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26

Robert Jordan's  
the WHEEL of TIME®



the EYE of the WORLD

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## the EYE of the WORLD

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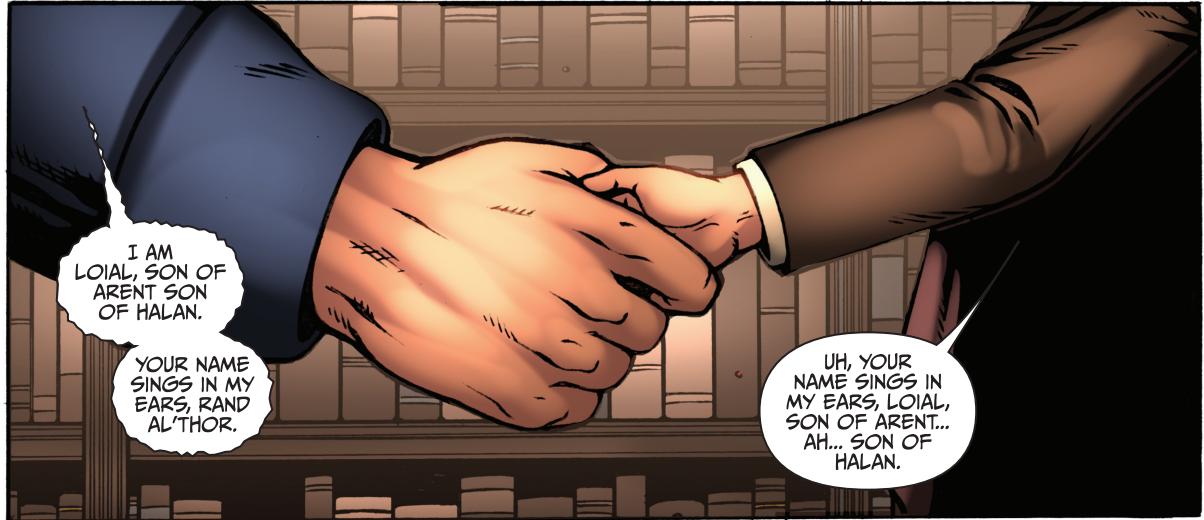
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Rand bit his lip to keep from laughing--if Loial was a hot-headed Ogier, he could imagine what most Ogier were like...

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 STEDDING 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.



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 DEFIADE 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:



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.

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:

I--

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...

WHAT?



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 HAWKING  
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  
HAWKING. 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.

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  
HAWKING, BUT, FOR A TIME, AT  
LEAST, PART OF THE WORLD WILL  
SHAPE ITSELF AROUND  
YOU.

EVEN  
ELDER HAMAN  
WOULD WANT TO  
SEE THAT.



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



I DON'T  
THINK IT'S A GOOD  
IDEA, LOIAL. EVEN  
IF MOIRANE 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, Nynaeve was jerked out of her reminiscence.



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

IN THE  
CAMP?

IN THE MIDDLE  
OF IT. MOIRANE 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.

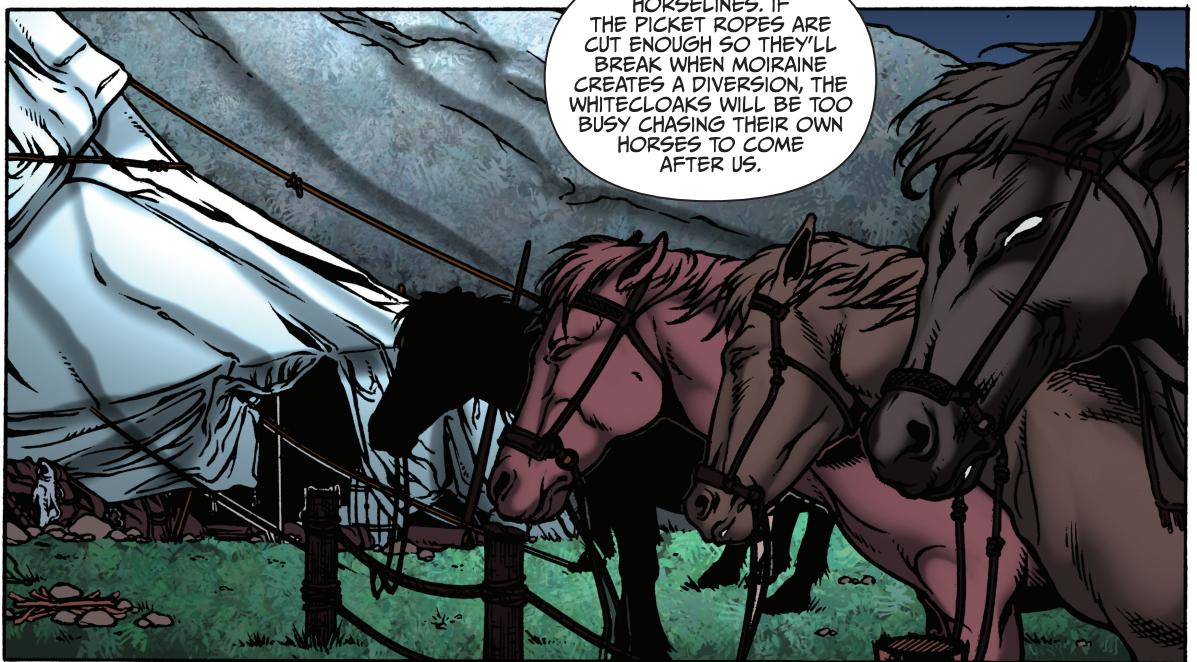


IF WE'RE SEEN,  
WE MAY FIND TWO  
HUNDRED WHITECLOAKS  
ON OUR HEELS, AND US RIDING  
DOUBLE... UNLESS THEY ARE TOO  
BUSY TO CHASE US. ARE  
YOU WILLING TO TAKE  
A CHANCE?

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 MOIRANE  
CREATES A DIVERSION, THE  
WHITECLOAKS WILL BE TOO  
BUSY CHASING THEIR OWN  
HORSES TO COME  
AFTER US.





THERE ARE  
TWO GUARDS ON  
THAT SIDE OF THE CAMP,  
BEYOND THE PICKET-  
LINES, BUT IF YOU ARE  
HALF AS GOOD AS  
I THINK YOU ARE,  
THEY'LL NEVER  
SEE YOU.

I'LL  
DO IT.



ONE OTHER THING. THERE ARE  
WOLVES ABOUT, TONIGHT. I SAW  
TWO, AND IF I SAW THAT MANY,  
THERE ARE PROBABLY  
MORE.



IT WAS ALMOST  
AS IF THEY WANTED  
ME TO SEE THEM. ANYWAY,  
THEY SHOULDN'T BOTHER  
YOU. WOLVES USUALLY  
STAY AWAY FROM  
PEOPLE.

I WOULDN'T  
HAVE KNOWN THAT.  
I ONLY GREW UP  
AROUND SHEP-  
HERDS.

WE'LL  
DO IT NOW,  
THEN.



ONCE YOU  
CUT THE ROPES,  
RETURN AS  
QUICKLY AS  
YOU CAN.



YOU ARE PART  
OF THE PATTERN,  
TOO, AND I WOULD NOT  
RISK YOU, ANY MORE THAN  
ANY OF THE OTHERS,  
IF THE WHOLE WORLD  
WAS NOT AT  
RISK.



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.

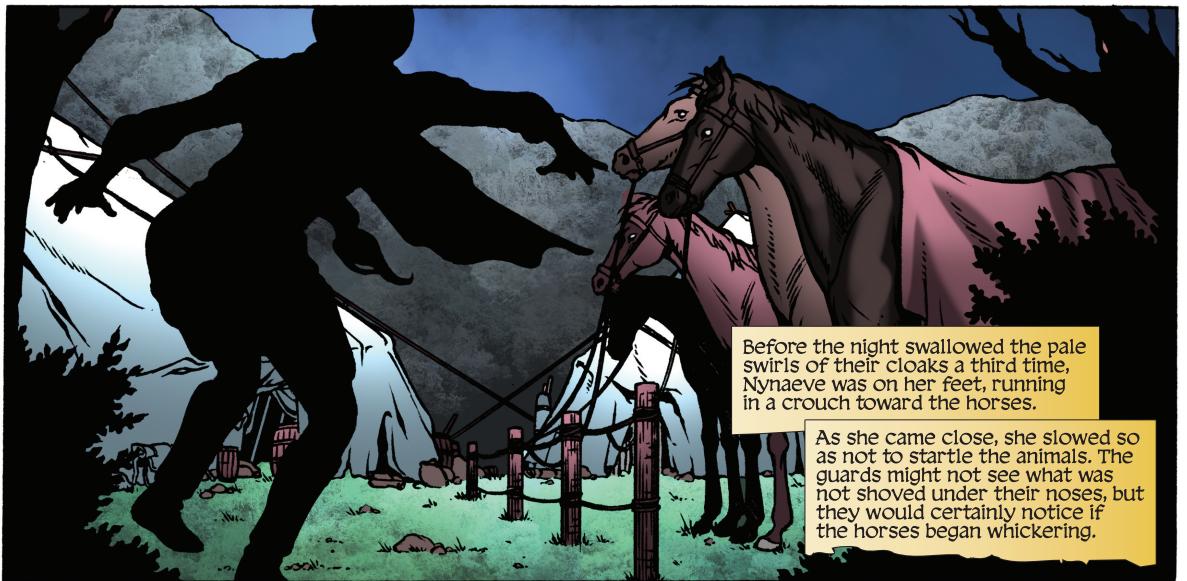
Relief flooded through her like warmth when she finally caught the smell of horses.



Nynaeve 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.





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.



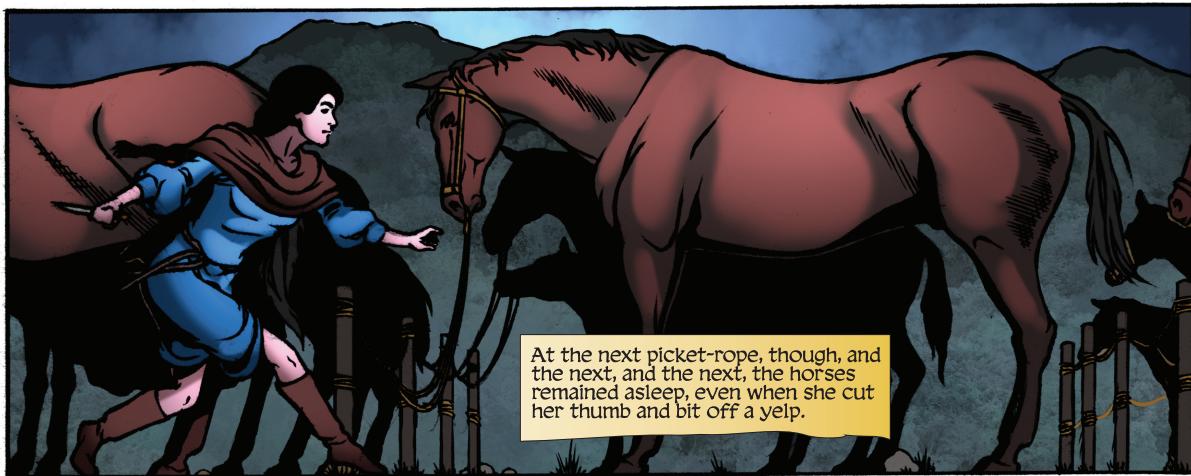
In the dim moonlight she was nearly on the endpost of the picket line before she saw it.



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.





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.

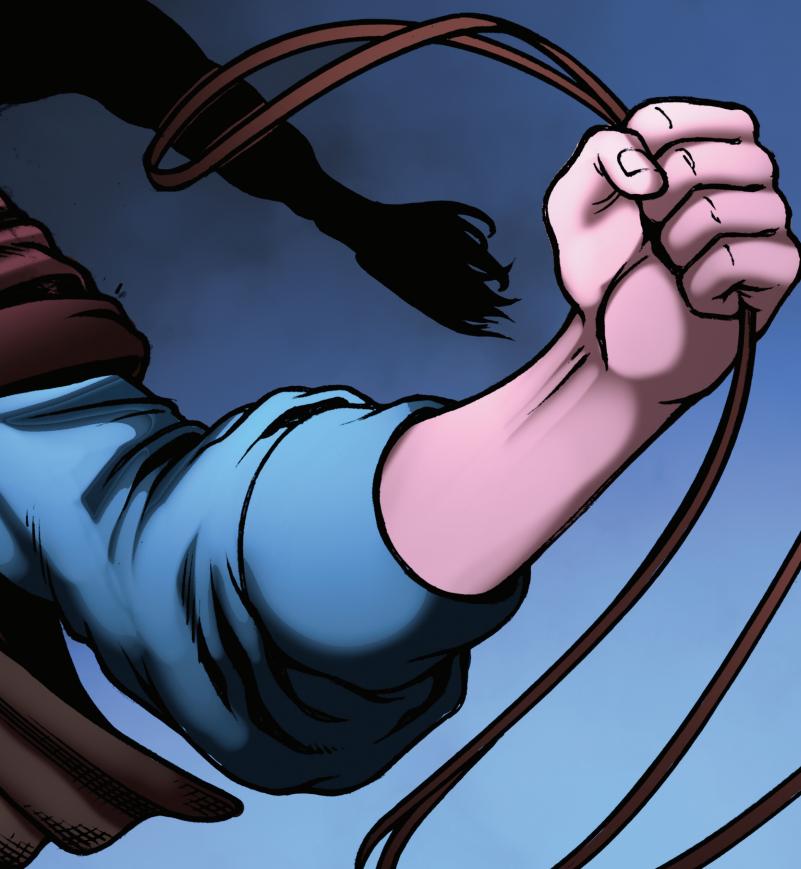
Light, make her do it now, before...

# KRRRAKA-KA

Incredible.



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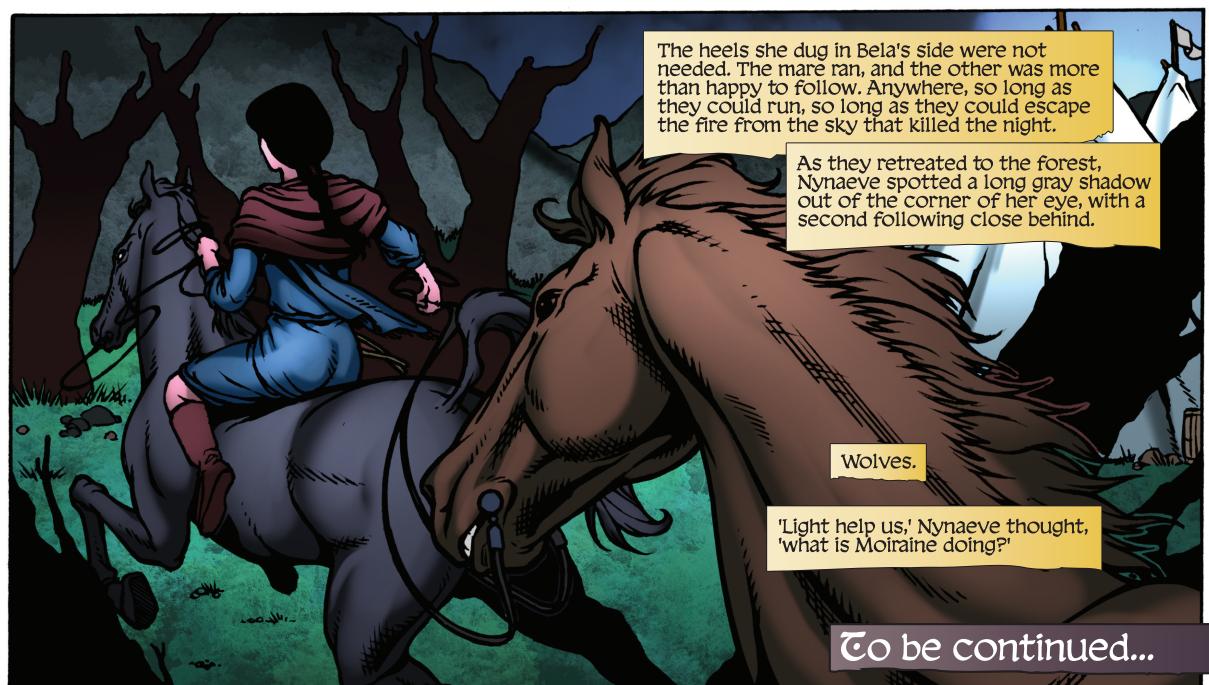
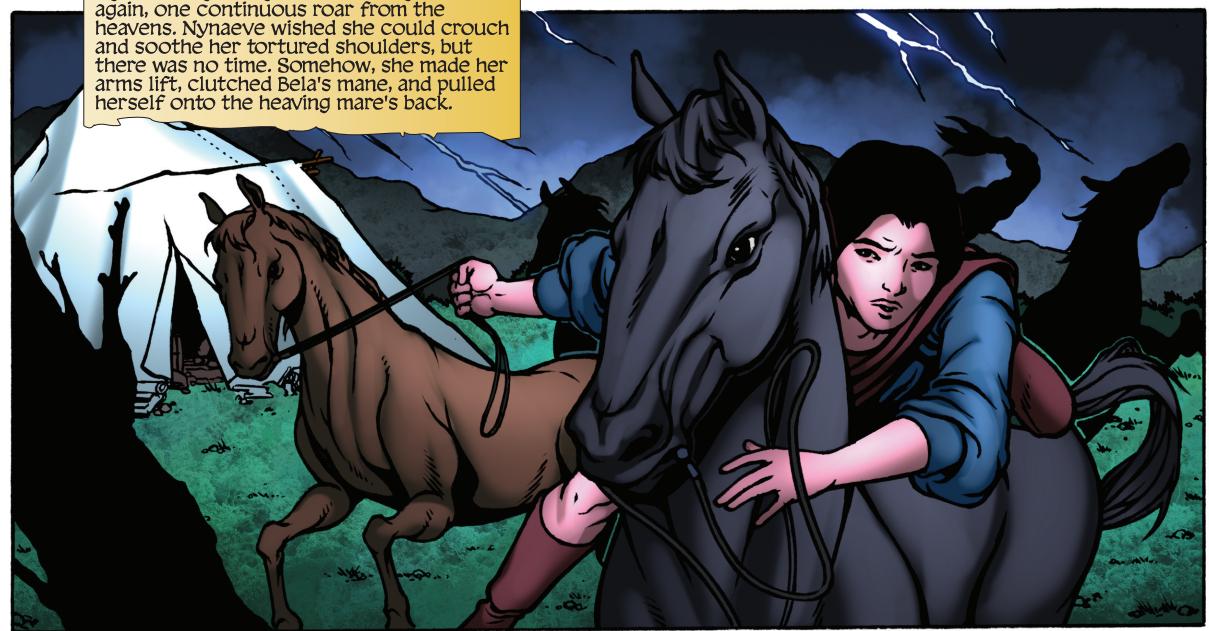




Nynaeve was too busy to exult; at the first clash, Bela jerked one way while the other horse reared in the opposite direction.

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...