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# WORLDS WITHOUT MASTER

*Issue 10, November 2015*

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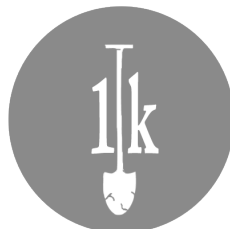
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## ISSUE 10, NOVEMBER 2015

### BECAUSE I CLASP THE CLOUDS AS MINE ..... 4 A tale by Osmond Arnesto.

*"The last road will be flanked by cannons pregnant with loads unfired. Wreaths of dahlias that smell of the breaths between marching orders will hang over their muzzles. It is the sign of wary peace, because even when armies are not champing at their borders, a nation will keep daggers in its boots."*

### THE HOARD OF YENGRA ..... 10 A tale by Epidiah Ravachol.

*"That silvery night as she watched the heroes bleed out and freeze upon the sea of sand, Yengra swam in a thrilling vertigo. The stars and moon cast a love her, she had never laid eyes upon anything so far away before. She sat there long enough to witness that, ever so slowly, they moved, arcing high across the sky. She could not discern if they fell toward or away from her, or if she fell with them toward some glass bowl at the bottom of the universe."*

### OH, THE BEATING DRUM! ..... 18 A comic by Bryant Paul Johnson.

*"Turns out sitting for an eternity is pretty bad for you, even when you're a god."*

### THE DREAD GEAS OF DUKE VULKU ..... 22 A game by Epidiah Ravachol.

*"You have long since freely given yourselves over to the Duke's sorcerous sway. His needs are your needs. His safety is your every thought. His command is as your own desire. You are precious to him and he is more so to you."*

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# BECAUSE I CLASP THE CLOUDS AS MINE

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*A tale by Osmond Arnesto*

*Illustrated by Wendy Martin*

The last road I will walk will be comprised of gemstones floating in a pink perfume haze; the floating dust will polish long jet or auburn strands of hair, if I have hair, and it will coat my pupils, if I have eyes. There will be stoic boulders floating in the void around the pathway, travelers who have lost their way or never had one to begin with. And there will be She. She will be before me, the Lady Hidden in the Dust, the Star Woman, with seven crowns around Her head and the world resting at Her feet above me. I will find Her beautiful because I always have. She will open Her mouth, and within I will watch every life I have been gifted to live. It will look like a broken window, splinters of the taste of charred lamb and the innocent sound of guitar strings plucked in the early after-morning cracking the glass. She will speak, and I will wake.

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My eyes adjust to the pink orange of dawn. The stars are as far away as one would expect them to be, but perhaps their slow march is not a thing that can be so easily perceived. I sit up with surprising ease and find myself in a huddle of sleeping figures, snores and coughs accompanied by the constant squeak of a wooden wheel on dry earth. This day's road is solid, packed down by the clouds overhead in rank and file. The dirt caked on their robes and the indecisive rattle of their breaths reveal I am riding with the impoverished. I do not mean to put myself above them. Of warmth,

protection, and decency, my own rags only provide me with the last. I wrap my arms around me to bar the cold as I stand and find my balance on the sleeping cart. My arms are lean, and there are fine brown hairs growing from the wiry musculature. I am a woman again, but younger.

"A flower rises in our garden." The voice, fragile and joyous all at once, comes from an elderly woman with mist hair and a corn cob nose. "Be wary of the greedy hand that may pluck you to decorate their hair."

"It is still spring for me, grandmother," I say.

"A fruit fallen loose from the tree, then."

"A seed looking for home."

"A seed must flourish in the soil before it can turn its leaves toward the sun." She spits over the side of the cart. A few more of its passengers are beginning to shake themselves awake. "Else, the plant will find itself hoary before its time."

"I'm taught that Wind will sometimes disperse the seeds himself." I ignore the chuckles that spring from her little joke. She turns to me then, a petrified tree remembering rain. "Some will bed in fallow fields and some will drop in the crevices between unlit ruins. The rest may never take root, but in doing so, are we not chasing the sun?"





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