

— ◦ UNKNOWN 9 ◦ —
ECHOES

Tomas Street — Vinz El Tabanas



Credits

Writer

Tomas Street

Artist

Vinz El Tabanas

Letterer

Patrick Brosseau

Art Director

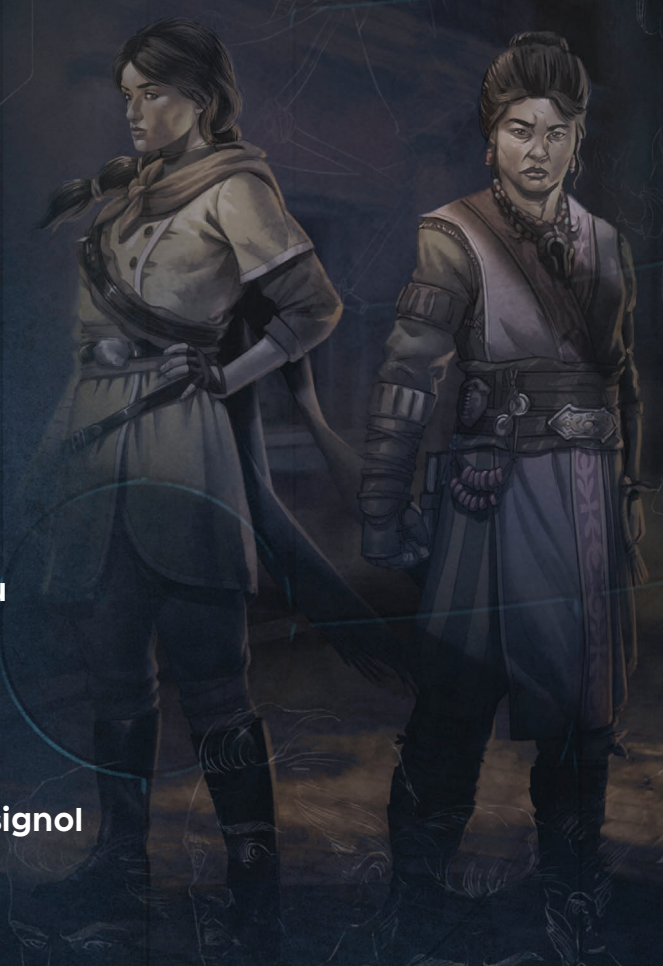
Cyril Sinel

Creative Director

Christophe Rossignol

Graphic Design

Charles Dubé



Special thanks to:

*François Beaugard, Andrew Veiga, Peter Soderlund,
Thea Danielak, Isabelle Henault, Marc-André Séguin,
Christopher Masson, Pierre Manéo, Benjamin McDonald*





HARDENED TO SURVIVE THE CYCLES OF DESTRUCTION, HUMANITY RISKS LOSING SIGHT OF ITSELF.

I'VE HARDENED TO SURVIVE ALSO.

MAINTAINING FEW CONNECTIONS HAS HELPED. FOCUSING ON PURPOSE, ON PUPILS. I SPOT PROMISE IN THEM EASILY.

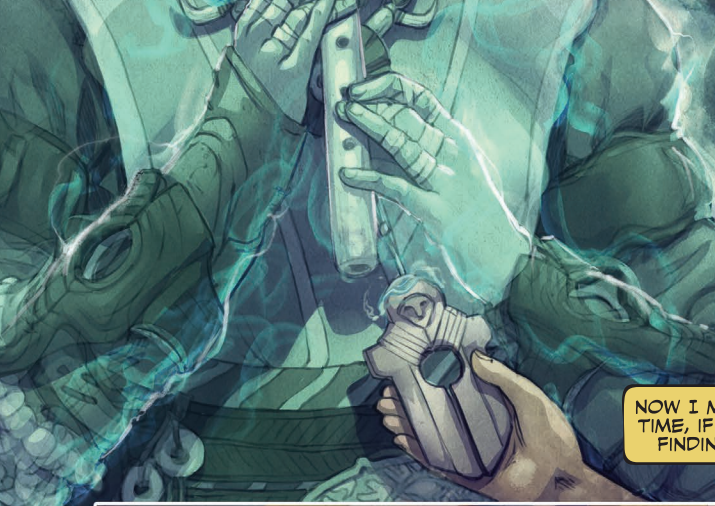


MY KNOWLEDGE WAS WELCOMED WITH OPEN ARMS. THEY ALL SHOWED EXCITEMENT AT THE CHANCE TO CHANGE THE WORLD AND I GAINED HOPE FOR THE FUTURE ONCE MORE.

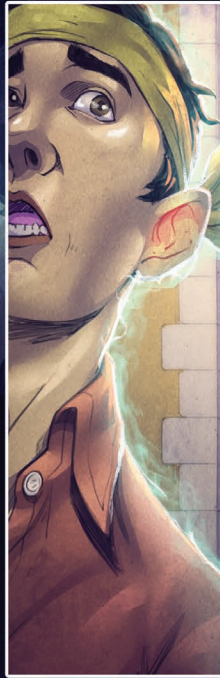


MY HOPE TURNED BITTER WITH EACH PASSING AND I ASKED MYSELF...

HOW MUCH TIME CAN I SPEND NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEM? I DIDN'T MIND AT FIRST. BUT NOW...

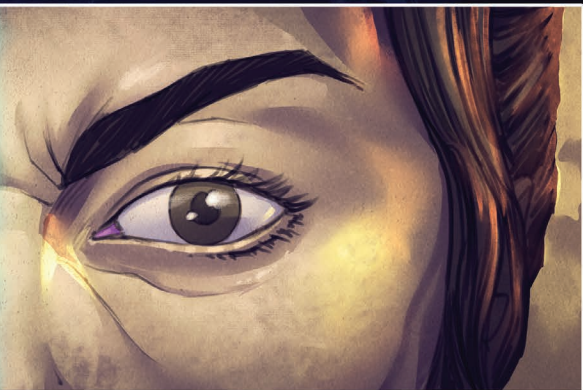


NOW I MUST BE PRECIOUS WITH TIME, IF I WANT TO SUCCEED IN FINDING A PUPIL OF WORTH.



PERHAPS THIS PATH IS NOT WHAT I THOUGHT IT WAS.





A PUPIL WHO
CAN WITHSTAND
THE UNKNOWN.



PERHAPS
I'VE GROWN
IMPATIENT..





WHAT A PROMISING REACTION TO MY AMULET.



LET'S SEE HOW THE CHILD FARES IN A CRUCIBLE.



THAT GIRL HAS A PURSE WITH ENOUGH TO FEED US FOR A WEEK. GET HER!





PROMISING INDEED.



TIME TO GO, DON'T YOU THINK?

BUT I HAVE SEEN PROMISE BEFORE.



WHAT ARE YOU FIGHTING WITH SATYAJIT FOR?

THEY CAME AFTER ME!

WE BETTER RUN BEFORE HE FINDS HIS FOOTING AGAIN.



I DON'T THINK THEY'RE FOLLOWING US.



YOU'VE MADE THEM MAD.

THEY WET THEIR PANTS.

WHY WERE YOU RUNNING SO FAST IF YOU'RE NOT SCARED?

TO PROTECT YOU, SILLY.

I DON'T NEED A PROTECTOR.

BUT YOU THINK I DO?



I'M NOT THE ONE WHO NEARLY HAD THEIR HEAD CRACKED OPEN.

HOW DID YOU DO THAT BACK THERE?

IT WAS LIKE YOU...I DON'T KNOW... STEPPED OUT OF TIME TO AVOID THAT STRIKE.



I'M NOT SURE...IT WAS LIKE NOTHING I'VE EVER EXPERIENCED.

THE WORLD, IT CHANGED, AZAD, EVERYTHING CHANGED. IN THE STRANGEST OF WAYS.

GOOD THING YOU HAVE STAYED THE SAME.



WHY'D WE COME THIS WAY? DON'T LOOK AT IT OR YOU'LL LOSE YOUR SOUL.

IT IS JUST AN OLD STONE CARVING...THERE IS ENOUGH REAL EVIL TO BE WORRIED ABOUT.



CAN I SEE THE TRINKET YOU GRABBED? I BET IT'S WORTH A LOT. WE CAN GET A BASKET OF NAILS TO FIX THE HUTS.



I...I DROPPED IT.

YOU UPSET THE GANG AND YOU LOST THE LOOT?!



THE OTHERS ARE COUNTING ON US, HAROONA.

LIKE YOU'VE NEVER RETURNED EMPTY-HANDED.



DO YOU THINK THE HUTS CAN WITHSTAND ANOTHER MONSOON?

YOU'RE RIGHT...START DINNER WITHOUT ME. I'LL BE BACK SOON.

WAIT, WHAT ABOUT SATYAJIT? I'LL COME WITH YOU.

I'M BETTER ALONE.

I'LL STAY CLEAR OF HIS ALLEY IF IT MAKES YOU HAPPY.

A BASKET FULL OF PARATHA WOULD MAKE ME HAPPY.

I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO...

SHE'S A SOLITARY ONE. I WONDER HOW SHE WOULD FEEL ABOUT LEARNING WITH ME.



YOU MUST PAY FOR THOSE!



VENOTH, AMIR, CATCH THAT ONE!

I SAW THIS CONFRONTATION APPROACHING SINCE SHE LEFT HER VILLAGE.



YOU'RE A QUICK STREET RAT.



BUT STILL, JUST A RAT.

THE OUTCOME, HOWEVER, IS NOT AS CLEAR...



WHAT'S A
WOMAN LIKE
YOU GOING
TO DO ABOUT
IT?





WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

WHO WANTS TO KNOW?



I'M REIKA, HERE... YOU DROPPED THESE.

NO THANKS, I DON'T WANT TO OWE YOU ANYTHING.

BUT WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEARN HOW TO HARNESS YOUR UMBRIC ABILITIES?

MY WHAT?




YOU KNOW WHAT I'M SPEAKING ABOUT-- HAROONA.



PERHAPS ANOTHER TIME.

I SENSE I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN.

DOES SHE ALREADY SEE THE PATH I WONDER?



I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT IT EASY FOR SOMEONE WITHOUT FAMILY TO ACCEPT SUCH A CALLING AS MINE.

I STOPPED CARRYING THE LOSSES I'VE SEEN LONG AGO. FAMILIES NO LONGER WHOLE.

THE DISTANCE BETWEEN MYSELF AND MY EMOTIONS HAS GROWN SO VAST THAT I HARDLY REMEMBER WHAT IT IS LIKE...

WHEN WILL YOU TEACH ME MORE THAN SIMPLE TRICKS?

IN TIME VINCENT.

WHOSE TIME?!

IT IS DANGEROUS!

YOU CARE FOR ME AFTER ALL.

I CARE THAT THE FOLD IS TREATED WITH RESPECT.

TO HURRY HOME AND CARE FOR OTHERS.



I SHOULD NOT BE REVEALING MYSELF LIKE THIS.





WHERE HAS THIS FOOLISHNESS COME FROM?

WHAT IS IT ABOUT THIS GIRL THAT MAKES ME LOWER MY GUARD?

HOW DID...

THANK YOU FOR SAVING MAYA.

SHE IS NOT WHO I WAS SAVING.

I SAID I DON'T WANT TO OWE ANYTHING.

THEN WHY ARE YOU HERE?

YOU DON'T, AND YOU NEVER WILL.

I'M TAKING A TRAIN IN TWO DAYS.

THERE IS SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT YOU, HAROONA. WITH MY HELP, YOU COULD BE A GREAT QAESTOR.



IF YOU CHOOSE TO BE.

SHE NEEDS TO MAKE THE DECISION ON HER OWN. I'M DONE CONVINCING OTHERS.

I'VE WASTED ENOUGH TIME IN THIS PLACE. IF I AM TO FIND A WORTHY PROTEGE...

REIKA...

YOU CAN TEACH ME TO DO WHAT YOU DID IN THE STORM THE OTHER DAY?

HAROONA... WHAT DO YOU THINK I DID?

I'M NOT SURE--BUT I THINK IT WAS... UMBRIC.

THAT'S WHAT YOU CALLED IT, RIGHT?

IT'S WHY I SAW THE WORLD TURN GREY IN THE ALLEY, ISN'T IT? WHEN I TOOK YOUR AMULET?

THAT'S RIGHT. I THINK YOU KNOW MORE ABOUT IT THAN YOU REALIZE...

YOU DO? WHY?

HOW DID YOU FIND ME, TODAY?

YOU SAID YOU WERE TAKING THE TRAIN.

HOW MANY STATIONS AND TRACKS THERE MUST BE AND STILL SHE CHOSE THE RIGHT ONE.

I DID, DIDN'T I...THIS IS OUR TRAIN.

WILL I GET TO SEE MY FRIENDS AGAIN?

YOU WILL...UMBRIC TRAINING TAKES A LONG TIME THOUGH, BUT IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO DO IT PROPERLY.

COME ALONG NOW, THEY WON'T WAIT FOR US. THERE'S A SCHEDULE TO KEEP.

ARE THERE SWEETS ON THE TRAIN?

SUCH INNOCENCE...I HOPE MY MERE PRESENCE WON'T HARDEN HER.

14 YEARS LATER.

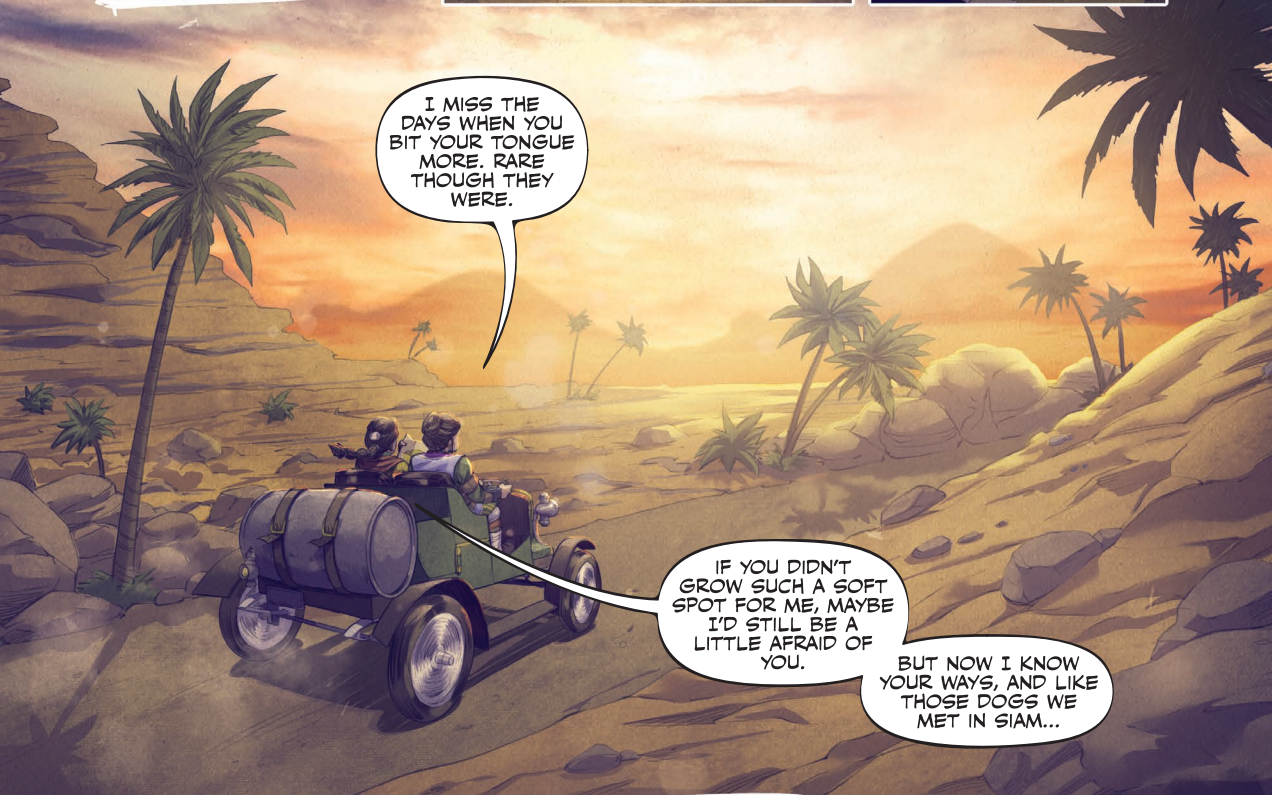


YOU CAN HARNESS THE FOLD REIKA, BUT COULD YOU AVOID THE POTHOLES?

YOU SENT ME ON THIS PATH.



YOU COULDN'T SEE IT COMING?



I MISS THE DAYS WHEN YOU BIT YOUR TONGUE MORE. RARE THOUGH THEY WERE.

IF YOU DIDN'T GROW SUCH A SOFT SPOT FOR ME, MAYBE I'D STILL BE A LITTLE AFRAID OF YOU.

BUT NOW I KNOW YOUR WAYS, AND LIKE THOSE DOGS WE MET IN SIAM...



YOUR BARK IS WORSE...



HEY, WATCH IT.



HAHA. YOU MUST ALWAYS BE PREPARED FOR THE UNEXPECTED.

THE LESSONS NEVER STOP.

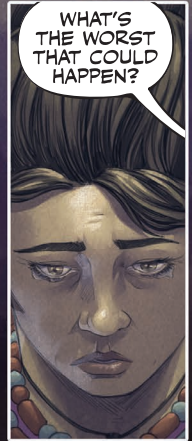
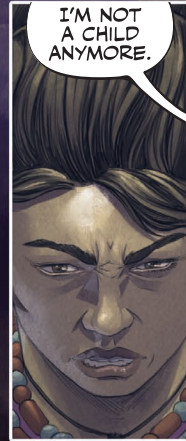
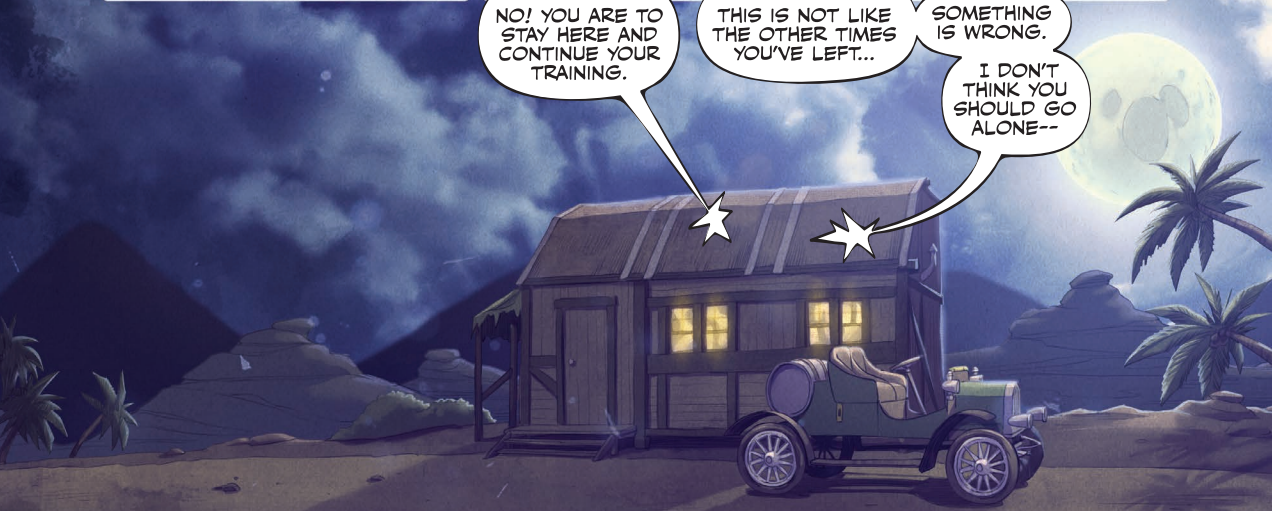
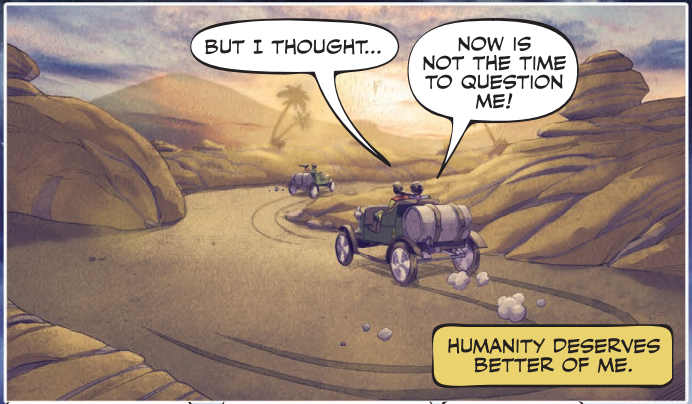
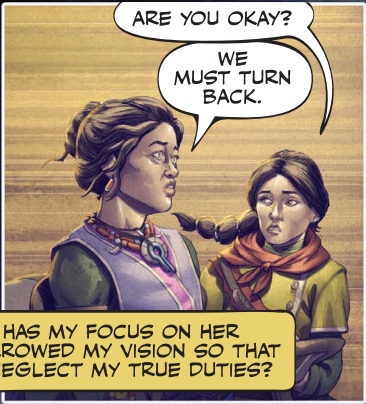
LEARNING NEVER CEASES.





I COULD NOT HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THIS WITHOUT YOUR TRAINING, REIKA.

REIKA?



HAROONA HAS PROVEN MY STRONGEST PUPIL BY FAR BUT I CANNOT RISK HER INVOLVEMENT IN THIS. THERE IS TOO MUCH AT STAKE.

I COULD NOT STAND LOSING ANOTHER PUPIL. LOSING HER...

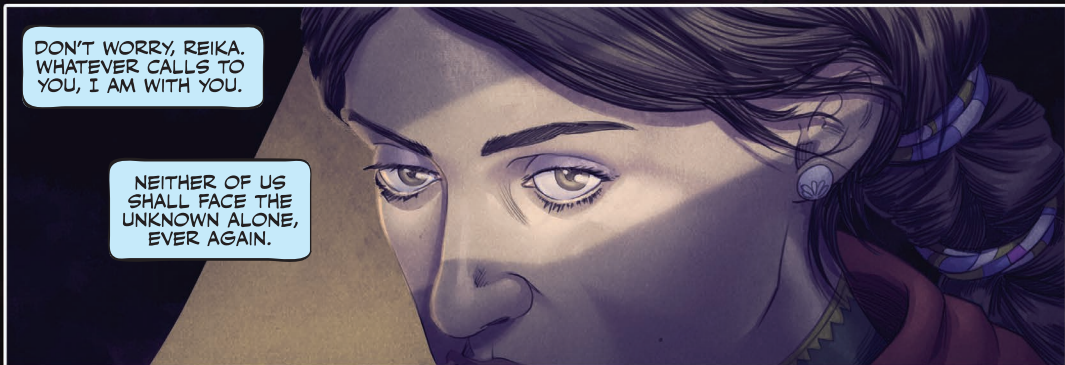
IT WOULD BE LIKE LOSING FAMILY.

I ONLY HOPE THERE IS ENOUGH TIME, TO ALTER WHAT IS TO COME.



DON'T WORRY, REIKA. WHATEVER CALLS TO YOU, I AM WITH YOU.

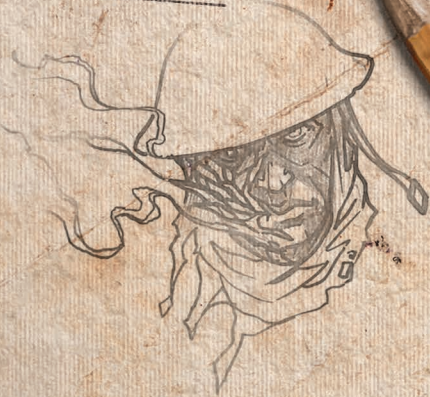
NEITHER OF US SHALL FACE THE UNKNOWN ALONE, EVER AGAIN.





ASCENDANT
ENDEAVORS

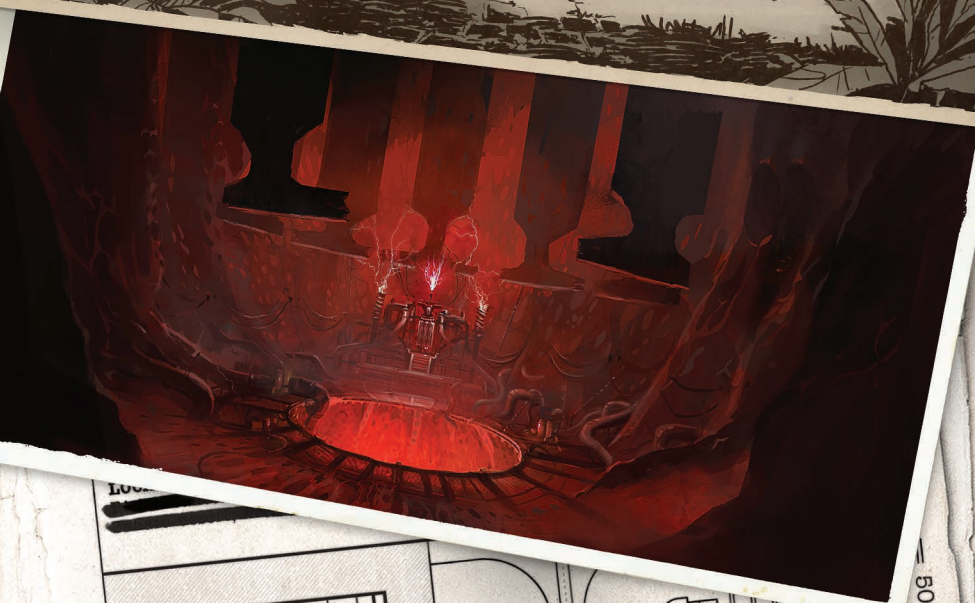
Field Office Research Report Files

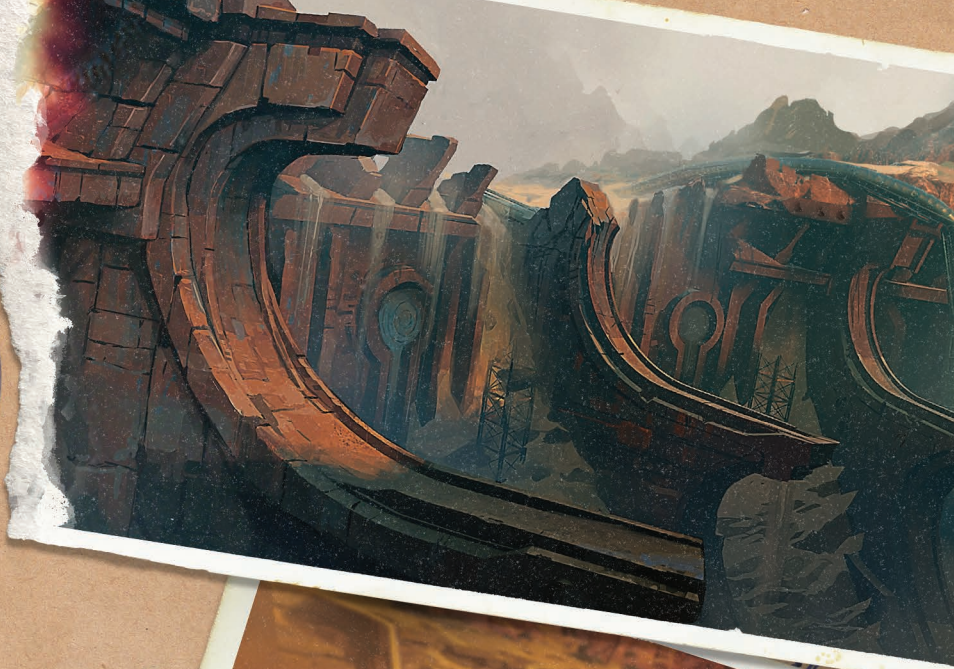


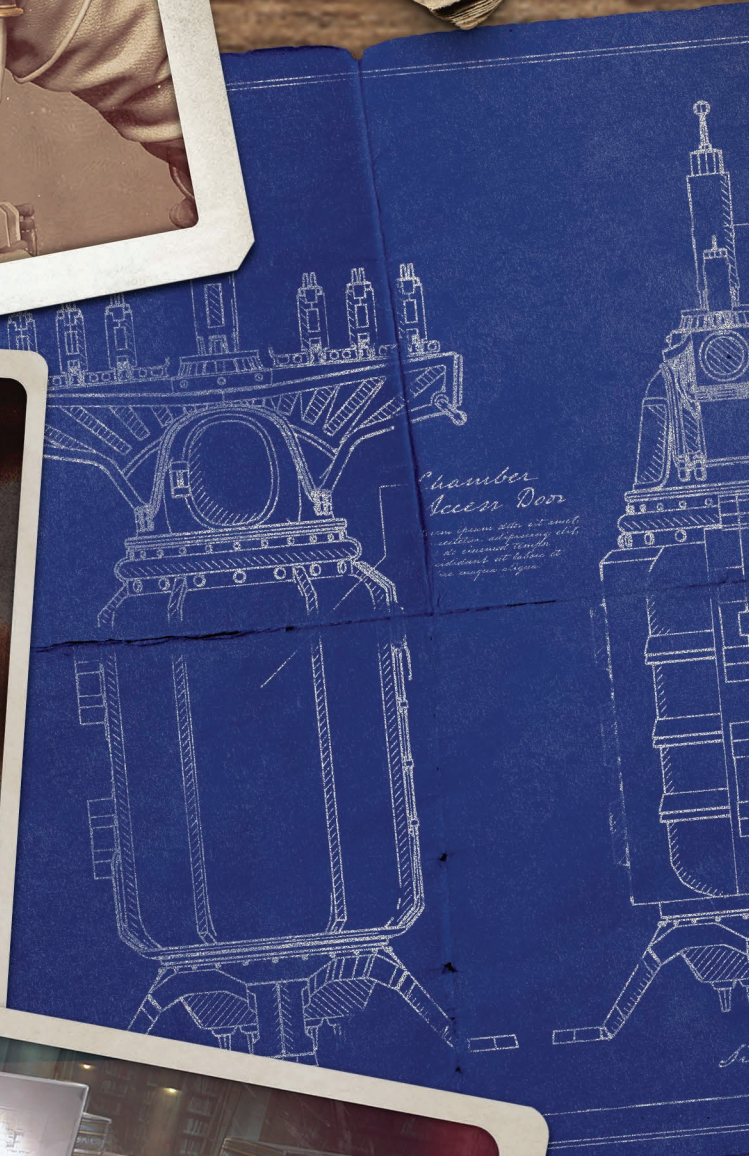
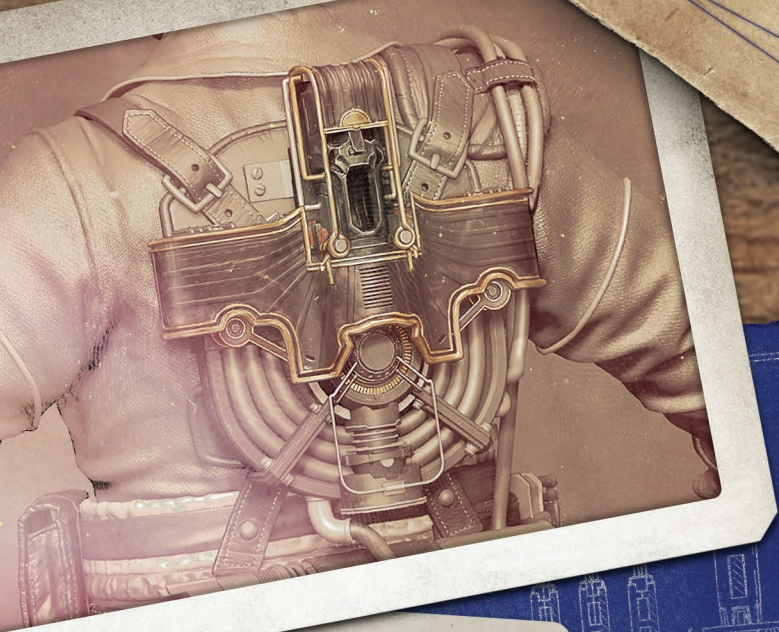
GUN











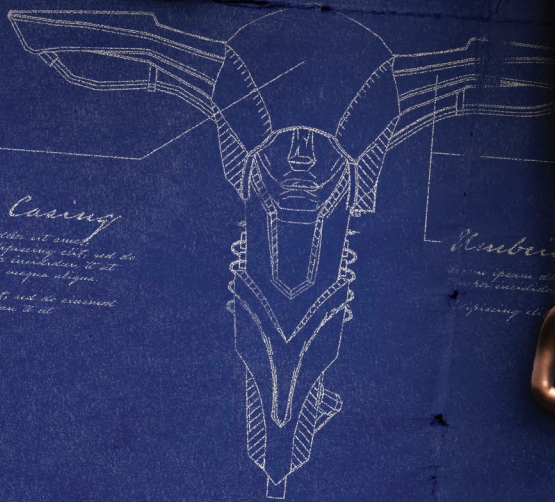
Chamber
Access Door

Open space into all small
sections adjoining this
chamber and below it
is a large airway



not possible
because of the
nature of the
thing





Brass Casing

*Devisio speciem dicitur, ut simul
construatur, utpote, ablat, and de
construit, tamquam circumstantia, et ut
datur, et aliter magna alijque.*

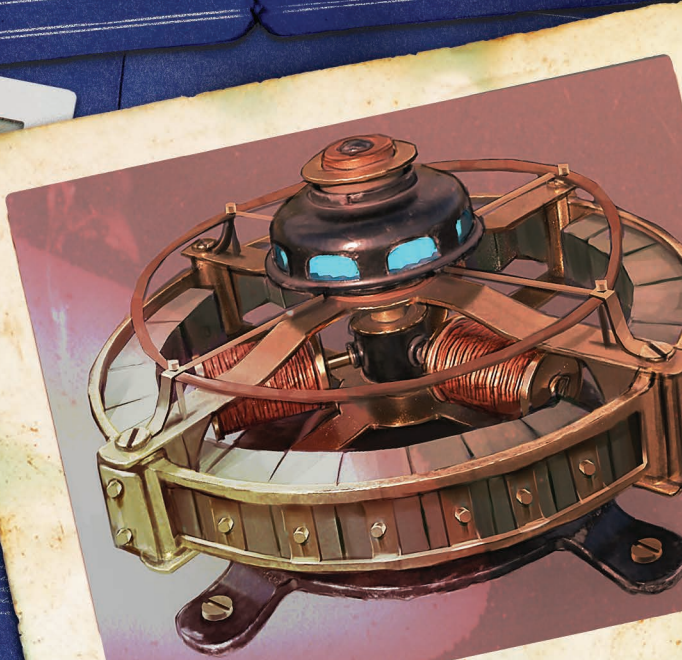
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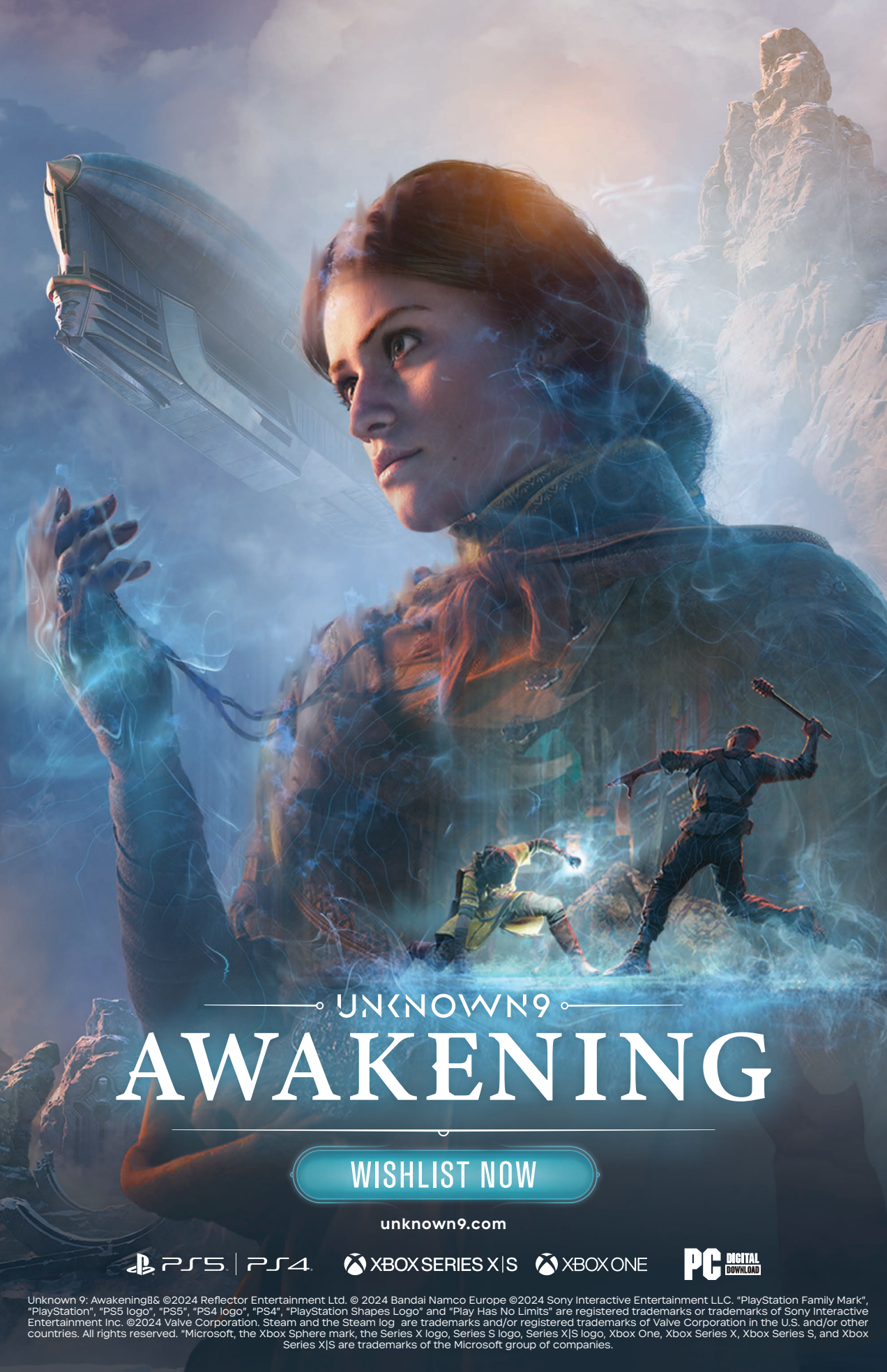


Front

987634-12 Devastator Weapon System

Back View





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