

MAUDE MOLD

#21

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GORGON DEFAULTS

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25 December. Morning.

The children who didn't believe in Santa Claus hadn't minded at all when he got shot down. Trolls popping up everywhere; the Ymir giant suddenly coalescing out of thin ice; all of these things were of secondary importance to stabilizing the flow of behavioral surplus from farm, to table, to manager, who were themselves only following orders from higher up the chain. Simply put, the gods were out of ideas and needed to huff the secondhand exhaust of humans in order to make themselves feel sane again. For their part the children were happy to oblige, interacting with the scenario in real time, calibrating the automatic urban legends until Santa had made himself all too obnoxious to the powers that be. And then the missiles had gone up.

"We've gotta get these guys back in their bubbles."

Jerrymander was still fiddling with his desktop settings. The ground flickered pink and then gray, pink and then gray, suggesting an impending aesthetic revelation that nevertheless continued to elude Jerrymander's conscious perception. TAB1 punched him in the arm to get his attention, inducing the (very) old man to rock in his Brooks Brothers shoes, the fist-shaped indentation slowly filling in as Jerrymander found himself inexplicably resisting the urge to complain.

The Gorgon defaults would have to do, for now.

They crossed the battlefield, trudging over mismatched limbs and disconnected appendages, gathering up whatever seemed to be in good enough condition to recard and sell as new. The layers of wack on wack crime baffled them—most of these idiots had killed each other, quite independent of the lightning from god—but this, too, was part of the job. The gods and trolls provided permanent OPFOR serving as a foil for the observations of the children. They were not themselves the product, but merely its abandoned carcass.