

**(Retrofuture Rocky) by Shane Blay**

“FIGHT!!!”

The announcers voice rang out as Rock entered the flow state of violence. After 22 years of retirement, he still had it. *Dodge. Left foot pivot, defend, get inside, duck, kidney shot, left to head.* A bell rung somewhere and he could breathe, the crowds wail a dull buzz. Another bell rang, and that’s how it went.

Bell, dance. Bell. Breathe.

Rock, having no idea what round he was in, felt his body start to tire. They were trading blows, but nothing disabling. To this point, they were testing each other. *Have to find a weakness.* Then he saw it. *Left knee, surgery scar, make him change stances.* Rock stepped in faking left to the body, the man pivoted in defense and Rock launched his upper body with all he had forward, swinging around a perfect right hand straight to the temple of the opponent. *Heh, they’ll be talking about this shot for years.*

The blow connected, and Rock dropped to the floor. Dazed, he glanced down at his hand. The gloved mass was hanging limp from his forearm, bone bursting through the skin. Blood already pooling around his knees.

“I...” He didn’t have time to react as a shadow hurled itself at him. And rock was on his back, the man a blur above reigning down blows. BAM. Rock felt his jaw break. An elbow came down. THUD. Rock felt his right eye socket collapse. THUD THUD THUD. Before Rocks vision left him, he caught a glimpse of the mans face, the cheek where his perfect hit had connected. The tissue was torn back and underneath something shined under the Octagon’s flashing lights.

*Is that... metal?*

And all went black.

“He’s ready, Doctor.”

Pain. Rocks head swam. He tried to open his eye but blinding light forced the eye back closed.

“Begin prep for the convergence, and bring the other one out of stasis.”

Pain. All went black again.

—

“Comrades, consider the contract fulfilled. We must thank the Fighting Federation for arranging his death, and the drone fought and baited the old man perfectly. All these years comrades, the day has finally come. Za Zda-ro-vye.”

Rock heard light applause from every direction, as his head swam to make sense of anything. But he knew that voice, that accent. He willed his one good eye open to see Ivan Drago,

strapped to a table across from him. Hundreds of cables connected to his body, falling over table and running to...

*My body. Oh Fuck.*

Rock tried to move but was paralyzed, and for the first time since losing Adrienne, he felt real fear. He scanned the room searching for anything that could help, giant machinery everywhere, masked men in lab coats and giant goggles. Rock then noticed a large upright vat of liquid with a body inside. Large, well muscled, dark skin..

*Oh...my...god.*

Drago met his eye, thousands of lights from machinery blinking all around, "I will have what made you better, I win. Proceed Doctor."

### **(Fast & Furious 10,000 BC) by Micah Kinard**

Beringia was wet, a little too wet but Domtor had bigger problems. With a bag full of black glass and the pink shell to a now blown out saber, he slipped from shadow to shadow amongst the strange mud caves the people made here. Trumpet blasts from the Mammoth Watch clashed in the night air with the roars and bleats of scrambling mounts as the Watch chased down Domtor's fleeing rivals. He had left Mazdar, his own crimson Smilodon, in an abandoned stable scouted days before. She knew the drill, he'd come back for her in the morning, but for now he had to vanish. Domtor's thoughts ceased as thunderous foot falls shook the earth around him with encroaching doom. A watchman atop a towering black and white Woolly turned toward him and sauntered near. Domtor flicked up his hide cloak to cover the telling hair forsaken pate they'd be spying and donned a relaxed demeanor as the shaggy titan patrolled by.

It worked.

The Mammoth stopped and turned as the watchman howled, "DOMMTOORR!"

It didn't work.

The Woolly let loose a sonic blast that stunned Domtor jolting his only option to instinctual presence... RUN.

He burst into prey-like speed, darting left and right through the mud wall maze of the settlement. If he could just make it to the tree line, he could wait out the night... but where was his pack?! They had to be looking for him unless... he prayed the moons blessing on them as he fled, expecting the worst.

Domtor rounded the last turn to the tree line and frantically skid to a stop.

"DOMMMTOOORRR!" Screamed the woolly's rider as the two towered between the now

gasping Domtor and his freedom.

Another trumpet blast slammed him from behind in near concussive volume.

He turned. He turned again. Flashbacks of his 2 years in slavery under the Watchmen's whip invaded his mind as inevitability sank in.

He was surrounded...

The whoolys began to close their distance when, "DOM!" A voice barked from the distance, "DOM, GET ON!" the voice now impossibly closer, "NOOOOWWW!!" An emerald saber-cat carried the voice, soaring from the rooftop over his head and landing beside in a snarled halt.

He couldn't believe his eyes, it was the same rider who almost bested him that very night, and the same saber who's pink shell now weighed in his purse, "Bricon??"

"GET ON, NOW!" The man prodded.

Domtor mounted the green beast and the the three bounded through the legs of the shaggy giant's and into the tree line.

They were safe.

A while later Bricon dropped Domtor off at his cave where his worries were traded for rage when he found his pack in feasting revelry.

He and Bricon entered to the great surprise of his brothers. "DOMTOR! You live! But... how dare you bring the buster known as Bricon here!"

Domtor tore the gourd bottle from his brothers hand and roared, "While you reveled, THE BUSTER kept me out of rope cuffs!"

### **The Ballad of Baxon Reed and the Drowned Quartet by Ben Orthey**

Kaira counts us in

Clack

Bow against her cello

Clack

Four heads nod together

Clack

Eight ears hear the score

Clack

Melody rips through the air like lemon zest

Dancing flames on ultraviolet  
Passing hordes of panicked passengers slow to listen  
The chaos of the sinking ship is anchored for a moment  
None knows what happened down below  
The crew claims ice has breached the hull  
But no such glaciers would haunt this bay  
Either way, our fate is made  
We have no recourse but to play  
And on we carve our sacred hymn, silver ribbon in the wind  
Like honeydew and sunlight in the middle of the spring  
Like hammers in the belly of an ancient metal beast  
Like mourning bells, the morning your beloved is deceased  
When somewhere in the dark we see new ice begin to form  
The captain murmurs curses as the snow turns to a storm  
And jarring as a blade, as if to rip us from a dream  
Over all the crowds and we hear the captain's bloody scream

**DRAGON**

The masses erupt to madness  
Gouts of frost fanning over the horizon  
Fendry stands and scrambles away  
His lyre slams against the deck and barks out a twisted chord  
The trio is frozen  
Kaira gets on her feet and grabs her things  
The duo remains frozen  
I look to Lissa  
Eyes wide, fingers frigid on the lute  
A shadow grows in the sky  
What can be done?

Either way, our fate is made  
I close my eyes and start to play  
On I carve our sacred hymn, silver ribbon in the wind  
Like honeydew and starlight in the middle of the spring  
Like hammers in the belly of an ancient metal beast  
Like mourning bells, the morning your beloved is deceased

After several moments, Lissa's fingers start to move  
Every note a spark of warmth and every timbre smooth  
Kaira hears the chorus swell and turns back on her heels  
Reprises her position and resumes her haunting peal  
Our music reaches Fendry somewhere lost within the pack  
And in another minute he has fully traced his track  
He lifts his lyre from the floor to join within the tune  
What better end to four best friends than soundtracking their doom?

Senselessness around us as the ice dragon descends  
Splintering of wood and steel and bone, a frosted mess  
Gore and soot and ragged lumber, shattered casks of rum  
The dragon's beating wings become the beating of our drum

Our wicked ballad crackles as his talons score the mast  
My violin stabs violent harmonies over the blasts  
Fury in his orbit, iron pikes within his jaw  
A blur of chaos and utter destruction  
Pounding, pounding  
The structure of the ship shifts wildly beneath us as it begins to tear asunder

BOOM!

Steadying my tempo, I take a moment's rest

BOOM!

Lift my eyes to see the beast ahead prepare his breath

BOOM!

And strike the final chord upon the moment of my death

**(Retrofuture Rocky) by Shae Walters**

INT. BEDROOM - 5AM ALARM

A.I.

Good morning Rocky.

We see a holographic face on a small machine. The camera tilts down to see ROCKY, sitting up in his bed wearing a grey henley, tired but pushing through to wake up.

NEWS A.I.

Today in the forecast, another foggy day with smog in the air. Face coverings are recommended for those being out for extended periods throughout the day.

Rocky lifts himself up and makes his way to the Food Atom Generator across from his bed. He hits a holographic button on the machine. It glows, with dozens of food options. He swipes to "Protein." Then to "Egg." Then to "Raw." Quantity: "5." Five eggs emerges from the machine's plastic door. Rocky cracks the eggs into an old plastic cup and chugs them down as quickly as he can.

NEWS AI

Last night, a major sting in an underground boxing ring, utilizing android fighters, as our local police departments fight for safer entertainment practices with their AlphaAndroid initiative: Keeping Androids Safe. Rocky wipes his face and makes his way for the door.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA SLUMS - 5:15AM

The streets are dark and deserted. Not a car in site. Rocky does some stretches next to his apartment staircase. Then makes his way out of the alley way, swinging his arms. The camera widens to reveal truly no one in site. A man works on a news ticker hologram, a blue illuminated old paper boy who shouts the news. The boy flickers and glitches as the man tightens the base of the machine with a wrench. Rocky runs by, now in full stride. Rocky runs through an archway, by an old historic courthouse, flailing his arms. The sun starting to come up, he makes his way to the base of a staircase. He runs up, maintaining his pace, skipping every step. Near the end, he slows down, as he struggles to reach the top, gripping his side. The camera pans to see the historic building at the top painted in the sun's red beams. Rocky stops and turns. Out of breath, he coughs into his hands black oil. He limps down the stairs as we pan to

see the deserted Philadelphia city, with holograms spilled across the skyline, an old Benjamin Franklin monument in the foreground, and a sign that reads, “Making Humanity Work for Us. - Alpha Android Initiative.”

### **Fall of the Frost-Giant by Anna Marie Hamilton**

It was strange to think the Frost-Giant had once been the pride of the Northern Seas. A finely wrought, curved vessel, made of mountain ash-wood, the mighty frost-giant himself carved into the prow, coldly surveying the seas. The ship herself decked out in war drums and the skulls of its master’s enemies, but also with festive mistletoe for the wedding in far Greenland for which she had, once, set sail. And here she lay in ruins, prey to an iceberg.

Revna gasped in the cold air, thrashed at the merciless waves trying to stay afloat. She shouted appeals to Thor and Odin, to Frigg and Freya, and to all the unknown gods and goddesses of the deep, in hope she would escape with her life. She heard a splash next to her head. “Jaak?”

“Yes, my lady,” came his voice, weak, but still warm and playful as she had always known it.

“Surely we will die here,” Revna whispered, a tear forming, then freezing, on her cheek.

“We will not. Or, at least, you will not.”

“What do you mean?” Jaak pointed to a piece of floatsam, the fracked frost-giant prow. Revna swam towards it and grabbed hold. She saw that Jaak remained floating in the cold waves.

“Come on, dear. Take hold.”

“N-no,” replied Jaak. “A true warrior will give his life in defense of what he loves, and should we both take hold, we would both meet a watery death. No, my love, my princess—you take hold. Alone.”

“Jaak...” Revna was but seventeen winters old, yet had seen so much of life since she met Jaak. When she was near tears, knowing the ship’s journey to far Greenland would end with her forced to marry the vile chieftan Kaal, and that oars-boy Jaak had come to her aid, comforted her. When they stood together, him at her back, on the Frost-Giant’s prow, laughing with the salt sea splashing about them. When they lay together in the ship’s hold and he had promised her to set sail to the stars, a journey worthy of the great sagas. How she had discovered a warrior’s boldness to rescue him from the hold where he slept as the Frost-Giant sank. And now, here he was, barely floating in the water, his face pale, the life slowly draining from his limbs, as she desperately grasped the broken prow and stayed above water.

“You’ll live long, Revna,” he whispered. “Give birth to many brave warriors...and brave ladies, too. Live long for me.” And the waves swallowed him. Revna cried out, and through her tears, she could see it— The lights of a trading vessel approaching, coming to rescue her.