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# DRAGON

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*DRAGON* is a work of fiction.  
Broad dramatic license has been  
taken with the historical figures  
and events depicted herein.

# POENARI CASTLE, WALLACHIA

ANNO DOMINI 1450  
HIJRI 853

A report to his Imperial Majesty, Sovereign of the Sublime House of Osman, Commander of the Faithful, successor to the Prophet of the Lord of the Universe, Custodian of the Holy Cities, Sultan Mehmed II, regarding the tribute mission to Wallachia.

Written by the hand of  
Janissary Commander  
Adil Suriye.

I am no man of words, your Majesty. I will try to write what I saw in Wallachia.

But I fear you won't believe it...



MAY GOD DAMN THIS PLACE.

I THINK HE ALREADY HAS, SIR. HOW DO THE BARBARIANS LIVE IN THIS COLD?

LIKE ANIMALS. THEY LIVE LIKE ANIMALS IN THIS GODFORSAKEN WILDERNESS.



COMMANDER. I DON'T BLAME YOU FOR BEING ANNOYED AT PLAYING OUR HONOR GUARD IN THIS BACK-WATER.

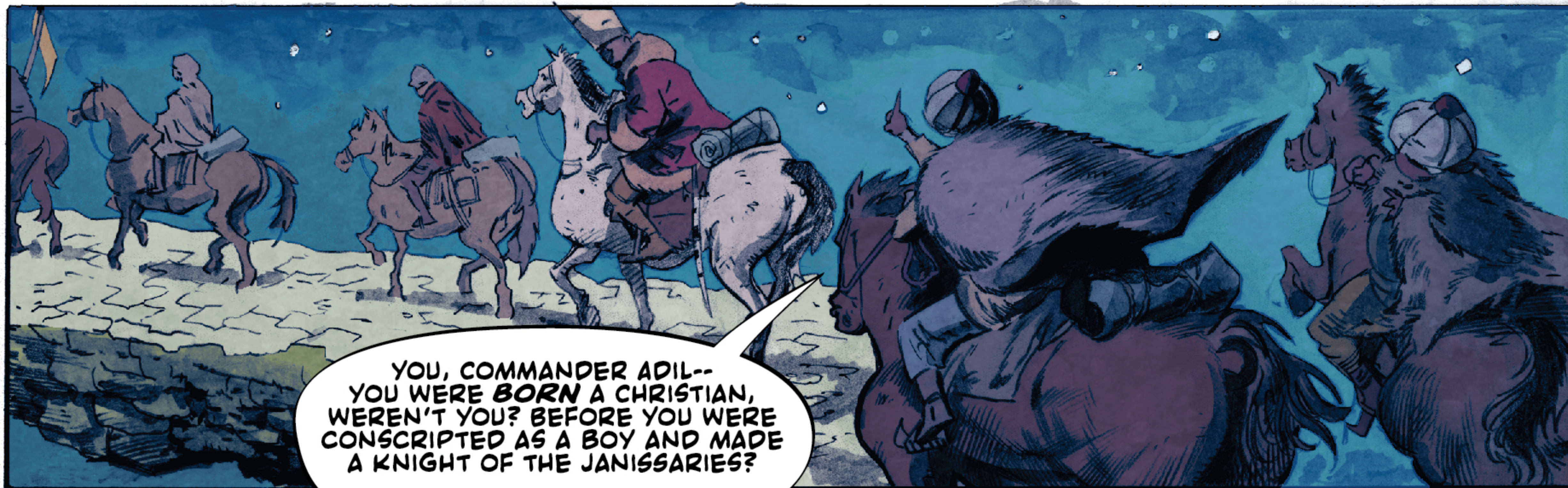
BUT YOU CAN'T BLAME THE LAND ITSELF. IT'S QUITE BEAUTIFUL HERE, IN A SAVAGE WAY.



IF YOU SAY SO, AMBASSADOR.

IN ANY CASE, YOU AND YOUR MEN MUST SHOW OUR HOST THE UTMOST RESPECT.

HE'S A CHRISTIAN AND A BARBARIAN, BUT ALSO A POWERFUL PRINCE, AND SWORN TO OUR SULTAN.



YOU, COMMANDER ADIL-- YOU WERE BORN A CHRISTIAN, WEREN'T YOU? BEFORE YOU WERE CONSCRIPTED AS A BOY AND MADE A KNIGHT OF THE JANISSARIES?



AH.

YOU DON'T WISH TO SPEAK OF IT.

DOUBTLESS SUCH REMINDERS OF YOUR ORIGIN ARE EMBARRASSING. FORGIVE ME.



YET YOU'VE COME SO FAR. THE JANISSARIES ARE THE FINEST SOLDIERS IN THE EMPIRE, AND YOU THEIR GREATEST COMMANDER.

IT IS SAID YOU HAVE THE EAR OF THE SULTAN HIMSELF. HOW MANY BATTLES HAVE YOU WON FOR HIM?



OF COURSE, THERE ARE THOSE WHO SAY THE JANISSARIES ARE UPJUMPED EX-CHRISTIANS WHO KNOW NO LOYALTY TO THE TRUE FAITH.

BUT WHO LISTENS TO SUCH WAGGING TONGUES?



LET'S GO.



IF WE RIDE HARD WE CAN REACH THE CASTLE COURTYARD BEFORE FULL DARK.



SHOULDN'T THERE BE SOMEONE HERE TO MEET US, SIR?

YES. THERE SHOULD BE.

STAY SHARP, MEN!



HMF.

YOU ARE A SOLDIER THROUGH AND THROUGH! BUT THIS IS DIPLOMACY. THE BARBARIAN PRINCE THINKS IT MAKES HIM LOOK POWERFUL TO HAVE US WAIT HERE IN THE DARK.



WE SEEK AUDIENCE WITH HIS EXCELLENCY **VLAD DRACULA!**

WE ARE EMISSARIES OF HIS MAJESTY, SULTAN MEHMED II, COME TO COLLECT TRIBUTE AND HEAR FEALTY!



DO YOU THINK THEY DIDN'T HEAR, SIR?

THEY HEARD US.

INDEED THEY DID, AND MY PATIENCE FOR THIS GAME HAS-- **EH?**



THIS FOG! BY GOD, I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING!

WHERE DID IT COME FROM?



What in the name of God--



**NO!**  
**NO!**  
**AA**  
**AA**  
**GH**

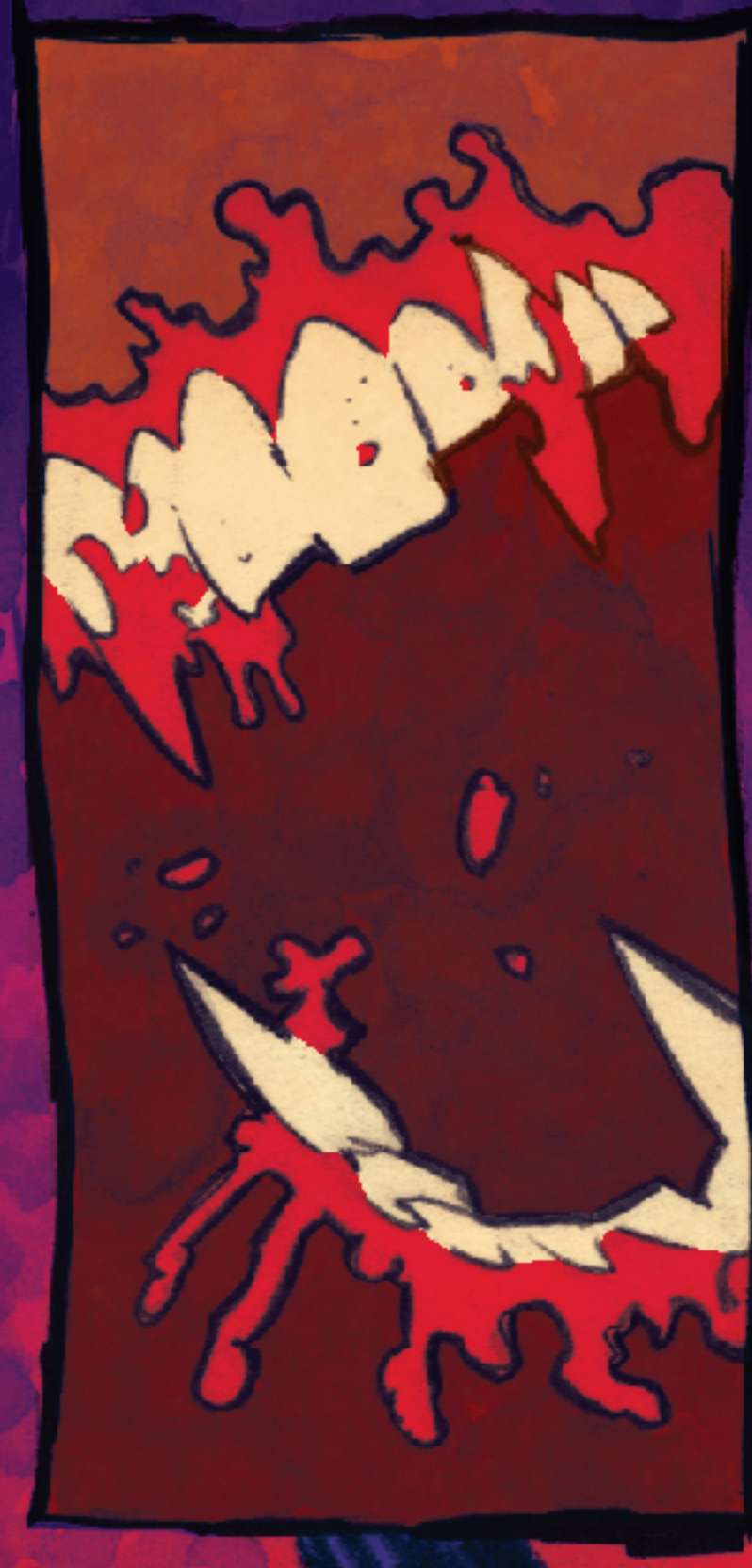
Your Majesty, my report on Wallachia is this:

It has been claimed by Satan.





Something set upon us at the castle of Vlad Dracula.



Your Majesty's emissaries were slaughtered.

But not by men.



A dozen of my best soldiers screamed and bled and called for God and their mothers.

Above it all I heard a beast's howl mingling with a man's cackle.

You know my mettle, your Majesty. I have stood fast against hopeless odds for the Empire and won.

Never in my life have I run from a fight.

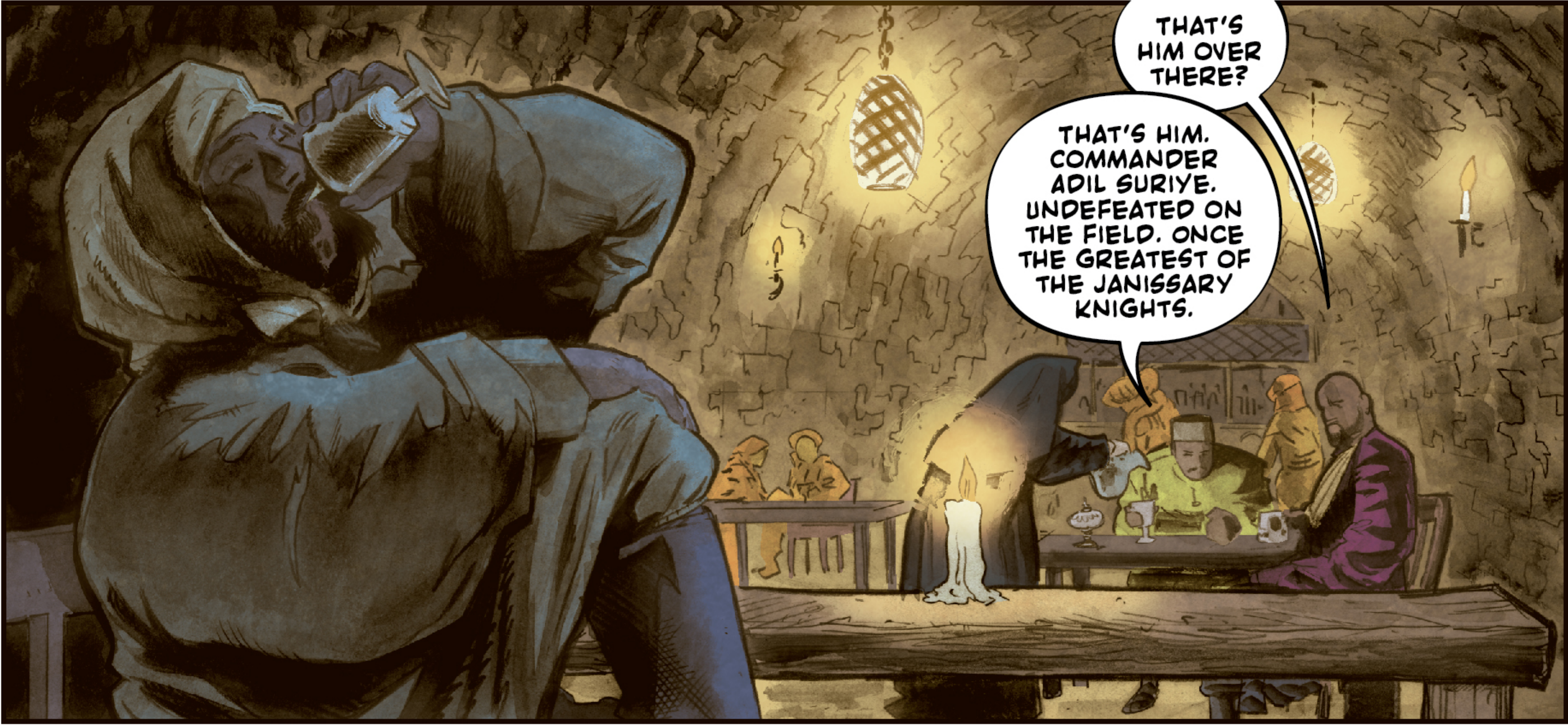
But I ran from Wallachia. The only man to escape the slaughter.





God forgive me, I ran all the way back to civilization.

# AUNTIE ASLI'S TAVERN, ISTANBUL, SIX MONTHS LATER.



THAT'S HIM OVER THERE?

THAT'S HIM. COMMANDER ADIL SURIYE. UNDEFEATED ON THE FIELD. ONCE THE GREATEST OF THE JANISSARY KNIGHTS.



NOW A DRUNKEN COWARD.



SIRS, PLEASE, YOU DON'T WANT TO START

**SHUT UP, OLD WOMAN, OR WE'LL BURN THIS DEN OF SIN TO THE GROUND. THIS IS SULTAN'S BUSINESS.**



**HEY! AUNTIE ASLI HAS KEPT ME GOOD AND DRUNK EVERY SINGLE DAY OF THESE PAST SIX MONTHS.**

**SHOW HER SOME RESPECT, YOU SONS OF WHORES!**

