

BOOM!
STUDIOS

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#3

SEVEN SECRETS

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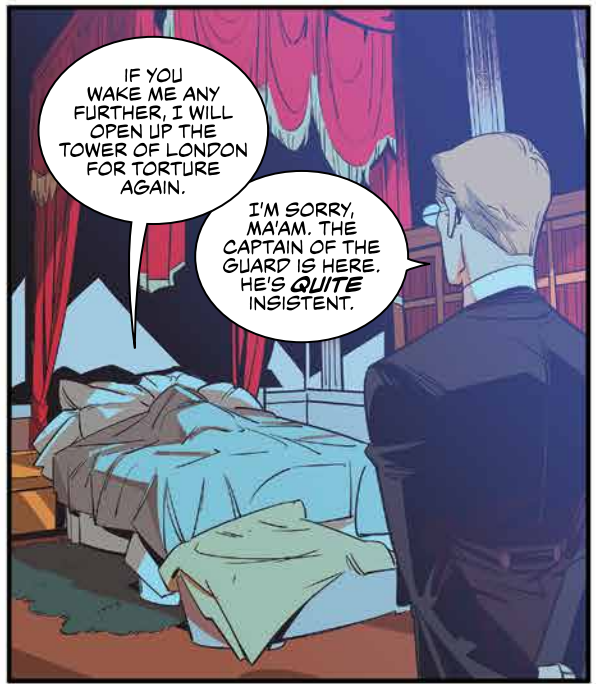
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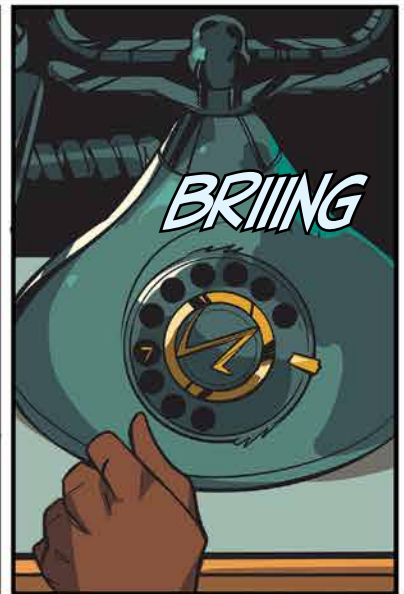
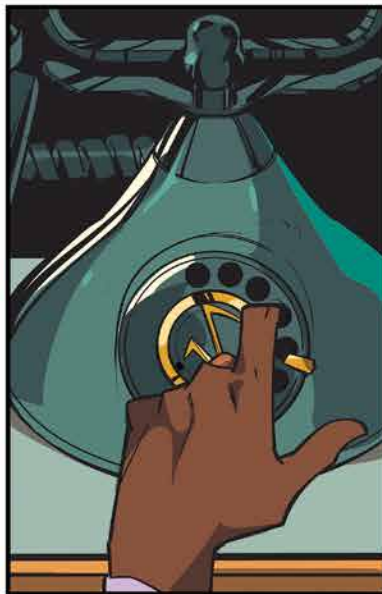
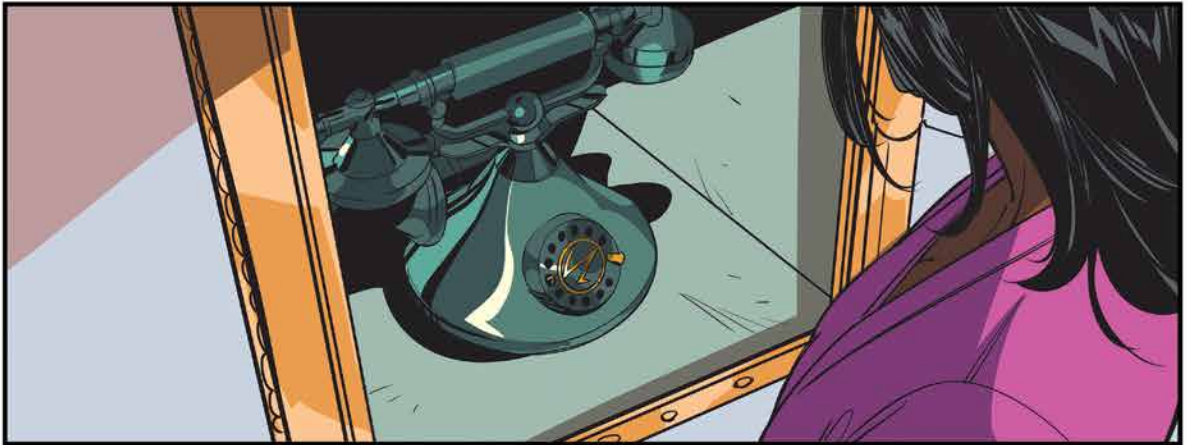
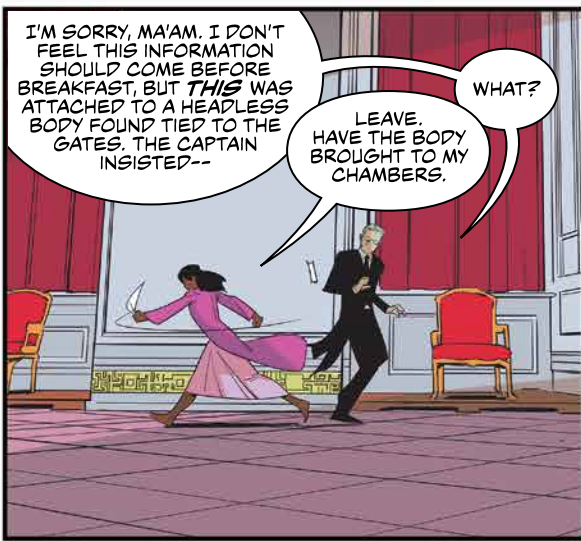
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BOOM!
S T U D I O S

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MY MOTHER ARRIVED IN VENICE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, AFTER MY FATHER HAD BEEN KILLED.

I'D BEEN WAITING FOR HER.



TAJANA.

EVA. I'M SO SORRY.



YOU WILL BE ELEVATED TO KEEPER. TRIALS WILL BE HELD FOR A NEW HOLDER.



MY CLASS HAS MANY FINE CAPETS WHO I BELIEVE ARE READY FOR THE TRIALS.

MANY?

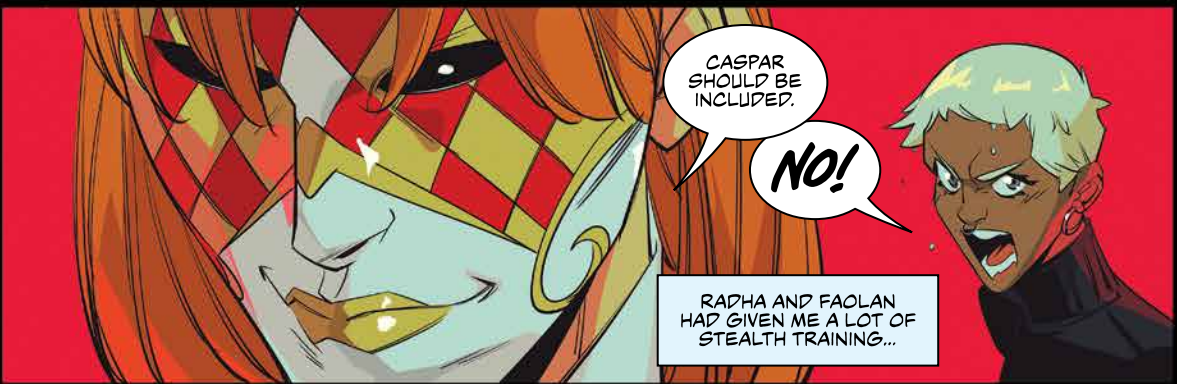
OKAY. MAYBE THREE. FEL. TITUS. DION.



CASPAR SHOULD BE INCLUDED.

NO!

RADHA AND FAOLAN HAD GIVEN ME A LOT OF STEALTH TRAINING...





...AND I WAS VERY GOOD AT IT. SO, I HEARD WHAT I WASN'T SUPPOSED TO.

EVA. HE'S TRAINED FOR THIS THE ENTIRE TIME HE'S BEEN HERE. AND HE WAS ALREADY SKILLED WHEN HE ARRIVED.

HE'S BEEN TAUGHT BY EVERY KEEPER. EVERY HOLDER. EVEN YOU AND SIGURD.



HE'S TOO YOUNG.

HE WILL GROW. THAT'S KIND OF WHAT HAPPENS.



AGE IS IMMATERIAL.

HE'S FIFTEEN.

AND I'M SEVENTY.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRY TO TAKE SOMETHING FROM *ME*?



EXCUSE ME, FIRST KEEPER.

WHAT IS IT?



IT'S THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND.


SHE FOUND SIGURD'S BODY.




THE TRIALS STARTED TWO DAYS LATER. BUT I HAD ANOTHER TRIAL TO GET THROUGH FIRST...



...WE HAD
TO **BURY**
MY DAD.



NINE WORLD LEADERS
ATTENDED. THREE PRIME
MINISTERS, AN EMPEROR,
A KING, A QUEEN AND
THREE PRESIDENTS.



THE PRESIDENT
OF AMERICA HAD
SOME CONFUSING
THINGS TO SAY
TO ME.

YOU'RE
CASPAR?

YES.


I UNDERSTAND
THINGS WERE...
COMPLICATED. BUT HE
WAS A GREAT MAN
AND I'M SORRY FOR
YOUR LOSS.



CANTO
SAID IT
WAS...

A GREAT
HONOR SO MANY
IMPORTANT
PEOPLE CAME
FOR SIGURD.

I COULDN'T SEE WHY
THAT WOULD MATTER TO
A DEAD PERSON.



THEY ALL TOLD STORIES ABOUT SIGURD.

THE STORIES WERE BROKEN, LIKE THEY'D BEEN REDACTED. LIKE ALL THEIR SENTENCES HAD BLACK LINES RULED THROUGH THEM.

WHAT I HEARD WAS AMAZING, BUT I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE THE PERSON THEY TALKED ABOUT AT ALL.



CASPAR, WOULD YOU LIKE TO SAY SOMETHING?

YOU DON'T HAVE TO, BUT YOU MIGHT REGRET NOT DOING SO, AND YOU CAN SAY WHO HE WAS TO YOU IN THIS PLACE.



I DIDN'T WANT TO SPEAK AT ALL, BUT I TRIED, BECAUSE I THOUGHT IT WAS EXPECTED OF ME.

UM... SIGURD WAS MY FATHER, BUT WE WEREN'T REALLY ALLOWED TO TALK ABOUT THAT. I ONCE GAVE HIM A BIRD. HE TAUGHT ME TO FIGHT.



I DON'T KNOW IF HE LIKED ME.





BIRDS?

SIGURD CARVED ME BIRDS.

THERE'S MORE.



HOW OLD DID HE THINK I WAS?

I DON'T THINK HE BOUGHT THAT RECENTLY.

HOW MANY THINGS ARE THERE?



THERE WERE FIFTEEN GIFTS.

ONE FOR EVERY YEAR I'D BEEN ALIVE.

BIRTHDAY PRESENTS SIGURD COULDN'T GIVE ME.



I TOLD HIM I LIKED HIS JACKET...

I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HE HEARD ME.

MY FATHER TOOK THE FINAL GIFT OFF HIS OWN BACK.



IT'S A LITTLE BIG.

YOU'LL GROW. IT'S KIND OF WHAT HAPPENS.



CASPAR. CAN YOU KEEP A SECRET?

AFTER ALL THE TRAINING I'VE HAD, I'D HOPE SO.



I MEAN IT. I NEED YOU TO PROMISE ME.

I PROMISE.



I HAVE TO TELL YOU WHAT SIGURD... I NEED TO SAY WHAT HE NEVER HAD THE CHANCE TO.

BUT IT'S DANGEROUS.

YOU CAN TRUST ME. IT'S OKAY.



CASPAR...

I LOVE YOU WITH MY WHOLE HEART.



IT WAS THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE ANYONE HAD KISSED ME.

AND IT IS STILL THE GREATEST SECRET I'VE EVER HEARD.



ARMED WITH MY FATHER'S JACKET...



...AND A LOVE I NEVER KNEW EXISTED...



...I BEGAN THE TRIALS.

THESE ARE YOUR CASES.

YOU LOSE YOUR CASE, YOU WILL NOT BE THE **HOLDER** OF THE SEVENTH SECRET.



THERE WERE FOUR OF US. TITUS, DION, AND FEL.



THIS IS ALL I'VE EVER WANTED. DON'T GET IN MY WAY.



I DIDN'T CARE WHAT WAS COMING.

I WAS NEVER LETTING GO.

THEY CALLED THEM "THE TRIALS." A BETTER NAME WOULD HAVE BEEN **ADVANCED SADISM.**



THEY BEGAN WITH SLEEP DEPRIVATION.



AND THEY STARVED US.

OVER DAYS, EVERY FIVE HOURS, THEY'D OFFER TO END IT. OFFER US SLEEP. OFFER US FOOD.



ALL WE HAD TO DO WAS...

GIVE US YOUR CASE.



NO.



NO.



NO.



@#% OFF.



ON THE THIRD NIGHT, THEY DROVE US TO MONTE BELDONE.



AND THEY LEFT US.



HUDDLE TOGETHER.

I DON'T NEED TO.



BUT THEY WEREN'T JUST TRYING TO BREAK US.

TITUS. DON'T BE YOU. GET IN HERE.



STAY CLOSE. STAY WARM.

WE CAN GET THROUGH THIS.



THEY WERE ALSO TRYING TO PUSH US TOGETHER FOR WHAT CAME NEXT...



...THE TORTURE.



TO TEST OUR LOYALTY, THEY HAD ONE OF US WATCH WHILE ANOTHER WAS TORTURED.

BOTH TRIALISTS HAD THE POWER TO STOP IT WITH A WORD.

HINING!



APPARENTLY, TITUS DIDN'T BLINK WHEN THEY WORKED ON DION.

NAAARGH!!!

GIVE ME THE SECRET.

NAH.



DION WAS THE FIRST TO BUCKLE.

STOP!

BUT NOT BECAUSE OF HIS PAIN...



...HE DID IT FOR ME.

LEAVE HIM ALONE. YOU CAN HAVE IT.

DION...?



YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO DO THAT, MAN. I COULD HAVE HANDLED--

JUST DON'T LET TITUS WIN.



EITHER ONE OF YOU CAN STOP THIS AT ANY TIME. JUST GIVE UP YOUR CASE.

NEXT, IT WAS MY TURN TO SIT AND WATCH.



BUT I...

CRK

...I DIDN'T AGREE WITH THE PARAMETERS.

THD

HEY!

WHOOOSH

CRNCH





I'M NOT SURE YOU WERE ALLOWED TO DO THAT.

WELL, THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE SPECIFIC.



WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED IN THERE?

A TRIAL.



HE CAN'T JUST--

WHY NOT? BEING OVERPROTECTIVE IS HARDLY A BAD THING HERE, AND IT HAS BEEN DONE BEFORE.



BUT THAT'S THE FIRST TIME FOR--

2,342 YEARS.



HERE, I'M DONE.

WHY?



I'M NOT BEATEN. I'M JUST HONESTLY NOT SURE I'M UP FOR SPENDING MY LIFE IN SERVITUDE, PROTECTING AN INANIMATE OBJECT.

AND BEING TORTURED REALLY DOESN'T INSPIRE THE LOYALTY YOU MIGHT THINK IT DOES.



AND THEN THERE WERE TWO.

THEY'D TESTED OUR BREAKING POINT. NOW IT WAS TIME TO TEST US AGAINST EACH OTHER.



ARGHH!!



THD



I HONESTLY THOUGHT IT WOULD GO BETTER.

HNF!

CRUNCH



IT DID NOT GO WELL.



SPLASH



AM I OUT?

BECAUSE... YOU FELL OFF A BEAM?



NO.

YOU'VE SHOWN US, IN THE HIGHLY UNLIKELY EVENT OF YOU NEEDING TO FIGHT FOR YOUR SECRET ON A PLANK OF WOOD, YOU COULD DO WITH SOME MORE PRACTICE.

BUT WE'RE LOOKING FOR A BIT MORE THAN THAT.



ALSO, DESPITE BEING KNOCKED DOWN, YOU ARE STILL HOLDING YOUR CASE.

WHILE TITUS--



YES!



OUT!



DOES THAT MEAN...?

IT DOES. IT'S OVER. YOU CAN GIVE ME THE CASE.

NO.



GOOD MAN.

IT'S YOURS. IT WILL ALWAYS BE YOURS.

TO HOLD, AND ONE DAY, PERHAPS, TO **KEEP**.



WHEN DO I GET THE REAL THING?

YOU HAVE IT. YOU WERE HOLDING THE ACTUAL SECRET THE WHOLE TIME.

WHAT?

TAJANA HAD A LOT OF FAITH IN YOU.



I... I LEFT IT OUTSIDE WHEN I WENT TO THE BATHROOM.

I WOULDN'T REPEAT THAT.



ARE YOU PROUD OF ME?

I AM. AND I'M ALSO A LITTLE SAD. THIS IS A GREAT HONOR, BUT ALSO A GREAT BURDEN.

THE SECRET AND I WERE INTRINSICALLY LINKED FROM THAT DAY. TWO THINGS MY MOTHER WOULD FIGHT TO THE DEATH FOR IN ONE HANDY PACKAGE.



HER FIGHTING FOR ME STARTED THE SAME DAY I WAS MADE **HOLDER**.

FIRST KEEPER! THERE'S SOMETHING---



NEXT:
**ABSOLUTE
CARNAGE**