

# KINGDOM



**THE PROMISED LAND**

DAN ABNETT ★ RICHARD ELSON



## **DEDICATIONS**

**DAN ABNETT**

*For Mike Conroy*

**RICHARD ELSON**

*For Richard Burton and Alan McKenzie.*

*Thanks for the break.*



# KINGDOM

THE PROMISED LAND

KINGDOM CREATED BY DAN ABNETT & RICHARD ELSON

# KINGDOM

## THE PROMISED LAND

**DAN ABNETT**

Writer

**RICHARD ELSON**

Artist

**REBELLION**

Creative Director and CEO: Jason Kingsley

Chief Technical Officer: Chris Kingsley

2000 AD Editor in Chief: Matt Smith

Graphic Design: Simon Parr & Luke Preece

Marketing and PR: Keith Richardson

Repro Assistant: Kathryn Symes

Graphic Novels Editor: Jonathan Oliver

Designer: Simon Parr

Original Commissioning Editor: Matt Smith

Originally serialised in *2000 AD* Progs 2007, 1518-1525, 2008, 1567-1576. Copyright © 2006, 2007 and 2008 Rebellion A/S. All rights reserved.  
Kingdom and all related characters, their distinctive likenesses and related elements featured in this publication are trademarks of Rebellion.

The stories, characters and incidents featured in this publication are entirely fictional.

Published by Rebellion, Riverside House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES, UK.  
[www.rebellion.co.uk](http://www.rebellion.co.uk)

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

For information on other *2000 AD* graphic novels, or if you have any comments on this book, please email [books@2000ADonline.com](mailto:books@2000ADonline.com)

To find out more about *2000 AD*, visit [www.2000ADonline.com](http://www.2000ADonline.com)

# INTRODUCTION

Once in a while, to my immense gratification, an idea just pops up. I would imagine (I can't say for certain) that I'm typical of most freelance writers in that I spend a good deal of my time deliberately working up ideas and crafting concepts. It's an active process. You can't expect to have all the notions you're going to need for a day's work just delivered to your head, ready for use, by some kind of divine FedEx. You have to work for them. You have to go looking for them. You have to dig them up and concoct them. You have to plan and invent. This is why freelance writing is classified as a 'job' rather than as 'fun'. It's not all velvet smoking jackets and flashbulbs, I can tell you.

But every now and then, an idea may, as it were, come looking for you. It arrives without warning or effort. It *is* delivered by some kind of divine FedEx.

This has happened to me, with any degree of significance, perhaps a half dozen times in the last twenty years. Hmmm... possibly less than that, even. Anyway, *Kingdom* was one of those times. I have no idea what started the idea off. I have no memory of the spark. All I can recall is that one minute I had nothing and the next – *pop!* – there was *Kingdom*, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, and the stork was asking me to sign for it.

As is always the case in such circumstances, there was no sender's address. *Kingdom* may have been born out of my ambitions to write a heroic fantasy story, full of blades and beasts and bloody swathes and mighty thews. It may have originated in my love of the post-event survival genre, especially the books of John Wyndham. It may have stemmed from Bruce Chatwin's book about the native Australian story-telling tradition, *The Songlines*. Or 1950's atomic monster movies. Or too much cheese at bedtime.

I really can't honestly say. I was just delighted to see it, and excited by it from the word go. To me (and I'm really not the person who should be judging this, but, hey...) it had something of the feel – the simple, dynamic feel – of the classic *2000 AD* strips that had inspired me to write in the first place. The concept and the main character were robust and easy to grasp, the excuses for action plentiful, the opportunity for catchphrases numerous, and the whole endeavor wasn't a million miles shy of satire. If not biting satire, then at least growling, whining satire.

Of course, even when so complete an idea turns up at your house, it's nothing without its realisation. Richard Elson and I had worked together before, most notably on the *Atavar* series, a process we'd both enjoyed a great deal. *Kingdom* took us to a new high. Rich's contribution in terms of both design and storytelling (not to mention, you know, colour) was fabulous. I don't believe he's produced better work, but I do believe that sentence should always appear with a 'yet' on the end.

By the time we got to book two, 'The Promised Land', which is also anthologised in this volume, we had become slightly more deliberate in our ideas. Our high concept was 'M. Night Shyamalan directs a simultaneous remake of *Witness* and *Them* from the storyboards of Frank Frazetta.

No, I'm kidding. I don't know where book two came from either.

**Dan Abnett**

*Maidstone, September 2008.*



# KINGDOM

Script: Dan Abnett  
Art: Richard Elson  
Letters: Ellie De Ville

Originally published in *2000 AD Progs* 2007, 1518-1525




THEY HAD BEEN OUT FOR EIGHT MONTHS. LONGEST WALK-AROUND THEY'D EVER DONE.

FURTHEST, TOO. THEY WERE NORTH OF BIG HILLS, NORTH OF EMPTY VALLEY, RIGHT ON THE SHORE OF THE SEA ITSELF.


THEY WERE TIRED AND THEY WERE COLD. THEY WERE LIVING OFF BODY FAT AND THE LAST OF THE FOOD BRICKS.



THEY WONDERED WHY THEY WERE BEING PUSHED SO FAR.



BUT EVERY DAY AT DAWN AND AT DUSK, THE URGINGS CAME, GUIDING THEM ON.



FAINT NOW, AT SUCH A DISTANCE, URGINGS ONLY THEY COULD HEAR, BUT CLEAR ENOUGH. THE MASTERS WANTED THEM TO GO ON.



AND THEY OBEYED BECAUSE THEY WERE A PACK, AND EVERY PACK WAS TRAINED TO OBEY.

THE PACK. THEY WERE ALL VETERANS, BLOODIED SOLDIERS. JACK SO WILD, RUN RUN SHAW, TOD OF MUCH SLAUGHTER, MARYAN FAITHFUL, LOUEY ARMSTRONG, OLD MAN GARY, GINNY WOOLF...

... AND GENE, WHO WAS THEIR LEADER. ALPHA MALE GENE THE HACKMAN.



*sofa  
sofa*

NO MORE LAND. PACK GO BACK NOW, GENE?



NO. ON, JACK, ON.

BUT THERE IS NO MORE LAND, URGINGS OR NO URGINGS.

NO. THERE IS LAND. MORE LAND. SEE, JACK, SEE.

THAT IS NOT RIGHT LAND, GENE. THAT IS LAND WHERE THERE SHOULDN'T BE LAND.

OLD MAN! TELL GENE THIS IS NOT RIGHT!



OLD MAN GARY WAS THE OLDEST OF THEM BY TWENTY YEARS. HE WAS WEAK IN SCRAPPING, BUT THEY KEPT HIM ON BECAUSE HE KNEW.

HE GAVE IT THE NAME.

LAND BRIDGE.

THEM MUSTA BUILT IT.

THEM. THIS IS THEM'S WORK.

THEM?

THIS IS WHY THE MASTERS URGED US HERE. TO SEE THIS.

LET US SEE IT.

SMOOTH, LIKE... NOT-ROCK.

I DO NOT LIKE IT, GENE. MAKE US GO BACK.

I HAVE NO WORD FOR IT EITHER, MARYAN.

SCENT!  
SCENT, GENE!

GROUND SOUNDS TOO.

GET WHET.





AND THEM CAME. A SKIRMISH PARTY, BUT ENOUGH TO KEEP A PACK IN WORK.



LOUEY ARMSTRONG DID NOT LIVE ANOTHER SUNSET.



NEITHER DID RUN RUN.



AND THEN THEM TOOK GINNY WOOLF TOO.

SHE HAD BEEN GENE'S LIFEMATE. FIVE YEARS THEY HAD ACHED AND LOVED.

THE MASTERS HAD PROMISED THEM LICENSE TO BREED.



NOW SHE WAS DEAD.

AND GENE, IN HIS WRATH, BECAME HIS NAME.



A HACKMAN.

AND THAT WAS THE SCRAPPING OF THAT DAY.



AND, AFTERWARDS, THEY LIT A FIRE, AND SAT AND ATE.

TELL US THE TALE, OLD MAN.

YES, TELL US THE TALE!

GENE? IS THIS PROPER TIME FOR THE TALE?



GO ON AND TELL IT.

THERE WAS ONLY ONE TALE, AND OLD MAN KNEW IT BEST.



THE TALE. THE TALE IS CALLED "TWO-FEET-WALK-ON-THE-GROUND".

ONCE WAS THIS TWO-FEET, TWO-FEET-WALK-ON-THE-GROUND, AND HIM HE HAD THE CALL OF THE WILD AND HIM HE RAN THE WORLD.



**BIG NOISE** HIM, BIG FELLAH. VERY PROUD. AND THEM, THEY DIDN'T LIKE TWO-FEET, NO, SIR, NOT AT ALL. HIM THEY HATED VERY MUCH.

RISE ON UP, THEY DID. RISE ON UP AND MAKE TWO-FEET RUN, RUN FAR AWAY TO THIS COLD PLACE.



ANARCHTICY!

LIKE YOU SAY.

SO THEM GOT TOGETHER, TIGHTER AND TIGHT. ALL MAKING ONE BIG BUZZING THING.

AND THEM THEY EAT UP THE WORLD AND OWN IT, LEFT AND RIGHT, UP AND DOWN, EAST AND WEST.



AND NORTH!

AND NORTH, MARYAN, BUT NOT SOUTH. NOT THIS COLD PLACE. NOT ANARCHTICY.



SO, TWO-FEET, HE COME HERE PRONTO, AND HE HIDES HERE, AND HE MAKE US, MAKE US SHARP AND TRUE. TOUGHER THAN TWO-FEET WE ARE, TOUGHER AND TOUGH.

HE MAKE US GOOD WITH HIS CLEVER STUFF, TO KEEP THEM AT BAY.



GOOD JOB, WE SAY. GOOD JOB, TWO-FEET. PACK AND PACK, WE DO WALK-AROUND, KEEP THE COLD PLACE CLEAN. TWO-FEET HE SLEEPS LONG TIME, BUT HE TELL US, KEEP THEM OFFA MY LAWN!

YES, HE DOES.

WHAT IS LAWN, OLD MAN?

I DUNNO. PART OF THE TALE, SO IT'S RIGHT.



HUSH YOU! GROUND SOUNDS.



GET WHET.



THEM CAME DOWN ALONG  
THE LAND-MEETS-SEA, OUT  
OF THE NIGHT.

THEM CAME SCUTTling DOWN  
THE LAST PIECE OF THE WORLD  
THEY HAD NOT YET ATE UP.



NO ONE KNEW IF THEM COULD HEAR  
OR TASTE OR SMELL OR EVEN SEE.

NO ONE HAD EVER FOUND OUT. THE  
MASTERS, THEY PROBABLY KNEW,  
BUT THEY HAD NEVER TOLD ANYBODY.

EVEN IF THEY COULDN'T  
HEAR OR TASTE OR  
SMELL OR EVEN SEE,  
THEM ALWAYS FOUND  
THINGS SURE ENOUGH.



AND GENE, HE KNEW THE  
ONE THING THEM ALWAYS  
FOUND THE QUICKEST.

THE ONE THING AS  
ALWAYS DREW THEM.





GET WHET!



FOLLOW ME!  
SCRAP THEM!

GENE KNEW THE CLEVER  
STUFF BECAUSE GENE  
WAS ALPHA MALE.



SCRAP THEM  
DEAD!

HE WAS  
TOUGHER  
AND TOUGH.



HE LED THE PACK ON  
THE WALK-AROUND,  
TO KEEP THE COLD  
PLACE CLEAN.

TO KEEP ANARCHTICY  
CLEAN, FOR THE MASTERS.

TO KEEP THEM OFFA  
THE MASTERS' LAWN.

AND WHEREVER GENE  
WENT WALK-AROUND...

... THE PACK  
ALWAYS FOLLOWED.

TOUGHER AND TOUGH.  
SHARP AND TRUE.

I GOT IT,  
GENE!

JACK SO WILD, THE  
EAGER THREE-YEARLING.

SEE ME **SCRAP**,  
GENE?

GOOD, JACK,  
GOOD.





TOP OF MUCH SLAUGHTER, WHO WAS BETA MALE TO GENE'S ALPHA.

YOU BIT, GENE? YOU TAKEN A HURTING?



MARYAN FAITHFUL, THE PACK DAM.

IF GENE'S BIT, HE'LL HEAL. HE'S GENE. HE'S STRONG.



AND OLD MAN GARY, LAST AND OLDEST.

OLD MAN WAS OLD, AND WEAK IN SCRAPPING.



HE HAD SEEN TWENTY YEARS MORE THAN ANY OF THEM, THIRTY MORE THAN JACK.

BUT HE HAD NOT LIVED THOSE YEARS WITHOUT LEARNING.

HIS MUSCLES WERE IN HIS HEAD, GENE ALWAYS SAID.

BUT THE PACK WAS NOT AS STRONG AS IT HAD BEEN THAT MORNING PREVIOUS.

IN THE LAST SCRAP, THEY HAD LOST THREE, ONE OF THEM GINNY, GENE'S LIFEMATE.

TOO MANY, GENE! PACK GO NOW?



THE LOSS STILL STABBED HIM, MADE HIM SCRAP-HAPPY TO PILE THEM UP DEAD.

MADE HIM HIS NAMESAKE. A HACKMAN.

NO, JACK, NO. PLENTY WORK HERE STILL.



TOO MANY MANY! GENE! GENE!

GAH! ENOUGH THEN.



RUN, JACK, RUN!

RUN, PACK, RUN!  
RUN ALL!





AND THAT WAS THE SCRAPPING OF THAT NIGHT.



WHEN THEY HAD RUN FAR ENOUGH, THEY DROPPED DOWN TO SLEEP. BONE TIRED, THEY WERE.



THEY HUDDLED IN. MARYAN CAME TO GENE'S SIDE. NOW GINNY WAS GONE, SHE SAW A CHANCE TO CLAIM HER PLACE AS THE ALPHA MALE'S MATE.

BUT HIS ARM HURT, AND HIS HEART HURT MORE.

NO.



NO, GENE? NO?

NO.



GENE HEARD HER GO TO TOD INSTEAD. TOD DID NOT SEND HER AWAY.

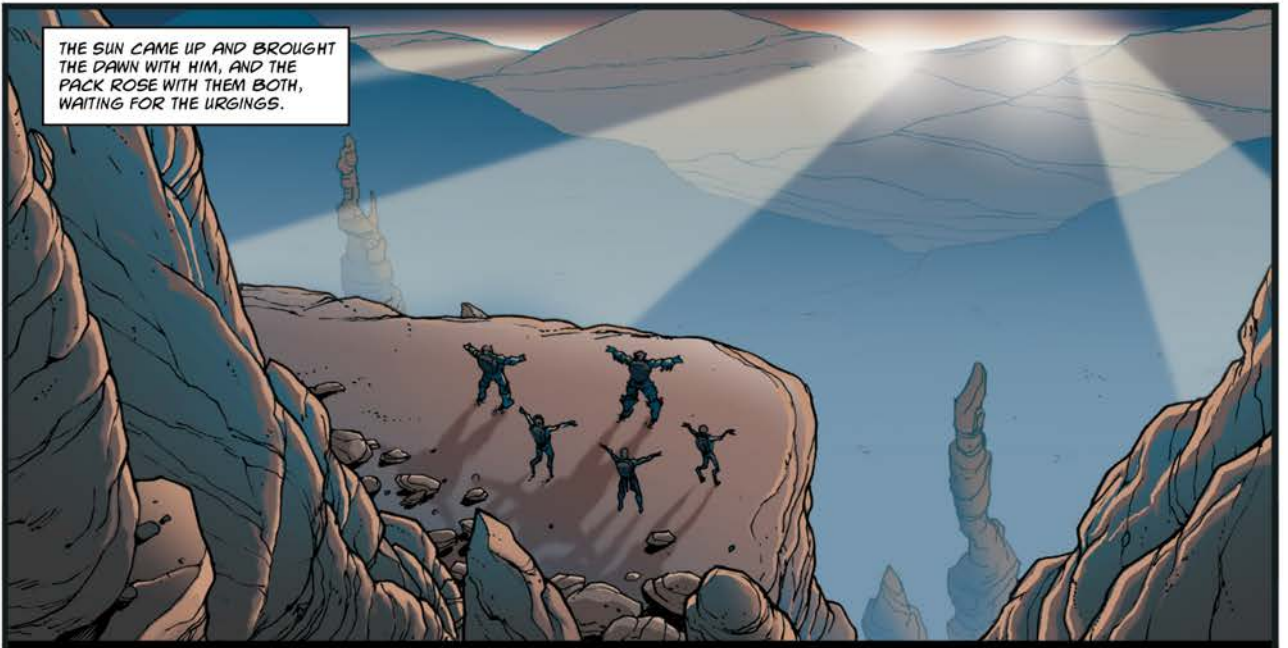
HE KNEW, IN A DAY OR LESS, TOD WOULD CHALLENGE HIM FOR ALPHA MALE. TOD HAD A FEMALE NOW. AND HE WAS TOUGHER AND TOUGH.



GENE THOUGHT THAT WOULD BE THE PROBLEM THE NEW SUN BROUGHT FOR HIM.

HE WAS WRONG.

THE SUN CAME UP AND BROUGHT THE DAWN WITH HIM, AND THE PACK ROSE WITH THEM BOTH, WAITING FOR THE URGINGS.



THEY HAD BEEN OUT FOR EIGHT MONTHS, THE LONGEST WALK-AROUND THEY'D EVER DONE.

EVERY DAY, AT DAWN AND DUSK, THE URGINGS HAD COME, GUIDING THEM ON.



BUT NOT THAT DAWN.

HNNH.



TROUBLED THE PACK WAS THEN. OLD MAN GARY....

... MARYAN FAITHFUL....

... GENE THE HACKMAN...

... JACK SO WILD...

... AND TOD OF MUCH SLAUGHTER.

WHERE ARE THE URGINGS?

WHY ARE THE MASTERS QUIET? HAVE WE DISPLEASED THEM, GENE?



HUSH, JACK, HUSH.

GENE WAS ALPHA MALE, SO HE KNEW THE CLEVER STUFF, BUT HE HAD NO ANSWERS.





OLD MAN? DO YOU KNOW WHY THE DAWN IS QUIET?

NO, GENE, I MUSTA SEEN THIRTY YEARS OF SCRAPPING.

NEVER IN THEM THIRTY YEARS HAVE THE URGINGS NOT COME.

WE MUSTA BEEN **BAD!** WE MUSTA DONE A **BAD THING** SOMEHOW, AND THE MASTERS ARE **ANGRY** AT US!

WHAT DID WE DO THAT WAS **BAD?** WHAT DID WE DO?

SHUT YOUR YAPPING, PUP. THIS IS A SIMPLE THING TO FIND A REASON FOR.

YEAH, TOD?

YEAH, GENE. ONLY A **DUMB-HEAD** WOULD NOT SEE IT.

WE'RE ALL **DUMB-HEADS**, ARE WE, TOD? TELL US, THEN. TELL US, **CLEVER TOD**.



THE MASTERS DON'T NEED TO URGE US TODAY BECAUSE NOTHING'S CHANGED.

THE MASTERS WANT US TO DO WHAT WE DID YESTERDAY, AND THE YESTERDAY BEFORE, AND THE YESTERDAY BEFORE.

WE DO THE WALK-AROUND AND KEEP THE COLD PLACE CLEAN.

THEY'VE **TOLD** US WHAT TO DO. THEY DON'T **NEED** TO TELL US AGAIN.



NO.



'NO'?



SOMETHING'S **WRONG**.  
NO MORE LAND, NO  
MORE URGINGS.

WE SHOULD GO  
BACK NOW. BACK  
HOME.

PACK GO **BACK**,  
GENE? PACK GO  
BACK, **NOW**?



YES, JACK, PACK GO BACK.  
TELL THE MASTERS WHAT WE'VE  
SEEN. TELL THE MASTERS ABOUT  
THE **LAND BRIDGE** THEM'S  
BUILT.

TELL THE MASTERS  
ANARCHTICLY AIN'T **SAFE**  
NO MORE.

WRONG. YOUR  
MOUTH IS **FULL** OF  
WRONG.

WE KEEP GOING.  
WE KEEP GOING WALK-  
AROUND SO THE MASTERS,  
THEY TELL US 'GOOD  
JOB'.



MY CHOICE. MY  
PACK. MY RULES.  
**NOT** YOURS.

GENE HAD ANTICIPATED THIS. HE  
KNEW TOD WOULD CHALLENGE  
HIM, SOONER OR LATER.

CONTEST HIM FOR  
ALPHA MALE, TOUGHER  
AND TOUGH.



MAYBE THE PACK  
SHOULD **NOT** BE  
YOURS. MAYBE **MY**  
RULES ARE  
BETTER.



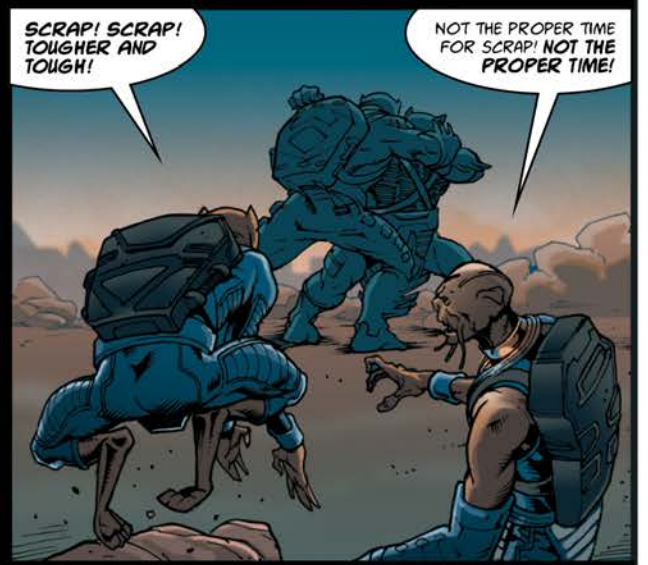
MAYBE YOU EAT SHIT AND **DIE**.  
MAYBE YOU ARE IN **LOVE** WITH  
ME AND WANT TO BE MY  
BITCH-BOY.

**MY** PACK. **MY** RULES.

UNLESS YOU  
GOT THE **BONE** TO  
DISAGREE.



I GOT THE  
**BONE**.





NO LONGER!

TOUGHER AND TOUGHER!  
TOUGHER AND TOUGHER!

MARYAN LOOKED ON. HER HEART SANG. HER MATE WOULD BE ALPHA MALE.

SHE WOULD BE THE ALPHA MALE'S MATE.



GROOKK!

OOOH! SMACK IN THE NADS! HAS TO HURT!



NO!

MY PACK.

UHGG!





THEM HAD FOUND THE PACK.



BUT THEM HAD FOUND SOMETHING ELSE AS WELL.



THEM HAD FOUND GENE THE HACKMAN. THEM HAD FOUND WHETTED DEATH.



THEM HAD FOUND  
A SCRAP.

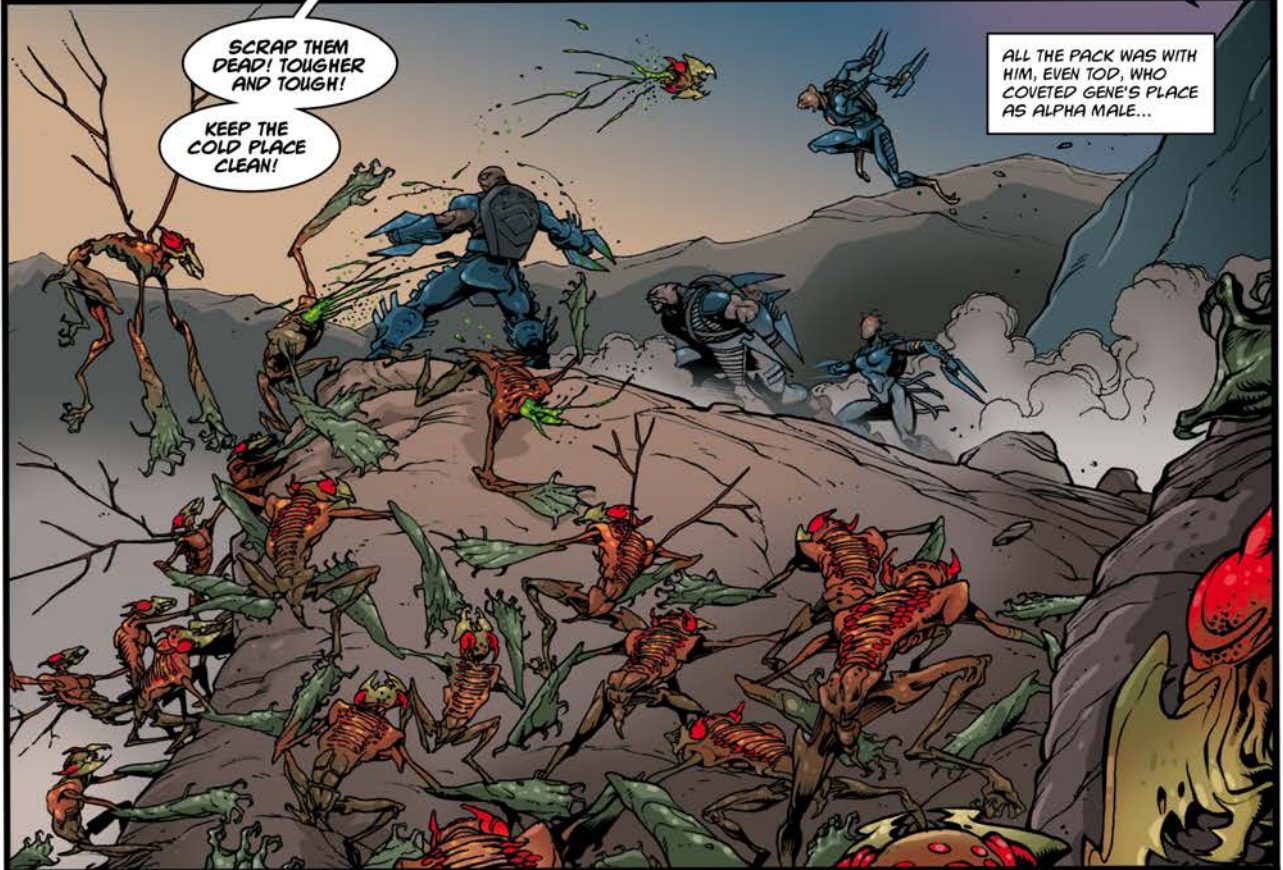


NYAHHH!

SCRAP THEM  
DEAD! TOUGHER  
AND TOUGH!

KEEP THE  
COLD PLACE  
CLEAN!

ALL THE PACK WAS WITH  
HIM, EVEN TOP, WHO  
COVETED GENE'S PLACE  
AS ALPHA MALE...





... ALL THE  
PACK, EXCEPT  
FOR ONE.

OLD MAN?  
OLD MAN?  
WHERE IS OLD  
MAN GARY?

I DON'T SEE  
HIM! YOU SEE HIM,  
JACK-PUP?

I AM HERE,  
I AM **HERE!** KEEP  
THEM BACK **OFFA**  
ME A BEAT!

I DON'T  
SEE OLD  
MAN **ANY-**  
**WHERE!**

snff-  
snff-



OLD MAN! WE NEED  
YOU SHARP AND  
TRUE! WHAT ARE YOU  
FOOLING AT?

**NOT**  
FOOLING, GENE!  
GIMME A BEAT!

snff-  
snff-

OLD MAN HAD TWENTY YEARS  
MORE THAN **ANY** OF THEM. HE  
HAD NOT LIVED THOSE YEARS  
WITHOUT **LEARNING.**

OLD MAN FELT THE GROUND SOUNDS AND THE TREMBLE OF THE ROCK SHELF CAREFULLY.



HE KNEW.

BREAK OFF! BREAK OFF, PACK, AND COME HELP THE OLD MAN!

NOW, YOU PUPS!



OLD MAN?

HELP ME ROLL THIS ROCK OVER, GENE! GHH! HELP ME!

BUT ONE ROCK WILL ONLY SQUASH ONE OF THEM.



WRONG, TOD, YOUR MOUTH IS FULL OF WRONG.

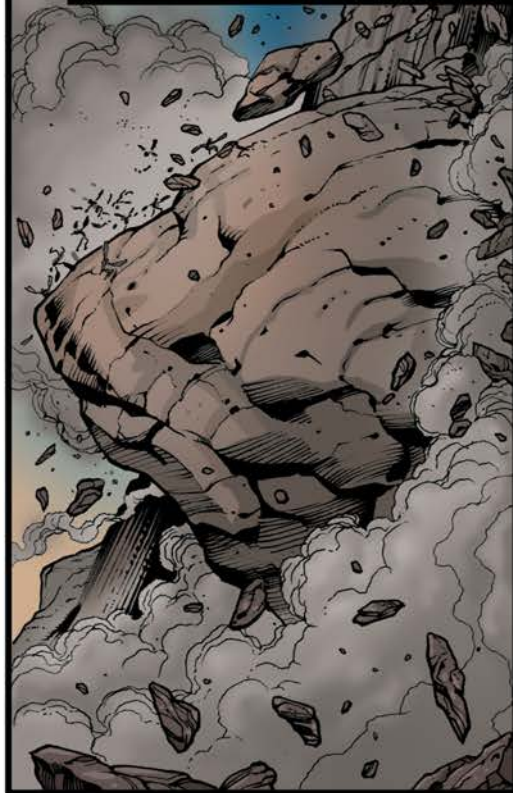
NGHHH!

NNHHH!



GNNAAHHH!







TOUGHER  
AND TOUGH...



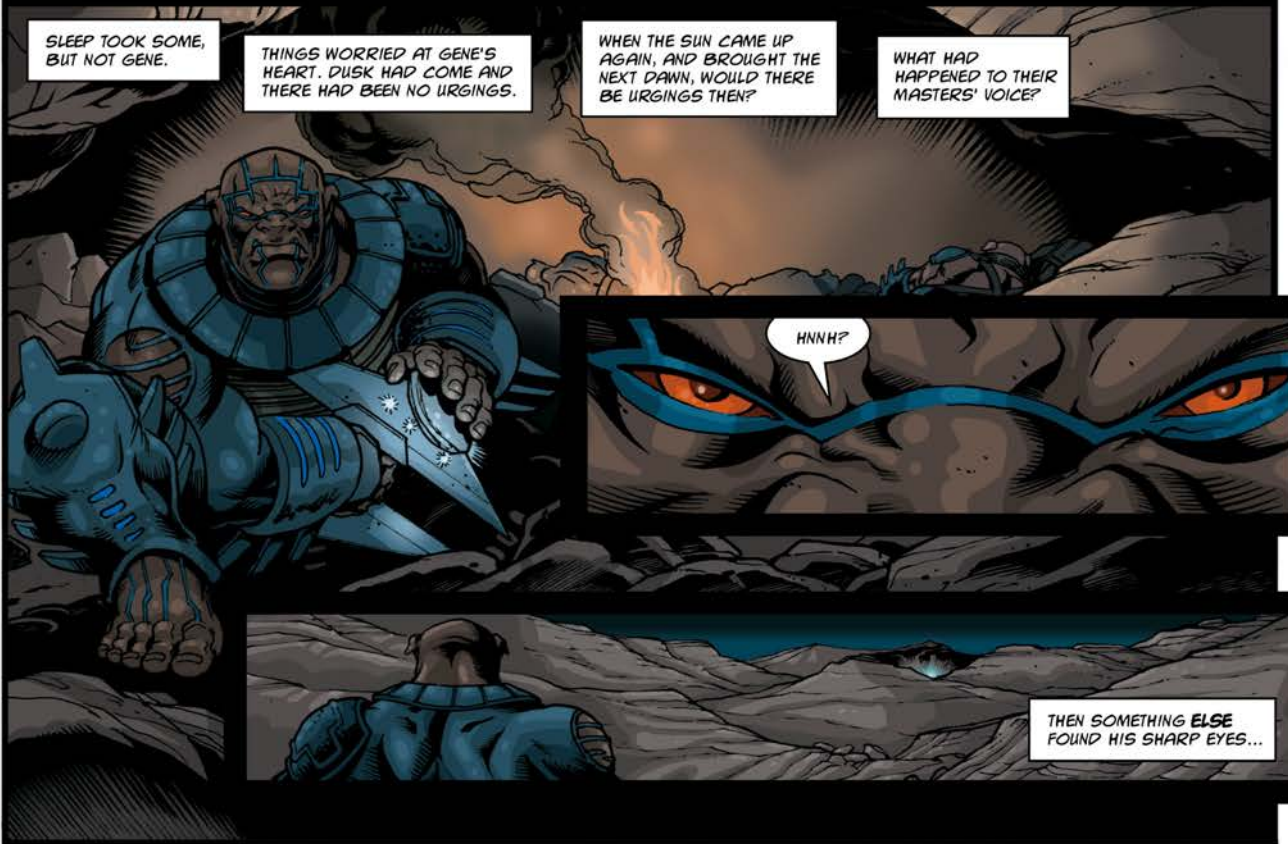
... MUSCLES IN  
YOUR HEAD, OLD  
MAN. SMART, OLD  
MAN, SMART.

HEH.



AND THAT WAS  
THE SCRAPPING  
OF THAT DAY.

THE PACK WENT ON UP  
INTO THE BIG HILLS,  
AND THEN NIGHT CAME  
AND THEY RESTED.



SLEEP TOOK SOME,  
BUT NOT GENE.

THINGS WORRIED AT GENE'S  
HEART. DUSK HAD COME AND  
THERE HAD BEEN NO URGINGS.

WHEN THE SUN CAME UP  
AGAIN, AND BROUGHT THE  
NEXT DAWN, WOULD THERE  
BE URGINGS THEN?

WHAT HAD  
HAPPENED TO THEIR  
MASTERS' VOICE?



HNNH?



THEN SOMETHING ELSE  
FOUND HIS SHARP EYES...

THE NEXT SUN-COME-UP WAS ANOTHER SUN-COME-UP WITHOUT URGINGS.

SO THE PACK STRUCK OUT FOR HOME.



KEEP UP! CLOSE UP, PACK!

THEY HAD BEEN OUT FOR EIGHT MONTHS, THE LONGEST WALK-AROUND THEY'D EVER DONE.

NOW THEY WERE GOING HOME AGAIN, TO TELL THE MASTERS WHAT THEY HAD FOUND.

AND TO BE TOLD, IN TURN, 'GOOD JOB, PACK, GOOD JOB.'



GOING HOME WAS GENE'S DECISION, AND HE WAS ALPHA MALE, THE LEADER OF THE PACK.

HE WAS A HACKMAN.



THEY WERE TIRED AND THEY WERE COLD. THEY HAD BEEN OUT SO LONG ON THE WALK-AROUND, THEY WERE LIVING OFF BODY FAT AND THE LAST OF THE FOOD BRICKS.

JACK-SO-WILD, THE LEAST IN YEARS, WAS HAPPY TO TURN BACK.



PACK GO BACK, GENE? PACK GO BACK?

YES, JACK, LIKE I TOLD YOU, PACK GO ALL-AWAY HOME.

TOD OF MUCH SLAUGHTER WAS LESS HAPPY. ALREADY, HE HAD GOT THE BONE ENOUGH TO CHALLENGE GENE AS ALPHA.

GENE!

YOU CALL MY NAME, TOD?





WHY YOU STOPPED, TOD?

THIS IS **NOT** THE WAY, GENE. WE WANNA GO ALL-A-WAY HOME, WE GOTTA TAKE THE DRY SLOPES THROUGH TO EMPTY VALLEY.



WE WILL. FIRST WE SWING **THIS** A-WAY.

WHY, GENE? THIS A-WAY IS **NOT** ALL-A-WAY HOME.



MY PACK. MY RULES.



NOT GOOD ENOUGH, GENE. NOT NO MORE. **WHY** THIS A-WAY?



LAST NIGHT, I SAW A **LIGHT** UP IN THE PEAKS. PACK GO LOOK WHAT IT WAS.



NO, NO, NO! FIRST YOU SAY WALK-AROUND, THEN YOU SAY ALL-A-WAY HOME, **NOW** YOU SAY GO FIND SOME **LIGHT**?

NO, GENE, **NO**. NOT **THIS** TIME. YOU WALK US IN CIRCLES SO TIGHT, OUR HEADS STICK UP OUR **ARSES**.

NO, GENE. **NO**.



MY PACK. MY RULES. YOU GOT THE BONE AGAIN, TOD?

NO! NO MORE SCRAPPING! NO MORE!



BE QUIET, OLD MAN, I AIN'T GONNA SCRAP WITH GENE NO MORE. GENE, HE'S ALPHA MALE, TOUGHER AND TOUGH.

AIN'T THAT RIGHT, GENE THE HACKMAN?

YEAH.



YOU GO FIND YOUR LIGHT, ALPHA. ME, I'M GOING ALL-A-WAY HOME.

WHO'S WITH ME?

MARYAN WAS, OF COURSE. SHE WAS TOD'S MATE. AS FOR OLD MAN GARY...



PACK IS THE PACK IS THE PACK. I DO WALK-AROUND WITH GENE. WHERE GENE GOES, THERE I AM.



JACK?

JACK SO WILD SO WANTED TO GO BACK. HE WAS YOUNG, AND HE MISSED HOME.

BUT GENE WAS GENE, SHARP AND TRUE.

I... I GO WITH GENE. WHERE GENE GOES, THERE I AM.



GOOD, JACK, GOOD.



UH-HUH. SO THAT'S THE WAY IT'LL BE, THEN.

SO LONG, GENE.



GENE TURNED HIS BACK, BUT JACK WATCHED UNTIL TOD AND MARYAN WERE OUT OF SIGHT.

HE WOULD NEVER SEE THEM AGAIN.



SO LONG, TOP... SO LONG, MARYAN...



THE DAY GOT LATER, AND THE SUN GOT HEAVIER. NIGHT WAS GETTING READY FOR HIS WALK-AROUND THE SKY.

THE LIGHT, GENE? WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

LIKE A LIGHT, OLD MAN. ARE THERE TYPES?



OH YEAH. ONE LIGHT IS LIKE THE SUN, ONE IS LIKE THE LIGHTNING, ONE IS LIKE THE STARS-AT-NIGHT, ONE IS LIKE A REST-FIRE —

LIKE A STAR, THEN, OLD MAN. LIKE A STAR-AT-NIGHT, BUT ON AND OFF.

COULD IT BE A STAR-AT-NIGHT THAT HAS FALLEN DOWN ON ANARCHTICY?

DO THEY FALL DOWN? WHAT HOLDS THEM UP? WILL IT BE HOT?



HEH HEH HEH! PUP-QUESTIONS! YOU HEAR 'EM, GENE? YOU HEAR THE QUESTIONS THE LITTLE FELLAH ASK?

GENE?

THEY HAD BEEN DEAD LONG TIME. DRY-DEAD LIKE PAPER IN THE COLD OF THE COLD PLACE.

THEY HAD BEEN A PACK TOO, ONCE.



DEADER AND DEAD.

YOU KNOW 'EM, OLD MAN?

HIM, THAT'S RIP AND TORN. HE WAS ALPHA.

THAT WOULD BE BAZ WRATHBONE, AND THAT... MAYBE... I DUNNO, GENE. THE FACE IS ALL GONE.



W-WHAT KILLED THEM, GENE? WHAT KILLED THEM?

ANARCHTICY.

RAW BONES, JACK. STARVED, THEY DID.

WILL WE STARVE, OLD MAN?

NO, JACK. GENE WILL LOOK AFTER US, TOUGHER AND TOUGH.



OH, WE WON'T STARVE.

WE'LL BE TOO BUSY RUNNING.



THEM CAME DOWN THE VALLEY,  
FASTER AND FASTER. NONE OF  
THEM, NOT EVEN OLD MAN, HAD  
SEEN THEM LIKE THAT BEFORE.

NEW KIND. NEW  
BREED. FAST KIND.

THEM HAD SENT NEW BREEDS  
ACROSS THE LAND BRIDGE  
INTO THE COLD PLACE.



NEW BREEDS THAT A PACK  
COULD NOT OUTFRONT...



... OR OUTFIGHT.



UHHH!  
GENE! GENE!



GENE!

JACK!



NO, GENE, NO!



JACK SO WILD  
HAD FALLEN.

THERE WAS NO WAY HE  
COULD RUN ANYMORE, NOT  
WITH A SNAPPED ANKLE.

LOOKING UP, HE SAW  
THEM COMING FOR HIM.



A WHOLE NEW BREED  
OF THEM, COMING IN  
SKITTLE-SCUTTLE FAST.

FEAR TURNED JACK'S  
BLOOD TO SLUDGE, AND  
HIS LIMBS TO LEAD.

NO, GENE,  
NO!

JACK! RUN,  
JACK, RUN!


BUT GENE WAS TOO  
SLOW THIS TIME.



GENE WAS COMING BACK FOR HIM,  
IGNORING OLD MAN'S YELLING. GENE  
HAD ALWAYS LOOKED OUT FOR  
JACK-PUP, TOUGHER AND TOUGH.



THEM GOT TO JACK  
FIRST AND BIT HIM UP,  
AND THAT WAS HIS END.



ALL GENE HAD  
LEFT THEN...



... WAS HIS WRATH.

RRRAAARHHH!



SCRAP-HAPPY WRATH.  
VENGEANCE WRATH.

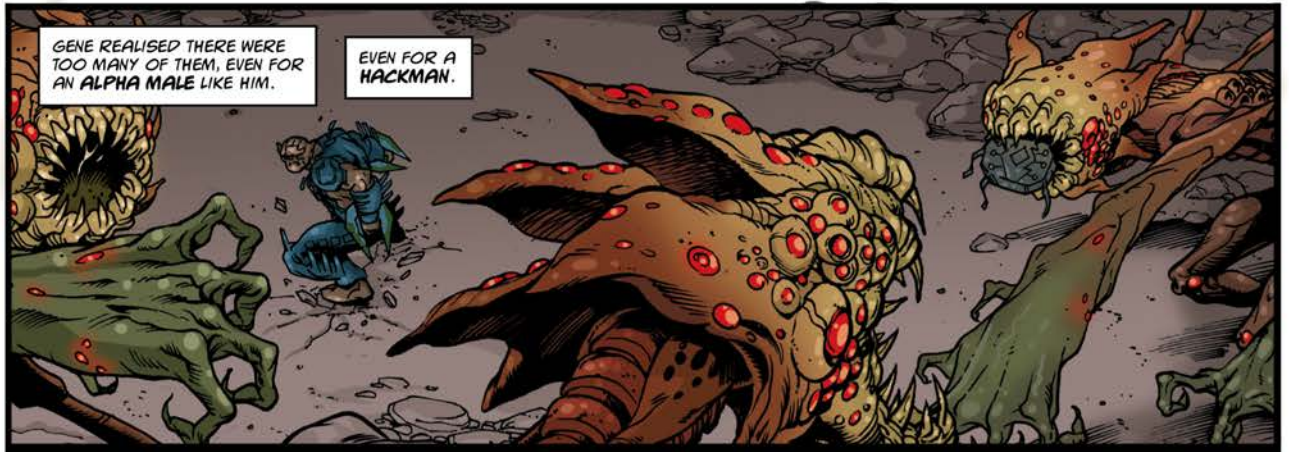


YOU WANT  
A TASTE?



GENE REALISED THERE WERE TOO MANY OF THEM, EVEN FOR AN ALPHA MALE LIKE HIM.

EVEN FOR A HACKMAN.



HE KNEW HE'D BEEN WRONG TO GO BACK FOR POOR JACK-PUP.

ALL HE'D MANAGED TO DO WAS GET HIMSELF BITTEN UP TOO.



YAAAAAAGHHH!



NHH! NHHHHH!  
NHHH!

VABBOOOOOMM!

GNNHH!

VADDOOOM!

VADDOOOM!

AND THAT WAS THE  
SCRAPPING OF THAT DAY.

A character in a blue, segmented suit stands in a rocky, mountainous landscape. The scene is dimly lit with some light rays filtering through the rocks.

OLD MAN?  
OLD MAN?

GENE HAD NOT SEEN OLD MAN GARY SINCE THE START OF THE SCRAP.

HE HOPED OLD MAN HAD RUN, OR HID, OR BOTH.

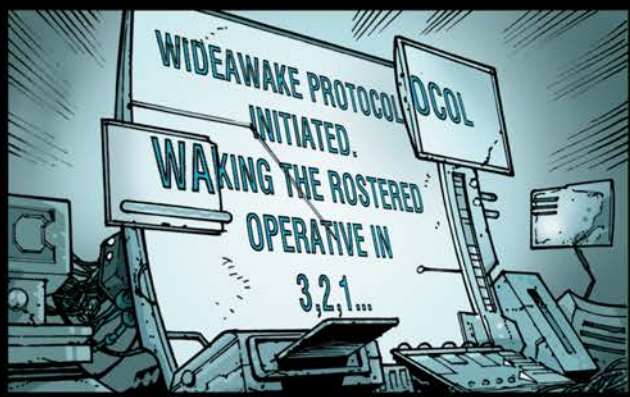
The character is lying on the ground in a rocky, mountainous landscape. The scene is dimly lit with some light rays filtering through the rocks.

MAYBE OLD MAN HAD HID IN THIS PLACE. MAYBE THIS PLACE WAS WHERE THE LIGHT HAD COME FROM.

MAYBE THESE GATE POSTS HAD KILLED THEM WITH THE BURNING BEAMS.

A close-up of the character's face, showing a determined and somewhat weary expression. The character has blue markings on their face and glowing orange eyes.

GENE WASN'T SURE. HE'D TAKEN A BAD HITTING AND LOST BLOOD, SO HE WASN'T SURE OF ANYTHING MUCH...





JESUS BLOODY HELL...



WHY THE HELL HAVE I BEEN WOKEN?

I FEEL LIKE SHIT, YOU KNOW THAT? LIKE SHIT.

HEL-LO? ARE YOU FRIGGING LISTENING?

OUTPOST COMCON IS MONITORING YOUR VERBALISATION. THE TONE WAS PRESUMED TO BE RHETORICAL.

DO YOU HAVE A SPECIFIC QUESTION?

YES, COMCON. I HAVE A SPECIFIC BLOODY QUESTION. WHY HAVE I BEEN WOKEN UP? IS IT THE FIFTY-YEAR CHECK? IT'S THE FIFTY-YEAR CHECK, RIGHT?

WASN'T IT GRIFFIN'S TURN, THE NEXT FIFTY-YEAR CHECK? WHY ISN'T HE HAULING HIS FROSTBITTEN ARSE OUT OF CRYO?

IT IS NOT THE FIFTY-YEAR CHECK.



IT'S NOT? REALLY?

THE LAST FIFTY-YEAR CHECK WAS CONDUCTED BY OPERATIVE GRIFFIN THIRTY-SEVEN YEARS AGO. YOU HAVE NOT BEEN AWAKE FOR EIGHTY-SEVEN YEARS.



CHRIST, NO WONDER I FEEL LIKE SHIT...

THE BODY CAN'T TAKE IT, YOU KNOW? NOT THIS LONG IN CRYO. IT WAS NEVER SUPPOSED TO LAST THIS LONG.

TOOK A YEAR'S SUPPLY OF STIMS JUST TO STOP MY ORGANS FROM PACKING UP WHEN YOU BROUGHT ME ROUND.

DON'T DENY IT. I KNOW. I READ THE MED-CONSOLE EVERY WIDEAWAKE. MORE DETOX PURGES, BLOOD-SCRUBS, TRANSPLANTS FROM THE ORGAN BANK...



I'M THIRTY-TWO, COMCON. IN 'AWAKE' YEARS. THIRTY-BLOODY-TWO. LOOK AT ME, HOW OLD AM I? IN REAL MONEY, I MEAN?

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-THREE YEARS OLD.



EIGHTEEN HUN...?

JESUS CHRIST. I'D LOST COUNT. EIGHTEEN HUNDRED?

AND FIFTY-THREE.

YEAH, LET'S NOT FORGET THOSE.

THIS IS NO KIND OF LIFE FOR A MAN. I'D WEEP IF MY TEAR DUCTS WEREN'T PACKED WITH PERMAFROST.



A FEW DECADES, TOPS, THAT WAS ALL IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE. A FEW FRIGGING DECADES.

SO, SPILL. WHY AM I AWAKE IF IT'S NOT THE FIFTY-YEAR CHECK?

PROCEED TO THE REPAIR SUITE.

THE REPAIR SUITE? WHY? WE NEVER USE IT.

PROCEED TO THE REPAIR SUITE. THERE HAS BEEN A PERIMETER INFRACTION.



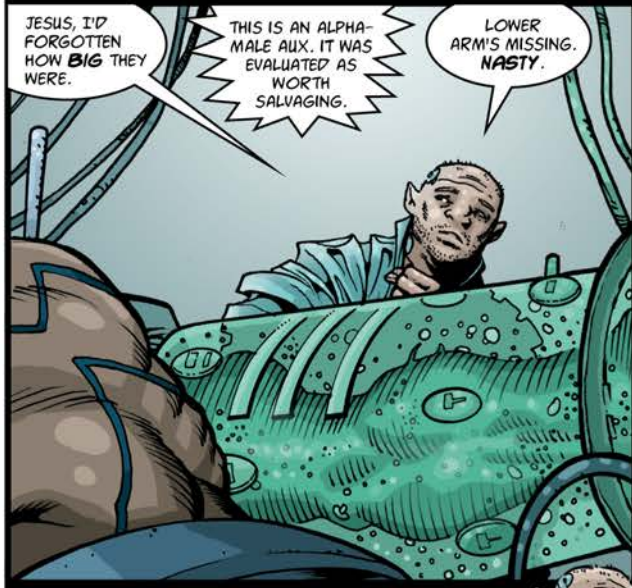
A PERIMETER INFRACTION? OH JESUS BLOODY HELL...



WHAT'S **THAT** DOING IN HERE? WHAT THE **HELL** IS **THAT** DOING IN HERE?

COMCON, WHY THE **HELL** DID YOU LET IT IN?

THE AUX WAS IN DISTRESS. IT HAD SUSTAINED MASSIVE INJURY.



JESUS, I'D FORGOTTEN HOW **BIG** THEY WERE.

THIS IS AN ALPHA-MALE AUX. IT WAS EVALUATED AS WORTH SALVAGING.

LOWER ARM'S MISSING. **NASTY.**



IT HAD BEEN BITTEN OFF.

BITTEN? JESUS **CRAP!** THE **BUGS** ARE HERE?

MULTIPLE XENOPTERA FORMS WERE IDENTIFIED AND ELIMINATED BY THE SENTRY BATTERIES. THE AUTO SYSTEMS LOCATED THIS AUX AND BROUGHT IT INSIDE FOR GROW-PAIR THERAPY.



SHIT...

OKAY, YOU WERE RIGHT TO WAKE ME. WE NEED TO RUN A FULL-AREA SCAN, AND WORK OUT WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON OUTSIDE.

WE'D BETTER CONTACT THE **OTHER** OUTPOSTS IN THE ZONE AND GET THEM WIDEAWAKE TOO.

MESSAGES HAVE BEEN SENT. THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPLIES.

NO REPLIES? BUT—



—GGGHKKK!

GHKKK!  
GAAKKK!

YOU WILL TELL GENE  
WHERE HE IS.

WHERE IS  
THIS?



YOU WILL TELL GENE  
NOW.

URRHHHK! JESUS!  
JESUS!

I WAS SAYING... IF  
YOU STOP THROTTLING ME, I'LL  
GLADLY TELL YOU!

THANKS A LOT,  
COMCON! THANKS A  
BLOODY LOT! YOU LET AN  
ANIMAL INSIDE, THIS IS  
WHAT HAPPENS!



WHO ARE YOU  
TALKING TO?

LOOK, PLEASE  
DON'T HURT ME. PLEASE.  
I'M ON YOUR SIDE. I... I  
MADE YOU, SEE?

YOUR MOUTH IS  
FULL OF WRONG. THE  
MASTERS MADE GENE  
HACKMAN.



WELL, I DIDN'T MEAN I  
MADE YOU PERSONALLY.  
IT WAS WRONG OF ME TO  
SAY THAT. I MEANT WE  
MADE YOU. HUMANS  
MADE YOU.

THE MASTERS? IS THAT  
WHAT YOU CALL US?

THAT IS WHAT I CALL THE  
MASTERS. YOU ARE NOT ONE OF THE  
MASTERS. I HAVE SEEN THEM, AT HOME. THEY  
ARE TALL, AND MADE OF SHINY METAL.



OH, YOU MEAN THE SERVITOR ROBOTS. THEY'RE NOT THE MASTERS. CHRIST, NO. THEY JUST DO THE WORK FOR US WHILE WE'RE IN CRYO.

SO WHERE IS HOME? YOUR **BASE STATION**, YEAH? DO YOU COME FROM ONE OF THE AUX PLANTS IN ANTARCTICA CENTRAL?

WHAT IS AN AUX PLANT?

HUH? WHAT IS THIS ON ME?



OH, CAREFUL! DON'T TOUCH THAT! IT'S A **GROW-PAIR SHEATH**. IT'S REBUILDING YOUR LIMB.

REBUILDING?

YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT. **GENE**, WAS IT? THAT'S RIGHT, GENE, IT'S MAKING YOU ALL BETTER.



ARE YOU...

ARE YOU **REALLY** TWO-FEET-WALK-ON-THE-GROUND?

I GUESS I AM.

YOU ARE SMALL AND **SICKLY**.



WHAT CAN I SAY? EIGHTEEN **HUNDRED** FRIGGING YEARS OLD, I'M NOT THE MAN I WAS.

WHO IS, THESE DAYS?



IF YOU ARE ONE OF THE MASTERS, YOU WILL KNOW THINGS. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE **URGINGS**?

ALSO, WHERE IS OLD MAN GARY?

I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT URGINGS ARE, SUNSHINE. SORRY.

COMCON, DID WE PICK UP ANOTHER AUX?

AFFIRMATIVE.

GAH!  
WHAT IS THAT VOICE?

RELAX, THAT'S JUST COMCON, THE OUTPOST'S A.I. SYSTEM.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THIS OTHER AUX THEN, COMCON?

IT WAS OLD AND WEAK. IT WAS EVALUATED AS OBSOLETE AND NOT WORTH SALVAGING. IT WAS TAKEN TO SECTION EIGHTEEN FOR—

OKAY, OKAY! THAT'S FINE, COMCON! THANKS. I'XNAY, OKAY?

WHAT DID IT SAY? WHERE IS OLD MAN?

HE'S FINE. HE'S... HE'S JUST FINE. EVERYTHING'S OKAY, WE THOUGHT HE... UH, DESERVED A GOOD OLD REST, AFTER ALL HIS EFFORTS...

SO WE... UH, WE SENT HIM TO A LOVELY FARM IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, WHERE HE... HE CAN LIVE THE REST OF HIS LIFE IN PEACE. IT'S LOVELY THERE. HE'LL ENJOY IT.

HE DESERVED A REST, DIDN'T HE? HE WAS OLD, SO THAT'S NICE, REALLY, ISN'T IT?

IT IS GOOD. OLD MAN GARY DID DESERVE A REST. HE WAS OLD. HE WAS MY FRIEND, SO I AM HAPPY FOR HIM.

THIS... FARM. IT IS A NICE PLACE?

IT'S FABULOUS. HONESTLY. I'VE SEEN PICTURES.

SO, GENE, TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF.

I AM GENE. I AM HACKMAN. MY PACK IS GONE. THAT IS ALL THERE IS ABOUT ME.

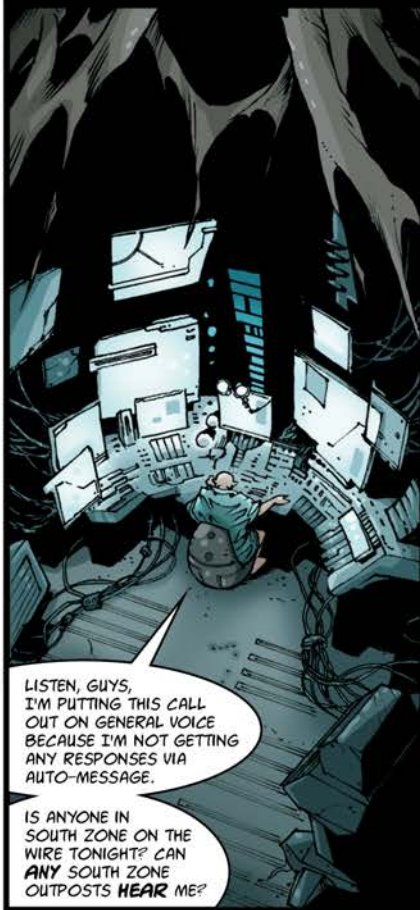
LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT THE LAND BRIDGE.

THE... WHAT?



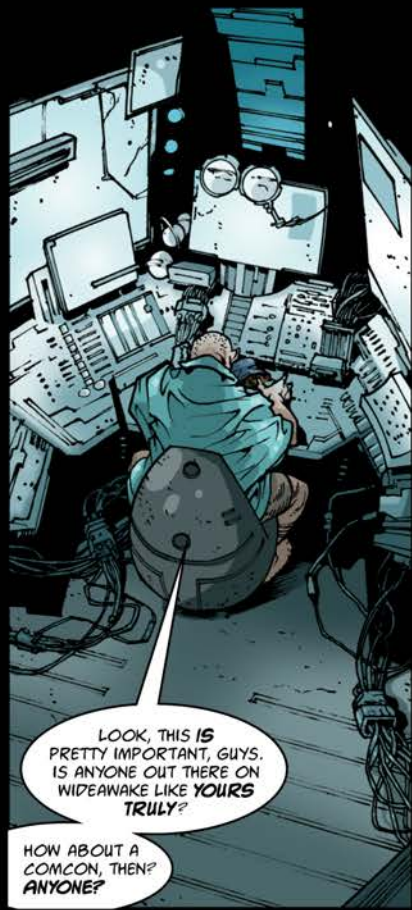
AHEM. H-HELLO?  
**HELLO?** THIS IS OPERATIVE  
SYMONS CALLING FROM THE  
SOUTH EIGHT OUTPOST.

ANYONE OUT  
THERE? ANYONE  
**AWAKE** OUT THERE?



LISTEN, GUYS,  
I'M PUTTING THIS CALL  
OUT ON GENERAL VOICE  
BECAUSE I'M NOT GETTING  
ANY RESPONSES VIA  
AUTO-MESSAGE.

IS ANYONE IN  
SOUTH ZONE ON THE  
WIRE TONIGHT? CAN  
**ANY** SOUTH ZONE  
OUTPOSTS **HEAR** ME?



LOOK, THIS IS  
PRETTY IMPORTANT, GUYS.  
IS ANYONE OUT THERE ON  
WIDEAWAKE LIKE **YOURS**  
**TRULY?**

HOW ABOUT A  
COMCON, THEN?  
**ANYONE?**



IT'S PRETTY BLOODY  
CREEPY **NONE** OF YOU IS  
ANSWERING, GUYS, LET ME  
TELL YOU. **BIG TIME**  
CREEPY.

ON THE **PLUS**  
SIDE. CHEESE AND  
ONION SNACKIOS.



OKAY, I'LL GET TO IT. MY COMCON'S  
PULLED ME OUT OF CRYO BECAUSE WE'VE  
GOT BUGS HERE.

REPEAT, I AM  
**CONFIRMING** XENOPTERA CONTACT  
AT SOUTH EIGHT.

SENTRY BATTERIES FRIED THEM,  
BUT THERE MAY BE MORE, SO CONSIDER  
THIS **NOTICE**. ANY COMCONS HEARING THIS  
MAY WANT TO WIDEAWAKE A **DUTY**  
**OPERATIVE** ASAP.



WE, UH, WE HAD A **PERIMETER INFRACTION** TONIGHT. TOOK IN AN INJURED AUX, A BIG ALPHA-MALE. THE AUX **CONFIRMED** THE BUG ACTIVITY.

AND THAT'S NOT **ALL**. THE AUX SAYS THERE'S A **LAND BRIDGE**. THE BUGS HAVE BUILT A LAND BRIDGE.

THEY'RE ON THE **LAWN**, PEOPLE.



WELL, SO, UH, I LOOK FORWARD TO GETTING A CALL BACK SOON, OKAY? I'M A BIT **FREAKED** WE CAN'T RAISE ANY OF YOU GUYS. DO YOU THINK THERE MIGHT BE A COM PROBLEM? I **HOPE** IT'S JUST A COM PROBLEM, I REALLY DO.



OKAY, THIS IS SYMONS AT EIGHT. ATOMIC CLOCK SAYS IT'S JUNE FIFTEEN, 3965 ANNO FRIGGING DOMINI. CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT? WHERE DOES THE TIME GO, EH?

SO, I'M JUST WAFFLING NOW. SOMEONE GET BACK TO ME, OKAY? **SOON**, OKAY? I THINK...



... I THINK WE COULD BE IN **BIG BLOODY TROUBLE** HERE.

SOUTH EIGHT OUTPOST OUT.



WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?



**JESUS!**

**FRIG, GENE!** I THOUGHT YOU WERE ASLEEP, FELLAH!

SNEAKING UP ON ME LIKE THAT...



WHO WERE YOU TALKING TO?

I WAS, UH, I WAS TRYING TO RAISE THE **OTHER** OUTPOSTS. ON THE **RADIO**, YEAH?



RAY-DE-OH.



GIVE THE DUDE A PRIZE.

TROUBLE IS, NO ONE SEEMS TO BE LISTENING. THAT'S NOT GOOD. MAKES ME WORRIED.

IT'S TOO DAMN QUIET, YOU KNOW? "IT'S TOO DAMN QUIET." YEAH, LIKE IN THE MOVIES?



GENE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT MOO-FEES IS.



RIGHT, RIGHT. WHICH IS ODD, 'CAUSE I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU WERE GREAT IN THE FRENCH CONNECTION.

OKAY, BEFORE YOUR TIME. THEY NAMED YOU ALL AFTER STARS, YOU KNOW?



STARS?

MOVIE STARS, WRITERS, POP CULTURE, STUFF LIKE THAT. I DUNNO WHY, SO DON'T ASK. PROBABLY SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA, LIKE NAMING PETS.

THEN AGAIN, HIDING IN ANTARCTICA SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA TOO, SO GO FRIGGING FIGURE.



ANARCHTICY.

HUH?

ANARCHTICY. THAT IS WHAT THE COLD PLACE IS CALLED. NOT WHAT YOU SAID.



OH, OKAY, **SURE**, WHY NOT? LIKE I'M GONNA ARGUE WITH YOU.

HOW'S THAT ARM?

IT WAS AN ARM AND THEN IT WASN'T. NOW IT IS AGAIN.

IT IS GOOD. MAYBE YOU **ARE** WHAT YOU SAY YOU ARE. A **MASTER**. YOU HAVE MADE THIS ARM. MAYBE YOU **DID** MAKE ME.

WELL, GROW-PAIR TECHNOLOGY IS JUST AN EXTENSION OF THE **GENE-BREEDING TECH** WE DEVELOPED WHEN THE WAR BEGAN. I MEAN, WE NEEDED TROOPS. DOG SOLDIERS. OKAY, **LOUSY** PUN, I KNOW, BUT **SERIOUSLY**.

WE NEEDED INEXPENSIVE FRONTLINE TROOPS TO KEEP THE BUGS AT BAY WHILE WE PREPPED FOR THE **BIG SLEEP**.


I ALWAYS WONDERED, WERE WE **KIDDING** OURSELVES BACK THEN? KIDDING OURSELVES THAT WE **COULD** JUST CRYO AWAY AND WAIT FOR THE BUGS TO DIE BACK?

I MEAN, THE BUGS HAD CONQUERED **EVERYWHERE** BY THEN. WE WERE ON THE ROPES. SIX MILLION HUMANS REDUCED TO **FORTY THOUSAND**.


I GUESS WE WOULD HAVE TRIED **ANYTHING**.

MAN, I ALWAYS REMEMBER THIS...


WHEN I WAS A KID IN HIGH SCHOOL, I HAD THIS SCIENCE TEACHER, MR PLIMPTON. FUNNY, I REMEMBER IT LIKE IT WAS **YESTERDAY**. HE SAID WE WERE JUST **TEENANTS**, RENTING THE PLANET. THE **INSECTS** WOULD RULE THE WORLD ONE DAY.



ANTS, TERMITES, WHATEVER. THEY WERE THE **INHERITORS**, HE SAID, HEIRS IN WAITING. THEY'D RULE THE WORLD, CONQUER IT **COMPLETELY**, AND REIGN LIKE THE DINOSAURS DID, FOR A HUNDRED AND FIFTY MILLION YEARS.



MAMMALS WERE JUST AN **ABERRATION**, A BRIEF **PASSING** PHASE IN MR PLIMPTON'S OPINION. **OPPORTUNISTS**, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A TINY HIATUS BETWEEN **DYNASTIES**.



WE ALL LAUGHED, THE WHOLE CLASS. MR PLIMPTON SIMPLY SHOOK HIS HEAD.





TREAT YOURSELF. THEY WERE BUILT FOR YOUR KIND. FRIG KNOWS, A BLOKE LIKE ME CAN BARELY LIFT SOME OF THOSE BLADES.

GOOD. GOOD. TOUGHER AND TOUGH.

YEAH. I MIGHT NEED YOU TO BE TOUGHER AND TOUGH BEFORE LONG.



WHAT IS THIS?

THAT? OH GENE, YOU'RE GONNA LOVE THAT.



ATTENTION, ATTENTION. PERIMETER INFRACTION. MULTIPLE CONTACTS.

COMCON? WHY CAN'T I HEAR THE SENTRY BATTERIES?

THE SENTRY BATTERIES ARE OFF-LINE.



WHAT? THEY'RE FRIGGING WHAT?

OH JESUS, WE ARE SO DEAD.



GENE? LET ME SHOW YOU HOW THIS WORKS...



THE MASTER HAD  
**ALSO** GIVEN GENE  
A NEW DEATH TOY.

GENE HAD DECIDED THAT,  
IN RETURN FOR THESE  
TREATS, HE OUGHT TO GET  
THEM **OFFA** THE LAWN.





COME ON! GENE IS HERE!

GENE WILL SCRAP YOU GOOD!



BRRRAAPPPPP!



TOUGHER AND TOUGH!

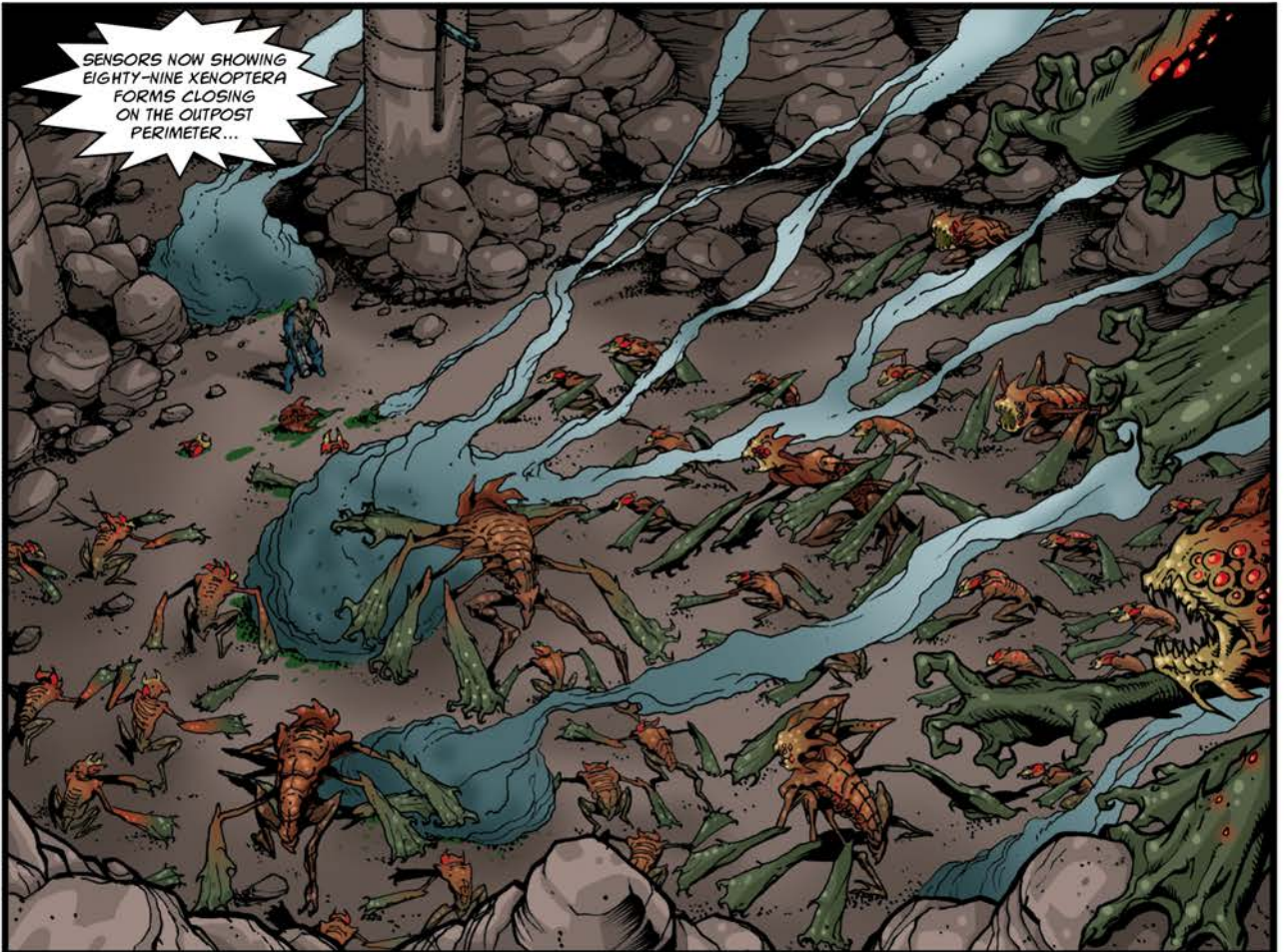


GENE WARNED YOU!



HNRRRRR...

SENSORS NOW SHOWING EIGHTY-NINE XENOPTERA FORMS CLOSING ON THE OUTPOST PERIMETER...



EIGHTY-NINE? OH JESUS.

ESTIMATE THEY WILL TAKE TWELVE PERCENT CASUALTIES BEFORE THEY OVERRUN THE GATE.

JUST TWELVE? TWELVE? WHY, COM-CON?

THE STANDARD M77 MUNITION CLIP CONTAINS THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY ROUNDS OF EXPLOSIVE FLECHETTE.

DID YOU PROVIDE THE AUX WITH SPARE CLIPS? DID YOU TEACH HIM HOW TO CHANGE CLIPS?

OH CRAP.

OH CRAP CRAP CRAP! I SHOULDN'T BE LEFT IN CHARGE OF ANYTHING, YOU KNOW THAT?

I RE— OWWWWW!

OPERATOR? ARE YOU IN DISTRESS?

OWW! J-JESUS! G-G-GET ME SOME STIMS!

S-SOMETHING! COMCON! I—

AAAAHHH!



OPERATOR? OPERATOR?





THERE WERE A LOT OF THEM, PERHAPS TOO MANY, EVEN FOR AN ALPHA-MALE HACKMAN LIKE GENE.

BUT GENE DID NOT CARE. HE WAS HIS NAMESAKE AND THERE WAS NO FINER WAY OF DYING THAN KEEPING THE COLD PLACE CLEAN.



SHARP AND TRUE TO THE LAST, AS THE PACK USED TO SAY.

SCRAP YOU ALL DEAD! I WILL—



UHH?

BBRRRAAAPPPI!



SPRAY THEM.



SPRAY THEM. SQUISH THEM ALL.



COLD PLACE GOTTA STAY CLEAN.



THAT'S THE LAST OF THEM! DONE AND DONE!

GOOD, MOLL, GOOP.

HOLD FIRE, PACK.



AND THAT WAS THE SCRAPPING OF THAT DAY.

HEY.

HEY TO YOU.



SNFF SNFF

SNFF SNFF



VAL KILMORE, ME.  
ALPHA-MALE. THIS IS  
MY PACK.

YOU?



GENE.  
OMEGA-  
MALE.

SHAKK

IT WAS HARD FOR  
GENE TO SAY IT.  
OMEGA-MALE. IT  
MEANT A MALE WHO  
HAD NO PACK.



IT WAS THE FIRST  
TIME GENE HAD  
TRULY REALISED  
THAT WAS WHAT  
HE HAD BECOME.

VAL.

GENE. YOU SEE  
ACTION, GENE?  
YOU WALK-  
AROUND?



LONGEST WALK-AROUND WE EVER  
DID. EIGHT MONTH. LOST MY  
PACK, ONE BY ONE.

CAME HERE.  
THIS PLACE.

YOU?



SENT OUT  
FROM HOME SIX  
WEEKS BACK. TOLD  
THERE WAS THEM  
TROUBLES.

SEEMS  
WE FOUND  
IT.



THEM IS HERE.

THEM'S BEEN HERE **BEFORE**. THAT'S WHY WE DO THE WALK-AROUND.

NO, VAL KILMORE. THEM'S HERE MORE THAN **EVER** BEFORE. MANY **TIMES**. MANY MORE THAN THE FINGERS AND TOES OF A **WHOLE** PACK.

TOUGHER AND TOUGH **TOO**. THEM HAS A **LAND** BRIDGE NOW.



A **WHAT**, GENE-OMEGA?

WHAT **IS** THIS ONE SAYING, VAL? HIS MOUTH IS **FULL** OF STRANGE.



HUSH, MOLL. GENE KNOWS THE **CLEVER** STUFF.



TELL US, GENE, TELL US. WHAT IS 'LAND BRIDGE'?

A BRIDGE ACROSS THE **SEA** TO ANARCHTICY. THEM BUILT IT. SO THAT THEM CAN **COME** HERE AND TAKE THE LAST PIECE OF THE WORLD THEY HAVE NOT YET ATE UP.



A BRIDGE? NO, **NO**. THE MASTERS **WOULDA** TOLD US OF THIS.

THE MASTERS DON'T **KNOW** IT. THE MASTER HERE, **HE** DIDN'T KNOW IT.

THERE IS A MASTER **HERE**?



YEAH. **COME** SEE HIM. **HE'LL** TELL YOU GENE IS RIGHT.



THIS A MASTER, GENE? THIS A MASTER?

NO, GENE, NO. NOT A MASTER, THIS.

DEAD AND COLD ANYWAY, VAL.

THE MASTERS ARE TALL AND MADE OF SHINY M—

NOT THE REAL MASTERS.

YOU DONE THE WALK-AROUND **TOO LONG**, GENE-OMEGA. THE COLD PLACE HAS GOT INTO YOUR HEAD. **FUNNY** THINGS YOU SAY.

GENE SPEAKS THE **TRUTH**.

GENE IS **OMEGA**. EVERY PACK KNOWS OMEGAS ARE **DUMB-HEADS**.



SHOW **RESPECT**. GENE WAS **ALPHA** ONCE.



GENE, MY PACK GO ALL-A-WAY **HOME** NOW, TELL THE MASTERS WHAT WE FOUND, SO THEY CAN TELL US 'GOOD JOB'!

YOU COME WITH US?

NO.



I'LL GO... I'LL GO PROVE I'M RIGHT.

NO, GENE? WHERE WILL YOU GO, THEN, OMEGA?

YOU GOT THE BONE FOR THAT?

YEAH... I GOT THE BONE.

ONE THING...

TEACH GENE HOW THE TOYS WORK.



AND THE SUN CAME DOWN HEAVY, AND THE NIGHT DID HIS WALK-AROUND, THEN THE NEXT SUN-COME-UP, VAL KILMORE'S PACK STARTED OUT TO GO ALL-A-WAY HOME.

SO LONG, GENE-OMEGA.

VAL WILL DO THAT MUCH, AT LEAST.


AND THAT WAS THE LEAVE-TAKING OF THAT DAY.

SO LONG. TELL THE MASTERS WHAT I SAID, EVEN IF YOU DO THINK MY MOUTH IS FULL OF WRONG.




GENE THE HACKMAN, WHO HAD GONE FROM ALPHA TO OMEGA, WALKED A-WAYS SOUTH.

THE SUN CAME UP AND WENT DOWN. GENE SLEPT IN COLD BURROWS, AND ATE THE FOOD BRICKS HE'D GOT FROM THE OUTPOST.




HE WALKED DOWN THROUGH BIG HILLS ALL THE WAY TO THE LAND-MEETS-SEA. HE WALKED UNTIL THERE WAS NO MORE LAND.



THERE WERE NO URGINGS. GENE HADN'T EXPECTED ANY. HE HAD BEEN BRED TO OBEY, BUT THERE WAS NOTHING TO OBEY ANY MORE EXCEPT HIS OWN URGE.

NIGHT CAME DOWN, AND HE SAW THE STARS. HE NODDED UP AT THEM.




GENE GOT NAMED AFTER ONE OF YOU.



SNFF  
SNFF

THEM? GENE'S COMING. TOUGHER AND TOUGH.

YOU'D BETTER GET WHET.



AND THAT WAS THE TALE OF HOW GENE THE HACKMAN WALKED A-WAYS OUT OF ANARCHTICY.





# THE PROMISED LAND

Script: Dan Abnett  
Art: Richard Elson  
Letters: Simon Bowland

Originally published in *2000 AD Progs* 2008, 1567-1576

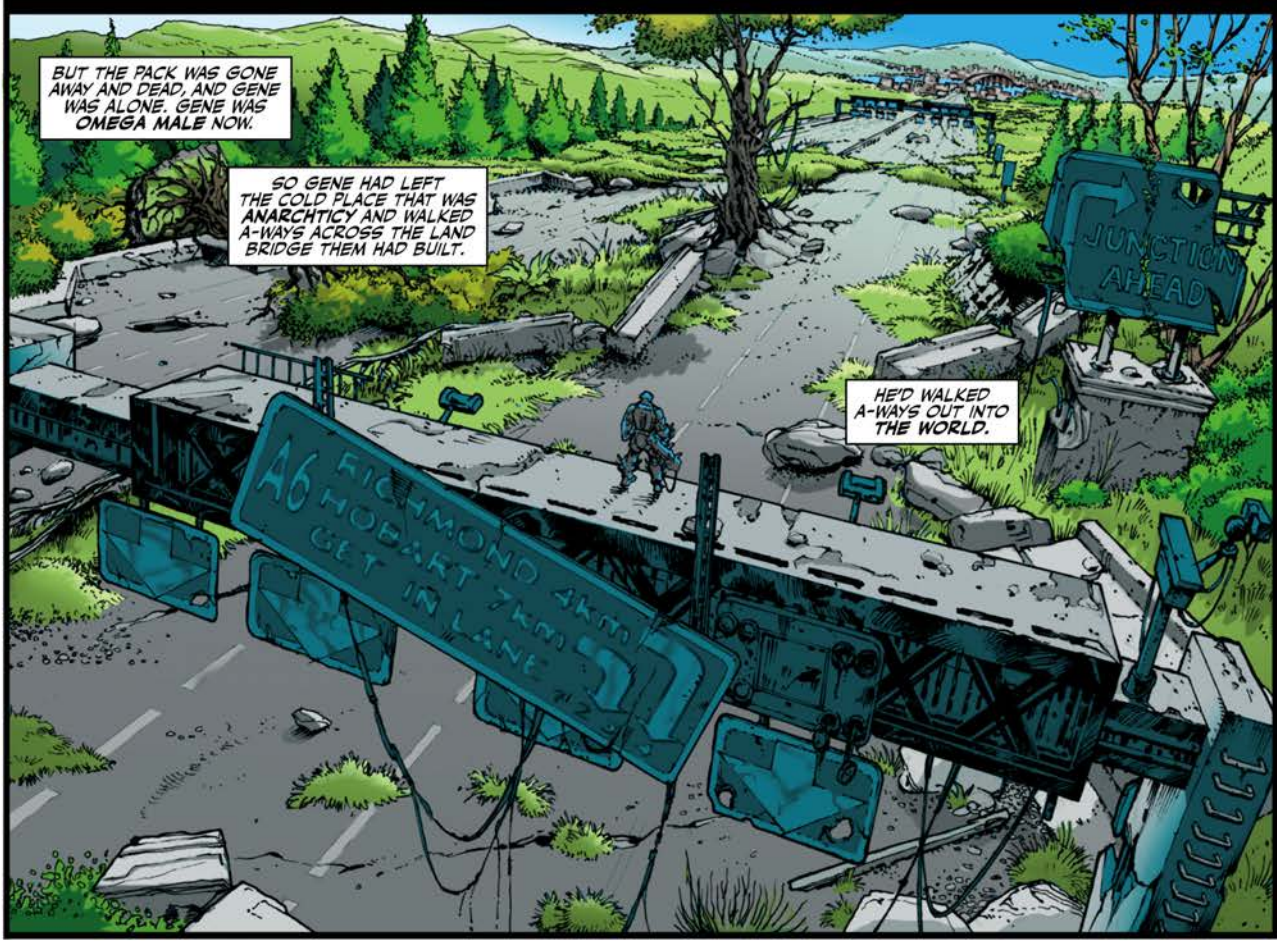


THIS IS THE TALE OF HOW  
GENE THE HACKMAN FOUND  
THE PROMISED LAND.



ONCE, GENE HAD BEEN ALPHA MALE,  
TOUGHER AND TOUGH, LEADING HIS  
PACK ON THE WALK-AROUND TO KEEP  
THE COLD PLACE CLEAN.

TO KEEP THEM OUT  
OF THE COLD PLACE  
WHERE THE MASTERS  
SLEPT, LONG TIME.



BUT THE PACK WAS GONE  
AWAY AND DEAD, AND GENE  
WAS ALONE. GENE WAS  
OMEGA MALE NOW.

SO GENE HAD LEFT  
THE COLD PLACE THAT WAS  
ANARCHTICY AND WALKED  
A-WAYS ACROSS THE LAND  
BRIDGE THEM HAD BUILT.

HE'D WALKED  
A-WAYS OUT INTO  
THE WORLD.

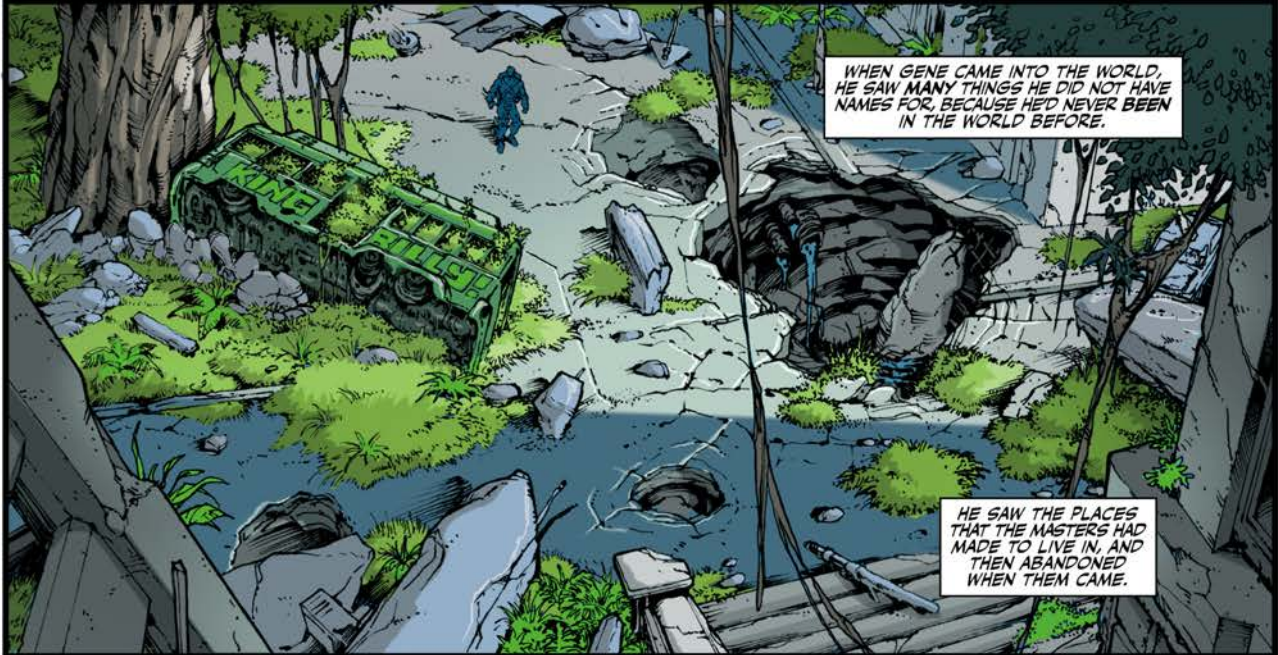
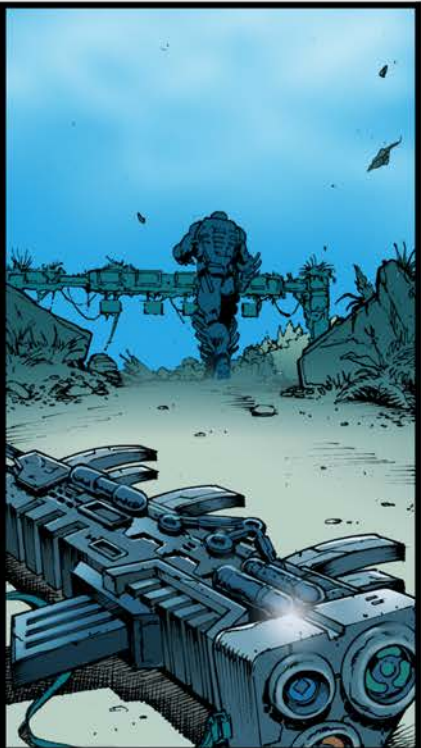


LONG TIME HE HAD WALKED,  
AND MANY TIMES HE'D HAD TO  
GET WHET AND SCRAP WITH  
THEM THAT HE MET ON THE WAY.

BUT GENE WAS A  
HACKMAN, TOUGHER  
AND TOUGHER.



EVEN WHEN HIS  
DEATH TOY BROKE  
AND WAS NO GOOD  
NO MORE.



WHEN GENE CAME INTO THE WORLD,  
HE SAW MANY THINGS HE DID NOT HAVE  
NAMES FOR, BECAUSE HE'D NEVER BEEN  
IN THE WORLD BEFORE.

HE SAW THE PLACES  
THAT THE MASTERS HAD  
MADE TO LIVE IN, AND  
THEN ABANDONED  
WHEN THEY CAME.





THEM WAS AROUND,  
LIKE THEY WAS  
EVERYWHERE.



THERE WASN'T ONE PIECE  
OF THE WORLD THEM HAD  
NOT YET ATE UP, APART  
FROM ANARCHTICY.

SO GENE PLAYED  
SLY-DOG, AND HE LISTENED  
FOR GROUND SOUNDS AND HE  
SNIFFED FOR SCENT.



HE ONLY  
SCRAPPED WHEN  
HE HAD TO.



AND WHEN HE  
HAD TO, HE WAS TRUE  
TO HIS NAME.



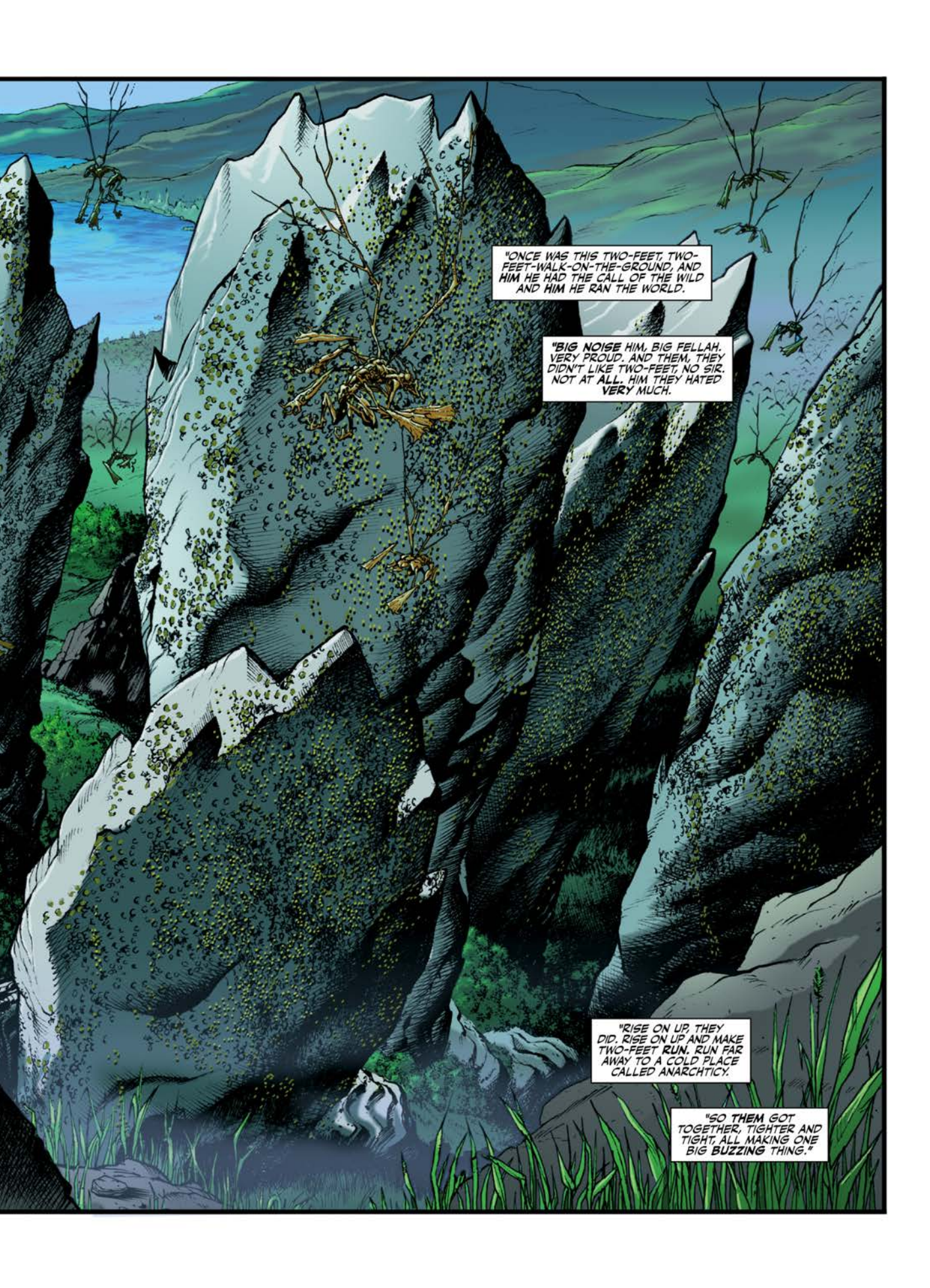
HE WAS A  
HACKMAN.



ONE SUN-COME-UP, NEAR  
THE PLACE WHERE THE  
MASTERS HAD ONCE LIVED,  
GENE SAW THE NEST.

IT WAS A  
NEST OF THEM.

IT MADE GENE REMEMBER  
THE TALE OLD MAN HAD USED  
TO TELL. THE TALE WAS CALLED  
"TWO-FEET-WALK-ON-THE-  
GROUND". IT WENT--



"ONCE WAS THIS TWO-FEET, TWO-  
FEET-WALK-ON-THE-GROUND, AND  
HIM HE HAD THE CALL OF THE WILD  
AND HIM HE RAN THE WORLD."

"BIG NOISE HIM, BIG FELLAH,  
VERY PROUD, AND THEM, THEY  
DIDN'T LIKE TWO-FEET, NO SIR,  
NOT AT ALL, HIM THEY HATED  
VERY MUCH."

"RISE ON UP, THEY  
DID. RISE ON UP AND MAKE  
TWO-FEET RUN. RUN FAR  
AWAY TO A COLD PLACE  
CALLED ANARCHTICY."

"SO THEM GOT  
TOGETHER, TIGHTER AND  
TIGHT, ALL MAKING ONE  
BIG BUZZING THING."

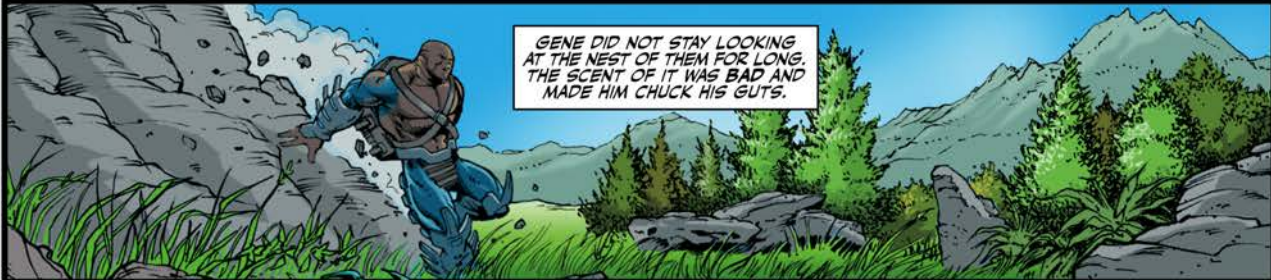
THINKING OF THE TALE MADE GENE HAPPY AND SAD, ALL TOGETHER. "EVERY DOG HAS A TALE," OLD MAN USED TO SAY.

GENE MISSED OLD MAN. OLD MAN HAD HIS MUSCLES IN HIS HEAD.

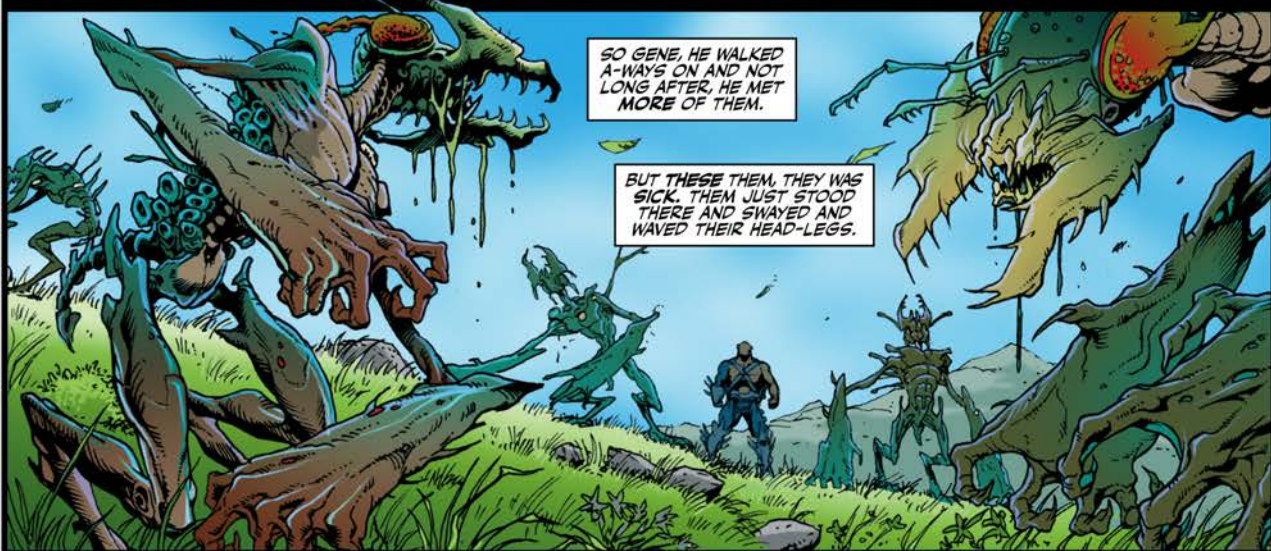
OLD MAN HAD GONE TO A FARM IN THE COUNTRY. GENE HOPED TO FIND THE FARM ONE DAY AND LIVE THERE WITH OLD MAN.



GENE DID NOT STAY LOOKING AT THE NEST OF THEM FOR LONG. THE SCENT OF IT WAS BAD AND MADE HIM CHUCK HIS GUTS.



SO GENE, HE WALKED A-WAYS ON AND NOT LONG AFTER, HE MET MORE OF THEM.



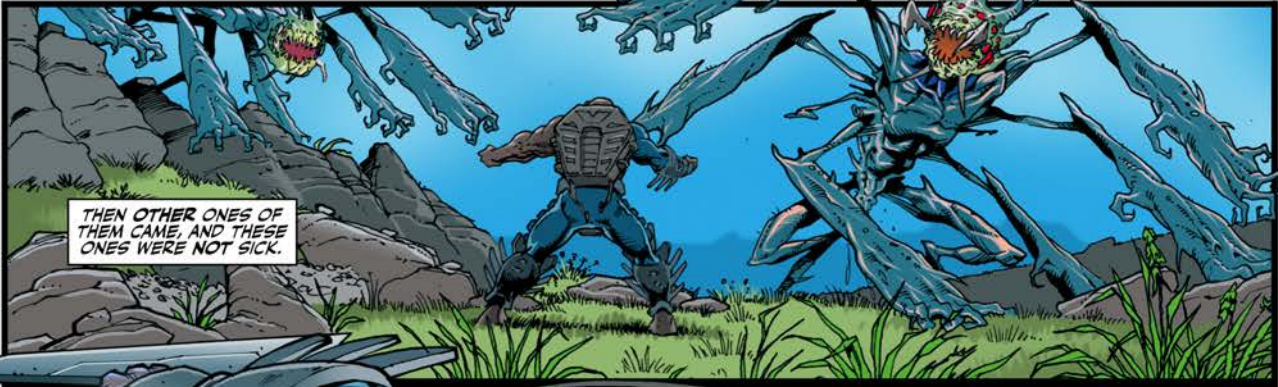
BUT THESE THEM, THEY WAS SICK. THEM JUST STOOD THERE AND SWAYED AND WAVED THEIR HEAD-LEGS.

GENE WALKED A-WAYS RIGHT THROUGH THEM AND THEM DIDN'T CARE.



GENE SAW THERE WERE THINGS LIVING ON THEM, LIKE TICKS ON FURRY HIDE. THE TICK THINGS WERE MAKING THEM SICK.





THEN OTHER ONES OF THEM CAME, AND THESE ONES WERE NOT SICK.



AND GENE HAD TO SCRAP.

GET WHET.

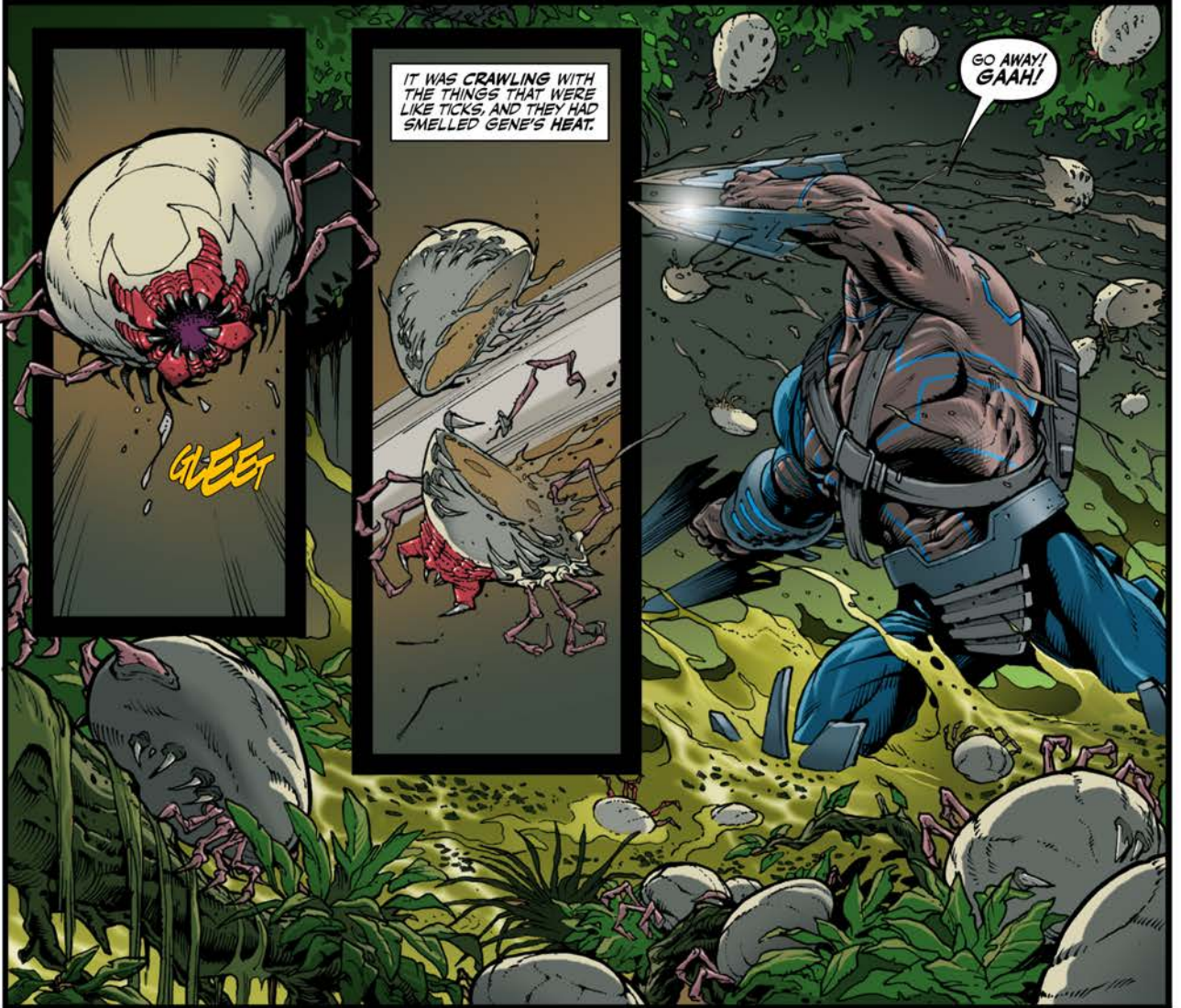


GRAAAH!



NHH!









YAAAAHHH!



GRAAAARHH!



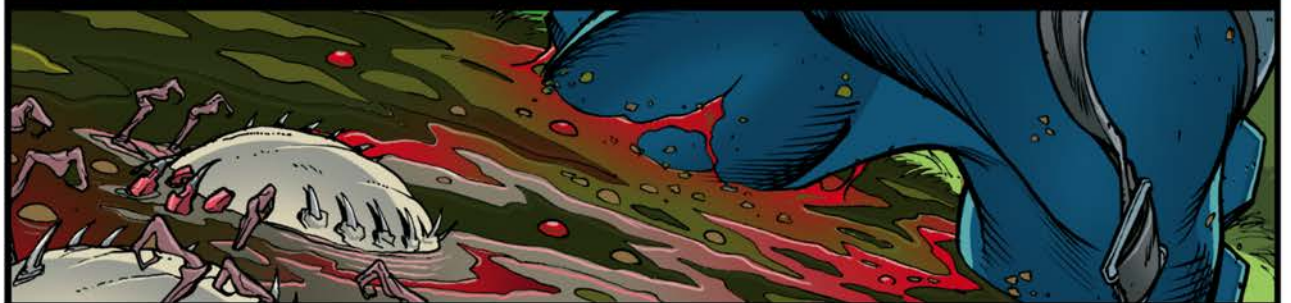
THE TICK THINGS BIT GENE,  
AND HE HAD TO PULL THEM  
OUT OF HIS HIDE.

THEY HURT.



GENE KEPT MOVING  
UNTIL HE SMELLED  
SUNLIGHT AGAIN.

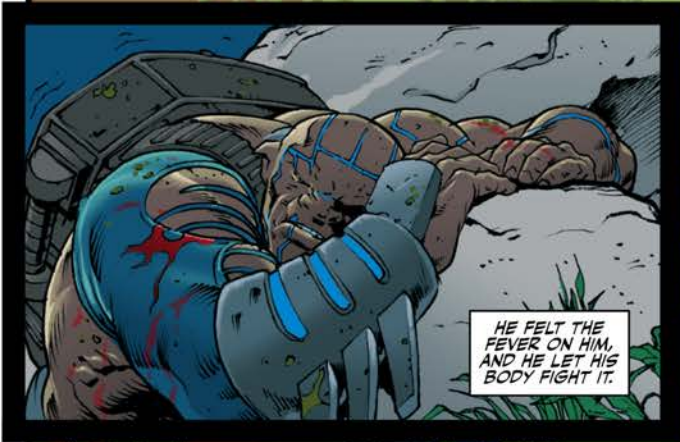
GENE GOT OUT OF THE  
WET-STINK PLACE, AND  
GOT THE THINGS OUT  
OF HIS BODY.



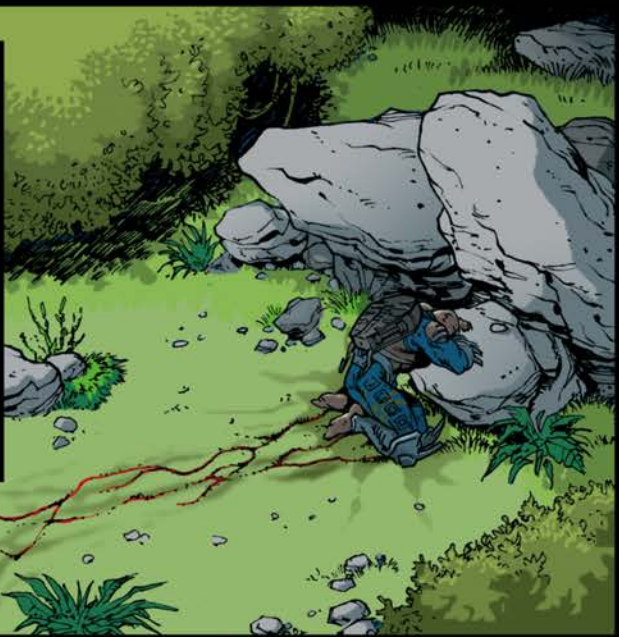


BUT GENE HAD TO REST.  
HE FELT THE BURN OF  
DIRT IN HIS VEINS--

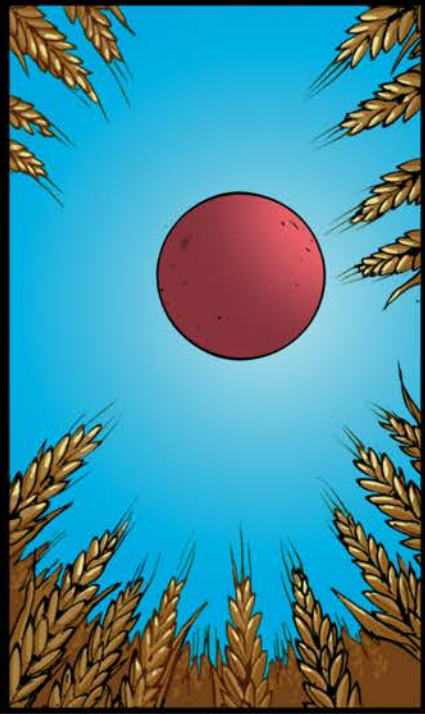
--THE SPIT OF THE TICK  
THINGS, WHERE THEY BIT  
HIM, MINGLING WITH HIS  
BLOOD.



HE FELT THE  
FEVER ON HIM,  
AND HE LET HIS  
BODY FIGHT IT.



NNHHH...







GAAAAHHH!



WHEN GENE WOKE WITH THE NEXT SUN, HIS FEVER HAD BROKE AND GONE.

THE MEMORY OF THE FEVER-DREAM HAD NOT.



BUT THERE WERE OTHER THINGS TO CONCERN GENE...

GENE.

HUH?

GENE.



WHO IS TALKING TO GENE?

WHAT IS TALKING TO GENE?

SHOW GENE YOUR FACE!



BE CALM, GENE. YOU KNOW WHO WE ARE. YOU JUST HAVEN'T HEARD US IN A LONG WHILE.

YOU... YOU...



...YOU ARE THE URGINGS.

YES, GENE. AND WE'VE BEEN SILENT FOR TOO LONG.

WE HAVEN'T BEEN WITH YOU FOR A WHILE. WE HAVEN'T BEEN TELLING YOU WHAT YOU SHOULD DO.



GENE THOUGHT YOU WERE TIRED OF HIM. GENE THOUGHT YOU'D GIVEN UP ON HIM.

YOU STOP SPEAKING TO THE PACK. YOU STOPPED LEADING US.

WE KNOW. WE'RE SORRY, GENE. WE SHOULD NEVER HAVE ABANDONED YOU.

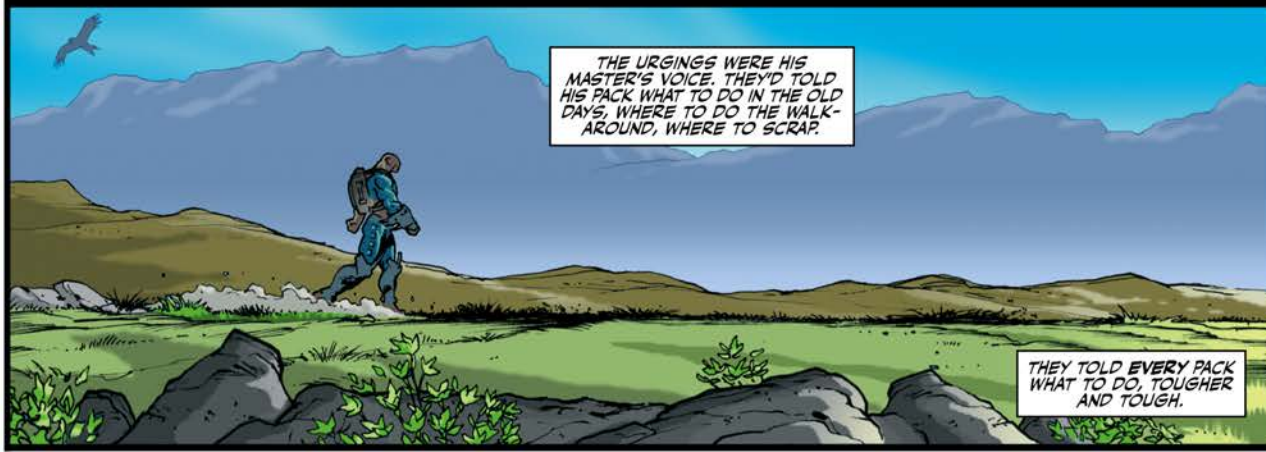


BUT WE'RE HERE NOW. HERE TO LEAD YOU, GENE.

HNN. WHERE TO?



GENE WAS WARY, BUT HE HAD LONG MISSED THE URGINGS AND THE CALM INSTRUCTIONS THEY GAVE, EVERY DAWN AND DUSK.



THE URGINGS WERE HIS MASTER'S VOICE. THEY'D TOLD HIS PACK WHAT TO DO IN THE OLD DAYS, WHERE TO DO THE WALK-AROUND, WHERE TO SCRAP.

THEY TOLD EVERY PACK WHAT TO DO, TOUGHER AND TOUGH.

NOW THEY WERE LEADING GENE AGAIN, AND GIVING HIM PURPOSE, EVEN THOUGH HE WAS ONLY OMEGA MALE. GENE WAS GLAD IN HIS HEART.

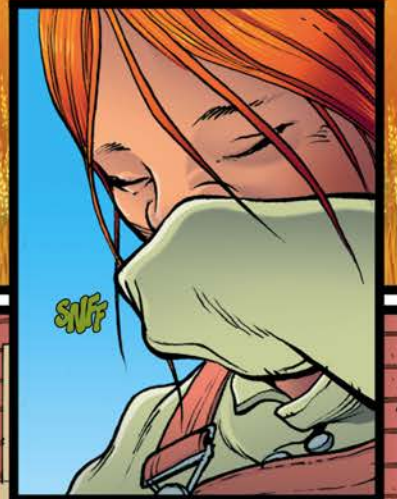
THE MASTERS HAD NOT FORGOTTEN GENE THE HACKMAN.



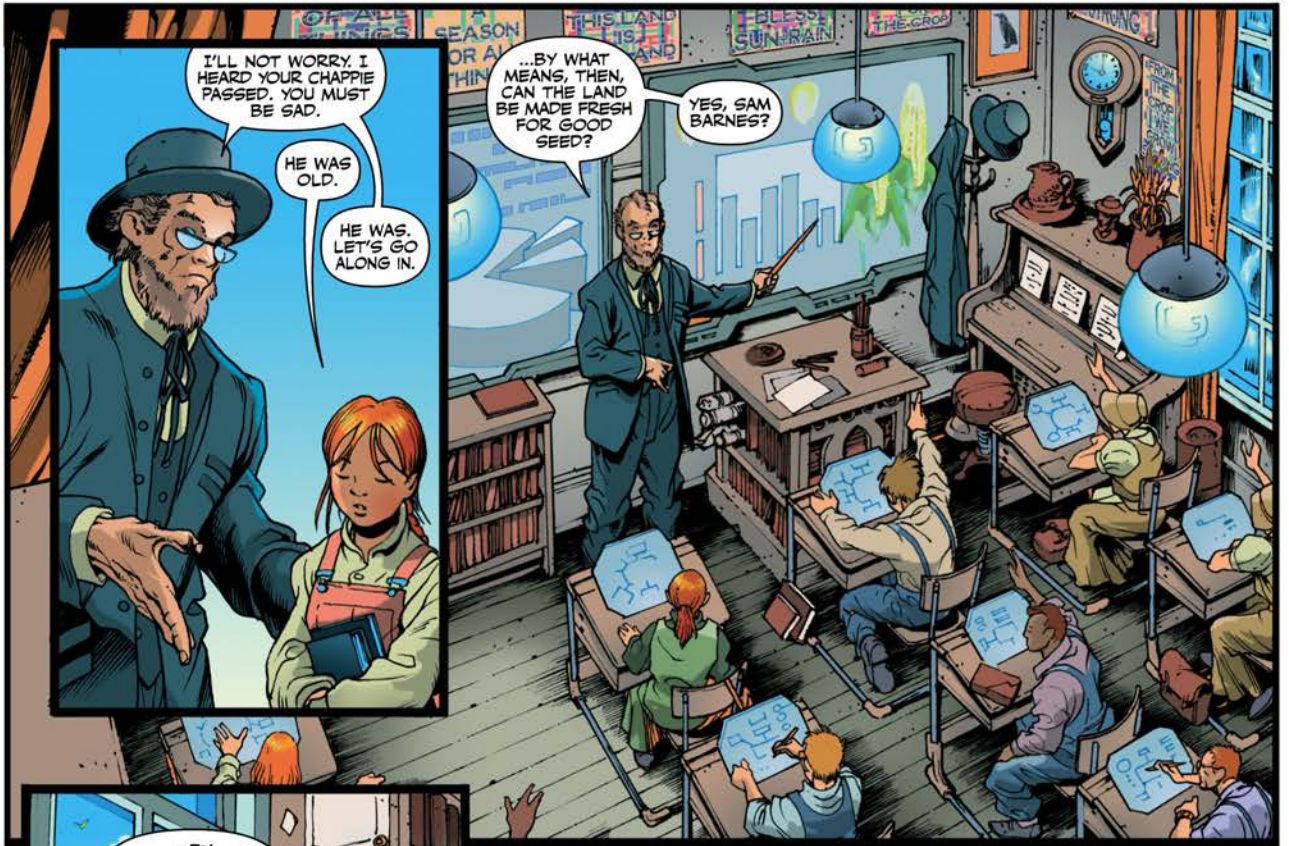
WHAT IS THIS PLACE? WHAT HAVE YOU LED GENE TO?

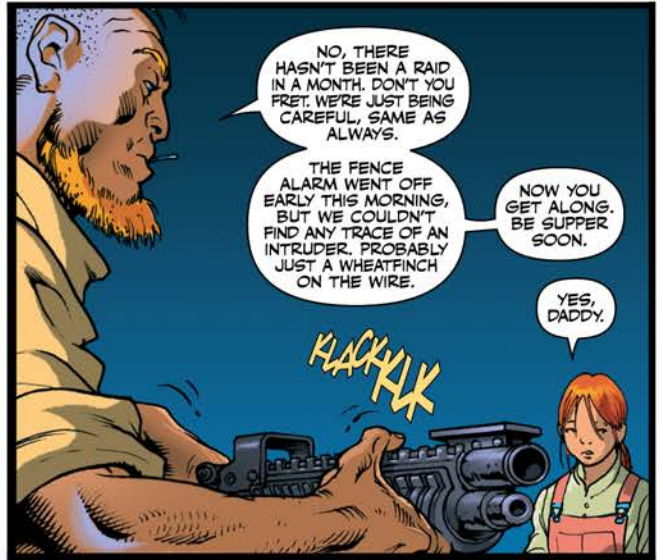
THE PROMISED LAND, GENE. THE PROMISED LAND.

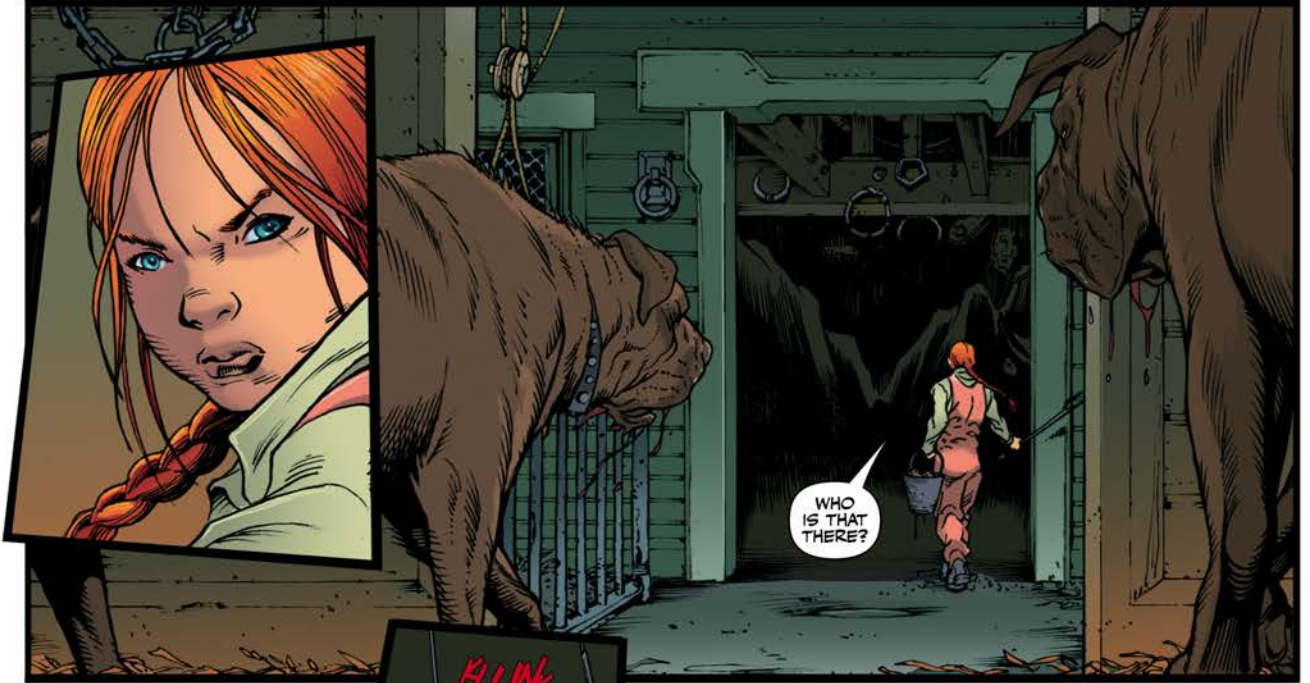














LEEZEE?  
LEEZEE GIRL?  
WHAT'S KEEPING  
YOU?

SUPPER'S  
ON THE TABLE!  
HAVEN'T YOU FED  
THOSE DOGS  
YET?



LEEZEE?  
ARE YOU OUT  
HERE?



OH,  
PILLARS  
OF FIRE!  
LEEZEE!



IT'S ALL  
RIGHT, DADDY.  
HE WAS JUST  
HUNGRY.



DADDY?  
CAN  
I KEEP  
HIM?





IT WAS IN THE WEST BARN

I HEARD SAY RALPH SOWER'S CHILD FOUND IT

WHAT CAN IT MEAN?

BIG, THEY SAID

NEVER KNOWN SUCH A THING!

HOW DID IT GET IN?



LEEZEE SOWER FOUND IT?

WHAT ARE WE TO DO, THOUGH?

WHO DOES IT BELONG TO?



HUSH, NOW! HUSH YOU ALL!

WE HAVE A GUEST TO WELCOME.

HEAVEN HELP US!

IT'S A MONSTER!

DON'T LET YOUR LEEZEE STAND SO CLOSE TO IT, RALPH!



HE SAYS HIS NAME IS GENE HACKMAN.

THAT'S NOT A PROPER NAME! NO ONE WOULD BE CALLED THAT!

THAT'S NOT A PROPER PERSON!

YOU SAYING THAT THING CAN TALK, RALPH SOWER?



OF COURSE GENE CAN TALK. GENE IS NOT SOME ANIMAL.



I WAS MADE AN AUX BY THE MASTERS, TO GUARD THE COLD PLACE AGAINST THEM. TO KEEP THE MASTERS SAFE WHILE THEY SLEPT.

I LED A PACK, BUT IT IS GONE, SO I CAME HERE.



GENE, I AM LEARNER JOHN. I TEACH SCHOOL HERE.

ER, YES. THAT'S RIGHT.

SO YOU KNOW THE CLEVER STUFF? YOU HAVE MUSCLES IN YOUR HEAD?

GENE, WHO ARE THESE MASTERS YOU SPEAK OF?

LIKE YOU, OF COURSE. TWO-FEET-WALK-ON-THE-GROUND. BUT YOUR SCENT IS DIFFERENT.

MEN, YOU MEAN? WHY WERE THEY SLEEPING?

UH, BECAUSE THEY WERE TIRED?

AND THIS "COLD PLACE", WHERE IS THAT?

FAR AWAY, LONG WALK-AROUND, ACROSS THE LAND BRIDGE.



I'M AFRAID WE DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT THE WORLD, GENE. WE'VE LIVED HERE FOR MANY GENERATIONS, BUT WE STAY INSIDE THE FENCE FOR FEAR OF THEM.

WHY DID YOU COME HERE?



THE URGINGS TOLD ME TO. THE URGINGS OF THE MASTERS. GENE HEARS THEM IN HIS HEAD.

THE URGINGS TOLD GENE TO COME TO THIS PLACE, TOLD GENE IT WAS THE PROMISED LAND.



WHY, THAT IS WHAT WE CALL IT!

HE HAS BEEN SENT HERE TO US!

MAYBE HE WILL HELP US?



OUR FARM IS THE PROMISED LAND, GENE. LEARNER JOHN TAUGHT US THAT.

HERE WE ARE SAFE FROM THEM, TO LIVE, AND WORK THE LAND, AND BE FREE.

THAT'S RIGHT, LEEZEE. GOOD GIRL.

DON'T THEM EVER COME HERE?

SOMETIMES, AND OUR DADDIES SHOOT AT THEM AND DRIVE THEM OFF.



THEM DO RAID US, FROM TIME TO TIME. THESE PAST THREE YEARS, THE ATTACKS HAVE BECOME MORE COMMON.

WE FEAR THAT THEM ARE TESTING OUR FENCES, READY FOR A BIG ASSAULT.

THERE ARE MANY THEM OUTSIDE YOUR FENCE. GENE HAS SEEN THEM.



BUT SOME ARE SICK. THEY HAD THINGS ON THEM LIKE TICKS.

GENE THINKS TH--

GENE? WHAT IS IT?



GROUND SOUNDS.

W-WHAT?

GROUNDS SOUNDS. TROUBLE.

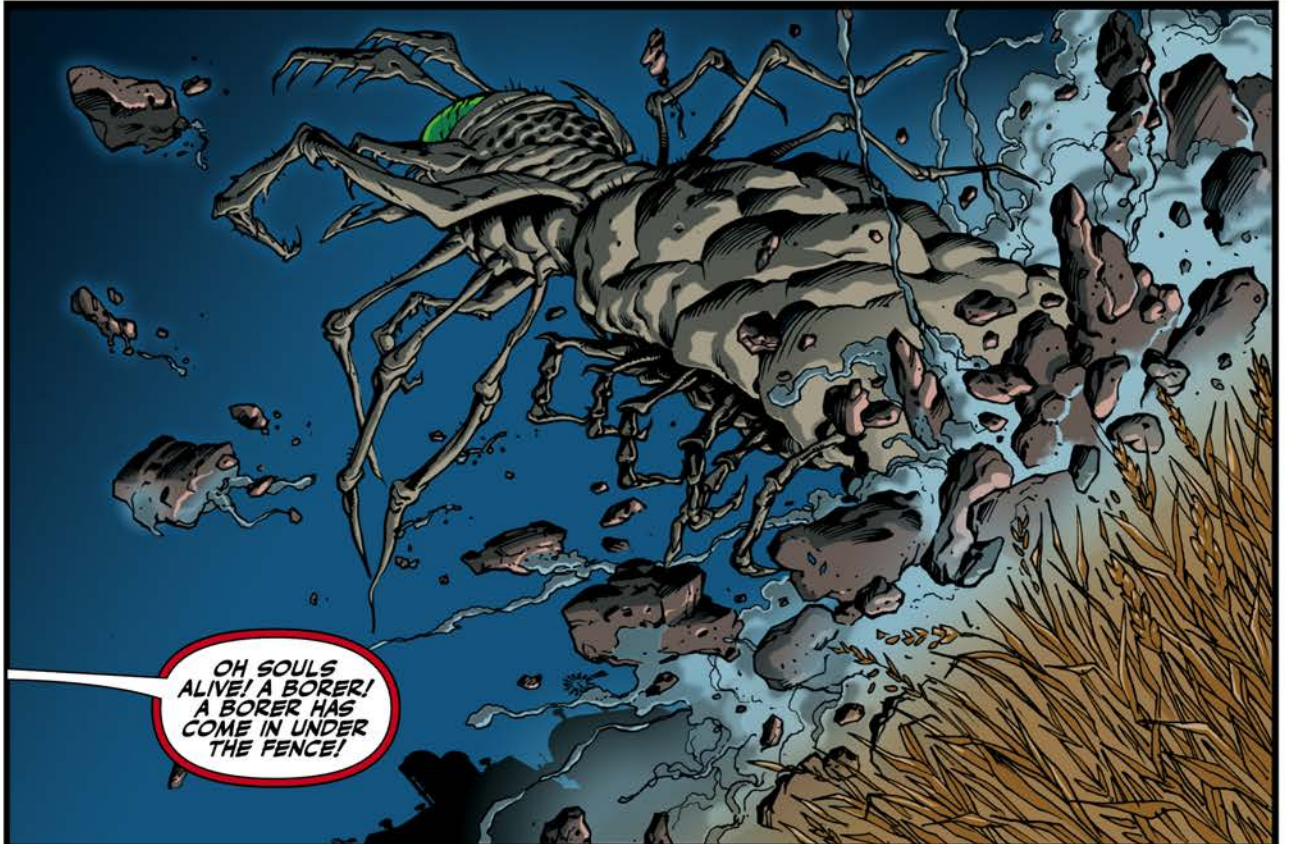


NO, GENE. THE FENCE ALARM WOULD HAVE SOUNDED--



NEVER THE LESS, THERE IS TROUBLE.

LET HIM THROUGH! LET HIM THROUGH!



OH SOULS ALIVE! A BORER! A BORER HAS COME IN UNDER THE FENCE!



GOODWIFE SARA! GET THE WOMENFOLK AND THE CHILDREN TO THE SAFE BARN!

BROTHERS! QUICKLY NOW! FETCH YOUR GUNS AND THE DOGS!



GET WHET.



GENE, OMEGA MALE, DID NOT HESITATE. THE CROPS WHIPPED AT HIM AS HE RAN OUT INTO THE FIELD.

GENE NEEDED NO URGINGS TO TELL HIM WHAT HAD TO BE DONE. HE WAS A HACKMAN, TOUGHER AND TOUGH, SHARP AND TRUE.



HE'LL BE KILLED!

LOOK AT HIM!

WHERE DID THOSE KNIVES COME FROM?

IS HE MAD?

NO, HE IS GENE HACKMAN.



LEEZEE SOWER  
WAS RIGHT.



AND THAT WAS  
THE SCRAPPING  
OF THAT DAY.



GET FIRE.  
BURN IT UP.  
FILL IN THE  
BURROW.



GENE! GENE! STAY  
WITH US! STAY WITH  
US AND GUARD  
US!

PLEASE?



YES.



SO GENE, WHO WAS OMEGA MALE, TOUGHER AND TOUGH, BEGAN HIS LIFE ON THE FARM.

HE GOT TO KNOW HIS WAY AROUND THE PLACE, THE HOMESTEADS AND THE BARNS...



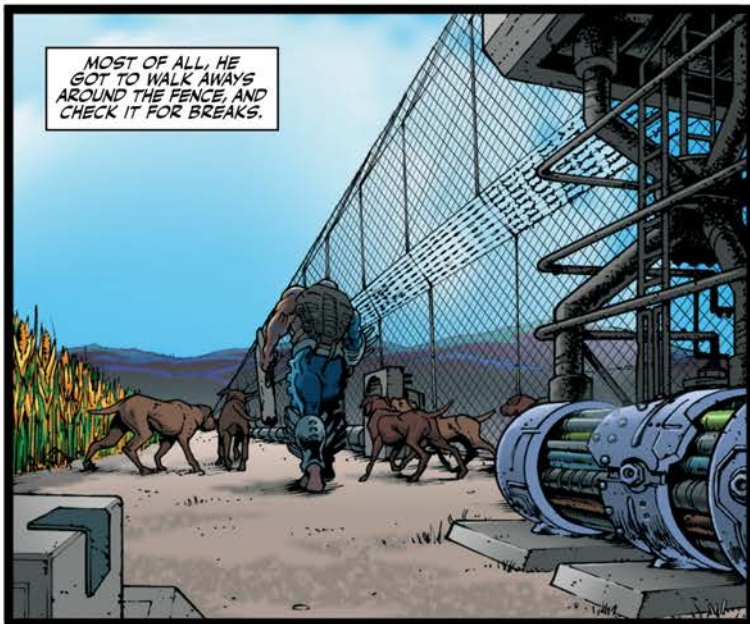
...AND THE FARM FOLK GOT TO KNOW HIM.

DAY TO YOU, GENE HACKMAN.

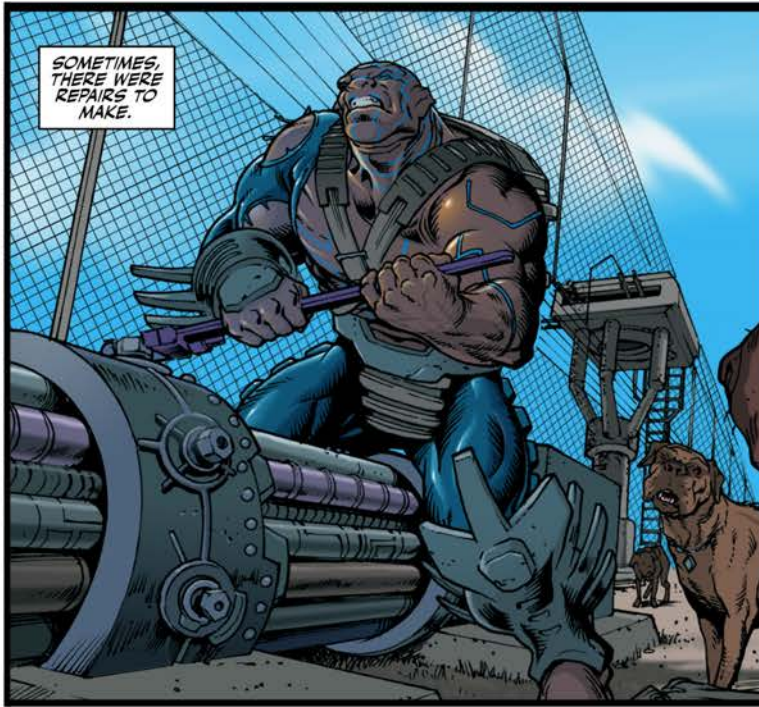
UH... HELLO.

...SO VERY BIG!

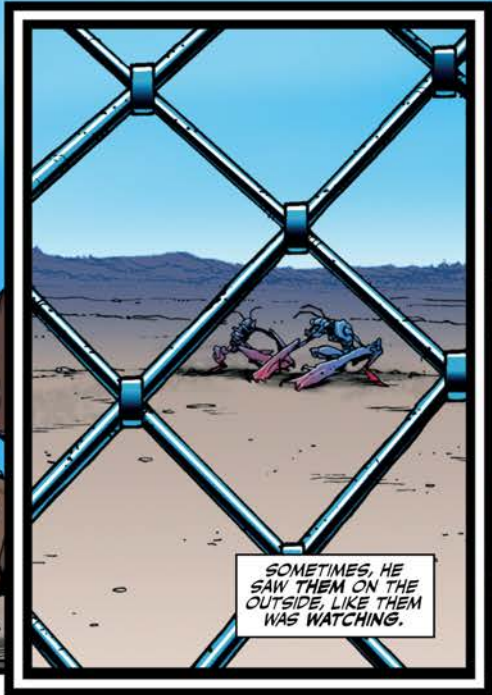
HUSH NOW, GOODWIFE!



MOST OF ALL, HE GOT TO WALK AWAYS AROUND THE FENCE, AND CHECK IT FOR BREAKS.

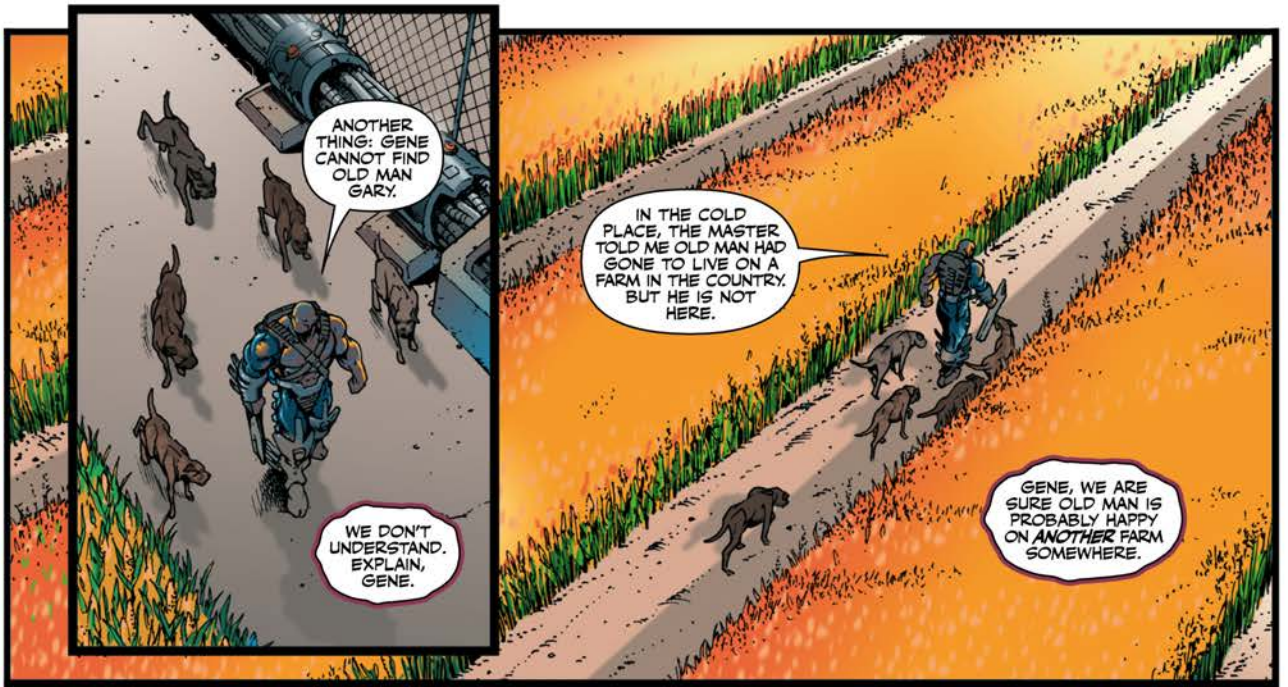


SOMETIMES, THERE WERE REPAIRS TO MAKE.



SOMETIMES, HE SAW THEM ON THE OUTSIDE, LIKE THEM WAS WATCHING.



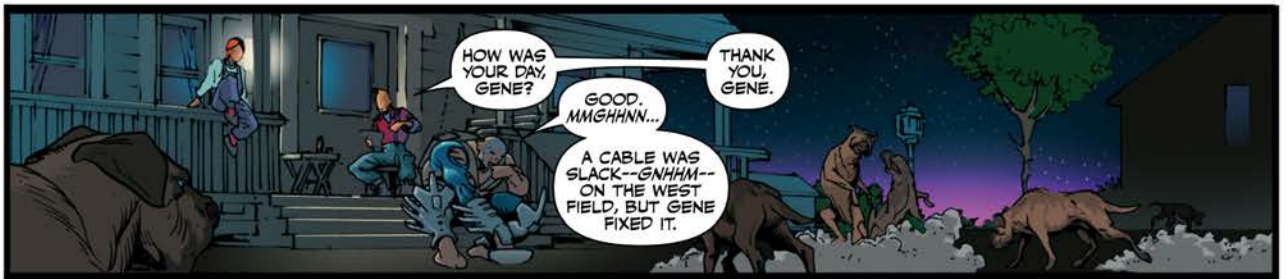


ANOTHER THING: GENE CANNOT FIND OLD MAN GARY.

WE DON'T UNDERSTAND. EXPLAIN, GENE.

IN THE COLD PLACE, THE MASTER TOLD ME OLD MAN HAD GONE TO LIVE ON A FARM IN THE COUNTRY. BUT HE IS NOT HERE.

GENE, WE ARE SURE OLD MAN IS PROBABLY HAPPY ON ANOTHER FARM SOMEWHERE.



HOW WAS YOUR DAY, GENE?

THANK YOU, GENE.

GOOD. MMGHNN...

A CABLE WAS SLACK--GNHHM-- ON THE WEST FIELD, BUT GENE FIXED IT.



YOU EAT SO FAST, GENE! GOBBLE-GOBBLE-GULP!

YOU ARE WORSE THAN STARCOAT, OR PATCH EVEN!

LEAVE GENE BE, LEEZEE. HE NEEDS HIS STRENGTH.

YES, DADDY.



RALPH SOWER?

YES, GENE?

WHERE DOES THE MEAT COME FROM?

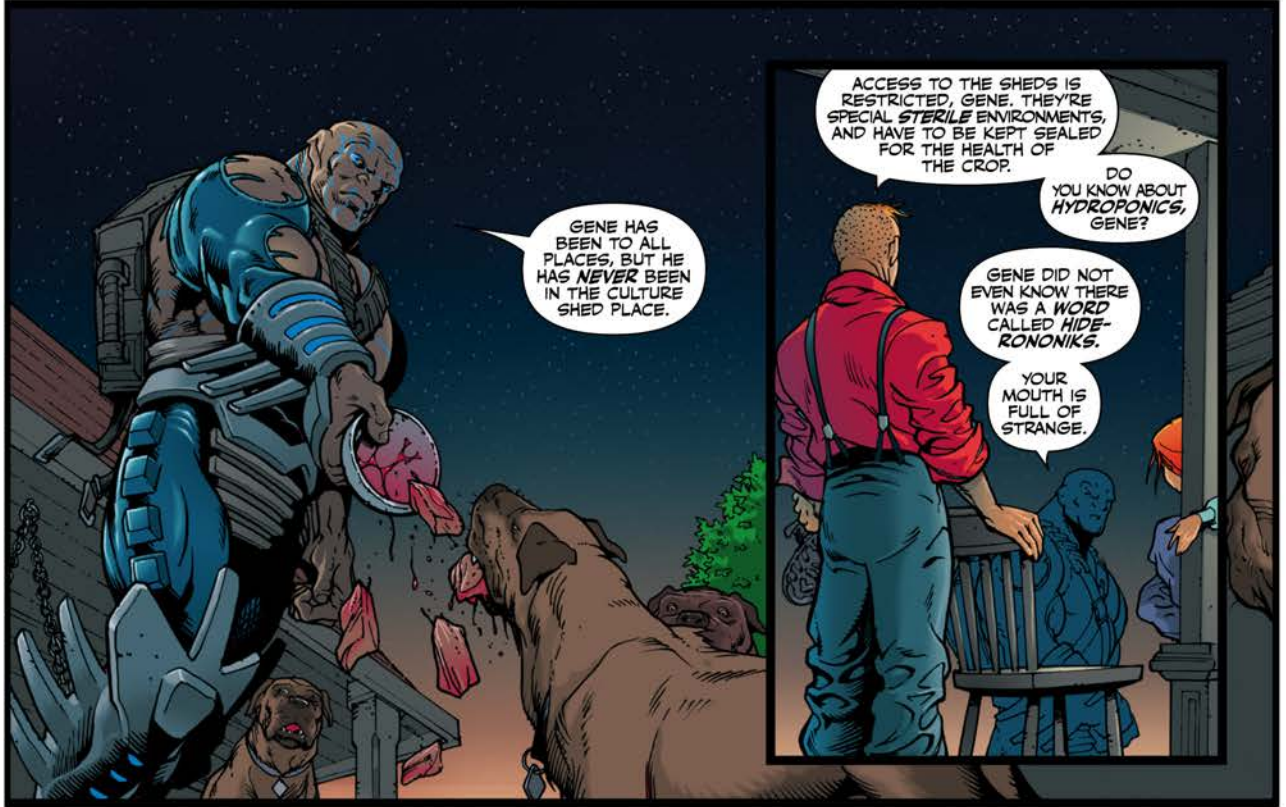


EVERY NIGHT, GENE FEEDS ON MEAT. THE DOGS TOO. THE FOLKS TOO.

BUT THERE ARE NO ANIMALS ON THE FARM.



OH, I THOUGHT YOU REALISED, GENE...OUR MEAT IS *SYNTHETIC*. WE GROW IT IN THE CULTURE SHEDS.



GENE HAS BEEN TO ALL PLACES, BUT HE HAS *NEVER* BEEN IN THE CULTURE SHED PLACE.

ACCESS TO THE SHEDS IS RESTRICTED, GENE. THEY'RE SPECIAL *STERILE* ENVIRONMENTS, AND HAVE TO BE KEPT SEALED FOR THE HEALTH OF THE CROP.

DO YOU KNOW ABOUT *HYDROPONICS*, GENE?

GENE DID NOT EVEN KNOW THERE WAS A WORD CALLED *HIDE-RONONIKS*.

YOUR MOUTH IS FULL OF STRANGE.

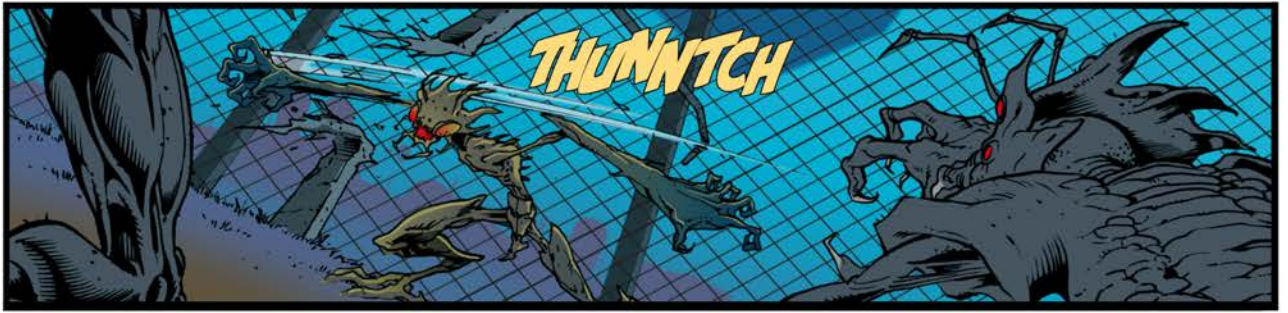


YOU NEED LEARNING LIKE ME, GENE! YOU SHOULD COME WITH ME TO THE *SCHOOLHOUSE*!

MAYBE GENE WILL DO THAT.

THAT WOULD BE *FUNNY*! CAN HE, DADDY?













GENE WAS RIGHT AND THAT WAS THE SCRAPPING OF THAT DAY.

HA HA! YOU ARE DIRTY ALL OVER WITH THEM'S BLOOD!

AND NOW I AM *CLEANER*, LEEZEE SOWER, THANKS TO YOU.



THAT'S ENOUGH NOW, LEEZEE.

YES, DADDY.



I DON'T WANT TO SCARE MY GIRL, BUT YOU SAVED US TODAY, GENE.

LEARNER JOHN WAS RIGHT IF YOU HADN'T HELD THEM BACK...

THEM ARE TESTING THE FENCE. THEY ARE LOOKING FOR WEAKNESSES.

THEM WANT TO GET IN.



WHY? WHY CAN'T THEM JUST LEAVE US ALONE?



MAYBE THEM IS HUNGRY.



GENE?  
GENE, WHAT  
ARE YOU  
DOING?



GENE?  
ANSWER  
US.

SHUT UP.  
GENE NEEDS  
TO SEE.

SEE?  
SEE WHAT,  
GENE?



GENE WANTS TO  
SEE WHERE THE MEAT  
COMES FROM. GENE  
WANTS TO SEE WHAT  
HIDE-RONICKS  
MEANS.

GENE, WE  
TOLD YOU NOT  
TO GO INTO THE CULTURE  
SHEDS. GENE, THEY  
ARE FORBIDDEN.  
GENE--



SHUT  
UP.  
SMELLS FUNNY.  
SMELLS BAD.

GENE,  
GO BACK. YOU  
SHOULDN'T BE  
IN HERE.



NO. THIS  
IS FULL OF  
WRONG.





WHY?  
 WHY IS THE  
 CROP TICK-  
 THINGS?  
 TELL  
 GENE WHY YOU  
 ARE GROWING  
 TICK-THINGS?



OH,  
 GENE.  
 THAT'S A QUESTION THAT WOULD NEVER  
 HAVE NEEDED AN ANSWER IF YOU HADN'T  
 COME POKING YOUR NOSE IN HERE.  
 YOU  
 WERE TOLD THE  
 CULTURE SHEDS  
 WERE FORBIDDEN,  
 GENE.



THAT DOESN'T  
 TELL GENE  
 WHY.  
 WHY,  
 RALPH SOWER? WHY,  
 LEARNER JOHN, WITH  
 YOUR HEAD FULL OF  
 MUSCLES?  
 YOU WOULDN'T  
 UNDERSTAND,  
 GENE.  
 NOW LET'S  
 JUST GO OUTSIDE  
 AND FORGET THIS  
 EV--



WHY?  
 PILLARS  
 OF FIRE!  
 WATCH  
 OUT!



COME ON, GENE. YOU LIVE HERE WITH US, AND WE'RE HAPPY FOR THAT.

YOU PROTECT US, AND WE'RE HAPPY FOR THAT TOO.

CALM YOURSELF DOWN.

NOW THIS IS OUR *SPECIAL CROP* GENE. IT'S IMPORTANT TO US.

IF YOU PROTECT US, THEN YOU *MUST* PROTECT IT TOO.

YES, GENE. FROM THEM.

FROM THEM?



THEM HATES THE TICK-THINGS.

THAT'S RIGHT, GENE...

GENE HAS SEEN IT. THE TICK-THINGS BURY INTO THEM'S SKIN AND MAKE THEM SICK AND DEAD.



...THE TICKS, AS YOU NAME THEM, ARE THEM'S NATURAL ENEMY. THEY ARE A PARASITE, A PEST THAT LIVES OFF THEM.

IT'S EVOLUTION, GENE. THEM GREW BIGGER AND STRONGER TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD, AND THEIR NATURAL PREDATORS DID LIKEWISE.



GENE DOES NOT LIKE THE SOUND OF THE WORD *EVILYOUSHUN*.

THAT IS WHY YOU KEEP THE TICK-THINGS HERE? BECAUSE THE TICK-THINGS KEEP THEM AWAY?

YES, GENE.



IT IS WRONG. DO YOU NOT SEE?

WE FEAR THAT'S SO, GENE. THEM MAY WELL BE RISING TO EXPUNGE THIS CONCENTRATION OF THEIR NATURAL ENEMY.

IF THAT'S SO, WE NEED PROTECTION MORE THAN EVER.

THIS IS WHY THEY ARE GETTING BOLDER, WHY THEY ARE RAIDING MORE AND MORE.

THEM ARE BUILDING THEIR STRENGTH TO COME AND WIPE THIS PLACE OUT!



YOU WANT GENE TO PROTECT YOU? LET GENE BURN THESE THINGS! BURN THEM UP GOOD!

BURN THEM AND THEM WILL LEAVE YOU ALONE!



NO, GENE.

YES! YOU ARE MEANT TO BE THE CLEVER ONE, LEARNER JOHN!

THE TICK-THINGS ARE EVIL! THEY ARE AS BAD AS THEM!

YOU SAID YOURSELF, THESE ARE THE EVIL YOU SHUNT!



STOP IT, GENE!

OUT OF GENE'S WAY! GENE WILL GET FIRE AND BURN--

STOP IT, GENE! NOW!



DO NOT TOUCH GENE!

AAAAHHH!






BAD DOG.



BAD DOG, GENE.

LIFE WAS *GOOD* HERE ON THE FARM, BUT YOU HAD TO GO AND *SPOIL* IT.



YOU WERE *WARNED*. YOU WERE *TOLD*. WE TOLD YOU.

ONE *SIMPLE* RULE, AND YOU *BROKE* IT.



THAT'S *DISOBEDIENCE*, GENE.

NO...

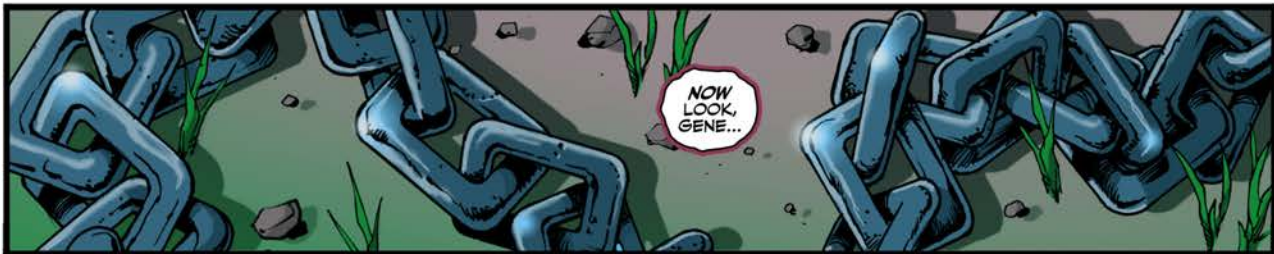


GENE HACKMAN, *BAD DOG*.

*NO!* THEY HAD *TICK-THINGS* IN THEM!

THEY WERE *NOT MASTERS* AT ALL!

LIFE WAS *GOOD*, GENE. ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS *OBEY* THE RULES.



NOW  
LOOK,  
GENE...



...NOW LOOK  
WHAT'S BECOME  
OF YOU.

SSHHING



GRRAAAAGHH!



GENE.

GO AWAY.

GENE.



GO AWAY.

WHY, GENE? WHY DID YOU SPOIL EVERYTHING?

THE MASTERS WERE GOOD TO YOU.



THEY ARE NOT MASTERS!

THEY ARE TICK-THINGS BURIED IN MASTER-FLESH!



GNHH! GRRHHNN!

LIFE WAS GOOD, GENE. ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS OBEY THE RULES.



GENE NOT OBEY RULES OF TICK-THINGS!

WHY DID URGINGS LEAD GENE TO A PLACE FULL OF TICK-THINGS?

WHY?



BECAUSE THIS IS WHERE WE WANTED YOU, GENE HACKMAN.

THIS IS THE PROMISED LAND.



GENE?  
GENE DOG? I BROUGHT YOU FOOD, GENE.



GENE ISN'T HUNGRY, LEEZEE SOWER.



A DOG HAS TO EAT, GENE.





NO!  
NOOO!

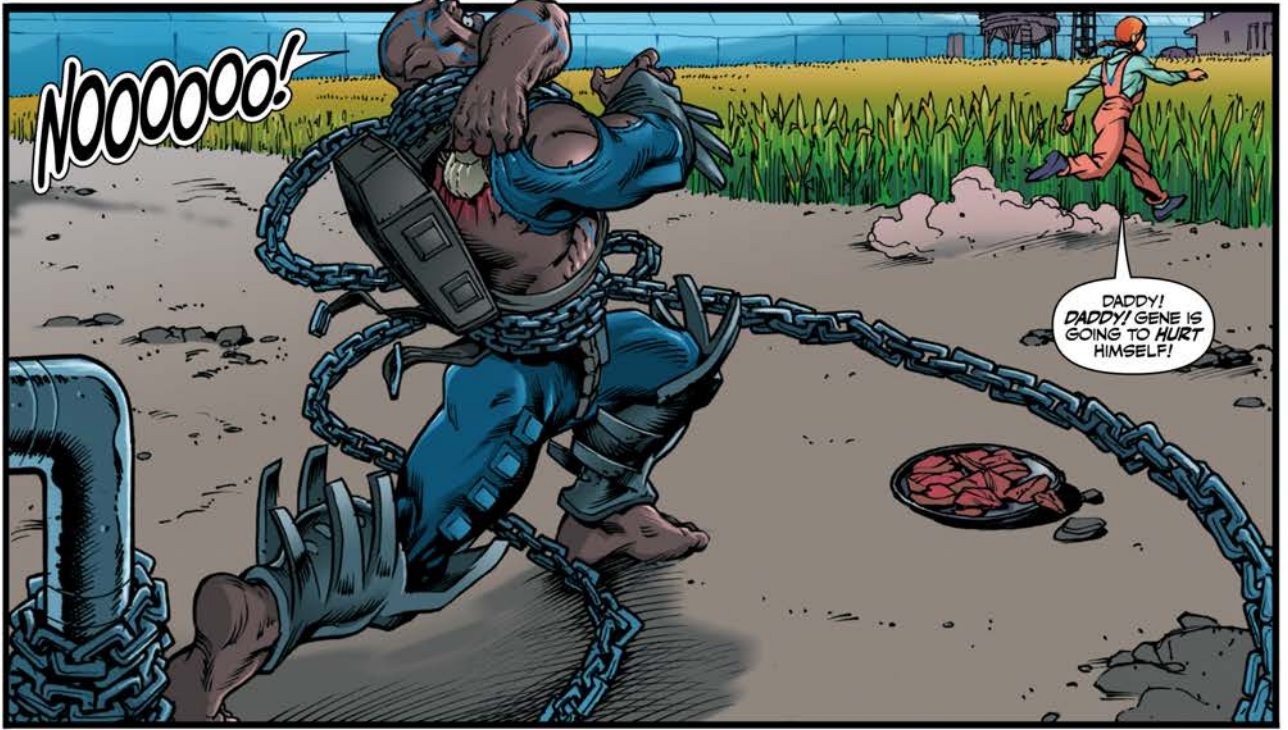
YES,  
GENE.

YOU  
KNEW! YOU  
KNEW ALL  
ALONG!

GENE,  
WE'VE BEEN  
HERE ALL  
ALONG...



...YOU  
DIDN'T GET OUT  
OF THAT SWAMP  
UNSCATHED  
AFTER ALL.



Noooooo!

DADDY!  
DADDY! GENE IS  
GOING TO HURT  
HIMSELF!



GENE!  
STOP IT!

RRRRGHHH!



GENE!

GRRRAGGHH!



GENE!

RRRARRRGCHH!





GENE THOUGHT THE PAIN HAD  
KILLED HIM. TOTAL PAIN WAS  
THE LAST THING HE KNEW.

BUT IT HADN'T.



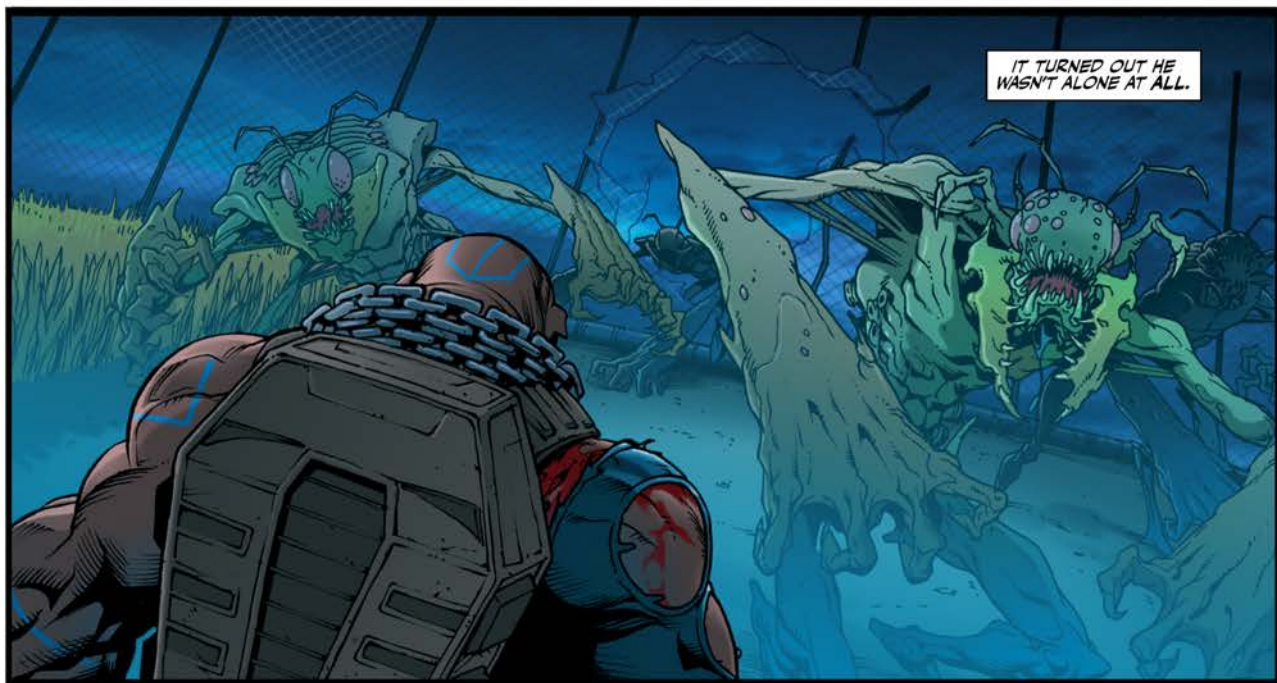
WHEN HE CAME ROUND, IT  
WAS NIGHT. THE PAIN IN HIS BACK,  
WHERE HE'D TORN THE TICK-THING  
OUT, WAS A THREADY ACHE.

AND THE URGINGS  
WERE NO LONGER  
TALKING TO HIM.



THE URGINGS HADN'T BEEN  
URGINGS. THEY HAD BEEN  
THE TICK-THING TALKING  
INSIDE HIS SKIN.

HE WAS GLAD IT WAS GONE,  
BUT HE FELT STRANGELY  
ALONE NOW IT WAS QUIET.

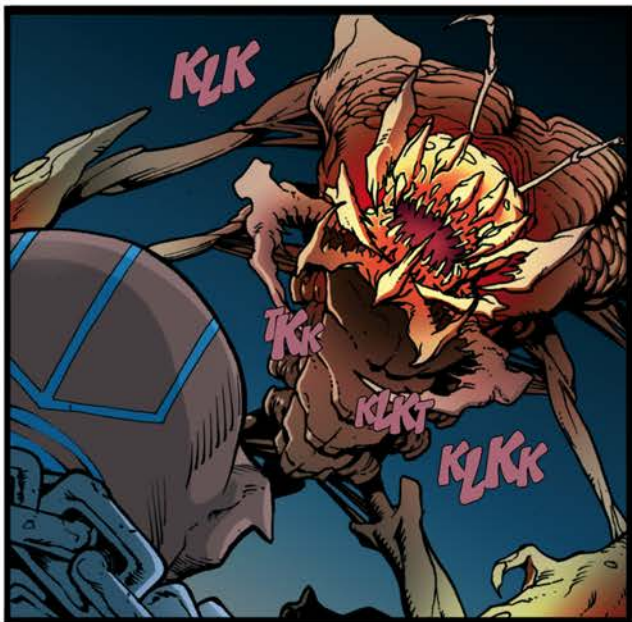


IT TURNED OUT HE  
WASN'T ALONE AT ALL.



THEM HAD GOT THROUGH THE FENCE.

THEM HAD GOT INSIDE.



GO ON, THEN. KILL GENE. GENE IS WAITING. GENE CANNOT FIGHT.

KILL GENE LIKE YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO.



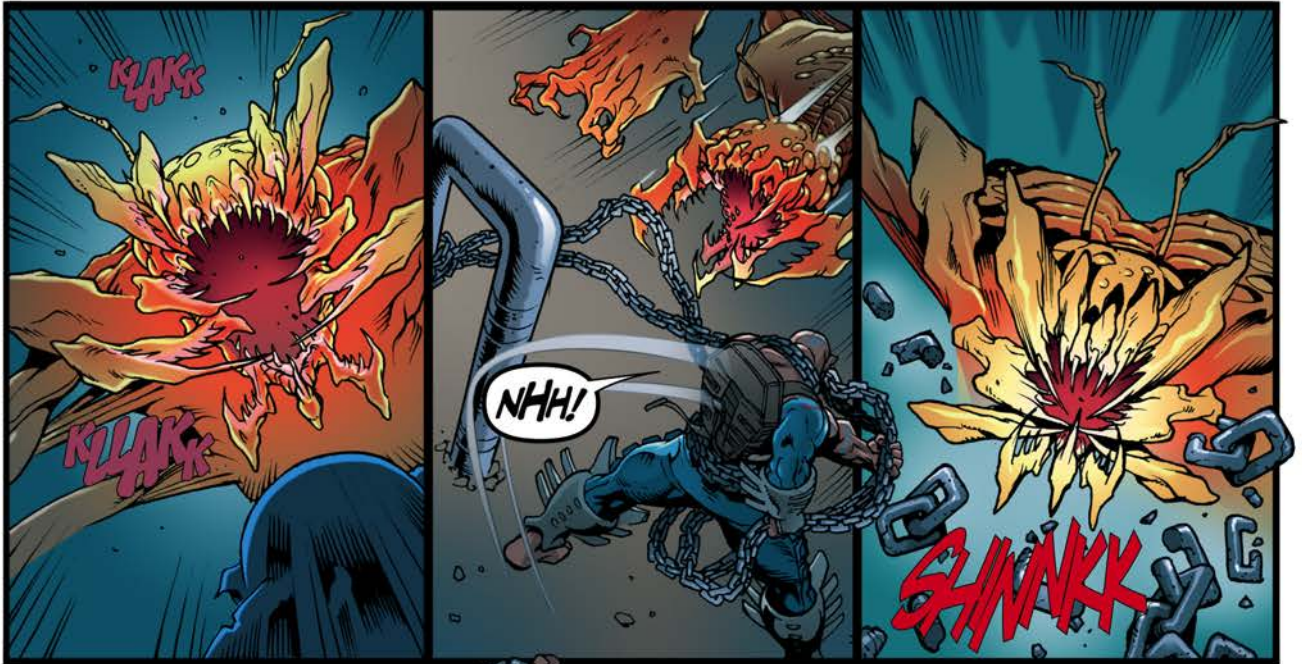
GENE COULD SMELL FIRE. HE COULD HEAR GUNFIRE AND SCREAMS.

THE FARM AND THEM WERE SCRAPPING BITTERLY, AND GENE KNEW WHO WOULD WIN.



THE THEM AROUND HIM MOVED OFF TO JOIN THE SLAUGHTER.

ONE REMAINED. GENE KNEW IT HAD BEEN LEFT TO KILL HIM. AND KILL HIM SLOWLY BECAUSE HE WAS A HATED AUX.





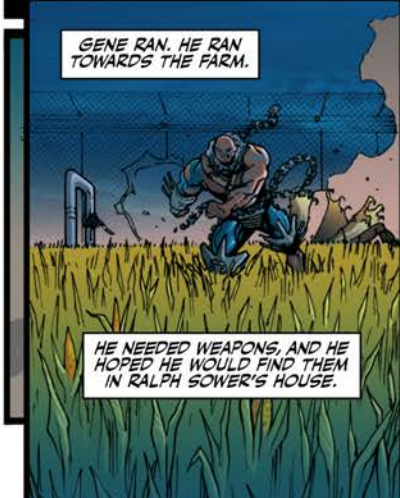
HNNHH!



TIME TO DIE!



GENE SAID DIE!



GENE RAN. HE RAN TOWARDS THE FARM.

HE NEEDED WEAPONS, AND HE HOPED HE WOULD FIND THEM IN RALPH SOWER'S HOUSE.



GOD CURSE YOU, MONSTERS! GOD CURSE YOU!

THE FARM HAD BECOME A PLACE OF KILLING. THE FOLK WHO HAD LIVED WERE DYING THERE TOO.

THEM HAD FINALLY COME, AND IT WAS THE END OF DAYS.

AND IN ONE CORNER OF THE DYING FARM...

**RAFF RAFF**



**No!**

YOU'RE HURTING MY DOGS! I HATE YOU!

THE DOGS ARE MY FRIENDS! GO AWAY!

WHERE IS MY DADDY? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO MY DADDY?



PLEASE, GO AWAY, HORRIBLE THINGS!  
I WANT MY DADDY!

LEEZEE, HIDE YOURSELF.



WHO IS THAT THERE?  
**OH!**

HIDE YOURSELF. NOW.

**GET  
WHET!**

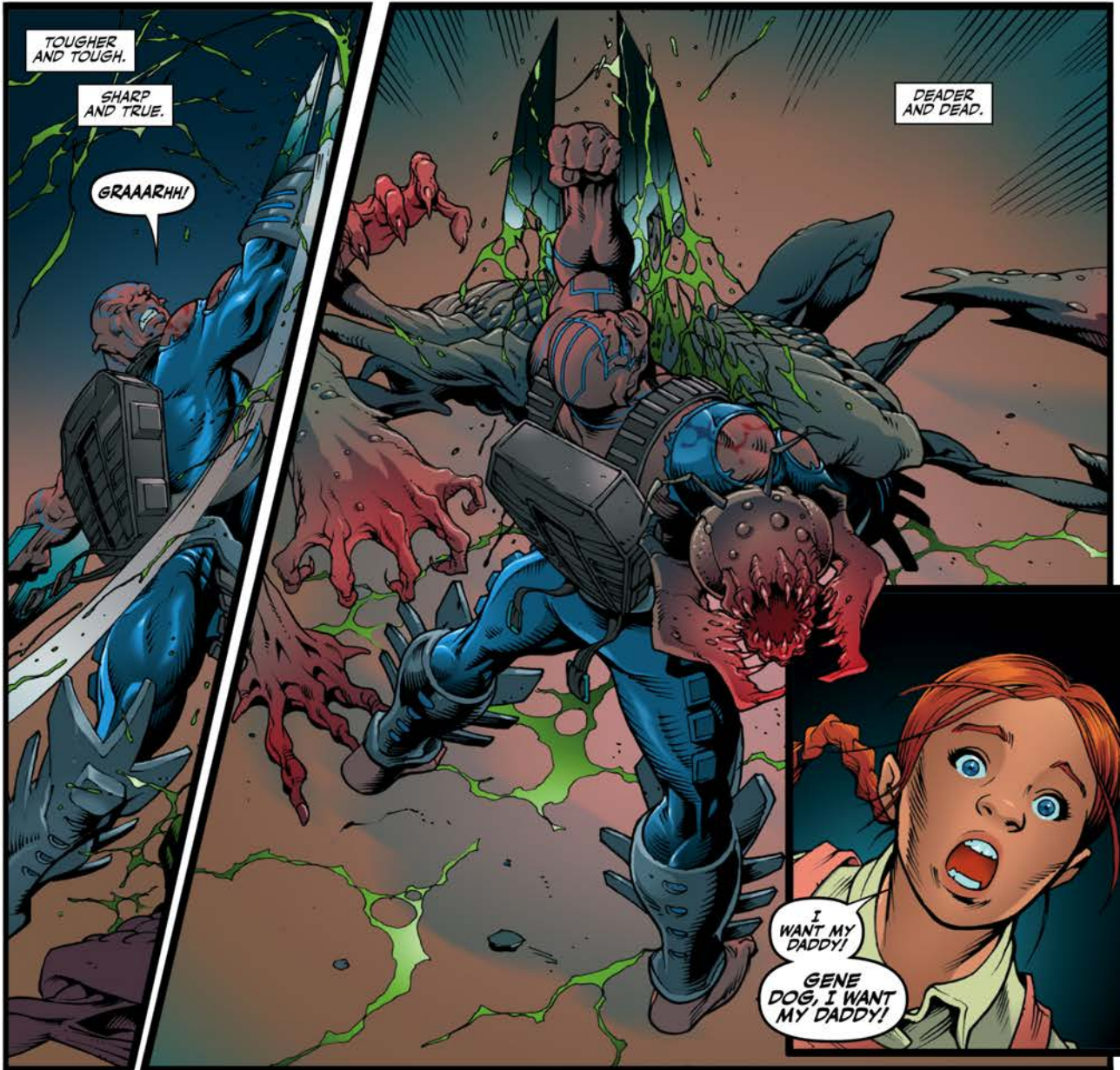




THEM WAS INSIDE THE FENCE. THEM WAS IN THE FARM.

IT WAS TIME FOR THE LAST SCRAP.

GET OFFA THE LAWN!



TOUGHER AND TOUGH.

SHARP AND TRUE.

GRAAARHH!

DEADER AND DEAD.

I WANT MY DADDY!

GENE DOG, I WANT MY DADDY!



GENE WAS TOO SCRAP-HAPPY TO HEED LEEZEE SOWER'S CRIES.



BESIDES, GENE WAS PRETTY SURE THE NIGHT HAD ALREADY SEEN RALPH SOWER'S END...



...GONE TO THEM'S BITE.



WHO'S NEXT?



THERE WAS STILL PLENTY OF THEM NEXT.

GHHNRR!



GRRRAAGH!!!



NNNNHH!



BUT GENE WOULD BE A HACKMAN UNTIL IT WAS HIS END TOO.

IN HIS WRATH, HE BECAME HIS NAME.





THAT WAY ONLY WAY!

BUT THE CULTURE SHEDS ARE FORBIDDEN, GENE!

BAD, GENE, BAD!

COME ON ANYHOW!

I'VE NEVER BEEN IN HERE, GENE DOG...

OH, LOOK AT THOSE TANKS!



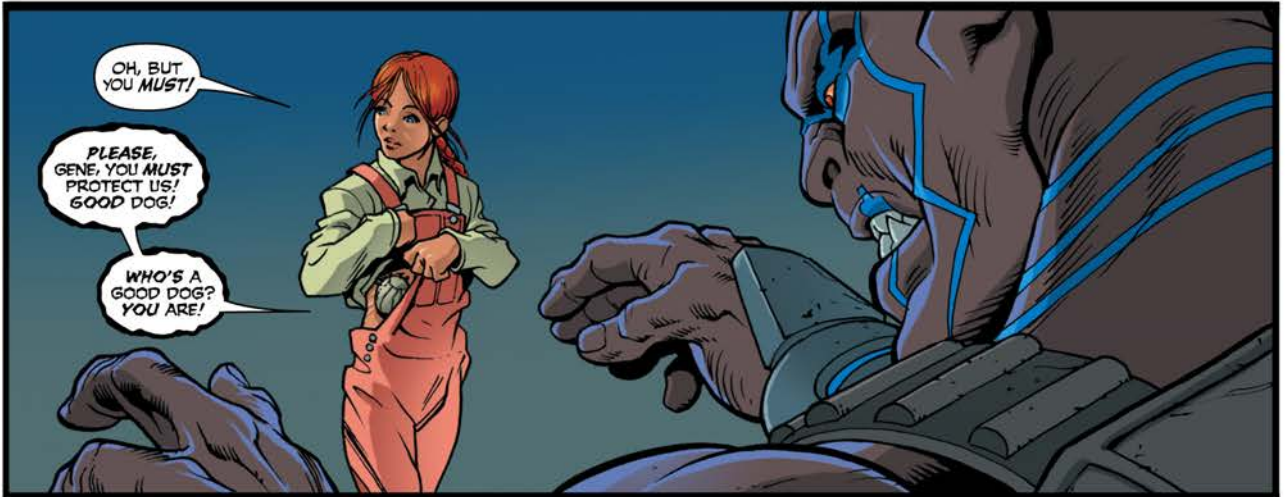
LOOK! THINGS OF THE CROP! JUST LIKE I HAVE IN MY SIDE!

GLEET GLEET GLEET



YOU'LL HELP THEM, WON'T YOU, GENE?

NO, LEEZEE.



OH, BUT YOU MUST!

PLEASE, GENE, YOU MUST PROTECT US! GOOD DOG!

WHO'S A GOOD DOG? YOU ARE!



LEEZEE!  
GET BEHIND  
ME!

GENE HAD BEEN ALPHA  
ONCE, AND HE STILL KNEW  
THE CLEVER STUFF.

SHRRRRRKKK



SKKKKTSSSSZZZKK

NOW,  
LEEZEE!

HE KNEW THE ONE  
THING AS ALWAYS  
DREW THEM.



MOVE!



WHOOOHHHH



WHTHOOOHH

AND THAT WAS  
THE SCRAPPING  
OF THAT NIGHT.



THE SUN CAME UP, AND SAW WHAT THE NIGHT HAD DONE.

THE FARM WAS ALL GONE.



GENE AND LEEZEE HID AWAY FROM THE DAY AND STAYED OUT OF SIGHT.

TIRED THEY WERE, AND SCARED, BUT THEY DID NOT DARE REST.



CAN WE GO BACK, GENE?



NOT ANY MORE, LEEZEE.

THERE IS NO BACK TO GO BACK TO.



THEN WHERE WILL WE GO?



WE WILL GO WALK-AROUND.

THEM HAD OVERRUN THE FARM, AND BROUGHT IT TO ITS END.

NOW THEY SPREAD OUT AND SEARCHED THE LAND, HUNTING FOR ANY THAT MIGHT HAVE GOT AWAY.



GENE AND LEEZEE STAYED IN THEIR HIDING PLACE FOR AS LONG AS IT TOOK THE SUN TO WALK AROUND THE SKY.



AND WHEN THE NIGHT CAME DOWN AGAIN, THEY RAN AWAY INTO IT.



I WANT MY DADDY...

GENE IS ALL YOU GOT LEFT, LEEZEE SOWER.



I DON'T WANT YOU! I WANT MY DADDY!

I WANT TO GO BACK! NOW!



THAT ISN'T LEEZEE TALKING, IS IT?

YOU'RE USING HER VOICE, BUT YOU AREN'T HER.



PLEASE, GENE. TAKE ME BACK.

I WANT TO BE WITH THE OTHERS.

NO OTHERS LEFT. ALL BURNED AWAY AND GONE.

YOU SHOULD BE GONE TOO.



NO, GENE!

NO, IT HURTS!

BETTER THIS WAY.



NO, GENE!  
STOP! YOU  
CAN'T DO  
THIS!

OWWWW!

GENE PULLED  
THE TICK-THING  
OUT OF  
HIMSELF. HE'LL DO  
THE SAME THING FOR  
LEEZEE SOWER,  
AND SHE'LL BE  
BETTER.



YOUR  
MOUTH IS FULL OF  
WRONG, GENE  
HACKMAN.

YOU ARE  
AN AUX, TOUGHER  
AND TOUGH, AND THE  
PAIN OF SEPARATION  
ALMOST KILLED  
YOU.

THIS  
LITTLE GIRL  
WOULD NOT  
SURVIVE.



MAYBE.

GENE DOES  
NOT WANT TO  
HURT LEEZEE  
SOWER.



WE  
WALK-AROUND, THEN.  
MAYBE FIND SOMEONE  
WITH MUSCLES IN THEIR  
HEAD, WHO CAN TAKE  
TICK-THINGS OUT  
WITHOUT PAIN.

NO, I  
DON'T WANT  
TO WALK  
AROUND--



MY  
CHOICE.

MY  
PACK. MY  
RULES.



SO THEY WALKED.

I AM TIRED, GENE DOG. HOW MUCH FURTHER?

AS FAR AS IT TAKES.



WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

SOME PIECE OF THE WORLD THEM HAS NOT YET ATE UP.

WHERE WILL THAT BE?

SOMEWHERE UNDER THE STARS.



THEY NAMED ME AFTER THE STARS.



OH! WHICH ONE?

GENE DOESN'T KNOW.



THAT IS A POOR STORY! MY DADDY--

MY DADDY, HE TOLD MUCH **BETTER** STORIES.



YOU WANT A STORY? YOU WANT TO HEAR A TALE?

YES!

THERE IS ONLY ONE TALE, AND OLD MAN KNEW IT BEST, BUT GENE WILL TRY TO REMEMBER HOW IT GOES.



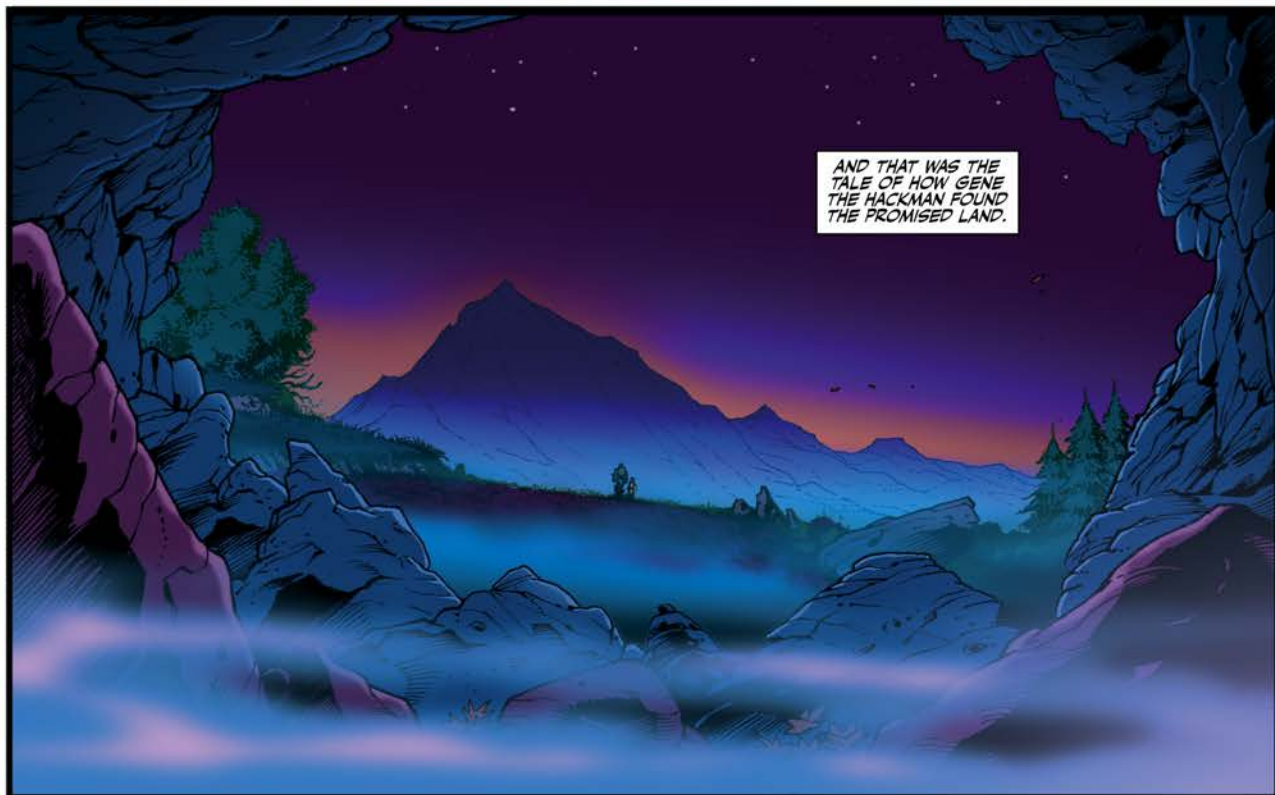
THE TALE IS CALLED "TWO- FEET-WALK-ON- THE-GROUND".

ONCE WAS THIS TWO-FEET, TWO-FEET-WALK-ON-THE-GROUND, AND HIM HE HAD THE CALL OF THE WILD AND HIM HE RAN THE WORLD.



**BIG NOISE**  
HIM, BIG FELLAH. VERY PROUD. AND THEM, THEY DIDN'T LIKE TWO-FEET, NO SIR. NOT AT ALL. HIM THEY HATED VERY MUCH.

RISE ON UP, THEY DID. RISE ON UP AND MAKE TWO-FEET RUN. RUN FAR AWAY...



AND THAT WAS THE TALE OF HOW GENE THE HACKMAN FOUND THE PROMISED LAND.

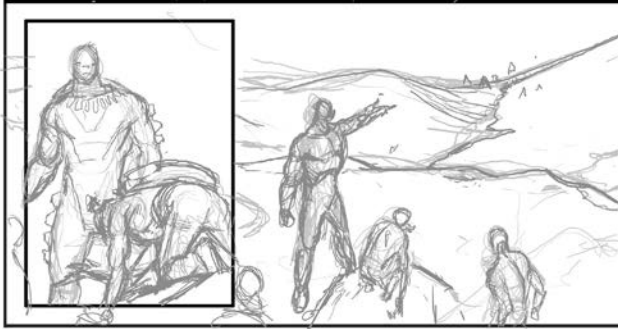
# COVER GALLERY & SKETCHES







Various pencils from Episode 1



The creative process: Episode 1 page 2, from rough layout to pencils, inks and colour



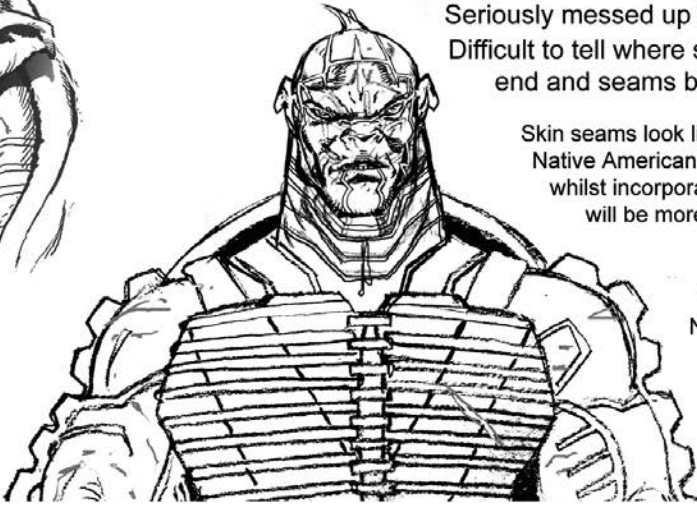
The creative process: Episode 1 page 3, from rough layout to pencils, inks and colour

# GENE



Seriously messed up face.  
Difficult to tell where scars  
end and seams begin.

Skin seams look like warpaint so I've tried for a  
Native American look to the costume designs,  
whilst incorporating Dan's ideas. The armour  
will be more damaged in the actual strip.



Weapons will also be based on a  
Native American Tomahawk/spear  
design. The blades are stored  
or fold into the shield-like  
structure on the pack's backs.

# LOUY



# THEM

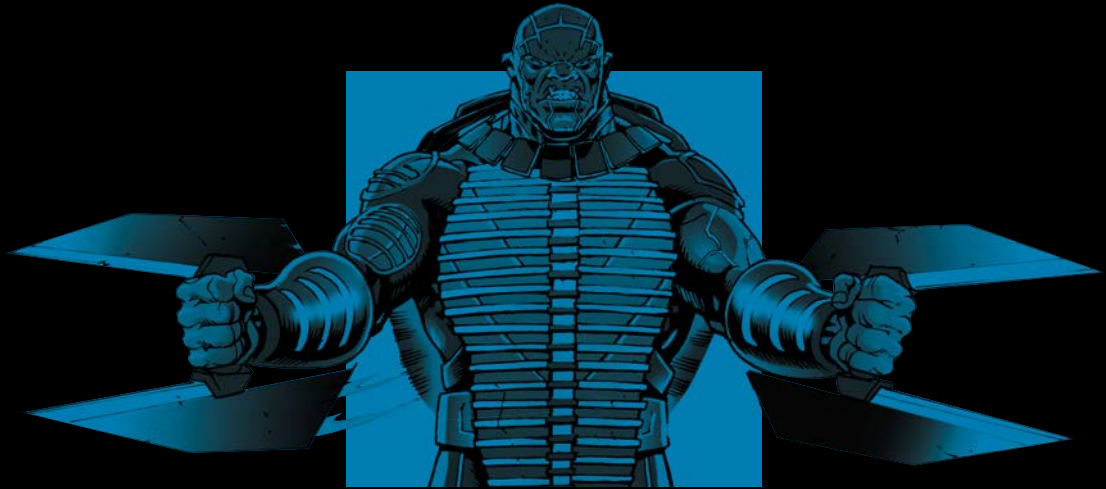
The insect-like THEM  
have faces filled with razor sharp blades.  
They are the insect equivalent to  
a food blender.  
Using their multi-bladed jaws to liquidize  
anything in their path.

## DAN ABNETT

Dan Abnett is the co-creator of *2000 AD* series *Atavar*, *Badlands*, *Sancho Panzer* and *Sinister Dexter*. He has also written *Black Light*, *Downlode Tales*, *Durham Red*, *Flesh*, *Future Shocks*, *Judge Dredd*, *Pulp Sci-Fi*, *Roadkill*, *Rogue Trooper*, *The VCs*, *Vector 13* and *Venus Bluegenes*, as well as *The Scarlet Apocrypha* and *Wardog* for the *Megazine*. A prolific creator, Abnett has also written for Marvel, Dark Horse and DC Comics. He is the author of twenty novels for the Black Library, including the bestselling *Gaunt's Ghosts* series. His most recent work outside the *Galaxy's Greatest Comic* is DC's *Legion* and *Superman*, and Wildstorm's *Mr Majestic*. Dan Abnett was voted Best Writer Now at the 2003 National Comic Awards.

## RICHARD ELSON

Richard Elson's first *2000 AD* work was on a *Future Shock* way back in 1988, and since then he has pencilled *Judge Dredd*, *Time Twisters*, *Terror Tales* and *Tyranny Rex*, as well as the co-created strips *Atavar*, *Roadkill*, *Shadows*, *The Scrap*, *A.H.A.B.*, *Go-Machine* and *Kingdom*.



## TOUGHER THAN TOUGH!

**OUT INTO THE WILDERNESS THEY TREK, LED BY THE URGINGS FROM THEIR MASTERS, CHARGED WITH KEEPING *THEM* OFF OF HIS LAWN.** The pack, led by Gene the Hackman, are strong, experienced soldiers – they don't know exactly what *Them* are, but they have their orders, and *Them* are to be scrapped at every opportunity. The Masters must be obeyed. But the *The Masters* are not all they appear to be and when Gene the Hackman's pack scatter he will come face to face with a world shattering truth!

Written by best-selling author Dan Abnett (*Durham Red*) with art by Richard Elson (*Judge Dredd*) this action-packed tale of earth's far future is not to be missed!



WWW.  
2000AD  
ONLINE  
.COM