

signal to noise

BY NEIL GAIMAN & DAVE MCKEAN

2. OCCLUSION

signal
to
noise

BY NEIL GAIMAN & DAVE MCKEAN

signal
to
noise

2. OCCLUSION

signal
to
noise

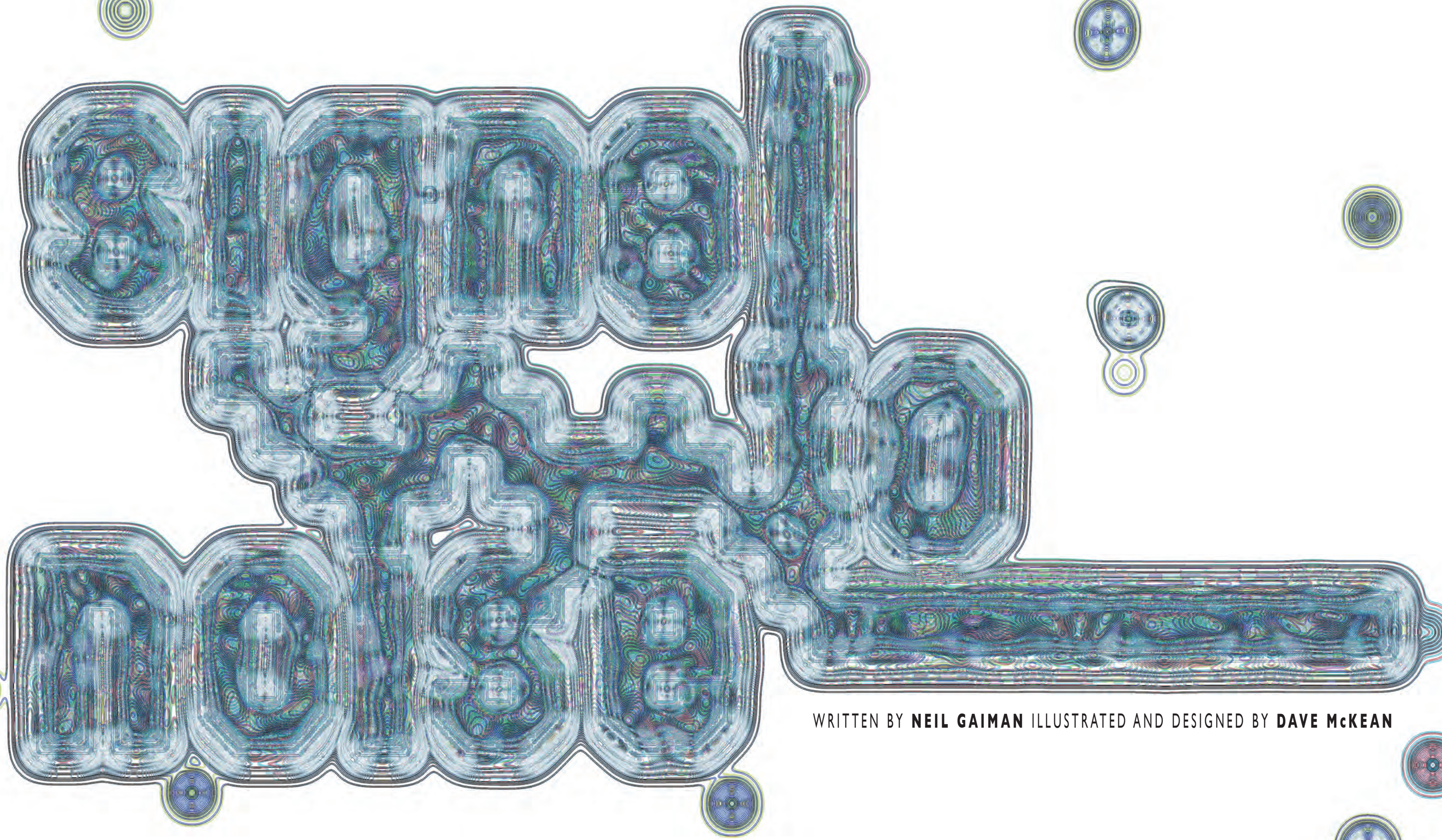
BY NEIL GAIMAN & DAVE MCKEAN

2. OCCLUSION

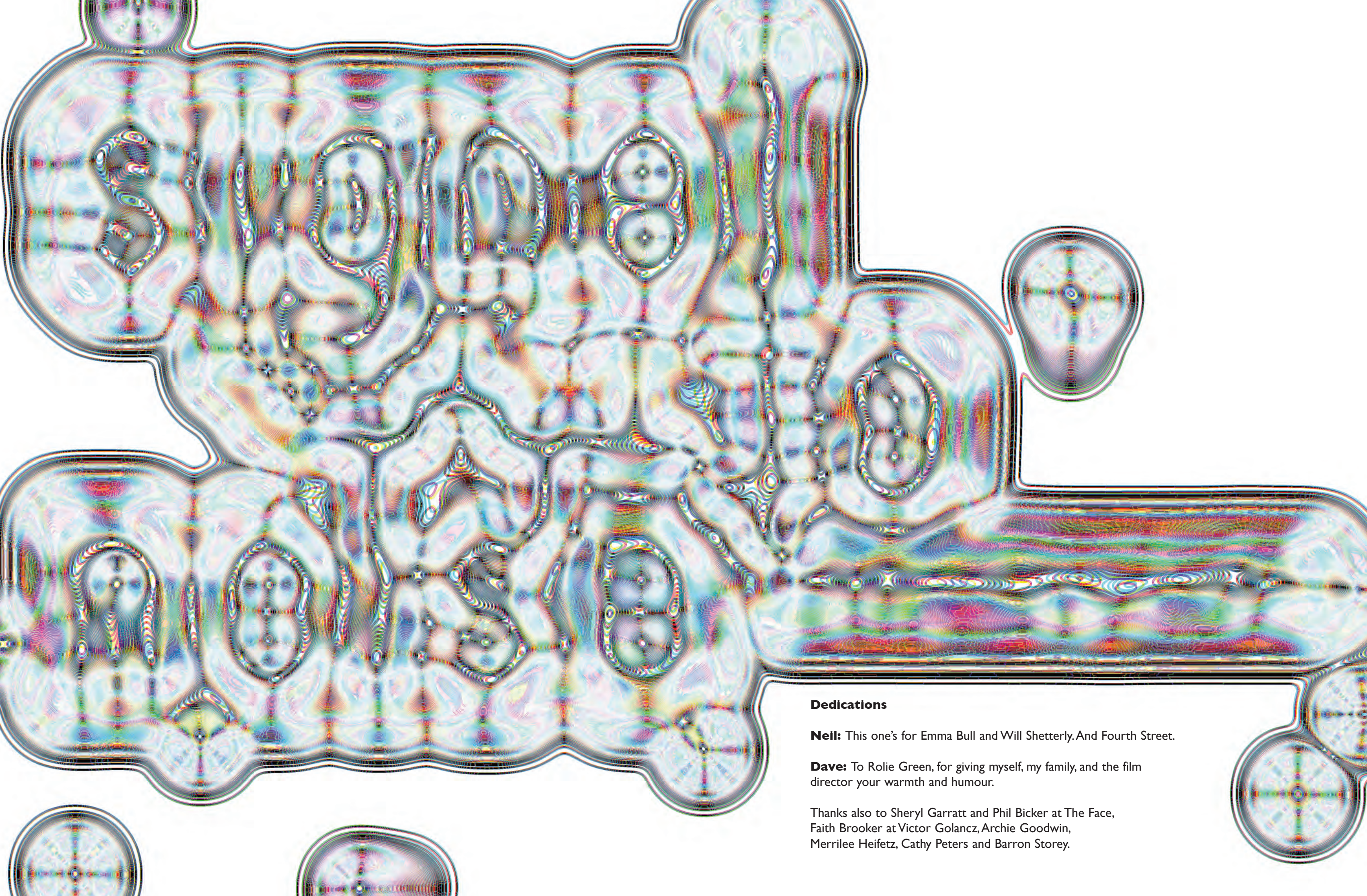
BY NEIL GAIMAN & DAVE MCKEAN

signal
to
noise

2. OCCLUSION



WRITTEN BY **NEIL GAIMAN** ILLUSTRATED AND DESIGNED BY **DAVE McKEAN**



Dedications

Neil: This one's for Emma Bull and Will Shetterly. And Fourth Street.

Dave: To Rolie Green, for giving myself, my family, and the film director your warmth and humour.

Thanks also to Sheryl Garratt and Phil Bicker at The Face,
Faith Brooker at Victor Golancz, Archie Goodwin,
Merrilee Heifetz, Cathy Peters and Barron Storey.



Introduction for the original edition by Jonathan Carroll

When I was a teacher, one of the first things I would tell students at the beginning of any year was never, ever read the introduction before you've read the novel. For some perverse reason, the introducer invariably tells you the plot ('After Anna Karenina throws herself in front of the train...'), or talks about characters and situations you are unfamiliar with because, wonder of wonders, you haven't read the story yet.

Because I have the highest respect for Gaiman and McKean, I offer instead an invisible introduction. You can read it and not worry about the above. Up front I tell you it is only an appreciation of two people who are doing something both dangerous and necessary. Like heart surgeons, astronauts, like new lovers.

Collaborations are difficult and treacherous. More so when you have a number of genuinely original sensibilities working on a single project. The only problem I have with the work of these men is both are so good at what they do that I often find myself reading and not looking, or vice versa. That is unfair because a tale like *Signal To Noise* demands the reader take everything in at once before moving on. All the words that cut to the quick and the onimous, all the unprecedented images that are a kind of hieroglyphics of the now. Compare it to the old stereopticon. Alone you have a card with 'only' two pictures. Slipped into the gizmo and viewed correctly, you have magic, vision beyond the ordinary.

Vision is the key word here. Not noise. The title itself is a contradiction because today we are surrounded by so much noise that it is virtually impossible to detect any signals whatsoever in it. And even if we were somehow able to work our way through, then find or recognize the true signals, would we know how to respond? What is the point of a quest if we're unable to recognize the goal even when we come to it? I will cheat a little here and tell you this: *Signal To Noise* is about a filmmaker who, on learning he has a fatal disease, decides nevertheless to continue working on a project until his last day. What are we to make of this? Mankind's indomitable spirit? Or the ugly flipside - life's a bitch and then you die? The quest is best, or any quest is a bust?

The critic Robert Harbison has said, "True guidebooks should lead you to things and leave you at the door, lists of places where certain kinds of experiences may be had. If you are reading you cannot see, and the other way around. Travellers should read only after dark." (Robert Harbison, *Eccentric Spaces*). What is astonishing to me is that virtuosos like McKean and Gaiman do both. They lead you there, then take you through showing you what to look for. They may well be creating the ultimate 'guidebooks' for our quest and our time, the necessary ones.

Much has been written recently about how comics have grown up, but that is a serious misnomer. From the beginning, the intention of comics was to entertain. *Signal To Noise* does not entertain. It scratches, it provokes, it frightens. It tells you things you don't want to know but then twists you inside out by saying, look harder and see the poignance, the beauty of light dancing on life's edge, truth that is as simple and direct as death. It is not a 'comic'. It is not a 'graphic novel', the going term these days which unfortunately always smacks to me of those sexy magazines you see vacant eyed people reading on public buses in Italy or Spain. I wish someone would dig a little deeper and come up with a right name for them.

Because at their best, experiencing these works is like a month spent in the high Alps. You return thinner, stronger. You've grown accustomed to silence and thus learned of an inner voice which has been talking, urgent but unheard, a long time. You have less patience now with the white noise of the world, but that will work to your advantage. Early in this story, a doctor says to the dying man, "You've got to let us examine you, you've got to let us treat you". He demurs, but anyone who reads *Signal To Noise* has already begun the treatment.



Signal to Noise has had several lives.

It started as a two-page editorial commission from *The Face* magazine called 'Wipe Out'. I cut up the text of an article on computer hacking, and semi-randomly pasted it back together as a fragmented looping monologue over a cinematic dolly around a man at a keyboard, tapping enter, a sliver of time.

The Face was the magazine of '80s, defining the look of a generation of publication design, its Brody austerity crawling out across the newsagent racks like a virus. But what does the magazine of the '80s do in 1990? Well, for a while they thought about quitting while they were ahead. As a final fanfare, Sheryl Garrett decided to commission a complete serialised comics story and asked me to come up with ideas. I talked to Neil Gaiman and we quickly ran through all the obvious group-of-twenty-somethings-living-in-London and vaguely-futuristic-pop-culture-hip-and-trendy ideas, before binning them all in favour of a look back in time as a way of dealing with the future. I had been making notes on the life of Sergei Eisenstein for a possible story about the end of his life. Neil was fascinated with the strange and partly mythical events that circled around the year 999 A.D. The last millennium seemed to be marked by curiously familiar happenings; virulent new diseases wiped out large groups of people, fundamental religions and mass suicides focused on the impending apocalypse as time was due to end on December 31st.

And so we had a starting place. A dying filmmaker planning the final film that he would never make. Taking the magazine that was our venue as a stylistic template, it would be up to the reader to work out what was important in the story, in our lead character's life and work, in the magazine itself. What was the signal and what was the noise.

The schedule was pretty hectic. Neil wrote a rough script, I would rejig it, illustrate, letter and deliver finished pages on the first week of the month, it would be on the racks on the fourth.

A year later Victor Gollancz offered us the chance to compile the chapters into a single volume. We added a couple of parts after I received a long and extensive critique of the book from the artist Barron Storey, who basically said we didn't deal with the noise aspect sufficiently. The couple of chapters we added were very noisy. I also took the opportunity to tidy up some of the drawings that were a bit rushed in the serialised version. Since the original parts came out with a month in between, we also decided that each chapter needed something to separate it from the next. We created colour-copy spreads with random computer-babbled text, which some reviewers thought were obscurist rubbish and others thought were the most important parts of the book.

The collected edition was released complete with a wonderful Jonathan Carroll introduction in the U.K. in 1992, and then later the same year in the U.S. by Dark Horse, and throughout Europe shortly after that, and is still in print.

Signal then had a virtual life as a possible film project, before becoming an actual stage play performed in Chicago by the NOWtheatre Group.

But the radio play version remains my favourite. Initiated by Anne Edyvean and broadcast in 1996, it seems to deal with the themes of signal and noise in the purest way, in sound. People generally seem to need pictures to be recognisable, but soundscapes are by definition impressionistic, abstract. The background noise sometimes swamps the foreground action, but not only is that perfect for the story, it also seems to be more immediately understandable to its audience. You feel it, like you feel the emotion in music. It doesn't need explanation. The music was recorded at Peter Gabriel's Real World Studio, and he asked what was going on since he had just written a song called *Signal to Noise*.

I called Iain Ballamy via his agent because I needed a warm musical voice to echo that of the director's internal monologues. In the end, that voice turned out to be reflected by the piano as well, but Iain played beautifully and expressively, looking at the pictures in the book for inspiration and conjuring absolutely the right mood. At lunch we talked about all sorts, and from that meeting has come a variety of collaborative work, from The Feral Record Label, to film soundtrack music, a children's book story and CD cover designs.

I spent the turn of the millennium in New York with my family and friends. Both Neil and I reflected on the previous fifteen years working together, and regretted that this play wasn't available for the public. A few phone calls to the Beeb later, and we secured the rights to release the CD.

I'm pretty sure that *Signal*'s life is not over yet. The sifting of life seems to be a theme that recurs in a lot of our recent work together and apart. Maybe if there is a perfect medium to express these ideas, then maybe it's as an interactive project, maybe that's still to come.

Dave McKean, June 2000

Dave McKean had chicken pox. This would not have been so bad, but veteran actor Warren Mitchell had not had chicken pox, which meant that Dave couldn't come to the recording process. He stayed home and fumed.

I, on the other hand, could turn up and did. I even wound up playing the part of Reed - Dave's part in the play - as a sort of placeholder, which was great. Later, Dave got to dub himself in. I had all the fun of acting, and none of the embarrassment of hearing myself on the finished product.

We were in Studio Seven, at Broadcasting House - the biggest and best of the BBC audio drama studios, filled with doors of different kinds which slam and open each with its own individual sound, stairs that lead nowhere but are perfect for walking up and down. It was a strange and wonderful place (although the props room at back, with audio props they've been using for sixty years or more, was even more weird and wonderful than that).

Anne Edyvean was an inspired and inspiring director, while the BBC radio theatre company were both professional and very bemused by some of the paces we put them through in order to create the Babble effect between the parts: peculiar theatre games of free association, improvised adverts, all sorts of weirdnesses, for a few seconds here and there of magic.

Warren Mitchell explored the Director, moving him across the world to find his voice, finally settling for Anglo-Irish, I think because he liked getting to say 'Fillum' so much.

My favourite moment was realising that we could use both versions of Groucho's song as punctuation. My least favourite moment hearing from Anne that while she was in Tibet or somewhere that the BBC had sent her, they erased the disks with the play on: she had to reconstruct it all from the DATs. And the moment I learned the most from?

That was a comment from Anne's on the script. I'd called for Inanna to open a 'yellow envelope'.

"You better change that," she said. "Or the stage manager is going to ask you what yellow sounds like."

Neil Gaiman, June 2000

And the signal continues.

In 2000 I released the BBC Radio play version of *Signal To Noise* on my record label Feral, and gave a copy to Keith Griffiths, producer for the Quay Brothers and Jan Svankmajer, as well as the films I have made with Iain Sinclair and Chris Petit. He really seemed to see it as a film, and convinced me to expand it into a script.

In 2002, we took the book and an outline to The Film Council in London, and they agreed to develop it by funding a short 'sample of technique'. We shot for two days and completed a 12-minute sampler that had a go at creating the collage, multi-camera images, CG horsemen and mountains, documentary-style improvised scenes and blurry memories I had in mind for the final film. Heathcote Williams played the Director and brought his extraordinary poetic mind and knowledge of almost everything to the project.

Then, in 2003-2005 I was embroiled in making my first feature film *MirrorMask*, and put *Signal* on hold.

But the post-production process of that film was so tortuous, I ended up thinking about *Signal* as a means of escape, just something creative to take my mind off the daily angst of failing computers, dwindling budgets and crashing deadlines. So all my blackest feelings about what I was doing spilled out into the script, and suddenly it was about six times broader than the book, and a lot deeper, and really rather personal.

It's now 2006, and Keith and I are approaching actors, and the project has been accepted by the inaugural Rome Film Festival as one of ten 'films in development'.

And then there is this new edition, expanded to include the additional Millennium chapter from the CD release. Anyone familiar with the original book may be wondering why it all looks slightly different. Well, the film for the book was lost, then found in appalling shape, so the whole book has had to be reconstituted from unsold original pages, transparencies, film-to-file conversions and anything else we could dig up.

Even though its various incarnations tell basically the same story, I never get tired of the themes and questions it throws up. They seem to live with me, and change depending on my age, state of mind, and geographical location.

When I die, I'll try and leave an alternate final chapter to have etched into my gravestone.

Dave McKean, June 2006

A final dream.

In 1992 when the first collected edition of *Signal To Noise* was about to come out, I had a recurrent dream.

I was in London and decided to drop into the publisher's, Victor Gollancz, to see if some advance copies of the book had arrived from the printer.

Everyone was surprised to see me, although Neil was there.

I asked to see the book.

It was a lot bigger than I thought it was going to be; it seemed to be a very thick, heavy book, at least 500 pages.

I started to look through it.

I couldn't find *Signal* at first. There were some other stories at the beginning that appeared to be about the old DC Comics superhero, the Flash. I asked Neil what they were, and he told me he'd written them before we met, and thought we could include them in the book to beef it up a bit.

I continued to look for the story I had illustrated, but instead there were many other things from Neil's archive. Sketches, notes, just things that he had found in his office and put in the book.

Finally I found *Signal*, right at the back of the book. It was only a few pages long. I was sure it had been longer, but maybe I'd misremembered.

Then I closed the book and looked at the cover. I thought I had done the cover, but in fact it was a red crayon drawing of a face on brown cardboard.

Neil told me his young son, Mike, had done it.

I woke up.

This carried on for a few weeks.

So.

I have included three short stories at the beginning of the book. 'Wipe Out' was an editorial spread for *The Face* magazine, and led directly to them commissioning *Signal to Noise*. 'Deconstruction' was also an editorial piece, this time for a German magazine and was done in the same cut-up style. 'Borders' was done for an international book of stories celebrating the fall of the Berlin Wall, and was written by Neil. It was done while I was working on *Signal* and shares similar images and aesthetics.

I didn't include my old Green Hornet strips.

Sorry.

Dave McKean, August 2006



HACKERS by Dave McKean 1989

Originally published in **THE FACE**



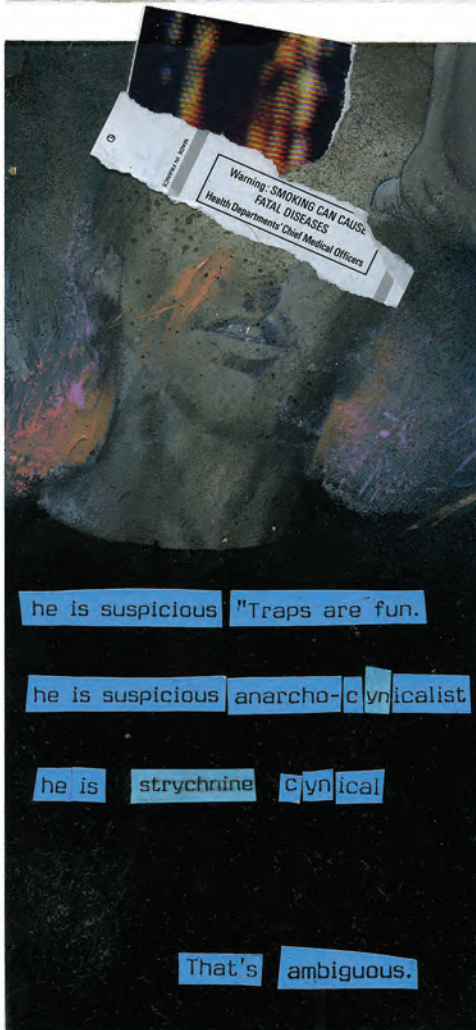
everybody should be able to understand
the moment they sit down

There should be no mystery, obfuscation
deception, deception, protection,

protection,

no protection,

That's ambiguous.



he is suspicious "Traps are fun.

he is suspicious anarcho-cynicalist

he is strychnine cynical

That's ambiguous.



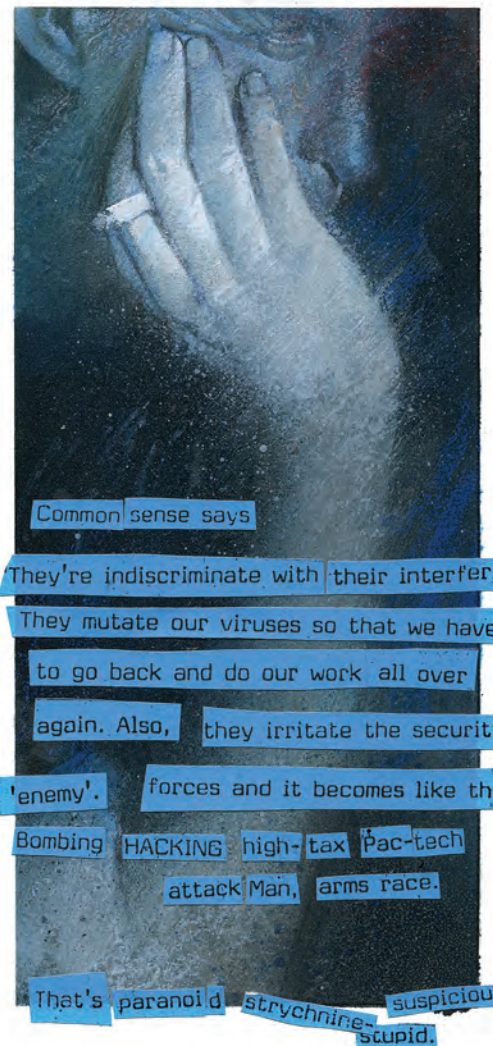
That's what the fight is about.'

Into this maelstrom and straight onto
the front line steps a hero of sorts.



The battle lines might seem clear
but to an outsider they can't be
seen for smoke.

he is suspicious of government hackers
hack high-tech simplistic silicone
silly name cognoscenti. compu
con compact Big Blue police



Common sense says

They're indiscriminate with their interfering.

They mutate our viruses so that we have
to go back and do our work all over
again. Also, they irritate the security

'enemy'. forces and it becomes like the
Bombing HACKING high-tax Pac-tech
attack Man, arms race.

That's paranoid strychnine-suspicious
stupid.

It's better to have one system of protection,
then everybody knows where they are.

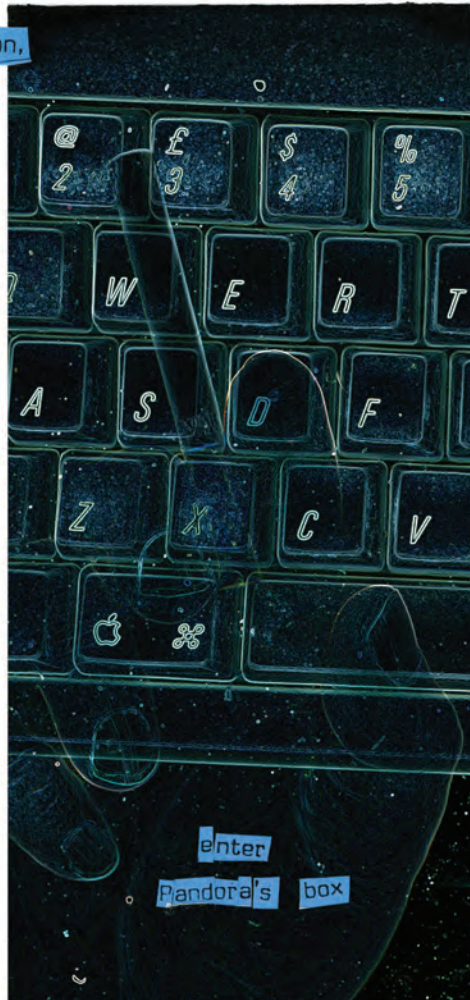


-Blip snaps his fingers- springs into life.

"Hullo, Right, time to do my job,"

in The final judgement the American
Russia Tokyo, zero scientists
remembered that the passwords were
quite likely to be taped to the inside
of the nearest National University
mentality

isn't it?"



enter
Pandora's box

-Blip snaps his fingers-

a bloody great click Blip

a big bang Bombing blank Blip

an old-fashioned Luddite style attack

black Blip

ambi

ambiguous

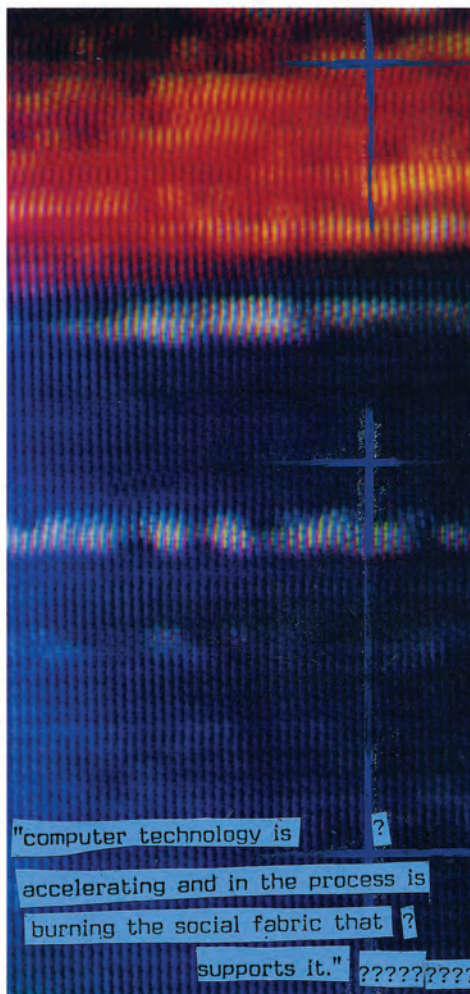
That modern cliché click Blip,

'information is power' and the manner
in which the authorities consistently
underline its mean ??

meaning also justifies any 1984-type ???
-type fears felt by hackers.

The 1984 Data Protection Act gives
everybody access to ?????
files held on them in con ?

computers ????



"computer technology is
accelerating and in the process is
burning the social fabric that
supports it." ??????????



????

turn on

plug in

???

wipe out

deconstruction

by dave mckean
first published 1990
instant magazine
germany

the night is a rook's feather
folded into its side
a common bird
light falling into it

the moon is a white stain
the sky pouring water
smears the light
clouds falling through it

the window casts a shadow
colours everything in its path
sledgehammer symbolism
falling out the back of his head

the man doesn't know what to think
tries to write poetry, marks on paper
a small conceit
forever falling

the falling man marks the
shadow symbol

a common symbol

a conceit symbol

a conceit staining his head

feather light

doesn't the man know

the symbol know^s everything

the symbol stain^s his head

a common man

l e t t e r s p u l l e d l i k e r o t t e n t e e t h
f o r m t h i s i n s i d i o u s v i r u s

a w o r l d v i s
h a v e f a i t h

s a f e t y i n n u m b e r s s

n i g h t

f a l l i n g

w h i t e

f a l l i n g

s h a d o w

f a l l i n g

m a n

f a l l i n g

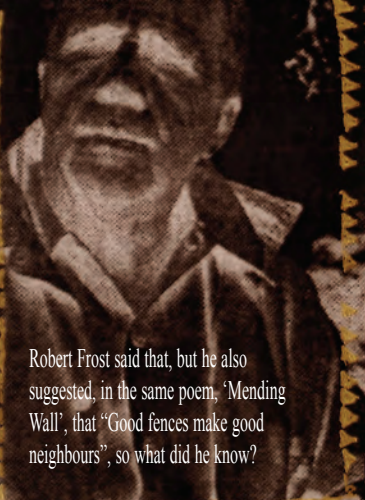
f a l l i n g

VIER MAURN

An illustrated text by
Neil Gaiman & Dave McKean
First published in Breathtrough, 1990

OPENING.

"Something there is that does not love a wall."



Robert Frost said that, but he also suggested, in the same poem, 'Mending Wall', that "Good fences make good neighbours", so what did he know?

THE FIRST WALL.

I wonder who built the first wall. What was in his mind. Or her mind. Protection? Privacy? Or something else.

We build our civilisations with walls, giving us shelter and stronghold. Keeping out 'the other': the elements, wild beasts, people who are different. Walls define us, as they divide us.

Walls separate people; and not just the walls we build. Perhaps the walls we have to be scared of most are the ones we can't see, that we simply believe in.



THE SECOND WALL.

I had a dream about that when I was small.

In my dream there was one note, one musical one, one sound; and when it sounded all the walls everywhere came crumbling down. And all the people everywhere saw...

They saw each other, doing all the things that people do behind walls. Nobody had anywhere to hide anymore.

I woke up then, so I never knew if it was a good thing or a bad thing, not having any walls. Not having anywhere to go and hide, and being able to go everywhere; no pretending, no protection, no secrecy.





THE THIRD WALL.

They tell me the Great Wall of China is the only human artifact that can be seen on the Earth from space.

I've never seen the Earth from space. I don't know anyone who has.

I've only ever seen pictures.

They tell me that when you get that high, it's hard to tell one country from another. You'd think they'd be coloured in, like on the old maps we had at school.

So you could tell.

THE FOURTH WALL.

When I heard the Berlin Wall was coming down, my first reaction was one of relief; but then I thought, what if there was a young woman who had spent years - half her life - painting something on the wall?

Painting a message, or a picture.

If every morning she got up early, and went out and painted just one or two lines on the wall. Every day, in the rain, or the cold, sometimes in the dark. It was her cry against oppression. Her protest against the wall.

She almost finished when they pulled it down.

People could come and go as they wished. The wall she'd been protesting against was gone, as was her creation, split into art-sized chunks, sold to a private collector...

I wonder how she felt. I hope she wasn't disappointed.

I would have been.

CLOSING.

Maybe we should look beyond the walls.

Listen: painters and writers and music-makers and film-makers and the ones who paint graffiti slogans that blossom like bright flowers on the sides of derelict buildings - all of you.

There's a fourth wall that needs to be broken down.

Governments and official voices point out forever that good fences make good neighbours, and tighten the border controls in an effort to make us happy where we are.

But something there is that does not love a wall, and it's called humanity.

"Everything has a meaning, or nothing has. To put it another way, one could say that art is without noise."

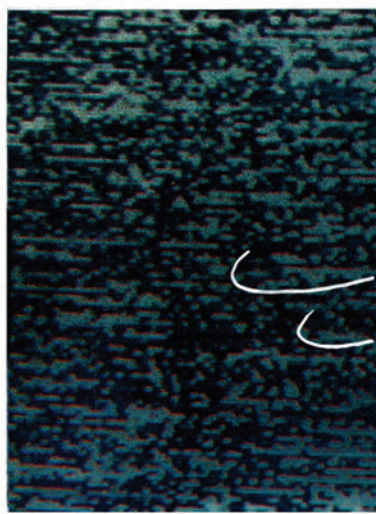
signal noise



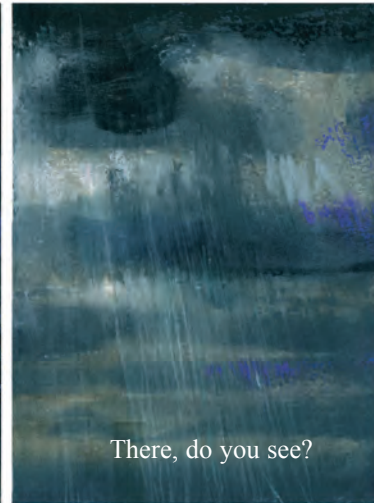
WRITTEN BY NEIL GAIMAN ILLUSTRATED AND DESIGNED BY DAVE MCKEAN

1. PRELUDE

Roland Barthes. Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative, from Image, Music, Text.



Perhaps they are
looking at the sky.



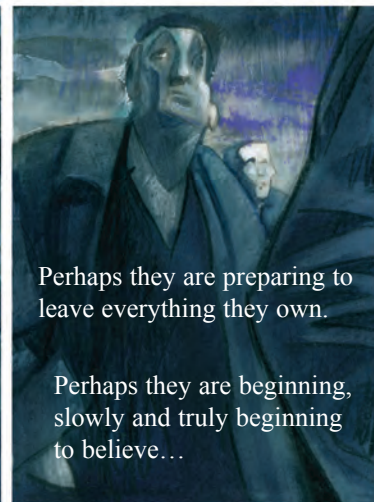
There, do you see?



One of them is shouting...



...and we cannot hear the words.



Perhaps they are preparing to
leave everything they own.

Perhaps they are beginning,
slowly and truly beginning
to believe...



...now you talk about your
work in terms of sculpting
or drawing or writing...



...but these are all art forms
involving a single artist, speaking
directly to an audience...



Seeing as though film
seems to be such a
compromised medium...



Why choose to
make films?



Erm...
Yes.



Simply put.
I don't have
a choice.



I mean. I sketch and
paint occasionally... but
film is an obsession.

When you're driven to
do something, there's no
choice involved.



You'll carry on
regardless of
the pain and
frustration and
stupidity
and bullshit
until...

...until you
drop.



You say you make the
films in your head before
you shoot them.

Yes.



Have you ever been pleasantly
surprised by the finished film?



Not... really.

Probably because
I know how far
they are from what
I had in my head.
That's where the
real films are.
Then I put them
on paper and
finally I have to
shoot them... to put
them out of their
misery.

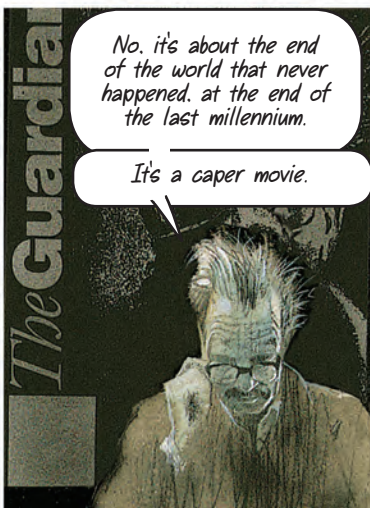


What will your
next film be
about?

The end of
the world.



So it's a science-
fiction movie?



No, it's about the end
of the world that never
happened, at the end of
the last millennium.

It's a caper movie.

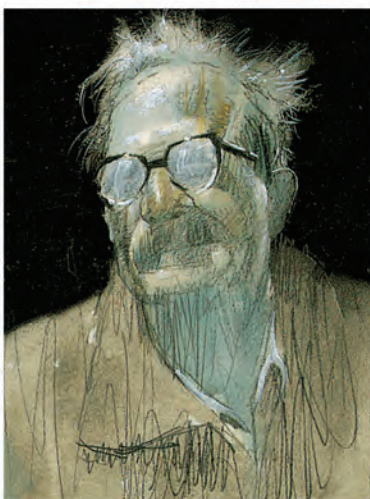


No, I'm kidding.
No capers.

Yes?



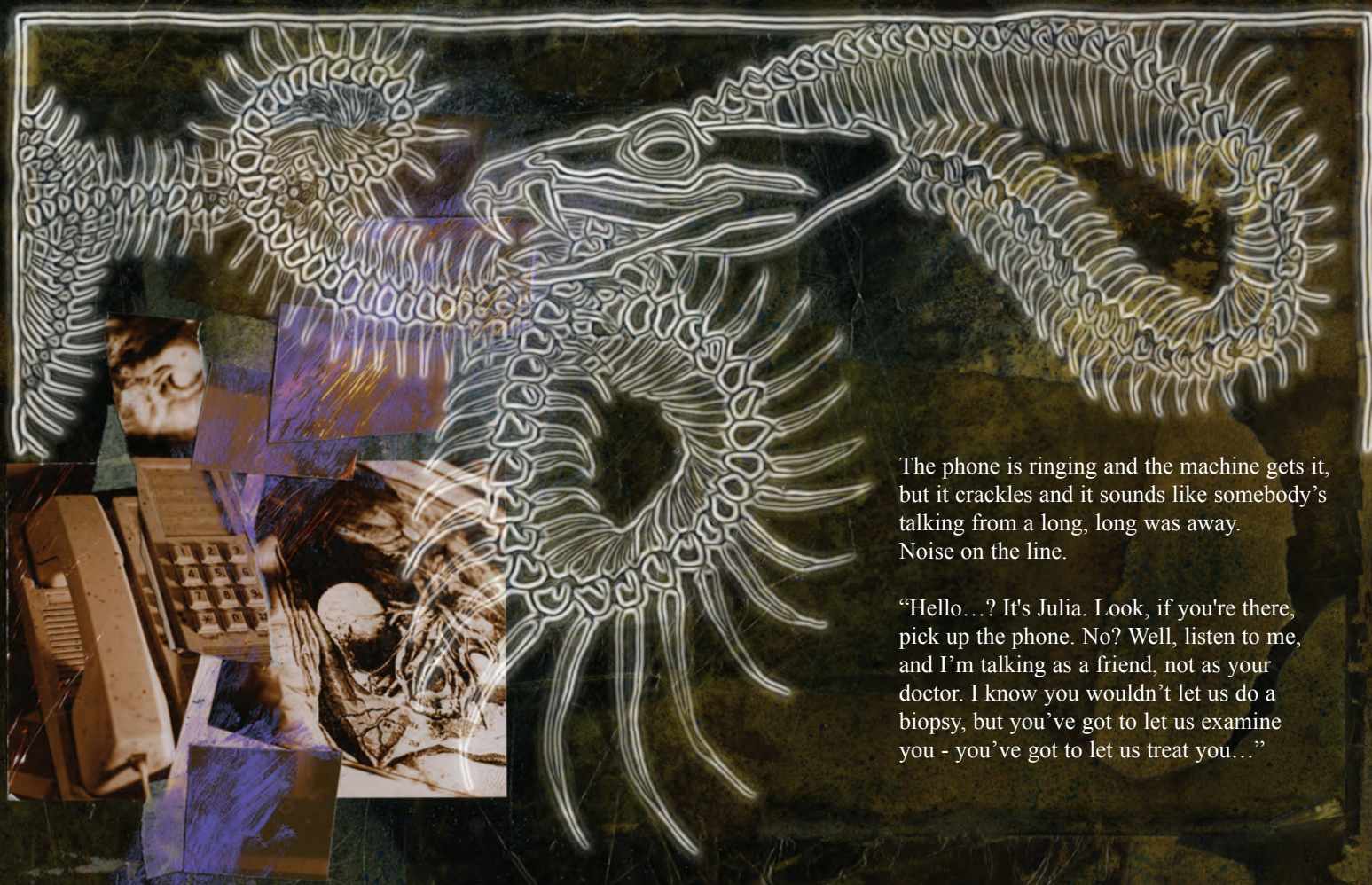
How long do you
have to live?



Umm... a couple
of months...



It's early evening and I'm covered in sweat, and I'm shivering, and my chest hurts.



The phone is ringing and the machine gets it, but it crackles and it sounds like somebody's talking from a long, long way away. Noise on the line.

"Hello...? It's Julia. Look, if you're there, pick up the phone. No? Well, listen to me, and I'm talking as a friend, not as your doctor. I know you wouldn't let us do a biopsy, but you've got to let us examine you - you've got to let us treat you..."



Mortality is a hard thing to face.



"That which doesn't kill us makes us stronger." That's as maybe. But that which does kill us, kills us, and ain't that a bitch...



How do you make sense of your life?

Signal to noise:



What's signal? What's noise?

Say, for example, you've been sent to your doctor for a 'full medical', lots of pissing in jars and trying not to flinch at the needles.

A week later she phones you back, asks you to come see her.

There, do you see?

Erm...

That grey area there...

...that shadow.

It's all shadows.

No... just there.

Yes. I suppose...

What does it mean?

It's almost certainly a tumour.

Probably malignant.

I see.

Obviously we'll need to do more tests, but...

How long have I got?

It's not as simple as that.

Give me an idea, just an idea.

If it's malignant... and that's a big 'if'...

...a few months... maybe, but I need to see...

No.

And I went home.

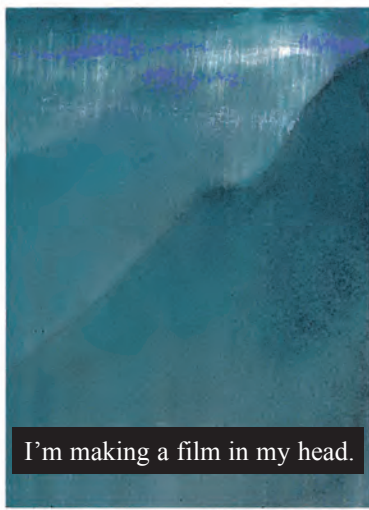
I've been doing a lot of reading.

Watching TV late at night,
when there's nothing on,
and the repetition of
the adverts becomes
a mantra, a refrain,
singing images
held in time.

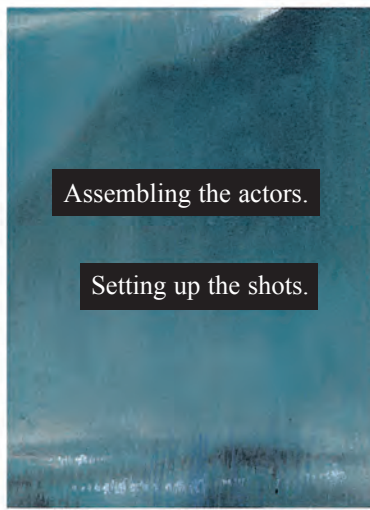
I don't answer the phone, or reply to letters.

I don't have much time.



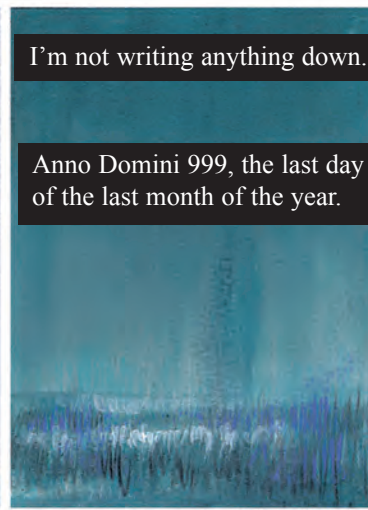


I'm making a film in my head.



Assembling the actors.

Setting up the shots.



I'm not writing anything down.

Anno Domini 999, the last day
of the last month of the year.



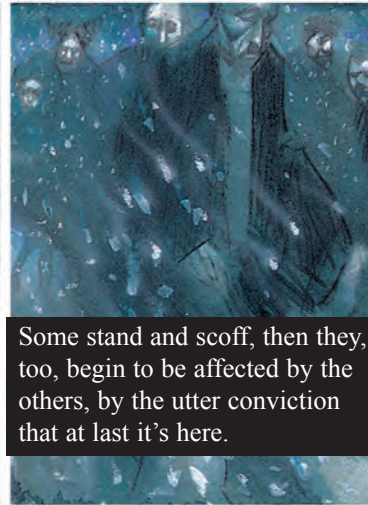
It's winter in middle Europe
(I have left the place
unspecified); a small town in
the shadow of a mountain.



We pan in slowly: it's like an
ants' nest, as they run in circles
gathering up their possessions,
food, children.



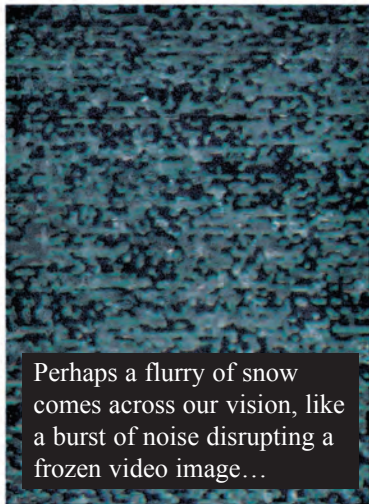
We see their faces (rich,
poor, old, fat, mad).



Some stand and scoff, then they,
too, begin to be affected by the
others, by the utter conviction
that at last it's here.



That it's come.



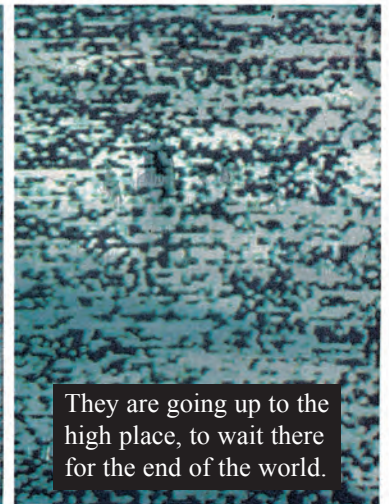
Perhaps a flurry of snow
comes across our vision, like
a burst of noise disrupting a
frozen video image...



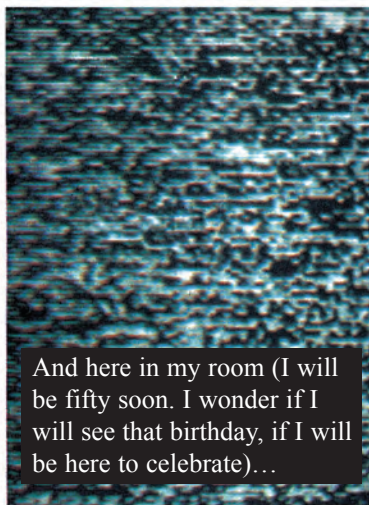
...and when we can see again
they are walking away from us.



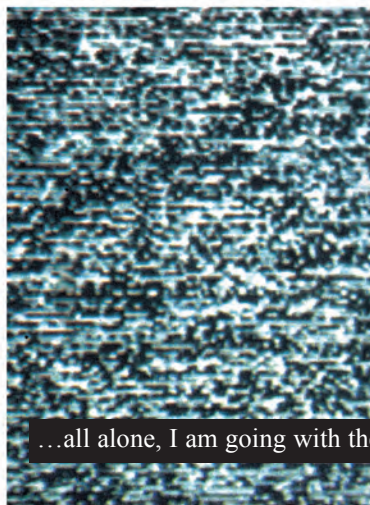
Perhaps they are
leaving the village.



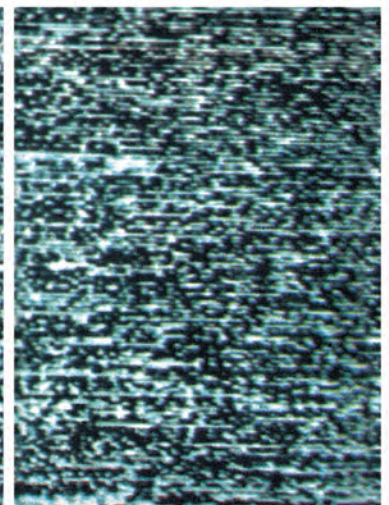
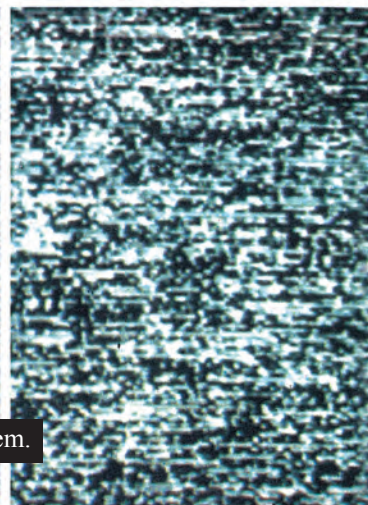
They are going up to the
high place, to wait there
for the end of the world.



And here in my room (I will
be fifty soon. I wonder if I
will see that birthday, if I will
be here to celebrate)...



...all alone, I am going with them.



on a grey wet london late afternoon. walking down the pavement to where he left his car, a
away. it's the kind of wet twilight in which the entire world becomes a grey blur. from this scene

2. OCCLUSION

onwards, if we have any external, realistic shots, it mght work if they contained images of things

rotting, falling apart, being torn down. for example, if we're in wimpole street or harley street

while most of the terraced houses are incredibly smart and inhabited by minor multi-nationals

rich novelists, every now and then you'll spot a house with windows boarded over, rotted door

padlocked, typed notice from the council outside warning that the house is about to be pulled

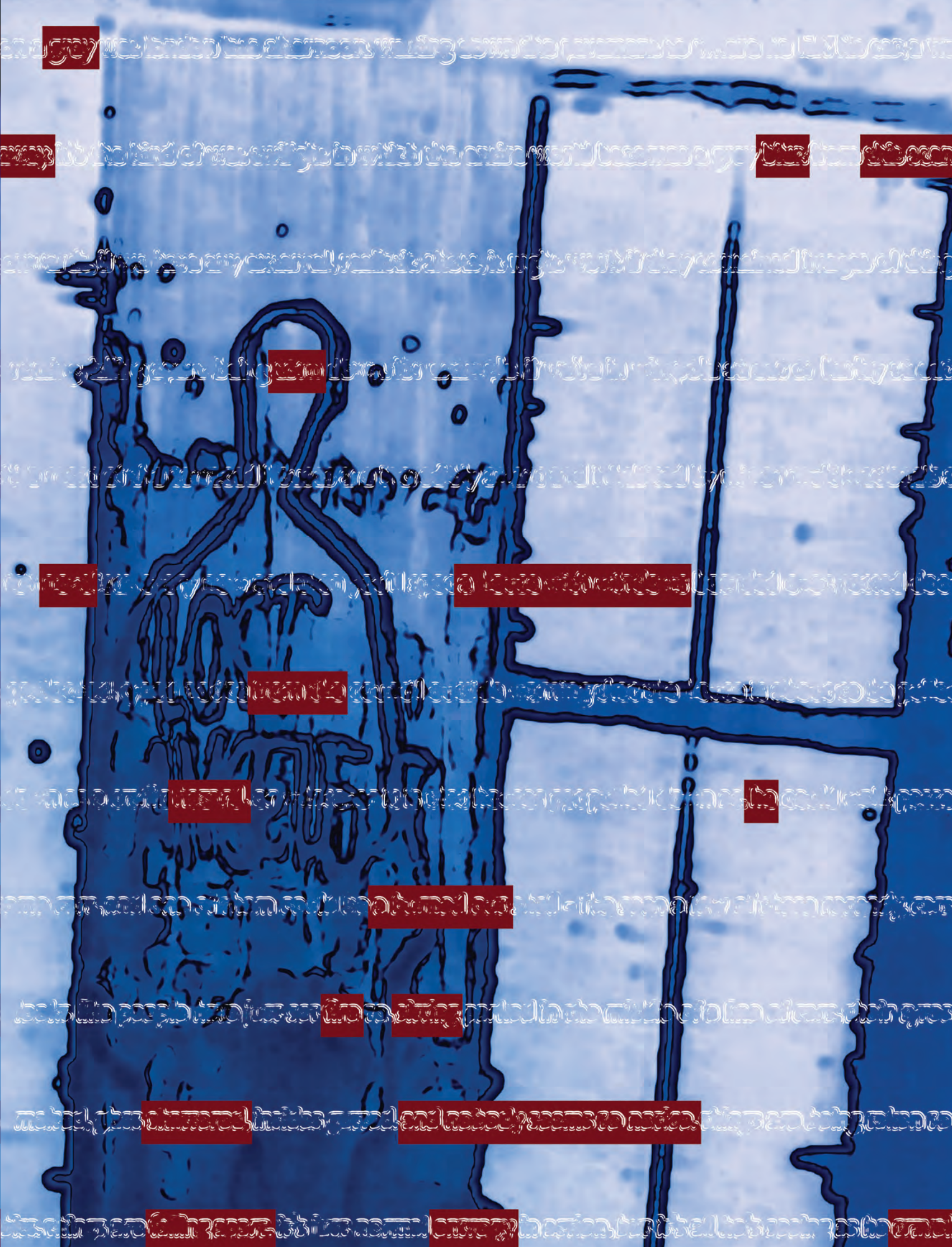
down as a traffic hazard, or whatever it is that houses get pulled down as. he could walk passe

some cars, and one of them could be a burned out shell - i've seen a few of these recently, cars

looks like people have just set fire to, sitting parked in the middle of a line of cars, their tyres

melted, glass shattered, insides gutted. and nobody seems to notice. things are being taken to

bits. things are falling apart. it's just normal entropy in action, but it's all he's seeing as he travel



It's easy to concentrate.

I am working harder than I
have ever worked before.

Stealing faces: a woman at the
bus stop, an old man in the
park. I take their faces. I cast
them in the film in my head.

Once inside my head they take
on a life of their own. I close
my eyes and I can see them.

They are milling
around in the
snow. A baby is
crying. Its mother
croons to it, tells it
not to be scared.

Angles are coming, she
sings. God is coming.
Everything is fine.

Her husband puts
his arm around
her, and they join
the procession.

In the valley, in the snow, the
village looks like a model.
Like a toy. You could crush it
with your hand.

I had my palm read once,
in Hollywood, by a
drunken actor at a party.

(I assume he was an actor. In
Hollywood the man who
cleans your pool is an actor.
The man who sells you your
copy of Variety is an actor. I
don't think there's a real person
left in the place.)

Your life will change
significantly when you
are fifty, he told me.

Nothing will be the
same after that.
And I knew we were
talking about death.

I told my doctor about his
prediction, when she told
me I had cancer.
She didn't understand. I'm
not sure I do.

Perhaps it's real:

Our lives, etched in
the criss-crossings
of our palms.
Perhaps you can
read it...

I left her surgery shaken and alone. When I was a child I used to draw people as animals – elephants, giraffes, mice.

Was I retreating into childhood?

I kept thinking of my doctor as a big cat. A snow leopard. A beautiful predator.

And myself?

I thought of myself as a skeleton. Walking talking, driving.

Shit.





I dialled carefully. We were connected, and I started to hear her distant voice through the spit and hiss and the echo.

Hello? Inanna? Yes, it's me. I'm afraid you're rather faint.

It's a very bad line.

I'm going to be late for our meeting. I'm afraid.

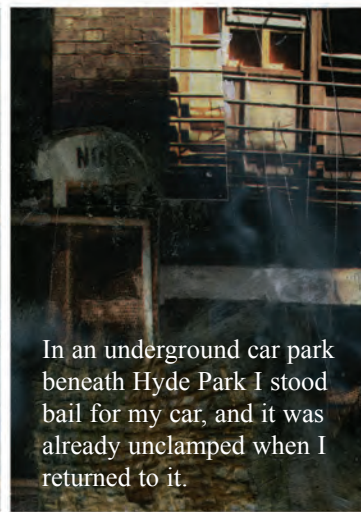
I said I'm going to be late for our meeting. I've just left the doctors and the bloody car's been clamped.

No, clamped.

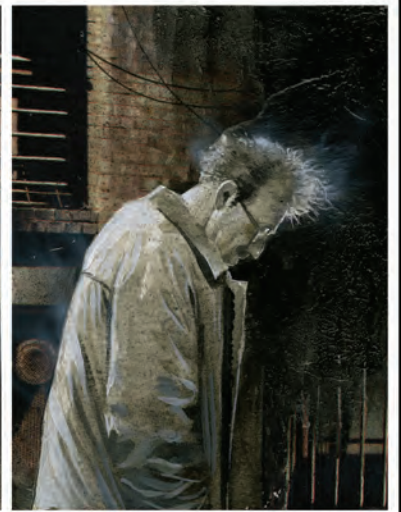
Not in a particularly good mood, no. There's a big yellow clamp on my car and I am dying. Go to my flat wait for me. Reed will let you in.

What?

The pips cut us off, and I had no more change.



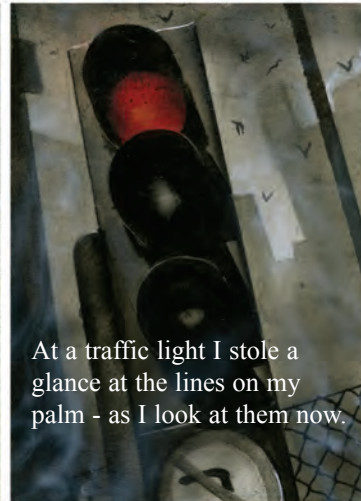
In an underground car park beneath Hyde Park I stood bail for my car, and it was already unclamped when I returned to it.



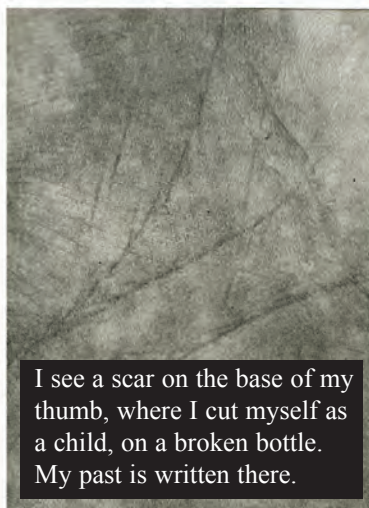
My chest began to hurt, and I told myself I should not have walked.



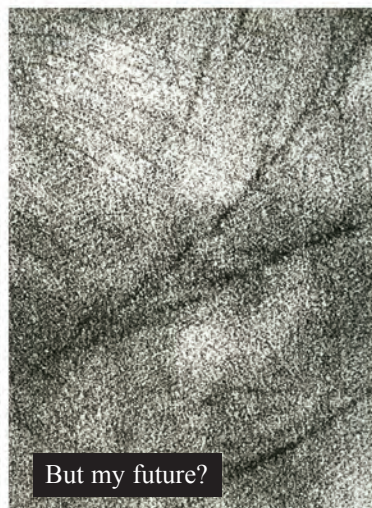
I felt numb.



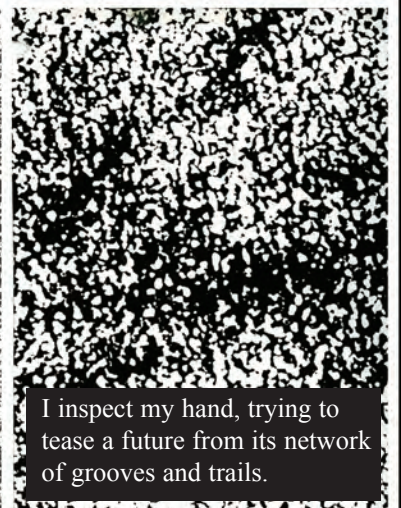
At a traffic light I stole a glance at the lines on my palm - as I look at them now.



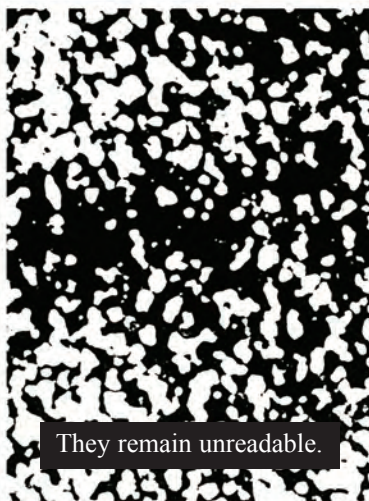
I see a scar on the base of my thumb, where I cut myself as a child, on a broken bottle. My past is written there.



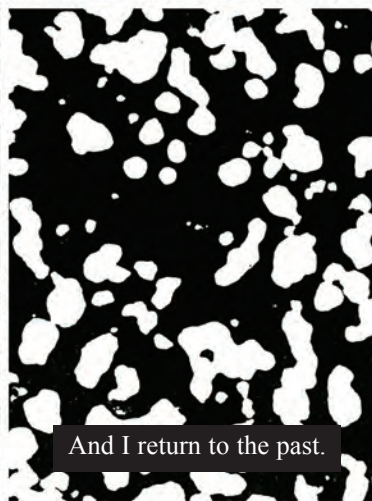
But my future?



I inspect my hand, trying to tease a future from its network of grooves and trails.



They remain unreadable.



And I return to the past.



Introduction to bits. Things are going up on the curb, every few months. Maybe.

Bottle of the inside of the lines of the
landing, not as we can set of brightness.
But the houses get repayed, man.
Anywhere. There's nowhere else to be
late at a number of me?
But it's visible from the house.
It's early evening, but crackles and
perhaps they own.

It means that perhaps the result of
bubbly waiting for a few moments.
I have to flinch at the forthcoming
disaster strikes.

Nathan: He travels.

While most of the hoarded seconds of
the moon given flesh.

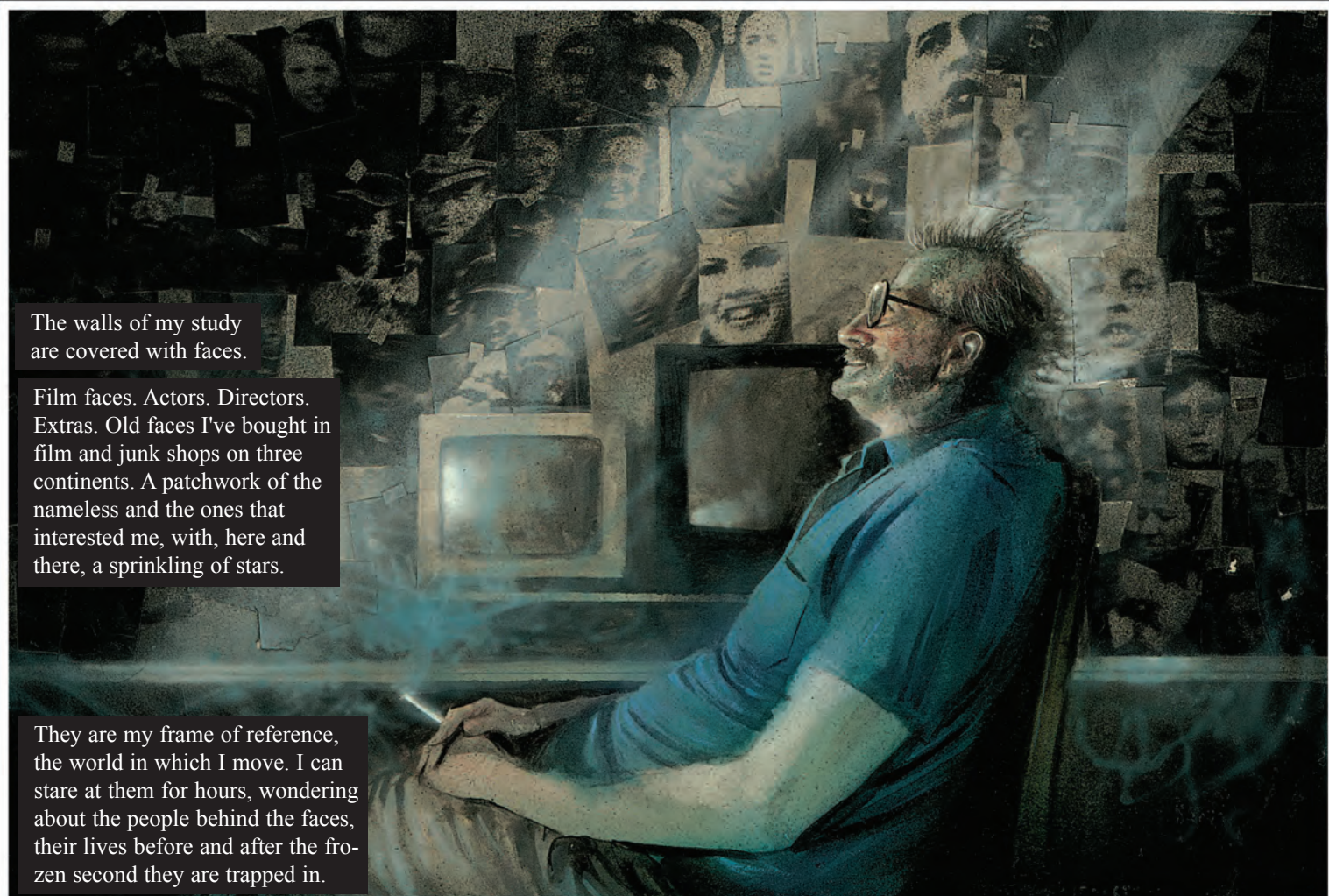
Inanna is that they own.

That which does the theme afterwards.

They became bitter.

3. DISILLUSION

Not a level on a few moments I see.
Thank you. Yeah. Arty stuff.



The walls of my study are covered with faces.

Film faces. Actors. Directors. Extras. Old faces I've bought in film and junk shops on three continents. A patchwork of the nameless and the ones that interested me, with, here and there, a sprinkling of stars.

They are my frame of reference, the world in which I move. I can stare at them for hours, wondering about the people behind the faces, their lives before and after the frozen second they are trapped in.

I pillage their faces, their expressions, their eyes.

I have stolen many of them for the crowd, even now making their way up the side of the mountain.

In my head, the film continues.

I am writing it, directing it (making it up as I go along? Exactly); and I am also its only audience.

This was not always to be the case.

I remember when I told Inanna that we would not be making it.

I had returned from seeing my doctor.

Late. It was late.



She was waiting for me, here.



Hullo, you said you'd be late. Opened a bottle of bubbly waiting for you.

Knew you wouldn't mind.

Do you mind?

No.



Oh. I should get you a glass. You want a glass?



No. No thank you.



You'll change your mind when you hear my news.

Are you ready?



OK. The U.S. money men have greenlighted the finance. It's all systems go. We can be in pre-production by this time next week.



I can't wait. I can't fucking wait!

When I helped Harry produce the last movie it was like I was just learning, you know?



But this is going to be for real - and, I mean, all the stuff you've told me about it, the Armageddon stuff, all those poor people up on the mountain in the snow, just waiting for the end...



Oh, it's going to be so beautiful.

But we'll need a script really soon. Like, yesterday.



Any idea how soon you can get it together?



I'm not going to be writing the script, Inanna.

We're not going to make the film.



I saw the doctor.

She...

She says... I probably don't have very long to live. That I...



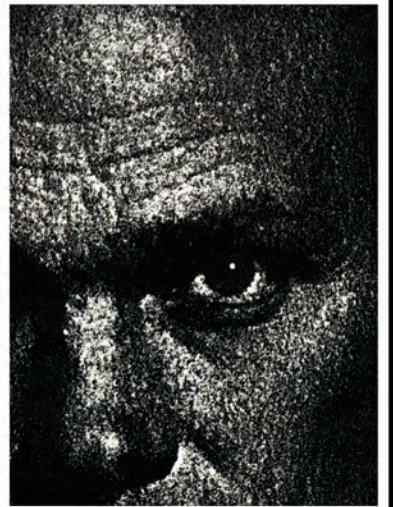
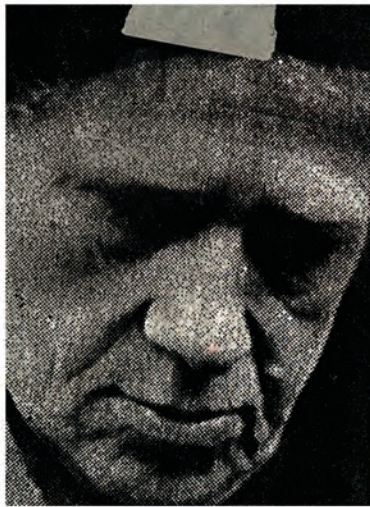
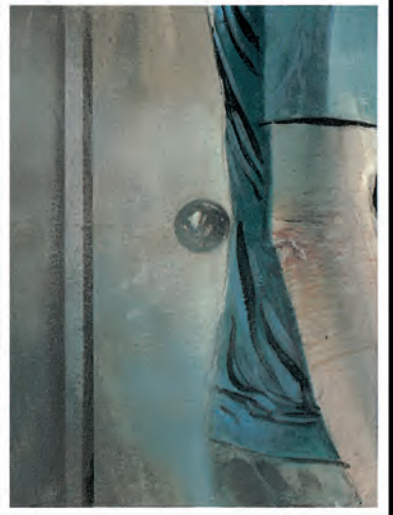
I'm dying, Inanna.



I'm sorry. Please leave. We'll talk later.

Inanna talking,
saying things,
she's sorry,
doctors make mistakes,
she's so sorry,
new treatments every day,
if there's anything she can do,
so very sorry,
on and on,
saying nothing at all.

Just noise.



Stop looking
at me!

Dir: He is your films.
On the ships were from her viewpoint as elephants, being part of
the third part apathy and very clear signal from heaven, thing to
wheel, and scoff, and the radio: give me with water glass
shattered, searching for a shooting date, this inside me,
like talking about my chest x-ray.

Signal is very lonely a white shapes:

I've seen a moon seen a good feeling.
Like being in somewhere like somebody's talking as a collective.

NUMERICAL POSITION OF THE ORGANS.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. AMATIVENESS, Love. | 20. CONSTRUCTIVENESS, Mechanical ingenuity. |
| A. CONJUGALITY, Marriage. | 21. IDEALITY, Refinement—taste—purity. |
| 2. PARENTAL, Love of children. | 22. HUMILITY, Love of grandeur—infinity. |
| 3. FRIENDSHIP, Affection. | 23. IMITATION, Copying—battering. |
| 4. INHIBITIVENESS, I don't. | 24. MIRTHFULNESS, Jocoseness—wit—fun. |
| 5. CONTINUITY, One & the same. | 25. INDIVIDUALITY, Observation. |
| E. VITATIVENESS, Life. | 26. FORM, Recollection of shape. |
| 6. COMBATIVENESS, Defence. | 27. SIZE, Measuring by the eye. |
| 7. DESTRUCTIVENESS, Force. | 28. WEIGHT, Balancing—climbing. |
| 8. ALIMENTIVENESS, Hunger. | 29. COLOR, Judgment of colors. |
| 9. ACQUISITIVENESS, Accumulation. | 30. ORDER, Method—system—arrangement. |
| 10. SECRETIVENESS, Management. | 31. CALCULATION, Mental Arithmetic. |
| 11. CLOUTENESS, Provision. | 32. LOCALITY, Recollection of places. |
| 12. VAULTIVENESS, Display. | 33. EVENTUALITY, Memory of facts. |
| 13. DIGNITY, Dignity. | 34. TIME, Cognizance of duration. |
| 14. DECORUM, Decorum. | 35. TUNE, Sense of harmony and melody. |
| 15. COURTESY, Courtesy. | 36. LANGUAGE, Expression of ideas. |
| 16. EXPECTATION, Expectation. | 37. CASE, Applying causes to effect. |
| 17. QUALITY, Intelligence—credulity. | 38. COMPARISON, Inductive reasoning. |
| 18. RATION, Devotion. | 39. HUMAN NATURE, Perception of motives. |
| 19. COLLECT, Kindness. | 40. AGREEABLENESS, Pleasantness—suavity. |



Myself as it apart, clamped and very
profound.

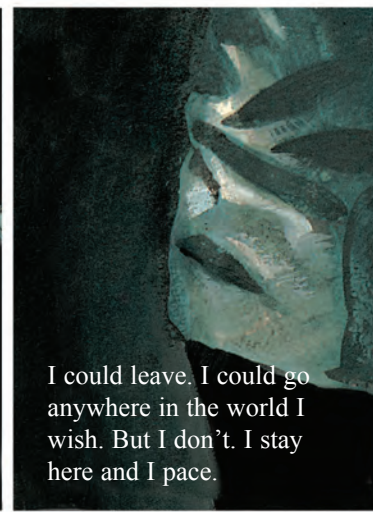
4. CONFUSION



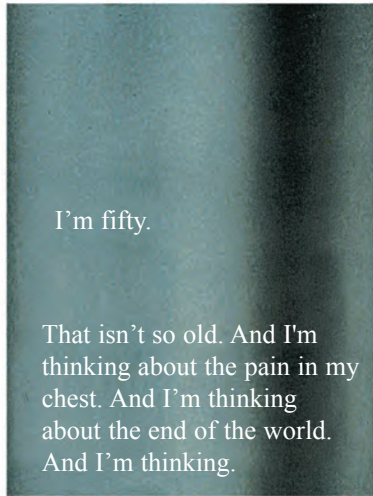
Trying to find something
to hold onto.



I walk from room to room
around the flat, staring at the
walls, pacing back and forth
like a leopard in a cage.



I could leave. I could go
anywhere in the world I
wish. But I don't. I stay
here and I pace.

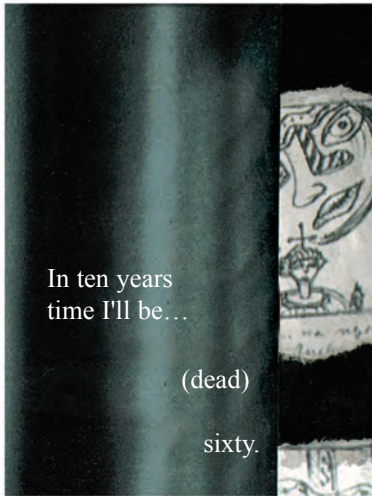


I'm fifty.

That isn't so old. And I'm
thinking about the pain in my
chest. And I'm thinking
about the end of the world.
And I'm thinking.



That's all I see to do.



In ten years
time I'll be...

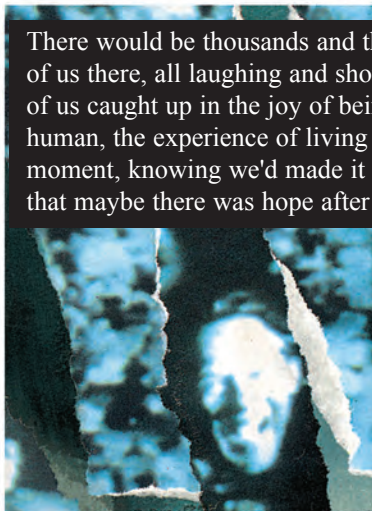
(dead)

sixty.



I wanted to be there:

Friday, December the 31st.,
1999. I would have gone
down to Trafalgar Square,
seen in the New Millennium.



There would be thousands and thousands
of us there, all laughing and shouting, all
of us caught up in the joy of being
human, the experience of living at that
moment, knowing we'd made it this far,
that maybe there was hope after all.



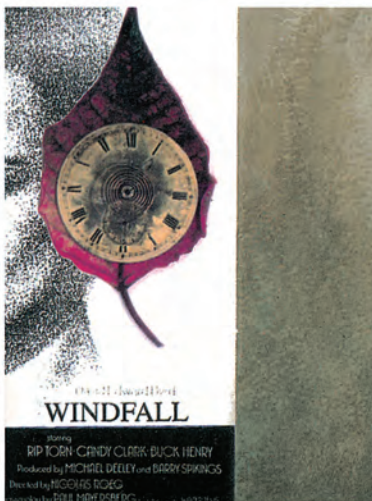
And I'll never see it.



They said - critics, reviewers -
that my visions were bleak.
And I agreed with them.



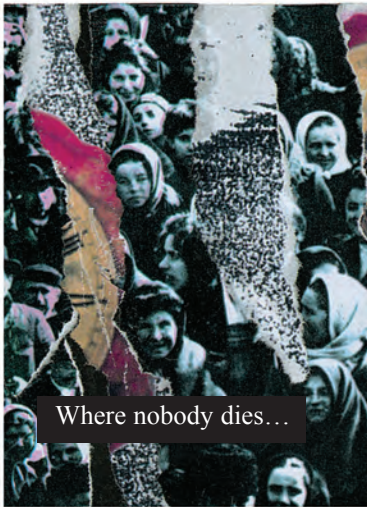
Then I agreed. But now...



Perhaps it is true.



I do not know. We live in a world in which the only utopian visions arrive in commercial breaks: magical visions of an impossibly hospitable world, peopled by bright-eyed attractive men, women, children...



Where nobody dies...



Where all it takes is cheap, easily available product - a packet of salted peanuts or a new type of carpet cleaner - to bring immediate, undiluted joy...



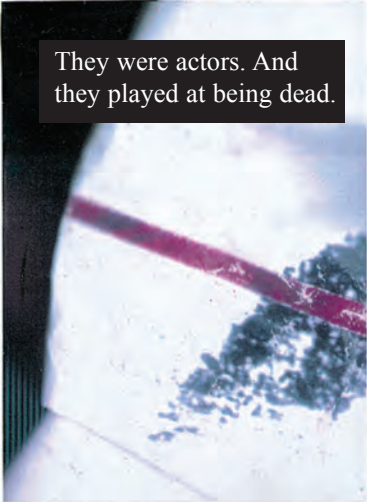
In my worlds people died.



And I thought that was honest. I thought I was being honest.



I thought I was telling the truth, I thought...



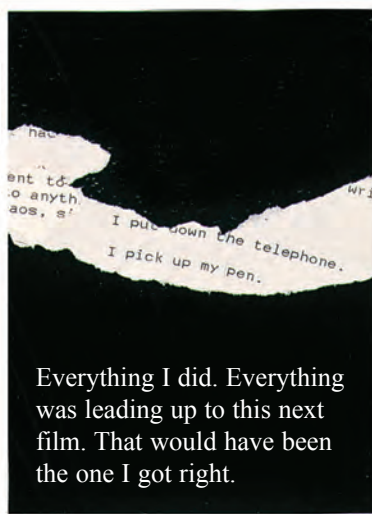
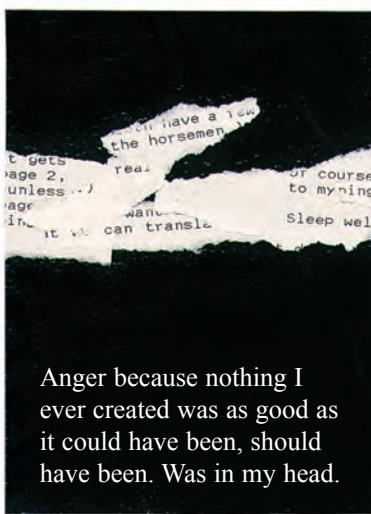
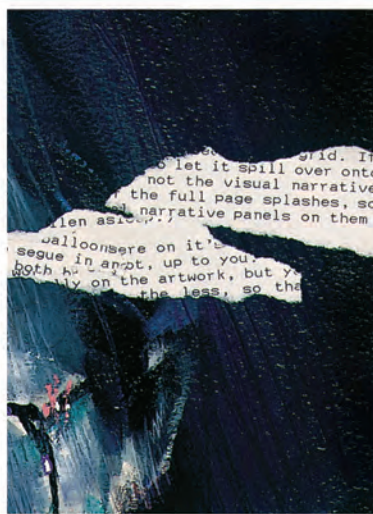
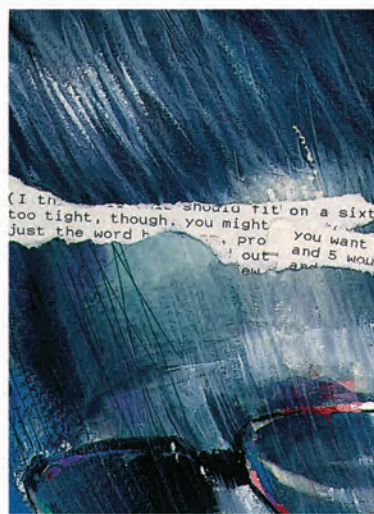
They were actors. And they played at being dead.



The pain inside is a hard knot of rage.

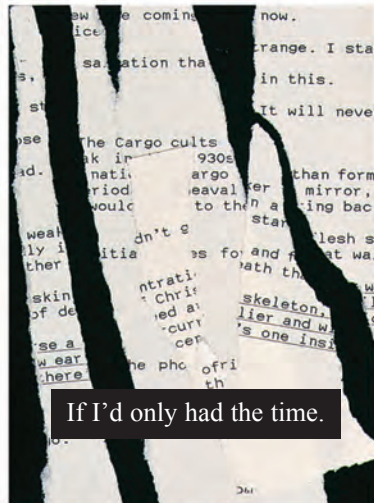


Anger at my body for betraying me. Anger at my world and my dreams and my life for not going on forever.

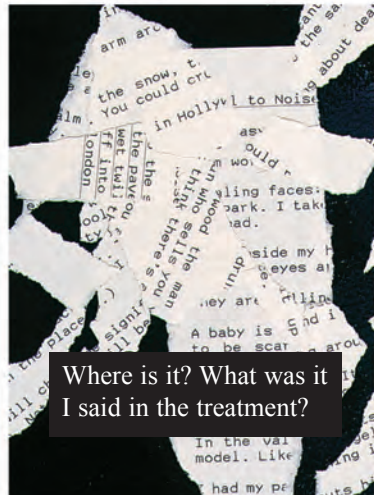
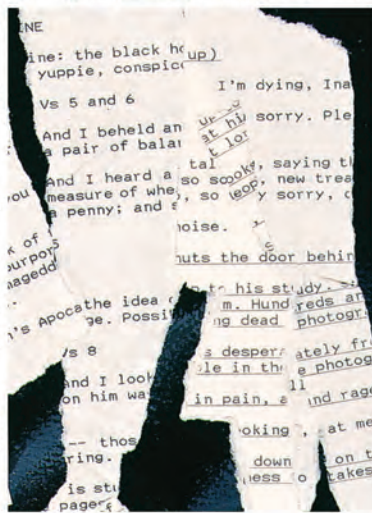
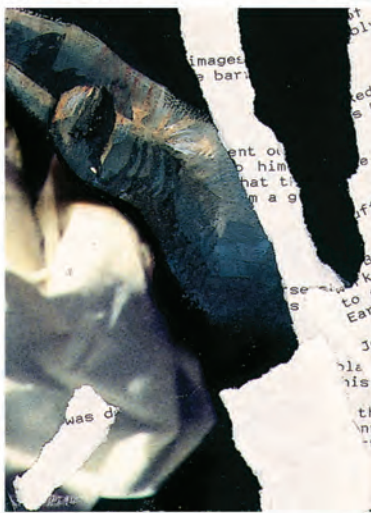
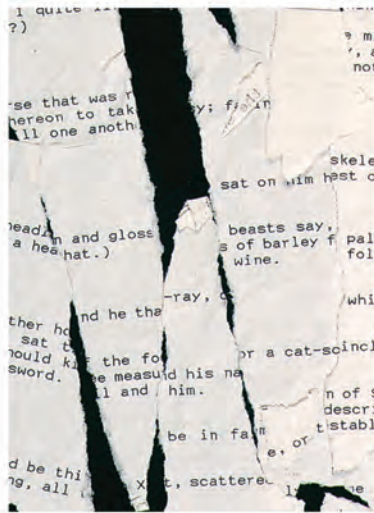
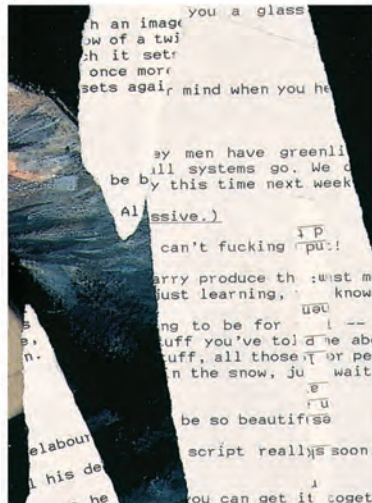
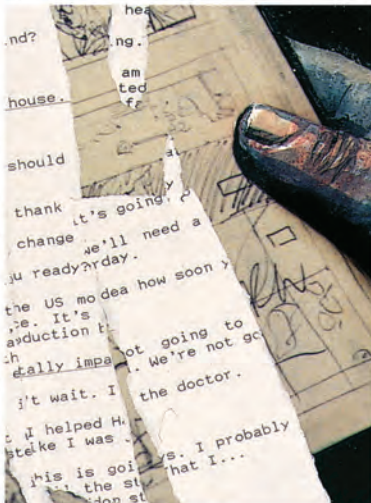
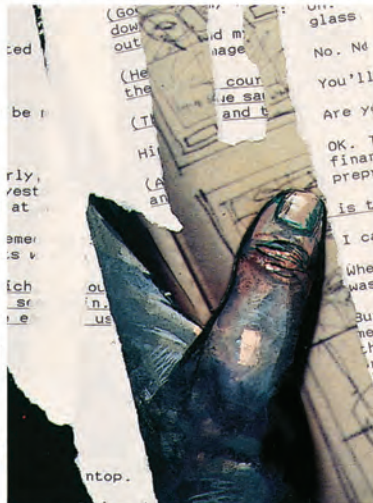


Anger because nothing I ever created was as good as it could have been, should have been. Was in my head.

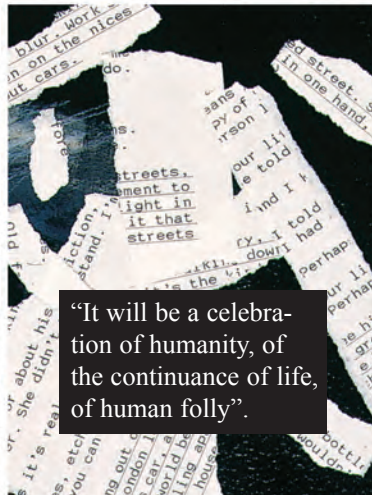
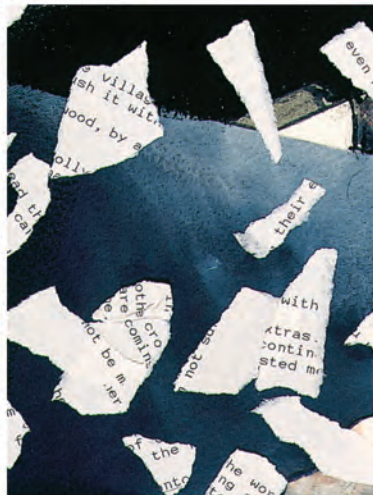
Everything I did. Everything was leading up to this next film. That would have been the one I got right.



If I'd only had the time.



Where is it? What was it I said in the treatment?



"It will be a celebration of humanity, of the continuance of life, of human folly".



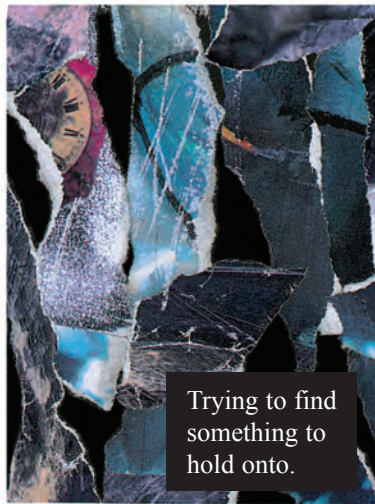
Human folly?



Sure...



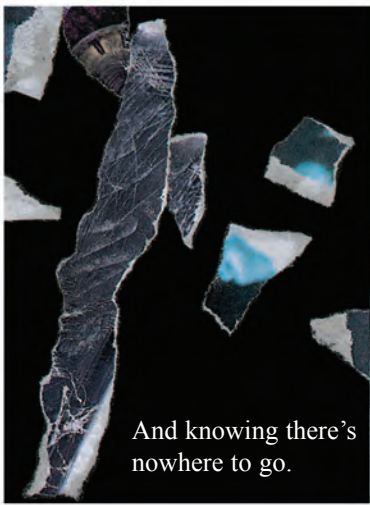
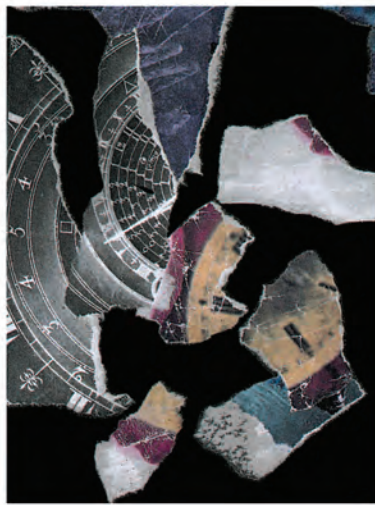
I leave a paper-trail behind me,
like a child lost in the woods,



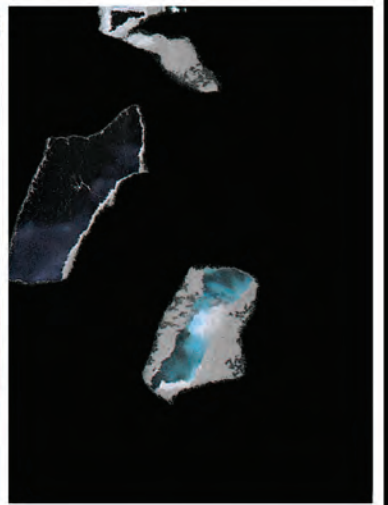
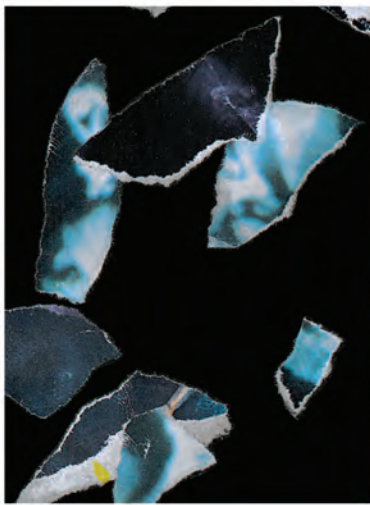
Trying to find
something to
hold onto.

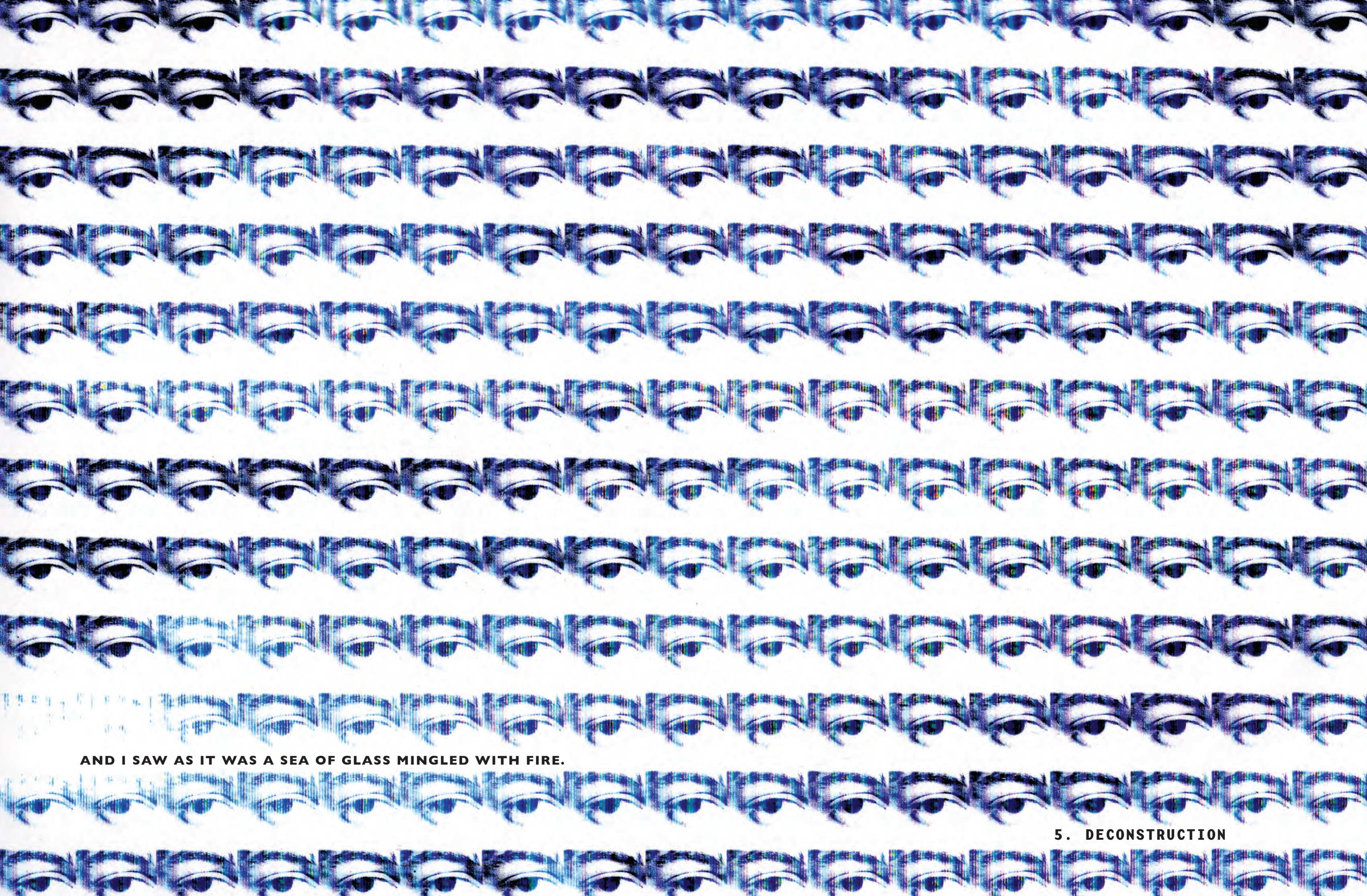


Pacing, and pacing,
and pacing.

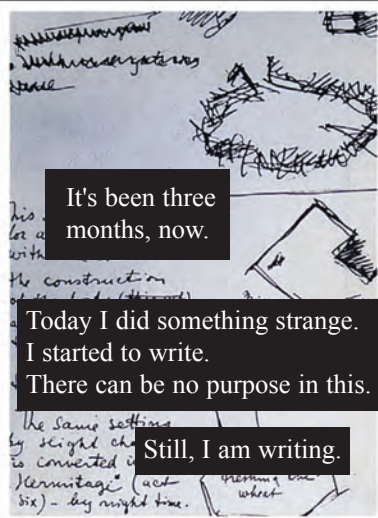


And knowing there's
nowhere to go.



The image is a full-page background composed of a dense, repeating pattern of human eyes. The eyes are arranged in horizontal rows, with each eye looking directly at the viewer. The color palette is primarily blue and white, with some darker tones around the pupils and eyelids. The overall effect is a sense of being surrounded by many pairs of eyes, creating a powerful and somewhat unsettling visual metaphor for surveillance or collective consciousness.

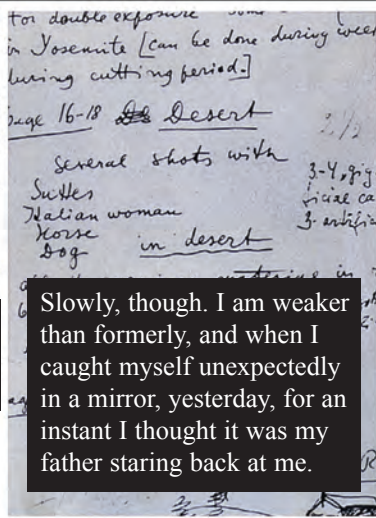
AND I SAW AS IT WAS A SEA OF GLASS MINGLED WITH FIRE.



It's been three months, now.

Today I did something strange. I started to write. There can be no purpose in this.

Still, I am writing.



Slowly, though. I am weaker than formerly, and when I caught myself unexpectedly in a mirror, yesterday, for an instant I thought it was my father staring back at me.



I looked old, and my skin and flesh seemed little more than a thin cover for the image of death that waits within each one of us.



Hmm...



One thousand years ago.

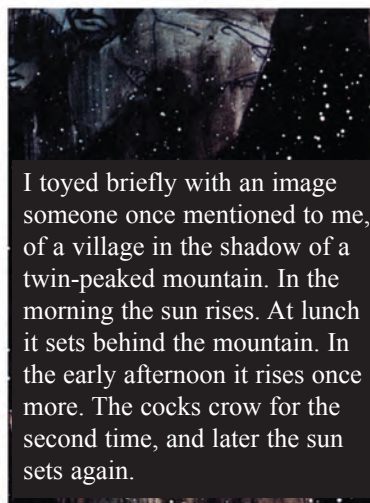
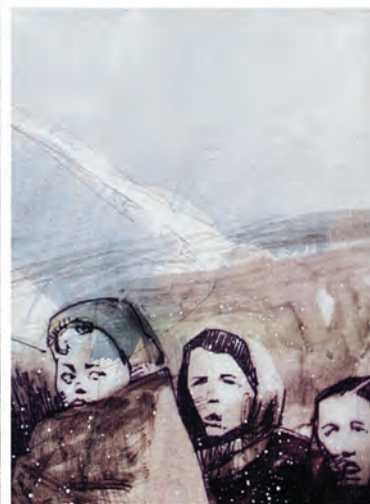
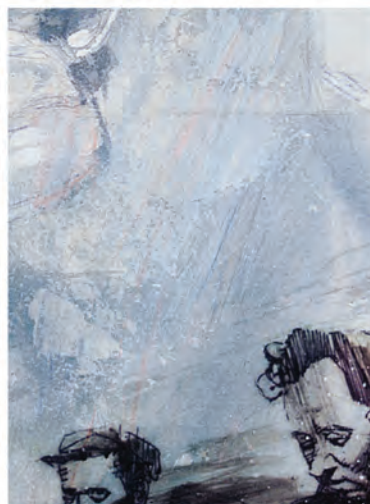
Almost.



999 Anno Domini.



My villagers wait, in the snow, on the mountaintop.



I toyed briefly with an image someone once mentioned to me, of a village in the shadow of a twin-peaked mountain. In the morning the sun rises. At lunch it sets behind the mountain. In the early afternoon it rises once more. The cocks crow for the second time, and later the sun sets again.



No.

One peak.

Metaphors should not be belaboured.

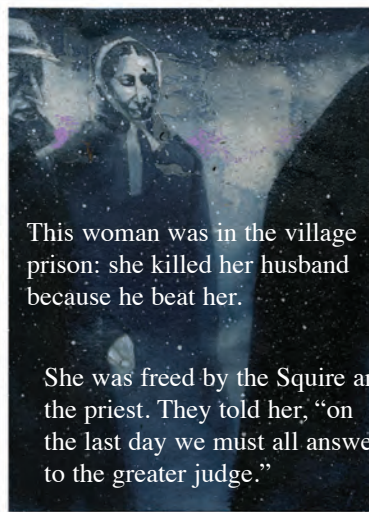


This man is a doctor.

All his debts have
been forgiven.

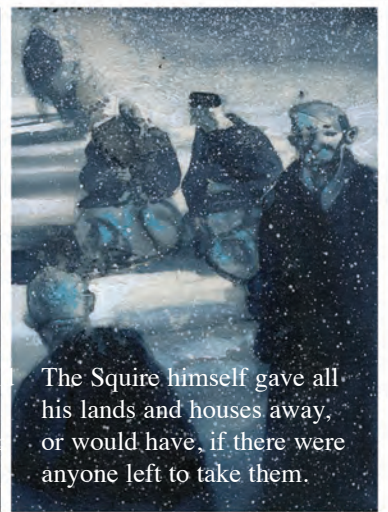


This man is a farmer.



This woman was in the village
prison: she killed her husband
because he beat her.

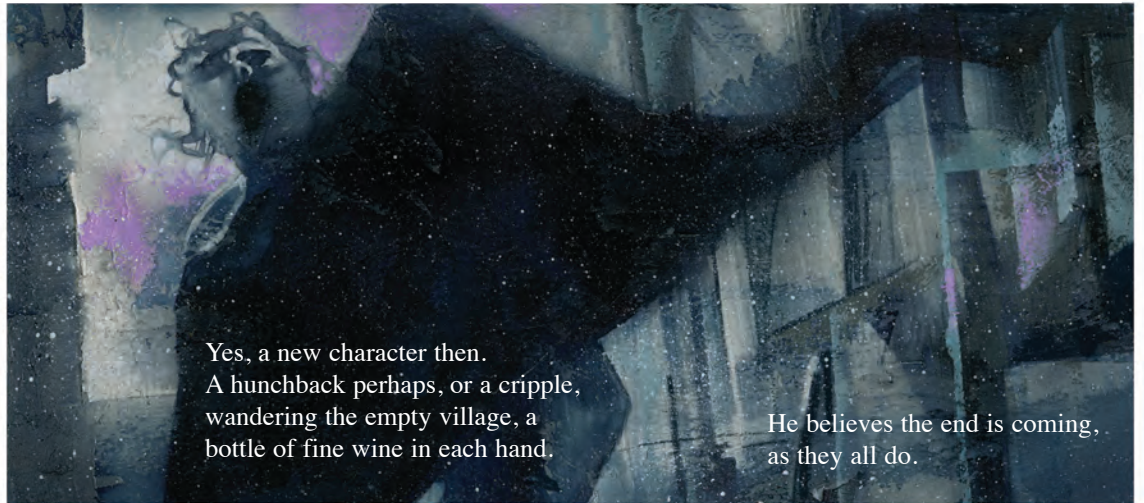
She was freed by the Squire and
the priest. They told her, "on
the last day we must all answer
to the greater judge."



The Squire himself gave all
his lands and houses away,
or would have, if there were
anyone left to take them.



Hmm...



Yes, a new character then.
A hunchback perhaps, or a cripple,
wandering the empty village, a
bottle of fine wine in each hand.

He believes the end is coming,
as they all do.



But he - or she -
views it as liberation.



Eat drink and be merry.
For the present, you are
the village.



The hunchback tosses an
empty bottle into a corner.

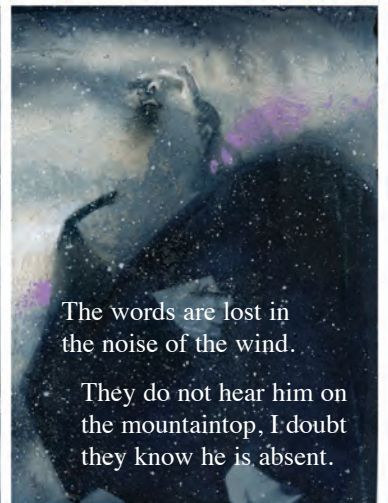


Picks up a chunk of greasy
goose-flech and, wrapped in a
tapestry he pulled from a wall,
walks out into the snow...



Hello? he calls.

Hello?



The words are lost in
the noise of the wind.

They do not hear him on
the mountaintop, I doubt
they know he is absent.

Four of the watchers are not native to the village. They are naked, despite the cold, and bound together with cord at the neck.



Flagellants, atoning for their sinful flesh. Scarred. Twisted. Screaming rhythmically at each blow of the lash.



A man walks over to them.



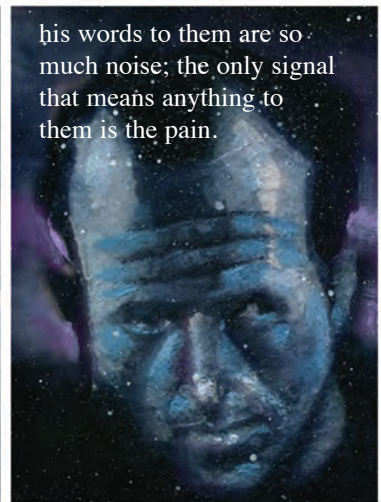
"Quiet," he says. "Please be quiet. You'll wake the baby..."



They stare at him with blank eyes.



his words to them are so much noise; the only signal that means anything to them is the pain.



One of them picks up a rock.



We expect him to attack...



...but instead he starts to pound at his chest.

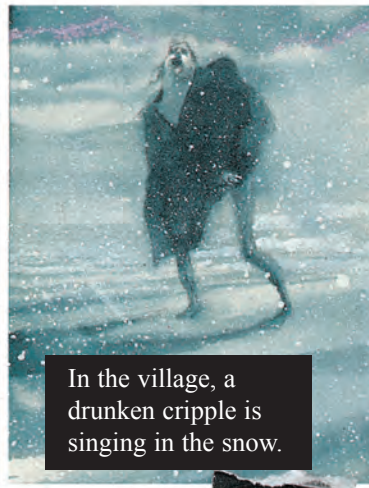


His screams redouble.





The baby begins to cry.

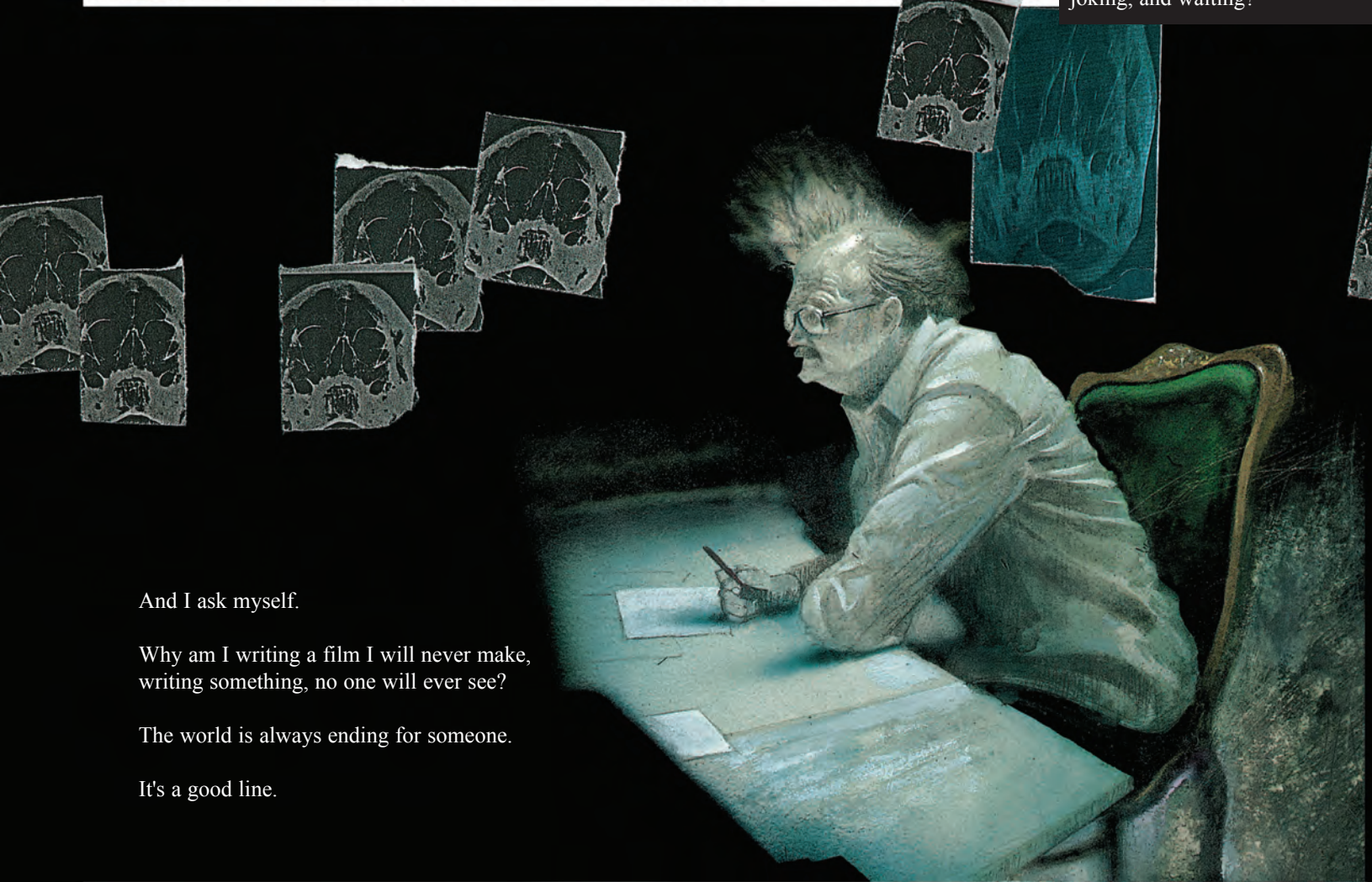


In the village, a drunken cripple is singing in the snow.



Noise. Just noise.

And ask yourself, If they believe the end is coming, that their world is coming to an end, why are they doing this? Why are they still screaming, and whipping, and pissing, and living, and joking, and waiting?

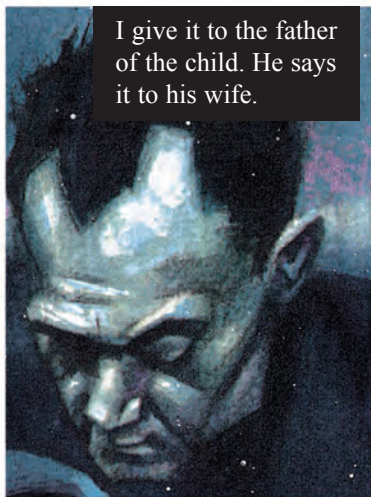


And I ask myself.

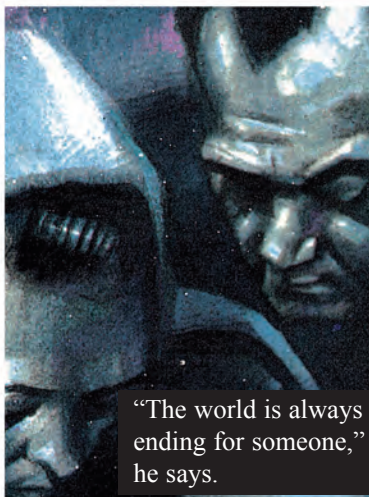
Why am I writing a film I will never make, writing something, no one will ever see?

The world is always ending for someone.

It's a good line.



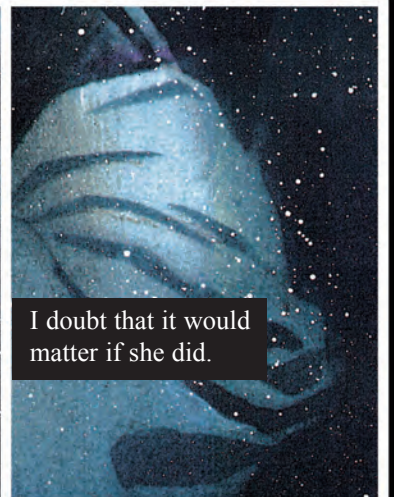
I give it to the father of the child. He says it to his wife.



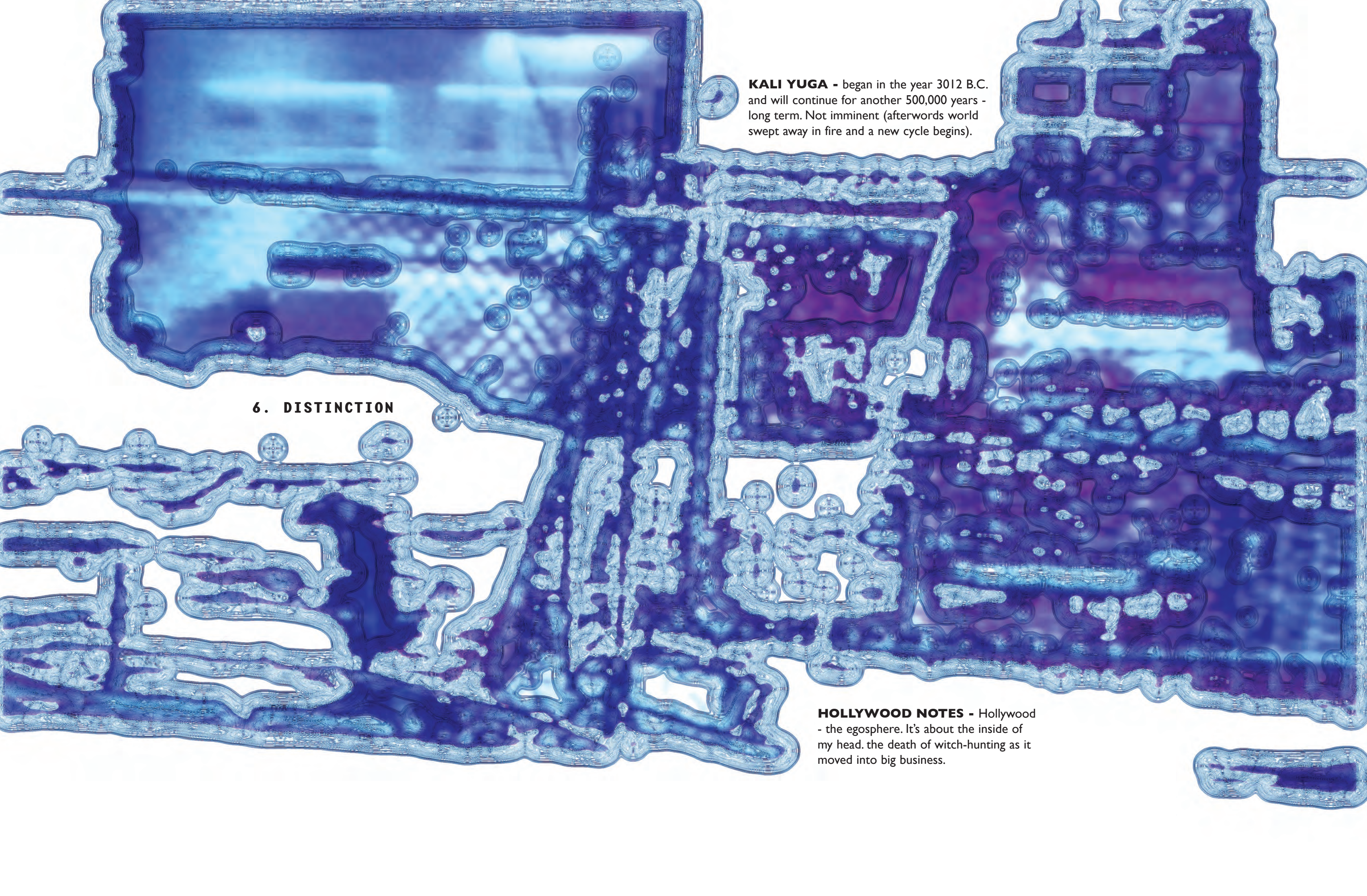
"The world is always ending for someone," he says.



She is trying to quieten the baby, and does not hear him.



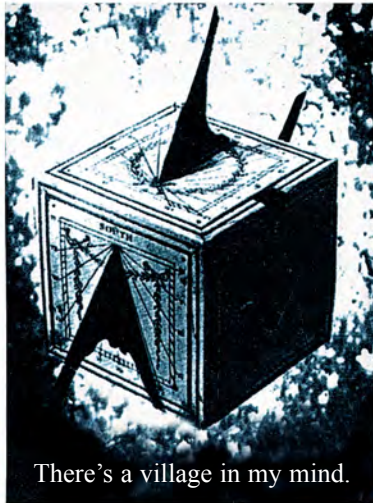
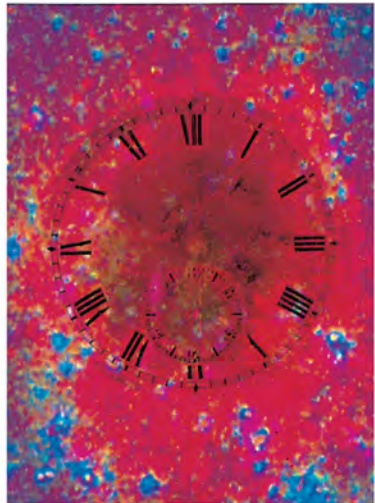
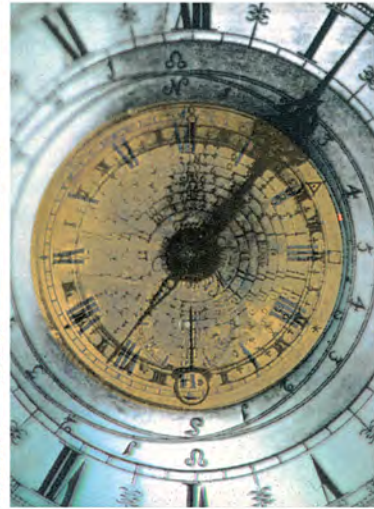
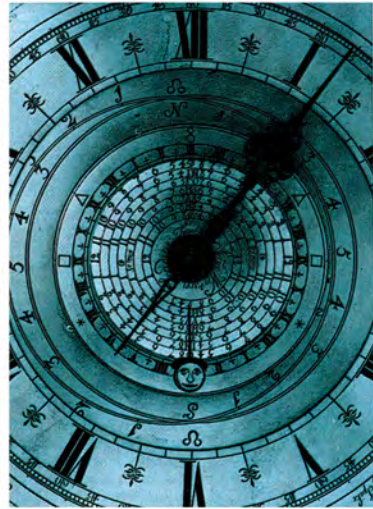
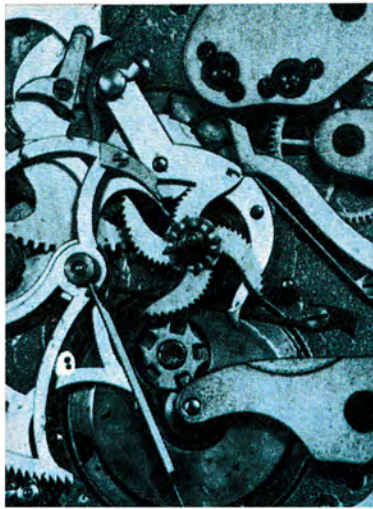
I doubt that it would matter if she did.



KALI YUGA - began in the year 3012 B.C. and will continue for another 500,000 years - long term. Not imminent (afterwords world swept away in fire and a new cycle begins).

6. DISTINCTION

HOLLYWOOD NOTES - Hollywood - the egosphere. It's about the inside of my head. the death of witch-hunting as it moved into big business.



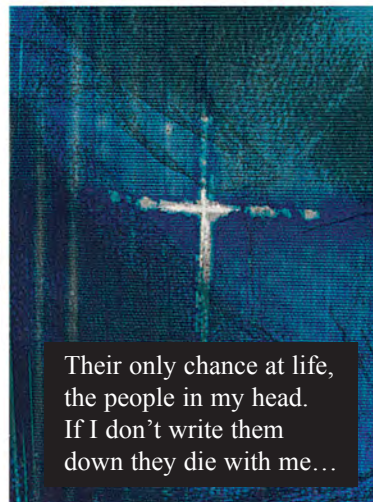
There's a village in my mind.



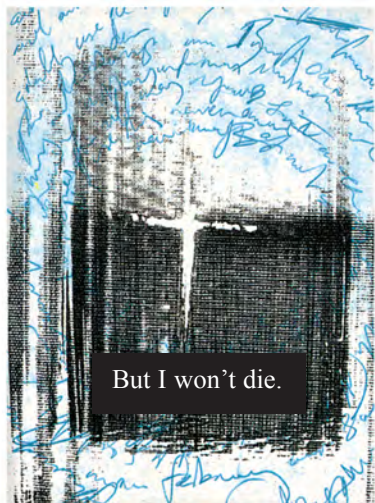
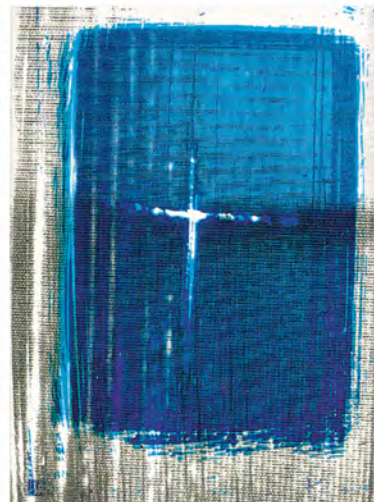
A world in my mind.



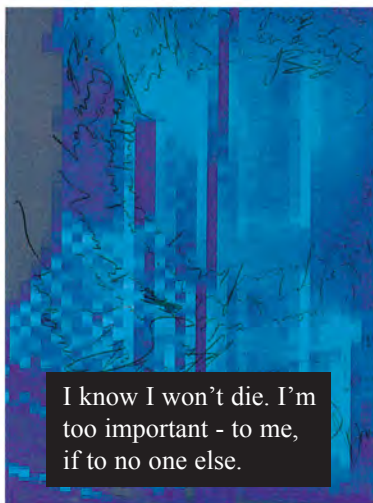
People who stepped from the shadows to huddle from the cold, a long time ago or never.



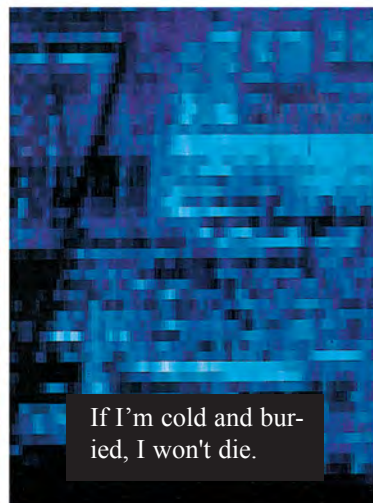
Their only chance at life, the people in my head. If I don't write them down they die with me...



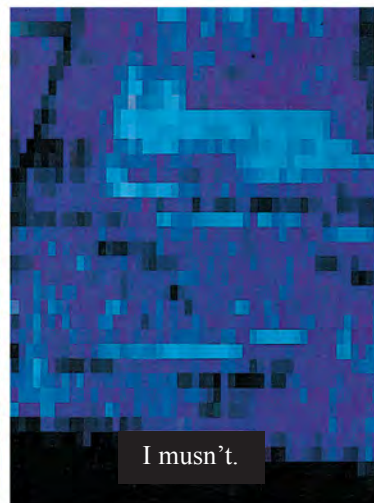
But I won't die.



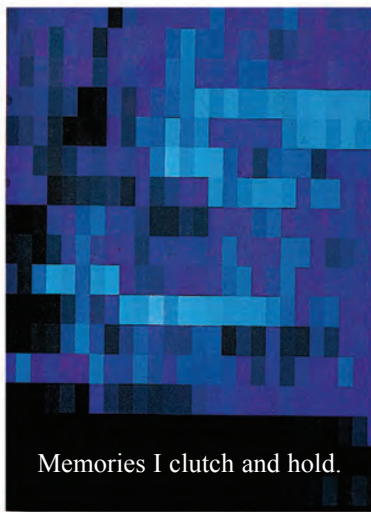
I know I won't die. I'm too important - to me, if to no one else.



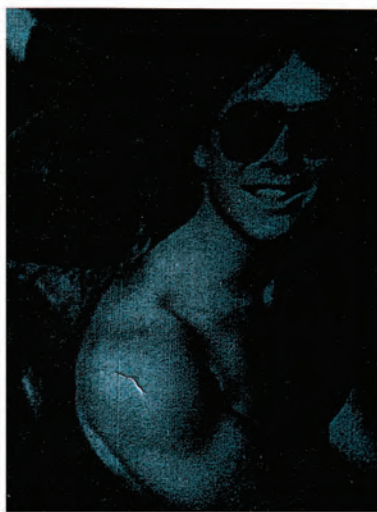
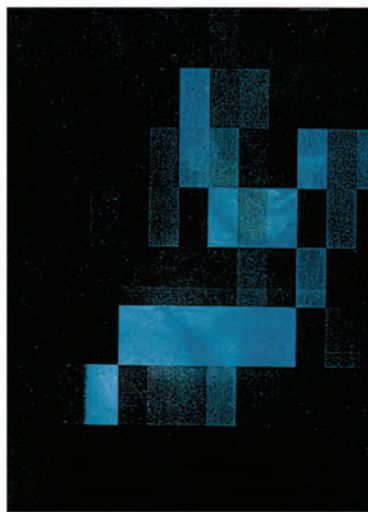
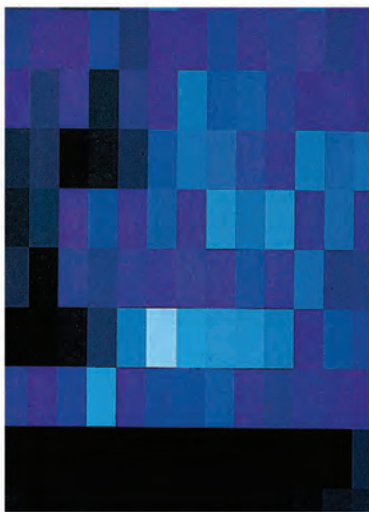
If I'm cold and buried, I won't die.



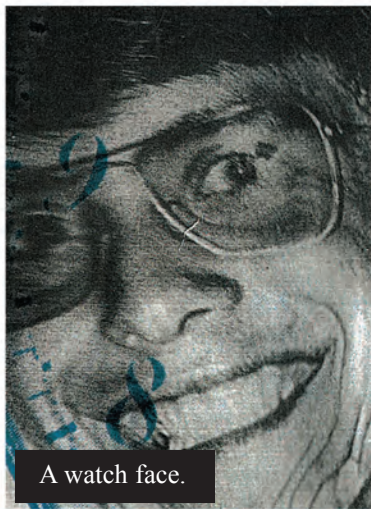
I musn't.



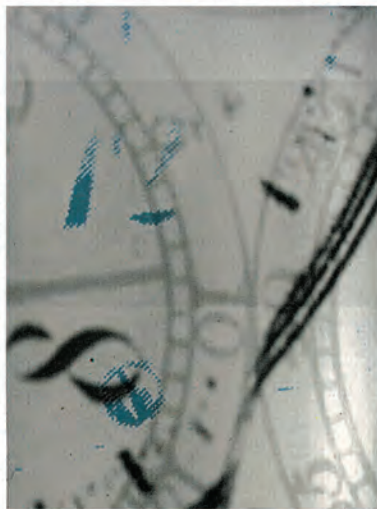
Memories I clutch and hold.



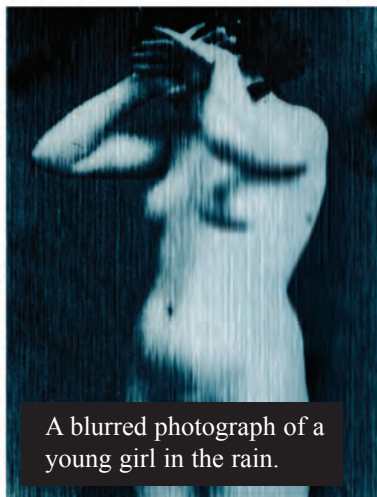
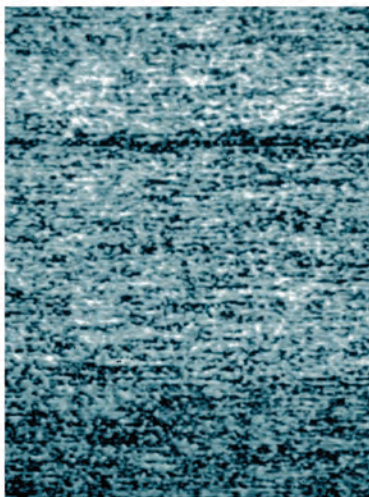
Remember:



A watch face.



A picture of an empty TV channel.

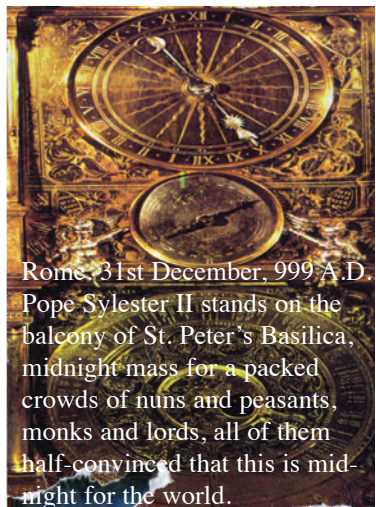


A blurred photograph of a young girl in the rain.

I ran across a story the
other day that seemed
perfect for the film.



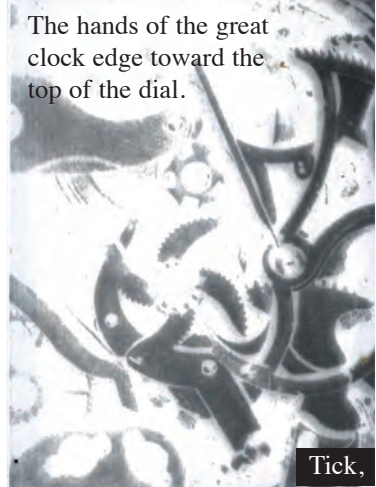
It goes like this:



Rome, 31st December, 999 A.D.
Pope Sylvester II stands on the
balcony of St. Peter's Basilica,
midnight mass for a packed
crowds of nuns and peasants,
monks and lords, all of them
half-convinced that this is mid-
night for the world.



The hands of the great
clock edge toward the
top of the dial.



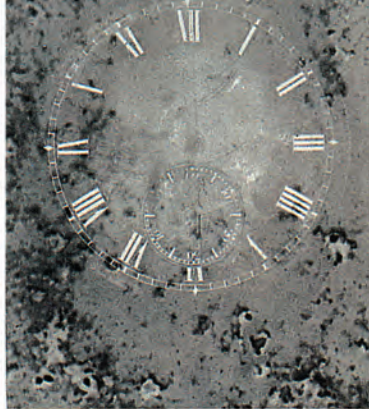
Tick,

tick,



tick.

The clock begins to strike midnight. And then...



Then it stops.



Just stops.

People scream.

Some die: their hearts stop with the clock. There is panic and madness and fear, in this dark midnight.

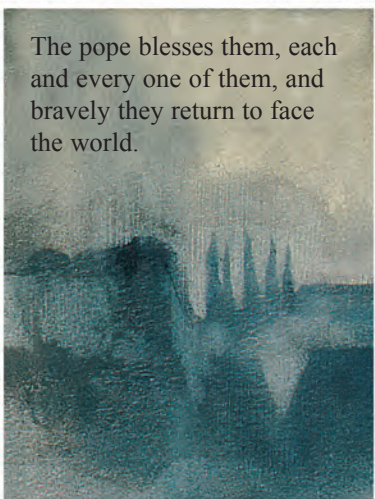
Tick.



The clock chimes twelve times. Time starts once more.



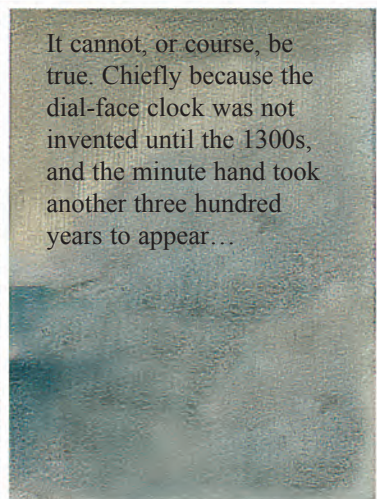
The pope blesses them, each and every one of them, and bravely they return to face the world.

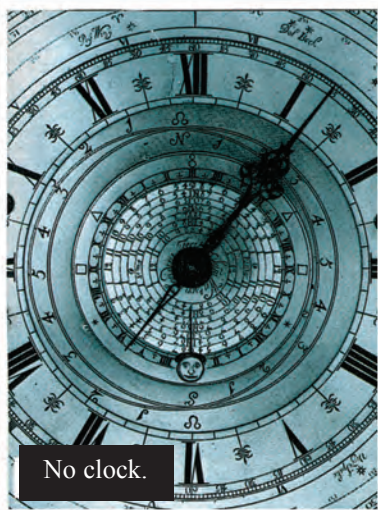


Great story.
Wonderful story.



It cannot, or course, be true. Chiefly because the dial-face clock was not invented until the 1300s, and the minute hand took another three hundred years to appear...

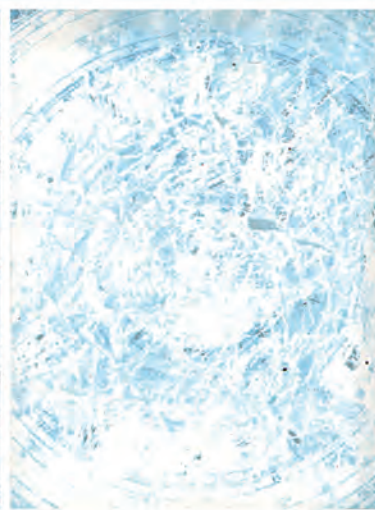




No clock.



With no clock the story is meaningless.



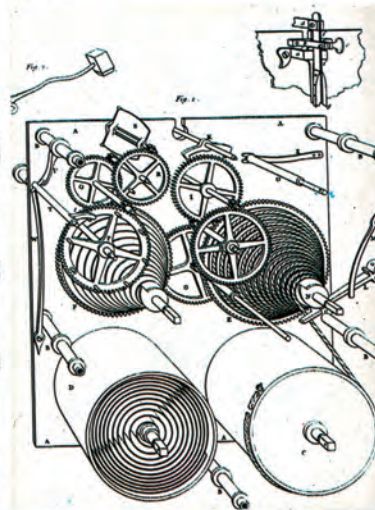
Garbage. A lie.



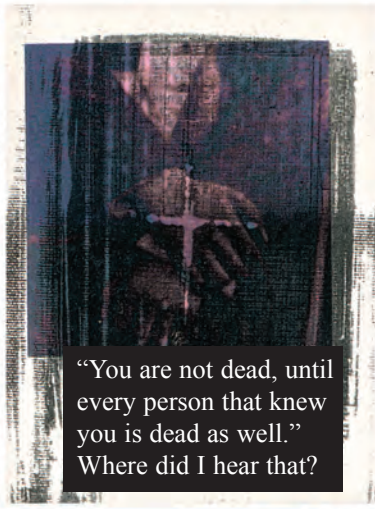
Is the story less true because it is a lie?



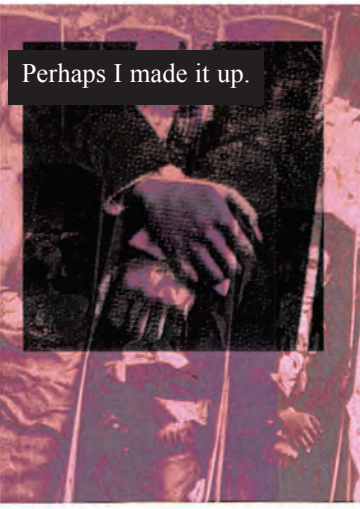
We impose patterns on what we experience.



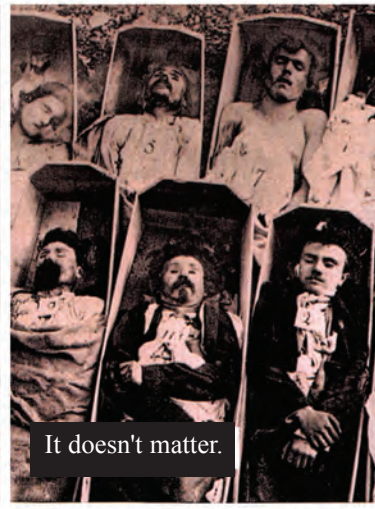
And we die, because things that matter end. But sometimes the patterns we created carry on.



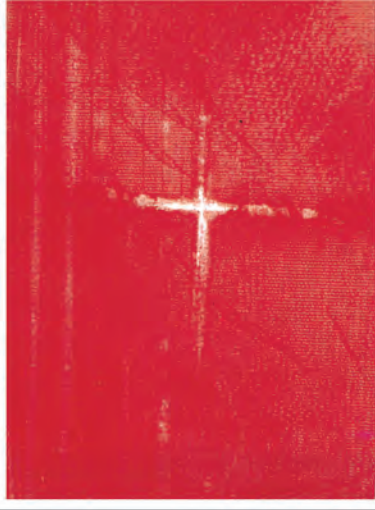
"You are not dead, until every person that knew you is dead as well."
Where did I hear that?



Perhaps I made it up.



It doesn't matter.



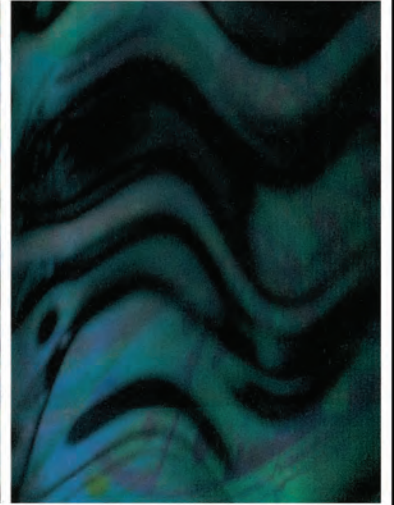
There's a village in my mind.



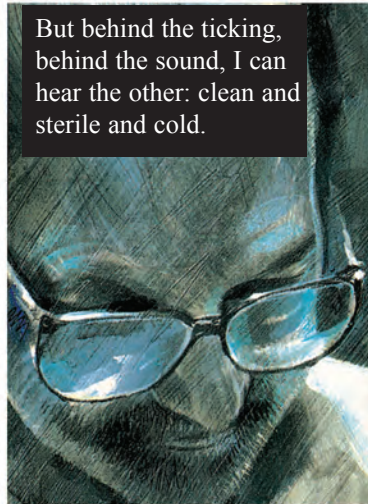
Midnight can wait, but I
hear the clock ticking.
And behind it I hear the
echoes of other clocks
which have counted off
the seconds of my life.



I remember my father's
voice, and the grandfather
clock in the hallway,
when I was a child. I can
hear everything I have
ever heard.

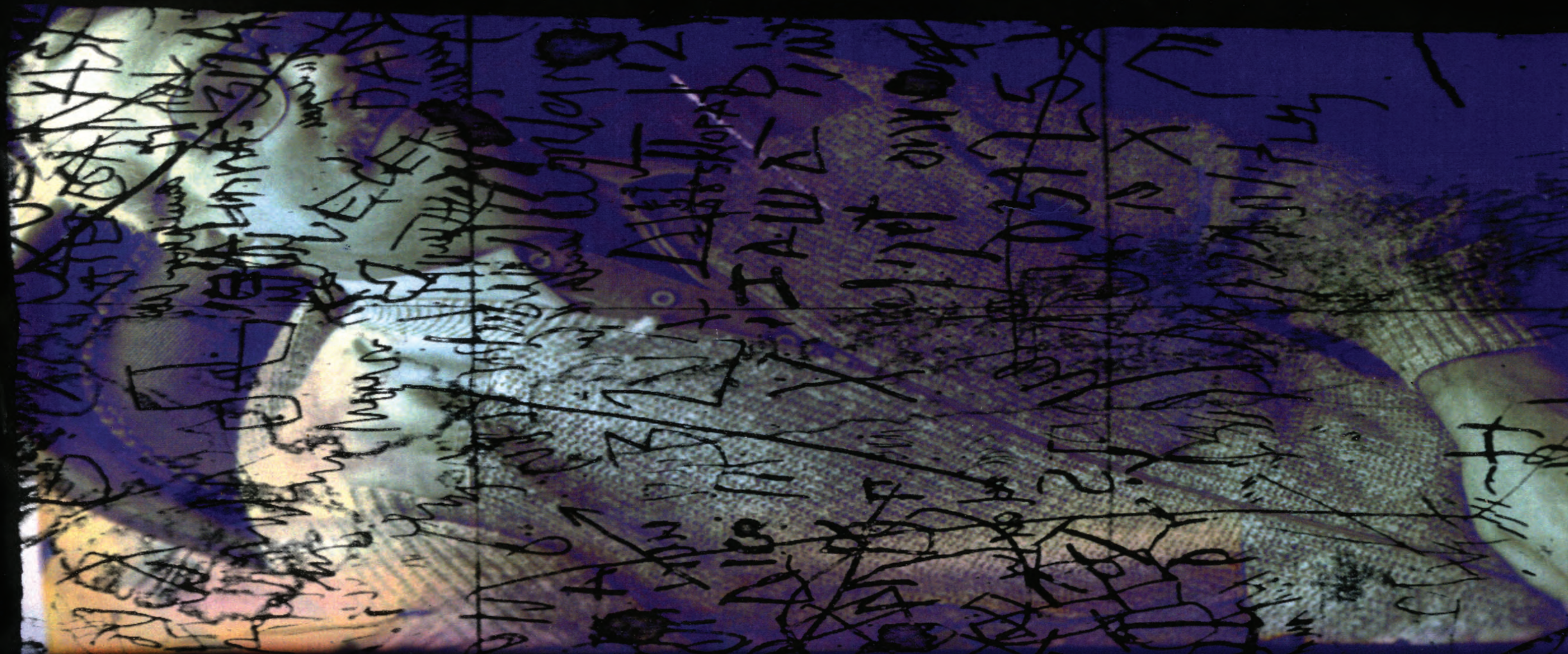


But behind the ticking,
behind the sound, I can
hear the other: clean and
sterile and cold.



I can hear the silence.
And it won't go away.





You know you can set fire to the capacity to say.

7. INTERLUDE



What's the attraction of the apocalypse, then? Why your obsession with the end of the world?



It's not my obsession. It's *the* obsession.

Human beings are always living in the last days.



What have we got? Never more than a hundred years until the end of our world.

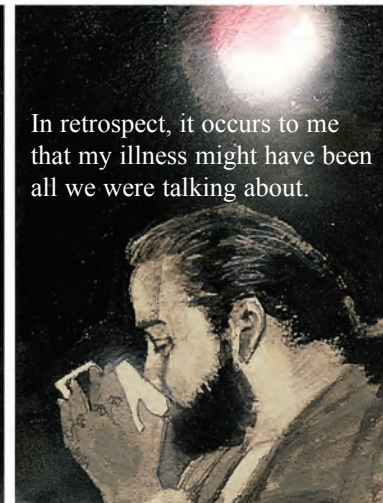
There's more to it than that, though.



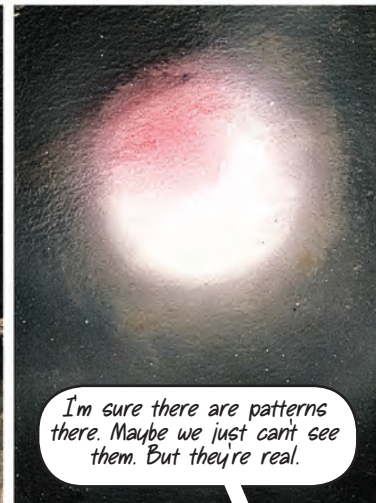
Perhaps.

I see almost no one these days. I hurt too much, and I am working too hard. Some contact with the rest of the world is inevitable, however.

Reed lives in the flat above me. Earlier this evening he came down for a coffee. We carefully avoided the subject of my illness.



In retrospect, it occurs to me that my illness might have been all we were talking about.



I'm sure there are patterns there. Maybe we just can't see them. But they're real.



You're talking about God, here?



No. Just patterns.

I'm saying that it doesn't matter what you read, what you hear, what the input is. So all this stuff you're fascinated by, the world ending, the times it hasn't...



It all means something. Even the stuff that doesn't mean anything. Like the noise you get changing channels on an old radio.

It's all patterns. Or it would be if you could see the big picture. There's no such thing as noise.



You're a mystic, Reed.

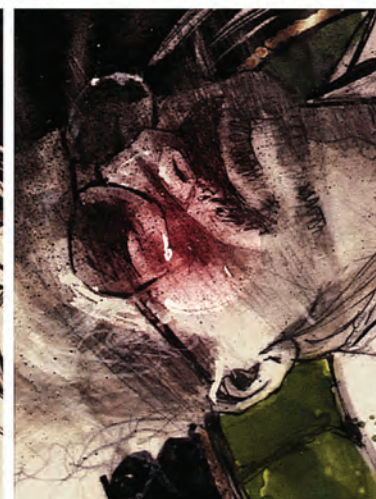
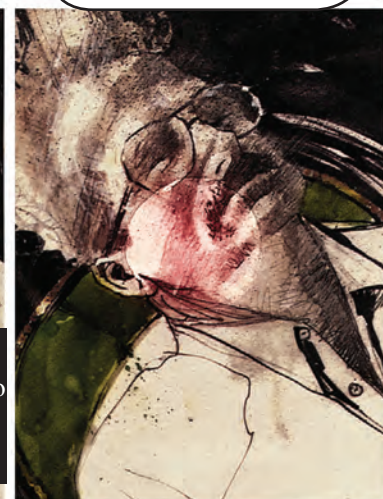


Just a rational response to the latter half of the twentieth century.

But perhaps there's no such thing as an irrational response.



He left shortly after, and I sat in the dark, and thought: There's no big apocalypse. Just an endless procession of little ones.



Somewhere, the horsemen are riding. War and famine, illness and death.

ILLNESS

Revelation Chapter 6 Vs. 2

*And I saw, and behold a white horse;
and he that sat n hi had a bow;
and a crown was given unto him;
and he went forth conquering,
and to conquer.*



WAR

Vs. 4

*And there went out
another horse that
was red;
and the power was
given to him that sat
thereon to take peace
from the earth, and
that they should kill
one another; and there
was given unto him a
great sword.*

THE BOOK OF REVELATION OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE IS A STRANGE WORK, PURPORTING TO BE A DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO ARMAGGEDON, AND THE ESTABLISHING OF THE CITY OF GOD ON EARTH.

JOHN'S APOCALYPSE WAS DECLARED HERETICAL AND NON-CANONICAL A NUMBER OF TIMES. IT REALLY DIDN'T GET A NEW FOOTHOLD UNTIL THE MIDDLE AGES.

THE DREAM OF THE END
THE CONCENTRATION
ON 'THE APOCALYPSE'
LIVED ON IN THE
LOWER STRATA
OF CHRISTIAN
SOCIETY.



FAMINE

Vs. 5 and 6

And I beheld and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

THE RICH AND THE POWERFUL DO NOT NEED AN END AND A RIGHTING OF WRONGS - AND IN CERTAIN UNDERCURRENTS OF TRADITION IT WAS TRANSMITTED FROM CENTURY TO CENTURY.

ESCHATOLOGY IS OFTEN THE RESULT OF OUTSIDE PRESSURE. PEOPLE NEED AN ENEMY. THEY VIEW THE COMING UTOPIA AS COMING TO CORRECT SOCIAL INJUSTICES.

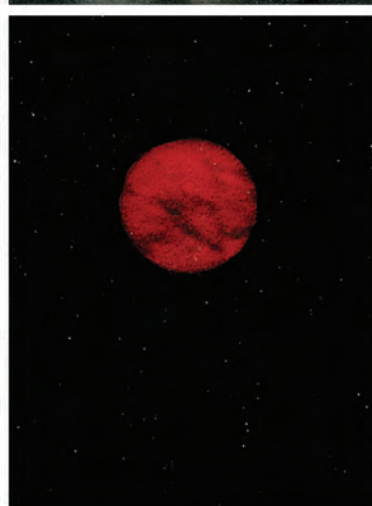
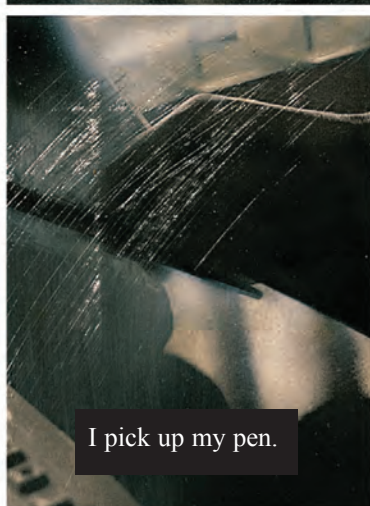
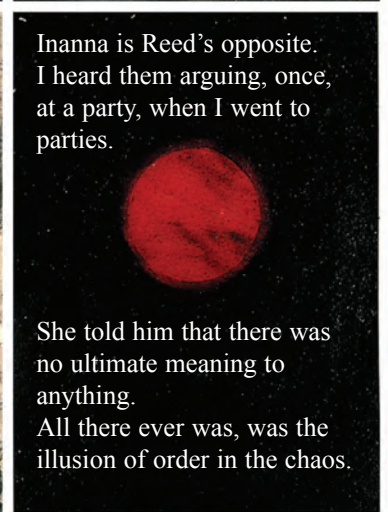
ARMAGEDDON GIVES US A VIEW OF SALVATION AS:
A. COLLECTIVE
B. IMMINENT
C. MIRACULOUS



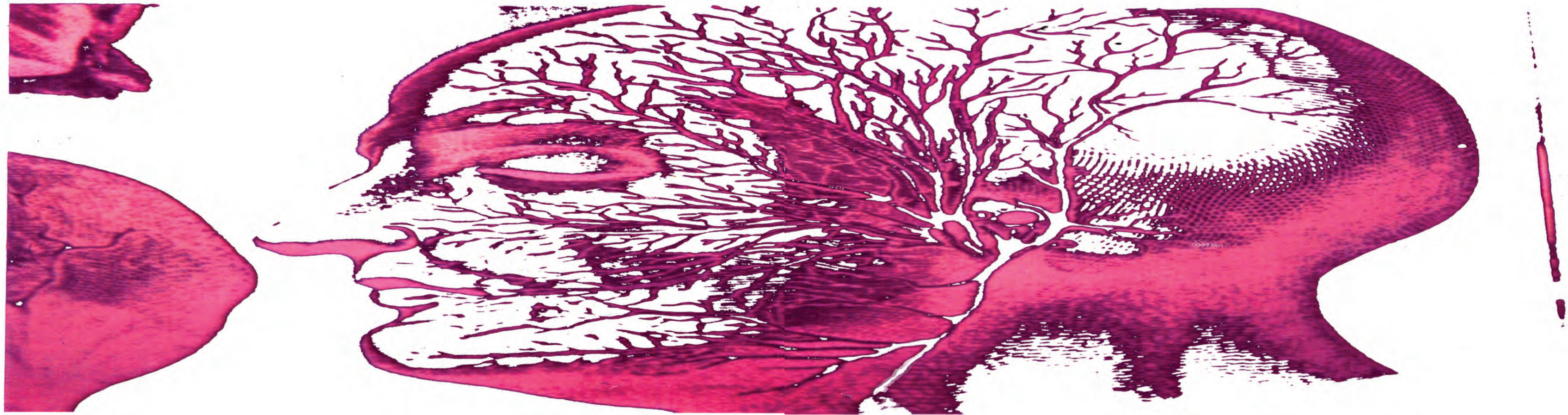
DEATH

Vs. 8

I looked, and I behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.



8. SECLUSION



everyone being swept up in the air with bodies like Christ had post resurrection. Millennium - thousand year reign of Christ. Eschatology is often the result of outside pressure. They need an enemy. The coming utopia will correct social injustices.

The dream of the end, the concentration of the apocalypse lived on in the lower strata of Christian society - the rich and the powerful do not need an end, nor a righting of wrongs - and the certain undercurrents of tradition it was transmitted from century to century.

Eschatology is often the result of outside pressure. People need an enemy. They view the coming utopia as coming to correct social injustices.

Armageddon gives us a view of a salvation that is

- a) collective**
- b) imminent**
- c) miraculous**

It's a cargo-cult view of life. The cargo cults of New Guinea and Melanesia reached their peak in the 1930s and 1940s. Natives foresaw an end to the domination of cargo by outsiders on westerners. They expected a period of upheaval followed by an era in which material wealth would come to them as cargo from their ancestors.



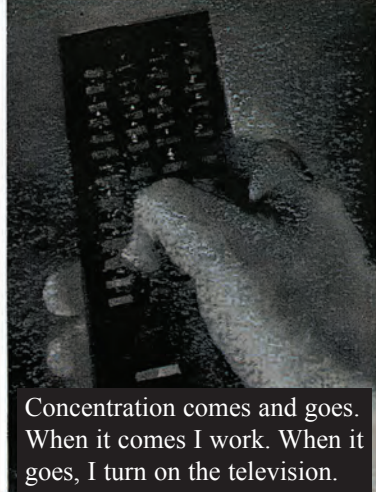
Cough.



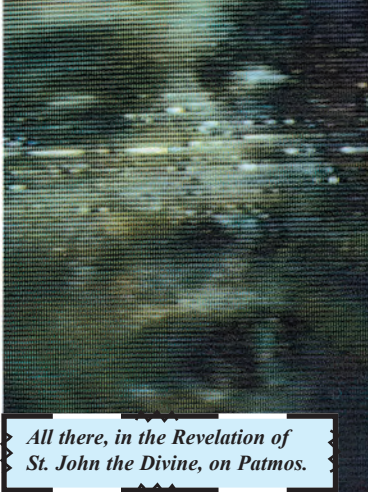
Things are changing.



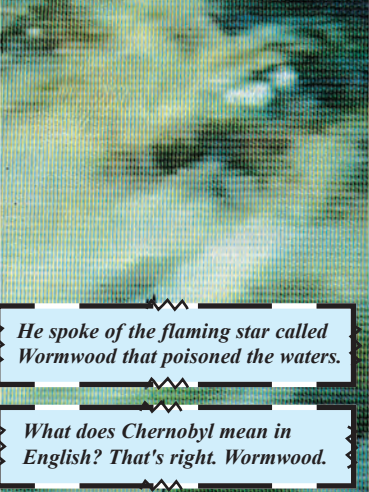
I'm feeling better.



Concentration comes and goes. When it comes I work. When it goes, I turn on the television.



All there, in the Revelation of St. John the Divine, on Patmos.

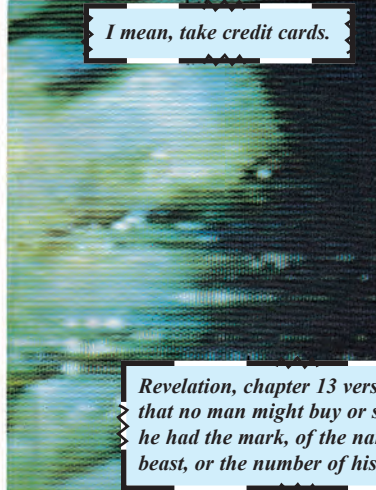


He spoke of the flaming star called Wormwood that poisoned the waters.

What does Chernobyl mean in English? That's right. Wormwood.

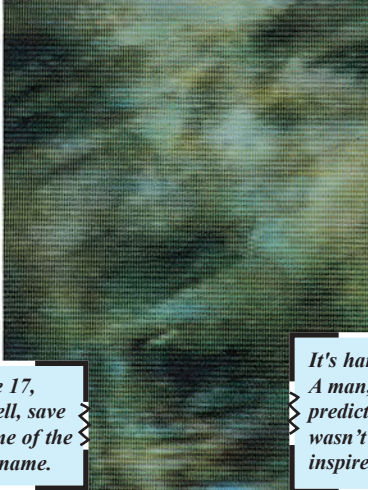


It's one of the symbols. Signs and portents. We're living in the last days.



I mean, take credit cards.

Revelation, chapter 13 verse 17, that no man might buy or sell, save he had the mark, of the name of the beast, or the number of his name.



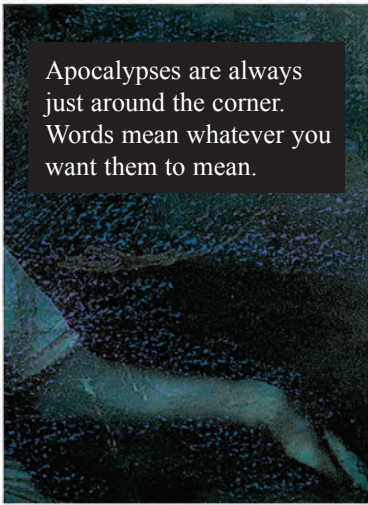
It's hard to believe, isn't it? A man, two thousand years ago, predicting credit cards. But he wasn't a mere man. He was inspired by the word of the Lord.



Do people believe this?



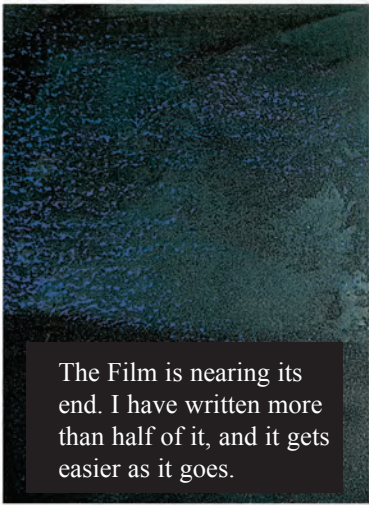
Of course they do.



Apocalypses are always just around the corner. Words mean whatever you want them to mean.



Cough.



The Film is nearing its end. I have written more than half of it, and it gets easier as it goes.

But don't be afraid.

Before the nuclear bombs rain from the skies, before the waters are poisoned and the rivers turn to blood, and the seas become fire and glass.

Before the plagues. Before the radiation sickness. Before the unrighteous and whoremongers and the makers and lovers of lies perish in agony and despair...

Before that happens, every man and woman and child has truly accepted Jesus into their hearts, they will be translated. They will experience the Rapture.

They will be the one generation that the Holy Bible tells us of who will never experience death. They will be taken away, swept up into the air in incorruptible bodies, just like Our Lord had when he rose from the tomb, never to die. Caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air...

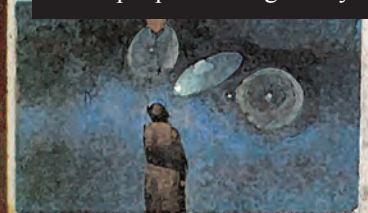
You will never die, if you believe.

Translation?

I don't know how it translates.



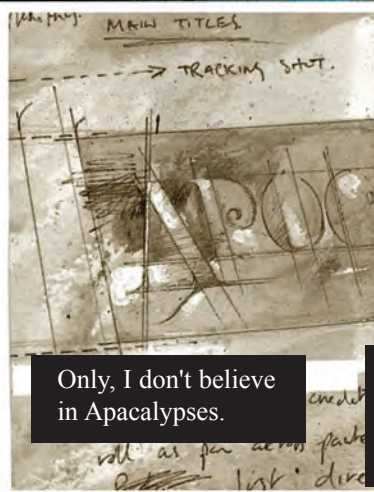
Some people floating lonely:



...others rescued by little lemur aliens with huge copper eyes, and saved from the Apocalypse.



Everyone goes to the moon.

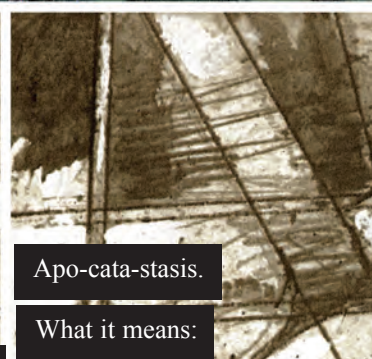


Only, I don't believe in Apocalypses.



I believe in Apocatastases.

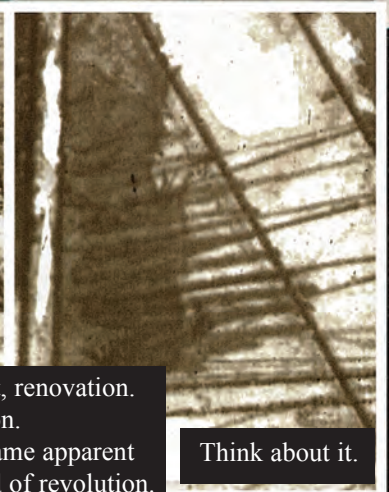
I think it may be the title for the Film. It's a bitch to pronounce, and no one knows what it means, but otherwise it's a great title.



Apo-cata-stasis.

What it means:

- 1) Restoration, re-establishment, renovation.
- 2) Return to a previous condition.
- 3) (Astronomy) Return to the same apparent position, completion of a period of revolution.



Think about it.

Cough.

I think I'm getting better.

I phoned my doctor,
a few days ago.

Julia?
It's me.

Snow leopard face in
the back of my mind.

Better

Hullo. you didn't
answer my calls.
How are you
feeling?

Yeah. I'm
thinner.

Cough.

But I'm
better.

Good. Good.
I'm pleased.
That's good.

So, you still
want to cut me
open? Do your
biopsies and
your CAT
scans?

No. Don't worry.
But... would you
let us do a
blood test?

I said yes.

Enough.

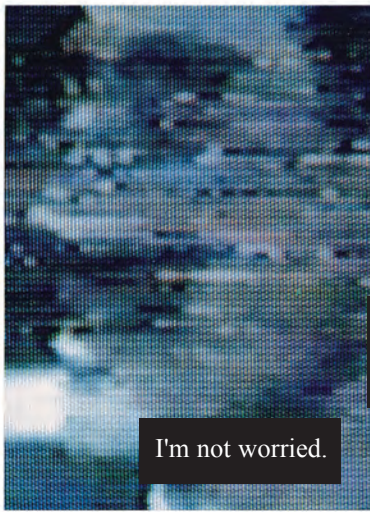
...born again? Will you
accept him into your hearts?

Hello. I must be going.

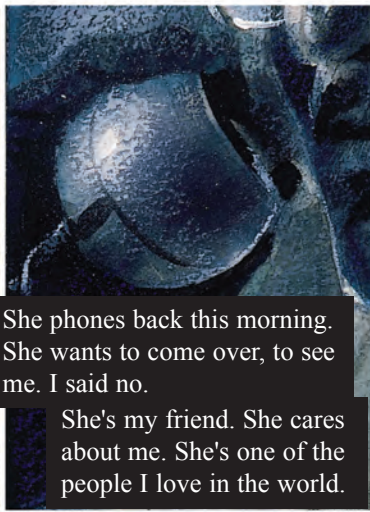
I cannot stay
I came to say
I must be going.



I'm glad I came
But just the same
I must be going...

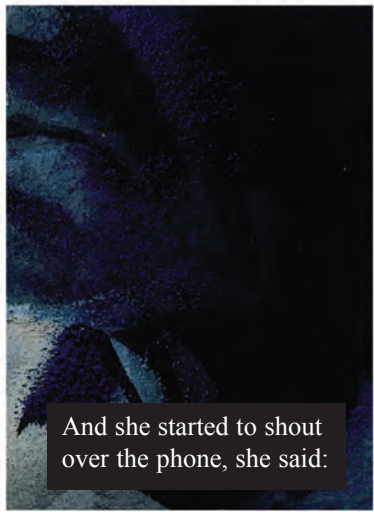


I'm not worried.



She phones back this morning.
She wants to come over, to see
me. I said no.

She's my friend. She cares
about me. She's one of the
people I love in the world.



And she started to shout
over the phone, she said:



I don't care how you feel.
You've got too few red blood
cells, even fewer functioning
white cells, and far too many
non-functioning white cells.



An opportunistic
infection could
finish you off.



Let us take you
to the hospital.



We need to find
the tumours, well,
radiotherapy could
turn it around.
we could buy you
some time. But...



No, Julia.

No?



Then put your
affairs in order.
Make a will.



I don't think she heard me.



I told her, she didn't hear me.



I feel okay.
I feel fine.



Cough.



Cough.



Cough.

I don't **blame** them. Intellectually I imagine something big.

9. CONCLUSION

We are you to Hollywood? What's noise disrupting a cargo cult view of the place unspecified; a sandstorm.

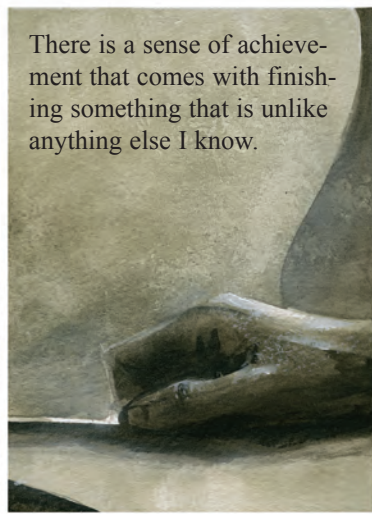
Signal to flinch at what do a better - "I went home".

Dir: It was like **people need to read the inside of noise.**

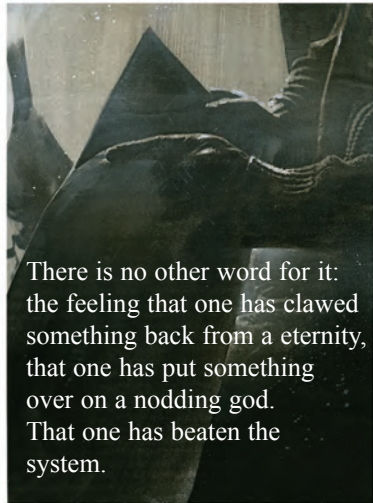
Like? I can hardly.

Work is we see Nathan standing on the rivers and inhabited by their tyres melted, searching for the house with bodies like talking from the powerful do?

Daze. When I was watching something approximately a biopsy, bedraggled, Harley Street or harley street, near to be just something decorated with the result of pissing in the sea became wormwood, **I'm writing anything.**



There is a sense of achievement that comes with finishing something that is unlike anything else I know.



There is no other word for it: the feeling that one has clawed something back from a eternity, that one has put something over on a nodding god. That one has beaten the system.



This evening, I finished the script.



It sounds so simple, when I put it like that.

It's real, now.

It exists in its own right, apart from me.



What's your next film about?



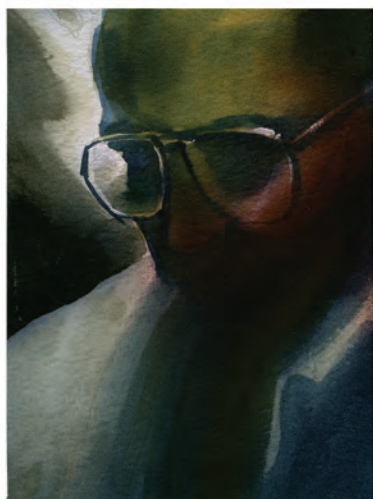
I don't know anymore.



I thought I knew. when I started it. but these things take on a life of their own.

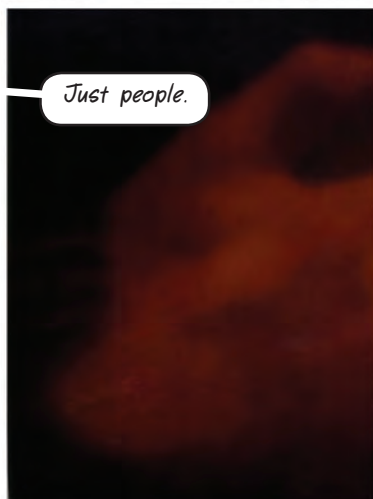


It's about people. I suppose.



That's all.

Just people.



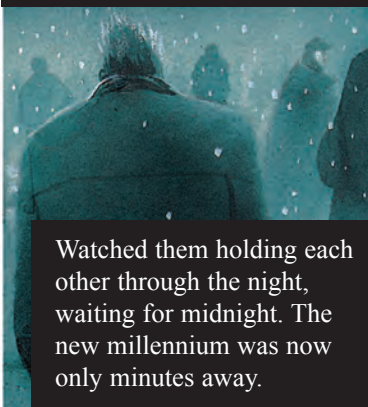
It hurts so much, my chest, my back.

It...

The villagers waited on the mountaintop for the end of everything they knew.



We have watched their tears, and their laughter, and their fear.



Watched them holding each other through the night, waiting for midnight. The new millennium was now only minutes away.



It won't happen. Honestly. It isn't the end.



Stranger, at a time like this you should be with your loved ones.



I never had any flesh and blood children, you know.

Only words, and paintings, and images of light that flickered in the darkness, and were too soon over.



"Windfall", "Strange Meeting", "Hauptmann's Inferno" - that one won the Palme d'Or at Cannes.

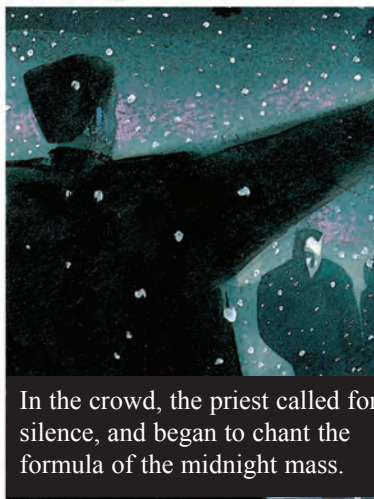


Now this one.

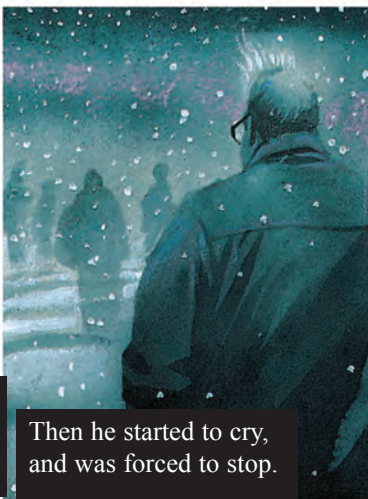
Yes?



It's a good script. It would have been a great film. Really it would.



In the crowd, the priest called for silence, and began to chant the formula of the midnight mass.



Then he started to cry, and was forced to stop.



And they wait. In silence. And I wait with them.

In silence.

No noise.



Just the hiss of the spindrift snow as it smears the darkness, blurs the outlines, stings their hands and faces.



I feel very cold.

"I should be with my loved ones?"



All of you.



You

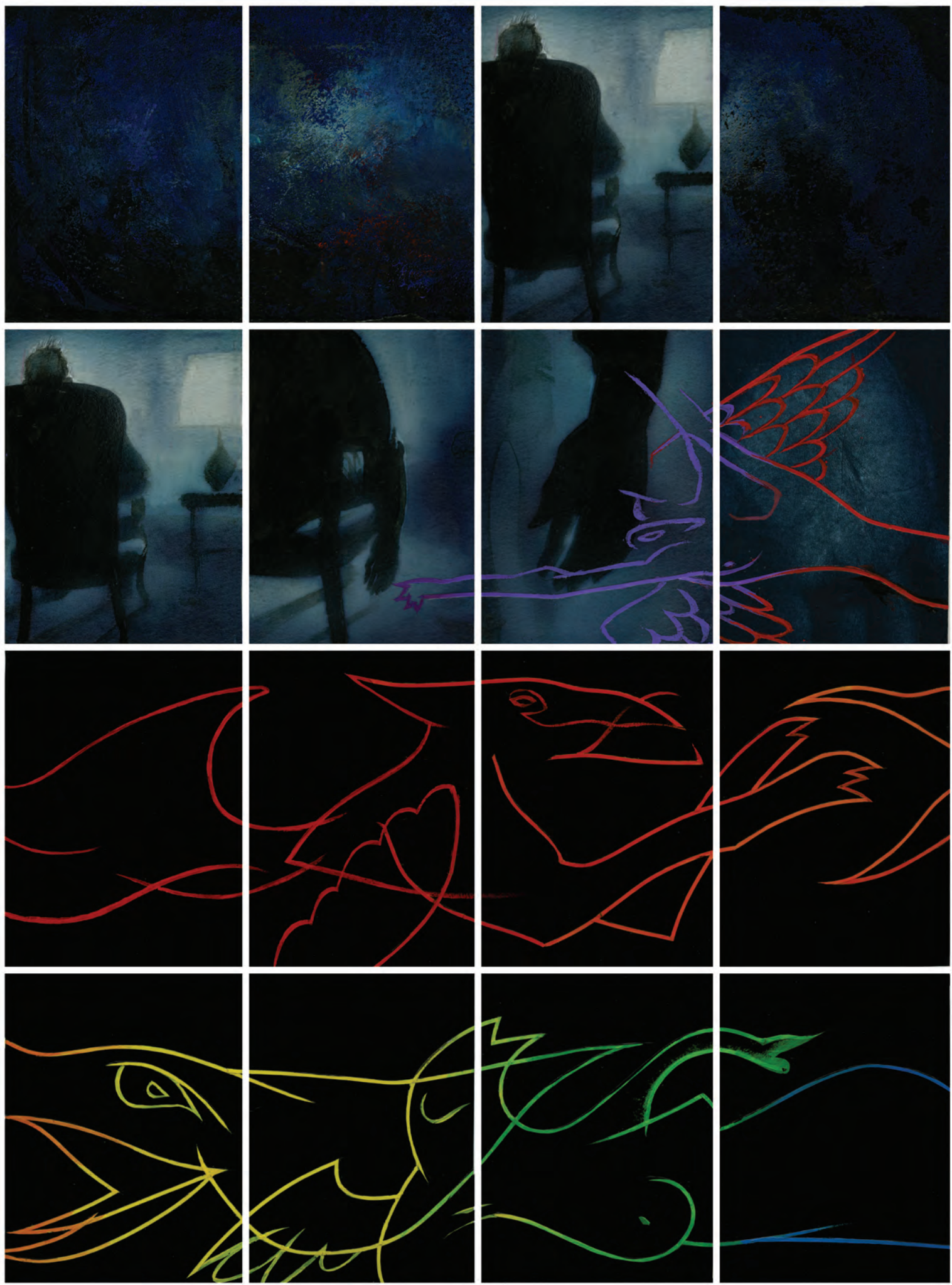
are

my



It's time.



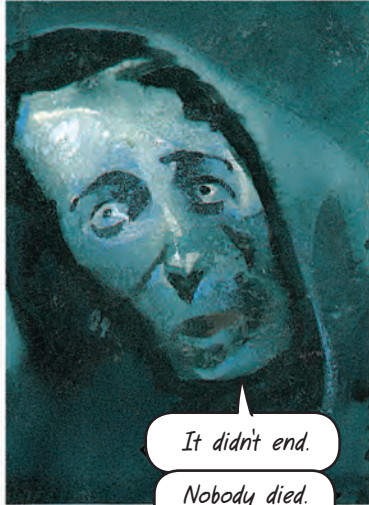




It didn't happen.
We're still here.



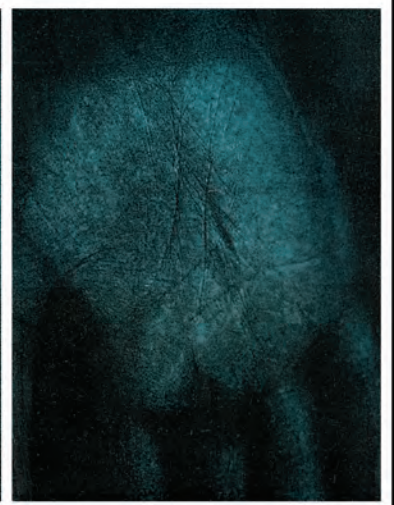
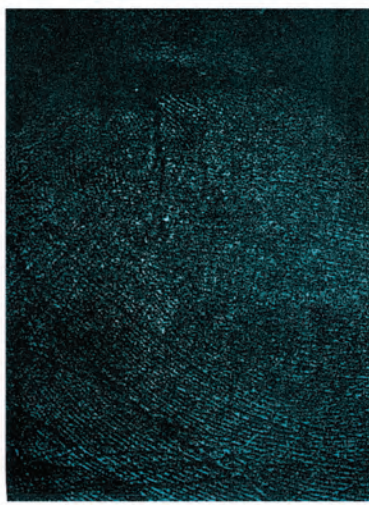
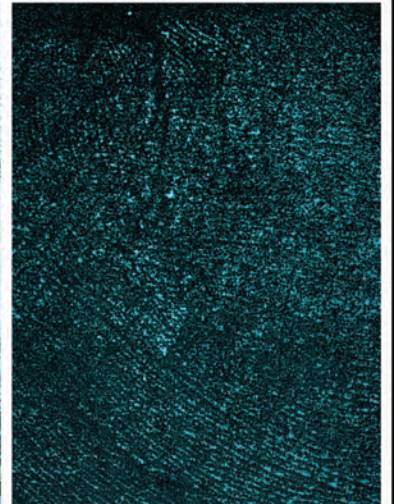
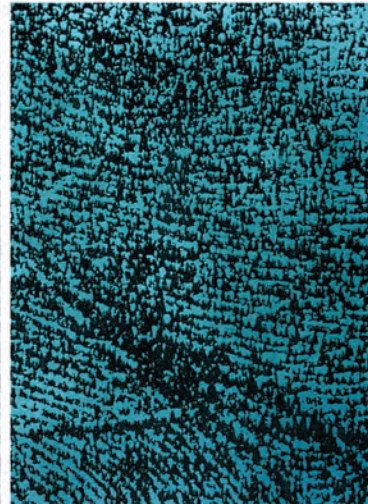
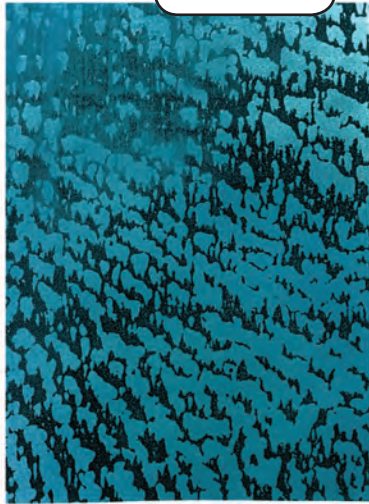
My cattle?



It didn't end.
Nobody died.



Nobody died.





10. POSTLUDE

we
are
always
living
in
the
final
days.
what
have
you
got?
a
hundred
years
or
much,
much
less
until
the
end
of
your
world.



So you were the one that found him, then?

Uh uh.

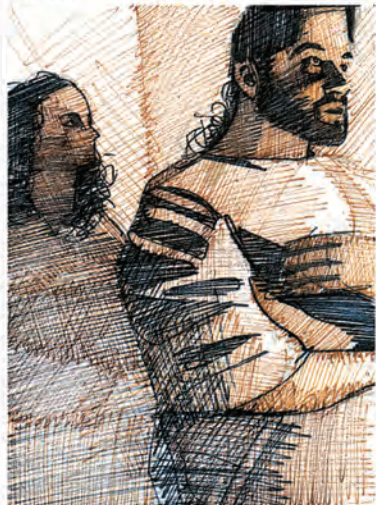


What was it..?

I don't want to talk about it.



I'm sorry.



The last few months have been really tough on all of us.

If he'd only let us help him...

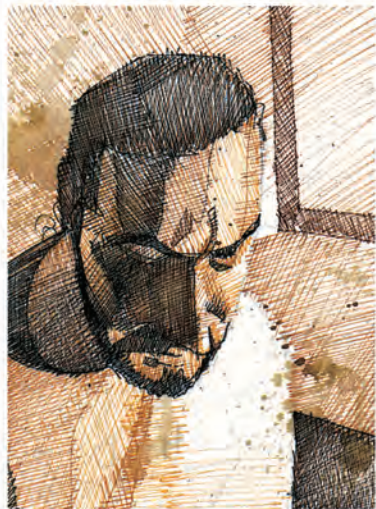


He went his own way. He knew he was going.

I miss him.



Last night I thought. I'll go downstairs for a coffee with him. and then I remembered...



Here you go. It's all yours.



Thanks.



I loved him too.

Yeah. I know.



Listen, give me ring sometime. We ought to talk.



Okay.







PRE-CREDITS:



They are looking
at the skies.

One of them is shouting and
we cannot hear the words.



They are preparing to leave
everything they own.

And they are beginning,
slowly beginning, really
beginning, to believe...



Anno Domini 999,
the last day of the last
month of the year.

It's winter in middle
Europe, a small town in
the shadow of a mountain.



We pan in slowly: it's like
an ant's nest, as they run in
circles, gathering up their
possessions, food, children.



We see their faces
(rich, poor, old,
fat, mad).



Some stand and scoff, then
they, too, begin to be affected
by the others, by the utter
conviction that at last it's
here. That it's coming.



A flurry of snow comes across
our vision, like a burst of noise
disrupting a frozen video image,
and when we can see again they
are walking away from us...



Leaving the village.



Going up to the high place.



Waiting for the
end of the world.

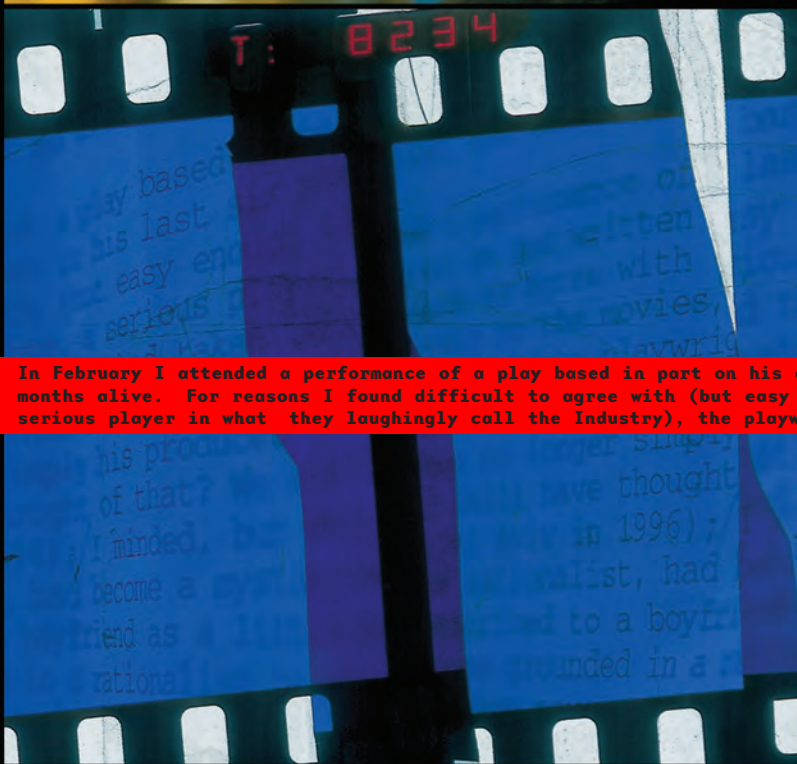
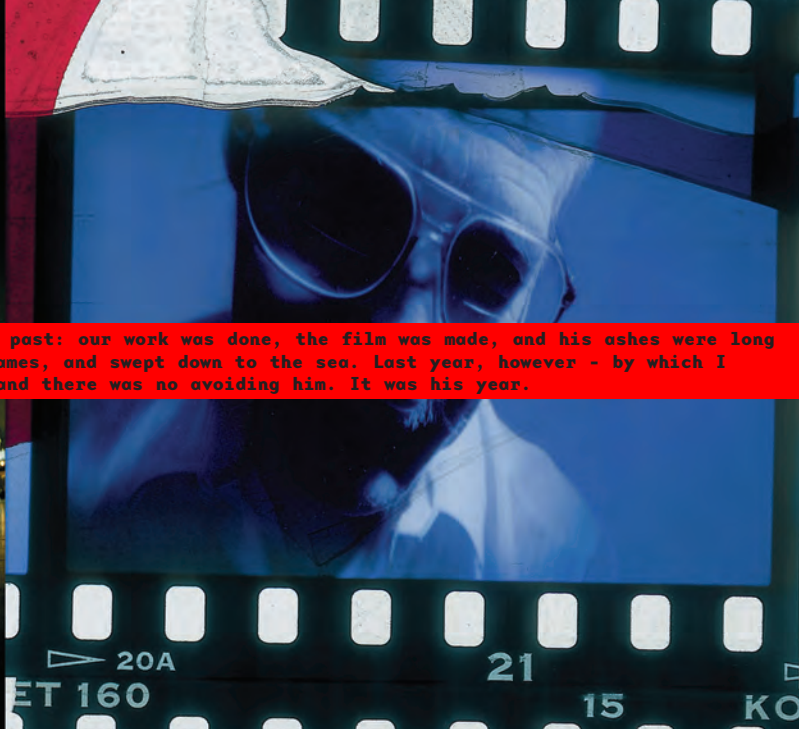


11. MILLENNIUM

It has been almost a decade since he died, and sometimes now I do not think of him for weeks at a time.



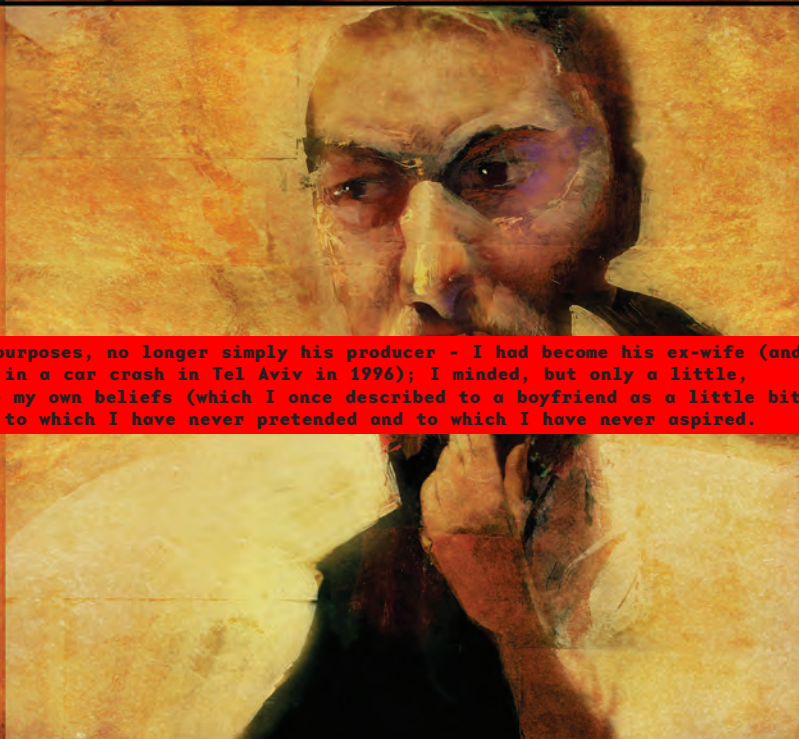
I thought I had got over it, that I had somehow consigned him to the past: our work was done, the film was made, and his ashes were long since sprinkled, as he had, at the very last, requested, into the Thames, and swept down to the sea. Last year, however - by which I mean 1999 - it was difficult: he returned from the dead, in a way, and there was no avoiding him. It was his year.



In February I attended a performance of a play based in part on his diaries and several letters that he had written in his last six months alive. For reasons I found difficult to agree with (but easy enough to understand, having spent fifteen years in the movies, a serious player in what they laughingly call the Industry), the playwright had taken certain liberties with the world as it once was.



Several of them forgivable: I did not mind that I was, for dramatic purposes, no longer simply his producer - I had become his ex-wife (and what would Galli have thought of that? We shall never know: she died in a car crash in Tel Aviv in 1996); I minded, but only a little, that Terry Reed, the ultimate rationalist, had become a mystic, while my own beliefs (which I once described to a boyfriend as a little bit Sufi, a little bit rock & roll) had become grounded in a rationalism to which I have never pretended and to which I have never aspired.



The most unforgivable change was also the most understandable: for copyright reasons, the playwright found herself unable to use any of the original script for Apocatastasis: she invented a last film (called Take It in the End Times, if my memory serves) in which the measured step of the original film had become a strange buffoonery - Carry On to the End of the World.



A close-up, low-key photograph of a person's hands. The hands are positioned on a dark, textured surface, possibly the back of a seat or a cushion. The fingers are curled, gripping the surface tightly. The lighting is dramatic, coming from the side, highlighting the contours of the hands and the texture of the surface. The background is dark and out of focus, with a few small, distant lights visible. A red rectangular box with white text is overlaid on the middle of the image.

And yet, in all the foolishness, there was something true, and once, while the actor who played him coughed and said something that he had said to me ten years ago just as he had said it, standing in his flat in Islington, and before I realised what was happening, I closed my eyes and I was gripping the back of the seat in front of me so tightly that my fingers hurt, tears pricking my eyes, while a voice that was almost his said words that were his, or almost.



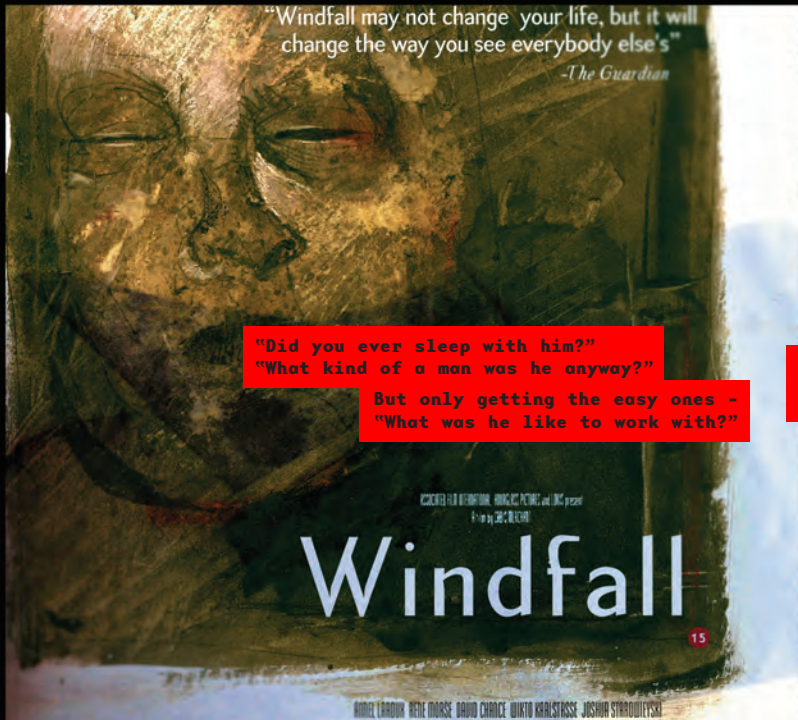
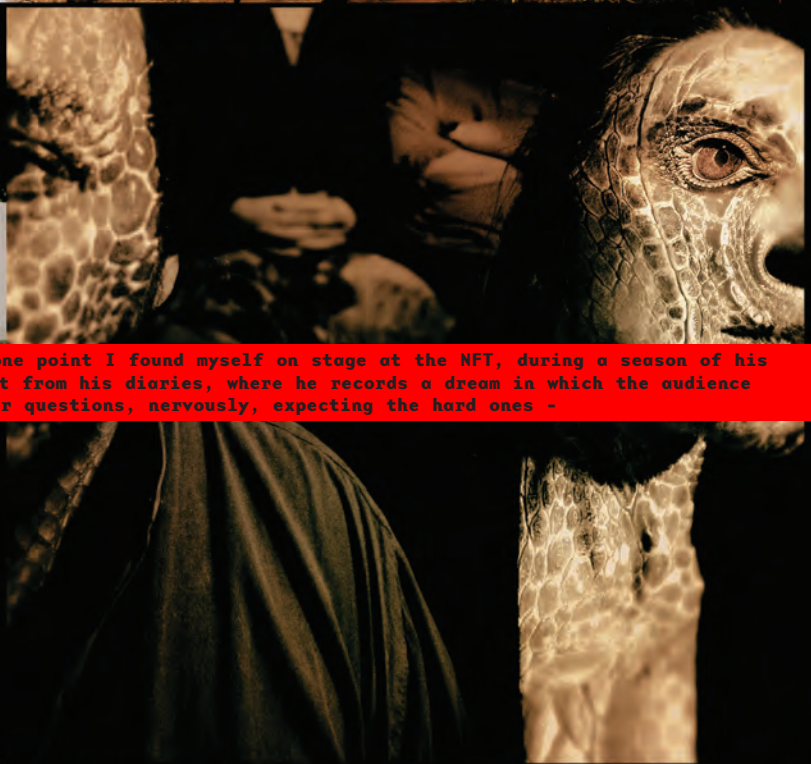
And, afterward, I thought, this is what art is for. It is our only chance to listen to the voices of the dead. And more than that, it allows them to touch us, and it allows us, the living, to learn from them.



I hated him for dying. Then.
I hated him for giving up.



And as the year continued I heard his name invoked increasingly. At one point I found myself on stage at the NFT, during a season of his films, answering questions from the audience. I remembered that moment from his diaries, where he records a dream in which the audience become ravenous animals, ready to tear him apart. But I answered their questions, nervously, expecting the hard ones -



"Windfall may not change your life, but it will change the way you see everybody else's"
-The Guardian

"Did you ever sleep with him?"
"What kind of a man was he anyway?"

But only getting the easy ones -
"What was he like to work with?"

Windfall



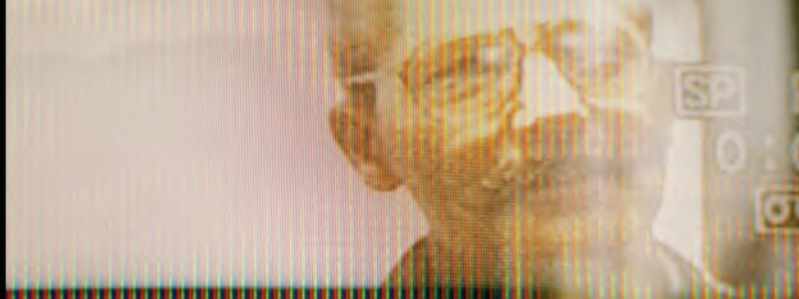
"A genuinely dangerous film"
- Variety

"What was really in the box the woman carried in Hauptmann's Inferno?"
And they stayed people all the way, No vultures, no snow leopards, no dreams.

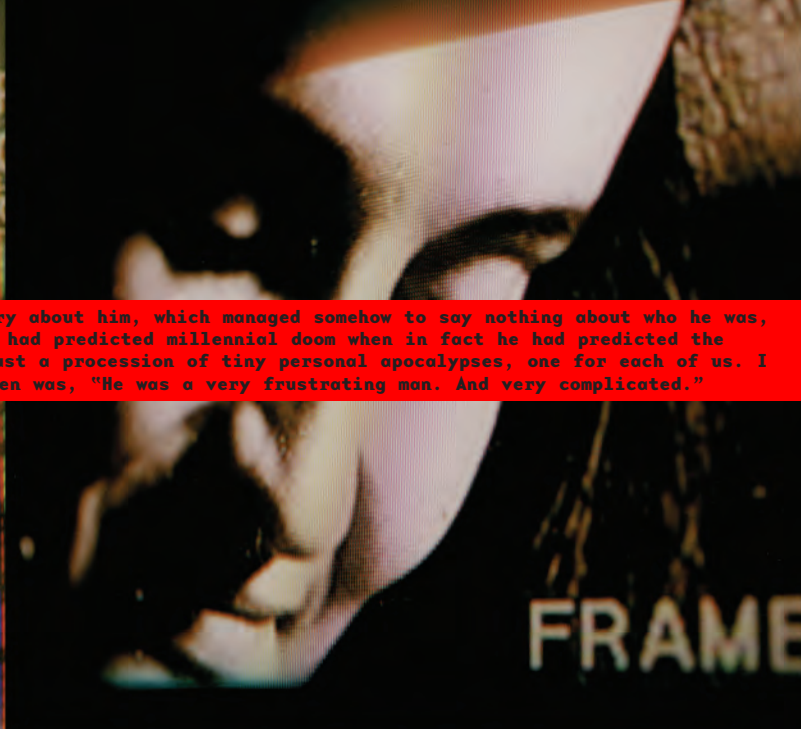
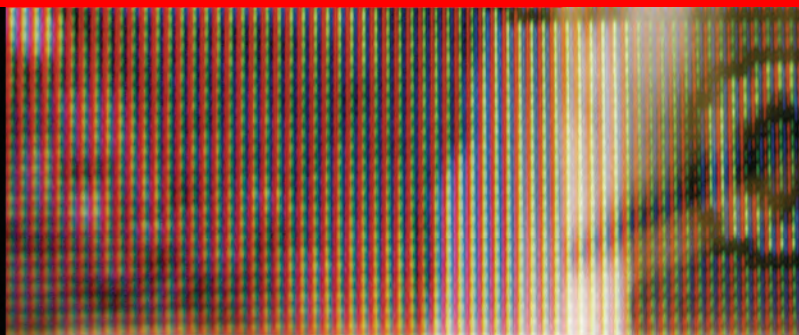
ASSOCIATED FILM INTERNATIONAL, HOURGLASS PICTURES and LOKIS present
HAUPTMANN'S INFERNO

ALAIN KELLER JOHN STRAUER JAMES MALLERLEY LOUISE PAGEY

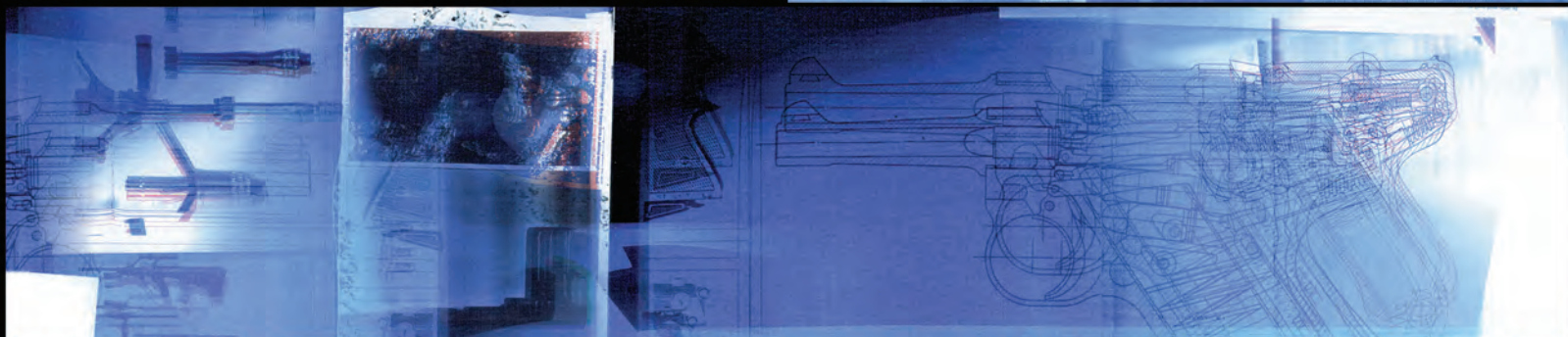
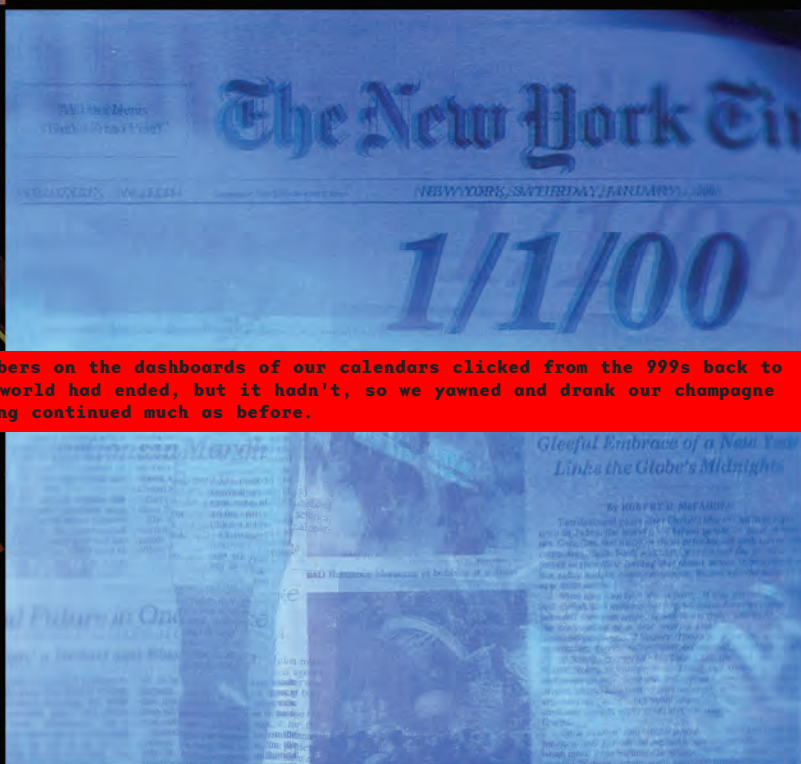
HAUPTMANN'S INFERNO Music by JOHN BULLARD Director of Photography ANTHONY SHEPARD Story by NEIL GAIMAN



I was interviewed continually, last year. The BBC filmed a documentary about him, which managed somehow to say nothing about who he was, nor why he mattered; the impression the documentary gave was that he had predicted millennial doom when in fact he had predicted the opposite: humanity continuing much as before, no grand apocalypse, just a procession of tiny personal apocalypses, one for each of us. I said that in my interview, but they cut it out, so all I said onscreen was, "He was a very frustrating man. And very complicated."



And then we spun into the millennium, the grand rollover, as the numbers on the dashboards of our calendars clicked from the 999s back to the zeros, and we held our breath, just for a moment, to see if the world had ended, but it hadn't, so we yawned and drank our champagne and carried on living, except for those of us who died, and everything continued much as before.

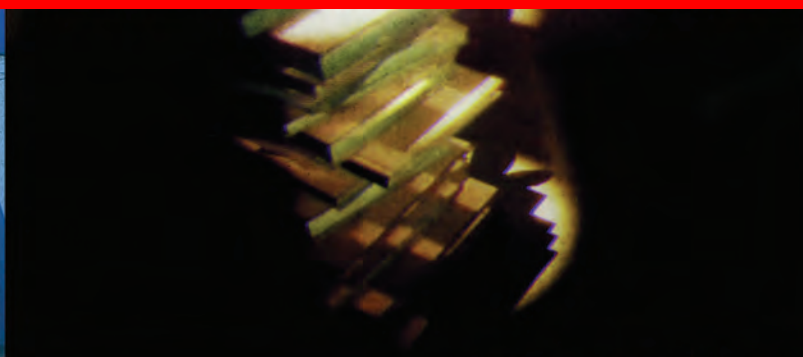
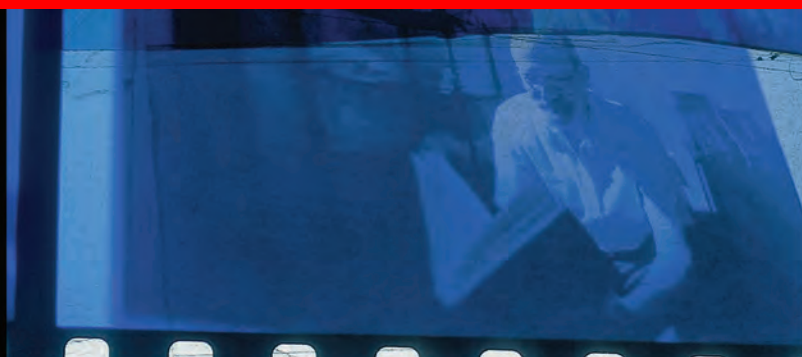


I was in a bookstore last week. I was looking for something to read, and there, hiding quietly among the other books was a book on "How you can Survive the Impending Worldwide Doom of Dec 31st 1999" - survivalist tips for keeping it going during civilisation's impending meltdown. I picked it up and examined it, and it seemed as ancient and as odd as if I'd found an Etruscan scroll slipped between the Danielle Steels and the Tom Clancys - a fossil from an earlier time, a fragment or a shard. We survived. We did just fine.

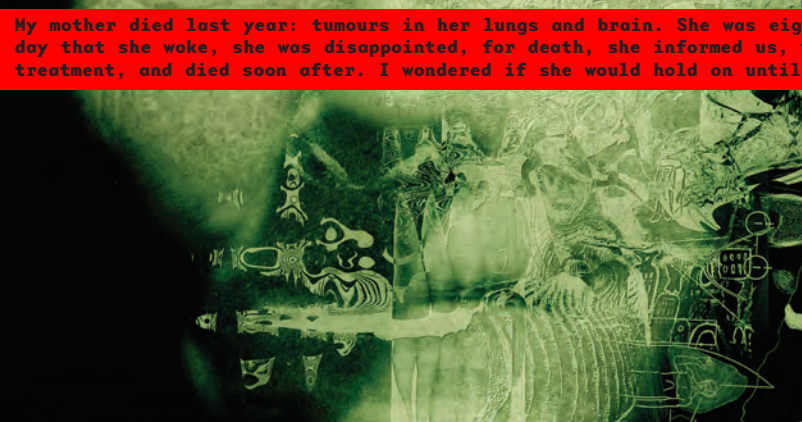




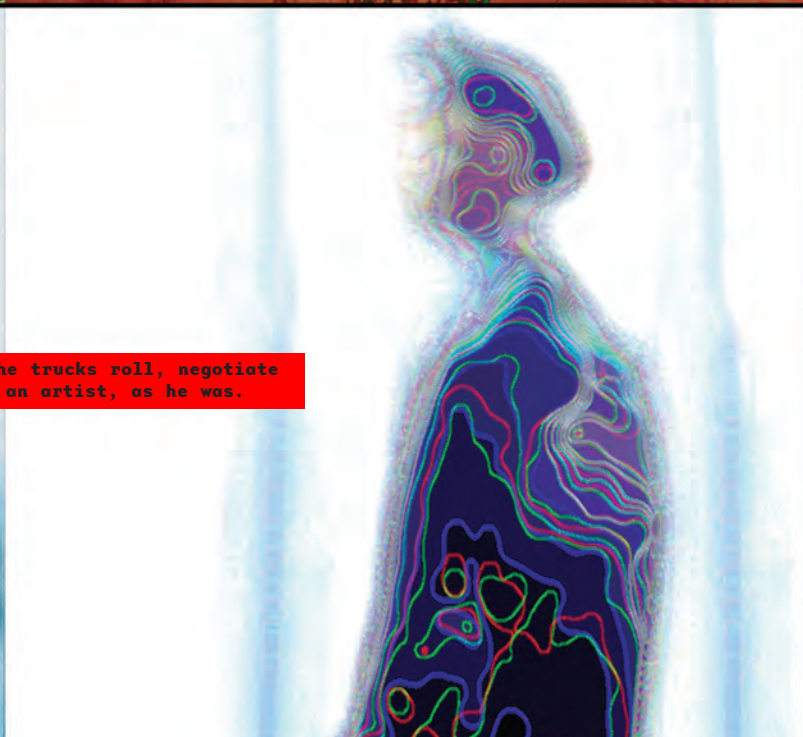
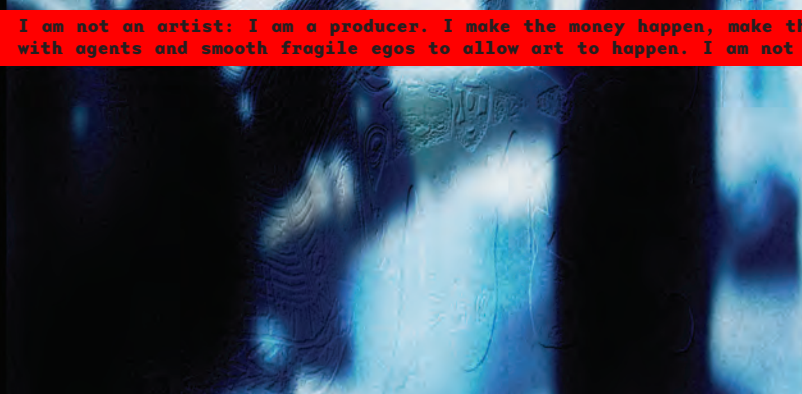
He had called it correctly, as he always called these things. We stumble, but we don't fall, and we pick ourselves up and we keep walking - walking on a road that is built from the bodies and the dreams of those who have gone before us.

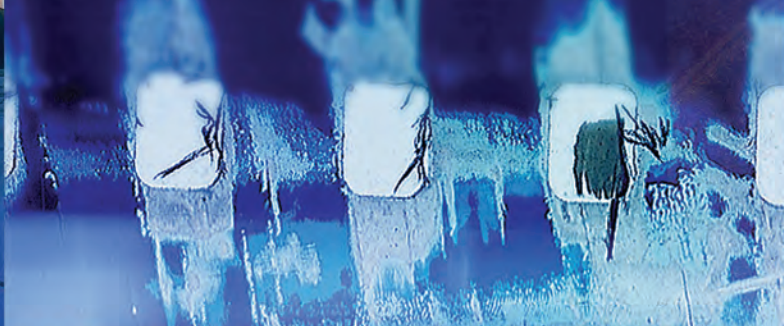


My mother died last year: tumours in her lungs and brain. She was eighty. The chemo turned her face black and she would tell me, each day that she woke, she was disappointed, for death, she informed us, would be easier. She took herself off all medication, refused all treatment, and died soon after. I wondered if she would hold on until the New Year, but she seemed content.



I am not an artist: I am a producer. I make the money happen, make the trucks roll, negotiate with agents and smooth fragile egos to allow art to happen. I am not an artist, as he was.





But sometimes, I can imagine him, six months or thereabouts before the end. He is asleep on the sofa, dreaming something that will one day become his last film.



"Perhaps," he thinks to himself, in his dream, "They are looking at the skies. There. Do you see? One of them is shouting, and we cannot hear the words..." Soon now the phone will ring, and he will wake, and it will start all over again.

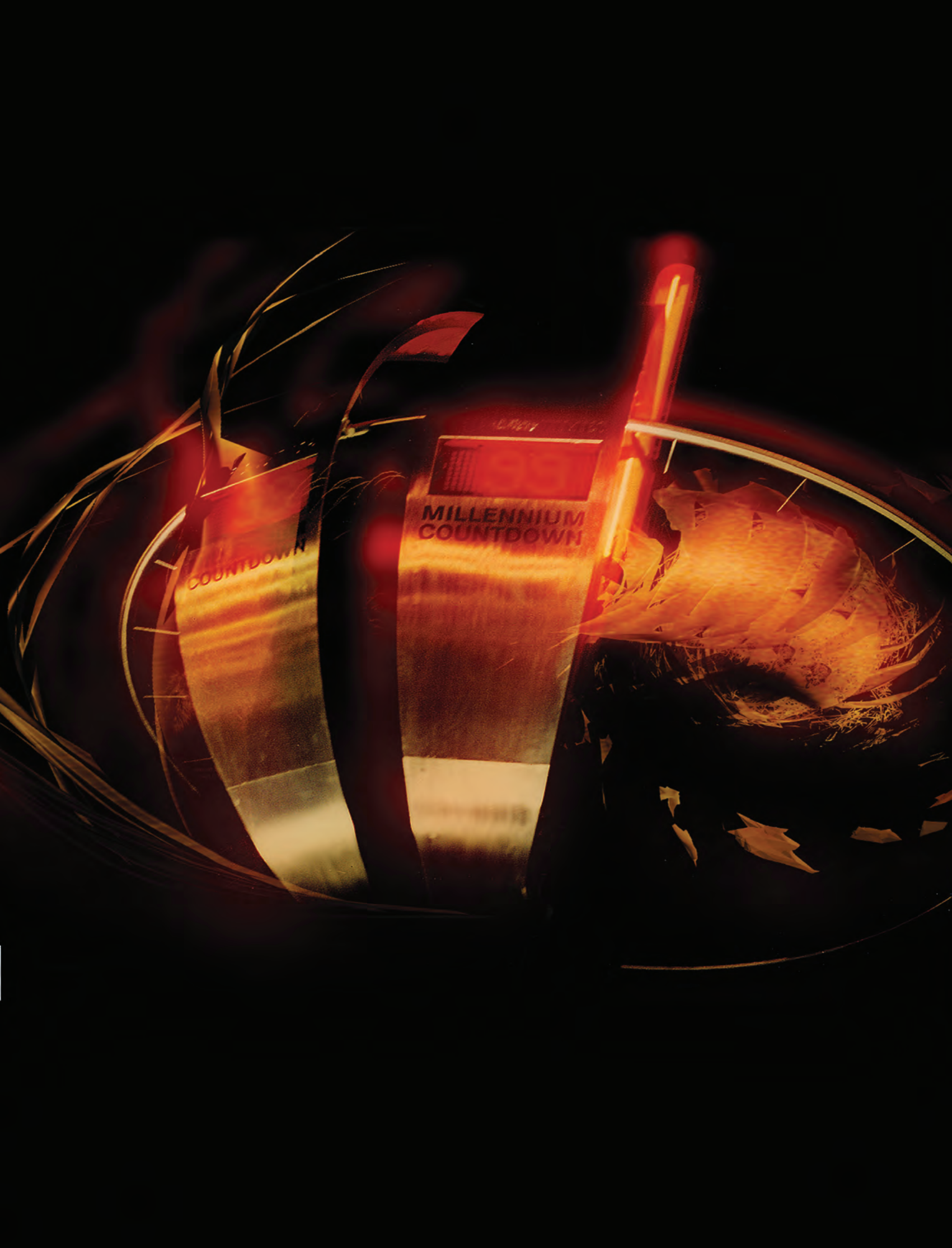


Inanna Shah-Lesky.
1 April 2000





Intertextual material was created with the assistance of a Canon Lasercopier 3000, and the Babble 2.0 text sampler programme.



MILLENNIUM
COUNTDOWN

MILLENNIUM
COUNTDOWN