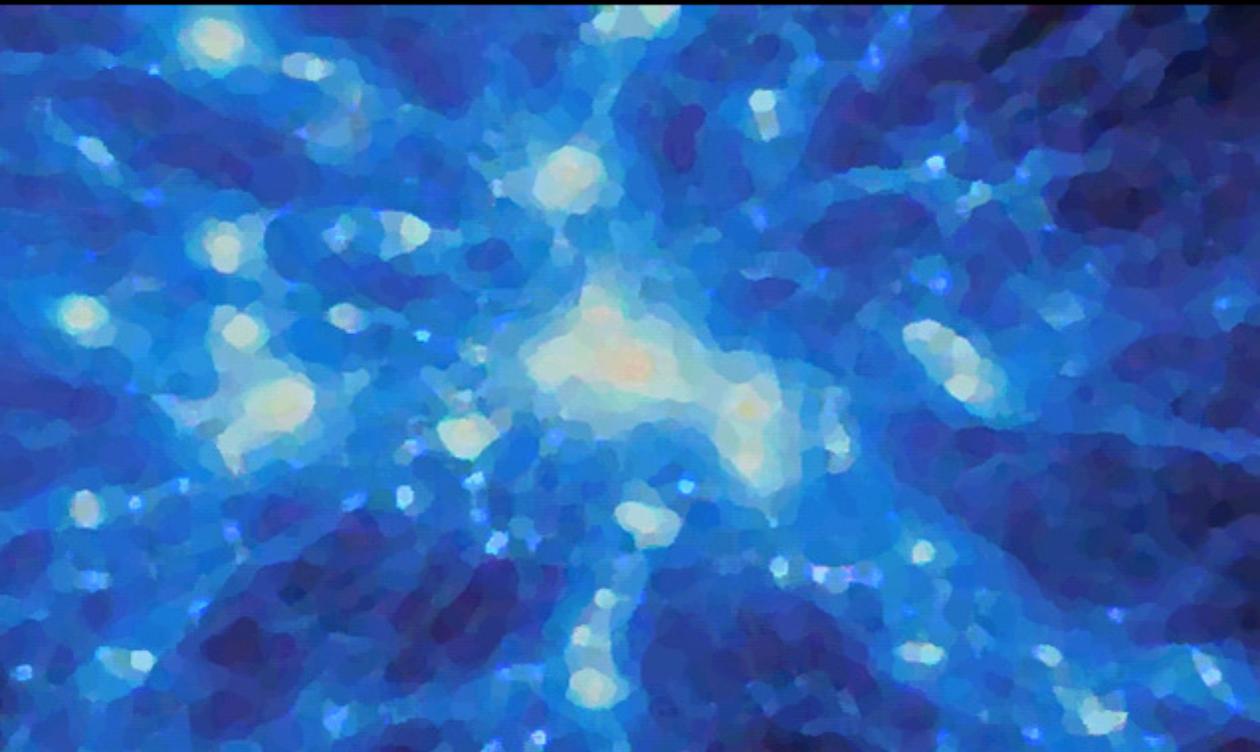
FRRRRRUUUUSSSH

AND I COULD REMEMBER MORE
AND MORE, MOSTLY ABOUT
DEMIROS' EXPERIENCES
THROUGH TIME AND THE
INTERACTION HE HAD WITH...

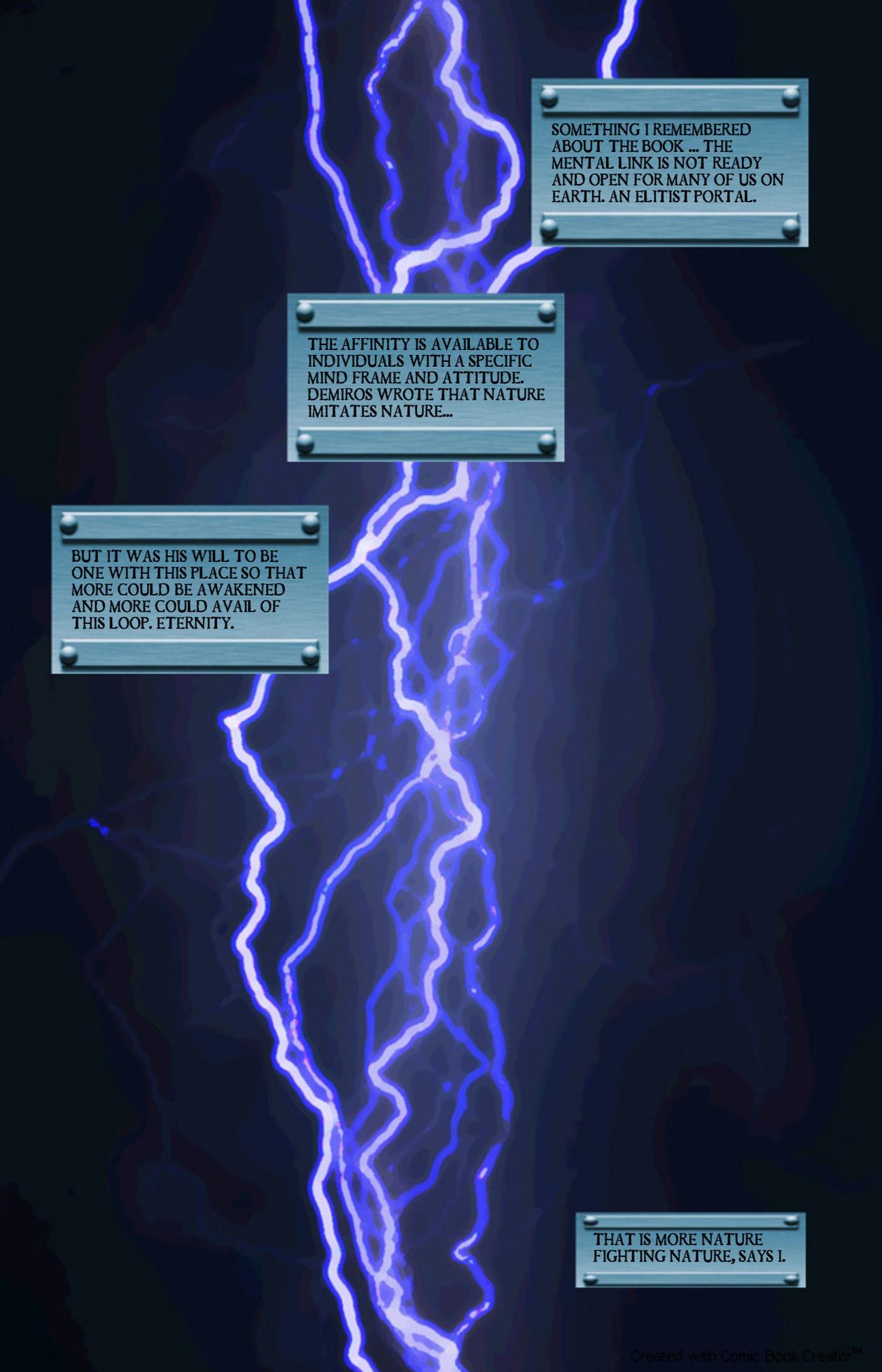
part
eight:

RESOLUTION

WE TAKE IT ALL FOR GRANTED. ALL OF
IT.
SOME DO ACTUALLY BELIEVE WE WILL
COME BACK IN A FORM OR ANOTHER.
THEY ARE RIGHT...



ALMOST.



SOMETHING I REMEMBERED
ABOUT THE BOOK ... THE
MENTAL LINK IS NOT READY
AND OPEN FOR MANY OF US ON
EARTH. AN ELITIST PORTAL.

THE AFFINITY IS AVAILABLE TO
INDIVIDUALS WITH A SPECIFIC
MIND FRAME AND ATTITUDE.
DEMIROS WROTE THAT NATURE
IMITATES NATURE...

BUT IT WAS HIS WILL TO BE
ONE WITH THIS PLACE SO THAT
MORE COULD BE AWAKENED
AND MORE COULD AVAIL OF
THIS LOOP. ETERNITY.

THAT IS MORE NATURE
FIGHTING NATURE, SAYS I.

AND THAT IS WHY THE
ACCOLADE WANTS TO FIND
THE BOOK. IT WOULD GIVE
THEM CONTROL OF THIS PLACE
AND OF WHO CAN ACCESS IT.

OR INDEED,
LEAVE IT.

DEFICIT.

ENOUGH !

UH ? DON'T EVEN
KNOW YOU BUT I
HAVE THE FEELING
YOU ARE REALLY
RUNNING THE
SHOW HERE, NOT
VERITAS...

INDEED YOU ARE
CORRECT NOONE. I AM
THE LEADER OF THE
ACCOLADE, ALWAYS
WAS, ALWAYS WILL BE
AND I WILL GET HOLD
OF THAT BOOK !

THE FATHER
SUPERIOR I
BELIEVE ?
DEMIROS
TRUSTED YOU ...

SO YOU KNOW, SO IT IS
TRUE ... YOU MET HIM
DURING YOUR EXPERIENCE
AND YOU READ THE BOOK ...
AND INEVITABLY YOU ALSO
KNOW ITS LOCATION SO
FOR THE LAST TIME, WHERE
IS IT ? **WHERE ?**

HOLD ON, IT'S TRUE ... I
KNOW. I KNOW WHERE
THIS DARN BOOK IS AND
I WILL TELL YOU BUT NOT
BEFORE YOU SEND
DEFICIT TO HIS NEXT
EXPERIENCE ... QUID PRO
QUO, BUT WORKING TO
MY ADVANTAGE ?

YOU MUST THINK I
AM AN IDIOT !
SAME AS BROTHER
DEMIROS, THE
FOOL ...

WELL, NOTHING PERSONAL, BUT YES, I THINK
YOU ARE AN IDIOT. WE ALL HAD AN
OPPORTUNITY TO ASPIRE TO IMMORTALITY,
TO PROSPER AS A MASSIVE AND EVER
GROWING COMMUNITY OF MINDS ALIKE FOR A
BETTER AND SAFER TOMORROW. DEMIROS
SAYS IT CLEARLY IN HIS BOOK ... FOR
EVERYBODY. AND YOU MEANINGLESS DUMB
DECIDE THAT HAS TO BE YOURS. JUST YOURS.
TYPICAL ISN'T IT ?
ONE TO RUIN IT FOR THEM ALL.
CONGRATULATIONS FATHER SUPERIOR.

SO NO MORE GAMES, NO
MORE STALLING, NO MORE
BAD GUY'S LAST SPEECH
BEFORE THE GOOD GUY
KICKS HIS ASS ... YOU LET
DEFICIT GO AND YOU GET
THE INFORMATION YOU
SEEK. RIGHT NOW OR I AM
GONE AND YOU KNOW
BETTER THAN ME THAT I
HAVE THE POWER TO DO
THAT !

THAT'S
ENOUGH,
NOBODY DARES
SPEAK TO THE
FATHER
SUPERIOR IN
THAT TONE, I ...

YOU WHAT YOU
USELESS TWIT. YOU
BRING US BACK TO A
SITUATION LIKE THIS
? I KNEW I SHOULD
HAVE LOOKED AFTER
THIS MATTER
DIRECTLY...

BUT ...
FATHER
SUPERIOR...

SHUT UP VERITAS AND
DO AS YOU ARE TOLD
... INITIATE A
PROCEDURE FOR
DEFICIT TO BE PINGED
... AND DO IT NOW
BEFORE I TERMINATE
YOU INSTEAD OF HIM ...

AND YOU, NOONE, YOU
BETTER HAVE INFORMATION I
LIKE OR IT WILL BE MY
PLEASURE TO BRING YOU
PERSONALLY TO THE EDGE OF
THE ABYSS AND LET YOU GO
FOREVER. NO BAD GUY'S
LAST SPEECH, IT'S A
PROMISE !

I HEAR YOU LOUD AND
CLEAR. NO GAMES
FATHER, I JUST WANT
MY FRIEND SAFE AND
AFTER THAT THE
LOCATION WILL BE
YOURS AND DO AS
YOU PLEASE...

ALTHOUGH I STILL
BELIEVE YOU ARE A
SELFISH PRICK BUT
THAT IS JUST MY
OPINION...

YES, ANOTHER CRUISADER
FOR THE GOOD CAUSE,
ANOTHER FOOL WHO DOES
NOT UNDERSTAND THAT IF
THIS PLACE WAS MADE
ELITARIAN THERE IS A VERY
GOOD REASON FOR IT.
IT MUST BE SO.

DEMIROS WAS A
DISILLUSIONED FOOL. THIS
PLACE IS A NATURAL
CLEANSER OF THE HUMAN
DISEASE. A POWERFUL
FILTER WHICH PURPOSE IS
TO BRING HARMONY TO OUR
SPECIES...

HARMONY WHICH WAS
DISRUPTED BY DEMIROS'
ACTIONS... THE RESULT ?
MORE WARS ON THE PLANET,
MORE SUFFERING ON EARTH,
MORE DEATH AND MISERY. WE
CAN GUARANTEE A BETTER
FUTURE, A BETTER PLANET.

AND I BET A BETTER FUTURE
FOR THE LIKES OF YOU AND
YOUR ACCOLADE. WHO ARE
YOU TO DECIDE WHAT IS
BEST FOR MANKIND AND
THE PLANET ? YOU ARE NO
GOD YOU KNOW ?

AND WHAT IF INSTEAD I
WAS... GOD. CAN'T YOU SEE
IT NOONE ? CAN'T YOU SEE
THAT THIS WAS MY DESTINY
ALL ALONG ? MY FATE TO
MEET DEMIROS AND BEEN
HELPED TO FREE MY MIND
AND TO SEE THAT GOD NEVER
WAS BUT WAS MEANT TO BE ?

DELUSIONAL. YOU WERE EATEN BY ENVY WHEN YOU MET DEMIROS AND YOU WERE AND STILL ARE DRIVEN BY YOUR SELFISH SELF. THE CLEANSING IS JUST AN EXCUSE TO MASK YOUR INTENTS FROM THE VERY START. WHAT IS IT EXACTLY YOU CRAVE SO MUCH ON THE PLANET? FORTUNES? POWER? UHM, LOOKS? DEMIROS HAD A PLAN FOR US ALL, THE CHANCE TO CLEANSE YES BUT THEN RETURN TO A BETTER LIFE FOR OURSELVES AND FOR THOSE AROUND.

YOU SPOKE TO HIM DURING YOUR LAST EXPERIENCE, DIDN'T YOU? HOW IS MY PUPIL DOING? IT HAS BEEN AGES SINCE I LISTENED TO HIS MENTAL IDEAS ON HOW THE LINK COULD BE OPENED TO ALL AND ON HOW INTERACTING WITH THE DARK YOU COULD CREATE A NATURAL WAY TO ACHIEVE IMMORTALITY.

BUT WHY GIVE SUCH A POWERFUL TOOL TO THE LIKES OF YOUR FRIEND FOR EXAMPLE ...

HAVE TO GIVE IT TO DEMIROS THO, THE WORK HE HAS DONE HERE ALWAYS IMPRESSED ME AND THAT IS WHAT I CRAVE YOU FOOL. IT'S NOT THE POWER ON THE PLANET I SEEK, IT'S THE ULTIMATE POWER IN HERE. I NEED TO BE WHOLE WITH IT.

EH-EHM

**VERITAS !
IS IT DONE ?**

**UHM...
UNFORTUNATELY
WE HAVE BEEN
UNABLE TO
LOCATE
DEFICIT,
FATHER
SUPERIOR.**

**HEHE, BYE BYE
BARGAINING
CHIP THEN...**

**NOT SO FAST
NOONE... AND YOU
VERITAS, WHAT A
HUGE
DISAPPOINTMENT
YOU HAVE BEEN...**

VAROOOOOOOM

... AND NOW
YOU'LL PAY THE
ULTIMATE
PRICE...

VAAAROOOOOOM

SUDDENLY THE BLACK TURNED INTO
PURE LIGHT. THE NOISE EVER
ASCENDING. THE SCREAMS EVER
CHILLING. THE ABYSS, WHERE THERE IS
NO RETURN.

AAAAAAAAARRRRRRGGGGHHHHHHHHH

YOU'LL ROT
IN THE ABYSS
!

VAAAROOOOO

AAAAAAAAARRRRRRGGGG

THE NOISE ESCALATING TO
INHUMAN LEVELS. THE SCREAMS
SOUNDING MORE AND MORE
INHUMAN. THIS IS INHUMAN.
AND I FEEL I AM NEXT ...

AND AS THE NOISE REDUCES
AND AS THE PORTAL CLOSES
THE SCREAMS REMAIN BUT
NOW FAR AND FURTHER MORE...

VAAAROOOOOM
AAAAAAAAAKKKKGGGGHHHHHHH

... AND FURTHER
MORE UNTILL ...

AAAAAAAAARRRRRRGGGGHHHHHHH

VAAAROOOOOM

THWIP

IT'S DARK AGAIN.
BUT NOT FOR LONG. MY TURN.

LAST CHANCE
NOONE,
TELL ME WHAT I
GRAVE OR I'LL
SEND YOU TO THE
LAND OF NO
RETURN !

//AAROOOOOM

I WAS POWERLESS. I COULD DO
MORE ABOUT EVERYTHING IF I
REMAINED IN THE DARK AT
LEAST UNTIL MY NEXT
EXPERIENCE. AND...

I HAD TO FIND DEFICIT. PROBABLY HIS
FACTORS HAD CHANGED AND HE WAS
SENT OFF, FINALLY, TO HIS NEW LIFE
BEFORE VERITAS COULD FIND HIM.
GOOD OLD DEFICIT, MY FRIEND. SO I
CAVED IN. I WAS POWERLESS.

THE BOOK
YOU SEEK IS
HIDDEN
HERE, IN THE
DARK.

THWIP

part
nine:
REWIND

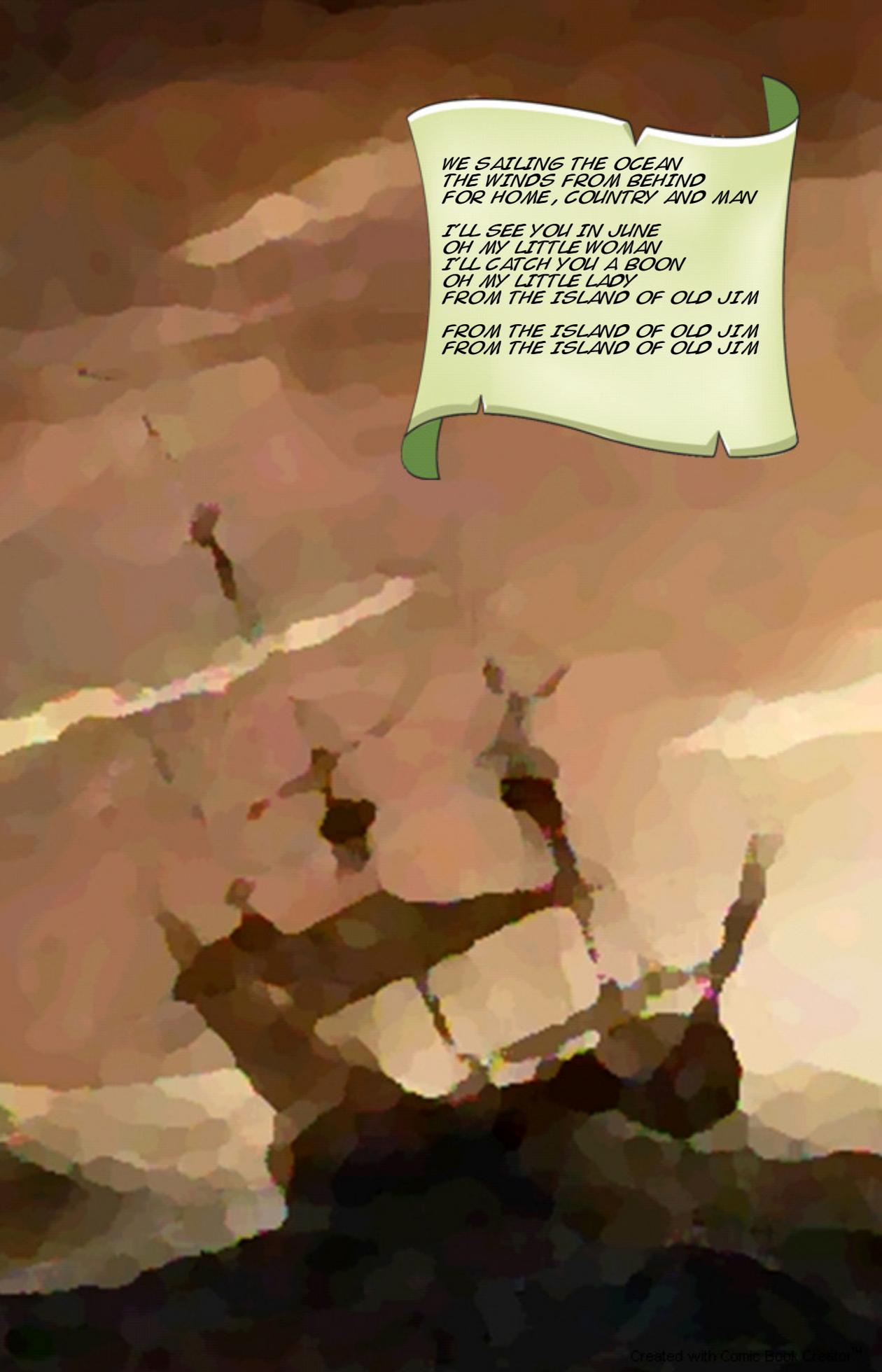
PORT OF GENOA.
ITALY.
A.D. 1747



WE LEFT ON A GLORIOUS DAAAAAY

***THE WINDS FROM BEHIND
ON THAT LAST WEEK OF MAAAAAY***

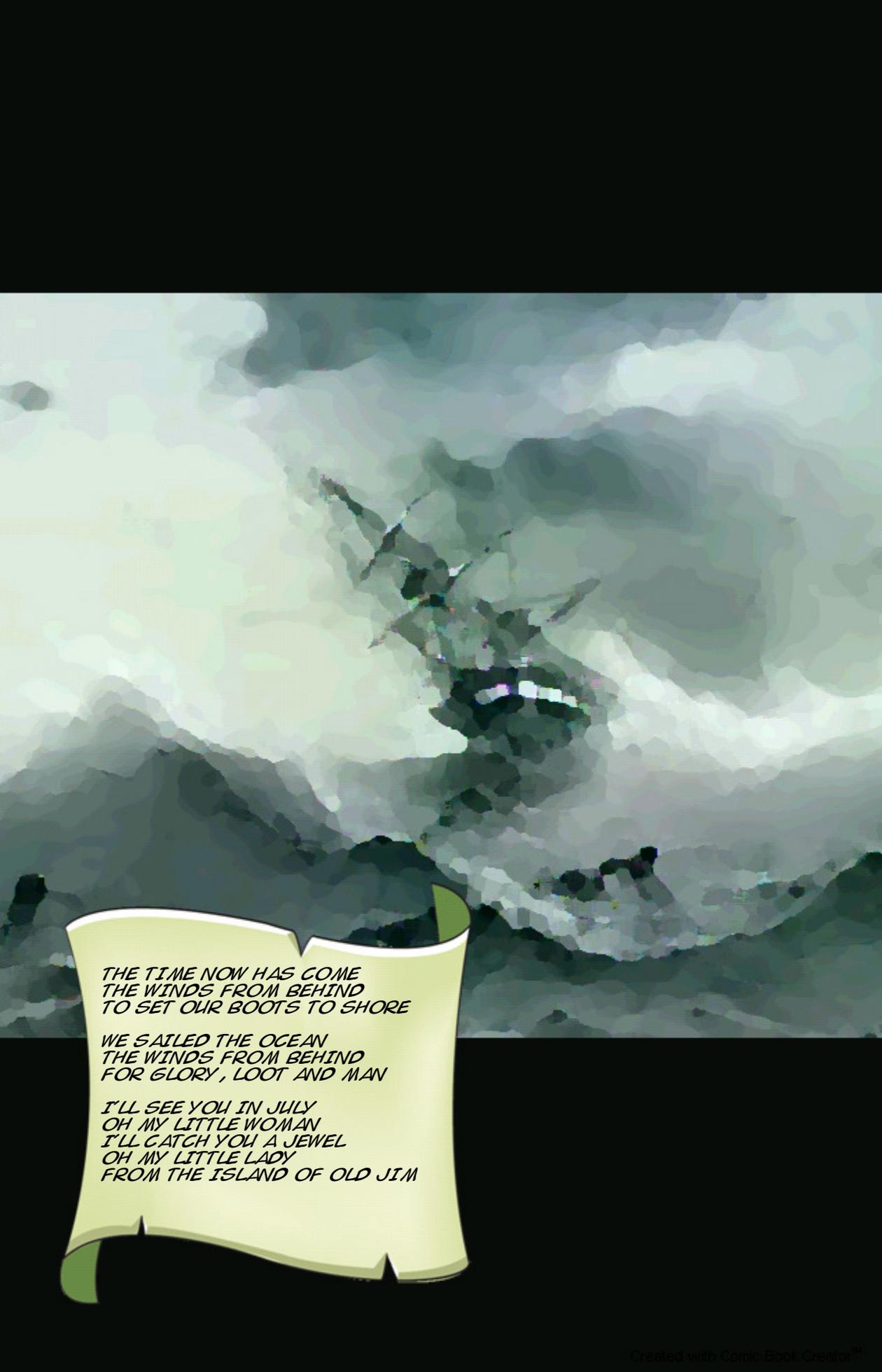




*WE SAILING THE OCEAN
THE WINDS FROM BEHIND
FOR HOME, COUNTRY AND MAN*

*I'LL SEE YOU IN JUNE
OH MY LITTLE WOMAN
I'LL CATCH YOU A BOON
OH MY LITTLE LADY
FROM THE ISLAND OF OLD JIM*

*FROM THE ISLAND OF OLD JIM
FROM THE ISLAND OF OLD JIM*



*THE TIME NOW HAS COME
THE WINDS FROM BEHIND
TO SET OUR BOOTS TO SHORE*

*WE SAILED THE OCEAN
THE WINDS FROM BEHIND
FOR GLORY, LOOT AND MAN*

*I'LL SEE YOU IN JULY
OH MY LITTLE WOMAN
I'LL CATCH YOU A JEWEL
OH MY LITTLE LADY
FROM THE ISLAND OF OLD JIM*

A parchment scroll with a torn edge, floating in the upper left corner of the frame. The background is a dark, stormy sea with white-capped waves crashing. The text on the scroll is written in a simple, black, sans-serif font.

*FROM THE ISLAND OF OLD JIM
FROM THE ISLAND OF OLD JIM*

*ASHORE WE WILL LAND
THE WINDS FROM BEHIND
TO MAKE OUR FINAL STAND*

*WE NOW LEFT THE OCEAN
THE WINDS FROM BEHIND
FROM TREASURE, GOLD AND MAN*

*I'LL SEE YOU IN AUGUST
OH MY LITTLE...*

CRAAAACKTHARAAA

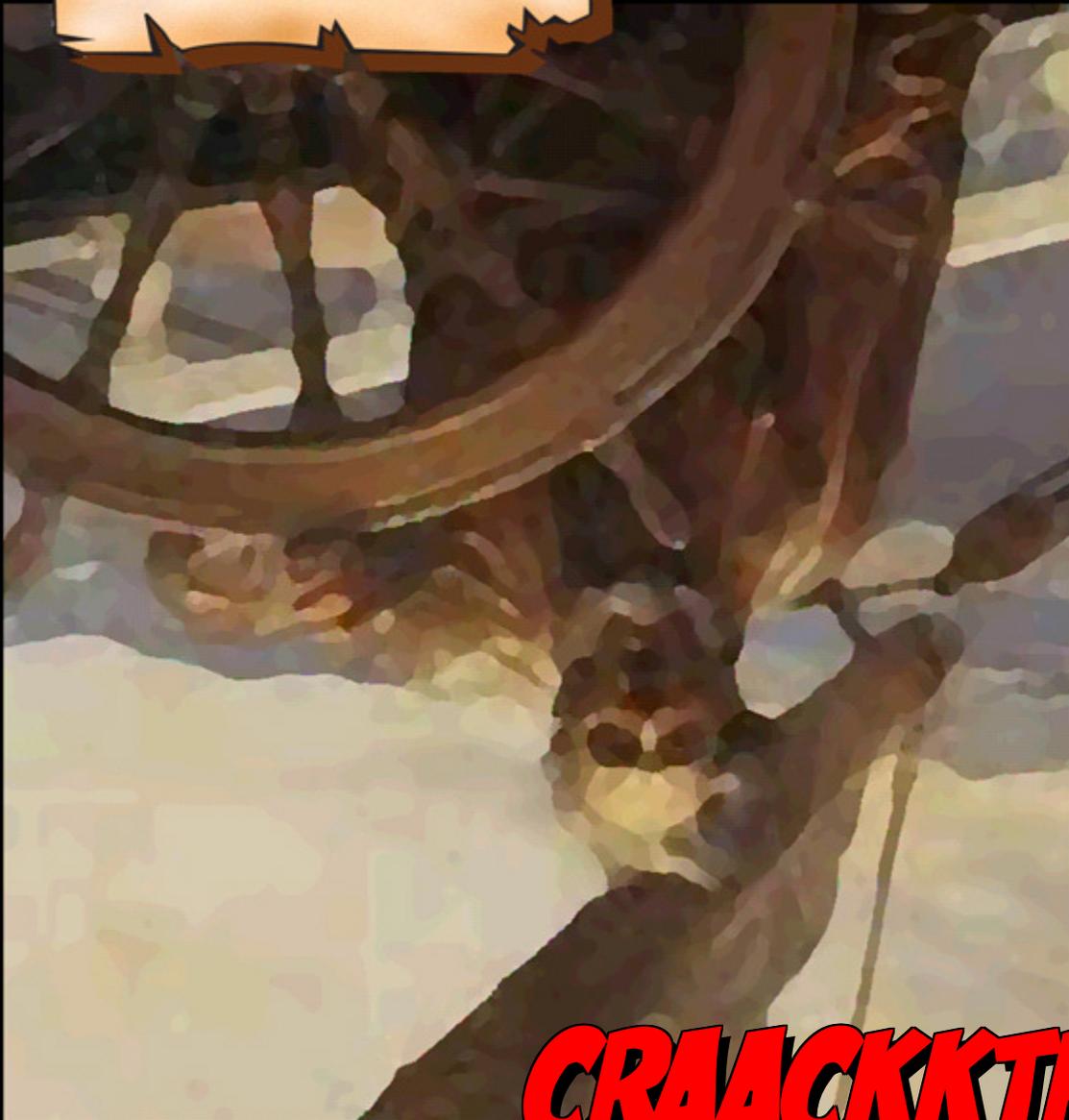
ACKTHARAAAKKK



*CAPTAIN
DEMIROS, WE ARE
TAKING WATER,
WHAT SHOULD WE
DO CAPTAIN?*

*CAPTAIN
???*

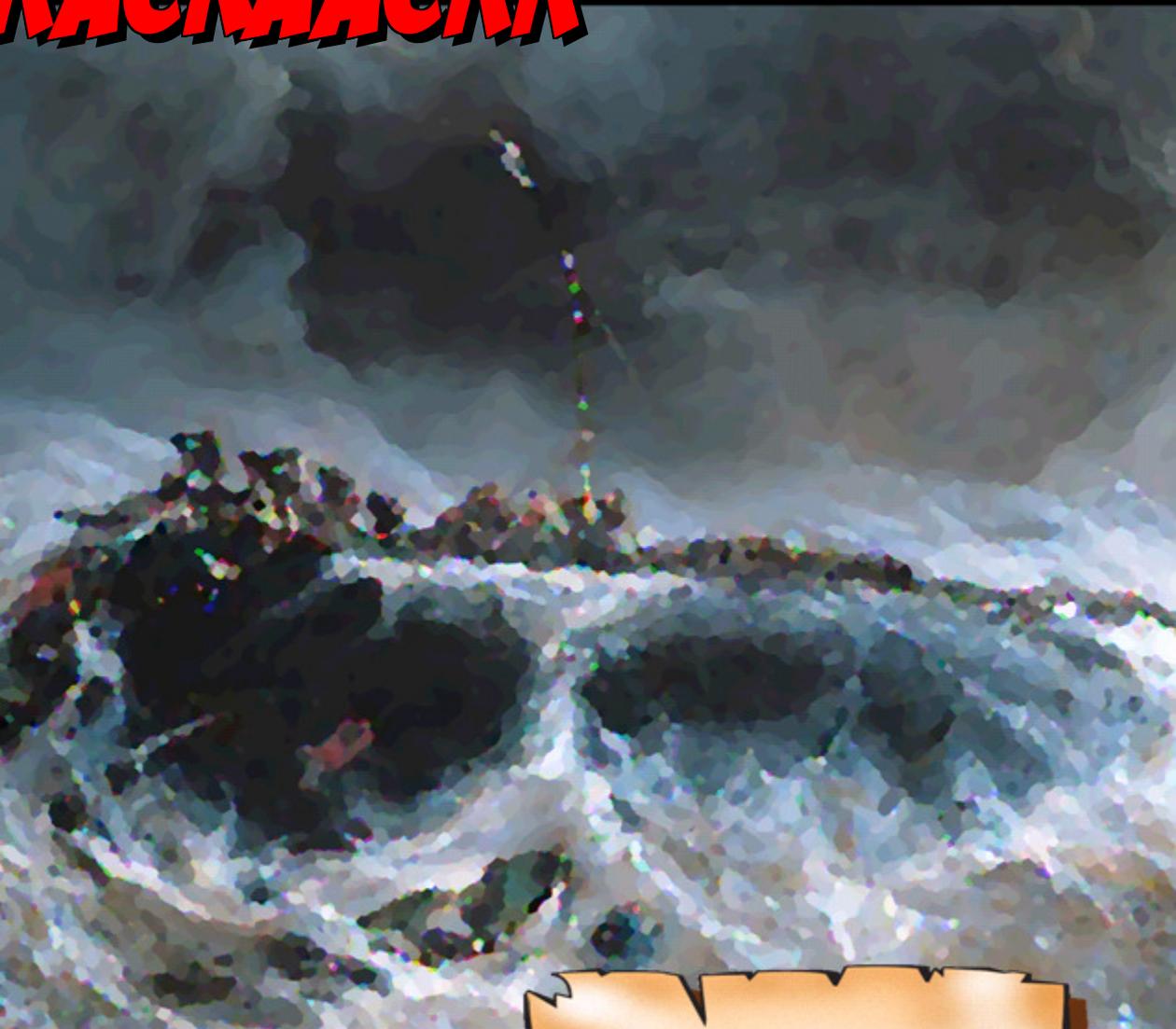
AND THEN, SHATTERED LIKE THE
SAILORS' DREAMS, OUR VESSEL
WAS EVENTUALLY TAKEN BY
THE TEMPEST.
SWINGING LIKE A FEATHER IN
THE STRONG WINDS, FROM THE
LEFT TO THE RIGHT, UP AND
DOWN ...



CRAACKKTRA

AT TIMES IT FELT
UPSIDE DOWN.

KACRAACKK



WE HIT THE ROCKS OF THE ISLAND AND THE VESSEL WAS NO MORE. THE FLOTSAM AND JETSAM SAVED A MERE PART OF THE CREW AND IT WAS THEN, JUST BEFORE WE HIT THE SAFE SANDS, THAT I HAD TO GO.



I DRIFTED IN THE TURBULENT
WATERS, LIKE IT HAPPENED
BEFORE, LET IT GO AND JUST
AFTER THE EMBRACE OF
DEATH SEDUCES YOU, REACT.

WOOOOOOSSHH

WOOOOOOOSSHHHH

THE DARK.
AGAIN.

**NEXT EVENT
DEPARTURE**

THE ACCOLADE.
THE BOOK.

THE LOCATION OF THE
BOOK IS IN PERIL. THE
SECRET I KEPT HIDDEN IN
THIS DARK UNIVERSE IS
ABOUT TO FALL IN THOSE
VERY HANDS I SAVED IT
FROM MANY TIMES BEFORE.
AND TODAY MUST

NEXT EVENING
DEPARTURE

THE NAME OF THE DOOR JUST
SPOKE TO ME ONE DAY, MAYBE
OUT OF BOREDOM BUT I
THOUGHT IT WAS WITTY AND
FULL OF MEANING AT THE SAME
TIME. MAYBE WE MAKE THE
LEGENDS TOLD, MAYBE THERE
WAS NO PANDORA ONCE.

TWEEEEEEEEIIINGG

BUT IT CERTAINLY
EXISTS NOW AND IT
WILL BE UNLEASHED
SOON...

WEEEEEEIINGG

PANDORA.
THE SECRET TO THE DARK.
WHERE I DID HIDE THE
BOOK FROM THE ACCOLADE
PROBABLY FAR TOO LONG.
WHO AM I TO DECIDE WHO
CAN AND WHO CAN'T ?

I AM JUST A
VEHICLE TO A
HIGHER WILL.
I AM IMMORTAL.
I AM DEMIROS.

DEMIROS...

DEMIROS...

... NOONE ...
HE IS HERE BUT
NOT ALONE..

part
ten:

ANSWERS

BERLIN,
APRIL 1939

HAIL
HAIL
HAIL

SO THEY MARCHED
AND KEPT MARCHING
DRIVEN BY LUST
DRIVEN BY MADNESS

THEY MARCHED IN THE
NAME OF A NATION AND
IN THE NAME OF A SINGLE
EVIL MIND...

HAIL

HAIL

HAIL



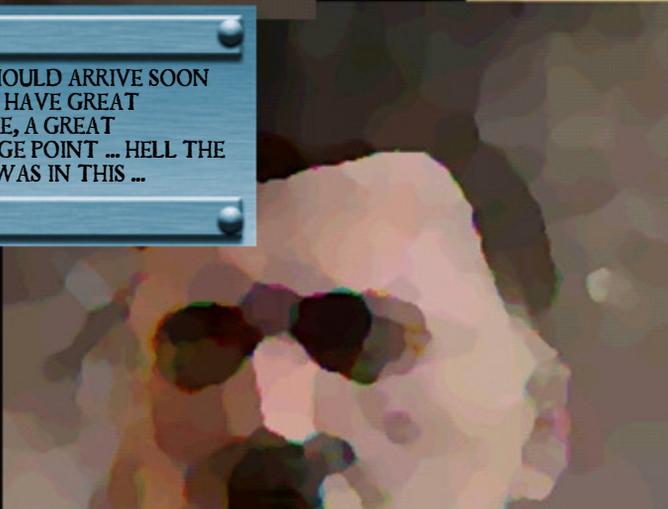
AND THEY KEPT COMING
AND THAT WAS ENOUGH.
ON HIS BIRTHDAY, ON THIS
CELEBRATION OF GRIM...

AND TODAY HE DIES.
NO MORE MADNESS.
NO MORE EVIL.

HAIL
HAIL
HAIL



HIS CAR SHOULD ARRIVE SOON
ENOUGH, I HAVE GREAT
HARDWARE, A GREAT
ADVANTAGE POINT ... HELL THE
GESTAPO WAS IN THIS ...



A WALK IN
THE PARK...



THE ROADS FILLED WITH
CHANTS TO HIS NAME, THE
SWEAT CAUSED BY THE
HUMIDITY OUTSIDE IN THIS
THAT WAS MEANT TO BE...

HAIL
HAIL
HAIL

A CELEBRATION.

THE CELEBRATIONS HAVE STARTED, THE CHEERS, THE HUMIDITY, HE SHOULD BE CLOSE ENOUGH, ONLY A FEW MINUTES AND THE WORLD...

HAIL

HAIL

HAIL

WILL BE A BETTER PLACE.

CRRTCRR

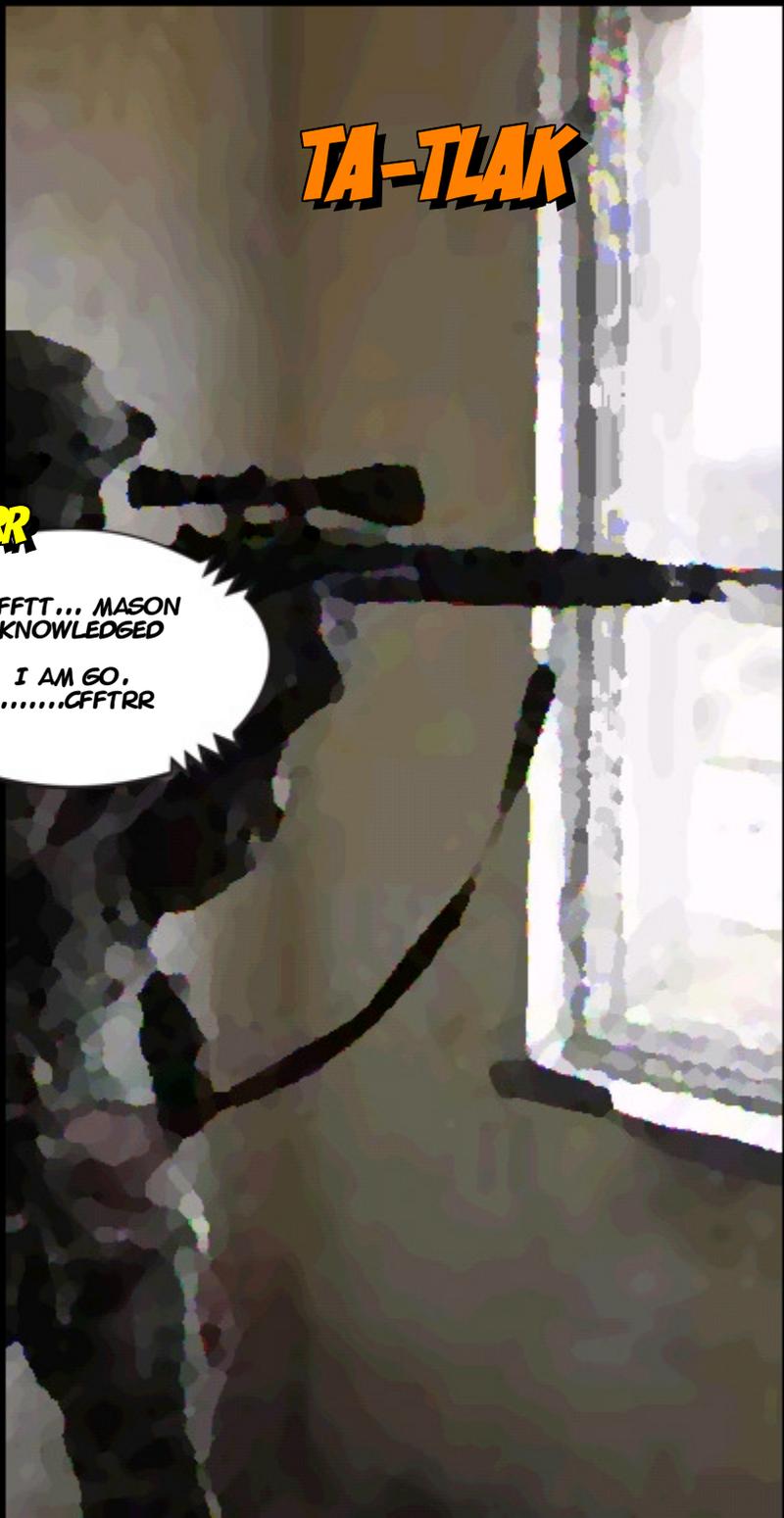
CRRFT... MASON EAGLE HAS COME IN POSITION... AKNOWLEDGE... ..CRRFT

TA-TLAK

CRRICRR

CRFFTT... MASON
AKNOWLEDGED

I AM GO.
.....CFFTRR



RIGHT ON QUEUE, YOU MUST
LOVE THEIR PUNCTUALITY.
NOW TO WAIT UNTIL HE
SHOWS UP IN HIS THRONE OVER
THE PARADE SITE, AND CLICK.

WROOOOOOM



CRRTCRR

... MASON ...
I CONFIRM
VISUAL ON EAGLE.
I AM GO AT
PARADE SITE...
OUT...

CRRTCRR

CRRTCRR

... MASON ...
TARGET IS ON
THE DECK, I AM
ENGAGE
... OUT

CRRTCRR



GNIIIIIC

WADDA
...???

SLAM

ACHTUNG

VERBOTEN

COME AND GET IT
YOU GESTAPO
SCUM ... WHO
GAVE ME AWAY UH
???



RATTATTATAA



**ZIIP
ZIIP**

BANG



HE GOT ME STRAIGHT THROUGH
THE HEAD.
I ALMOST MISSED THE RIGHT
TIME TO REACT, THIS WAS A
CLOSE ONE ... WASTE OF TIME.

SO AS ALWAYS RUMBLING
SOUNDS, YOU BECOME AS LIGHT
AS A FEATHER, YOU TRAVEL TO
THE DARK AND WAIT FOR YOUR
NEXT CALL ... WELL NOT ME.

WOOOOOOSSH

I KNEW BETTER NOW, I WAS
FASTER, MORE ACCURATE AND
ON A ROLL OF LITTLE CHANGES
THAT WILL MAKE IT ALL
BETTER. FOR EVERYONE.

OOOSSSHHHHH

I'M BACK.
A NEW PURPOSE A NEW WILL.
I AM THE VIGILANTE OF THE
ETHEREAL. I AM NOONE.

THAT LIGHT.
I NEVER SAW IT BEFORE.
SO BRIGHT AND RIGHT BEHIND
THE CRADLE. THIS PLACE
DOESN'T FINISH TO AMAZE ME.





STORY OF MY LIFE ... A DOOR.
THE MORE I LEARN ABOUT THIS
PLACE THE MORE IT KEEPS
THROWING AT ME. I WAS
TEMPTED TO OPEN THE DOOR...

GNIIIIIK

BUT THE SUDDEN NOISE MADE
ME REALIZE I WASN'T ALONE IN
THERE. COULD IT BE DEFICIT ?
OR THE FATHER SUPERIOR OR
DEMIROS HIMSELF ... OR WHO ?

DEFICIT ...
DEFICIT ?
IS THAT YOU ?

IF IT'S NOT MY
FAVORITE ESSENCE !
NOONE, LONG TIME
NO INTERACT , WHERE
HAVE YOU BEEN ?

SOMEHOW I DID NOT THINK HE
REALLY WANTED TO KNOW.
RETHORIC IS FUN.

part
eleven:
FALLEN

IS NOT OF ME REALLY
TO RETURN TO
ENDURE PAIN AND
HUMILIATION...



GOD ONLY KNOWS...
AND THAT IS THE WHOLE POINT
... DOES HE ? DOES HE CARE ? AND
SO THE ANSWER SHALL COME
FROM ONLY ONE SOURCE ... HIM.



NAZARETH.
ANNO DOMINE.

FATHER, BLESS ME FOR I HAVE SINNED.
I OFFER THIS TO YOU, YOUR HUMBLE
MANNEQUIN.
FORGIVE ME IF I AM CUTTING TO THE POINT
BUT YOU HAVE ABANDONED ME...

CONDEMNED TO THE
CROSS, HUMILIATED.
AND YOU WANT ME
TO KEEP GOING ?

CURSED BY THIS GIFT, TO COMMUNICATE
WITH YOU AND BEING A HUB FOR BETTER
WAYS AND FOR PROGRESS IN THE RIGHT
DIRECTION. FORGIVE ME FATHER I DID NOT
MEAN WHAT I SAID. I WILL HOLD ON.



EVEN AT MY WORST.
EVEN WHEN HELL
OPENS THOSE
TEMPTING DOORS, I
WILL KEEP GOING...

I WILL HOLD ON AND I
WILL SEE YOU AT THE
STEP OF HEAVEN AS YOU
SO KINDLY MANDATED.
ME. YOUR SON ON EARTH.

AND FORGIVE ALL OF
THEM BECAUSE THEY DO
NOT KNOW WHAT THEY
ARE DOING, TO ME AND
TO YOU.

ALL THOSE THOUGHTS.
ALL THOSE PRAYERS AND
INTENTS.
BUT NO ANSWER.
NO GOD. NO HOPE.

I SO HAD MY ANSWER.
JESUS WAS A MAN POSSESSED BY A FAITH
THAT MADE HIM BLIND AND BELIEVE HE WAS
THE MESSIAH.
NO ANSWER, NO GOD.

SO MUCH FOR ALL
THOSE YEARS IN THE
ABBEY SPENT TO
SERVE NO ONE.



BUT HIS FAITH.
THAT WAS UNDENIABLE. ON THE
BORDER TO MADNESS BUT REAL,
HUMAN. FAITH IN A GOD THAT
DOES NOT ANSWER YOU.



ELI ELI LAMMA...

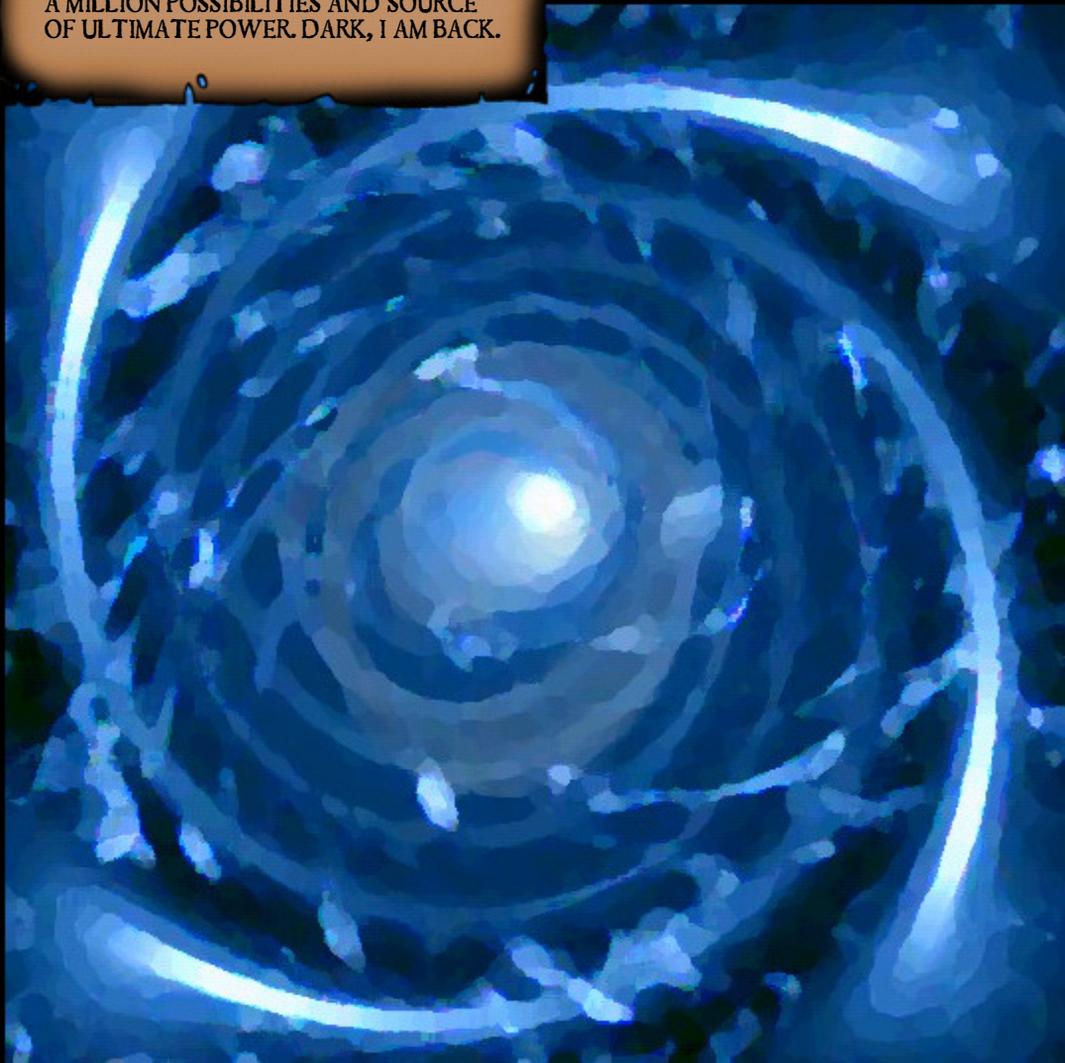
HIS LAST THOUGHT WENT TO HIS MOTHER AND TO ALL IN A CYNICAL ORDER LIKE AS IF THE ONE WAS GREATER THAN THE MANY. AND SO HE WENT.

AND SO I GO, SLOWLY, PAINFULLY. DELUDED AND USED, BUT NO TIME FOR THAT ANYMORE, IT IS WHAT IT IS. REACT AND COME BACK FATHER.

WOOOOOOOOOOSSSHH

DOOSSHHH

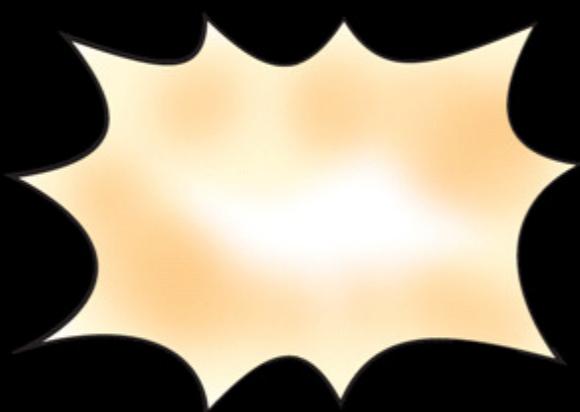
COME BACK TO THE PLACE THAT
MEANS YOU THE MOST. COME BACK TO
A MILLION POSSIBILITIES AND SOURCE
OF ULTIMATE POWER. DARK, I AM BACK.



ULTIMATE POWER THAT
WILL BE MINE WHEN I FIND
THE BOOK. I HAVE A GOOD
FEELING ABOUT THIS.

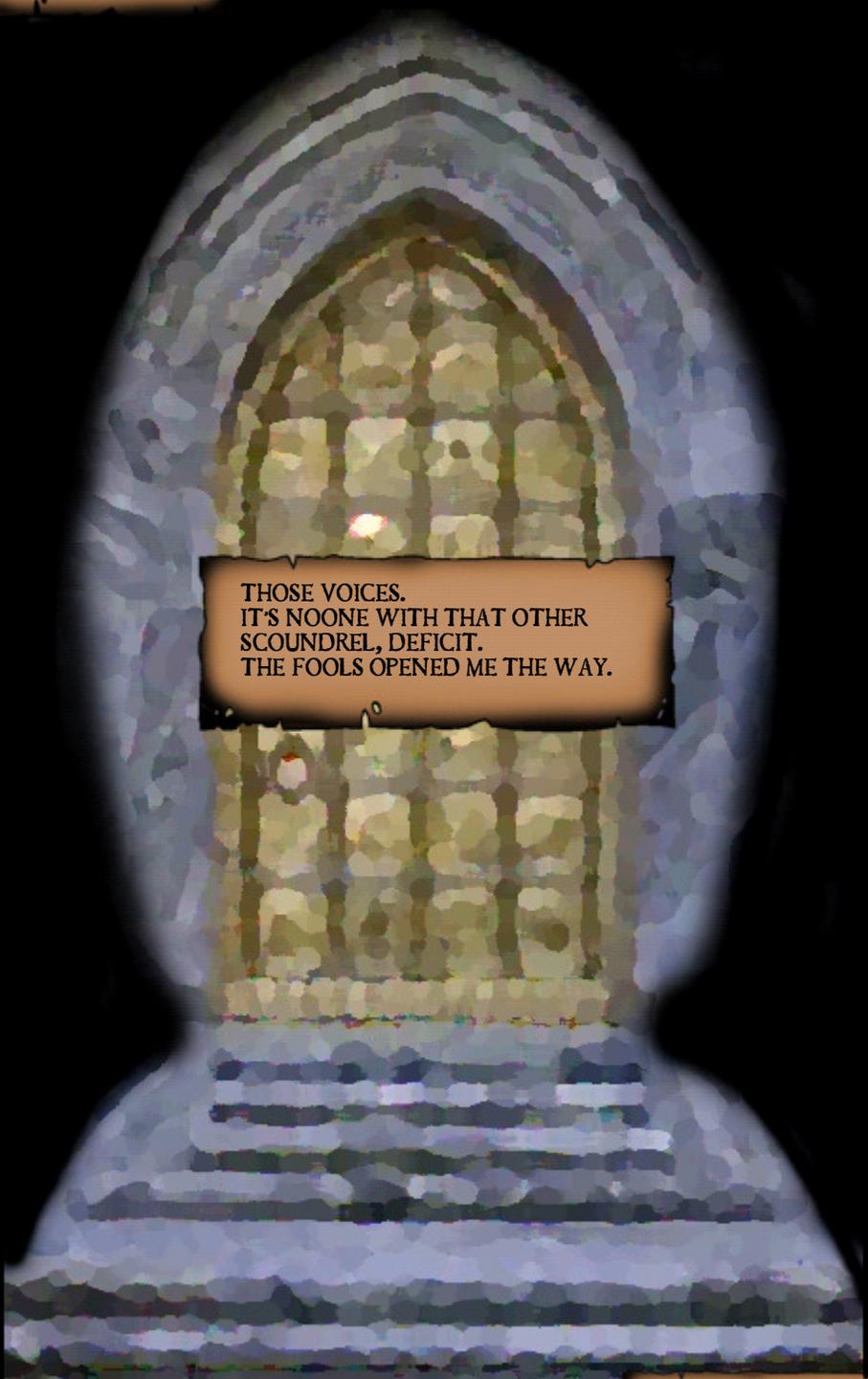
SOMETIMES IT'S ALL IT
TAKES. A GOOD FEELING.

LIKE AN EXPLOSION OF LIGHT, FURTHER
TO THE CRADLE, A VERY INTERESTING
PHENOMENON, ONE THAT I HAVE BEEN
WAITING FOR A LONG TIME.



IN THESE YEARS I LEARNT OF THE LEGEND OF
PANDORA BUT THAT IS WHAT I THOUGHT IT
WAS, A MERE RUMOUR. AND IF MY OLD EYES
DON'T FAIL ME, THERE IT IS IN THE LIGHT...

PANDORA.
IT'S REAL.
THE BOOK MUST BE
BEHIND THAT DOOR.

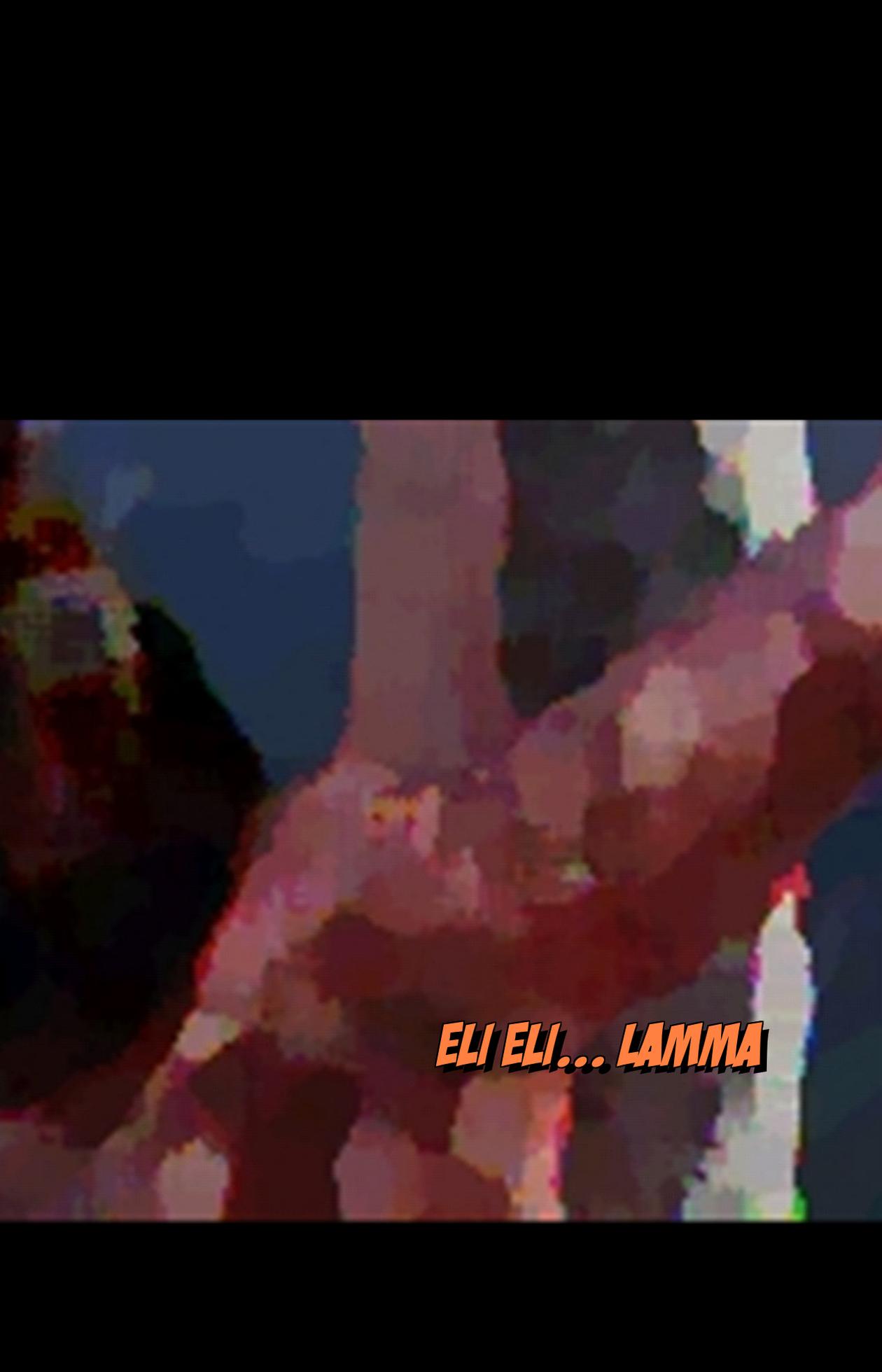


THOSE VOICES.
IT'S NOONE WITH THAT OTHER
SCOUNDREL, DEFICIT.
THE FOOLS OPENED ME THE WAY.

THIS SHOULD ALSO BE
INTERESTING.
GOTTA HAVE FAITH.



ELI ELI LAMMA ... SABACTANI



ELI ELI... LAMMA

THU-THUMP

ELI ... LAMMA ... SAB...

THU-THUM

COUGH

THUM

THUP

BEEEEEEEEEEEP

part
twelve:
ANGELS



TOSSED IN A WORLD I DIDN'T
UNDERSTAND. MOVED FROM YEAR TO
YEAR IN A LOOP OF INFINITE COME
BACKS. IT TOOK ME AGES TO MASTER
THE FEW TRICKS THAT I KNOW AND
STILL THIS PLACE THROWS THIS AT ME.

CAN IT BE THAT ALL THAT
WE KNOW OF AND MORE IS
CONCEALED BEHIND THIS
DOOR ? AND WHY A DOOR ?

SO HERE I ARRIVE AT WHAT IT
CAN BE THE END OF
EVERYTHING OR THE
BEGINNING OF NOTHING.
EITHER WAY I FEEL CHEATED.

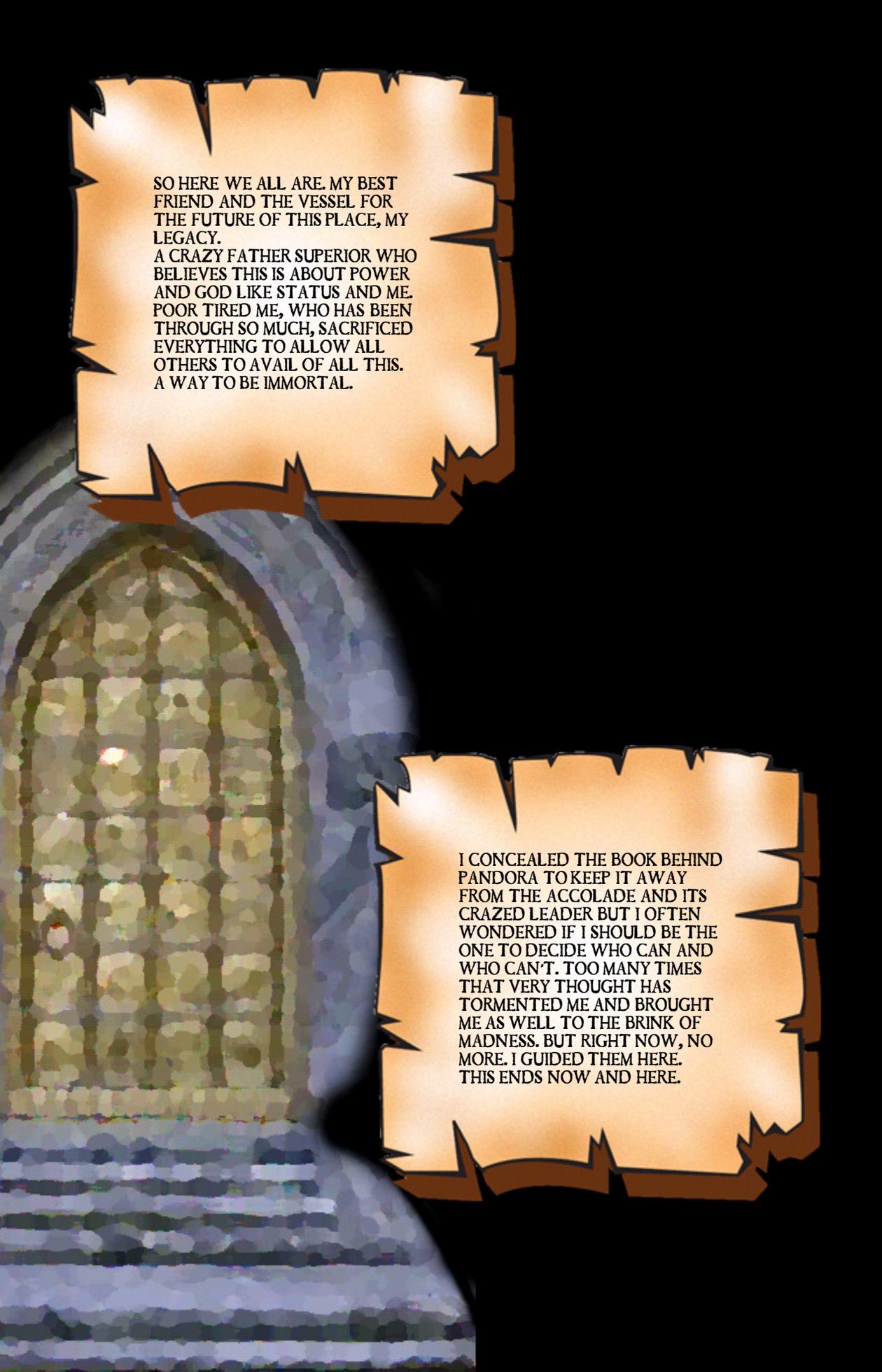
TRICKED BY AFFINITIES,
CONCEPTUALIZATIONS AND
COMPUTATIONS OF FACTORS,
THE ILLUSION THAT YOU CAN
CONTROL THIS NOTHING...

THIS DARK. AND WHEN YOU
THINK YOU HAVE FOUND A
PURPOSE IN LIFE AND DEATH
AND RETURNS, THE DARK
BEAST POPS A DOOR...



... A DOOR TO WHAT ?
MORE OF THIS ? THE END ?

DEFICIT !
THE ONLY THING TO
KEEP ME SANE.



SO HERE WE ALL ARE. MY BEST FRIEND AND THE VESSEL FOR THE FUTURE OF THIS PLACE, MY LEGACY.

A CRAZY FATHER SUPERIOR WHO BELIEVES THIS IS ABOUT POWER AND GOD LIKE STATUS AND ME. POOR TIRED ME, WHO HAS BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH, SACRIFICED EVERYTHING TO ALLOW ALL OTHERS TO AVAIL OF ALL THIS. A WAY TO BE IMMORTAL.

I CONCEALED THE BOOK BEHIND PANDORA TO KEEP IT AWAY FROM THE ACCOLADE AND ITS CRAZED LEADER BUT I OFTEN WONDERED IF I SHOULD BE THE ONE TO DECIDE WHO CAN AND WHO CAN'T. TOO MANY TIMES THAT VERY THOUGHT HAS TORMENTED ME AND BROUGHT ME AS WELL TO THE BRINK OF MADNESS. BUT RIGHT NOW, NO MORE. I GUIDED THEM HERE. THIS ENDS NOW AND HERE.

A SHORT FEW MOMENTS AND I
WILL BE REVEALED AND SO WILL
BE MY LAST SECRET. TYPICAL OF
MEN TO DESIRE WHAT THEY
DON'T HAVE AND IGNORE WHAT
THEY DO HAVE.

ALL THESE POSSIBILITIES TO
SAVE A PLANET THAT IS DYING,
FAITH WILL SAVE US IN THE
SHAPE OF ANGELS WHO RETURN
TO UNDO WHAT CANNOT BE
UNDONE OTHERWISE.
NOT SERVANTS, ANGELS.

BUT WHAT IS IMPORTANT, HERE
AND NOW, AT THE CENTRE OF
THE UNIVERSE AS WE BARELY
UNDERSTAND IT, THE BOOK IS
THE KEY TO THE FUTURE.
FORGET ABOUT THE REST,
THAT IS WHAT WE ALREADY
HAVE, WHO CARES, UH ?

ENOUGH, TIME TO FINISH
WHAT I STARTED.

NOONE ?
ARE YOU
STILL HERE ?





I COULD HEAR THEM TALKING, I SHALL HIDE
IN THE DARK AND STARTLE THEM AT MY
CONVENIENCE. MAYBE THEY KNOW
SOMETHING I DON'T AND A LITTLE EVE
DROPPING NEVER HURT ANYONE, RIGHT ?

I CANNOT BELIEVE IT.
PANDORA IS REAL.
PANDORA IS HERE.

AND THE BOOK MUST BE CONCEALED
BEHIND THAT GOLDEN GATE.
ALL I WANTED FOR SO LONG HERE,
JUST A FEW INCHES AWAY BUT I NEED
TO MAKE SURE I WILL BE THE ONE.

THE ONLY ONE.
A GOD THAT DOES
NOT ANSWER.

I ASK MYSELF HOW THESE TWO
MANAGED TO FIND PANDORA.
ROOKIES LUCK ? THE ACCOLADE IN
YEARS OF WORK AND RESEARCH
HAS NEVER BEEN ABLE TO FIND
EVEN A CLUE, AND THESE TWO...

THE ACCOLADE, MY MOST EVIL CREATION, A
HORDE OF ANONYMOUS ENTITIES THAT
SCOUR THE AGES FOR A SOLE PURPOSE.
IT IS TRUE THAT IF YOU WANT SOMETHING
DONE PROPERLY, YOU MUST DO IT YOURSELF.



NOTHING MUCH THESE TWO ARE
TALKING ABOUT, I GUESS IT'S TIME TO
CLEAR UP THE AREA AND GET RID OF THE
EVIDENCE. AND GRAB THE BOOK.
I LIKE EASY PLANS.



DEMIROS HIMSELF CANNOT
SAVE YOU NOW, YOU TWO
PUPPETS. ONCE YOU
DISAPPEAR IN THE ABYSS I
SHALL POSSESS THE BOOK
AND ALL WILL BE REVEALED
TO ME. A ONLY GOD WHO
DOES NOT ANSWER !

GASP!
WADDA...

OOOH, LOOK WHO
DECIDED TO JOIN THE
PARTY, WELCOME
FATHER SUPERIOR,
WELCOME TO PANDORA
AND TO WHAT IT
CONCEALS. ARE YOU
READY FOR THIS FINAL
SHOWDOWN ?

PANDORA
???

I HAVE BEEN READY FOR TOO
LONG TO GO AMISS NOW.
BUT FIRST I NEED TO GET
RID OF THE CLUTTER BEFORE
DEMIROS REALIZES HIS
SECRET IS IN DANGER!
YOU SHALL FOLLOW THE
LOST SOULS IN THE FINAL
ABYSS...

VAAROOOOOOOOOM!



OH NOT THIS
PORTAL AGAIN.
DEFICIT WE NEED
TO STAY AWAY
FROM THIS, IT
LEADS TO...

A PLACE OF NO
RETURN? YES I
HAD TO CREATE A
PORTAL TO THE
ULTIMATE END FOR
THOSE WHO
COULDN'T KEEP THE
PACE THIS PLACE
REQUIRES...

YOU HAVE CREATED NOTHING YOU
INSIGNIFICANT NUT JOB.
DEMIROS HAS CREATED ALL THIS
AND HIS KNOWLEDGE IS BEHIND
THAT DOOR.
NOW PLEASE DISAPPEAR IN THE
VORTEX AND LET ME BE.

FATHER SUPERIOR YOU
ARE BLIND AND CANNOT
SEE OVER YOUR
OBSESSION ABOUT THE
BOOK AND WHAT IT
LEADS TO. BUT I HAVE
DECIDED THAT YOU CAN
INDEED HAVE IT AND SO
BE IT. NO MORE GAMES.

WHAT ARE YOU
TALKING
ABOUT
DEFICIT...

VAAARRROOOOMMM

**IT'S NOT
POSSIBLE.**

**SO YOU REALLY
ARE ... HIM ?**

**THE ONE AND ONLY I'M
AFRAID. YOU HAVE TO
EXCUSE MY SHARADE, THE
DEFICIT GIG I MEAN, BUT I
COULDN'T REVEAL MYSELF
TO YOU OR OTHERS TO
PROTECT THIS PLACE FROM
THE LIKE OF THE FATHER
SUPERIOR AND ITS
ACCOLADE. I ADMIT THO I
HAD A LOT OF FUN...**

**SO WHAT YOU
ARE WAITING
FOR DEMIROS ...**

**IT'S TOO LATE,
THE VORTEX WILL
ENGLUF YOU BOTH
AND I WILL HAVE
MY GREATEST WIN !**

V/A R O O O O O O O M

VAAAROOOOOM



TWIIIP

PHEW !

I AM DISAPPOINTED IN BOTH OF YOU. DID YOU REALLY THINK THAT WAS GOING TO BE A PROBLEM FOR ME ? NOONE YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER... AND YOU, FATHER. AS I PROMISED YOU NO MORE GAMES, NO MORE WAITING, NO MORE... THIS DOOR LEADS ...

DAM YOU DEMIROS

...TO YOUR BELOVED BOOK. ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS TO OPEN THE DOOR...

AND SO BE IT...

AND SO BE IT...



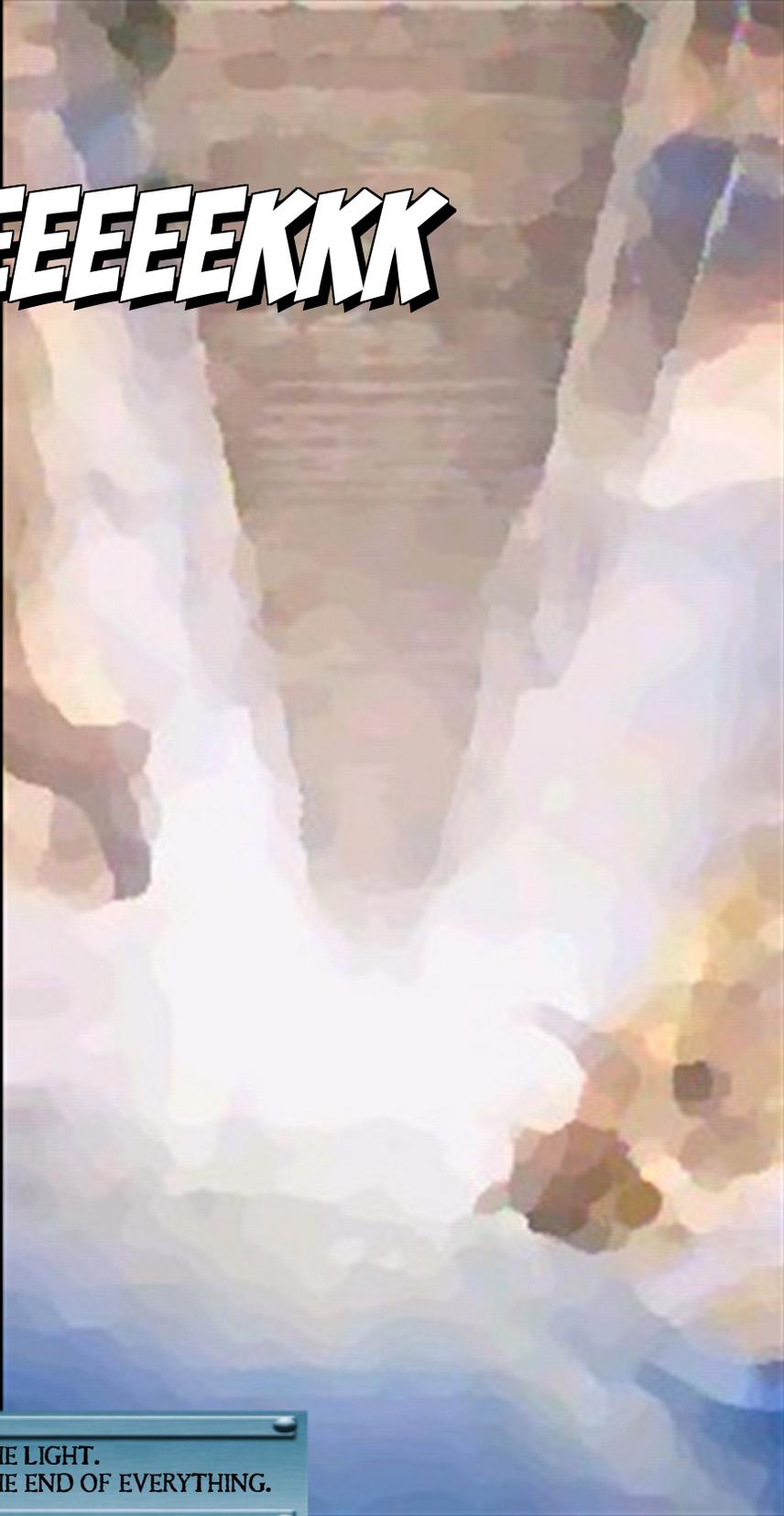
SO BE IT AND THE
HELL WITH YOU AND
YOUR GAMES, IT
HAS BEEN TOO
LONG...

I WILL BE
ONE GOD !

CLINK
CLANK

SKREEEE

EEEEEEEEKKK



THE LIGHT.
THE END OF EVERYTHING.

the
DARK

written by

MAX COTTICA

your copy is number

out of 25

WE LIVE.

WE DIE.

WE COME BACK.

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