

THE 'GOD MADE THEM STRONG' UNIVERSE PRESENTS:

SHELTERN & VESLOSTOY

TWO LINKED SUPERNATURAL NARRATIVES, IN GRAPHIC NOVEL FORMAT

WRITTEN BY ROB PLUMPTON

ELEVATOR PITCH: "Three lost souls are embroiled within a supernal arms race in which heavenly powers vie for supremacy within their pantheon, through generating supernaturally-gifted prophets who are driven to proselytise through combat and demonstration of miracles."



PREMISE & TREATMENT FOR THE ENTIRE SERIES

PREMISE: Two narratives follow three lost souls as they try to negotiate life whilst caught in the shadow of supernal warfare waged between angels who vie for dominance within their pantheon in a world abandoned by God. The narratives are anchored in two locations - an island situated on the UK's northeast coast, named SHELTERN, and the Baltic state named VESLOSTOY.

TREATMENT: The two seemingly disparate narratives are centred on three core characters who are embroiled in the heavenly struggle. The ultimate goal of this conflict is dominance within an angelic pantheon in a world abandoned by God. The bridging character, who fuses these narratives, is a demonic missionary who sojourns within Veslostoy after fleeing Sheltern in disgrace. This character is named MALCORVUS.

The three principal characters are:

- **ERIC BLYTH:** A grieving husband who, out of rage, murders the man he considers responsible for his wife's suicide. He has accidentally contacted demonic powers through automatic writing, whilst attempting to determine the way to provide peace to his wife's restless spirit. In desperation he visits a forbidden part of Sheltern where, under demonic influence, he is transformed into a porcine mockery of humanity so he can take Sarah's place in Purgatory.
- **SARAH CROWTHORNE:** A psychically gifted woman. Sarah was involved in a human/demon hybridisation programme named 'THE DEMETER PROGRAMME'. This resulted in ten hybrids, of which Sarah's daughter was the ninth. Following her daughter's euthanasia in 1986, Sarah's abilities ebbed significantly. Unable to accept the loss of her daughter along with reduced powers, Sarah falls ill whilst in Eric's care and commits suicide.
- **HYBRID 7:** The Demeter Programme's sole survivor exhibited supernatural powers far later than his siblings. The ability to sedate living things was exploited by senior personnel who misdirected Hybrid 7 into cooperating in his siblings' euthanasia. The guilt of this follows Hybrid 7 through his life, prompting an unquenchable rage that he attempts to quell with violence.

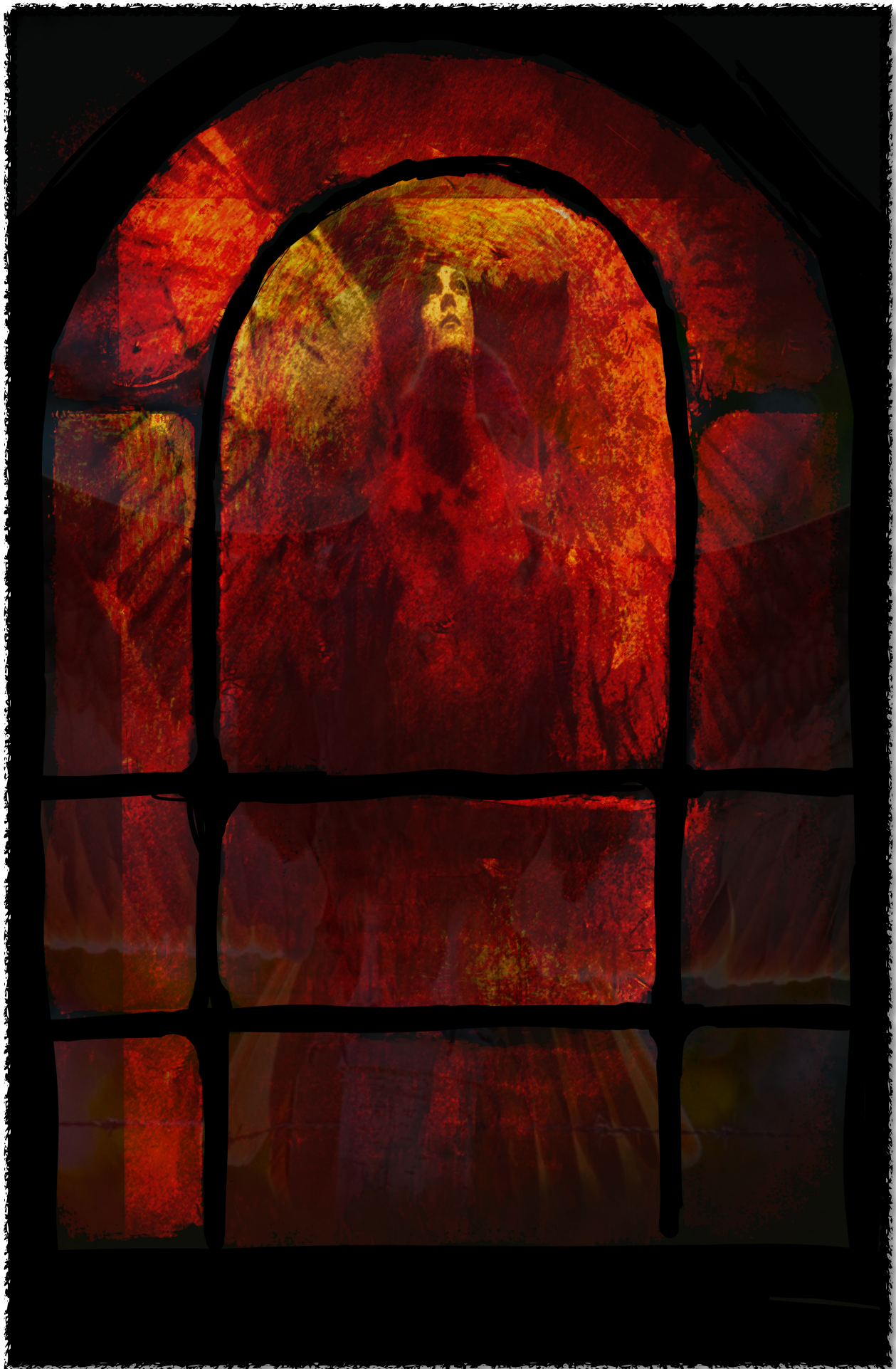
All narratives dovetail into an attempt, by a demonic figure named NELUS, to construct 'THE SKY IRIS'. This is effectively a doomsday engine geared towards bringing early judgement to humankind by opening a portal to Heaven. At the narrative's start, it is 1/3 completed.

Whilst investigating Sarah's involvement within 'The Demeter Programme', Eric is contacted by, and befriends, Hybrid 7's mentor - a man named FATHER AITES. Eric confides in Father Aites, detailing his visions of 'The Sky Iris'. These are fed back to Hybrid 7 who is operating on behalf of South Veslostian forces after an agreement forged between South Veslostoy and a 17th Century missionary.

This figure, known as MALCORVUS, enacted a pact named 'THE ANCESTRAL SABRE'. The terms of this undertaking are that - in acknowledgement of South Veslostoy harbouring him - all holders of Malcorvus' bloodline will provide ten years military service upon their eighteenth birthday. Hybrid 7 is accordingly trained as a living weapon and deployed to South Veslostoy. He undertakes an extensive campaign combining military and paramilitary combatants against North Veslostoy.

During his investigations into Sarah's past life, Eric attempts to locate the sacred place in which her ashes must be scattered. He forges an agreement with a demon named OUTIS, pledging his soul to replace that of Sarah's in Purgatory. Eric is mutated, by demonic energies, into a porcine mockery of humanity. He is rejected by Sarah due to his repulsive appearance but in spite of this he agrees to replace her in Purgatory. Sarah is admitted to Heaven, by METATRON.

Finally, in Veslostoy, senior military figures undertake an invasion of North Veslostoy in order to prompt a diversion of military resources away from The Sky Iris. This allows Hybrid 7 to access the construction site, eventually kill Nelus and destroy 'The Sky Iris' just as it begins to open its supernal portal.



PREMISE & TREATMENT FOR BOOK 0

PREMISE: A mortal man, mutated significantly by demonic energies, is the means for an incubus' rebirth whilst at the same attaining judgement by an archangel named Metatron. In Veslostoy, a handful of paramilitaries are crowded round a barrel fire whilst discussing the putative recent sighting of one supernaturally gifted fighter operating in the vicinity. Recommended music: 'Strange Weather' by Doves.

TREATMENT: This is a preview designed for crowdfunding and initial publicity. It tells a specific tale but without spoilers relating to subsequent books that would otherwise detract from the readership's enjoyment. It is split into two distinctive halves, namely *Sheltern* and *Veslostoy*. These are summarised below.

SHELTERN (THE CHAMPION OF LOVE):

On an unremarkable autumn day a hideous porcine humanoid vomits profusely. He is situated within an abandoned play area that is littered with forgotten toys. The bones of small animals are collected in neat piles. A fine film of grease, grime and dust covers the surrounding area's terrain and other features.

THE MUTATED MAN'S vulgar frame is silhouetted against a free-floating will-o'-the-wisp. His fine features are obscured by the sprite. He vomits, a congealed mixture of red blood, food and blackened ichor. A miasmatic aura surrounds The Mutated Man, who has attracted a dense cloud of flies.

Harsh, sharp, sun-baked asphalt shreds The Mutated Man's hoofed feet. The extent of this porcine character's pestilence is evinced by a prevalence of buboes, from which shadowy auras are expressed. Out of desperation, The Mutated Man picks up a glass shard. He tests it on his hand, inflicting a bloodied slit that immediately heals. He then pierces a couple of buboes that burst. He then draws this sharp object across his throat.

Initially choking on his own blood and ichor, The Mutated Man's wound heals as he gurgles and tears off his already shredded clothing. Collapsing through pain and blood loss, The Mutated Man slits his belly open. His guts spill out and, from this wound, a foetal incubus - known as MALVETIUS - emerges.

A pastel yellow light shines upon The Mutated Man. From this, a LANKY SILHOUETTE steps out thronged by nine childish spectres. They surround him, joining hands then skipping and chanting. The Lanky Silhouette approaches The Mutated Man, who feebly raises a defensive right hand. Life ebbs from The Mutated Man's eyes.

VESLOSTOY (OPERATION GREY OYSTER):

Night. Saturday, 31st October 1998. A calm, starlit night. Four men are standing round a barrel fire, attempting to keep warm. They discuss putative sightings of a demonic warrior named 'SHRIKE' who is said to operate in the area. His presence is said to forebode a forthcoming era of violence and military action.

The next scene is illuminated in shades of green, akin to night vision. All the combatants are accordingly equipped with night vision goggles, aside from Hybrid 7 - he can see almost perfectly the dark using 'purple vision'.

Three POI-19 transport helicopters fly above a forest canopy at night. Locating a suitable area. The side doors are open, revealing several red combatants. The focal character, Hybrid 7, looks out at the horizon. The view switches to Hybrid 7's eye. In his pupil, a nostalgic scene is presented. It portrays Hybrid 7 as a child in 1985. It illustrates his congenial relationship with staff and mentors within a Sheltern-based organisation named THE BIRD INSTITUTE.

After Hybrid 7's reminiscence, the narrative returns to 1998. The three POI-19 helicopters are flying low and slow, to evade enemy radar. Reaching a suitable area, the helicopters hover. Ropes are released and the passengers descend rapidly. It is initially quiet. The combatants then rendezvous with a GUERRILLA UNIT who have been awaiting them. Operation Grey Oyster begins.

SCRIPT FOR BOOK 0

SHELTERN

(ARTWORK BY TOMMY MACHIYO; LETTERING BY ELENA ARTESE; COVER BY DONNA BLACK)

CHARACTER NOTES

THE MUTATED MAN: A porcine humanoid whose body has become corrupted by the demonic energies linked with an embryonic incubus carried in his guts.

THE LANKY SILHOUETTE: Slender and avian, this is a fagin-esque demonic character who is connected with the embryonic incubus.

THE CHILDISH SPECTRES: Nine ghostly children who are linked to The Lanky Silhouette, the embryonic demon and The Mutated Man.

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PAGE 1 (1 PANEL)

PANEL 1 (ENTIRE PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

There are several distinctive and easily recognisable features connecting this area with childish activity: a slide, roundabout, swings, climbing frame, and religious paraphernalia akin to stylised totems.

COMMENTARY:

1994. An autumnal sunset. An unremarkable day. An end to torment.

PAGE 2 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Mid-range view of the autumnal sun. Orange and low, it is set against the amber sky.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

A duplication of the above shot. A sparse cloud of flies is now present in the foreground.

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

A duplication of the above shot. The cloud of flies has increased in density.

PANLE 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

A duplication of the above shot. The cloud of flies is far denser. It is accompanied by a diseased, pockmarked, shoulder that edges into the sun.

PAGE 3 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Close shot. An abandoned child's trike stands alone in the play area. It is red and black. The handle bars are situated at an angle.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Mid-range shot. Two spring riders shaped like fish, with one being a cod and the other a shark.

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Evening. Close shot. A porcine shadow falls over the shark-shaped spring rider. The cloud of flies is visible once more.

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Evening. Mid-range shot. The Mutated Man stands in front of a spring rider, partially obscuring it.

PAGE 4 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Long shot. The Mutated Man is silhouetted against a free-floating will-o'-the-wisp. He is doubled over in pain.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Long shot. The Mutated Man tears off his shirt, his back arched back as he is contorted with agony.

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Mid-range shot. The Mutated Man, silhouetted, drops his shirt on the ground as he arches forwards.

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

The Mutated Man, still silhouetted, clutches his stomach and is now arched forwards. His mouth is wide open.

PAGE 5 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Headshot of The Mutated Man's mouth. His porcine maw is wide open as he vomits.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Close view of the cod spring rider. It is covered in vomit, which is a congealed mix of black ichor and deep red blood.

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Close view of several glass shards that litter the floor. There is a neat little pile of mouse skulls beside it.

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

A duplication of PANEL 3. However, The Mutated Man's hand is visible as he picks up a glass shard.

PAGE 6 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Close view of The Mutated Man's porcine face. Tusks bud from his bottom jaw, which is a little elongated.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Extreme closeup of The Mutated Man's throat. It is covered with sores, buboes and pockmarks.

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Duplication of PANEL 2. The glass shard is drawn over The Mutated Man's bare throat.

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Duplication of PANEL 3. Blood and ichor spurt from The Mutated Man's self-inflicted wound.

PAGE 7 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Long shot. The Mutated Man has fallen to his hands and knees as he bleeds profusely.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Close shot of The Mutated Man's wound that begins closing almost immediately.

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Continuation from PANEL 2. The wound continues to close as The Mutated Man tears at it with taloned hands.

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Continuation of PANEL 3. The wound closes around The Mutated Man's taloned fingers.

PAGE 8 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Headshot of The Mutated Man. His tusks are far more prominent. His mouth is, once again, open.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

A continuation of PANEL 1. The Mutated Man's mouth is open as he vomits. However, vomit is projected via the holes in his throat.

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Top-down long shot of The Mutated Man as he looks up towards a pastel yellow light situated just off panel.

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Mid-range shot. A solid pastel yellow panel in which The Lanky Silhouette's distant form is just about visible.

PAGE 9 (1 PANEL)

PANEL 1 (FULL PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Long shot. A solid, pastel yellow, panel in which The Lanky Silhouette stands with the nine Childish Spectres.

PAGE 10 (9 PANELS)

PANELS 1-9 (SQUARE PANELS, IN ROWS OF THREE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Close view. Each of these panels will depict a spectral child, silhouetted against a solid pastel light. They all point towards The Mutated Man.

PAGE 11 (1 PANEL)

PANEL 1 (FULL PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Body shot of The Lanky Silhouette. It has now extended a further eight arms. One of the hands glows red.

PAGE 12 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

The Mutated Man's dilated pupil reflects the pastel light. The Lanky Silhouette simply watches as it levitates.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

A continuation of PANEL 1. Three Spectral Children step in front of The Lanky Silhouette.

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Close shot of The Mutated Man's fully healed throat. It is scarred and covered in pockmarks. Blood and ichor stain it.

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Long view, top down, of The Mutated Man surrounded by the nine Spectral Children.

PAGE 13 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Close shot of The Spectral Children's hands. They are opened, motioning to grab one another.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Continuation of PANEL 1, with another two hands poised to grip one another.

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Continuation of PANEL 2, with another two hands poised to grip one another.

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Continuation of PANEL 3. Another two hands that aren't poised to grip one another.

PAGE 14 (1 PANEL)

PANEL 1 (ENTIRE PAGE):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Top down, negative effect view, of The Spectral Children holding hands. They stand in a ring around The Mutated Man.

PAGE 15 (9 PANELS)

PANELS 1-9 (THREE PANELS PER ROW):

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Each panel is a headshot depicting one of The Childish Spectres. They speak in unison. One in each panel.

THE NINE SPECTRAL CHILDREN
Daddy ...!

PAGE 16 (3 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (RECTANGLE, TOP OF PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Headshots of three Spectral Children. They are smiling and giggling, looking down at The Mutated Man.

PANEL 2 (RECTANGULAR, MIDDLE OF PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Close shots of three Spectral Children, view of their torsos. They are holding hands around The Mutated Man.

PANEL 3 (RECTANGULAR, BOTTOM OF PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Close shots of The Spectral Children, view of their feet. They are evidently skipping and dancing.

PAGE 17 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Mid-range shot of the shark spring rider that is motionless in situ.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

THE NINE SPECTRAL CHILDREN
... Daddy ...!

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. MARBLED RED AND BLACK PANEL, CLOUDS, WHITE TEXT - EVENING

white text.

THE NINE SPECTRAL CHILDREN
... creature of faith ...!

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

Mid-range shot of the shark spring rider which is bent back as though bearing weight.

PAGE 18 (3 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (RECTANGLE, TOP OF PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

The slide. There are three Spectral Children on this - one sliding, and two climbing its steps.

PANEL 2 (RECTANGLE, MIDDLE OF PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

The roundabout. There are five Spectral Children using this apparatus - one spinning it and the others seated, giggling.

PANEL 3 (RECTANGLE, BOTTOM OF PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

The shark spring rider. There is a single Spectral Child using this apparatus.

PAGE 19 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

The Lanky Silhouette steps from the pastel light. Its focus is evidently on The Mutated Man. It has ten arms.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

The Lanky Silhouette now has just eight arms that are extended either side.

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

The Lanky Silhouette has just six arms that are still outstretched on either flank.

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

The Lanky Silhouette has just four arms that are outstretched. The index fingers are pointing either side.

PAGE 20 (1 PANEL)

PANEL 1 (ENTIRE PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - EVENING

The Lanky Silhouette has absorbed all but two of its arms. The Lanky Silhouette's frame is imposed over a crucifix.

PAGE 21 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - NIGHT

Close-up of The Mutated Man's belly. He is holding a glass shard against it.

THE NINE SPECTRAL CHILDREN (O.S.)
Daddy...!

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - NIGHT

The Mutated Man drags the glass shard over his distended belly. Blood, ichor and pus flow from the open wound.

THE NINE SPECTRAL CHILDREN (O.S.)
... Daddy ...!

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - NIGHT

The Mutated Man's wound is enlarged. A small hand reaches out from the widening wound.

THE NINE SPECTRAL CHILDREN (O.S.)
... Creature of faith ...!

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. SHELTERN, ABANDONED PLAY AREA - NIGHT

The Mutated Man's guts spill out. Among the mess, an embryonic incubus, the demon MALVETIUS, is visible.

THE NINE SPECTRAL CHILDREN (O.S.)
... Our Daddy!

PAGE 22 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. MARBLED RED AND BLACK PANEL, CLOUDS, WHITE TEXT - NIGHT

THE NINE SPECTRAL CHILDREN (O.S.)
Champion ...

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. MARBLED RED AND BLACK PANEL, CLOUDS, WHITE TEXT - NIGHT

THE NINE SPECTRAL CHILDREN (O.S.)
... of ...

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. MARBLED RED AND BLACK PANEL, CLOUDS, WHITE TEXT - NIGHT

THE NINE SPECTRAL CHILDREN (O.S.)
... love ...

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. MARBLED RED AND BLACK PANEL, CLOUDS, WHITE TEXT - NIGHT

THE NINE SPECTRAL CHILDREN (O.S.)
... DADDY!

PAGE 23 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. MARBLED RED AND BLACK PANEL, CLOUDS, WHITE TEXT - NIGHT

Three Spectral Children are silhouetted against the predominantly red background.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. MARBLED RED AND BLACK PANEL, CLOUDS, WHITE TEXT - NIGHT

Three Spectral Children are silhouetted against the predominantly red background.

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. MARBLED RED AND BLACK PANEL, CLOUDS, WHITE TEXT - NIGHT

THE NINE SPECTRAL CHILDREN (O.S.)
... love ...

Three Spectral Children are silhouetted against the predominantly red background.

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. MARBLED RED AND BLACK PANEL, CLOUDS, WHITE TEXT - NIGHT

The Lanky Silhouette is present in this panel. It has extended a hand towards The Mutated Man, who is off panel.

PAGE 24 (1 PANEL)

SINGLE PANEL (ENTIRE PAGE)

White text over a grungy, black, background. A taloned hand, coloured red, is visible just off centre.

COMMENTARY

The demon, born of mortal womb and split into five, will seal the collective fate!

SCRIPT FOR BOOK 0

VESLOSTOY

(ARTWORK BY LAURA WOODRIFF; LETTERING BY ELENA ARTESE; COVER BY DONNA BLACK)

CHARACTER NOTES

THE SOUTH VESLOSTIAN COMBATANTS: Three veteran guerrilla fighters who have seen extensive action within Veslostoy's Contested Zone.

THE POI-19 HELICOPTER: A mid-sized troop carrier with minimal armament. These are used to deposit elite fighters in the Northern Contested Zone.

THE MYRMIDON: Elite special forces combatants operating within Veslostoy in the Northern Contested Zone.

HYBRID 7 (ADULT): A human/demon hybrid fighter, sired during THE DEMETER PROGRAMME, he leads a handful of brutal fighters within Veslostoy.

HYBRID 7 (INFANT): This human/demon hybrid is, due to an apparent lack of supernatural abilities, a pleasant, affable and approachable entity.

LORD ARKHAN: A senior fighter linked with, but not a member of, The Myrmidon. He is Hybrid 7's direct subordinate.

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PAGE 25 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Long shot. The starlit sky. Distant tree tops are partially visible at the bottom of this panel.

COMMENTARY
Halloween, 1998. South Veslostoy.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Long shot. As above, but additional illumination is provided by a partial moon.

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Close-up. Calloused hands are placed over a fire in order to warm them. They are partially illuminated by the flames.

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Night. Four armed men, SOUTH VESLOSTIAN COMBATANTS stand around a barrel fire. They are warming their hands whilst conversing.

PAGE 26 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Headshot. SOUTH VESLOSTIAN COMBATANT 1. He is partially lit by flames within the barrel fire.

VESLOSTIAN COMBATANT 1
You know, I think I saw him.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Headshot. SOUTH VESLOSTIAN COMBATANT 2. He is lit in the same manner as his comrade.

VESLOSTIAN COMBATANT 2
I heard he's here. Where did you see him?

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Headshot. SOUTH VESLOSTIAN COMBATANT 3. He is lit as per the earlier examples.

VESLOSTIAN COMBATANT 3
Bullshit! If he was here, we'd all know about it!

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Headshot. SOUTH VESLOSTIAN COMBATANT 4. He is illuminated by the same source as his opposite numbers.

VESLOSTIAN COMBATANT 4
I hear you. There's no way he'd be here. Not this shit hole. Not now!

PAGE 27 (2 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP HALF OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Long view of the four Veslostian Combatants standing around the barrel fire. There are several more of these fires in the distance.

VESLOSTIAN COMBATANT 1
I swear. It was in a helicopter. One of the POI-19s.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, BOTTOM HALF OF PAGE)

Long view of the four Veslostian Combatants as they continue their conversation.

VESLOSTIAN COMBATANT 1
He flew over. Looked straight at me!

VESLOSTIAN COMBATANT 2
No way. Absolutely ...

PAGE 28 (1 PANEL)

PANEL 1 (ENTIRE PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

A top-down long view of the Veslostian Combatants. Other paramilitary personnel are in the periphery.

VESLOSTIAN COMBATANT 2
... no fucking way!

PAGE 29 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (RECTANGLE, TOP 1/3 OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Illuminated in shades of green akin to night vision, three POI-19 helicopters fly close to the tree tops. The stars shine brightly.

PILOT (O.S.)
Ok, gents. Flying low and slow. Approaching The Contested Zone airspace ...

PANEL 2 (VERTICAL RECTANGLE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Long view of one South Veslostian helicopter, the POI-19. As before, it is a monochrome landscape in shades of green.

PILOT (O.S.)
... Looking for the rendezvous point!

PANEL 3 (VERTICAL RECTANGLE, BOTTOM MIDDLE OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Close view of another POI-19; the scene is coloured as before. The helicopter is not illuminated.

PANEL 4 (VERTICAL RECTANGLE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Night. View of the third POI-19 helicopter. It is embellished with a shark face and religious markings.

PAGE 30 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

View of the tree tops from inside the POI-19 helicopter. It is, as before, a starlit night coloured in shades of green.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. POI-19 HELICOPTER, COCKPIT - NIGHT

Through the window view of a landing zone - a beacon can be seen flashing - within this POI-19 helicopter's interior. Hybrid 7 is seated at the exit point, looking down. He is partially obscured.

PILOT (OFF PANEL)
Ah! There it is!

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. POI-19 HELICOPTER - NIGHT

An open doorway. View of the outside via one POI-19's interior. The scene's green illumination continues.

PILOT (OFF PANEL)
... Preparing for drop-off ...

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. POI-19 HELICOPTER - NIGHT

View of several MYRMIDON specialist fighters, within a POI-19 helicopter. With the exception of Hybrid 7, all have night vision goggles

PILOT (OFF PANEL)
... Good luck, gents!

PAGE 31 (3 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (RECTANGLE, TOP 1/3 OF PAGE)

INT. POI-19 HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Close view of Hybrid 7's eyes. In one pupil, situated to the right of this page, BIRD INSTITUTE SECURITY GUARD ONE is visible.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. THE BIRD INSTITUTE HQ, CORRIDOR - DAY

Mid-range shot. Negative view of Bird Institute Security Guard One. He is armed with an exotic gun and stands guard outside a door.

COMMENTARY
1985

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. THE BIRD INSTITUTE HQ, CORRIDOR - DAY

Day. Close view of Bird Institute Security Guard One's head. His ornate armour is covered in scriptures, religious talismans, and similar.

PAGE 32 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. THE BIRD INSTITUTE HQ, CORRIDOR - DAY

Long oblique view down a corridor that ends in a junction. Bird Institute Security Guard One maintains his static position.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. THE BIRD INSTITUTE HQ, CORRIDOR - DAY

A continuation of the above shot. Two long shadows fall just at the junction point.

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. THE BIRD INSTITUTE HQ, CORRIDOR - DAY

Mid-range view of BIRD INSTITUTE SECURITY GUARD TWO rounding the corner. He is armed in a manner akin to his counterpart.

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. THE BIRD INSTITUTE HQ, CORRIDOR - DAY

Another individual, BIRD INSTITUTE SECURITY GUARD THREE, rounds the corner and paces beside Bird Institute Security Guard Two.

PAGE 33 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. THE BIRD INSTITUTE HQ, CORRIDOR - DAY

Long view of the corridor junction. The Bird Institute Security Guards pace up the corridor.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. THE BIRD INSTITUTE HQ, CORRIDOR - DAY

Long view of the corridor junction. The INFANT HYBRID 7 rounds this corner with extreme haste. He holds a toy rabbit.

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. THE BIRD INSTITUTE HQ, CORRIDOR - DAY

Long view of the corridor junction. Bird Institute Security Guard Two turns and faces the Infant Hybrid 7.

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. THE BIRD INSTITUTE HQ, CORRIDOR - DAY

Long view of the corridor junction. Bird Institute Security Guard Two tenderly kneels in front of the Infant Hybrid 7.

BIRD INSTITUTE SECURITY GUARD TWO
Oh hi, Joseph. How are you today?

PAGE 34 (2 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, LEFT CENTRE OF PAGE)

INT. POI-19 HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Close view of Hybrid 7's right eye. Bird Institute Security Guard Two is present in the pupil.

COMMENTARY
1998

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, RIGHT CENTRE OF PAGE)

INT. POI-19 HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Night. Close view of Hybrid 7's left eye, the pupil of which now reflects the starlit horizon.

PAGE 35 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. POI-19 HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Long view from the POI-19's interior. Coloured in shades of night vision green, as per earlier. Smoke is visible.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. POI-19 HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Close view of Hybrid 7's dagger which is sheathed and attached to his webbing.

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

Night. Close view of Hybrid 7's automatic rifle, a VOH-1265. As before, it is illuminated in shades of green.

HYBRID 7 (OFF PANEL)
Prepare for disembarkation, lads!

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

Close view of Hybrid 7's backpack. There is an anti tank missile system attached to it.

PAGE 36 (3 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (RECTANGLE, TOP 1/3 OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Long view of the three POI-19 helicopters. The side exit points are open. Still illuminated in green.

HYBRID 7 (OFF PANEL)
Go, lads! Go ...

PANEL 2 (RECTANGLE, MIDDLE 1/3 OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Long view of the three POI-19 helicopters. Ropes descend from each aircraft. Illuminated in green.

HYBRID 7 (OFF PANEL)
... Go ...

PANEL 3 (RECTANGLE, BOTTOM 1/3 OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Long view of the three POI-19 helicopters. The ropes are fully extended.

HYBRID 7 (OFF PANEL)
... Go!

PAGE 37 (3 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (RECTANGLE, TOP 1/3 OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Mid-range view of a POI-19 helicopter. Figures descend the ropes. Illuminated in green.

PANEL 2 (RECTANGLE, MIDDLE 1/3 OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Mid-range view of the ropes. Figures descend down each rope. Illuminated in green.

PANEL 3 (RECTANGLE, BOTTOM 1/3 OF PAGE)

Mid-range view of the bottom portion of each rope. There are figures nearing the ground, as they slide down. Illuminated in green

PAGE 38 (6 PANELS)

PANELS 1 TO 6 (SQUARE, EVENLY SPACED)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

Each of these panels will depict a face belonging to one of the elite combatants who disembarked from the POI-19 helicopter. In green.

PAGE 39 (1 PANEL)

PANEL 1 (ENTIRE PAGE)

Long shot, top-down view of three VESLOSTIAN COMBATANTS who are awaiting Hybrid 7 and his unit.

PAGE 40 (4 PANELS)

PANELS 1-4 (SQUARE, EACH OCCUPYING 1/4 OF PAGE)

EXT. VESLOSTOY, FORESTED AREA - NIGHT

The elite combatants arrive as The Veslostian Combatants approach. Illuminated in green.

SCRIPT FOR BOOK 0

THE CROFFULAX

(ARTWORK BY ELIANA ZOE; LETTERING BY ELIANA ZOE; COVER BY ELIANA ZOE)

This short poetic piece is 'a book within a book'. It is aimed at The Gifts of Demeter, circa 1985. It is intended to serve as a means for the young human/demon hybrids to disengage momentarily from their edificatory education. Essentially it gives them respite from the gravity of their intended mission, to revitalise their ebbing religion through combat and miracles. It is an allegory relating to propaganda.

CHARACTER NOTES

THE CROFFULAX: An anthropomorphic shrew with a stout body plus lanky limbs. He is a novice magic user who grows in power after tapping into rage through grief.

THE DIPPER: One of The Croffulax's closest friends, the happiness he provides is holding back The Croffulax's magic. This leads to him being murdered.

THE SPINDELUK: A senior officer within the vanguard invading force who unleashes The Croffulax's abilities by murdering The Dipper. He represents propaganda.

.....

PAGE 41 (1 PANEL)

PANEL 1 (ENTIRE PAGE)

Image of THE CROFFULAX and THE DIPPER in an idyllic setting.

COMMENTARY

The Croffulax was a little tiny shrew. Tolerant of others, he lived in a
yew!

Sharing the woods with dryads and fairies, he lived on bugs, worms, fish
plus berries.

An amphibious creature (loving clear waters), he would daily dive, swim
and totter

Along pebbled beds, that made him feel chipper particularly when shared
with his friend The Dipper.

PAGE 42 (1 PANEL)

PANEL 1 (ENTIRE PAGE)

Another image of The CroffulaxX and The Dipper in an idyllic setting.

COMMENTARY

This water bird would, of him, often ask, "My dear Croffulax, may I give you a task?"

And in friendly spirits he would always accept this little bird's challenges, 'til here evil crept!

Through blighted streams that washed bloodied claws, The Spindeluk's influence spread from his maw,

Into the river where our friend would swim, until dark toxins had maddened him.

PAGE 43 (1 PANEL)

PANEL 1 (ENTIRE PAGE)

An image of The Croffulax and his deceased friend.

COMMENTARY

But through his mad frame, goodness still flowed and remembering his friend, created an ode,

For he had discovered (floating in a bog) His friend The Dipper ,
poisoned by grog!

"What sport can I have, now my friend is blighted, waters are gloomy, my days now benighted!

"I feel a malady invading my being (A dark gift that, though bad, is all seeing)."

PAGE 44 (1 PANEL)

PANEL 1 (ENTIRE PAGE)

An image of The Croffulax in torment.

COMMENTARY

"My fur has grown darker, eyes glow in the night, yet these nightly coals are cold as they're bright."

Said he, to his own mannequins wrought By the hands inspired by a maddening lot.

The Croffulax, sensing evil's approach, Considered it worthy for TOOTH to broach.

He began a journey, hidden by magic, to carry a message concerning invasion tragic.

SCRIPT PREVIEW FOR BOOK 1, SHELTERN - 'A BODY'

PREMISE: An anonymous, bereaved, husband attempts to contact his late wife through automatic writing but accidentally opens his body to demonic influence. Under the demons' malign guidance, he murders a young man and flees the police whilst trying to determine the sacred place where his wife's ashes should be spread.

PAGE 1 (1 PANEL)

PANEL 1 (CENTRE OF PAGE)

CLOSE VIEW: A crudely scribbled image depicting a large and complex pylon, approximately one third built. It is thronged with several angelic figures drawn with equal crudity. A few scribbled corpses are randomly positioned at the pylon's base.

COMMENTARY

Sheltern, Thursday 12th January, 1995. The demons have reached out.

PAGE 2 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. THE MAINLAND, ERIC BLYTH'S STUDY - DAWN

CLOSE VIEW: A crude drawing, in a similar vein to that previously shown, showing one smiling ghostly child - HYBRID 9 - holding a sharp object. An adult lays prone on the floor beside her.

PANEL 2 (TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. THE MAINLAND, ERIC BLYTH'S STUDY - DAWN

CLOSE VIEW: A crudely written note, in capitals, that reads 'THE SKY IRIS WILL HERALD JUDGEMENT UPON ALL!', above which the pylon is repeated.

PANEL 3 (BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. THE MAINLAND, ERIC BLYTH'S STUDY - DAWN

CLOSE VIEW: Another crude drawing, this time showing a porcine humanoid kneeling before an angel. Text reads 'FROM OUR BELOVED METATRON, WE BESEECH GUIDANCE'!

PANEL 4 (BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. THE MAINLAND, ERIC BLYTH'S STUDY - DAWN

CLOSE VIEW: A scrawled message, written in block capitals, that reads 'BEWARE THE COLD ARIA'.

PAGE 3 (1 PANEL)

PANEL 1 (CENTRE OF PAGE)

EXT. NORTH VESLOSTOY, THE SKY IRIS CONSTRUCTION SIGHT - DAWN

The Sky Iris - a gigantic aerial constructed to tap into angelic powers, thereby opening a portal to Heaven and prompting early judgement, stands one third completed against the dawn sun.

COMMENTARY

North Veslostoy, Friday 13th January 1995. An unremarkable dawn.

PAGE 4 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. NORTH VESLOSTOY, NELUS' THRONE ROOM - DAWN

LONG VIEW: A grand and spacious room in which NELUS' throne is centrally located. There are four stained glass windows that depict significant scenes relating to Sheltern's religion. The windows are positioned to ensure that the sun shines on Nelus, in his throne, throughout a given day.

COMMENTARY

Nelus' throne room.

PANEL 2 (TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. NORTH VESLOSTOY, NELUS' THRONE ROOM - DAWN

MID-RANGE VIEW: The desiccated body of Nelus is seated upon the throne. He is illuminated by coloured light that shines through a stained glass window. His physical frame is adorned with medical machinery that maintains a half-living state.

COMMENTARY

A demon, resting ...

PANEL 3 (BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. NORTH VESLOSTOY, NELUS' THRONE ROOM - DAWN

CLOSE VIEW: A blood pack held up with a frame, from which a tube extends. The blackened sanguine contents are a mix of ichor and blood; a dark aura emanates.

COMMENTARY

... Unable to live and not allowed to die ...

PANEL 4 (BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. NORTH VESLOSTOY, NELUS' THRONE ROOM - DAWN

HEADSHOT: Nelus' drawn facial features exhibiting a blankness that accompanies dormancy. Eyes are taped shut, and his mouth is frozen in a bony smile.

COMMENTARY

... It is said that an Aria may rouse this beast into consciousness! Putting an end to simple, and bare, existence.

PAGE 5 (4 PANELS)

INT. NORTH VESLOSTOY, NELUS' THRONE ROOM - DAWN

PANELS 1 - 4 (EACH 1/4 OF PAGE)

LONG VIEW: A young choir file in from three doorways. There are three individuals from each door. They stand left, right, and in front, of Nelus.

PAGE 6 (4 PANELS)

PANELS 1 - 2 (EACH 1/4 OF PAGE)

INT. NORTH VESLOSTOY, NELUS' THRONE ROOM - DAWN

MID-RANGE VIEW: A choir, dressed elaborately, have convened around Nelus' frame. Their mouths are open as they sing.

PANEL 3 (BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. NORTH VESLOSTOY, NELUS' THRONE ROOM - DAWN

MID-RANGE VIEW: A bearded, ornately dressed, religious figure possessing an air of seniority kneels before Nelus' immobile corporeal frame. His appearance echoes that of METATRON in the earlier scrawled drawings.

PANEL 4 (BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. NORTH VESLOSTOY, NELUS' THRONE ROOM - DAWN

A dead lamb is placed in a smoking altar beside Nelus. The body smokes. The choir sings.

PAGE 7 (2 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (ENTIRE PAGE - BACKDROP)

BACKDROP PANEL

A grungy, mottled, black and red, panel. The red element appears akin to smoke.

PANEL 2 (CENTRE OF PAGE)

INT. MAINLAND, ERIC BLYTH'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Surrounded by scrawled notes that litter his double bed, ERIC BLYTH sleeps alone. His dormant brow is furrowed.

PAGE 8 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. MAINLAND, ERIC BLYTH'S BEDROOM - DAWN

MID-RANGE VIEW: A digital radio alarm clock. It stands idle, faintly glowing.

PANEL 2 (TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. MAINLAND, ERIC BLYTH'S BEDROOM - DAWN

CLOSE VIEW: The radio alarm clock activates. It begins playing '(Your Love Is Like A) Heatwave' by Martha Reeves and The Vandellas.

SONG LYRICS, LOVE IS LIKE A HEAT WAVE (V.O.)
Whenever I'm with him
Something inside starts to burning
And I'm filled with desire
Could it be the devil in me
Or is this the way love's supposed to be?

PANEL 3 (BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. MAINLAND, ERIC BLYTH'S BEDROOM - DAWN

CLOSE VIEW: Eric Blyth's torpid face. It remains stuck in its stressful expression.

SONG LYRICS, LOVE IS LIKE A HEAT WAVE (V.O.)

It's like a heat wave
It's burning in my heart
I can't keep from burning
It's tearing me apart

PANEL 4 (BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. MAINLAND, ERIC BLYTH'S BEDROOM - DAWN

CLOSE VIEW: Eric's closed eye. The dawn sun has hit his face from a window.

SONG LYRICS, LOVE IS LIKE A HEAT WAVE (V.O.)

Whenever he calls my name so softly and plain
Right then, right there, I feel that burning flame
Has high blood pressure got a hold on me?
Is this the way love's supposed to be?

PAGE 9 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. PURGATORY DREAMSCAPE, A HALCYON MEADOW - AFTERNOON

LONG VIEW: A lush meadow replete with long grass, wild flowers and bordered with hedgerows. The spirit of SARAH, Eric's late wife, is positioned centrally. Her arms are outstretched.

SONG LYRICS, LOVE IS LIKE A HEAT WAVE (V.O.)

It's like a heat wave
It's burning in my heart
I can't keep from burning
It's tearing me apart

PANEL 2 (TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. PURGATORY DREAMSCAPE, A HALCYON MEADOW - AFTERNOON

MID-RANGE VIEW: Sarah is spinning, head held back, with an enraptured smile.

SONG LYRICS, LOVE IS LIKE A HEAT WAVE (O.S.)

Sometimes I stare in space
Tears all over my face
I can't explain it, don't understand it
I ain't never felt like this before

PANEL 3 (BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. PURGATORY DREAMSCAPE, A HALCYON MEADOW - AFTERNOON

CLOSE VIEW: Sarah exhibits a beaming smile. Her eyes are glowing, and a beam of light escapes her mouth plus nostrils.

SONG LYRICS, LOVE IS LIKE A HEAT WAVE (V.O.)

Now this funny feeling has me amazed
Don't know what to do, my head's in a haze
It's like a heat wave

PANEL 4 (BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. PURGATORY DREAMSCAPE, A HALCYON MEADOW - AFTERNOON

CLOSE VIEW: Sarah and Eric are extending open hands towards one another. Sarah's hands are glowing.

SONG LYRICS, LOVE IS LIKE A HEAT WAVE (O.S.)

Yeah yeah
Yeah yeah
Ha oh yeah

PAGE 10 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. PURGATORY DREAMSCAPE, A HALCYON MEADOW - AFTERNOON

MID-RANGE VIEW: Eric and Sarah are holding hands. Light continues to be emitted by Sarah, whose aura seems to invigorate Eric. He smiles.

SONG LYRICS, LOVE IS LIKE A HEAT WAVE (V.O.)

Yeah yeah
Yeah yeah
Oh yeah

PANEL 2 (TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. PURGATORY DREAMSCAPE, A HALCYON MEADOW - AFTERNOON

CLOSE VIEW: Sarah's facial expression is now one of remorse. A couple of buboes have appeared on Sarah's face. Sarah's aura longer shines.

SONG LYRICS, LOVE IS LIKE A HEAT WAVE (O.S.)

I feel it burning right here in my heart
Don't you know it's like a heat wave?

PANEL 3 (BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. PURGATORY DREAMSCAPE, A HALCYON MEADOW - AFTERNOON

CLOSE VIEW: Sarah's face is covered with sores, bruises and buboes. Her facial expression is now one of sadness. Blood pours from her mouth.

PANEL 4 (BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. PURGATORY DREAMSCAPE, A HALCYON MEADOW - AFTERNOON

MID-RANGE VIEW: Sarah has been stabbed by the ghostly presence, Hybrid 9. A diminutive spectre in a small child's clothing.

SONG LYRICS, LOVE IS LIKE A HEAT WAVE (V.O.)

Yeah yeah
Yeah yeah
Oh
Don't you know it's like a heat wave

PAGE 11 (1 PANEL)

EXT. PURGATORY DREAMSCAPE, A HALCYON MEADOW - AFTERNOON

LONG VIEW: Sarah has collapsed, cradled in Eric's arms. The ghost of Hybrid 9 is running away.

SONG LYRICS, LOVE IS LIKE A HEAT WAVE (V.O.)
Burning right here in my heart?

SCRIPT PREVIEW FOR BOOK 1, VESLOSTOY - 'THE SLEEPING BEAUTIES'

PREMISE: The undeclared war between Northern and Southern Veslostoy plays host to accidental heroism enacted through wanton violence on both sides. A group of morally questionable psychopaths are recruited to investigate the disappearance of several experienced mercenaries three days prior after hearing reports of supernatural activity in the area.

PAGE 1 (1 PANEL)

PANEL 1 (CENTRE OF PAGE)

EXT. A FOREST, VESLOSTOY'S CONTESTED ZONE - DAY

COMMENTARY
Tuesday, 30th June 1998.

LONG VIEW: A dusky sun hanging in the moderately clouded summer sky above Veslostoy. A couple of birds are silhouetted against it.

PAGE 2 (4 PANELS)

PANELS 1 - 4 (SQUARES, EACH OCCUPYING 1/4 OF THE PAGE)

EXT. A FOREST, VESLOSTOY'S CONTESTED ZONE - DAY

LONG VIEW: Bottom-up depiction of the deciduous canopy. Dappled sunlight shines through leaves.

COMMENTARY
An unremarkable summer in which 'The Cold Aria' is sung.

PAGE 3 (7 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. A FOREST, VESLOSTOY'S CONTESTED ZONE - DAY

LONG VIEW: A shrew forages amongst deciduous leaf litter upon the forest floor. It is surrounded by moss-covered logs and branches.

COMMENTARY
Recklessness ...

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. A FOREST, VESLOSTOY'S CONTESTED ZONE - DAY

BODY SHOT: Scratching amongst the leaf litter, this tiny mammal locates a diminutive worm, approximately twice the length of its head.

COMMENTARY
... driven by a gluttony of sorts ...

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. A FOREST, VESLOSTOY'S CONTESTED ZONE - DAY

HEAD SHOT: The annelid, grasped in this shrew's jaws, struggles. Its body is twisted and contorted with pain.

COMMENTARY
... 'Wants'! 'Needs'!

PANELS 4A - 4D (SMALL SQUARES, COLLECTED IN THE BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. A FOREST, VESLOSTOY'S CONTESTED ZONE - DAY

HEAD SHOTS: The worm is squirming, its upper third being chewed into a pulp. The shrew chews hastily but fails to observe its surroundings.

COMMENTARY
But in all cases, such gluttony seeks reward!

PAGE 4 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. A FOREST, VESLOSTOY'S CONTESTED ZONE - DAY

LONG VIEW: Perched upon a lichen-covered branch, one sizeable shrike is intently observing the shrew.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. A FOREST, VESLOSTOY'S CONTESTED ZONE - DAY

HEADSHOT: The shrike is evidently focused upon its quarry. This bird's head is cocked to one side as it focuses on the shrew.

COMMENTARY
... Sometimes to its enactor ...

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. A FOREST, VESLOSTOY'S CONTESTED ZONE - DAY

LONG VIEW: The shrike leaps from its perch. The bird's wings are outstretched as it descends.

COMMENTARY
... and sometimes ...

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. A FOREST, VESLOSTOY'S CONTESTED ZONE - DAY

LONG VIEW: The shrike has landed upon its quarry amongst the sunlight-dappled leaf litter.

COMMENTARY
... to a punishing agent!

PAGE 5 (4 PANELS)

PANELS 1 - 4 (SQUARES, EACH OCCUPYING 1/4 OF THE PAGE)

EXT. A FOREST, VESLOSTOY'S CONTESTED ZONE - DAY

CLOSE VIEW: The shrike messily despatches the shrew with great brutality as depicted by a confusing mass of images in each panel.

PAGE 6 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (SQUARE, TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. NORTH VESLOSTIAN MILITARY AIRBASE, BORDERING THE CONTESTED ZONE - DUSK

MID-RANGE VIEW: The shrike is perched on barbed wire, silhouetted against a low hanging sun. The sun's enfeebled rays silhouette this bird.

COMMENTARY
So beware The Butcherbird ...

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. NORTH VESLOSTIAN MILITARY AIRBASE, BORDERING THE CONTESTED ZONE - DUSK

LONG VIEW: The shrike, still a focal point, is dwarfed by several military buildings plus installations. These include SAM missiles silos.

COMMENTARY
... He is cursed to punish and be punished ...

PANEL 3 (SQUARE, BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

EXT. NORTH VESLOSTIAN MILITARY AIRBASE, BORDERING THE CONTESTED ZONE - DUSK

CLOSE VIEW: The shrike has impaled its prey - the shrew - upon a large barb.

COMMENTARY
... Condemned to brutality both by and upon him ...

PANEL 4 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. NORTH VESLOSTIAN MILITARY AIRBASE, BORDERING THE CONTESTED ZONE - DUSK

CLOSE VIEW: The shrew is curled, frozen in place by rigor mortis. It is silhouetted by the setting sun.

COMMENTARY
... The learned brute who is taught mercy ...

PAGE 7 (2 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (ENTIRE PAGE)

EXT. A NORTH VESLOSTIAN MILITARY ENCAMPMENT - EVENING

MID-RANGE VIEW: Three naked corpses are visible. One is hung upside down from a branch, its feet bound by rope. It has been impaled through its midriff. Its groin is a bloody mess. A further two bodies are arranged under the hanging

corpse. They have been positioned as though sleeping. Three assault rifles are arrayed below. The uniform, though bloodied, is neatly folded.

PANEL 2 (SQUARE, BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

EXT. A NORTH VESLOSTIAN MILITARY ENCAMPMENT - EVENING

CLOSE VIEW: The upside-down corpse has an amputated penis forced into its mouth. The corpse's throat is cut, its tongue protruding from the slit.

COMMENTARY
... but fails in its execution!

PAGE 8 (4 PANELS)

PANELS 1 - 4 (SQUARE, EACH OCCUPYING 1/4 OF PAGE)

EXT. A NORTH VESLOSTIAN MILITARY ENCAMPMENT - EVENING

These four panels show one vicious, carbon-coated, knife blade being cleaned with a bloodied rag.

PAGE 9 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (ENTIRE PAGE)

EXT. BACKGROUND PANEL MIMICKING THE DECIDUOUS CANOPY - MORNING

A grungy plus mottled, red and black, panel that backdrops PANELS 2-4.

COMMENTARY
Thursday, 2nd July 1998.

PANELS 2 - 4 (SQUARE, DIAGONALLY ARRANGED ON PAGE, LEFT TO RIGHT)

EXT. NORTH VESLOSTIAN MILITARY AIRBASE, BORDERING THE CONTESTED ZONE - MORNING

Sections of the military airbase in which LORD ARKHAN is stationed. It is heavily guarded and accommodates several runways.

LORD ARKHAN (V.O. - SPREAD OVER THREE PANELS)
Sorry to convene you so early, and at such short notice, gents. Your expertise is needed. It appears 'The Cold Aria' has, once again, been sung by The Butcherbird ... Shrike ... Hybrid 7! You are needed ...

PAGE 10 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. NORTH VESLOSTIAN MILITARY AIRBASE, BRIEFING ROOM - MORNING

MID-RANGE VIEW: The sun shines through slats in evidently old and heavily-used blinds. Each beam cuts through the dimness in this room. Several silhouetted figures - SEARCH PARTY EPSILON - are seated. Another silhouette, that of LORD ARKHAN, is standing in front of them.

LORD ARKHAN
... on two counts.

PANEL 2 (TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. NORTH VESLOSTIAN MILITARY AIRBASE, BRIEFING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE VIEW: A projector's power switch. A hand hovers over it.

LORD ARKHAN

Bear with me a moment! Can we activate this, please?

PANEL 3 (BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. NORTH VESLOSTIAN MILITARY AIRBASE, BRIEFING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE VIEW: The projector is activated.

SFX

click

whirrrrr

PANEL 4 (BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

MID-RANGE VIEW: A map of The Contested Zone's northern quadrant is projected onto a whiteboard.

PAGE 11 (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1 (TOP LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. NORTH VESLOSTIAN MILITARY AIRBASE, BRIEFING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

MID-RANGE VIEW: Lord Arkhan is partially illuminated by the projector beam.

LORD ARKHAN

So, gents. We need your expertise. First ...

PANEL 2 (TOP RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. NORTH VESLOSTIAN MILITARY AIRBASE, BRIEFING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

MID-RANGE VIEW: A continuation of the above. Lord Arkhan has circled a section of the map using a marker pen.

LORD ARKHAN

Around here, a group of mercenaries issued a garbled distress call. They were undertaking an operation to flush out and eliminate a group of paramilitaries sympathetic to 'The South'. So ...

PANEL 3 (BOTTOM LEFT OF PAGE)

INT. NORTH VESLOSTIAN MILITARY AIRBASE, BRIEFING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

MID-RANGE VIEW: A continuation of the above. Lord Arkhan gestures with his hands as he talks.

LORD ARKHAN

... First, you must investigate the disappearance and confirm the nature of their disappearance. Just to be sure ...

PANEL 4 (BOTTOM RIGHT OF PAGE)

INT. NORTH VESLOSTIAN MILITARY AIRBASE, BRIEFING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

MID-RANGE VIEW: A continuation of the above. Lord Arkhan has circled another part of the map.

LORD ARKHAN

... And second, to quell any rumours - with extreme prejudice - relating to supernatural activities in the area. This zone hangs in the balance, so we could do without a propaganda loss!

PREMISES FOR 'SHELTERN': BOOKS 2-5

BOOK 2: A BAD CROW (1658-1854)

PREMISE: Following intercourse with an incubus named OUTIS, a woman gives birth to human/demon hybrid who is subsequently named JOSEPH AITES. The attendant clergy exercise mercy, allowing this being to live. As he grows Joseph is taunted by his father until, desperate to end his suffering, the hybrid attempts self-immolation.

TREATMENT: After giving birth to the hybridised being named Joseph, AGNES SMYTH dies and the attendant clergy initiate an impassioned debate concerning this hybrid's right to continue living. There are two clear sides:

1. Given his diabolic origin, this entity should be destroyed via exorcism, since his continued existence would be dangerous to Sheltern's residents.
2. The being, Joseph, was born as a tabula rasa, and he should determine his own fate through choices. It was added that, if he can be swayed to good, the endemic religion can be revitalised.

After a lengthy discussion, which - at one point - boils over into abject aggression that borders violence. The conclusion is ultimately a simple one: because Joseph played no part in the angels' fall from grace, he should be allowed to continue living. If swayed to good, the continued existence of this hybrid will confound his progenitor along with his cohort.

Joseph's subsequent childhood is one of education. He is edified through tuition deriving largely from the first FATHER AITES. Being grounded in ethics, along with academic syllabi, Joseph is swayed to good. As the clergy anticipated, this displeases Outis, who begins to taunt his son. Early on in his childhood, Joseph befriends a deaf mute girl named MARY. By using his telepathic talents, Joseph is able to communicate on Mary's behalf. They bond, and this continues into Joseph's troubled teenage years.

Eventually, in his mid-teens, Joseph is unable to withstand Outis' incessant taunts that plague his waking hours. Eventually, in anger and desperation, Joseph explodes in an act of self-immolation. The blast radius is large, and several religious buildings plus sacred texts are destroyed with great loss of life.

Over a nine year period, Joseph's liquified body congeals and reforms. As his body solidifies, which causes Joseph immense pain, The Bird Institute is formed. It rises anew like a phoenix, and begins to exert an influence over the recreated religious texts plus teachings.

After fully reforming, Joseph finds that his powers are diminished. His vital essence is gone, replaced by anger, rage and remorse. Out of shame, Joseph flees Sheltern and eventually settles in VESLOSTOY where he is greeted as an itinerant, supernaturally gifted, prophet. However, civil war erupts and Joseph flees back to Sheltern. As a parting gift, however,

Joseph forges an agreement that all holders of his bloodline will provide ten years military service in Veslostoy upon reaching their eighteenth year.

BOOK 3: 'CONCERNING AN IRRATIONAL FEAR OF BUNNIES'

PREMISE: The police investigation into Kieran Traupe's murder progresses within Sheltern as Detective Winslade's psychic abilities are blocked by an unknown force. The fugitive, Eric, digs into the island's history. Upon discovering his deceased wife's participation within a human/demon breeding programme, Eric wonders if he truly knew his wife.

TREATMENT: Detective Winslade is assailed, in his sleep, by three anthropomorphic, demonic, bunnies. They restrain and incapacitate the detective, and drag him into a purgatory rabbit warren. He finds himself in a claustrophobic Bastille, which is impossible to navigate.

After that, Detective Winslade glimpses Sarah's bruised soul. He then wakes up. Using largely supernatural means, Eric continues his investigation into Sarah's past. He learns that she was heavily involved with The Bird Institute before exiting Sheltern. He determines that it is necessary to integrate with the islanders in order to learn where Sarah's ashes need to be scattered. Accordingly, Eric resolves to attend a forthcoming religious ceremony.

Three days pass and Detective Winslade continues his investigation but meets hostility from the islanders who consider him an apostate due to him leaving Sheltern. He attempts to utilise his psychic abilities again but is, once more, blocked. He resorts to traditional investigation methods. He visits several religious buildings, mulling over the religion that the detective had abandoned.

Three days pass, and Eric walks into the principal temple associated with Sheltern's religion. He attends a religious ceremony, as does Detective Winslade. The two exchange polite words, and Detective Winslade begins to sense that something is amiss. He is, however, distracted by the ceremony beginning.

The ceremony takes place, and there is a sermon relating to trust, for 'The New Blank'. It is explained that 'Blanks' are people who have no knowledge of Sheltern's religion and are considered blank slates ripe for conversion. Eric, eager to learn more, participates in the ceremony and imbibes a potent hallucinogenic cocktail.

During his drug-fuelled hallucinatory world, Eric comes face-to-face with the three Anthropomorphic Rabbits. They guide him to a vision of Sarah. As Eric approaches, Sarah turns and is subsequently stabbed repeatedly by a demonic figure - the ghost of HYBRID 9. Eric wakes in his room at the bed and breakfast.

Detective Winslade is psychically attacked by the unseen malevolent force and he has no choice but to leave Sheltern. This he does, but not without vowing to return. He forcibly seizes a couple of artefacts connected with protection, which he intends to 'activate' so he can safely return later. Over a four week long period, Eric is absorbed into Sheltern's religious community. He works as a handyman to pay his bills at the bed & breakfast which further ingratiates him with Sheltern's community.

Eric further dabbles in automatic writing and, reconnecting with Sean Stammers, learns that a malevolent presence wishes harm to Eric. Finally,

a letter slid under the door to Eric's room instructs him to investigate 'THE DEMETER PROGRAMME'.

BOOK 4: 'WHERE WAS I TOMORROW?' (1978-1986)

PREMISE: Ten hybridised children are born to voluntary participants in The Demeter Programme. Over an eight year period, they begin to exhibit supernatural talents. However, the sinister telepath, UNCLE TOBY, is monitoring these entities. Eventually, he has them euthanised in their eighth year. Hybrid 7, rejected by his siblings, assists Uncle Toby out of sheer malice.

TREATMENT: The Gifts of Demeter are born, each, with the exception of Hybrid 7, are born without complications. Hybrid 7's mother dies during travail, so he is subsequently adopted by the current Father Aites out of mercy. The rest of these hybrids remain with their mothers.

As the Gifts of Demeter grow, they begin to develop supernatural plus preternatural abilities. Uncle Toby and his research team identify a set of shared abilities, exhibited by every entity, save for Hybrid 7. These are catalogued. During the hybrids' formative years, a series of weaknesses and potential countermeasures are investigated. The shared abilities include:

- Telepathy between hybrids, excluding Hybrid 7, who appears to passively block this ability in his siblings
- The ability to see in the dark with 'purple vision', which renders night vision equipment unnecessary
- Super fast reflexes that exhibit passively as needed, this is independent from cognition

Whilst honing their unique abilities, The Gifts of Demeter are seen as increasingly dangerous. As these abilities developed, Hybrid 7 eventually demonstrates a supernatural power: sedation of all living things. He does so by putting a pet rabbit to sleep so he could sneak it into his dormitory.

Following the exciting development of his abilities, Hybrid 7 is eclipsed when one of Hybrid 9's abilities, linked to her mother, comes to the fore as demonstrated repeatedly. This is eventually known as 'The Maternal Imperative'. In short, both Sarah's and Hybrid 9's abilities increase in accordance with their proximity to one another. So the closer they are, the stronger they become.

It becomes apparent to Uncle Toby and his cohort that the presence of each mother distracts The Gifts of Demeter from their purpose: eventual proselytisation through combat and demonstration of miracles. The hybrids are all seized and transported to a subterranean panopticon. This event is known as 'The Night of Crustal Tears'.

Sarah, also psychically-gifted, initiates a coup. This ends with a confrontation between her and Uncle Toby. The letter is victorious, but is physically diminished as a result of Sarah's concerted psychic attacks and retires to a chamber within the panoptic subterranean structure where he is kept alive by medical machinery. Separated from her daughter, Sarah's powers diminish significantly.

Finally, upon their eighth birthday, nine of the hybrids are euthanised

with assistance from Hybrid 7, who sedated each one allowing them to be suffocated in their dormant state. Hybrid 7 is immediately repentant and mentally withdraws.

BOOK 5: 'THE GREY DEATH'

PREMISE: Eric learns that Sarah's ashes must be spread over her daughter's grave within the Abandoned Play Area. This he does, but in doing so Eric succumbs to the spiritual and physical toxins that spread after The Amendation ran aground. He dies as Sarah ascends to Heaven.

TREATMENT: Eric finds an old, almost pristine, newspaper that describes an incident wherein a cargo vessel, 'THE AMENDATION', runs aground upon Sheltern's northeastern coastline, shedding a noxious chemical that continues to blight this area. There are no plants or birds, just fable flies that feed upon rotting sacrificial carcasses (mostly lambs).

With his supernatural abilities amplified, Eric engages once more with Sean Stammers. He furnishes Eric with information concerning the whereabouts of Hybrid 9's corpse - this is where Eric must scatter Sarah's ashes. Eric progresses deeply into The Contaminated Zone. He is stalked by The Lanky Silhouette - an eerie avian/human figure who carries a mandolin. It is joined by nine ghosts, The Gifts of Demeter, adopting a Fagin-esque role. The hybrids are effectively spectral foot soldiers who advanced upon Eric.

With his continuing metamorphosis, Eric makes his way to an abandoned play area. He finds nine shallow, open, graves. The contents have been burnt but each has a metal plaque that indicates which hybrid is interred within it. Eric's skin greys incrementally over time. Locating Hybrid 9's remains, Eric spreads Sarah's ashes.

Learning of Eric's whereabouts, Detective Winslade hastily makes his way to The Contaminated Zone but does not progress beyond the protective fencing. He notes that the gate has been forced and a couple of relics have been removed from the fence. He sighs and, tensely, advises that he and his partner will need Hazmat suits.

In The Contaminated Zone, An amber light shines upon Eric. He has begun to appear bestial, as though his violence and guilt are manifested as physical corruption. He develops porcine features, squeals and howls. He picks up a glass shard and, stripping naked, cuts his body. The wounds express blood, ichor, and a demonic miasma.

Within The Temple of Metatron, Detective Winslade and his companion leverage Father Aites into providing hazmat suits adorned with protective trinkets. They put these on and are blessed. After a brief ceremony, they are driven into The Contaminated Zone via armoured personnel carriers. Sarah's silhouette is visible as The Spectral Children form a ring around Eric. They sing, dance and chant, referring to Eric as 'Daddy'. As the chanting becomes more intense, Eric slices his belly with the glass shard and, from his guts, the embryonic form of an incubus name Malvetius is hatching.

Detective Winslade and his opposite number arrive too late. Eric's mutated corpse is laid ceremoniously within the abandoned play area where he encountered Sarah's spirit. From the amber realm, Eric watches a distortion of these two Hazmat-Suited Figures. He looks behind him as Sarah and Hybrid 9 access Heaven following Metatron's judgement. He is then dragged away by malevolent spirits, into Purgatory where he

continuously relives his murderous act.

WRITER'S STATEMENT

My two narratives: *Sheltern* and *Veslostoy* are intended to function as a visceral plus grotesque landscape that addresses issues linked with philosophy, supernatural, and questions relating to the problem of evil. The narrative landscape has been conceived through character development along with world building. The end result is a complex tale, the narrative building blocks of which are individually uncomplicated and straightforward.

The end goal of this project is to provide compelling distraction whilst generating a profit. Through innovative character generation, an ably paced narrative plus competent artwork, this is intended to generate a very loyal cult following. It is anticipated that this narrative will bleed into additional media, namely TV and computer games. It capitalises on a gap in the market for sci-fi and horror with a philosophical edge.

It is worth noting that this venture is, for me, akin to biography. Like a biographer, I researched my characters. They have always existed within me, I just did not know it at that stage. Just like a biographer, I became attached to my characters and had to excise any sentimentality. My characters are frequently tortured - both figuratively plus directly - in one way or another; they encounter difficult situations and all possess an ethically unsound history.

In itself, this narrative is a grotesque, often violent and visceral in its exploration of love in several guises. Examples of this exploration are:

- Eric qua The Mutated Man - motivated by true love - merges with a demon; this act permits him access to Purgatory to rescue his wife.
- Father Aites becomes a paternal mentor to both Hybrid 7, following the latter's mother dying during labour.
- Hybrid 7 enjoys a fraternal bond with THE MYRMIDON - his personal bodyguard unit and 'brothers in arms'.

Centred within a bleak narrative landscape known as 'The God Made Them Strong Universe', *Sheltern* and *Veslostoy* are initially disparate but, over time, fuse. The core steps involved in this process are:

- The human/demon hybrid, Joseph Aites, is born in the 17th Century and duly orphaned. A senior member of the clergy adopts him.
- Joseph is tormented by his demonic father and eventually attempts self-immolation by exploding.
- The explosion kills many people. In addition, it destroys several religious buildings, artefacts, plus texts.
- Over time, Joseph reforms but, carrying the guilt linked with his earlier destructive act, adopts the moniker 'Malcorvus' and flees.

- Eventually, Malcorvus settles in Veslostoy where he becomes an itinerant preacher.
- A religiously-motivated civil war erupts. Feeling shamed once more, Malcorvus flees, returning to Sheltern where he lives a reclusive life
- Before exiting Veslostoy, Malcorvus pledges all who hold his bloodline into ten years military service from the age of eighteen.
- The Bird Institute, then, has to make all human/demon hybrids available to serve in Veslostoy in line with this agreement.

Additionally, this piece of work explores the problem of evil. The answer within my narrative is that matter preceded God and is imperfect. Like a potter working with inferior clay, God may only create imperfection with the material available to him. I wanted to provide a sinister air via a religion in which God abandoned his creation. This work, then, would be administered in His absence by a choir of angels.

These factors, coupled with the reproduction of lost religious texts, with limited integrity, renders this central religion apt for corruption. In line with this, so are the followers. It is this recipe that will ensure success.

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the protagonist/antagonist classifications are fluid. For example:

Hybrid 7 is initially presented as a brutal antagonist who undertakes military operations alongside a collection of morally questionable psychopaths. However, it is these ethically challenged people who are destined to destroy The Sky Iris, a device that threatens to destroy their world.

Similarly, 'Eric Blyth' is initially presented as a cold murderer but ultimately undergoes a process of self-sacrifice in order to provide his deceased wife access to Heaven. He aims to redeem himself, but ultimately his failure to do so - dooming himself to Purgatory - presents itself as profound tragedy.

So, to round things up: this venture fuses gruesome viscera with some core philosophical, theological and spiritual concerns. It is a chimera, possessing numerous faces. The component characters are never completely good or evil, and often they are presented through the after effects of their own actions, rather than directly portrayed.

It is hoped that the above will conspire to create a winning formula that distracts, compels and inspires whilst generating a profit. I am anticipating a long-lasting cult following rather than a 'flash in the pan' blockbuster that is forgotten in a year. This will be achieved by submitting the graphic novel(s) to media such as magazines plus podcasts, for review and hopefully positive publicity.

To close, and this is perhaps the most important part, my education has primed me for this project. I have recently completed a Masters course in screenwriting (official course title: '*Writing for Script & Screen*'), with a high grade. I have learnt how to execute storytelling techniques, generate characters, build worlds and pitch to audiences. This course has rendered my interest in writing into a vocation.

For me, 'Success' will be writing for a living and pleasing audiences. In the narrative landscape of my own life, within which I am protagonist, this could be considered both 'Want' and 'Need'. The antagonists are my own demonic self-doubt and if I fail - or indeed do not try - to attain this commodity, my day-to-day life will be somewhat flat plus dimmed.

