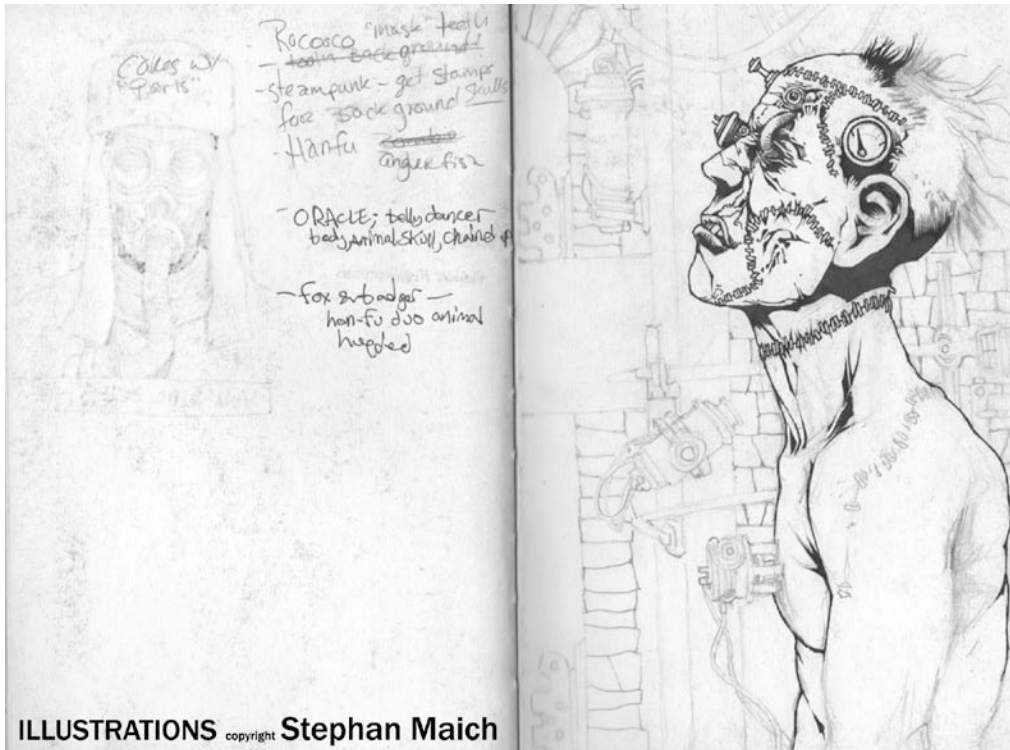


Ron Garmon



Headsman's Apology

Detainees in I-block weren't allowed to have music, so the vintage SanzaFuze device Jeezy took off a commodity trader the night before was a real find, or it would have been if he could get past the bourgie motherfucker's abysmal taste in music. "Who the *fuck*," the jailer pleaded meditatively to God as he slid a plastic key card into a metal slot for the first time in his shift, "is Red Sovine?"

God didn't answer, but a vaguely feminine, definitely prerecorded voice from the wall speaker cracked out the words "Ren-dall Double-you Hon-nicker. Detainee Class T. Processing complete. Proceed to Terminal Interview." The orderly up-thumbed to the turnkey far up the dank day-glo orange corridor and

began to pull the detainee out as soon as the lockbolts snapped open. The wall section gave slowly and smoothly, taking the object of the exercise out with it. Gowned, his head crated in a steel restraint, limbs and torso wrapped in IV tubes and leather straps, Honnicker had been secured to the wall hours before by the nightshift. Jeezy injected thiopental sodium into the drip mix of LSD-25 and Ibogaine. The turnkey went back to the videogame on his monitor and an attendant began to push the interviewee to the processing room, hooking phones into his ears and cranking Dave Dudley's "Six Days on the Road" before the subject started to babble. Before all the banks failed, Jeezy had been an orderly in a large hospital in Norfolk, Virginia and, after the Crackdown, homeless in Philly and glad to have missed a berth in a Carolina deathcamp. After brief, but conspicuous, service in the general shooting, the Revolution gave him a \$150,000 Worker's Exploitation Bonus, four new back teeth, a studio apartment in Terre Haute's Debs Tower and this low-stress version of his old job.

Pausing at the glass double doors leading to the green room to light a jay, Jeezy could see the interviewee's jaws working already. Like most subjects (and how they *hated* the term "Federal prisoner" around here), he was male- another white guy well into squishy middle age. *Fuck, this one looked like beef gone to tallow, with not enough muscle to hold up the old-skool white power tats on his massive guns. It's been a longish while since we'd had one of these jethros,* Jeezy thought, the interview base being mostly econocrime these days. He remembered being part of a Cadre team years back that flushed out a nest of them in the woods near Lynchburg- six fat starchy fucks who'd squatted in a limestone cave for months eating Gulf War I era MREs and awaiting orders that never came. They gave up when the first sniper round pulped their Grand Dragon's head all over the rocks.

Jeezy slid the wall section into a slotted space at the end of the corridor, locked the bolts into place, perched in a chair and resumed playing with his new toy when the red light on the wall-panel came on. Processing seldom took long.

Inside, Honnicker stopped talking and squinted at the pink shaft of light that was the only illumination in the room. Its source could've been six inches from his eyes or a thousand yards, but the voice clearing itself of obstruction seemed to come from inside his skull and its sudden appearance seared his neck with pain, as he briefly fought the head restraint. *Fuck it,* he thought and went back to relaxing. Life was too good at the present moment.

"You are Captain Honnicker, formerly of the Second West Virginia