

4 MONTHS LATER...


THE PAST FEW YEARS IN SALUS--
LIKE BEING SLOWLY DROWNED IN
A POOL OF POISON.

I LEFT IT BEHIND--
CLEANSED MYSELF.

REDISCOVERED
MY TRUTH.

FOUR MONTHS IN THIS
PIT. A COLD REMINDER--





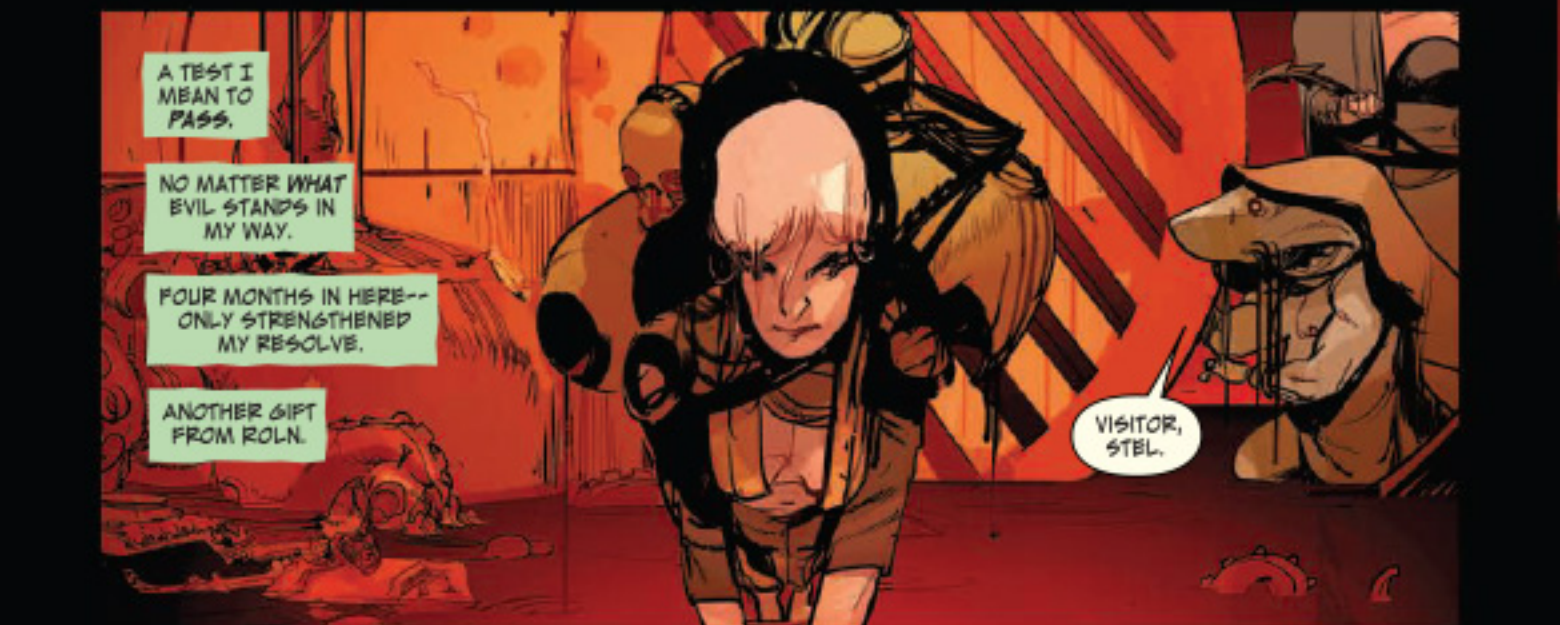
--THERE'S
NO TIME TO
LOSE.

THE END OF
HUMANITY IF
I FALTER.

I WON'T.

THE FUTURE IS IN
MY HANDS NO
MATTER HOW DIRE
THE FORECAST.

ALL A TEST.



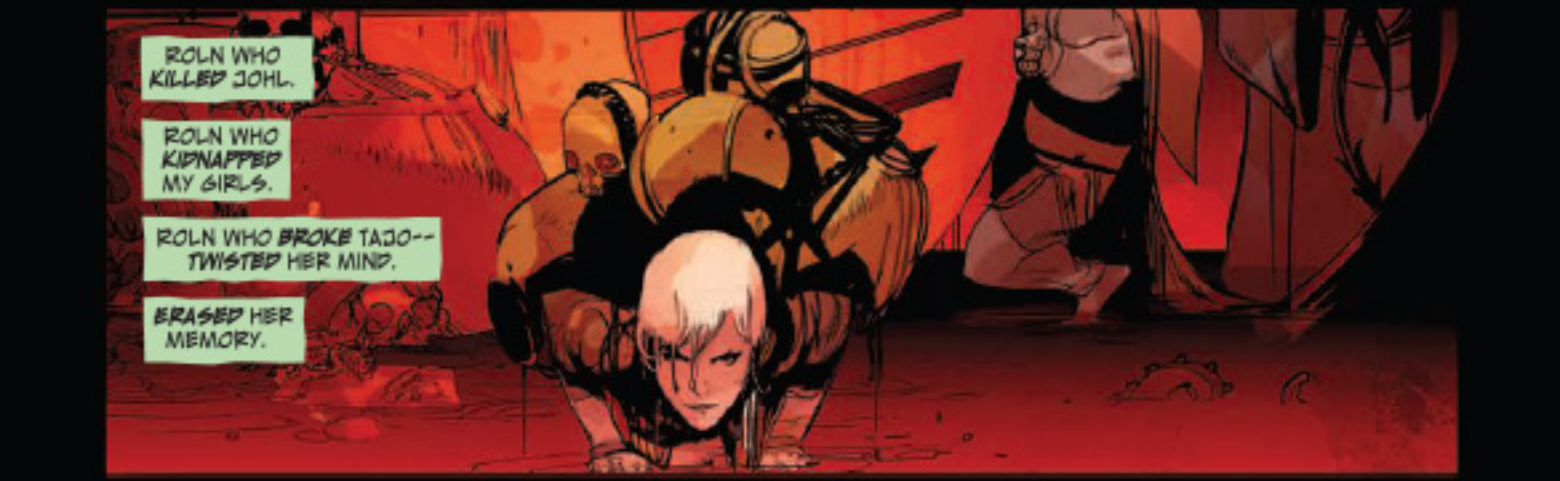
A TEST I
MEAN TO
PASS.

NO MATTER WHAT
EVIL STANDS IN
MY WAY.

FOUR MONTHS IN HERE--
ONLY STRENGTHENED
MY RESOLVE.

ANOTHER GIFT
FROM ROLN.

VISITOR,
STEL.




ROLN WHO
KILLED JOHL.

ROLN WHO
KIDNAPPED
MY GIRLS.

ROLN WHO BROKE TAJO--
TWISTED HER MIND.

ERASED HER
MEMORY.



ROLN WHO I
WILL SEE DEAD.

MORE
EXERCISE?

SUCH RAW
PETERMINATION,
MOTHER.

MINDLESSLY
PUSHING FORWARD
TO SOME BETTER
DAY.

BUT THE TRUTH IS--
THE THING NO ONE
EVER TELLS YOU--YOUR
PAIN AND LOSS--

--IT DOESN'T
EVER HEAL.

YOU
JUST LIVE
WITH IT.

DO YOU
WONDER WHY IT'S
SO IMPORTANT TO
YOU TO BREAK
MY FAITH?

YOU
MISUNDERSTAND--
I LOVE YOUR
OPTIMISM.

I GET TO
TAKE IT AWAY,
LASS.

AH, YOU
RECOGNIZE THE
BLADE?

IT'S
BEAUTIFUL BARBS
ETCHED INTO YOUR
CONSCIOUSNESS.

HOW MANY NIGHTS HAVE YOU AWOKEN,
RECALLIN' AS IT PLUCKED YOUR BELOVED
HELMSMAN'S EYE, HMMH?

YOU'LL BE GIVIN' ME
THE LOCATION OF THAT
PROBE TODAY.

WHAT'S SO
DIFFERENT
ABOUT
TODAY?

YOU'VE HEARD
WHISPERS OF
MARIK'S HEROISM
IN THE ARENA?

I KNOW
YOU HAVE--
I'VE SEEN
TO IT.

YOU IMAGINED
HIS SUCCESS A
BYPRODUCT OF
YOUR TEACHING.

YOUR BRIGHT
BOY FINALLY
RISEN.

DID IT OCCUR
TO YOU I'D
RIGGED THE
GAME?

HIS SURVIVAL
GIVES YOU HOPE--
HOPE CAN CRUSH
A PERSON WHEN
TAKEN.



I'LL DIE WITH THE PROBE'S LOCATION.

I HAVE THINGS YOU WANT.

MARIK'S LIFE.

TADJ'S MIND.

THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR SWEET PELLA.

AH-- THERE IT IS.




THE BUTTON.

ONCE YOU HAVE THE BUTTON...

...ALL YOU NEED IS THE PRESSURE TO PUSH IT. WHICH I DO, AND SOON, RIGHT BEFORE YOUR EYES-- I WILL.

YOUR OPTIMISM IS SIMPLY A DESPERATE FOOL'S DELUSION...




"--YOU HAVE NO CONTROL OVER ANYTHING, STEL."

DID SHE TELL YOU?

WILL SHE GIVE YOU THE LOCATION OF THE PROBE?

SOON, BROTHER. TRUST ME.

IF THIS PROBE HAS THE COORDINATES OF A BLUE PLANET...

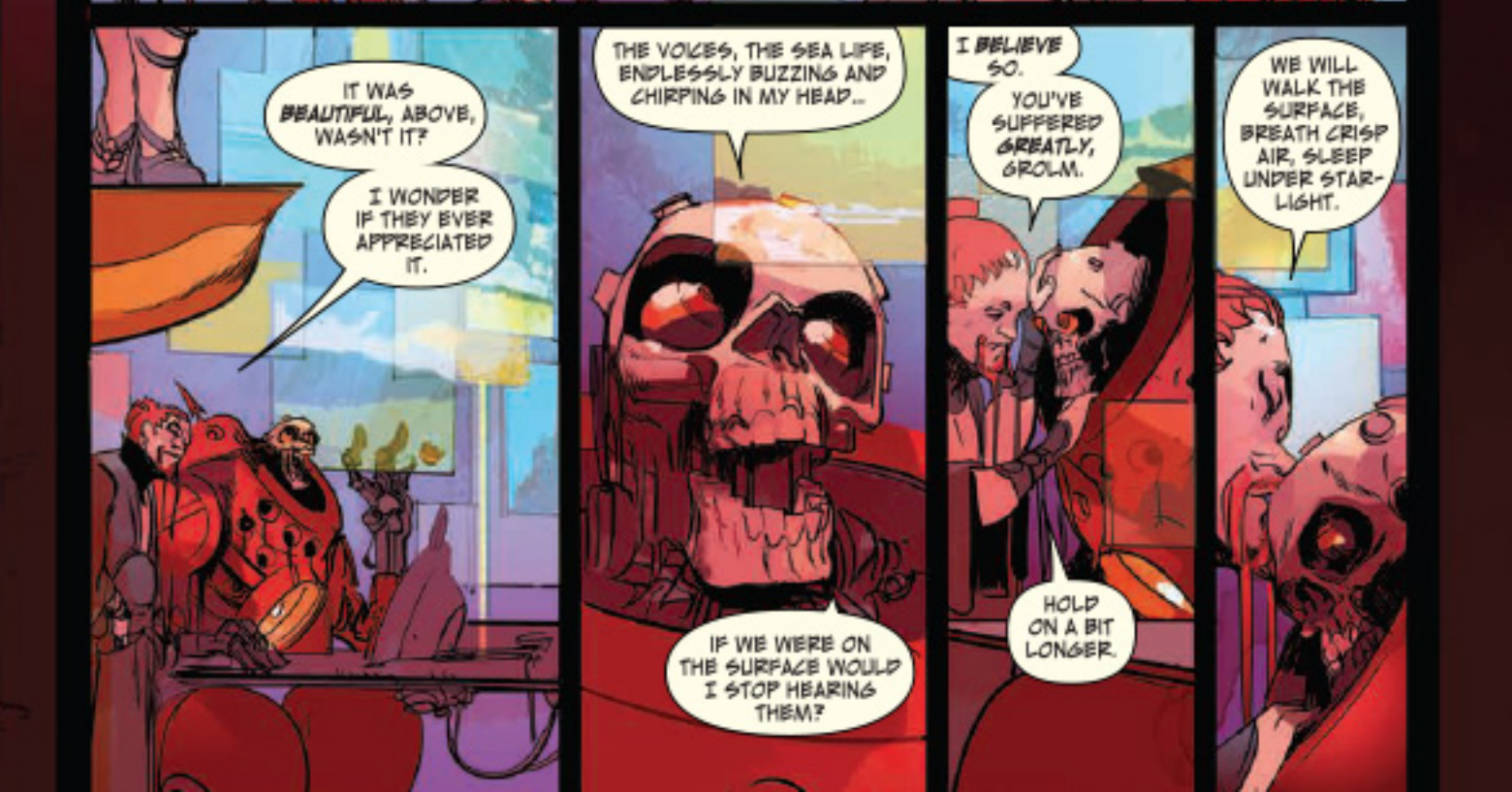


...WE COULD WALK THE SURFACE? SMELL REAL AIR?

COULD IT BE TRUE?

SHE BELIEVES IT.

ENOUGH TO RISK HER LIFE AND HER SON'S.



IT WAS BEAUTIFUL, ABOVE, WASN'T IT?

I WONDER IF THEY EVER APPRECIATED IT.

THE VOICES, THE SEA LIFE, ENDLESSLY BUZZING AND CHIRPING IN MY HEAD...

IF WE WERE ON THE SURFACE WOULD I STOP HEARING THEM?

I BELIEVE SO.

YOU'VE SUFFERED GREATLY, GROM.

HOLD ON A BIT LONGER.

WE WILL WALK THE SURFACE, BREATHE CRISP AIR, SLEEP UNDER STAR-LIGHT.

"I WILL BUY YOU RESPIRE,
DEAR BROTHER."

MAKE
WAY!

THE MANGY
MUTINEERS' BRIGADE
MAKIN' THEIR LAST
MARCH, YE [REDACTED]

OPEN THE
GATES!

PREPARE
THE MAW!

HOLD UP--
GOT A LUCKY NEW
CONTESTANT.

MOVER
YOUR [REDACTED]

ASH--!
P-PLEASE--
I'M NO
GLADIATOR!

NAH, YER
A GEEZER,
WHO RUNS
BAMBOOZLES
AN' SCREW
JOBS.

I'M T-TOO
OLD--I WON'T LAST
A SECOND IN THE TANK!

YOU WILL IF
YOU BELIEVE
IT.

Y-YOU...
YOU'RE...

MARK
CAINE!

WOW.
GUESS I
GOT A LITTLE
FAMOUS.