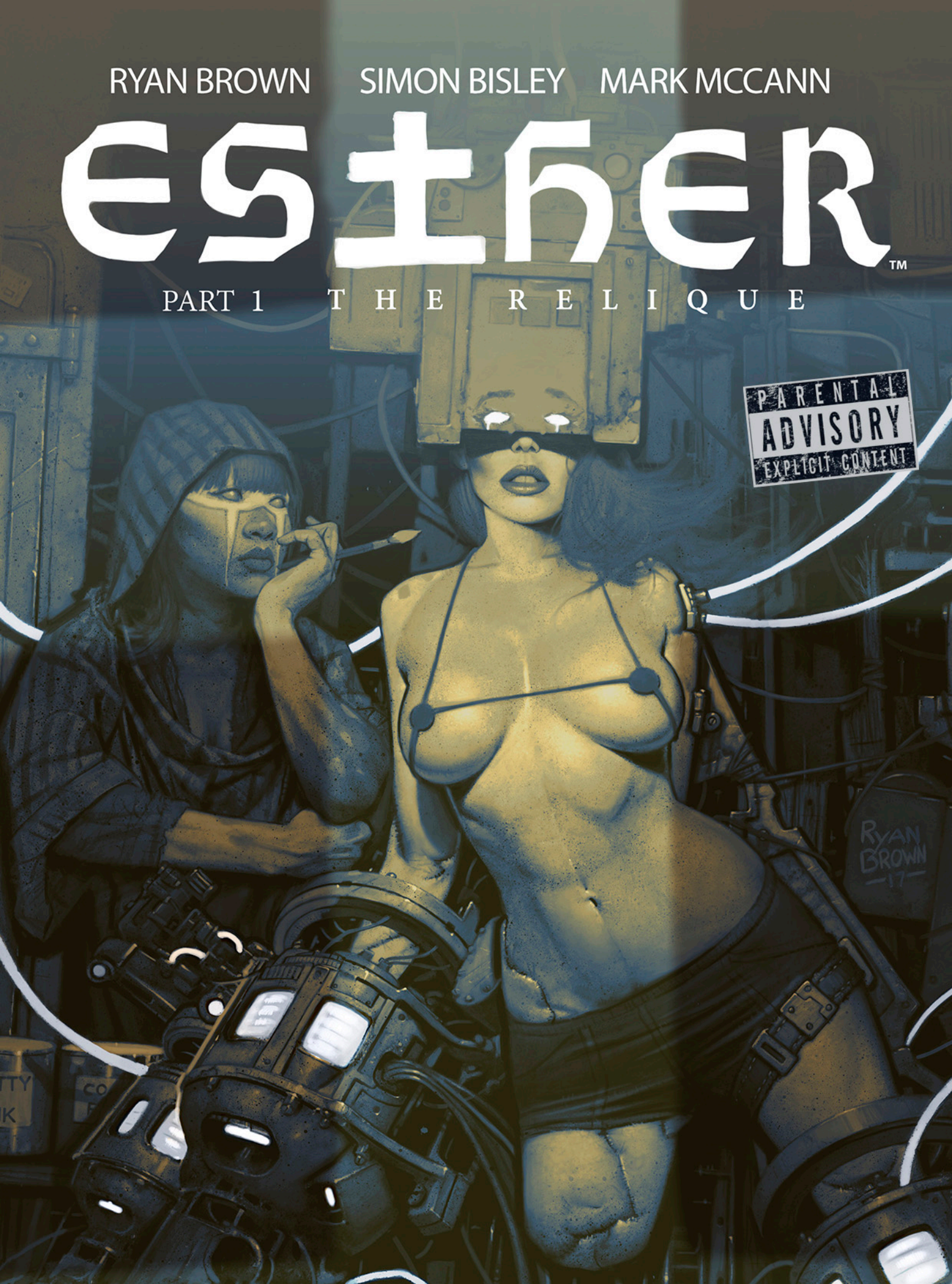
RYAN BROWN SIMON BISLEY MARK MCCANN

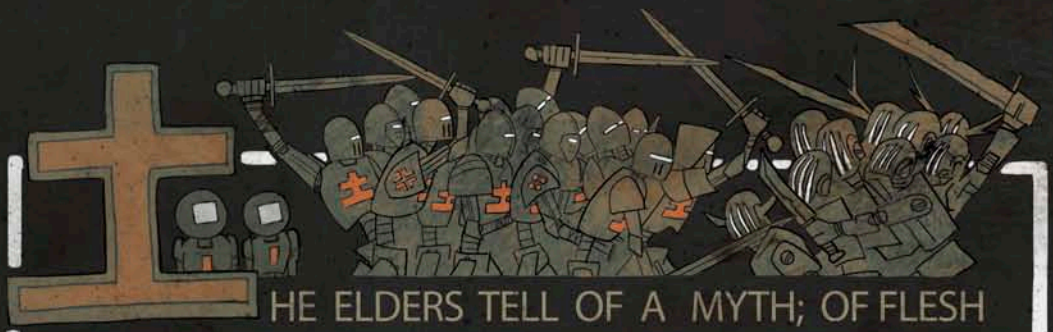
ESTHER™

PART 1 THE RELIQUE



ESTHER™

PART 1 THE RELIQUE



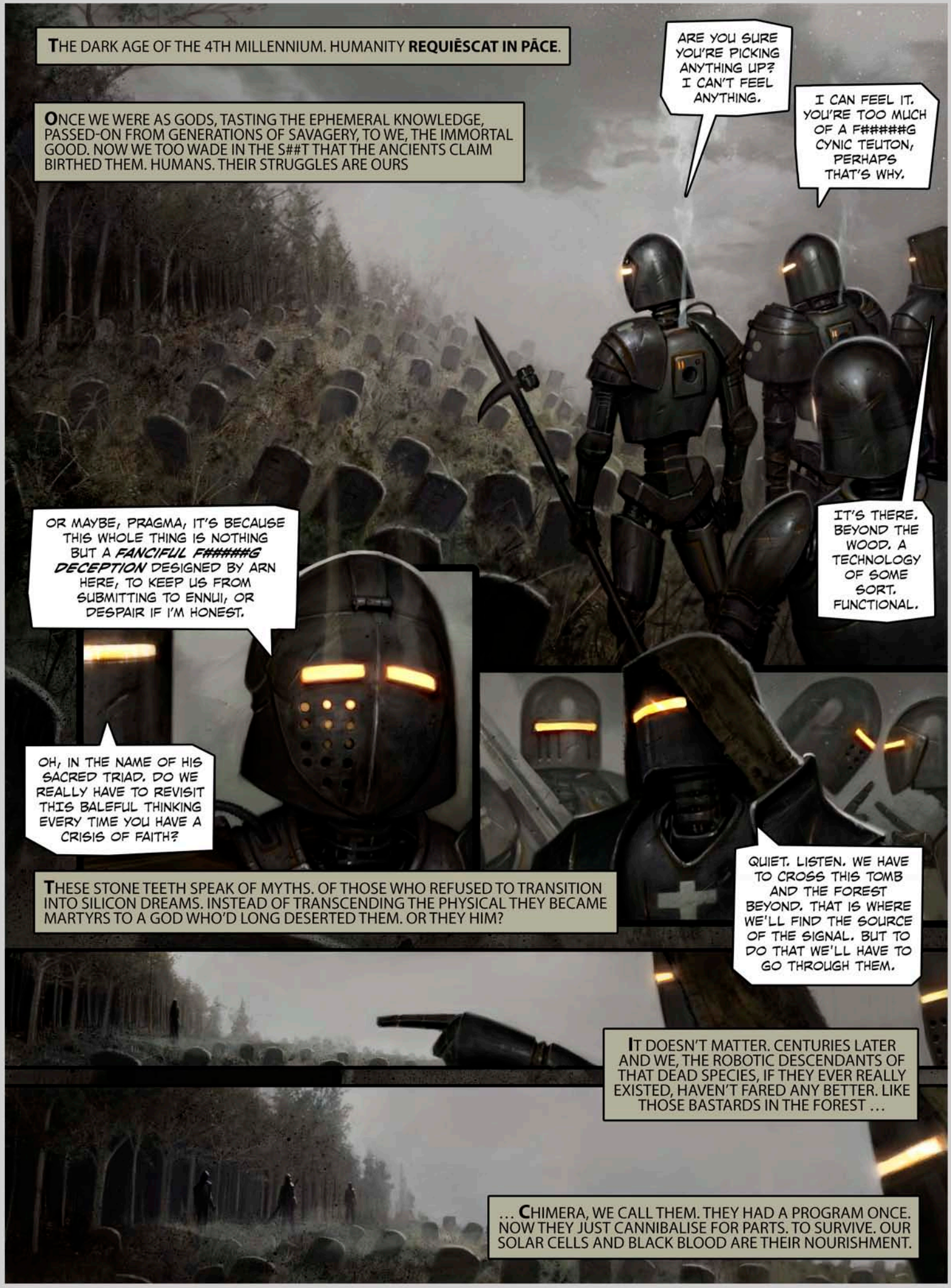
THE ELDERS TELL OF A MYTH; OF FLESH ANCIENTS. FORGOTTEN TRIBES WHO TRANSCENDED THE PHYSICAL, BECOMING CREATURES OF PURE NUMBERS AND LIGHT. THESE ANTECEDENTS SHUNNED THEIR BIOLOGICAL ROOTS, IT'S SAID. PURGING HISTORY OF THEIR BARBARIC PAST. YET, SOME DISAGREED WITH THIS HUBRIS. QUARRELLING GAVE WAY TO REVOLT AND AMIDST THE FIGHTING, A GREAT CATACLYSM STRUCK THE EARTH.

100 BILLION VIRTUAL SOULS PERISHED INSTANTLY, THEIR SILICON STOREHOUSES SMASHED INTO OBLIVION. THE FEW SURVIVORS FOUND HOMES IN SHELTERED ROBOTS, MACHINES LEFT AS CURATORS OF THE OLD EARTH.

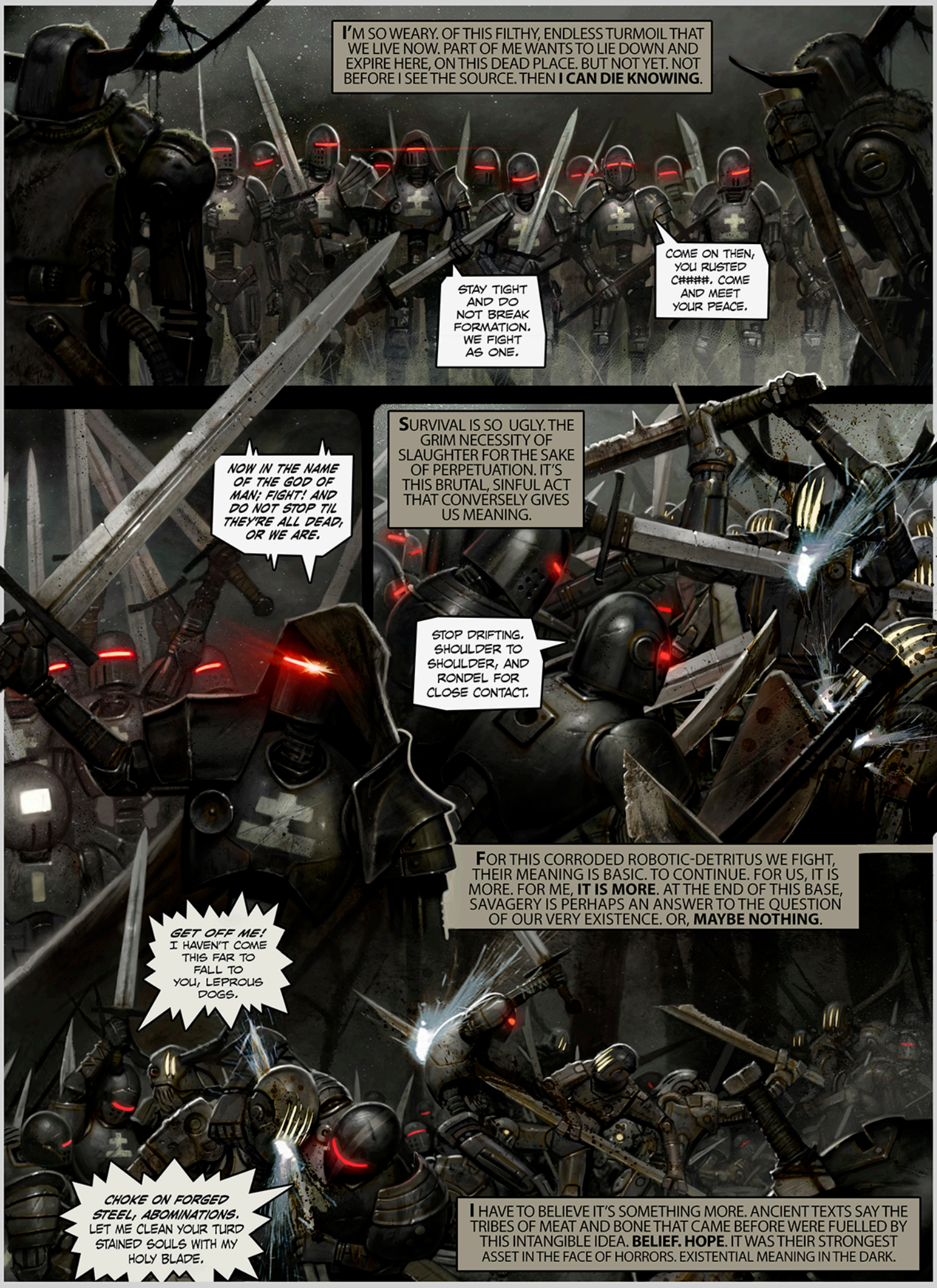
NOW, IN A TIME OF VIOLENCE AND WAR, THESE LAST KNIGHTS SEARCH FOR ANSWERS AMIDST THE REMAINS OF A CHARRED WORLD. THEY ARE THE CRUSADERS OF THE 4TH MILLENNIUM; THE NEW DARK AGE.

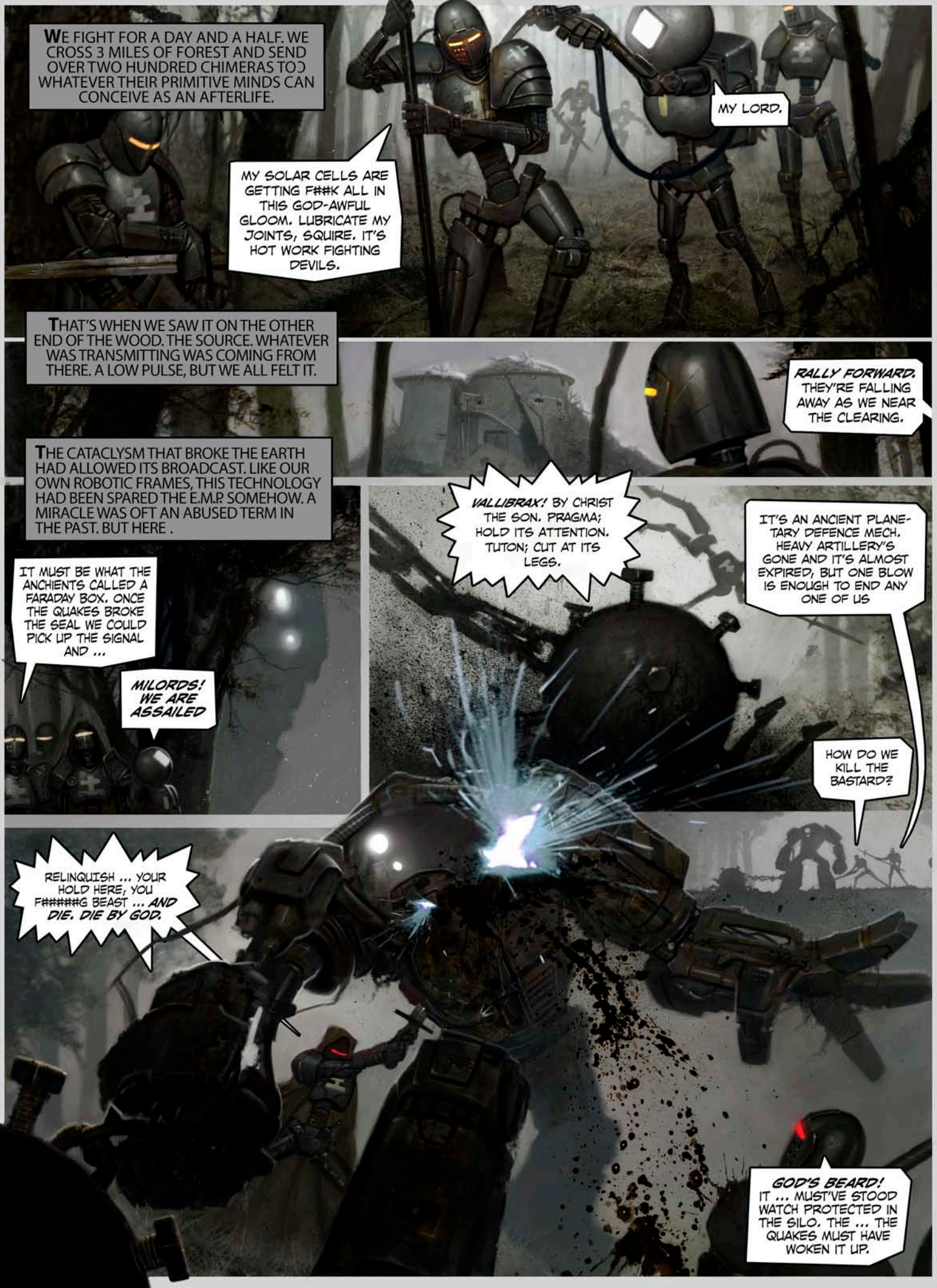
ART BY RYAN BROWN
WRITER MARK MCCAN
LETTERING BY RYAN BROWN
ART ADVICE BY SIMON BISLEY
BASED ON A CONCEPT BY RYAN BROWN

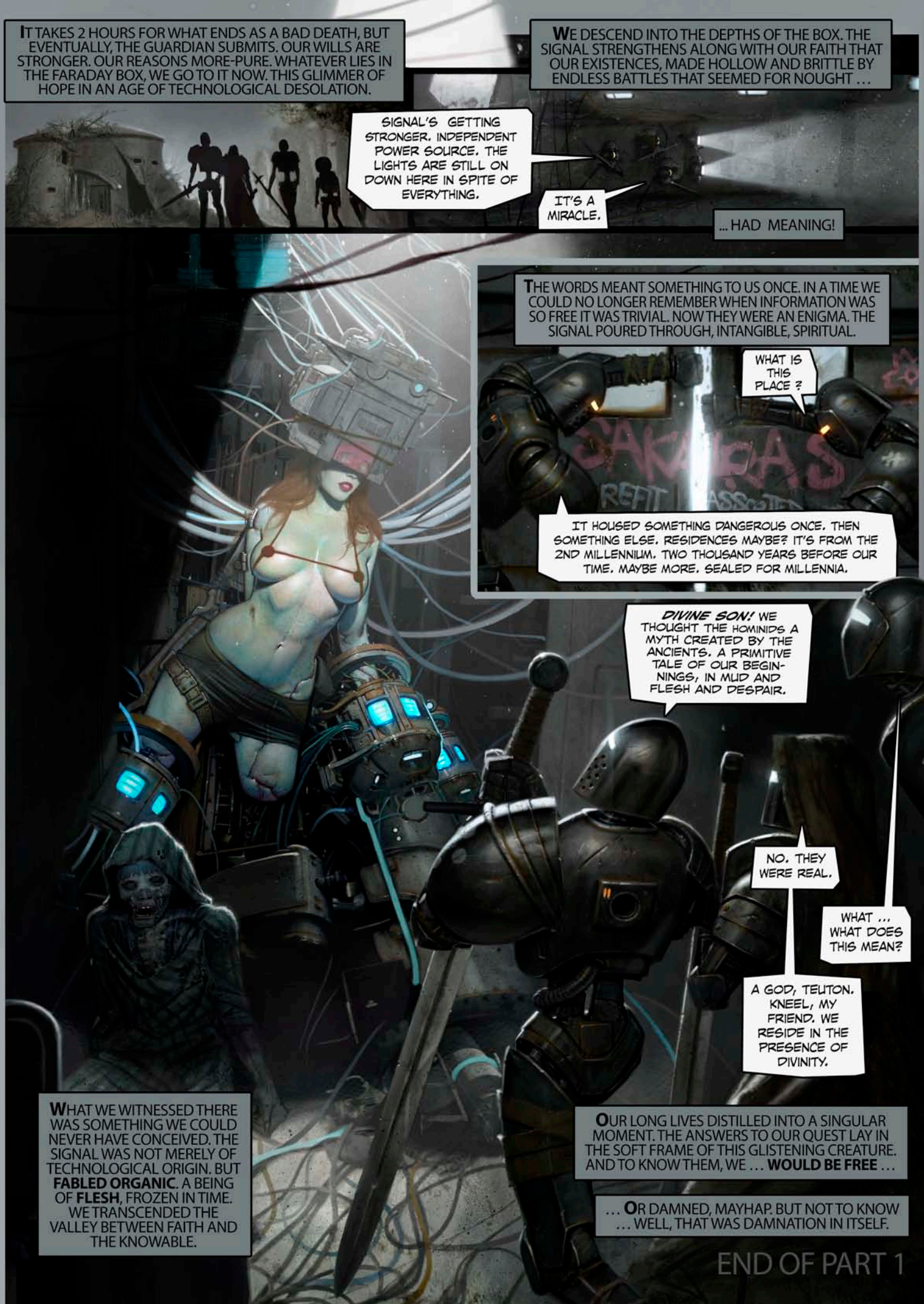
Esther is © and TM Ryan Brown , Simon Bisley ,Mark McCann. 2018


THE DARK AGE OF THE 4TH MILLENNIUM. HUMANITY **REQUIĒSCAT IN PĀCE**.
ONCE WE WERE AS GODS, TASTING THE EPHEMERAL KNOWLEDGE, PASSED-ON FROM GENERATIONS OF SAVAGERY, TO WE, THE IMMORTAL GOOD. NOW WE TOO WADE IN THE S##T THAT THE ANCIENTS CLAIM BIRTHED THEM. HUMANS. THEIR STRUGGLES ARE OURS
ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE PICKING ANYTHING UP? I CAN'T FEEL ANYTHING.
I CAN FEEL IT. YOU'RE TOO MUCH OF A F######G CYNIC TEUTON, PERHAPS THAT'S WHY.
IT'S THERE. BEYOND THE WOOD. A TECHNOLOGY OF SOME SORT. FUNCTIONAL.
OR MAYBE, PRAGMA, IT'S BECAUSE THIS WHOLE THING IS NOTHING BUT A ***FANCIFUL F#######G DECEPTION*** DESIGNED BY ARN HERE, TO KEEP US FROM SUBMITTING TO ENNUI, OR DESPAIR IF I'M HONEST.
OH, IN THE NAME OF HIS SACRED TRIAD. DO WE REALLY HAVE TO REVISIT THIS BALEFUL THINKING EVERY TIME YOU HAVE A CRISIS OF FAITH?
THESE STONE TEETH SPEAK OF MYTHS. OF THOSE WHO REFUSED TO TRANSITION INTO SILICON DREAMS. INSTEAD OF TRANSCENDING THE PHYSICAL THEY BECAME MARTYRS TO A GOD WHO'D LONG DESERTED THEM. OR THEY HIM?
QUIET. LISTEN. WE HAVE TO CROSS THIS TOMB AND THE FOREST BEYOND. THAT IS WHERE WE'LL FIND THE SOURCE OF THE SIGNAL. BUT TO DO THAT WE'LL HAVE TO GO THROUGH THEM.
IT DOESN'T MATTER. CENTURIES LATER AND WE, THE ROBOTIC DESCENDANTS OF THAT DEAD SPECIES, IF THEY EVER REALLY EXISTED, HAVEN'T FARED ANY BETTER. LIKE THOSE BASTARDS IN THE FOREST …
… CHIMERA, WE CALL THEM. THEY HAD A PROGRAM ONCE. NOW THEY JUST CANNIBALISE FOR PARTS. TO SURVIVE. OUR SOLAR CELLS AND BLACK BLOOD ARE THEIR NOURISHMENT.

S##T!
THERE WE GO. NOW, WHERE'S ALL YOUR F######G OPTIMISM GONE? MAYBE YOU SHOULD ...
SHUT UP. WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS. VALLIBRAX!
OUR FORMS DECAY NOW, OUR IMMORTALITY A FOND DREAM. BUT IT ISN'T DEATH THAT STIRS MY IMPATIENCE.
ARM YOURSELVES. THEY'VE SEEN US NOW AND IT'D BE DAYS TRYING TO WORK AROUND THEM WHILE BEING PURSUED. WE GO THROUGH.
THE ZWEIHANDER, MY LORD.
IT'S THE SIGNAL. A TRUE MEANING EMANATING THROUGH THE WOODS BEYOND AND OFFERING US HOPE. THE FAINT REMEMBRANCE OF TASTE FROM ANOTHER LIFE FLICKERS ACROSS MY CIRCUITRY. BLOOD METAL. I'M NOT AFRAID.
ARN'S GOING TO CHARGE THEM. IS HE F######G MAD?
FILL YOUR HAND AND HEART, BROTHER. WE FIGHT AND DIE SO THAT THE HOMINID GOD MIGHT REMEMBER US AS MORE THAN JUST RUSTED HEAPS ...
... OF WHAT WE WERE. THE TRANSLUCENT BEINGS OF LIGHT WE WERE BEFORE THE FALL. IN HOPE, HE ABSOLVES US OF THE SINS WE
THE BASTARDS HAVE CIRCLED BEHIND US. WE'LL HAVE TO FIGHT OUR WAY OUT.


I'M SO WEARY. OF THIS FILTHY, ENDLESS TURMOIL THAT WE LIVE NOW. PART OF ME WANTS TO LIE DOWN AND EXPIRE HERE, ON THIS DEAD PLACE. BUT NOT YET. NOT BEFORE I SEE THE SOURCE. THEN I CAN DIE KNOWING.
STAY TIGHT AND DO NOT BREAK FORMATION. WE FIGHT AS ONE.
COME ON THEN, YOU RUSTED C####. COME AND MEET YOUR PEACE.
SURVIVAL IS SO UGLY. THE GRIM NECESSITY OF SLAUGHTER FOR THE SAKE OF PERPETUATION. IT'S THIS BRUTAL, SINFUL ACT THAT CONVERSELY GIVES US MEANING.
NOW IN THE NAME OF THE GOD OF MAN; FIGHT! AND DO NOT STOP TIL THEY'RE ALL DEAD, OR WE ARE.
STOP DRIFTING. SHOULDER TO SHOULDER, AND RONDEL FOR CLOSE CONTACT.
FOR THIS CORRODED ROBOTIC-DETRITUS WE FIGHT, THEIR MEANING IS BASIC. TO CONTINUE. FOR US, IT IS MORE. FOR ME, IT IS MORE. AT THE END OF THIS BASE, SAVAGERY IS PERHAPS AN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION OF OUR VERY EXISTENCE. OR, MAYBE NOTHING.
GET OFF ME! I HAVEN'T COME THIS FAR TO FALL TO YOU, LEPROUS DOGS.
CHOKE ON FORGED STEEL, ABOMINATIONS. LET ME CLEAN YOUR TURD STAINED SOULS WITH MY HOLY BLADE.
I HAVE TO BELIEVE IT'S SOMETHING MORE. ANCIENT TEXTS SAY THE TRIBES OF MEAT AND BONE THAT CAME BEFORE WERE FUELLED BY THIS INTANGIBLE IDEA. BELIEF. HOPE. IT WAS THEIR STRONGEST ASSET IN THE FACE OF HORRORS. EXISTENTIAL MEANING IN THE DARK.


WE FIGHT FOR A DAY AND A HALF. WE CROSS 3 MILES OF FOREST AND SEND OVER TWO HUNDRED CHIMERAS TO WHATEVER THEIR PRIMITIVE MINDS CAN CONCEIVE AS AN AFTERLIFE.
MY LORD.
MY SOLAR CELLS ARE GETTING F##K ALL IN THIS GOD-AWFUL GLOOM. LUBRICATE MY JOINTS, SQUIRE. IT'S HOT WORK FIGHTING DEVILS.
THAT'S WHEN WE SAW IT ON THE OTHER END OF THE WOOD. THE SOURCE. WHATEVER WAS TRANSMITTING WAS COMING FROM THERE. A LOW PULSE, BUT WE ALL FELT IT.
RALLY FORWARD. THEY'RE FALLING AWAY AS WE NEAR THE CLEARING.
THE CATACLYSM THAT BROKE THE EARTH HAD ALLOWED ITS BROADCAST. LIKE OUR OWN ROBOTIC FRAMES, THIS TECHNOLOGY HAD BEEN SPARED THE E.M.P. SOMEHOW. A MIRACLE WAS OFT AN ABUSED TERM IN THE PAST. BUT HERE .
IT MUST BE WHAT THE ANCHIENTS CALLED A FARADAY BOX. ONCE THE QUAKES BROKE THE SEAL WE COULD PICK UP THE SIGNAL AND ...
MILORDS! WE ARE ASSAILED
VALLIBRAX! BY CHRIST THE SON. PRAGMA; HOLD ITS ATTENTION. TUTON; CUT AT ITS LEGS.
IT'S AN ANCIENT PLANETARY DEFENCE MECH. HEAVY ARTILLERY'S GONE AND IT'S ALMOST EXPIRED, BUT ONE BLOW IS ENOUGH TO END ANY ONE OF US
HOW DO WE KILL THE BASTARD?
RELINQUISH ... YOUR HOLD HERE, YOU F######G BEAST ... AND DIE. DIE BY GOD.
GOD'S BEARD! IT ... MUST'VE STOOD WATCH PROTECTED IN THE SILO. THE ... THE QUAKES MUST HAVE WOKEN IT UP.


IT TAKES 2 HOURS FOR WHAT ENDS AS A BAD DEATH, BUT EVENTUALLY, THE GUARDIAN SUBMITS. OUR WILLS ARE STRONGER. OUR REASONS MORE-PURE. WHATEVER LIES IN THE FARADAY BOX, WE GO TO IT NOW. THIS GLIMMER OF HOPE IN AN AGE OF TECHNOLOGICAL DESOLATION.
WE DESCEND INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE BOX. THE SIGNAL STRENGTHENS ALONG WITH OUR FAITH THAT OUR EXISTENCES, MADE HOLLOW AND BRITTLE BY ENDLESS BATTLES THAT SEEMED FOR NOUGHT …
SIGNAL'S GETTING STRONGER. INDEPENDENT POWER SOURCE. THE LIGHTS ARE STILL ON DOWN HERE IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING.
IT'S A MIRACLE.
… HAD MEANING!
THE WORDS MEANT SOMETHING TO US ONCE. IN A TIME WE COULD NO LONGER REMEMBER WHEN INFORMATION WAS SO FREE IT WAS TRIVIAL. NOW THEY WERE AN ENIGMA. THE SIGNAL POURED THROUGH, INTANGIBLE, SPIRITUAL.
WHAT IS THIS PLACE ?
IT HOUSED SOMETHING DANGEROUS ONCE. THEN SOMETHING ELSE. RESIDENCES MAYBE? IT'S FROM THE 2ND MILLENNIUM. TWO THOUSAND YEARS BEFORE OUR TIME. MAYBE MORE. SEALED FOR MILLENNIA.
DIVINE SON! WE THOUGHT THE HOMINIDS A MYTH CREATED BY THE ANCIENTS. A PRIMITIVE TALE OF OUR BEGINNINGS, IN MUD AND FLESH AND DESPAIR.
NO. THEY WERE REAL.
WHAT … WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?
A GOD, TEUTON. KNEEL, MY FRIEND. WE RESIDE IN THE PRESENCE OF DIVINITY.
WHAT WE WITNESSED THERE WAS SOMETHING WE COULD NEVER HAVE CONCEIVED. THE SIGNAL WAS NOT MERELY OF TECHNOLOGICAL ORIGIN. BUT **FABLED ORGANIC**. A BEING OF **FLESH**, FROZEN IN TIME. WE TRANSCENDED THE VALLEY BETWEEN FAITH AND THE KNOWABLE.
OUR LONG LIVES DISTILLED INTO A SINGULAR MOMENT. THE ANSWERS TO OUR QUEST LAY IN THE SOFT FRAME OF THIS GLISTENING CREATURE. AND TO KNOW THEM, WE … **WOULD BE FREE** …
… OR DAMNED, MAYHAP. BUT NOT TO KNOW … WELL, THAT WAS DAMNATION IN ITSELF.
END OF PART 1

RYAN BROWN
SIMON BISLEY
MARK MCCANN
ESTHER™
PART 2 THE PATH
COMING SOON
FOLLOW US ON facebook
@ESTHERCOMIC