BRANDON SANDERSON

RIK HOSKIN • DYNAMITE • JULIUS GOPEZ

DYNAMITE®

Praise for WHITE SAND
Volume One

"Brandon Sanderson is an amazing author. His novels are addictive. White Sand is a fantastic new addition to his growing list of books. Highly recommend."

— Kirkus Reviews

"Within White Sand, traditional fantasy comes to life, in this intriguing blend of action, suspense, and mystery. The art by Julius Gopez is a nice blend of contrast as the novel progresses. Gopez manages to subtly add in more color. The cities seem to get increasingly detailed, as they grow larger."

— GraphicPolicy.com

"A tip of the hat to the creative team. These creators had a herculean task: take a novel by a writer who is known for his detail and length, and condense it into a lean graphic novel. Hoskin's writing preserves what makes Sanderson's stories so accessible, charming, and intriguing. Gopez's artwork meanwhile channels the otherworldly beauty of this bright, alien ecosystem, complete with giant monsters, sand magic, and expressive characters. I look forward to seeing how this creative team tackles the rest of White Sand, and commend them on an opening act well done."

— Tor.com

WhiteSand™
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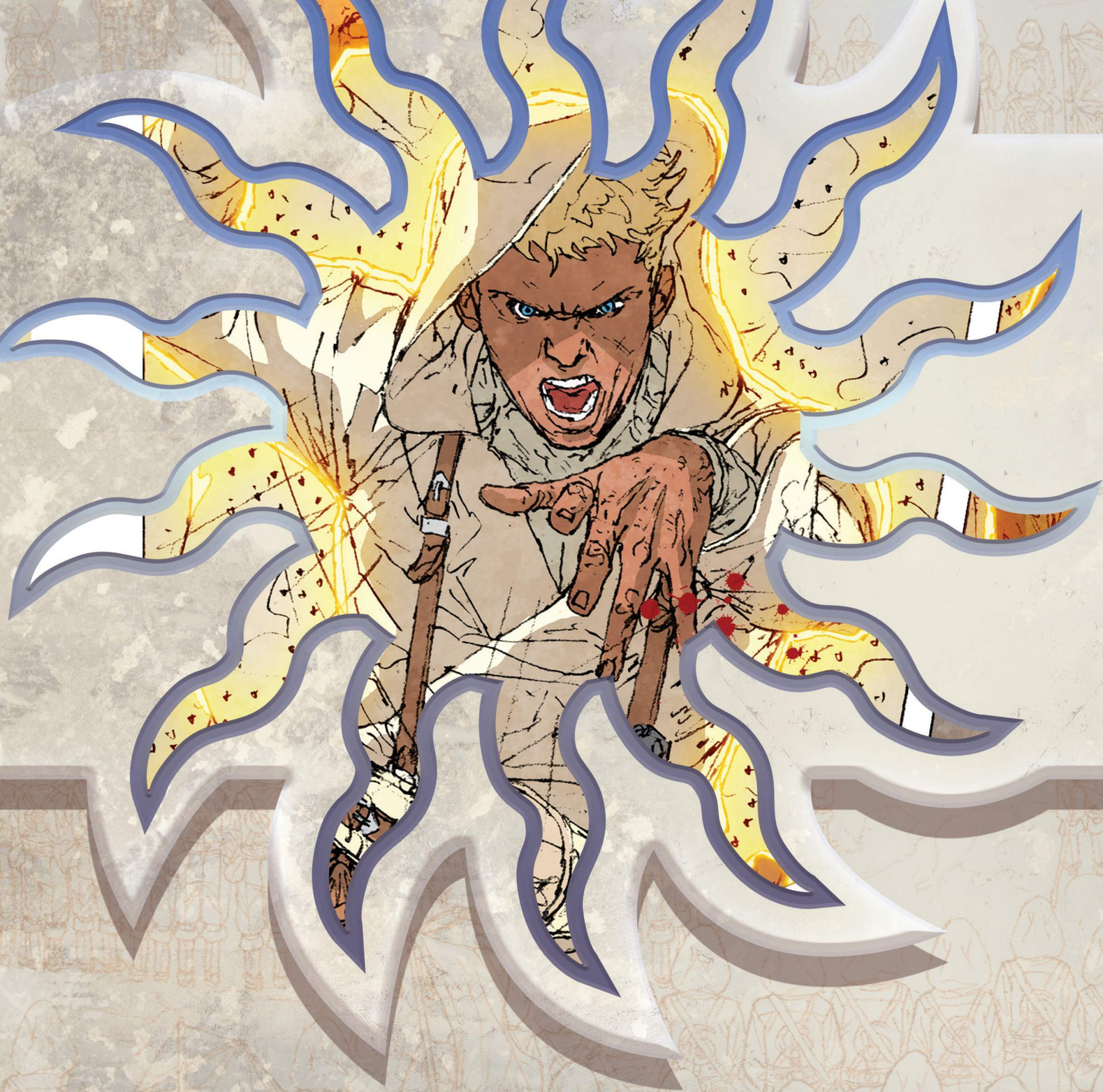

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DAYSIDE
NORTHERN BORDER OCEAN
DEEP SAND
DENKA
Revan
SEEVIS
THE KERIA
KraeDa
NOR' TALLON
Nor Tallon R.
TALLON
DEEP SAND
Ker Kedasha
Kezare
Ry'Do Alli R.
LOSS SAND
Kraezare
SOUTHERN BORDER OCEAN

PREVIOUSLY...

The planet Taldain is tidally locked — one side forever bathed by the brilliance of the beating sun while the other remains permanently in darkness.

On dayside, the legendary Sand Masters were once revered for their mastery of the magically-charged white sand that dominates the landscape, which they could manipulate to form huge constructions, for personal flight and for breathtaking displays of combat. However, in their arrogance, the Masters have become remote, and forces within the Taisha ruling council are moving to oust them from their once-celebrated role.

Having lost most of their number in a bloody ambush organized by unknown forces, the remaining Sand Masters now turn to Kenton as their leader. Half-darksider, Kenton is the son of the previous Lord Mastrell, but his own powers of sand manipulation are notoriously paltry compared to those of his contemporaries ... or so it seems.

Assigned a bodyguard by the Taisha council, Kenton now has two weeks to convince its leery councilors of the value of the Sand Masters to Dayside society. Adding to Kenton's woes, many of his own people seem to be plotting against him under the more forthright Drile, while the bodyguard assigned to protect him — Senior Trackt Ais — despises sand mastery as heretical to her own beliefs. It seems that Kenton's only ally is Aarik, a childhood friend who has just returned after traveling the world.

Meanwhile, Duchess Khrissalla — better known as Khriss — has traveled from Darkside in search of a mythical group of magicians whom her late fiancé hoped could bring stability to her own troubled land. Khrissalla befriended Kenton when, having become lost in the Kerla sands, her party found him amongst the remnants of the ambush on the Sand Masters. Kenton helped Khriss reach civilization but, with his powers depleted, did not reveal who he was.

Now, with all other avenues closed to her, Khriss has come to the Diem, home of the Sand Masters, to petition them for help — only to discover Kenton was their leader all along!

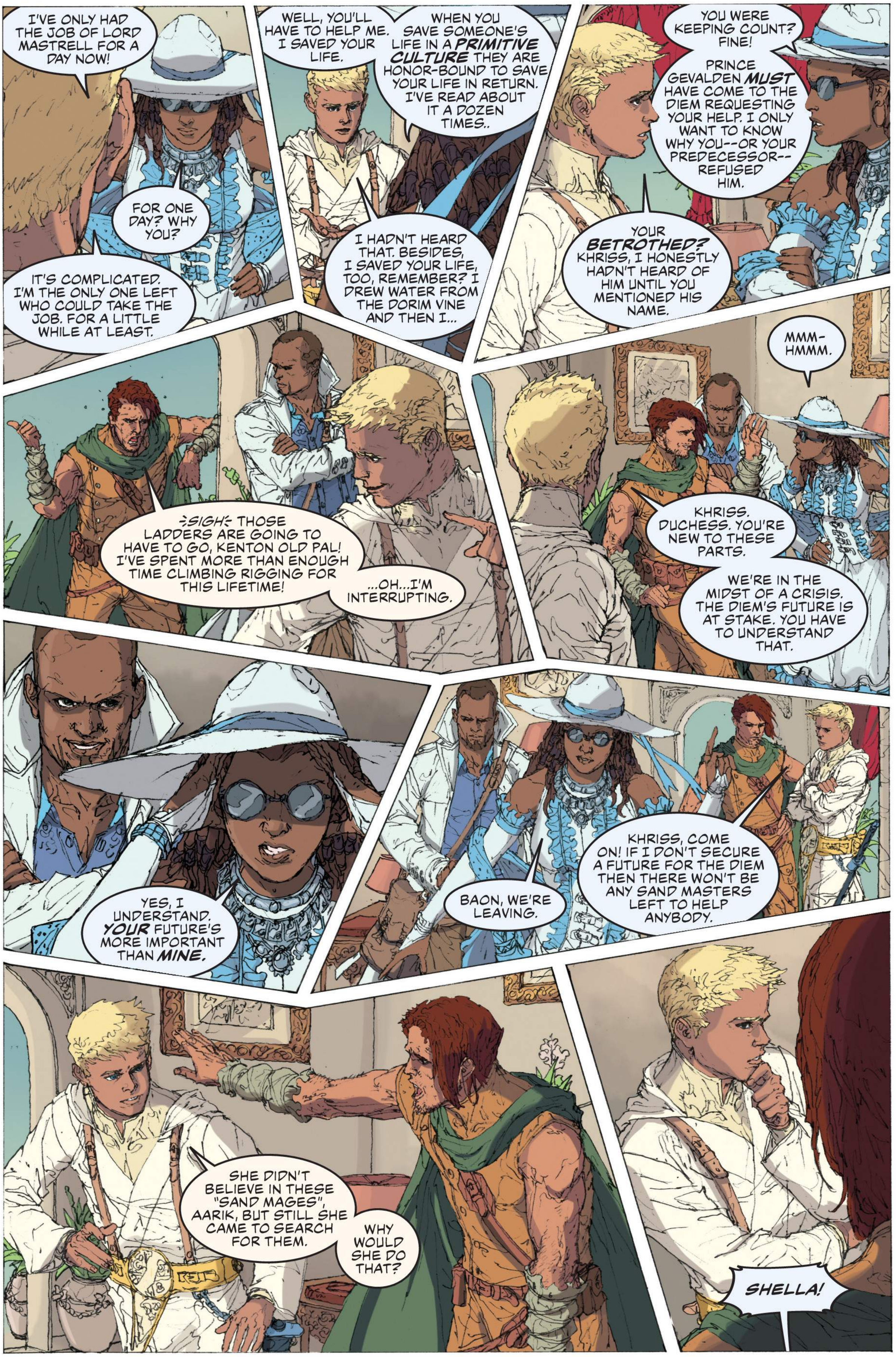
CHAPTER 1
HONOR BOUND

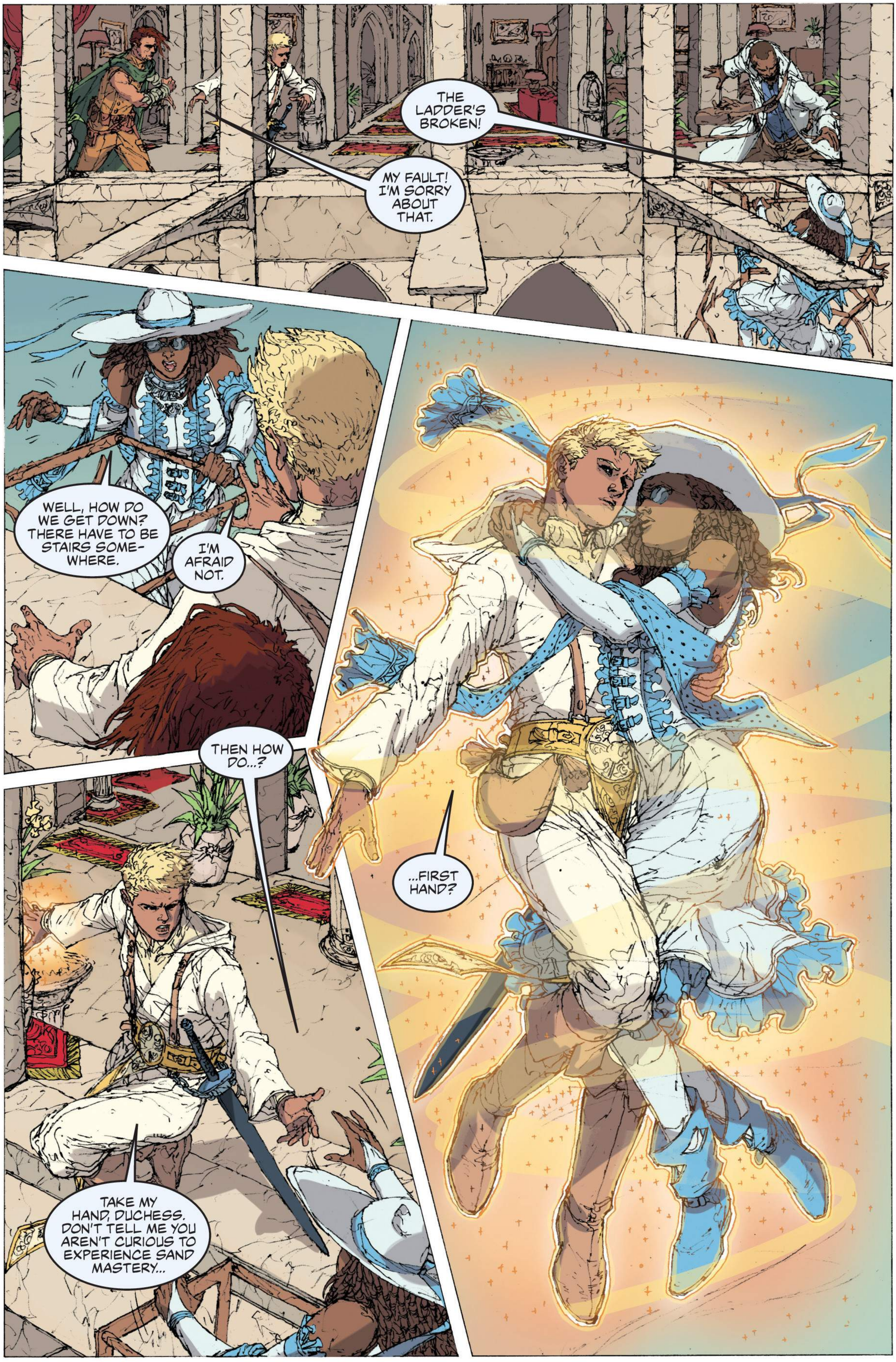
THE DIEM, HOME OF THE SAND MASTERS.
I... THAT...
UNGH!
HE CAN'T JUST RUN AWAY FROM ME LIKE THAT!
DUCHESS, I WOULD ADVISE AGAINST UPSETTING...
HEY! YOU CAN'T JUST--
I DO NOT UNDERSTAND YOUR LANGUAGE--AND RIGHT NOW, I DON'T CARE!
EHHH--?
I'LL GET HER.
DUCHESS KHRISSALLA, PLEASE! I AM SUPPOSED TO ACCOMPANY YOU--
--AT ALL TIMES!
DUCHESSES-- HONESTLY, YOU'D DRIVE A SANDLING TO DRINK!
HEY, WHAT'S ALL THE NOISE ABOUT?
YOU!
NOW, KHRISSALLA, LET'S NOT BE HASTY!
WE NEED TO TALK, KENTON!

YOU'RE A SAND MAGE!
SLAP
OUCH!

THAT'S TALKING?
YOU'RE A SAND MAGE!
THERE'S THAT WORD AGAIN. WHAT IS A SAND MAGE ANYWAY?
I'M NOT CERTAIN WHAT TRICKS YOU USE, BUT...
YOU'RE FLUSTERED--
A MAGE IS THE SAME THING AS A WIZARD OR A SORCERER. SOMEONE WITH MYSTICAL POWER.
I'M NOTHING OF THE SORT. I AM A SAND MASTER. WIZARDS AND MAGICIANS ARE FOR THE SUPERSTITIOUS-- CHARLATANS WHO PREY UPON THE FOOLISH.
--MAYBE A DRINK WOULD COOL YOU DOWN.

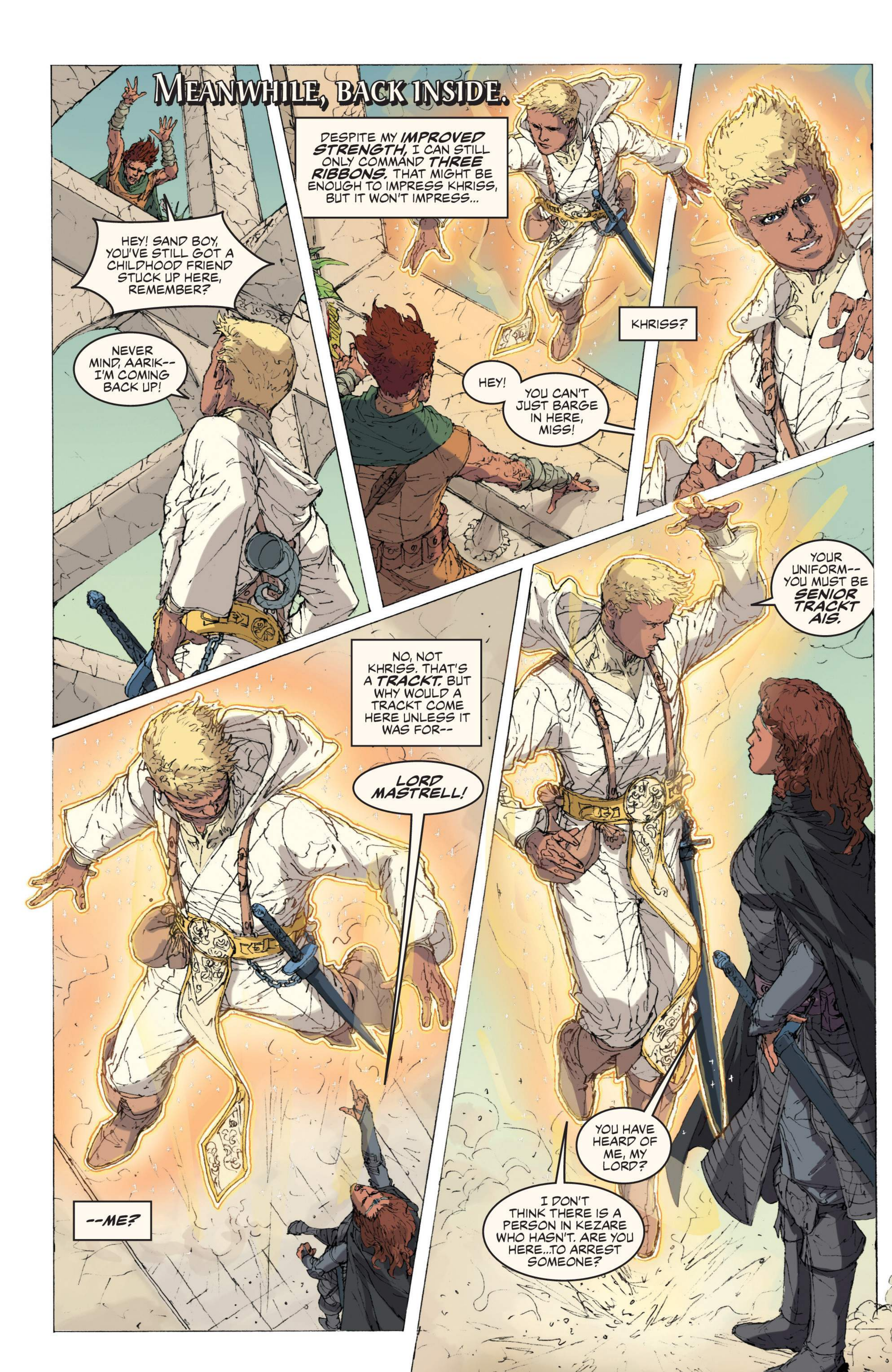
WHERE IS THE STRING?
WHAT STRING?
THE STRING YOU'RE USING TO HOLD IT UP--?
PLEASE DON'T TOUCH THE *SAND* LIKE THAT...
...IT'S VERY DISTRACTING.
SORRY.
I DON'T BELIEVE IT. IT REALLY EXISTS... GEVIN WAS RIGHT.
DAYSIDE MAGIC IS REAL.
MMMM, I KEEP TELLING YOU, IT ISN'T MAGIC--IT'S SAND MASTERY.
YOU STILL LIED TO US! YOU TOLD US YOU WEREN'T ANYONE IMPORTANT--BUT APPARENTLY YOU'RE ONE OF THE HIGH RANKING TAISHA.
BACK WHEN YOU FOUND ME, I *WASN'T* ANYONE IMPORTANT, KHRISS!

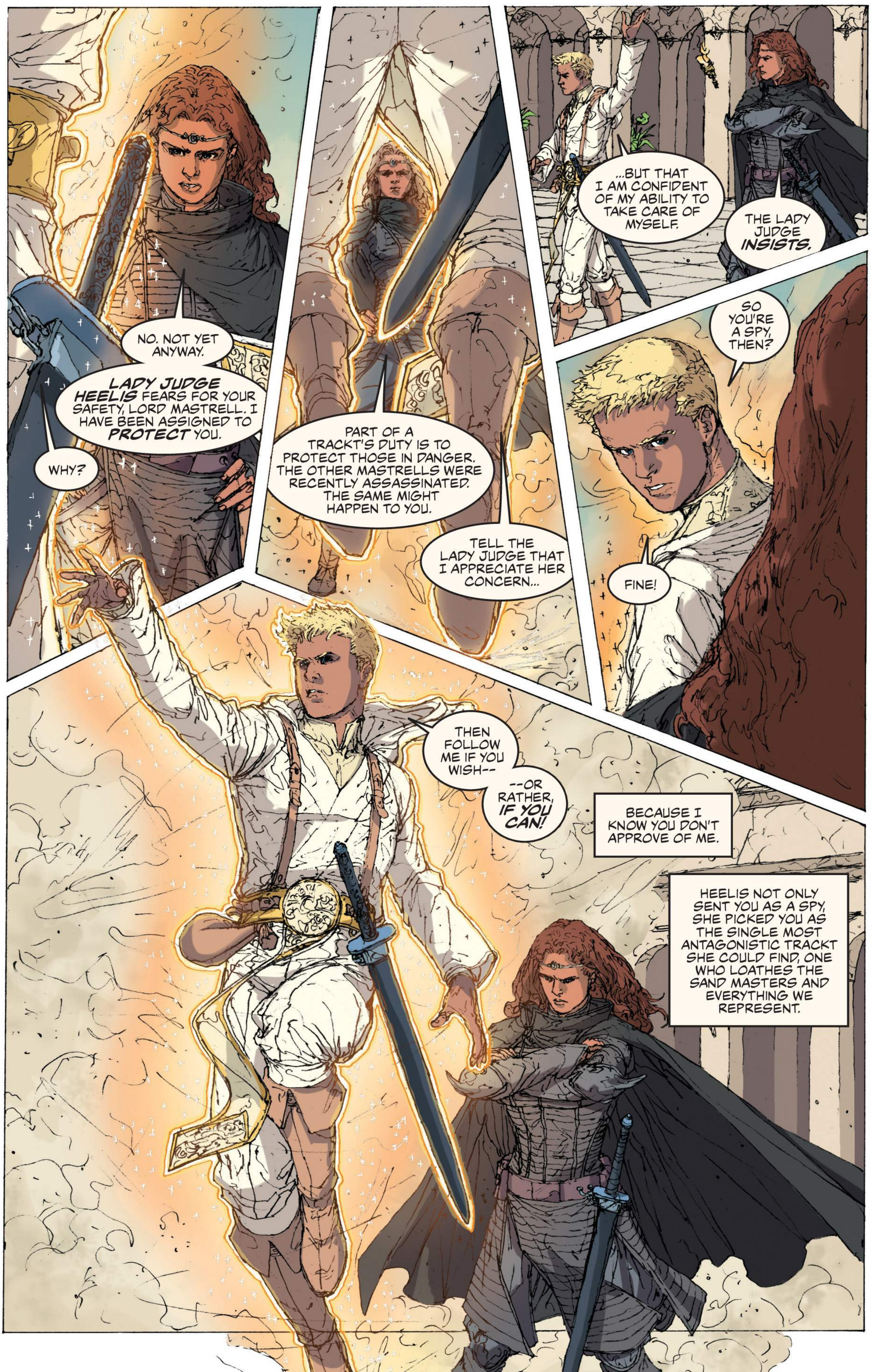

I'VE ONLY HAD THE JOB OF LORD MASTRELL FOR A DAY NOW!
FOR ONE DAY? WHY YOU?
IT'S COMPLICATED. I'M THE ONLY ONE LEFT WHO COULD TAKE THE JOB. FOR A LITTLE WHILE AT LEAST.
WELL, YOU'LL HAVE TO HELP ME. I SAVED YOUR LIFE.
WHEN YOU SAVE SOMEONE'S LIFE IN A PRIMITIVE CULTURE THEY ARE HONOR-BOUND TO SAVE YOUR LIFE IN RETURN. I'VE READ ABOUT IT A DOZEN TIMES..
I HADN'T HEARD THAT. BESIDES, I SAVED YOUR LIFE, TOO, REMEMBER? I DREW WATER FROM THE DORIM VINE AND THEN I...
YOU WERE KEEPING COUNT? FINE!
PRINCE GEVALDEN MUST HAVE COME TO THE DIEM REQUESTING YOUR HELP. I ONLY WANT TO KNOW WHY YOU--OR YOUR PREDECESSOR--REFUSED HIM.
YOUR BETROTHED? KHRISS, I HONESTLY HADN'T HEARD OF HIM UNTIL YOU MENTIONED HIS NAME.
MMM-HMMM.
:SIGH: THOSE LADDERS ARE GOING TO HAVE TO GO, KENTON OLD PAL! I'VE SPENT MORE THAN ENOUGH TIME CLIMBING RIGGING FOR THIS LIFETIME!
...OH...I'M INTERRUPTING.
KHRISS. DUCHESS. YOU'RE NEW TO THESE PARTS.
WE'RE IN THE MIDST OF A CRISIS. THE DIEM'S FUTURE IS AT STAKE. YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT.
YES, I UNDERSTAND. YOUR FUTURE'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN MINE.
BAON, WE'RE LEAVING.
KHRISS, COME ON! IF I DON'T SECURE A FUTURE FOR THE DIEM THEN THERE WON'T BE ANY SAND MASTERS LEFT TO HELP ANYBODY.
SHE DIDN'T BELIEVE IN THESE "SAND MAGES", AARIK, BUT STILL SHE CAME TO SEARCH FOR THEM.
WHY WOULD SHE DO THAT?
SHELLA!

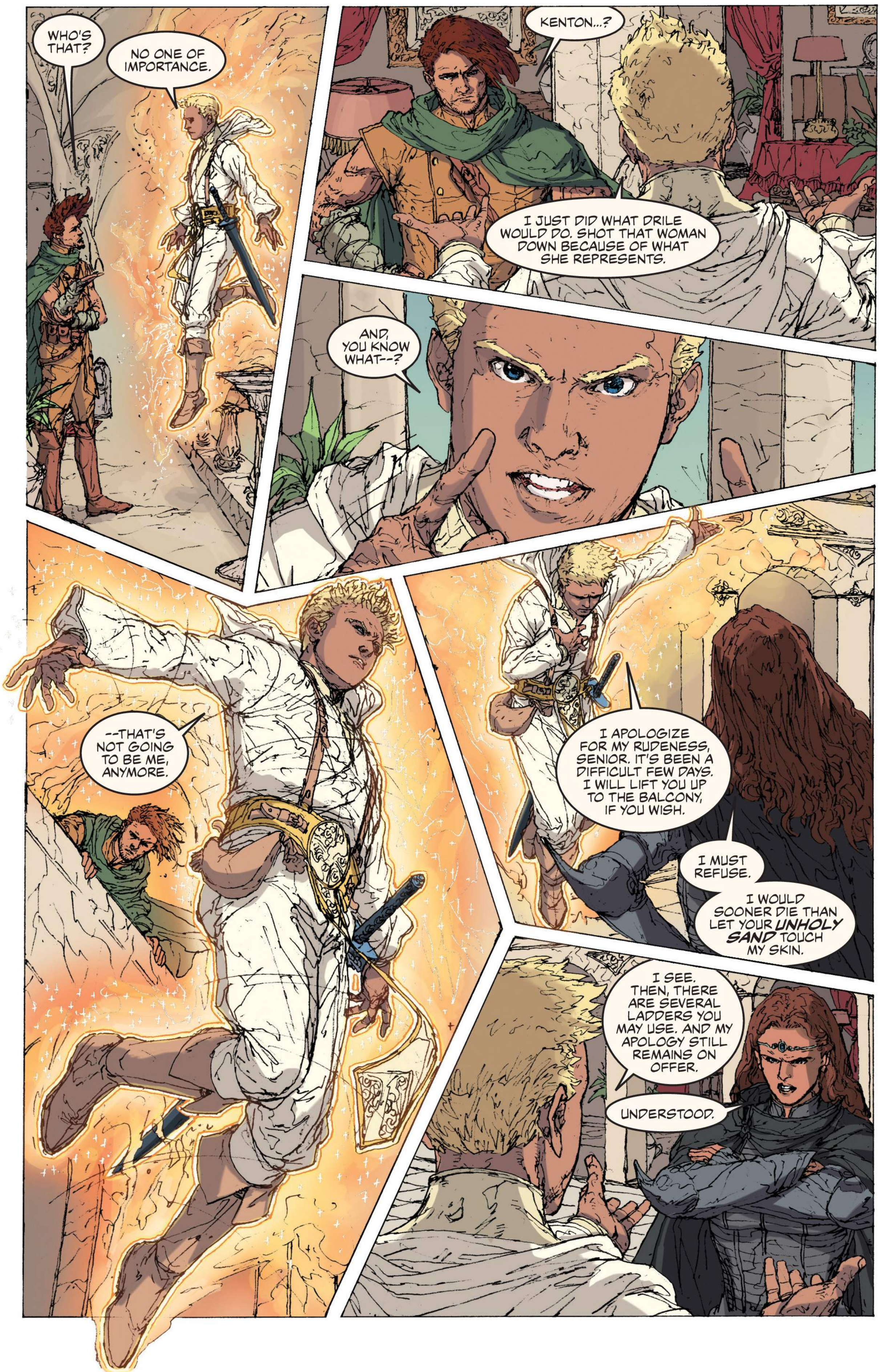

THE LADDER'S BROKEN!
MY FAULT! I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT.
WELL, HOW DO WE GET DOWN? THERE HAVE TO BE STAIRS SOME-WHERE.
I'M AFRAID NOT.
THEN HOW DO...?
...FIRST HAND?
TAKE MY HAND, DUCHESS. DON'T TELL ME YOU AREN'T CURIOUS TO EXPERIENCE SAND MASTERY...

OH, SHELLA! SHELLA! SHELLA! DON'T DROP ME!
WAIT A MINUTE! YOU COULD HAVE JUST DROPPED ME BY MYSELF-- YOU DIDN'T NEED TO CARRY ME!
I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE MORE FUN TO--

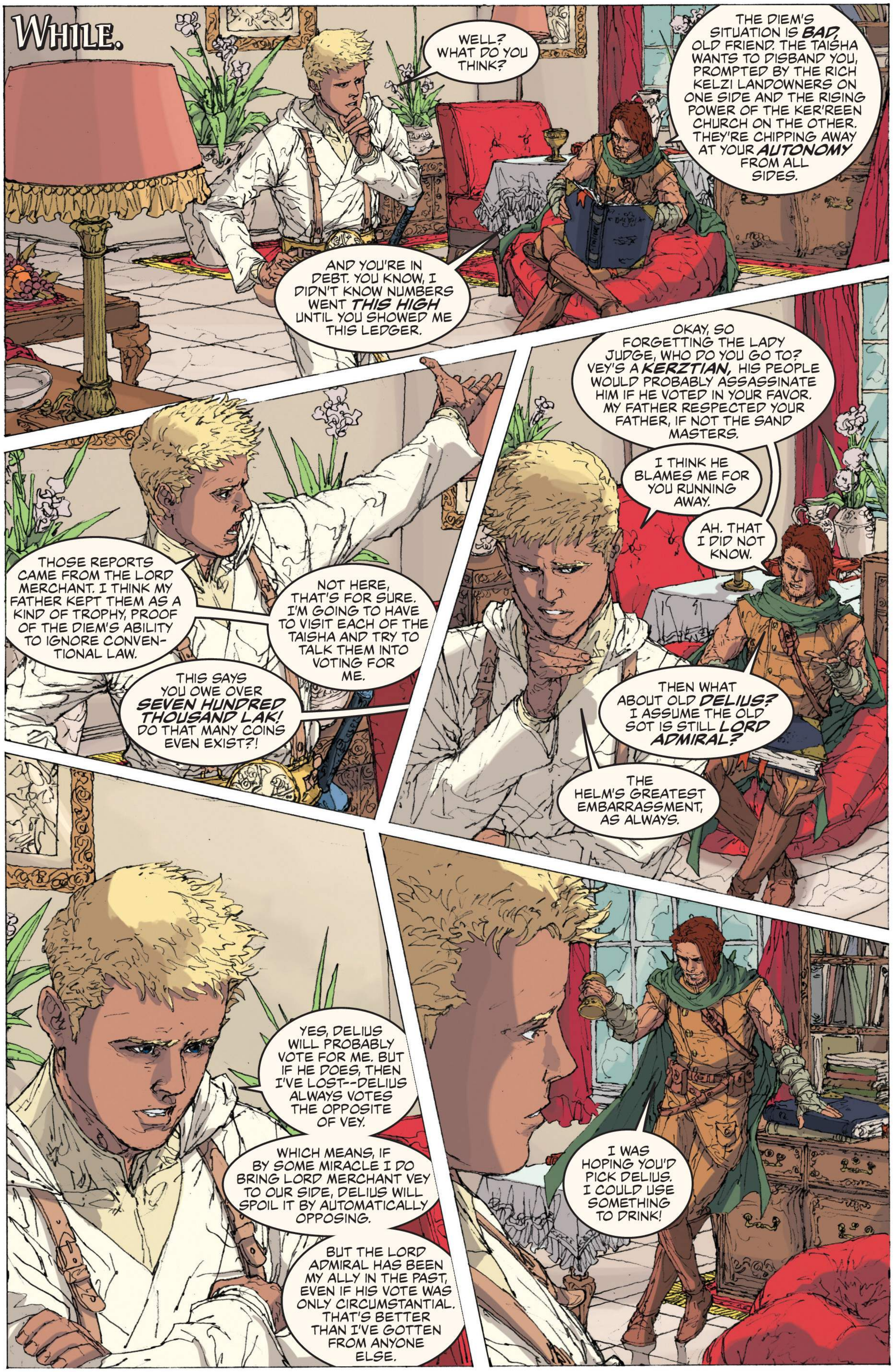
--TO...
...UH...
...YOU KNOW WHAT? YOU ARE COMPLETELY RIGHT. I SHOULD'VE JUST DROPPED YOU.
YOU'RE A BOY PLAYING GAMES!
BAON, N'TEESE--WE'RE LEAVING!
I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT MAN! I SAVED HIS LIFE, TRAVELED HALFWAY ACROSS THE KERLA WITH HIM, AND STILL HE LIED TO ME!
WE SHOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FIGURE IT OUT.
HOW? THERE'S NOTHING REMARKABLE ABOUT HIM--HE DIDN'T STRIKE ME AS ANYONE IMPORTANT.
SOMEDAY, DUCHESS, YOU WILL NEED TO LEARN HOW TO JUDGE PEOPLE, AND NOT FACES OR TITLES.
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN, BAON?
:SIGH!: NEVER MIND, JUST GET ME AWAY FROM THAT...THAT LIAR!


MEANWHILE, BACK INSIDE.
HEY! SAND BOY, YOU'VE STILL GOT A CHILDHOOD FRIEND STUCK UP HERE, REMEMBER?
NEVER MIND, AARIK-- I'M COMING BACK UP!
DESPITE MY IMPROVED STRENGTH, I CAN STILL ONLY COMMAND THREE RIBBONS. THAT MIGHT BE ENOUGH TO IMPRESS KHRISS, BUT IT WON'T IMPRESS...
HEY!
YOU CAN'T JUST BARGE IN HERE, MISS!
KHRISS?
NO, NOT KHRISS. THAT'S A TRACKT. BUT WHY WOULD A TRACKT COME HERE UNLESS IT WAS FOR--
LORD MASTRELL!
--ME?
YOUR UNIFORM-- YOU MUST BE SENIOR TRACKT AIS.
YOU HAVE HEARD OF ME, MY LORD?
I DON'T THINK THERE IS A PERSON IN KEZARE WHO HASN'T. ARE YOU HERE...TO ARREST SOMEONE?


NO. NOT YET ANYWAY.
LADY JUDGE HEELIS FEARS FOR YOUR SAFETY, LORD MASTRELL. I HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED TO PROTECT YOU.
WHY?
PART OF A TRACKT'S DUTY IS TO PROTECT THOSE IN DANGER. THE OTHER MASTRELLS WERE RECENTLY ASSASSINATED. THE SAME MIGHT HAPPEN TO YOU.
TELL THE LADY JUDGE THAT I APPRECIATE HER CONCERN...
...BUT THAT I AM CONFIDENT OF MY ABILITY TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.
THE LADY JUDGE INSISTS.
SO YOU'RE A SPY, THEN?
FINE!
THEN FOLLOW ME IF YOU WISH--
--OR RATHER, IF YOU CAN!
BECAUSE I KNOW YOU DON'T APPROVE OF ME.
HEELIS NOT ONLY SENT YOU AS A SPY, SHE PICKED YOU AS THE SINGLE MOST ANTAGONISTIC TRACKT SHE COULD FIND, ONE WHO LOATHES THE SAND MASTERS AND EVERYTHING WE REPRESENT.

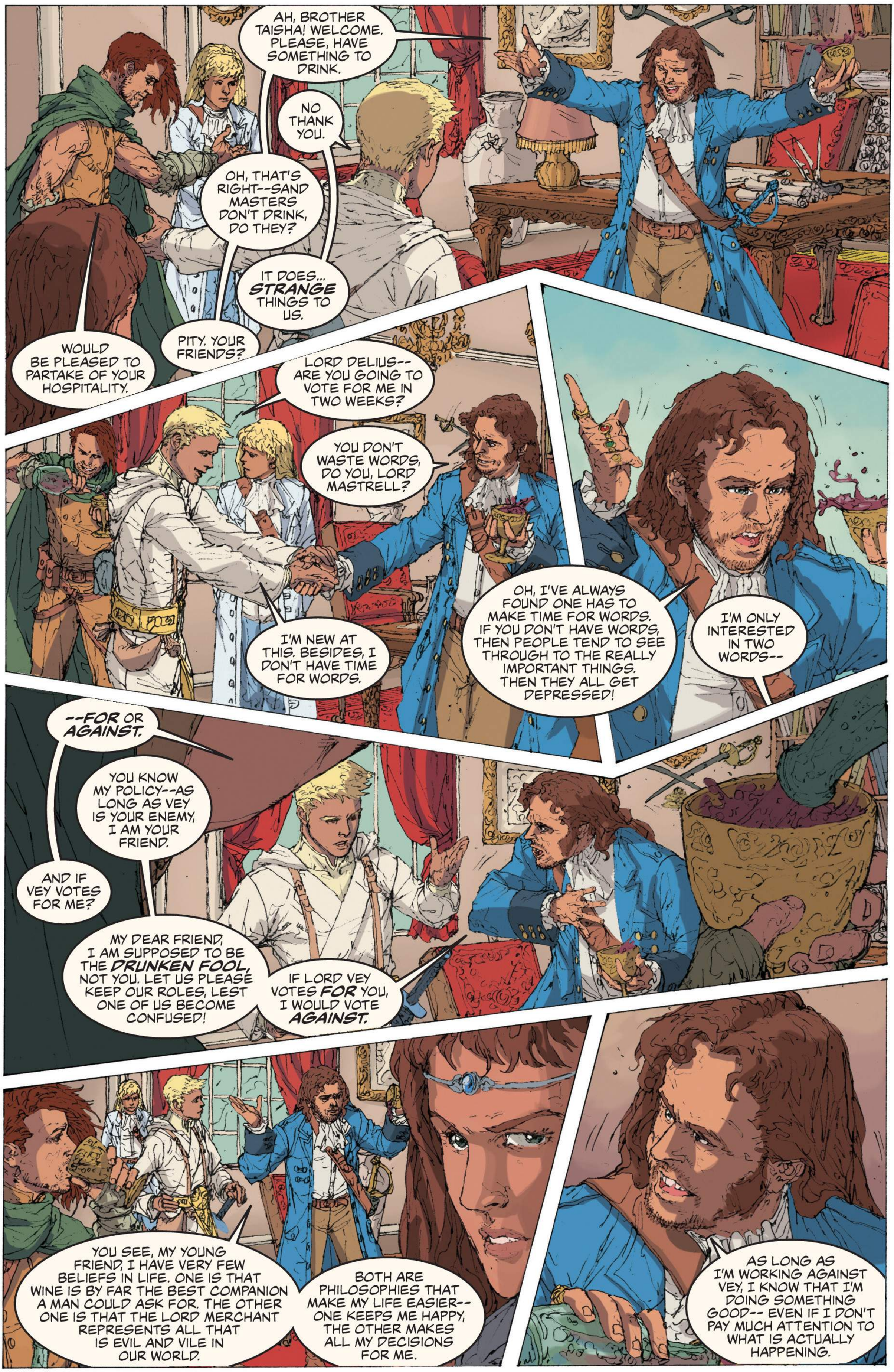

WHO'S THAT?
NO ONE OF IMPORTANCE.
KENTON...?
I JUST DID WHAT DRILE WOULD DO. SHOT THAT WOMAN DOWN BECAUSE OF WHAT SHE REPRESENTS.
AND, YOU KNOW WHAT--?
--THAT'S NOT GOING TO BE ME, ANYMORE.
I APOLOGIZE FOR MY RUDENESS, SENIOR. IT'S BEEN A DIFFICULT FEW DAYS. I WILL LIFT YOU UP TO THE BALCONY, IF YOU WISH.
I MUST REFUSE.
I WOULD SOONER DIE THAN LET YOUR UNHOLY SAND TOUCH MY SKIN.
I SEE. THEN, THERE ARE SEVERAL LADDERS YOU MAY USE. AND MY APOLOGY STILL REMAINS ON OFFER.
UNDERSTOOD.

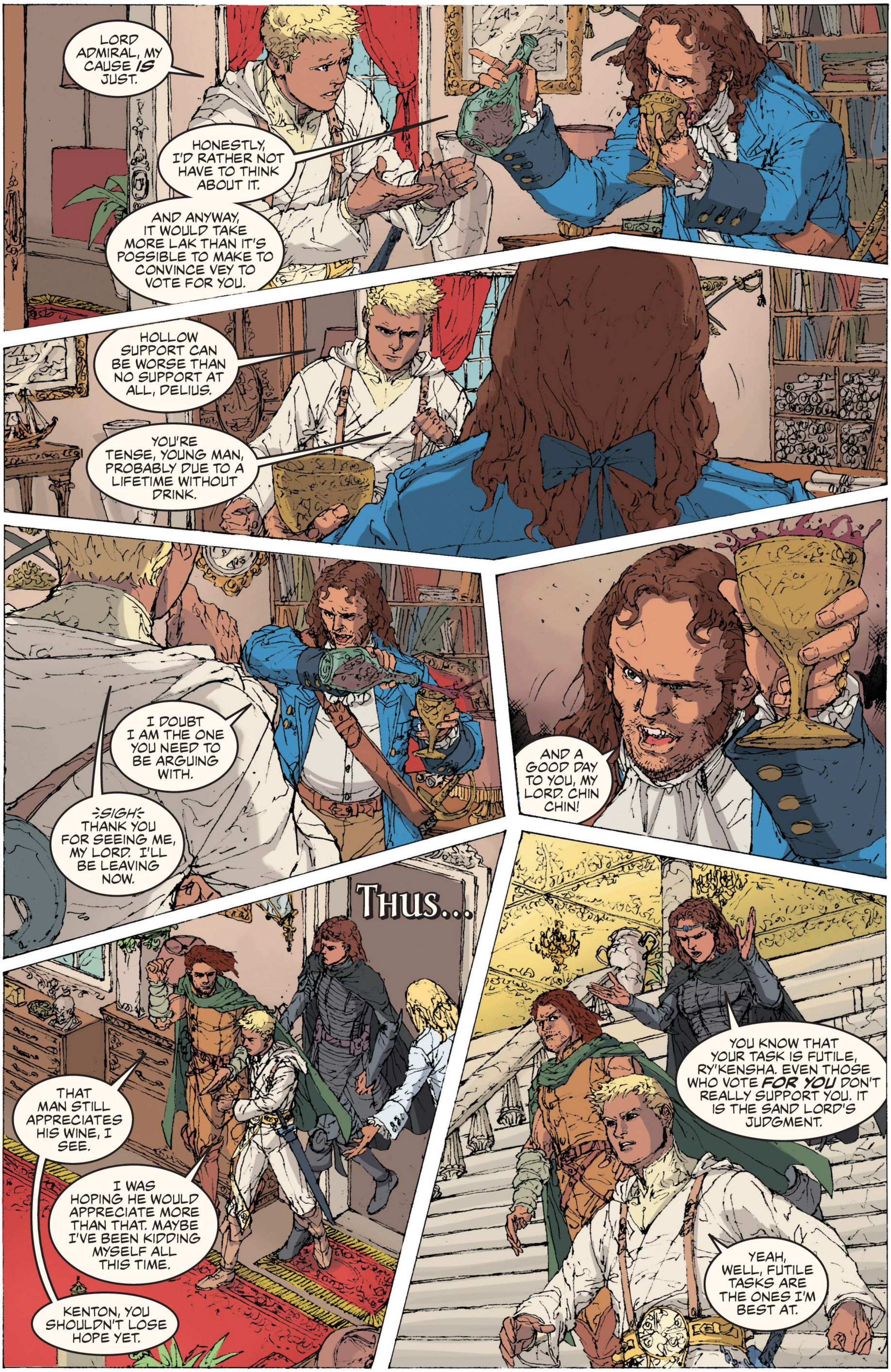
DARKSIDER QUARTER, A LITTLE LATER...
ARGH! THAT KENTON IS...IS...
...SO INFURIATING!
INFURIATING OR NO, THE WORD IS IT'S FALLEN ON HIS SHOULDERS TO SAVE THE DIEM.
THEN THE DIEM'S DOOMED. KENTON HAS ALL THE DIPLOMACY OF THOSE BLASTED DORIM VINES HE SHOWED US.
THE ONES THAT MELT THE SHELL OFF ANY CRITTER THAT EATS THEM?
EXACTLY, PROFESSOR! THE SAND MAGES ARE DOOMED.
PERHAPS, PERHAPS NOT. IT SOUNDS LIKE WHAT THEY NEED, DUCHESS--
--IS A SKILLED DIPLOMAT ON THEIR SIDE.
YOU MEAN...
...ME?


WHILE.
WELL? WHAT DO YOU THINK?
THE DIEM'S SITUATION IS BAD, OLD FRIEND. THE TAISHA WANTS TO DISBAND YOU, PROMPTED BY THE RICH KELZI LANDOWNERS ON ONE SIDE AND THE RISING POWER OF THE KER'REEN CHURCH ON THE OTHER. THEY'RE CHIPPING AWAY AT YOUR AUTONOMY FROM ALL SIDES.
AND YOU'RE IN DEBT. YOU KNOW, I DIDN'T KNOW NUMBERS WENT THIS HIGH UNTIL YOU SHOWED ME THIS LEDGER.
OKAY, SO FORGETTING THE LADY JUDGE, WHO DO YOU GO TO? VEY'S A KERZTIAN, HIS PEOPLE WOULD PROBABLY ASSASSINATE HIM IF HE VOTED IN YOUR FAVOR. MY FATHER RESPECTED YOUR FATHER, IF NOT THE SAND MASTERS.
I THINK HE BLAMES ME FOR YOU RUNNING AWAY.
AH. THAT I DID NOT KNOW.
THOSE REPORTS CAME FROM THE LORD MERCHANT. I THINK MY FATHER KEPT THEM AS A KIND OF TROPHY, PROOF OF THE DIEM'S ABILITY TO IGNORE CONVENTIONAL LAW.
NOT HERE, THAT'S FOR SURE. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO VISIT EACH OF THE TAISHA AND TRY TO TALK THEM INTO VOTING FOR ME.
THIS SAYS YOU OWE OVER SEVEN HUNDRED THOUSAND LAK! DO THAT MANY COINS EVEN EXIST?!
THEN WHAT ABOUT OLD DELIUS? I ASSUME THE OLD SOT IS STILL LORD ADMIRAL?
THE HELM'S GREATEST EMBARRASSMENT, AS ALWAYS.
YES, DELIUS WILL PROBABLY VOTE FOR ME. BUT IF HE DOES, THEN I'VE LOST--DELIUS ALWAYS VOTES THE OPPOSITE OF VEY.
WHICH MEANS, IF BY SOME MIRACLE I DO BRING LORD MERCHANT VEY TO OUR SIDE, DELIUS WILL SPOIL IT BY AUTOMATICALLY OPPOSING.
BUT THE LORD ADMIRAL HAS BEEN MY ALLY IN THE PAST, EVEN IF HIS VOTE WAS ONLY CIRCUMSTANTIAL. THAT'S BETTER THAN I'VE GOTTEN FROM ANYONE ELSE.
I WAS HOPING YOU'D PICK DELIUS. I COULD USE SOMETHING TO DRINK!

THE LORD ADMIRAL'S.
LOOK OUT BELOW!
HAH-HAH-HAH! THE WAY THOSE LITTLE PEOPLE SCURRY OUT OF THE PATH OF CHEAP WINE. STILL, IT'S PROBABLY MORE THAN THEY COULD AFFORD WITH A YEAR'S WAGES!
I'M SORRY, I FORGOT-- ARE YOU STILL HERE?
WE HAVEN'T HAD OUR AUDIENCE YET, LORD ADMIRAL.
WELL, WHAT DID YOU WANT?
WE BRING A REQUEST FROM THE CIRCLE. THEY WERE HOPING TO CONVINCE YOU TO CURB YOUR DRINKING.
CURB MY DRINKING? WHY, HOW WOULD I SPEND MY TIME?
THERE ARE MANY OTHER THINGS YOU COULD TRY, MY LORD. BALLS, PLAYS, BOAT RACES...
BORING, BORING AND BORING!
NO, I SHALL FACE THIS WORLD DRUNK, OR I SHAN'T FACE IT AT ALL. THANK YOU FOR THE SUGGESTION, BUT SINCE I JUDGE IT TO BE INANE, I SHALL IGNORE IT.
FIND YOUR WAY OUT, DOUBTLESS TO A PLAY OR BALL RACE OR... BOAT SOMETHING.
YES, LORD ADMIRAL.
STEWARD, DO YOU THINK WE COULD KNOCK DOWN A FEW BUILDINGS TO MAKE THIS VIEW MORE PICTURESQUE?
MMM, PERHAPS, MY LORD.

THE LORD ADMIRAL IS BECOMING AN EMBARRASS-MENT!
THERE'S NO BECOMING ABOUT IT--HE'S...
SHH! NO NEED TO ADVERTIZE IT.
THEY SHOULD HAVE BOWED TO YOU. YOU'RE THE LORD MASTRELL.
THEY LOOKED PREOCCUPIED.
YOU MEAN INFURIATED.
A LITTLE LIKE YOUR CHEERY NEW SHADOW.
OH, HER?
ARE YOU COMING, AIS? YOU'RE NOT GOING TO MAKE A VERY EFFICIENT SPY IF YOU DON'T STAY CLOSE TO ME.
=CHORTLE=
MY LORD WILL SEE YOU NOW, LORD MASTRELL.
YOU KNOW, BUDDY, SELLING THIS PLACE COULD PAY YOUR DEBTS WITH SOME LEFT OVER.
THIS IS NOT THE TIME, AARIK.


AH, BROTHER TAISHA! WELCOME. PLEASE, HAVE SOMETHING TO DRINK.
NO THANK YOU.
OH, THAT'S RIGHT--SAND MASTERS DON'T DRINK, DO THEY?
IT DOES... STRANGE THINGS TO US.
PITY. YOUR FRIENDS?
WOULD BE PLEASED TO PARTAKE OF YOUR HOSPITALITY.
LORD DELIUS--ARE YOU GOING TO VOTE FOR ME IN TWO WEEKS?
YOU DON'T WASTE WORDS, DO YOU, LORD MASTRELL?
I'M NEW AT THIS. BESIDES, I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR WORDS.
OH, I'VE ALWAYS FOUND ONE HAS TO MAKE TIME FOR WORDS. IF YOU DON'T HAVE WORDS, THEN PEOPLE TEND TO SEE THROUGH TO THE REALLY IMPORTANT THINGS. THEN THEY ALL GET DEPRESSED!
I'M ONLY INTERESTED IN TWO WORDS--
--FOR OR AGAINST.
YOU KNOW MY POLICY--AS LONG AS VEY IS YOUR ENEMY, I AM YOUR FRIEND.
AND IF VEY VOTES FOR ME?
MY DEAR FRIEND, I AM SUPPOSED TO BE THE DRUNKEN FOOL, NOT YOU. LET US PLEASE KEEP OUR ROLES, LEST ONE OF US BECOME CONFUSED!
IF LORD VEY VOTES FOR YOU, I WOULD VOTE AGAINST.
YOU SEE, MY YOUNG FRIEND, I HAVE VERY FEW BELIEFS IN LIFE. ONE IS THAT WINE IS BY FAR THE BEST COMPANION A MAN COULD ASK FOR. THE OTHER ONE IS THAT THE LORD MERCHANT REPRESENTS ALL THAT IS EVIL AND VILE IN OUR WORLD.
BOTH ARE PHILOSOPHIES THAT MAKE MY LIFE EASIER--ONE KEEPS ME HAPPY, THE OTHER MAKES ALL MY DECISIONS FOR ME.
AS LONG AS I'M WORKING AGAINST VEY, I KNOW THAT I'M DOING SOMETHING GOOD-- EVEN IF I DON'T PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO WHAT IS ACTUALLY HAPPENING.


LORD ADMIRAL, MY CAUSE IS JUST.
HONESTLY, I'D RATHER NOT HAVE TO THINK ABOUT IT.
AND ANYWAY, IT WOULD TAKE MORE LAK THAN IT'S POSSIBLE TO MAKE TO CONVINCE VEY TO VOTE FOR YOU.
HOLLOW SUPPORT CAN BE WORSE THAN NO SUPPORT AT ALL, DELIUS.
YOU'RE TENSE, YOUNG MAN, PROBABLY DUE TO A LIFETIME WITHOUT DRINK.
I DOUBT I AM THE ONE YOU NEED TO BE ARGUING WITH.
SIGH THANK YOU FOR SEEING ME, MY LORD. I'LL BE LEAVING NOW.
AND A GOOD DAY TO YOU, MY LORD. CHIN CHIN!
THUS...
THAT MAN STILL APPRECIATES HIS WINE, I SEE.
I WAS HOPING HE WOULD APPRECIATE MORE THAN THAT. MAYBE I'VE BEEN KIDDING MYSELF ALL THIS TIME.
KENTON, YOU SHOULDN'T LOSE HOPE YET.
YOU KNOW THAT YOUR TASK IS FUTILE, RY'KENSHA. EVEN THOSE WHO VOTE FOR YOU DON'T REALLY SUPPORT YOU. IT IS THE SAND LORD'S JUDGMENT.
YEAH, WELL, FUTILE TASKS ARE THE ONES I'M BEST AT.

THAT BOY NEEDS TO LEARN THAT EVERY CONVERSATION DOESN'T HAVE TO BE AN ARGUMENT.
STEWARD-- WHAT OPINION WOULD YOU SAY THE KELZIN HAVE OF THE MASTRELLS?
THEY HATE THEM. MANY KELZIN ARE KERZTIAN, AND THOSE WHO AREN'T ARE USUALLY KER'REEN.
BESIDES, IT IS THE NATURE OF THE WEALTHY TO HATE ANYONE MORE INFLUENTIAL THAN THEMSELVES.
QUITE.

"STILL, I WONDER WHERE HE'LL LAND NEXT."
YOU'RE LATE!
I'M LATE?! WHAT ARE YOU EVEN DOING HERE, KHRISSALLA?!
ISN'T THAT OBVIOUS? I'M WAITING FOR YOU.
YOU ARE?! KHRISS, I HAVE MY OWN WORRIES RIGHT NOW--I HAVE TO SEE THE LORD ARTISAN ABOUT A TRICKY SITUATION--
--WHICH I'VE BEEN WAITING HERE FOR FIVE HOURS TO HELP YOU WITH. HENCE, YOU'RE LATE.
LORD MASTRELL, WE ARE HONORED TO RECEIVE YOU AT THIS TIME.
THE LORD ARTISAN WILL SEE YOU IMMEDIATELY.
KHRISS, I GOTTA RUN.
I SAID I'M HERE TO HELP YOU, KENTON...
...SO, TELL HIM I'M WITH YOU!
...
OH-KAY, BUT TRY TO RESTRICT YOURSELF TO A DOZEN OR TWO QUESTIONS-- THE LORD ARTISAN IS A BUSY MAN.
THUS...
LORD MASTRELL, YOU TRAVEL WITH A LARGE GROUP.
I'VE FOUND MY COMPANY HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY POPULAR SINCE WE LAST SAW ONE ANOTHER, LORD ARTISAN.
YOU'LL FIND SUCH IS THE NORM FOR THOSE IN OUR POSITION. HOW CAN I HELP YOU?
I NEED YOUR VOTE, LORD RITE.

THE DIEM HAS BEEN TREATED UNFAIRLY AND NOW ITS OPPONENTS ARE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF ITS WEAKNESS.
MY ONLY CONCERN IS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE ELECTED ME, AND IT IS IN THEIR INTEREST THAT I VOTED AGAINST YOU.
YOU MUST REALIZE THAT THE NEW A'KAR IS CALLING FOR BLOOD. WHAT WILL THE MEMBERS OF YOUR PROFESSION THINK WHEN THIS NEW DAI'KEEN OVERRUNS LOSSAND?
IS IT IN YOUR INTEREST TO DESTROY THIS COUNTRY'S LONGEST AND MOST FEARSOME SOURCE OF PROTECTION?
THE SAND MASTERS ARE WITHOUT LAW. THEIR MASTRELLS TAKE WITHOUT NEED AND GIVE NOTHING BACK TO LOSSAND. THEY OFFER NO GOODS AND PERFORM NO SERVICE. I CANNOT, WITH GOOD CONSCIENCE, ALLOW THAT TO CONTINUE.
MY LORD, WHAT YOU SAY--
KENTON, ASK WHAT KIND OF RECOMPENSE WOULD HE NEED TO FORGIVE YOUR TRESPASS?
AND SO, KENTON TRANSLATES...
LEDGERS HAVE BEEN KEPT OF WHAT THE DIEM OWES MY PROFESSION, MISS. BUT IT ISN'T WHAT'S OWED--IT'S THE POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE THEFT THAT WORRIES ME.
AND WHAT IF THE THEFTS STOPPED? WHAT IF THE DIEM PAID BACK ITS DEBTS?
I DON'T SEE HOW. THE ONLY MONEY THE DIEM HAS IS GIFTED FROM THE OTHER PROFESSIONS.
BUT CAN YOU IGNORE THAT SAND MASTERY IS A WONDROUS TOOL?
UNFORTUNATELY, ITS PRACTITIONERS HAVE SQUANDERED ITS POTENTIAL.
THAT CAN CHANGE. YOU YOURSELF SAID THE FUTURE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE PAST.
IS THERE NO WAY THAT THE SAND MASTERS COULD BE OF USE TO YOUR MEMBERS? ON A PERCENTAGE BASIS PERHAPS, TO PROVIDE AN INCENTIVE FOR THEM TO COOPERATE.

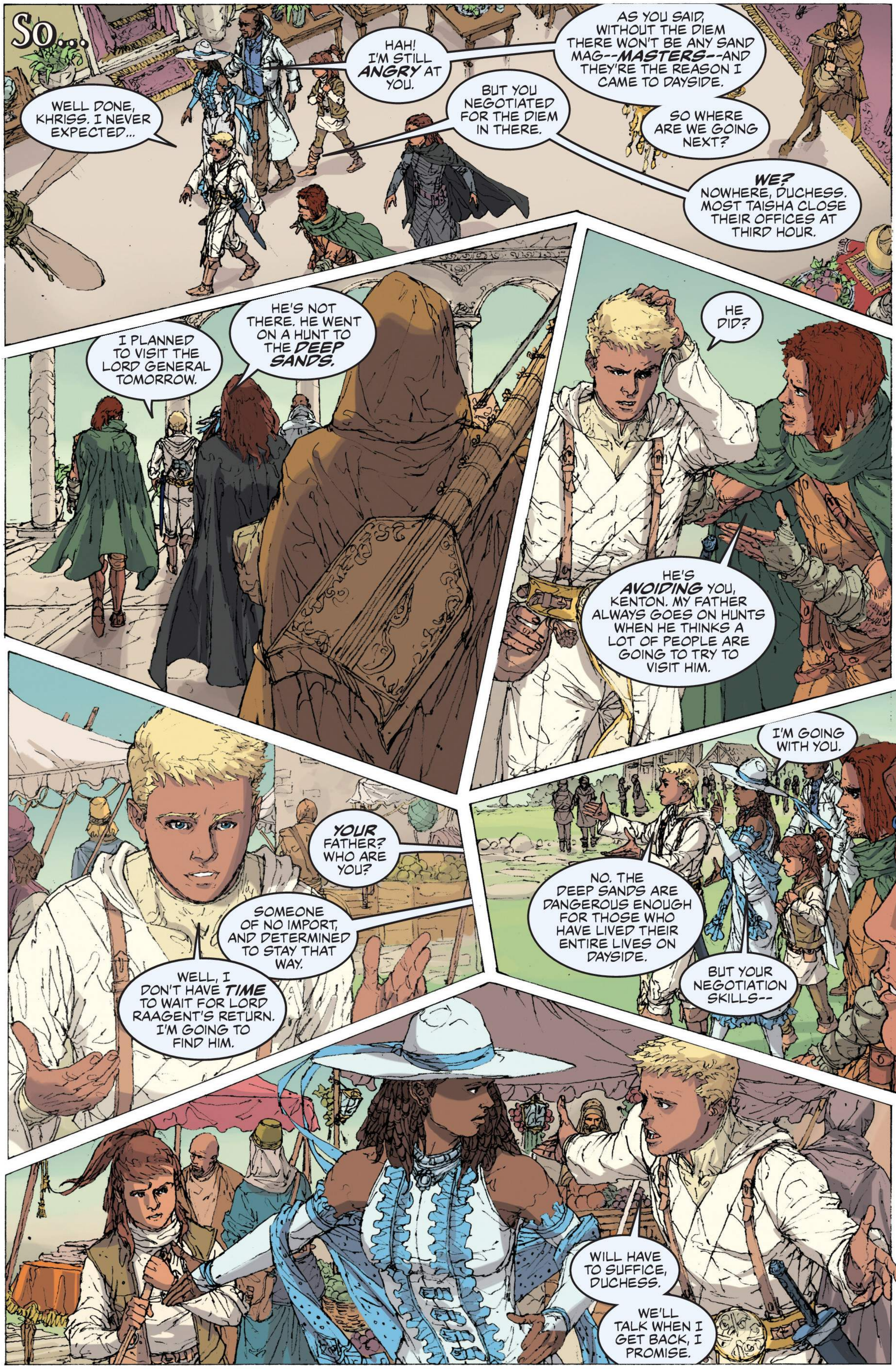
THE PROPOSAL WHICH YOUR ASSOCIATE PRESENTS HAS MERIT, LORD MASTRELL. YOU SHOULD HAVE PUT THIS FORWARD SOONER.
IT IS A... RELATIVELY NEW PROPOSAL, LORD ARTISAN.

BUT THE OFFER IS THERE, IF YOU WOULD CONSIDER IT.

I ACCEPT.
PROVIDED THAT THE DIEM CAN PAY BACK ITS DEBTS AS A SIGN OF GOOD FAITH.
SEVEN HUNDRED THOUSAND LAK IS UNFORTUNATELY BEYOND--
SEVEN HUNDRED THOUSAND? I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOUR INFORMATION COMES FROM, LORD MASTRELL--
--BUT OUR RECORDS SAY YOU OWE A HUNDRED AND FIFTY THOUSAND, AND THE FIELDS ANOTHER FIFTY THOUSAND.

THEN YOU'LL GET YOUR LAK, MY LORD.

THEN TO WHOM DOES THE DIEM OWE THE OTHER FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND?


So...
WELL DONE, KHRISS. I NEVER EXPECTED...
HAH! I'M STILL ANGRY AT YOU.
BUT YOU NEGOTIATED FOR THE DIEM IN THERE.
AS YOU SAID, WITHOUT THE DIEM THERE WON'T BE ANY SAND MAG--MASTERS--AND THEY'RE THE REASON I CAME TO DAYSIDE.
SO WHERE ARE WE GOING NEXT?
WE? NOWHERE, DUCHESS. MOST TAISHA CLOSE THEIR OFFICES AT THIRD HOUR.
I PLANNED TO VISIT THE LORD GENERAL TOMORROW.
HE'S NOT THERE. HE WENT ON A HUNT TO THE DEEP SANDS.
HE DID?
HE'S AVOIDING YOU, KENTON. MY FATHER ALWAYS GOES ON HUNTS WHEN HE THINKS A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE GOING TO TRY TO VISIT HIM.
YOUR FATHER? WHO ARE YOU?
SOMEONE OF NO IMPORT, AND DETERMINED TO STAY THAT WAY.
WELL, I DON'T HAVE TIME TO WAIT FOR LORD RAAGENT'S RETURN. I'M GOING TO FIND HIM.
I'M GOING WITH YOU.
NO. THE DEEP SANDS ARE DANGEROUS ENOUGH FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LIVED THEIR ENTIRE LIVES ON DAYSIDE.
BUT YOUR NEGOTIATION SKILLS--
WILL HAVE TO SUFFICE, DUCHESS.
WE'LL TALK WHEN I GET BACK, I PROMISE.

SHORTLY, AT THE DIEM.
THE PLACE IS LOOKING BETTER, DIRIN. GOOD WORK, THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR.
THEY'RE GOING TO BUILD A STAIRCASE IN EVERY CORNER SO THAT EVERYONE CAN ACCESS ALL THE LEVELS OF THE DIEM.
PERFECT.
I'M GOING TO GRAB SOMETHING TO EAT. WON'T YOU JOIN ME?
NOT JUST YET, I WANT TO CHECK THE DIEM'S RECORDS AGAIN.
AND TRY TO WORK OUT WHO'S OWED THOSE OTHER 500,000 LAK.

CHAPTER 2
MY ASSASINS

PFF--
WHO--?
FFFT
THUD
OKAY, HERE'S SOMEONE WHO HATES PAPERWORK AS MUCH AS I DO!
FFFT
FFFT
FFFT
THUD
THUD
THUD

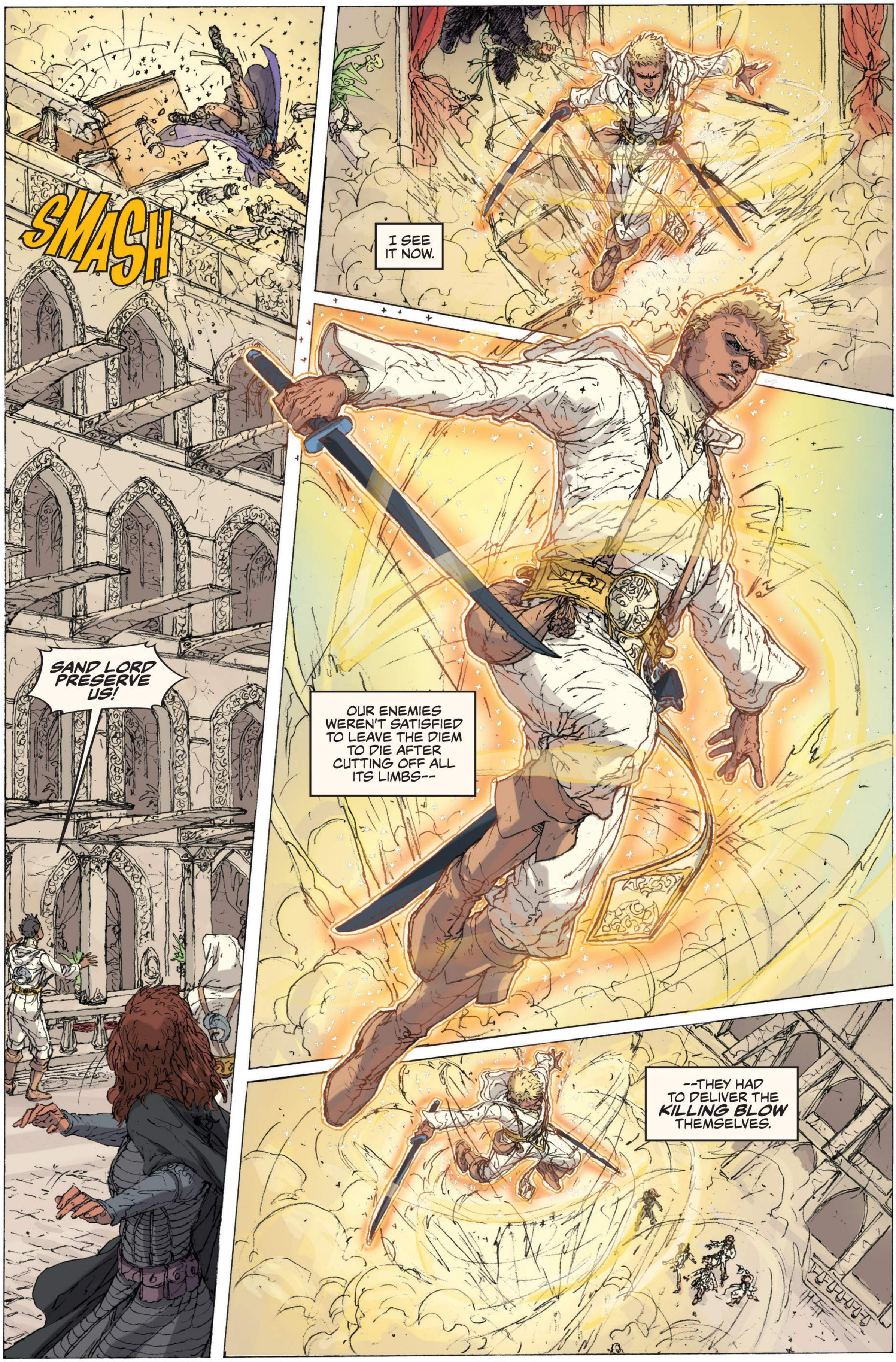
SHHHHHH
WHAT THE--?!
THEY'RE... TERKEN! IMPERVIOUS TO SAND MASTERY!
FFFT
YEARGH!

THEY THINK THEY HAVE ME TRAPPED, BUT THE ROOM'S TOO SMALL FOR A GROUP ATTACK. WHICH MAKES IT...
...ONE ON ONE!
CLANG
DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING?
PROBABLY JUST KENTON TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HIS FATHER'S FILING SYSTEM, I'LL BET!
GOOD LUCK WITH THAT!
WHERE--?!
SLASH
GUNNNGH!

THUD
THUD
FFFT
FFFT
OH, SHELLA!
THUD
THINK FAST! STOP THE ARROW BEFORE--!
OH, SHELLA! THE ARROWS... ARE TERKEN TOO?!?
WHAT ON THE SANDS IS HAPPENING?

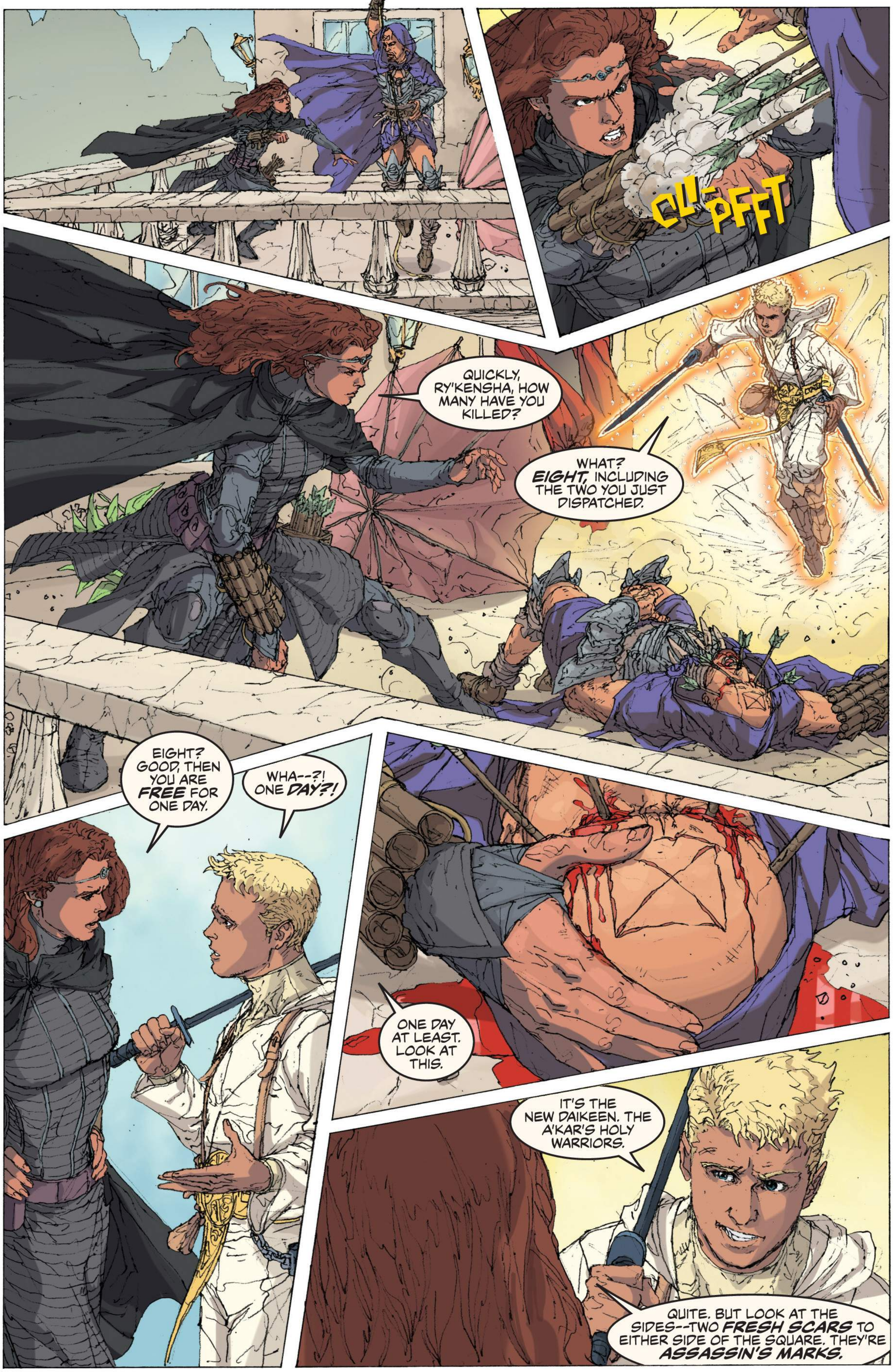
OUT OF ARROWS, GUYS?
THEN MAYBE YOU SHOULD TABLE THE MOTION FOR TODAY--
--WHAT DO YOU SAY?
WHAM

I GUESS THEY TOLD YOU THAT YOU'D BE IMPERVIOUS TO SAND.
BUT THEY DIDN'T TELL YOU THAT SAND DOESN'T HAVE TO TOUCH YOU--
THUD
--TO BE DEADLY!
UNGH!
CRUNCH

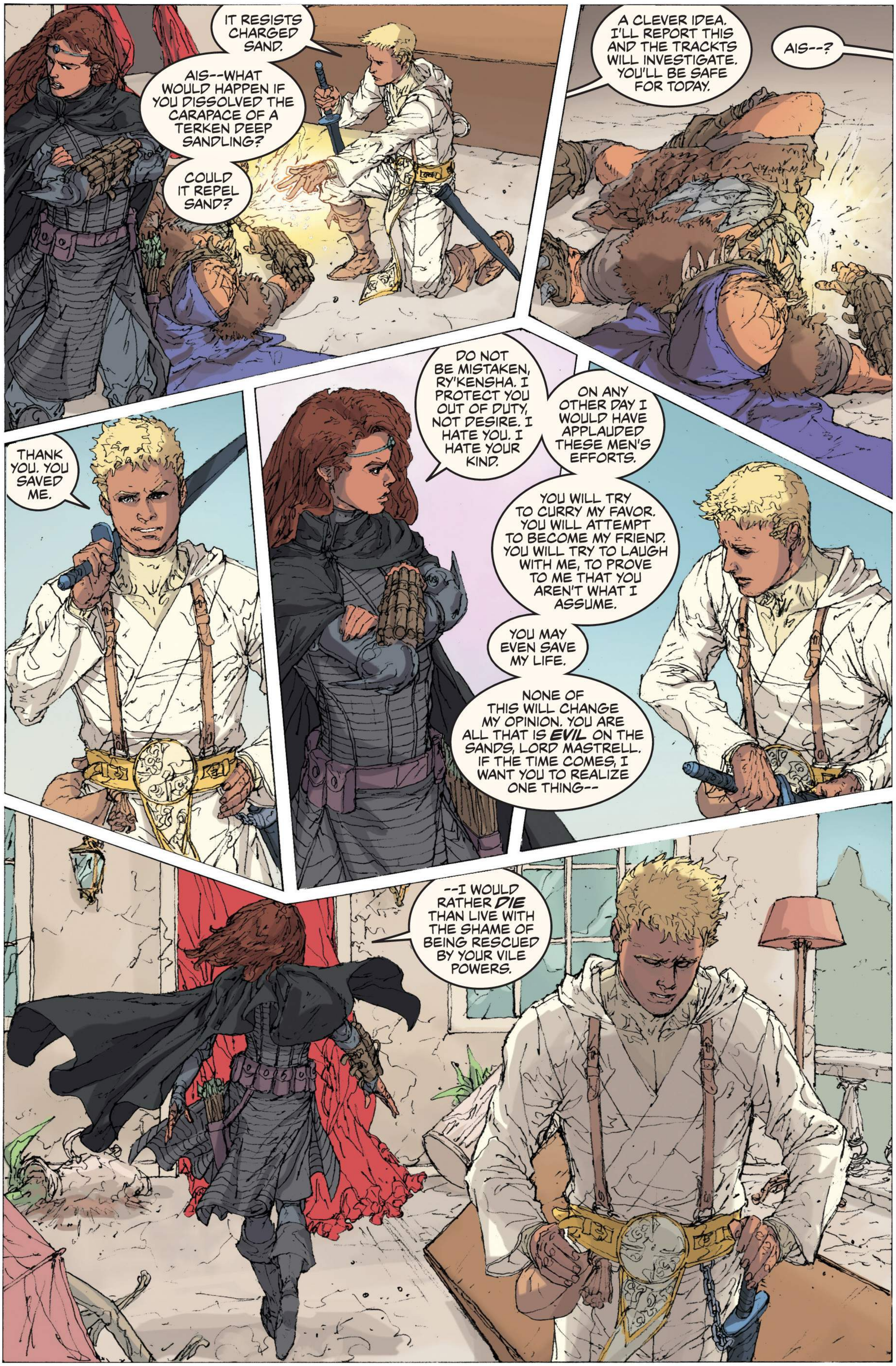

SMASH
SAND LORD PRESERVE US!
I SEE IT NOW.
OUR ENEMIES WEREN'T SATISFIED TO LEAVE THE DIEM TO DIE AFTER CUTTING OFF ALL ITS LIMBS--
--THEY HAD TO DELIVER THE KILLING BLOW THEMSELVES.

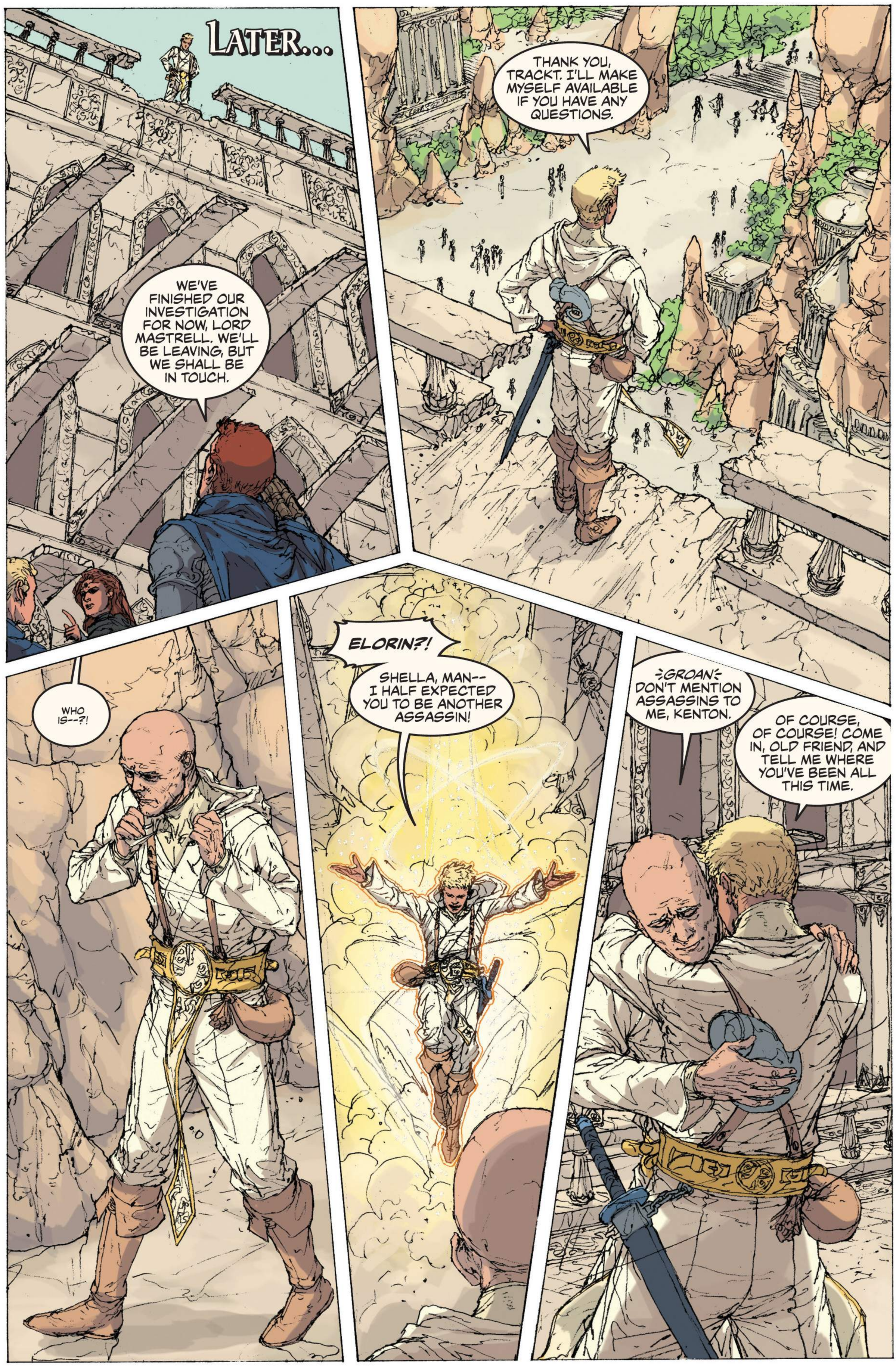
WHERE ARE YOU GOING, LORD MASTRELL? STAY WHERE I CAN PROTECT Y--
--SHELLA!
HE'S ABOVE US!
YEARGHHHH!

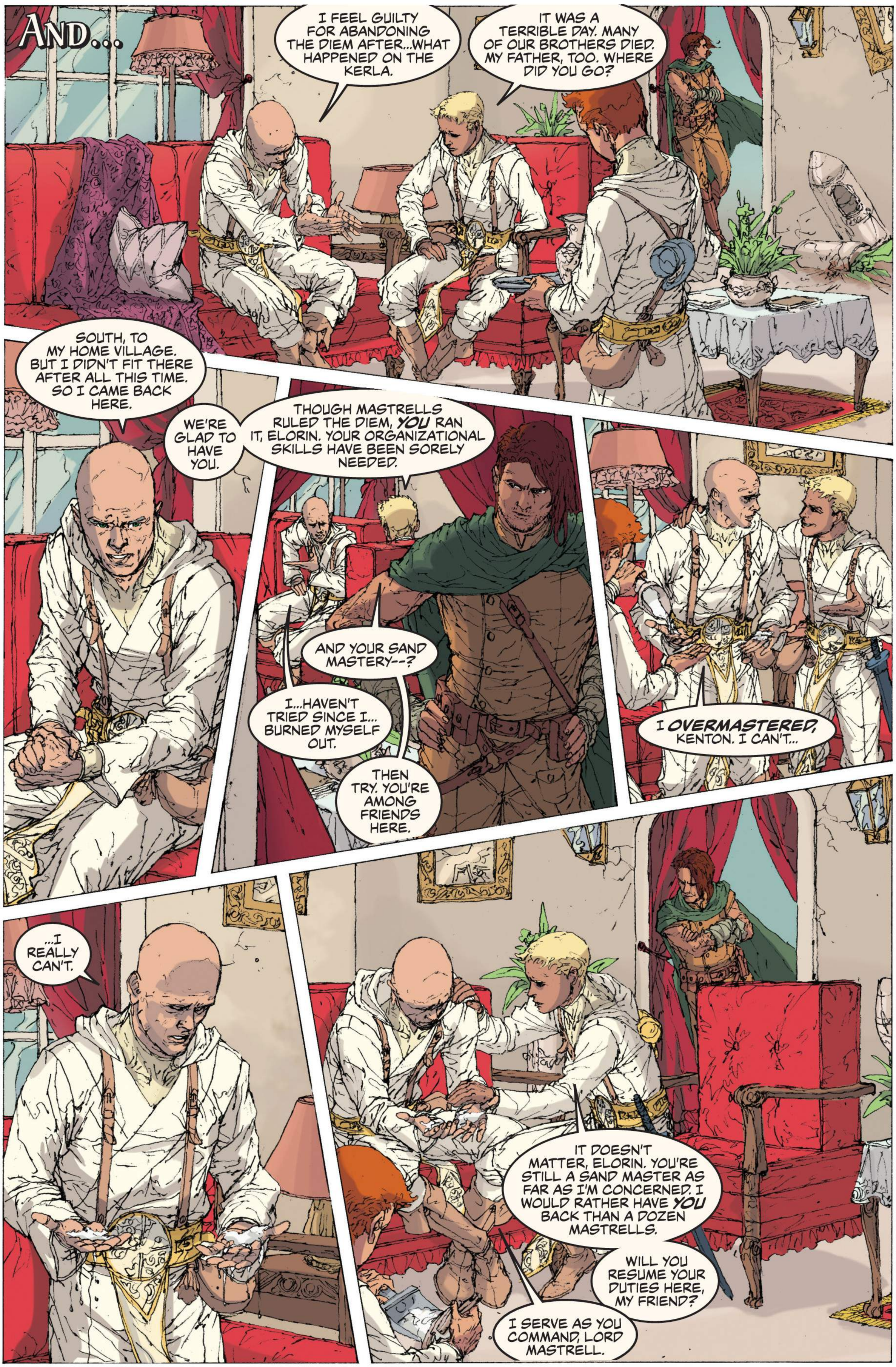
SLICE
ARRRGHHHH!
TWO AGAINST ONE. AND THEY'RE TOO FAR FOR ME TO REACH. GOING TO HAVE TO...
...DODGE...?
WHU--?!
AHHHHHHH!


CLI-PFFT
QUICKLY, RY'KENSHA, HOW MANY HAVE YOU KILLED?
WHAT? EIGHT, INCLUDING THE TWO YOU JUST DISPATCHED.
EIGHT? GOOD, THEN YOU ARE FREE FOR ONE DAY.
WHA--?! ONE DAY?!
ONE DAY AT LEAST. LOOK AT THIS.
IT'S THE NEW DAIKEEN. THE A'KAR'S HOLY WARRIORS.
QUITE. BUT LOOK AT THE SIDES--TWO FRESH SCARS TO EITHER SIDE OF THE SQUARE. THEY'RE ASSASSIN'S MARKS.

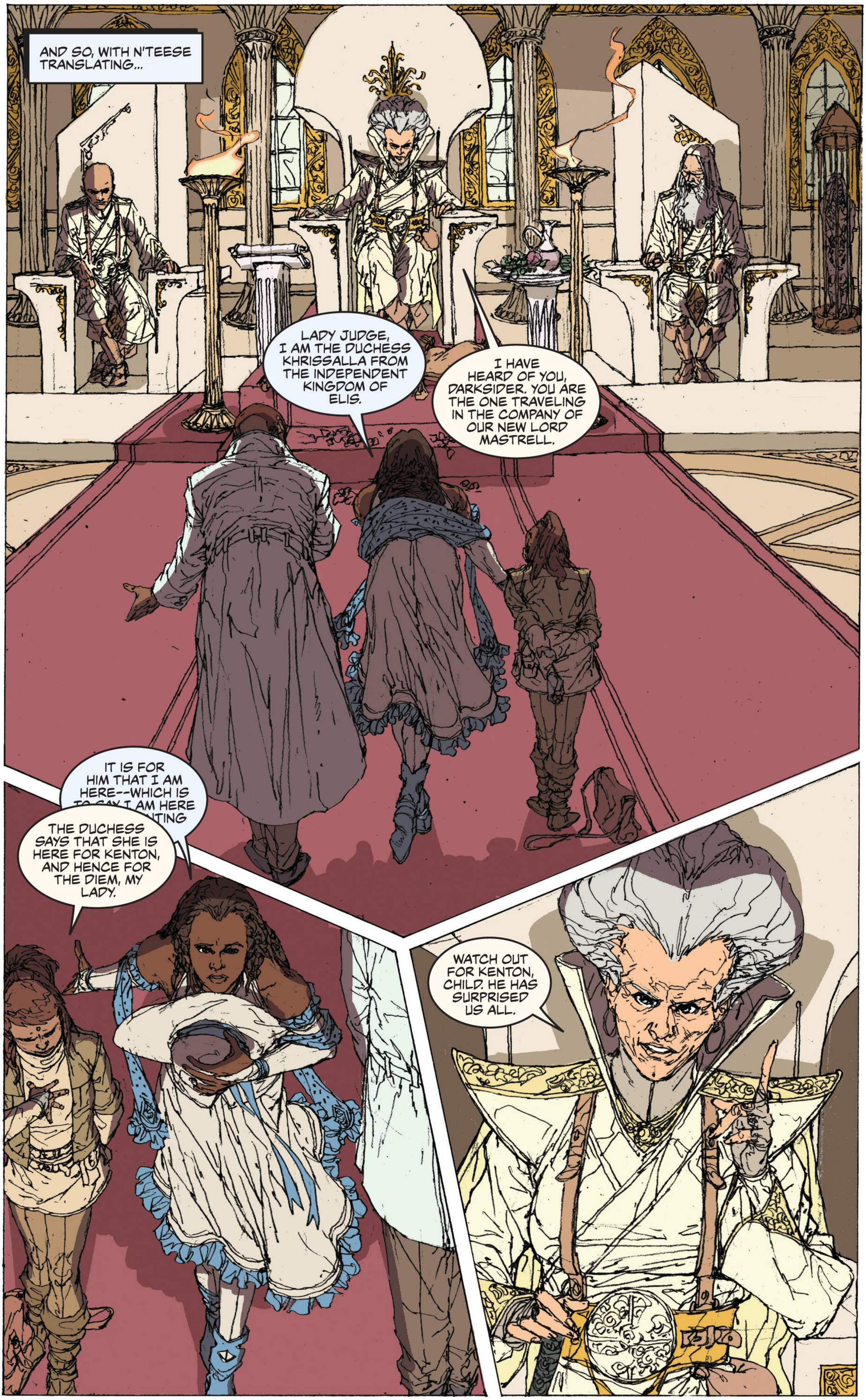
IT MEANS THAT YOU'VE BEEN TARGETED AS AN ENEMY OF THE KERZTIAN PEOPLE. OR AT LEAST THE ENEMY OF THE A'KAR.
BUT ALL SAND MASTERS ARE THE KERZTIANS' ENEMIES, AREN'T THEY?
THIS IS DIFFERENT. THE A'KAR HAS GIVEN A SPECIFIC FAMILY THE TASK OF KILLING YOU. IT IS A FORMAL CHARGE.
THEY MAY SEND UP TO EIGHT WARRIORS EVERY OTHER DAY UNTIL THEY SUCCEED...
...OR UNTIL YOU KILL THEIR LEADER. DEFEAT HIM AND ASSASSINS CAN'T BE SENT AGAINST YOU FOR ONE YEAR.
BUT WHO'S THEIR LEADER?
USUALLY IT'S THE FAMILY HEAD. IF HIS FAMILY HAS FEW WARRIORS, HE COULD ASSIGN A DIFFERENT FAMILY TO USE AS KILLERS.
BUT HE WILL PERSONALLY DIRECT THE ASSASSINS, SO HE WILL BE CLOSE-- IN KEZARE SOME-WHERE.
AND LOOK AT THIS. DISSOLVED CARAPACE.
THE WARRIORS ARE SMEARED WITH IT, AS ARE THEIR WEAPONS AND ARMOR.
DOES IT...
DO NOT TOUCH ME WITH THAT ABOMINATION!
SORRY, SORRY. I FORGOT YOU DON'T LIKE... SORRY.

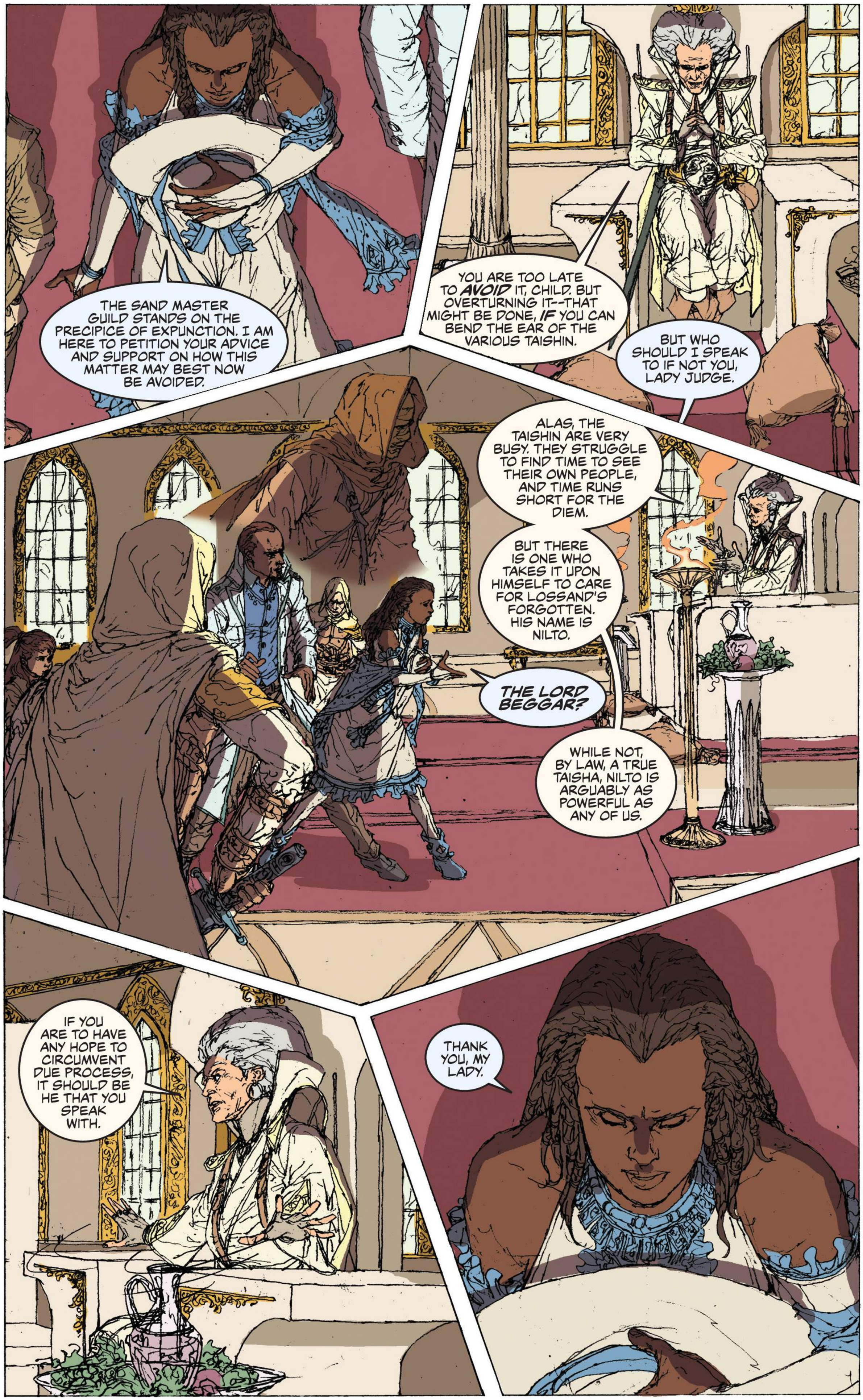

IT RESISTS CHARGED SAND.
AIS--WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU DISSOLVED THE CARAPACE OF A TERKEN DEEP SANDLING?
COULD IT REPEL SAND?
A CLEVER IDEA. I'LL REPORT THIS AND THE TRACKTS WILL INVESTIGATE. YOU'LL BE SAFE FOR TODAY.
AIS--?
THANK YOU. YOU SAVED ME.
DO NOT BE MISTAKEN, RY'KENSHA. I PROTECT YOU OUT OF DUTY, NOT DESIRE. I HATE YOU. I HATE YOUR KIND.
ON ANY OTHER DAY I WOULD HAVE APPLAUDED THESE MEN'S EFFORTS.
YOU WILL TRY TO CURRY MY FAVOR. YOU WILL ATTEMPT TO BECOME MY FRIEND. YOU WILL TRY TO LAUGH WITH ME, TO PROVE TO ME THAT YOU AREN'T WHAT I ASSUME.
YOU MAY EVEN SAVE MY LIFE.
NONE OF THIS WILL CHANGE MY OPINION. YOU ARE ALL THAT IS EVIL ON THE SANDS, LORD MASTRELL. IF THE TIME COMES, I WANT YOU TO REALIZE ONE THING--
--I WOULD RATHER DIE THAN LIVE WITH THE SHAME OF BEING RESCUED BY YOUR VILE POWERS.


LATER...
WE'VE FINISHED OUR INVESTIGATION FOR NOW, LORD MASTRELL. WE'LL BE LEAVING, BUT WE SHALL BE IN TOUCH.
THANK YOU, TRACKT. I'LL MAKE MYSELF AVAILABLE IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.
WHO IS--?!
ELORIN?!
SHELLA, MAN-- I HALF EXPECTED YOU TO BE ANOTHER ASSASSIN!
÷GROAN÷ DON'T MENTION ASSASSINS TO ME, KENTON.
OF COURSE, OF COURSE! COME IN, OLD FRIEND, AND TELL ME WHERE YOU'VE BEEN ALL THIS TIME.

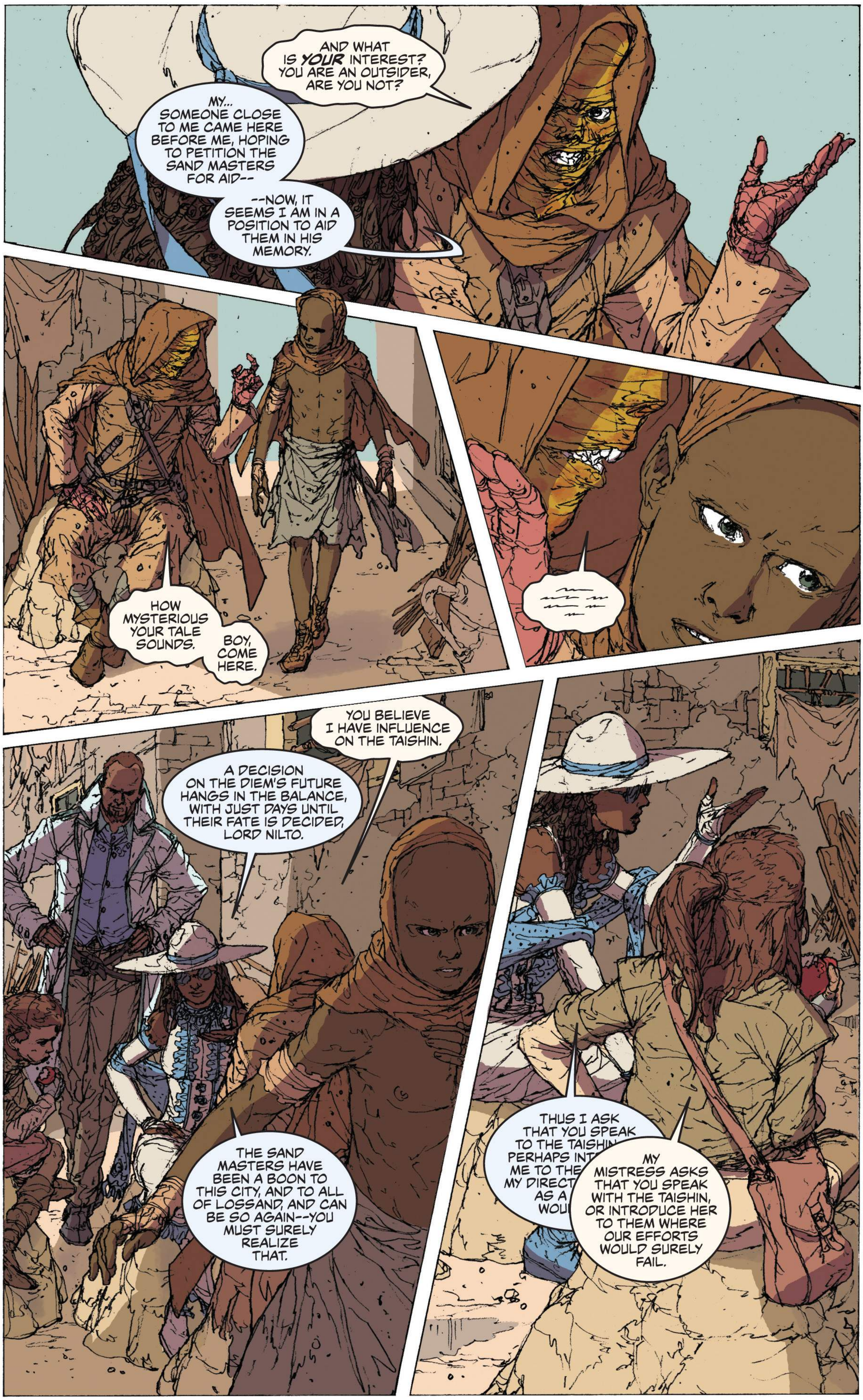

AND...
I FEEL GUILTY FOR ABANDONING THE DIEM AFTER...WHAT HAPPENED ON THE KERLA.
IT WAS A TERRIBLE DAY. MANY OF OUR BROTHERS DIED. MY FATHER, TOO. WHERE DID YOU GO?
SOUTH, TO MY HOME VILLAGE. BUT I DIDN'T FIT THERE AFTER ALL THIS TIME. SO I CAME BACK HERE.
WE'RE GLAD TO HAVE YOU.
THOUGH MASTRELLS RULED THE DIEM, YOU RAN IT, ELORIN. YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS HAVE BEEN SORELY NEEDED.
AND YOUR SAND MASTERY--?
I...HAVEN'T TRIED SINCE I... BURNED MYSELF OUT.
THEN TRY. YOU'RE AMONG FRIENDS HERE.
I OVERMASTERED, KENTON. I CAN'T...
...I REALLY CAN'T.
IT DOESN'T MATTER, ELORIN. YOU'RE STILL A SAND MASTER AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED. I WOULD RATHER HAVE YOU BACK THAN A DOZEN MASTRELLS.
WILL YOU RESUME YOUR DUTIES HERE, MY FRIEND?
I SERVE AS YOU COMMAND, LORD MASTRELL.

MEANWHILE, AT THE HALL OF JUDGMENT.
N'TEESE, WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT SAND MASTERY?
THAT IT IS THE PROVINCE OF THE MASTRELLS.
BUT HOW DOES IT WORK? IF I'M TO REPRESENT KENTON'S GUILD OF SAND MASTERS I SHOULD KNOW.
CAN THEY CONTROL OTHER OBJECTS MADE OF SAND OR JUST SAND? IF IT'S JUST SAND, WHY?
ALL WORK REQUIRES ENERGY-- SO WHERE DOES THE POWER COME FROM TO LIFT THE SAND INTO THE AIR? HOW MUCH SAND CAN A MASTER LIFT AND FOR HOW LONG?
DUCHESS, IF YOU ARE HAVING DOUBTS ABOUT REPRESENTING LORD KENTON HERE--
NO. IT'S JUST...
PERHAPS I'LL TRY BEING NICER TO KENTON. MAYBE HE'LL BECOME BAFFLED ENOUGH THAT HE'LL LET ME IN ON HIS SECRETS.
HMF. YOU'RE WEIRD.
DUCHESS KHRISSALLA AND PARTY? THE LADY JUDGE WILL SEE YOU NOW.
HE SAYS THE LADY JUDGE IS READY TO SEE YOU.


AND SO, WITH N'TEESE TRANSLATING...
LADY JUDGE, I AM THE DUCHESS KHRISSALLA FROM THE INDEPENDENT KINGDOM OF ELIS.
I HAVE HEARD OF YOU, DARKSIDER. YOU ARE THE ONE TRAVELING IN THE COMPANY OF OUR NEW LORD MASTRELL.
IT IS FOR HIM THAT I AM HERE--WHICH IS
THE DUCHESS SAYS THAT SHE IS HERE FOR KENTON, AND HENCE FOR THE DIEM, MY LADY.
WATCH OUT FOR KENTON, CHILD. HE HAS SURPRISED US ALL.


THE SAND MASTER GUILD STANDS ON THE PRECIPICE OF EXPUNCTION. I AM HERE TO PETITION YOUR ADVICE AND SUPPORT ON HOW THIS MATTER MAY BEST NOW BE AVOIDED.
YOU ARE TOO LATE TO *AVOID* IT, CHILD. BUT OVERTURNING IT--THAT MIGHT BE DONE, *IF* YOU CAN BEND THE EAR OF THE VARIOUS TAISHIN.
BUT WHO SHOULD I SPEAK TO IF NOT YOU, LADY JUDGE.
ALAS, THE TAISHIN ARE VERY BUSY. THEY STRUGGLE TO FIND TIME TO SEE THEIR OWN PEOPLE, AND TIME RUNS SHORT FOR THE DIEM.
BUT THERE IS ONE WHO TAKES IT UPON HIMSELF TO CARE FOR LOSSAND'S FORGOTTEN. HIS NAME IS NILTO.
THE LORD BEGGAR?
WHILE NOT, BY LAW, A TRUE TAISHA, NILTO IS ARGUABLY AS POWERFUL AS ANY OF US.
IF YOU ARE TO HAVE ANY HOPE TO CIRCUMVENT DUE PROCESS, IT SHOULD BE HE THAT YOU SPEAK WITH.
THANK YOU, MY LADY.

SOMETIME LATER...
HERE. TAKE IT. AND NOT JUST FOR THE CHILDREN. YOU MUST EAT TOO, MY FRIEND.
LORD NILTO? THIS IS...
YES, TELL HER I KNOW WHO SHE IS. THE WOMAN OF ELIS.
WORDS TRAVEL SWIFTER THAN THE KEZARE WINDS. THEY MAY REACH A MAN LIKE ME EVEN HERE, SO FAR FROM THE HALL OF JUDGEMENT.
AND N'TEESE TRANSLATES.
YOUR TRANSLATOR REQUESTED AN AUDIENCE. WELL, THIS IS MY OFFICE.
HERE?
YES, IF YOU WANT TO SPEAK WITH ME.
NOW, WHY ARE YOU BOTHERING ME?
THE LADY JUDGE INDICATED THAT YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP ME. THE PEOPLE OF THIS CITY SEEM TO RESPECT YOU--THEY LOOK AT YOU AS A SAVIOR.
I WAS HOPING YOU COULD USE YOUR INFLUENCE TO SUPPORT THE SAND MASTERS, AS THE HONORABLE MAN I KNOW YOU ARE.

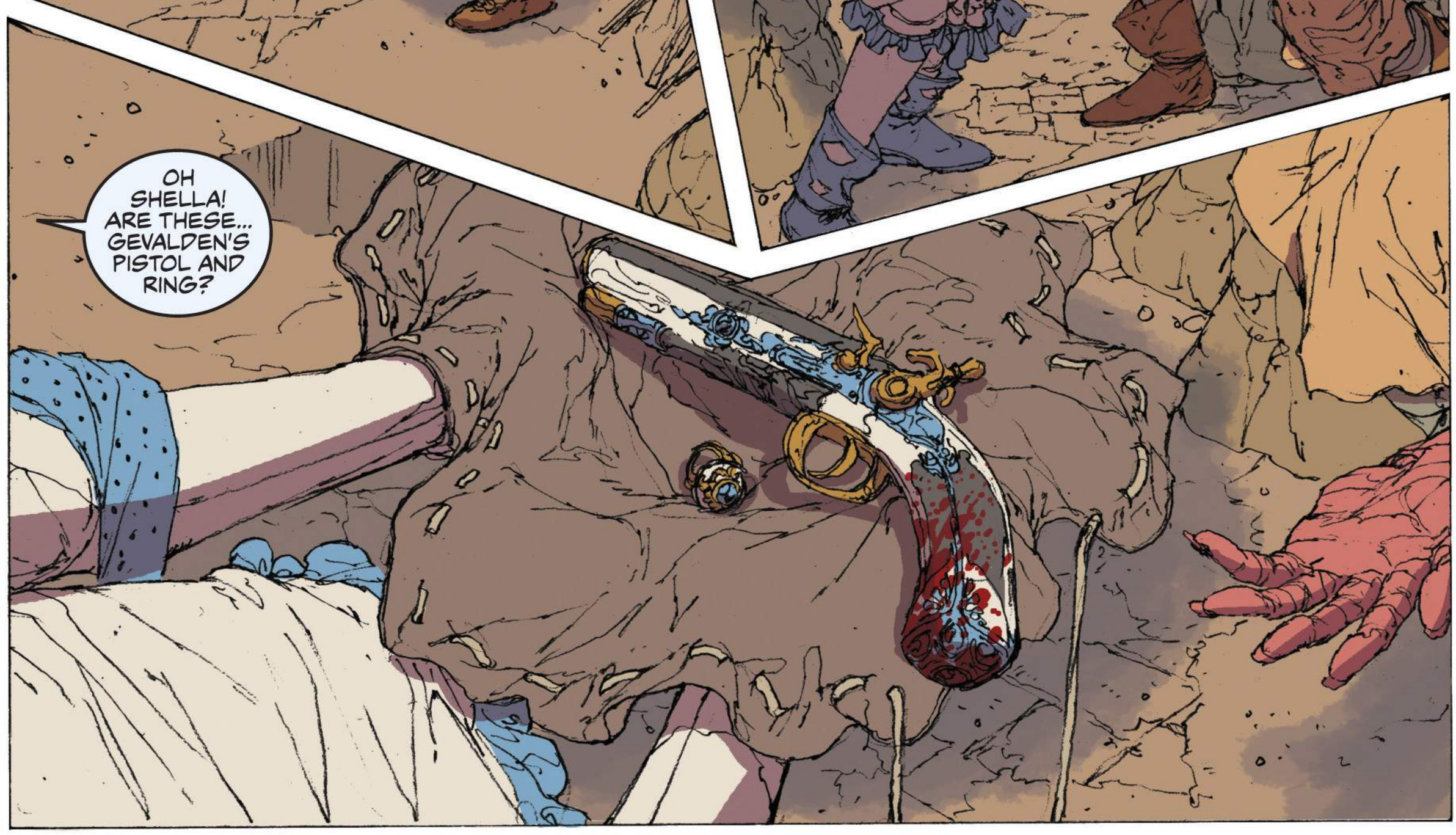

AND WHAT IS YOUR INTEREST? YOU ARE AN OUTSIDER, ARE YOU NOT?
MY... SOMEONE CLOSE TO ME CAME HERE BEFORE ME, HOPING TO PETITION THE SAND MASTERS FOR AID--
--NOW, IT SEEMS I AM IN A POSITION TO AID THEM IN HIS MEMORY.
HOW MYSTERIOUS YOUR TALE SOUNDS.
BOY, COME HERE.
YOU BELIEVE I HAVE INFLUENCE ON THE TAISHIN.
A DECISION ON THE DIEM'S FUTURE HANGS IN THE BALANCE, WITH JUST DAYS UNTIL THEIR FATE IS DECIDED, LORD NILTO.
THE SAND MASTERS HAVE BEEN A BOON TO THIS CITY, AND TO ALL OF LOSSAND, AND CAN BE SO AGAIN--YOU MUST SURELY REALIZE THAT.
THUS I ASK THAT YOU SPEAK TO THE TAISHIN PERHAPS INT ME TO THE MY DIRECT AS A WOU
MY MISTRESS ASKS THAT YOU SPEAK WITH THE TAISHIN, OR INTRODUCE HER TO THEM WHERE OUR EFFORTS WOULD SURELY FAIL.

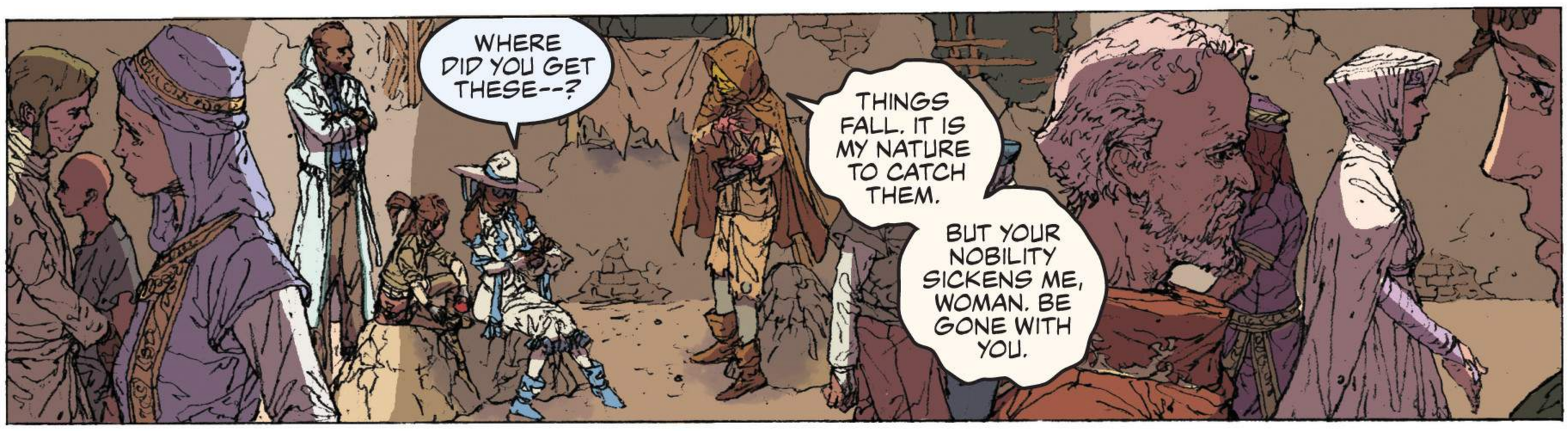
SO, YOU HOPED THAT BY BEGGING ME I COULD BEG ON YOUR BEHALF?
DON'T YOU KNOW THAT YOU SHOULD NEVER BEG A BEGGAR, DUCHESS?

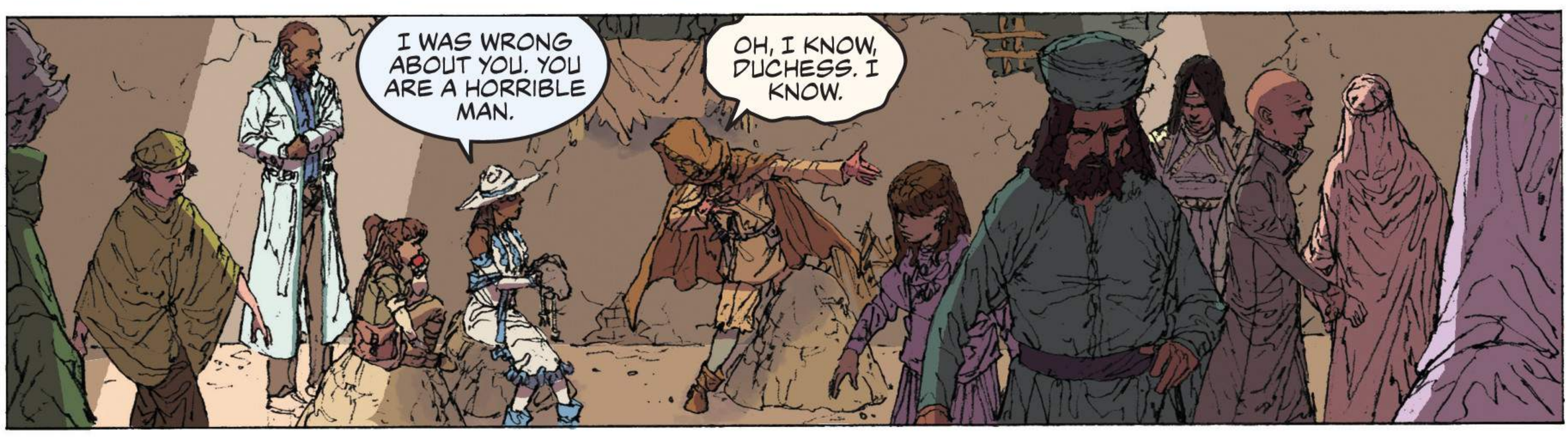
EVEN WHEN THE PROSPECTIVE SHIFT IN POWER AWAY FROM THE MASTRELLS MIGHT AFFECT THAT BEGGAR, LORD NILTO?
HMF. WE SHALL SEE.

HERE--

--THESE BELONG TO YOU NOW.


OH SHELLA! ARE THESE... GEVALDEN'S PISTOL AND RING?

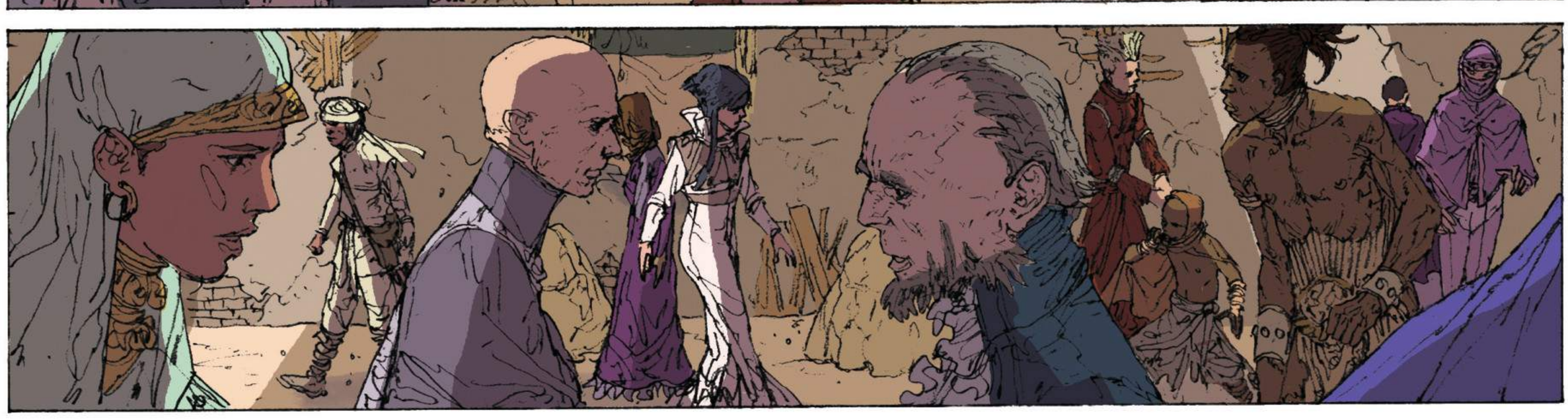

WHERE DID YOU GET THESE--?
THINGS FALL. IT IS MY NATURE TO CATCH THEM.
BUT YOUR NOBILITY SICKENS ME, WOMAN. BE GONE WITH YOU.


I WAS WRONG ABOUT YOU. YOU ARE A HORRIBLE MAN.
OH, I KNOW, DUCHESS. I KNOW.

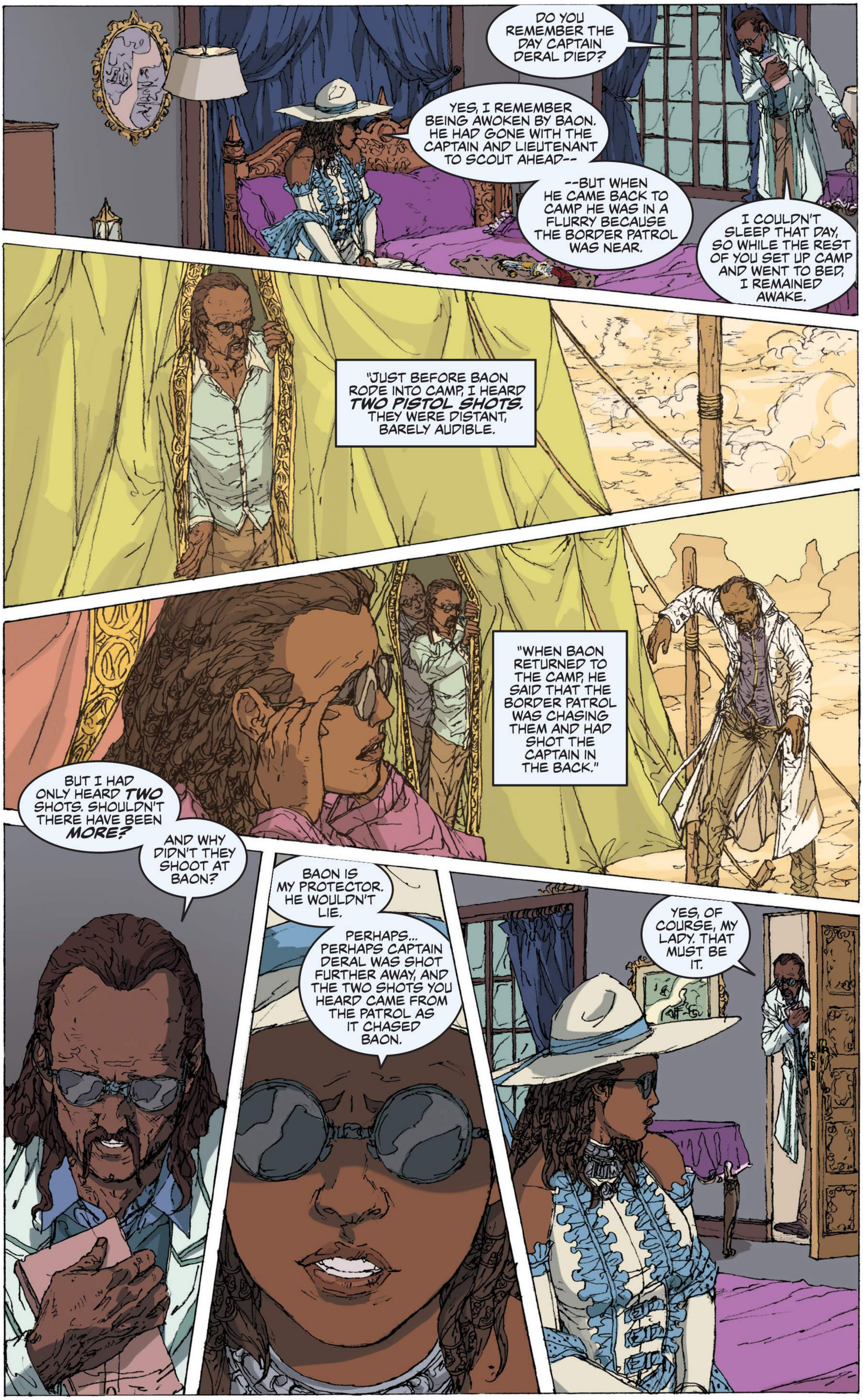
YOU ARE CERTAIN THAT THEY ARE PRINCE GEVALDEN'S, MY LADY?
YES, BAON, THEY ARE. THEY CAN ONLY HAVE BEEN RETRIEVED FROM HIS DEAD BODY.

LET'S GO. AS YOUR PROTECTOR, I WOULD FEEL A LOT MORE COMFORTABLE AWAY FROM HERE--

--EVEN IF YOU ARE NOW ARMED WITH YOUR LATE FIANCÉ'S PISTOL.



LATER, AT THE HOSTEL WHERE KHRISS'S PARTY IS STAYING.
TAP TAP
DUCHESS?
I AM SORRY, MY LADY, I DON'T MEAN TO INTRUDE. IT'S JUST MY BOOK...
GO AHEAD, ACRON, I'M... WASTING TIME.
IF I MAY SAY, DUCHESS: THAT YOU KNEW PRINCE GEVALDEN HAD DIED BEFORE WE ARRIVED HERE DOES NOT PRECLUDE YOUR GRIEF.
NO, BUT THERE ARE OTHER MATTERS THAT REQUIRE MY ATTENTION, AND GRIEF IS AN INDULGENCE I CAN ILL AFFORD.
THEN... PERHAPS WE MIGHT DISCUSS... ANOTHER MATTER THAT HAS BEEN ON MY MIND THESE PAST WEEKS.
WHAT IS IT, ACRON?


DO YOU REMEMBER THE DAY CAPTAIN DERAL DIED?
YES, I REMEMBER BEING AWOKEN BY BAON. HE HAD GONE WITH THE CAPTAIN AND LIEUTENANT TO SCOUT AHEAD--
--BUT WHEN HE CAME BACK TO CAMP HE WAS IN A FLURRY BECAUSE THE BORDER PATROL WAS NEAR.
I COULDN'T SLEEP THAT DAY, SO WHILE THE REST OF YOU SET UP CAMP AND WENT TO BED, I REMAINED AWAKE.
"JUST BEFORE BAON RODE INTO CAMP, I HEARD TWO PISTOL SHOTS. THEY WERE DISTANT, BARELY AUDIBLE.
"WHEN BAON RETURNED TO THE CAMP, HE SAID THAT THE BORDER PATROL WAS CHASING THEM AND HAD SHOT THE CAPTAIN IN THE BACK."
BUT I HAD ONLY HEARD TWO SHOTS. SHOULDN'T THERE HAVE BEEN MORE?
AND WHY DIDN'T THEY SHOOT AT BAON?
BAON IS MY PROTECTOR. HE WOULDN'T LIE.
PERHAPS... PERHAPS CAPTAIN DERAL WAS SHOT FURTHER AWAY, AND THE TWO SHOTS YOU HEARD CAME FROM THE PATROL AS IT CHASED BAON.
YES, OF COURSE, MY LADY. THAT MUST BE IT.

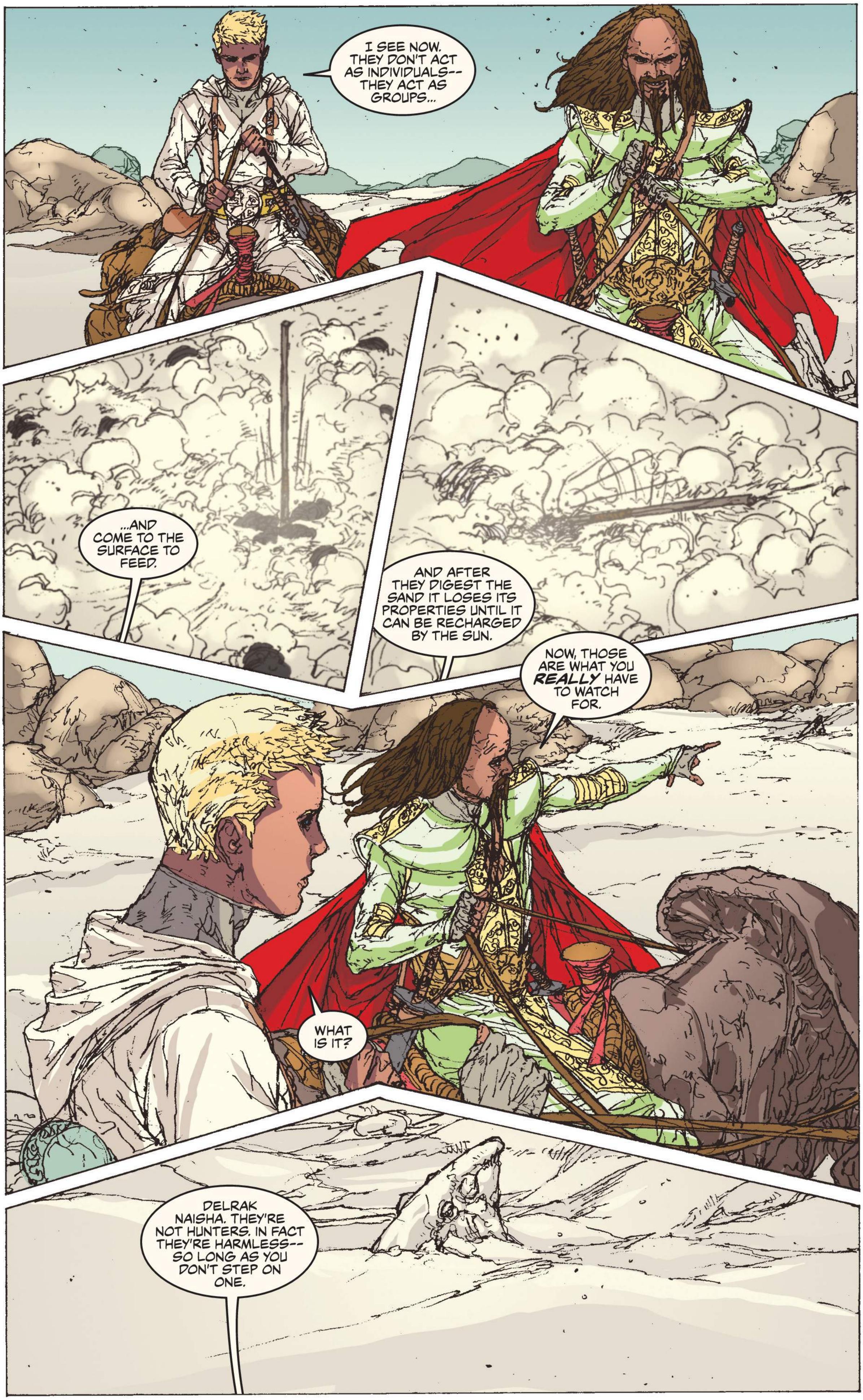
CHAPTER
3
THE CATCH

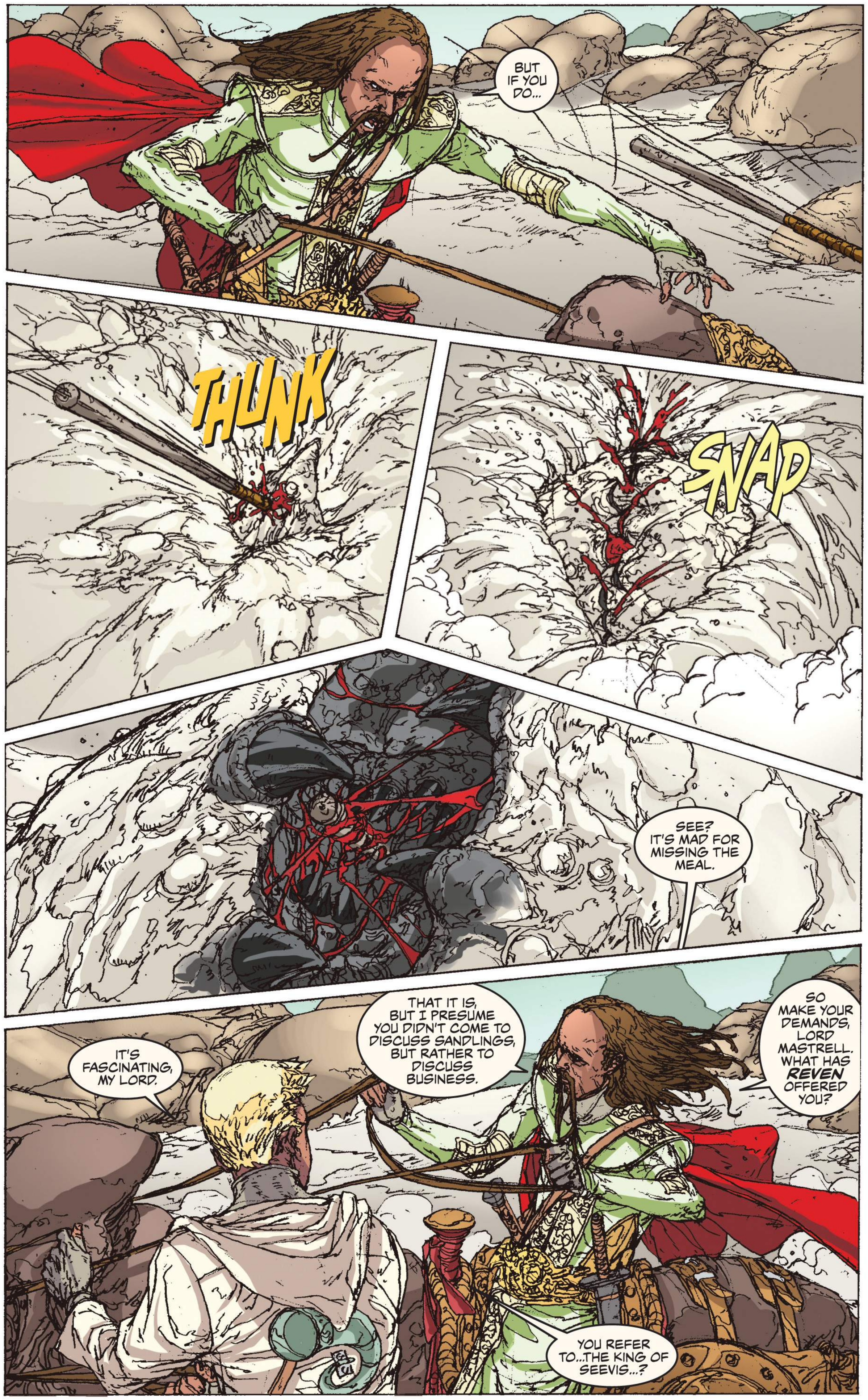
LORD MASTRELL! YOU SURPRISE ME--
--COMING OUT SO FAR TO MEET LIKE THIS.
I APOLOGIZE FOR INTERRUPTING YOUR VACATION, LORD RAAGENT.
I APPRECIATE THE SENTIMENT.
PLEASE, TAKE A SEAT.
THE DEEP SAND IS QUITE A TRIP FROM LOSSAND, LORD MASTRELL. I AM IMPRESSED BY YOUR DEDICATION IN FINDING ME.
THANK YOU, LORD GENERAL.

IT PROMISES TO BE A FRUITFUL HUNT. ALREADY WE'VE MADE SEVERAL CATCHES.
HAVE YOU EVER WATCHED A DEEP SAND HUNT BEFORE?
NO, MY LORD.
COME, LORD MASTRELL!
ARE YOU STILL SPARRING WITH THE TOWER'S SOLDIERS, OR HAVE YOU GROWN OUT OF THAT?
YOU MUST RECTIFY THAT. IT'S AN EXPERIENCE UNLIKE ANY OTHER.
THAT'S NOT REALLY WHY--
I'VE ALWAYS FOUND THEIR TRAINING HELPFUL. A WISE MAN MAKES CERTAIN HE'S NEVER TRAPPED IN BATTLE WITH ONLY A SINGLE OPTION OF ATTACK.
A TRUE STATEMENT, LORD KENTON. ADDITIONAL SKILLS CAN BE OF MUCH SERVICE TO A MAN--

--ESPECIALLY WHEN HE FINDS HIMSELF IN NEED OF CHANGING PROFESSIONS.
ACTUALLY, LORD RAAGENT, THAT IS WHY I CAME TO FIND Y--
LOOK THERE! THEY'VE FOUND SOMETHING.
WE SHOULD CONTINUE THIS DISCUSSION. WOULD YOU CARE TO JOIN ME?
UH...
YOU CAME ALL THIS WAY--YOU MIGHT AS WELL SEE WHAT A HUNT IS ALL ABOUT.
I'VE NEVER RIDDEN A TERHA BEFORE, MY LORD.
TRUST ME, THEY'RE TOUGH. FROM INFANCY, WE DOUSE THEIR BODIES WITH DOKALL, MAKING THE SHELL IMPOSSIBLE TO DISSOLVE.
YOU'VE NOT BEEN OUT HERE BEFORE SO I SHOULD WARN YOU--THE STORIES AREN'T EXACTLY ACCURATE WHEN IT COMES TO DEEP SANDLINGS.
YOU MEAN DEEP SANDLINGS AREN'T AS LARGE AS PEOPLE THINK?
OH, THEY'RE BIG...

...BUT WITH THE DORIM VINES RARER OUT BEYOND THE KERLA, SANDLINGS ARE ALLOWED TO GROW-- JUST NOT ALWAYS IN THE WAY EVERYONE ASSUMES.
WHAT... WHAT AM I LOOKING AT?
IT'S AS IF THE SAND IS ALIVE!
HAH! I WARNED YOU, LORD MASTRELL!
WHEN PEOPLE VISIT THE DEEP SANDS, THEY SEE THE SAND AGITATE AROUND THEM, REMEMBER THE STORIES AND ASSUME THEY'RE GOING TO BE ATTACKED.
SO THEY RUN! THEY NEVER REALIZE THAT WHAT THEY'RE SEEING ISN'T A SINGLE MONSTER...
THUNK
...BUT THOUSANDS OF TINY ONES.

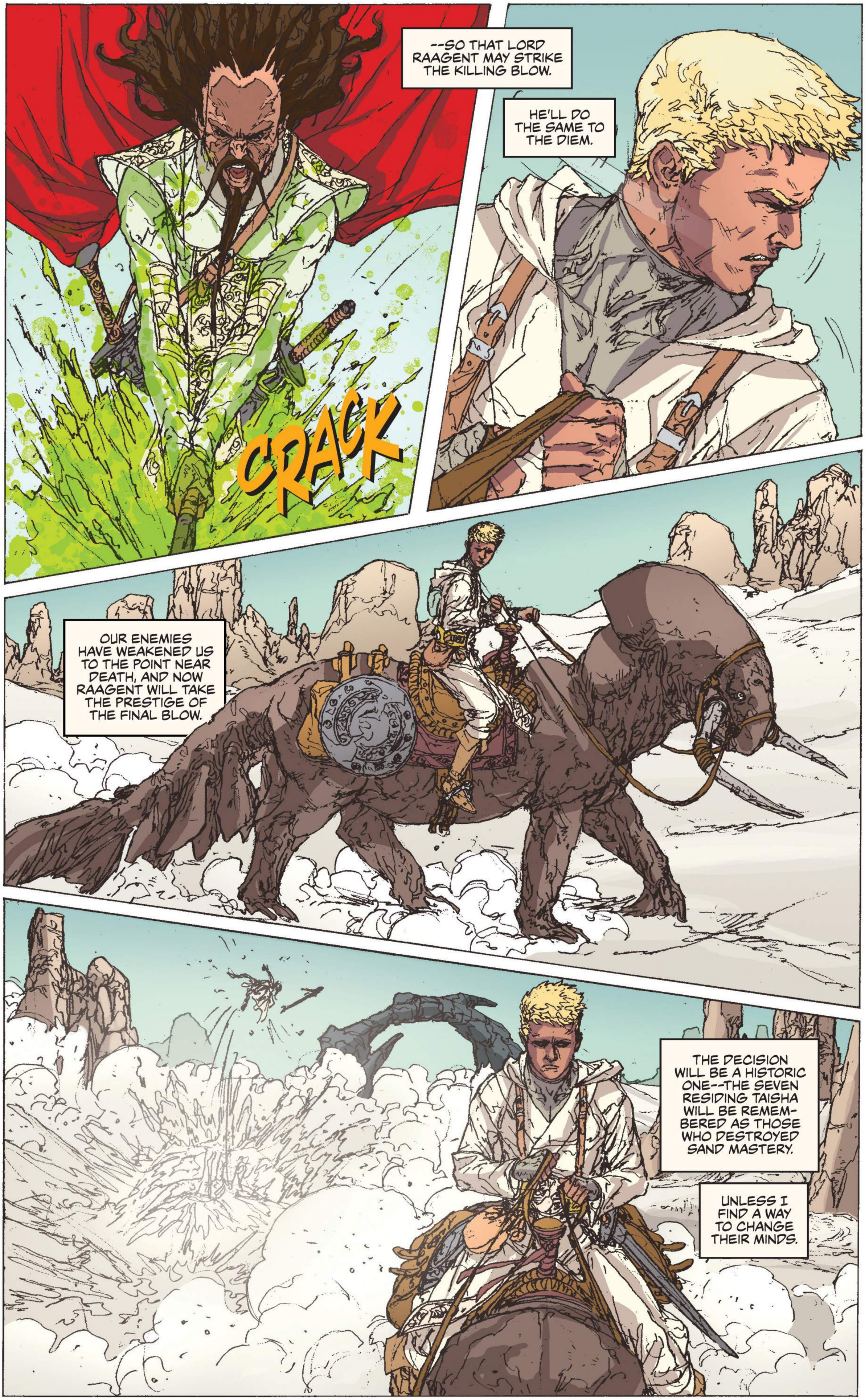

I SEE NOW. THEY DON'T ACT AS INDIVIDUALS-- THEY ACT AS GROUPS...
...AND COME TO THE SURFACE TO FEED.
AND AFTER THEY DIGEST THE SAND IT LOSES ITS PROPERTIES UNTIL IT CAN BE RECHARGED BY THE SUN.
NOW, THOSE ARE WHAT YOU REALLY HAVE TO WATCH FOR.
WHAT IS IT?
DELRAK NAISHA. THEY'RE NOT HUNTERS. IN FACT THEY'RE HARMLESS-- SO LONG AS YOU DON'T STEP ON ONE.


BUT IF YOU DO...
THUNK
SNAP
SEE? IT'S MAD FOR MISSING THE MEAL.
IT'S FASCINATING, MY LORD.
THAT IT IS, BUT I PRESUME YOU DIDN'T COME TO DISCUSS SANDLINGS, BUT RATHER TO DISCUSS BUSINESS.
SO MAKE YOUR DEMANDS, LORD MASTRELL. WHAT HAS REVEN OFFERED YOU?
YOU REFER TO...THE KING OF SEEVIS...?

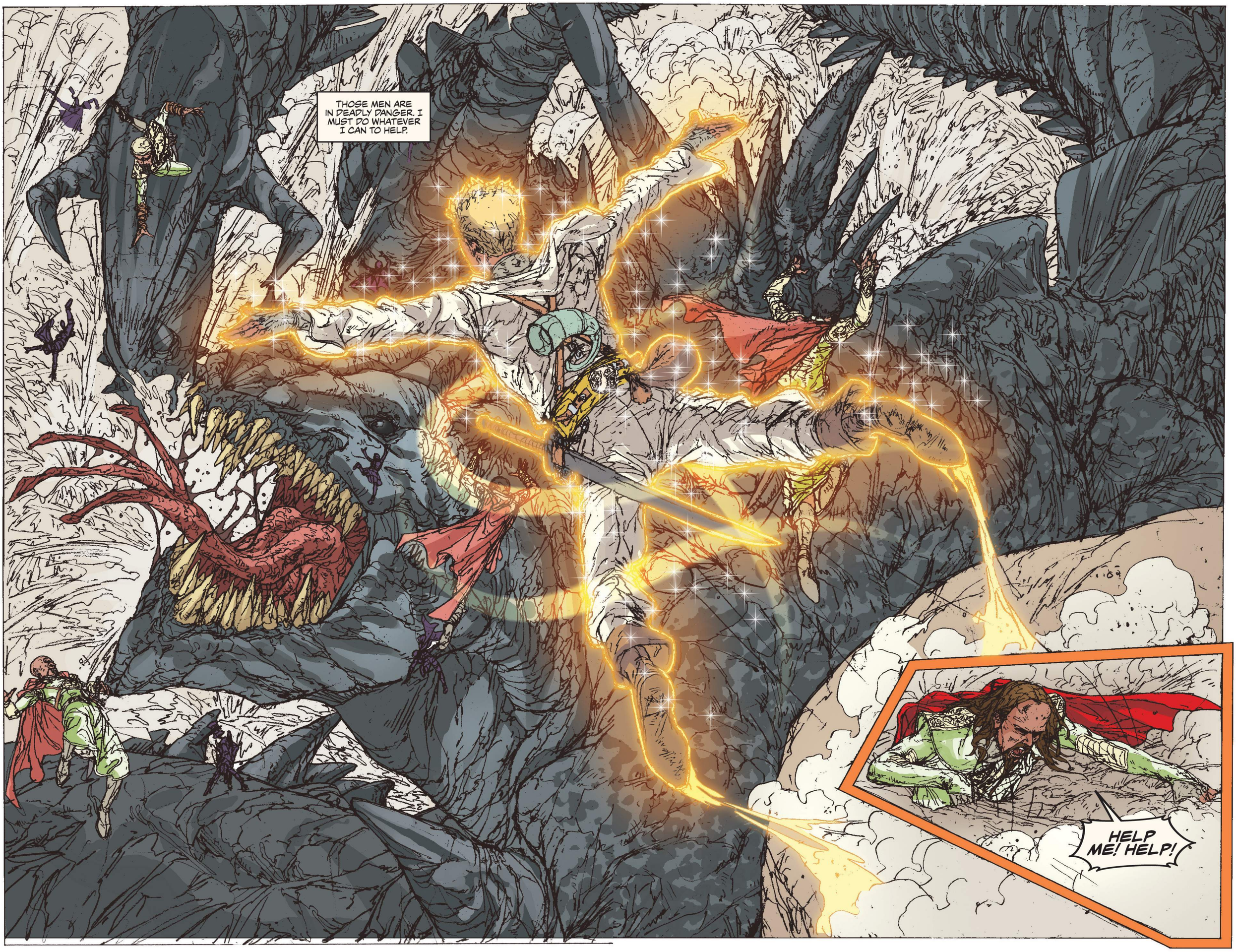
YES. YOUR MOVE SURPRISED ME, BUT I ACKNOWLEDGE ITS BRILLIANCE.
WE HOPED TO TAKE CARE OF THE MASTRELLS BEFORE ANY OF THE OTHER COUNTRIES KNEW WHAT WE WERE DOING AND MIGHT TRY TO INFLUENCE YOU.
THE REST OF THE CITY DIDN'T EVEN KNOW ABOUT OUR PLANS TO DISSOLVE THE DIEM. BUT YOUR TWO WEEK "STAY OF EXECUTION" HAS RUINED THAT.
SO, TELL ME, LORD MASTRELL--
--HOW MUCH WILL IT COST ME TO HIRE YOU?
YOU WANT TO HIRE THE SAND MASTERS?
WELL, NOT ALL OF YOU, OF COURSE.
THAT WOULD DEFEAT THE PURPOSE OF DESTROYING THE DIEM. JUST ENOUGH THAT EVERYONE KNOWS THE TOWER HAS THE POWER OF SAND MASTERY.
TRUST ME, I WILL PAY YOU MORE THAN THE RIM KINGDOMS.
YOU WORK TO DESTROY US BECAUSE WE'VE GROWN TOO POWERFUL, THEN YOU SEEK TO SEIZE THAT POWER FOR YOURSELF?
ALL POLITICS IS FOUNDED IN HYPOCRISY, KENTON.
DO NOT LET OUR PERSONAL DIFFERENCES DESTROY YOUR CHANCES--OUR ARRANGEMENT WOULD BE OF MUTUAL BENEFIT.
THE REPORTS YOU HEARD OF MASTRELLS DEALING WITH THE RIM KINGDOMS INVOLVED ANOTHER SAND MASTER, NOT MYSELF. I INTEND TO SAVE THE DIEM.
AND OUR CONVERSATION HERE HAS PROVEN WE CAN GET ALONG IF WE WANT TO, AT LEAST. WE DON'T NEED TO BE ENEMIES.
SURELY WE CAN COME TO SOME ARRANGEMENT.
I ALREADY OFFERED YOU ONE, BOY. THE SAND MASTERS HAVE OUTLIVED THEIR USEFULNESS. EITHER YOU JOIN ME OR YOU LOSE YOURSELVES COMPLETELY.

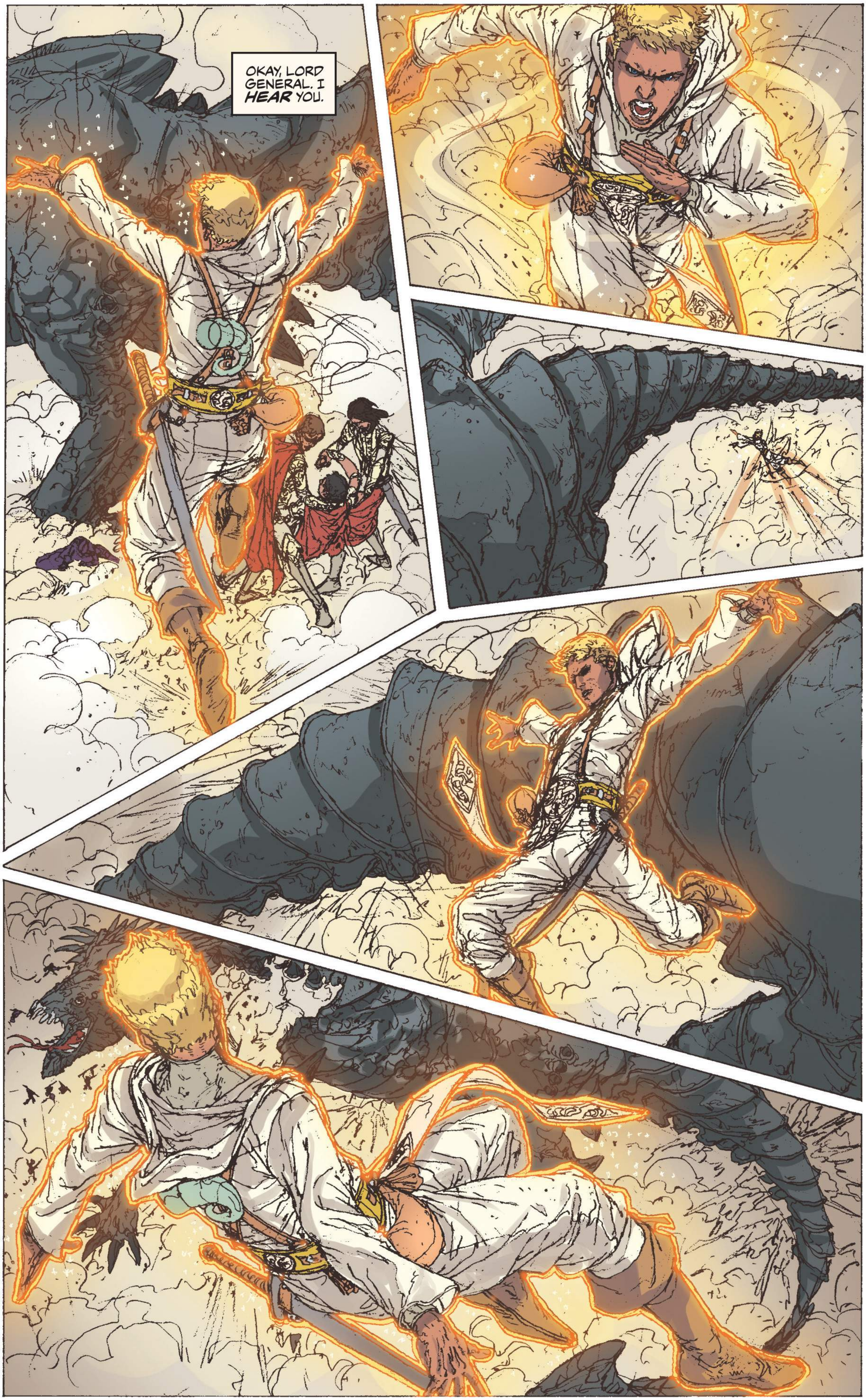
RAAGENT, YOU SAY THAT SAND MASTERY HAS OUTLIVED ITS USEFULNESS, BUT AT THE SAME TIME YOU SCHEME TO MAKE IT YOUR OWN. YOU KNOW ITS POWER AND YOU'RE AFRAID OF IT.
ALL YOU WANT IS WHAT'S BEST FOR YOURSELF, NOT LOSSAND.
HOW DARE YOU! I CARE NOTHING FOR SAND MASTERY'S POWER--IT HAS NONE! YOU ARE NOTHING MORE THAN STREET CHARLATANS. I WANT YOUR PRESTIGE, BOY! YOUR NAME!
HOWEVER, I'VE CHANGED MY MIND. I'D RATHER SEE YOU DESTROYED--
--THAN HAVE YOU ANYWHERE NEAR THE TOWER!
GEE-UP!
:SIGH: I'M GOING TO HAVE TO COME UP WITH BETTER ARGUMENTS.

HERE WE ARE-- LORD RAAGENT'S PRIZE, A KARAK, IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN.
HIS MEN HAVE TAUNTED AND TOYED WITH IT, LEFT IT WOUNDED AND HELPLESS--

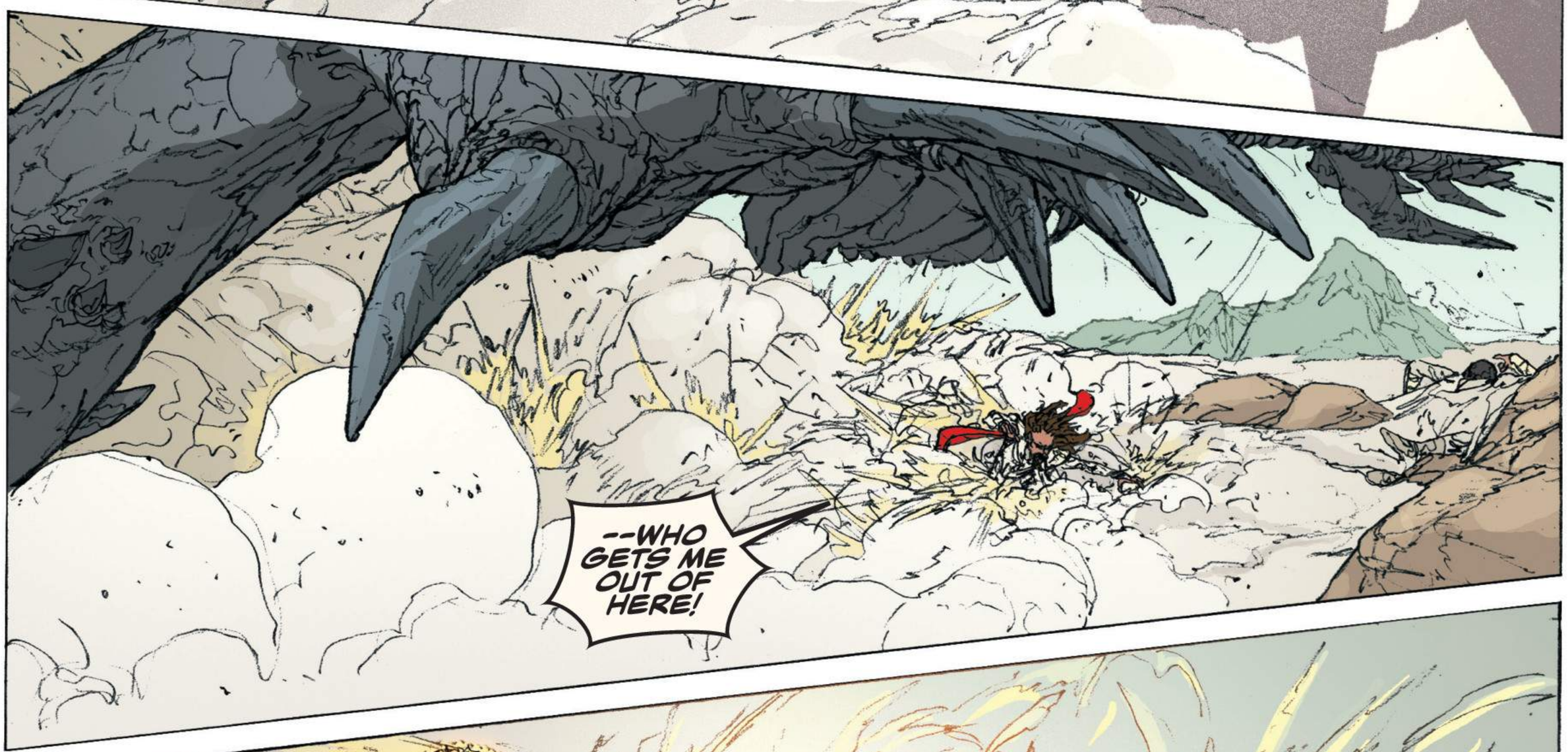

--SO THAT LORD RAAGENT MAY STRIKE THE KILLING BLOW.
HE'LL DO THE SAME TO THE DIEM.
CRACK
OUR ENEMIES HAVE WEAKENED US TO THE POINT NEAR DEATH, AND NOW RAAGENT WILL TAKE THE PRESTIGE OF THE FINAL BLOW.
THE DECISION WILL BE A HISTORIC ONE--THE SEVEN RESIDING TAISHA WILL BE REMEMBERED AS THOSE WHO DESTROYED SAND MASTERY.
UNLESS I FIND A WAY TO CHANGE THEIR MINDS.

WHAT TH--?!
THUMP
WHAT HAPPENED? ARE YOU--?
THE BEAST...WAS A BABY. NOW... MOMMY'S HERE.
LORD RAAGENT?
LORD RAAGENT?

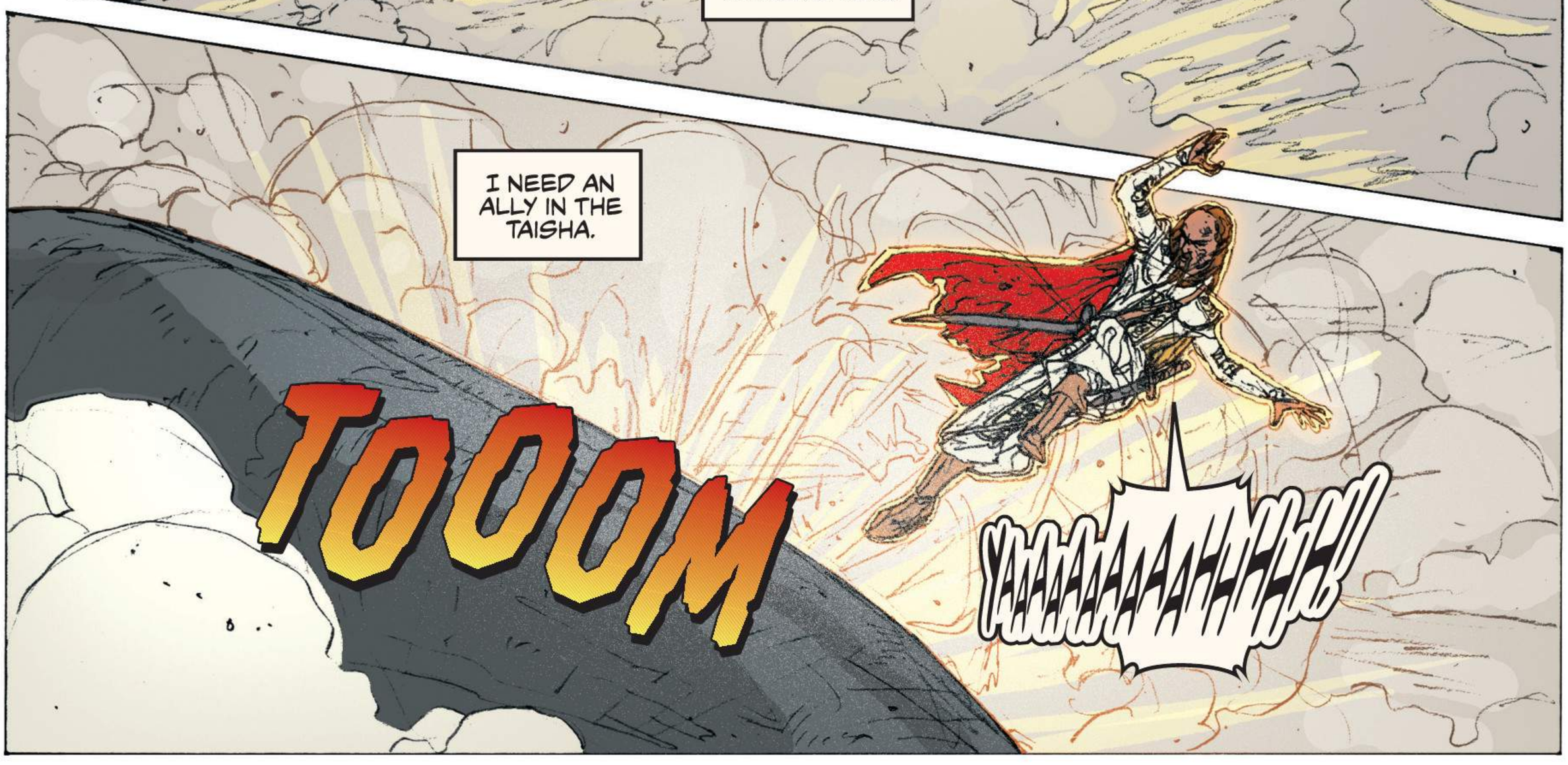

THOSE MEN ARE IN DEADLY DANGER. I MUST DO WHATEVER I CAN TO HELP.
HELP ME! HELP!


OKAY, LORD GENERAL. I *HEAR* YOU.

AN INSTANT PROMOTION FOR ANY SOLDIER--

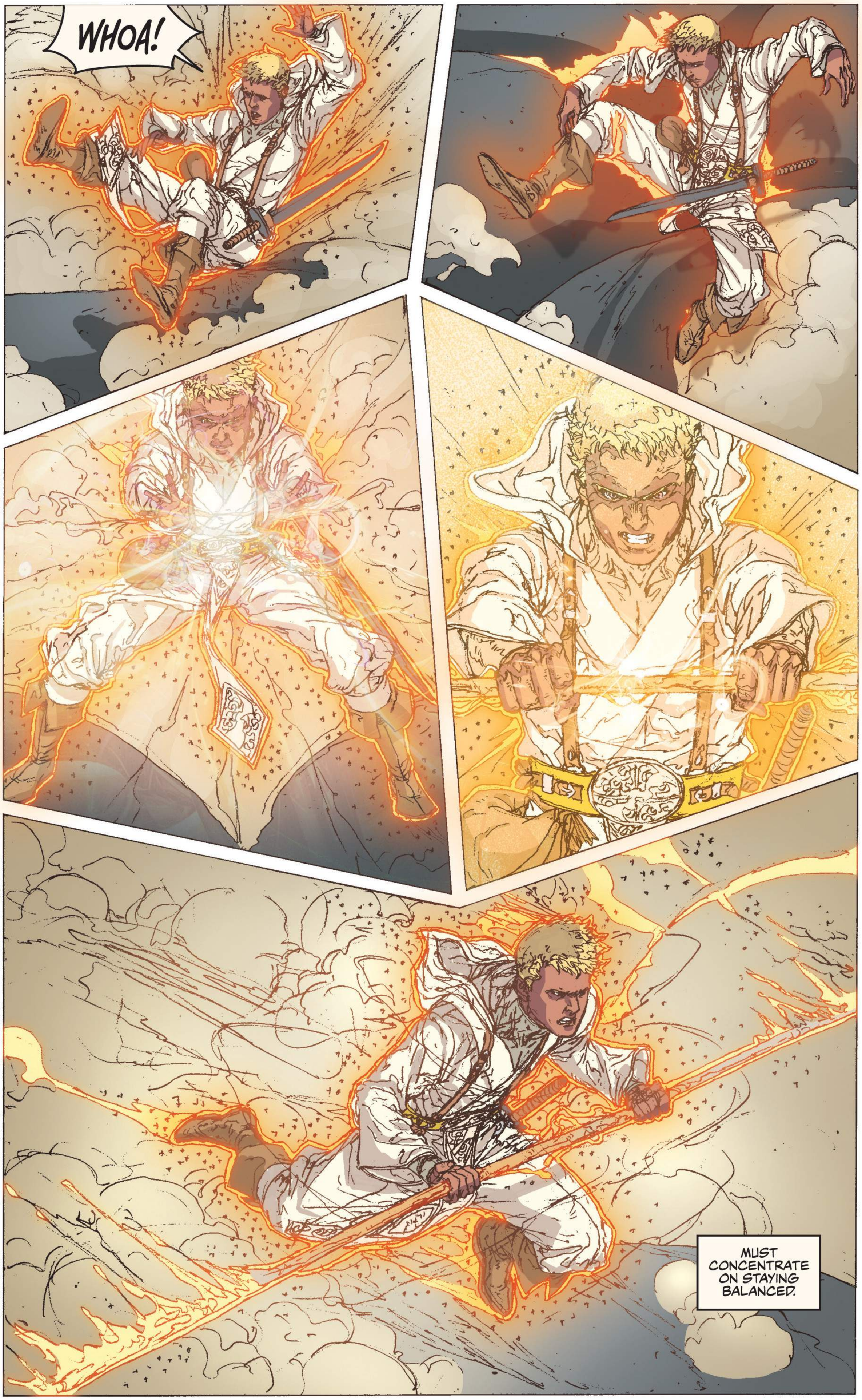

--WHO GETS ME OUT OF HERE!

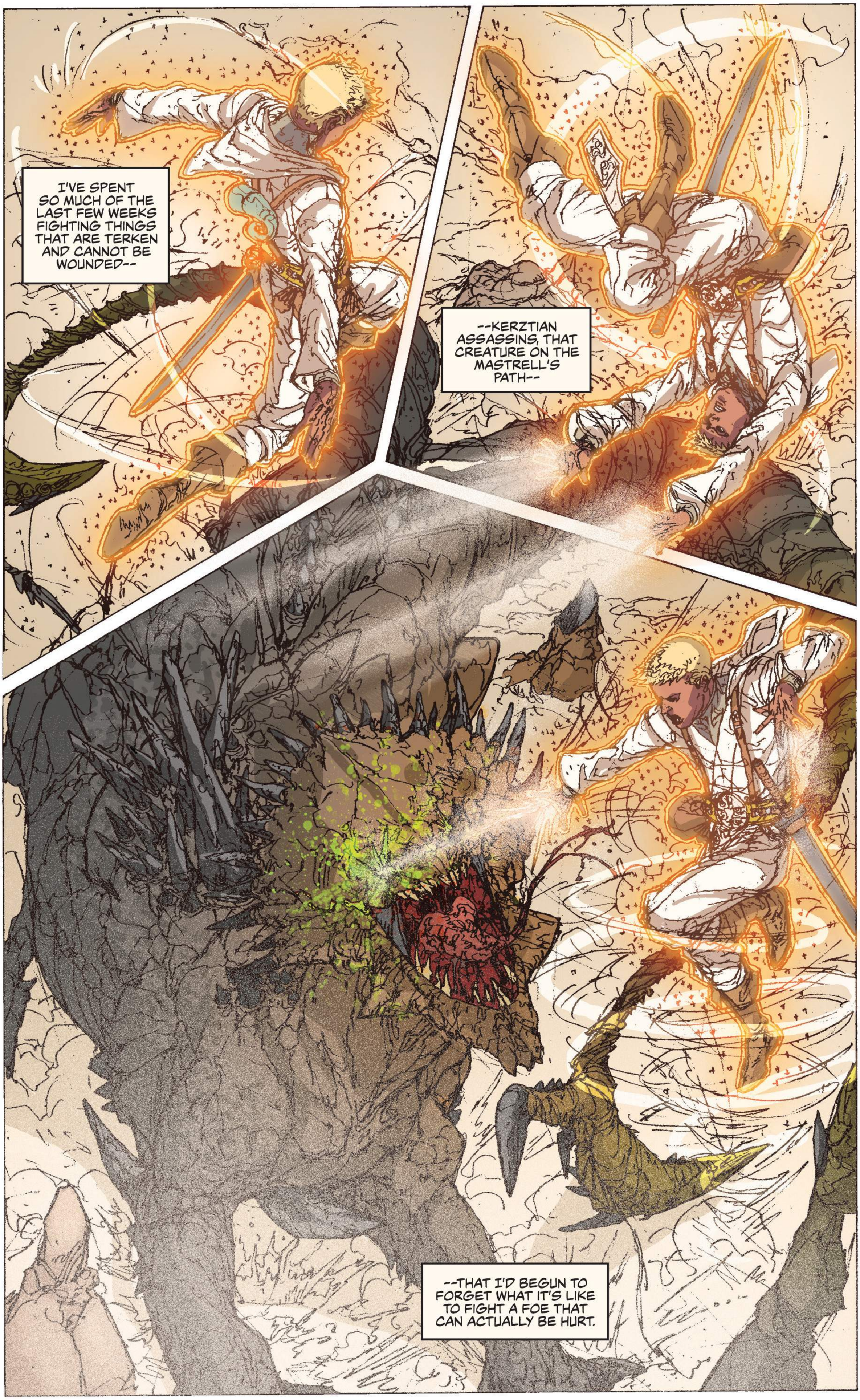
I DON'T NEED A PROMOTION.


I NEED AN ALLY IN THE TAISHA.
TOOOM
YAAAAAAAAAHHHHG!

:HUFF-PUFF: LORD MASTRELL, YOU MUST GET US OUT OF HERE RIGHT NOW!
I DON'T THINK I CAN LIFT US BOTH SAFELY, LORD RAAGENT. WE'LL HAVE TO RUN...
WHAT IN THE SANDS...?!
YOU LOOK LIKE YOU COULD USE A RIDE--
--FATHER!
AARIK? I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D FOLLOWED US.
KENTON'S MY FRIEND, AND HE'S APT TO GET IN TROUBLE IF I LEAVE HIS SIDE FOR TOO LONG.
NOW HANG ON!
RIGHT THEN. JUST ME AND MOMMY, IS IT?

FINE!
STEADY...
STEADY...


WHOA!
MUST CONCENTRATE ON STAYING BALANCED.


I'VE SPENT SO MUCH OF THE LAST FEW WEEKS FIGHTING THINGS THAT ARE TERKEN AND CANNOT BE WOUNDED--
--KERZTIAN ASSASSINS, THAT CREATURE ON THE MASTRELL'S PATH--
--THAT I'D BEGUN TO FORGET WHAT IT'S LIKE TO FIGHT A FOE THAT CAN ACTUALLY BE HURT.