

REPLOX



ABSTRACT FOUNDATIONS

WRITTEN BY: DAVID STIEFEL



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Preface: The Account of a Discove Agent

I have seen a great many things puzzling in the world. Most though, are not a puzzle in the sense of the word I most vividly remember seeing one particular event. This is an agent here, and for public safety's sake; I'll remain anonymous. The company is Discove, Inc. It is a for-profit privately-run spy organization that coordinates itself with the U.S. government. The current base now is Washington, D.C. in 2119. We are yet waiting to move back to our old location. Discove's first location was top secret. We were in a town known as Triple Play City, TX.

This beautiful city was formed when a Navajo who owned a bridge building company teamed together with a Ms. Merinda, a powerful Mr. Friedburg, and a politician named Henry Maverick. These four business folk took a section along a body of water they named the Triple Play River. They built three massive townships along the two river edges and one on an island in the Triple Play River. The Triple Play empties into the Gulf of Mexico on one end. The one river edge they named Friedburg, the other Merinda Twp. The island was named Maverickville, and the three towns made up the city known as Triple Play.

On the northeast edge of Merinda there were some massive building structures in this ill-fated town. These were nicknamed the "SABS." This stood for "Super Apartments and Broadcasting Stations." While these were indeed inside the SABS, much more went on than merely that. Elderly care centers, social counseling centers, and scientific research also went on frequently in these buildings. The science was mostly

in the lower levels of the SABS, particularly #5, the farthest to the northeast.

We have spent much time trying to compile together evidence against a man whose influence would eventually lead to the failure of this splendid city. It has taken us much research for years to know of this information. One of *the* pioneers in the phenomenon known as abstra-matrim was the devout man of the scientific community, unique to the town. Dr. Robert Abstracadia had from the beginning been a firm believer in multiple dimensions and alternate universes. One day, he actually discovered one, along with a friend of his who would be quick to capitalize on the fact. They eventually found a way of accessing the "Abstra-matri" world freely, and constructed a doorway underground. One day though, twenty-five of the 50 explorers that went with them into the Abstra-matri world vanished, possibly into a time warp. When the remaining 27 explorers entered the Abstra-matri world, there they found a long-standing civilization in disrepair, and Robert Abstracadia soon became a position of leadership in the rebuilding of the otherworldly empire.

A criminal-in-disguise from the beginning, businessman and humanitarian Maxwell Hurtz was fascinated by the matrix formulas and Abstra-matri world that Dr. Abstracadia had discovered. He envied the control over those who had become bound to the matrices and their formulas in the Abstra-matri world. Underground beneath SABS #5 was the hidden portal between Triple Play and the A-M World. As it would appear from rare discovered writings now in Discover possession, Mr. Hurtz had soon assumed the role of Abstracadia's assistant emperor in this other world which came to exist even to Abstracadia's dismay. The soldiers and

monsters that they could make men and women into by binding them to an Abstra-matrix amazed both of them immensely. The one thing that interested them most though, was one of the few things they had yet to try: Abstra-matrices modeled after Rubik's puzzles. Hurtz and Abstracadia, at the time of deciding to venture into the possibilities of making Rubik's puzzle Abstra-matrices, were equal in knowledge of their virtual empire. In a criminal mind though, contentment is never reached, and never comes close to being reached until one has added all of the concrete world into one's empire. The beginnings of a power struggle were on.

We have come to believe firmly here at Discove that Hurtz, during one of their experiments, "accidentally" dropped a canister, letting off various poisonous gases in the process. The gases filled the room they were in, making it hard for anybody to see. Dr. Abstracadia didn't know what to think next. Hurtz had confiscated in secret a program to allow for mind control, so that he would now be sole emperor of the Abstra-matri world, with Abstracadia's whereabouts being nothing to question. For those who still questioned, he'd already planned various lies to cover his wayward tracks. Hurtz waited in the darkness of the gas-filled room, and sneaked behind the unsuspecting doctor. Hurtz had his gas mask on, but in a single swoop of betrayal removed Abstracadia's, leading him to an untimely death.

The Abstra-matri world was still a secret to many on the surface, even to Discove and the police, who knew nothing of its whereabouts. Hurtz hid inside of it, transforming his criminal regimes and Abstra-creatures alike into a common cult of his following. To look more fitting in his role of leader in this freakish, other-worldly empire, Hurtz fastened himself

well into an elaborate purple metallic suit, said by many to look like a wearable pinball machine. Even his head was covered with a helmet that made him seem all the more a machine rather than a man, as if hardly anything left of him were still human. Since nobody knew much of anything about where he was, it was assumed that he'd merely walked out of existence entirely.

Two years passed, and he resurfaced, as a curiosity known as Enjerié. His outstanding appearance made him even more recognizable than the old Maxwell Hurtz. Plus, he was praised for his so-called "good deeds" by the public in the concrete world twice as much now that he could be spotted more clearly. He began to plot running for mayor, as this would be a major step in trapping Triple Play in the Abstramatri world, and making it the new capital of his empire.

Nobody knew of his many criminal regimes in Triple Play, always funding him behind everyone's back. One of his most devout followers was a man named Don Garibbins. This man would be one of Enjerié's early big steps toward increased power through crime. Garibbins would be transformed into a sharp-as-a-metal-shaft stork monster named Miscarriage, who would be almost as difficult for us to track at first as Enjerié himself. We can be glad that for this and many more of Enjerié's attempts, we would have an awaiting superhero, a reluctant mistake of Enjerié's, named: Replox.

Part 1: A Carjacking in the Streets of Maverickville

Place: A parking lot to a theater, near the northwest edge of Maverickville.

"We're taking the keys!" hollered an armed man to the helpless teen couple.

The man was wearing a trench coat and a mask, and had several similarly dressed men with him. The man with the pistol was the only one of them actually armed. The skinny 16-year-old boy and his pop-diva-esque date were merely wanting to go to the movies on a fine day around the summertime in 2101. They had gone to the movies while it was still early, and now it was hardly into the afternoon before they were faced with the most terrifying moment of their lives so far as they could know. They just leaned back, breathless, against the beat-up red pick-up truck behind them.

The armed man seemed to be gazing each of them right in the eyes, indicating that he'd shoot either or both of them at any time if they were to move even the slightest bit. It didn't take much before the boy was soaking his Death Metal Skullman T-shirt with sweat, and the girl was doing the same to her excessive makeup. The armed man began to motion some of his companions, as if they were now immediately to take the boy's keys away and steal the turquoise car, leaving the two lovebirds stranded. Some men remained in the gray car not too far away, so this was indeed more than the work of amateur criminals.

Hiding inside the back of a blue pick-up not too many cars away from here was a peculiar-looking wolf. It appeared to have a body that alternated in triangle/diamond patterns of green and purple, green being the chief head color.

"Why is this theater always the car theft capital of the city?" the wolf remarked in his thoughts, "And I suppose Enjerié's in on this too. Turn *me* into a Rubik's snake! Oh well, I'd best save those two fashion-deprived youngsters from any harm while I'm here."

The wolf suddenly jumped into mid-air. When it landed, it had changed. The wolf was really Replox in disguise. He was a strange creature indeed. The police knew nothing about where he came from or where he might hide. They didn't know if he was friend or foe, but they would eye with wonder this shape-shifting walking pattern nonetheless.

"At least I don't use up too much cubiyon with these simple transformations," Replox thought to himself again.

He soon jumped, flipped, and cart-wheeled his way across several cars until he arrived at the spot where the carjacking was. The armed man, taken by surprise, fired what few shots he had in his gun direct at the gymnastic kaleidoscope heading his way. He missed every shot, firing nervously.

"Come on, lighten up, it's not like I'm carrying death-in-a-bag or somethin'!" Replox taunted the criminals as he landed safely on top of the dating boy's car.

"Get back, all of you! We'll leave our mark at least!" hollered the armed ringleader to the other four men, urging them to jump back into the car.

The men drove off as if the whole thing weren't even occurring. The rest of the theater seemed to be frozen in time, and with an out-stander like Replox, it was a wonder nobody stopped to notice what was happening. The lovebirds were still pasting themselves, as if death-chilled, to the side of the truck. All they could do was watch the events around them in fear.

"Get out of here, now!" Replox hollered at them, to get them out of the way.

"Sh...sh...sh...sure!" the girl shivered to announce. Her boyfriend soon followed her back inside the building, too shocked by the sight of Replox to decide whether to see another movie or call the cops.

Realizing that he'd been left behind by his comrades, the armed man now dropped his gun and attempted to fight Replox one on one. He attempted to jump on the car and swing his fist at the bizarre walking-talking puzzle.

"Hold still, will ya!?" the gunman hollered in frustration, taking another swing with his fist in vain.

"What, you think I'm just gonna *let* you turn me into a punching bag?"

Replox continued to jump around and fight, even getting a roundhouse kick in the guy's chin. The man

responded quickly by running to the right past all the cars and near a fence. After feeling a safe 14 ft. or so away, and gaining the feeling back in his jaw, he pulled something out of the pocket of his coat, a silvery metal plate of some sort that looked like a stork. It had taped to the back something resembling a miniature time bomb; and he hurled it immediately at Replox. It smashed the window of the couple's car, but failed to hit the heroic puzzle, who dodged much too quickly.

"What in the?" Replox interrogated at the stork-like image of the plate.

He didn't have to think long before he was blown back, as well as three or four feet high in the air. The car violently exploded, even setting a few others on fire! Replox felt himself hit the ground forcefully, but unhurt save a possible bruise from impact with the pavement. This damage was soon repaired by some of his cubiyon energy. (Soon enough he'd contemplate once more the nature of this, but was at the moment intent merely to be glad he had it.)

"Must be one of those new guys in town!" he thought to himself, "Only these guys would throw a stork-shaped bomb at anything. I wonder what the connection is... Who's their boss?"

Replox would have continued to think on about a possible connection between their boss and Enjerié, except for what would happen next...

"Whoa, what in...!?"

Replox heard a motor, and turned around in time to see the gray car return, ready to hit him head-on! He jumped out of the way just in time to get his left leg front-swiped by the top of the gray car, sending him flipping through the air and landing bruised even further away to the right of the now exploded car than he had been blown away from. He was now pretty dizzy from the fighting and the impacts to want to continue at this point. (Plus, he didn't want to risk making a wrong move and getting run over in the middle of a transformation!) Therefore, he quickly climbed the wooden red picket fence that blocked the theater parking lot from intruding the scenery of some nearby domestic homes. Landing in the backyard behind the bushes, Replox was glad that whoever owned the house apparently wasn't home. He'd had enough mess to put up with just getting knocked around in those few minutes at the parking lot.

The former gunman quickly hopped inside the car, and they zoomed away, lucky that no police cars pursued. Replox peeked through a hole in the fence to watch it all happen, and from there began to wonder if this Stork Gang was related to Enjerié.

"He seems like such a good man on TV," Replox thought to himself in the bushes about Enjerié, "So why would he send those guys, even through an indirect boss, to cause such mischief? And *why* did I have to be turned into *this*?"

He began staring at his hands, the dark purplish, glove-like curiosities that they were. He knew that whoever lived in that house wouldn't stay gone forever. It wasn't now so much a feeling of physical inability that kept Replox from returning to the scene of action and sticking with the police in

pinning down the criminals. Nor was it fear of them mis-associating him with them that kept him from going back and giving physical descriptions of them to the cops. Right now, he was suddenly feeling a tug of emotional inner torment. Memories began flooding his head, and he knew that he had to find somewhere to be alone.

Where better? He looked up and saw not too far away from the residential neighborhood a tall office building, one of his favorite places to visit the top of when he was seven. He had fond memories of the sightseeing he could have done then, back when he was still Kevin Mend. He remembered using his dad's binoculars, and looking into the distance towards Merinda with them while on top of that building. He could almost distinctly make out in the distance the rooftop of Crown-of-Life Lutheran Church, where his family attended almost every Sunday. Question now was, how best to *get* to that roof top. That was an easy one.

Just last week, Herbert Abstracadia, the brother of the dead Robert Abstracadia and also Replox's mentor and trainer, had allowed him to master twisting his snake matrix into just the right shape to make himself into a swan. Flying fast out of the yard, Replox wasted almost no time at all obtaining the top of the building, and then making himself half-human once more. The gray building top offered little more than a view, and the offices inside offered hardly even that. The old gray structure was little to brag about, but that didn't matter to Replox. Up here, the world would leave him alone. Even the traffic helicopters seemed not to notice him.

Thoughts of his beautiful fiancée, Anyce Hamilton, and of Herbert Abstracadia began filling his head. He bore

with those thoughts feelings of anguish and pity, mostly self-pity that his condition partially separated him from them, not to mention cutting him off from the rest of the human race.

Up here though, that all didn't matter, and his thoughts shifted back to a yesterday before he learned to cope with his condition, and a happier day before yesterday when his condition didn't even exist.

He wondered now how the mysterious Enjerié who had employed him in the SABS would so quickly become his secret enemy, and all time and space in his mind began to shift back to the events, both fond and tragic, of those days bygone.

Part 2: Flashback: Anyce

Place: Home of the Mend family, Abstrad Rd., Merinda Twp.

He remembered everything since the day after Christmas Day. He had been getting along well with his job as an elderly care taker in the Super Apartments and Broadcasting Stations Complexes of Merinda(More conveniently called "SABS.") (Actually, he was also a social worker for a while, but quit that aspect since many claimed he needed social advising himself for being too critical all the time.)

The massive SABS structures provided many more things than just what they claimed. Scientific research, humanitarian group headquarters locations, and hotels complete with lobbies were predominantly what the SABS

contained in addition to their namesakes. Kevin Mend, 23, was a little concerned that he was working for Enjerié, an obscure humanitarian disguise as what has been described as a “walking pinball machine.” He had just wakened up from a dream that dark, colder-than-usual night.

“That was weird,” he thought to himself, wiping the sweat off his forehead.

It was a bizarre nightmare, that he quickly shrugged off as incomprehensible. He knew little of the Abstra-matri world, and therefore knew not how tangible his nightmare could really be. In his dream, he was walking along a sidewalk in a blue winter wonderland, wearing an Eskimo outfit. He was accompanied by his long-time girlfriend, Anyce Hamilton, also in an Eskimo outfit.

They began talking, something intangible to the conscious mind, and suddenly stopped. She began to stare deep into his coffee-brown eyes, pulling back his hood to reveal sky-reaching straight black hair, and a look of total and complete enjoyment. She couldn’t easily hide from him though, her long strands of straight hair, half blonde and half brown. He looked deep into her blue-gray eyes, and prepared for a kiss. This wouldn’t happen though.

Right when he got to the good part, he saw in the dream also a Rubik’s snake, green and purple, suddenly twisting itself into the figure of a turtle. A huge suction began to envelop him, and shouting for help while Anyce screamed in horror, he felt himself being sucked inside the Rubik’s snake, leaving Anyce behind in sorrow...forever!

"I at least know I'm still here, and still around if Anyce needs me," he reassured himself now awake.

He was planning to go downstairs anyway, since he enjoyed the early morning hours before the sun came up. He wished to sit on the couch, by the tree, with it all lit up, and just gaze at it aimlessly, thinking about the future. He'd have a bit of a hard time this year though. He had invited Anyce to spend the Christmas week with his family. She agreed to, partly because of Kevin and partly because she didn't desire to be out-of-town, like her DJ dad Johnny B.

As Kevin descended the creaky, blue-painted wooden stairs of the Mend home in near-darkness, he continued thinking about Anyce. She was sleeping on the couch, or so he thought.

"Creeeaaaak!" went a stair as Kevin's left foot rest its weight upon it.

"Whoops!" he began thinking to himself, "That one always was noisy. I'll just have to be quieter, so nobody knows I'm awake."

He made a right turn from the stairs to the living room, with its dismal beige carpet in a room almost as dark as his bedroom upstairs. He figured that after turning on the lights of the tree, he'd make up for the fact that he couldn't sit on the couch. He'd sit on the floor, couch to his back, and stroke the sleeping Anyce's hair while staring at the tree.

Anyce had other plans though. She'd gone up to get something to drink from the fridge, and had already turned

the lights of the tree on. Kevin just watched, curious, and then sat down on the vacant couch. There, he thought to himself that Anyce had probably gotten up briefly to get something, and thought about their plans for their future.

They had for a long time desired this in mind:

1. Kevin would continue working in SABS Building #2, and earning money for them.
2. Anyce would finish her schooling at the Abridge Medical Academy in Friedburg, and be a full-time vet.
3. They'd marry sometime soon, and search for a place to live where they wouldn't share a roof with Either Hubert Mend or John B. Hamilton.
4. They wouldn't care which one of them was the major breadwinner of the household.
5. They'd have, perhaps, one or two kids, maybe even three.

These dreams and fantasies all wandered through Kevin's mind as he gazed at the tree. However, he realized that Anyce would be back soon, and began heading back up the stairs so as not to disturb her. That idea was soon to be put to rest. Right as he was about to turn to head upstairs, Anyce came walking by. She was wearing a pink nightgown, though not at all her favorite color, and a glass of milk about three-fourths finished. They collided almost instantly, and noticed each other within seconds.

"Oops!" Anyce blushed, trying hard to keep her voice down so she wouldn't wake anybody up, "I.....didn't see you there."

Kevin simultaneously also forged a smile, saying: "Hey, I was the one in the hurry, right?"

"Oh well, no harm done; no milk spilled, just almost," Anyce reassured him.

Kevin began to attempt excusing himself, and would have walked back upstairs, except for next...

"Hold on!" Anyce begged, forging a smile again, "I...need to talk with you."

"You sure?" Kevin responded.

"Let's go on the couch and discuss this," Anyce urged.

They began talking in length about everything previously mentioned about their lives and futures, and about what time they should be ready the next morning so the Mends could take her back to her home in Friedburg.

"Say, anything bugging you lately?" Kevin instigated the conversation.

"You know, I would've gone to Concrillia in Merinda rather than attend Abridge, but Concrillia doesn't offer programs for veterinarians."

"Yea, I know. I too have been disappointed with that place."

"Did you hear about that old pinball machine whack you work for?"

"Yea, what about him?" Kevin interrogated, preferring not to think about Enjerié at a time like this.

"Do you remember a few months ago, when those for-profit 'Discover' agents were interviewing us?"

"What a joke. I'm sure none of those rumors are true. Abstra-matri world? What tabloids are these guys reading?"

"Are you sure? I've heard of that performer Herbert Abstracadia. He's the brother of Robert Abstracadia, the man accredited with discovering the A-M world."

"Sure. Still, Enjerié's criminal underworld? Maybe, but he makes such a saint of himself in public, that I have doubts about those accusations."

"Just do the best you can working for him. If he does turn out to be a crook, you can always quit," Anyce reassured.

"I guess you're right. Where would I go? There aren't a whole lot of places around that train male gymnasts in this city."

"Don't worry, I'll take good care of you in that scenario, even if it would be hard to find you another job."

"Just promise me one thing," he suddenly threw in, turning philosophical.

"What?"

"In anything, never let my demise become your own."

"I'll try," she answered, not quite sure why he threw the sentence in.

(Really, the sentence was inspired by the dream, which still troubled Kevin even though outwardly he'd already dismissed it as nothing.)

"After all, my parents keep telling me that a man who dresses as a pinball machine is not somebody to be trusted."

"I hear Enjerié wants to run for mayor of Triple Play," Anyce added, changing the direction of the conversation away from the confusing philosophical question that went just a little out of her comfort zone.

"Good luck. He'll need plenty of it!" Kevin responded.

Although he still was unwilling to think that Enjerié was really as evil as Discove said him to be, even the skeptical Kevin would admit that chances seemed thin for Enjerié to be elected, particularly since the popular Mayor Ernest Thrum was running for re-election. After about five seconds or so, Anyce sat there silent, eyeing Kevin while he eyed the tree.

"Is that about it?" Kevin finally spoke up, wondering if she had anything more to say.

"How's about you find out?" she smiled out, heading towards him all the while.

Before Kevin could even react, she had him trapped in her lip lock. Finally, after about ten seconds, she let him go, and he took a quick gasp for air.

"You know I don't breathe through my nose easily!" he playfully scolded her.

"Sorry," she smiled at him, "I just couldn't resist!"

Kevin liked her devotion to him, but thought this was just a little too forward. What would they do with the next couple of months if Anyce started losing self-control now?

"This reminds me of something," Kevin responded, after having three or four seconds to think about it.

"What?" Anyce asked, curious as she sat up.

"I...think you know," Kevin forced out, shy about possibly making a fool of himself even though there was nobody awake in the house to overhear them.

"Actually, I think I do know," Anyce commented, being playfully snotty, "And you already know my answer is yes."

"Nuts!" Kevin bobbed his head in a sudden fit of frustration, "I forgot the ring upstairs in my room!"

"Tomorrow in the van will work," Anyce reassured him, "and besides, that way, your family will know it's official."

"Sure," Kevin responded, feeling a little shy about her comment.

"I think you should be getting back to bed now, before they wake up and notice us," Anyce spoke up, getting herself ready to go back to sleep.

"Sure, see you in the morning, princess!" Kevin smiled.

As she lay down on the couch, Anyce smiled back. Kevin headed back up the stairs, being careful to avoid the step that always did creak. Tomorrow would be a busier day for them than they could've imagined; but for now, they both slept, with Kevin hoping his horrific dream would remain only that—a dream.

Part 3: Flashback: Miscarriage and the Gangsters

Place: SABS #5 Charlen Hotel

"Absolutely!" a harsh voice whisper-shouted, "They're waiting for me in the lobby, I'll bring 'em in and get started! Signing off!"

The voice came from inside Room #233 of the Charlen Hotel. The room was entirely dark, except for the bright screen of a portable TV set on the white maple work desk. The speaker was none other than the leader of the Stork Gang, Don Garibbins.

His message was for none other than, sure enough, Enjerié. Garibbins was in on Enjerié's latest plan, which his gang would need carried out no later than the New Year's.

Garibbins was no longer recognizable by anybody, except perhaps Enjerié himself, who supervised his binding to the Meta-Stork abstra-matrix. As Miscarriage, Garibbins would always go about his way, seeming to insist to everybody that he meant business.

Enjerié and Miscarriage went back a bit of a ways. After Enjerié murdered Robert Abstracadia and took control of the Abstra-matri world, he knew that if he wanted all Earth dragged into it, he'd need funding. Maxwell Hurtz, the commanding businessman and assumed humanitarian personage behind the mechanical purple giant called Enjerié, knew exactly how.

Garibbins was indeed a zealot for Enjerié's cult, and didn't think twice about undergoing the operation to become a spiked, silvery bird warrior. Garibbins was already a big figure in a small mob, and becoming leader of Enjerié's underground Stork Gang to wreak financial havoc and terrorize Triple Play seemed to him fitting.

The thought of making sure none of it would trace back to Enjerié himself made for all the more excitement, and Miscarriage had been quite out-of-control for months at a time now. The gang had been so successful as that not even Miscarriage could be traced back to!

This time though, he'd have more than just petty fund-raising heists to pull off! As Miscarriage opened up his silvery briefcase in the near-total darkness, he removed a small, green wristband.

"Brufo, Smiley, Gordini, get in here!" he hollered into it.

The three men he needed finally responded, and the meeting was made official as soon as the lights of the room were turned on and the door was completely shut. Three well-hidden faces in trench coats began to stare intently at the yellow-eyed monstrosity they called their boss, waiting for the opening word.

"Here's the plan, men," Miscarriage began, "Our beloved leader, Enjerié, has finally decided that it's time."

"Uh, time for what, per se?" interrogated the ignorant Brufo.

"I don't know, allowing us to play the pinball game on his chest piece?" Smiley joked.

The three gangsters in the room with Miscarriage now began to laugh vehemently.

"Enough stupidity!" Miscarriage scolded them, pounding his fist with commanding force on the work desk.

He gathered just enough calm to speak, and began to speak to the now stoically quiet congregation of gangsters before him.

"Have any of you heard about the Rubik's puzzles?"

"You mean, our scientists have now figured out abstra-matrices for them?" Brufo asked.

"Yes!" Miscarriage responded, "This is our golden opportunity! For the whole past year, Enjerié has been planning for us, a full-time monster to send on this city! He has for decades been fascinated by Rubik's puzzles, and now, we have them! We can begin almost immediately on the process to make a snake matrix."

"What exactly good will that do?" Brufo felt compelled to interrogate.

"The snake matrix," Miscarriage answered, "is capable of allowing whoever is bound to it to be a shape shifter! He need only know how to twist the triangles, and he can become almost anything! Such a man would be a *powerful* tool in our arsenal!"

"Could it easily be any one of us?" Smiley asked, somehow sensing it a dumb question.

"No!" Miscarriage scolded back, "You are all too old, too fat, and too inexperienced with the qualities we need! We need somebody...somebody young, someone...who would make an excellent gymnast...someone who can learn his stuff well, and fast! We need somebody who can work alone *or* on a team."

"Someone who already works for Enjerié; but knows nothing about us?" Gordini attempted to add his own say.

Brufo and Smiley soon erupted with laughter at this suggestion.

Miscarriage understood that these men obviously weren't taking the situation seriously at all. Not a moment hesitating, he forced out his long claws, four for each hand, and pointed them at the men, as they now silently listened to his every word.

"You know what, Gordini, if you didn't sound so impudent and stupid when you said that, I'd give you half-credit for a genius!"

"It was only a suggestion," Gordini attempted at defending himself.

"True," Miscarriage reassured, "but you're absolutely right for a change!"

"What?" Brufo and Smiley almost hollered out.

"Yes! You see," Miscarriage continued, "that's *exactly* who we need! And I know *exactly* how we're going to pull it off!"

"How?" asked the three men intently.

They didn't like that they wouldn't directly have Miscarriage himself there to guide them in their mission, only at a distance through walkie-talkie, but they were at least reassured that the man who would be in charge of them on that mission could get it done, and without Miscarriage's unsightly threats.

This man, Helms Brigglit, was not only in the Stork Gang. He was also manager of staff for Enjerié in SABS #5.

He knew everybody that worked in the SABS by database file, and without even alerting Miscarriage that it was so, he had selected that the target for kidnapping, matriculating, and brainwash would indeed be: Kevin Mend!

Part 4: Flashback: Tragedy on the Maverick Bridge

Place: Maverickville, near the Maverick Bridge.

"Hey, arms to self!" Hemely argued.

"Not if I can help it!" Kevin argued back.

Kevin and Anyce sitting on seats opposite inside the van were playing all sorts of tricks and teasing Hemely, Kevin's little sister. Hemely had just about had enough of the trip, and hoped that it wouldn't be too much longer before Anyce was home again.

"Now now, easy on the little ones!" teased Tyler, Kevin's younger brother, defending Hemely.

"You stay out of this!" smiled Anyce back at him playfully.

"He's right, you know," Mrs. Mend interrupted.

"Ah, the holidays," Mr. Mend sighed to himself.

Had any of the playful group in the van known who else was going to cross the Maverick Bridge that morning, they'd've paid the extra money to take a ferry to Friedburg instead.

"What is it boss?" a gangster in a gray limo asked into the 2-way radio.

"You see that off-white van that just passed you?" the voice on the other end asked.

"Bingo!"

"And don't fail! The frogmen are waiting!" came the unmistakable voice of Miscarriage.

The crew in the van was about to learn first-hand just how ruthless Miscarriage and the Stork Gang could really be.

"What on earth!!!?" Mr. Mend hollered, "Hang tight everyone!"

He had just viewed the limo charging the van up the rear. THUD! The whole van shook. Kevin and Anyce went from poking Hemely to clutching each other tightly. Mrs. Mend held on to the roof handle on the shotgun side with all her might. Mr. Mend then tried every maneuver he could think of to lose the limo, all to no avail. Where was the rest of traffic!!!?? The standoff against the limo seemed hopeless.

SLAM! The limo was now sideswiping the van.

"We're gonna hit the.....!!!"

It was too late for the hysterical Mrs. Mend to comment any further. With a thud, the van hit the concrete guardrail on the right side of the bridge. The scream-scratching noise of the collision brought agony to the ears of everyone in the car! Kevin looked out briefly to see the car also at a stop, not too far away. The family was lucky that Triple Play was in southern Texas, where the temperature that morning was 54°F. Otherwise, a patch of ice may have made the collision even worse.

Kevin's view wasn't to be much, for immediately after looking out, a bright flash or two forced him to shut his eyes. When he looked again, two silvery disks were spinning out from the bottom of the limo and heading for the bottom of the van. Immediately, the van stopped running.

"Noooooooooooo!" screamed Mrs. Mend, fearing that the brutes in the limo were now certainly gonna have them to serve whatever purposes they may find.

"The kill switch!" thought Kevin, in disgust.

Kevin and Anyce had a very bad feeling what would happen next, and began holding their breaths. They'd remembered hearing about these sorts of disks from a special TV presentation, and feared poisonous gas would come to them any second. The others in the van weren't so skilled in preparing for the worst. It was fortunate for Kevin and Anyce that they did hold their breaths.

Seconds later, gas from the one disk began to fill up the whole of the van's interior! Struggling to open the door without breathing, Kevin rushed with Anyce out of the van.

The gas clouded the whole scene, and the two victims didn't even see the hand that all too quickly slammed shut the door to the van. Kevin would've attempted opening the van door again, except that the fumes from the gas were already choking him and Anyce almost immediately after they'd gotten out. It didn't take long for the orange gas to diminish though.

The clearing only greeted the two confused souls with men in gray trench coats, fully armed, and ready for malice.

"Don't even bother checking pulses!" the apparent ringleader hollered at them, "Those in the van have already breathed too much of the gas!"

Kevin was confused by this. Why would they attempt at *poisoning* him and Anyce if they simply wanted to *capture* them? Also, where were the police? Had the gangsters set up a decoy operation somewhere else in the city?

"What do you want with us?" asked Anyce as she started getting roughed-around by the armed men.

"Cooperation!" the ringleader spoke, "Hands behind the back!"

Anyce obeyed, as they began pointing the guns at Kevin. She didn't know what she'd do if her love were shot now simply because she might refuse to obey her captor's orders. They took almost no time at all to tie her hands with a rope, and held on to her by her leather jacket.

"You, gymnast, on top of the van!" the masked ringleader ordered.

Kevin was outraged at this. He almost felt like bursting out: "Leave her out of this!" He knew better than to mess with these men. While he could've easily maneuvered his way around them enough to fight, he didn't want to risk anything with Anyce's life on the line! He finally obeyed, and hopped on top of the van. He peered down at the ringleader with a look of absolute resentment, as if to say: "Do **anything** to hurt the girl, and you *will* regret this!"

The ringleader just peered back through the mask, as if to say: "Don't worry. This isn't about the girl; it's about....YOU!"

Kevin didn't have much time to think about it any further. BOOOOOOOM! The second disk under the van had finally done its job!

"Noooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!" Anyce screamed.

It was too late. The van had just violently exploded, and Kevin was knocked backwards into the Triple Play River below. From his perspective it was all sky, then twirls, then the water. BOOM! A second time! This time, the gangster that was holding on to Anyce quickly grabbed at her and knocked her to the ground, covering her with himself and that with his trench coat to protect the both of them from the flying debris of what was the Mend family's van.

Kevin didn't have it much better. He opened his eyes underwater briefly, to see what awaited him. Frogmen! The

divers were carrying professional guns with sedative needles inside! Try as he may though, there was no way Kevin could get away from this one! The men grabbed him, and punctured both his arms with one needle each.

"Bring the sub here!" one of the divers radioed to the crew of a submarine not too far away in that deep section of the river. Kevin slowly began to fall under the sedative's influence, as the men carried him to the surface for one last breath before being hauled away in a sub. To where, that was to be found out. All Kevin could think about at this point was Anyce, and the words he'd said to her, and hoped she'd committed to memory: "Don't let my demise be your own." The frogmen were glad that their job was made easy. Had Miscarriage hosted the mission on the Navajo Bridge, Kevin might very well have been dead before they could have a chance to sedate him!

Anyce didn't even notice what was going beneath the bridge. She didn't even know that Kevin was safe in the hands of the indifferent kidnappers; for as far as she knew, he'd been blown to bits right along with the rest of the Mend family. Still, she wasn't about to give up hope.

"Go home! We will!" the gangster who sheltered her now shouted at her. With that, the men got back in their damaged limo and drove off as quickly as they could. Anyce just stood there on the cold, now blood-guilt-tainted bridge, half in tears. She felt inside various urges, not the least of which was to holler at the fleeing gangsters every obscenity and curse she could possibly conjure up. At this point, she wouldn't have minded much at all if these gangsters were dished out one-way tickets on a maglev train leading them

straight to the heart of Hell itself! But for all the hot-headed and hot-blooded emotions swelling up inside, she remained quiet.

She then stared at the engagement ring that Kevin gave her before they left the house, as soon as she was able to free her hands from the rope. Looking back up at the still massive flames of the van not too far away, she made a promise to herself: "Two years. I'll give it two years. If I can't get Kevin back in that much time, I'll look for someone else...if anyone else could ever be like him. Still, I can't let his tragedy be mine—he told me not to let it!" Despair then began to set in: "Yet...It already is."

As the wind began to pick up and blow, she simply knelt there. She was determined that they wouldn't get away with this. As soon as she regained enough emotional strength, she made the heartbreaking trip she knew was necessary to get from the bridge to the nearest police station.

She knew though that nobody there would believe her story until she had them go back to the sight with her. Still, she insisted until the Maverickville police finally listened.

Even afterwards, they questioned whether or not Anyce belonged in the Embroilic Home for the Mentally and Emotionally Unstable. Anyce's problem had really nothing to do with her mental health though.

It had to do with her dreams, all of which appeared to have just been shattered. All the while, Kevin would be any dream world, any Abstra-matri world, anywhere other than the concrete world where he longed to be.

Part 5: Flashback: The Transformation

Place: Onion Central Laboratory, Enjosh City,
Abstra-matri world

"Yet another day goes by....." observed Miscarriage while staring out a window.

The weather in Enjosh City was much the same year round, constantly 67°F. The sky was its usual wavy green with the occasional yellow and purple clouds. The bustling futuristic metropolis was moving at a predictably steady pace, traffic and everything being much the same as always. Even the ever-busy Triple Play had more inactivity during certain times of the year than this.

Miscarriage then shut the blinds. After all, nobody was supposed to see who exactly was being put through the experiments to come. Lab worker Rodnick Yibvur was among those working in the brightly green-lit lab room that morning. It looked more like a turbine room to a power plant than an actual laboratory room in many ways. On one of the walls was a green tube, with Kevin inside, helpless and unconscious. Rod crept over when Miscarriage's thoughts were occupied; feeling the glass gently.

"It's kinda sad," he finally spoke up, "This guy, whoever he is, never had a chance to tell us if he even *wanted* to become a Rubik's snake-bound shape shifter!"

"What difference does it make what his opinion is!?" Miscarriage pounded back, "The great cause of Enjerié should be your focus right now, not this guy's opinions!"

Rod certainly didn't care for the hot-headed way Miscarriage treated the lab workers, and even wondered how well Enjerié would tolerate if he knew what a tyrant Miscarriage could truly be. Rod, as it was, felt he was beginning to become disillusioned about Enjerié and his criminal cult. Still, Where would he go? Moving back to Triple Play in the concrete world wouldn't be easy. Not even knowing Kevin, he could almost feel the sympathies for him. How would he make up for the wrongs he was to be forced to commit though, in turning Kevin into a puzzle-code-bound shape shifter as the Abstracadia formulas would have it? He'd heard stories ever since entering the Abstra-matri world about the distant lands of Abstriclius, with the Grivvlins. Grivvlins, resembling fairy tale elves in some ways, had Abstra-matrices of their own, and even knew of the island of Domoril where all the abstra-matrices were supposedly stored. Rod though, never explored outside of Enjosh City; which was near the entryway to SABS #5 in Merinda Twp.

"All right everybody, let's gather round the controls!" Miscarriage finally ordered.

The men were soon busy at work, including Rod, pulling this lever and pushing that button. The green tube Kevin was in soon began glowing a very bright green color, complementing the room perfectly. Miscarriage all the while began throwing out orders as the men who made him a stork monster would have it:

"You, the matrilous! Over there, the liquid oxygen! You, crank up the power, make sure that there's no damage to the main cable!"

"Can I throw an eye of newt in for good luck?" one worker smart mouthed.

Without a word, Miscarriage hurled one of his flight blades out at the man, pinning his coat to a chair!

"You wish to be demoted to janitor!!!?" the crabby response came back.

"Uh, no....."

Rod just stared at the bottle of liquid oxygen before placing it in the right bin. "Liquid oxygen....," he kept on thinking to himself. He just couldn't help but feel guilty about what he was putting this stranger through. Still, the penalty for endangering the security of Enjerié's mission was certainly annihilation. Would he be willing and able to rescue the unfortunate soul at all costs from the brainwash certain to follow the transformation? For now though, he knew it best to keep his thoughts to himself.

All the while, Enjerié was returning to the Abstra-matri world after some campaigning in the Charlen Hotel. Even Gordini was there, disguised as a butler. He walked pacingly through the arcade, making his way to the lobby and eventually to the elevator.

"Did you see that little girl's face back there?" Gordini pointed out, "She looked afraid of you."

"Never mind that. She'll change her mind about me in good time. Did you hear about Miscarriage and the Rubik's snake matrix?" came the reply unusually calm for a villain with much on the line.

"Actually, I don't know really."

"The subject is perfect! My question now is, will he be able to serve the purposes of our cause?"

"Well, you always could just find out, couldn't you?"

"**Beep!**" came Enjerié's body phone.

"I hear you, Miscarriage, what's the news?"

"So far, everything looks like a perfect success!"

Enjerié and Gordini then entered the elevator, where they needed less to worry about anybody hearing them but Gordini still kept alert.

"Brilliant," Enjerié then responded, "how's our subject faring?"

"Better than I thought! Even my transformation wasn't this smooth! My question is, will we be able to convince him to serve our cause?"

"Don't worry about that," Enjerié comforted the uncertain Miscarriage, "after being turned into this brilliant creature that he's been turned into, he won't have anywhere

to go, or any other reason to continue living. Who knows enough about our world to help him resist us? Besides, if he does prove to be a menace to us, you know how to handle him!"

"What should the lab workers and I do in the mean time then?"

"Go home for the day. I'll investigate our new monster in about a week. Can you keep him dormant for that long?"

Just then, the elevator reached the basement of SABS #5. Gordini made sure that nobody was around that might overhear anything they shouldn't.

"Trust me, as long as he's in this green tube, he won't wake up!"

"Keep at least one lab worker there though, for security purposes."

"Sure, Miscarriage over and out!"

"Well, Gordini, what do you think?"

"I think it's kinda weird that we don't have better restrictions on this portal!"

"Don't worry. From our end, it's only a door on the one side. On the other though, it's just plain air. Only in the concrete world is it a door on both sides! Besides, whom do you know of that can pass between there and here without being bothered on one end or the other?"

"Uh, not anybody human, that'd be my guess."

"Exactly. Matter settled."

What they didn't know though, is that one man's conscience would not be so easily comforted. Later that evening, Miscarriage and Enjerié got together to talk. Rod Yibvur could overhear everything they said, as they didn't watch their volumes very carefully that their voices wouldn't transfer from the meeting room they were in to the hallway where Rod was eavesdropping.

Rod was the one chosen for guarding the new snake creature that once was Kevin. He began to lose faith in Enjerié's cultish schemes, and feeling disillusioned like never before, figured that there was only one way left to fight back against Enjerié's pride—turn his most successful scheme ever against him...

Part 6: Flashback: The Search for Anyce

Rod may have been a short man, with much of his red hair already gone, but he was determined to get Kevin out of this miserable place regardless the physical difficulty.

He carefully shut the door behind him, making sure that nobody around could hear it shut; and that they would therefore assume that he had always been in there with it completely and securely closed. He walked very slowly over to the green tube, eyeing the snake inside very sympathetically.

"Poor fellow, I regret that I had to do this to you. But I will pay you back! I'm gonna grant you your freedom!"

Rod then reached for the controls as soon as he could, and raised the tube enough that Kevin could drop out. Rod was careful though, to lower the tube again. Therefore, it'd look like nothing much had happened. Kevin, still in a daze, was now beginning to regain his senses. With a few coughs, he attempted opening his new snake eyes.

"Where, where exactly *is* this place? Who's your interior decorator?" he began smart commenting, "and WHAT THE HAY IS THIS!?"

"Easy!" Rod urged him to whisper, "You can still talk much the same. Your personality and voice are unchanged, but you as a whole are nothing of what you were."

"In plain English..," Kevin inquired.

"Look in that mirror over there, but don't shout!" Rod ordered him.

For the first time, Kevin got to see what he'd become.

"How could you do this to me!?" he began bitterly accusing.

"I was forced, it's Enjerié's goal!" Rod defended.

"This?" Kevin asked, "I expected better from Mr. Pinball Machine!"

"Believe me, I too have become disillusioned," Rod reassured, "I've overheard what goes on with that Enjerié. I now know why Discove Inc. wants so badly to defame him—because they're absolutely right! That pinball machine is nothing but a crook!"

"This is the Abstra-matri world I take it?"

"Only Enjosh City's Onion Labs," Rod specified, "I don't know how to change you back, but there is one man who can probably help us now."

"I'm gonna go back to the concrete world, and give this Enjerié a piece of my mind! Turn *me* into a Rubik's snake will he!"

"I understand your desire for revenge."

"Revenge? I just don't want this to happen again to anybody! I want also to put an end to those creeps who blew me off the bridge. Now, if they did *anything* to Anyce, *then*, I'd consider revenge, just consider it....."

Rod wasn't sure what to say or think next.

"Well, I'll pack us two bags," he finally spoke up, "It won't be easy to get you to Triple Play without myself getting in loads of trouble for it, but I'll do whatever it takes to get you back to this Anyce of yours."

"Say, can't I do some crazy thing with this bod, like, say, transform?" Kevin interrogated.

"Of course! But you need cubiyons first," Rod added.

"What's a cubiyon?" Kevin asked.

After a lengthy talk about the nature of cubiyons, Rod and Kevin got ready for their secret escape. They rushed through traffic fairly well in the nighttime purple sky. It didn't take longer than fifteen minutes before Rod and his hovercraft were at the doorway. They stared at it both curiously, as to why it wasn't better guarded.

"I'd say that this is where we get off," Rod commented.

The two of them walked through the portal after opening the door; and Kevin was intrigued to see the concrete world's side of it all...

"The basement of SABS #4?"

"SABS #5 actually," Rod corrected, "but this isn't our final stop."

Rod checked the two in for the night in the Charlen Hotel, but they wouldn't spend much of the night sleeping. Kevin had been asleep for so long, that he didn't feel a need for anything but making plans to war on Enjerié's criminal empire. (Not knowing it even, the two of them were in the same room in which Miscarriage had been discussing plans just a week or two ago how to abduct Kevin in the first place.)

The next day came before they even knew it, and Kevin was quick to get back into the action of things. He even

woke up the sleeping Rod, to let him know that it was already nearing ten.

"Oh no! We must leave here, right now!" Rod suddenly panicked.

"What, what? Is ten an unlucky number?"

"No, Kevin," Rod sighed, trying to settle down his own panicking tone, "I've learned much about you in our short time of meeting. However, they'll figure us out any time soon. You don't know how to use your cubiyon energy, and it'll be essential if you are to start this crusade of yours against Enjerié!"

"I get the picture," Kevin remarked, "But we can't start here. Got any more convenient places to get me started?"

"We must go in haste, but do you think this girl, this...Anyce of yours, will be able to help you find Herbert Abstracadia?"

"Only one way to find out," Kevin winked back at the nervous man, forcing a smile out on both of them.

"Just let me finish packing here, and we'll be on our way," Rod threw in, getting ready to pack the remainder of the tiny bit of luggage he actually did bring with him.

Kevin curled himself around Rod, hoping the man would be able to hold his weight for a long enough time to make their escape. They tried their best to remain as conspicuous as possible, knowing that Abstra-matri spies

could be anywhere or report anything. Only a miracle could keep something from happening to them now. Kevin though, started asking questions once the two left the hallway and entered the elevator to the lobby of the Charlen.

"When I do start this campaign of mine, I'll need a secret name. Do you have any good ideas?"

"I...really don't right now," Rod hushed back, "Play the role of a decoration for now!"

"Gotcha!" Kevin replied.

After leaving the front counter desk, successfully fooling the lady working there that Kevin was just his pet snake, they made their way into the streets of Merinda. From there, Rod hopped, skipped, and dodged his way from one building wall to another in spite of the weight he was carrying.

"Hey, take it easy! You won't go far like that with me on your back!" Kevin warned.

"What building is that over there?" Rod eventually pointed, as he lay panting across the street from the building of his interest.

"Oh that is Crown-of-Life Lutheran Church," Kevin responded, suddenly growing a dim tone of voice.

"What's wrong?" Rod asked, "Did you have an unpleasant experience there?"

"Oh no, not at all," Kevin answered, "It's just...those bells are funeral bells. For all I know, that's my family's funeral. Anyce's family is all I have left now. The church itself is nice. I doubt I'll be able to enter it anymore without causing a scene though."

"You know, I haven't prayed or done anything of that sort since the age of ten, not to anything normal, or to anyone like Who's celebrated in there. Today though, I'm secretly praying like never before. Not for my own sake, cause I'll know they'll hunt me down. I want to get you back to this Anyce of yours *before* they find me."

"You're too kind, Rod. I won't forget this. You didn't have to take this on yourself."

They then withdrew into an alleyway behind two buildings that were across the street from the church.

"Indeed, I had to," Rod countered, "If they'd turned you into Rubiksato like they planned, many a sacred place like this would suffer."

"Earth sanctuaries are hardly as sacred anymore as you give credit, but I understand what you mean."

"Now would be a good time to pick a name for you," Rod switched the subject, to make himself more comfortable.

"Right, how's about—The Diamond Snake!" Kevin got an idea.

"Too long," Rod countered.

"Viogreen? I'm green and violet all over."

"No. Your most human-like phases are numbered," Rod informed, "You could go by the default name for your basic phase, Phase #1."

"Ooooh...Phase #1 is soooo intimidating!" Kevin sarcasted.

"Well, let me think a minute...," Rod urged, "Let's see...you're something like a reptile, and you were made with liquid oxygen among other things—that's it!"

"What? Repliquox?"

"Even better! Reptile plus LOX yields REPLOX! Say, the name Replox looks very good on you too."

"I'll take your word for it," Kevin commented, not quite yet used to his new name.

"I know how to get to her in Friedburg from here!" Rod jumped up.

"A taxi?" Kevin uttered facetiously.

"Right," Rod grinned, getting the ill humor of it, "We'll need to take the ferry, and be careful about it, to avoid spies..."

The ride on the ferry didn't quite seem like a very long one, and before they knew it, they were on their way to

Anyce's house. Rod walked ever slowly and carefully in Friedburg though, as not to look suspicious. The two of them stopped outside a store, and Rod hid Kevin from view long enough to buy with the money he had left something for the both of them to eat.

Exhausted though from their long night; the two of them huddled together and slept in an alleyway in Friedburg, lucky that nobody found them there. Hours passed, and before long it was nearing 2:30 in the afternoon.

The air was still cold outside somewhat, but not cold enough to have mattered to the two determined souls, one man and one snake. Carefully, the two of them made their way to where Kevin navigated, and Rod, knowing that he mustn't ever be seen with Kevin again, left him near the bushes and such outside the Hamilton house, wishing his fairest goodbye wishes, and disappearing never again to be seen alive.

Kevin carefully eyed the house that stood before him, and the heavy red bag he'd have to carry up into the window without limbs to assist him.

Calculating diligently and quickly, he prepared himself for the task that awaited. As lower-class and uninviting as it seemed, the house was home to Anyce.

Kevin wouldn't mind it so much, except he wasn't even sure Anyce would accept him anymore. There was only one way to find out...

Part 7: Flashback: Breaking the News to Anyce

Place: Home of the Hamiltons

Now that Kevin was in the bushes at Anyce's house, the real question came across his mind: "How do I get in?" That's when he saw the most obvious opportunity right before him!

"I thought even Anyce was more sensible than that! And in a neighborhood like this?" he began thinking to himself, "It's almost like she's inviting trouble!"

He couldn't complain too much though. There've been times when he hadn't been the most concerned about safety either, and he began thinking that perhaps that had something to do with his new snake-like body. Still, a way in was a way in, even if it was the window entry to the downstairs bathroom. Finally fed up with the bag full of papers he'd never even seen, Kevin dropped them out of his mouth and to the ground with a thud. Despite that, the sudden splish-splashes he could hear from inside hinted that whoever was in there obviously didn't hear the bag plop in.

Kevin himself managed to slither in completely unnoticed. He was soon at rest on the bathroom sink, though he felt guilty on intruding upon someone else's bath. He felt like an absolute peeping Tom and soon closed his eyes in shame to see that it was none other than Anyce in the tub! Still, why she hadn't opened her eyes and noticed him, he had no clue.

"What's the use?" Anyce began thinking to herself out loud, "These bubble baths are about the only thing I can enjoy now that Kevin's gone...."

As she sighed, Kevin could only look at himself in the huge bathroom mirror, sharing her feelings of despair. Still, he was determined to let her know the painful truth anyway possible. He didn't care now how intruding he was; things had to be set right somehow!

Anyce began mildly singing to herself an old tune, in a version all her own: "Say where, oh where, could my, Kevin be.....those brutes took him away from me....."

Kevin, seeing a hilarious opportunity, added his line to the version: "They made me a snake 'cause Enjerié's no good...."

Suddenly realizing the intruding voice of Kevin, Anyce jumped in panic! She reached for a clean towel from on top of the orange clothes hamper's lid and covered herself with amazing speed before leaving the bathtub and discovering the nature of the voice. Sure enough, there in the sink, she beheld the green-and-purple curiosity that had uttered the words with Kevin's voice.

"I must be losing it!" she began to think to herself, "Is *that* a giant Rubik's snake talking to me?"

"Hey, hey, easy!" Kevin attempted in vain to reassure her, "it's me, Kevin!"

"That's it! I should give the Embroilic Home a call by tomorrow!"

"Come on, Anyce!" Kevin grew impatient.

It would take quite a lot of explaining before she was willing to accept what was right before her eyes. Kevin allowed her to use the time of getting dressed for preparing herself mentally for what was about to come next.

"I just don't believe this!" she exclaimed after he had finished explaining everything to her, "All this time, Enjerié has proved nothing but a crook?"

"Worse, a madman if you ask my opinion."

All Anyce could do was stare into the eyes of Kevin, not entirely certain *what* they could do about this one. Anyce began wondering though, if her dreams of having a pet snake might now be fulfilled. "Scratch that!--" she would then think to herself. How could she possibly turn the man of her life into merely a household pet, especially when they both needed to achieve so much more than that if Enjerié's plans were to be frustrated, and Miscarriage the Stork Monster put to a stop.

"Wait a minute!" Kevin suddenly blurted out, "The bag!"

"Bag?" Anyce interrogated.

"That red bag will answer everything!" Kevin insisted.

Without any further hesitation, Anyce rushed out of the kitchen, through the living room, and to the bathroom to find the red bag that lay right by the open window. Anyce quickly shut the window, should anybody less trustworthy than Kevin break in as well. The bag appeared to be a slight bit heavy, as would be a bag half-full of school textbooks. Kevin waited all the while, thinking, "She could've waited for me!"

As soon as she got back, the both of them stared in awe. Opening up the bag, they found inside a significant array of papers, barely intelligible to them in content, though the Rubik's snake-like appearances of the "Matrix Angle #40" helped bring the both of them a little bit more of a clue as to what was there. On top of the second stack though, which was not as well rubber banded-down as the first, they came across a message, which read: "Eat red cubiyon."

"What is *that* supposed to mean?" Anyce questioned in bewilderment.

"I can only guess based on what Rod said," Kevin returned, "but I'm almost positive that the red thing there separating the stacks is a cubiyon, and I'm the one these instructions say should eat it."

They both stared at the red thing, just slightly glowing at them inside the bag. It looked more like a holographic illusion than an actuality of anything, as it almost appeared to want to float.

"Well, here goes snake boy!" Kevin uttered before giving the experiment a go.

"Kevin wait!" Anyce spurted out.

Too late. As Kevin took a bite, he suddenly felt himself blown back into the phone, hanging by a mount that was screwed into the wall, knocking it down as both he and it came crashing to the ground.

"Kevin!" Anyce hollered hysterically.

The sudden lights and sparks may have been intimidating, but at least nobody was hurt.

"Oof!" Kevin muttered, "I'll be expecting that next time!"

"Hold on!" Anyce broke in, "If you're attached to some 'abstra-matrix' or something, maybe you can change shape just as the snake matrix you're bound to can!"

"Lovely, you can't accept me as a snake, you now want a 178-lb parakeet?"

"No, I'm just saying, maybe you can!"

"Well, let me look at something..."

Before they could act, Kevin found his body doing the equivalent of a demo on twisting the snake matrix! It began, in the region of Domoril, to twist itself into the shape of a Scottish terrier!

"Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! Ouch!" Kevin began hollering.

He clearly had not yet mastered twisting his matrix without the pains of breaking into it.

"Kevin!" Anyce became hysterical again.

She began to wonder if this weren't all just a dream. Yet before her next stood a giant Scottish terrier!

"I think we should get an expert's advice on this thing first, before we try anymore of our own stunts!" Kevin lectured in pain, smoke vaporizing trickle by bit off his body with appropriate sizzling noises.

"Oh Kevin!" Anyce muttered out relieved, reaching over to hug the giant dog that now stood before her.

"I've never much been the kind to want a dog's eye view of the dog days of summer, so while winter is still here, I think we should look for an expert."

"Where would we look though?" Anyce began to question.

"Wait," Kevin began thinking back to Rod, "I remember my rescuer saying something about...Abstracadia!"

"Abstracadia?" Anyce checked in uncertainty.

"Well, there can't be too many Abstracadias in this city, it should be easy," Kevin reassured.

As Anyce began searching for the phone book though, Kevin began to come across a newspaper article, conveniently right on the kitchen table. Glancing over, the mystery was all but solved.

"Hey Anyce, I think we have our man!"

She quickly stopped looking and ran over to read what the article had to say.

"Herbert Abstracadia: Brother of the deceased Robert Abstracadia, former parlor and stage magician, now the new manager of the Jungle Gym Laser Bully, the most interactive laser tag/gymnastics facility in Triple Play....."

"What was that one article about Robert a year or so ago saying?" Kevin added in.

"Something," Anyce attempted to remember, "about Robert Abstracadia celebrating the fact that he discovered the 'Abstra-matri world' or something a couple of years ago, and decided to make it public knowledge."

"Brilliant!" Kevin threw in, "He probably told his brother Herbert some of the things that he had learned. Rod, my rescuer said that Enjerié had to kill Robert to gain power in Enjosh City! We have our man!"

"Will Herbert be home tomorrow?" Anyce asked back.

"We can't afford him not to be, but in the mean time, let's get back to that phone book! Enjerié's goin' down! I don't care if it takes us two weeks or five years, Robert Abstracadia's demise will not be ours! Nor will it be the world's."

Though reluctant and paranoid at first, Abstracadia would prove to be one of the best allies that they could ever obtain, especially in the fight that lay before them long before Replox's battle in the Maverickville theater parking lot.

Long before the final fight to defeat Enjerié, would be the struggle in itself: Training Kevin to be Replox in the first place.

Part 8: Herbert Abstracadia

Place: The Streets of Friedburg

"Let's just hope we don't have any gray cars following us this time," Kevin joked as they started heading out for the old, gray junk car that Anyce would use to drive to Abstracadia's.

"Very funny!" she muttered back.

How could he joke so lightly about the one incident that could've forever separated them? She could've lectured, but instead; comforted.

"You know, I don't care if they turned you into a blood-sucking vampire, I'd still support you."

"Uh...thanks," he replied, feeling a more implied comfort than he was willing to show.

They just began to leave the house, and traffic was now going even slower on that morning. Overhead, the two might have even seen a low-flying helicopter, copilot keeping one eye open to see if anything newsworthy should occur. Anyce began driving; remembering all too well that her house was the third to the right from the road leading south out of town.

"Okay, we turn right, go up to the intersection near the museum, turn right again..."

"Anyce, you don't need a map; it's the third house before your academy!"

"You sure?"

"I scouted out and memorized the location last night."

"I thought you were sleeping on the roof last night!"

"What," Kevin smarted back, "where everyone could see me?"

"Well, where then did you sleep?" Anyce asked.

Just then, Kevin tried again to mess with his snake matrix, thinking that *just this time*, he might be able to control

it. It began shifting again, much without him having even the slightest clue what he was changing into.

Schkoom! Schkoom! Schkoom! Schkoom! The snake matrix began twisting, almost with a will of its own, until Kevin found himself at rest riding shotgun—as a cat! All the while, he shifted with the wildest of convulsions, almost panicking Anyce to the point of driving in the left lane!

"Someone's gonna think we're drunk!" Anyce hollered.

"Well, then I'd better leave Abstracadia to my talent, before I turn into a beer bottle!"

Finally! They were now at the house, and in the driveway. They parked in the driveway at the side entrance of a very small, robin's egg blue house, ultimately not much larger than the Hamilton household. In front of Anyce's gray junker stood a commercial sized, dark purple van that looked old enough to have well been from a previous decade.

"Well, this is the defining moment," Anyce near-whispered, leading the 178-lb. monster cat out of the junker and to the ground below.

The two of them could have guessed a lot of things as to what they'd encounter with Abstracadia, but only on actually ringing the doorbell would they find out. Looking dazed and paranoid, a frenzied man looking to be about 55 at the youngest rushed to the door and answered it, at first seeing only Anyce.

"No, absolutely no cookies! And I'm not into any of that cult stuff either!" he rushed out, looking at Anyce as an important stock broker might stare at the threat of job loss.

"You don't get it!" Anyce urged, "I've got an issue here that I need to talk to you about! It's something that you'll find relevant!"

"Yeah, that's what they said about the Monkey Turbo Steam cooking set!" the edgy old man shot back, "I'm not buying it!"

"This isn't about sales! This is about a problem a good friend of mine has that you might have yourself!" Anyce urged.

"If he's failing college, tell him to study harder!" Abstracadia lectured, getting ready to shut the door on her.

"Now look here!" Kevin suddenly shouted, getting ready to set the man straight.

Just that moment however, he began to feel an urge to twist his snake matrix. Bad move. Without first learning from lessons and from the paperwork in the red bag how to control it, he frustratingly tried it again. Schunk! Schunk! Schunk! Schunk! Schunk! Kevin found himself on the driveway, uttering in pain, emitting all sorts of green light as he rapidly began changing shape. He wasn't going to give up this time until he found something useful to change into! Remembering one of his favorite Rubik's snake positions, he quickly began directing the snake matrix to copy that very twisting motion.

"What the heck is that racket!?" Abstracadia began blurting, afraid he didn't want to find out.

"An abstra-matrix at work!" Anyce shouted back, "Exactly what I was preaching you about!"

Abstracadia could only look in disbelief at what was happening right before him in his very driveway. His past was coming back to haunt him!

"No! No!" he hollered in objection, "That crook Enjerié! Why didn't he stop this after killing my brother Robert? Rob, you were a fool to trust that Hurtz character!"

Anyce could barely understand what the cause was of the poor man's mad mutterings, only that he knew very well what was going on. She quickly moved aside to let Abstracadia dash over to the unstable shape-shifter, as dazed by what was happening as if a mere gawker from the streets.

"Hold still!" he then hollered to Kevin, getting ready to restrain him.

"Back off!" suddenly hollered the confusing creature that Kevin had become.

He then took a good look at what he'd become. He actually had an arm, a hand! It looked something like a glove, and he was indeed shaped much like his old self as far as the bodily outline was concerned. But why did he look so strange?

"Unbelievable!" Abstracadia quietly gasped, "You've discovered Phase #1 entirely without training!"

"Phase what the heck?" Kevin interrogated, as puzzled as Anyce.

"This is bad. Come in you two, I'll introduce myself better; and we can get to the bottom of this..."

Kevin could only scratch his leathery head, uncertain what to think of anything at this point. Anyce could only follow along, certain that she was now about to gain importance beyond understanding to the cause of bringing about the end of Enjerié's other world...

Place: Inside Abstracadia's house, the living room.

Abstracadia spent quite a long time explaining to the two all that had happened, and how it fit in perfectly with what was becoming of them. With the following narrative, one may see exactly what background this troubled old man was in:

Dr. Robert Abstracadia was quickly gaining popularity for his discoveries among the scientific community, even though there were many skeptics of him. This was largely because of the many trips he took to the Abstra-matri world through the discovered portal that he and Maxwell Hurtz had erected a door around, sealing its permanence as an opening from the Abstra-matri world to the universe with which men are more familiar

(often simply called the Concrete world by Abstra-matri dwellers).

These doubts were soon lessened by the sight of cubiyons by the critics. The question then arose: should the public hear of these things? What of the Abstra-matri world? Wouldn't this spark another migration in the U.S., similar to the 19th century "Manifest Destiny" movement? If international organizations bickered over things as simple as who controlled the skies, what would stop this from becoming a power grab, a debate of heated controversy? Dr. Abstracadia and Hurtz had enough issues on hand as to the missing explorers. Had this accounted for the massive number of creatures that inhabited islands in the Abstra-matri world's oceans? There was more. How many planets in the Abstra-matri universe were there? There certainly had to be something beyond just Enjosh City, Domoril, and the islands inhabited by Grivvlins. Where were the Grivvlins to be found, and what were they like? Were they human in almost every way? Was anything surprising to be found about them?

All these and more questions needed to be answered. Dr. Abstracadia found it convenient to withdraw from the Concrete Universe and spend his time with the empire he was founding here. This was where Hurtz first devised his plans to become Enjerié. Though not directly involved, the doctor's younger brother was in on the whole Abstra-matri controversy. Herbert learned well from Dr. Rob how to use the massive multitudes of supplies given him how to produce cubiyons, and all there was to know about reading manuals for directing shape-shifter matrices. Herbert was given access to Enjosh City web sites, and clearly knew all he cared to at the time. For the

most part, he was happy simply with doing magic shows in Triple Play. That's when everything went wrong...

From the moment the pronouncement of Dr. Rob's death reached Herb's screen, he suspected foul play. Maxwell's sudden disappearance and the advent of Enjerié led to investigation on his part, largely in correspondence with Discove, to learn as much about the matter as was possible. They both soon knew quite well that the gangs which suddenly appeared in the streets of Triple Play couldn't have come out of nowhere, and were only able to pull off some of their best getaway stunts with Abstra-matri support. Exactly how much world influence Enjerié's criminal empire was gaining would be hard to pinpoint, even for Discove.

Since then though, Herbert refused to log on to any Enjosh City web sites, kept a low profile both in Triple Play and in Enjosh, and generally dropped off the face of both worlds. He always went from day to day, when not at work at the Jungle Gym Laser Bully, scheduling for special events for the following year, never once wanting to make it known until the day he had to. He feared secretly though, that Enjerié wasn't finished with Abstra-matri monsters. Sure enough, his hopes of staying uninvolved in Enjerié's affairs were now to be all shattered, as on of them had just washed up on to his very driveway...

"But you can help me overcome all this!" Herb then proclaimed to Kevin.

"Me? I'd just like to put this Enjerié punk in his place!" came the reply.

"And indeed, there is a way we can do this!" Herb insisted.

"What do we need to do?" Anyce asked, throwing the "we" in the question out of certainty that she was not neutral in the midst of events.

"This will involve a two-fold plan at least," Herb began explaining, "First of all, Anyce, you will have to provide lodging for 'Replox' here, under the guise of your pet snake 'Kilo.'"

"Beginning to sound like an army general already!" Kevin smirked.

"You might want to change back into a snake, it helps you save cubiyon energy," Herb commented, "Now, first, we have to buy Discove time to get to Enjerié himself. We for certain can't allow him to become mayor of Triple Play! We can do much of this by keeping his gangs and their bosses redirected."

"How do we do that?" Anyce asked.

"By getting them so involved in battling Replox, that they forget their main job! Any small victory for Enjerié is one victory too many. Any super villain he whips out must be as soundly defeated as any of his political advances."

The night would drag on, as the three members of what would become known as the Rubik's gang came up with their strategy. Robert had been working at the same time with a girl he took pity on when visiting a friend of his in the Embroilic Home one day, a girl named Andrea. He had determined that Andrea would help him with computer work

whenever she could be available, and that he'd employ her readily.

When Andrea wouldn't be available though, Anyce would have to be. Kevin all the while though, would have to train to learn how to use his new-found gift.

This would be core essential against the odds that the group unknowingly would face in the months to come: putting down one of the first of Enjerié's most elaborate schemes by battling Miscarriage and the Stork Gang one on one! Indeed, Replox, had been born...

Part 9: Flashback: Training to Become Replox

Place: Abstracadia's backyard

"Yeeehaw!" came the exclamation of a more well-taught Replox, "These disks are getting too easy to dodge, catch, and the what-not. I'm done with the Jungle Gym Laser Bully for right now, I'd like to try something real!"

"Indeed, you've caught on well to Phase #1 and your Kilo animal modes. Still, I think you should wait some time before I teach you blue cubiyon moves," Herb warned.

"Blue?" Replox inquired.

"We went over that already..."

"I know what red, blue, and silver cubiyons are. I don't have to learn right away Phase #2, but I would like to try my luck with at least a small operation."

"Indeed, but there's no telling how you'll do this early off. The Rubik's Gang has only been around for five months, and in mid-June I'll get to hire Andrea as my secretary at the laser tag facility. Then maybe, we'll have more time to teach that low-life Enjerié a lesson."

"Oh....all right," Replox muttered.

About half a month later, Andrea would be over her shyness enough to finally reveal to Replox and Abstracadia the very dark secrets that put her in the Embroilic Home in the first place. At that time though, Miscarriage would remember her too...

Replox, before returning home as Kilo the afternoon after his session above mentioned with Abstracadia, received a well-concealed communicator that fit nicely into his glove-like left wrist. It was of its own abstra-matrix, as Herb had learned how to make small ones for inanimate objects of the sort.

It would only appear when Replox ordered it to, making it as easy for him to use as his now easy-to-control snake matrix. Through it, Herb could warn him of upcoming events by radio sequence; and replacing the batteries was hardly a problem. All this was sure to come in handy very much soon...

(End of Flashback)

Part 10: Abstracadia's Insistent Call

Place: The Hamilton home.

It was freshly the morning time in that June day, and children were getting ready to finish up the last of the school days they had before mid-June would come and the stubborn officials would allow the kids to finally have a summer vacation. Anyce was herself getting done with the spring term and looking forward into looking for work at a veterinary clinic, where she could learn what she could about snakes to better care for her dear Kilo.

She at first only called him Kilo when friends from college were around, calling him Kevin as she put him away in his large glass terrarium with a side door. Kilo in turn would never respond to the name "Kevin" or even speak at all when Anyce's college friends were around. After all, his secret as Replox was not to be made public in the least way.

Still, Anyce always worried inside that somehow, one of her friends just might some day make the connection between the green-and-purple pattern on Kilo's body and that on Replox's. That never happened, but the conditioning resulted in her simply calling him Kilo all the time, to the point that even her DJ dad John B. referred to him as Kilo. As for Kevin, the name change didn't really bother him at all. The question was though, would somebody be able to one day find out his secret?...

Anyce had only just wakened up then, about 8:34 if the clock was accurate, and clearly the blinds in her room

hadn't yet been opened. She removed the holey nylon towel from off of the terrarium top, while opening the side door to signify that a new day had begun.

"Hey there, how's about you Phase #1 me one?" she smiled out to the awakening creature.

Not wasting much time at all, Kilo immediately began shaping himself into Replox, ready to face another round of Abstracadia's countless training sessions if necessary, or another fight against the Stork Gang. Yet, when he looked at her once completely formed, she could sense that there was something not quite right inside of him.

"What's bugging you today?" she flirtatiously asked him.

"I was just thinking, as I have been a lot lately," he answered back reluctantly.

At this point, she had her arms around him, and was certain that he'd say anything pleasant that she could think of. This wouldn't though, exactly be the outcome.

"This...thing we're doing...it just isn't right," he managed to mutter out.

"What? What's not right?"

"We're not married, yet we've been sharing a house—sharing a room even—for months now! Somehow, this just can't be right!"

How could he possibly be thinking about marital statuses at a time like this? Still, Anyce couldn't deny that he had a point. But when could they fix the problem, and how would Anyce be able to convince John B. to let it happen?

After all, who would let their daughter marry a man who was half "alien" for all that was concerned? She had to think of any justification for the situation possible, and she was much more fortunate than most girls who try; for in her case, she could actually argue with a leg to stand on, or at least something resembling a leg...

"Kevin," she attempted to reassure.

"I'm serious this time!" he broke in, sounding more like a desperate fugitive than the superhero Abstracadia would have him out to be, "How can we pretend to be fighting for what's right and putting an end to Enjerié's evil, when we can't even behave ourselves by our own scales? What separates our little cheat from Enjerié's ruining of lives?"

"But you're a snake now!" she excused, "It's not like anything bad can happen between us!"

"Nothing you could put in a movie that would both strengthen the rating *and* maintain a sense of realism maybe, but it's the principle that counts, and if you try to cheat principle, you're the one who's cheated in the end!"

She now understood, as she looked with a gaze of defeat into the emotionless excuse for a face—more like a decorated helmet than that—of Replox Phase #1, that she had clearly lost the argument right then and there. But what kind of marriage could they have? Would she be able to put up

with this forever? She had the ability at heart to, and she knew that full well, to put up with a half-snake man all of her days, knowing she might never have children if she yielded herself to this destiny. But could she put up with the constant life of danger?

Would her dad approve, knowing his life would then also be one of endless danger? She knew that there wasn't much other choice. If she let Enjerié succeed in any way, simply by not fulfilling with her man what she knew she must, she'd let not only her own man down, but also her family, her town, her city, her county, state, country, the world, and perhaps even God himself! Could all this really rest on her pampered shoulders?

"All right then," she gave in, "but when should we have it? Who should I invite?"

"Invite?" he looked at her with a grave curiosity, "As few as possible I'd say! Abstracadia, good old Johnny B., that Andrea girl maybe, but we can't let anybody who might spread our secret, my secret, possibly find out."

"Should I arrange it with Pastor Frankne?"

"For a reverend, that man is quite a gossip machine! I can't say anything visiting your church but my family will find out about the minutest pieces of it from Pastor Steckel at Crown-of-Life a week later," he broke in.

"I see," Anyce said, "but how do we have any certainty that if we elope, how do you know that Steckel will be able to handle the situation any better?"

"At this point, we don't," he confessed, "but we'd best arrange an appointment."

"Appointment," Anyce laughed, as they headed out of their room and towards the kitchen, "must you talk about everything as if it's a health clinic?"

"Spiritual health clinic, maybe; but you're the veterinarian around here," he smart-mouthed back to her.

They then got a chance to sit at the table, as Anyce was about to pull out a cereal box from the pantry. Just then, John B. came rushing by, accidentally knocking over Anyce, on his way out the door.

"What's up with that?" Replox interrogated.

"No time, son-to-be, I'm late! I've gotta get to my radio show in five minutes! Oh, Anyce, sorry about that—ur...gotta go!"

"That's gotta be one of the first time's he's ever been late!" Replox noticed.

"Trust me," Anyce broke in, "he's always late. Biff just simply covers for him until he can get there, and Biff's called in sick more than likely."

"I'll...try to remember that," he replied.

"**Beep!**" suddenly came the calling of his matri-wrist band.

"Duty calls," he informed the less-than-impressed Anyce.

"Come in, Herb!"

"You two, get over here, fast! No time to explain!"

"Well, you heard the man," he uttered to Anyce as she looked in disbelief.

Place: Abstracadia's house

"What's the news?" Replox interrogated when he got there, having used his Swan Kilo form to arrive before Anyce could in her gray junker.

"It's about Andrea!"

"Who is this Andrea girl?"

"You'll find out for yourself today! She's only told us fragments of what we need to hear to piece together how Miscarriage plans to aid Enjerié's plan! Miscarriage managed to cut off our conversation before she got to mentioning what monster they plan to use! He's been tapping our whole conversation, and if you don't rescue her soon, then the creature will get to her first!"

"Okay, Herb. Where do I go?"

Just then, Anyce came in, certain beyond the need to ask that she'd already missed her piece of the important information.

"To the Embroilic Home, in Merinda, stat!" Herb hollered, more desperately as he knew time was ticking.

"That's for..."

"I know! You'll understand, just get over there! And use the ventilation system—they won't let you in, trust me!"

Hardly even sparing time to give Anyce a hug goodbye, he rushed to the backyard where he twisted himself into Snake Kilo and headed off for Merinda. To his luck, traffic that morning on the ground was far denser than the occasional air traffic.

Had the news helicopter spotted him, he'd've certainly had a hard time keeping out of publicity's way. Right now, all that mattered was getting to Andrea, whoever she may be, before Miscarriage could...

Part 11: Andrea Schlemming

Place: The Embroilic Home for the Mentally and Emotionally Unstable

Swan Kilo then managed to effectively make it to the rooftop of the Embroilic Home. Problem now was, how to get in? Back into Replox he changed.

"Now, there's got to be a pipe or something somewhere..."

Looking just below, there was a huge wheeled cart full of clean laundry, getting ready to be hauled inside the building for distribution to the patients.

"Well," Replox thought to himself, "This is about the easiest way in I can get."

Noticing that nobody was watching at the moment, he quickly jumped inside the cart, wasting no time in covering himself underneath the laundry pile and changing into a snake to be even more discreet. He was glad that nobody was watching, for it took at least a minute to get far enough down on the fire ladder to attempt a jump safely.

"Hmm... I got in easily enough, now how's about a little motion?"

It didn't take him too long to get his wish. Fwoom! The cart started moving, and then the next great task would face him: getting out without being seen.

He waited in the pile, hoping that it would stop in a closet or some place instead of the wash machine. Up one floor, then another, the creaky elevator made its accent.

"Nobody said anything about a rough ride!" Replox thought to himself from inside the cart.

Finally, the cart was dropped off exactly where it needed to be so, in a storage closet to be sorted later. As soon as the door was shut, Replox wasted no time getting back to Phase #1 from Snake Kilo mode, and hopping out of the cart.

"Lovely," he then thought to himself, "Question now is, where's my outlet?"

He turned to look back, and realized that there was a lot more in this "closet" than he'd counted on. The clothing was actually bed sheets and straightjackets, and copies of the finances for the Embroilic Home were bizarrely hidden in this closet.

"Now who on earth keeps financial records in a janitor's closet?" he questioned himself, "Looks like somebody is driving this place out of business. Oh well, I'll solve that case some other time. First, there's this 'Andrea' to find."

Looking right above, he saw an old, run-down vent system. Would that work? He began doubting that it would. First, he'd have to turn into a snake to fit through it, and secondly, he'd be vulnerable if he tried so. Plus, would the vent pipes be able to hold his weight?

"Better look elsewhere," he thought to himself.

Taking the opportunity, he opened up the closet door and peeped out to see if traffic was clear. To all appearances, his only obstacle seemed to be a security camera, and even that was facing the opposite direction. He got into the elevator as soon as he could, surprised that he didn't even have to wait for it to come down.

"Now *this* is getting around!" he thought to himself, slipping his way through this corridor and that, even changing to Snake Kilo and hitching a ride on a wheelchair with a

reptile-loving, flighty old man. Luckily, the man was too old and too far gone in his mental capabilities to care that the snake was talking to him. This way, Replox found it easy to get to where he needed.

"A...A...Andrea!" the man croaked out.

"Wh...wh...what is it?" came the voice of a timid woman from the other end of the door leading from the hallway to a large room.

"I've got a cute litter feller for ya here, a nahce visitor! He don't hurt nothin'!"

"Well, I guess you could let him in, but I haven't had my medicine yet Mel, and I might panic!"

"Just don't panic if you see strange lights," Replox warned her.

"I'll try not to," she moaned out, sounding about as forlorn and insecure as anything.

"Thanks for your help, Mel," Replox commented, "And remember—don't let anybody know I'm here!"

"Righty-O feller!" came the painful-sounding response, "Ah gotta love ya yun' heruehs!"

With that, Mel and his wheelchair left the area, leaving Replox to shut the door and meet with Andrea. There she sat in the middle of the room, an almost average-sized girl of about 23 or 24. She sat on a small, wooden chair, looking as if

either done sobbing or having been about to sob. The curled red hair and aqua-colored shirt seemed to add to the image of sadness.

"You know of Herb Abstracadia, don't you?" Replox interrogated the sorry creature.

"I...guess," she muttered, looking up to see a two-colored puzzle man standing before her.

"Ahh!" she shrieked, getting ready to scream.

"Hey, I told you not to panic!"

"But you're one of them! Back off, Charlie! Go away! No!" she began panicking.

"Who's Charlie? Look, I'm Replox, Abstracadia sent me here to find you and get the information from you before Miscarriage gets to you. Please! Cooperate, and don't let anybody know I'm here!"

"Well, all right," she gave in.

"Now, I need to know how you got here, and what the Stork Gang wants with you, do you think you can inform me?"

"I...suppose," she muttered.

She then began telling Replox all about herself:

(Andrea's Story)

Andrea was originally a bank teller at the Maverick Central. This much was no problem at all. She wished to be a model, but knew that she stood better chance at being a bank teller. She grew up in Maverickville, where she had spent most of her life. Her dad had died when she was still very young, and her mom was a pesky cynic, towards all that was religious and towards all that promised anything to relieve her from her self-inflicted misery from not getting over the fact that Mr. Schlemming had died in that boating accident. Andrea generally just simply put up with her librarian mom for all of her life. She didn't appear to have much ambition at all. Just then, she had received a report during a medical examination that she was at risk for developing a chemical imbalance in her brain. Not wishing to plague her mom with more misery, she simply ignored the report. However, she began to feel the symptoms, and was on rare occasions subject to fits of irrational panic. She soon couldn't even manager her expert computer skills at home without panicking at warning messages.

That was when Charlie entered the picture. Charlie had for a long time been involved in Miscarriage's gang, and was looking for any opportunity to support Enjerié's cult, and therefore prove himself in the plan of conquest. He had plenty of the makings of a crook, but was most specialized in faking a soft spot for women. The problem, as he saw it, was finding one troubled enough to give him, who seemed a nobody from nowhere, a chance. When he met Andrea one day at the bank, while planning how to rob it, he immediately hit things off with her. She never suspected anything bad about him, as he talked only about the seeming "good" things about where he came from. His generic terminology would have alarmed Andrea, except she was too far into her condition then to be objective. He did all he could to make her feel secure. When she

suggested that she was searching for a church, Charlie urged her to wait a bit longer, and she'd know something "better."

Charlie soon lost his charm. He began wanting favors from her, favors of all sorts, including money. At first, timidly, Andrea gave in to all of the demands he made, giving him anything he pleased out of her, even against her own better judgment. It soon began to occur to her that Charlie Rigsbelt wasn't the friend that she'd thought him to be. Alone together one night, he shared with her all his darkest secrets, including the Stork Gang, and how now that she'd "given herself to him in almost every imaginable way," she couldn't turn back.

She knew now what Charlie really wanted from her, but could she resist him in the future? The answer to this was soon to be discovered. One night, he pounded on the door, demanding in degrading terms that Andrea should answer. Being accustomed to this, she did so nonchalantly, though with burning feelings inside to demand he leave if he ask to enter her room or take her money. Charlie grew especially confident about his plans for that night, giving that Andrea's mom usually spent most of that night working at the library after hours. Anything he'd try would be simply between him and Andrea.

He began by asking her for the usual, four dollars. She adamantly refused, and said she wouldn't give him anymore money until he paid her back. To this, he at first seemed to give in.

Yet, when she turned her back to him, he pulled out a cloth that he'd had in his pocket. Before she knew it next, Andrea found herself with a chloroform cloth to her face, and woke up in her bed with bruise marks on her arms and legs.

What she didn't know was what Charlie had planned on doing even if she had listened to him. The Maverick Central, in a decision that would shock most of the nation, decided that its vaults were safe enough that they'd hold a good \$17 billion worth of federal money inside! There would be a series of cards, as well as code numbers to punch with those. Andrea, who knew not what the codes were, was given the cards to hide in her dresser, where only she would have access to them. Charlie though, through the Stork Gang's excellent computer hacking system, was able to discover the sequence of the colored cards and codes, all of which would allow him and some gangsters, in disguise, to raid the vault. This would come in handy in him proving himself to Miscarriage, and being allowed to become an Abstra-matri monster, something he envied.

Also, this was useful for the treasury of Enjosh City. Charlie had never discussed that he knew these secrets with Andrea, but decided to act upon it shortly after he'd told her his connections with the Stork Gang, which caused her to doubt that the cards were safe in her dresser. Having been in her house on frequent occasions, Charlie knew right away where the bedroom was, and after taking some time injuring the unconscious Andrea for fun, hurled her in the bed. He then left her there to recover her senses in time. Meanwhile, he raided the dresser, found the cards, and took off.

Andrea soon began to fear Charlie, and knew she must find some place besides her mom's place if she wished to hide from this monster. She never imagined that Charlie had stolen the cards. As she arrived at work the following morning, ready to get to work, she was suddenly greeted by an angry manager,

who hollered: "There's the lady that's been embezzling from us, get her!"

Two cops and some dogs began chasing her down. That's when the last bit of chemical stability in her brain finally snapped, and stopped running and began convulsing on the ground, hollering: "Keep it away, keep it away! Nooooooooooo!" The cops soon got a hold of their dogs' leashes, and held them just far enough away from the panicking woman to keep them from tearing into her.

Charlie's plan was a total success! He and some members of the Stork Gang managed to use Andrea's identity card to break in to the bank late at night, after Charlie was done with Andrea. Next, he invaded the vault with the cards, and the men took off with all of the money. Because of the clothes they wore, they barely showed up on the security camera, and the infra-red camera couldn't read them through their special suits. They took off into the night, opening a passage up to Enjosh City so that they'd be long gone before the police could track them or identify them in any sort of way. Since they could've only gotten the cards from Andrea, she was a prime suspect. The bank gave her all the blame for the event, though she knew nothing of what happened.

Discove managed to investigate with her, and through an interview, discovered her innocence. She would've been put in jail, except her sudden decline into "panic disease" made her a perfect candidate for the city's mental health clinic instead, the Embroilic Home. After Discove proved her innocence, she was no longer to face charges, but the bank requested that she not be allowed to work for them again, and that she stay in the Embroilic Home until her condition was suitably treated.

Andrea's mom, upon discovering all the details, distanced herself from all the events. Abstracadia, who visited friends of his in the Embroilic Home from time to time, forged a precious friendship with Andrea, that would prove to be a life saver for her.

(End of Andrea's Story)

Andrea by this time had finished sharing the overview with Replox, and he was getting curious as to details. That's when they discovered that their time to visit had just been interrupted...

BOOM! FIZZ! The door leading into Andrea's room suddenly melted to the floor, letting off less-than impressive fumes in the process.

"Beautiful what you can do with these acids!" came a sinister voice.

"Charlie! No! He's here!" Andrea began to panic.

"What in the?" Replox began asking.

Upon turning around, his answer would shine forth. The two of them beheld not a man, but something they both could scarcely believe. What neither of them knew, was what had become of Charlie. Before them was a creature, apparently made out of massive, transparent red glass, with tubes, vents, and seals. Rather than a bloodstream, the creature appeared to simply have plastic-like tubes with red chemicals in them. There were also chemicals of various sorts,

all in liquid form, inside the "punch bowls," but not in the tubes.

Part 12: Molarity

Place: Andrea's Room, Embroilic Home, Merinda Twp.

"Your precious Charlie, as I once was, is dead, Andrea!" the creature blabbed, "They call me *Molarity* now! It's time to show you the secrets I should've shown you a long time ago!"

"Now hold on a second, chemistry freak!" Replox hollered back.

"Freak?" bellowed the giant vat of chemicals, "You and I both!"

Replox now understood how Andrea's guilt had accumulated such. Her lack of good judgement resulted in her being hunted down by a monster like this. The knowledge of something like this would drive almost any unstable girl to near-insanity. She obviously wouldn't have time to take her medicine now, and couldn't save herself either. While she'd need Rev. Steckel's counseling to deal with her past time guilt, she'd need Replox to save her from Molarity.

"Big, belly, big lip, perfect combo!" Replox challenged the horrendous foe.

"You can talk," came the bitter response, "but sulfuric acid talks louder!"

With that, Molarity rushed forth out of his fingers a spray of acid, that Replox was lucky to be able to dodge in time. Our hero found it convenient to grab onto a pipe and swing-kick the creature, but; but Molarity was quick to recover. As Replox attempted another punch, Molarity was ready for it this time. He blocked, with his monstrous punch-bowl-like arms, and knocked Replox back.

"Nice warm-up!" he commented.

"Ditto that!" Replox replied, recovering his balance.

"Now try some hydrochloric for size!"

Without another word, Molarity let out a huge blast from his fingers, spewing Replox in the chest with acid and knocking him over to the ground. Sparks and green light flew all over as our hero struggled to use his cubiyon energy to insta-heal. In the mere seconds following, Molarity shot a massive hole in the wall of Andrea's room, revealing Merinda Twp. on the outside. He shot a fire hydrant open with an acid blast, and grabbed Andrea with the other hand. Using the stream of water that rushed upward, he made his descent with her to the streets below. He made sure that he got the roughest part of the descent, and that they landed on the water stream first to ensure a somewhat safe landing from perilous heights.

Ever since being bound to the Molarity abstra-matrix, Charlie's strength and endurance were considerably increased, and he knew that he could withstand most falls. He miscalculated on this one though, and while Andrea was unharmed, he had in fact shattered his right foot. This could've proven fatal to him, except he quickly re-directed

much of his liquid chemicals into the upper leg, where he shut off a seal valve and saved himself from losing his body fluids. While this left him with a limp, he had a firm grip on Andrea as he hobbled into an alleyway across the street.

Replox had now recovered from the hydrochloric blast, having lost only a small amount of cubiyon energy but still feeling like a Volkswagen had hit him going 30 MPH.

Knowing that a blast like that alone could not be allowed to stop him, he quickly turned into Swan Kilo, and flew out of the building before anybody from Embroilic's security arrived to check out the scene. It didn't take him long from a bird's eye view to find Molarity in the alleyway, with Andrea struggling not to get into the red convertible parked there.

"Don't you see it, moron!?" Molarity addressed Andrea, "As my partner, Molality, we shall become a chemical catastrophe to this pathetic city! That worthless Rubik's snake can offer you nothing!"

"I don't want you anymore! You're a devil!" she screamed back at him, still struggling to escape.

"Struggling will do you no good!" Molarity hollered at her, "Miscarriage can't afford to let you rat on us! You're *ours* now! Serve Enjerié proudly! And if you think of running away, I'll blast you down with full-throttle sulfuric acid!"

"Shut up and return to the science lab!" Replox shouted back, descending at a slant from the sky and knocking the limp Molarity to the ground with a swift kick.

"You'll be sorry you were ever made!" Molarity hollered back, now forgetting about Andrea and focusing solely on Replox.

Replox found himself dodging Molarity's chemical spews from every angle, wishing he knew Phase #2 so that he could teach a lesson to this obnoxious science freak. Andrea knew that she couldn't just forget about her rescuer, but now she had to save him. To her luck, behind the large, green dumpster in the alleyway, Andrea found an only half-used pack of matches.

She had come to assume that at least a portion of the chemicals in Molarity's body were extremely flammable, and then began basing all her hopes of escape on that one assumption. Finding a piece of paper, she lit it with the match, while Molarity was too busy experimenting with the different kinds of chemicals he could aim at Replox.

"Run!" she hollered at Replox, as she began running like never before after throwing the flaming paper on one of Molarity's chemical spills.

Replox ran after her, and they both took off. Molarity, forgetting about his broken right foot, returned the circulation to his leg, absent-mindedly exposing the fumes of his leaking body fluids to the flames. Before he noticed Andrea's trick, it was too late. In one last shout of: "Nooo!," the evil creature known as Molarity had become nothing but a massive, fiery explosion, setting many buildings at once on fire in that area. Replox and Andrea simply kept on running, until they found a

place to hide in a nearby kids' day care playground, to recollect their thoughts.

"You're as dangerous as he is!" Replox hollered at the shaking girl.

"I..." she urged to defend herself.

"You're lucky those buildings there were all condemned and abandoned." Replox comforted, "But that was too drastic and risky to be noble. However, you probably would've ended more lives in the end if you hadn't blown up that freak."

"What'll I do?" Andrea began to sob.

"This place isn't safe for you anymore," Replox attempted to comfort her, as they could hear the fire trucks on their way to the sight. By the time they got there, hardly anything of Molarity's body would remain to investigate. For all they knew, this was simply the work of a careless arsonist. A news helicopter flying overhead caught a glimpse of Molarity catching himself on fire. It then later spotted Replox and Andrea resting in the playground, but the footage would be stored as nothingness for quite some time, until the head of the news station that the helicopter belonged to could find some twisted use for it. In the mean time, the helicopter crew left the scene, satisfied to say that some old, abandoned buildings had mysteriously caught on fire, and were only barely saved by the fire trucks. (Only to be torn down a few weeks later.)

Replox and Andrea knew that they had to find a non-conspicuous way getting to Friedburg if they were to receive help from Abstracadia. Andrea couldn't afford a taxi, but luckily, canoe rentals were unusually cheap that morning, and the two of them managed to paddle their way all the way to the marina on the Friedburg side of the Triple Play River with unexpected ease. (Replox didn't yet trust himself with flying with a girl on his back.) Finally, they got to Abstracadia's house, where the real information sharing would begin.

Place: Abstracadia's Home

"We may need to inform Rev. Steckel of this one too," Abstracadia reflected, when he'd heard the entirety of Andrea's miserable and guilty past.

"This too?" Andrea asked Abstracadia, not quite certain what he meant.

"How can Kilo here go to church when his form might freak out the congregation? He's been wondering that a long time now and I won't let it continue to bug him. I've been considering showing my face in those places myself more often. Also, Anyce and the boy don't think it right that they should be under the same roof like this, unmarried. I don't know about the idea of a woman being wed to a snake, nor about how to handle you, but I hope that man has the guidance to know how to do so."

Andrea, after hearing about Replox's story, had gained new appreciation for the Rubik's Gang, and was now determined to join them as soon as she was chemically, mentally, and emotionally stable enough to do so.

"In the mean time, we must keep you out of sight, " Abstracadia warned her, as she gazed on thoughtfully at the faces before her.

"I wouldn't' doubt it if Enjerié plans to take the mayorhood of Triple Play by force," Abstracadia explained, "and if he can't do it alone, Miscarriage will stop at nothing to make it happen. I sense he's plotting something sinister right this second, and won't think twice about knocking you out of the way."

Andrea just mournfully understood, bowing her head and agreeing to do whatever the group told her to. She would spend the following nights in Abstracadia's basement, and then with Kilo and Anyce. Little did any of them know however, exactly how precious Andrea would become to the cause of Replox, nor how correct Herb's predictions really were about Miscarriage. Indeed, Miscarriage did plan something sinister soon, something one would think only Abstra-matri world dwellers capable of doing so perfectly well—abducting every important official they could from City Hall...

Part 13: Abductions

Place: Triple Play City Hall, Merinda Twp.

While Andrea was getting prepared with the group for whatever, she began thinking of the moral support she'd be getting. She knew that this could very well be a learning opportunity for her to start a new life. However, in the mean time, she kept a low profile with the Rubik's Gang.

Mayor Ernest Thrum though, should've done the same. Had he any idea what danger he was in, he probably would've. Thrum looked like a classic cowboy in every way that mythic cowboys were understood to look. This night, exactly two nights after the day of Molarity's demise, was Thrum's birthday.

"Thank you, everybody!" he commented to the crowd in front of the podium where he stood, "I can't easily say how thankful I am, to have the Thrum statue in my honor, mounted in Friedburg this very morning..."

City Hall was well lit up for that night's social event. That is, the area where the speech was being delivered was well-lit-up. The rest of the building though, to little anybody's knowledge, for some reason was very dark. If any of the security guards had ventured out into the hallway, they'd've actually heard the sounds of breaking glass, as the lights were being shattered. On the support boards of the ceiling, and all over the hallways, Stork Gang members were posting themselves. Miscarriage, of course, was giving the orders, and hiding inside the men's room.

"I don't see any sign of them yet!" Gordini complained to Miscarriage through a walkie-talkie.

"You idiot!" Miscarriage whispered back, "Shut up, or we never will!"

"Woman coming from room, should I move in?" whispered a masked figure to Miscarriage.

"Go for it!" came the response.

Thrum's secretary, Janice Myrle, was heading for the ladies' room to put some more make-up on. The first thing she noticed as she got out into the hallway was the way that everything was suddenly dark. This was very unusual. Who could've blown the fuse, why, and/or how? The next thing she'd have to deal with though was a sudden, cold sensation on her arm.

"Not another move," came a quiet, yet calm and commanding voice from the darkness.

Before she could even react, she felt the sudden stinging presence of a needle, and then all was complete blackness, before she could even shriek.

"I have a question," whispered one of the men into his walkie talkie, intending to know where the ultimate aim should be for hauling away the sedated secretary.

"You know where that former police station is?" Miscarriage whispered back to the man with the secretary.

"What about it?"

"Haul her in the van, stat! We'll hide in the abandoned building across the street from the station!"

Before long, the man was long gone. Miscarriage, although he was partially made of metal, began to feel the heat of the moment like never before. This was it! As soon as somebody squealed to the mayor that City Hall was under attack, the whole Stork Gang could collapse in on them! Sure

enough, Hugh Launder, the mayor's bond advisor, stepped out to see if his wife would finally show up as she had planned to. The mayor was cutting the cake right at the moment, with no clue as to the threat that lay behind closed doors only a few yards away!

"Men, do you have your abstra-teleport devices ready? You only get a few shots before they wear out!"

"Ready!" came the reply into Miscarriage's walkie talkie.

At the following instant, Hugh noticed the men on the roof's support boards, and gave the signal unknowingly: "Hooowah...Hooowah...Hooowah...We're under attack!"

"What in?" exclaimed the shocked mayor.

He'd have his answer within seconds. The doors burst open, and a whole squadron of fully-armed and fully-armored abstra-matri troops raided the building. The normal security police that were on duty immediately chickened out and fled the premises, right along with all of the nongovernmental guests, who were readily allowed to go free.

"Congratulations, Fuegbarian of the future!" Miscarriage taunted of Thrum, revealing the beginnings of Enjeri's plans for this seemingly doomed man.

"Alrighty you!" the confused Thrum began scolding, "Get on back to your forsaken Halloween store, pronto!"

"Those are hardly my origins or plans!" Miscarriage answered back, "And in the future, you'll be taking orders from me!"

Before the mayor could object, the last thing he saw before total darkness was a sedative dart, which had he not jumped, could easily have hit him right between the eyes!

"Aim lower! Who taught you how to shoot?" Miscarriage quick-scolded the marksman.

"Should we plunder the place here?" asked a pack-rat member of the Stork Gang troops, running up to Miscarriage with more than enough energy to keep running.

"No, keep it in good enough shape that Enjerié can take credit for repairing our damages!"

"Right on!" the man agreed, going back to his business but disappointed that he didn't have the permission to steal anything.

Due to a combined effort with the abstr-teleport devices of the troops, the van was able to make a complete getaway with the abducted City Hall officials. The police arrived, to their amazement, at least 20 seconds too late. Miscarriage, all the while, had plenty of time to arrange his hideout on the top floor of the abandoned business building. Overall, seven City Hall officials were captured, that number including Thrum, the secretary, and the bond advisor.

Place: The Hamilton's home.

While John and Anyce slept like babies that night, Kilo wasn't particularly settled. He felt uncomfortable about Andrea being with them. After all, she was marked. The Stork Gang had spies posted all over the city to look for her, and trying to catch her from all of her favorite hangout locations. If she were spotted in the Hamilton home, it could mean the end of everything for the Rubik's Gang! These worried thoughts, as well as the ongoing inner tension about living with Anyce before they could elope, kept him awake unusually late this particular night. Finally, he couldn't stand it anymore. He knew exactly what moves to make to get free, and then slithered his way to the outdoors. Changing into a bird of paradise, he flew to the top of the house, where he felt he could observe anything he wanted to in motion. Just then—shoom! He saw a violent green light, as the abductors used their devices together to allow for an instant ride into Enjosh City, where the police couldn't get to them.

"Not good!" he thought to himself.

With his excellent vision, he managed to trace the source of the light as having had to have come from somewhere in Merinda Township. He quickly switched into Swan Kilo mode, and flew over to Merinda from across the river. The river quietly streamed by in its blackness below him. Next though, he began thinking to himself.

"Now, why would that light have come from this part of Merinda? Obviously, Enjerié's up to this, or that rat-stork Miscarriage! What's here that they could want?..."

Then however, it hit him: "City Hall!!!!"

He wasted no further time in getting there, arriving before the police even thought to leave investigating the sight of the green light and disappearing van. Upon arriving safe on land, Kilo rapidly changed into Replox when he was certain that nobody was watching. He rushed into the building, to behold that his worst fears of the moment had indeed come true.

The hallway was a wreck, and it was obvious that he had arrived too late to save the night. He wasn't quite yet sure what all had happened, but as he stood still in the hallway and mentally prepared to go home before anybody knew he was there, all he could think was: "Not good..."

Part 14:

Rev. Steckel & Uneasy Situations

Place: Crown-of-Life Lutheran Church, Merinda Twp.

It was a hot morning the following day, and Steckel had to get the last sermon notes in order for the upcoming Sunday. Inside his small office in the church building, he realized that there was one thing missing.

"What next?" came the voice of the secretary, Miss Hilman's.

"What is it?" came the only half-interested interrogation of Steckel.

"The air conditioner fuse just popped again!"

"We're almost done here, let's just tough it out for now. We can always have Jim come in and reset it on Sunday."

"Right," came the less-than impressed, sweaty secretary.

Suddenly, Steckel succumbed to a fit of groaning.

"What's wrong?" the Miss Hilman asked, "Forget the groceries again?"

"No, Miss Hilman," Steckel moaned, "I'm trying to think of what I can say here."

"What's the key thing in the discussion for Sunday?"

"How cohabiting is not a glorious shortcut, but a cheat. The Bible's advice to the contrary is a much better alternative, and there's no time better than the present to switch to the better method for young couples."

"Well, you already have, from what I read, some interesting things blasting the philosophy behind 'the cheat,' so what are you lacking?"

"An example to draw from."

"Aren't there plenty of examples in our own congregation to show the one hand vs. the other?" Miss Hilman interrogated.

"Yes, but none that want to be even implicitly mentioned."

Steckel was in for more than just another sermon suggesting the old way vs. man-made shortcuts to fulfillment, and which was ultimately better. At the moment that he was about to sit down, Miss Hilman had gone into the entryway, hoping to peek outside and get some fresh air after more time than she cared for in the fast-growing-stuffy office. Right then is when Anyce and Abstracadia's cars showed up, with a tale that neither Miss Hilman nor Rev. Steckel were ready to believe.

"I...think they want to talk to you," she stated.

She saw the whole group, which included Snake Kilo, Anyce, Andrea, and Abstracadia, but only recognized Anyce.

"Who?" Steckel asked, puzzled.

"Uh...there with Anyce."

"Anyce..."

"Hamilton," Miss Hilman concluded, before going to the fellowship hall area to see if the new tables that were ordered had arrived or not.

"Penny, you goofball!" she thought to herself, discovering a note in very tiny print explaining why the old tables were still present, "Why didn't you tell me over the phone that the truck had been hijacked? I practically need a microscope to read this thing anyway!"

All the while that Miss Hilman occupied herself with management duties of those varieties; the Rubik's Gang had explained the whole situation to Steckel of the predicament that they were in. The response was a difficult one for any of them to draw on.

"Uh..." came the initial response of Steckel, "I don't...know about this."

"These two need to stick together, at least at night," Abstracadia defended the group's plan, "With Enjerié apparently not willing to stop at anything, we can't leave either of them with loose ends!"

"I'm not saying that I don't have the ability, I'm just still not sure that I could justify the act," came the nervous response of the humiliated reverend, "You see, I've never eloped couples before..."

"It's to keep Replox a secret!" Abstracadia urged.

"Kevin?" asked Steckel.

"Yep, it's me, sure enough."

"I hope you understand something before we go ahead with our plan."

"Go ahead," came the confident signal.

"First, it won't be easy, even if you do wed Anyce, to keep your identity a secret. Should she be captured, anything

could be forced out of her. Even if you two are the best at hiding out and keeping a low profile, without the possibility of physical intimacy between you, and with the both of you always somehow putting your lives on the line every day that you live, it won't normally be easy to keep a marriage together."

"We've already been preparing for that," Kilo reassured.

"Next, you must keep constant communication up when you're not fighting evil. If you two don't find common grounds and maintain proper communication, then the lack of intimacy will destroy your marriage."

"Hey, as a shape shifter, I can pose as almost anything."

"And I'll be able to write him up as my pet snake, and record his progress in health on my charts for my reptile section of my reports in Animal Medicine 103," added Anyce.

"Anyce," Steckel changed conversation partners to, "you'll have it just as hard if not harder inside than Kevin will. Should he die in battle for whatever, reason, you have to be willing to admit to yourself that a greater power is at work allowing such to happen."

With this, Anyce remembered Kevin's words during the past Christmas season: "Never let my demise be your own."

"Noted," she responded.

"Also remember that I'm not certain about this deal," Steckel added in, "I've read through both the Old and New Testaments multiple times, but I've never found any mention of the Abstra-matri world, of Domoril, or anything that would justify eloping a young woman with a puzzle-code bound shape shifter. What we're about to do in a week or so here, we're doing entirely on theory. I urge all of you to pray heavily about this one, cause it's not going to be easy to defend it against outside criticism, should the outside come across it."

"Good point," Andrea added her say in on the matter.

"Anyce, one more thing," Steckel added.

"Yes?"

"What does your dad think of this situation?"

"He's backing us up the whole way on it. Also, if we run into trouble, he says he'll use his radio show to defend our public image."

"Good," Steckel commented, now feeling the stuffy heat and humidity of which Miss Hillman was complaining.

"Here's something that I'd like to wish for all of you, Rubik's Gang," Steckel added in, "I urge all of you to pray that the public see Enjerié's true colors in time. Fighting his influence won't be easy, given that he's extremely popular in both worlds."

"Noted," came the dual-response of Kilo and Anyce.

"And what about those other two, do you have anything you'd like to discuss?"

"First things," Abstracadia broke in, "How can Kilo and Anyce attend church without the secret getting loose?"

"That's the easy part! Anyce sits in the balcony, or downstairs if she must. There's enough echo and reverberation in the sanctuary that the men repairing the bell two years ago could easily understand most of the sermon from on the roof. It'll be the perfect hideout for this not-to-be-seen child of God!"

"As for myself," Abstracadia got to his second point, "I've been hiding from the public's face for quite some time. After several years of not even wanting to crawl out of hiding even to set foot in a church, I feel like I've been missing something. The death of my brother has made me a coward for too long, and now the times call for courage!"

"Well said," came the intrigued response over Abstracadia's melodramatic tone, "But what about this one here?"

Andrea felt a little shy about telling a pastor all that bothered her most, but knew that this was one of the most efficient methods she had of putting the past away for good.

"Uh...I'll tell you another day," she spat out, "It's longer and more complicated than these guys, but I'm sure it's something more in tune with what you usually hear."

"All right then, I'll see all of you next Monday. Abstracadia, I'd be glad to get to know you better, and if you need me for any advice, don't be afraid to call. But remember, if I can't be there, the one who can is just few pages away, even closer," came Steckel's reply.

What nobody in the group inside the church knew was that all the while, Miscarriage's spies had been spying on Andrea ever since she walked into the building.

"Should we try now to get her?" radioed a masked spy to Miscarriage over a walkie talkie.

"When I give you the okay, you can try the gas! If that fails though, we have a backup plan!"

"What is the backup plan?"

"Thanks to our hackers and their invading of Abstracadia's computer files, and Molarity's input before we lost him, we know that Andrea and that blond girl are going to be at Modellium Clothing Store in the Friedburg Mall come tomorrow! Andrea always shops there, and won't even know that the desk clerk there, Sandra Mintels, is one of us! If this church raid fails, we can always capture her at the mall!"

"Should I try to send the gas bomb through the window?"

"Whatever, go for it!"

With that, the masked man wasted little time breaking the window, and launching a gas bomb right through it! Replox though, had come to suspect any sort of disturbance might have to do with Enjerié, the man he now burned with desire to undo.

"Run! Get some fresh air!" he hollered, as he turned into Phase #1 and took it upon himself to dispose of the bomb before it let off too much gas and knocked everybody unconscious. Seeing the easy solution, he launched it out the same window from which it came, and began to run out of the building to find the man who launched it.

"KA-BOOM!" came a sudden beam of something powerful as it knocked Replox back against the side of the church after racing out the door.

"Oooft!" came the grunt of a shocked puzzle hero, "What was that about?"

Replox knew that hardly any cubiyon had been wasted on that blast, but it was enough to keep him from recovering his senses quickly enough to stop the masked man from hopping into a gray car and making a getaway. The Stork Gang wasn't even counting on hitting Replox, they assumed a normal man would come after them, and likewise assumed that the energy blast would be enough to stun or kill an ordinary man.

The rest of the Rubik's Gang came rushing out, seeing the hero, dazed but not hurt.

"Those brutes!" Andrea thought aloud.

"Don't worry about Replox, Andrea," came Abstracadia's warning, "It's *you* they're after!"

"Me!!!?" came the reply of near-panic.

"Yes, you," Abstracadia reinforced.

"Why me?"

"Molarity," came Replox's reply, "They want you because of Molarity."

"They can't have me!" she grew hysterical, "I won't become Molality, never!"

"It's not so much about that," Anyce corrected, "They fear that you might have told us too much, or will. They're not gonna let you stand by and remember, and therefore inform us of, anything more that Molarity told you."

"What'll we do?" Andrea interrogated.

"Stick to the plan for now," Abstracadia insisted, as Replox began standing up and scratching his head, "Anyce won't be able to leave your sight in that mall tomorrow. We just can't afford it, not with spies everywhere!"

"Another thing," added Steckel, "Pray about it!"

They then all looked at each other, as if attempting emotionally to all be in agreement. There was no turning back for them now: Replox and the Rubik's Gang were now officially in business, and Enjerié had to go down. They knew

that Enjerié's demise would indeed be a long, hard battle, but that in the mean time, Miscarriage could not be allowed to continue. Exactly how they'd get over this secondarily mentioned obstacle though, would test all of them, particularly Replox, in the very near future.

Part 15: Tracker/Transmitter Socks

Place: Abstracadia's Home

It was already beginning to grow late, and the sunset was to happen any minute. In nearby homes on the other sides of Abstracadia's fences, children were still running through their sprinklers, with the adults struggling to urge their kids to get back inside and get ready for bed.

Given there wasn't anybody to observe, Replox and Anyce made themselves content in some recliners in the backyard. Andrea, observing the sunset, now felt more hopeless than ever. At the same time though, she had a renewed sense of a different hope.

This ambivalence could only be explained by her attempt to compensate the befriending of Abstracadia and the others with the damage Charlie Rigsbelt had done on her life. Was there something in that sunset indicating a bright future over the horizon?

"Andrea," came the calm voice of a tired-sounding Herb.

"Yes?"

"I'd like to inform you of something before you go home with them tonight."

"Would you just look at those two?" she interrupted his train of thought, "In all the world's sense, they've lost everything when he fell off that bridge. Yet, though they have no hope as far as any of us are capable of seeing, they still seem content, fulfilled. Their chances to be together could be ended easily any second, yet they seem neither worried nor despairing. Why is that?"

"They sense that in Heaven, they will always be able to be together; and there, they will have none of the trials which characterize them here," Abstracadia responded.

"Do you believe such, that even if a life on Earth is ruined, there can still be hope of renewed life elsewhere?"

"I'd like to believe it, Andrea. I'm a stubborn old man, and I've been unwilling to believe a lot of things. It's a paradox to humanity, which embraces so firmly the belief that the ultimate virtue is the right to a free will, that sometimes the best things Heaven can let happen to us are things over which we have no choice or control."

"Do you think that you ever can believe any of the things Rev. Steckel said this morning?" Andrea interrogated.

"With all that has happened today, I'd believe almost anything right now," Abstracadia gravely sighed, "I remember Steckel saying this, while you were off brushing your hair in the ladies' room. He said that while man can talk, only the

Spirit can convince of truth. The Spirit has his own timetable, so all I need is time. Thanks to recent events, our hearts are more open now than they would've been say, three years ago. This opening of our hearts allows us to put our mind's defenses down, but that isn't what I came to tell you about."

"What is it then?" she asked.

Anyce and Replox by this time were planning to go inside. The mosquitoes were already catching on to the fact that Anyce was present, and they weren't about to let a perfectly romantic night like this be spoiled by anything, not the Stork Gang nor the mosquitoes. Once they were all inside, Abstracadia called them into his bedroom.

"Now Andrea," he replied, calmer than usual.

"Yes?"

"This is something I wanted to keep a secret until such a time as now."

All three of the young Rubik's Gang members looked on, wondering what Abstracadia had in store next.

"A pair of rainbow socks?" Replox scoffed.

"Not exactly," Abstracadia corrected, "tracker/transmitter socks!"

"What do I need these for?" Andrea asked, smiling for one of the first times.

Already, her confidence level with herself and with hopes for the future was rising. She wasn't sure what to do with ruthless crooks after her, and a mom that didn't seem to care, but this was to her as the family she'd never had.

"It's simple, Andrea," he continued, "Replox here will be given a tracking device to hide in his glove along with his abstra-matri communicator. If you are captured while wearing these socks, we'll be able to find you."

"And with it, Miscarriage's hideout!" Replox emphasized.

"Let's not be too hasty," Abstracadia warned him, "You don't fully know Phase #2 yet, and Miscarriage may be more than your Phase #1 skills can handle."

"Noted," Replox reassured.

"Another thing, Andrea," Abstracadia insisted, "Don't attempt to wash these things on your own. I don't have a spare pair for you yet, and wearing these in public will be essential to rescuing you should Miscarriage strike again."

"I understand," she sadly nodded her head.

"Molarity was only a minor taste, I fear, of what's to come," Abstracadia warned.

Place: The streets of Friedburg

As Replox changed into Cat Kilo, and Andrea hopped in so Anyce could drive all three of them home, Abstracadia could only stand there and sigh. He knew that a long road

could easily be ahead of them, and admired the determination of these three young creatures against inestimable odds. As soon as the car turned left and was no longer in sight, Herbert Abstracadia relaxingly closed the door, calling it a night.

Overhead though, a helicopter flew. This one was the Stork Gang's personal helicopter, stolen off a large farm in Nebraska. Inside, the pilots kept a vigilant eye out for the gray junk car that they had come to identify as Andrea's means of transportation. Miscarriage was now dead-set on capturing Andrea. The longer she was with Anyce, the greater the chance that she might squeal. There was no proof that she already had, but they weren't about to let the opportunity arise much longer.

"This Anyce girl seems to be everywhere with our targeted Andrea!" radioed one of the pilots to Miscarriage.

"Very well, return home, you two!" came the response.

"It won't be easy to capture the girl in the mall tomorrow if Anyce is always by her side," the pilot warned.

"Do you think that our Sandra Mintels is stupid?" Miscarriage scolded, "Tomorrow could be our finest hour!"

"But how will we keep Replox and Abstracadia out of our way?"

"Leave those details to me to figure out!"

"We read you," the pilot responded, "Over and out..."

Part 16: Trashing the Bully

Places: The Jungle Gym Laser Bully, The Friedburg Mall, and the Hamilton household.

The following morning couldn't have been more serene at the Jungle Gym Laser Bully facility. In fact, Abstracadia could've even argued that in this case, peace was Hell! For the past three previous months, business had been incredibly slow at the facility, and the owner of the franchise was contemplating firing Abstracadia if business didn't pick up. Abstracadia wasn't too far worried about that though. He knew very well that he wouldn't be able to keep his position there for long if he were to continue functioning with the Rubik's Gang. How to handle that? There were a few options, but he decided to not worry about that until the laser facility fired him. His employment there though, would end sooner than he thought.

"KA-BOOM!" came the horrible sound from the entrance. Scattering through misplaced files and phone calls threatening to close down the facility, Abstracadia could barely look up before seeing what he feared most would happen.

"This is for hiding our girl!" came the horrific voice of Miscarriage.

"What do you want here!?" Abstracadia insisted an answer.

"Call anyone for help you wish!" Miscarriage replied, "Just don't call the police, or Gordini here will have to shoot you!"

Abstracadia knew exactly what they planned on next, and a good idea that they knew whom he would end up calling. Immediately, Miscarriage and his men stormed into the jungle gym and laser tag section of the two-story building, and wasted no time at all wreaking havoc to it. They didn't use as powerful of bombs as they did to destroy the entrance of the building, but they were certain to cut every net. The tubes, they made certain to blow to bits, and they stole began stealing the batteries from the laser guns.

Abstracadia wasn't about to let these Abstra-matri goons get away with destroying his very means of making a living quite so soon. When Gordini was distracted, he immediately dashed for the nearest phone, and called up Kilo.

"I certainly hope that kid is awake by now!" Abstracadia thought aloud.

Elsewhere, the real scheme was being carried out.

"Doesn't this pair of jeans just look marvelous on me?" Andrea asked Anyce while they were in the Modellium Clothing Store.

"I, guess," Anyce stumbled to comment.

"I say we try these on," Andrea stated.

"Well, I suppose nothing much can happen to you in a dressing room."

"Oh, I'll get the dressing rooms ready for you two," came the voice of the nearby cashier.

The two ladies, absorbed in fantasies about their clothes, soon forgot that the real reason they were in the mall was to protect one another from the suspicious eye of Miscarriage and his goons. Andrea was soon lead by the cashier to one dressing room, with Anyce in the one right next to it. The cashier was actually none other than Sandra Mintels, the middle-aged, hair dyed brown, skinny lady to which Miscarriage had given the assignment of ambushing the two girls! As soon as the girls were getting ready to try on their different pairs of pants, and Mintels was no longer visible to them, she immediately pulled out of the pocket of her navy blue suitcoat a walkie talkie, and then dashed to the front of the store.

"We move, now!" she commanded into it, with an evil smile of success on her semi-wrinkled face.

Suddenly, the door of Andrea's dressing room popped open. Andrea, as most women would do in the case of such invaded privacy, shrieked.

"It's over now, little rat!" came the voice of the masked gangster.

Before she could scream again, he quickly shot her in the left shoulder, the sedative not missing at all. In a panic to get it out, she pulled with ravenous speed, ignoring the pain. Yet, before she could move another step, all became blackness to her. Anyce, realizing that the sinister tone in the cashier's voice really was an indication of an ambush, popped

the door open with all the force that Kevin had once suggested she do in such a circumstance. She pounded over some of the men, but didn't waste any time staying to fight them all off. She even forgot, for a second, about saving Andrea. At that moment, not knowing if Andrea had merely been knocked out or poisoned and killed by the shot, all Anyce could think of was saving herself, and doing that in a hurry! Yet, as she was quick to find out, there was a man at the exit to the dressing room hallway, also with a gun! Nowhere to run, she immediately raised her hands, implicitly pleading the men for mercy, feeling utterly defeated. Yet mercy, they'd have little. As soon as she had her back turned to the one dressing room door nearest the exit, yet a third man came out, wasting no time shooting her in the back.

Upon that moment, Sandra re-entered the hallway, making sure that all the other customers had left and the gray bars had gone down, signifying that the store was to close much earlier than usual that morning. Other than a few suspicious would-be shoppers, nobody questioned Modellium's closing early.

"We've got the would-be squealer right here!" one of the masked men commented to the malevolent woman, "What should we do with her?"

"Put her in the safe, you know, the one with a few air holes punched into it!" came the stiff reply, "Miscarriage will be glad to have this one back!"

"What about this other girl?" asked one of the other masked men.

"She's of no consequence to us. You, over there!" she commented to the man farthest back in the group, also wearing a mask, "Do with her as you like, just get her out of here unharmed, and make sure that nobody sees her!"

"I'll find out who she is, and drop her off at home if possible, saying that she collapsed at the mall. If nobody questions any further, I'll leave before she wakes up," the man concluded.

He was somewhat more compassionate about how he treated women than most of his work companions were.

"Very well, but get both of these two out of here, now!" she scolded.

At the same time as this duel-kidnapping was going on, Abstracadia was paging the Hamilton home.

"Answer kid, answer!" Abstracadia thought aloud.

The phone rang, and Kilo wasted little time becoming Replox Phase #1 to answer it.

"Hello?"

"Replox! Get over here to the Jungle Gym Laser Bully, fast! Miscarriage is trashing the place!"

"It could be a trap!" Replox commented back, "But I'm on my way anyway!"

With that and hanging up the phone, he rushed out the door, changing into Swan Kilo with now seemingly

effortless ease, and flew with all the speed he could muster to the sight of the laser facility.

"All this time," he thought to himself while in the sky, "I thought this was the safest building in the city."

His mind began to float back to memories of laser games galore he had played there in the past. If not for this place, he would never have been able to become Replox. His family despised most martial arts facilities; leaving the gymnastics/laser tag fighting skills he'd learned here the backbone of all his later training with Abstracadia in the backyard of Abstracadia's house. He didn't have much time to daydream though; the facility was nearly in shambles. Also, every second that he took getting there, Abstracadia's life might be in all the more danger.

Right as he got there though, he saw a van suddenly vanish, with a blindingly bright green light as it did so! He knew now that once again, the villains had made their getaway. Yet, what about Abstracadia? Was he still okay? Replox quickly touched down on the ground and switched from Swan Kilo back into Phase #1, running to inside the shattered remaining walls and the rubble that now characterized the laser facility, the same way he'd ran into the hallway of City Hall not too long ago to discover his tardiness with preventing that action.

"Herb!" he hollered into the rubble, hoping to find something like a man to talk to.

"Over here, Replox!" came a voice sounding as if choking on the dust of the rubble.

He ran over to the spot where the voice had come from, seeing Herb covered head-to-toe in rubble dust, with only the remaining file cabinet left of his office space, now exposed to the wide-open.

"Why'd they have to attack here!?" Replox demanded an explanation.

"Oh!...", Abstracadia struggled to get the words out, "It was a trick, Kevin, a trick! I tried to call you call you back on your abstramatri communicator and warn you, but they found my transmitter and stole it! They also cut the phone line so I couldn't call you back there either!"

"What do you mean, a trick!?"

"They were using me as a decoy! While you were attempting to get over here in a vain attempt to rescue me and the facility, they successfully captured Andrea!"

"What about Anyce!!!!!!?" Replox grew desperate, shaking the old man.

"Anyce, they said, was fine! They'd drop her off at her house, alive and well. She'd regain consciousness within 15 minutes of being dropped off. Anyce isn't the point! Andrea's been captured!"

A brief pause came over the both of them, as they now realized the jeopardy they were in.

"What will we do without the laser facility for income?" Replox asked, suddenly realizing that much more was at risk than Anyce or Andrea's convenience.

"We'll have to give it up, boy," Abstracadia sighed in displeasure, "If we can, we'll have to put the Rubik's Gang financially into the hands of Discove now. As for this mission, well, it's up to God and those rainbow-colored socks to save our mission now..."

Both of them looked around then, waiting for the police to come so Abstracadia could inform them of the situation. Already, the sirens were audible. Replox knew that he'd have to change back into Swan Kilo so as to not risk being seen. All the while though, the both of them looked at the remains of that which to Abstracadia for months and to Kevin for years had been *the* place to be. An overwhelming sensation of hopelessness and despair attempted desperately to set into them at the sight of the wreck. Although not destroyed completely beyond the ability to repair, with the loss of business that the facility had been suffering from, there was now no longer any doubt that the building's owner would rather take the loss to the insurance company and leave with the cash than bother rebuilding. Alas, the Jungle Gym Laser Bully now ceased to exist, and Andrea's life was now in the hands of a ruthless, silvery stork monster. Luckily for Replox, Miscarriage knew nothing about the socks...

Part 17: Miscarriage's Plan Spelled Out

Place: An abandoned commercial building, 17 stories high, being used as Miscarriage's hideout; Merinda Twp.

Andrea, who'd been given a stronger sedative than Anyce, began waking up now that it had been several hours since her abduction at the mall. Suddenly, the warm air she'd remembered at the mall was replaced by the cold sensation of something metallic bound to her arms. She looked all around to see what her predicament was, seeing not even her clothes were the same! What could have happened? The cuffs that she now recognized to be cuffs were chained to the wall, with her arms in a downward position. Being no escape artist of any sort, she knew that she wasn't about to go anywhere for a while. She also noticed that she didn't feel the urge to panic as normal, meaning that somebody must have given her some of her medicine while she was asleep. Yet, what was going on?

"Ugggh!" she repulsed, looking to see what she was wearing! Her blue jeans had been replaced by a long, brown skirt, one which looked more fitting on a 4th-century B.C. king's concubine than a 22nd-century girl running away from a ruthless cult-gang. Even her top, formerly an aqua-turquoise woman's shirt, had been replaced by a brown bra-top of the same fabric as the skirt! She wasn't entirely certain if anything was on underneath the skirt, but prayed that nobody would try to find out. She was also barefooted, leaving her to complete bewilderment as to where she was and how she got to be dressed in such outrageous clothing. Looking up, she

saw that the wall she was attached to was really a giant machine! It had violently glowing-teal lights on the top of it, and rounded itself off at the top! The ceiling was incredibly high, suggesting that she was on the 16th floor and the 17th had been knocked away to make the ceiling of the 16th higher.

She now felt the urge to panic, even *with* her medicine! Looking down again, she could see that even her belly and feet were attached in some way to this machine. What on earth was going to happen to her!? Facing her right, she could see that she wasn't the only one attached to the machine! Also in a bizarre assortment of clothing, she saw seven others, still unconscious! Who could they be? It was very dark in the room there, despite the small window near the top at what was to her the far right of the room. No light at all, not even the city lights, appeared to be shining through it.

Nightfall had already come, and the teal light of the machine was all the light she would have to look forward to. She gazed gradually at the faces of the bizarrely clothed beings, if they could even be called human, trying to decide who they either were or had at one time been. Finally, she began to understand and clearly determine the face of Ernest Thrum—these were the abducted City Hall officials! She gasped, and then looked to her left. What she saw to her left would horrify her even more than the sight of the ghostly City Hall officials—Miscarriage himself! The evil, yellow eyes without pupils gazed back at her, and quickly the silvery beast became animated.

"So, you have discovered the beginning of a new life!" he commented to her, as he began to stand up completely,

revealing that he was wearing his special multi-blade glove-weapon set.

"What new life? I only see death here!" she accused back.

"Do you honestly think you have anything left to live for as a mere woman, with a rebel snake as your partner?"

"What *are* you talking about?"

"Replox!" he hollered at her, waving a sword-length blade at her, much to her intimidation, "He was originally meant to be one of us! Had that traitor, Rod Yibvur, not so thoroughly turned him against us, we could've set the mind control on him, and Rubiksato the Serpent Terrorist would have been the result! Not only the role of mayor of Triple Play, but possibly even the world could be in Enjerié's sights by now!"

"You killed his family off for your money and power lust!" she answered back, "Do you think that, knowing that, he would've joined your side anyway?"

"A mere desire of vengeance? That could too easily have been altered!"

"It goes deeper than that! Seeing you as a prime evil that must be prevented from ever engaging itself on the future is the real reason he continues to fight! He would never fight only out of a sense of revenge; I already know him better than that. Anyce does even more so, being that she's known him much longer than I have!"

"Very well!" stated Miscarriage, "We obviously can't *persuade* you to join us, we'll just simply have to *force* your joining instead!"

Upon hearing this, the now awakening Thrum began a tirade: "You have no authority to force anything on that girl! I can hardly yet open my eyes to see her, but you'll be sorry if you do anything here!"

"Shut up, you buffoon!" Miscarriage commanded, "As Molality, Miss Schlemming, you shall be the PERFECT replacement for that blundering fool Molarity!"

"Noooooo!" she began to shriek.

"Silence! The machine hasn't been started yet, but I'll warn you! The Molality abstra-matrix hasn't yet been...perfected!"

"So what will happen to me if it fails?" she asked, now growing very timid.

Suddenly, Miscarriage took the sword-length blade projecting from his right glove weapon, and swung it violently at Andrea, stopping just short of her neck, indicating a hidden desire to slit her throat.

"Kill you, most likely," he bellowed.

With that, he slowly drew the blade away from her, much to her peace of mind.

"You tyrant buzzard, you!" Thrum began scolding.

"The Fuegbarian abstra-matrix is perfected though!" Miscarriage shot back at the "insolent" mayor.

The other City Hall officials began waking up, realizing that they weren't gonna be going home unshaken *this* particular night! With that, Miscarriage allowed some of his men, who had stayed behind with him in the concrete world to operate the machine, to reveal themselves to the near-panic-stricken captives.

"Behold!" Miscarriage commanded of all of them. With that, he lifted a black cover off a glass box, revealing the inner contents to everyone's eyes.

"This, everyone, is a silver cubiyon! Red cubiyon energy will be fed into all of you after your transformations are complete; but should any of you try to overthrow my command before we can put you under the mind control, I need only consume this silver cubiyon, and you will all suffer being forced into submission!"

"What transformation?" asked the mayor's secretary.

"Shut up and listen!" commanded the acidic voice of Miscarriage, "Once you've all been transformed, we shall all be enlisted ranks in Enjerié's glorious monster army! The forces of Enjosh City will then easily raid and conquer cities, counties, states, countries, and then even the entire concrete universe afterwards! Enjerié, with his largest source of competition gone, will easily win the mayor's position in Triple Play!

Drawing Triple Play into the Abstra-matri world will be a rather small feat after this!"

"You can't make us attack those whom we've been residents and neighbors with for years!" objected Thrum's secretary.

"As Tigertria, you won't even care!" came the sadistic response, "Get the machines ready, men! Once it's all been set up, I can take over. The rest of you, then, get back to your posts on guard duty!"

Many of the City Hall officials were now losing all hope of being rescued, and some even were beginning to look forward to being turned into monsters. What they weren't looking forward to would be the painful procedures they'd have to go through during their transformations. Yet, Andrea, as accustomed to apparent hopelessness as she was, still had hope that the socks, wherever in the building they might be, could yet still prove a life saver for her.

(Little to her knowledge, her means of rescue was actually quite secure! Since a Molarity-like monster named Molality was what Miscarriage had planned to turn her into, he wanted to make sure that she was wearing clothes that wouldn't be missed if torn during her transformation. While she was still unconscious, some of Miscarriage's men had put the new clothes on her. If anyone were to have seen the fourth floor, they could have seen the old clothes still there. The men failed to check the socks for the transmitters Abstracadia had hidden in the toe sections, having no clue that there were any. Instead, they merely threw the socks absent-mindedly into a pile on the fourth floor of the building. On top of that, they threw Andrea's underclothing, then her pants, and then her shirt on top of it all. Deciding to get back to washing and then later selling the items of clothing after her transformation and brainwashing, the men left the pile of clothes on that fourth floor, unknowingly allowing Replox just the opportunity necessary to find the place later on!)

Part 18: Fate of the Silver Cubiyon

Replox was by this time had finished with his business at Abstracadia's house for the night, now fully confident that Anyce was okay. At first, he thought that the beeping of Herb's tracker would lead him to the Frendel Seaport, yet the non-continuation suggested that he still had a ways to go.

"Andrea, where could you be?" he thought to himself. He suddenly began to see teal light gleaming from the top of a building not too far away.

"That answers that question!" he thought to himself, now running as fast as he could to the location.

As he ran though, he soon found Miscarriage's guards, unarmed but fully skilled at fighting, ready for him near the entrance of the building.

"Give it up, reptile!" they hollered at him.

"Can't we have a little fun first?" he asked, pausing and getting ready for the worst.

"I should've packed a blue cubiyon for this!" he began to think to himself, "Little good *knowing* Phase #2's basics will be without it!"

Still, he mustered up all of his gymnastics skills, and prepared for whatever was necessary. A few tires by the side of a dumpster proved useful in hurling at the five guards. Hopping on top of it and grabbing the fire ladder, he wasted

no time climbing out of harm's way. Come the third floor, he saw an open window to climb into—perfect! The men on the ground just shook their fists at him, searching for their guns and wishing they'd had them all along.

Replox quickly ran up the many flights of stairs, being careful to prepare for a fight with anybody he might possibly encounter on his way up. Sure enough, one unarmed man did try to tackle him on the stairs, only to be outmaneuvered at the last minute and fall between the stairways to the floor beneath!

"He'll need a lot of aspirin!" Replox thought to himself, in too much of a rush to stop and help the injured man.

Without even thinking, as soon as he got to the entryway of the 16th floor, he barged into the room, guessing correctly that this was where Miscarriage's hideout was.

"Party's over, bird boy!" he hollered into the room. Miscarriage, expecting the visitation, wasted little time putting off pulling the lever to activate the transformation chemical transfer, and now focused on the foe before him.

"Too late, once again, Reptile Pox!" he shot back, "I have no time to duel with you now! But if you wait a second or two, I'll have us some...playmates!"

"Save us, you green moron!" hollered the mayor, "Quit standing there!"

"Shut up!" hollered Miscarriage, firing an electric shock out from his left wing weapon at both the mayor and Andrea, producing screams of pain from both, "For that, you two shall suffer the worst of the *whole* of this!"

"That's far enough in my book!" Replox hollered, now going on the attack.

WHACK! Miscarriage was ready for the assault. The fight didn't last long, before Miscarriage had exhausted most of Replox's cubiyon energy, and knocked him with firing blades down a vacant elevator chute.

To the surprise of all though, Replox had a much greater tolerance for pain than Miscarriage was willing to give credit. He quickly grabbed on to the nearest object he could on the long way down, preparing as ever he might have to so he could get back up. He knew that he didn't have much cubiyon energy left, especially after the abusive blows Miscarriage had just dealt him.

"This has to be timed just right!" he thought to himself on the climb up.

"Here's the sequence!" Miscarriage began taunting the victims, "First, you, mayor, shall become Fuegbarian! After the machine finishes with you, the cubiyon energy will enter the other cables and be fed into the rest of you, the last of you being the Schlemming girl! Next, the chemicals will pour into the vat for Fuegbarian, and the abstra-matrix will take its place in Domoril! Everything will work in that sequence!"

As Replox looked up, he could see the cables that Miscarriage was carrying on about, and knew that one of them had to be Andrea's! Which ones could he cut in time, and how would he get there in time to cut them?

The engines of the machine were now beginning to let of a quiet purr, a booting up sound signifying that time was fast growing short in supply. Seeing the opportunity as Miscarriage looked away to tell his men to go back downstairs in case any cops came, he jumped, hopped, and ran his way to Andrea!

"Hold on! I need to climb this machine before I can help you!" he insisted.

"Help!" she muttered in utter desperation, feeling painful electric shocks building up and trying hard to hold back the screaming.

Replox saw a cable come loose, and grabbed at it with all he could muster! Soon, he had climbed his way to the top of the machine, and was switching into Snowflake-Buzzsaw Kilo to cut them in a hurry. It was difficult maintaining that shape and keeping his balance at the same time, but one of the last things Replox cared about at that precise moment was his own dizziness!

Turning back to see what was happening, Miscarriage fired yet another of his blades at

the spinning hero.

"You!" he hollered in frustration, "Didn't I already kill you once today!?"

Changing back into Phase #1, Replox knew that if he got hit by too many more of Miscarriage's shots, he'd change back into a snake and be doomed! Yet, as he could feel the cubiyon energy from the cables begin pouring itself into him, he knew that he must hold on to them and put up with Miscarriage's assaulting blades a little longer!

"This intensity!" he began thinking to himself, "Maybe if I can absorb enough...yes! That's it! I've now created...a blue! Phase#2 or bust!" he began to shout.

Right before Miscarriage's eyes, Replox began the transformation he'd so longed to: becoming Phase #2. Before Miscarriage could think or act next, he beheld a shorter Replox, yet, one that had far better body armor than the previous! This one had monstrous feet and arms for the shorter body frame, and looked quite ready to rumble!

"Bring it on, Miscarriage!" came the energy-filled response.

At that moment, the computer sensors of the machine detected that the cubiyon feed had been cut off of all the victim's lines except that of Ernest Thrum. All the shackles of Andrea and the City Hall officials, as well as the injection needles and the radiators, came undone. The group knew that if Miscarriage were allowed to grab the silver cubiyon though, they'd have no chance of escape! Forgetting about Replox, her fears, Miscarriage, or even the mayor and the City Hall officials, Andrea rushed her barely-clothed body at the case to the silver cubiyon, signifying that if Miscarriage wanted to get to it, he'd have to cut her up or push her off first!

Miscarriage, now too desperate to have a conscience of any sort, soon drew out his blade to slice Andrea in two, as she lay there unwilling to move even to save her own life! Before he could act though, he felt a compelling tug from Replox behind him!

"That's no way to treat a lady!" came the scold, along with a forceful punch that left Miscarriage on the ground, dazed. His recovery time was quick though, and the hand-to-hand combat he was now locked in with Replox was unmistakable.

"Andrea!" hollered the mayor's secretary, "Over here, with us, hurry!"

They were about to attempt using the stairs to make their escape even with the goons downstairs, except they forgot that the transformation of Thrum was still in progress!!!!

"Noooooooooooo!" came a shout of anguish, and a violently orange-glowing creature arose from the machine, breaking free of all its parts before the abstra-matrix stabilizer fluid had fully transferred!

Andrea was almost to the secretary, but was cut off by a sudden stream of fire that burst out of the creature's mouth and separated her from the group! She wasn't willing to attempt this one! She could risk the thought of being hacked to death, but little scared her more than the notion of burning to a crisp! Miscarriage soon found that the creature wasn't just after Replox, it was after him too!

"You two!" Fuegbarian, the new being that had arisen from Ernest Thrum, proclaimed, "It's both your faults I am like this! Now you shall BOTH feel what's cooking!"

Replox didn't waste much time staring at the green-eyed, vengeance-filled monstrosity. He quickly changed back into Phase#1 and began a campaign of dodging the flame squirts as best as he could.

"You will submit, or else!!!!!" Miscarriage threatened, breaking the glass case and getting ready to consume the silver cubiyon!

Those were a poor choice of words! Fuegbarian, after setting the exit door on fire to trap the City Hall officials in, forgot all about Replox and now went full-fury on Miscarriage, delivering him one fiery blast after another!

"This is the wrath you shall feel!" the obsessed monster hollered.

Miscarriage, too stubborn to relent, continued to fight back, realizing that if he could only just get to that silver cubiyon, neither Replox nor Fuegbarian could stand any more chance of defeating him! Fuegbarian no longer looked at all like the man Ernest Thrum, which had been such a dear face to Kevin in his younger years. Now, all that was left was this creature, yellow pants, orange belt, red gloves, and ears like that of any demon in any medieval illustration! Indeed, was this a man or a devil? Either way, Miscarriage was getting what was coming to him all along. Still, Replox knew that he couldn't do much for the trapped City Hall officials and

Andrea, not until both these monsters had been quelled. But how to get both?

Replox didn't think to sweat the details. Seeing that Fuegbarian had been knocked back and needed to regain his balance, the now color-changing Miscarriage readied himself to consume the silver cubiyon! The time had come to change back into Phase #2, and warn Fuegbarian!

"Thrum! Don't let him get the cubiyon!"

"YOU do something!!!" the creature hollered, grabbing Replox and hurling him onto the cubiyon before any of the three abstra-matri creatures knew what to think of such! Grabbing and consuming the cubiyon in hurry, Replox began to feel his Phase #2 empowered like never before! Silvery light began to flash out from all corners of his body, as the other two creatures stood on in bewilderment!

"I won't give up without a fight! Never!" hollered Miscarriage, realizing that he was now on the losing end!

All the while, the fire had begun to spread throughout the building! The roof, where most of the fire seemed to be heading, could now melt at any second! The oxygen level was getting ever lower in the room, and even the City Hall officials were hitting the floor with Andrea, gasping for air! Before Replox could even begin to throw a single punch at Miscarriage now, Fuegbarian had knocked him aside, and began taking that honor upon himself.

Suddenly, Replox realized something from Fuegbarian's back end—he was slowly disintegrating!

Looking back at the machine section where the mayor once was, he saw that some of the stabilizer lay on the ground, catching on fire itself!

"Mayor!" Replox warned, "You're dying! Save yourself now, while you still have a chance!"

"No!" he insisted, "If I must take this stork down, I'll gladly go with him!"

With that, Fuegbarian let off one final spewing of fire at Miscarriage, signaling that Miscarriage was now nearing the end of his cubiyon energy, not to mention his life! That following instant, Fuegbarian began to turn into nothing but giant ball of flames, which fell through all 16 floors to the entrance below, leaving a burning whole in every floor on the way down! On his way down, he let out a final shout of anguish, ending when he landed in the (no longer functioning) decorative water fountain on the bottom floor, vaporizing it. At that moment, he was no more!

Miscarriage was still willing to fight, and made one final attempt at defeating Replox! That ended with a final two fist blows from the puzzle hero, knocking the color-changing stork monster closer to the pit of Fuegbarian, to fall to his doom! After feeling the impact of the punches, Miscarriage became unstable, and didn't even need to be pushed in! He merely fell in, having lost all sense of balance.

Right at that moment, the police had managed to, through reports by some curious nearby residents, arrest all but two of the men stationed outside Miscarriage's hideout. As two cops broke open the doors of the abandoned building

and barged into the lower entrance, Miscarriage's disintegrating body fell right on the spot where Fuegbarian had been doomed.

"Look out!" one officer warned the other.

They both hit the ground and ducked at that very moment, right as flying metal shafts began projecting out of Miscarriage almost instantly, threatening to pierce anyone within range! Upon these shafts flying every which way, it was now clear that there was nothing left of Miscarriage anymore either.

Replox had other issues now, like getting Andrea and the City Hall officials out of the building before they all became barbecues like Fuegbarian and Miscarriage! He swiftly changed back into Phase #1, and ran through the flames from the main room to the stairway! He realized that he'd have to act fast, for his air supply was running just as short as that of the others!

"In here!" he commanded to the terrified, gasping victims.

"We'll burn up if we do!" hollered one of the men in panic!

"You'll burn up just as quickly if you don't!" came the desperate reply.

One by one, holding their breaths, the City Hall officials and Andrea made their leaps over the flame barrier, and were soon joining Replox in the stairway. Andrea began

to panic when her skirt's bottom tip began to ignite, but Replox quickly used his hands (and some cubiyon energy armor) to put it out before Andrea had to worry about being burned and half-naked!

"Now what, genius!?" scoffed the secretary.

At that moment, Replox began thinking back to a time when Abstracadia was across the street talking to an ecstatic lady, and he'd crept into Abstracadia's paperwork for the Double-Tailed Arrowhead Jet. That was it! He even had the silver cubiyon necessary to form and operate that shape! Wasting no time changing into it, he soon shot a hole open in the wall nearest the bottom of that set of stairs!

"Form a chain!" he hollered, "Grab on to me and hope for the best; this'll be a rough ride!"

The seven victims quickly grabbed on to one another, allowing Andrea the task of grabbing on to the engine of this flying train of escapees! The flight through the hole and out of the building, followed by a turn to the left and a dropping off on the top of the former police station across the street was by no means filled with confidence! Even though Replox had allowed grips to come out of his tail end, an extra feature that he could only do while he was still high on silver cubiyon energy supply, Andrea still felt as though she might lose her grip on him at any moment!

Five of the seven lost their grip before leaving the building, and Replox then had to make three more trips back before they were all rescued! How much longer would the cubiyon energy last though?

Part 19: Fate of Kilo

Place: The streets and skies of Triple Play

“We’ve just received a bad report!” came a fearful voice from the police chief below the building to some of the other cops, as Replox flew low overhead and heard him through all of the chaos speaking into his megaphone, ***“The Maverick Airport, on the eastern end of Merinda Township, has declared that a jet has been stolen! We’ll have to let the firemen do the rest of this job alone!”***

Replox was determined to keep the cops there, patrolling for any of Miscarriage’s goons that might be in the area. Still, how could he let the ones who most likely were stealing the jet get away? To his luck he saw a tiny jet flying west, right his way!

“I don’t think so, Stork Gang!” Replox thought to himself!

The pilots of the stolen jet were none other than the pilots of the helicopter that had spied on Anyce and Andrea just a few days ago!

“We’re gonna show ‘em this time!” the main pilot thought, planning to lure the National Guard jet that they knew would pursue them into open air, and then blow it up!

“Warning!” came the police chief’s megaphone once again, ***“Everybody evacuate this area!”***

Potential terrorist activity in progress! Evacuate the area!"

The pilots of the pursuing National Guard jet knew, from a paper discovered at the site of the plane theft, that the men were setting a trap. What they didn't know, was that Enjerié had planned it all along in an effort to keep the police as distracted as possible from Miscarriage's planned activities that night!

The dogfight soon ensued between the Guard and the Stork Gang pilots in the air, and all anybody could do was watch in horror. Men, women, children, all came and watched the drama in the skies right before them!

Anyce and Abstracadia had just finished touching things up with the Embroilic Home, and agreeing on a day to return Andrea to them to finish her treatment, when they heard reports of the activities in the skies! They soon went from a slow drive towards the Navajo Bridge to a rapid race to the building which they saw to be burning to the ground! They saw Andrea and the City Hall officials on the ground, with Andrea waiting for them.

"What happened to you?" Anyce inquired.

"Long story, just get us out of here!" Andrea insisted.

Not wasting any more time, Andrea and the officials all hopped into Abstracadia's van, and raced past the fire trucks and police cars to the Frendel Seaport, where Abstracadia felt all of them would be the safest!

Meanwhile, the Guard made one horribly wrong move in the skies!

"Nuts!" exclaimed the main pilot, "Missed 'em!"

The two pilots wouldn't have time to think of a next move. Right at that moment, the jet with the Stork Gang pilots in it fired its missile, blasting the Guard's plane to smithereens without the slightest hint of mercy!

"Let's all go home now, shall we?" the main pilot of the stolen jet taunted over a microphone to the crowds of gazers below.

"Not on my agenda!" Replox thought out loud to himself, quickly catching up on the wayward plane!

"Skids! Behind us!" the copilot hollered.

"What?"

"That puny thing—it's gaining on us!"

"Let's try a nose ascent! He'll run out of air before he catches us!"

The pilots' scheme was far too optimistic. Rising up with them, Replox managed to blast a hole in the bottom of the jet, and getting in touch with the bottom of it as best he could, he switched into Phase #1 right as the last of his silver cubiyon had given up on him! To his luck, the bright, silvery cord that he saw at very first was the fuel cord for the whole jet!

"As I was saying!" he repeated, knowing that he was the only one who could hear, "Not on my agenda!"

Without another thought, he pulled the cord with all his might, soon drying up the engine of the plane and leading it into a flat spin! He then quickly let go of the doomed plane, falling ever faster to the ground!

"Okay, think fast...think fast!"

The pilots in the plane were doing the same, and decided that rather than be discovered, they'd rather the plane self-destruct! Replox managed to change into a swan right at the very moment before he would've hit the water, and managed to go instead into a smooth flight, but right as the plane hit the water, and all anybody could see from the Merinda shore was the violent explosion of the plane, followed by fire on top of water, resulting from the leaky jet fuel!

"Unbelievable!" came the reply of the police chief, now frozen in motion by the sight of it all.

From the Frendel Seaport though, Anyce could also see the events unfolding.

"Kevin, noooooooooo!" she thought to herself. She began running, ever faster and faster, to the Frendel Beach not too far away.

"We have to stop her!" Andrea thought.

"No," Abstracadia held her back, with the City Hall officials watching, "This is her time to mourn. We'll let her have it."

In very little time at all, Anyce was on the shores of the Frendel Beach, as she fell face to the ground, unable to hold back the tears as they fell in the sand. For all that she knew, her precious Kevin was dead. She began thinking back to the words that Steckel had said not too long ago, that the thought of losing one another was always going to be before them, and they'd have to learn how to cope with such feelings.

Arriving at the Frendel Seaport, John B. and Steckel joined Abstracadia and Andrea, all of whom were shaken at what might possibly be the case. They barely needed to speak, but by mere motion, concluded they should head out to Anyce, offering her whatever comfort they could muster. They didn't get even halfway there, when Anyce thought she could hear coughing. Who could be coughing?

She looked around, anywhere she could, for the source of the sound. Finally, she was able to detect it coming from near a house just a few feet away. Washed ashore on the sandy beach, though somewhat small to be considered a beach, she saw what looked like a large snake, first choking, then finally being able to breathe on its own, yet exhausted. Further inspection revealed the body to have an alternating pattern of green and purple triangles, with the tail being purple and the head being green. It was Kilo!

"Kilo!" she exclaimed in a sudden sensation of ultimate victory, "Oh Kilo! I thought you were dead!"

"As I could hear!" he struggled to speak, "I've had my swim for the night."

Anyce's hair began to sway gently in the night breeze, the tears now being more tears of joy than of sorrow. She picked him up, as heavy as he was, and leaned as much of his mass on her shoulder as she could.

"I don't know how I would've dealt with losing you again!"

"Didn't I tell you," he began to playfully scold, regaining his voice, "never to let my demise be your own?"

"Kilo," she smiled out, just glad to have him back.

By this time, the other four members of the Rubik's Gang had caught up with her, Andrea viewing the sight of the moment while holding back a few of her own tears. Helicopters flew overhead, searching for anything they could concerning the wreckage of the jet in the giant river below. Luckily, for the crew, the helicopters never once shined their lights on any of them.

"I take it I'll need at least two red cubiyons and a week off work to recover from this one!" Kilo half-joked with the others.

"Well, I say we go home. We can worry about the technical stuff later," John B. added in. As they all began heading back towards Abstracadia's van, the City Hall officials watched on, certain that anything could happen now. They

knew that without Thrum to re-run for mayor, the runner-up in the primary would receive the new honor of being Enjerié's challenger. Either way, they knew that they wouldn't be in their seats of power much longer. Still, to watch their rescuers leave with such confidence that they'd win a war that clearly was not yet over, they couldn't help but feel that the future would remain bright.

As for the news reporters, all that they could determine was a building catching on fire, some freaked-out police officers talking about flying metal shafts, and a sudden dogfight story that would soon gain Triple Play City almost as much national attention as the building scandals several years back of the SABS!

Either way, it was a win for everybody that night...everybody that is, except for those who were worked for Enjerié's underground criminal network! In the midst of it all though, all the Rubik's Gang could do that night, despite the many troubles that faced them very soon, was sleep...

Part 20: Epilogue

Within a week or so, the news got back to Enjerié that Miscarriage had met his demise. The Stork Gang had now ceased to exist, though the criminal network was far from exhausted. Grudgingly, Enjerié crumpled up the newspaper that his criminal operations secretary had given him. Not only had he lost the Stork Gang, and with it his best friend Don Garibbins, but his popularity in the polls had suddenly dropped significantly. This was due to the fact that the runner-up in the primary for Thrum had beaten Enjerié to the

punch in giving a sympathies speech regarding Thrum's bizarre demise. If he hadn't spent a week or so on scouting the Grivvlin lands to see which ones would be the best to conquer and add to his Abstra-matri empire, then he wouldn't have had to worry quite so much about the sudden decay of his concrete world empire.

Still, he wasn't about to give up. He knew that although he could only hope for small-scale operations, he still had a chance that he might put an end to Replox and the Rubik's Gang's resistance. Still, he knew that he couldn't afford another big operation against them for quite a long time. Suspicions were already beginning to build among a minority in the town, that perhaps Enjerié wasn't the spotless humanitarian he'd paraded himself to be after all. As he slouched in his chair for the first time in months, Enjerié mentally prepared himself for the challenge ahead: finding ways around Replox.

Andrea was now out of the Embroilic Home for good, and was now taking a weaker dose of her medicine than before. She actually was now beginning to take on virtually a whole different personality now that her panic disease was fading. The hopes were, in the minds of the Embroilic staff, that the condition would one day go away on its own. That had yet to be proven though.

Anyce and Kilo had now successfully eloped, and John B. stood by at his radio show ever ready and willing to defend Replox should the name ever become taboo to the public. His ability to defend and therefore persuade public opinion had yet to be proven though. Steckel's plans were all successful, and the Mend/Hamilton family now no longer had any trouble

going to church, knowing that Replox would be safe. With an alibi that Kevin had disappeared on business with Discove, the Rubik's Gang kept everyone from wondering why Anyce's new husband was never around. Discove readily took on funding the Rubik's Gang, though they knew that doing so might prove expensive in the end. Replox was the biggest hope they had of proving Enjerié for what he was, thus fulfilling one of their biggest current reasons for existing.

As for Replox, he could now readily look on to whatever was ahead, observing the sunset from the same building top in Maverickville which he had escaped to after the incident in the theater parking lot about a month ago already. He could sense Enjerié, somewhere out there, challenging him to a rough future. Burning deep within his dark purple eyes, he just kept on thinking to himself: "We'll be ready...I'll be ready..."

With a clenching of his fists, as if to signify that the promise he was making to himself was official, we now end our narrative.

Final Thoughts of a Discove Agent

Replox's story is far from over, and the history of Discove is far from this simple. I hope you all have seen something puzzling, yet uplifting, from this powerful experience. For now though, I hope that what I've told you is sufficient. This is an anonymous Discove agent—Signing off!

THE END .

Dictionary and Pronunciation Guide

Replox: (Rě'.plöks) Kevin Mend, after his transformation, also called Kilo in appropriate scenarios.

Anyce: (ə.nēēs') Kevin's fiancée, torn emotionally by his situation but refusing to leave him.

Abstracadia: (Äb'.strð.cā''.dēē. ð) 1. Dr. Robert Abstracadia 2. Herbert Abstracadia, the doctor's younger brother, mentor for the Rubik's Gang.

Enjerié: (Ĕn'.zher.ēē'') Maxwell Hurtz after returning from hiding, the "pinball machine" boss villain and ruler of an empire in the Abstra-matri world.

SABS: (SÄBZ) Super Apartments and Broadcasting Stations—landmark buildings in Triple Play City

Abstra-matrix: (Äb'.strð.-mā''.triks) An abstract, either natural or programmed artificial phenomenal puzzle-code object, possessing certain features and capable of altering things of the concrete world that it becomes bound to.

Merinda: (Mer.ĩn'.dð) A township, one of the three towns which came together to become Triple Play.

Fuegbarian: (Fwäg'.bair''.ēē.ăn) Mayor Ernest Thrum, after his forced transformation—a fiery, fire-spewing monster which takes out its wrath on Miscarriage the Stork Monster near the end of *Abstract Foundations*.

Friedburg: (Use German rules: pronounce “Freed-berg”) A town in the southern region of Triple Play, one of the three that comprise the city.

Charlen: (Shar’.lěn) Name of a hotel within one of the SABS buildings.

Garibbins: (Gare-ribbons) Don Garibbins, friend of Enjerié, who becomes the stork monster Miscarriage.

Domoril: (Döm’’.ō.rill’) An out-of-the-way island somewhere on the life planet in the Abstra-matri world, where all of the abstra-matrices of all the matri-bound beings in both worlds reside. This island is heavily protected by three layers of abstra-matri dome.

Grivvlins: (Grīv’.līnz) Elf-like human beings inhabiting certain islands near Enjosh City. They are the descendents of the missing Abstra-matri world explorers that disappeared through a time warp when Dr. Abstracadia and Maxwell Hurtz were first getting involved in the Abstra-matri world.

Frendel: (Frě’n’.del) A seaport and beach in Merinda Township, owned and run by the Frendel Seaport Company.

Hemely: (Hěm’.lěē) Kevin Mend’s younger sister.

Gordini: (Gore-dee’-ni) A gangster working for Miscarriage.

Enjosh: (Ĕn’jōsh) The capital city of Enjerié’s empire.

Phase #1: The most basic Replox phase, requiring only red cubiyon energy to operate. Very few special features.

Phase #2: The next-up Replox phase. This one requires blue cubiyon energy to operate. Special features include super-stomp, super-punch, and extra armor.

Cubiyon: (cube''-bee-yon') A cube-shaped pack of abstramatri energy. Reds can be regenerated by sunlight and food, blues and silvers can't. Reds are the basic unit, blues being only slightly more sophisticated and several times as powerful. Silvers are the most powerful, and the hardest to come across.

Yibvur: (Yib'.ver) Rod Yibvur, the lab worker who has sympathy on Kevin, and helps him escape though it cost him his own life.