

CORBEVRAN ♦ PICARD ♦ BRANTS

weëna

5. BATTLE



DEL COURT

AFTER THE HEAVY SHOWERS THAT DROWNED THE SOIL AND MADE RIVERS TO OVERFLOW, THE SUN SHOOTS NEW RAYS ON THE COUNTRY...

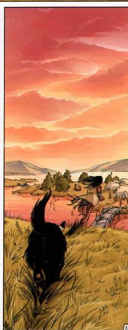
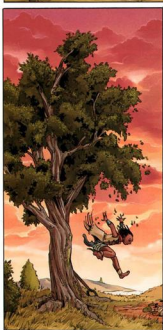
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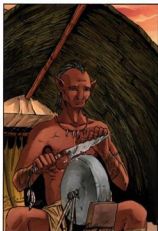
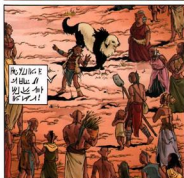
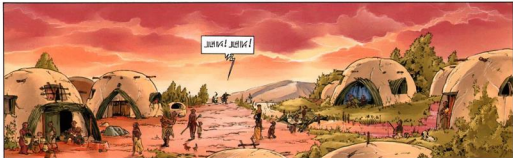
YOU KNOW YOUR STAFFS ARE THE BEST AT WHAT THEY DO, BUT ARE THEY WORKING TO THE MAX?

资料来源：根据《2014年中国统计年鉴》整理。

「你係咩?!!
 你係咩
 咁快?!!
 咁快?!!
 咁快?!!」

WELL, I WANT TO LET YOU KNOW THE CONTRACT HOUSE IS IN A BAD MOOD OF CONTRACTING.









I HAVE NEVER SEEN
THEM FOR REAL.
BEAUTIFUL. AREN'T
THEY, OPERA?

Y-Y-YES... THEY
A-A-ARE AMAZING...



ARE YOU COLD?

Y... YOU'RE
NOT?



NO! I LOVE
THE WIND!



IT ENVELOPS ME IN ITS EMBRACE... ITS MUSIC
WRAPS ITSELF IN MY HAIR LIKE NOTES... AND IN THE
EVENINGS, I LISTEN IT WHILE FALLING ASLEEP...



IT ROCKS ME... IT SOOTHES
ME... IT'S VERY REASSURING...



THE OTHER DAY ON THE BOAT, WHEN WE
DIVED INTO THE VOID, I EVEN UNDERSTOOD IT
WHISPERING MY NAME...



WEEEEEENAAA!

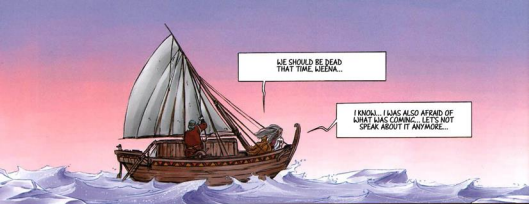
...AS IF HIS BREATH ATTEMPTED
TO PREVENT OUR FALL...



...AND THEN THE
WATER CLOSED
AROUND US AND WE
WERE SURROUNDED
BY SILENCE...



IT'S FUNNY, BUT AT THAT
MOMENT, I HAD AN IMPRESSION
THAT THE WIND HAD A VOICE OF
MY NURSE... MAUREL... THE ONE I
CONSIDER MY SECOND MOTHER...



WE SHOULD BE DEAD
THAT TIME, WEENA...

I KNOW... I WAS ALSO AFRAID OF
WHAT WAS COMING... LET'S NOT
SPEAK ABOUT IT ANYMORE...



OPERAT? ARE YOU
SURE YOU ARE
WELL, MY DEAR?



YES... IT'S JUST
THE SHIVERS...
IT REALLY IS
VERY COLD...

YOU CATCHED A COLD
WHEN YOU WERE STAY-
ING IN MOTOPUG GAL-
LERIES... DO YOU WANT
ME TO BRING YOU
ANOTHER BLANKET?

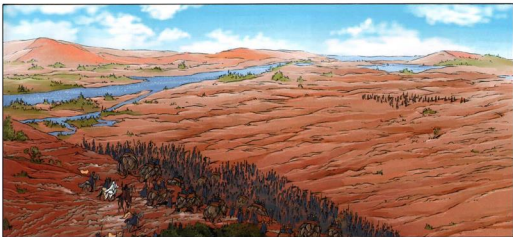


I FEAR THAT
WILL NOT CHANGE
ANYTHING... JUST
TELL ME... IN THIS
MOMENT... NOW...
WHAT IS THE
WIND TELLING
YOU?



I DON'T KNOW... IT'S AN ANCIENT LANGUAGE...
A BALLAD... I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE WORDS...
BUT IT IS A WONDERFUL AND POWERFUL SONG...







SHOULD I GIVE
THE ORDER
FOR THE
ASSAULT,
MY GENERAL?

HMM?... YOU'RE TALKING
TO ME, SERGEANT?



TO MY KNOWLEDGE ONLY
ONE GENERAL IS HERE,
MY GENERAL.

AND YOU WERE SAYING
SOMETHING INTERESTING?

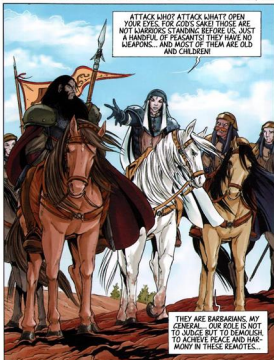


WELL... I SAID
WE HAVE THE SUN
BEHIND US... MEN
ARE READY AND
SUPERIOR IN NUM-
BERS... TAKING THE
SPEED, THE ENEMY
CLEARLY DIDN'T
HAVE TIME TO
ORGANIZE
THEIR
DEFENSE...

...ALL THIS
ELEMENTS ARE
FAVORABLE
FOR RAPID AND
OVERWHELMING
VICTORY OF THE
IMPERIAL ARMY.
IT SEEMS LIKE
THE BEST TIME
FOR AN ATTACK
IS NOW...



ATTACK,
SERGEANT?



ATTACK WHO? ATTACK WHAT? OPEN
YOUR EYES, FOR GOD'S SAKE! THOSE ARE
NOT WARRIORS STANDING BEFORE US, JUST
A HANDFUL OF PEASANTS! THEY HAVE NO
WEAPONS... AND MOST OF THEM ARE OLD
AND CHILDREN!

THEY ARE BARBARIANS, MY
GENERAL... OUR ROLE IS NOT
TO JUDGE BUT TO DEMOLISH
TO ACHIEVE PEACE AND HAR-
MONY IN THESE REMOTES...



OUR DUTY IS
TO PUSH BEYOND
THE BORDERS OF
NYM-BEUYN
KINGDOM FOR THE
GREATER GLORY
OF OTSKOOR, OUR
SOVEREIGN...



DO YOU KNOW WHAT
MY JOB WAS, BEFORE
I WAS OFFERED THE
COMMAND OF THE
ARMY, CORPORAL?

I HAVE NO IDEA, MY
GENERAL...



I WAS A HERDSMAN...

I KEPT A SMALL
FLOCK OF LAMBELLS
IN THE HALASINI
MOUNTAINS. LIKE MY
FATHER HAS DONE IT
AND MANY OTHERS
BEFORE HIM...

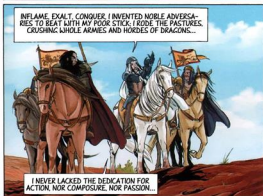


I WAS ALONE MOST OF THE TIME... AND TO PASS THE SOLITUDE, I TOOK REFUGE IN GAMES I CREATED FROM THE STORY SNIPPETS I HEARD ON GATHERINGS...

THOSE STORIES ALSO FEED MY DREAMS...



MY WILDEST DREAM WAS TO BECOME A GREAT WARRIOR...



INFLAME, EXALT, CONQUER. I INVENTED NOBLE ADVERSARIES TO BEAT WITH MY POOR STICK. I RODE THE PASTURES, CRUSHING WHOLE ARMIES AND HORDS OF DRAGONS...

I NEVER LACKED THE DEDICATION FOR ACTION, NOR COMPOSURE, NOR PASSION...



BUT EVEN IN MY CHILDISH DREAMS, NAIVE AND INCENOUS AS THEY MAY HAVE BEEN, MY ENEMIES HAD A CERTAIN ADVANTAGE OVER THOSE WHO STOOD IN FRONT OF THEM IN THAT MOMENT, CORPORAL: THEY WERE WORTHY OF THE NAME!



AND THIS HAND WHICH HELD THE HERDSMAN'S STICK WILL NEVER STRIKE WITHOUT REASON!



I'M AFRAID I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU MEAN, MY GENERAL...

I'M NOT SURPRISED!

WE MUST MAKE THE ASSAULT, MY GENERAL... THE KING HAS ORDERED...



IT WILL BE WITHOUT ME...



I CAN'T SUPPORT THIS...



...I REFUSE TO FIGHT!

FLAK!



YOU'RE RESIGNING?

CALL IT WHAT YOU LIKE... I'M GOING HOME...



YOU'RE MAKING A BIG MISTAKE!

MY BIGGEST MISTAKE WAS ABANDONING MY HERD...



YOU DISHONOR THE ARMY! YOUR ATTITUDE IS UNACCEPTABLE!

THAT'S RIGHT! MUREAL OFTEN REPEATED TO ME YOU HAVE TO LIVE YOUR LIFE WITH DIGNITY! AND I BEGIN TODAY BY REFUSING TO SLAUGHTER THOSE PEOPLE!



COWARD!!!



AAAAHHHHH!!!





WEEENA...



WEEENA FORGIVE ME...



THIS IS WHAT WE HAVE RESERVED FOR DESERTERS! AND NOW...



ATTACK!!!

ATTACK!!!

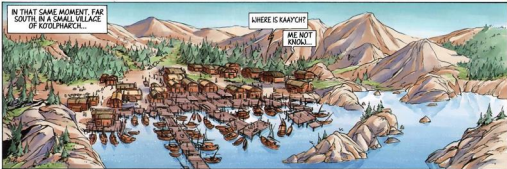




IN THAT SAME MOMENT, FAR SOUTH, IN A SMALL VILLAGE OF KOOLPARCH...

WHERE IS KAA'YCH?

ME NOT KNOW!



HE HAD TO WAIT FOR US IN MOOPLIC... HE WENT BEFORE! TWO GIRLS ESCAPED WITH HIM... ONE IS MY WIFE AND THE OTHER MY SLAVE! YOU CAN'T KNOW! NOTHING! WHERE ARE THEY?

ME NOT KNOW...



IF YOU PERSIST IN LYING, I WILL BE FORCED TO SLIT YOUR PRETTY THROAT... AND THEN YOUR PRETTY VOICE WILL BE MORE THAN ALFUL... DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

UNDERSTAND...



WELL... THEN I ASK MY QUESTION FOR THE LAST TIME, WHERE IS KAA'YCH? WHERE IS HE HIDING WEEEA?

KAA'YCH NO BACK... ME NOT KNOW WHERE HE BE...



MORCKKOR, STOP...



AAAAHHH!!!

BAD ANSWER...



I KNOW WHERE THEY ARE... THIS SNOTTY KID TOLD ME EVERYTHING...





KAAYCH ACTUALLY RETURNED TO THE VILLAGE DURING THE NIGHT IN COMPANY OF WEENA AND OPERA... THEY'VE EMBARKED IMMEDIATELY...

HOW CAN WE KNOW THIS KID IS A RELIABLE SOURCE?



I CHECKED... THE FISHING SEASON IS FINISHED... ALL BOATS ARE DOCKED... ONLY ONE IS MISSING: THE ONE OF KAAYCH!

THAT DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING, HAGGRAL! MAYBE IT'S JUST A TRICK TO GET US OUT OF THE VILLAGE!



IT'S POSSIBLE! BUT IF I WAS THEM, I WOULDN'T RISK STAYING HERE... NOT ENOUGH SPACE TO HIDE. I WOULD TAKE THE DIRECTION TOWARDS OPALOOSA, LOOK FOR MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION AND LEAVE THE REGION...



ANOTHER REASON NOT TO STAY HERE! WE MUST FIND A WAY TO REACH OPALOOSA AS SOON AS POSSIBLE BEFORE THEY FIND THE MEANS OF LEAVING THE REGION!

KAAYCH HAS PROPOSED TO TAKE US...



...FOR A FEE, OF COURSE!



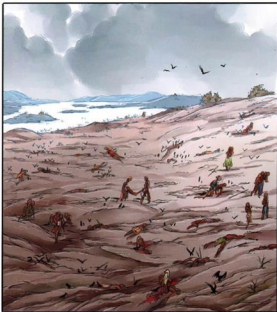
ALWAYS WITH YOUR DAMN PREDICTIONS! AND HOW DID THAT WORK OUT SO FAR? NOT VERY GOOD!

WHATEVER YOUR INTENTIONS ARE, WEENA HAS CONSIDERABLE ADVANTAGE OVER US...



OF COURSE!





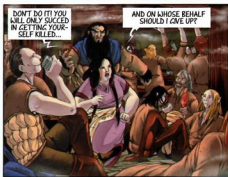
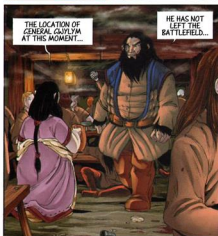
HE IS STILL ALIVE!

HE DOESN'T BELONG HERE!



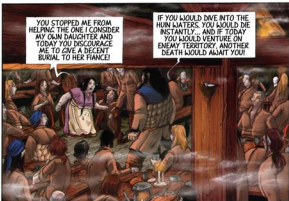
HE'S A LIVING BEING BEFORE HE'S AN ENEMY!







AND WHY SHOULD I CONTINUE TO SERVE WHEN YOU BROUGHT ME ONLY MISFORTUNE AND TORMENT??

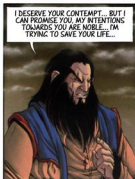


YOU STOPPED ME FROM HELPING THE ONE I CONSIDER MY OWN DAUGHTER AND TODAY YOU DISCOURAGE ME TO GIVE A DECENT BURIAL TO HER FIANCE!

IF YOU WOULD DIVE INTO THE HUNN LATTERS, YOU WOULD DIE INSTANTLY... AND IF TODAY YOU WOULD VENTURE ON ENEMY TERRITORY, ANOTHER DEATH WOULD AWAIT YOU!



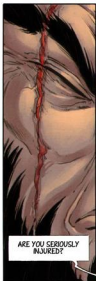
I KNOW YOU CONSIDER ME AS A THICK BRUTE... AND RIGHTLY SO, BECAUSE I'M ONLY A SOLDIER WITHOUT FINESSE... AND I'M NOT PARTICULAR PROUD OF WHAT WE HAVE DONE THERE...



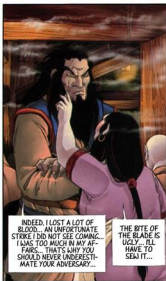
I DESERVE YOUR CONTEMPT... BUT I CAN PROMISE YOU, MY INTENTIONS TOWARDS YOU ARE NOBLE... I'M TRYING TO SAVE YOUR LIFE...



SO IF YOU HAVE AN OUNCE OF UNDERSTANDING, GIVE UP ON THIS INSANE PLAN...



ARE YOU SERIOUSLY INJURED?



INDEED, I LOST A LOT OF BLOOD... AN UNFORTUNATE STROKE... I DID NOT SEE COMING... I WAS TOO MUCH IN MY AFFAIRS... THAT'S WHY YOU SHOULD NEVER UNDERESTIMATE YOUR ADVERSARY...

THE BITE OF THE BLADE IS UGLY... I'LL HAVE TO SEW IT...



WHEN THIS IS DONE, I WILL LEAVE THE FORT TO ANNOUNCE OUR VICTORY TO THE EMPEROR AND ASK HIM TO NAME A NEW GENERAL... IF YOU WANT, WE COULD LEAVE TOGETHER, MUREAL...



OPALOOSA, WESTERN DISTRICT, 30TH DAY OF GOLDEN PERIOD.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING, OPERA?

BETTER... MY LUNGS ARE STILL BURNING AND MY THROAT STILL ITCHES... BUT OTHER THAN THAT, I THINK I'M GETTING BETTER...

HERE... TAKE THIS... IT'S BELLADEENA... HIGHLY RECOMMENDED TO FIGHT OFF ALL KINDS OF INFECTIONS...

ANOTHER POTION? ALL THE GOLD KANYCH GAVE US WILL RUN OUT! YOU WORRY FOR ME TOO MUCH, WEENA...

SO WHAT? FOR WHO ELSE WOULD I NEED TO WORRY ABOUT LEAVING YOUR FAMILY WAS EXECUTED BY THE LAST PRINCE IN THE LINE OF DEGENERATES... MY VILLAGE IS DESTROYED... I'VE LOST EVERYTHING!

YOU ARE MY ONLY FRIEND! SO DON'T TELL ME WHO I NEED TO WORRY ABOUT, ALRIGHT?

AGREE! AGREE! DON'T BE ANGRY! YOU WON'T WORRY WHEN I SING...

I HAVE A LITTLE SURPRISE FOR YOU... LOOK WHO WALKED BY ME ON THE DOCKS...

EHI WELL, THAT'S THE FIRST TIME SOMEONE SAID MY NAME WITHOUT SAYING IT WRONG...

...AND NO BREATHING!

WHO? VICHSHICH VIBSTZICH AS LOCSCHICH EL' BACKSHSCHI!

HAHAHAHA!

STILL THE SAME CRYSTAL LAUGHTER WHICH MAKES ME FEEL SO GOOD!



VIC HAS EXCELLENT NEWS
TO ANNOUNCE...

WHAT IS IT?

A CONVOY CARRYING SEAL
SKINS, OIL AND RLEHAN FISH
IS LEAVING OPALOOSA
TONIGHT, AFTER SUNSET...



I'M JOINING IT TO SELL A LOT OF LAMBS IN NYM-BRUYN... IF MY COMPANY AND THAT OF MY LITTLE FURY LUNATICS DOESN'T DISPLEASE YOU TOO MUCH, IT WOULD BE PLEASANT TO MAKE THAT JOURNEY WITH YOU!



WHAT DO YOU
SAY, MY DEARY?

UNEXPECTED!



NYM-BRUYN IS A GIANT CITY
WHERE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF
PEOPLE ARE LIVING. MORCKOOR
WILL NEVER GET THE IDEA TO
LOOK FOR US OVER THERE.
WE'LL BE SAFE FOR A LONG TIME!



AND THERE WE CAN FIND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INVISIBLE BRANCH... AND LEARN MORE ABOUT THE MYSTERIOUS NOOR OF WHICH YOU ARE HIS HEIRESS...



LUCK IS ON
OUR SIDE!



LUCK IS ON
OUR SIDE!



WHAT ARE YOU COMING
TO INVENT NOW,
HAGGAL? WHAT BAD
CURVE OF FATE DID
YOU DECIPHER IN
YOUR IMAGES OF
MISFORTUNE?

THE CARDS ARE NOT
JUST PAINTED FIGURES
ON A PAPER, PRINCE
MORCKOOR... AND THEY
ARE SO MUCH MORE...



REALLY? SO WHAT ARE THEY?

TAKE THE PACK IN YOUR HANDS...



...AND FIND OUT BY YOURSELF!



GO! TAKE IT... WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OFF? NOTHING WILL HAPPEN TO YOU...



THEY ARE BLANK...



THERE IS NOTHING! NO SILHOUETTE... NO GHOST! NOTHING!

...INDEED, FIGURES ONLY APPEAR AFTER INVOCATION...



A VERY PRECISE PRELIMINARY RITUAL PERMITS YOU TO ENTER INTO THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GHOSTS... ACCORDING TO MY QUESTIONS, THE SPIRITS SUGGEST ME AN ANSWER WITH THE HELP OF THE CARDS...

WHEN THE IMAGE APPEARS, IT IS MY JOB TO INTERPRET THEM.



...AND THIS ONE TELLS ME WE ARE NOT VERY FAR FROM OUR YOUNG MARRIAGE...



I COULD KILL YOU, MORCKOOR... I COULD DEFINITELY BE FINISHED WITH YOU. HERE AND NOW... I HAVE THE DESIRE AND YOU ARE AT MY MERCY...

AAARRRRH...



BUT I WILL NOT DO THAT...

HHHHH...



I WILL KEEP YOU ALIVE, BECAUSE OUR DESTINATIONS ARE CLOSELY RELATED... WE NEED EACH OTHER...

I WILL ADVISE YOU UNTIL YOU BECOME A KING... AND I WILL CONTINUE TO ADVISE YOU, WHEN YOU WILL BE A KING...



YOU WILL SIT ON THE THRONE... AND YOU WILL OBEY ME...



I WILL BE YOUR VOICE... YOU WILL BE MY ARM...



YOUR POWER IS MINE...



LEAVE ME NOW... I NEED TO BE ALONE... I HAVE TO ASK THE SPIRITS IF YOUR MARRIAGE WITH KEENA HAS INDEED BEEN APPROVED BY THEIR COMMUNITY...

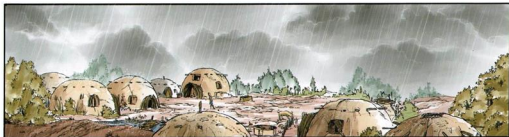
THE CEREMONY WAS CUT SHORT, HOWEVER, YOUR UNION MAY STILL BE ACCEPTED...



IF THAT WERE THE CASE, IT WOULD REMAIN TO CARRY OUT THE MOST ENJOYABLE PART OF OUR PLAN...



...YOUR CARNAL UNION WITH KEENA TO PRODUCE A CHILD!!!



WHERE AM I?

IN MY HOME... FOR
SEVERAL DAYS NOW...
YOU ARE WELCOME...



MY NAME IS
GJLYLM... WHO
ARE YOU?

I AM THE
ONE WHO
SHELTERED YOU,
AND TOOK CARE
OF YOU TO MAKE
YOU BETTER... I
AM RELIEVED YOU
FINALLY DECIDED
TO OPEN YOUR
EYES...



WHAT IS
YOUR NAME?

I CANNOT REVEAL IT TO YOU.
IN PERIOD OF MOURNING, THE
NAMES OF THE LIVING ACCOM-
PANY THE SPIRITS OF THE DEAD
INSIDE THE THRESHOLD OF
THEIR LAST HOME... IT'S NOT
NECESSARY TO DISTURB THEM
BY PRONOUNCING IT...



FUNNY
CUSTOM...
WHY ARE YOU
MOURNING?

THE WHOLE VILLAGE IS
MOURNING... THERE IS
NOT A SINGLE MEMBER
OF OUR COMMUNITY WHO
HAS NOT LOST A LOVED
ONE IN THE MASSACRE...



YOU'RE TRYING
TO SAY...



THAT YOU WERE
FOUND IN THE
COUNTRY OF THE
BEHRS, AND PEOPLE
SIMILAR TO YOU
HAVE KILLED MOST
OF OUR PEOPLE
WITHOUT REASON...



I WAS ONE OF THE ASSASSINS... WHY ARE YOU CARING FOR ME?

YOU WERE THE ONLY WOUNDED AMONG THE DEAD WHEN I FOUND YOU...



I GUESS YOU KEPT ME ALIVE WITH SOLE PURPOSE OF MAKING ME PAY A HEAVY PRICE FOR YOUR MISFORTUNE...

BLOOD CALLS FOR BLOOD... MURDER DRIVES TO MURDER... REVENGE ONLY LEADS TO REVENGE...



THE BEHRS ALWAYS REFUSED TO ENTER THE SPIRAL OF HATRED AND VIOLENCE... THIS IS NOT IN OUR NATURE... AND WE DON'T HAVE THE NEED TO CONQUER NEW LANDS AND DOMINATE OTHER PEOPLE...



SO WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH ME IF I WON'T BE TORTURED? YOU WANT TO HOLD ME FOR A RANSOM?

YOU ARE NOT OUR PRISONER... YOU'LL BE FREE TO GO AS SOON AS YOU CAN STAND ON YOUR FEET...



I WAS THEIR CHIEF... IT WAS I WHO HAS BROUGHT THOSE MEN HERE...



THEY LEFT WITHOUT YOU... IF THEY HAD ANY RESPECT FOR YOU, AS ONE SHOULD OBLIVION TO HIS CHIEF. THEY WOULDN'T LEAVE YOU WOUNDED IN THE MUD...



EVEN A DEAD BODY HAS RIGHT TO MORE CONSIDERATION...

IS HE AWAKE?...



YES, MY ANGEL AND YOU'RE ALL WET AGAIN...

THE CABRILS WERE GONE... I AND YKI SPENT ALL MORNING COLLECTING THEM...

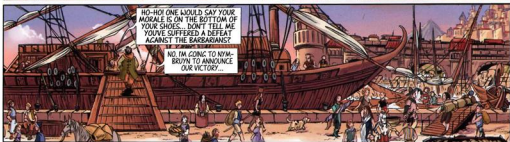


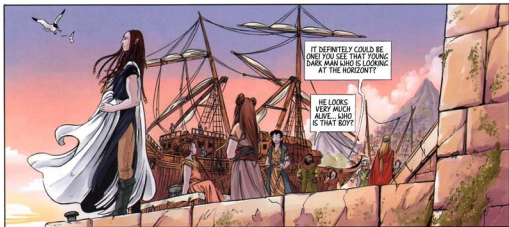
THE CABRILS? SO YOU'RE A HERDSMAN?



ME AND YKI ARE THE BEST HERDSMANS IN THE WORLD!







IT DEFINITELY COULD BE ONE! YOU SEE THAT YOUNG DARK MAN WHO IS LOOKING AT THE HORIZON?

HE LOOKS VERY MUCH ALIVE... WHO IS THAT BOY?



PRINCE MORCKDOOR... THE LAST SPOON OF THE DEAD BRANCH...



A DANGEROUS INDIVIDUAL WHO DID NOT HESITATE TO BURN MY VILLAGE AND MASSACRE ALL THE PEOPLE TO GET HIS HANDS ON THE OBJECT OF HIS DESIRE...

WHAT WAS IT?



WEEENA... THE YOUNG GIRL WITH ASHY HAIR I ALREADY TOLD YOU ABOUT...

THE ONE WHO WAS ON YOUR BOAT AND WHO DIDN'T HESITATE TO TAKE THE PLUNGE AND AVOID THE CLAWS OF YOUR SOLDIERS!



WHAT WAS SHE DOING ON THE SHIP?

I DON'T KNOW... PROBABLY TRYING TO ESCAPE HER DESTINY...



I THINK THE RETURN TO HIS DOMESTIC CASTLE IS NOT ON HIS PLAN...

AND HIM? WHAT'S HE STILL DOING HERE? IF WEEENA IS MISSING, WHY DOESN'T HE SIMPLY RETURN HOME?

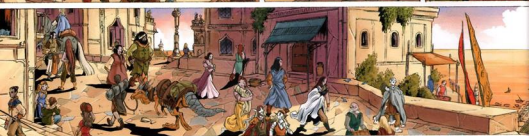
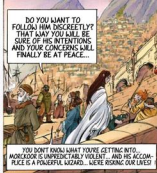


SINCE HE WAS LITTLE, MORCKDOOR ONLY DREAMED ABOUT ONE THING: TO ESCAPE FROM THE BONDAGE OF THE CURSE WEIGHTING UPON HIS BRANCH...

YOU SEEM VERY FAMILIAR WITH HIM...



I HELPED HIM COME TO THIS WORLD...





HE ENTERED
INTO THAT INN...

GOOD... LET'S
GO... WE'LL
ALSO TAKE A
ROOM THERE...



I THINK YOU MEANT
TO SAY WE'LL TAKE
TWO ROOMS!



IT SEEMS THE DISCRETION IS NOT
YOUR PRIMAL QUALITY, GAF!



I WILL MAKE YOU BLEED
LIKE THE LAST PIG IF YOU
DON'T TELL ME WHY YOU'RE
STICKING TO MY FOOTSTEPS!

... I DON'T KNOW
WHAT TO TELL
YOU... I DON'T
KNOW YOU
NEVER HAVE...



MORCKDOOR, CEASE!
I BEG YOU... I ASKED
HIM TO FOLLOW YOU...

WHO ARE
YOU?



DON'T YOU
RECOGNIZE
ME?



MURREAL?!, BUT
HOW?!... HOW IS THAT
POSSIBLE?!



MOREAL?

WHAT IS IT, MORCKDOOT?



MY MOTHER
NEEDS YOU
BY HER SIDE...

I'LL COME
SOON...



SHE SAID IT'S VERY URGENT...



SHE SAID MY LITTLE
SISTER IS ABOUT
TO ARRIVE...



VERY WELL.
I'M COMING...



I WAS 15 YEARS OLD
WHEN I ENTERED INTO
QUEENZYY'S SERVICE...

I STAYED FOR
15 YEARS...

IT WAS THE TIME OF
MY DARKEST AND
MOST TORMENTED
LIFE...



QUEENZYY ALWAYS LOATHED
HER STATUS... SHE NEVER
SUPPORTED TO LIVE UNDER
THE INFLUENCE OF THE
CURSE OF THE "DEAD
BRANCH"...



TO THE INVERSE OF
OTTENGDOOR, HER
BROTHER WHO
SEEMED TO BE
PERFECTLY SATISFIED
WITH HIS SITUATION,
QUEENZYY OFTEN
DESPAIRED OF THIS
HATEFUL TRADITION
OF THE WORLD,
WHERE HER SON AND
DAUGHTER WOULD
INHERIT HER CURSE...

QUEENZY OFTEN CONFIDED TO ME, SOMETIMES WE CRIED THROUGH THE NIGHT, MASTER AND SERVANT EMBRACED, UNITED IN THE SAME PAIN, EQUALLY DISARMED BEFORE THE INJUSTICE OF THE ANCIENT FATE...



WHAT GOD HAVE I OFFENDED TO DESERVE SUCH HEAVY PUNISHMENT? TELL ME, MUREAL... TELL ME...

SOME NIGHTS QUEENZY TOLD ME HOW SHE WOULD LIKE TO BE REMOVED... BUT SHE ALSO CONFESSED HOW WEAK AND COWARDLY SHE FELT AND HOW SHE SUFFERED BY ABANDONING HER PLAN EVERY TIME...



QUEENZY STUBBORNLY REFUSED OTTENGCOOR IN THEIR CONJUNICAL BED, TAKING HIS ASSAULTS, CONVINCED THAT WHILE ESCAPING HIS EMBRACE SHE WOULD ALSO ESCAPE THE CURSE.



BUT OTTENGCOOR, FULLY INSENSIBLE TO HIS SISTER'S PROTESTS, OFFERED HIMSELF NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, FORCING HER TO ACCEPT THE FATE AGAINST HER WILL.



QUEENZY EMERGED BRUISED FROM THOSE TERRIBLE HOURS OF HER BROTHER'S FORCING.



THREE YEARS AFTER I ENTERED THEIR SERVICE, QUEENZY BROUGHT MORCKOOR TO THE WORLD. THE BIRTH WAS TERRIBLE AND I HAD TO STITCH MY MISTRESS WITH MY OWN SEWING MATERIAL...



FOR THIS REASON, AMONG MANY OTHERS, QUEENZY HATED MORCKOOR MORE THAN SHE HATED OTTENGCOOR. FOLLOWING DAY AFTER THE BIRTH, SHE LOCKED HERSELF IN ONE OF THE NUMEROUS VACANT CHAMBERS OF THE CASTLE AND I HAD TO TAKE CARE OF THE BABY MYSELF...



QUEENZY BECAME A BITTER WOMAN OVERNIGHT, COLD AND AUTHORITATIVE. SHE HARDLY LEFT HER SHELTER AND DIDN'T SPEAK TO ME ANYMORE, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF GIVING ME ORDERS...



QUEENZY LIVED IN THE STATE OF EXHAUSTION AND PERMANENT CONFINEMENT. SHE NEVER TOOK CARE OF HER SON. I WAS IN CHARGE OF HIS EDUCATION.



AGONY BY THE BIRTH OF MORCKOOR OTTENCOOR WAS MORE THAN EVER DETERMINED TO FOLLOW THE IMPERATIVES OF THE CURSE TO THE LETTER. HE CONTINUED TO TORTURE HIS SISTER, HOPING FOR ANOTHER CHILD, A DAUGHTER, WHO HIS SON COULD MARRY, THUS PRESERVING THE FUTURE OF THE FAMILY AND THE KINGDOM.



ACCORDING TO OTTENCOOR, THE DEAD BRANCH HAD A VITAL ROLE TO PLAY IN THE BALANCE OF PEACE... HE LIVED IN HIS PAINFUL CONDITION AS A NECESSARY SACRIFICE FOR THE HARMONY OF THE UNIVERSE...



OTTENCOOR CONTINUED TO HARASS QUEENZY ABOUT THIS. NOT A DAY PASSED BY WITHOUT REMAINING HER OF HER DUTY. APATHY AND QUEENZY'S RECLUSION ONLY STIRRED HIS FURY.



ONE NIGHT, NOTHING WAS HOLDING HIM BACK ANYMORE. OTTENCOOR SMASHED THE DOOR OF HIS SISTER'S ROOM AND FORCED HER TO WELCOME HIS SEED.



AFTER THE TASK WAS DONE, OTTENCOOR ABANDONED QUEENZY TO HER FATE. I SPENT ALL MY LIFE TRYING TO SOOTHE HER SOBS UNDER MORCKOOR'S WORRIED LOOK.



AFTER HER TEARS DRIED OFF, QUEENZY WALKED THROUGH THE CASTLE PASSAGES, HOWLING ABOUT HER DISTRESS DAY AND NIGHT, CURSING HER MISFORTUNE, HER BROTHER AND HER UNWANTED CHILDREN.



ONE NIGHT SHE EVEN TRIED TO END HER PREGNANCY PREMATURELY, BUT HER BROTHER WAS KEEPING HER UNDER CLOSE OBSERVATION.

THE SECOND BIRTH WAS EVEN MORE TERRIBLE FROM THE PREVIOUS. QUEENZY GAVE BIRTH TO A BEAUTIFUL GIRL, BUT SHE LOST HER LIFE.



JUST AFTER OLIVIA'S BIRTH, OTTENGROO CONFINED HIS CHILDREN TO A NEW NURSE AND THAT MEANT MY REMOVAL.



HE DIDN'T HAVE CONFIDENCE IN ME ANYMORE. I WAS IMPREGNATED. HE SAID, BY HIS SISTER'S BAD THOUGHTS AND I WAS NOT ABLE TO EDUCATE HIS CHILDREN IN THE SPIRIT OF TRADITION...

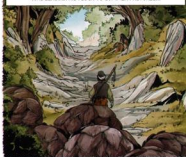


I LEFT THE CASTLE WITH SMALL SAVINGS, BREAD AND SOME FRUIT, AND MY ONLY LUGGAGE WAS A SEWING KIT FROM QUEENZY...



HAVING NO FAMILY AND NOWHERE TO GO, I TOOK REFUGE IN THE MOUNTAINS.

I WANDERED FROM VALLEY TO VALLEY WITHOUT MEETING ANYONE FOR WEEKS. HUNGRY, DESPERATE, I WAS ABOUT TO LOSE ALL HOPE WHEN MY DESTINY PUT ME IN A WAY OF A YOUNG HERDSMAN WHO WAS LEADING HIS FLOCK TO SUMMER PASTURES...



HIS NAME WAS TOLDEC. HE MADE ME DRINK THE MILK OF HIS LAMBELS AND SHARED HIS MEAL WITH ME...



WHEN I FEEL ASLEEP ON THE STRAW THAT EVENING, I DIDN'T KNOW I WOULD SPEND SEVERAL YEARS IN HIS COMPANY...

THANKS TO TOLDEC, I FELL IN LOVE WITH LIFE... THIS PERIOD, WHICH SEEMED EXTREMELY SHORT IN DURATION BUT STILL LASTED 4 YEARS, WAS THE HAPPIEST OF MY ENTIRE LIFE...



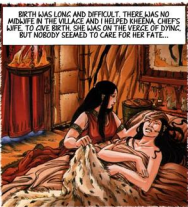
ONLY SHADOW OVER THE PICTURE: THE HARSH MOUNTAIN CLIMATE DIDN'T SUIT MY FRAGILE HEART. I WAS OFTEN SICK AND ISOLATION DIDN'T HELP.



ONE NIGHT, 20TH OF THE ASHY PERIOD, TOLDAC TOOK ME TO HALASKINI VILLAGE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FESTIVAL OF THE SPIRITS...



THAT WAS THE NIGHT OF WEENA'S BIRTH...



BIRTH WAS LONG AND DIFFICULT. THERE WAS NO MIDWIFE IN THE VILLAGE AND I HELPED KHEENA, CHIEF'S WIFE, TO GIVE BIRTH. SHE WAS ON THE VERGE OF DYING, BUT NOBODY SEEMED TO CARE FOR HER FATE...

THE APPARITION OF VILLAGE PROTECTIVE SPIRIT TOOK THE ATTENTION OF ALL COMMUNITY...



THE GRAY-CHILD WILL BRING SHAME, PAIN AND DISCORD WITHIN THE FAMILY... MISFORTUNE AND PAIN WILL BEFALL ON HALASKINI...



I SEE FIRE, AND BLOOD... AND TEARS, A VALLEY OF TEARS!



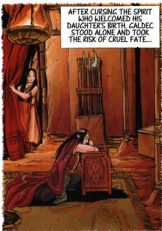
I SHUDDERED ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CURTAIN WHEN I HEARD THE REACTIONS ON THE PROPHECY MADE BY FURY MOHNHOWE...

THERE IS NOT A MOMENT TO LOSE!

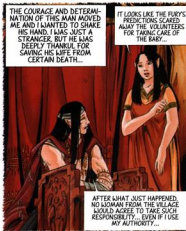
WE MUST GET RID OF THE CHILD!



WHILE SOME WERE SUPPORTING TO KILL THE BABY ON THE SPOT, OTHERS SUGGESTED TO MOVE HER AWAY OR RAISE HER IN SECRET... GALDEC, CHILD'S FATHER, USED FORCE TO SAVE HER LIFE...



AFTER CURSING THE SPIRIT WHO WELCOMED HIS DAUGHTER'S BIRTH, GALDEC STOOD ALONE AND TOOK THE RISK OF CRUEL FATE...



THE COURAGE AND DETERMINATION OF THIS MAN MOVED ME, AND I WANTED TO SHAKE HIS HAND. I WAS JUST A STRANGER, BUT HE WAS DEEPLY THANKFUL FOR SAVING HIS WIFE FROM CERTAIN DEATH...

IT LOOKS LIKE THE FURY'S PREDICTIONS SCARED AWAY THE VOLUNTEERS FOR TAKING CARE OF THE BABY...

AFTER WHAT JUST HAPPENED, NO WOMAN FROM THE VILLAGE WOULD AGREE TO TAKE SUCH RESPONSIBILITY... EVEN IF I USE MY AUTHORITY...



NO NEED TO GIVE YOURSELF A CRIB - I'M WILLING TO TAKE HER...

WHO ARE YOU?



MY NAME IS MUREAL... I'M A SEAMSTRESS...



MUREAL... THAT'S NOT A COMMON NAME AROUND HERE... WHERE DO YOU COME FROM?

I PREFER NOT TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION... I AM HERE ON MY OWN FREE WILL, AND I WOULD LIKE TO DRAW A LINE OVER MY PAST...



AS YOU WISH... MY NAME IS GALDEC... TAKE THE CHILD IN YOUR ARMS... SHE HAS TO DECIDE IF SHE WILL ACCEPT TO RELY ON YOU...

OHMMMM

OUTSIDE THE WIND PICKED UP AND PUSHED THE CLOUDS IN FRONT OF WHITE DISC OF ASHY MOON... BUT THEY WERE COVERED WITH CHILD'S SCREAMS, PROBABLY TERRIFIED BY TRAGIC EVENTS, WHICH THREW A VEIL OF UNCERTAINTY ON HER ENTRY INTO THE WORLD OF THE LIVING...



OOIIIIIIII

I GENTLY TOOK THE BABY IN MY ARMS AND I SPOKE QUIETLY, STROKING HER GRAY HAIR COVERING HER TREMBLING SKULL... SHE STOPPED CRYING IMMEDIATELY.



I BELIEVE SHE ADOPTED ME... WHAT IS HER NAME?



WHAT DO YOU SAY ABOUT SALVEENAT... IT MEANS 'GRAY CHILD' IN ANCIENT DIALECT...



LOOK AT HER FACE... I THINK SHE DOESN'T LIKE THE NAME!

THEN WHAT ARE YOU SUGGESTING?

THE WIND SUDDENLY PICKED UP... IT'S A SIGN... WHAT DO YOU SAY ABOUT WEEENA?



WEEENA, 'DAUGHTER OF THE WIND'... I FIND IT SOUNDING GREAT...

EVERY DAY THE WIND WILL BLOW YOU SWEET WORDS MY PEOPLE FAILED TO GIVE YOU TODAY...



EVERY NIGHT THE WIND WILL WHISPER YOU DARK SECRETS OF YOUR BIRTH... IT WILL SING PRAISE TO YOUR BEAUTY AND UNVEIL KEY TO YOUR FUTURE...



WE WELCOME YOU, WEEENA!







OVERWHELMED BY GRIEF AND
SORROW, CAUGHT UP WITH
PROPHECY HE THOUGHT WAS
LONG FORGOTTEN, GALDEC
CHOOSE TO TAKE HIS OWN LIFE...
GIVING UP ON PURSUING THE CAP-
TORS OF HIS UNIQUE DAUGHTER...



THIS IS WHEN I
MADLY RUSHED
IN SEARCH FOR
WIENA, IN
COMPANY OF
GWYLYM, A
YOUNG HERDS-
MAN SHE WAS
IN LOVE WITH...



I FAILED...



WIENA'S CORPSE LIES SOMEWHERE
AT THE BOTTOM OF THE ICY
GRAVE... AND THAT OF GWYLYM IS
SLOWLY ROTTING IN THE MUD ON
THE BATTLEFIELD!



...YOU CAN BE
PROUD OF
YOURSELF,
MORCKOOR!



YOU CAN OVERWHELM ME
WITH BLAME, MUIREAL...
YOU HAVE THE RIGHT...

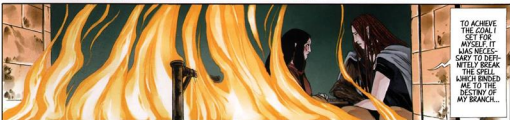


I DIDN'T FORGET YOU WHEN I
GREW UP IN THE SHADOW OF
MY FANATIC FATHER AND
DEMENTED MOTHER...

THE MADNESS AND
HATE WERE MY PLAYING
COMPANIONS...



I DIDN'T FORGET MY ONLY
PLEASANT MOMENT OF
CHILDHOOD WITH YOU,
I OWE THAT TO YOU...





ALVET HOW CAN YOU SAY SUCH A THING?

I SAW WITH MY OWN EYES HOW WATER CLOSED AROUND HER...

RELIEVE ME, SHE PULLED HERSELF OUT... DON'T ASK ME HOW SHE HAS DONE IT, BUT SHE DIDN'T DROWN IN THE HUN...



WEENA IS HERE... SOMEWHERE IS OPALDOSA...



RAD NEWS, MORCKOOR... I WAS UNABLE TO FIND HER!

?!



THE CARDS INDICATE SHE HAS LEFT THE CITY... THERE IS NOT A MOMENT TO LOSE... LET'S SADDLE UP AND CATCH THEM!

I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE WITH YOU, HAGGRAL! YOUR TRICKERY EXPIRES TODAY... YOU'VE BETRAYED ME! I DON'T WANT YOUR ADVICE OR YOUR COMPANION ANYMORE!



TAKE CARE OF YOUR WORDS, MY PRINCE... HAVE YOU ALREADY FORGOTTEN YOU ARE IN MY POWER?



AND YOU? ARE YOU FORGETTING THAT WITHOUT ME YOU WILL NEVER REACH THE GOAL YOU'VE SET FOR YOURSELF?



YOU CAN'T TO DO ANYTHING AGAINST ME! YOUR PLAN IS CONDEMNED IF YOU KILL ME!

CERTAINLY IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE ELIMINATING YOU... BUT I CAN FORCE YOU TO REMAIN OBEDIENT...



WEENA IS HERE... SOMEWHERE IS OPALDOSA...



?!



GOGHHH...

LET GO
OF HER!

I CAN'T...



LET HER GO
OR I'LL SLICE
YOUR THROAT!

I DON'T CON-
TROL... MY ARM...
HAGGERAL IS IN
COMMAND...



FORGET IT
THEN!

AAAAHHH!



ALL IS
WELL... IT'S
FINISHED...



HAAHAHA POOR AND NAIVE!
NOTHING IS FINISHED!



THE SPELL IS INTERRUPTED, BUT
THE LINK TO TRUE MAGIC CAN
NEVER BE BROKEN BY STEEL...

NOOOOO!



THE HAND OF FUTURE
KING IS REGROWING!



HENCEFORTH,
WE WILL HIT
THE ROAD
TOGETHER...
THIS WAY, YOU WILL
FEAR FOR THE
LIFE OF YOUR
FRIENDS AND YOU
WILL CONTINUE
TO FOLLOW THE
PATH I'VE SET
FOR YOU...



WHAT ARE YOU
THINKING ABOUT,
WEEENA?

NOTHING, VIC. I'M JUST
WATCHING THE LAND-
SCAPE AND I FIND IT
MAGNIFICENT...



IT CERTAINLY IS! I'M BLIND, YOU
KNOW! NOT A COMPLETE FOOL...
I CAN FEEL PERFECTLY WHEN A
PERSON IS GOING THROUGH DARK
THOUGHTS IN MY WAGON!

IT'S TRUE... I'M THINKING ABOUT THE
PAST... WHAT MY LIFE WOULD HAVE BEEN
IF I KISSED GWYLYM LONGER...



IF OUR KISS WOULD CONTINUE, THERE IS NO DOUBT I WOULD HAVE STAYED BY HIS SIDE A FEW SECONDS LONGER...

THE SECOND KISS WOULD RESULT IN THIRD KISS... AND SO ON...



I WOULDN'T COME BACK DOWN TO THE VILLAGE FOR SEVERAL HOURS. MORCKDOOR WOULD NEVER TAKE ME BECAUSE HE WOULD HAVE NEVER FOUND ME. HE WOULD LEFT AND NOBODY WOULD HAVE BEEN KILLED...



I WOULD BE IN GAYLYMYS ARMS THIS MOMENT... MY BRAVE AND LOYAL HUSBAND... WHO DIDN'T DREAM ANYTHING ELSE BUT TO BECOME A GREAT WARRIOR...



ALL THIS FOR A SIMPLE KISS...



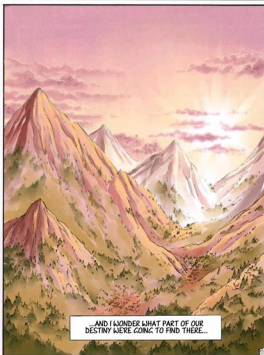
DON'T TORTURE YOURSELF, WEENA... EVENTS COULD HAVE OCCURRED WHATEVER YOU WOULD ARRIVE OR NOT...



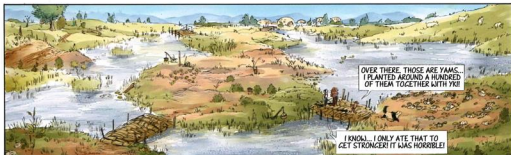
MORCKDOOR WOULD DESTROY YOUR VILLAGE IN ANY CASE... HE WOULD CHASE YOU AND YOU ALONE, BECAUSE HE WANTS TO MARRY YOU...

OPERA IS RIGHT, WEENA... LET ME REMIND YOU OF A SAYING, ONE MEETS HIS DESTINY BY PATHS ONE TAKES TO AVOID IT!

THIRTYFULLY, THE MEANING OF THE SAYING IS SCARING ME A BIT BECAUSE THE PATH IS LEADING TO NYM-BROYN...



...AND I WONDER WHAT PART OF OUR DESTINY WE'RE GOING TO FIND THERE...





OUR WAY OF LIFE DIDNT CHANGE MUCH SINCE OUR ANCESTORS CAME HERE... THE EARTH IS UNGRATEFUL AND THE CLIMATE IS HARDLY PLEASANT, BUT WE ALWAYS KNEW NOT TO ACCOMMODATE IT TO OUR NEEDS...



WE DONT PRODUCE MORE THAN NECESSARY... OUR DESIRES ARE RESTRICTED AND OUR AMBITIONS ARE TURNED TOWARDS WEALTH INSIDE US...

IF ONLY THE SOVEREIGN OF NYM-BRYUN COULD HEAR YOU...



I SAW THEM... THEIR EYES WERE EMPTY AND THEIR HEARTS DRIED! THEY LEAD THEIR MEN TO BATTLE AND FILL THEIR CHESTS WITH FEAR AND STOP THEIR MINDS FROM THINKING!



THEY HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE!

YOU DIDNT KNOW ANYTHING MORE WHEN YOU ENLISTED UNDER THEIR BANNER TO WAGE WAR AGAINST US...



YOU ARE RIGHT... TODAY I AM ASHAMED... I DONT KNOW HOW I CAN LOOK YOU IN THE EYES...

WE KNEW THIS MISFORTUNE WOULD EVENTUALLY FALL ON US...



EXPANSION OF OTSKOOR'S EMPIRE WAS REACHING OUT OF NYM-BRYUN BORDERS... WE KNEW IN THAT INSTANT OUR VILLAGE WAS NEXT TO BE THREATENED...



AND TODAY IT HAPPENED... WE ARE FORTUNATE THEY DIDNT BURN OUR HOUSES AND FIELDS LIKE THEY DID IN OTHER REGIONS.

YOU SEEM VERY RESIGNED FOR SOMEONE WHO LOST HER COMPANION IN EXCHANGE FOR NOTHING...



WE HAVE THE FLOWERS TO REMEMBER HIM AND OUR EYES TO CRY...



I DON'T AGREE WITH YOU... THIS IS NOT ENOUGH!! WE STILL HAVE TO BRING JUSTICE FOR THOSE WHO DIED UNNECESSARILY!

WHO ARE YOU TO DECIDE WHAT JUSTICE IS AND WHAT IS NOT?



EXACTLY... I'M NOT MUCH NOW... BUT I OWE YOU... OTSKOOR IS YOUR DEBTOR! THE EMPIRE MUST REPAIR YOURS...

BUT I'VE ALREADY SAID IT... VENGEANCE IS NOT PART OF OUR TRADITION...



YOU'RE SPEAKING ABOUT VENGEANCE? I WILL GO TO NYM-BRUYN AS A REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE BEHRS...



I WILL DEMAND AN AUDIENCE BEFORE THE EMPEROR AND I'LL OPEN HIS EYES ABOUT HIS DISASTROUS CONQUEST... HE WILL HEAR THE TRUTH!



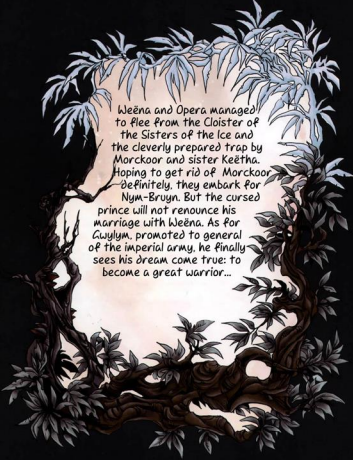
HE ALREADY KNOWS... HE HAS A LONG RULING... YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME... YOU'LL GET KILLED!!!

I ALREADY DIED ON THE BATTLEFIELD... I AM AN AMBASSADOR AND I WILL ADDRESS MY COMPLAINTS BEFORE THE ROYAL COUPLE!



MY DECISION IS FINAL... TOMORROW I'M LEAVING FOR THE CAPITAL!

Weëna



Weëna and Opera managed to flee from the Cloister of the Sisters of the Ice and the cleverly prepared trap by Morckoor and sister Keëtha. Hoping to get rid of Morckoor, they embark for Nym-Bruyn. But the cursed prince will not renounce his marriage with Weëna. As for Gwylym, promoted to general of the imperial army, he finally sees his dream come true: to become a great warrior...

