

D. A. Da Rosa

The Archeomancer

Echoes of the Shattered Empire

5



UNVEILING
THE PAST!

MIDNIGHT JOURNEYS EDITIONS

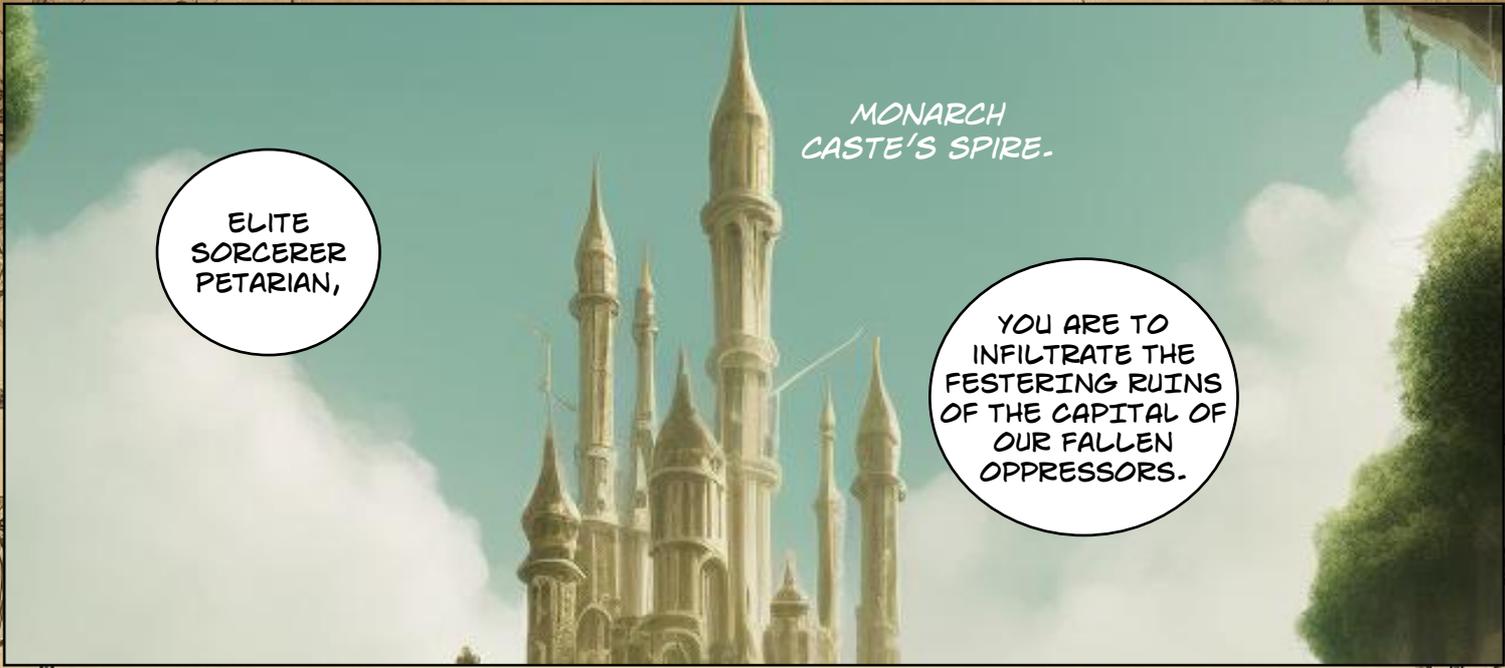
PROLOGUE

PAMSUTYCI,
FOHRVOI.

32ND DAY OF
LATE SUMMER.

39 YEARS
AFTER THE
LIBERATION.





MONARCH
CASTE'S SPIRE.

ELITE
SORCERER
PETARIAN,

YOU ARE TO
INFILTRATE THE
FESTERING RUINS
OF THE CAPITAL OF
OUR FALLEN
OPPRESSORS.



OUR SURVIVING
AGENT INFORMED
US OF THE
LOCATION OF
YOUR MARK.



THE SLAYER ONCE
KNOWN AS MASTER
PROTECTOR ILLITARIAN IS
TO BE FOUND AT A WALLED
CITY WITHIN THE RUINS,
DEVOURING TOWN.

HE'S HIDING,
PLOTING WITH A
LEADER AMONGST
SAVAGES. YOU MUST
FIND A WAY TO GET
CAPTURED BY THEM.
OUR AGENT WILL
TELL YOU HOW.



AS YOU
COMMAND,
REPRESENTATIVE
ALLARIS. I WILL
NOT DISAPPOINT
THE PAVOI.

THE CURSED
WOODS,
AUSHULIA.

WEIRD. MY
SCRYING SPELLS
HAVE BEEN ACTING
OFF SINCE WE
STARTED THIS
JOURNEY.

TWO WEEKS
AGO.

IT MUST BE
THE KAYNN
HERE.

ANOTHER OF
THESE. HMM. IT'S
ALMOST LIKE THESE
TRESPASSERS WANT US
TO FOLLOW THEM.
I'LL WARN THE
CAPTAIN.

THE RUINED
CAPITAL,
AUSHULIA.

DAYS AGO.

LOWER YOUR
WEAPONS. IT WAS
ME WHO BROUGHT
YOU HERE. YOU'RE
TAKING US TO SOME
SAVAGE CALLED
'SHADOW KING',
RIGHT?

SOMETIME
LATER.

UH...

SO, WHAT
DO YOU SAY?
WILL YOU HELP
ME?

OK.

SURE.

NOW.



The Archeomancer

Echoes of the Shattered Empire



ART BY *MIDJOURNEY*

WRITING AND PROMPTING BY *D.A. DA ROSA*

ENGLISH REVIEW BY *CHATGPT*

SHOUT OUT TO *BEATRIZ BARRETO, LEANDRO EUGÊNIO C.*

*SANTOS, PAULO GALLINA, DANILO VIEIRA, SHAM BANGHAL AND
DARKSTAR*

MIDNIGHT JOURNEYS EDITIONS

5. BOUND BY WORDS

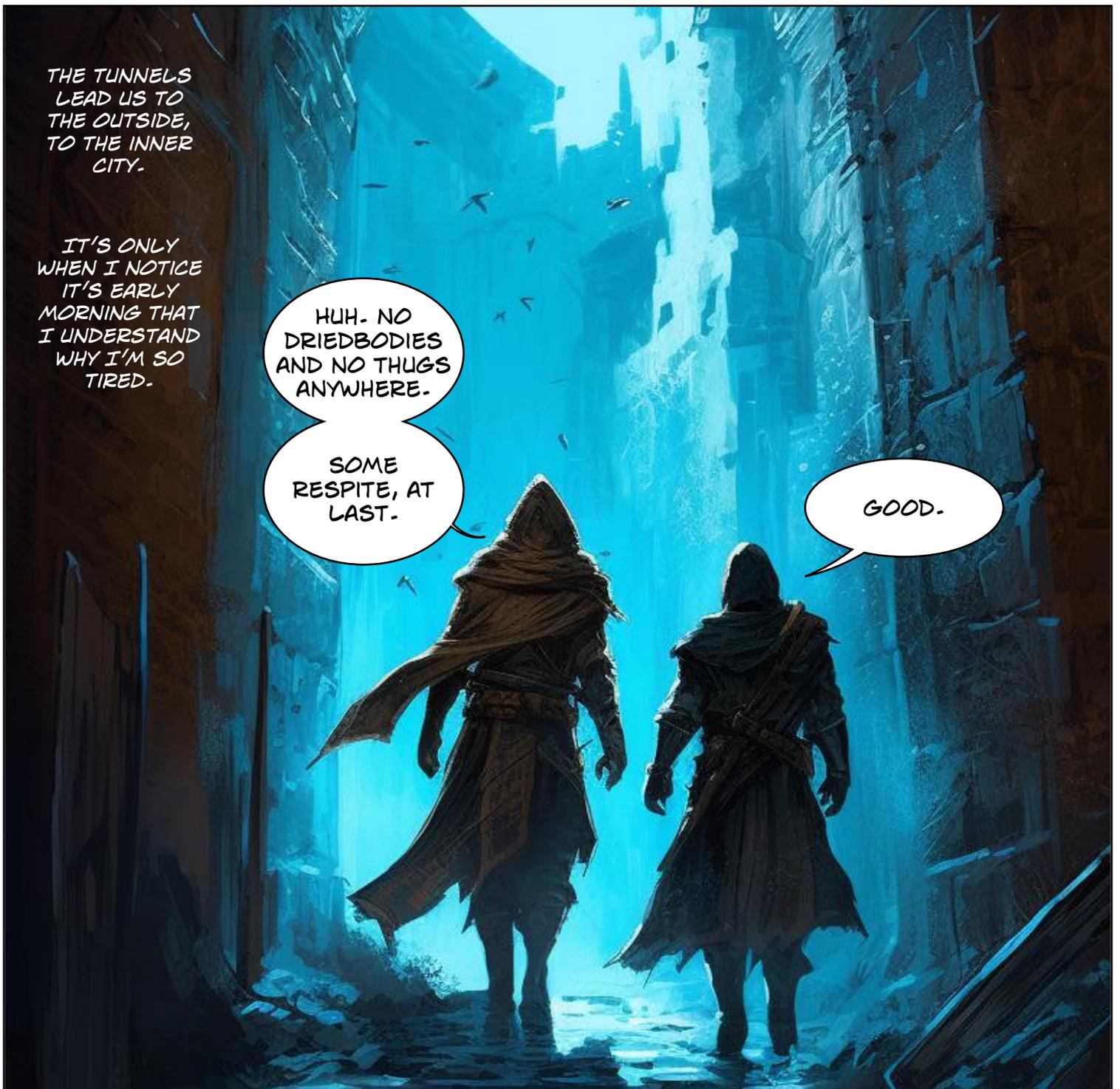
THE TUNNELS
LEAD US TO
THE OUTSIDE,
TO THE INNER
CITY.

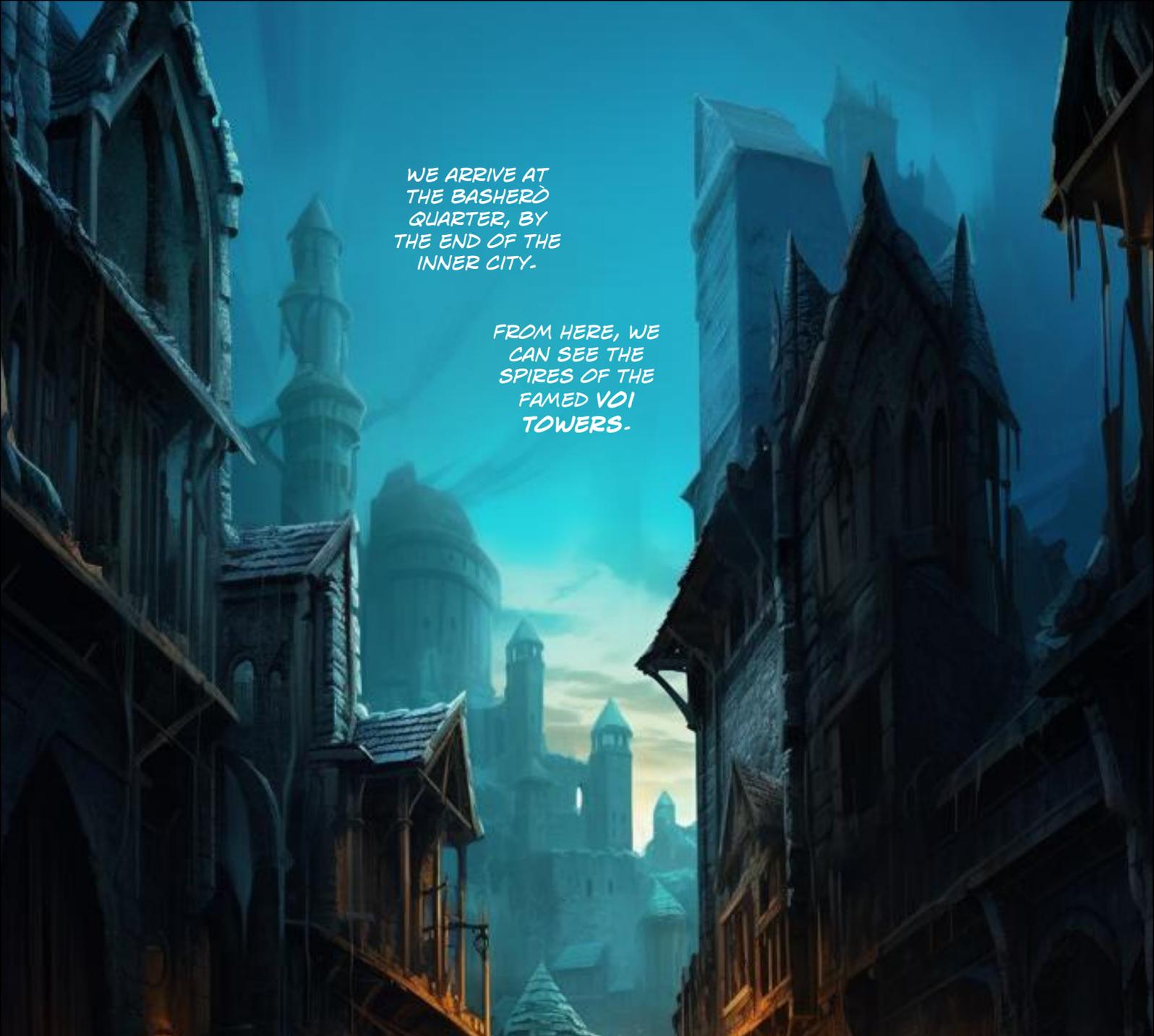
IT'S ONLY
WHEN I NOTICE
IT'S EARLY
MORNING THAT
I UNDERSTAND
WHY I'M SO
TIRED.

HUH. NO
DRIEDBODIES
AND NO THUGS
ANYWHERE.

SOME
RESPIRE, AT
LAST.

GOOD.





WE ARRIVE AT
THE BASHERÒ
QUARTER, BY
THE END OF THE
INNER CITY.

FROM HERE, WE
CAN SEE THE
SPIRES OF THE
FAMED VOI
TOWERS.



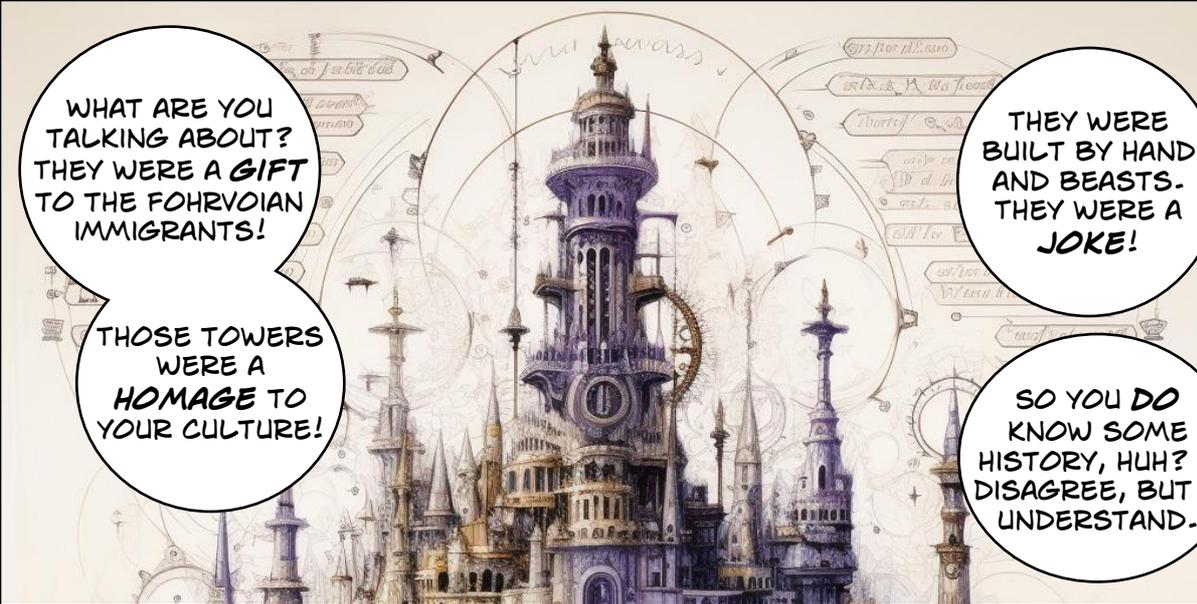
SO, WHAT DO
YOU THINK OF
GOING UP
THERE?

BET YOU
WOULD FEEL
RIGHT AT
HOME.



THESE
BUILDINGS ARE A
MOCKERY OF MY
PEOPLE. I HAVE NO
INTEREST IN GOING
THERE.

BUT WE CAN CHART
OUR WAY TO THE
PALACE FROM THEM
AND WE COULD REST,
SO, I'M **NOT**
OPPOSED TO IT.



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? THEY WERE A **GIFT** TO THE FOHRVOIAN IMMIGRANTS!

THOSE TOWERS WERE A **HOMAGE** TO YOUR CULTURE!

THEY WERE BUILT BY HAND AND BEASTS. THEY WERE A **JOKE!**

SO YOU DO KNOW SOME HISTORY, HUH? I DISAGREE, BUT I UNDERSTAND.



WE GO ON IN SILENCE.



HER COMPLAINTS ECHO THOSE OF THE VOI AT THE TIME.



BUT WHAT DID THEY WANT? THAT WE USED **MAGIC** TO ERECT THEM LIKE THEY DO?



THE EMPIRE HAD MORE PRESSING MATTERS BY THEN.

IF IT WASN'T SO BUSY WITH OTHER PROVINCES, MAYBE IT WOULDN'T HAVE CRUMBLLED.



DOLARAC,
WAIT.
LOOK.

WHO GOES
THERE?

NOTHING? NO
'GOOD MORNING',
NO 'HELLO'?



OK, THEN.
WAIT WHERE YOU
ARE, WE'LL
COME TO YOU.



JUST DON'T
DO ANYTHING
STUPID.



NOW, LET'S
START OVER.
HELLO.
I'M CLARAJJ
AND THIS IS
OUR TURF.



YOU WANNA PASS
BY, WE CAN ESCORT
YOU FOR A FEE.
OTHERWISE, YOU
BETTER FIND
ANOTHER WAY.



WE ARE GOING TO THOSE DREADFUL TOWERS OVER THERE.

COULD YOU TELL US HOW TO GET THERE, THEN?



SURE. FOR A PRICE.

WHAT ABOUT THAT SWORD, MASKED-MAN?



HM... OK. I TOOK IT FROM A HUNTSMAN AT THE TOURNAMENT. YOU KNOW, FROM THE DEVOURERS.

WHAT?



OH, DON'T BE SO NAIVE, MAQRIQ.

WE DON'T LIKE LIARS AROUND THE TURF, MASKY-MASK.



ENOUGH! I'M TOO TIRED FOR THIS SHIT! LET US THROUGH!



HMM.
THEY **ARE**
MAGES. MAYBE
THEIR STORY
IS TRUE.

THAT
WOULD
EXPLAIN WHY WE
DIDN'T SEE ANY
UNDEAD OR
DEVOURERS
TODAY.



YOU
KNOW WHAT?
NEVERMIND THE
FEES.
WE'LL TAKE YOU
TO THE VOI
TOWERS.



WE'LL TAKE
YOU HOME.



HOME?



THOSE TOWERS
BLUE GIRL CALLED
DREADFUL? THAT'S
OUR PLACE.

BUT I GET HER.
THE BLUE DUDES
IN OUR GROUP
DISLIKE THEM AS
WELL.



OUR
GROUP?

I SEE. THEY
ARE CANNIBALS
TOO. OR
SLAVERS. OR
BOTH.

UGH, I'M TOO
TIRED FOR
BOTH.



OH, NO, NO. WE'RE JUST SURVIVORS. SCAVENGERS, IF YOU PREFER. AND WE COULD USE THE HELP OF A COUPLE MAGES.

YOU BOTH LOOK LIKE CRAP. YOU CAN REST AND EAT WITH US.

IF YOU FEEL LIKE IT, TOMORROW YOU MEET GRAMPS GAMBE AND SEE IF YOU'D LIKE TO HELP.



I DON'T THINK WE HAVE THE TIME FOR THIS.



WHY NOT? YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO HELP PEOPLE. THEY ARE PEOPLE AND THEY NEED HELP.



WE GO WITH HER, WHILE THE OTHERS ARE LEFT THERE TO SCARE OTHER INVADERS.





**THE
CAPITAL'S
VOI
TOWERS.**

**FROM UP
THERE, ANYONE
COULD SEE THE
MAGNIFICENCE
OF THE
IMPERIAL
CAPITAL.**



**BUT THOSE
WERE OTHER
TIMES.**

**COME.
WE MUST GET
THROUGH THE
ENCHANTED BARRIER
TO GET IN.**

**OH, AND BE
CAREFUL WITH THE
LIGHTS. THEY ARE
MEANT AS A
DISTRACTION.**

DISTRACTION?

**FROM THE
INVISIBLE
TRAPS.**



YO,
CLARAJJ.

WHO ARE
THOSE?



THEY HAVE NEWS
ABOUT THE DEVOURERS.
BUT FIRST, THEY NEED SOME
REST AND FOOD.



SCAVENGE
DUTY IS TO KEEP
PEOPLE OUT AND
GET STUFF IN, NOT
THE OTHER WAY
AROUND.

YOU ALREADY
BROUGHT IN THAT
FOREIGNER GIRL
THIS WEEK. WE ARE
NOT AN INN.



YOU
BOYS ARE ON
GUARD DUTY TODAY,
NOT ON THINKING DUTY.
THESE ARE *MAGES*.
JUST TAKE 'EM UP.

I'LL KEEP AN
EYE ON THINGS
DOWN HERE WHILE
YOU DO IT.
CHOP CHOP!



THE FIRST THING WE NOTICE WHEN WE ENTER IS SOME OF THE REMAINING ORNAMENTS OF THE TOWER.

INTERESTINGLY, THIS TOWER WAS ONCE OCCUPIED BY THE HEALERS CASTE, THE DEVOTEES OF CANRIEL, THE DOG-GOD.



WHEN WE GET TO THE UPPER LEVELS, AFTER A TIRING CLIMB OF ITS STAIRS, WE SEE WARRIORS, SCAVENGERS AND SURVIVORS TALKING ABOUT STRATEGY AND POLITICS.



ABOVE THEM, WE SEE A COMMUNITY, WITH KIDS AT PLAY, OLD PEOPLE WATCHING THEM AND ADULTS WORKING HERE AND THERE.



AFTER GETTING US SOME FOOD, THEY LEAVE US AT A SECLUDED "GUEST ROOM". WE SLEEP WITHIN FIVE MINUTES.

NEXT MORNING,
THEY TAKE US TO
THEIR LEADER.

GREETINGS,
FOREIGNERS.
I'M GAMBE
DORFF.

I HEARD YOU ARE
MAGES WHO SURVIVED A
DEVOURING TOURNAMENT
AND FLED, IS THAT
CORRECT?

WAIT. GAMBE
DORFF? LIKE IN
ARCHMAGE
GAMBE DORFF?

ARCHMAGE...
HEH. THAT'S A
TITLE FROM A
DIFFERENT ERA.



LONG GONE
ARE THE TIMES IN
WHICH I WAS KNOWN
FOR MY KNOWLEDGE
AND THEORIES ON
MAGICRAFT.

WITHIN THIS
TOWER, I'M
SIMPLY THE ONE
KEEPING OTHERS
ALIVE, NO DIFFERENT
THAN ANY VULGAR
ENCHANTER.

CLARAJJ
SAID YOU NEEDED
HELP. THAT YOU WERE
LOOKING FOR MAGES.
HOW CAN WE
HELP?





AFTER THE NECROMANCERS SETTLED AT THE DISTINCT DISTRICT MANORS, MANY SURVIVORS GATHERED TOGETHER IN SMALL BANDS.



MOST OF THESE GROUPS WERE EVENTUALLY TAKEN OUT BY ZOMBIES, VAMPIRES, ANIMALS OR BY OTHER PEOPLE.

SOME OF THESE THRIVED, SUCH AS THE ZADAARITES AND THE DEVOURERS.

AND THEN THERE ARE OTHERS LIKE US, ALWAYS STRUGGLING.



BUT THE THING IS... I'M TOO OLD. I'M TOO TIRED.



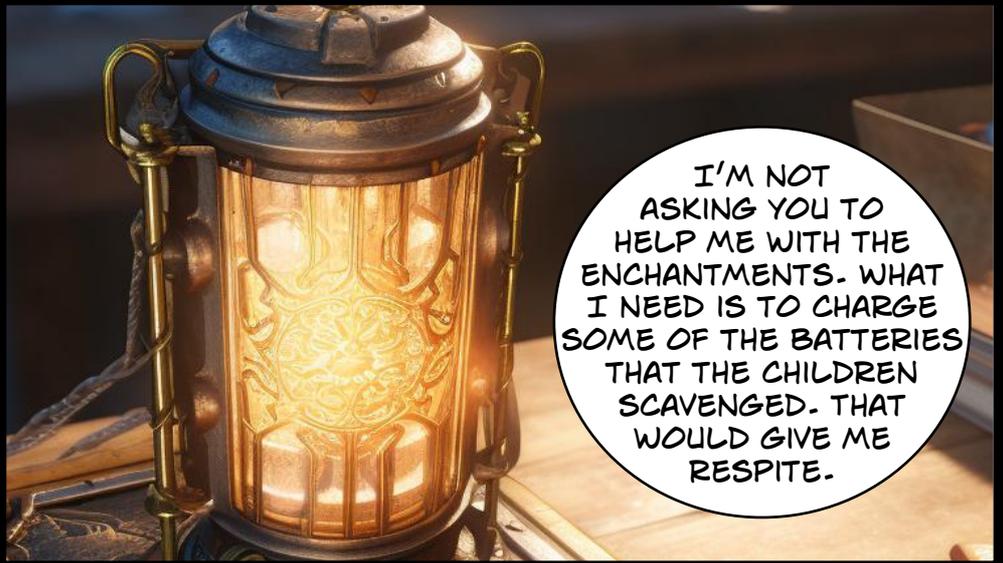
THE CHILDREN DON'T KNOW THIS BUT MY ENCHANTMENTS NETWORK IS WEAKENING. SOMEDAY SOON, IT WILL FAIL.



AND IF IT DOES, ALL THESE PEOPLE, WHO I'VE BEEN PROTECTING FOR DECADES, THEY ARE ALL GOING TO DIE.



SORRY TO DISAPPOINT, BUT WE ARE NO ENCHANTERS, MASTER DORFF.



I'M NOT ASKING YOU TO HELP ME WITH THE ENCHANTMENTS. WHAT I NEED IS TO CHARGE SOME OF THE BATTERIES THAT THE CHILDREN SCAVENGED. THAT WOULD GIVE ME RESPITE.



NOT TO BE RUDE, BUT, I'M SORRY. WE ARE TOO BUSY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY...



DOLARAC...



WE'LL NEED OUR KAYNN, PETARIAN. THERE'S TOO MUCH AT STAKE IN OUR MISSION.



AS A DEVOUT TO CANRIEL, YOU KNOW I'M NOT ALLOWED TO DENY HELP TO THOSE IN NEED.



LET ME HELP YOU, DORFF. BRING ME YOUR BATTERIES.



I WAIT FOR PETARIAN IN THE GUEST ROOM, WHILE SHE WASTES TIME AND ENERGY.

CAN'T SHE SEE THAT THIS IS POINTLESS? I'M GOING TO SAVE EVERYONE, AFTER ALL.



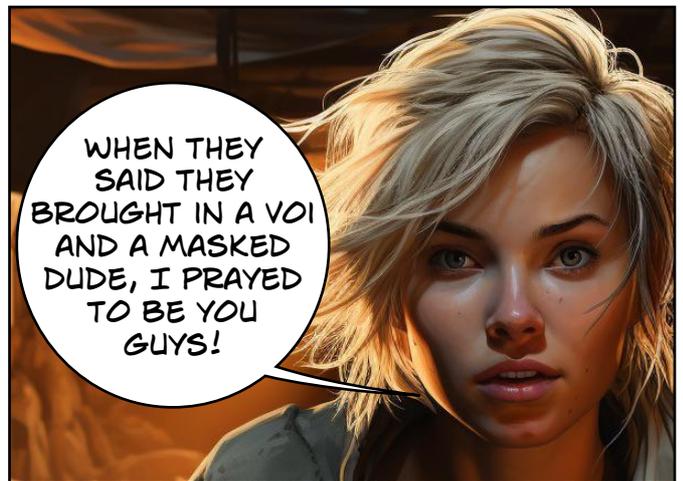
DOLARAC?

?



REDR'S HORNS!

MARCHIA!?



WHEN THEY SAID THEY BROUGHT IN A VOI AND A MASKED DUDE, I PRAYED TO BE YOU GUYS!

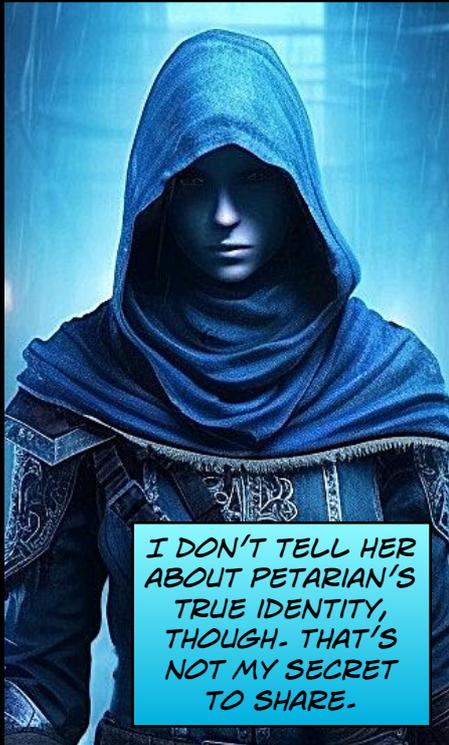


SHE THEN TELLS ME THE TALE OF HER SURVIVAL.

MARDRIGO'S FALL, UQIJJ'S DISAPPEARANCE, HER NARROW ESCAPE, AND HER RESCUE BY THE HANDS OF CLARAJJ'S CREW.



I ALSO SHARE OUR OWN ADVENTURES. THE GUARD REMNANTS, THE SHADOW KING, THE DEVOURERS.



I DON'T TELL HER ABOUT PETARIAN'S TRUE IDENTITY, THOUGH. THAT'S NOT MY SECRET TO SHARE.



DAMN... I STILL HAD SOME HOPE THAT UQIJJ HAD SURVIVED AND FOUND YOU GUYS.



I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT. BUT DON'T WORRY. WE ARE ON A QUEST TO SAVE EVERYONE.

COME WITH US. WE CAN PROTECT UQIJJ FROM WHATEVER HAPPENED TO HER.



HUH? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?



I CAN'T SAY MUCH MORE UNLESS YOU ARE IN. BUT I CAN ASSURE YOU: IF I SUCCEED, I WILL CHANGE THIS WORLD FOR GOOD.



HM... YOU DO REALIZE THAT THIS SOUNDS CRAZY, RIGHT?

AND, PLEASE, IT'S JUST YOU AND ME HERE. KNOCK OFF THIS TERRIBLE ACCENT. THAT'S HOW MY GRANDMA SPOKE.



ERM... SORRY. IT BECAME A BIT OF A HABIT BY NOW.



WHAT'S THE DEAL, MAN? THE MASK, THE ACCENT, THE FAKE NAME...

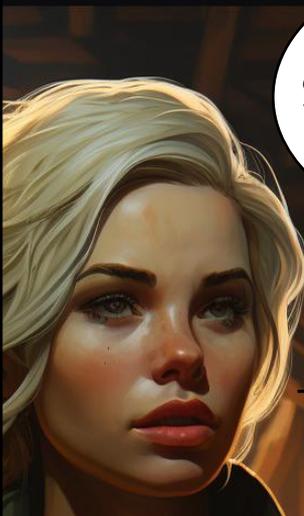
WHO ARE YOU?



YOU KNOW WHAT? NEVERMIND.

IT WAS GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN. I'M GOING TO SEE IF PETARIAN IS DONE WITH THE BATTERIES.

STAY SAFE.



NO, WAIT!
I'M SORRY, I'M
COMING WITH YOU. I
WANNA HELP. I WAS
JUST CURIOUS,
THAT'S ALL.

WHO KNOWS,
MAYBE I EVEN FIND
THE ARTIFACT PARTS
I'M LOOKING FOR.

FINE.
JUST... JUST KEEP
FROM ASKING ME
PERSONAL
QUESTIONS.

WHO I AM
IS NOT
IMPORTANT.



OK, BUT... NOW
THAT I'M IN, WHY
DON'T YOU TELL ME
WHAT WE ARE
DOING?

LOOK **THERE**.
THAT'S WHERE WE
ARE GOING.

WE ARE
GOING TO THE
**IMPERIAL
PALACE**.

WHAT? BUT
THAT'S THE
MOST DANGEROUS
PLACE IN THE
**WHOLE
CAPITAL!**

REALLY? HM.
I THOUGHT IT WAS
THE **OUTSKIRTS**.
THAT'S WHAT THE
BOOKS SAID, AT
LEAST.

WELL, THESE
BOOKS ARE FULL
OF SHIT, THEN. THE
CLOSER TO THE
PALACE, THE
WORSE.

YOU SEE THOSE
MANORS AROUND
THE PALACE? THAT'S
WHERE THE
**NECROMANCERS
LIVE**.



THE
NECROMANCERS?
THEY CERTAINLY ARE
TOO OLD OR TOO
CORRUPTED BY
NOW...



DOLARAC... YOU
HAVE IT ALL WRONG.
BY WHAT GRANDPA GAMBE
SAID TO ME, THE
NECROMANCERS HERE
DEVELOPED SOME KIND OF
NEW UNDEATH.
SOMETHING BETTER
THAN VAMPIRISM.

HM...
SO THEY
FIGURED IT
OUT.

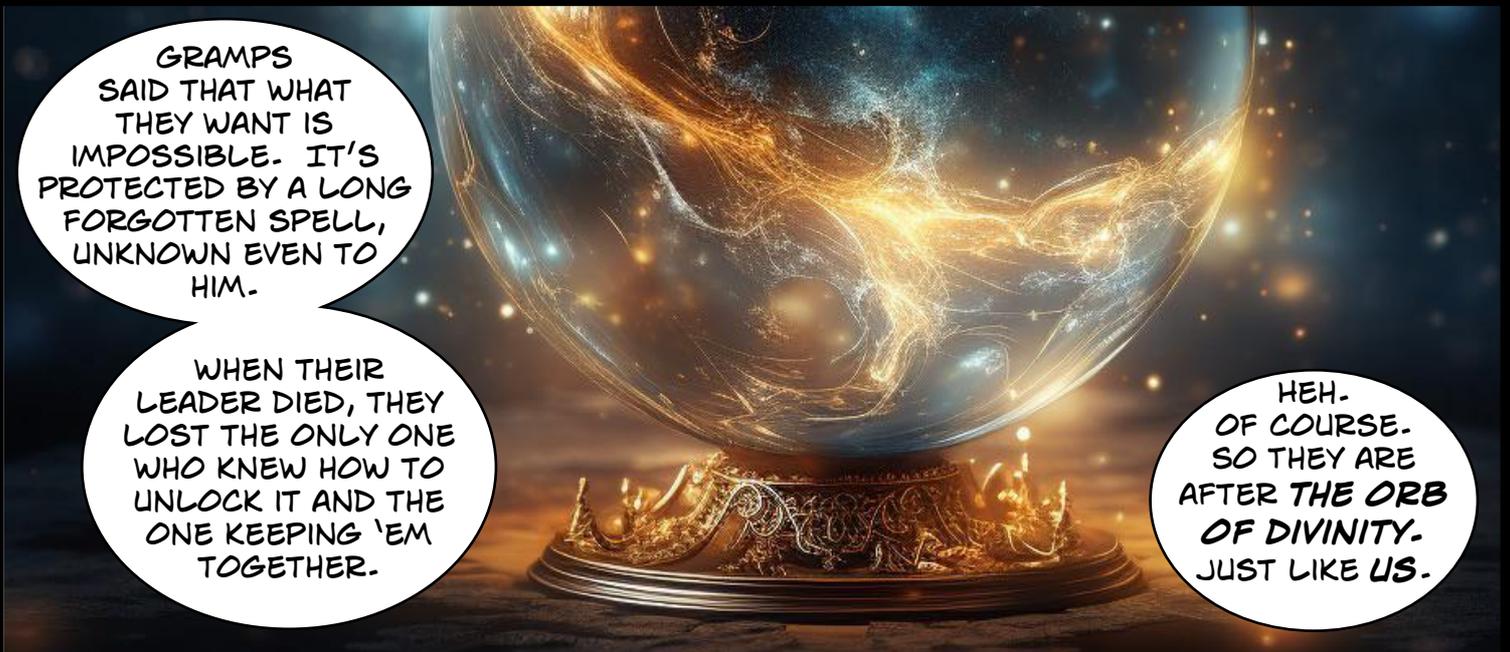


THEY MAY BE OLD,
CORRUPTED AND
DEAD, BUT THEY ARE
VERY ACTIVE, VERY
POWERFUL.

THEY ARE
FIGHTING A WAR OVER
SOME ARTIFACT.
SOMETIMES WE CAN SEE
THE SPELLS AND THE
HORDES CLASHING
FROM HERE.



FIGHTING
OVER... AN
ARTIFACT?



GRAMPS
SAID THAT WHAT
THEY WANT IS
IMPOSSIBLE. IT'S
PROTECTED BY A LONG
FORGOTTEN SPELL,
UNKNOWN EVEN TO
HIM.

WHEN THEIR
LEADER DIED, THEY
LOST THE ONLY ONE
WHO KNEW HOW TO
UNLOCK IT AND THE
ONE KEEPING 'EM
TOGETHER.

HEH.
OF COURSE.
SO THEY ARE
AFTER THE ORB
OF DIVINITY.
JUST LIKE US.



BUT I KNOW
HOW TO UNLOCK
THE ORB'S TRUE
POWER.

AND,
WITH IT, WE ARE
GOING TO BRING
THE **EMPIRE**
BACK.



DOLARAC...
THAT'S **INSANE**.

I MEAN... EVEN IF
IT WAS POSSIBLE,
WHY WOULD WE DO
THAT? THE EMPIRE IS
BETTER **DEAD**.

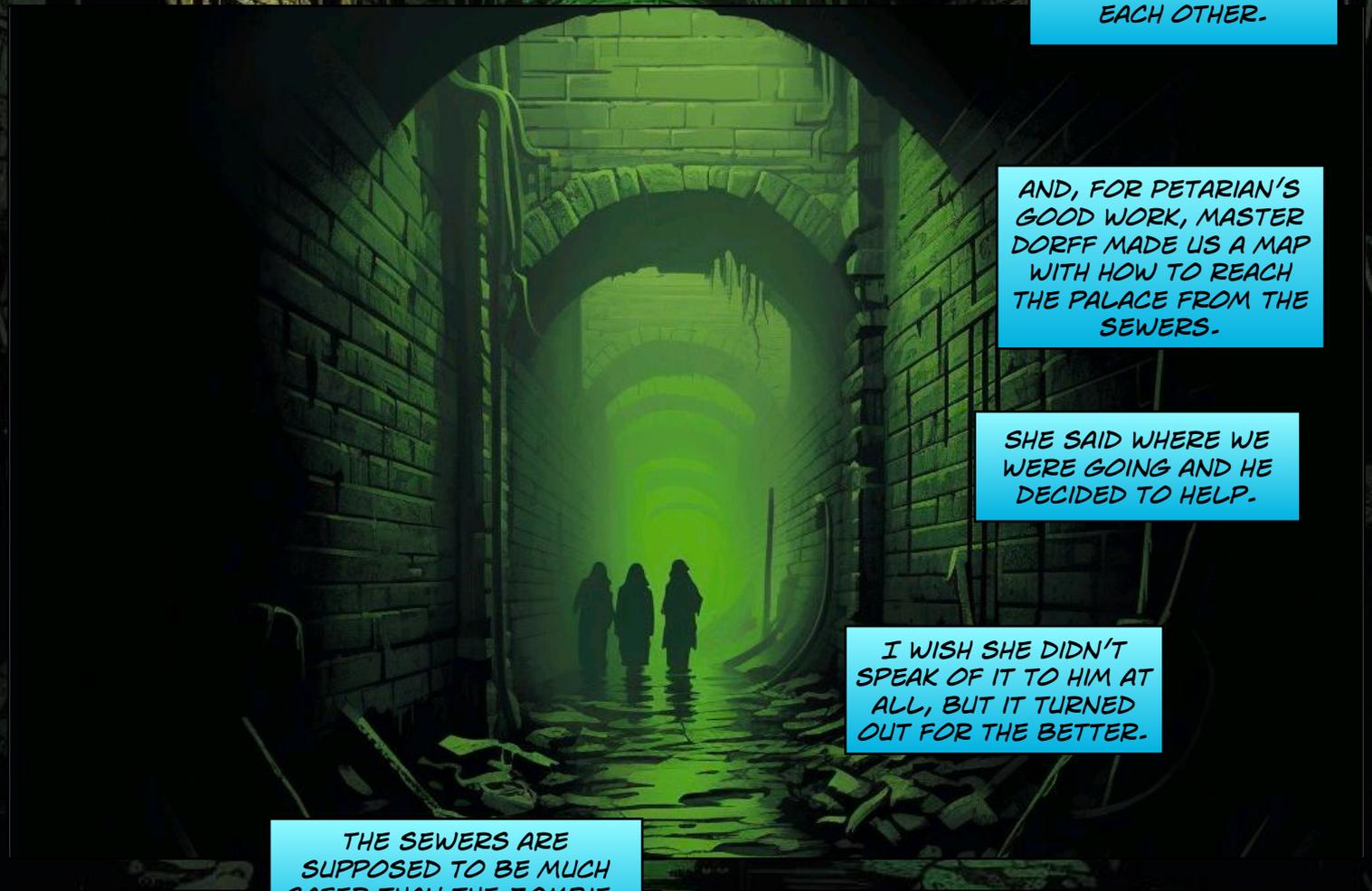




IT TOOK SOME...
CONVINCING FOR
MARCHIA TO KEEP
UP HER WORD.

I'M GLAD IT
NEVER CAME OUT
TO THAT WITH
PETARIAN.

AT LEAST, THEY WERE
VERY HAPPY TO SEE
EACH OTHER.

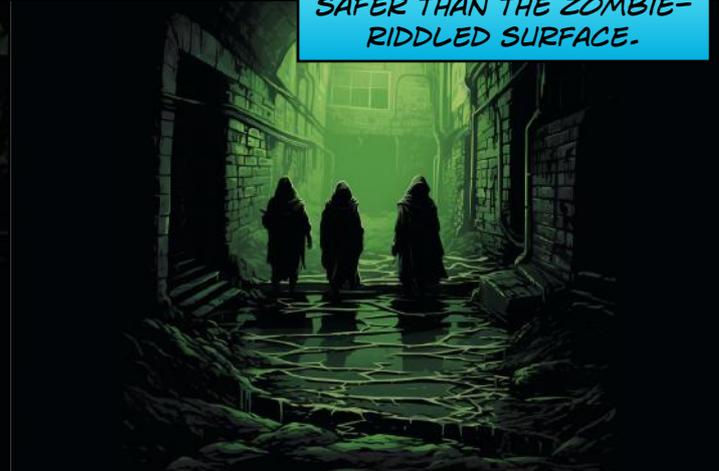


AND, FOR PETARIAN'S
GOOD WORK, MASTER
DORFF MADE US A MAP
WITH HOW TO REACH
THE PALACE FROM THE
SEWERS.

SHE SAID WHERE WE
WERE GOING AND HE
DECIDED TO HELP.

I WISH SHE DIDN'T
SPEAK OF IT TO HIM AT
ALL, BUT IT TURNED
OUT FOR THE BETTER.

THE SEWERS ARE
SUPPOSED TO BE MUCH
SAFER THAN THE ZOMBIE-
RIDDLED SURFACE.



HEY,
LOOK
AHEAD.



TSC.
NOW WHAT?
DO WE GO
ABOVE OR GET
AROUND?

MARCHIA CONVINCES US
TO GO ON UNDERGROUND.



IT'S NOT WITHOUT
ITS DANGERS...



...BUT MUTANT BEASTS
ARE EASIER TO DEAL WITH
THAN AN ENTIRE HORDE.

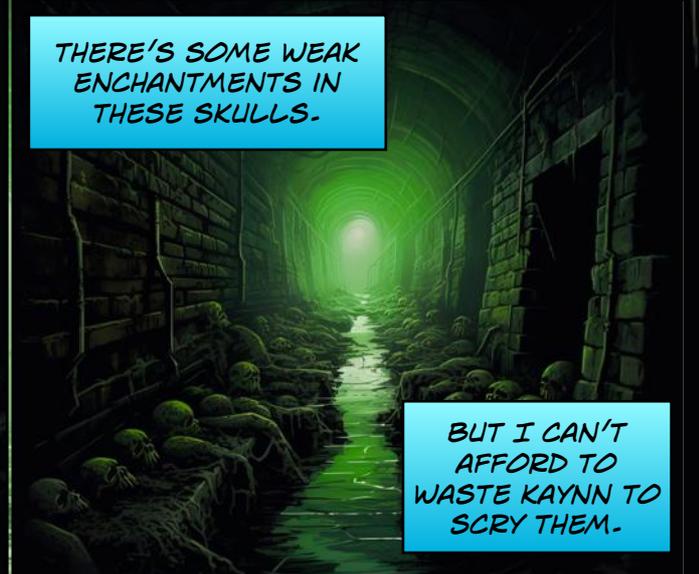


AS WE
GO ON...



...WE REACH A
TUNNEL THAT
GETS MORE AND
MORE BIZARRE.

THERE'S SOME WEAK
ENCHANTMENTS IN
THESE SKULLS.



BUT I CAN'T
AFFORD TO
WASTE KAYNN
TO SCRY THEM.



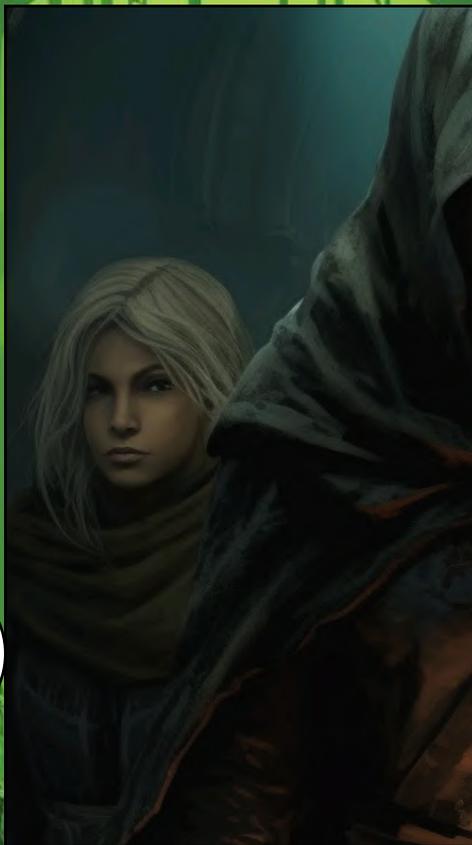
HELLO,
LADIES AND
MASKED-MAN!

WHAT
BRINGS YOU TO
THE LANDS OF
ZADAAR?



WE ARE GOING TO THE IMPERIAL PALACE.

YOU CAN HELP US REACH THERE OR WE'LL GET THROUGH YOU.



GIVE WAY, BOYS.



THIS IS ABOVE YOUR LEAGUE.



AND YOU ARE...?

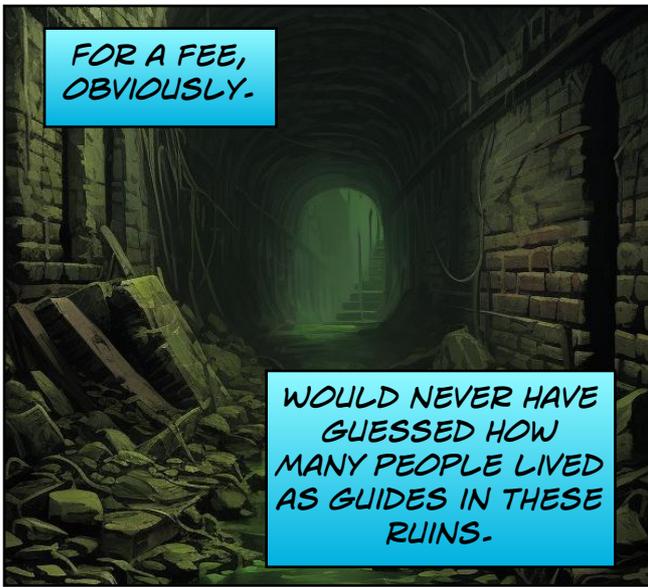


MIND YOUR MANNERS, BLUESKIN. YOU ARE TALKING TO XUKOVIAN ZADAAR, THE ELDEST OF THE SONS.

EASY, BROTHER. THAT'S AN ISHTURIAN THEY GOT THERE.



NOW, WE DON'T NEED TO BE RUDE. WE CAN HELP YOU TO GET THERE...



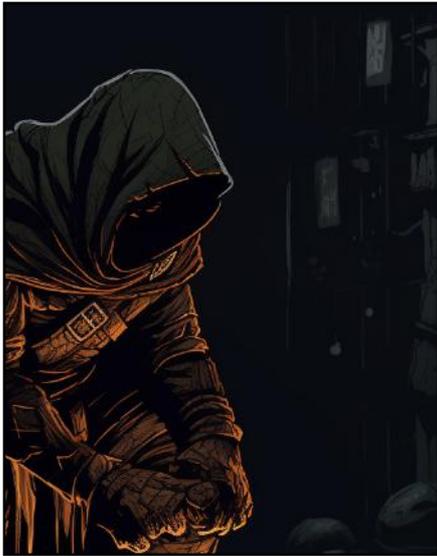
FOR A FEE, OBVIOUSLY.

WOULD NEVER HAVE GUESSED HOW MANY PEOPLE LIVED AS GUIDES IN THESE RUINS.



THEY LEAVE US CLOSE TO THE PALACE.

WE FIND A SPOT TO DINE AND GET READY. AS USUAL, I DINE ALONE, SO MY FACE REMAINS UNSEEN.



HEY... WHAT WAS THAT AT THE SEWER?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?



ARE YOU AWARE OF THE REASON HE WANTS TO GO TO THE PALACE?



YES. HE WANTS TO USE THE ORB OF DIVINITY TO SAVE THE EMPIRE.

HM. SO HE TRICKED YOU INTO HELPING HIM TOO?

NO, NOT AT ALL. WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

HE HAS CAST AN ENCHANTMENT ON ME. "OATHBOUND ME TO MY EARLIER PLEDGE", AS HE SAID.



THAT'S
FUCKED UP.
NEVER HEARD
OF SUCH
SPELL.



YEAH. AND
IF YOU DIDN'T
HELP, MAYBE
THOSE ZADAARITES
WOULD HAVE, YOU
KNOW, SET ME
FREE.



LISTEN...
WHAT DO WE
EVEN KNOW
ABOUT HIM?



AND WHY
ARE YOU OK WITH
HIM TRYING TO
ACHIEVE DIVINITY,
FOR FUCK'S
SAKE?



SIMPLE.
BECAUSE WHAT
HE WANTS IS
IMPOSSIBLE.

NOT EVEN
TRUE GODS
COULD PULL OFF
SOMETHING LIKE
THAT, IMAGINE SOME
OFFSHOOT OF A
LESSER DEITY.



SO, I'LL
HELP HIM GET
THERE. I OWE HIM
THAT. WHEN HE
REACHES THE ORB,
I'M GOING TO
MAKE SURE...

HEY, GUYS!
THERE YOU
ARE!



UQIJJ!?

MISSED
ME?

I'VE BEEN
LOOKING FOR
YOU GUYS FOR
DAYS!



MISTRESS,
HERE THEY
ARE!



HERDA
BE PRAISED!
YOU DID FIND
THEM! YOU HAVE
DONE WELL, MY
PET.

NOW,
INTRODUCE ME
TO YOUR OLD
FRIENDS. I'M
EAGER TO MEET
THEM.

TO BE CONTINUED...

THE ARCHEOMANCER'S TOOLS



AS THE ANCIENT SAYING GOES, 'AN OATH IS BUT WORDS CARVED IN BLOOD'. ONE OF THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL SPELLS KNOWN TO MASTER SANGUIPROTECTORS, THE OATHBIND WAS CLASSIFIED AS A FORBIDDEN ENCHANTMENT BY IMPERIAL LAW.

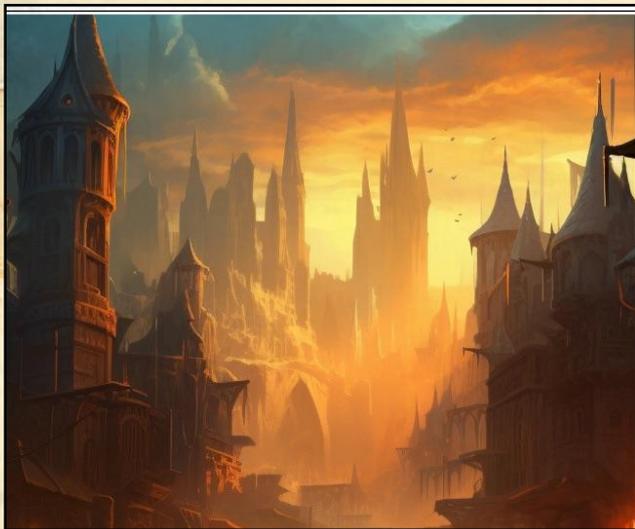
IT IS SAID THAT THIS ENCHANTMENT'S EXISTENCE WAS THE REASON WHY THE 'ACT OF FOUNDATION OF THE IMPERIAL AND ARCANO ACADEMIES' BANNED THE PRACTICE OF SANGUINOMANCY WITHIN THE EMPIRE'S FRONTIERS.

THROUGH THE USE OF THIS ENCHANTMENT, ITS TARGET BECOMES OBLIGED TO KEEP ONE SPECIFIC PROMISE OR COMMITMENT HE MADE WITH THE CASTER. THE TARGET CAN DENY TO PUT THEMSELVES AT IMMINENT RISK, BUT, OTHER THAN THAT, THEY MUST DO ANYTHING IN THEIR POWER TO MAKE GOOD ON THEIR WORD.

THROUGH THIS MAGIC, SANGUINOMANCERS AND SANGUIPROTECTORS ENSURED THAT PACTS WOULDN'T BE BROKEN AND MADE POLITICS MUCH HARDER FOR THE AUSHULIAN DISTINCT FAMILIES. NO WONDER WHY THEY GOT PERSECUTED THE MOMENT THEY CONSOLIDATED THEIR POWER OVER THE KNOWN LANDS.

DARING TO KNOW

EXCERPTS FROM SUPREME MASTER SAGE ALTIANN, AT *HISTORY OF THE EMPIRE*. PUBLISHED AT EL-PAMSU, AUSHULIA, TEN YEARS AFTER THE FALL.



THE FIRST CENTURY: IMPERIAL ASCENSION

"THROUGH LOCARUB QUESDUN'S MACHINATIONS, THE PAVOI DEMIGODS AND THE CHAMBER OF THE PEOPLE SWORN LOYALTY TO THE QUESDUN FAMILY, THUS ESTABLISHING THE ALLIANCE PACT TREATY.

(...)

DURING THIS CENTURY, THE CASTE VOI, THE CHAMBER'S DELEGATES, THE BASHERO KINGS AND THE DISTINCT FAMILIES COOPERATED IN ORDER TO ENSURE THE QUESDUN RULE AND, THROUGH IT, THEIR OWN ASCENDANCY OVER OTHER FACTIONS VYING FOR POWER".

THE SECOND CENTURY: IMPERIAL GLORY

"THE GLORIOUS AGE OF THE EMPIRE SAW THE ROAD EXPANSIONS, THE ORDUN II'S THIRTY-YEAR REIGN, THE GALLINIÉLIDAS CAPTAINCY, THE 'SAME-COIN/SAME-LANGUAGE' POLICY AND MUCH, MUCH MORE.

THE EMPIRE REDUCED DISTANCES BETWEEN THE PROVINCES, AUGMENTED THE BUREAUCRACY AND THE EMPERORS CONCENTRATED MORE POWER THAN EVER IT WAS POSSIBLE BEFORE.

ALL OF THESE ACHIEVEMENTS TURNED AGAINST THE NEXT-CENTURY'S EMPERORS, AS THE RESENTED ELITES WERE CLOSER AND ANGRIER THAN EVER TOO."



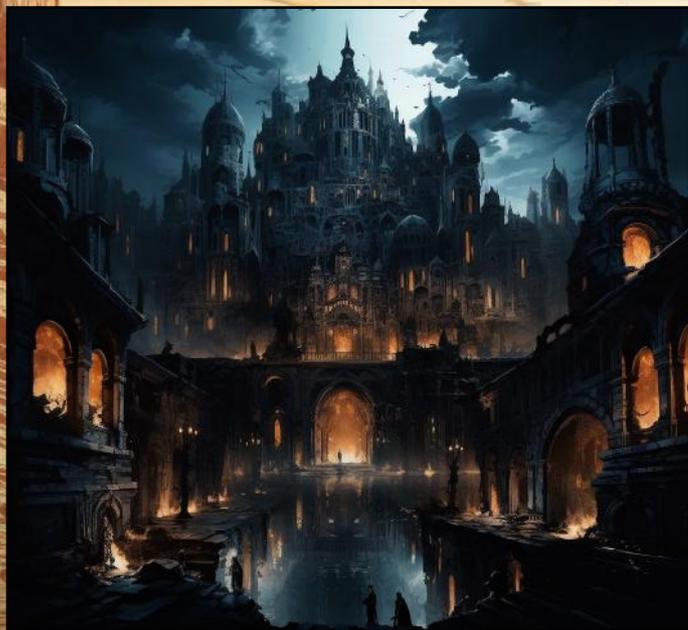
THE THIRD CENTURY: IMPERIAL FALL.

"WHEN THE LAST EMPEROR DIED, MANY THOUGHT THAT THAT WAS THE END OF THE EMPIRE, BUT THAT'S JUST COMMON SENSE. ANY HISTORIAN WOULD SAY THAT THE EMPIRE FELL FIVE YEARS PRIOR, WHEN FOHRVOI AND ORSHANDIA ABANDONED THE EMPIRE.

SOME OF THEM WOULD SAY THAT IT WAS QALIJ V, 'THE CAPITAL'S FURY', THAT DOOMED THE EMPIRE. SHE BEGAN A WAR ON DISSATISFIED QUESDUN BRANCHES THAT WOULD END ONLY THREE EMPERORS AND THREE DECADES LATER.

BUT GOOD HISTORIANS WOULD SAY THAT THE EMPIRE STARTED TO END AT THE MOMENT IT PEAKED. THAT IS, WHEN MUQDUS III, 'THE LEGISLATOR', THE MOST POWERFUL EMPEROR WHO EVER LIVED, DESTROYED EVERY OTHER QUESDUN BRANCH AND ENTANGLED THE MAIN BRANCH WITH THE UXER.

WHILE THE UXER DID A GREAT JOB HELPING THE LAST QUESDUN TO RUN THE EMPIRE, THIS ALIENATED THE OTHER HIGH DISTINCT FAMILIES".





THE HISTORIAN'S REFUGE.

THE STORY IS COMING TO AN END IN THE NEXT ISSUE AND, AT THE SAME TIME I CAN'T WAIT TO HAVE IT FINISHED, I KNOW I'M GOING TO MISS THE WHOLE CREATIVE PROCESS THAT INVOLVES DOING EACH ONE OF THESE ISSUES. SO, LET ME TALK ABOUT HOW I WRITE.

BUT TO DO THAT, I NEED TO TELL YOU SOMETHING THAT YOU PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE ALREADY GUESSED BY NOW: I'M A HUGE RPG NERD. NOT LIKE 'I DABBLE WITH IT', BUT RATHER 'AFTER 17 YEARS TOGETHER, MY WIFE CAN'T STAND ME MONOLOGUING ABOUT RPG ANYMORE'. UNLESS IT'S VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE - SHE FREAKIN' LOVES IT.

I DIGRESSED, SO, BACK TO IT: MY STORYTELLING PROCESS. WELL, AT FIRST, I GET THE WHOLE STORY STRUCTURED AND PLANNED IN ROUGH DRAFTS. I MEAN, I HAVE SOME BULLET POINTS AND THAT'S WHAT I WANT TO HAPPEN IN THE STORY. AND THEN, WHEN I'M ACTUALLY WRITING/NARRATING THE THING, I TRY TO STEER THE WRITING TOWARDS THESE DIRECTIONS, BUT THE REAL THING IS THAT MY CHARACTERS, JUST AS MY PLAYERS WHEN I'M DMING, DRIVE THE STORY.

WHICH MEANS THAT I ALWAYS HAVE TO REDO THE BULLETPPOINTS, REWRITE EARLIER PASSAGES OR IMPROVISE MY WAY INTO THINGS. AND WITH COMICS, I FOUND THAT MY METHOD GETS WORSE, BECAUSE I HAVE LESSER CONTROL OVER THE STORY - AND SOME IMAGES JUST DEMAND ME TO TAKE THE STORY TO SOME OTHER UNEXPECTED WAY.

I KNOW, IT SOUNDS CRAZY. BUT IT'S WORKING SO FAR, SO, 6TH ISSUE WILL BE DONE THE SAME WAY: ADAPTING, IMPROVISING AND IGNORING THE PLANNING IF THE CHARACTERS - AND THE AI ARTIST - SAY SO.

D.A. DA ROSA, JUNE '23.

The background of the entire page is a dark, atmospheric illustration. Two figures, seen from behind, stand on a rocky, uneven ground. They are wearing long, dark, hooded robes. The figure on the left is mostly obscured by shadow, while the figure on the right is more clearly defined, showing a detailed, ornate belt with circular patterns and a sword tucked into a scabbard. The sky is a pale, yellowish-green, suggesting a sunset or sunrise, with several birds or small creatures flying in the distance. The overall mood is mysterious and somber.

THE ARCHEOMANCER
SHARES HIS TRUE
QUEST.

WOULD HE BE
BETTER OFF
ALONE? OR IS HE
THE ONE WHO
SHOULD BE LEFT?

THE WHOLE WORLD
HANGS ON THE
ANSWER TO THESE
QUESTIONS.

The Archeomancer

Echoes of the Shattered Empire

MIDNIGHT JOURNEYS EDITIONS