

ABRAXIS WREN OF

EBERRON

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®



A B R A X I S W R E N O F

EBERRON

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

IDW



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THERE ARE MANY
NAMES FOR *SHARN*.

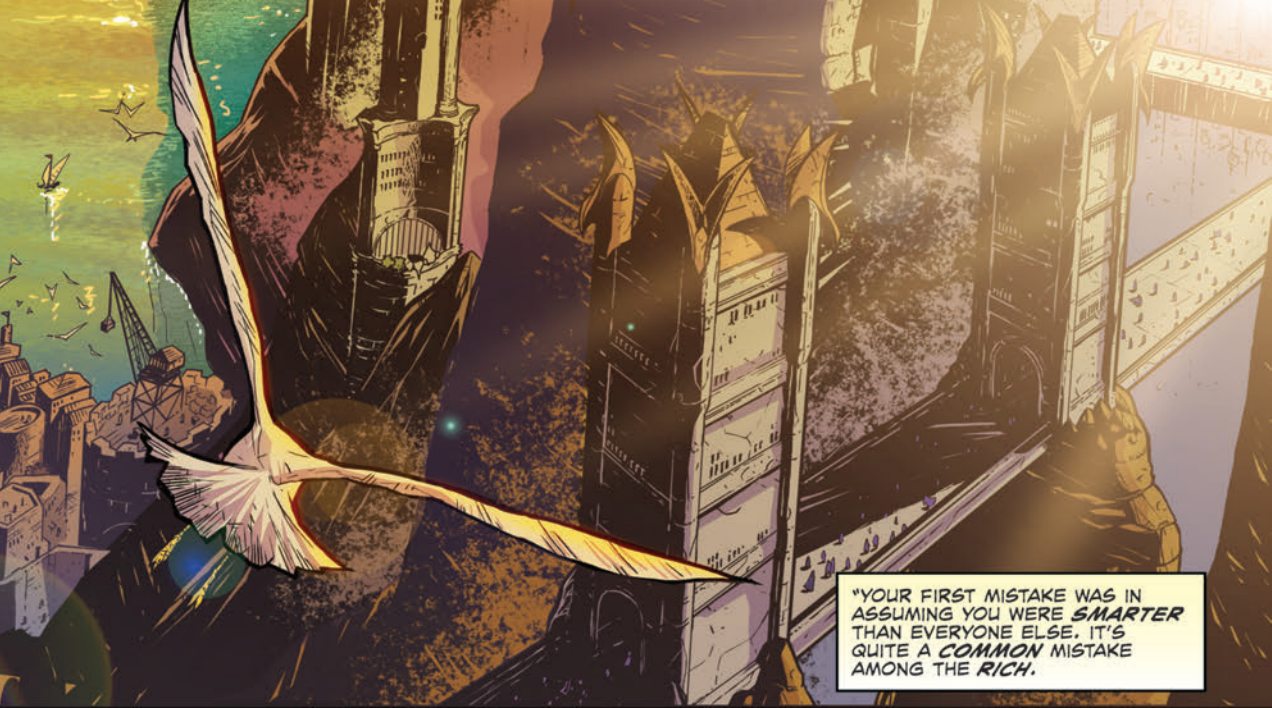
THE CITY OF *TOWERS*.

THE CITY OF *KNIVES*.

THE CITY OF A *THOUSAND EYES*.

BUT SPEND ANY TIME
THERE AND YOU COME TO
KNOW HER *TRUE NAME*,
THE NAME THAT BEATS
BENEATH HER *ANCIENT*,
HARDENED HEART...

...THE CITY OF *LOST SOULS*.



"YOUR FIRST MISTAKE WAS IN ASSUMING YOU WERE *SMARTER* THAN EVERYONE ELSE. IT'S QUITE A *COMMON* MISTAKE AMONG THE *RICH*."



"IT'S SOMETHING I MYSELF THINK ON *FREQUENT* OCCASIONS. EXCEPT IN *MY* CASE IT'S *TRUE*."



"*YOU*, FOR INSTANCE, YOU CLAIM YOU WERE AT—AND FORGIVE ME FOR LAUGHING—AN *ART* CLASS, PAINTING THAT RATHER *TERRIBLE* STILL LIFE OUT IN THE CORRIDOR."

"EXCEPT THE *PATTERN* OF *BRUSHSTROKES* SUGGESTS A LEFT-HANDED ARTIST, WHEREAS *YOU* ARE *RIGHT*-HANDED."

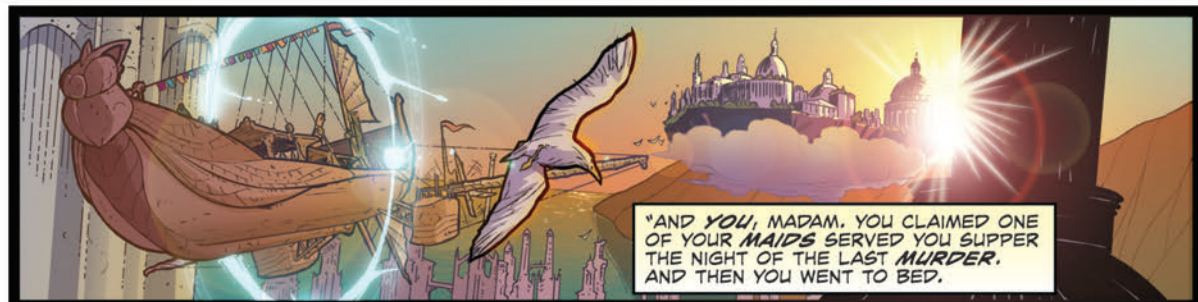


"AND BEFORE YOU ASK HOW I KNOW, THE VARNISH YOU USE TO DECORATE YOUR NAILS IS *IMMACULATE* ON YOUR LEFT HAND, BUT *SLOPPY* ON THE RIGHT. THEREFORE, YOU ARE *RIGHT*-HANDED."



"*YOU*, SIR! YOU SAY YOU WERE PRACTICING THE... AHM... *HARP* ALL NIGHT, BUT THERE ARE NO *CALLUSES* ON YOUR FINGERS.

"YOU DO NOT *PLAY* THE HARP. YOU PROBABLY DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT ONE *LOOKS* LIKE, YOUR *ALIBI* IS A *LIE*.



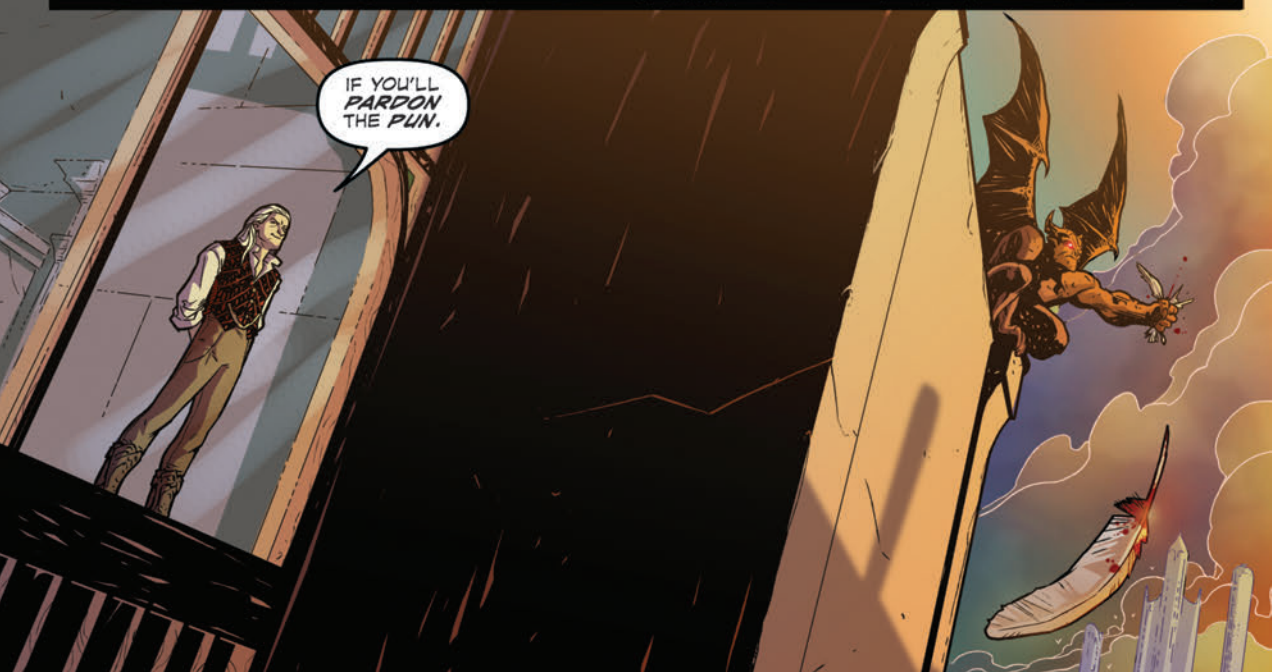
"AND *YOU*, MADAM, YOU CLAIMED ONE OF YOUR *MAIDS* SERVED YOU SUPPER THE NIGHT OF THE LAST *MURDER*. AND THEN YOU WENT TO BED.



"BUT I CAN SEE FROM YOUR *DIRTY* CUFFS AND THE SLIGHT RING OF GREASE AROUND YOUR COLLAR THAT YOU *HAVE* NO *MAIDS*.



"YOU *FIRED* THEM WHEN THE TROUBLES STARTED, SO YOUR *DIRTY LAUNDRY* WOULDN'T GET *AIRIED*."

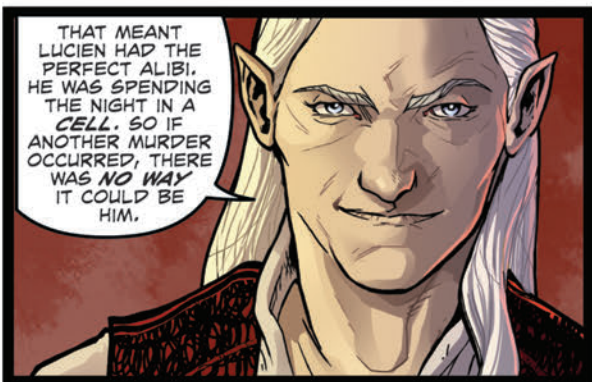


IF YOU'LL *PARDON* THE *PUN*.



YOUR
PREPOSTEROUS
ALIBIS GOT ME
WONDERING. WHAT WAS
THE **POINT**? WHAT
WERE YOU TRYING
TO **ACHIEVE**?

AND THEN I
REALIZED. ON
THE NIGHT OF THE
FINAL MURDER—
THE NIGHT YOU ALL
CONCOCTED YOUR
ALIBIS FOR—YOUNG
LUCIEN HAD BEEN
ARRESTED FOR
BEING **DRUNK** AND
DISORDERLY.



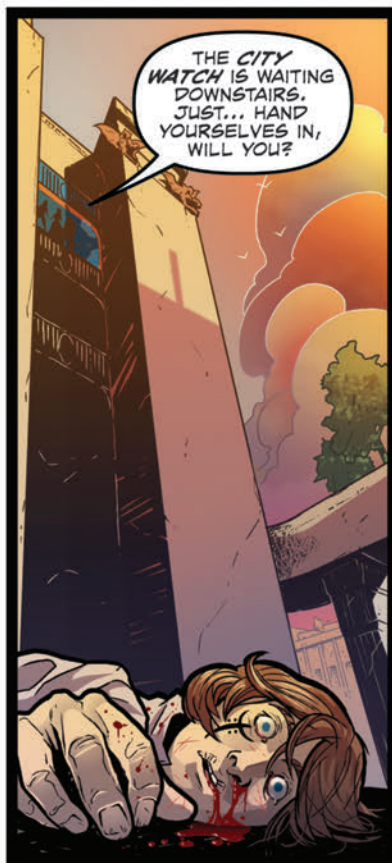
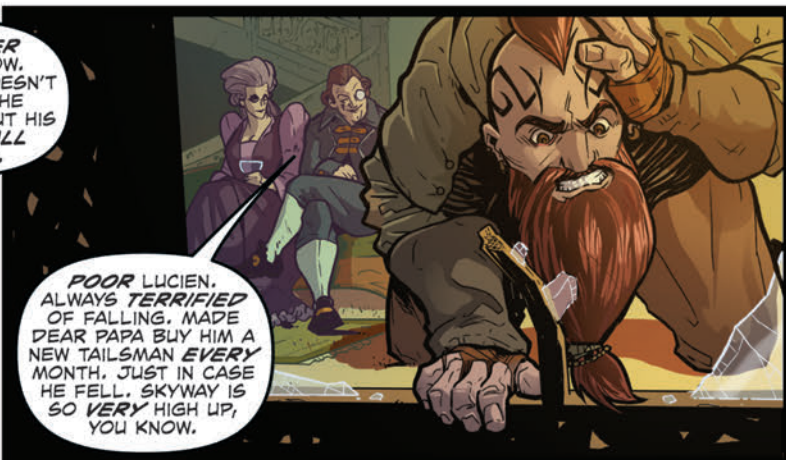
THAT MEANT
LUCIEN HAD THE
PERFECT ALIBI.
HE WAS SPENDING
THE NIGHT IN A
CELL. SO IF
ANOTHER MURDER
OCCURRED, THERE
WAS **NO WAY**
IT COULD BE
HIM.



I PUT IT TO YOU THAT YOU ARE **ALL**
GUILTY! LUCIEN FOR THE **FIRST SEVEN**
MURDERS, AND YOU THREE FOR THE
LATEST. A CLUMSY ATTEMPT TO
DEFLECT ALL SUSPICIONS AWAY
FROM YOUR BROTHER!



WELL, I
WASN'T
EXPECTING
THAT.





PUT THAT DOWN.
THAT'S **AUNDARIAN RED**. TOO GOOD FOR
YOUR WORKING-CLASS
PALATE. I'M SURE
THERE'S SOME OLD
ALE IN THE
BASEMENT.



SO, THAT **FEATHER FALL TALISMAN**.

THE ONE **LUCIEN**
DROPPED?
WHAT ABOUT
IT?



I DIDN'T SEE
HIM **DROP** IT. I
CERTAINLY
DIDN'T SEE YOU
PICK IT UP.



WELL, I **SAY** DROPPED
IT. BUT IT MORE
SORT OF...
FELL INTO MY
HAND.

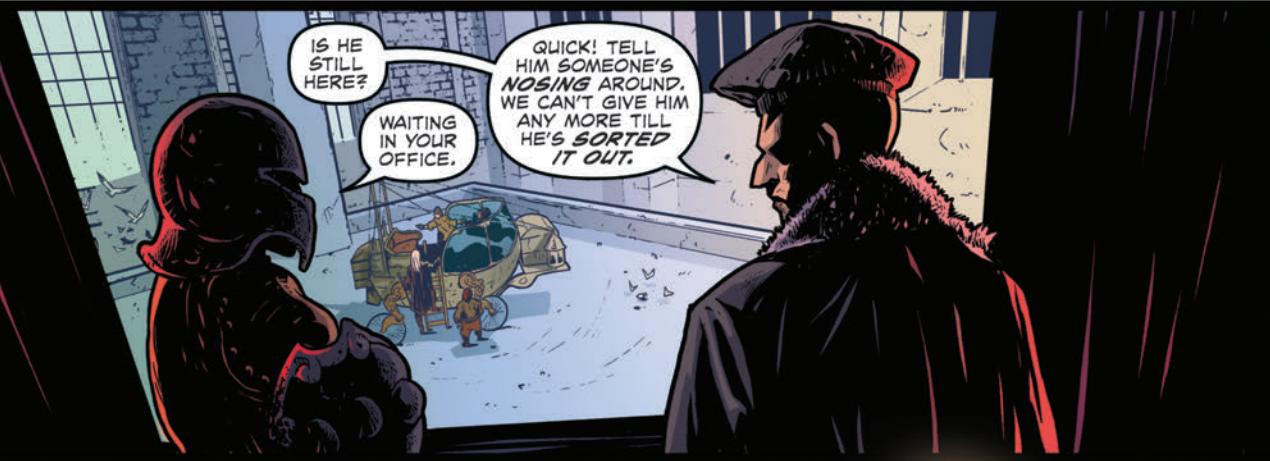
WHEN I
WAS GOING
THROUGH HIS
POCKETS.

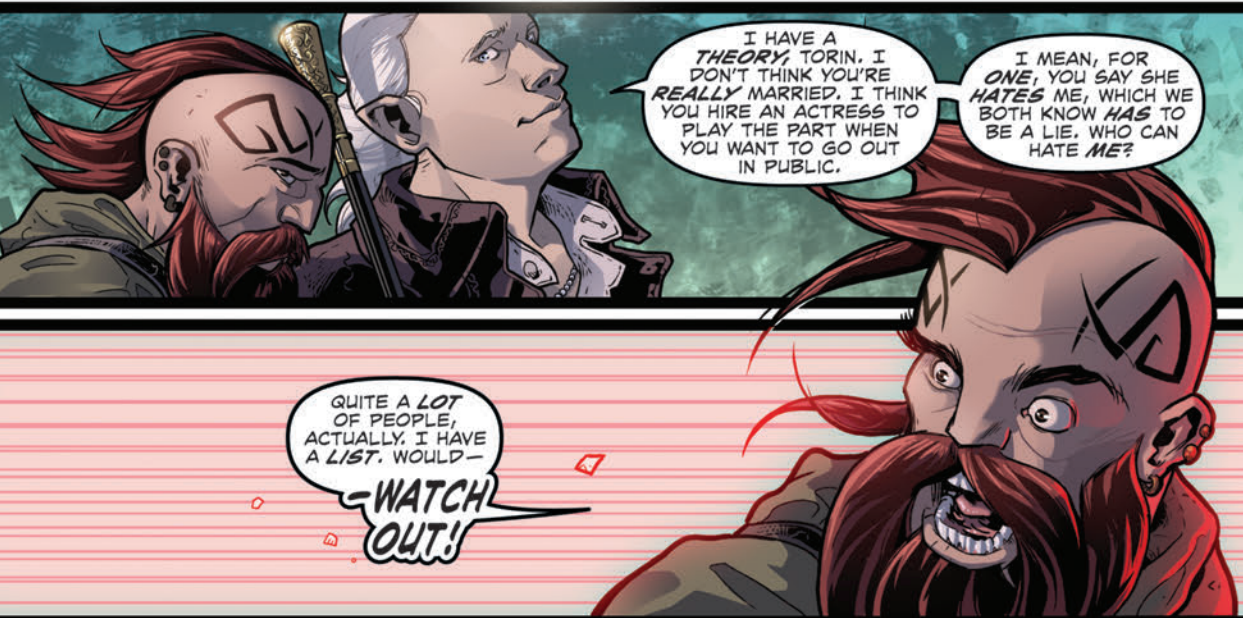
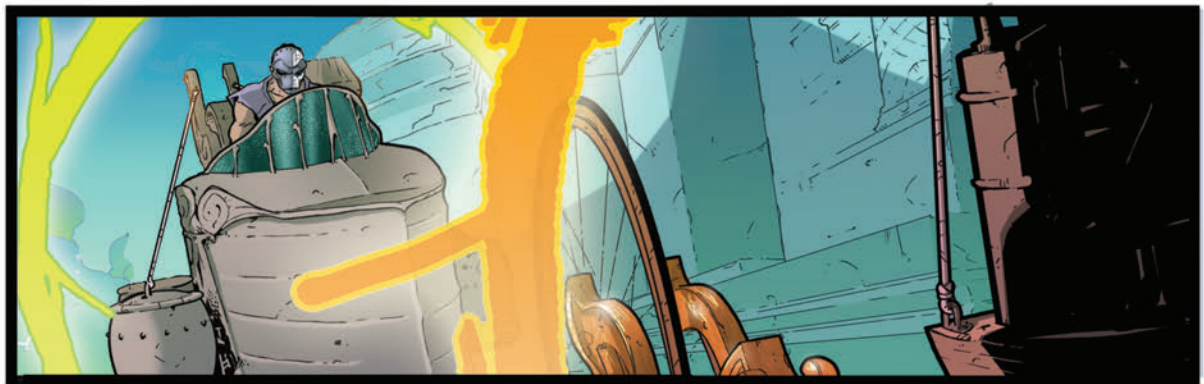


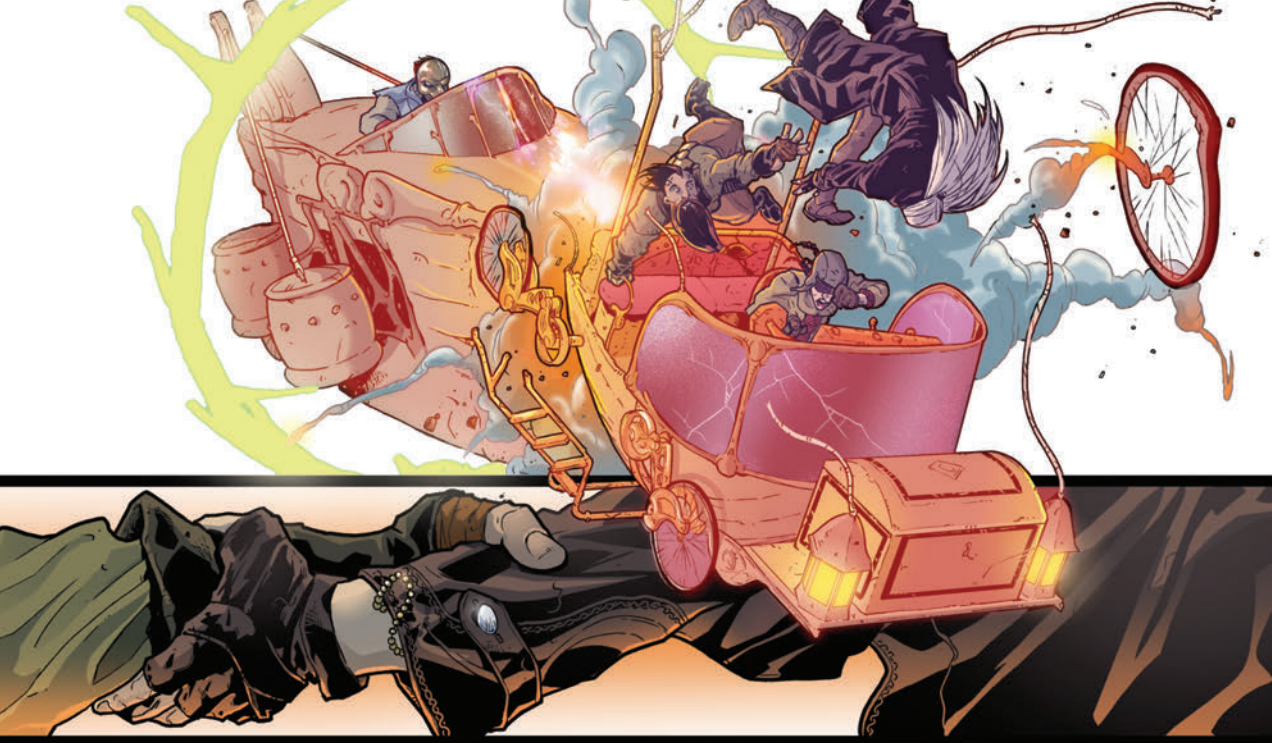


BOLDREI ASYLUM.
OAKBRIDGE, MIDDLE
NORTHEdge PLATEAU.



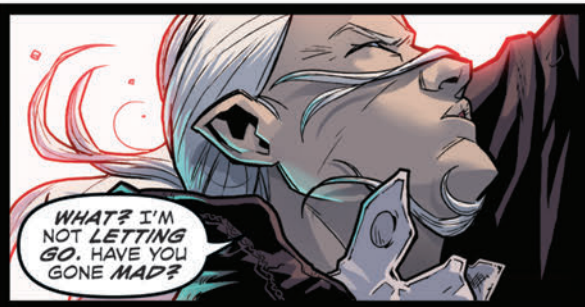


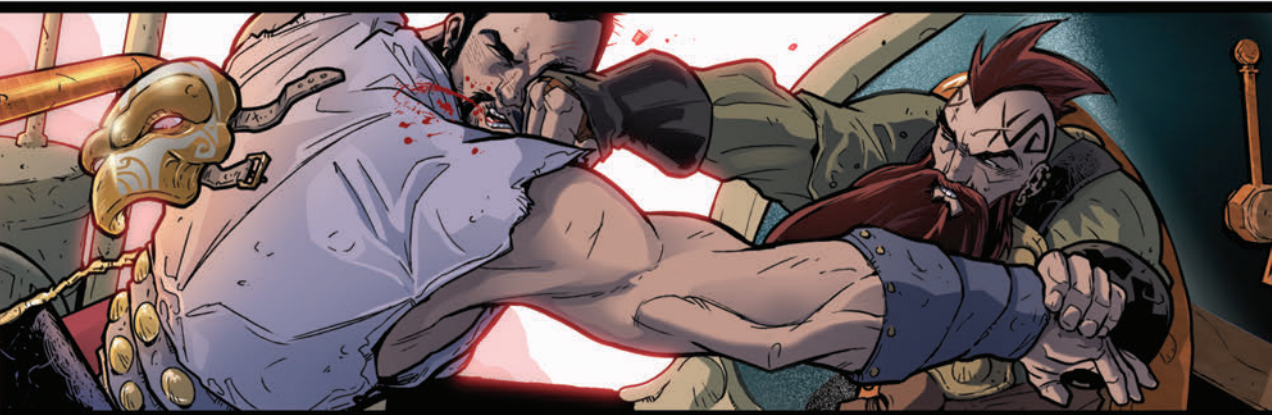
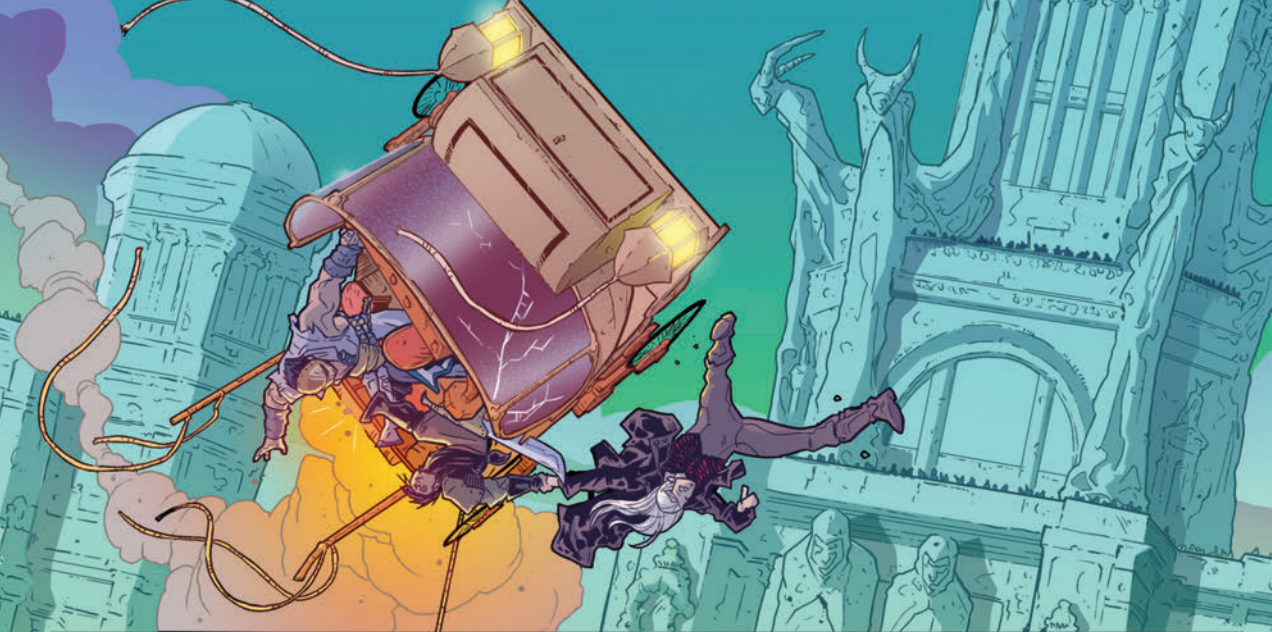




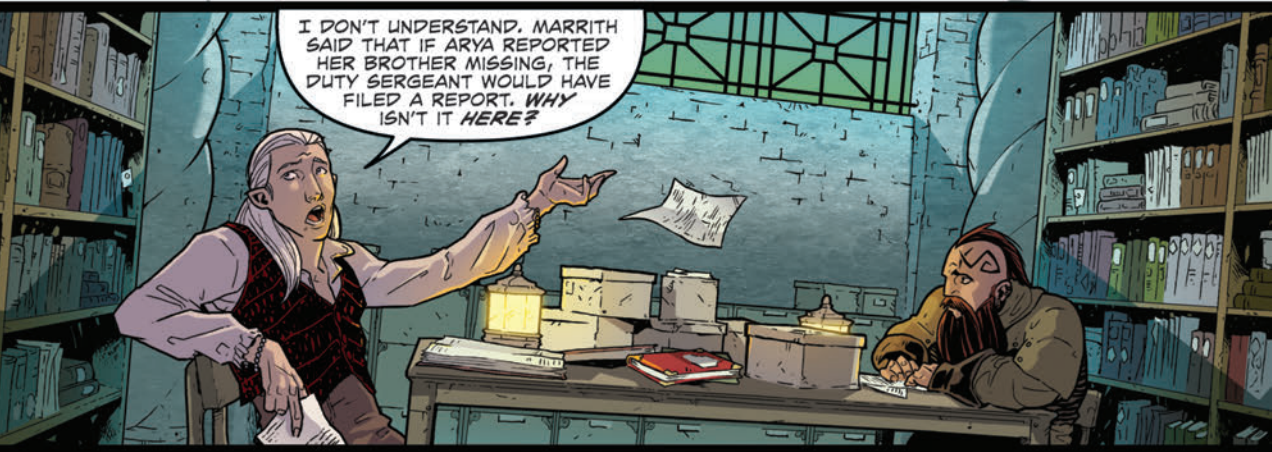
I'LL BE
REPORTING
YOU TO HOUSE
LYRANDAR! THIS
IS TERRIBLE
SERVICE!











I DON'T UNDERSTAND. MARRITH SAID THAT IF ARYA REPORTED HER BROTHER MISSING, THE DUTY SERGEANT WOULD HAVE FILED A REPORT. **WHY** ISN'T IT **HERE?**



I THINK I'VE **FOUND** SOMETHING.

YOU **CAN'T** HAVE. YOU'RE LOOKING THROUGH THE **SOLVED** CASES, TORIN.



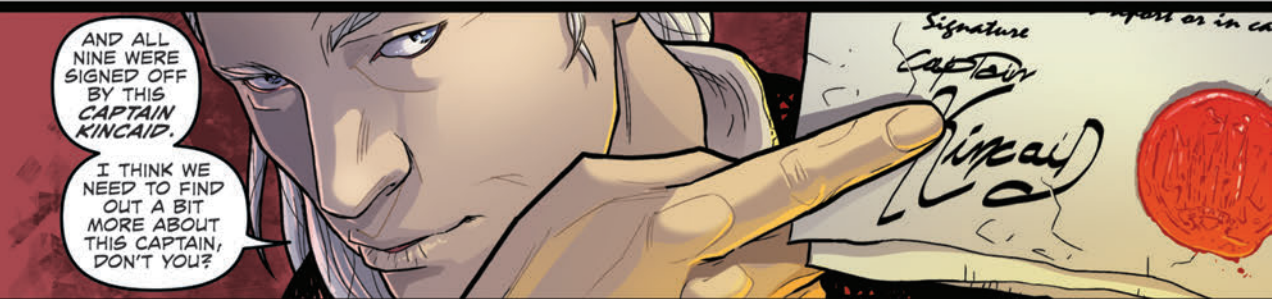
I **KNOW**. THAT'S THE **ODD** THING. THIS IS ARYA'S CASE FILE. BUT HER BROTHER'S DISAPPEARANCE HAS BEEN MARKED AS **SOLVED**.



IT SAYS HE WAS FOUND DEAD ON THE GROUNDS OF THE **BOLDREI ASYLUM** YESTERDAY. A **SUICIDE**.



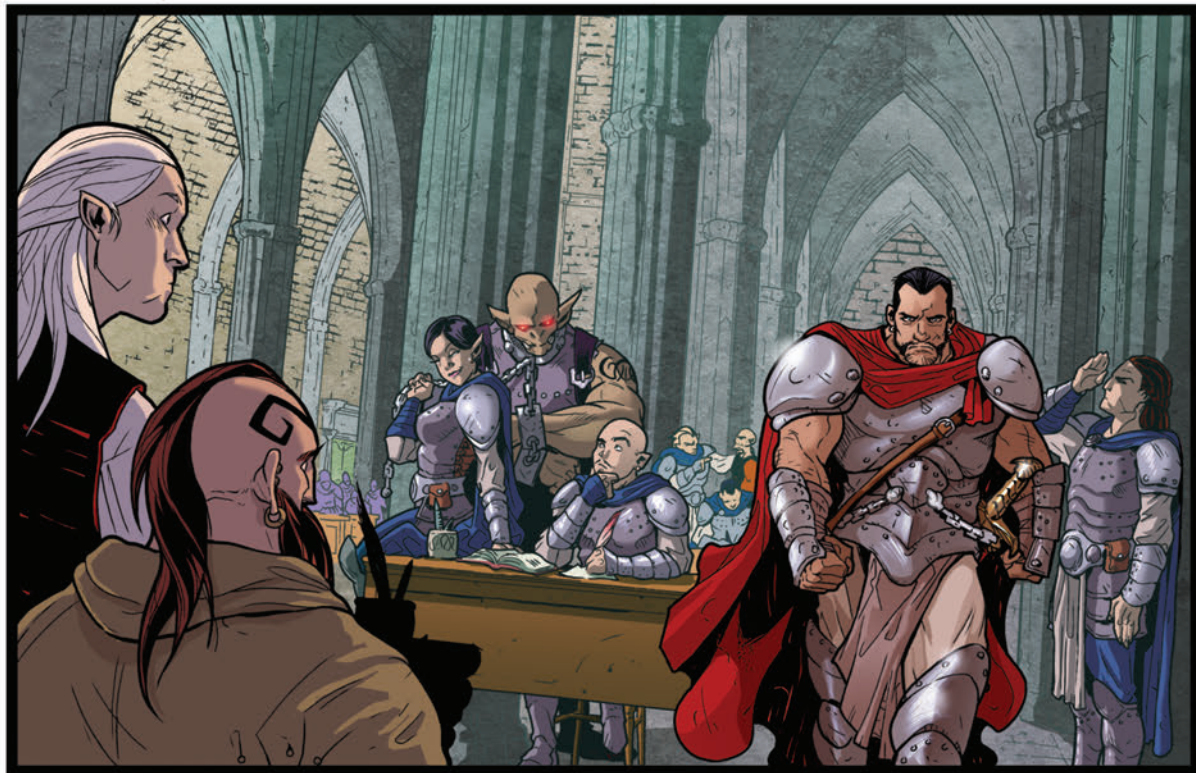
THERE'S MORE LIKE THAT. **NINE** INMATES HAVE ESCAPED FROM **FOUR SEPARATE ASYLUMS** OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS. ALL APPARENTLY FOUND DEAD WITHIN A FEW HOURS.



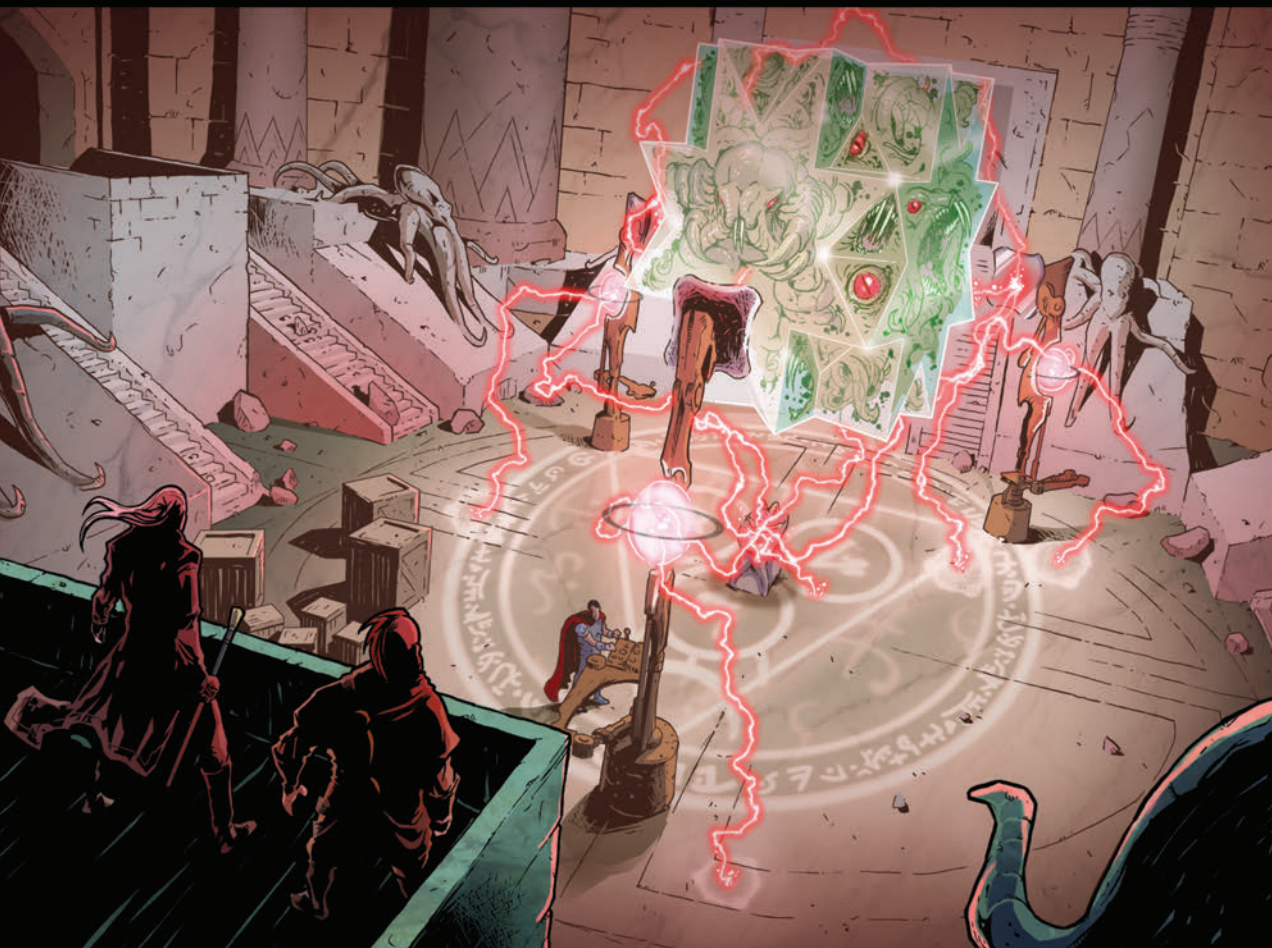
AND ALL NINE WERE SIGNED OFF BY THIS **CAPTAIN KINCAID**.

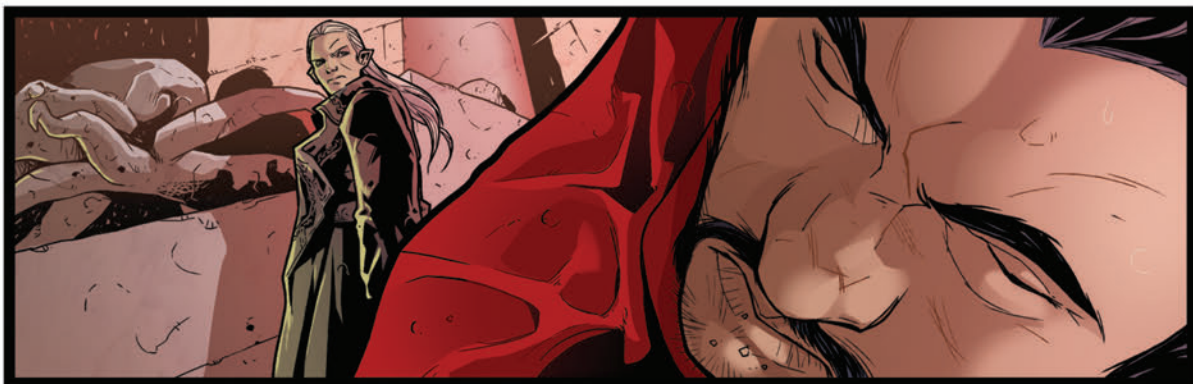
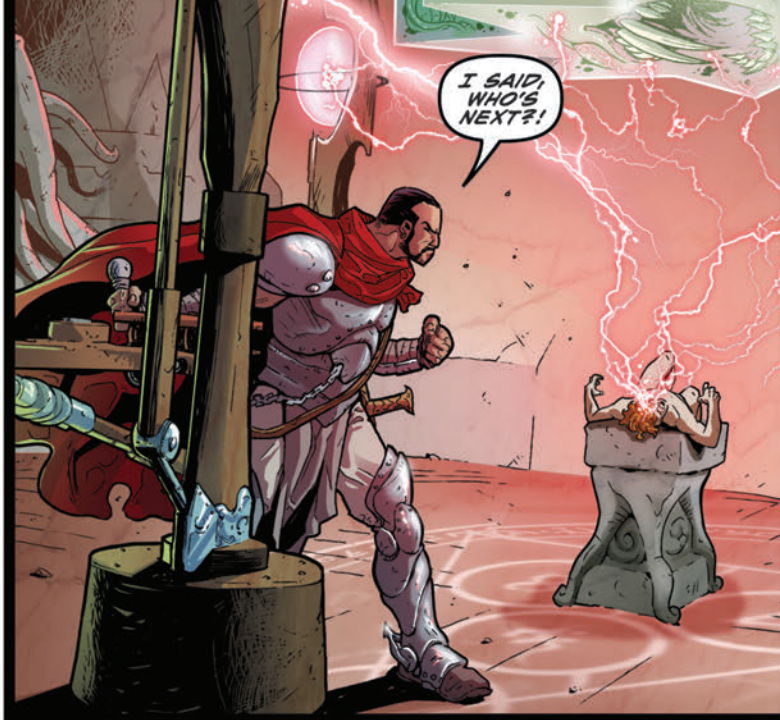
I THINK WE NEED TO FIND OUT A BIT MORE ABOUT THIS CAPTAIN, DON'T YOU?

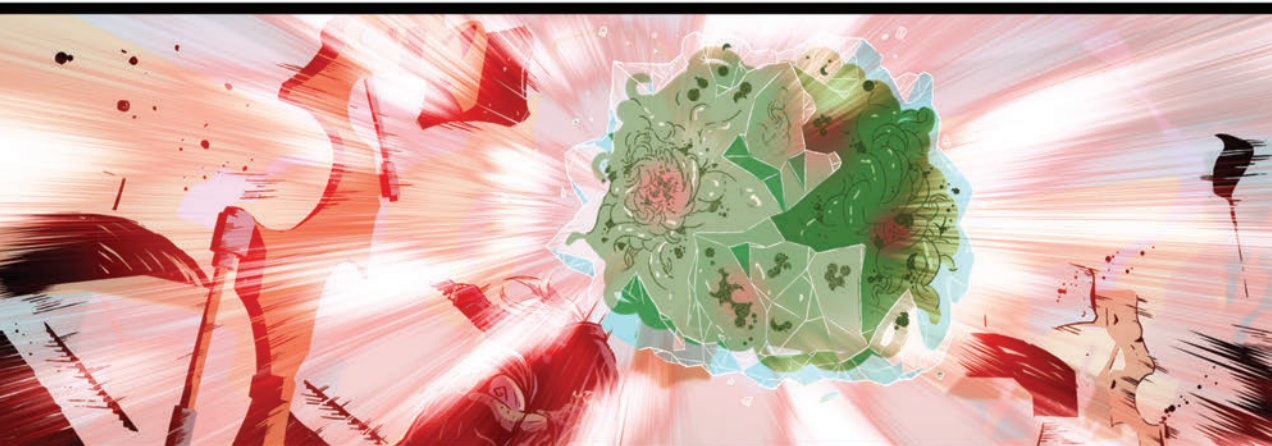
Signature
Captain
Kincaid



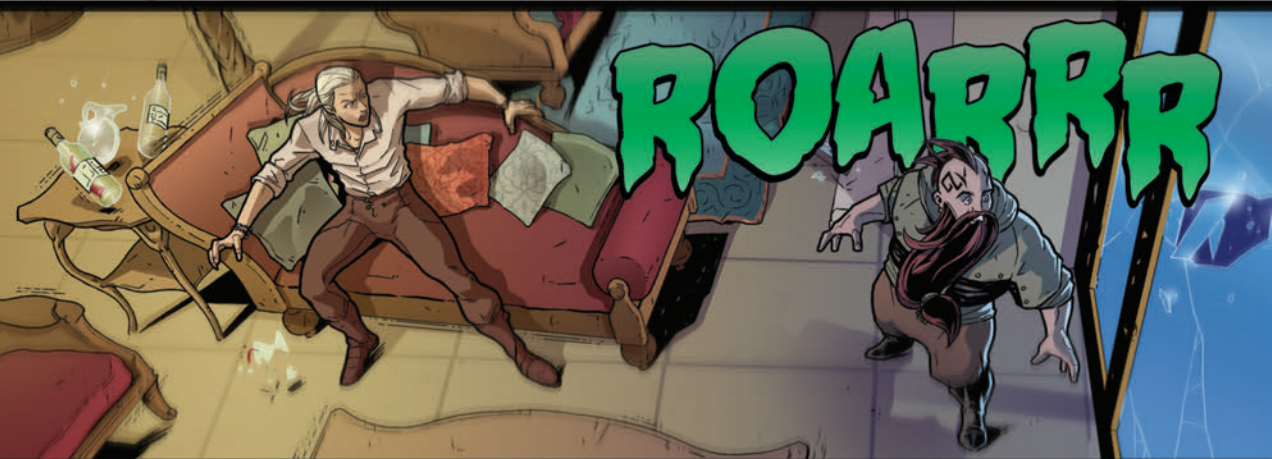
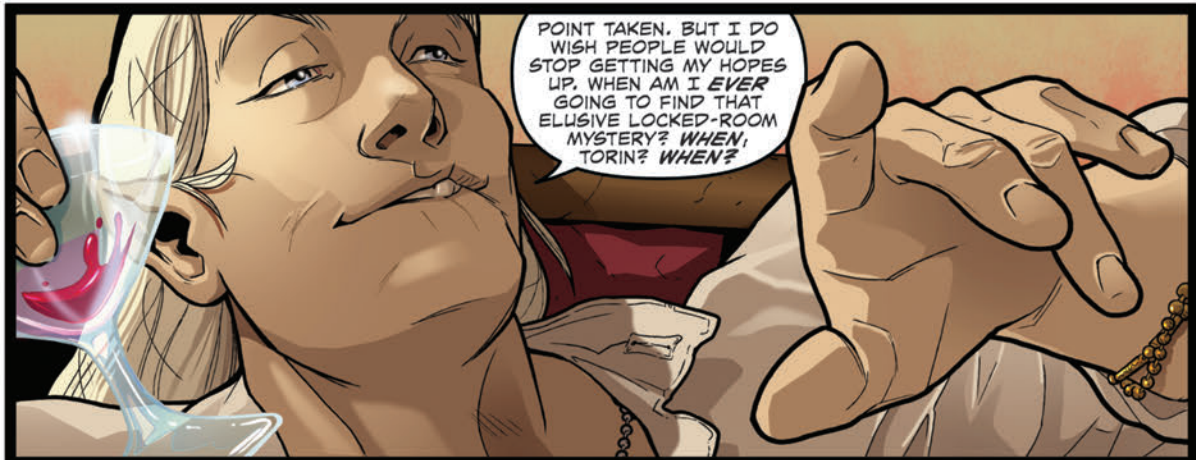


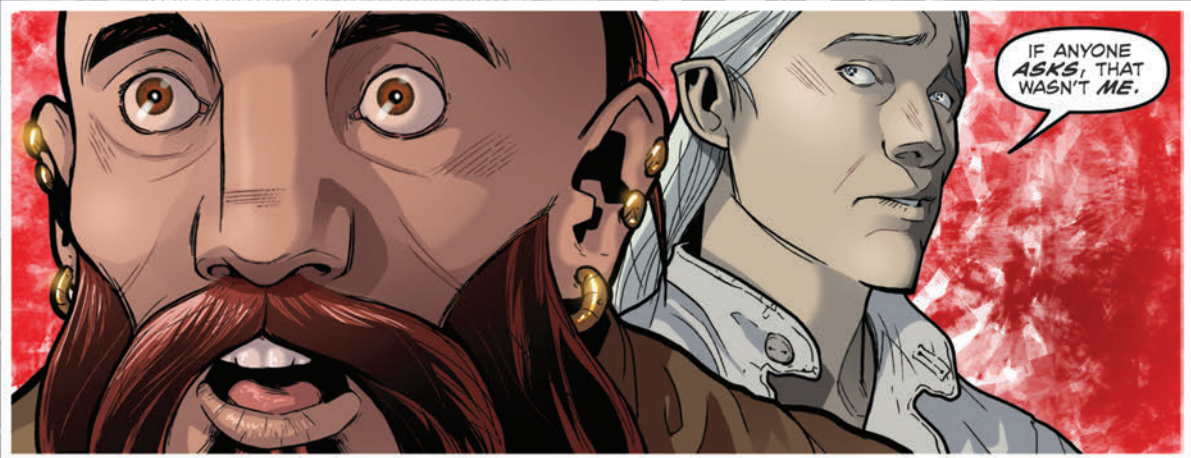


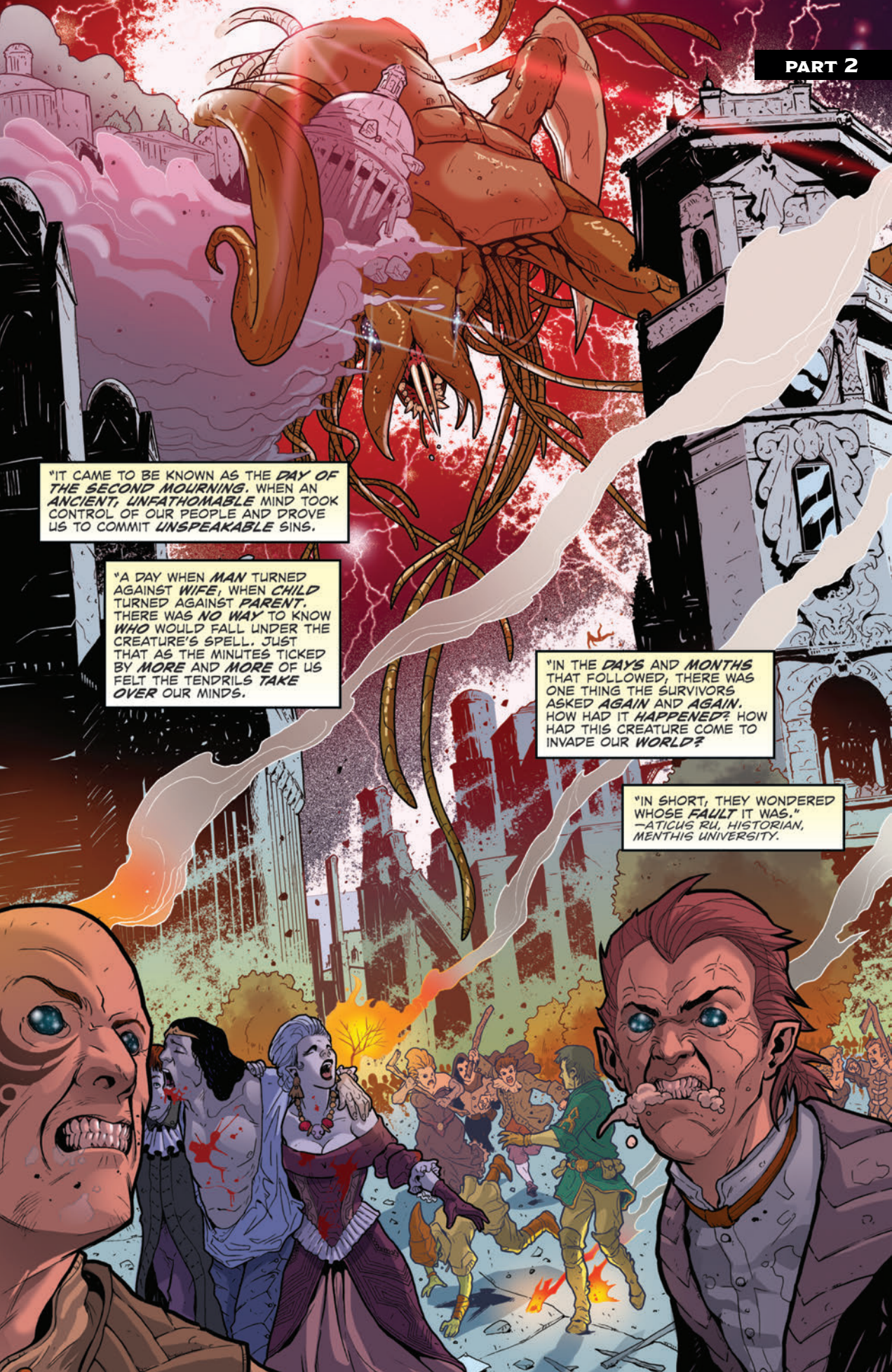




SCHLOOP







"IT CAME TO BE KNOWN AS THE **DAY OF THE SECOND MOURNING**. WHEN AN **ANCIENT, UNFATHOMABLE MIND** TOOK CONTROL OF OUR PEOPLE AND DROVE US TO COMMIT **UNSPEAKABLE SINS**.

"A DAY WHEN **MAN** TURNED AGAINST **WIFE**, WHEN **CHILD** TURNED AGAINST **PARENT**. THERE WAS **NO WAY** TO KNOW **WHO** WOULD FALL UNDER THE CREATURE'S SPELL. JUST THAT AS THE MINUTES TICKED BY **MORE AND MORE** OF US FELT THE **TENDRILS TAKE OVER** OUR MINDS.

"IN THE **DAYS AND MONTHS** THAT FOLLOWED, THERE WAS ONE THING THE SURVIVORS ASKED **AGAIN AND AGAIN**. HOW HAD IT **HAPPENED?** HOW HAD THIS CREATURE COME TO INVADE OUR **WORLD?**

"IN SHORT, THEY WONDERED **WHOSE FAULT IT WAS.**"
—**ATICUS RU, HISTORIAN, MENTHIS UNIVERSITY.**



I REFUSE TO TAKE THE BLAME FOR THIS, TORIN. IT ISN'T MY FAULT.

IT IS A *BIT* YOUR FAULT. *YOU'RE* THE ONE WHO DESTROYED THOSE MACHINES.

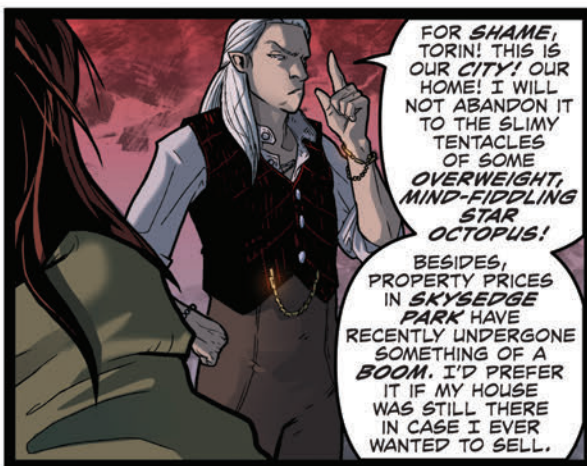
YOU DON'T KNOW THAT'S WHAT *CAUSED* THIS! IT COULD BE A *COINCIDENCE*.



THAT'S A PRETTY *BIG* COINCIDENCE, WREN.

I'M JUST GLAD MY WIFE IS VISITING HER MOTHER IN *WROAT*.

ACTUALLY, WHY *AREN'T* WE FLEEING THE CITY LIKE EVERYONE ELSE? I'M NOT REALLY KEEN ON *DYING* HERE TODAY.



FOR SHAME, TORIN! THIS IS OUR *CITY*! OUR HOME! I WILL NOT ABANDON IT TO THE SLIMY TENTACLES OF SOME *OVERWEIGHT, MIND-FIDDLING STAR OCTOPUS*!

BESIDES, PROPERTY PRICES IN *SKYSEDGE PARK* HAVE RECENTLY UNDERGONE SOMETHING OF A *BOOM*. I'D PREFER IT IF MY HOUSE WAS STILL THERE IN CASE I EVER WANTED TO SELL.

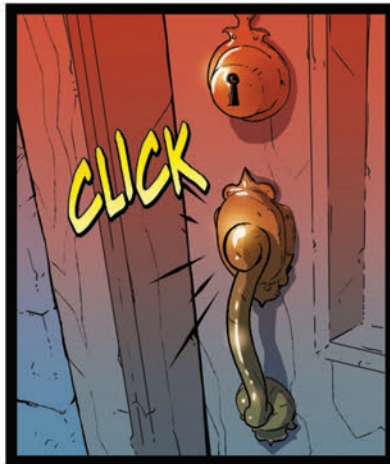


AND YOU *HONESTLY* THINK KINCAID'S GOING TO COME BACK *HERE*? HE WAS PROBABLY THE FIRST ONE OUT OF THE CITY.



I DON'T SEE WHY NOT. HE *CLEARLY* HAS SO MUCH OF VALUE THAT HE WON'T WANT TO LEAVE BEHIND.

BUT IF YOU HAVE A *BETTER IDEA*, I'M ALL EARS.



YES... *RIGHT*.
DON'T MOVE.
OTHERWISE, MY
BLOODTHIRSTY LITTLE
FRIEND WILL *GUT* YOU
LIKE AN OVERLY LARGE
FISH. AND I MUST WARN
YOU, THE KNIFE IS
VERY, VERY *BLUNT*.
SO... IT WILL
HURT. MORE.



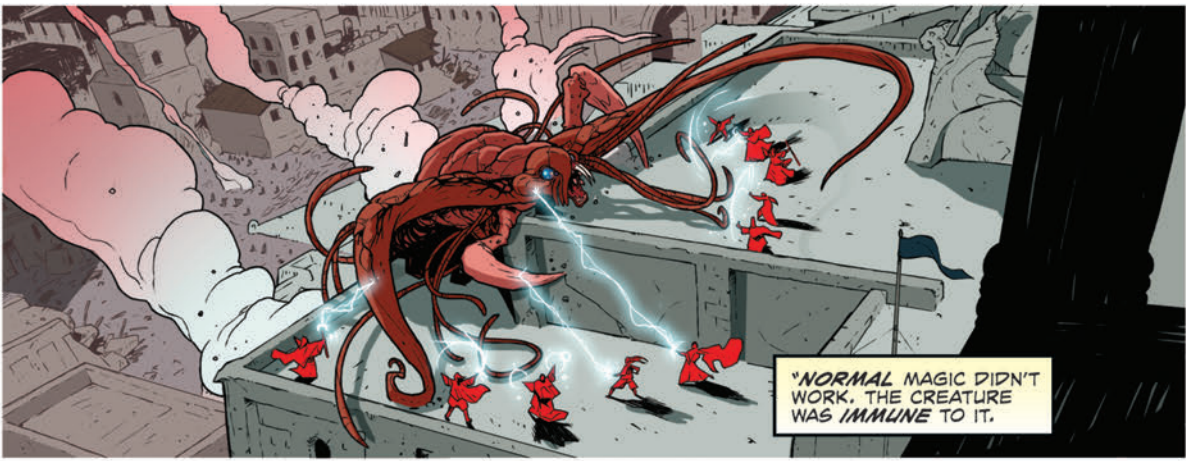
SORRY, THAT
SOUNDED MORE
THREATENING IN
MY HEAD.

GO AHEAD.
KILL ME. YOU'VE
SENTENCED
EVERYONE TO
DEATH ANYWAY.



YES. *ABOUT*
THAT. WHY DON'T
YOU TELL US EXACTLY
WHY THERE'S A DEMONIC
OCTOPUS CREATURE TRYING
TO *EAT* OUR *CITY*? AND
TAKE YOUR TIME. IT'S NOT
AS IF WE'RE IN A RUSH
OR ANYTHING.





"NORMAL MAGIC DIDN'T WORK. THE CREATURE WAS IMMUNE TO IT."



"IN THE END, THEIR ONLY HOPE WAS TO TRY AND TRAP IT. THEY KNEW IT FED ON CHAOS, SO THEY HOPED TO USE ITS ABSOLUTE OPPOSITE."



"THEY SOUGHT OUT A MANIFEST ZONE—AN... OVERLAP, IF YOU WILL—TO DAANVI, THE PLANE OF PERFECT ORDER. THE CLOSEST ONE THEY COULD FIND WAS BELOW SHARN."

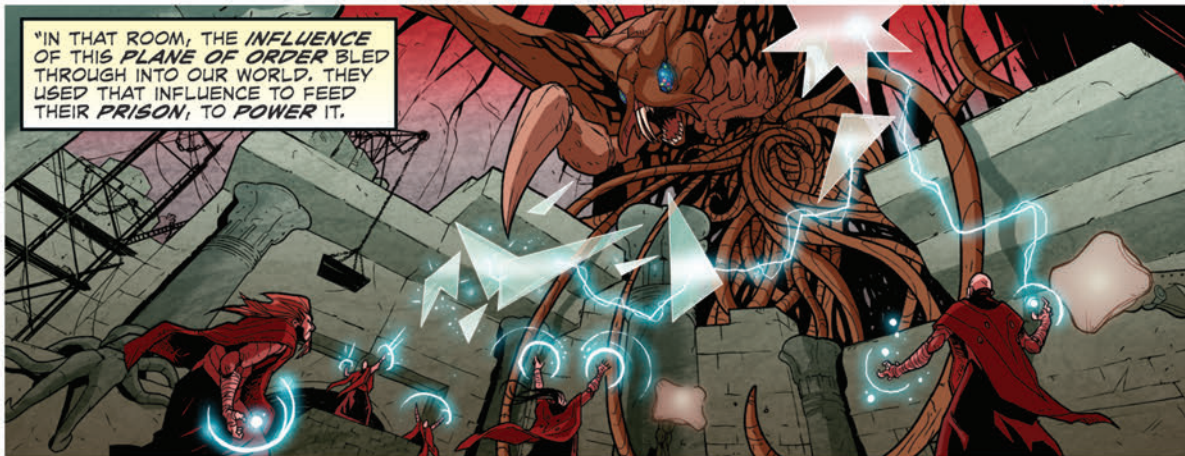


"THERE WAS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF... COLLATERAL DAMAGE. BUT THEY HAD NO CHOICE. IT WAS THE LIVES OF A FEW AGAINST THE LIVES OF THE MANY."

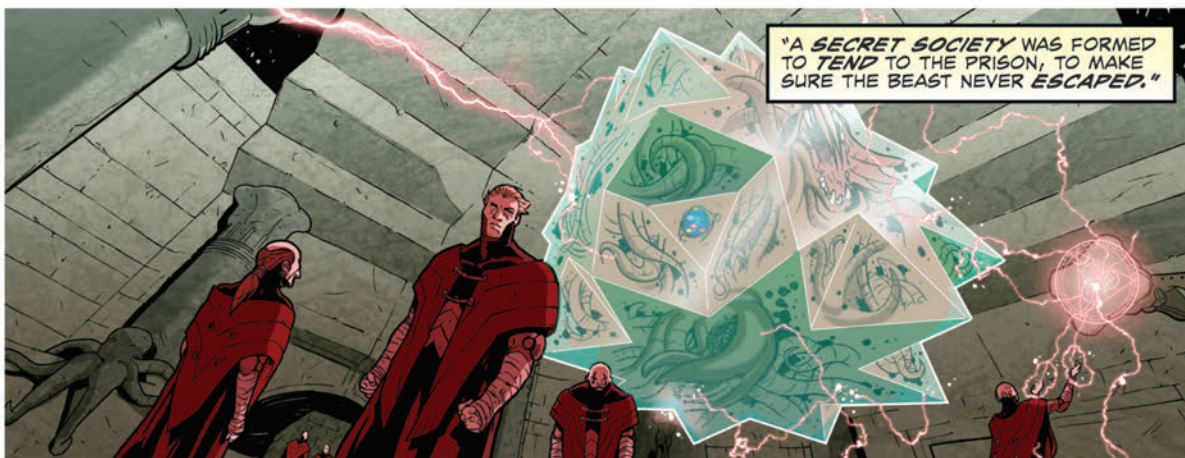


"BUT THEY SUCCEEDED IN THEIR GOAL. IN LEADING THE CREATURE INTO THE TRAP."

"IN THAT ROOM, THE INFLUENCE OF THIS PLANE OF ORDER BLEED THROUGH INTO OUR WORLD. THEY USED THAT INFLUENCE TO FEED THEIR PRISON, TO POWER IT.



"A SECRET SOCIETY WAS FORMED TO TEND TO THE PRISON, TO MAKE SURE THE BEAST NEVER ESCAPED."



WHY DIDN'T THEY JUST KILL IT?



THEY COULDN'T! NONE OF THEIR WEAPONS DID ANYTHING. THEY'D CUT IT AND THE WOUND WOULD JUST HEAL.

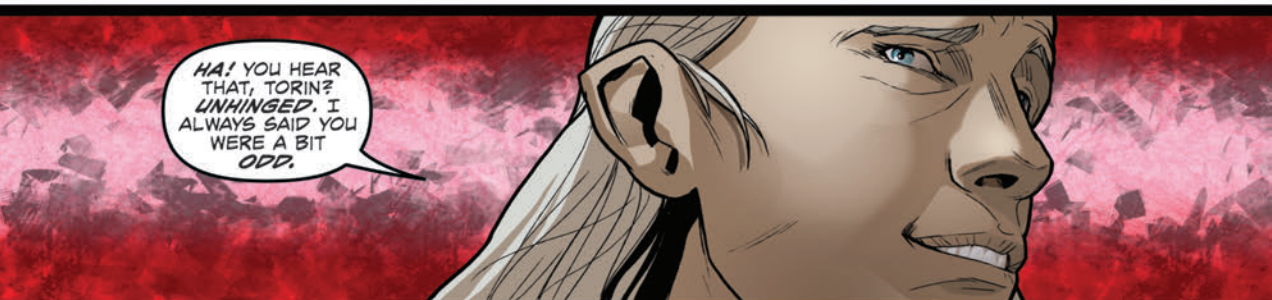
BESIDES, THERE WERE THOSE WHO WANTED TO KEEP IT ALIVE. IN CASE WE EVER NEEDED TO... USE IT. COMMUNICATE WITH IT.



THE PATIENTS FROM THE ASYLUM.

THE PATIENTS FROM THE ASYLUM.







"WE FOUND THAT THE BEAST AFFECTED THOSE WITH **BROKEN MINDS** THE MOST. WE USED THAT TO OUR **ADVANTAGE**, USED IT AS A MEANS TO **COMMUNICATE**."



THE **OLD ONES** ARE COMING. I CAN SENSE THEIR HUNGER, FEEL THE **BARRIERS WEAKENING**.

YOUR TIME IS AT AN **END**, HUMAN.



"UNFORTUNATELY, ALLOWING THE BEAST INTO THEIR HEADS TENDED TO... BREAK THEM. THAT'S WHY WE HAD TO USE SO MANY."



I'M STILL NOT GETTING THIS. WHEN WE FOLLOWED YOU, YOU WERE ASKING THE BEAST WHO WAS **NEXT**. IT GAVE YOU A **NAME**.

THE **BARRIERS** WERE **WEAK**, BUT THAT DIDN'T MEAN THEY WOULD **BREAK**. AT LEAST, NOT WITHOUT **HELP**.

THE **OLD ONES** WERE EXTENDING THEIR INFLUENCE **THROUGH** THE **BARRIER**, **POSSESSING** PEOPLE.



WHEN WE DISCOVERED THE CREATURE WAS **STILL CONNECTED** TO ITS **KIND**, WE USED THE PATIENTS TO FIND WHO HAD BEEN **COMPROMISED**. THEN I TRACKED THEM DOWN AND **KILLED** THEM.

"THEN YOU CAME ALONG
AND RUINED **EVERYTHING**.
ONCE YOU KILLED THE
BEAST, WE COULD NO
LONGER FIND OUT WHO
WAS BEING **POSSESSED**."



"THE OLD ONES WERE
ABLE TO **USE** THEM,
TO **BEND** THEM TO
THEIR NEEDS."

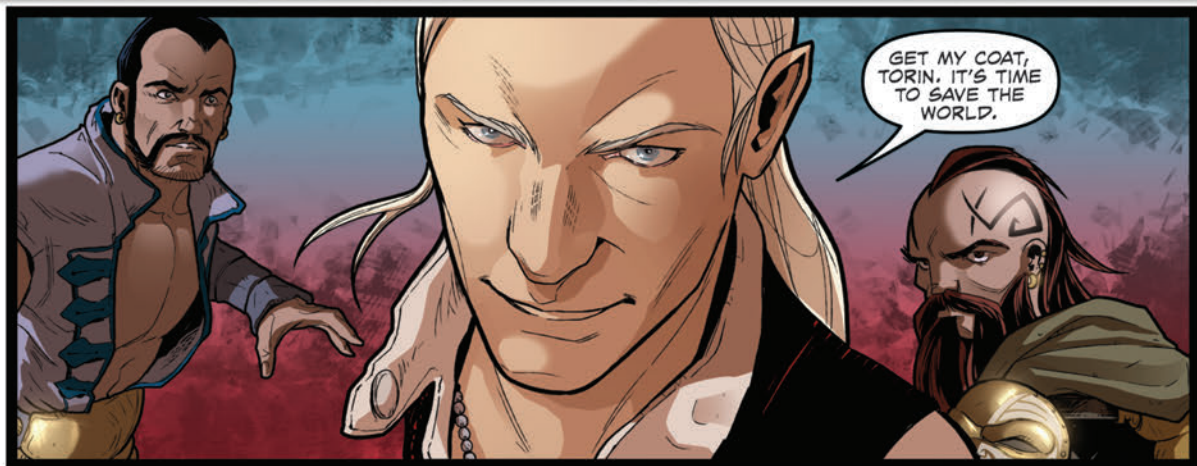
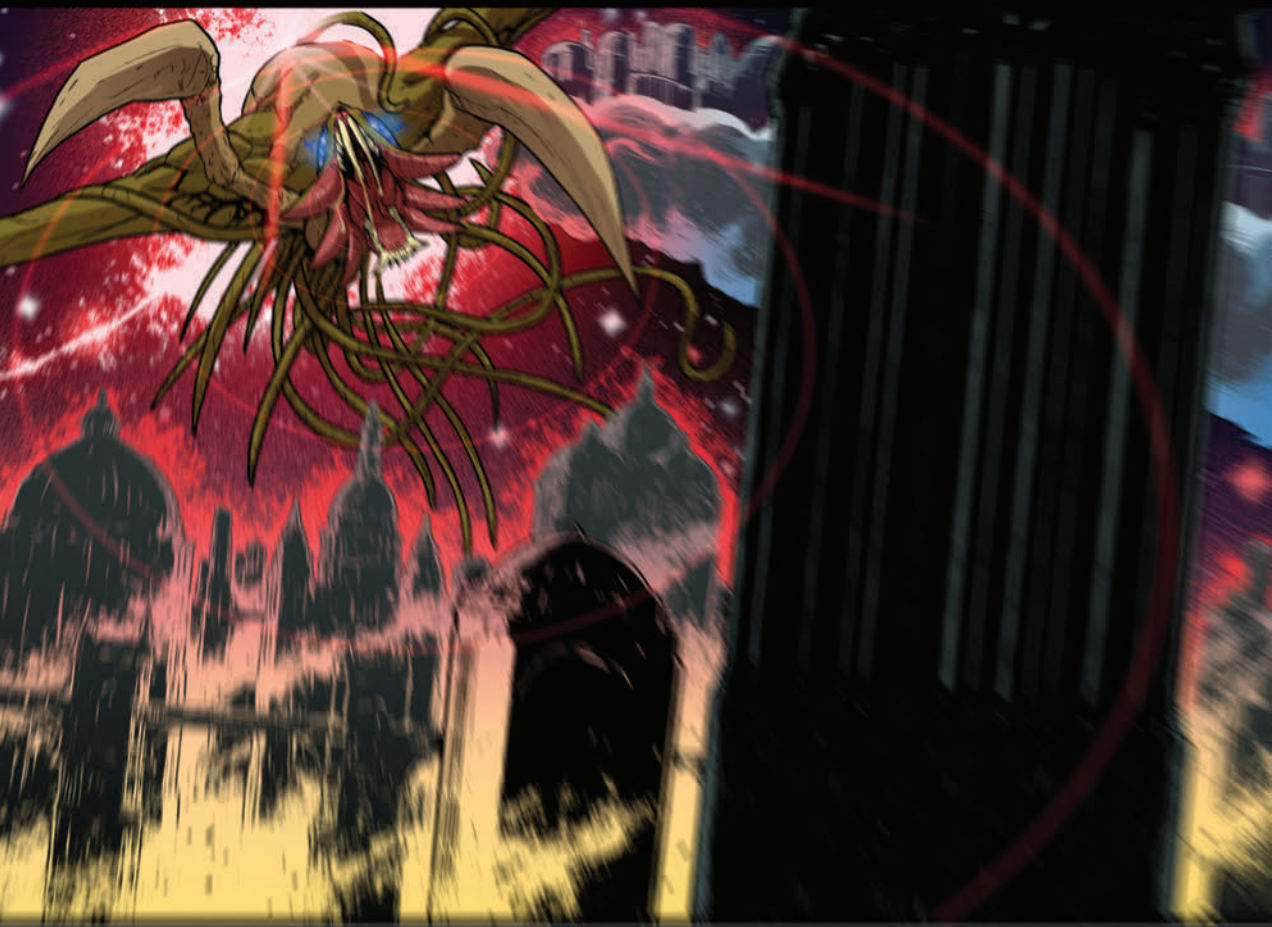
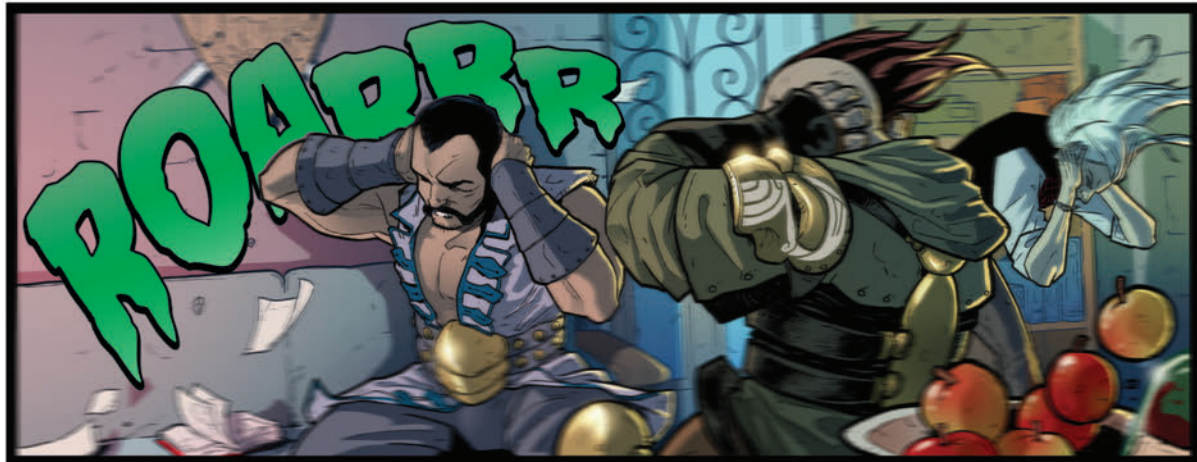


"IF YOU'D LEFT ME ALONE
I COULD HAVE TRACKED
THEM DOWN AND **KILLED**
THEM BEFORE THEY HAD A
CHANCE TO **DO** ANYTHING."



"AND NOW IT'S
TOO LATE."

HE IS
COMING.





WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WE NEED TO **LEAVE!** AT THE RATE THE OLD ONE IS MOVING, IT WILL BE THROUGH THE RIP WITHIN AN HOUR!

AND THEN WHAT? IF THIS CREATURE IS HALF AS DANGEROUS AS YOU SAY IT IS, **NOTHING** WILL STOP IT. THE WHOLE OF **KHORVAIRE** WILL FALL.



CAN'T YOU JUST MAKE ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE **PRISONS?**



NO. THE POWER NEEDED TO CREATE THE ONE WE HAD WAS ALMOST TOO MUCH FOR THE MAGES. THAT THING UP THERE IS **HUGE**. IT'S **IMPOSSIBLE**.



THERE HAS TO BE **SOMETHING**. SOMETHING WE CAN **USE...**



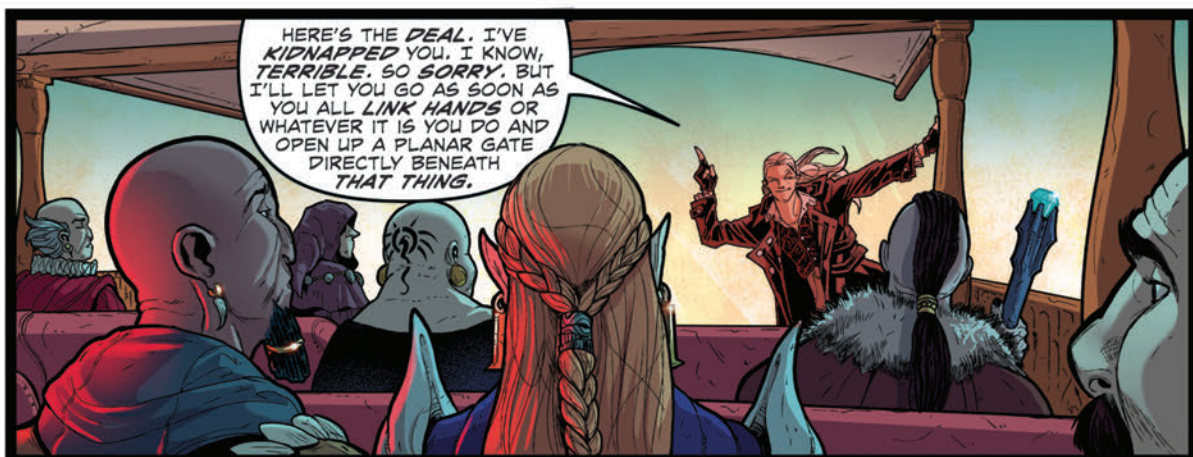
I HAVE AN **IDEA**. AND LIKE ME, IT'S **BRILLIANT**, **CUNNING**, AND **INCREDIBLY HANDSOME**.

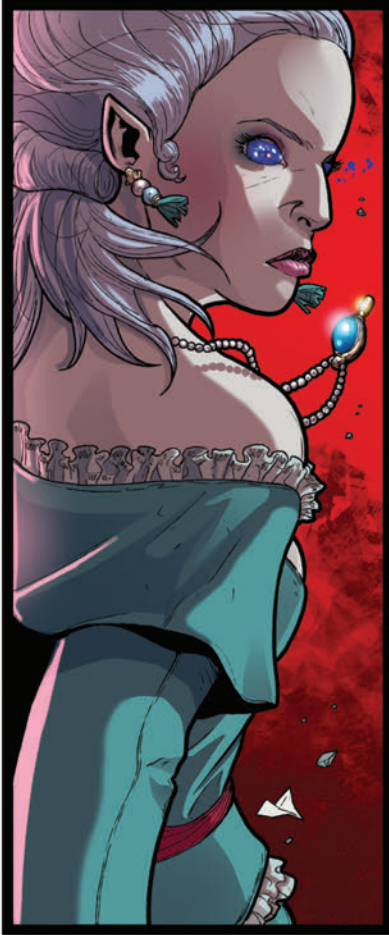


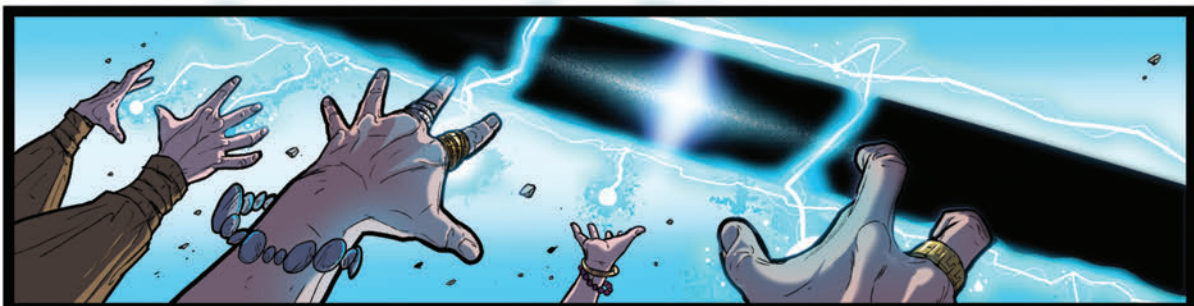
MENTHIS COLLEGE OF CONJURATION AND MAGICAL ARTS.

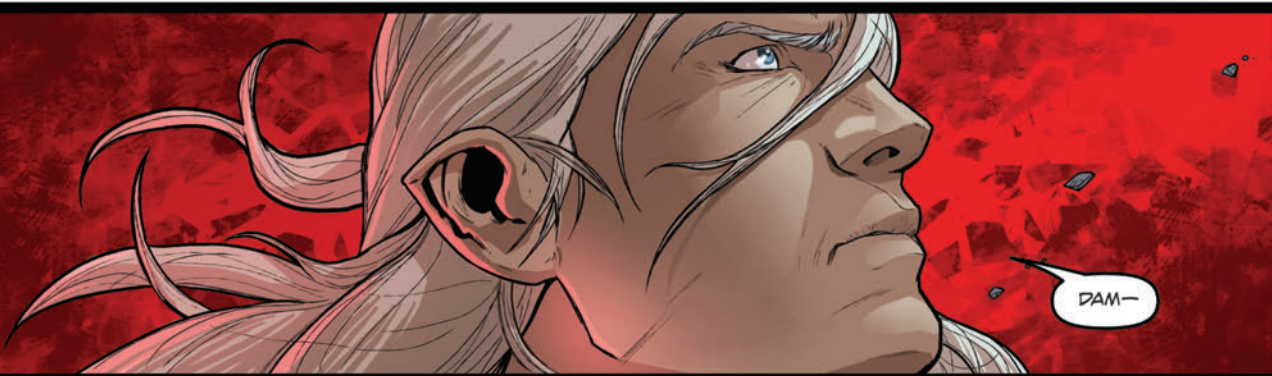
A comic book panel depicting a scene in a library or study. In the foreground, a character with pointed ears, wearing a blue tunic and a matching cap with a gold emblem, stands on a raised platform. He has a stern expression and is pointing his right index finger towards a man standing below. The man is wearing a purple robe with red trim and is carrying a large stack of books under his arm. He looks back at the character in the blue robe. In the background, behind a wooden railing, two other figures are visible: a bald man with a long white beard and a man with a shaved head and a yellow earring. A speech bubble from the character in blue says "TEACHERS ONLY." The scene is set in a room with wooden beams and a warm, reddish-pink color palette.

GOOD JOB.
NOW TAKE US
UP TO SKYWAY.
THE PLAZA OF
FALLEN
GODS.

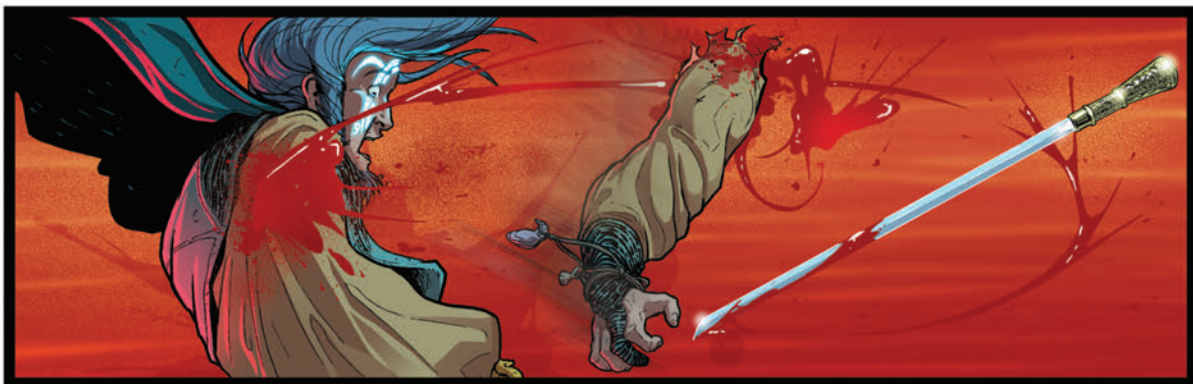
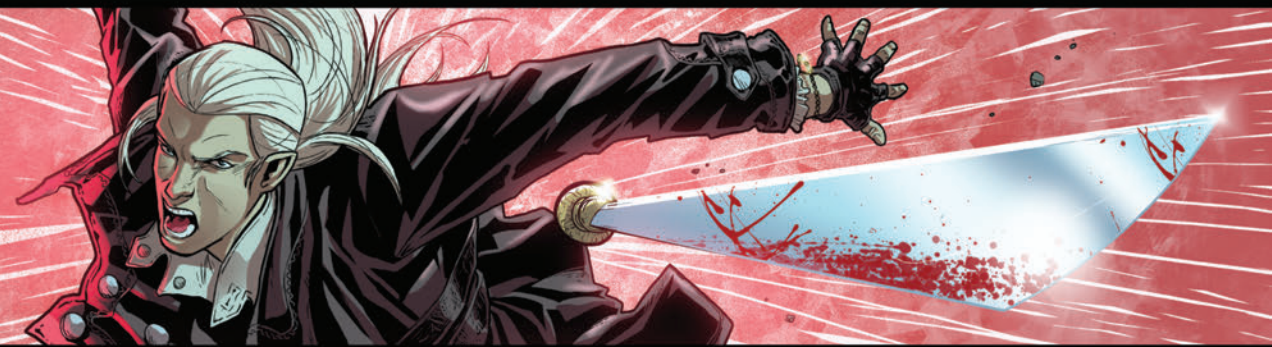


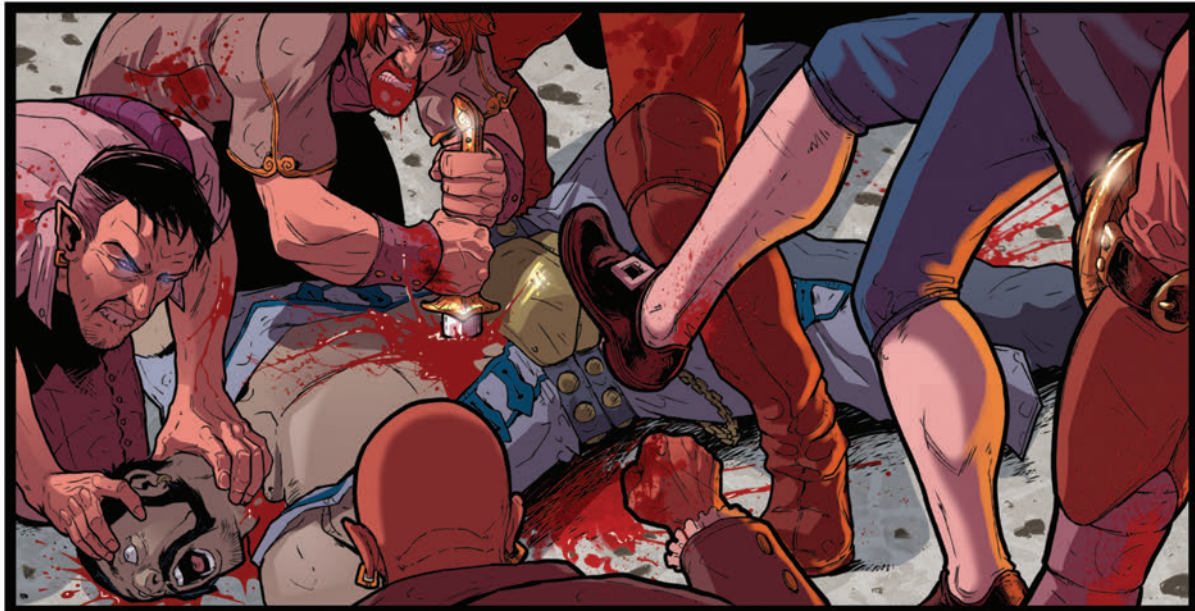


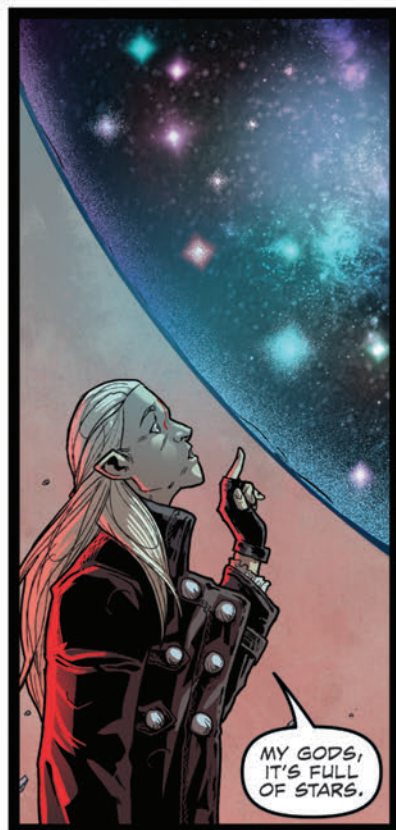
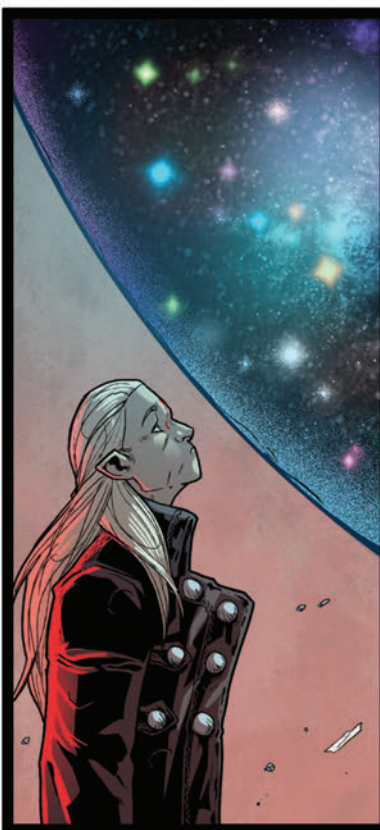
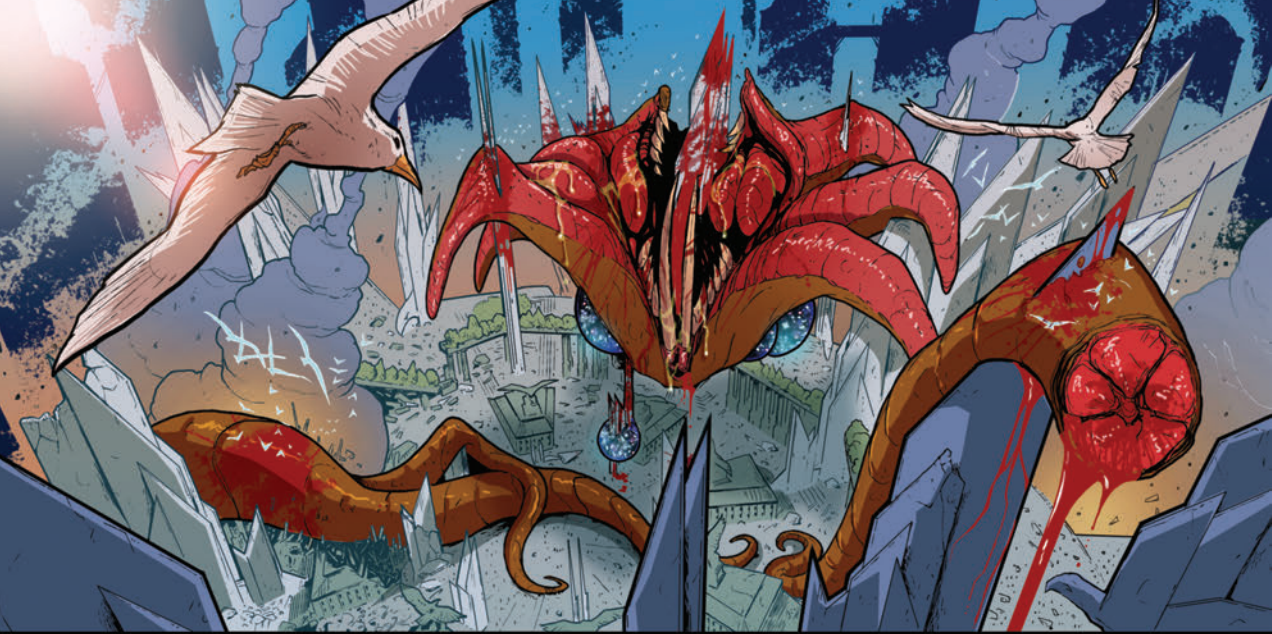

















A HUNDRED YEARS
OF WARFARE.

THOUSANDS UPON
THOUSANDS DEAD,
AND ALL BECAUSE
THE OFFSPRING OF
KING JAROT COULDN'T
DECIDE *WHO* SHOULD
TAKE UP THE CROWN
WHEN HE DIED.

THE KINGDOM OF GALIFAR
FRAGMENTED, CRUMBLING
BENEATH THE PETTY
AMBITIONS OF POWER-
HUNGRY SIBLINGS.

TWO YEARS AGO, THE WAR FINALLY
ENDED. BUT OLD RESENTMENTS STILL
FLOW STRONG. EVEN AS NATIONS TRY
TO REBUILD, THEY ARE FIGHTING A
SHADOW WAR WITH *ESPIONAGE*,
SPIES, AND *SABOTAGE*.

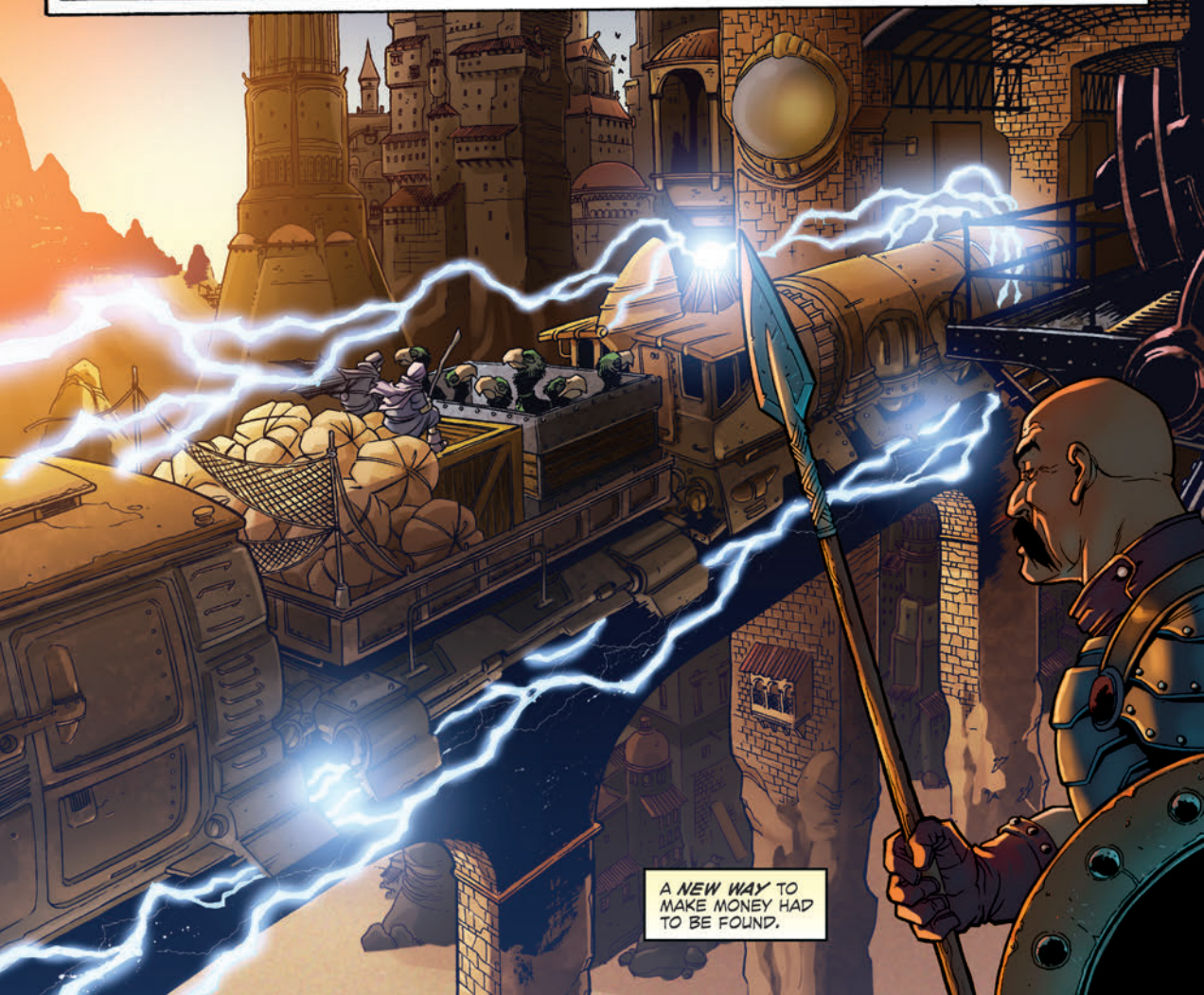




THE *FIRST* LIGHTNING RAIL WAS COMMISSIONED TO HELP MOVE *SOLDIERS* AND *WEAPONS* ACROSS THE CONTINENT.




BUT WITH THE *TREATY OF THRONEHOLD* MAINTAINING A *SHAKY PEACE*, AN ENTIRE WARTIME INDUSTRY NEEDED TO SHIFT DIRECTIONS.



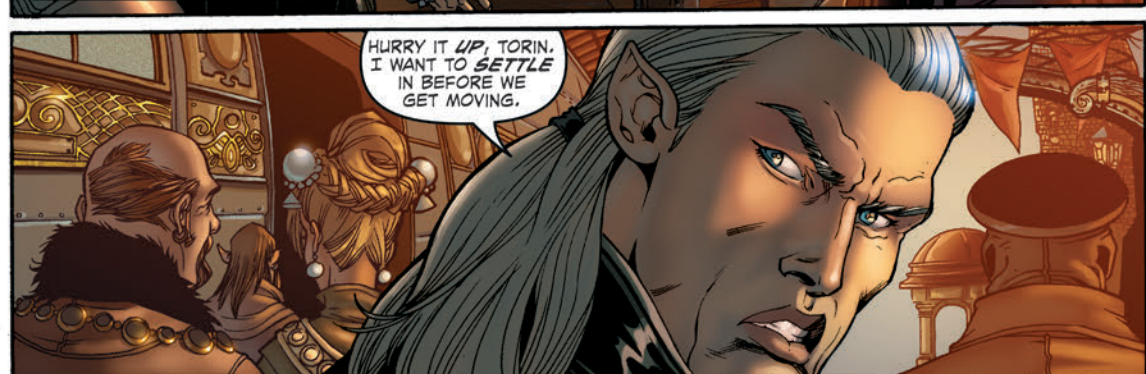
A *NEW WAY* TO MAKE MONEY HAD TO BE FOUND.



THE MAIDEN VOYAGE
OF THE LUXURY CLASS
LIGHTNING RAIL, THE
BRELAND EXPRESS.



TICKETS FOR THE TRIP SOLD
OUT WITHIN THE HOUR. BLACK
MARKET PRICES WERE *HIGHER*
THAN THE AVERAGE PERSON'S
YEARLY SALARY.



HURRY IT UP, TORIN.
I WANT TO *SETTLE*
IN BEFORE WE
GET MOVING.



WHY DO YOU
NEED *SO MUCH*
LUGGAGE? IT'S
NOT NORMAL.



WHAT ARE
YOU *TALKING*
ABOUT? IT'S VERY
NORMAL. LOOK.
FORMAL NIGHT
WEAR.

FORMAL
DAY WEAR.

SEXY NIGHT
WEAR—*WHAT?*
YOU NEVER
KNOW.

SEXY DAY
WEAR.

THAT ONE
IS IN CASE
THERE'S A
SURPRISE
BALL.

THAT ONE IS
IN CASE WE
DRIVE INTO A
BLIZZARD—



WREN, THE
TRIP ONLY
LASTS *THREE*
DAYS!

I *KNOW*.
THAT'S WHY
I'M TRAVELING
LIGHT.



ALL
ABOARD!

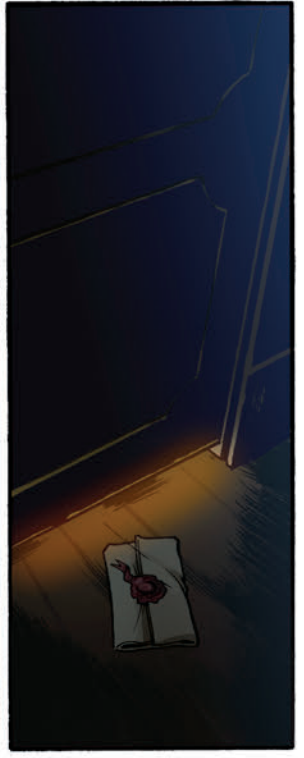
WHAT'S
UP WITH
YOU?

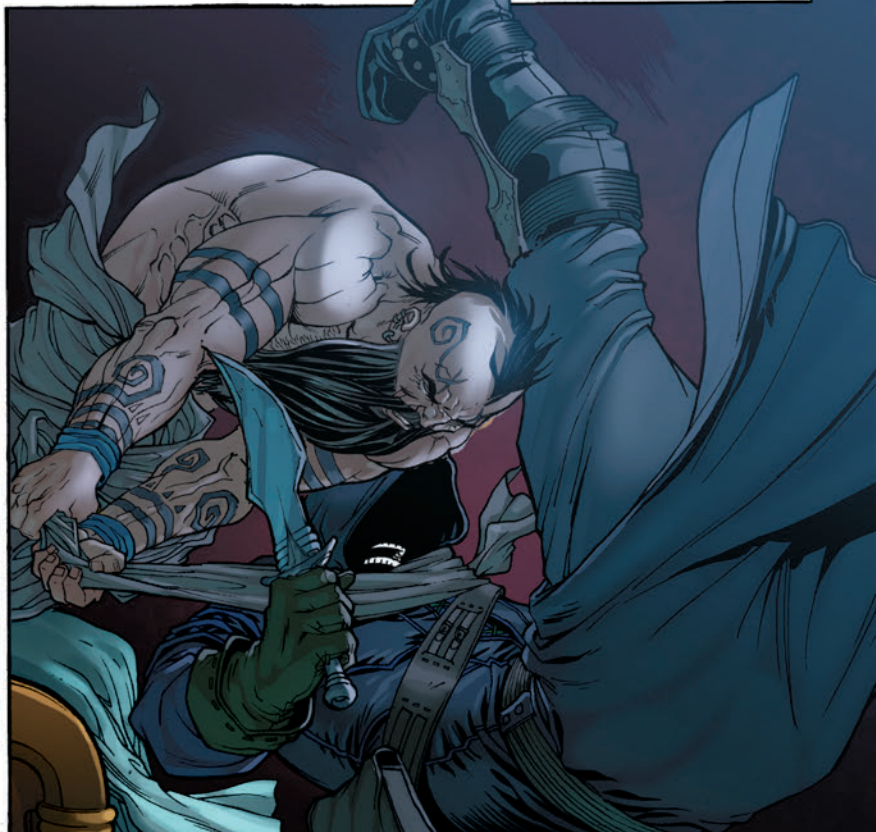
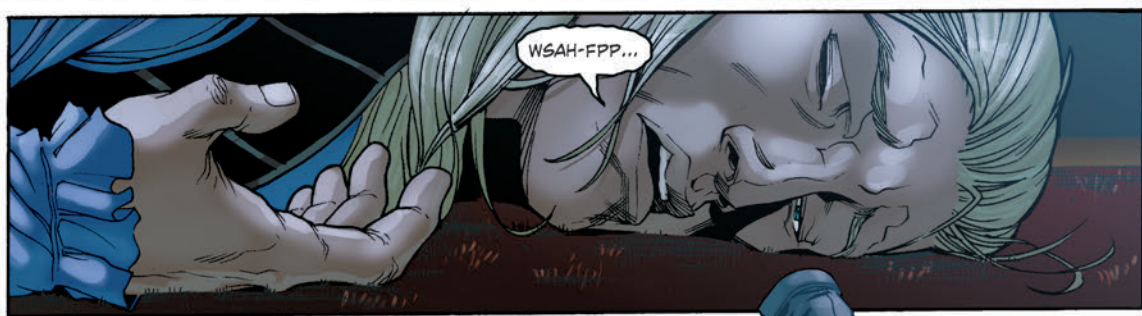
NOTHING...
JUST THOUGHT I
RECOGNIZED...

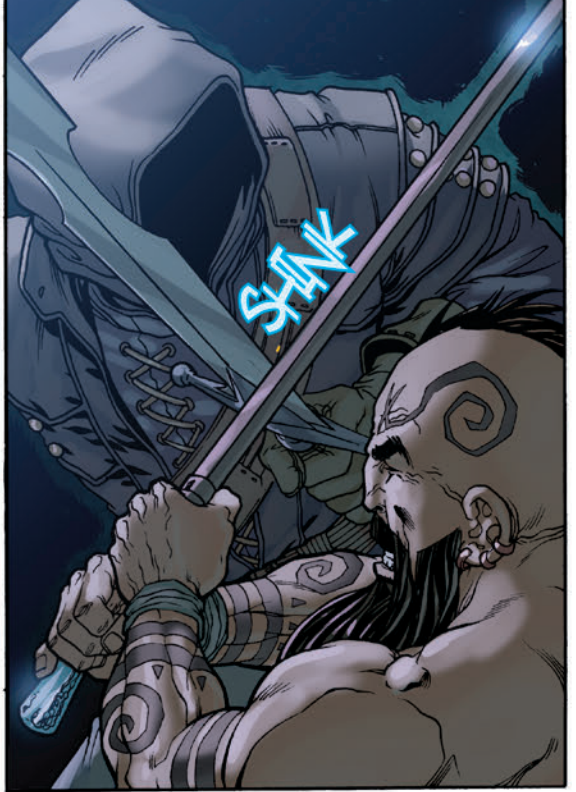
DOESN'T
MATTER. LET'S
GET ABOARD.

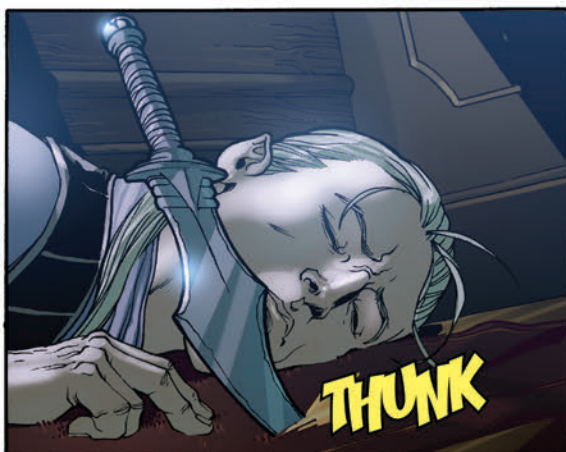
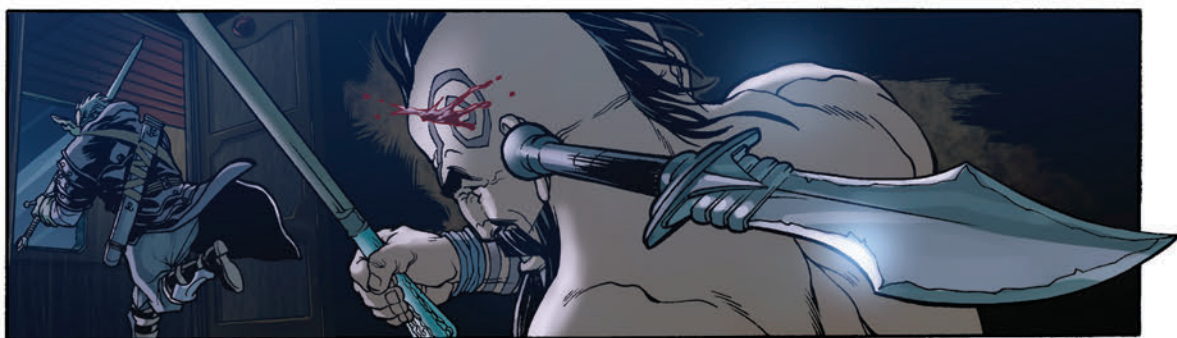
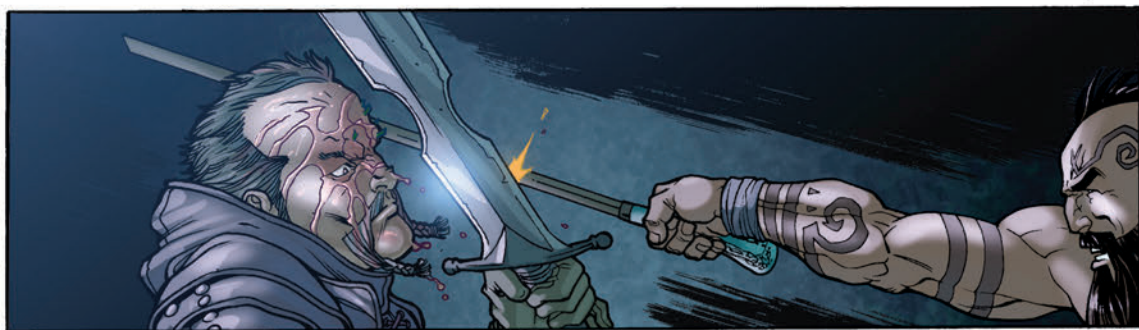












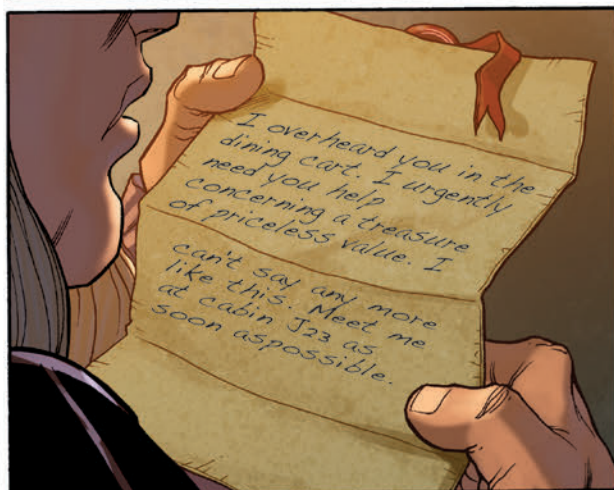
HONESTLY, TORIN. WHY MUST YOU OFFEND *EVERYONE* WE COME IN CONTACT WITH? WHAT DID YOU DO *THIS* TIME?

ME?! YOU'RE THE ONE WHO WAS *RANTING AND RAVING* AT DINNER, AND DON'T YOU THINK IT'S MORE LIKELY THAT YOU WERE THE *TARGET*? SEEING AS I WAS SLEEPING IN YOUR BED?



THEN IT *SERVES* YOU *RIGHT*. MAYBE NEXT TIME YOU'LL KNOW YOUR *PLACE*.

NOW, WHAT DO WE HAVE *HERE*? A REQUEST FOR A *MIDNIGHT TRYST*, PERHAPS? I DON'T KNOW IF I'M UP FOR IT TO BE COMPLETELY *HONEST* WITH YOU.



NOT A TRYST THEN. OH WELL.

WE'RE UP *NOW*. I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD GO AND SEE WHAT THIS FELLOW *WANTS*.



ACTUALLY, I THINK SOME *WATER* FIRST. IT TASTES LIKE SOMETHING'S *DIED* IN MY *MOUTH*.





TORIN, KEEP EVERYONE OUT. WE'LL TAKE OVER HE—



URGH. WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?



THIS IS MY CRIME SCENE. I WAS HERE FIRST. GET LOST.



COME NOW,
MY DEAR. YOU GO
AND HAVE A NICE
CUP OF TEA AND
LEAVE THIS TO THE
PROFESSIONALS.



WHAT?!



I SAID
GET LOST.
I WAS HERE
FIRST.

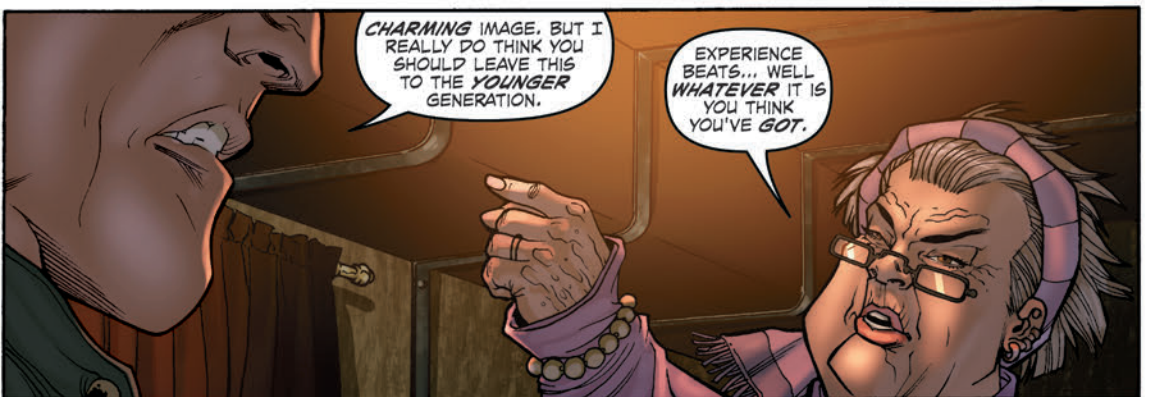


JUST WHO
DO YOU THINK
YOU ARE?



ASTA
TELANDRA.
AMATEUR
SLEUTH.

WELL, I SAY
AMATEUR BUT I'VE
SOLVED OVER A
HUNDRED CASES IN
MY TIME. I ALWAYS
GET MY MAN, NO
MATTER HOW MUCH
THEY STRUGGLE.



CHARMING IMAGE, BUT I
REALLY DO THINK YOU
SHOULD LEAVE THIS
TO THE YOUNGER
GENERATION.

EXPERIENCE
BEATS... WELL
WHATEVER IT IS
YOU THINK
YOU'VE GOT.





A BLOW TO THE **SKULL**. THE AMOUNT OF BLOOD THAT HAS **MATTED** HIS HAIR SHOWS **HEAVY FLOW**. THE WOUND WAS INFLICTED **BEFORE** THE HEAD WAS CUT OFF.



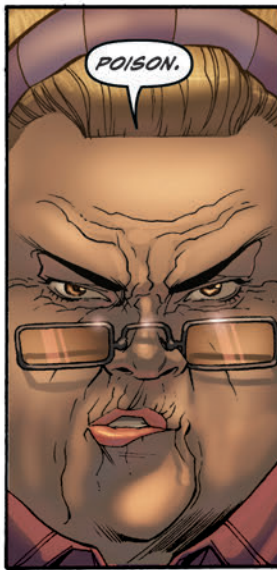
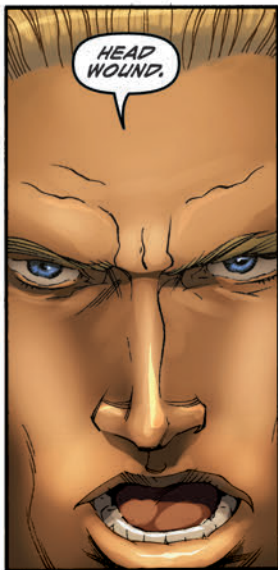
CONFIRMATION: **HEMORRHAGE** IN THE **EYE**. OBVIOUSLY HAPPENED WHILE HE WAS ALIVE AS A RESULT OF THE **BLOW** TO THE **HEAD**.



THE **DECAPITATION** OCCURRED **AFTER** **DEATH**.



IF YOU HAD LET ME FINISH, I WAS REFERRING TO THE **YELLOW FOAM FLECKS** AROUND HIS **MOUTH**. HE WAS **POISONED**. ATTACKED **AFTER** HE LOST CONSCIOUSNESS. THE **POISON** KILLED HIM.



I... I'M REALLY NOT **SURE** YOU SHOULD BE **LOOKING** AT MY PASSENGER LISTS. THEY'RE **CONFIDENTIAL**.

DON'T WORRY. TORIN IS THE VERY SOUL OF DISCRETION. NOW TELL ME, IS IT POSSIBLE TO TURN THIS TRAIN **AROUND**?

WHAT? **N-NO**. WE CAN ONLY TURN AROUND ONCE WE GET TO **VATHIRON** TOMORROW.

I SEE. SO WE'RE STUCK ON BOARD THIS RATHER **CLAUSTROPHOBIC**, BUT **ADMITTEDLY** REASONABLY WELL-APPOINTED, **LIGHTNING RAIL** WITH A **SADISTIC MURDERER** FOR THE NEXT 24 HOURS?

SOUNDS LIKE FUN.



HERE IT IS. HIS NAME WAS **VALERON DARIUS**. SAYS HERE HE WAS AN **ANTIQUES DEALER**.



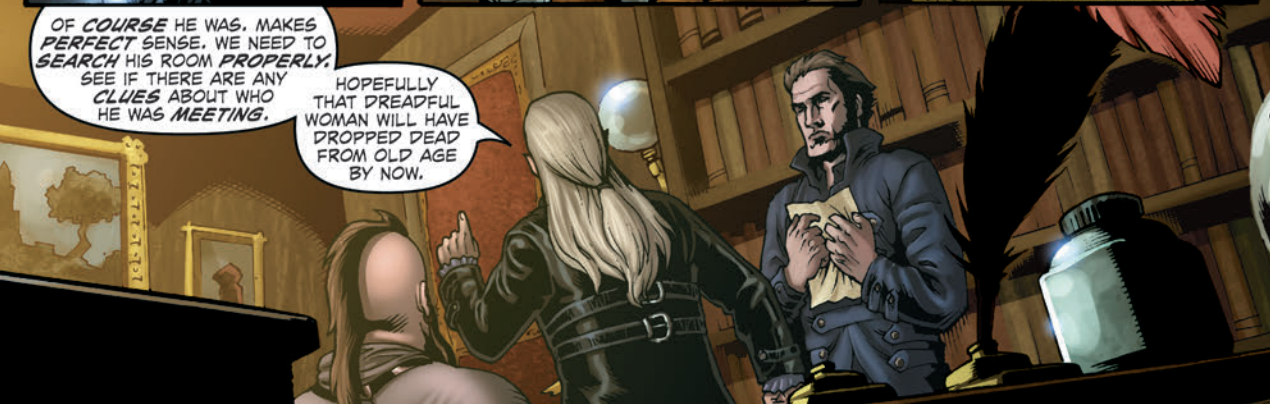
INTERESTING. MEETING A **WEALTHY** CLIENT ABOARD THE BRELAND EXPRESS, PERHAPS? A HANDOVER THAT WENT **WRONG**? WHAT DO YOU THINK? HE WANTED MORE **MONEY**, OR HIS CLIENT DIDN'T WANT TO **PAY ANYTHING**?

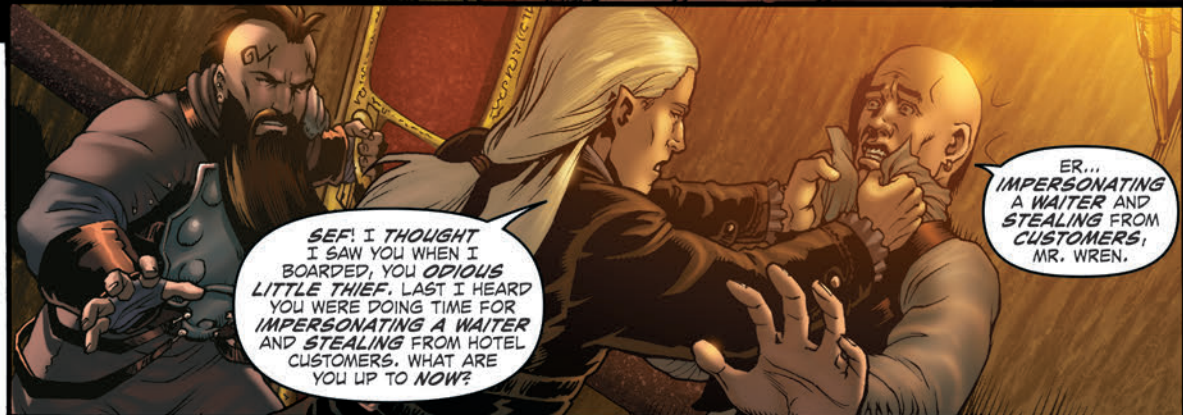


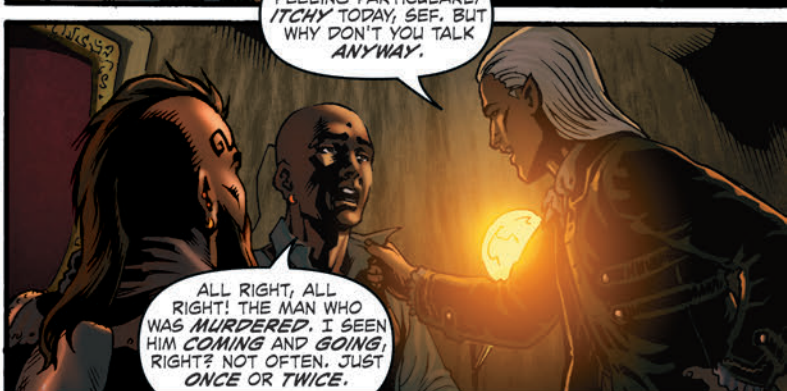
YOU DON'T KNOW HE WAS MEETING **ANYONE**.

OF COURSE HE WAS. MAKES **PERFECT** SENSE. WE NEED TO **SEARCH** HIS ROOM **PROPERLY**. SEE IF THERE ARE ANY **CLUES** ABOUT WHO HE WAS **MEETING**.

HOPEFULLY THAT DREADFUL WOMAN WILL HAVE **DROPPED DEAD** FROM OLD AGE BY NOW.











YOU COULDN'T HAVE SPOTTED IT WHEN WE WERE TRAVELING OVER LAND? YOU HAD TO WAIT TILL THERE WAS A THOUSAND FOOT DROP?

I'D GET A MOVE ON IF I WERE YOU. IT DIDN'T LOOK VERY SECURE.

I'D DO IT MYSELF, BUT MY BACK'S A BIT TENDER FROM ALMOST BEING KILLED TODAY.







I COULD HAVE *DIED*, TORIN. MY WHOLE LIFE *FLASHED* BEFORE MY *EYES*. IT WAS *FABULOUS*, OBVIOUSLY, BUT IT JUST MADE ME WANT TO LIVE ALL THE *MORE*.



THERE'S NOTHING HERE.

CUT IT OPEN. THERE HAS TO BE A *REASON* IT WAS THROWN AWAY.



WREN, THESE ARE *IDENTIFICATION PAPERS*.

LET ME *GUESS*. HE WASN'T AN *ANTIQUES DEALER*?



NO, HE WAS A *DARK LANTERN*, ONE OF KING BORANEL'S *SECRET AGENTS*.



POLITICS, TORIN. WHY IS IT ALWAYS POLITICS? POLITICS MAKES ME FEEL DIRTY. AND NOT IN A GOOD WAY.



I DON'T SUPPOSE IT HAS A DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF HIS MISSION OR ANYTHING CONVENIENT LIKE THAT?

AFRAID NOT. JUST HIS PAPERS, AND A WRIT SIGNED BY THE KING SAYING THAT THE BEARER OF THE NOTE IS ENTITLED TO... WELL, TO DO PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING HE WANTS, REALLY.



I'LL HAVE THAT. MIGHT COME IN HANDY SOME DAY.

NOW, WHY IN THE NAME OF ALL THAT'S HOLY WOULD A SPY SEND ME A NOTE SAYING HE NEEDED MY HELP WITH SOME TREASURE?

I THINK IT'S SAFE TO ASSUME THE TREASURE WAS CODE FOR SOMETHING ELSE.



YES, THANK YOU, TORIN. I'D NEVER HAVE FIGURED THAT OUT WITHOUT YOU.

LET'S FIND SEF. WE NEED TO FIND OUT WHICH CARRIAGE VALERON WAS VISITING. AND NOW.





TWO DEATHS. ONE NOTHING TO DO WITH US; THE **SECOND** MOST DEFINITELY OUR FAULT. OR **MINE**, AT LEAST.

HOW YOU FIGURE THAT?



BECAUSE THE **MURDERER** MUST HAVE FOUND OUT I ASKED FOR HIS **HELP**. I SENT SEF TO HIS **DEATH**, TORIN. HE WASN'T THE **NICEST** PERSON IN THE WORLD, BUT HE DIDN'T **DESERVE** THAT.



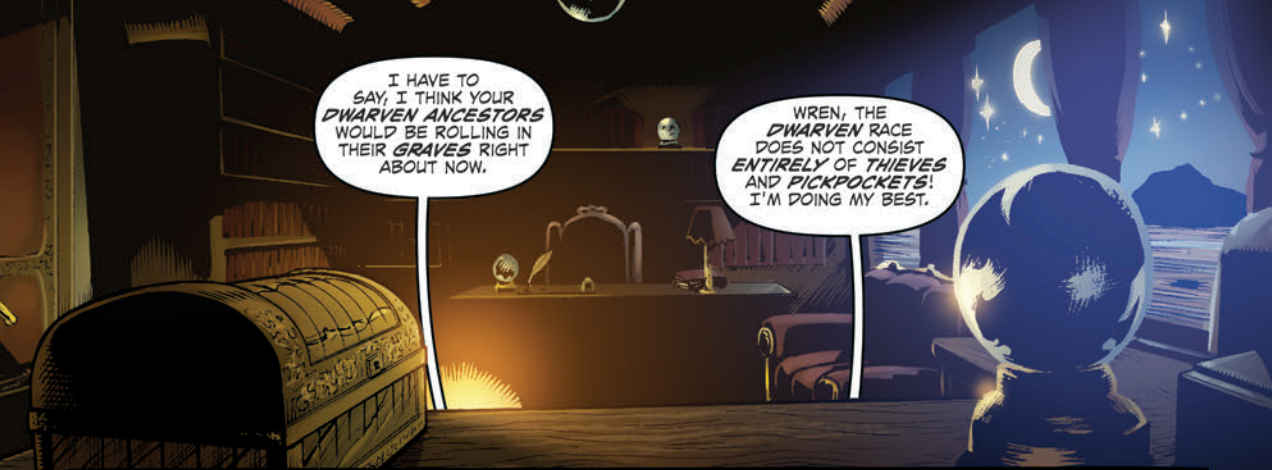
WHAT'S THAT?



IT'S FROM **SEF**. HE SAYS **VALERON** VISITED CARRIAGE NUMBER **5**, THAT THE CAPTAIN KEEPS THOSE PASSENGER MANIFESTS IN A **SAFE** IN HIS **QUARTERS**.




GOOD ON YOU, SEF, YOU **ODIOUS** LITTLE THIEF. YOU ACTUALLY MANAGED TO DO SOMETHING **GOOD** BEFORE YOU DIED.



I HAVE TO SAY, I THINK YOUR **DWARVEN ANCESTORS** WOULD BE ROLLING IN THEIR **GRAVES** RIGHT ABOUT NOW.

WREN, THE **DWARVEN RACE** DOES NOT CONSIST **ENTIRELY** OF **THIEVES** AND **PICKPOCKETS**! I'M DOING MY BEST.



ALL I'M SAYING IS THAT YOUR BEST IS SOMETIMES NOT VERY **GOOD**. I THINK I SHOULD **DROP** YOUR **PAY**.



click



GOT IT!



YOU *SEE*? ALL YOU NEEDED WAS A BIT OF FINANCIAL INCENTIVE. A DWARF THROUGH AND THROUGH.



UH-OH.



WHAT? I HATE IT WHEN YOU SAY THINGS LIKE THAT.



UM... IT SAYS *HERE* THAT THE *PASSENGER* IN CABIN NUMBER FIVE IS KING BORANEL'S SON, PRINCE BORTAN.



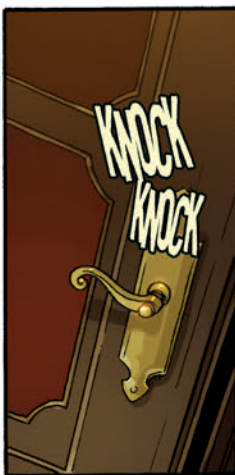
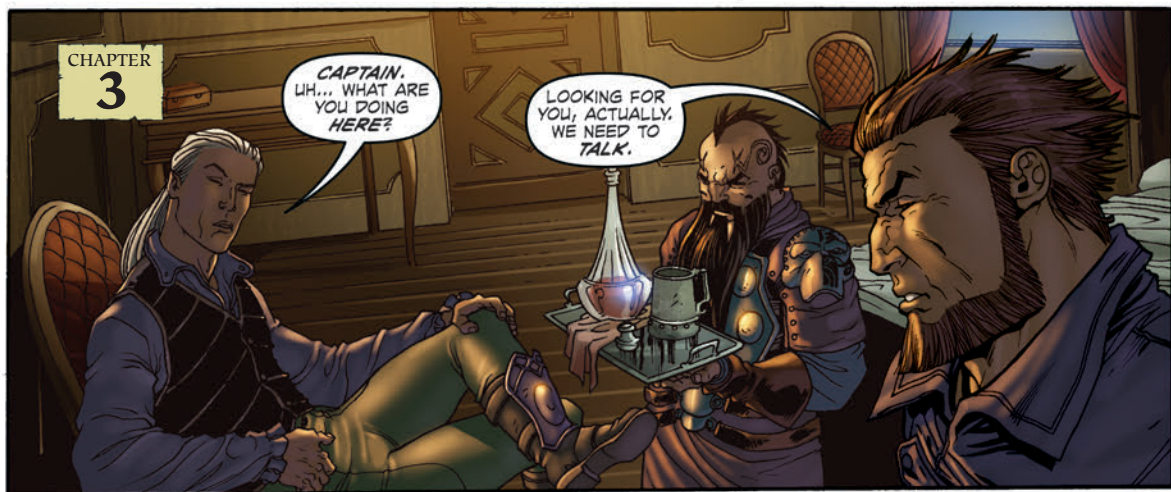
THAT CAN'T BE RIGHT, CAN IT? DO MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY *DO* THIS KIND OF THING? I THOUGHT THEY JUST HAD SECRET *SEX PARTIES* WHERE THEY EAT *FOOD* FROM THE BODIES OF NAKED COURTESANS.

UM, YES, THAT'S WHAT THEY NORMALLY DO WREN. OF *COURSE*. BUT WHEN IT'S A *HIGHLY PUBLICIZED LAUNCH* OF A BRAND NEW *LUXURY EXPRESS*, THEY LIKE TO GET *OUT* FOR A WHILE.

WELL, I THINK THEY'RE GOING TO *REGRET* THAT, TORIN. BECAUSE I RECKON SOMEONE IS GOING TO TRY AND *ASSASSINATE* THE HEIR TO THE *THRONE* OF BRELAND.

THAT'S... NOT GOOD.

CHAPTER
3











I'M ACTUALLY **SURPRISED** YOU FIGURED IT **OUT**. I HAD YOU DOWN AS AN **ARROGANT BLUFFOON**.

I THINK YOU'LL BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT THAT APPEARANCES CAN BE **DECEPTIVE**. I HAVE TO SAY, THOUGH, I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU HOPED TO **GAIN**.



WHAT DID YOU **THINK**? I'M FROM **KARRNATH**. WAR IS WHAT WE **EXCEL** AT. WE ENJOY IT. THE LAST **HUNDRED YEARS** HAVE BEEN GOOD FOR US.

AND NOW HERE WE HAVE THIS **TREATY OF THRONEHOLD**? PEACE BETWEEN **NATIONS**?

NO. WE WILL **NOT** HAVE IT.



I SERVE THE **ORDER OF THE EMERALD CLAW**. I HAVE PLANTED AN **ELDRITCH MACHINE** IN THE LEAD CARRIAGE. THE TRAIN WILL CRASH AT FULL SPEED INTO THE **STATION**. THAT IS THE TRIGGER FOR THE **ELDRITCH MACHINE** TO **EXPLODE**. KILLING EVERYONE ON BOARD, INCLUDING THE CROWN PRINCE OF BRELAND.

THERE WILL BE SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE POINTING TO **ALINDAIR** AS THE CULPRITS.

KING BORANEL WILL HAVE **NO CHOICE** BUT TO RESUME HOSTILITIES. THE **TREATY** WILL **COLLAPSE**. WAR WILL **RESUME**. **KARRNATH** WILL TRIUMPH, AS WE ALMOST DID LAST TIME.



THAT, MR. WREN, IS WHAT I HOPED TO **GAIN**.



YOU
WANT
WAR?



YOU WANT THAT ALL OVER AGAIN? ALL THOSE DEATHS, ALL THAT SUFFERING? IT MEANS NOTHING TO YOU?

I WILL NOT.

LET.

THAT. HAPPEN.

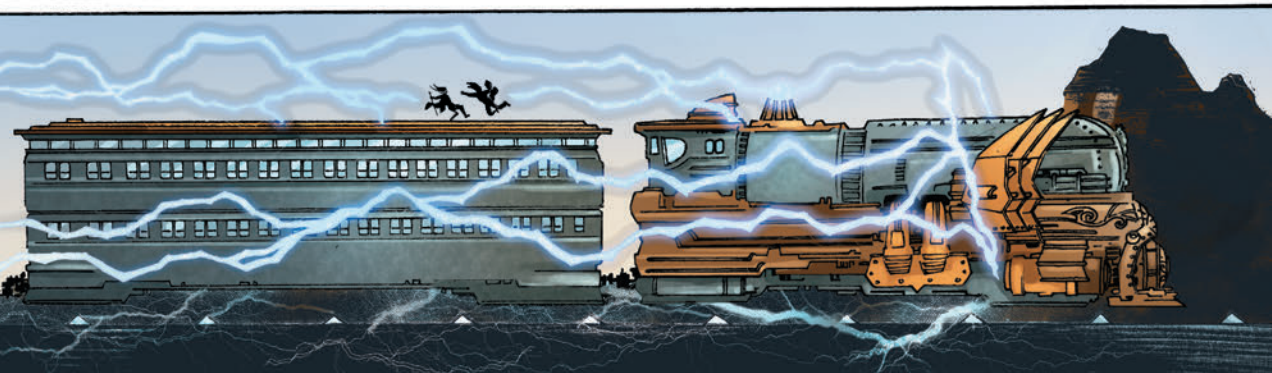
YOU HAVE NO CHOICE. MY PET CHANGELING IS GUARDING THE LEAD CARRIAGE. THERE'S NO WAY IN. THIS LIGHTNING RAIL IS DUE TO ARRIVE IN... OOH, ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES, I SHOULD THINK. KING BORANEL'S SON WILL DIE. AUNDAIR WILL BE BLAMED. WAR WILL CONTINUE. THIS IS LIFE.

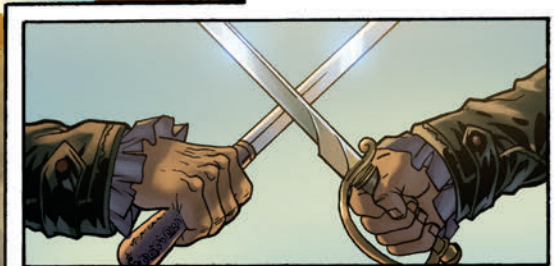
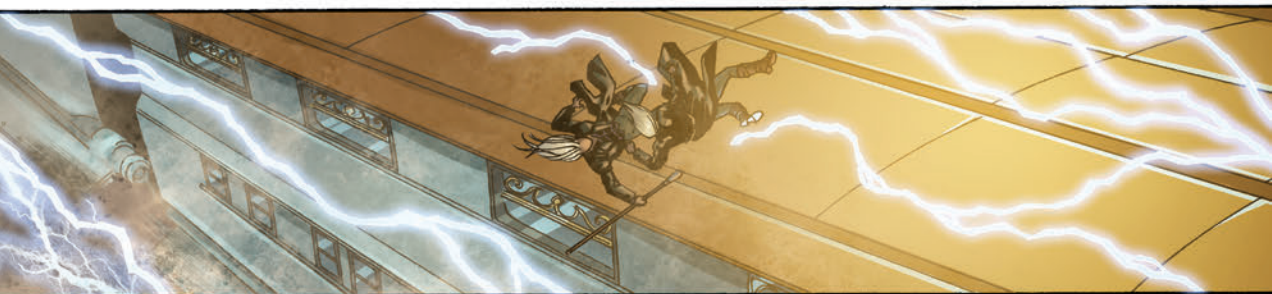


THIS IS DEATH.



I'M GOING TO STOP THIS, TORIN. BUT IF YOU HEAR A BANG, AND EVERYTHING GOES DARK, IT PROBABLY MEANS I'VE FAILED. SORRY.









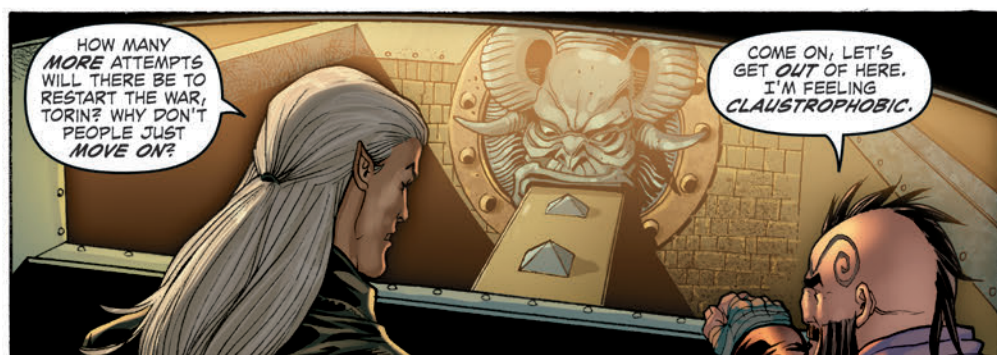
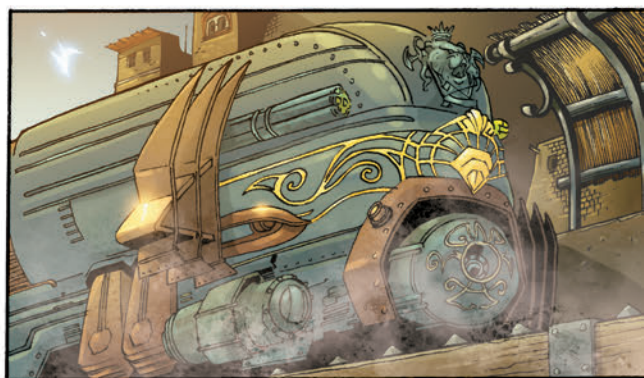
HOW DID YOU KNOW HE WAS THE **FAKE**?

LUCKY GUESS!



LUCKY GUESS? YOU'RE KIDDING RIGHT? TELL ME YOU'RE KIDDING.

FINE. I'M KIDDING.



HOW MANY **MORE** ATTEMPTS WILL THERE BE TO RESTART THE WAR, TORIN? WHY DON'T PEOPLE JUST **MOVE ON?**

COME ON, LET'S GET **OUT** OF HERE. I'M FEELING **CLAUSTROPHOBIC.**



SERIOUSLY, HOW DID YOU KNOW WHICH ONE TO SHOOT?

I TOLD YOU. LUCKY GUESS.

COME ON. YOU WOULDN'T. IT WAS MY NATURAL GOOD LOOKS YES? EVEN A CHANGELING COULDN'T COPY THEM. THAT'S IT, YES?

NOPE.

IT WAS THE SWORD! YOU SAW OUR SWORDS WERE DIFFERENT.

WREN, I COULDN'T TAKE MY EYES OFF YOUR FACES. THE THOUGHT OF TWO ABRAXIS WRENS HAD ME FROZEN IN FEAR. I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE THE SWORDS.

THEN HOW DID YOU KNOW?

I TOLD YOU—

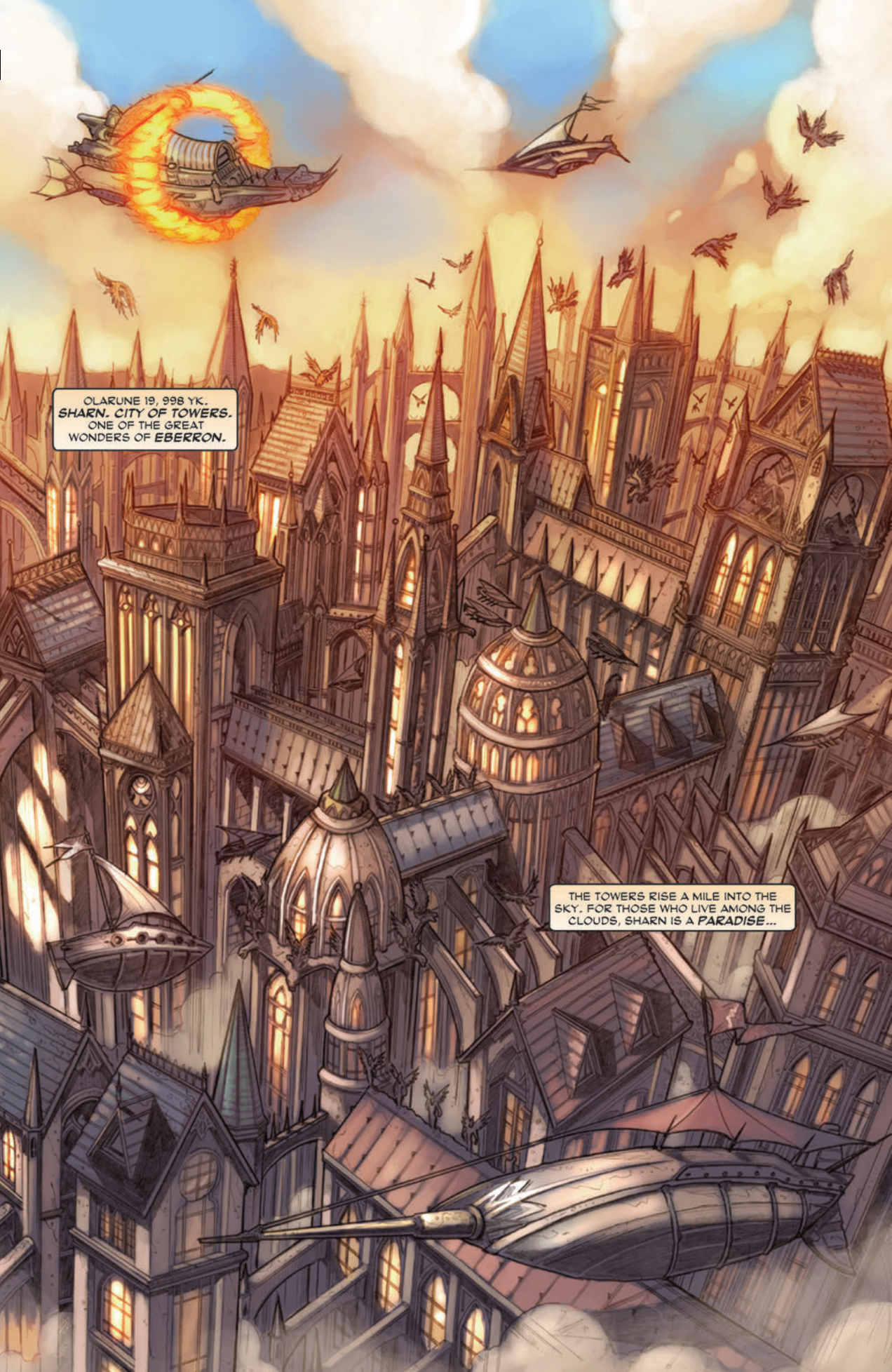
TORIN, I INSIST THAT YOU TELL ME. RIGHT THIS INSTANT.



NOPE.

THE END.





OLARUNE 19, 998 YK.
SHARN. CITY OF TOWERS.
ONE OF THE GREAT
WONDERS OF **EBERRON.**

THE TOWERS RISE A MILE INTO THE
SKY. FOR THOSE WHO LIVE AMONG THE
CLOUDS, SHARN IS A **PARADISE...**

...BUT SOMEONE'S GOT TO LIVE AT THE **BOTTOM**: REFUGEES FROM THE WAR, CRIPPLES, VAGABONDS, AND OTHERS WITH NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.

PEOPLE LIKE ME.



FOR THREE YEARS I'VE BEEN DOING WHAT I CAN TO MAKE THIS A **BETTER** PLACE. TO FIND A **NEW** HOME.



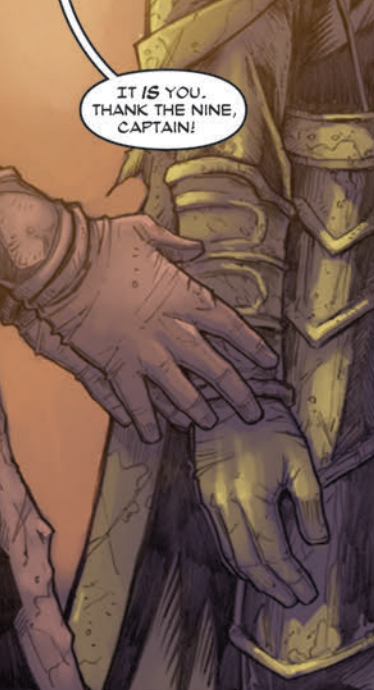
NOW, THE GHOST OF CYRE-- THE NATION AND PEOPLE I **FAILED**-- WAS COMING BACK TO **HAUNT** ME.

CAPTAIN GREYKELL IR'RYC?

NOT ANYMORE.

IT WAS A STRANGER'S VOICE, AND A TITLE I'D ABANDONED LONG AGO.





IT IS YOU.
THANK THE NINE,
CAPTAIN!



I'M LIEUTENANT
DOLAN. I'VE BEEN
SEARCHING FOR YOU
FOR MONTHS--

I WANTED TO SEND HIM AWAY, BUT I
SAW SOMETHING IN HIM... SOMETHING
I HADN'T SEEN IN YEARS.



CAPTAIN, PLEASE.
WE NEED TO TALK
PRIVATELY.

VERY WELL.
FOLLOW ME. AND
I TOLD YOU--

--IT'S JUST
GREYKELL
NOW.

I KNEW WHAT I HAD TO DO.



SO WHERE WERE
YOU STATIONED,
DOLAN?

NORTH CYRE,
CAPTAIN GREYKELL.
I FOUGHT THE KARRNS
AT THE SIEGE OF
BRANTUN.



WELL, LET ME
TELL YOU ONE OF MY
WAR STORIES.

IT WAS 994. CYRE HAD BEEN
FIGHTING THE WAR FOR NEARLY A
CENTURY... AND WE WERE *LOSING*.



WE HAD ENEMIES ON *ALL*
SIDES, BUT *KARNATH*
WAS THE WORST OF THEM.





I STILL SEE THE BONE
KNIGHTS AND LEGIONS OF THE
DEAD IN MY NIGHTMARES.

I WISH I COULD HAVE BEEN AT BRANTUN.
BUT I HAD MY OWN MISSION FAR TO THE
WEST, IN THE SAVAGE DEPTHS OF **DROAM**.

I WASN'T TOLD WHAT THE KARRNS WERE
LOOKING FOR IN THE RUINS OF THE FALLEN
EMPIRE. MY ORDERS WERE SIMPLE ENOUGH:
--LEAVE NO KARRN ALIVE.




I BROUGHT THE **BEST** SOLDIERS IN
MY COMMAND. VETERANS ALL, EXPERTS
IN THE ARTS OF STEALTH AND WAR.



WE FOUND THE KARRNS EASILY
ENOUGH, SNIFFING AROUND AN
ANCIENT SHRINE.




THEY WERE **SEARCHING** FOR
SOMETHING, ALL RIGHT.



WE HAD THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE,
AND MY ARCHERS KNEW THEIR WORK.


BUT THESE WERE KARRNS--
AND ARROWS AREN'T MUCH USE
AGAINST THE WALKING DEAD.



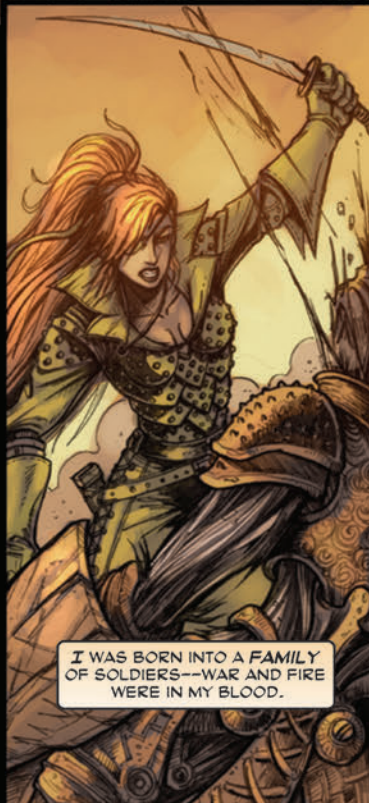
YOU HAD TO *CRUSH* THOSE BEASTS,
OR HACK THEM INTO *PIECES*.

CYRE AND
GALIFAR!


THAT WAS *OUR* JOB.



MACE WAS A WARFORGED
BUILT TO DEFEND CYRE.



I WAS BORN INTO A FAMILY
OF SOLDIERS--WAR AND FIRE
WERE IN MY BLOOD.



DUREGH HAD FOUGHT THE
KARRNS FOR EIGHT DECADES.

ALL OF US WERE READY TO
DIE TO PROTECT OUR NATION--

--AND SOME OF US WOULD.

WORST THING
ABOUT FIGHTING
KARRNS, CAPTAIN? THE
THRICE-DAMNED
STENCH!

THAT'S WHAT I
LOVE ABOUT YOU,
DUREGH.

SURROUNDED
BY MORTAL ENEMIES,
AND YOU'RE JUST WORRIED
ABOUT KEEPING YOUR
BEARD CLEAN.

PRECIOUS
LITTLE ELSE TO
FEAR, CAPTAIN.

SECURE THE AREA.
CAREFULLY.

I DIDN'T LIKE IT. OUR VICTORY WAS TOO
EASY. I SAW NO COMMANDER OR PRIEST
AMONG THE CORPSES. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT
THE KARRNS WERE SEARCHING FOR...

...BUT THE CHILL IN MY SPINE
SAID THEY'D ALREADY FOUND IT.

THEY HAD.

THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOME **MAGIC**
HIDDEN IN THE RUINS, SOMETHING THAT
LET THEM STEP THROUGH SHADOWS.

THERE WAS A WHISPER OF WIND, AND THE
GLEAM OF BLADES IN THE DARKNESS.



THEY APPEARED ALL AROUND US, TOO MANY TO FIGHT... AT LEAST, WITH **STEEL**.

BUT I HAD **OTHER** OPTIONS.

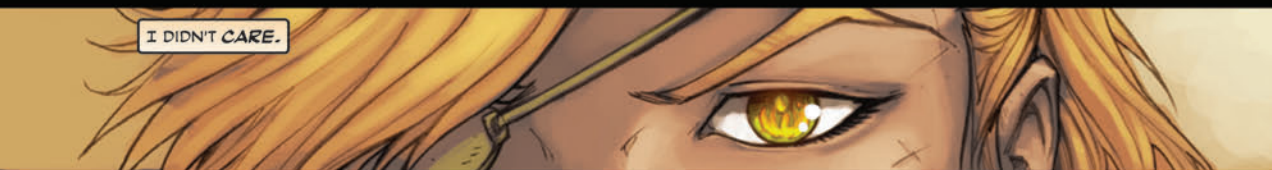
DORN'S TEETH!

PULL TOGETHER! **DRAGON'S FANG**, ON ME!

MY FATHER SAID I HAD THE **BLOOD OF DRAGONS** IN MY VEINS.

HE COULDN'T **LIE** WORTH A DAMN.

I ALWAYS KNEW THERE WAS A **DARKER SECRET**, SOMETHING THAT **FRIGHTENED** HIM.



I DIDN'T **CARE**.



GO!

AS MY ENEMIES FELL, I GAVE THANKS TO WHATEVER POWER HAD BOUND THIS FLAME TO MY BLOOD.



KEEP MOVING, CAPTAIN!



FALL, BRUTE!

UNLIKELY.



ARRGH!

THERE WERE STILL
TOO MANY OF THEM.



KARNATH
TRIUMPHANT!

DUREGH!
NO!

UNNH!



BLOOD!

MY MYSTIC FIRES WERE *EXHAUSTED*.
BLADES WERE ALL I HAD LEFT.



THEY WEREN'T *ENOUGH*.

IT'S OVER,
CAPTAIN.

TELL YOUR
WARFORGED TO
STAND DOWN.



SURRENDER
NOW AND I'LL GIVE
YOUR SOLDIERS A
CLEAN DEATH.

FIGHT, AND
I'LL BIND YOUR
CORPSES TO
MY WILL.

HE SAID NOTHING OF MY
FATE. WE BOTH KNEW IT WOULD
BE SLOW AND PAINFUL.

THERE WERE TOO MANY OF THEM TO
FIGHT, AND THE THOUGHT OF DUREGH'S
ROTTING BODY MARCHING UNDER KARN
COMMAND WAS A BLADE IN MY HEART.



YOUR
WORD ON
THAT?

IT SEEMED THERE
WAS NO CHOICE.



BY MY
BLOOD.



THEN FORTUNE
INTERVENED... IN A MOST
UNEXPECTED FORM.

I THINK YOU
SHOULD **ALL** LAY DOWN
YOUR WEAPONS, IF ANY OF
YOU WISH TO LIVE TO SEE
THE MORNING.





RRARRGH!

RRARRGH!

RRARRGH!



STAND FAST!

THE GNOLLS OF DROAAM
POSSESS INHUMAN STRENGTH--



--AND THIS PACK WAS
DEFENDING ITS HOMELAND.

THE KARRNS DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE,
AND I KNEW BETTER THAN TO FIGHT.



LORD
SURADIN, LADY
GREYKELL, I'M ONLY
REQUIRED TO KEEP
YOU ALIVE.

IF YOU CARE
ABOUT YOUR SOLDIERS,
YOU WILL SURRENDER
YOUR WEAPONS.

A MOMENT BEFORE, I THOUGHT I WAS
GOING TO FALL TO A KARRN'S BLADE.

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THIS MEDUSA
WANTED, BUT WE HAD NOTHING TO LOSE.



CAPTAIN--

THIS *ISN'T* OVER. WE *STILL* HAVE A MISSION. FOLLOW MY LEAD.



WEAPON!

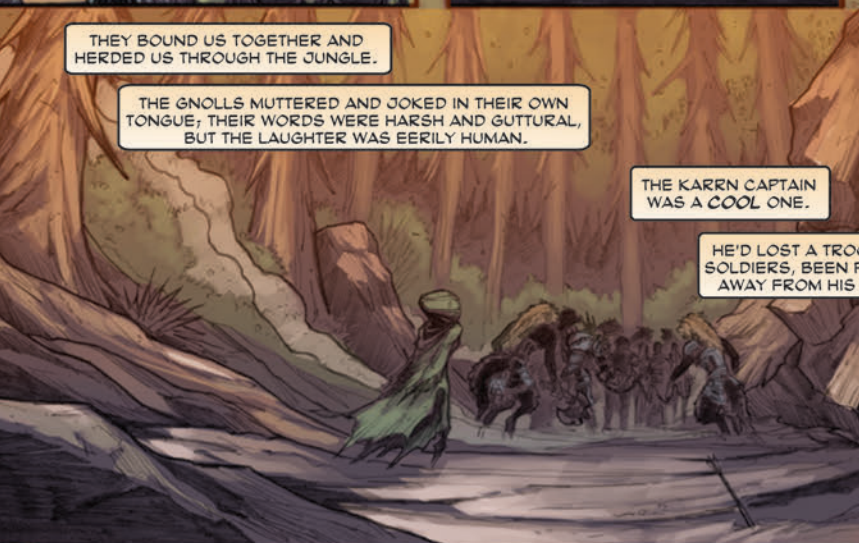
DON'T GET ANY IDEAS, HYENA. I'LL BE TAKING THAT BACK.

THE DRAGONSHARD BLADE WAS ONE OF THE FEW RELICS OF MY FAMILY, AND I HAD NO INTENTION OF LOSING IT TO A PACK OF FLEA-PICKERS.



RRR... WEAPON?

AND AS FOR MACE, HE WAS A WEAPON.



THEY BOUND US TOGETHER AND HERDED US THROUGH THE JUNGLE.

THE GNOLLS MUTTERED AND JOKED IN THEIR OWN TONGUE; THEIR WORDS WERE HARSH AND GUTTURAL, BUT THE LAUGHTER WAS EERILY HUMAN.

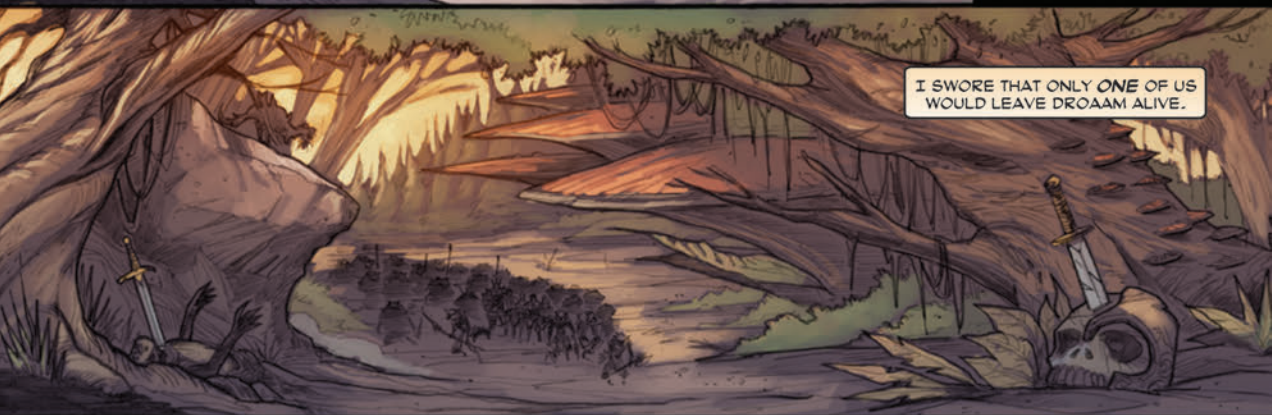
THE KARRN CAPTAIN WAS A *COOL* ONE.

HE'D LOST A TROOP OF SOLDIERS, BEEN PULLED AWAY FROM HIS DIG...



...AND HE ACTED AS IF IT WAS ALL PART OF HIS *PLAN*.

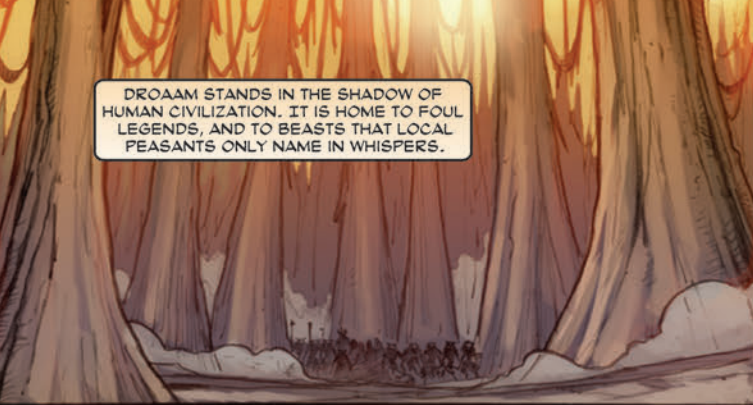
MAYBE IT WAS.



I SWORE THAT ONLY *ONE* OF US WOULD LEAVE DROAM ALIVE.



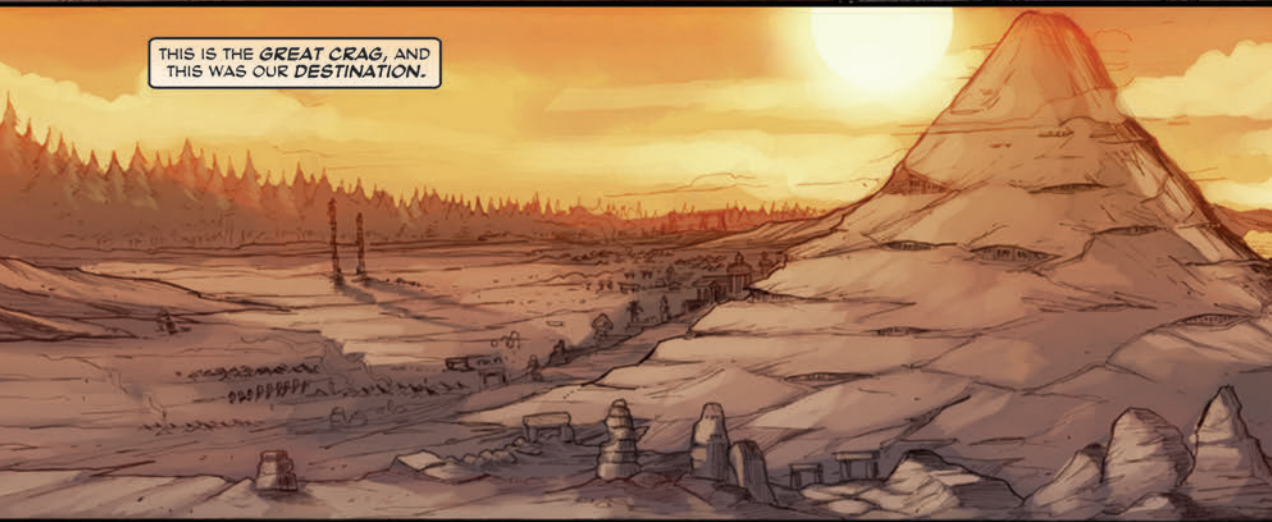
LITTLE DID I KNOW HOW *FOOLISH* THAT WAS.



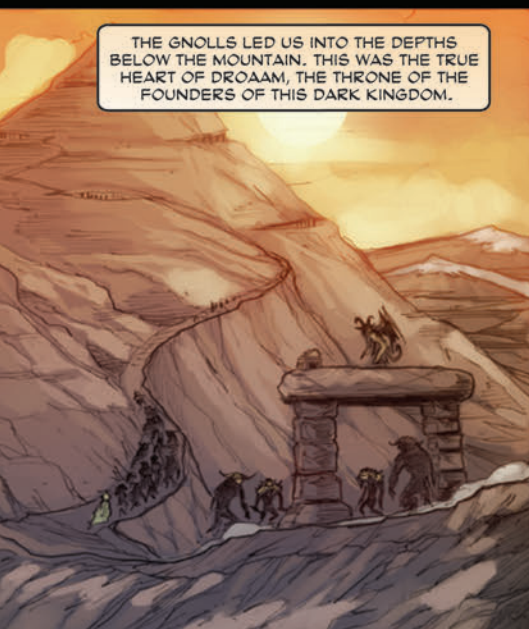
DROAAM STANDS IN THE SHADOW OF HUMAN CIVILIZATION. IT IS HOME TO FOUL LEGENDS, AND TO BEASTS THAT LOCAL PEASANTS ONLY NAME IN WHISPERS.



THERE IS A CITY AT THE CENTER OF DROAAM. BUILT ATOP ANCIENT GOBLIN RUINS, IT IS HOME TO OGRES, MINOTAURS, TROLLS, AND FAR WORSE THINGS.



THIS IS THE *GREAT CRAG*, AND THIS WAS OUR *DESTINATION*.



THE GNOLLS LED US INTO THE DEPTHS BELOW THE MOUNTAIN. THIS WAS THE TRUE HEART OF DROAAM, THE THRONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THIS DARK KINGDOM.



THEY HAD SENSED OUR PRESENCE, AND REACHED OUT ACROSS DROAAM TO SEIZE KARRN AND CYRAN ALIKE.



MOVE!

I'D HEARD THE LEGENDS, AND I KNEW WHAT LAY AHEAD.

THE RULERS OF DROAAM...

...THE DAUGHTERS
OF SORA KELL.

GREAT ONES,
WE FOUND THEM AS
YOU PROMISED, FIGHTING
OVER THE RUINS OF
OUR LAND.

WE HAVE SPARED
THE CAPTAINS AS YOU ASKED,
AND LEFT THEIR WARRIORS
TO FEED THE WORMS.

EACH OF THE DAUGHTERS WAS
A LEGEND IN HER OWN RIGHT.

FOR CENTURIES THEY HAD BEEN CAMPFIRE
TALES, STORIES USED TO FRIGHTEN CHILDREN.

NOW THEY WERE **QUEENS**.

BLOOD AND FEAR,
THE SWEETEST
OF SMELLS.

SORA MAENYA, THE
TERROR OF THE NORTH.

TALES TOLD OF HER CRUSHING
GIANTS WITH HER HANDS, AND
DEVOURING ENTIRE TRIBES
TO SATISFY HER HUNGER.

DARKNESS
AND LIGHT WAR
ONCE MORE.

SORA TERAZA.

SOME SAY SHE KNOWS THE TIME
EACH MAN WILL DIE; OTHERS CLAIM
THAT SHE **CHOOSSES** THIS TIME.

YES, IT IS TIME
TO SET THIS WHEEL
IN MOTION.

SORA KATRA.

SHAPESHIFTER AND DECEIVER,
WHOSE CUNNING WORDS LEAD
HEROES TO THEIR DOOM. HERS
IS THE VOICE OF THE NATION.

LORD SURADIN OF
KARNATH. YOU CAME TO
OUR LAND SEARCHING FOR AN
ANCIENT ARTIFACT--THE
KECH NASAAR.

DID YOU THINK
THIS WOULD ESCAPE OUR
NOTICE? DID YOU THINK US
IGNORANT OF THESE
TREASURES?

CAPTAIN?

LET'S
HEAR THEM OUT,
MACE.

ON THE
CONTRARY, SORA
KATRA, I WAS
COUNTING ON YOUR
KNOWLEDGE.

IF YOU THINK
YOUR PATHETIC BEASTS
COULD TAKE ME AGAINST MY
WILL, YOU ARE SORELY
MISTAKEN.

HE HAD CONFIDENCE, THERE
WAS NO DENYING THAT.

I KNOW
WHAT WAS TAKEN
FROM THE TOMB OF THE
KECH NASAAR. YOU KNOW
WHO I AM, WHO I SERVE,
AND WHAT I SEEK.

GIVE ME THAT KEY,
AND WE MAY LEAVE YOUR
LAND ALONE UNTIL THE REST
OF THE WORLD LIES AT
OUR FEET.

RHAHAHA!

HUSH.

YOU ARE BOLD, SURADIN
OF KARNATH. AND YOU ARE
QUITE RIGHT... I DO KNOW
WHO YOU ARE.

GIVE ME THE KEY NOW,
OR I'LL BRING THE FULL
FORCE OF KARNATH
AGAINST YOU!

SORA KATRA'S FLESH
RIPPLED AND FLOWED.

HER NEW FACE MEANT NOTHING
TO ME, BUT FOR ALL HIS BRAVADO,
SURADIN STIFFENED AT THE SIGHT.

WOULD YOU? COULD YOU?
NO MATTER. THE KEY CANNOT
REMAIN IN DROAAM.

THEN
GIVE IT TO
ME.

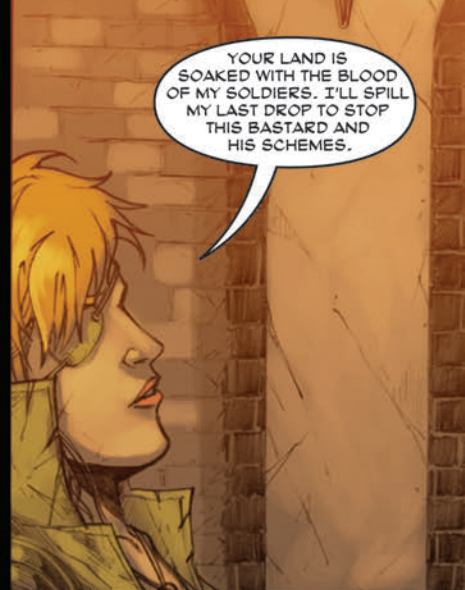
HSSSSSSSS

SURADIN DIDN'T HESITATE.
HIS CHAINS SNAPPED LIKE
DRY STRAW AS HE LEAPT
FOR MY THROAT.

HE MOVED WITH
BLINDING SPEED...

GGKKKK

BUT SO DID SHE.





WE HAVE HIDDEN
THE KEY BENEATH THE
GREAT CRAG.

FIND IT--
DEFEATING YOUR
ENEMIES AND THE
DANGERS OF THE DARK
--AND YOU SHALL **TAKE**
THIS TREASURE FROM
OUR LANDS.

IF YOU DON'T
WANT THIS THING, WHY
DON'T YOU JUST GIVE
IT TO ONE OF US?



OR IS FOUR
VERSUS TWO YOUR IDEA
OF A FAIR FIGHT?

HEH!

THIS IS NOT OUR CHOICE TO MAKE,
LITTLE SISTER. WE ARE THE
INSTRUMENTS OF **DESTINY**. AND
WHEN HAS FATE GIVEN
YOU REASONABLE
ODDS?



FOUR
OF US.

MAY WE
BEGIN, DREAD
LADIES?



GO, LITTLE
WORM.

THIS BEGAN LONG
AGO. NOW IT COMES
TO AN END.

FIND YOUR
PRIZE IN THE EYE OF
THE WOLF.



MY MIND WAS RACING AS THE GUARDS LED US DEEP BELOW THE MOUNTAIN. WHAT WAS THIS KEY, AND WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF IT FELL INTO SURADIN'S HANDS?

I REALIZED THAT NOT ONLY MUST I PREVENT HIM FROM ACQUIRING IT--BUT IF THIS KEY WAS AS POWERFUL AS THE SISTERS IMPLIED, I NEEDED TO SEIZE IT FOR CYRE.

WE WERE OUTNUMBERED, WE HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE TERRAIN... I WOULDN'T HAVE WAGERED ON OUR SUCCESS.

THEY LEFT US AT A GREAT STONE GATE.

THE MASSIVE DOOR BOOMED SHUT BEHIND US, LEAVING US TRAPPED IN THE DEPTHS AND THE DARKNESS.

I CALLED ON MY INNER FIRES TO BRING LIGHT.

MOST OF MY STRENGTH HAD BEEN SPENT IN THE BATTLE, BUT I COULD STILL SUMMON THIS TINY FLAME.

MACE.

YOUR
CONDITION?

MACE WAS WARFORGED, A SOLDIER FORMED FROM STEEL AND WOOD GIVEN LIFE BY MAGIC.

HE WAS A STRONG SHIELD, AND I WAS LUCKY TO HAVE HIM AT MY SIDE...

DAMAGE
REPAIRED.

PREPARED
FOR BATTLE.

CAREFUL.

THE FIRST THREAT
CAME SOON ENOUGH...

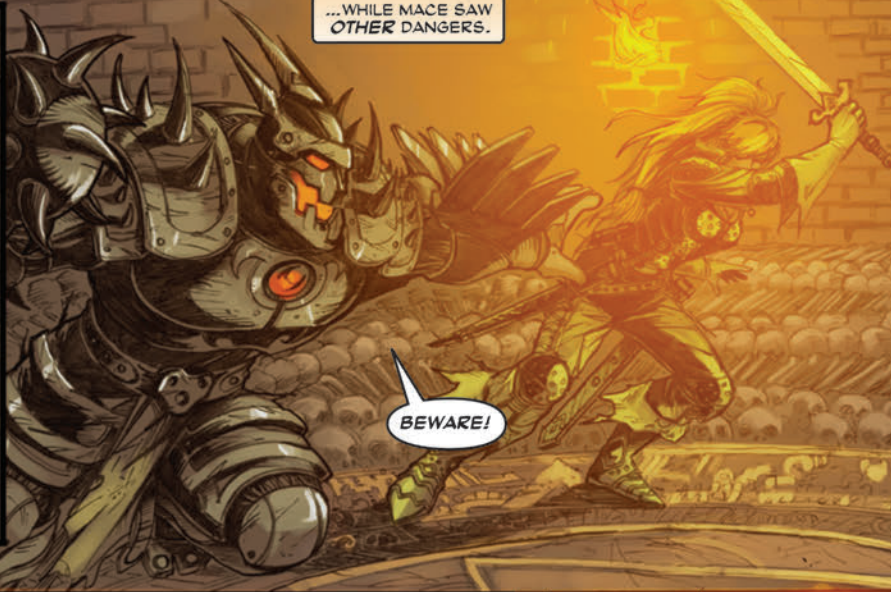
...BUT IT WASN'T WHAT WE EXPECTED.

STATUES.

NO SCULPTOR
CARVED THESE. MEDUSA,
COCKATRICE... OR WORSE.
KEEP ALERT.



I SHOULD HAVE TAKEN MY OWN ADVICE. I WAS ONLY WATCHING FOR **MONSTERS**...



...WHILE MACE SAW **OTHER DANGERS.**

BEWARE!



WHAT **IS** IT?

MACE WAS **MORE** THAN A WARRIOR.

HE COULD **SENSE** THE FLOW OF MAGICAL ENERGY, AND SHAPE THIS POWER TO REPAIR DAMAGE OR ENHANCE HIS ABILITIES.



SUBSTANTIAL ARCANIC POWER IS BOUND WITHIN THE SIGIL.



FORTUNATELY FOR ME, HE COULD ALSO SPOT MYSTIC WARDS.



LET'S SEE WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH.



FZAAASH



I THINK YOU'D BETTER TAKE THE LEAD, MACE.

UNDERSTOOD.

THE PLACE WAS A THRICE-DAMNED MAZE,
AND MACE'S SENSE OF DIRECTION WAS ALL THAT
KEPT US FROM STUMBLING ABOUT IN CIRCLES.

THE HAGS SAID THE KEY WAS HIDDEN BELOW,
BUT WE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THIS KEY WAS.

NO MATTER. *SURADIN*
WAS MY CONCERN.

I'D FOUGHT THE FORCES OF KARRNATH
FOR THE LAST TEN YEARS. I'D SEEN
HORRORS I'LL NEVER FORGET.

BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING
ABOUT *SURADIN*... SOMETHING
THAT MADE MY SKIN CRAWL.

THE SOVEREIGNS SMILED ON
US THAT NIGHT. WE HEARD OUR
ENEMIES BEFORE THEY HEARD US,
AND I DOUSED OUR MYSTIC LIGHT.

WE'VE BEEN
DOWN THIS PASSAGE
BEFORE!

YOU THINK YOURSELF
A BETTER TRACKER?
TAKE THE LEAD.

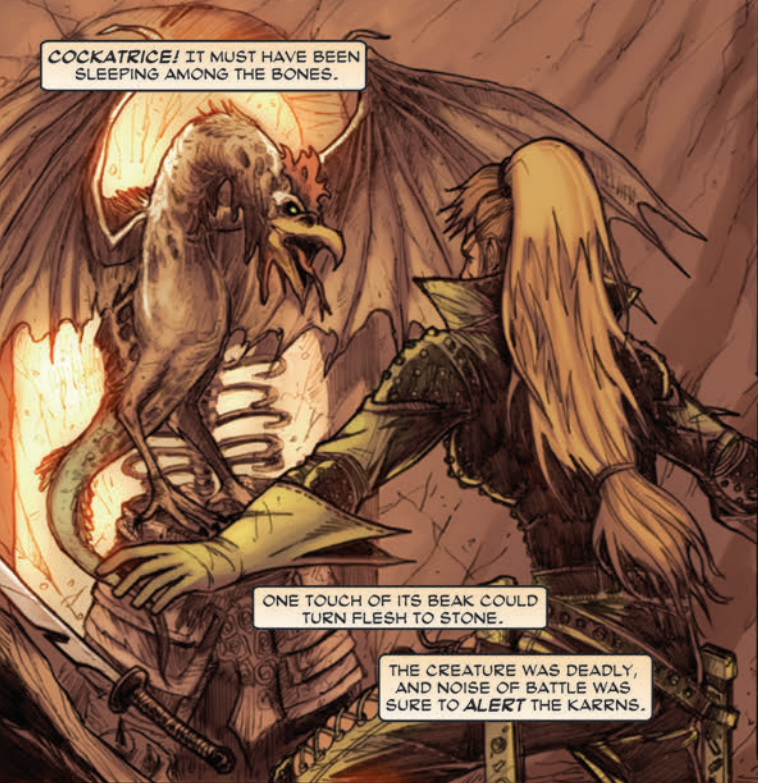
THE KARRNS HAD SPLIT UP... HOPING
TO COVER MORE GROUND, NO DOUBT.

THESE
STATUES ARE
WORSE THAN
GHOSTS.

ALL WE HAD TO DO WAS WAIT.
A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE,
AND IT WOULD BE OVER.

BUT AS *SORA KATRA* POINTED
OUT, WHEN HAS FATE EVER
GIVEN ME REASONABLE ODDS?

COCKATRICE! IT MUST HAVE BEEN
SLEEPING AMONG THE BONES.



I CAUGHT IT EVEN
AS IT OPENED ITS
BEAK TO SCREECH.



ONE TOUCH OF ITS BEAK COULD
TURN FLESH TO STONE.

THE CREATURE WAS DEADLY,
AND NOISE OF BATTLE WAS
SURE TO ALERT THE KARRNS.



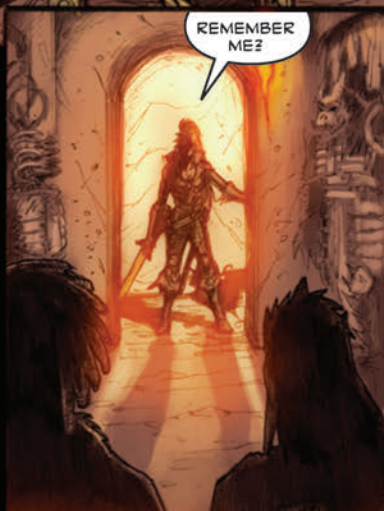
FLAILING WINGS SLAPPED
AGAINST THE STONE.

IT JABBED AT MY HAND, AND I
FELT A TERRIBLE NUMBNESS...



WHAT WAS
THAT?

A CHANCE
TO SPILL BLOOD,
I HOPE.



REMEMBER
ME?



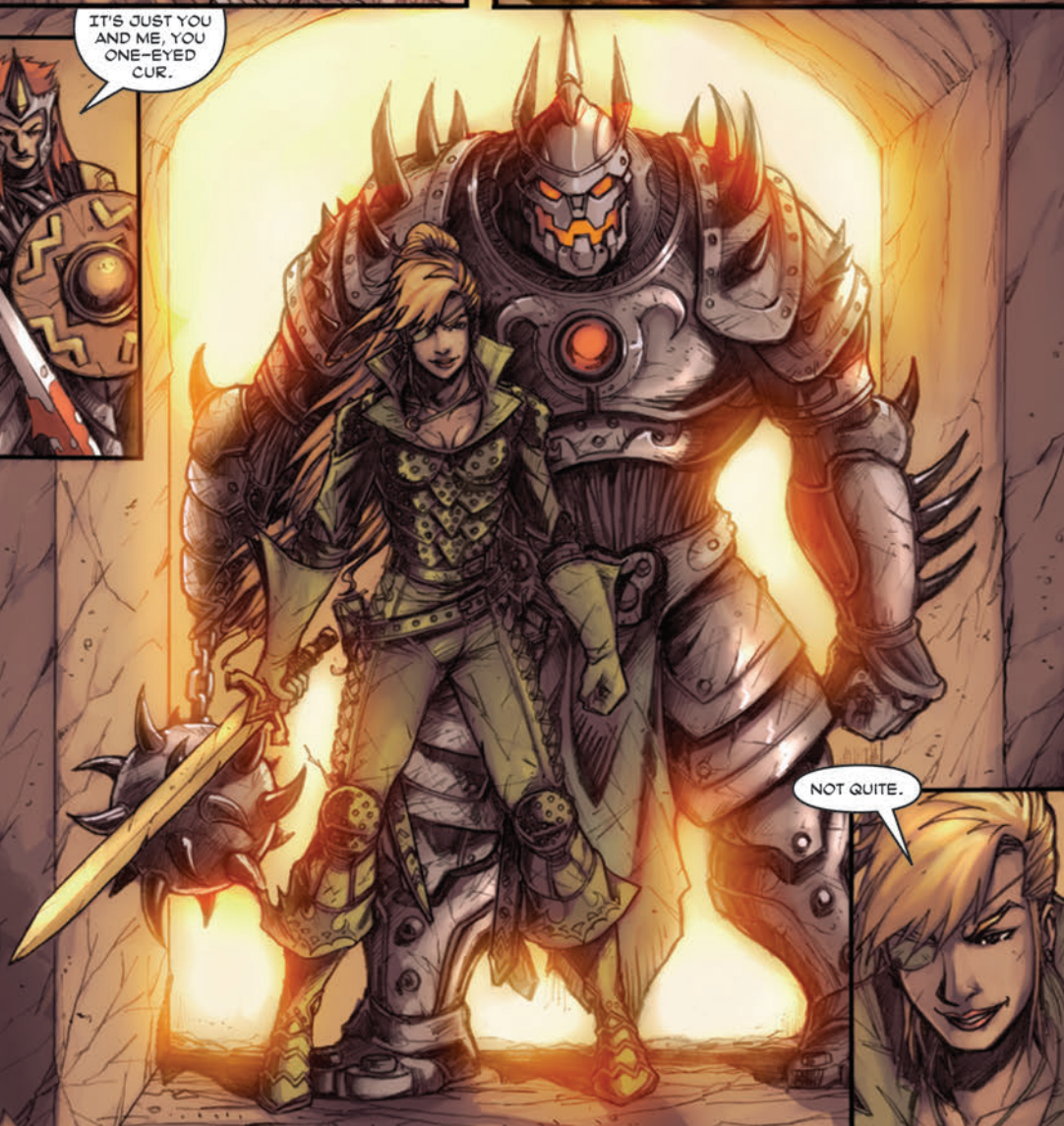
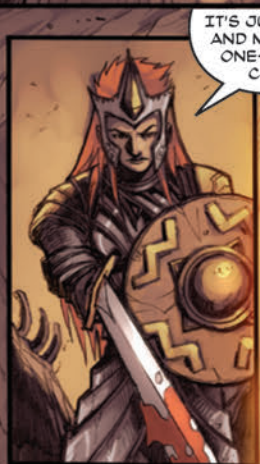
OH, YES.



DIE!



YOU
FIRST.





SHE WAS BRAVE. FEW PEOPLE COULD MEET MACE HEAD ON WITHOUT FLINCHING.

UNNH!



HAIII!

HTTT!

SHE WAS QUICK AS THE WIND.

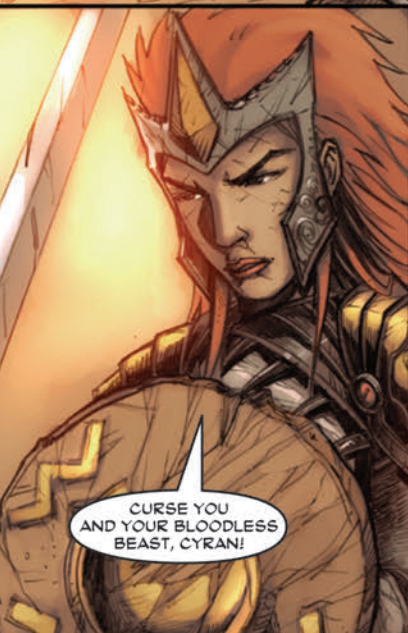


AGAINST MACE, YOU NEEDED MORE THAN JUST SPEED.



UNGH!

HER SHIELD SAVED HER LIFE, BUT I HEARD THE CRACK OF WOOD AND BONE.



CURSE YOU AND YOUR BLOODLESS BEAST, CYRAN!



JUST LAY DOWN YOUR SWORD. TELL ME WHAT THIS IS ABOUT.

I'LL DIE FIRST...



...AND I'LL DRAG YOU DOWN TO DOLURRH WITH ME!



I ADMIRER HER *SPIRIT*.



SHE NEVER HESITATED,
NEVER STOPPED FIGHTING.

HAI!!!



WE WERE BOTH SOLDIERS,
FIGHTING TO PROTECT THE
PEOPLE WE LOVED.

FOR
KAIUS!



BUT ONE OF US HAD TO DIE...



...AND ONE OF US DID.



SHE WAS A KARNATHI SOLDIER.
SHE WOULD HAVE KILLED US BOTH.

BUT STARING AT HER CORPSE,
I SAW MY OWN REFLECTION.

HOW SERIOUS
ARE YOUR INJURIES,
MACE?



DAMAGED BUT
FUNCTIONAL.

INITIATING
REPAIRS.

THE OTHERS WHO'D DIED ON THIS MISSION...
I'D DRANK WITH THEM, JOKED WITH THEM.
I'D MET THEIR WIVES AND CHILDREN.



MACE? I'D NEVER THOUGHT OF
HIM AS A PERSON. HE WAS A
WEAPON, CREATED TO FIGHT. NOW
I FOUND MYSELF WONDERING.



WHY DO
YOU FIGHT?



EXPLAIN.

I WAS BORN
IN CYRE. THE BLOOD
OF MY FAMILY IS IN
THE SOIL.

BUT...
WHY DO YOU
FIGHT?



I REMEMBER
THOSE WHO FIGHT
AT MY SIDE.

DUREGH.

TALA.

GREYKELL.



YOU ARE MY
PEOPLE, AND I WILL
PROTECT YOU. I DO NOT
FIGHT FOR CYRE.

I FIGHT
FOR YOU.



MACE, I...

REPAIRS
COMPLETED.

WE SHOULD
CONTINUE.

...VERY WELL.

WE TRAVELED DEEPER AND DEEPER BENEATH THE MOUNTAIN, UNTIL FINALLY WE FOUND OURSELVES IN A GREAT HALL. I'D HEARD TALES OF ANCIENT WARS BETWEEN GOBLINS AND MEDUSAS...

...AND HERE WERE THE *REMNANTS* OF SUCH A STRUGGLE, PRESERVED AGAINST THE RAVAGES OF TIME.

BUT WE WEREN'T THE ONLY ONES WITH AN INTEREST IN THIS ANCIENT BATTLEGROUND.

CAPTAIN GREYKELL. THEY CALL YOU THE LAUGHING WOLF, DON'T THEY? AND YET, THE WOLF IS THE SYMBOL OF MY NATION.

THE FIRST KING OF GALIFAR GRANTED THE SYMBOL OF THE WOLF TO THE IR'RYC LINE. A GIFT TO *TRUE* SERVANTS OF THE LAND.

BOLD WORDS, CAPTAIN. BUT IF YOUR DEATH IS ALL THAT'S REQUIRED, IT'S EASY TO ARRANGE.

SURADIN. HE SEEMED TO MELT OUT OF THE DARKNESS. I FELT A CHILL AS HIS EYES MET MINE.

KARRNATH TORE APART THAT PERFECT KINGDOM.

AND AS LONG AS I LIVE, YOUR LORD WILL *NEVER* WEAR THE CROWN OF GALIFAR.

CYRE AND GALIFAR!

KARRNATH TRIUMPHANT!



HA!

NNH!



HRRR!

YOU'RE STRONGER THAN YOU LOOK, CAPTAIN.



SO AM I.



FIND YOUR PRIZE IN THE EYE OF THE WOLF, THE SISTERS SAID. I THINK I'LL JUST SEE WHAT'S HIDDEN BEHIND *YOUR* EYES, LITTLE WOLF.

YOU'RE... MAD...

HIS TOUCH DREW THE STRENGTH FROM MY LIMBS. I WAS AS WEAK AS A CHILD. I COULDN'T EVEN RAISE MY HANDS.



KRRNCH



GREYKELL!

I'LL BE BACK FOR YOU, MY DEAR.

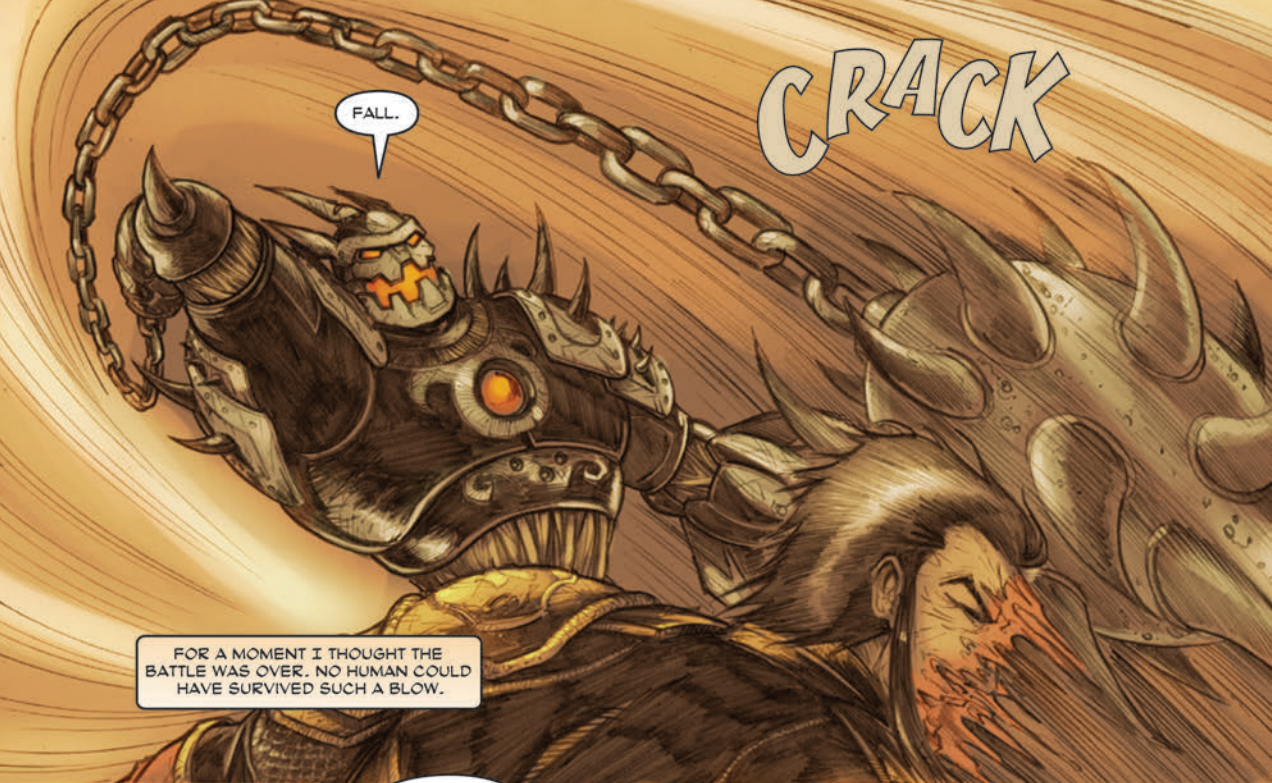


UNNH!



THIS ENDS NOW.

INDEED IT DOES!



FALL.

CRACK

FOR A MOMENT I THOUGHT THE BATTLE WAS OVER. NO HUMAN COULD HAVE SURVIVED SUCH A BLOW.



BUT SURADIN WASN'T HUMAN... NOT ANY MORE.



NOW DO YOU SEE, YOU STEEL FOOL?

I HAVE THE STRENGTH OF DEATH ITSELF. I AM ONE OF THE CHOSEN OF VOL, AND YOU ARE MY PREY.



FEEL YOUR STRENGTH SLIPPING AWAY? YOU HAVE NO BLOOD FOR ME TO FEAST ON, BUT I CAN STILL DRAW THE LIFE FROM YOUR SHELL.

HE WAS A VAMPIRE, ONE OF THE WORST OF THE WALKING DEAD.



IF ONLY I HAD THE TIME TO SAVOR IT. BUT I HAVE OTHER MATTERS TO ATTEND TO.

HKKK!

SHANK



GOODBYE,
WARFORGED.

SURADIN WAS INHUMANLY FAST AND STRONG.
HE COULDN'T BE KILLED BY PLAIN STEEL.



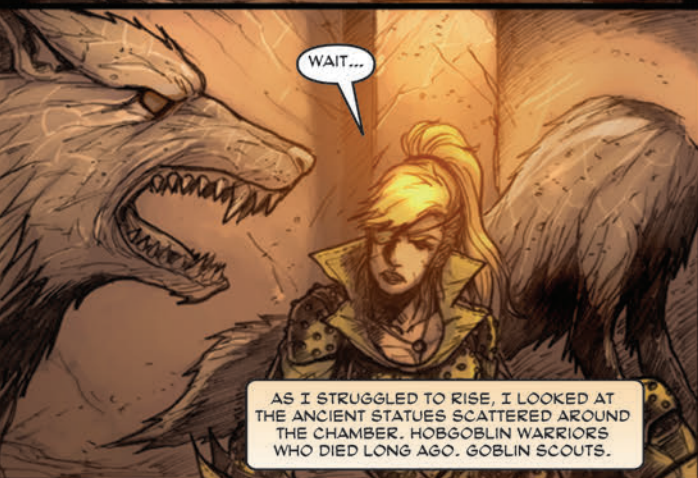
BUT HE DIDN'T KNOW MACE.

NO.



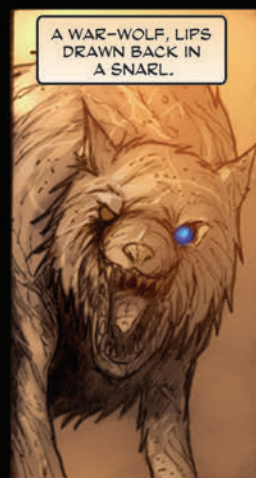
UNNH!

THIS WAS A FIGHT EVEN
MACE COULDN'T WIN. HE WAS
BUYING ME TIME WITH HIS LIFE,
YET I COULD BARELY MOVE.



WAIT...

AS I STRUGGLED TO RISE, I LOOKED AT
THE ANCIENT STATUES SCATTERED AROUND
THE CHAMBER. HOBGOBLIN WARRIORS
WHO DIED LONG AGO. GOBLIN SCOUTS.



A WAR-WOLF, LIPS
DRAWN BACK IN
A SNARL.



AND THERE IT WAS.



THE WOLF...

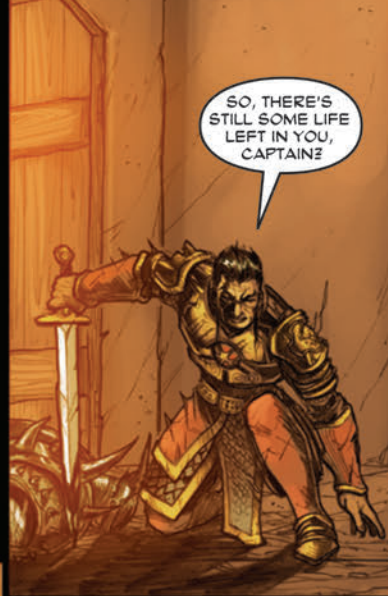


...EYE OF
THE WOLF.

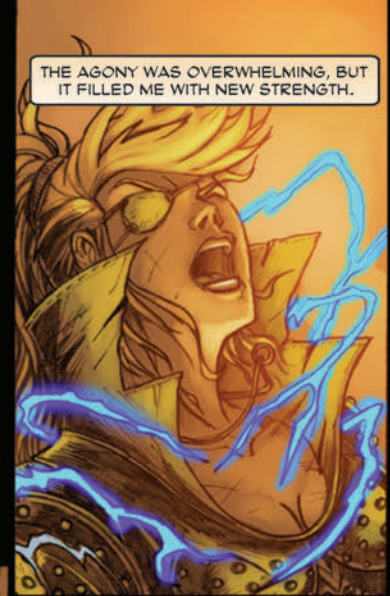


AHH!

PAIN TORE THE WORLD AWAY.



SO, THERE'S STILL SOME LIFE LEFT IN YOU, CAPTAIN?



THE AGONY WAS OVERWHELMING, BUT IT FILLED ME WITH NEW STRENGTH.



NOT FOR LONG.

I WAS OVERWHELMED BY SENSATIONS. I COULD SEE THE STOLEN LIFEFORCE FLOWING THROUGH SURADIN'S UNDEAD CORPSE.

AND I COULD SEE THE POWER BOUND WITHIN THE FLOOR.

DO I START WITH THE EYEPATCH? OR SHALL I SEE WHAT LIES BEHIND YOUR OTHER EYE, LITTLE WOLF?



THIS TIME HIS TOUCH SEEMED TO RESTORE MY STRENGTH. IT WAS AS IF ALL THAT STOLEN ENERGY FLOWED BACK INTO ME... AND MORE.



AND I WASN'T GOING TO LET IT GO TO WASTE.

SURPRISE!

UHH!



THE ROOM WAS WHIRLING AROUND ME.



THE WORLD DISSOLVED INTO PAIN, AND
DARKNESS STOLE MY SENSES AWAY.





WELCOME BACK TO
THE LAND OF THE LIVING,
WOUNDED WOLF.

WHERE...
MACE?

I AM
HERE.

BE CALM. YOU
HAVE DONE WELL.
LORD SURADIN IS
NO MORE.

ASHES AND
DUST.



WHAT HAVE
YOU *DONE* TO
ME?



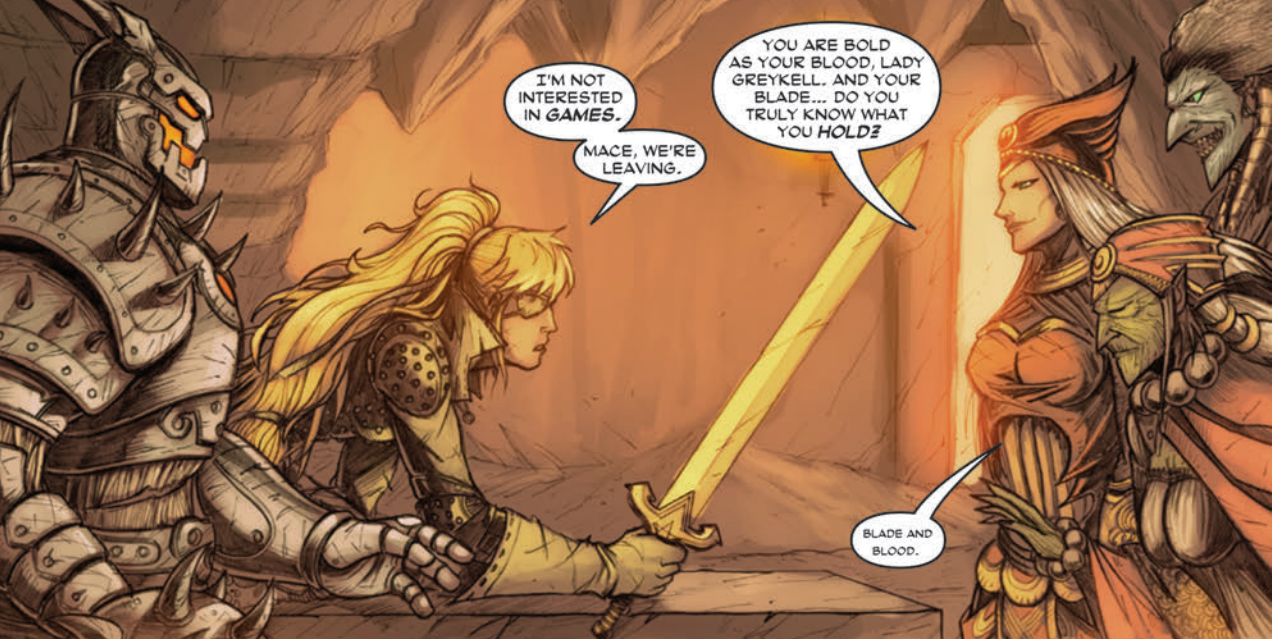
WE HAVE DONE NOTHING.
YOU HAVE CHOSEN YOUR
OWN PATH, AND IT IS
A HARD ROAD.



BLOOD AND
BATTLES LIE
AHEAD.

STORM AND
SHADOW BAR
YOUR WAY.

THE KINGDOM
OF NIGHT AWAITS
YOU.



I'M NOT
INTERESTED IN
GAMES.

MACE, WE'RE
LEAVING.

YOU ARE BOLD
AS YOUR BLOOD, LADY
GREYKELL. AND YOUR
BLADE... DO YOU
TRULY KNOW WHAT
YOU HOLD?

BLADE AND
BLOOD.



NO MATTER.
YOU ARE FREE
TO GO.

WE WILL EVEN
ENSURE YOUR **SAFE**
PASSAGE OUT OF
OUR REALM.



WHY?

YOU HAVE
SERVED YOUR
PURPOSE HERE.
AND YOU HAVE
MUCH STILL
TO DO.



THE DEAD ARE NOT FINISHED
WITH YOU. YOU HAVE THE
KEY. NOW YOU MUST
FIND THE GATE.



I JUST WANT TO GO
HOME. IF YOU'RE NOT
GOING TO **STOP** ME, GET
OUT OF MY WAY.



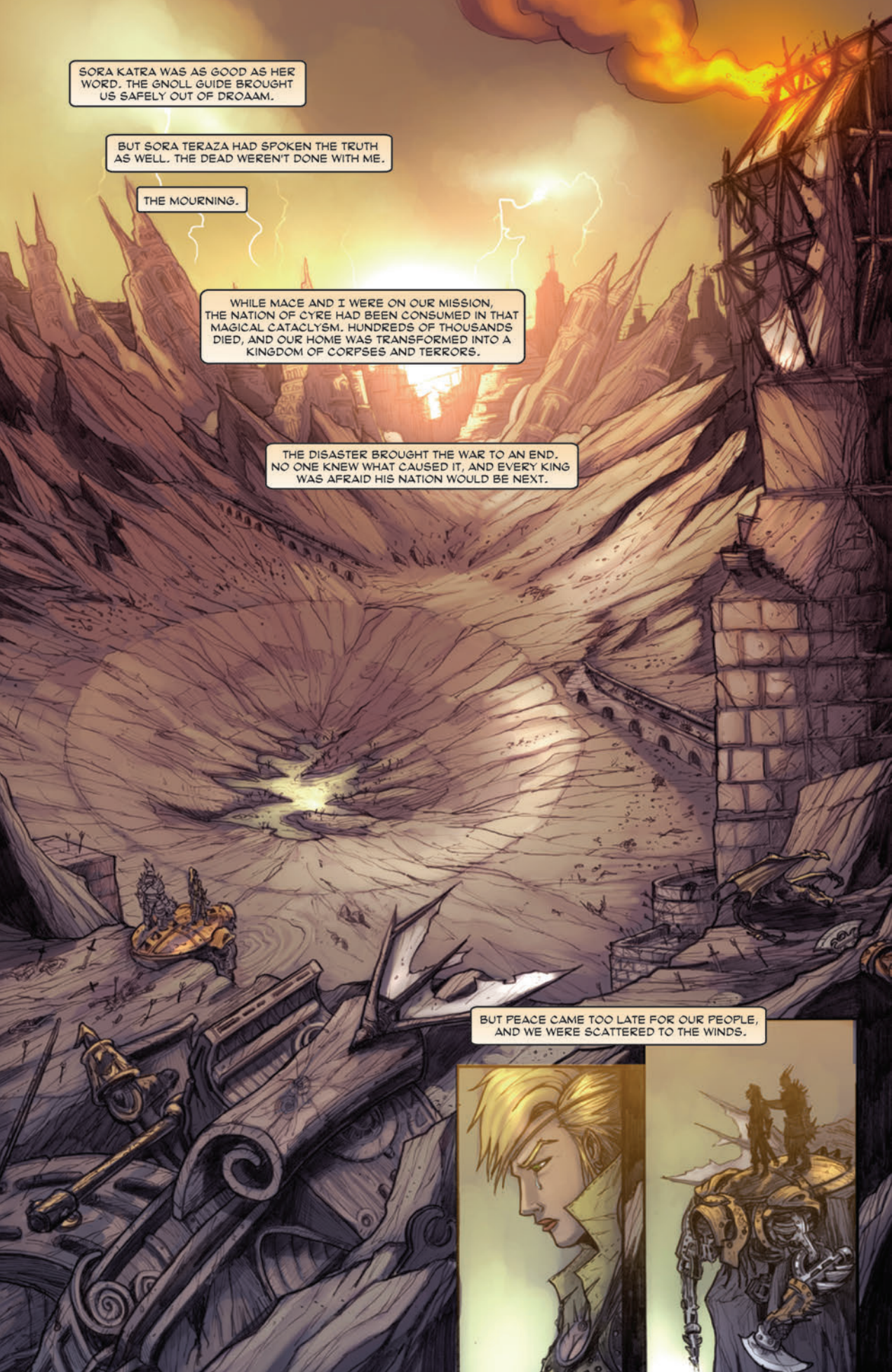
YOUR HOME IS
WAR, LITTLE SISTER.
REMEMBER THAT, WHEN
YOU MUST BUILD YOUR
HOME ANEW.



MACE,
LET'S GO.

GLADLY.

GARUUF WILL
GUIDE YOU TO THE
BORDER. I'M SURE YOU
CAN FIND YOUR WAY
FROM THERE.



SORA KATRA WAS AS GOOD AS HER WORD. THE GNOLL GUIDE BROUGHT US SAFELY OUT OF DROAAM.

BUT SORA TERAZA HAD SPOKEN THE TRUTH AS WELL. THE DEAD WEREN'T DONE WITH ME.

THE MOURNING.

WHILE MACE AND I WERE ON OUR MISSION, THE NATION OF CYRE HAD BEEN CONSUMED IN THAT MAGICAL CATAclysm. HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS DIED, AND OUR HOME WAS TRANSFORMED INTO A KINGDOM OF CORPSES AND TERRORS.

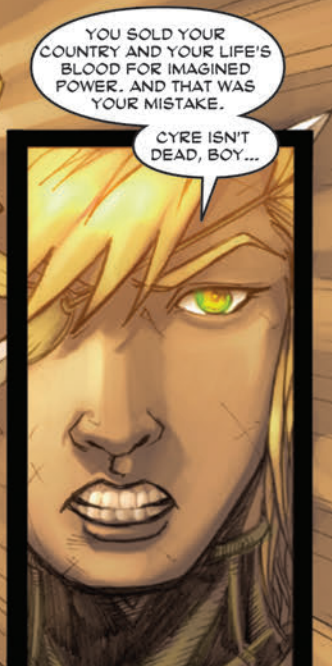
THE DISASTER BROUGHT THE WAR TO AN END. NO ONE KNEW WHAT CAUSED IT, AND EVERY KING WAS AFRAID HIS NATION WOULD BE NEXT.

BUT PEACE CAME TOO LATE FOR OUR PEOPLE, AND WE WERE SCATTERED TO THE WINDS.











...SHE'S IN OUR BLOOD.

AAAAH!



YOU CAN DESTROY ME. BUT KARNATH WILL HAVE THE KEY.

OTHERS... OTHERS WILL FOLLOW



LET THEM COME.



I KNEW THIS DAY WOULD COME.


EVER SINCE I WOKE UP IN THE GREAT CRAG, I KNEW THE KEY TO THE KINGDOM OF NIGHT WOULD BRING ENEMIES TO MY DOOR.



I'VE BEEN HIDING IN THE SHADOWS, TRYING TO FORGET WHAT HAPPENED TO ME, WHAT HAPPENED TO MY NATION.



BUT THE TIME FOR HIDING IS OVER.



IT'S TIME TO FACE MY *DESTINY*.

The End- for now!



ART GALLERY





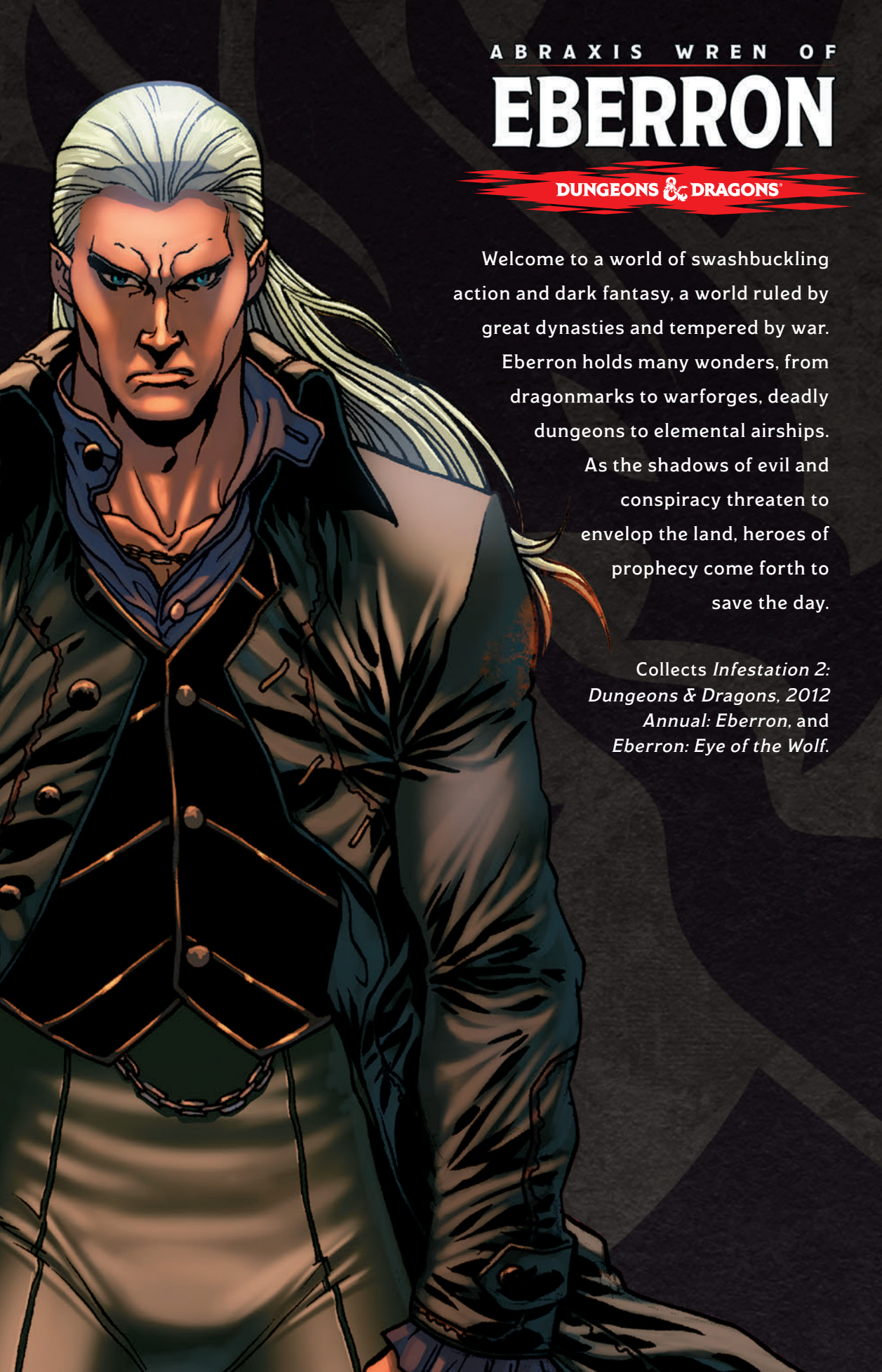


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