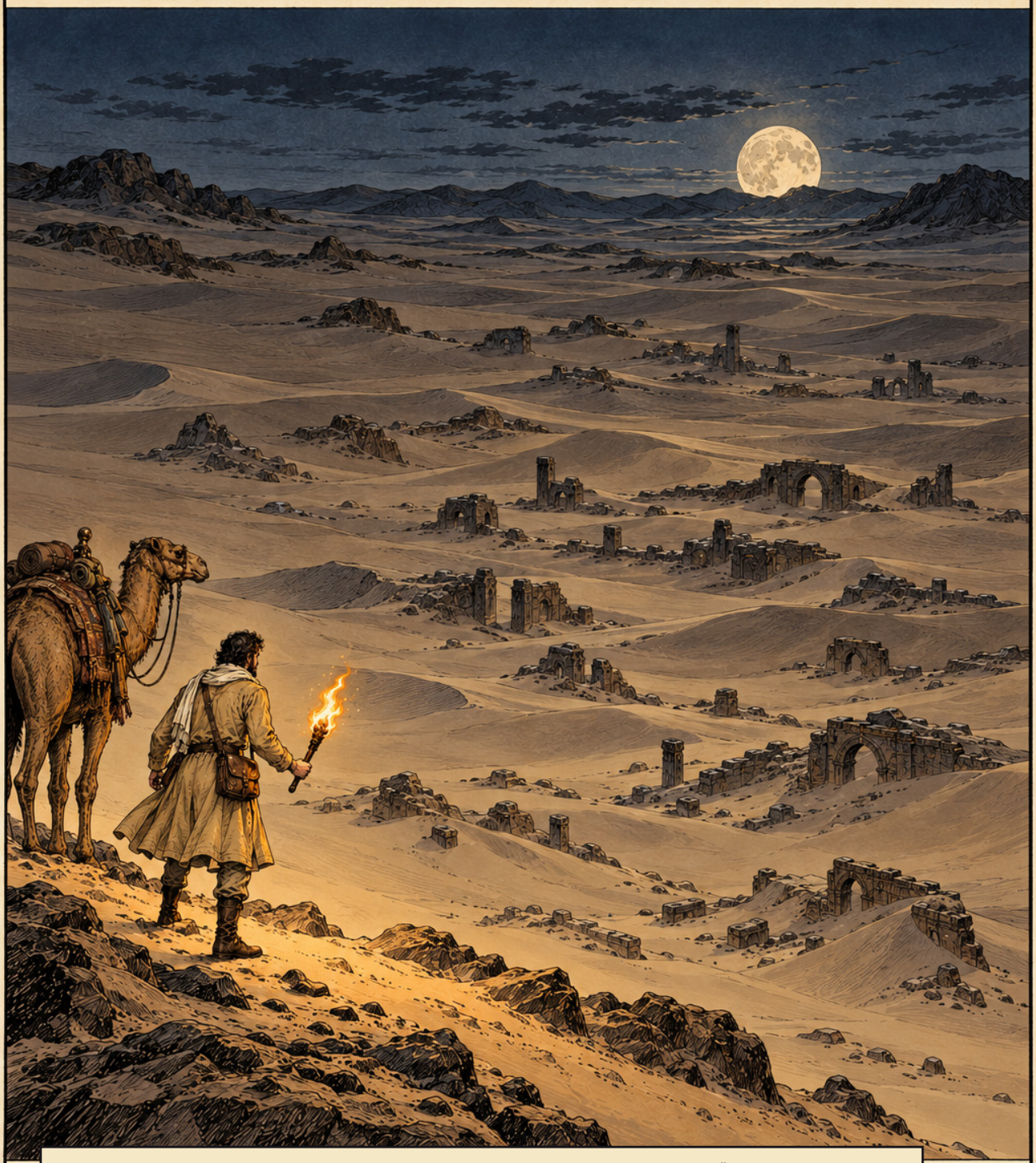
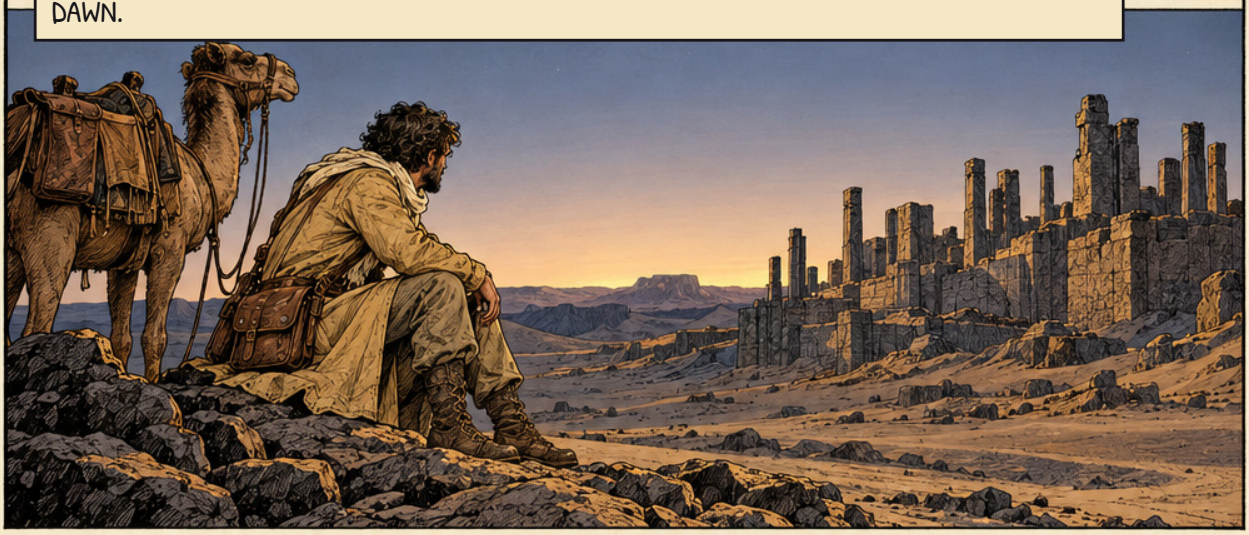
THE NAMELESS CITY

REMOTE IN THE DESERT OF ARABY LIES THE NAMELESS CITY, CRUMBLING AND INARTICULATE...



IT WAS OF THIS PLACE THAT ABDUL ALHAZRED THE MAD POET DREAMED... "THAT IS NOT DEAD WHICH CAN ETERNAL LIE, AND WITH STRANGE AEONS EVEN DEATH MAY DIE."

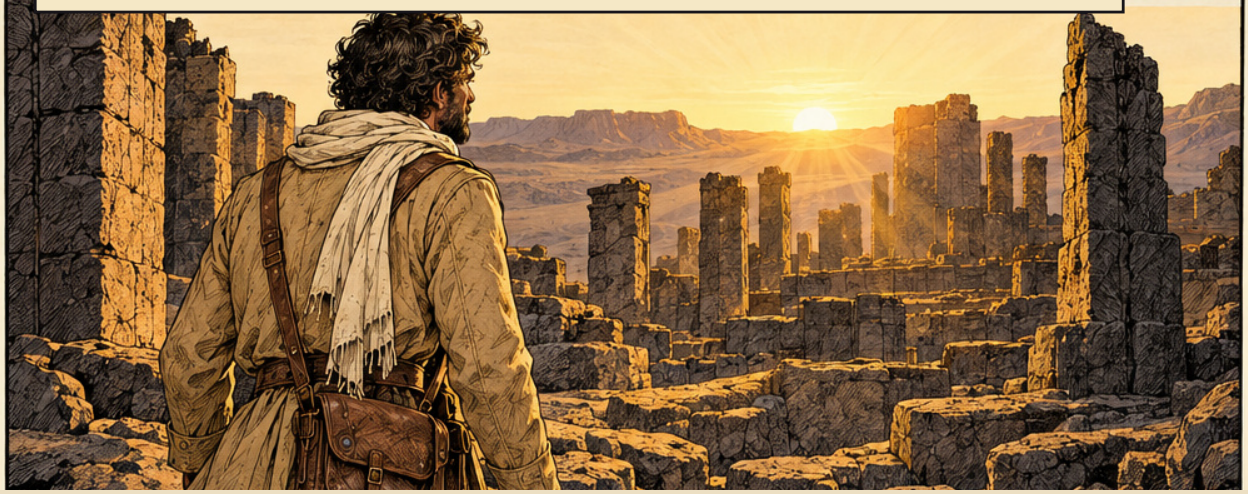
...I FORGOT MY TRIUMPH AT FINDING IT, AND STOPPED STILL WITH MY CAMEL TO WAIT FOR THE DAWN.



I HEARD A MOANING AND SAW A STORM OF SAND STIRRING AMONG THE ANTIQUE STONES THOUGH THE SKY WAS CLEAR...



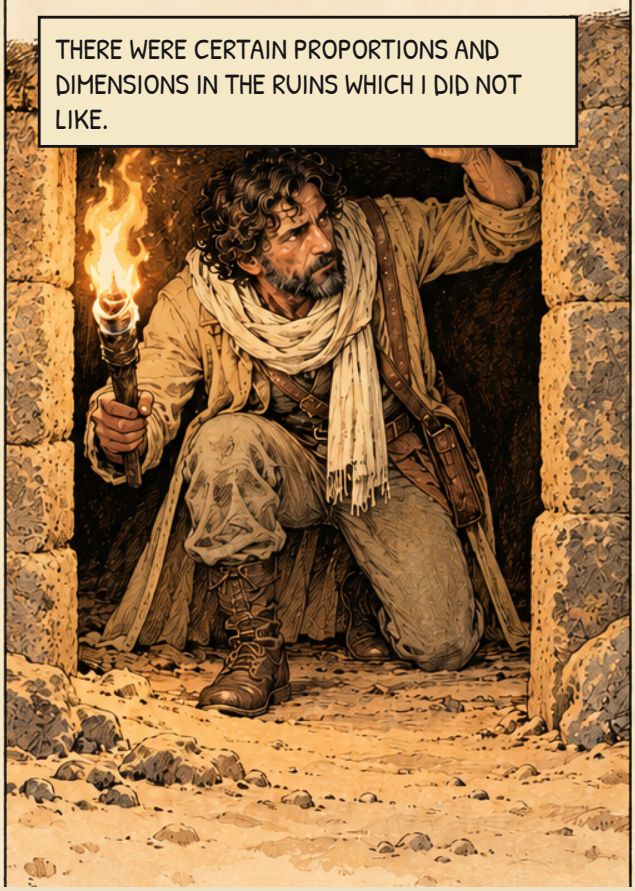
...I FANCIED THAT FROM SOME REMOTE DEPTH THERE CAME A CRASH OF MUSICAL METAL TO HAIL THE FIERY DISC...



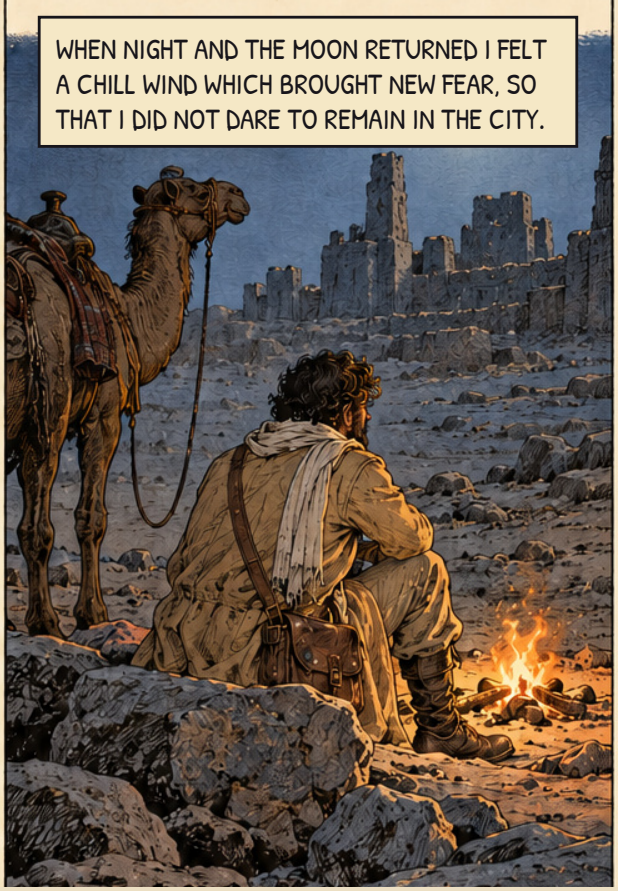
...I WANDERED, FINDING NEVER A CARVING OR INSCRIPTION TO TELL OF THOSE MEN, IF MEN THEY WERE...

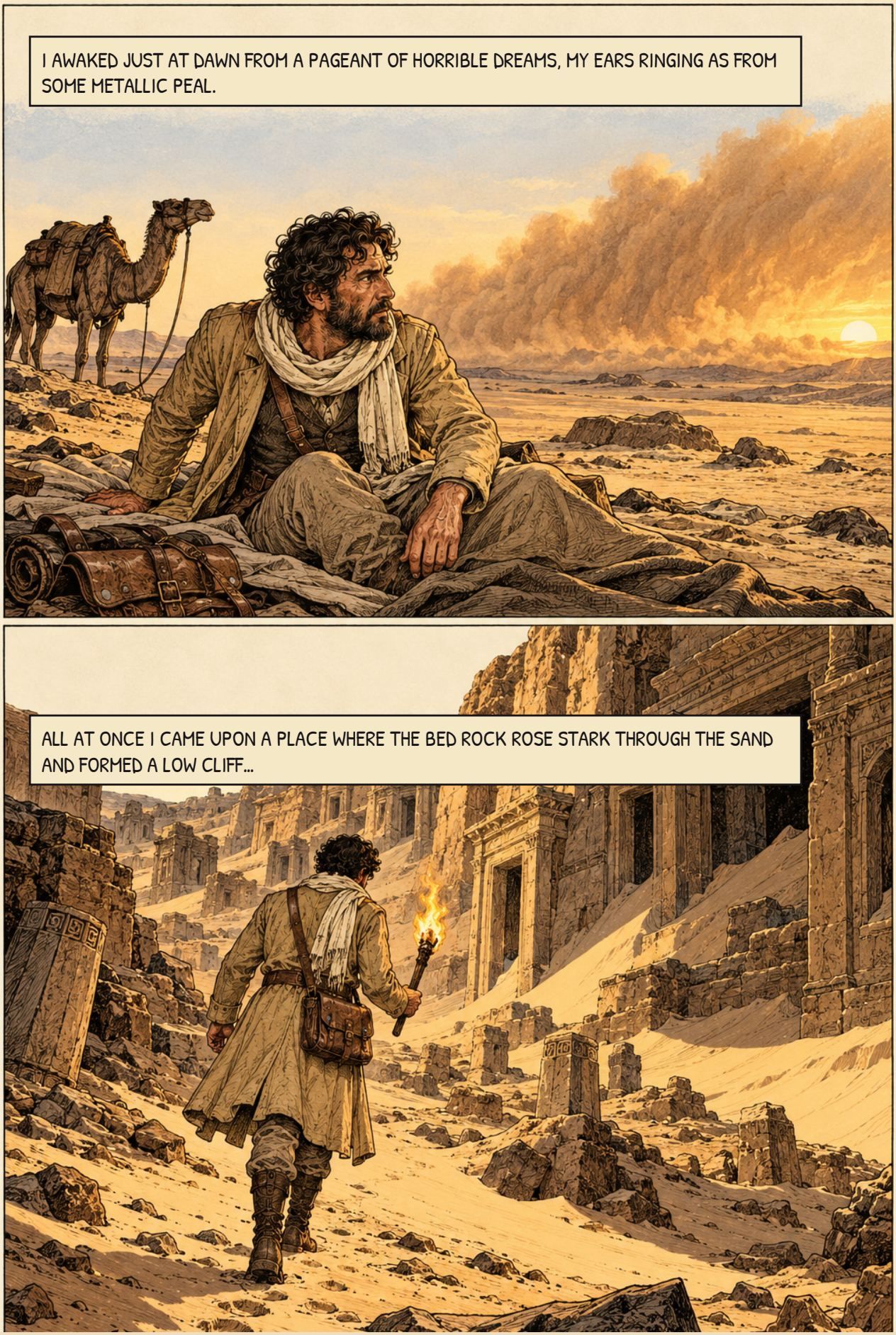


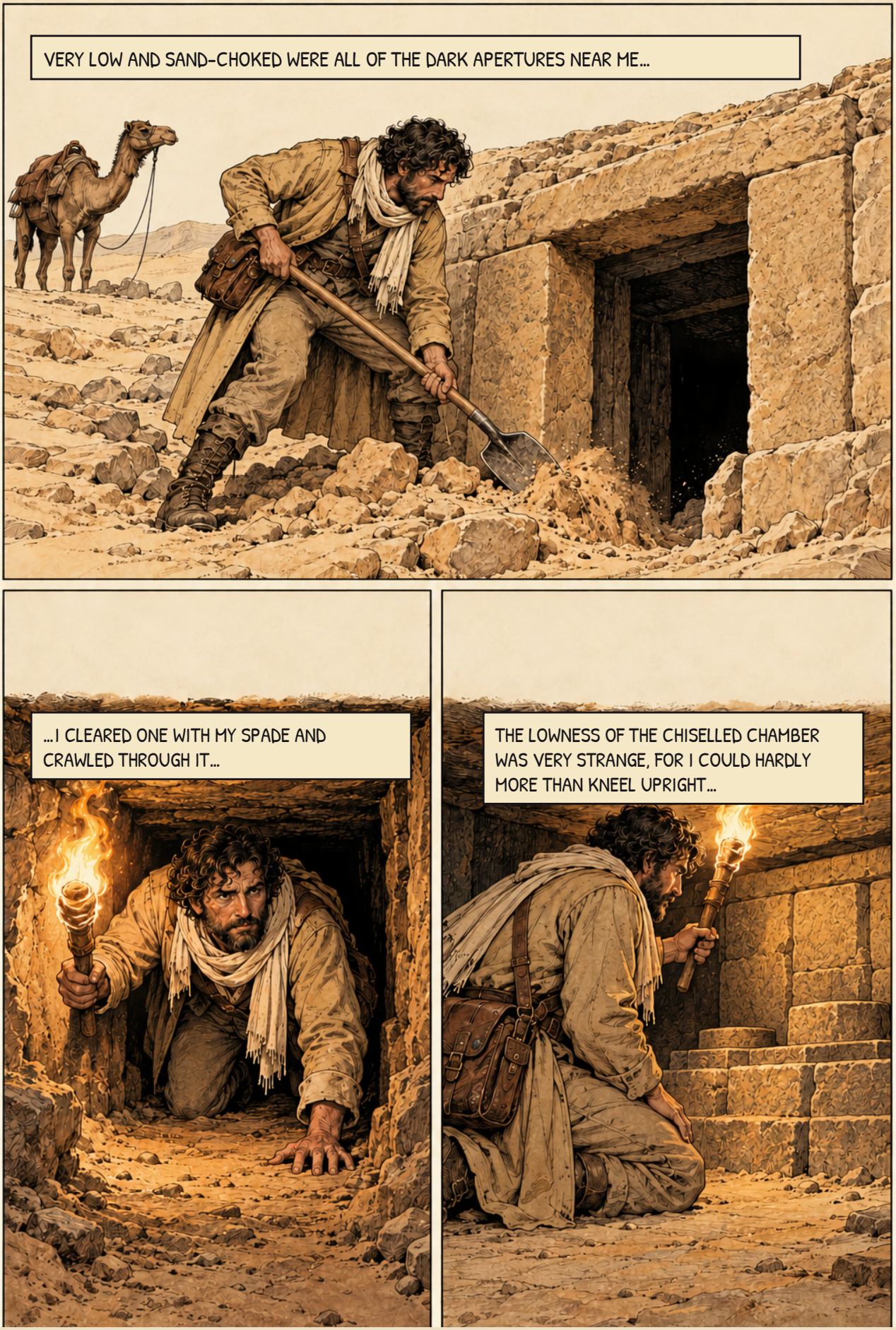
THERE WERE CERTAIN PROPORTIONS AND DIMENSIONS IN THE RUINS WHICH I DID NOT LIKE.

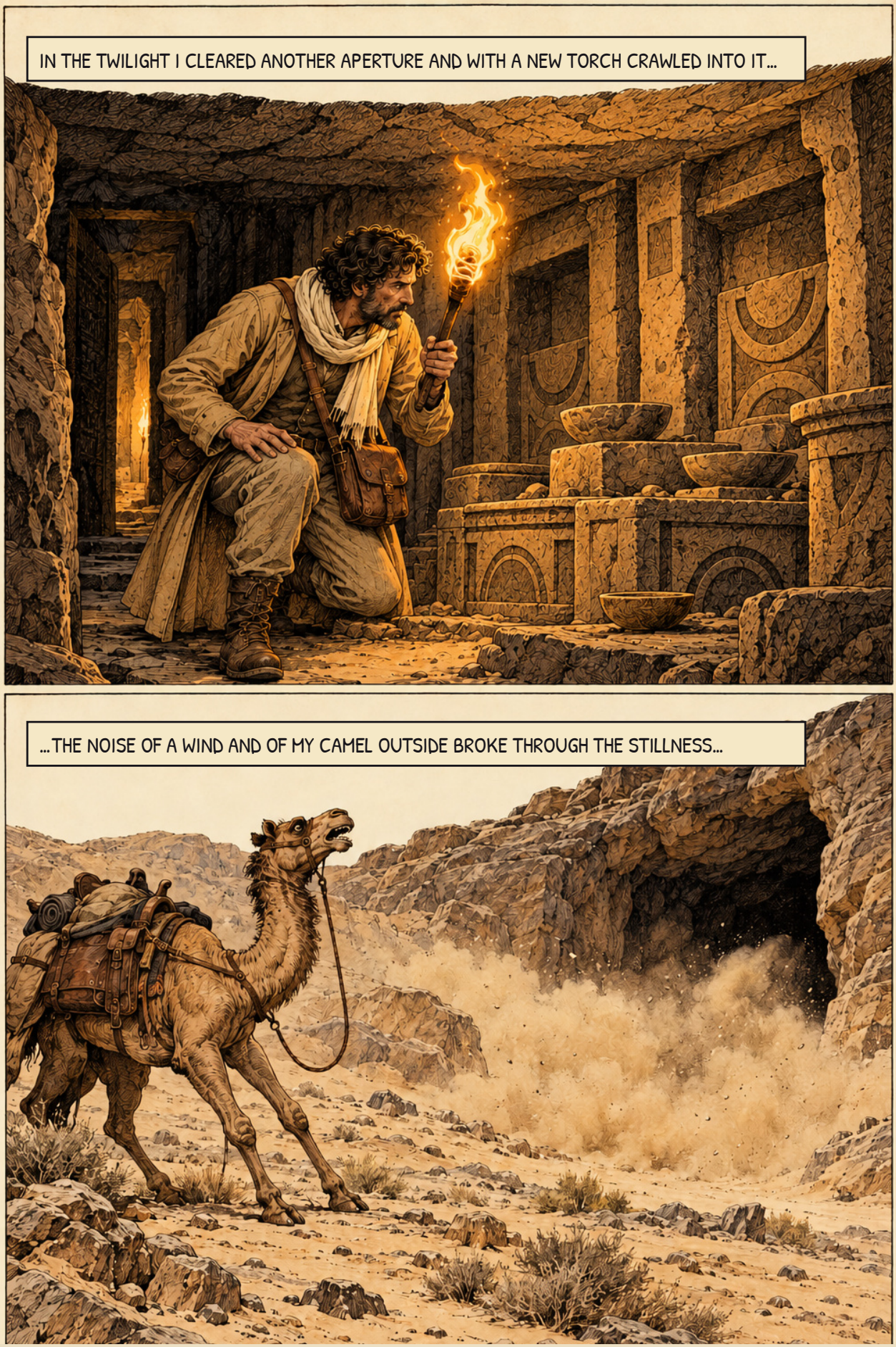


WHEN NIGHT AND THE MOON RETURNED I FELT A CHILL WIND WHICH BROUGHT NEW FEAR, SO THAT I DID NOT DARE TO REMAIN IN THE CITY.




I AWAKED JUST AT DAWN FROM A PAGEANT OF HORRIBLE DREAMS, MY EARS RINGING AS FROM SOME METALLIC PEAL.
ALL AT ONCE I CAME UPON A PLACE WHERE THE BED ROCK ROSE STARK THROUGH THE SAND AND FORMED A LOW CLIFF...


VERY LOW AND SAND-CHOKED WERE ALL OF THE DARK APERTURES NEAR ME...
...I CLEARED ONE WITH MY SPADE AND CRAWLED THROUGH IT...
THE LOWNESS OF THE CHISELLED CHAMBER WAS VERY STRANGE, FOR I COULD HARDLY MORE THAN KNEEL UPRIGHT...


IN THE TWILIGHT I CLEARED ANOTHER APERTURE AND WITH A NEW TORCH CRAWLED INTO IT...
...THE NOISE OF A WIND AND OF MY CAMEL OUTSIDE BROKE THROUGH THE STILLNESS...

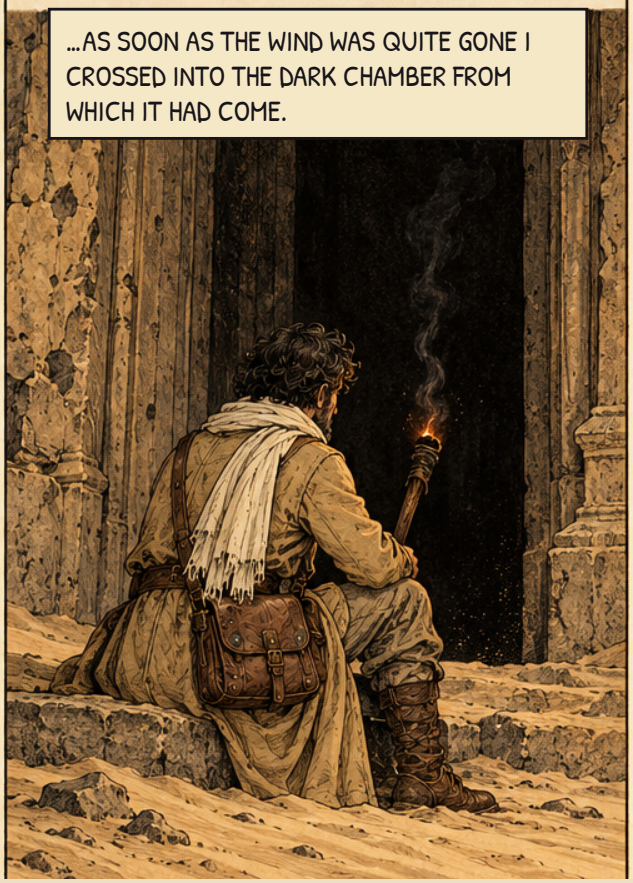
...I CHANCED TO GLANCE UP AND SAW THAT THERE WAS NO WIND ATOP THE CLIFF.



IT POURED MADLY OUT OF THE DARK DOOR, SIGHING UNCANNILY AS IT RUFFLED THE SAND...



...AS SOON AS THE WIND WAS QUITE GONE I CROSSED INTO THE DARK CHAMBER FROM WHICH IT HAD COME.



HERE I COULD STAND QUITE UPRIGHT, BUT SAW THAT THE STONES AND ALTARS WERE AS LOW AS THOSE IN THE OTHER TEMPLES.



...THE OPENING TO THOSE REMOTER ABYSSES WHENCE THE SUDDEN WIND HAD BLOWN...

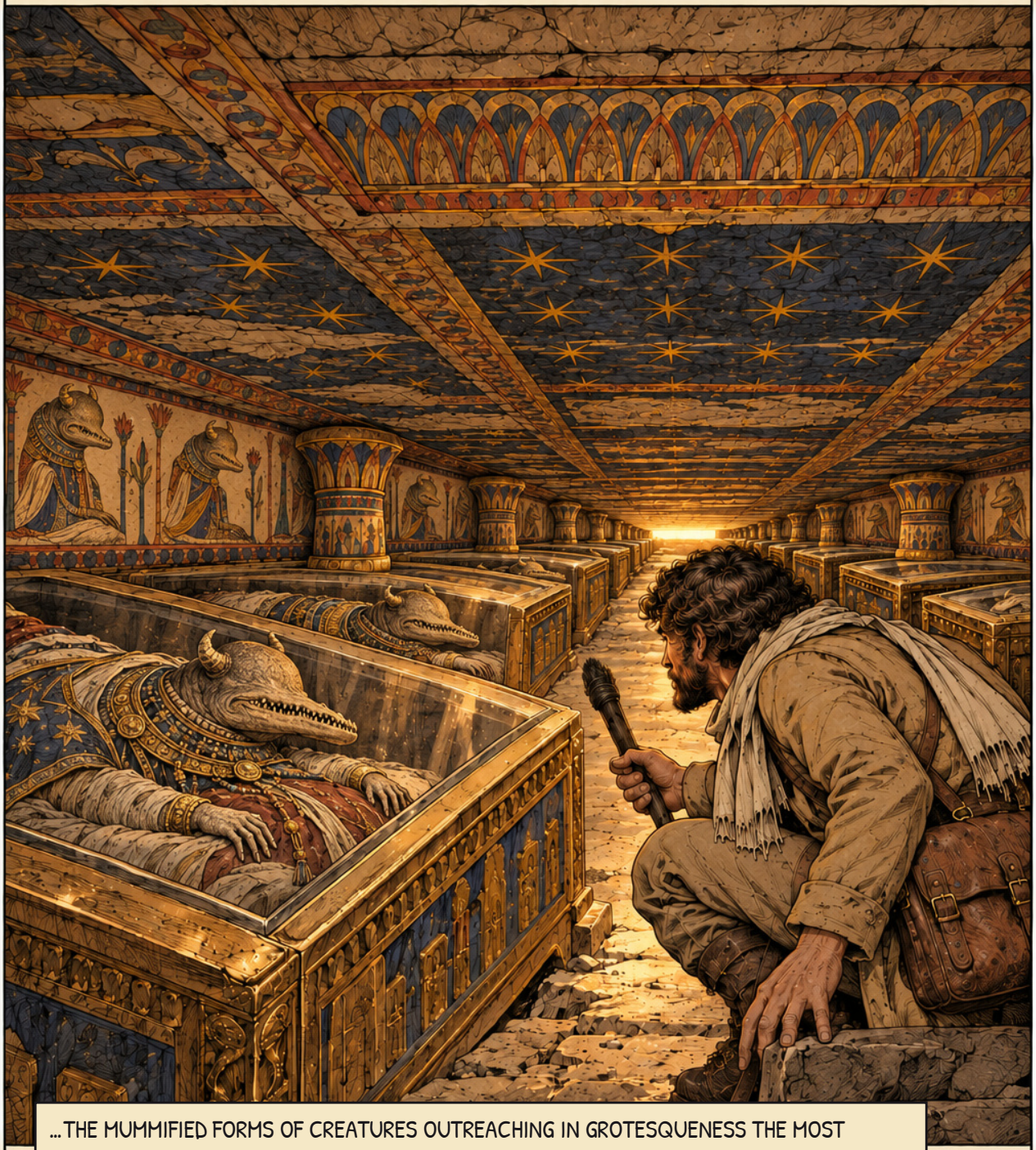



...COMMENCING TO CLIMB CAUTIOUSLY DOWN THE STEEP PASSAGE, FEET FIRST, AS THOUGH ON A LADDER.
AT THE TIME I HARDLY KNEW WHETHER TO CALL THEM STEPS OR MERE FOOT-HOLDS IN A PRECIPITOUS DESCENT.


THERE WERE CHANGES OF DIRECTION AND OF STEEPNESS...
THE PLACE WAS NOT HIGH ENOUGH FOR KNEELING.
...I WAS STILL SCRAMBLING DOWN INTERMINABLY WHEN MY FAILING TORCH DIED OUT.

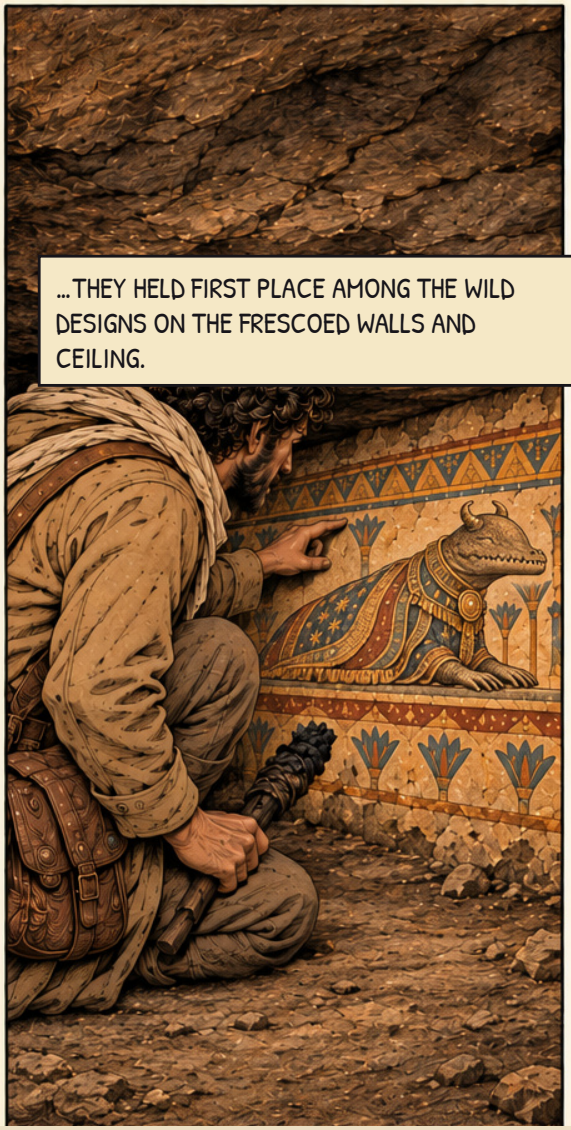

AS IN THAT PALAEOZOIC AND ABYSMAL PLACE I FELT OF SUCH THINGS AS POLISHED WOOD AND GLASS I SHUDDERED...
...THERE CAME A GRADUAL GLOW AHEAD...

THIS HALL WAS NO RELIC OF CRUDITY LIKE THE TEMPLES IN THE CITY ABOVE, BUT A MONUMENT OF THE MOST MAGNIFICENT AND EXOTIC ART.



...THE MUMMIFIED FORMS OF CREATURES OUTREACHING IN GROTESQUENESS THE MOST CHAOTIC DREAMS OF MAN.


THEY WERE OF THE REPTILE KIND, WITH BODY LINES SUGGESTING SOMETIMES THE CROCODILE, SOMETIMES THE SEAL...


...THEY HELD FIRST PLACE AMONG THE WILD DESIGNS ON THE FRESCOED WALLS AND CEILING.


THESE CREATURES, I SAID TO MYSELF, WERE TO THE MEN OF THE NAMELESS CITY WHAT THE SHE-WOLF WAS TO ROME...

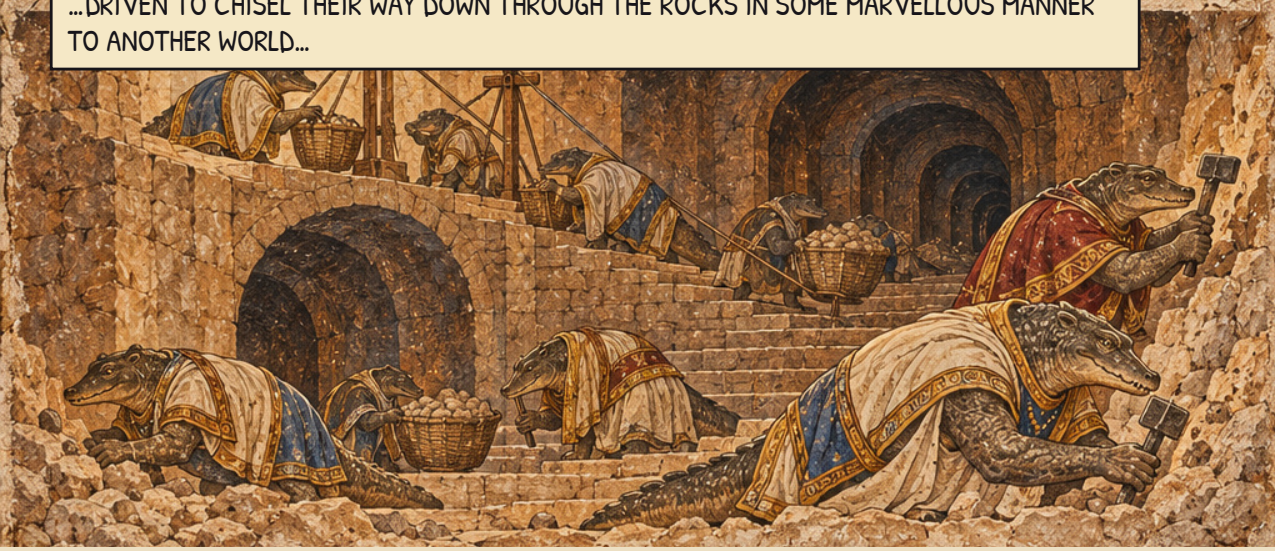
...THE TALE OF A MIGHTY SEA-COAST METROPOLIS THAT RULED THE WORLD BEFORE AFRICA ROSE OUT OF THE WAVES...



...AS THE SEA SHRANK AWAY, AND THE DESERT CREPT INTO THE FERTILE VALLEY THAT HELD IT.



...DRIVEN TO CHISEL THEIR WAY DOWN THROUGH THE ROCKS IN SOME MARVELLOUS MANNER TO ANOTHER WORLD...



...THE LEAVE-TAKING OF THE RACE THAT HAD DWELT IN THE NAMELESS CITY AND THE VALLEY AROUND FOR TEN MILLION YEARS...

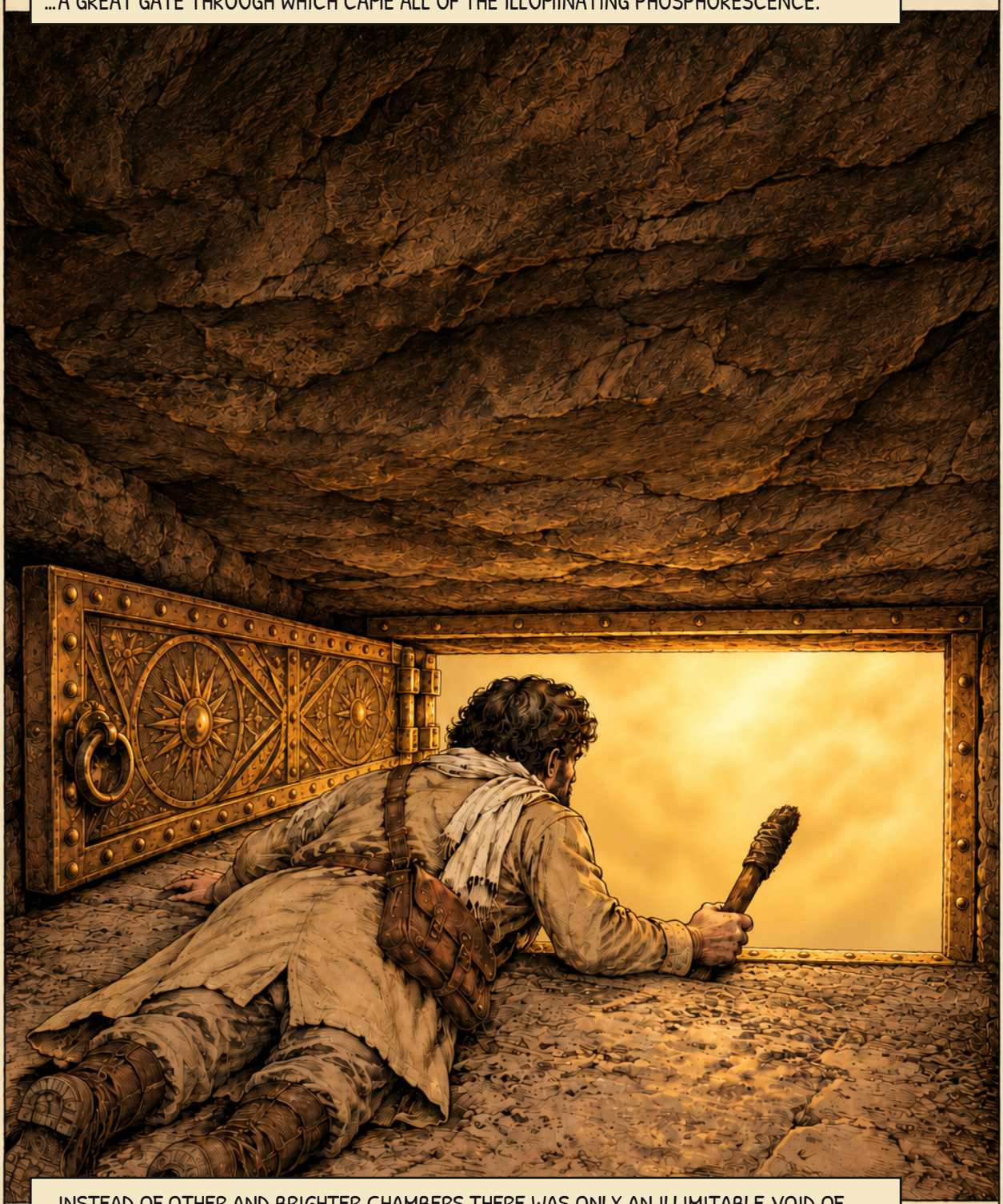


...A HIDDEN WORLD OF ETERNAL DAY FILLED WITH GLORIOUS CITIES AND ETHEREAL HILLS AND VALLEYS.




...A SLOW DECADENCE OF THE ANCIENT STOCK, COUPLED WITH A GROWING FEROCITY TOWARD THE OUTSIDE WORLD...
...A PRIMITIVE-LOOKING MAN... TORN TO PIECES BY MEMBERS OF THE ELDER RACE.
...GLAD THAT BEYOND THIS PLACE THE GREY WALLS AND CEILING WERE BARE.

...A GREAT GATE THROUGH WHICH CAME ALL OF THE ILLUMINATING PHOSPHORESCENCE.



...INSTEAD OF OTHER AND BRIGHTER CHAMBERS THERE WAS ONLY AN ILLIMITABLE VOID OF UNIFORM RADIANCE...

I TOUCHED THE OPEN BRASS DOOR, AND COULD NOT MOVE IT. THEN I SANK PRONE TO THE STONE FLOOR...

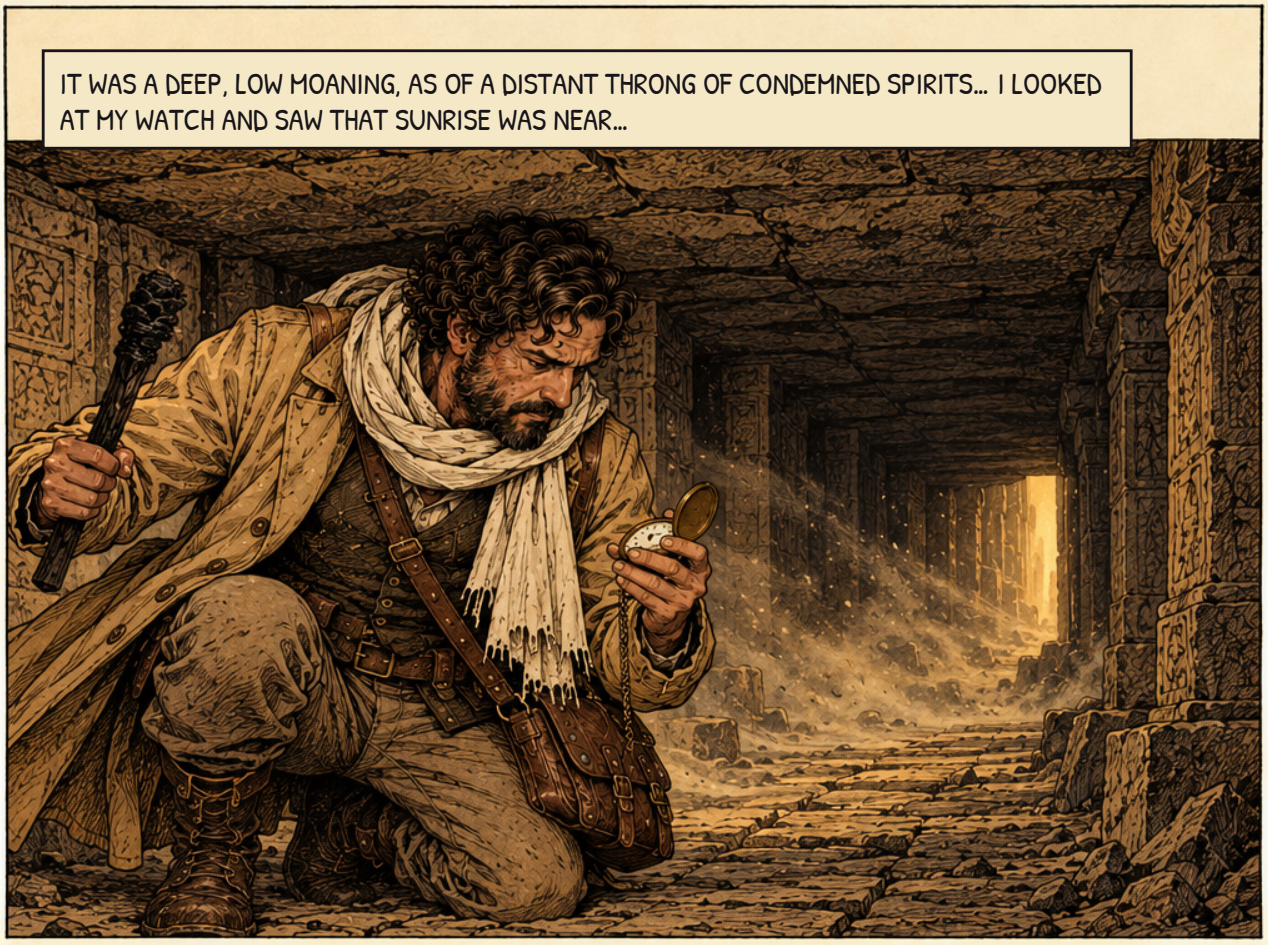


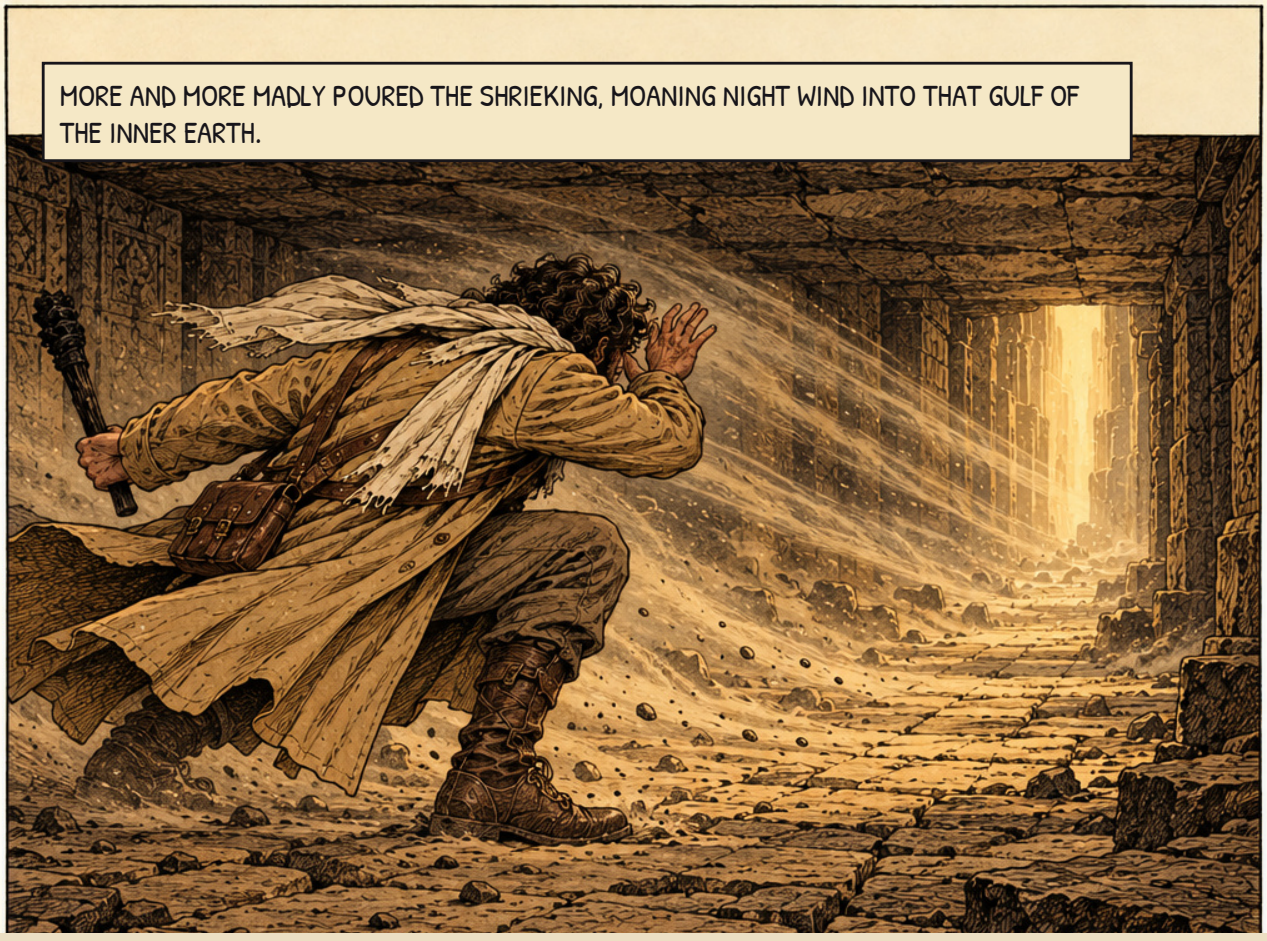
...WHY THE LEVEL PASSAGE IN THAT AWESOME DESCENT SHOULD BE AS LOW AS THE TEMPLES...



AS I THOUGHT OF THE CRAWLING CREATURES, WHOSE HIDEOUS MUMMIFIED FORMS WERE SO CLOSE TO ME, I FELT A NEW THROB OF FEAR.

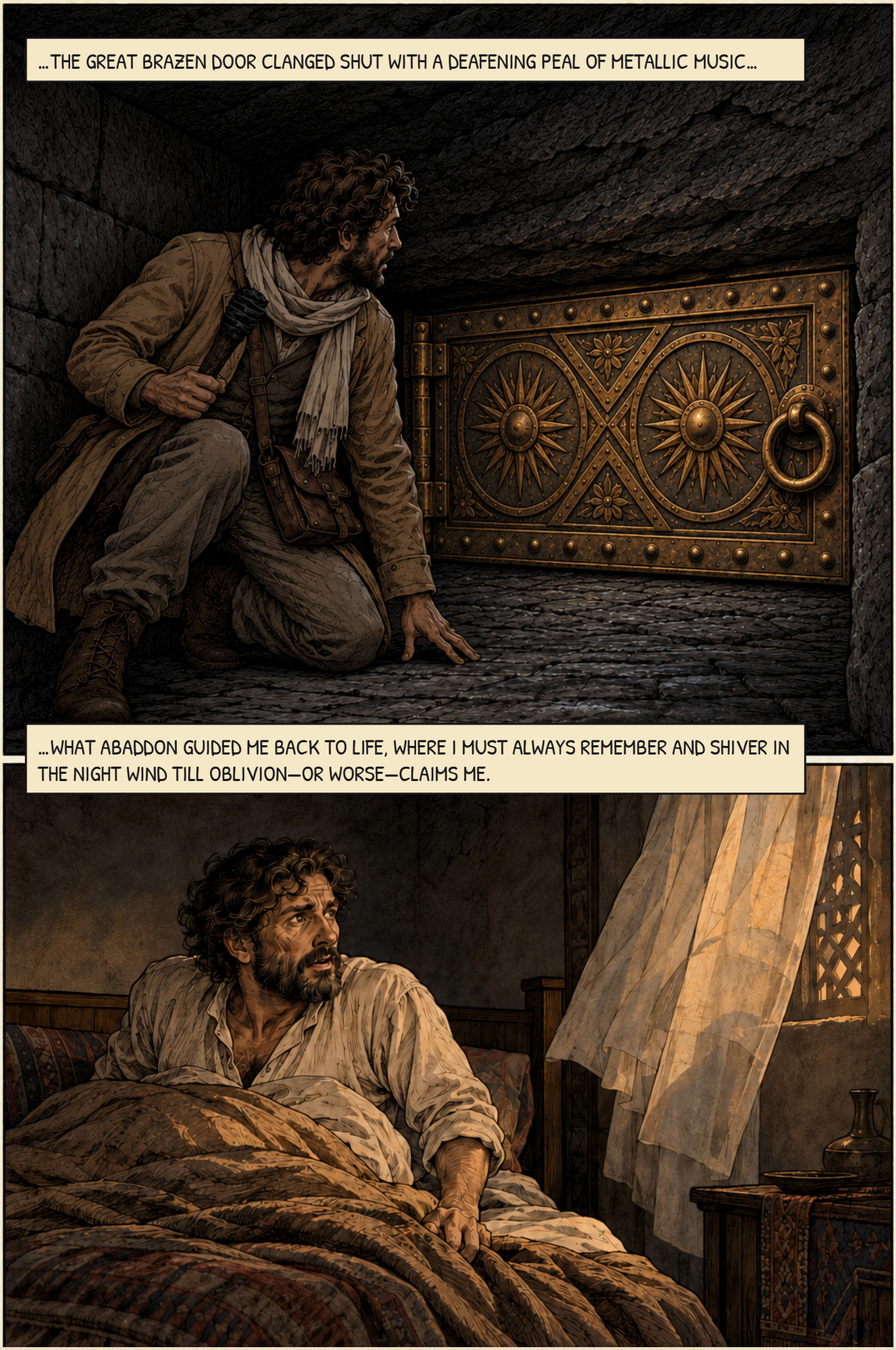



IT WAS A DEEP, LOW MOANING, AS OF A DISTANT THRONG OF CONDEMNED SPIRITS... I LOOKED AT MY WATCH AND SAW THAT SUNRISE WAS NEAR...


MORE AND MORE MADLY POURED THE SHRIEKING, MOANING NIGHT WIND INTO THAT GULF OF THE INNER EARTH.


...IN THE FIENDISH CLAWING OF THE SWIRLING CURRENTS THERE SEEMED TO ABIDE A VINDICTIVE RAGE...
...I FELL TO BABBLING OVER AND OVER THAT UNEXPLAINABLE COUPLET... "THAT IS NOT DEAD WHICH CAN ETERNAL LIE, AND WITH STRANGE AEONS EVEN DEATH MAY DIE."


...I HEARD THE GHASTLY CURSING AND SNARLING OF STRANGE-TONGUED FIENDS.
...A NIGHTMARE HORDE OF RUSHING DEVILS... THE CRAWLING REPTILES OF THE NAMELESS CITY.


...THE GREAT BRAZEN DOOR CLANGED SHUT WITH A DEAFENING PEAL OF METALLIC MUSIC...
...WHAT ABADDON GUIDED ME BACK TO LIFE, WHERE I MUST ALWAYS REMEMBER AND SHIVER IN THE NIGHT WIND TILL OBLIVION—OR WORSE—CLAIMS ME.