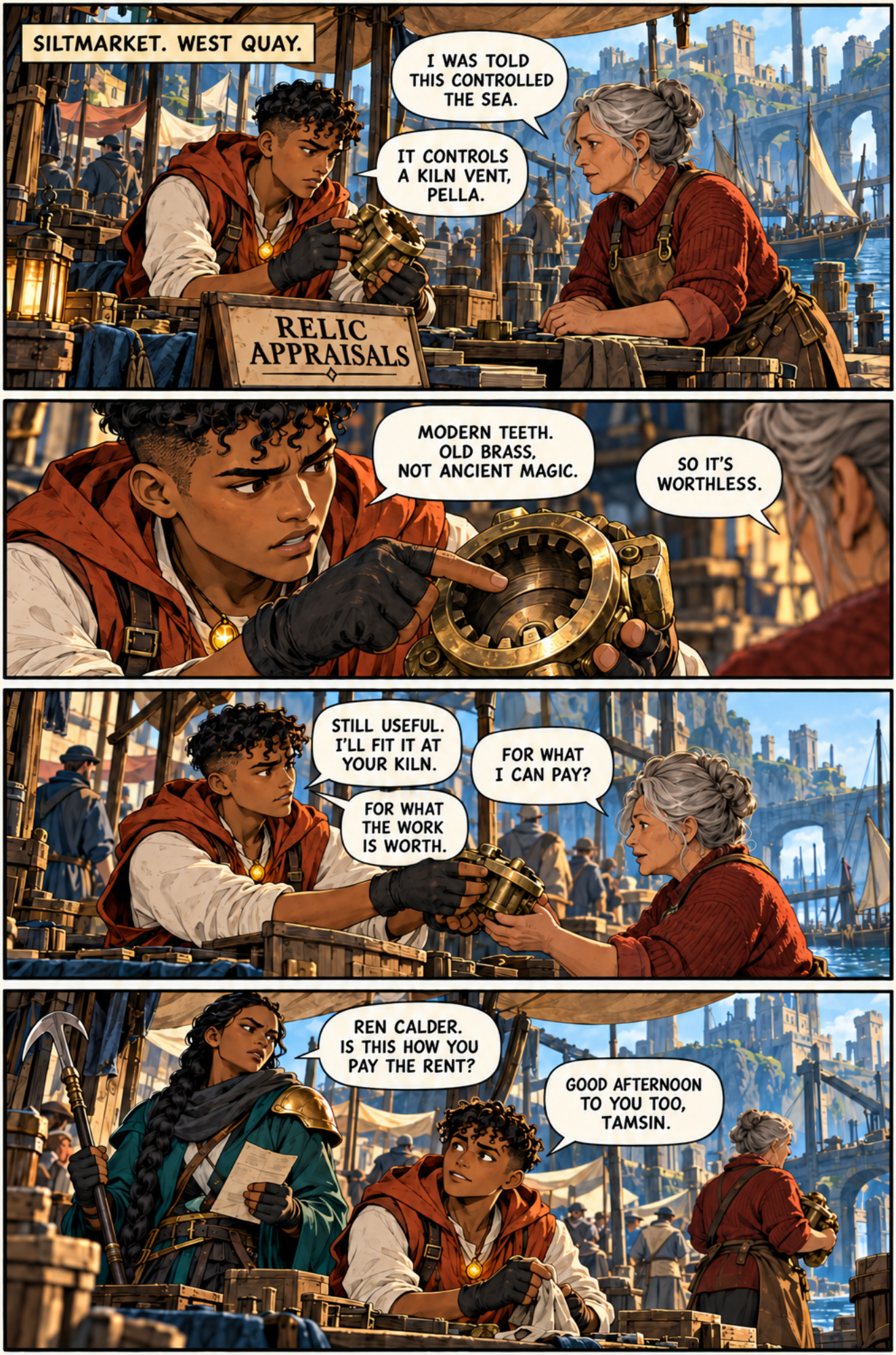

M1SCH1EF
COMICS
THE
HOLLOW HOARD
01
THE KEY THAT BIT BACK


SILTMARKET. WEST QUAY.
I WAS TOLD THIS CONTROLLED THE SEA.
IT CONTROLS A KILN VENT, PELLA.
RELIC APPRAISALS
MODERN TEETH. OLD BRASS, NOT ANCIENT MAGIC.
SO IT'S WORTHLESS.
STILL USEFUL. I'LL FIT IT AT YOUR KILN.
FOR WHAT I CAN PAY?
FOR WHAT THE WORK IS WORTH.
REN CALDER. IS THIS HOW YOU PAY THE RENT?
GOOD AFTERNOON TO YOU TOO, TAMSIN.


THEY REFUSED MY PASS AGAIN.
DOES THE HARBOR GUILD MISS ITS BEST RANGER?
DENIED
FORMER RANGER. I GAVE THE BADGE BACK.
THEY'VE GOT A LONG MEMORY.
THREE WEEKS' RENT. THE LOFTKEEPER WANTS IT BY DAWN.
MY LAST CLIENT WANTS A SECOND OPINION INSTEAD OF PAYING.
RENT DUE BY DAWN
ONE RECOVERY. ENOUGH TO CLEAR IT.
WHAT'S THE CATCH?


ONE BRASS KEY. WEST BREAKWATER VAULT. RETURN INTACT.
ANONYMOUS BUYER. GENEROUS FEE.
THE TIDE GIVES US MINUTES. THAT'S THE FEE.
AND YOU FOLLOW MY LEAD.
I IDENTIFY IT. YOU GET US OUT.
LAST HEATSTONE. HALF A CHARGE.
KEEP SOME FOR TONIGHT.
A KEY, RENT, AND A BED.
KEY FIRST. BED LATER.


LOW TIDE. FIVE MINUTES LEFT.
ONE BRASS KEY. ONE MONTH'S RENT.
I LIKE THE SOUND OF RENT.
DON'T TOUCH THE BLACK IRON.
SINCE WHEN DO KEYS NEED CHAINS?
TIK
TAMSIN... KEYS DON'T SHIVER.


IT'S FEEDING THAT THING.
IT'S BARELY BREATHING.
EASY. I'VE GOT YOU.
KLIK
KRRROM
DOWN!
THAT WASN'T A KEYHOLE.
I NOTICED.


THE DOOR'S CLOSING!
YOU DON'T WANT GOLD.
YOU WANT HEAT.
THAT'S OUR LAST HEATSTONE.
IT WON'T RECHARGE.
I'D RATHER LOSE THE STONE.


TAKE IT.
FSSSH
KRAK
NOW!


KEEP MOVING.
YOUR SPEAR!
GRRNNK
WHOOOSH
NO KEY. NO HEATSTONE. NO SPEAR.
EVERYONE BREATHING, THOUGH.
WHAT'S IT CALLED?
LATCH.
OF COURSE IT IS.


YOUR WRIST?
BRUISED. THE SPEAR TOOK THE WORST.
I'LL BUY YOU ANOTHER.
THAT ONE TOOK SIX MONTHS.
YOU TOUCHED THE CLAMP AFTER I WARNED YOU.
I SAW IT SUFFERING. I STOPPED LOOKING AT THE ROOM.
I PUT YOU IN DANGER. I'M SORRY.
NEXT TIME, WE CHOOSE TOGETHER.


YOUR KEY WAS ALIVE. SOMEONE WIRED IT INTO A WARDEN.
THE ORDER IS FOR AN INTACT DELIVERY.
WE NEARLY DIED RECOVERING IT.
NO DELIVERY, NO PAYMENT.
LEAVE IT HERE. YOU'LL HAVE YOUR RENT.
AND WHAT HAPPENS TO IT?
THE BUYER'S BUSINESS.
THEN CANCEL THE JOB.
BOTH OUR NAMES.
CANCELLED


THE BATHHOUSE VENT. IT'S WARM.
UNTIL THE NIGHT VALVE SHUTS.


PELLA'S KILN, THEN?
I STILL OWE HER A VALVE FITTING.
SHE'LL WANT MORE THAN A SAD STORY.


YOU DON'T HAVE TO STAY.
YOU OWE ME A SPEAR. I'M KEEPING YOU ALIVE TO PAY FOR IT.


AT LEAST WE CAN SELL THE IRON.
WAIT. LET ME SEE THAT MARK.
CANCELLED


THE BUYER'S MARK. ON ITS CHAIN.
HE KNEW IT WAS ALIVE.
NUMBER NINE.
HOW MANY OTHERS ARE THERE?
009
FIRST, WE KEEP THIS ONE ALIVE.
CURATOR VEY.
BRING BACK THE SPECIMEN. ALIVE.
NEXT: THE BORROWED FLAME.