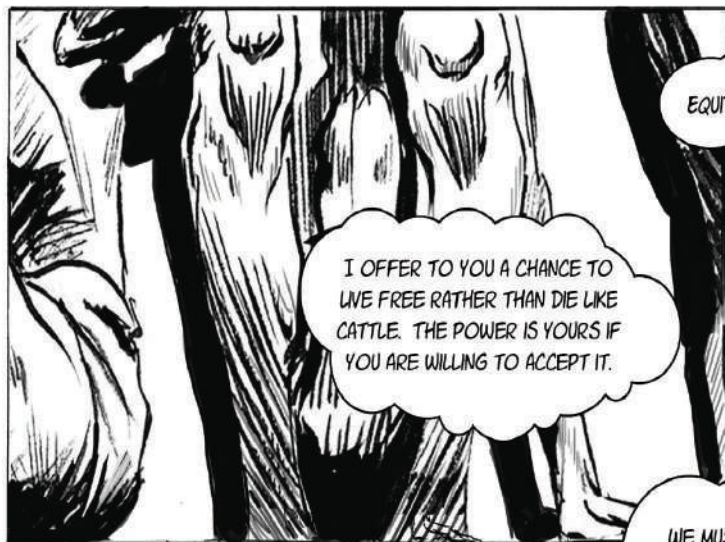


IN THE BOWELS OF THE SHIP THE SHACKLED MALE CAPTIVES LIE TIGHTLY PACKED. A YOUNG MALE BY THE NAME OF ADUBI LIES BENEATH EQUI. A HOLE IN THE PLATFORM THAT EQUI LIES UPON ALLOWS FOR HIM TO SEE ADUBI AND ADUBI HE. ADUBI IS FROM A DIFFERENT TRIBE THAN EQUI. EQUI ATTEMPTS TO SPEAK TO HIM IN INGBU, BUT THE MAN IS NOT ABLE TO UNDERSTAND EQUI'S WORDS. THE MAN'S BODY REFUSES TO RETAIN FOOD. THIS CAUSES HIS ONCE-MUSCULAR OBSIDIAN FRAME TO WILT, AND HE LIES HELPLESS AS BONE WRAPPED IN GRAY SKIN. THE SHAPE OF HIS DEFINED SKULL AND EYE SOCKETS IS PROMINENT. DEATH KISSES HIS FOREHEAD. EQUI SILENTLY LAMENTS AT THE SUFFERING OF HIS FELLOW CAPTIVES.

"WE ARE FROM DIFFERENT TRIBES. THIS IS TRUE. IN OUR HOMELAND WE FOUGHT. IGNORANT TO THE COMMON ENEMY THAT SOUGHT TO CAPTURE AND EXPLOIT US. BUT WE CAN NO LONGER BE DIVIDED BY OUR DIFFERENCES. WE MUST COME TOGETHER TO CONFRONT OUR COMMON ENEMY. WE MUST BECOME ONE! ONE BROTHERHOOD. UNITED NOT BY BLOOD BUT BY THE ROOTS OF OUR SOULS. MY ANCESTORS HAVE BESTOWED THE POWER UPON ME TO GIFT TO YOU. BUT YOU MUST BE WILLING TO ACCEPT THE GIFT."



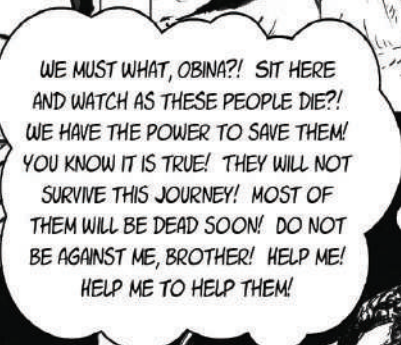
I OFFER TO YOU A CHANCE TO LIVE FREE RATHER THAN DIE LIKE CATTLE. THE POWER IS YOURS IF YOU ARE WILLING TO ACCEPT IT.



EQUI? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?



EQUI?! THIS IS NOT THE WAY. WE MUST...



WE MUST WHAT, OBINA?! SIT HERE AND WATCH AS THESE PEOPLE DIE?! WE HAVE THE POWER TO SAVE THEM! YOU KNOW IT IS TRUE! THEY WILL NOT SURVIVE THIS JOURNEY! MOST OF THEM WILL BE DEAD SOON! DO NOT BE AGAINST ME, BROTHER! HELP ME! HELP ME TO HELP THEM!



SO I SAY TO YOU, MY BROTHERS, DO YOU ACCEPT? DO YOU ACCEPT THIS GIFT?!



OBINA AND EQUI SPEAK, BUT THEIR MOUTHS DO NOT MOVE. AS EQUI SPEAKS TO THE OTHER CAPTIVES HIS MOUTH DOES NOT MOVE. EQUI SPEAKS TO THEIR SOULS. HIS PASSION AND HIS CONVICTION RESONATES IN THE SOULS OF THE OTHER CAPTIVES. THEY UNDERSTAND HIM, BUT SPIRITUALLY. THEY ARE TERRIFIED AND ASTONISHED AT THE FACT THAT THEY CAN HEAR AND UNDERSTAND HIM. THEY ALL BEGIN TO CRY OUT.



YES!

EACH OF THEM CRIES OUT IN THEIR OWN NATIVE TONGUE.

YES!

A REVOLUTION IS BREWING RIGHT BENEATH THE FEET OF THE CREW. BUT TO THEM IT SOUNDS LIKE NOTHING MORE THAN MORBID GROANS AND COMPLAINING BY THE CAPTIVES. SOUNDS THAT THE CREW HAS GROWN DESENSITIZED TO.

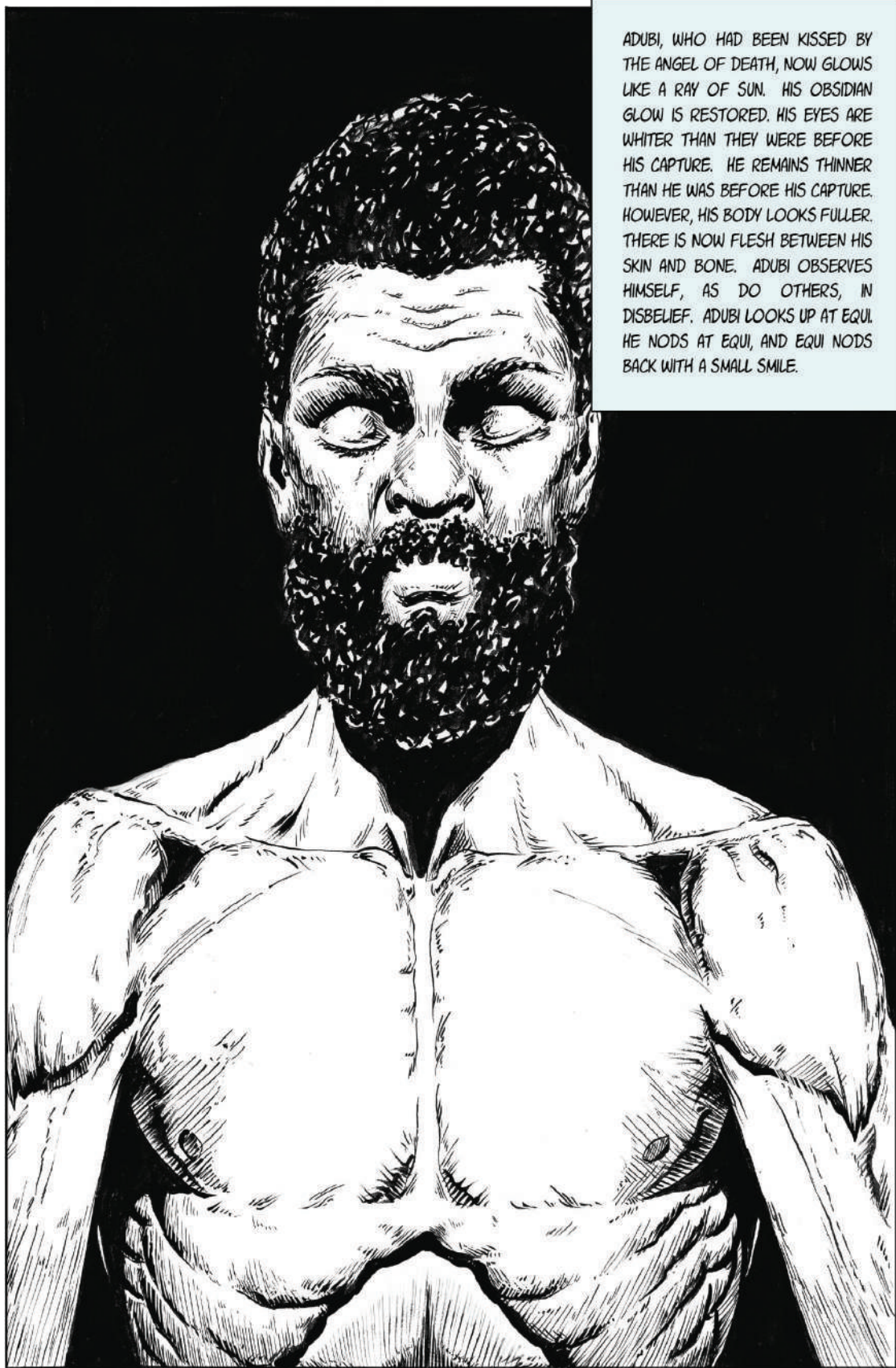
EQUI RAISES HIS WRIST TO HIS LIPS. WITH HIS TEETH HE PUNCTURES HIS SKIN. BLOOD STREAMS FROM HIS HAND. HE POSITIONS IT OVER THE HOLE BENEATH HIM. HIS BLOOD DRIPS ONTO THE FACE OF ADUBI. DROPS OF EQUI'S BLOOD LAND IN ADUBI'S EYE AND ONTO ADUBI'S TONGUE. ADUBI INGESTS EQUI'S BLOOD.



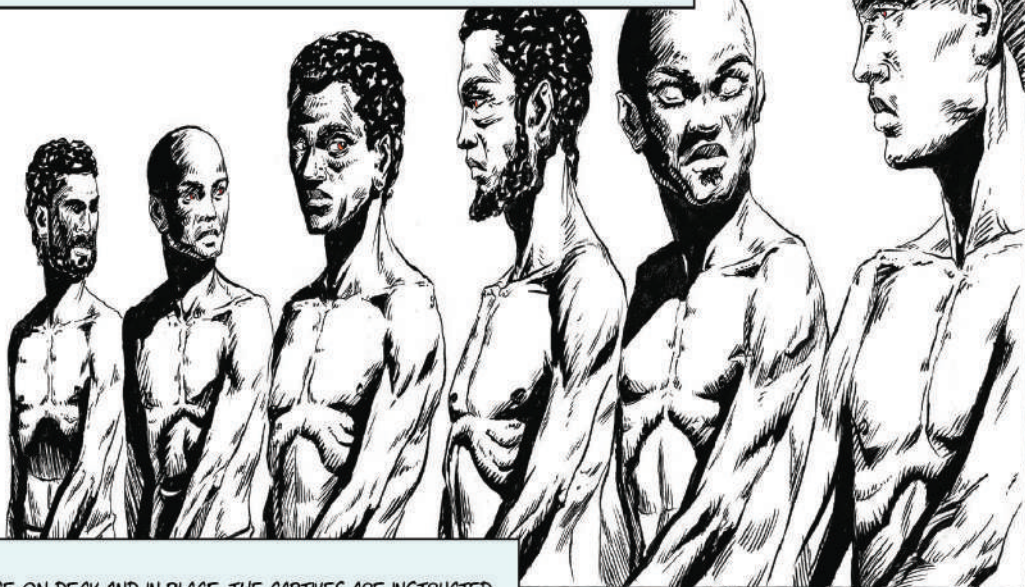
OBINA FOLLOWS EQUI'S LEAD ALONG WITH ARU, WOYE, ADU, AND TWENTY OTHERS LIKE OBINA AND EQUI WHO ARE BEING HELD CAPTIVE ON THE SAME SHIP. THE BLOOD FROM THE WRISTS OF THE MEN RUNS DOWN, BATHING THE OTHER CAPTIVES AND SATURATING THE FLOOR OF THE SHIP. THEN THEY ALL SLEEP. EARLY THE NEXT MORNING A CREW MEMBER ENTERS THE BOWELS OF THE SHIP TO RETRIEVE THE MALE CAPTIVES FOR EXERCISE. EQUI AWAKENS AND LOOKS DOWN THE HOLE AT ADUBI WHO HAS DRUNK OF HIS BLOOD THE NIGHT PRIOR.

THE AWAKENING

ADUBI, WHO HAD BEEN KISSED BY THE ANGEL OF DEATH, NOW GLOWS LIKE A RAY OF SUN. HIS OBSIDIAN GLOW IS RESTORED. HIS EYES ARE WHITER THAN THEY WERE BEFORE HIS CAPTURE. HE REMAINS THINNER THAN HE WAS BEFORE HIS CAPTURE. HOWEVER, HIS BODY LOOKS FULLER. THERE IS NOW FLESH BETWEEN HIS SKIN AND BONE. ADUBI OBSERVES HIMSELF, AS DO OTHERS, IN DISBELIEF. ADUBI LOOKS UP AT EQUI. HE NODS AT EQUI, AND EQUI NODS BACK WITH A SMALL SMILE.



EQUI, OBINA AND THE REST OF THE CAPTIVES ARE DIRECTED BY A CREW MEMBER TO GO TO THE SURFACE OF THE SHIP. EQUI GIVES OBINA A STARE AND A NOD. OBINA SHAKES HIS HEAD IN DISAGREEMENT. EQUI IGNORES OBINA'S DISAGREEMENT. HE NODS TO THE OTHER CAPTIVES WHO ALL NOD BACK.



ONCE ON DECK AND IN PLACE, THE CAPTIVES ARE INSTRUCTED TO BEGIN JUMPING BY A CREW MEMBER. EQUI HANGS HIS HEAD AND DOESN'T JUMP. THE CREW MEMBER YELLS AT HIM.



EQUI DOESN'T RESPOND. OBINA LOOKS WORRIED.

I SAID HEY! YOU BE...

ENOUGH!

MALE CAPTIVES BEGIN ATTACKING CREW MEMBERS AND THROWING THEM OVERBOARD. THE CAPTIVES ARE SURPRISED AT THEIR STRENGTH. THEY ARE STRONGER THAN WHEN THEY FIRST CAME UPON THE SHIP, BUT THEY ARE STRONGER. SOME OF THE CAPTIVES ARE STRUCK AND KILLED BY THE CREW MEMBERS AND THROWN OVERBOARD.



AT THAT MOMENT OF YELLING "ENOUGH" IN HIS NATIVE TONGUE EQUI STRIKES THE MAN. THE STRIKE IS ACROSS THE MAN'S FOREHEAD AND IS SO POWERFUL THAT IT CAUSES ONE OF HIS EYEBALLS TO EJECT SLIGHTLY FROM HIS HEAD. THE STRIKE LEAVES A CUT SO DEEP THAT IT TAKES A SECOND AND A HALF FOR IT TO BLEED. UPON EQUI STRIKING THE MAN, A COMPLETE INSURRECTION BEGINS ON THE SHIP.



THE CAPTAIN HEARS THE COMMOTION AND EMERGES TO SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?! JOHN!? JOHN?!

YES, SIR?!

WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?

A BUNCH OF ANGRY SAVAGES IS WHAT IT APPEARS TO BE TO ME, SIR.

THE CAPTAIN DRAWS A SWORD AND ADVANCES ON EQUI.

YOU, SAVAGE?! YOU?! SAVAGE?! STAND DOWN NOW! I SAID STAND DOWN N...!

EQUI TURNS TO THE CAPTAIN. HIS BLOOD-STREAKED MELANIN ENRICHED FACE GUSTENS IN THE LOW LIGHT. THE CAPTAIN'S EYES MEET EQUI'S EYES, WHICH ARE LIKE A DARK, GALACTIC ABYSS -- COLD, STEELY, AND AS BLACK AS OPAL. IN THE SAME INSTANT THEY ARE LIKE JASPER. "A TRULY TERRIFIC AND MAJESTIC EXPERIENCE TO LOOK INTO EYES SUCH AS THESE," THE CAPTAIN THINKS TO HIMSELF. FROM EQUI'S CORE EMERGES A LOW-TONED, PRIMORDIAL GROWL. THE CAPTAIN IS BOTH MARVELED AND STUNNED WITH FEAR. TO THE CAPTAIN IT IS LIKE HEARING THE VOICE OF DEATH. IT IS A SOUND THAT WILL HAUNT A MAN'S SOUL.



EQUI RAISES A SPIKE, PREPARED TO STRIKE THE CAPTAIN DOWN. BEFORE THE SPIKE IS ABLE TO TEAR THROUGH THE FLESH OF THE CAPTAIN, OBINA STEPS IN BETWEEN EQUI AND THE CAPTAIN AND ABSORBS THE BLOW HIMSELF.

