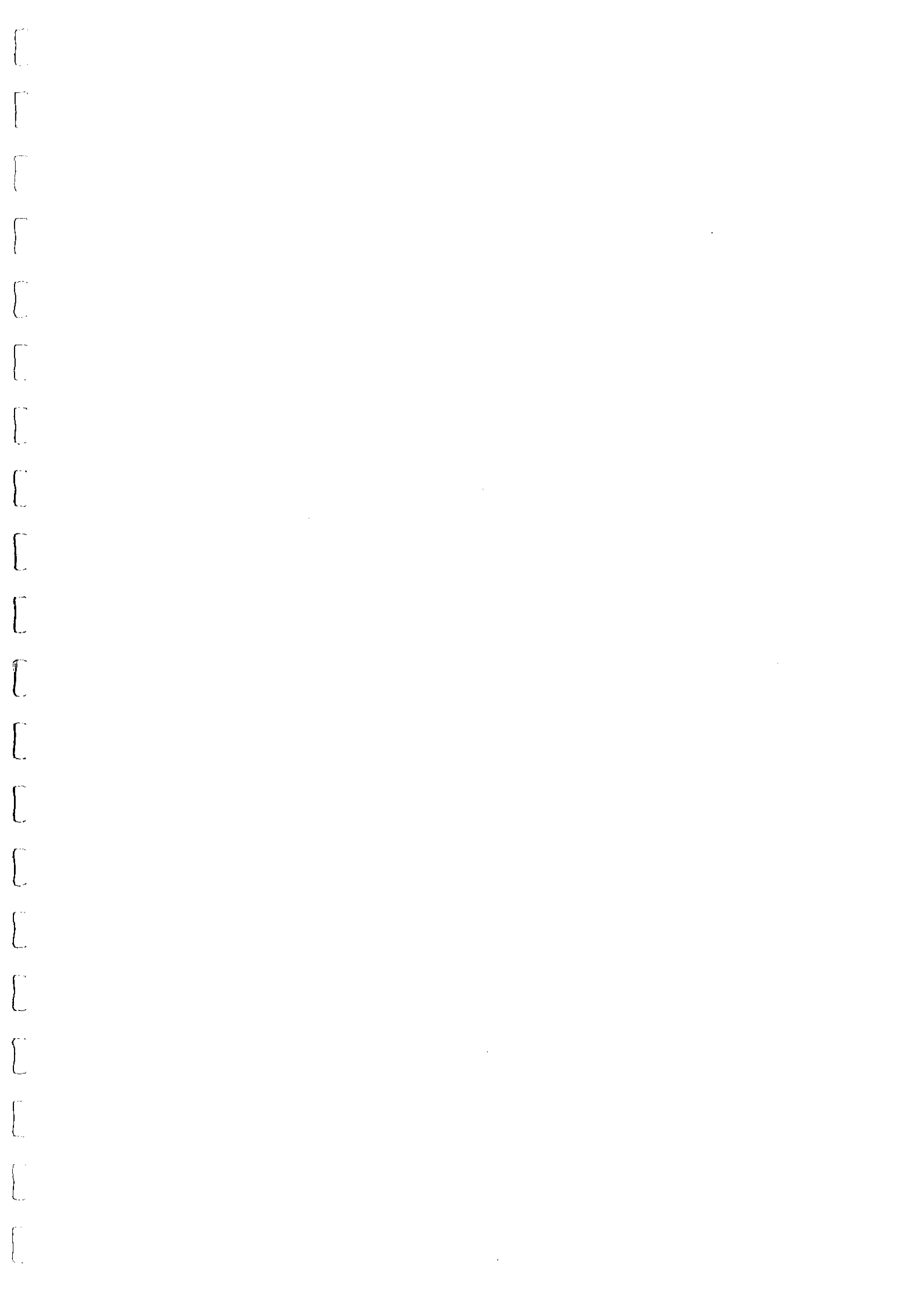


The Ring Project

Bob Jarvis





The Ring Project

The Ring Project

an adaptation of Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*

by Bob Jarvis

2004

The Ring Project

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

London South Bank University provided 75 hrs of 'staff development' time as 'relief' from class contact teaching town planning and urban design. Since the plot of The Ring concerns dodgy building contracts, luxury development in areas of outstanding natural beauty, the theft of mineral resources and severe flooding and fire as a result I have no qualms about this use of this support.

This was originally written as my "Individual Writing Project" for an MA in Creative and Transactional Writing and my tutors Rose Atfield and David Fulton in the Department of English at Brunel University have offered encouragement, comment and support for what has sometimes seemed a curious and foolhardy experiment. Since 'all planners do is talk' I am very grateful to them both for the development of my voice and my retraining as a poet.

Bob Jarvis September 2004

The Ring Project

The structure of this piece follows the four operas and their act and scene breaks of Wagner's four operas, *The Rhinegold*, *The Valkyrie*, *Siegfried* and *The Twilight of the Gods*.

The settings of the scenes in the headings are those of the original *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and are clearly not those used in this version, though the names of characters and places have been retained.

Extended quotations from other works are in *italics* in the text and these sources and other references are listed at the end.

The Ring Project

Let me assume you are a young and good looking woman. Try to imagine yourself in that character at Klondyke five years ago . The place is teeming with gold.....Now suppose a man comes along....with common desires, cupidities and ambitions.....he may be an ugly ungracious unamiable person....you may most bitterly disappoint him. What is left to him then than to curse the love h e can never have and turn remorselessly to the gold.....Here then is the first scene of *The Rhine Gold*

George Bernard Shaw *The Perfect Wagnerite* 1893

HANSEL AND GRETEL ARE ALIVE AND WELL
AND THEY'RE LIVING IN BERLIN
SHE IS A COCKTAIL WAITRESS
HE HAD A PART IN A FASSBINDER FILM

.....
HE SAYS: I'VE WASTED MY LIFE ON OUR STUPID LEGEND
WHEN MY ONE AND ONLY LOVE
WAS THE WICKED WITCH

Laurie Anderson, *The Dream Before (for Walter Benjamin)* 1989

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THE RHINEGOLD

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PRELUDE

These
days you read
the review, hear about
it on TV, see the posters,
wonder exactly what the image
is for, maybe flick through a copy
in the store look out for some special
offer (three for two), think it over, rent
the video and then when you get to see
the real thing you half way know what's going to
happen anyway and you don't need that long prelude
that tells you :long ago and far into the future, in type that
rolls across cities across galaxies and disappears into the far
horizon so small and so quick that you can't quite read it as it fades
smaller and smaller and did you get that ,was that the era when? In
those days long ago and far into the future things were different. Everyone
knew, or believed that gods ruled the earth and the cities were built by giants
and with the right spells and runes all could be changed and all that ever was
shall be or might be or could have been could be seen. The wisdom of the world
was

spun
in
a
thread

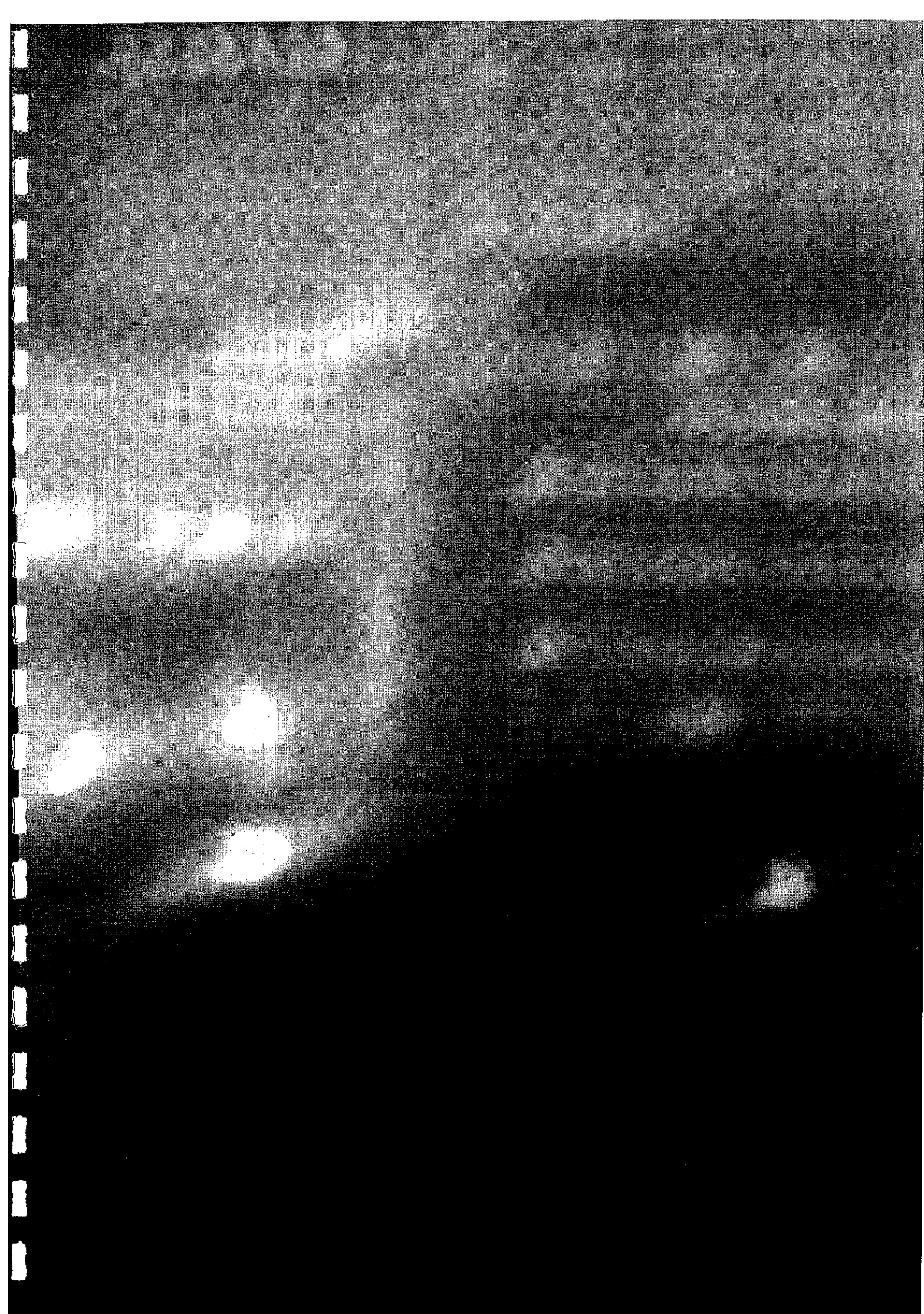
.Except now we know that isn't quite so. That's what science taught.

These days everyone knows its unbelievable that :
you could live for ever; change your shape; build bridges from rainbows or a
fortress in the sky; pay the giants who built it with cursed, gold stolen from water
nymphs; start dynasties bred by gods and mortals and use them to get you out of
fixes so that you rule the world for ever; when it all goes belly up because your
daughter goes soft on a couple of incestuous lovers, disobeys you and neglects
her duty of collecting the corpses of heroes to protect you and then their son
manages to reforge the magic sword you can't just come in and shatter it; so when
he kills the dragon (who used to be a giant) guarding the cursed gold with which
you'd paid the giants and then he shatters the staff on which you've written all the
laws by which you govern the world and, because he knows no fear, can pass
through the ring of fire in which you've imprisoned your disobedient daughter
(though it broke your hear to do it) and falls in love with her (although she's actually
his aunty) you might as well give up; so when he gets drugged into marrying her off
to the brother of the son of the very dwarf you stole the gold from who then kills him
to avenge his honour (but really to get his hands on the gold) all you can do is sit
and watch from the heavens ; finally when your daughter finds out what's been
happening she rides her flying horse into his funeral pyre and all earth floods and
you and all the gods and your heavenly fortress is consumed by the fires and thats
the end of the world.No.

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We all know that's bunk. Hokum. The kind of rubbish you get in old operas. Except, every once in while, just as the sunset catches the side of the hill, and you are not sure if it's a dream or did you read it somewhere, maybe, and that song and that old man and that...but now you've lost it again, the moment's gone, when it made sense. Just stick to facts. Tell the story, the visible everyday events, the ring roads and the shopping centre walkways and retail outlets, part of complex international logistics chains, and the late night kebab stalls outside the station car park. Believe in ordinary magic, that real stuff in cheap magazines and properly refereed academic journals. Not myths and legends. Not stories, made up by writers and artists paid by the word or on some grant scheme to keep them off drugs. Look out the window. Go down town. That's where it is. There's no such things as gods and giants and a thread of fate and magic songs and an army of the dead. There is no past and there is no future.

Just facts and long train journeys.



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SCENE 1
(IN THE DEPTHS OF THE RHINE)

It was a slack time between five, when the last exhausted punters quit for the all night bus back to the outer suburbs, and seven, when the late shift sorters trailing back to their two bed deck access maisonettes usually called in for something to get the dust out of their throat and knock a few frames around to ease the anger at dumb foremen and hopeless managers, and Woglinde, Wellgunde and Flosshilde would sometimes do a turn for them if it hadn't been too hard a night. But now it was quiet and hot and empty in the lower basement rooms that were currently the Goldwater Pool and Lapdance Club, and they could just sit and listen to the creaking and hissing as the prewar air conditioning dragged the traces of nitrous oxide and stale smoke from the damp dark walls and slippery stained floors, leaving another strata of condensation sludge for future archeologists to ponder over when they came to unearth the rock lined love booths from the steel reinforcement and the unexplained arrangements for heating. They watched disinterestedly as the last night's Leni Reifensthal movies spooled back in slo-mo across the screens and the few clear wall spaces. The lights flickered and hummed in the way that they'd been doing for generations, through more name changes and billings and costume changes and dance styles than they wanted to remember. Salmon skin was the latest. It just seemed that this was how it had always been. Always that humming, always that same note, that same gold glow under the floor. And the three of them. Somehow always there, nowhere else to go, as if there was some special hold the place had on them.

As short fat Alberich squeezed and puffed down the spiral stair he could easily claim to have come from land use control. The problem with the Goldwater Pool and Lapdance Club was that there were no records at all. According to building records the site did not have a basement, and there were therefore no land use records for what was officially a nonexistent site. So no problem to get in then. Flash the badge and push.

-Hello honey we could find a way round these irregularities I'm sure. Just one or two things I need to check a little more closely. If you could just show me some of your assets.

One of them would be easy enough. Three could be fun, especially at this time of half night half day. The usual banter, half serious, half sinister. Innuendo. Smiles and jokes.

- Another drink? Its easy to forget there is such pleasure in the world. Even this one.

Only half human after all.

It's getting nowhere. Woglinde, Wellgunde and Flosshilde have this all night and every night .

-Get lost, shorty.

-Go make another pass, crab claws

-We're closed, even for you darling frog face.

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By now its cooler and the air's cleared and the light glows in that mysterious way.

-Oh, Honey, don't take it seriously. But that light is so strong, such power could run a thousand cities, Alberich croons. He's falling love. With power.

-Better give up chasing skirt if you want that then. Could get badly burned.

-Can't see our short fat friend as Mr Big though.

-More pink grilled shrimp.

They're tired and coming down and laughing more with each line. Don't see him that well.

But the light and the the humming and the power really get to him and he dreams a thousand deals. Screw the bitches. So what if I get a little radiation problem. I could buy a cure, and curse the bitches. You gotta give up love if you wanna rule the world. Just a bit of sex now and again, maybe, an' I could afford that, easy.

And he's gone, and the light that's glowed there for ever has gone too. Now it's just another dark and fetid basement club.

And an illegal one too.

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SCENE 2

(AN OPEN SPACE ON THE MOUNTAIN TOPS)

Dozing in the lounge on the new decking overlooking their softly burbling water feature, Wotan could dream. It would soon be over and he could retire. Get this blind eye sorted.

He dreams:

Sixteen coaches rumbling through the marshalling yards on the city outskirts. The soft slow drift of smoke. An old heavy twelve axle Wagon-Lits. Wood panelling and gold relief lettering, vacuum brakes and steam heating. Expensive real wood and slow rhythms across the points and junctions. He breathes deeply and sleeps soundly in luxury. Everything is done, now. King of the City at last. The final programme. The last project is complete. Its lights sweep across the darkened compartment. The greatest investment and the safest return. All this is dreams, realised through long and complex deals and contract management and agreements with third parties, waivers and deferred payments. But complete. Complete enough. Real and physical and shining above the city. A few details to resolve. Final settlements to be negotiated, lawyers business, tricky stuff. Impressive.

He dreams again:

From the private jet slowly descending along the estuary they see below them the landscape of shopping malls and car parks, unnamed white goods retail complexes, pale clad offices let to media service industries, deep secure file and data storage blocks, circuits of slip roads and landscaped intersections and with a continuous twenty four hour current of new reg. company cars and international logistics trailers and containers. Every anonymous kilometre another identically corridor hotel block neon signs and colonial catalogue furnishing in neutral shades : *NoTell Motels* with whisper quiet rooms and relaxation facilities for after that key meeting. Each hectare that swept over the horizon offering him his percentage. Land reclamation. Brownfield restructuring. Foundations and piling. Project management and return leasehold negotiation. A small fraction each time. All adds up. Almost a complete gateway corridor, with his name deep in every contract. Complete enough. Real and physical and shining beyond the city edge. A few details to resolve. Final settlements to be negotiated, lawyers business, tricky stuff. Another day.

-Wotan, wake up. Wotan, you philandering monster what's going on? You told me that getting this villa built would mean we could get out of all this and settle down on the coast and I could trust you and now look what's happened. Wake up and answer me. Wake up or I'm leaving right now and I'm taking Freia with me and you can sort it out. If I find out that you left her with those two no good builders of yours out there all on her own and what I think happened did happen then forget it. Just like I have to forget all those other tarts you pick up on your business trips. Just forget it alright. Come on Freia darling, are you OK now? Sister's here, I'll look after you.

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-Fricka look, it was your idea. It was what you wanted. How we could all be together. All I did was sign the contracts. Freia's a grown up. She can look out for herself. If they wanted her to be around. I got the best advice I could.

-From that shyster Loge, you mean. He's a clown, not a bloody lawyer. Get him here and sort it, now, or stuff the lot of you.

-Its not that simple if they've built it as we agreed, if they completed the patio and the planting and jacuzzi we asked for, by law there's nothing we can do.

-Just get it sorted or you're on your own. Bloody villa in the sunset. I should never have listened to you. Just stick to your stupid operatic fantasies, you no good. All you ever were was a fixer with a bit of insider trading. How could I ever have trusted you of all of them I don't know.

-Look Fricka. I'll try. I'm seeing Loge this afternoon, OK. Now just shut up and let me rest.

-Yeah, sure. Just use your good eye though.

*

*On the thirtyninth floor a gold plated door
won't keep out The Lord's burning rain.*

Fafner and Fasolt's grubby four wheel drive bumps through the canyons between the container stacks. Internationale Spedition. Hapag Lloyd. United Airlines. Rust stained logos. Shipping dockets from ports in dodgy regimes. No questions. You could be lost here for a very long time. Six, eight high. Above them the transfer gantries, beyond them the truck parks and berths. Eastern Baltic. Western Seaboard.

-This won't take long to settle. Bloody Wotan's signed the fucking deal. He insists on all these fucking written contracts and now we can screw him on them.

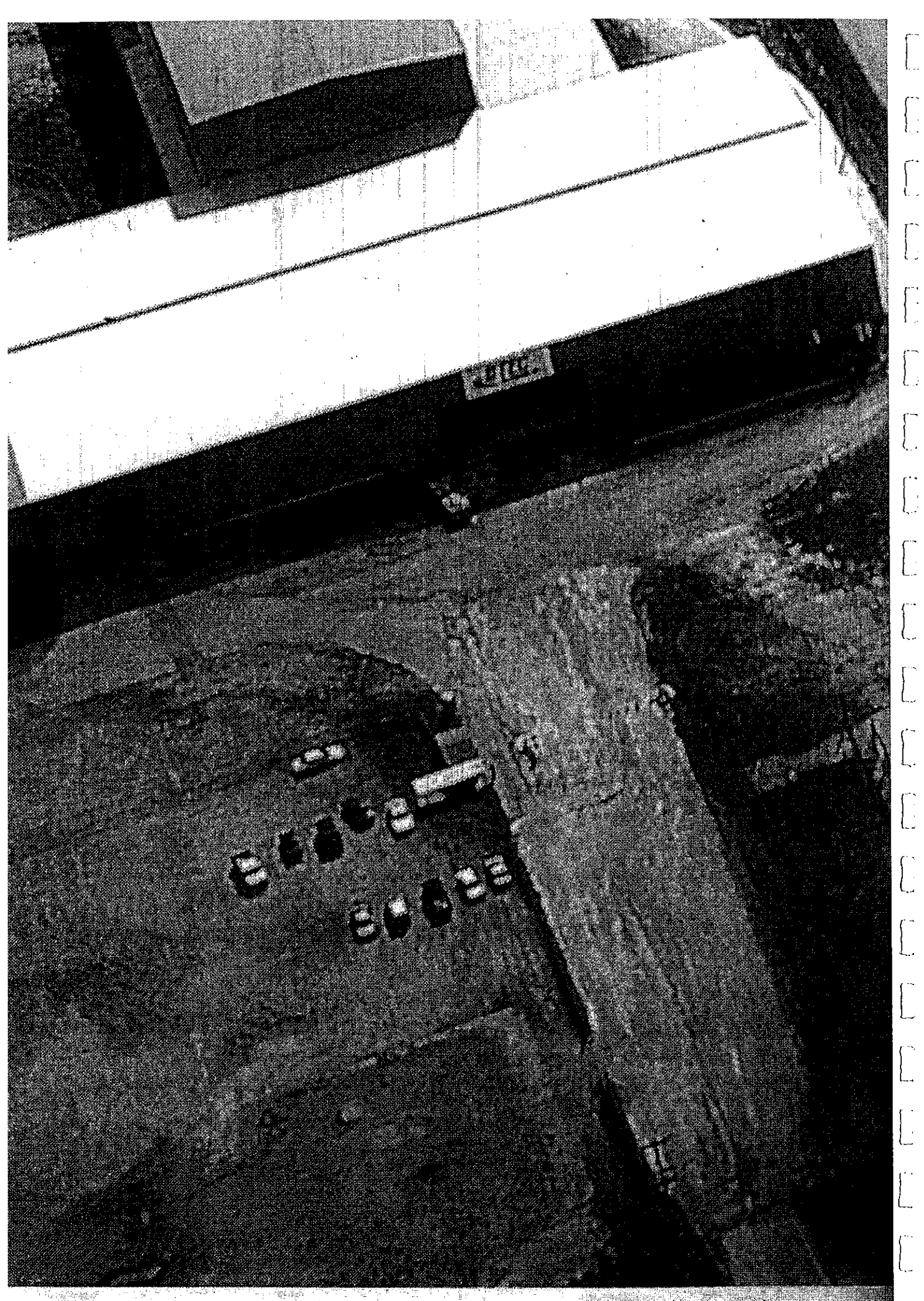
-Hey Wotan you one eyed old man! Can you hear us? We're gonna screw you on your fucking contracts.

-Built this fantasy fortress for the old loony now its payback time. That Freia's a bit of stuff alright. Fancy my hammer with her.

-We done good brother. You sure this is the place?

*This whole town's filled with sin
It'll swallow you in
If you've got the money to burn.*

Wotan waits at the head of the board room table. Burnished steel and zinc. Buzzes in Thor and Donner, half brothers Freia insisted were on the board. The sunset catches the towers across the river and the room glows gold as the window tint adjusts the photovoltaic shading a degree or two. Somewhere thirty eight floors below those stupid thugs will be trying to persuade security that they do have a meeting here. He relishes the irony of the Muzak version of that old Gram Parson's song they'll hear in the lift. But he cannot hold the picture long enough. There is no focus. He is growing old. Everything is slipping and everything is unfinished. Loge hasn't shown and the deal is crumbling like an old fortress on a mountain top.



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-Look when I suggested Freia was part of the deal you don't think I was serious do you? Wotan tries to stall them.

-We can understand English you know. We ain't as thick as you think we are. Your two bully boys there ain't got a leg to stand on. And that Loge can't smarm you out either so just give us the cash or the bird and that's the deal done. OK?

*

The portakabin is getting hot and sticky. The two giants smell of sweat and beer, their T-shirts stained, their Caterpillar Shockproof Industrials are starting to scuff the imitation Persian rug. Donner and Thor are flexing their fingers running their hand over their bulging pockets, testing the air. Spoiling for the fight old man Wotan daren't have. Fricka looks at him with alimony eyes, go on sell my sister and then we'll see. The world around slips back to this backyard hut, the corporate office lost as much a dream as the mists of an opera set. The table is covered in unpaid bills, demands and notices. The iced air drains away and the stench of the marsh and slurry of the estuary fill the room, the tinted glass and art rich walls become so many loads of hardfill.

Wotan's mobile rings. Loge is on his way.

- Got held up the architects, why did you have to employ bloody Spaniards no wonder the cost has overrun. Five minutes max. If you'd got a proper office I'd be there already. Ciao.

*

Wotan meets him at the door. A quick word with the client and family.

-You've got to get us out of this. You told me it was possible and now I'm on the edge here and you've got to deliver.

-Wotan you have to remember I promised to look into things to explore everything and report back. These boyos have done a good job and delivered on time, with no defects and no insurance claims so really there's nothing I can do to get you out of this. It's your contract not mine this time. If you offered her as default then that's an end to it legally. If you're broke your broke.

Donner and Thor squeeze over their father's fixer but their intimidation is wasted. Loge flicks his organiser and looks past them to Wotan.

-The only hope I can give is that there's been talk of some strange new mineral resource. Only rumours on the markets, but I had a few leads and tracked it back. Some sort of theft of unlicensed power sources. But if you could get your hands on it you pay of these two and have some spare change. Or a few trinkets for the lovely Fricka at least.

Fricka glares at him. She knows the contempt Loge has for them all. But he knows her vanity.

The Ring Project

-You would rule the world if you could get your hands on this stuff. Almost like magic they say. The real power is in the way you can make this stuff do what ever you want.....

F & F look up. A bit of skirt's one thing, a couple of nights fun, but this could be the real measure get them up into the big league, heavy deals, and no more site work.

.....The trouble is, Wotan, its gone underground as they say. No trace in the books. Liberated from the known world of bookkeeping you might say. So if you want it you'll have to wheel and deal a bit more than unusual old boy. What's not written cannot be held up in court as they say. I'm sure you get my drift.

Fafner is quicker than the old dreamer when it comes to readies.

-Yeah, we'll buy that. Get us the stuff and you get the tart back, seems simple enough to us simple contractors. So come along dearie, a night with Fafner and the charming Fasolt here won't hurt that much. And we'll be back same time tomorrow to pick up the stuff then? OK?

*

Wotan has no choice in the matter. As the brother's 4x4 splashes back through the mud and ruts into the blue green chemical sunset Wotan feels even older. He had always tried to get things sorted. Everything written and agreed. Now its all slipping away. A couple of cowboy builders and a shyster lawyer and all there is left is a way out thats difficult and illegal at best and at worst could bring the whole lot tumbling down around them. He looks around what's left of his family. But they are slipping away into a drowsy slumber. Having Freia around kept them young, they were family, they would live for ever. Now its just another deal going wrong.

Fricka's nagging him again, frightening herself to suddenly seem old and pained. Half regret. If only she'd not always wanted that proper house on the hill, with a drive and a pool, the view of the mountains and the garden allées :

- Look at this mess fine you've got us into, it would be funny if you didn't see yourself as some sort of god. Now you're just a sham. Master of the Universe you may be in your dreams. Just get us out of this. You let that Loge talk you into this now let him get you out.

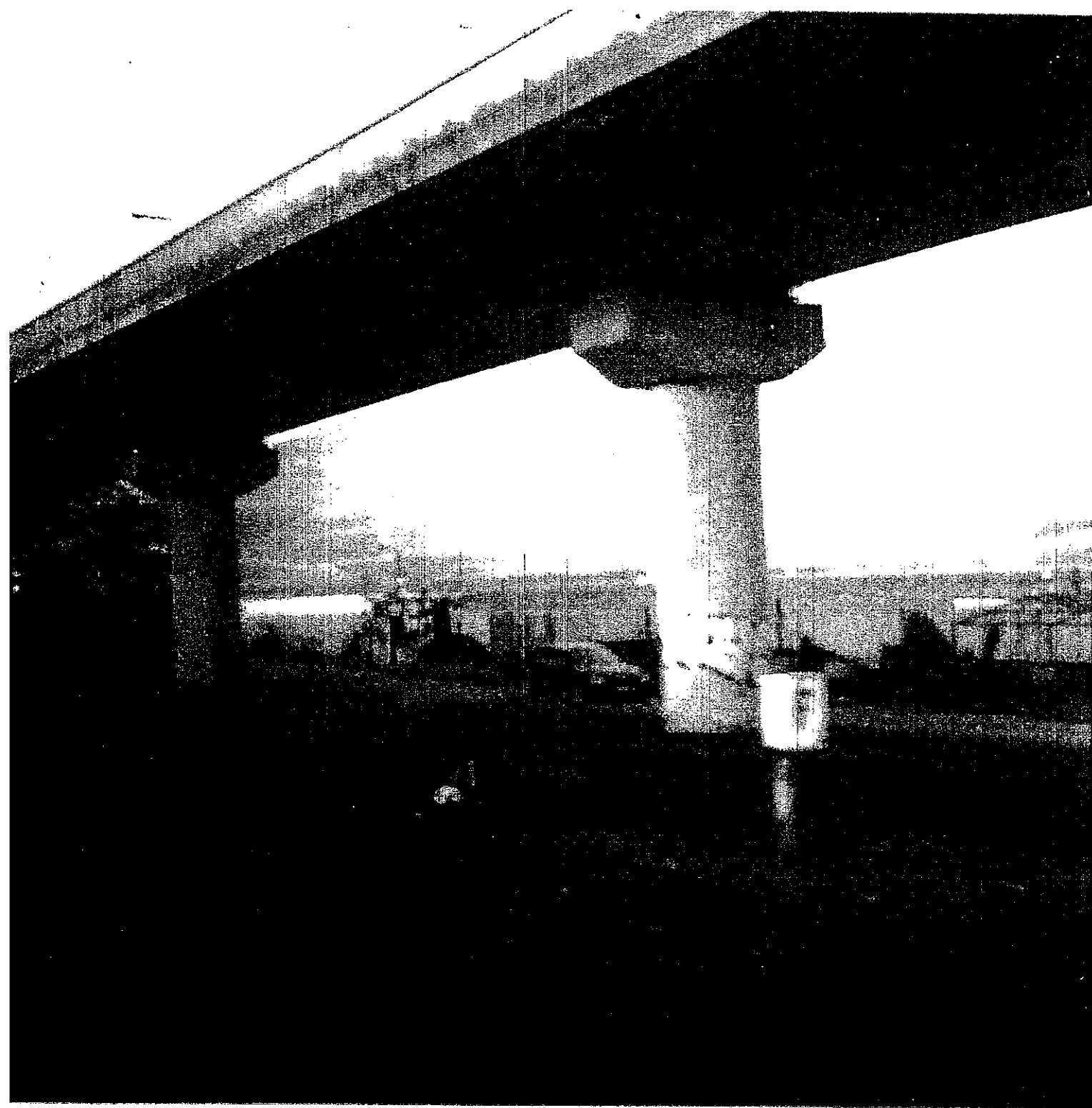
Wotan sees them in a different light now. She might talk, but all she can do, as always, is sit there and tell me what's right and what's wrong and its up to me again. Sometimes I do carry this world or what's left of it in my contracts.

Its getting dark and the city skyline glows with the last lights of low tech industry that have made him. But even as the family firm is in disarray he senses in that new mineral power Loge talked up there could be way forward.

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Something cool and humming. The rest are asleep now. Shivering slightly. He folds the grey dusty sheets across them like old furniture and calls Loge.

-OK then, what's the next move?



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SCENE 3
(A SUBTERRANEAN CAVERN)

It was a dark and foggy night.

They drive through the dark palm lined avenues of the high tech research campus. The grey steel blocks, identifiable only by discreet corporate devices above the entrance canopy, could be blocks of granite in this darkness. The rain slips across the high red wax shine of Loge's Buick. Wotan could never understand the man's taste of antique cars. He always had the right tape though even if he couldn't get all the words of the old Springsteen song:

*Well' everybody's got a secret ,son. Something they just can't face.
Till someday they'll just cut it loose. Nobody asks any questions
or looks too long in your face :
in the darkness at the edge of town.
Some folks get it anyway anyhow. I lost my money and I lost my wife.
But them things don't seem to matter much to me now.
When life's on the line and dreams are found and lost
I'll be there and I'll pay the cost, for I need the things that can only be found:
in the darkness on the edge of town.*

Loge knows this old man needs him more that he needs that decaying family and their pompous oaths and loyalties. He was always another hired hand, never one of the clan. But they paid well enough.

-Look Wotan, just leave the talking to me and maybe we'll get out with what we need.

The only sign flickers in dark red *Nacht and Nebel R and D . No unauthorised entry*. Loge dims the lights and they cross the deserted parking lot, he slips one of his many fake ID chips into the reader and they slide round the service door. Below them a huge dimmed cavernous floor, trailing airlines and coiled cables, flickering indicators, the mantric hum of advanced electronics. A slight mist rises as the humid air they've washed in with them is suddenly cooled.

In a far corner a techie crouches over a shiny white workbench, but his form flickers in the half light, as he seems to mutate from one form of life to another and then, briefly, to virtually complete invisibility. As Wotan and Loge watch another shape, almost human, glides up on a floating movement device, extends an artificial arm and grabbing the bundle of chips and cable from the technician twists him, screaming, to the grey polished floor.

-OK brother Mime, that's enough. I own the patents and I own you. Leave this to me and get back to your rest box.

The Ring Project

As he speaks he holds the device from the workbench to his head and seems to expand to the fill the entire cavern, his distorted image flickers onto every screen, his voice echoes from every speaker .

Another crazy, thinks Loge. Another cheap SF story line, another seeker after world domination, one of those who've seen too much late night TV and read too much of the wrong stuff between his program manuals. Wotan sees only the power that could be his. They follow Mime to the rows of rest boxes where in ranks of numbered cubes a soft womb light glows over a thousand huddled forms, curled beneath their grey webbing in the blood temperature humming air. Mime stirs.

-How did you get here? Are you more of Alberich's spies?

Mime is shaking and Wotan's bulk towers over him. But at least he has real arms and legs and seems human, so a sudden kind of empathy swells up in his fear and he tells the dark strangers more than he should.

-I'm just one in a thousand here. We test the material and we try out new patterns but its Alberich who has turned this place into the hell it is. We used to make transistors and cell phones, happy workers, we made such beautiful things here

(Loge starts humming *Baby your mind is a radiohey! radio head.... the sound of a whole new world* from *True Stories*

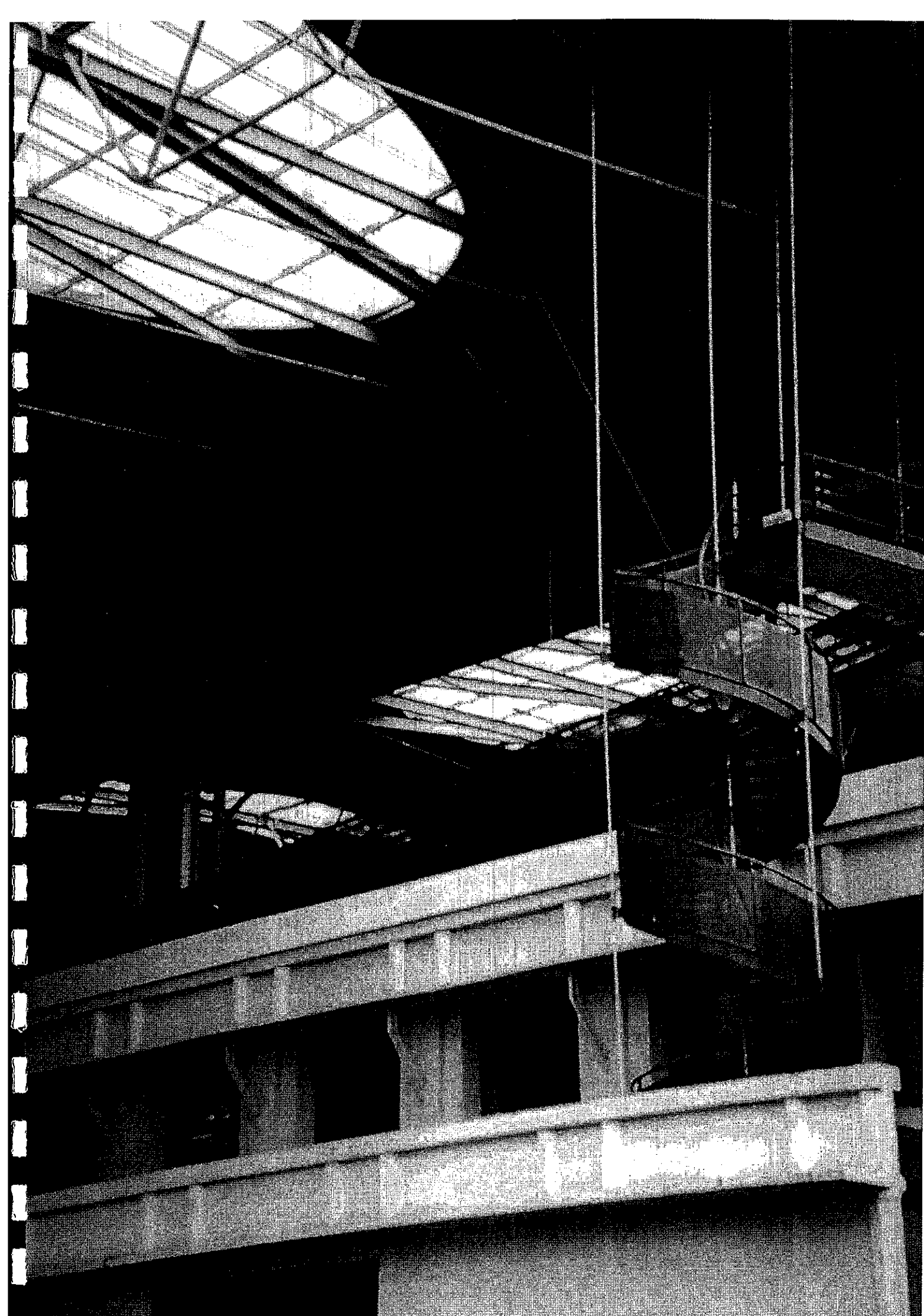
..... then one day he turned up with this new wonder mineral and set us to turn it into everything he desired. Holograph porn, unmetered power sources, replicators, light drive vehicles like his goddamn Mekon platform. We've got no permits here and he keeps us prisoner. Just get out now while you can and if you can get me out with you

-Good evening strangers! Most exceeding welcome this dark night. I see you've already met my most gifted researcher, Mime. Please allow me to introduce myself.

The spindrive floater materialises behind Wotan and Loge. The air chills even further as if a ghost had entered human space with evil intent. Loge is not impressed , he's heard this line before somewhere up by the Altmont Speedway coming from a giant inflated penis. Its only rock n' roll and it bores him.

-Let me show you around Nacht and Nebel. Ever since the introduction of Goldrin, our new multi functional matrix, we've been able to expand our operations base far beyond the norms of electronic technology intowell almost perpetual motion and matter transformation certainly. There is literally no limit to what we can do here. Maybe you'd like to join me for a little demonstration?

-Of course, its always a pleasure to see a new product in its early stages. To discuss mutual development options. Advise on security. Loge charms away.



The Ring Project

Loge prods Wotan to keep his greed under control. After years of running the less attractive side of Gottesmund Inc., paying off the whores and the dealers he knows that old big W. wants this more than anything. As they get older power replaces sex as the big drive, so he read in an airport self analysis guide. Too true big W.

-Show me what it can do. We saw your Mime experimenting with the shape shifter. Can you show us that? Something big perhaps? Something really corny - like maybe , a dragon?

And in the aircon cool, as they watch a huge green earth snake coils over the benches and reaches the halogen floods. Probably some brain pulse induction generated virtual reality hallucinogen but soooooo corny thinks Loge, so hand drawn Disney, and such wonderful, realistic scales. He can just see his office done out in that. Desk top, laptop bag the whole works.

-Very nice and so house trained too. But big is easy and they say that nano tech is the next big thing - can you do small? Can you do a toad perhaps?

And thats it . Wotan stabs the creature with is stick. Loge flicks open a stainless grip and as Alberich returns to scale he's a prisoner. A pulse from the stungun and they're out of there. Sweeping back up the valley drive to the house on the hill Loge finds another track. Roger McGuinn *Back from Rio* , track 6,*House on the hill*

*LA's asleep.
You roll up your window,
the night air is cold and the freeway is clear.
In a green Gucci bag are your prized possessions,
the jewels of your mind to hold back the fear.*

*And when Monday comes round,
there's a high lonesome sound,
and she follows you down from the kill.
A white blinding light makes it all seem so right
and you feel you're the king of the hill
How many years will you crawl through this castle
So satisfied and still wanting more
The guests have arrived, with all the right faces,
but you miss all the ball in that room down the hall.
Sunrise again and the driveway is empty.
The crystal is cracked and there's blood on the wall.*

Wotan grunts, adjusts his eye patch and shifts his bulk in the leatherette. Why does that creepy know all have to have a bloody song for everything. But he couldn't loose those last words :

The crystal is cracked and there's blood on the wall.

The Ring Project

SCENE 4
(AN OPEN SPACE ON THE MOUNTAIN TOPS)

HEADS IN THE CLOUDS – BODIES IN THE CONCRETE?

When you drive past the newly opened Gottesmund Valhall residential complex in the hills and you remember all the operatic razzamatazz of their opening - all that dry ice cloud and the bridge of rainbow lights, the 70 piece orchestra booming out all those Wagnerian themes of power and glory - and wonder at the glittering terraces and heroic statues along the private driveways then its easy to not worry too much about the shabby dealings and dodgy contracts that underlie it.

Not that a press card will get you past the security or more than a curt *auf Wiedersehen* on the entryphone, for this is clearly a palace built on fear. However much the architectural glossies have swooned at its faux deconstruction gothic, there is something as much Hans Christian Anderson (as in Emperor's New Clothes) as Mies van der Rohe in its message, for this is the architecture of deception, not of celebration.

Architecture may be frozen Muzak these days but really its frozen assets. Follow the money is as good advice in architectural criticism as crime, and that certainly tells a different story here.

The first question to ask is where did Wotan, CEO of Gottesmund Inc., raise the capital - there are stories of a merger with shady Nacht and Nebel R & D (not listed on NASDAQ or FT) and a new wonder organic mineral, Goldrin, but N & N R & D aren't answering any calls. Other sources point to high level dispute and a forced buy out. Certainly, a series of unmarked 36 wheelers with Bavarian plates left the west coast plant of N & N late in the night and all there is at the plant now is a lone security watch and heavy chains on the gates. Rumours abound that N & N madcap founder Alberich Nibelung has left a fatal flaw in the material that will eventually lead to world catastrophe, but he could not be traced. How much he might be able to rebuild his essentially craft based company remains to be seen but he is no doubt bitter about the sudden collapse of his always somewhat underground empire.

It seems likely that its from the profits of this off shore deal that Wotan funded the project but even in his dealings with his contractors there are mysteries. Of the two Giant Building Brothers Fasolt is reported killed in a 'construction accident' (which seems to have taken place at about the time of the final contract payments) and Fafner has retreated to 'a cave in the forest' to count the profits. The beautiful and bountiful Freia (whose 'golden apples' offer perpetual youth so the stories go) is reunited with her brothers and sisters in Valhall but was at one stage reported to have been held hostage by the Dodgy Brothers until Wotan was advised by his 'inner spiritual teacher' to settle up.

The Ring Project

No-one directly involved in the project is willing to comment beyond sending out the elaborate and operatic promo video, but three outsiders have offered some insight.

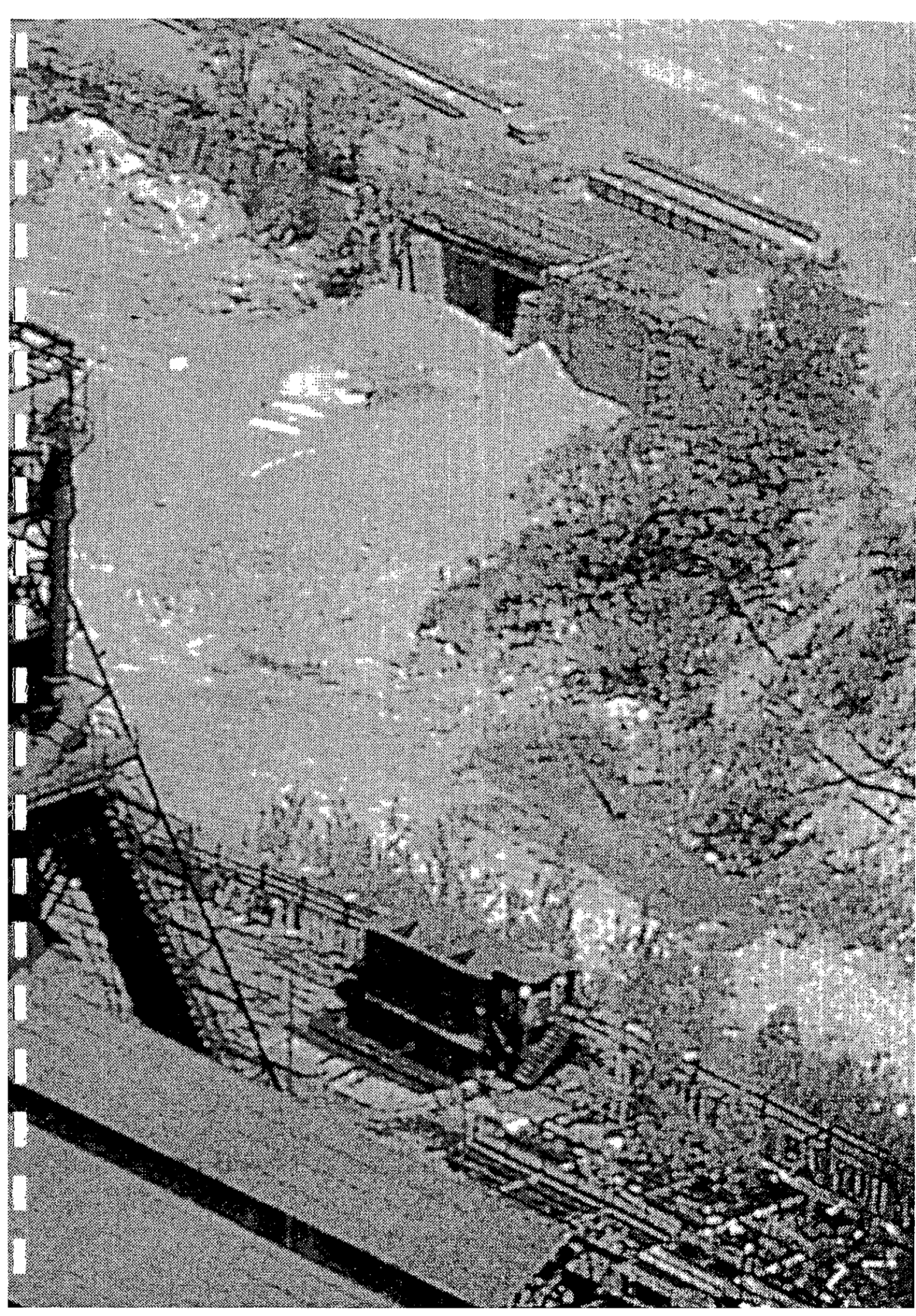
Mystic ecologist Erda, “the eternal world’s first ancestor” , claims to have advised Wotan that his pursuit of the magical ‘Goldring’ would lead to world collapse and that the consequences of tearing it from the subterranean caves where it had provided underwater light and heat, could not be calculated in worldly terms, but were of another dimension. But her claims “to know all that has been and all that is to be” put her on the pages of *Astrologer and Spiritualist* rather than even the most extreme columns of *Radical Ecology*.

Three ‘exotic dancers’ from a basement club claim that their unlicensed source of light and power and a feature in their dance routines for centuries had been stolen by a deformed dwarf-like figure who matches the description of the elusive Alberich Nibelung. Instead of lighting ‘truth and beauty’ they claim it will soon reveal the false and fainthearted.

Closest to Wotan is his ‘agent’ Loge who has been instrumental in the deals : “I am confident that the spin off and leverage of the Valhall project will be seen for generations. We should all bask in its glory as one of the outstanding regeneration projects, built in difficult terrain, of recent years.” Privately though he is reported to be ashamed to have been involved, and is thinking of moving into pyrotechnics.

How long Valhall will stand on its remote hillside is still the subject of ongoing environmental debate. But too much is uncertain about its origins to give it a clean bill of health.

(Critical Urbanism Quarterly, July 2004)



The Ring Project

THE VALKYRIE

The Ring Project

ACT 1 (HUNDING'S HUT IN THE FOREST)

Sixteen light years out from the Alphane Moon and still running from their endless clan warfare, in deep silent dark space with only the sound of his own pulse and the night ghosts of forgotten battles - Dr Bloodmoney, The Game Players of Titan, even those slippery friends from Frolix 8 - running for ever in his dreams for the penultimate truth, scraping through the maze of death, Sigmund Volsung let his 106 KV personal cruiser/destroyer "Richard Wagner" (named ironically after the minor late 20th Century American pornographic filmmaker) float on the scatter of meteor dust which would at least offer a few seconds of cover till they traced him again. He was wounded badly from the last laser battle off Alpha Centuri and his space warp generators were way down and the AI systems had long gone and he was flying on manual, with only a late 21st Century Apple scanner to see beyond the event horizon. At least they built them like tanks.

In his mind the battles kept re-running like shadows on a hologram EV channel you couldn't shut down, but the players had no names and no faces. He was running on the adrenalin of battle and his memory was shot. He knew if he didn't land soon and get patched up he was as dead as these lumps of space debris around him. Images flicker into his VR goggles. He cannot tell if they are his phantasms or lost messages he has skipped in the heat of battle that are down loading in the last electronic spasm of his support systems. An old half blind man he calls "father" who has taught him all he knows - how to live off the slime of the sea slugs of Hvergelmir, outwit the dark dwarves than burrowed below the surface of Midgard, and to a six legged warrior wolves Skoll and Hati from the far flung frozen northern galaxies. down with a single blow. And that final slaughter in the sponge forests, his mother's body thrown to the fires, his sister taken away as bounty and then his father's wolf-cloak lying there on the trackway and no other trace.

Sigmund Volsung was a loner. Full of vengeance and a love cut too deep for words that had been torn apart in brutal slaughter. A free wild spirit screaming revenge through the outer galaxies. Now he lay mortally wounded in a meteor belt of a minor planet of an unnamed star.

He lets the battered space craft drift down to the surface, buffeted by the sulphur storms and hidden in the darkness between the twin dawns. Only a strange shaft of light seems to guide him as he staggers across the fragments of blue crystal and torn stumps of spiked undergrowth, of god knows what toxicity. He is too far gone to check now, and crawls the last few yards to the shelter.

Gradually, painfully his receptor systems intermittently recover fragments of another world. Things he recognised from his own specie's habitations, his own tribe's even. In the darkness there is still a glowing column of radiation. Sounds that gradually take on the patterns of speech, a soft female intonation, a familiar tongue.

The Ring Project

-Stranger, distant visitor to the dark forests are you.....alive?

Eyes so like those of his father, so like those of his mother look down at him. Soft hands offer a beaker of a strange brew, swirls of dark amber and bright green in a translucent shell horn.

-You're wounded. Let me bathe your scars.

- But where am I ? In whose dominion do I lie? And you so strange and yet so familiar what is your name, whose tribe claims you?

- You have landed on Hunding's dark moon. All that you see is his by conquest. Even I. Rest here until he returns, but then you would be safer to leave. I can repower your craft, but you must flee.

She bends over the prone space warrior, her long blonde hair brushes his wounded trunk as she offers him another drink. Their eyes, deepest blue, meet, and strangely reinvigorated he stands before her.

-Even in this darkest moon deep night I see light , but now I must return to my search.

-Your search for?

As they stand there, both knowing that his search and her slavery are over but neither daring speak it, the shelter shakes as through the visor scans they see a blackened Warrior Class burner drop from the sky, its engines screaming power. The new arrival flings his battle suit into the decontam. unit and grabs the blonde, towering over her slight form.

He grins though his blackened teeth.

-And our uninvited guest is? Is who, wife ?

- I am a seeker for just vengeance, wounded and needing refuge on your satellite. Your wife offered me shelter.

- Stay then, one night. I am Hunding. Eat here, rest . But first your name, strange traveller.

Even as he speaks he notices that the wounded stranger has the same deep blue eyes as his wife. Deepest blue, cold and cunning. But beautiful. Like the eyes of a space snake from Mercury II.

-Wife, why do you stare at our guest so ? Your name stranger?

The Ring Project

-If you knew my story, the terrors I have seen, the planets burned and ships pulverised into ash and dust, the subterranean cities filled with poison gas, the way my family was torn from around me even when I was young, you would understand why I am in flight. I do not even have my dead father's stun phaser. Even now I am pursued by the Goths of Gothiem X for stopping the rape of a young woman. So I am neither free nor happy. I bring only woe and fear. I am known to others as Joyless. As Woeful.

- And I know you now as Enemy. What you stopped on Gothiem X was not rape but legal trade after a defeat. The Goths are my clan. I must avenge their loss. But I am an honourable man. Rest here for now, but when the twin green moons rise you must face me with your bare hands, to the death. Wife to our bed. Prepare our aphrodisiac, I need a good night before the slaughter of this worm. Let him lie here in the waste.

Aroused now, Hunding paws at his wife's thighs and begins to tear her skimpy robes. But her snake blue eyes are on the stranger in the light of the radiation beam.

*

Sigmund Volsung lies in the dim shelter, growing cold as the support systems slip back to rest pilot level. He dreams of the snake eyed beauty and despairs that defenceless, he will die alone on an unnamed satellite, while somewhere his father's weapon, the one thing that might save him lies lost and forgotten. Then in the fading glow of the radiation the shutter to Hunding's sleeping cubicle slides slightly to one side. Hunding's wife's lithe form glides silently towards him. Her curvaceous body silhouetted against the panels of the shelter through what remains of her robes, still torn from whatever the monster warrior has subjected her to.

- Shhhh. I've drugged him with CanD, he still thinks I'm with him in triplicate in some Asiatic fantasy brothel. Stupid sex crazed block head. This is no marriage- it was another of those tribal rape deals you stopped. No wonder he's mad. Too close to home. Listen stranger, this may help you. I still remember how, just at the height of the 'wedding' orgy a dark hooded stranger with one eye suddenly burst in, and pierced me with his one eye. I knew his sadness, like yours, stranger, was mine. From his dark cloak he pulled a radiation stunner and plunged its beam deep into the rock. He turned and left in silence. My new "brothers", always greedy for hardware and weapons could not unlock it, however hard they tried. So its still here. That's the radiation beam you see. If you could unlock it you stand a chance against him.



Soap sensationalism: The scene between Steve (Martin Kemp) and Barbara (Sheila Hancock)

A KISS TOO FAR

The Ring Project

Sigmund Volsung, lone space warrior of the forever broken heart, the battle scarred human hero who is doomed to die reaches forward and without a pause slowly draws the antique stun beam from the basalt blocks of the shelter's floor. He stands proud and as the blade beam modulates to the Volsung genetic coding that is deeply embedded in it turns to the womankind who stands in awe beside him.

A thousand rare moon orchids bloom in the forests of poisonous cactus, a thousand flowers open on the bracts of the coiling undergrowth. The twin moons rise above the opposite horizons and join in a dazzling green light. Sigmund Volsung turns to the woman and they embrace in escape, in victory.....in love.

-Sigmund, victor, warrior, I am Siglinde, your sister, your lover, your wife. You have won me, you have freed me, there is nothing now that can stop us. Come.

Sigmund powers up the battered Richard Wagner, slams the hyperdrive to max, and with Siglinde beside him they disappear as if a great black hole of eternal love had swallowed them. Even the asteroids flicker to atomic life as they pass.

*

Three moon cycles later Hunding wakes in a cubicle stained with unmentionable bodily fluids, his groin like a scorched volcano and a headache strong enough to generate nuclear fusion drive. He grunts and groans to the screen and scrolls through the bounty lists, searching for his lost wife and the stranger who took her. His unsteady fingers, too massive for this keyboard even on a good day, stumbles on the popular psychoanalytical channel. Normally he'd dump such crap in an nanosecond, but the grey suited presenter's words, as he sits in front of a blow up photo of a passionate same species kiss and the headline *A KISS TOO FAR*, catch him unexpectedly:

- *Dr. Donnington, you've researched incest in pre-holographic musicdram , what are your views?*

-*It is generally felt that incest is unnatural. That is precisely what it is not. Nature has no more objection to incest than a cattle-breeder. Why should nature object? What we call nature is the very embodiment of the mother principle. The purpose of the incest taboo is to prevent us from slipping back into an animal state of unconsciousness and irresponsibility. To transfer our main unconscious and incestuous fantasies from mother figure to sister figure is a normal stage of growth, and prepares us for.....*

Murder. Hunding completes the sentence. Those snake blue eyes. Now he knew. Hunding ripped the transcomlink screen from its socket and heaved it to the wall. It shattered to a shreds of cable and crystal, grinding beneath his anti-grav boots as he kicked his specially adapted chopper killer craft to life.

-Vengeance ! He yelled. The rest was lost in dust and aftershock. In space no-one hears you scream, he thought.

The Ring Project

ACT TWO SCENE 1 AND 2
(IN THE MOUNTAINS NEAR VALHALLA)

Twilight Drive , Episode 8

Long flying pan over credits:

Leafy hillside suburban homes in golden glow of twilight. We see gardens of rich fir trees and as they rise up the hill, outcrops of rock in them. Soundtrack is agitated but compassionate, but romantic, with the familiar motifs of the series. Something in the music or the slightly exaggerated styles of the dream houses tells us this is closer to *The Sopranos* than *Neighbours*.

Long pan. shot :

Pop Wotan's garden, the last and highest plot on the drive edging the wilderness. Pop Wotan, rather overweight but was once clearly hansom in an almost godlike way, his eye patch giving him a slightly gangster cool air, is sitting on a garden seat carved from fake grey rock, dressed in a bright Hawaiian shirt and bright shorts, drinking beer from a can. From time to time he pokes at garden gnomes with a long staff and burps, staring at them in dreamy but vengeful way. His daughter, Brunhilde, is riding her trail bike noisily and recklessly around the wilderness that lies beyond the garden plots. She is blonde, tanned and wearing a metallic see through T-shirt and shorts, with golden horns painted on her black crash helmet.

Blurred tracking shots through the trees and rocks:

-Hey Pop, can you see this? This Grane 800 is the hottest wheels yet.

Cut to dialogue CU's :

-Brunhilde girl, come here, I gotta special job for you.

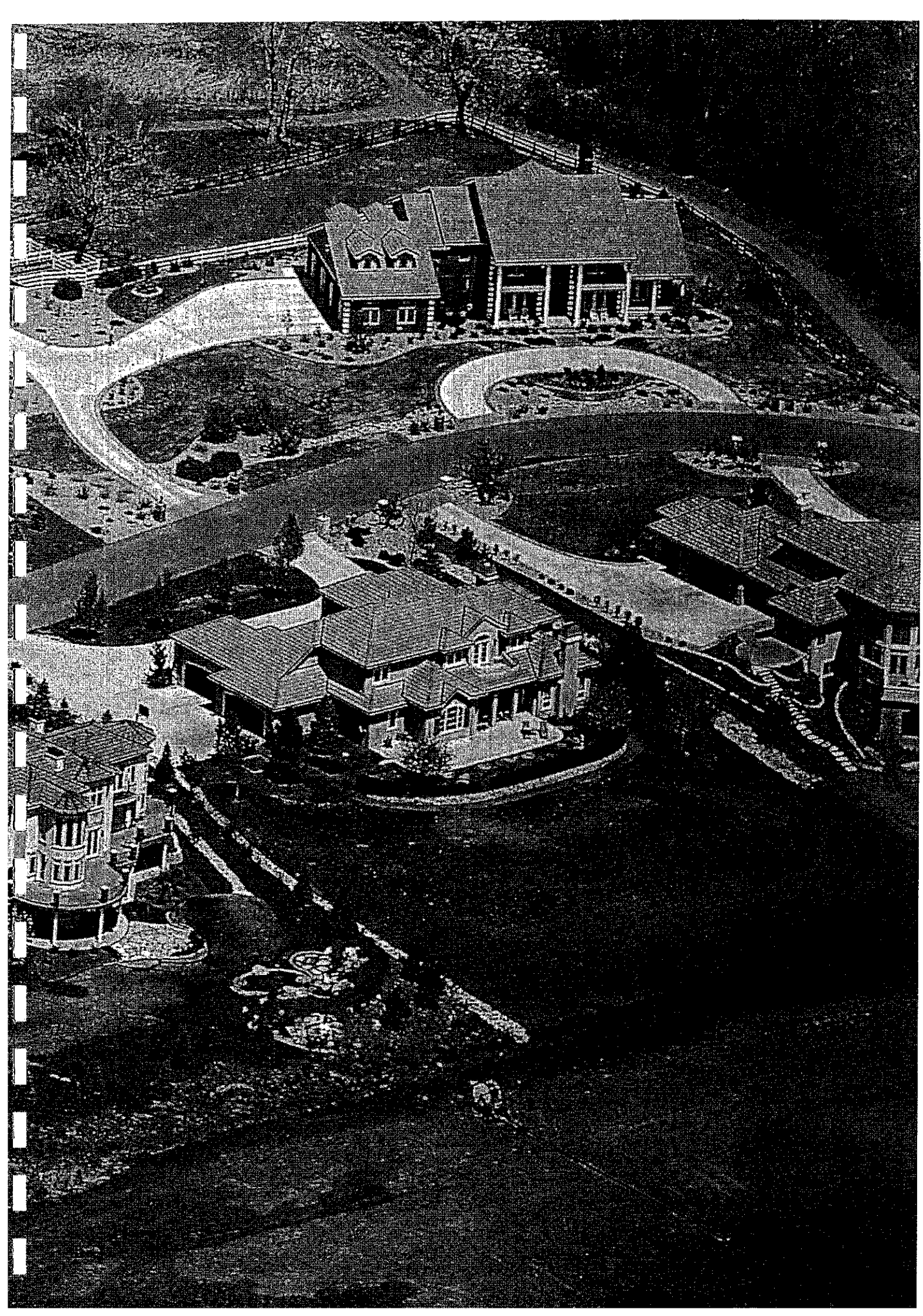
Brunhilde skids into the garden. Cuts the engine and flips down the stand. As she takes off her helmet her golden hair catches the sunlight's last rays.

-There's been a few problems on a deal, and I need to be sure that Sigmund Volsung comes out clean. As for Hunding, I never saw the guy. OK?

-No problemo, Pop. Its better than college, running for The Gods, anyday. But watch your back, though, Frika Sticka's gunning for you. I'd rather be out on the streets at 2 am. , than deal with her. See-ya.

Pull back to mid shot of garden:

As Brunhilde's bike leaves noisily left, her step-mother Fricka, dressed up tight in blue suit and pearls, clearly corsetted in under a tight skirt, no trace of smile though perfect make up and a fixed perm, enters from the house. Pop W. (centre) slumps in the rock seat, pulls himself up and turns to glare at his wife, as strong and godlike as a Hawaiian shirt with beer stains and sweat marks allow.



The Ring Project

Cut to dialogue CU's :

-So here you are, come home to change your pants? When I need you you're never here.

-And?

-I don't care about your business as long as it's business, but this time it's getting personal. Family. Sigmund Volsung is not one of ours and what happens is none of our business, so stay clear of it. Get it. Your bitch children run wild in the streets and as long as they don't get picked up I can stand that, but if you think you can pass the firm on to a bastard son's incestuous kid then you got a lot to learn old man. Do your own dirty work. I got brothers too you know. An' they can be heavy.

-You don't get it do you? If we're gonna get ahead we gotta get smart. Branch out. Get untraceable. Get free agents. Family is too close for this job is all

-Then let Sigmund sort it himself. Just stay clean, you dirty prick. If you can. Now look at me.....

(Fricka grabs his wrist and twists him to the ground)

.....Look at me, just keep you and your bitch kids out of this one.....

(Pop Wotan has been drinking too much in the afternoon sun to do more than mumble grudging assent)

.....Let him die and keep the family clean.....

(Fricka strides back to the house. CU as her clean and sensible shoes pass Brunhilde's dusty bike wheels)

.....Your father needs to tell you something, Wild Child.

(The last words burn with scorn, despite the smile. The kitchen door slams, we see F. fixing herself a strong drink through the net curtains).

Mid shot:

Pop Wotan is slumped in the rock seat, his head in his hands. Brunhilde lets her bike fall to the ground and rushes over to him. The scene is posed like a sculpture. As he speaks, Pop Wotan drinks beer and slugs of Bourbon. Gradually his speech gets slurred and his body slumps.

- Pop. Whassamatter? I ain't ever seen you like this. Ever.

- I'm not sure you'll get, child. You're so close, it's like talking to myself. But I guess you gotta know it all. Things even your stepmother doesn't know. The Valhall deal, I did a few bad things to get that through. Real bad. I got warning notes from the Ecocrazies even. But we needed the break. After that I kinda lost it for a while. Had to find out more. I became obsessed with the old hag who sent me the notes. Kinda fell for her in a strange way. She's your natural mother, I guess I never told you that. I kinda dreamed you and your sisters, by pulling the strongest hoods into our family, for godsakes you're fucking beautiful enough, could get back the Goldrin that The Giant Brothers demanded. That slob Fafner is just letting it sit his vault. He ain't got no clue what the stuff can do. I've seen it girl, and what I've seen it do you wouldn't believe.

-But the Volsung job?

The Ring Project

-Alberich, the guy I got the Goldrin from has fixed it up. Its toxic unless you have the codes, and they're genetic. Its not like straight mineral rocks, not like our usual pharmaceuticals. It has to be outside the family. Half at least. And A., the slimy dwarf wants it back. Sigmund V. was going to be the one to get through but now Frika's got in on it and wants him dead. So the deals off. And thats an end. To us all maybe. I don't know. I don't really care now. Fuck the lot of you. Fuck you all. Let it all fall apart. See if I fucking care. See if I do.

Brunhilde sits at his side and watches her once proud father slump into drunken stupor. She stands up and watches over him like an angel over a dying man, her shining helmet cradled in her arms.

Fade to credits and theme music.

Titles and teaser for the next episode : will B. do as her father says or as she knows he really wishes?

Commercials.

The Ring Project

ACT TWO SCENE 3, 4 AND 5
(DEEP IN THE FOREST)

They'd got through the Brenner and down the A22 through Bolzano and Trento before the storms brought down the trees and they avoided the Polizia Stradale at Verona by cutting round through Bassano di Grappa on the SS 47 and going through the centro storico of Padova. Sigmund hit the A13 running scared, his foot hard to the floor of the golden high end Punto, pushing it like a golden bullet. By the time they were through the Appenines and south of Firenze it was dark and the autostrada almost deserted.

As dawn hit the Tuscan hills behind the services at Terranuova he swapped the rented Fiat, its engine shot and overheated, for an air conditioned Alpha and signed the carto di credito slip "R Wagner". No sign of Hunding's Teutonic thugs but he knew they were out there. Maybe the storms in the Sud Tyrol had given them a few hours, but Siglinde was looking paler by the kilometre and he knew they had to get help soon. At least the air conditioning kept her temperature down and the change of car might confuse them, though as they twisted and turned past the villa condos in the mists in the hills east of Arezzo, he wondered maybe the "R. Wagner" was a cheap trick. But in these postmodern days, who knows. "U. Eco" on the next and hope the filling station attendant wasn't a semiotics student moonlighting. A few more hours and they'd be safe in the miles of empty stables beneath the Ducal Palace in Urbino. They could pass themselves off easily as art history students doing a survey by day and hide up there at night. He knew some student radicals there from the old Red Brigade days and even though they were now respected *professori* they could get them false papers to get to Morocco.

Under the rolls of paper and survey kit the well oiled and gleaming solid black steel of his family's trusted "Nothung" 20mm automatic gave the lie to all these plans. It had been his father's and in his family since it had been made for them specially by gunsmiths in Nürnberg. And Siglinde's belly was swelling with their love child of those dark nights in the north, the reason for their flight and their joy.

-I can't go on.

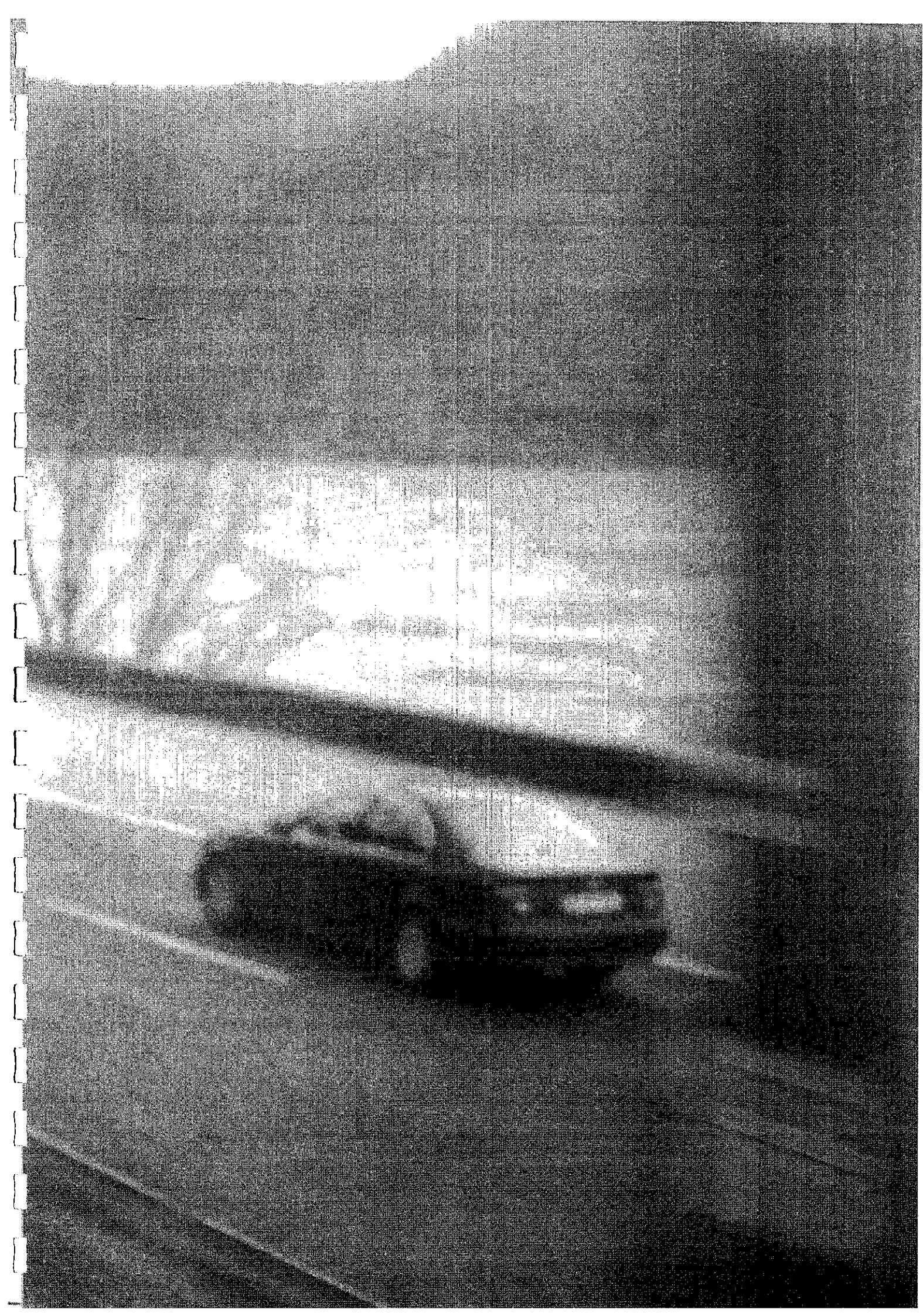
Sigmund swerved and bumped the Alpha up the rutted track towards an old cement works. The grey dust billowing through the parched birch scrub along the dry stream.

-It's OK I'll stop for a while.

-No, its not the driving. It's just.....

She pushes Sigmund away as he tries to comfort her.

.....It's just it doesn't feel right. I don't know, I know how you rescued me and how much you love me, brother, but before then I'd been taken and abused and I feel.....less than worthy of you, of our child.



The Ring Project

Sigmund puts his arm round her and brushes the tears from her cheeks.

-Sleep now. You need rest. Hunding's mob won't find us here. They think we're headed south on the Autostrada for Sicily. They won't touch us with old Nothung in my hands and flaming revenge. Then we'll be free of it all.

The shadows turn to dusk and to night and Siglinde drifts into an an uneasy sleep. In the last light fireflies glow and flicker in the damp air. Small animals search for food, become the prey of owls and foxes. Sigmund dozes and half awake he senses a strange bright glowing in the woods, shifting and moving slowly towards him. He sits upright in the passenger seat and instinctively turns to lift Nothung from its wrappings. He is frozen to stillness, a deep fear grips him. The myriad scufflings and scurryings of the night suddenly stop too. The light drifts towards him, passing through the trees and bushes without stirring them.

He hears a soft voice, quiet and assured, restful but with a tone that gives no argument, no question. Rather like a doctor talking to a terminally ill patient, he recalls himself thinking. He does not know if this is real or a dream, the inner panic, the lost family, the endless flight, the desperate running for a new beginning taking the form of fantasy.

-Sigmund. Sigmund Volsung. I am here to guide you on your last journey. Soon you will be at peace. You will be at rest . You will rejoin your father in a land of beauty and calm. I will guide you to that place at the very moment you perish at Hunding's hand. Now that you have seen my presence you must follow me.

The speech pattern is archaic, like something from a translation of a nineteenth century opera libretto. The promise - or threat - something totally outside Sigmund's pragmatic secular world, its semi-legal operations and the powers of the night that run it . This makes no sense at all to him.

-No. Nrrrr. Ngrrrr.

Sigmund struggles to argue and to wake.

-Siglinde. Our child. Nothung will protect us. Your cozy sweet night comforts are nothing, the real is here and now and hard and running. We are...

But when your angel comes you cannot argue. Even in a dream.

-It is ordained so. Your Nothung is a mere mechanism, a device. It will fail you soon. Just as you will see the reality of the myth that you are living but do not understand.

The light angel is talking in riddles.

The Ring Project

-Then if it fails me, first it must take us all. Siglinde and our child and me. I can only stand and fight. Leave us. Leave out all this mystic crap. Get out of my head. Get out. If I'm gonna die, then we'll all die. I'm not leaving her to that brute Hunding.

Sigmund turns and grabs Nothung from the back seat and as he turns he is paralysed as if a bolt of cold lightning had pinned him there.

- Quiet mortal one. Quiet. Things may yet be different. The power of your love.....

Suddenly the strange calm is shattered by the roar and crash of diesel. The inner voice, the wish maiden dream voice is lost. The calm of the hovering angel glow broken by the harsh halogens of Hunding's X90 as it screams through the undergrowth, bullets ripping through the leaves. Sigmund grabs Nothung and runs for cover, leading the zigzagging 4X4 away from Siglinde. Bullets scar the tree trunks as Sigmund fires wildly behind him as he runs. One bullet catches the front tyres and Hunding's lumbering death wagon swerves to a halt. Hunding leaps down chases on foot. Suddenly Sigmund sees him in a clearing, illuminated by that same strange glow.

-Now. Now, Sigmund, strike for your future. Our future.

That same calm quiet voice. Sigmund levels Nothung but as he squeezes the trigger a single shot rings out from the dark woods and he falls to the ground. Hunding cannot believe his luck and rushes in for the kill. Another shot. Hunding too staggers and slumps, a look a disbelief as he sees who has taken them both. A dark and brooding form steps forward.

-No. Enough. Outamyway. Bungler.

The cloaked figure lifts his silver revolver to his one eye and aims calmly at Hunding to finish his prey. In the distance a bike roars to the abandoned Alfa where Siglinde sits screaming in terror. A camouflaged rider leaps off, pulls the pregnant woman from the car and roughly sits her on the pillion.

-Its your last chance, girl. Hold tight.

Siglinde half recognises one of Sigmund's Red Brigade alumni. She grabs hold and they swerve and bump down to the road to Urbino. The dark figure, his plans in turmoil, slowly walks back to a waiting black Lancia. Its lights dimmed, the engine ticking over, the driver leans over opens the door.

-Where now God-Father?

The tall dark figure sighs. His own daughter has turned against him. Or at least turned back on his forced submission to Fricka. There will be only bitterness now. No resolution. And no going back either, he senses.

-To the end of the world, he quips, with resigned cynicism.

The Ring Project

ACT THREE SCENE 1 AND 2
(A MOUNTAIN PEAK NEAR VALHALLA)

The projections are of clouds and storms. Dark, thunderous, cumulo nimbus piling up against a moonlit sky. Deep shadows and flashes of brightness. The noise levels are off the scale, even a heavy drug metal Hawkwind one. The punters are all males, early twenties, tattooed and pierced. Well out of normal consciousness by now. The air steamy and fetid, the floor slippery with spilt booze, piss and anything else they couldn't hold back. A Michael Moorcock tribute number and then the band make the usual shouted halfway coherent introductions.

-Thankyouthankyouathousandmillion. Yeeeeeeaaaahhhhhh.

-HEEEELLLLLLOOOOOO VALHALLLLAAAAA.

-ARE YOU READY TO ROCK FOR ETERNITY? ARE YOU READY TO LOOSE IT ALL? FOR EVER? FOR THE END OF THE WORLD?

- Helmwige and Ortlinde on electric anvils.

A roar as Helmwige and Ortlinde stand behind their massive black anvils and trash them with their hammers, their long curls of bright red hair weaving a secondary layer of nimbus across the back drop.

-Gerhilde and Siegrune on bass.

Gerhilde and Sigrune step forward and mount their basses like giant dildos and grind them ecstatically back and forth. The man crowd scream for more.

-Schwertleite on oooooorgan.

Schwertleite stands and turns around slides her black rubber clad buttocks along the keyboard to a earsplitting crescendo. The crowd are theirs now.

-Rossweisse and Grimgerde in geeetarssssss

Rossweisse and Grimgerde lick the frets of their upright Strats to an eerie wail as they stand with their legs very wide apart at the very edge of the crowd. They could pick them out one by one. They will.

The vocalist swings the mike in a way that should bring stars from out of the heavens, and slowly turns to the crowd, bending down low to tease them with her cleavage as she slides the mike towards her crotch, rubbing it slowly.

-We're the Valkyries. Sorry that Sister Brunhilde couldn't be with us tonite. I'm Waltraute and this is our very last number.....your very last number the last number of all time..... ***Steal your soul for a hero's death.***

On the mixing desk their old man, Big Daddy W. cues in the spots and racks up the amps an extra notch. Brushes his long greasy hair back from his eyepatch.

-Gonna steal your soul for an army. Gonna make you come for the Gods.
Yeeahhhh. MMMMMMMMMM. Ooooooh yeah.

The Ring Project

As the death blue spots pick out one stoned would be hero, dreamdazed and ready for an eternity of delight with the band maidens, who slip into the crowd one by one and haul the man sacks to a pile on to the stage as each of crack the strobe light laser freezes another of the sweating man hunks.

-You're gonna save the world with me. Oooh big boy you'll stop eternity for me. Hold back the hordes of death and we can live. Foooreeeeeeerrrrrrrr. Oooh hero mensch, be mine for ever. Oooh yeahhhhhhhh.

As Waltraute's freeform lyric builds to its climax and her sisters pile the lifeless bodies of the would be heroes at the back of the stage, Rossweisse misses a beat, the rhythm stutters and while the rest of the band pick up the great looping climaxes again (though the crowd are too far gone now to notice) as Brunhilde, wildest of the wild slips on stage, carrying not a hero corpse but a slight, blonde, heavily pregnant woman.

-Brunhilde? What are you doing? Gerhilde shouts against the throbbing din.

-If Wotan gets wind of this you're finished, Schwertliete turns from her keyboard and hustles them to the back of the stage.

Behind the screaming amps Brunhilde's sisters gather. Feedback and echo will keep the show noise up now. The gig's winding down anyhow.

-She needs help. Wotan wants her dead, and her child. Some kind of threat to the family. I don't really understand.

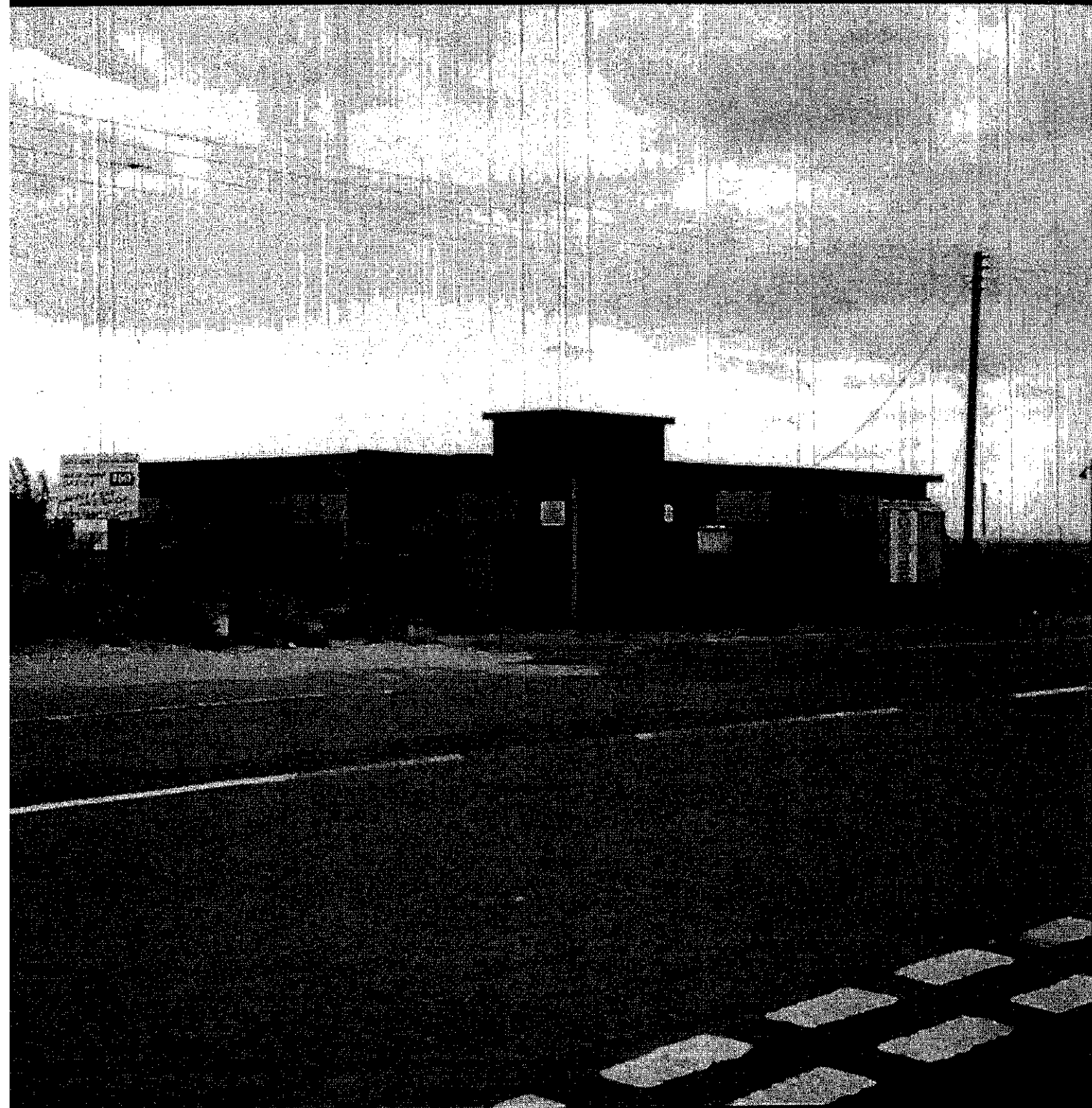
Hot and tired her sisters gather round. Hoarse from the screaming, swigging water from a plastic bottle, Waltraute pushes her off stage.

-If he sees you we're all gone. Get the blonde out of here. Put her in the van. Siglinde, you must go, now! Your child will be a greater star than all these cheap thrills. Hide.

Waltraute rushes and pushes Siglinde to the van, as Brunhilde passes to her a bundle of electronic components, bent and shattered wrapped in a sweaty towel.

-Take these, one day they may save us all, Brunhilde mutters, as enigmatically as a death's angel goth rocker in skin tight black lycra with a horned headpiece can be.

Big Daddy W. suddenly cuts the stage effects, pulls the amps, switches on the cheap fluorescent tube that is, technically for health and safety, the houselights, and in the sudden silence gets up from the mixing deck, his huge body dwarfing the FX board that had a few minutes earlier turned the hall into a Wagnerian sex-rock show of epic dimensions.



The Ring Project

-B R U N H I L D E.

His angry voice alone fills the hall now. The sisters, so briefly proud and strutting, cower together.

-What's wrong? She needed our help. The girl she brought here was wounded. And pregnant. She needed protection.

The sisters clamour round Big Daddy W., but at the same time, instinctively hide Brunhilde amongst them.

-She broke the contract. She defied me. Don't hide from me girl. I made you what you are, without me you're nothing. Zilch. Less than zero. A game show stand-in.... He grabs Brunhilde and screams in her face.

..... A solo acoustic support act at a stadium gig. You defied me and now you're out. As for rest of you pack up the gear and get on the road. Bayreuth University Student Union tomorrow.

Brunhilde slumps to the floor and looks up her father as her sisters start to hump the gear into the clapped out VW vans on long term hire from Gesamtkunstwerk AG. , their stage make up stained and cheapened in the floodlights in the car park, their costumes torn and stained, their bodies no longer those of sex goddesses, but just another small time rock band strained and exhausted from endless one night cheap club gigs and no record deal. Brunhilde looks up her father, pleading.

- I did what you wished. I saved the child Volsung. His father so loved his mother. In them I could see the future.

-But not as I asked or wished. You meddled where you had no right to. I need obedience. You just think you can follow your heart's whims. If it's love that appeals then you can stay here, wherever it is, someone will pull you. He'll put you on the game or you'll become a small town housewife. Depends on your luck, I guess. I don't care anymore.

Brunhilde looks at up her father from the lager swilled floor with eyes that could melt glaciers.

-Father, I tried. I deserve better. I'm not just a groupie tart, waiting for the next passing band. I was your favourite daughter. I knew your heart. I shared your dreams. We could have made it big time. I had a future. At least give me a chance to start over.

Big Daddy W. looks at her with tears in his eyes. He's seen the future and he's running scared. He can only defy Frika once again.

-I'll think of something. Come here girl. You'll pull through. I'll miss you more than you'll ever know. The fluorescents flicker red above them as the stage falls into shadow.

The Ring Project

ACT THREE SCENE 3
(A MOUNTAIN PEAK NEAR VALHALLA)

The moment of most risk is past.
She is safe now.
Her condition is stable.
In the clinic clean corridors its always silent night.
3 am. and softly humming clear.
There are no ghosts and none of the living.
Attendants and doctors glide past.
A soft shoe shuffle between life and death.
He sits and watches her.
He has been here longer than he needs.
The attendants monitor vital signs.
Connect and adjust.
Watch the indicators.
There is no hurry here.
Tomorrow is a long way off.
Tomorrow is eternally postponed here.
He has arranged it all.
He has paid for it all.
Everything is safe now.
There is very little risk.
The Consultant has advised him.
The attendants shift a valve on the IV a little to the right.
He can hold her hand for three minutes more.
There is no need to whisper.
She cannot hear.
He has said everything that he can.
He has said everything that he needs.
He does not understand what he says.
He does not know what it might mean.
Farewell, you bold and wonderful child.
You, my heart's holiest pride
Farewell. Farewell.
I kiss you now as mortal
may your star now shine
for one happier than I,
one who does not fear me.
He kisses her eyes.
The attendants cover her body.
The clear hood slides into place.
The crystals begin to form around her like white fire.
He turns and walks away.
There is no purpose in staying.
There is no purpose in leaving.
There is no purpose to anything .

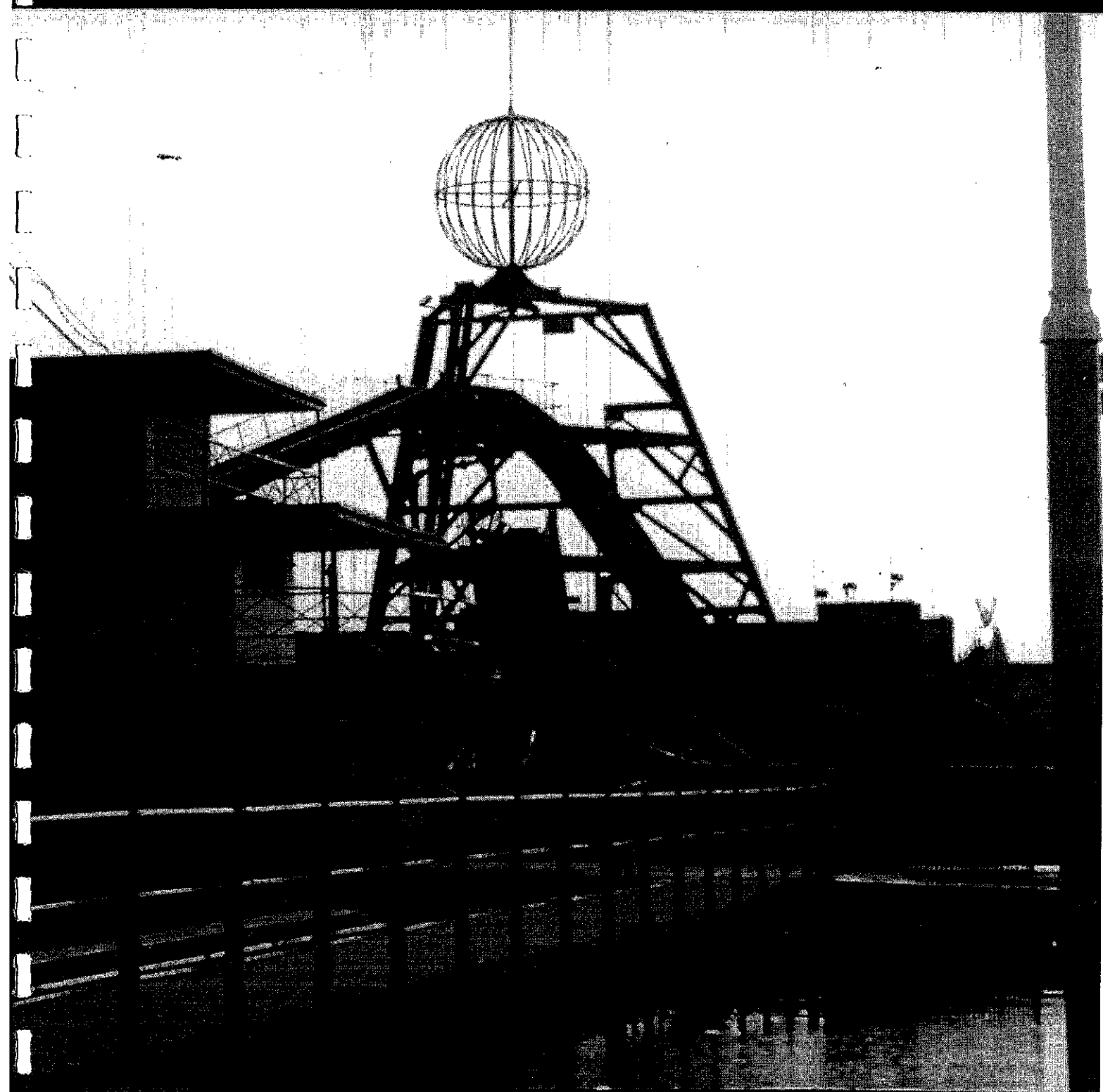


The Ring Project
All that can be done is done.
Things are set up.
The doors swing to behind him.
Someday it may be possible.
Someday things might be different.
Once it might have been different.
There is no telling.
He walks along the silent daylight nightlight corridors.
At each junction another set of doors swings open.
This world is on automatic.
There is no one left.
He passes the waiting area.
He signs the forms passively.
They do not understand.
He does not know.
He leaves the high white building.
She will still be there.
Even after him.

In the chaos of the streets. The noise and the movement. The life and the risk. He is not ready for this. He cannot yet grasp what has happened. What he has set in motion. He crosses to the car park. The signs and the lights. The shop fronts and the offers. The bars and the stalls. He passes LOGES ALL NITE FLAMER GRILL AND KEBAB. OUR FLAMES ARE YOUR GUARANTEE.

-Night Sir. Keep well. Keep safe. Watch out for.....

The words are lost in the cold and the night. He passes by and does not hear them.
He turns on the ignition.
Did he say:
I'll watch out for her.
Did he ask:
Watch out for her.
Whatever it was is lost in the traffic.
His thoughts and the words, lost.
Like him.
He drives away into the night air.
The last dawn will be soon.
In the mirror the glow of the city
and the flames of the grill.
She lies between them.
Unknowing, waiting, asleep for a thousand years.
The lights glow on the dashboard.
Soon all will be gone.
He wonders.
He begins to wander.
Nothing matters now.
Everything is done. Another time.



The Ring Project

SIEGFRIED

The Ring Project

ACT ONE

(A ROCKY CAVERN IN A WOOD, IN WHICH STANDS A NATURALLY FORMED
SMITHS FORGE, WITH BIG BELLOWS)

Since he'd lost his job as line foreman at Nacht and Nebel and his house got repossessed Mime's council flat was three floors up past the stink of unemptied refuse skips and bags of rotting frozen food, take aways and nappies, the deck access glass long kicked in,

Nibelung Scum Out.

WE'RE WATCHING YOU PAEDOPHILE DWARF , WE KNOW WHERE YOU LIVE

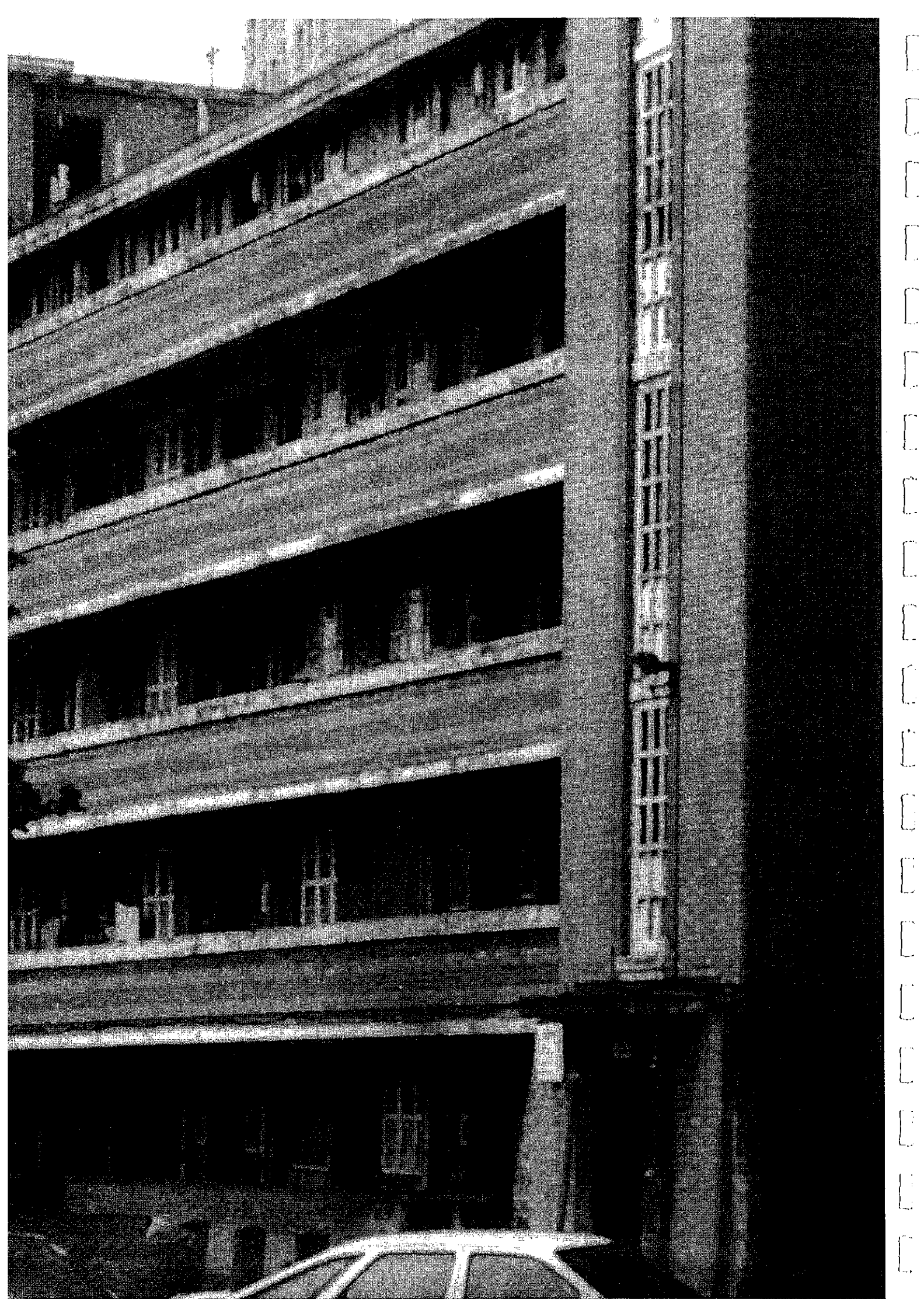
sprayed along the walkway past the steel welded grills and the one doorway with improbable plastic Bambis and hanging baskets of ivy and geraniums.

He'd made ends meet with a bit of fixing video's here and there, recoding car locks, copying DVDs, the kind of thing a few years in electronics R&D teach you than have a street value. But since the man-child had been there with him he'd put up blackouts and screwed the letter box shut, never answered the intercom on the door, and left the landline unplugged. No one asked too much here, and once he'd stopped buying baby food they'd rather forgotten. He never claimed benefits and when they found Siglinde's body behind the CIU and walk in clinic he kept quiet. Just another junkie on the game, the crime scene tapes taken down, case closed. Never too many questions round here.

But the kid was getting to be a problem now. Out late and drinking already. A few crashes in borrowed cars. Drugs, soon, he was sure, then he'd be good for nothing. Came home in bear suit one night, like some crazy. Like he just didn't know what fear was. But the kid was good on the circuit board OK. Train him up and he'll be better than me. If I can't get that Goldrin code then I sure hope he can, otherwise my investment is wasted. Why I took pity on that slut I don't know. There must be a kind heart underneath this warped and twisted frame somewhere. Or maybe just greed. Just keep him long enough then get him a part in one of them snuff movies the blokes in the club we're talking about the other night. The ones that Wagner guy was setting up.

-Hey, Stooppy, this last set up's crap. And your health food muck's like shit, reprocessed. I'll get my own burger's, OK.

The kid steps out from the unpainted back room darkness, rips the wires of Mime's last job and cracks circuit board in his hands. He's dressed in torn jeans and an unwashed T-shirt, unwashed and pale with a scrub of adolescent stubble. But unlike Mime with his stooped back, thick lensed taped up glasses and single strand of dank hair wound around his bald head, the kid is tall and handsome with clear snake blue eyes.



The Ring Project

-Kid, I've looked after you, been like father and mother to you an' this is all I get?

-Yeah, but been like's not been is it ? I've seen kids on the block and they got at least one parent who kinda looks passing like them. So just who are you? Monkey man, who am I ?

The blonde kid towers over the warped old man threateningly, holding the smoking soldering iron inches from his goggle lenses.

- I gotta know. Or I go to the men in blue. Gettit?

- OK ungrateful wretch. You wanna know? That junkie slut they found dying behind the clinic. I found her first, she'd just borne you and I coulda left you to die with her but I took you in. Kept quiet about you, raised you here, best I could.

-An' did she have a name, dwarfy?

-I'm not sure. Siglindey, something like that. Not sure now. Anyways she gives me this bundle of bits and pieces. Strange electrical gear. Said it was your old man's. Would make a rich man of you.

-So you gonna fix it then? You're the king of the switch gear round here. You're the one who fixes the meters. Get it done by the time I'm back and you'll live longer. If you get my meaning. Then I'm outta this dump. For good. So get fixing, "daddy".

The last words turned to hate. The tall blond kid turns and slams the door and the bare bulb swings, he jumps the stairs two at a pace, kicking the garbage sacks as he goes.

*

Mime's on his way back from the social when the old dosser on the bench flicks the can out in front of him and holds his old stick out across his path. Mime's a few heavy ales down the road to oblivion for the night and doesn't quite get it. The old guy with the big hat and the long stick had been there a few days, and could have passed as another pile of rags 'til now, surrounded by supermarket bags that look like they're stuffed with old legal documents, but there's more strength in the way he holds Mime back with this gnarly old stick than you'd credit.

-You. Mime Nibelung.

- Me. Whaddya want old man. How you know my name? You watching me? I got friends round here. OK One Eye? Piss off.

The Ring Project

-It's odd really. I've seen a few places and yet it's only in dumps like this, full of evil, that I get this abuse. And yet, you know, Warped One, I could help you, if you'd let me.

The stranger's voice is quite different from his dress. From the pile of old rags comes a deep and cultured voice. The knowledge and learning of generations.

-You get on my wick, old man. This is a wind up, ain't it. You just want a coupla quid for a drink. Yeah. Well, you answer me this and maybe....

-There is no maybe. I'll answer and then maybe I'll let you go.

The stranger holds Mime's foot with the stick and stares hard at him. Mime winces and gabbles out a string of questions.

-What happened to Nacht and Nebel then, who's running the show now, and how come the fuckin' Regulator lost me my job if they're so good? As if that old tramp'll know that. Looks as if he lost half his brain when he lost his good eye. Stupid ol'git.

-If you'd followed the financial pages instead of slavering over page three tits you'd know N&N were one of the fastest growing newtech companies on the west coast and that with their new Goldrin products they were set for world domination, though questions about their rights to Goldrin and a dodgy take over by Giant Bros. led to their sudden collapse and the disappearance of their assets, while the Regulator still holds the key to the resolution of the matter; and as for your job,sniveller, I've got a few questions for you.....

Mime fears this old man might be from copyright control or the revenue or something, working undercover and just wants him out of the way. The cloaked ragman stands up to his full sixfive and looks down on the sweating maimed dwarf:

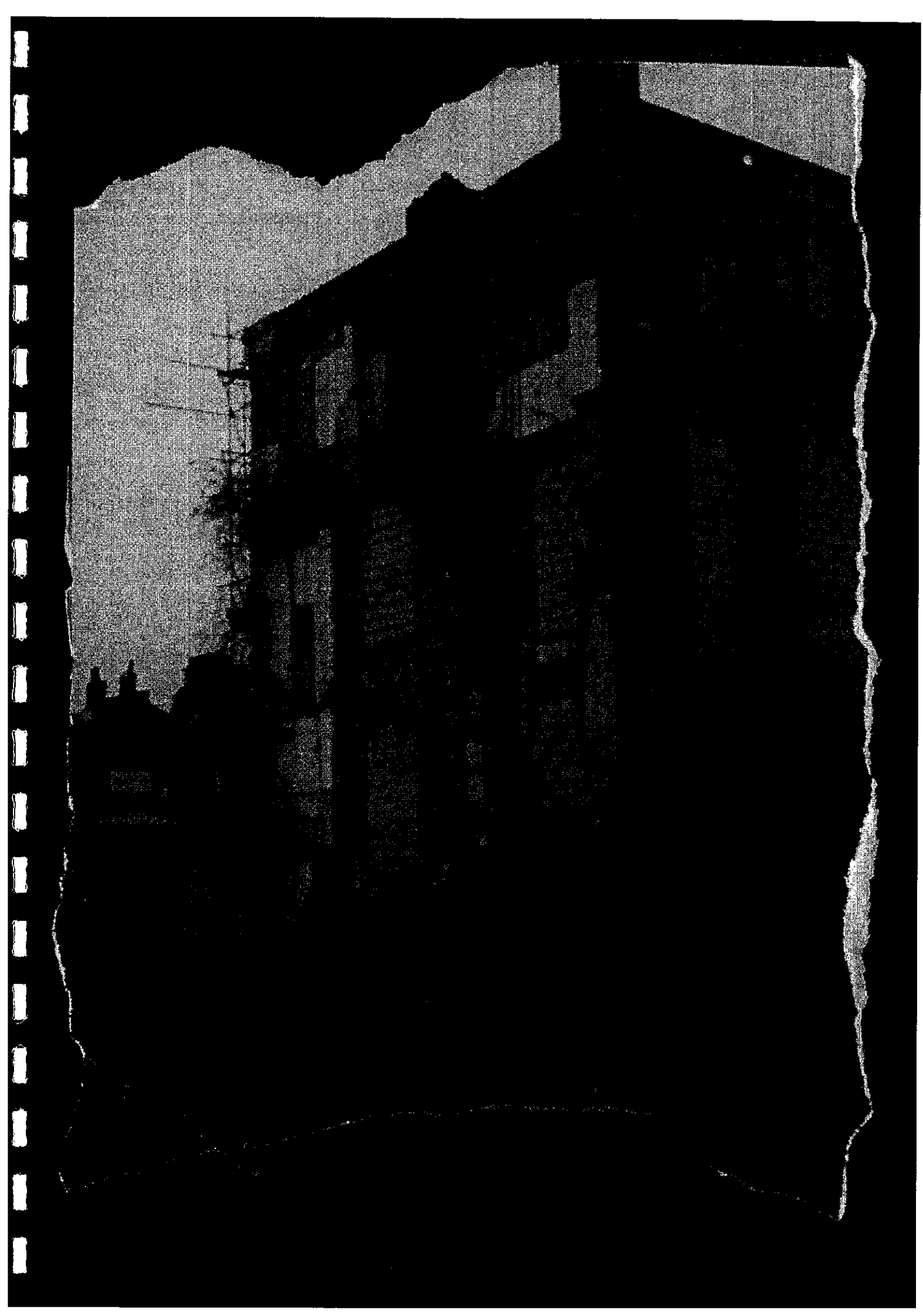
....Now you tell me, who was the girl who disappeared round here a few years back?

Maybe he's Drug Squad? Mime's getting scared now.

-Siglinde, Siglinde Volsung. Word was she was running from some God-Father or something. Some sort of family oath broken. But I'm not sure, its just the word on the streets, is all. I never said nothing to no-one. Trust me.

-Trust me, I'm a creepy pervert. Oh, sure. And did she give her child's keeper a bag of old electronic scraps, the key to unlocking the code to Goldrin? And what is it called?

Who is this guy. How come he knows all this much. Is this real? Did someone slip a mickey in my heavy tonight?



The Ring Project

-Nothing.

- Nothing. Smart guy. And now if you want to live, tell me who will recode this device?

-I dunno. I can't fix it. I've tried. Its genetic software I think. Something like that . I'm not sure. I can only get so far into the systems.

-You listen to me now. Only the one who knows no fear will unlock it. So that rules you out, cheap forger. Better watch how you go. You never know these days. You've told me enough to live a lot less. But I'm a generous man. There's not much left to loose these days. But I hope we never need to meet again.

And then he's gone. The dark cloak and big hat lost in the landscape of no streetlights, the dark shapes just another stack of binbags. Mime scuttles back to his cheap flat, triple locks the door and checks the shutters, and sits there on an old chair, shaking. He scuffles for his copy of last month's *Big and Bouncy* from the pile of electronics mags to feel secure and alive again, but it's limp in his sweating hand. That eye still haunts him. Deep blue, just like, just like, his, just like the kid's. That makes him even more afraid.

*

The next morning Mime's up at first light, fiddling and fixing and testing and flicking this and than, fiddling here and there like crazy but its no bloody good at all he just can't get it and as he looks out of the greasy nets there's a strange light and its growing and getting like a *B I G B A L D H E A D* poking up over the grocery store. He's going crazy here.

-Hey! What you want? What you looking at? Get out . Just get out. Or I'll.....

When the kid comes in he finds Mime still shaking behind the workbench. The stench is worse than ever where he's pissed himself.

-Fixed it then? Sleeping on the job, hey. Come on just do it, cretin.

-Don't you know what its like to be afraid, ain't there nothing that you'd run from, kid? You gotta learn fear to be brave. If I could fix this you'd stand a chance, I guess. With it we, you could get into, we could get pastnever mind. I'll show you one day soon then you'll know what scared is.

-Why don't you just shut up and let me fix it, mumbler?

The kid pushes past the bent old man, sweeps the test gear to the floor and shakes the bag of chips and crystals onto the bench.

The Ring Project

-Stoppit, stoppit for chrissakes you don't know what you're doing. I've trained in this business. I was in R & D. It's our passport outta this dump and you'll bust it.

-It's my passport not yours, bump back. Its got my code. You know that and so do I.

The kid is transformed, focussed completely on the jumbles of wires and chips and transistors on the test bench, absorbed with reassembling the strange device the dwarf calls "Nothing". Mime has no idea of its powers or the treasures it may lead them (or rather him, as the kid will be bin bags as soon as he's done) to, but Mime, can guess, after the clues the old dossier gave him. Now it starts to make sense to him.

-Keep at it Kid, you're good. I'll fix you a drink, he smirks.

Something real potent. Just as soon as you've got it coded up, its nighty nighty herochild, and hello big time for me. Keep at it kiddo. Keep at it. And then I'll be outta here, you'll be another carpet roll on the skip and I'll be king of the hill.

The bench starts to hum and the light in the room glows like a ten thousand watts of halogen. The kid stands taller than ever and reaches out with the device. The workbench seems to melt. The door, once triple locked and barred swings open in front of him like a cheap cat flap for the neighbourhood tom.

The kid slowly and confidently walks down the three floors to the street.

Mime scurries after him. Somehow he's got to get a grip on this, or with his flat in melt down he's facing a few difficult questions about unfinished business and the parts for dwarves in private video nasties aren't much fun.

The Ring Project

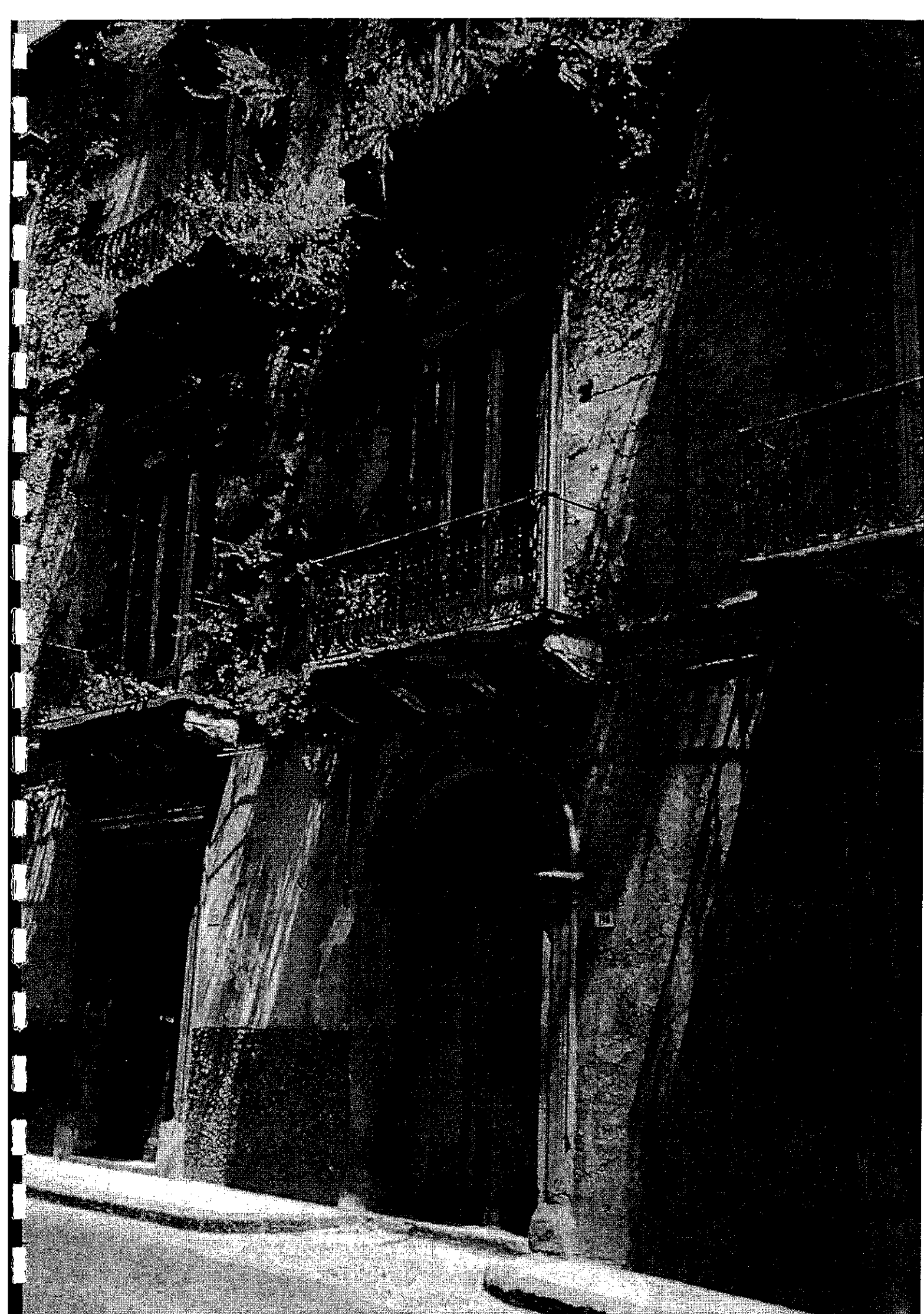
ACT TWO SCENE 1

(A DEEP FOREST, IN THE BACKGROUND AN ENTRANCE TO A CAVE)

Everyday since the collapse of his company Alberich Nero had come to porch of the Unione del Circolo Incessante and sat down alone. He had come there in the fogs of winter when the campanile of the Duomo was hidden and its bells rang out into a hidden city. He had come at noon in the hottest summer when only the tourists were fool enough to be in the streets looking for just the right restaurant and the spot where the shadow cuts the sheets on the balconies just so. He was there the evening of the procession of the relics, the one day when the streets were filled with stalls and bands and the Society of the Holy Wounds and children with firecrackers and candy floss. These passed his view, he saw them but he did not notice them. The other old men in their ill fitting suits, their once muscular bodies shrunk away inside them, at Unione del Circolo Incessante had long given up any attempt at conversation. Alberich Nero was known to them only as Il Silenzio. At best a neutral *comé stae, vecchio amico?* would get a grunt and a shrug for Alberich Nero did not care for human company. Even the harmless flirtations of the young girls left him cold. He remembered that night when he had become the richest man on the island, and how he lost everything. No he would just sit and watch and watch and sit. Everyday from the portico of the Unione del Circolo Incessante. In the fogs and the sunlight, in the dawn and in the dusk. Everyday.

And what did Alberich Nero watch so incessantly? Was he scanning the evening passeggiata for a glimpse of some long forbidden love? Was he hoping that one day the cruise ships would return to him a distant American Uncle with tales of the new world and new lives? Was he scrutinising the lists of masses for the dead of the parish for the forgotten souls of the departed? Did he harbour a secret desire for the series of muscular dark visored guards who stood, not quite as impassively as Alberich Nero either side of the doorway opposite. They were human, they smoked, they whistled quietly at the young girls along Strada Avidata.

But Alberich Nero simply stared at the facade opposite. Seemed to scrutinise every curl of its crumbling pediment, every layer of dust on the elaborate window mouldings, every crack appearing on the dragons that held the twin shields over the portico, every stain that made the half relief giants supporting them less credible and less fearsome, every flake of decay that was beginning to scour even the solid bronze ring on the door, every beetle and spider and creep of rot that would one day turn its massive doors to dust and leave the vaults of the Draco Construzione SPa open. He knew of course that this day would never come. But there was a chance that a slip would give him the chance to reclaim what was, by rather uncertain rights, his. However doubtfully he had come by the wealth that Draco Construzione SPa now held was nothing compared to the trickery by which had lost it. Curse them all. May who ever holds that treasure never live to prosper by it. He could almost write a grand opera around the story of his lost fortune and his eventual, inevitable good fortune.



The Ring Project

He would call it Il Circolo Incessante. All he had to do was watch and wait.

And then one day, just as its getting really serious and dark, and his mind was full of revengeful crescendos, and the sky full of storm clouds, this old guy in a big blue cloak and a big floppy hat with an eye patch comes up to him and says:

-Hey, Nero, old friend, after all these years, what are you waiting here for, at the top of Greed Street, doomsday?

And Nero who isn't taken for a minute by the disguise or the false bonhomie, and recognises Wotan "Il Bianco" who skinned him out all those years back, built all those condo's along the hillsides, and looks him straight in his good eye and says:

-You've got a lot of nerve to say you are my friend, Bianco. Lost any one else's fortune in your deals then? Get away from me, you've done enough damage. You and your lawyers won't trick me again. I know you can't touch Draco, but I can. And I will, one day, soon I'll have it all back. And then we'll see who rules this place.

-*Bene, bene*, Nero. *Che sara, sara*, I say. All that's behind me now. I know what you've got in mind, but these day's I can let things pass. It's your brother you need to watch out for. He's the one with an eye on your treasure. Except he's got a rival, someone who can get past Draco's security easy, then whoever get the gold, gets the gold, as they say. Just a warning from an old friend, you might say. I could have a word with Draco, come to some sort of deal for you, its nothing to me now.

-Piss off. You think I'm that much of a sucker.

-Just watch out for your brother, is all. There's nothing I can do. I'm just an old man. Do your worst. It will change nothing now. It's nearly twilight, and we may not meet again. *Buona notte, vecchio amico*.

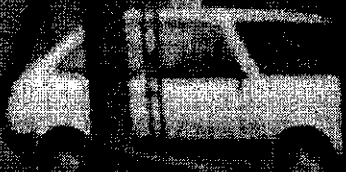
And he's gone. Disappeared into the shadows of the arcade and the night, as suddenly as he came.

Alberich Nero shivers a little and wonders if this really happened. There's something creepy here. The air goes cold and still. He thinks he sees a light flicker in one of the windows across the street. He waits and watches.

Watches and waits. And wonders who he can trust. The world's changing somehow and he can't quite work out how or why. Bianco used to be so proud, so strong and fierce, now he's just another old riddler. But strange, all the same. Seems to know it all, to know what's coming. Best trust nobody. Get your own revenge. Let the old man burn in hell. Serves him right.

Kwik-Fit

ANOTHER MAJOR
NEW DEVELOPMENT
OPENING SOON



The Ring Project

ACT TWO SCENES 2 AND 3
(IN THE WOODS NEAR THE CAVE)

-You gotta do it boy, you jus' gotta get out there and do it, kid. Ain't no use hanging around an' tellin' me how you wanna be a rock and roll star and playing me these riffs an' asking if that one's better than that one and wondering if you should restrung your guitar or get a twelve string or hire a different drummer because, kid, I really don't care. So far it's all talk and a few songs that nobody ain't heard and sure ain't making any money for you or me anybody else, and you're just wasting your time and mine. You won't learn nuffink' til you get up there and do it. It's no good telling me you ain't afraid of going out there when you're still sat here in this office with me, because believe you me you don't know the half of it. Never seen a drunk crowd of punters when the amps go down? Or when your voice goes on the second chorus? Or your bass is too far gone to even know what he's supposed to be playing let alone play it in anywhere near the right key? Then you can tell me you don't know what fear is.

Mime's office was three floors up past a repossession agency and a phone sex business, with a scuzzy kitchen and a shared toilet that was even worse and he knew the kid was going to make him rich and get him out of here into a nice air conditioned block with security on the door and sexy little receptionist with a low cut top and a husky voice, and all he had to was get the kid to sign before he got wise and found some smart lawyer.

-Siggy boy, you've got a good stage name, Siegfried, and you can make Nothung sing like a bird, but it's not all roses and sweet little girls. You gotta get to the heart. You can get right to the heart, boy, and you could go far. I can look after you alright, but you gotta do the business.

Mime Theatrical and Musical Agents needed Siegfried more than he needed them but Mime wasn't going to give that away.

-This gig at the Dragon Rooms, that'll be the one. That'll show 'em kid.

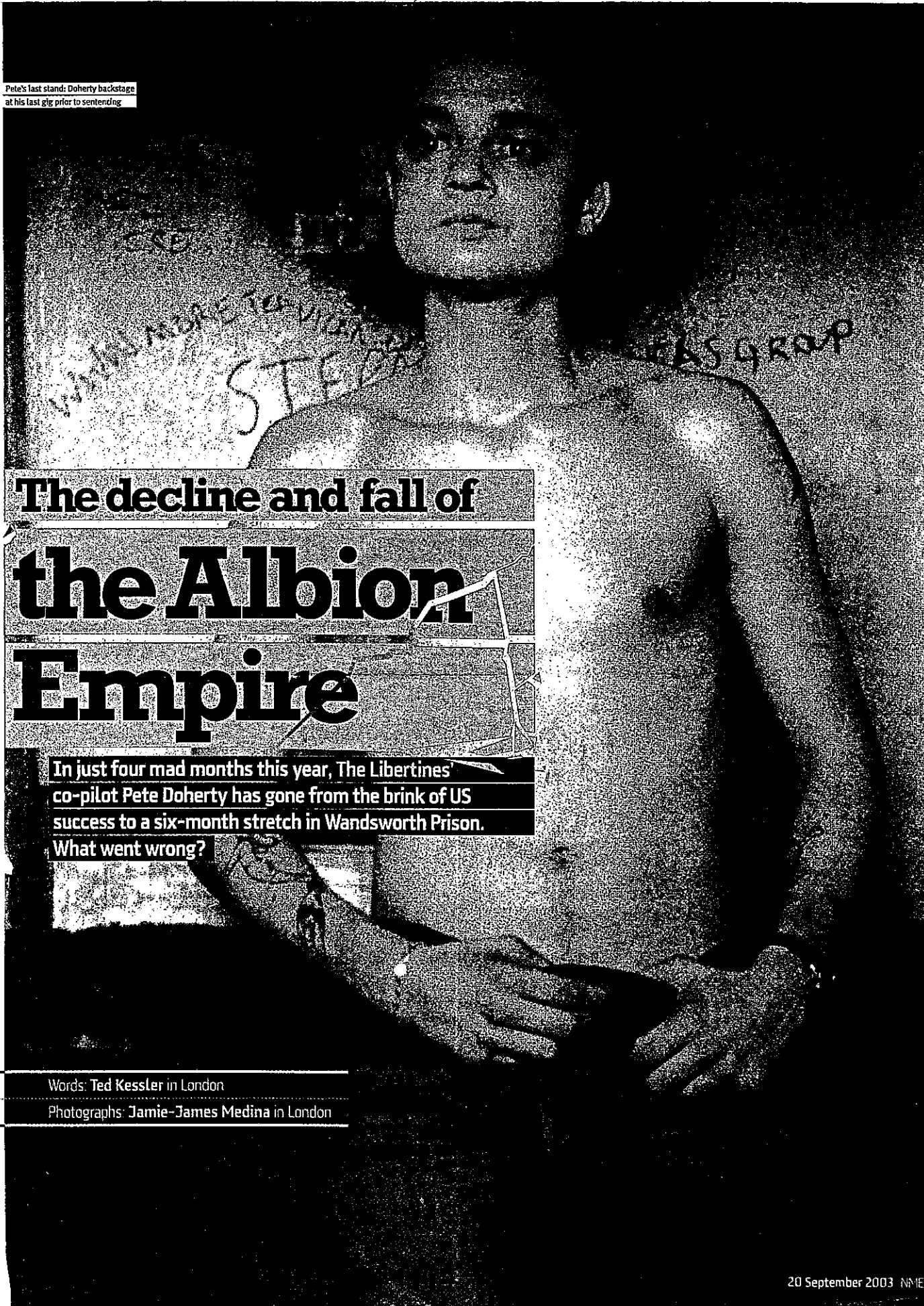
Who is this old creep, all screwed up and warty thought Siegfried. Like he's in some timewarp movie, some black and white rock 'n roll B feature. Is this the best I can do?

-Here. Take this for your stage fright.

Mime opens one of the drawers in his greasy old desk and passes Siegfried a small packet.

-Look, leave it will you old man. I don't need your stuff.
But he pockets it anyway. Might be worth a few quid, who knows?

*



Pete's last stand: Doherty backstage
at his last gig prior to sentencing

The decline and fall of the Albion Empire

In just four mad months this year, The Libertines' co-pilot Pete Doherty has gone from the brink of US success to a six-month stretch in Wandsworth Prison. What went wrong?

Words: Ted Kessler in London

Photographs: Jamie-James Medina in London

The Ring Project

Strange dreams . Three hours later, warming up, Siegfried is lost in inner space. He tries an old Laurie Anderson number and different guitars and settings on his mixing desk. *I turn around : its fear*. Dreams and visions flow through his fingers. *All of nature talks to me, if I could just figure out what its trying to tell me*. But in his state he can't quite make it out. *Insects rubbing their legs together , short animals buck up on their hind legs* . What is all this? *Bugs are crawling up my legs* . Did I choose this number? *Hey! I'd rather watch this on TV* . But its no good. *Nobody knows me, nobody knows my name* . He gulps down the stuff from the envelope Mime gave him, what the hell, don't even know who my parents were so one more fucked up gig won't matter. *All life comes from some strange lagoon*.

Mime's limo picks him up and the minders manage to get him on stage, get the effects set up, plug in the amps and the monitors and the huge black Marshalls. The indicators glow red in the darkness. The light show flickers to life. *And the little girls sing ooooooh eeeeeh ooooo eeeeeh He's Mister Heartbreak* . The smoke and videos fill the stage. *At the beginning of the movie they know they've got to find each other*. The monster movies segue in. *It rises up* . It all feels so good now, everything seems right, then like a great dragon and like wow, man. *Bucks up to its full height* . What are you doing man? *From a boggy swamp on a dark night* . They can't hear the screams against the feedback. *They're all talking to me*. And can't see the blood in the smoke and now he's free of it all, free from them all, all those creeps and dealers and agents. *Listen to my heartbeat* . Something strange is happening. *Calling Mister Sharkey* .He can make sense of the voices in his head. *It creeps into your house*. Just grab what you can and leave the rest . Stick you old man you want the money, you eat it. *This is your day*. He's out of there and running clear of it all. *I turn around its fear I turn again and its love* .It's love.

*

Not many can make it from obscurity to the rock and roll hall of fame and to the most wanted list in one gig, but somehow Siegfried Volsung, managed that at the Envy Club last night, though with S's reputation of serious substance abuse and the shady reputation of his, now former, manager Mime Nibelung it's uncertain how much registered with our hero. It takes some nerve at least to turn an obscure Laurie Anderson number from the Eighties into a two hour solo, with complete dragon effects, destroy the stage and then kill your manager and run off with the door money. "Most wanted" Siegfried V. is reputed to have found true love in the remote mountains, while Mime's even shadier brother, Alberich Nibelung is turning out DVDs of the "Siegfried's End of Rock and Roll Gig" for those who missed the show and get back his brother's investment. But maybe there is a career in prison gigs for Siegfried sometime. Or maybe next time it will be the end of the world.They say there is always a curse on stolen money.

Sword Hammer Raven Fanzine, nd., no pagination.

The Ring Project

ACT THREE SCENE 1

(A WILD SPOT AT THE FOOT OF A ROCKY MOUNTAIN. NIGHT. STORM.
LIGHTNING AND VIOLENT THUNDER)

He pushes her crumpled and drooling body back and forth in the hard wheeled chair - more a cart than a wheelchair. She clutches in her lap an old handbag that contains her pension book and all the wisdom of the world in scraps of aging paper, fading and stained. He too is bent and struggles to move her inert form across the kerbs. His hair is grey and unwashed, his beard greasy. One eye is gone, rheumy and washed white. He mutters in her ear endlessly, but she pays little attention.

-There is an end to this. Everything has an end to it. Endlessness ends or it would not have a name, but when and how those are the questions. Those will be the answers. You might as well carry on until there are answers. Or else there is no point in going on. Everything has an answer even if there are no questions there will be answers its just a case of waiting. Or asking. The time passes and things come and go, more or less. Once I was. Once I was another. Now others are. And others are not I. Dispute with me. Take my will from me. Make other questions and take other answers so I am left here. Alone. The story that I live in is no longer mine. My children and my children's children tell the story now. Take what little I have left. Though they make what is still mine though they do not know it. Others too were before, but they are not. Or they sleep. Sleep so deep that they too are not. I cannot reason this through. In the darkness here. No answers here for old Wotan. Old ragman. The light has gone. Others will come. And they will ask. As I ask. Only the asking does not end.....

Then loudly, in a voice that shakes the queue outside the Post Office and wakes the old woman:

.....Where now? Who now?

But she will have none of this, shakes him away, hunches her head down further in her sunken chest and whispers.

- Too many questions. Sleep is enough. Dreams. Didn't want any of this. This world is all confused. You messed it up. Your plans. It should have been better than this. It's beyond me now. Let me sleep. Let me go. Ask someone else.

In several shunting to and fro moves he manages to turn the cart around slowly heaves it back up the hill, past the shops and care homes to her decaying semi-detached house with an overgrown garden smelling of cats. He pushes at the gate that was once painted, once had a latch. Still mumbling to her.

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-All this. All this I made. All this I could unmake. Make end. Your dreams are nothing, old woman, to my making. Come and go, pass and pass on. Stories. Thats it. Give up wishing. Just the stories themselves. Then I'm free of it all, like you but unlike you. Give up the inheritance of stories. Make myself free of what I willed once. All that will pass. Pass to others. There's nothing left here.....

The old man pushes her into the house and then makes his way along the path alone. He stands awkwardly, leaning on the fence, blocking the path of a teenage lad, who pushes him aside. Still mumbling to himself the old God pulls himself back up and shambles into the shadows:

.....you must go on,I can't go on,I'll go on.

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ACT THREE SCENE 2
(LIGHT DAWNS, THE STORM HAS CEASED)

Since his shares in Goldrin fell through the floor years back they couldn't find Big W nowhere, they say. Not the regulators, not the papers and not the police, who were still trying to solve some unexplained deaths related to construction contracts funded out of the profits. So maybe he did the right thing to drop like a lead weight through the socioeconomic groupings index and come out standing in the alleyway by the oil can fire, by the coal drops where the junkies hung out. But he kept himself to himself, none of us dross or scum ever got near him. Even with one good eye he could still lay us out with his stick in a flash, not that he had much that you could trade for a fix mind you.

So there he is in the shadows, waiting. Shouting riddles and claiming to be the master of the universe, him with his bags of old news papers that he says are the laws that bind the world together and his cape and hat. Stinking like the best. Most would give him a wide berth, but not this kid. Comes right for him and sits down. Says he's looking for some tart in a ring of fire. Sounds kinky to me but old W looses his rag at this and gets all wound up.

- Who told you about her? Where you from, laddie?

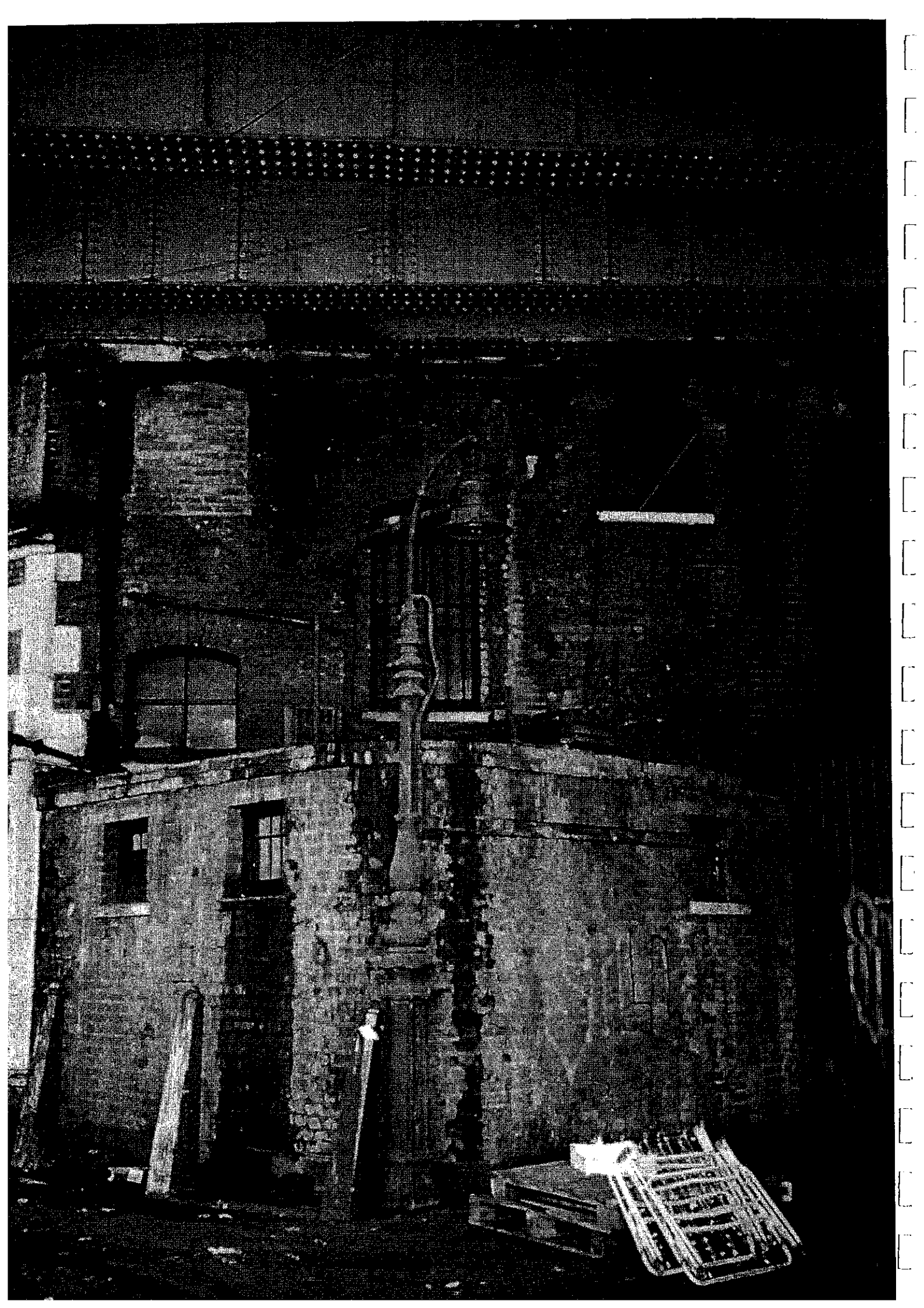
Starts prodding him with his old stick. Asks him all kinds of crazy questions about dragons and dwarfs and swords like he's been reading some cheap comic crap or something. But then the kid starts mocking him, says he's always been there blocking his path like it's some trick cyclist mumbo jumbo when he's never even seen the old geyser before so far as I know, and laughing at his one good eye. Says he'll put that one out if he don't let him past.

-DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM, says old W, in a voice that shakes the skips and sets off car alarms, do you know who I am? I know you and your father and your mother and I know who you're looking for.

He kicks the fire can so it burns brighter, and I can see a look in both of them that says it all. Family. Somehow, though god knows how.

-Piss off old man, says the laddie, you're just an old drunk in a alley and from the past so piss off and die, and gets a blade out of his pocket and goes for the old man. The sight of the blade sends the old man ballistic and says he broken that thing once before and he'll do it again.

-Oh yeah, try it, says the young one, now I know you're the one who killed my father. And just slashes through his stick. Just like it was paper or something. Old W. kicks the fire can over to block him with the flames, but the laddie runs on like it was nothing. Old W? never saw him again. Thats all I know. Give us that stuff now. C'mon you said it was a deal. I know where you live. Just cos' you can write it and I canna don't mean all this ain't true what I'm telling, like its a myth or something.





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ACT THREE SCENE 3

(THE SAME ROCKY HEIGHT AS AT THE END OF THE VALKYRIE. AT DAWN)

Walk through fire for your love

(Steel guitar, bass, snare)
Never told me the truth about you.
Never told me what I should expect.
Just said "You'll never do it, son"
- and I just walked on by.

But this is an opera and this ain't real,
so this is the ways things could end.

I saw you in the papers,
all dressed up like a sheriff.
"Vivacious and rumbunctious"
I was sure it was a quote.
But you're up there in the mountains
and a million miles away, behind a ring of fire.

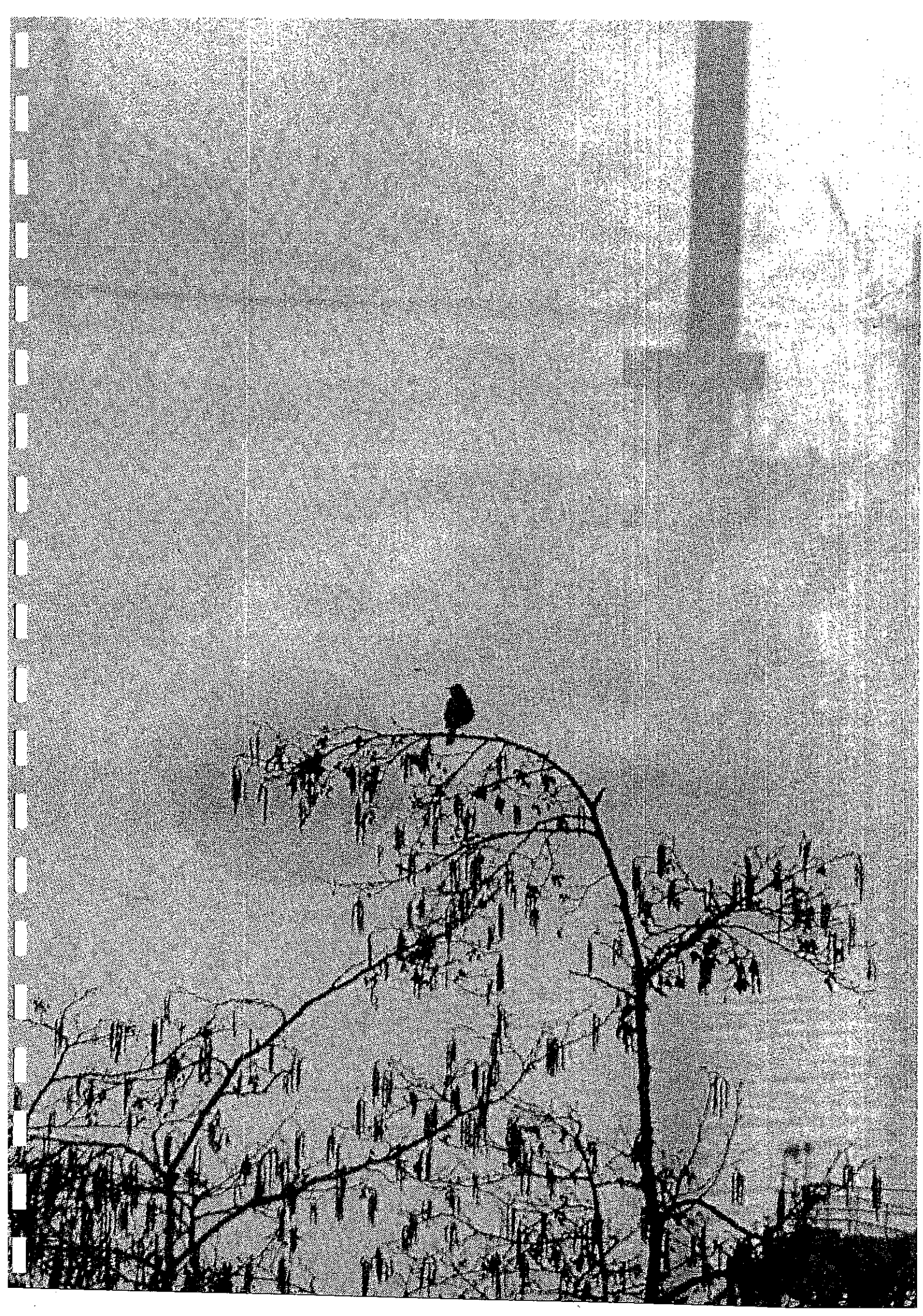
But this is an opera an' all this ain't real.
It's just the ways things end round here.

So if I said I'd always dreamed you ,
and if I said you'd been a warrior
If you said you'd been a stripper,
I'd say I'll walk through fire for your love;

You'd say it was an opera,
you'd say it's not how things are.

But high in Colorado, way up from Denver
three turns off the Interstate and fifteen miles from the great divide,
I guess they've read up semiotics.

So if I say this is an opera
or a Barbara Cartland book
I can say *"I love you madly"*
and walk through fire for your love.
(Duet)
Just leave the rest to chance.
Walk out of the myths and legends.
Just
(Crescendo, full strings)
walk through the new day sun with your love.



The Ring Project

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

The Ring Project

PROLOGUE
(ON THE VALKYRIES' ROCK, NIGHT, THEN DAWN)

-So there you have it, sisters. There's not a lot we can do now, guess we'd better unplug ourselves, pack in all this spinning tales and web weaving and head for the hills, somewhere off the grid. Since Goldrin went into meltdown there's been nothing but news of catastrophes and collapse. I can't keep up with it.

Urd sat there staring at the screen.

The three of them, the anonymous 'horns-of-fate.com' who kept ecological groups across the world in touch with what was increasingly seeming like the world wide collapse and catastrophe, stared over the bleak landscape of the city, where only the fires in the mountains, fuelled by the recklessness of Loge Inc.'s security systems that were ever more popular as any form of law and order gradually lost out, lit the horizons.

-Sure thing, said Verlandi, all the attempts to refinance that Valhal Resort Complex have just meant more deforestation and no-one seems to be doing anything about it.

Skuld tried to reboot the systems but the screens just flashed crash messages. She carefully rolled pages of printout into the log box as her screen flickered. Here it comes. Power's down again. Always knew things would fall apart since we lost Nacht und Nebel; they may have been a bit dodgy ethically, but at least they delivered. -Too true, she smiled, always knew it would come like this.

-If only someone could get the earth's mineral balance right again, that would sort things, at least for a while.

The fluorescents in the cracked ceiling of their makeshift office flip-floped on and off, casting sinister shadows over the fading Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth posters, relics of an earlier age of optimism.

-Verlandi you're such an optimist, it's really not part of your job description, quipped Skuld. Its all too late. Pack yer bags. We're outta here before this shack collapses on us. Down, sisters, down.

*

Over on the other, better side of the city, where the power still ran and the sprinkler systems drifted misty clouds through the gardens' Edenic forests, sunrise broke through the virgin white drapes of the master bedroom at Villa Felsenfuer catching Brunhilde's waist length golden curls as she slipped from Siegfried's manly grasp and stood naked in the fresh light of the dawn.

The Ring Project

-How could love you if I did not let you go on to new deeds, my hero? I just worry that I'm not enough for you.

Siegfried rose from the crumpled sheets and shouted from the gold plated shower room as the jets washed over his muscled torso and thighs:

-Wonder-woman you've taught me more in one night than ever . All I need is to think of you.

- Just as you tore off those tight fitting corsets to wake me in a way I'd never been wakened before, I suppose, Brunhilde giggled as he wrapped his still wet arms around her beneath the crisp white bathrobe, relishing the tautness of his well toned muscles, feeling the manly strength rising in him.

- You know I've got to go now. But here take this ring. I've killed for this. Keep it in return for all yourtuition. Think of it as a pledge of my undying love for you. He smiled that knowing smile as he turned to slip into his Armani suit and loafers, their dark shades bringing a foreboding tone the sunlight that now flooded the room. He pulled the fine leather belt around his tight waist.

- Oh my love, borrow my Grane, it really flies you know and it's got storm protection navigation and personal identifiers. Brunhilde skipped across the room, and threw her car keys to him.

Siegfried turned and ran two steps at a time down the semi circular stairways past the statues of the ancient gods who almost seemed to smile on him as his golden locks caught the morning breeze. He leapt into the low sports model and gunned the engine.

-Oh that I could be your soul, called Brunhilde from the balcony, her curvaceous form garlanded with the wisteria and roses that perfumed the air around her.

-You are my spirit just as I am yours, so your home will hold us both, we are one now, called back Siegfried as he spun down the drive to the riverbank boulevard, leaving a cloud of dust drifting through the laurels and topiary. As the car disappeared from her view Brunhilde heard the deep tones of the horn.

-Hail Siegfried, light of my life..... she called to the air, and sank back in rapturous dreams ,wrapping his dressing gown, still rich with his manly scent, around her heaving bosom.

.....Who shall separate us now? Even when we are apart we are together.....



The Ring Project

ACT ONE SCENES 1 AND 2
(THE HALL OF THE GIBICHUNGS ON THE RHINE)

To anyone who saw it, from the bus, or in the background of a news report on suburban traffic management, or read about it in the council newsletter, Gibichung Hall Estate was just another estate, swirling roads in patterns that made sense only in the eyes of the gods and town planners. It had a "*cheerful air of prosperity and normality*" with nice neat little houses improved and made over and extended in the latest chain store chic with gardens with decking and fountains and conservatories and even tumbling streams and rapids and dwarves happily hammering away at dinky little anvils. The latest rockeries even had swirling mists around the three foot mountain tops. No one had yet offered a Valhalla pack, but some cynical commentators had suggested this was the next thing complete with pyrotechnic destruction at dusk.

But from the passing bus (Wednesdays only, free service to the out of town shopping centre at 10.30 and back at 3.30 - just in time to pick the kids up) you wouldn't see Gunther sat on the fitted corner unit with his sister Gutrune looking bleak as hell in almost matching BHS casual wear (its just as good as M&S you know), while their half brother paces around. Gunther and Gutrune have middle management jobs in middle sized companies and they want more, they want better, they wantup. Upscale, upmarket, up the hill, a bigger car, a nicer house, nothing too flash you understand, but, well, to be honest about it they just haven't got what it takes. And to be happily married, of course. People are starting to talk, you know. But Gunther is a different kettle of genes, his father was a shifty sharp in almost anything, and better not said (and if he comes round here again....., you can hear sweet little Gutrune adding) but it's given dark haired Hagen an edge a drive that wants it all, now, and is going to get it all, somehow. Anyhow.

Except that Gibichung Hall Estate is not quite all. And never would be.

-Look, I've asked this bloke I know about to come round. He's quite a lad, not bad looking, nudge nudge hey Gutrune, and he's got a bird who's a bit of alright too Guntie old boy, know what I mean? He's well endowed on all counts, they say.....

Hagen really did talk like some outtake from Only Fools and Horses and they hated him for it, but at least he'd saw a bit of the world and after all he was family, even if only half family. And maybe this could be the answer.

.....Trouble is she's a bit stuck up and only has eyes for him. And he's a bit soppy on her too. But I got this mate who's fixed me up with a bit of the old pharmaceuticals and I think we can get around that. Look he's coming now, that's his Audi.

The Ring Project

They could tell he was a bit vorsprung durch technik with a motor like that but they weren't getting any younger so what the hell, live dangerously.

- Hope you don't mind me parking the motor in your drive, asked Siegfried as he came in. It's borrowed from my girl friend really.

To be honest Siegfried was a bit nice but dim but he was rather a good looking and Guttrune couldn't take her eyes off him, little vixen.

-Siegfried old mate, what's your tippie? Just got this special Vodka for helping a few Ukrainians with their paper work, hoho. My beautiful sister will pour you one, won't you sweetie? Gunther take the man's coat won't you, he's not here to read the meter.

-Yes, lets drink a toast then. To true love.

And Guttrune passes him the vodka, knowing full well that nice but dim Siggy who was thinking of someone else will soon have the hots for her instead.

-Gunther, what's your sister's name? Hagen never told me.

-It's Guttrune, he stutters, hardly believing their luck, seeing the way Siegfried watched his sister's backside as she wiggled out of the room with overwhelming false modesty.

-And are you married, yourself, then?

-Wish I was. Long time ago I heard of this dream girl, Brunhilde something, but I dunno, I can't get up the courage to even chat her up a bit. They she's a bit difficult to get through to, so I guess it's all a dream really. Gunther tries hard to sound convincing on Hagen's cue but since the 'special vodka' has had its effect on Siegfried he doesn't need to try too hard.

-Well, maybe I can help, now we're all together, oops now, nearly said family but maybe we are, or nearly so. Lets take a spin in my motor, see where it lands us. I could introduce you at least. Maybe we can fix up a double date. Who knows? He really doesn't realise what's happened does he, thought Gunther as they spun out of the drive, the Audi's radials cutting deep into the newly laid turf of the extra green clover free lawn mix he'd just had laid.

-See ya, Guttrune, waved Siegfried as they turned the corner.

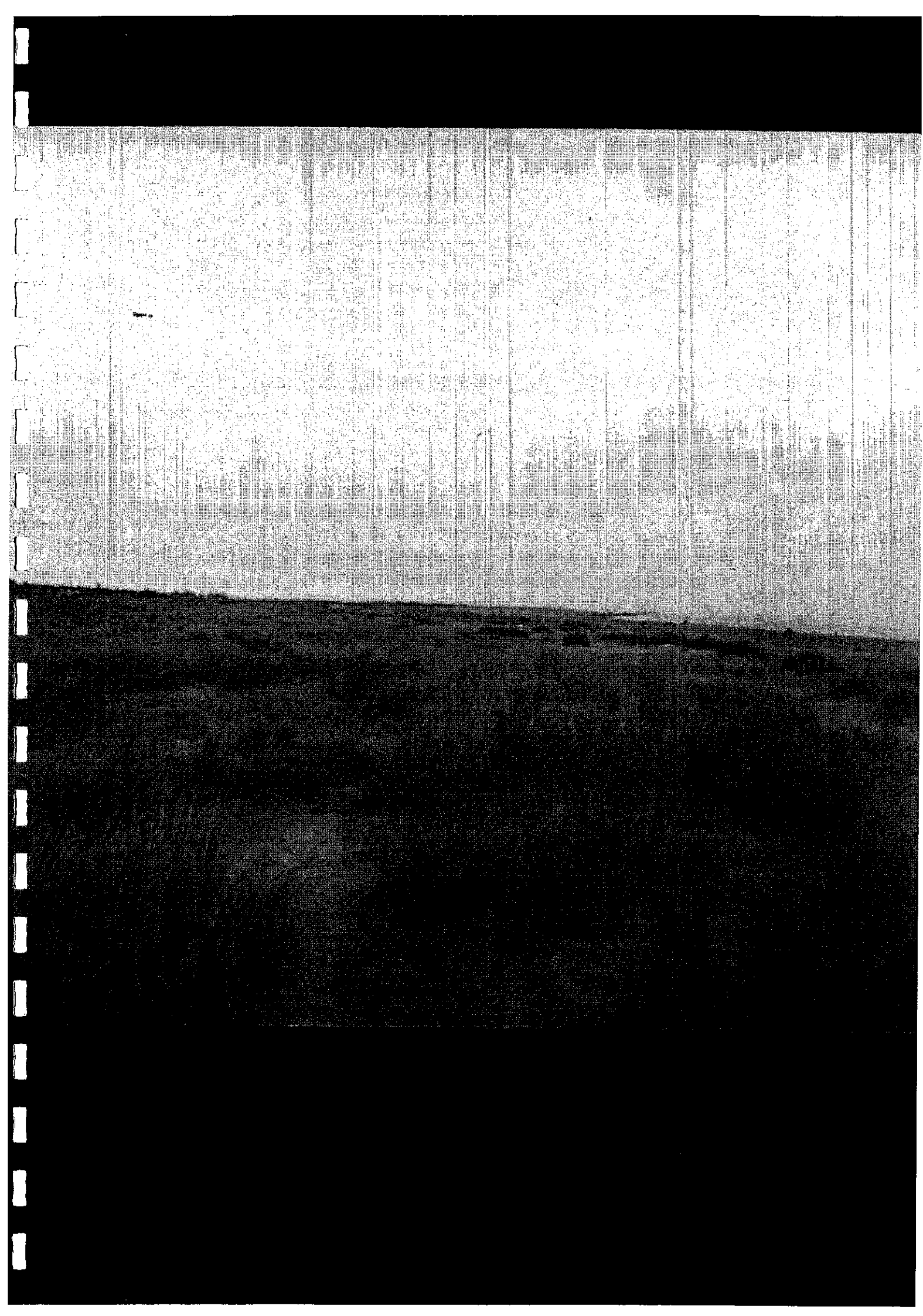
-What's all that about? asked Guttrune as she cleared up the nibbles and glasses with Hagen.

-Just wait and see. Just wait and see.

The Ring Project

Gutrune runs out of the room and upstairs, thinking bridal gowns, present lists, sexy lingerie, and riding in that motor with each step. Hagen gets on his mobile and rings a few mates.

-I think I've fixed up the Goldrin deal I mentioned. Just give it a coupla days, OK?



The Ring Project

ACT ONE SCENE 3
(THE ROCKY HEIGHT WHERE BRUNHILDE WAITS)

Fire Fen, out beyond God's End Drain in the wilderness towards the horizon, where the mud and the slow tides and the sea and the sky ran into each other was just the kind of place that Waltraute would have expected her father to shut her sister Brunhilde away. The ol' fen boys reckon Black Shuck lives out there. You had to be pretty fearless to get out there between tides and marsh and the tricks of the mists that caught the sunset like fire. Waltraute knew enough about the by-products of their father's petrochemical experiments and the skills of their German chemist Loge to recognise the deliberate difficulty he had added to the isolation.

Beyond the last vast prairies of agribusiness fen grain and the blackened stalks of bean fields, at the end of the level where the dark water slowly oozed up over the mudbanks, it was clear that their father had chosen an especially difficult spot. The tide was on the turn now and the hunters' paths over the marshes were disappearing as the grasses and samphire were swallowed below the slow flat wash of thick water that caught the setting sun and turned the whole panorama to a sheet of fire. She could see the old pumping station against the horizon, but now it was far beyond reaching. High above the con-trails of a late flight out of East Midlands to Benidorm caught the last sunlight, like some sky rider searching for another life. She wished.

Brunhilde watched the same tide rising, pushing the flotsam of town expansion - plastic water bottles, condoms, discarded take-away boxes against the crumbling brickwork, pulled the rotted door closed and turned up the propane heater. She pulled the cork out of the bottle of Valkyrieblood, a local mix of cheap wine, surgical spirits and pre-regulation, high opiate Collis Brown Tincture, and took a slug, fumbling round for another damp sweatshirt to keep out the bitter fen wind. She understood now why the old Fenmen had grown their own opium and died of laudum poisoning. That bloody ring he left was not going to keep her warm. Somewhere behind the dried up baked bean tins and the mildewed bread her mobile buzzed.

-Yeah, she snapped, wha' you want, Waltraute. Thought you bloody family had cut me orf and lef' me hear u'rot - or freeze.

-Thats just it, sister. Since you've been away they've gone all funny. Suffering from severe vitamin deficiencies, which they won't even try and get help for, and they all just sit there like they were terminally ill. They all just sit there staring at the sunset out at the back of the Fisher Fleet, beyond the old roll-on-roll off berth and getting greyer and older every minute. I can't understand it at all. Brunhilde, you've got to do something to help, they're your family. You've really got to.

The Ring Project

So much for sending you lot to Cambridge to read Norse mythology and folk anthropology and me to pick beans and strawberries for LinCan, fat lot of good tha's done you, thought Brunhilde.

-So I should worry?

-The only thing our dearest Daddy ever says is that it would all get better if threw that ring he knows you've got back into the water. Something to do with the minerals or the chemical balance or something. Oh look, you know I was never very good at science. But he does love you so much.

A fully grown woman and she still call calls that old ogre 'Daddy Dearest', what an airhead. Does she really think that I'm going to chuck away the only thing I've got to remind me of the only man I ever really loved.

-Jest you forget it, gel. Anyway my 'ol man's comin bak now. Gotta go.

Brunhilde snapped the mobile shut and looked at the punt deftly making its way across the marshy waters as the darkness gathered. Only one man she knew could do that . Her Siegfried. But a rougher, unfamiliar voice calls in the gloaming. She isn't sure now.

-You lookin' for someone special, gel?

Who? Who else could? How? Who else could get through the maze of shallow channels and mists that kept her safe? Who is this crude interloper? Is this another indignity of her father's doing to ruin her further? Where is Siegfried? The dark figure rushed at her and threw her on the couch in the corner. This can't be Siegfried. But he seems so like him. What's happened to him? Has he been drugged? His voice isn't the same. His manner, he'd never...

-Who are you, you bastard?

-Gunnuh, your Siegie's best mate. We 'ad a bet. An' I won. Jus' give us the ring and get you on the bed and shut you the fuck up.....

Brunhilde screams as she staggers across the damp brick floor. He grabs at the ring and twists Brunhilde to the floor

.....Les's get on with it, I got a magic sword here alright an' your gonna feel it gel if I don't get what I came for.

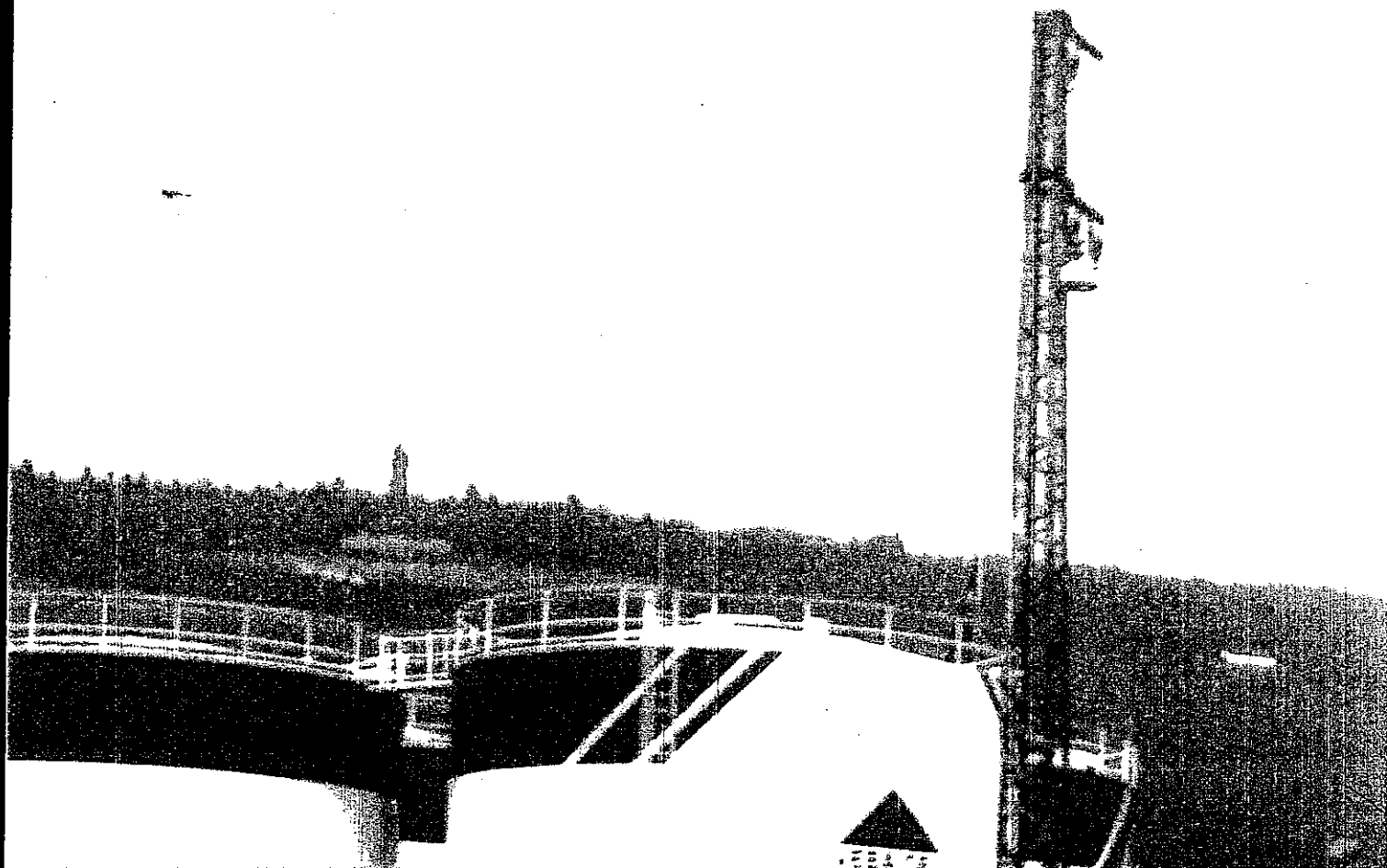
Brunhilde struggles free and runs frantically round the single squalid room that has been her prison and her refuge and her one secret heaven with Siegfried. Exhausted and confused she finally stands shivering in the corner, is this some fantasy from too much Collis Browne in the mix?

The Ring Project

She slowly lapses into unconsciousness. She remembers Siegfried carrying her gently to the pallets and blankets that were her bed. But at dawn it is dark Gunther who stands over her. Her phone is buzzing in the corner as he roughly carries her down to the punt.

-You leave that, gel, snaps Gunther.

Waltraute tries one last time to get through and thinks of their greying father and the way things are starting to collapse around them all.



The Ring Project

ACT TWO SCENE 1

(NIGHT. AN OPEN SPACE ON THE SHORES OF THE RHINE NEAR THE
GIBICHUNG HALL)

Hagen's sat out the back of the trailer home, staring into the blackness of the overflow drain and trying not to breathe the stench too deeply and wondering if it would turn out the way he'd planned. The shadows of the stacks of used scaffolding poles and damaged container pallets make it difficult to figure things out and there are always rats scurrying around since the kebab van had taken to parking where the spur road ran down to the disused goods yard. If that stuff one of his mates from the club did its job on Siegfried though he'd get the loot and his half brother and sister fixed up too. Not bad for a night's work. Just when he's dozing off there's this scratching sound and Hagen flicks his dog's leash and is just about to blast whatever it is/was with his sawn-off when he hears this croaky voice:

-Hagen, my son, are you asleep?

He makes out the humpy shadow of his father's deformed body creeping round the crates and puts the gun down.

-You're a lucky bugger old man. If you weren't dead already you would have been then.

- I'm 'arder than that, an you fukin' know it, smirked Alberich.

-Jus' get out won't you. Trust you to show up jus' when I got it sorted. Want your cut I suppose?

-My share, that's rich. You dunno what you're into do you, son? That stash Siegfried'll get you, s'mine, and don't you forget it. I got it, I did the r'an'd, worked out the formula and then that bloody Valhalco tricked me out of it in some scam. It's not just bullion, some of that stuff is high tech, can do strange things, an' there's a ring'll give you more power than you can 'andle.

-So? Hagen didn't want this creepy old memory coming back now. Just when he's figured out a way of going respectable.

-So. That's all, just a kindly word from your ol'man. But it's coming back into the family now, but you'd jus' take care. Their godfather may 'ave gone loopy and that Siegfried may be dumb, but he's strong and that Brunhilde bird too. You gotta send 'im on a long vacation, a very long vacation, one 'e ain't gettin' back from. I'm an ol' man now. You gotta' do it . For the firm, for the family.

Alberich's words, menace mixed with the advice, hung in the darkness, mixed with the stench from the drain. Hagen pulled on his rottweiler's leash and sat staring at the night, was lost in the dark night, in his dark dreams.



The Ring Project

ACT TWO SCENES 2 TO 5
(DAWN BREAKS, THE HALL OF THE GIBICHUNGS)

Investigation of murder young unidentified male by stabbing and suspicious death
by burning of female of unknown age

WITNESS STATEMENT BY A. GIBICHUNG

I reckon Siegfried must have got back early and come round to Hagen's and Gunther's flat and knocks 'em up and then he somehow has to explain to that Guttrune who was always a bit edgy anyhow, and I heard them shouting a bit about how he'd been off disguised as her brother to pull Brunhilde who used to be his bird and after a bit they seem to make up that seems OK cos' Hagen comes round all matey and stands out on the walkway texting round the lads to meet up down by the Arena sharpish like and that was a bit of a laugh cos' they all think there's gonna be a big bust up like. But when they get there Hagen says no, there's to be right old do we got it all sorted, I got me brother and sister fixed up - but he don't say nothing about the loot he'd get. So, yeah, we did nick a few boxes from the van out the back of the offy, but I didn't use them cards like you said to get the pizzas in and as for them E's an the acid, that's not my style guv and you know it. It must have been the kids wot put the banners on the overpass, I guess.

And we're all well pissed up when Gunther turns up with Brunhilde who's none too chuffed at it at all 'specially when she sees Siegfried there all lovey-dovey with Guttrune and when she see that ring on Siegfried she goes right ballistic, yeah.

-Where you get that you fucker, she screams. 'Spect you'll tell me you killed a dragon or some crap. Well you can forget it. You know and I know you gave me that when you screwed me and where were you when this other brute here raped me and nicked it then and how come you're wearing it, hey, tell me then. Do I know what's going on or do I know what's going on?

Gunther starts slapping Brunhilde and says control herself, she's his bird now and she'll do as he says. Hagen's mates all look ready to off Siegfried an' Gunther and Guttrune looks as if they been tricked, double, somehow, but can't figure out how. Hagen I guess sees his chance an' says OK then you swear on this here blade, so then Siegfried comes on all innocent and says he ain't tricked no one and that Brunhilde's a bit of a wild one but she'll get over it an' they're all family so why don't they get on with the party then?

Which we all do, 'cept Gunther and Hagen and Brunhilde stand around outside sharing a spliff and looking a bit shifty, and one of me mates who'd gone out for slash heard something about offing Siegfried. Next we see them Hagen's got a look like he's won the lottery and the other two look a bit out of it, but not just the blow if you know what I mean?

Statement taken by R. Wagner, Investigating Officer.

The Ring Project

ACT THREE SCENE 1 AND 2
(A WILD AND ROCKY VALLEY ON THE RHINE)

Since he'd got that job with the Gibichung Group and seemed to be getting on well with the brothers who ran the company Siegfried had got a taste for rallying and would often take his company car off road and try all sorts of routes that never showed up on the satellite navigation charts. It was one of those days when he'd got another deal and cut up into the hills rather than head straight back to the office.

The track was getting rougher just like he wanted and he was really pushing the motor and getting the kind of response that was a dream, really punchy and tight, when all of a sudden the track turns to sludge and he's stuck there spinning and smoking and going nowhere, very expensively, and he wished he had taken the four wheel drive today.

There's a tap on the window and Siegfried looks round and sees this great technicolour cloud of dreadlocks surrounding the most amazing simmering look he's ever seen in any singles bar. She blows him a kiss. Siegfried looks around and there's another on the bonnet pulling a ragged Save the Planet T-shirt really tight over the kind of breasts he'd love to get his hands on. He's sat there in shock and the passenger door opens and a third siren who seems only to be dressed in leaves slips in beside him and very slowly starts to run her grimy tattooed hand down his chest, slowly unpicking the buttons on his grey Paul Smith shirt.

-You don't have to go back to the office, murmurs Wellgunde, licking his ear, why not give it all up for a life here with nature and us.

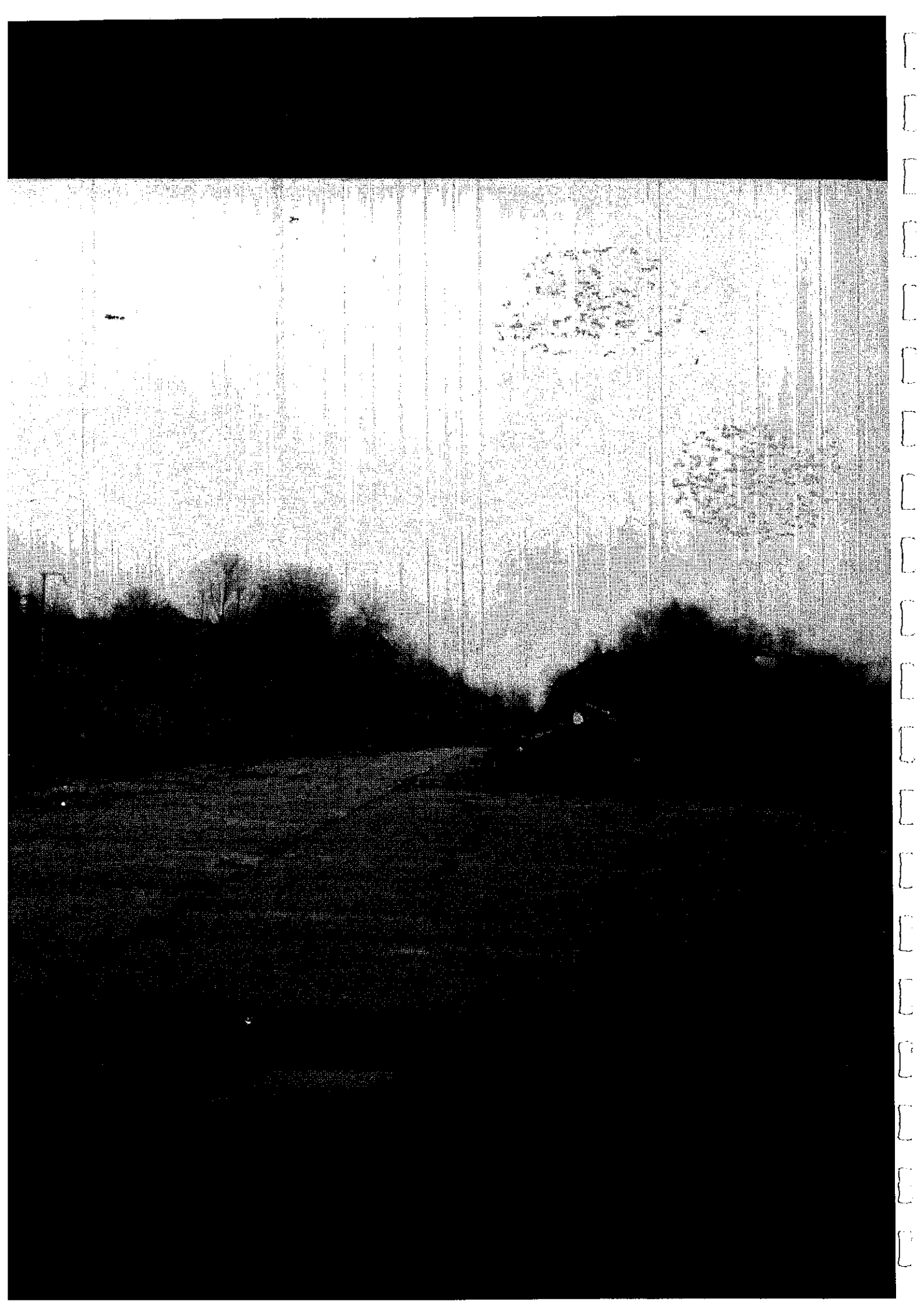
- Even just that ring, and stay for a few hours, adds Flosshilde breathily steaming up the windscreen and leaving Siegfried in no doubt of the charms he could enjoy.

-It's a nice thought, he replies blushing just a little, but you know.....

-Afraid your nice little wifey will find out are you? What's so special about the ring then?

-Miser, the three of them snap and pull back to stand there slowly rocking the saloon's suspension and looking suddenly like serious eco-terrorists. Then they're gone.

Siegfried gets the car back in gear and slowly starts to move again. There's a tap on the window and Woglinde who's got a Kalashnikov cradled across her breasts now, indicates to wind it down.



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-You may not know it stupid, but that ring isn't just a trinket. Its part of the fall out from the collapse of Nacht und Nebel and their bio-metals research. It could do lot of damage in the wrong hands. People have been killed for it already and you could be next on the list, sweetheart.

She bent low so he got a good eyeful of her cleavage and blew him a kiss.

Siegfried revved the engine and as the wheels spun mud behind his three point five litres of advanced driving machine power, his mind confused with the mix of threats and seduction.

-See if I care, was all he could yell, glad to be free of the episode.

-You'll loose it, and your life, before long, the three called out after him. See if you don't.

*

Three hours later Siegfried comes fuming into the club, where Hagen and Gunther and some of the junior execs are having a wind down drink.

-God, I could do with a drink, and a strong one, he grunts. You OK, Gunther, no problems with the wife now?

-What's up, old man? Lost that Nibelung deal? jokes Hagen. Gunther looks at the tips of his shiny Prada's and can't eyeball Siegfried.

-No, just a weird thing on the way back. Death threats from some sisters of Gaia or something. Nothing that unusual.

-Not your type then, hey Siegfried? I thought you grew up with all that back to nature crap, a good romp in the backwoods and all that.

-Not quite. Siegfried downed his Manhattan in one slug. My shout old boy. Then I'll tell you the story of my life.

But Siegfried doesn't know that Hagen's slipped a little loosener in his drink that will bring back his memory and so when Siegfried starts on his story of his rise from post room to board room and his unravelling of the magic of insider dealing and how he could have had any woman he wanted but instead went on this journey through the hot house of Goldrin Securities to chat up this amazing blonde called Brunhilde, there was a hush in the air and you could hear the glasses being put down. But Siegfried just goes on and on about that night with her and how he could loose himself for ever in her arms and similar full on romantic hyperbole, just like some tenor in full aria. Gunther almost chokes on his Martini.

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-Gotta take a leak, chaps, Siegfried blushes.

And as he turns to make for the marble lined hall, Hagen comes after him and taps him on the shoulder, pointing to the cologne bottles on the wash stand.

-You ever seen that three raven logo before? Know what it means, hey? It. Means. Vengeance. Is. Mine.

Hagen makes an almost invisible upward thrust of a fine Sicilian stiletto through the ribs into Siegfried's heart. Siegfried slumps down into a flowing pool of blood. Gunther hears Siegfried's death cries for Brunhilde and rushes in.

-What have you done? What have you done?

He pushes his half brother against the cubicles and for one moment seems strong. Hagen shakes him off like a troublesome dog.

-Settled our family account. Hagen walks past him and out into the car park. He says nothing about the share transfers that he's planning and how close he is to the lost secrets of Goldrin technologies.

Siegfried's blood and piss are all over the marble tiled floor as the sirens and lights of crime scene investigation sweep in to the club grounds. But by then Hagen is checking onto an outbound flight and Gunther's got the body in the back of his estate under a set of gold clubs and a blanket and is driving back along the river valley in the mists and moonlight, knowing he's as guilty as his half brother. Only weaker. He wonders what his sister will say.



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ACT THREE SCENE 3
(MOONLIGHT, THE HALL OF THE GIBICHUNGS)

In the heat of the prairie night Guttrune couldn't sleep and through the screen door she thought she saw the lights of Siegfried's pick up bumping down from the hills through the corn in the moonlight. This early, what's happened? They were going to be out hunting all night? Brunhilde's room was empty, too. What was going on? She froze as the truck swerved into the corral. Roughly thrown in the back and wrapped in blood stained blankets was a body.

Gunther sits at the wheel, staring into the distance. Hagen, his hands bloody swings out of the cab, pulls on his oily Caterpillar cap and smooths out his grey and greasy ponytail. He stands tall and dark in the shadows. The rest of the ranch hands drive up behind them and stand around, not quite sure if they're in the right movie.

-Here you are sister. Your hero. Lets say it was the justice of the hunt? He drawls, as if it was nothing.

Guttrune rushes round and pulls her brother out, screaming and beating him with her fists.

-Murderer. You'll pay for this. You bring me a hero and then you murder him.

Gunther does his best to calm her, holds her shoulders as she tears away at the blankets, weeping and screaming, her hands bloodied from her man's mutilated corpse.

-It wasn't me. It wasn't me. It. Was. Him. Gunther points to Hagen, who grabs him and pushes up against the pick-up's muddy side panels. He has no fear now and no scruples.

-Yeah. So. That was the deal and now its payback time, grunts Hagen, reaching over to grab the ring from Siegfried's body, the ring that he knows will open the old Nibelung mines in the hills, and more.

-You've no right to that. That's Guttrune's inheritance.

Gunther tries to stay calm and reason his way out, but Hagen levels his revolver and aims at his half brother. Gunther slumps across the tail board, groaning and Hagen gets his knife out to cut the finger and ring from Siegfried's corpse. As he does so a beam of moonlight cuts down through the clouds onto the ring and it gleams with a ghostly light, seeming to float in the shadows. Even in the hot prairie night there is a sudden chill.

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Brunhilde dressed up in her best jeans and her hair all done up high, pushes her way through the stunned circle of farm hands and hunters, radiant against their dusty, grubby outfits. Her white stetson glows in the moonlight.

-Shuddup, y'awl..... Her southern drawl cut through the night air; as the crowd gathered round the bodies Hagen slunk away to his black Mustang.

..... You scum don't know a good man even when you've killed one. He's mine now and he always has been. Outta my way.

Brunhilde throws a jerry of gasoline over the body, throws in a match and leaps into the cab. She turns the music up real loud and as she switches on the engine, the flames start to catch. She circles round and into the forests leaving a trail of fire. A Lucinda Williams song speaks for her thoughts, she needs no operatic aria, no soaring climax for this immolation. *I drove my car in the middle of the night/ I just wanted to see you so bad.* The dry summer pines catch one on the other and soon the whole skyline is blazing. As the pick up climbs higher and higher in the hills the song track is gradually lost in the roar of the fires and the crashes of falling trees. *The road was dark but the stars were bright / I just wanted ot see you so bad/ It didn't matter what my friends woud say/ I was going to see you any way.* The wheels scar and scream on the gravel road and Brunhilde dreams of the life they would have had together, remembers scenes form her childhood, unexplained journeys and another track mixes into her head : *broken down shacks, engine parts, stories nobody know, dogs barking in the yard.* Somehow in these long last moments she manages to feel at peace, to forgive her father and all he's p ther through. Ravens and eagles fly up to avoid the heat . Just ahead of the fire storm she rounds Valhal Peak where her old man Wotan and the boys have been up for days drinking and watching old videos of Götterdämmerung they've edited into soft porn for the black market. But they're too far gone to see the sparks catching their cabin roof as she passes. and the bodies of the old God Club are never found. At the highest point on the gravel road Brunhilde stops on the longest bridge she's ever known and throws the ring that has cursed then all down into the reservoir below, trying to undo the harm it's brought and keeping the secrets of the golden mountain safe for ever. As if she believes it will.

Soon Brunhilde and the body of her lover are heat and dust too. They say the last words of the song still echo in the burned out hillsides. *I saw your face so clear and bright / I must have been crazy but it sure feels right / I wanted to see you so bad*

*

On the desert side of the range another song spirals through the night, high harmonies and strumming guitars:





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*On a dark desert highway, cool wind in my hair.
Warm smell of colitas rising up through the air
Up ahead in the distance, I saw a shimmering light
My head grew heavy and my sight grew dim,
I had to stop for the night.*

Though the power had long gone out Woglinde still kept her old 8-track powered up with batteries, and kept playing that Eagle's song, which would have fitted the Goldwater Kitten Shack still if they'd been able to stay open. But you can't have good sex on a vibrating water bed if it's just a flaccid bag and what good's a jacuzzi if it's as exciting as a duck pond on a calm day. So business had kinda fallen off.

Then just when the three of them are watching the forest fires on the horizon the neon crackles on again, the sign glows pink and orange in the desert dark and the fountains gurgle. Storm clouds drift across the night and there a flashes against the huge anvil clouds. A strange golden ring of lightning drifts across the bar area and hovers over the jacuzzi. Lizards scurry away at the sudden change of mood. The three temptresses smile at each other and give a little whoop and a wiggle.

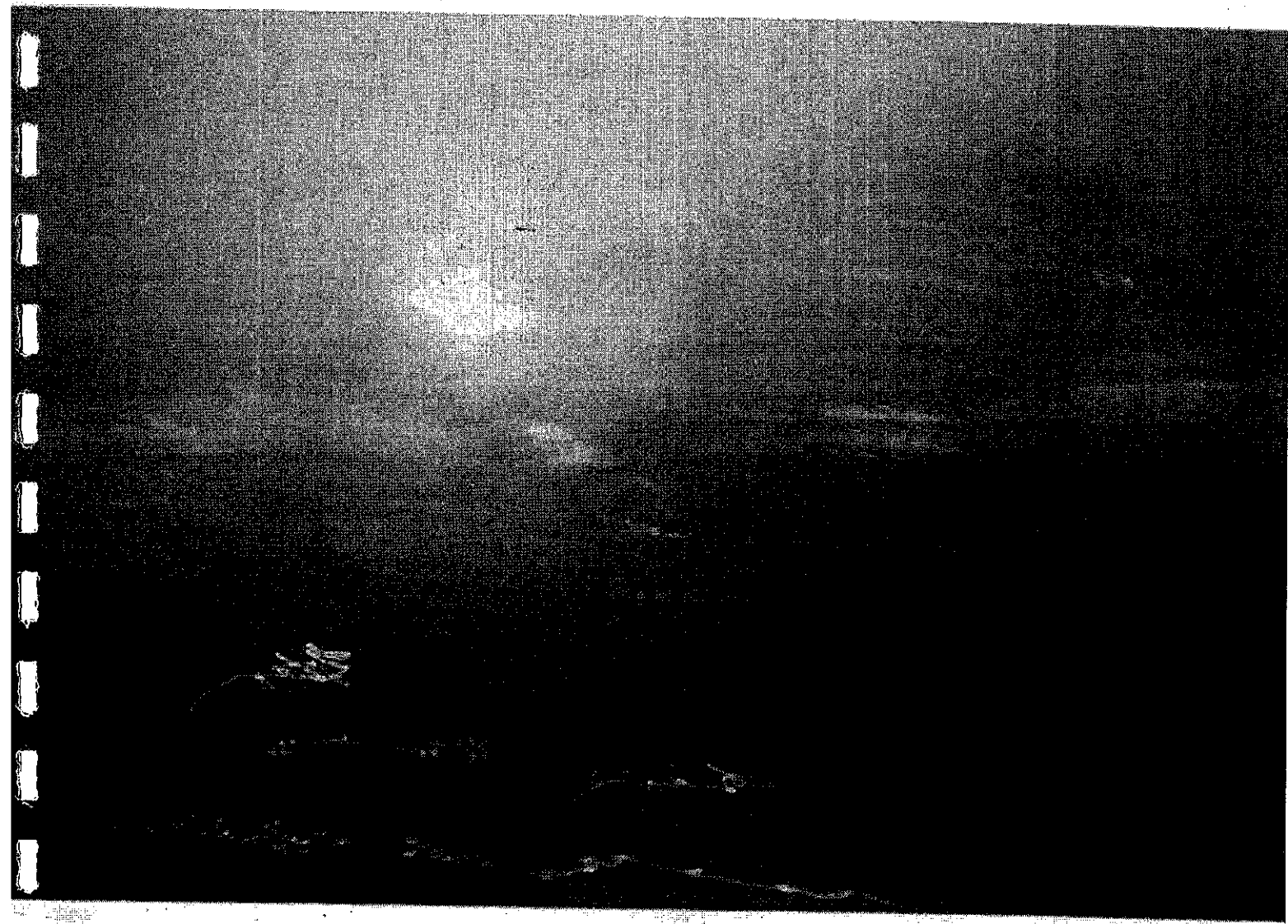
Then out of nowhere, Hagen Gibichung screams down the dirt road in his Mustang and rushes in before the dust has even drifted away into the hot dry darkness. He makes to grab for ring of lightning that just floats there, filling the room with a strange quiet hum.

-The power is mine now, he grunts as the three girls rush him.

-Not so fast, big boy, says Flosshilde taking a gold plated snub nose from her fishnet stocking top, I think its time for you to take a little moonlight dip. We're running this joint from now on. For ever.

They hold him under the jacuzzi longer than is good for respiration and throw his sodden body into the log chopper out the back of the parking lot. Woglinde's 8-track hides the sound. A gold light stripes the eastern desert.

*Last thing I remember, I was
Running for the door
I had to find the passage back
To the place I was before.
Relax,' said the night man,
We are programmed to receive
You can check out any time you like.
But you can never leave.*



The Ring Project

AFTERWORD

*The bard's tale endeth
and spring regreens the brake.*

So all tales end.

Minstrels pass onward to another hall.

Five minutes of motifs of redemption and transformation,
full orchestra, major chords, diminuendo, applause and then
your phaeton awaits beneath the torch lit porte clochere.

The curtain falls;
the credits roll,

and next week's new series previews in the margins of the screen.

You close the covers on another book,
click onward to the next screen,
dial up another link.

"But tell me,"

asks the poet in the twice smoked air, roughened with the drink,
the analyst leaning forward to the couch, trying to resolve transference,
the critical theorist drafting another revision of the paper,
the producer pitching for another sequel and wanting to tie up casting,
(and even as you turn out the bedside light and snuggle down,
you wonder)

"is it really over?"

The old Gods might be destroyed, scores settled, love justified,
even the whole world ended,
(some say they've seen it so,
others that *'though the world ends the earth remains'*,
and get into endings as renewal).

The stories just repeat,
Propp-ed up by a few set plots and (is it twenty two?) situations,
kept Jung by archetypes and dreams
and that old joke,
just when you thought it was safe to.....

So,

gan canny pet,
them's angels on wor train tonight.
And wish maidens.
Valhalla's on the Nordic Line, they say.

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SOURCES USED IN THE TEXT

p 10. *No Tell Motel - Whisper quiet rooms* is a spoof from a box of matches.

p 11. G. Parsons / C. Hillman *Sin City* 1996 Irving Music BMI, recorded by The Flying Burrito Brothers on *The Gilded Palace of Sin*

p 15. B. Springsteen *Darkness on the Edge of Town* 1978 Bruce Springsteen

p 16. Byrne, D *Radio Head* in *True Stories* Faber, London 1986, pp 174-6 and recorded by Talking Heads.

p 17. R. Mc Guinn / T. Petty *King of the Hill* 1990 McGuinn Music (BMI)/Gone Gator (ASCAP) recorded by Roger McGuinn on *Back from Rio*

p 19. There is no such journal as *Critical Urbanism Quarterly*.

p 21. *Dr Bloodmoney*, *Our Friends from Frolix 8*, *The Clans of the Alphane Moon*, *The Penultimate Truth* are the titles of books by Philip K Dick (1928 - 1982). CanD is also an psychotropic drug inducing real seeming hallucinations he used as a device in *The Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*.

p 21. "Richard Wagner" is also an American pornographer.

p 21. The nordic sounding places are from Guerber H.A. *The Myths of the Norsemen* Harrap, London 1908.

p 24. *A KISS TO FAR* is the title of an article by Max Davidson in *The Daily Mail*, July 24, 2001 on incest in soap TV and is the source of the illustration. The longer quote is elided from Donnington, R *Wagner's Ring Cycle : the music and the myth* Faber, London, 1963, pp 116-123

p 25. Such seats are available from Sussex Country Gardens, Ditchling £999.

p 34. This is a free translation of part of Wotan's last long farewell at the end of *Die Walküre*

p 40. Laurie Anderson *Sharkey's Day* Difficult Music 1984.

p 40. *Big and Bouncy* is a top self fiction.

p 45. *Sword, Hammer and Raven* is an invention but sounds suitably Goth.

p 46 and 47 *Where, now* and *I can't go on ...* are the opening and closing words of Samuel Beckett's *The Unnameable* (1959), p 267 and p 382 in the 1979 Picador edition.

p 49 "Vivacious and rumbunctious" is a reference to Kathleen Brooks, sometime Mayor of Georgetown, Colorado, and former stripper, see Andrew Stephen *Stripped of Office* Sunday Times Magazine, 2002(?). pp 38- 43. You can see for yourself in the illustration.

p 49. "I love you madly" is a reference to Umberto Eco's description of the post-modern in "Postmodernism, Irony, the Enjoyable" in Eco, *Reflections on the Name of the Rose* Secker and Warburg 1985 p.67.

p 51. Wagner doesn't give the three Norns of Fate names, these are taken from Guerber, H A *The Myths of the Norsemen* Harrap 1908 p166.

The Ring Project

p 51-2.Brünnhilde's and Siegfried's dialogue is only slightly adapted from Wagner's libretto from the Prelude to *Die Götterdämmerung* since it had the unbelievable,super-romantic effect I wanted here.

p 53.This is Donnington's description of the Gibichung 'palace' in *The Ring and its Symbols* p. 221

p 53.Rockeries with mists are also available at Ditchling Garden Centre.

p 56.This is a reference to Black Shuck, a mythical giant black dog of East Anglia,which may have some connection with Norse legend. Whether it is a corruption of *Sköll*, one of the fierce wolves that perpetually pursued the sun I do not know, but I do know that nights on the Fens can be weird, I grew up there.

p 56.The Fisher Fleet is a real location beyond King's Lynn Docks where my father designed the first roll-on--off berth in the 1960's.

p 65.The quotations are from Lucinda Williams *I just wanted to see you so bad* and *Car Wheels on a Gravel Road* (Warner Tamourlane Publising Corp/ Lucy Jones music /Nomad Noman Music, 1988 and 1998) recorded on Koch and Mercury Records respectively. There are one or two other phrases from Lucinda Williams' in there too.

p 66.Don Felder, Don Henley, Glenn Frey *Hotel California* Long Run Music, Fingers Music, WB Music Corp, (ASCAP) 1976. Recorded by The Eagles

p 66.Having seen floating ball lightning close up, once, I know how spooky it is.

p 67.This is a line from a version of *Tristan and Iseult* that I read in the 1960's and can't remember the author or any details, but this line has stuck in my mind and I thought would make a nice start to this little cadenza.

p 67 *saw the world end* is the title of Deryck Cooke's famous study of The Ring.*Though the world ends..* is the conclusion of Kitcher, P and Schacht, R*Finding an Ending* OUP 2004, p 201, another volume in the Wagner book

p 67.Wish maidens' is one of the attributes of the Valkyries as they rapturously serve the dead heroes they have selected and carried to Valhalla (see Donnington, 1963, pp 144-6)

Imagine
WAGNER'S RING
CYCLE as:

**a quick read for the holiday,
A SOAP
OPERA,**

**A
ROMANTIC
NOVEL**

**AN EPISODE OF THE
SOPRANOS,**

**A NEWS REPORT,
AN ADVENTURE
MOVIE,**

science fiction.

A COUNTRY AND WESTERN SONG

(BUT PERFORMED BY FORCED ENTERTAINMENT),

**-AS ANYTHING BUT GRAND OPERA
AND CERTAINLY NO HORNED HELMETS**

(Well, almost no horned helmets, and they're ironic horned helmets)

THE RING PROJECT is all of them. In one.

In short:

**"A DUMBED DOWN AND DECONSTRUCTED
RING CYCLE FOR THE POST PUNK SOUND
BITE AGE- JUST WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS"**

