

PAGE TWO

PANEL 1

Interior of a wizards laboratory - we can see the large, open window behind, and the line trailing to the building across the street. The laboratory is full of odd, esoteric items, like an armillary sphere (<http://www.1worldglobes.com/images/Globes/atlasgl051.jpg>), alchemical equipment like distillers and beakers, old magical tomes, and parchment scrolls - much of which has been rummaged through already. CINDER BYRNES holds one such scroll in front of his face - reading it with narrowed eyes. He's wearing rugged leather gear - with a pair of steampunk-style goggles around his forehead. Several charms with mystical symbols dangle from his neck, and on his belt, he has a long revolver holstered on one side, and a short sword on the other. Behind him, BLACKTOOTH, a goblin, is appraising a globular flask (<http://bit.ly/pTk00g>) of dark, swirly liquid. Blacktooth is the size of an adolescent human, with large, pointy ears, bushy eyebrows, and a set of sharp, pointy teeth that are black around the gums. He's also dressed in leather, but wears a long cloak that conceals some of his gear. He carries a shoulder bag that is already full of potions, scrolls and other magical treasures.

CINDER: They'll spend a fortune warding themselves against every spell in creation...

CINDER: ...then forget something as mundane as locking a window.

BLACKTOOTH: Hmf. Its a wonder all this stuff is still here for us to steal.

PANEL 2

Blacktooth has uncorked the flask. He wrinkles his nose as a fine black mist wafts up from the open mouth.

BLACKTOOTH: Eurgh.

BLACKTOOTH: Find what you're after yet, Cinder?

PANEL 3

Cinder is reading from a magical scroll.

CINDER: I think so, Blacktooth.

CINDER: This looks like the right --

PANEL 4

Cinder shouts at Blacktooth, reaching towards the open flask.

CINDER: Watch it! Are you trying to get us killed?

PANEL 5

Blacktooth pops the cork back on, looking bemused.

BLACKTOOTH: What? It smells...

BLACKTOOTH: ...well, it smells foul, but not –

CINDER: Deadly? Trust me, it's almost as bad as that crap
you put in your cigars.

CINDER: Now put it back, before --

PANEL 6

Cinder is startled, he looks over his shoulder in surprise. Durand, the mage, stands in the laboratory's doorway. He's in his fifties, with impeccably groomed hair and beard. He wears a high-collared coat inlaid with mystical runes over a well tailored suit. Durand is quite angry - his right hand coruscates with glowing runes and energy.

DURAND: Yes. Please do...

DURAND: And place my scrolls back in the case as well.

DURAND: Stealing from me is a grave mistake.

PAGE THREE

PANEL 1

Durand unleashes a bolt of energy.

DURAND: Not that you'll live to regret it.

DURAND: < lightning bolt >

(LETTERER NOTE: I'll be using < > to denote when a wizard is casting a spell - what I'd like to see is a specialized balloon, using a "magic" symbol font - such as Dark Arts from BlamBot - you can copy and paste the bracketed text into the font)

PANEL 2

Cinder drops into a crouch as the blast sears the air above him.

SFX: SHRAKK

CINDER: Get down!

PANEL 3

Blacktooth points at Durand, shouting.

BLACKTOOTH: What are you waiting for? Blast him back!

CINDER: With what?

BLACKTOOTH: With... I don't know... magic!

PANEL 4

Cinder has ducked behind the alchemical table. He grits his teeth, and has drawn his pistol - a long-barrelled Colt Peacemaker style revolver, whose barrel is inlaid with glowing blue runes. Another blast of energy shoots past him overhead.

CINDER: What, you found some that will work for me?

PANEL 5

Closeup on Blacktooth shouting at the top of his lungs - he's outraged.

BLACKTOOTH: That was the whole point of coming here!

BLACKTOOTH: You said it was finally going to work!

PAGE FOUR

PANEL 1

Cinder pops up from cover, firing his gun at Durand.

CINDER: It's not that simple!

CINDER: Besides, bullets still work.

SFX: BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

PANEL 2

Durand smiles as the bullets veer off erratically before hitting him - he holds his hand up and we can see from the action lines that they have literally changed direction in midair.

DURAND: < Etheric Shield!>

CINDER (OP): Usually.

PANEL 3

Durand begins casting a mighty spell - a ball of energy grows between his outstretched hands.

DURAND: Hmpf. Gutter Magic.

DURAND: < Gather Energy for fireball >

PANEL 4

Blacktooth runs towards Cinder, while Cinder continues shooting at Durand.

BLACKTOOTH: So you drag me up here, practically defenseless...

PANEL 5

Blacktooth hurls the flask toward Durand.

BLACKTOOTH: ...and you think I'm the one trying to get us killed.

PAGE FIVE

PANEL 1

Cinder leaps backwards towards the window, aiming his gun midair John Woo style. (<http://bit.ly/qtzVNO>), Blacktooth charges after him.

CINDER: You want magic? Fine.

PANEL 2

The flask sails through the air.

CINDER (CAP): “Abra.”

PANEL 3

Tracking the flask as it sails towards Durand, still intent on casting his spell.

CINDER (CAP): “Ca.”

DURAND: < still gathering energy >

PANEL 4

The flask is even closer, and we see Cinder’s bullet about to hit it. Durand notices this and falters.

CINDER (CAP): “Dabra.”

DURAND: < still gather-->

PANEL 5

Cinder’s bullet shatters the glass, releasing a cloud of black mist.

SFX: KRAKOOM!

PANEL 6

Durand coughs, choking on the spreading mist.

DURAND: AARGH!

PANEL 7

Cinder is standing on the ledge as black smoke billows out of the window behind him. He has unhooked the line from the gargoyle, and is holding it taut with one hand. He is jerking the thumb of his free hand back towards the window. Blacktooth stands at his side looking over the edge in agitation.

BLACKTOOTH: You didn't have to--

CINDER: What do you think he was trying to do to us?

BLACKTOOTH: Well, you almost got us killed, too!

PANEL 8

Blacktooth is clinging to Cinder's waist for dear life as they swing through the air to safety. He's clearly terrified.

CINDER: Yeah.

CINDER: What else is new?

PAGE SIX

PANEL 1

Daytime - Big, establishing shot of a city street in Meridian. Paved with cobblestones, a mix of ordinary humans, trolls, goblins and other creatures mill around, going about their business. In the distance, we see some of the towers from page 1 - but the buildings on the street are all 1-3 stories high (possible ref: <http://bit.ly/sW9AxJ>). The street looks decrepit and old - sagging masonry that's been propped up with wooden beams, holes patched over, and shanty-like additions hastily built wherever there's space. The most prominent building is a two-story tavern - looks as bad as the rest of the neighborhood. A sign hangs out front that reads "SMILING MARY'S", underneath a picture of a skull wreathed by roses.

CINDER: Look, I'm sorry, alright?

CINDER: Ten years, I've been chasing down every rune, every diagram, every last syllable of this spell.

CINDER: I've stolen from libraries. Book dealers. Wizards even worse than that one back there..

PANEL 2

Interior of Smiling Mary's - CINDER and BLACKTOOTH are sitting at a table in the corner of the bar that's littered with beer bottles.

CINDER: I've traded artifacts that would satisfy a dragon's greed for scraps of paper. And that was the last one.

CINDER: It was a dangerous move, but I had to get it.

BLACKTOOTH: See, this is why half the city wants to kill you.

PANEL 3

Blacktooth waves his hand, puffing on his cigar, as Cinder continues his diatribe.

BLACKTOOTH: You let that magic business get in the way of real business.

BLACKTOOTH: But, well, here we are. It's done.

BLACKTOOTH: You gonna get on with it, or what?

PAGE SEVEN

PANEL 1

Wider shot of the interior of Smiling Mary's - big scene, like the Star Wars cantina - lots of strange creatures interacting. Have fun, but include the following in the mix of characters: KATE, a young barmaid with flaming red hair; NIC, a small winged imp (about the size of a small dog); and SMILING MARY herself; a shrieking, skeletal ghost behind the bar - she should be shrieking at a patron, trying to scare them - but everyone who drinks here is used to her, and pays her no mind. Cinder and Blacktooth's table should be visible on the right.

CINDER: It's not that simple, Blacktooth.

CINDER: Look, this spell is supposed to fix my connection with magic... give me the gift that everyone else in my family was born with.

PANEL 2

Cinder has unraveled a scroll, and laid it on the table. We can see a copy of the diagram from his wall (see last page of issue 0 preview).

CINDER: But, it's still a spell.

CINDER: I can't even cast it in the first place.

PANEL 3

Blacktooth takes a drag on his cigar, looking thoughtful.

BLACKTOOTH: Hm.

PANEL 4

Blacktooth's face widens into a wide grin, showing off his rotten teeth. He looks vaguely sinister, like a diabolical plan has just clicked into place in his mind.

BLACKTOOTH: What about that cousin of yours? He'd have the juice, no?

PANEL 5

Blacktooth listens as Cinder explains.

CINDER: Victor? No. chasing this spell down has dragged the Byrnes name through the mud so much he hardly wants anything to do with me.

CINDER: And I've ripped off pretty much every other wizard that could help.

PANEL 6

Blacktooth slams his fist on the table, cheerfully.

BLACKTOOTH: Well, it's a spell. Someone had to have wrote it.

BLACKTOOTH: So let's find the bastard, and put that fancy gun of yours to his head 'till he casts it for you.

PAGE EIGHT

PANEL 1

We'll need to reverse the angle here a bit, to show Cinder and Blacktooth in the foreground, but the rest of the patrons in the back (we've been looking at them against the wall up to this point). Cinder looks a bit exasperated, throwing his hand up dismissively. Blacktooth, on the other hand, looks like he's trying to sell a used car - all grins, hands wide as though he's showing something off. Between them, in the crowd, we see a shadowed figure, THE RATCATCHER, is reaching into his coat. He should be mostly hidden by the crowd, but the impression I want to give is that he's an assassin, taking aim.

CINDER: How do we even know it's a "he"? Where are we supposed to –

BLACKTOOTH: The Goblin Market, my friend! Trust me, Everything's for sale...

PANEL 2

A two-tined fork (ref: <http://www.photo.rmn.fr/LowRes2/TR1/C69JPD/97-015751.jpg>, but make the tines longer and handle shorter) slams into the floor near Cinder's boot, impaling a rat.

BLACKTOOTH: ...secrets most of all.

SFX: THWAKK!

PANEL 3

Cinder looks up, annoyed.

CINDER: Damn you, Ratcatcher! Watch it!

PANEL 4

THE RATCATCHER kneels to retrieve his fork and the dead rat. He's a short man, disheveled and raggedy looking - wears a bandolier across his chest with several throwing forks like the one from panel 8.2. Hanging off his backpack are some small iron cages, holding live rats, and he has several large rat pelts hanging off his belt.

RATCATCHER: Don't mind me boys... just doin' me job.

RATCATCHER: There's plague about, n'all..

PANEL 5

Cinder leans over to look the Ratcatcher in the face. Cinder is angry, and the Ratcatcher is returning the sneer.

CINDER: Damn your plague! You just missed my foot!

RATCATCHER: Only cause I weren't aiming for it. Ain't out to catch men. Just rats.

RATCATCHER: And secrets. Catch plenty of those.

PANEL 6

Ratcatcher's cracks a grin. Maybe we see a bit of the rat on the fork as Ratcatcher holds it up. Cinder's not amused.

RATCATCHER: My little lovelies hear so many stories... well, you'd be amazed.

PAGE NINE

PANEL 1

Blacktooth has stood up, and is practically dragging Cinder away from Ratcatcher.

BLACKTOOTH: Leave it alone, ‘catcher. We don’t need your little network.

BLACKTOOTH: I know a guy.

PANEL 2

Cinder shrugs as they make their way through the crowd - Blacktooth is smiling, and carrying himself somewhat imperiously, like a professor giving a lecture. KATE the barmaid, stands in their way.

CINDER: You always “know a guy”...

BLACKTOOTH: I know a lot of guys.

KATE: >AHEM<

BLACKTOOTH: Girls, too.

KATE: Time to settle up. Again.

PANEL 3

Kate has blocked Cinder and Blacktooth from leaving. Behind her, NIC THE IMP perches on the bar.

CINDER: We’re off to the Market. Just tell Mary to put it on our tab.

KATE: You don’t have a tab, anymore. New policy. Absolutely no credit for people who are going to be dead before the week’s out.

PANEL 4

Nic the Imp pricks up his ears as he sips from his tankard.

KATE: Word’s out, Cinder. The Morgue wants your head.
And the woman gets what she wants.

PANEL 5

Cinder is facing Kate as she points a remonstrative finger at him. He is grinning and shrugging, trying to play it off.

CINDER: Come on, Kate --

KATE: Long as I've known you, you've talked a good game. But there's no talking your way out of this.

KATE: Look, forget the tab. You've got to run.

PANEL 6

Cinder has tossed some coins on the bar, and is looking up at Kate with an annoyed expression.

CINDER: No. Here it is.

KATE: I'm serious. She'll kill you. Or worse.

PANEL 7

Cinder and Blacktooth walk on - Cinder looks like he's in a bad mood. Smiling Mary shrieks at their backs, angrily. Kate is not amused.

CINDER: She'll have to get in line.

PAGE TEN

PANEL 1

Wide shot of the docks - several workers are unloading a ship, while BENEDICT, a member of the Ghost Knives gang stands watching. Nic flies towards Benedict, about to land on his shoulder.

PANEL 2

Nic lands on Benedict's shoulder - the gangster looks surprised.

BENEDICT: Whuh?! Nic?

NIC: Relax, Benedict. I've got news. About a certain someone your boss is after.

PANEL 3

The Ghost Knife looks a little ticked now.

BENEDICT: You know where he is?

NIC: Better. I know where he'll be.

BENEDICT: Then spill it, imp. We're busy here.

PANEL 4

Nic smiles wide, and holds out his palm.

NIC: Tsk, Tsk, Benny. You ghost knives and your manners.

NIC: Atrocious.

NIC: Money first.

PAGE ELEVEN

PANEL 1

Wide, overhead shot of the goblin market - a confusing maze of stalls and booths that looks more like a maze than a market - tons of people milling about (ref: <http://bit.ly/qHlhVk> - but more chaotic). Cinder and Blacktooth are just two ants in the crowd.

CINDER: I hate this place.

BLACKTOOTH: That's 'cause you never came here with me...

PANEL 2

Cinder and Blacktooth walking among the stalls - all around them are people shopping, merchants hawking their wares, and items of every description piled up (ref: <http://bit.ly/ozHA4o>).

BLACKTOOTH: ...they'll cheat you out of your shirt and pants. They live for it.

BLACKTOOTH: For a fellow goblin, though...

CINDER: Just your shirt?

PANEL 3

Cinder and Blacktooth turn a corner.

BLACKTOOTH: Ha! You're learning, my boy... you're learning.

BLACKTOOTH: Come on, Foulroot's stall is--

PANEL 4

Blacktooth looks shocked; the cigar falls from his mouth.

BLACKTOOTH: Oh, shit.

PAGE TWELVE

PANEL 1

SHIVER stands at the head of a group of Ghost Knives. She's smiling, confident that she's caught her prey. The Ghost Knives look threatening, holding clubs and weapons, ready to cut loose. There's about a dozen of them.

SHIVER: I'm sure you've got lots on your shopping list, boys.

SHIVER: But the Morgue would like a word with you.

PAGE THIRTEEN

PANEL 1

Cinder crouches slightly - into a gunfighter's stance - his hand is right over the butt of his revolver - he's smirking.

CINDER: Look Shiver, I know The Morgue's pissed, but it's just business.

PANEL 2

Shiver smiles back.

SHIVER: You stole from her, Cinder.

SHIVER: It's that exact sort of business my mother takes personally.

PANEL 3

Cinder and Blacktooth tense up, ready for action. The smirk is gone from Cinder's face.

CINDER: Well, I smashed one of her windows, too.

CINDER: Left the guards alive, though. That must count for –

PANEL 4

Focus on the Ghost Knife to Shiver's left - smiling in anticipation. She should be in frame, but the focus is on him.

SHIVER: For what? These boys practically worship death.

SHIVER: They crave it. And you know the best part?

PANEL 5

Shiver snaps her fingers. The GKs charge.

SFX (SMALL): Snap!

SHIVER: They're not afraid of it in the least.

PAGE FOURTEEN

PANEL 1

Cinder's in full battle mode, now - firing his gun

SFX (GUN): BLAM BLAM BLAM

CINDER: Fear it or not...

PANEL 2

The bullets thud into one of the closer Ghost Knives - the others throw their hands up in an expression of self-defense, halting their advance.

SFX (BULLETS): THUKK

PANEL 3

Cinder smirks.

CINDER: ...seems they do it just fine.

PANEL 4

Blacktooth stands at an opening between a pair of stalls - he also has a pistol out, but he's shouting at Cinder.

BLACKTOOTH: Come on! There's too many!

PAGE FIFTEEN

PANEL 1

Blacktooth and Cinder run down an aisle of stalls.

CINDER: Which way?

BLACKTOOTH: Doesn't matter...

PANEL 2

Shiver is shouting the Ghost Knives, and pointing - they've recovered their nerve and are giving chase.

CAPTION (BLACKTOOTH): "... just run!"

PANEL 3

Cinder and Blacktooth hit a dead end - a stone wall. Cinder's agitated. Blacktooth is calm.

CINDER: Damn it, Blacktooth! It's a dead end!

BLACKTOOTH: Wait for it.

PANEL 4

The wall begins disassembling - we can see hints of tiny gears and pistons behind the bricks as the wall folds open, revealing an opening. Cinder looks on in surprise.

CINDER: Wait for... what the hell?

SFX: Whirrrrr... KACHUNK

PANEL 5

Cinder looks up as they run through the opening - show a little more detail on the wall mechanism, if possible.

CINDER: How –

BLACKTOOTH: Later... now let's move!

PAGES SIXTEEN-SEVENTEEN (SPREAD)

PANEL 1

Time for something crazy. What I would like here is a double page spread - the market is a twisted maze - like the market is a giant MC Escher painting, with twisting paths and perspective tricks. Its up to you where we see Cinder and Blacktooth and the Ghost Knives - it can be at one point, or several, just give it the sense that they're being chased through this huge, mind-bending place. If you want to do it over the space of several panels, that's cool too. (Here's an example of the kind of image I'm looking for, from a recent DC comic: <http://bit.ly/sgLBWn> It's not dead on, but I would like the spread to have that mind-bending, chaotic feel to it.) The key thing to depict here is that the Market is, in a sense, aware, and helping them escape their pursuers

Do 1 panel, do 100 panels, just go nuts and have fun with it.

BLACKTOOTH: Keep up with me!

CINDER: How are you --

BLACKTOOTH: It's not me. It's the market.

CINDER: What do you mean?

BLACKTOOTH: It's helping us.

CINDER: How?

BLACKTOOTH: Just keep up!

BLACKTOOTH: Almost...

BLACKTOOTH: Jump!

PAGE EIGHTEEN

PANEL 1

Cinder and Blacktooth, hands on their knees, catching their breath.

BLACKTOOTH: The market'll lead them around for a few hours,
then dump them out.

CINDER: I still don't get it

BLACKTOOTH: The market looks after it's own.

PANEL 2

Blacktooth grins up at Cinder, shrugging.

CINDER: It's alive?

BLACKTOOTH: It's... aware.

BLACKTOOTH: And it helped me. You were just lucky enough to tag along.

PANEL 3

Blacktooth jerks a thumb over his shoulder.

BLACKTOOTH: Come on. It's this way.

CINDER: After all that... how can you even tell --

PANEL 4

Cinder and Blacktooth enter a covered stall overflowing with books and scrolls. FOULROOT, an old goblin - balding, wrinkled and nearsighted, is seated at a small desk, writing with a quill pen. He's engrossed in what he's doing, and barely looks up.

BLACKTOOTH (CAP): Just come on.

FOULROOT: Welcome, welcome. Come see... grimoires, qabala,
enochian texts of every...

FOULROOT: Oh. It's you.

PANEL 5

Foulroot adjusts his glasses, as he looks at Blacktooth with disdain.

FOULROOT: Not buying, Blacktooth. Not from you, no more.

CINDER (OP): Relax...

PANEL 6

Cinder hands Foulroot a rolled up parchment. Foulroot wrinkles his nose.

CINDER: ...we're not selling. I just need a name.

FOULROOT: Whose name?

CINDER: Whoever wrote this spell.

PAGE NINETEEN

PANEL 1

Foulroot adjusts his glasses as he looks at Cinder's spell - he looks like he expects it to be worthless.

FOULROOT: Hmpf. Another trick, Blacktooth?

FOULROOT: Get me to read it, and you think I'll be so enticed, I'll just... have to...

PANEL 2

Close on Foulroot's eyes widening as he reads the parchment.

FOULROOT: I've seen this spell before. Parts of it.

PANEL 3

Foulroot rummages through a stack of books.

FOULROOT: Had an old journal here somewhere. Belonged to one of your war wizards.

FOULROOT: Same handwriting... think it was...

FOULROOT: Ah, here it is.

PANEL 19.4

Foulroot hands a dusty book to Cinder - looks like a journal.

FOULROOT: Uch. Terrible with human names...

FOULROOT: Oppa- Oppey-

PANEL 19.5

Cinder looks down at the book, reading the name with interest.

CINDER: Oppenheimer?

PAGE TWENTY

PANEL 1

Cinder thumbs through the journal. In the background, we see a flashback (like a propaganda poster - ref: <http://bit.ly/rfCD8L>) - A young Robert Oppenheimer (ref: <http://www.atomicarchive.com/Images/bio/H07.jpg>) standing next a young CYRUS BYRNES, Cinder's grandfather (should have a resemblance to Cinder) - both looking heroic, in outfits that are half wizard robes, half military uniform - overhead, we see a mix of WWII fighter planes, and dragons sailing through the sky.

CINDER (CAP): Huh.

CINDER (CAP): He says here we couldn't have won the war without him.

CINDER (CAP): But, if that was true, there'd be a statue of him right next to my Grandfather's in victory square.

CINDER (CAP): Who is this guy?

PANEL 2

Exterior shot of Foulroot's stall. We can see Cinder, Blacktooth, and Foulroot's shadowed forms inside.

CINDER: The war was a long time ago, Blacktooth.

CINDER: Who knows if he's even alive, still?

PANEL 3

Pull back even further to show Shiver and a couple of Ghost Knives from the back, waist down. Shiver's hand is crackling with energy as bright runes swirl around it.

SHIVER: < maelstrom blast >

PANEL 4

Shiver grins, and aims her finger, pointed like a gun.

SHIVER (whisper): Bang.

PAGE TWENTY-ONE

PANEL 1

Cinder, Blacktooth, and Foulroot look up, surprised as a wave of energy overtakes them.

PANEL 2

The stall is blown over, like it got hit by a tornado - papers, bricks, and books fly everywhere.

SFX: THOOOOOOOM

PAGE TWENTY-TWO

PANEL 1

Cinder, Blacktooth and Foulroot are picking themselves up. Cinder's hunched over, with his hands on his knees. Blacktooth and Foulroot are still semi-prone.

CINDER (SFX): > huff <

CINDER: Shiver. That didn't take long.

PANEL 2

Shiver stands tall, flanked by the Ghost Knives. In her hand, she holds a straight razor.

SHIVER: It's the goblin market, Cinder.

SHIVER: Everything's for sale.

PANEL 3

Shiver holds the straight razor up near her face - magic runes dance around the blade and her hand.

SHIVER: Even you.