



Broken Saints redefines modern art. Computer technology, especially the Internet, has taken us light years beyond Picasso and free verse. With all the high tech capabilities of the Macromedia Flash animation program, North Vancouver's Brooke Burgess and friends have produced a stunning piece of graphic literature. So stunning, in fact, that it recently received the "Audience Award for Online Animation" at the prestigious Sundance Festival.

Graphic literature is a term from the comic book industry that separates more mature intelligent works from the average blow 'em up superhero material. Using dynamic images created by self-taught artist Andrew West, Burgess moves the story along with dialogue bubbles and internal monologue text, just like in a comic book. The technical director for all the material is Ian Kirby, who knows everything there is to know about Flash.

According to the website the story is about hope, fate, love, fear, death, hate, power, consciousness, betrayal, change, mercy, compassion, wisdom, awareness, will,

discipline, faith, courage, paranoia, revenge, forgiveness and sacrifice. It is about the good and evil in all of us.

*In the quiet corners of the globe
Four strangers receive a message
Together they will face the coming darkness
And learn that the greatest love
Is often the greatest sacrifice*

The plot revolves around four diverse characters: Shandala, a mysterious young woman raised on an uncharted Fijian island after being lost at sea as a baby; Raimi, a Montrealer working for a high-tech communication company in an unnamed Pacific Northwest city; Oran a Muslim mercenary from Baghdad; and Kamimura, a Japanese Shinto priest. They are drawn together by the same recurring psychic vision and thus the plot unfolds.

The idea for the story grew out of Burgess' travels, his perspective on the world, and his interest in such global religions as Shinto, Sufism and Taoism. "I know I believe in something beyond myself but I don't know what? I take the pieces of everything I've

encountered. This is a way of expressing that. All the characters believe in something totally different and yet their perspectives on what is happening are identical." He pauses for a moment and then adds, "Under the skin we are all one. It's the basic holistic truth."

Unlike much of the fast-paced material on the net, *Broken Saints* moves slowly, supported by a hypnotic, almost meditative, soundtrack created by Burgess' cousin, Tobias Tinker with contributions from Toronto-based composer Quentin Grey. It requires the audience to set aside the time to absorb the story and its atmosphere, to ponder its images, to be still. The reader is compelled to become involved in the experience. In one of Burgess' many haikus on the site, he says,

*"You are embarking
On a strange and sacred quest
Summon your patience"*

The online serial story is told in 24 chapters, each chapter taking from three weeks to two months to complete. Although, for the most part, *Broken Saints* has kept true to the