

ACCOUNTS OF NUMINOUS EFFICACY

5 January 2049, Maude's birthday.

Maude Mold watched the M.A.S.K. intro on repeat, jerking her arms stupidly each time the insipid song arrived at its screeching climax. Flames in the fireplace cycled inevitably through their finite quantity of discreet frames, mocking her attempts to exert mere human decision power over the intentionally limited choices on offer. Maude didn't even like M.A.S.K., but this clip was just so easy to click.

The flames looped.

WHITE NEUTRALITY

23 June 2049, someone's sixtieth anniversary.

Somewhere in the global north...

"Yeah, I don't really want to sell coke."

TAB3, just back from space. TAB2, his father, had seen neither hide nor hair of the boy for an untold number of years, and he had to be honest, he wasn't exactly chuffed to see him now. Too many memories from a time before he'd straightened out all his own bullshit. His son had just... shown up, declared himself pregnant, and then proceeded to dig in his heels, staking out a disused corner of the living room for his bedroll. That was ten minutes ago. This all rang disturbingly familiar. The self-same predicament TAB2 had found himself in, all those years ago.*

And now here he was saying he thought he was too good to take over the family business.

Well, like the RAGNAROK during her mid-career stint of labor activism, that just wasn't going to fly.

"Son, it's what we *do*. Ever since I was a boy I've moved ready rock. How do you think I paid for these tits?"

TAB2 lifted up his flannel shirt.

"Something's happening in space. Everything's turned inside out. The stars are black, the background's all white. Like somebody was pressing on my visor." TAB2 lowered his shirt, walked back over to his

* ACTRON V4, #14.

pressboard desk and resumed his 8-bit gaming session. He was starting to lose interest in the conversation. TAB3 did tend to go on.

"This, too, is utterly expected. The stars invert. You're not sixteen anymore, Dad. Grow the fuck up."

"I'm keeping my baby."

TAB2 did a spit take, flipped out both sides of his mullet with his hands, then brought a fist down on his mechanical computer keyboard, showering the tiny apartment with a debris of murder.

"Not if I get you out of Indiana before the law finds out."

INVENTING A LEGENDARY PAST

4 July 2049, "In Congress..."

Sparklers lined the sidewalk in front of Maude's modest Midwestern home, fizzling in the boy's ears as he approached. TAB3 didn't get it. What if the lawn caught fire?

Maude was already on shift, waiting behind the front screen door as he made his way up the sidewalk. *Yohai*—worshipping from afar?

"Dad kicked me out again," he said.

"I know," she said, but pointedly didn't open the screen door.

"Okay," TAB3, already deflated.

He unrolled his sleeping bag right there on the porch.