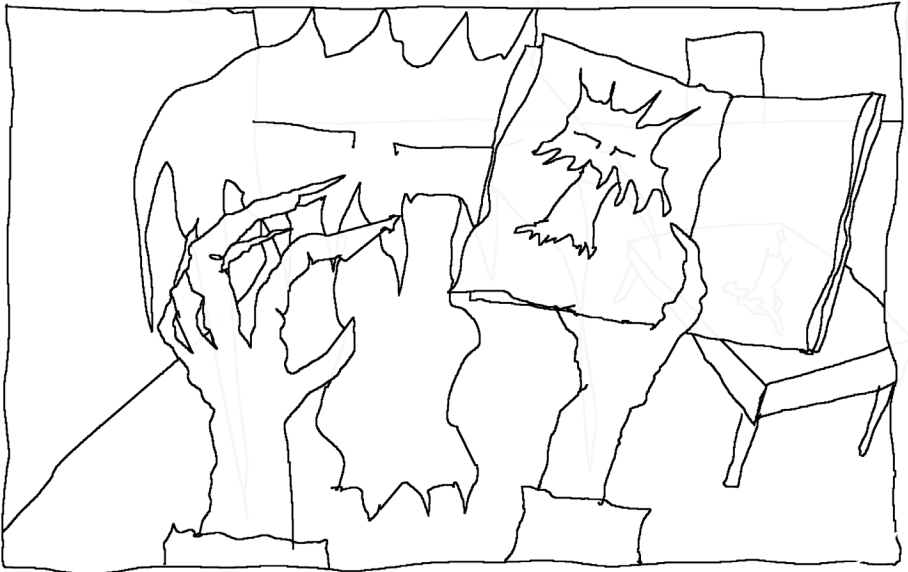


EARTH A.D. ZINE



- THE MINOTAUR (YOU)'S WET NOSE
IS HIGHLY COMPELLING.

*

The coffin where I live creaks in the wind. High above the mountain range, it is bolted to what was once a satellite array used for guiding trans world transport down to the valley. This was the only approach vector for a long time, thousands of years, successive regimes.

Whatever else changes, often the last constant is meteorological, geographical, chemical, material. The mountain topography; indivisible from that of the planet as a whole, indivisible from the makeup of the atmosphere, indivisible from the complex orbital dance of local moons, indivisible from the fundamental laws of space flight; allows

only the narrowest of channels for direct travel to the valley below.

The turbulent state of the rest of the planet, and the rest of the solar quadrant, means simultaneously that the valley must be travelled to and from, and that this must be done directly.

Where I rest I feel the vibrations running outward from the steel cables sending the wind's howl through the container where it is bolted to the mast. Those howls are stepped down by the shape, purity, and positioning of metal, to become whispers in the faraday cage around what might have been my skull. Listening to a song, unable to identify the point where anything begins and ends. Lost and delirious, swaying, bound and adrift.

*



*

"I feel like I occupy my body on a shift basis" I say to J.

"I need to be mindful of who is working at this station tomorrow, not fuck them over".

J looks at me through dark glasses, "I definitely relate to that" they say, taking another sip from their mug and returning their gaze to their book.

"Its good training in solidarity at least" I think or maybe mutter as I take a drink from my own mug, a slight tinge of residual shame running through me as if I'd spoken those personal words to anyone but the utterly trustworthy person that sits across from me now. It is good training in solidarity. It would be so easy to do something with myself that would compromise the next user, there's no survival instinct that wards me against this in the manner that I've paused before doing myself harm and had to work through one final safety check. There's no hardware level failsafe even though the future agent I put in danger is always me. This solidarity is built on a cerebral, conscious decision. Which is perhaps why mistakes sometimes get made.

J finishes their drink, bends across the small table to hug my goodbye

while slipping the paperback into a hidden pocket on their long black coat and disappears out of the canteen. They know when I'm like this I'm likely to stay sitting here for a while. Mind not really attached to anything and instead just slipping about on the ice of things that aren't ideas or emotions or plans but something else. Slipping about, running thump into walls, not being articulate enough to comprehend the process of slipping and running and thumping.

This is a long time ago though. I'm replaying that moment in the canteen but it isn't here, it's just a recording. It gives me comfort reliving a more discrete sensory experience, but there's obviously a lot of irony in my making those observations back then, already too late.

*



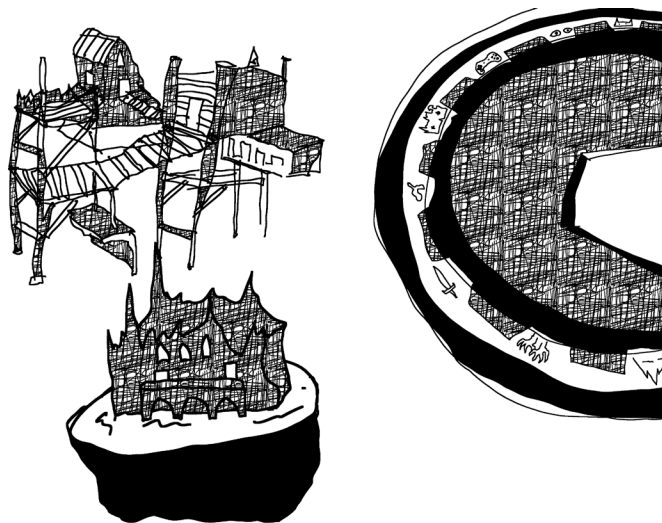
*

I sing softly to myself, unconcerned with either my uncertainty of the lyrics, or my ability to hold the tune. The paddle dips into the water on one side of the canoe and then the other, a rhythm that I sing to, mostly.

Above, if I were to look up, the sky is oppressive. It has more in common with visual artefacts in video reproduction or from eyes under stress than something with genuine depth. I dreamt once of a huge eye following me. The eye was so large that I could barely make out its curve. To the untrained, it may have appeared just as a black sky, but I was all too aware that it was a huge pupil, with the iris beginning just at the horizon if only the mountains did not obscure this.

That dream stayed with me, and then I pushed it down with my work, and now, now it surfaces in my memory once again, and so i try not to look at this sky above my rhythmic paddling in case i summon that dream to come to be the next night, when I must lie in the bottom of my canoe, the sky feeling as if it begins only inches from my face.

*



*

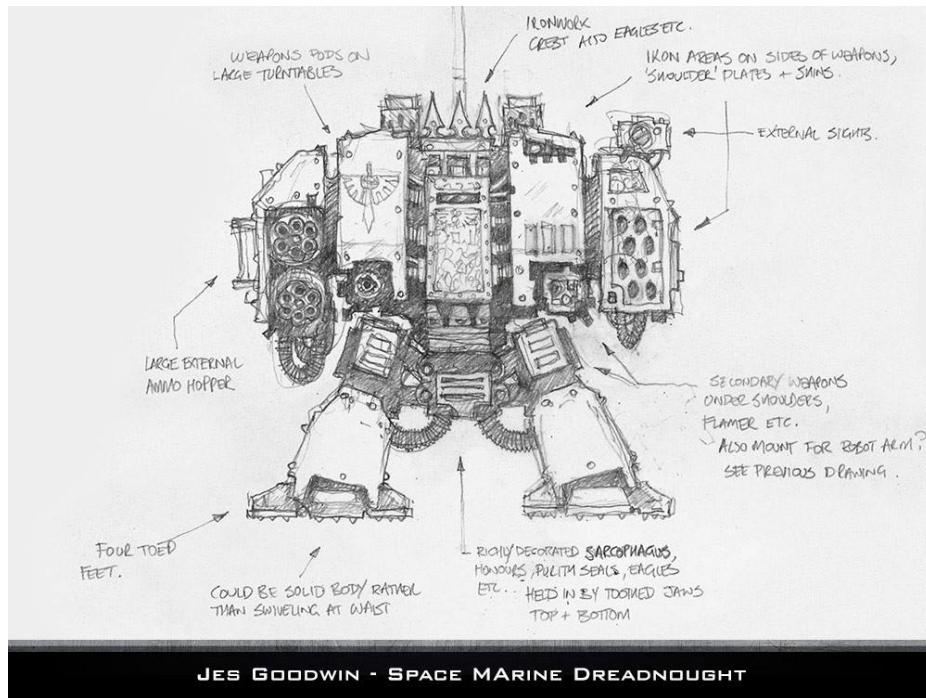
Drifting here, strapped to the mast. I think about how there are no clear boundary between the elements which make up that coffin and the mast itself. They are both similar graded steel. Also I think about how corrosion on exterior of both draws attention to the lack of clear boundary there either.

Moisture, dust, animal waste eat at the perimeter of the box, just as shifts in pressure fronts decide when and in what quantities that moisture, dust, and animal waste will arrive, and these pressure fronts are in turn affected by the mountain range where the mast is affixed.

No, that's not quite right, I am not thinking about this, it's just something I'm aware of, in the way that one mammal with a body and a proprioceptive system is aware of where they have moved through a dark set of corridors where another creature stalks and how far their head is from their feet and how high a standing jump they can make if it came to that. So what am I thinking about? Well I am not thinking, I'm dreaming, sloshing gentling with the wind and the throm, dreaming of times when I have been previously brought down from my roost and gently awoken by my friends and family.

I think about these surfacings, and they all have an allegorical quality, events mixed with interpretations and associations.

*



*

My nose is wet.

The rain drips down through the tree canopy, soft ducking on leaves running down my horns in little rivulets, some down my neck and some streaming at the edge of my vision.

I grunt to myself without meaning to, a response to the light cutting cold through a break in the clouds and the trees and forming a pool

ahead.

I grunt again, with even less intention, and feel my body drawn forward, gaining speed, crashing through saplings and spraying water and steam up into the emerging sunshine, my awareness left back at that spot.

*



*

This is where it starts. In the reeds, blood running down their fluted steps, the soft clacking of rain making its way through the tree canopy, my dress in wet ruins still beautiful and dreadful, my family lost in the

