

A THOUSAND, THOUSAND YEARS AGO, ALEXANDER THE GREAT SAT WITH A SAGE OF WIDE RENOWN. THERE, HE LEARNED A SECRET THAT WOULD SHAKE HIM TO HIS CORE.

"THERE ARE MORE WORLDS THAN THIS," SAID THE SAGE. "THEIR NUMBER IS NEAR INFINITE AND THEY SPREAD ACROSS THE COSMOS, BEYOND THE REACH OF ANY MAN'S SENSES."

ALEXANDER LOOKED UPON HIS OWN EMPIRE, FROM THE RICH MEDITERRANEAN TO THE STEPPES OF ASIA, FROM ITS HEART IN THE CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION TO ITS FARTHEST BORDER.

AND HIS EYES FILLED WITH TEARS.

"GREAT ALEXANDER, WHY DO YOU WEEP?" ASKED THE SAGE. "YOU HAVE EVERY GLORY THAT A MORTAL HAS EVER KNOWN."

"IS IT NOT WORTHY OF DESPAIR," REPLIED ALEXANDER, "THAT THERE ARE AN INFINITE NUMBER OF WORLDS TO CONQUER..."

"...AND I CANNOT BECOME THE MASTER OF EVEN ONE?"

MY NAME IS NATHANIEL RICHARDS. I WAS BORN IN THE 31st CENTURY.

BY THE TIME I'D REACHED THE AGE OF 18, I HAD CONQUERED NOTHING.

MY WORLD WAS A UTOPIA OF PLEASURE AND ENTERTAINMENT. MY SO-CALLED BETTERS CALLED IT *POST-SCARCITY*. I CALLED IT *BORING*.

A UTOPIA, TO BE SURE, WHERE TEN-YEAR-OLDS COULD MASTER ADVANCED ROBOTICS. WHERE A BOY COULD HAVE HIS THROAT CUT BY BULLIES AND RECOVER IN A MATTER OF MONTHS, AS I RECENTLY HAD.

BUT IT WAS ALSO A PLACE WHERE TIME SEEMED TO HAVE STOPPED. IT WAS THE END OF HISTORY, A MEANINGLESS PROCESSION OF TEPID MOMENTS, A COUNTDOWN TO NOTHING.



AND SO I BEGAN TO SEE MY TIME FOR WHAT IT TRULY WAS.

A CAGE.



AND LIKE ANYONE WISE ENOUGH TO SEE THE LOCKS THAT HOLD THEIR PRISON SHUT... I'D DEVISED AN ESCAPE.

THE FUTURE HELD NO PROMISE, SO I HAD BEGUN TO SEEK THE KEYS TO THE PAST.



I KNEW THAT IN THE ECHOES OF THE ANCIENTS LAY ANSWERS TO MY EVERY QUESTION.



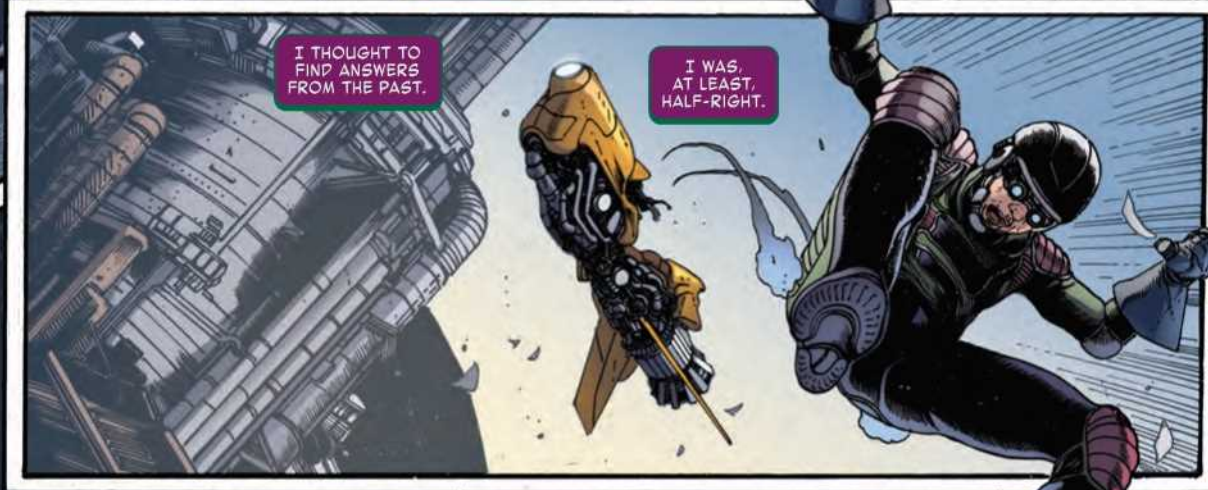
I KNEW THAT THOSE EMBATTLED CHAMPIONS OF THE BRUTAL PAST HAD FATHOMED QUESTIONS THAT I, IN MY COMFORT, COULD NEVER EVEN THINK TO ASK.



IT HAD TAKEN ME ALMOST TWO YEARS OF SEARCHING. I HAD THOUGHT OF NOTHING ELSE.

I FORGED A LEISURE PASS. I REROUTED SECURITY FROM THE EURASIAN INDUSTRY FIELDS.

AND I RODE BY SHADOW INTO A LAND ONCE RULED BY FISTS OF IRON AND DEFENDED BY DELIRIOUS MAGIC.



I THOUGHT TO FIND ANSWERS FROM THE PAST.

I WAS, AT LEAST, HALF-RIGHT.



THE AIR ITSELF WAS THICK WITH HISTORY.

HM. EXACT COORDINATES.



I'D NEVER SEEN ANYTHING OLD WITH MY OWN EYES BEFORE.



WHAT IN THE--



BUT THEN AGAIN...

STOP!
I COMMAND YOU!
YOUR MASTER IS LONG DEAD AND I AM HIS ONLY--



THE GRANDEUR
OF HOPE, WORN
DOWN BY THE AGES.

LIKE ROCKS IN
THE DESERT
WINDS.



IT WAS
BEAUTIFUL.



AND I WAS
A FOOL.



KRZZ



...SO
WAS HE.

