

JUDGE DREDD: ECLIPSE

A 2000 AD NOVEL BY JAMES SWALLOW

On the anniversary of the Apocalypse War, ruthless future lawman Judge Dredd heads off-world to bring the rioting Luna-1 colony back under control. Using his unique brand of law enforcement, Judge Dredd is all that stands between millions of citizens and outright anarchy. But what have the vast MoonieCorp business empire and the Moon-U pirate radio station got to do with the trouble?



James Swallow comes out with all guns blazing in an action-packed SF adventure featuring one of the world's greatest cult comic book stars!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Swallow has previously written the 2000 AD Presents audio dramas *Judge Dredd: Dreddline* and *Judge Dredd: Jihad*, and he has also worked on a number of books, including the Sundowners quartet of "steampunk" Westerns as well as short fiction for the *Silent Night* anthology and *Inferno!* magazine and *The Butterfly Effect* novelisation for Black Flame. He lives in London, and is currently working on his next book.

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from **Judge Dredd: Eclipse**

Calvin Spinker hated the Moon. Hated it. Hated, hated, mother-drokked, spugging, snecking hated the big airless ball of dirt with every fibre of his being. He hated the way that you'd bounce like a low-rent Boing freak if you forgot to wear gravity boots or stepped clear of a street with g-plates. He hated the stupid mock seasons they had inside the Luna-1 domes, with synthi-snow, sprinkler rains and holographic rainbows. He hated how every damn thing imported from Earthside cost ten per cent more than the drab local produce, and some days he swore he'd wreck the next servo-bot that offered him a "Moon Pie" at the Eat-O-Mat.

But above all, the thing Calvin Spinker hated the most about the Moon was the air.

It had this sickly smell to it, see, this kinda plastic tang that reminded him a little bit of burning insulation or melting plas-teen. It was everywhere. He couldn't take a breath without the stink being right there in his nostrils. He'd tried nose filters, strong cologne, even breathing through his mouth for weeks on end, but nothing could make the smell go away. If Calvin thought hard enough about it, he would start to feel sick. He knew that out there in the airless wilderness of the lunar plains there were domes half-buried in moondust where the stale, used breath from millions of Luna-cit lungs was being sucked in and reprocessed. Then they pumped it back out, used it to supplement the raw oxygen that was flown in by astro-tankers, and channelled it back down to where Calvin could breathe it again. Back down to here, to Kepler Dome on the outer rim of Luna-1's conurbation. The top-level domes, places like Kennedy, Armstrong and Lovell, of course they would get the pure new air

straight away. Not the reused gases he was breathing – no sir, those rich fat cats with their thick stacks of credits, they got the fresh air. Spinker hated them too, now that he considered it.

Sometimes Calvin would get giddy thinking about how many times the breath he was taking in right now had been recycled, scrubbed and sent around the system. How many lungs had it already gone through? What sort of people had tainted it before he got it? How the hell was anyone going to stay sane when all they had to live on was second-hand air?

For what must have been the millionth time in his life, Calvin thought about going home, getting back to Earth and starting over somewhere where you didn't have to pay to breathe in and out. Okay, maybe the air wouldn't be that clean, but at least it would be free. You see, he hadn't chosen to live in Kepler. He'd been on the Moon reluctantly clearing up a divorce settlement with his stupid ex-wife when Judgement Day had happened. Spinker had been trapped here, stuck without a place to stay or anywhere to go. He didn't know the ins and outs of it, but Calvin understood in his vaguely moronic way that back on Earth, some weirdo from the future – this guy called Sabbath or something – this dingus had made the dead rise from their graves and start tearing up stuff. He still remembered the day he walked into the Luna-1 starport only to be told that all flights to Earth had been cancelled "due to zombie infestation". When he asked the robo-clerk when the next shuttle to Mega-City Two would be leaving, the machine told him simply: "That destination no longer exists."

It wasn't until a day later he found out what that actually meant. MC-2, his home, a massive city-state that covered most of North America's Western Seaboard, was gone, nuked out, vaporised. Overnight, he was a refugee. So Calvin was forced to stay in Luna-1 and eventually the city council found him a one-pod hab in Kepler. And there he sat, day after day, nursing his hatred and breathing in this repellent, germ-laden air.

But today, Spinker looked up from his cup of cold synthi-caff and something like confusion crossed his greasy knot of a face. Confusion, because he couldn't detect the stinky stale smell any more. Confusion, because the oxymeter in the ceiling of his hab that rattled around the clock had gone silent. Calvin stood on a chair and held his hand underneath the air vent, feeling for the

telltale trickle of cool breathing gas that forever cycled through it.

Nothing. Not a single breath.

Then Calvin Spinker started to panic, and as his vision started to fog as carbon dioxide filled the cramped little bedsitting room, he found himself desperately wishing, praying, pleading for just one more lungful of that hated, loathsome air.

While Calvin and his neighbours choked to death, a different kind of panic was rising in a frenzied tide on the streets outside the apartment block. Ernesto Diaz did his best to hide beneath the counter in his corner café and not wet his pants.

The morning had begun like any other. Ernesto had climbed down from his Komfy-Koffin capsule bed in the roof space and rolled open the shutters to declare Diaz's Hotties open for business. He'd had the usual thin crowd of early risers and a few grey-faced workers on their way to the zoom terminal that would take them into the city proper, off to toil in the mines or the oxy cracking yards. By mid-morning, he had the mock-meat sausages on the grill sizzling up a treat, and he was filling the dispensers with synthi-mustard and thinking about the lunchtime rush; it started then. He happened to look out the window, noting with studied disinterest a lone Judge outside the vacant store near the pawn shop – she'd roused a couple of go-gangers and had them cuffed to a holding post. Ernesto frowned. He didn't like those punks, but he had to admit they'd done him a big favour by setting fire to the local branch of Luney Lunch.

Across the street from Diaz's store was a holographic billboard that was forever on the fritz. This week it had been running a recruitment advertisement for one of the ice mining concerns down in Clavius, but the braying voice of the announcer choked off in mid-sentence and the screen disintegrated into a storm of flickering pixels. Ernesto caught it out of the corner of his eye and looked up. A new image appeared on the billboard screen, a computer-generated cartoon character with a stylised moon for a head. It winked – right at him, so it seemed – and spoke in a chatty, conspiratorial manner. Every word the 'toon spoke was repeated in a ticker-tape stream along the bottom of the screen.

"Hey friend," it began, and now Diaz was sure it was talking to him. "Where do U go if U want 2 know what's up, up, up?"

Lemme tell U. Right here! Right now! Listen up, up, up! Moon-U has all U need to know, no matter what the Big Helmets say!" The little figure now sported a T-shirt with the words "Moon-U" emblazoned on it, and he struck a comic pose as a bumbling parody of a Luna City Judge ambled on screen. For a second, Ernesto looked around and saw that everyone on the street had stopped what they were doing to watch the billboard. From his vantage point at the café counter, he could see the Moon-U cartoon appearing on another public screen up at the Sagan Street crosswalk, and repeated here and there in the windows of the discount electrical store and on the back of some juve's telly-jacket.

"Shuddup!" drawled the caricature Judge in a thick Texas City accent, listing back and forth as if he was drunk. "Ya little runt! I ain't lettin' you flap yo lips–"

Moon-U gave Diaz a broad wink and out of nowhere produced a massive hammer that had the words "ten tons" written on it. Unbidden, hysterical laughter bubbled up out of Ernesto as the moon-faced figure used it to flatten the comic Judge into a bloody pulp. Someone chortled. "Yeah! Right on! Smash those Judges!"

Diaz saw the female Judge on the street corner speaking urgently into her belt mic.

"Quick! I gotta tell U before they get me!" Moon-U hissed urgently. "The Judges never did a thing for U, did they? And now they're gonna cut off the air!"

A ripple of anger and fear spread through the audience, and Diaz felt his heart tighten. Suddenly, strident voices were shouting.

"They can't do that! Stinkin' Judges!"

"They never liked Kepler, just 'cos we ain't a rich dome–"

"If those sneckers come down here, we'll bust 'em in the head–"

"They always pick on us! We gotta show them!"

"Ooh no!" cried Moon-U, and he pointed up at the dome ceiling hundreds of metres above them. "Look out!"

Like everyone else on the street, Diaz had looked up, and there he had seen something that made his blood run cold. At the very crest of the transparent glasseen dome, just as there was in every Luna conurb, a disc-shaped oxygen processor

managed the airflow for Kepler, a train of green indicator lights forever marching around its base to signify its safe operation. The green lights winked out one by one and turned red. A muffled klaxon hooted: the air-warning siren.

Ernesto suddenly felt sick with fear. He stumbled back into the café, the mustard jar falling forgotten from his nerveless fingers. His mind was racing, caught in a whirl of emotions. Just seconds ago, he'd been laughing inanely at the cartoon without a care, but now he felt like his world was coming to an end. His head swam with nausea and anxiety.

He gripped one of the counter stools for support and dared to take another look out into the street.

Ernesto had a ringside view.

A cluster of citizens had surrounded the Judge. They were jeering at her and waving their fists; even one of the cuffed punks on the holding pole dared to lash out at her with a swift kick. Diaz couldn't make out what they were saying, but the meaning was clear. The Judge drew her daystick in a single fluid movement and brandished it in a wide arc, stabbing at the air with her free hand. Whatever she said appeared to have no effect; some of the people grabbed pieces of garbage and threw them.

The Judge blurred; Ernesto heard the high-pitched crack of the stick as it broke bone, and one of the citizens spun away trailing blood, hands pressed to a ruined face.

"Gee, that was a nasty thing 2 do," said the billboard.

With a roar, the crowd surged forward and the blue-black of the Judge's uniform vanished under a dozen kicking, punching, yelling bodies. Ernesto had to choke back bile when he saw something ragged and bloody – a limb, maybe? – go arcing up into the air to land on the pedway.

The screen began to show pictures, images from street cameras in different parts of Kepler, places that Diaz recognised like the zoom terminal, the shoplex on Clarke Avenue, the free clinic. There were people brawling everywhere, not just picking on Judges, but each other, fights breaking out all over as buried rivalries and petty disputes were given sudden, bloody purpose. He watched as the guy from the used droid place on the corner strangled some ugly kid with his bare hands, slamming the boy's face into the road over and over even after it was clear he was

dead. Ernesto threw up and stumbled behind the counter to conceal himself, trying not to choke on the sickly cooked smell of the frying hotties.

He lost track of time; all he could hear was the rolling murmur of the mob outside, incoherent shouts and snarls melding into a landscape of violent noise. Glass broke and people screamed. Once, a brick shot over his head and smashed the bio-lume sign over the counter, showering him with flecks of plastic. Then there was a new sound that joined the rioting: the staccato popping of gunfire.

Diaz knew that sound all too well. He'd grown up in Banana City where the law of the spit gun had been the only law there was, but he had got out, gone to the Moon and found a life that, while not exactly better, was just a little less lethal. But now that sound brought it all flooding back to him, and Ernesto's gut knotted.

He took a careful look over the top of the counter and saw someone brandishing a pistol, cracking off shots at random, shooting out what windows were still intact or putting rounds into fleeing figures. The street, which before had been a decrepit permacrete avenue lined with dull little shops and limp moon-palm trees, was now a war zone. Cars were burning, sending palls of sooty smoke up to cluster in a thick disc at the apex of the dome, consuming vital draughts of oxygen. Plasteen lay in drifts around the yawning shop fronts and here and there dead bodies were lying like knots of discarded rags.

Ernesto flicked a glance up at the billboard, where images of the rioting continued to cycle, over and over. The only constant was the Moon-U logo, a laughing lunar face, in the bottom right corner. The man with the gun paused and fiddled with the weapon, and Diaz felt a sneer forming on his face. The half-witted idiot couldn't even work a snecking spit gun! What kind of moron was he? Without realising it, Ernesto drew up from behind the counter and moved to the door of the café to get a better view. The acrid smoke from the flaming cars tickled his nostrils with the scent of burning battery chemicals. His jaw hardened and a new bloom of hatred blossomed in his chest, hot and fierce. Clearly this jerk-o with the gun had no idea how stupid he was! Firing a gun inside a sealed dome, how idiotic was that? Sure, it would be a million to one chance that a bullet

might penetrate a weak spot and cause a blow-out, but who would be Munce-brained enough to risk it?

Diaz's fear melted away and in its place was anger, pure and simple. His hands closed around the hilt of the knife he used for chopping up the hotties and he strode out into the street, spitting in fury. "Hey! Stupido! You wanna get us all killed?"

The gunman glanced up at him. "Get lost," he snarled back, and then he noticed the name of Ernesto's café on the cook's apron. "Diaz's Hotties? You're Diaz?"

"Yeah!" Ernesto brandished the knife, feeling potent and deadly. "What you gonna do about it, pendejo? I'm gonna cut you up and cook you!"

The other guy laughed nastily. "You know what? Your hotties suck, man. I liked Luney Lunch much better."

The gunman's comments made Diaz see red and he launched himself at him, swearing and stabbing. The cook plunged the knife into the other man's chest, his face splitting with a savage grin as blood spurted. All that Ernesto wanted now was to tear this fool apart and paint the street with his innards.

There was a crack of sound and Diaz reeled away and fell on his backside. He felt like a robo-horse had kicked him, and his right shoulder sang with burning hot pain.

The cook looked down to see a crimson patch growing around a blackened entry wound.

The gunman took a shaky step toward him, one hand clutching at the hottie knife still in his ribs, the other holding the smoking gun. "Y-you... You types. You think you're better than me, just 'cos you got a job." Blood trickled from his lips. "You ain't gonna look down on me no more. Not now I got me this." He nodded at the spit gun.

Ernesto tried to get to his feet. The flat of his hand fell on something angular and metallic – a pistol. Without hesitation, Diaz gripped the weapon and brought it up, pointing it at the gunman in a shaky, inaccurate grip.

"You dumb spug!" spat the gunman. "Lookit what you got there. That's a Judge's rod. You can't fire that!"

The cook never took his eyes off his target, but he could see the bulky shape of the weapon in the periphery of his vision. The gun must have been tossed aside when the mob was busy taking that lady Judge to pieces. A small flicker of memory tickled at the

back of Ernesto's mind, something important, something about a Judge's gun, but he shook it away. Angry thoughts crawled around the inside of his brain like a troop of ants, scratching for a way out, blanking out everything else. "Shut it! You can't tell me what to do, jerk-o!"

The gunman grimaced and pulled the trigger. The spit gun's hammer fell on an empty chamber with a hollow click. "Ah, sneck–"

Ernesto growled, teeth flaring in a feral grin, and fired as well. In the instant his finger tightened on the electronic trigger mechanism, his mind threw up the thing that had been nagging at him. All Judges' guns had a key characteristic in common: a tiny computer-scanner combination that checked the palm print of any person attempting to fire it. If someone other than the designated Judge pulled the trigger, a countermeasure was activated. In some models, this was a simple safety catch or an electro-stunner, but like the pistols used by Mega-City Judges, firearms issued by the Luna-1 Justice Department had a self-destruct charge fitted to them, equivalent in power to a hand grenade. The gun's detonation killed both men instantly, leaving two more shredded corpses to litter Kepler Dome's streets.

On the electronic billboard overhead, Moon-U broadcast a replay of the moment across the whole complex, repeating it on any screen that the pirate signal could infiltrate.

Judge Spring cursed inwardly as the low battery buzzer sounded on his sonic rifle, just as a smoke-blackened rioter vaulted over the plastiform barricade. Without wasting a moment to swap out the power pack, Spring flipped the weapon over and used the heavy butt to crack the lawbreaker across the face. "Get back, meathead!" he snapped and the rioter fell away, unconscious.

Spring reloaded by touch alone, scanning the open plaza in front of the Kepler precinct house for any sign of a new rush towards the barriers – but no, the citizens seemed happy enough to continue tearing into one another or smashing up property. The Brit-Cit Judge frowned. This wasn't like any typical confront or Block War, there was just no direction to it. It was nothing but wanton destruction; violence for the sake of violence.

He spotted movement close to the flickering panels of a cracked wall-screen and called out to his deputy on the line, a female Judge from the Sydney-Melbourne Conurb. "Kenzy! Watch for any group movement."

She nodded. "On it. Where's that electro-cordon?"

He opened his mouth to answer, but a new voice interrupted him. "Spring! Where are you?" The Brit-Judge stepped back from the barricade as Senior Judge Koenig approached, emerging from drifts of grey smoke with a group of men in riot gear. Koenig was Sector Chief for Kepler Dome and Spring's direct superior. Spring had grown to respect the elder Luna-City officer during his secondment to the Moon and knew him well enough to read the grim set of his chin.

"Judge Koenig. Glad to see you brought reinforcements, sir. I hope they're not all you've got."

"Save it, Spring," Koenig snapped irritably. "What are you still doing here? We can't just hold the plaza, we need to move in and pacify."

"With respect, sir, we're spread too thin. Ten patrol Judges dead or incapacitated out in the field, a dozen more in medbay. The citizens outnumber the rest of us fifteen-to-one and we can't chance using riot foam or stumm gas until the oxygen supply is reactivated. I put in a call for cordons and Mantas from the main dome, but—"

"But they're not going to get here for another four hours, at least," Koenig broke in, seeing the Brit-Judge's jaw drop. "I've just come from the zoom terminal. Rioters sabotaged the track, the train has blocked the tunnel and we've had a blow-out in the zipstrip to Luna-1. We're on our own."

"Grud," mumbled Kenzy.

"We need to crush this, before it gets out of control," Koenig added.

Spring felt his annoyance flare. "Look around!" he grated. "It already is out of control!" He took a step closer to the senior Judge. "We've got the lowest manpower and hardware capability of any outer dome on Luna and we're coming apart just holding these crazies in place!"

"Then maybe you should have been aware of this before it even happened! You're my sector deputy! Where are your street skills?"

"Maybe if you got out of your office once in a whi—"

Kenzy shouted, her voice mingling with the sound of a high-powered spit carbine: "Sniper!"

With a keening ricochet, a bullet deflected off the crown of Koenig's helmet and the elder Judge cursed. "Drokk!" In a swift movement, Koenig's pulse gun was in his hand and he cracked off a trio of well-aimed shots. On the far side of the plaza, a man clutching a rifle fell out of a tree and lay still. Koenig looked back at Spring, the sudden anger that had been building between them dissipated for the moment. "Where are they getting these weapons from? This doesn't make sense. I'd expect panic from an oxygen outage, but not a full-blown street war."

"Surveillance has had absolutely no indicators of any serious tensions for the past three weeks. It's like someone just pushed a button and got a riot, sir."

Koenig paused for a moment, considering. "All right, Spring, we'll do it your way. Bottle them up and let it burn itself out."

"Incoming!" called another Judge from further up the barricade.

"How many?" said Spring.

"Uh... All of them."

Koenig and Spring turned together to see a wall of figures boiling out of the entryways and into the plaza. Spring raised the sonic rifle and took careful aim, searching for obvious ringleaders.

"Form up!" Koenig shouted, his voice carrying over the line. "Set your STUP-guns to maximum stun. Knock them down!" The Judge flicked a glance down at his own pulse pistol and checked the charge. "Hold the line!"

Chief Judge-Marshal Tex flicked off the comm-screen with a grimace and pushed back the hat on his head, rubbing the furrows on his brow. From his office at the pinnacle of the Luna-1 Hall of Justice, the entirety of the Moon's largest city-dome was visible as a vast network of lights. Thousands of towers, bridges and sub-spheres all clustered beneath a huge silver-grey roof. From this height, Luna-1 looked like some intricately worked piece of jewellery, set in a cratered stone landscape. Kepler Dome was just barely visible, to the south west beyond the Armstrong Monument and the skyscrapers of Von Braun Territory. From

such a vantage point it was hard to imagine that Kepler's streets were alive with violence and flame.

"We could consider a Class One contingency," Tex's second-in-command, Judge-Marshal Che spoke quietly, his soft Mexican accent carrying across the room.

Tex removed his hat and shook his head. "A worldwide lockdown? I reckon that'd be a death sentence for anyone still in Kepler."

"We have to keep it contained, Chief Judge," Che insisted. "This is the worst incident yet. If word spreads that we can't keep a lid on our own citizens—"

"What?!" Tex snapped. "You think the Triumvirate will come in here and fire us? Send us to Titan?" He shook his head wearily. "The day we took these badges we swore an oath to protect this colony." Tex tapped the star-and-crescent-moon shield on his chest. "I'm not gonna put myself before that. Not ever."

"So what do you propose?"

"We're fallin' apart up here and we know it, Che. We need help to get to the heart of this and I know just the man to ask."

Che's eyes widened. "With all due respect, sir, I must protest—"

"Protest all you want, amigo. But just get me a secured line to Chief Judge Hershey at the Mega-City One Grand Hall o'Justice."

Will Judge Dredd be able to quell the riots on the Moon? Find out in:

Judge Dredd: Eclipse

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ABC WARRIORS: THE MEDUSA WAR

A 2000 AD novel by Pat Mills and Alan Mitchell

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STRONTIUM DOG: BAD TIMING

A 2000 AD novel by Rebecca Levene

WARPED BY THE twisted effects of Strontium 90 fallout, mutants are a victimised underclass on Earth. Denied normal work, many have taken the one job too dirty for norms: bounty-hunting. Across the expanding frontier of space, they hunt the criminals too dangerous for the Galactic Crime Commission.

Johnny Alpha is one such Strontium Dog and his latest assignment takes him to Epsilon 5 – a quarantined planet where time has sped up to four-hundred times its normal rate. Johnny is in a literal race against time to avoid all manner of dangers and find his prey before he ages to death!



JUDGE DREDD: BLACK ATLANTIC

A 2000 AD novel by Simon Jowett and Peter J Evans

HOT ON THE trail of a cargo of illegal bio-weapons, Judge Dredd boards the Cityship Sargasso, a vast agglomeration of ancient toxic waste tankers loaded with refugees from warzones around the world. It is also home to large populations of mutants and scavengers, so when the law comes on board, Dredd finds himself as a most unwelcome guest.

But when one of the bio-weapons is released from stasis, Dredd must stop it before it sets about fulfilling its single pre-programmed function: to destroy everything in its path.!



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