BLACK SCIENCE

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VOLUME 5
TRUE ATONEMENT

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BLACK
SCIENCE



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VOLUME 5
TRUE ATONEMENT

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FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A THOUSAND YEARS THE THREE *FOREVEMIDS* ARE REUNITED-- MERGING TO FORM

THE OMNIMID, DRINKER OF DARKNESS!

AND WITH THIS UNION THE HEARTS OF THE THREE CLANS OF *TARANA* ARE WHOLE AGAIN, BRINGING AN END TO EONS OF WAR AND DIVISION!

HEAR HER SONG IN YOUR HEARTS!

MAY SHE EXUDE HER PERFECT LIGHT FROM THE TRANQUIL GREEN SEAS TO THE RED MOUNTAINS.

LET US THANK HER BEAUTIFUL MESSENGER, SHE WHO CAME TO US AS FORETOLD--

SHE WHO ENDED THIS STRIFE BETWEEN OUR PEOPLES!

LET US BE AS WE ONCE WERE--A UNIFIED PEOPLE, ONE VOICE IN THE COSMIC CONVERSATION.

GOOD PEOPLE OF TARANA!

WHATEVER POWERS YOU IMAGINE ME TO HAVE, THEY ARE SIMPLE REFLECTIONS OF YOUR OWN *BRAVERY!*

IT WAS *YOUR* NOBILITY THAT BROUGHT THE THREE *FOREVEMIDS* TOGETHER AGAIN!

WE THANK YOU, PRINCESS PIA, SPRITE OF THE SIX SKIES, FOR RETURNING THE *OMNIMID* TO US!

DON'T PUT THIS ON ME, KIND VONTTA.

I CAN'T, I *WON'T* TAKE CREDIT FOR THE PEACE YOU'VE ACCOMPLISHED.

MAY SHE DRINK ALL DARKNESS AS HER GRACE BESTOWS CONTENTMENT UPON ALL PEOPLE OF TARANA!

HMMF?

WHAT THE--?!

DRREEEEEEE-

KROOOM

HUGAK!

SKREEEEE

LOOK OUT!

NO. NO. NO.

STAY HERE, MY LOVE!

VONTTA! THE FOREVEMIDS--?

DESTROYED.

ALL HOPE IS LOST!

KOFF KOFF

MAN.

I HAVE A *LOT* TO LEARN ABOUT FLYING THIS PIECE OF--

OH.

UHH... HELLO?

DEVIL!

WHOA!

HEY!

EASY--

CHOKK

WHO SENT YOU? WAS IT *DOXTA*, THE CURSED WITCH?

GAKK...

THE WEASELS FROM THE DISTORTION ZONE?

IT...

WAS...

ACCIDENT...

KOR!

STOP.

MY LOVE?!

HE'S TELLING THE TRUTH.

YOU KNOW THIS DEMON, MY PRINCESS?

=SIGH=

I WISH I DIDN'T.

YOU WILL ROT HERE UNTIL KING BARROW DECIDES YOUR PUNISHMENT.

OOF--!

THAT IS IF THE KINGDOM HASN'T FALLEN TO WAR DUE TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE *OMNIMID*.

YOU CAN'T LEAVE ME IN HERE.

YOU JUST DECIMATED A PEACE TREATY THAT WOULD HAVE ENDED A THOUSAND YEARS OF WAR.

PIA--I DIDN'T MEAN TO. *OBVIOUSLY*.

PLEASE-- YOU HAVE *NO IDEA* WHAT I'VE GONE THROUGH TO FIND YOU.

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE.

WHAT? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

IT WAS AN ACCIDENT, PIA! *TELL THEM!*

I'D NEVER WILLINGLY CAUSE HARM!

I CAN'T ATTEST TO THAT.

'XCUSE ME, LOVE.

DID DA PRINCESS SAY YOU'RE DA BLOKE SMASHED MY CLAN'S *FOREVEMID?*

UHHH...

MY LOVE, I AM CONFUSED.

WHEN I FOUND YOU ALL THOSE YEARS AGO IN THE TEMPLE OF CHAR'OQ, YOU CLAIMED TO REMEMBER NOTHING.

I WAS SCARED.

AND ONCE I'D SEEN HOW BEAUTIFUL THIS PLACE WAS AND HOW KIND YOU ALL WERE...

...I DIDN'T ***WANT*** TO REMEMBER.

AND IT SEEMED SO IMPORTANT TO YOU THAT I BE THE "EUCALYPTUS" DESTINED TO BRING PEACE.

I JUST WENT WITH IT.

YOU LIED.

IT DID MORE GOOD TO LIE THAN TELL THE TRUTH.

I WANTED A NEW LIFE.

SO... IT SEEMED BEST FOR ALL INVOLVED.

YOUR FATHER IS SUCH A VILE CREATURE?

HE'S NOT VILE... HE'S JUST *SELFISH.*

PART OF A GENERATION THAT CHERISHES ITS ADOLESCENCE.

A WORKAHOLIC WHO HIDES FROM HIS FEELINGS.

MY FAMILY... WE WERE JUST ACCOUTREMENT TO HIS LIFE. BACKGROUND NOISE.

BEING A FATHER WAS HARD, SO HE DISAPPEARED.

WHAT MANNER OF MAN BEHAVES LIKE THIS?

BACK HOME HE'S WHAT WE CALL "*NARCISSISTIC.*"

THIS COMPLICATES THINGS *TERRIBLY*, MY LOVE.

THE SKYLORDS AND THE MOUNTAIN QUEEN BOTH HAVE ARMIES WITHIN OUR WALLS.

THERE ARE ALREADY RUMORS THAT *WE* SET THIS TRAGEDY IN MOTION.

I PROMISED THEM THAT YOU WERE THE EUCALYPTUS.

THEIR FAITH IN YOU BROUGHT ABOUT THE PEACE OF THE THREE TRIBES, QUELLED THEIR HATRED.

WHEN THEY DISCOVER I LIED...

YOU *DIDN'T* LIE.

NOT KNOWINGLY. BUT IT WON'T MATTER. I'M COMPLICIT.

PIA, THE FOREVEMIDS HELD THE GREATEST POWER OF EACH TRIBE.

AND NOW THE LORDS KNOW THAT IT WAS *YOUR FATHER* WHO DESTROYED THEM.

IF WE CANNOT CALM THEM, THEN WAR WILL SOON RETURN TO *TARANA*.

HOW CAN I HELP?

MY FATHER IS HOLDING A BANQUET THIS EVENING TO BRING THE THREE FAMILIES TOGETHER AND EXPLAIN THIS TRAGEDY.

I'VE CAUSED YOU SO MUCH TROUBLE.
YOU'VE MADE ME HAPPIER THAN I'VE EVER BEEN.
I KNOW YOUR HEART IS GOOD.
STILL, YOU LIED TO ME.
I DO NOT LIKE *DOUBTING* YOU.
I'M SORRY, KOR.
I FORGIVE YOU.
BUT NONE OF THE OTHER CLANS ARE GOING TO BELIEVE ANYTHING FROM MY MOUTH OR YOURS.
I'LL JUST EXPLAIN IT TO THEM--?
NO.
IT'S A MEETING OF GODS. ONE FALSE WORD OR IMPROPER HAND GESTURE COULD BE MISCONSTRUED AS DISRESPECT.
IT RESTS ON YOUR FATHER TO EXPLAIN HIMSELF AT THE BANQUET TONIGHT.
THE FATE OF OUR WORLD RESTS ON HIS CHARACTER.
THIS IS THE WORST DAY OF MY LIFE.

THIS IS THE MOST *FANTASTIC* DAY OF MY LIFE!

SUCH A *PLEASURE* TO HAVE THE QUEEN OF THE RED MOUNTAINS IN OUR HOME.

WE THANK YOU FOR COMING. OUR HEARTS GRIEVE AT THE DISASTER TODAY, AND WE HOPE--

WE HAVE GUARDED OUR THIRD OF THE *OMNIMID* FOR *THOUSANDS* OF YEARS.

THERE ARE ***SOME*** IN MY CLAN WHO THINK YOUR OVERTURES FOR PEACE WERE SIMPLY A PLOY TO GATHER OUR SHARD TO DESTROY IT-- TO ***WEAKEN*** US.

THEIR QUEEN AMONG THEM.

QUEEN MOROSA, THE TRAGEDY BEFELL US ALL.

OUR *FOREVEMID* SHARD WAS ALSO SHATTERED.

IT WAS A TERRIBLE HAPPENSTANCE.

I SMELL BLORMM SHIT.

WE'LL SEE IF THE FATHER OF YOUR LYING BRIDE CAN SWAY ME, PRINCE KOR.

THE MOUNTAIN ARMIES ARE RESTLESS AND VENGEFUL. IF YOU ARE LYING...

"...YOUR STREETS WILL RUN RED TONIGHT."

WHOA--!

IT IS AN **OMEN** THAT THIS DAY BE WROUGHT WITH **ILL TIDINGS!**

THIS MAN'S ARRIVAL-- IT IS NO COINCIDENCE! WE HAVE SEEN IT!

YOU FLAT-FACED SKY DICKS SEE SO MUCH, WHY THE ***FUCK*** DIDN'T YOU SAY SOMETHING?

MAYBE YOU AN' THE BALANCE CLAN WORKIN' TOGETHER TO SET US UP?

IT IS MY LOVE FOR YOUR DAUGHTER THAT I FIND THE MERCY IN MY HEART FOR THE CRIME YOU HAVE COMMITTED.

I'LL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO SET THINGS RIGHT.

I JUST WANT PIA TO BE HAPPY.

ALL THAT I ASK IS THAT YOU SPEAK THE TRUTH AND CONDUCT YOURSELF WITH GRACE.

YOU HAVE MY WORD.

PLEASE, *PLEASE!* THERE IS NO NEED TO ARGUE OVER HIS VERACITY AMONG YOURSELVES--

LET US HAVE WORDS WITH SIR MCKAY HIMSELF.

UH... HEY. NICE TO, *UH,* SEE YOU ALL AGAIN.

UNTIL THIS DAY, IT WAS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT I HAD NO IN-LAWS.

I SEE HONOR IN THIS MAN. SIR MCKAY WILL QUELL ANY SUSPICIONS OF A PLOT.

AND TO MAKE SURE YOU SEE THAT BARROW THE BALANCED HAD NO FOREKNOWLEDGE OF HIS ARRIVAL.

THE HELLS?!

YOU'RE DRINKING FROM *MY* GOBLET, FOOL.

OH.

GOD. I'M SORRY.

I'M JUST SUPER NERVOUS.

I LIKE YOUR PINK SKIN AND WOULD ACCEPT ITS FLUIDS.

BUT I FEAR MY PEOPLE'S GORB'D WINE IS NOT FOR SUCH A TINY FACE TO PROCESS.

IT'S STRONG?

IT IS TRUE THE UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL OF MY NEW BROTHER HAS BROUGHT TRAGEDY.

BUT THERE IS A SOLUTION.

THE THREE SHARDS OF THE *OMNIMID*, SOUL OF TARANA, MOTHER OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY, CAN BE RE-FORMED.

WE MUST BE BETTER THAN OUR ANCESTORS, WHOSE GREED AND MISTRUST LED TO THIS WAR.

"WAR ENDED UPON THE ARRIVAL OF THE EUCALYPTUS.

"BUT HER FATHER HAS DESTROYED THE BALANCE PYRAMID."

WITHOUT BALANCE, THE CREATION AND DESTRUCTION SHARDS WILL TEAR EACH OTHER APART!

WE MUST RECLAIM THE ***OXEN HEART*** OF ROMADOR, FIRST OF THE BALANCE CLAN.

DIRE TIMES CALL FOR DIRE MEASURES.

THE BALANCE AND STRENGTH OF THE OXEN HEART CAN REFORM THE *OMNIMID*.

WE MUST EACH SEND OUR BEST WARRIORS INTO THE WITHERING WOODS TO TAKE THE OXEN HEART BACK FROM ***DOXTA, THE CURSED WITCH.***

YOU WISH TO UNLEASH THE FURY OF DOXTA UPON US ALL?!

THIS FOOL DESTROYS THE GREAT *OMNIMID*, AND YOU ASK US TO SEND OUR BEST MEN TO *DIE* AT THE HAND OF THE *UNDEFEATABLE* WITCH?!

THIS STINKS OF CONSPIRACY!

ONCE PIA AND MY SON ARE MARRIED THIS MAN WILL BE MY KIN.

IT WOULD BE IDIOCY FOR ME TO HAVE USED HIM IN FRONT OF ALL OF YOU TO DESTROY THE *OMNIMID*.

IT IS WHY I BROUGHT YOU ALL TOGETHER TO HEAR HIS HONEST WORDS.

PLEASE, SIR MCKAY, ILLUMINATE THE TRUTH.

I ≥HIC≤ DUNNO WHA' THAT GUY'S SO UPSET 'BOUT.

BUNCHA MAGIC BABIES...

HA! I'M KIDDING! LIGHTEN UP, *HUH?*

YEAH, YEAH... EXCUSE ME ≥*HOOPH*≤ SOME WINE.

WENT TO MY HEAD.

MY DAUGHTER... WE WERE SEPARATED ≥HIC≤ BEEN TRYIN' TO FIND 'ER ≥HIC≤ I MISS 'ER AN' I WANTED TO GET HER HOME.

THE NEW PILLAR... I MEAN ≥HIC≤ I BARELY KNOW HOW TO PILOT THE THING... AN'...

I BROKE YOUR GODDAMNED MAGIC PYRAMID BRAINS AN'...

I'M *SUPER* SORRY. I...

BWAAAA--!

OH, GOD...

LISHEN-- I DON'T KNOW ANY O' YOU...

I DIDN'T MEAN TO *FUCK UP* YOUR THINGY.

I MEAN, YOU ALL LOOK LIKE SUPER STRONG PEOPLE--

SO I HOPES >HIC< YOU BELIEVE ME, NOT LIKE "*BELIEVE*" ME--

NOT LIKE I'M TRYING TO *MAKE YOU* BELIEVE SOMETHING--I'M TELLING THE TRUTH HERE--

I JUST... I MISS MY LITTLE GIRL, AN' I NEED TA FIX IT.

AN' >SOB< I WAS A SHIT DAD.

I WAS AFRAID THAT I WOULDN'T BE A GREAT DAD AND...

...SO I HID.

SLAM

BUT I FIGURED OUT A LOT OF STUFF FROM THE GIANT SPACE MOUNTAIN FACE MAN 'CAUSE HE HAD THE FLOATING QUESTION THINGY STEAL MY MEMORIES, AND I HAD TO GET THEM ALL BACK BUT NOW >*HIC*< I'VE *GOT* 'EM ALL BACK AN'... I SEE...

SO...

I THINK YOU GUYS ARE ALL PROBABLY SUPER GREAT AN' MY DAUGHTER LIKES YOU ALL SO, JUST...

KLWKK

WHY DON'T WE SAY *FUCK IT!*

UGHH-- GOD, LOOK WHAT I DID!

IT ALL WENT IN *THERE.*

NO PROBLEM...

JUST... HOLD STILL...

...CAN'T GET THE WINE...

I CAN ONLY GET THE... SO MUCH...

...BOOB.

THAT DIDN'T GO VERY WELL, DID IT?

I *FINALLY* FOUND HAPPINESS!

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME, YOU'D SHOW UP TO *RUIN IT!*

RIGHT?

THESE PEOPLE THOUGHT I WAS SOME LONG-DEAD GODDESS RETURNED TO UNITE THEIR PEOPLE.

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I WAS THE CENTER OF SOMEONE'S UNIVERSE, MY NEEDS WERE *CONSIDERED*.

KOR PUT ME IN CHARGE, ASKED MY OPINIONS-- *LISTENED TO ME!*

AND YOU KNOW WHAT?

I'M GOOD AT IT.

I SAVED THIS ENTIRE WORLD FROM WAR!

I WAS ABLE TO BROKER PEACE BETWEEN ALL OF THESE PEOPLE WHO *HATE* EACH OTHER.

I *NEVER* KNEW I HAD IT IN ME.

BECAUSE MY ENTIRE LIFE I'VE BEEN IN THE SHADOW OF *YOUR* NARCISSISM.

EVERYTHING'S BEEN ABOUT CLEANING UP *YOUR* MESSES, TRYING TO FILL THE VACANCIES *YOU* LEFT IN THE FAMILY.

BUT FOR ONCE SOMEONE LOVED ME AND PUT MY NEEDS INTO THE EQUATION.

I CAN SEE WHY THIS PLACE IS APPEALING.

YOU HAD TO GROW UP TOO SOON.

NOW YOU'RE WORSHIPED AS A GOD, BY GODS.

I ALWAYS SAW HOW STRONG YOU WERE, BUT I NEVER TOLD YOU...

I JUST LEANED ON YOU.

I CAN SEE WHY YOU WERE HAPPY HERE--BUT THAT WAS WHEN YOU THOUGHT THERE WAS NO WAY TO GET HOME.

BUT THERE *IS* A WAY HOME NOW.

YOUR MOTHER, SHE DESERVES TO HAVE HER CHILDREN BACK.

SHE'S ALREADY MOURNED US, DAD.

SHE'LL NEVER *STOP* MOURNING YOU.

IT'S TIME WE PUT AN END TO THAT.

YOU MEAN IT'S TIME TO PUT AN END TO ME BEING *HAPPY!*

I FINALLY FOUND A PLACE WHERE I *BELONG,* AND YOU WANT ME TO LEAVE SO THAT YOU CAN UNDO *YOUR MESS!*

AGAIN!

I'M SORRY, DAD, I'M HAPPIER THAN I'VE EVER BEEN. KOR AND I ARE IN LOVE, AND WE'RE GETTING MARRIED.

IT'S EASY TO MISTAKE *BEING* LOVED WITH BEING *IN* LOVE.

WHAT DOES *THAT* MEAN?

THIS PLACE *ISN'T* YOUR HOME. THESE PEOPLE *AREN'T* YOUR FAMILY.

THEY'RE A *HELL OF A LOT* CLOSER TO IT THAN YOU EVER WERE.

YOU HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO HATE ME.

BUT YOU DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO GIVE UP ON OUR FAMILY.

I'VE CHANGED, PIA. I *HAVE.*

I'LL DIE BEFORE I FAIL YOU AGAIN.

IF YOU STAY HERE YOU *WILL* DIE, DAD.

GET IN YOUR SHIP AND GO HOME.

THERE'S NOTHING MORE FOR YOU HERE.



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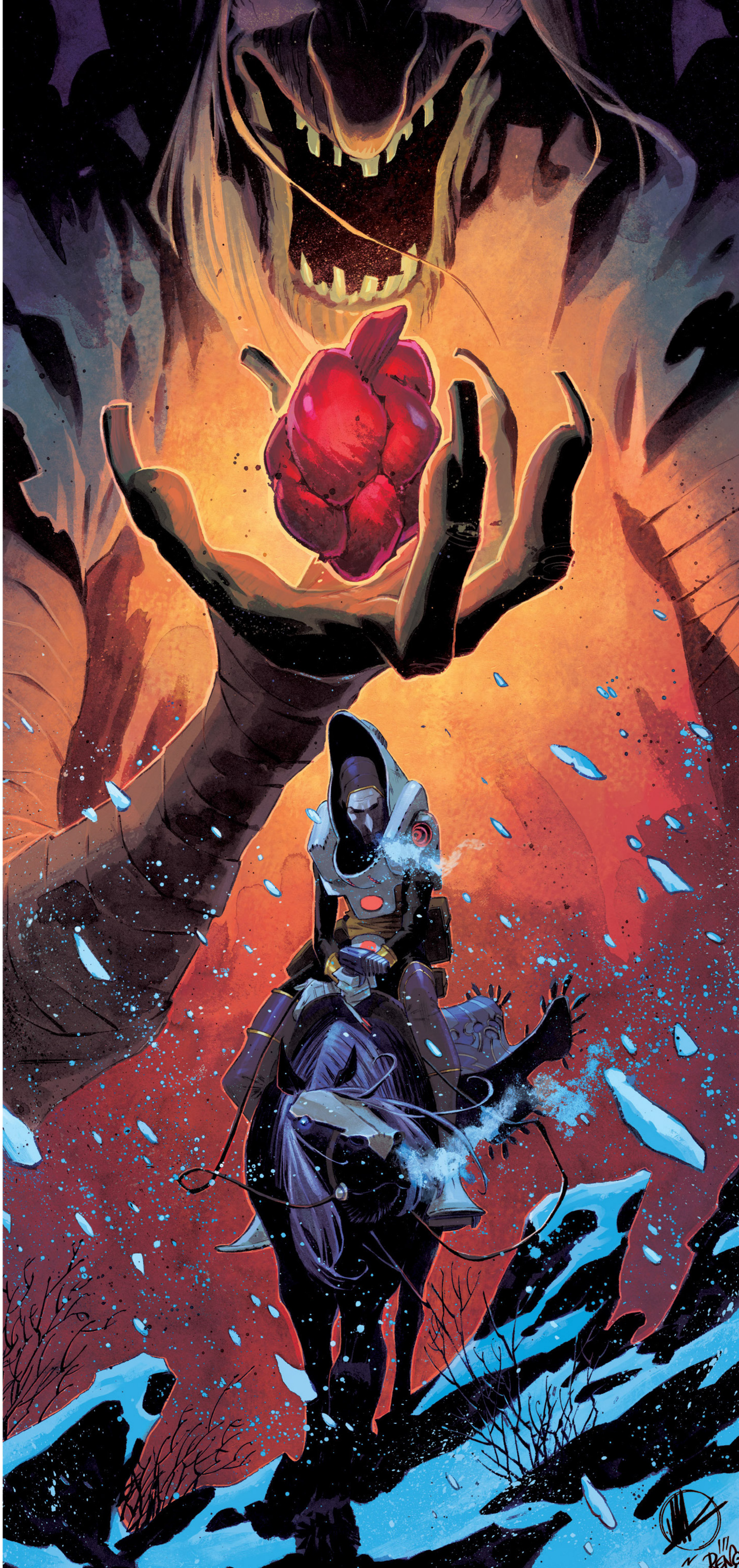

YOU DON'T BECOME A FATHER THE DAY YOUR FIRST CHILD IS BORN.

YOU EARN IT SLOWLY.

LESSON BY LESSON, YEAR BY YEAR, YOU GROW.

HURFF

FOR SOME OF US, IT TAKES LONGER THAN OTHERS.

YOU'RE DOING GREAT, SPAGHETTI.

I KNOW YOU DIDN'T SIGN ON FOR THIS BULLSHIT.

A TIRED HORSE IN A DARK WOOD--

--I'M LIVING A BAD METAPHOR.

THIS TRIP IS IMPORTANT.

DOESN'T CHANGE THAT CLIMBING ON AND FORCING YOU INTO A MONSTER-FILLED FOREST OF EVIL TIDINGS IS BARBARIC.

THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE ONE OF THOSE MISSIONS WHERE THE HORSE GETS KILLED.

I PROMISE.

YOU'RE GOING TO HELP ME FULFILL A PROMISE TO AN OLD FRIEND.

THE WITHERING WITCH

I'M GOING TO LEAVE EVERY DIMENSION BETTER THAN HOW I FOUND IT.

THOUGH AT THIS POINT I'D SETTLE FOR JUST LEAVING IT AS GOOD AS I FOUND IT.

HURPMF

PERFECT.

EVIL TEMPLE OF **DOXTA,** THE CURSED WITCH, IS EXACTLY AS FAR AWAY AS I'D EXPECTED.

AND AS **TERRIFYING.**

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THIS ***IS*** THE EASIEST PATH TO THE DEATH CASTLE OF IMMINENT DOOM.

HURPMF

JUST TAKE IT ***SLOW.***

THERE NOW.

YOU AND ME, IF WE GET THE OXEN HEART AND FIX THE OMNIMID THINGY-- THE ENTIRE KINGDOM IS GONNA WORSHIP YOU LIKE A HORSE GOD.

PUT YOU OUT TO STUD IN A FIELD OF ENDLESS CARROTS AND--

HOOO!

WHA--?!

WHOA, SPAGHETTI! **WHOA!**

WRHEEEE--!

GRAGH--!

TWUPP

THUP

WUPP

HOO

DICK.

THUP

PIA!

MY PRINCESS-- WAKE UP!

WHAT?!

YOUR FATHER IS GONE!

OH. WOW. FOR A SECOND, I WAS WORRIED YOU CAME RUNNING IN HERE YELLING BECAUSE IT WAS *BAD* NEWS.

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND--

I UNDERSTAND THAT SINCE HE *DEMOLISHED* THE *OMNIMID* THE GREAT STORMS HAVE RETURNED.

HE *LITERALLY* BROUGHT A DARK CLOUD WITH HIM.

GONE MEANS HE CAN'T MAKE MORE OF A MESS.

HE BORE AN ILL OMEN, THERE IS NO QUESTION, MY LOVE.

BUT...?

HE DID NOT LEAVE TO GO HOME.

HE... STOLE MY HORSE.

OF COURSE HE DID.

HE *DESTROYED* TARANA'S ONLY CHANCE AT PEACE AND DRUNKENLY *FONDLED* THE MOUNTAIN QUEEN'S TITS...

...SO NATURALLY HIS NEXT MOVE WOULD BE TO *STEAL* MY FIANCÉ'S *HORSE*.

THAT'LL BE HIS EPITAPH--*IT'S PERFECT!*

DON'T EVEN NEED TO PUT HIS NAME ON THE TOMBSTONE.

JUST THOSE WORDS "*FUCKED THINGS UP AND STOLE A HORSE*" AND EVERYBODY'LL KNOW THAT'S WHERE OL' GRANT MCKAY'S BURIED!

IT'S WORSE.

DO TELL.

HE'S GONE TO THE WITHERING WOODS.

NO, HE'S NOT.

HE STOLE THE MAP FROM ONE OF THE CARTOGRAPHERS.

DOXTA THE WITCH?

I ASSUME SO.

UNREAL.

HE CAN'T EVEN BE NOBLE WITHOUT SCREWING THINGS UP.

I'VE GATHERED THE QUORUM OF THUNDER. WE WILL PROTECT THE IMBECILE.

NO, KOR.

WE HAVE NO TIME TO WASTE. YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT SHE CAN DO, TO HIS VERY SOUL--

NO.

I WON'T LET YOU RISK THE QUORUM. NOT WITH WAR UPON US.

YOU'VE ALL SUFFERED ENOUGH AT MY FATHER'S HANDS...

"...HE'S ON HIS OWN."

I'M NOT YOUR FAVORITE PERSON IN THE WORLD.

I GET IT.

BUT, I MEAN, TO BE FAIR, YOU WERE **KIND** OF A PUSSY WITH THE OWL THING.

I DON'T MEAN PUSSY AS A COMMENT ON THE FORTITUDE OR STRENGTH OF FEMININITY--I MEAN LIKE A **SMALL CAT.**

SOFT, CUDDLY, AND NOT VERY BRAVE.

SO IN THAT CONTEXT, WE CAN PROBABLY SAY IT'S A FAIR CALL.

HERUMPF

C'MON, THAT'S A BIT FUNNY. YOU KNOW, SARCASM IS THE BEST WAY TO DEAL WITH HORRIBLE--

REHEHE!

WHOA!

OKAY. IT'S OKAY.

PROMISED TO GET YOU HOME AND I WILL.

NO ONE ELSE DIES ON MY WATCH.

NOT EVEN HORSES TERRIFIED OF OWLS.

LOOK THERE-- THAT'S CHIMNEY SMOKE!

AND WHERE THERE'S CHIMNEY SMOKE...

"...THERE'S A WARM CABIN."

HOPEFULLY SOMEONE INSIDE KNOWS HOW TO HELP AN EASILY FRIGHTENED HORSE.

HURMF

MEEPO DALODOO!

WHAT *ARE* YOU DOING OUT IN THIS STORM, YOUNG ONES?

ON A GOOD OLD-FASHIONED MISSION TO TRY AND REDEEM MYSELF TO MY DAUGHTER WHO HATES ME, AND I GOT MY HORSE HURT BECAUSE SHE'S AFRAID OF OWLS.

COUPLE OF GENIUSES, HUH?

ACTUALLY...

I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY BUT IF THERE'S *ANYTHING* I CAN DO TO HELP YOU--

YOU CAN HELP ME BY HELPING *YOURSELF.*

EVERY FOOL WHO FALLS INTO THE WITHERING WOODS ENDS UP IN SOME DAMNABLE SITUATION THAT I END UP HAVING TO RECTIFY.

THIS AGURA ROOT WILL HEAL YOUR STEED'S INJURY. ONCE SHE IS WELL, RIDE HOME.

I'M TOO OLD AND TIRED TO KEEP PROTECTING COCKSURE YOUNG FOOLS.

THAT'S SOME *SUPER* SOUND ADVICE, BUT I CAN'T GO UNTIL I'VE REPAIRED THE MESS I'VE MADE OF MY DAUGHTER'S LIFE.

SEEMS ALL I DO IS FAIL HER.

YOUR FEAR IS THE CURSE OF ALL PARENTS, NO MATTER THEIR ADORATION OR COMPETENCE.

ONLY AN *EGOTIST* WOULD CONSIDER HIMSELF A WONDERFUL FATHER.

I CANNOT SAY AS TO WHETHER YOU HAVE SUCCEEDED OR FAILED...

...BUT IN YOUR VOICE I HEAR THE TRUE *AFFECTION* YOU HAVE FOR YOUR DAUGHTER.

YOU'VE DONE AT LEAST THAT MUCH RIGHT.

FOR THE NOURISHMENT OF *LOVE,* ABOVE ALL ELSE, IS WHAT EVERY CHILD NEEDS.

NONE OF IT MEANS ANYTHING IF YOU'RE NOT THERE FOR THEM.

WELL, IF YOU ENTER THE WITHERING TOWER OF THE WITCH DOXTA YOU WILL *NEVER* BE THERE FOR *ANYONE* AGAIN.

THERE IS NO PLACE MORE WICKED.

THERE WAS A BIG PEACE TREATY BACK IN TOWN, AND I DESTROYED THE *FOREVEMIDS* FROM THE THREE KINGDOMS, OR WHATEVER.

BIG KING WHAT'S-HIS-BALLS SEEMS TO THINK THE ONLY WAY TO PUT THEM BACK TOGETHER IS SOMETHING THE WITCH HAS.

THE OXEN HEART.

DO *NOT* SPEAK OF THE OXEN HEART IN MY HOME.

TO UTTER THE BUTCHERED GOD'S LOSS IS A *CURSE.*

IT IS HER *MOST* PRIZED POSSESSION.

TO STEAL THIS FROM THE WITHERING WITCH WOULD SURELY BRING DOOM UPON YOU!

YOU THINK YOU DO THIS TO EARN YOUR DAUGHTER'S LOVE.

YUP.

I'M GOING TO FIX THIS EVEN IF IT KILLS ME.

THERE ARE WORSE FATES THAN DEATH.

DOOM

TWO VISITORS IN ONE NIGHT.

HOW ODD.

WHEREVER MY FATHER GOES *SOMETHING* IS AMISS, MA'AM.

I APOLOGIZE, AND I HOPE YOU'LL FORGIVE HIM.

FORGIVE HIM FOR WHAT, DEAR?

WHATEVER *BULLSHIT* THING IS GOING TO HAPPEN BECAUSE OF HIM.

HMMH.

YES.

WELL, I MUST ADD HEALING OINTMENT TO HIS HORSE'S WOUNDS.

YOU HURT KOR'S HORSE?

MY OINTMENT WILL HEAL THE BEAST.

IF ONLY IT COULD HEAL WOUNDS OF THE HEART.

BUT THE ONLY OINTMENT FOR THAT IS *FORGIVENESS.*

...A MUCH *RARER* CONCOCTION.

♪

PIA--

HOW MUCH *WORSE* DO YOU HAVE TO MAKE *EVERYTHING?*

THESE ARE *GODS,* DAD!

AS IN CONTROL-THE-ELEMENTS AND SUMMON-GIANT-CREATURES-MADE-OF-*MAGMA* GODS!

AND *NONE OF THEM* HAVE *EVER* RETURNED FROM *DOXTA'S TOWER.*

I'LL FIND A WAY.

LOOK, I'VE GOT A PRETTY COOL LASER GUN.

I BET NONE OF THE SUPER GODS YOU HANG OUT WITH HAVE COOL LASER GUNS.

MY FIANCÉ CAN HARNESS THE COSMIC WINDS INTO AN AXE THAT JUDGES INTENTIONS AND SHATTERS MOUNTAINS.

BUT NO LASERS?

YOU WON'T COME HOME WITH ME.
YOU'RE HAPPY HERE.
SO I'M GOING TO FIX WHAT I DID BEFORE I GO.
I'M PROUD OF YOU.
THEY ALL ADORE YOU, AND YOU *DESERVE* IT. YOU'VE PROVEN YOU'D DO WELL NO MATTER WHERE YOU ENDED UP.
MY LITTLE GIRL, PRINCESS PIA.
AND I JUST...
I WANT YOU TO BE HAPPY.
IF I CAN LEAVE HERE AND KNOW--
JUST SHUT UP.
I'M NOT EQUIPPED FOR ANOTHER BOUT OF SUPER SAPPY SINCERITY.
THE OXEN HEART, THERE'S A REASON THAT NO ONE ELSE VOLUNTEERED TO GET IT, DAD.
IT'S JUST *NOT* POSSIBLE.
AND THIS, YOU RUNNING OFF AND GETTING YOURSELF *KILLED* SO THAT I CAN BE HAPPY, THAT'S *NOT* GOING TO MAKE ME HAPPY...
...IT'S GOING TO MAKE ME REALLY SAD.
WELL, I DIDN'T PLAN ON DYING.
WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME *ANY* OF YOUR PLANS WORKED OUT?

I FOUND *YOU.*

AND HOW DID THAT TURN OUT?

UH...

HOW ARE YOU GOING TO FIND THE HEART *EXACTLY?*

YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE?

I KNOW WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE.

IT LOOKS LIKE THAT.

HOLY SHIT.

WHAT'S IT DOING HERE?

PUT YOUR COAT ON.

RUN AND DON'T LOOK BACK.

INVITED INTO MY HOME--

GIVEN FOOD, WARMTH; AND HOPE.

BUT THE LIVING SELDOM HAVE RESPECT FOR CHARITY!

SO INSTEAD I WILL GIVE YOU WHAT YOU TRULY CRAVE--

NO!

GAZZAT

HOLD ON!

I'M GETTING YOU OUT--

MURRGLE!

HUNHH!

I WARNED YOU.

BEGGED YOU TO GO BACK.

ALWAYS THE SAME WITH THE INTRUDERS.

YOU COME SEEKING HORROR.

DETERMINED TO FIND IT.

YET DOXTA SHOWS ONLY KINDNESS, COURTESY.

DOXTA BEGS YOU TO DO RIGHT.

BEGS YOU TO RETURN *COURTESY.*

BUT YOUR KIND NEVER RECIPROCATES. YOU STEAL FROM A KINDLY OLD WOMAN WHO TOOK YOU IN!

PLEASE STOP--*STOP HURTING HER!*

THE ROOTS HAVE HER NOW.

YOU SAY YOU DO THIS TO EARN YOUR DAUGHTER'S LOVE.

YOU'VE FAILED HER FOR YEARS.

YOU'RE GOING TO DO RIGHT...

...EVEN IF IT KILLS YOU.

ANYTHING YOU WANT!

JUST LET HER GO!

ANYONE CAN DIE.

IT'S QUICK, OR SLOW, BUT IT'S THE END.

DYING IS EASY.

LIVING WITH LOSS IS NOT.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

TO SOLVE ALL OF YOUR PROBLEMS.

TO FREE YOUR PIA FROM THE BLACK ROOT.

TO GIVE YOU THE OXEN HEART THAT YOU MIGHT END WAR WITH.

BUT THE OXEN HEART IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE ATTRIBUTES, COLLECTED FROM ANOTHER DESPERATE FATHER, THE STOUT HEART OF A MIGHTY KING.

SUCH STRENGTH INSIDE IT.

IF I AM TO GIVE YOU THE OXEN HEART I WILL NEED ANOTHER ATTRIBUTE TO TAKE ITS PLACE.

A TRADE.

WOULD YOU GIVE ME EVERYTHING THAT MAKES YOU EXTRAORDINARY TO SAVE HER?

I WANT THE ONE THING THAT MAKES YOU UNIQUE.

WOULD YOU BECOME ***AVERAGE*** IN EVERY WAY?

I WANT YOUR INTELLECT.

I WANT THE KEY TO UNLOCK

BLACK SCIENCE.



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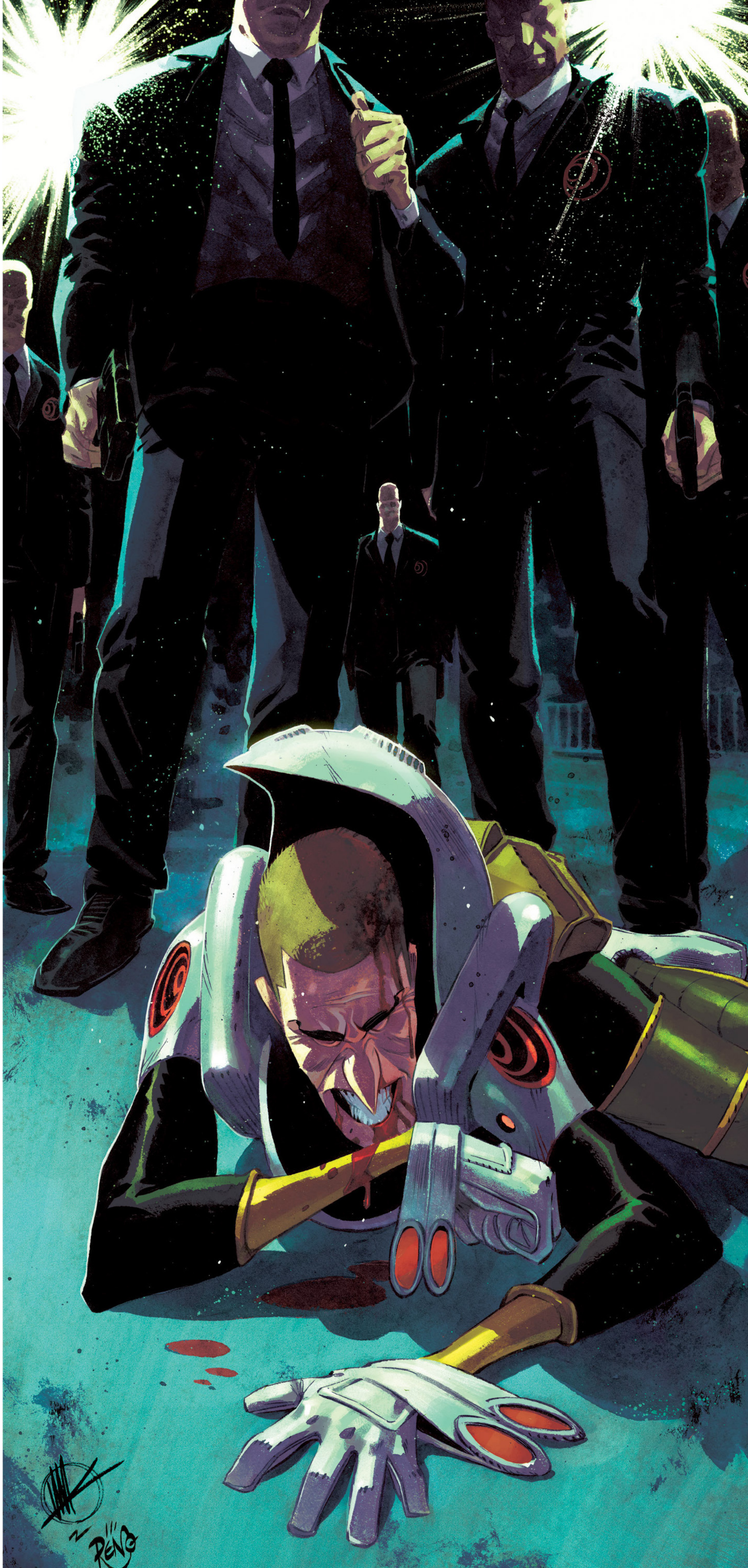


WE ALL LABEL OURSELVES.

FOCUS ON *ONE* THING WE IDENTIFY AS ABOVE ALL OTHERS.

I'M ABOUT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU STRIP THAT THING AWAY.

WHAT A MESS YOU'VE MADE IN HERE.

HOW DOES AN ARTIST GO ON WITHOUT ARMS?

YOU'VE TAKEN THIS BEAUTIFUL MACHINE AND LITTERED IT WITH CONFUSION, DOUBT, AND MADNESS.

HOW WILL I SURVIVE WITHOUT THE ONE THING THAT MADE ME ME?

PERHAPS IT IS THE *MADNESS* THAT CREATES THE *GIFT?*

OR WAS THE GIFT YOUR BURDEN? EITHER WAY--

YOU'RE FREE OF IT!

THE WINDING PATHWAYS OF FATE, SUCH SEEMINGLY STRANGE OCCURRENCES-- BUT NOT THIS!

I DREW YOU TO ME!

TO TRAVEL ALL THIS WAY TO GIVE ME YOUR SECRETS!

SUDDENLY IT ALL GOES CLOUDY.

MIND COVERED IN SOOT.

THE BUZZING CIRCUS SILENCED.

MURGLE!

L-LET HER GO...

FINALLY-- THE GLORIOUS KEY IS MINE!

A BARGAIN STRUCK, AND SO FULFILLED!

=GASP!=

THANK YOU FOR ENDING THE CYCLE, SOJOURNER!

FEAR NOT-- MY LOVE SHALL GRACE YOU AGAIN--

--FOR THE GREAT BARTER YET TO COME!

THAT LAST BIT DIDN'T SOUND GOOD.

D-DID SHE...

SHE DID. BUT HEY, LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE...

"...I JUST HELPED AN EVIL MIND-WITCH WITH HER ROTTEN PLANS."

...AND WE MUST STILL *CONSIDER* THE OPTION OF A DIPLOMATIC MARRIAGE TO THE SKYWARD REACHES.

FATHER, PLEASE. I HAVEN'T GIVEN UP HOPE THAT PIA WILL RETURN.

OF COURSE, KOR. BUT GIVEN WHERE SHE WENT... IT IS PRUDENT TO DISCUSS OPTIONS SHOULD SHE NOT--

DON'T GO PAWNING OFF MY MAN JUST YET.

HE'S GOT TO HELP ME PICK CHINA PATTERNS IN THE MORNING.

BELOVED!

A TRUE MIRACLE THAT YOU FOUND YOUR FATHER BEFORE HE REACHED DOXTA'S DEN!

I DIDN'T.

WE'LL TALK ABOUT DOXTA, BUT TAKE THIS FOR NOW.

BUT WHAT--

BY GOLDRA'S SOUL, *SHE HAS FOUND IT!*

THE OXEN HEART!

WAR IS AVERTED-- OUR *BELOVED* PRINCESS HAS SAVED US *AGAIN!*

SEND WORD TO THE OTHER CLANS!

THE *OMNIMID* CAN BE *HEALED!*

PEACE IS RETURNED TO US!

PRINCESS PIA, LIGHT OF THE LAND, SALVATION FROM DARKNESS!

THERE SEEMS TO BE SOME SORT OF A CELEBRATION HAPPENING.

THE MISSION WENT ACCORDING TO PLAN?

"ACCORDING TO PLAN" ISN'T REALLY MY STYLE.

I FIXED A MESS I MADE...

...TWO IF YOU COUNT KEEPING SPAGHETTI ALIVE.

SPAGHETTI?

A NEW FRIEND.

AND PIA?

JUST... GO TO THE NEXT TRACKING BEACON.

THE NEXT ONE IS TEETERING NEAR THE EDGE OF THE VOID REGION.

TO BYPASS IT, WE WILL HAVE TO TRAVEL OUTWARDS AND LOOP AROUND.

WHAT AXIS COORDINATES DO YOU RECOMMEND WE USE?

I...

JUST USE YOUR BEST JUDGMENT, I DON'T KNOW. I JUST HAVE TO...

PLEASE JUST TAKE ME TO NATE.

BREAKING OUR DEAL ALREADY?

WE WEREN'T GOING TO LEAVE EACH OTHER ANYMORE.

PIA.

I JUST... I THOUGHT THAT YOU WERE--

YOU SEEM SO HAPPY HERE.

DADDY.

I CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT YOU DID FOR ME.

ALL THE BRAINS IN THE WORLD DIDN'T HELP ME MAKE A SMART CHOICE.

MAYBE NOW I'LL BE ABLE TO SEE WHAT REALLY MATTERS.

YOU STILL LOVE YOUR OLD MAN AS A DUMMY?

NEVER STOPPED ME BEFORE.

TANARS AT ARMS!

SALUTE!

YOUR BLUE MAN-GOD, DOES HE UNDERSTAND?

WHAT DID YOU TELL HIM?

THAT NOTHING CAN KEEP PEOPLE WHO ARE TRULY IN LOVE APART FOR LONG.

"HE KNOWS WE'LL BE TOGETHER AGAIN."

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

I...

YOU GREW UP, PIA. IT'S GOING TO TAKE ME A WHILE TO GET USED TO.

I'M SO DAMN PROUD OF YOU.

THAT MAKES TWO OF US, DADDY.

LET'S GO FIND NATE.

DREEEEEEEEEEE-

ONCE AGAIN, BEYOND FROSTBITE, I DETECT NO INJURY...

...PHYSICAL OR PHYSIOLOGICAL.

I CANNOT HEAL NOR RECONSTRUCT WHAT HASN'T BEEN DAMAGED.

HOW CAN YOU SAY I AIN'T DAMAGED-- THERE! LISTEN TO THAT GRAMMAR!

I TRY TO THINK OF WORDS AND I CAN'T REMEMBER THEM, IT'S LIKE... THERE'S JUST A BLANK SPACE IN MY HEAD.

DAD...

GOT TO SOLVE PROBLEMS AN' I CAN'T GET MY HEAD AROUND *ANY* OF IT!

HOW CAN YOU TELL ME THERE'S NOTHING TO FIX?! *SCAN ME AGAIN!*

BASED ON YOUR NEURAL PATHWAYS AND SPEED OF RECOGNITION, YOUR MIND NOW APPEARS TO BE AVERAGE.

AVERAGE?! MY IQ IS 173!

OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT... I THINK...

NOT ANYMORE.

WHATEVER HAPPENED I'M AFRAID I SEE NO WAY TO REVERSE THE EFFECTS.

THIS IS MY FAULT.

DON'T YOU SAY THAT.

I WENT OUT THERE, I MADE THE BARGAIN.

IT WAS *MY* CHOICE, ALL OF IT.

SHIT, MAYBE IT'S FOR THE BEST.

MAYBE I'M TOO DUMB TO BE SMART.

MADE THE PILLAR TO HELP, TO SOLVE EVERY ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER, EVERY DISEASE, FIND EVERY NEEDED RESOURCE.

I SACRIFICED *EVERYTHING*, DID IT ALL TO SAVE THE WORLD FOR MY KIDS.

BUT NOTHING TURNED OUT HOW I EXPECTED.

WHAT IF WHILE TRYING TO SAVE ONE WORLD...

...I MADE THE WEAPON THAT'LL DESTROY *ALL* WORLDS?

THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN MEANING TO ASK. THIS MAP OF THE ONION, IT'S FULL OF BLANK SPOTS.

YEAH, I THINK THERE'S SOMETHING BAD HAPPENING. SOMETHING WE SET IN MOTION...

THERE ARE ONLY THREE BLIPS.

CHANDRA, SHAWN, AND NATE.

WHAT HAPPENED TO REBECCA?

UHMM...

BETTER I DON'T KNOW.

OKAY, SO, ONE OF THESE BLIPS IS NATE, BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHICH ONE?

PRETTY MUCH.

SO WHY ARE WE MOVING AWAY FROM ALL THREE OF THEM?

BECAUSE WE'RE NOT GOING AFTER NATE.

"I'M TAKING YOU HOME."

DREEEEEE--

FIND A FIELD IN THE NORTH PART OF TOWN AND GO INVISIBLE, YOU KNOW, CLOAK OR WHATEVER.

UNDERSTOOD.

OR WHATEVER.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, *HOME?*

WE HAVE TO GET NATE!

I HAVE TO GET NATE.

WON'T RISK BRINGING YOU.

YOU'RE GOING HOME TO YOUR MOTHER.

IF YOU WON'T DO IT FOR ME, DO IT FOR *HER.*

SHE THINKS WE'RE DEAD BY NOW, PIA. GO HOME.

SHE NEEDS YOU.

WHAT IF... WHAT IF YOU DON'T COME BACK?

YOU CAN TRACK ME WITH THIS.

IT'LL ALERT YOU WHENEVER A PILLAR JUMPS INTO OUR UNIVERSE.

I'M NOT SURE I CAN HANDLE THIS ALONE.

WHAT DO WE TELL HER?

THE *TRUTH.*

I... THAT'S QUITE A LOT.

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D EVER EVEN SEE MOM AGAIN. OR YOU FOR THAT MATTER.

JUST A FEW DAYS AGO I WAS...

YOU WERE MAKING A WORLD BETTER THAN IT WAS BEFORE YOU ARRIVED.

YOU WERE DOING WHAT DIMENSIONAUTS DO.

WHAT WE *INTENDED* TO DO ANYWAY.

YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO DO THE TALKING WHEN WE GET HOME, DAD.

I CAN'T HANDLE IT.

YOU'LL HAVE TO.

I DON'T NEED TO BE A GENIUS TO KNOW IT'S NOT GOING TO HELP ANYTHING FOR ME TO GO IN THERE RIGHT NOW.

PLEASE, PIA.

OKAY.

DON'T DIE AGAIN.

I'LL TRY.

OKAY.

YOU CAN DO THIS.

JUST TURN THE KNOB AND--

NO WORRIES, SWEETIE, JUST HAVE TO GET IT OUT OF THE--

KRSHH

W-WHA-- WHAT THE--

BABY, WHAT IS IT--

PIA?

ROMAN LASER TANKS? EGYPTIAN MOBSTERS? SENTIENT PLANETS? NO PROBLEM.

BUT FACING MY WIFE?

NO CAN DO.

HAL, MY MEMORY IS FUCKED, AND I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU LANDED.

GONNA NEED YOU TO DE-CLOAK BEFORE I HIT MY HEAD.

GOTTA PROTECT WHAT FEW IQ POINTS I'VE GOT LEFT...

GRANT MCKAY.

TWOKK

GUHH--!

I NEVER RECEIVED YOUR OFFICIAL RESIGNATION, MR. MCKAY.

I'D FEARED YOU'D STOLEN MY INVENTION AND RUN OFF.

THANK YOU FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO ME.

PIA... OH, MY BABY GIRL.

I MISSED YOU SO MUCH, MOM.

H-HOW DID YOU GET AWAY?!

AWAY FROM WHO? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT--

WE CAN GO OVER THE DETAILS *LATER.*

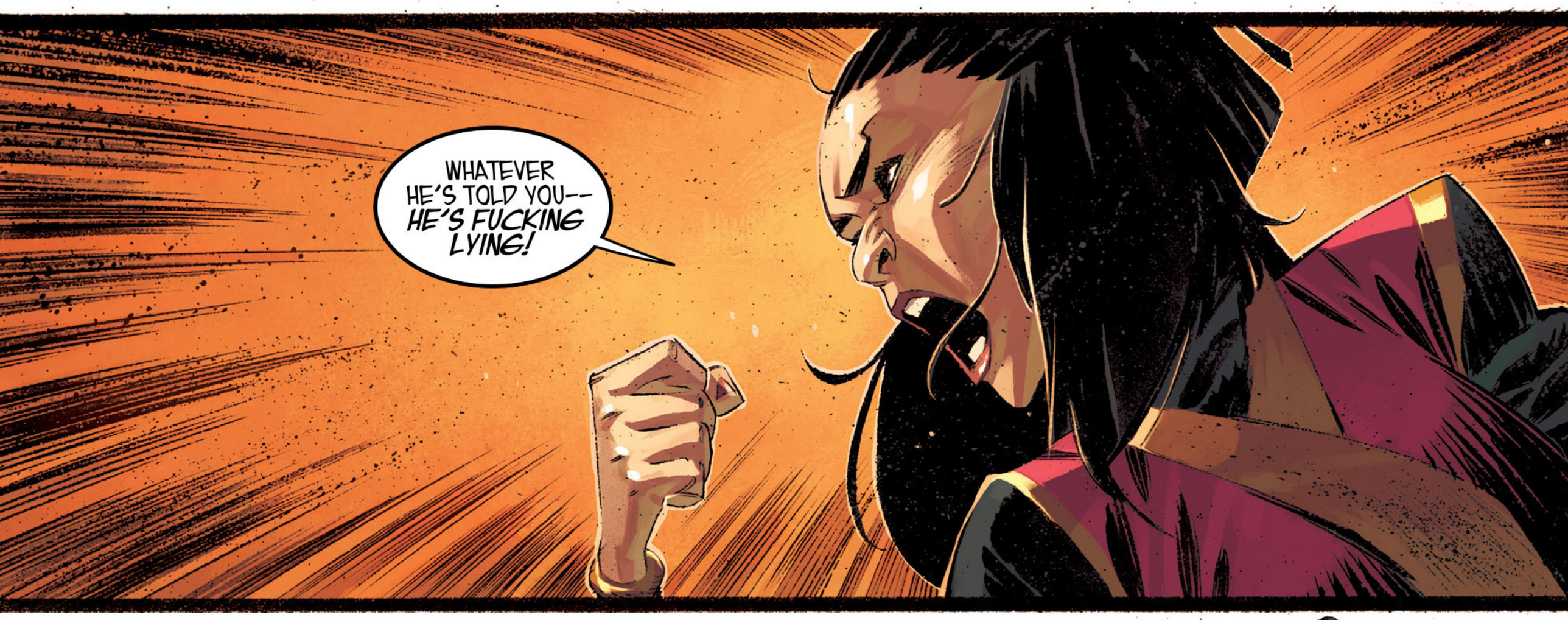
WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS GETTING YOU TO A DOCTOR *RIGHT NOW!*

WHAT IS *HE* DOING HERE, MOM?

NO.


WHEN KADIR ESCAPED FROM YOUR FATHER...
GRANT STABBED ME IN THE CHEST.


THEY FOUND HIM IN A GUTTER. JUST BARELY CLINGING TO LIFE.
SHE NURSED ME BACK TO HEALTH. HELPED ME, GAVE ME A REASON TO HOLD ON.
AND IN THE END, HE HELPED ME, PIA. HELPED ME GET OVER WHAT YOUR FATHER HAD DONE.


WHATEVER HE'S TOLD YOU-- HE'S FUCKING LYING!


PIA, PLEASE.
JUST WAIT UNTIL YOU KNOW EVERYTHING BEFORE YOU--
TELL MY MOTHER HOW FULL OF SHIT YOU ARE?


GO FUCK YOURSELF, KADIR.
I CAN PROVE YOU'RE A LIAR.

OH, MY HEAVENS, *IT'S TRUE!*

YOUNG PIA RETURNED AND IN ONE PIECE. WE HAD *FEARED* THE WORSE.

YOU NEEDN'T BE AFRAID ANYMORE--

YOUR *LUNATIC* FATHER HAS BEEN APPREHENDED.

UH, MR. BLOCK, WHAT ARE YOU...

I'VE HAD A DETAIL KEEPING AN EYE ON YOUR HOUSE, KADIR.

YOU CAN IMAGINE MY SHOCK WHEN I GOT A CALL THAT THEY'D SEEN *GRANT* MCKAY CHASING POOR YOUNG PIA.

GRANT?

GRANT'S HERE?!

OH...

SARA!

WHAT'S GOING ON?

WHAT'VE YOU DONE WITH MY DAD?!

LET US SPEAK.

THE LAST THREE YEARS HAVE BEEN TRYING, I KNOW.

FIRST, YOUR FATHER'S INEPTITUDE CAUSES A LAB ACCIDENT THAT *KILLED* CHANDRA, WARD, JEN, REBECCA, AND SHAWN.

HE KIDNAPPED YOU, KADIR, AND YOUR BROTHER TO HIDE THIS DISASTER.

YOU'VE BEEN THIS MADMAN'S HOSTAGE FOR YEARS AND BEEN JONESTOWNED INTO BELIEVING HIS DELUSIONAL PARANOIA.

WHAT?

YOU ESCAPED HIS CLUTCHES BUT HAVE NO MEMORY AS TO WHERE HE HAS IMPRISONED NATHAN.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO, BUT I'M NOT GOING TO TELL ANYBODY THAT LOAD OF *SHIT*.

LIFE IS A SERIES OF *CHOICES*.

EVERY ONE BRANCHING OUT INTO A DIFFERENT DIMENSION, CREATING ITS OWN REALITY.

AND HERE IS *YOUR* CHOICE.

IN ONE DIMENSION YOU TELL EVERYONE EXACTLY WHAT I HAVE JUST TOLD YOU, AND YOUR FAMILY WILL BE SAFE AND WELL COMPENSATED.

THEN THERE IS ANOTHER REALITY.

GET YOUR HANDS OFF OF--

A REALITY WHERE YOU DISOBEY ME AND TELL YOUR STORY.

KWOOM

DO NOT CHOOSE THAT DARK PATH.

FOR YOUR OWN SAKE... AND YOUR MOTHER'S.

CAN'T HAVE YOU RUNNING AROUND TELLING YOUR VERSION OF THINGS, BUT I'M GOING TO TRY THE SOFT APPROACH FIRST.

SEE IF I CAN GET YOU TO KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT, LIKE I DID KADIR.

WHAT ABOUT MCKAY?

HE'LL BE SAFE.

YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN WE'LL NEED WHAT'S IN HIS HEAD.

BUT FOR NOW, BE GLAD...

...HE'S DELIVERED US AN OPERATIONAL PILLAR!

HELL OF A LOT MORE THAN YOU EVER DID, KADIR.

IF I WERE THE SUSPICIOUS TYPE, I'D THINK YOU WERE *TRYING* TO KEEP THE PILLAR OUT OF MY HANDS.

REMEMBER, YOUR MARRIAGE TO PRECIOUS SARA HINGES ON HER NEVER FINDING OUT THE TRUTH, MR. ASLAN.

SO, WE ALL HAVE GOOD REASON TO STICK TO *MY* VERSION OF THINGS.

BE HAPPY.

IT'S A GOOD DAY.

POP A CORK!

WITH THE PILLAR BACK IN *MY* CONTROL...

...THE *REAL* WORK CAN FINALLY BEGIN.



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LIVED MY ENTIRE LIFE FEELING ALONE.

A DISCONNECTED ALIEN DESTINED FOR ISOLATION.

HELL IS OTHER PEOPLE. SO I KEPT TO MYSELF.

FOCUSED ON MY PROJECTS.

EVENTUALLY, YOU GET USED TO BEING LONELY.

SIX MONTHS IN A ROOM ALONE MIGHT FUCK UP A NORMAL PERSON. BUT FOR *ME*...

...*THIS* IS NORMAL.

THE DOCTORS SAY I'M CRAZY, LIKE DAD.

THEY SAY I KILLED NATE.

HE'D BE NEARLY SIXTEEN BY NOW. IF HE'S ALIVE.

AT BEST NATE'S PAYING THE PRICE IN SOME OTHER DIMENSION, STRANDED FOR YEARS.

AND I'M STUCK IN HERE.

DON'T HAVE THE BRAINS TO BUILD ANOTHER PILLAR EVEN IF I COULD GET OUT.

I'VE LOST HIM.

AGAIN.

GOOD MORNING, MR. MCKAY.

NO THREATS OF VIOLENCE TODAY?

GOOD.

SEEMS WE'VE FINALLY SUBDUED YOUR ANGER.

SAVES EVERYONE A LOT OF TROUBLE.

YOU ESPECIALLY.

NOW THE HEALING CAN BEGIN.

MR. BLOCK NEEDS MORE PILLARS BUILT.

TOLD YOU...

AND HE IS GROWING TIRED OF YOUR *LIES*.

I DON'T KNOW HOW ANYMORE.

NO, NO, NO-- THAT *WON'T DO*.

MR. BLOCK IS TIRED OF HEARING THAT. HE KNOWS YOU'RE UPSET.

BUT IF YOU DON'T MAKE YOURSELF USEFUL SOON, HE'LL RECONSIDER THE *LENIENCY* HE'S SHOWN YOUR EX-WIFE AND DAUGHTER.

HAVEN'T YOU CAUSED THEM ENOUGH PAIN?

YOU'RE A *BRIGHT* MAN, MR. MCKAY...

"... I KNOW YOU'LL MAKE THE *SMART* CHOICE."

TENANTS' FEELINGS DON'T MAKE A BIT OF *FUCKING* DIFFERENCE TO ME--

WE'VE ALREADY GONE OVER THIS.

WHAT CAN I GET FOR YOU?

AM I SUPPOSED TO LOSE MONEY BECAUSE THESE LOSERS USED THEIR BOOTSTRAPS TO TIE OFF?

CAN I HELP YOU, SIR?

LOOK, PRICES IN THE SUNSET HAVE TOPPED OUT, I'M *SELLING.*

THAT'S WHAT I PAY YOU FOR-- *EVICT THEM.*

FUCKHEAD!

YOU'VE REACHED THE POINT OF THE LINE WHERE YOU ORDER YOUR DRINK!

CAN YOU TAKE A BREAK FROM BEING A PIECE OF SHIT SO I CAN GET YOU A TEN-DOLLAR CUP OF JUICE?!

FUCK *THIS* PLACE.

ENJOY YOUR SHITTY JOB, *BOTTOM FEEDER.*

JESUS, PIA, WHAT WAS *THAT?*

THIS CITY HAS BEEN TAKEN OVER BY *THAT* GUY.

I CAN'T CHANGE IT, BUT I SURE AS *SHIT* DON'T HAVE TO ALLOW HIM TO STEAL MY DIGNITY BY MAKING ME WAIT TO TAKE HIS ORDER.

I DON'T CARE *HOW* YOU FEEL ABOUT OUR CLIENTELE--

OKAY.
IT'S ALL RIGHT, LINDA.
PIA, WHY DON'T YOU TAKE THE AFTERNOON?
CUT HER SOME SLACK.
WHY? WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT PRINCESS PIA?
DON'T YOU KNOW?
HER FATHER KIDNAPPED HER FOR THREE YEARS.
LUNATIC KILLED HER BROTHER IN FRONT OF HER.
JESUS CHRIST.
YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT.
IT WAS ALL OVER THE PAPERS. HE WAS A SCIENTIST OR SOMETHING.
BURNED UP HIS ENTIRE CREW. RAN OFF WITH HIS KIDS.
"HER DAD'S A PSYCHO.
"HE REALLY MESSED HER UP."

HEY, MOM.

PIA, HMMH... WHAT TIME IS IT?

THREE O'CLOCK.

HMMH... I MUST HAVE DOZED OFF.

YEAH, YOU'VE BEEN DOING A LOT OF THAT.

LOOK, MOM, I *DON'T* WANT TO GO TO THIS *BULLSHIT* THING TONIGHT.

PLEASE, SWEETHEART, MAKE LIFE EASY ON EVERYONE AND ACCEPT THINGS THE WAY THEY **ARE**.

THERE'S STUFF ABOUT KADIR... STUFF I CAN'T FORGIVE AND I--

HAVEN'T WE SUFFERED **ENOUGH?**

CAN'T WE JUST START OVER?

JESUS...

LET'S GO BACK TO ZERO, SWEET-HEART.

CAN YOU DO THAT FOR ME?

KADIR'S A **GOOD MAN,** PIA.

PIA?

HONEY, ARE YOU THERE?

BLOCK INDUSTRIES

"masterminding your world one invention at a time"

RISE AND SHINE, BALLBAG.

YOU GOT A VISITOR.

HMMH?

DON'T RIGHTLY KNOW WHY ANYONE WOULD WASTE TIME ON A *DIRTBAG* LIKE YOU.

CRAZY OR NOT-- WE'RE ALL JUST ITCHIN' FOR A CHANCE TO LAY INTO YOU.

WATCH WHAT YOU SAY. DON'T PUT ANYONE ELSE IN DANGER.

KEEP YOUR FUCKIN' MANNERS IN THERE.

HOW YOU HOLDING UP, BROTHER?

THEY TREATING YOU ALL RIGHT?

BETTER THAN HE DESERVES.

YOU MIND FUCKING OFF, TUBS?

NICE. GUESS "ASSHOLE" RUNS IN THE FAMILY.

YOU SHOULDN'T COME HERE, BRIAN. IT'S NOT SAFE.

THEY SURE DON'T MAKE VISITS EASY.

PROBABLY WHY PIA AND SARA HAVEN'T COME IN.

YEAH... PROBABLY.

HAD LUNCH WITH THEM LAST WEEK.

THEY'RE DOING WELL.

ALL THINGS CONSIDERED.

LET'S JUST GET THROUGH THE PART WHERE YOU ASK ME, BRIAN.

I DON'T HAVE TO ASK.
I KNOW IT'S ALL BULLSHIT, BROTHER.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED.
SARA WON'T TALK ABOUT IT. FUCKIN' KADIR WON'T LET HER.
EVERYBODY ACTS LIKE OUR FAMILY HAS SOME KIND OF PLAGUE.
SOMEBODY THREW A BRICK IN LAST NIGHT.
THEY EGGED MOM'S HOUSE LAST WEEK.
HEH.
SO THERE'S AN UPSHOT.
YEAH. LOOK, I KNOW YOU DIDN'T KILL ANYONE, BUT EVERYONE'S SO WORRIED...
YOU GOTTA STOP WITH THE CRAZY TALK AND TELL ME--
WHERE'S NATE?
I'M SORRY...

"...I CAN'T TELL YOU."

MOM?

HAVE YOU BEEN ASLEEP *ALL DAY?*

YOU'VE BEEN MIXING THE PILLS WITH WINE AGAIN.

HMMH?

PLEASE, YOU CAN'T DO THAT, IT'S *DANGEROUS.*

I'M SORRY, PIA, I KNOW... IT'S JUST... IT'S BEEN A BAD WEEK.

CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT NATE.

YOU KNOW THE THINGS THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT DAD--

DON'T. JUST... I KNOW HE DID A NUMBER ON YOU, BUT *PLEASE* STOP DEFENDING HIM.

IN FACT, STOP MENTIONING HIM AT ALL.

YOU NEED TO ACCEPT WHAT HE DID.

ACCEPT THAT NATE.... NATE IS...

NO. MOM, GODDAMN- IT.

IT'S COMPLICATED. DAD... HE...

HE WHAT?

WHAT AREN'T YOU TELLING ME?!

HEY HEY!

TONIGHT'S THE BIG NIGHT! WHO'S EXCITED?

...

WHAT?

WHY THE LONG FACES?

SARA, I TOLD YOU WE'D BE LEAVING IN AN HOUR, WHY AREN'T YOU--

YOU'LL HAVE TO FORGIVE US FOR NOT BEING IN THE MOOD TO CELEBRATE YOU, KADIR.

PIA, YOU'RE UPSETTING YOUR MOTHER.

AGAIN.

WOULD YOU PLEASE COME HELP ME PICK OUT HER DRESS?

DO YOU THINK THIS HELPS?

YOU *KNOW* WHAT HE'LL DO TO ALL OF US IF YOU TELL HER THE TRUTH.

SEEMS LIKE IT'S ALL WORKING OUT JUST FINE FOR YOU.

YOU GET MY MOTHER, A NEW HOUSE, FAME, AWARDS...

YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON HERE.

WHAT I'M TRYING TO DO.

JUST... *PLEASE* JUST LET *ME* HANDLE THIS.

LIKE YOU HANDLE MY MOM?

MY DAD'S SPENT SIX MONTHS LOCKED IN A PADDED CELL WHILE YOU TAKE CREDIT FOR HIS INVENTION AND FUCK HIS WIFE!

NATE'S STILL OUT THERE, LOST GOD KNOWS WHERE--HOW *EXACTLY* ARE YOU HANDLING *THAT?!*

GRANT'S *EXACTLY* WHERE HE *BELONGS*. I THINK YOU KNOW THAT. AS FOR YOUR MOTHER--WE'RE IN LOVE.

WE WERE TOGETHER BEFORE GRANT STOLE HER FROM ME, AND I PROMISE YOU I TREAT HER WITH A HELL OF A LOT MORE *RESPECT* THAN *HE* EVER DID.

I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT STUPID KIDNAPPING STORY, BUT WHAT ELSE WAS I GOING TO SAY?

THEY FOUND ME IN A DITCH WITH A HOLE IN MY CHEST! YOU WERE ALL MISSING.

BECAUSE *YOU* SABOTAGED THE PILLAR.

AND I'D HAVE KEPT AN OPERATIONAL PILLAR *OUT* OF BLOCK'S HANDS, UNTIL YOUR DAD UP AND *HANDED* HIM ONE!

SO, YES, OUR SITUATION IS *FUCKED* BEYOND BELIEF, BUT I HAVE IT UNDER CONTROL.

YOU HAVE TO TRUST--

FUCK IT.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO TRUST ME.

JUST MAKE SURE YOU AND SARA COME TO THE CEREMONY TONIGHT.

BECAUSE IF YOU'RE NOT THERE, MR. BLOCK ISN'T GOING TO BE HAPPY...

"...AND THINGS ARE MUCH BETTER WHEN HE IS."

SIX PERFECT TITTIES!

I MEAN, THAT'S THE DIMENSION I BELONG IN, HANK.

SHIT, IF YA'LL HADN'T DRAGGED ME OUT I'D HAVE *NEVER* LEFT.

HAR--WE ALL FIGURED YOU WERE JUST HOPING TO FIND OUT IF THE DUDES THERE HAD SIX PERFECT DICKS.

YEAH, JUST LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT PLACE FOR YOUR DAD TO RETIRE.

QUITE A HAUL!

YES, SIR, WE MANAGED TO HIT OVER FORTY DIMENSIONS AND GATHER SAMPLES FROM EACH.

THAT LAST ONE WAS A **REAL** TREAT, SIR.

WHAT HAS YOUR JAUNT UNCOVERED, MR. PETERSON?

FOUND SOMETHING I THINK YOU'LL LOVE.

WE HIT A WORLD WHERE THESE LITTLE GUYS ARE THE MOST SOUGHT AFTER THINGS AROUND.

PETS TO THE VERY RICH AND FAMOUS.

CUTEST LITTLE FUCKERS I EVER SEEN. LISTEN TO 'EM PURR.

=KQUEEP KQUEEP=

AND THE DIMENSIONS FULL OF AMAZONIAN WOMEN?

YEAH. THEY, *UH*, REALLY WERE HOSPITABLE, BUT THERE WAS NO WAY WE WERE GETTING OUT OF THERE WITH A LIVE SPECIMEN.

NEXT TRIP WE'LL BRING THE ARMOR DIVISION.

NAB A FEW FOR YOUR RUMPUS DUNGEON, SIR.

HEY, YOU SEE THIS ONE'S GOT A RED BUMP ON ITS HEAD...

=KQUEEEEEP!=

HOLY SHIT!

CHRIS, WE'VE GOT SOMETHING HERE.

FSHHHH

YES, SAM, THAT WOULD BE THE ENTIRE POINT OF--

SAM?

GAZE NOW UPON HAR'LOGH THE DEFILER!

BRINGER OF ARMAGEDDON. DRINKER OF HOPE.

GHAHH!

HOLY SHIT--!

HELP ME!

THE DEMON LORD HAR'LOGH WILL FEED FOR ETERNITY UPON YOU INSIGNIFICANT SOULS!

YERGH--!

GAKK!

OPEN THE DOORS!

OPEN THE FUCKING DOORS!

YOU KNOW OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE FOR THESE EVENTS, PETERSON.

YOU FAT SON OF A--

GAKK--

HAR'LOGH DELIGHTS AT YOUR SUFFERING.

GHRAGHH--!

I WILL FEAST ON THE FACES OF YOUR DEAD MOTHERS.

YOUR WORLD WILL FESTER IN THE POLLUTION OF MY EVIL.

IS IT CONTAINED IN THERE, MR. TOTTEN?

I RECOMMEND WE INCINERATE AND VENT THE ROOM TO BE SAFE--

THAT ISN'T WHAT I ASKED.

YOU WILL DROWN IN RIVERS OF YOUR CHILDREN'S BLOOD.

YES SIR, I--I CAN'T SAY FOR SURE. PROBABLY IT'S CONTAINED, BUT--

GOOD. HAVE MY SUIT FOR TONIGHT'S GALA BROUGHT TO MY ROOM, TOTTEN.

I NEED TO REHEARSE MY SPEECH.

OPEN THE GRATES AND STORE OUR NEW PET IN THE LOWER CONTAINMENT CELL.

AND BRING IN ONE OF THE ANCILLARY TEAMS TO MAN THE PILLAR IMMEDIATELY...

"...I WILL *NOT* HAVE US FALLING BEHIND SCHEDULE."

...SO REST ASSURED THAT *BLOCK INDUSTRIES* MAINTAINS A STRONG COMMITMENT TOWARDS OUR INVESTORS.

WITHOUT YOUR FAITH AND FUNDING, NONE OF OUR *MAGNIFICENT* INNOVATIONS WOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE.

INNOVATIONS THAT HAVE REWOUND CLIMATE CHANGE, GIVEN US CLEAN RENEWABLE ENERGY, AND COUNTLESS TECHNOLOGIES THAT HAVE ENSURED OUR GREAT NATION'S CONTINUED ECONOMIC DOMINATION.

AND WE'RE ONLY GETTING STARTED.

BLOCK SCIENCE

ALLOW ME TO GET TO THE GRAND UNVEILING YOU WERE ALL PROMISED.

A SIMPLE-LOOKING DEVICE, YES?

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I PRESENT YOU WITH THE *CURE* FOR ALL *CANCERS!*

A ROUND OF APPLAUSE FOR THE MAN, THE MIND, BEHIND ALL OF BLOCK'S NEW DEVELOPMENTS--

KADIR ASLAN!

CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP

CONGRATULATIONS, DEAR.

ALL OF YOUR HARD WORK, IT'S JUST INCREDIBLE.

YOU'VE CHANGED THE ENTIRE WORLD, KADIR. REALLY.

YEAH. I-IT WASN'T ALL ME...

MR. BLOCK IS JUST BEING GENEROUS.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO PLAY HUMBLE. NOT TODAY. YOU'VE SAVED THE WORLD.

ENJOY THIS.

PIA, MY DEAR GIRL, AS *RADIANT* AS EVER!

NOW I KNOW THIS HAS BEEN A DIFFICULT PERIOD FOR YOU, BUT I ALSO KNOW THAT YOU'VE DONE AN *EXEMPLARY* JOB KEEPING YOUR SIDE OF OUR AGREEMENT.

WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

JUST ONE, REALLY.

BUT PERHAPS *THIS* WILL LESSEN THE STING.

YOUR FIRST TASTE OF THE *PROFITS* FROM OUR NEW MIRACLE CURE.

#1970

BLOCK INDUSTRIES

PAY TO THE ORDER OF: PIA MCKAY

THE AMOUNT OF: $1,000,000

ONE MILLION AND XX/100 DOLLARS

OF AMERICA

0603567

WITH THE PILLAR AT OUR DISPOSAL, WE WILL CONTINUE TO LIFT HUMANITY TO THE GREATEST HEIGHTS!

I WON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH--

DEPOSIT MY CHECK, SPEND MY MONEY, AND ENJOY YOUR LIFE OR I FEAR I *WON'T* BE ABLE TO *TRUST* YOU AND...

...I THINK YOU'LL BE MUCH HAPPIER IF I *DO*.

YOU'RE BEING TOO HARD ON YOURSELF, DEAR.

YOUR COMPANY IS DOING WONDERFUL THINGS, AND THEY COULDN'T BE DOING ANY OF THEM WITHOUT YOU.

I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT.

I HAVE A BAD HABIT OF THAT.

I LOVE YOU, SARA.

I LOVE YOU TOO, GRANT.

OH! =HIC= I-I'M SO SORRY.

I'VE HAD TOO MUCH TO DRINK...

BEEP BEEP

-DEET-

WELL PAST VISITING HOURS, SIR?

MY HALL PASS IS IN THE BREAST POCKET.

FIVE MINUTES.

HOW THEY TREATIN' YOU, GRANT?

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU SOMETHING.

YOU STABBING ME IN THE CHEST WAS THE BEST THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO ME.

GOT ME EVERYTHING I EVER WANTED.

WHEN THE PILLAR JUMPED, IT SENT ME BACK HOME.

SHAWN CHANGED THE DESTINATION COORDINATES.

BEFORE YOUR MISTRESS BASHED HIS HEAD IN WITH A WRENCH.

BUT THAT'S NOT YOUR FAULT EITHER, IS IT? HOW COULD YOU HAVE KNOWN, RIGHT?

AFTER I'D SPENT ***WEEKS*** RISKING MY LIFE TO DEFEND YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR CREW, YOU TRIED TO ***KILL*** ME.

TO DEFEND THE WOMAN WHO MURDERED YOUR PROTÉGÉ.

DO YOU HEAR ALL THAT AND STILL THINK YOU'RE THE ***HERO*** IN THIS STORY?

IS YOUR NARCISSISM ***THAT*** POWERFUL?

SARA, THAT WAS THE FIRST FACE I SAW-- BEAUTIFUL SARA SITTING BY MY HOSPITAL BED.

I THOUGHT I'D GONE TO HEAVEN.

REALLY.

THAT WAS THE FIRST THING THAT WENT THROUGH MY HEAD.

"YOU'VE GONE TO HEAVEN AND A JUST UNIVERSE HAS REWARDED YOU WITH THE WOMAN WHO HOLDS YOUR HEART."

"THEY SAID I HAD A THIRTEEN PERCENT CHANCE OF SURVIVAL.

"BUT WITH HER SITTING NEXT TO ME I FOUND THE STRENGTH TO HOLD ON.

"BECAUSE, UNLIKE YOU, GRANT..."

...I ACTUALLY LOVE SARA.

I'VE GIVEN HER THE LIFE SHE DESERVED, A LIFE OF HAPPINESS AND TRANQUILITY.

SHE'S FINALLY *FREE* OF YOU-- FINALLY *OVER* YOU.

SHE'S FINALLY *HAPPY*.

BULLSHIT.

YOU MURDERED HER SON.

I REMIND HER EVERY DAY.

YOU--.

SON OF A BITCH!

YOU LIKE TO SUCKER PUNCH.

TRYING TO HIT A MAN IN THE BACK.

BECAUSE YOU'RE A WEAK COWARD.

STABBING A MAN FOR PROTECTING YOUR KIDS.

IN A FAIR FIGHT YOU WOULDN'T LAST A MINUTE.

YOU'LL *APPRECIATE* THIS...

...THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE A FAIR FIGHT.


KRAKK

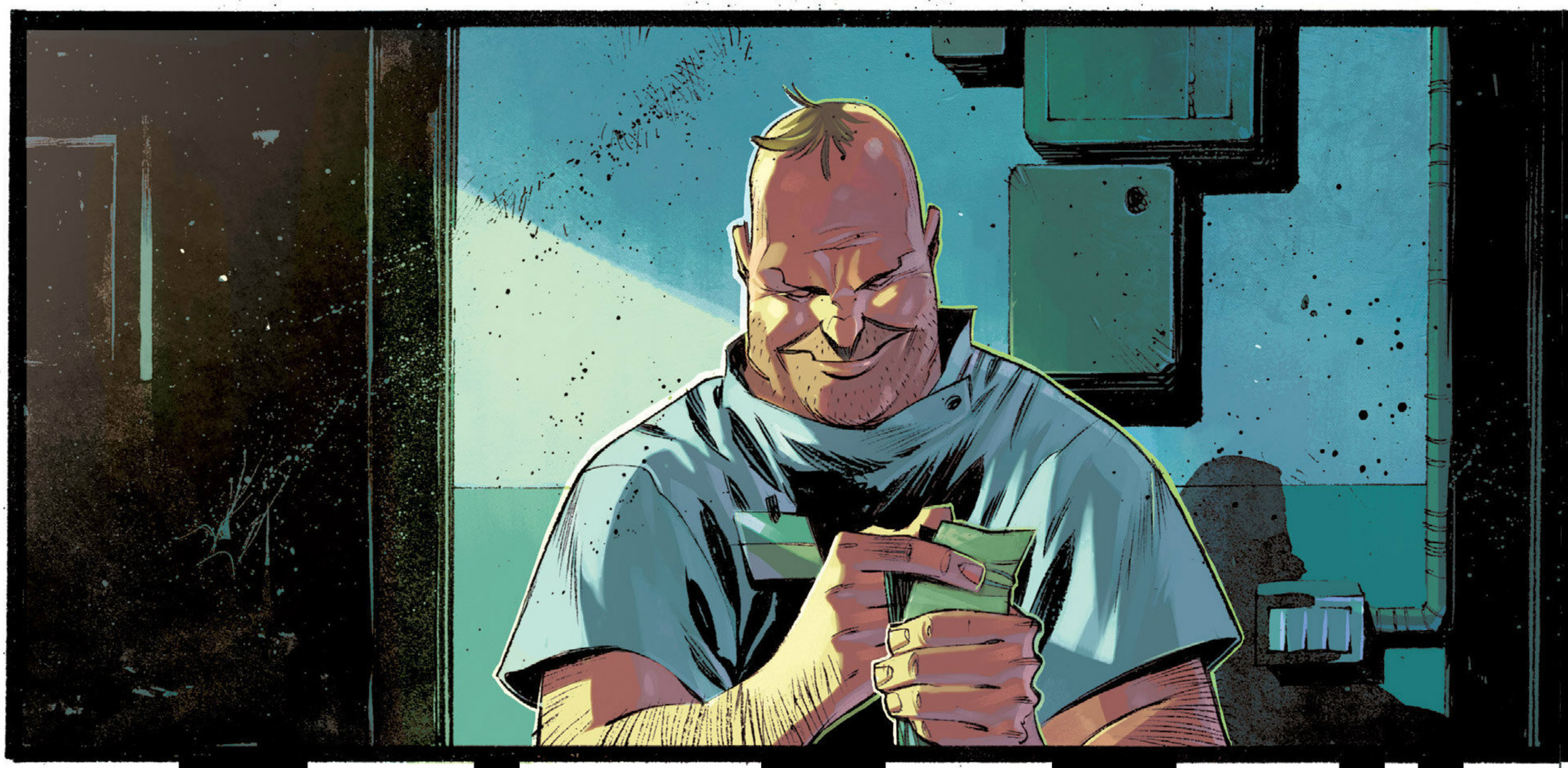

HE'S RIGHT.


IT'S WHAT I DESERVE.


THE KIND WHO'D MAKE EVERYONE POOR.


JUST SO HE COULD BE RICH.


TAKE ALL OF THE HAPPINESS FOR HIMSELF.



BLACK

TWOKK

BEING *SMART*...

...MEANS KNOWING WHEN YOU'VE BEEN *STUPID*.

TRIED TO USE EVIL TO DO GOOD.

WORKING FOR A *BAD* PERSON.

AND LEAVE NONE FOR ANYONE ELSE.

AND I GAVE HIM A KEY...

TO *ANYTHING* HE CAN IMAGINE.

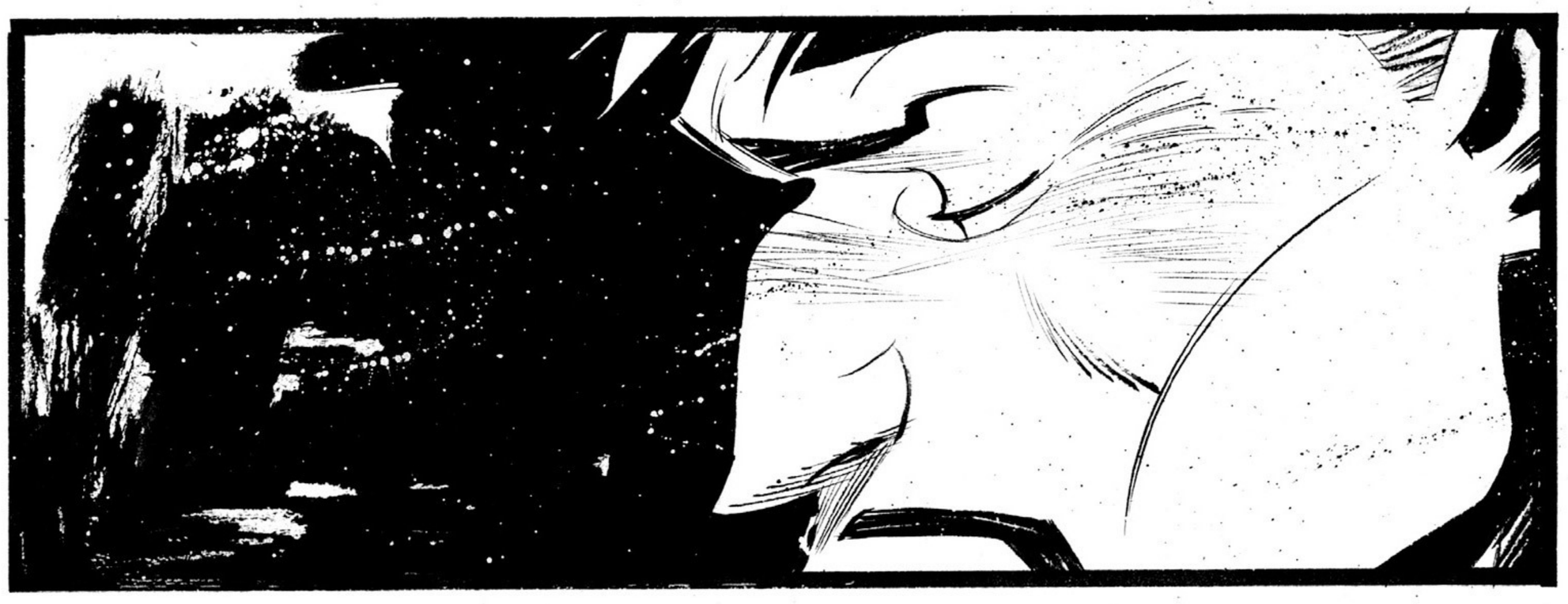
AND I OWE THE WHOLE WORLD AN APOLOGY.

FOR BEING SO FUCKING *STUPID*.

SENTENCE



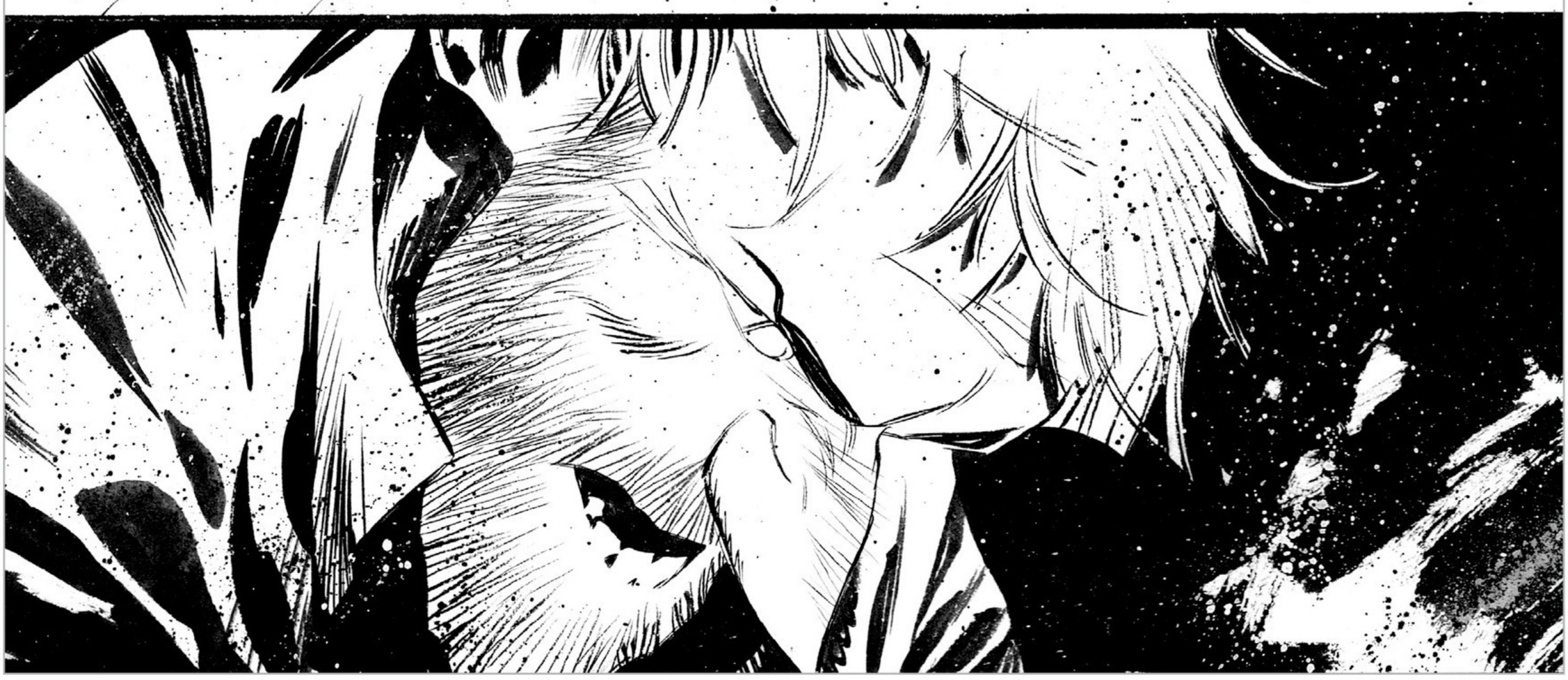
#23 PAGE 1 INKS













RICK REMENDER

Rick Remender is the writer/co-creator of comics such as *LOW*, *Fear Agent*, *Deadly Class*, *Tokyo Ghost*, and *Black Science*. For Marvel he has written titles such as *Uncanny Avengers*, *Captain America*, *Uncanny X-Force*, and *Venom*. He's written video games such as *Bulletstorm and Dead Space, worked on films such as The Iron Giant, Anastasia, and Titan A.E.* He and his tea-sipping wife, Danni, currently reside in Los Angeles raising two beautiful mischief monkeys.



MATTEO SCALERA

Matteo Scalera was born in Parma, Italy, in 1982. His professional career started in 2007 with the publication of the miniseries *Hyperkinetic* for Image Comics. Over the next nine years, he has worked with all major U.S. publishers: Marvel (*Deadpool*, *Secret Avengers*, *Indestructible Hulk*), DC Comics (*Batman*), Boom! Studios (*Irredeemable*, *Valen the Outcast*, *Starborn*), and Skybound (*Dead Body Road*).



MORENO CARMINE DINISIO

Born in 1987 in southern Italy and holding a pencil since year one, thanks to a painter father, Moreno grew up with the aim of becoming a professional artist. After studying comic art in Milan, he went on to work as a comic and concept artist and character designer until 2013, when he crossed into American comics, coloring *Clown Fatale* and *Resurrectionists* (Dark Horse). Moreno first collaborated with Matteo Scalera on *Dead Body Road* (Skybound). With the release of *Black Science* in December 2014, he continues their fruitful partnership.

Grant McKay forges a path through the ravaged Eververse, determined to undo the damage he caused. His first stop is a world where his estranged daughter Pia has managed a peace offering between three godlike races, ending eons of brutal warfare. Grant's appearance threatens to destroy the fragile truce, sending him on a quest to finally bring his family home...but what he finds waiting for him there may be worse than the multitude horrors he encountered in countless alternate dimensions.

Rick Remender and **Matteo Scalera** bring the Dimensionauts home for their greatest adventure yet.

Collects ***Black Science #22-25***.

"...this is the perhaps the most exciting and promising the book has ever been."

– LEVI HUNT
(IGN.com)

"This book is the sci-fi odyssey that we need and continues to keep a great story entertaining and full of surprises."

– ZEB LARSON
(Flickeringmyth.com)

"***Black Science*** is pure fun. Rick and Matteo are firing on all cylinders here, every page a jolt right to the comic book pleasure center of my brain. Buy this book NOW!"

– STEVE McNIVEN
(Civil War, Uncanny Avengers)

"***Black Science*** is, for my money, the most consistently brilliant series on the shelves today, an accolade it has held – in my opinion, at least – for the best part of three years now. Remender's work has honestly never been better, and his seamless collaboration with Scalera continues to redefine just how well a writer and artist should be working together."

– CRAIG NEILSON-ADAMS
(BigComicPage.com)



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