

5 TOP 20

DUTY OF A TRUTH SEEKER

CARDELL S COLE II



STORY AND ART BY CARDELL S COLE II

The place where light and dark begin to touch
is where miracles arise.

-Robert A. Johnson

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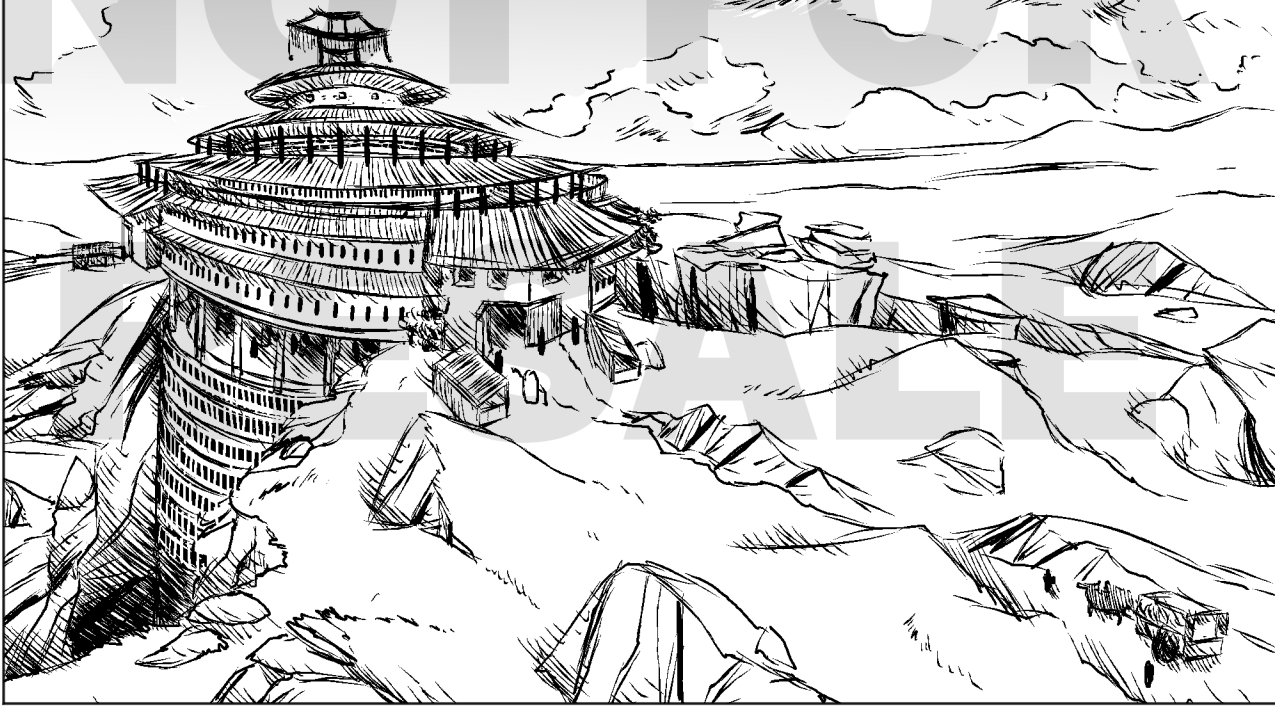
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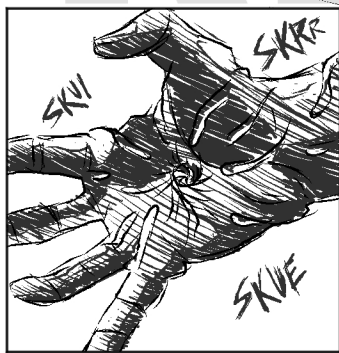
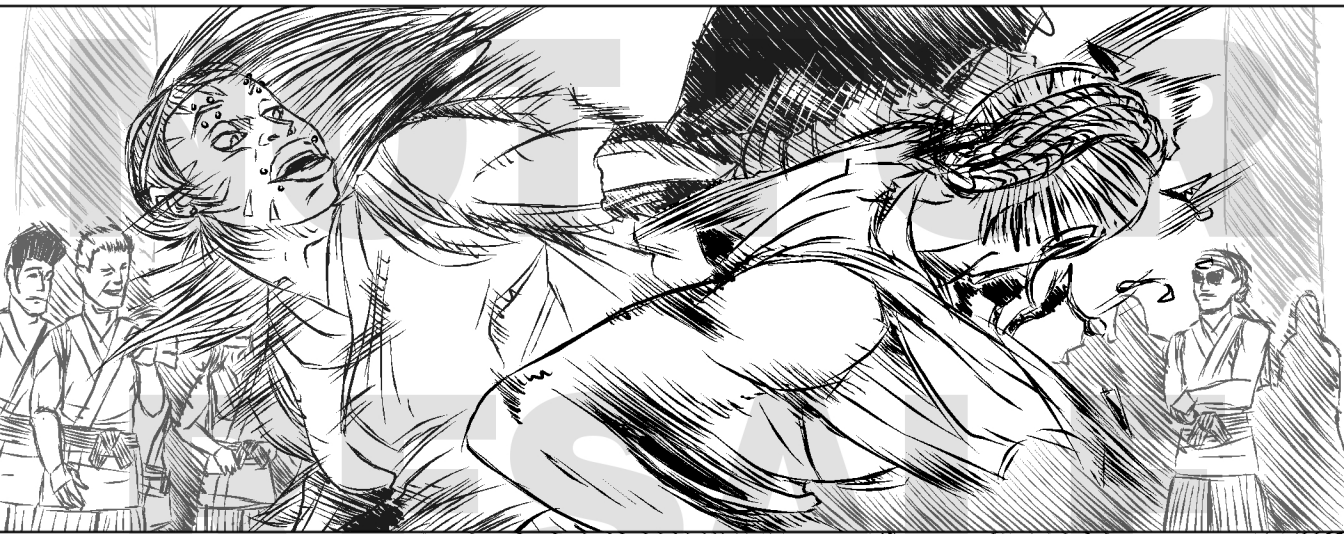



REAPER BRANCH MAIN, SIANDO PROVINCE
VERNA 21, 1298



REAPER SPARRING GROUNDS







How **COULD** this have been allowed to happen? How many of our branches were attacked?

The reports confirm what we were told by Representative Xoychi. More than 20 branches were attacked in cities all over Grand Regealous, excluding, I'm afraid, Lithiveos Province!

Which may confirm the suspicions that Master Ko may be in collaboration with the Swords of Truth. We already have confirmations that he may sympathize with the them.

And now all Orthros may be compromised! What does the reports say about our losses?

67 and rising... If this was indeed caused by Master Ko's orders, it is vital he answers for these crimes!

If he **IS** indeed responsible for these crimes, I give my word as a Grand Master that he **WILL** answer for them! Have we heard any word from Dragon?



They have been completely silent... I'm sure reports of Master Ko's possible betrayal comes as a serious shock to Grand Master Michael...

Unless he is a conspirator!

NO! Not Master Michael... An attack like this would be a coward's act in his view... I've known no more honorable man in my life.



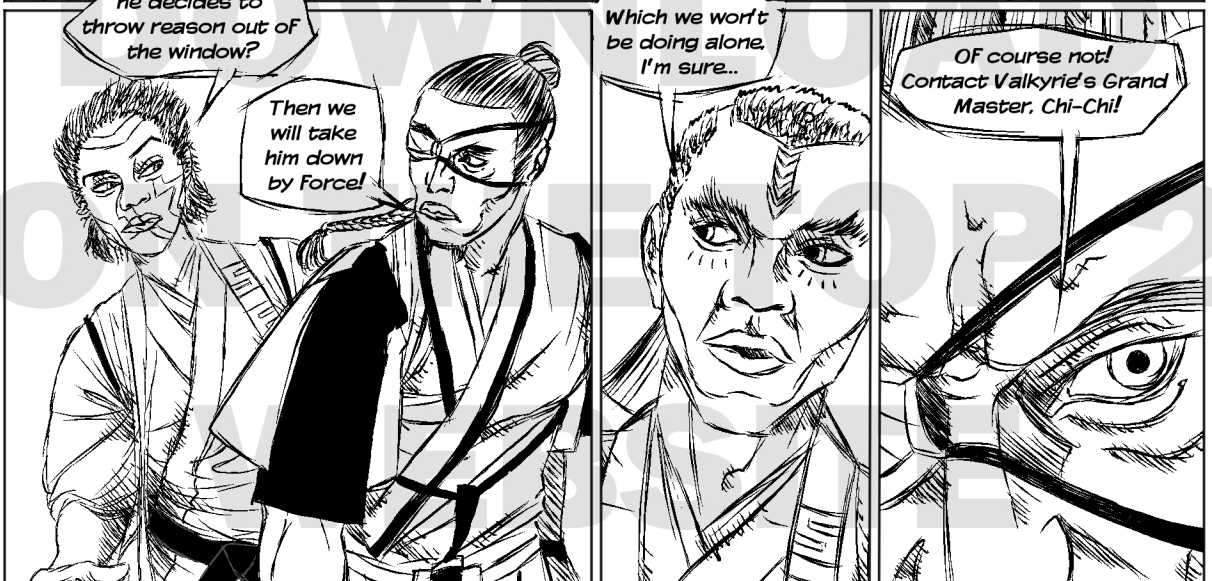
DON'T PUSH me. Tina! Master Ko is the suspect, and so it is Master Ko of whom we will seek answers. I will approach him directly...

Are you sure that is wise...?

We will handle this with care, as quietly as possible. The last thing we need is a war within our own borders. Despite all this, Master Ko is a reasonable man.

You never know what people are capable of until...

What if he decides to throw reason out of the window?

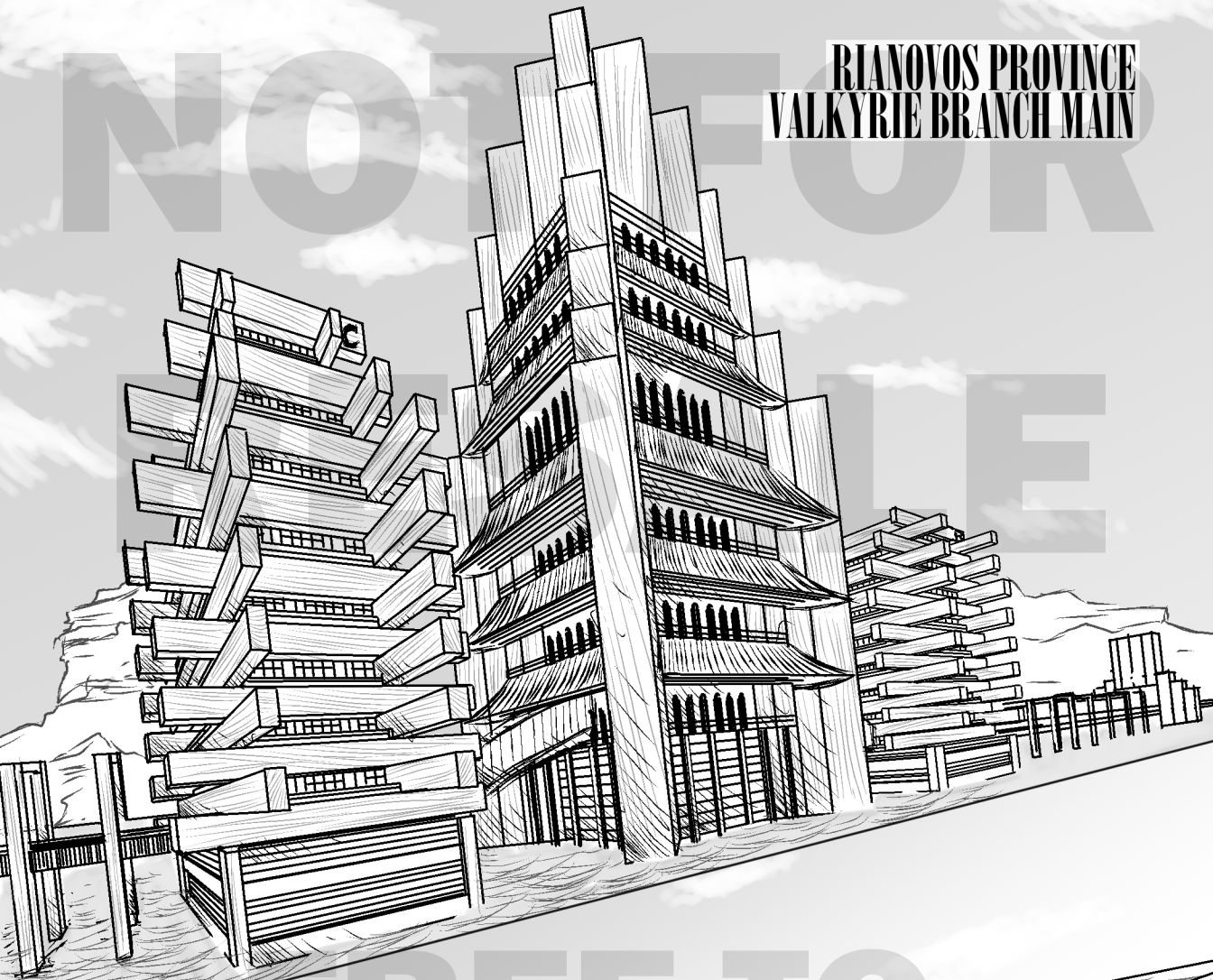


Then we will take him down by force!

Which we won't be doing alone. I'm sure...

Of course not! Contact Valkyrie's Grand Master, Chi-Chi!

**RIANOVOS PROVINCE
VALKYRIE BRANCH MAIN**



*What do you
want, Xena?*



I totally understand your need to calm yourself following recent events. Grand Master. I understand that meditation is one of the only ways to quell your anger, but we still have issues that need to be addressed!



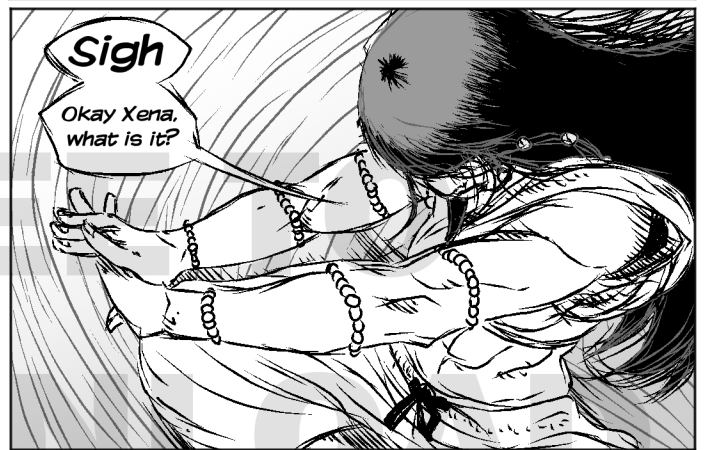
You act as if I don't comprehend that fact, Xena! You know how much that irritates me!

Well, that's neither here nor there... What matters now is your most recent message.



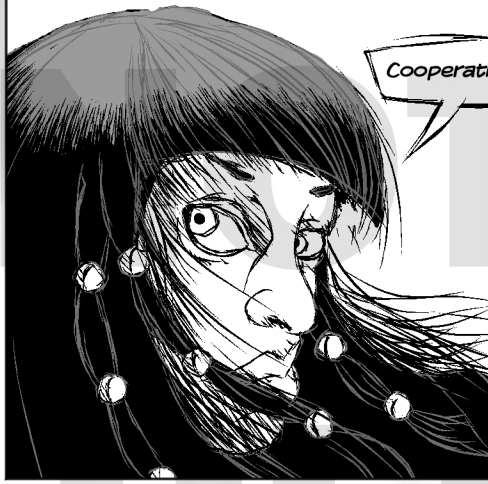
Sigh

Okay Xena, what is it?

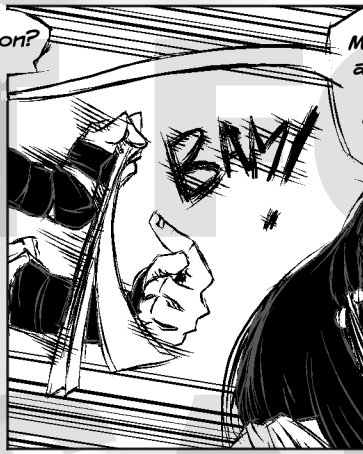


Grand Master Yoticho is requesting your cooperation.





Cooperation?



He's preparing to confront Master Ko of Orthros Branch! To avoid a potential...confrontation, Valkyrie's aid would be greatly appreciated. Two branches are more capable should an uprising...well, you know.



Well, I certainly **HOPE** not! That would seriously complicate things... A most devastating challenge..




Excellent! One I am most willing to accept! Tell Grand Master Yoticho that he has our Full support!



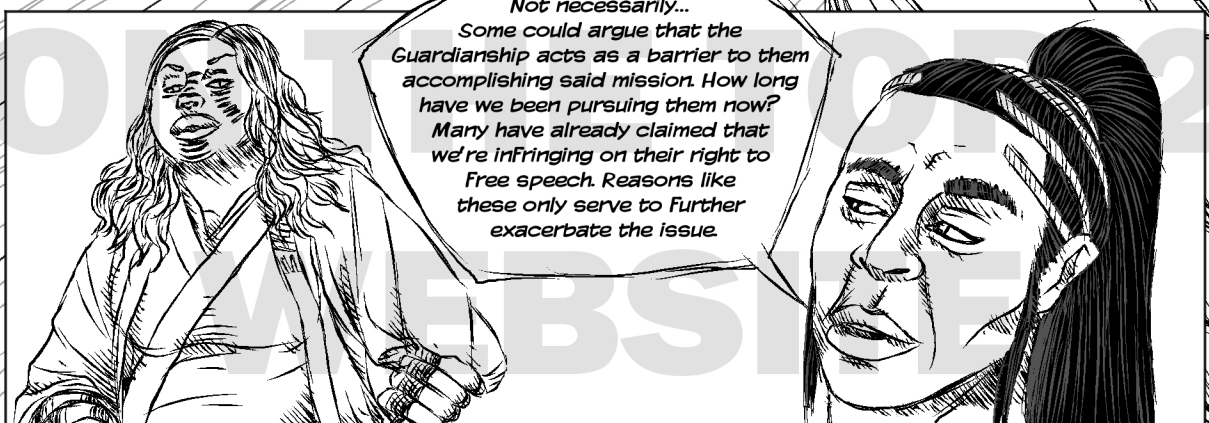
It makes sense... Other than Dragon, we two would be the most capable of seeing this through to succession. I cannot be held responsible for my actions in the event that my aid becomes a necessity! I take it Dragon won't be a problem?

Meanwhile at Othros Branch...




So, this is their game, eh? Associating Master Ko with Swords of Truth guerilla squads!


This is preposterous!
The idea that the Swords of Truth would make Guardian Branches their primary targets makes no sense! Their mission has always been to expose government corruption, not inspire violence.




Not necessarily...
Some could argue that the Guardianship acts as a barrier to them accomplishing said mission. How long have we been pursuing them now? Many have already claimed that we're infringing on their right to Free speech. Reasons like these only serve to further exacerbate the issue.




Not to mention that out of all the branches attacked, not a single one in our province was hit. This looks bad, really bad...




Bad enough to make Dragon and our members doubt the Grand Master?



Who knows for sure with Dragon? Since our last transmission to them we have heard nothing... But our members? Surprisingly not! Most, if not all, hold Master Ko in high esteem. His departing speech only served to motivate them further.



That's all fine and dandy except the fact that Master Ko won't receive news of the attacks until he reaches Dragon Branch... For all we know he's...

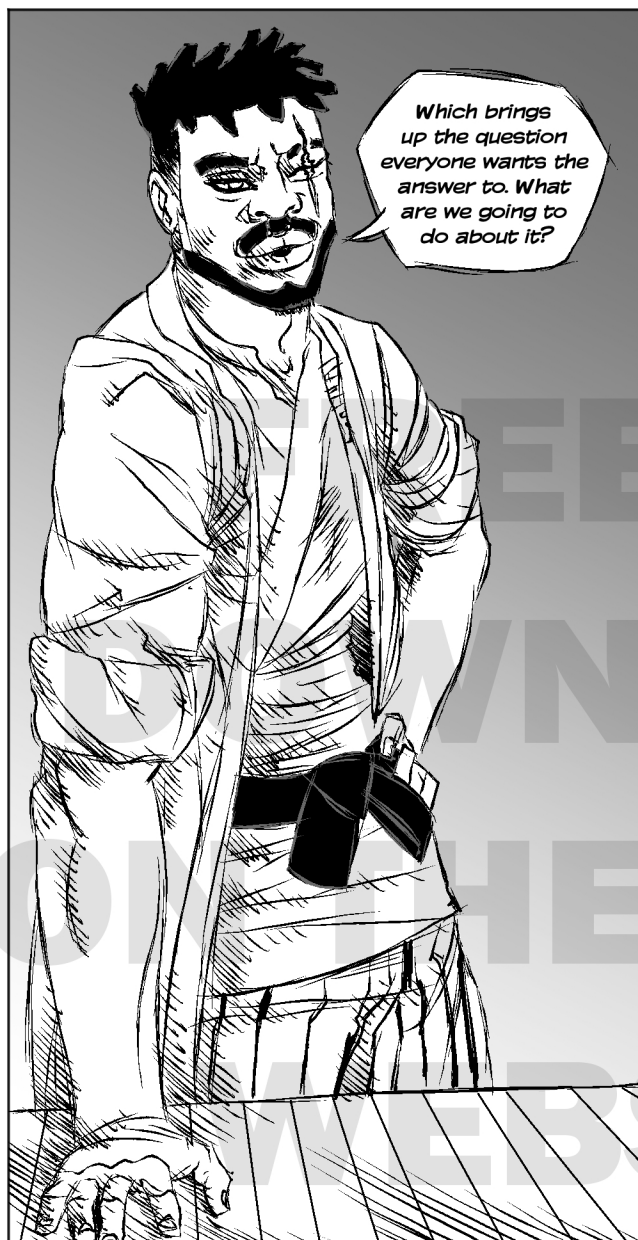


Let's not jump to conclusions here, or cause unnecessary stress. I highly doubt we have anything to fear from Dragon... I'm more concerned with the other branches, specifically Reaper and Valkyrie. They will most assuredly be the firsts to take action in response to these false rumors.

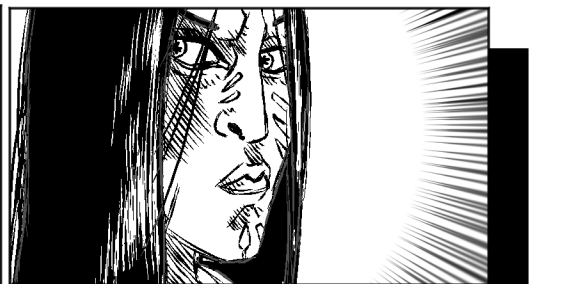


Both have attempted to contact us.

They want answers. I'm sure we can all assume that they'll come for them.



Which brings up the question everyone wants the answer to. What are we going to do about it?



TOP 2 CHARACTER
INTRODUCTIONS #5

NAME: DYKU ORION

RANK: FIELD LEADER

BRANCH: DRAGON

AGE: 18

BIRTHDATE: SOLSTI 12, 1279

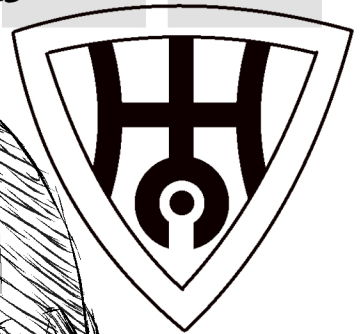
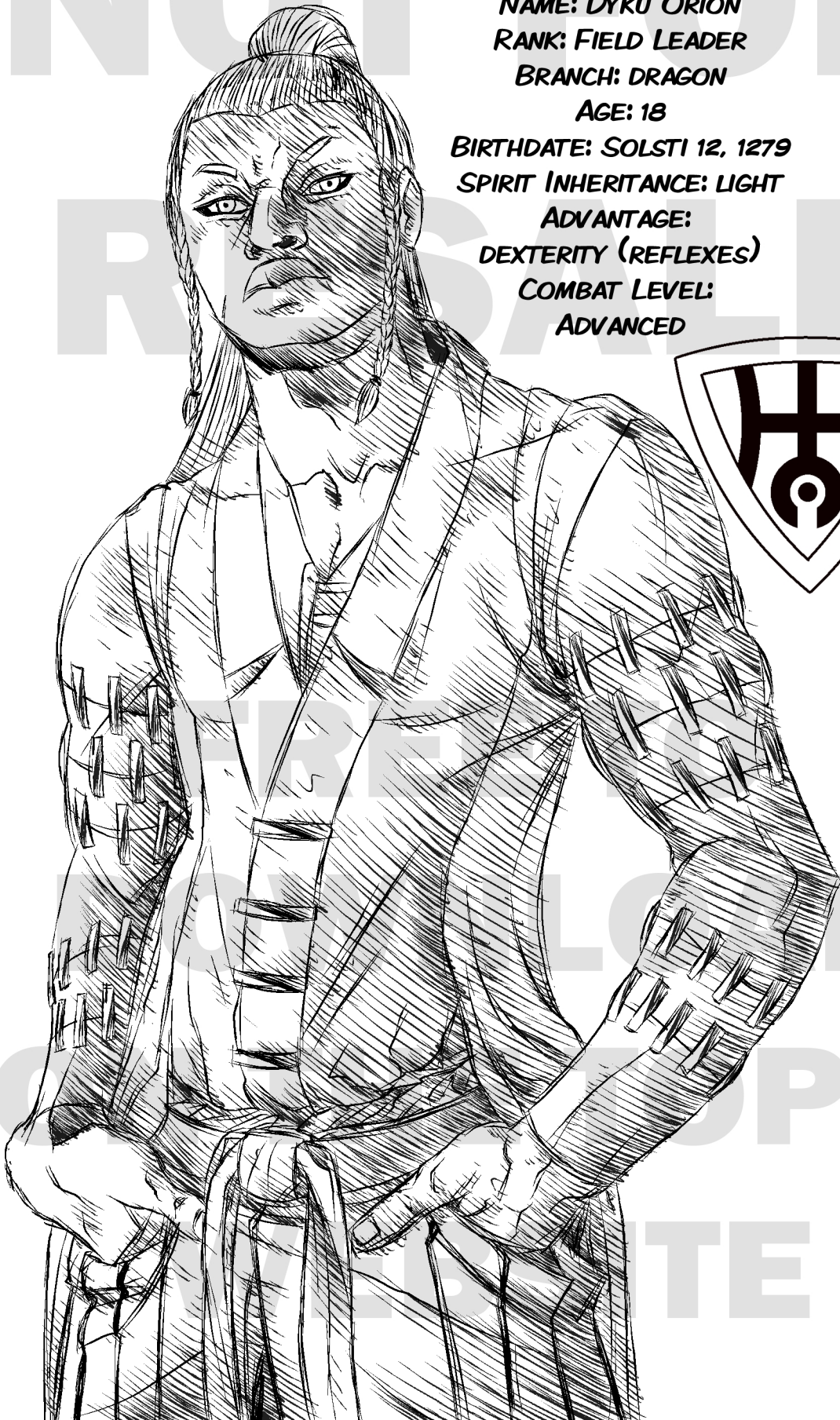
SPIRIT INHERITANCE: LIGHT

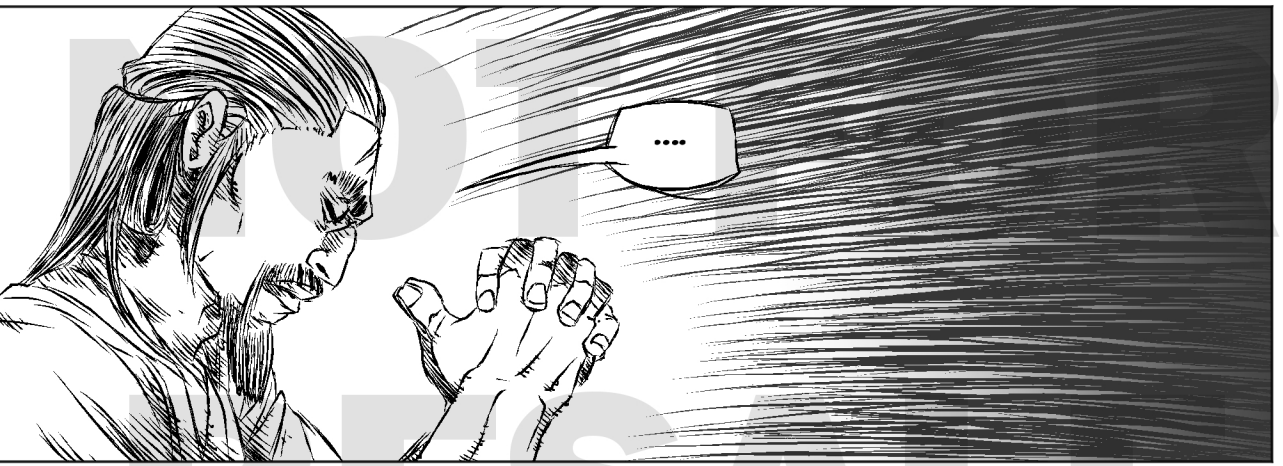
ADVANTAGE:

DEXTERITY (REFLEXES)

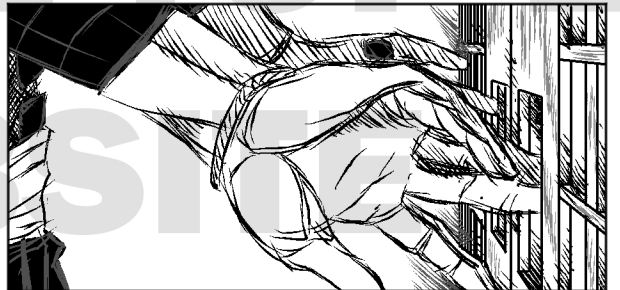
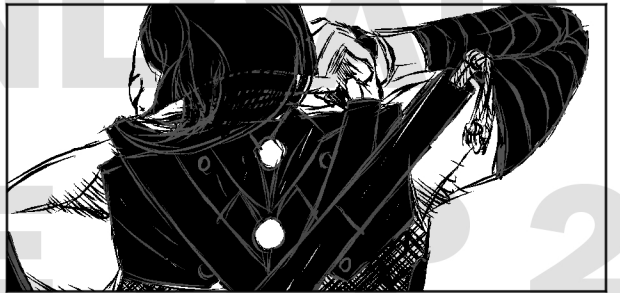
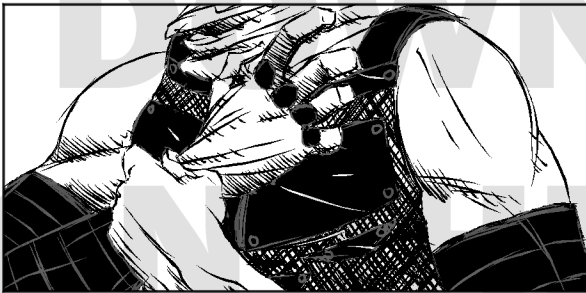
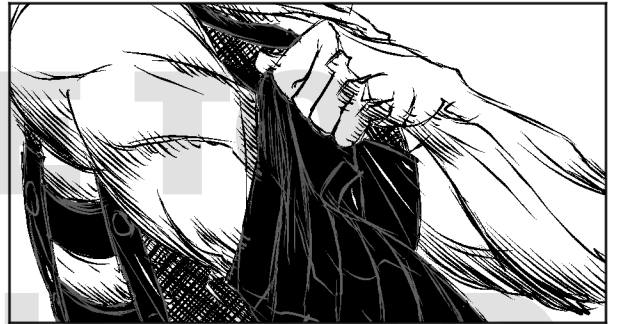
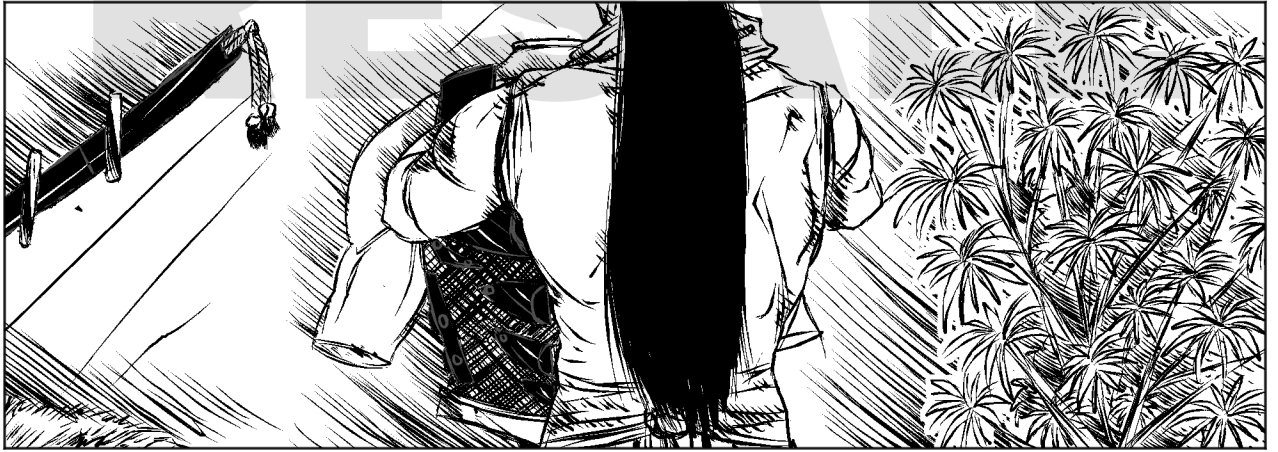
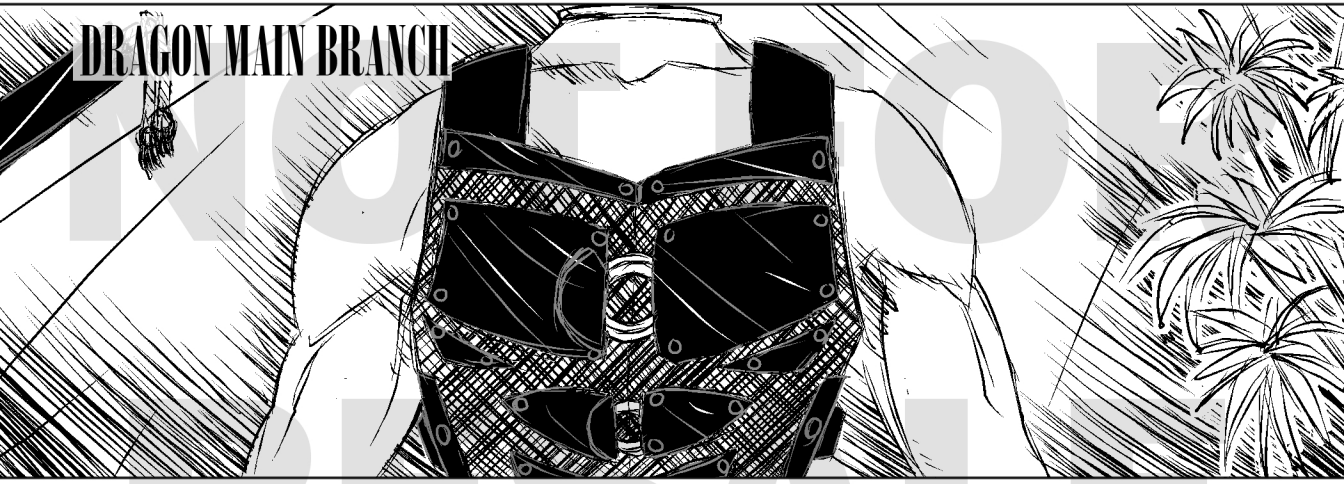
COMBAT LEVEL:

ADVANCED





DRAGON MAIN BRANCH





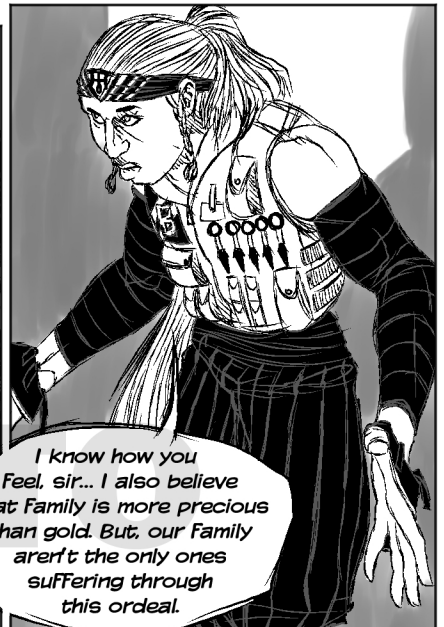
How DARE you! Surely these accusations are unfounded... Have you ever met the man? Ever listened to him speak? Ever witnessed his tenacity? His spirit? I will not be party to such inaccurate accusations...

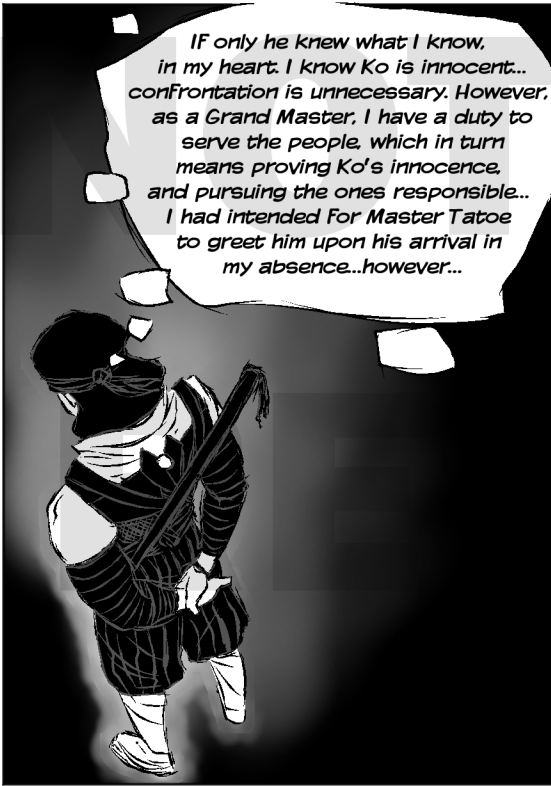
Then tell me, Master Michael! What would you call these actions? You have no more proof than I whether he is responsible or not! What matters is that he is suspect, and must be pursued...despite your close ties.

Indeed...

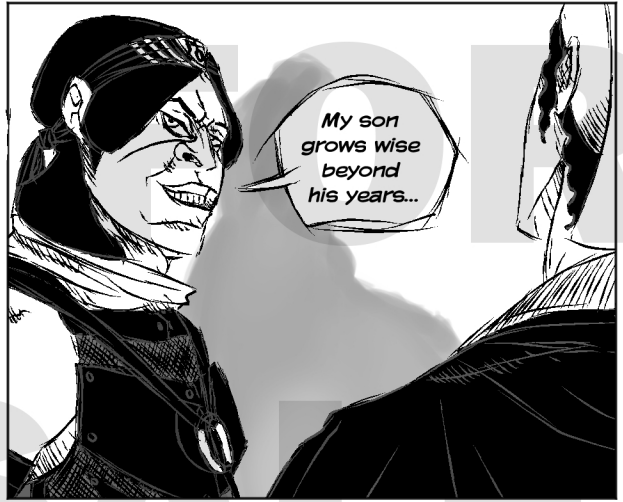
He WILL be pursued AFTER I have seen to my Family's safety! Now, excuse me please...

Father, Sir! Please wait...

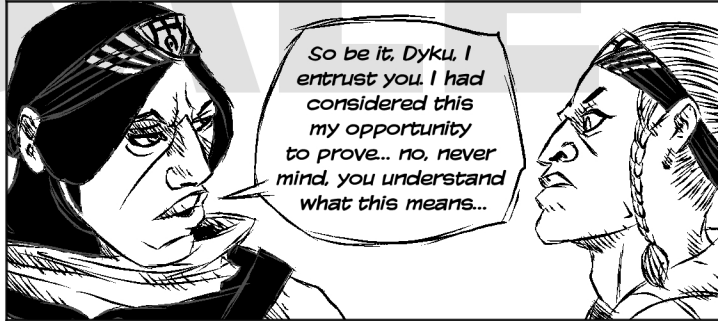




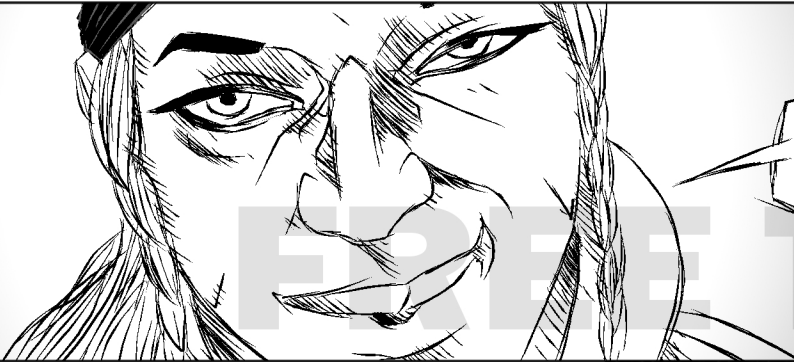
IF only he knew what I know, in my heart. I know Ko is innocent... confrontation is unnecessary. However, as a Grand Master, I have a duty to serve the people, which in turn means proving Ko's innocence, and pursuing the ones responsible... I had intended For Master Tatoe to greet him upon his arrival in my absence...however...



My son grows wise beyond his years...



So be it, Dyku, I entrust you. I had considered this my opportunity to prove... no, never mind, you understand what this means...



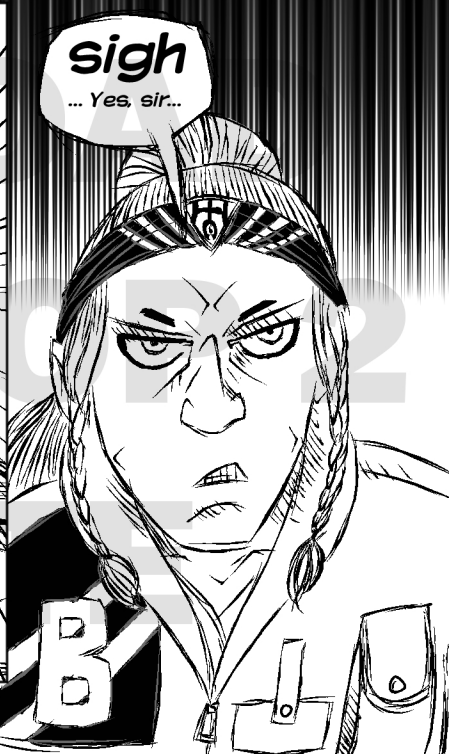
Yes, I do. I won't let you down! I take it I have the pick of my team?



So long as that team includes Field Instructor Sheba...

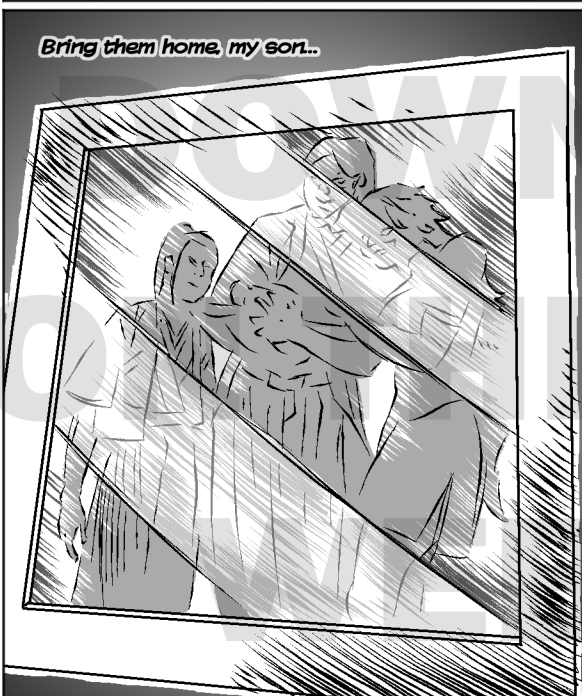
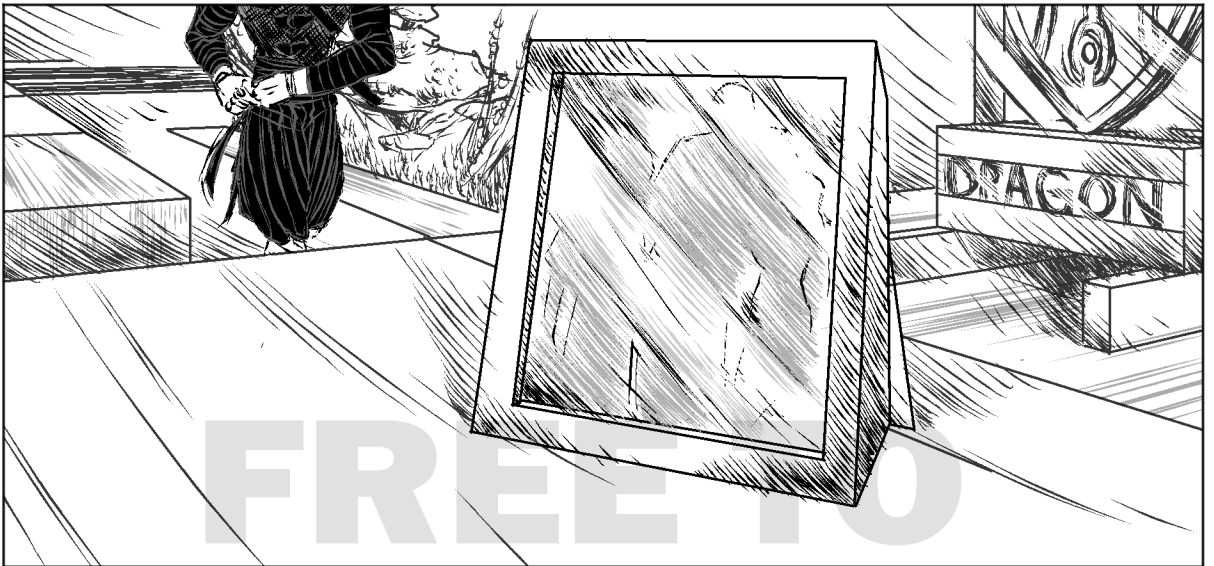
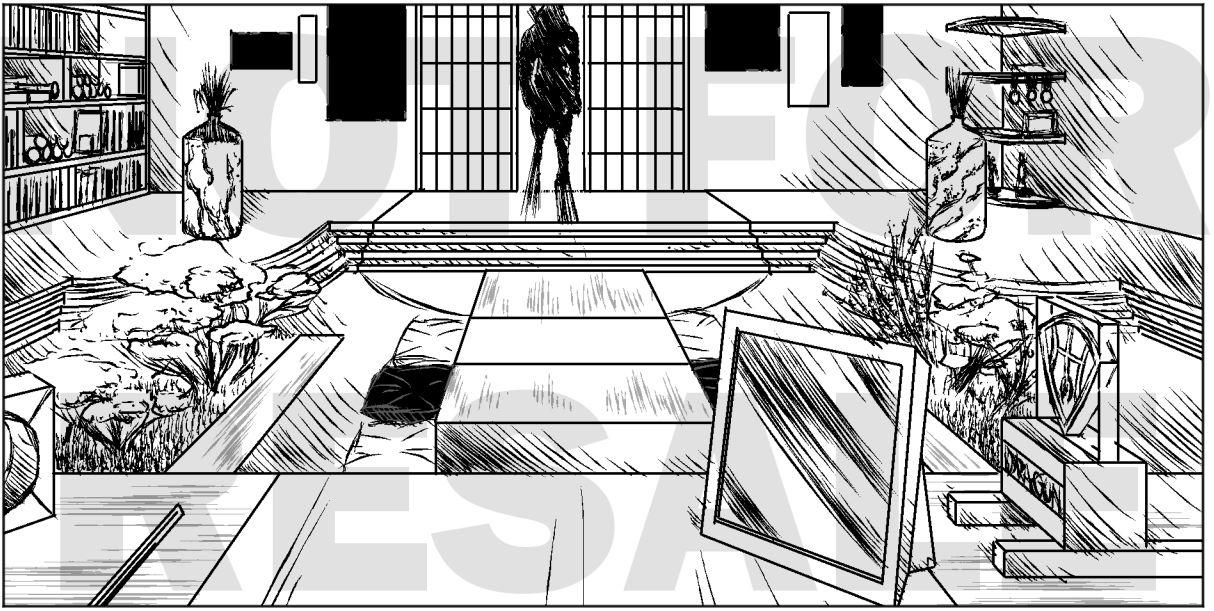


Tsch...!



sigh

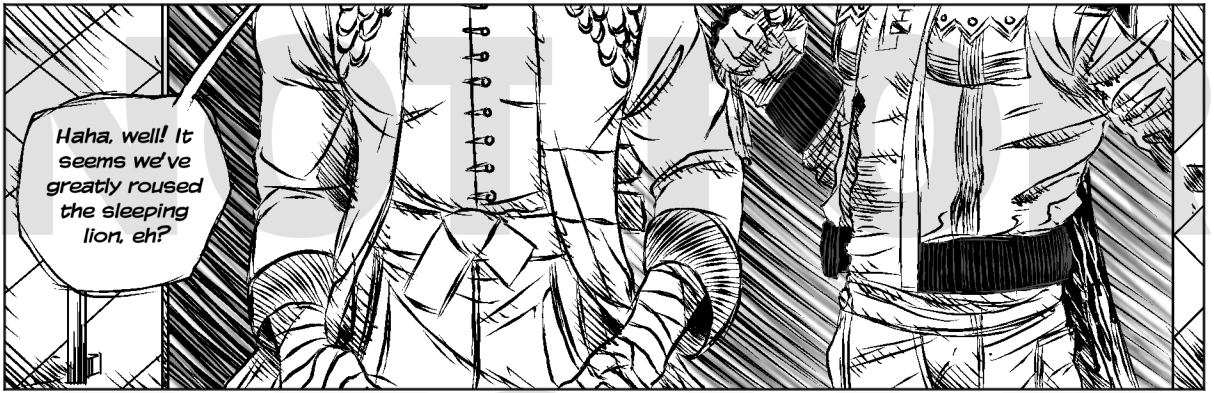
... Yes, sir...



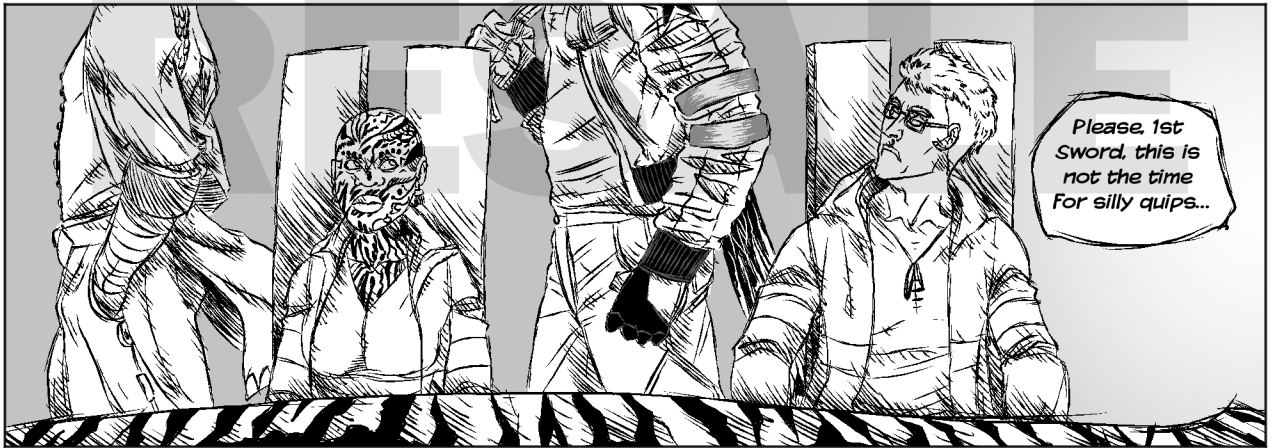
Somewhere in Floriveos Province
Verna 22, 1298



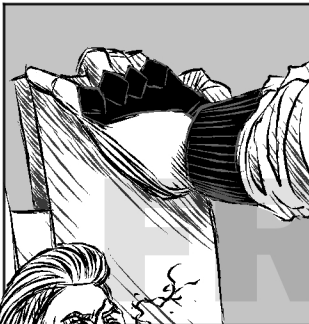
SSHHhhuck!



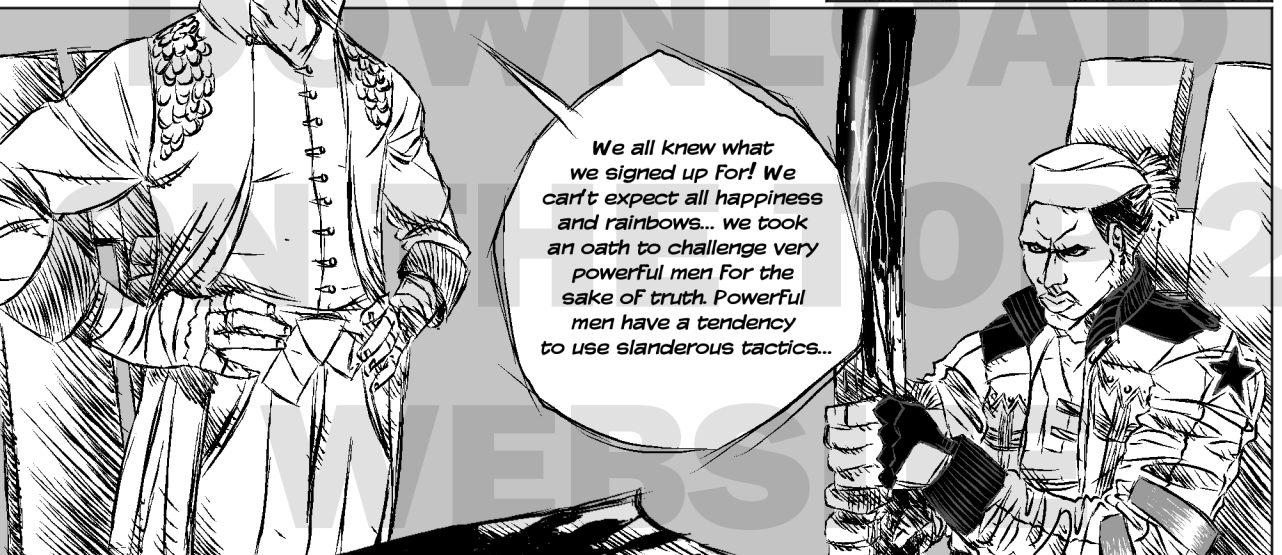
Haha, well! It seems we've greatly roused the sleeping lion, eh?



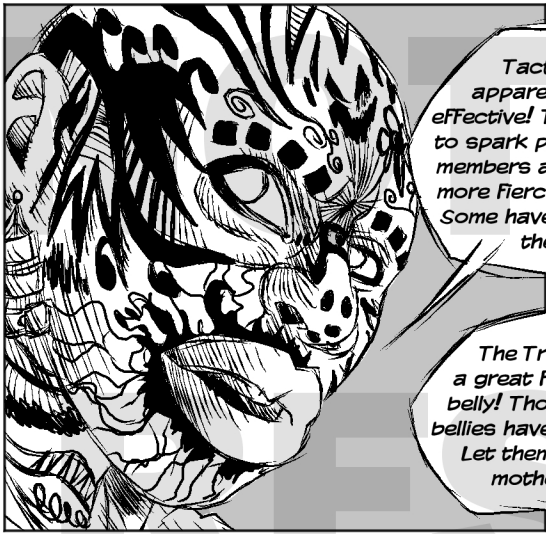
Please, 1st Sword, this is not the time for silly quips...



Indeed First Sword! Never have we faced such an ordeal...



We all knew what we signed up for! We can't expect all happiness and rainbows... we took an oath to challenge very powerful men for the sake of truth. Powerful men have a tendency to use slanderous tactics...



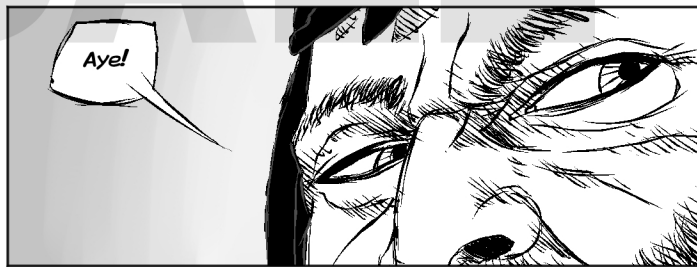
Tactics which apparently are very effective! They've managed to spark public anger! Our members are being hunted more Fiercely than before! Some have even deserted the cause...

The Truth sparks a great fire in a man's belly! Those with empty bellies have no place here! Let them run to their mother's teats!

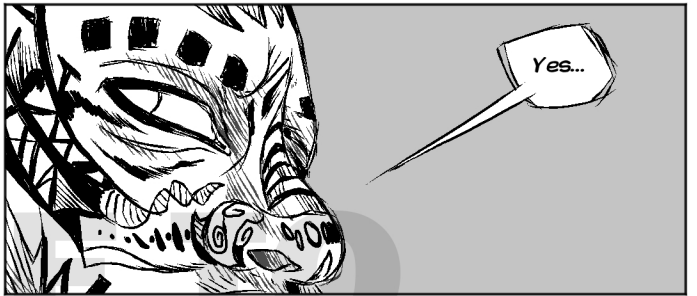


Haha! Spoken like a true warrior of Truth, Brother Obed!.. No, regardless of how effective they were these attacks were very well planned and orchestrated. Although our numbers were growing steadily, we lacked the structure that would warrant such earth shattering attacks against our good name.

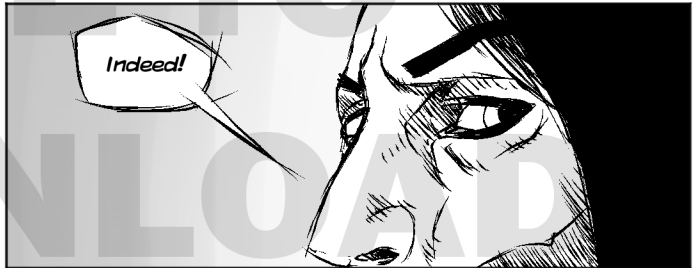
These branch bombings were executed for the soul downfall of one man. We can all agree that Grand Master Ko of Orthros Branch is the real target, can we not?



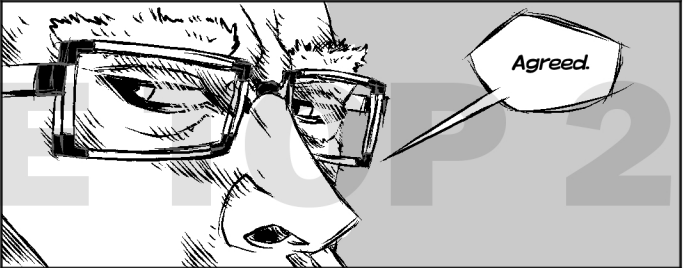
Aye!



Yes...



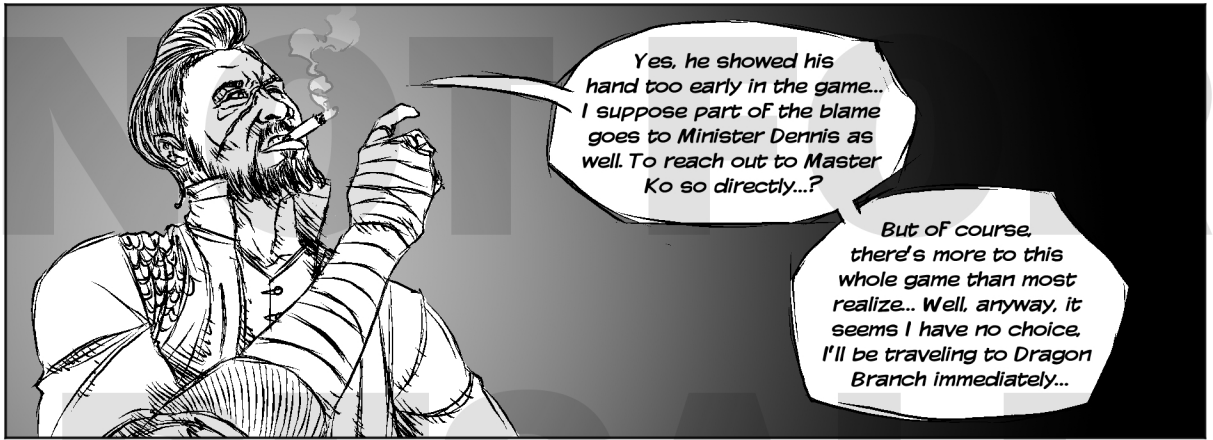
Indeed!



Agreed.

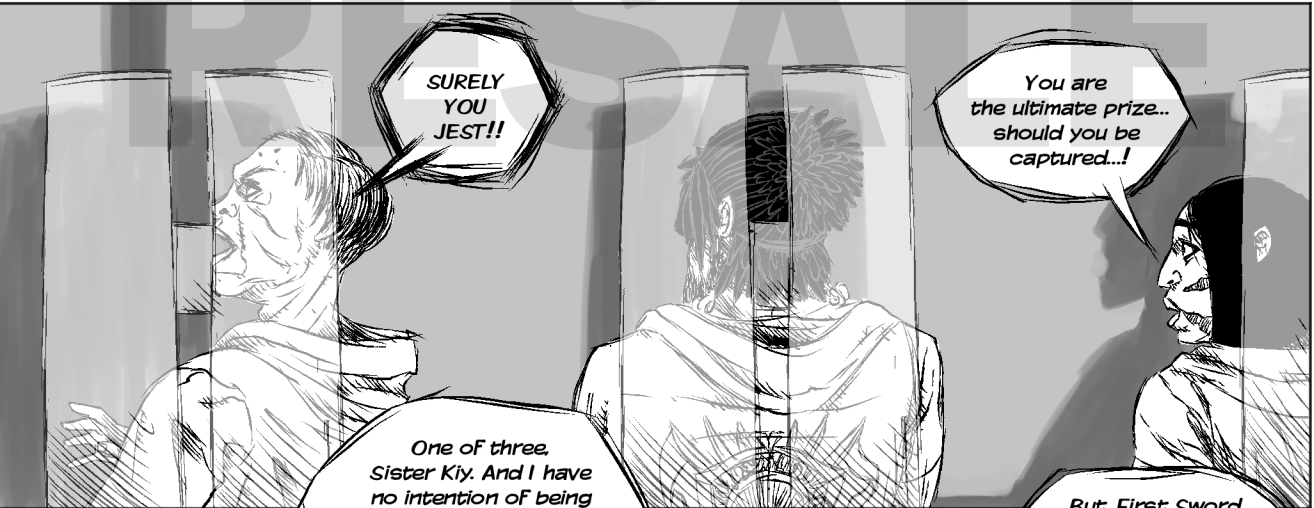


He has placed himself in a very dangerous disposition!



Yes, he showed his hand too early in the game... I suppose part of the blame goes to Minister Dennis as well. To reach out to Master Ko so directly...?

But of course, there's more to this whole game than most realize... Well, anyway, it seems I have no choice, I'll be traveling to Dragon Branch immediately...



SURELY YOU JEST!!

You are the ultimate prize.. should you be captured...!

One of three, Sister Kiy. And I have no intention of being captured so easily... besides, Liberator Bobo will be accompanying me. Right, Bobo?

But, First Sword, you can't just depart so suddenly...!



Hmm!

NOD



In our darkest hour, no doubt?



Quit whining like sniveling children!! Our great leader is on a holy mission! We can easily handle things here in his absence, so. **SHOW YOUR SUPPORT!**



Ready Bobo?



Hmm!



But First Sword!
If you don't mind
me asking, why
Dragon Branch?



Because. I
assure you, when
Grand Master Michael
hears what I have to say,
he's bound to become
Grand Master Ko's,
and in turn, our
greatest ally!

CREATOR'S CORNER

Greetings all, it's great to see you all once again. I hope you enjoyed reading this issue!

Wow! Michael sure had a difficult decision to make in this issue. It was a decision that had to be made with very little information to fall back on.

His emotional connection to Ezrietta caused him to act immediately upon receiving reports about the attack.



His main concern was the safety of his family, and he was prepared to thrust duty to the wind to ensure their well being.

In the end he couldn't deny the logic of Dyku's words. His son brought him back to himself, which is a beautiful thing.

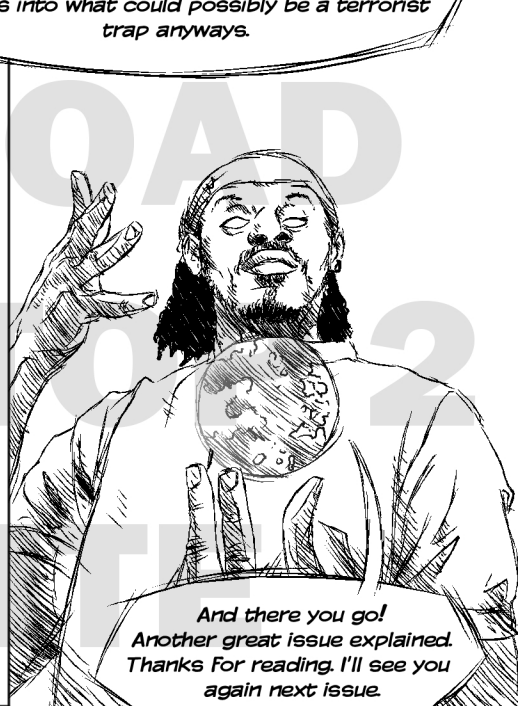
It's a sign of how quickly we forget logic as well as ourselves when the lives of those we care about are at stake.

Of course, with growing uncertainty about the meaning of these attacks, Michael wouldn't have been too hasty in sending members into what could possibly be a terrorist trap anyways.

He found it prudent to send a small party instead, and seeing as his son volunteered, there you go.

Dyku's squad was to be the first line, with secondary squads following after for support and cleanup.

And there you go! Another great issue explained. Thanks for reading. I'll see you again next issue.



**TO BE CONTINUED...
NEXT ISSUE**

CHARBELL & GULE II

TOP 20

**PLAYING
WITH
FIRE**

FOLLOW @ WWW.TOP2BYGSG2.COM



Explosions have erupted in multiple cities across the country, with the intention of causing mass fear and confusion. City Branches burn, and the skies are filled with ashes of the fallen. The ultimate plan to destroy Ko's credibility has been put into action, putting him in an almost impossible predicament. With the odds stacked against him, how will he defend himself against the hatred of an entire country? And what of Michael? Will he fall into that hatred, or continue to be a trusted friend and potential ally?

**SPECIAL THANKS TO
Maleeza Castillo**

