



KRAKOOOM

NOTHING GOOD COMES OF STORMS. ONLY WET AND NOISE.



RUMBLE

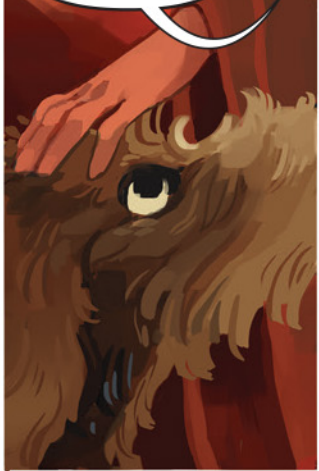
RUMBLE


RUMBLE

A LOT OF WET AND NOISE, TO BE SURE, BUT THE SOUNDS OF ROLLING AND CLANGING THUNDER BRINGS TO MIND IMAGES OF GREAT BATTLES FOUGHT LONG AGO.

SPEARS CRASHING AGAINST SHIELDS, AXES SPLITTING ARMOR, SWORD MEETING SWORD ON THE BATTLEFIELD.


BUT I KNOW ANOTHER STORY THIS STORM REMINDS ME OF.



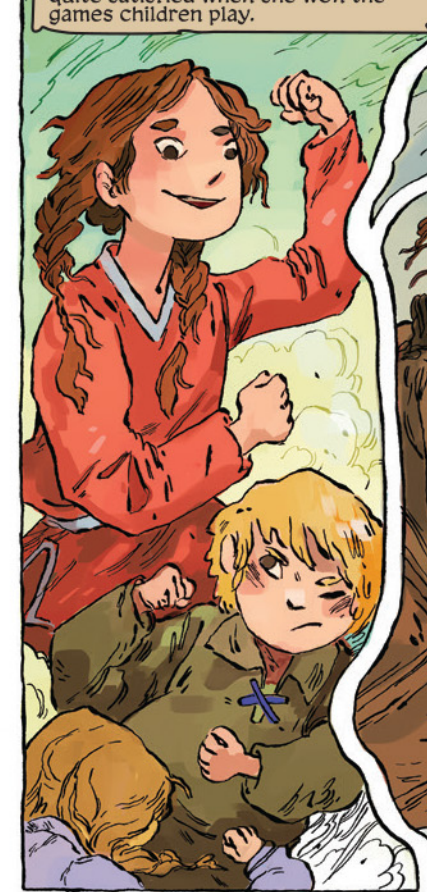


IN ANOTHER TIME, THERE WAS A POWERFUL WARRIOR BORN TO A SOUND OF THUNDER SO GREAT, IT COULD SHAKE THIS HOUSE TO THE GROUND.


SOME HAVE SAID THAT SHE WAS BORN IN A VALLEY AS THUNDERBOLT STRICKEN MOUNTAINS CRUMBLLED AROUND HER. OTHERS SWEAR SHE WAS BORN IN HER FATHER'S CATHEDRAL, SAFE FROM A SQUALL SO TERRIBLE THAT ONLY THE CATHEDRAL STOOD AMONGST THE RUBBLE THE NEXT MORNING.



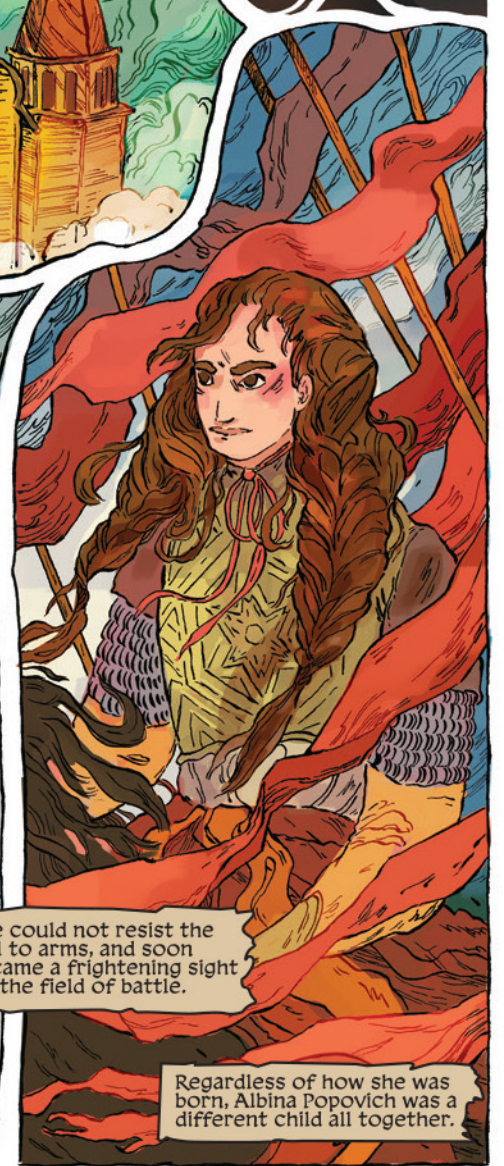
She was taller and stronger than other children her age. She never quite found her equal, and was never quite satisfied when she won the games children play.



She was swifter and more cunning than her peers, and she sought after those things that require such abilities.



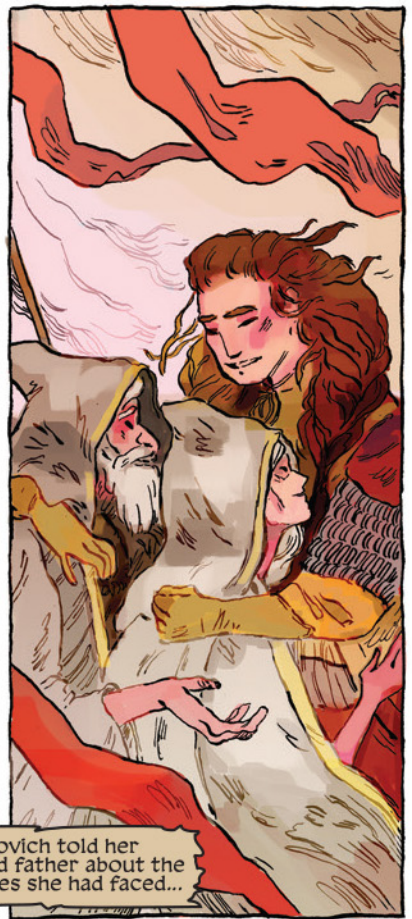
She could not resist the call to arms, and soon became a frightening sight on the field of battle.



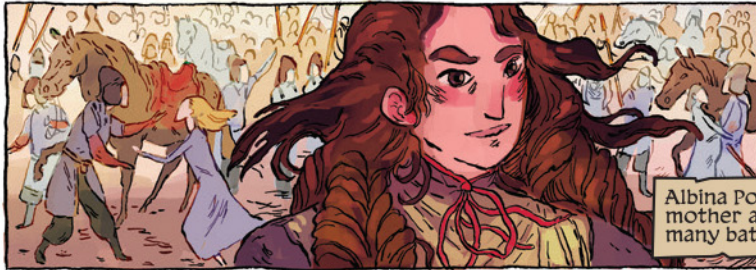
Regardless of how she was born, Albina Popovich was a different child all together.



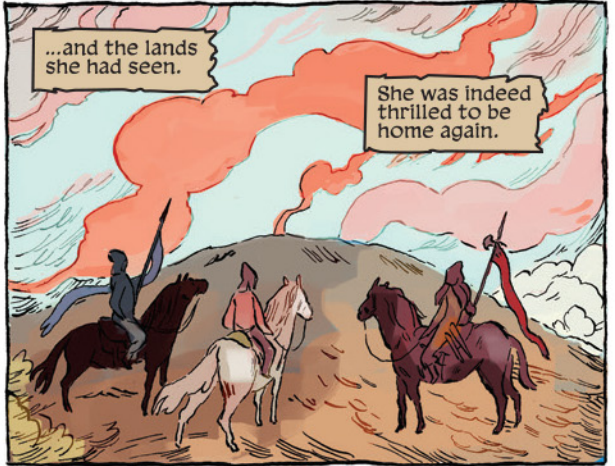
After one such battle, she returned home to her mother and her father, priests who lived in a holy house of worship.



Albina Popovich told her mother and father about the many battles she had faced...



...of men and demons she had conquered...

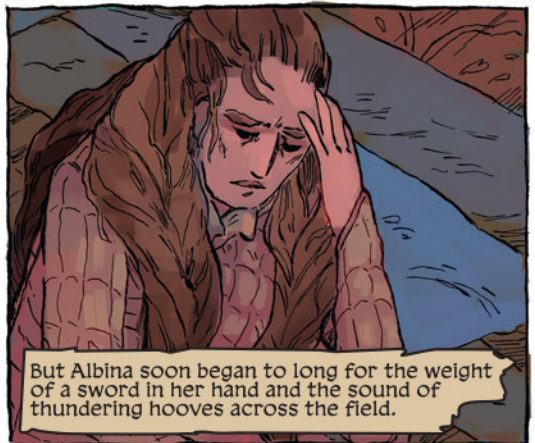


...and the lands she had seen.

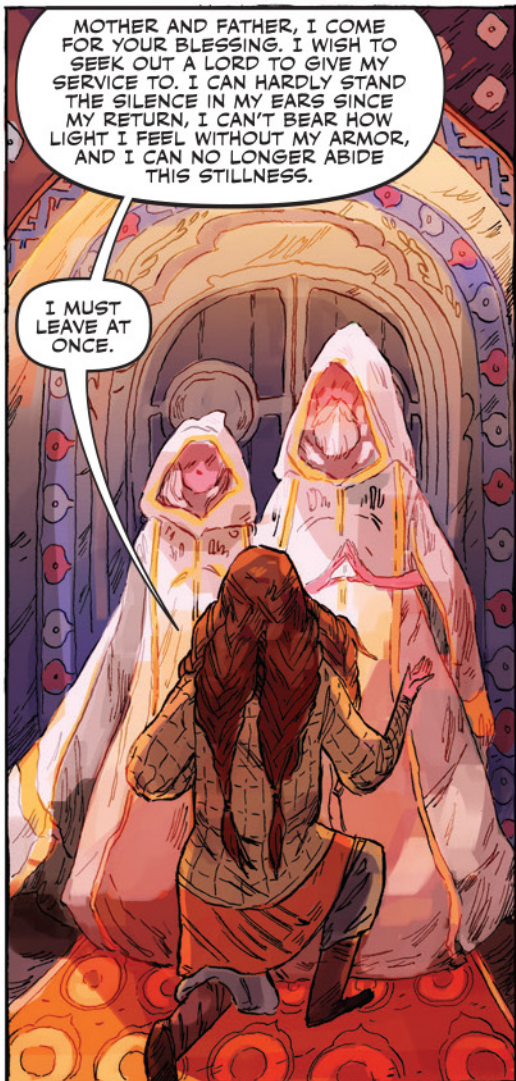
She was indeed thrilled to be home again.



She rested for a time.

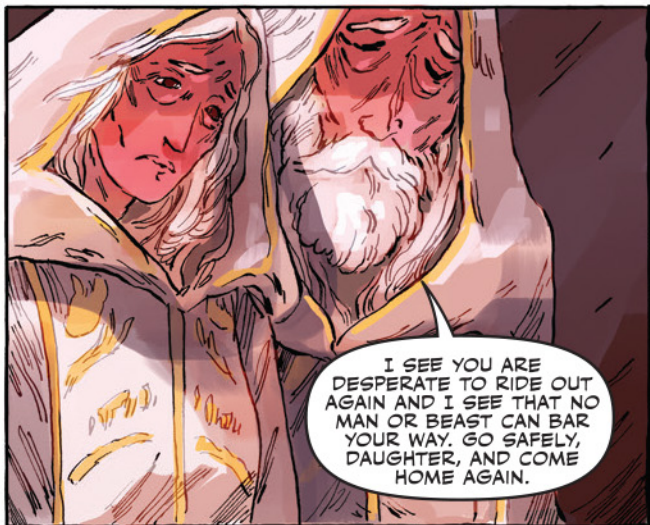


But Albina soon began to long for the weight of a sword in her hand and the sound of thundering hooves across the field.

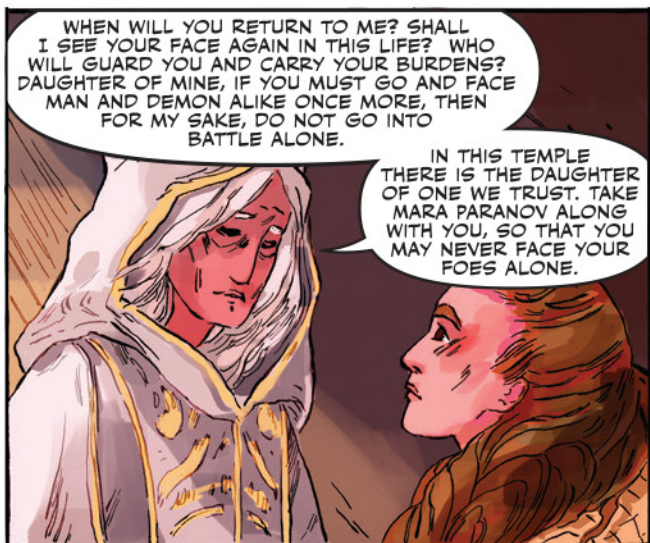


MOTHER AND FATHER, I COME FOR YOUR BLESSING. I WISH TO SEEK OUT A LORD TO GIVE MY SERVICE TO. I CAN HARDLY STAND THE SILENCE IN MY EARS SINCE MY RETURN, I CAN'T BEAR HOW LIGHT I FEEL WITHOUT MY ARMOR, AND I CAN NO LONGER ABIDE THIS STILLNESS.

I MUST LEAVE AT ONCE.

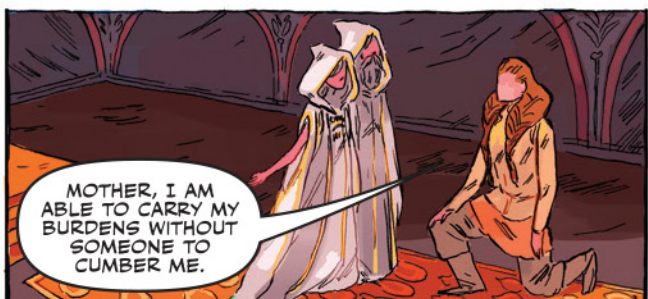


I SEE YOU ARE DESPERATE TO RIDE OUT AGAIN AND I SEE THAT NO MAN OR BEAST CAN BAR YOUR WAY. GO SAFELY, DAUGHTER, AND COME HOME AGAIN.

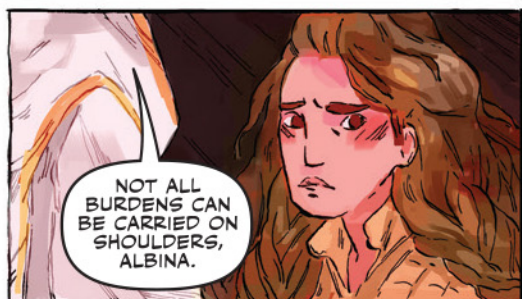


WHEN WILL YOU RETURN TO ME? SHALL I SEE YOUR FACE AGAIN IN THIS LIFE? WHO WILL GUARD YOU AND CARRY YOUR BURDENS? DAUGHTER OF MINE, IF YOU MUST GO AND FACE MAN AND DEMON ALIKE ONCE MORE, THEN FOR MY SAKE, DO NOT GO INTO BATTLE ALONE.

IN THIS TEMPLE THERE IS THE DAUGHTER OF ONE WE TRUST. TAKE MARA PARANOV ALONG WITH YOU, SO THAT YOU MAY NEVER FACE YOUR FOES ALONE.



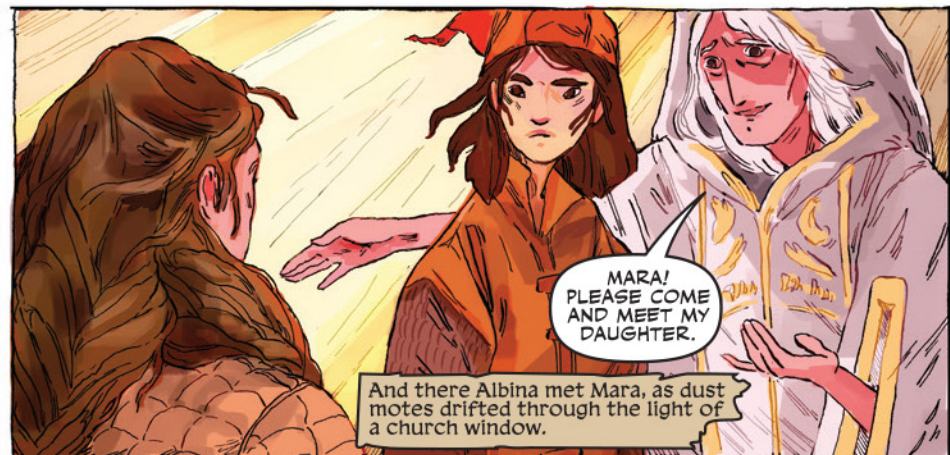
MOTHER, I AM ABLE TO CARRY MY BURDENS WITHOUT SOMEBODY TO CUMBER ME.



NOT ALL BURDENS CAN BE CARRIED ON SHOULDERS, ALBINA.



THE HEAVIEST WEIGHT IS OFTEN UNSEEN.

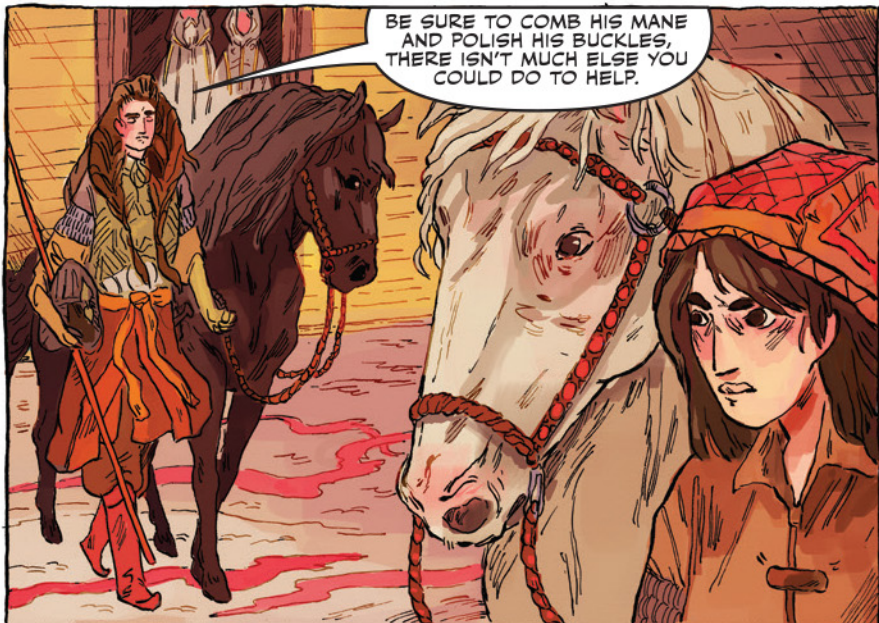
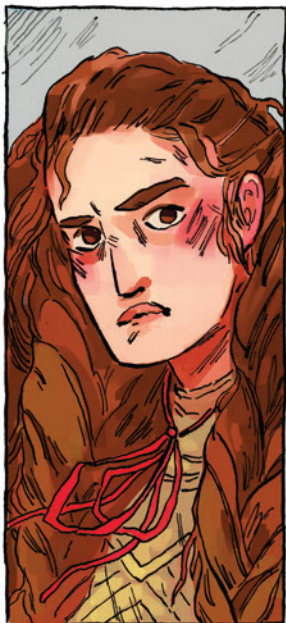


MARA! PLEASE COME AND MEET MY DAUGHTER.

And there Albina met Mara, as dust motes drifted through the light of a church window.



FAREWELL,
MOTHER AND
FATHER.



BE SURE TO COMB HIS MANE
AND POLISH HIS BUCKLES,
THERE ISN'T MUCH ELSE YOU
COULD DO TO HELP.



I WASN'T
CHARGED WITH
POLISHING
TACK.

LET'S BE
OFF.

Albina and Mara mounted their good steeds
in the light of the next morning, and with
boldness in one heart and resolution in the
other, they set on their way.