

FORESHADOWS

FORESHADOWS: THE GHOSTS OF ZERO EXCERPTS FROM SELECT STORIES

* * * * *

The creature opened its eyes, waking from daytime dormancy.

The western horizon drifted slowly away from its star, a burning sphere of purest white which the Saharan atmosphere now rendered in shades of red, orange, and savage amber. Spectroscopic eyes perceived a wreath of ionized gas around the star. Its mere existence promised a baleful fate to all planets in proximity.

But the extinction of human life would surely come first.

The creature lifted its head and watched the star a moment longer, soaking in the rays of ever-present ultraviolet before the solar shape melted from sight. The creature had come to think of it as the Golden One, like one of Ayn Rand's anthemic protagonists, because it was fond of the star's Earthen hue.

A healthy sun—but a damaged sunset.

And sunrise was much the same.

From its perch atop the highest casing stone, the creature turned its gaze to the southeast, where the head of Khafre stared east across the dry plateau. The effigy had been reconstructed, piece by piece, its olfactory sensor now as intact as the pharaoh's more than four millennia ago. The leonine king now surveyed a realm transmuted, if not reborn: Cairo, city of voltaic light, brighter within than without.

Like many in this world.

excerpt from "Geist Anthropic 1:4" by [Jeff LaSala](#), music by [Michelangelo](#) and [Dylan Leeds](#)

* * * * *

The bullets hit before Marco even heard the sound of the guns that fired them. The first ones slammed into the back of his shoulder like hot wires as he ran, only heavier. The impact almost knocked him down. He managed—in his mind at least—to take a couple more long, terrified steps before more wires lanced through him. His legs went numb and stopped working. Marco did a face plant onto the hard tile floor. The fall knocked the wind out of him. Adrenalin and terror kept him going, dragging him along on hands and elbows and a slick trail of his own blood. His tie, caught under his chest, pulled at his neck with every movement.

You got greedy, Marco. They were waiting for you.

excerpt from "Too Much Is Never Enough" by [Don Bassingthwaite](#), music [Bilian](#)

* * * * *

They call me Flash.

It started as mockery, jeering because my lame right side makes me limp, always dragging my right arm and leg behind me, half my body too wasted to keep up with the rest of me.

Watching me hurry across a small room is a hilarity of slow, stumbling clumsiness. "Flash" indeed.

It was my own brother who first started calling me Flash. He sang it, actually, chanting a song from an ancient movie that proclaimed me "savior of the universe!" He could never resist adding that line.

Until I killed him for it.

excerpt from "Best Served Flash-Frozen" by [Ed Greenwood](#), music by [Michelangelo](#) and [Thee Crumb](#)

* * * * *

"Whatayou got?"

I pulled my jacket open to show him.

"Lemme see," he said, eagerly.

I handed him the Glock and he gave me the needler to hold.

He turned the Glock over in his hands happily.

"Cold," he said. "Cold as the gun."

"Yeah," I said. "Cold."

I held his needler back out to him. He stared at it for a few seconds and just when I thought I was going to have to fight him for my gun, he handed it back and took his.

"What's the job?" he asked.

"Keep me alive."

He grinned. "I've done that before."

"Yeah," I said, "you have. Still armored?"

He banged his hand on his chest and said, "Mostly."
"Let's go, then."

excerpt from "**Cold As the Gun**" by [Robert J. Randisi](#), music by [Joshua Wentz](#)

* * * * *

The pink, stinging light came from inside dozens of artificial cherry blossom trees lining a concrete path. Intricately sculpted, their faux wood branches arched above my head in a too-symmetrical shape that nature would never have tolerated. The cold spring air carried a thick, chemically floral scent that came from a ventilation system installed beneath the path.

There hadn't been a living tree on this stretch of ground for over twenty years, not since the last of the Himalayan cedars died out. The re-creation of Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden angled away into the distance, the faux trees diminishing and eventually, blessedly, they stopped and revealed Tokyo Tower and the city lights. I didn't mind those artificial glows. They weren't pretending to be something else. Good old electric wonderland.

excerpt from "**Made in Brazil | Living in Japan**" by [Jaleigh Johnson](#), music by [Gene Pritsker](#) and [Bilian](#)