

ANTIGONE + MAUDE

#8

by Stanley Lieber

DAD'S MAD

Food court, his usual stool. Bill ordered his minced ham sandwich, Doritos, sweet gherkin pickles, and a Pepsi.

It wasn't enough.

He re-upped, this time noticing his surroundings as he ate. Business around here was picking up, although he couldn't begin to imagine where all these shop partisans were actually shopping. He was going to have to ask the girls some questions.

New guy in the fountain.

And there was Daisuke, looking forlorn (as usual) in his empty *dojo*.

But what was with all these other new storefronts? Natural Wonders. Waldenbooks. None of these companies existed anymore. And yet, here they were, viable businesses, doing brisk trade.

God damn it.

TAIDEN

Granit wasn't sure what to do with his afternoon, so he hit the mall. Sometimes coming alone was depressing, but today he honestly didn't care. He just liked the ambience of the big, empty space. The weird smells.

Passed by one of those cheesy martial arts academies. The ones so elite they opened franchises in shopping malls. Backed up. Something about the sad little man kneeling in the center of the otherwise completely empty space pricked his conscience. That was the only way he could describe it. It certainly wasn't the decor that drew him in, in any case.

On an impulse, Granit clapped his big stone mitts and asked if he could sign up for classes.

"The conditioning has already begun," Daisuke murmured, and disappeared (rolling) into his back-room office.

Granit followed.