



The
HIGHEST
HOUSE

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The Highest House

Lord Demini has invited several lords of the Consistory to Highest House in an attempt to build friendships and strengthen alliances. But there is trouble brewing amongst the noblemen, who have allegiances of their own, and when an uprising against Demini and his family puts their lives in danger, Moth and a brave group of slaves take up arms to defend their home. Again, Moth is offered his freedom, and again, he declines, knowing that he cannot accept when so many are still enslaved—and when Obsidian has yet to fulfill his promises...

Obsidian's Bargain, Part 5

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WIMBLE?
ARE YOU IN
HERE?

WHY
IS IT SO
DARK?



MOTH!
THAT IS--
I MEAN--

SIEUR, SO
PLEASE YOU.
I'M SORRY. I'LL
STRIVE TO
IMPROVE.



WHAT?
WHAT ARE
YOU DOING?

I'M--
BOWING,
A LITTLE.

TO ME?
WHY? I'M A
SLAVE, LIKE
YOU.

BUT LORD DEMINI
OFFERED TO FREE YOU
TWICE. AND HE GAVE
YOU A SWORD. IF I
EVER OFFENDED YOU,
SIEUR, WITHOUT
MEANING TO--



YOU DIDN'T. DON'T
BE STUPID. BUT I
WAS HOPING YOU
MIGHT HELP.

ON THE NIGHT
I FIRST CAME TO
HIGHEST HOUSE, YOU
TOOK SOMETHING OF MINE.
A BRACELET OF BRAIDED HAIR.
I SHOULD LIKE IT BACK,
IF YOU STILL HAVE IT.



IT SHOULD BE
HERE. I THROW
NOTHING AWAY.



YOU'D DO
BETTER WITH
A LIGHT.



THE SHIDHA DIED.
I SENT NESTOR
TO CATCH
ANOTHER.



AH! HERE IT
IS, SIEUR.

I MEAN
MOTH.
MASTER.

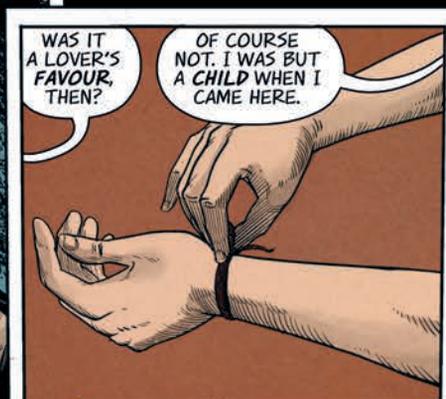


I TOOK IT
BECAUSE IT WAS
A VANITY. SLAVES
ARE WHIPPED FOR
SUCH THINGS.

I KNOW,
WIMBLE.



MASTER
MOTH.

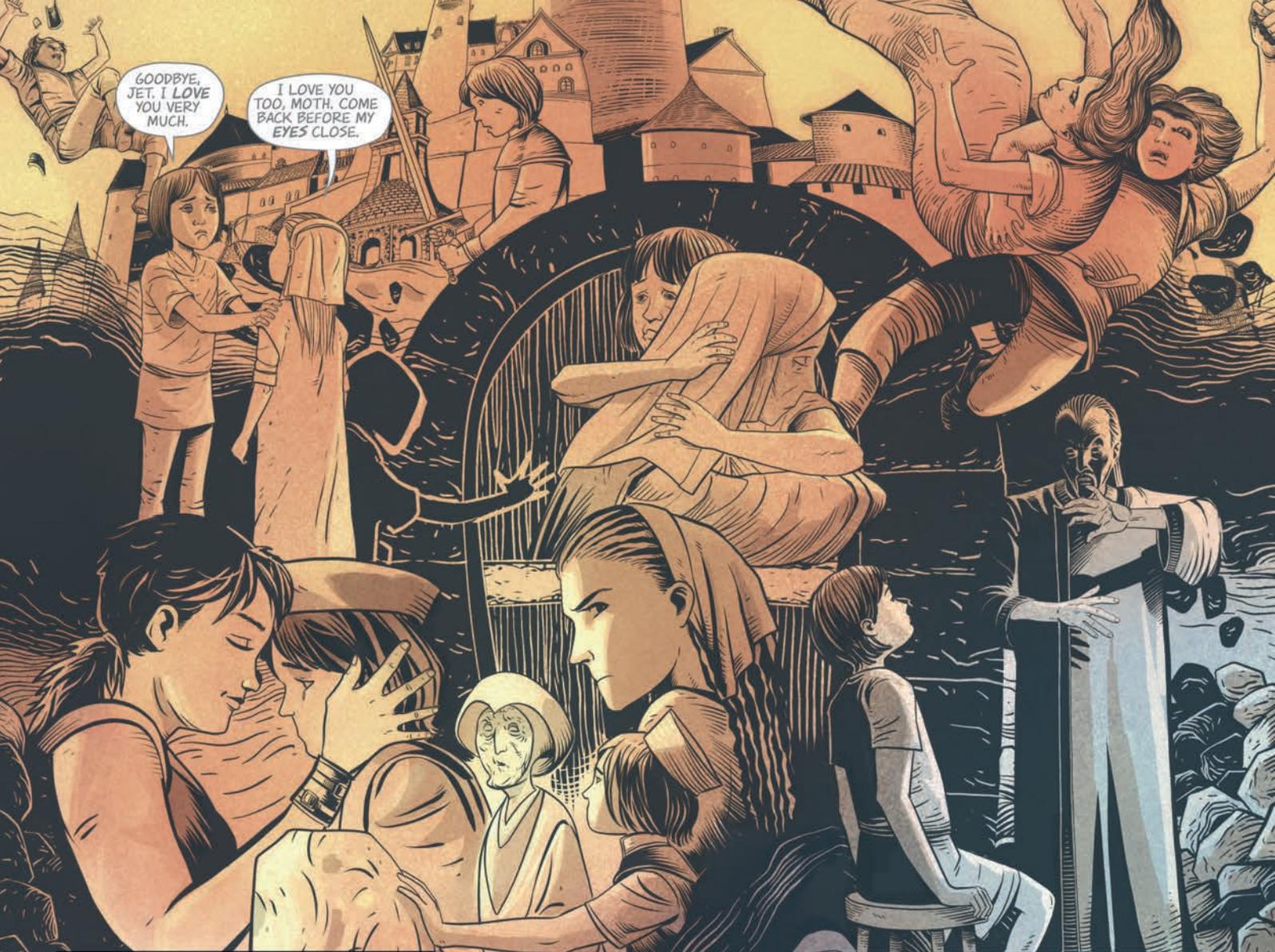


WAS IT
A LOVER'S
FAVOUR,
THEN?

OF COURSE
NOT. I WAS BUT
A CHILD WHEN I
CAME HERE.



IT WAS MY
SISTER'S.



GOODBYE, JET. I LOVE YOU VERY MUCH.

I LOVE YOU TOO, MOTH. COME BACK BEFORE MY EYES CLOSE.



THE GODDESS HAS BEEN KIND TO YOU, MOTH. YOU OWE HER A GREAT MANY OFFERINGS.

THE GODDESS?



AYE. PRAISE HER HOLY BREATH.



BWAAARRRPPPP

WHO COMES?

A FRIEND TO THIS HOUSE. AND THOUGH I RIDE ALONE, I AM OF NOBLE BIRTH.

CONVEY MY GREETINGS TO YOUR LORD, DEMINI ALDERCREST. I WOULD HAVE WORDS WITH HIM.



ERBED OF HASK?

AYE, MY LORD. THE SON OF THE MAN YOU CRUCIFIED.

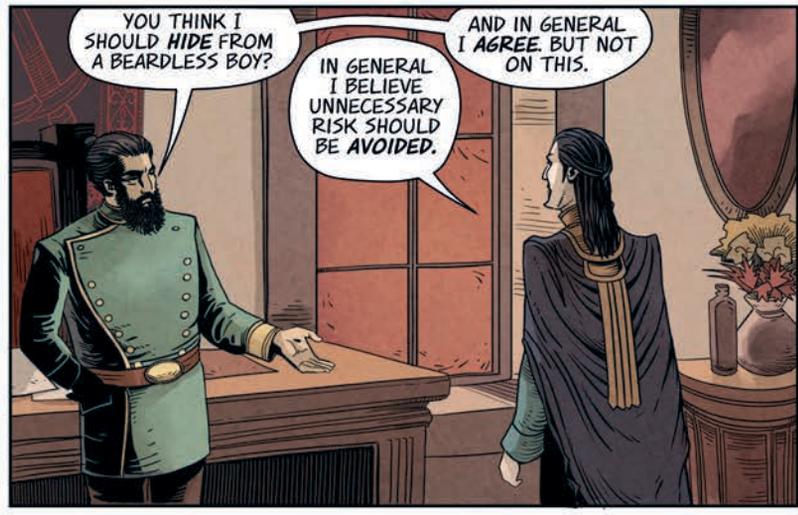


AND HE'S ALONE? THAT BESPEAKS COURAGE, AT LEAST.



OR A SETTLED MIND, PERHAPS. HE NEEDS NO ARMY IF HE INTENDS TO CHALLENGE YOU TO DUELLO.

I ADVISE THAT YOU ADMIT HIM BUT GRANT HIM NO AUDIENCE. HE WILL TIRE IN TIME.



YOU THINK I SHOULD HIDE FROM A BEARDLESS BOY?

IN GENERAL I BELIEVE UNNECESSARY RISK SHOULD BE AVOIDED.

AND IN GENERAL I AGREE. BUT NOT ON THIS.

"I KILLED HIS FATHER. HE HAS A RIGHT TO LOOK ME IN THE FACE."
SOUND HIM IN WITH DRUMS AND TRUMPETS. I'LL MEET HIM IN THE COURTYARD."





LORD HASK. WELCOME TO HIGHEST HOUSE.

WILL YOU WASH OFF THE DUST OF THE ROAD AND EAT WITH US?

MY THANKS TO YOU, LORD DEMINI.

BUT I AM OF THE NESSERINE FACTION LIKE MY FATHER. AND SEEING THE WELCOME YOU GAVE HIM, I'LL NOT TARRY.



YOUR FATHER WOULD HAVE KILLED ME IN MY BED. AND MY WIFE AND DAUGHTER, TOO.

THE CONSISTORY RULED HIS DEATH LAWFUL AT THE SAME TIME THEY PASSED HIS TITLE ON TO YOU.



AYE. THEY DID. I'VE COME TO BUY HIS BODY BACK, AND GIVE IT DECENT BURIAL.

ASSUMING HOUSE ALDERCREST HAS NO FURTHER USE FOR IT.



THESE THINGS ARE BEST DISCUSSED AT TABLE, WITH GOOD MEAT AND ALE.

IF YOU ACCEPT MY TERMS, I'VE NO NEED TO TROUBLE YOUR HOSPITALITY.

FIVE HUNDRED BARS, TO BE SENT, OR FOUR HUNDRED IN SCRIP THAT I CARRY WITH ME. WHAT SAY YOU?

LORD ERBEO, YOU HAVE YOUR FATHER'S LOOKS. THE SAME GREY EYES, AND THE SAME CAST OF FEATURE.



MY PARDON, LADY ESSU. I--I SHOULD HAVE OFFERED YOU GREETING.



STAY A WHILE, FOR MY SAKE. WE ARE STARVED OF GOOD CONVERSATION.

YOUR LADYSHIP IS TOO KIND.

I--I HAD NOT THOUGHT TO STAY.



BUT YOU MUST NOT THINK OF LEAVING BEFORE WE'VE FED AND FETED YOU.

PERHAPS --A SINGLE NIGHT--

AND YOU MUST MEET OUR DAUGHTER. AND LORD CARROW, HER BETROTHED. THEY'VE HEARD OF YOUR SKILL WITH THE LONGBOW, AND WILL WANT TO TEST YOUR METTLE.



HE STILL WEARS HIS SWORD.

AND HIS ARMOUR. BUT MY LADY IS MORE THAN A MATCH FOR HIM.

EXTAT, WE NEED TO TALK AT ONCE.



IT SEEMS YOU ARE DISMISSED.

YES. I SUPPOSE SO.

OBSIDIAN, WHAT IS THE NESSERINE FACTION?

I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE THAT I DON'T KNOW.

THEY'RE A POLITICAL GROUPING IN OSSANIUL'S RULING BODY. BUT I CANNOT TELL YOU WHAT THEY STAND FOR.

MY CURRENT LODGINGS ARE SOMEWHAT RESTRICTED.

IF YOU WOULD KNOW ABOUT THE WORLD OUTSIDE HIGHEST HOUSE, YOU HAD BEST ASK ANOTHER.

YOUR PRINCESS, PERHAPS. SHE MUST BE GOOD FOR SOMETHING.



OH, SEE HOW SHE PULLS. GIVE HER MORE REIN, LACE!

HO LACE. SHU. CAN YOU HELP ME WITH A QUESTION?



I WANTED TO KNOW --

"SHU"?

L-LORD CARROW! MY APOLOGIES.

I DIDN'T SEE YOU.



YOU LET A SLAVE TALK TO YOU LIKE THAT?

OF COURSE NOT. MOTH, YOU ARE--YOU ARE VERY **INSOLENT**. BE GONE FROM MY SIGHT.

AT ONCE, MY LADY. I BEG YOUR PARDON, TRULY



JACKANAPES! AND SHE TOOK HIS SIDE!

TO SAVE YOU A BEATING, OR WORSE, NOT BECAUSE SHE FAVOURS HIM.

STILL, YOU MUST LOOK ELSEWHERE FOR ANSWERS.



AYE. I WILL.