

## Gaunt Worlds

By Ron Koppelberger

He realized that some might say it was not wise to speak of gaunt worlds, lands and vistas of famine, savannahs of desert sand and tempests that trifle the will of man. Muscat Sapphire surveyed the rolling dunes and the scrap wood about the canvas city. The denizens were the poorest of the poor and thirsty for nourishment. Gaunt worlds in a desolate absolute, gaunt noonday through Sunday, gaunt eternities of parchment and bone, they were starved and their bellies spoke in slow rolling swells of hunger.

The amazing twilight-tide calyx, the chrysalis of a miracle in invocation, in the midst of cinders and dire dilemmas, sang the triumph of a world gone to the side of stars and cool winds. Ecstasies of haloed survival and amazements of wellspring rush afforded the chance at fate, the moment of life.

The baby had been covered with fat horseflies and gnats, dry, bone dry droplets of milk from his emaciated mother. Muscat had watched her pray as the child suckled her bosom, desperate for nourishment. In delicate tendrils a few stray spears of prismic light had touched the babies forehead, in the aura of a cross. The dunes, distant and dry, arid pools revealed a secret moments later. Just beyond the horizon a heard, a wild heard of bison, sent by the promise of a miracle. Vast and beyond customs of fear they entered the town of gaunt season as salvation and sustenance. Muscat kissed the child's forehead and later, after corralling the wealth of bison they would eat until they nearly burst.

It was a gaunt world, yet they were sated in spirit.

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