

DYNAMITE
26

Robert Jordan's
the **WHEEL**
of **TIME**



the **EYE** of the **WORLD**

ROBERT JORDAN, CHUCK DIXON & MARCIO FIORITO



Robert Jordan's the **WHEEL** of **TIME**

the **EYE** of the **WORLD**

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≡SIGH≡

SO FEW OF
YOU HUMANS
REMEMBER US. IT'S OUR
OWN FAULT, I SUPPOSE...
NOT MANY OF US HAVE
GONE OUT AMONG MEN
SINCE THE SHADOW
FELL ON THE
WAYS.

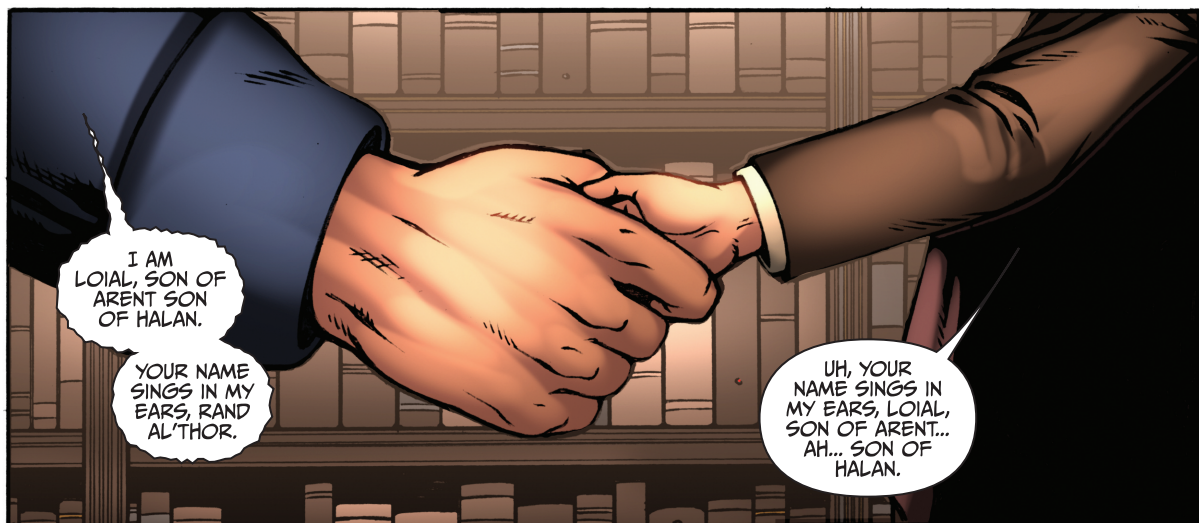
THAT'S... OH,
SIX GENERATIONS,
NOW. RIGHT
AFTER THE WAR
OF THE HUNDRED
YEARS. TOO
LONG.



I THOUGHT
YOU WERE--THAT
IS, WHAT ARE...
UM...



MY
NAME IS RAND
AL'THOR.



I AM
LOIAL, SON OF
ARENT SON
OF HALAN.

YOUR NAME
SINGS IN MY
EARS, RAND
AL'THOR.

UH, YOUR
NAME SINGS IN
MY EARS, LOIAL,
SON OF ARENT...
AH... SON OF
HALAN.



YOU
HUMANS
ARE VERY
EXCITABLE.

I HEARD
ALL THE STORIES,
AND READ ALL THE
BOOKS, OF COURSE,
BUT I DIDN'T
REALIZE.

MY FIRST DAY
IN CAEMLYN, I COULD
NOT BELIEVE THE UPROAR--
A MOB CHASED ME ACROSS
THE CITY, WAVING CLUBS AND
KNIVES AND TORCHES
AND SHOUTING
"TROLLOC."



THERE'S NO
TELLING WHAT
WOULD HAVE
HAPPENED IF A
PARTY OF THE
QUEEN'S GUARD
HADN'T COME
ALONG.

A LUCKY
THING.



YES, BUT
EVEN THEY
SEEMED AFRAID
OF ME.

FOUR DAYS IN
CAEMLYN, AND I HAVEN'T
BEEN ABLE TO PUT MY
NOSE OUTSIDE THIS INN.
I'LL TELL YOU, IT WAS NOT
FOR THIS THAT I LEFT
THE STEDDING.



YOU'RE AN
OGIER!

WAIT--~~SIX~~
GENERATIONS?
YOU SAID THE
WAR OF THE
HUNDRED YEARS!
HOW OLD ARE
YOU?



NINETY YEARS! IN ONLY TEN
MORE I'LL BE ABLE TO ADDRESS
THE STUMP, THOUGH I THINK THE
ELDERS SHOULD HAVE LET ME
SPEAK NOW, SINCE THEY WERE
DECIDING WHETHER I COULD
LEAVE OR NOT.

BUT THEN,
THEY ALWAYS
WORRY ABOUT
ANYONE OF ANY
AGE GOING
OUTSIDE. YOU
HUMANS ARE SO
HASTY, SO
ERRATIC...

PLEASE
FORGIVE ME. I
SHOULDN'T HAVE
SAID THAT. BUT YOU
DO FIGHT ALL THE
TIME, EVEN WHEN
THERE'S NO
NEED TO.



THAT'S
ALL RIGHT.

STILL,
AT LEAST THEY
DID LET YOU
GO.



WELL, AS TO
THAT... YOU SEE, THE
STUMP HAD NOT BEEN MEETING
VERY LONG, NOT EVEN A YEAR,
BUT I COULD TELL FROM WHAT
I HEARD THAT BY THE TIME THEY
MADE A DECISION I WOULD BE
OLD ENOUGH TO LEAVE
WITHOUT THEIR
PERMISSION.

SO I JUST...
LEFT. THE ELDERS
ALWAYS SAID I WAS TOO
HOT-HEADED, AND I FEAR
I'VE PROVEN THEM
RIGHT... BUT I HAD
TO GO.

Rand bit his lip to keep from laughing-- if Loial was a hot-headed Ogier, he could imagine what most Ogier were like...

IF YOU DON'T MIND MY ASKING, WHY DID YOU WANT TO GO, AH, *OUTSIDE* SO MUCH? I WISH I'D NEVER LEFT HOME, MYSELF.

WHY, TO *SEE*.

I READ THE BOOKS, ALL THE TRAVELER'S ACCOUNTS...I STUDIED EVERY SCRAP I COULD FIND ABOUT THE WAYS AND CUSTOMS IN HUMAN LANDS, AND THE CITIES WE BUILT FOR YOU HUMANS AFTER THE BREAKING OF THE WORLD.

THE MORE I READ, THE MORE I KNEW I *HAD* TO GO OUTSIDE, GO TO THOSE PLACES WE HAD BEEN, AND SEE THE GROVES FOR MYSELF.

GROVES?

YES, THE *GROVES*. THE *TREES*. ONLY A FEW OF THE GREAT TREES, OF COURSE, TOWERING TO THE SKY TO KEEP MEMORIES OF THE STEPPING FRESH.

WHAT ABOUT THE CITIES THE OGIER BUILT?

AH. WORKING WITH STONE... IT IS A FINE THING, I SUPPOSE, BUT NOT THE TRUE THING. WORKING WITH STONE IS JUST SOMETHING THRUST ON US BY THE WEAVING OF THE PATTERN; TRY AS YOU MIGHT, YOU CANNOT MAKE STONE LIVE.

I... DIDN'T KNOW OGIER BELIEVED IN THE *PATTERN*, LOIAL.

OF COURSE WE BELIEVE. THE WHEEL OF TIME WEAVES THE PATTERN OF THE AGES, AND LIVES ARE THE THREADS IT WEAVES.

SOMETIMES I THINK THE REASON YOU HUMANS ARE THE WAY YOU ARE IS BECAUSE YOUR THREADS ARE SO *SHORT*.



OH! OH, THERE I'VE DONE IT AGAIN. THE ELDERS SAY YOU HUMANS DON'T LIKE TO BE REMINDED OF HOW SHORT A TIME YOU LIVE.

I HOPE I DIDN'T HURT YOUR FEELINGS.



HA! NOT AT ALL. I SUPPOSE IT'D BE FUN TO LIVE AS LONG AS YOU DO, BUT I NEVER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT.




WELL, PERHAPS YOU HUMANS DO HAVE SHORT LIVES, BUT YOU DO SO MUCH WITH THEM, AND YOU HAVE THE WHOLE WORLD TO DO IT IN. WE OGIER ARE BOUND TO OUR STEDDING.

YOU'RE OUTSIDE.

FOR A TIME, RAND. BUT I MUST GO BACK, EVENTUALLY. THIS WORLD IS YOURS AND YOUR KIND'S. THE STEDDING ARE MINE. THERE'S TOO MUCH HURLY-BURLY OUTSIDE, AND SO MUCH HAS CHANGED FROM WHAT I READ ABOUT.

WELL, THINGS DO CHANGE OVER THE YEARS. SOME, ANYWAY.



SOME?! HALF OF THE CITIES I READ ABOUT
AREN'T EVEN THERE ANY LONGER, AND MOST
OF THE REST ARE KNOWN BY DIFFERENT
NAMES--AND NO ONE REMEMBERS
THEIR HISTORY.

...CAEMLYN IS
STILL CAEMLYN, BUT
THEY LET THE CITY GROW
RIGHT OVER THEIR GROVE--
NOT A TREE OF IT LEFT. I'VE
BEEN TO TEAR AND ILLIAN,
TOO. DIFFERENT NAMES,
AND NO MEMORY OF
WHAT WAS.

THERE'S ONLY
PASTURE WHERE THE
GROVE WAS AT TEAR, AND
AT ILLIAN THE GROVE IS THE
KING'S PARK, AND NONE ARE
ALLOWED IN WITHOUT HIS
PERMISSION.

IT HAS ALL
CHANGED, RAND. I
FEAR THAT I WILL FIND THE
SAME EVERYWHERE I GO: ALL
THE GROVES GONE, ALL THE
MEMORIES GONE, ALL
THE DREAMS DEAD.

YOU CAN'T
GIVE UP, LOIAL. YOU
CAN'T EVER GIVE UP.
IF YOU GIVE UP, YOU
MIGHT AS WELL
BE DEAD.

YES,
THAT'S THE WAY
OF YOUR KIND,
ISN'T IT?

"TILL SHADE
IS GONE, TILL WATER
IS GONE, INTO THE SHADOW
WITH TEETH BARED, SCREAMING
DEFIANCE WITH THE LAST
BREATH, TO SPIT IN SIGHT-
BLINDER'S EYE ON
THE LAST DAY."

Discomfort grew as Loial waited for Rand to recognize and respond to his statement, a quote from the change in his voice, and one Rand couldn't place. After a minute or two, grasping for something to break the silence, Rand asked:

THE GREAT
TREES--ARE
THEY LIKE
AVENDESORA?

YOU KNOW
BETTER THAN
THAT! YOU OF ALL
PEOPLE!

ME?
HOW WOULD
I KNOW?



Rand opened his mouth to say that they had come to see the false Dragon... and he couldn't.

Instead, he found himself telling Loial the truth. The *whole* truth.

I--

Loial took it all in, and was silent for a time after the story was finished. Rand wondered if the Ogier thought he was mad. And then, Loial spoke a single word:

TA'VEREN.

WHAT?

TA'VEREN. YOU KNOW HOW THE PATTERN IS WOVEN, OF COURSE?

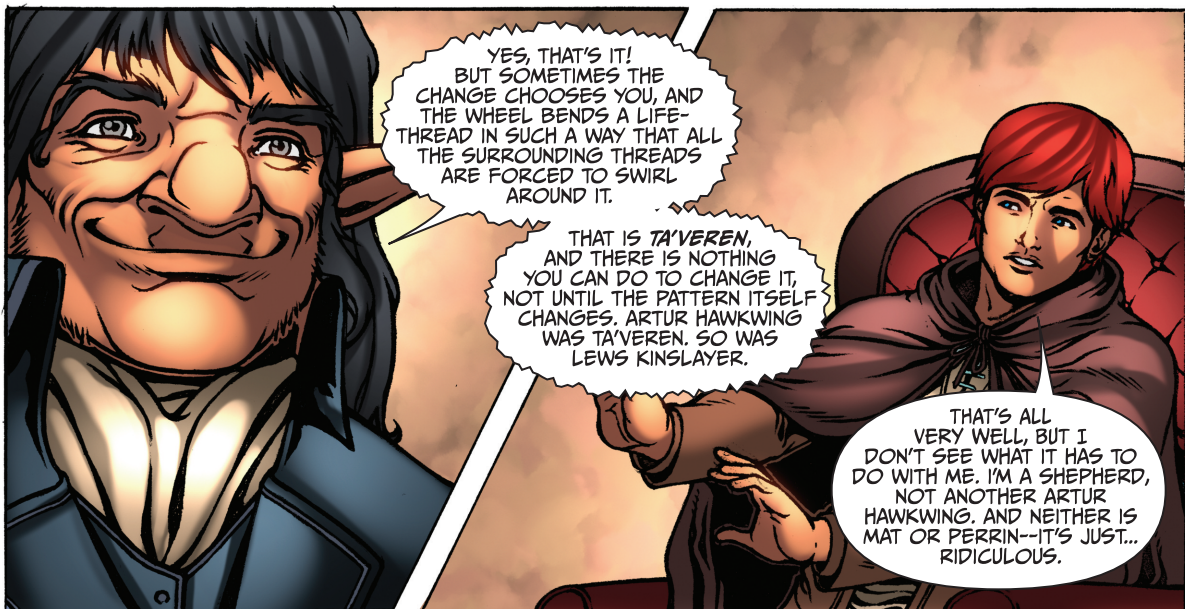
I NEVER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT. IT JUST IS.

UM, YES, WELL... NOT EXACTLY. YOU SEE, THE WHEEL OF TIME WEAVES THE PATTERN OF THE AGES, AND THE THREADS IT USES ARE LIVES.

IT IS NOT ALWAYS FIXED, THE PATTERN. IF A MAN TRIES TO CHANGE THE DIRECTION OF HIS LIFE AND THE PATTERN HAS ROOM FOR IT, THE WHEEL JUST WEAVES ON AND TAKES IT IN.

THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM FOR SMALL CHANGES, BUT SOMETIMES THE PATTERN SIMPLY WON'T ACCEPT A BIG CHANGE, NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRY. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

SO I COULD LIVE ON THE FARM OR IN EMOND'S FIELD, AND THAT WOULD BE A SMALL CHANGE. IF I WANTED TO BE A KING, THOUGH...



YES, THAT'S IT!
BUT SOMETIMES THE
CHANGE CHOOSES YOU, AND
THE WHEEL BENDS A LIFE-
THREAD IN SUCH A WAY THAT ALL
THE SURROUNDING THREADS
ARE FORCED TO SWIRL
AROUND IT.

THAT IS TA'VEREN,
AND THERE IS NOTHING
YOU CAN DO TO CHANGE IT,
NOT UNTIL THE PATTERN ITSELF
CHANGES. ARTUR HAWKWING
WAS TA'VEREN. SO WAS
LEWS KINSLAYER.

THAT'S ALL
VERY WELL, BUT I
DON'T SEE WHAT IT HAS TO
DO WITH ME. I'M A SHEPHERD,
NOT ANOTHER ARTUR
HAWKWING. AND NEITHER IS
MAT OR PERRIN--IT'S JUST...
RIDICULOUS.



I DIDN'T SAY
YOU WERE, BUT I
COULD ALMOST FEEL THE
PATTERN SWIRL JUST
LISTENING TO YOUR TALE.
YOU ARE TA'VEREN,
ALL RIGHT.

I... I WISH
TO TRAVEL WITH
YOU, RAND.

WITH ME?
DON'T YOU REMEMBER
WHAT'S CHASING ME?
ANYWAY, I THOUGHT
YOU WANTED TO GO
SEE YOUR TREES.

THERE IS A FINE
GROVE AT TAR VALON.
BESIDES, IT IS NOT JUST THE
GROVES I WANT TO SEE. PERHAPS
YOU ARE NOT ANOTHER ARTUR
HAWKWING, BUT, FOR A TIME, AT
LEAST, PART OF THE WORLD WILL
SHAPE ITSELF AROUND
YOU.

EVEN
ELDER HAMAN
WOULD WANT TO
SEE THAT.



I DON'T
THINK IT'S A GOOD
IDEA, LOIAL. EVEN
IF MOIRAIN FINDS
US HERE, WE'LL
BE IN DANGER ALL
THE WAY TO TAR
VALON. IF SHE
DOESN'T...



WILL YOU AT
LEAST TALK WITH
ME SOMETIMES?
AND MAYBE A GAME
OF STONES? I HAVE
NOT HAD ANYONE
TO TALK TO IN
DAYS.

OF COURSE
I WILL. AND IF
WE MEET IN TAR
VALON, YOU CAN SHOW
ME THE GROVE
THERE.

Elsewhere, Nynaeve gripped the reins of the three horses and peered into the night as if she could somehow pierce the darkness and find the Aes Sedai and the Warder... what were they doing?

The trio had recently left the Caemlyn Road in order to follow the trail of whichever boy still had his coin--Moiraine did not know which one--and traveled north into the forest. They continued on for several days until the invisible trail suddenly... vanished.

Without the token, Nynaeve was told, Moiraine would have to be much closer to locate the missing boy. The possibility of an aimless search kept the Wisdom from sleep that night... and then, long after the last glow had faded from the coals of their campfire, Moiraine opened her eyes and told Nynaeve that the boy had regained the coin, and all would be well.



They continued on then, with a purpose, until stopping here--where Moiraine and Lan left Nynaeve to tend to the horses while they went off into the woods.

And then, abruptly,
Nynaev was jerked out
of her reminiscence.

OH!

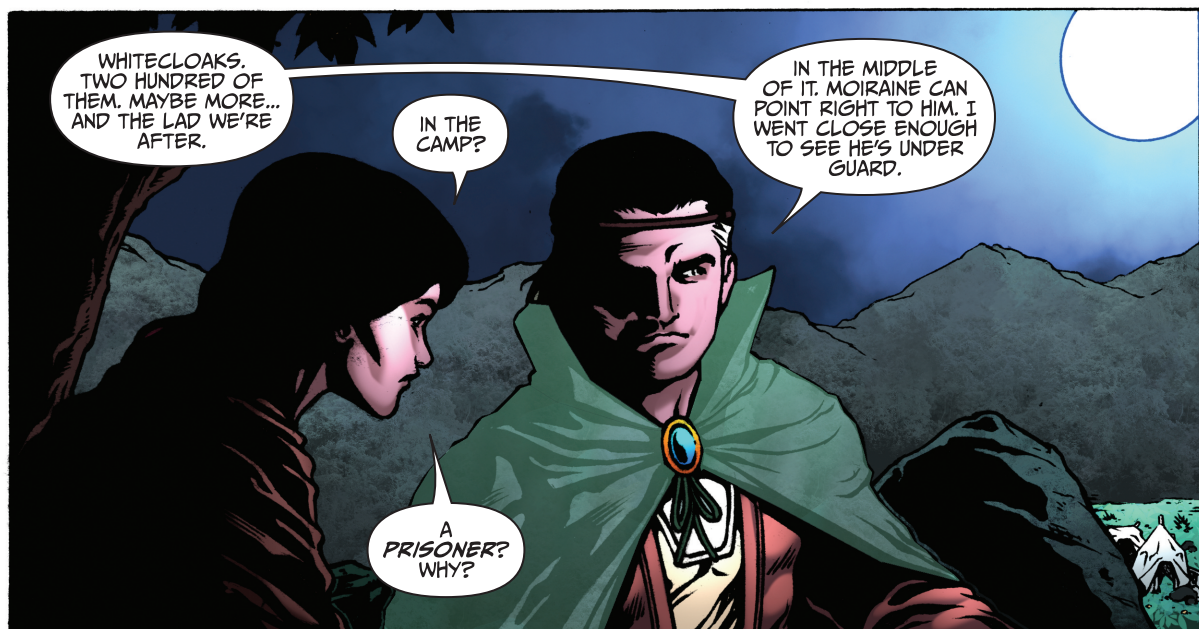
SHH. YOU ARE
NEEDED. SECURE
THE HORSES AND
COME WITH
ME.



LOOK.



WHAT
AM I---?
AH.

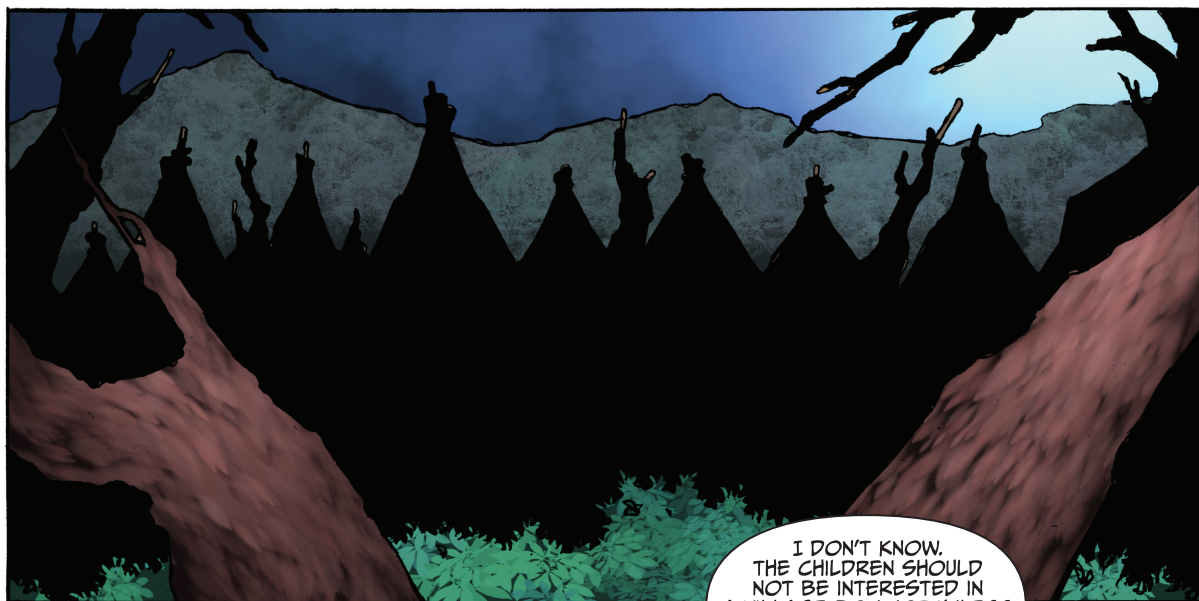


WHITECLOAKS.
TWO HUNDRED OF
THEM. MAYBE MORE...
AND THE LAD WE'RE
AFTER.

IN THE
CAMP?

IN THE MIDDLE
OF IT. MOIRAIN CAN
POINT RIGHT TO HIM. I
WENT CLOSE ENOUGH
TO SEE HE'S UNDER
GUARD.

A
PRISONER?
WHY?



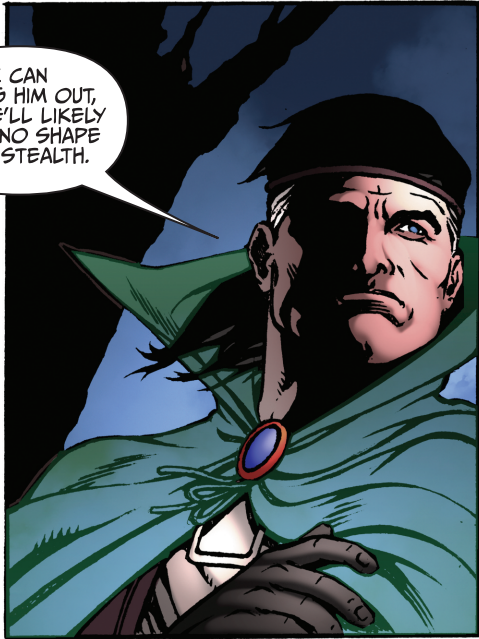
I DON'T KNOW.
THE CHILDREN SHOULD
NOT BE INTERESTED IN
A VILLAGE BOY, NOT UNLESS
THERE WAS SOMETHING
TO MAKE THEM
SUSPICIOUS.



HOW ARE
YOU GOING
TO FREE
HIM?



I CAN
BRING HIM OUT,
BUT HE'LL LIKELY
BE IN NO SHAPE
FOR STEALTH.

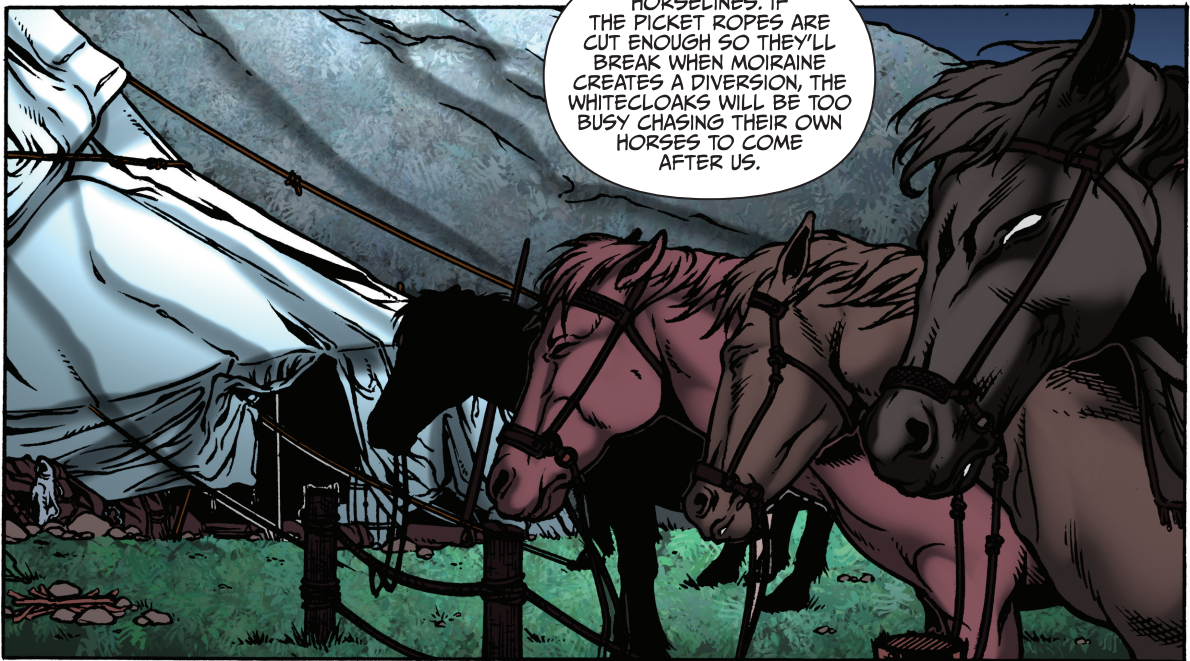


IF WE'RE SEEN,
WE MAY FIND TWO
HUNDRED WHITECLOAKS
ON OUR HEELS, AND US RIDING
DOUBLE... UNLESS THEY ARE TOO
BUSY TO CHASE US. ARE
YOU WILLING TO TAKE
A CHANCE?

TO HELP
AN EMOND'S
FIELDER? OF
COURSE!

...WHAT
KIND OF
CHANCE?

THEIR
HORSELINES. IF
THE PICKET ROPES ARE
CUT ENOUGH SO THEY'LL
BREAK WHEN MOIRAINÉ
CREATES A DIVERSION, THE
WHITECLOAKS WILL BE TOO
BUSY CHASING THEIR OWN
HORSES TO COME
AFTER US.







After tying up her skirts to allow her legs some freedom, Nynaeve hurried off towards the camp, concentrating on making her way through the dark woods.

It was not hard, in and of itself; the faint light of the moon was more than enough for anyone who had been taught by her father, and the ground had a slow, easy roll.

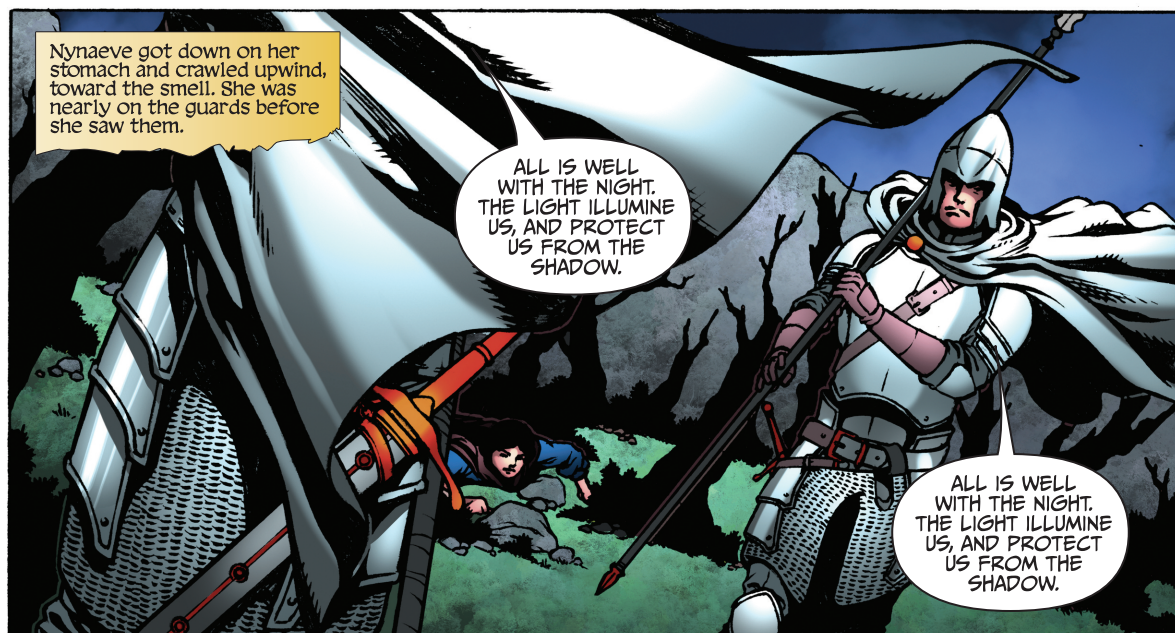


But the trees, bare and stark against the night sky, constantly reminded her that this was no childhood game, and the keening wind sounded all too much like Trolloc horns.



Now that she was alone in the darkness, Nynaeve remembered that the wolves that usually ran away from people had been behaving differently in the Two Rivers this winter.

Relief flooded through her like warmth when she finally caught the smell of horses.



Nynaevae got down on her stomach and crawled upwind, toward the smell. She was nearly on the guards before she saw them.

ALL IS WELL
WITH THE NIGHT.
THE LIGHT ILLUMINE
US, AND PROTECT
US FROM THE
SHADOW.

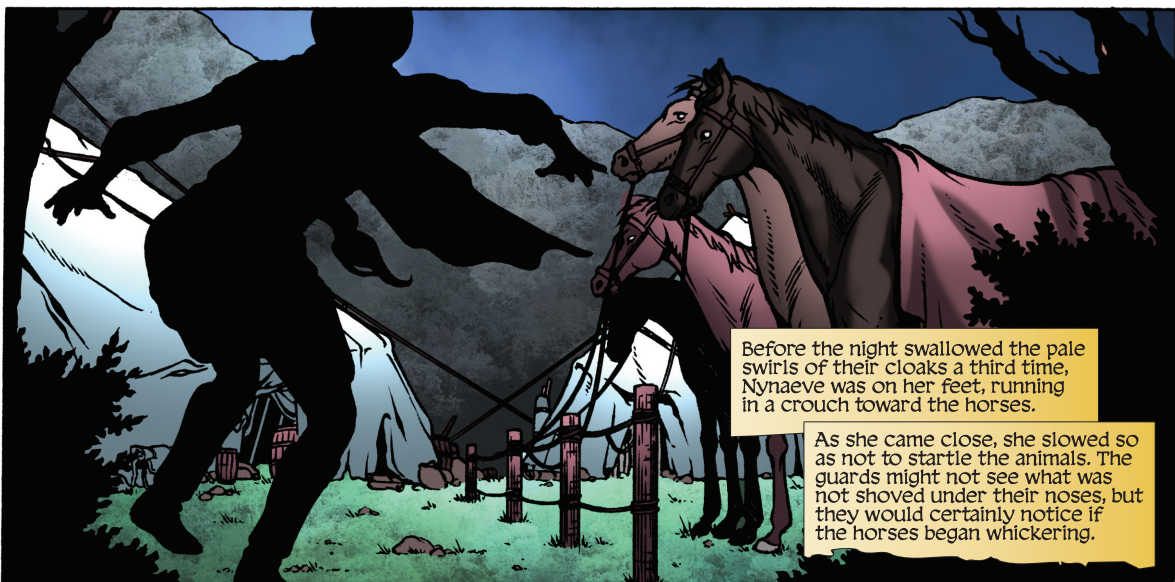
ALL IS WELL
WITH THE NIGHT.
THE LIGHT ILLUMINE
US, AND PROTECT
US FROM THE
SHADOW.



Nynaevae waited, counting to herself as the guards made their circuit twice.

Each time they took exactly the same count, and each time they repeated the same formula, not a word more or less. Neither so much as glanced to one side; they stared straight ahead as they marched up and away.

She wondered if they would have noticed her even if she was standing up.



Before the night swallowed the pale swirls of their cloaks a third time, Nynaevae was on her feet, running in a crouch toward the horses.

As she came close, she slowed so as not to startle the animals. The guards might not see what was not shoved under their noses, but they would certainly notice if the horses began whickering.

The horses along the picket lines--there was more than one row--were barely realized masses in the darkness, heads down. Occasionally one snorted or stamped its foot in its sleep.



In the dim moonlight she was nearly on the endpost of the picket line before she saw it.



Nynaeve reached for the picket-line and froze when the nearest horse raised its head and looked at her.

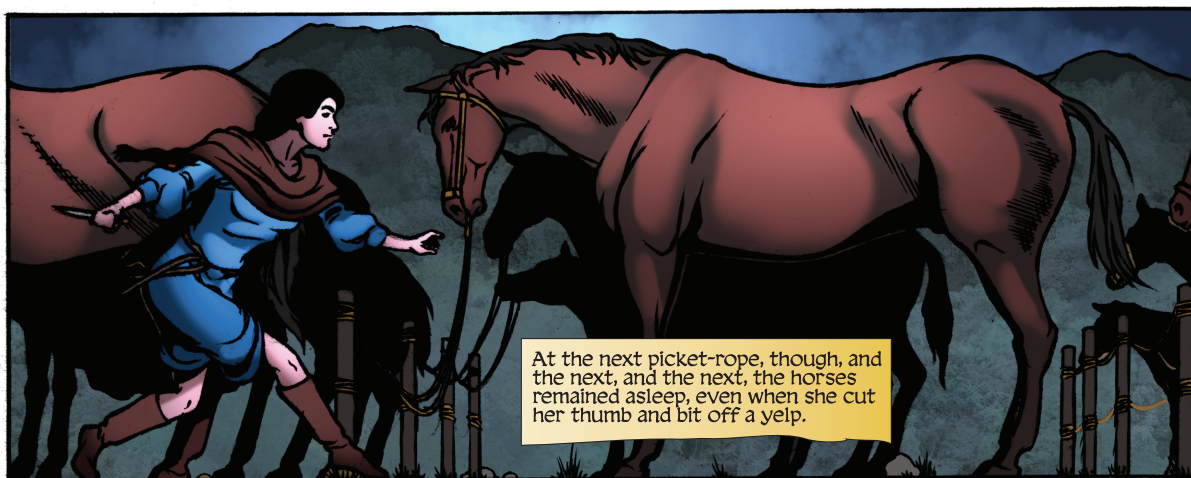
One whinny.

Her heart tried to pound its way out of her chest.





"Never taking her eyes off the horse, Nynaeve sliced at the picket-rope, feeling in front of her blade to see how far she had cut; only a few thin strands of hemp remained whole under her fingers.



At the next picket-rope, though, and the next, and the next, the horses remained asleep, even when she cut her thumb and bit off a yelp.



Sucking the cut, she looked warily back the way she had come. Upwind as she was, she could no longer hear the guards make their exchange, but they might have heard her if they were in the right place.

If they were coming to see what the noise had been, the wind would keep her from hearing them until they were right on top of her. It was time to go--with four out of five horses running loose, the Whitecloaks wouldn't be chasing anyone.



But Nynaeve did not move. She could imagine Lan's eyes when he heard what she had done. There would be no accusation in them; her reasoning was sound, and he would not expect any more of her.

She was a Wisdom, not a bloody great invincible Warder who could make himself all but invisible.

She should just leave.



Jaw set, Nynaeve moved on to the last picket line...



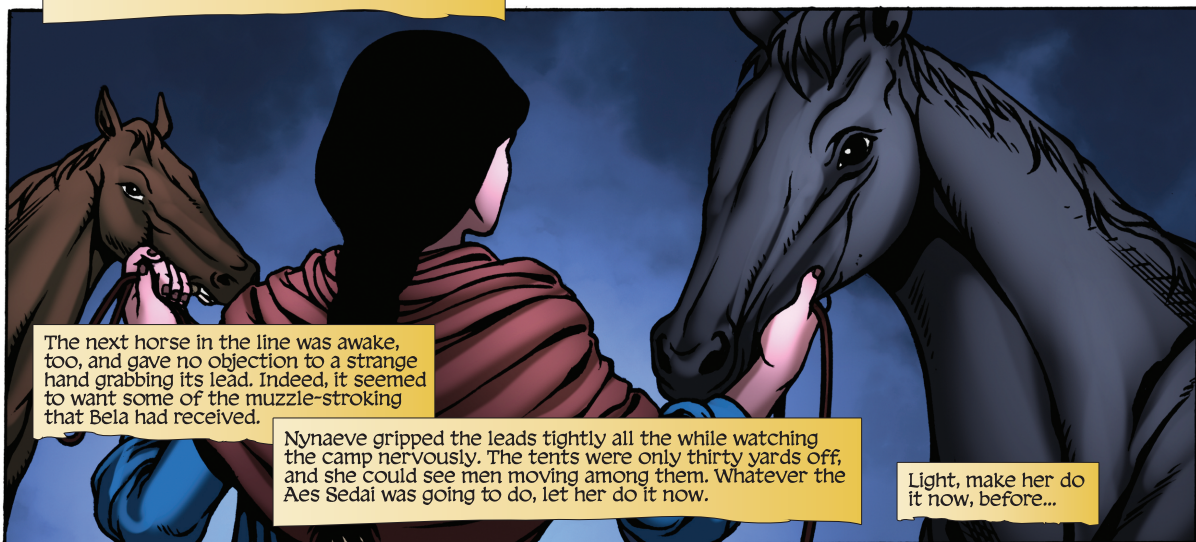
...where she received a shock. The first horse on the line was Bela. There was no mistaking that squat, shaggy shape; for there to be another horse like that, here and now, was too big a coincidence.

Suddenly, she was so glad she had not left this last line that she was shaking, but her mind was as clear as the Winespring Water.

Whichever of the boys was in this camp, Egwene was there, too. And if they left riding double, some of the Children would catch them no matter how well the horses were scattered, and some of them would die.

She was as certain as if she were listening to the wind, and it terrified her.

Strangely, the fear stilled her trembling. After cutting the rope, she resheathed her dagger and grabbed Bela's lead-rein. The shaggy mare woke with a start, but Nynaeve stroked her nose and spoke comforting words... Bela gave a low snort and seemed content.



The next horse in the line was awake, too, and gave no objection to a strange hand grabbing its lead. Indeed, it seemed to want some of the muzzle-stroking that Bela had received.

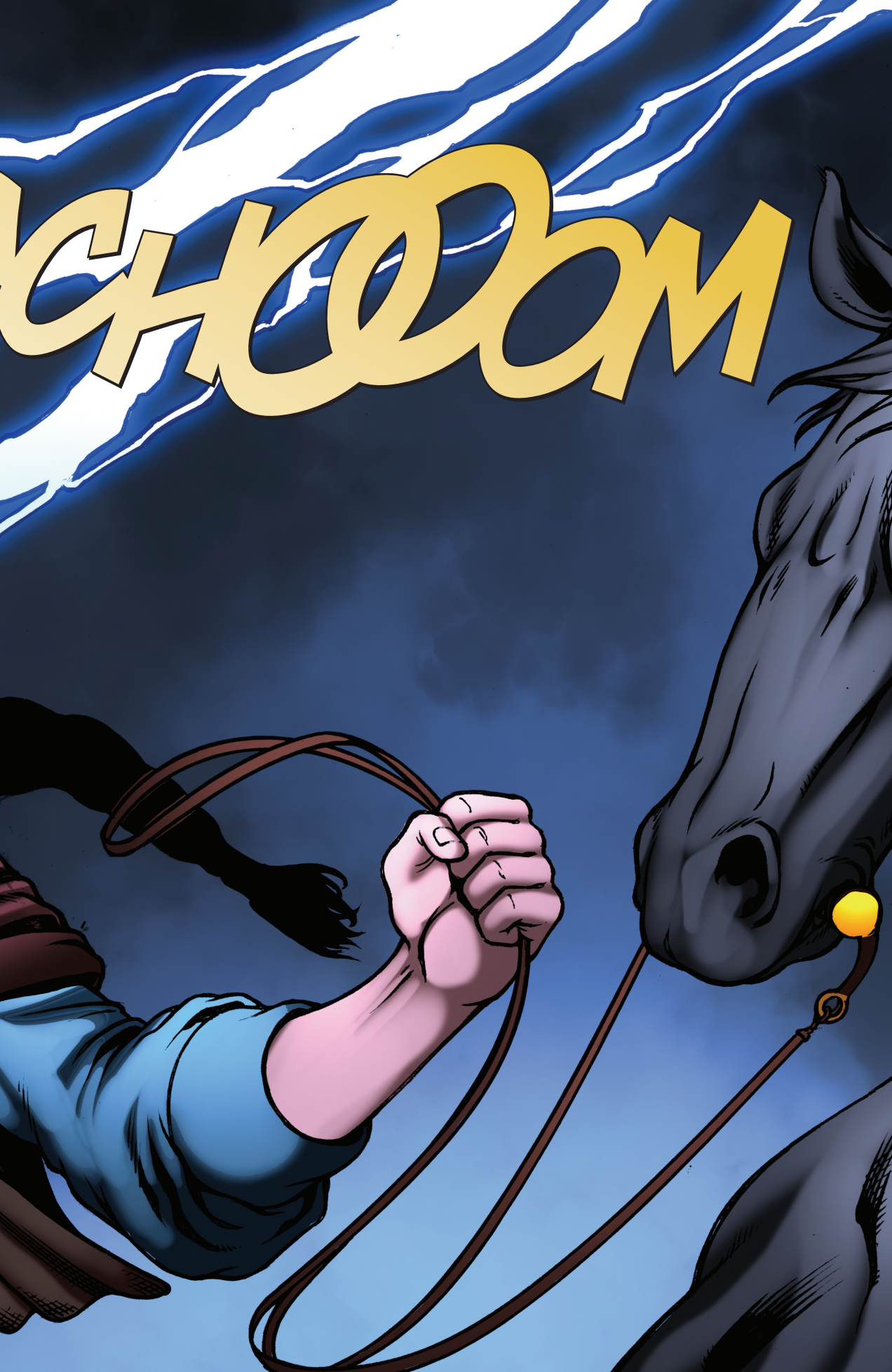
Nynaeve gripped the leads tightly all the while watching the camp nervously. The tents were only thirty yards off, and she could see men moving among them. Whatever the Aes Sedai was going to do, let her do it now.


Light, make her do it now, before...

KRRRAKKA-KA

Incredible.



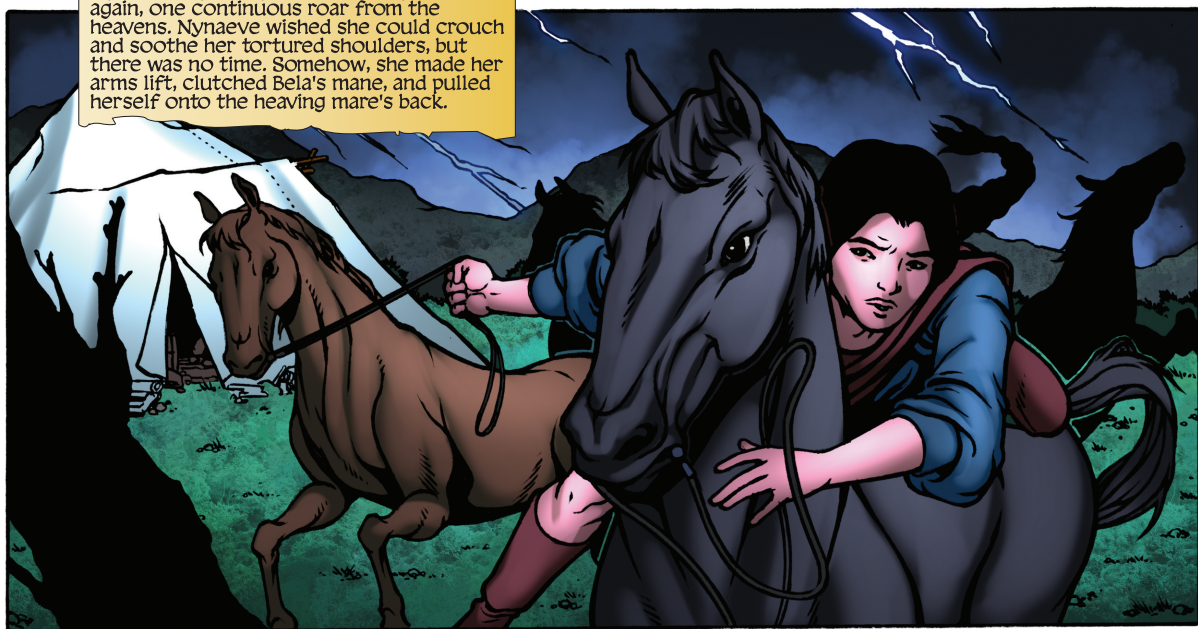


A comic book panel showing a woman with dark hair, wearing a blue tunic and a red cape, suspended in the air between two galloping horses. She has a look of shock and fear on her face. The horses are one brown and one dark gray. The background is a dark, stormy landscape with mountains and a lightning bolt visible in the sky.

Nynaeve was too busy to exult; at the first clash, Bela jerked one way while the other horse reared in the opposite direction.

She thought her arms were going to be pulled out of their sockets... for an endless minute, she was suspended between the horses, her feet off the ground, her scream drowned by the crash of the lightning.

Again the lightning struck, and again, and again, one continuous roar from the heavens. Nynaeve wished she could crouch and soothe her tortured shoulders, but there was no time. Somehow, she made her arms lift, clutched Bela's mane, and pulled herself onto the heaving mare's back.



The heels she dug in Bela's side were not needed. The mare ran, and the other was more than happy to follow. Anywhere, so long as they could run, so long as they could escape the fire from the sky that killed the night.

As they retreated to the forest, Nynaeve spotted a long gray shadow out of the corner of her eye, with a second following close behind.

Wolves.

'Light help us,' Nynaeve thought, 'what is Moiraine doing?'

To be continued...