

WASTELAND

Issue 9

"ELUSIVE CURE"

by

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PAGE 1

PANEL 1

OPEN ON FLASHBACK, as with the previous issue. We are in FLAD-SI-DEE once again.

CLOSE ON the young JAKOB, now five years old. Jakob, wearing a sleeveless shirt and rough hemp pants, lies on his side on the ground, clutching his arm and crying.

JAKOB

Waaaaaah!

(cont)

Abi!

PANEL 2

PULL BACK TO REVEAL the scene; a playing area for the Artisans' children. Still pretty primitive, it mainly consists of a low wooden border around a square area in which the children play. There are plenty of other children playing here too, watched over by their mothers (or nanny slaves).

ABI, wearing baggy, smock-like clothes, rushes over to Jakob. Jakob has a large bruise/graze on his upper arm. Still crying, he points at PEDOR, another boy standing nearby. Pedor, who is a couple of years older than Jake, protests his innocence to Abi.

ABI

What's the matter, honey?

JAKOB

Pedor pushed me over! I hurt my arm!

PEDOR

I did not!

PANEL 3

Abi crouches down and hugs Jakob protectively, frowning at Pedor. Pedor continues to claim he did nothing.

PEDOR'S MOTHER, a severe-looking Artisian's wife, sees the commotion and comes over, shouting.

ABI

Pedor, don't lie. Now why did you push him?

PEDOR

I didn't! He fell over!

PEDOR'S MOTHER

Hey!

PANEL 4

She puts an arm around Pedor's shoulders, using the other to point accusingly at Abi. Abi shows her the graze on Jakob's arm, but Pedor's mother won't hear of it.

PEDOR'S MOTHER

If my son says he fell, then he fell. Pedor wouldn't lie.

ABI

It's a pretty big bruise, he wouldn't just get this from fallin' over...

PEDOR'S MOTHER

Don't you backchat to me, slave! I'll have you whipped!

PANEL 5

Pedor's mother turns and marches away, with her son in tow. But Pedor looks back over his shoulder and sticks his tongue out at Abi and Jake, knowing he's got away with it.

JAKOB

It hurts, Abi...

ABI

I know, Jake. C'mon, let's go home.
(cont) I won't let them hurt you any more.

PAGE 2

PANEL 1

CUT TO present day. THE NEWBEGIN COUNCIL.

CLOSE ON BROTHER BRYN.

In Heddor's now-permanent absence, Bryn conducts the welcoming ritual we saw Heddor perform in issue 2.

BROTHER BRYN

My lord founder approaches! Artisans and freemen alike, hail!

PANEL 2

MARCUS sits down at his council chair, helped into it by Yan. HEDDOR'S CHAIR is of course empty. OF NOTE: so is NEELAN'S.

ENSEMBLE

Hail lord founder!

MARCUS

May the light of your fathers be upon you.

PANEL 3

The rest of the council sit down. Marcus wastes no time; he spreads his hands to indicate the two empty chairs.

MARCUS

Brother Bryn. As acting Primate, you are responsible for proper order in council meetings.

(cont)

So tell me, why are there not one, but two empty chairs?

PANEL 4

ON Bryn and FRODRIK.

Bryn shrugs. Frodrik tries to explain...

BROTHER BRYN

Ah... Artisian Neelan did not answer the summons, my lord.

FRODRIK

Lyndder, his daughter, is--

PANEL 5

...But is interrupted by Marcus, who waves away the excuse.

MARCUS

--Unwell. Thank you, Frodrik, I think we all know it by heart. Never mind.

(cont)

To more important matters. Before we begin the agenda, I have an announcement you are all no doubt expecting.

PANEL 6

CLOSE ON CHEFFRI, looking very pleased with himself.

MARCUS (OFF)

It is my responsibility to appoint Primate Heddor's successor. But his treason has shaken our city, and this council, and therefore--

PAGE 3

PANEL 1

REPEAT PANEL. Cheffri is shocked.

MARCUS (OFF)

--I will deliberate further, and announce my decision a week hence.

CHEFFRI

My lord...!

PANEL 2

ON Marcus, grim-faced. He's not going to enter debate about this, he's had enough trouble from the Artisians lately.

MARCUS

This matter will not be debated in chambers, Cheffri. You may make your own case for the Primateship to me in private, like everyone else.

PANEL 3

VIEW OVER DEXUS'S SHOULDER, looking at Cheffri. Dexus barely suppresses a smile. Cheffri is resigned, knowing it's useless trying to force Marcus' hand when he's in this kind of mood.

CHEFFRI

...Yes, my lord. Of course.

PANEL 4

Marcus turns to Brother Bryn. Bryn looks apologetic.

MARCUS

Now, to business. Brother Bryn, what news from the compounds?

BROTHER BRYN

My lord, the Sunners are proving stubborn. Of the newly enslaved, barely a hundred have converted to your glorious church.

PANEL 5

Next, Marcus turns to Dexus. The smile is gone, and Dexus is back to his businesslike self.

MARCUS

Then you must redouble your efforts. Watchman, how many new slaves do we have, exactly?

DEXUS

We have not yet finished processing, my lord,
but a current estimate places the count at two
thousand heads.

MARCUS

Any trouble so far?

PANEL 6

CLOSE ON Dexus. And the hint of a smile returns.

DEXUS

Nothing my disciples cannot handle.

PAGE 4

PANEL 1

CUT TO the Metalcar stop at the top of the city, outside the Artisian district.

The conductor calls the stop, and MICHAEL and ABI alight the Metalcar along with a few others.

METALCAR ATTENDANT

Artisian district, end of the line! All change!

PANEL 2

They approach the entry gates of the district, manned by two Disciples with rifles. One of the guards steps forward to challenge them.

Michael has Abi's arm over his shoulder, half-dragging her along. He's clearly struggling.

MICHAEL

Nnn

GUARD 1

Hey there.

PANEL 3

Michael comes to a stop and nods past the guard, into the district. But the guard has his orders - he holds out his free hand, expecting Michael to show him a pass.

MICHAEL

Need to get inside. See a physician.

GUARD 1

And I need to get better paid, but ain't neither of us gettin' what we want without a pass.

PANEL 4

But instead, Michael presses a SMALL CLOTH BAG filled with coins into his hand. The guard looks around to check no-one else is watching.

MICHAEL

Check our heads. Not slaves. No trouble, promise. Just need medicine.

GUARD 1

Right, right...

PANEL 5

Michael walks past the guard, who calls out to the other Disciple at the gate.

GUARD 1 (SMALL)

I get called, I never seen you before and I'll kill you myself.

MICHAEL

Right.

GUARD 1

All in order. Let 'em through!

PAGE 5

PANEL 1

CUT TO inside the district. Michael and Abi head down a street sided by large houses.

MICHAEL

I know you're awake, Abi, so stop dragging.

ABI

Mmm...

PANEL 2

CUT TO inside the grounds of ARTISIAN NEELAN'S HOUSE, not unlike Heddor's as we saw it in issue 3. Michael knocks on the front door.

MICHAEL

I'll explain soon. Safe here for now.

SFX

Knock
knock

PANEL 3

The door opens a crack. ARTISIAN NEELAN peers out from inside, half-hidden in shadows.

NEELAN

Did anyone see you?

MICHAEL

Had to bribe gate guards. Didn't see where we came, though.

NEELAN

All right, come in. Quickly!

PANEL 4

CUT TO inside the house. Michael and Abi enter, and Neelan closes the door quickly behind them.

NEELAN

Is she all right?

MICHAEL

Will be. Spare bed?

NEELAN

Follow me.

PANEL 5

CUT TO a room on the ground floor - the bedroom of LYNDDEER, Neelan's sickly daughter.

Lyndder is thirteen, and has early onset MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS. Not that anyone in this world knows what MS is, of course. But it leaves her bedridden and unable to function for days, sometimes weeks, at a time - and Neelan's wife died some years ago.

The room is small and sparsely furnished. Lyndder lies in bed, swathed in blankets. Next to it is another bed, smaller and vacant.

ROOM LAYOUT: shape and size not critical, but a couple of things are vital for later in the story. Plentiful CLOSETS and CUPBOARDS; a BEDPAN lies next to Lyndder's bed; and there's a SINGLE WINDOW in an outside wall, large enough for a man to climb through. As always, it's not essential you get all this in right away - we'll be spending a good few pages in this room, so sprinkle it throughout.

Neelan holds the door open while Michael carries Abi to the spare bed.

NEELAN

In here with Lyndder, like you asked. What's wrong with her?

MICHAEL

Dweller attack.

(cont)

Trust me, she'll recover. Not lying.

PANEL 6

Abi is now lying on the spare bed. Michael pulls the sheets over her. Note that this isn't tenderness, not really; he does it with the sort of brusque and workmanlike manner of a military nurse.

Behind him, Neelan suddenly looks distinctly uncomfortable.

NEELAN

I... I didn't say you were.

MICHAEL

Don't need to.

(cont)

Think she can't do it. Think I'm trying to cheat you. Think she's just normal.

PAGE 6

PANEL 1

REPEAT VIEW from previous panel. Abi is now tucked in bed. Michael stands and faces Neelan. And around them, multiple objects from the room - a chair, a vase, feeding bowls, spare bedsheets, etc. - FLOAT IN MID-AIR.

MICHAEL

And now you're scared.

NEELAN

...Yes.

PANEL 2

Things return to normal. Michael turns to look at Lyndder and wipes his bleeding nose.

MICHAEL

Don't be. How is she?

NEELAN

Today's a bad day. She can't speak, can't walk, and her vision is poor. At least the tremors have subsided, for once.

PANEL 3

Michael crouches down next to Lyndder and places a hand on her forehead. She doesn't move her head, but moves her eyes to look at him. It's all she can do.

MICHAEL

Lyndder. It's Michael.

LYNDDER

Nnn...

MICHAEL

Yes, I found her.

(cont)

Perhaps. No guarantees.

PANEL 4

Michael stands and turns back to Neelan, who nods and moves toward Lyndder.

MICHAEL

Needs a bedpan.

NEELAN

Right.

PANEL 5

ON Abi. She turns her head to look sideways at Lyndder.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 6

ABI'S POV, looking across at Lyndder. The girl looks back at Abi, a pathetic figure.

LYNDDER

Nnfff...

PAGE 7

PANEL 1

FLASHBACK. MATCH COMPOSITION of previous panel, but it's FRALA lying in the bed.

FRALA
Abi...?

PANEL 2

PULL BACK TO REVEAL the scene. We're in Frala's bedroom. NOTE that it's only a single bed - since her condition has worsened, she sleeps here alone.

ABI - still wearing the smock-like clothes, this is her quasi-uniform during her time as a slave - stands over Frala. The bedsheets are pulled back, and Abi lays hands on Frala's body. (Frala is wearing nightclothes, though).

FRALA
What are you doing? Stop...

ABI
What's it look like? I'm tryin' to heal you.

PANEL 3

Frala protests weakly, trying to push Abi's hands away, but she's much too weak. Abi smiles down at Frala.

FRALA
Abi, no... it's okay. We tried all this when you first got here, remember? There's no need to start again now.

ABI
Start? Frala, I ain't never stopped. Near every day for the past two years. You just don't usually wake up.

PANEL 4

Frala looks up at Abi, confused. Abi looks hopeful.

FRALA
But why? Uou said it was... what's that word?

ABI
Congenital, yeah. But I can feel somethin', frala. bit by bit, I can feel somethin' give. I think it's startin' to work.

PANEL 5

Frala gives up protesting and smiles up at Abi. Abi shrugs in response.

FRALA

You don't have to do this. You earn your keep.

PANEL 6

CLOSE ON Abi, her head hung in sympathy for Jakob.

ABI

Yeah, I do. But Jake needs you. I do the best
I can, but... well, I ain't his mother.

(cont)

He's hurtin' inside.

PAGE 8

PANEL 1

CUT TO the slave compound.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP on Jakob's eyes and forehead. He is BEING TATTOOED. A Disciple's hands grip the sides of his head (from above) while, from off, another man uses a KNIFE to cut a triangle (point upwards, remember) into Jake's head. Primitive stuff.

Jake GRIMACES as BLOOD pours from the cut, down over his face.

(Chris: I've asked Ben to do this as the cover image for this issue, too. Powerful, symbolic image.)

TATTOOIST (OFF)

I know it hurts, but just hold still a while more...

PANEL 2

The TATTOOIST, a burly man with long hair, stands up, finished.

We're inside the compound, but not in the cells - we're in the area between the cells and the walls. Jakob kneels on the floor, a Disciple holding his head in place. Behind them is a line of slaves awaiting their tattoos.

The tattooist passes the knife to his ASSISTANT, who also holds INK and CLOTHS in his hands.

TATTOOIST

All right.
(cont) Ink, please.

PANEL 3

The tattooist smears black ink into Jake's wound.

JAKOB

Nnng

TATTOOIST

There. He's done.

PANEL 4

The Disciple shoves Jakob into the waiting arms of another, as the next slave is brought up.

The ink and blood drip from Jakob's cut.

TATTOOIST

Next!

PANEL 5

CUT TO Jakob's cell. But as they near it, there's a commotion from another nearby cell - the "for sale" cell. ALLUN is arguing through the bars with a Disciple guard.

ALLUN

Get him outta here! You want us all to die?

GUARD 2

Old man, I don't give a fuck if you already croaked! You ain't giving the orders around here!

PAGE 9

PANEL 1

Jakob is shoved roughly into his cell by the Disciple, who's distracted by what's going on. The Disciple shouts over to the one arguing with Allun.

JAKOB

Unh!

GUARD 1

Hey, settle down over there!

PANEL 2

The Disciple approaches the arguing guard and Allun.

GUARD 1

Trouble?

GUARD 2

Nah, they just got someone sick.

ALLUN

You fucking idiot, he's not just sick, he's dying! It's the pale sickness!

PANEL 3

Back in Jakob's cell, he turns to one of his cell mates and asks what's going on.

JAKOB

Hey Lood, What's going on? Who is it?

LOOD

I dunno, some old guy in the sale cell. Started coughing blood last night, apparently. There, look...

PANEL 4

ON Doc, lying almost comatose in the Sale cell. He has patchy, dark blotches on his exposed skin.

Everyone keeps their distance; no-one wants to be infected.

LOOD (OFF)

...That one, the guy on the floor.

PANEL 5

CLOSE ON Jakob, shocked.

JAKOB

No...
(cont)
Doc!

PAGE 10

PANEL 1

Jake rushes to the bars and shouts through them to Allun. RYKARD stands with Allun in the Sale cell. They both look downcast.

JAKOB

Allun! What's wrong with him?

RYKARD

Doc's going to die.

ALLUN

Rykard's right, Jakob. Doc's spitting blood, he keeps collapsing, and he's white as Father Moon.

PANEL 3

Jakob is bewildered, but Allun spreads his hands to indicate the thousands of people imprisoned here.

JAKOB

But how? We've only been here a week, he was fine when we arrived...

ALLUN

You noticed the thousands of other new slaves while you were out there being processed, right?

PANEL 4

ON Allun. He slumps against the bars, exhausted, exasperated and all but resigned to dying right here in this cell.

ALLUN

I tell you, I ain't ever seen any of these compounds so packed. They weren't built to hold this many people, you know?

(cont)

It ain't healthy. There's others already died in here.

PANEL 5

ON Jakob. Shocked and saddened, he sinks to the floor.

JAKOB

Doc...

ALLUN (OFF)

And they ain't gonna be the last. Someone oughtta complain.

PANEL 6

CLOSER ON Jakob. He sits with his back against the bars, his head also flopped back. He stares up at the sky and fingers his new slave caste mark.

JAKOB

Right. 'Cos that'll work round here.

PAGE 11

PANEL 1

CUT TO Neelan's house. Lyndder's bedroom.

Neelan feeds Lyndder from a bowl of gruel with a spoon. Michael is stripped to the waist, changing back into his normal clothes.

MICHAEL

Where are your slaves?

NEELAN

I told them to stay in the kitchen area all day. I thought it was better they don't see this.

PANEL 2

Neelan turns to look back at Michael as he pulls on an undershirt.

MICHAEL

Abi needs more than a day to recover. But she's Sunner too. Doubt they'll say anything.

NEELAN

You want Frodrik to look at her?

PANEL 3

Neelan nods over in Abi's direction. Michael picks up another shirt.

MICHAEL

Who?

NEELAN

Our chief physician. An Artisian. We can trust him.

PANEL 4

VIEW FROM OUTSIDE, looking in through the window. Michael pulls on the second shirt, looking out at us.

MICHAEL

Only Artisian I trust is you. And only because you need this favour too much to tell.

PANEL 5

ON Neelan. He's finished feeding Lyndder, and gently wipes at her mouth with a cloth.

NEELAN

Frodrik's practically family. He's attended Lyndder since she first got sick, and he regularly covers for me at council meetings. Believe me, he's discreet.

PANEL 6

CLOSE ON Michael. Arms folded, stubborn.

MICHAEL

No.

PAGE 12

PANEL 1

Michael crouches down by Abi, who's asleep. Neelan stands, carrying the bowl and cloth.

NEELAN

She's not going to heal on her own, Michael. Those wounds are serious, and frankly I'm amazed she's even alive.

MICHAEL

She'll heal. Needs rest and time, that's all.

PANEL 2

Neelan slams the bowl and cloth down on a table with frustration-fuelled anger.

NEELAN

So now you're a physician? You don't know that!

MICHAEL

I know.

NEELAN

Look at her! She could drop dead any minute, and then we'd all be up to our knees in goatshit!

PANEL 3

ON Michael. He regards Neelan coolly.

MICHAEL

She won't.
(cont) She's like me.

PANEL 4

Neelan storms out of the room angrily.

NEELAN

That might explain things if I knew what in the name of the fathers you are.

PANEL 5

Michael looks down at Abi with something approaching sympathy. This may be the most compassionate we've ever seen him...

MICHAEL

Makes two of us.

PANEL 6

Michael looks up at the sound of someone knocking at the door, suddenly alert.

SFX (OFF)

Knock
knock

MICHAEL

Who's that?

NEELAN (OFF)

Frodrik said he'd call by after the council meeting. Just shut up and let me talk to him.

PAGE 13

PANEL 1

CUT TO the slave compound. Evening.

ON Golden Voice, in the 'special' cell. And finally, we see what's so 'special' about it - Goldie is the sole occupant.

He looks up as a guard shouts his name.

GUARD 1

Golden Voice! Step forward!

PANEL 2

A Disciple stands on the other side of the cell bars, holding a rifle. He cocks his head at Golden Voice.

GUARD 1

You're coming with me.

(cont)

It's time.

PANEL 3

CUT TO the paths between the cells. The Disciple leads Golden Voice out - the sun-singer doesn't resist - and they pass Jakob's cell.

Jakob sees them pass and shouts out to the guard. The Disciple doesn't look back as he replies.

JAKOB

Goldie! Where are you taking him?

GUARD 1

Say goodbye, slave, 'cos you ain't ever gonna see him again.

PANEL 4

Golden Voice looks back over his shoulder, his expression impassive.

GOLDEN VOICE

May Mother Sun light your path, Jakob. You only did what you thought was right.

PANEL 5

CLOSE ON Jakob, clutching the bars, helpless to intervene.

(CHRIS: If possible, make this and the two following panels a three-panel sequence repeating across the bottom tier of the page. If that won't work, you can just use panels 6 + 7 as the sequence instead, and draw this one separately.)

JAKOB

Goldie... no...

PANEL 6

REPEAT PANEL (if possible, see above). Jakob slumps forward, resting his head against the bars.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 7

REPEAT PANEL. As the shot sounds from outside, a tear rolls down Jakob's cheek.

SFX (OFF)

Blam!

PAGE 14

PANEL 1

CUT TO outside. CLOSE ON the barrel of a rifle pointing upwards, to the sky.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 2

CLOSE ON Golden Voice, his eyes closed.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 3

REPEAT PANEL. Golden Voice opens his eyes, not quite understanding why he isn't dead.

GOLDEN VOICE

What...?

PANEL 4

Suddenly, two MEN emerge from the shadows and throw a BLANKET over Golden Voice's head. The Disciple who led him out here, meanwhile, looks around to check no-one is watching them.

MAN 1

Make a sound and you're dead. you're coming with us.

PANEL 5

Man 1 hustles Golden Voice away, under the blanket.

Man 2 turns to the Disciple and shakes his hand, smiling. But the guard has no time for pleasantries.

MAN 2

Thank you.

GUARD 1

Just hurry up and get him out of here.

PANEL 6

The Disciple turns, heaves his rifle over his shoulder and briskly walks away from the strange scene, muttering under his breath.

Man 2 catches up with Man 1 and together they hustle Golden Voice away, into the shadows.

GUARD 1 (SMALL)

May Mother Sun light your path.

PAGE 15

PANEL 1

CUT TO Neelan's house. Lyndder's bedroom.

FRODRIK leans over Abi, listening to her chest with a stethoscope (Make it a chunky, old-fashioned style thing with just one earpiece, not some slick piece of modern tech).

FRODRIK

Who is she? Why isn't she wearing a visitor's mark?

PANEL 2

Michael stands nearby, watching Frodrik suspiciously. Frodrik turns to him and raises his eyebrows in question.

MICHAEL

Didn't come in through the gates.

FRODRIK

And neither, I'm guessing, did you. Is what Neelan said true? Can she really cure Lyndder?

PANEL 3

ON Abi. She's still asleep.

MICHAEL (OFF)

Maybe. Maybe not.

PANEL 4

Frodrik puts the stethoscope in a goathide bag and shrugs. He doesn't look confident. But Michael is absolutely convinced Abi will be okay.

FRODRIK

Same as her chances of survival. I've cleaned her up as best I can, but...

MICHAEL

She'll survive. I know you don't believe me. But she will.

PANEL 5

CUT TO the front doorway. Neelan holds the door open for Frodrik.

FRODRIK

Just see she gets plenty of rest and water.

NEELAN

Thank you, Frodrik. Please don't say a word about this to anyone.

PANEL 6

CUT TO outside, as Neelan steps through the door and out into the yard. He has a disdainful look, as if he's eaten something sour. Neelan, standing in the doorway, just looks worried.

NOTE: It's now evening, and dark outside.

FRODRİK

It's your house, Neelan. You want to have a couple of desert rats round for dinner, that's your business.

PAGE 16

PANEL 1

FLASHBACK. MATCH COMPOSITION of previous panel, as the 5-year-old Jakob peers nervously round a doorway.

VOICE OFF

Jakob! Come here, now!

PANEL 2

PULL BACK TO REVEAL the scene. We're in a room in Oskorr's house. A CHINA VASE lies smashed into pieces on the floor.

A furious OSKORR stands by it, pointing at it accusingly as Jakob shuffles into the room. Jakob is clearly scared of his father.

OSKORR

By the gods, do you have any idea how much that cost me? It's from a Precity!

(cont)

What happened?

PANEL 3

Oskorr BACKHANDS Jakob across the face.

JAKOB

I didn't--aaah!

OSKORR

Don't lie to me, boy! Who else could it have been? The gods didn't break it!

PANEL 4

But then ABI rushes into the room.

ABI

Wait! Mr. Oskorr, sir... I broke it.

PANEL 5

ON Oskorr. He turns to face her, breathing hard.

OSKORR

Oh, really.

PANEL 6

Oskorr grabs Abi by the throat and pushes her against the wall. She doesn't resist. Jakob flees the room.

OSKORR

Well, then I guess you'll have to be punished.

PAGE 17

PANEL 1

CUT TO present day. The streets of the Artisian district. EVENING.

Frodrik walks down the street, through the shadows. Remember, these streets have electric lighting, but there are still areas of darkness inbetween the pools of light.

VOICE OFF (SMALL)

...Luck yet?

VOICE OFF (SMALL)

None of my disciples have seen him, Sultan.
Assuming he still looks like you described.

PANEL 2

REVERSE THE ANGLE.

WATCHMAN DEXUS and SULTAN AMEER are in foreground, deep in conversation as they make their way along the street. Frodrik is in background, looking over his shoulder at them.

SULTAN AMEER

He always looks the same. And not just his clothes, if you know what I mean.

DEXUS

I do. Just like Marcus.

PANEL 3

Frodrik HIDES round a dark corner as the men walk past, still preoccupied by their conversation.

SULTAN AMEER

The rumourage about Michael, out there on the old roads... He has visions, he's immortal, he ain't human... It's exactly the same.

(cont)

That's why I know he's valuable to your precious Lord Founder.

PANEL 4

ON the men, as they walk on. Frodrik is now unseen, deep in shadow.

DEXUS

If he's such an old friend, why are you selling him out?

SULTAN AMEER

Who said anything about friends? Goatfucker slept with one of my wives!

PANEL 5

ON Dexus as he turns off, leaving the Sultan to make his own way back to his caravan.

DEXUS

You should choose your words more carefully, Sultan.

(cont)

If I hear anything, you'll be the first to know.

PANEL 6

CLOSE ON Frodrik. He stands at the corner, looking back toward Neelan's house.

NO DIALOGUE

PAGE 18

PANEL 1

CUT TO the council chambers. Marcus sits on his throne, accompanied as ever by Yan. Frodrik stands at the other end of the table. Marcus ponders.

MARCUS

Neelan, harbouring a sunner? I am...
disappointed.

FRODRIK

I don't know for sure he's a sunner. But
Neelan definitely doesn't want him seen.

MARCUS

Indeed. And this is the same man the Sultan
spoke of?

PANEL 2

ON Frodrik. He still has his doctor's bag - he's clearly come here straight from overhearing Dexus and Ameer out on the street.

FRODRIK

He's called Michael, and he's not a citizen.
He's not alone, though.

MARCUS (OFF)

Oh?

PANEL 3

CLOSE ON Marcus. He purses his mouth and steeples his fingers to it, thoughtful.

FRODRIK (OFF)

There's a woman with him. She's injured, but
he believes she can cure Lyndder somehow. I
guess that's how he knows Neelan.

PANEL 4

INSERT DREAM SEQUENCE PANEL from issue 2 - page 1, panel 4.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 5

REPEAT PANEL 3.

MARCUS

A man... and a woman.

PANEL 6

ON Frodrik. He bows, smiling.

MARCUS (OFF)

Thank you, Artisian. Your loyalty in this matter will not be forgotten.

FRODRIK

My lord.

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PANEL 1

FLASHBACK. A man's SILHOUETTE in a doorway. The space behind him pure white, the doorway pure black.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 2

CLOSE ON Jakob, lying in bed. The shadow of the same man falls across him. He looks up, frightened.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 3

REPEAT VIEW OF PANEL 1, but now we see the man as he steps through the doorway. It's OSKORR. He enters and closes the door behind him.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 4

CUT TO Frala, asleep in her own bed, fast asleep.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 5

CUT TO Abi, sat up on her own bed in the slave quarters. She's fully awake, her knees curled tightly up to her chest, her hands over her ears.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 6

CLOSER ON Abi. We see now that she's crying, her eyes screwed tightly shut and her hands pressed firm against her ears.

NO DIALOGUE

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PANEL 1

CUT TO present day. CLOSE ON Neelan's front door as DEXUS's hand knocks on it.

SFX

Knock
knock

PANEL 2

Neelan answers the door and looks out at Dexus in surprise. Dexus greets him cordially, but doesn't smile.

NEELAN

Watchman Dexus! What a, uh, surprise.

DEXUS

Good evening, Artisian Neelan. May I come in?

PANEL 3

CUT TO inside Lyndder's bedroom. No lights on in this room, the only illumination coming from the moon outside.

Abi is finally awake but still lies on the bed, groggy and sleepy. Michael stands by the window, peering carefully out.

ABI (SMALL)

'Sgonnon?

MICHAEL

Not sure. Think it's the Watchman. Stay down.

PANEL 4

CUT TO Neelan's front doorway. He steps out, pulling the door closed behind him.

NEELAN

Uh, this isn't, really isn't a good time. My daughter, you see, is very ill, and--

DEXUS

Then I must ask you to accompany me to chambers.

PANEL 5

Dexus places a hand on Neelan's arm. Neelan is SHOCKED - he may not be leader of the council, but he's still an Artisian, and Dexus is still just a Freeman.

NEELAN

What? Unhand me! How dare you!

DEXUS

I am here on my Lord Founder's instruction,
Artisian. He requests you attend him.

(cont)

Now.

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PANEL 1

Neelan pulls his arm away. But Dexus won't be denied his duty, and steers Neelan away from the house regardless.

NEELAN

All right, all right... There's no need to manhandle me.

DEXUS

This way.

PANEL 2

They exit Neelan's yard gate, out onto the street. Neelan is flustered, but Dexus is cagey and refuses to answer the Artisian's questions.

NEELAN

Is this about my missing today's meeting? I asked Drodrik to explain my absence. He'll vouch for me.

DEXUS

Not exactly, Artisian.

PANEL 3

VIEW FROM OUTSIDE LYNDDEE'S WINDOW, looking in as before. Abi looks up at Michael, but Michael is still peering carefully out the window.

ABI (SMALL)

Steddown... heh. Canndo ennthin' else...

MICHAEL

Neelan's gone with him. Don't like this.

PANEL 4

CUT BACK TO Neelan and Dexus. They pass a street corner opposite Neelan's house - and half a dozen DISCIPLES are waiting there for them, out of sight of the house. Dexus acknowledges them, but keeps Neelan moving.

DEXUS

All clear, sergeant. Move in.

SERGEANT

Yes, sir!

PANEL 5

The Disciples creep across the dark street, toward Neelan's house. Neelan is horrified and tries to stop them, but Dexus holds him back.

NEELAN

What--what's going on? Hey! You can't go in there! My daughter's sick!

DEXUS

Shut up, Neelan. They won't harm your girl...

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PANEL 1

SPLASH PAGE!

VIEW FROM INSIDE LYNDDEER'S BEDROOM.

A Disciple SMASHES the butt of his rifle through the bedroom window.

Lyndder doesn't move - she can't. But Abi, weak as she is, flinches in her bed and screams in surprise.

NOTE that Michael is NOT SEEN in this shot. That's important for next issue.

CAPTION

"...Just so long as she doesn't get in the way."

SFX

Krasssh!

ABI

Aah!

//ENDS