

HARD LIGHT

INTRO PAGE

Map of the solar system in which most of the story takes place. Sun. 2 small inner planets. Asteroid belt. 2 large gas giant outer planets. Kuiper Belt of outer asteroids and comets.

In the asteroid belt, pick out several of the larger asteroids scattered throughout the Belt and label them Pokhara, Chundaliapur, Kibera, Ngungi's Rock, Raised Fist Township.

Go nuts with the layout and design. One idea: make it like a poster. This is anarchist poster from the Spanish Civil war:

<https://www.inkling.com/read/history-of-graphic-design-philip-meggs-5th/chapter-14/figure-14-43>

Here are other posters:

<http://www.cartridgesave.co.uk/news/the-foreboding-propaganda-posters-of-the-spanish-civil-war/>

<https://www.google.com/search?q=spanish+civil+war+anarchists+posters>

Another idea: Those opening pages of Master of Kung Fu issues. The characters staring down at the map from the corners of the page. Tentacles form the edge of the page.

CAPTION

Free People System

Population: 2.5 billion

Population Centers: Asteroids and Habitats. Nothing planet based.

Politics: Anarcho-syndicalist

Specialities: Force field tech and genetics.

PAGE 1

Two panels.

Panel 1.

It's a stealthed observation station hiding in the Kuiper Belt of The Free People System. The station needs large sensor and communication arrays. Large grids of solar panels extending from the body of the station and communication dishes. There are a number of asteroids around it.

Panel 2.

One of the asteroids is drifting towards the space station.

PAGE 2

This page is showing Anna break into the space station. What I want to do here on this page is make the reader uncertain as to what they're seeing. I don't want

to reveal Anna's body until page 2.

Call out panels: In the Images Folder/call outs, there are examples of call out panels used in other works. Do whatever looks best.

Panel 1.

A narrow tentacle comes down from the top of the panel and hits a series of numbers on a numbered keypad. The keypad is for the outside of an airlock on the space station. The tentacle is protected from vacuum by a barely visible force field. The tentacle is very close to the same color and pattern as the hull of the space station.

Panel 1.5

Call out from Panel 1. Text: Chromatophore hack: Octopus genes allow camouflage abilities.

Panel 2.

Anna is floating in space next to the space station. She's visible only from the waist up. Anna is in her mid-30s, very fit. Her genetic background is Southwest Asian, Indian. At this time, her skin color is very black, as she's camouflaging herself against the background of space. She's also protected by a force field. She's wearing over the force field a weapon harness that's hung with guns, grenades, knives. She's also got a cargo pouch strapped to her front, over the force field as well. Her air is provided by a rebreather unit strapped to her back. It's a biotech semi-organic device that produces oxygen and takes in carbon dioxide.

She's peering at the screen of a handheld device. A cable running from the device frays into thin filaments which rest against the hull of the space station. The handheld is a quantum sensor and lock picking device

Panel 2.5

Call out from Panel 2. Text: Force field: armor and space suit.

PAGE 3

Panel 1.

There are now two tentacles and one holds a gun. The other has an implanted force knife jutting from the tip. The tentacles are camouflage color. In the background of the panel, the airlock is opening.

Panel 3.5

Call out from Panel 3. Text: Tentacles and cartilaginous skeleton: gene-mods for space

Panel 2.

Anna is floating through the airlock. She has a gun in one hand. She's only

visible from the upper torso on up. Her skin color has changed to match the walls of the airlock.

Call out: This is Anna Vishapandi.

Panel 3.

A tentacle snakes out of duct and slits the throat of a soldier who was maneuvering down a zero-gravity passageway. No force field on the tentacle. Because there is no gravity, the blood forms floating globules in the air.

PAGE 4

During this combat sequence, Anna is surrounded by a very close, almost completely transparent force field that also acts as her space suit as well as armor.

Panel 1.

This is the full reveal of Anna. She's been genetically modified, at her request, to be more suited for zero gravity. She has no legs. Instead, she has a number of tentacles. Her skeleton has been made cartilaginous, so that she is inhumanly flexible. As has already been noted, she can change her skin color to act as camouflage. She's floating in the zero-gravity, firing in one direction with a gun in her hand and firing in another direction with a gun in a tentacle. I'm looking for a sense of whippy motion from this panel as well a good look at Anna.

Call out: War Krewe Kommando of the Free People.

Panel 2.

Group of soldiers getting killed by Anna's shots.

PAGE 5

Panel 1.

Anna's floating in the core of the station. Since it's a zero-gravity environment, it's circular chamber, all the walls covered with controls, read out panels, wiring. Stanchions jut from the walls at different locations where people anchor themselves to attend to the equipment. Anna's got her computer out, its filaments connecting to different data ports on the walls. She's got several windows up, running different hacker and cracker programs.

Panel 2.

Close up on a computer screen.

COMPUTER TEXT
Copying Gravity Project Files...

PAGE 6 AND 7

5 horizontal panels.

Panel 1.

Anna's hurrying down a corridor towards the airlock. Dead bodies floating in the background.

COMING FROM LOUDSPEAKER IN THE WALL

Self Destruct Imminent. Self Destruct Imminent. Evacuate Immediately. Evacuate Immediately.

Panel 2.

Stretches across the page. One the left side is the observation station, on the right side is Anna's spaceship. It looks like a small asteroid. Anna is visible, leaving the observation station. The background is a star field.

Panel 3.

POV is downward and close up on the outer hull of Anna's ship as Anna lowers herself towards the airlock, which is disguised as a small impact crater.

Panel 4.

Anna's nestled in the core of her ship. It's another spherical room, control panels on all angles of the wall. Anna's powering up the ship's propulsion system while, showing an example of her extreme flexibility, her back is arched back and her tentacles are keying in the navigation plot to get her home. She's done this so many times, is so intimately familiar with the interior of her ship, that she can run the power up sequence without looking.

Panel 5.

On the left side of the panel, the observation station blows up. On the right side of the panel, Anna's ship speeds way; the asteroid disguise armor peeling away, revealing the spaceship beneath. The background of the panel is a star field.

PAGE 8

Horizontal panels.

Panel 1.

Anna inside the control room of her spaceship. She's talking Silvia St. Jane, her employer on Pokhara, the asteroid that's the Free People main government center/city.

ANNA

Mission accomplished.

ST JANE

Any survivors?

ANNA

None. I blew up the station once I pulled all the files.

Panel 2.

What I want to do in this panel and the following panels is do a slow reveal of the interior of Pokhara, the asteroid that contains the largest Free People population, leading to a splash page. This is the other side of the conversation that is going on between Anna and St. Jane. St Jane is the head of War Krewe Intelligence and has hired Anna for the job she just finished. She has East African, Somali genetics, tall and elegant.

The conversation takes place inside St. Jane's office. The POV is side on. St. Jane sitting behind her desk, talking to Anna who shows up on an semi-transparent screen hovering over her desk (basically a mirrored force field that has an image projected onto it, standard for Free People computers). Past St. Jane, the far wall of her office is one long window showing one of the cities in Pokhara. It's night time.

ANNA(from the computer screen)

And I still don't understand what they hell they were doing.

Panel 3.

Inspiration image at images/pokhara_interior/city01

Pull out through the window of St Jane's office to reveal the ring city in which she lives. The ring city is just that, a ring of buildings that extends in a band around the interior of Pokhara. What we see is a basic cityscape, streets, buildings, advertising, etc. The city extends in the distance and it curves upwards on each side, up and over.

ANNA

(caption)

They were keeping track of something in-system. There are multiple stations in our system. Gravity detectors on every station.

Panel 3.5

Call out on where the city curves up along the interior of the asteroid.

CAPTION

Inside a hollowed out asteroid.

Panel 4.

The perspective grows, revealing a larger part of the interior of Pokhara. There's a ring of green space next to the city, trees, parks, fields, creeks and streams, curving up and over.

ST. JANE

(caption)
How long is it going to take you to get back here?

ANNA
(caption)
15 days.

PAGE 9.

Splash page.

Interior of Pokhara.

Inspiration image at images/pokhara interior/interior perspective.

Some technical caption text here. Population: 20 million. Size: 103km long 79km in diameter. Hollowed out asteroid. Crust is 5km thick all around and on both ends - provides radiation protection. Light provided by fusion reaction in force field tube running the length of the center of the asteroid. Gravity provided by spin. Gravity decreases as person gets closer to the center. Interior surface space is 30,200 square kilometers. (non text - about the size of Maryland, if my calculations are right.)

CAPTION
POKHARA

Largest inhabited asteroid in the Free People System

Size: 100km x 20km

Interior Surface: 30,000 km²

Light: Fusion plasma in transparent force field

Gravity on the inside walls provided by spin.

Zero gravity down the middle

COUNTDOWN CAPTION
2059175

PAGE 10

Splash Page.

Panel

See images folder “committee” for clothes for Vinda, and Indira.

Meeting room. Meeting in progress, been going on for a while, snacks, drinks, view screens. Symbols of the Free People. Cases with old school space suits, worn by the founders. Circular table. Silvia, R. K. Vinda - Spy Krewe, dressed with the restrained elegance that benefits someone who's from a long line of wealthy power players among the Free People - Southeast Indian genetics, genetically unmodified, Indira Singh- Environment Krewe - Indian genetics - glider wing membranes between arms and body, Nahruddin Saleh- Science Krewe - east African genetics - centipede hack, multiple sets of arms.

CALL OUT ON ST. JANE

Silvia St. Jane

Boss: Military Intelligence Krewe

CALL OUT ON VINDA
R.K. Vinda

Boss: Spy Krewe (Civilian Intelligence Gathering)

CALL OUT ON SINGH
Indira Singh
Boss: Environment Krewe

CALL OUT ON SALEH
Nahruddin Saleh
Boss: Science Krewe

CAPTION

Pokharans organize themselves into Krewes. The Krewes are independent worker groups with elected Bosses, evolved from the founding construction work-gangs. Pokharans define worker very broadly. Spies, soldiers, entertainers, artists, academics, etc, they all consider themselves to be workers and have their Krewes. These are the Bosses of some of the most important Krewes.

PAGE 11.

Panel 1

ST JANE

So you're all in agreement, there are no immediate threats to Pokhara or any of our other habitats in this system?

Panel 2

VINDA

None of the nearby polities, even the ones that actively hate us, Hangzhou, Fabrikant IG, are making any moves against us.

Panel 3

SINGH

And we're clean, environmentally speaking. No unknown pathogens, no unbalanced systems. The environment is stable. No one is messing with us.

Panel

SALEH

I'm not sure what I'm doing at this meeting, but at least I can report that Pokhara

is stable. Spin is unchanged, orbit unchanged. I really think that you're letting your job make you paranoid, Boss St. Jane.

PAGE 12

Panel 1

ST JANE

If I wasn't paranoid, I wouldn't be doing my job, Boss Saleh. I'm just engaging in forward analysis.

Panel 2

VINDA

Why does your forward analysis include unauthorized black ops?

ST JANE

I'm not running any unauthorized black ops. I authorized them. I have complete autonomy to direct my forces anywhere I want.

Panel 3

Vinda just lets that sit there for a moment. Saleh and Singh exchange glances.

Panel 4

SINGH

Wouldn't dream of telling you how to run your Krewe, Boss, but that's not exactly how it works.

SALEH

You need Committee consensus for any operations.

Panel 5

ST. JANE

None of my ops are at the level that requires Committee involvement. You want to be careful when accusing me of treason, any of you.

SINGH

Calm down, Silvia. No one is accusing you of that.

VINDA

Yet

SINGH

(over Vinda)

No. One. We just want you to remember how checks and balances work.

SINGH

Now the next item on our agenda is?

PAGE 13

Splash Page

Inspiration images images/lakeside/all 3 images, but with more greenery.

Establishing shot, possibly high, looking down. Green space in an urban area. Baobab trees, pygmy elephants playing with kids in a shallow lake. Vinda and St. Jane outside at a lakeside table with an umbrella. This is the same location as later when Vinda meets with Marcus and when he's directing Marcus when Marcus is infiltrating the power station. Vinda has no office, in direct contrast to St. Jane. He mainly works here. Some sort of wireless computing device on the table in front of him, tablet maybe. He occasionally taps it during the conversation, okaying or replying to what pops up on it.

PAGE 14

Panel 1.

ST JANE

So why were you busting my balls back there? Those civilians I can understand bitching and moaning, but it's not like you don't have your own little secret ops running.

Panel 2

VINDA

No, I don't actually. All of my ops I cleared through the Committee. That's how it works, Silvia.

Panel 3

VINDA

The minute we start acting alone, even if we know it's the best thing for our society, that's it. We're returning to the bad old days.

Panel 4

ST JANE

You hypocrite.

Panel 5

VINDA

No. It's what I honestly believe. We, as a people, fought and bled and carved these worlds from hard vacuum.

Panel 6

VINDA

And we did it for the right reason. So that the worker would always be in

control of their life.

Panel 7

ST JANE

And I believe that too! That's why I do what I do and how I do it! If I see an imminent threat, a threat to us all, I act without consulting, without voting!

Panel 8

VINDA

And that's how it starts. That's been the age old excuse for tyrants everywhere.
Only they know what's best, only they know how to save the world.

PAGE 15

Panel 1

Through skylight from behind shoulder of guy -

VINDA

(caption)

And that's what my agents and I do.

Panel 2

Closer in through skylight. Criminal Pokharans - weapons runners - sellers and buyers around a table, weapons out on the table.

VINDA

(caption)

We stop anyone who thinks that they know better.

CALL OUT TEXT on the weapons

(long gun) Arakaga Mag Launch 2.7 recoilless

(pistol) Kibu 9mm caseless

Panel 3

Marcus Wanyama crashes through the skylight, guns out and firing, Rasta Nick Fury.

VINDA

(caption)

Anyone who wants to put the boot back on our necks.

Panel 4

Back to Vinda and St. Jane.

ST. JANE

You've got me all wrong, Vinda. I don't want to rule. I just want to make sure we survive.

PAGE 16

Inspiration images in images/pokhara exterior

Splash page. Pokhara from the outside. It's a lumpy potato shaped asteroid, spotted with large factory complexes and arrays of huge dish antennas. Surround the page with a frame that suggests a surveillance camera. Label the frame "War Krewe Weapons Platform 3". The view is from one end of the asteroid. On that end of the asteroid is an opening, shielded by force fields. This opening is the docking area for incoming ships. There are a lot of ships arriving and leaving. There are also smaller asteroids floating around Pokhara. These are primarily weapons platforms. Each of the factories has a call out, targeting computer style. A plastics factory, owned by Arik Plastics, a smelter, owned by MetalTek, and a wetware factory, owned by Blastulated Zygote Inc. If you want, work in logos of each of the firms.

PAGE 17

Three panels.

Panel 1.

Anna's space ship approaches Pokhara.

Panel 2.

Interior of the docking area, a big round chamber. There are docking structures along the walls and a zero gravity dock hanging free in the middle. It's a long structure with ships hooked into it via clamps, airlock umbilicals, and power cables.

CONTROL
(caption)

Goa Massive, you have your approach vector to zero gravity dock 15.

ANNA
(caption)

Roger that, Control. Following your vector to dock 15.

Panel 3.

Anna's ship clamped into the zero gravity dock, power cables and airlock umbilical attached.

CONTROL
(caption)

OK, Goa Massive. You're solid. Welcome home.

ANNA
(caption)
Thanks, Control.

PAGE 18
Four panels.

Panel 1.

Inspiration for Anna's jewelry in images/anna in civvies/anna in jewelry image
Anna in a transparent passenger tube along a zero grav maglev line heading along the center of Pokhara. She's changed her clothes. She's dressed in a brightly colored civilian clothes, a sari modified for zero gravity and for someone with tentacles instead of legs, gathered at the waist. She's wearing jewelry now, earrings and a nose stud.

Panel 2.

Inspiration image in images/pokhara background/pokhara street fashion image
Anna in a crowd of other zero gravity people, hanging onto the sides of a zero gravity elevator, a tall narrow tube with straps and footholds along the sides. The people around her are a mix of Asian and African genetics. The clothing styles are brightly colored and loose fitting, nothing too heavy since the climate in Pokhara is very controlled and stable. About half of the people are showing signs of genetic modification: arms instead of legs, glider membranes between their arms and torsos, stuff like that,

Panel 3.

Apartments are balls tethered together, connected by a web of ropes and cables and nets which allow people to go between them in any orientation. The cluster of apartments floats against a background of the vista of the interior of Pokhara. Anna can be seen moving along the ropes and nets towards one of the apartments.

Panel 3.5

Call out from an apartment.

CAPTION
Living spaces for those who prefer a zero gravity environment.

Panel 4.

Anna going into her apartment. POV from the side as she goes through the door.

ANNA
How the hell did you know I was coming home?

PAGE 19

Four panels.

Panel 1.

Her apartment is a spherical room with doorways leading off to the bathroom and the bedroom. Klaus has lit her apartment with floating glow globes. All sorts of stuff along the wall. A Computer/Entertainment center curve along one section. Klaus Obawedo, her boyfriend is hanging from a handhold on the wall. He's a short, stocky guy, bald head, African genetics. Really black skin, genetic modification for protection against sunlight. *Inspiration image in images/klaus/klaus skin image (woman in the foreground with her back to the camera)* He's smiling, glad to see Anna.

Panel 2.

Close up on Klaus.

KLAUS

Cyrus was working Dock Krewe. He let me know that your ship was headed in.

Panel 3.

Anna has pushed across the room to Klaus and now they're hugging.

ANNA

Missed you.

KLAUS

Missed you too.

Panel 4.

They stop hugging but are still loosely entwined.

KLAUS

How are you doing? How did it go? Want anything to drink?

ANNA

Great idea. A chotta bulb of gin. Chilled.

CAPTION

Chotta: small

PAGE 20

Panels

Panel 1.

Klaus gets her a bulb of chilled gin from a refrigerator in one wall.

KLAUS

You hungry? We can go out to that kebab place you like.

ANNA

Yeah, that sounds good, maybe later.

Panel 2.

Klaus hands her the bulb. They're both anchored to a wall.

KLAUS

Can you talk about how it went? This was one of your longer missions, you were gone for a long time.

Panel 3.

Anna drinking from the bulb, there's a straw in it.

ANNA

A whole lot of boring, really. Some stuff I can't talk about, but mainly just cooped up in a small ship for a couple of weeks.

PAGE 21

Panel 1.

Klaus and Anna.

KLAUS

A boring Special Forces mission? Not the glamour gig you thought it'd be when you got yourself tweaked and joined up?

ANNA

Not even remotely. I don't regret it, getting changed, but, yeah, not what the posters said.

Panel 2.

Anna stretches.

ANNA

Anyway, I need to seriously unwind after being cooped up in that little ship for so long.

Panel 3.

Anna pushes off towards the doorway to the bathroom, shedding clothes as she goes.

ANNA

Shower first. Join me?

PAGE 22

Multiple panels

Sex scene in the shower. The shower is a sphere, water comes out one side, and the drain is on the opposite side. Gentle suction in the drain draws the water across the sphere.

You can be as explicit as you feel comfortable being. Probably nothing X-Rated, that would seriously limit our potential publishers. The only image I require is a reversal of the standard woman fucking an octopus shunga. I'd like to see Klaus going down on Anna and her tentacles wrapped around his head.