

# EL PASO TALES



STORY AND ART BY SAM RILEY

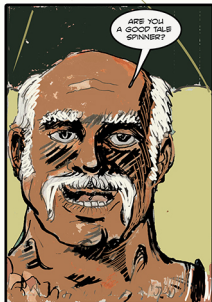
# STORY AND ART BY JIM RIEL

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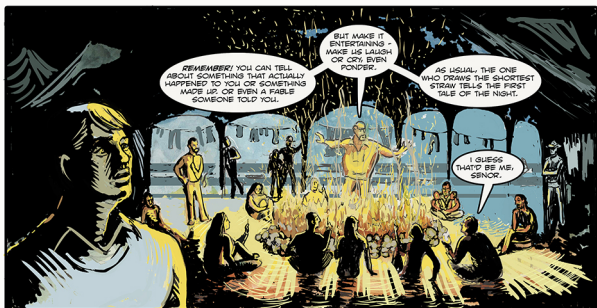












# THE COOK'S TALE



SAN TOMAS NESTLES CLOSE TO GAGXANUL. VOLCANO HOTSPRINGS PROVIDE HOT WATER WHEN INDOOR PLUMBING FAILS, WHICH HAPPENS REGULARLY.



MANY STREAMS FROM THE VOLCANO NOURISH CROPS PARTICULARLY OUR COFFEE TREES



ON THE DAY BEFORE ITS ERUPTION GAGXANUL WAS SHOWING ITS DARK SIDE, GRUMBLED DEEP INTO THE NIGHT, SHAKING BUILDINGS.



MOST VILLAGERS WERE DEEP IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT DAY'S MARCH OF EL PRESIDENTE AND HIS FIESTAS MINERVALIAS.

WATCH YOUR STEP XELHA.



BUT ONE VILLAGE ELDER FELT THE VILLAGERS NEEDED TO PREPARE FOR A DIFFERENT EVENT.



HORADO CASTRANO HAD LIVED THROUGH PREVIOUS ERUPTIONS AND KNEW HOW UNPREDICTABLE AND DEADLY THEY COULD BE.

ENOUGH! LET'S GET AWAY FROM THESE CRAZIES.





MORADO SCANNED THE TREES  
UNTIL HE SAW HIS SPIRIT ANIMAL.



THE EAGLE, HIS LIFE-LONG  
PARTNER



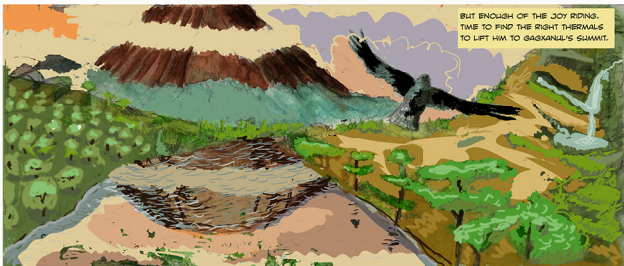
HIS PRAYERS AND INCANTATION  
TOOK AWHILE BUT EVENTUALLY  
THEY MERGED

TO THIS DAY, NO ONE  
KNOWS HOW THEY  
TRANSITION, AND THE  
NAGUALS WON'T TELL.

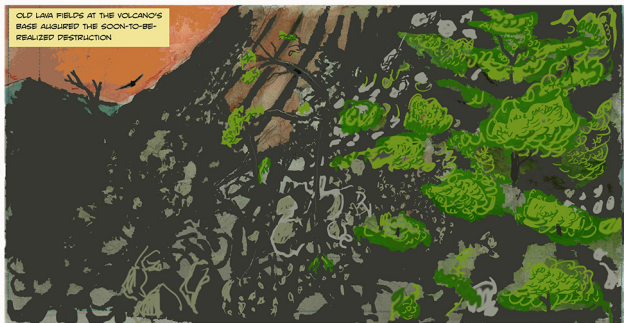




IT HAD BEEN AWHILE SINCE HORADO  
HAD MERGED WITH WITH HIS EAGLE  
SPIRIT-MATE AND HE'D FORGOTTEN  
HOW WONDERFUL FLOATING  
ON THE THERMALS FELT.



BUT ENOUGH OF THE JOY RIDING.  
TIME TO FIND THE RIGHT THERMALS  
TO LIFT HIM TO GASKANUL'S SUMMIT.



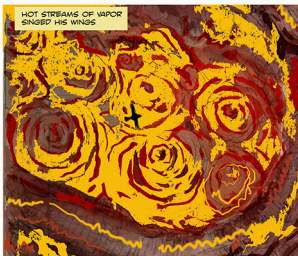
OLD LAVA FIELDS AT THE VOLCANO'S  
BASE ALASSED THE SOON-TO-BE-  
REALIZED DESTRUCTION



WHAT HORADO SAW  
CONFIRMED HIS SENSE OF  
URGENCY. ANIMALS LARGE  
AND SMALL SCRAMLED FOR  
SAFETY OFF THE MOUNTAIN.



LAVA STREAMS BOILED,  
SWIRLED, AND EXPLODED  
LIKE A CAULDRON OF  
SWIMMING CORN SOUP.



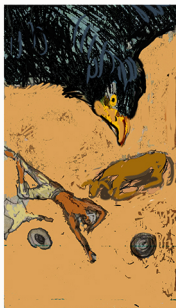
HOT STREAMS OF VAPOR  
SINGED HIS WINGS



TOO QUICKLY A DEEP  
FATIGUE DRAINED HIM



A WING TANGLED IN  
TREE BRANCHES AS  
GRAVITY PULLED HIM  
DOWN FROM THE  
VOLCANO'S SUMMIT





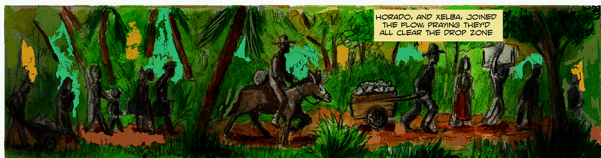












A FEW MONTHS LATER, XELBA RETURNED TO HORADO'S PROPERTY ALONE. HORADO NEVER RETURNED.



SOME SAY HORADO SHAPE-SHIFTED ONE LAST TIME. OTHERS THINK HE WASN'T ABLE TO SURVIVE THE ERUPTION OR THE DEBRIS SHOWER THAT DESTROYED FARMS AND VILLAGES FOR KILOS AROUND.



SAN TOMAS WAS PARTIALLY DESTROYED BUT ENOUGH OF THE ROADS AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS REMAINED TO MAKE IT WORTH REBUILDING. ONLY A FEW DIED THANKS TO HORADO'S WARNINGS.

A MASSIVE LAVA ROCK STILL SITS IN THE SQUARE TO THIS DAY AS A REMINDER OF GASKANUL'S POWER AND FURY IN 1902.

SUCH A SPLENDID TALE, JAMIE, AND AN EXCELLENT WAY TO KICK OFF OUR STORY HOUR.

GRATIAS, SENOR. SAN TOMAS IS MY HOME AND I ALREADY MISS IT. HOPEFULLY I'LL MAKE ENOUGH MONEY AS A CHEF TO RETURN THERE SOON.



NOW! WHO ELSE HAS A TALE AS ENTERTAINING TO TELL US?

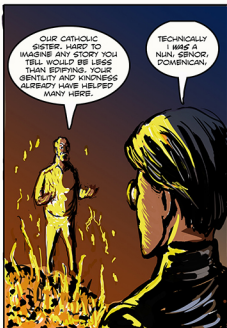
COME NOW! DON'T BE SHY. COME FORWARD AND BE HEARD



IT WOULD BE SUCH A SHAME TO WASTE SUCH A WARNING FIRE -

I WILL DO IT, SENOR, ALTHOUGH MY TALE MIGHT NOT BE AS ENTERTAINING AS OUR YOUNG COOK'S.





OUR CATHOLIC SISTER. HARD TO IMAGINE ANY STORY YOU TELL WOULD BE LESS THAN EPIPHANY. YOUR GENTILITY AND KINDNESS ALREADY HAVE HELPED MANY HERE.

TECHNICALLY I WAS A NUN. SENOR, DOMINICAN.



## THE EX-NUN'S PROLOGUE

WHEN I WAS A CHILD I WANTED TO BE A PRIEST. I DROVE MY PARENTS CRAZY.



WE ALL KNOW HOW THE WORLD WORKS THOUGH. THE CLOSEST I COULD COME TO THAT ROLE WAS AS A NUN.

I WORKED VERY HARD, HOPING AGAINST HOPE THAT THE OLD BOYS NETWORK WOULD RELENT AND REALIZE HOW WOMEN COULD BE AS EFFECTIVE AS THEY WERE IN THE PRIESTHOOD.



I WORKED MY WAY UP TO BECOMING MOTHER SUPERIOR FOR A CONVENT IN THE BARRIO BUT FOUND MYSELF ENBROILED IN CONFLICTS WITH THE BISHOP AND OTHER CLERICS OVER OUR OUTREACH TO THE POOR AND GANG VICTIMS.

UNTIL MY ACTIVISM BECAME DANGEROUS. MY LIFE HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT OTHERS



LONG STORY SHORT I GOT IN TROUBLE WITH THE LOCAL POLICE, WHO WERE VERY CHUMMY WITH THE BISHOP AND THE REST OF THE CHURCH HIERARCHY

THEY WANTED TO CAST ME AS A REBEL AND FORCED ME TO RESIGN MY POSITION.

UHM... ERR... MAYBE NOW IS NOT



BUT RESIGNING AS SUPERIOR AND LEAVING THE CONVENT WAS NOT ENOUGH FOR THESE HORRIBLE, DABOLICAL MEN.



SO - SOMEONE TRIED TO KILL ME.

NOW HERE I AM FLEEING THE COUNTRY OF MY BIRTH, COLUMBIA, AND THE PEOPLE I LOVE AND ONLY WANT TO SERVE IN HOPE OF ASYLUM.



IN COLLEGE I STUDIED THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAS, SPECIALIZING IN ERAS BEFORE THE SPANISH CONQUEST IN THE 1500S.

MY TALE IS OF INTRIGUE AND BETRAYAL OF DREAMS THAT TELL THE TRUTH BUT MISLEAD THE DREAMERS. THIS TALE CONTINUES TO HAUNT ME.





INKA CHUGLI-CHINCHAY RETURNS TO THE CITY OF CHUSCO TRIUMPHANT. HIS OPPONENT, INKA URQU, HAS BEEN OVERCOME BY THE SHEER ALDACITY OF HIS AMBUSH. ALTHOUGH CHINCHAY'S BATTALIONS HAVE SUFFERED GREIVIOUS LOSSES AND HE KNOWS HE'LL HAVE TO OFFER RECOMPENSE TO HIS ALLIES.









AND SO BEGAN A REGIMEN OF TORTURE NOT UNIQUE IN HUMAN HISTORY. IF YOU THINK IT BARBARIC, ONLY TURN TO THE PAGES OF RECORDED WESTERN CIVILIZATION WHERE THE INQUISITION SAW FIT TO HANG OR BURN WITCHES OR INFIDELS TO DEATH. BUT ONLY AFTER TORTURING THEM TO GET A FORCED CONFESSION OR CONVERSION.

STEP UP THE PACE



WHEN YOU'RE DONE, BRING HIM TO THE RACK



THE TRAMPLING WAS BAD ENOUGH

I DON'T HAVE THE STOMACH FOR THIS



OUR ILLUSTRIOUS LEADER DON'T SEE FIT TO SAY WHY SHOULD WE?

MORE TO DISMISS IN PRIVATE, FRIEND



I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY, BUT I'M NOT THERE YET

OUR PEOPLE HAVE BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH UPSET AND TROUBLE. EVEN IF CHANCERY HAS NO BUSINESS BEING KINGS, AND I AGREE HE DOES NOT, WHAT COST TO THE CALMNESS AND WELLBEING TO OUR PEOPLE?



THE COST OF A VAIN, INSENSIBLE, AND INCOMPETENT MAN WHO TAKES NO COUNSEL FROM WISER MEN, WHO ACTS ON IMPULSE, AMBITION, AND CALLOUSNESS. DO YOU THINK HE CARES ABOUT THE WARRIORS HE LOST IN THE BATTLE TO OVERCOME HIS BROTHER? OR FOR THAT MATTER THEIR FAMILIES?

ALL THAT YOU SAY IS TRUE, AMARU. BUT HE'S ONLY DIFFERENT IN DEGREE FROM HIS TWIN OR EVEN HIS FATHER. LIKE I SAID, THAT FAMILY BELIEVES THE GODS TAILOR THE WORLD AND NATURE TO MEET THEIR WANTS AND NEEDS.

I'VE GOT TO GO. SO MUCH TO DIGEST. MY WIFE EXPECTS ME FOR DINNER.



ALL THE MORE REASON TO NIP IT IN THE BUD, KUNTUR

I'M MEETING WITH SOME LIKE-MINDED FRIENDS' SUNSET TONIGHT. PERHAPS YOU'LL JOIN?

I'LL SEND A MESSENGER TO LET YOU KNOW WHETHER OR NOT I'LL ATTEND







I WOULDN'T BE  
HERE IN THIS CURSED  
MONSOON IF I DON'T  
BELIEVE YOUR PLAN IS  
RIGHTEOUS AND WILL WORK,  
AND IT DOES MAKE  
SENSE THAT THIS DEED  
IS DONE OUT IN  
THE OPEN

AND THAT  
IT IS DONE BY  
THIS RIGHT  
PEOPLE!



BUT I AM  
SURPRISED  
THAT THOSE PEOPLE  
ARE TUPAC AND OLGA.  
TUPAC! I THOUGHT YOU  
WERE CLOSE TO  
CHUNCHAY AN ADE,  
AND OLGA AREN'T  
YOU A MAN  
SERVANT?

ALL THE BETTER TO SEE  
HOW BAD CHUNCHAY WILL BE FOR  
US AND WHAT ACTUALLY MOTIVATES  
HIM. GENERAL KUNTURI. HIS TERROR  
WON'T STOP WITH HIS BROTHER - HE  
WANTS ALL THE CITIES NEAR US  
TO PAY TRIBUTE TO HIM.

WE ARE  
CLOSE AND KNOW  
ALL HIS PRIVATE  
ACTIONS AND  
THOUGHTS

AND OFTEN  
EVEN HIS  
DREAMS



KUNTURI! TUPAC  
AND OLGA ARE GOOD  
AND HONORABLE  
MEN

THEY WILL  
NOT SHIRK  
OR EVADE  
THEIR OATH



IT'S NOT  
THEIR COMMITMENT  
THAT WORRIES ME,  
AMARU.

THEY ARE  
NOT EXPERIENCED  
WARRIORS. WHOEVER  
STRIKES THE FIRST BLOW  
MUST MAKE IT COUNT.  
IF IT DOESN'T HURT HIM  
ENOUGH, HE COULD  
ESCAPE

I WILL STRIKE  
FIRST SR.  
WITH PLEASURE  
AND TO THE  
HILT.



SO BE IT,  
HONORED  
FRIEND

WE MUST  
EACH STRIKE A BLOW  
AND BEFORE THE  
PRIESTS INVEST HIM.  
THIS CONSPIRACY CAN  
HAVE NO BACK  
SEATERS.



THE BEST TIME  
TO STRIKE IS WHEN  
CHUNCHAY REACHES THE  
TOP OF THE CEREMONIAL  
PYRAMID. IT'S REQUIRED  
THAT HE BE ALONE. HIS  
GUARD MUST WAIT  
BELOW

CHUNCHAY  
WILL BE FOCUSED  
ON THE RITUAL AND  
WON'T BE AWARE  
OF US.

WE SHOULD  
EACH LEAVE  
SEPARATELY  
NOW



EVEN IF WE  
SUCCEED,  
THERE WILL BE  
TARGETS ON OUR  
BACKS. CHUNCHAY'S  
COUSIN WIRANA  
WORRIES ME.

MAY HUARI  
GUIDE OUR BLADES  
TOMORROW. SLEEP  
WELL COMRADE



INKA CHUNCHO-HY!  
CHUNCHO-HY, INKA!  
WAKE UP! IT'S  
IMPORTANT

I'VE HAD A  
BAD DREAM, A  
NIGHTMARE, A WARNING  
ABOUT YOU

HMMMM



IN MY DREAM,  
A PANTHER SWALLOWED  
A BABY WHOLE. THE GRAVES  
OF ANCESTORS SPRUNG OPEN  
AND SURRY STALKED THEM  
BREATHING FOUL VAPORS  
FROM HER MOUTH

THEN LLAPE  
ROARED ACROSS THE  
SKY BURNING TREES  
AND VILLAGES. IT CAN  
ONLY BE ABOUT YOU,  
MY LOVE.



STOP!  
YOU MIGHT BE  
MY FAVORITE BROTHER  
BUT THERE ARE PLENTY  
OF OTHERS WHO'D  
BE HAPPY TO TAKE  
YOUR PLACE!



I'M ALSO  
THE LONGEST  
SERVING AND I'VE  
ALWAYS LOOKED  
OUT FOR YOU

THE GODS HAVE  
SENT A WARNING  
AND YOU ARE IN  
DANGER



I COULD  
USE MORE  
SLEEP BUT NOW  
SINCE YOU WOKE  
ME UP...

LISTEN TO ME.  
THE DREAM WAS VERY  
CLEAR. YOU WON'T  
SURVIVE THE DAY IF  
YOU GO TO YOUR  
CORONATION



THAT'S  
RIDICULOUS.  
YOUR DREAM  
MEANS THE  
OPPOSITE

I'M NOT  
STUPID. I KNOW  
I HAVE MANY  
ENEMIES

BUT I'VE  
ALWAYS HAD  
THEM. I'M USED  
TO IT.



I THINK SURRY  
AND LLAPE ARE  
SAYING THAT THE  
OLD WORLD IS  
DYING AND I WILL  
BE BUILDING A  
NEW ONE

I WOULDN'T  
HAVE SUCCEEDED  
IN KILLING MY  
BROTHER IF THEY  
DIDN'T WANT  
IT TO BE SO.

SIGH





DREAMS FOLLOW THEIR OWN  
LOGIC, PROVOKED BY THEIR  
MYSTERIOUS SOURCES



LIKE OUR MAMMALIAN BROTHERS,  
WE ARE ALL SUBJECT TO THEM,  
NO MATTER THEIR ENDS.



SOMETIMES THEY  
COALESCE AROUND  
THE SAME DREAM



CHING-HAY  
BRINGS QUITE  
AN ENCOURAGE  
IN SUPPORT.  
AWAY!

HAI! HIS  
CEREMONIAL  
GUARD WILL  
SCATTER LIKE  
RABBITS AT THE  
FIRST FLASH  
OF A  
BLADE



I RECOGNIZE  
THE COLORS OF  
WANA'S GUARD  
BRINGING UP  
THE REAR

WANA CAN BE  
DANGEROUS, BUT  
THE PRIESTS REQUIRE  
CHING-HAY ASCENDS THE  
STAIRS ALONE



WITH OR  
WITHOUT A  
GUARD WE  
MUST MOVE  
FAST, WITHOUT  
HESTATION

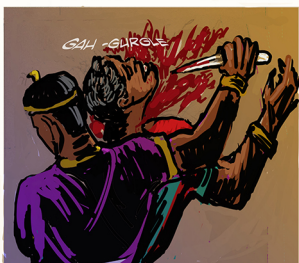
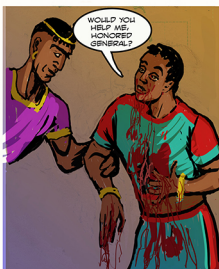
















I PRAY  
YOU HEAR  
ME OUT,  
WAYNA

MANY TIMES  
YOU AND I HAVE  
SHARED BLOOD AND  
THE SWEET TASTE  
OF VICTORY

BEFORE YOU  
D'ESECRATE THIS  
SACRED PLACE  
ANY MORE THAN  
IT ALREADY HAS  
BEEN BY US -



USE YOUR  
BLADE ONLY ON  
ME NOW IF YOU  
TRUST YOU ARE  
INFORMED ENOUGH  
TO KNOW OUR  
MOVES



BUT IF  
YOU HAVE  
DOUBTS LISTEN  
TO ME, HONORED  
WARRIOR

AND YOU WILL  
HEAR THE TRUTH  
AS MY FRIENDS  
AND I SAW IT



DO YOU THINK  
GENERAL KUNTUR  
COULD BECOME  
OUR NEXT KING?

ONLY IF THE GODS  
AND LORD WAYNA  
WANT HIM TO



SO TELL  
PUKA TO BRING  
HIS BATTALION TO  
THE LITTLE  
MOUNTAIN WHERE  
THE SUN FIRST  
RISES AS SOON  
AS HE CAN.

RUN LIKE  
THE WIND!

I WILL, UNCLE,  
BUT LORD  
WAYNA

A HOT HUMID NIGHT AND PIERCE MOSQUITOS TOOK THEIR TOLL ON KUNTUR'S SLEEP AS IF THE GHOST OF INKA CHUQUI-CHINWAY WANTED TO EVEN THE SCORE.



KUNTUR STARTLED AWAKE TO A CHIRPING PURRING SOUND. WAS HE DREAMING? THE SOUNDS OF RUFFLING FEATHERS AND A CACKLE SAID OTHERWISE.



SURELY YOU KNOW WHY YOUR NAMESAKE KUNTUR-CONDOR IS HERE



AFTER ALL, WE SHARE THE SAME DARK NATURE

THIS A DREAM. I'VE DREAMT YOU BEFORE BUT ALWAYS IN ADVANCE OF A BATTLE



AND THAT'S WHERE YOU'LL MEET ME AGAIN. SOONER THAN YOU MIGHT THINK.

THE COUNCIL WENT WELL. WAYNA HAS ACCEPTED THE RESULTS



THE COUNCIL WILL SELECT OUR NEW LEADER - A FIRST!

OH RIGHT! NONSENSE



I MUST BE DREAMING

SO YOU SAY, BROTHER.





EVEN OVER 500 YEARS AGO BEFORE THE SPANISH CONQUEST, MEN WERE MISUNDERSTANDING THEIR DREAMS AND ACTING ONLY TO SATISFY THEIR EGOS. AS POWERFUL MEN TEND TO DO AFTER EVENTS SPIN OUT OF CONTROL, AND DISASTER ENSUES. AMARU WAS KILLED SOON AFTER HIS HEART-TO-HEART WITH KUNTUR, IN A SURPRISE ATTACK BY HIS OWN TROOPS.



KUNTUR, PROBABLY THE MOST UPRIGHTING, INTELLIGENT, AND YES EVEN NOBLEST OF THE CONSPIRATORS, STILL RESOLVED HIS GUILT IN THE ONLY WAY HE KNEW - THROUGH A VIOLENT ACT.

ON HEARING OF AMARU'S DEATH, KUNTUR PERSUADED A TRUSTED SLAVE, ON THE PROMISE OF HIS FREEDOM, TO RUN HIM THROUGH WITH HIS OWN SPEAR.



OVER THE THREE PLUS YEARS OF WAYNA'S REIGN AND HIS CONSTANT WARRING, THE WARI PEOPLE GREW TIRED OF HIS STEADY DEMANDS FOR TRIBUTE INCREASES.

THEY FOUND OCCASION TO DEPRIVE WAYNA OF HIS EXALTED POSITION AND LIFE ON A TRIBUTE VISIT TO ONE OF HIS HOLDINGS AND QUICKLY DISPATCHED HIM.

MEN! WAYNA COMBINED THE WORST QUALITIES OF HIS TWO UNCL'S WITH A STREET URGHIN'S GREED FOR MORE, WHICH IS WHAT HE BASICALLY WAS ANYHOW.

NONE OF THE PEOPLE IN MY STORY HAD A CLUE TO THEIR PERVERTED VIEW OF LIFE BECAUSE THEIR ENTITLEMENT BLINDED THEM.

THE CONQUISTADORS WHO OVERCAME THE INKANS WERE AS BAD IF NOT WORSE. THE MALE DEFECT IS NOT BOUND BY ANY CREED OR IDEOLOGY.

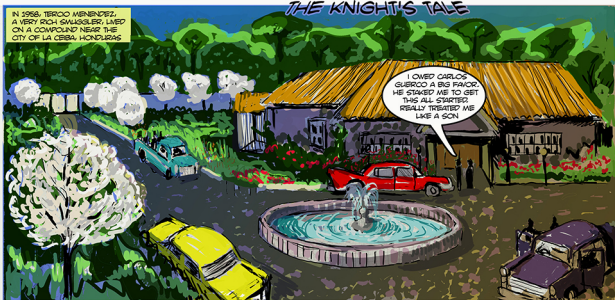
MEN ARE STILL IN CONTROL OF MOST FACETS OF LIFE TODAY. THEIR TENDENCY TO EXERT POWER IS A CONSTANT FOR US ALL. THAT IS MY TALE. MAKE OF IT WHAT YOU WILL.



THE END



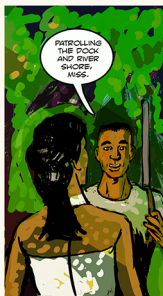
IN 1956, TERCO MENENDEZ, A VERY RICH SMUGGLER, LIVED ON A COMPOUND NEAR THE CITY OF LA CEBIA, HONDURAS





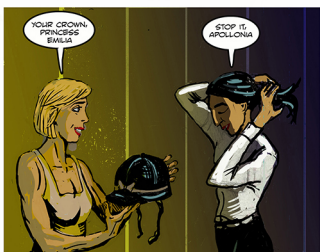






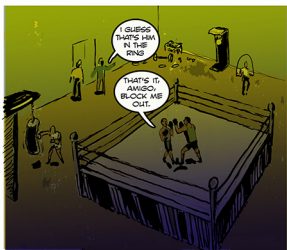






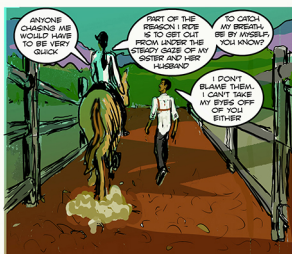










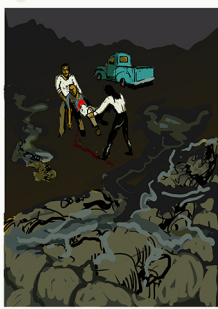








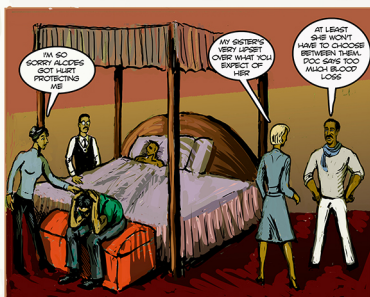


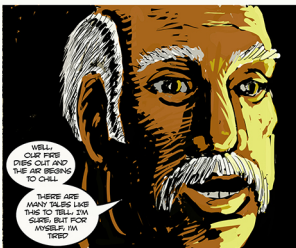












# THE TWO SPIRIT'S TALE



CHARLEY HAD ITS DAY AND MAKES FOR A TIDY ENDING, BUT IT'S CAUSED AS MUCH HARM AS IT'S RESCUED DAMSELS IN DISTRESS

OH COME NOW SENORITA ER SENOR UMM I DON'T WISH TO OFFEND BUT I'M NOT SURE WHICH YOU ...



IF YOU PREFER THAT I DIDN'T, SENOR --



NO NO, GO AHEAD PLEASE, IT'S LATE AND I'M A BIT CRANKY

AS YOU WISH

MY TALE IS ABOUT A YOUNG WOMAN LEADING A DOUBLE LIFE



ONE IS A LIFE SHE'S BEEN FORCED INTO AND JUST MUDDLES ALONG IN.

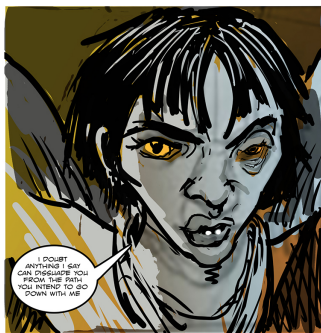


THE OTHER IS A LIFE WHERE SHE EXCELLS

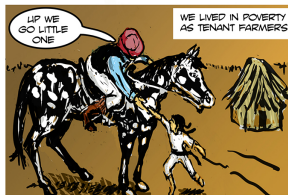
IT STARTS IN THE MEXICO CITY OF THE 1650S WHEN MEXICO WAS STILL PART OF THE DOMINION OF SPAIN



YOLOTLI CALDERON, YOU MUST FOREWITH CONFESS TO YOUR WITCHERY AND COLLABORATION WITH SINISTER AND OTHERWORDLY FORCES.



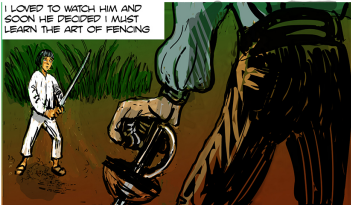




PAPA HAD BEEN A CAPTAIN DURING THE PEASANTS REBELLION AND STILL PRACTICED HIS FENCING



I LOVED TO WATCH HIM AND SOON HE DECIDED I MUST LEARN THE ART OF FENCING



I LEARNED QUICKLY AND GOT BETTER, BUT HE WAS A DEMANDING TASK MASTER



BY THE TIME I TURNED 13, I WAS BESTING HIM REGULARLY BUT THAT ONLY GAVE HIM PLEASURE



HE OFTEN TOOK ME WITH HIM ON COLLECTION RIDES TO HIS TENANTS. IT WAS HARD TO SEE HOW POOR THEY WERE, KNOWING THAT I HAD COME FROM THE SAME LIFE.



THE DROUGHT SENOR. I'LL HAVE IT ALL NEXT MONTH

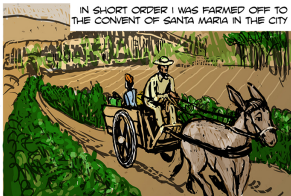




WHEN I WAS 15, MY FATHER DIED OF THE POX, PROBABLY CONTRACTED ON HIS RENT COLLECTION VISITS



I, OF COURSE, HAD NO SAY IN THE MATTER



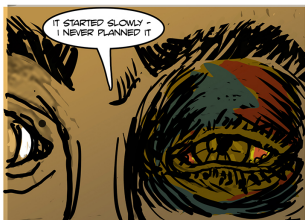
IN SHORT ORDER I WAS FARMED OFF TO THE CONVENT OF SANTA MARIA IN THE CITY



THE SISTERS SEEMED TO KNOW LITTLE OF WHAT TO MAKE OF ME, AS I DID OF THEM.



QUICKLY MY LIFE SETTLED INTO A SLOW, STEADY STREAM OF MASS AND PRAYER



THEY QUEUED UP AT A MUNICIPAL  
BUILDINGS TO PAY THEIR TAXES









