

# The Age of Abundance

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*Conversations with death*

Aldo Urbano 2023

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# The Age of Abundance

- CONVERSATIONS WITH DEATH -

HE'S THE MASTER OF ABUNDANCE,  
A GURU WITHOUT A CULT, EXPERT IN DESERTS,



AND IN THE DESERT IT IS WINTER,  
A DOUBLE TORMENT, AND ON THIS DAY THE  
SELF-DESTRUCTIVE POET FAR-LI-MAS IS FAR  
AWAY,

AND ALONE HE GOES IN SEARCH OF  
HIS CRUEL DESTINY,



WHICH TEMPORARILY TAKES THE FORM  
OF A CADAVEROUS VAGABOND.



I LAUGH AT THE WORLD!

MASTER OF MASTERS, I COME TO  
YOU BEFORE PROCEEDING WITH MY  
WISE DEMISE.



WHY DO YOU COME TO  
ME, IN THIS VAST DESERT?

BECAUSE, ALTHOUGH  
THERE'S NOTHING HERE,  
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO  
HAS THE MOST.

OH DEATH,  
YOU ULTIMATE VAGABOND,  
BLIND DOLL,  
CHURLISH CHAPERONE!  
WITH YOUR GHASTLY FACE  
PACKED WITH JEWELS!



AND SHE LAUGHED AT THE SCENE,  
AS IF IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH  
HER.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, CHEAP  
CHAMBERLAIN, SWINDLER OF THE WEAK!  
WAS IT SO HARD TO BE HUMBLE?



WHEN HE HEARD HER, THE MASTER  
WOULD HAVE CRIED IF HE COULD  
HAVE, BECAUSE SHE WAS RIGHT,  
BEING HUMBLE WAS EASIER THAN  
MAKING UP ONE'S OWN GOD.



BUT YOU DID NOT COME TO ME  
LOOKING FOR REPROACH. I'LL  
ANSWER YOUR DOUBTS WITHOUT  
KNOWING WHAT QUESTIONS YOU  
CAME WITH: FRIEND, YOU DON'T  
LOVE YOURSELF! WHAT COULD I  
EVER DO FOR YOU?



AND THE MASTER WAS SILENT,  
AS IT WAS CLEAR THAT  
NOT EVEN DEATH COULD HELP HIM.

LIFE HERE REQUIRES EXCESSIVE INGENUITY!

THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK, YOU FOOLISH MASTER, BUT IT'S EVEN WORSE!

YOU'LL NOW LEARN WHAT THIS LIFE FEELS LIKE!

AND DEATH TOOK HIM BY THE HAND AS IF HE WAS A CHILD AND SHOWED HIM EVERYTHING THAT COULD BE FOUND THERE.

YOU'RE HERE TO FEEL WHAT THE DESERT FEELS.

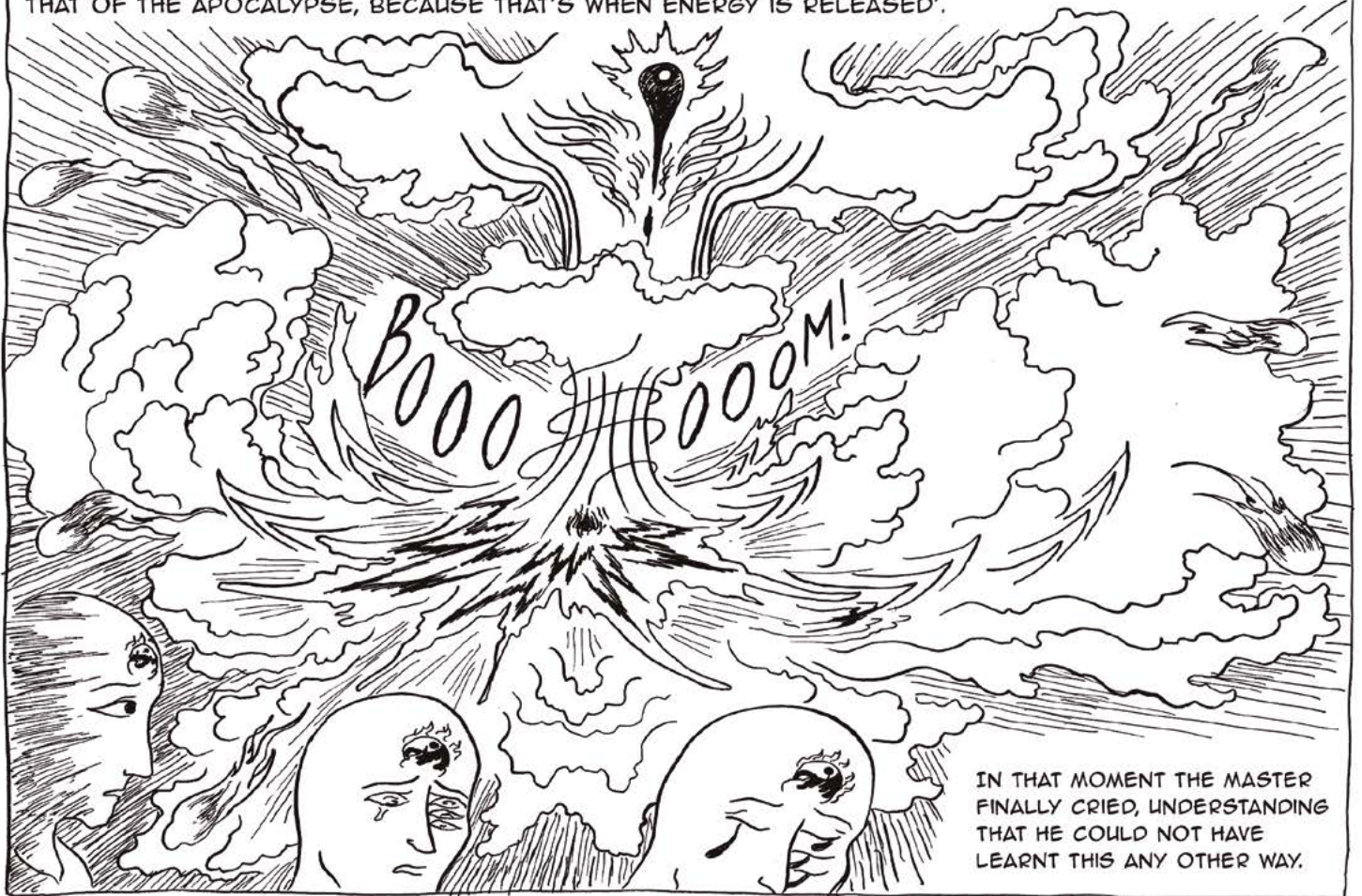
AND WHAT A STAG FEELS AFTER SHEDDING HIS ANTLERS AT THE END OF AN UNFRUITFUL MATING SEASON -- THAT SACRED GIVING UP IN THE MIDDLE OF WINTER,

WHAT THE LAST ANIMAL OF A SPECIES BEFORE ITS EXTINCTION FEELS.

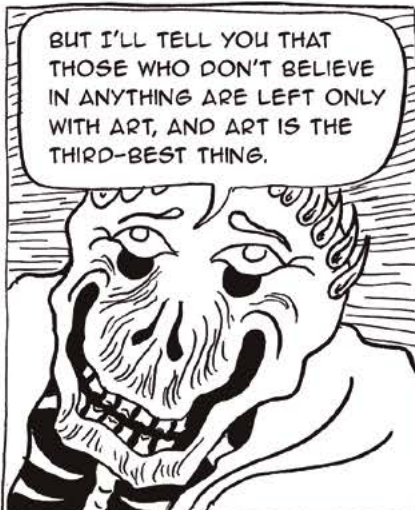
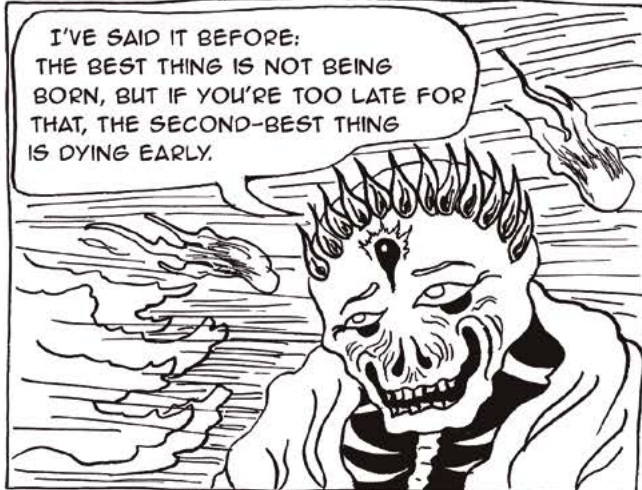
I DON'T WANT TO GO ON LIVING.

AND WHAT THE INNOCENT PLAINS FEEL BEFORE A PLUTONIUM EXPLOSION REACHES THEM.

'AND YOU'LL SEE', SHE SAID, ENIGMATICALLY, STILL CHEERFUL 'HOW THE MOST JOYFUL MOMENT IS THAT OF THE APOCALYPSE, BECAUSE THAT'S WHEN ENERGY IS RELEASED'.



IN THAT MOMENT THE MASTER FINALLY CRIED, UNDERSTANDING THAT HE COULD NOT HAVE LEARNT THIS ANY OTHER WAY.



THE PAINTER MONKEY WAS CONVALESCING AFTER HIS LAST KIDNAPPING.



I'LL NEVER GET OUT OF HERE.

PIECES OF PAPER FILLED WITH PAINTINGS CROWDED ROUND HIM LIKE PARASITIC FISH TRAVELLING ATTACHED TO A SICK WHALE.



OH PAINTER MONKEY, YOU EMINENT ELDER! OR TRAPPED IN THE NIGHTMARE OF REAL LIFE AT THE MERCY OF THE ELEMENTS.



SEEING DEATH WITH THE MASTER, THE MONKEY RECOGNISED HER IMMEDIATELY.

YOU WHO TAKE EVERYTHING FROM EVERYONE AND WHO ARE RICHEST, WON'T YOU SPARE ME SOMETHING?



OF COURSE, YOU SCROUNGY MONKEY!

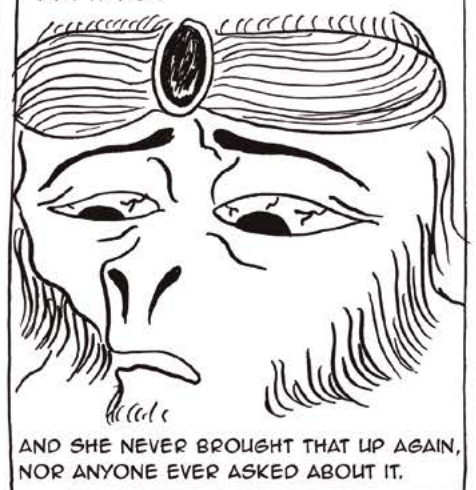
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR FREEDOM, AND I'M HERE TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM. I SHORTEN ALL PROBLEMS!



FOR SCARCITY IS NOT THE ONLY RULE, AND THE WHEEL CAN TURN AT ANY MOMENT SO THAT WHAT WAS ON TOP MAY MOVE TO THE BOTTOM.



'THERE'S ANOTHER WORLD', SAID DEATH, 'WHERE THINGS GO WELL WHEN THINGS GO BADLY HERE, WHERE THEY GROW SAD EACH TIME ANYONE HERE SUCCEEDS AT ANYTHING'.



AND SHE NEVER BROUGHT THAT UP AGAIN, NOR ANYONE EVER ASKED ABOUT IT.

AND DEATH CHARITABLY GAVE THE MONKEY A PAINT BRUSH MADE WITH HAIR FROM A RECENT CORPSE, THE ONLY PAINT BRUSH HE WOULD USE FROM THAT DAY ON.

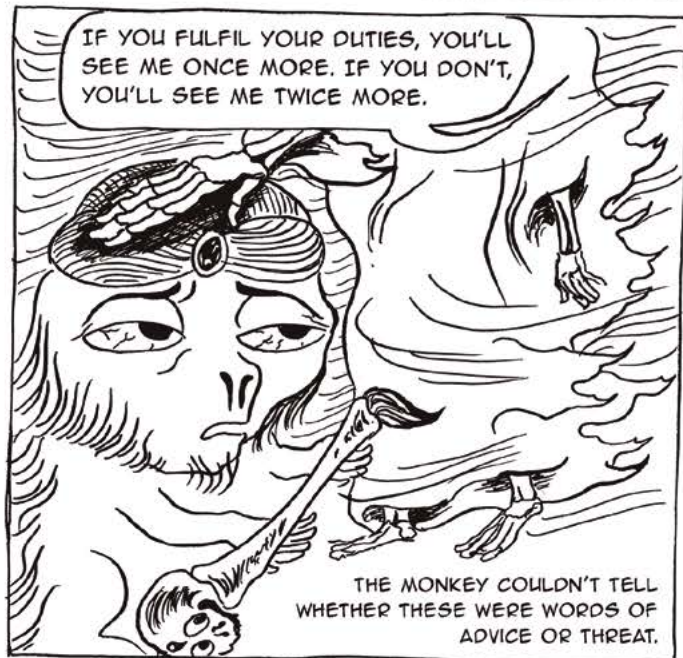
THIS ONE COMES FROM THE OTHER SIDE.



AND THE MASTER THOUGHT TO HIMSELF: 'DEATH IS GENEROUS, TO EACH OF US SHE GIVES SOMETHING'.



IF YOU FULFIL YOUR DUTIES, YOU'LL SEE ME ONCE MORE. IF YOU DON'T, YOU'LL SEE ME TWICE MORE.



THE MONKEY COULDN'T TELL WHETHER THESE WERE WORDS OF ADVICE OR THREAT.

AND BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE YOU FEELING SAD, I'LL REVEAL THE MYSTERY OF MY JOY TO YOU: ALL THINGS MUST DISAPPEAR, AND IN THIS LIES THEIR GREAT LUCK'.



'OH PAINTER MONKEY!', THOUGHT THE MASTER, 'DEATH COULDN'T COMFORT YOU EITHER, SHE WHO COMFORTS EVERYONE...'



I GIVE YOU THE PAINT BRUSH UNDER THE CONDITION THAT YOU COME WITH IT TO ENTERTAIN SOME FRIENDS OF MINE.



IN THIS DESERT?

YES, THEY'RE NOT FAR FROM HERE.





HERE WE ARE,  
THIS IS THEIR ABODE.

THEY HAVE AN OASIS!  
I'VE NOT SEEN ONE  
IN YEARS.



IS IT A FAIR?

YES, THEY ALSO LIKE ART.

THEY DON'T BELIEVE  
IN ANYTHING EITHER?  
WHO ARE THEY?



THEY ARE THE COLLECTORS; THEY ACCUMULATE THE  
THINGS THAT GET TO GROW HERE. LOOK AT THEM, WITH  
THEIR GRANDIOSE AIRS, SO OUT OF PLACE. UNRULY  
HEDONISTS!



THEY HAVE THE DAY OFF  
TODAY, SO THEY'LL PLAY  
THEIR STRANGE GAME.

THEY TAME THE DESERT FOWL, THEY DEPRIVE  
THEM OF THEIR NATURAL FREEDOM FOR YEARS,  
ALL IN PREPARATION FOR TODAY'S RACE.

WHAT KIND OF A  
MACABRE SATIRE  
IS THIS?

WHEN THEY LEAVE THEIR CAGE, THEY HAVE TO TRY TO  
STOP THE WIND FROM DIVERTING THEM, AND STOP THE  
SADNESS CAUSED BY THEIR CAPTIVITY FROM MAKING  
THEM HESITATE.





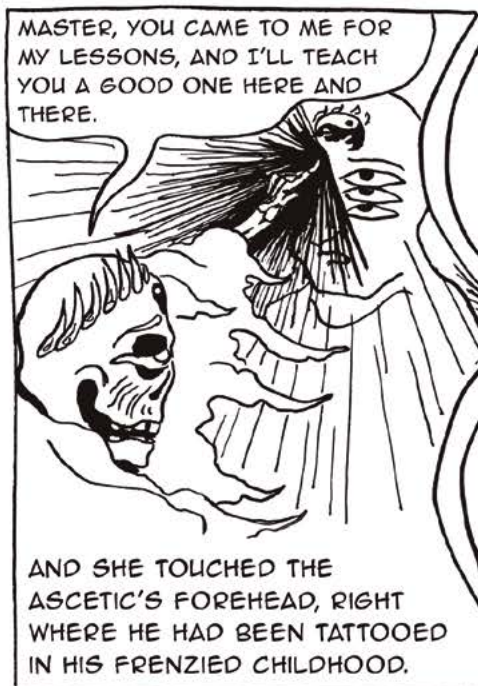
THE FINISH LINE IS MADE OF FIRE, AND WHEN IT REACHES IT, THE WINNER IRREVOCABLY CATCHES FIRE, AND THE REMAINING BIRDS ARE SUDDENLY GLAD THEY DIDN'T WIN.



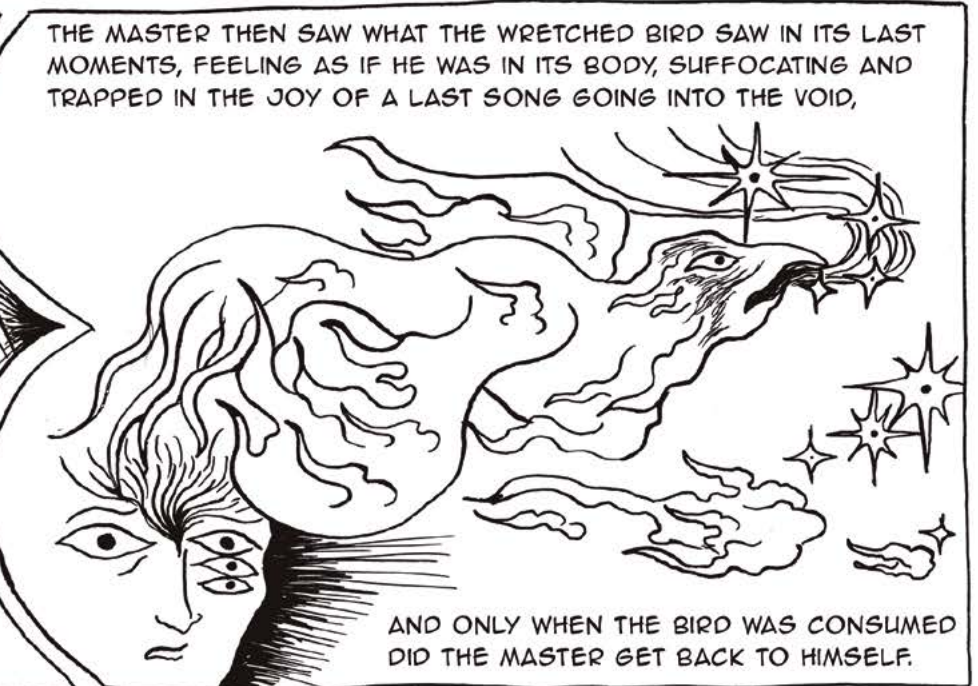
THESE PEOPLE THRIVE IN THIS SCARCITY!

WHO CAN BLAME THEM? IT'S AN INNOCENT GAME, BUT IT REMINDS THEM SO MUCH OF ART!

THEY REALISE THIS WAS THE POINT OF THE GAME ALL ALONG: THE RACE WAS POINTLESS, IT WAS ONLY DESIGNED SO THAT THE AUDIENCE COULD HEAR THE MESMERISING SONG OF A BIRD IN FLAMES.



AND SHE TOUCHED THE ASCETIC'S FOREHEAD, RIGHT WHERE HE HAD BEEN TATTOOED IN HIS FRENZIED CHILDHOOD.



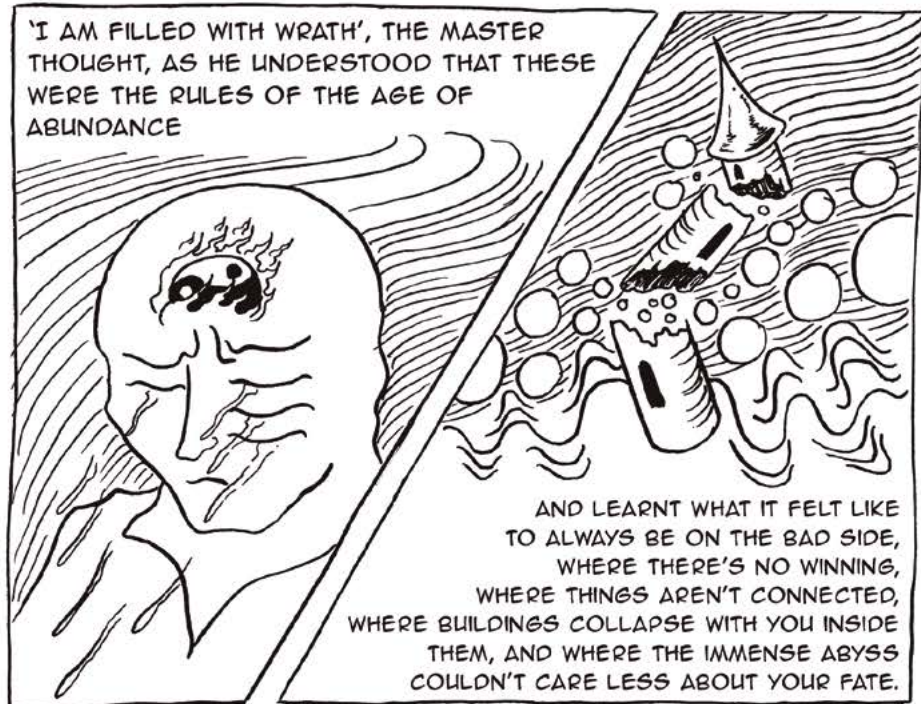
THE MASTER THEN SAW WHAT THE WRETCHED BIRD SAW IN ITS LAST MOMENTS, FEELING AS IF HE WAS IN ITS BODY, SUFFOCATING AND TRAPPED IN THE JOY OF A LAST SONG GOING INTO THE VOID,

AND ONLY WHEN THE BIRD WAS CONSUMED DID THE MASTER GET BACK TO HIMSELF.



SAGES WOULD TRADE THE WISDOM ACCUMULATED FOR MILLENNIA FOR AN INSTANT OF LUCK SUCH AS THE ONE I'VE GIVEN YOU.

THE MASTER STRUGGLED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT EXACTLY HE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR.



'I AM FILLED WITH WRATH', THE MASTER THOUGHT, AS HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THESE WERE THE RULES OF THE AGE OF ABUNDANCE

AND LEARNT WHAT IT FELT LIKE TO ALWAYS BE ON THE BAD SIDE, WHERE THERE'S NO WINNING, WHERE THINGS AREN'T CONNECTED, WHERE BUILDINGS COLLAPSE WITH YOU INSIDE THEM, AND WHERE THE IMMENSE ABYSS COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT YOUR FATE.

ENOUGH OF LESSONS, I'M GOING TO TALK TO MY FRIENDS, YOU'LL SEE HOW THEY REACT WHEN THEY SEE THIS MONKEY!

I WON'T COME, I'M TIRED AND IT'S GETTING DARK.

DO AS YOU PLEASE!

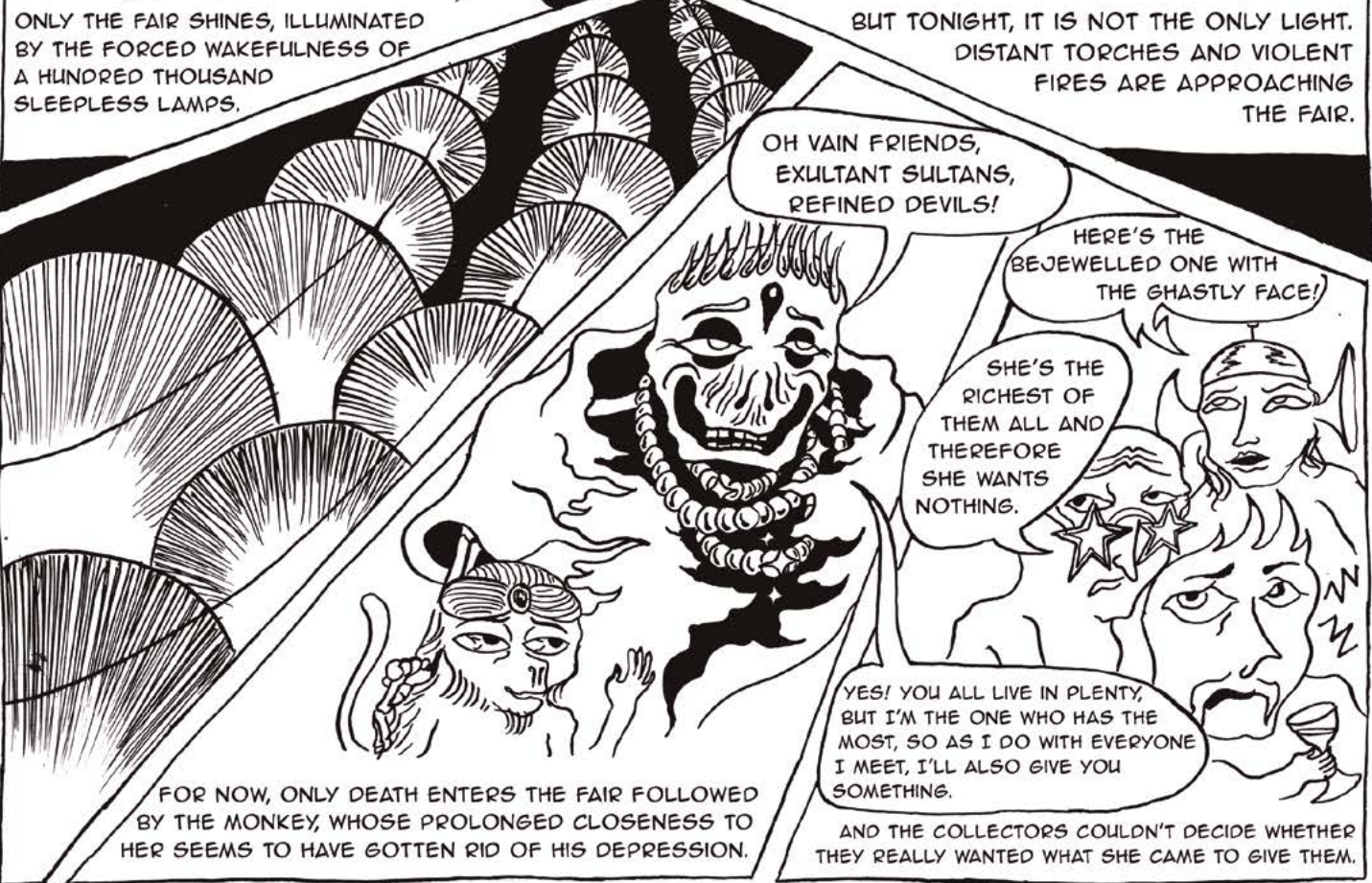
AND THE MASTER STAYED ALONE BY THE OASIS.

NIGHT DESCENDS, POETIC AND LETHAL, UPON THE UNDISTURBED DESERT, LIKE THE DEATHLY ANAESTHETIC AGONIZING BEASTS ABANDON THEMSELVES TO.



ONLY THE FAIR SHINES, ILLUMINATED BY THE FORCED WAKEFULNESS OF A HUNDRED THOUSAND SLEEPLESS LAMPS.

BUT TONIGHT, IT IS NOT THE ONLY LIGHT. DISTANT TORCHES AND VIOLENT FIRES ARE APPROACHING THE FAIR.



OH VAIN FRIENDS, EXULTANT SULTANS, REFINED DEVILS!

HERE'S THE BEJEWELLED ONE WITH THE GHASTLY FACE!

SHE'S THE RICHEST OF THEM ALL AND THEREFORE SHE WANTS NOTHING.

YES! YOU ALL LIVE IN PLENTY, BUT I'M THE ONE WHO HAS THE MOST, SO AS I DO WITH EVERYONE I MEET, I'LL ALSO GIVE YOU SOMETHING.

FOR NOW, ONLY DEATH ENTERS THE FAIR FOLLOWED BY THE MONKEY, WHOSE PROLONGED CLOSENESS TO HER SEEMS TO HAVE GOTTEN RID OF HIS DEPRESSION.

AND THE COLLECTORS COULDN'T DECIDE WHETHER THEY REALLY WANTED WHAT SHE CAME TO GIVE THEM.

DON'T BE AFRAID! FOR YOU AND I WORK TOGETHER, AND THOUGH WE ACT AS KEEPERS, WE KNOW WELL THAT WE MUST SOMETIMES DO SOME PURGING.

THAT'S WHY I'VE BROUGHT YOU THIS ANIMAL WHO I TAUGHT TO PAINT.

AND THE COLLECTORS LAUGHED (THIS WAS HER KIND OF HUMOUR - EXTRAVAGANT, APOCALYPTIC) BUT THEN THEY SAW THE PAINT BRUSH AND THEY KNEW SHE WAS SERIOUS.

TEMPERED BY THE ARIDITY OF THIS UNGRATEFUL WASTELAND!

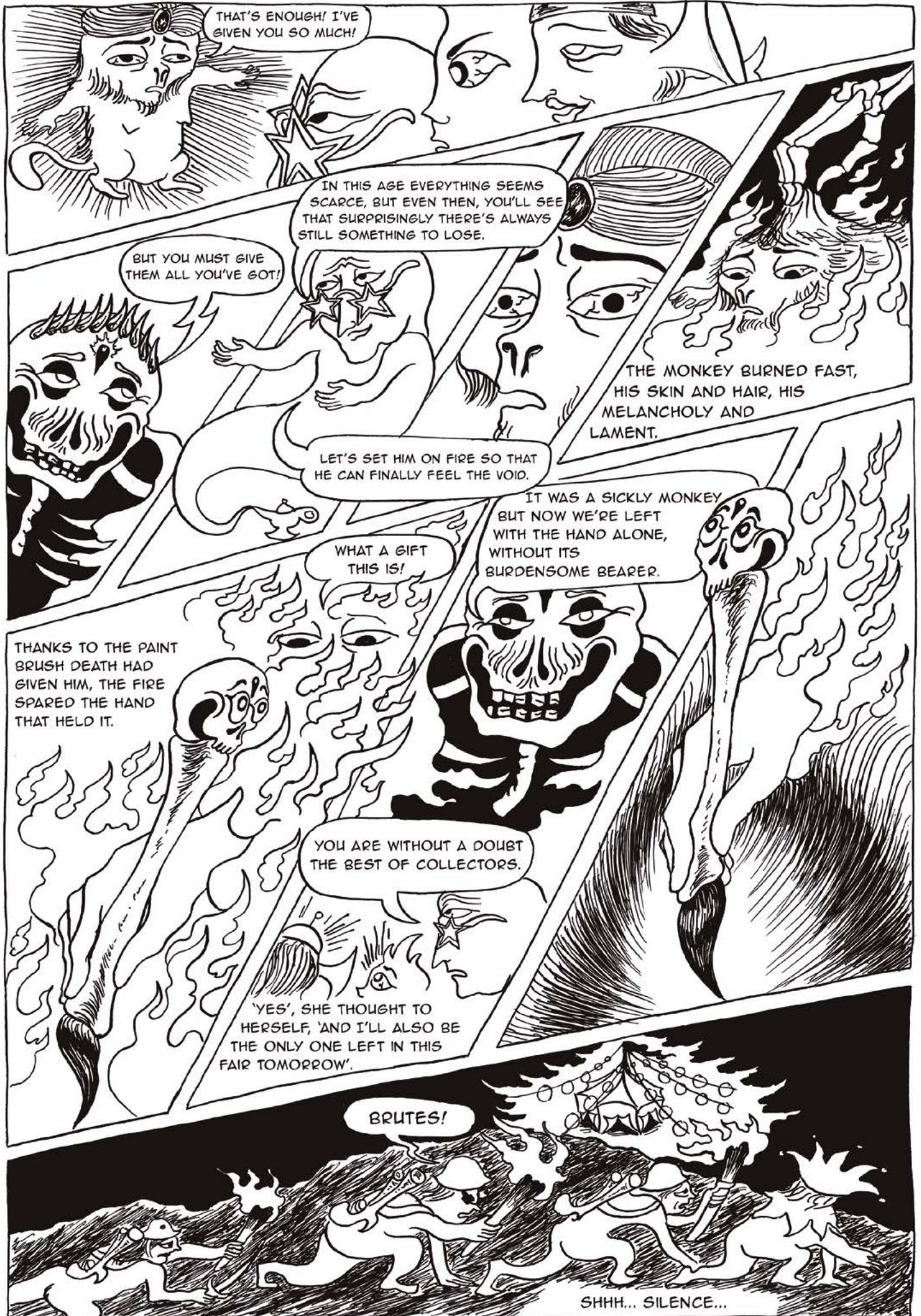
SUBJECTED TO THE INTOLERABLE PRESSURE THAT TRANSMUTES PRECIOUS MINERALS FROM WITHIN!

INFINITELY DIMINISHED AND FORCED TO LIVE UNDER THE FLIGHT OF CONDORS, THEN HUNTED AND FLAYED ALIVE, AND RESCUED ON THE EDGE OF VANISHING BY DEATH HERSELF!

SMALL IS HIS AMBITION, BUT HIGH IS HIS ENTERPRISE!

AND YOU, INCOMBUSTIBLE FAQIRS, MASTERS OF FIRE, WILL RUTHLESSLY CURE THE SORES CAUSED BY HIS IMPRISONMENT, AND YOU WILL LEAVE HIM CLEAN AT LAST.

ALTHOUGH THE MONKEY DIDN'T GET THE FULL SENSE OF HER WORDS, HE DIDN'T LIKE THE EXALTED TONE THEY HAD ACQUIRED, SO HE WASN'T AT EASE AMONG HIS NEW FRIENDS.



THAT'S ENOUGH! I'VE GIVEN YOU SO MUCH!

IN THIS AGE EVERYTHING SEEMS SCARCE, BUT EVEN THEN, YOU'LL SEE THAT SURPRISINGLY THERE'S ALWAYS STILL SOMETHING TO LOSE.

BUT YOU MUST GIVE THEM ALL YOU'VE GOT!

THE MONKEY BURNED FAST, HIS SKIN AND HAIR, HIS MELANCHOLY AND LAMENT.

LET'S SET HIM ON FIRE SO THAT HE CAN FINALLY FEEL THE VOID.

IT WAS A SICKLY MONKEY BUT NOW WE'RE LEFT WITH THE HAND ALONE, WITHOUT ITS BURDENSOME BEARER.

WHAT A GIFT THIS IS!

THANKS TO THE PAINT BRUSH DEATH HAD GIVEN HIM, THE FIRE SPARED THE HAND THAT HELD IT.

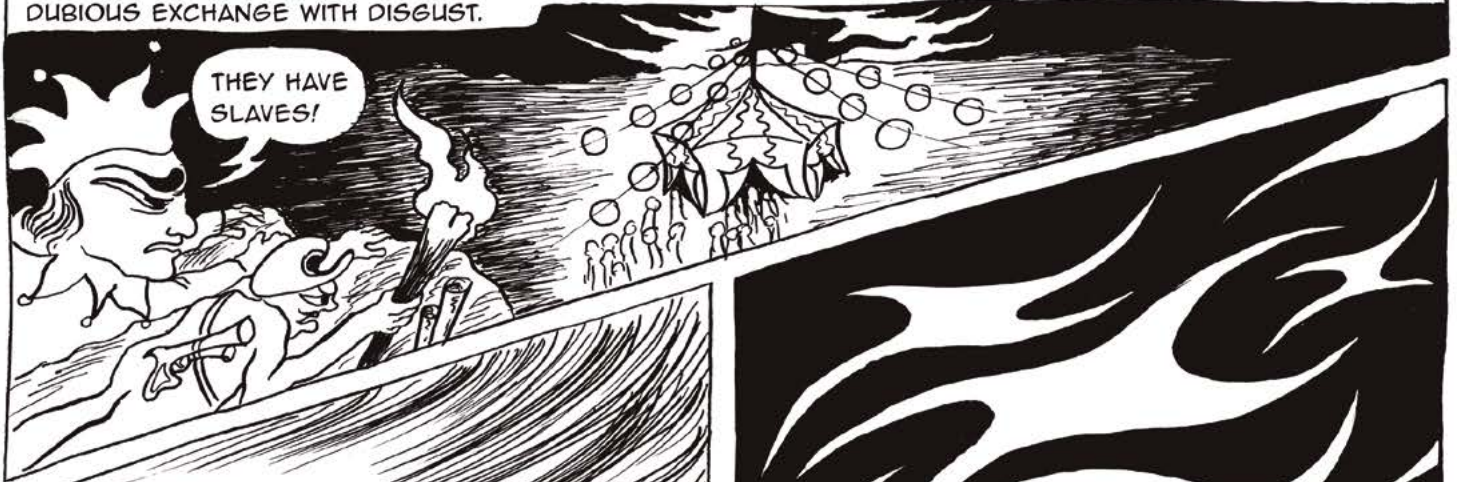
YOU ARE WITHOUT A DOUBT THE BEST OF COLLECTORS.

'YES', SHE THOUGHT TO HERSELF, 'AND I'LL ALSO BE THE ONLY ONE LEFT IN THIS FAIR TOMORROW'.

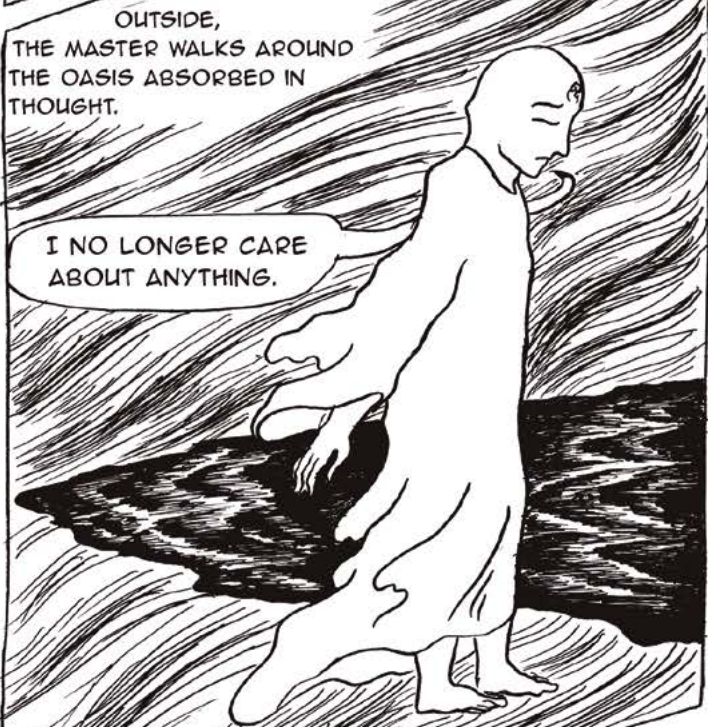
BRUTES!

SHHH... SILENCE...

UNFORTUNATELY, THIS SHOW HAS A BIGGER AUDIENCE THAN ITS ACTORS IMAGINE: THE WRETCHED OF THE DESERT HAVE BEEN PLANNING A COUP FOR MONTHS, AND ON THIS NIGHT, THEY OBSERVE THIS DUBIOUS EXCHANGE WITH DISGUST.



THEY HAVE SLAVES!



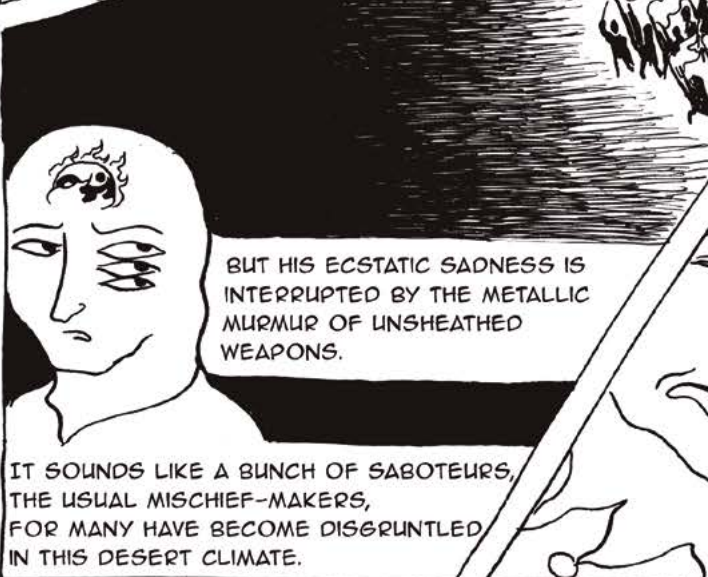
OUTSIDE, THE MASTER WALKS AROUND THE OASIS ABSORBED IN THOUGHT.

I NO LONGER CARE ABOUT ANYTHING.

AND HIS SADNESS IS CRADLED BY THE CHURCH-LIKE GLOW OF THE HUNDRED THOUSAND STARS THAT FLY ABOVE THE FAIR, LIKE SILENT PYROTECHNICS IGNITED BY NO ONE, EXTINGUISHED WITHOUT CELEBRATION.



THE MASTER RECOGNISES FAR-LI-MAS LEADING THE REBEL MOB - HE WHO HAD BEEN A POET - HAS NOW CHOSEN TERROR AS A CREATIVE PURSUIT.



BUT HIS ECSTATIC SADNESS IS INTERRUPTED BY THE METALLIC MURMUR OF UNSHEATHED WEAPONS.

IT SOUNDS LIKE A BUNCH OF SABOTEURS, THE USUAL MISCHIEF-MAKERS, FOR MANY HAVE BECOME DISGRUNTLED IN THIS DESERT CLIMATE.



HE'S THE WORST OF THEM ALL!

IT SEEMS THAT FAR-LI-MAS REMEMBERED WITH BITTERNESS THE TIME WHEN HE WAS THROWN OUT OF THE FAIR, HAVING GONE THERE TO PERFORM HIS SHOW, WHICH WOULD HAVE FEATURED LITTLE DESERT TOYS INTONING DESPERATE SONGS TO ETERNITY.



OH, FAR-LI-MAS, THIS WON'T HELP THE SITUATION!



SEEING THE MASTER IN THE DISTANCE, FAR-LI-MAS CAN'T HIDE HIS SCORN TOWARDS THE SAINT, FOR ALTHOUGH HE'S ALSO SADDENED BY THE CRUEL SPECTACLE, HE ISN'T CAPABLE OF HARMING ANYONE, AND HIS HOMICIDAL GRIEF EVENTUALLY ATTRACTS UNDESIRABLES SUCH AS THE ONES CAPTAINED BY FAR-LI-MAS TONIGHT.

OH MASTER OF ABUNDANCE, HOW THEY HAVE CLIPPED YOUR WINGS.



I'VE SEEN YOU TALKING TO THAT SCARECROW MADE OF RAGS AND BONES.



PATHETIC!

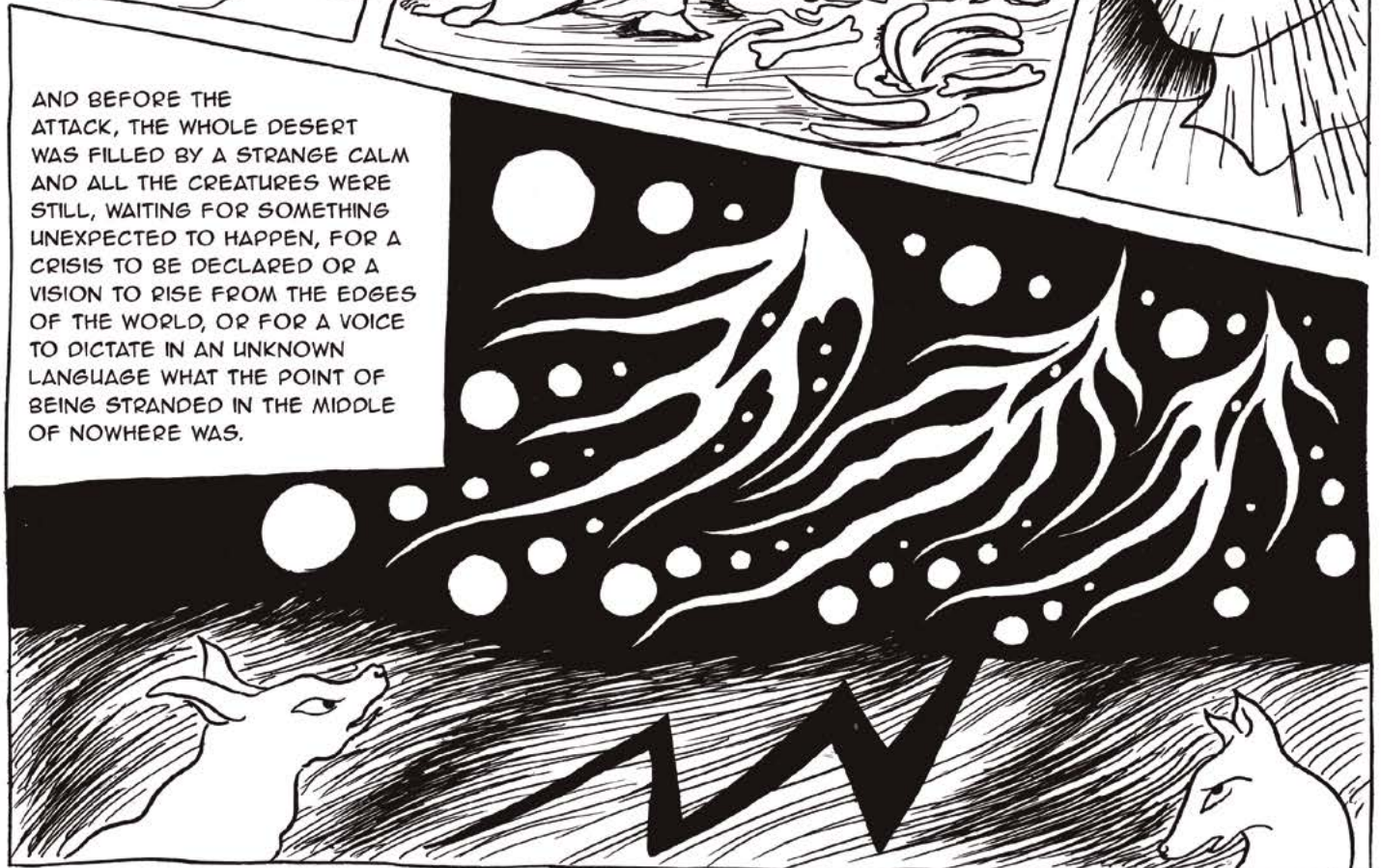
MASTER OF MASTERS, I COME TO YOU...



WHAT!?



AND BEFORE THE ATTACK, THE WHOLE DESERT WAS FILLED BY A STRANGE CALM AND ALL THE CREATURES WERE STILL, WAITING FOR SOMETHING UNEXPECTED TO HAPPEN, FOR A CRISIS TO BE DECLARED OR A VISION TO RISE FROM THE EDGES OF THE WORLD, OR FOR A VOICE TO DICTATE IN AN UNKNOWN LANGUAGE WHAT THE POINT OF BEING STRANDED IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE WAS.



EVEN FAR-LI-MAS, SURROUNDED BY THE REBELS, HAD TO STOP FOR A MOMENT BEFORE REACHING THE FAIR.

HE WAS TAKEN BY A DISTANT RAPTURE HE COULDN'T CONTROL WHEN HE LOOKED AT THE MADDENING LANDSCAPE OF STARS ABOVE THE PEACEFUL BARENESS OF THE LAND

WHAT'S WRONG?

AND SAW THE GIGANTIC LIGHTNING BOLT OF PAIN THAT PIERCED ALL THE THINGS HOPELESSLY BURNING IN THE UNIVERSE,

AT THE CENTRE OF WHICH LAY THE OLD EMPIRE OF MARBLE SOLITUDE FOREVER UNINHABITED, WHERE THE AIR WAS STILL.

NO ONE CAN CHANGE THE DIRECTION OF THIS WORLD.

LET'S FULFIL OUR DARK MISSION.

YOU'RE RIGHT.







GREEDY GATHERERS OF THE DESERT,  
YOU'RE IN DANGER!



COME ON IN FRIENDS!



ON SEEING  
DEATH  
JOINING THE  
REBELS AT  
ONCE...

... THE  
MASTER BEGAN  
TO WONDER  
WHETHER IT ALL  
WAS...



... A PLOT ORGANISED  
BY HER TO REMAIN ALWAYS  
THE WINNER.



THE MASTER SAW THE CLEAR AIR FILLED BY FLAMES AND SAW THE OASIS AS HIS ONLY ESCAPE, A SHELTER OF BLACK WATER WHERE THE ROSY REFLECTIONS OF THE OUTSIDE FLAMES FLASHED.

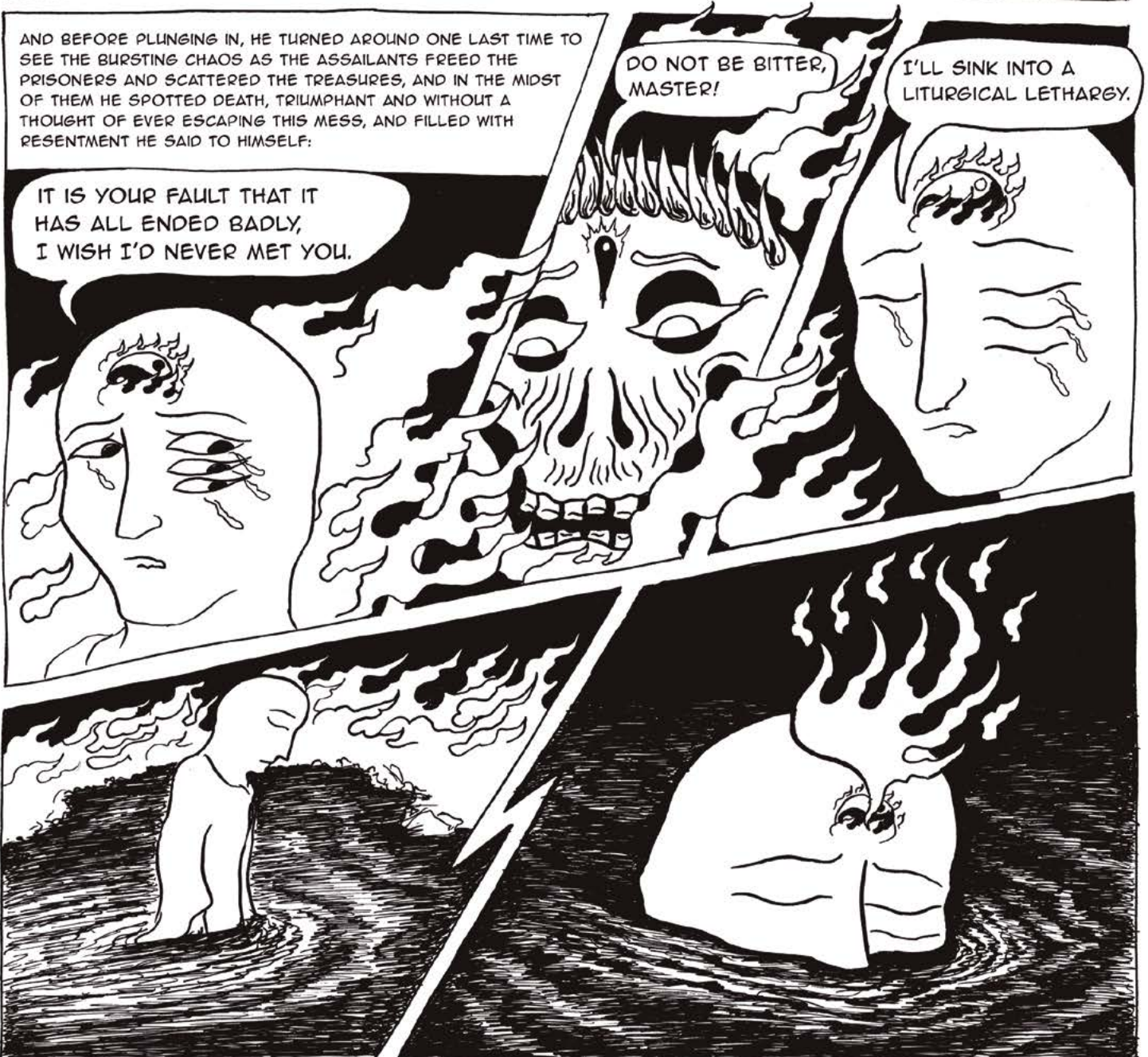


AND BEFORE PLUNGING IN, HE TURNED AROUND ONE LAST TIME TO SEE THE BURSTING CHAOS AS THE ASSAILANTS FREED THE PRISONERS AND SCATTERED THE TREASURES, AND IN THE MIDST OF THEM HE SPOTTED DEATH, TRIUMPHANT AND WITHOUT A THOUGHT OF EVER ESCAPING THIS MESS, AND FILLED WITH RESENTMENT HE SAID TO HIMSELF:

IT IS YOUR FAULT THAT IT HAS ALL ENDED BADLY, I WISH I'D NEVER MET YOU.

DO NOT BE BITTER, MASTER!

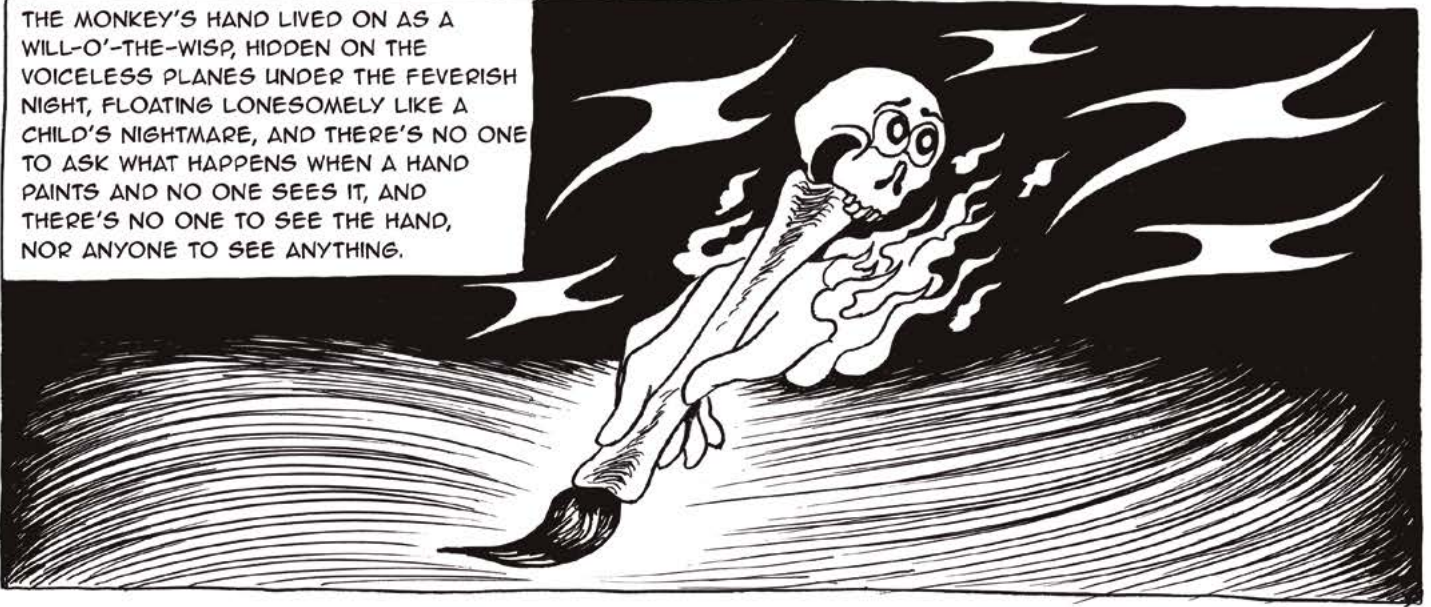
I'LL SINK INTO A LITURGICAL LETHARGY.



THE MASTER SANK INTO  
THAT LIQUID DARKNESS.



THE MONKEY'S HAND LIVED ON AS A  
WILL-O'-THE-WISP, HIDDEN ON THE  
VOICELESS PLANES UNDER THE FEVERISH  
NIGHT, FLOATING LONESOMELY LIKE A  
CHILD'S NIGHTMARE, AND THERE'S NO ONE  
TO ASK WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A HAND  
PAINTS AND NO ONE SEES IT, AND  
THERE'S NO ONE TO SEE THE HAND,  
NOR ANYONE TO SEE ANYTHING.



AT THE START OF A NEW DAY, DEATH...

... CAME TO THE REALISATION ...

... THAT SHE DID NOT EXIST.



I'M SO  
TIRED.

¡CLOC!

¡CLOC!

THE END.

ALDO URBANO, 2023

