

Does a castle cease when its ruler does? Once emptied of living lifeblood, the bones of its structure molder like the ribs of an ancient beast that once carried its monarch into battle.

Looters and worse descend like flies on a corpse greedily lapping at the spilled blood.

NO MERCY!
RENDER THEM UP LIKE
THE SELFISH SWINE
THEY ARE.



CRUSHING
THE BREATH IN
THEIR THROATS IS A
TREASURE ALL
ITSELF.

DON'T
FORGET TO
CHECK THE BODIES.
THE TREASURES THEY
OFFER UP DON'T END
WHEN THEY STOP
BREATHING.





Merritt's body covered with a scarred tracery of his hard fought victory for Hope's soul forges ahead of Grace and the girl to first face any foes lest they surprise his companions and do them harm.

CAREFUL NOW, I DON'T SEE ANY GUARDS, BUT... HELLO?

WE ARE NOT FRIENDS OF THE QUEEN.



MAYHAP AND MAYHAP NOT, BUT THAT IS THE SWORD OF A SOLDIER.



IT IS MY FATHER'S SWORD AND NEITHER OF US SERVED THE QUEEN.

SO YOU SAY, BUT I RECALL A GINGER HAIRD TOFF WHO RODE WITH SHAME.



VILFREDO!
PUT YOUR SWORD
AWAY.

YOU ALWAYS
DID HAVE MORE
BALLS THAN BRAINS.
MY FRIEND MERRITT WOULD
MAKE SHORT WORK OF
YOU FOOLS AS HE DID
SHAME'S SHADOWY
SERVANTS.



AND THIS
YOUNG LADY IS MORE
POWERFUL THAN THAT
DARKNESS HERSELF. SO
COUNT YOURSELF LUCKY
THAT OUR LITTLE HOPE
IS A MIGHT CONFUSED
JUST NOW.



HOPE.



AS WE
WELCOME YOUR AID
VILFREDO, THERE IS STILL
MORE TROUBLE ROAMING
THESE HALLS
SNIFFING
AFTER US.







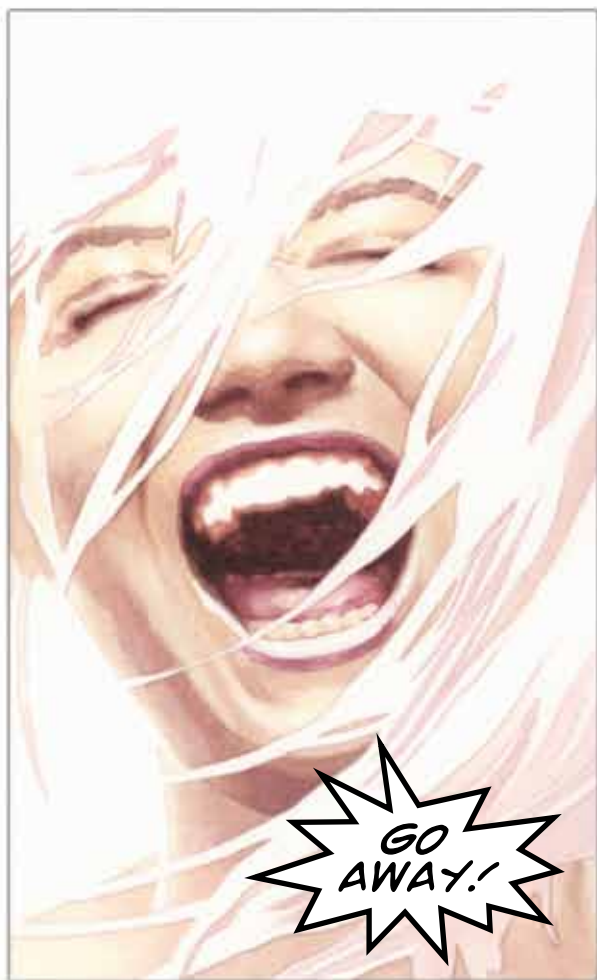




This one trembles and shakes. Could be we can tear 'til it breaks!

And gives its skin a peel! Then watch how sweet it will squeal!

Then we pulls its insides out and the blood will gush, no doubt!



GO AWAY!



RUN FOR YOUR LIVES! THEY AREN'T AFTER US!