

ROM DIRE WRAITHS



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...ONE SMALL STEP FOR DIRE WRAITH-KIND

WRITER: CHRIS RYALL

ARTISTS: LUCA PIZZARI, ANDREA PIZZARI, AND RON JOSEPH

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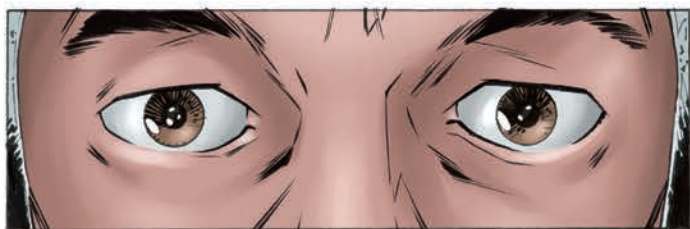
...ONE SMALL STEP FOR A SPACEKNIGHT

WRITER: CHRIS RYALL

ARTISTS: GUY DORIAN SR., SAL BUSCEMA,
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COLORIST: ROSS CAMPBELL

JULY 1969.



★ WITH THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD ON OUR SHOULDERS AND ALL EYES UPON US, WE LEFT THE PLANET EARTH BEHIND.

THE GRANDEST ADVENTURE OF ANYONE'S LIFETIME. ONE I WAS HAPPY TO TAKE ALONGSIDE *THESE TWO*.

IF THEY'D FINALLY ANSWER MY DAMNED QUESTION, THAT IS.

SO WAS IT *BRADBURY, ASIMOV, OR ELLISON?*

THIS AGAIN? *HERE?* YOU REALLY WANT *THIS* AS PART OF THE OFFICIAL RECORD?

I NEVER HEARD YOUR ANSWER, AND IT'S NOT LIKE WE DON'T HAVE SOME TIME TO KILL.

I JUST THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO SHARE WHERE WE FOUND OUR ORIGINAL INSPIRATION TO DO THIS. FLIGHTS OF FANCY IN BOOKS? MOVIES?

IF IT SHUTS YA UP, IT WASN'T BOOKS OR MOVIES—IT WAS MY *DADDY*.

HE ALWAYS TOLD ME SOMEDAY I'D BE CALLED ON TO *BEAT THE RUSSIANS*. AND HERE I AM.

AS FOR ME, IT'S SIMPLE, REALLY—

—I JUST WANTED TO FLY HIGHER THAN ANYONE ELSE.



THAT WAS THE CAPTAIN IN A NUTSHELL—NOT A BIG TALKER, BUT HE SURE DID HAVE A WAY WITH WORDS WHEN HE USED THEM.



WE WERE ON OUR WAY, IN CONTACT WITH HOUSTON BUT ALONE NOW. JUST THE THREE OF US IN ALL THE UNIVERSE.



★ BUT EVEN WHEN YOU'RE ALONE, THERE ALWAYS SEEMS TO BE *SOMEONE* LOOKING OUT FOR YOU.



ALL RIGHT, WE'VE GOT RADIO SILENCE NOW—I CUT THE OFFICIAL FEED. YOU CAN REACH OUT TO PRETTY BOY AND HIS CREW, NO ONE BACK HOME IS GONNA HEAR IT.

CLICK

OBLIGED.



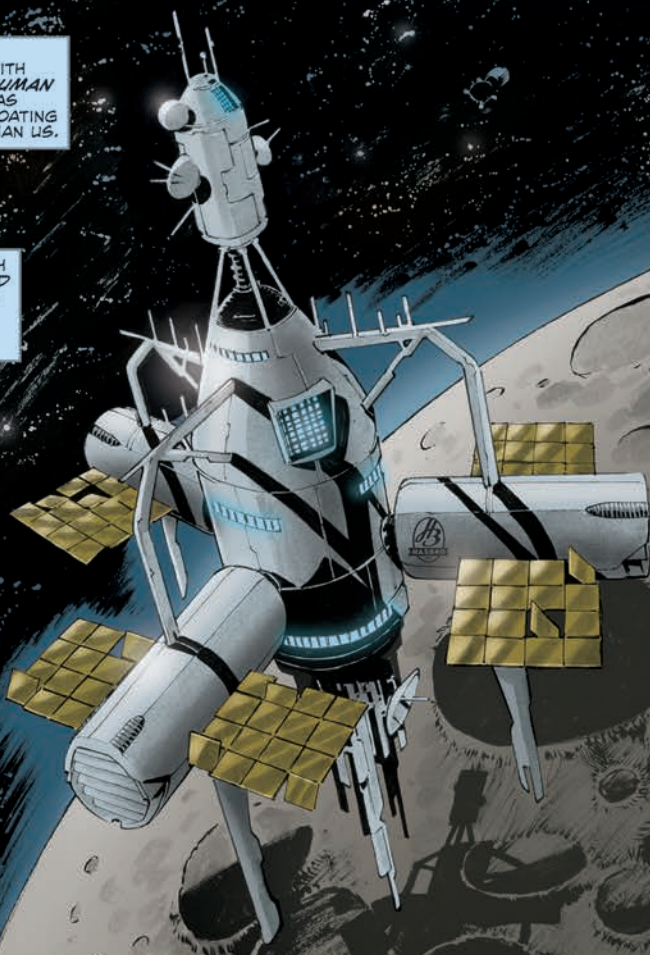
GRIFFIN, THIS IS COLUMBIA—WE'RE APPROACHING LUNAR ORBIT AND CLEAR TO TALK. DO YOU READ?

HANK, OL' BUDDY—ARE YOU THERE?

THAT NICKNAME, "GRIFFIN," A MYTHOLOGICAL BEAST AND ALSO THE CALL SIGN OF MAYBE THE MOST TOP-SECRET EXPERIMENT IN HUMAN HISTORY. FEELS RIGHT.

ADVENTURE-ONE, THE SATELLITE BASE TASKED WITH SECRETLY MONITORING *INHUMAN* THREATS ABOVE AS WELL AS BELOW. *THEY'VE* BEEN FLOATING UP HERE A LOT LONGER THAN US.

ME, I HOLD NO TRUCK WITH THE PURSUIT OF MYTHS AND MONSTERS. BUT SOMEHOW, AMONGST THIS UNKNOWN BLACKNESS, I'M GLAD TO HAVE THEIR SUPPORT.





THE CREW OF THE GRIFFIN READS YOU CLEAR, CAPTAIN. SANDRA AND I WELCOME YOU ALL TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

DR. HERMAN "HANK" ARMSTRONG
ADVENTURE-ONE
CO-CAPTAIN.

HELLO AGAIN, SIR. HOPE YOUR CO-PILOT HASN'T BEEN TOO *IRASCIBLE* THUS FAR.

AHH, HE REMAINS JUST IRASCIBLE ENOUGH. IT'S BEEN SMOOTH SAILING ALL AROUND. HOW'S BY YOU?

DR. SANDRA SHORE
ADVENTURE-ONE
CO-CAPTAIN.



WELL, THERE'S A TINY *SOMETHING* THAT MIGHT BE *NOTHING*.

GO ON...

WE'VE NOTICED SOME ENERGY FLUCTUATIONS THAT AREN'T IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZABLE.

POWERFUL SOLAR FLARE REFLECTING OFF THE LUNAR SURFACE, MOST LIKELY.



YOU KNOW, NO ONE EVER WORRIES UNTIL THEY'RE TOLD *NOT TO WORRY*.

IF *YOU* SAY IT'S FINE, SANDRA, THEN IT'S FINE.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
CAP'N BELIEVED IN MONSTERS EVEN LESS THAN I DID. BUT HE WAS TOO NICE TO SAY SO.
★ ★ ★ ★ ★



WE'RE HERE TO MONITOR ALL ACTIVITY, KNOWN AND UNKNOWN, TO ENSURE YOUR SAFE PASSAGE. WE'D BE REMISS NOT TO MENTION IT, BUT HAVE NO CONCERNS.

WE'RE HERE FOR YOU. THE CREW IS PREPPING OUR LANDER NOW.

WE'LL TOUCH DOWN AFTER YOU BOYS PERFORM YOUR DOG-AND-PONY FOR THE CROWD BACK HOME.

GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME. WE'LL SEE YOU SHORTLY. *COLUMBIA* SIGNING OFF.



UNFLAPPABLE, THOSE GUYS.

THEY REALLY ARE THE BEST OF US.

I'LL GO CHECK ON THE CREW'S PROGRESS. HOPEFULLY DODGER AND KIEV HAVEN'T KILLED EACH OTHER YET.



READY TO BE THE **SECOND** TEAM TO EVER LAND ON THAT ROCK?

FIRST TEAM TO DO IT WITHOUT PLAYING TO THE CAMERAS, YOU MEAN.

AWW, LET THE FLYBOYS DO THEIR PROPAGANDA WORK. ME, I'M HAPPY TO BE ABLE TO DIG IN WITHOUT THE WORLD WATCHING.

THERE IS MUCH TO LEARN, BUT ALSO PERHAPS MUCH TO FEAR. THAT'S WHY WE DO THIS AS A TEAM.

DR. JAMES "DODGER" BRIGHTSIDE
ENGINEER AND SHIP-BUILDER.

DR. ELMO "SCALPEL" AUBREYSON
ARCHAEOLOGIST AND MECHANIC.

DR. MARTIN "MIXMASTER" FLANNERY
CHEMIST.

COLONEL ANATOLI "ARSENAL" KIEV
HEAD OF MILITARY PROCEDURES.

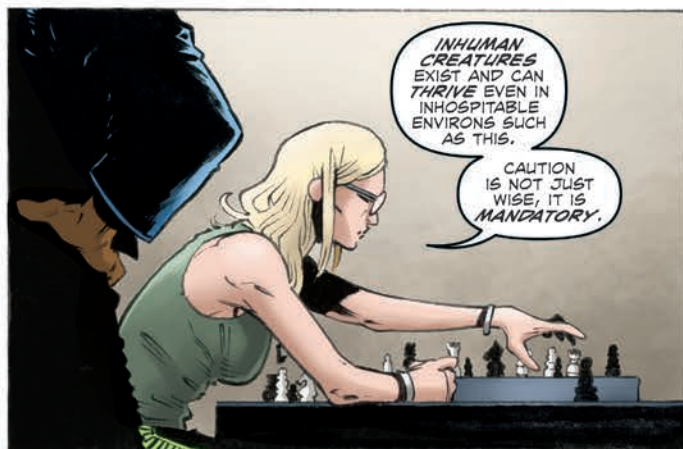


A CALL FOR TEAMWORK FROM THE PERSON PLAYING CHESS ALONE IN THE DARK, HOW APPROPRIOS.



I THOUGHT WE ALL AGREED TO KEEP AN OPEN MIND, BUT AVOID ANY "FEAR" TALK.

NO. YOU ALL AGREED, NOT ME. I KNOW WHAT I SAW DURING "OPERATION: SUBTERRANEA."



INHUMAN CREATURES EXIST AND CAN THRIVE EVEN IN INHOSPITABLE ENVIRONS SUCH AS THIS.

CAUTION IS NOT JUST WISE, IT IS MANDATORY.

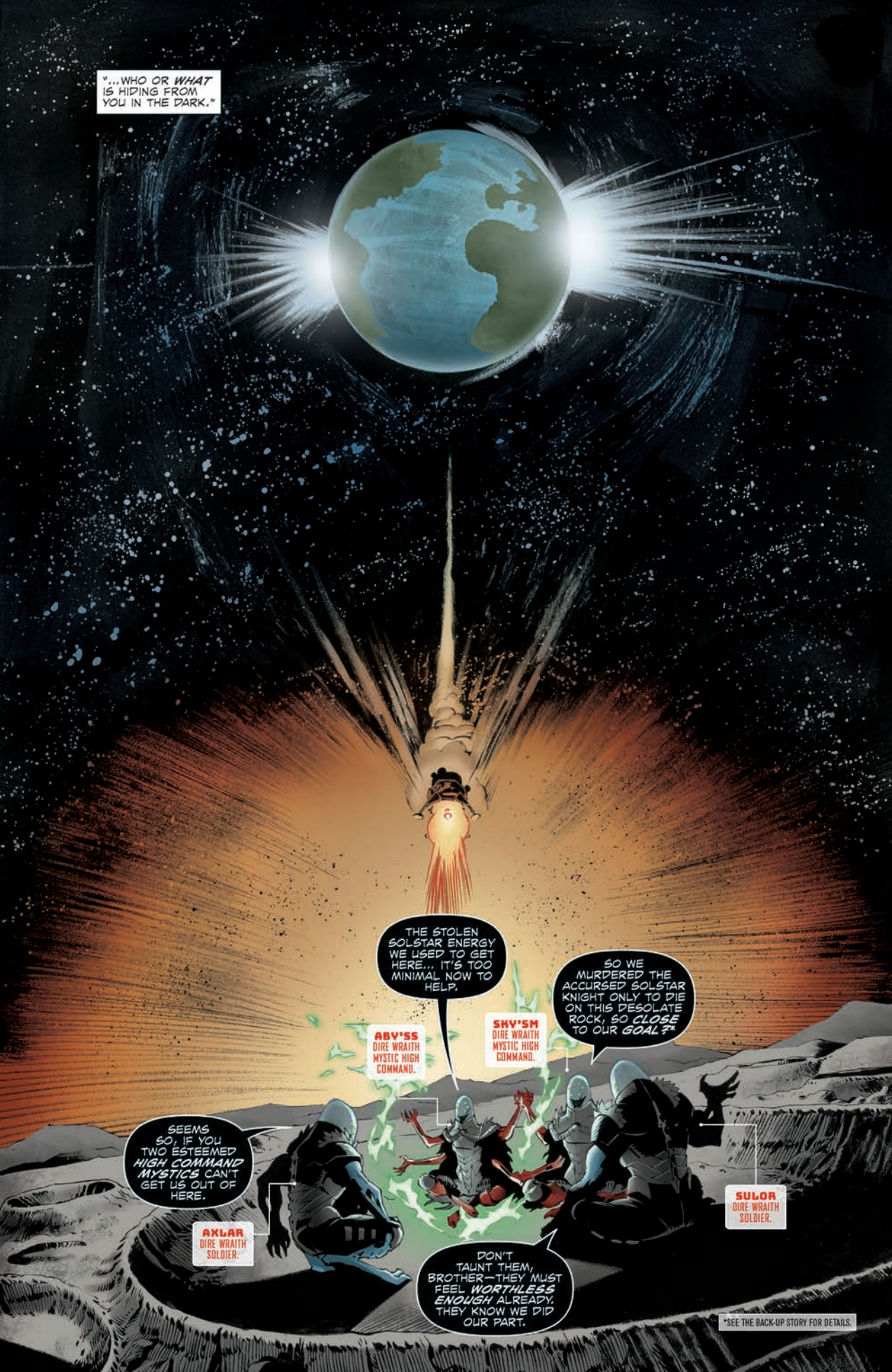


AH YES, THE OLD "I SAW UNDERGROUND MONSTERS BACK IN MOTHER RUSSIA BUT MY COMRADES WON'T LET ME FURNISH PROOF TO YOU AMERICANS" LINE. I'M NOT CONVINCED.

BUT I DO AGREE THAT CAUTION IS IMPORTANT. TRUST, EVEN MORESO.

BECAUSE YOU JUST NEVER KNOW...

"...WHO OR WHAT
IS HIDING FROM
YOU IN THE DARK."



THE STOLEN
SOLSTAR ENERGY
WE USED TO GET
HERE... IT'S TOO
MINIMAL NOW TO
HELP.

ABY'SS
DIRE WRAITH
MYSTIC HIGH
COMMAND.

SKY'SM
DIRE WRAITH
MYSTIC HIGH
COMMAND.

SO WE
MURDERED THE
ACCURSED SOLSTAR
KNIGHT ONLY TO DIE
ON THIS DESOLATE
ROCK, SO CLOSE
TO OUR GOAL?

SEEMS
SO, IF YOU
TWO ESTEEMED
HIGH COMMAND
MYSTICS CAN'T
GET US OUT OF
HERE.

AXLAR
DIRE WRAITH
SOLDIER.

DON'T
TAUNT THEM,
BROTHER—THEY MUST
FEEL *WORTHLESS*
ENOUGH ALREADY.
THEY KNOW WE DID
OUR PART.

SULOR
DIRE WRAITH
SOLDIER.

*SEE THE BACK-UP STORY FOR DETAILS.