

OLIMPIERI

# V. E. SCHWARZ

## SHADES OF MAGIC

ANGIOLINI



THE STEEL  
PRINCE

WITH  
ROB STEEN



“ONCE, THERE WERE FOUR WORLDS  
INSTEAD OF ONE, SET SIDE BY  
SIDE LIKE SHEETS OF PAPER.

“THERE WAS MAGIC IN THOSE  
WORLDS. IT WAS LIKE HEAT,  
FADING A LITTLE WITH EVERY  
STEP, BUT NONE WENT COLD.

“THE WORLDS WERE CONNECTED.  
THEIR EDGES TOUCHED. THEIR  
WALLS WERE THIN, AND MAGICIANS  
COULD MOVE FROM ONE TO THE  
NEXT, SHARING KNOWLEDGE,  
POWER, WARMTH...

“UNTIL THE FIRST  
WORLD FELL ILL.

“THEIR MAGIC, ONCE  
THE STRONGEST, WAS  
CORRUPTED, AND SOON  
THE SICKNESS SPREAD...

“THE NEXT SEALED OFF  
THE DYING WORLD, AND  
ALL INSIDE, AND IT WOULD  
HAVE BEEN ENOUGH...

“BUT THE THIRD, AFRAID,  
BARRED ITS DOORS NOT  
ONLY TO ONE NEIGHBOR,  
BUT TO BOTH...



“...FORCING ONE WORLD TO FACE THE DARK ALONE, AND SEVERING THE OTHER FROM THE REST OF MAGIC.”

“AND SO THREE WORLDS WERE LOST INSTEAD OF ONE.”

“HERE, OUR STORY BEGINS.”

# V. E. SCHWAB

## SHADES OF MAGIC

### THE STEEL PRINCE



**“The Steel Prince,”** said Sol-in-Ar, and then, reading Maxim’s expression:  
**“It surprises you, that the tales of your exploits reach beyond your own borders?”**  
The Faraon’s fingers grazed the edge of the map. **“The Steel Prince, who tore the heart  
from the rebel army. The Steel Prince, who survived the night of knives.  
The Steel Prince, who slayed the pirate queen.”**

**Maxim finished his drink and set the glass aside.**

**“I suppose we never know the scale of our life’s stories.  
Which parts will survive, and which will die with us.”**

*—A Conjuring of Light*

Maxim Maresh became one of the most controversial figures in the Shades of Magic series.

Father to Rhy, adopted parent to Kell, he was more often painted as an antagonist than a hero. His role was a necessary, but also frustrating, one—there was so much more to Maxim’s life than I could fit on the page, and by showing him as he was during the time of someone else’s story, I was forced to neglect his own.

When I wrote the above passage, I knew I was cracking open a door, one I so hoped I’d have the chance to walk through. And here we are.

Before he was the King of Arnes, Maxim Maresh was a young, headstrong prince with a penchant for metal magic and a lot to learn about the world beyond Red London. Banished by his own father to Verose, a city on the dangerous Blood Coast, Maxim was plunged into a world of danger and adventure. A place where he would make a few friends and many enemies, and gain a reputation that would follow him onto the pages of Shades of Magic.

The title he would earn? The Steel Prince.

This is his story.



# SHADES OF MAGIC

## THE STEEL PRINCE

WRITER

V. E. SCHWAB

ARTIST

ANDREA OLIMPIERI

COLORIST

ENRICA EREN ANGIOLINI

LETTERER

ROB STEEN

EDITOR

AMOONA SAOHIN

MANAGING & LAUNCH EDITOR

ANDREW JAMES

SENIOR DESIGNER

ANDREW LEUNG

### TITAN COMICS

Titan Comics Editorial  
Dan Boulwood

Production Assistant  
Rhiannon Roy

Production Supervisor  
Maria Pearson

Production Controller  
Peter James

Senior Production Controller  
Jackie Flook

Art Director  
Oz Browne

Circulation Executive  
Frances Hallam

Sales & Circulation Manager  
Steve Tothill

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Bella Hoy

Direct Sales & Marketing Manager  
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Head Of Rights  
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Publishing Manager  
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Leigh Baulch

Executive Director  
Vivian Cheung

Publisher  
Nick Landau

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For international rights information, contact Jenny Boyce: [jenny.boyce@titanemail.com](mailto:jenny.boyce@titanemail.com)

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YOUR FATHER HAS MADE ALL THE ARRANGEMENTS...



...VEROSE HAS ONLY ONE BASE...

...BUT YOU'LL FIND IT IN DIRE NEED OF LEADERSHIP...



Mm Mm Mm



"YOU SUMMONED ME?"

Tieren Serense,  
Head Priest of London

Nokil Maresh,  
King of London

Maxim Maresh,  
Prince of London



MAXIM.

FATHER.

YOU  
TOOK YOUR  
TIME.

APOLOGIES.  
I WAS  
OCCUPIED.



YES, YOU  
HAVE BEEN BUSY  
LATELY, HAVEN'T  
YOU?

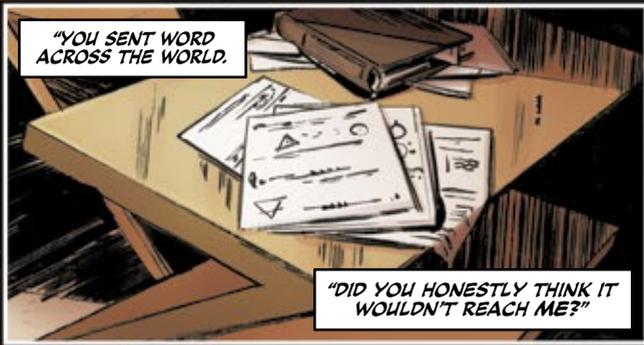
DESPITE  
MY EXPLICIT  
ORDERS-

I'M...NOT  
SURE WHAT  
YOU-

ENOUGH.



DO  
YOU THINK  
ANYTHING  
HAPPENS IN  
THIS PALACE  
WITHOUT MY  
KNOWLEDGE?



"YOU SENT WORD  
ACROSS THE WORLD.

"DID YOU HONESTLY THINK IT  
WOULDN'T REACH ME?"



"YOU SEND SCOUTS LOOKING FOR ANTARI MAGICIANS."



"SCOUR THE EMPIRES FOR SIGNS OF THEIR POWER."



"YOU SEEK OUT THE VERY MAGIC WE USED TO SEAL AWAY THE OTHER WORLDS."



WHY WOULD YOU SEE THOSE DOORS PRIED OPEN AGAIN?

BECAUSE SOONER OR LATER, ALL SPELLS FAIL.



AND ONE DAY THE DOORS TO THOSE WORLDS WILL OPEN...

...WHETHER WE WISH IT OR NOT.



THE SEALS  
HAVE HELD FOR TWO  
HUNDRED YEARS.

THEY WILL  
CONTINUE TO  
HOLD.



FOR HOW LONG?  
THE SINS OF OUR  
PAST-

THE *DECISIONS*  
WE MADE TO KEEP OUR  
PEOPLE SAFE-

WE SHOULD  
REACH OUT TO THEM,  
BEFORE-



**ENOUGH.**

YOU ARE THE  
ROYAL PRINCE OF *ONE*  
LONDON, NOT FOUR. IT IS  
TIME TO WORRY ABOUT  
YOUR OWN WORLD.



THIS  
OBSESSION OF  
YOURS...



**"...IS AT AN END."**



HOW LONG AM I TO STAY?



ARE YOU LISTENING?



YOU FORGET, MASTER TIEREN,  
I AM A SOLDIER AS WELL AS A  
PRINCE. I HAVE LED  
TROOPS BEFORE.

AT NORTHERN  
BASES WHERE THE GREATEST  
DANGER WAS A WILD ANIMAL,  
OR A FOREST THIEF.

VEROSE IS A VERY  
DIFFERENT PLACE. A PORT  
CITY, KNOWN FOR ITS VIOLENCE,  
ITS LAWLESSNESS, ITS  
*FORBIDDEN* MAGIC.

MY FATHER WISHES  
TO PUT ME IN MY PLACE  
BY CASTING ME OUT OF IT.  
THRUSTING ME INTO  
DEEP WATER.

I WILL SHOW  
HIM HOW FAR I  
CAN SWIM.



WELL, SOON  
YOU SHALL HAVE  
YOUR CHANCE.



HALT!



WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

I'M GETTING OUT.

IF VEROSE IS AS DANGEROUS AS YOU SAY, I'D BE A FOOL TO ENTER THE CITY IN THIS WAY. ANNOUNCE TO EVERY THIEF AND SCOUNDREL THE ARRIVAL OF A ROYAL MARK.

I'LL MEET THE CITY ON MY TERMS.



YOU RIDE ON TO THE BASE AND DELIVER MY THINGS. I'LL MEET YOU THERE.



...AS YOU WISH...



WAS THAT WISE?



HE HAS TO LEARN.

PERHAPS...



ARE YOU QUESTIONING MY ORDER?

NOT AT ALL.



I ADVISE YOU, NOKIL. I ALWAYS HAVE. BUT I SERVE MAGIC. AND THE PRINCE MAY HAVE A POINT ABOUT THE OTHER WORLDS...



AND YET HE NEGLECTS HIS OWN.

MY SON HAS GROWN STRONG, BUT ALSO ARROGANT. HE WANTS TO PROVE HE'S READY TO BE A KING. SO LET HIM PROVE IT...



MASTER, SPARE A LIN?

COME IN, AND REST YOURSELF.

FANCY A DRINK? WE MAKE IT STRONG.



...TURN A HEART TO STONE...

...BRING HER TO HER KNEES...

LOST, SIR?



...NOT FROM  
HERE...

...CAN TELL BY  
YOUR CUT...

...TOO  
CLEAN...

...TOO  
PROUD...



TOO SLOW-





NOT SO FAST.



THE PUNISHMENT FOR STEALING IS A FORTNIGHT IN JAIL, ASSUMING IT'S YOUR FIRST OFFENSE.



DO YOU SEE A SOLDIER?



LOOK CLOSER.



LEARN MY FACE.

STEAL AGAIN AND I'LL-

**CRASH**





UNGHHH...



**SMACK**



SANCT.



SOLDIER!

I'M OFF-DUTY.



HALT.



TAKE YOUR HAND OFF ME.

OR WHAT?



YOU'RE DRUNK.

OUT OF UNIFORM AND OUT OF SHAPE.



LIKE A CHILD PLAYING DRESS-UP.

GET-OFF-

CAN'T FIGHT.



CAN'T SUMMON.



NOT MUCH OF A SOLDIER...



OSILI?

WHAT THE BLESSED SAINTS IS TAKING SO LONG-

OH. WHAT'S THIS?



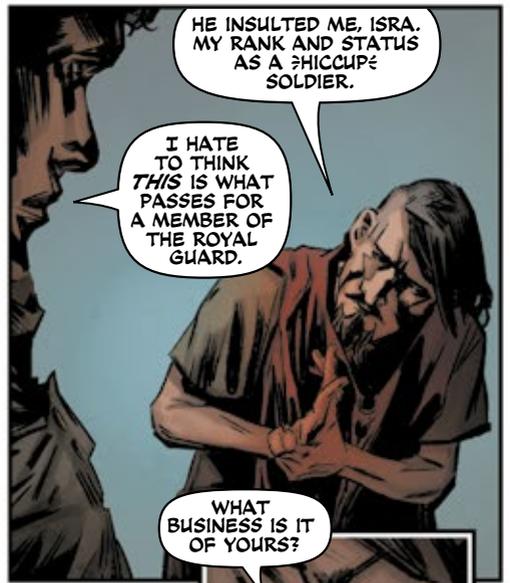
WHAT'S THIS NOW?



GET YOUR HANDS OFF MY SOLDIER.



YOUR SOLDIER PICKED A FIGHT WITH ME.



HE INSULTED ME, ISRA. MY RANK AND STATUS AS A  $\text{\textcircled{H}}$  SOLDIER.

I HATE TO THINK *THIS* IS WHAT PASSES FOR A MEMBER OF THE ROYAL GUARD.

WHAT BUSINESS IS IT OF YOURS?





TIME TO GO.



WHO'S SHOOTING AT US?

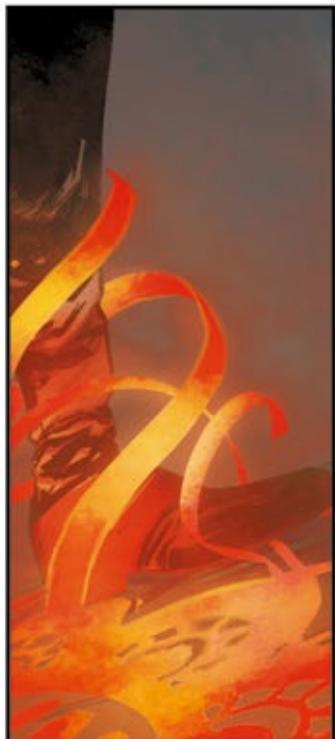
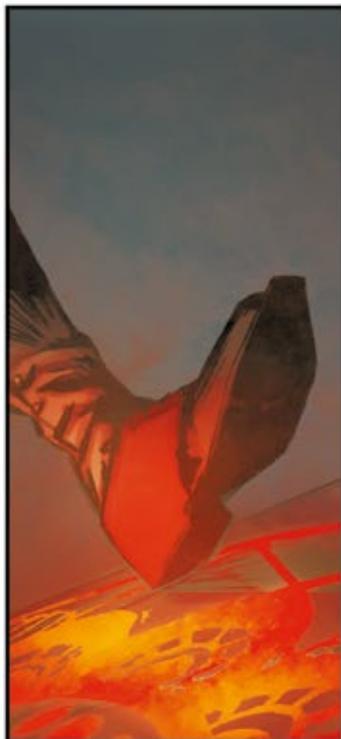
WHO KNOWS?

WHO CARES?



COULD BE ANYONE. WE'RE NOT EXACTLY POPULAR.

OR WE'RE **VERY** POPULAR, DEPENDING ON HOW YOU LOOK AT IT.



SANCT.

LEAVE HIM.

HE'S NOT ONE OF OURS.



LOOK AT THAT.

A BUG IN MY NET.

SHALL I LET HIM GO?



MAGIC IS NOT MUSCLE, MY PRINCE.

YOU CANNOT BREAK IT WITH BRUTE STRENGTH.

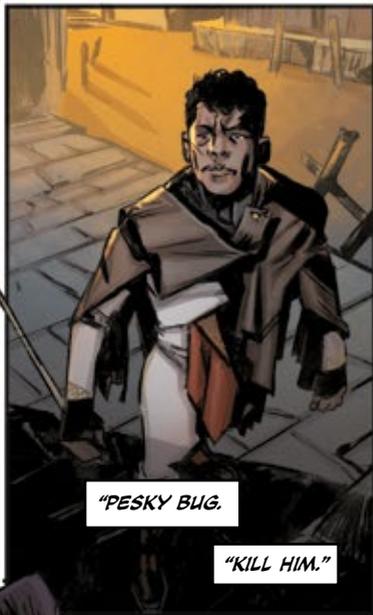


BUT YOU CAN FIND ITS WEAKEST POINT.

"TELL ME, BUG, WHAT WILL YOU GIVE, TO KEEP YOUR LIFE?"



THIS.



"PESKY BUG."

"KILL HIM."



FORMATION.



TORO.  
COVER.

**SMAASHH**



THUD

KRUNCH



CLANK

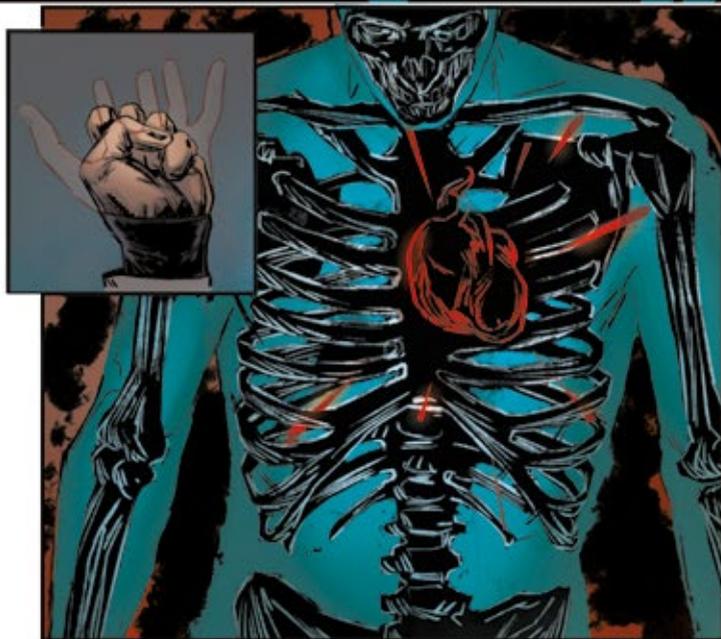


WATCH OUT, PRINCELING.



FWOOOSH





WE SHOULD GO AFTER HIM.

WHAT'S THE RUSH?

PLENTY MORE WHERE HE CAME FROM. AND THEY'LL STILL BE HERE TOMORROW.



COME ON, STRANGER.

WE'LL GET YOU CLEANED UP.



...LET'S GET A DRINK, YOU SAID...

...WAS MY FAVOURITE SHIRT...

...LUCKY THAT'S ALL YOU LOST...



HOW DID YOU DO THAT? WITH THE SWORD?

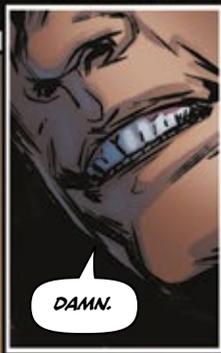
I SAW IT IN THE TOURNAMENT LAST YEAR. PRACTISED FOR MONTHS.

LAST YEAR'S GAMES WERE HELD IN FARO. YOU TRAVELLED ALL THAT WAY?

MUST BE RICH.

WHY WOULD A RICH BOY COME TO VEROSE?

YOUR HIGHNESS!



DAMN.



PRINCE MAXIM, WE EXPECTED YOU AN HOUR AGO...



DON'T CALL ME THAT.

PRINCE?

OH SANCT, I TRIED TO HIT THE PRINCE.

MAS AVEN, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

YOUR VALET SAID YOU CAME ON FOOT.

I WARNED HIM. THIS CITY IS NO PLACE FOR A-

ENOUGH.

THIS CITY AND I HAVE MADE OUR INTRODUCTIONS. WE WILL GET ALONG FINE.



RIGHT NOW, I WANT ONLY A CLEAN PAIR OF CLOTHES.

OF COURSE.

COME, I'LL SHOW YOU TO YOUR ROOM.



I CAN'T STAY HERE.

I KNOW IT'S SMALL...

GOOD LUCK, MY PRINCE.



WHERE DO THE OTHER SOLDIERS SLEEP?

**FWSH**

IN THE BARRACKS, MAS VARES.

THEN I WILL SLEEP THERE.



YES SIR.

**THUD**





YOU'LL HAVE A SCAR, MAS VARES.



YOU ALREADY KNEW WHO I WAS. HOW?

THE WAY YOU WALK. THE WAY YOU TALK. BUT MOST OF ALL, THE WAY YOU FIGHT.

I FIGHT LIKE A SOLDIER.

YOU FIGHT LIKE A ROYAL.

HOW DOES A ROYAL FIGHT?



LIKE THE WEAPONS ARE MADE OF WOOD. LIKE NO ONE MEANS TO HURT YOU.

BUT THIS IS NOT LONDON, YOUR HIGHNESS.

THE PEOPLE HERE WON'T SPARE YOU FOR YOUR BLOOD.

IF ANYTHING, THEY'LL LOOK TO SPILL IT.



SO I SUGGEST YOU LEARN TO FIGHT LIKE YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT.



"IT'S BEEN A WHILE, HASN'T IT?"

"TOO LONG, IF YOU ASK ME."



"HOME SWEET HOME."



RAISE THE LIGHTS.



"RUN UP THE FLAG.



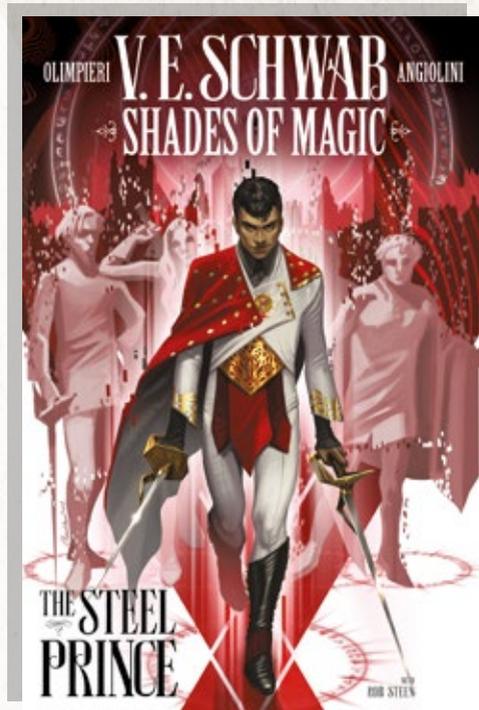
"LET THE WHOLE CITY KNOW...



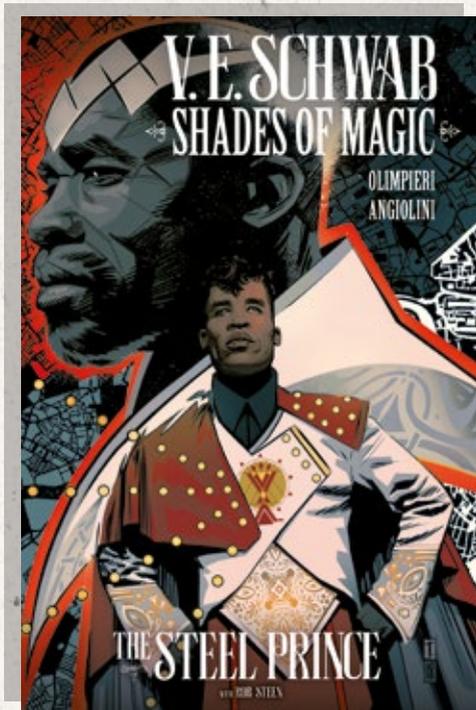
...THEIR  
QUEEN IS  
BACK.

TO BE CONTINUED!

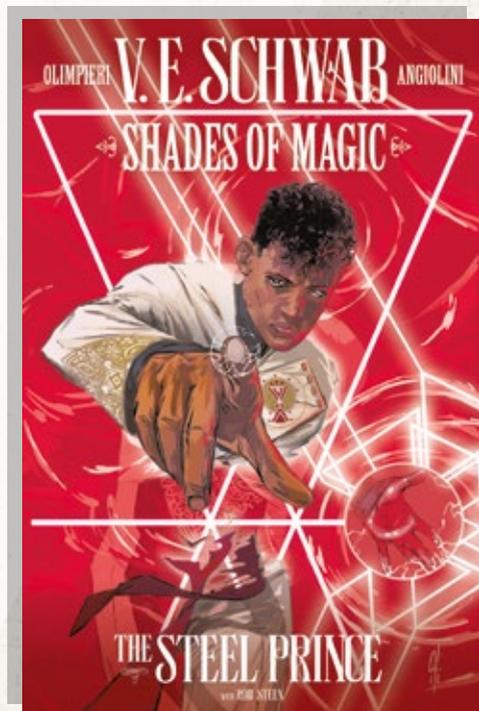
# #1 COVER GALLERY



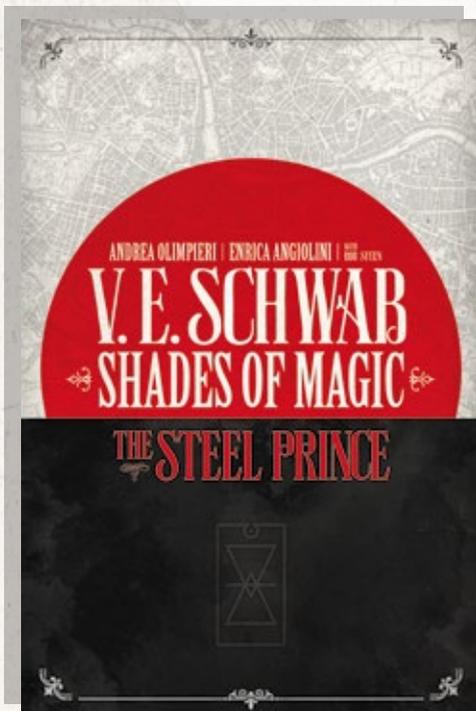
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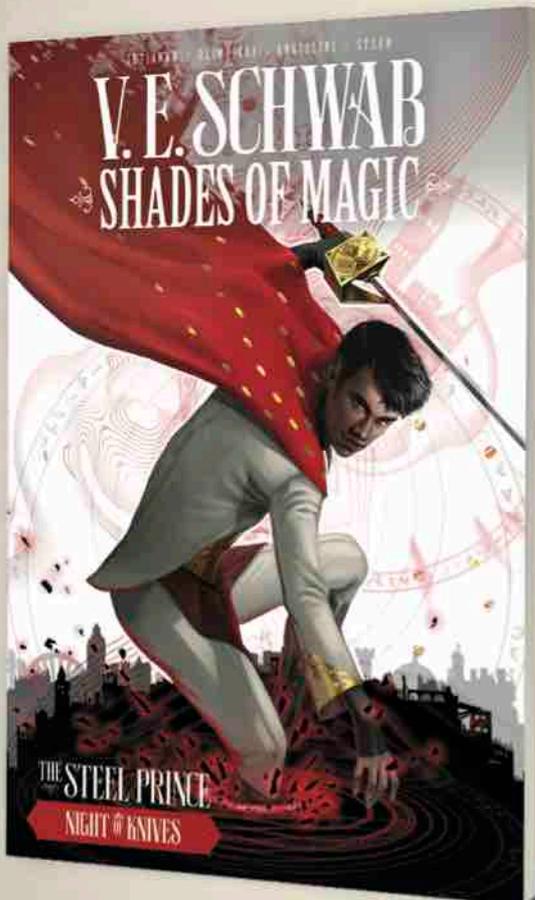
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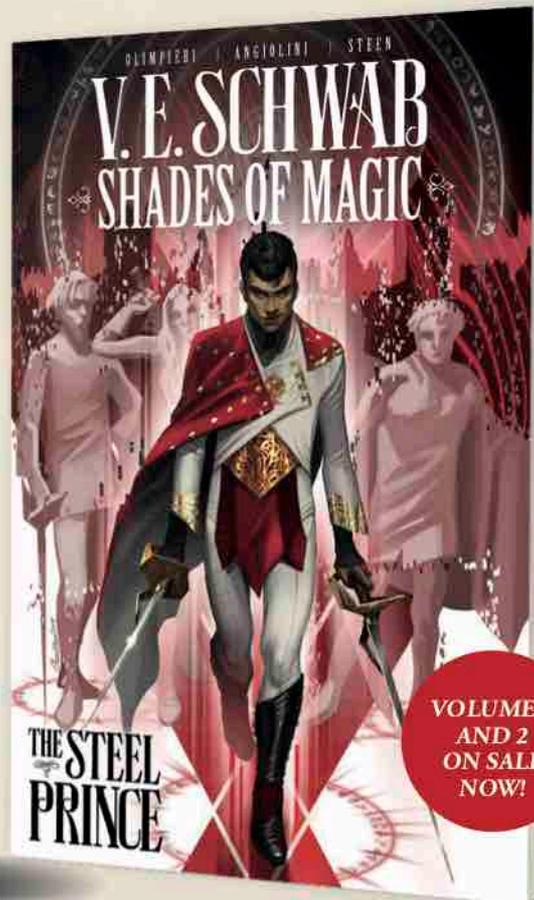


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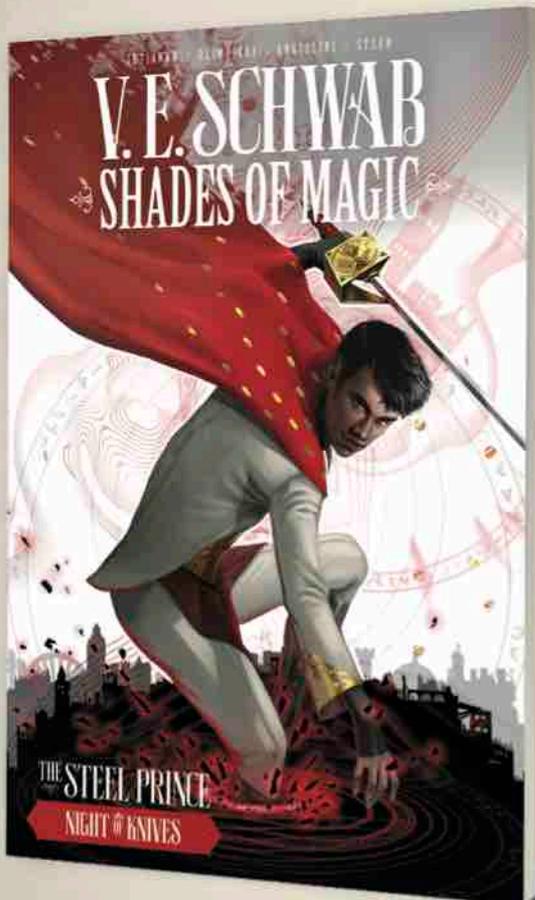
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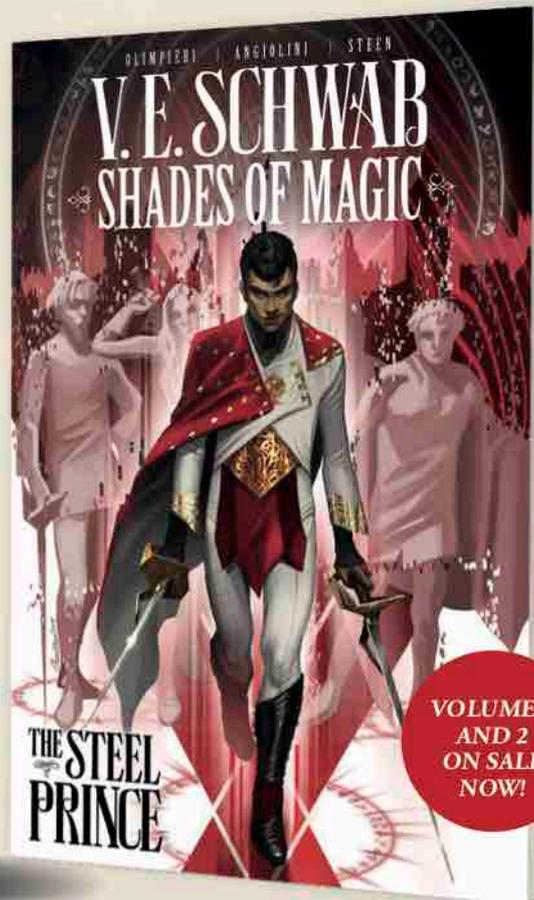


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