

## Page One - 5 panels

[1] FULL WIDTH PANEL.

*It's deep into a long, unforgiving winter. A robed **HUNCHBACK**, grotesque, his face twisted with panic, is driving a ghastly stagecoach pulled by two skeletal horses with fiery eyes. We can see the hunchback and the upper half of the horses from a front POV. The stagecoach is being driven down an old, winding road covered in snow. Snow-capped trees crowd the road on both sides.*

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[2] SMALL PANEL, SECOND ROW.

*Close up of the hunchback's arm cracking his whip.*

1 **SFX:** *Crack!*

[3] SMALL PANEL, SECOND ROW.

*We see the inside of the stage coach. Deep, blood red curtains shut out all outside light. Only a dim lantern hanging from the ceiling lights the small quarters. An ominous wooden box takes up much of the room. Many nails have been driven into it to keep it tightly shut. Still, a small hole has been cut into one side of the box, a little larger than a human eyeball; through the hole is only darkness.*

2 **HUNCHBACK** (quietly, from outside): Ha.

[4] WIDE PANEL, THIRD ROW.

*The stagecoach again, this time directly overhead, with the POV looking down. We see the road, the trees, the skeletal horses and the **HUNCHBACK** cracking his whip once again. The horses' hooves are fiery, too.*

3 **HUNCHBACK:** Haa!

[5] SMALL PANEL, THIRD ROW.

*A close up on the hole in the box inside the stagecoach's dimly lit cabin. We can see a little bit of the red curtains behind the box, but the hole is the focus of the panel. It is still just a black void -- we cannot see anything inside the box.*

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## Page Two - 3 panels

[1] FULL HEIGHT PANEL, HALF WIDTH.

*The POV shifts to behind the **HUNCHBACK**'s shoulder as he arrives at his destination. He's pulling back on the horses' reins and looking up at the gates to a great, gothic castle. Behind the castle and its gates we can see a dark storm stirring, partly covering a bright moon. If we could see the Hunchback's face, we could see that it is filled with awe.*

1 **HUNCHBACK**: (quietly) Whoa.

[2] QUARTER PAGE PANEL, SECOND COLUMN.

*The POV changes. We're looking through the gaps in the portcullis in the castle's courtyard. We see the shape of **RAPHAEL**, the dutiful keeper and servant of the castle's Lord. He is a man who cares very much about appearances, with a straight posture and fine clothes. He calls out to the **HUNCHBACK**, who has tied off the stagecoach and is approaching the gate on foot.*

2 **RAPHAEL**: Halt! State your business, sir. And know that my Lord is not seeing visitors this night.

3 **HUNCHBACK**: I be Piotr, good master, from th' town of Korsova.

[3] QUARTER PAGE PANEL, SECOND COLUMN.

*We see over the **HUNCHBACK**'s shoulder. He's holding up a closed, heart-shaped locket. The locket is inscribed with runic writing on its cover. He stands before the gate, speaking to **RAPHAEL**, who is carrying a small hand lantern. We see the servant fully for the first time, looking a little put off by the unannounced visit.*

4 **HUNCHBACK**: I'm sorry t'impose at th' witchin' hour, but I bring a trinket ...

5 **HUNCHBACK**: And I think tha' yer Lord'll want t'see **what else** I got in me cabin.

## Page Three - 5 panels

**Note:** You may see this page and its panelling differently.

[1] SHORT, WIDE PANEL, FIRST ROW.

***RAPHAEL** inspects the locket up close, having opened it. Inside, we see the face of **YOUNG MISCHAELNA** on the left locket panel, and **VANION THE BARD** on the right locket panel. They both look very happy. The pictures within are yellowed with age.*

1 **RAPHAEL:** Ah, yes. I can see that you speak the truth.

2 **RAPHAEL:** Lord Vanion has been expecting your delivery for several days now, you know.

[2] SHORT, WIDE PANEL, FIRST ROW.

***RAPHAEL** pulls a lever, causing the portcullis to begin to rise.*

3 **SFX:** CREEAAK

4 **RAPHAEL:** Come! Bring your coach up to the stables and I shall meet you there.

[3] TALL PANEL, SECOND ROW.

***RAPHAEL** and the **HUNCHBACK** stand outside the castle's rickety, rotting stables. Behind them, we can see a grinning gargoyle statue and part of the back of the stagecoach. The **HUNCHBACK** is looking nervously over his shoulder to the stagecoach. **RAPHAEL** does not follow his gaze; he is stoic and poised, a proper Quartermaster.*

5 **RAPHAEL:** Please, excuse my poor manners earlier. It is quite rare that we receive visitors once the sun goes down. I am Raphael, the Quartermaster of Lu'ghul Castle.

6 **HUNCHBACK:** Thank ye fer openin' yer gates t'me, Master Raphael.

7 **RAPHAEL:** Speak nothing of it. I wish that you had come two nights ago. Your delay has left Lord Vanion in a mood *most* foul.

[4] TALL PANEL, SECOND ROW.

*The POV returns to the inside of the stagecoach. We see the inside of the cabin in full again, with the nailed up box in the center of the panel. It is shaking, subtly, just a little, hinting at life within it.*

8 **HUNCHBACK:** M'lady can be ... fickle.

[5] SMALL PANEL, SECOND ROW.

*A close up on the **HUNCHBACK**. We see him from below, his face knotted with anxiety. He's looking down to the underside of his arm, but from our POV we can't see what he sees there on it until the next panel.*

9 **HUNCHBACK:** She weren't too pleased with yer Lord's request. Or t'hear from him at all, if'n I'm bein' honest.

[6] SMALL PANEL, THIRD ROW. SAME SIZE AS PANEL [5], JUST BELOW IT.

*A close up on the **HUNCHBACK**'s bare arm to see what he's looking down at. Terrifying claw marks have left his arm red and mutilated. The wounds appear diseased.*

10 **HUNCHBACK:** (quietly) It's been a *difficult* couple'a nights.

## Page Four - 7 panels

[1] SMALL PANEL, ROW ONE.

***RAPHAEL** shows a small kindness to the **HUNCHBACK**, placing a comforting hand on his shoulder. The **HUNCHBACK** looks away from his arm and up to the **RAPHAEL** behind him.*

1 **RAPHAEL:** Well, worry no more. Once your work is done, you shall be afforded a bottle of valley wine and a warm bed in the servant's quarters for the night.

2 **RAPHAEL:** Naturally, the rest of the castle is *off limits*.

[2] SMALL PANEL, ROW ONE.

*The POV shifts to over the **HUNCHBACK**'s shoulder as he looks up at the towering castle. There is a window high above that suggests the dim glow of a fire within. There is the hint of a strange, mostly formless shadow on the outside castle wall near the window in the distance.*

3 **HUNCHBACK:** I'm not t'see, uh, Lord Vanion personally then?

[3] SMALL PANEL, ROW ONE.

*Close up of **RAPHAEL**. His kind demeanor has changed, hardening. His reaction to the messenger's question is harsh and almost threatening.*

4 **RAPHAEL**: Do you *truly* wish to stand before Lord Vanion?

[4] MEDIUM SIZE PANEL, ROW TWO.

*Close up of the lit window of Lu'ghul Castle from the **HUNCHBACK**'s perspective. Wisps of strange light, the result of some dark magic, can be seen overtaking some of the firelight seen before. Just outside of the window, a menacing shadow in the shape of a beast can faintly be seen stretching along the castle wall.*

5 **SFX**: (a scream echoing quietly in the distance, stretching into Panel [5] too)  
aaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhh!

[5] MEDIUM SIZE PANEL, ROW TWO.

*Close up of the **HUNCHBACK** from the perspective of the window. He looks pale from fear as he stares up at the window.*

6 **HUNCHBACK**: ... n-nay.

7 **HUNCHBACK**: Nay. Let me bring th' crate inside ...

[6] SMALL PANEL, ROW THREE.

*Close up of the box within the coach's cabin. It is still now, but we can barely see a little bit of **MISCHAELNA**'s eye through the hole -- mostly hidden in shadow.*

8 **HUNCHBACK**: ... an' be done with this cursed night.

[7] SMALL PANEL, ROW THREE.

*Close up on the hole in the box. We see **MISCHAELNA**'s eye fully now; it is feminine and monstrous, all at once. It seems as though it's looking straight back at the reader.*

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## Page Five - 2 panels

**Page Notes:** I see this page as one full page panel(1) with a smaller panel(2) fitting inside of it.

### [1] FULL PAGE PANEL.

*Lightning crackles and forks behind the great, gothic castle. The castle sits atop a tall hill with a single winding dirt road that leads up to its main gates. The hill overlooks a valley and distant town that we don't need to see in this panel. Through the storm clouds, we see a Full Moon shining down upon the castle and forest. The castle itself appears slightly twisted, a little unearthly, almost alive. The most important imagery, the castle and moon, is positioned on the left side of the panel. The castle and surrounding forest carry a dusting of snow, a sign of the lingering winter.*

- 1 **Caption:** (left side) It's easy to be a Lord.
- 2 **Caption:** Butcherer.
- 3 **Caption:** Madman.
- 4 **Caption:** **Necromancer.**

### [2] MEDIUM SIZE INNER PANEL.

*The panel is placed within the art and borders of PANEL 1. Here, we see **LORD VANION** in the castle's gloomy Great Hall, sitting atop a throne of bones, a goblet of wine held loosely in his hand. He is a Golden Elf - a beautiful race of unaging elves with long, golden hair and white eyes. His eyes are different than his kin's, though: they glow a bright red, and though he is attractive, there is something twisted to his appearance. He has strange, foreboding tattoos on his arms and body where his robe isn't covering his skin: he is a Necromancer of great power, well over 1,500 years old. **VANION** stares out, blankly, lost in thoughts and memories.*

- 5 **Caption:** You give into becoming those things ... one inch, one **moment** at a time.

## Page Six - 2 panels

**Page Notes:** I see this page as one full page panel(2) with a smaller panel(1) fitting inside of it. The second page's panels should have a dream-like border and effect, as they are memories; the art should be vivid and beautiful, filled with surreal color.

[1] MEMORY: MEDIUM SIZE INNER PANEL.

*This panel is placed within the art and borders of PANEL 2. Here, we see **VANION THE BARD** in a beautiful elvish graveyard nestled in a vibrant forest during twilight hours. He is sitting atop a mound of grass and flowers, holding his dead son in his arms; the image should be a sort of mirror to PAGE 1, PANEL 2. His son appears to be about eight years old, and is badly burned, having died in a fire. **VANION** looks to be the same age as in the previous panels, but is actually over 1,000 years younger; he is dressed like a simple Bard, and his eyes are kinder than before -- and entirely white. He weeps quietly as he cradles his son to his body. The grass around him is long and wild, with strange and colorful flowers growing up from the earth. Behind **VANION** we can see the lower section of a great ivory statue of a winged elf.*

1 **MISCHAELNA:** (quietly, unseen in the panel) Papa ...

[2] MEMORY: FULL PAGE PANEL.

*Here, we see the elvish graveyard more fully, the perspective pulled back from PANEL 1. The most important imagery should be on the right side of the panel, so that PANEL 1 is placed within the left side of this panel. The trees are colorful, beautiful, slightly alien. The graves are crystalline, both strange and stunning. Through the canopy of the trees it is a starry night, and there are four moons of different sizes. In the center of the graveyard is the statue of the winged elf. **VANION** can be seen, smaller than in PANEL 1, cradling his dead son. We can now also see **YOUNG MISCHAELNA**, his daughter. She is dressed in a white, flowing gown, speckled with a little bit of blood, and appears to be in her early teens. She is standing a few feet away from her father, looking helplessly to him and her dead brother.*

2 **MISCHAELNA:** (even quieter than before) ... will the Men come for us? Like they came for Kael and Mama?

3 **Caption:** (lower right side) It's much harder to be a Father.

## Page Seven - 5 panels

[1] MEMORY: SMALL PANEL, ROW ONE.

**VANION** stands up, still cradling his dead son in his arms. He smiles sadly and tries to comfort **MISCHAELNA**.

1 **VANION**: The Menfolk don't dare come here. This is our Peoples' most sacred place, where the spirits of the Old Ones lie beneath the earth.

[2] MEMORY: SMALL PANEL, ROW ONE.

Close up on **VANION**'s dead son in his arms, from the perspective of him looking down to him. It's here that we can better see the terrible burns on the boy's body.

2 **VANION**: The Old Ones ... they will give us strength.

[3] MEMORY: SMALL PANEL, TWO.

Close up on **MISCHAELNA** from a POV behind **VANION**. She has walked up to tug on her father's tunic, exhaustion and worry on her face.

3 **MISCHAELNA**: But what if they come for us while the Old Ones are sleeping?

4 **VANION**: Then I'll keep you safe.

5 **Caption**: He lied.

[4] MEMORY: SMALL PANEL, ROW TWO.

Even closer up on **MISCHAELNA** from **VANION**'s perspective, looking down. She manages a meek smile as she looks up to her father.

6 **Caption**: And a piece of his heart broke.

7 **MISCHAELNA**: Okay. And I'll keep you safe, too.

[5] MEMORY: FULL WIDTH PANEL, ROW THREE.

The POV pulls away a little, looking down on the pair as they walk through the misty graveyard, through a patch of bright, colorful flowers. The moonlight shines down upon them through the canopy.

8 **VANION**: I know. I know that you will.

9 **VANION**: Stay close now, girl ...

## Page Eight - 1 panel

[1] MEMORY: SPLASH PAGE.

*We see the back of **VANION** carrying his son, and **MISCHAELNA** holding idly onto his tunic. They stand at the edge of the graveyard garden. Beyond them no flowers bloom, and no trees stand. There is only the great maw of a massive cave a few hundred yards away. Its stalactites and stalagmites look almost like teeth, only adding to the sinister appearance of the cave. Beyond the cave is nothing but a barren wasteland lit barely by the moonlight overhead. This page should look very adventurous, with our two main characters standing at the edge of beauty, and before something frightening. This could almost be a cover page in its style.*

1 **VANION**: ... we're almost there.