



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



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

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

the EYE of the WORLD

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On the hard-packed dirt of the North Road the horses stretched out, manes and tails streaming back in the moonlight as they raced northward, hooves pounding a steady rhythm.

On and on they sped, northward and into the night, time fading into an indistinct blur.

Abruptly, Lan slowed, then brought the file of horses to a stop.

Rand was not sure how long they'd been moving, but a soft ache filled his legs from gripping the saddle.

Ahead of them in the night, lights sparkled, as if a tall swarm of fireflies held one place among the trees.

They were *windows*. The windows of *houses* covering the sides and top of a *hill*.

It was Watch Hill. He could hardly believe they had come so far.



MUCH AS I WOULD LIKE TO PUT ALL THESE VILLAGES BEHIND ME, A FEW HOURS REST WOULD NOT GO AMISS JUST NOW.

SURELY WE HAVE ENOUGH OF A LEAD TO ALLOW THAT?

WE CANNOT STOP UNTIL WE'RE ACROSS THE TAREN. NOT FOR MORE THAN A FEW MINUTES.

BUT THE HORSES. WE'LL RUN THEM TO DEATH IF WE TRY TO GO ANY FURTHER TONIGHT. MOIRAIN SEDAI, SURELY YOU--

Rand had vaguely noticed Moiraine move amongst the horses, but he had not paid any real attention to what she did. He fell silent as she laid her hands on Cloud's neck.

I DID NOT KNOW SHE COULD DO THAT.

YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE SUSPECTED IT. YOU WATCHED HER WITH YOUR FATHER.

SHE WILL WASH ALL THE FATIGUE AWAY. FIRST FROM THE HORSES, THEN THE REST OF YOU.

THE REST OF US. NOT YOU?

Moments later, the horse tossed his head and danced a step sideways, as restive as if he had spent a **week** in the stable.

I DON'T NEED IT, NOT YET. AND NOT HER - WHAT SHE CAN DO FOR OTHERS, SHE CAN'T DO FOR HERSELF. ONLY ONE OF US WILL RIDE TIRED. YOU'D BETTER HOPE SHE DOESN'T GROW TOO TIRED BEFORE WE REACH TAR VALON.

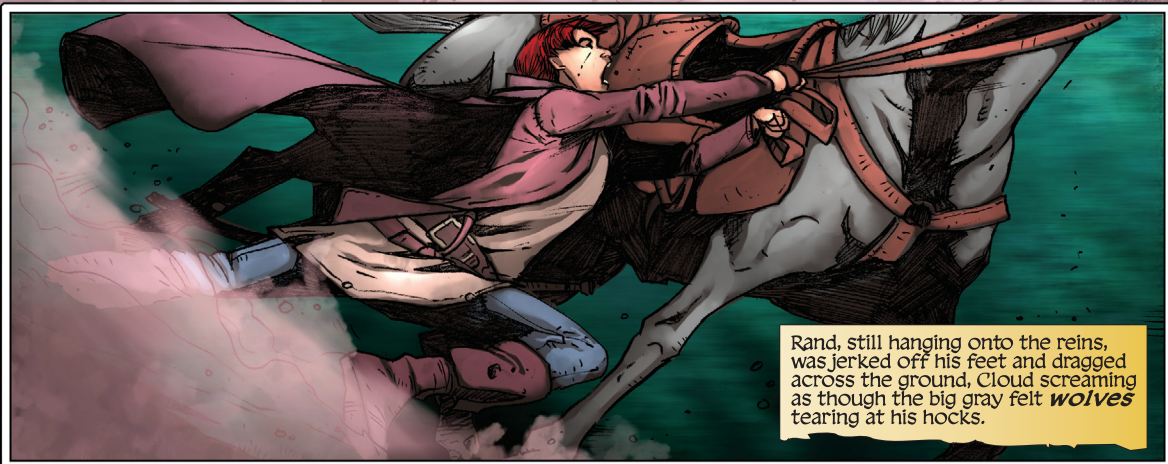
TOO TIRED FOR WHAT?

YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT YOUR BELA, RAND.

SHE HAS A GOOD HEART. STRANGE AS IT SEEMS, SHE MAY BE THE **LEAST** WEARY OF ALL.

SKRAAAAW

The wind of the Draghkar's wings beat at Rand with a feel like the touch of slime. He had not time to feel the fear of it, for his horse, Cloud, was twisting desperately, as if attempting to shake off some clinging thing.

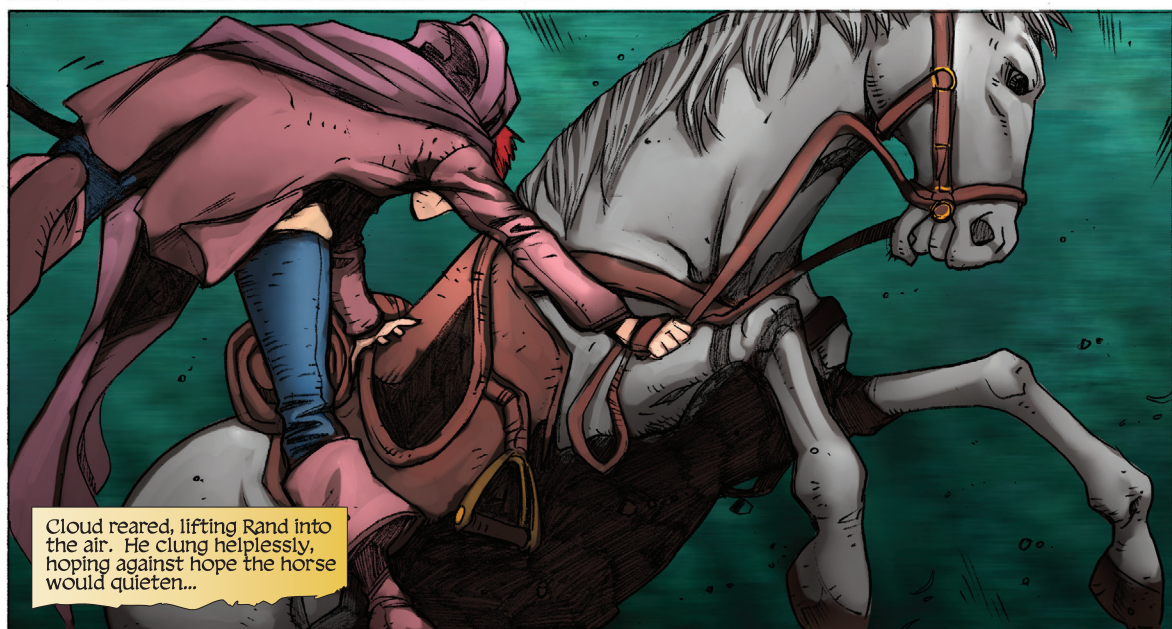


Rand, still hanging onto the reins, was jerked off his feet and dragged across the ground, Cloud screaming as though the big gray felt *wolves* tearing at his hocks.

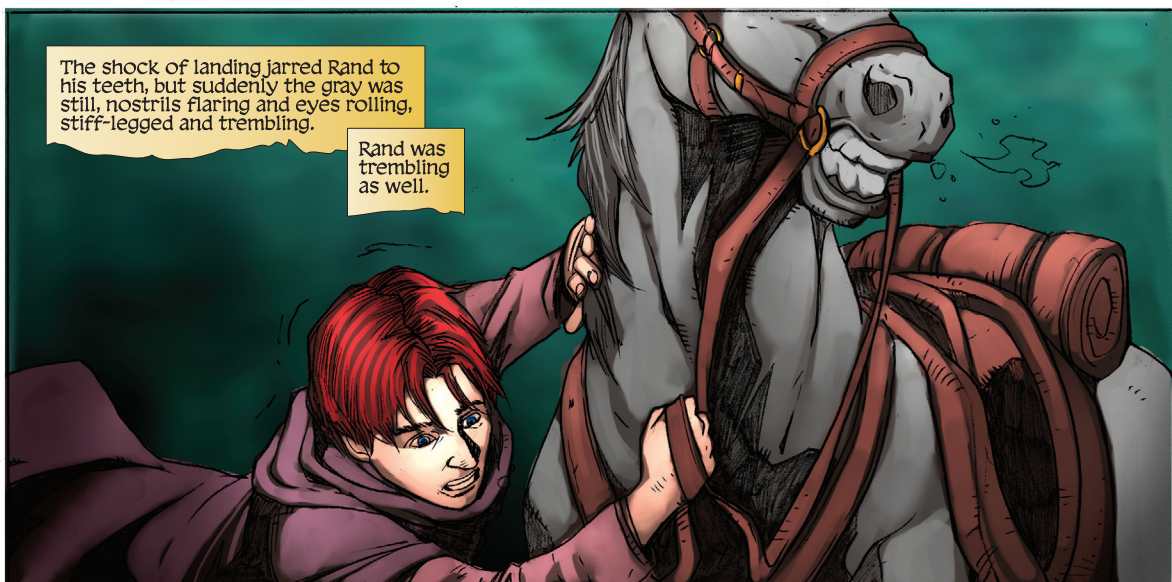


Somehow Rand maintained his grip on the reins; using the other hand as much as his legs he scrambled to his feet, taking leaping, staggering steps to keep from being pulled down again.

His breath came in ragged pants of desperation. He could not let Cloud get away. He threw out a frantic hand, barely catching the bridle.



Cloud reared, lifting Rand into the air. He clung helplessly, hoping against hope the horse would quieten...



The shock of landing jarred Rand to his teeth, but suddenly the gray was still, nostrils flaring and eyes rolling, stiff-legged and trembling.

Rand was trembling as well.



THE DRAGHKAR
WOULD NOT HAVE SHOWED
ITSELF UNLESS IT HAD
ALREADY REPORTED OUR
WHEREABOUTS TO THE
MYRDDRAAL.



SKRAAAAW

IT TRACKS
US NOW, MARKING US
FOR THE HALFMAN.
HE WON'T BE
FAR.

They galloped in a knot, horses all
jostling together as they ran. Lan
ordered them to spread out again,
but no one wanted to be even a
little alone in the night.

The Warder gave
up and let them
run clustered.





Spurred by the Draghkar's cries, they ran. Cloud strained to force himself between the Warder's black and the Aes Sedai's trim mare, yet the gray could not gain so much as a step on the other two horses.



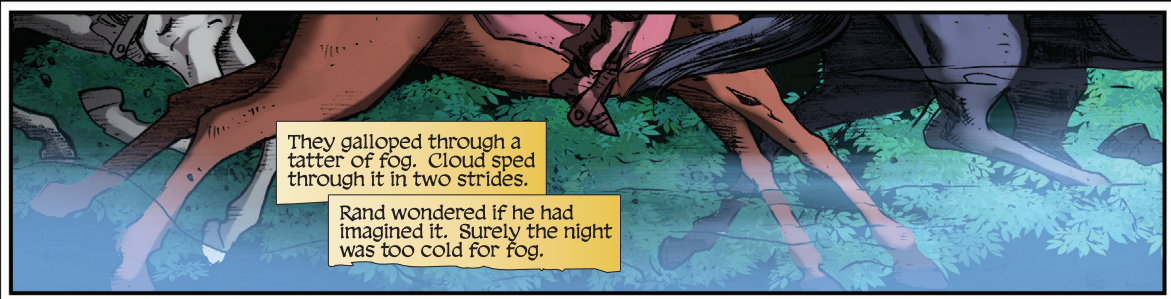
Rand looked at Bela - who ran with neck outstretched, matching the larger horses' every stride - and thought the Aes Sedai must've done something more than simply ridding her of fatigue.

Lan must have asked a question then, for Moiraine suddenly shouted over the wind and the pounding of hooves.



I CANNOT!
MOST ESPECIALLY
FROM THE BACK OF
A GALLOPING HORSE.
THEY ARE NOT EASILY
KILLED, EVEN WHEN
THEY CAN BE
SEEN.

WE
MUST RUN AND
HOPE.

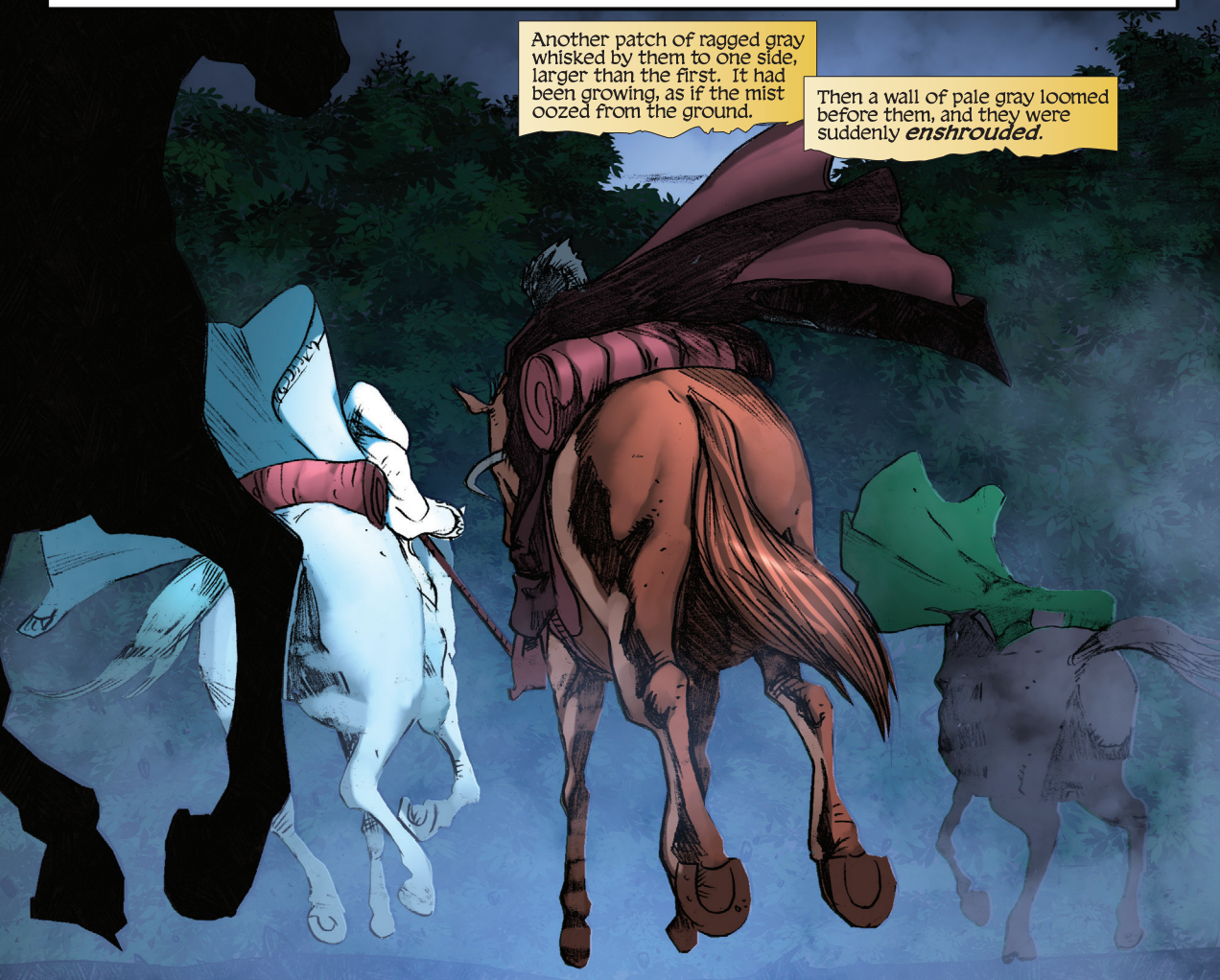


They galloped through a tatter of fog. Cloud sped through it in two strides.

Rand wondered if he had imagined it. Surely the night was too cold for fog.

Another patch of ragged gray whisked by them to one side, larger than the first. It had been growing, as if the mist oozed from the ground.

Then a wall of pale gray loomed before them, and they were suddenly *enshrouded*.



Lan did *not* slow their pace.

THERE IS STILL ONLY ONE PLACE WE CAN BE GOING!



MYRDDRAAL ARE SLY.

I WILL USE ITS OWN SLYNESS AGAINST IT.



Slaty mist obscured both sky and ground, so that the riders, themselves turned to shadow, appeared to float right through the clouds. Even the legs of the horses seemed to have vanished.

Rand shifted in his saddle. Knowing Moiraine could do these things was one thing; having those things leave his skin damp was something else again.

He realized he was holding his breath, too, and called himself nine kinds of idiot. He couldn't ride all the way to Taren Ferry without breathing.



KEEP CLOSE!
STAY ONLY SO FAR
BACK AS YOU CAN SEE
THE OUTLINES OF THE
OTHERS!



After the advice, the Warder did not slacken his stallion's dead run. Side by side, he and Moiraine led the way through the fog as if they could see clearly what lay ahead.



The rest could only trust and follow.

And hope.

It must have been hours that they rode. Rand was sure. Only the rush of wind and the stretch and gather of a horse beneath him told him he was moving at all.





Rand was so startled at Lan's sudden command that Cloud forged ahead for half a dozen strides before Rand could pull him to a halt.

And then, Rand *stared*.



Houses loomed in the fog on all sides. Strangely tall to Rand's eye. He had never seen this place before, but he had heard descriptions.

That tallness came from high redstone foundations, necessary when the spring melt in the Mountains of Mist made the Taren overflow its banks.

They had reached Taren Ferry.



Rand had met few people from Taren Ferry. He tried to recall what little he knew about them.

They seldom ventured down into what they called the 'lower villages,' with their noses turned up as if they' smelled something bad. The few he had met bore strange names, like Hilltop and Stoneboat.

One and all, Taren Ferry folk had a reputation for slyness and trickery. If you shook hands with a Taren Ferry man, people said, you counted your fingers afterward.



Before long, Lan and Moiraine stopped in front of a tall dark house that... looked exactly like any other in the village.

WAIT
HERE.



WHAM
WHAM
WHAM

I THOUGHT
HE WANTED
QUIET.





WHAT'S THIS? WHAT'S THIS?



MASTER HIGHTOWER, JUST THE MAN I NEED. WE WANT TO CROSS OVER ON YOUR FERRY.

THE FERRY GOES OVER IN DAYLIGHT. NOT IN THE NIGHT. NOT EVER.



AND NOT IN THE FOG, NEITHER. COME BACK WHEN THE SUN'S UP AND THE FOG'S - HEY!



TINK
TINK
TINK
TINK



AND AS MUCH AGAIN WHEN WE ARE SAFELY ON THE OTHER SIDE.

BUT WE LEAVE NOW.





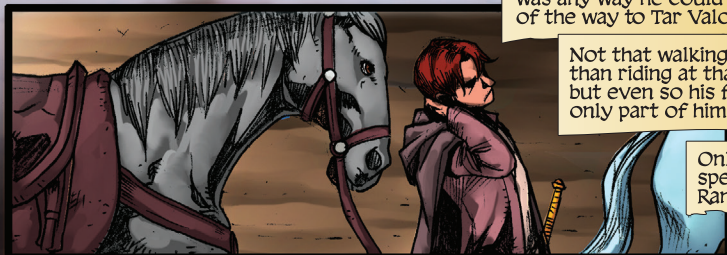
After dealing with the ferryman, Lan came down the stairs, told the company to dismount, and lead their horses after him through the fog.

Again, they had the trust that the Warder knew where he was going.

Rand moved stiffly from the ache of the long ride, wondering if there was any way he could walk the rest of the way to Tar Valon.

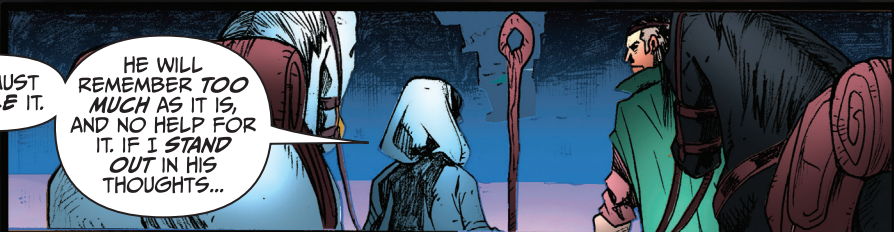
Not that walking was much better than riding at that moment, of course, but even so his feet were almost the only part of him that was not sore.

Only once did anyone speak loud enough for Rand to hear clearly.



YOU MUST HANDLE IT.

HE WILL REMEMBER TOO MUCH AS IT IS, AND NO HELP FOR IT. IF I **STAND OUT** IN HIS THOUGHTS...



Beyond that, Rand could hear only grumbles and muttering.

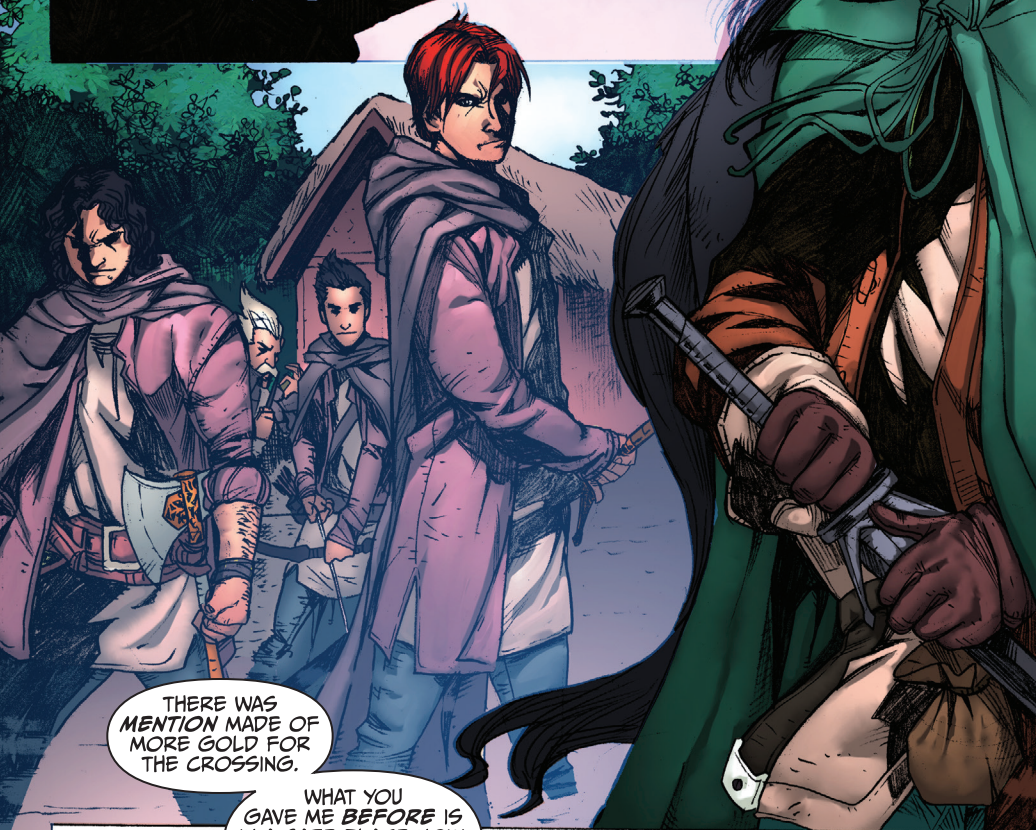
Mat and Perrin muttering with bitten-off exclamations whenever one stubbed their toe on something unseen in the fog, and Thom grumbling words like 'fire,' 'mulled wine,' and 'hot meal.'



Egwene marched along without a word. She was getting her adventure, and as long as it lasted Rand doubted she would notice little things like fog or damp or cold.



Later, at the docks, Lan gave specific instruction to Rand, Perrin, and Mat, moving swiftly back to his horse when bobbing lights appeared in the mist, signaling the approach of the Ferryman and his haulers.



THERE WAS MENTION MADE OF MORE GOLD FOR THE CROSSING.

WHAT YOU GAVE ME BEFORE IS IN A SAFE PLACE NOW, HEAR? IT'S NONE OF IT WHERE YOU CAN GET AT IT.



THE REST OF THE GOLD GOES INTO YOUR HAND WHEN WE ARE ON THE OTHER SIDE.

LET'S BE ABOUT IT, THEN.





WOULD THEY HAVE **REALLY** TRIED TO ROB US? HE ACTED MORE AS IF HE WERE AFRAID WE WERE GOING TO ROB **HIM**.

WITH THE **FOG** TO HIDE THEM...WELL, WHEN WHAT THEY DO IS HIDDEN, MEN SOMETIMES DEAL WITH STRANGERS IN WAYS THEY WOULDN'T IF THERE WERE OTHER EYES TO SEE.

AND THE QUICKEST TO HARM A STRANGER ARE THE **SOONEST** TO THINK A STRANGER TO HARM THEM.

THIS FELLOW... I BELIEVE HE MIGHT SELL HIS **MOTHER** TO **TROLLOCS** FOR STEW MEAT IF THE PRICE WERE RIGHT.

I'M A LITTLE SURPRISED YOU ASK. I HEARD THE WAY PEOPLE IN EMOND'S FIELD SPEAK OF THOSE FROM TAREN FERRY.

YES, BUT... EVERYONE SAYS THEY... BUT I NEVER THOUGHT THAT... WHAT IF...



HE MIGHT
TELL THE FADE WE
CROSSED ON THE FERRY.
MAYBE HE'LL BRING THE
TROLLOCS OVER
AFTER US.

HEH.

ROBBING A
STRANGER IS *ONE*
THING, DEALING WITH A
HALFMAN SOMETHING
ELSE AGAIN.



CAN YOU REALLY
SEE HIM FERRYING
TROLLOCS OVER IN THIS
FOG, NO MATTER HOW MUCH
GOLD WERE BEING
OFFERED?

OR EVEN TALKING
TO A MYRDDRAAL, IF HE
HAD ANY CHOICE? JUST THE
THOUGHT OF IT WOULD
KEEP HIM RUNNING FOR
A MONTH.



I DON'T THINK
WE HAVE TO WORRY
VERY MUCH ABOUT DARK-
FRIENDS IN TAREN FERRY
NOT HERE. WE ARE SAFE...
FOR A TIME, AT LEAST.
FROM THIS LOT,
ANYWAY.

WATCH
YOURSELF.



AND SAY *NO
MORE*. THESE ARE
BAD DAYS TO SPEAK OF
TROLLOCS, OR DARK-
FRIENDS, OR THE FATHER
OF LIES WITH STRANGE
EARS TO HEAR.

SUCH TALK
CAN BRING WORSE THAN
THE *DRAGON'S FANG*
SCRAWLED ON YOUR
DOOR.

Abruptly, pilings loomed in the shadowy mist before them. The ferry thudded on the far bank, and the haulers hurried to lash the craft fast and let down the ramp.

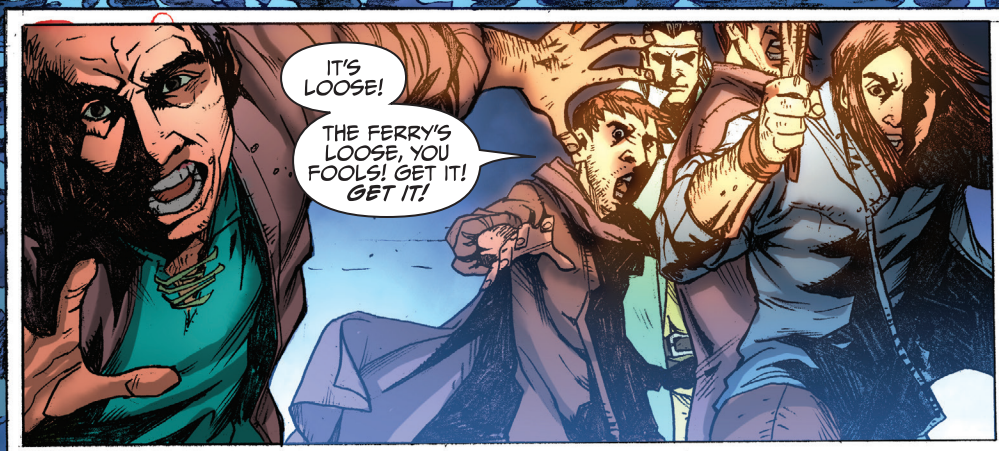
HMPH. THE
TAREN'S NOT
THAT WIDE.

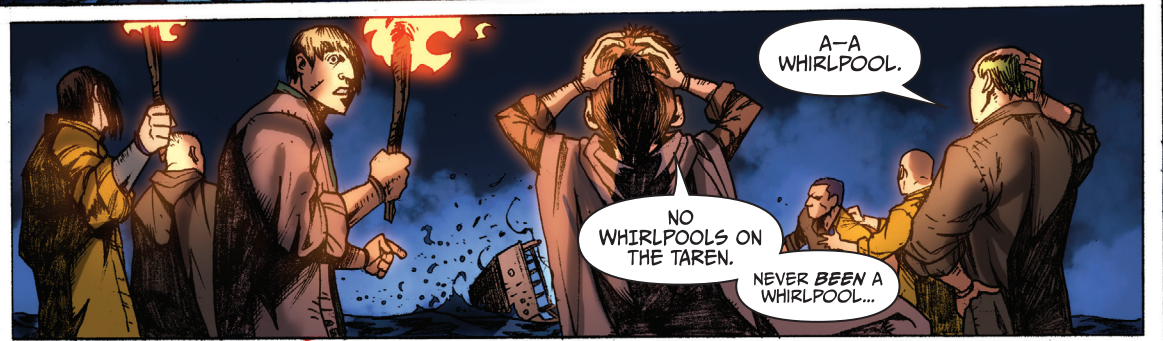
FROM ALL
I'D HEARD, YOU'D
THINK IT WOULD'VE
TAKEN A WEEK TO
CROSS!

HERE, NOW!
HERE! WHERE'S
MY GOLD?

IT SHALL BE
PAID. AND A SILVER
MARK FOR EACH OF YOUR
MEN, FOR THE QUICK
CROSSING.







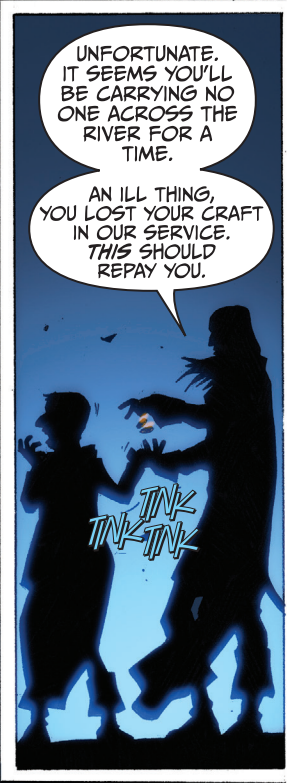
A-A
WHIRLPOOL.

NO
WHIRLPOOLS ON
THE TAREN.

NEVER BEEN A
WHIRLPOOL...



AN UNFORTUNATE OCCURRENCE.



UNFORTUNATE. IT SEEMS YOU'LL BE CARRYING NO ONE ACROSS THE RIVER FOR A TIME.

AN ILL THING, YOU LOST YOUR CRAFT IN OUR SERVICE. *THIS* SHOULD REPAY YOU.



I--I--



AIYYEE!



THERE IS NOTHING LEFT TO KEEP US HERE, NOW.

To be continued...