

SIMON SPURRIER × MATÍAS BERGARA

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"This one is really special!"

—JEFF LEMIRE

(*New York Times* bestselling
writer of *Black Hammer*)

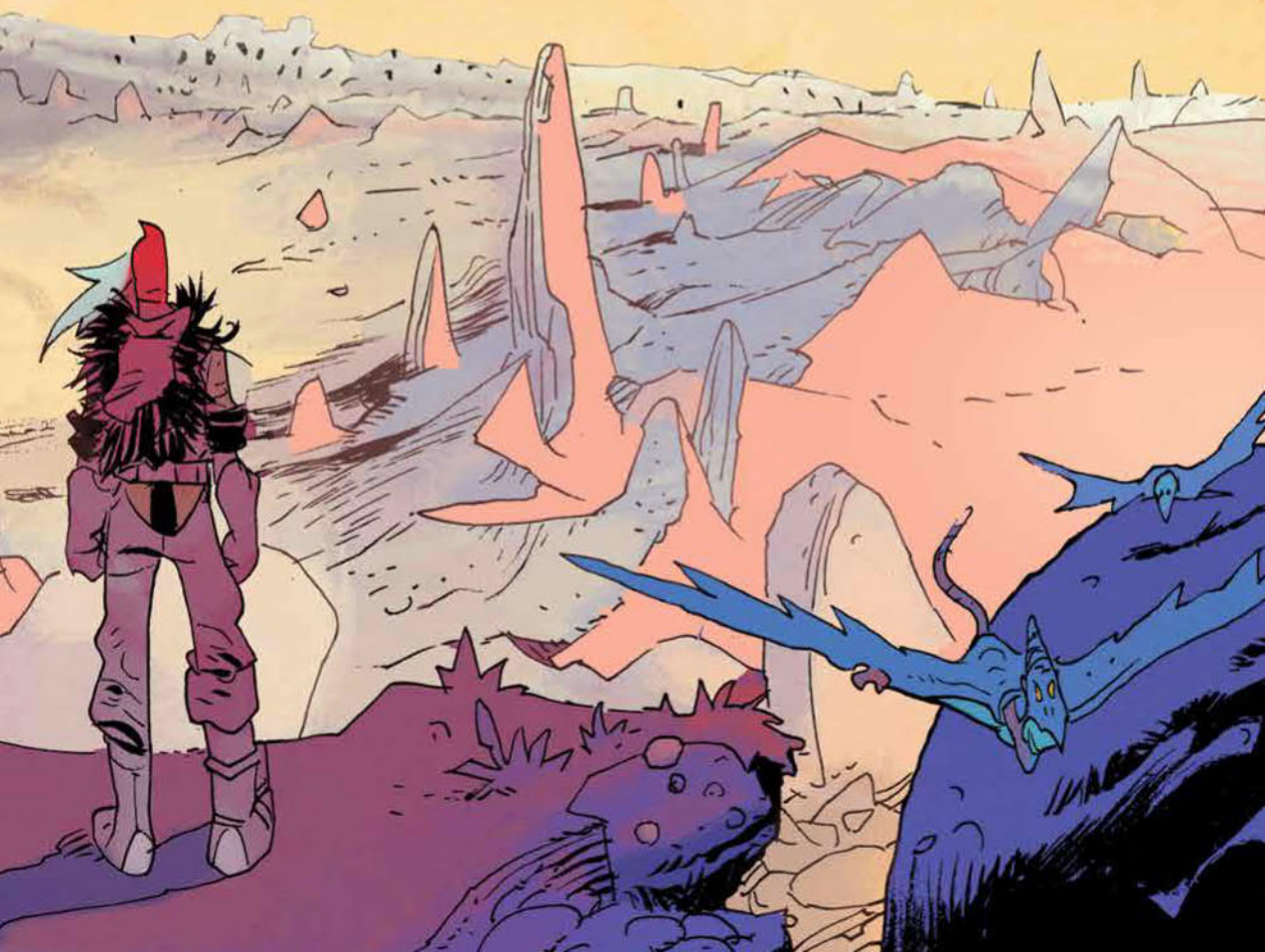
VOLUME ONE

Matias B. 18

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MY DARLING SERKA,

LAST TIME I SAW
YOU, I SAID I COULD
BARELY REMEMBER
WHAT THE WORLD
WAS LIKE BEFORE
THE QUENCH.

THERE
ARE RATS
IN MY
BOWEL!

I--
I FEEL THEM
SCAMPER!

I WAS LYING.

HALF ASLEEP, BUSY ENJOYING
THE LINE OF YOUR HIP. JUST...
TOO LAZY TO FIND THE RIGHT
WORDS.



SURKK

GET THEM
OUT OF ME,
SCAVENGER--ELSE
I SHALL IMMOLATE
YOU! TH--THEY
SCAMPER SO!

HM.

NO, I REMEMBER THE OLD
WORLD JUST FINE. IT'S
MORE LIKE I CAN'T BELIEVE
IT WAS REAL.

THE CRYSTAL CASTLES.
THE KNIGHTS AND ENCHANTED
BLADES. THE LIGHTNING MAGES
AND POINTY-EARED YLVES.

BACK WHEN
DRAGONS
COULD FLY.

I MEAN, WHEN
YOU WRITE IT
DOWN LIKE THAT
IT JUST LOOKS--
RIDICULOUS.

I MUST'VE LIVED IT, OF COURSE.
I MUST HAVE ACCEPTED IT ALL
AND NEVER STOPPED TO THINK
"THIS IS INSANE."

WH--WHAT DID
YOU **FIND** INSIDE
ME, HUMAN? IS IT THE
RATS? DESTROY
THEM OR FACE MY
WRATH!

NOW? THAT
WHOLE TIME
FEELS LIKE
A DREAM.

**SCRATCH
MY ARSE!
SCRATCH MY
ARSE OR BE
DOOMED!**

OR IF I'M HONEST, MORE LIKE THE
MEMORY OF A DRUNKEN NIGHT.
FLASHES OF OBNOXIOUSNESS WHICH
FELT SO VERY CLEVER AT THE TIME.

SOMETIMES I THINK THIS
WHOLE BLOODY WORLD'S
HUNGOVER.



HM.

WENT FOR A
RUMMAGE IN THERE,
DIDJA? HEARD OLD
BONY COMPLAINING
FROM MILES AWAY,
I BET. HEH.

NO
SUDDEN
MOVES,
EH?



DON'T FEEL TOO BAD,
MATE. I BEEN PUTTIN'
SHINY BAIT IN THERE SINCE
HIS LAST MUSCLES
FELL OFF.

AGITATE MY BOWEL,
BANDIT! SCATTER THE
RODENTS! MY RAGE
IS LEGEND!

MUST BE SOME
SORT OF HELL.
IMMORTALITY,
EH? >TT<?

'TWEEN US,
I DON'T THINK HE'S
EVEN GOT AN ARSE
TO SCRATCH, NO
MORE.

YOU EVER GET
THAT, DRIFTER?
PHANTOM
ITCHES, LIKE?

I REFER
TO THE
LEG.

OH, YOU DON'T
HAVE TO ANSWER.
I'M JUST BEING
POLITE. I WAS
AN 'EAPSMAN,
PRE-QUENCH.

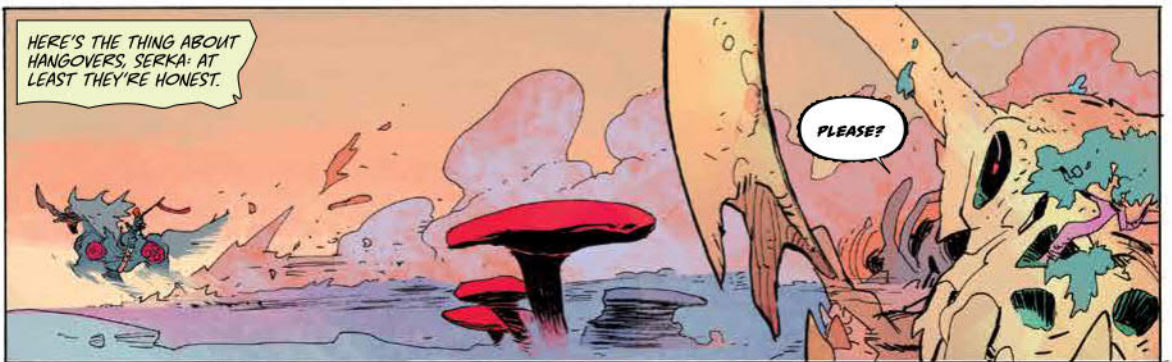
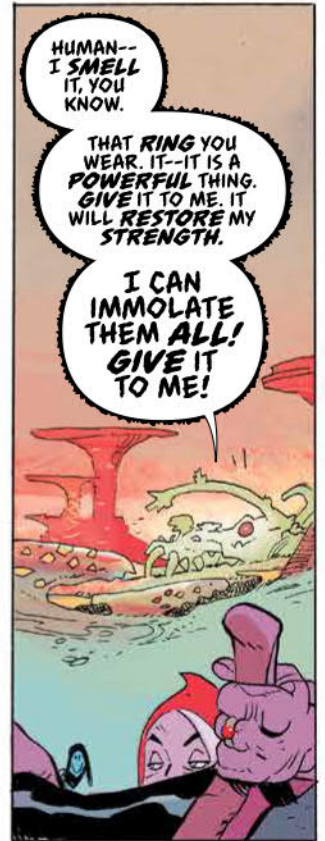
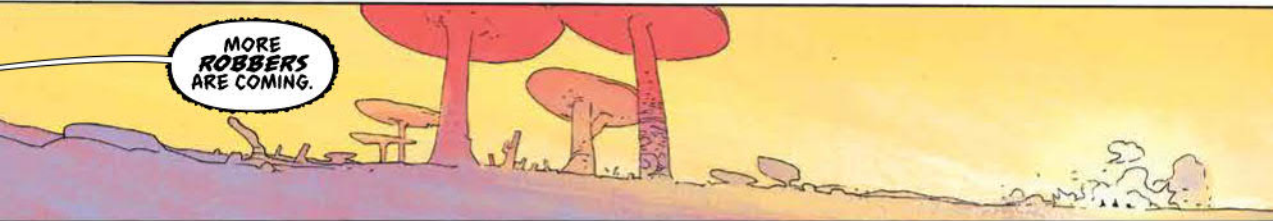
NICE TO
PUT FOLK AT THEIR
EASE BEFORE THE
AXE, THOUGH THERE'S
ALWAYS SOME WHAT
PREFERS THE DIRECT
APPROACH.

>AHEM<
SIR: I INTEND TO
ROB YOU. THIS
WILL BE A TERMINAL
PROCEDURE SHOULD
YOU ATTEMPT TO
RESIST OR FLEE.

...SPEAKING
O' FLIGHT. I CAN'T
IMAGINE YOU WALKED
ALL THE WAY OUT
HERE. SO--C'MON
THEN.









PEOPLE SAY A DRUNK
CAN'T LIE--BUT THEY CAN.
YOU CAN TAKE THAT FROM
AN OLD BARD WITH A
LIFETIME'S EXPERIENCE
OF BRAGGARTS.

'ERE,
NOTCH--
IS THAT A
BLOODY
UNIC--

YUP.

VARLEY!
STAY WITH THE
PACK!

IDIOT.



BUT SHOULD YOU
CHOOSE TO WAIT 'TIL
THE MORNING AFTER...

THEN FOR ALL THE PAIN HE'S
IN...FOR ALL THAT HIS HEAD
SEETHES LIKE AN ANGRY EMBER...

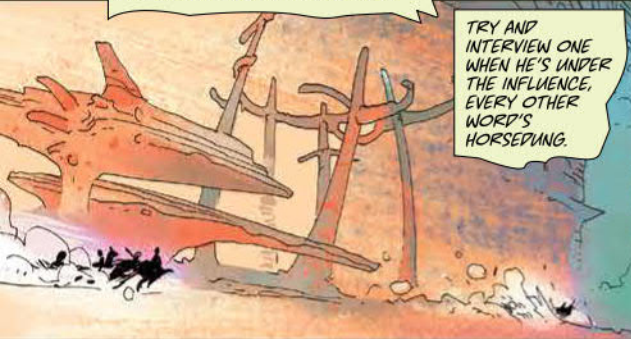
...FOR ALL THAT
HE FEELS THE
WORLD ITSELF IS
TRAMPLING HIM...





DIBS ON THE STABBYHORSE.

KINGS, CRUSADERS, AND WANKERS ON QUESTS. YOU GET TO KNOW 'EM ALL WHEN YOU'RE PAID PER SAGA.



TRY AND INTERVIEW ONE WHEN HE'S UNDER THE INFLUENCE, EVERY OTHER WORD'S HORSEPUING.



AKKER UP.

JUST TALL TALES AND EMBELLISHMENTS.

HA HAAAA--!!



I CAN CATCH HIM. I CAN TAKE H--


NO HE'S HEADED FOR RIDGETOWN.

...FOR ALL THAT? WHEN THE BOASTING'S DONE, WHEN THE STORYTELLER'S CLEARED HIS GUTS BOTH WAYS, WHAT'S LEFT IS THIS:

PULL BACK

A REALIST.





THE OLD WORLD WAS
BEAUTIFUL AND BRIGHT
AND CRAZY AND BRAVE.
MOSTLY I HATED IT.

AND THEN
IT ENDED

LATEST IN A LONG LINE OF
UNPRONOUNCEABLE PARK
LORDS FINALLY DID IT.

FIRE IN THE SKY, DEATH
OF THE YLVES, ARMIES OF
SHADOW, BLAH BLAH, AND
THAT LAST DAY, WHEN--

WELL, YOU KNOW.
YOU WERE THERE.

AND THEN NO
NEW MAGIC.

NO NEW MAGIC, AND
WE'RE ALL SUPPOSED
TO BE MISERABLE
ABOUT THAT, BUT YOU
KNOW WHAT, SERKAZ?

I'D RATHER AN HONEST
HANGOVER THAN A
RAGING DRUNK.



AH, IGNORE ME. I'M WAFFLING.
I GOT CHASED BY BANDITS,
SO--YOU KNOW. BUSY PEN.

FOUND A NEW SETTLEMENT TOO.
SOME SORT OF INSANE WEAPON ON
TOP. GOOD TRADE, MAYBE, BUT ALL
I CAN THINK IS: DUMMIES.

SELF-DECEIVERS AND OPTIMISTS,
TRYING TO STAVE OFF THE SORE HEAD
BY PRETENDING TO STILL BE DRUNK.

THE PROBLEM'S ME,
OF COURSE. NOT THEM.

AGE-OLD
INSTINCT, ISN'T
IT? ALL THESE
FOLKS HUDDLED
UP TO SQUABBLE
AND THIEVE AND
COMPETE WITH
EACH OTHER--

--ALL TOGETHER,
ALL HIDING FROM
THE LOSS OF
YESTERDAY--

--AND NONE
OF THEM
ARE THE ONE
I NEED?

LIKE I SAID:
IGNORE ME.

SITTING HERE PREACHING
A BREAK WITH THE PAST
WHILE I'M STILL ACTING
THE BLOODY COURT BARD
WITH EVERY OVERLONG,
NEEDLESSLY PURPLE LINE.

THE
FESTERING
FENIX

SAYING
EVERYTHING
EXCEPT WHAT
I REALLY THINK.



WHY WRITE THREE WORDS WHEN YOU CAN WRITE A HUNDRED, EH SERKA?



I MISS YOU. X



WHAT YOU WRITIN'?



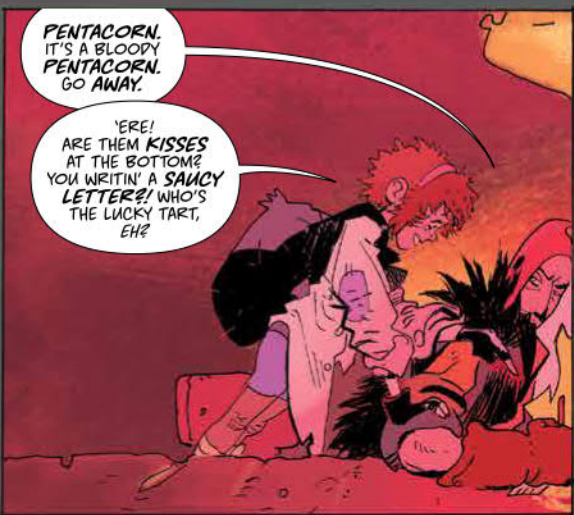
HM.

YOU'RE NEW 'ERE, AIN'T YOU? WAS THAT YOUR UNICORN OUTSIDE?



GO 'WAY.

MIND YOU, IT HAD FIVE 'ORNS INSTEAD 'A ONE-- YOU BEEN GIVIN' IT DIRTY AKKER, I BET--SO THAT'D MAKE IT A... FIVEACORN.



PENTACORN. IT'S A BLOODY PENTACORN. GO AWAY.

'ERE! ARE THEM KISSES AT THE BOTTOM? YOU WRITIN' A SAUCY LETTER?! WHO'S THE LUCKY TART, EH?