

TALES FROM THE  
**SECRET SHOP**  
"ARE WE HEROES YET?"







AS THE DAY OF BATTLE DAWNS,  
SUNLIGHT FINDS A SANCTUARY SO SECLUDED  
SOME MIGHT SAY IT'S **SECRET!**

BUT THE DAY'S IS NOT THE ONLY EYE...

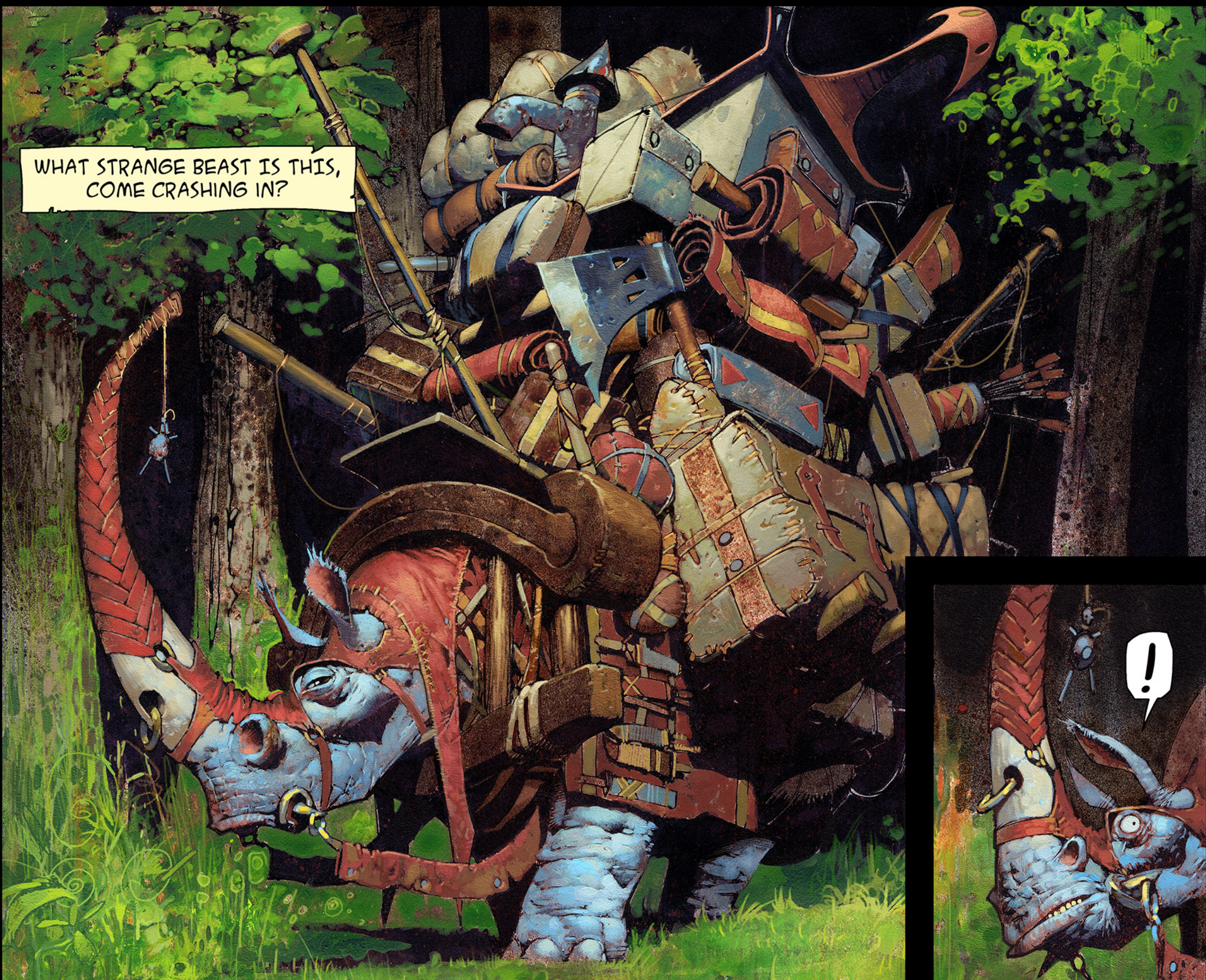


...TO SPY...



...THIS SACRED SPOT!





HUH-HUM!





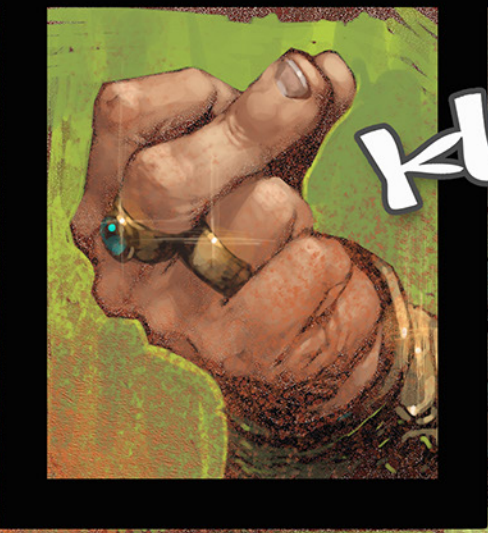


AH, FRULL!  
FOUND YOU AT LAST!

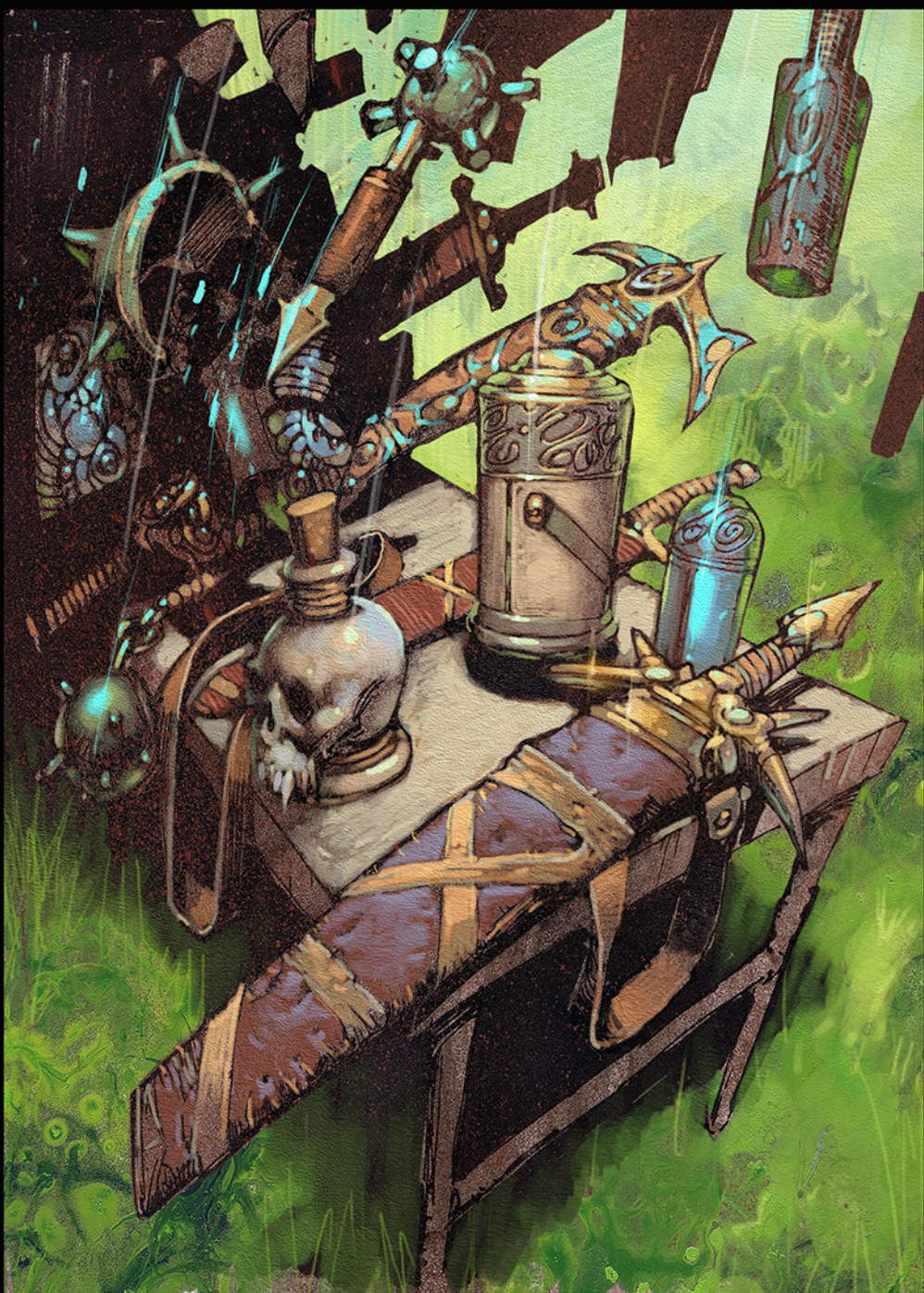
AND YOU, I SEE,  
HAVE FOUND  
THE PERFECT SPOT!

THEN AGAIN,  
YOU ALWAYS DO.

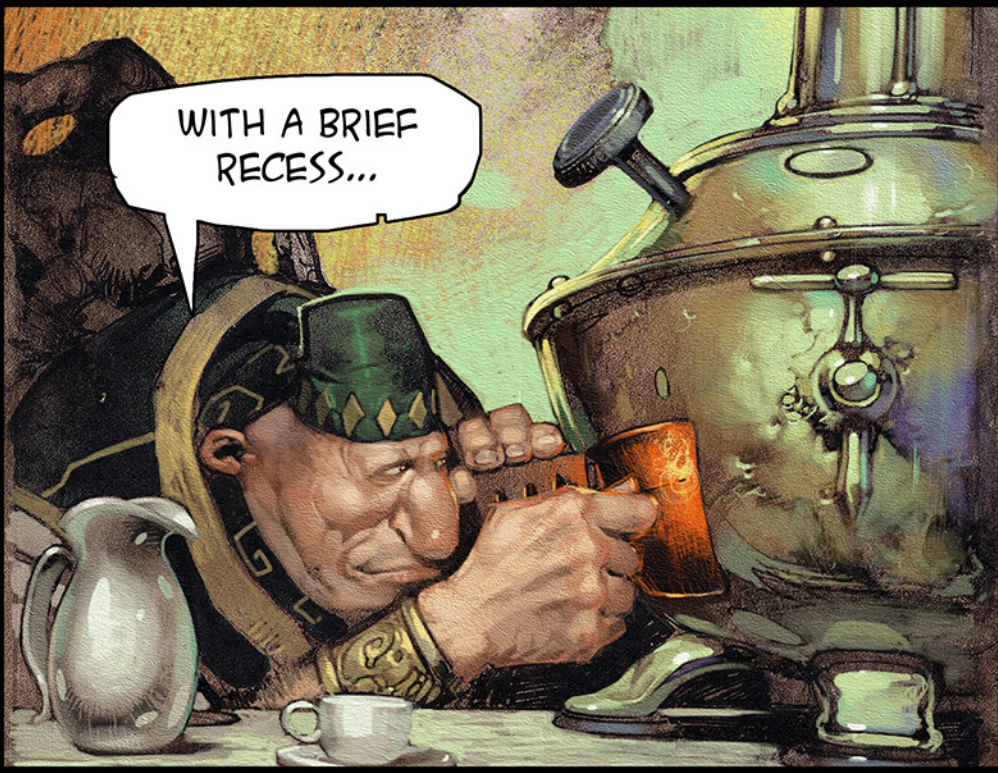




Klik



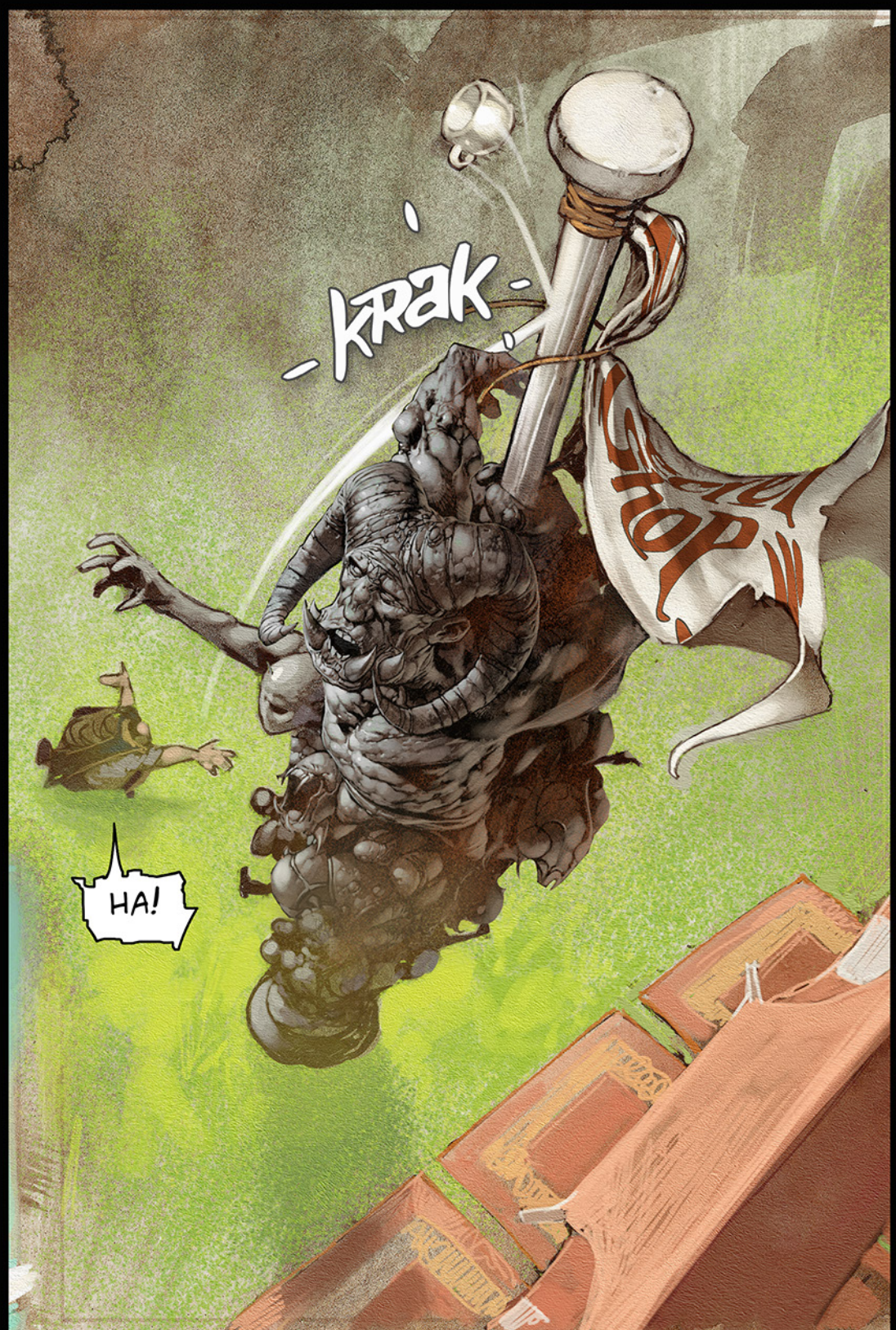
















NOT SO SECRET NOW, EH?



JUST KEEP  
YOUR EYE ON  
THE KEEPER.

AND LEAVE ALL THE  
TALKING TO ME...





CAREFUL HOW  
YOU PLAY HIM!



GENTLEMEN!  
WELCOME TO THE  
SECRET SHOP!

CAN I OFFER YOU  
REFRESHMENTS?

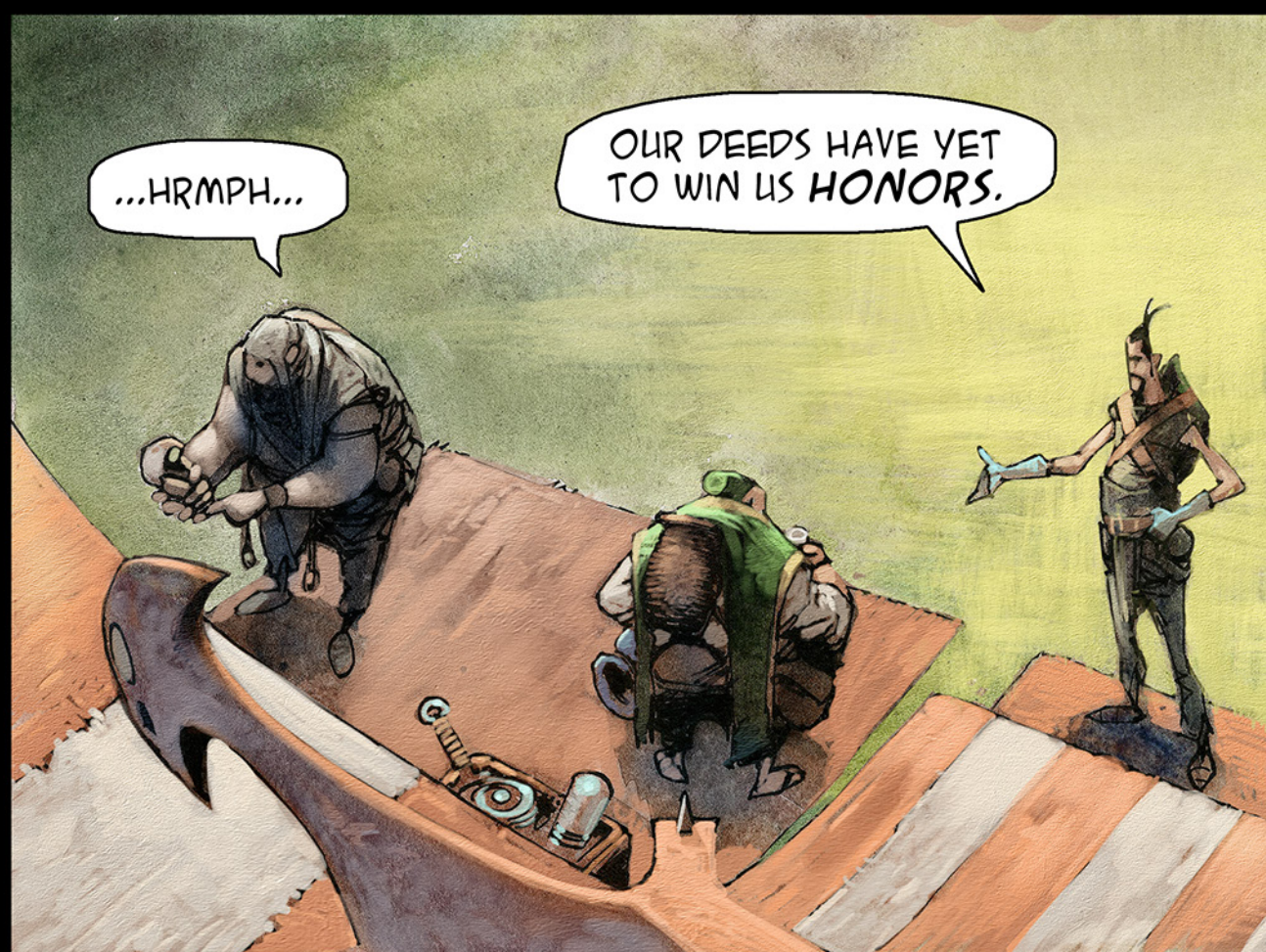


I HAVE STRONGBLACK  
IN QUANTITY! MY EMERALD TEAS ARE  
BEYOND COMPARE.

OR PERHAPS YOUR  
TASTES RUN TO  
ADDLEBERRY TINCTURES?

SOME THINK  
THERE IS NO FINER  
WAY TO DRIVE  
OFF THE MORNING  
DEW.



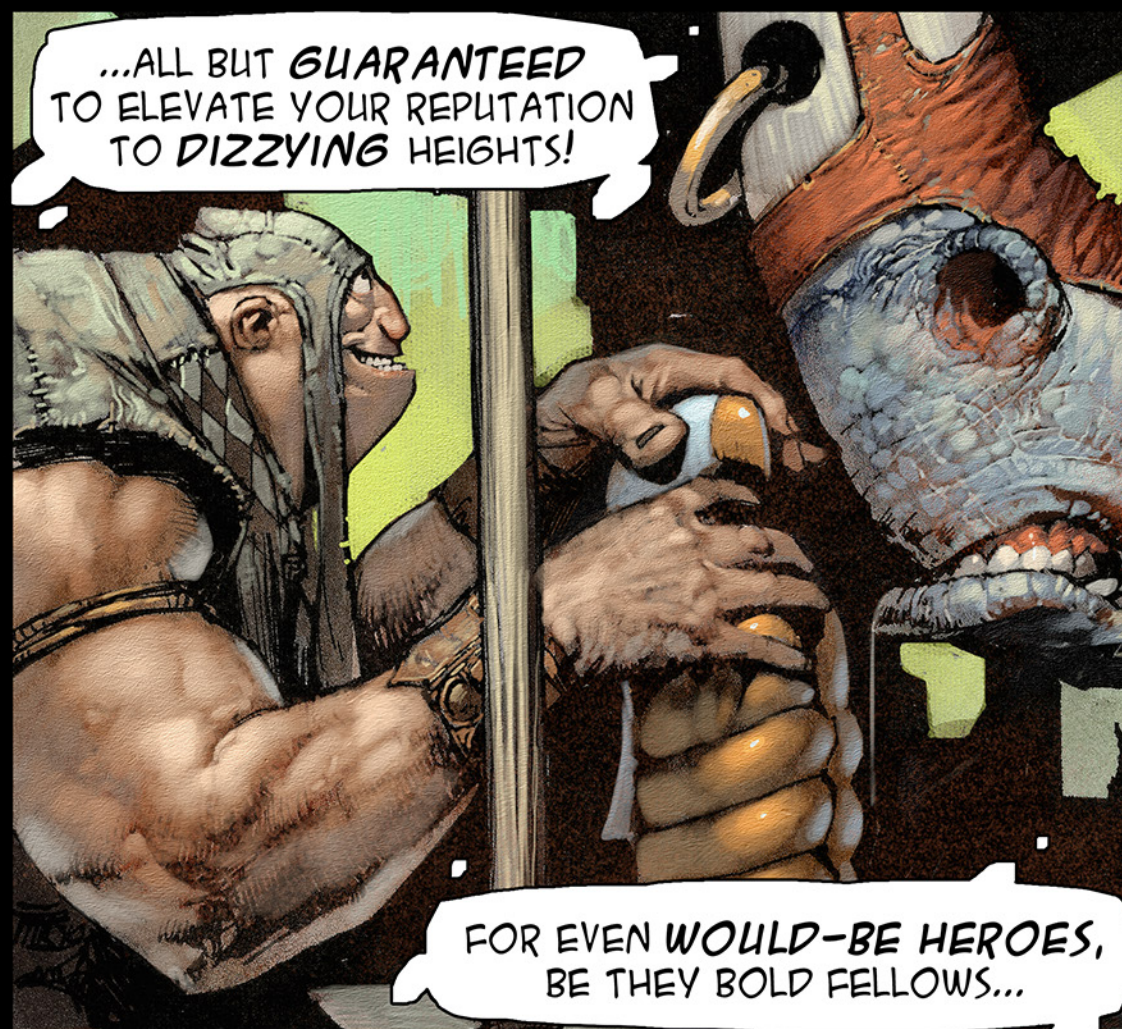






AND SPEAKING OF  
**MOTIVE AND  
OPPORTUNITY...**

...PERHAPS I CAN  
OFFER A TASK...



...ALL BUT **GUARANTEED**  
TO ELEVATE YOUR REPUTATION  
TO **DIZZIFYING** HEIGHTS!

FOR EVEN **WOULD-BE** HEROES,  
BE THEY BOLD FELLOWS...



...MAY PERFORM FEATS  
WORTHY OF THE **ELDER-  
SONGS!**

SHE IS **OUT THERE**  
SOMEWHERE, GENTLEMEN...

LISTENING,  
QUIRT?

...LOST ON THE  
FIELD OF **BATTLE**,  
AND I SORE DESIRE  
HER **RETURN**.



WHO IS **SHE**?  
YOUR WIFE?  
YOUR **MOTHER**?

NAY!



A SWEET, SWEET **RELIC**,  
WITHOUT WHICH I CANNOT  
**OPEN SHOP!**

SURELY YOU HAVE  
HEARD OF...  
**DEMON EDGE?**



WHEN THE  
**MAD MOON**  
TORE ASUNDER, AND  
THE **ANCIENTS**  
FELL TO EARTH...

SPLINTERS OF THE  
**NEMESIS STONES** LAY  
SCATTERED.

THE DEMON-SMITH **ABZIDIAN**  
LAID CLAIM TO  
TWO SUCH FRAGMENTS...

AND FROM THEM FORGED  
THE  
**DEMON EDGE:**

HER HILT OF **DIRESTONE**  
CUNNINGLY CARVED;

HER BLADE A SINGING SHARD  
OF **RADIANT ORE.**







HE LEARNED TO HIS CHAGRIN  
THAT **ONLY A HERO** COULD  
HANDLE HER.

BUT ONCE THE WEAPON  
WAS **COMPLETE...**

IN TESTING HER EDGE, THE  
DEMON-SMITH ABZIDIAN  
**SLEW HIMSELF!**

SINCE THAT DAY,  
DEMON EDGE HAS  
PASSED FROM  
**HAND TO HAND,**

THOUGH ONLY  
HEROES CARRY HER  
FOR LONG.

FOR IN ONE  
WEAPON, WARRING  
ANCIENTS **VIE...**

AND **LESSER  
MORTALS**  
CANNOT WIELD  
SUCH POWER!





DON'T SEE HOW  
**WE'D** BE ANY USE  
TO YOU THEN.

FEAR NOT!

SHE WAS BROKEN  
IN BATTLE.  
**HILT AND BLADE**  
LIE STREWN  
APART...

OR SO MY **SOURCE**  
INFORMS ME...



SKREEK!



INDEED,  
**ROQUELAIRE**,  
I'M SURE THEY  
WOULD  
BENEFIT FROM  
YOUR  
**GUIDANCE**.

...SKRAWK...

I SHOULD  
HOPE.



NOW, 'TWOULD BE  
**NAIVE** OF ME  
TO SUGGEST THAT  
**ADVENTURE**  
IS ITS OWN REWARD,  
AND YET...

tap  
tap link  
link



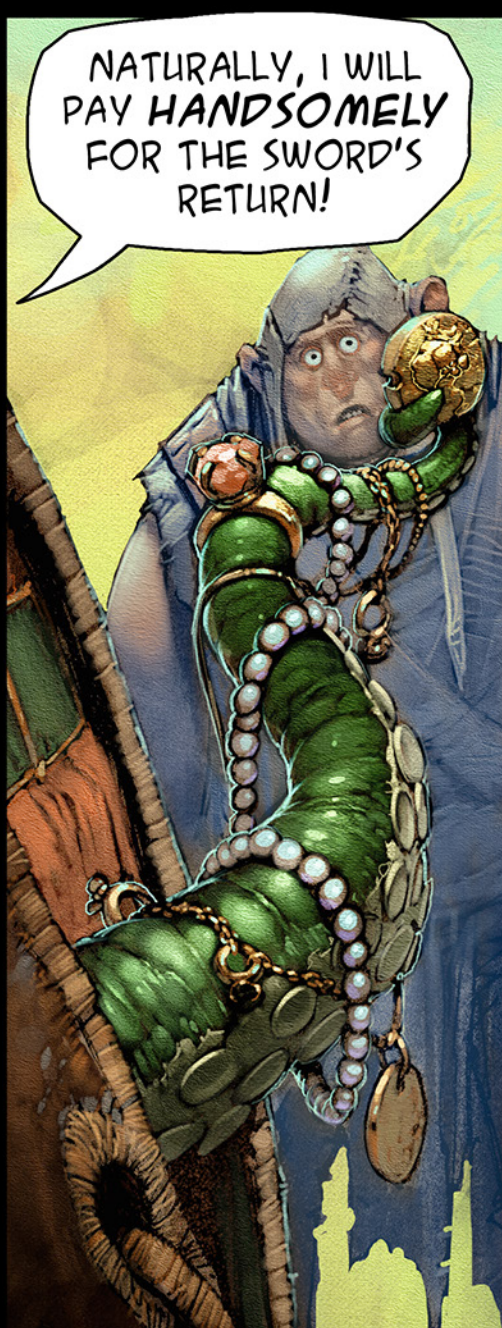
AS YOU CAN SEE, THERE IS A GAPING  
**VOID** IN MY **INVENTORY**, WHICH MY  
CUSTOMERS WILL EXPECT TO BE FILLED  
WITH THE **BLADE** IN QUESTION.



WELL, IT MIGHT BE  
POSSIBLE...  
**MIGHT**, MIND YOU...

THAT WITH  
A BIT OF  
**PERSUASION**...

IF THAT'S THE  
**WORD** I'M  
LOOKING  
FOR...



NATURALLY, I WILL  
PAY **HANDSOMELY**  
FOR THE SWORD'S  
RETURN!



IF YOU WOULD EXCUSE US...  
MY PARTNER AND I NEED A  
MOMENT.

TAKE ALL  
THE TIME  
YOU--

EH?

ASK IF HE'S GOT  
ANY ANIMAL  
TRANQUILLIZER!



PUT THAT  
BACK!

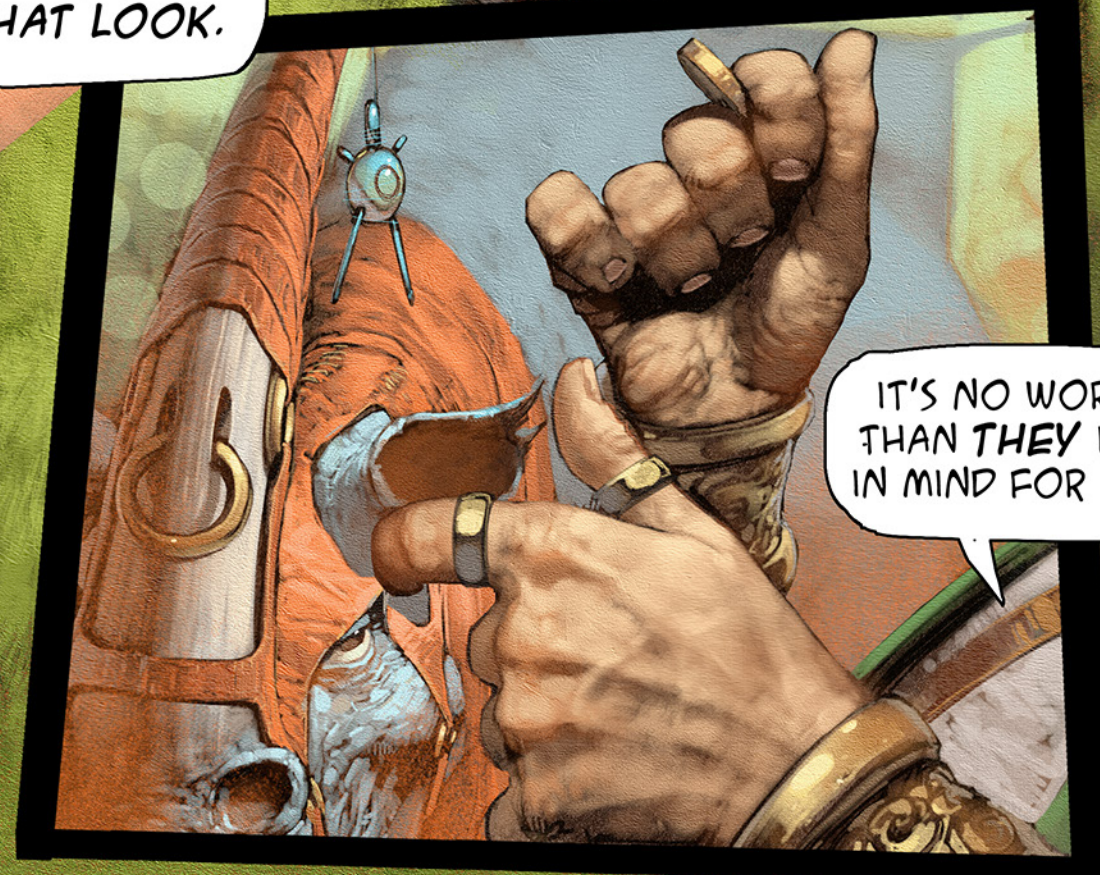
thwap!

NO DEALING  
ON THE SIDE,  
YOU!





YOU NEEDN'T GIVE ME THAT LOOK.









# WANTED!

HAVE YOU SEEN THESE ROGUES?



WANTED FOR QUESTIONING IN REGARDS  
TO THE FOLLOWING CRIMES:

FORGERY, FOISTERY, KIDNAPPING,  
COUNTERFEITING, LOOTING,  
LARCENY (PETTEY & GRAND)

QUACKERY, DISPENSING POTIONS  
WITHOUT A LICENSE, SMUGGLING,  
BOOTLEGGING, CONTRIBUTING TO  
THE DELINQUENCY OF A PACK  
ANIMAL

ROBBERY (HIGHWAY, GRAVE AND  
AERIAL) (ARMED & UNARMED)

IMPERSONATING  
PUBLIC OFFICIALS, IMPERSONATING  
A HERO (SINGLY & IN PAIRS)

GENERAL MALFEASANCE, ILLEGAL  
COLLUSION WITH KNOWN  
UNSAVOURY TYPES

...AND OTHER CRIMES  
TOO NUMEROUS AND  
VARIOUS TO LIST





TELL ME AGAIN WHY WE DON'T JUST---

SH! THE WIND HAS EARS!

---WHY *SOMEONE* DON'T JUST KNOCK OVER THE KEEPER AND TAKE ALL HE'S GOT? HE COMES OFF AS TOUGH AS A *CREAM HORN*.

WHO WOULD STEAL FROM THE SECRET SHOP? *KEEPERS* ARE FAVORITES OF THE GODS!



YOU'RE TELLING ME NO ONE'S EVER *TRIED*?

MANY! BUT ONLY *ONE* CAN BE SAID TO HAVE SUCCEEDED.

*ROSHAN*, YOU MEAN?!

BUT HE DIDN'T JUST STEAL THE *AEGIS OF IMMORTALITY*, HE KILLED ITS KEEPER!



SURELY THEFT IS ONLY A MINOR INFRACTION BY COMPARISON...

TEST THE GODS AT YOUR *PERIL*.

BUT CONSIDER *ROSHAN*: DOOMED TO HAVE HIS *TREASURE* STOLEN REPEATEDLY, AND HIS *LIFE* ALONG WITH IT.

THE GODS DO *LOVE* AN IRONIC PUNISHMENT!



BAH! THAT'S A TALE FOR FRIGHTENING *FAIRIES*!

*DOUBT* IF YOU WILL, GENTLEMEN, IT'S OF NO CONSEQUENCE.

FOR IN YONDER GLADE, YOUR QUEST COMES TO A *HEAD*!

CAN IT BE?

YOU MAY *RELY* ON IT!











SAY YOU WERE AN **ELDER SWORD**, FORGED BY A **DEMON**, SWUNG BY A **HERO** WHO FELL IN BATTLE...

...WHERE WOULD YOU BE AT THIS MOMENT?



INDEED!

AND THERE ARE **MANY** SUCH HEAPS AHEAD!

UNDER A PILE OF **HEROES' BONES**, MOST LIKE.



YES, IT'S ALL COMING BACK TO ME NOW! OUR **DESTINATION** IS IN SIGHT! DO HURRY!

YOU'LL PARDON US IF WE GO MORE **CAUTIOUSLY** THIS TIME.



TARRY NOT, GENTLEMEN! I CAN **ALMOST** SEE IT FROM HERE!

CAREFUL...



HEAR THAT?

**DOWN!**







DROW RANGER!

SHUT UP!





LOOK AT THOSE SORRY **DIRE** TROGLODYTES! NEVER QUESTIONING THEIR ENDLESS **WAR**... ENTHRALLED TO A SHINY OLD **ROCK**!



AND THE **RADIANT** GOONS. DON'T BE DECEIVED! THEY MIGHT BE NOBLER IN **SPIRIT**, BUT ARE THEY ANY MORE **FREE**?





IT IS UP TO YOU TO  
CROSS INTO...

...THE TARN OF  
ROSHAN!

HIM AGAIN!







THIS IS  
**MOST ASSUREDLY**  
THE PLACE!

DON'T ASK ME HOW I  
COULD HAVE FORGOTTEN  
THE **SINISTER TARN OF**  
**ROSHAN!**

SHUT UP, BIRD!

I'LL JUST HIE ME BACK TO  
THE **KEEPER** THEN, WHERE  
MY WORDS ARE MET WITH  
**APPRECIATION!**

MAY THE BLESSINGS OF  
**SKREE'AUK**  
THE VULTURE GODDESS  
SHOWER **WARMLY** DOWN  
UPON YOU!



I WONDER HOW  
MANY HEROES LOST  
THEIR LIVES HERE?

WHO CARES ABOUT  
THEIR **LIVES?**  
IT'S THEIR **LOOT**  
THAT INTERESTS ME!



NOW SPLIT UP, AND  
REMEMBER....

...**DIRESTONE HILT,**  
**RADIANT BLADE!**













I'D BEST TAKE  
A CARE NOT  
TO CUT MYSELF.



BUT IT'S **DEVILISH**  
HARD TO  
GET A **GRIP**...

...WITHOUT  
A **HILT**!



**HILT**, YOU SAY?



SO, **DEMON EDGE**,  
YOU MEAN TO  
**RESIST** ME?

WHAT'S THAT?  
YOU'VE MET  
MY **LIKE** BEFORE?

I ASSURE YOU, I HAVE  
MANY MEANS OF  
**PERSUASION** AT  
MY DISPOSAL...



AND SOMETIMES  
EVEN A  
**THINKING MAN**  
MUST RESORT  
TO...

**BRUTE  
FORCE!**

**Whammm!**





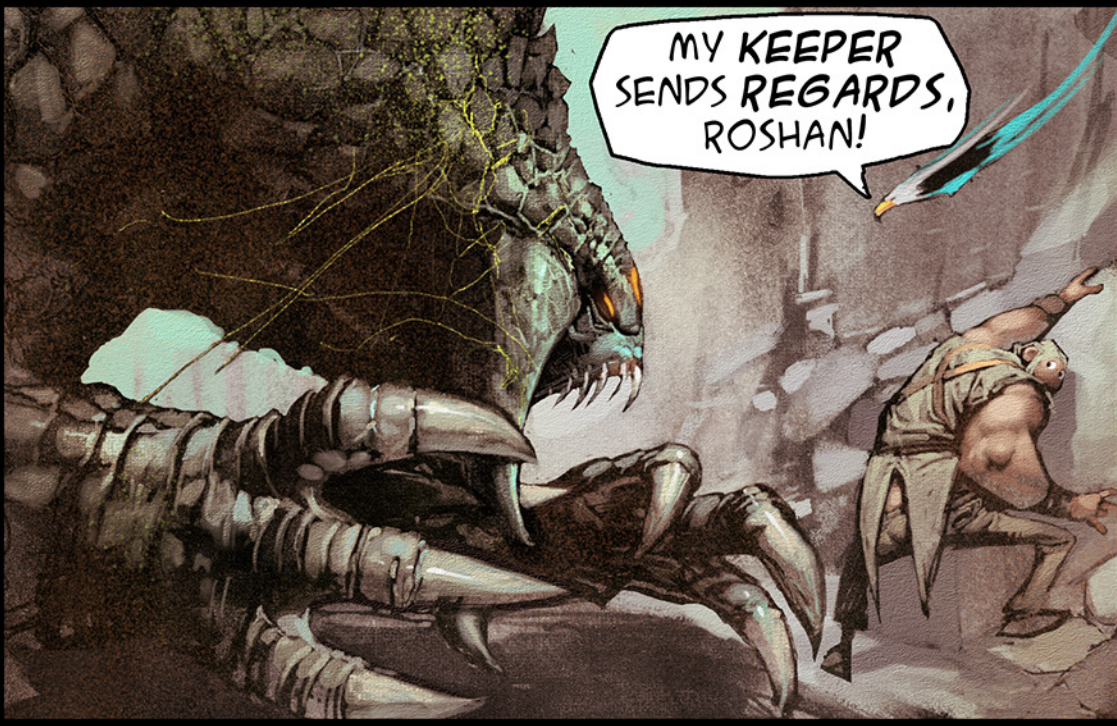




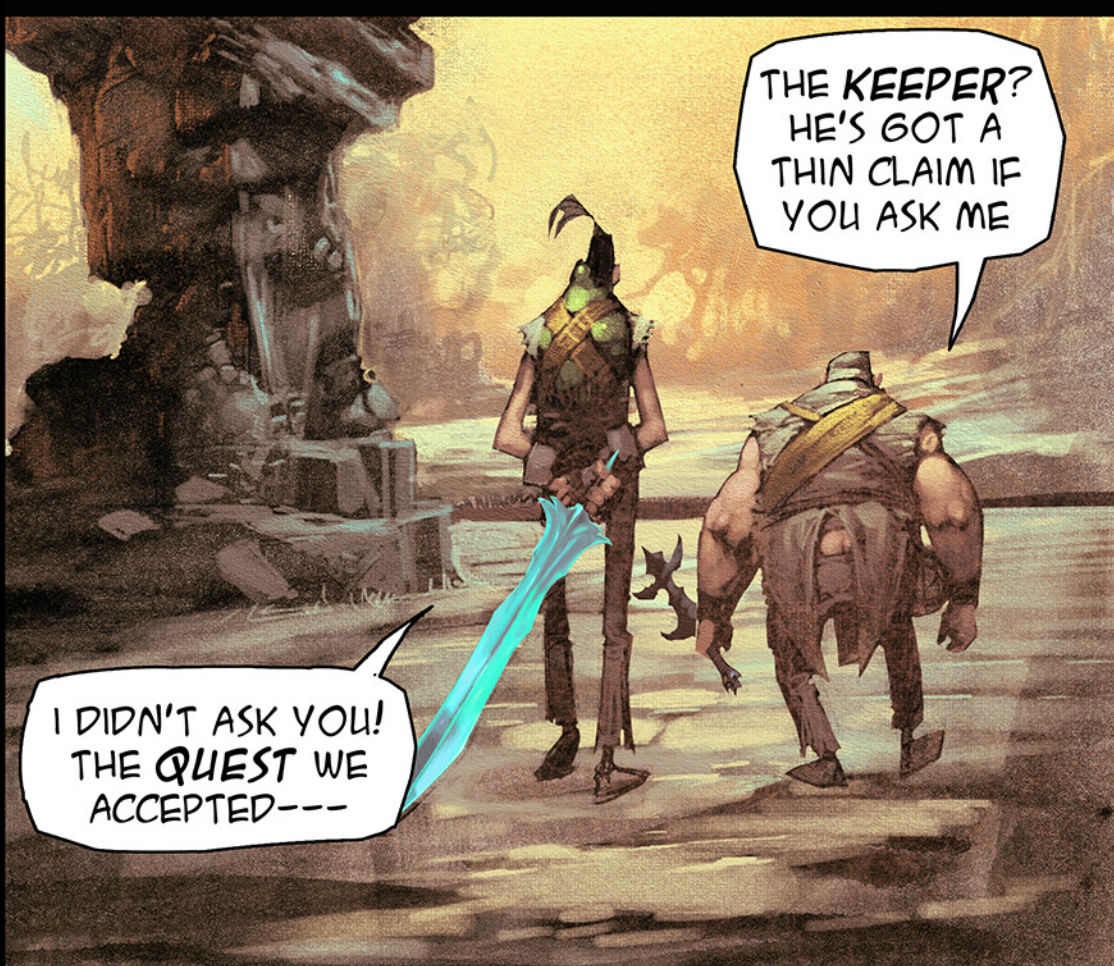
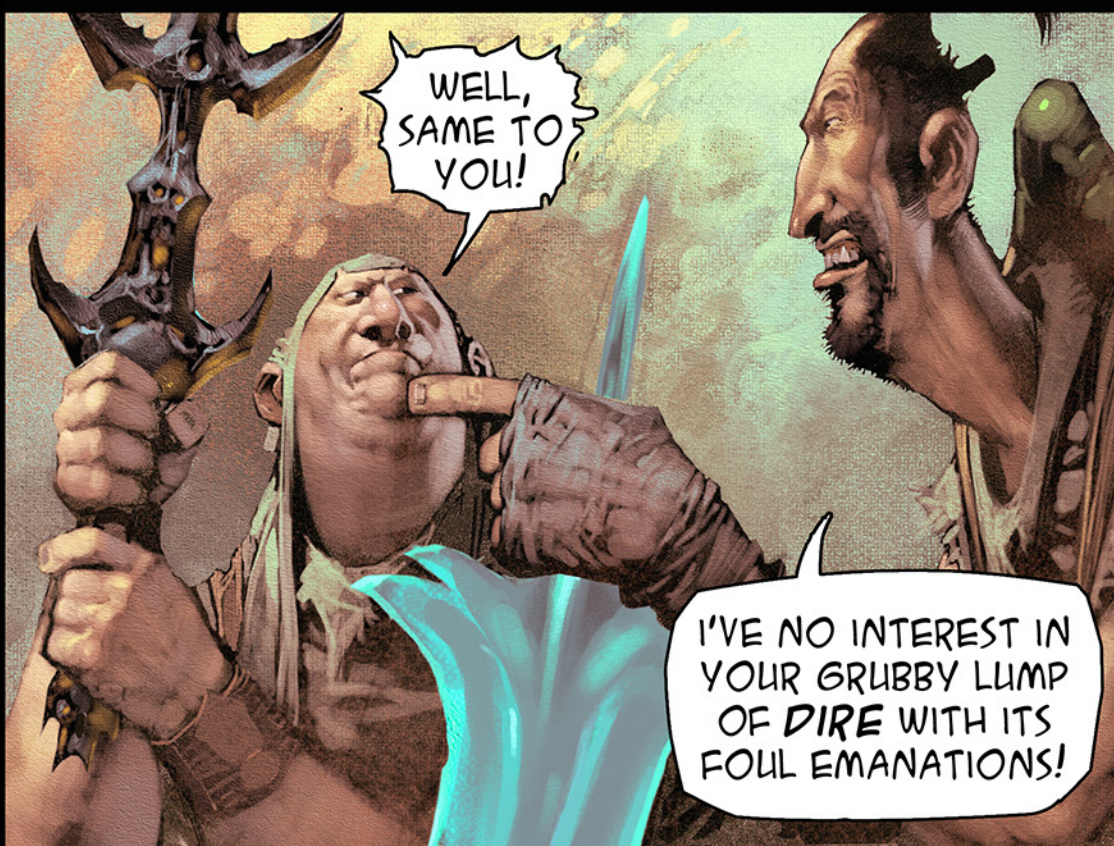
















AMONG NOBLE  
CREATURES, ONE'S  
**INTENTIONS**  
COUNT MORE  
THAN LEGAL  
AGREEMENTS!



**NOBLE?!**  
WHO'M I TAWKIN TO  
ALL UVVA SUDDEN?



I MIGHT ASK YOU THE SAME!  
YOUR **SLURRED VERNACULAR** AND  
HUNCHED GAIT MAKE IT PLAIN THE  
**LOW COMPANY** YOU PREFER HAS  
HAD A **COARSENING** EFFECT.



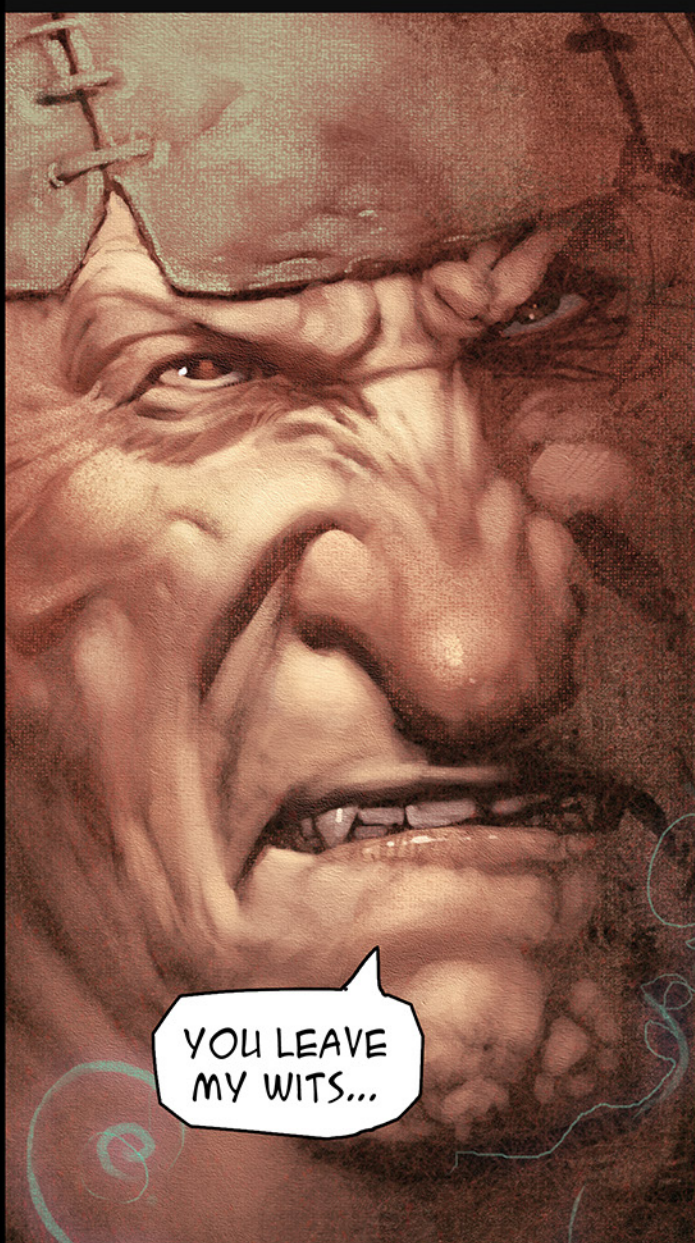
FANCY WORDS EN'T  
GONNA FOOL ME  
INTA GIVIN UP THIS  
RARE BIT O' **LEWT**  
ON THE SAYSO OF A  
KEEPSHOPPER AN A  
KNOWN STAB-BACK  
SETCH AS VERSELF!

LET ME OFFER SOME  
SIMPLER WORDS THEN.  
I SWEAR ON MY SOUL YOU'LL  
SURRENDER THAT HILT IF I  
HAVE TO RUN YOU  
THROUGH MYSELF!



YE SLIMY SNAKE! YE  
BIN PLANNING TO  
**TREACHERIZE** ME  
THIS WHOLE TIME,  
EN'T YE?!

MY MOTIVES ARE  
**HONEST AND PURE---**  
TWO CONCEPTS I'M QUITE SURE HAVE  
NEVER COMPROMISED YOUR DULL  
AND SULLIED WITS.



YOU LEAVE  
MY WITS...



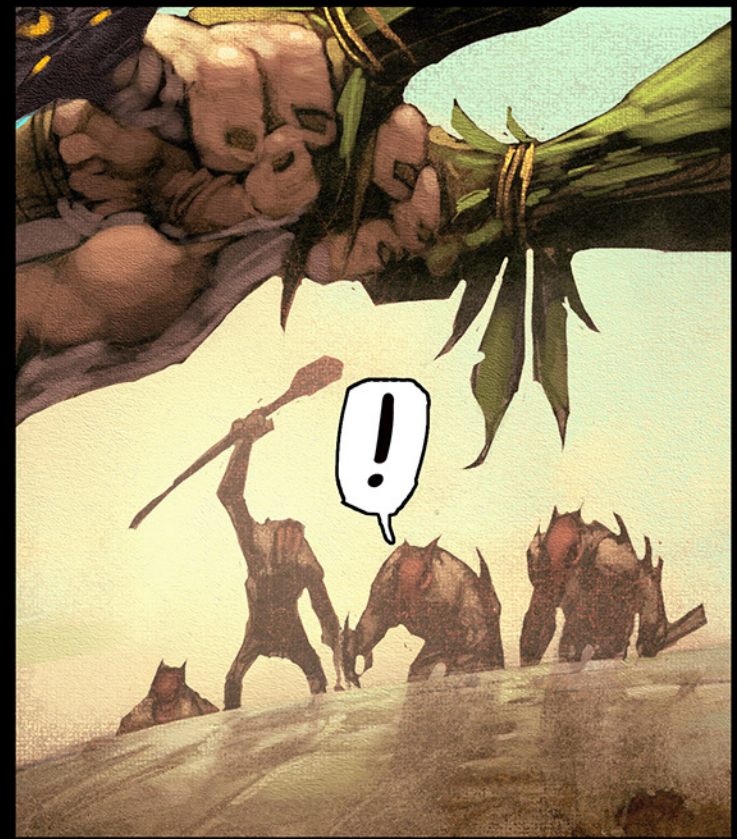
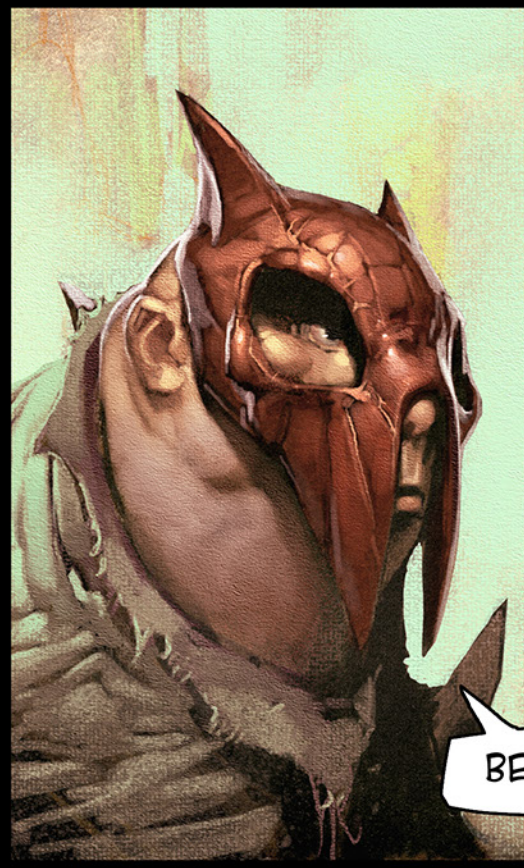
...OUTTA THIS!

**THOK!**













WE COME,  
COMRADE!



TO OUR KIN'S  
DEFENSE!



DIRE  
WRETCHES!

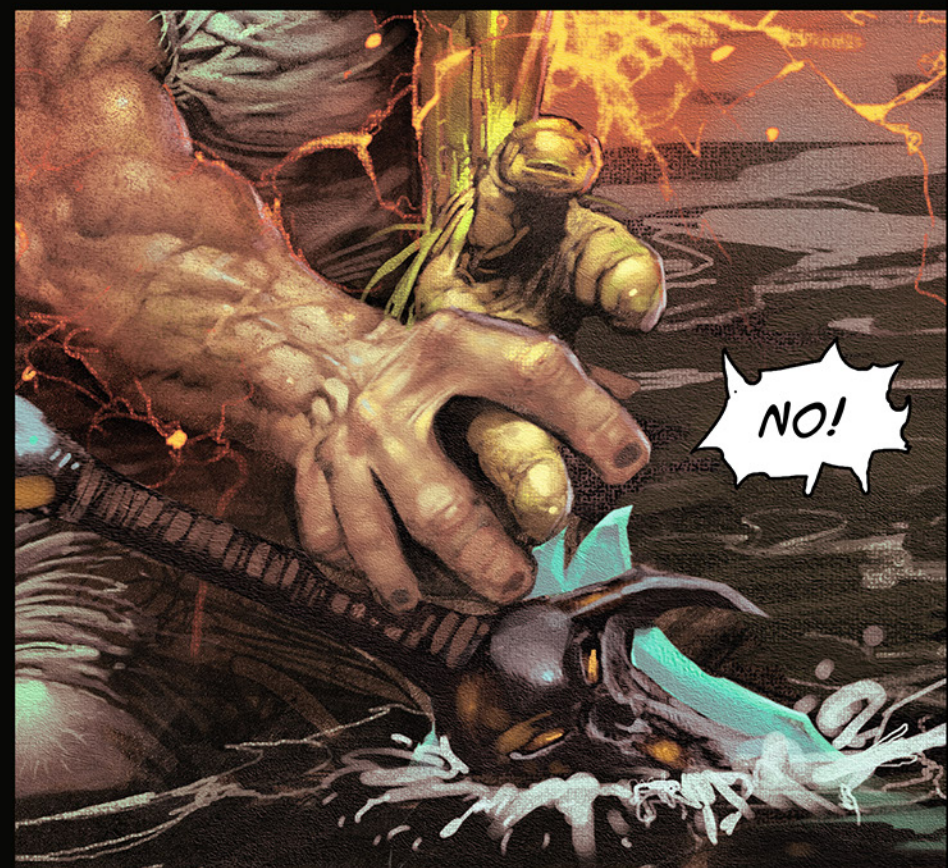
RADIANT  
SCUM!



HA!  
MINE!

NOT  
SO!

HEY, YER  
CHOKIN'  
MFFFK--!



NO!



ME  
SWORD!

--GLUB!--

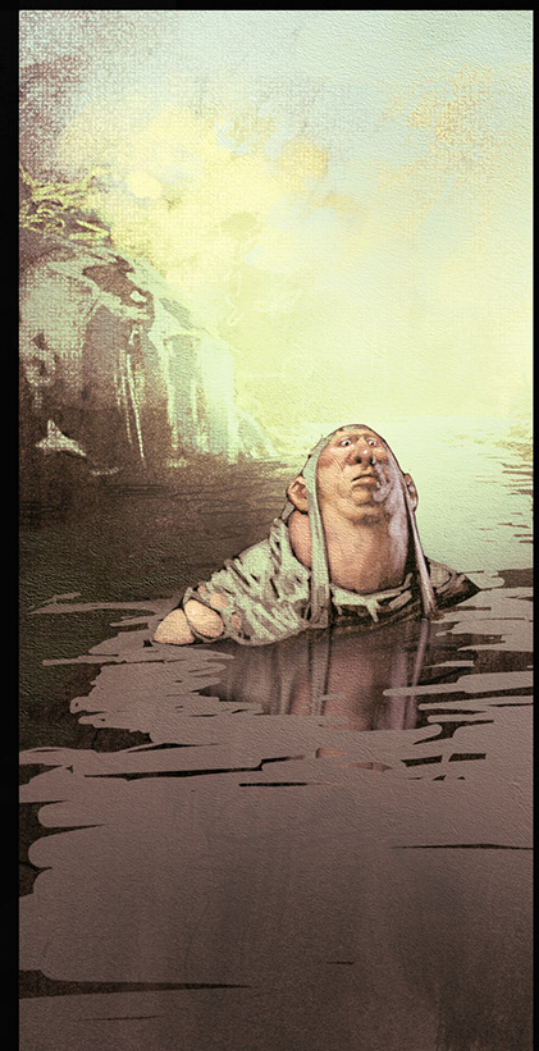
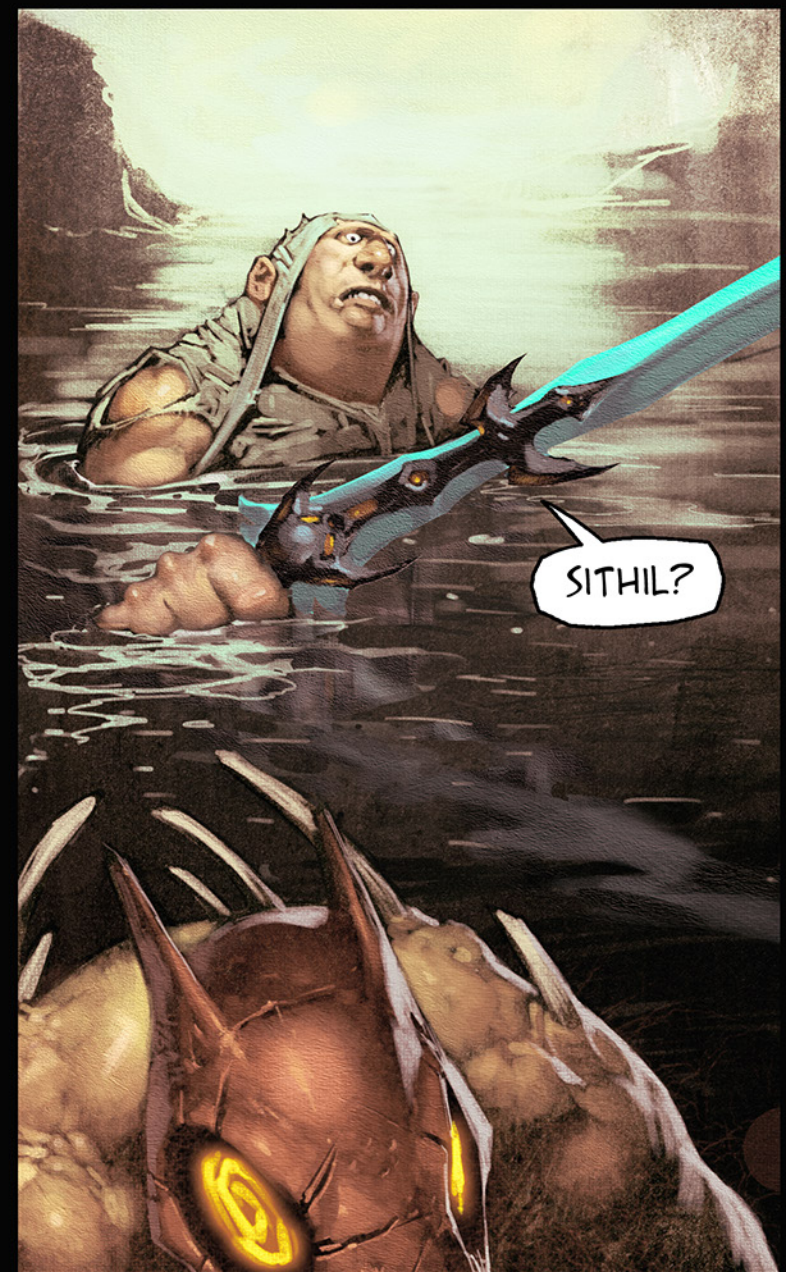
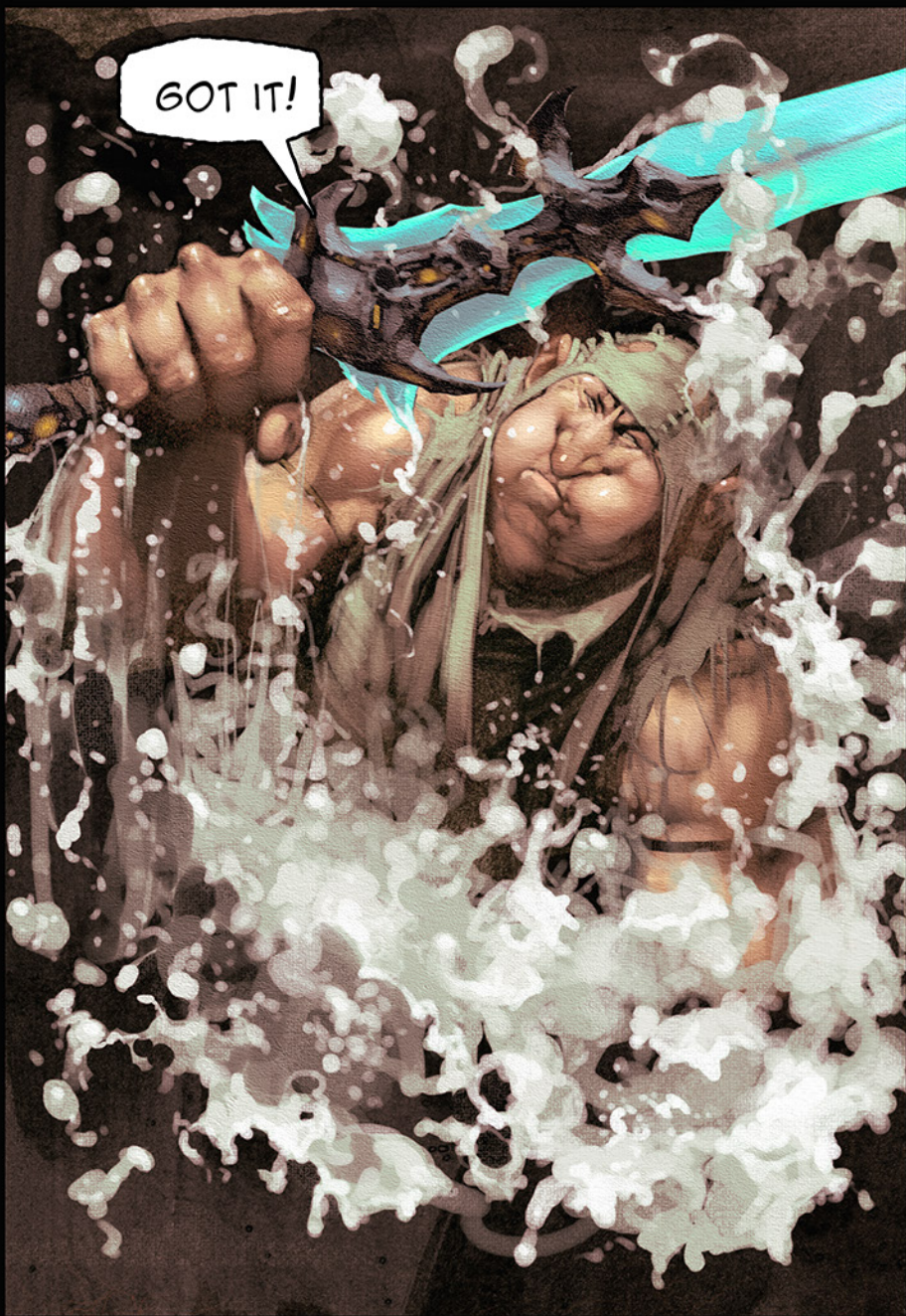


HO,  
BROTHER!  
STAND FIRM  
AGAINST THE  
DIRE!

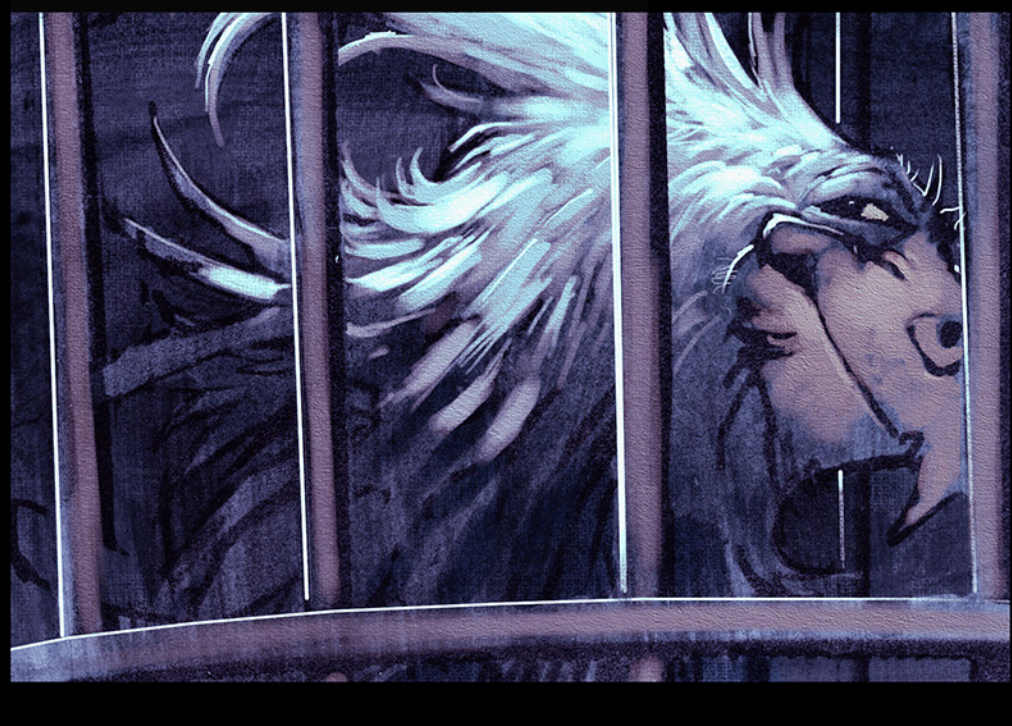
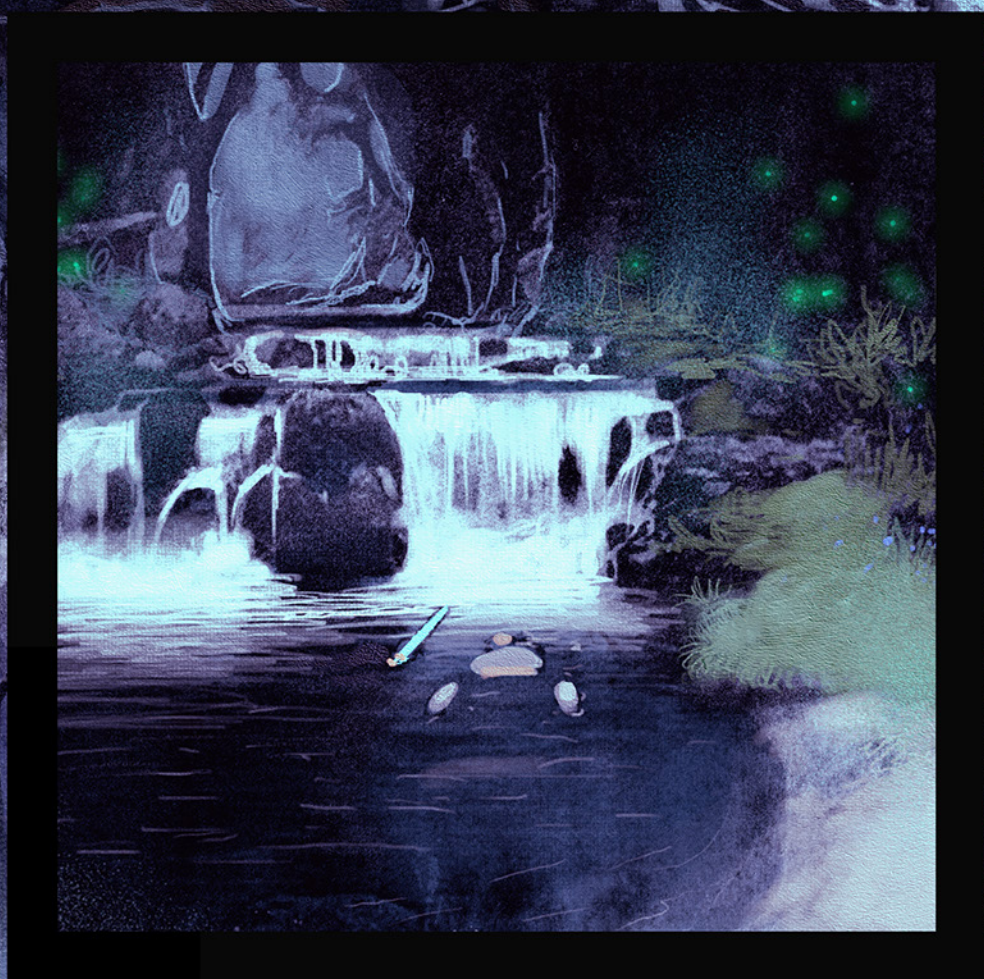
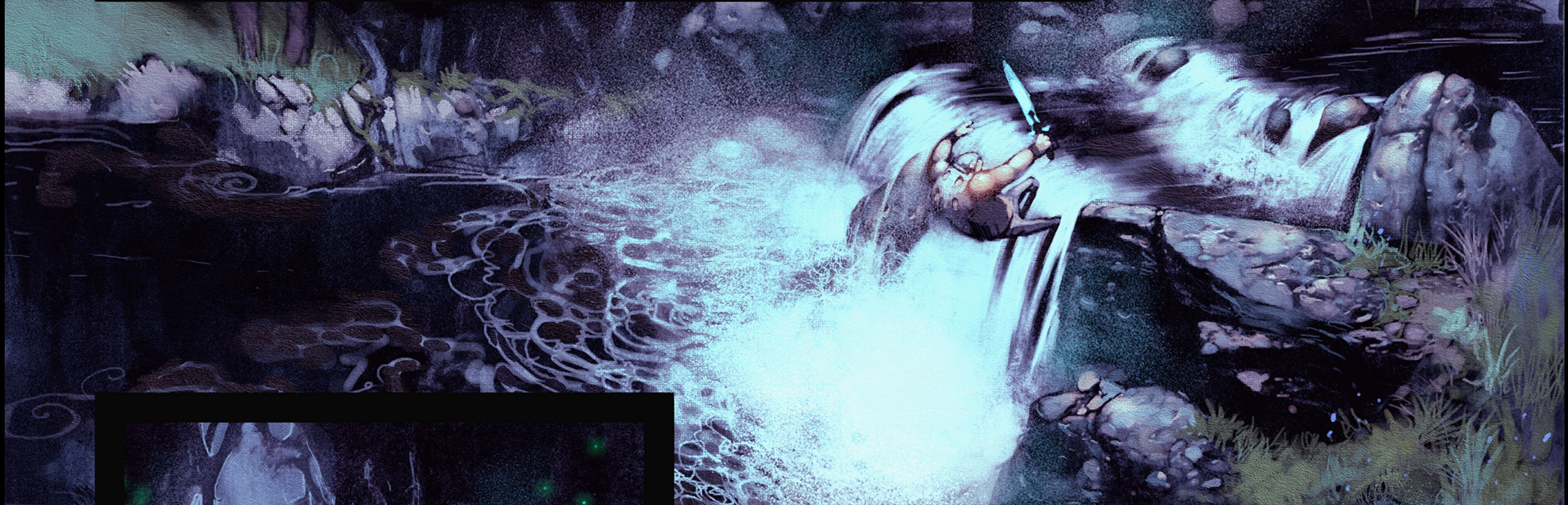
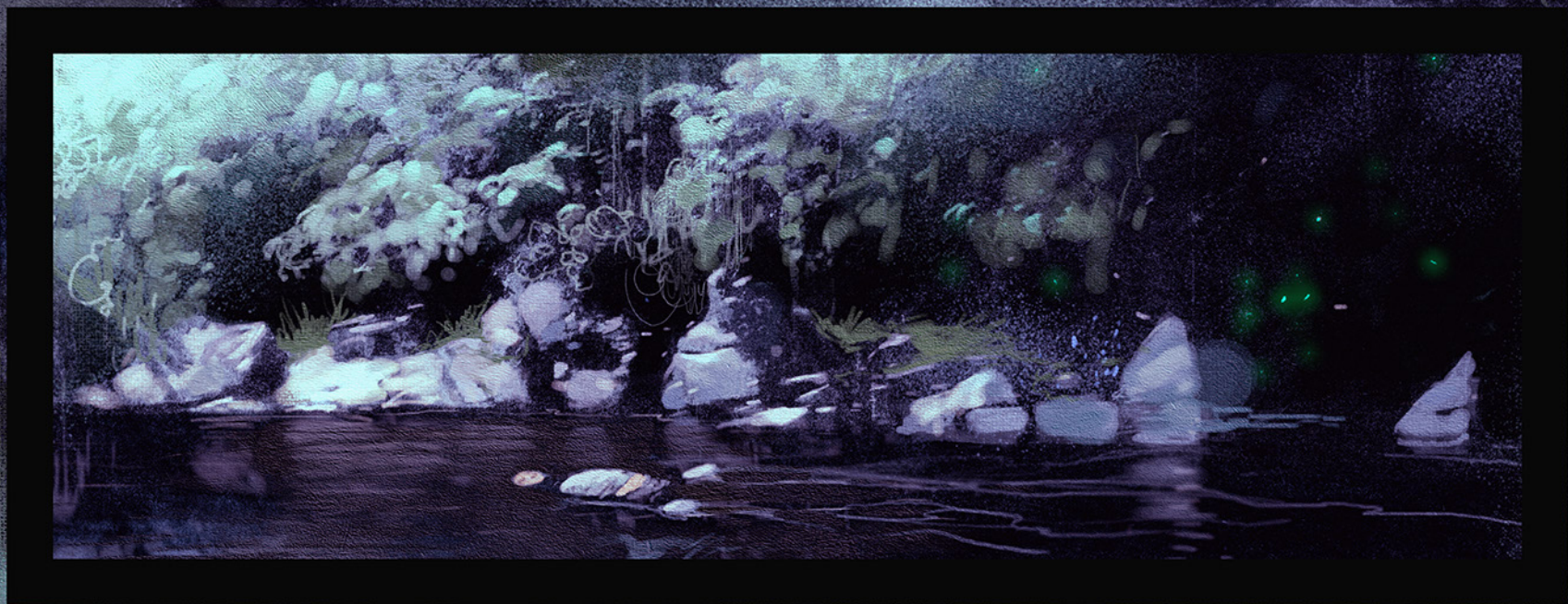
EH?

AYE, THE  
DOGS  
DESERVE  
DEATH!













SO ONLY **HEROES** CAN CARRY HER, EH?



WELL **I** SEEM TO BE DOING ALL RIGHT.

IT'S ALMOST LIKE SHE **WANTED** ME TO HAVE 'ER.



**I DID** GO UP AGAINST **ROSHAN** IN SINGLE COMBAT, MORE OR LESS!

THAT'S A BIT **HEROIC**.



I CAN'T HELP BUT NOTICE SHE LEFT **SITHIL** TO HIS **RADIANT FATE**, BUT SAVED **ME** TO CARRY HER OFF!

AND IF I **AM** TURNING OUT TO BE A **HERO**, IT'S JUST AS WELL I DON'T **TEMPT** MESELF HANGING ROUND THAT **SHOP**.



I'M LIKELY TO **LIFT** SOMETHING, JUST OUTTA **HABIT**.

NAH. BETTER TO PUT **SOME MILES** BETWEEN ME AND THEM OLD **TEMPTATIONS**.



TIME I STARTED ACTING LIKE THE **SORT OF HERO** THIS 'ERE **SWORD** WOULD WANT ME TO BE.



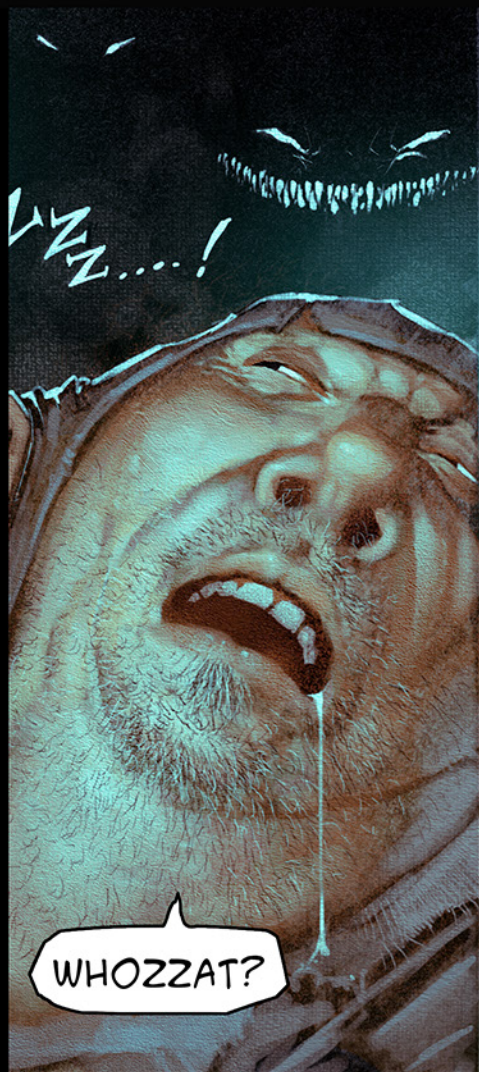
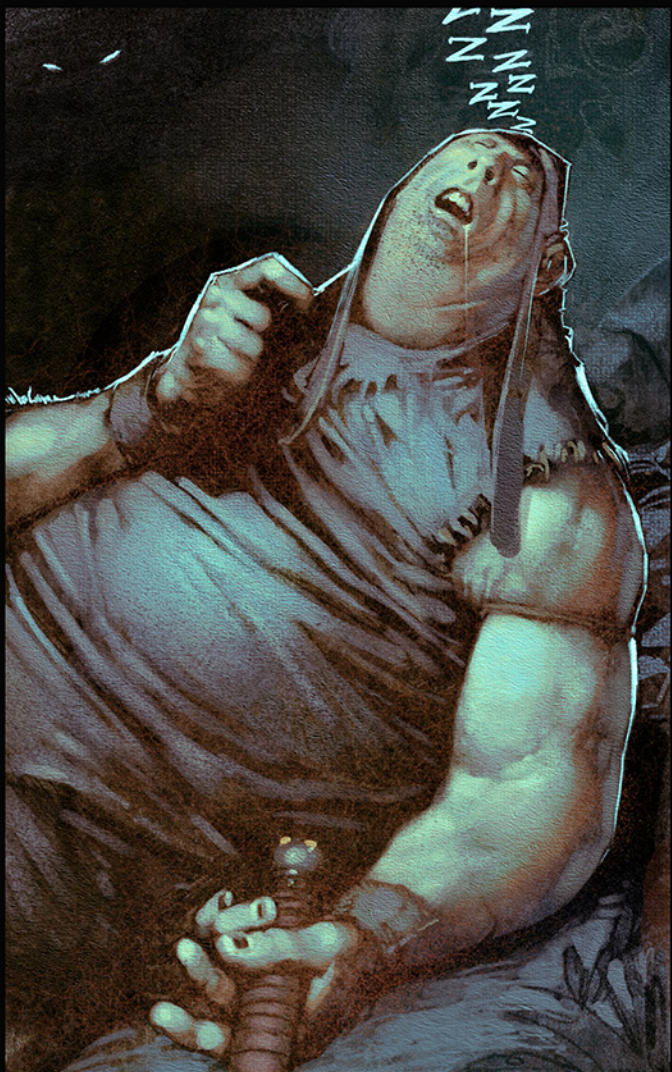
**DEMON EDGE...**

...I THINK...

...I'LL KEEP...

...YOUZZZ...

















PLEASE DON'T LET  
THAT **ROOSTER**  
CR---



---000 **KK KK**...



NOT LONG AFTER...

ZZZZZZZZ



HM-HM-HM...  
HUMDA-HUM-  
HUM-HUM...



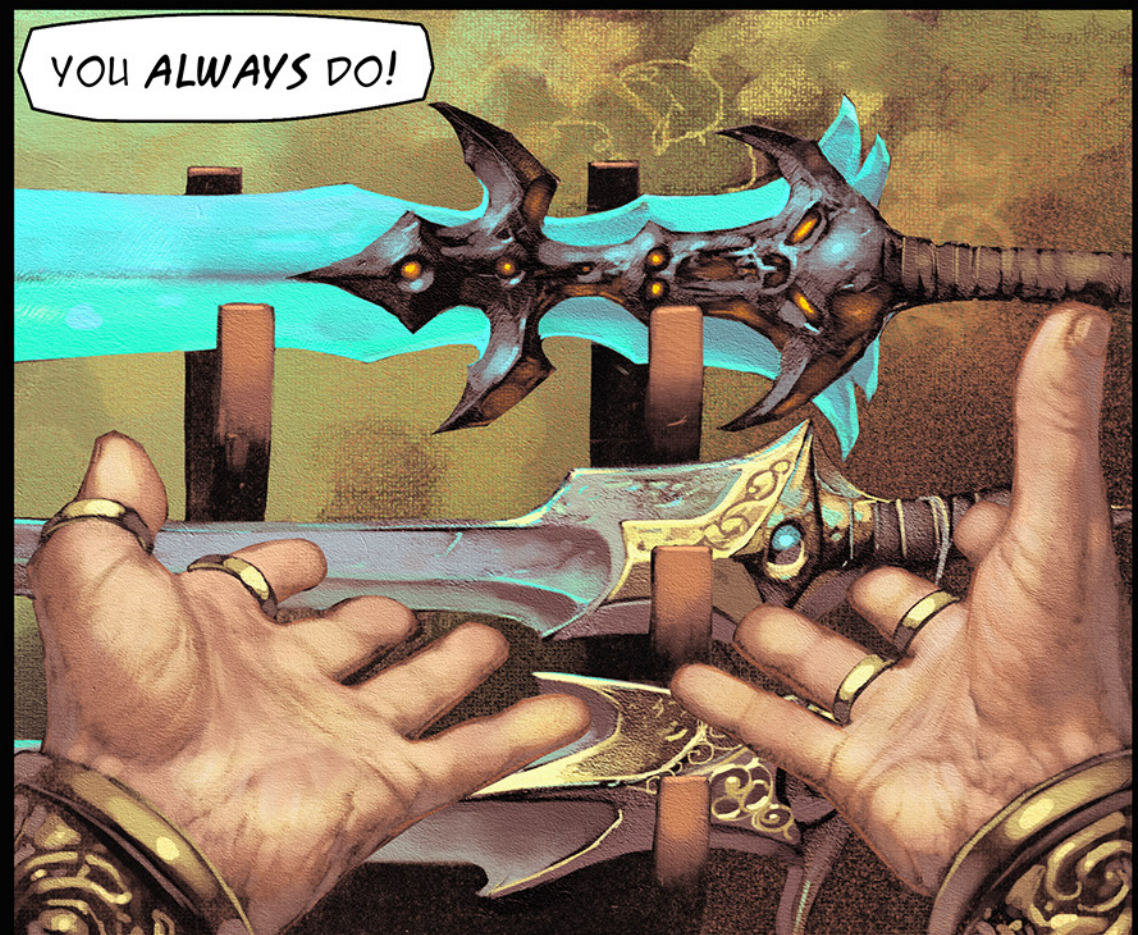
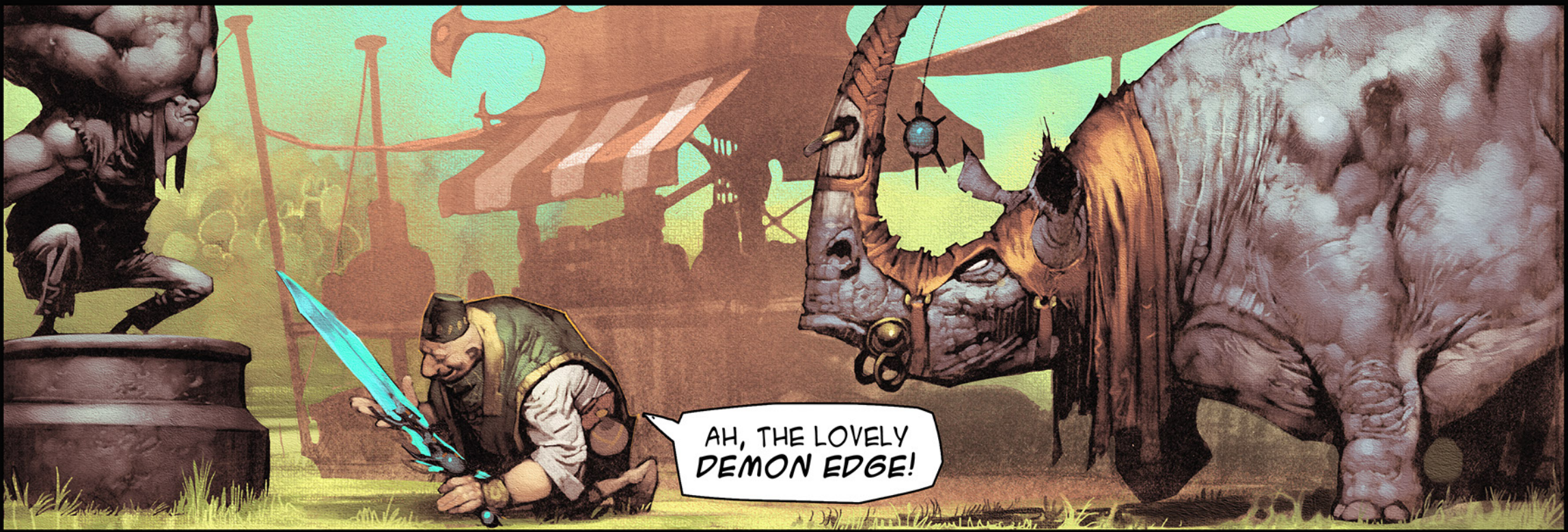
ZZZZ...  
@!/?

GOOD MORNING,  
**MY LADY!**  
YOUR **STRONGBLACK**  
IS **READY!**



**WELL NOW!**  
WHAT DO  
I **SPY?**







# MISSING!

HAVE YOU SEEN US?



UNSAVORY ASSOCIATES ARE BEREFT!

HELP TO MEND A SHATTERED GUILD!

SITHIL AND QUIRT ARE STERLING  
MEMBERS OF THE ROGUE'S GUILD,  
ONLY SLIGHTLY BEHIND ON DUES!

MISUNDERSTOOD BY A FETTERED  
SOCIETY, BUT BELOVED BY THEIR  
LIKEWISE FROWNED-UPON PEERS,  
WHO CONSIDER THEM EXEMPLARY  
PRACTITIONERS OF ILLICIT ARTS!

UNHERALDED BY AUTHORIZED BARDS,  
THEIR NAMES REMAIN SYNONYMOUS  
WITH CUNNING AND DUPLICITY!

TIRELESS RECOVERERS OF ANCIENT  
ARTIFACTS, CHARITABLE TO FEYFOLK,  
UNSTINTING INSTRUCTORS OF  
NEOPHYTES IN THE ARTS OF KNAVERY!

PLEASE REPORT ANY INFORMATION TO  
THE INN OF THE SILENT BRAGGART,  
SLY CUTTLES, PROP.

LAST SEEN NEAR THE  
SECRET SHOP!

OUR CRONIES MISS US!





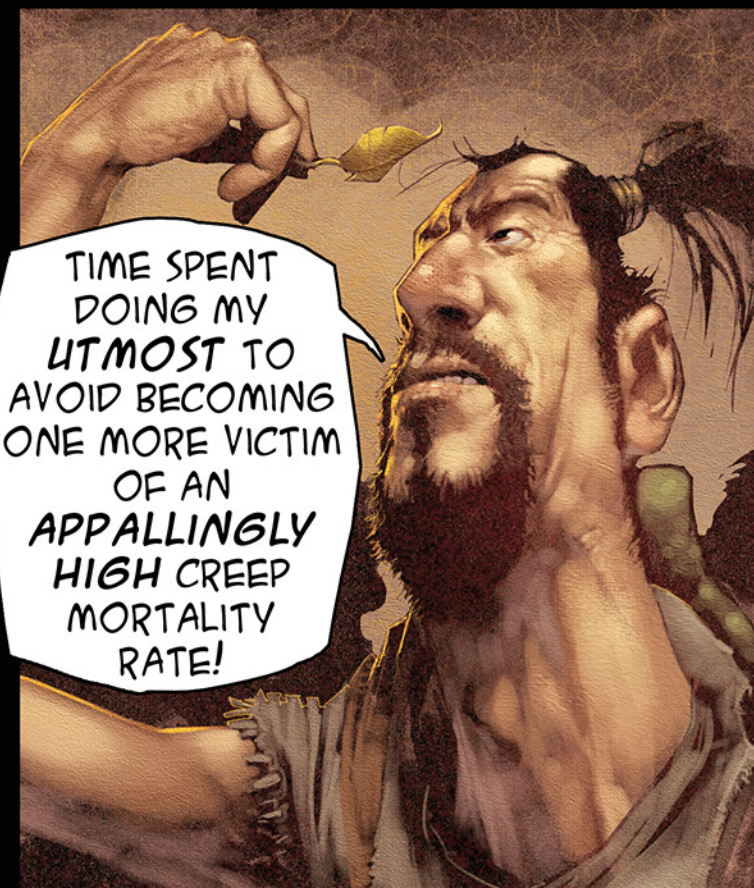
IT TOOK SOME YEARS OF **SCHEMING** TO SPRING MY FRIEND FROM HIS **ENTRAPMENT**.



YOU TOOK YOUR **TIME** ABOUT IT!



TIME SPENT DOING MY **UTMOST** TO AVOID BECOMING ONE MORE VICTIM OF AN **APPALLINGLY** HIGH CREEP MORTALITY RATE!



ADMIT IT...YOU ALWAYS HAD A **FONDNESS** FOR THE **RADIANT**.



IT'S TRUE, I DO LOOK **DASHING** IN GREEN!



YOU GOT OFF LIGHT. I'M **SCARRED** FOR LIFE.



...ALL THOSE YEARS OF WEARING AN **ASS** FOR A **HAT**...





THE NEXT ROUND IS ON QUIRT!

LET'S JUST SAY HE'S COME INTO A NEW SOURCE OF INCOME!



I WISH YOU WOULDN'T ADVERTISE THAT.

THE KEEPER MIGHT NOT WANT IT **GETTING AROUND** THAT HE'S DOING DEALS WITH **UNHEROIC** TYPES LIKE US.



'SIDES, HE HAD **GOOD REASON** TO GET RID OF THIS THING.



IT'S AS MUCH **PEST** AS **BLESSING**!



THOUGH TO BE SURE...IT DO HAVE ITS **ADVANTAGES**!

END!