The Wilderness and the Wild Hero (Richard K. Morgan, *No Man's Land*, 2026)

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No Man's Land is the tenth novel by Richard K. Morgan (b. 1965, London), an author mainly known for his cyberpunk novels about tough hero Takeshi Kovacs (*Altered Carbon*, 2002; *Broken Angels*, 2003 and *Woken Furies*, 2005), novels that were the object of a Netflix adaptation (2018-2020). Morgan has also published the high-fantasy trilogy *A Land Fit For Heroes* (*The Steel Remains*, 2008; *The Cold Commands*, 2011; *The Dark Defiles*, 2014), and three SF thrillers: *Black Man* (*Thirteen* or *Th1rte3n* in the USA) and *Thin Air* (2018), which are set in the same universe, and *Market Forces* (2004). Morgan is so far the recipient of the Philip K. Dick Award, the John Campbell Award, the Arthur C. Clarke Award and the Gaylactic Spectrum Award.

In *No Man's Land*, a strange event known as the Unbinding causes trees to suddenly

become conquering giants overnight, quick to swallow the land and even its inhabitants. The Upbinding, which happens in 1918, causes WWI to suddenly stop, and forces the United Kingdom to necessarily reorganize many aspects of life. The threat posed by the invading trees is compounded with the sudden re-empowerment of the Fae people, in particular the aggressive Huldu, until then hidden lurking in the Forest. Morgan's protagonist, Duncan Silver, is a 31-year-old veteran who makes a living rescuing the human children that the Fae kidnap and replace with changelings. When the mother of four-year-old Mimi Rush requires Duncan's services, he stumbles upon dangerous power games among the Fae, and between them and a handful of treacherous humans.

This interview is focused on *No Man's Land*; see the bibliography for other interviews with Richard K. Morgan also by Sara Martín.

In the Acknowledgements you write "*No Man's Land* is something of a departure from previous books, a bit of a leap in the dark, and therefore a risk taken" (477) and then you thank "all those who facilitated this particular leap," beginning with the producer of the Netflix version of *Altered Carbon*, Laeta Kalogridis. You also refer to "the long delays and spasms of creative doubt" to thank next "all those readers who made it clear they would far rather have the book I wanted to write than one I felt constrained to put out, and encouraged me to take all the time I needed to produce the former rather than the latter." Can you tell us a bit more about how *Altered Carbon*, the TV series, freed you to write what you wanted and about the rather long gap between your previous novel, *Thin Air* (2018) and the new one?

Well, I don't suppose it will come as any surprise to anyone that, one way or another,

the Netflix series made me quite a lot of money. And that in turn took the pressure off needing to deliver books for financial reasons rather than love of the work. Just as well, as it turned out, because between working with the writers' room on season two of the show, helping out with a Kovacs comic-book series spin off and getting invited in as development director for a videogame start-up, I was pretty busy in the couple of years immediately after the show landed. Then, of course, there was Covid and Lockdown, a disruption which for me was made infinitely worse by two cases of cancer in the family and one resulting bereavement.

Perhaps not surprisingly, then, progress on the sequel to *Thin Air*, titled *Gone Machine*, got off to a painfully slow start. And I reacted to this in the worst possible way—I tried to force myself to bang the book out quick, just to get it delivered, and as a result drove it into a ditch instead. Where it stayed for quite some time, wheels churning up mud, going nowhere fast. I hovered over it like an expectant father over his nearly-due pregnant wife, I tried this and that, but try as I might, I could not get the damn thing out of that ditch.

It was about then that Duncan Silver showed up in my head with his burdens and his shotgun and his rage. And it seemed like the worst idea in the world to just abandon the book I had already half written, in order to set out on a new journey of dubious viability requiring a complete reset and a tonne of historical research into the bargain! But luckily, I had the financial security to be able to take the risk and, once I'd shown them a couple of sample chapters, I had my long suffering London and New York editors rooting for me too. That whole starving artist thing is for the birds, as far as I'm concerned. Financial security is a fantastic aid to great art— just so long as you hold your nerve!

Also in the Acknowledgements, you comment that you used two main sources to build the WWI background: *Somme Mud* (2008), the memoirs by Private Edward Lynch, and the website run by Chris Baker since 1996, *The Long, Long Trail* (https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/). What came first: the choice to write about WWI or these sources? I found, by the way, the disabled veterans Crammond (wounded at Gallipoli) and Arthur (a victim of horrendous weaponry) compelling presences in the novel.

Thank you! Yes, I'd already determined quite early on that *No Man's Land* would be set in the aftermath of WWI, albeit in a reality slightly altered from our own. Initially, that came from the shotgun/forest-Fae mash-up in the striking image I had that started it all off, and the scenes that followed from it. But the more I looked into the period, the more it struck me what a perfect setting for a fantasy this would be. So then of course, it was time to go and do some research. The *Long, Long Trail* website was a god-send, an early resource I stumbled on that saved me an enormous amount of time and energy and expense by stacking so much painstakingly gathered useful detail in one place. In a similar way, I stumbled on *Somme Mud* in my local branch of Waterstones one evening, and after about ten minutes browsing, realised this was all the eyewitness detail I was ever likely to need. I did look at some other books along the way as well, but really, these two were the making of Duncan's war.

You use diverse quotations to open the two parts of *No Man's Land* and its chapters, from authors as varied as Robert Frost, J. R. R. Tolkien, Lord Dunsany, W. B. Yeats... I'm especially interested in the passage from Raymond Chandler, "It's not a very fragrant world, but it is the world you live in" from "The Simple Art of Murder, an Essay." This continues with words you don't quote: "and certain writers with tough minds and a cool spirit of detachment can make very interesting and even amusing patterns out of it." Do you want to be seen as that kind of writer?

In all honesty, I have never worried much about what kind of writer I'm seen as, but for what it's worth, I've never thought of my writing process as possessing "a cool spirit of detachment." In fact, rather the opposite. I'm usually driven by quite strong emotions when I write—as perhaps you can tell... As to the "tough mind," well, I guess I tend to be quite resistant to easy options and cheery endings in my fiction. I have a quite puritanical attachment to *cost,* the idea that if anything is achieved by my protagonists, there will usually a heavy price to be paid for it. I like my readers to feel the heft of the world in my work. If all that makes me tough minded, well, okay. I'll wear it.

But really, the point of the quoted authors is that *they all lived through the period the story is set in.* Tolkien, Dunsany and Chandler all, famously, fought in the trenches of the First World War and were marked by their experiences. (Frost and Yeats didn't serve, but were active poets throughout the period and were still writing when the war ended). And of course, it seemed fitting that Chandler should be the opener for the second act of the book, named *Affairs of Men* and, in stark contrast with the darkly fantastical realm of Fae and Forest, dealing with the human world. *No Man's Land* is really themed around the collision of atavism and modernity, and who better spokesman for the second of those than the man who helped create the foundations of the modern crime novel?

A character tells the protagonist, Duncan, that Niels Bohr has just been awarded the Nobel Prize for physics, which means that the plot is set in the Autumn of 1922, but internal chronology suggests this is 1923, correct? How much research did you have to do to reflect life in that year? I see that you mention real-life events but also crack some jokes, such as supposing that Murnau made a version of *Carmilla*, and not of *Dracula*. Should we read *No Man's Land* as alternate history?

Yes, strictly speaking, the events of *No Man's Land* take place in 1923, so a year after Bohr received the prize. I did, in fact, do quite a lot of historical research along the way, but, yes, clearly, this version of 1923 is not ours! God knows what the last hundred years would have been like, if it were! (Perhaps not as nightmarish as what actually transpired in the twentieth century? Perhaps far worse?)

The nod to Murnau, apart from being a pointer to the alternate reality of the book, is a kind of *what-if?* for those readers who really know their horror genre roots. I threw it in along the way because it fitted the conversation Duncan and his sort of girlfriend Niamh are having. But part of the spark beyond that was the fact I knew the makers of *Nosferatu* had ripped off *Dracula* without buying the rights. So I wondered what would have happened if Murnau and his associates had had a little more respect for copyright and tried instead to buy the rights to Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, which, predating *Dracula* by a good twenty five years, might have been cheaper to option!

Erlsley, where your protagonist lives, is an imaginary city located at some point between Manchester and Sheffield, right?

Yes. Erlsley stands in roughly for Leeds and Bradford, occupies approximately the same space on a map of Britain. When I started work on the novel, I wasn't even sure if it would be set in our world at all. I liked the idea of it being some modern-era descendant of the land of Erl in Dunsany's *The King of Elfland's Daughter*, with Erlsley the capital, thus providing a continuity with that story, or maybe being a world in which Dunsany's book exists as a legend, or something....

Anyway, that didn't work out. As more of the themes and details of the story emerged, I could see that this really needed to be set firmly in the aftermath of WWI, if not exactly in our world, then in a very close analogue of it. But by then, I'd come up with a bunch of street detail I'd have needed to revise to fit the actual streets of Leeds, and I didn't feel like being unnecessarily constrained that way. So yeah—in this version of our world the Fae are known as the Huldu, Murnau made *Carmilla* instead of *Nosferatu*, and there's a big ass city in the north called Erlsley where Leeds ought to be! I played fast and loose with a few other geographical locations too. The villages of Dowgreave, Miller's Frith, Maltby Ferry and Kettley Cross are all invented as well.

The world of *No Man's Land* is conditioned by the Unbinding, a mysterious event by which potent storms help the trees (oak, yew, birch) grow very fast overnight to start their occupation of the land, with "monstrous atavistic versions of themselves by the legion" (29). Duncan refuses to accept a specific theory for the Unbinding, but it's suggested that WWI brings it on. Were you thinking of rewilding in any way? Are you expressing environmental concerns here?

You can find the spectre of environmental concern haunting the book, sure. But that wasn't a conscious decision on my part, just, I think, an echo of the times and fears we

are all living through. And of course, the overarching theme of modernity vs. atavism resounds in the fundamental clash between humans and Fae over the fate of the forests. As to the extent of the newly resurgent forest, we are told (fleetingly, in passing) that similar overwhelming regrowth events have occurred right across Europe—though there doesn't seem to have been any corresponding change in the New World.

One thing I did find fascinating about this period is the extent to which localism would still have been a core part of normal life in Britain, and indeed most other places too. The kind of travel we now take for granted—across continents, across oceans— simply was not available to ninety percent of the population, and even the ten percent who did travel such distances would have done so slowly. And of course, the eruption of the forests has made things even worse. So, in keeping with all this, the lens through which we view Duncan's adventures is very close focus indeed, with news from other lands extremely limited.

The Unbinding unbalances the relationship between the dominant humans and the Forest's Fae people, specifically the Huldu. As the trees reclaim human territory the Huldu grow more aggressive and increase the number of human children they have traditionally kidnapped and replaced with changelings (Duncan's job is to rescue them). All this alludes to myth and legends in British and Scandinavian folklore. I see traces of Tolkien, Dunsany and Arthur Machen there, but JK Rowling is also lurking in the background... Why did you grow interested in this type of fantasy?

As it is often the case with my books, I started with something very limited, a basic scene, almost not even that, just an image. A tired young man comes out of a forest as night falls and looks down at the lights of human habitation below. He's carrying a small child bundled up in a blanket in the crook of his arm, and a pump action shotgun across his back. That image jump-started the entire novel for me. Everything else, I mapped in later to justify the world I'd called into being. And yes, of course, there is a rich vein to be mined in the various myth bases—Anglo-Saxon, Norse, Celtic—and all the writers who've borrowed from them (though Rowling isn't in my list—I confess I have never read the Harry Potter books).

As to growing interested in all this, I think I always have been! Like a lot of SFF lovers, I read Tolkien as a kid, Dunsany as a teen. Elves and other Norse-derived mythic creatures were always kind of a staple of the fantasy genre for me. But none of it ever coalesced into anything of substance until I found that vital image.

The tree sprites or skogsra, play a minor but crucial role in the plot. Again, from what aspects of folklore did you take inspiration for them?

My starting point, near as I recall, was classical Greek dryads (or maybe the ones I read about in C.S. Lewis's Narnia books), but obviously that was completely out of keeping with the mythos I was mining, so I went looking for the dark equivalent in North Western Europe, and sure enough, there they were! Skogsra; Scandinavian tree sprites. Just what I needed! Though in *No Man's Land*, they've ended up, I think, rather far from their original form!

The trope of the kidnapped children and the changelings can be read from today's perspective as child abuse. Fae and humans have interbred, either by choice or under duress, but there are also hints in your

novel that the children are taken not only to become 'thralls' but also to be abused. The narrator reports that "The Huldu took small children, always had. As future iron thralls, as playthings, as the slaking of some momentary spite or thirst, a possessive passion-on-sight whim that seemed to manifest in mortals only among the truly deranged" (266). Is this reading of the Huldu correct?

Yes, the Huldu are evil—or, perhaps more accurately, amoral—motherfuckers. At the meta level, of course, they represent atavistic appetite and whim, the things that human civilization works so hard to moderate and restrain. At a reference level, I'm mining the darker end of the myth base, the Scandinavian ur-myths where the elves are pretty much gods and pretty terrifying with it. In the actual fiction of the book itself, I've tried to put all of that on the table, allow various characters to advance their own theories about what is and isn't true, and leave the reader to make their own connections, draw their own conclusions. I've never been very fond of fantasy that explains its magic or its gods and other horrors in great, encyclopedic detail, let alone moral terms because, well, what's the point? It's *magic*, right? It's mythology. Scary, unpredictable stuff. It doesn't have to —indeed, I feel, probably *shouldn't*—be conclusively understood or bound by human concerns.

Duncan Silver, your protagonist, is a WWI veteran in his early thirties who makes a living rescuing abducted children and who has a complex relationship, to say the least, with the Fae. Two matters. One is that you offer no description of Duncan, beyond a female character calling him "devilishly handsome." The second is that there seems to be a gap in his biography between his leaving boarding school and enlisting around age 22.

Is he educated beyond secondary school? At one point you show him falling asleep while reading TS Elliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915)…

Duncan was in every way the driving force behind the novel. I started writing *No Man's Land* cold, from that seed image I mentioned of him emerging from the forest at evening. At that point, I didn't know anything much about him or where he'd been. Then, as the book developed, so did he. But it was never my intention to fully flesh out his life and history. The book feeds you the details you need as you go along, and that's all you get! In fact, I'd say the essence of any good character development is that you always leave the audience wanting more—even though they can't have it. That leaves them to speculate and wonder and extrapolate, exactly as you would about a real person you'd met. It renders the character, to all intents and purposes, real in their mind.

As a side note, the Eliot thing was really by way of a joke. We always mock the things we love, right? And I've been a big fan of Eliot's poetry most of my life. But it has to be said, he is a dreary little motherfucker! And I'm quite keen on finding ways to distance myself from my protagonists where I can, practicing a little healthy detachment, I guess you could say. So having Duncan unable to stay awake reading one of my favourite poets just seemed like a fun thing to do. But it certainly wasn't intended to reflect on his level of education!

There are 34 mentions of the word 'rage' in the 474 pages of *No Man's Land*, almost all of them connected to Duncan. That's quite a lot… How's he different from your other raging heroes?

Well, he's obviously from the same stock as previous Morgan protagonists—military background and competences, combat trauma

and disillusion, rage against the way the world works and a general sense of alienation from the wider run of humanity. But I think Duncan is probably as close to a Hollywood White Hat hero as I've ever written (or am ever likely to write!). He is, in essence, a crusader—something none of my previous heroes have ever been.

A character tells Duncan "You are oriented firmly toward the feminine, that much is clear. You reek of it, in fact" (294). This connects him with other male protagonists in your novels, who are ultra-masculine but at the same time oppose male power. In *No Man's Land*, Duncan's enemies are all violent males, both human and Huldu, whereas some of his allies, also on both sides, are female. Fae queen Mebhuranon, in particular, a truly powerful female, plays a decisive role in Duncan's confrontations with the males who abuse power.

I think that last isn't accurate, to be honest. Most of Duncan's allies are, in fact, male—Garner, Crammond, Arthur, Mikey Collier, and of course Viscount Savin. And while Mebhuranon is certainly *ambiguous* in her attitude to Duncan, she is not his friend nor anything close to it. Any alliance she makes with him is very much a political compromise born of necessity. She has an agenda, and intends to see it through, whatever the cost.

The comment about Duncan being oriented towards the feminine, on the other hand, yes, that's fair comment. Duncan is very much a man who likes women (as opposed to just wanting to fuck them—though, of course, that too...). I would like to feel that's not completely outlandish, that there are a fair number of men out there like that, would like to feel, in fact, that I am one myself! But that said, there are some fairly strong and —I hope—fairly clear

reasons why Duncan particularly has ended up that way, and we get to see them unfold as the plot thickens....

In the world on *No Man's Land* a number of post-Blavatsky spiritual currents have bloomed, following the mysterious Unbinding. This has given witches a public presence they don't have today, though "Like the suffragettes, like the upstart women entering universities in the closing decades of the last century, witches were tolerated... just about" (74, original ellipsis). You have two appealing secondary characters who are witches, Sal and Annie. The later comments on the problems of training boys for the task. This reminded me of the witches in Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels and I was wondering whether they were a reference for you.

No, I am in fact scandalously under-read in Pratchett—just *Mort* and one other (*Guards Guards!*, maybe? I don't remember.) So his witches have passed me by. In *No Man's Land*, Sal and Annie are just an attempt to humanise and to some extent modernise all the old witch tropes in the myth-base—while also giving respectful space to the idea that sex and sexuality are not simply the preserve of young and beautiful women. As with elf tropes, witches have always been drenched in sexual power and significance, sometimes suppressed or symbolic, sometimes overt. It seemed only fair to bring that all the way out in the wash.

I notice that, like in your other novels, the women initiate sex, and your protagonist has diverse satisfactory encounters with different women. I fail to understand, however, why sex with Belle d'Or is presented so negatively. There is really no obligation on Duncan's side to have sex with her, and the scene reads as if he has allowed himself to be raped in

exchange for Belle offering him a temporary refuge in her brothel… bit ugly, poor woman!

Well, I think Duncan probably *is* obliged, more or less, to entertain his hostess as best he can, out of politeness if nothing else. And he can't be expected to get on well in bed with everyone, can he? That would be a little too fantasy-like. I prefer a more anchored approach to these things. There is plenty of rubbish sex in the world, sex we probably shouldn't have had, sex that didn't work out especially well. We've probably all had such experiences, and in many of those cases it likely wasn't anyone in particular's fault either. Just compatibility issues, or wrong time, wrong place, or a headache or other pressing concerns.

Truth is, I don't see Belle as a negative character at all. She's just someone whose wants and needs and agenda don't happen to align with our hero's, in or out of bed. She's inspired, by the way, at least in part by the real-life night club manager and businesswoman Kate Meyrick, who is contemporary with the story and actually gets a mention at one point in the book. A remarkable woman, Meyrick—as I like to imagine Belle would be too. In fact, once Belle and Duncan have decided to call it quits and not have sex anymore, they actually get along quite well—and maybe there's a lesson in that for us all! We never get to know Belle especially well—she is after all, a minor character —but by the end, we do at least have a sense of what makes her tick, not to mention some possible hints as to why she drinks and does so much cocaine.

Duncan usurps quite accidentally the identity of his superior in the trenches, Captain Da Silva, when this man is killed in action. Duncan subsequently becomes (a false) Captain Da Silva, and is demobbed as Major Da Silva. Later, the man who forges his new identity papers suggests that Silver, like the pirate in *Treasure Island*, is a less conspicuous name. Duncan admires Da Silva, "the kindly Welsh officer who cared for him in the dugout" (304), to the point that he wishes he were this other man. Ultimately, though, Duncan concludes that it takes some combination of his own personality and Da Silva's "to live on" (304). Could you comment on this merger?

I always knew that Duncan would need to have a shrouded past. Some of that is for obvious reasons of plot, but it also speaks to the way in which the upheaval of war dislocates everything at both societal and personal level. Men come home changed, traumatised, unsure of who they are, who they've become, maybe who they ever were. I wanted Duncan's experience to reflect that. The meeting with da Silva is fortuitous, in more ways than one, but one of those ways is that it gives Duncan an opportunity to repudiate, or at least attempt to balance out, the worst excesses of what he's done during the war. At the same time, he's not naïve. He knows, like Chandler, that *it is not a very fragrant world* and worse still, that the Huldu are out there, the Forests grown back and new horrors already unfolding. All of which means he can't simply abandon his previous savagery, if he plans to survive.

Faery queen Mebhuranon insists that "We come bearing gifts, Duncan! We bring you the roots of being, the ancient swooping rise and fall, the gut deep depth of dark joy and abandonment, the cravings you could never feed with all your dreams of measuring and mastery and mind" (190), and cannot understand why humans rejects those gifts. I

see here a shadow of the alien overlords here, a bit of the Borg queen in Meb...

I'm not familiar with the Borg first hand, I'm afraid—my last real engagement with the *Star Trek* universe was *The Voyage Home* (1986), and I never saw any of the successor TV shows, only the original series, so I can't comment on that similarity. But Meb is not threatening overlordship. She's just delineating an existing trend within humans, as she sees it. WWI was a critical moment in Western civilisation, because it shattered the previous spirit of the age. It proved the limits of the Victorian Dream. Far from Man's inevitable mastery over nature through science and discovery, what it showed was that mankind was not even capable of mastering himself. Science and technology, far from lifting humanity up to some kind of modernist heaven, had just provided four years of Hell on Earth, and piles of slaughtered corpses everywhere you looked. The call of the Forest and the Fae is a call back to a blissful ignorance and abandon that predates human attempts at civilisation. In the shockwave and trauma of the post-war, humans turn to superstition, religion, *anything at all* to reassure them of their place in the scheme of things. And Meb can smell all this a mile off, the way a wolf smells blood.

In the Acknowledgements, you thank your Krav Maga instructor Jack Gunton for having provided the tools you needed to imagine the choreography of the diverse fights Duncan is involved in. Violent fights are always part of your novels and I wonder whether you imagine them as they would happen in real life, or as they would be filmed in action movies?

Well, certainly not as they play out in action movies of the John Wick type—I'm not very interested in that lingering, almost balletic treatment of violence. I much prefer directors like Paul Greengrass who give you a jarring, partial sense of what's going on, but deliver with it a huge emotional punch. And in the end, that's what I'm after, the emotional impact of the fight. So, I need to know what the combat steps are, just as Greengrass needs his actors to actually go through the fight choreography, regardless of how that gets mixed later on. Jack's Krav instruction was invaluable in helping me get the choreography clear in my head, and he also very generously agreed to read through sections of the book and critique them from a fighter's point of view.

There are moments in *No Man's Land*, such as the episode in the church of Miller's Frith or the description of some WWI episodes which are horrific, yet this is not a horror novel. Did you ever consider increasing its horror elements?

Not really. I knew there would have to be some pretty dark, horrific things lurking in the forest because that is, after all, part of the point of the book. But I'm also a big fan of horror by elision and implication, so I didn't feel the need to go all in with the gore or nightmarish scenarios. It was enough to come up with (or borrow in from existing mythology) a handful of things, then leave the reader to imagine what other awful stuff there might be that we still haven't seen. More than anything, it's the sense that such terrors are abroad *in general* that matters. Similarly, with the more mundane horrors of the trenches—a few indicative examples suffice. Less, I think, is very much more where this kind of thing is concerned.

The witch Sal claims that "Duncan is Tyche-warded; I have him the full deck a week ago—luck in stealth, evasion, chance encounter, prowess. That ought to be enough" (371). To

what extent, then, is Duncan's performance against his enemies Sal's work?

Aha! Wouldn't you like to know! (I would too!) Duncan certainly does have quite a lot of luck in the book—heroes often do!—but you'll have to make up your own mind how much of that he owes to Sal and her magicking.

At one point, Duncan describes himself as a machine built to last, a consequence of his ill-treatment by the Huldu. Meb protests that she doesn't like machines and Duncan replies "I don't like being one. But what's done is done" (473). Could Duncan be your least human(e) hero?

I'm loath to force interpretation of my own work, you'll really need to take from that conversation what you yourself feel it means. But for me, what it highlights is the overarching clash between the two sides, Human and Huldu, modernity and the dark atavism that modernity attempts to drive out. The modern world, for better or worse, is a world of machines and structured processes, and perhaps in buying into modernity, we are allowing a certain mechanisation of ourselves in the process, cannot perhaps do it any other way. But this is in stark contrast to the way the Huldu see things. Mebhuranon doesn't like machines—doesn't understand them, has no use for them, could never trust them. For Duncan to call himself a machine must come across as a kind of sacrilege. Or maybe just the realisation of her worst fears about humans.

In any case, I don't see Duncan as any less human/humane than any of my other heroes. He's a man who has suffered massive trauma and is badly damaged as a result, but the same could easily be said of Takeshi Kovacs, Ringil Eskiath, Carl Marsalis or Hakan Veil. They're all emblematic of the human condition. We all pay a price for what we've been through, even if it's just the basic cost of living in an unjust and uncaring cosmos. What defines your humanity, for better or worse, is what you come to value in that cosmos, and whether you can keep fighting for it.

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