





rock bottom

Tomiko Nanashi

hit rock bottom.

rock was nice about it.
offered tea.

we sat in silence.

honestly?
might stay a while.



Chopper Travails

Moshe Davidovici

Tex Unger sighed and brushed his bangs away from his face. “I don’t think you appreciate the situation that I’m in, *compa*.” He said quietly from the copilot’s seat of the Apache helicopter as the muffled sounds of the blades beat overhead. “I mean how does one tell a man you’re about to throw him out of a helicopter?”

Kiko Freeman blinked. “‘Hello, sir. I’m about to throw you out of a helicopter.’ And stop calling me *compa*. I’m not hispanic.”

Tex waved his words out of the air, his pinkie ring glinting from the sunlight that filled the cockpit. He watched as Los Angeles flew by beneath them. “And I thought *Checkers* was the least helpful guy I’d ever met. You can’t just hand out death like it’s candy, bro.”

Kiko raised an eyebrow. “Isn’t that pretty much what Bachman pays us to do? Get whoever he asks us to out of the way?”

Tex shook his head and adjusted his shirt. He’d never liked this new uniform, camo pants, black shirt and boots. Uniforms were for students, not trained killers. “This one’s different. He worked with us. He was helpful, kind of. What he did wasn’t *that* bad...”

“Since when have *you* given a shit?”

“I’m going soft in my old age.”

“You’re twenty six.”

“My mom was twenty six when I was twelve. As far as I’m concerned, I’m a geezer.”

Kiko ran a hand through his buzz cut. “Whatever you say. If you’re so hung up, just close your eyes and push and it’ll all be over. It’s Bachman’s orders, man, and I gotta be in here keeping this thing flying.”

“No! I’ve gotta give it the proper respect, man.”

“You have not given anything or anyone the ‘proper respect’ since you were born. ‘Eh, Kiko, it’ll be fine, I don’t need to read the manual. How hard can driving an oil truck be?’ Never come closer to dying in my life.”

Tex shrugged. “There’s a first time for everything. And come on, the truck thing wasn’t *that* bad.”

“The dead would beg to differ.”

Tex put a hand to his chin. “Maybe I’ll say something religious.”

“You haven’t read a single word from the bible in your life.”

“Speak for yourself. I’m absolutely positive that ‘the’ is in it somewhere.”

“Smart ass.”

“Whatever. In the westerns I watched with my dad as a kid, when somebody died they said something about the Lord or whatever.”

Kiko craned his neck to get a better view below them. “I don’t think the Lord would much appreciate you using his name.”

“Fair point. Maybe I’ll say something funny. Wouldn’t *you* want to die laughing?”

“Right now, I want to die just to get out of this stupid conversation.”

“Don’t be dramatic.”

“I am by far the least dramatic one here.” Kiko eased the bulky Apache into a turn. “Well, here we are.” They hovered over a nondescript gray skyscraper. When they threw the man from the chopper, it would look like he’d jumped himself. Kiko turned to Tex. “Look, the plan Bachman laid out for us, he doesn’t even need to know. Hand him the dummy parachute and send him on his way.”

“And he doesn’t even know he’s about to die?”

“Best way to go out, if you ask me.”

Tex laced his fingers behind his head. Kill a man with no warning? He wasn’t so sure about this... “*necesito pensarlo.*”

“Talk in English or I’m throwing you out with him.”

Tex patted the man on the back as they peered out the open door of the helicopter. “How you feeling, Dennis? Ready to shoot them Street Union fuckers dead.”

Dennis, a broad man with a stubbled neck, snarled, his eyes and grin wide, his knuckles white around the grip of his AR. “Fuck yeah! *Shoot ‘em dead! I’m ready, man!*” Tex cringed. He didn’t know if it was the way he talked or his look or what, but Dennis gave him the creeps. Nice enough guy, but...nobody ever let him anywhere near the drugs Bachman’s outfit sold, but Tex didn’t know how else to explain...well, everything about him. Ambivalent as he was, he could see why Bachman had given the order to have him whacked.

He looked away as Dennis put an arm around his shoulder like the brochachos they always said they were. “You got it, Denny-boy. Down to the street, around the corner and into the cafe. Everyone inside is Street Union or owned by Street Union. Your armor only goes so far, so try not to get shot *too* much.”

Dennis’ nostrils flared. “They’ll all *be* dead ‘fore they can shoot *me!* Lemme *at* ‘em!”

“That’s the spirit, buddy. Come on, on three. Imma kill ‘em, one!”

Dennis twitched in excitement. “Imma kill ‘em *one!*”

“Imma kill ‘em, two!”

“Imma *kill* ‘em *two!*”

“Imma kill ‘em, three!”

“*Imma kill ‘em three!*” Tex sank back and looked down as Dennis threw himself out of the helicopter, thinking that he’d pull the cord, float down and shoot some bastards up. Tex floated back into the cockpit and into his seat.

Kiko steered the chopper toward home and hit the gas. He glanced at Tex. “And after all that, you just went with the original plan.”

“Suck my dick, man.”

“Hey, and we were just talking about things that’d make me want to die. Probably kill me itself, infected as the thing is.”

Tex sighed. “None will ever hear his blood-crazed scream again.”

“You say that like it’s a bad thing.”

“I’ll think of something better for next time. Some kinda speech to give. Give him time to think up his last words.”

“You keep bugging me about this, you might be saying your own soon enough. Let’s get home.”

Tex leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. Before today, he’d liked choppers...



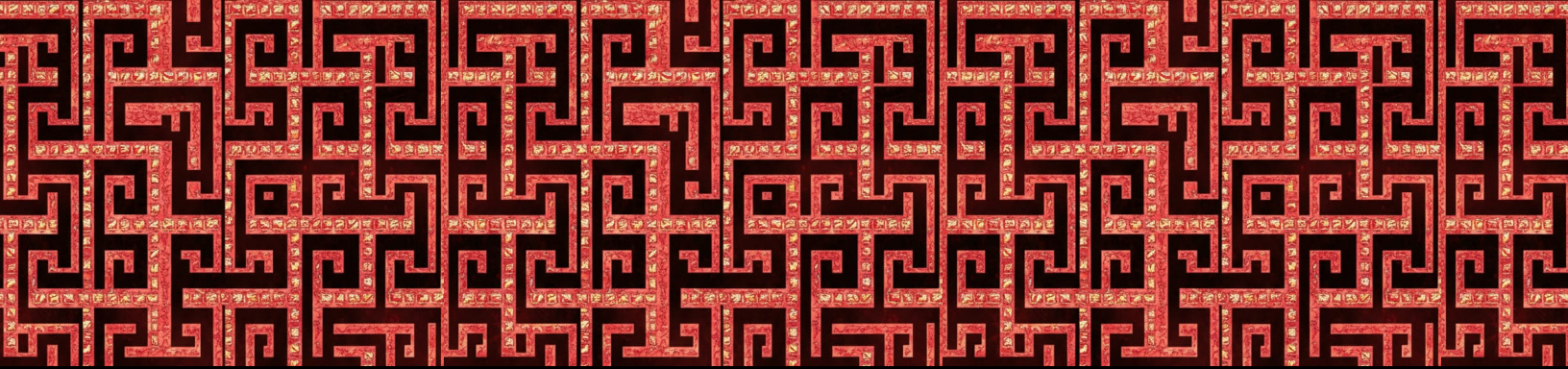


three bottle date

Stephen Ground

I drank of the silty blood &
feasted on the willing body,
tattooing whispered words on
the inside of my eyelids like
twisted vines of *remember* & still
you smashed me like a hobbled
mouse seeking shelter from a
historical storm, pleading for warmth
& a mouthful of crumbs to fuel my
scurrying, blind-hearted scrounge.





A walk in the park

Melissa Lemay

“Barbie, we need to talk.”

Barbie continues
reading her magazine.
“What is it, Kenneth?”

“You know I love you...”

Not this again.

“...if I didn’t, I wouldn’t—”

“Wouldn’t what, Ken?
Harp on me constantly
when you should be
minding your own business?”

“That isn’t fair.
The amount of money
I spend on your
binge eating
is keeping me
from buying a new
Barbie Jeep.”

Barbie rolls her eyes.

“I mean, seriously.
Look at this! You
asked me to bring
you McDonald’s. You
already have
a whole pizza,
sushi, tea sandwiches,
cupcakes!”

“I’m hungry.”

“No, you need help.”

“And you need to shut the —— up.”

“Listen to yourself.
When I’m gone,
you’ll never find
another Ken,
not with that attitude.”

“K.”

“What’s more,
all the purging
you do is rotting
your teeth.
Soon those sneakers
will be the
whitest things
you own.”

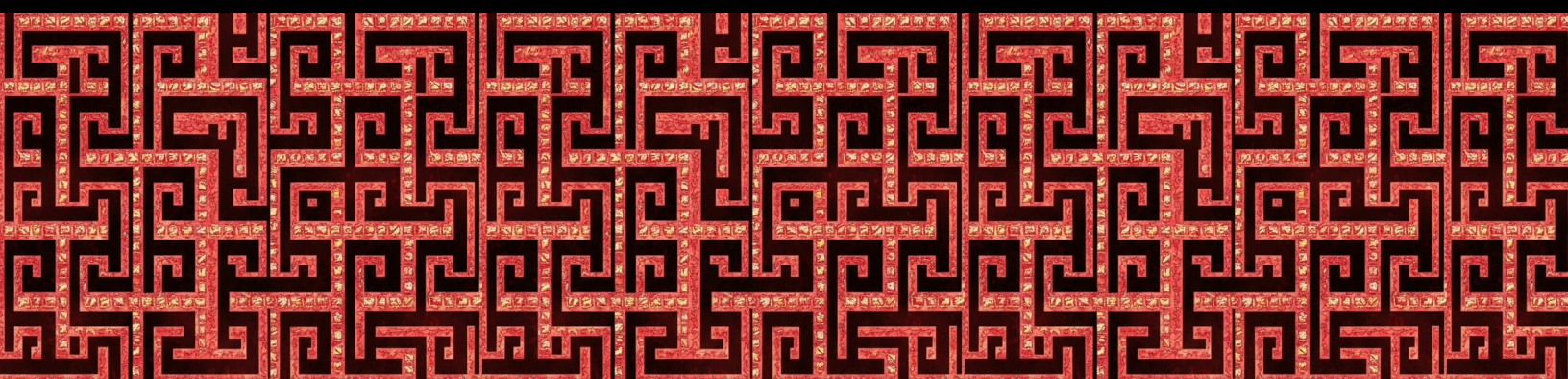
“Did you say s’mores?”
Barbie teases Ken.

“You don’t take this
seriously at all.
It’s a serious issue.”

“No, Ken.
Women’s rights
is a serious issue.
What I’m eating isn’t.
I’m a doll.”

“I can’t do this
anymore. I will not
stand by and watch
while you
slowly kill yourself.”

“Leave the McDonald’s.”





Zillowtopia

Nate Mancuso

“BRING ME LEBRON! HURRY UP, STU!” Stacey Schmaltzberg screams at her husband while her fingers work furiously inside her purple cotton panties. She leans back in her leather office chair and peers through squinted eyes at the laptop computer perched on the desk in front of her.

“Cavs, Heat, or Lakers?” Stuart Schmaltzberg asks eagerly, standing behind Stacey in their home office.

“I don’t care what team, Stu! JUST GET ME MY FUCKING LEBRON!” Stacey shouts while her fingers pick up speed.

“Okay,” Stu replies as he hurries through the office door. “But I have to go to the garage and get the dolly, so it may take a few minutes.”

Stacey eases into a steady rhythm and bites down on her lip with her eyes closed. After a few moments, she opens her eyes and stares back at the laptop screen, where a Zillow.com web page reads, “**Zestimate: \$775,000,**” under her Boca Raton, Florida property address. Stacey parts her lips and moans softly, then closes her eyes and slides her fingers in deeper.

“OK peaches, I got your man!” Stu announces excitedly as he pushes a small handtruck into the office. Strapped to the handtruck is

“Lebron”—a 6’8” dark brown thermoplastic elastomer male sex doll wearing a red basketball jersey with a gold number 23 printed on front. Lebron is naked from the waist down with a fully-erect penis. Stu quickly unstraps Lebron from the handtruck, then lays him on his back in the middle of the carpeted office floor. He looks up at Stacey with a smile and exclaims, “Bring it on, showgirl!”

Stacey pushes herself up from her chair, slides off her panties, then hurries over to Lebron and steps over him so that she’s straddling him with her feet planted on either side of his bare hips. She bends her knees and descends toward a sitting position as she grabs Lebron’s long thick shaft. But she stops mid-squat and looks up angrily at Stu. “He’s dry as a desert, Stu! Lebron is supposed to be self-lubricating! I can’t dry-dock this fucking Clydesdale!”

Stu stammers, “Sorry, hon, his lube ran out after the Cohens’ pool party last month and I forgot to replace it. But I can go get Mad Max or Conan or Elon. They’re each fully-lubed and ready to go.”

“For fuck’s sake, Stuart!” Stacey screams as she sits down on Lebron’s thighs, still holding his shaft. “Just go get the Uber from the bathroom. And hurry up!” Stacey starts to grind her crotch against Lebron’s muscular thigh.

“What Uber? Why do we need an Uber?” Stu asks in confusion.

“The *Uberlube*, you fucking moron! It’s sex lubricant, Stu! It’s in my medicine cabinet next to the Voltaren. Now hurry up!” Stacey shouts as she grinds harder against Lebron’s thigh.

Stu runs off to the bathroom and returns seconds later holding a small plastic bottle. He quickly uncaps the bottle, bends over and squeezes clear lubricant onto Lebron’s protruding penis, then uses his other hand to spread it around evenly.

Stacey grabs the bottle out of Stu’s hand, squeezes some lube out onto her fingertips, then reaches down and rubs her fingers between her open thighs. She raises to a kneel and moves herself over the head of Lebron’s penis, then slides down his shaft until her pale, flabby, cellulitic butt cheeks rest on his upper thighs. She rips out a loud fart against Lebron’s testicles.

“Help me get going, Stu,” she says to her husband as she leans forward and places her hands on Lebron’s broad shoulders. Stu sits down on Lebron’s knees behind Stacey, then presses his hands against her bare butt cheeks with a gentle shove to move her up Lebron’s shaft. Stacey begins to ride Lebron and moan, “Ohhh fuck, Lebron, ohhh yes!”

Stu stands up while Stacey speeds up her rhythm. She squeezes Lebron’s jersey in her fists while she rocks back and forth. Loud guttural grunts and flecks of spittle spew from her open mouth. After a few

moments, she tries to turn over onto her back with Lebron's penis still inside her but is unable to complete the pivot.

"Help me, Stu! Fucking help me here!" Stacey yells out.

"Are you going reverse cowgirl?" Stu asks.

Stacey stares up at him incredulously. "Really, Stu? Does this look like a reverse fucking cowgirl? Now get over here and flip us, goddammit!"

Stu hurries over and hoists Lebron over on top of his wife while she lies flat on her back. She bends her knees while Lebron's bare hips and thick-muscled butt part her thighs.

"Oh Jesus, I strained my back again!" Stu yelps out, grabbing his lower back.

"Fuck your back, Stu! I'm *so* close right now I just need you to push him so I can finish off!" Stacey demands from beneath Lebron. "And you should have sprung for the electric hip thrusters if you were so worried about your back, you cheap bastard!"

"It would've cost an extra \$500 and we were trying to save for Jonah's bar—"

"Just shut the fuck up and push that black ass for me, you goddamn tightwad!"

Despite the sharp pain ripping through his back, with tears welling up in his eyes, Stu kneels down and clenches Lebron's butt cheeks with both hands, then thrusts Lebron's hips back and forth between Stacey's thighs while her moans intensify. "Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, oh my Jesus fucking YES!"

Stacey's moans become one continuous high-pitched wail while Stu's back pain escalates with each forward thrust—a sharp dagger piercing through to his spine.

"Ohh-ohh-ohh-ohh-ohh-fuckkkkk!" Stacey belts out, bucking her hips until she climaxes in one final scream, "AHGHHHHH!" Completely exhausted, she gasps in air as her tension releases and body goes slack, collapsing back to the floor. "Okay, Okay, Okay," she pants.

His back on fire with excruciating pain, Stu falls forward onto Lebron—pushing their full combined body weight down onto his wife.

"Get off me, Stu, you're crushing me! I can barely breathe, now get the fuck up!" Stacey shouts from beneath Lebron.

With his last ounce of energy, Stu pushes himself up and rolls over onto his back next to Stacey and Lebron, breathing heavily with his hand on his chest. "Oh my God, I think I'm having a heart attack," Stu groans painfully.

Ignoring her husband, Stacey pushes Lebron off of her while sweat pours down her pudgy red face, streaming over her loose jowels and down her neck. "Get me a towel, Stu," she says as she catches her breath. "I'm sweating like a pig."

Stu doesn't answer, lying flat on his back with his hand pressed to his chest, breathing slowly with his eyes pinched shut and face twisted in pain.

Stacey sits up and her soft loose-skinned gut laps over her pelvis, settling in just above a thick patch of sweat-dampened gray pubic hair. She takes a deep breath, then stands up and hobbles to the bathroom while Stu remains in a prostrate position on the floor.

After toweling off and putting her clothes back on, Stacey steps over Stu and LeBron, then plops down heavily into her office chair. She refreshes the laptop screen and types something into the Google search query box. She selects a website and scrolls down, then picks up her phone.

"Hello, you've reached Home Equity Hunks, South Florida's leading home equity lender, making all your financial dreams come true," says an automated voice on the phone. "If you're an existing customer, press or say 1. If you're a new customer, press or say 2." Stacey presses 2 on her dial pad and the voice continues, "If you'd like to hear options for a new—" Stacey presses 0 before the voice can finish. After a brief pause, the voice resumes, "I'm sorry, but—"

Stacey interrupts the voice, frantically screaming into her phone, "Operator! Human being! I want a live fucking person!"

"Please hold for a dedicated loan hunk," the voice says.

"Oh Jesus, hurry the fuck up," Stacey groans. "I don't have time for this shit."

After about thirty seconds of soft hold music, a live voice pipes up on the other end of the line. "This is Chaz Beaumont, loan hunk number 028746. And whom do I have the pleasure of speaking with today?"

Stacey says her name and asks, "I sent my loan application in yesterday morning and still haven't heard back. What's going on?"

Chaz replies, "Ma'am, the loan review process typically takes at least ten to twelve business days, and then—"

"I don't have that much time!" Stacey shouts. "My daughter's summer camp tuition is due in a few days, and then we have to buy our plane tickets to Paris. I need the money now!"

"I understand, Mrs. Schmaltzberg, but this is a regulated process and we—"

Stacey cuts him off. "I have the new Zillow valuation for our house—\$775,000—it's got more than enough equity for another fifty thousand cashout. This ain't my first rodeo, Chaz."

Well ma'am, I'll see if I can get the review process accelerated for you but I'll need some basic information first. What's the total mortgage debt on your house, ma'am?"

Stacey pauses, then mumbles, "About \$520,000."

“And how much did you buy the house for, ma’am?”

After another pause, Stacey answers, “\$310,000 about fifteen years ago, but Zillow says it’s worth almost \$800,000 now.”

“Well you’re obviously no stranger to home equity loans,” Chaz chuckles. “Have you borrowed from Home Equity Hunks in the past, ma’am?”

“No,” Stacey answers irritably. “We used another home equity lender for the first two loans, then Cashout Studs for the third one. But we can’t—”

“Don’t tell him about the Loan Depot assault charge and restraining order,” Stu whispers into Stacey’s ear, having risen from the floor to join her at the phone. “It might disqualify us.”

“And your annual household income, ma’am?” Chaz asks methodically.

Stacey answers, “Well it fluctuates since my husband is between jobs right now, but—”

“For now you can just tell me the adjusted gross income number on your last tax return, ma’am,” Chaz says flatly.

After a long pause, Stacey mumbles, “About \$85,000.”

“And what do you do for a living, ma’am?” Chaz asks.

“I’m a legal assistant at a foreclosure defense law firm, and a sales associate at Bloomingdale’s in Boca Town Center on weekends and holidays,” Stacey replies.

“Let me put you on a brief hold while I speak to my manager, ma’am,” Chaz says.

Stacey looks over at Stu with a scowl. “It’s your fucking fault if we don’t get this money. You’ve made about thirteen dollars in the last twenty years, Mister Mom. I must’ve missed the chapter of the fairy tale where Prince Charming quits his job and sponges off the Fairy Princess for the rest of his fucking life, Mr. Harvard MBA!”

Stu looks down in embarrassment. “Stace, please, you know I—”

Chaz is back on the line. “Thank you for holding, Mrs. Schmaltzberg. I just spoke to my manager. Unfortunately we’ll be unable to accelerate the review process on your loan application. But you will receive a formal response from us within fourteen days. Now is there anything else I can help you with today, ma’am?”

“Listen to me, Chaz!” Stacey pleads, “We need—I repeat NEED—this money now! Do you have children, Chaz?”

“Well, no ma’am, but—”

“Then you’ve never had to pay \$50,000 for a bar mitzvah, or \$15,000 each summer for Lake Winnepesaukee sleepaway camp, or \$10,000 for a vacation to Europe for a family of four. Life is very expensive these days, Chaz. And we’re still the only family we know who doesn’t have a backyard pool—we have to use the fucking community

pool! And we drive a seven-year old Mazda and a six-year old Honda while every time I turn around I see a brand new BMW, Mercedes or fucking Lexus. Literally *everyone* has one. The Mendelsons just bought a Porsche for their sixteen year-old daughter. IT'S FUCKING EMBARRASSING, CHAZ!"

"With all due respect, Mrs. Schmaltzberg, none of those things sound like real necessities. Just some friendly advice, ma'am, maybe you should try living within—"

"FUCK YOU, CHAZ! You know nothing about me! I work like a dog, two jobs—"

"Goodbye, ma'am." The line goes silent.

"Asshole!" Stacey screams into the phone, then glares at Stu, "Go get the firepower, Stu, we're going into battle mode."

"But hon, we can't have another Loan Depot situation. We're lucky we didn't go to jail over that. We need to think of the kids."

"Fuck Loan Depot! Fuck Home Equity Hunks! Fuck the fucking kids!" Stacey shouts. "Now go get ready and meet me at the car in ten minutes! Move your ass, Stuart!"

Stacey takes a deep breath, looks in the hallway mirror and composes herself, then walks out the front door.

Jodi Simon, the Schmaltzbergs' nextdoor neighbor, stands at the edge of her yard as Stacey hurries down the driveway to her car. "Oh hey, Stacey!" she shouts. "Does Jonah know where he's going to college next year? Rachel has it narrowed down to Duke, Emory and Vandy—still trying to decide."

Stacey smiles over at Jodi. "Jonah got into those ones plus UF, Miami and a few more. But we're so overwhelmed getting ready for our trip to Paris next month and then Leah starting at American Heritage after she gets back from sleepaway camp in New Hampshire, we just haven't had time to even breathe let alone think about his college plans right now."

"Wow!" Jodi replies, "American Heritage just raised its tuition to over forty thousand. You guys must be doing pretty well."

Stacey nods with a smile and humble shoulder shrug. "Well, Stu's hedge fund is doing okay I guess. I don't know anything about that money of finance stuff but apparently it's paying the bills."

Before Jodi can say anything else, Stacey turns to her car and says, "Sorry Jodes, gotta go – late for one of Stu's work things – but let's catch up soon. Bye!"

Nosy little bitch, Stacey thinks as she steps into the car, shutting the door behind her as Jodi waves and then turns back to her yard.

Waiting in the passenger seat, Stacey looks down at her phone, then clenches her jaw and begins to shake with fury, squeezing her phone so hard that her knuckles turn white. The Facebook post stares back at her

with a smug little smirk that bores through her skull and claws into her brain. As soon as Stu opens the driver-side door and steps into the car, she sticks her phone into his face and shouts, “Look at this! The Silvermans are in fucking Barcelona to celebrate Ethan getting into Miami! We need that money, Stu! We need it fucking now!”

When they arrive at the Home Equity Hunks corporate headquarters, occupying the entire top floor of a high-rise office building in downtown West Palm Beach, Stacey hurries into the lobby clutching her Zillow printout with Stu in tow. “I need to speak with a senior loan officer immediately—it’s an emergency!” she says to the office receptionist.

“I’m sorry,” the receptionist replies in confusion. “Do you have an appointment, ma’am?”

“No, but I’m sure a loan officer will want to speak with us when I show him this appraisal,” Stacey says proudly, holding the Zillow report out in front of her.

“I’m sorry, ma’am, but you’ll need to make an appointment if you’d like to meet with a loan officer. You can do so on our website. This is a private office and—”

“Well where the fuck am I supposed to go in the meantime, lady?” Stacey screams. “Back to the house with no pool? With shitty little cars in the driveway? *What kind of life is that?*”

The receptionist presses a button on her desk phone and speaks into her headset. “I need you guys in the lobby, Steve, we got another live one out here.”

Stacey turns to Stu and reaches her hand out. “Time for Plan B, Stu. Give it to me.”

On command, Stu reaches into his black trenchcoat and pulls out an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle. “Uh Stace, maybe we should just—”

“Stop whining and give me the goddamn gun, numbnuts!” Stacey says as she grabs the AR-15 out of Stu’s hand.

The receptionist stands up from her chair with her eyes bulging and mouth half open. Her head is blown apart before she can scream. Blood, brain and skull fragments splatter the wall behind her as Stacey’s (still smelly) finger rapidly works the AR-15 trigger. Stacey heads toward the door leading from the lobby to the interior offices.

Two armed security guards enter the lobby from the interior door with their guns drawn. Stacey mows them down with her AR-15 before they have time to react. They drop to the floor like potato sacks, their bloodied bodies riddled with bullets. Stacey steps over them and walks through the door.

AR-15 blazing away, Stacey marches down the hallway and into the individual offices, shooting anything that moves. Rapid gunfire followed by horrific screams fill the air as the body count piles up. Employees hide behind office furniture and cower in corners while Stacey

continues her bloody rampage, screaming with a maniacal grin as her AR-15 fires off two rounds per second. Stu trails her, finishing off any survivors with a Glock 9 millimeter.

“Please, please, no!” Vern Cromwell, CEO of Home Equity Hunks, pleads from behind his leather office sofa after Stacey enters his corner office from the hallway. “Please, ma’am, put the gun down! Just tell me what you want!”

Keeping her AR-15 trained on Cromwell, Stacey removes the folded Zillow report from her front pocket and tosses it onto his desk. “Our house was worth 775K as of this morning. It’s probably worth over 800 by now, maybe 825. We just need a little home equity cashout.”

Cromwell unfolds the Zillow report with shaking hands and studies it briefly through his reading glasses. “What do you owe on the house and what’s your annual income?” he asks without looking up.

Stacey tells him.

Cromwell looks up at Stacey, then over at Stu, who’s just entered the office from the hallway. Cromwell raises his eyebrows and laughs. “Sorry, but are you two fucking idiots? I mean, I thought I’d seen everything in this business, but you two morons have the financial intelligence of a mentally retarded billygoat!”

Stacey’s AR-15 clicks empty when she pulls the trigger to shoot Cromwell. “Get me more ammo, Stu!” she shouts behind her.

While Stu fumbles through his trenchcoat searching for an ammo clip, Stacey looks down at her phone. Horrified by what she sees, she throws the phone against the wall with a blood-curdling scream. She leans back against the wall and collapses to the floor, lowering her face into her hands as her body rocks with violent sobs.

“What’s wrong, poodle?” Stu asks. “I can’t find the extra clip, maybe we left it in—”

“Forget the ammo and just look at my fucking phone!” Stacey wails from the floor, pointing to her phone.

Stu picks up the phone and squints at its cracked screen. “I can’t see—what is it, peaches?”

“The Teitelbaums just bought a fucking plane! A FUCKING PLANE, Stuart! I just saw it on Deborah’s Instagram.” Stacey tilts her head back and closes her eyes. “Just kill me now,” she mutters.

“So what, Stace? Since when do you want a plane? We can’t even fly one.” Stu replies in genuine confusion.

“It doesn’t matter, Stu. Can’t you see that it doesn’t... fucking... matter!” Stacey cries while shaking her head.

Stu and Vern Cromwell watch Stacey silently, neither moving an inch.

Stacey thinks for a moment, then looks up at Stu. “My life insurance money—that’s it!” In one fluid motion, she grabs the AR-15 from the

floor (forgetting that it's empty), sticks the muzzle into her mouth and presses down on the trigger. The gun clicks empty.

“Uh, sorry to interrupt, ma'am, but most life insurance policies have a two-year suicide exception,” Cromwell explains. “When did you buy the policy?”

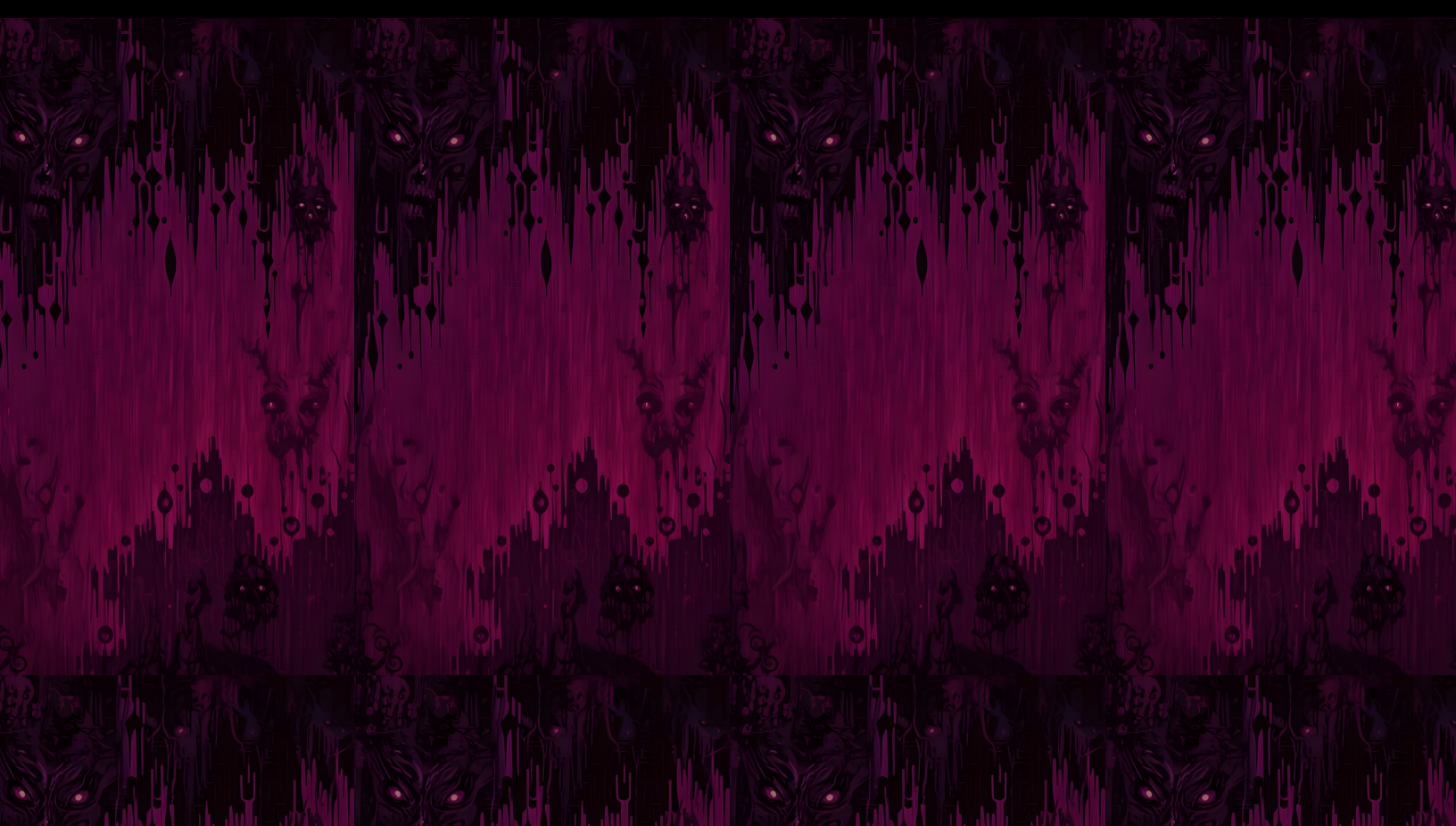
“About ten years ago,” Stacey replies. After a brief pause, she asks, “What floor is this?”

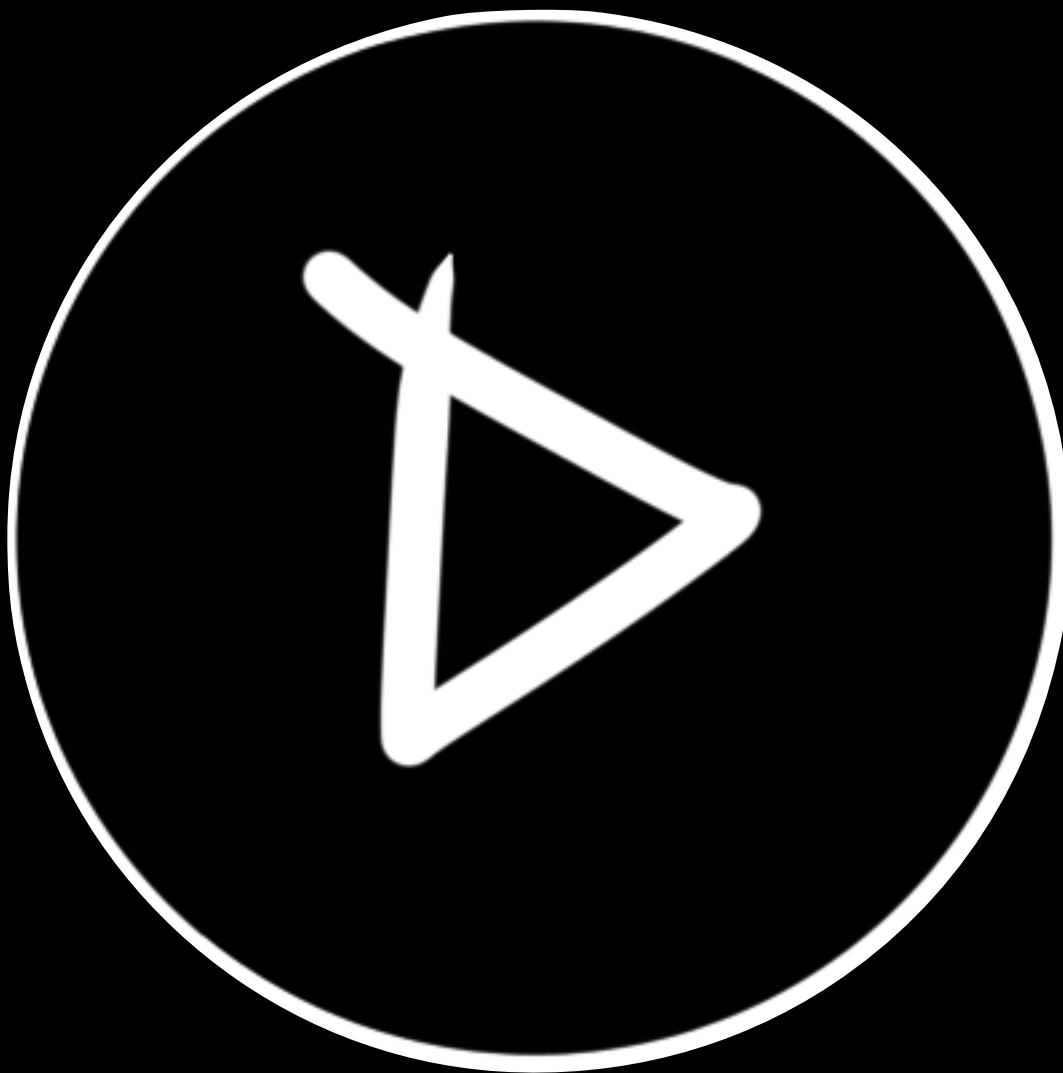
“Fifteenth floor, ma'am,” Cromwell answers.

“And that window—is it shatterproof?” Stacey asks, pointing to the floor-to-ceiling window wall.

“I don't believe so,” Cromwell replies with a chuckle. “But I've never tried to find out.”

Before Stu or Cromwell can stop her, Stacey lowers her head and runs toward the window. From a full sprint, she dives at it headfirst from just two feet away. Wait'll Deb Teitelbaum see the new yacht we're gonna buy with this money, Stacey thinks, smiling to herself as she launches. Stupid bitch'll probably jump out the window.





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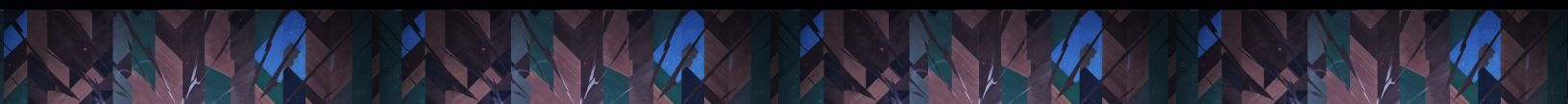
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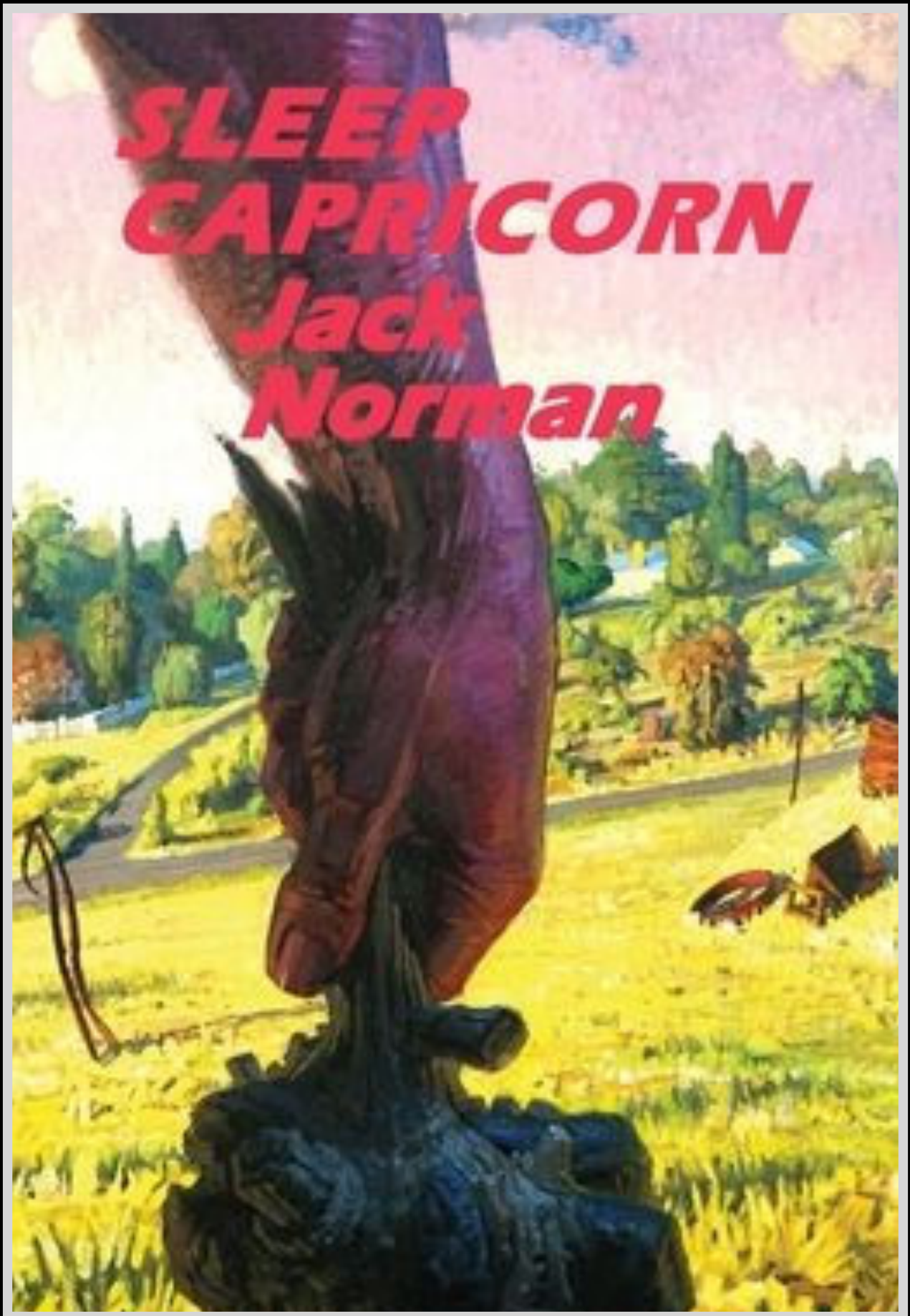


SMILE CENTRAL

Theodore Wallbanger

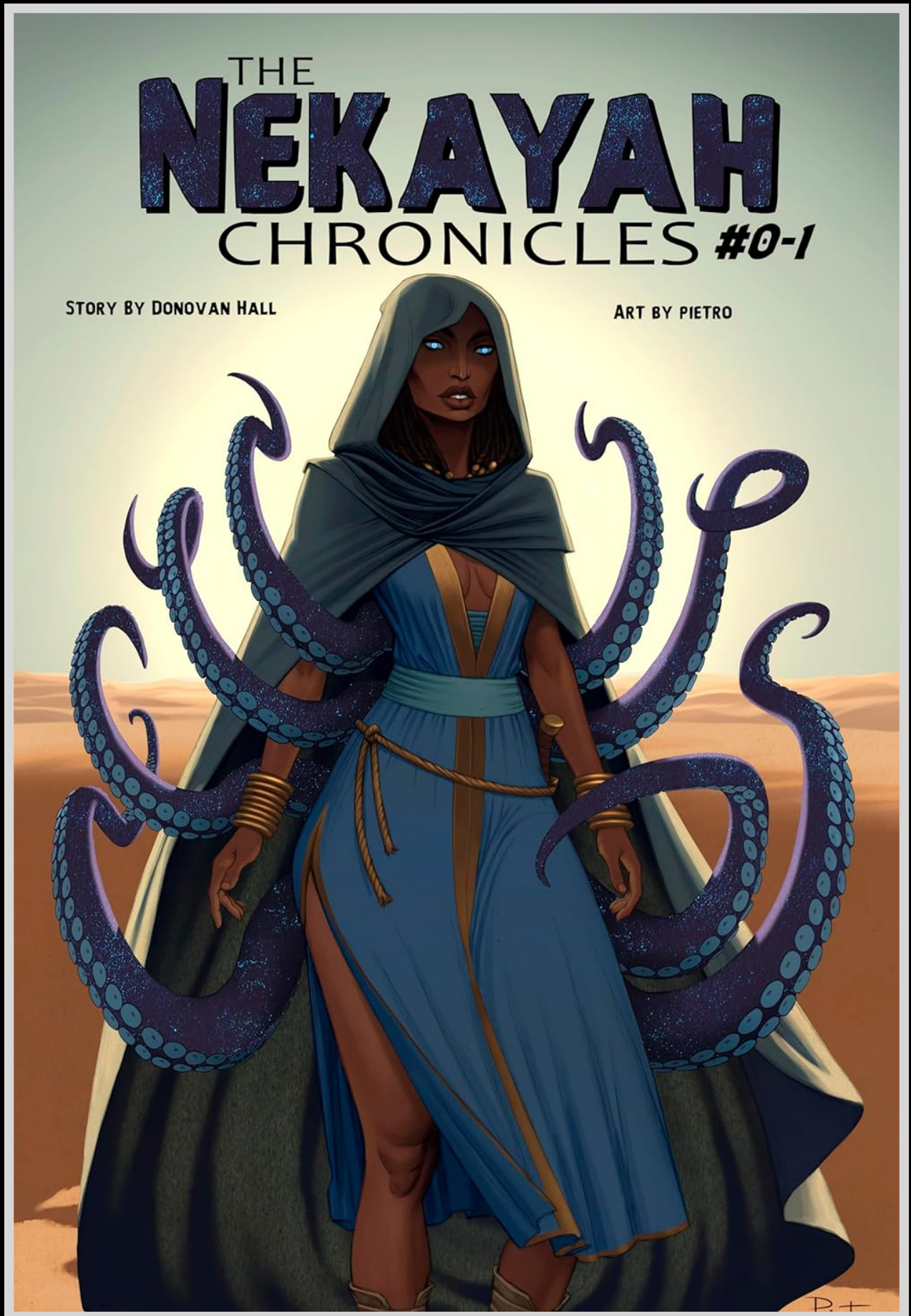
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