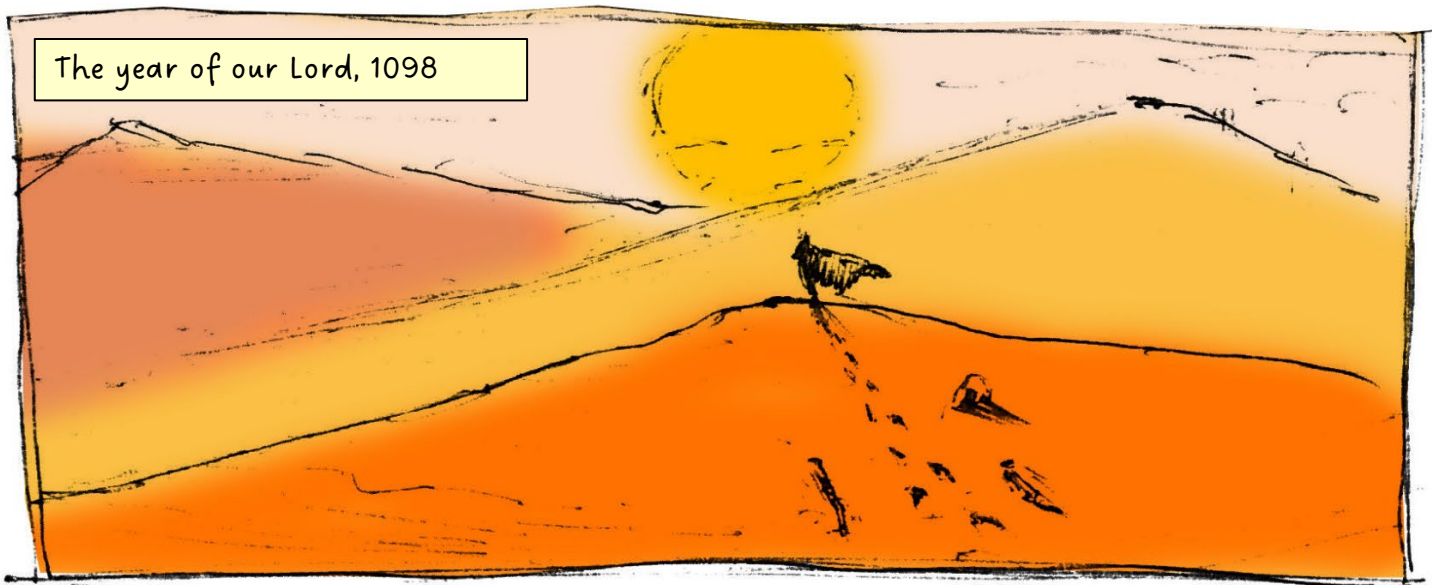


A dark, sketchy illustration of a figure, possibly a person in a dark, hooded garment, with a large, bright red cross on their chest. The figure is set against a bright orange background with a large, glowing sun or moon. The overall style is dark and moody, with heavy black lines and a red cross that stands out prominently.

ḥa qīqa

The year of our Lord, 1098



Beneath the eighth waning moon, the Syrian sands did whisper.



Sir Godric of Évreux, knight of the Cross, was sunder'd from his host amidst the burning waves near the forsaken stones of Palmyra.



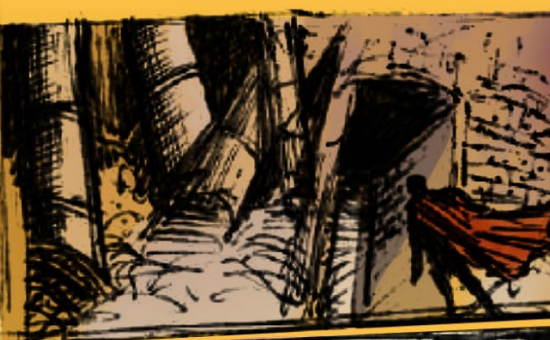
His banner—broken.
His blade—burden'd with
the weight of penance.

The heat—
Nay, not of this
earth alone.
It came as breath
of wrathful god,
Scorching flesh,
Scorching faith,
Scorching soul.

Each step he took did sink not only
in sand, but in sin.



"How many innocents fell 'neath my
banner?" ?" quoth he.
Though the desert answer'd not.



Three days with neither
shade nor succor.
at eventide—he beheld
them:
Columns black,
stretch'd like cursed
fingers toward the
heavens.



Ruins of a temple, Older than writ,
Colder than the grave of memory.



Godric crossed the threshold.
The air grew still, thick with
incense and ash.

Before him—stone steps,
descending deep into
the earth like the throat
of some buried beast.

He descended.
Each step echo'd with judgment.
Torches wept green flame.

The stair gave way to
a great hall—
Wider than
cathedrals, roof lost
in blackness.



And there, on
either side, stood
the watchers:



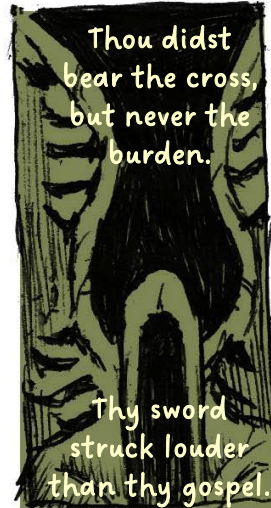
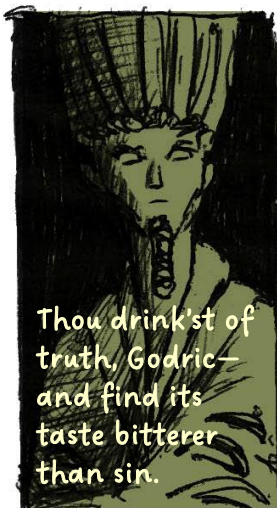
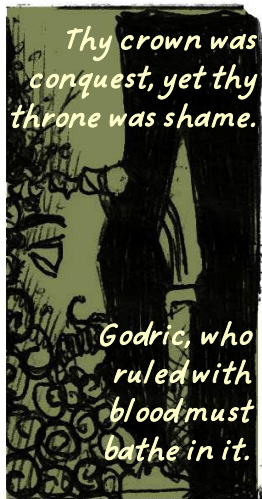
Ancient kings with
broken crowns, gods
whose names hath
been forbidden, and
angels whose wings
were not feather,
but iron and bone.

They spake not aloud,
yet spake still—
A thousand whispers in
a tongue before Babel.
Each voice a challenge.

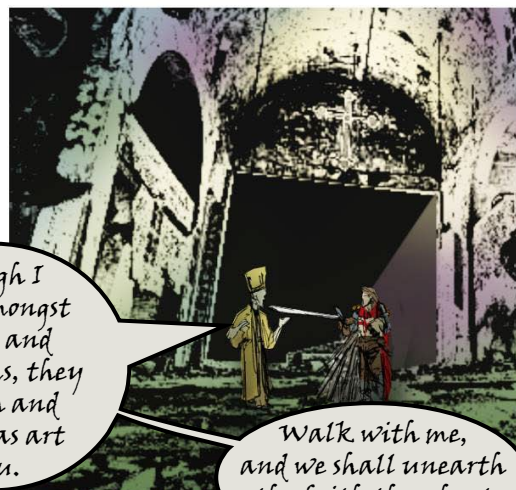


He who swingeth steel for Heaven oft
finds Hell clingin' to its edge.

Each step Godric of Évreux taketh is laden with judgment, remorse, and woe.
Godric contendeth not with the temple alone—but with the ruin that is himself.



Then, in a shadowed
corner where light
dare not kneel, Godric
hideth his face.



Walk with me,
and we shall unearth
the faith thou hast
buried.



You did
not lose your faith.
You traded it, bit by
bit. For safety.
For silence.
For orders.

...I only
obeyed.

You obeyed?
So do dogs.
So do executioners.

Obedience is no virtue
when the soul goes blind.
You walked where they
pointed but you chose not
to see where it led.

...I believed. I
thought I did.
I fought for
something
greater...



In Palestine...
You fought for
permission. To kill.
To silence doubt.
And you called it
sacred.

You never
believed, Godric.
You obeyed because
it was easier than
thinking.

And that god of
yours... the gentle one,
the merciful, nailed to
wood and worshipped
in gold... He's weak.
Vain. A mirror
crowned.



You marched beneath the cross... but your path was carved in flesh. You did not conquer evil — you became it.

Towns of prayer burned at your word. Pilgrims dismembered, their corpses piled in silent alleluias.

Women dragged by the hair. Children skewered like beasts, in the name of Heaven.

And centuries later, the banners changed— but the boots still crush the dust of the same ruins.

This is your truth, Crusader. Not in scripture, but in shadow.

Not in glory, but in blood. This is what your faith became—ḥaqīqah, Godric.

The truth... you refused to see.



No.
It was a test.
And you
failed it.

But now...
you will
have to see.

..Then what
was it all for? The marches.
The blood. The prayers...
Was it all... a lie?

I...I
see
it.

The only fitting answer is neither argument nor plea— but a raw acknowledgment of horror, a human reflex before the incomprehensible.

The old world ends where the stone breaks.
Beneath it: silence shaped like a scream.

Your
gods live in
books.
This place
writes nothing.
It devours.

In the centre, suspended upside-down over the
pit: a crucified knight. A Crusader like Godric,
armour rusted, flesh clinging to sinew. He does
not move, but the air trembles around him.

Another who bore the Cross.
Another who broke beneath
its weight.

From the depths of the pit, long, thin tendrils
rise—glistening, sniffing, seeking. They brush
the air like serpents hunting warmth.

The pit remembers.
The pit feeds.

NO!

You cry for him...
But it was never
him they came for



You said this was
the path to faith
but all I've found
is damnation!

You preach truth,
but all I see is rot,
blood, madness!
Chains that sing, a
pit that feeds—
Is *this* the mercy
of your god?!

*Insolent
wretch.
I offer you
meaning, and
you spit fear in
my face.*

*You whine of
mercy?!
Faith is earned
in agony—
or not at all!*

Truth, crusader?

*You butchered the meek.
You called it holy. Now
choke on what you've
done—this is your gospel!*

Have
mercy...

Mercy?!
Nooo... it won't
be so easy...
You must see it.

*This is your legacy
in the Holy Land—
Look at it. That's your reflection.
That's your truth...
blood and ruin.*

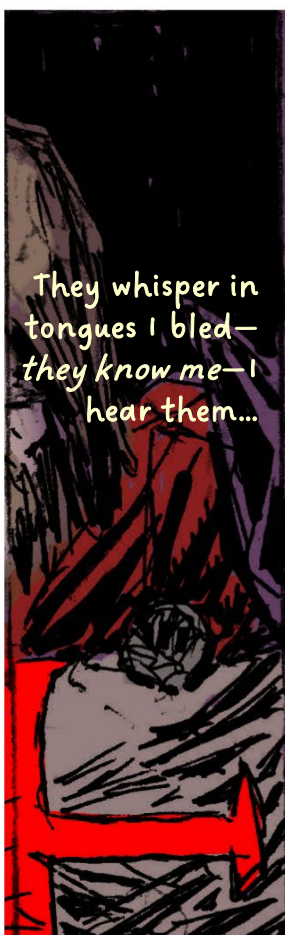
AAAAARRRR



No light. No sky.
Just stone—
breathing—
watching...



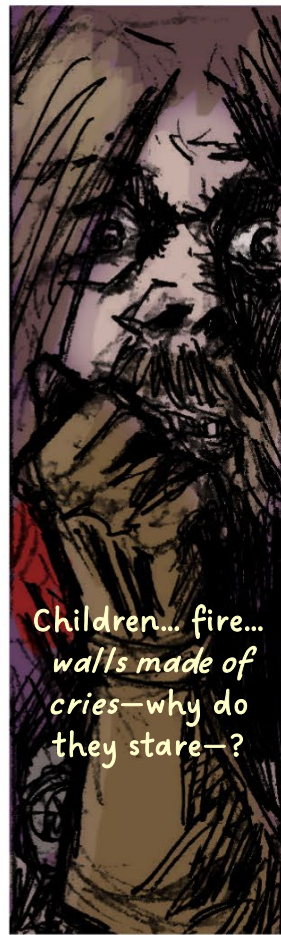
They whisper in
tongues I bled—
they know me—I
hear them...



Silence! I obeyed!
I obeyed!—I did
what was right—!



Children... fire...
walls made of
cries—why do
they stare—?



I buried my
faith. I buried
it with...
THEM!!!



**GET ME
OUT!!**



Away from the blood
away from the voices
I won't be buried here!
I won't be judged!

*You still tremble, Godric...
as though this torment were
yours alone.*

*But your hands lit
fires yet to burn.
In Egypt's scorched
sands, in Syria's
bleeding heights*

*And in Gaza,
where the sky rains
ash and angels do
not answer.*

NO

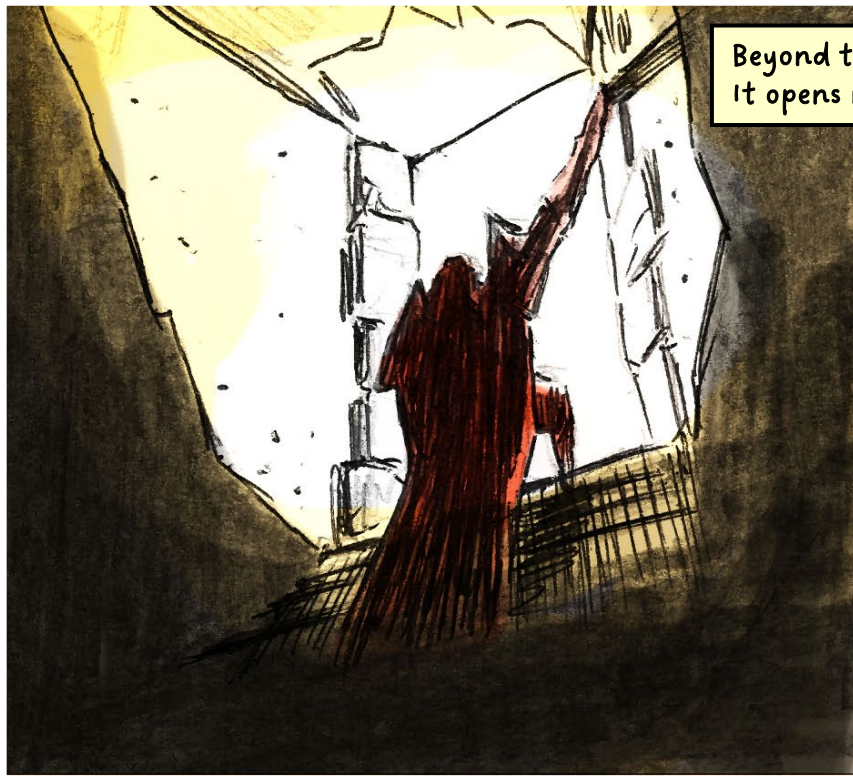
NO

NNNOOOOOOOOO!!!

He saw the shape of evil. Not as story or
symbol— but as matter, as flesh. The veil is
torn. And the world is no longer silent...

I saw it...
God was never
alone.

...Yet even after truth devours the soul, there is
light— and light asks no permission to shine.



Beyond the veil of horror, there is a door.
It opens not with faith, but with surrender.

Not to gods—but to silence.

To the peace that dwells in
not knowing.

To the comfort of saying:
'As God wills it.'

And if he walks through,
perhaps he can forget what
truth cost him— and begin
again, not as crusader,
but as man.



Not all who crawl from
the abyss return whole.
But some... return awake.

The sun is no longer a
judgment, but a warmth.

The breath no longer a
burden, but a gift.

And in the silence, faith stirs—
not in glory, but in grace.



Godric is in peace.

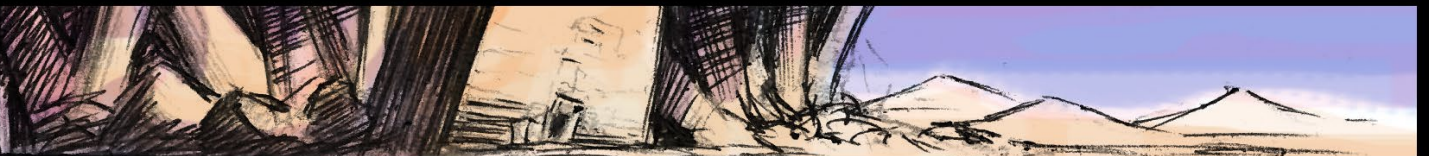
It is the proud who close their eyes in the sun, believing the storm has passed.
It is the comfortable who mistake survival for victory, and silence for absolution.



But the past does not forgive.



And the deep does not forget.



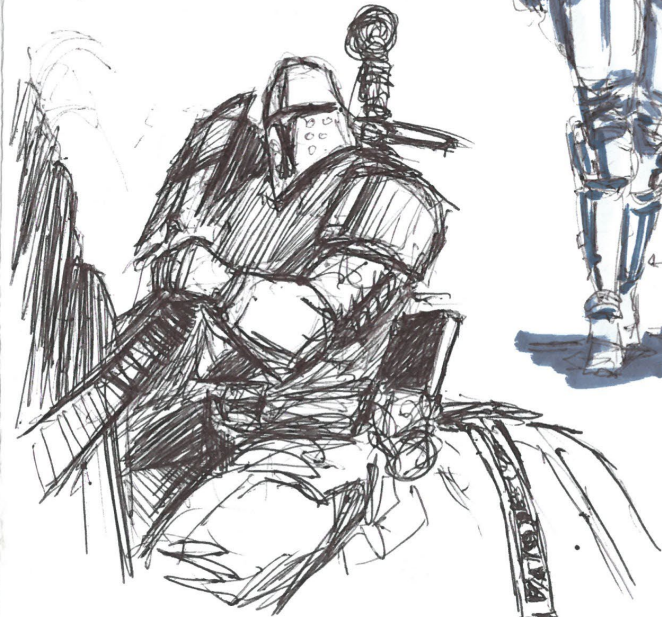
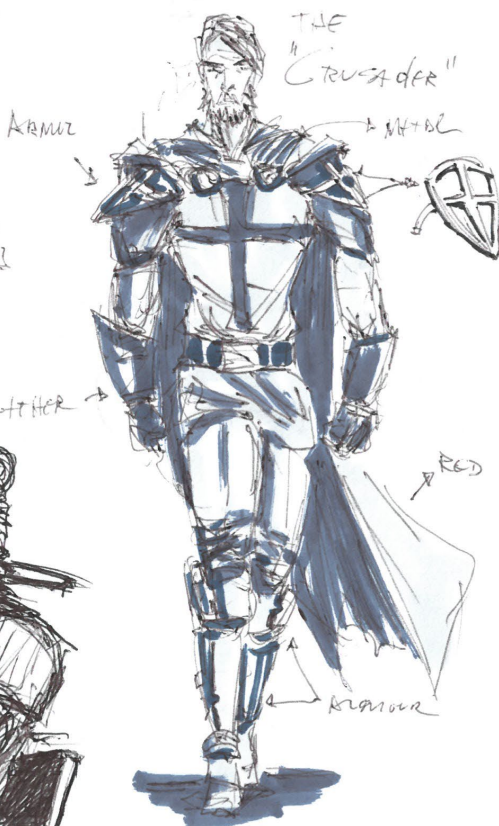
You, who watch and breathe—
have you not too called yourself saved,
while leaving your guilt buried,
and your sins unspoken?



This is **ḥaqīqa**, The Truth — not written in scrolls, carved in flesh and ashes.
The truth beneath banners and blessings.
The truth sung by swords and silenced by fire.
That holiness can be a mask for hunger.
That faith, when blind, drinks blood and calls it wine.

halequah!

CHARACTER DESIGN,
JUN 2005



"The Temple Guardian"



ḥaḳīqa

Illustrations and graphic design
Leo Corres



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