



APHRODITE

IX



MATT HAWKINS
STJEPAN SEJIC



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APHRODITE

IX

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STJEPAN SEJIC



FINCH
WEEKS



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APHRODITE

IX

MATT HAWKINS
STJEPAN SEJIC



e.l.a.s
2007
R.O.
CESAR

APHRODITE IX

SAN DIEGO
COMIC CON
INTERNATIONAL



Stab the kidney to immobilize the body with shock, then slit the throat while tilting the head down to minimize blood spray.



Preferred execution method with a blade. Quick, quiet, precise and lethal.



HOW I KNOW THIS BUT NOT WHO I AM OR WHY I KEEP BLACKING OUT IS A SOURCE OF DEEP DESPAIR DURING MY BRIEF PERIODS OF FULL LUCIDITY.



FOCUSING MY THOUGHTS ON THE *WHY* OF ANYTHING IS QUICKLY TUNED OUT BY THE VOICE IN MY HEAD DISTRACTING ME WITH ENDLESS CYCLING STRATEGIES, ANALYSIS OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ANY POSSIBLE THREATS SURROUNDING ME.

Seduction target approaching, agitated, heart rate elevated. Matrix Initiated.



MY ATTRACTION TO MARCUS SEEMS MORE COMPULSION THAN ROMANCE; I CAN'T TELL IF MY FEELINGS FOR HIM ARE GENUINE.

HE'S ENGAGED TO LINA, THE FUTURE QUEEN OF THESE PEOPLE, AND PREYING ON HIS INSECURITY AND UNCERTAINTY IS BOTH VILE AND SOUND STRATEGY.

APHRODITE!

YES, MARCUS. WHAT'S WRONG?

THANK THE LIGHT YOU'RE OKAY.
MY MOTHER IS DEAD! *MURDERED!*




LOSING JURISDICTION OVER MY OWN ACTIONS...HAVING NO CONTROL OF MY EMOTIONS...IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO EXPLAIN HOW VIOLATED I FEEL IN MY BRIEF MOMENTS OF CLARITY BEFORE THE STATUS QUO OF CONFUSED INDIFFERENCE RESUMES.

WHAT HAPPENED?

THAT DRONE WITCH HELEN ESCAPED... SHE *KILLED* MY MOTHER AND HER GUARDS BEFORE FLEEING THE CITY.

I'M SO SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS. I'LL DO ANYTHING TO HELP. WHAT CAN I DO?


I'M TAKING A SMALL GROUP OUT TO HUNT HER DOWN AND I'D LIKE YOU TO COME. JOIN ME IN THE DRAKE PEN ONCE YOU'RE DRESSED.



WHEN I SEE MARCUS WITH LINA
MY MIND CYCLES THE VARIOUS
WAYS I COULD KILL HER.

YOU'RE
TAKING
WY'VERN?


YES, GLAMRUNG'S
ELDEST...MY DEAR
DEPARTED FRIEND
WOULD WANT ME TO
TAKE WING WITH ONE
OF HIS.



I DON'T WANT YOU TO
COME WITH US, LINA.
YOU'RE NEEDED
HERE.

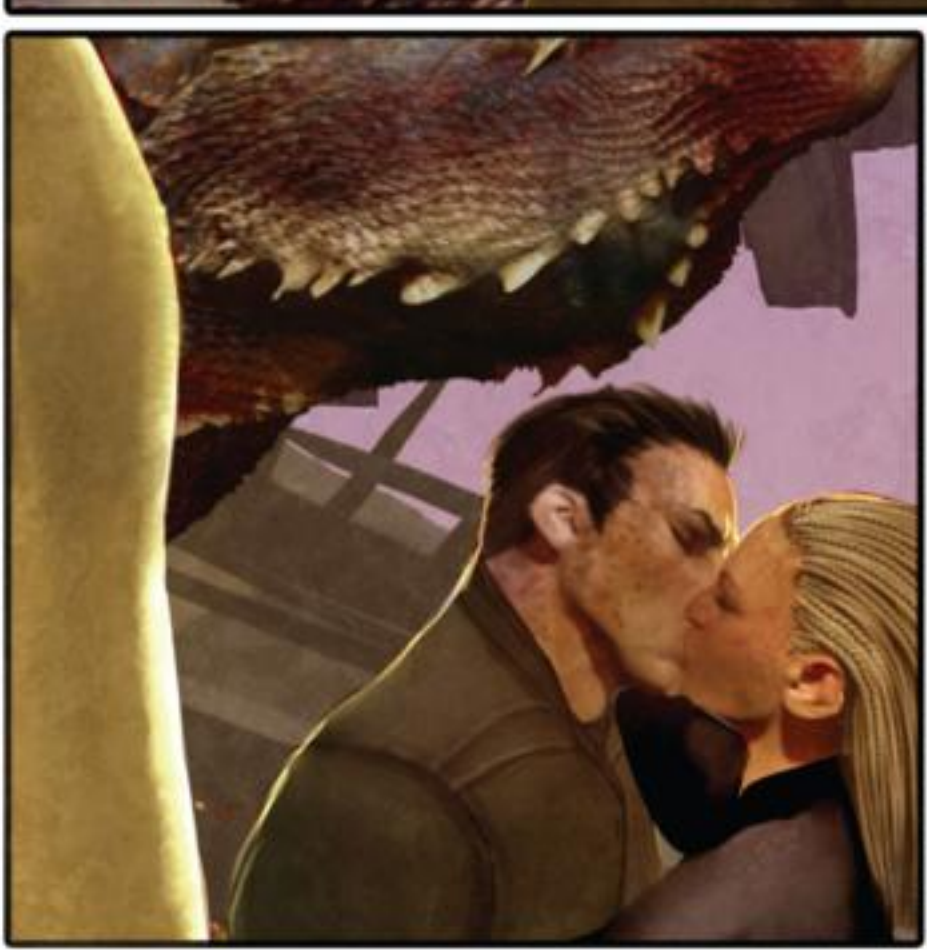
OUR PEOPLE ARE
SCARED. EVERYONE KNOWS
YOU'LL BE THE REAL POWER
BEHIND THE THRONE ANYWAY...
I'M MERELY THE ELDEST
LIVING SON BORN INTO THE
RIGHT FAMILY.

YOU SELL YOURSELF
SHORT, MY LOVE. YOU'RE
THE SWORD OF OUR
PEOPLE, A SYMBOL OF
OUR STRENGTH.



YES, BUT A MONARCH NEEDS TO BE A DIPLOMAT...NOT
JUST A WARRIOR LIKE ME. I'M NOT READY FOR THIS. MY
PARENTS SHOULD HAVE RULED FOR AT LEAST ANOTHER
20 YEARS. PEOPLE ARE LOOKING TO ME NOW FOR
ANSWERS AND I HAVE NONE.

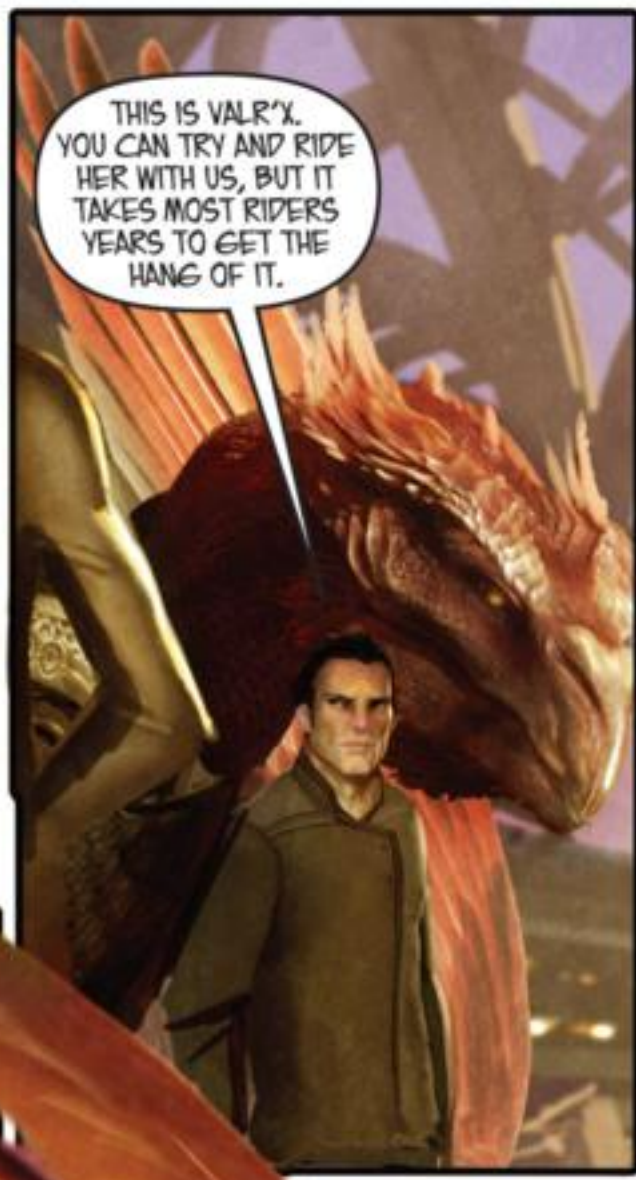
YOU'LL MAKE A FINE KING, MARCUS. STOP
DOUBTING YOURSELF. OUR PEOPLE LOVE YOU.
I LOVE YOU. THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS.



A SCOUT
SPOTTED HELEN
HEADING WEST ON
FOOT. HE ESTIMATES
SHE'LL CROSS THEIR
BORDER IN ABOUT
TWO HOURS.



NO TIME TO
WASTE THEN.
LET'S GO.



A JOYFUL SOLACE OVERWHELMS ME
AS WE TAKE FLIGHT, FLOODING
MY BRAIN WITH ENDORPHINS.

IN THAT CONTENTMENT THE
VOICE GOES SILENT...
QUESTIONS ARISE AND REMAIN
LONG ENOUGH FOR A RARE
TIME OF REFLECTION.

THAT MAN IN THE CAVE.
WHO WAS HE? AND WHY
COULDN'T I ATTACK HIM?
HE SEEMS FAMILIAR TO ME.

MY BLACKOUTS, MEMORY
ISSUES... WHAT IS CAUSING
THEM? WHY CAN'T I
REMEMBER WHO I AM?

Sixteen minutes
to target. Energy
reserves at
maximum.

CONFUSION LEADS TO FEAR WHICH
STIMULATES AN ADRENAL RESPONSE
TRIPPING AN ARTIFICIAL SYNAPSE
PROMPTING THE VOICE TO RETURN
AND BLOT OUT ALL OTHER THOUGHT.

A NEVER-ENDING CYCLE
OF CONFUSION AND
CLARITY.

FLIGHT, RALLY
TO ZONE 5 IN
THE DESOLATE
ZONE.

RAAFEL VON K

DESOLATE
ZONE

CHRONOS, I'M
FOUR KILOMETERS EAST
OF MARKER 5. PURSUIT
IS INEVITABLE; I WON'T
MAKE THE BORDER
WITHOUT ASSISTANCE.
REQUESTING IMMEDIATE
EXTRACTION.

A SQUADRON IS
INBOUND, HELEN. THEY'RE
15 MINUTES FROM YOUR
POSITION AND WILL
RENDEZVOUS WITH YOU AT
THE MARKER.

COPY THAT.
I'M ON THE
WAY.

SIR,
THEY'RE ON ME
NOW. I'M NOT
GOING TO MAKE
THAT.

Target acquired. Cyborg female,
38% organic, designate Helen.
Surname unknown.

Prior analysis indicates
skull, neck and appendages
reinforced with unknown
metal. Recommend focused
attack on core. Ribcage and
sternum confirmed organic.



SQUADRON
COMMANDER
TK-421, WHAT IS
YOUR ETA TO HER
POSITION?

ELEVEN MINUTES,
SIR. FIVE IF WE OVERTASK
THE THERMALS. WE HAVE A
LONE TITAN THAT CAN
GET THERE IN TWO
MINUTES, BUT THAT WILL
BURN 95% OF ITS
ENERGY RESERVE.

DO IT. MY
AUTHORIZATION.



SLAVING
APHRODITE IS
POSSIBLE NOW.
WITH HER HELP IT
MIGHT BUY YOU
ENOUGH TIME TO
GET YOUR MEN
THERE.



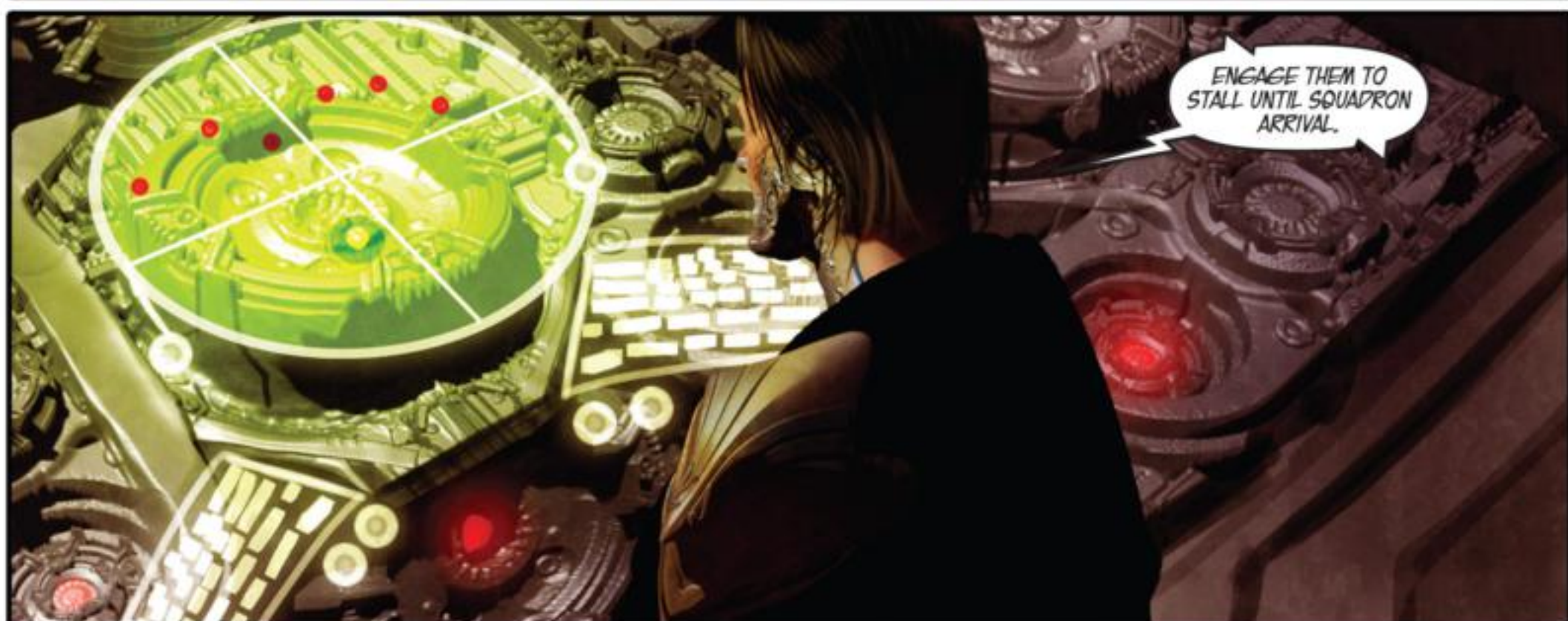
NO, WE CANNOT
TIP OUR HAND JUST YET.
THE GREATER PLAN IS
MORE IMPORTANT THAN
ANY INDIVIDUAL'S LIFE,
EVEN ONE AS SUITED
TO IMMORTALITY AS
HELEN.

THIS MAY BE OUR
ONE CHANCE TO RID
OURSELVES OF THESE
VERMIN FOREVER AND
WE MUST SEIZE
IT.



THEY'VE
SURROUNDED ME
ON THE GROUND.
I'M NO LONGER
MOBILE.

UNDERSTOOD. A TITAN IS
NEARLY THERE BUT WILL ONLY
HAVE A 5% THERMAL RESERVE.
YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO USE IT
TO ESCAPE.



ENGAGE THEM TO
STALL UNTIL SQUADRON
ARRIVAL.



Incoming unmanned craft,
unknown designation.
Analyzing.



SQUAD
LEADER,
ETA?

THREE
MINUTES TO
YOUR
LOCATION.

SHIELD
UP.



Energy shield resistant to ranged
energy weapons. Weakness
identified; insufficient coverage to
protect organics from melee combat.

Close distance
and engage.





13 meters to target.

FIRE!



Max speed to target 1.2 seconds.



DO NOT TARGET APHRODITE.



SHE'S ENGAGING ME. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

1 meter gap from shield to organics.



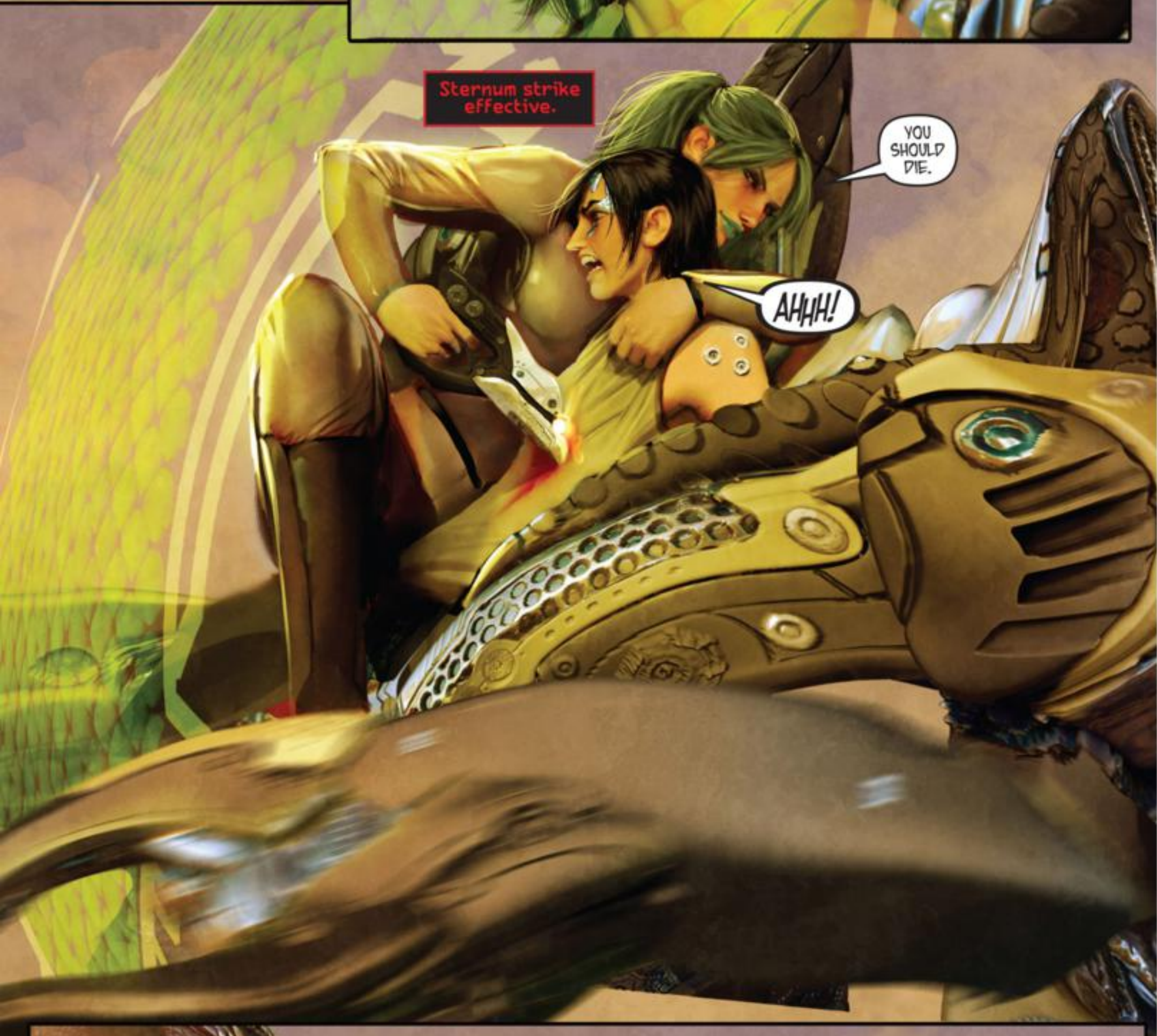
Target deceased. Energy reserve at 22%.



THE
SQUADRON IS TWO
MINUTES OUT.
THEY HAVE YOU ON
VISUAL.



COME IN HOT,
LET'S KILL THEM
ALL. TARGET AND
DESTROY ALL
ORGANICS.



Sternum strike
effective.

YOU
SHOULD
DIE.

AHHH!



Recommend immediate
cessation of all activity
for recharge.



CANCEL ACTION,
SQUAD LEADER.
RETURN TO BASE;
DO NOT ENGAGE.
SHE'S DEAD
ALREADY.

AH, HELEN, I'M SORRY,
MY OLD FRIEND. YOUR SACRIFICE
WILL SAVE TENS OF THOUSANDS.
I WILL LITTER THE DESERT WITH
THE BURNED OUT HUSKS OF THESE
FREAKS IN YOUR NAME.



EXECUTOR
CHRONOS, SORRY TO
DISTURB YOU, BUT
COUNCILWOMAN ARIANA
WISHES TO SEE YOU IN
THE HANGAR.

YES, OF
COURSE.



MR. BURCH,
WHEN THESE
SCUM RETURN TO
GENESIS I WANT
APHRODITE TO
TARGET AND KILL
LINA AT THE FIRST
OPPORTUNITY.



YES,
OF COURSE. YOU
DO REALIZE WITH
THIS THEY'LL KNOW
WITHOUT ANY DOUBT
SHE'S INVOLVED.

I'VE LISTENED TO SOME
OF THE CONVERSATIONS SHE'S
EAVESDROPPED ON. SOME THERE
ALREADY SUSPECT HER INVOLVEMENT,
BUT MARCUS PROTECTS HER.



YES, HER SEDUCTION
MATRIX HAS DEFINITELY
SERVED ITS PURPOSE BY
CLOUDING HIS JUDGMENT.
YOU AND YOUR LITTLE
PUPPET HAVE DONE YOUR
JOB WELL.

SHE MEANS
A LOT TO ME, I
DON'T WANT
HER HURT.

I DON'T CARE IF
SHE LIVES OR DIES AND YOU'D
DO WELL TO MIND THAT FACT.
SHE SEEMS PRETTY RESILIENT;
I THINK SHE CAN TAKE CARE
OF HERSELF.

WHAT MATTERS IS
THAT MARCUS IS WEAK AND THE
CLANS DON'T FULLY RESPECT HIM
YET. LINA IS THE GLUE THAT HOLDS
THEIR PATCHWORK ACCORD
TOGETHER. WITH HER DEATH OUR
VICTORY IS ASSURED.



YOU'RE A SWEET ONE,
RED. I CAN TELL YOU AND
I WILL BE FRIENDS FOR A
LONG TIME TO COME.

RRRFFF

APHRODITE,
COME SEE
THIS.

WHAT IS
IT?

THE SUNSET...
IT'S SO RARE WHEN
THE SKY IS USUALLY
COVERED WITH BLACK
CLOUDS.
SO
BEAUTIFUL.

ARE YOU
OKAY?

NO, I'M NOT. HELEN'S DEATH SHOULD BRING
ME SOME PEACE, BUT IT DOESN'T. MY
PARENTS ARE DEAD AND I FEEL LOST
WITHOUT THEM. MY FATHER'S STRENGTH AND
MY MOTHER'S WISDOM WERE THE BACKBONE
OF OUR WAY OF LIFE. I'M NOT
READY TO RULE.

AS KING I WILL BE
ANOINTED THE SWORD
OF THE LIGHT. THE
PROTECTOR OF GOD'S
CHOSEN PEOPLE.

CHOSEN TO
DO WHAT?

AN EXCELLENT
QUESTION. I'VE NEVER
BEEN MUCH FOR RELIGION,
BUT IT'S BELIEVED GOD
CREATED US OUT OF THE
ASHES OF THE OLD WORLD
TO BUILD A NEW ONE AND
POPULATE IT WITH HIS
FAITHFUL.

YOU DON'T
BELIEVE?

I HAVE A HARD TIME
TRUSTING IN A GOD THAT
ALLOWS SUCH
UNRELENTING PAIN AND
UNNECESSARY ANGUISH. I
BELIEVE IN MY FAMILY AND
I'M TIRED OF WATCHING
THEM DIE.

I DON'T
HAVE A
FAMILY.

YOU DO
NOW.

SEROS CITY

YOU HAVE DONE WELL, EXECUTOR CHRONOS. OUR SPIES CONFIRM THE DEATH OF BOTH MONARCHS AND CHAOS AMONGST THE TRIBAL LEADERS.

LINA, THEIR FUTURE QUEEN, IS NEXT. SHE'LL BE DEAD BY NIGHTFALL.

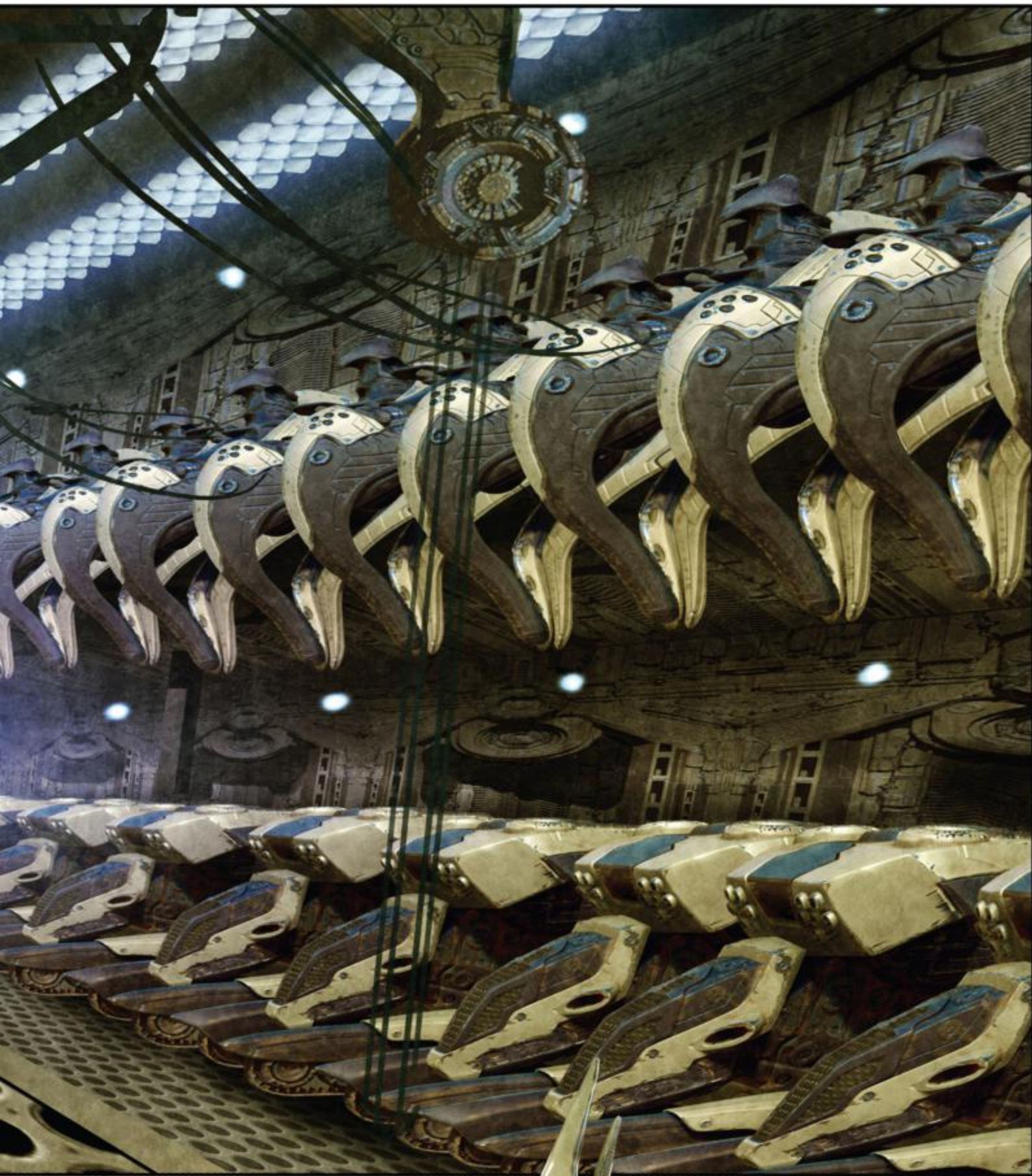
AFTER THAT, PREPARATIONS WILL BE FINALIZED FOR OUR ATTACK. WE'RE USING THE ENERGY SUPPORT SHIPS TO EXTEND OUR RANGE FAR ENOUGH TO HIT THE CITY OF GENESIS ITSELF AND WIPE THEM OUT IN ONE MASSIVE ASSAULT.

THIS WILL BE A GREAT VICTORY FOR YOU. IT SHOULD ASSURE YOU A SEAT ON THE COUNCIL.

THAT WOULD BE A GREAT HONOR, BUT MY PRIMARY MOTIVATION IS TO SAVE OUR PEOPLE. YOU KNOW THE PROJECTIONS, WHY WE HAVE TO EXPAND. IT'S NOT AN OPTION. OUR OWN POPULATION SWELLS BEYOND OUR ABILITY TO SUPPORT IT. WE EITHER ACT NOW OR WE START CURTAILING OUR WAY OF LIFE.

NO ONE WANTS THAT, BUT A FAILURE HERE WOULD BE WORSE THAN DOING NOTHING.

NEVER FORGET THAT ONE OF OUR PEOPLE CAN LIVE ONE HUNDRED OF THEIR LIFETIMES. THERE IS NO EQUANIMITY IN TRADING BLOOD FOR BLOOD.



GENESIS

THE TEMPLE OF LIGHT

UNDERSTANDING THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF MARCUS' PEOPLE IS DIFFICULT WITHOUT A LIFELONG INDOCTRINATION. THE TEACHINGS ARE COMPLICATED AND FROM AN OUTSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE SOMEWHAT CONFLICTING.

THE MEN PRAY TO A GOD, THE WOMAN TO A GODDESS, BUT IT'S SOMEHOW THE SAME ENTITY.

THIS GOD DESTROYED THE WORLD THAT EXISTED BEFORE FOR ITS DEPRAVED REJECTION OF HIS LAW AND CREATED THE CITY OF GENESIS AND THESE "TREASURED" PEOPLE TO INHABIT IT.

ACCORDING TO THE TEXT, THE CYBORGES ARE EVIL, SOULLESS DEMONS CREATED TO TEST THEM AND THEIR FAITH.

LINA, I AM SORRY TO INTERRUPT YOUR PRAYERS.

IT IS TIME FOR ME TO REST NOW, BUT YOU CAN STAY HERE AS LONG AS YOU WISH.

THANK YOU, LADY IRIS.

THE LIGHT OF THE GODDESS BLESS AND ILLUMINATE YOUR SOUL, MY CHILD.

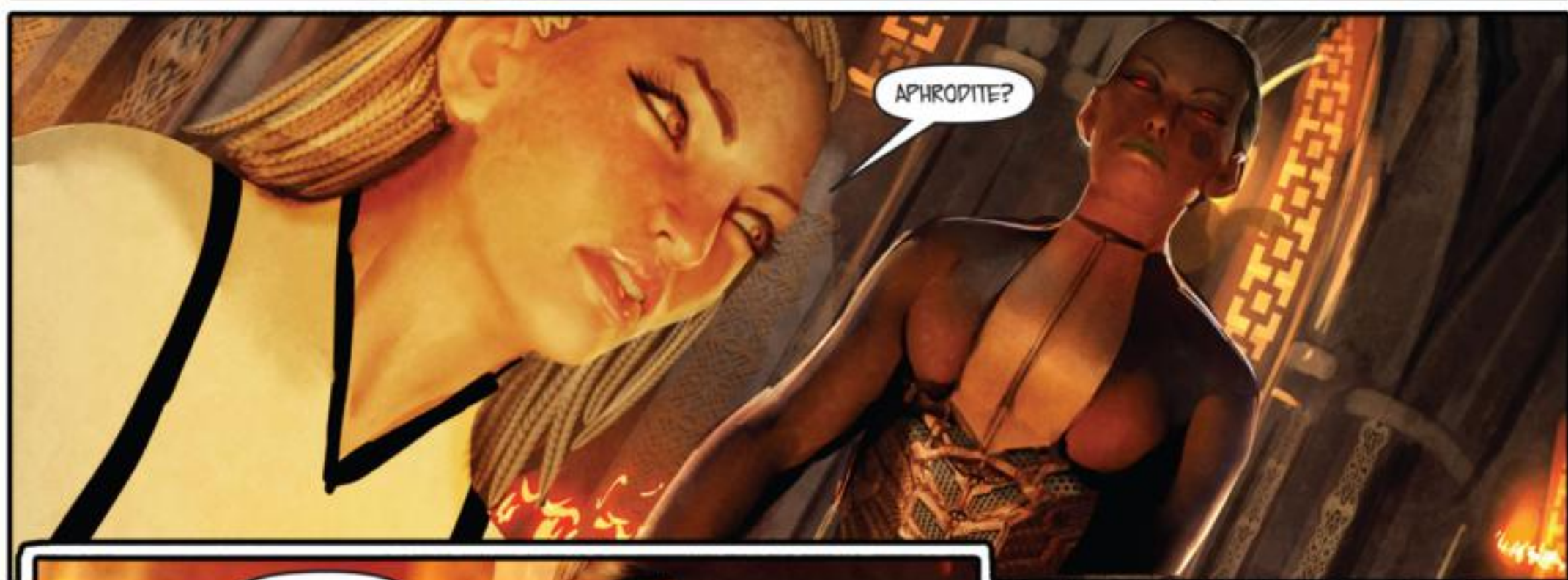


Kill target
alone, unarmed.

BLESSED MOTHER,
LIGHT OF ALL. I PRAY
FOR YOUR GUIDANCE
IN THESE DIFFICULT
TIMES.



GRANT ME WISDOM TO
HELP GUIDE OUR COURSE.
AND GRANT MARCUS
STRENGTH AND BLESS US
WITH MANY CHILDREN, AS
IS YOUR WILL.



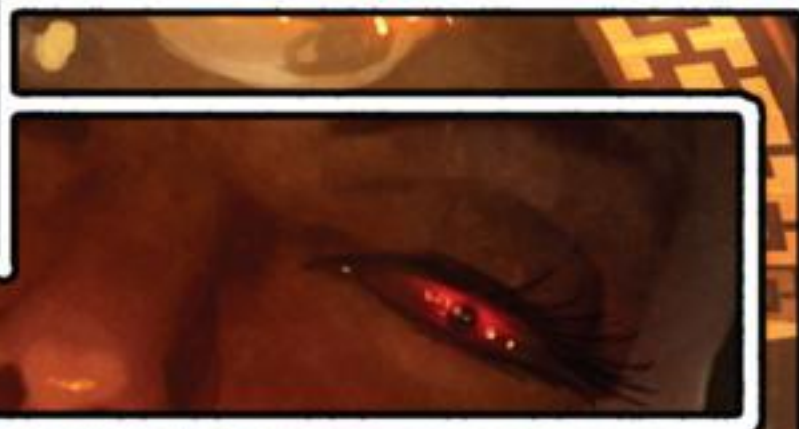
APHRODITE?



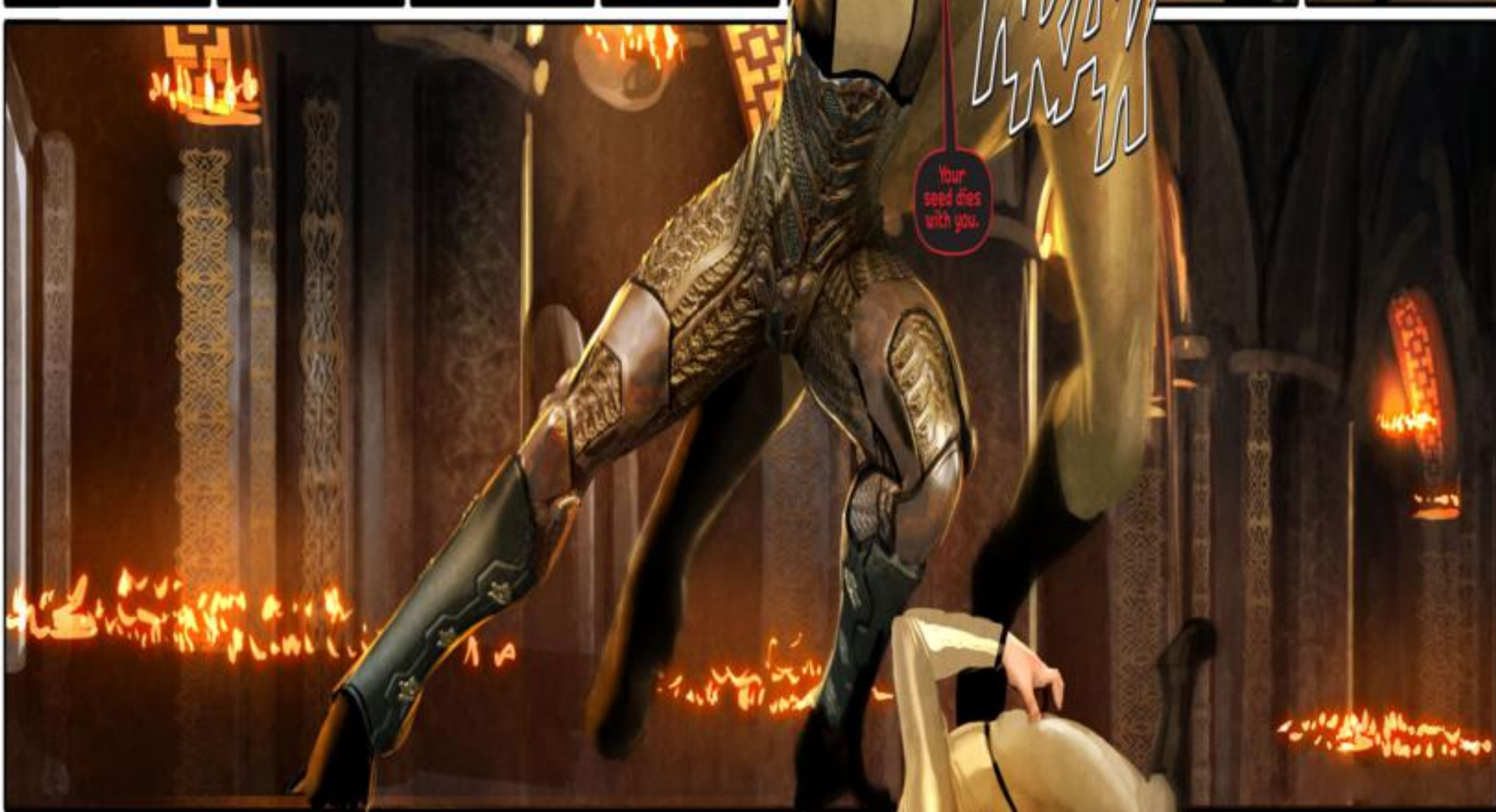
WHAT'S WRONG
WITH YOUR EYES?
ARE YOU WELL?

Kill.

Your
Goddess has
a message
for you.



Skilled
opponent.



8:31

IMAGINE BEING AWARE OF EVERYTHING
AROUND YOU BUT BEING UNABLE TO
CONTROL YOUR ACTION OR THE WORDS
LEAVING YOUR MOUTH.

IN EIGHT MINUTES THE ARTIFICIAL
SYNAPTIC CONNECTION BEHIND MY
EYE SHOULD ISOLATE AND ELIMINATE
THE MEMORY OF THIS 20 MINUTE
PERIOD AND FLOOD MY BRAIN WITH
ENDORPHINS DESIGNED TO STIFLE
ANY POTENTIAL ANXIETY OR
EMOTIONAL RESPONSE.

SOMETHING IS
DIFFERENT THIS
TIME, THOUGH...

TO BE CONTINUED!



APHRODITE **IX**
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FINCH
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