

ABERRANT FEAR AND LOATHING



The **ABERRANT** world
through a gonzo lens

ABERRANT: FEAR & LOATHING

ROLLO?

To: James Abbot, E&D
Fr: Roger Graves, New Projects Division, Simon & Shuster
Re: Rollo

Dear Jim,

After the brainstorming session for the new book-a-zine project, I got on the Op and checked out that Rollo guy from *Flare* that they were talking about. I agree that this guy has the rebel appeal that we're going for. I think the name recognition factor would probably be a significant boost to readership as well, but I have some definite concerns that I'd like to voice before we go any further with this. Frankly, he sounds like a loose cannon to me. Can we control this guy? His rebellious style is great, but we have to set clear limits for him. Make sure he realizes that there are certain topics that he is not allowed to parody. I'm enclosing a few of his recent articles so you can get a feel for what I mean.

I like this guy, but I'm a little hesitant. What do you think?

Roger

ROLLO!

To: Roger Graves, New Projects Division, Simon & Schuster
Fr: James Abbot, E&D
Re: Re: Rollo

Hi Roger,

Thanks for keeping me in the loop. You talked to the right guy. Rollo's editor at *Flare* is a friend of mine from Medill. You're right about his rebel appeal. Only novas get higher popularity ratings from the male 18-28 demographic. And you're right: Cannons don't come any looser than Rollo. If you think he's going to use your "Do Not Parody" list for anything but a catalog of targets, you're on crack.

Thanks for the collection of Rollo articles, though. I laughed my ass off.

J.



THE PLANE CRASHED ON THE DAMN RUNWAY AGAIN

Anytime anyone with any-where to be at any point during the day needs to visit Miami, their plane crashes on the damn runway. Now don't get me wrong — I know that no one in the world needs to be in Miami unless they're Cuban or waiting to die — but sometimes work takes you there, or you have to see a terminally ill relative. Neither of these are often the case, however, and everyone knows that.

From *Flare's* "Normal Lives" column by Dr. Duke Rollo

So why was the plane crashing on the damn runway again?

Novas. Ratings, baby. With the fighting and the punching and the— ooh! hurry, someone

snap Mefistofaleez' picture, and we'll sell it to Nike! Luckily, I had my digital camera at the ready and clicked a quick pic of everyone's favorite militant Muslim black nova wrapping a transformer cowl around the head of Miami's "private police nova," the Miami Streak. At the time, I think the current Streak was one of those freaks from that berserk Argentine family who had practically every third child erupt with an M-R node. The Gracies or something. Anyway, it's irrelevant.

Our plane's descent had been rudely interrupted by the overflow of another

pointless redneck brawl between these two atavisms from the highway onto the landing tarmac. The pilot, in an unwarranted fit of compassion, jerked the plane back up to avoid the slugfesting dimwits in the landing path. Now, I'm no aerospace engineer, but even I have the smarts to know that a 797 isn't designed for vertical takeoff and landing, and the pilot's swerve served only to snap the wings off the plane.

Which fell the remaining, oh, 30 feet to the hot, hot Miamian asphalt.

The Miami news crews shot a haphazard gig of hi-res digital of the gracelessly belly-flopping plane before scuttling over each other to return to the "action," which consisted of Mefistofaleez choking the living nova shit out of the Miami Streak. Boring. Boring! Here's a plane full of once-valuable human lives, dangling on a thread over the yawning, gaping chasm of mortality, riding the pinnacle of transportation technology only a hair's breadth from erupting into a fiery pinwheel of death. And what does the camera crew commit to video? A high-school-wrestling-grade submission hold.

As I found out later, Mefistofaleez was fined \$900,000 American, about half of which was used to buy another set of wings for the plane. The other half rolled into a 60-second loan to a Californian venture capital company at seven points above the vig — oh, did I say vig? I meant prime — and then rolled into United's insurance kitty at 12 minutes before closing the day after the plane crash. I have no idea what the individual payouts to passengers were, but I'll bet ViaSoft can tell you — I was a guest host for MTV3's "Teenagers Hump Each Other on the Beach 2007!" Halloween special or some such lunacy.

The show drew 18 million viewers, if I remember my figures correctly.



After exiting the plane, I gathered my bags and reported to the Traveler's Insurance booth.

"I'd like to report a death and claim a settlement, please," I said, expecting to be laughed out of the office or, at least, threatened with the phone number of their main headquarters.

"Yes, sir. Policy number?"

What was this? She was going to cut me a check right there?

I recited my policy number. I had purchased a four-million-dollar insurance rider as a joke back at Kennedy in New York. What the hell did I care? ViaSoft paid for it, and they made their money back and then some from the ad revenue generated by 18 million horny teenagers watching 6,000 other horny teenagers hump each other on the beach.

"Thank you, sir. May I see some ID?"

Caught! Like a dingo dragging a baby into the outback beneath a set of halogen house kliegs!

"Certainly," and I showed her. As a journalist, I am never rattled.

"Sir, the policy names you as the insured."

"That's correct."

"But you're claiming to be the beneficiary, as well."

"Yes. And?"

"And nothing."

She cut me a check for four million American dollars.

Granted, this was back in aught-seven, before the Klesko-Cambridge case. It was cheaper for Traveler's to cut me the check and then garnish me for it later than to pay an employee to negotiate with me for 15 minutes. Their insurance money was insured against jackasses like me.

But that didn't mean I couldn't be a jackass. I deposited the check at a BancSouth there at the airport, creating a new account and withdrawing, oh, let's say, 600 of it right there. On the service counter at BancSouth, the Miami Streak grinned at me foolishly from a promotional placard. Apparently, their mortgage rates had never been lower. Thank you, Miami Streak. Next time I need to mortgage my house at the airport, I'll remember your earnest endorsement. Please don't crash my plane again.

For three days, those MTV3 teenagers humped each other like crazed rabbits. All of the ViaSoft game shows and comedy jams and Backstreet Boys Reunion Beach Bashes (they played that song in which all of the 'Boys

dressed like monsters in the old video) held their attention for only so long, at which point they resumed humping. And let me say, as a curmudgeon, I can think of little more repulsive than drunken, fornicating teenagers, except perhaps the jobs most of these ballyhoonians would hold upon graduating this brief period of their higher learning. The human body is a beautiful thing, I suppose, as is the miracle of copulation or intercourse or something, but nothing upsets the stomach like a turgid, drunken detachment of Sigma Phi Fuckheads gang-raping an inebriated high-school girl who had wandered too far from the protection afforded by her gaggle of cohorts. I may sound like an old fart for saying so, but there's just nothing right about it — cries of, "They're just being kids!" to the contrary. Even when I found myself in Tijuana, I can take comfort in the fact that those were whores and I paid for the right to do everything I did, fair and square.

The beer and blood and puke and semen and more beer flowed freely as the hedonism orgied forth from these vibrant, privileged youth. As a firm believer in the difference between use and abuse, I can say only that hopefully this wanton lunacy taught a few of these worthless children-of-

middle-managers a thing or two about human capacity. As Bryan Ferry sang about three centuries ago, "I use you and I confuse you," and that's certainly what that debauch did to those kids. It chewed them up and spit them out, shitting them back to their schools, where they could learn nothing and spend their weekends in puddles of their own sick in the solace of their dormitories. Kicking the gods of booze and death in the testicles is not for everyone.

It was precisely one of these suburban terrors I encountered when lurching my own addled way through the hip-deep crotch of Caligulan excess known as South Beach. Having consumed my weight in Mai Tais, I was warmed up and ready to have a few drinks. I had been accompanied by "Halloween Humpfest '07" producer Amber Suk (her real name — Korean-American) and music director Jeff "Gorilla" Guynes, and we proceeded to make space at the bar for ourselves by allowing Jeff to elbow the throats of people who were there before us. They had gorged themselves on the blood of teenagers and were a bit drunk as well.

"This sucks," said Suk.

"With a name like that, why aren't you a stripper?" I asked her with a drunken dose of my ever-present tact.

"You're a pig," she said, attempting to knee my groin as if I were a god of booze and death.



It was only then that I noticed the utter preposterousness of our situation. Gorilla, after throat-punching room for us at the bar, had vanished into the assembled sea of devils, giant genitalia, forgotten deities and Divis Mals.

Madness!

Oh. Halloween. I had briefly forgotten my wits.

"That's the fattest Divis Mal I've ever seen," I cooed to Amber. "And so is that one. And that one looks like Divis Mal if he worked part-time at Abercrombie and Fitch." This last Divis Mal wore his trademark gold breastplate and a shock of fire-engine-red hair stuffed beneath a curve-brimmed baseball cap.

"Those aren't really Digdis Mall," Amber reassured me, one eye throttling the other one in a battle for drunken supremacy. I noticed she had dressed herself as some sort of Cat-Girl. It spoke to me then that, having not noticed the cat costume before, my tastes were perhaps jaded. It meant nothing to me that I had left the hotel with a feline-clad Asian woman, and I hadn't even remembered that it was Halloween.

Apparently, my Halloween costume was that of Guy With Glasses Who Is Drunk. I wondered where Gorilla was and what costume of his I had taken for granted.

As I turned to scope the assembled monster, Mefistofaleez and Kikjak heads for one that resembled, well, a Gorilla in the employ of ViaSoft, I was jostled rudely from behind. A surly, bald, mustachioed palooka had shoved his way between myself and the bar. Lance Stryker!

No. A bloated, beer-bellied hooligan bedecked as the "Stone Badass."

"Gowwa my way or thassa damn fack!" bellowed Stryker's doppelganger. I had no idea what this meant. I mean, I was intimately familiar with the nuances of Lance Stryker's persona, but these mangled words in this nonsensical patois



conveyed no meaning. I could practically see the comic-strip booze dingbats orbiting his flushed head, and his pupils threatened to engulf the entire bar. A youth of perhaps 17 to 24 (I surmised from his presence at the MTV3-dominated beach), he was nonetheless a healthy, Midwestern stump of an offspring. I decided to defuse him with wit.

"Whut? Watchit," I countered, fumbling my devastating verbal riposte.

"Fuck. Whutchoo sayin'? Hafta mess yu up. Wooooooo!"

This last must have been some youthful call to arms. I can discern no other purpose.

And just then, over the shoulders of the roiling crowd, swung the meaty arm of the Gorilla, whose fingers found purchase in the deep eye sockets of the Stone Dumbass. The young man's bulbous head bent sharply downward at the neck and his entire body rocketed backward into the crowd of gathered Caestus Paxes (Paxi?) where I kicked at him ignominiously.

Gorilla lifted Amber to sit on the bar. I quickly rummaged my shoulder bag for a sharpened screwdriver or a razorblade taped to a toothbrush, but by the time my fruitless search allowed me to look to the crowd, Stryker had disappeared, replaced by no fewer than the three indistinguishable simulacra.

"Fucking hell," said Gorilla. "Let's have shots."

A Team Tomorrower (moonlighting as a South Beach bartender) poured us very deep oil slicks, which we chased with Coke.

A torrent of hideously loud blather roared out of the loudspeakers. Six Divis Mals took to the bamboo-themed stage. A tanned emcee in white shorts and T-shirt waved his hand over each. The crowd cheered or booed. One Divis Mal made a rude gesture, which the crowd took to be "in character," so they roundly applauded. He was given a prize bottle of Bacardi rum, half of which he downed in one celebratory victory guzzle.

Ten, twelve years ago, these jokers would have been costumed as monsters out of our common human myth. Devils, witches, ghosts, perhaps. Or perhaps they would have dressed as cultural icons like gangsters or karate fighters or maybe even some character from history. And still, among the periphery of the crowd, a few of these noble relics circulated. But by and large, Halloween has become a parody of our every day: Novas were it. Just as every aspect of our daily life is somehow attached to the novas' presence, so has every aspect of this pagan holiday grown to accommodate the de facto gods among us.

Back when I was young, we used to buy our consumer-friendly Halloween costumes at the grocery store. Even then, we had laid the groundwork for this media-ravaged sodomy of culture that is our legacy. Our costumes were disposable, cheap, just like our lives have become. Even the costumes themselves made no attempt. Most were simply vinyl ponchos with an ill-crafted mask (that rubbed your tongue raw when you stuck it through the breathing slot) and some frenetic icon emblazoned across the torso: "I'm Scooby-Doo playing tennis. What are you?" "Superman flying up the side of a building." But at least mostly, these were memes and fantasies. Scooby-Doo didn't have any cult of personality associated with him — no fawning legion of sycophants, starfuckers and celebrities-by-association.

Have we no identities of our own any longer? Is everyone a minor derivation of the novas who walk at our sides? Have we become secondary to the few thousand rednecked *Übermenschen* who treat the planet as if it were a fire hydrant and they were dogs?

Wait. Don't answer. I don't want to know.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY WAS A MAN'S FUCKING MAN

He could drink more than you, and he often did. He could punch things really hard. He didn't dance around a paragraph when he sat down to write. He ran with the bulls in Pamplona, and if my memory serves correctly, he strangled one with his bare hands before breaking it in half, eating one of the portions and hurling the rest of the carcass to a gaggle of starving urchins. If you gave him any lip, he would take his Bloody Mary glass, crush it in his hand and lacerate you with the shattered remains. He woke up in strange places, head bulbously hungover, and bludgeoned the hostile natives before finding a desk and a typewriter with which he could ply his trade for the day. When everything finally proved too much for him, Papa took a shotgun and removed most of his own head. It's a berserk, macho, romantic fantasy made real, and it lingers in men's memories and libidos, forever a symbol of the ultimate barbarism and tragedy of being a man. Slog through the shit until you just can't take it no more, and then, make a big mess for the people who have to find you. Fuck you, world!

Unfortunately, the Hemingway myth seems to develop some sort of discrepancy when translated into any of the thousands of dialects spoken by the residents of Africa. Almost the entirety of the continent is governed by coups established by the lunatic warlord-of-the-month. Virtually without exception, these are men who want their cake, and damn you if you tell them they're not going to eat it, too: roaring, puking,

brawling tornado-men who embody all of Hemingway's machismo but none of the tragedy or taste associated with it. Hemingway was too much for the world — he wasn't cut out for long-term habitation. Some say he even hung around for longer than he should have. But these African dictators don't even have the courtesy to blow their own heads off once their lives become surreal. They make other people do it for them and drag other, undeserving lives into the abyss with them. No self-styled Idi Amin sighs and throws up his hands in sheepish defeat. No, he sits in his purloined harem and waits for the monthly cadre of lunatic resistance to violently depose him.

From *Flare's* "Normal Lives" column by Dr. Duke Rollo

History, they say, repeats itself. Why, then, do the African dictators not believe that their end will come in the same cloud of gore as the 10,000 who preceded them? Are they truly so deluded — is madness so endemic to African government — that each truly thinks he will be the exception to the rule?

Even more bizarre is that these thugs end up holding *any fucking kind of power at all*. I've been to Africa. Lots. Scores of times. My wife insists that we travel to Kenya at

least every other year, and I have to admit a secret yen for the malt liquor they brew on the Ivory Coast. The people there are *the most sensible, humble, down-to-earth people I have ever met in all of my journalistic travels across the globe*. These are not narcotic-maddened South Americans! They are not degenerate American has-beens! They are not paranoid Europeans trying desperately to clutch five-century-old prominence! They're not mercenary Nipponese or shady Shanghai smugglers! So how is it that any two-bit bushwhacker lunatic can arm his mooks to the teeth and cow entire nations into hanging on his every word? Half of them *aren't even novas*, who at least have their own unique power to command others' favor.

Case in point: Alafin Sango. Back in early 2006, this guy walks into Abuja, climbs the stairs of the capitol building, shoots everyone he sees and, in effect, sends the nation a memo stating, "Greetings; I'm the new dictator." Goons with cheap, *Soviet-era* automatic rifles shoot the people who want to shoot Sango, thereby keeping him in the office of the "president." Literally — Sango's first 100 hours were spent in the same office, out of fear that some other whack-job would shoot him and claim to be the successor. The country's half Muslim, just under half Christian and a little bit of "other," and no one has a problem with this. It's got numerous international accords honoring things like nuclear testing bans, endangered species protection, marine biology conservation, etc., oh, *and it just happens to have a gun-toting psychotic calling all the shots*. What the hell, the Nigerians think, he'll be out of office in six weeks.

But they were wrong. Sango proved to be the first in a line of "power dictators," who basically held onto their positions by screwing over everyone they could and hoarding what they got from them. I imagine one dialog went something like this.

Project Utopia: We see you have a government, Mister Sango. That's nice.

Alafin Sango: Thank you. Do you have any guns or gold?

Project Utopia: Yes, we do. Would you like some? We will ask that you allow Team Tomorrow to aid in the development of the country. And stop with the heroin distribution.

Alafin Sango: No problem. Thank you for the guns and money. Now please leave my country.

Project Utopia: But, you said....

Alafin Sango: Ha ha. I lied. Get out before I shoot you.

Project Utopia: Well, crud.

And thus, Project Utopia wears a dunce cap.

Why don't they send novas in to recover the country? Or their guns and money? Two reasons — it would mean admitting the mistake, and it would mean spending more money to have the privilege of seeing exactly what Sango bought with *all* their old money. Throwing good money after bad isn't a smart business model. So, they let it sit.

Of course, no good deed goes unpunished, and soon every psychotic with no morality and a handful of homemade guns that were as likely to blow him up as they were to blow up his enemies stepped up to bat and, goshdarnit, had himself a country. Granted, Project Utopia — "PU" in much parlance — didn't finance all of these backwater bananas, but they did their part in setting up more than just Sango. Out of the half-a-hundred "new" political entities in Africa, Utopian money leaks out of 30 of their assholes. The rest are kept in check only be the sensibilities of their people and the beady eyes of quite-possibly-lunatic neighbors.

And then — *and then* — the shit hit the fan. The fucking *novas* started doing it. Not that they couldn't run

countries they wanted, anyway. But that would have taken *effort*. Why lift a finger to stage a coup when you could have others do it for you?

Take notes, class; I may give a test. This here's example number two.

The Fulani Sovereign State, an organization of ethnic African political types, has just declared itself (as of this writing) a completely independent nation. Led in this quest by a very savvy council of nominal "elders" whose membership comprises the governmental cabinet, the nation sold part of its sovereignty to a pair of novas in exchange for protection and a share of longer-term interest in the well-being of the state.

What does that mean on a nuts-and-bolts level?

Birds of a feather flock together. A group of separatist wackos, rallying behind the idea of cultural unity at gunpoint, offered "stock" in the nation to a pair of novas, who would kick the ass of anyone stepping unwanted into FSS borders. In return, these two novas — Magda al-Naguib and Hannibal — get national citizenship (which amounts to diplomatic immunity and a friendly extradition policy, should they wake up in the streets of another nation with the blood of the locals on their hands) and, well, free money just for being there. Compare this to some of the other financial arrangements novas have made:

Corporate retainer or endorsement requires you to work for or represent the corporation. Free agent status means feed yourself. N! broadcasts require you to either say, do or fight something or someone to be considered newsworthy. Being the shill of a puppet regime means, on the other hand, that you get to lie around all day in the *wazi's* harem and, on the off chance that someone wants to invade the nation's boundaries, you have to go rough them up a bit. And you receive subsidy money from whatever international organization the regime is ripping off.

For the record, it's just slightly less ridiculously easy than I'm describing it. The FSS has declared its borders formally, which place it *within* the political boundaries of already-recognized-as-a-fucking-nation-thank-you-very-much Chad. But what's Chad going to do? Complain? Then they face a war with the maniacs of the FSS council, whatever radical elements have united with those creeps and, on top of that, a pair of novas who have the best interests of the Crackpot Nation of the

Month Club
lining their
Swiss
accounts.

(It also might be worth mentioning that the Fulani Sovereign State is not the land of milk and honey. At last word, someone had reportedly hired "seven-figures-and-I'll-kill-whomever-you-want-me-to" Totentanz to remove Hannibal and al-Naguib from their FSS offices. Probably a resentful rival puppet dictatorship



looking to crawl like termites into the boundaries carved out by the FSS or one of the more sensible governments, like Chad or perhaps Cameroon. As of this printing no developments beyond the rumor have occurred.)

The Fulani Sovereign State has no airport. I have had to fly into Chad and hop a rogue jeepney whose driver is still on speaking terms with the part of the nation that is no longer part of the nation since Fulani separatists have said, "Hey, guess what; we're a country now."

What the FSS does have, however, is an aggressively patrolled border. Unless you're sneaking across the hills and plateaus that make up the non-highway countryside, you're not getting into this country without a stack of transit papers that make a Tolstoy novel look brief by comparison. And why do you need these papers? To ensure the country that you're not a rebellious insurgent. They already have enough of those — the ones who were responsible for creating the nation from a few thousand square miles of another country's turf. More insurgents mean trouble, and they don't want any trouble that they're not personally responsible for making.

I hand them my stack of papers and smile. The border sergeants rains only a few half-hearted, mandatory thwacks of his truncheon upon my head. I bleed obligingly and am waved into Fulani Sovereign borders.

Upon arriving at the capitol, Abacha (named after some other country's dictator or lord-general or something, to hear the locals tell it), it becomes obvious that the entire phenomenon of "elite nations" and likely, to a lesser extent, governments set up by passing coups, are exercises in Darwinian selection. The people of

these countries have no faith in the governments that run them — in many cases, the people were *there first* and the jackals rode in on vintage Range Rovers and Mercedes, proclaiming themselves kings, dictators, presidents, generals or other variations of grand-poobah-until-someone-cuts-off-my-head-or-shoots-out-my-eyes.

The local currency is worth little more than a pile of human feces on the index. I pay for my hotel in American dollars, cash. Everyone here knows that the FSS elder council has taken the gold upon which the currency is based and sunk it into local telecom infrastructures, in hopes of creating an internationally secure communications network. So, in effect, the money is based on the hopes that everyone wants to talk on the phone a lot and that people from other countries want to take advantage of the government's complete deregulation of anything resembling a personal privacy issue. Yes: The economy is supported by hackers and digital child porn. It's not without expense, as anyone who's ever installed eufiber connections in place of their old copper or fiber-optic lines knows. Just because these people are murderous maniacs doesn't mean that their tech is low-rent. God bless the OpNet and the loons who keep it functional.

The country is nothing so much as a pressure cooker set on high boil. Everything within the pressure cooker, part of the stew, is fairly homogenous; they're all in it together. However, the steam building up is equally as likely to explode the kettle and send FSS soup splattering all over the metaphorical kitchen of Africa as it is to yield a palatable meal.

The nation is half Muslim (which dominates the government) and half Christian, claiming about four million people, but it has very little religious tension. The market is a free economy, a capitalist's dream and a sweatshop

manufacturer's promised land, but the average person's life is not one of ceaseless toil. The FSS has hyperspecialized, making itself a *Casablanca*-esque crossroads of other nations and the aforementioned telecom hub. Aside from the fact that the damn money's no good, life is fairly quotidian, from the standpoint of your average African citizen.

The pressure, however, is inescapable. It's not an existential toil in Sartre's Hell, nor is it a postwar depression. It's the *constant, very real and very dire threat* that at any time, any lunatic who decides that he can do it better can march into

Abacha, kill whatever he thinks is causing the problem, take it over, and the entire nation will simply grind onward, probably oblivious because it's more comfortable that way.

The colonial savagery of centuries-old Africa has given way to a new, civilized governmental terrorism.

My way or the highway. I have novás, you have bruises. The ultimate (or, actually, penultimate, given that almost any of these countries can fashion a nuclear device from instructions gleaned from the OpNet) expression of playground bullying.

I have no idea why people support this mania in this day and age. Perhaps it's the human condition — they are

accustomed to jackbooted governmental thuggery and constant turnover and, they would rather accept this evil than risk the unknown of another custom.

But it shows. The people are tired. The markets of FSS trade city Nubalb — established 2007 — are full of busy merchants whose drooping eyes nonetheless dart furtively from side to side, anticipating an explosion of violence from just outside their peripheral vision. Like the coups endemic to old Haiti or Cuba or mid-Revolutionary France, the theater has merely shifted location. The location doesn't matter: You may

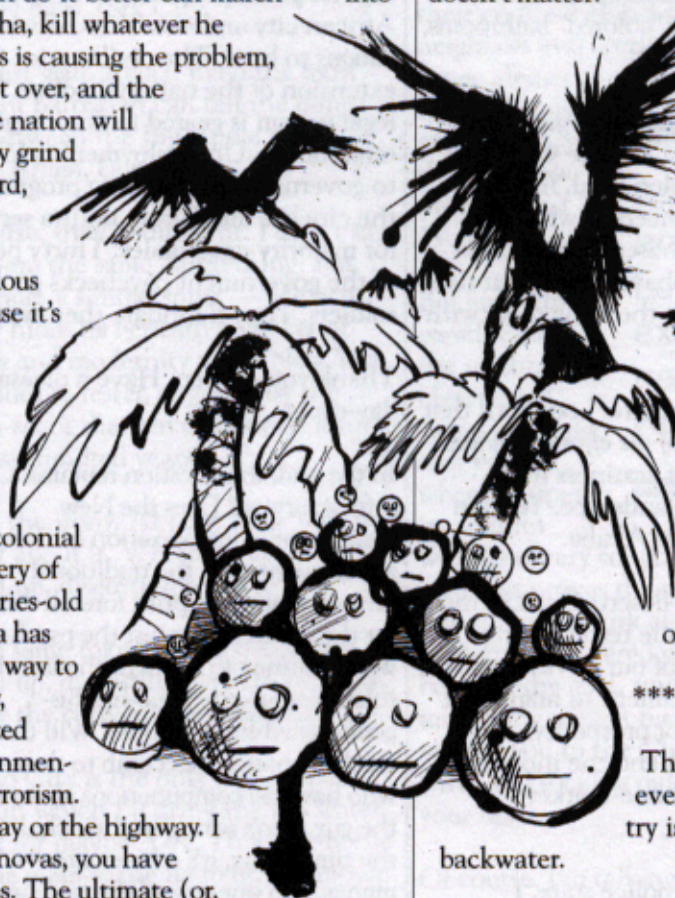
You may well be dragged away in the back of a 20-year-old Toyota if this week's Minister of Paranoia and Torture decides you're a troublesome element. In his defense, he *needs* to act like that, because next week, he's going to be the one dragged away.

Then again, not every African country is a dictatorial

backwater.

But even the ones that aren't are just as weird.

Take South Africa for instance. Shipping hub of the southern hemisphere. Centuries-old outgrowth of British empire (back when that mattered). Up to date with all the technologies and amenities offered by the



21st century. State-sponsored education through university level. Still crippled by the racism that characterized its past.

Racism.

Now? In 2008? Who still believes in that crap? With the efforts of the ANC a decade and a half ago and a global focus on the fundamental human injustices that were part and parcel to South African day-to-day, *don't you think someone would have taken the clue?* Although it's not still a part of the institution, skin-color bias is still a very potent undercurrent in South African life. They still have "colored" bathrooms, for Christ's sake.

Which is ridiculous, if you give it a moment's thought. They're willing to accept crackling-blue-eyed, fire-headed, civil-engineering-wrecking novas who throw buses at each other in the streets of Johannesburg, but they don't want to sit at the same table with the kafir. Pathetic.

But it doesn't end there. Locations that exist *only because of the efforts of novas* are still outposts of craziness in an otherwise berserk landscape. Yes, I'm talking about Addis Ababa.

A-A! Jewel of the desert! Oasis in the hot plains — miracle terraforming effort and symbol of our novas' legacy of prosperity! Testament to man's will made real! Fount of prosperity, entrepreneurialism and the indomitability of the global free-market economy!

Orwellian Utopia police state. I wonder if they didn't just shine this diamond-in-the-rough so they could have a cheap, non-union place to shoot their promotional Team Tomorrow literature.

Addis Ababa is proof that the government need not be populated by rabid fiends to have a detrimental effect on the society. Yes, I'm aware that A-A citizens enjoy the most comfortable lifestyle in Africa. I'm aware that economic growth in the entertainment, marketing and technology industries keeps A-A growing with the promise of better tomorrows. Yes, I know that their crime and unemployment rates are virtually nil.

After all, the Devil has to offer something to make his deal attractive, doesn't he? Addis Ababa has the highest per capita tax rate of any African city and *most non-African nations* to boot. The civil service is an extension of the national police. The legal system is geared to favor registered novas. Unemployment is low due to governmental "training programs"; the city has mandatory militia service for majority-aged males. Thirty percent of the government paychecks go to soldiers. They fluoridate their water.

Thank you, citizen. Have a pleasant day-cycle.

In the end, the question remains: Can Africa survive? Does the New Millennium's juxtaposition of transitory government with the traditional ethnocultural blueprint foretell disaster for the continent or just the psychopaths who continue to torment the largely-tolerable-but-everyone-has-his-goddamned-limits people? Will the non-crackpot nations succumb to the swine who have no compunctions about killing the guy who's sitting in their chair? For the time being, it's a stalemate — maniacs on one side of the table and totalitarians on the other. And sometimes they play musical chairs. No, I'm afraid that before Africa settles down it's got a good bit more acting up to do.

MEXICO CITY IS A CULTURE-SHOCKED HELLHOLE

I'm not ashamed to say it. I have a special space reserved in my heart for Mexico City, and it occupies the piece of real estate right next to the one filled by New York City.

Now just wait. Relax. Even the most ignorant barbarian can tell the difference between the Big Apple and *Nuevo Aztlán*, can't he?

Of course, they're different. I didn't say they were the same damn thing. But they share a similar spirit — Mexico simply hides its beneath a veneer of civility and modernity while New York continues to fester, engulfed by the crotch-scabs that have poisoned it for the past hundred years.

That's the irony. At least New York is honest about it. Which makes it a fucked-up, disgusting place to live.

By the same token, Mexico City is a fucked-up, disgusting place to live. Just not for the conventional reasons.

Mexico City is the only city in the world in which I'll drink the tap water, except for maybe A-A. This isn't borne of some glam-scene hauteur, but rather out of the desire not to explode in a cloud of chemical sterilization agents or toxic gust of bacterial terror. Mexico City has great water.

It's got great food. It's cleaner than a Japanese hospital. Goods and services are largely inexpensive without being cheap, and the people are beautiful.

The drugs are safe, the liquor is potent, and the police will obligingly cudgel into submission any howling rapscallion who has too much of either and makes himself a liability. They have admirable extradition treaties with their civilized global-community neighbors and corruption of their fringe elements has exhibited an ebb tide, a slow surcease over the past 11 years.

But amid this paradise lurk the seething, bleary-eyed swine who take root everywhere prosperity snuffles

with its silvery snout. It's yet another case that proves the rule — the barbarians no longer lurk at the gate in this modern, accoutered world. They crawl beneath the gate, smiling at you with impossibly perfect teeth before converting you to the Church of Barbarian Faith and sucking out your tithe with your taxes.

Of course, I'm talking about Utopia.

Project Utopia. Assuager (!) of all fears and bringer-about of universally good things for all. Sworn enemy of the proto-Satanic Teragen and builder of brighter futures.

Any of you familiar with yr. Corresp.'s journalism no doubt see the formation

From Sickness: Vomit and Elections in 2008, Lucent Press, 2008; excerpt reprinted by permission by KulturesZeit

of another anti-Utopian rant, but I won't bore you with such tedious predictabilities. Every two-bit, bomb-throwing anarchist weirdbeard has his own conspiracy theory, and *KulturesZeit* isn't paying word rate for me to advance mine. So I'll stick to the facts.

If it wasn't fucking Utopia's fault, some other heinous conglomerate, whether corporate, religious, moral or paragovernmental would have crawled up Mexico City's ass and befouled it with its own brand of post-consumerist holocaust.

Sure, the Mexico City you see is nice and prim, a virginal stretch of Latin nubility, ready to be passionately loved and regaled to the wet spot of imperialism. But if you try that shit around here, Johnny, you'll have the Devil to pay.

At the turn of the 21st century, Mexico City, like all of Mexico and the two-thirds of Central and South America that aren't pimped out by Medellín money, teetered on the brink of Third-World status. Sensing weakness, ViaSoft launched a salvo of germ-bombs at Mexico City, which exploded into bacterial colonies the likes of which threaten the sanity of most of North America. From these livid, gaping sores grew the virally homogeneous HearNow! Music stores and Starbucks' "once-we-served-coffee-but-now-we're-a-lifestyle" affronts to nature. Instead of stabbing each other in desolate adobe streets, the *rudos* went berserk on soft asphalt in front of fluorescent-lit strip malls. Surely ViaSoft had intended to spark a wave of Madison-Avenue consumer frenzy but had overlooked the fact that the local economies of starving, violent nations aren't built around pallets of *For God's Sake*, *Sting Still Refuses to Stop Singing* chip box sets and Grande Latte Sirhan Sirhan Kenya-Scented Agave-Twist slop-buckets of coffee priced at eight bucks a pop, which roughly equate to three million units of the

local currency. The market cultivation failed spectacularly.

Strike one for pigdog profit-rapists.

Of course, ViaSoft wasn't the only scumbag willing to slit throats for every last peso the locals made. The United States Gummint cast its sickly eye southward as an uncharacteristically political league of South and Central American novas watched the circling vulture prepare for the coup de grace. What ensued was the 100-hour epic struggle between on-retainer American and Canadian novas and the heroes of Latin legend who wanted no part of fetid American culture-rot. The paid scabs went down like three-dollar whores before the guerrilla-style head-exploding hijinx of the *mascaras* and their cousins. Surprisingly, heart won out over pig-fucking greed, as it has so rarely in history. In Spanish-speaking schools, this four-day prevention of a modern *Rape of the Sabines* is known as *La Cruzada Tierra*, in which the local heroes defended their culture from the evil empire. In North American schools, it's known as the Mexico Incident, whereby a group of rogue communist jackboot radicals enabled an entire nation to refuse the sacrament of development. Yr. Corresp. recalls it as the clash of the savages with the chanced idiot-god over the rights to pay-per-view cockfights and chalupa-turf franchise.

Strike two for the swine of rapine gluttony.

But all dynasties must end — Camelot can last only so long each time it revisits this mortal coil, and Brigadoon inevitably fades into the mists once again. The third time, so goes the saying, was the charm.

Team Tomorrow, acting on referendum from Project Utopia, then descended upon Mexico like the super-powered Village People of Righteousness, delivering quantum neck kicks and

fiery, head-exploding looks at anyone who doubted their magnanimity. Utopia's party line was that the "Mexico Intervention" needed to happen — which it did, of course — and that they simply responded to a social policy plea from Mexican nationals and South American watchdog groups who were wary of yet another annexation attempt by the gonorrheal grubdollars from the north. Good ol' PU dodged claims of imperialism by claiming that their multinational backing made them a support mechanism instead of a junta, which is true if you interpret their words' denotations.

Almost overnight, the salvation of Mexico began, with its epicenter at that heinous hive of villainy, Mexico City. Within two years — rivaling the expedience with which the Ethiopia effort took place — Mexico City had been broken and tamed like the snorting bucking monster it once was. Population remained the highest in the world, but there was no reason it shouldn't, as paradise naturally has all manner of people willing — nay *wanting* — to live under its benevolent eaves. (Does anyone remember the Utopia ad campaign back then? "Come to Mexico City, the Eden reborn on



Earth"? I wonder how much they paid for that one....) Utopians scrubbed the city clean with early versions of the Zushima macrobe and reduced the ghastly unemployment rate to an unprecedented six percent by "suggesting" that the government double taxes and use that money to employ new civil servants in the realms of sanitation, law enforcement and engineering (which, if you *need* more government mooks, is how to do it without being draconian).

Mexico's rejuvenation spread outward, fostered by massive popular support and PR campaigns by T2M celebs like The Incandescent Smile, Gigaface, Look At Me Man, NovaShill and the ubiquitous Caestus Pax. Local communities chased their corrupt leaders out of town with broken bottles tied to broomsticks and jump-started their agrarian economy with trade agreements both north and south of their borders. Regional drug laws changed drastically, some echoing the hysterical terror imposed by the Philippines and others stopping just shy of the hysterical terror imposed by the Philippines.

Beneath this blanket of niceness and invigoration, of course, the old corruption still flourished. You're just not supposed to pay attention to the man behind the curtain. The unemployed became *really* impoverished, many localities became neo-feudal dictatorships, the drug trade practiced enough sleight of hand to convince people that all of its product in fact originated in Colombia, Venezuela and from the fertile loins of the Medellín snort-gods. Any maniac who could addle a mob's brains with enough Seconal to eat the flesh of his enemies could become a local potentate as long as he filed the right documents with the federal government.

And who cared? The half-assed success of the project never made the news because it affected only poor Mexicans, and the Utopians knew you didn't

want to see that. It's not like the jackals had come to make their dens in Cancun or Ixtapa or Cozumel or any of the rich resort towns. (Well, they had, but they were charismatic jackals.)

It was just this sort of snowjob that the editors of *KulturesZeit* suspected when they contacted yr. Corresp. for an exposé. Naturally being above that sort of thing, I refused to indulge the propagandoid aspect of the assignment, but agreed to discuss the new golden era with the just-add-water fascists of T2M-Americas. What follows is an excerpt from that ongoing series of columns, which concluded last December. I apologize if some of it seems incoherent — I did as best I could to transcribe my hairy-eyed, manic screeds from their audio recordings, but the paranoia that Mexico breeds had convinced me that I was soon to be the target of a new infestation of biological blood goblins that could burst a man from within like a sausage from its casing. It is just such a cast, however, from which Utopia's modern Orwellian Mexico City deserves to be viewed.

Armed guards flank Utopia headquarters.

I can't figure out why. Inside that building lurk some of the most twisted, savage fiends ever to staple a logo to their chests and save the world in the name of their parent organization. Any normal baseline who wants to pick a fight with these walking nukes will likely resemble gruel after the encounter, and any rival nova who gets a wild hair up his ass and decides to take the fight to T2M-AmHQ isn't going to be stopped by Jose Average with a carbine.

It's all very officious, though, and it serves to put the fear of God in any self-avowed "journalist" who shows up for the song-and-dance with a head full of methadone-and-cerveza cocktails. The armed hooligans chased me down their receiving tunnels, and I found

myself in a mahogany-paneled office, greeted by a woman with a cascade of halogen headlight-beams emanating from her breasts and teeth. I knew my only recourse was to wrestle her into submission. But I couldn't — that would let the Utopia goons know I was on to them. Or worse, it would make them think that I wanted them to think that I was on to them or, quite possibly, that I was trying to misdirect them by wanting them to think that I wanted them to think that I knew that they were on to me and was having none of it because I was on to them. The dance of political journalism is one of exacting detail, and every word uttered to another becomes a unique moment of epic gravity. Still, I can pretty certainly say that at that point, I wasn't even sure that I was on to me, so I decided to play it cool.

"Duke Rollo for an appointment with Caestus Pax. I'm on the books," I sneered, mealy-mouthed, at the receptionist even though I couldn't tell whether or not she was on to me. I tapped my finger atop the massive slab of mahogany.

She opened the books, found my name and resumed beaming the halogen lust lamps at me. "Yes, sir, Señor Rollo. Please put on one of the jumpsuits you'll find in the dressing room, and I'll have you escorted directly to Caestus Pax' chambers."

What manner of madness was this? I knew that there were no jumpsuits — that beyond the door to the dressing room lay only a loincloth that would doom me to serve the rest of my life chipping away at the stone in the catacombs of the salt mines that spiderwebbed beneath the T2M-AmHQ. In addition, she should have been more honest. T2M-Am never had any intention of letting me spend some *mano a mano* time with Caestus Pax. Surely they knew that letting whatever hack or fixer *KulturesZeit* managed to buffalo into heading to Mexico on two

days' notice haggle with the HNIC at the base camp was a disaster waiting to happen. It was like flying on Air Force One — sure, you're *on the plane* with the President, but you sit with the rest of the muckraking press monkeys in that special section. And blasted on methadone, to boot.

Still, by now I was in too deep. Couldn't give away the secret. Gotta get the story. I knew that these Utopia fronts didn't trust any press that wasn't theirs and regarded us as some sort of half-rabid crossbreeds between badgers and loaded pistols. In order to keep *them* calm, I had to be calm, so I decided to play along. Minutes later, I was wearing a suit dazzled with Team Tomorrow logos and riding an elevator up to some lounge or another.

Which could easily have been any day. I stayed a week with the T2M crews, always assured that I would have a chance to talk to Pax "sooner or later." Most of these days and empty promises were taken up by trips to publicity events, from Florida to Bogata. I did actually *see* Caestus Pax once, I think, but it might have been a burro.

Once, in Matamoros, a pair of rowdy, shifty-eyed ratbastard tourists cornered me at the perimeter of one of the Team Tomorrow publicity camps.

"Are you one of the Team Tomorrow novas?" the guy asked.

"That's right, I am."

"What's your power, then?"

"I can sit in this lawn chair until you die. And I smoke a lot of cigarettes. Plus, I can eat your weight in blotter acid and not fall down."

They weren't impressed. As if it would have been any more interesting if I could fire death rays from my nostrils or juggle city buses.



But these jokers' blasé reception of the "nova" in their midst drove the point home to me. In this organization, only the half-dozen or so Big Shows make a damn lick of difference. Team Tomorrow did manage, however insidiously, to turn this backward nation into a nation that can at least pretend to face forward, but none of it really matters. For every chest-beating nova simian the organization bankrolls, T2M has *hundreds* of faceless bureaucrats, yes-men, shit-shovelers and grunts who actually see the day-to-day operations through.

If ViaSoft or the US had succeeded in colonizing Mexico, it wouldn't have changed the landscape any. The entire population — even the visiting fuckheads from other countries — have been dazzled so long by the brilliance in their presence that their daily affairs mean nothing. Take, for example, Caestus Pax: hero to all but the rampaging heathens, idol of young children and poster-child for whatever popular cause grips T2M's supporters this week. It doesn't matter that the guy is a *complete asshole*. It's irrelevant that he blew off an appointment with me. I'm just one man, like everyone else in the world, and when The World

Needs Saving™, who cares if it's a blessed saint or a pilloried sheep-rapist who gets the job done? In the end, the spin is all that matters.

That's why the world is still no better than it was at the *fin de siècle*-ous end of the last century. We've made technological improvements. We've cleaned up the planet. We've ended the poverties and injustices that caught our attention at that time, and we've beaten back the specter of apocalypse that refused to abate decades after the Cold War ended. And it doesn't mean a damn thing.

Mexico City and all of Mexico can continue to prosper. Their commercials and billboards and pretty lights can continue to dazzle us for years to come, just as they do in every other population center in excess of 100,000 inhabitants. But we're not making anything better — we're just making it easier.

Perhaps I am a nova after all. My amazing ability is the capacity to see bullshit for what it is. And this new, plastic, neon-lit Mexico City is the same old venal Gomorrah in a different package.

IBIZA

I just met a girl named Ibiza.

Or words to that effect.

Ten A.M. Curb. Curb? Oh, yes. Curb. Cold, rough, unforgiving curb. Breakfast of champions! No, pillow of hounds.

One mere hour before, my accountant Lewis Harwell and I found ourselves crashing through the streets of Ibiza at 90 miles an hour, armed with 3,000 pounds of Bavarian terror, six cylinders of rocket-powered virility and a white leather ragtop that had long since been punctured by what memory conjured as a murderous horde of Mongols, all screeching for our blood and casting their evil spears at us. Actually, I think Harwell had flipped the Bimmer through a thicket or maybe a row of hedges. Or perhaps through the window of a bistro.

Ibiza! Where men can crash cars with impunity! Where dinner consists of six to 16 tabs of nostalgic Mitsubishi MDA! Where the savvy traveler may upgrade his accommodations by gesturing wildly at a broken fax machine and clutching his heart! Where the screams of twisted acid nightmares mingle happily with the joys of the pseudo-Spanish nightlife! Ibiza! Land where all languages are spoken but none are understood!

I could feel the blood throbbing through the veins in my temples. A telltale bump near my ass said that I still had my wallet. A telltale groan near my feet said that I still had my accountant.

The constable roused me with a few brutal blows to the cranium. "I'm up!

Up! Up, damn you! What sort of country is this where a journalist can be poisoned in his sleep! Who are you dog-faced monsters? Where are the men who stole our car? Who is this man?!"

The street had been littered with \$100,000 American worth of automotive parts Bavarian. A hedge had been viciously uprooted. Six tables and 11 chairs had been sent to early graves. A window gaped at us, bits of glass dangling like the teeth of a cartoon hooligan who had just suffered a wallop to the mouth. I half expected to see an overturned van full of nuns who had been ground to hamburger.

My accountant was given a citation. He could fight it in court or pay the \$200 in person. As the constable handed him the ticket, Harwell shook and belched forth a good quantity of detox vomit. Another ticket: \$20.

Like a tribe of space aliens crashing through the city on a comet sent from the hellish depths of space, we had literally demolished, to the best of our ability, this intersection of the Ibizan streets. It cost us \$220 American to atone. We could have sodomized and decapitated a school bus full of cheerleaders for another \$45, but we decided to pass.

Ibiza!

"Down (But Not Out) for the Count"

"I need you to cover a story in Ibiza."

"What? You madman, there are no stories in Ibiza. Only novas, drugs and Euro-techno."

"It's for *Traveler's*."

"What could *Traveler's* possibly want from Ibiza? The people who read that magazine stay way the hell away from places like that!"

"It's chic. Glamorous. It's where the novas go to vacation."

"That's what makes it Hell, Lester!"

"You don't want the assignment?"

"What's it pay?"

"Twelve thousand for five K words."

"Pshaw! A weekend's work."

"Plus expense account."

"Well, then I'll need an expense accountant."

"Indubitably. Your plane has been booked."

Yr. Corresp. wages a never-ending war with Ibiza. It is a savage place, populated by sycophants and those who enjoy being sycophanted. It is an anarchic demilitarized zone, in which the only law is that which seizes the individual's id at any given moment. Drugs may be purchased from police officers and running karate chops may be delivered to anyone who deserves them. Ibiza: conundrum. Excess to whatever levels one wants, with the sole price of weathering the excesses of others. The playground of the world's nova and baseline glitterati. It is not unlike looking up one's own ass and seeing stars.

An entire hedonistic fantasy fulfilled.

Complete with hangover afterward.

Ye gods, the irony! Having one's cake, eating it, and finding it acrawl with maggots!

And yet alluring.... Back! Back, foul demons! Into the abyss with you! Never again shall I nibble the Princess of Monaco's thigh! Never again shall I smoke fist-sized rocks of methamphetamine! Perhaps not until noon shall I emerge, naked, from my hotel room and bark apocalyptic soliloquies at the other guests from the depths of my temporary psychosis! Waitress! Six beers, immediately!

To: Dr. Duke Rollo, Room 1276

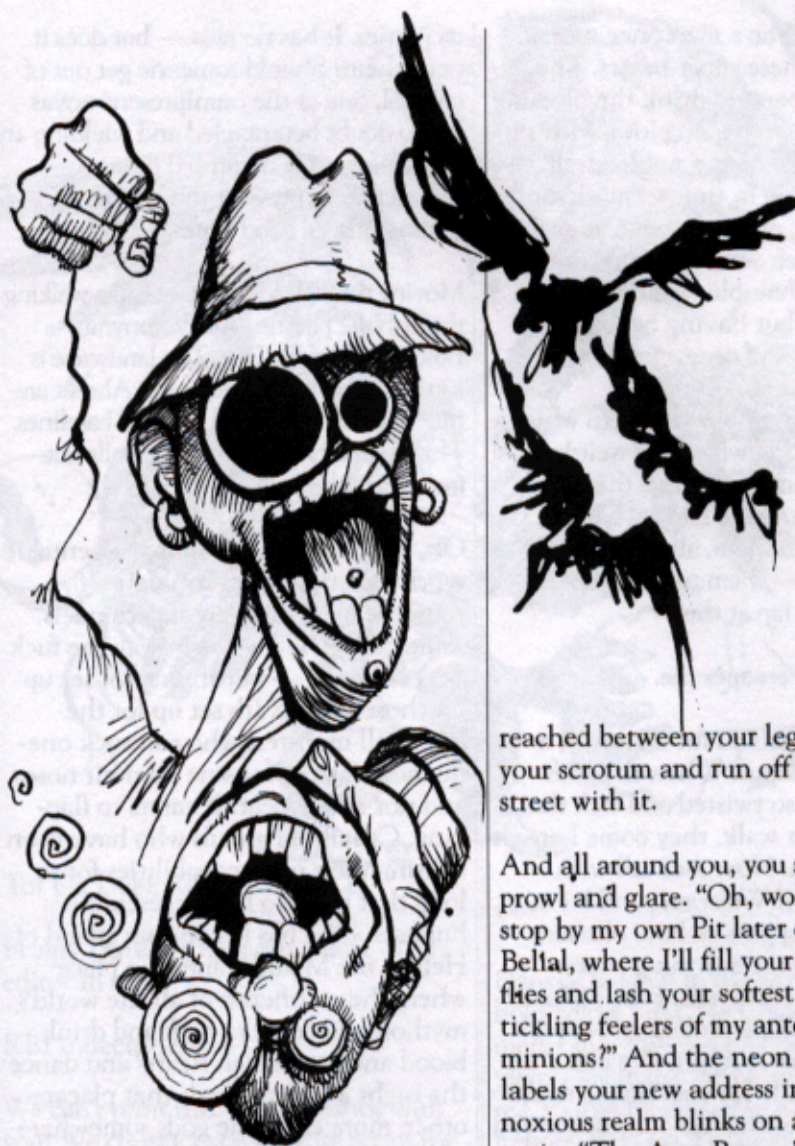
From: *Traveler's* magazine, desk of the editor in chief

RE: Termination

After receiving three revolving bills from three separate hotels in Ibiza, we have decided to invoke the termination clause of your contract. No amount of your crazed ranting is worth the agony you have caused us. Cease and desist. Do not send us any more hat boxes filled with unidentifiable gore.

You have two return fares booked with Air Ibiza. I suggest you use them. Immediately.

Consider my horror when I discovered, 60 hours into the 72-hour trip, that my chip-recordings of observations I had made for later use contained nothing but disembodied screams and gibberish, punctuated with a few bursts of high-energy techno music and Spanish-language police dispatches.



Demons? Bug-eyes? Hard-shelled satans who have erupted from the nether depths? What half-crazed maniac had stolen my recorder and whispered his private hells to it?

"Harwell! Can you hear me!"

The paranoia has set in. These are the bad times: the lonely parts in the wee small hours of the morning when all of the amyls in the world can't save you. When the drugs that have kept you high have worn off and the drugs that calmed you down from that high have worn off and the drugs you took to counteract the drugs you took to counteract the drugs you took have

reached between your legs and grabbed your scrotum and run off down the street with it.

And all around you, you see the devils prowl and glare. "Oh, won't you please stop by my own Pit later on, my young Beltal, where I'll fill your cavities with flies and lash your softest flesh with the tickling feelers of my antennae minions?" And the neon sign that labels your new address in the Fiend's noxious realm blinks on and off and on again: "The Amp Room." No entry for one such as you! No entry now! No salvation!

The devils line up — they were once men and women, but they have become beasts—

"Harwell! Get up, man! We can't stay here! They're boiling men alive in the basement! They're making the women into harpies and cat-demons! They'll do it to you. Don't look at me! No, not you, Harwell, these devils! Run! Use your legs, man, run!"

— but not beasts like you have become. Much *more*. Super-beasts. When all this wears off and you can breathe

again, you will be a man once more. Not so with these super-beasts. They dance and caper and drink the blood of peasants, and their skin glows with the heady vapors of quantum bleed-off. Their heads bob in time to music only they can hear, and they poke at each other with their wicked horns, or they shimmy and shamle, wearing no human forms but having become instead puddles of ooze.

It is no longer possible to discern where the drugs end and where the weirdness of the novas begins. They love this city; they flock to it. And, like a whore, it opens its legs to them, allowing — encouraging! — them to nestle in the sweet folds, to lap at the—

My metaphor escapes me.

This is not an island for men. It is a cancered Olympus. When the gods have become so twisted and sick that they no longer walk, they come here. It caters to them. Nine feet tall with iridescent skin? Welcome, and let our savory dancing girls or boys pleasure you as if you were a shining avatar fallen from the heavens. Face replaced by eyeless, sucking proboscis? Marvelous! Have a drink that we've concocted especially for you. Snake man? No problem! Slither up our just-for-you Ophidian Access System.

Normal? May we invite you to have sex with yourself? Somewhere else, please! Thank you; please tip on your way out.

Ibiza is not for the faint of heart. Luckily, yr. Corresp. can counteract his faintness of heart with inhalants, but that doesn't make the stay any more pleasant. Which isn't to say that it's unpleasant, even though it certainly is.

Ibiza needs the dollars of tourists and the professional partier class — its economy is based solely on having people come to

its parties. It has no jails — but does it need them? Should someone get out of control, one of the omnipresent novas — no doubt betentacled and wielding an impressive array of tainted pincers — will step in to prevent the boor from fouling others' good times.

Moving through Ibiza is not unlike walking through the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch or Salvador Dali. The landscape is surreal and so are the denizens. Absent are the "normal" novas and the civil baselines. This place is home to only the balls-out freaks of both classes.

Oh, sure, a few of the more presentable types sometimes pass through — Randel Portman, a few supermodels, some college kid who's in way the fuck over his head — but Ibiza's not set up for those people. It's set up for the king-hell monsters who can suck one-pound bricks of cocaine up their noses and not miss a beat. It caters to flapping, Cthulhoid ghouls who have been abusing their nova capabilities for so long that they no longer resemble humans. Ibiza has become an island of Hell in the Mediterranean, a place where the archfiends of all the world's mythologies come to fuck and drink blood and eat human hearts and dance the night away in rituals that placate other, more chthonic gods somewhere none of us can see even while in the depths of mescaline derangement.

Yet it has a powerful draw; Eve's forbidden fruit. "Don't go there; you'll die." "Sounds like fun." It appeals to that adolescent sense of denial achieved; it calls to the atavistic, thrill-seeking urge for self-destruction that lurks inside all people, whether baseline or nova. It beckons us to dash ourselves to bits on its beach and then gather up the ragged, bloody pieces so we can do it again.

No. No thank you. Not again. Never. At least, not until next time. Well, maybe just one more. Then I have to go. Unless I can stay here?



To: Dr. Duke Rollo, Cabana H

From: *Traveler's* magazine, desk of the editor in chief

RE: Indecipherable

We can't print this. What's wrong with you? We contract you to write about the exciting shores and glamorous novas, and you send us some drug-addled mania hastily scrawled after a 16-hour debauch? The readers of *Traveler's* don't want this!

You're fired!

To: El Magnifico, *Traveler's* magazine, New York City

From: Dr. Duke Rollo, curbside

RE: I'll Pull Your Lungs Out Through Your Nose, You Swine

What exactly do you think people do here?

Harwell made it to the airport a good hour before I did. He looked like hammered shit. His eyes had been completely encircled with irritated bands of red, so that he looked like some coke-frenzied raccoon. His clothes had been rumpled beyond recognition, and all that remained of his briefcase was the handle.

"Let's never do this again," he said.

And he never would, no doubt. Leave it for the weirdoes, the twisted creeps who could weather this sort of self-inflicted beating. The kinds of explosive savages who shattered themselves to push their limits and ended up having to shatter themselves again and again afterward just to feel any sort of response. It was the junkie's lifestyle; it was the Devil's deal.

"Okay," I lied to him.

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there are a million little people who make him
worth a damn.

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If you've seen one berserk, nightmarish, balls-out
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