

# **The gambling debt**

- A short story in the Permaneo Humanus universe -

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The night held the gigantic city hostage and a heavy rain permeated everything.

The only thing that broke this gloomy haze were billboards of all shapes and sizes. They were everywhere on the surrounding buildings and caused an orgy of light that glowed beautifully in the rain.

Everything from moving advertising pillars to giant, electronic screens did their best to drown each other out, creating a cacophony that would have made the most hardened visitor exhausted.

On top of this, the city was also permeated by a frenetic air traffic that existed in a controlled chaos. Thousands of hovercrafts of all kinds travelled in long lines through the air. These lines stretched as far as the eye could see and from a distance these resembled a glowing pattern that could have been created by a drunken higher power.

The planet in focus was very special because it was a place that people went to if they wanted to disappear. It lay at the outer edges of the Laam system and was called Bissk Junta Franekk Su Baan. The name of the planet had a long and complicated grammar for outsiders and in the universal language of Batonn it roughly meant 'The world of eternal day and night'.

Since the planet name was long and unwieldy for most people to pronounce, it was simply shortened to Biss.

This place was also special for the reason that the celestial body rotated around its parent star with a so-called bound rotation. This meant that one side of the planet was constantly exposed to the star's unforgiving radiation. The atmosphere on the bright side was devastating to all life and could reach temperatures of up to 134.56 Traa-Brek (about 900 degrees on the human Celcius scale).

Since nothing could survive there, it resulted in the civilisation on Biss being concentrated on the nocturnal and significantly colder side.

The largest city there was called Bak and had a population of around 600 million inhabitants. The city was originally a mining colony but it had grown to its current size due to the criminal organisation 'the Black Crescent' that ruled the city with an iron fist.

Suddenly an alarm sounded from a clock on the wall, illuminating the darkness of the bedroom with its green colour.

Brek Gondo woke up from his deep sleep and stood up in a daze, staring at the window.

From time to time, bright pillars of light from the outside disturbed the darkness, painting ghostly fingers of shadow along the floor and walls of the room.

The heavy rain was a constant reminder of the harsh reality outside his window and Brek filled his lungs with air and sighed.

A black feeling of anxiety quickly planted itself in his stomach because Brek realised that he would soon have to get up and get ready for something he really didn't want to do.

- "I've really got myself in trouble this time." he said in a resigned voice.

Brek Gondo was a Sekulithh. These were about 1.7 metres tall and were quite slender. They had a head shaped like a rough V and on each side of the head were the eyes. They were two in number and had an emerald green colour. The eyes looked like semi-transparent crystals and to an outsider the sekulithhs looked very wise.

The mouth was small in size but could still produce clear sounds or beautiful melodies and it was not uncommon for sekulithhs to be singers or radio broadcasters by profession.

Two arms and legs made up the body's physique where the hands had three fingers and the feet had the same number of toes.

The skin tone was dark grey in colour while the skin itself was wrinkled and resembled old, weathered leather. This was not due to aging but was a biological consequence of the planet they came from.

The celestial body Brek came from was called Sekulithh II and was part of a small solar system with three planets orbiting a blue, superhot star.

The trio of planets were called Sekulithh I-III and, as the name suggested, Brek came from the second one in that order.

It was only this planet that had any form of life. Namely, the first one was far too close to its parent star, while the third one was too far away.

Life on Sekulithh II was not easy and the scorching heat from the sun was constant and unforgiving. As a result, the civilisation on the planet relied on huge barges floating hundreds of metres above the planet's surface. These barges stayed close to areas where the temperature was most merciful to all life on the planet.

Thankfully, Sekulithh had a slow rotation around its own axis so the barges didn't have to travel too fast to stay away from the extreme temperature areas.

However, they did need to be in constant motion because in the hottest areas the temperature could reach as high as 1500 degrees centigrade.

Reminding himself of the predicament he was in, he closed his eyes and thought back on his life. Some time ago he had gotten into trouble with the Black Crescent over a large gambling debt and was given an ultimatum. Pay within six months or die, but because Brek was completely destitute and had no assets, he could not pay his debt to the criminal organization. Condemned to his fate, he was about to have his death sentence carried out when the leader of the Black Crescent, the infamous Ak-Diir, had an idea.

If he managed to work at one of the most exposed and problem-laden shops in Bak for 165 rotations (about six Earth months), his debt would be cancelled.

Naïve as he was, Brek took the offer, thinking he had gotten an easy way out of his hopeless situation.

This, of course, was not the case and by the time he found out what it really was about, it was already too late. Ak-Diir was well known to be a very sadistic person and he proved it here. Namely, Brek Gondo was going to work in a shop owned by the Black Crescent called D'Kass. For the longest time Ak-Diir had long had great difficulty in finding willing employees for his business because no one had survived there for more than a few days.

Brek started shaking and sweating at the same time because he knew there was no way out for him anymore. He was doomed to do this.

Very reluctantly, as if each body part weighed several tonnes, he got out of bed and trudged over to the window. Placing a three-fingered hand on the surface of the window, he looked out at the never-ending nighttime activity and closed his eyes. He heard the rain pattering soothingly against the window pane and he let the sound of the water droplets quiet his mind for a few precious seconds.

When he couldn't stand there any longer, he took a few deep breaths and gathered his courage. It was time now, he realised with an unwanted clarity. His first day in this labour hell had just begun. He searched for a light blue and slightly soggy full-body suit and reluctantly put it on.

Brek grabbed the front zip and pulled it all the way up to his neck.

It was always raining in the city of Bak and he really didn't want to get wet and cold now.

After putting on sturdy boots that would hopefully keep his feet dry, he opened the door to his living quarters and headed out into the long and dilapidated corridor outside.

With heavy steps, Brek walked over to one of the nearby elevators and pressed a button on a worn panel where one of the lights was blinking out of sync.

As he stood there waiting, he listened to the pattering of the rain and froze. The surroundings were cold and dark and Brek wanted nothing more than to return home to his warm bed where everything was fine.

Standing there all alone and scared, it felt more like he was on his way to his own funeral. It wasn't exactly a welcoming feeling and Brek stood there with a blank stare, staring at the panel when the elevator doors suddenly opened up in front of him.

He was abruptly jerked out of his harsh daydream and entered the dark space with hurried steps.

Once inside, he looked through a large computer panel showing all the floors of the building. Right now he was on floor 613 and he was going all the way down to floor 3.

This was below the relatively safe part of the city and the bottom ten floors were visited only at one's own risk.

During his time there, Brek had realised the danger of visiting this particular area so it was with a trembling hand that he pressed the button for floor 3 on the panel.

With a time of 0.83 seconds the lift doors closed abruptly in front of him and after a few mechanical noises the lift descended towards its final destination.

Brek felt that he was travelling downwards fast and the speed made it feel chilly inside the elevator compartment. To protect himself mentally, he closed his eyes and dreamed away to avoid seeing how much time was left before his destination was reached.

He thought back to the time when he was a young offspring on one of the big barges back home on Sekulithh. He saw himself playing with his friends in the wonderful sunshine and nothing was impossible.

They were playing Boh with each other and it was a game where you threw a metal ball to each other and tried to nod it with your head so that it landed in a basket on the ground.

Brek remembered how he hugged his nest-mother and really felt how her love and warmth for him was complete. During that time in his life, he had truly been a lucky offspring.

Suddenly the computer panel inside the elevator produced a sharp sound and a new uncomfortable truth entered his mind. He had reached the third floor.

There was, of course, no lighting at all outside and the only thing that met him there was a cold darkness that slowly crept into the relatively well-lit elevator.

Brek plucked up his courage and walked out quickly. He stood still in front of the gaping elevator that still gave him some light, but even that disappeared as the doors closed and the elevator sped upwards again.

Terrified of being in such a dangerous place, he walked cautiously down the corridor, looking for a safe, well-lit spot of some kind.

Brek walked there for a long time and heard his footsteps echoing eerily on the metal floor.

"Must get to D'Kass before someone discovers me here." he thought anxiously and shivered inwardly. "If that happens, they will most certainly kill me on the spot."

Soon after, he noticed a welcoming light at the end of the corridor. Without hesitation, he ran to it, feeling a little more at ease.

A few metres from him, a long and wide bridge stretched out, connecting the building he was on with the adjacent complexes. His eyes were drawn to an illuminated neon sign next to it, showing a map of the area where he was.

After a moment of searching, with one of his right fingers tracing the map, Brek knew that his workplace was waiting for him on the other side of the bridge.

He hesitated at first to go out into the heavy rain, but as he turned and stared back, he felt the corridor stretching out an icy shadow of darkness after him. He swallowed nervously and hurried out onto the bridge.

May this day be over soon, he thought hopefully.

Once outside in the rain, Brek saw how the bridge he was on was part of a complex network of hundreds of other bridges, and when he looked down from it, he couldn't see the ground.

"By my holy nest-mother!" he gasped, feeling a little dizzy. "I'm probably several mega lengths above the ground. If I were to fall down from here, I would be no more than a wet spot." he thought and shivered inwardly.

Brek looked up and everywhere his eyes landed he saw advertising pillars and myriad other colourful spectacles beautifully reflected in the rainy night.

He looked out at the frenetic traffic visible everywhere and marvelled at the mile-long cargo ships docked alongside the building complexes.

Fifteen minutes later, he had crossed over to the other side and after navigating through a couple of seedy neighbourhoods, he reached his final destination. Namely, the mythical D'Kass business complex.

The front of the building looked dilapidated and worn, and a large, semi-broken neon sign hung above the entrance with the characters for D'Kass glowing in a bright red colour.

The place he had come to was a shop that sold everything from ordinary groceries to the most exotic and forbidden weapons in the galaxy.

However, the store's main purpose was not to provide the inhabitants with ordinary necessities, but it was a front to hide D'Kass's more shady activities.

Because even though law and order was absent in the city, you could never be safe. The threat of bounty hunters and other criminal organisations was everywhere, so the less the community knew about the Black Crescent's business, the better.

The Black Crescent's main source of income was the slave trade, and the business was there to mislead what little police involvement there was.

The city's reputation as a haven for outlaws created vast and lucrative opportunities for fortune seekers and criminals around the galaxy. The flip side of this was that it also brought unwanted attention from private police organisations and freedom fighters who wanted to contain the criminal forces in the city.

Brek's role in this was very simple. He would work as the manager of the store and ensure that the legal side of D'Kass was run without any problems.

With sad eyes, he stood in the rain outside the entrance and felt an enormous resistance inside of him.

He really didn't want to go into the shop but what could he do? He had no other choice. If Brek didn't fulfil his part of the contract, Ak-Diir would execute his death sentence and he would quickly meet a cruel and sudden death.

He stood there in the rain, looking in through the dirty window panes.

A dim, yellowish light hung heavily over the shop and at the moment the premises were empty of customers.

Considering the heavy rainfall that quickly soaked his clothes, he took a deep breath to calm his mind and entered the shop.

Once inside, he studied his surroundings with suspicious eyes and realised that D'Kass looked like a run-down shop that had definitely seen better days.

Adjacent to him was a stand selling modified plasma rifles and a little further away was a table selling Ippaakys.

The latter were small, woolly life forms that charmed their surroundings with large eyes that radiated warmth and friendliness. The creatures were a true delicacy because it was believed that if you ate a live ippaakys, you received their soul inside and this would bring good luck in life.

Brek went further into the shop and shuddered as he thought about what was really going on here.

Without giving it any more thought, he went into the staff room, took off his wet coat, put on his work clothes and walked over to the checkout station and logged into the computer system.

The login was quickly confirmed and the computer system wished him a nice day, which made Brek feel a little better.

He was standing there, staring at the panel with a blank stare, when the entrance doors suddenly opened and a discreet sound from the door sensors was heard in the store.

He jumped and immediately looked up to see a strange life form slowly walking towards the cash register.

Brek immediately recognised the creature and it was a Barrokk.

It was two metres tall and they were known for their strange behaviour, to say the least.

The body itself was only a metre high, but at the top of the head, a long lace of some hard, bone-like material extended upwards.

This lace had a great impact on their home planet, Barrokk'ha, and with a bigger and more powerful size of the lace, the higher in their social hierarchy they were placed.

The mouthless face was narrow and gray, and above the bridge of the nose six eyes appeared that took in the surroundings with a sleepy atmosphere.

Barrokk's were known to be extremely slow in everything they did.

For example, they could stand still at a crossroads for days to figure out the best route to take.

Brek sighed heavily as he realised that the barrokk could be a very long-term customer.

After a moment of tired head-nodding, it disappeared behind one of the nearby store shelves, but Brek still knew where it was, thanks to the long tip of its head.

Brek went back to staring blankly at the cashier's computer panel, which was emitting a hypnotising buzz that didn't exactly make him feel any better.

After a moment that felt like an eternity, he looked up again to check where the barrokk was in the store.

To his great surprise, he saw that there were now two spikes sticking up and wandering quietly along the shelves.

"Oh! No!" he gasped and rubbed his forehead. "I forgot that they multiply with every Indi-rotation."

An indi-rotation was the time it took a Sekulithh to sing a special song of honour his deceased nest-mother. In earthly terms, this roughly translated into twenty minutes.

He closed his eyes and filled his four lungs with air to calm himself.

"I hope they buy something soon and quickly. Otherwise I'll have a whole horde of these disgusting creatures in the shop. Bluerg!" he thought, swearing irritably to himself.

With a deep sigh, he went off to fetch a mop and began cleaning the floors of various bodily fluids, the origin of which was shrouded in mystery.

Brek slowly and methodically swabbed the worn, light grey floorboards, all the while watching the activities of the two barrokks in the shop.

He walked over to the area where they had been before and noticed a clear trail of green slime where they had gone.

"Please! Just let them buy something so they can leave me alone." he pleaded hopefully.

He began to clean the disgusting trail of slime from the barrokks and after a while of frantic scrubbing he was finally finished.

Brek proudly stretched himself and looked for the head tips again when he suddenly saw three of them in the shop.

"Gaarhg!" he shouted inwardly, clenching his skinny mouth. "Take a deep breath now and walk calmly and steadily back to the checkout station and just breathe."

He put the mop down in the staff room and stood behind the counter again, smiling ruefully. He picked up a pen and fiddled with it to pass the time but was interrupted when he heard three muffled thuds where the barrokks were.

Confused, he rushed over to investigate what had happened and what he saw did not improve his mood.

The three barrokks had fallen to the floor and were quietly purring, which meant that they currently were in a state of deep sleep.

Brek rolled his eyes heavily and cursed the sleeping barrokks in front of him.

He scratched his head strenuously and wondered how to resolve this awkward situation quickly. His thoughts were abruptly interrupted when the front door opened again and a new customer entered the shop.

Brek quickly stretched himself and hurried back to the checkout station to welcome the new customer. Once there, he was greeted by a giant wearing a heavy black coat.

The collar was completely turned up and a large, wide-brimmed hat completely concealed the customer's identity. All Brek could see was an impenetrable darkness through the opening in the collar where the face would be.

The giant stood completely still in front of the cash register without saying anything.

A charged silence was created in the shop and Brek felt his heart begin to beat a little faster.

Why was the giant just standing there without saying anything?

He couldn't help but stare into the dangerous darkness where the face should be and swallowed nervously.

"Uh... Is there anything I can help you with?" Brek asked kindly but uncertainly.

The large life form did not answer his question but continued to inspect him in cold silence.

Brek began to sweat and became increasingly nervous when two green eyes suddenly lit up from within the darkness.

"Siiiiiiiiirr Kalassssssss Roodooldoo." hissed the life form.

Brek didn't understand anything the colossus said and felt embarrassed.

"Eh... E-excuse me, but I didn't quite understand what you meant there. Do you happen to know Batonn, the universal language?" he apologised.

"Siiiiiiiiirrrr Kalassssss Rooodooldooo, Kah!" the giant continued, but now in a much darker tone than before.

Brek cleared his throat and was about to ask the same question once more when the colossus suddenly shot out his right arm and took a strong grip around his neck.

With tremendous strength Brek was lifted up a couple of metres into the air and was dragged across the counter towards the glowing eyes.

He couldn't see any facial features at all, only the hypnotising glow of the eyes.

Brek smiled wryly and tried to say something but the life form had such a strong grip around his neck that he could only hiss.

"Seeeeeeeeee Kass Nooroo Baaas!" the giant shouted angrily and threw Brek across the shop with violent force.

He landed on one of the store shelves next to the sleeping barrokks and fell down the aisle in their midst. In the fall, he got lots of goods all over him, breaking and spilling various liquids everywhere.

In particular, a whole line of Sarukah Bas parasite shampoo fell to the floor and broke. Shards of glass flew everywhere, and if that wasn't enough, the freshly cleaned floor was littered with tiny, black insects. Because the parasites were carnivorous by nature, they were deadly to some life forms, and Brek Gondo was in that category.

In a great panic, he jumped onto a nearby shelf and narrowly avoided the dangerous insects.

Brek stared at the barrokks and realised that they were immune to the parasites. However, the swarm of insects was an uncomfortable experience for them and they slowly woke up from their deep sleep.

They stared sleepily at Brek with their six eyes and nodded lazily.

Once up again, they stumbled off towards another aisle and that's when Brek suddenly saw that there were now four of them wandering around the shop.

"Raaah! Karoo! Dirty Barrokks!" he shouted inside, feeling more and more despondent with each passing second.

Suddenly he remembered the menacing colossus that had thrown him across the shop. Brek stared in horror at the cash register, expecting the worst, but the giant was no longer there.

It must have left the shop in anger or something and Brek breathed a quiet sigh of relief.

Before heading back to the checkout station, he checked carefully that none of the parasites were near his feet.

He took a few quick steps and hurried back to the checkout counter.

Once there, he looked around and checked that everything was back to normal again.

After a positive verification of the situation, he wondered what to do next.

Brek looked at the computer screen in front of him and realised that only sixteen ypsi rotations had passed and the day was far from over.

Ypsi rotations were the sekulithhs' way of dividing the days on their home planet, and sixteen ypsi rotations were about two human Earth hours.

It wasn't long before he was jolted from his newfound calm and a panicked creature suddenly burst into the shop. He immediately ran up to Brek with a desperate glare in his eyes and grabbed his arms.

"PLEASE! YOU MUST SAVE ME!" he shouted in exasperation, staring manically around him as if he were being followed by someone. "DO YOU HEAR WHAT I'M SAYING? I'LL GIVE YOU ANYTHING, AS LONG AS YOU SAVE ME FROM THEM."

Brek was about to say something when the lights in the shop suddenly disappeared and a terrible noise was heard.

He stood perfectly still behind the counter, staring out into the darkness and listening to the noise.

"What is it now?" he thought with a slight trembling inside.

Suddenly the lights came back on and he saw the panicked person standing there in front of the counter.

He was wearing a light grey leather jacket that looked worn and weather-beaten. The trousers were black and had numerous pockets on both sides. At the bottom, the customer was wearing a pair of worn boots and Brek suspected he was homeless because he smelled very bad.

His skin was yellow and on his head he wore a worn cap.

He stood very still in front of the cash register and Brek asked if he could help him with anything.

There was no response from the terrified customer and it was not long before Brek realised that something was not quite right with him.

Slowly, numerous red lines began to appear all over his body and Brek noticed to his horror how one of the lines quickly formed over half the top of his head.

The customer began to shake violently and the red cuts created an intricate pattern that made Brek frown and wonder what was going on.

Small streaks of blood seeped through the lines and Brek decided to ask the customer how he was feeling. Brek had just opened his mouth to say something when the top of the customer's head suddenly slipped off and fell to the freshly cleaned floor with a sticky thud.

With an open mouth of disbelief, Brek just stood there and watched as the customer fell apart into hundreds of smaller pieces. At the same time, blood and body fluids sprayed out everywhere and the whole thing looked extremely grotesque.

He just stood there in a frozen state of terror, with lots of blood and guts all over him.

The cash register and the area around him were also soaked with various bodily fluids and everything smelled very bad.

Brek's gaze was dark and he ran his hand over his bloodied face, feeling nauseous.

He studied his hand and saw how bodily fluids of various kinds ran down his fingers, creating elongated drops that refused to come off.

He made a tired but angry face and reflected on the new, and to say the least, sticky situation.

"And I was just finished with the cleaning," he whined resignedly and rolled his eyes. "And now this. Working here really is a punishment," he growled, feeling the growing irritation pushing aside his earlier fear.

Brek sighed wearily and went to the dressing room to change. He couldn't just stand there with bloodied clothes and pretend that nothing's happened.

Once he had cleaned himself up and was ready to take on his duties with a new uniform, he heard the chime from the front door alarm again.

He came out to greet the new customer when, to his horror, he noticed a large and winged life form approaching the cash register with a fusion grenade in its hand.

"Oh! No!" he realised anxiously and wished himself away. "I'm about to be robbed by a Raskorint."

The robber was dark red in colour and had an elongated and very fit body. The skin looked hardened by nature and revealed several large scars indicating a hard life.

The body was bare except for a wide belt around the waist. Hanging from the belt were weapons and sharp instruments of various kinds and besides this, a short shroud hung down between the legs. Behind the muscular back were large wings that looked impressive. They hung gracefully along the back and looked extremely agile.

Notorious for their aggressive behaviour, raskorints were a common sight in the underworld. The robber's coal-black eyes held Brek in a firm grip as it approached him with malicious intent in its eyes.

The raskorint was about to present its threatening demands to him when something happened that it was completely unprepared for.

Without warning, the raskorint slipped on the sticky mess from the previous customer and fell to the floor with a loud thud. Clearly annoyed by the clumsy mistake, it was about to get up when the robber realised to his horror that the grenade had been activated.



Brek immediately realised what had happened and ran away from there as fast as he could, throwing himself down between two shelves further away. At the same time, the raskorint tried to deactivate the bomb with quick fingers. The robber worked with lightning speed, but once the correct button had been pressed, it realised it was too late.

An incredibly violent explosion followed, and Brek could hear the dying screams of the raskorint in the inferno. The destruction was enormous and large parts of the shop now lay in ruins while a thick and acrid smoke spread everywhere.

Burnt body parts mixed with blown off sections of the shop's interior rained down everywhere and all was chaos around him. Brek looked up towards the ceiling and was suddenly struck by a smoking piece of the raskorint's right wing. Pain flashed across his face and he grunted angrily to himself.

He felt the blood flowing from his nose and he felt dazed and miserable.

After a while the smoke had cleared so much that it was possible to see reasonably well inside the shop again.

Cautiously, because by now Brek felt that anything could happen, he got up and went back to the checkout station again, or rather what was left of it.

A smoking crater was visible where the cash register had stood, and shattered machine parts were strewn everywhere.

Brek looked down and had to watch where he was going. Charred body parts from the raskorint lay on the floor all around him and there was smoke everywhere.

He stood at the former checkout counter and felt apathetic. Unable to think about everything he had experienced so far this morning, he sat down on a burnt stool and rested his legs.

He took out a white paper and pressed it to his nose and sighed in resignation.

After a while the smoke had almost disappeared and he could now see that the rest of the shop was relatively undamaged.

The nose had stopped bleeding and he crumpled the paper and threw it behind the counter.

Brek looked out and saw how the rain was creating numerous and intricate water trails along the window while the hovercraft traffic outside was as dense and chaotic as before.

A large crowd had formed outside the shop and they were all standing in the rain looking in with curious eyes.

Brek looked at them with tired eyes and shook his head in resignation.

He sat there for a long time feeling sorry for himself when the giant with the folded collar suddenly entered the shop again. Brek jumped in fright and noticed how the dark figure had two companions with him this time.

They walked on either side of the colossus and were much smaller in size than their leader.

Brek stood up and watched the trio approach and on closer inspection the two companions looked more like small children in comparison.

- "Oh, no! What will happen now?" he thought anxiously, biting his lip anxiously.

The three lifeforms stood silently in front of Brek and the ruined checkout counter and after a while one of the minions began to speak.

- "N'taar was in here a moment ago asking if the shipment of slaves had arrived. He received no answer and you chose instead to be unpleasant to N'taar. As punishment, you will become N'taar's slave and to show the reverence and respect that N'taar deserves, you will jump over the edge on the main bridge outside and allow yourself to be sacrificed." the person urged in a cold and bureaucratic voice.

Brek Gondo just stood there with his chin open, hardly believing his own ears.

What had the pathetic bureaucrat just said? Was he going to jump over the edge of the main bridge over there and take his own life just because he hadn't understood what that idiotic giant had tried to tell him?

- "Bah! I don't think so." he hissed in his mind and was about to shake his fist at their accusations when the giant once again took a firm grip around his neck and lifted him up into the air.

- "Do we have a deal?" hissed the pig-like bureaucrat.

Brek couldn't get a word out, and mostly hissed, when N'taar's companion happily shouted.

- "He accepts! Now let us see this life form sacrifice itself for the almighty N'taar."

- "Oh, no! This will not end well." Brek thought hopelessly.

As he was carried out of the shop, he saw that there were now thirteen Barrokks in the shop.

- "Aargh! Why don't they just buy something?" he thought as he struggled against N'taar's tight grip around his neck.

Before Brek knew it, N'taar did something unexpected and threw him off the walkway with a tremendous force. A cold vision of death spread its icy poison through his body and Brek fell screaming to the ground several kilometres below.

As he fell, Brek felt the heavy rain and the wind tear at his clothes.

He descended into the airborne traffic lanes and when he squinted his eyes he saw a mixture of neon and darkness spinning chaotically all around him.

Brek looked down and noticed how it was still a long way down to the ground where his death sentence awaited him.

After screaming himself hoarse with the fear of death, he started thinking about the barrokks again, reflecting on their strange behaviour as he fell to his death.

- "Ah! Since there were thirteen of them in the shop, it must mean that they multiply faster when they are nervous." he realised, suddenly feeling a little smarter.

However, this realisation would not last long, he realised bitterly, and soon the gravity would make Brek Gondo a permanent part of the city of Bak on the planet Bissk Junta Franekk Su Loarl.

The world of eternal day and night.