

THE ADVENTURE ZONE

The Eleventh Hour

#1 New York Times–bestselling creators

Clint McElroy • Griffin McElroy • Justin McElroy

Travis McElroy • Carey Pietsch

\$19.99 US
\$26.99 CAN

Welcome back to ...

THE ADVENTURE ZONE

THE BUREAU OF BALANCE

has located yet another Grand Relic, and this time its terrifying power is . . . time? A small mining town called Refuge has been locked away behind an arcane bubble, and somewhere inside it the Temporal Chalice is causing unknown mayhem. Taako, Magnus, and Merle are literally launched into their investigation, but they've barely had a chance to get their feet under them before the whole sitch goes sideways. When the town clock tower strikes noon, Refuge and its citizens are destroyed in a chaos of flame and ruin, and our heroes' relic-hunting careers—along with their lives—come to an abrupt end.

But whoa, what's this? It's eleven a.m., they're alive again, and Refuge *definitely* hasn't just been exploded? Looks like a classic time loop, friends! This town is trapped in its final hour, and so are Taako, Magnus, and Merle. In order to escape, they'll not only have to solve the mystery of what happened to the chalice—they'll also have to resist what it offers: the chance to rewrite the worst days of their own pasts.

Based on the blockbuster podcast where the McElroy brothers and their dad play a tabletop RPG, and illustrated by cartooning powerhouse Carey Pietsch, *The Adventure Zone: The Eleventh Hour* is a thrilling new chapter in this *New York Times*-bestselling series.

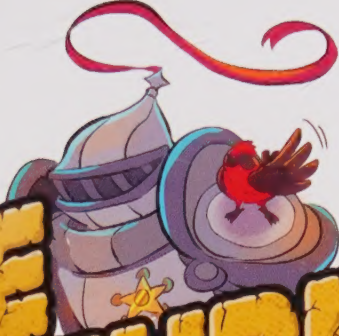


**THE
ADVENTURE
ZONE**

The Eleventh
Hour



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THE ADVENTURE ZONE

The Eleventh
Hour

Based on the podcast by

Griffin McElroy

Clint McElroy

Travis McElroy

Justin McElroy

Adaptation by

Clint McElroy

Carey Pietsch

Griffin McElroy

Art by

Carey Pietsch

:01

First Second
New York



First Second

Text © 2023 by Clint McElroy, Griffin McElroy, Justin McElroy, Travis McElroy
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Letterer: Tess Stone
Flatters: Ensley Chau, Leigh Davis, Cassandra Tassoni
Authenticity Reader: Ryan Douglass
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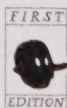
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HOWDY,
COWPOKES!

CARE TO
TAKE A LITTLE
WANDER DOWN
MEMORY LANE?



PREVIOUSLY ON
THE ADVENTURE ZONE:

TARAKO™ FROM TV

MAGNUS BURGISTRES

MERLE HIGHMURKIN

A COZY CANDLENIGHTS PARTY
AT THE B.O.B. ...

NEVER MIND!

GOOD LUCK,
BOYS!

OUR HEROES FACE
A LAB OF HAUNTED
CRYSTAL HORRORS
TO RECLAIM THE
PHILOSOPHER'S
STONE.

NOELLE: A
ROBOT?

KILLIAN + CAREY:
CO-WORKERS?

R.I.P. TO THAT
GUY...

O SHIT

I CAN EXPLAIN.

GOOD AS
NEW!

ANYWAY, BYE!

HEY!

BEHOLD!
ALL OF
CREATION!





DEATH ARRIVES TO ARREST LUCAS FOR NECROMANCY.

A TRUCE IS STRUCK WITH DEATH (KRAVITZ)

HELLO-

REMATCH WITH OLD ENEMIES

ALL OF YOU BELONG IN UNDEAD JAIL!

NECROMANCY

A GHOST

DID NO-THING WRONG

ALREADY DIED???

THE UNDEAD ARE BANISHED.

O FUCK!!

LUCAS ESCAPES!

MY WORK HERE IS DONE.

BACK AT THE BOB, THE RELIC IS DESTROYED.

WHAT AWAITS THEM NEXT?

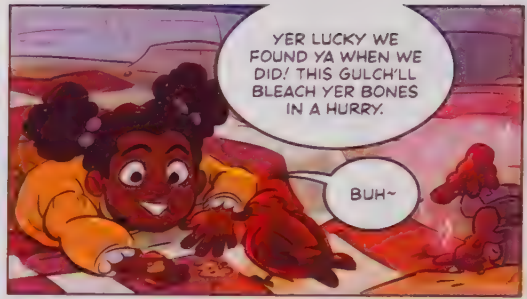




WHHSSHHH



YOU JUST ABOUT CAUGHT YOUR BREATH?





OH! WELL,
THERE AIN'T
MUCH TO BEAR.



LOTS OF CLAY.
SOME DRIED-UP
DIAMOND MINES.

OCCASIONAL
HUNDRED-FOOT-
LONG WORM.



HA!



SOME GOOD
FOLKS, THOUGH.



I CAN
SEE THAT.

C'MON, JUNEBUG!

POOR GUY'S BEEN THROUGH ENOUGH THIS MORNIN' WITHOUT HAVIN' TO DE-SLOBBER HIS CLOAK.

OH, I DON'T MIND!

NYAM NYAM

REALLY, THIS THING'S BEEN THROUGH WORSE. MUCH WORSE.

WELL, WE OUGHTTA BE GOIN', ANYHOW. DON'T WANT TO GET CAUGHT OUT HERE AFTER DARK.

...WORMY.

TENDS TO GET A BIT...

THANK YOU, TRULY, FOR YOUR KINDNESS.

YOU WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO KNOW THE QUICKEST WAY OUT OF HERE WOULD YOU? I'M NOT THE BIGGEST FAN OF OVERSIZED INSECTS.

YOU KIDDIN' ME? WE'RE NOT JUST GONNA LET YOU WANDER OFF TO YOUR DOOM AGAIN.

YOU SHOULD COME BACK HOME WITH US. GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP BEFORE YOU HEAD OUT.





I GUESS I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR A...

...SANCTUARY, OF SORTS. A-

REFUGE?



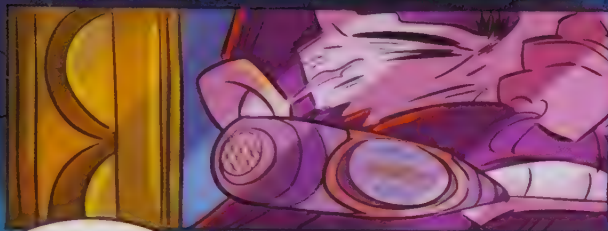
PARTNER...



...YOU'RE EVEN LUCKIER THAN I THOUGHT.

Chapter

1



HE WAS SUCH A GOOD TEAMMATE...

I KNOW IT'S BEEN TWO MONTHS, BUT SOMETIMES...I THINK I CAN STILL HEAR BOYLAND'S VOICE.

BUREAU OF BALANCE

9:30 AM

DIDN'T YOU SAY HE ALWAYS BROUGHT DOUGHNUTS...?

NEVER FORGOT A BIRTHDAY. HE WAS A REAL SWEETHEART...

EVER MEET HIS KIDS? TERRIFIC DAD...

DAVENPORT. DAVENPORT...

I REALIZE THIS IS A RITE OF REMEMBRANCE, BUT ARE WE SURE IT'S THE RIGHT RITE?

NOT TO SPEAK ILL OF THE DEAD, BUT YEAH—WASN'T HE KIND OF A TOTAL TURD?

HE CERTAINLY HAD TURD-LIKE TENDENCIES, YES.

WE'RE NOT WRONG ABOUT THAT, ARE WE, JOHANN?

I KNOW HE GOT ZAPPED INTO A CRYSTAL LAWN ORNAMENT AND ALL, BUT HE WAS STILL A BIT OF AN ASSHAT, RIGHT?

Merle

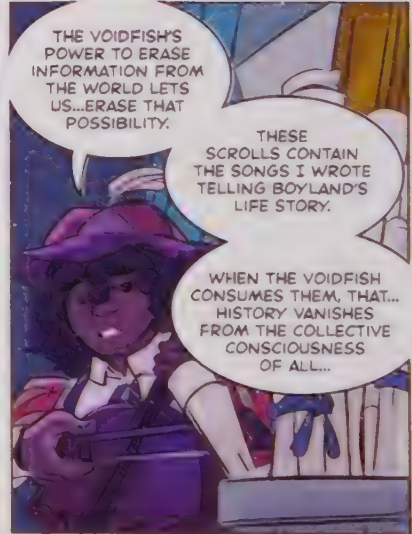
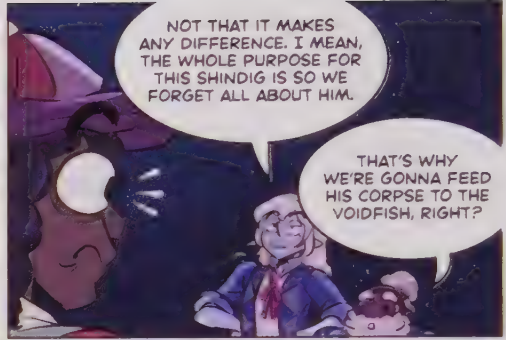
RAGE CLASS DWARF CLERIC
 + PROFICIENCIES +
 + BELT BUCKLE OBSERVATION
 + BARELY ADEQUATE HEALING
 + BELOW-AVERAGE FUNERAL DECORUM

Magnus

RAGE CLASS HUMAN FIGHTER
 + PROFICIENCIES +
 + SLICING UP MONSTERS
 + SUPREME RUSTIC HOSPITALITY
 + SCATOLOGICAL REFERENCES

Taako

RAGE CLASS ELF WIZARD
 + PROFICIENCIES +
 + FOOD-ORIENTED CONJURING
 + FAULTLESS FASHION SENSE
 + FLAUNTING OF AUTHORITY



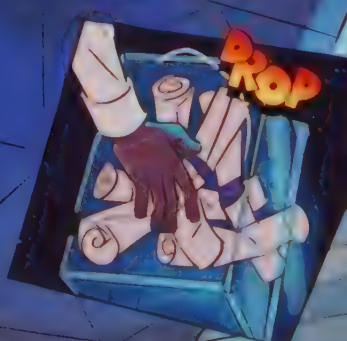




The Director

RACE HUMAN
 CLASS DIRECTOR

- ◆ PROF. C. ENGES ◆
- ◆ remembering the dead
- ◆ protecting the living
- ◆ Making sure there are more of the latter



FLASH!

KAASH!
SHWASH!





MADAM DIRECTOR! MADA-

WHOA...!

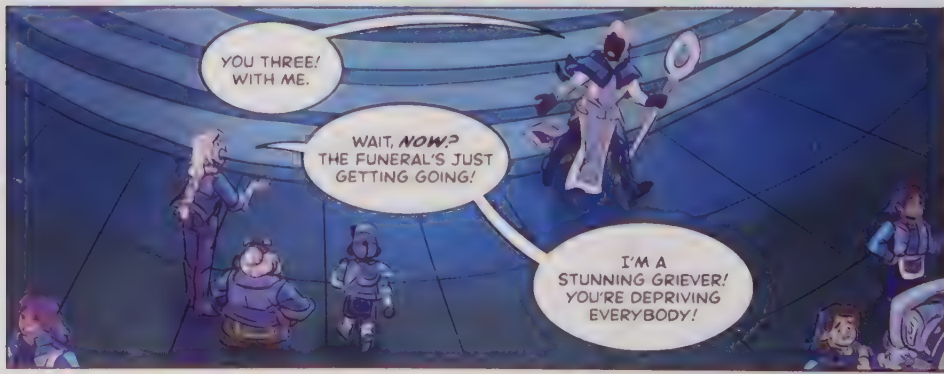
Angus McDonald
RAGE CLASS HUMAN
DETECTIVE
PROFICIENCIES+
Using "zee leetle gray cells"
Perceiving... shit
Really pulling off the whole bow-tie look



YES, ANGUS?

UH...

AVI FINALLY MADE CONTACT. HE'S READY.



YOU THREE! WITH ME.

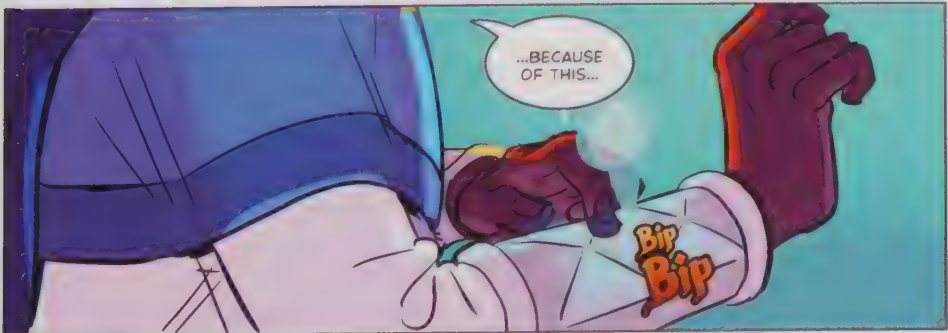
WAIT, NOW? THE FUNERAL'S JUST GETTING GOING!

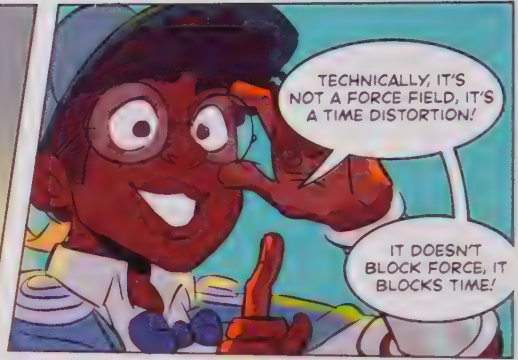
I'M A STUNNING GRIEVER! YOU'RE DEPRIVING EVERYBODY!



9:45 AM







I COULD PUNCH THROUGH IT, I BET. I'VE PUNCHED THROUGH A LOT OF STUFF IN MY TIME.

I BET YOU COULD, TOO, BIG FELLA.

WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS THE SPOT, BOSS?

THIS IS THE TEMPORAL CHALICE: A RELIC THAT ALLOWS THE HOLDER TO CONTROL THE FLOW OF TIME.

WE THINK SOMEONE HAS USED THE CHALICE TO CREATE THAT TIME DISTORTION SPHERE.

Temporal Chalice
Vessel of Future, Past, and Present

WHAT'S MORE...

...WE'RE WORRIED WHOEVER'S WIELDING IT...

...COULD ALTER TIME ITSELF.



WAIT! SO...
IT CAN CHANGE
HISTORY?

ITS WIELDER CAN
CHANGE HISTORY, YES...
WHICH MAKES IT THE
MOST SEDUCTIVE AND
DANGEROUS RELIC YOU
HAVE FACED YET.

PFFFT,
WE'VE GIVEN THE
COLD SHOULDER TO
YOUR OTHER FOUR
UBER-TCHOTCHKES...
WE CAN HANDLE
THIS ONE.

...BECAUSE THE
POWER TO FIX
YOUR MISTAKES IS
A TEMPTATION THAT IS
NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE
TO RESIST.

I
HOPE SO,
TAAKO...



WAIT!
WHAT'S THAT
SUPPOSED
TO—

GET CHANGED,
BOYS. WE'LL RECONVENE
AT THE LAUNCH BAY AT THE
TOP OF THE HOUR.





SO...

...DO YOU HAVE A WAY TO MAKE THIS IMPENETRABLE FORCE FIELD...PENETRABLE?

MISTER AVI HAS ACTUALLY BEEN WORKING ON A THEORY.

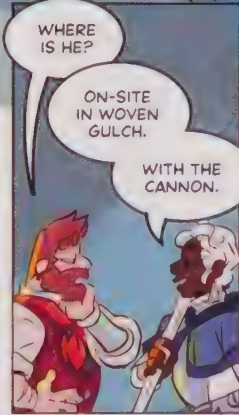
SOUNDS GOOD! LET'S GET THE LOWDOWN!

MY MAN!! AVI!!

10:00 AM



...



WHERE IS HE?

ON-SITE IN WOVEN GULCH.

WITH THE CANNON.



THANK FANTASY JESUS!

IF I HAD TO GET SHOT OUT OF THAT CANNON ONE MORE TIME, I WOULD FREAK.

TELL ME WE'RE NOT GONNA USE THE GONDOLA OF DEATH AGAIN.

NO, SIR! WE HAVE A NEW METHOD OF TRANSPORATION...





Gentle Descent
BABY'S FIRST
FEATHERFALL



VWOMM

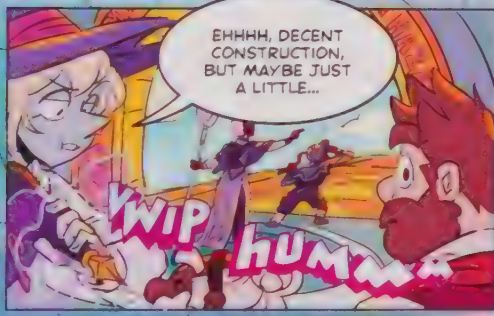
WHESH



WOBBLE

**WOBBLE
WOBBLE**

WESHHHH!



EHHHH, DECENT
CONSTRUCTION,
BUT MAYBE JUST
A LITTLE...

KWIP

hummm



TAAGH!

Featherfall
The real deal in
gravity defiance

WHAT HAPPENED TO
"HE'S REALLY GOOD"?

HE IS...



...BUT
I'M TAAKO.



WELLLLL, LOOK AT MY PRECIOUS PROTAGONISTS JUST ZOOMING THROUGH THE WILD BLUE YONDER!

PRETTY SWEET, RIGHT?

VERY! AND I AM DIGGING THAT AVIAN CHEST PIECE YOU'RE ROCKIN'!

THIS OLD THING? PICKED IT UP FROM MY BESTIE GARFIELD.

GM
Gregory McGloxy
 ACTUAL HUMAN BEING
 CLASS GAME MASTER
 + PROFICIENCIES +
 + Generating challenges
 + Granting levels
 + Guiding Gooftballs

IT ONLY COST ME AN OLD ARMOR PIECE...AND SOME BLOOD.

I GOT THE STRONGMOUSE AMULET. IF IT LIKES MY JOKES, I GET A BOOST TO CONSTITUTION!

WHAT ABOUT YOU, TAAKO-FROM-TV?

DUDE'S JUST WILD ABOUT MY BLOOD, I GUESS.

YIKES.

AND IF IT DOESN'T?

THIS STUPID SLINGSHOT.

I GET STRUCK BY LIGHTNING.

WE'LL MISS YOU VERY MUCH, MERLE.

Magnus
 Fighter Level 10/
 Rogue Level 1
 CONSTITUTION +2
 DEXTERITY +1

Merle
 Cleric Level 10/
 Rogue Level 1
 CONSTITUTION +1
 WISDOM +1

Taako
 Transmutation Wizard Level 10/
 Rogue Level 2
 INTELLIGENCE +1
 DEXTERITY +1

I'M GONNA KEEP IT IN MY BACK POCKET LIKE THE IRASCIBLE TROUBLEMAKER I AM.



DING

SO, AREN'T YOU GOING TO CANCEL MY SPELL AND LET US PLUNGE TO THE GROUND?

OR SEND US INTO A TORNADO OR SOME OTHER GRUESOME DEATH-DEALING SCENARIO?

NO!! OF COURSE NOT!

WE'RE ALREADY IN TROUBLE WITH KRAVITZ FOR DYING SO MANY TIMES...

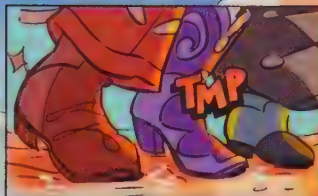
YEAH, HE SEEMED REALLY PISSED ABOUT THAT.

OH, YES...

...I REMEMBER.

TOP SECRET FILES

BY MATT



NICE LANDING!

THANKS, AVI. WHAT'S THE SITCH?

IT'S REALLY INTERESTING. THE TEMPORAL ENERGY FLUCTUATES IN INTENSITY.

IT GETS WEAKER, THEN STRONGER, THEN WEAKER... AND I THINK I'VE LOCKED ON TO THE PATTERN.

WOVEN GULCH

10:30 AM

Avi

RACE HUMAN
CLASS LUNCH SPECIALIST
+ PROFICIENCIES +

- occasional advance man
- operating oversized artillery
- revising percentages

dust dust

OH, WOW! LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THIS BAD BOY! IS THIS A MODIFIED VERSION OF THE YEAGER-68?

NO. THAT'S A PROTOTYPE OF THE EVEN NEWER YEAGER-69! IT SHOULD HAVE NO PROBLEM—

PLEEEEEASE DON'T SAY—

—BLASTING YOU RIGHT THROUGH THAT BARRIER!

...THAT.

WHEN YOU SAY "NO PROBLEM"...

I AM 94 PERCENT SURE THAT IF I SHOOT YOU OUT OF THE CANNON POINT-BLANK WHEN THE DISTORTION'S ENERGY LEVEL IS AT ITS LOWEST, YOU'LL GO THROUGH!

HAVE YOU TESTED IT?

A FEW ROCKS. A SKULL....

...MAYBE I'M 91 PERCENT SURE.



91 PERCENT? WELL, I'M SOLD! LET'S DO IT!

I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'VE GIVEN ANY THOUGHT TO HOW WE'RE GOING TO GET BACK OUT, HAVE YOU?

OH. HM.



YEAH, I GUESS WE SHOULD FIGURE THAT OUT, HUH?

YEAH, AVI, WE SHOULD FUCKIN' FIGURE THAT OUT.

UHH, AVI...?



DO THEY HAVE A GOPHER PROBLEM AROUND THESE PARTS?



SHUMMP!

SCREEEE!

NEVER MIND! NOT GOPHERS!!

SCREEE!!

SCREEE!!



A...BIG GOPHER PROBLEM??

SCRUMBLE SCRUMBLE



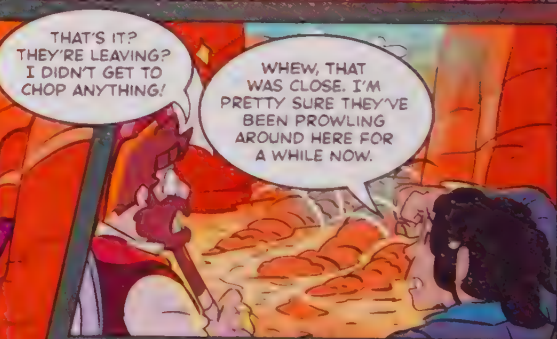
WHOA!
THAT GYM
MEMBERSHIP IS
REALLY PAYING
OFF!



SCREEE!!
GLEAM!
SCREEE!!!



SWEEEEE!
SWEEEEE!
SWEEEEE!



THAT'S IT?
THEY'RE LEAVING?
I DIDN'T GET TO
CHOP ANYTHING!

WHEW, THAT
WAS CLOSE. I'M
PRETTY SURE THEY'VE
BEEN PROWLING
AROUND HERE FOR
A WHILE NOW.



I THINK THEY
WERE LOOKING
FOR SOMETHING.

OH, WAS
IT MAYBE A
RIGHTEOUS ASS
WHIPPING?

BECAUSE
THEY FOUND
IT.

OOOOHHHHHHHHH!



I THOUGHT PURPLE WORMS WERE SUPPOSED TO BE...HUGE.

LIKE, THE SIZE OF A BUNCH OF TRAINS ALL BUNDLED TOGETHER, HUNDREDS OF FEET LONG AND DOZENS OF FEET WIDE—



WAIT! YOU MEAN THOSE WERE *BABY* WORMS?

UHHHHHHH, PRETTY MUCH.



TAAKO IS *NOT* GOOD OUT HERE!



THISSSS... ISSSS...



SOOOOO COOOOOL...

10:58 AM



Inertia Charm
EFFECT Reduces momentum
DESCRIPTION Prevents death by rapid acceleration...hopefully

ONE MORE THING, SIRs.

WHEN YOU
PASS THROUGH THE
TIME DISTORTION...

IF THEY
PASS THROUGH THE
DISTORTION.

...YOU WON'T
BE ABLE TO
COMMUNICATE
WITH US!

YOU WILL
TRULY BE ON
YOUR OWN.

SO BRACE
YOURSELVES,
ADVENTURERS...

KROOOM!!!





FOR THE TIME

TICK TICK

OFF FFFF

YOUR

!!!

TICK

TICK

Chapter

2



TAAKO IS PRESENT-ISH. MAGNUS?

I...*THINK* I'M STILL HERE.

GOOD ENOUGH. MERLE?

hrbrggllhhh...

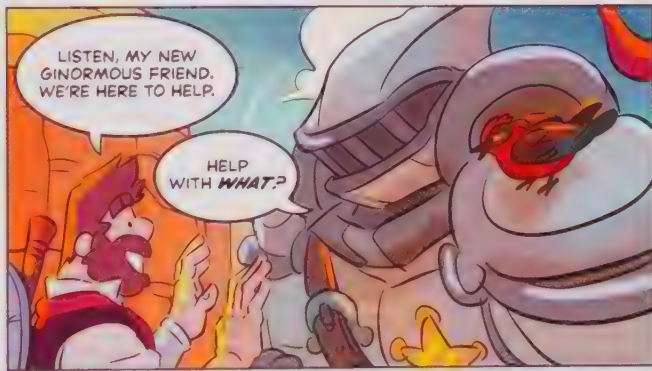
SECONDED.













...



OKAY, I'M GONNA
MAKE A COMMAND
DECISION HERE.



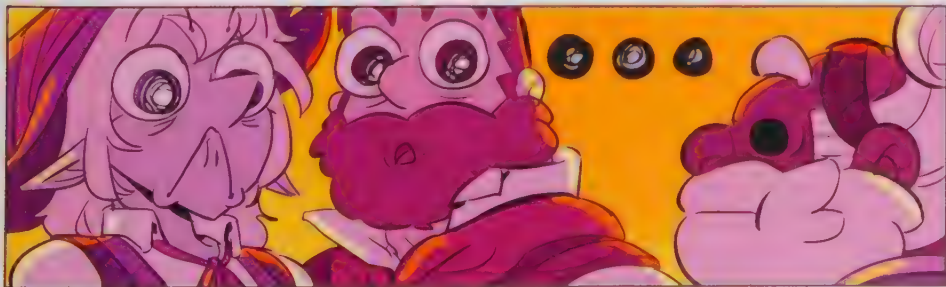
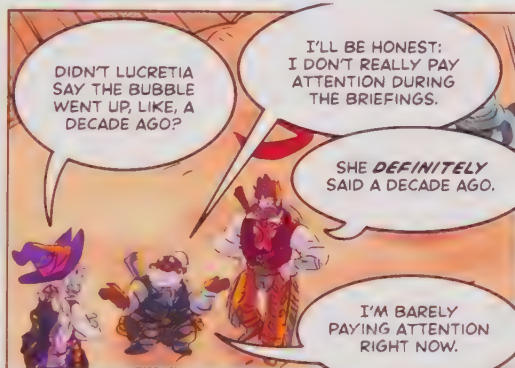
YOU THREE CAN
ENTER, BUT I NEED YOU
TO COME GET CHECKED
OUT BY THE SHERIFF.

SOUNDS
EASY ENOUGH!



JUST...STAY
CALM, PLEASE.
AND DON'T CAUSE
ANY TROUBLE.

OPE! OKAY.
NEVER MIND.





HOW IN THE WHOLE FUCK DO YOU KNOW WHAT RELEVANT...ISTIC...

HE SAID IT AGAIN!

RELATIVISTIC TIME DILATION?



FELLAS, I KNOW LOADS OF STUFF.

APPARENTLY.



SO, TIME'S ALL GOOFED UP, MERLE'S APPARENTLY A PHYSICIST...

I'M AS SURPRISED AS YOU ARE!

ANYONE NOTICE ANY OTHER WILD GARBAGE WE SHOULD BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR—

UM, BOYS?



ARE YOU COMING?



11:20 AM



I REALLY DON'T WANT TO LOCK YOU GUYS IN A CELL, BECAUSE... WELL, BECAUSE YOU HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING WRONG, AS FAR AS I CAN TELL.

CAN I TRUST YOU TO JUST HANG OUT HERE AND NOT DO ANYTHING WHILE I GO FETCH THE SHERIFF?

SURE, SURE, SURE.



ANIMATED GOLDEN BIRD

ANALYSIS:
A formerly inanimate object given life by powerful magic, often controlled by a command word. Also, a bird.

GRAB!

LET ME SEE THAT!

WHAT'S IT SAY?

A "COMMAND WORD"?

LIKE A PASSWORD?



HORSERADISH!

WHAT ARE—

PASSWORD!

OH.

COOLPASS 69!

PLEASE STOP.

NICE.

COOLPASS 70!



OKAY, WELL, IN SPITE OF YOUR INDISCRIMINATE SHOUTING OF NONSENSE WORDS, I THINK YOU GUYS ARE ALL RIGHT.

I HOPE THE SHERIFF AGR-



VRUMBLE!!

KRAASH



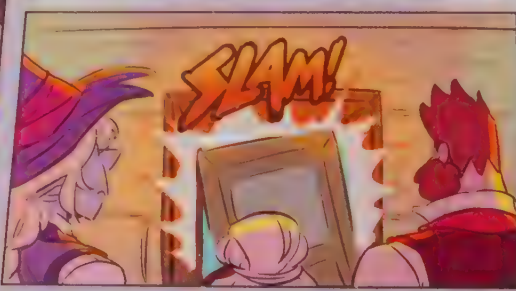
DO YOU GET A LOT OF THOSE?

TREMORS? NO...NOT REALLY. I NEED TO GO CHECK IT OUT.



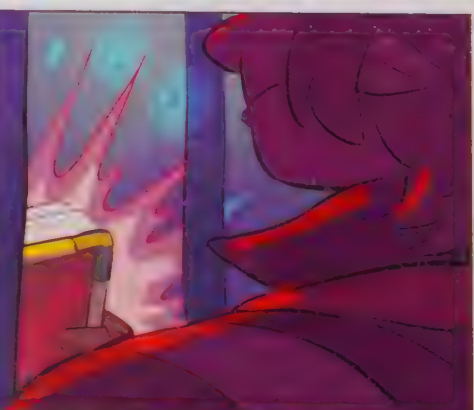
JUST STAY HERE AND...

...DON'T DO ANYTHING BAD!!



SLAM!







WHEE-OOO



WHEE-OOO



11:30 AM







SALUTATIONS, CELLMATE! WHAT DO YOU SAY WE START OVER, HUH?

SALA-DACIOUS?

HOO



WHAT'RE YA SAYIN'?

THAT GERBLIN-SPEAK?

UH...



DEPUTY!
'AY, DEPUTY!

GOT AN INKLIN' THESE THREE ARE GERBLINS, STACKED ON UP, WEARIN' PEOPLE-SKINS!

HEY!



MA'AM, I ASSURE YOU, WE'RE NO GERBLINS.

'AT'S WHAT A GERBLIN'D SAY, HUH?



LET'S START OVER, UH, **AGAIN.**

NAME'S MERLE. THAT'S MAGNUS, AND THE WIZARD WITH THE SOILED ROBES OVER THERE'S NAMED TAAKO.

...CHARMED.



...



AW, HELL, Y'ALL SEEM ALL RIGHT!



YEAH! RUSTIC HOSPITALITY!

HEY, THAT'S MY LINE!

I AIN'T NEVER MET A BUNCHA GERBLIN SKINWALKERS 'FORE.

TECHNICALLY, YOU STILL HAVEN'T.



NAME'S CASSIDY! BUT MY FRIENDS CALL ME CASSIDY!

THAT'S... OKAY, FINE. HI, CASSIDY.

HEYA, MARCHUS.

Cassidy

RACE HALF-ORC
CLASS MINER
+ PROF. CIENCER +

- ▶ Digging diamonds
- ▶ very specific skill set...with bombs
- ▶ down-home homilies



...WHAT? NO, HE'S MARCHUS. I'M TAAKO.

WHATEVER YA SAY, TORGO!

PAT PAT
CRUNCH

OKAY! I THINK WE'RE GOOD ON INTRODUCTIONS.



MAY I ASK WHAT GOT YOU LOCKED UP, CASSIDY?

AW, THAT TRESPASSIN'. USED TO WORK IN THE MINES BELOW TOWN, 'FORE THEY GOT SHUT DOWN. GOT CAUGHT TRYIN' TO SLIP BACK IN.



THEY JAILED YOU FOR TRESPASSING?

I KNOW, RIGHT?



SHERIFF ISAAK TOOK ME IN, 'N' HE CONFISCATED ALL THE DAMN 'SPLOSIVES I HAD ON ME!

OH, OKAY. NOW IT MAKES SENSE.



CASSIDY, YOU SEEM LIKE SOMEONE WHO'S GOT HER FINGER ON THE PULSE.

HELL YEAH. GOT SOME **BIG** IDEAS 'BOUT HOW REFUGE SHOULD RUN.



LOTSA FOLKS TELL ME, THEY SAY, "CASSIDY, YOU GOT STINK IDEAS." BUT YOU KNOW WHAT I SAY TO THAT?

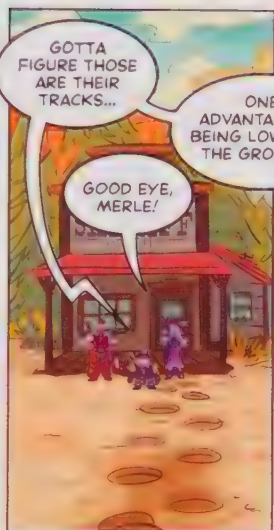
I SAY **THEY'RE** THE STINK... ONES.

THAT'S TELLIN' THEM.













THE EARTHQUAKE
POPPED OUR CELL OPEN!
WE DIDN'T WANT YOU TO
COME BACK AND THINK
WE HAD ESCAPED!

SO, WE...
ESCAPED TO COME
TELL YOU WE DIDN'T
ESCAPE!

SUCKED
HER RIGHT
OUT!

AND THE
QUAKE ALSO...SUCKED
CASSIDY RIGHT OUT
OF HER CELL!

WHOOOSH!
LIKE THAT!
WHOOOSH!

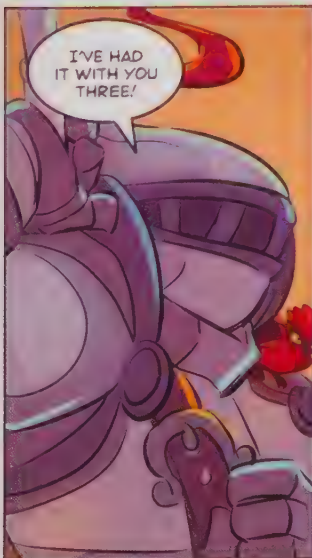


...



DROP.

THAT'S IT!



I'VE HAD
IT WITH YOU
THREE!



**KRACK-
KA
BOOM!**





ROSWELL!! ARE THERE ANY OTHER SURVIVORS?

NOPE.

THERE'S JUST ME AND YOU.



NOW, TELL ME WHERE THE HELL YOU CAME FROM AND WHAT YOU'RE DOING HERE...

SHING!



...OR I'M NOT GONNA LET YOU LEAVE!

BOOSH!

Keeek



FINE! JUST, CAN WE MAYBE CHAT ABOUT IT OUTSIDE THE BURNING BANK?

NO! START TALKING!

Keeek

WIPONSH!



WE-CAME-FROM-OUTSIDE-THE-BUBBLE-WE'RE-HERE-TO-FIND-A-TIME-WARPING-CHALICE!!!



I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!!

NEITHER DO I! LET'S GOOOOOO!

RRRUMBLE



CREAK
KRUMBLE



SMASH!
KKRASHH!



I GOTTA TELL YOU,
I AM REALLY GETTING
SICK OF THIS 'MAGNUS
RUSHES IN' SHIT!

...YUP...STARTING...
TO GET A LITTLE...OLD...
FOR ME...TOO...



FELLAS, I
THINK...WE MIGHT
BE IN TROUBLE
HERE.

I'M SURE...
WE'VE SEEN...
WORSE.



NO, MAGNUS.

11:59 AM

Bong

FRUDDOAAA

BONG!



I DON'T BELIEVE WE HAVE.



BONG!

FWASH!
bong!!

CRASH!

Bong!

ROOM!

ble





??

...

BONG!

BONG

BONG!

Bonng!

Bonngg

Boon

Boon
BOUMBLE

WASH!

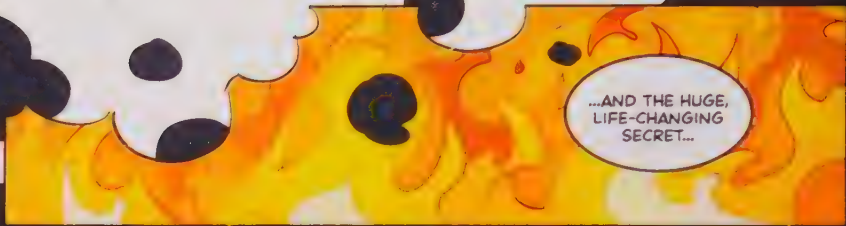
Boon

Boon
BO

12







...AND THE HUGE, LIFE-CHANGING SECRET...



...TO "STEAK TAAKO"...

...IS CONTROLLING THE FLAME TO SEAR IN THE FLAVOR.

FWASH!



SIR, I AM SO THANKFUL YOU ARE GIVING ME THESE MAGIC LESSONS.

FLIP!



BUT WOULDN'T IT JUST BE EASIER TO USE A TRANSMOGRIFY SPELL ON THE STEAK?







SCORCHING RAY
extremely powerful beam of pure energy

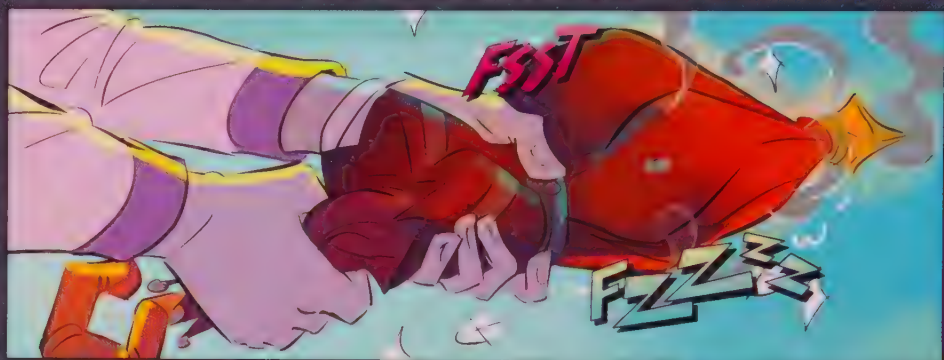


WHAT ARE YOU DOING, SIR?

I'M NOT DOING ANYTHING!!

IT'S DOING ITS OWN THING!!!

ZHOOM!







REFUGE

GREETINGS,
VISITORS!

11:02 AM

WELCOME
TO REFUGE!




Chapter

3



SO...
WAIT, WE'RE...BACK
WHERE WE STARTED?


WHEN WE
STARTED?



LET ME GUESS...
RELATIVISTIC TIME
DILATION?

TIME LOOP!
WE'RE GOING WITH
TIME LOOP!

THIS IS
MORE OF A COUNTER-
RELATIVISTIC TIME
REDUNDANCY...



ALSO, WE'RE
IGNORING THE
BIG PROBLEM
HERE.

OH?

IT DIDN'T
TAKE US BACK FAR
ENOUGH FOR ME TO
SAY "NICE." WHEN AVI
TOLD US IT'S CALLED
THE YEAGER-69.



UM...

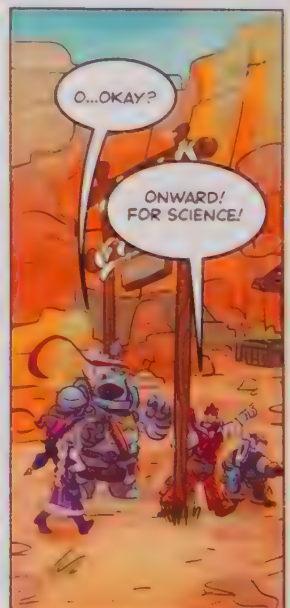
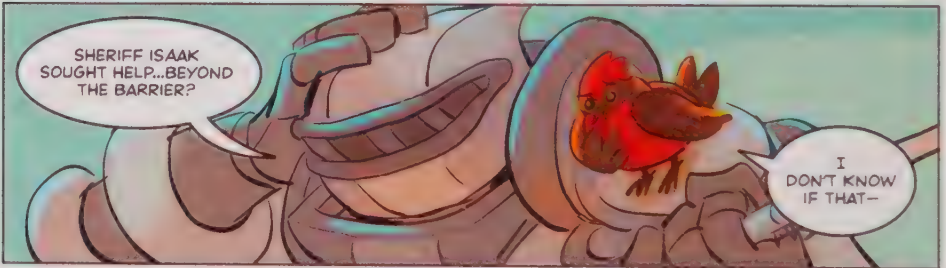
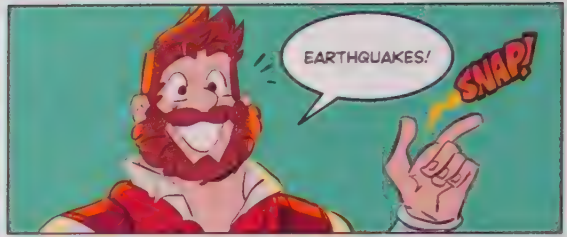
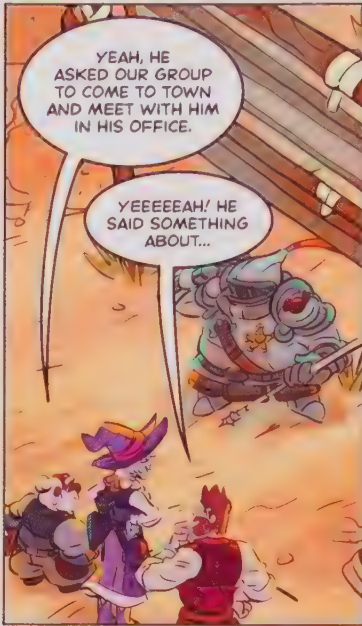
PLEASE KEEP
YOUR HANDS AT
YOUR SIDES,
AND—



YOU MUST
BE DEPUTY
ROSWELL!

WHA...
WHO...HUH?

WE'RE HERE
FOR AN APPOINTMENT
WITH SHERIFF ISAAK.

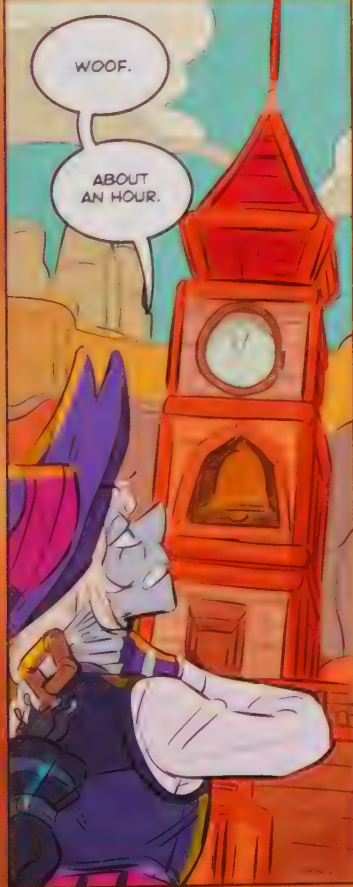




SO, JUST MAKING SURE WE'RE ON THE SAME PAGE...

I MEAN, WE'RE PRETTY CLEARLY LOOKING AT YOUR CLASSIC TIME LOOP SCENARIO.

AT NOON, WE BEEF IT, ALONG WITH EVERYONE ELSE IN TOWN. WHICH LEAVES US...



WOOF.
ABOUT AN HOUR.



TO DO WHAT, EXACTLY?

SAVE THE DAY? GET THE RELIC?

DON'T SWEAT THE DETAILS! I'M SURE THINGS WILL BECOME CLEAR AFTER A FEW MORE FIERY DEATHS.



ASSUMING WE GET MORE CHANCES AT THIS?

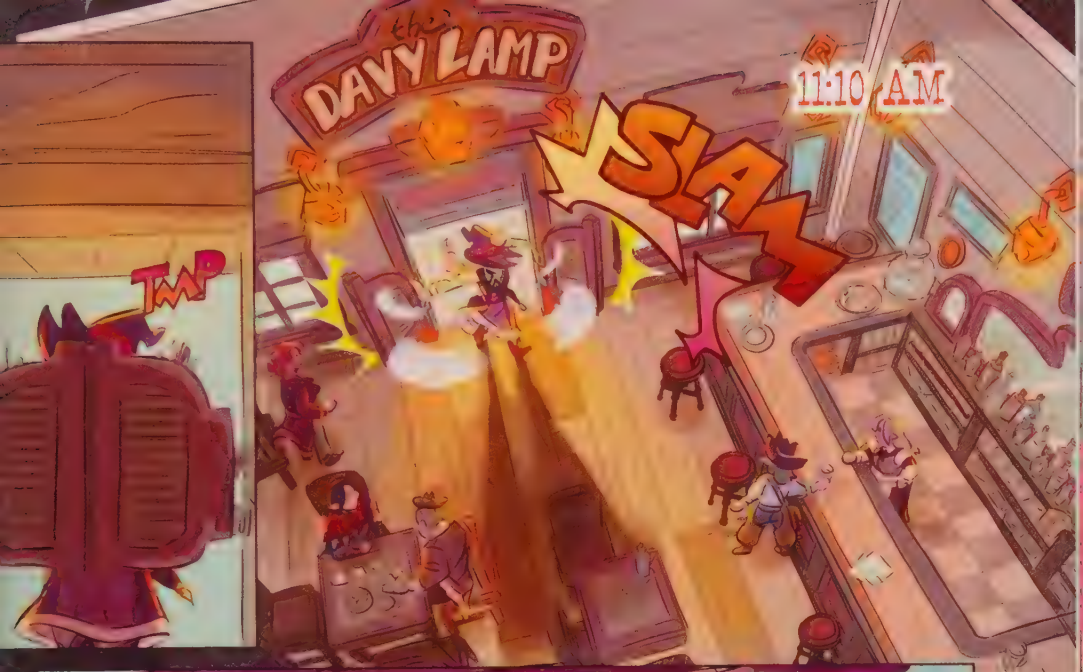
PSH, WHAT KIND OF TIME LOOP ADVENTURE REPEATS JUST ONCE? THAT'S ACTUALLY THE DUMBEST SHIT YOU'VE EVER SAID.



DAVY LAMP

11:10 AM

SLAM



HOWDY.



YOU CAN'T SMOKE IN HERE.

WHAT?

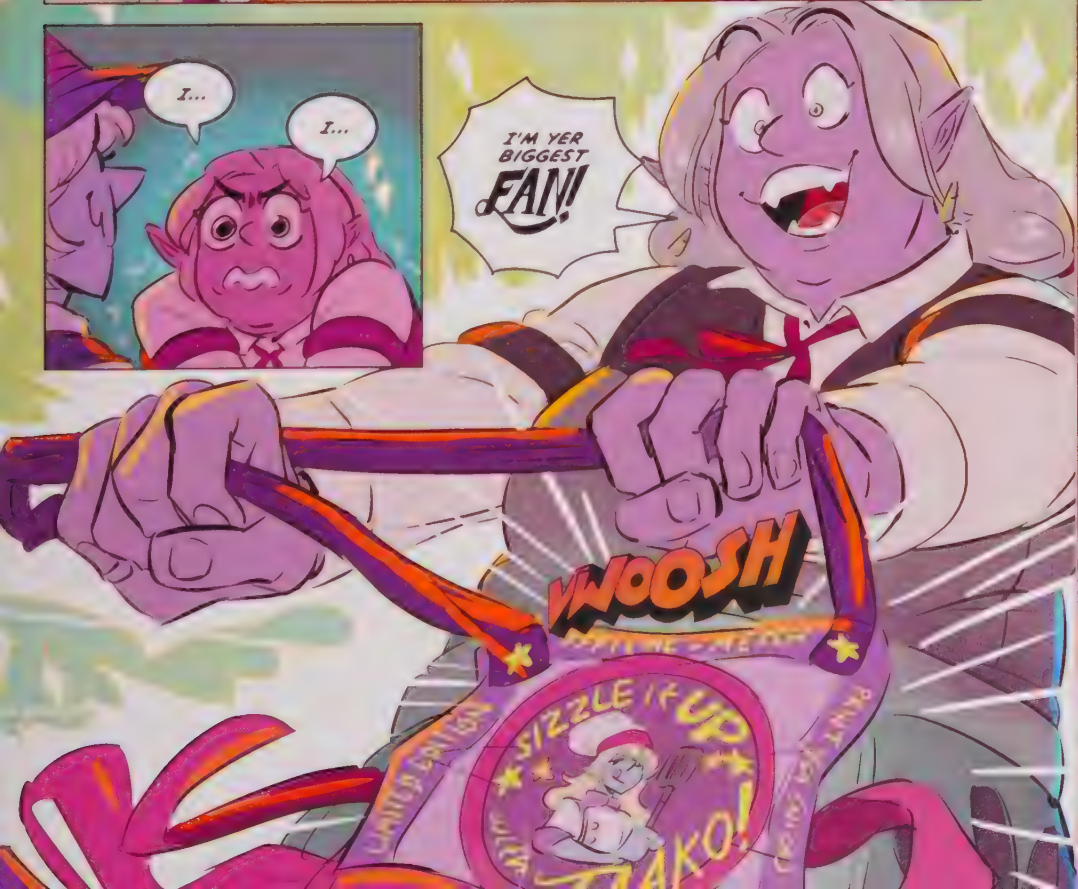


OH!

THIS IS FAKE.

CHOMP







FINALLY!
AN NPC WITH
TASTE!

I WATCHED
EVERY *SINGLE*
ONE OF YOUR
SHOWS!

WHAT THE
HELL'RE YOU
DOING IN
REFUGE?



WAIT, HOW'D
YOU GET THROUGH
THE BUBBLE IN THE
FIRST PLACE?



LISTEN...

REN!

LISTEN, REN.
THIS WHOLE
SITCH IS *WILD*, BUT
I KNEW A *FELLOW*
MAGICIAN WOULD
UNDERSTAND. AND I
CAN TELL YOU'RE A
STUDENT OF THE
ARCANE ARTS.

Ren

RACE: ELF
CLASS: SALOON OWNER

- ♦ PROF. GLENDB ♦
- ♦ Slinging the suds
- ♦ Teako fandom
- ♦ Wizard wannabe



YOU KNEW
THAT? YOU CAN...
*SENSE MY
POWER?*

ACTUALLY, I JUST SAW
THAT GI-NORM-O STAFF
YOU'VE GOT BEHIND
THE COUNTER AND PUT TWO
AND STAFF TOGETHER.

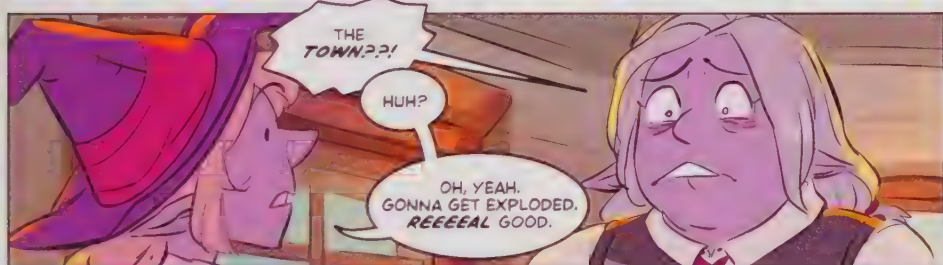
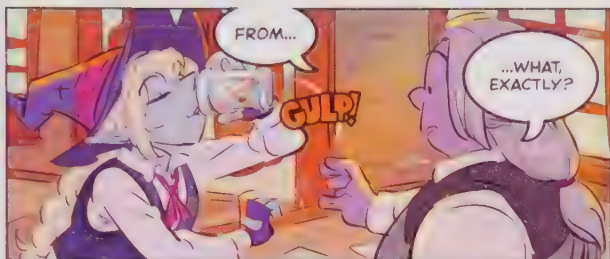


SO, ANYWAYS,
I'M HERE TO SAVE THIS
TOWN. AND BY EXTENSION
THE WORLD, AND BY
FURTHER EXTENSION *THE
LINEAR FLOW OF
TIME ITSELF.*



YOU'RE WHA—

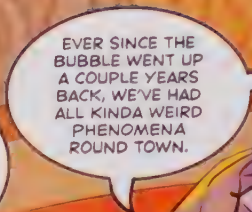
OH, CAN I GET
A SARSAPARILLA,
BY THE WAY?
I'M PARCHED.





WAIT, HAS SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAPPENED BEFORE?

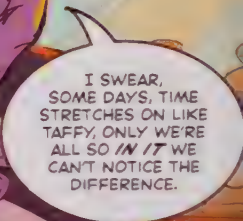
OH, NOT AS FAR AS I'M AWARE! IT JUST SEEMED LIKE WHAT YOU'RE GETTING AT. AND TIME'S ALWAYS MISBEHAVING AROUND THESE PARTS.



EVER SINCE THE BUBBLE WENT UP A COUPLE YEARS BACK, WE'VE HAD ALL KINDA WEIRD PHENOMENA ROUND TOWN.



THE TEMPLE GOT UN-BUILT, THE MINES GOT TIME-STUCK.



I SWEAR, SOME DAYS, TIME STRETCHES ON LIKE TAFFY, ONLY WE'RE ALL SO *IN IT* WE CAN'T NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE.



AND THROUGH ALL OF IT, WE'RE JUST TRAPPED HERE.

SAFE, SOME'D SAY, FROM THE WORLD OUTSIDE. BUT... NAH, WE'RE TRAPPED LIKE RATS.



I SWEAR, YOUR SHOW'S THE ONLY THING KEEPING ME SANE IN HERE.



YOU...STILL WATCH?

OF COURSE, MAN!

YOUR SHOW IN WAJERA WOODS KILLED LAST MONTH!

"LAST MONTH"?

YEAH! AND ONCE THIS BUBBLE POPS, FIRST THING I'M DOING IS GETTING TICKETS TO YOUR NEXT SHOW!

MY...NEXT SHOW?

YEAH!



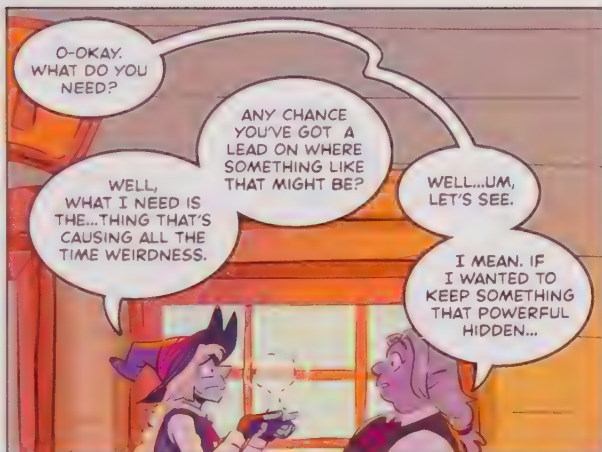
THAT'S GOING TO BE A PROBLEM, REN.

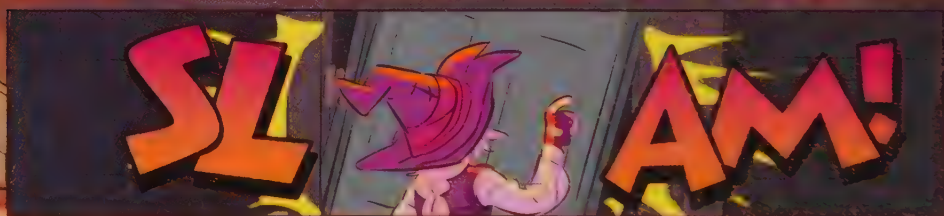
I DON'T REALLY DO *THAT* ANYMORE.



AND IF YOU'RE UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT I *DO*, THEN...

WELL, TIME MAY BE A LOT MORE FUCKED UP THAN YOU KNOW.



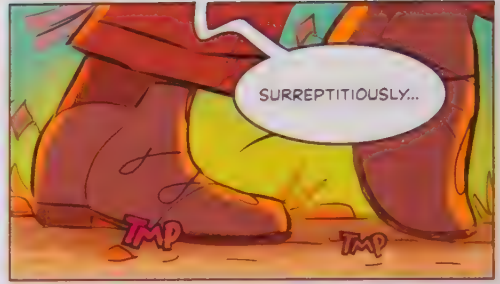


11:25 AM

HMMM.

SHNEE!







I AM PALOMA. BUT I ALREADY KNOW YOUR NAME, YES? INTRODUCTIONS ARE NOT NECESSARY.

BUT, WE'VE NEVER—

WHAT CAN I HELP YOU WITH, MAGNUS BURNSIDES?

Paloma
RAGE KUMON ORACLE CLASS
+ PROF. CENCIES +
Predictions
+ prophecies
+ crystalline Feng shui



OKAY, WELL, MY FRIENDS AND I COME FROM BEYOND THE BUBBLE.

I KNOW THIS.

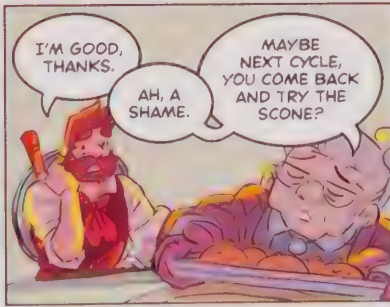
AND... WE'RE HERE TO SOLVE REFUGE'S TROUBLES.

I KNOW THIS, ALSO.



WELL, I'M GLAD ONE OF US HAS A GRIP ON WHAT'S GOING ON HERE.

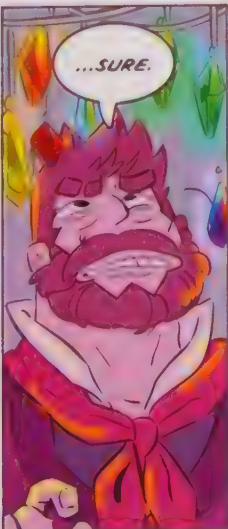
SCONE?



I'M GOOD, THANKS.

AH, A SHAME.

MAYBE NEXT CYCLE, YOU COME BACK AND TRY THE SCONE?



...SURE.



YOU ARE WONDERING HOW I KNOW OF YOUR PREDICAMENT?

I'M GUESSING IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH YOUR OVERHEAD DECOR.



AH, SO OBSERVANT!

MY PROPHECIES. SOME BIG, SOME LITTLE.



THEY SHOW THINGS TO COME. FATES TO BE AVERTED. FATES TO BE EMBRACED.

YOU SEEK HELP? THE PROPHECIES CAN HELP.



OKAY, SOOOO...

DO I JUST... PLUCK ONE DOWN? YOU GOT A STEPLADDER I COULD BORROW?

NO! YOU MUSTN'T!



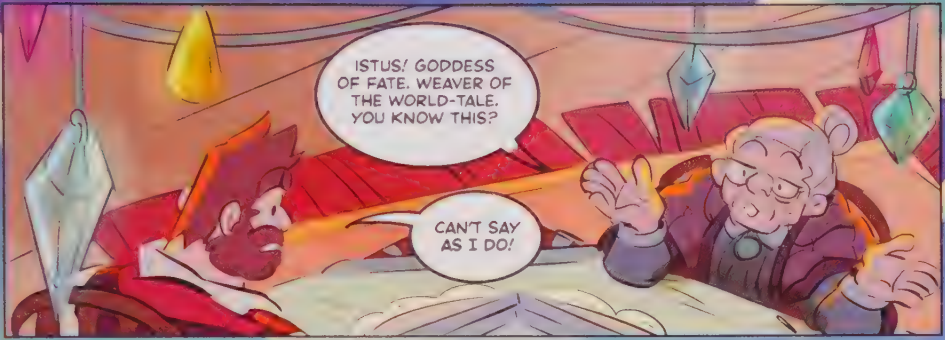
WHEN ISTUS IS READY TO REVEAL HER WHIMS TO YOU...

...SHE WILL DO SO WITHOUT YOUR INTERVENTION.

PAT PAT



SORRY, ISTUS?



ISTUS! GODDESS OF FATE. WEAVER OF THE WORLD-TALE. YOU KNOW THIS?

CAN'T SAY AS I DO!



GUESSING THAT'S HER PLACE DOWN THE ROAD? LOOKS LIKE IT'S SEEN BETTER DAYS.

THOUGH, WITH THE EARTHQUAKES AROUND HERE, IT'S A MIRACLE THAT—

NO. NO EARTHQUAKES. THE TEMPLE IS FINE.



BUT—

IT IS HERE, BUT NOT *NOW*. IT IS LOCKED AWAY IN ANOTHER TIME.



THE DOOR WILL OPEN, BUT ONLY WHEN—

—ISTUS IS READY, RIGHT.



SO, WE WAIT?

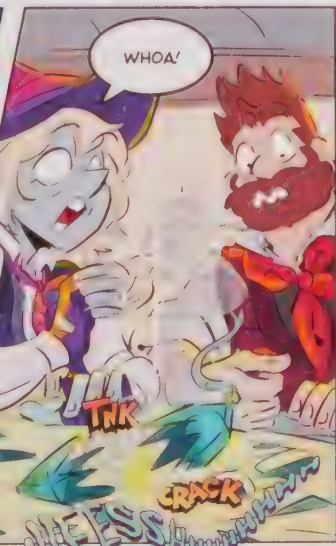
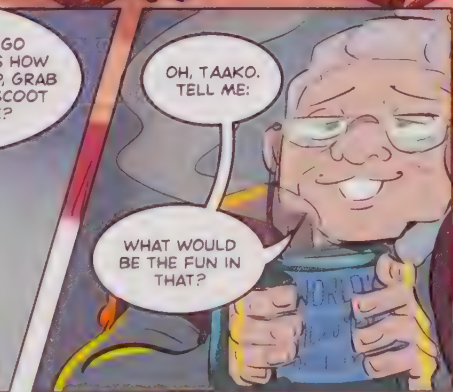
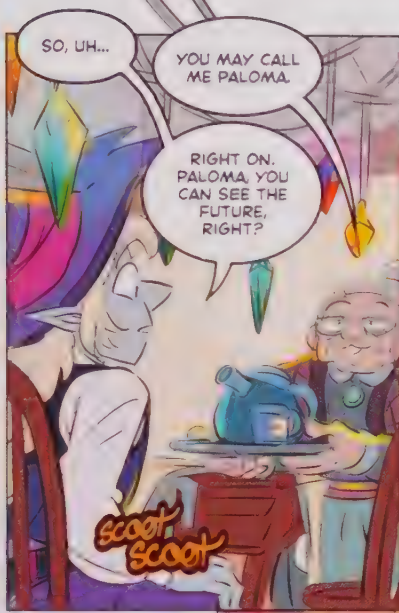
YES. WE WAIT.

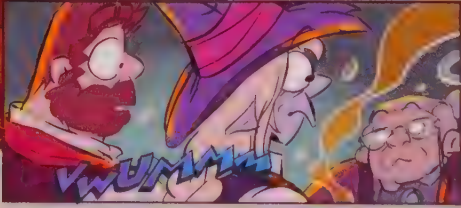
AND SO, I ASK AGAIN:

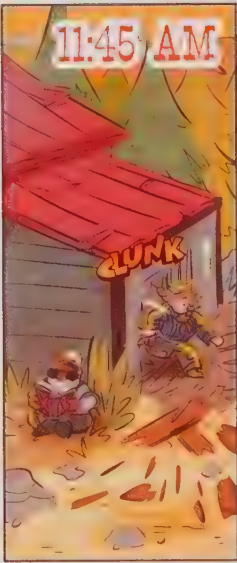


SCONES?









GEEZ LOUISE,
IT'S ABOUT TIME!

Hippicker

- RACE: **DRY DOLL-THING-JERK**
CLASS: **PROF SCIENCES**
- Can open almost any lock
 - With a side order of insults
 - Gives the user a large ration of shit while he does it

GOLLY GEE, MERLE, YOU ALWAYS BRING ME TO THE NICEST PLACES!

HAUNTED CRYSTAL TORTURE CHAMBERS AND TOWNS THAT EXPLODE EVERY FUCKING HOUR! I JUST LOVE LIVING IN YOUR BAG!

KLIK

KLIK

AND JUST A NOTE, YOU'VE GOT SOME KIND OF HALF-EATEN, MONTH-OLD, STINKY MEAT SANDWICH DOWN IN THERE. YOU MIGHT WANT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

KLATCH!

AND CAN WE TALK ABOUT YOUR POSTURE—?

ENJOY YOUR STINK-MEAT!

SHOVE!

FZZT!

MAGNUS CALLING MERLE!





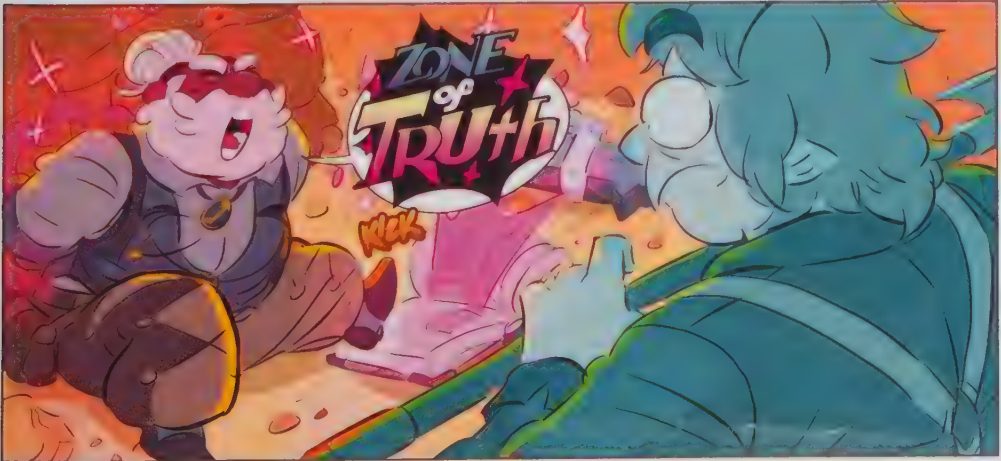
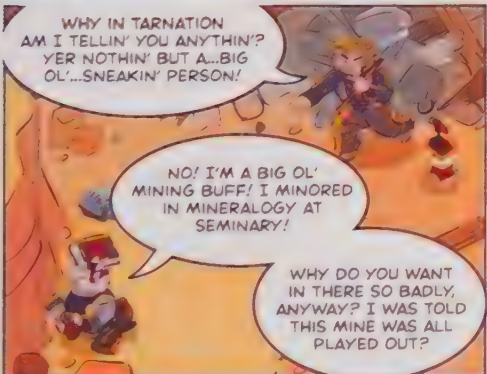
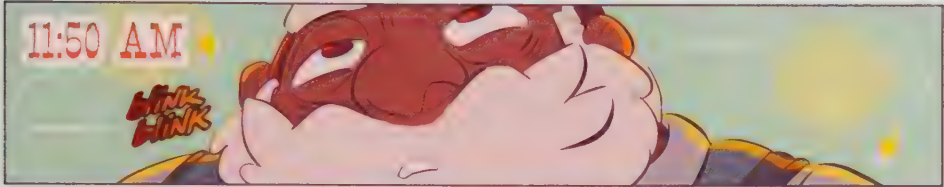
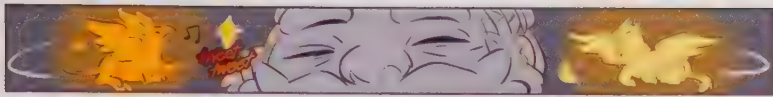


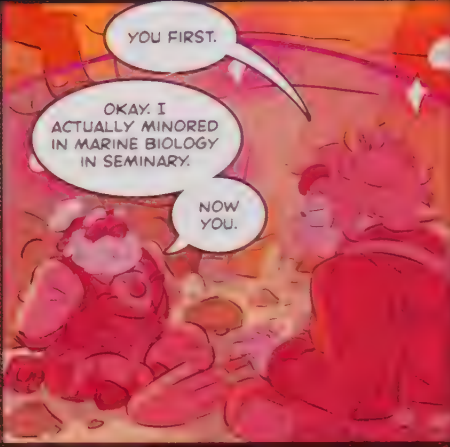
AND I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU THE MOST AMAZING BOOK!



...IT WILL SOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS...









Bong!

...HOLY
MOTHER OF
PAN...

BONG!

BONNING!





BONGG

KROON

BOON

BONG

rrumblee





ADMIT IT...



...WHEN I WANTED TO TAKE A SPA DAY, YOU THOUGHT I WAS CRAZY!



NO...

...WHAT I THOUGHT WAS CRAZY WAS THAT YOU INVITED *ME* TO GO ALONG WITH YOU.



WELL, YOU *ARE* MY BOSS, AND WE HAVEN'T REALLY HIT IT OFF VERY WELL.

AND YOU AND I HAVE A LOT IN COMMON, SINCE, YOU KNOW, WE'RE A BIT OLDER THAN ALL THOSE OTHER YOUNG WHIPPERSNAPPERS.




WHICH YOU HAVE JUST PROVEN BY USING THE WORD *WHIPPERSNAPPER*.

HA!



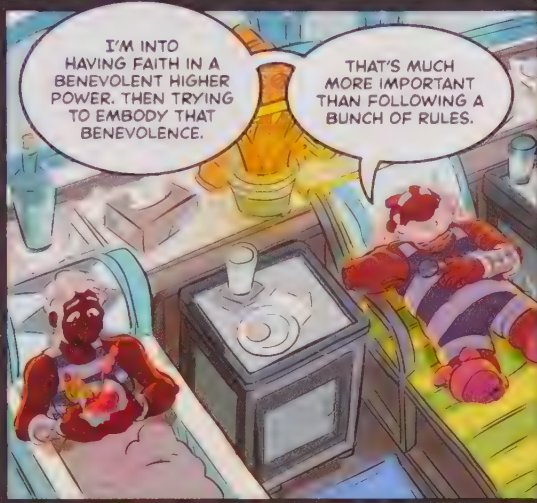
I MUST ADMIT, I'M SURPRISED YOU'RE IN SUCH HIGH SPIRITS, CONSIDERING WHAT YOU WENT THROUGH IN LUCAS' LAB.

WHERE DOES THAT RESILIENCE COME FROM, MERLE? IS IT BECAUSE OF YOUR PRIEST TRAINING?




I MAY COVER IT UP WELL, BUT...

I'M NOT REALLY ALL THAT GOOD AT THE "PRIEST THING."




I'M INTO HAVING FAITH IN A BENEVOLENT HIGHER POWER, THEN TRYING TO EMBODY THAT BENEVOLENCE.

THAT'S MUCH MORE IMPORTANT THAN FOLLOWING A BUNCH OF RULES.




IT'S NOT THE RULES I STRUGGLE WITH.

IT'S THE *PREDETERMINATION.*



I WAS A CHRONICLER, ONCE, BEFORE THE BUREAU.

I DEDICATED MY WHOLE LIFE TO RECORDING THE ENDEAVORS OF NOBLE HEROES, EVEN WHEN THOSE ENDEAVORS LED US DOWN A PATH TOWARD RUIN.



BUT ONE DAY, I MADE THE DECISION TO STOP CHAMPIONING THE HEROISM OF OTHERS AND TAKE THE DIRECTION OF MY LIFE INTO MY OWN HANDS.

I LOST DEAR, DEAR FRIENDS BECAUSE OF THAT DECISION, BUT IT WAS THE ONLY ONE TO MAKE.



SO, IN A WAY,

I'M ENVIIOUS OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH PAN.

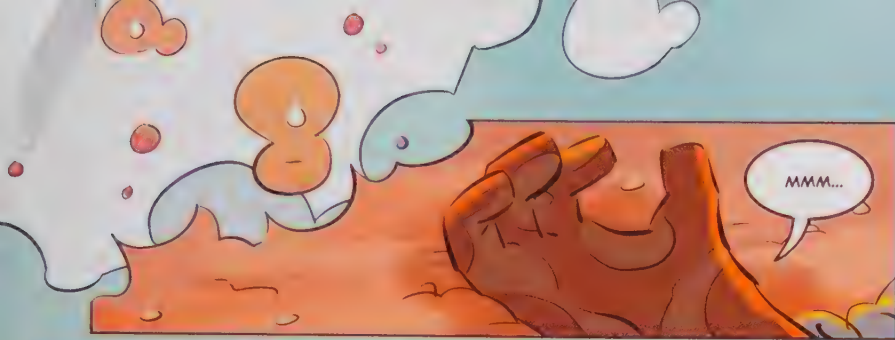


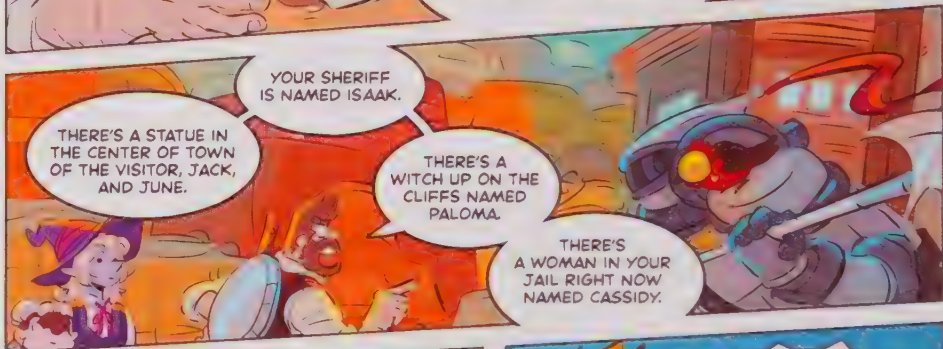


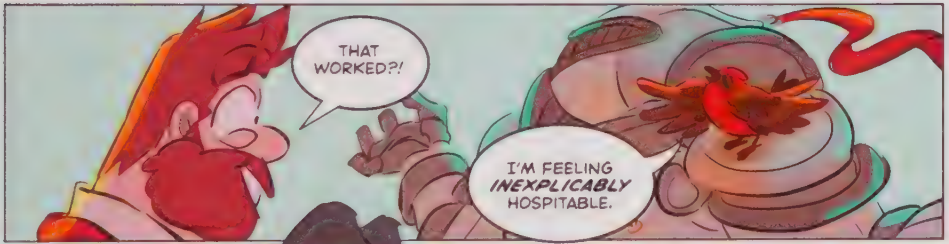


Chapter

4



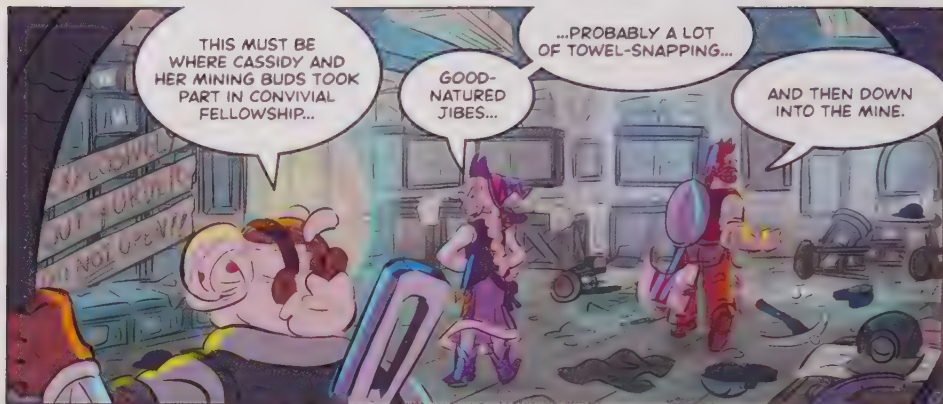








Hole-Thrower
puts a circular hole into any non-living, non-magical object or barrier
USE ONCE A DAY



THIS MUST BE WHERE CASSIDY AND HER MINING BUDS TOOK PART IN CONVIVIAL FELLOWSHIP...

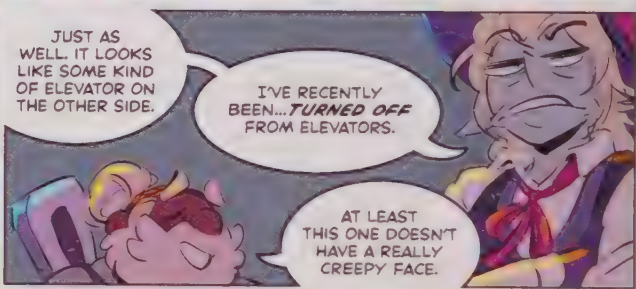
GOOD-NATURED JIBES...

...PROBABLY A LOT OF TOWEL-SNAPPING...

AND THEN DOWN INTO THE MINE.



NOT THROUGH THIS DOOR. IT'S LIKE A MINI-VERSION OF THE TIME BUBBLE.



JUST AS WELL. IT LOOKS LIKE SOME KIND OF ELEVATOR ON THE OTHER SIDE.

I'VE RECENTLY BEEN...**TURNED OFF** FROM ELEVATORS.

AT LEAST THIS ONE DOESN'T HAVE A REALLY CREEPY FACE.



COULD YOU TRY YOUR HOLE-THROWER ON THE BARRIER?

THAT WOULD BE A NO. WE ONLY GET ONE SHOT PER DAY.

HEY, FELLAS, LOOK!



I'M A MINER!

FWASH!

OH, GEEZ! IS THAT REALLY NECESSARY?



ONLY IF WE WANT OUR HIJINKS TO STAY OSHA COMPLIANT.

11:15 AM

THIS IS WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT, ISN'T IT!

THE THREE BRAVE ADVENTURERS, STARING DOWN A DARK MAW OF DANGER...

...DEEP UNDERGROUND, TORMENTED BY SEVERE CLAUSTROPHOBIA...

...HATING EVERY SECOND OF IT.

I THOUGHT DWARVES LIKED IT UNDERGROUND.

I'M A BEACH DWARF! THE CLOSEST WE COME IS BURYING OUR TOES IN THE SAND.

OH, HOW I MISS MY ENDLESS SUMMERS, WASTING AWAY IN—

LESS NOSTALGIA.

MORE KEEPING AN EYE PEELED...

KLEK!

TIK TIK

...FOR TRA—

TIK

WHOOOM!

Chapter

5



...APS.

MY BAD.

11:01 AM



OKAY, GOOFS ASIDE, CAN WE EASE UP ON THE UNNECESSARY DEATHS?

WORRIED ABOUT YOUR K/D RATIO?

WORRIED ABOUT THE LITERAL MANIFESTATION OF DEATH REAPING THE HELL OUT OF OUR SOULS ONCE THIS IS ALL OVER.



UH, G.M.? THESE DEATHS... DON'T REALLY COUNT, DO THEY?

WHO'S TO SAY!

YOU! YOU ARE SPECIFICALLY TO SAY!

WHAT A MYSTERY!

YEAH, ALL RIGHT.



BY THE WAY, YOU MENTIONED SOMETHING ABOUT LETTING US FAST-FORWARD THROUGH THIS PART...?

RIGHT, RIGHT, RIGHT!



SNAP!

11:10 AM

ONE QUICK SPRINT LATER...

ONCE MORE, WITH FEELING!



NOW, MERLE. WHAT DID WE LEARRRRN?

YEAH, YEAH.

WATCH OUT FOR THE PRESSURE PLATES.

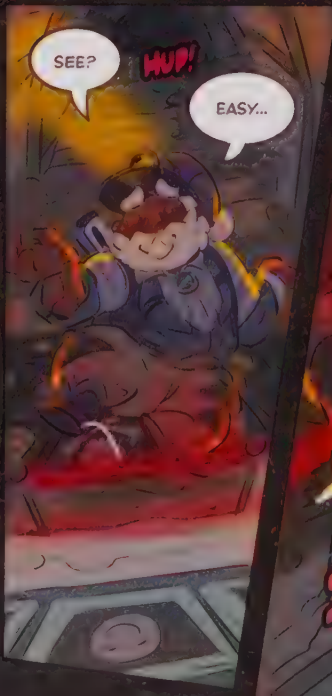


SEE?

HUP!

EASY...

...PEEZY.



SNKT!



TK

TK

TK

TK



WHISK!



Chapter

6



OKAY, TECHNICALLY?!

THAT WASN'T A PRESSURE PLATE...

11:01 AM

ANOTHER QUICK SPRINT LATER...

11:10 AM

MERLE! STAY BACK UNTIL WE CLEAR THE WAY!

OH... ALL RIGHT...

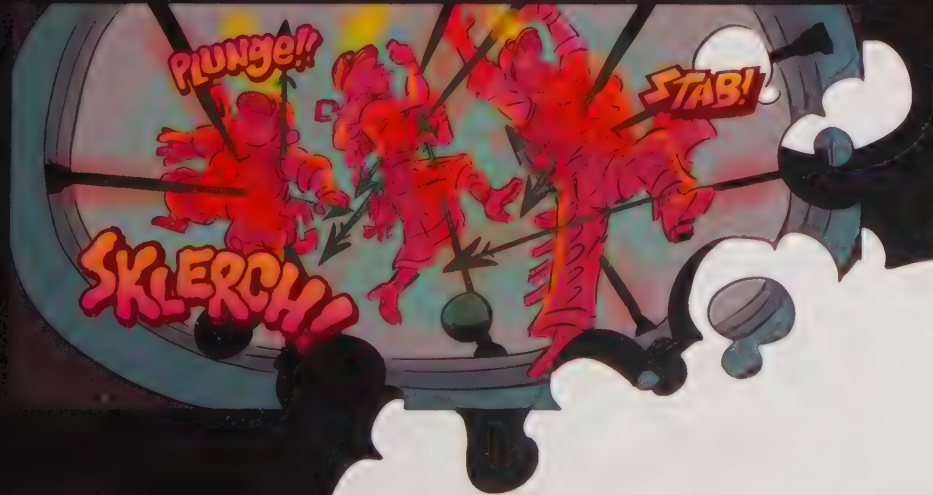


WE DON'T WANT YOU SCREWING THIS UP AGAIN!

KIK! KIK!



TIK TIK TIK



Plunge!!

SKLERCH!

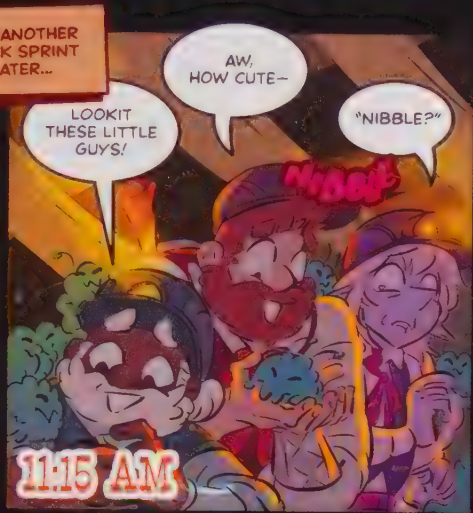
STAB!

Chapter

7



YET ANOTHER QUICK SPRINT LATER...

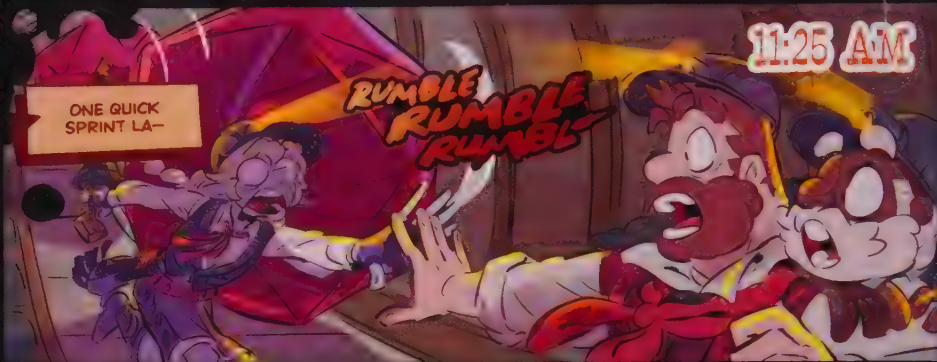


Chapter 8

STILL ANOTHER QUICK SPRINT LATER...



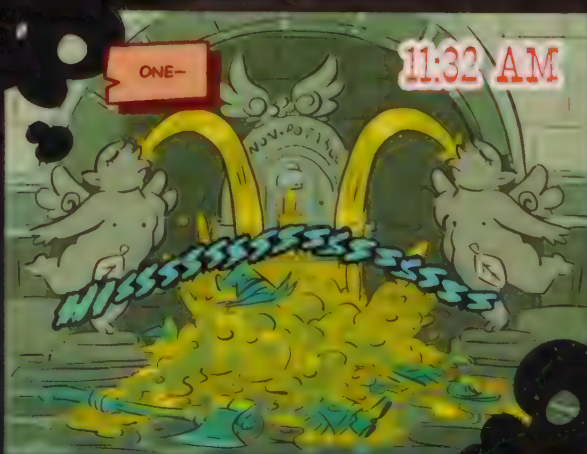
Chapter 9



Chapter 10



Chapter 11



Chapter 12

11:32 AM



Chapter
13

SPEAR!



11:25 AM

Chapter
14

11:17 AM



Chapter
15



11:20 AM

Chapter
16

11:25 AM



Chapter
17

11:25 AM



Chapter
18

11:25 AM



19

MISS



FIRE!



POW!



Chapter

108

ONE QUICK...

SPRINTING

PRESSURE PLATE
STEP-OVER-ING

TRIP WIRE
AVOIDING

TRIGGER-
NON-TRIGGERING

BOULDER DODGING

SPEAR JUMPING

AX DODGING

ROCK CRUSH
NEAR MISSING

SLEEPING ARMOR
NON-WAKING

ACID AVOIDING

CARNIVOROUS
BUG ESCAPING

SPIKE PIT SURVIVING

LATER...

11:45 AM

I THOUGHT DYING
WOULD HURT LESS
IN A MONTAGE.

SHRUC

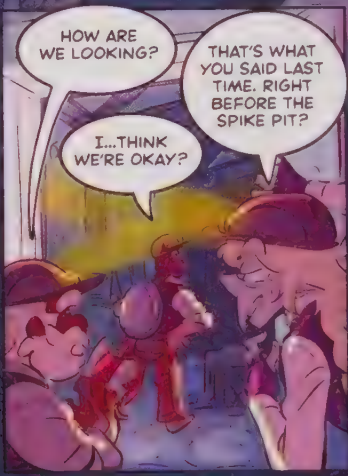




WHOOSH

...

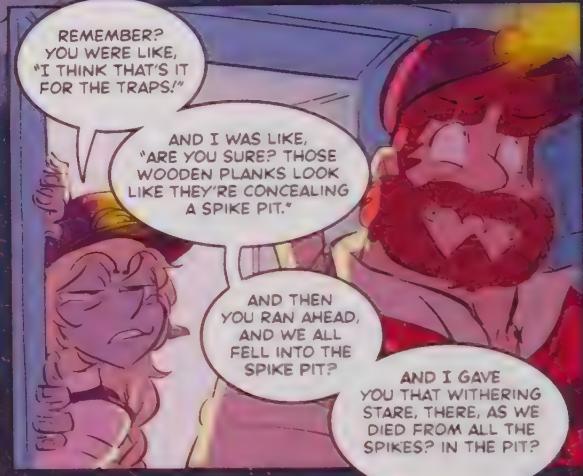
POP!
POP!
POP!



HOW ARE WE LOOKING?

THAT'S WHAT YOU SAID LAST TIME, RIGHT BEFORE THE SPIKE PIT?

I...THINK WE'RE OKAY?



REMEMBER? YOU WERE LIKE, "I THINK THAT'S IT FOR THE TRAPS!"

AND I WAS LIKE, "ARE YOU SURE? THOSE WOODEN PLANKS LOOK LIKE THEY'RE CONCEALING A SPIKE PIT."

AND THEN YOU RAN AHEAD, AND WE ALL FELL INTO THE SPIKE PIT?

AND I GAVE YOU THAT WITHERING STARE, THERE, AS WE DIED FROM ALL THE SPIKES? IN THE PIT?



THIS TUNNEL LOOKS LIKE IT'S SEEN SOME ACTIVITY RECENTLY.

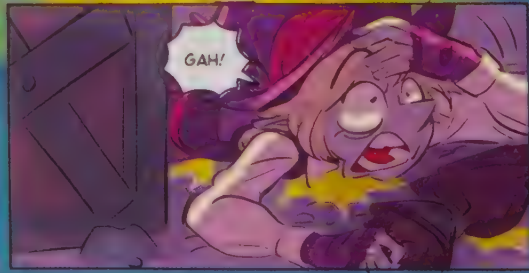
YEAH, I THINK WE REALLY ARE THROUGH IT NOW.



WELL, ONLY BECAUSE YOU BOTH SEEM—

KRA

RO OOM!



GAH!





THAT GIRL...

IS THAT...?



JUNE, YEAH. I RECOGNIZE HER FROM THE STATUE.

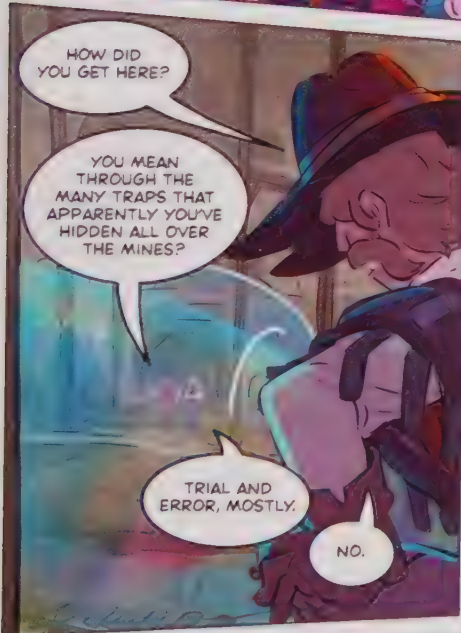
LOOKS LIKE HER AND THE CHALICE ARE LOCKED UP IN ANOTHER BUBBLE.



I THOUGHT SOMETHING FELT DIFFERENT.

AND JUDGING BY THE HARDWARE ON HIS VEST, I'M GUESSING THAT'S SHERIFF ISAAK. WHY IS HE—

Isaak
RAGE HUMAN
CLASS SHERIFF
♦ PROFICIENCIES +
♦ Frontier Justice
♦ overseeing artifacts
♦ Debuting halfway through a story





YOU'RE...

...LOOKING FOR THE CUP, I TAKE IT?



ACTUALLY, WE'LL TAKE IT!

HEH.

NOT SO HASTY, PARTNER.



OH MY GOD! HE ACTUALLY SAID "PARTNER"! LIKE A REAL COWPOKE!

UH, IS HE TALKING ABOUT THE CHALICE? HE SHOULDN'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS, RIGHT?



THAT'S... WEIRD, YEAH.

MAYBE HE'S A GHOST? THE VOIDFISH DIDN'T AFFECT NOELLE.

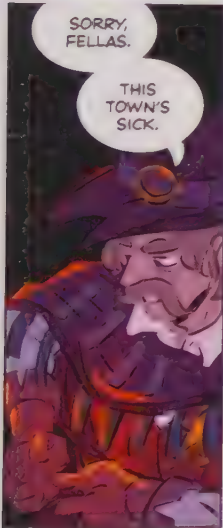
I DUNNO, HE SEEMS PRETTY CORPOREAL TO ME.

IF YOU'RE FINISHED.



THIS TOWN AIN'T HITTIN' THE RADAR OF EVERY RELIC-HUNTING ROYAL BASTARD LONG AS I'M KICKIN'.

SO YOU BOYS CAN TURN RIGHT AROUND AND GO BACK TO WHATEVER WAR-TORN HELLHOLE YOU CAME FROM.





LISTEN, PAL, WE--

DON'T WASTE YOUR BREATH, MAG. HE'S NOT GONNA BUDGE.

GLAD YOU'RE LISTENIN' TO REASON.



OH, NO, SORRY!

CLAD



WE'RE ABSOLUTELY TAKING THE CUP.

AFTER WE FIGURE OUT HOW TO DESTROY THESE BARRIERS, AND OVERPOWER YOU WITH TREMENDOUS--AND SOME MIGHT ARGUE EXCESSIVE--FORCE.



OH, IS THAT SO?

BONG!

I'M THINKIN' YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT TIME FOR THAT KINDA ENDEAVOR.

UNFORTUNATELY FOR US BOTH, WE'VE GOT ALL KINDS OF TIME.

**BONG!
BONG!**

**BONG
BONG**

SPEAKING OF WHICH, YOU, UH... MIGHT WANT TO ASSUME THE FETAL POSITION. THIS NEXT PART'S ROUGH.

BONG

HEH.

HOW ABOUT THAT.

YOU BOYS ARE LOOPIN', TOO, AREN'TCHA?

BONG!

BONG!!

BONG!

BONG!

WUUMBLE

BONG

VWAASHHH

Chapter
109



WELP.

THAT
COMPLICATES
THINGS.



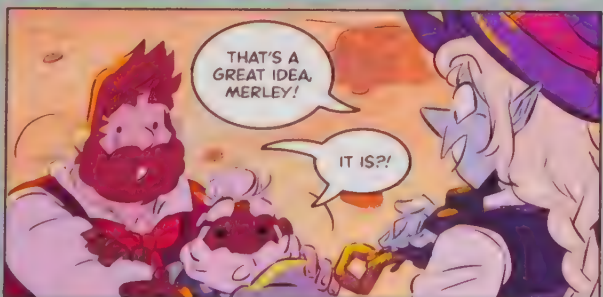
I THINK
WE NEED A
BREAK...

...LET'S HAVE
A FUN ONE!



GO TO THE
SALOON, PLAY
SOME SHUFFLEBOARD,
THROW BACK A FEW
EXOTIC DRINKS SERVED
IN COCONUTS...

HAVE A
FEW LAUGHS
UNTIL NOON!
WE DESERVE
IT!



THAT'S A
GREAT IDEA,
MERLEY!

IT IS?!



YOU BET!

I JUST
WANNA MAKE
ONE SLIGHT
TWEAK TO THE
AGENDA...

11:10 AM

SLAM!

WHO WANTS TO ROB A DAMNED BANK?!

HEHE-HEH, THAT'S A REAL FUNNY JOKE, STRANGER!

AIN'T NOBODY HERE TALKIN' ABOUT ROBBIN' ANY-

...WAIT A SECOND! AREN'T YOU-

YES! TAAKO FROM TV!

AND YOU'RE MY BIGGEST FAN. I KNOW BECAUSE I KNOW EVERYTHING, AND IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO PAY UP FOR ALL THE INSPIRATION AND TITILLATION I'VE PROVIDED OVER THE YEARS.

PRODUCTION COSTS HAVE GONE THROUGH THE ROOF, AND I NEED TO DRUM UP SOME QUICK CASH FOR MY NEXT BIG EXTRAVAGANZA!

I HEARD YOU AND YOUR PURPLE-NECKERCHIEF CRONIES WERE GOING TO KNOCK OVER THE BANK, AND I WANT TO GET MY BEAK WET, AS THEY SAY...

BUT...HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE PLAN?

OH! UH, I DID A SPELL. OR SOMETHING. A MAGICAL... PLAN-REVEALING SPELL.

OH. THOSE EXIST?

APPARENTLY!





REFUGE IS **WITHERING**. A COMMUNITY CAN'T SURVIVE IN ISOLATION LIKE THIS. WE GOTTA GET OUT.

SOUNDS LIKE WE'RE ON THE SAME PAGE, THEN.

WHATEVER'S IN THAT VAULT, I'M CONVINCED IT'S THE KEY TO BRINGING DOWN THE BARRIER AND **FINALLY** SETTING US FREE!



THE CUP'S DOWN IN THE MINE, RIGHT? SO, WHAT'S IN THE BANK?

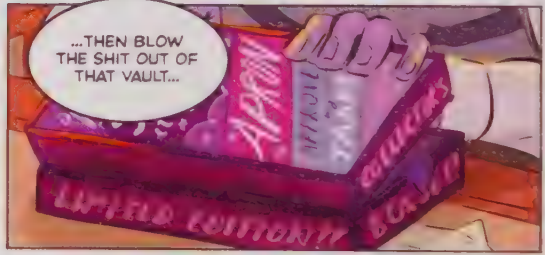
SOMETHING ISAAK DOESN'T WANT US TO HAVE.

ROB FIRST, ASK QUESTIONS LATER.



HOW, EXACTLY, ARE YOU PLANNING ON STEALING IT?

FIRST, WE'RE GOING TO GET EVERYBODY OUT OF THE BANK...



...THEN BLOW THE SHIT OUT OF THAT VAULT...



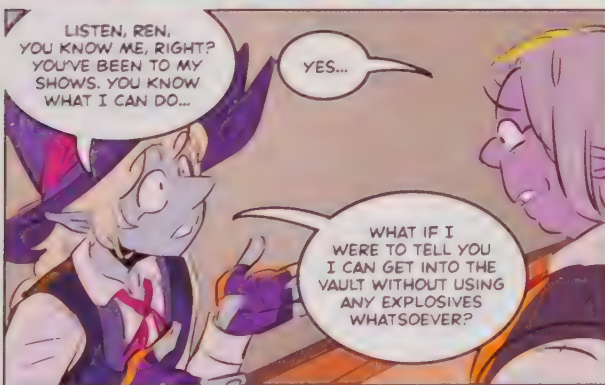
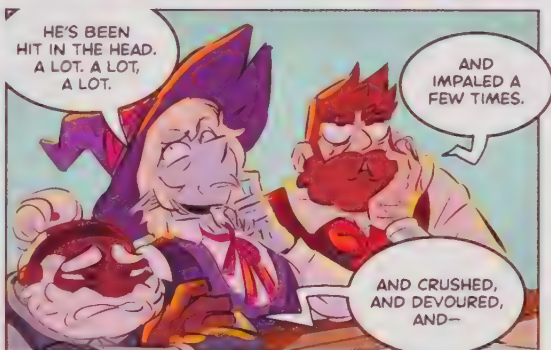
...WITH THIS!



AAAAHHHH NO PAN PLEASE NOOOOOO!

WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM?

HE'S FINE. WE'VE JUST BEEN...**INTIMATELY ACQUAINTED** WITH BEING EXPLODED TODAY.





SETTLE DOWN,
I'M JUST FUCKIN'
WITH YA.

PHEW.



ALL RIGHT.
HERE'S WHAT
I'LL DO.

WE'LL GIVE
YOU GUYS A FEW
MINUTES. WE'LL HIDE
OUTSIDE WHILE YOU
THREE GO IN AND DO
YOUR MAGIC
THING.

IF YOU CAN'T
PULL IT OFF...

...WE'LL
COME IN...

...AND DO
IT OUR WAY.



MUCH
BETTER
PLAN!

BUT WE HAVE
TO MAKE ONE
STOP FIRST.

HU!



AND I
NEED THIS!

SWIPE!

11:25 AM



DEPUTY ROSWELL! DEPUTY ROSWELL!



A BUNCH OF BAD, BAD MEN WITH PURPLE HANDKERCHIEFS OVER THEIR FACES ARE VANDALIZING THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE!



THANKS, UNUSUALLY CONSCIENTIOUS GERBLIN!



SO, YOU'VE JUST GOT A SPARE GERBLIN FACE IN YOUR BAG?

FIRST OFF, IT'S RUBBER. I'M NOT A SERIAL KILLER!



SECOND OFF, YOU DON'T GET TO HATE ON MY RUSE WHEN YOU'VE GOT A PERFECTLY GOOD HOLE-THROWER THAT COULD SHORT-CIRCUIT THIS WHOLE MESS.

IT'S ONE USE PER LOOP! I WANT TO SAVE IT TO GET US OUT OF TROUBLE, NOT INTO A POTENTIALLY BOOBY-TRAPPED VAULT!



IT WAS AN EXCELLENT RUSE, MERLE.

THANK YOU.

MAYBE NEXT TIME, THOUGH...



...YOU COULD DIVERT THE MARK TO SOMEWHERE NOT TWO DOORS DOWN FROM THE BANK WE'RE ROBBING.?

OH.

NOTED.

11:40 AM

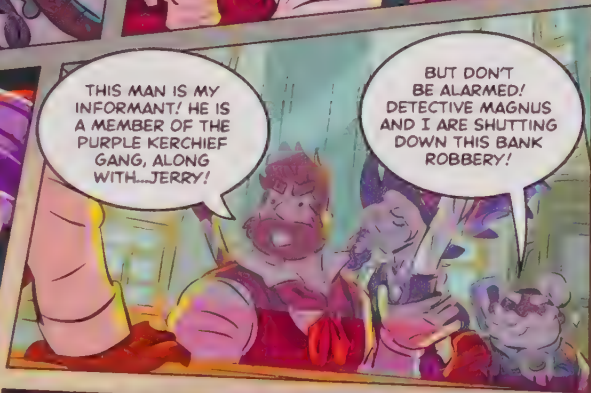


Brogden

RACE DWARF
CLASS BANKER
PROF SCIENCES

- ▶ smiling customer service
- ▶ dispensing toasters if you play your cards right
- ▶ Member FDIC







KRAACK!



SMASHINKLE

PHUT!

PHUT!
PHUT!

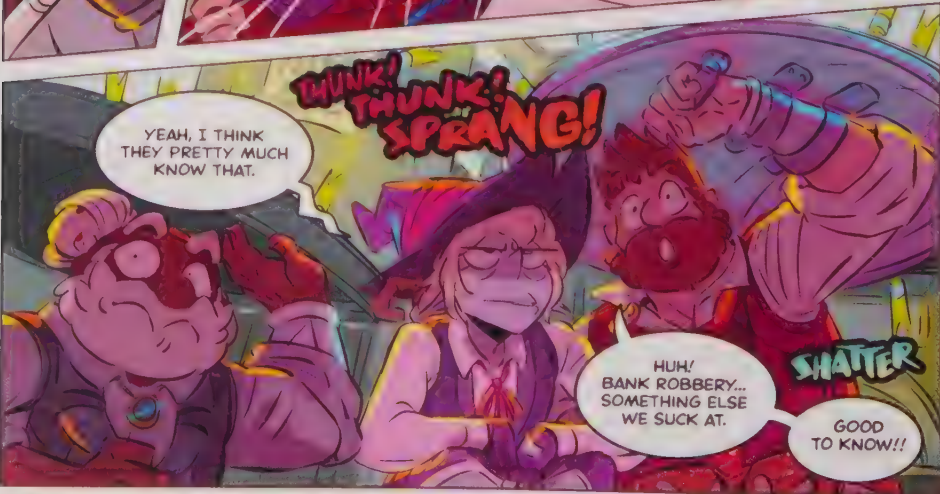
offuhh!



TMP
TMP
TMP

SLAM!

THIS IS A
HOLDUP!



THUNK!
THUNK!
SPRANG!

YEAH, I THINK
THEY PRETTY MUCH
KNOW THAT.

HUH!
BANK ROBBERY...
SOMETHING ELSE
WE SUCK AT.

SHATTER

GOOD
TO KNOW!!



SPINN
GREAKK

WE'VE GOT TO GET INTO THAT VAULT BEFORE THINGS GET ANY SHITTIER!!

SLAMM!

11:48 AM

...



IT'S SHITTIER.



ALL OF THIS IS MY FAULT!

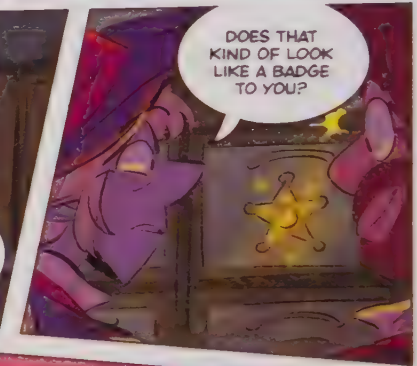
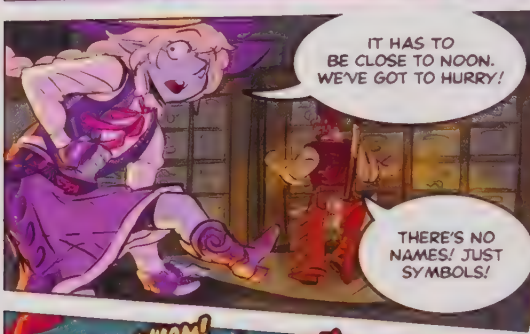
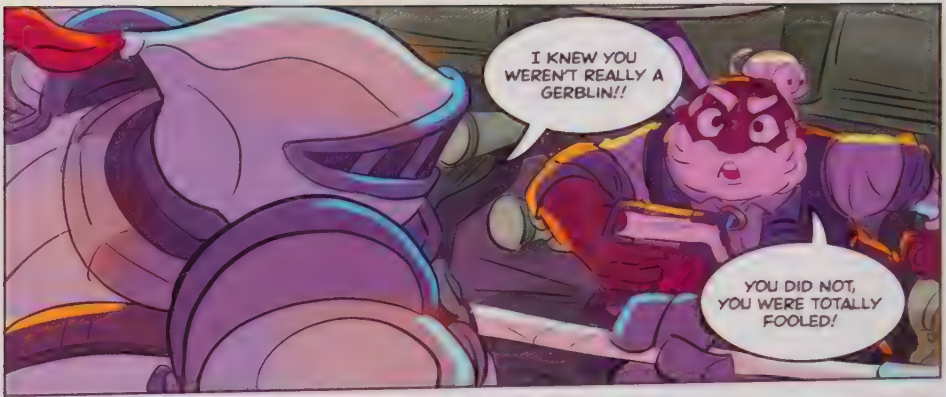
YOU GUYS GET TO THE VAULT!



...HEY, THAT RHYMES...









KEY!
HEY, WE GOT
A KEY HERE!
AND A...DIARY,
I THINK!

...THE TEMPLE/
ISAAK MUST HAVE
LOCKED UP THE
TEMPLE ON
THE HILL!

WE'VE STILL
GOT A COUPLE MINUTES
BEFORE WORM-TIME! IF
I GO NOW, I CAN MAKE
IT UP TO—

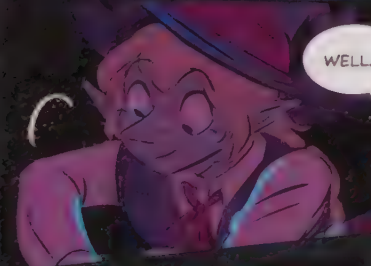
KREEAAAK!



**SHIAM!
SPIN!**



WELP.



WELL...



...IT WAS A
GOOD PLAN...



STILL IS.



SHWAZZZ!!



YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE LEFT! WHY DON'T YOU SURR-



OOH! IS THAT AN ADAMANT SPANNER?!

YEAH! PRETTY SWEET, HUH? PICKED IT UP BACK IN MY BATTLEWAGON RACING CAREER!

ARE THEY REALLY ALL SOUPED-UP WITH MAGICKS?



YOU TELL ME!

SHHAP!



HUH...

**PIURT
PIURT**



ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?

ABSOLUTELY! YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO HAS A CHANCE OF GETTING THERE IN TIME!

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?



CATCH UP ON MY READING.

11:52 AM

"TODAY WAS THE DAY I RUINED THREE LIVES..."



"...JACK'S, JUNE'S..."



"...AND MY OWN."



"AS SHE WAS WONT TO DO, JUNE HAD WANDERED OFF INTO THE MINES."

"SO, JACK AND I SET OUT SEARCHING FOR HER, AS WE WERE WONT TO DO."


"BUT WHEN OUR SEARCH TOOK US TOWARD AN OPEN SHAFT...I FOUND SOMETHING ELSE."




"I FOUND MY OPPORTUNITY."

"I FOUND DAMNATION."





"FROM THE MOMENT
THE VISITOR LEFT IT IN
JACK'S CARE, I KNEW THERE
WAS NOTHING I WOULDN'T
DO TO GET THAT CUP."



"IT'S LIKE I COULD
HEAR IT SPEAK TO ME
IN MY MIND."

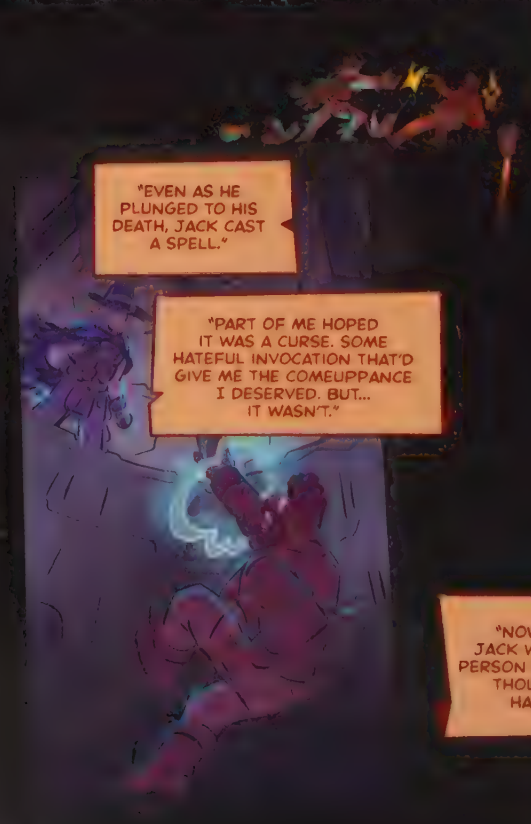


"IT PROMISED
ME...EVERYTHING."




"SO..."

"...I MURDERED MY BEST FRIEND."



"EVEN AS HE
PLUNGED TO HIS
DEATH, JACK CAST
A SPELL."

"PART OF ME HOPED
IT WAS A CURSE. SOME
HATEFUL INVOCATION THAT'D
GIVE ME THE COMEUPPANCE
I DESERVED. BUT...
IT WASN'T."



"NOW I UNDERSTAND:
JACK WAS A MUCH BETTER
PERSON THAN I AM... HIS LAST
THOUGHT WAS NOT OF
HATRED FOR ME..."

"...BUT OF LOVE. FOR HIS
CHILD, HIS COMMUNITY..."

11:57 AM



"HE CONJURED A GUARDIAN TO PROTECT JUNE AND ALL THE REST OF REFUGE IN HIS ABSENCE..."



"...AN EARTH ELEMENTAL/ A POWERFUL, MAGIC ENTITY..."



"...AND THE COMMAND WORD FOR THAT SUMMONING SPELL?"



"JACK'S LAST WORD, HIS LAST THOUGHT..."



"...HIS PRECIOUS..."



WUMMM



SHUGGAWHOOOOOM



C'MOON!!

C'MON,
LITTLE KEY!

BONG!!

BONG!!



FIT! FIT,
YOU LITTLE KEY!

KLIK!



YES! GUYS,
IT FI-

RRUMBLEEE

BONG



RRUMBLEEE

BONG



BONG!!

BONG!!

WAA AASHHH

BONNG



BON!

WASH!

RRRUMMMBLE-

BON!

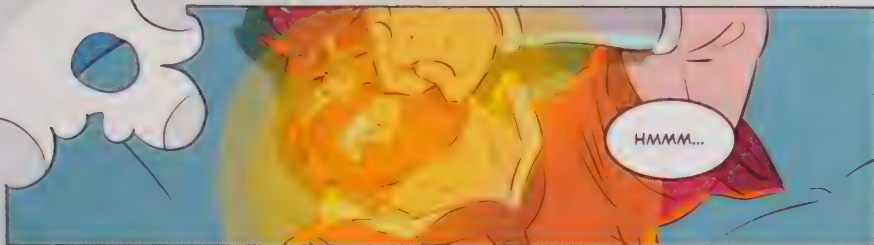
KRACK!



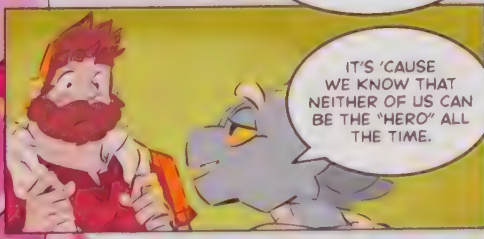
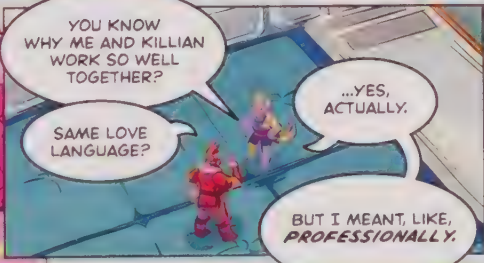


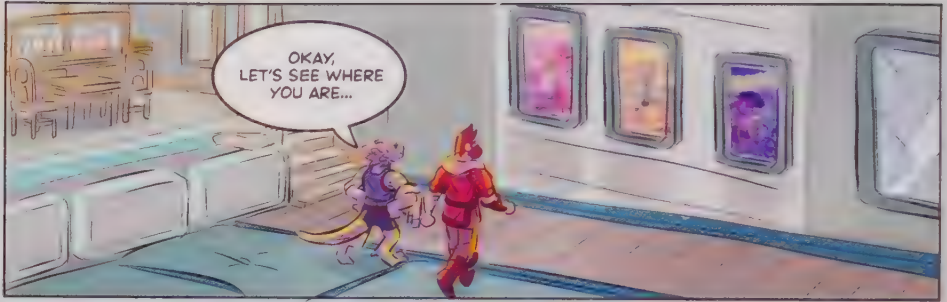
Chapter

110









OKAY,
LET'S SEE WHERE
YOU ARE...



YOU'VE GOTTEN
PRETTY GOOD WITH
THOSE LOCKPICKS
I GAVE YOU...

I THINK MY
PROFICIENCY IN
WOODWORKING
HELPED ME
THERE.

YOUR
UNCANNY DODGING
HAS BECOME...
CANNIER.

I TRY TO
KEEP MYSELF
LIMBER.

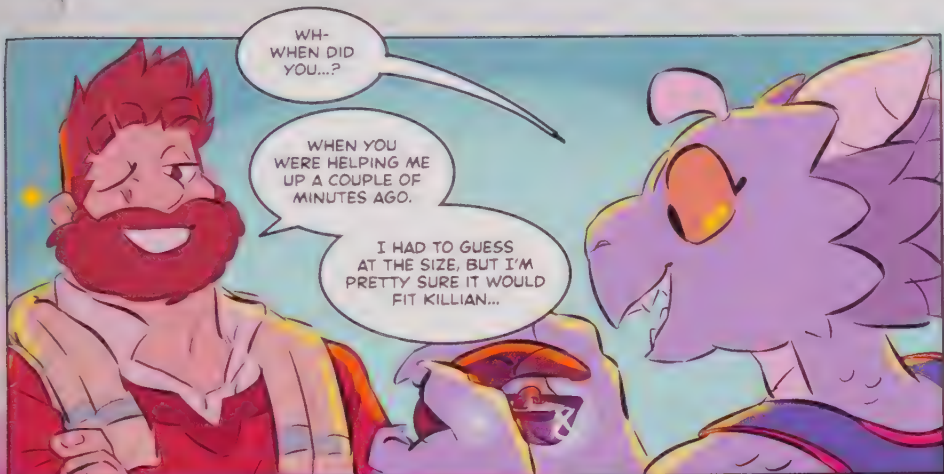
BUT YOUR
PICKPOCKETING
IS FOR SHIT.

REMEMBER:
AN ACCOMPLISHED
CUTPURSE CAN PLACE
THINGS IN PEOPLE'S
POCKETS, TOO...
VALUABLE SKILL



FOR
SHIT, HUH?

CHECK
YOUR POCKET...



WH-
WHEN DID
YOU...?

WHEN YOU
WERE HELPING ME
UP A COUPLE OF
MINUTES AGO.

I HAD TO GUESS
AT THE SIZE, BUT I'M
PRETTY SURE IT WOULD
FIT KILLIAN...



IT'S...
PERFECT.

I DON'T
KNOW WHAT
TO SAY.

THEN
JUST
LISTEN.



YOU'RE RIGHT.
WHEN I'M IN THE
FIELD, I'M TOO
IMPULSIVE.

IF I DON'T
WORK ON THAT,
I'LL BE TOO DEAD
TO BE OF ANY USE
TO ANYONE.

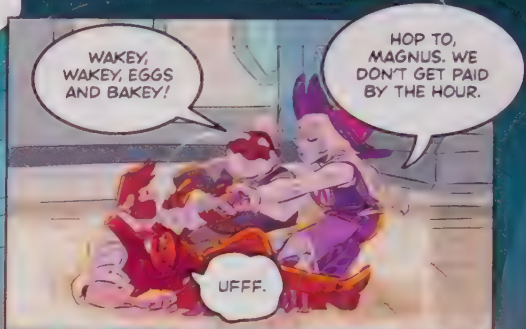
BUT WHEN
IT COMES TO
THIS...



...WAITING
AROUND FOR THE RIGHT
OPPORTUNITY MIGHT JUST
BE THE MOST DANGEROUS
THING YOU CAN DO.



HNNNN



WAKEY, WAKEY, EGGS AND BAKEY!

HOP TO, MAGNUS. WE DON'T GET PAID BY THE HOUR.

UFFF.



WHAT... WHY ARE YOU GUYS HERE?

WHOA, THAT'S KIND OF A BIG QUESTION, MAN. WHY ARE ANY OF US—

I THINK HE MEANS HERE, IN THE TEMPLE, AND NOT DEAD AS HELL BACK IN TOWN.




YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS OURS. ONE MINUTE, WE WERE WORM FOOD, AND THE NEXT...

YOU MADE IT.




JUST IN TIME.



OKAY, WOW.
AN ACTUAL, FACTUAL
DEITYV JUST TALKED
TO US.

I MEAN, I'M NOT
SUPER RELIGIOUS, BUT
I'VE ALWAYS CONSIDERED
MYSELF *SPIRITUAL*,
YOU KNOW?



EH,
NOT REALLY.

FELLAS,
PLEASE. DON'T
EMBARRASS
ME.

THE GODS CAN
DO MAGIC, I CAN DO
MAGIC. IT'S LIKE, WHAT'S
THE DIFF?

THIS IS
MY AREA OF
EXPERTISE.
LET ME TAKE
THE LEAD.




OH,
FEARSOME ISTHMUS!
HALLOWED BE—



ISTUS.

OKAY!


GESUNDHEIT.



HI, ISTUS.
THANKS FOR HAVING US.
LOVELY TEMPLE. MUCH
MORE AGREEABLE THAN
THE WORMPOCALYPSE
OUTSIDE.

DID I SAY
SOMETHING
WRONG?

NO, LITTLE
BUDDY, YOU GOT
IT IN ONE.



I'M GLAD WE
COULD FINALLY
MEET. YOU THREE
HAVE DONE WELL
TO FIND ME.

I SUSPECT I
HAVE WISDOM TO
SHARE THAT WILL BE
OF USE TO YOU.



UH, *YEAH*,
ISTUS.

I SUSPECT
THAT YOU DO.

SO, MY
FRIENDS,

HOW
ARE YOU
FEELING?

Ishtus
GODDESS OF TIME
AND FATE





UHHHH...

ALIVE?
I GUESS?

I'M GUESSING
WE'VE GOT YOU TO
THANK FOR THE HOURLY
REDO, THEN?

KIND
OF CONFUSED!
SO, NORMAL!

I AM AFRAID
NOT, TAAKO. OUTSIDE
THESE WALLS, I HAVE
VERY LITTLE INFLUENCE
OVER WHAT HAPPENS
IN REFUGE.



YEAH, THAT
WOULD HAVE
BEEN A *LITTLE*
TOO EASY.

WHATEVER FORCE
IS SUSTAINING THIS
CYCLE HAS *CHOSEN*
YOU THREE TO SEE
BEYOND IT.

I CAN
FEEL IT, THOUGH.
THE UNNATURAL
CYCLING OF TIME'S
CURRENT.

WELL,
REMEMB ME
TO SEND THEM
A THANK-YOU
CARD LATER.



PERHAPS YOU
SHOULD, MERLE
HIGHCHURCH.



I CAN FEEL
THE POWER BEHIND
THIS ENCHANTMENT
WANING.

SOON,
IT WILL EXPIRE
COMPLETELY.

WITHOUT IT,
THE THREE OF YOU WILL
BE DOOMED TO PERISH
EVERY HOUR...

...UNAWARE THAT
YOU'VE FOREVER JOINED
THE PATTERN YOU SEEK
TO INTERRUPT.

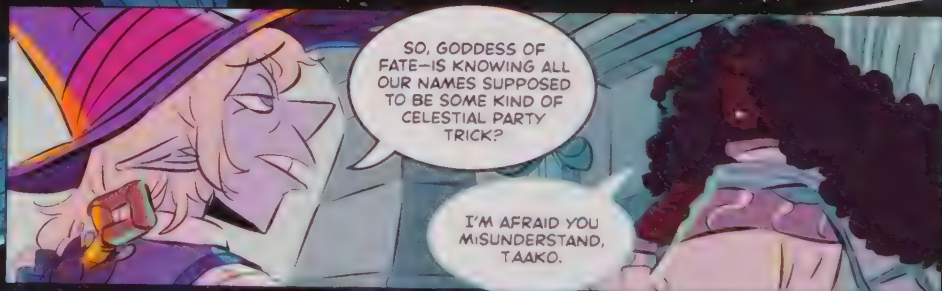


WELL,
THAT'S...



...GENUINELY,
EXISTENTIALLY
TERRIFYING.

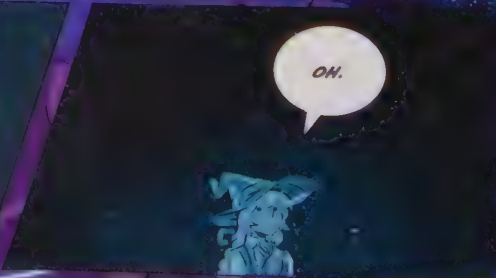
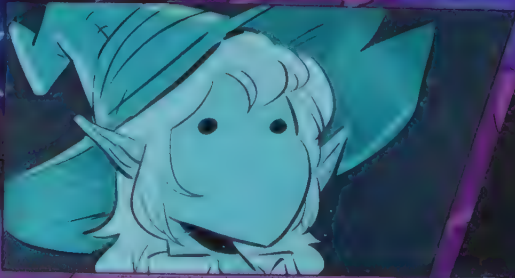
HENCE MY
DELIGHT THAT
WE'VE FINALLY
MET, MAGNUS
BURNSIDES.



SO, GODDESS OF
FATE—IS KNOWING ALL
OUR NAMES SUPPOSED
TO BE SOME KIND OF
CELESTIAL PARTY
TRICK?

I'M AFRAID YOU
MISUNDERSTAND,
TAAKO.

I HAVE KNOWN
YOUR NAMES FROM
THE FIRST MOMENTS
OF MY EXISTENCE.



OH.

HEY, CLERIC-GUY. HAVE YOU HEARD OF ISTUS BEFORE?

BEFORE TODAY, I MEAN.

OH, SURE!

OH! NOPE.

LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE GOT US AT A DISADVANTAGE.

OH, I DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY. I'M NOT ONE OF THE MORE FAVORED CELESTIALS ON THIS PLANE.

REALLY? I'D THINK YOU'RE A HIT WITH THE ARTS-AND-CRAFTS CROWD.

PEOPLE SEEM WILLING TO ENTERTAIN THE IDEA OF FATE'S DESIGN ONLY IN TIMES OF PEACE AND JOY.

OR, AS WAS THE CASE IN REFUGE, TIMES OF *PROSPERITY*.

THOSE TIMES, AS YOU MIGHT IMAGINE, ARE NOW IN SHORT SUPPLY.

SO, YOU DO SOME CROSS-STITCHING ON THAT BIG TAPESTRY, AND... THINGS HAPPEN?

IF ONLY THAT WERE THE CASE.

I OBSERVE, MOSTLY. I TRY TO MAKE A PICTURE, A STORY, OUT OF THE CHAOS OF OUR REALITY. ON A GOOD DAY, I CAN CATCH GLIMPSES OF FIXED EVENTS IN THE FUTURE AND WEAVE THEM INTO THE PATTERN.

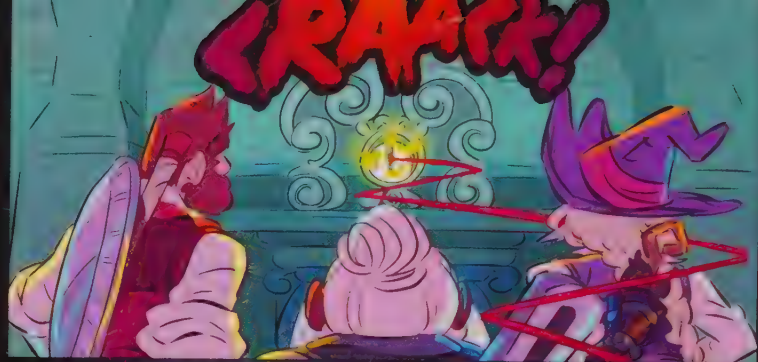
SO... YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO *CHANGE* FATE?

I DIDN'T SAY THAT.

ON OCCASION, I CAN INTERVENE...

...WHEN PROVIDED THE CORRECT INSTRUMENTS.

YUUMMM!





FUCK!

MAYBE A BIT MORE WARNING NEXT TIME!



DON'T SAY "FUCK" IN FRONT OF A DEITY! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU!?

YOU SAID IT, TOO!

I'M A CLERIC!

WHAT DOES THAT EVEN MEAN?!

...GUYS, CAN IT!

GRAB!



I THINK WE'RE GETTING SOME HEAVENLY BOONS OVER HERE!!

DA NA-NA-NAH

IF YOU'RE GETTING A NEW WEAPON, CAN I HAVE RAILSPLITTER?

YOU CANNOT!

PFF.

The Minute Hand

+2 TO ATTACK
can be recalled to
the owner's hand from
a distance



OF COURSE, BOYS. I HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN ABOUT YOU.

WHEW! WHAT A RELIEF. I THOUGHT FOR SURE THAT—

plunk!

I DON'T KNOW, ISTUS. SEEMS A LITTLE SMALL FOR A BIG MAGIC SWORD OR WHATEVER.

LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING, TAAKO.

THIS IS THE BAG OF NECESSITY. CONTAINED WITHIN IS SOMETHING YOU WILL DESPERATELY NEED...

PARRY!
THRUST!!

...AND IT WILL NOT OPEN UNTIL YOU DESPERATELY NEED IT.

PATIENCE... IS...NOT ONE OF MY STRONG SUITS!

PERHAPS IT CAN BECOME ONE, TAAKO.

AHEM.

PAT.

Bag of Necessity

Holds something needed at just the right time

+effect+
The deus ex machina-iest thing ever!!


**YANK
PULL!
STREETEICH!!**



MERLE
HIGHCHURCH.
I GRANT TO
YOU...




...THE GIFT
OF TIME ITSELF.



YOU MEAN...LIKE,
A SUPER NICE WATCH?
MAYBE? PLEASE?

SO, LIKE,
A SUPER NICE
INVISIBLE
WATCH?

I'M AFRAID
THIS GIFT IS QUITE
INTANGIBLE.



MAYBE I
COULD JUST FINISH
BEQUEATHING YOU
THE GIFT OF *TIME*
ITSELF.

OH! SORRY!

AS
I WAS
SAYING:

YOUR DESTINIES ARE GUIDING YOU TO A FIXED POINT IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

I HAVE SEEN THE SHAPE OF IT; NOT ENOUGH TO KNOW ITS PRECISE NATURE, ASIDE FROM THIS:

YOU'RE GOING TO FACE AN IMPOSSIBLE DECISION. ALL OF YOU.

THE CHOICE YOU MAKE WILL CHANGE THE WORLD.

SO, ARE YOU... GONNA TELL US THE RIGHT OPTION TO PICK, THEN?

NO, MERLE.

I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU THE TIME YOU NEED TO DECIDE.

Wuuuum




aa

VA AAAASHH!



THE
THREE OF
YOU...

...MY
EMISSARIES.



you're going to be
AMAZING.



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11:00 AM

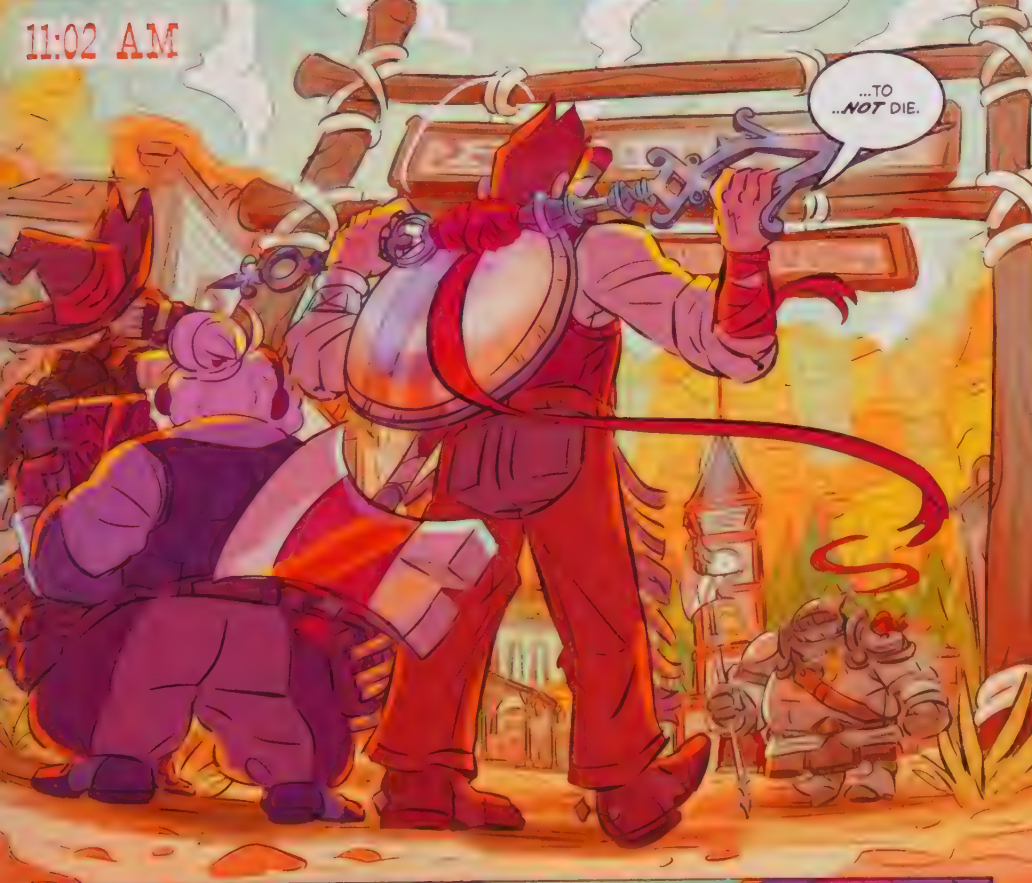






TODAY'S A GOOD DAY...

11:02 AM



...TO
...NOT DIE.



TO STOP DYING ALL THE TIME, I MEAN.

NO, WE GET IT.

11:03 AM

JUNEBUG!!

....

WHAT- WOULD- YOU- LIKE- ME- TO- DO?

ACTUALLY, PARDNER, THE QUESTION IS:

11:17 AM

YOU'RE WELCOME!

BUT--

DO YOUR THING, BEEF BOY!

11:25 AM

11:26 AM

POPP!!





WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?

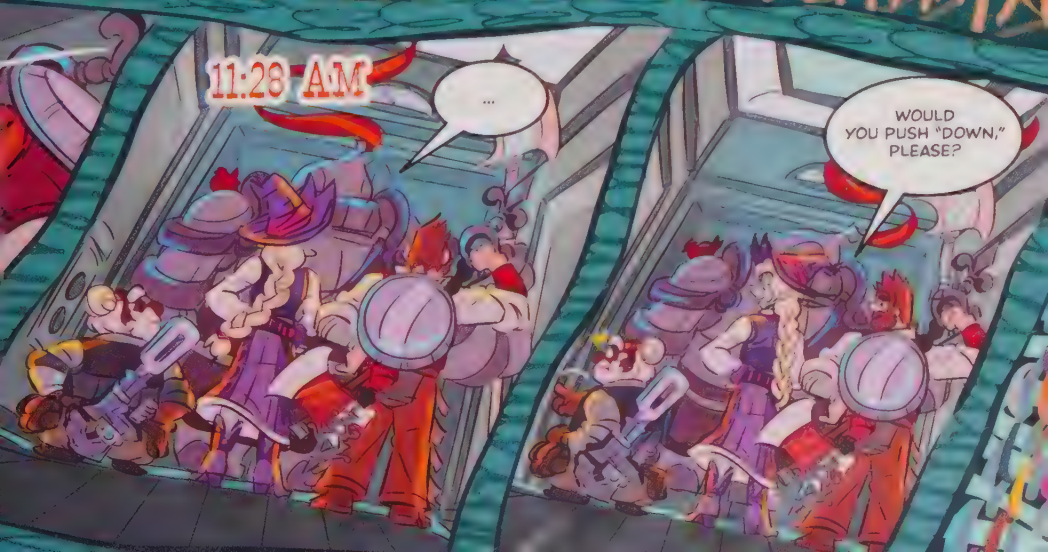


11:10 AM

I'LL JUST SERVE MYSELF. THANKS.

NO, TRUST ME, YOU HAVE GOT TO TRY THESE SCONES.

11:15 AM



11:28 AM

...

WOULD YOU PUSH "DOWN," PLEASE?

11:30 AM

DING!

YOU'RE
BACK.

I'LL BE
HONEST, FELLAS,
FOR A MINUTE, I
THOUGHT—

ZZHING!

POP!







STOP!
DAMN IT! YOU
DON'T KNOW
WHAT YOU'RE
DOING!

ISAAK...
LAST-NAME...YER
UNDER ARREST FER
MURDERIN' JACK! IN
THE MINESHIFT!

WITH THE
CANDLESTICK!



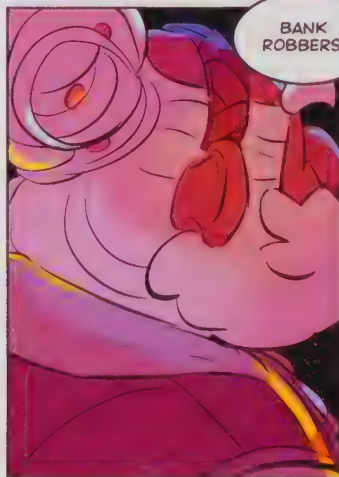
UM, YOU GUYS
DON'T ACTUALLY HAVE
THE AUTHORITY TO—

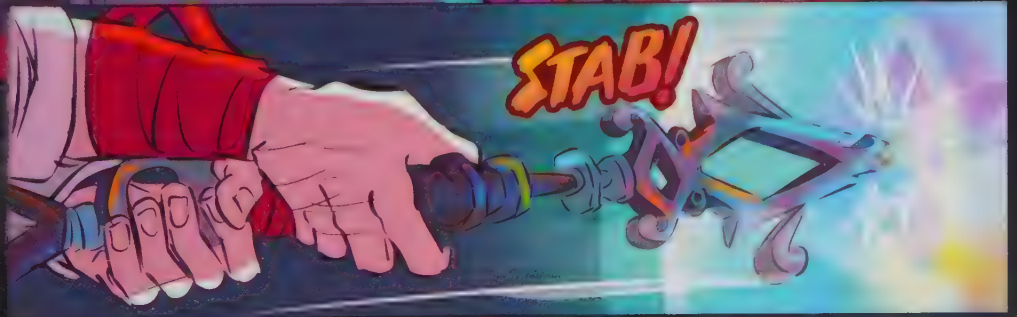
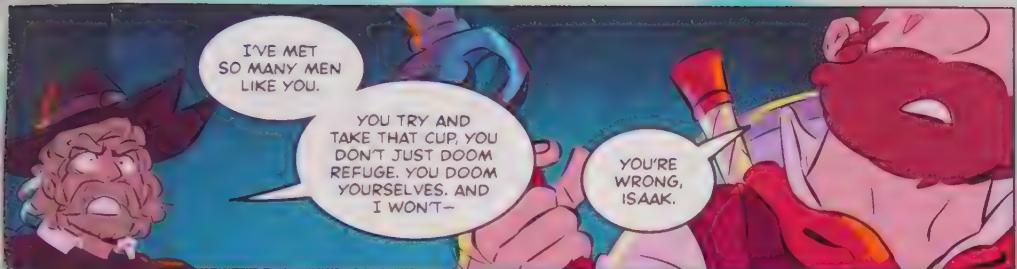
TO THE
POKEY WITH
'EM!

YOU DON'T
UNDERSTAND!



THE REASON
I KILLED JACK IS
EXACTLY THE REASON
WHY I CAN'T LET YOU
TAKE THE CUP.





KROON

VAA





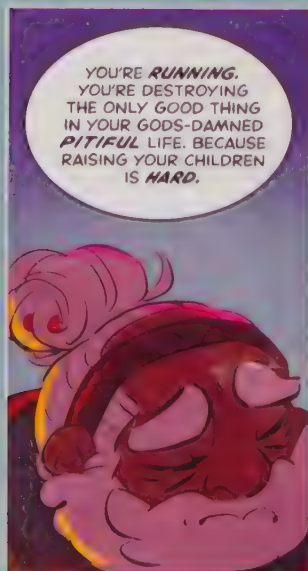
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...THEY'RE BETTER OFF WITHOUT ME FUCKING UP THEIR LIVES.



POPPA-DAD?



WHERE YA GOIN'?









AND...



BA-BOOM,
BABY!

GET
ROASTED!

NOW, YOU MIGHT
BE WONDERING:
*THIRTY-GARLIC-CLOVE
CHICKEN? WHERE
AM I SUPPOSED TO
GET THIRTY GARLIC
CLOVES?*

Oooooo!



WELL, THE EASIEST
OPTION IS, OF COURSE, TO
WAIT FOR THE MIDSUMMER
HARVEST, WHEN—



JUST
KIDDING!

MAGIC!!

NOW, THE
REAL TRICK
TO CREATING AN
UNFORGETTABLE
POULTRY
EXPERIENCE?

**CLAP
CLAP
CLAP**



WELL,
YOU COULD
SAY...

...IT'S JUST A
MATTER OF
THYME.

**HA
HA
HAWA!**



PHILIPPE.





WAIT, WHAT ARE YOU...



...OH, GOD.




SOMEONE, PLEASE! HELP!


PHILIPPE, SOMETHING'S WR-








I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE STILL DOING THAT.



DON'T JUDGE MY PROCESS, OLD MAN. IT WORKS.

I'M NOT JUDGING. I'M MAKING FUN OF IT.


RUDE.



WE'RE BACKED UP ON ORDERS FOR WEEKS, STEVE. MY TECHNIQUE IS UNDENIABLE.


I'D ARGUE THAT HAS LESS TO DO WITH YOUR CRAFTSMANSHIP AND MORE TO DO WITH, YOU KNOW...

...THE FACT THAT YOU'RE A HERO OF THE REBELLION?



A DECORATED HERO OF THE PEOPLE.


AND SO MODEST, TOO!




I'M JUST SAYING, THE TWO OF YOU LED THE CHARGE TO OVERTHROW MAD GOVERNOR KALEN. YOU COULD PHONE IT IN A BIT.

AT LEAST CUT BACK ON THE LAVENDER FURNITURE POLISH.

IT'S MY CALLING CARD! BESIDES, NOBODY—




OH, SO THAT'S WHY ALL YOUR CHAIRS SMELL LIKE GRANDMAS.



OOH, CAREFUL, JULIA. YOU'RE TALKING TO A *DECORATED* FOLK HERO.

OH, PLEASE. I PRACTICALLY *STARTED* THE REBELLION. I'VE GOT FOLK HERO SENIORITY.



I AM HUMBLED TO HAVE THIS HERO OF LEGEND IN OUR HOME! WHAT AN HONOR TO HAVE THE PEOPLE'S CHAMPION MAKING THE WORLD'S STINKIEST GRANDMA CHAIRS RIGHT HERE IN OUR WORKSHOP!!

STINKY *AND* LUCRATIVE.



MISSED YOU.



MISSED ME?

I WAS ONLY OUTSIDE TEN MINUTES.

SAYS THE MAN LEAVING FOR TWO WEEKS.

I KNOW, IT WAS UNBEARABLE!

MAGNUS,
WE WON.

I'VE ALWAYS
LOVED HOW MUCH
YOU TRY AND PLAN
FOR THE FUTURE, BUT
ISN'T IT TIME TO FOCUS
ON THE PRESENT? THE
LIFE WE HAVE HERE
AND NOW?

THE COUNCIL IS
WORKING TO MAKE THE
TRANSITION OF POWER
GO AS SMOOTHLY
AS IT CAN.

THEIR WHOLE
JOB IS TO HELP, IF WE
CAN GIVE THEM THE
SPACE TO DO IT.

I TOLD
THEM I'D BE
AT ONE FINAL
MEETING TODAY.
THEN, I'M HOME
FOR GOOD.

ALL RIGHT,
LOVE.

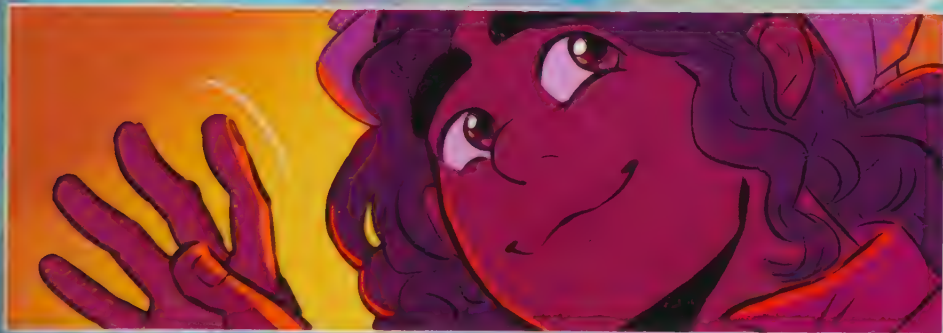
BUT PLEASE...

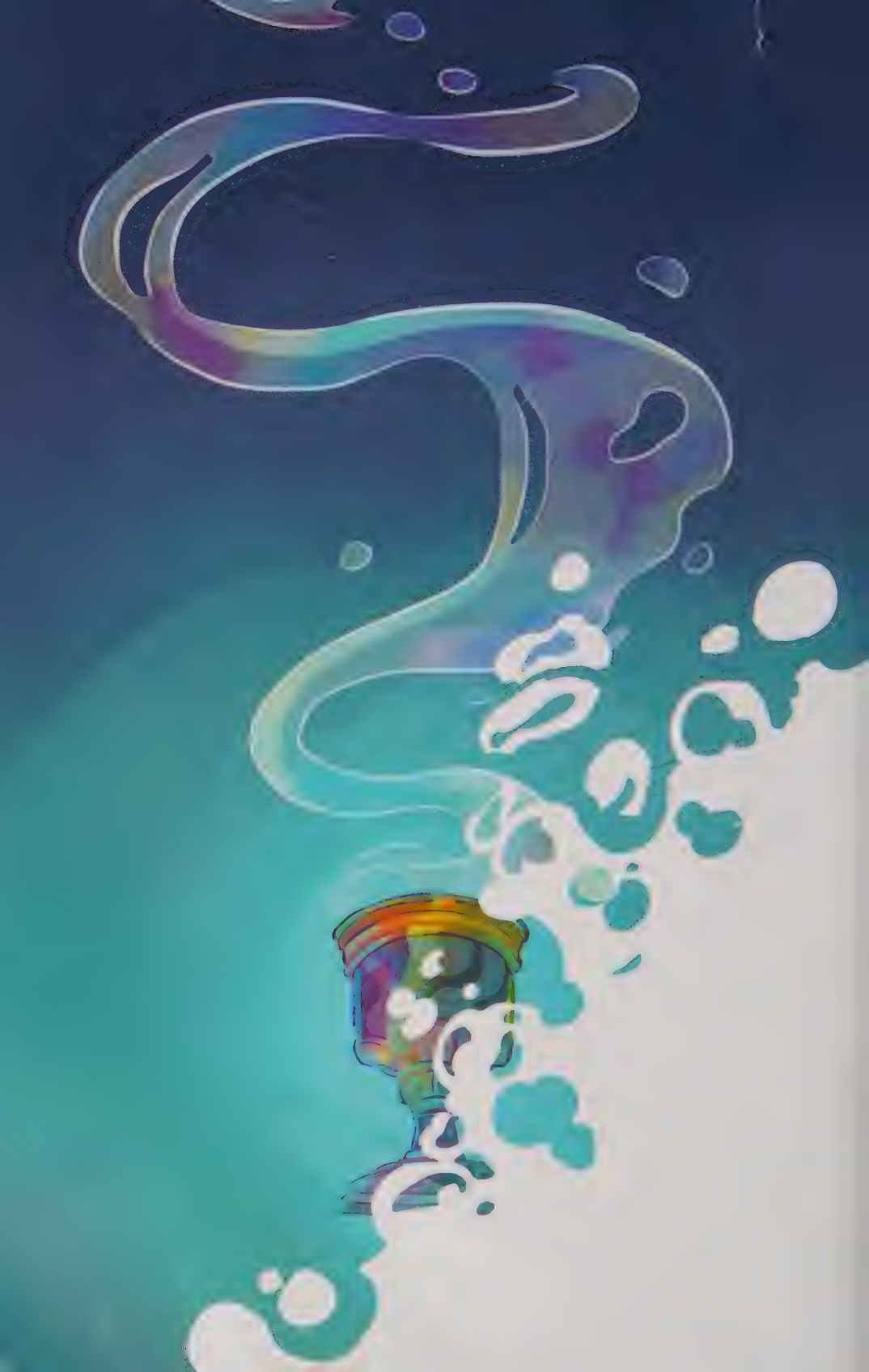
...BE CAREFUL,
MAGNUS.

HE
ALWAYS
IS.

NO,
HE ISN'T.

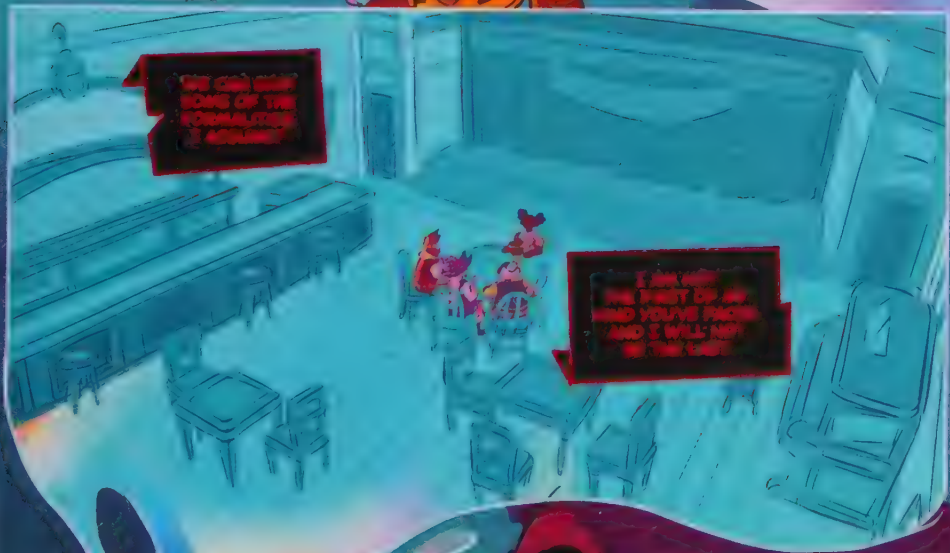
NO, HE
ISN'T.



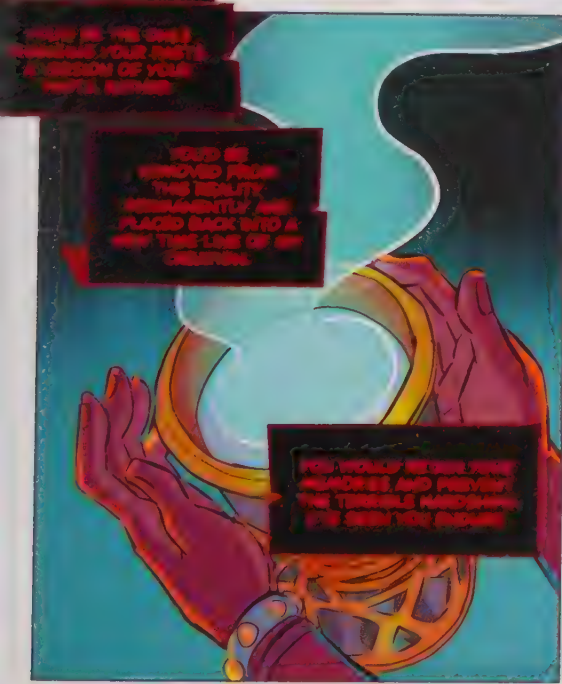
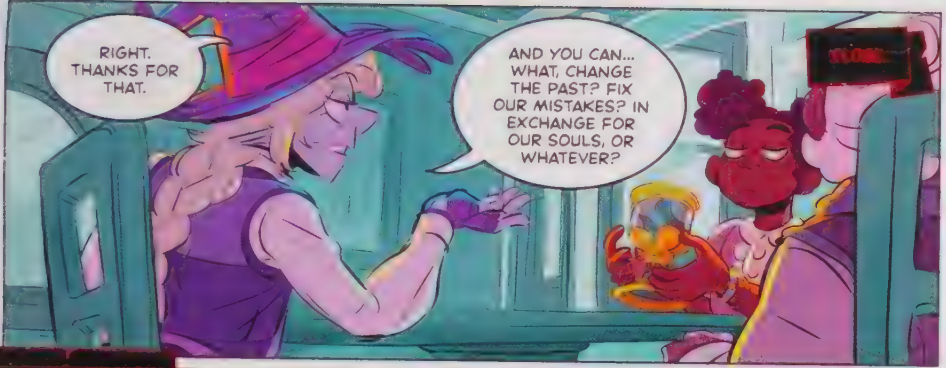


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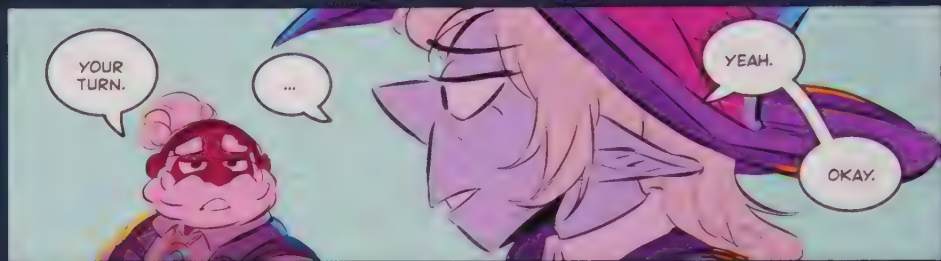












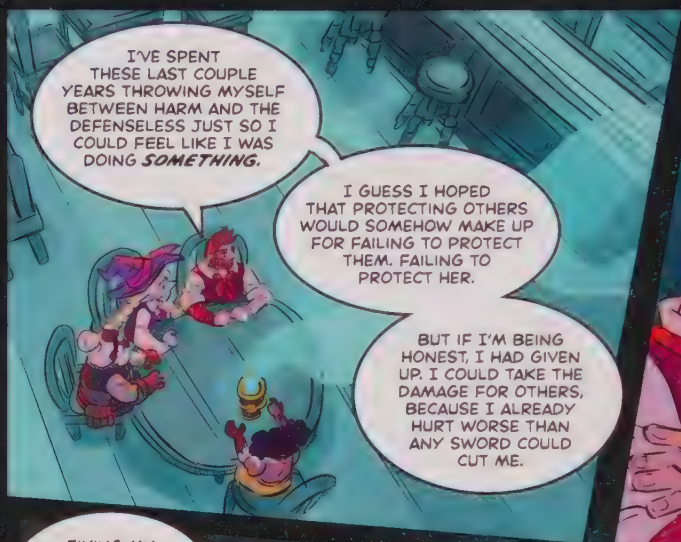
THEY
WANT TO
KILL YOU!

IT'S
NOT
YOUR
FAULT!

THEY
WANT
TO
KILL
YOU!

IT'S
NOT
YOUR
FAULT!

THEY
WANT
TO
KILL
YOU!



I'VE SPENT THESE LAST COUPLE YEARS THROWING MYSELF BETWEEN HARM AND THE DEFENSELESS JUST SO I COULD FEEL LIKE I WAS DOING *SOMETHING*.

I GUESS I HOPED THAT PROTECTING OTHERS WOULD SOMEHOW MAKE UP FOR FAILING TO PROTECT THEM. FAILING TO PROTECT HER.

BUT IF I'M BEING HONEST, I HAD GIVEN UP. I COULD TAKE THE DAMAGE FOR OTHERS, BECAUSE I ALREADY HURT WORSE THAN ANY SWORD COULD CUT ME.

I KNOW THAT ACCEPTING YOUR OFFER MEANS...

...ANYONE I'VE HELPED SINCE RAVEN'S ROOST WOULD BE ON THEIR OWN.



FIXING MY HURT WILL HURT OTHERS...BUT RIGHT NOW, IN THIS MOMENT?

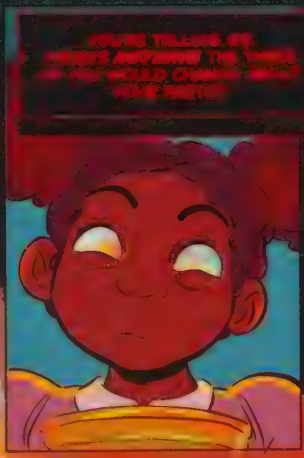
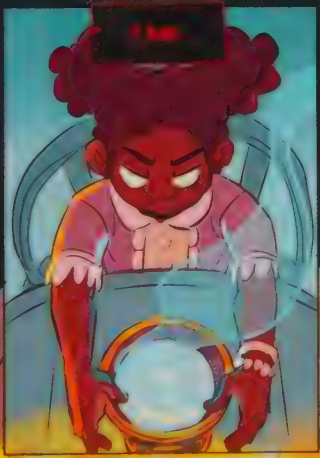
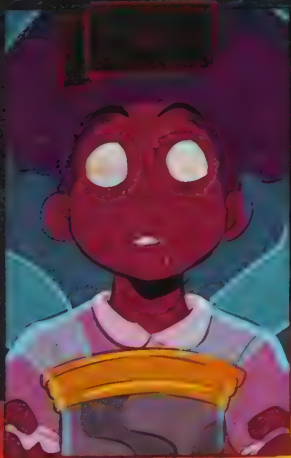
I DON'T CARE. IT IS EVERYTHING I WANT.



BUT IT'S NOT WHAT JULIA WOULD WANT.

MY ANSWER IS NO.







OH. RIGHT.

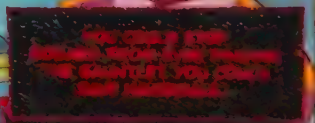
YEAH,
THIS ONE WAS
OUR BAD.



LOOK, GUYS!
REMEMBER LENNY
LONGPANTS? THAT
GUY CRACKED
ME UP.

I THINK IT WAS
BARRY BLUEJEANS,
ACTUALLY. NOT THAT
IT MATTERS IN THE
SLIGHTEST.

POOR
BARRY.



IS THAT...?


NOELLE.

THIS IS
HOW SHE
DIED.



...

WE...
...DID
EVERYTHING WE
COULD, RIGHT?



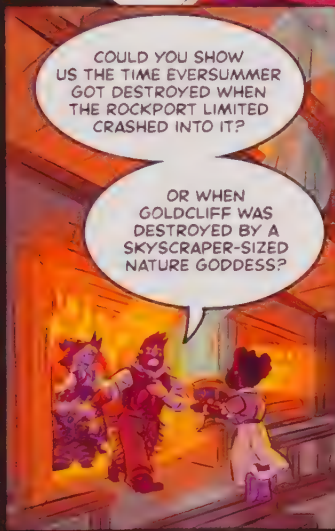
I MEAN, WE DID AS MUCH AS THREE LEVEL-ONE DOOFUSES COULD, SURE.

IT'S JUST... IF WE COULD PREVENT THE GAUNTLET FROM EVER—

THEN WE'D FIND A NEW WAY TO FUCK IT UP.



TELL ME, CHALICE.




COULD YOU SHOW US THE TIME EVERSUMMER GOT DESTROYED WHEN THE ROCKPORT LIMITED CRASHED INTO IT?

OR WHEN GOLDCLIFF WAS DESTROYED BY A SKYSCRAPER-SIZED NATURE GODDESS?



DON'T FORGET THE CRYSTALS!

OH, RIGHT! MAYBE SHOW US THE TIME A FLYING LAB FELL TO EARTH AND TURNED THE WHOLE WORLD INTO CRYSTALS?




I DON'T THINK SHE CAN DO THAT, MAGS.



NO, SHE CAN'T.

BECAUSE SHE CAN ONLY SHOW US STUFF WE CAN CHANGE.

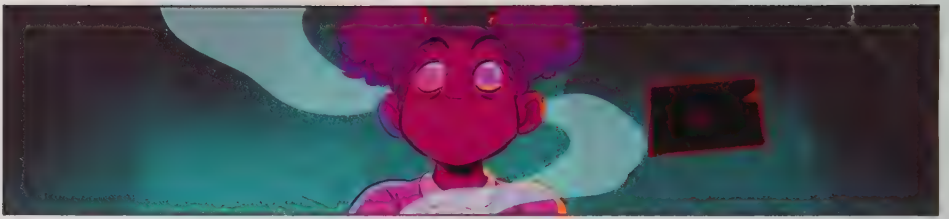
NOT THE STUFF WE DID CHANGE.



I'M GONNA GO WITH TAAKO ON THIS ONE.



FUCK NO.



crackle
CRASH!

FWOOOM!



FWAASHH



FWOO!

VAASHHHH

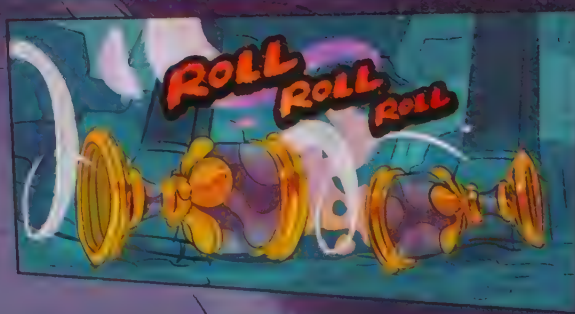


WHESH!

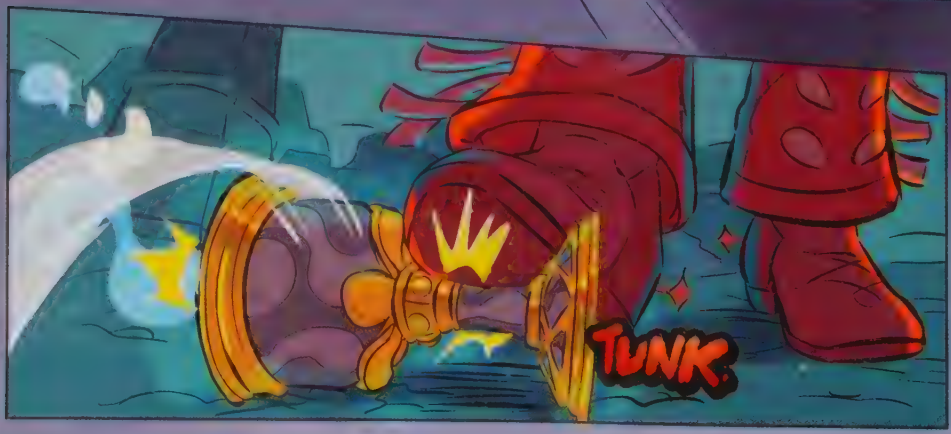


TINK

TAK



ROLL ROLL ROLL



TUNK



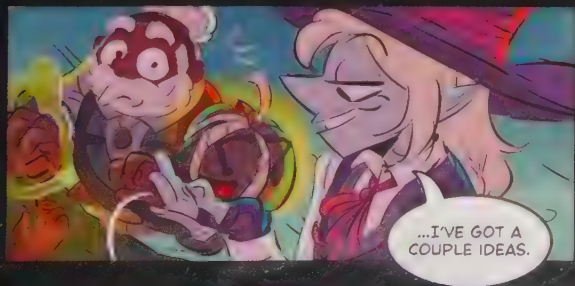
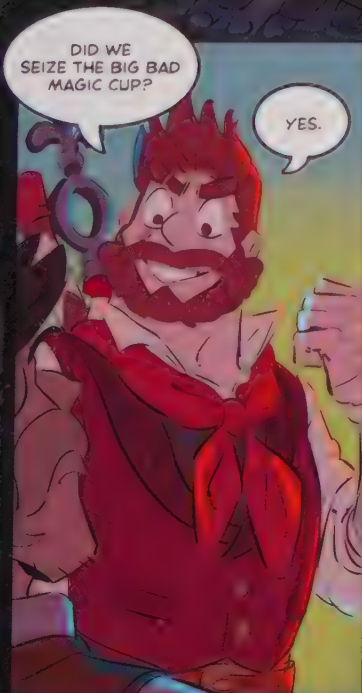
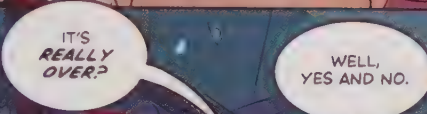
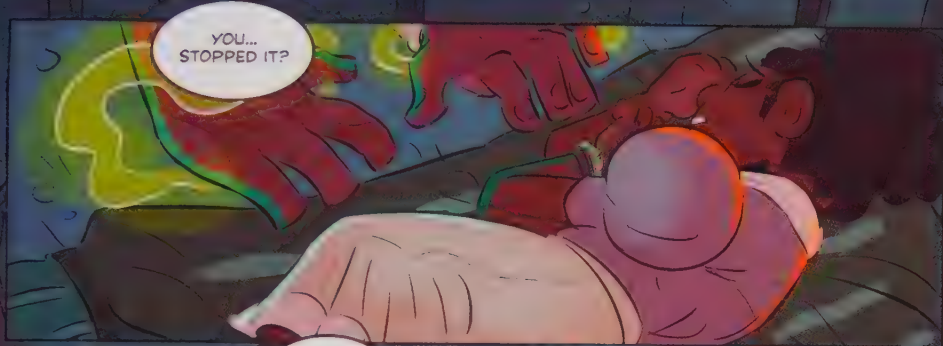
RIGHT.

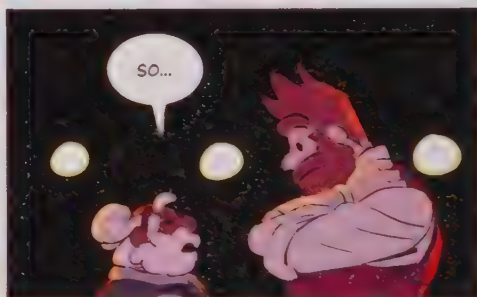


LET'S
GO HOME.

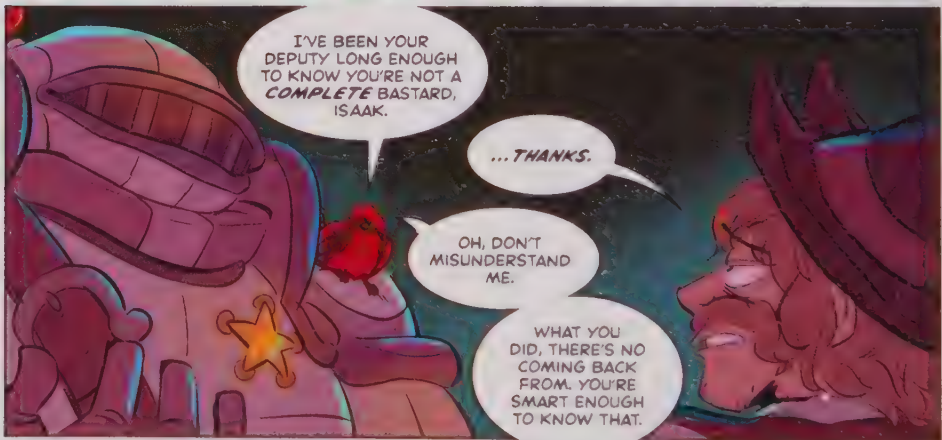
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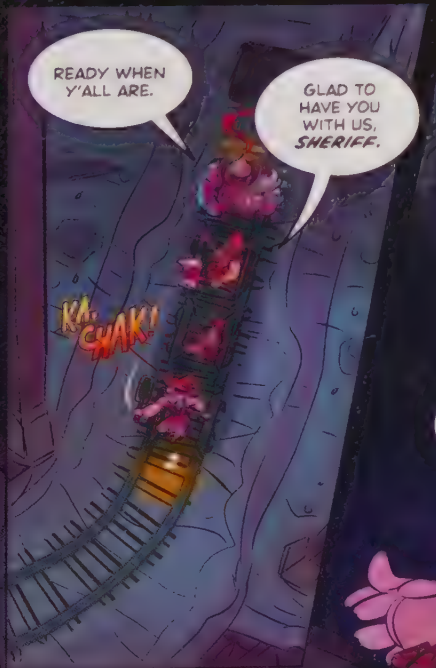




KEEP HER
SAFE, ISAAK.



KEEP
'EM ALL SAFE.



READY WHEN
Y'ALL ARE.

GLAD TO
HAVE YOU
WITH US,
SHERIFF.

**KA-
SWAK!**

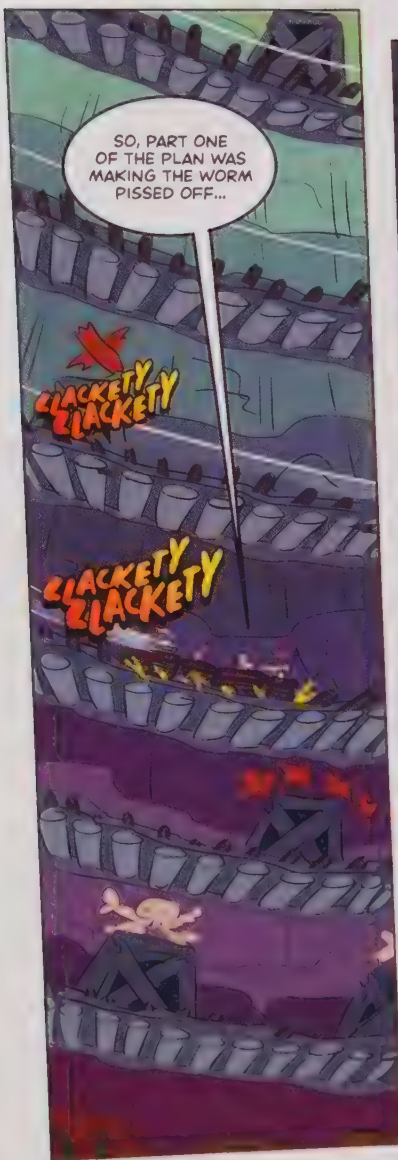


SO LONG...

**CLACKETY
CLACKETY**



...JUNEBUG.



SO, PART ONE OF THE PLAN WAS MAKING THE WORM PISSED OFF...

CLACKETY CLACKETY
CLACKETY CLACKETY



...WHAT'S THE SECOND PART?

THERE ISN'T ONE!



THERE ISN'T ONE?

IT'S IMPROV, MERLE! BE A TEAM PLAYER! "YES, AND!"

THOOM!



UH, GUYS?

RIGHT! SORRY.

YES, AND... WE'RE ALL GOING TO DIE IN, LIKE, FIVE SECONDS.

THUD!



HAVEN'T YOU HEARD THAT CLASSIC IDIOM?



THE EARLY BIRDS GET THE WORM!



KA-THOOM!

GROOOOAAAR!





OOOAAOR!!!



SHPLOOM!

**CLACKETY
CLACKETY**



NA-CHOOM!

GROO

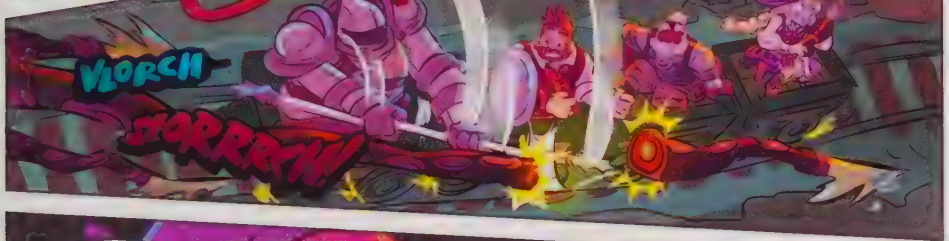
CHOMPI CHOMPI CHOMPI!



IT WORKED! THE
WORM IS *SUPER*
PISSED OFF!

YEAH, WE
TEND TO HAVE
THAT EFFECT
ON PEOPLE.

AND
NEMATODES,
IT SEEMS!



Tentacles of DARKNESS
Entangling arms of mystic energy

ZHWOOM!

**CLACKETY
CLACKETY
CLACKETY
CLACKETY**

SPLANG!

OH, HELLO!

HEY, GUYS, I KNOW HOW THIS SOUNDS...

...BUT A BIG, LONG LEVER JUST SPRANG UP BETWEEN MY LEGS!

SNRK

PFFf

THAT'S THE REMOTE TRACK SWITCH!

IT CONTROLS WHICH TRACK THE CARS FOLLOW!



OH!

OH
OH OH!!



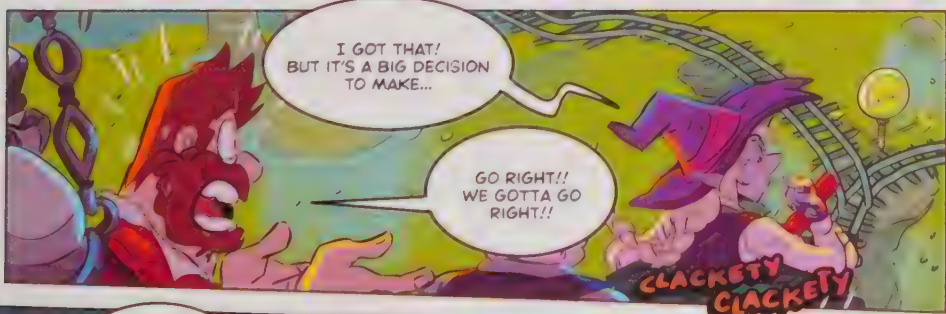
REMEMBER
THE PROPHECY?!

OH, YEAH,
THE PROPHECY!



SO, THERE'S
JUST TWO WAYS I
CAN PUSH IT? EITHER
LEFT...OR RIGHT...

CORRECT!
IT WAS IN THE
PROPHECY!



I GOT THAT!
BUT IT'S A BIG DECISION
TO MAKE...

GO RIGHT!!
WE GOTTA GO
RIGHT!!



...I JUST
WISH I HAD
SOME CLUE...

IT WAS IN
THE PROPHECY!!
GO RIIIGHT!

...OH,
YOU'RE JUST
TORMENTING
HIM NOW...

GROO!

IT'S A COIN FLIP, REALLY...

WHAT TO DO WHAT TO DO...

NO, IT ISN'T!!!

IT'S RIIIIIIIGGGGGHHHHHTTTT!!

OH, WELL, GUESS I'LL JUST TAKE A SHOT IN THE DARK.



KROOAR!!



CHANK
CHANK

IT LOOKS LIKE LEVER TWO IS CONTAGIOUS

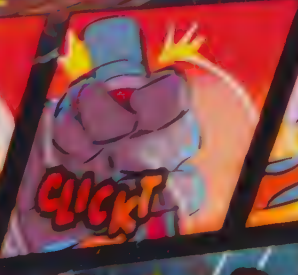
CHANK

CHANK

ANOTHER SOUND!



KLUCK



CLICK

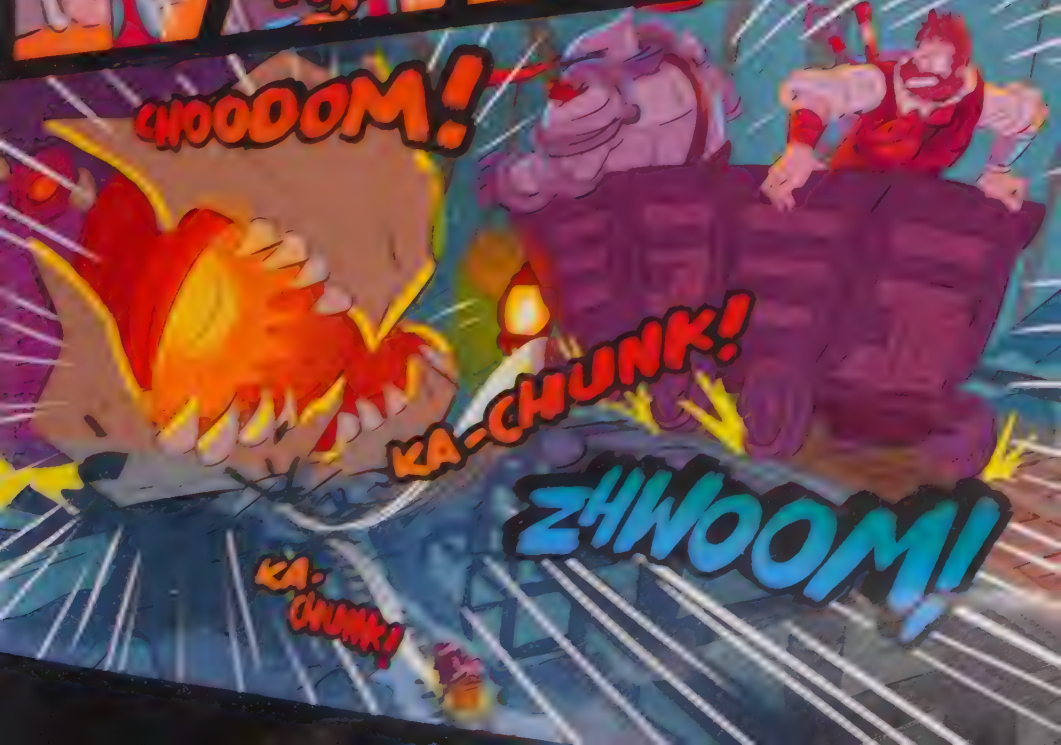


KLUKT



CLUKK

BOOOOM!



KA-CHUNK!

ZHWOOM!

KA-CHUNK!

SCHIRUMBLE

DO YOU ACTUALLY THINK YOU HAVE SOMETHING THAT IS GOING TO BOTHER A MONSTER WORM?

I'M GONNA TRY SOMETHING TO SLOW IT DOWN!

WEEAACH!

FWAAAAAASH!

OH, YEAH, THAT MIGHT WORK.

Armory of Spirit
manifest a weapon of your choosing

SHUNK!

SCREEE!!

ROSWELL! DROP THIS INTO THE TRACKS!

HUP THUM!

Grappling Hook
ideal for castle wall surmounting
•EFFECT•
pure Hell on railroad ties



HOW'S THAT FOR IMPROVISATION?!

YEAH... ABOUT THAT...





HUZAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!





I CAN'T BELIEVE ANY OF THAT WORKED!

YEAH, BUD. THAT MAKES TWO OF US.

SNAGG!

COULD YOU GIVE ME A HAND HERE?!

RUMBLE RUMBLE

RUMBLE

SHMAASH!!

CHOMPKT CHAMPTK



...WE'RE GONNA NEED A BIGGER CART...



OH, I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT THE WORM, GANG!

CLACKITY CLACKITY

WE'LL BE DEAD *LONG* BEFORE SHE CATCHES UP TO US.

CLACKITY CLACKITY



ROOARR!!

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS, MERLE!!

YOU GOTTA QUIT SAYING SHIT LIKE THAT!!

...



TAAKOP?

WHAT?



TELL ME THAT I MADE REFUGE SAFE!

IS NOW
REALLY THE
TIME FOR POSITIVE
AFFIRMATIONS?
WE'VE GOT—

ROSWELL...

...YOU MADE
REFUGE SAFE.

VWUMMM

FWUP

THANKS A
LOT, FELLAS...

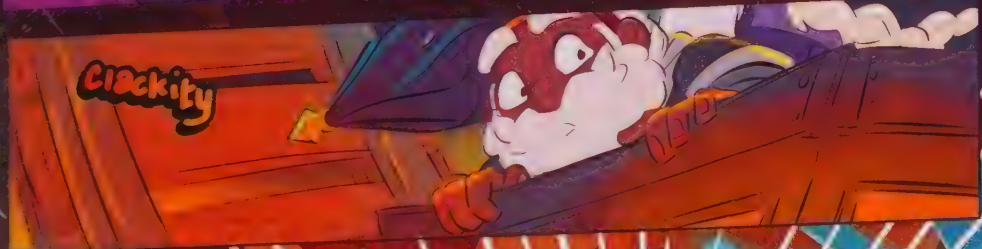
VWUMMM

VWUMMM

ROOAR

WHOOOOOM! **SHA-**
BLAMMM!





CLACKITY
CLACKITY

CLACKITY
CLACKITY

VRUMM!!

FUUUUUUUCK!





Plib

SHWAMM





AAAAARRR!

THWUMP



THAT'S...



...THAT'S ONE OF THE GIANT WORMS I WAS TALKING ABOUT!

WOW! NOTHING GETS BY OUR AVI.



SHE'S BEEN THROUGH A LOT AND IS KIND OF TAKING IT OUT ON US.

ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD KNOW?



KACH!

OH, YEAH!



KACH!

THEY BREATHE FIRE.

ROOOAA-



**KRACKLE
KRACKLE
KRACKLE**

Rumble!



**ROOOOAA
ROOOOAA**

SWEETEEEE!



WHUMPF!





...THAT WAS...



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SO...

...CAN'T HELP
BUT NOTICE THAT
REFUGE'S STILL ALL
BUBBLED UP.

DID WE,
UH...

...FAIL?

WUUM



FAR FROM IT, MERLE.

GAH!



OH, SORRY.

THE CONCEPT OF A SURPRISE IS ALIEN TO ME.



I CANNOT IMAGINE IT WAS EASY, SEEING YOUR HISTORIES REPLAYED IN SUCH VIVID DETAIL.

YEAH, BUD, THAT WAS *ROUGH STUFF*.



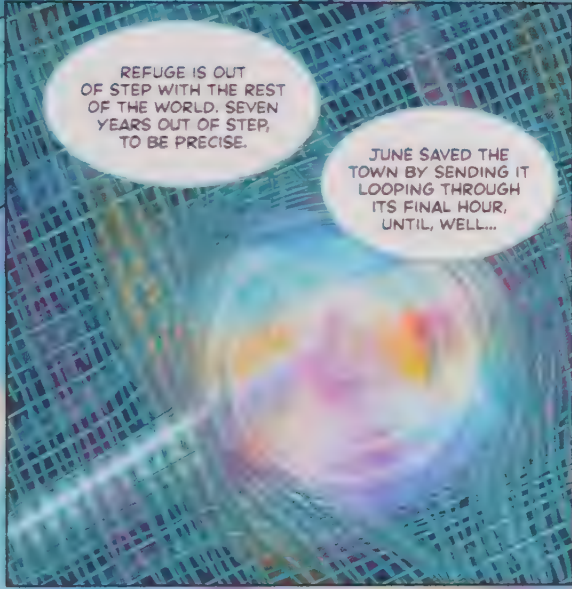
SO, WHY'S THE BUBBLE STILL THERE?

I STABBED IT! I STABBED IT GOOD!



IN REMOVING THE RELIC, YOU'VE CURED THE DISEASE...

...BUT THE SYMPTOMS REMAIN.



REFUGE IS OUT OF STEP WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD. SEVEN YEARS OUT OF STEP, TO BE PRECISE.

JUNE SAVED THE TOWN BY SENDING IT LOOPING THROUGH ITS FINAL HOUR, UNTIL, WELL...

UNTIL *DEUS EX NASTY BOYS* ARRIVED.

...RIGHT. BUT NOW REFUGE HAS A LOT TO CATCH UP ON.



THAT IS AN EXCELLENT TEAM NAME.



I'M GOING TO GET THEM BACK ON SCHEDULE.

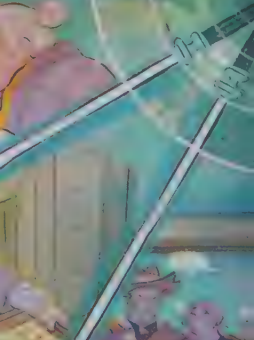
WUMMMMMMMMM



YOU SHOULD REALLY WATCH.



VAAAASHH





VAAASHHHH

WMMMMM

POP!

VWOMMMMM



REFUGE

12:01 PM

SOOOO...
THANKS FOR
YOUR HELP WITH
THE BANK BACK
THERE!

AND ALL THE
SARSAPARILLAS.

AW, IT WAS
MY PLEASURE!

BUT IF
YOU WANNA
REPAY ME...

...MAYBE YOU
COULD TEACH ME
A LITTLE ABOUT
MAGIC?

WELL,
SURE, I'D BE
HAPPY TO!

...FOR A
REASONABLE
FEE.

HEH.



I'LL NEED ALL THE HELP I CAN GET, I RECKON.

STEPPING OUT INTO A WORLD THAT MOVED ON WITHOUT YOU IS LOOKING LIKE A PRETTY TALL ORDER.



REN, PLEASE.



YOU FOUGHT TO SAVE YOUR **EXPLODING WORM TOWN**. I THINK YOU'LL DO FINE BACK IN THE REAL WORLD.

HA.

THANKS, TAAKO.



SHIT, THE KEEBLER WITCH IS CREEPING ON ME AGAIN, ISN'T SHE?

A-YUP.



LISTEN, PALOMA. IF YOU WANT AN AUTOGRAPH, JUST SAY SO! IT'S TWENTY BUCKS FOR A HEADSHOT, OR THIRTY FOR—

I HAVE ONE LAST PROPHECY FOR YOU.




OH, I REALLY DON'T—

VUMP



CRACK!

VWOOSH!



IN YOUR
HOUR OF GREATEST
NEED, YOU WILL FIND
THE POWER THAT
YOU SEEK...

...FROM A HERO
WREATHED IN
FLAMES!

VVAASH!



UGH,
THANKS A WHOLE
HELL OF A LOT!

I NOW
HAVE, LIKE, THREE
PROPHECIES I HAVE
TO KEEP IN MY HEAD
SIMULTANEOUSLY!

...

UM, DO YOU
HAVE ANY MORE
OF THOSE SCONES,
THOUGH?

VWIP!



SO, DID YOU BUST OUT OF JAIL...AGAIN?

HECK NO, YOU OLD SIDEWINDER! I GOT PARDONED!!



NOT ONLY THAT, BUT I GOT MYSELF ELECTED MAYOR!



WELL, I GUESS THERE'S SOMETHING TO BE SAID FOR YOUR...**FOLKSY CHARM.**

THIS TOWN OWES YOU AND YER SADDLE-PALS SO MUCH...
...I WANT YOU TO HAVE THESE...



...

...ROOT BEER BARRELS?



I'VE HELD ON TO THESE FER SEVEN LONG YEARS, NEVER GIVING IN TO THE TEMPTATION TO GOBBLE 'EM DOWN.

I WANT YOU TO HAVE THEM.



I...GUESS THIS IS GOODBYE, PARD.

UNLESS...MAYBE YOU MIGHT COME BACK TO VISIT US SOMETIME?

OH, CASSIDY.



ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT!



SO, ARE YOU A SORCERER?

SOME KIND OF BATTLE-MAGE?

A GOD?

I'M IN TRANSPORTATION...

UM...



MAGNUS...?

June X

- RACE HUMAN
- CLASS TEEN
- PROF SCIENCES+
- bird beerrinding
- bridge building
- Picking the Perfect Parting gift



JUNEBUG?!

IT... IT REALLY IS YOU.



YOU'RE ALL GROWN UP!

I GUESS... FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, YES.

BUT I WOULDN'T HAVE HAD A CHANCE TO IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR YOU THREE.



AW, IT WAS NOTHING.

NO, MAGNUS.

FOR US, IT MEANT *EVERYTHING*.



AND I THINK WE FOUND A WAY TO RETURN THE FAVOR...

...AT LEAST IN SOME SMALL PART.



WHILE EVERYONE ELSE PUT THE TOWN BACK TOGETHER, I'VE SPENT THE LAST SEVEN YEARS MAKING SENSE OF JUST WHAT HAPPENED HERE.

ISAAK'S HELPED, ACTUALLY. FOR OBVIOUS REASONS, HE KNOWS MORE ABOUT THE CUP THAN ALMOST ANYONE.



I THINK WE FOUND AN ANSWER...IN MY DAD'S OLD JOURNAL.

THERE'S SOMETHING IN HERE THAT...WELL, THAT HE WANTED YOU TO SEE.



NOT NOW, THOUGH, PARTNER.

LATER. WHEN YOU'VE GOT SOME PRIVACY.




I... O-O-KAY.

THANK YOU, JUNE. ISAAK.




AW.

IT WAS NOTHIN'.




WAS THAT
JUNEBUG? SHE
SURE LOOKED
DIFFERENT.

WELL,
SPENDING YOUR
PUBESCENT YEARS
LOCKED UP IN A TIME
BUBBLE WILL DO
THAT TO YOU,
I GUESS.



I DON'T KNOW
WHAT SHE GAVE YOU,
MAGS, BUT IT'S GOT
TO BE BETTER THAN
THE GRODY PRESENT
I GOT.


IT'S...
FROM JACK.
FROM JUNE'S
DAD.



WHY DID
JUNE'S DAD
LEAVE YOU
A GIFT?

I DON'T
KNOW. THINK
I SHOULD
OPEN IT?

IF YOU DO,
MAGNUS...



...IT'S GOING
TO BE HARDER
FOR ME TO
PROTECT YOU!





AND HERE I WAS, THINKING WE COULD GO *ONE FUCKIN' QUEST* WITHOUT THIS GUY POPPING IN.

HOW ABOUT I'M *GONNA OPEN IT*, AND ALSO, *BITE MY WHOLE ASS?*



YOUR ANGER IS UNWARRANTED. IF YOU'D—

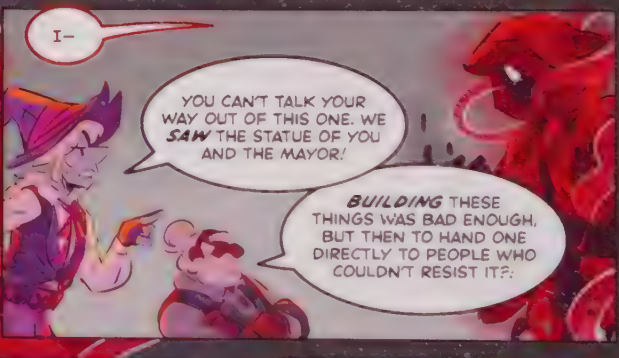
WE'RE NOT DOING THIS WITH YOU AGAIN, DUDE.

YEAH, WE'RE FULL UP ON OMINOUS, INFURIATINGLY AMBIGUOUS WARNINGS.

AND WHAT THE HELL MAKES YOU THINK WE'D TAKE ADVICE FROM SOMEONE WHO *GAVE A GRAND RELIC TO REFUGE* IN THE FIRST PLACE?



WHAT?



I—

YOU CAN'T TALK YOUR WAY OUT OF THIS ONE. WE *SAW* THE STATUE OF YOU AND THE MAYOR!

BUILDING THESE THINGS WAS BAD ENOUGH, BUT THEN TO HAND ONE DIRECTLY TO PEOPLE WHO COULDN'T RESIST IT?!



PEOPLE *DIED* BECAUSE OF YOU! THAT RELIC NEARLY DESTROYED THE WHOLE TOWN!

AND NOW YOU SHOW UP OFFERING *PROTECTION?* WHAT KIND OF A MONSTER *ARE* YOU?!



I—I DON'T... I SWEAR TO YOU, I DIDN'T...

OH, SO IT WAS A *DIFFERENT* MEMBER OF THE BLOOD ROBES CLUB? COOL, WELL, THAT'S NOT REALLY A POINT IN YOUR FAVOR.



PLEASE, I...
THERE ARE THINGS AT
STAKE HERE BIGGER
THAN ANY ONE LIFE, OR
ANY ONE **TOWN!**

THE END IS ALMOST
HERE, AND IF YOU
ALIGN YOURSELVES
AGAINST ME WHEN
IT ARRIVES...

...THIS
WORLD
WILL
BE LOST!



THE END, HUH?
AND WHOSE
FAULT IS THAT?

YOU **MADE**
THE RELICS. THE
BUREAU OF BALANCE
IS TWO AWAY FROM
DESTROYING
THEM ALL.

IF YOU WANT
TO HELP US? STAY
THE **FUCK** OUT
OF OUR WAY.



THE BUREAU...?
CAN'T YOU SEE THAT
THEY'RE ONLY GIVING
YOU ONE SIDE OF
THE STORY?

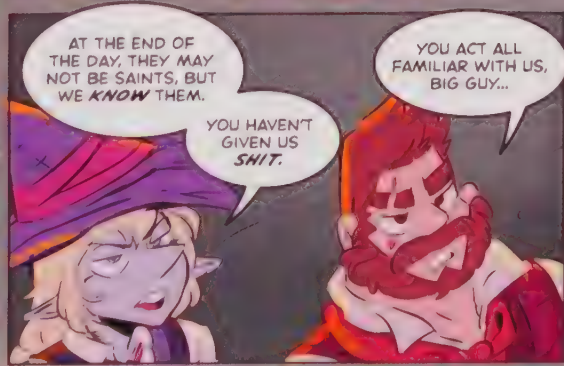
WHY ARE
YOU SO TRUSTING
OF THEM?

HOW HAVE I **EVER**
GIVEN YOU REASON
TO DISTRUST ME?



WE'VE BEEN
WORKING WITH
THE BUREAU FOR...
WHAT, ALMOST
A YEAR?

IT'S NOT
ALWAYS CLEAN,
OR EASY, BUT
THEY'RE DOING
THEIR BEST.



AT THE END OF
THE DAY, THEY MAY
NOT BE SAINTS, BUT
WE **KNOW** THEM.

YOU HAVEN'T
GIVEN US
SHIT.

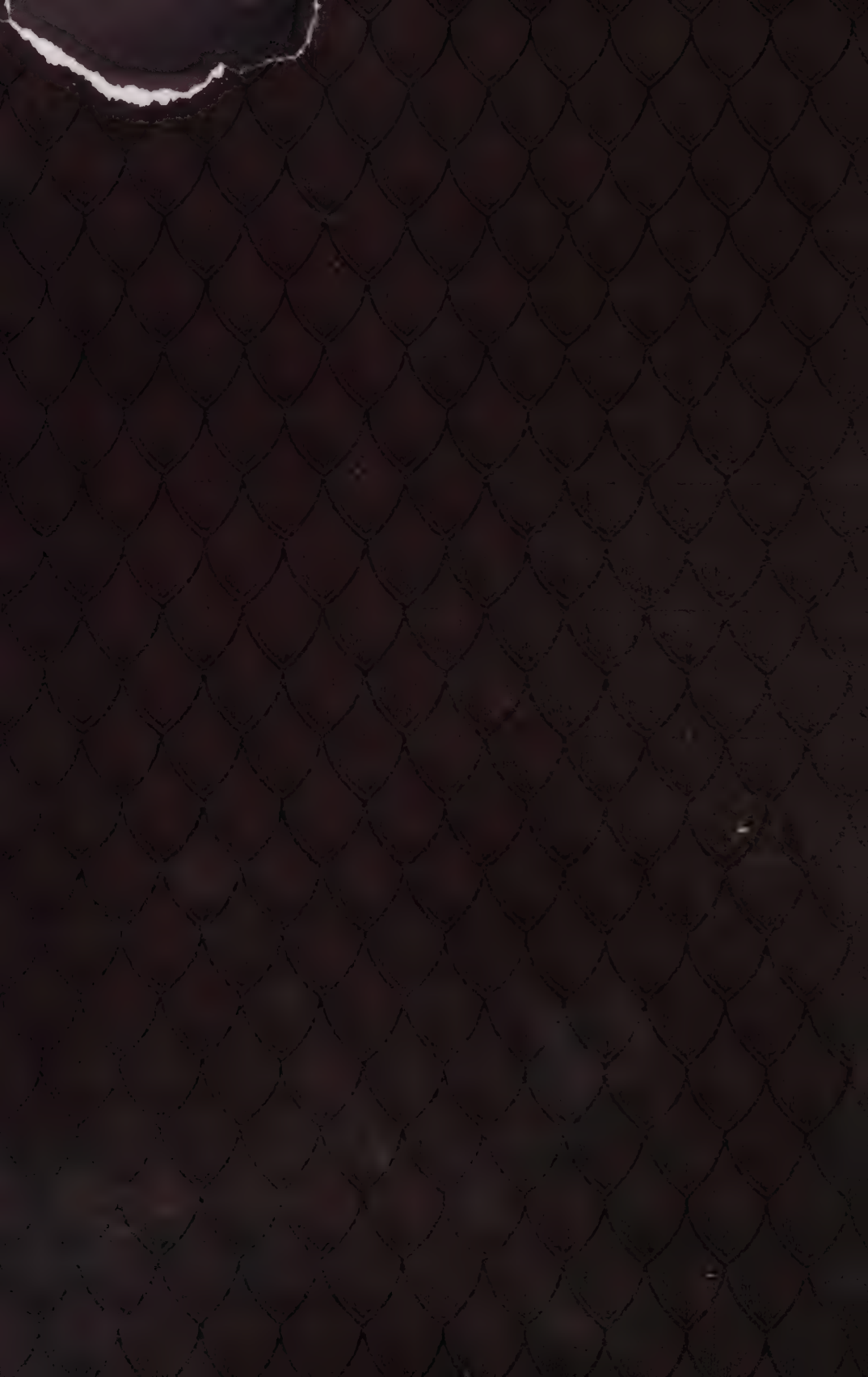
YOU ACT ALL
FAMILIAR WITH US,
BIG GUY..

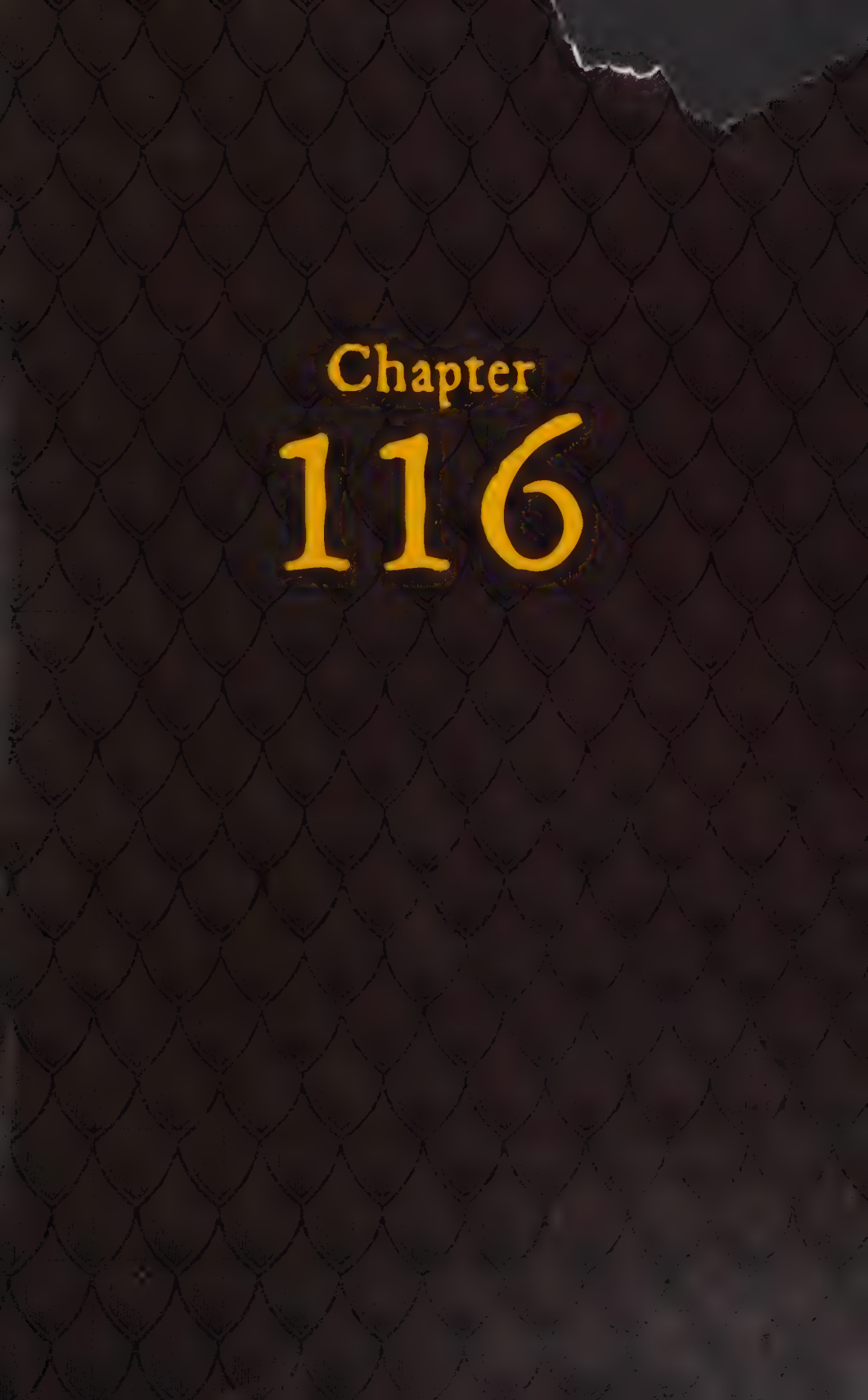


...BUT WE
DON'T KNOW
YOU AT **ALL.**

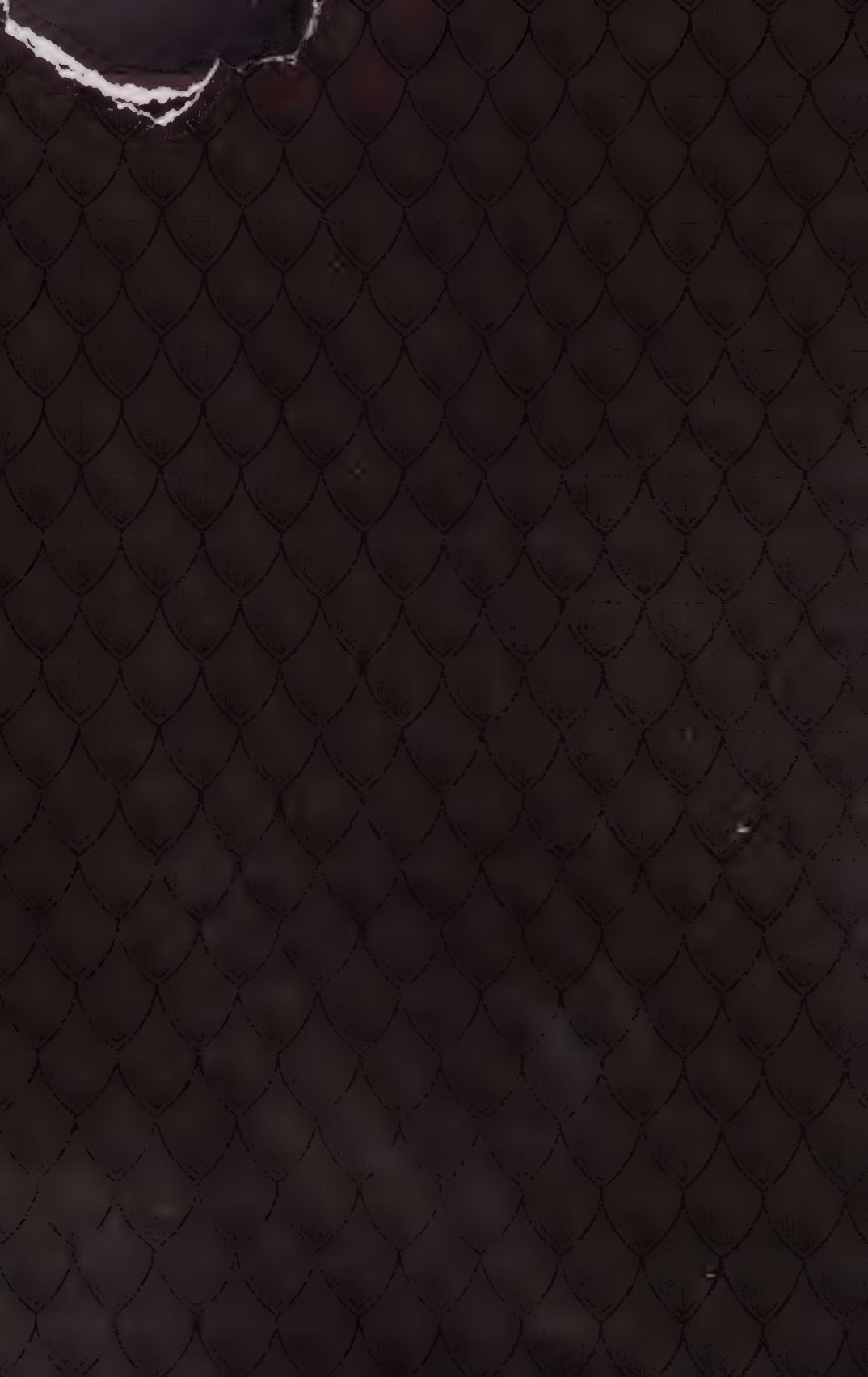






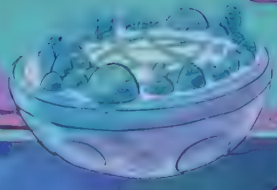


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I'M SORRY
FOR WORRYING YOU
OVER NOTHING.



GREEAK



KA-KUNK!



AHHH, CLOAK OF THE MANTA RAY.

SOMEDAY, YOU'LL BE USEFUL, OLD FRIEND.



AHEM.



ARE YOU TALKING TO ME?

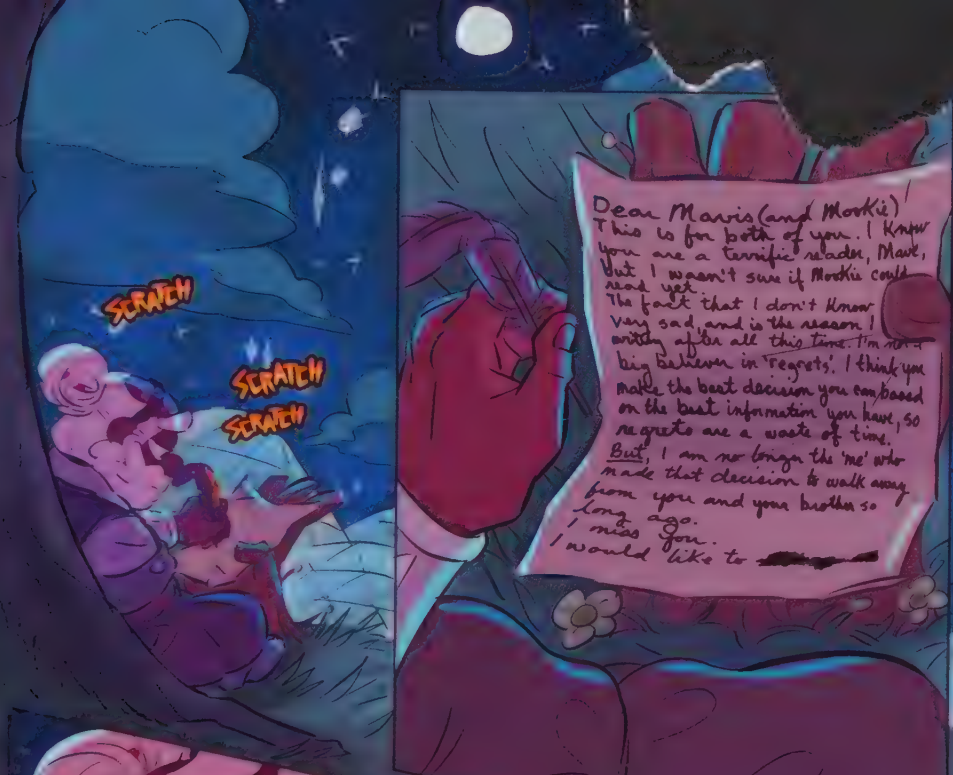


YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS HAVE ADDED...

...QUITE A BIT TO YOUR DEATH COUNT, HAVEN'T YOU?

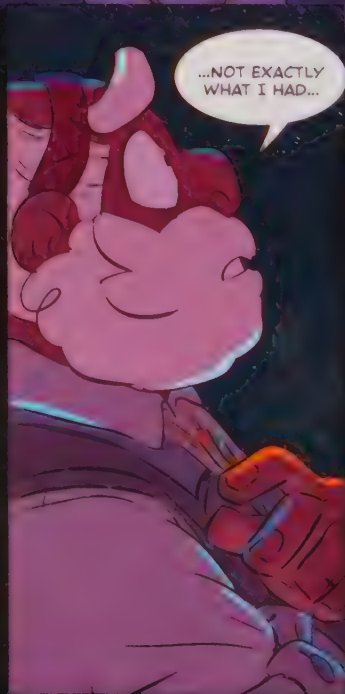








THAT'S...



...NOT EXACTLY
WHAT I HAD...



...IN
MIND.



HUH.



OKAY.

I'M LOST.



I MEAN...

...YOU SKETCHED A MEAN LANDSCAPE, JACK...

...BUT WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH...



...

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Carey Pietsch is a cartoonist based out of Brooklyn, New York. Her previous work includes drawing two arcs of *Lumberjanes* and the artwork for the *Mages of Mystralia* webcomic. Carey also makes *Keepsakes* and other original comics about magic and empathy. *The Adventure Zone* convinced her to give playing in tabletop campaigns a try, and she's never looked back.




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