



THE REVIVAL

CHAPTER 3

NECROMANCER'S LAIR



THEN I BEHELD A SOLEMN DARKNESS, COOL TO
THE TOUCH AND STUBBORN AS STONE. A MIND
SHARP, SOMEHOW MADE DULLER BY THE
TURNING OF THE STONE WHEEL. BUT IN IT,
BEHIND THE MURK, THE CINDERS OF TIMES
PASSED REMAINED STOKED; IN THE FIRE WERE
REVEALED THE ANCIENT ONES, TALL AND
MIGHTY.

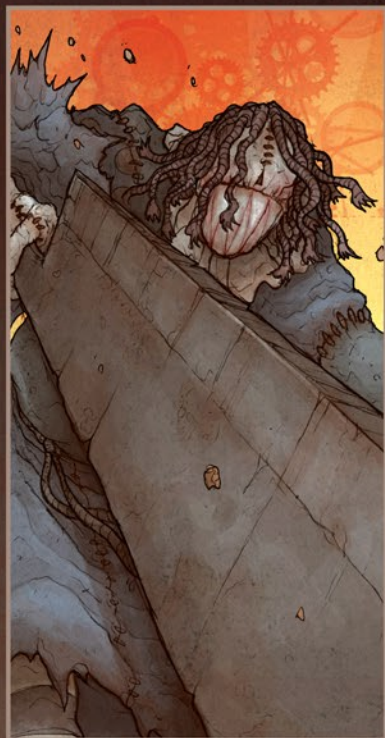
BEFORE MY EYES PASSED THE GREAT WORKS;
THE ORIGINATORS, WHOSE FLASH OF
INSPIRATION RENDERED WOOD AND BEAM INTO
SHIP, ROCK INTO CASTLE AND DIRT INTO CITY.

I WITNESSED NATURE, GREEN AND LUSH, WITH
INHABITANTS PEACEFUL AND TRUE. TIMES OF
OLD, TIMES OF PLENTY.

BUT YEA, THE EMBERS COOLED, AND IN A FLASH
ALL WERE GONE, FIGMENTS AND REMNANTS IN
THE MIND, RETREATING BACK INTO THEIR
COLD, INDIFFERENT DARKNESS."

-Spellbook of The Patriarch

CHAPTER THREE NECROMANCER'S LAIR



I DO HOPE THE RAGGEDS DID NOT HARM YOU.

YOU MUST UNDERSTAND, THEY ARE NOT SENTIENT BEINGS, BUT ANIMATED SENTRIES SET TO ATTACK ANYONE THAT VENTURES TOO CLOSE TO MY CAVE. THEY CAN MAKE NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN *CLONE SOLDIER* OR *CIVILIAN*.



NO, WE SHOULD APOLOGIZE. WE APPROACHED UNANNOUNCED AND ARMED. WE DIDN'T MEAN TO INTRUDE.

BY THE EVER-LIVING!

IT IS NO INTRUSION, ALTHOUGH I AM NOT ACCUSTOMED TO GUESTS OUT HERE.

TELL ME--



MY FRIEND, YOUR JAW HAS BEEN INJURED! PLEASE, ALLOW ME TO TAKE CARE OF THAT.

...HUH?



WHAT IS..?!



KEEP YOUR MAGIC TO YOURSELF, WARLOCK! WE DIDN'T WANDER THROUGH THE DESERT TO PLAY DOCTOR WITH YOU.



MY APOLOGIES.

...BUT THEN TELL ME, WHY DID YOU COME HERE?



WE NEED HELP. THE RESISTANCE CRUMBLED LONG AGO, AND EVER SINCE WE'VE BEEN STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE. WE MIGHT BE ALL THAT'S LEFT OF THE ENTIRE KINGDOM. EGO IS TOO POWERFUL, AND IF WE DON'T DO SOMETHING, HE'LL EVENTUALLY FIND US AND KILL US, TOO.



THERE IS MORE AT STAKE THAN THAT, I FEAR. COME INSIDE. WE SHALL TALK.

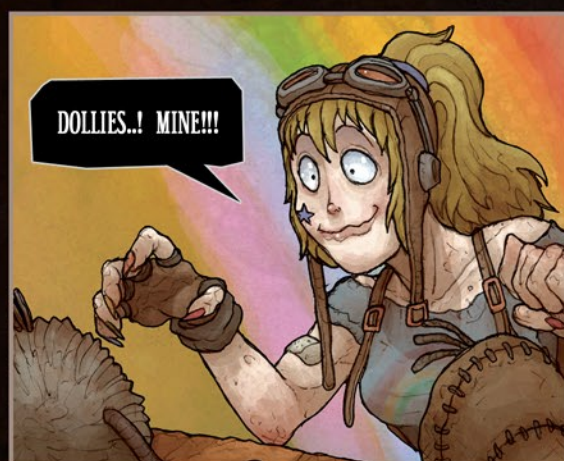


...BUT DO NOT TOUCH ANYTHING.



NO FAIR.





IT IS TRUE, MY MAGIC WAS NOT ENOUGH TO TURN THE TIDE OF THE WAR. BUT I ASSURE YOU, FLEEING WAS ONLY AN OPTION AFTER I HAD EXHAUSTED ALL OTHERS.

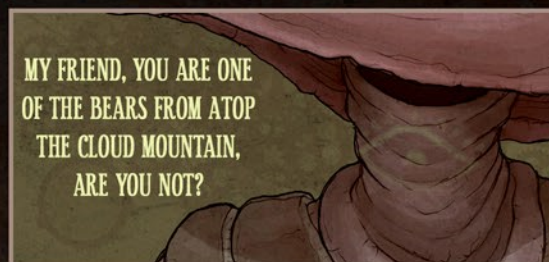




SO TELL US. TELL US
WHAT HAPPENED.

NECROMANCER, I'M SORRY.
HE'S BERRY DISTRUSTFUL--

NO, I UNDERSTAND.
I CAN SEE THAT YOU
HAVE ALL BEEN
THROUGH MUCH.



MY FRIEND, YOU ARE ONE
OF THE BEARS FROM ATOP
THE CLOUD MOUNTAIN,
ARE YOU NOT?



YES. I'M THE
ONLY ONE LEFT,
IN FACT.



A SHAME. I KNEW THAT EGO'S IRON STAIN
WOULD EVENTUALLY ENVELOP EVEN YOU.

HE ENVELOPED US, ALL
RIGHT! WE WERE ENSLAVED,
EXPERIMENTED ON, AND
EXTERMINATED. I WAS THE
ONLY ONE TO ESCAPE.



MY PEOPLE ARE DEAD! THEY
DIED WHILE YOU HID OUT HERE,
PLAYING WITH YOUR TOYS! HOW
CAN YOU JUSTIFY RUNNING
AWAY?!



FIGHT!
FIGHT!



PESSIMIST,
STAND DOWN.



...PLEASE, THERE IS NO NEED FOR THIS. FOLLOW
ME TO MY STUDY. I WILL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING.



COME, GATHER AROUND THE PIT.
MAKES YOURSELVES COMFORTABLE.



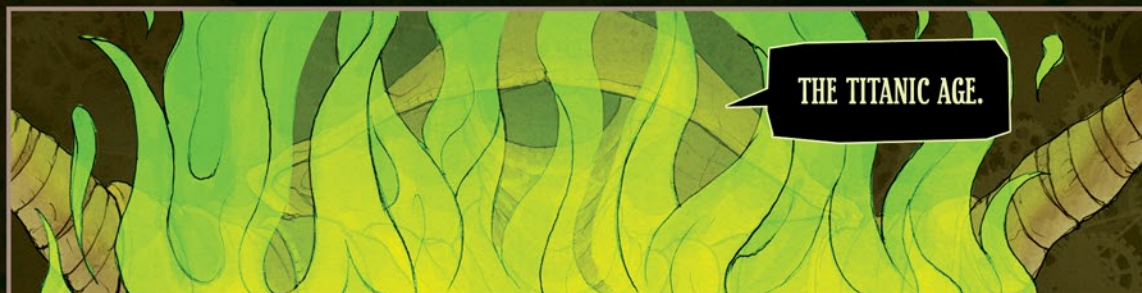
OOOH! TIME FOR GHOST STORIES!
I'LL GO FIRST. SO THIS SLIMY,
GREEN GHOST IS EATING A BUNCH
OF HOT DOGS, RIGHT? SO THEN--



ENOUGH OUT OF YOU.
THE GROWNUPS ARE
TALKING.



SILENCE, PLEASE. GAZE INTO THE
FLAME. I SHALL TAKE YOU BACK TO
WHERE THIS ALL STARTED. BACK TO...



THE TITANIC AGE.

"IT ALL BEGAN WITH THE TITANS. ANCIENT, ROBOTIC BEINGS
WAGED THEIR VIOLENT WARS ON OUR LANDS, EONS AGO. IT IS
BELIEVED THAT THEY WERE NOT FROM THIS WORLD, BUT BROUGHT
THEIR WARMONGERING WITH THEM FROM BEYOND THE STARS."

"NOBODY KNOWS FOR SURE WHAT HAPPENED, AS THE TITANS
LIVED LONG BEFORE ANY OF OUR COMMON ANCESTORS CAME
TO BE, BUT IT IS SAID THAT THEY DESTROYED EACH OTHER IN
COMBAT. WE KNOW ONLY OF THEM FROM THE REMAINS THEY
LEFT BURIED IN THE SAND: GARGANTUAN, ROBOTIC PIECES,
BODY PARTS AND BROKEN DOWN, RUSTED TECHNOLOGY.
THEY ARE THE STUFF OF LEGENDS."



I'LL SAY!
THAT'S BABY
STUFF. WE USED
TO HEAR ALL
THAT JAZZ AS
BEDTIME STORIES.



IN FACT...



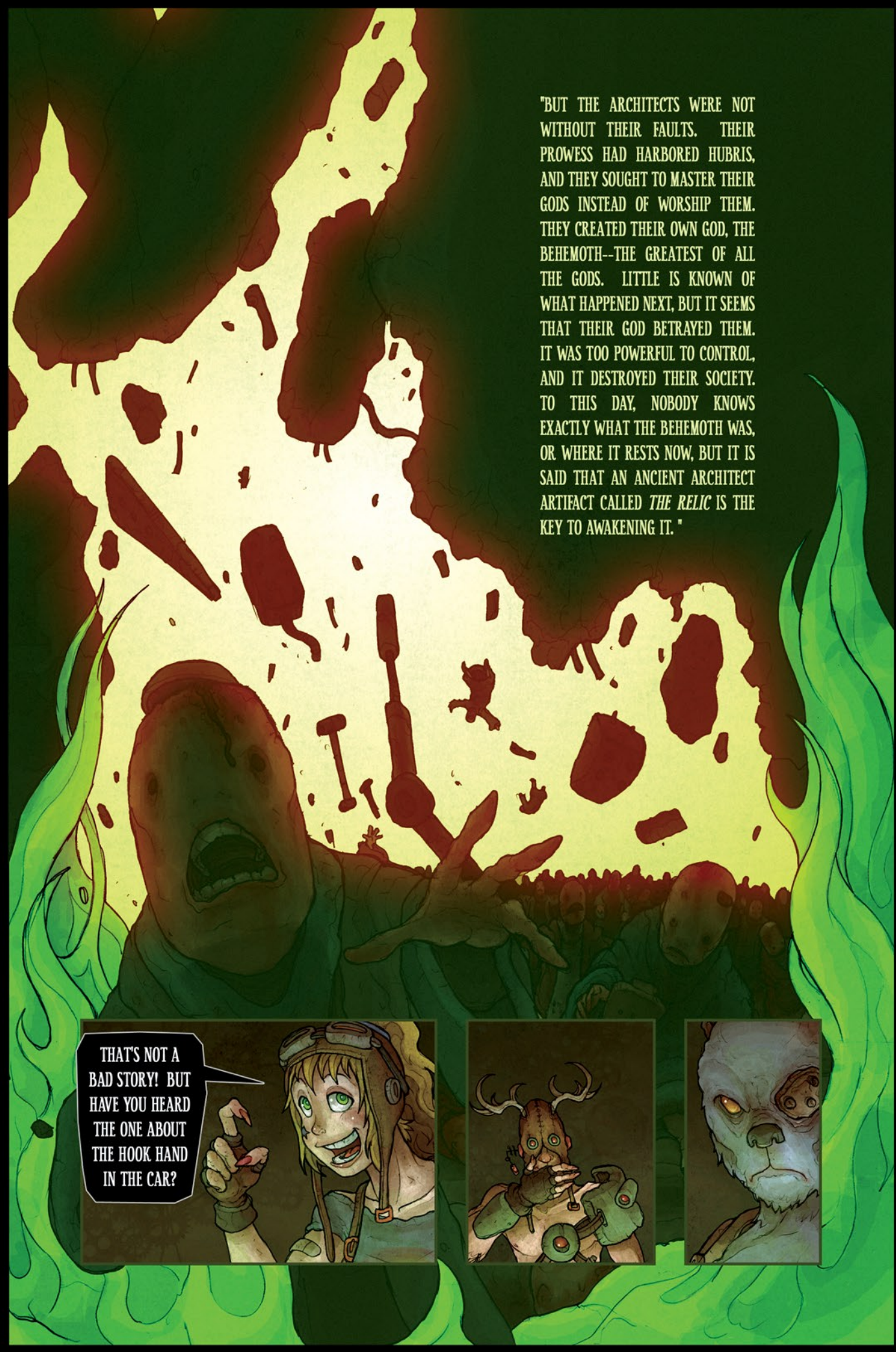
QUIET,
RAINBOW.
LET HIM
CONTINUE.



I CAN ASSURE YOU
ALL, THEY EXISTED.


"AS CERTAINLY AS THE ARCHITECTS DID. THEY CAME LONG AFTER THE TITANS, AND WERE NATIVE TO THESE LANDS. WHERE THE TITANS WERE GRAND, THE ARCHITECTS WERE SMALL, BUT THEY HAD IN THEM THE KNOWLEDGE TO DISSECT THE REMAINS. THEY DISCOVERED THE REMNANTS OF THE TITANS IN WHAT LATER CULTURES CALLED 'THE FORBIDDEN LANDS'--THE BURIAL GROUNDS OF THE GIANT ROBOTS. THE ARCHITECTS SAW THESE ENORMOUS BEINGS AS THEIR GODS, AND THEIR REMAINS AS BLESSINGS. THEIR SOCIETY SOON FLOURISHED WITH THE ADVANCES THE ALIEN MACHINERY ALLOWED THEM TO MAKE, AND IN ONLY A FEW GENERATIONS THEY USED THE ANCIENT TECHNOLOGY TO CREATE THEIR UTOPIA: THE CITY OF COLOR."

"BUT THE ARCHITECTS WERE NOT WITHOUT THEIR FAULTS. THEIR PROWESS HAD HARBORED HUBRIS, AND THEY SOUGHT TO MASTER THEIR GODS INSTEAD OF WORSHIP THEM. THEY CREATED THEIR OWN GOD, THE BEHEMOTH--THE GREATEST OF ALL THE GODS. LITTLE IS KNOWN OF WHAT HAPPENED NEXT, BUT IT SEEMS THAT THEIR GOD BETRAYED THEM. IT WAS TOO POWERFUL TO CONTROL, AND IT DESTROYED THEIR SOCIETY. TO THIS DAY, NOBODY KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT THE BEHEMOTH WAS, OR WHERE IT RESTS NOW, BUT IT IS SAID THAT AN ANCIENT ARCHITECT ARTIFACT CALLED *THE RELIC* IS THE KEY TO AWAKENING IT."




THAT'S NOT A
BAD STORY! BUT
HAVE YOU HEARD
THE ONE ABOUT
THE HOOK HAND
IN THE CAR?





I WOULD NOT TAKE THESE
EVENTS SO LIGHTLY. THEY HAVE
SHAPED ALL OF YOUR LIVES IN
WAYS YOU CANNOT IMAGINE.



I'VE HEARD ENOUGH FAIRY
TALES. WHAT ABOUT THE FALL
OF THE KINGDOM? WHY WON'T
YOU EXPLAIN WHY YOU FLED?



PATIENCE, PLEASE. WE
HAVE A WAY TO GO.

"CENTURIES AFTER THE ARCHITECTS FELL, A RACE OF BLUE-SKINNED, GNOME-LIKE PYGMIES EMERGED. THEY CALLED THEIR TRIBE THE SYLPH, AND REVERED NATURE, DEVELOPING SKILLS IN SORCERY AND MAGIC. THE ELDEST AND WISEST OF THEIR RACE, PATRIARCH, HAD DEEP ROOTS IN THE FORESTS AND FIELDS. HE SPURNED THE TECHNOLOGICAL REMAINS OF THE ANCIENT RACES, AND FORBADE HIS PEOPLE FROM VENTURING INTO THE DESICCATED DESERTS. INTO THOSE... FORBIDDEN LANDS. LATER, WHEN HUMANS EMERGED, PATRIARCH SHARED WITH THEM HIS MAGIC AND KNOWLEDGE OF TILLING THE LAND. EVENTUALLY, MAN DEVELOPED HIS OWN TECHNOLOGY, CULMINATING IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE KINGDOM, A BUSTLING METROPOLIS ATOP THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN. SO IT WAS FOR GENERATIONS MAN AND SYLPH REMAINED SEPARATE BUT CONGENIAL INHABITANTS OF THE LAND."

"THE OTHER RACES ALL STAKED THEIR CLAIMS ON THE LANDS, THE GENTLE BEARS ATOP THE CLOUD MOUNTAIN AND THE FAUNS IN THE FORESTS AND GLENS. FOR AN AGE ALL LIVED IN HARMONY... BUT THE PAST CANNOT STAY BURIED FOREVER."

"PATRIARCH'S ASSISTANT, A BRILLIANT, AMBITIOUS SYLPH NAMED EGO, BECAME THE ENVOY BETWEEN HIS RACE AND MAN. HE WAS FASCINATED WITH THE KINGDOM'S TECHNOLOGY, AND CRAVED MORE. HE KNEW OF THE ANCIENT MYTHS... WHAT LAY HIDDEN IN DUSTY DESERTS. HE IMPORED PATRIARCH TO EMBRACE INDUSTRY, CALLING HIS MAGIC SUPERSTITIOUS AND OUTDATED, BUT HIS ELDER WOULD HEAR NONE OF IT. BEHIND PATRIARCH'S BACK, EGO EXPERIMENTED WITH HIS OWN TECHNOLOGY, AND BROUGHT MORE AND MORE CONTRAPTIONS HOME FROM HIS TRIPS TO THE KINGDOM. EVENTUALLY, IN SECRET, HE WANDERED INTO THE FORBIDDEN LANDS, WHERE, AMID THE DUST, PERHAPS WAITING FOR HIM, HE FOUND THE RELIC."



HE 'AS THE RELIC? SO
TH' LEGENDS'R TRUE?

"INDEED. HIS MISSION WAS NOW CLEAR: EITHER PATRIARCH WOULD ACCEPT HIS NEW IDEAS, OR HE WOULD TAKE OVER AS LEADER. PATRIARCH NATURALLY BERATED EGO FOR TRESPASSING AND FINDING THE RELIC, SO IN A RAGE, EGO SLEW HIS ELDER AND ASSUMED COMMAND OF THE SYLPH TRIBE."

"NOT ALL THE SYLPHS AGREED TO THIS CHANGE OF POWER, AND SO FLED THE FORESTS TO SEEK REFUGE WITH EITHER MAN OR FAUN. WITH THE BULK OF HIS PEOPLE AT HIS SIDE, EGO BEGAN TAKING WHATEVER HE WANTED FROM THE KINGDOM, SLOWLY TURNING HIS TRIBE'S FORESTS INTO A BUDDING INDUSTRIAL EMPIRE. THE KING HAD BECOME WEAK AND ROLLED OVER TO HIS WHIMS, COMING UNDER CRITICISM FROM HIS SUBJECTS. EGO TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION AND RALLIED THE PEOPLE AGAINST THE KING, DECLARING A MONARCHY TO HAVE NO PLACE IN A MODERN SOCIETY. THE PEOPLE WOULD RULE, UNDER EGO'S LEADERSHIP. THE KINGDOM WAS SPLIT INTO CIVIL WAR: THOSE LOYAL TO THE MONARCHY, AND THOSE SEDUCED BY EGO'S PROMISES AND PROGRESS."

"EGO'S INCREASING POWER FUELED HIS LUST FOR SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY, AND SECRETLY HE BEGAN EXPERIMENTING ON HIS OWN FOLLOWERS. MOST OF THE ROYAL GUARD STILL SUPPORTED THE MONARCHY, AND HE KNEW HE WOULD NEED A LARGER FORCE. RUMORS BOUNDED THAT HE WAS TRYING TO CREATE A RACE OF SUPER-HUMAN CLONES, AND BEFORE LONG HE OFFICIALLY DECLARED WAR ON THE KINGDOM."

"AS CHIEF ADVISOR AND COURT MAGICIAN, I COUNSELED THE KING AS BEST I COULD, BUT AFTER HIS SON WAS KILLED IN BATTLE, HE BECAME DISTANT AND INCOMPETENT TO LEAD. UNBEKNOWNST TO ANY OF US, HIS OWN DAUGHTER, THE PRINCESS, FRUSTRATED BY HER FATHER'S LAX RULE AND EAGER TO TAKE THE THRONE HERSELF, SECRETLY SIDED WITH EGO. HE PROMISED A SPLIT DICTATORSHIP WITH HER IF SHE COULD HELP HIM OVERTHROW THE KINGDOM. SHE AGREED, AND GAVE HIM UNGUARDED ACCESS TO THE ROYAL INNER SANCTUM ON THE CONDITION THAT HER FAMILY BE SPARED. SHE, ALONG WITH PATRIARCH, LEARNED TOO LATE NOT TO TRUST THIS BLUE TYRANT."

"IT WAS A BLOODBATH. EGO'S FORCES INVADED AND LAID WASTE TO THE ROYAL MILITARY, THE KING WAS SLAIN, AND THE KINGDOM FALLEN. I HELD THEM OFF AS BEST I COULD, BUT IN THE END I, TOO, WAS FORCED TO FLEE. I GRABBED WHAT I COULD FROM MY LAIR AND FLED TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY SURROUNDING THE MOUNTAIN, ALONG WITH THE REMAINING SOLDIERS AND CITIZENS STILL LOYAL TO THE MONARCHY. THERE, WE HID IN THE RUINS AND PREPARED A CHARGE IN HOPES OF TAKING BACK THE KINGDOM. IT WAS THEN THAT EGO UNVEILED HIS FINAL BETRAYAL."



"HE UNLEASHED *THE HARVESTED*. A SIN AGAINST SCIENCE AND NATURE, THEY WERE HIS CLONE ARMY, CREATED FROM THE VERY SUBJECTS HE PROMISED TO LIBERATE FROM THE MONARCHY. HE ORDERED THEM TO KILL EVERYBODY: OUR SOLDIERS, OUR CITIZENS, EGO'S OWN FOLLOWERS, EVEN HIS SYLPHID BRETHREN. BY THE END OF THE WAR, THESE HORRID ABOMINATIONS BLANKETED THE LANDSCAPE, DRIVING ANY SURVIVORS DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO HIDING. BUILT ATOP THE CORPSES AND RUINS OF OUR KINGDOM, EGO CHRISTENED HIS NEW EMPIRE 'THE ENGINE'. ONCE AGAIN, I HAD TO PACK UP AND LEAVE--THIS TIME, TO SOMEWHERE NOBODY COULD FIND ME."

WOW, THAT WAS A LOT OF EXPOSITION! I HOPE A FIGHT SCENE IS COMING UP SOON.

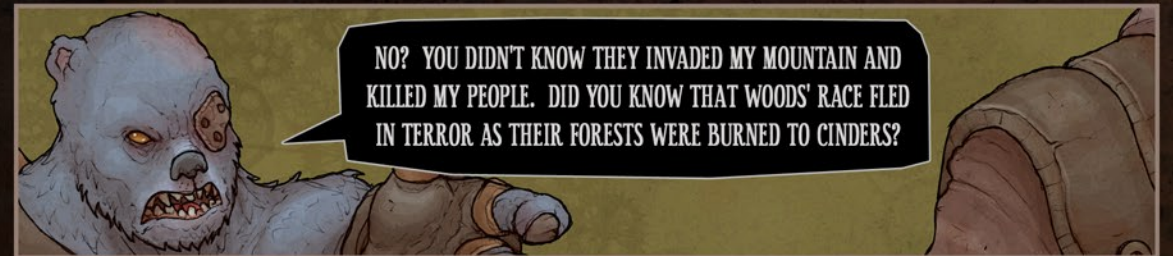


THAT'S THE END OF THE STORY FOR *YOU*, WIZARD, BUT THE ENGINE'S RAMPAGE WAS JUST GETTING STARTED WHEN YOU TURNED TAIL AND RAN.

I AM NOT BLIND TO WHAT EGO HAS DONE SINCE THE WAR ENDED.



NO? YOU DIDN'T KNOW THEY INVADED MY MOUNTAIN AND KILLED MY PEOPLE. DID YOU KNOW THAT WOODS' RACE FLED IN TERROR AS THEIR FORESTS WERE BURNED TO CINDERS?



...AND EVERYBODY YOU LEFT BEHIND WAS EVENTUALLY HUNTED DOWN AND KILLED, ALL WHILE YOU SAT HERE AND MADE SAND CASTLES. YOUR LANDS NEEDED YOU. THEY STILL NEED YOU. WHAT DO YOU *DO* OUT HERE?

PESSIMIST, THAT'S ENOUGH.



ANSWER ME THIS, BEAR. IF I AM THE VILE COWARD YOU ASSUME ME TO BE, WHY DO YOU RISK LIFE AND LIMB TO TRACK ME IN THIS DESERT, TO BESECH ME FOR HELP? FOR A SUPPLICANT, YOU MAKE YOURSELF HARD TO SYMPATHIZE WITH.





I'M SORRY, NECROMANCER. MY LIEUTENANT'S OUTBURSTS DON'T SPEAK FOR THE REST OF US.

FINDING YOU WAS MY IDEA. IF WE REALLY ARE ALL THAT'S LEFT OF THE KINGDOM, THEN IT'S UP TO US TO TAKE IT BACK. BUT WE NEED HELP.



YOU MAY STAY THE NIGHT, AND I SHALL SEE YOU OFF IN THE MORNING WITH SUPPLIES.

NO... WE NEED *YOUR* HELP. WON'T YOU JOIN US?



YOU SAID YOURSELF THAT EGO HAS THE RELIC. WE'RE TRYING OUR BEST JUST TO STAY ALIVE, BUT NOW WE LEARN HE'S CAPABLE OF AWAKENING AN ULTIMATE WEAPON. YOUR KNOWLEDGE, YOUR MAGIC... YOU MAY BE OUR ONLY HOPE TO STOP HIM. TO GO FROM A GROUP OF SCAVANGERS BACK TO A RESISTANCE. A CAUSE.



A RESISTANCE...? THAT HAS ALREADY FAILED ONCE, WHILE WE YET HAD AN ARMY...

IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE... I...



GIVE ME THE NIGHT TO PONDER. YOU ALL REQUIRE REST AFTER YOUR LONG JOURNEY.



SO... NO FIGHT SCENE, HUH?





NEXT CHAPTER: RENAISSANCE



