

UMBRAE

One: The Day Dawned Twice

by

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PAGE 1

PANEL 1

SPLASH PAGE!

ON a YOUNG GIRL, maybe 10 years old, with straight dark hair and aquiline features. A small nose ring protruding from her left nostril. Her clothes are dark and practical -- leather boots, hemp pants, leather jerkin over a tidy blouse, a belt from which hang bags, pouches, and tools.

Her name is RASCAL, and she's a THIEF.

She's also our protagonist, and right now she's in a bad, dark place -- literally.

Rascal is cautiously making her way through a corridor of blackened, rusty metal and charred wood, with uneven, peeling and flaking surfaces; like an industrial place that's been burned out, but without actually destroying the building.

Blackened iron spikes jut through the walls and ceiling in random places; holes in the floor and walls expose lead pipes, burning fires, billowing steam, bubbling liquids. Chains hang from the ceiling in place of chandeliers.

This is THE UMBRAL, a nightmarish mirror of the "real" world. A place that has been slowly corrupted and destroyed over centuries, till all that's left is this world of horrors.

CAPTION

When the bards sing songs of my life,
they probably won't mention this part.

CAPTION

The part where I fell into the Umbral
and couldn't get out.

PAGE 2

PANEL 1

Rascal comes to a DOOR in the corridor. It's uneven, oddly-angled -- is it a strange perspective, or is it just plain weird? We can't really say for sure.

CAPTION

Could have sworn I already passed this door. That's bad, isn't it?

PANEL 2

Rascal slowly pulls the door open. A LIGHT GLOWS from inside, but instead of the bright white light we might have been hoping for, it's a MURKY GREY...

SFX

RRRRRRRRRR

CAPTION

No, wait --

PANEL 3

The door is THROWN OPEN by a BIG HULKING SHADOW CREATURE!

Its body is a BLACK shadowy void. WISPS of shadow COIL OFF its "skin" like tendrils of smoke. Its EYES BURN with a BLOOD RED FIRE. Its MOUTH is filled with rows of BONE-WHITE RAZOR-SHARP TEETH. Its CLAWS are the same sharp bone white, practically glowing against the black, void-like form of its body.

This is an UMBRAL. They're kind of unfriendly.

The umbral REACHES for Rascal, HISSING her name...

(LETTERING NOTE: this is kind of combined dialogue/SFX, so see which works best. Either way, we'll need to establish a style for Umbral dialogue, so whatever that ends up being, make sure this has the same kind of feel to it.)

UMBRAL

RRRRRRASCALLLLL...

CAPTION

-- That's bad.

PAGE 3

PANEL 1

CUT TO the "real" world.

ON the SUN, high in the sky -- just as the MOON pokes one edge in front of it. An ECLIPSE is about to take place.

CAPTION

Twenty minutes earlier:

VOICE OFF (BELOW)

The bards will write songs about this!

PANEL 2

BIG PANEL!

On the streets of STRAKHELM -- capital city in the kingdom of FENDIN -- a FESTIVAL is taking shape, to celebrate the eclipse. After all, these things only come round once every 500 years.

The streets are filled with people drinking, dancing, and carousing -- and plenty of bards, wine-sellers, jugglers, and so on to keep them entertained and spending money.

We focus on STRAKAN'S SQUARE, the city's main gathering place, in the centre of which is a STATUE AND FOUNTAIN. The statue shows KING STRAKAN, one of Fendin's most beloved historical kings and founder of this city, on a battle horse in a triumphal, sword-raising pose. Water gushes from the mouths of FISH arranged at the base of his pedestal. You know the type.

The square is in front of the RED PALACE, the royal residence, surrounded by high walls and iron gates to keep the riff-raff out. (Think Buckingham Palace, but taller and more mediaeval, with lots of towers and spires.)

ANGLE THIS so the sun is "above the reader", shining down on the crowd, and facing the front of the palace.

One portly, half-drunk old woman objects to a nearby bard, and jeers at him.

BARD

Since five centuries past
In the days of great Strakan
Slew the shadows of hell
And brought light to the world

DRUNK OLD WOMAN

Some of them have already started!
Shut your hole, y'noisy bugger!

PANEL 3

We MOVE OVER the crowd, closer to the palace.

BARD (OFF, SMALLER)

Now comes again the dawn
That twice awakes the world
To fair Fendin and all
Shall the dark shadows fall

PANEL 4

Continue moving over the crowd, closer to the palace -- and now we're close enough to see a SMALL FIGURE in a WINDOW on one wing of the palace, looking out over the walls at the crowd below.

CAPTION

The bards will mention Prince Arthir, though. In fact, he'll be a big part of my songs.

PANEL 5

CLOSE ON the figure in the window. A BOY, eleven years old, fair-haired and smooth of skin, dressed in "rich casual" clothes -- that is to say, ordinary boots-and-jerkin type clothes (rather than gowns and capes) but VERY fine and expensive.

He also wears a SHORT SWORD in a belt scabbard.

This is PRINCE ARTHIR, and while he's not one of our central stars, he's nevertheless going to be very important.

Arthir SMIRKS out at the gathered crowds.

CAPTION

How could he not? He's a Prince!

PAGE 4-5

MAP AND CREDITS DPS

PAGE 6

PANEL 1

CUT TO a large room elsewhere in the palace -- a reception room, in fact, with LARGE FRENCH WINDOWS leading to a WIDE BALCONY.

KING PETOR and QUEEN INNALINE -- Arthir's parents -- are here, preparing to go out and address their people when the eclipse passes.

NOTE this is a big room, and they're sufficiently far away from the balcony to be unseen by anyone in the streets below.

In some ways, Petor and Innaline are a typical fantasy royal couple; they're fairly handsome (mainly just because of wealth), he's in his 40s, she's in her 30s, and there's not much real love lost between them any more.

Where they differ is in their physicality and manner; Fendin has been at peace for hundreds of years, so the idea of a warrior-king hasn't been important for a long time.

Petor is tall and willowy, a neurotic who looks like he'd snap if you breathed heavily on him. He paces up and down the room, nervous.

Innaline is short and overweight, a woman used to being waited on and getting her own way. She's much more relaxed, as a handmaiden makes last minute adjustments to her hair and bodice.

NOTE they're both in full ceremonial dress, all velvet and ermine and ribbons and gold.

Petor also holds the MORDENT, a ceremonial object passed down through the royal line for centuries. It's a wooden staff, five feet long/high, made of five separate lengths of wood, braided into a single length.

At the base is a brass 'foot', a cap to stop the wood breaking when it strikes the ground.

At the top, the five pieces of wood separate to form a kind of bowl shape, with each end carved to a point. It's like a large round jewel is supposed to rest in the points, but the jewel is missing.

(I hope I'm describing this well enough! I can always do a quick crappy sketch if need be, just holler.)

Two ROYAL GUARDS (known as REDGUARDS) also stand in the room, just silently standing watch near the main door.

KING PETOR

For heaven's sake, hurry up, Inna! The eclipse is starting!

QUEEN INNALINE

Profoss Olbert said it will take forty minutes to pass fully. Stop panicking.

PANEL 2

ON Petor, looking out towards the open french windows. Nervous.

KING PETOR

I'm not, I'm just anxious. The first twice-dawned day since Strakan was king... people will want to see us when it's over.

PANEL 3

ON Innaline, as the handmaiden brushes her hair.

In extreme foreground is the MORDENT, in Petor's hand.

QUEEN INNALINE

No, dear, they want to see the Mordent.

(cont)

You just happen to be the one carrying it at the moment.

PAGE 7

PANEL 1

ON Petor, holding the staff and looking at it with a certain amount of melancholy.

KING PETOR

And heavy is the arm that holds the staff.

PANEL 2

ON Innaline, grabbing the handmaiden's hair brush and shooing her away in frustration.

QUEEN INNALINE

Oh, don't start. That tree branch has survived three rebellions, two wars, and dozens of your fathers. I'm sure it'll cope with an eclipse...

(cont)

For god's sake, girl, leave it alone! I'll do it myself!

PANEL 3

Petor LEANS IN and KISSES Innaline on the head, SMILING a little. She SMILES back, sarcastic.

KING PETOR

Sometimes, Queen Innaline, I remember exactly why I married you.

QUEEN INNALINE

Sometimes, King Petor, I forget exactly why I said yes.

PANEL 4

Innaline starts brushing her hair out, still annoyed. Petor rolls his eyes, and orders one of the guards to go find the Prince.

NOTE make sure Borus the guard is visually distinctive, identifying him will be important later.

QUEEN INNALINE

And where the bloody hell is your son?

KING PETOR

He's always my son when he misbehaves, isn't he?

PANEL 5

Small panel, ON BORUS, one of the Redguards.

KING PETOR (OFF)

Borus, go and find Arthir. He knows he
should be here.

PAGE 8

PANEL 1

CUT TO PRINCE ARTHIR, RUNNING along a corridor in the palace. He weaves around a couple of redguards (NOT the same ones we just saw!), who back off to let him pass. They're clearly used to this.

BEARDED REDGUARD
Careful, there, little prince...!

PRINCE ARTHIR
Sorry, Hanry! Important business!

PANEL 2

ON the guards, watching Arthir run off. The Bearded Redguard looks worried, as if he's about to follow, but the Old Guard holds him back...

BEARDED REDGUARD
Where's he going?

OLD REDGUARD
Wait, wait...

PANEL 3

ON Arthir, RUNNING THROUGH a narrow door that leads to a spiral staircase.

OLD REDGUARD (OFF)
...See? It's fine. Come on, it's almost time.

PANEL 4

The guards turn back, only to now see BORUS approaching.

They're surprised to see him. Borus looks annoyed at being given this job.

BEARDED REDGUARD
Borus? Aren't you supposed to be with King Petor all day?

BORUS
Apparently I'm now a babysitter as well as a Redguard. That's assuming the little brat's even in the palace, today...

PANEL 5

ON the two guards. They look at one another, as if figuring out whether they should tell Borus where the Prince went.

BORUS (OFF)

...Don't suppose you've seen Arthir?

PAGE 9

PANEL 1

CUT TO Arthir, now at the top of the stone spiral staircase. It's a narrow TOWER, and he uses a KEY on his belt to UNLOCK a door at the top...

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 2

...which leads into a SMALL ROUND ROOM with a CONICAL CEILING.

The room is old, dusty, and unused -- nothing in here but some rough planks of wood leaning against the walls, a few roof tiles, a hammer, etc.

But in the centre of the room is a WOODEN STEP LADDER, positioned under a HATCH in the conical ceiling.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 3

Arthir CLIMBS the ladder and UNBOLTS the hatch...

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 4

CUT TO the TILED ROOF outside, as Arthir PUSHES OPEN the hatch.

The tower is situated at a corner of the palace, and the roof here joins with sloping roofs from two other sides of the building, so it's a bit of a hideaway.

Nestled away in this tiled juncture, out of sight from below, is RASCAL. She leans back on the tiles, facing the sun, arms folded and EYES CLOSED.

RASCAL

Profoss Munty says that the eclipse is so bright, you can see it even with your eyes closed.

PANEL 5

CLOSE ON her. She turns to face Arthir, opens her eyes and SMILES.

RASCAL

It's all bollocks, as usual. I couldn't see a fucking thing.

PANEL 6

ON Arthir, propped half-out of the hatch. He SMILES back.

PRINCE ARTHIR
Hello, Rascal.

PAGE 10

PANEL 1

CUT TO inside the tower room, as they both climb through the hatch.

PRINCE ARTHIR
How long were you waiting?

RASCAL
Since last night. It's hard enough getting over the walls in the dark, no way was I doing it in daylight.

PANEL 2

CUT TO them at the bottom of the spiral staircase, peeking out to make sure the coast is clear.

NOTE the light is already failing -- we're ten minutes into the eclipse, and the sun is half-covered.

(Might be a good idea to add some tiny "phases of the eclipse" panels throughout these pages, actually, leading up to the full eclipse moment...)

RASCAL
Frankly, I'm not convinced doing this in daylight is a good idea, either.

PRINCE ARTHIR
Daylight? We're not even at full eclipse yet, and it already feels like dusk.

PANEL 3

ON them creeping through the palace corridors, Arthir leading the way. Rascal rolls her eyes at his question, and reaches inside her jerkin.

PRINCE ARTHIR
You did bring the Mist, didn't you?
I'll need it to get through the cage.

RASCAL
Do I stand next to you on the palace balcony and tell you how to wave at your subjects?

PANEL 4

CLOSE ON her, as she produces a PENDANT hanging around her neck. On the chain is a SMALL BLUE CRYSTAL, filled with GLOWING, SWIRLING POINTS OF LIGHT.

They call these crystals MIST.

Rascal SMIRKS.

RASCAL
Anyway, I never take it off.

PANEL 5

They move on, walking up a WIDE STAIRCASE.

PRINCE ARTHIR
Erm... you might want to, at some point.

RASCAL
Figure of speech. Of course I'll take it off when you start doing magic with it.
(cont)
I don't want nothing to do with that shit.

PAGE 11

PANEL 1

CUT TO a big old TROPHY ROOM, elsewhere in the palace. All wooden floors and walls, lined with a maze of cabinets containing old war trophies, historical artifacts and weapons... It's a museum, basically.

Arthir leads Rascal through it, gesturing at all the cabinets and displays. She doesn't care.

PRINCE ARTHIR

King Strakan himself established this trophy room, after the Shadow War. Hardly anyone comes here any more.

RASCAL

Blah, blah. I'm not here for the tour. Just show me the Oculus.

PANEL 2

They reach a particular exhibit, a LARGE CARVED WOODEN PEDESTAL, with a small dais and cushion, as if to hold a precious jewel.

Which is exactly the case -- this is where the OCULUS, a sphere of Mist, has been housed for centuries. There are no bars, no security features -- because the "cage" Arthir referred to is magical, powered by the Mist itself.

Not any more. The pedestal is EMPTY. The magic cage VANISHED. Nothing.

Arthir is, to say the least, SHOCKED.

PRINCE ARTHIR

It's right --

(cont)

What the hell?!

PANEL 3

Arthir is FRANTIC, trying to figure out what happened. How could someone have stolen the Oculus from its magical cage? And why?

But Rascal is looking around, and spots something more worrying -- a TRAIL OF BLOOD DROPS leading away, behind a large exhibit cabinet...

PRINCE ARTHIR

I came and checke

d, after we planned everything on Tuesday!

I wanted to make sure they hadn't rearranged the room, or... I just, I don't...

RASCAL

Erm... Arthir.

(cont)

Arthir.

PANEL 4

...And behind the cabinet they find BORUS, the guard sent to find Arthir. His THROAT HAS BEEN SLIT.

PRINCE ARTHIR

Borus!

PAGE 12

PANEL 1

Rascal HOLDS Arthir back, and tries to take control of the situation. Arthir is BEWILDERED.

RASCAL
OK, this looks bad. When did you last see that Redguard?

PRINCE ARTHIR
This morning! He was fine, stomping around after my dad like usual...

PANEL 2

ON Rascal, looking around. Ominous.

RASCAL
And now he's dead, and the Oculus is gone. If that's a coincidence, I'm an Azqari.
(cont)
Come on.

PANEL 3

Rascal and Arthir FOLLOW the BLOOD TRAIL -- it takes them through a side door, into a narrow corridor.

PRINCE ARTHIR
Was this someone else at the Guild?

RASCAL
Pretty sure I'd have heard about it, if it was. I think this is someone working freely, like me.
(cont)
Every thief in Strakhelm knows the eclipse will be a great distraction.

PANEL 4

ON them, as Rascal suddenly realizes that they could be walking straight into the clutches of a wizard. Which she most certainly does not want to do.

PRINCE ARTHIR
And do they all know the Oculus sits in a magical cage, as well?

RASCAL
...Ah. Shit.

PRINCE ARTHIR

Yeah. Narrows it down just a bit,
doesn't it?

PAGE 13

PANEL 1

Rascal tries to head back the other way, pulling Arthir with her, but he resists.

RASCAL
You're right. We should go.

PRINCE ARTHIR
I knew you'd say that. What is it with you and magic?

PANEL 2

ON Rascal, trying hard to convince him this just became more than a simple caper.

RASCAL
There are only half a dozen wizards in the entire Thieves' Guild, and they're all murdering psychopaths.
(cont)
Which is basically a tautology, anyway.

PANEL 3

Arthir is OFFENDED by this characterization. Rascal DISMISSES his protests.

PRINCE ARTHIR
Ahem? Hello, spellcaster here?

RASCAL
Don't be an arse. I mean proper wizards.
(cont)
And we really should go. The Oculus is worth a fortune, not my bloody life.

PANEL 4

CUT TO a corridor, and a NARROW DOOR opens -- revealing Arthir. This is where the back corridor leads.

And eagle-eyed readers might realize that this is the SAME CORRIDOR we saw Arthir running down, earlier...

PRINCE ARTHIR
And what about someone else's?
(cont)

Screw the Oculus, haven't you figured
out where we're heading? Where all
this blood leads?

PANEL 5

Rascal stands with Arthir in the corridor, looking up and down,
and suddenly REALIZES where they are.

The wide corridor, the suits of armor, the hanging tapestries and
paintings...

RASCAL
The King and Queen.

PRINCE ARTHIR
Otherwise known as my mum and dad.

PAGE 14

PANEL 1

Rascal starts to head off in the direction of the balcony room, but Arthir GRABS her arm and stops her.

PRINCE ARTHIR

Wait!

(cont)

There's a secret way. We'll be safe there.

PANEL 2

Instead, Arthir leads them down a narrow, dark, side corridor...

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 3

...And OPENS a WOOD PANEL in the wall! A secret passage!

PRINCE ARTHIR

Go on, hurry.

PANEL 4

CUT TO inside the passage, as they SNEAK along the cramped, darkened passage, in between the castle walls. The only light comes from various PEEP HOLES along the way, to spy into various rooms.

RASCAL

A secret passage, between the walls.

(cont)

Of course there is.

PRINCE ARTHIR

Parts of the Red Palace are pre-Calamity. Some of these passages are so old, they're not even on the profoss' maps.

PAGE 15

PANEL 1

They arrive at one particular peephole, LOW in the wall, and Arthir stops.

PRINCE ARTHIR
Here. This one looks straight into the balcony room.

PANEL 2

ON Arthir, CROUCHING to look through the peephole.

PRINCE ARTHIR
If there's anyone sneaking about, I'll go and call...

PANEL 3

FACE-ON SHOT of him from the other side of the peephole (it looks through the base of a TALL IRON SCONCE, where there should be a rivet, but we'll be too close to see the whole thing).

Arthir's eye is WIDE IN SHOCK.

PRINCE ARTHIR
...the Redguards...

PANEL 4

BACK TO inside the secret corridor. Arthir STUMBLES BACK from the peephole, STUNNED by what he's seen. Rascal CATCHES him, and is CONFUSED.

RASCAL
Arthir? Oh, god, what's happened?

PANEL 5

ON Rascal. She looks through the peephole herself... And is just as WIDE-EYED as Arthir was.

RASCAL (SMALL)
Fucking hell.

PAGE 16

PANEL 1

SPLASH PAGE!

And in the balcony room, things are suddenly quite different to how we left them.

Outside, through the French windows on to the balcony, we see the ECLIPSE nearing its apex, casting the room into GLOOMY SHADOW.

KING PETOR and QUEEN INNALINE lie DEAD on the floor of the balcony room, their GUTS ripped out.

The HANDMAIDEN is dead, too, but her body has been thrown in a corner.

And over their bodies stand TWO UMBRAL.

(Chris, it's up to you whether you make them identical or differentiated in some way. We're definitely going to encounter "senior" Umbral later, to which you might want to give grey hair, so by all means "individualize" them all, if you like.)

UMBRAL 1 holds the MORDENT in one clawed, blood-stained hand. Blood runs down the wood.

In the other hand, it holds THE OCULUS. It's a SPHERICAL PIECE OF MIST, 2" in diameter, set in a BRASS ENCASEMENT. The brass is finely worked, with circular openings to reveal the crystal, and pointed "thorn" shapes curling round the openings.

(In other words, look at the 'thorns/claws' shape on our covers. Yes, that there in the middle is the Oculus :)

UMBRAL 2, meanwhile, uses its claws to CUT into the KING, catching the blood in a CHALICE.

(LETTERING NOTE: OK, here's where we definitely need to establish a style for Umbral dialogue. White on purple, perhaps? And some kind of 'wispy' balloon shape? Let's try out a few different things to decide)

UMBRAL 1

Hurry.

(cont)

The second dawn nears, and this royal blood will cool too soon.

PAGE 17

PANEL 1

Umbral 2 uses the blood chalice to pour out a CIRCLE OF BLOOD on the floor, in the centre of the room.

(NOTE *Not* around the bodies -- the King and Queen's bodies are nearby, but aside from this.)

UMBRAL 2
Still no word from our sister. Our
task is made more difficult.

PANEL 2

The blood circle is complete. Now Umbral 1 HOLDS the Mordent upright in the circle, and the Oculus above it, over the thorns...

UMBRAL 1
It is no matter. The halo is complete,
the Oculus rejoined.

PANEL 3

Umbral 1 LETS GO and steps back. The Mordent and Oculus both STAY there, upright, HOVERING ABOVE the ground in the centre of the blood circle. The Oculus GLOWS BRIGHTLY with purple light.

UMBRAL 1
The Mist clears.

PANEL 4

We look through the french windows, and see that the ECLIPSE IS NOW FULL, with just a halo of sunlight around the moon.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 5

ON Rascal and Arthir, in the secret passage. Arthir is still in SHOCK, but Rascal is still watching.

RASCAL
It's some kind of... ritual? And the
eclipse is happening!

PAGE 18

PANEL 1

BIG PANEL!

And now we see the point of the blood circle. The HALO LIGHT from the eclipse shines in through the french windows, and MATCHES the blood circle.

A WALL OF RED LIGHT shines upward from the blood circle.

The STAFF AND OCULUS hover in the centre, and now the Oculus is also glowing RED.

The two Umbral stand around the circle, arms raised, as if SUMMONING something...

UMBRAL (TOGETHER)
The gate of the second dawn unfolds.

PANEL 2

ON Rascal and Arthir, in the passage. Rascal is still looking through the peephole, and doesn't notice that under her tunic, her MIST PENDANT is GLOWING with purple light.

But Arthir does.

RASCAL
Arthir, we really have to go. I'm
sorry about your parents, but --

PRINCE ARTHIR
Er... Rascal, your chest is glowing?

PANEL 3

ON Rascal. She pulls the pendant out to stare at it, SHOCKED and CONFUSED.

RASCAL
What the...?!

PAGE 19

PANEL 1

In the balcony room, the Umbral suddenly TURN TO LOOK at the wall...

UMBRAL 1
Mist.

UMBRAL 2
Near.

PANEL 2

...And then Umbral 1 literally TEARS THE WALL OPEN with his claws! Rascal and Arthir SHRIEK in fright!

(NOTE that Rascal's mist continues to GLOW throughout this scene, until she enters the Umbral.)

UMBRAL 1
Very near!

RASCAL
Aaaah!

PANEL 3

Arthir STEPS in front of Rascal and PULLS HIS SHORT SWORD, SHOUTING at the Umbral.

Rascal PULLS on his arm, trying to get him away.

PRINCE ARTHIR
NO!
(cont) You bastards, I'll kill you all!

RASCAL
Arthir, no...!

PANEL 4

Umbral 1 LEANS OVER Arthir, more amused than anything by this tiny human. Imposing, threatening.

UMBRAL 1
Brave Prince. One versus two...

PANEL 5

ON the blood circle. The FLOOR inside it seems to have disappeared into a hole... a gateway!

ANOTHER UMBRAL starts to CLIMB out, its clawed hand DIGGING into the edge of the hole.

UMBRAL 1 (OFF)
...and more are coming.

PAGE 20

PANEL 1

ON Arthir and Rascal. Arthir is CRYING with rage, still holding his SWORD out to try and defend them from the Umbral. Rascal knows it's useless, and continues to PULL at his arm.

PRINCE ARTHIR
Run, Rascal! I'll... I'll hold them
off!

RASCAL
Don't be bloody stupid! Are you trying
to

PANEL 2

Suddenly, Umbral 1 SWIPES DOWN at Arthir, its arm a BLUR OF SHADOWY MOVEMENT...

(LETTERING NOTE: this kind of roar might work better as SFX, rather than a balloon? See what you think)

UMBRAL 1
RRRRRAAAAAAHHHH!

PANEL 3

...And now REPEAT PANEL 1, with Rascal still holding Arthir's arm -- and that's all she's holding. The rest of Arthir lies DEAD on the floor, SLICED to ribbons by the Umbral's razor claws.

RASCAL
impress me

PANEL 4

SMALL PANEL. CLOSE ON Rascal, staring down at Arthir's severed arm in SHOCK as she lets it DROP.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 5

There are now FOUR UMBRAL in the room. They CLOSE IN on Rascal. She BACKS away, reflexively RAISING a hand to her Mist pendant.

UMBRAL 1
Give us the Mist.

RASCAL
...Swap you for the Oculus?

PANEL 6

ON the Umbral. They LAUGH.

SFX (UMBRAL)

HA HA HA HA HA

CAPTION

I was never the sharpest blade on the
anvil, as they say.

PAGE 21

PANEL 1

And that's what Rascal was hoping for. While they're temporarily distracted, she BREAKS for it, RUNNING THROUGH them -- toward the blood circle!

CAPTION
But I am the fastest.

PANEL 2

Rascal JUMPS through the wall of red magical light, REACHING UP for the Oculus...

CAPTION
And while I don't really care about the Oculus any more, these things obviously do.

PANEL 3

CLOSE ON her hand as she GRABS the Oculus. SHAFTS of its red glowing light SHINE THROUGH her fingers.

CAPTION
Not that I really have a clue what I'm doing.

PANEL 4

And then she LANDS... To find the French windows onto the balcony have somehow been replaced by a set of BLACKENED, RUSTY IRON BARS.

She's in THE UMBRAL.

(Maybe compose this and panel 2 the same, with a long/wide distance of the scene, so that we can tell where she's supposed to be, and immediately see the change in environment...?)

CAPTION
Just a stab in the dark.

PAGE 22

PANEL 1

Rascal WHIRLS round, wondering what the hell's going on. The whole room is like this, all blackened and corrupt, like all of the Umbral world.

The blood circle is still there, but the magic and light is gone. The Mordent has vanished. The Umbral are nowhere to be seen.

(NOTE that the Oculus is also gone from her hand, but she doesn't even think about that right now, and we're not going to draw attention to it... yet ;)

RASCAL
But... the window...?

PANEL 2

Rascal WALKS cautiously back towards the main door -- which is now lined with IRON SPIKES, and the space beyond into the corridor is a BLACK VOID.

CAPTION
Smells like a blacksmith's furnace.
Charred steel and burnt oak.

CAPTION
Why are my legs so slow --

PANEL 3

But as she passes by, TWO UMBRAL start to emerge from the shadows. She BACKS AWAY...

CAPTION
-- like a nightmare --

PANEL 4

Rascal PULLS herself through the door, SCRAPING her hand on the iron spikes.

CAPTION
-- Like walking through mud. Mud that shifts from side to side with every step.

CAPTION
Ouch, by the way. Those spikes feel real enough.

PAGE 23

PANEL 1

And now we've come full circle, back to the start of the issue.
So REPEAT 1.1 (either smaller, or just crop in close on Rascal)

CAPTION

When the bards sing songs of my life,
they probably won't mention this part.

CAPTION

The part where I fell into the Umbral
and couldn't get out.

PANEL 2

She RUNS through the corridor of WEIRD DOORS...

CAPTION

Of course, the Umbral isn't real. It's
just a story to scare kids at bedtime.

CAPTION

Yeah, you keep telling yourself that,
Rascal.

PANEL 3

...Then comes to a HALT as she spies a TALL CLOAKED FIGURE up
ahead, its back to her, a PURPLE GLOW emanating from its head.

CAPTION

Woah. Where did he come from?

RASCAL

Um... hello?

PANEL 4

Moving CAUTIOUSLY, she APPROACHES the figure.

RASCAL

Don't suppose you know a way out, do
you?

PANEL 5

The stranger TURNS and REACHES for her! A tall, gaunt man in a
long dark cloak, with a mohican and a black stripe across his
eyes... a wizard!

WIZARD

Little girl...

(cont)

Blood of the eye...
(cont)
So much power in a small thing...

PAGE 24

PANEL 1

Rascal RUNS AWAY. The wizard doesn't move from the spot, but REACHES after her...

CAPTION
Not bloody likely.

PANEL 2

...And then the FLOOR COLLAPSES under Rascal's feet! She FALLS through!

RASCAL
Aaaah! Shit!

PANEL 3

She lands on a blackened floor covered in debris and ash.

CAPTION
And all this because I snatched...

CAPTION
Shit, where's the Oculus? I had it in my hand, when --

PANEL 4

ON Rascal, as she PULLS out her Mist pendant... Except it's changed. Now it's THE OCULUS hanging on a chain around her neck.

She is, naturally, CONFUSED.

CAPTION
Oh.

PANEL 5

Rascal CLOSES HER (BLEEDING) HAND around it, looking around to check nobody's watching, as she remembers how the Umbral found her in the first place...

CAPTION
Oh, god. If they could sniff out my little piece of Mist, this thing must be like a fire beacon.

PANEL 6

CLOSE ON her hand, as the blood from her cut REACTS with the Oculus. It starts to GLOW (PURPLE)...

CAPTION

No, don't start glowing now...!

PAGE 25

PANEL 1

But she looks up and sees the OUTLINE of a DOOR, where before there was just a wall of peeling paint.

The same PURPLE LIGHT GLOWS from behind it, illuminating the door edges.

CAPTION

And I'm telling you, that door wasn't there before.

PANEL 2

The Oculus still glowing around her neck, Rascal OPENS the door.

BLINDING PURPLE LIGHT glares out. She SQUINTS in the sudden illumination...

CAPTION

What the hell. Got to be better than nothing but shadows...

PANEL 3

PURPLE PANEL.

CAPTION

tenebros and luxan

PANEL 4

And CUT TO a BACK STREET somewhere in Strakhelm. The kind of high-walled street where the city's homeless come to sleep, full of rags, salvaged planks to sleep on, blankets, and of course hobos. Most of them are out begging right now, though.

Rascal EMERGES from what appears to be a solid stone wall, with the PURPLE FADING around her. And the OCULUS is still in her bloody hand, on the chain around her neck.

Nobody notices her.

NOTE that time has continued to move on, so the eclipse is almost at an end.

CAPTION

Now where?

CAPTION

Smells like Strakhelm. Like piss and porridge.

PANEL 5

ON the eclipse, almost finished.

CAPTION
Was it even real?

CAPTION
Maybe I ate something bad?

PAGE 26

PANEL 1

Rascal puts the Oculus back inside her tunic, looking around at the street. There's a PILE OF RAGS nearby...

CAPTION

No. I've still got the Oculus. And that means... Oh god, poor Arthir.

PANEL 2

...and REPEAT, as the "pile of rags" suddenly unfolds into a HOMELESS GUY who was sleeping! He REACHES out for Rascal -- she SHRIEKS, STARTLED.

As for the hobo, he's got long blond hair, a scraggly beard over thin features, a ragged long coat that's seen better days, and if you took all the dirt off it you might recognize some magical symbols...

Yep, it's DALONE.

DALONE

Little girl... Here, over here...

RASCAL

Aaah!

PANEL 3

Rascal thinks Dalone is just an old perv out to feel her up, and KICKS him in the nuts! He DOUBLES UP in pain.

RASCAL

(cont) Piss off, you randy old bastard!
I've had the fucking day from hell,
and it's not even sundown!

DALONE

YOOOWWW!

PANEL 4

Rascal RUNS AWAY, turning a corner...

CAPTION

I can't go to the Redguards. "Well, officer, I was just sneaking round the palace to try and steal the Oculus, when..."

PANEL 5

...And sees a CROWD up ahead. In fact, it's the same crowd we saw earlier, outside the palace. We can see the palace, and the balcony where the King and Queen were supposed to appear.

CAPTION

But they'll soon realize something's wrong. When the King and Queen don't walk out onto that balcony, someone will go to check on them.

PAGE 27

PANEL 1

ON the CROWD, including some of the people we saw earlier, as they all LOOK UP, SMILING and WAVING in the direction of the palace.

Rascal is now in the crowd herself, and follows the crowd's gaze, CONFUSED...

MAN

There they are!

(cont)

Long live the King!

CAPTION

What?

PANEL 2

ON the palace balcony.

And there, standing for all to see, are KING PETOR and QUEEN INNALINE. Petor even holds the Mordent aloft, for the crowd to see, as they WAVE and SMILE at their subjects.

(NOTE this is just the normal staff, no Oculus hovering above it...!)

CAPTION

WHAT?

PANEL 3

ON Rascal, DAZED AND SHOCKED.

Nearby, a BARD starts to sing. (Again, may as well make this the same one as before.)

BARD

Now fair Fendin awakes
A second dawn this morn
With Petor's kingly light
And black Mordent so gripped

PANEL 4

Rascal WANDERS out of the crowd, CONFUSED. A drunk old woman shouts at the bard...

BARD

So the shadows are fled
From the might of the kings

Strakan's blood burns the dark
And the city is saved

DRUNK OLD WOMAN
That doesn't even rhyme, you useless
toerag!

PANEL 5

...And the "hobo" she kicked in the nuts -- i.e. DALONE -- lurks
around a corner, watching her go. Remember, the readers don't
know who he is, so make this nice and ominous.

BARD (SMALL)
Heed the folly of Culin
Whose Calamity echoes still
Harken the profoss' wisdom
Pray not to absent gods

PAGE 28

PANEL 1

CUT TO elsewhere in the city. NIGHT.

The MOON is high and full in the sky.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 2

ON RASCAL, at the gates of a HIGH-WALLED GOTHIC MANSION on the seaward, clifftop edge of the city.

A SURLY GUARD opens a small SHUTTER in the gate postern door, and asks:

GUARD
Today's words.

PANEL 3

ON Rascal, serious expression.

RASCAL
"The day dawned twice."

PANEL 4

CUT TO the other side of the gatehouse, as the guard lets Rascal through the postern door.

RASCAL
Is Jinglefingers in?

GUARD
Hasn't left quarters all day, as far as I know.

PANEL 5

Rascal STRIDES across the courtyard, with the guard CALLING after her.

GUARD
He gave orders not to be disturbed!

RASCAL
Tough shit. I'll disturb him, all right.

PAGE 29

PANEL 1

CUT TO the JINGLEFINGERS in question. A middle-aged, fat, bearded man, dressed in finery, his fingers covered in GEMSTONE RINGS, and hence his nickname.

But don't be fooled by his buffoonish appearance. Jinglefingers (real name Gearge) is MASTER OF THE THIEVES' GUILD.

FACE-ON shot of Jinglefingers as he SPREADS his arms, DELIGHTED to see us/Rascal.

JINGLEFINGERS

Rascal!

(cont)

How's my favorite little thief?

PANEL 2

They HUG, like a father and daughter. Which isn't a bad summary of their relationship.

And now we can see the location -- we're in Jinglefingers' STUDY, near the top of the mansion, all carved wood panels, expensive leather chairs, and so on. If you didn't know better, you'd think you were in the office of an academic, and that's exactly the impression Jinglefingers is going for.

The room has plenty of windows, too, and a balcony on two sides. During the day, it would be well-lit. For now, though, it's all candles.

RASCAL

They said you didn't want to be disturbed, but --

JINGLEFINGERS

Nonsense, nonsense. I finished my work at sundown.

(cont)

Besides, I always have time for my favorites.

PANEL 3

They separate, and Jinglefingers can see that Rascal's obviously disturbed about something. He ushers her out onto the balcony.

RASCAL

I... look, I'm not really even sure where to start, but...

JINGLEFINGERS

Dear girl, you're pale as a princess'
knickers.

(cont)

Let's get you some fresh air, and you
can tell uncle Gerge all about it.

PANEL 4

CUT TO the balcony, outside.

RASCAL

I was at the Red Palace today. During
the eclipse.

JINGLEFINGERS

Ah, yes. My whispering shadows told me
you'd been seen.

PANEL 5

ON Rascal, looking up at him, SURPRISED.

RASCAL

Wait, you know? Then... you know what
happened there, today?

PAGE 30

PANEL 1

ON Jinglefingers. He leans on the balcony railing, looking out across the city.

JINGLEFINGERS

Rascal. Please.

(cont)

I also know that behind my back you all call me Jinglefingers, and Fat Felon, and say I'm past it.

(cont)

It is because I know this that I am Master of the Thieves' Guild. My whispering shadows remain faithful.

PANEL 2

ON Rascal, FRANTIC and almost in tears. She simply doesn't know what to make of any of it.

RASCAL

So tell me what happened in there!

(cont)

The King and Queen were dead, and then Arthir was killed and there was I don't know some kind of magic and these dark monsters and I escaped but they're alive I saw them on the balcony and...

PANEL 3

HER POV, looking up at Jinglefingers. He raises an eyebrow, SKEPTICAL.

RASCAL (OFF)

...And you don't believe me, do you?

PANEL 4

Rascal PULLS the OCULUS out from under her tunic, determined to make him believe her.

RASCAL

Fine. But I didn't imagine taking this.

PANEL 5

Jinglefingers' EYES LIGHT UP at the sight of it.

JINGLEFINGERS

Ah, the Oculus. Such beauty, its true
purpose lost to time and myth...

RASCAL

Well, I think I just discovered it.

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PANEL 1

Jinglefingers PONDERs, as if giving the issue some thought.
Rascal puts the Oculus away.

JINGLEFINGERS
And Prince Arthir was killed, you say?
I know you've become close to him. An
unlikely pairing, some would say.

RASCAL
He was fun. And he hated being rich.

PANEL 2

ON Jinglefingers, SMILING SADLY down at her.

JINGLEFINGERS
Is that what he told you? Poor girl.
Sometimes I forget how young you are.
(cont)
Now, give me the Oculus. Such a rare
prize will need a delicate touch to
fence.

PANEL 3

ON Rascal, having second thoughts.

RASCAL
What if I don't want to sell it?

PANEL 4

Jinglefingers REACHES OUT for her. Rascal BACKS AWAY, suddenly
wary.

(And if we didn't notice it before, we might now realize that one
of the gems in Jinglefingers' many rings is a small piece of
MIST...)

JINGLEFINGERS
Rascal, you have no choice. I cannot
allow you to keep it.

RASCAL
But it could be important! I saw
these... things coming through a magic
gate!
(cont)
What if it's some kind of invasion?
What if Fendin's under attack?

PANEL 5

ON Rascal, looking up at us, UTTERLY SHOCKED.

(LETTERING NOTE: in the Umbral style, please...)

JINGLEFINGERS (OFF)

Such a clever girl. But it's too late.

PAGE 32

PANEL 1

SPLASH PAGE!

RASCAL'S POV, *or* VIEW OVER her shoulder, whichever you think works best.

And where Jinglefingers stood, there's now AN UMBRAL. It GRINS with its many sharp teeth, REACHING OUT for Rascal...

JINGLEFINGERS/UMBRAL
The Umbral are already here.

// ENDS