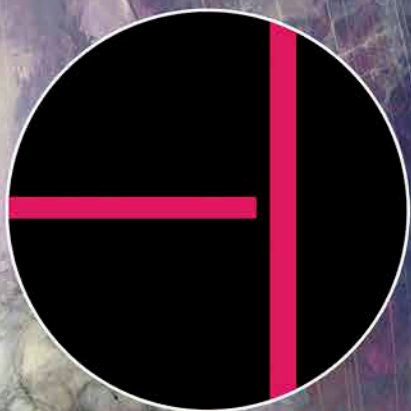
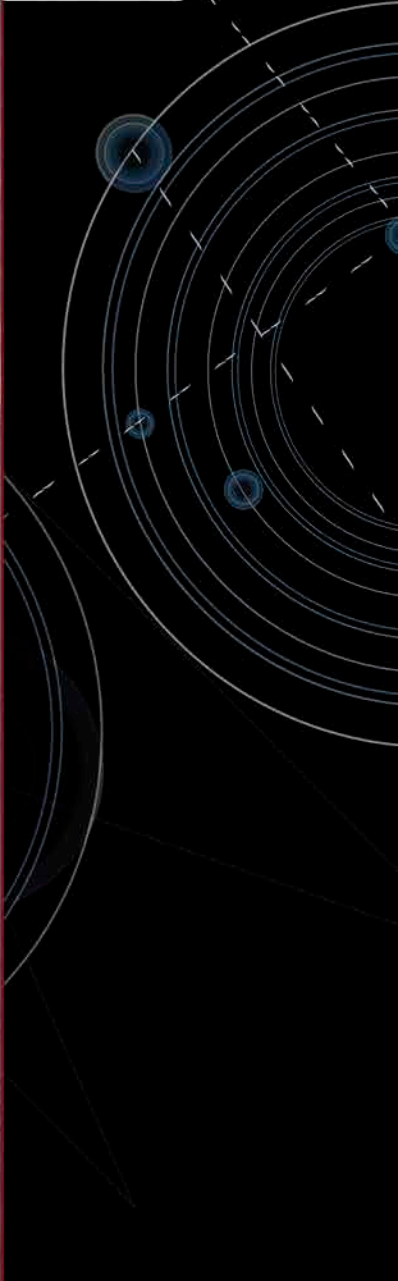


A STARHEDGE GRAPHIC NOVELLA

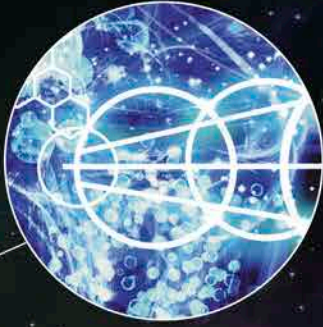


STARHEDGE



LIAM SHARP

LIAM SHARP



CHAPTER TWO

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF UR

In future times they would talk about a queen who died.

The Ur-Queen had once been human, but had spent decades attached to all things, in as much as it was possible. She had been carked and modified in such ways that she dwelt in several planes at once:

The Hyperveldt of the machine minds.

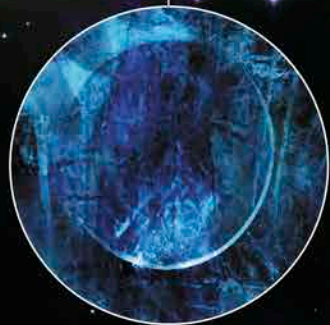
A realm of thought vortices, and vast interconnected intelligences. Here reality itself was hacked, a billion battles fought in nanoseconds. Space and time traversing avatars monitored a thousand worlds. Virtual ambassadors negotiated alliances and treaties. Sub-atomic vaults housed the intergalactic standard currency that was allotted, managed, and credited to all races that still participated in barter-based trade. The Ur-Queen saw, and had agency in all of that.

The Metaveldt.

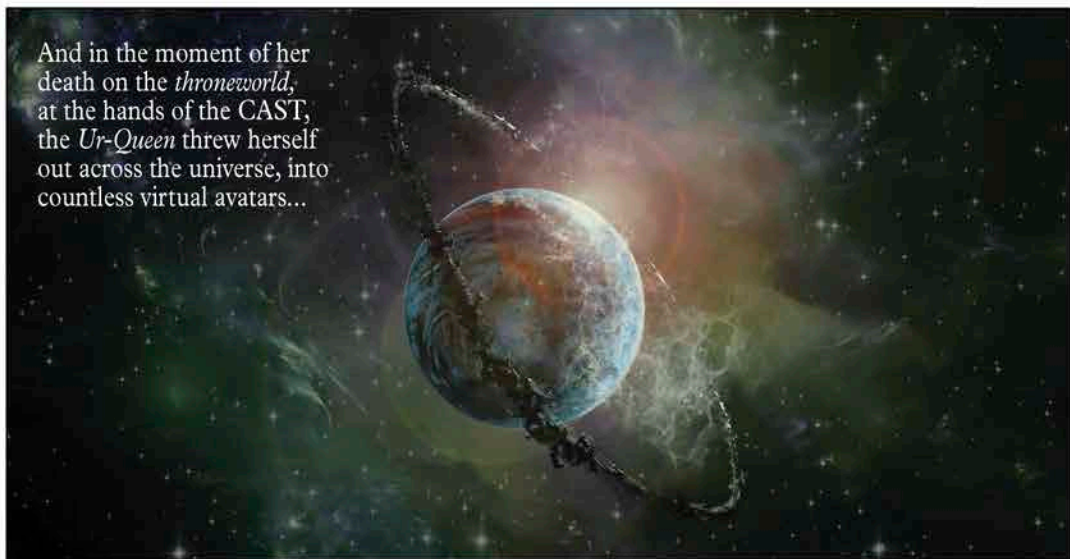
That realm of dreams, the literal collective subconscious of the sentient organic races. Few could swim in such chaos with the same purpose as the Ur-Queen!

And the Terraveldt.

The physical realm, where her first life was ended.



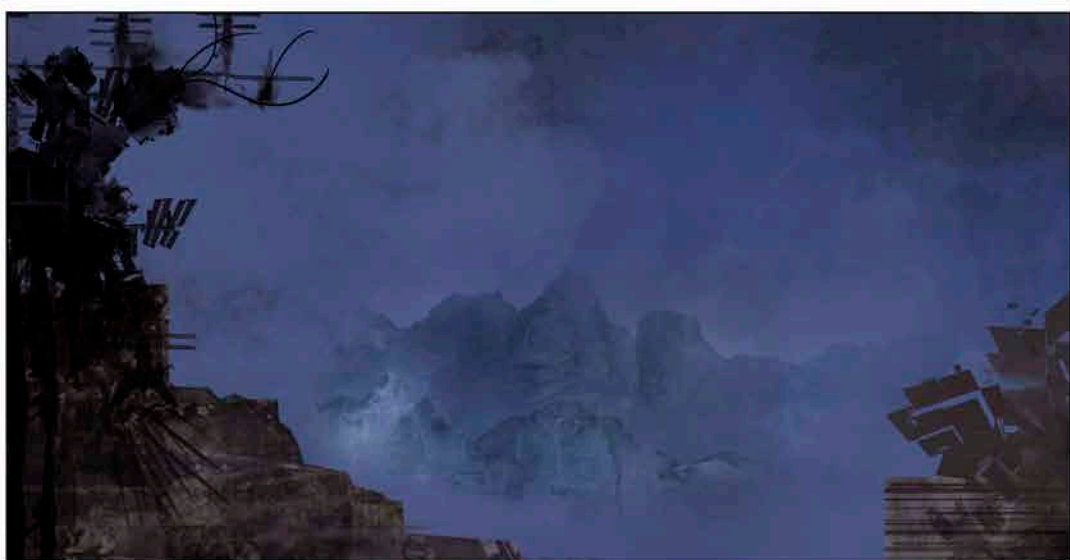
And in the moment of her death on the *throneworld*, at the hands of the CAST, the *Ur-Queen* threw herself out across the universe, into countless virtual avatars...



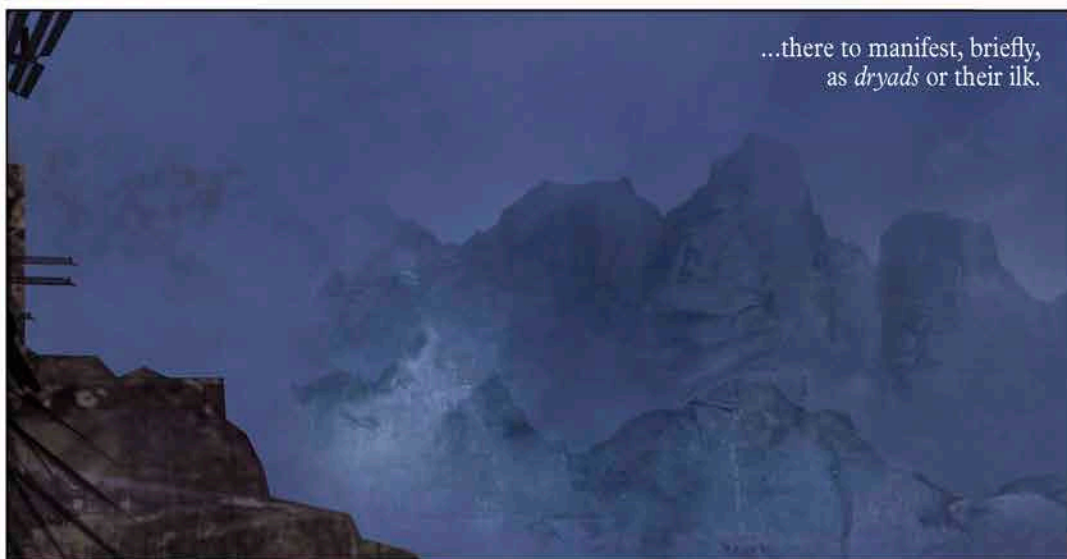
Some simple and organic -
with only one purpose,
or a single message.



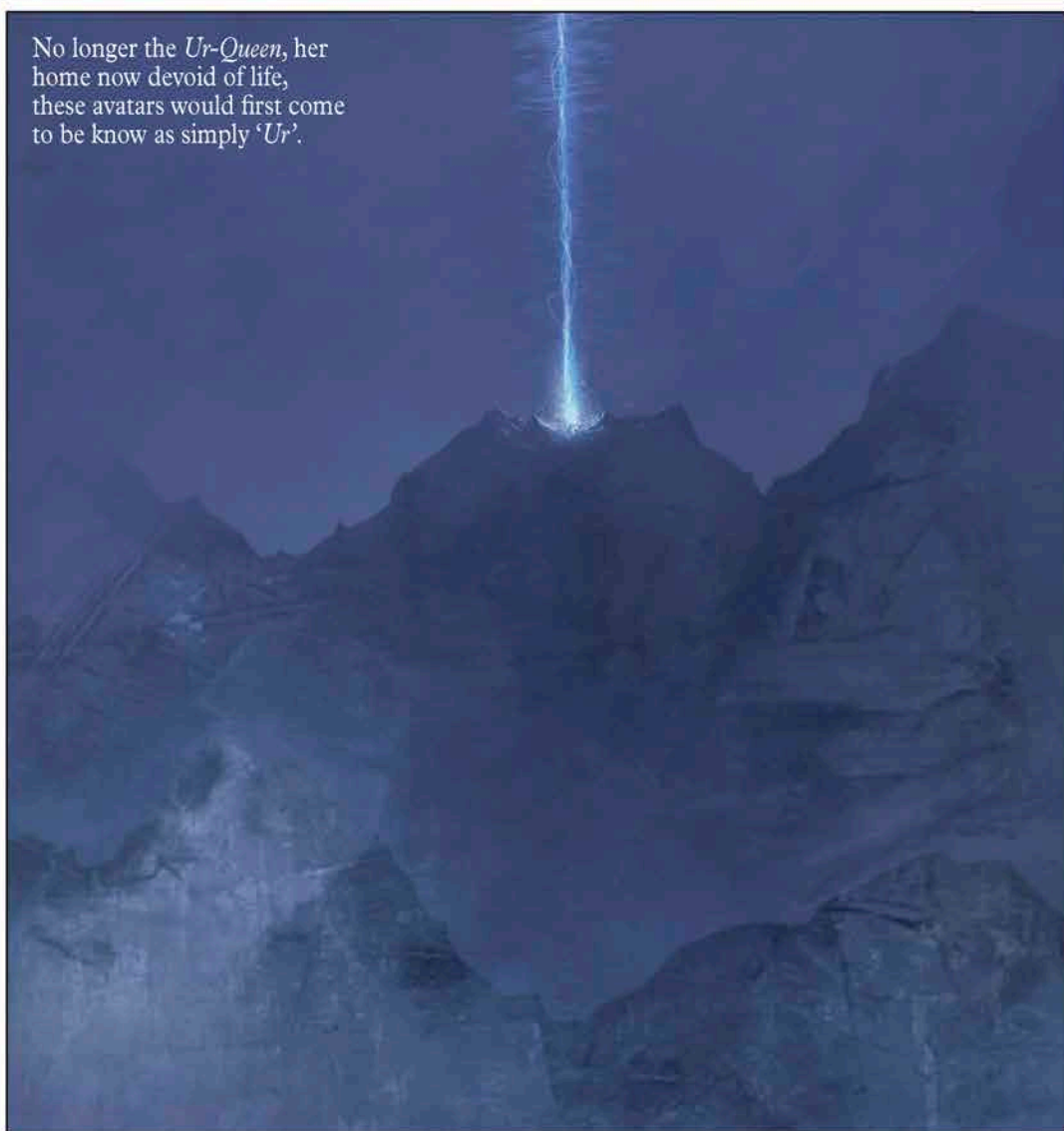
Some true *veldt-daemons*,
sent back through time...

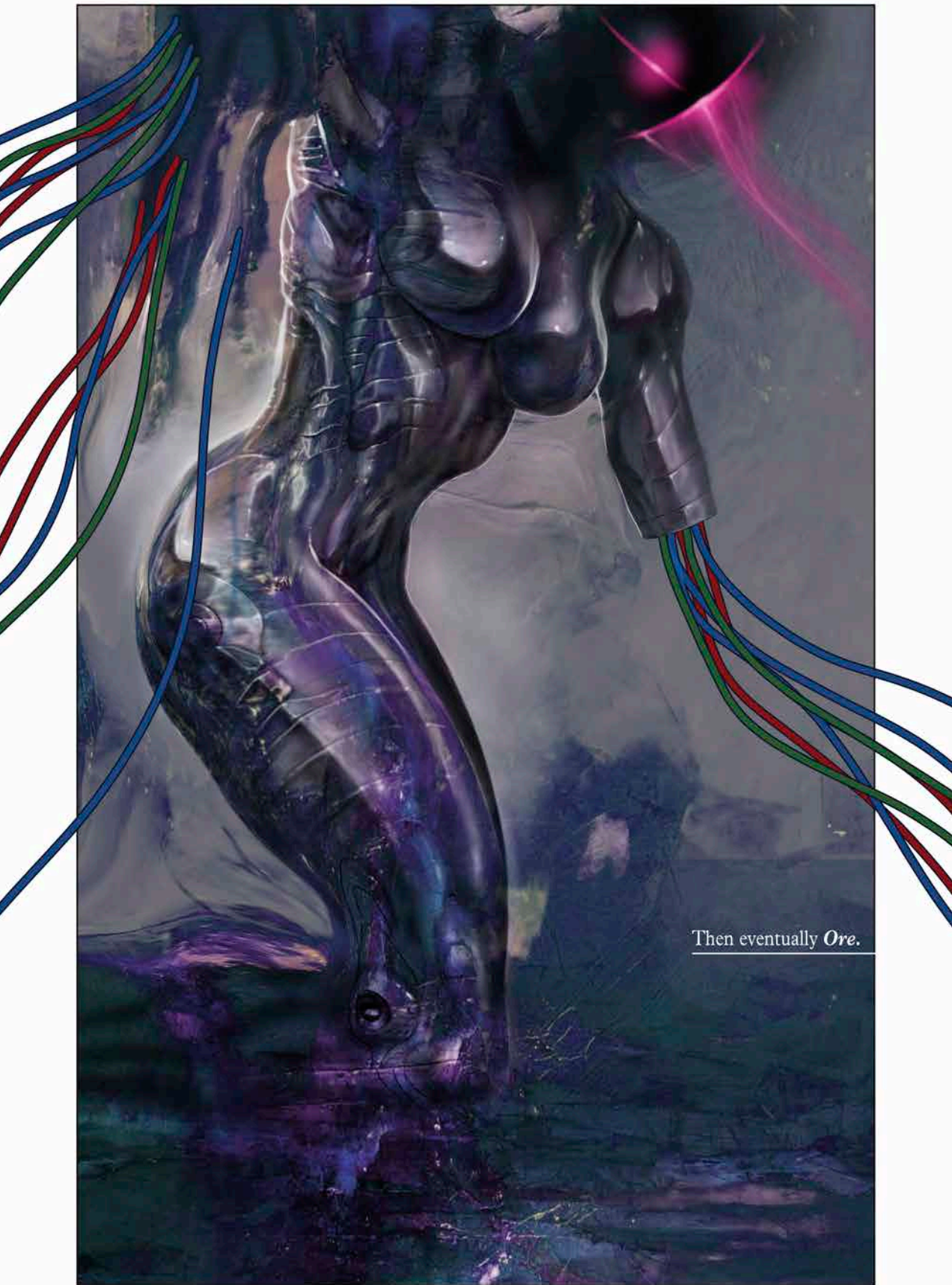


...there to manifest, briefly,
as *dryads* or their ilk.



No longer the *Ur-Queen*, her
home now devoid of life,
these avatars would first come
to be know as simply '*Ur*'.





Then eventually *Ore.*



If she could get to a place though the *Hyperveldt* – spiralling through elegant flux craters, dancing amongst atoms in that great interconnectedness – she could, she found, mine whatever materials existed there, make herself a thousand new bodies on as many worlds.

These avatars had *two* goals:

To save as much life as they could.

To make the CAST learn how to suffer.