
CRITICAL ROLE
THE LEGEND OF VOX MACHINA™
THE WHITESTONE™
CHRONICLES
RIPLEY
MARIEKE NIJKAMP
TYLER WALPOLE
prime



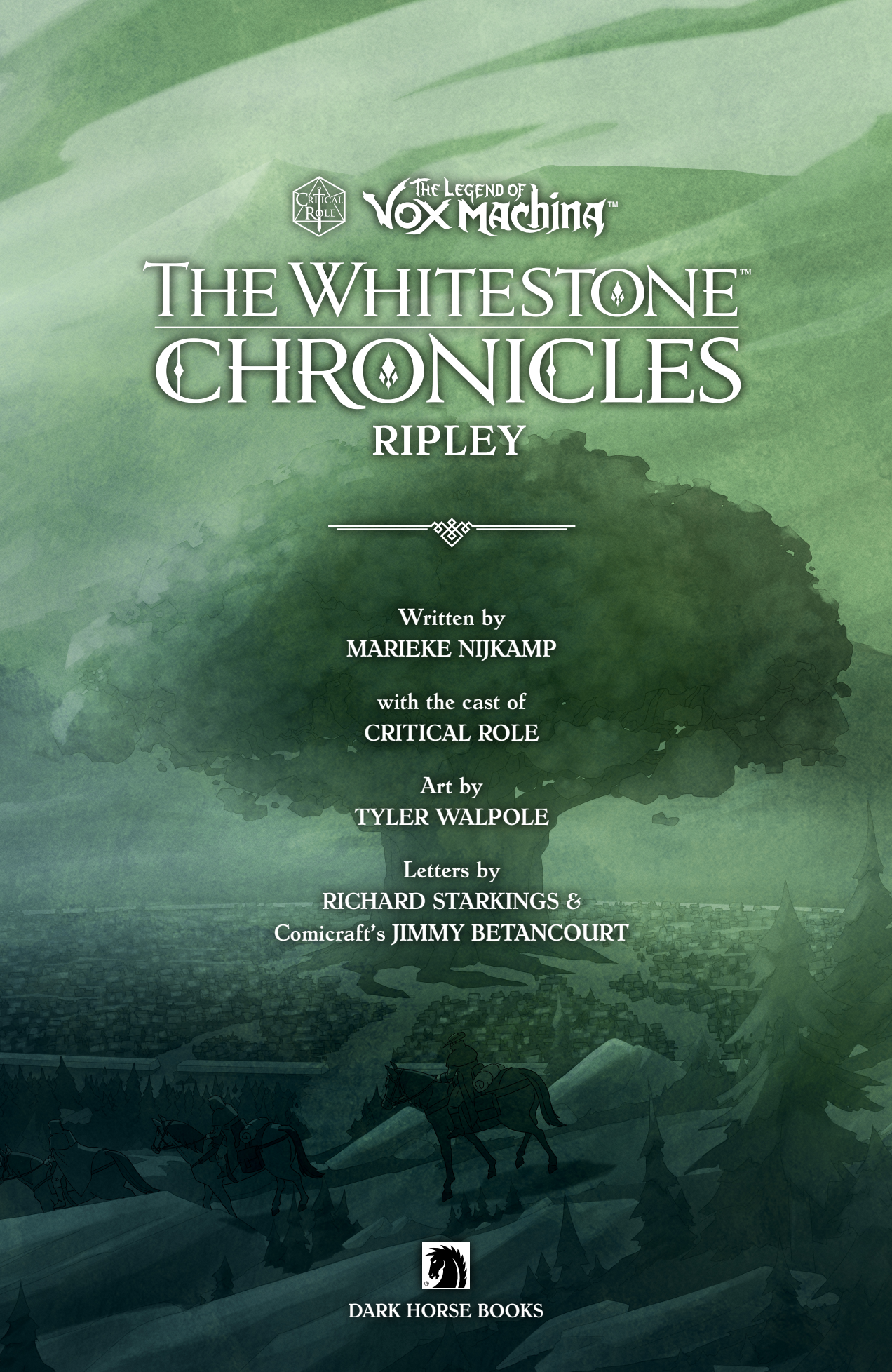
THE LEGEND OF VOX MACHINA™

THE WHITESTONE CHRONICLES™

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RIPLEY

Written by
MARIEKE NIJKAMP

with the cast of
CRITICAL ROLE

Art by
TYLER WALPOLE

Letters by
RICHARD STARKINGS &
Comicraft's JIMMY BETANCOURT

DARK HORSE BOOKS

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PORT DAMALI.
YOU LOST YOUR COIN TO A CUTPURSE, NOT TO THE MOON.
I'M TELLING YOU, IT SPELLS ILL LUCK.
IGNORANT FOOLS.


WHAT A DESPERATE WAY TO LIVE, TO BE GUIDED BY PALTRY SUPERSTITIONS.
TO LET YOUR LIVES BE DETERMINED BY FORTUNE INSTEAD OF SHAPING IT THROUGH KNOWLEDGE . . .


...INGENUITY...


...INNOVATION.


ENLIGHTENMENT IS THE VERY FOUNDATION OF PROGRESS. AND THROUGH PROGRESS, POWER.
ONCE I RESUME MY EXPERIMENTS, THEY WILL SEE.


THIS IS WHAT I NEED TO CHANGE THE WORLD FOR THE BETTER...
...ONE DAY.
DOCTOR RIPLEY, I PRESUME.
EMPIRE RATS! YOU WON'T TAKE ME BACK!
WE DO NOT SERVE THE EMPIRE. QUITE THE OPPOSITE, IN FACT.
WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU. OUR EMPLOYERS WOULD LIKE A WORD.


THE SHADED STEIN
SIT.
DOCTOR ANNA RIPLEY. ENGINEERING WUNDERKIND. INFAMOUS INNOVATOR.
IT'S A *PLEASURE* TO MEET YOU.


ALLOW ME TO PRESENT LORD SYLAS AND LADY DELILAH BRIARWOOD OF THE DWENDALIAN--
NO NEED FOR SUCH FORMALITY, STONEFELL. I'M SURE THE GOOD DOCTOR HAS HEARD OF US.
MAY I OFFER YOU SOMETHING TO DRINK? WINE? ALE?
I *HAVE* HEARD OF YOU.
IT'S NOT OFTEN ONE MEETS A *DISGRACED* MEMBER OF THE CERBERUS ASSEMBLY.
AH, WINE IT IS.
WHY AM I HERE?
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?


WE HAVE MUCH IN COMMON.
DO WE?
WE SHARE AN AVERSION TOWARD IGNORANCE AND NARROWMINDEDNESS.
ESPECIALLY WITH SO MANY FLAWS IN THE WORLD THAT NEED FIXING.
YOU'RE HERE BECAUSE WE FIND OURSELVES IN NEED OF A *UNIQUE* MIND,
SOMEONE ABLE TO ACCESS AN ANCIENT STRUCTURE--A *ZIGGURAT*--IN THE ALABASTER SIERRAS, IN TAL'DOREI.
YOU'LL NEED A GUIDE, NOT AN ENGINEER.
THERE IS NO EASY PATHWAY TO THIS ZIGGURAT. WE NEED SOMEONE OF INTELLIGENCE TO UNEARTH ITS EXACT LOCATION.
A RESEARCHER WHO ISN'T TOO SQUEAMISH TO DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE FOR THE SAKE OF DISCOVERY AND *KNOWLEDGE.*
WHO HAS THE ALCHEMICAL UNDERSTANDING NEEDED TO NAVIGATE THE ALABASTER SIERRAS' STRANGE MINERALS.


AND YOUR MAGIC CAN'T HELP YOU?
INTERESTING. YOU HAVE A DISTASTE FOR MAGIC?
FATHER!
I HAVE DISTASTE FOR MAGIC SO STRONG THAT NONE WILL WITHSTAND IT.
SUCH DESTRUCTIVE POWER REQUIRES A BALANCE. IT REQUIRES A RIVAL.
THE MINERALS PRODUCE A SUBSTANCE WITH MOST UNUSUAL PROPERTIES. IT MIGHT BE OF INTEREST TO YOUR EXPERIMENTS TOO.
YOUR WEAPONS DESIGNS ARE INSPIRED.
SO I SHOULD--WHAT, HELP YOU BECAUSE OUR PURPOSES ARE ALIGNED?
I ASSUME YOU HAVE PLANS FOR THIS ZIGGURAT BEYOND SIMPLE ARCHEOLOGICAL CURIOSITY.

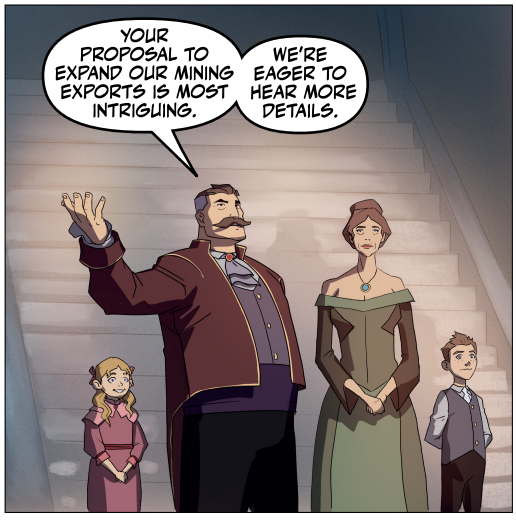

OUR PLANS, AS I'M SURE YOU WILL UNDERSTAND, ARE OUR OWN.
BUT UNLIKE YOUR PREVIOUS EMPLOYERS, WE WOULD *VALUE* YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS.
WE WOULD PAY YOU HANDSOMELY.
FULFILL YOUR END OF THE BARGAIN, AND WE WILL SEE TO IT YOUR RESEARCH GOING FORTH WILL BE FULLY FUNDED.
IMAGINE HAVING YOUR OWN STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITY FAR AWAY FROM THIS UNENLIGHTENED HELLHOLE.
A PLACE WHERE YOU'LL BE ABLE TO PURSUE YOUR EXPERIMENTS WITHOUT PRYING EYES.
WITHOUT CONSTRAINTS OR ANYONE HOLDING YOU BACK.


THAT IS, IF YOU ARE INTERESTED.
MAGIC IS NOT JUST POWERFUL, IT'S ARROGANT. UNTRUSTWORTHY.
AN OFFER THIS GENEROUS CANNOT BE GENUINE.
BUT HESITATION IS WEAKNESS IN THE FACE OF KNOWLEDGE AND OPPORTUNITY.
PROGRESS DEMANDS POTENTIAL WHERE LESSER MINDS SEE ONLY OBSTACLES.
IF NOTHING ELSE, IT'S MY TICKET OUT OF HERE.
I'M IN.
WHAT IS THIS FABLED PLACE OF ANCIENT STRUCTURES AND POWERFUL MINERALS?
TELL ME...


...HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF WHITESTONE?

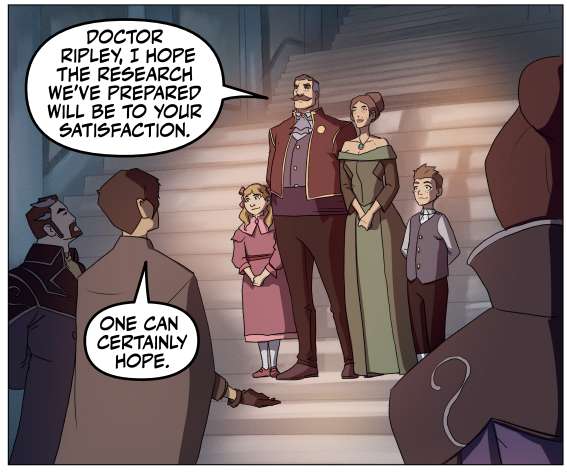



WHITESTONE CASTLE.
SEVERAL MONTHS-SEVERAL LONG MONTHS OF PLANNING AND MAKING NICE WITH MAGES-LATER.
INTRODUCING LORD AND LADY BRIARWOOD, TRADE EMISSARIES OF THE DWENDALIAN EMPIRE.
OR SO THESE GULLIBLE FOOLS THINK.
WELCOME TO WHITESTONE.
IF YOU'LL FOLLOW ME, I'LL GUIDE YOU TO LORD AND LADY DE ROLO IMMEDIATELY.
AMAZING HOW EASILY THEIR LIES ARE BELIEVED.
HONORED GUESTS! WELCOME!

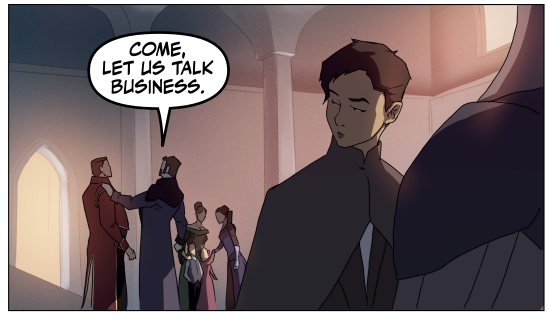

YOUR PROPOSAL TO EXPAND OUR MINING EXPORTS IS MOST INTRIGUING.
WE'RE EAGER TO HEAR MORE DETAILS.

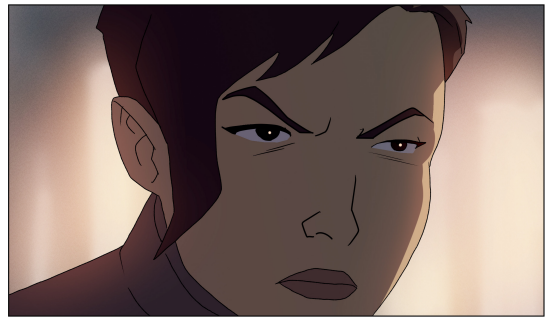

WE'RE DELIGHTED TO BE HERE, MY LORD. I'M SURE THIS OPPORTUNITY WILL BENEFIT BOTH OUR PEOPLES.
LET ME INTRODUCE OUR TRUSTED CHIEF ALCHEMICAL ADVISOR, DOCTOR ANNA RIPLEY.


MY LORD, MY LADY.
LOOK AT THEM. NO IDEA THEY'RE USHERING IN THEIR OWN DOWNFALL.


DOCTOR RIPLEY, I HOPE THE RESEARCH WE'VE PREPARED WILL BE TO YOUR SATISFACTION.
ONE CAN CERTAINLY HOPE.

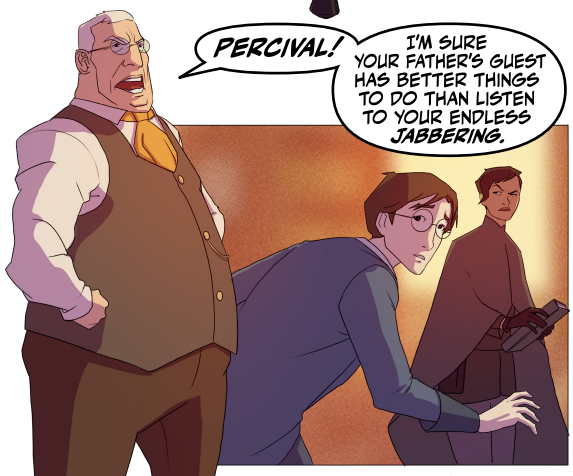

SHOW DOCTOR RIPLEY TO THE LIBRARY, PLEASE.


COME, LET US TALK BUSINESS.




AT LEAST THIS CHARADE GIVES ME A REASON TO BE HERE...
...SURROUNDED BY SUCH KNOWLEDGE.
A WEALTH OF RESOURCES, HOARDED BY NOBLES, RESTRICTED TO A REMOTE, ISOLATED TOWN.
IT'S THE HEIGHT OF ARROGANCE, WHEN ACCESS TO INNOVATION COULD HELP CREATE A BETTER WORLD.


YOU'RE NEW HERE. YOU MUST BE THE ADVISOR FATHER TOLD US ABOUT. IS IT TRUE THAT YOU'RE AN ENGINEER? WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON? I'M A TINKERER TOO--

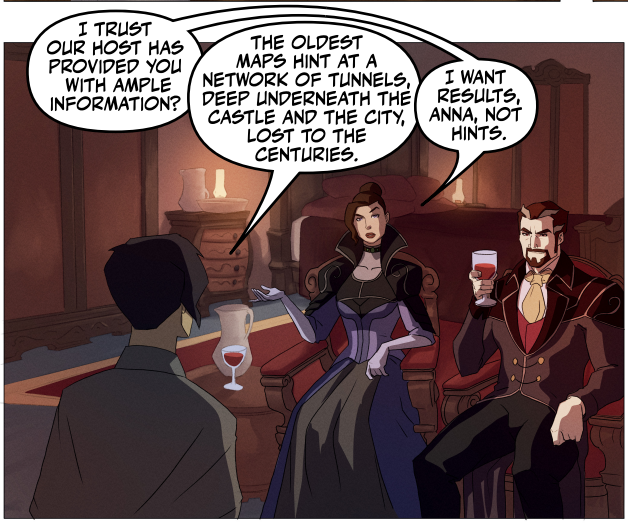

PERCIVAL!
I'M SURE YOUR FATHER'S GUEST HAS BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN LISTEN TO YOUR ENDLESS JABBERING.


INSOLENT GIRL! YOU THINK YOU KNOW EVERYTHING.
YOUR PRIDE WILL BE YOUR RUIN!


I DIDN'T CATCH YOUR NAME?
ANDERS. PROFESSOR ANDERS.
PROFESSOR, YOU SAY? I DO HAVE BETTER THINGS TO DO.
BUT I WOULD THINK A TRUE TEACHER WOULD ENCOURAGE CURIOSITY IN HIS STUDENTS.
I ENCOURAGE DISCIPLINE. THE BOY MUST RETURN TO HIS STUDIES. HIS SISTER AWAITS HIM.
THAT POMPOUS WINDBAG WOULD NOT RECOGNIZE GENIUS IF IT STABBED HIM IN THE EYE.
BUT THE BOY... A BRIGHT SPARK IN THESE DRAB SURROUNDINGS.
ONCE I LOCATE THE ZIGGURAT, ONCE I LEAVE THE BRIARWOODS' MACHINATIONS BEHIND, A CURIOUS MIND LIKE HIS WOULD BE A BOON TO MY RESEARCH.


LORD BRIARWOOD DIDN'T LIE ABOUT WHITESTONE'S STRANGE MINERALS.
SUCH VERSATILE PROPERTIES...

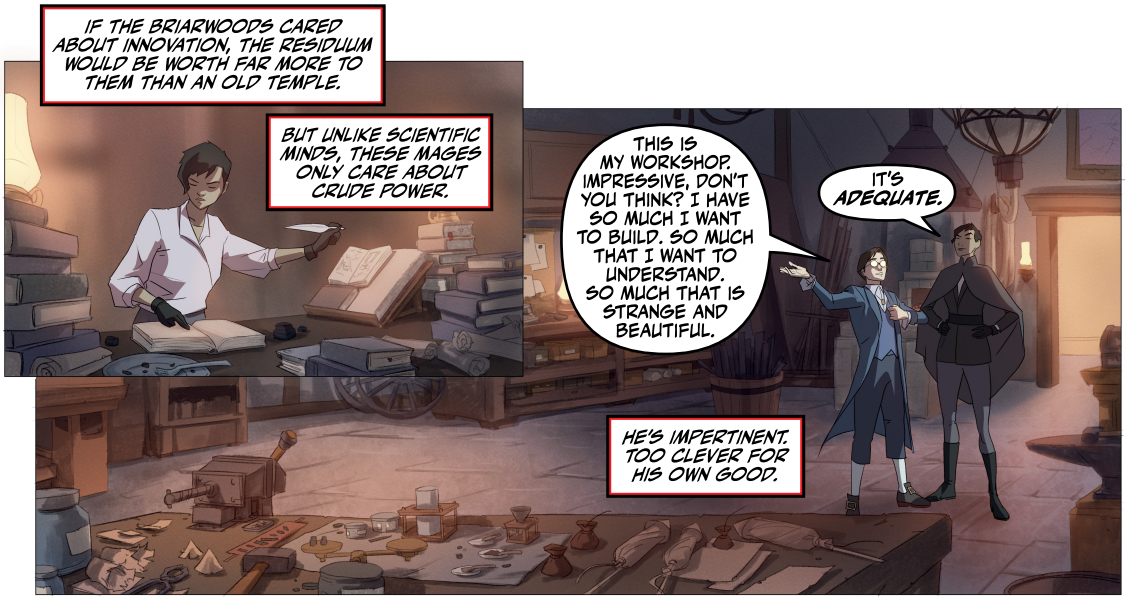

BLAH BLAH *FIREWORKS* BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH *TINKERING* BLAH BLAH BLAH

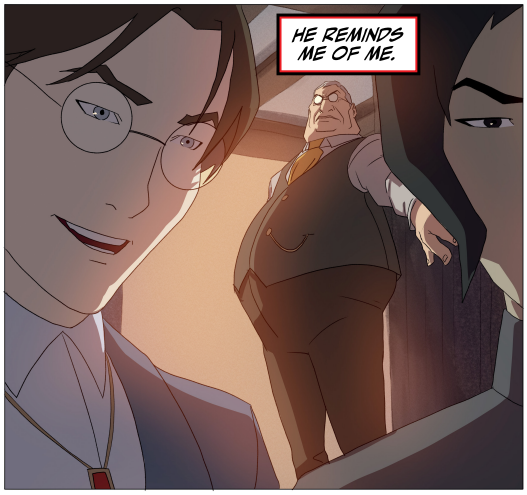

I TRUST OUR HOST HAS PROVIDED YOU WITH AMPLE INFORMATION?
THE OLDEST MAPS HINT AT A NETWORK OF TUNNELS, DEEP UNDERNEATH THE CASTLE AND THE CITY, LOST TO THE CENTURIES.
I WANT RESULTS, ANNA, NOT HINTS.


LORD BRIARWOOD, A MESSAGE FROM LORD DE ROLO. HE INVITES YOU TO JOIN HIM ON A HUNT.
GLADLY. I RATHER ENJOY HUNTING.


EXCELLENT. HE'LL BE DELIGHTED.


THEY'RE TREASURED GUESTS.
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO IMAGINE WHITESTONE WITHOUT THEM.
THE BRIARWOODS' MAGIC IS CRUELLY MANIPULATIVE.
MY APOLOGIES, DOCTOR. THIS AREA IS OFF LIMITS.
MY INSTRUCTIONS ARE QUITE CLEAR.
SO ARE MINE.


IF THE BRIARWOODS CARED ABOUT INNOVATION, THE RESIDUUM WOULD BE WORTH FAR MORE TO THEM THAN AN OLD TEMPLE.
BUT UNLIKE SCIENTIFIC MINDS, THESE MAGES ONLY CARE ABOUT CRUDE POWER.
THIS IS MY WORKSHOP. IMPRESSIVE, DON'T YOU THINK? I HAVE SO MUCH I WANT TO BUILD. SO MUCH THAT I WANT TO UNDERSTAND. SO MUCH THAT IS STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL.
IT'S ADEQUATE.
HE'S IMPERTINENT. TOO CLEVER FOR HIS OWN GOOD.


HE REMINDS ME OF ME.


SOON, IT WILL BE AS IF THE BRIARWOODS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HERE.
AND NO ONE WILL THINK THE BETTER OF IT.


ARE YOU READY, MY DEAR?
DOES THE END JUSTIFY THE MEANS?
IT IS A SHAME OUR HOSTS WILL SUFFER SUCH AN UNEXPECTED, DEADLY ILLNESS.


YOU KNOW YOUR DUTIES.
I DO.
I SWORE TO PROTECT THE POWERLESS FROM THE MACHINATIONS OF MAGIC--
BUT THESE NOBLES ARE HARDLY POWERLESS.
JULIUS! VESPER!
BY THE GODS, NO... NO!
SUCH WANTON DESTRUCTION.
STILL, WE DO WHAT WE MUST FOR THE SAKE OF PROGRESS.

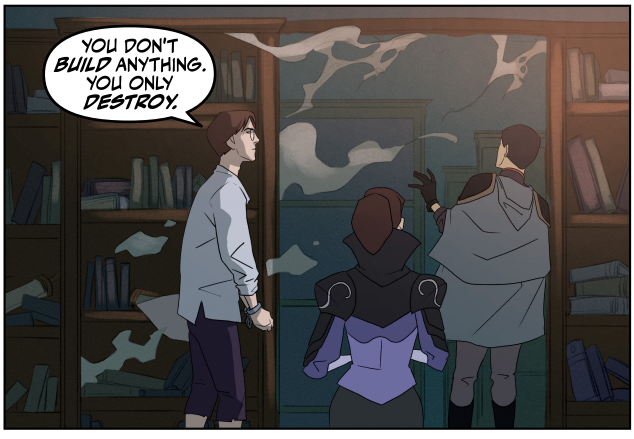

AAAAARGH!
NO RESISTANCE? YOU DISAPPOINT ME, FREDERICK.
THEY DIE LIKE COMMONERS.
LEAVE THE GIRL, VEDMIRE.
SHE MIGHT STILL BE USEFUL TO US. ONE NEVER KNOWS WHEN ONE MIGHT NEED A WITNESS. OR A PROP.
WAIT!
WHAT?!
LEAVE THE BOY TOO. HE'S A CLEVER ONE. SEEMS TO KNOW EVERY INCH OF THE CASTLE.
HE'S OF INTEREST TO YOU?


"ANY RESOURCE THAT CAN HELP ME LOCATE THE ZIGGURAT IS OF INTEREST TO ME."
"NEED I QUESTION YOUR DEDICATION?"
I'M INTRIGUED BY HIS EXPERIMENTS. HE COULD BE OF USE TO BOTH OF US.
SHOW US HOW VALUABLE HE CAN BE.
EXTRACTING INFORMATION THROUGH PAIN IS INELEGANT AND INEXACT.
YOU'RE THE BRILLIANT MIND. FIGURE IT OUT.
FIND US THE SECRET UNDERNEATH WHITESTONE.
PLEASE, I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING!


AAAAARGH!
YOU MUST UNDERSTAND--
--THIS IS FOR THE GREATER GOOD.
AAAAARGH!
PLEASE-- NO--STOP-- I DID NOTHING WRONG.
YOU'RE A MAGE. WIELDING MAGIC IS YOUR CRIME.
NO! DON'T HURT HER!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR, BUT MY PARENTS--OUR LIBRARY HAS A HIDDEN ROOM WITH THE OLDEST, MOST VALUABLE BOOKS.
I'LL TAKE YOU THERE.

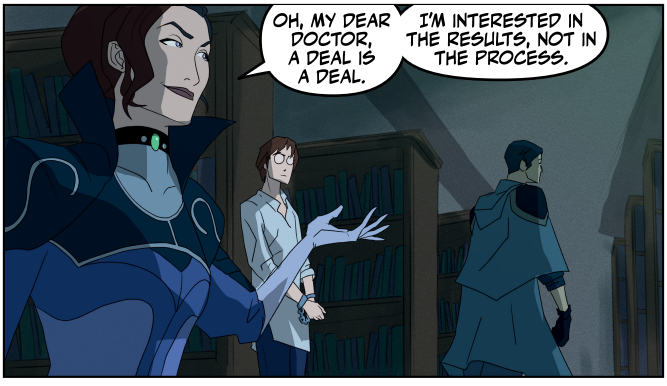



THAT ONE. THE STUDY OF ARCHITECTURE. IRONICALLY.
WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?


YOU DON'T *BUILD* ANYTHING. YOU ONLY *DESTROY.*

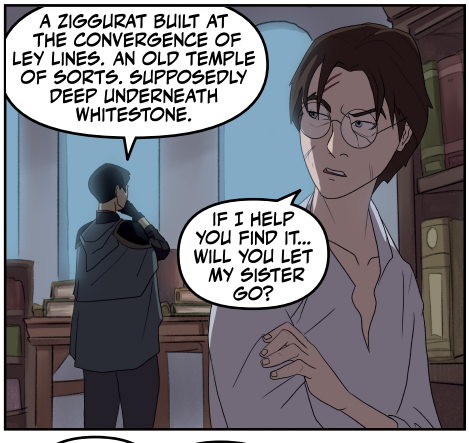

YOU WERE RIGHT. HE *IS* USEFUL.
YOU CAN KEEP HIM AS YOUR PET AS LONG AS YOU *BOTH* CONTINUE TO BE VALUABLE.

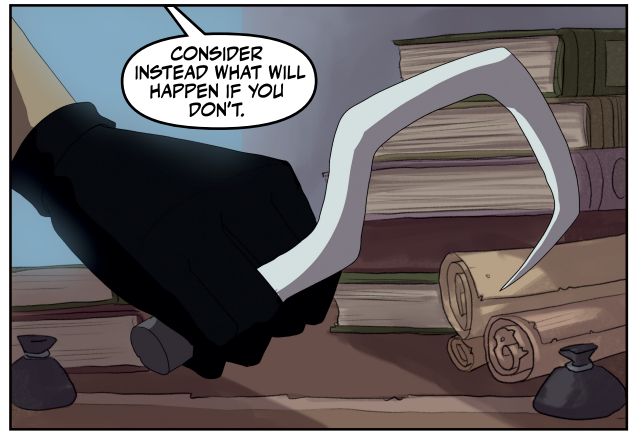

WE HAVE AN AGREEMENT AND I WILL HONOR IT.
I WILL DELIVER YOUR ZIGGURAT, AND YOU WILL PAY FOR MY RESEARCH.


OH, MY DEAR DOCTOR, A DEAL IS A DEAL.
I'M INTERESTED IN THE RESULTS, NOT IN THE PROCESS.


LET ME LEAVE YOU TO IT.
YOU KNOW WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE.


IT'S ALL A GAME TO THEM. AND ALL THE PEOPLE AROUND THEM, PAWNS.
WHAT IS IT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR?


A ZIGGURAT BUILT AT THE CONVERGENCE OF LEY LINES. AN OLD TEMPLE OF SORTS. SUPPOSEDLY DEEP UNDERNEATH WHITESTONE.
IF I HELP YOU FIND IT... WILL YOU LET MY SISTER GO?


CONSIDER INSTEAD WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU DON'T.


YOU MONSTER. I THOUGHT YOU WERE CLEVER.
BUT YOU'RE JUST AS CRUDE AS THE OTHERS.


THE BEST WAY TO UNDERSTAND A STRUCTURE IS TO GO BACK TO ITS FOUNDATIONS.
I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THIS TEMPLE, BUT...I THINK I KNOW WHERE TO START LOOKING FOR IT.
SHOW ME.


MY SISTER CASSANDRA FOUND SOME OLD, WALLED OFF CHAMBER DOWN IN OUR FAMILY CRYPTS WHEN WE WERE LITTLE. I HAVE A SKETCH.
MOTHER CAUGHT WIND OF IT AND FORBADE HER FROM POKING ABOUT DOWN THERE. SAID IT WAS TOO DANGEROUS. NOT THAT MY SISTER EVER LISTENED.
YOU KNOW, YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS. IF IT'S FUNDS FOR RESEARCH YOU'RE AFTER, WE HAVE THE COIN.
IF IT'S MATERIALS, I KNOW SUPPLIERS WHO HELPED ME WITH MY WORKSHOP TOO.
THESE NOTES, THESE DESIGNS...THERE'S SO MUCH RAW POTENTIAL, ALL WASTED ON TOYS AND CHEAP TRICKS.
JUST HELP ME GET CASS OUT OF HERE.
WHAT DO YOU WANT? ARE YOU HERE TO CHECK UP ON ME?
CONTINUE YOUR WORK, DOCTOR.


YOU HAVE NOTHING.
THIS IS NOT YOUR HOME ANYMORE.
LEARN TO SURVIVE OR PERISH WITH IT.
NO!
PLEASE.
YOU SHOW REMARKABLE TALENT.
I DON'T WANT TO DESTROY ANY MORE OF YOUR DESIGNS, SO I WOULD PREFER IF YOU DON'T FORCE MY HAND.
WORK WITH ME INSTEAD.


IT'S A SHAME, REALLY. HIS IMAGINATION. MY SKILLS.
UNDER DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES, WE COULD BE UNSTOPPABLE.
PERHAPS I WILL TAKE HIM ALONG ONCE I GET OUT OF HERE. AN ASSISTANT FOR MY LAB.
IF HE HAS THE WITS TO SURVIVE THE BRIARWOODS AND THEIR DOGS.
CLICK
AT LEAST THESE UNDERGROUND DISCOVERIES WILL KEEP ME OUT OF THEIR SIGHT.
THEIR MAGIC DISGUSTS ME, AND THE WHOLE CASTLE NOW STINKS OF IT.
FUCK.
MORE AND MORE CURIOUS.


KEEP GOING, WE NEED THIS TUNNEL EXCAVATED!
THE SERVANTS WORK WITH MINDLESS ZEAL.
PERHAPS THAT'S HOW THE BRIARWOODS WOULD PREFER ME TO BE.
ARE YOU MAKING PROGRESS YET, DOCTOR?
THE WORK SEEMS TO BE RATHER... SLOW.
YOU SAID IT YOURSELF. THERE IS NO EASY PATHWAY TO THE ZIGGURAT.
AS LONG AS WE CAN TRUST YOU TO DELIVER...
I WILL BRING YOU WHAT YOUR MAGIC CAN'T.
I CAN BE TRUSTED.
FAAAATHER!
I MUST FIND MY WAY THROUGH.


A FIREWORKS DISPLAY. HOW QUAINT.
IT'S EASY ENOUGH TO SETTLE INTO A RHYTHM.
BUT THESE CALCULATIONS... USING BLACK POWDER FOR *PROJECTILES*... COULD THEY WORK?
BOOM
INTRIGUING. THESE TUNNELS ARE METICULOUSLY MADE.
CLICK
INGENIOUS.
WHATEVER IS DOWN THERE IS WELL-PROTECTED.
AND WELL-HIDDEN.

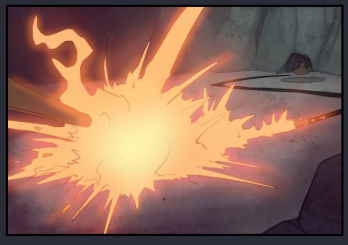

...THE TUNNELS ARE A MAZE, FILLED WITH TRAPS. IF YOU WANT ACCESS TO THE ZIGGURAT, WE HAVE TO BE THOROUGH AND CAUTIOUS.
WE HIRED YOU FOR YOUR INTELLIGENCE NOT YOUR MISGIVINGS. IT'S BEEN MONTHS. WHEN CAN WE EXPECT RESULTS?
SOON, I--
MY LORD, MY LADY. I AM WELL VERSED IN EXCUSES.
AND I RECOGNIZE A STUDENT WHO HASN'T DONE THEIR HOMEWORK.
YOU GROVELING PEST--
DOCTOR.
I PROMISE RESULTS, BUT PLEASE, HAVE SOME PATIENCE.
I'M NO WAYWARD STUDENT.
BUT EVEN SO, THE WORK SEEMS TO BE GOING IN CIRCLES.
NO!
AND SO AM I.
THESE TUNNELS ARE AN ENDLESS NIGHTMARE, BUT I REFUSE TO LET THEM GET THE BETTER OF ME.
PERHAPS...


PERHAPS IT'S NOT ABOUT FINDING PATHWAYS BUT CREATING THEM.

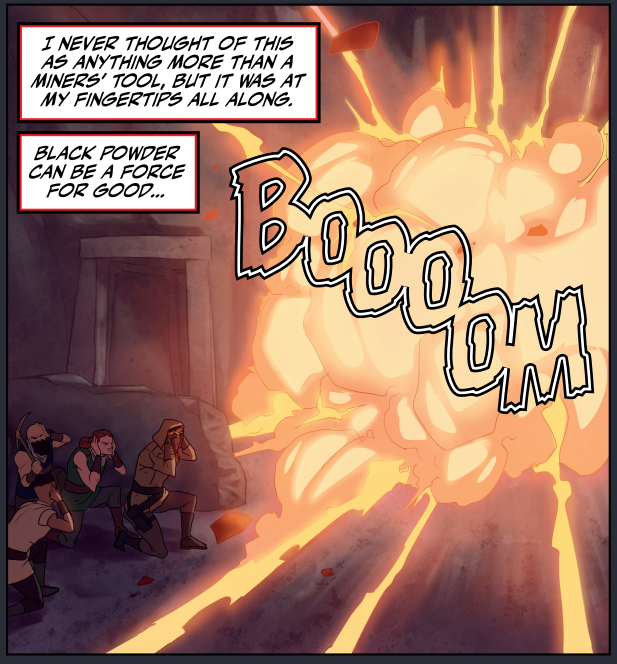

CARVING OUT TUNNELS TO FIND NEW TREASURES.


AND THE BOY'S BLACK POWDER IDEAS ARE A TREASURE TOO.
EVERYBODY GET BACK! NOW!








I NEVER THOUGHT OF THIS AS ANYTHING MORE THAN A MINERS' TOOL, BUT IT WAS AT MY FINGERTIPS ALL ALONG.
BLACK POWDER CAN BE A FORCE FOR GOOD...
BOOOOM


MORE THAN JUST A MEANS TO REACHING THE ZIGGURAT...
IT CAN BE A WEAPON.


I'VE FOUND THE KEY TO DEEPER PASSAGES, AND THE TRUE PATH TO THE ZIGGURAT...
WE'RE MAKING PROGRESS.
IM MAKING PROGRESS.
THESE DESIGNS OF YOURS ARE QUITE CLEVER. I'M CURIOUS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS BLACK POWDER MIXTURE YOU'VE HINTED AT.
HAVE YOU THOUGHT OF PUTTING IT TO BETTER USE?
WHY EVER WOULD I TELL YOU?
A VOLATILE SUBSTANCE LIKE THIS, IT COULD RIVAL ANY MAGIC.
IT COULD CHANGE KINGDOMS AND EMPIRES.
IT COULD SHIFT THE BALANCE OF SOCIETIES.
IT COULD BE THE GREAT EQUALIZER.


I WILL CONSIDER THAT WHEN I'M BACK IN MY CELL WITH THE GENTLE COMPANY OF FOUR WALLS AND NOTHING ELSE.
I WILL GET MY ANSWERS, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.
AND THEN YOU'LL CHANGE THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT? GOOD, I WAS GETTING BORED OF IT ANYWAY.
STOP TOYING WITH HIM, DOCTOR.
BRING HIM BACK TO HIS CELL.
WHAT DO YOU *WANT*?!
SURPRISE INSPECTION. THE LORD AND LADY WANT ME TO CHECK ON HOW FAR YOU'VE COME.


THEY'LL BE SORELY DISAPPOINTED TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR PRIORITIES.
THERE ARE TRAPS DOWN IN THE TUNNELS. YOU DON'T SEEM VERY AGILE.
TUNNELS. HOW VERY IMPRESSIVE.
I'VE FACED MORE DANGEROUS ENEMIES THAN STONES.
SMASH
AAARGH!
A WELL-PLACED STONE CAN KILL AS EFFECTIVELY AS ANY SWORD.
REMIND THE BRIARWOODS I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING.
INTERFERE WITH MY WORK ONCE MORE AND I'LL MAKE SURE YOU'LL NEVER SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY AGAIN.


THE CASTLE CHANGES OVERHEAD, WITH THE BRIARWOODS COMPLETELY SETTLED IN AS LORD AND LADY, AND NO ONE WHO THINKS TO QUESTION IT.
TIME PASSES DIFFERENTLY UNDERGROUND. THE DAYS STRING TOGETHER IN DARKNESS.
THE AIR IS SHARPER HERE.
MY THOUGHTS ARE TOO.
I'M SO CLOSE TO SOLVING THIS PUZZLE.
CLOSE TO A RETURN TO MY PROJECTS, AND BLACK POWDER WILL GIVE ME THE BREAKTHROUGH I'VE LABORED FOR.


NO! SHIT!
I'VE SEEN THIS SYMBOL BEFORE.
IT SHOWED US THE ONLY RIGHT PATH.
CAREFUL OBSERVATION IS ESSENTIAL TO SCIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING.
CRACK
COME TO WHITESTONE, THEY SAID--
OH.
IT'S MAJESTIC.

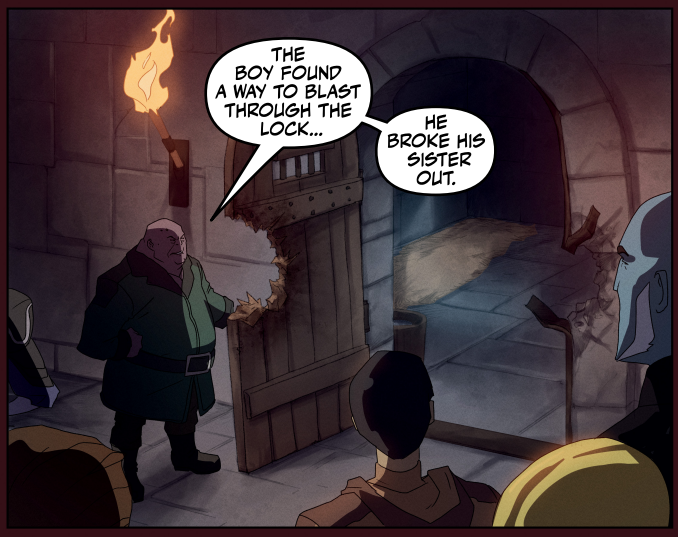

THEY CAN'T DOUBT MY DEDICATION NOW.




I'VE FOUND IT!
WONDERFUL WORK, DOCTOR.
BRAVO!
I DID WHAT YOU HIRED ME TO DO.
NOW, LET'S DISCUSS PAYMENT, SHALL WE?
I BELIEVE YOUR EXACT WORDS WERE A STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITY--
AH, BUT YOU'RE NOT DONE YET.
WHAT--WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
FINDING IT IS ONE THING, DOCTOR. THERE'S MORE TO YOUR TASK.


WE HAVE AN AGREEMENT. I DELIVERED ON MY END OF THE BARGAIN.
OH MY, I TOLD YOU SHE WAS LACKING.
HARDLY THE GENIUS YOU'VE PAINTED HER TO BE.
THE ZIGGURAT DOESN'T SIMPLY NEED TO BE UNEARTHED, BUT ACTIVATED.
WE CAN BE GENEROUS.
YOUR PET'S LAB. WE'LL SEE TO IT THAT IT'S ADEQUATELY SUPPLIED, AS A GESTURE OF GOODWILL.
BUT UNDERSTAND THIS: WE EXPECT MORE FROM YOU.
THAT'S NOT WHAT WE AGREED ON.
I--
MY LORD! MY LADY!
THE DE ROLO WHELPS HAVE ESCAPED!


WHAT HAPPENED?
I COULD FEEL VICTORY WITHIN MY GRASP.
WHAT HAPPENED?


THE BOY FOUND A WAY TO BLAST THROUGH THE LOCK...
HE BROKE HIS SISTER OUT.


LOOKS LIKE BLACK POWDER, MY LORD.
HE MUST HAVE SWIPED IT WHILE THE GOOD DOCTOR WASN'T WATCHING. HOW CARELESS.


I WANT THEM FOUND IMMEDIATELY, OR THE CONSEQUENCES WILL BE DIRE.
I WILL NOT TOLERATE SUCH NEGLIGENCE. SUCH FAILURE.


I GOT SO CLOSE, BEFORE IT ALL CAME CRASHING DOWN.


ASSEMBLE THE GUARD. FIND THEM!
AND YOU.
FETCH THE HORSES! MAKE YOURSELF USEFUL.
THAT OBSTINATE, SHORTSIGHTED BRAT. WHAT A WASTE.
HE REMINDED ME OF ME.
I KEPT HIM SAFE... AND THIS IS HOW HE REPAYS ME?
I CAN HURT HIM IN SO MANY WAYS.
I WILL.


BUT THEN AGAIN...
...YOU'VE SERVED YOUR PURPOSE.
BETTER TO CLEAN UP THE MESS.


THIS WAS YOUR PLAN? YOUR GRAND ESCAPE?
YOU HAVE NOWHERE TO GO.
I SUPPOSE I COULD BE MERCIFUL...
FAILED EXPERIMENTS SHOULD BE DESTROYED.
LET NOTHING STAND IN THE WAY OF PROGRESS.


"THE ZIGGURAT DOESN'T JUST NEED TO BE UNEARTHED, BUT ACTIVATED."
THE STRUCTURE IS AS COLD AND LIFELESS AS THE CASTLE.
THEY DON'T WANT ME, THEY WANT A MIRACLE WORKER, TO BREATHE LIFE BACK INTO IT.
BUT THESE SLOTS LOOK FAMILIAR...
THIS DESIGN IS INTRICATE.
SLIDE
WHAT SECRETS DO YOU HOLD?
WHAT IS SO IMPORTANT THAT THE BRIARWOODS WOULD OVERTHROW A CASTLE, MERELY TO GET TO YOU?


IF I FIND A WAY TO RECAST THE SYMBOLS, I CAN FILL THE SLOTS.
COULD THE ANSWER BE A SIMPLE PHASE TRANSITION?
IT'S THE CURSE OF EVERY MAGE...THEY'RE ARROGANTLY CONVINCED THEIR ABILITIES PROVE THEM WORTHIER THAN THE REST OF US.
THEIR CHEATS AND SHORTCUTS MAY BE POWERFUL...
...BUT THEY ARE NO MATCH AGAINST TRUE KNOWLEDGE...
...RIGOROUS EXPERIMENTATION...
...AND PERSEVERANCE.


YOU ARE A DISGRACE TO THE TITLE, DOCTOR.
MUST YOU INSIST ON MESSING UP EVERYTHING WE HAVE PLANNED?


ANOTHER THEORY DOWN.


HISSSSSSSS

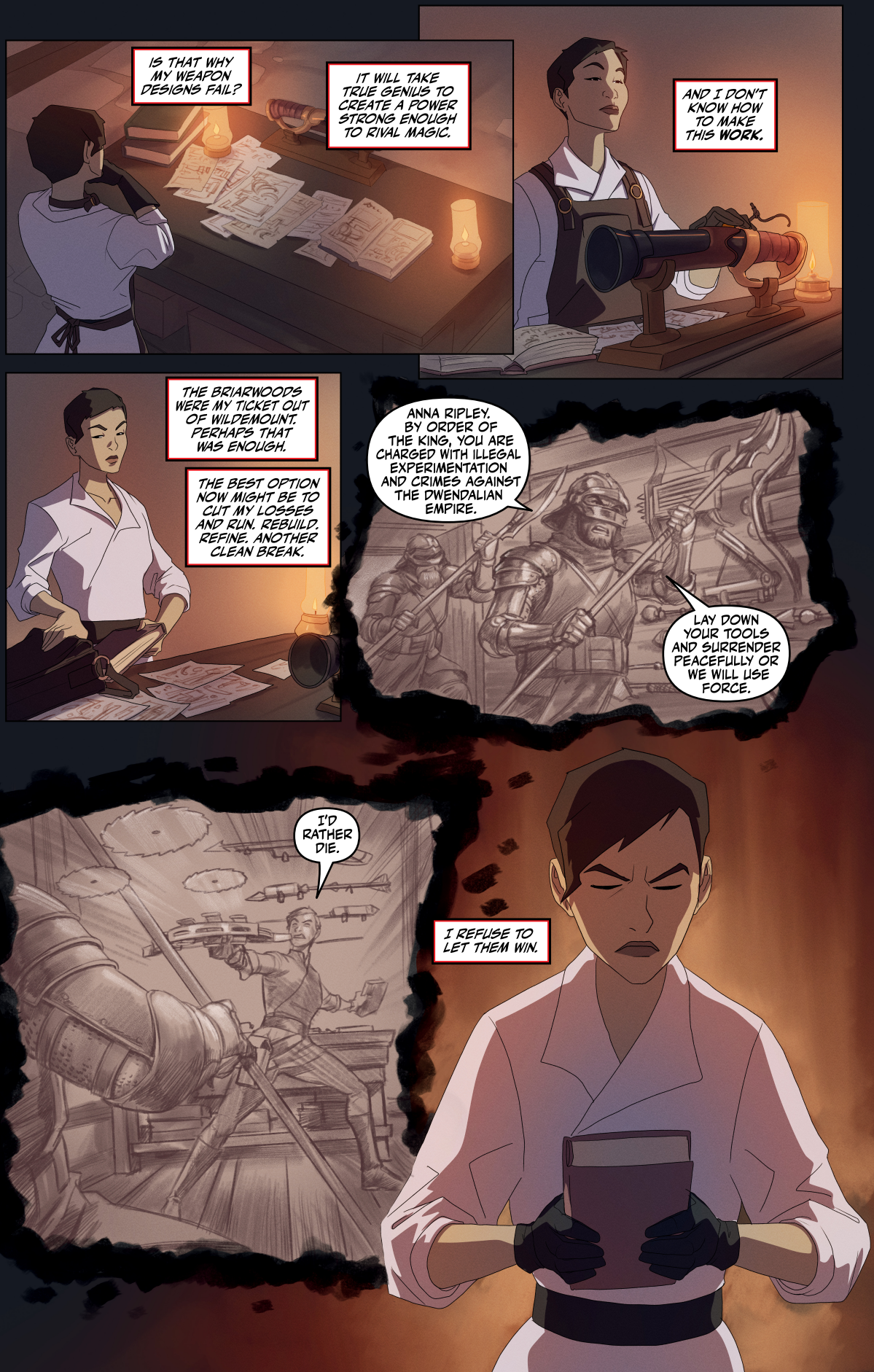



YOUR ARROGANCE MIGHT BE YOUR DOWNFALL, DOCTOR RIPLEY.
A CLEVERER MIND IN YOUR FRAGILE POSITION WOULD ASK A TRUE RESIDUUM EXPERT FOR HELP.
JUST ADMIT YOU NEED A HAND. A TEACHER.

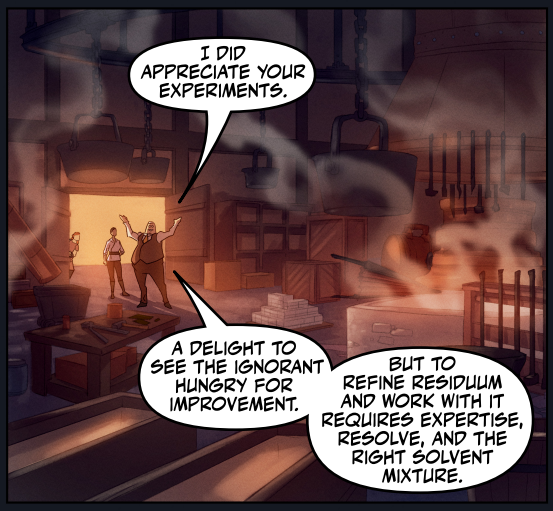

THERE HAS TO BE A SOLUTION.

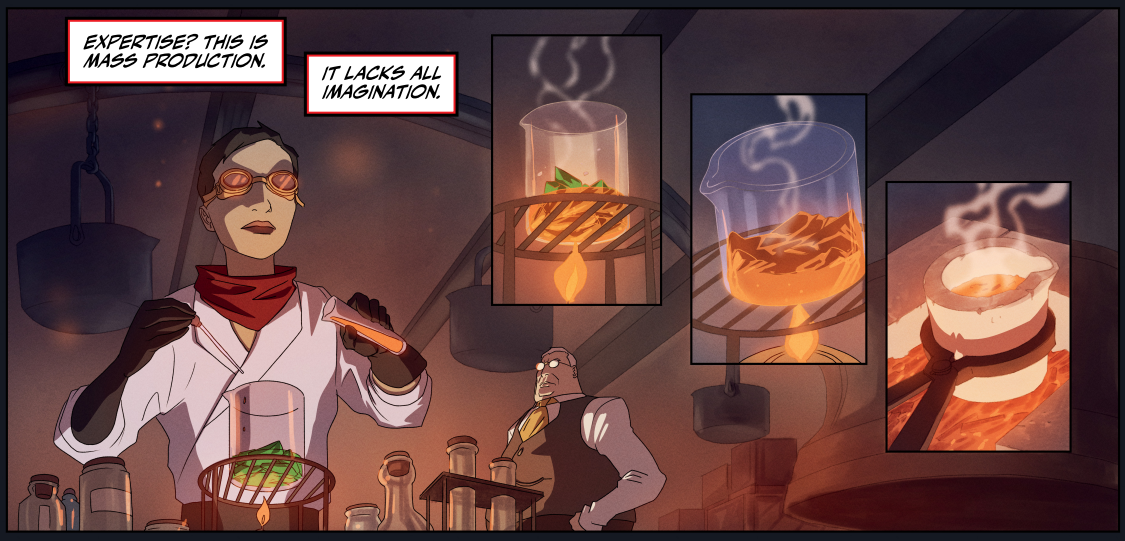

OR WERE THEY RIGHT ALL ALONG?


AM I THE PROBLEM?


IS THAT WHY MY WEAPON DESIGNS FAIL?
IT WILL TAKE TRUE GENIUS TO CREATE A POWER STRONG ENOUGH TO RIVAL MAGIC.
AND I DON'T KNOW HOW TO MAKE THIS WORK.
THE BRIARWOODS WERE MY TICKET OUT OF WILDEMOUNT. PERHAPS THAT WAS ENOUGH.
THE BEST OPTION NOW MIGHT BE TO CUT MY LOSSES AND RUN. REBUILD. REFINE. ANOTHER CLEAN BREAK.
ANNA RIPLEY. BY ORDER OF THE KING, YOU ARE CHARGED WITH ILLEGAL EXPERIMENTATION AND CRIMES AGAINST THE DWENDALIAN EMPIRE.
LAY DOWN YOUR TOOLS AND SURRENDER PEACEFULLY OR WE WILL USE FORCE.
I'D RATHER DIE.
I REFUSE TO LET THEM WIN.


AH, ANNA.
PROFESSOR ANDERS. I NEED YOUR HELP.
OF COURSE YOU DO. I'M GLAD YOU'VE FINALLY COME TO YOUR SENSES.


I DID APPRECIATE YOUR EXPERIMENTS.
A DELIGHT TO SEE THE IGNORANT HUNGRY FOR IMPROVEMENT.
BUT TO REFINE RESIDUUM AND WORK WITH IT REQUIRES EXPERTISE, RESOLVE, AND THE RIGHT SOLVENT MIXTURE.


EXPERTISE? THIS IS MASS PRODUCTION.
IT LACKS ALL IMAGINATION.


SO SHE HAS COME TO HER SENSES.
IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME.
SHE NEEDED A NUDGE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION FROM HER BETTERS.
AND OF COURSE, MY REFINERY IS UNRIVALED WHEN IT COMES TO RESIDUUM PRODUCTION.


NO ONE *BETTER* THAN YOU FOR THOUGHTLESS GRUNT WORK, ANDERS.
FIND SOMETHING PROMISING, DOCTOR?
OH, I HAVE. I KNOW EXACTLY HOW TO AWAKEN THE ZIGGURAT.
=SCOFF=
PROMISES, PROMISES. YOU HAVE *NEVER* DELIVERED.
YOUR JEALOUSY IS *QUITE* UNBECOMING, ANDERS. THIS IS MAGNIFICENT WORK.
UNFORTUNATELY, I DOUBT THIS REFINERY HAS THE MEANS OF PRODUCING RESIDUUM IN THE QUANTITIES I NEED.
IT CERTAINLY IS UNRIVALED. IN ITS MEDIOCRITY.
I'LL NEED LARGE QUANTITIES OF SOLVENT, OF CASTS, OF *EVERYTHING.*
THEN WE WILL PROCURE MORE. COST WILL NOT BE AN ISSUE.
SPLENDID WORK, DOCTOR.


THIS GLOOMY CASTLE HAS COME TO LIFE AFTER ALL.
WITH POTENTIAL AND PROGRESS.


STONEFELL IS ON HIS WAY TO TURST FIELDS TO SECURE ORDERS OF THE INGREDIENTS YOU NEED.
THESE GUARDS WILL ACCOMPANY YOU TO THE MINES OF THE UMBRA HILLS AND KEEP YOU SAFE.


TO KEEP ME SAFE OR TO MAKE SURE I DON'T WANDER OFF?
DON'T WORRY, I'LL SEE THIS THROUGH. AND CLAIM MY REWARD WHEN IT'S DONE.




UMBRA HILLS, NEAR JORENN VILLAGE.
IT'S STRANGE TO FINALLY BE AWAY FROM WHITESTONE.
SEEING THE WORLD OUTSIDE ITS WALLS AND TUNNELS AGAIN.
AND IT'S EXCRUCIATING PARTING FROM MY WORK.
YES?
DR. ANNA RIPLEY, EMISSARY OF THE BRIARWOODS. YOUR FOREMAN IS EXPECTING ME.
OF COURSE.
FARIL! VISITORS!
WE'VE HAD WORD OF YOUR ARRIVAL, FOR ALL THE GOOD IT'LL DO YOU.
ANOTHER TRADE EMISSARY FROM A FAR OFF PLACE, IS IT? I'M AFRAID WE HAVE SCARCELY FEW WARES TO BARTER. IT'S BEEN A ROUGH SEASON.
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN YOUR RAW MATERIALS.
I'M INTERESTED IN YOUR EQUIPMENT—ESPECIALLY YOUR STRONG WATER AND SPIRITS OF SALT—AND I'M WILLING TO PAY WELL FOR IT.
WELL, THAT'S NEW.
WE NEED THESE COMPOUNDS TO DO OUR WORK. WE DON'T JUST HAND THEM OUT TO ANY RANDOM STRANGER, NO MATTER THE COIN THEY CARRY.


AH, FARIL. I APPRECIATE YOUR GRUELING, POINTLESS LABOR.
BUT I ALSO NEED THEM, TO DO MY WORK.
I DID NOT COME HERE TO BARGAIN OR CONVINCE YOU.
I WILL NOT LET YOU OR ANYONE GET IN MY WAY.
WAIT!
THERE IS NO NEED TO THREATEN MY PEOPLE.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
I TOLD YOU. A SIMPLE EXCHANGE OF GOODS.
NOW, DO YOU WANT TO DO BUSINESS, OR DO YOU WANT TO DIE?

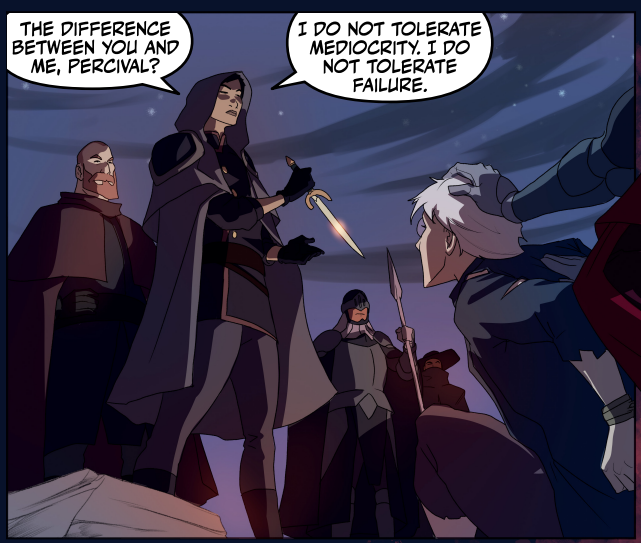

THESE INGREDIENTS WILL HELP ME CREATE ENOUGH OF THE SOLVENT I NEED.
A CRUDE METHOD OF ACQUIRING THEM, PERHAPS, BUT NECESSARILY SO.
AND THE RUSH OF POWER...
IF THIS IS HOW MAGES FEEL ALL THE TIME, IT'S IMPERATIVE MY OWN RESEARCH SUCCEEDS TOO.
ONCE I HAVE WEAPONIZED BLACK POWDER...
COWARDS, THE LOT OF THEM. DID YOU SEE THE LOOK ON THEIR FACES?
LIKE THEY THOUGHT THE DOCTOR COULD SUMMON AN ARMY.
WEAKLINGS, TO SACRIFICE THEIR LIVELIHOODS WITHOUT A FIGHT.
VENGEANCE...


RIPLEY!
I WILL HAVE JUSTICE FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO MY FAMILY!
IF IT ISN'T A GHOST FROM MY PAST. HOW QUAINT.
SO YOU SURVIVED YOUR DESCENT.
WELL, MORE OR LESS, ANYWAY.
OH.
OH.
BLAAAAM
GET HIM!
TAKE HIM DOWN!


I LOST EVERYTHING I HOLD DEAR BECAUSE OF YOU.
AW. AND DO YOU THINK YOUR LOSS MAKES YOU SPECIAL?


I WOULDN'T DO THAT IF I WERE YOU.
BUT YOUR WEAPON... MARVELOUS.


AND YET, HERE I AM.
AND HERE YOU ARE.
YOU COULD HAVE SO MUCH MORE THAN YOUR PITIFUL QUEST FOR REVENGE.


THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND ME, PERCIVAL?
I DO NOT TOLERATE MEDIOCRITY. I DO NOT TOLERATE FAILURE.


OF ANY KIND.


AAARGH
SUCH A LOVELY DESIGN WASTED ON SUCH CARELESS HANDS.
THESE CARELESS HANDS BUILT WHAT YOU COULDN'T.
THIS IS IT.
THE CORE DESIGN IS INSPIRED.
I CAN FIX THIS MECHANISM.
THIS IS WHAT I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR.
FIND A NICE HOLE FOR HIM TO ROT IN.
LET THIS DEFECTIVE WEAPON BE A REMINDER OF HIS NEGLIGENCE AND DEFEAT.
I KNOW WHAT I NEED TO DO.


EVERY ENGINEER MUST FACE THIS ORDEAL.
THE NECESSITY TO RULE OUT FLAWED THEORIES BEFORE FINDING THE RIGHT ONES.
LESSER MINDS WOULD QUESTION THEMSELVES. LOSE THEIR WAY.
LESSER MINDS WOULD NEVER SEE BEYOND THE FLAWS.
NOT ME.
NEVER ME.
I MAY HAVE WAVERED BUT I HAVEN'T STRAYED.
I TOOK THE BOY'S DESIGN AND MADE IT BETTER.
THIS WILL BE MY REWARD.


I HAVEN'T THANKED YOU YET, PROFESSOR.
WITHOUT YOUR HELP, I WOULDN'T BE WHERE I AM NOW.
THANK YOU. I'M WELL AWARE HOW MUCH TIME AND EFFORT YOU PUT INTO...AIDING ME.
ONE DAY SOON, I WILL RETURN THE FAVOR.
OF--OF COURSE.
BUT FIRST...
I HAVE A PROMISE TO KEEP.

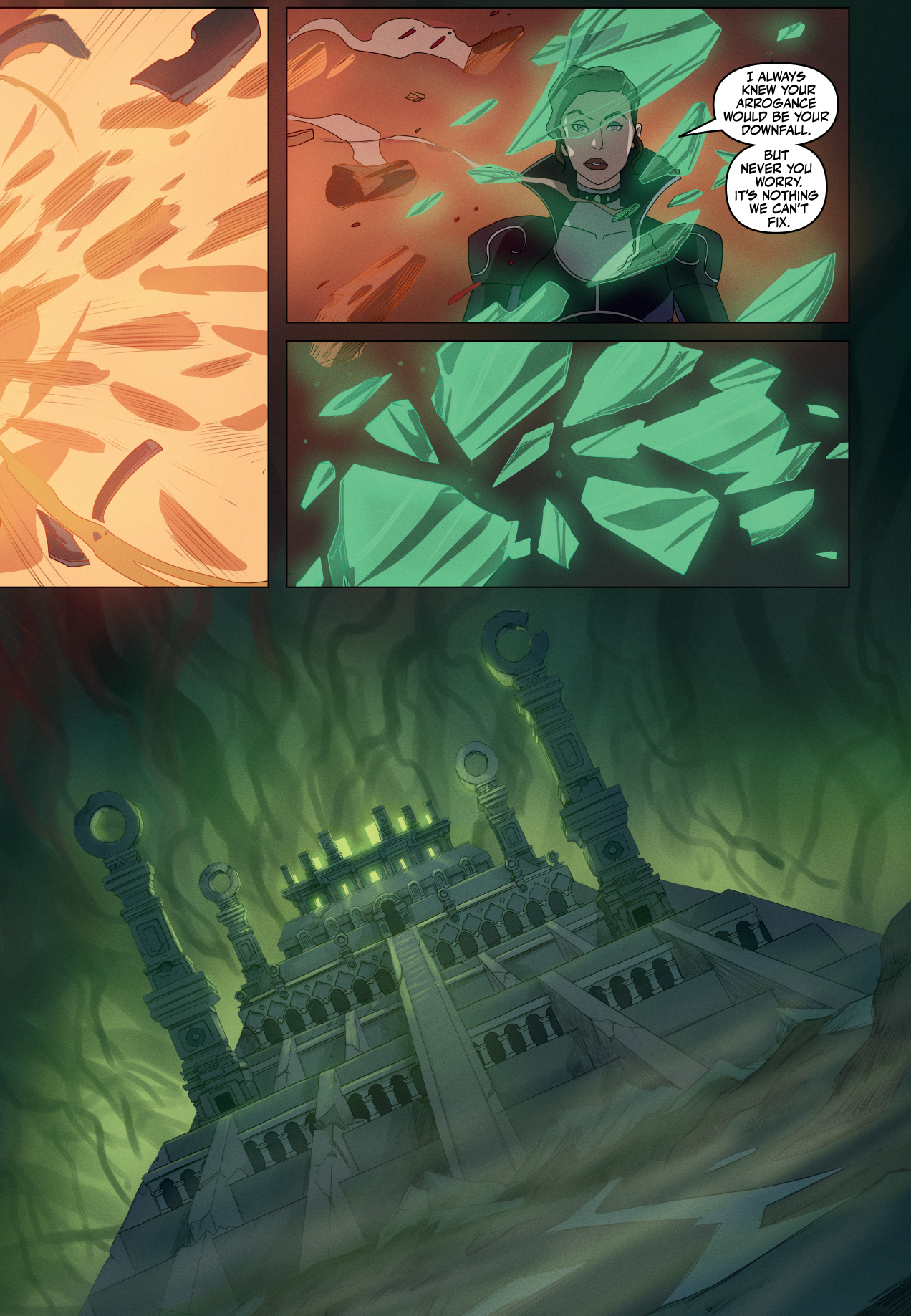

KNOWLEDGE.
INGENUITY.
INNOVATION.
THESE QUALITIES ARE THE VERY FOUNDATION OF PROGRESS.
AND THROUGH PROGRESS, POWER.


IT IS DONE.
AND THE WORLD WILL BE MINE TO CRAFT.


I MUST SAY I'M QUITE IMPRESSED, DOCTOR.
WITH THE PROPER INCENTIVE, YOUR WORK IS UNPARALLELED.
I KNOW.
AND WE HAVE A DEAL. THE ZIGGURAT--FULLY AWAKENED--FOR THE FUNDS TO CONTINUE MY RESEARCH.
WHO ARE WE TO RENEGE ON AN AGREEMENT?
THOUGH YOU MUST UNDERSTAND, IT MAY TAKE A WHILE TO GATHER THE FUNDS YOU DESERVE.
UNTIL THEN, THERE IS MORE WORK FOR YOU TO BE DONE HERE.
I'M *DONE* WORKING FOR YOU. THIS ANCIENT STRUCTURE IS IMPORTANT TO YOU, AND I HAVE THE KEY TO UNLOCK IT, SO WE SETTLE OUR DEBTS *NOW.*
I DON'T CARE HOW. *CONJURE* THE COIN, IF YOU MUST.
HOW *IMPATIENT.*


I'M NO LONGER DEFENSELESS AGAINST YOUR TRICKS.
DO NOT TEST ME.
STAY BACK!
MY DEAR. THE PRETENSE OF DEFENSE IS HARDLY A MATCH FOR US.
AND THIS PRIDE OF YOURS, IT WILL ALWAYS BE YOUR RUIN.
I WON'T BE TOYED WITH ANY LONGER.
I WILL KILL YOU.
I REFUSE TO LET THEM WIN.
I'LL CHANGE THE WORLD.
CLICK


BOOOOOM
WHAT HAPPENED?
I WAS SO CLOSE TO VICTORY.


I ALWAYS KNEW YOUR ARROGANCE WOULD BE YOUR DOWNFALL.
BUT NEVER YOU WORRY. IT'S NOTHING WE CAN'T FIX.


I WAS SO CLOSE.
ONE DAY, THESE BARS WILL OPEN.
AND WHEN THEY DO, I WILL NOT FAIL AGAIN.
END OF WHITESTONE CHRONICLES
BOOK ONE

SKETCHBOOK

Character Illustrations by TYLER WALPOLE Commentary by RACHEL ROBERTS



Thumbnail cover sketches.



The Legend of Vox Machina comes to comics! For the very first cover, the entire team wanted the artwork to be striking and memorable while capturing the tone of the story. Ripley's determined smirk and piercing stare, the scattered research documents, and domed residuum casting its eerie green glow accomplish this task very well for both existing Critters and new readers.



Cover pencil and ink.



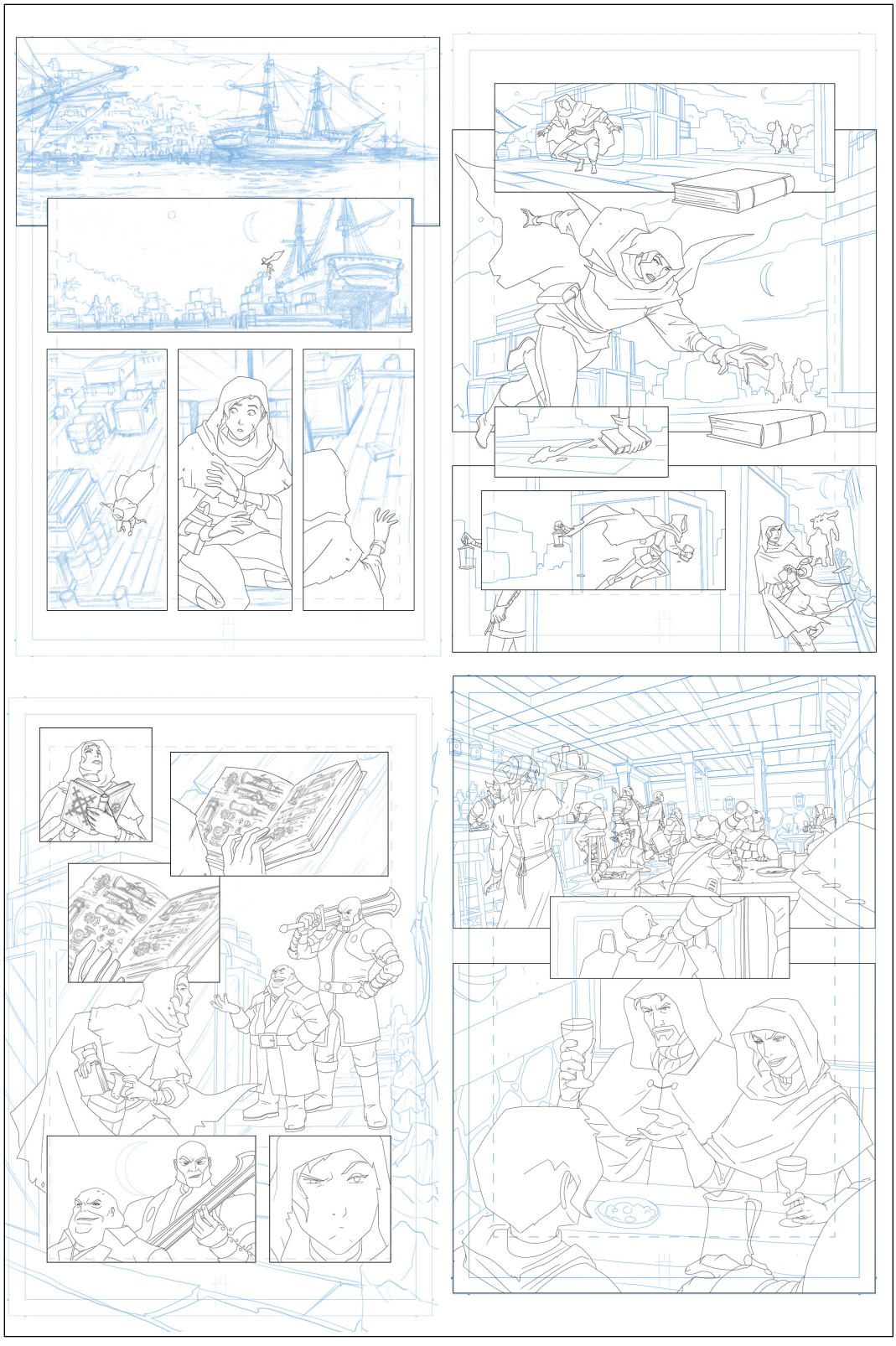
Early design sketches.

The first step in any comic's art process is to establish the look and feel of the characters. With *The Legend of Vox Machina*, our creative team had a head start: many designs were already established by the show itself, but that also presented unique challenges.



Character revised sketches.

Matching animation models in a different medium is one of those unique challenges, and for main characters and villains like the Briarwoods, even more so. Tyler's drawing style was a perfect match for the aesthetic and he truly brought the characters to life.



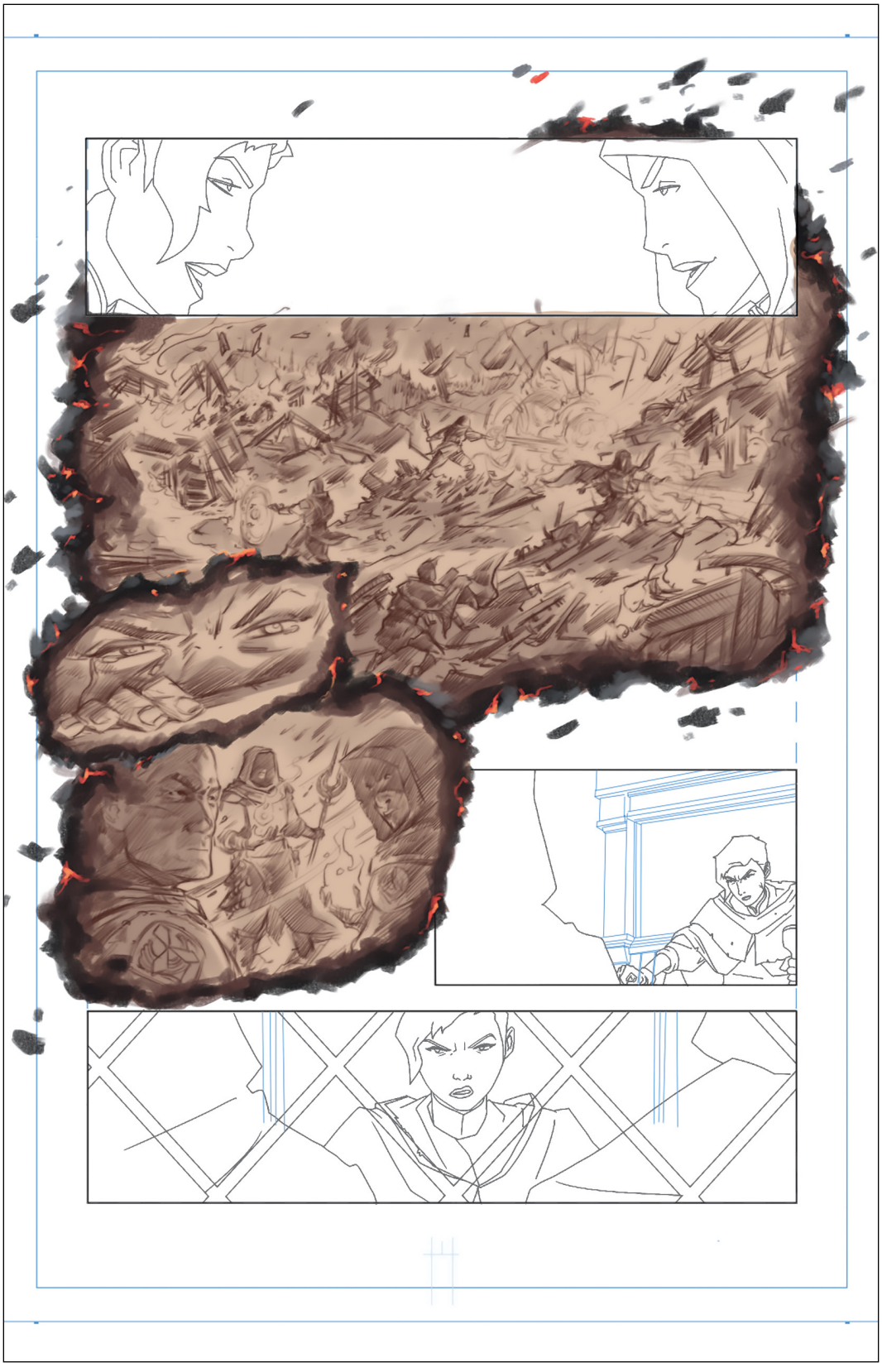
Ink interior pages.

Once the script is done and the interior pages are ready to be drawn, the artist will draw a rough draft of the book. This process, called thumbnailing or layouts, is an important step in blocking out each scene, character, background, and even the lettering balloons (pro-tip: always leave room for lettering!) While the thumbnails are much smaller than the final pages, they provide a vital roadmap for artist and editor alike.



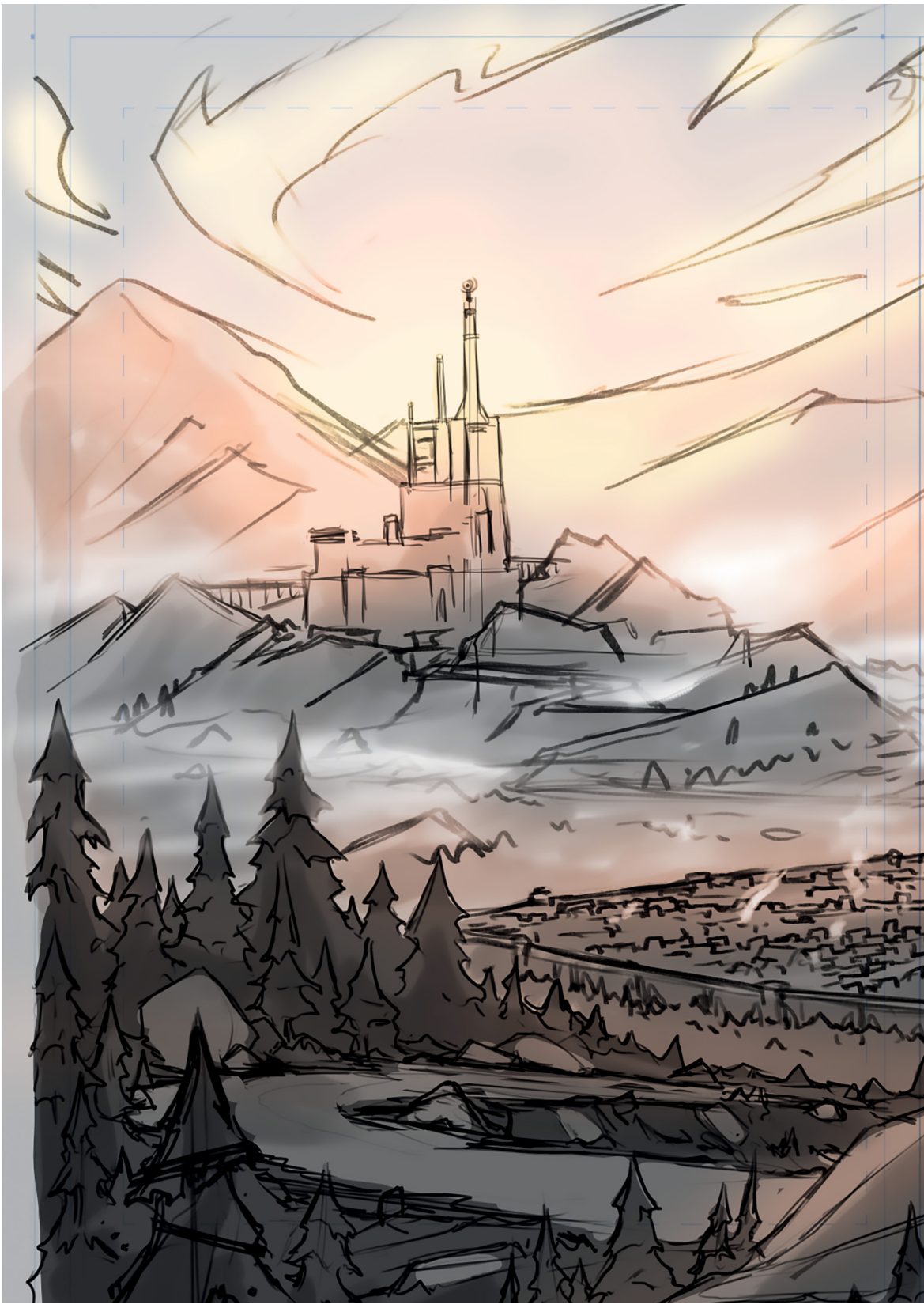
The finished inks included both black and blue lines. Blue lines have been used for a variety of purposes in art and comics, but in this case, they denoted the portion of background or props that would be painted rather than inked and colored in the "animation" style.

Rough and final ink pages.



Ink interior page.

With most comics, colors aren't started before the final inkwork is done. In this case, the flashback sequences had such a drastically different style that Tyler opted to work on them outside of the typical process.



With his strong background in painting for prestigious projects like *Magic: The Gathering,* full spreads like these are where Tyler's artistic talents truly shine. The beautiful lighting and skillful rendering transport the reader directly



Ink interior page.

into the story, and the painted backgrounds throughout the book pair wonderfully with the characters' animated series look.

The Legend of Vox Machina™

The Whitestone™ Chronicles

Ripley

Tragedy strikes the renowned de Rolo family of Whitestone when they're massacred by the vicious Briarwoods. Luckily for Dr. Anna Ripley, the bloodshed and regime change presents the perfect opportunity for her to further her own dark plans in service to Whitestone's new ruling family. But just how much of her loyalty lies with the family, when compared to her work?

Written by Marieke Nijkamp (*Critical Role: Vox Machina—Kith & Kin*) with art by Tyler Walpole, in collaboration with the cast of Critical Role. Fans of *The Legend of Vox Machina*, the record-breaking animated series from Critical Role and Amazon Studios, won't want to miss this first of three interconnected prequel stories.

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Critical Role

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