

KNIGHT CLUB: The Bat & The Crow – One shot

PAGE ONE

PANEL ONE – EXT. DARK BATTLEFIELD – NIGHT

This panel takes up one half of the page, vertically. The setting is a DARK and CHAOTIC BATTLEFIELD. In the foreground is MALIZAR. He is a tall, lanky, and worn-looking evil wizard in a scarred, leathery cloak. Bathed in shadow behind Malizar is his army of gruesome fiends, both human and non-human.

CAPTION (top of page): In the time before the Three Crown War, before the lands of Trygia were forever lost, vast armies of unfathomable creatures battled for the right to shape the four realms in their image. The commanders of these warring factions were two wicked spell-casters of indescribable power.

CAPTION (beside Malizar): Malizar the Bloodthirsty ruled legions of cruel beasts and hideous undead fiends. His mastery of the dark arts was rivaled by that of only one other.

PANEL TWO – EXT. DARK BATTLEFIELD – NIGHT

This panel makes up the second half of the page. In a similar setting, we see KALKUS in the foreground. He is a stocky, crook-nosed man with wild hair and an ornate feathered cloak. Bathed in similar shadow behind him is another similar army of creatures.

CAPTION: (beside Kalkus): Kalkus the Dark was the only wizard to oppose Malizar's reign and live. He ruled over an entire kingdom of twisted, otherworldly beings and wraith-like warlocks.

CAPTION: (bottom of page): The two dark masters collided on countless occasions. Each confrontation brought about immense turmoil, painting entire mountains red with inhuman blood. Still, neither man would yield.

PAGE TWO

PANEL ONE – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – DAY

This tremendous, dilapidated stone TOWER sits at a slight angle. Whole CHUNKS of its stonework have fallen to the soft earth below. The nature of this structure seems to tell a story of many large sieges upon it.

CAPTION: It wasn't long before Malizar and Kalkus heard some most pleasing news. An ancient spell-caster and enemy had recently passed away in the night, leaving behind all

of his worldly possessions. The tower he'd lived in now contained a fortune of mystical items and sacred objects that held great power.

PANEL TWO – EXT. TRYGIAN BATTLEFIELD – TIMELESS

We now see a scene of HELLFIRE, as a KIND-LOOKING WIZARD dressed in spotless garments BEHEADS a particularly nasty looking DEMON with an ornate SWORD. The demon looks to be about the size of a normal man, though twisted and powerful, small horns jutting from his head.

CAPTION: What Malizar and Kalkus wanted most, however, was an unknown artifact that the wizard had wrested from the clutches of a lesser demon. No one, aside from the wizard himself, knew what this particular trinket could do, or even what it was.

PANEL THREE – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – DAY

We now see Kalkus and Malizar, standing face to face at the bottom of the tower. There is a little distance between them.

CAPTION: But each spell-caster figured that this artifact *might* be the key to destroying the other.

PANEL FOUR – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – CONTINUOUS

We now see from the perspective of the doorway as Kalkus and Malizar both fly toward the reader as if they have just heard the starting gun in a race.

CAPTION: They knew that the ultimate victor could be whoever reached the artifact first.

PAGE THREE

PANEL ONE – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – MOMENTS LATER

We see a close up of a hideous Uk’Nath as it bares its fangs and belts out a call to arms for its monstrous brethren.

UK’NATH: UUURRRRRRAAAAANNGGG!!

CAPTION: Outside, Kalkus and Malizar’s armies engaged in what each knew to be the final conflict.

PANEL TWO – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – CONTINUOUS

As the two factions collide, the tower in the background trembles and quakes as massive power is barely contained within its walls. It's clear that neither army is going to be taking any prisoners, while Kalkus and Malizar are clearly having their own duel within the tower.

CAPTION: As the depraved fiends drew each other's blood by fist and by fang, their self-appointed overlords rocked the ancient tower from within. The aura of dark magic was palpable.

PANEL THREE– INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – MOMENTS LATER

We now see Kalkus and Malizar as they stand, exhausted, bloody, and battered. They are both stopped in their tracks, looking at an elaborately designed BOX on a PEDISTAL. Dark energy seeps from beneath the lid.

CAPTION: When they finally found what they wanted, they had thrown every dirty trick and ghastly spell at each other. They could each sense the power of the artifact in the box before them, but knew they were too evenly matched to stop each other from reaching it.

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, Malizar TRANSFORMS himself into a small BAT. Similarly, Kalkus TRANSFORMS himself into a CROW.

CAPTION: They each made one more effort to gain the upper hand.

MALIZAR: SKREEEEE IT'S MINE!

KALKUS: CAWW! CAWW! NEVER!!

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, Kalkus and Malizar, in their animal forms, are bathed in pure white light, and look as if they are each in seering pain.

CAPTION: But in a final act of desperation, they simultaneously called out the forbidden curse.

KALKUS & MALIZAR (in unison): AS YOU ARE NOW, SO SHALL YOU FOREVER BE!!

PAGE FOUR

PANEL ONE – INT. DRAGON’S GULLET TAVERN – NIGHT

We are now in the Dragon’s Gullet tavern. This seedy establishment looks like the type of dive one would find all manner of thugs and con men. A long BAR sits to one side of the room, while TABLES and CHAIRS stand nearby.

We see a CLOAKED FIGURE, his face completely obscured by the shadow of a hood, his eyes shining from within. He is sitting at a table across from the KNIGHT CLUB, though for now we see only him from the Knight Club’s point of view.

CLOAKED FIGURE: You see, the forbidden curse binds the victim to their current place, in their current state, for all time. There is a widely respected rule against using it, since all who do magic must leave a spell open to reversal.

PANEL TWO – INT. DRAGON’S GULLET TAVERN – CONTINUOUS

We now see SIR CARTER and TED THE ARMORER, sitting across the table from the cloaked figure. Carter is very interested in this story, it appears, while Ted is simply guzzling alcohol from a large MUG shaped vaguely like a horned skull.

CARTER: So what you’re saying is that the two men in your story doomed themselves to eternal imprisonment in the loft of that tower? That’s fascinating. Perhaps even poetic!

TED: GLURG GLURG

PANEL THREE – INT. DRAGON’S GULLET TAVERN – CONTINUOUS

We now see Ted and CHANCE RAVENHART, who is sitting to his other side. Chance is laid back, not particularly enthralled by the story, but not as flippantly disrespectful as Ted. Ted slams down his mug with a belch.

TED: Uurrrpp. Ehmm. Nice fairy-tale. Listen, I’ve got a story about a lizard woman that’ll turn you inside out!

CHANCE: Not again, Ted. We’ve all heard the story. We’ve all seen the scars.

PANEL FOUR – INT. DRAGON’S GULLET TAVERN – CONTINUOUS

We are back on the cloaked figure as he again addresses the group.

CLOAKED FIGURE: Ah... if I may continue... I assure you this is no mere bedtime fable. I am prepared to pay whatever excessive fee you adventurers require in return for the very artifact I spoke of.

PANEL FIVE – INT. DRAGON’S GULLET TAVERN – CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, Ted’s ape-like hand shoots across the table to shake hands with the cloaked figure. Ted grins down at him almost imposingly.

TED: Well why didn’t you say that in the first place? My favorite fees are the excessive kind!

CAPTION (bottom): **KNIGHT CLUB: The Bat & The Crow** – Illustrated by Sean W. Thornton, Written & Created by Christopher Howard Wolf

PAGE FIVE

PANEL ONE – INT. DRAGON’S GULLET TAVERN – MOMENTS LATER

We now see the cloaked figure departing in the background as Chance and Carter discuss the proposition. Ted is largely just in the way of this debate.

CARTER: So what do you make of him, Chance?

CHANCE: Seems completely harmless. Naturally, I don’t trust a word that came out of his mouth.

PANEL TWO – INT. DRAGON’S GULLET TAVERN – CONTINUOUS

Chance holds up a small COIN BAG and a handful of a few small coins. She shrugs. It’s clear that, save for these coins, she’s broke.

CHANCE: However, mistrust is a luxury I cannot afford for the time being. I think-

PANEL THREE – INT. DRAGON’S GULLET TAVERN – CONTINUOUS

Ted puts one arm around Chance’s shoulders, and the other around Carter. He grins.

TED: Come on. All you two do is think!

CARTER: *Someone here has to.*

PANEL FOUR – INT. DRAGON’S GULLET TAVERN – CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, LERON appears at the table and begins to take a seat. He is a fancy, foppish character, his attire is nasty neat and his glorious locks are well-kempt. The Knight Club is now complete, with all four members here. Carter addresses Leron as he rejoins the group.

CARTER: Hail, Leron! A strange old man in a robe just offered us money. I say we should take it. What do *you* think?

PANEL FIVE – INT. DRAGON’S GULLET TAVERN – CONTINUOUS

Leron, fully seated now, folds his arms and looks a little miffed.

LERON: Tsk. I think the interesting things always happen when I’m in the little knight’s room!

PAGE SIX

PANEL ONE – EXT. TED’S ARMORY – LATER

This squat stone building looks as if it has weathered a few attacks from burglars and other unsavory folks. A large SIGN hangs out front, reading:

TED’S ARMORY
ALL WELCOME! *

In smaller text on the bottom of the sign, we see:

* ENTER AT THINE OWN RISK.

PANEL TWO – INT. TED’S ARMORY – AT THAT MOMENT

Ted is now in full ARMOR, save for his HELMET. He holds a razor-sharp SWORD in his hands, and is testing the sharpness of the blade with his thumb. A small sign behind him reads: THIEVES WILL BE BLUDGEONED UNTIL DEAD.

TED: Right. My store, my rules. Take what you need for the quest. If you end up breaking it, you’re buying it.

PANEL THREE – INT. TED’S ARMORY – CONTINUOUS

We now see Leron, looking a little indecisive as Ted holds the SWORD and a MACE up in front of him.

TED: So what’ll it be? Smashy or stabby?

Leron: Hmm. Can I see how I look holding them?

PANEL FOUR – INT. TED’S ARMORY – CONTINUOUS

Chance holds up a THROWING AXE and studies the handle.

CHANCE: I trust these axe heads won’t come loose in mid-swing?

TED: (off panel) Hmph. I’m gonna pretend you didn’t ask that.

CHANCE: Carter, what are you wielding this time out?

PANEL FIVE – INT. TED’S ARMORY – CONTINUOUS

Carter stands at a large wooden TABLE with a few KNIVES sticking out of its surface. He holds a rolled-up MAP over the table.

CARTER: Well, rather than run about grabbing everything shiny that catches my eye – I’d prefer to know what we’re in for so I can aptly prepare.

PANEL SIX – INT. TED’S ARMORY – CONTINUOUS

Carter stands over the unfurled, tattered map. It displays a bevy of dangerous looking areas with a twisted dotted line through most of them.

CARTER: Let’s check the trusty, dusty map... Shall we?

PAGE SEVEN

PANEL ONE – EXT. FOREST OF A THOUSAND WOES – LATER

The Knight Club gang is now within a deep, dark FOREST. The TREES here seem to be grabbing and tearing at the group with their branches as our heroes strike back with their weapons. Ted is now wearing his helmet in addition to his armor, and is carrying a giant

war hammer. Chance is carrying a large battle axe, with a couple throwing axes on her belt. Leron and Carter seem to prefer wielding swords.

CAPTION: Splendid. First we'll have cut through the Forest of a Thousand Woes.

TREE #1: Woe!

TREE #2: Woe.

TREE #3: Woe...

PANEL TWO – EXT. NEFARIOUS SWAMP – LATER

The Knight Club gang is now plodding through a SWAMP. A group of GLOURINS, dwarf-sized mushroom creatures with large, orb-like eyes and fungus covered bodies, are pulling at the group. Ted is smashing one on the head with his hammer.

CAPTION: That will take us to the Nefarious Swamp. Ooh, we'll have to watch out for the Glourins.

GLOURIN #1: Ssstay heeere with usss...

GLOURIN #2: Ssssleeeep in the sssoft muuuck and mire.

SFX: (Ted hammering the Glourin) PTTHT!

PANEL THREE – EXT. FROG HEAD BOG – LATER

The group is now wading through a foggy BOG, up to their waists in goop and slime. Each of them has a strange and bloated FROG sitting on top of their head. The Knight Club gang looks particularly annoyed by this circumstance, though they are simply pressing onward without trying to remove the amphibians.

CAPTION: Then it's a quick hop through "Frog Head Bog", whatever that is.

FROG #1: Nurrpp.

FROG #2: Gurrpp.

PANEL FOUR – INT. VOLVANO CAVERN – LATER

The gang is now inexplicably fighting round, rocky LAVA CREATURES amid a fiery setting. Chance is burying an axe in one of the creatures' heads as the ground cracks beneath their very feet.

CAPTION: And I suppose we'll pass through this volcano. That doesn't seem to make very much sense, does it?

SFX: (Chance's axe striking the lava creature) CHUKK!

PAGE EIGHT

PANEL ONE – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – LATER

The Knight Club now stands in front of Abyss Tower. It is in even worse disrepair than before. A bed of SKELETAL REMAINS lie scattered in front of the tower. These bones are all that remain of Malizar and Kalkus' armies, all of whom fought to the death. A few large STONE BLOCKS have fallen free of the tower and rest half-buried at the foot of the structure. Our heroes look up at the tower, as if in awe.

CAPTION: From there it's a long walk to our destination... the fabled Abyss Tower.

TED: Ugh. That's going to be a lot of stairs.

PANEL TWO – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – CONTINUOUS

Leron covers his mouth as if he is letting out a gasp. Carter walks toward the tower, looking at the skulls and bones scattered around him. His hand is ready at his sword. Just in case.

LERON: *gasp* I don't like the looks of this place at all! Oh, it's wretched!

CARTER: So many bones. What caused such carnage?

PANEL THREE – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – CONTINUOUS

Carter looks up as a voice off-panel replies to him. It is not one he has heard before.

VOICE: (off panel) Their own fault, it was.

CARTER: Who...?

PANEL FOUR – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – CONTINUOUS

We now see that one of the STONE BLOCKS that have fallen from the tower is actually speaking! A crooked little angular FACE resides on the block's surface.

STONE BLOCK: Saw it all, I did. Two armies. Not a one of them left standing in the end. Awful shame, that.

PANEL FIVE – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – CONTINUOUS

Chance approaches the talking stone block cautiously, but with curiosity.

STONE BLOCK: Ooohh, you're tough one! Ready to cut me in half, I see. That would be a terrible experience, I'm sure of it.

CHANCE: Do you intend to delay our progress by maiming, eating, or otherwise inconveniencing us?

STONE BLOCK: Ha ha ha! Can't even stop the birds from sitting on me.

PAGE NINE

PANEL ONE – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – PREVIOUSLY

We are now transported back to the epic battle that took place between Malizar and Kalkus at the beginning of our story. We see the side of Abyss tower as a blast inside blows a hole in the wall. Among the shards of rock is the stone block the Knight Club has been talking to. Its little crooked face looks shocked and dismayed as it flies through the air, an aura of magic surrounding it.

CAPTION: I was part of that tower. Got knocked off by some spell or another, then started thinking and talking and the whole bit.

SFX: (Explosion) FOOOOM!

STONE BLOCK: Eeee! What a horrific first memory this is going to be!

PANEL TWO – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – CONTINUOUS

The stone block addresses Chance again, who now seems more at ease with the strange creature. Leron boldly (or perhaps carelessly) touches the talking block to see what it's made of.

LERON: Ha! It *is* a stone. Isn't that just so peculiar?

STONE BLOCK: All small talk aside, I wouldn't go in there if I were you. Probably won't come back out again. That'd be awful to see.

CHANCE: We didn't come all this way to go home empty handed. We've been hired to retrieve a powerful artifact from inside. Maybe you know if it?

STONE BLOCK: Oh, there's lots of those. I couldn't tell you one from the other.

PANEL THREE – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – CONTINUOUS

Chance continues to converse with the chunk of animated rock.

CHANCE: Well, how about those wizards...

STONE BLOCK: Awful folks, them.

CHANCE: Right. They were after the same thing we are. Where did they end up?

STONE BLOCK: Ah, that I know! Top floor. That's where I come down from. Landed face-up by the grace of the Gods, I did.

PANEL FOUR – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – CONTINUOUS

Chance turns back to Ted, Carter, and Leron. She looks as if she's ready to lead the charge toward the tower.

CHANCE: Alright, you heard the man. Top floor, let's go.

STONE BLOCK: Oooh! Called me a man, she did. Fancy that.

PANEL FIVE – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – CONTINUOUS

As we see the Knight Club charging toward the tower in the background, the stone block rests in the foreground. It is clearly out of earshot of the group.

STONE BLOCK: (to self) Lovely folks. Shame they'll be eaten up.

PAGE TEN

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER MAIN ROOM – MOMENTS LATER

We are now inside the large MAIN ROOM of the tower. Moss and slime cling to the stone walls, the WOODEN FLOOR decayed and in disrepair. A large STONE BUST of an old man overlooks the room, and several LANTERNS are still somehow lit and flickering. The Knight Club group advances warily through the room.

CARTER: Strange. These lanterns should have long burned out.

TED: Would you feel better if we were in complete darkness?

CARTER: Well no, I'm just saying... It's a tad disconcerting.

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER MAIN ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Leron stands at the head of the group, lifting his sword high with a flourish.

LERON: Fear not, noble friends! Try not to focus on the appalling aesthetic, and let our blades guide us! Ha ha!

SFX: (off panel creaking) RRRKK-KKK

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER MAIN ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, Ted stops cold, a quizzical look upon what we can see of his face.

SFX: (off panel creaking) K-KRKK

TED: Er... I hope that sound is the foundation settling.

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER MAIN ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Ted looks up to see the stone BUST leaping free of its perch, plummeting down upon him much like a finely sculpted boulder. It seems to have a murderous look on its chiseled face.

SFX: (Gargoyle moving) RRKKKK-RKK

TED: Oh, dirty bugger...

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER MAIN ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Leron, Carter, and Chance barely have time to move as the large stone bust lands on Ted. Ted and the bust crash through the wooden floor, sending dust and splinters in every direction.

TED: UURFF!!

SFX: (floor collapsing) VRUUNNCHH!

PANEL SIX – INT. ABYSS TOWER MAIN HALL – CONTINUOUS

We now see the hole in the floor. Only DARKNESS is visible within. Carter carefully creeps to the edge.

CARTER: I say! Is everything alright down –

SFX: (Ted/Bust hitting cellar floor) CHOOM!

CARTER: Hmm.

PAGE ELEVEN

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER CELLAR – AT THAT MOMENT

We are now in a dark, dingy CELLAR. The only light cast down from the fresh HOLE in the ceiling above. Lying on the cold solid rock floor is Ted. He's all but knocked out cold. Shattered PIECES of the stone bust lie scattered around him, now motionless.

TED: Ohhh... Nng. Stinkin' statue... what was that about? I'm fine, guys.

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER CELLAR – CONTINUOUS

Ted gets to his feet, holding his back as if in pain.

SFX: (Ted's back) Krikk!

TED: Awp! Spoke too soon.

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER CELLAR – CONTINUOUS

As Ted stands, we see that he is standing face to face with a small GROUP OF ZOMBIES! The undead creatures were once human, and are all dressed as SERVANTS. There are a couple MAIDS, some BUTLERS, and a few other assorted servants.

BUTLER ZOMBIE #1: I say, ol' chum! Quite a tumble you took. I think you might need a good lie down.

TED: Gah!! Ghouls!

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER CELLAR – CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, Ted uses his giant HAMMER to completely clobber the Butler Zombie who just spoke. Needless to say, the undead creature falls apart at the seams. The other zombies simply watch the event unfold, seemingly without too much care for their associate.

TED: HUP!!

SFX: (Butler Zombie being hit) SPLUUNNCH!

BUTLER ZOMBIE #1: MY WORD!!

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER CELLAR – CONTINUOUS

As Ted readies his hammer for another swing, the other zombies look down at the splattered zombie, still as cool as cucumbers.

PANEL SIX – INT. ABYSS TOWER CELLAR – CONTINUOUS

A different zombified butler looks up at Ted, who is holding back his attack for the moment.

BUTLER ZOMBIE #2: I'm quite sure we're zombies, actually. Ghouls are a different sort altogether.

MAID ZOMBIE #1: Spot on.

PAGE TWELVE

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER CELLAR – CONTINUOUS

Ted seems less tense for the moment, lowering his weapon a bit without giving up his defenses.

TED: Makes no difference to me. Monsters are monsters.

MAID ZOMBIE #1: Monsters?? Oh, what a charmer you are! Won't get far with that attitude.

TED: Hey, watch it, worm food.

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER CELLAR – CONTINUOUS

Butler Zombie #2 addresses Maid Zombie #1 with his boney finger in the air, as if making an important point.

BUTLER ZOMBIE #2: Come now, Harriet. We've not had visitors in ages. Let us not forget our manners when entertaining a guest.

MAID ZOMBIE #1: Point taken.

TED: Guest, eh?

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER CELLAR – CONTINUOUS

This is a close-up of Butler Zombie #2 as he grins... as best he can with a rotting face.

BUTLER ZOMBIE #2: When the master passed away, we had no more purpose. Locked ourselves away down here to wait for a time when we'd be needed again. Now, by a wonderful stroke of luck, you've found us and we shall be your dedicated caretakers!

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER CELLAR – CONTINUOUS

Butler Zombie #2 stands before Ted, who thinks this over, stroking his chin.

BUTLER ZOMBIE #2: Do tell, what would you require first? A spot of tea, perhaps?

TED: Uhhmm... Gosh, that's a tempting offer, but I'm not the type that enjoys being waited on hand and foot. Not by zombies, anyway.

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER CELLAR – CONTINUOUS

Butler Zombie #2 puts his rotten hand on Ted's shoulder, as if carefully explaining something to him. Ted looks at the hand with revulsion.

BUTLER ZOMBIE #2: Ha ha, very good, sir. I don't think you understand the situation. We lived only to serve, and we still intend to carry on our duties. There's really no two ways about it. Now, let's see you off to your room, shall we?

PAGE THIRTEEN

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER CELLAR STAIRS – AT THAT MOMENT

We are now on a set of musty old STAIRS that lead downward to the CELLAR DOOR. Chance is on the stairs, moving toward the door. The cellar door is large and wooden, and has a small DOORKNOB.

CHANCE: Ted, you in there? Answer me, you shaved sasquatch. We're waiting on you.

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER CELLAR STAIRS – CONTINUOUS

Suddenly the cellar door FLIES OPEN. Ted emerges from the cellar, his hammer held aloft. It is now covered in ZOMBIE GOO, as if he had to fight his way out.

CHANCE: Aah!!

TED: Sorry, little bird. No time to chat!

CHANCE: Don't call me—

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER CELLAR STAIRS – CONTINUOUS

Ted slams the door SHUT, but not before a few ZOMBIE HANDS jut out, preventing the door from closing as they grasp blindly for anything outside the door.

ZOMBIE #1: (from inside door) PUUURRRPOSE....

ZOMBIE #2: (from inside door) PUUURPOSE!!

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER CELLAR STAIRS – CONTINUOUS

We see Chance as she lifts a HAND AXE high, ready to swing down as Ted manages to shut the door solidly.

SFX: (door closing) Clickt!

CHANCE: Stand aside!!

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER CELLAR STAIRS – CONTINUOUS

Chance brings the axe down on the doorknob, chopping it off. Needless to say, the door now cannot be opened.

SFX: (chopping off knob) CHNNK!

PANEL SIX – INT. ABYSS TOWER CELLAR – AT THAT MOMENT

Back in the cellar, we see Butler Zombie #2 holding the other end of the doorknob in his hand. It is now completely removed from the door as he studies it. A couple other zombies are here as well, including Maid Zombie #1.

MAID ZOMBIE #1: Oh, good show, Hieronymus. Capital work.

BUTLER ZOMBIE #2: Do shut up, Harriet.

PAGE FOURTEEN

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER MASTER STAIRCASE – MOMENTS LATER

Ted, Leron, Chance, and Carter are now moving upward on a large, creepy STAIRCASE. The stone stairs are almost as unstable as the wooden floor below. Large chunks have been blasted out of the walls and the stairs themselves, presumably by the battle between Kalkus and Malizar.

CARTER: What kept you, Ted? Was the cellar stocked with barrels of ale?

TED: Keep it up and I'll make sure you see what's down there.

CARTER: ... I'll pass, thank you.

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER MASTER STAIRCASE – CONTINUOUS

We see a close-up of Leron as he sniffs the air with delight.

LERON: Ah! What is that beautiful smell? We must be getting close to the kitchen!

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER MASTER STAIRCASE – CONTINUOUS

Chance comes up next to Leron as they climb the stairs steadily.

CHANCE: I don't smell anything except mildew and rust.

LERON: Tsk. Finely cultured senses like mine are a bit super-human when it comes to the culinary delights! I've seen what you eat, so I expect your tastes are a tad more... crude.

CHANCE: Right...

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER MASTER STAIRCASE – MOMENTS LATER

We now see a large KITCHEN DOOR alongside the stairs. A fork and knife emblem emblazoned on the wooden door tells us that this is a kitchen. Leron stands near the door, gesturing toward it with a flourish. Chance stands nearby, holding her nose in disgust.

LERON: Tada! What did I tell you? This magical nose does not lie.

CHANCE: Awww. Gods! What a stench!!

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER MASTER STAIRCASE – CONTINUOUS

Leron pulls the door OPEN, letting out even more of the odor inside the kitchen. Carter and Ted have joined in on holding their noses shut.

LERON: Nonsense! It's divine. Must you be such an unsophisticated brute?

CARTER: Don't go in there, Leron. Something dreadful relieved itself and died in there. Possibly not in that order.

PANEL SIX – INT. ABYSS TOWER MASTER STAIRCASE – CONTINUOUS

Chance, Carter, and Ted stand outside the door. It is clear that Leron has indeed gone into the kitchen.

CHANCE: Come back! You're daft!!

TED: And you guys say I'm the stupid one.

CARTER: It's a hotly contested title, to be sure.

PAGE FIFTEEN

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – AT THAT MOMENT

This is a large kitchen, complete with CAULDRON, lots of CUTLERY on the walls, and a large TABLE for preparing meals. Several broken dishes and bowls are scattered throughout the room. There is also a WINE RACK to one side of the room. Though it is in disrepair, some of the bottles are still intact upon it. Leron seems to float through the room; lead by his nose to the most wonderful thing he has ever smelled.

LERON: My, oh my! Maybe they've left a recipe behind...

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Leron stops to look in the CAULDRON. Inside we can see a BOUILLABAISSSE, largely full of unrecognizable chunks.

LERON: Beautiful! Like someone just made it...

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

We still see the cauldron as Leron steps away, no longer looking at it. Something just below the surface of the stew stirs.

SFX: (stew surface stirring) Slssh

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

As Leron moves to the back of the room, looking through the drawers of a CABINET, we see the cauldron moving itself, using its foot-like metal “legs” to walk. Leron whistles a blissfully unaware tune.

LERON: ♪ ♪ ♪

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, Chance steps into the kitchen through the door. She is pointing forward, as if to warn Leron about the danger he has not yet noticed.

CHANCE: Leron! Look out! It's a Bouillabaisse!!

PANEL SIX – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

We see a close-up of Leron as he looks back over his shoulder curiously.

LERON: What?

PAGE SIXTEEN

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Leron turns to face the CAULDRON, which is now alive with large, menacing EELS and FISH HEADS sprouting from the bouillabaisse inside, though they are still connected to the stew. It seems to resemble a large tentacle monster of sorts, contained in the cauldron. Leron is, of course, more than a little taken aback by this sight.

LERON: Egads! I don't think I want the recipe anymore!

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

As Chance charges the bouillabaisse monster with her axe, she is thrust backward and knocked into the air by the large, writhing eel heads. Carter ducks nearby.

CHANCE: OOF!!

CARTER: Oh, that's just sick!

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Ted is the next to attack, but this time Leron also raises his sword to attack from the other side of the bouillabaisse creature. The creature prepares for the attack, its many fish and eel heads readying themselves on either side.

TED: It looks worse than it smells!

LERON: Eeeugh! Kill it! Kill it!

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Still huddling down, Carter looks up at the WINE RACK, a look of realization on his face.

CARTER: Keep it busy, guys! I think I've got an idea!

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

We see now that Ted is being throttled by one of the eel heads as others bite and writhe at him.

TED: Ulk! Drop the idea and pick up a sword, you coward!

PANEL SIX – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

We are back with Carter, who is searching through the wine rack, reading each bottle's label.

CARTER: Yes, that certainly seems to have worked well so far, hasn't it?

PAGE SEVENTEEN

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Chance gets to her feet, having had the wind knocked out of her. She leans on her axe for support as she stands.

CHANCE: Nng... That stew packs a real punch...

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Leron hacks off one of the eel heads with an awkward swing of his sword. He seems to be very happy about this successful blow.

LERON: Ha HA! ... My blade strikes true! Verily, the beast is through!

SFX: (chopping off an eel head) SLCHH!

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Now down on his knees, Ted struggles to pull off the eel wrapped around his throat with one hands. With the other, he tries to warn Leron by pointing at a couple other eels as they pull some very large, very sharp KNIVES from the wall.

TED: Uck lugluch ucch...

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

The two knife-wielding eel heads cross their blades to stop Leron's sword from striking again. Leron is a bit surprised as his sword is stopped mid-swing.

SXF: (sword on knives) SHIINNGG!

LERON: Oh! You're quite clever for fishes.

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Chance uses her axe blade to sever a few of the eel heads at once with one mighty strike.

SFX: (chopping off eel heads) Chhutt!

CHANCE: Rraahh!

PAGE EIGHTEEN

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Chance has now fully joined the fray again as the bouillabaisse strangles Leron and Ted on the floor. She hacks at the cauldron itself with her axe.

CHANCE: Maybe if we can spill it...

SFX: (axe on cauldron) CHANNGGG...

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

We now see a very heroic shot of Carter as he points to the others and holds a BOTTLE OF RED WINE over his head as if he is about to throw it.

CARTER: Look out! This is going to get messy.

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Carter THROWS the bottle of red wine at the bouillabaisse creature, shattering the glass and covering the creature with the wine. The creature howls with displeasure.

SFX: (bottle breaking) KRSHHH

BOUILLABAISSSE: BLLUURRAAAAGGHHH!!!

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Ted and Leron are released from the bouillabaisse creature's grip as the cauldron tips over, spilling the now completely normal stew all over the floor. The creature is clearly dead, or has at least been nullified.

SFX: (bouillabaisse spilling) Spluurrrshhh

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Confounded, Leron, Ted, and Chance look to Carter, who grins. For a moment, they simply stare at him as he soaks in the glory of his victory.

PANEL SIX – INT. ABYSS TOWER KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Carter folds his arms, still grinning like a cheesy action hero.

CARTER: Everyone knows red wine doesn't go with fish.

PAGE NINETEEN

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER MASTER STAIRCASE – MOMENTS LATER

The group presses onward and upward. It is clear that nobody is very happy with Carter, even though he just saved their lives.

CARTER: Oh, come on. That was extraordinary, admit it!

TED: When I'm old and grey, telling this story to my grandkids, I'm not including that.

CARTER: Jealouuuusss.

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER MASTER STAIRCASE – CONTINUOUS

We now see only Chance as she leads the group up the stairs, axe in hand, wary for any danger.

CHANCE: I think we can agree it would be nice to carry on without creating any more unpleasant incidents. Let's keep it quiet, shall we? Hmm?

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER MASTER STAIRCASE – CONTINUOUS

We see a close-up of Chance's face as she casually looks back to the others following her.

CHANCE: *Shall we, boys?*

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER MASTER STAIRCASE – CONTINUOUS

We now see Leron, Carter, and Ted on the stairs below and behind Chance, who has turned to look at them. The men are contained on large SPIDER WEB COCOONS as a gigantic SPIDER hangs from the ceiling above them. Just enough of the webbed characters can be seen to tell who they are.

CARTER: Mfff.

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER MASTER STAIRCASE – CONTINUOUS

We see another close-up of Chance's face as she rolls her eyes.

PAGE TWENTY

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT DOOR – LATER

The Knight Club gang finally reaches the TOP of the stairs. At the top is a LARGE DOOR with a tremendous metal DOOR KNOCKER made to resemble a monstrous, leering FACE. The Knight Club gang clearly looks bedraggled and tired.

CAPTION: Nine unpleasant incidents later...

LERON: This is it. This has to be it. The loft.

CARTER: Our quest ends here.

TED: Don't say it like *that*...

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT DOOR – CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, the door knocker SPEAKS.

KNOCKER: Greetings, adventurers bold and *strong*. I sense your journey has been *long*. The artifact you seek and *more* rests beyond this humble *door*. Cross my threshold if you *dare*, but I do suggest that you *beware*!

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT DOOR – CONTINUOUS

The door knocker gives a wide grin as it continues to speak.

KNOCKER: Before I allow your passage *however*, answer my riddle... or enter *never*!

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT DOOR – CONTINUOUS

Just as suddenly, Ted SLAMS the door knocker in its “face” with his hammer at full force, much to its dismay.

SFX: (hammer hitting door knocker) VRUUUNNGGGG

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT DOOR – CONTINUOUS

The door suddenly swings OPEN on its own, the door knocker now looking a little pushed in. Ted stands by casually.

KNOCKER: Alright, in you go.

PAGE TWENTY TWO

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – MOMENTS LATER

Back in the loft from the beginning of our story, we find that not much has changed. There are a few signs of battle here, but everything seems to be pretty much in order. A large FIREPLACE is lit at the back of the room, with two large CHAIRS facing it and a small TABLE between them. A single STEMMED GLASS sits on the table by itself. Several ARTIFACTS rest around the room on various tables and hanging on the walls. The BOX ON A PEDISTAL from the beginning of our story, which contains the mystery ARTIFACT stands in the center of the room, untouched. For the time being we cannot see if there is anyone sitting in the CHAIRS for the moment. CHANCE is the first to enter this room.

CHANCE: This is it. Doesn't seem all that terrible. Someone's left a fire burning for us.

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – MOMENTS LATER

Suddenly, MALIZAR and KALKUS speak from their respective CHAIRS. Since they are facing the fireplace, the Knight Club gang cannot see them yet, nor can the reader.

MALIZAR: Oh we have more than a fire for you, dear friends.

KALKUS: Much more than a fire for you!

MALIZAR: Must you repeat everything I say?

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

We now see Kalkus and Malizar, still in their BAT and CROW forms. They are seated in their respective chairs and the Knight Club gang stands idly in the background, still not able to see the two of them. Kalkus has a PIPE in his beak, smoke billowing from it. Kalkus has a GLASS OF BRANDY in his winged “hand”.

MALIZAR: Parrots do that. You’re not a parrot, are you?

KALKUS: Don’t talk down to me you flying rat. I’ll say whatever I want.

MALIZAR: Why you scruffy, ragged little malcontent! Must you be so impossible?

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Unsure of what to make of Kalkus and Malizar so far, Chance gestures to the box on the pedestal as Carter approaches it.

CHANCE: Let them squabble. This looks like the box our employer described. Let’s have it and be off.

CARTER: That’s the best plan I’ve heard all day.

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, Malizar and Kalkus FLY into the air above their chairs, and now are facing our heroes. They’ve dropped the pipe and glass in their haste.

MALIZAR: I don’t think that’s a very good idea, children. Skreee!!

KALKUS: CRAWW! Touch that box and I’ll pull your fingers off!

PAGE TWENTY THREE

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Ted, Chance, Leron and Carter wearily ready themselves for yet another fight.

LERON: Foey! I was hoping we wouldn't have to do anymore fighting today.

TED: Don't worry. It won't take much to smash a couple of puny birds.

CARTER: Actually, bats aren't birds.

TED: Close enough.

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Kalkus and Malizar are now PERCHED on the backs of their chairs, still facing the Knight Club gang.

KALKUS: So what do you fancy this time? Should we kill them quick or have a bit of fun with them?

MALIZAR: It's been a while since anyone's been foolish enough to come here. I say we keep them around for a while. Maybe cut off little bits here and there until their shrieks begin to bore us.

KALKUS: Brilliant.

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Kalkus and Malizar turn to converse with each other, seemingly oblivious to the others once again.

KALKUS: Oh! Remember that fancy knight with all the shiny armor and the enchanted shield? He was loads of fun.

MALIZAR: Not sure if I recall him, specifically.

KALKUS: The "Don't set me on fire" bloke.

MALIZAR: Ahhh, yes! How could I have forgotten?

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Ted waves at Kalkus and Malizar to get their attention.

TED: Oi! Birds! Come get splattered so we can get going.

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Malizar and Kalkus take to the air again, this time they're clearly determined to incapacitate or destroy our heroes.

MALIZAR: SKREEEE!! You shall come to regret your insolence, oaf.

KALKUS: You'll regret your insolence! Yes! Caww!

PAGE TWENTY FOUR

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Ted lifts his hammer and begins to charge Kalkus and Malizar. Carter holds his hand up and tries to tell him to wait, but to no avail.

TED: Raaaaaarrrrgghh!!!

CARTER: Ted, wait – they may still possess great power!

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Kalkus, wings outstretched, summons a mighty WIND, which blows Ted backward, clear off of his feet!

KALKUS: Caawwww! Compelling winds of Gongoreth, I call thee to my aid!

TED: Woop...

PANEL THREE – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – AT THAT MOMENT

We are now OUTSIDE the tower as Ted hurtles THROUGH the wall at the top of the tower with a tremendous crash of flying stone.

TED: URRFF!

SFX: (wall shattering) CHOOM

PANEL FOUR – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – CONTINUOUS

As Ted plummets downward, he manages to grab onto a cracked and worn STONE LEDGE with ONE HAND. He is clearly still in a very precarious state but for the time being he has avoided the fall.

TED: Nnnghh! Ah! The Gods must be smiling on—

PANEL FIVE – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – CONTINUOUS

We now see just the tower wall where Ted was hanging. The stone ledge is now missing a chunk where Ted was hanging on. In its place is a GOUGE where the ledge came away from the building.

PANEL SIX – EXT. ABYSS TOWER – CONTINUOUS

Ted is now lying at the FOOT of the tower, next to the TALKING STONE BLOCK that he met earlier. Ted seems to have landed in a soft patch of mud. Due to his sturdy armor and the fact that he stopped his fall by grabbing onto the ledge earlier, he is alive though laid out for the count.

STONE BLOCK: I see you landed face-up as well. What are the odds of that? Now you see what I went through, eh? Not very pleasant, that.

TED: Uurrrghh... You talk a lot for a rock.

PAGE TWENTY FIVE

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – AT THAT MOMENT

Chance now wields her battle axe and swings at Malizar, who deftly avoids the blade in mid-flight. Chance seems to be enraged.

CHANCE: Ted!! If you've killed him I'll have the both of you on a sandwich!!

MALIZAR: Yes! That's the spirit. Keep it interesting.

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Malizar raises his leathery wings as a wretched, hideous GIANT SNAKE materializes and bears down on Chance, its jaws agape. The snake has tremendous, poison-dripping FANGS.

MALIZAR: By Primortal's stench, I call the great swallower Fex to ensnare thee! Skrreeech!

CHANCE: Aah! What sort of abomination is this?!

GIANT SNAKE: Hssss...

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – AT THAT MOMENT

Leron and Carter double-team Kalkus, their swords drawn and ready to strike at the crow.

LERON: Shall we?

CARTER: We shall.

KALKUS: Try your hardest, fools. The more you struggle, the more I will enjoy dusting off my ten thousand and one curses!

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Leron strikes at the bird, his sword drawing only a few feathers as Kalkus swoops to avoid the strike. Simultaneously, Kalkus spews FLAMES from his beak at Carter, who can only dodge as well.

LERON: Thrust!

KALKUS: KRAAWWW HA HA HA HA HA!

CARTER: Eee! Or perhaps not!

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Kalkus flies after Carter as he runs through the room, one step ahead of the flames that Kalkus is spewing, lighting up the floor. Carter is running at full tilt for lack of a better idea.

CARTER: Spot of bother here, guys. Any ideas?

PANEL SIX – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – AT THAT MOMENT

We now see Chance as the giant snake wraps its coils around her. She is fighting back with tenacity and strength, but the large serpent is a bit too strong for her. Its horrible face leers over her.

CHANCE: OVER HERE! NOW!

PAGE TWENTY SIX

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Carter darts around the giant snake as Kalkus pursues him, blasting the snake with an errant burst of flame.

GIANT SNAKE: SssssSSSSsssSss!!!

SFX: (flames) Fwoosh!

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

The giant snake's immense TAIL slaps Kalkus out of the air with a solid blow.

SFX: (tail striking Kalkus) Slapt

KALKUS: Ooph!

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

We see Kalkus as he is sent reeling by the blow of the snake's tail. He flies right into the fireplace.

SFX: (fireplace) WHOOMPH

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Chance is able to work herself free enough to grab the giant snake's TAIL as it writhes. Its charred head bears down on her as she does this.

CHANCE: Now... all you have to do... is bite me.

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

The giant snake lunges for Chance, only to dig its fangs into its own tail as she pulls it in front of her. The serpent has just bitten itself with its own poisonous teeth.

CHANCE: HA!

SFX: (snake chomping its tail) Squittch

PANEL SIX – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Leron, Carter, and Chance regroup together as Chance steps free of the now loosened coils of the snake, which is laid out as if dead.

CARTER: Excellent. That worked out perfectly.

LERON: Oh, get off it. That was pure luck and you know it.

PAGE TWENTY SEVEN

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Kalkus emerges from the flames of the fireplace, largely unharmed. Malizar flies nearby.

MALIZAR: Are you quite done being inept?

KALKUS: I'm sorry, who was it that thought summoning a giant snake in an enclosed space was a good idea?

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Malizar hovers in the air, a mass of swirling SHADOW AND SPIRITS encircling him. Kalkus smolders off to the side.

MALIZAR: Peons. Your futile attempts to destroy us are worthless. You should know by now that we are immortal! Now, I call down the madness of Tilleria herself upon you!!

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Malizar's eyes begin to shine like beacons as the spirits around him begin to take on a more twisted, solid state.

MALIZAR: SKRREEEEEE!!!

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

The door to the loft SLAMS shut behind Chance, Leron, and Carter as the shadows and spirits begin to encroach upon them. They look more than a little disturbed by this turn of events.

LERON: Ugly things! We should have just grabbed that accursed box and ran!

CHANCE: I don't know. If those sorcerers haven't touched it, we probably wouldn't have been able to either.

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

We see a close-up of Carter as an idea strikes him, a look of realization washing across his face. A shadowy spirit creature looks as if is about to do something very nasty to him.

CARTER: They haven't touched it. Yes... OF COURSE!

PAGE TWENTY EIGHT

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, the shadowy spirit creatures dissipate in frustrated clouds of mist as Carter steps forward, boldly addressing Malizar, who seems to have lost his concentration.

CARTER: You can't open the box, can you? It's cursed or charmed somehow and won't let you.

MALIZAR: Hmm? Yes, of course. That's as plain as day.

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Carter holds his hands out, as if to say 'don't kill me until I finish my point'. He moves toward the box on the pedestal. Kalkus perches nearby, wary of any tricks Carter might be trying to pull.

CARTER: Hear me out, now. You've lived for eons. You've been trapped here with this box for most of that time. It must be driving you crazy wondering what it is that's inside, right? You don't even know what it was you two were fighting over.

KALKUS: Caww! Of course it's maddening. Make your point, you're losing my interest.

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Carter addresses Kalkus, while holding his hand over the box. Kalkus seems even more apprehensive now that Carter is almost touching the box.

KALKUS: I said don't touch that! CRAWW!! CRAWWW!!

CARTER: Relax. It's not like it's doing you any good, am I right? Why don't you tell me why you can't open it? It can't hurt to let me know.

KALKUS: I suppose it makes little difference. It wasn't long before we sensed that the box has a nigh-unbreakable spell cast upon it. No one with hate in their heart can open it.

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Carter grins at Kalkus. It's as if he no longer fears the powerful bird at all.

CARTER: This artifact, whatever it is, you must agree that it's of no use to either of you now that you're trapped in this tower for all this time. Even if one of you could kill the other with the contents of this box, it would be a pointless victory.

KALKUS: I'm starting to tire of this. You understand what that means?

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Carter stands in front of Chance and Leron, his arms folded. He has that same cheesy grin as if he has just become the hero of this entire ordeal. Leron and Chance seem surprised by what Carter is saying.

CARTER: If one of us can open that box... you'll finally know what's inside, and in return you'll let us walk out with it. If we can't open it, well... you understand what *that* means?

PAGE TWENTY NINE

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Malizar and Kalkus land on their table and begin to whisper to each other, their wings at their sides.

MALIZAR: (whispering) What do you think?

KALKUS: (whispering) Well...

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Kalkus puts his wing up to his beak and Malizar's ear, shielding his whispers from Leron, Carter, and Chance.

KALKUS: (inaudible whispering) sss sss sssss s ss ssss ss sss

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Malizar and Kalkus turn back to the others, their private discussion finished.

MALIZAR: Very well, we agree to the terms of this arrangement.

KALKUS: But if you can't open it, the girl has to do a dance for us, too.

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

We see a close-up of Chance, Carter and Leron as they stand shoulder to shoulder with each other in a line. Chance looks downward with pensive expression. Carter strokes his chin thoughtfully. Leron doesn't seem to be thinking about this too hard.

CARTER: It can only be opened if you possess no hate in your heart... Let's see. Which one of us might fit the bill?

CHANCE: When I was a child, my brother was murdered. I have always hated whoever did this. It can't be me.

CARTER: I hate Ted, so it can't be me.

LERON: And I hate these two rotten wizards, so it can't be me.

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Kalkus and Malizar both look very intense, and a bit happy about this turn of events.

MALIZAR: Very well. If you cannot hold up your end of the bargain...

KALKUS: ... You shall suffer!

PAGE THIRTY

PANEL ONE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Leron has a second thought. He looks as if he is contemplating something as Carter leans into the shot, pointing to Leron.

LERON: Well, actually I don't *hate* you guys. I guess I just dislike you. ... No, that's mean. I don't even really *know* you. Maybe we just got off on the wrong foot?

CARTER: He'll open it.

PANEL TWO – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Leron approaches the box on the pedestal with a bit of apprehension. He already has his hands upon the box.

LERON: Well... here goes nothing...

PANEL THREE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Leron, Chance, and Carter look down into the now OPEN box. Power seems to radiate out of it. Kalkus and Malizar are perched on Leron's shoulders. They are enthralled by the sight of what's inside, though we cannot see it!

KALKUS: That... That's our artifact?

MALIZAR: Taken from a Trygian demon so long ago...

CARTER: Amazing. It makes perfect sense.

PANEL FOUR – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Still perched on Leron's shoulders, Kalkus and Malizar address the three others.

KALKUS: Well, now that we know what it is, I suppose we don't even want it.

MALIZAR: Yes. Off with you, and take the box. Simply looking at it angers me now.

PANEL FIVE – INT. ABYSS TOWER LOFT – CONTINUOUS

Leron, Chance, and Carter are now leaving the loft. Leron is carrying the box and waving back at Kalkus and Malizar.

LERON: Thank you! Goodbye!

KALKUS: Close the door on your way out, goodbye.

MALIZAR: Farewell. Come back again and we'll pull out your eyes.

PAGE THIRTY ONE

PANEL ONE – INT. DRAGON'S GULLET TAVERN – DAY

We are once again in the familiar surroundings of the Dragon's Gullet Tavern. For now we only see Chance sitting across the usual table from the Cloaked Figure they met at the beginning of this story.

CHANCE: And so, we walked out with the artifact. Well, actually we fought our way out. That place was insane.

CLOAKED FIGURE: You've succeeded where countless others have failed... countless others whom I hired myself. You have my deepest respect.

PANEL TWO – INT. DRAGON'S GULLET TAVERN – CONTINUOUS

Carter is returning to the table, carrying Ted's skull-shaped MUG, full of ALE. He is about to set it down on the table.

CARTER: Ahhh! Here you go, mate. How're you feeling?

PANEL THREE – INT. DRAGON'S GULLET TAVERN – CONTINUOUS

We now see that Ted is sitting directly next to Carter, who has put the mug of ale in front of him. Ted is BANDAGED and has his arm in a make-shift SPLINT. He looks a little worse for wear.

TED: I'll be better once you buy me a few more drinks.

CARTER: We'll see.

PANEL FOUR – INT. DRAGON'S GULLET TAVERN – CONTINUOUS

Now that we see Carter, Ted, and Chance are seated at the table, Chance slides the artifact box across the table to the cloaked figure.

CHANCE: Here it is.

CLOAKED FIGURE: This spell that was cast upon the box...

CHANCE: After Leron opened it, it stayed unlocked. You shouldn't have any problem with it. But can I ask you something?

CLOAKED FIGURE: You may.

PANEL FIVE – INT. DRAGON'S GULLET TAVERN – CONTINUOUS

We see the Cloaked Figure as he lifts the artifact out of the open box. The artifact is a DEMON'S HEAD. It is the head of the same DEMON from the beginning of this story. The head is clearly dead, though fantastically preserved. Its eyes have crossed and its tongue lolls out, but other than that it seems to be in perfect condition. The Cloaked Figure grins widely. He is clearly very, very happy to have this.

CHANCE: (off panel) Well... we were wondering why you wanted us to bring you back a Demon's severed head...

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PANEL ONE – INT. DRAGON'S GULLET TAVERN – CONTINUOUS

The cloaked figure is still holding the demon's head. The cloaked figure now has his own set of HORNS sprouting from his head. The cloaked figure's EYES begin to burn with unholy light. His grinning mouth is filled with razor-sharp teeth.

CLOAKED FIGURE: So long ago... The wizard who took this head decided to keep it as a memento... a keepsake! He became so paranoid about retribution from other demons that he locked it away. Never told anyone what it was. Naturally, most assumed he had returned with a powerful weapon or enchanted item that was so potent he wouldn't share it.

PANEL TWO – INT. DRAGON'S GULLET TAVERN – CONTINUOUS

The cloaked figure now looks exactly like the other demon whose head he is holding. He is clearly of the same "race". His robe does little to hide his demonic features.

CLOAKED FIGURE: I tried to retrieve it myself. Killed that old wizard while he slept... but I couldn't open that pitiful box. Couldn't even *touch* it! But now... I finally have my father's head back. At last we can have a proper burial now. Thank you.

PANEL THREE – INT. DRAGON'S GULLET TAVERN – CONTINUOUS

We are back on Chance, Ted, and Carter's side of the table. Carter and Chance look horrified and shocked at this turn of events. Tad is completely unfazed.

TED: Yeah, that's nice. Glad we could reunite the family. Now about our fee.

CLOAKED FIGURE: (off panel) Yes, yes. Of course.

PANEL FOUR – INT. DRAGON'S GULLET TAVERN – CONTINUOUS

We see the Cloaked Figure once again as he FADES AWAY, as if returning to his own realm.

CLOAKED FIGURE: An embarrassment of riches waits for you. Feel free to collect it... next time you're in Trygia! Ha ha ha haaaaaa!

PANEL FIVE – INT. DRAGON'S GULLET TAVERN – CONTINUOUS

Carter, Chance, and Ted look utterly dejected and angry. Carter has his head down on the table as Chance puts her hand to her face. Ted simply gnashes his teeth, his fist clenched in his splint. Leron enters from the side of the panel, just returning to the group.

CARTER: Back from the little knight's room, eh?

LERON: Why? ... What did I miss THIS time?!

PANEL SIX – BLANK SPACE – TIMELESS

This is a simple panel with a classic, medieval-style rendering of Kalkus and Malizar in their Bat and Crow forms, grappling with each other as one would expect a bat and a bird might be able to.

CAPTION: THE END.