

The Highest House

IDW | ISSUE 3 | \$4.99



oth has begun his apprenticeship in Highest House under the careful eye of Roofer Fless. But the voice calling to him in the night has finally given itself a name: Obsidian. In return for Moth's loyalty and aid, Obsidian will grant his greatest wishes...

The Highest House

Obsidian's Bargain, Part 3

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Special thanks to Olivier Jalabert of Glénat Editions for his invaluable assistance.

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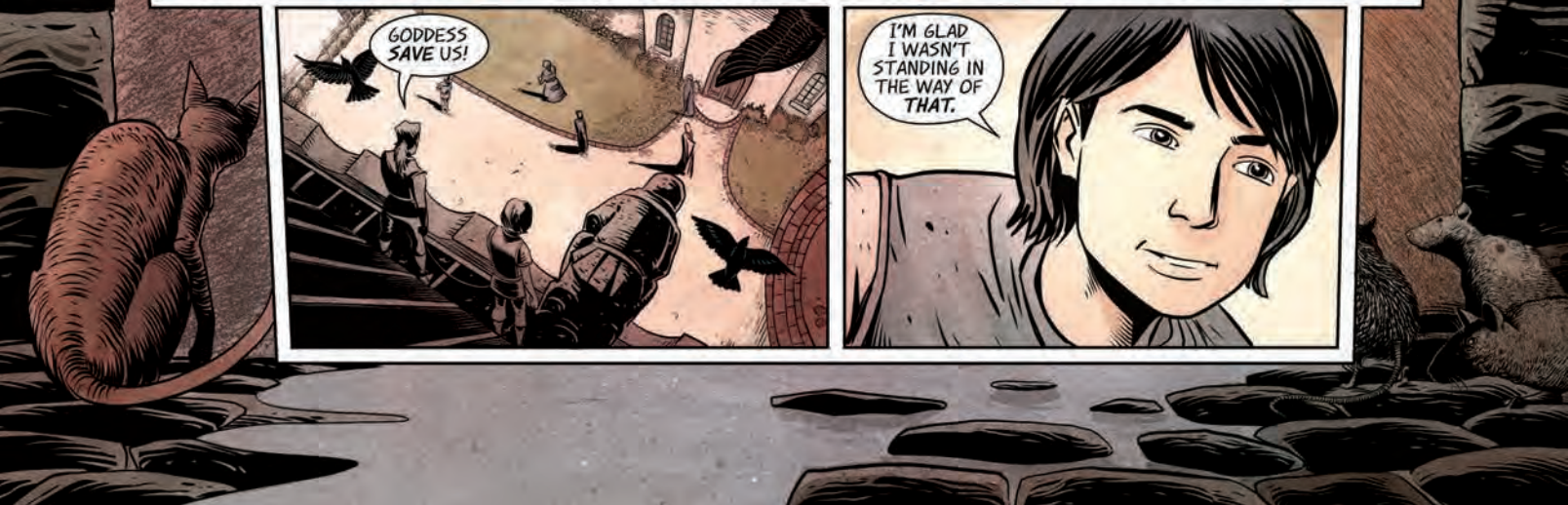
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AYE, THERE ARE TIMES WHEN IT'S BEST TO BE A LONG WAYS OFF THE GROUND.

BUT HE'S BEEN LIKE THIS FOR A WEEK NOW, FLESS.

WE CAN'T LIVE ON THE ROOF

SIEUR EXTAT IS LORD WHEN THE LORD IS AWAY. AND DEMINI WAS NEVER AWAY FOR SO LONG BEFORE--ALMOST SIX SUMMERS.

NOW THE WHOLE FAMILY IS COMING AND OUR STEWARD IS IN A PANIC. HE'LL HAVE TO ACCOUNT FOR ALL THE DECISIONS HE'S TAKEN IN THAT TIME.

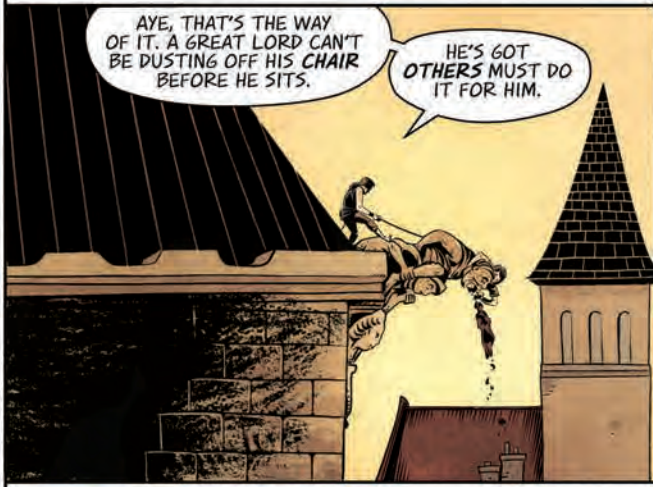


AND MUST THE WHOLE PALACE SHINE LIKE A MIRROR BECAUSE LORD DEMINI IS COMING HOME?



AYE, THAT'S THE WAY OF IT. A GREAT LORD CAN'T BE DUSTING OFF HIS CHAIR BEFORE HE SITS.

HE'S GOT OTHERS MUST DO IT FOR HIM.



BUT ROOFS DON'T SHINE, NOT UNLESS IT RAINS. CLEANING OUT GUTTERS IS A WASTE OF OUR TIME. AND WE'VE FIFTY YARDS OF THATCHING TO DO OVER BY THE BELL TOWER.



WELL AND ALL, YOUNG MOTH. THERE'S WORSE PLACES TO BE.

ARE THERE? WHERE?

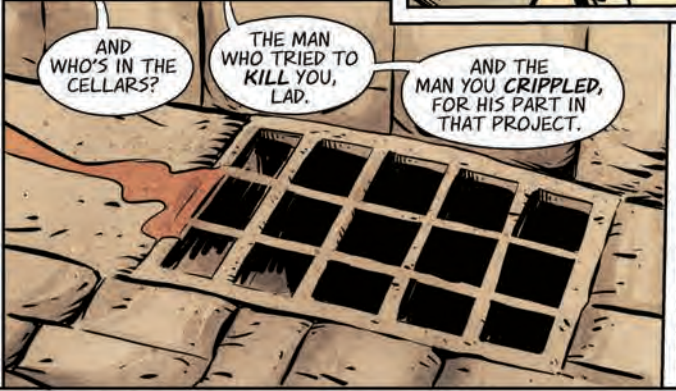
THE CELLARS WOULD BE ONE.



AND WHO'S IN THE CELLARS?

THE MAN WHO TRIED TO KILL YOU, LAD.

AND THE MAN YOU CRIPPLED, FOR HIS PART IN THAT PROJECT.



HNNNF!

HNNNF!

HNNNF!

TAK

TAK

TAK

"TEMTOLLER"





HELLO THERE, LITTLE ONE.

SQUEEEEEEE

AYE, IT'S DARK AND LONELY HERE, TO BE SURE. I'M HAPPY TO HAVE MET YOU.



WE SHALL BE FAST FRIENDS.

YOU MAY CALL ME MASTER TEMTOLLER.

SQUEEEEEEE



AND I'LL CALL YOU MOTH.



FLESS, THIS IS MOTH.

EENA, THIS IS MOTH.

EXTAT, THIS IS MOTH.

PLEASE TO KEEP YOUR OBSERVATIONS POLITE.





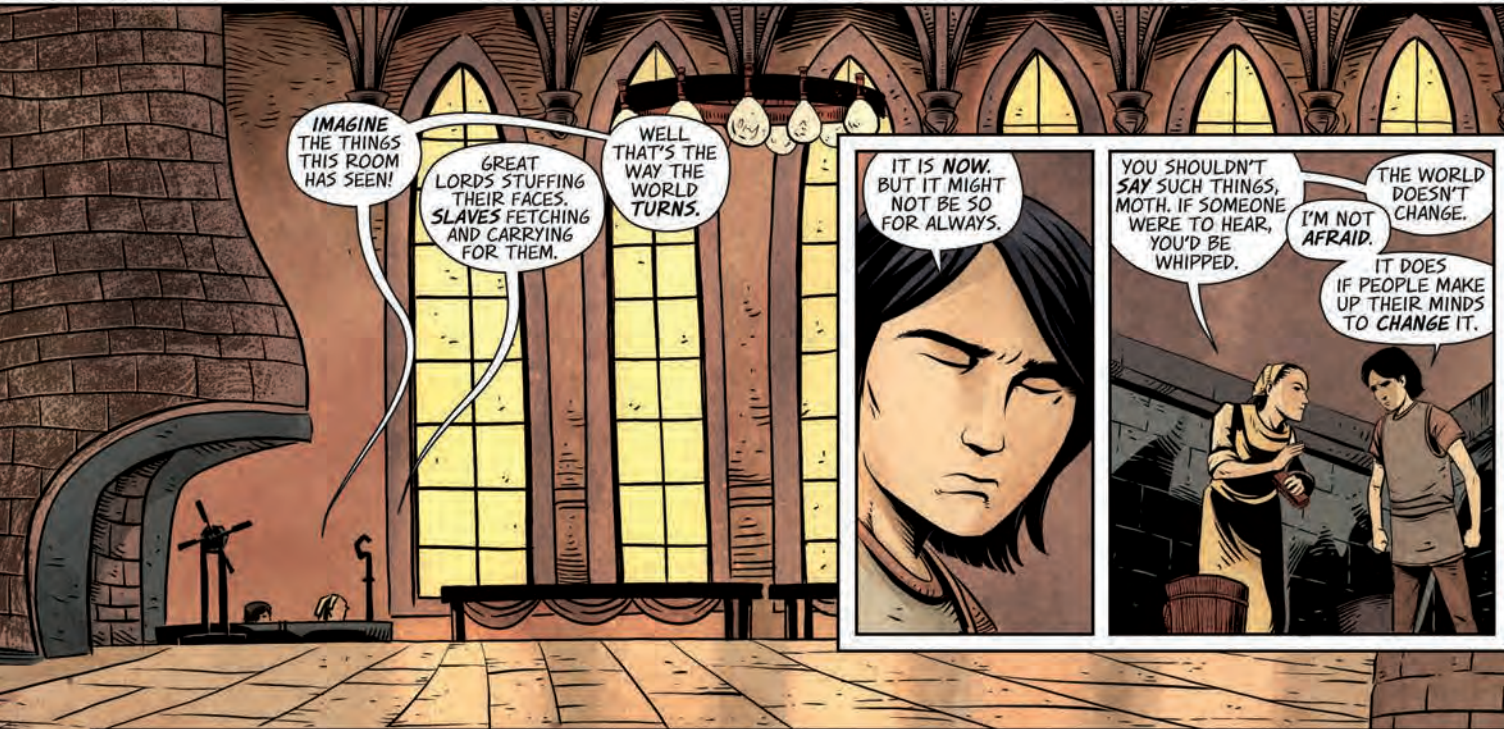
SIX YEARS?
AYE, I THINK SO.
SO ALL THAT ASH AND GREASE AND DIRT...
...HAS HAD PLENTY OF TIME TO MAKE ITSELF AT HOME. I'D BEST GET STARTED.



CAREFUL!
YOU'RE LIGHT AS A FEATHER, EENA.
I PROMISE I WON'T DROP YOU.



SO WHY HAS NOBODY EATEN HERE IN ALL THAT TIME?
BECAUSE THERE ARE NO BANQUETS WHEN THE FAMILY'S NOT IN RESIDENCE.
EVERYBODY JUST EATS IN THE REFECTORIES OR SHIFTS FOR THEMSELVES.



IMAGINE THE THINGS THIS ROOM HAS SEEN!
GREAT LORDS STUFFING THEIR FACES. SLAVES FETCHING AND CARRYING FOR THEM.
WELL THAT'S THE WAY THE WORLD TURNS.



IT IS NOW. BUT IT MIGHT NOT BE SO FOR ALWAYS.



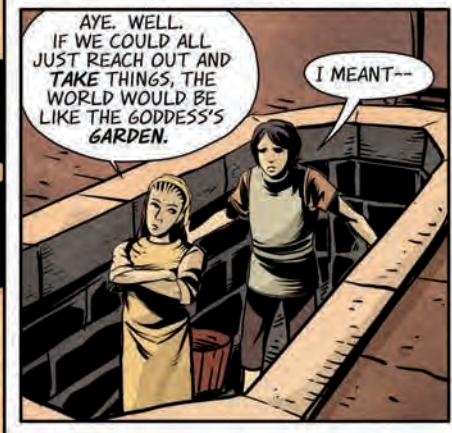
YOU SHOULDN'T SAY SUCH THINGS, MOTH. IF SOMEONE WERE TO HEAR, YOU'D BE WHIPPED.
THE WORLD DOESN'T CHANGE. I'M NOT AFRAID.
IT DOES IF PEOPLE MAKE UP THEIR MINDS TO CHANGE IT.



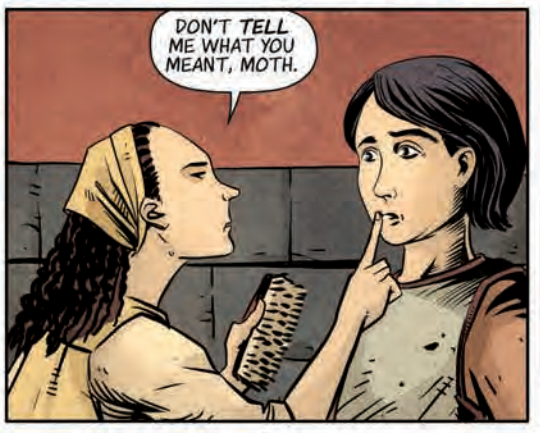
IMPORTANT PEOPLE MIGHT DO THAT. KINGS AND GREAT ONES, BUT NOT THE LIKES OF ME AND YOU.
NOT SLAVES.



THERE'S NO DIFFERENCE, EENA.
IDIOT! THERE'S ALL THE WORLD OF DIFFERENCE.
YOU JUST HAVE TO BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT MOST. AND THEN YOU REACH OUT AND TAKE IT.



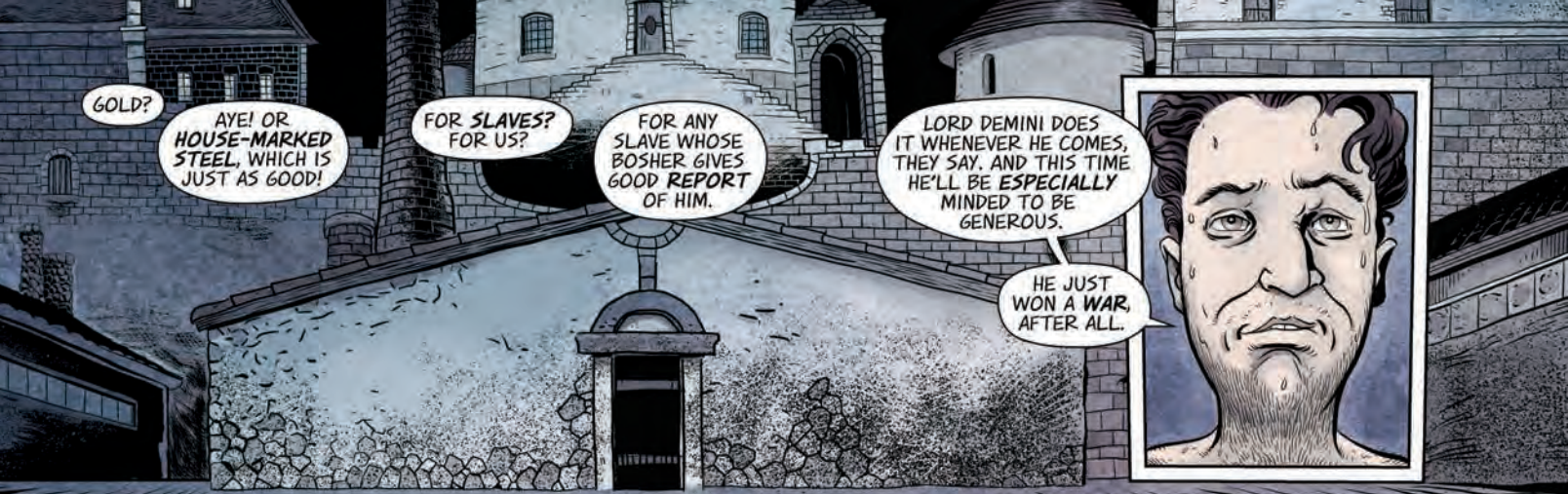
AYE, WELL. IF WE COULD ALL JUST REACH OUT AND TAKE THINGS, THE WORLD WOULD BE LIKE THE GODDESS'S GARDEN.
I MEANT--



DON'T TELL ME WHAT YOU MEANT, MOTH.



YOUR WISHES DON'T COME TRUE IF YOU TELL THEM.
DON'T YOU KNOW ANYTHING?



GOLD?

AYE! OR HOUSE-MARKED STEEL, WHICH IS JUST AS GOOD!

FOR SLAVES? FOR US?

FOR ANY SLAVE WHOSE BOSHER GIVES GOOD REPORT OF HIM.

LORD DEMINI DOES IT WHENEVER HE COMES, THEY SAY, AND THIS TIME HE'LL BE ESPECIALLY MINDED TO BE GENEROUS.

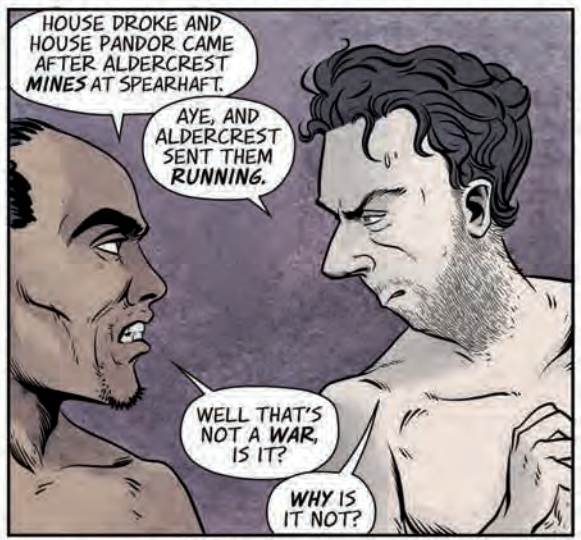
HE JUST WON A WAR, AFTER ALL.



IT WERE NO WAR.

FIVE THOUSAND MEN ON EITHER SIDE! WHAT WOULD YOU CALL IT, JADIK?

IT WERE A HOUSE FEUD.



HOUSE DROKE AND HOUSE PANDOR CAME AFTER ALDERCREST MINES AT SPEARHAFT.

AYE, AND ALDERCREST SENT THEM RUNNING.

WELL THAT'S NOT A WAR, IS IT?

WHY IS IT NOT?



WAR IS WHEN COUNTRIES FIGHT COUNTRIES, LIKE WHEN KOVIK FOUGHT OSSANIUL AND THE KOVIKI BECAME OUR MASTERS.

IT'S NOT WHEN FAMILIES FIGHT FAMILIES.

WAS BLOOD NOT SPILLED?

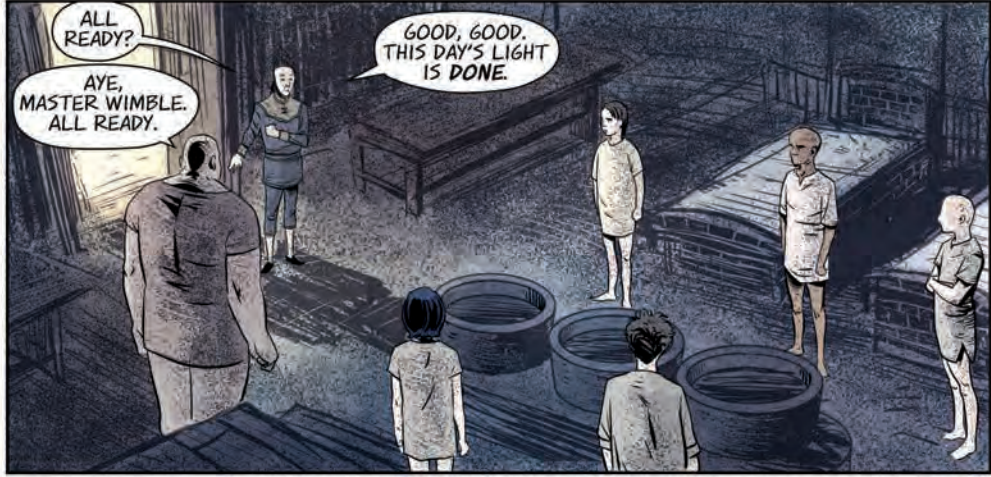
AYE, BUT--

AND DID FLAGS NOT FLY, BOTH OURS AND THEIRS? IT WAS WAR ENOUGH FOR ME, AND VICTORY ENOUGH.

AYE, BUT STILL--



YOU SHOULD REJOICE THAT ALDERCREST WON!



ALL READY?

AYE, MASTER WIMBLE. ALL READY.

GOOD, GOOD. THIS DAY'S LIGHT IS DONE.



AND THIS ROOM'S, LIKEWISE.