Though not yet introduced by name, Myra is the story’s central protagonist, and her actions and personal motivations will drive the story forward from beginning to conclusion.

Her design references a variety of third century cultures, to keep in line with her eclectic background and extensive travels. The Roman goddess Diana was referenced, too.

In both writing and designing Myra, I relied on a range of my favorite anti-hero protagonists, from Han Solo in Star Wars to Megara in Disney’s Hercules.
Early designs of Myra reflect a relative variety of ages, body types and ethnicities, as it took a while to flesh out her story background - something that will be pivotal to the story in later chapters.

Her main outfit is a mixture of Late Roman and Greek military dress, and was one of the earliest design decisions I was able to nail down.
I needed her to seem strong and confident, and a physically capable leader among thieves. She also needed to seem like someone who was familiar with operating in a world dominated by masculine ideals. I tried out several designs toward this end.
One of the last design questions I had was how far to take Myra's sense of her own sensuality, a defining character trait that is pivotal to the unfolding plot of the story.

I decided on a finished design that was more subtle than you see here, and opting for tomboy-like strength and casual self-confidence over anything that could be seen as seductive or alluring.

After deciding on painting the comic in Illustrator rather than Photoshop, I used these later designs to test several painting techniques and lighting studies.
I was able to make use of a lot of sculpture and mosaic work from Africa and the Near East for costume, fabric and hairstyle decisions. Fortunately, there is no shortage of visual reference for the African Empire of this period.

Pompeii and Herculaneum were also great visual resources for understanding Roman life, due to their famously preserved mosaics, sculptures and wall paintings.
A surprising amount of textiles survive from the Late Roman and Sassanid Persian periods, due to the arid climate of Egypt, Libya, and Syria. I was able to implement much of the color and patternwork of these Roman and Persian textiles into the artwork of KYRIE's first chapter.
Dura Europos was a settlement in modern Syria, and today is famous for being an exquisite time capsule for those interested in Late Roman and Sassanian history.

Part of the reason the city is so well preserved is because it was abandoned after its conquest by Sassanian Persia in 256-257 CE. This makes it the ideal archeological reference point for a story set just a few short years previous.

Dura Europos was also home to a synagogue, which was decorated with elaborate and well preserved Biblical scenes. The figures are dressed in outfits contemporary with those living in this border town in the 240s CE, showing Jewish, Persian and Roman influences.
A fairly large amount of archeological and historical research exists about the people who made Alexandria their home in Late Antiquity, and the more of it I read, the more I wanted to pay particular respect to them. Because of this, I thought it would be fun to draw many of the background characters as true caricatures of the well-known Fayum mummy portraits, whose subjects would have been rough contemporaries, lived relatively nearby, and would have shared the same basic Late Roman culture as Alexandrians.
People of Alexandria

The clothing and armor of the Roman military is a popular historical subject, and is therefore very well documented, even for this relatively unknown period in Late Antiquity.
Sassanid military attire is also well documented, and thanks to a combination of reference books and costume enthusiasts, I was able to come up with some pretty accurate and interesting costumes.
Women in Sassanid Persia were more difficult to research, though there is enough evidence from coins, textiles and later paintings to create a passable portrayal.
ANTIAS & ANTAEUS
THUNDER BROTHERS

The character designs of these two thieves were arrived at pretty quickly. I knew that they would both both need to be as large as they were slow. One brother, Antias (sounding like Latin for ‘against’), would be the suspicious but ultimately clueless leader of the two, while the other, Antaeus (named after the wrestler of Greek mythology who matched Heracles for strength) would be a particularly large, silent but winsome brute.
I knew from the outset that Valerian’s design would need to emphasize his dignified position while hinting at a particularly strong soldier’s physique. I also wanted to hide his eyes with bushy eyebrows - a visual cue to his mysterious intentions and setting the stage for later developments in the story.
Though the main plot of KYRIE has been in linear development over the past year, the first chapter underwent considerable changes, right up to the Kickstarter campaign. The main issue had to do with whether the opening chapter would be better as a stand-alone prequel to the larger story, with characters and events largely isolated from the main plot, or as an introduction to the story proper, which puts the reader straight into the opening action and conflict, but resolves very little.

Prequel characters no longer used
I originally thought that the prequel option would be better, and so I developed a story all the way to final script and rough layout. Friends and confidantes read this prequel version and thought that it was difficult to follow and poorly laid out, so I decided to take a risk and entirely scrap the prequel and jump straight into the main plot of the story. Fortunately, my friends believe that this was a sensible change, though it led to many a busy night of revisions!
STYLE & LOOK
VISUAL DEVELOPMENT

It took months to arrive at a clean and efficient visual style for KYRIE.

Most of explorations were to figure out how much I would rely on Adobe Illustrator over Photoshop for painting, linework and speech bubbles.
Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.
CREATING ALEXANDRIA

Though much of ancient Alexandria lies buried in silt beneath the harbor or sealed under the modern city streets, a lot can be inferred from premodern artistic portrayals of the ruins before the present city’s expansion, and surviving architecture from nearby Libya and the Levant.

Based on this evidence, I am able to make 3D models to serve as reference for the panel drawings.
CREATING ALEXANDRIA

Based on the 3D models and the reference, I draw out the backgrounds using Adobe Illustrator, using the Blob Brush tool, as it allows for stylus pressure sensitivity, but still keeps the drawing as an editable vector shape, so that I can make revisions later if needed.

I also paint the backgrounds in Illustrator, using the same tool, as it keeps the shapes clean, simple, and, of course, fully editable. At this point the speech bubbles and rough drawings of the characters are worked out in Photoshop.
CREATING ALEXANDRIA

I then draw and paint in the characters in Illustrator, then bring the file into Photoshop and combine it with the speech bubbles and text, and also embellish the artwork with some textured brushes.

When every panel on every page looks satisfactory in Photoshop, I then save a flattened image and make a multi-page PDF in Illustrator, and the comic is complete!