

SAM BECK

# VERSE



BOOK ONE: THE BROKEN HALF

"Verse's rich drawings and colours beautifully illustrate a complicated, fantasy world filled with sympathetic characters. I can't wait to learn more about them as their journey continues!"

ic Novel

ERIN HICKS, Author & Illustrator of *The Nameless City*



YARA  
DESERT

SEA OF  
BROKEN  
BRIDGES

ESSEAR

TILLE

FIREMIST  
BAY

BISE

ORTH...

THE  
RADIANT  
ISLES

ATAN

MUGAI



# VÉRSE

BOOK ONE: THE BROKEN HALF

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SAM BECK

# VERSE

BOOK ONE: THE BROKEN HALF



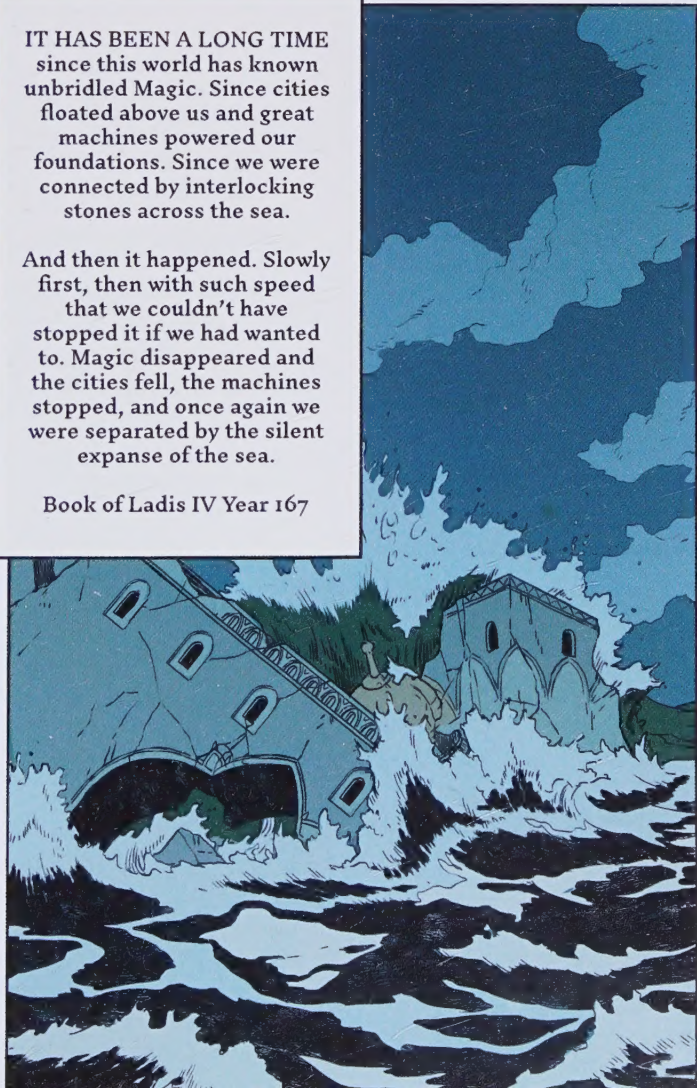
To those who set out on this journey with me  
while the destination was still unknown.



IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME since this world has known unbridled Magic. Since cities floated above us and great machines powered our foundations. Since we were connected by interlocking stones across the sea.

And then it happened. Slowly first, then with such speed that we couldn't have stopped it if we had wanted to. Magic disappeared and the cities fell, the machines stopped, and once again we were separated by the silent expanse of the sea.

Book of Ladis IV Year 167

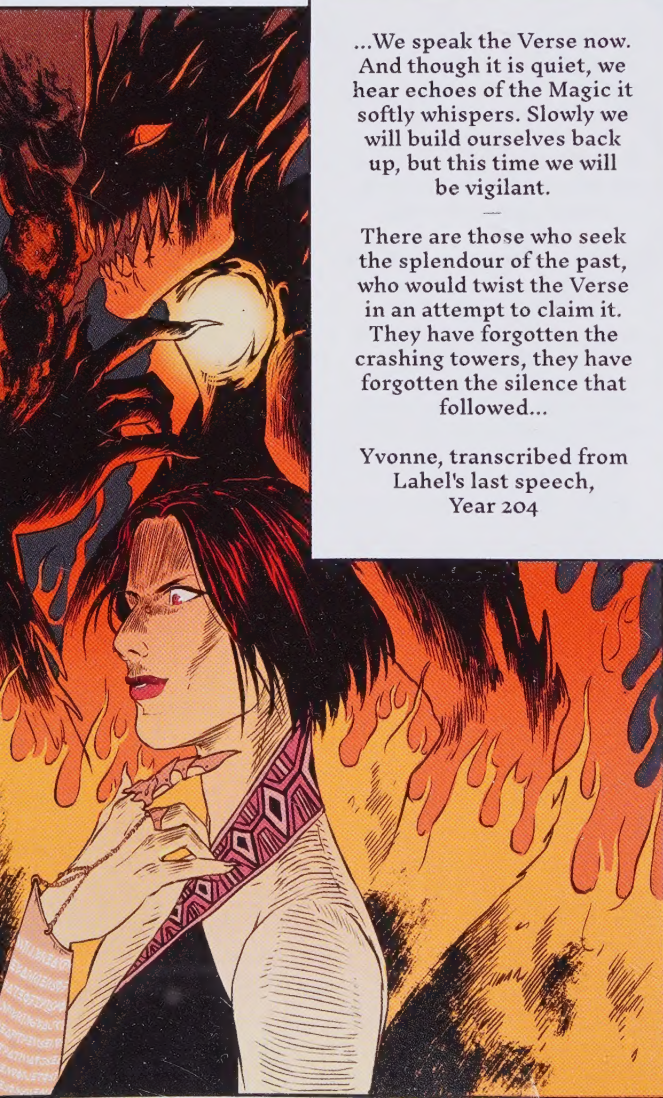




...We speak the Verse now.  
And though it is quiet, we  
hear echoes of the Magic it  
softly whispers. Slowly we  
will build ourselves back  
up, but this time we will  
be vigilant.

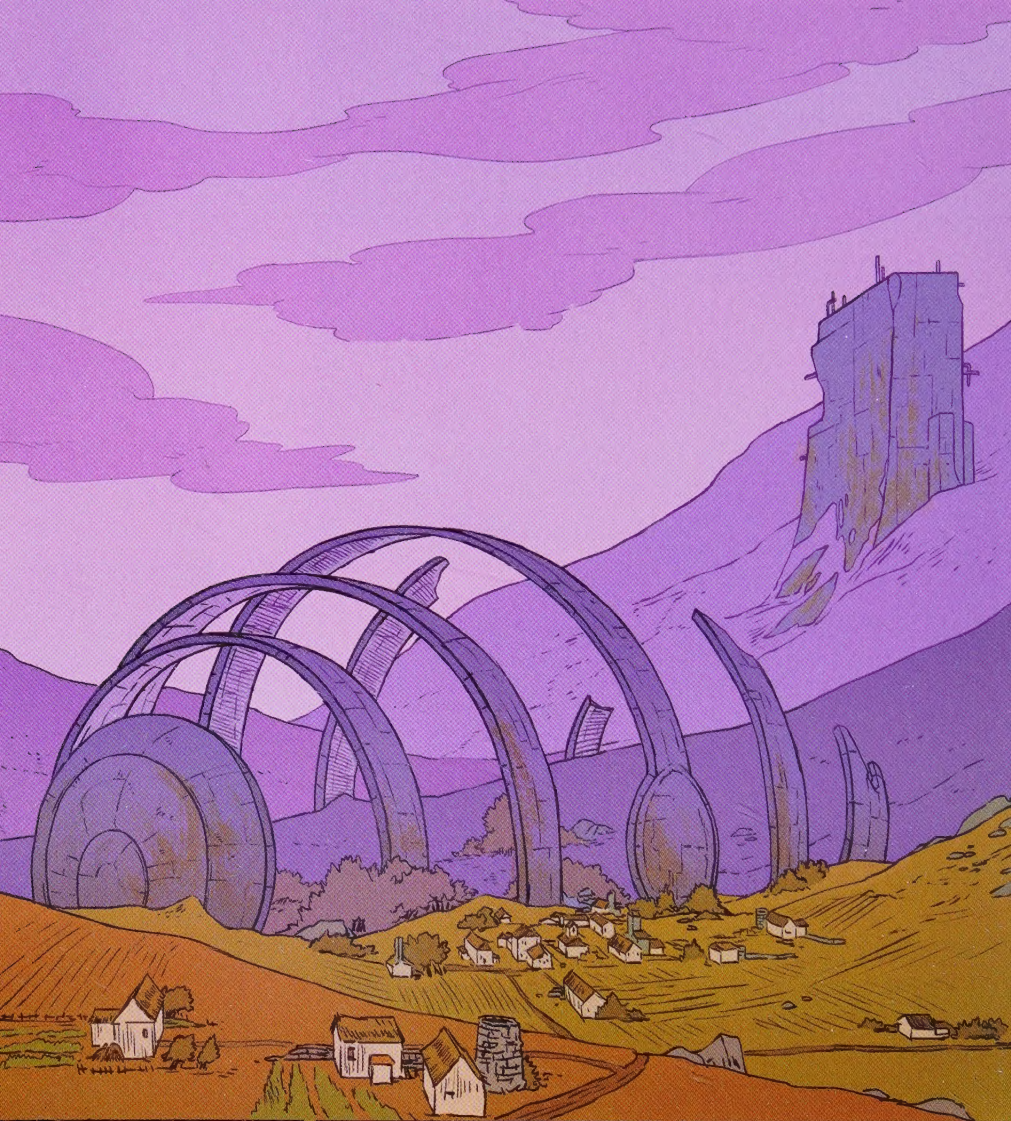
There are those who seek  
the splendour of the past,  
who would twist the Verse  
in an attempt to claim it.  
They have forgotten the  
crashing towers, they have  
forgotten the silence that  
followed...

Yvonne, transcribed from  
Lahel's last speech,  
Year 204

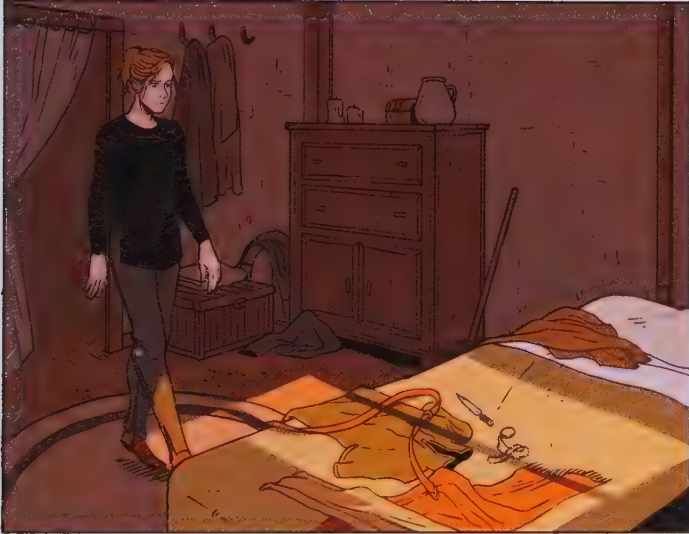
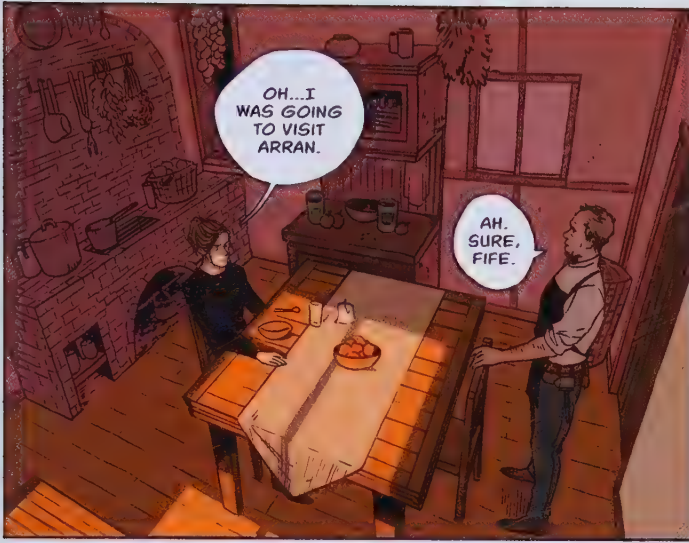


# CHAPTER 1

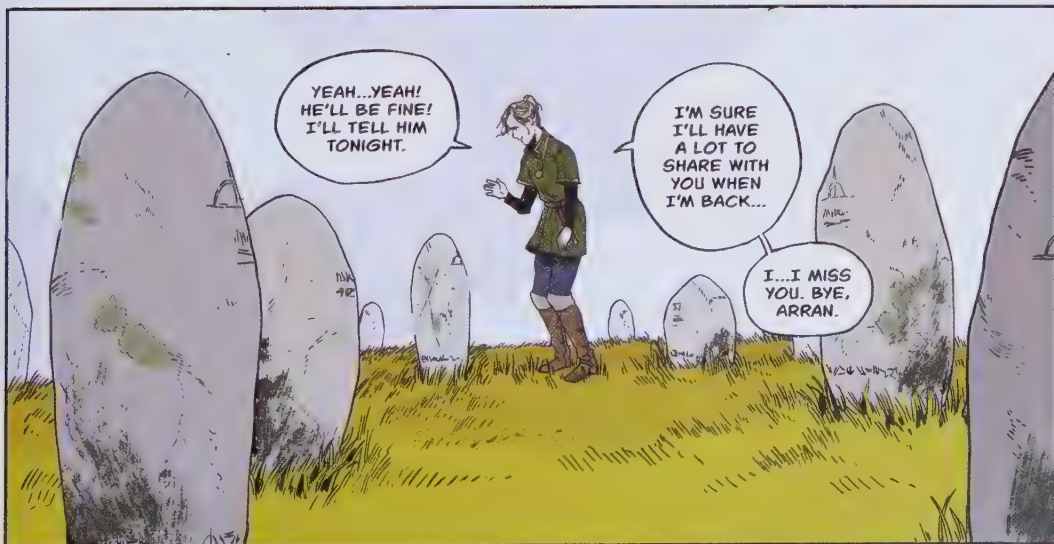
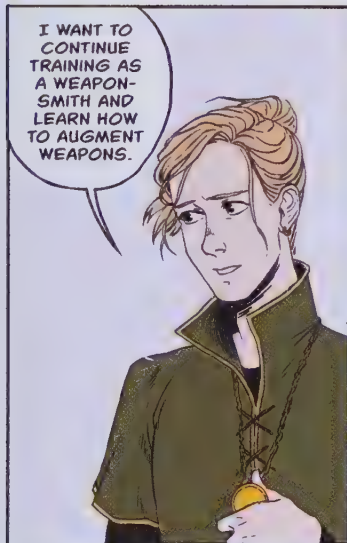
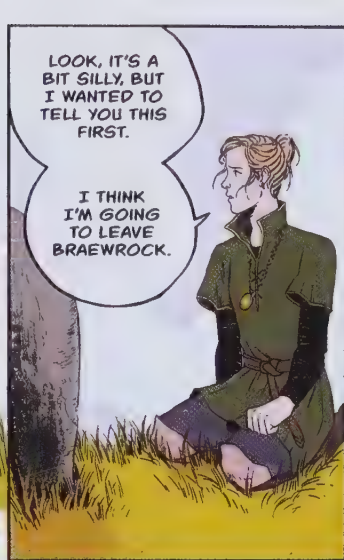
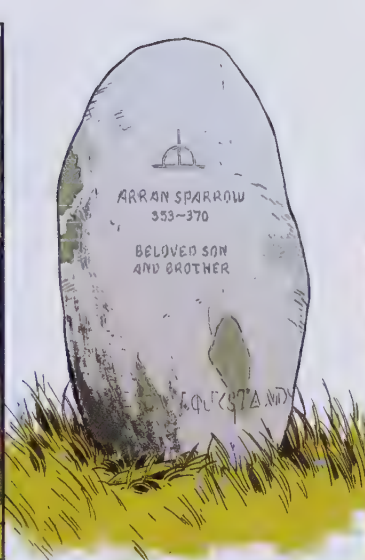


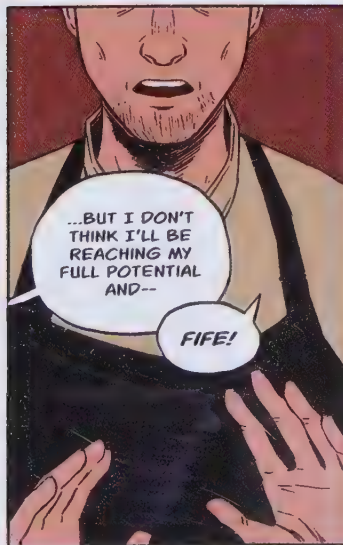


NIELES WAS ASKING IF YOU'D BE HELPING HIM AT THE SMITHERY TODAY.











SO IT'S FINE?  
YOU'LL BE FINE...?

OF COURSE!  
NIELES MIGHT BE A BIT HURT, THOUGH.



I GIVE YOU MY FULL BLESSING!

I JUST WANT YOU TO BE SAFE.

GETTING THERE WILL BE A LONG TRIP, SO YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE POOR OLD ASH.



I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU WHAT LURKS IN THE RUINS OR FORESTS... JUST BE SAFE OKAY, FIFE?



I KNOW, DAD, DON'T WORRY!

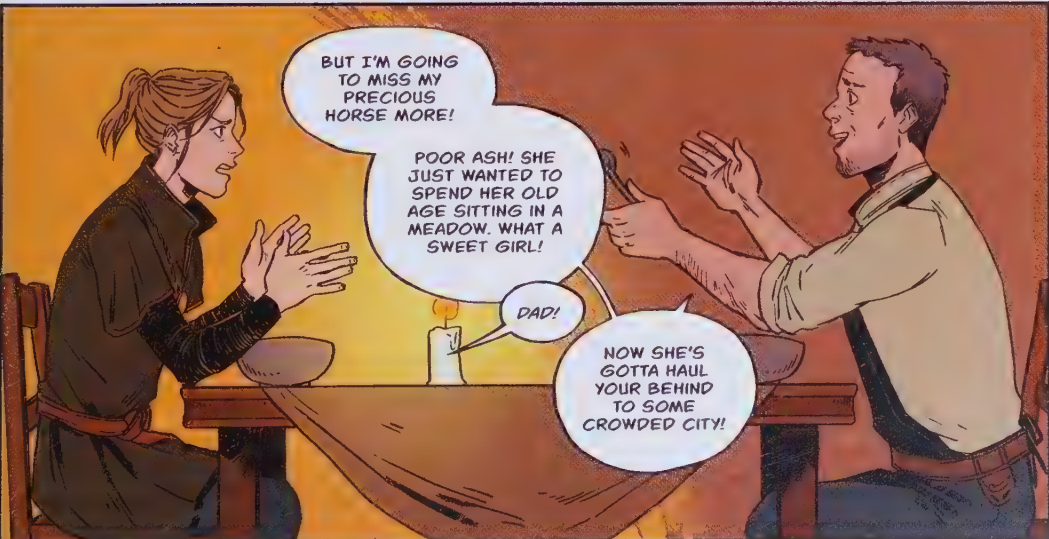
I'M GOING TO COME BACK THE BEST WEAPONSMITH! THE ONLY PERSON WHO SHOULD BE WORRIED IS NIELES!

HA-HA...



I'M GOING TO MISS YOU, FIFE.

AW, COME ON--

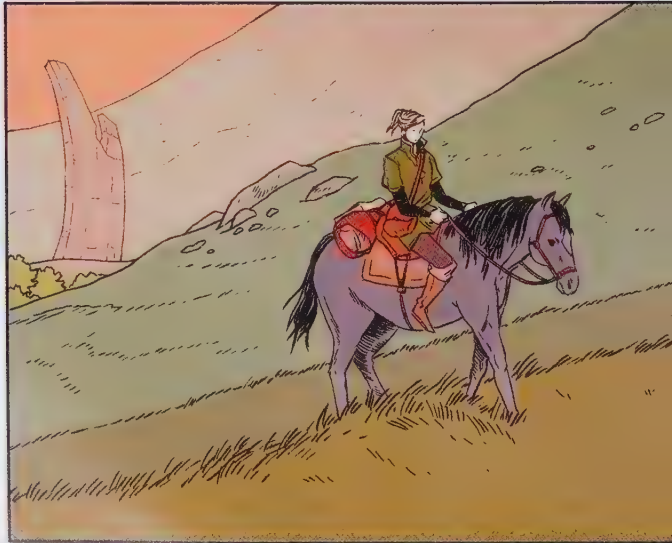
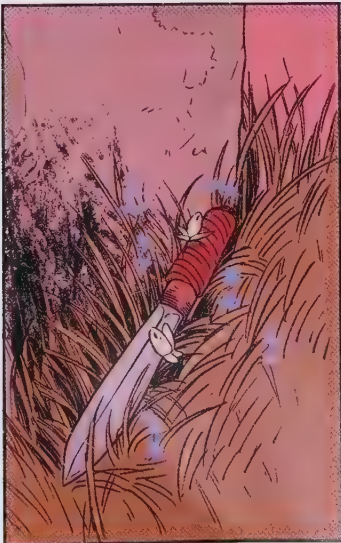
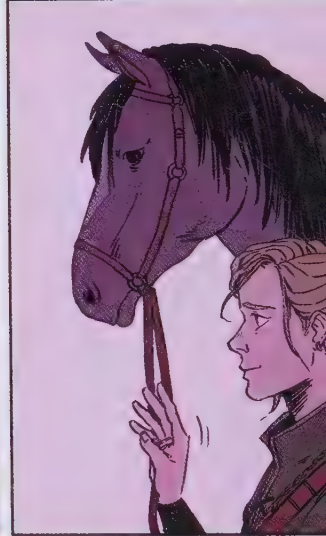
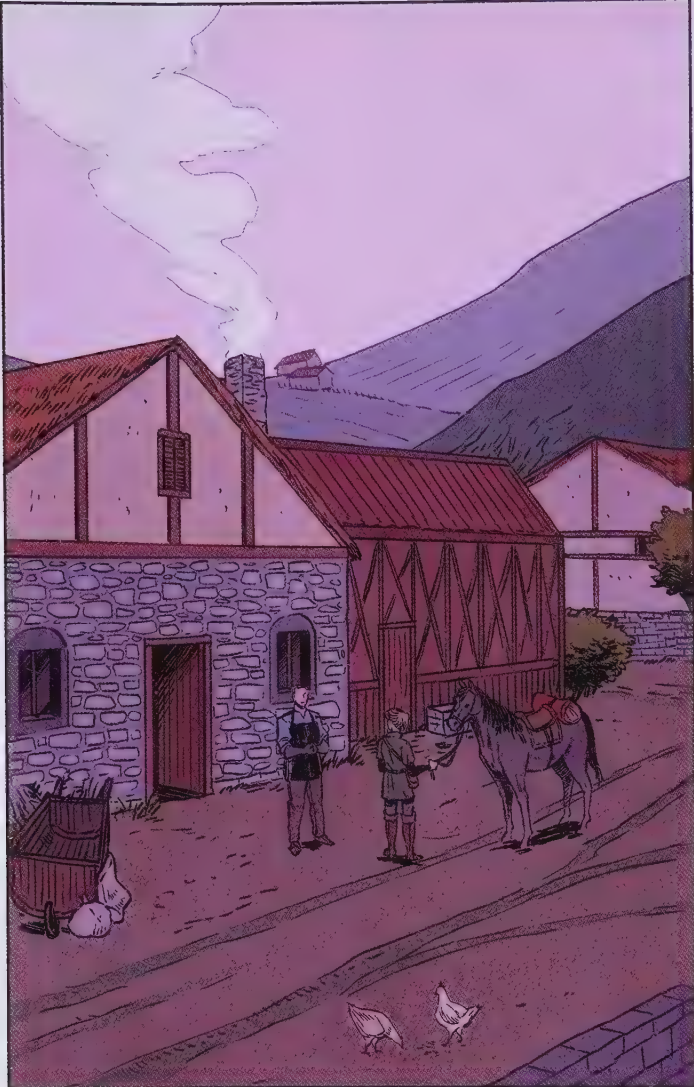


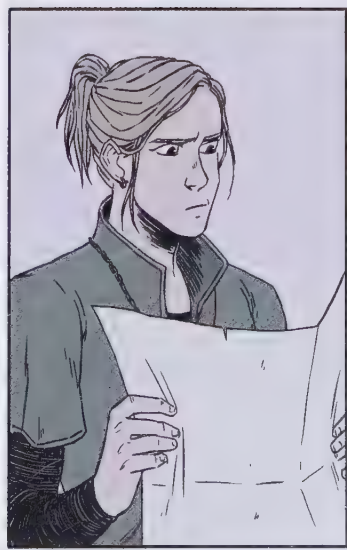
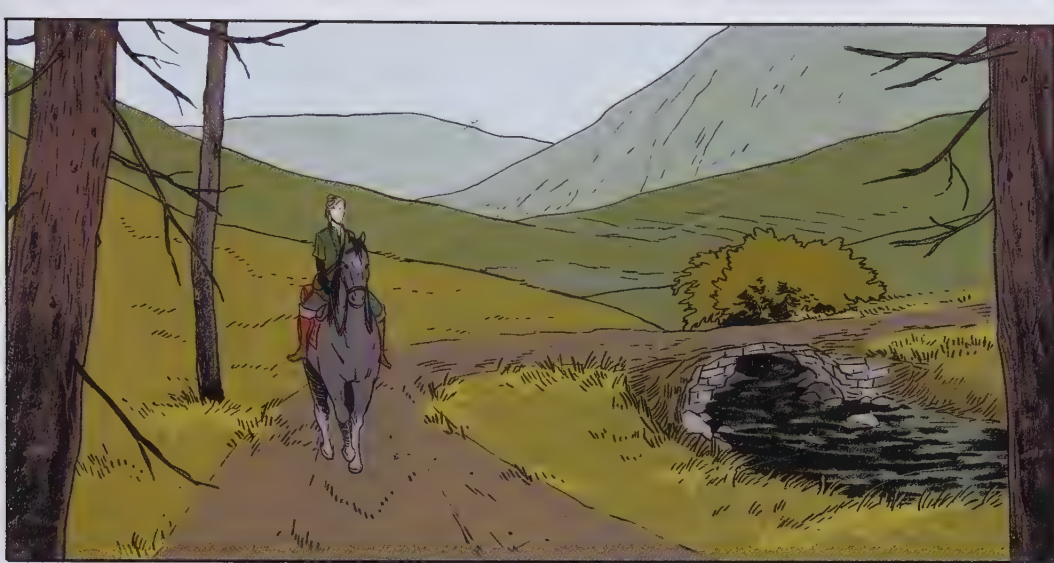
BUT I'M GOING TO MISS MY PRECIOUS HORSE MORE!

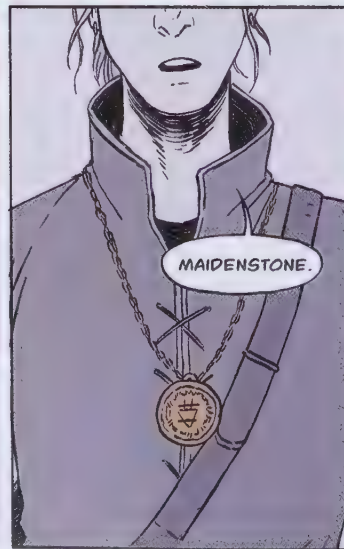
POOR ASH! SHE JUST WANTED TO SPEND HER OLD AGE SITTING IN A MEADOW. WHAT A SWEET GIRL!

DAD!

NOW SHE'S GOTTA HAUL YOUR BEHIND TO SOME CROWDED CITY!









UH, WELL I HAVE A MAP, BUT I'M HAVING SOME DIFFICULTY WITH IT...



GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

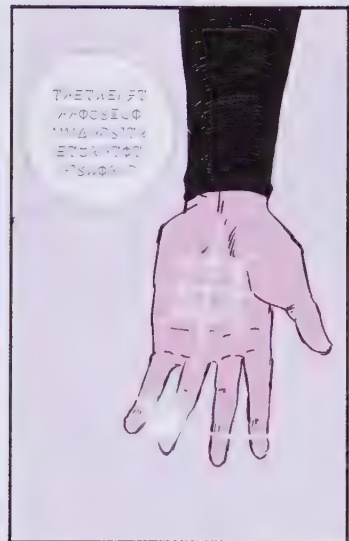
AHA... HA... WHY?



JUST A LITTLE VERSE TO HELP GET YOU WHERE YOU'RE GOING...



THEY'RE GOING TO FIND THE VERSE TO HELP YOU GET WHERE YOU'RE GOING...



THEY'RE GOING TO FIND THE VERSE TO HELP YOU GET WHERE YOU'RE GOING...



I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS! THIS WILL POINT ME IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?

YEP. IF IT STARTS TO FADE JUST REPEAT THE VERSE.

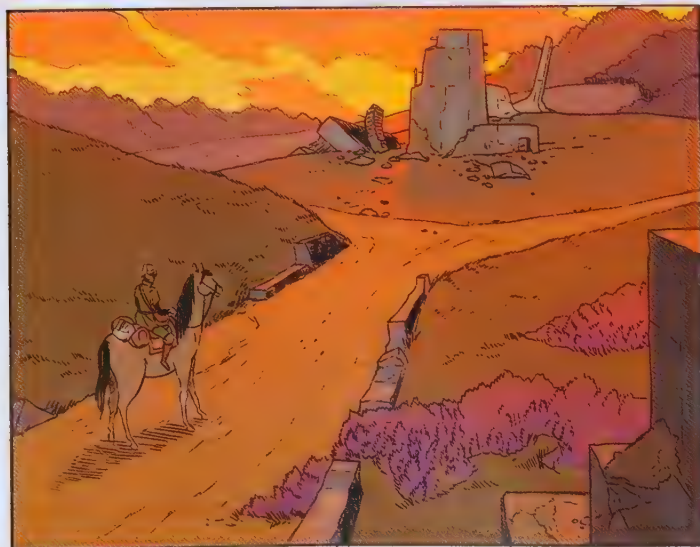
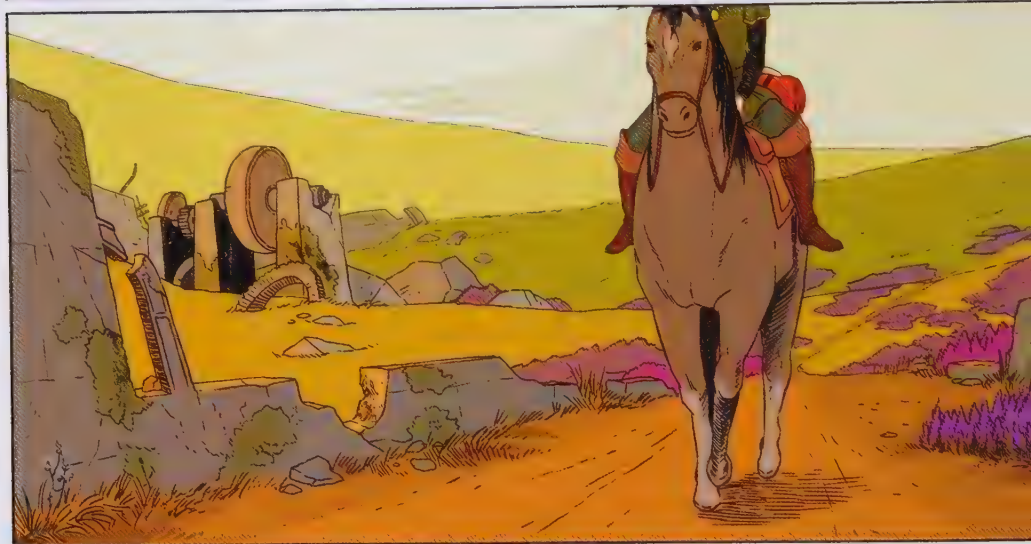


SAFE TRAVELS.

THANK YOU!

GO WITH THE SONG.

ALRIGHT, ASH,  
WE'RE SET  
NOW. NO MORE  
GETTING LOST!



IT'S  
FADING...  
UH, HOW  
DID IT  
GO?





REACTING  
TO THE  
SIGNAL  
IS  
CRUCIAL  
TO  
THE  
MIS-  
SION



THE  
SIGNAL  
IS  
WEAK  
BUT  
IT  
IS  
THERE



NOTHING.  
LET ME  
TRY THE  
MAP  
AGAIN.

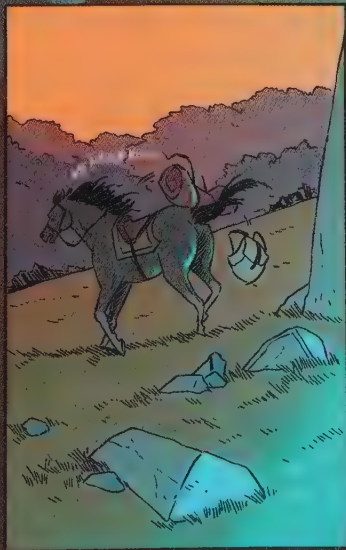
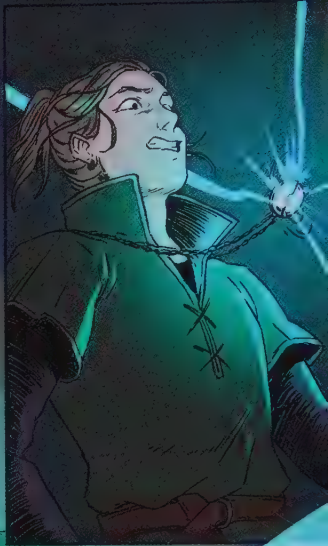


NEVER MIND.



WHAT WAS  
IT, WHAT  
WAS IT...?









WERE YOU WALKING BY?



DID YOU SEE...

NNGHH...





W-WHERE AM I?  
WHO ARE YOU?




W-WHAT  
ARE YOU?

VEL?


NO, VEL  
CAN'T TALK!  
AHHH--!



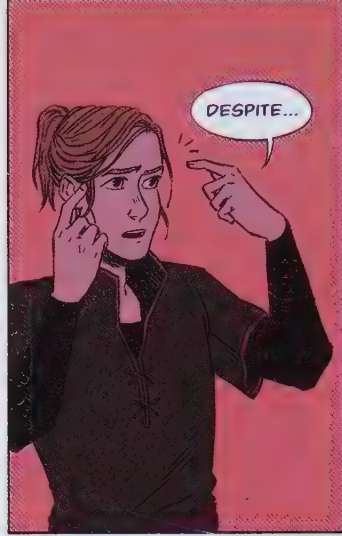
VEL? CAN YOU  
PLEASE TELL  
ME...WHERE  
I AM?



H-HOW  
DID I GET  
HERE...

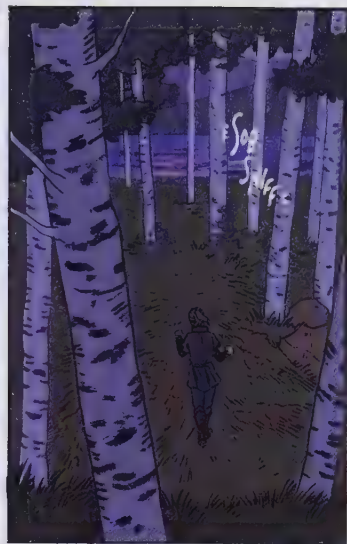


I...I CAN'T  
REMEMBER...





WHAT AM I GETTING MYSELF INTO?



I CAN'T REMEMBER. I CAN'T...



YOU WERE WALKING BY JUST NOW?

RIGHT?

YOU SAW THAT FLASH OF LIGHT?

> Sob  
Smf



...

UHM... SORRY ABOUT THE WHOLE DAGGER THING.



I'M FIFE.

ARE YOU LOST?

YES...

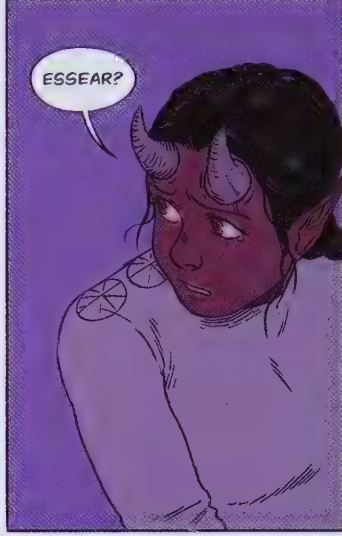


WELL, WE'RE ABOUT A DAY AWAY FROM THE VILLAGE OF BRAEWROCK.

...

NEAR THE FOG HIGHLANDS?

...IN THE COUNTRY OF ESSEAR?



ESSEAR?



YEAH... ARE YOU FROM NEARBY?



I'M FROM...

I'M FROM--

I-- I DON'T KNOW! I DON'T KNOW WHERE I'M FROM!



OH! NO, NO, PLEASE.

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

\*SNIFF\* MY NAME'S N-NEITYA.



OKAY, NEITYA. YOU REMEMBER THAT!



I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON.

THERE WAS A FLASH OF LIGHT, AND NOW I'M HERE.

WHEREVER HERE IS.



WHAT ABOUT THE HORNS...

:SNIFF:

AHH! NEVER MIND.



OH!

MY THINGS!  
MY HORSE!

UH, JUST  
WAIT--  
WAIT RIGHT  
THERE!



ASH!

ASH?!



DAD IS  
GOING  
TO KILL  
ME.



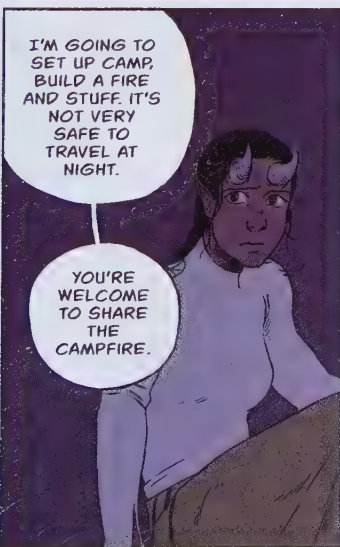
I FOUND  
SOME  
STUFF...

...BUT NO  
HORSE.



HEY, UHM,  
NEITYA?

THE SUN  
IS ALMOST  
GONE.



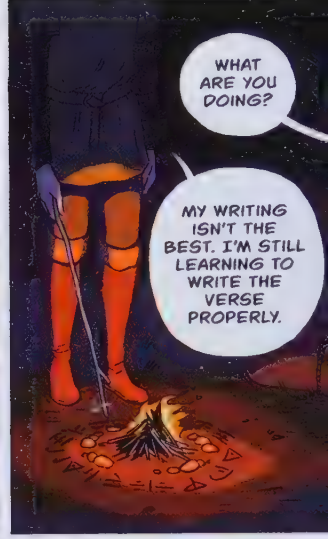
I'M GOING  
TO SET UP  
CAMP,  
BUILD A FIRE  
AND STUFF. IT'S  
NOT VERY  
SAFE TO  
TRAVEL AT  
NIGHT.

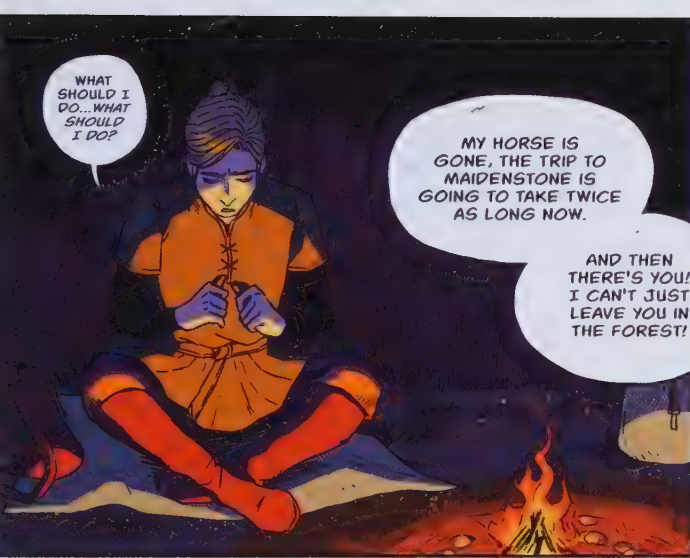
YOU'RE  
WELCOME  
TO SHARE  
THE  
CAMPFIRE.



OKAY...

LET ME  
FIND SOME  
KINDLING.





WHAT SHOULD I DO...WHAT SHOULD I DO?

MY HORSE IS GONE, THE TRIP TO MAIDENSTONE IS GOING TO TAKE TWICE AS LONG NOW.

AND THEN THERE'S YOU! I CAN'T JUST LEAVE YOU IN THE FOREST!



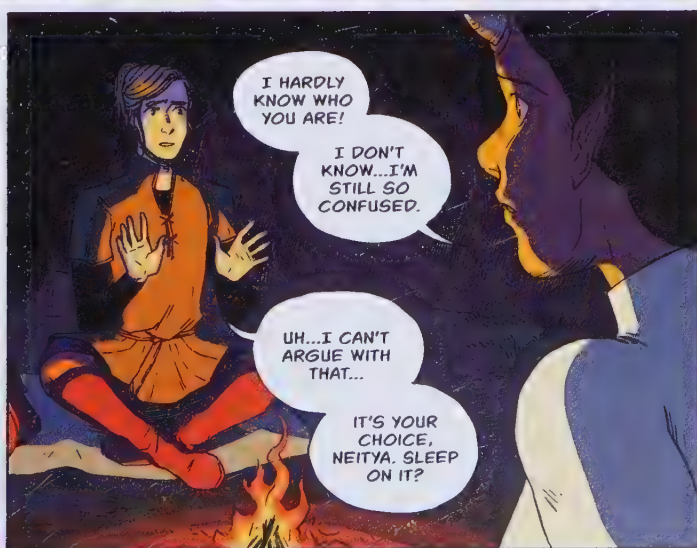
SORRY.

THERE'S NOTHING TO BE SORRY ABOUT.



HUH...

YOU COULD COME TO MAIDENSTONE WITH ME.

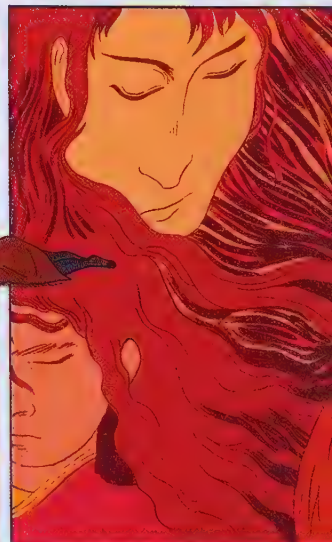
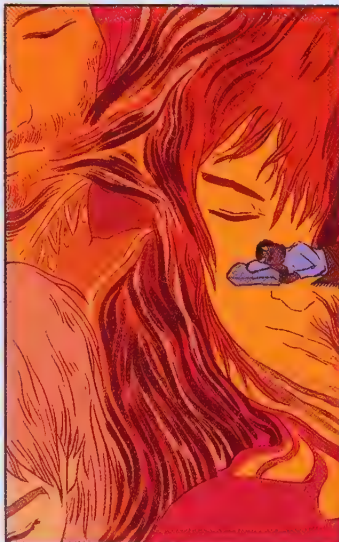
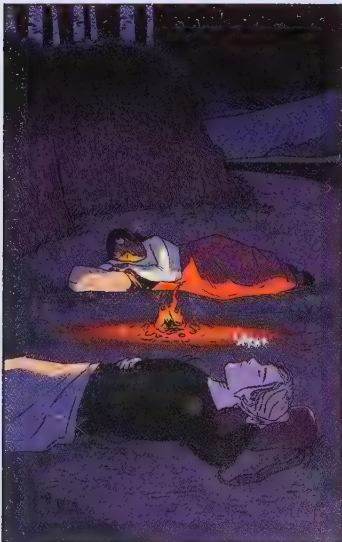
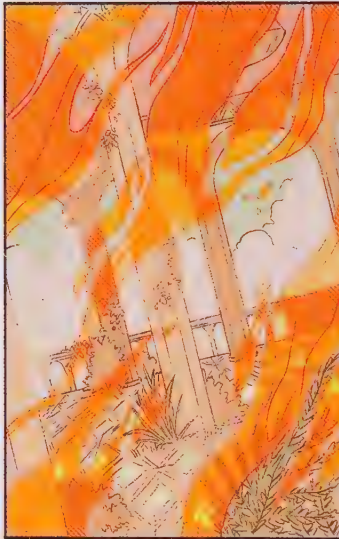
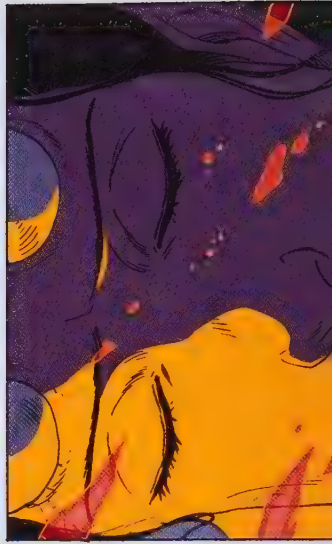


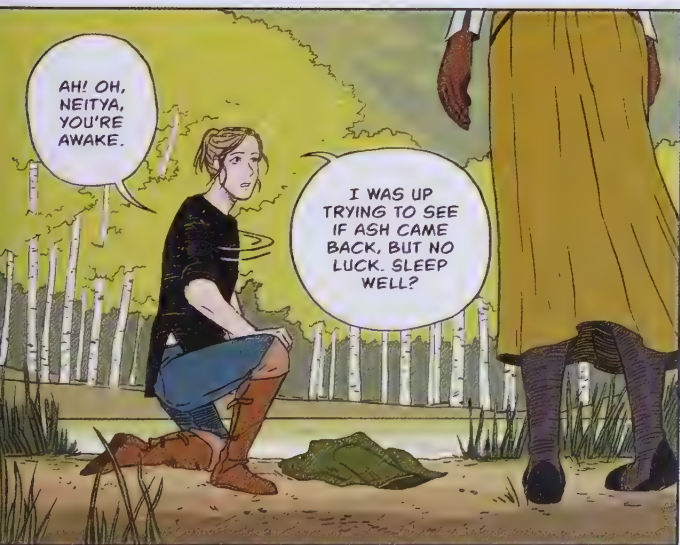
I HARDLY KNOW WHO YOU ARE!

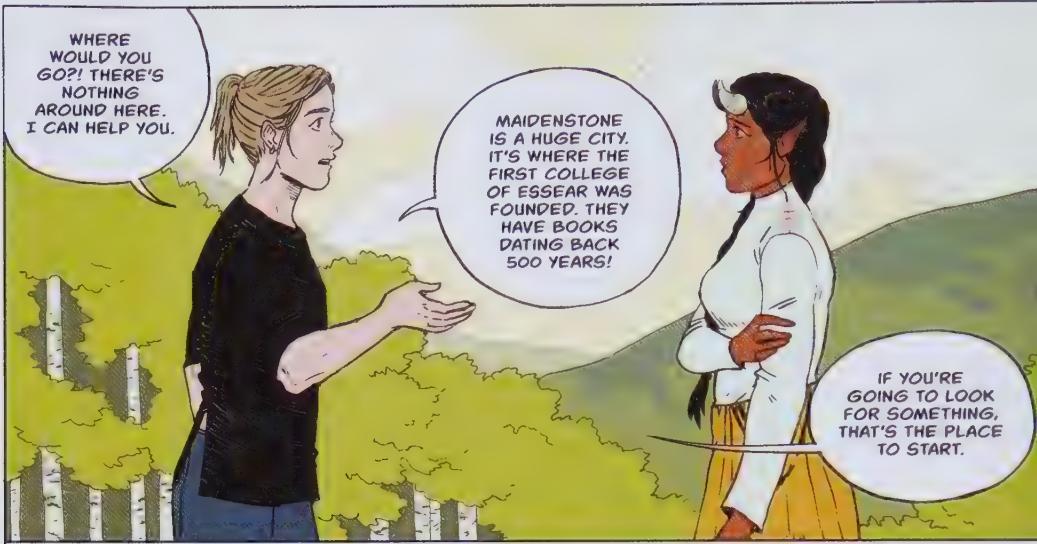
I DON'T KNOW...I'M STILL SO CONFUSED.

UH...I CAN'T ARGUE WITH THAT...

IT'S YOUR CHOICE, NEITYA. SLEEP ON IT?







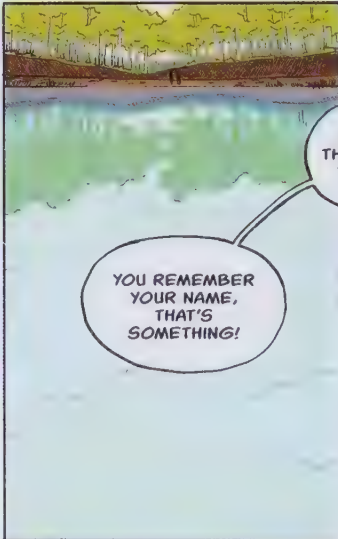
WHERE WOULD YOU GO?! THERE'S NOTHING AROUND HERE. I CAN HELP YOU.

MAIDENSTONE IS A HUGE CITY. IT'S WHERE THE FIRST COLLEGE OF ESSEAR WAS FOUNDED. THEY HAVE BOOKS DATING BACK 500 YEARS!

IF YOU'RE GOING TO LOOK FOR SOMETHING, THAT'S THE PLACE TO START.



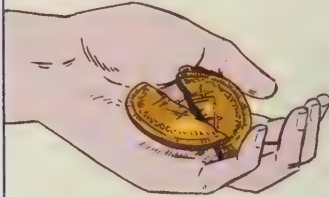
I WOULDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO START LOOKING FOR...



YOU REMEMBER YOUR NAME, THAT'S SOMETHING!

AND THERE'S THIS.

I THINK YOU SHOULD TAKE IT.



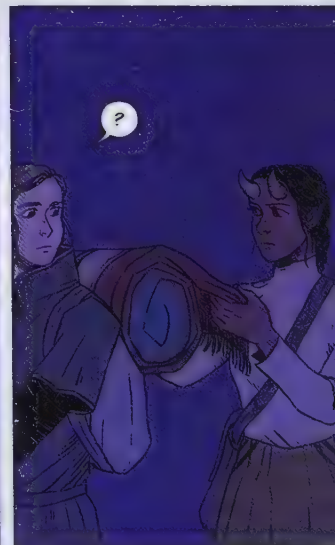
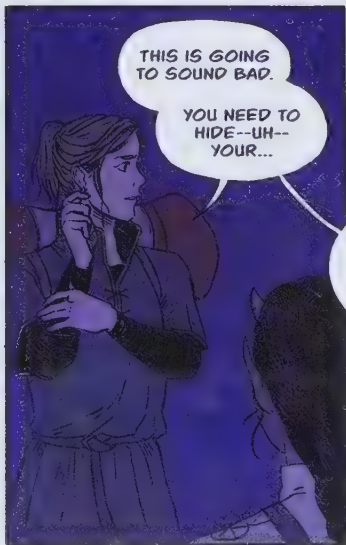
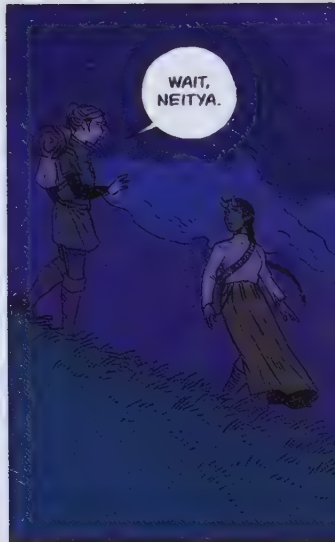
WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY WAS REALLY STRANGE.

I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK OF IT, BUT WE WON'T FIND ANY ANSWERS IN THIS FOREST.













I NEED TO TALK TO THE INNKEEPER AND SEE IF SHE HAS ANY SUPPLIES I CAN BUY.

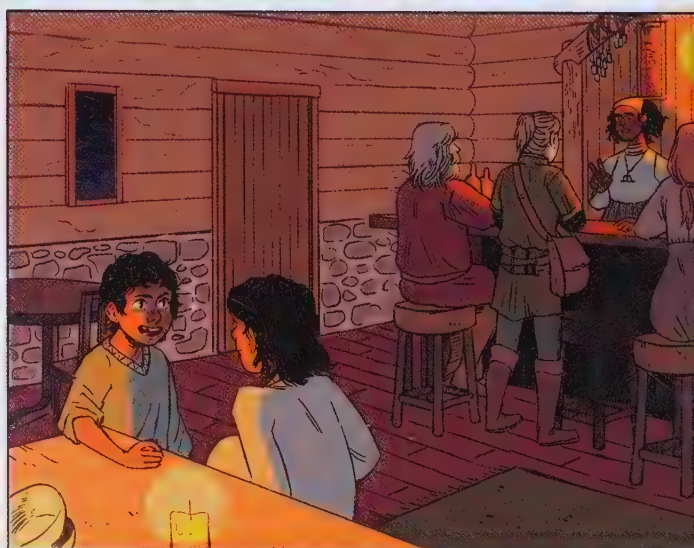
I DON'T HAVE MUCH COIN. I HOPE WHATEVER WE GET WILL LAST US.

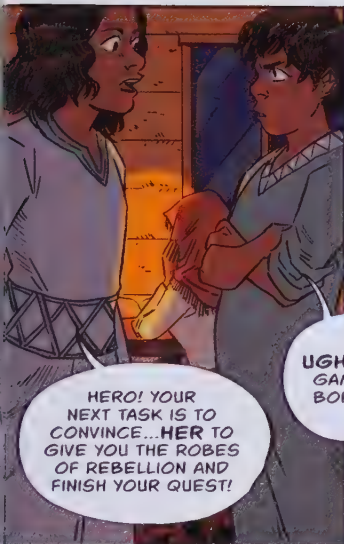


WILL YOU BE OKAY HERE?



I'LL BE FINE! STOP WORRYING.



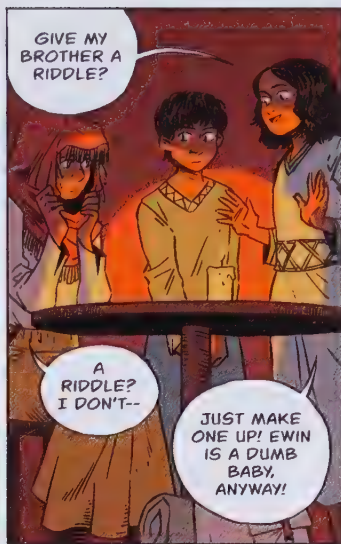


HERO! YOUR NEXT TASK IS TO CONVINCE...HER TO GIVE YOU THE ROBES OF REBELLION AND FINISH YOUR QUEST!

UGH! THIS GAME IS BORING!



HEY!



GIVE MY BROTHER A RIDDLE?

A RIDDLE? I DON'T--

JUST MAKE ONE UP! EWIN IS A DUMB BABY, ANYWAY!



I'M NOT A BABY!

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE!

AHAHA, UHM...



WHAT BELONGS TO ONLY YOU, BUT IS USED MORE BY OTHERS?



HMM...



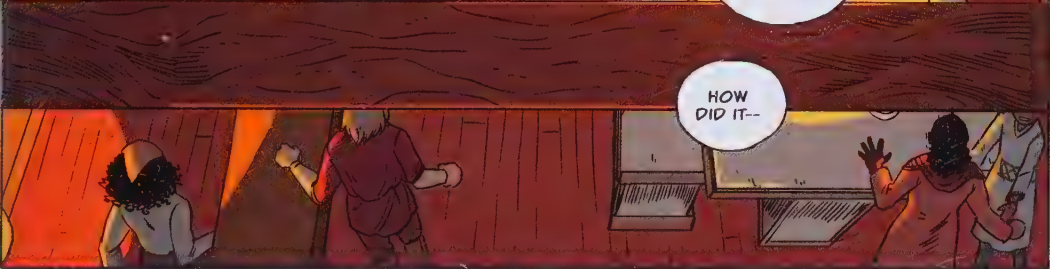
OH! I KNOW!

THE ANSWER IS MY NAME!



CORRECT!







WHY WERE THEY SCARED?



I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING TO SCARE THEM! IF IT'S JUST THESE HORNS THEN--

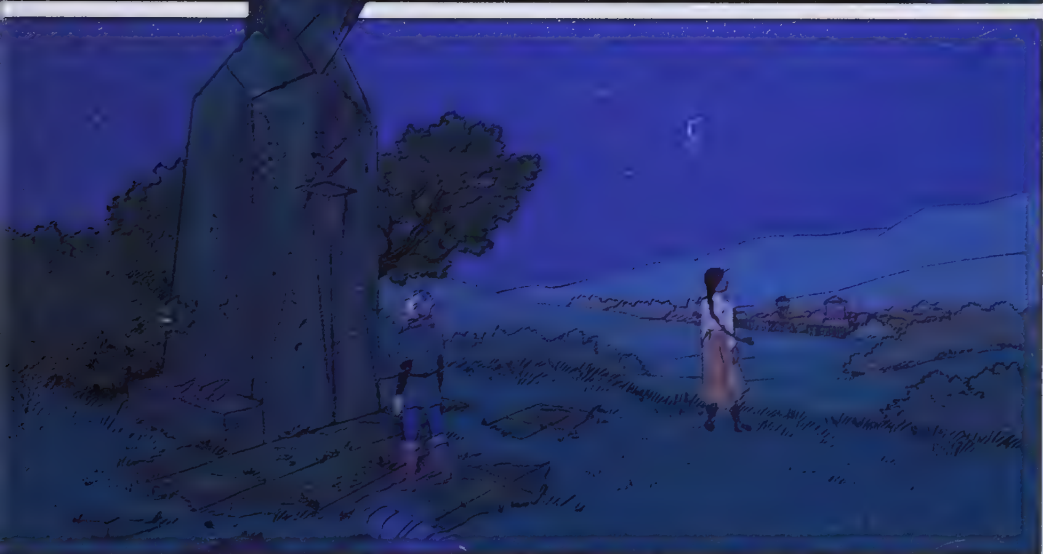
--AND WHAT'S VEL?

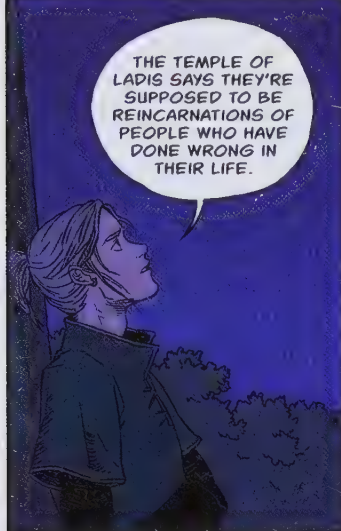
WHY DID THEY CALL ME THAT!

SHHH! KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN!

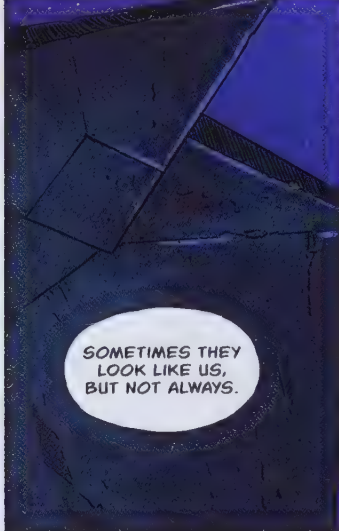


I'LL EXPLAIN, BUT WE CAN'T STAY HERE.

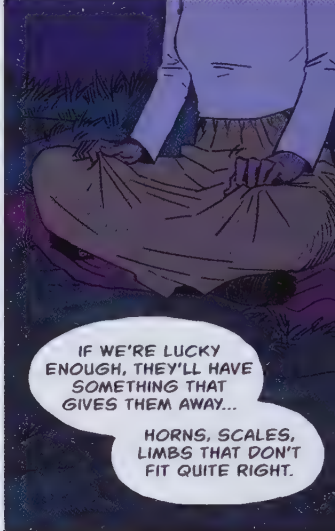




THE TEMPLE OF LADIS SAYS THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE REINCARNATIONS OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE DONE WRONG IN THEIR LIFE.

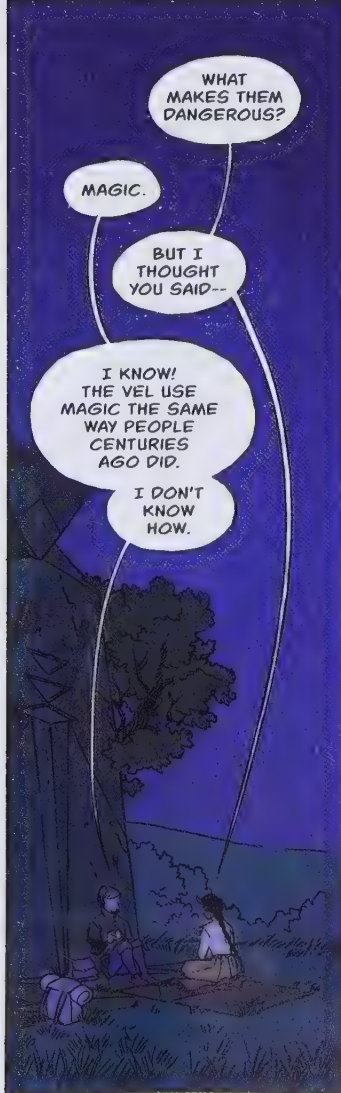


SOMETIMES THEY LOOK LIKE US, BUT NOT ALWAYS.



IF WE'RE LUCKY ENOUGH, THEY'LL HAVE SOMETHING THAT GIVES THEM AWAY...

HORNS, SCALES, LIMBS THAT DON'T FIT QUITE RIGHT.




WHAT MAKES THEM DANGEROUS?

MAGIC.


BUT I THOUGHT YOU SAID--

I KNOW! THE VEL USE MAGIC THE SAME WAY PEOPLE CENTURIES AGO DID.

I DON'T KNOW HOW.

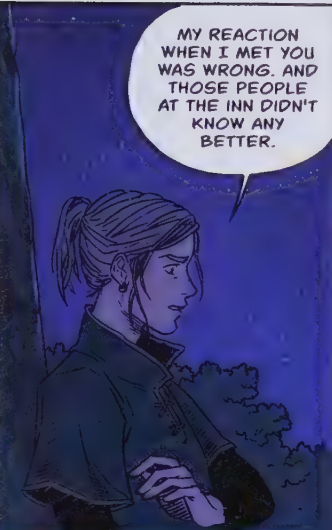


ALL I KNOW IS THEY USE IT AGAINST US.

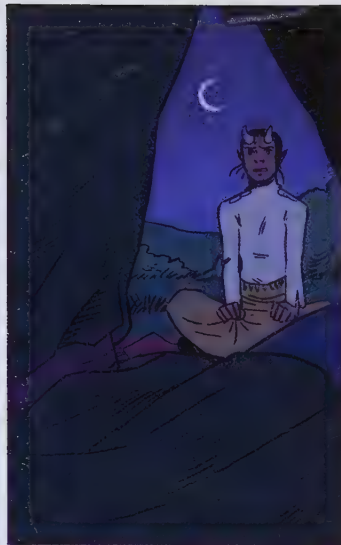


I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN BY MAGIC.

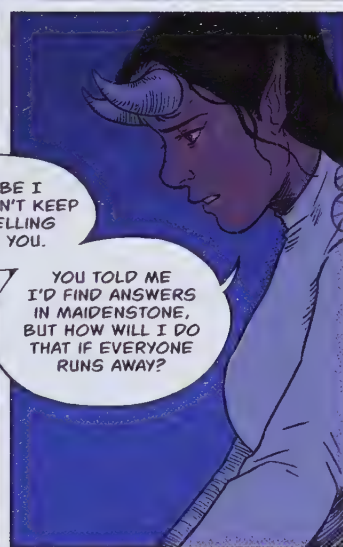
I DON'T EVEN KNOW *WHY* I LOOK LIKE THIS. BUT I'M NOT GOING TO HURT ANYONE.



MY REACTION  
WHEN I MET YOU  
WAS WRONG. AND  
THOSE PEOPLE  
AT THE INN DIDN'T  
KNOW ANY  
BETTER.


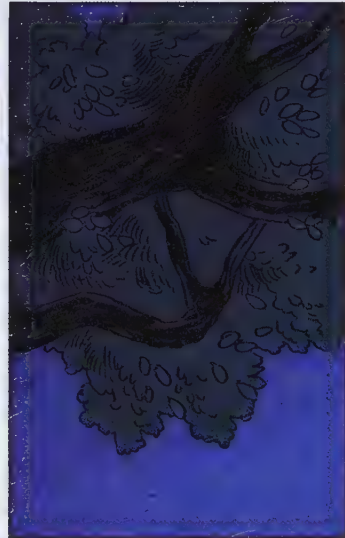


YOU'RE  
NOTHING  
LIKE THE  
VEL.



MAYBE I  
SHOULDN'T KEEP  
TRAVELLING  
WITH YOU.

YOU TOLD ME  
I'D FIND ANSWERS  
IN MAIDENSTONE,  
BUT HOW WILL I DO  
THAT IF EVERYONE  
RUNS AWAY?

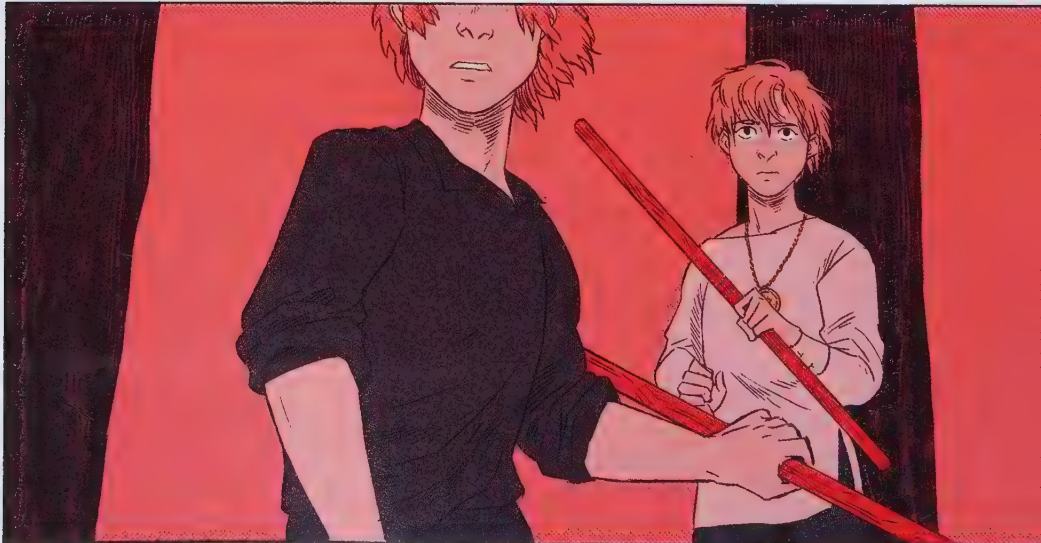
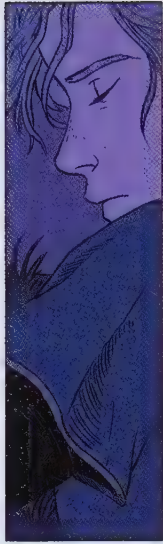
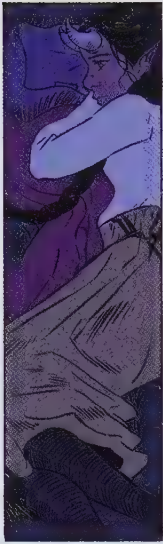


WE'LL FIND  
SOMEONE--

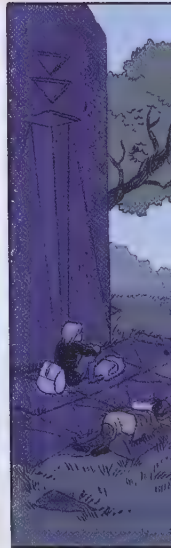
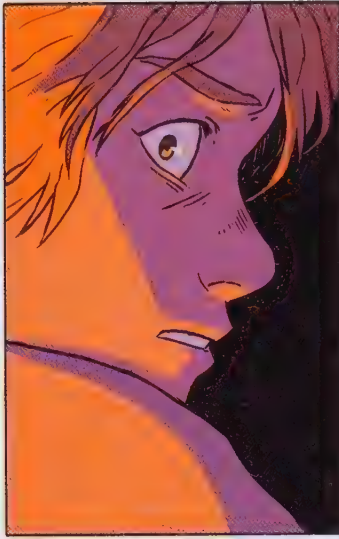
I'M NOT GOING  
TO ABANDON  
YOU, PROMISE.



THANKS,  
FIFE.

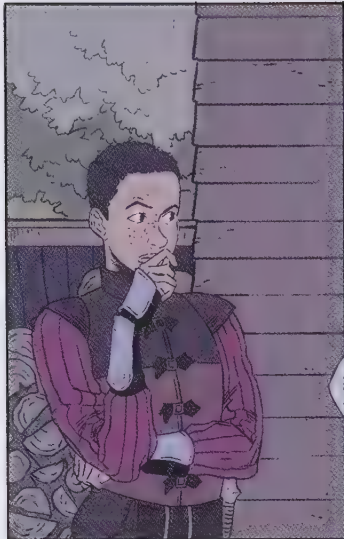






## CHAPTER 2





LIKE I SAID, IT TORE OUT OF HERE LAST NIGHT.

WE ONLY HAVE ONE GUARD, IF YOU CAN CALL HER THAT, SO WE JUST DECIDED TO LOCK OUR DOORS AND WAIT FOR MORNING.



AND, SORRY, YOU SAID IT WAS HOW TALL?

FOLKS SAID IT WAS TALL! WITH HUGE HORNS!

YOU'RE LUCKY WE WERE OUT HERE ALREADY, WE'LL SURVEY THE AREA FOR ANY VEL.

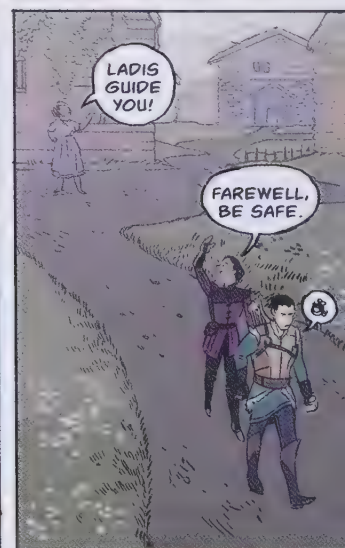
THANK YOU SO MUCH. ESSEAR NEVER SENDS RYVERS OUT HERE.



THE ESSIC MILITARY ARE A BUNCH OF--

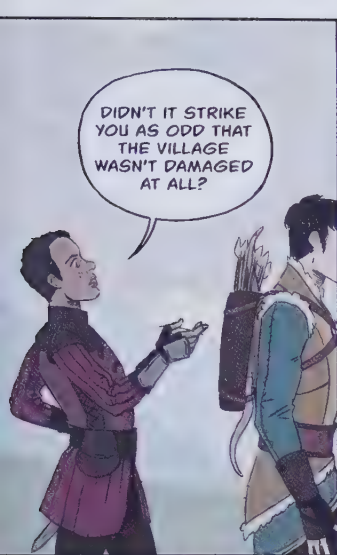


KIDAI!

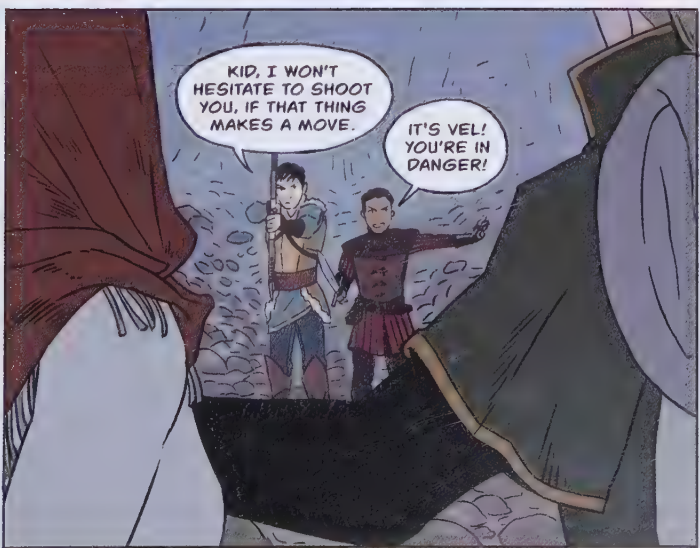
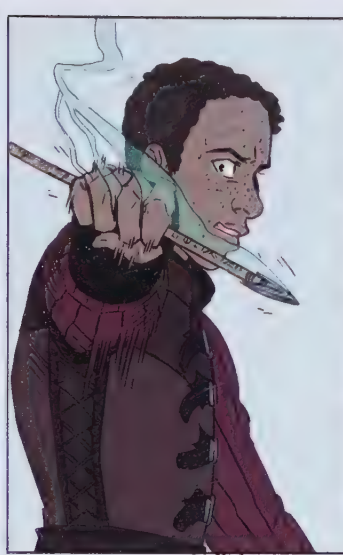


LADIS GUIDE YOU!

FAREWELL, BE SAFE.









LET ME EXPLAIN!



SPEAK QUICKLY! MY FRIEND HAS LITTLE PATIENCE.



T-THERE WAS AN AMULET AND--



I KNOW I LOOK LIKE THE VEL, BUT PLEASE BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY I'M NOT!



WE'VE BEEN TRAVELLING FOR DAYS TO GET TO MAIDENSTONE SO THAT I CAN--



YOU CAN SPEAK?!

Y-YES?

ISOLF, IS THIS SOME SORT OF ILLUSION IT'S CASTING?

W-WE JUST WANT TO BE ON OUR WAY!



YOU ARE VEL.



IF I RELEASE THIS ARROW YOU WILL BECOME NOTHING MORE THAN DUST.

...



I'LL TAKE THE SHOT!

I THINK THEY SHOULD COME WITH US.



TWANG



WHAT?!



BOTH OF YOU ARE COMING WITH US.

OPHELIA NEEDS TO SEE THIS.

DON'T WE GET A SAY IN THIS?

NO.



WE'RE TAKING YOU BACK TO OUR CAMP.

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

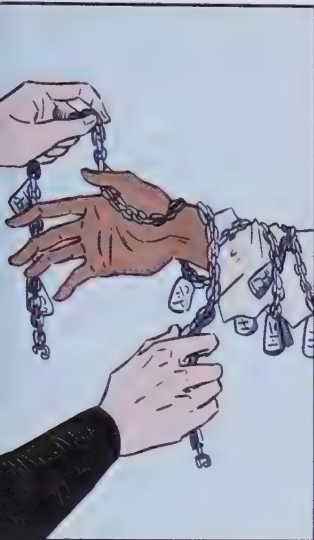
ME? FIFE.



FIFE, PUT THIS ON THE VEL.

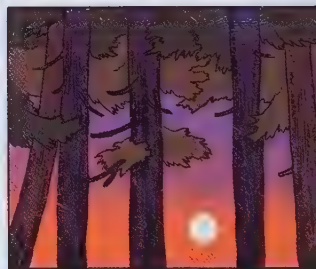
IT WILL STOP IT FROM USING ANY MAGIC.

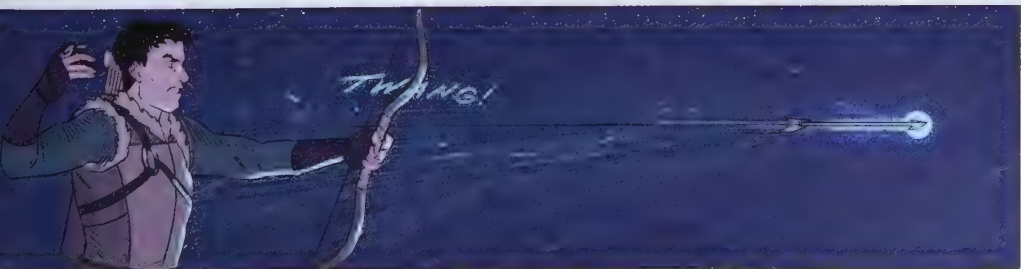
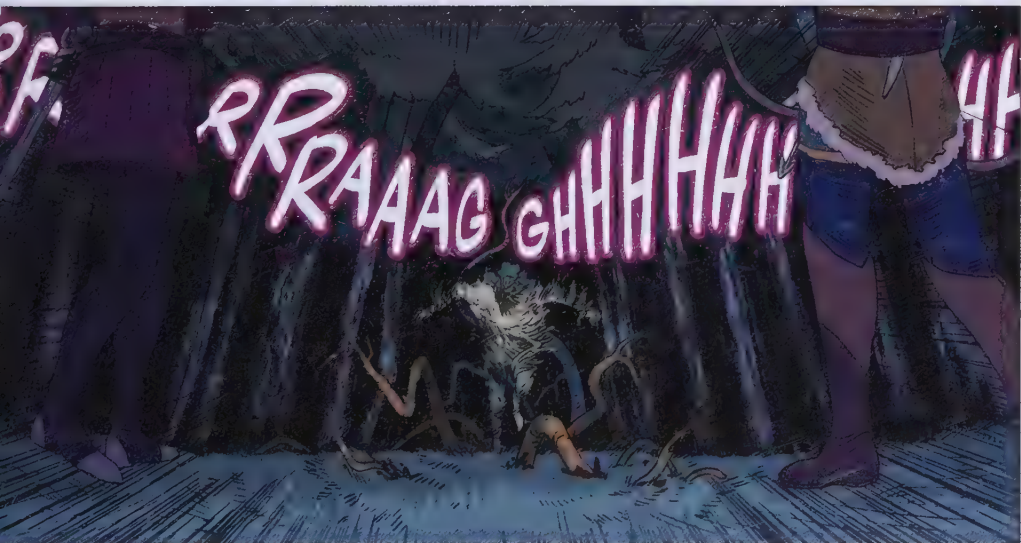


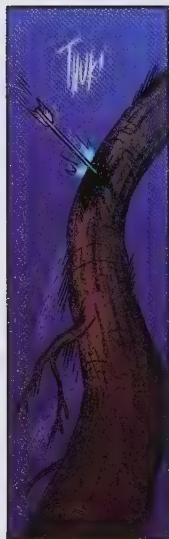
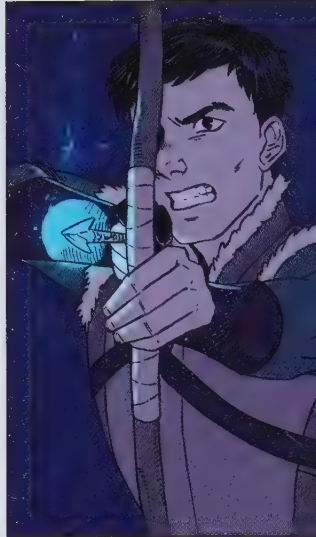


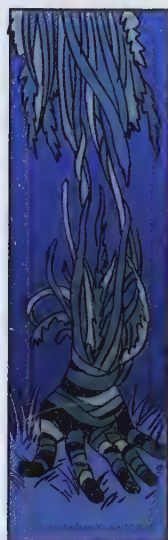
HEY, ISOLF. THIS IS YOUR WORST PLAN YET.

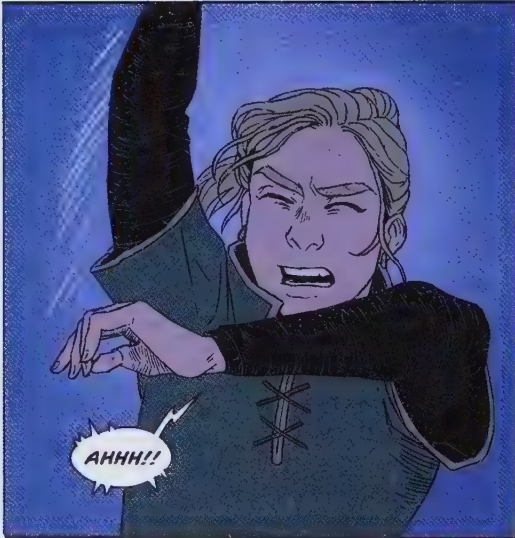
SHUT IT!

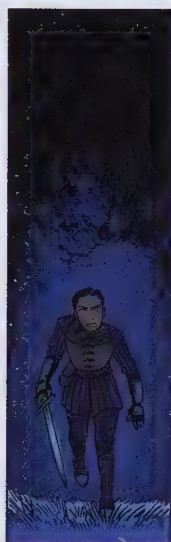
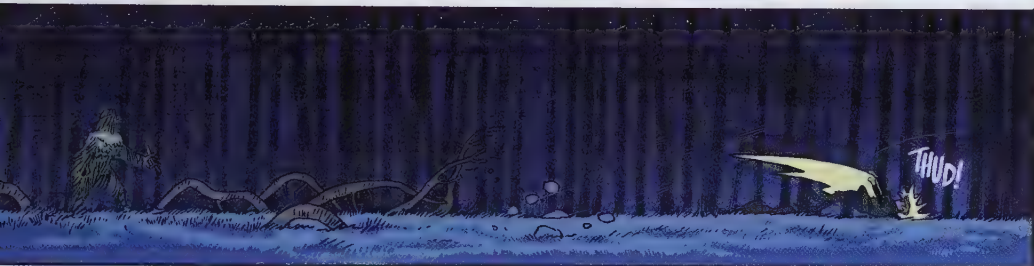
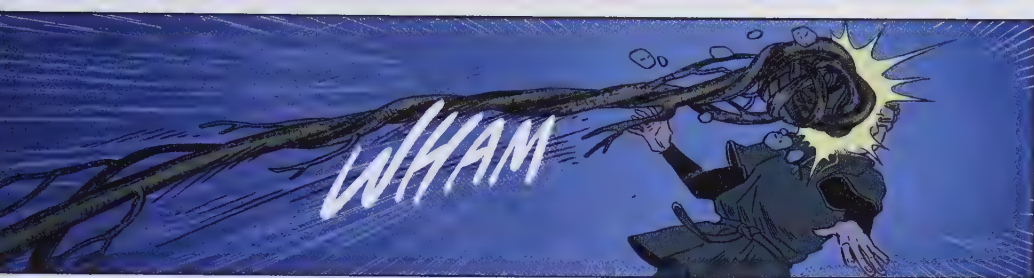




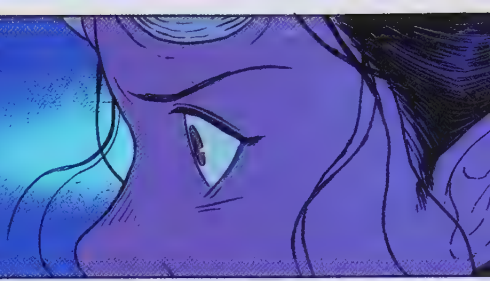




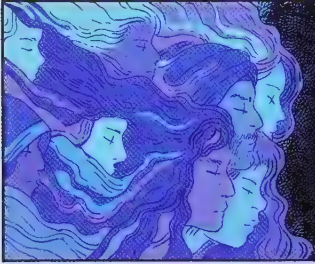




HUNTER,  
PRIEST,  
BAKER,  
PAGE,  
CARPENTER,  
BRICKLAYER,  
KING.

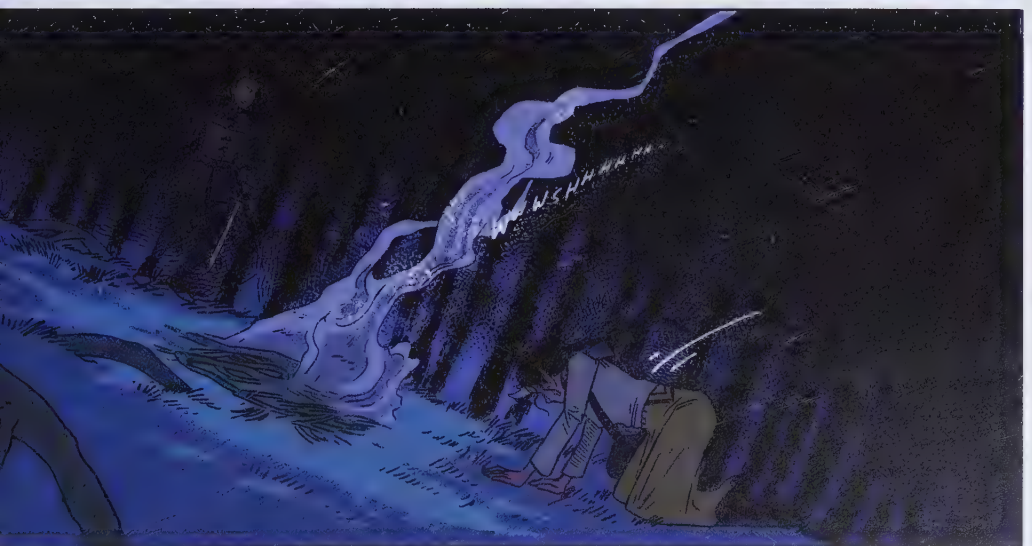
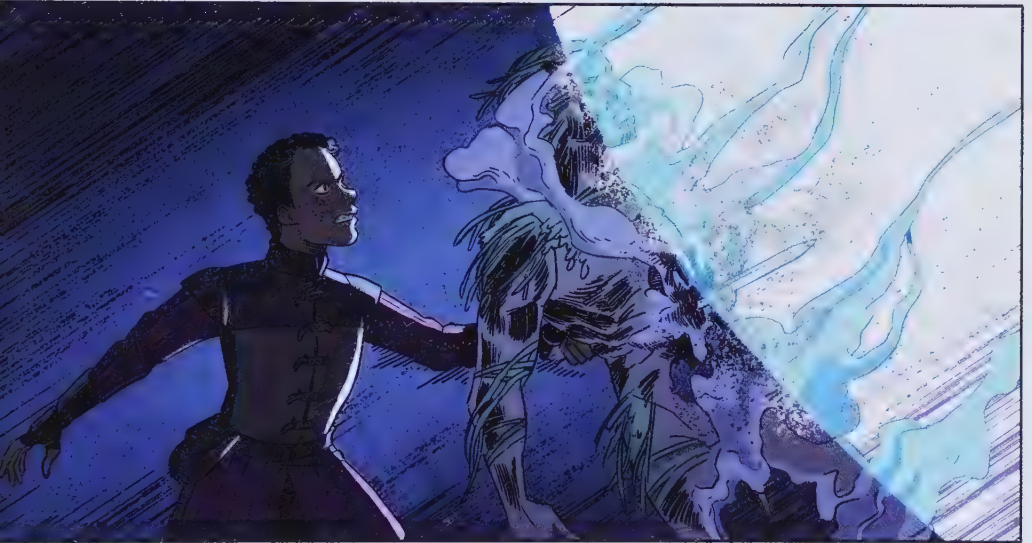
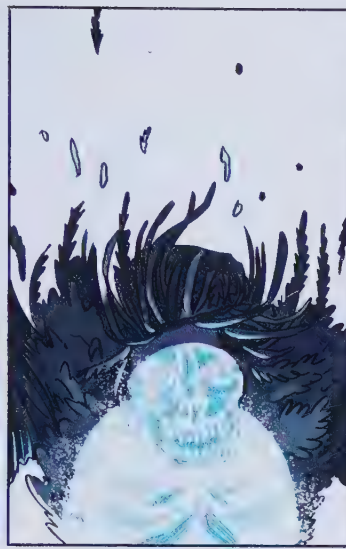


NO MATTER OUR STOCK  
WE KNEW THE SONG.  
BANISH IT, BANISH IT.

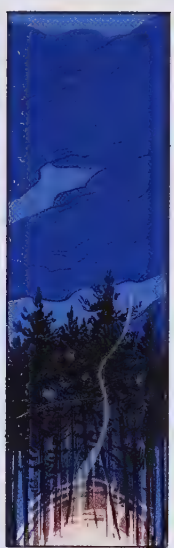
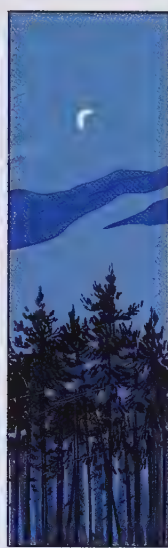


BANISH IT!







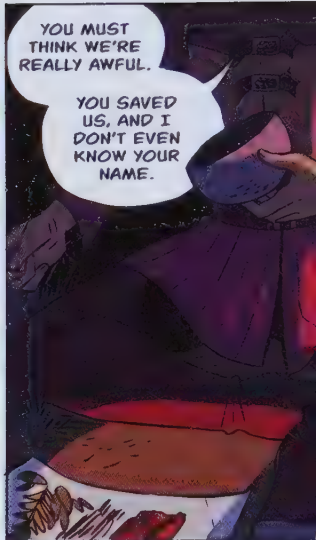




HOW DID YOU DO...  
WHATEVER YOU DID  
BACK THERE?



I-I  
DON'T  
KNOW.



YOU MUST  
THINK WE'RE  
REALLY AWFUL.

YOU SAVED  
US, AND I  
DON'T EVEN  
KNOW YOUR  
NAME.



IT'S  
NEITYA.

THANK YOU,  
NEITYA.

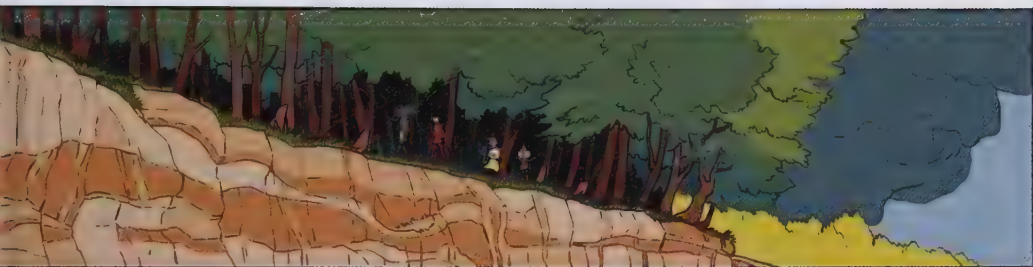
*\*SIGH\**

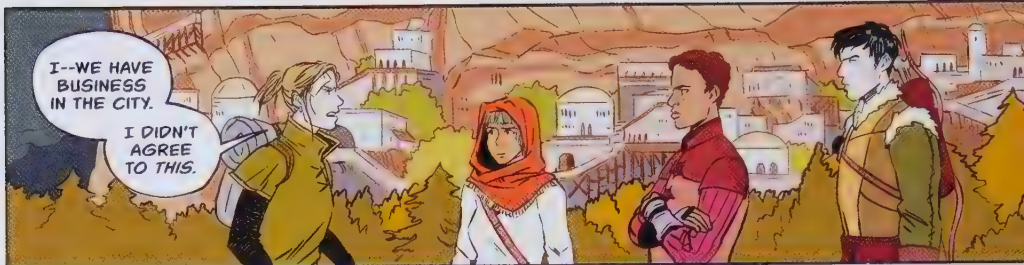
WE STILL HAVE  
TO TAKE YOU TO  
OUR CAMP, YOU  
UNDERSTAND,  
RIGHT?



...WHAT  
ARE YOU  
MAKING  
NOW?

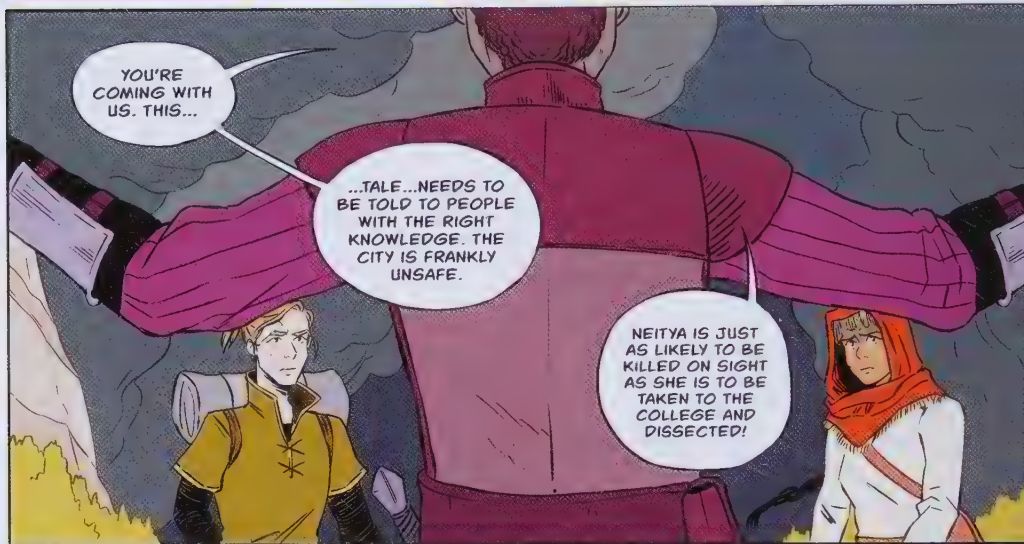
UH, IT'S  
A MIXTURE  
OF WILLOW  
BARK AND...





I--WE HAVE BUSINESS IN THE CITY.

I DIDN'T AGREE TO THIS.



YOU'RE COMING WITH US. THIS...

...TALE...NEEDS TO BE TOLD TO PEOPLE WITH THE RIGHT KNOWLEDGE. THE CITY IS FRANKLY UNSAFE.

NEITYA IS JUST AS LIKELY TO BE KILLED ON SIGHT AS SHE IS TO BE TAKEN TO THE COLLEGE AND DISSECTED!



WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO IF I TURN BACK?

I COULD LEAVE IF I WANTED TO!

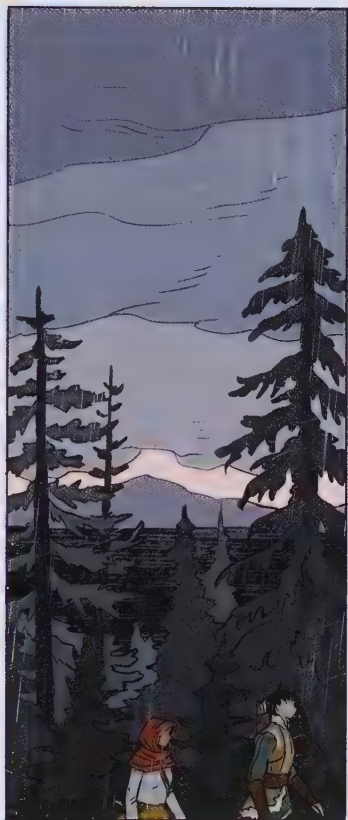
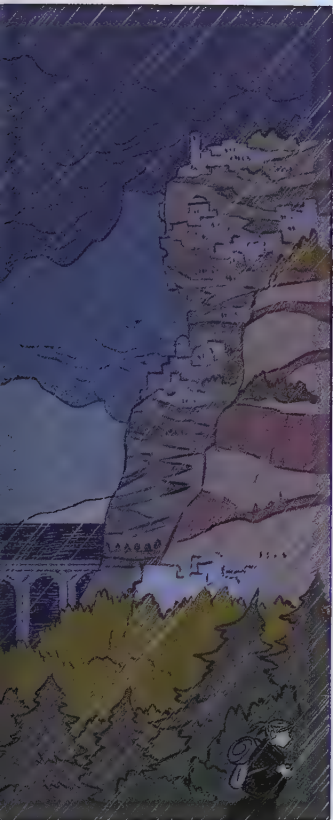
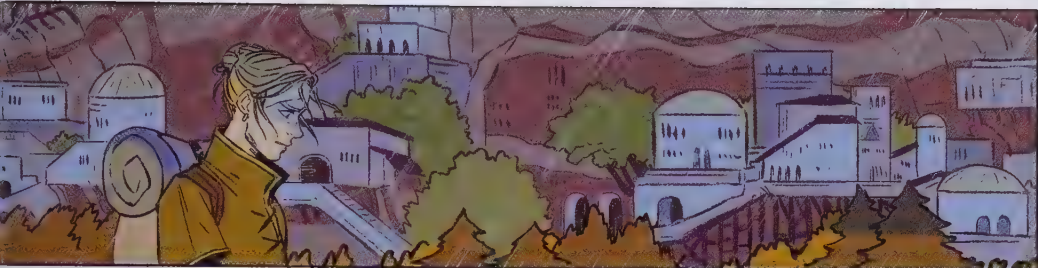


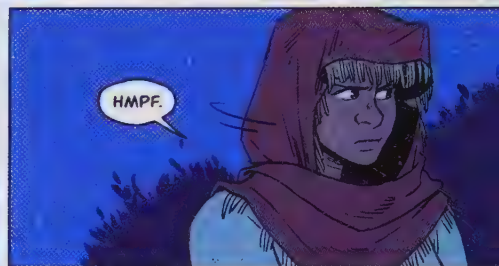
WE NEED BOTH OF YOU TO TELL YOUR SIDE OF THE STORY.

THEN YOU'RE FREE TO DO WHATEVER YOU WANT, FIFE.



...SOME PROMISE.







FOLLOW ME.



THANKFULLY, IT'S THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. THIS WOULD BE A CIRCUS IF EVERYONE WAS AWAKE.



KIDAI, I'VE ALREADY TOLD OPHELIA WHAT I CAN. IF YOU WANT TO GO--



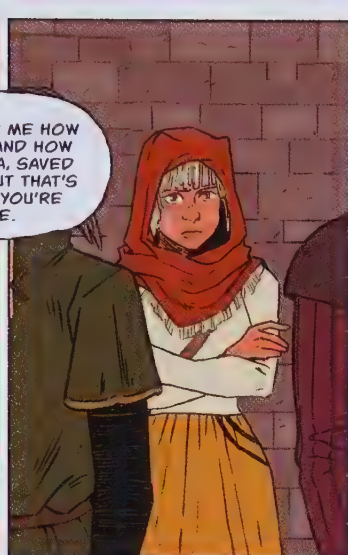
GLADLY. GOODNIGHT.





WELL, I'LL GET TO IT. I'M OPHELIA.

ISOLF TOLD ME HOW YOU MET, AND HOW YOU, NEITYA, SAVED THE DAY. BUT THAT'S NOT WHY YOU'RE HERE.



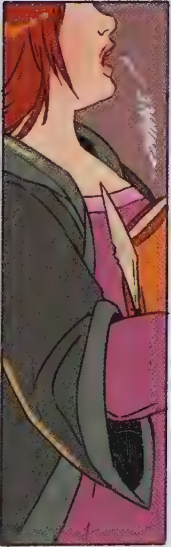
YOUR APPEARANCE MARKS YOU AS VEL, AND YET YOU HAVE SPEECH, CONTROL, FREE WILL.



IF THIS WERE UP TO ME, I WOULDN'T TAKE A CHANCE, BUT IT'S NOT ONLY MY DECISION.



OH!



I HAVE SO MANY QUESTIONS!

ISOLF MENTIONED MAGIC, AND THAT'S UNHEARD OF! I MEAN, THE VEL CAN USE MAGIC, BUT YOU MAYBE AREN'T VEL?

SO WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

IS IT A NEW PERMUTATION OF THE VERSE?

WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?

ARE THERE OTHERS LIKE YOU?

AND THAT PORTAL YOU CREATED...IT COULDN'T BE? COULDN'T IT?

BUT, IF SO--



SLOW DOWN, MAGDALENA.

I WANT TO HEAR FROM HIM, FIFE. WAS IT?

WHAT'S YOUR ROLE?



I LEFT MY VILLAGE TO GO TO THE CITY AND STUDY AS A WEAPONSMITH...



...LOST...

...AMULET...



...ESCAPED...



SHE APPEARED?! WHAT WAS THIS AMULET? WHAT DID IT LOOK LIKE? WAS IT ENGRAVED WITH--



MAGS, HANG ON. I THINK WE'RE MISSING A VERY KEY PART.



NEITYA, DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO ADD?

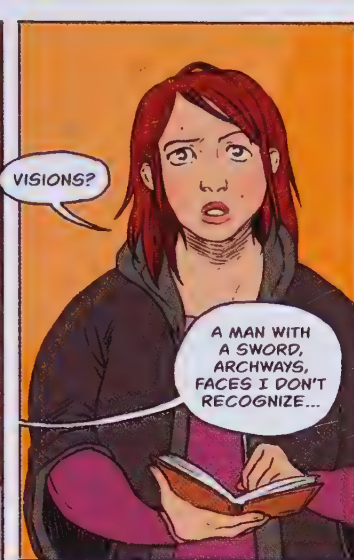


W-WELL, I DON'T REMEMBER A LOT. ACTUALLY, I ONLY REMEMBER MY NAME.

MY JOURNEY'S BEEN THE SAME AS FIFE'S.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO TELL YOU! I WOKE UP FROM WHAT FELT LIKE A NIGHT'S REST WITH THESE H-HORNS AND MARKINGS.

I'VE HAD VISIONS AND HEARD VOICES, BUT THEY'RE FOGGY, LIKE A DREAM YOU CAN'T REMEMBER.

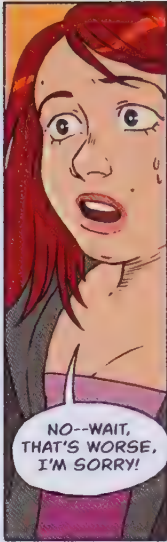




A CHARGE?  
LIKE A PRISONER?



NO! LIKE A RESEARCH SUBJECT.



NO--WAIT, THAT'S WORSE, I'M SORRY!



NOT LIKE I HAVE MUCH CHOICE.

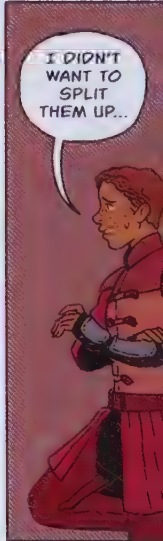


HOLD ON A MOMENT.

YOU CAN'T MAKE THESE DECISIONS FOR US.

YOUR FRIEND IS SAFEST HERE. I DON'T SEE ANOTHER OPTION.

AS FOR YOU, FIFE... BRINGING YOU HERE HAS MADE YOU A LIABILITY TO US. I CAN'T HAVE YOU GOING BACK TO THE CITY AND REVEALING THIS CAMP.



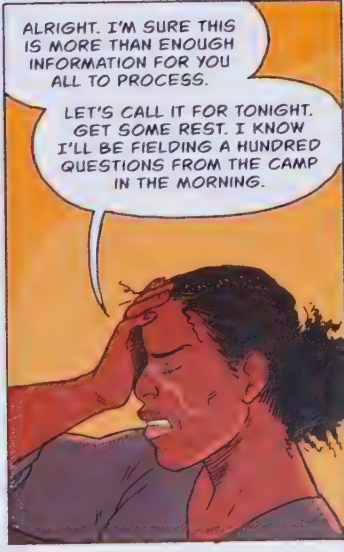
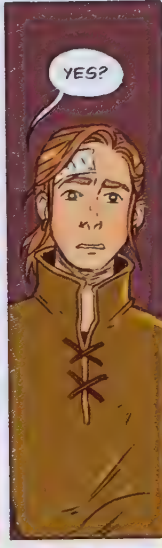
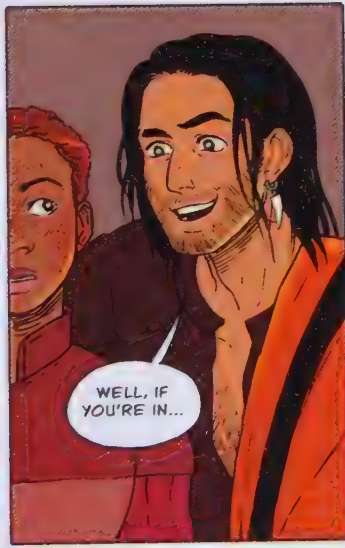
I DIDN'T WANT TO SPLIT THEM UP...

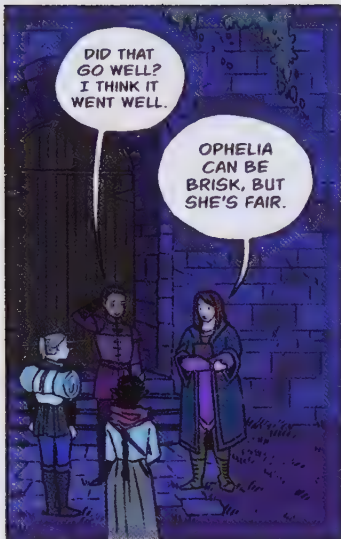


AHEM. I HAVE A SOLUTION.



\*SIGH\* WHAT IS IT, AZAR?



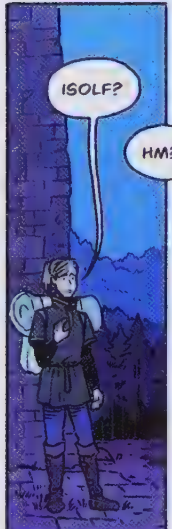


DID THAT GO WELL?  
I THINK IT WENT WELL.

OPHELIA CAN BE BRISK, BUT SHE'S FAIR.



BOTH OF YOU MUST BE EXHAUSTED. YOU CAN SLEEP IN MY TENT FOR NOW. WE'LL GET YOU SET UP PROPERLY TOMORROW.



ISOLF?

HM?



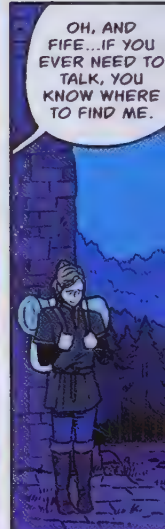
THANKS AGAIN FOR FIXING ME UP, AND FOR GIVING NEITYA A CHANCE.



DON'T MENTION IT. I SHOULD'VE BEEN THE LAST PERSON TO MAKE ASSUMPTIONS BASED ON LOOKS.

ONLY WE CAN DEFINE OURSELVES.

Y-YEAH.



OH, AND FIFE...IF YOU EVER NEED TO TALK, YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME.



YOU CAN PUSH OVER THOSE BOOKS FOR SPACE.

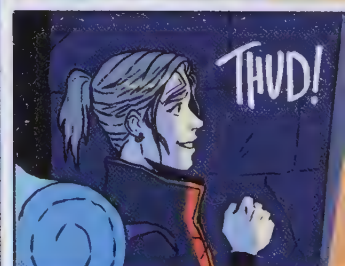
THESE ONES?

OH, NOT THAT PILE!

AAUGH!



QUICK, QUICK! GRAB THAT SCROLL!



THUD!



HOW DOES SHE FIND ROOM TO DO ANYTHING IN HERE?



I'LL HAVE BETTER LUCK SLEEPING OUTSIDE.



HUNTER, PRIEST, BAKER, PAGE... WHAT DID IT MEAN?

WHY CAN'T I REMEMBER ANYTHING?



No!

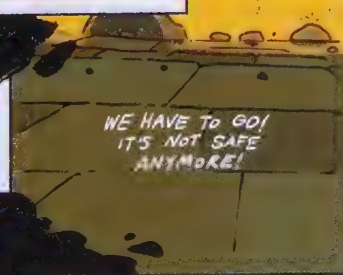
I'M NOT LEAVING WITHOUT HER!



No.

No

No.



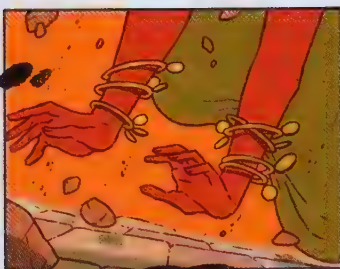
WE HAVE TO GO! IT'S NOT SAFE ANYMORE!



RRRUU MMBLE

I'M NOT LEAVING WITHOUT HER!

RRR  
UUUU  
UMMM  
MMMB  
BBBB  
LEEE



UUUU  
UMMM  
MMMB  
BBBB  
LEEE

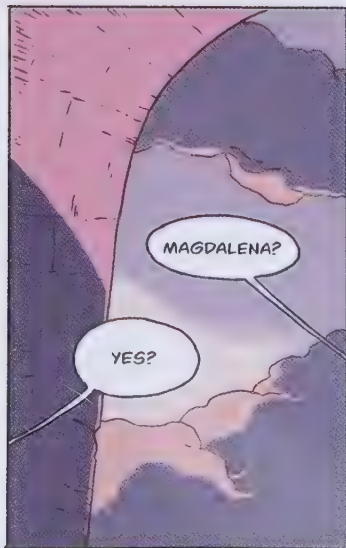


IS EVERYTHING  
OKAY? YOU  
WEREN'T  
AROUND AND...



OH...I MUST  
HAVE FALLEN  
ASLEEP OUT  
HERE.

EVERYONE WILL  
BE WAKING UP  
SOON. WE HAVE TO  
EASE THEM IN. I  
WOULDN'T WANT  
THEM TO DRAW A  
SWORD ON YOU.



MAGDALENA?

YES?



DO YOU  
KNOW WHAT  
THIS SYMBOL  
IS?



AY I?  
THIS IS THE AMULET FIFE HAD? HUH...



WELL, IT'S OLD. THIS WRITING ON THE EDGE ISN'T EVEN THE VERSE. HM.

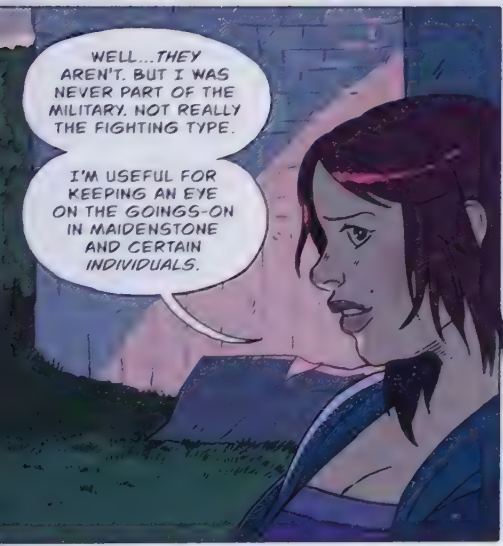
MIND IF I HOLD ONTO IT FOR NOW?

GO AHEAD.



I'LL BE IN THE CITY SOON! I'LL DIG AROUND AT THE COLLEGE.

ISOLF SAID YOU WERE TRAITORS. ARE YOU ALLOWED IN THE CITY?



WELL...THEY AREN'T. BUT I WAS NEVER PART OF THE MILITARY. NOT REALLY THE FIGHTING TYPE.

I'M USEFUL FOR KEEPING AN EYE ON THE GOINGS-ON IN MAIDENSTONE AND CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS.

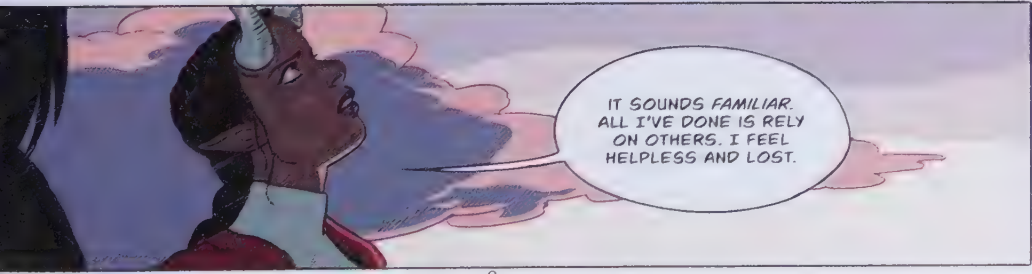


SO YOU'RE A SPY?

I SUPPOSE!



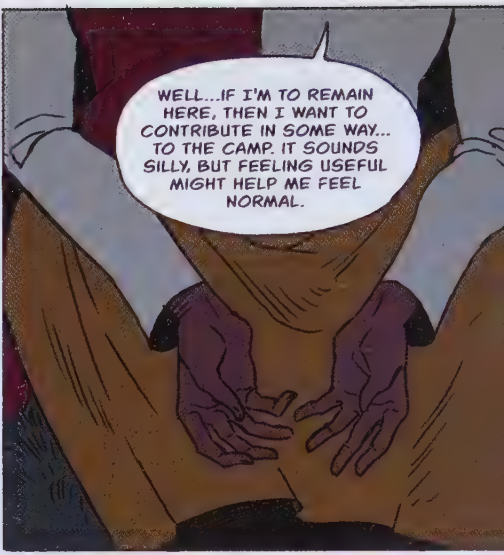
I KNOW THIS SOUNDS STRANGE COMING FROM SOMEONE YOU JUST MET, BUT I'M SERIOUS ABOUT HELPING YOU. WE'LL FIGURE THIS OUT.



IT SOUNDS FAMILIAR. ALL I'VE DONE IS RELY ON OTHERS. I FEEL HELPLESS AND LOST.



WHAT WOULD MAKE IT BETTER?



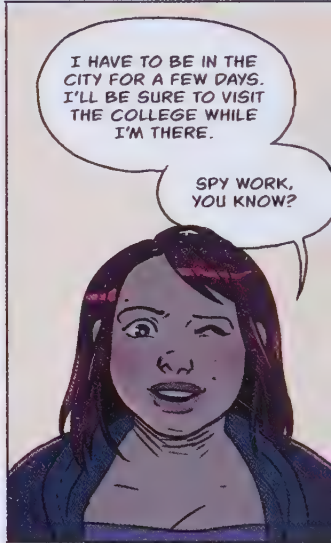
WELL...IF I'M TO REMAIN HERE, THEN I WANT TO CONTRIBUTE IN SOME WAY... TO THE CAMP. IT SOUNDS SILLY, BUT FEELING USEFUL MIGHT HELP ME FEEL NORMAL.



THERE WILL BE NO LACK OF THINGS TO HELP WITH AROUND HERE. YOU MIGHT REGRET THE OFFER!



IN THE MEANTIME, I'LL WORK ON THIS.



I HAVE TO BE IN THE CITY FOR A FEW DAYS. I'LL BE SURE TO VISIT THE COLLEGE WHILE I'M THERE.

SPY WORK, YOU KNOW?

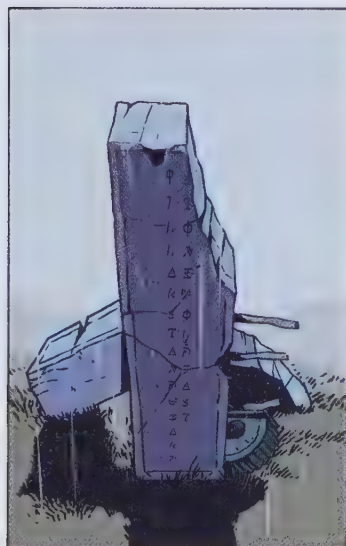


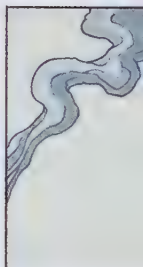
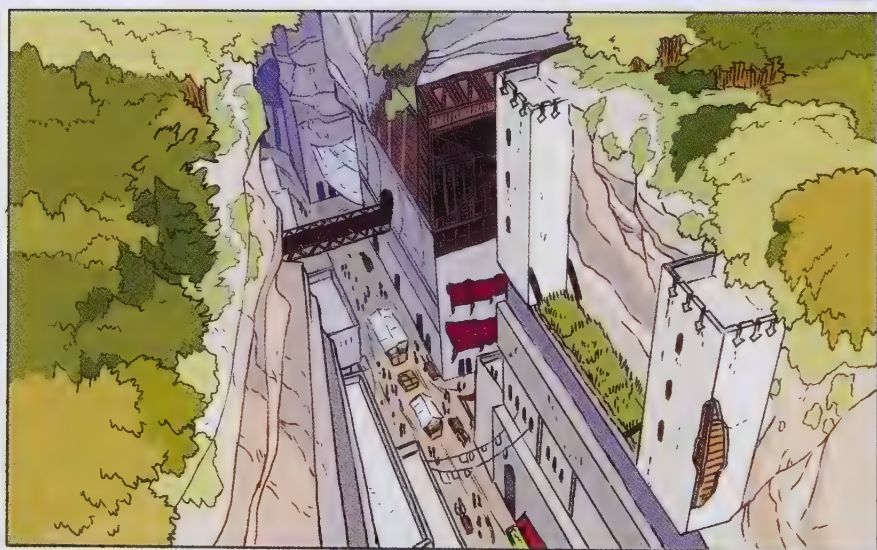
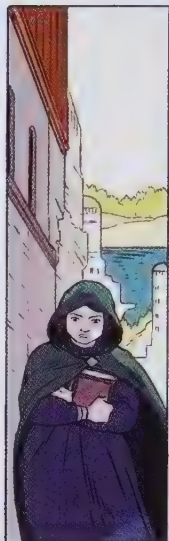
EVERYTHING IS GOING TO WORK OUT, NEITYA!

BUT NOW WE'VE REALLY GOT TO BRACE YOU FOR MEETING EVERYONE.

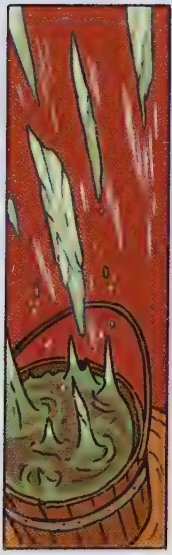
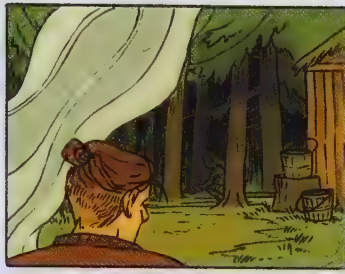
IF I HAVE TO...

# CHAPTER 3





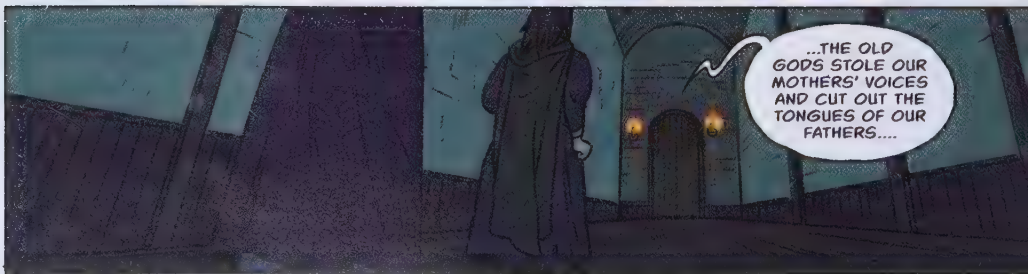
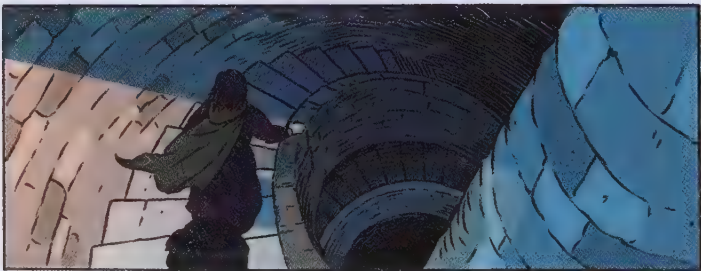
PIECES OF SILVER, BLUE SMOKE, WHITE ROBES.




A RITE ONLY FOR THE MOST UNFORTUNATE.



I'M LATE!






THEY LEFT US TO FEND FOR OURSELVES. WHEN WE SAW OUR GODS AGAIN, THEY WORE NEW FACES.

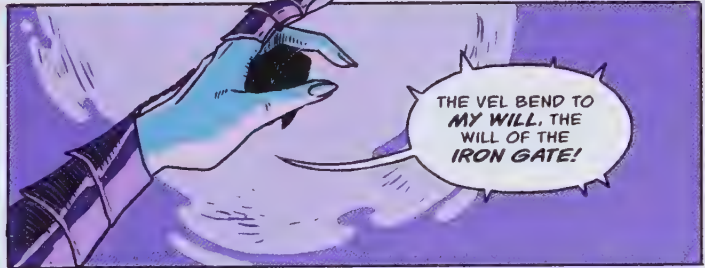
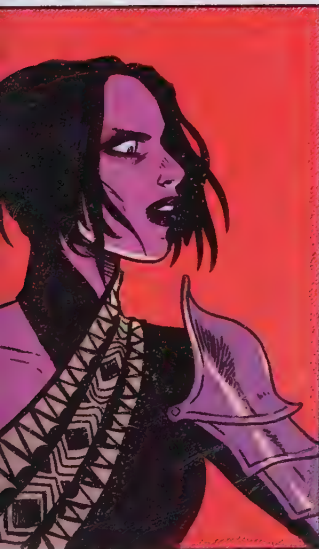
THEY TOOK PITY ON US, THREW US SCRAPS, WHISPERED VERSES OF AN ANCIENT SONG.

WE CRIED OUT WITH OUR NEWFOUND VOICE, BUT DID NOT KNOW IT WOULD CALL THE WOLVES TO US AS WELL.



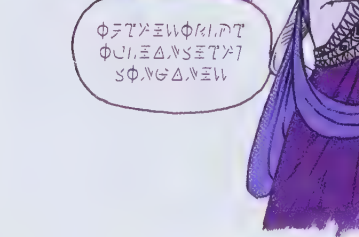
NOW WE ENTER A NEW ERA. WHAT WAS A WHISPER NOW RESOUNDS CLEARLY.

WE WILL TAKE THE VOICE OF THE MONSTERS THAT HUNT US, AND WE WILL USE THEIR WORDS AGAINST THEM.

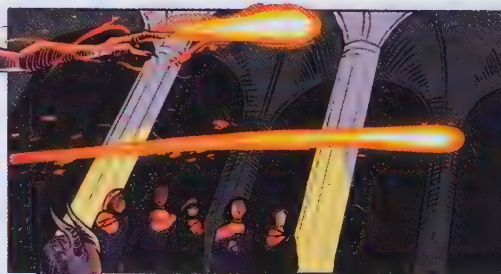




ΤΡΑΝΔΕΙΛΞ  
ΝΡΤΦΙΙΨΩ  
ΙΙ,ΤΡΞΩΠΙ,  
ΦΞΤΡΞΙΚΦ  
ΝΘΑΤΞ



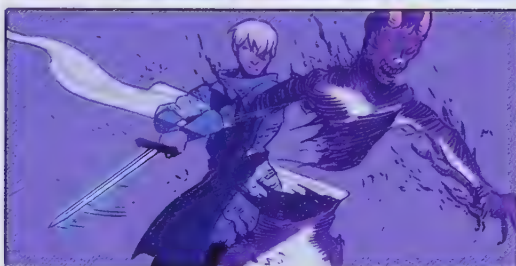
ITS VOICE, ITS  
MAGIC, MOVES  
THROUGH ME.



WHAT IS LEFT TO  
FEAR WHEN WE  
CONTROL OUR  
TORMENTORS?

ΞΞΝΡΞΦΚΤ  
ΝΞΤΚΞΞΡΦΙΙ  
ΤΡΞΙΙΦΚΞ

ΦΞΤΡΞΩΦΚΙ,ΡΤ  
ΦΙΙ,ΞΑΝΞΞΤΡΤ  
ΞΦ,ΝΘΑΝΞΩ

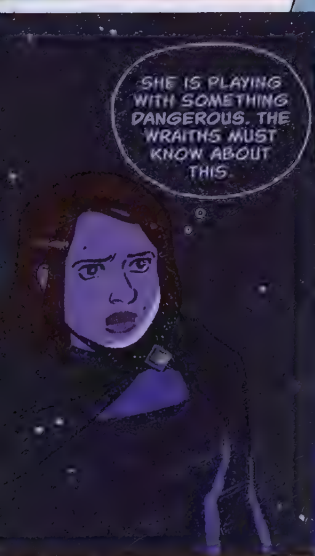


DUST AND NOTHING MORE.

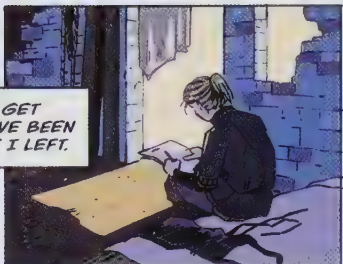
I, BRANCA, DID NOT HAVE TO BEG AND PLEAD LIKE LADIS TO ONLY RECEIVE A PALTRY BLESSING.

WITH THE STRENGTH OF THE IRON GATE, WE WILL BRING BACK THE SONGS OF OUR MOTHERS AND FATHERS.

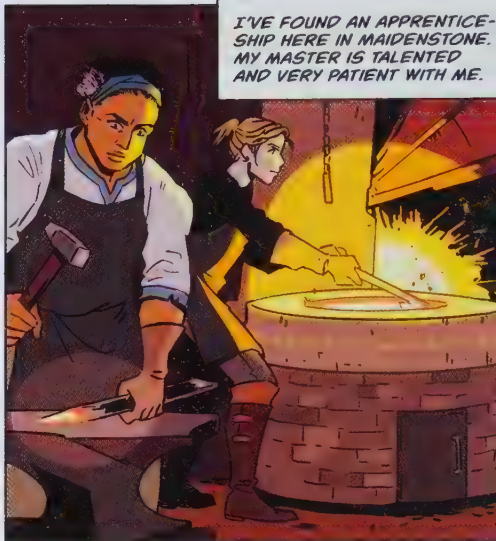
AND NO GOD CAN STOP US.



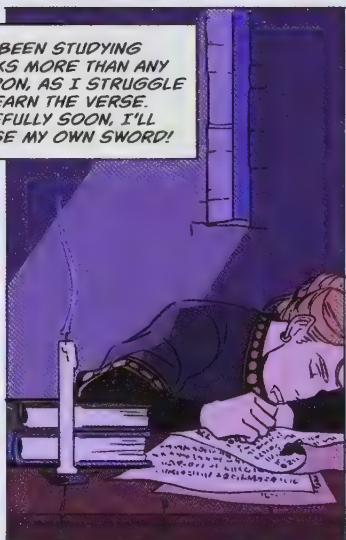
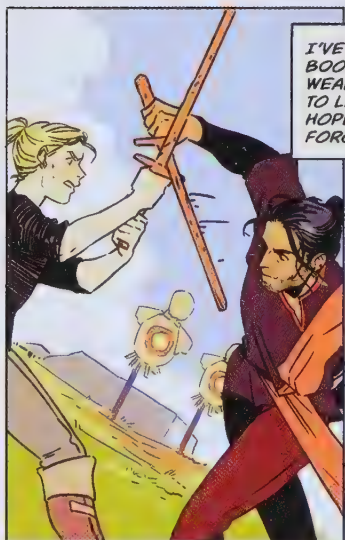
DAD, WHEN YOU GET THIS, IT WILL HAVE BEEN A MONTH SINCE I LEFT.



I'VE FOUND AN APPRENTICESHIP HERE IN MAIDENSTONE. MY MASTER IS TALENTED AND VERY PATIENT WITH ME.

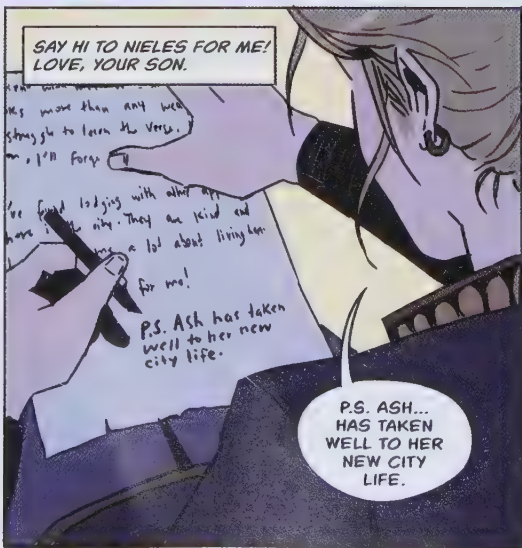


I'VE BEEN STUDYING BOOKS MORE THAN ANY WEAPON, AS I STRUGGLE TO LEARN THE VERSE. HOPEFULLY SOON, I'LL FORGE MY OWN SWORD!

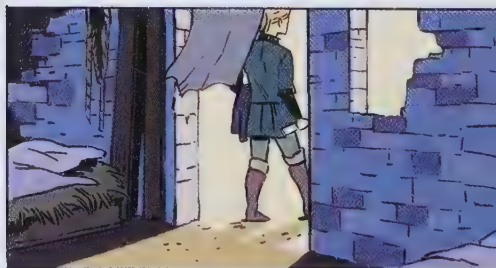
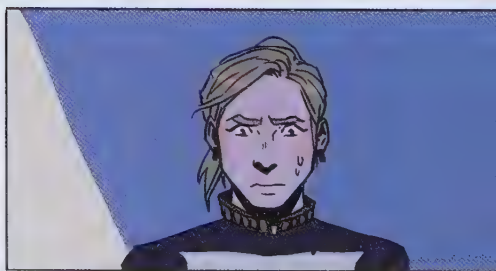


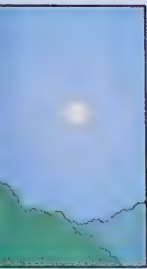
I'M STAYING WITH OTHER APPRENTICES IN THE CITY. THEY ARE KIND AND HAVE MADE IT FEEL A BIT MORE LIKE HOME HERE.

SAY HI TO NIELES FOR ME!  
LOVE, YOUR SON.



P.S. ASH... HAS TAKEN WELL TO HER NEW CITY LIFE.



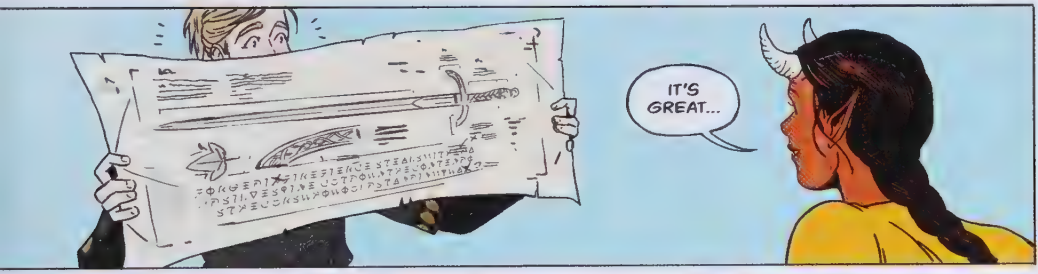


NEITYA!



YOU'RE AWFULLY HAPPY TODAY.

SYBIL LET ME DRAFT MY FIRST SWORD! LOOK.



IT'S GREAT...



...BUT WOULD YOU KNOW YOUR WAY AROUND ONE IF YOU MADE IT?



I'VE BEEN TRAINING REAL HARD. ISOLF SAID I MIGHT EVEN BE READY TO SHADOW THEM ON THEIR NEXT PATROL.

KIDAI WOULD NEVER LET THAT HAPPEN.

WHA--!



HA HA HA

HEY!

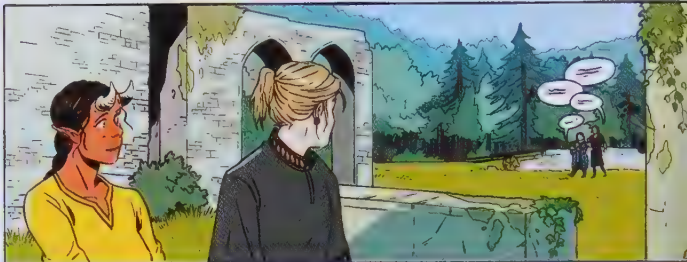


PFFT... ANYWAY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

KEEPING THIS JOURNAL. A REQUEST FROM MAGDALENA. SHE WANTED TO GET ANOTHER RECOUNT OF THAT NIGHT...

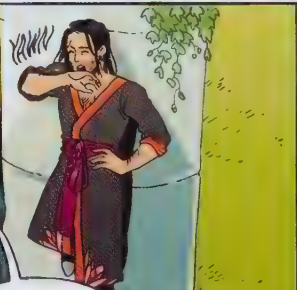


I DON'T KNOW HOW THAT'LL HELP WITH MY MEMORY, BUT SHE'S THE EXPERT, RIGHT?



I'M TELLING YOU, I'VE LOOKED THROUGH EVERY BOOK!

EVERY BOOK, MAGG? I THINK YOU NEED A FRESH SET OF EYES. LET ME TAKE A LOOK!

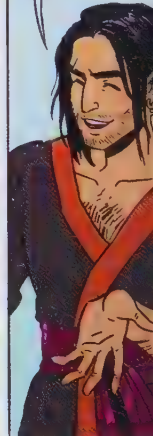


THE AMULET, PLEASE.

NEITYA, I GOT THESE TO CROSS-REFERENCE YOUR STORY. WHAT YOU DESCRIBED SOUNDED LIKE A GATE.

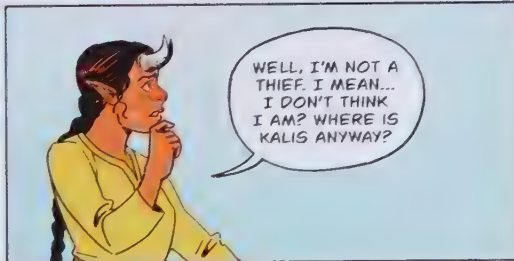
HI, FIFE.

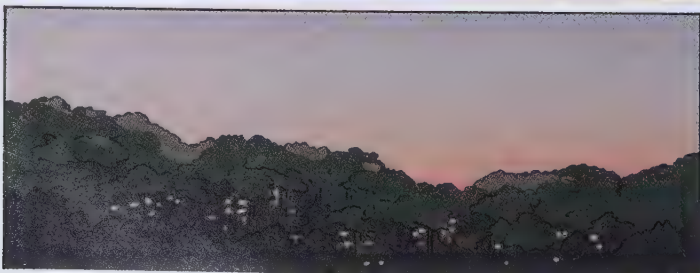
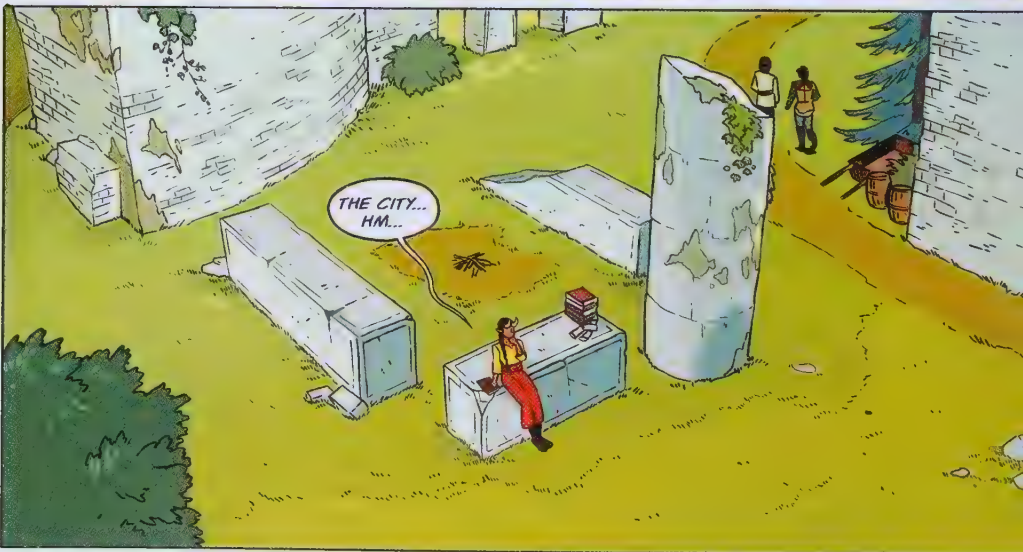
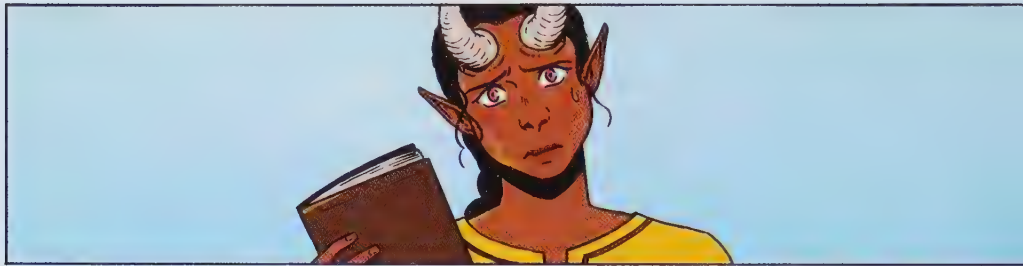
WHICH, AGAIN, IS UNHEARD OF--

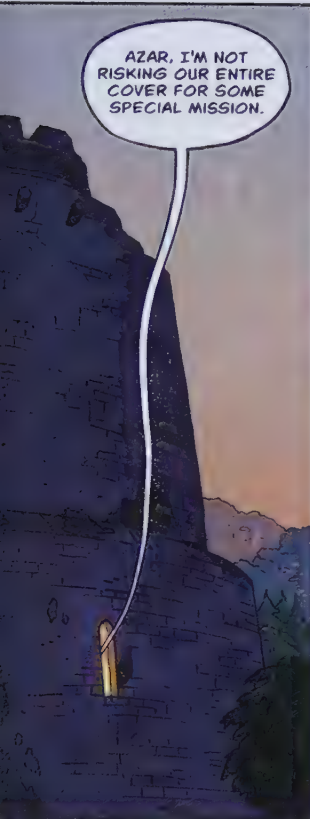


HERE! TAKE IT.

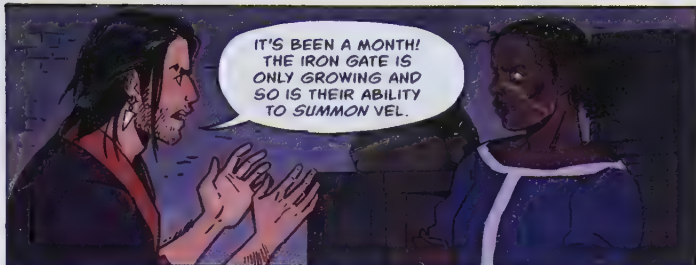








AZAR, I'M NOT RISKING OUR ENTIRE COVER FOR SOME SPECIAL MISSION.

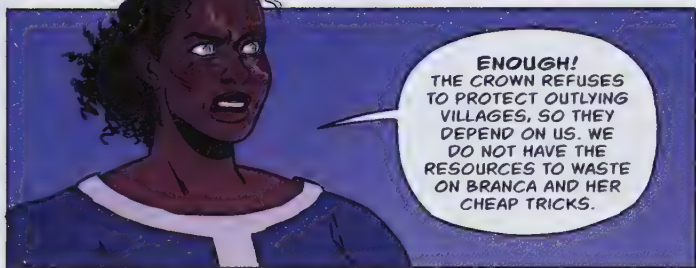


IT'S BEEN A MONTH! THE IRON GATE IS ONLY GROWING AND SO IS THEIR ABILITY TO SUMMON VEL.



...THEY HAVEN'T MADE ANY BIG MOVES YET.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE ON MY SIDE!



**ENOUGH!**  
THE CROWN REFUSES TO PROTECT OUTLYING VILLAGES, SO THEY DEPEND ON US. WE DO NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES TO WASTE ON BRANCA AND HER CHEAP TRICKS.



MAGDALENA, I TRUST YOUR WORD. IF THERE WERE SUFFICIENT REASON TO TAKE ACTION, I WOULD.



YOU'RE RIGHT... BRANCA IS ONLY FOCUSED ON FOOLING PEOPLE INTO THINKING SHE CAN USE MAGIC.

SHE'S CHARISMATIC, BUT NOT DANGEROUS.



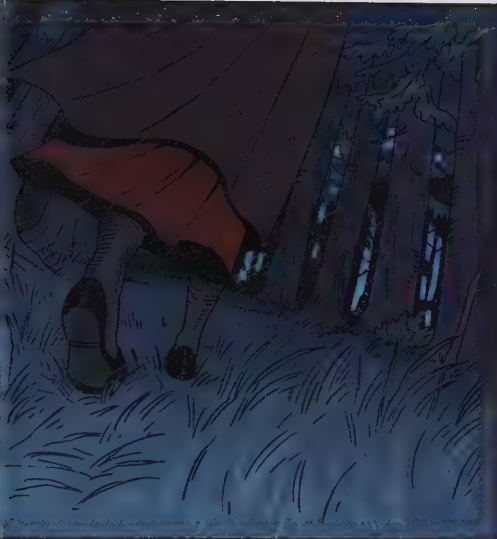
IT'S GETTING LATE... I MUST BE ON MY WAY.

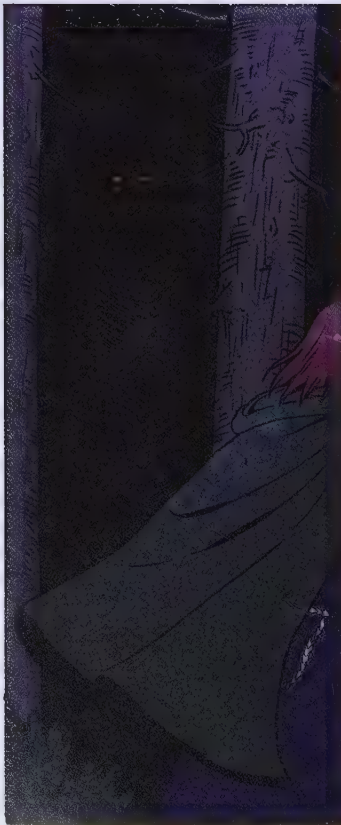
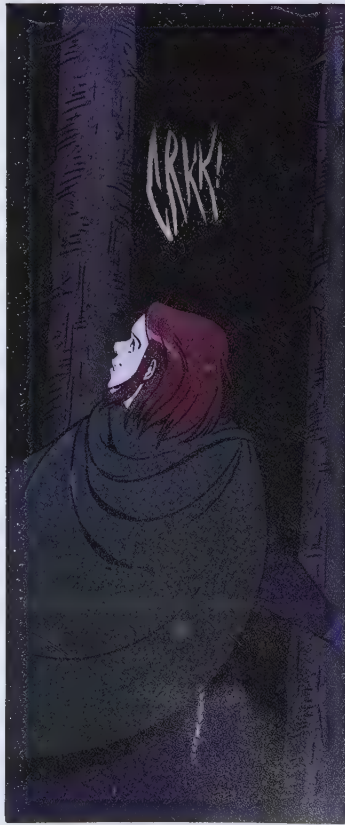


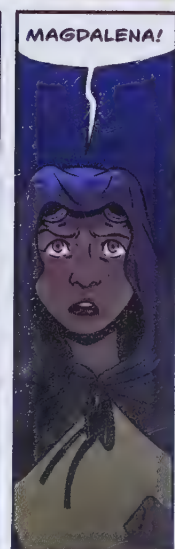
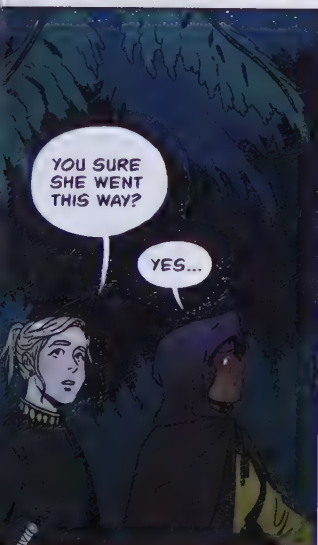
I APOLOGIZE FOR KEEPING YOU SO LONG.

STAY VIGILANT. GO WITH THE SONG.



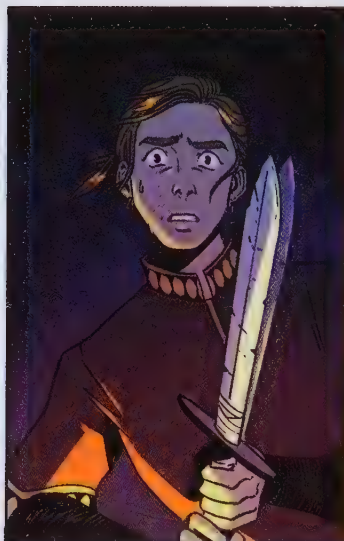


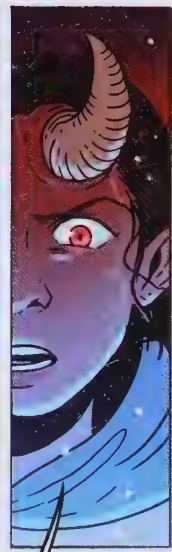
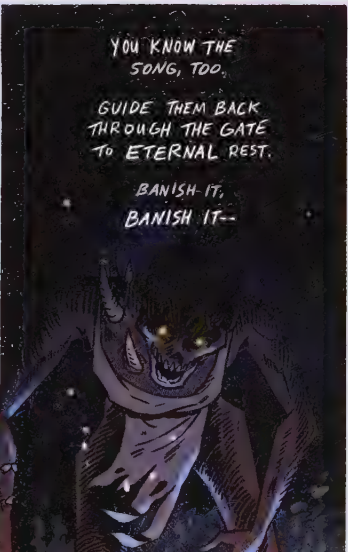


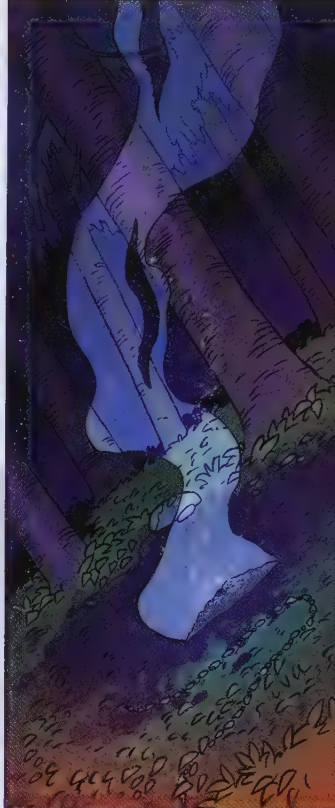














THAT WAS ASTONISHING!



I TOLD YOU I WANTED TO BE USEFUL.



YOU FOLLOWED ME AGAIN.

N-NO, FIFE AND I WERE JUST OUT FOR A WALK--



YOU CAN'T FOLLOW ME TO THE CITY. IT'S--

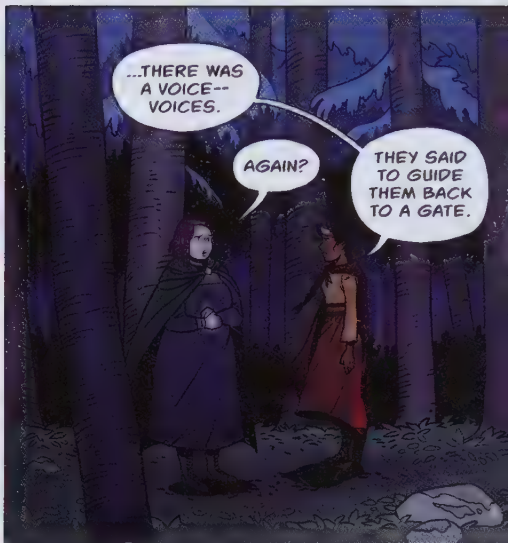
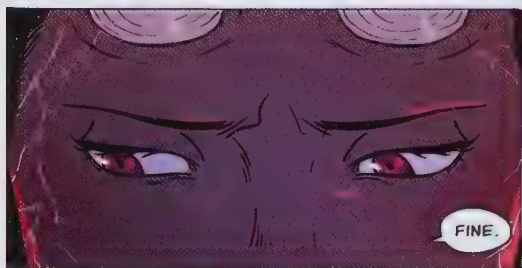


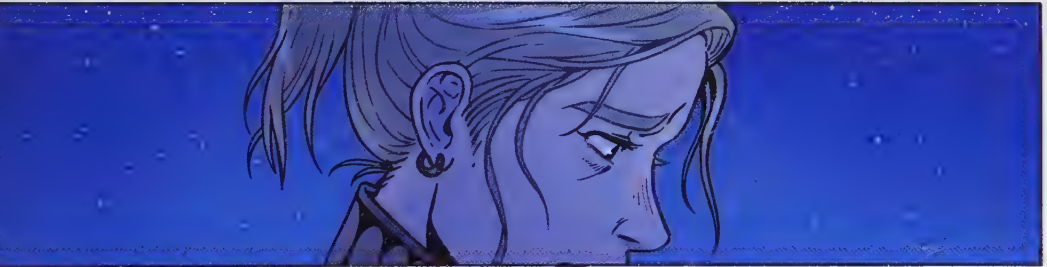
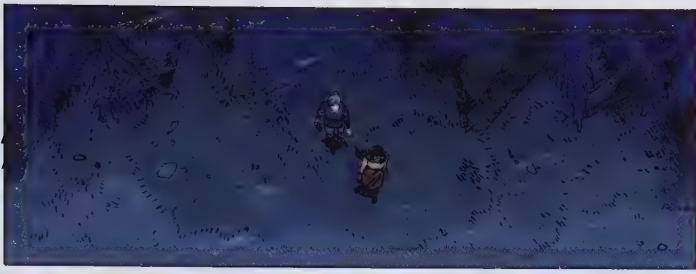
--UNSAFE.

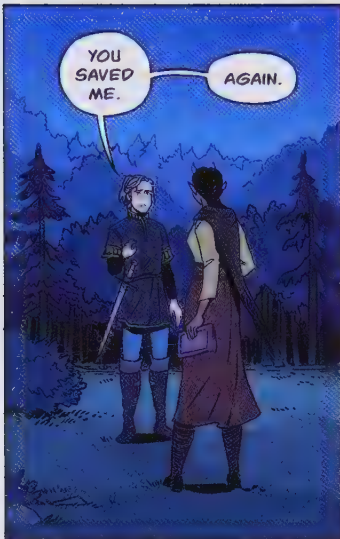
IT CAN'T BE MORE DANGEROUS THEN THE VEL!

IT'S DANGEROUS FOR YOU.

PLEASE GO BACK TO THE CAMP.

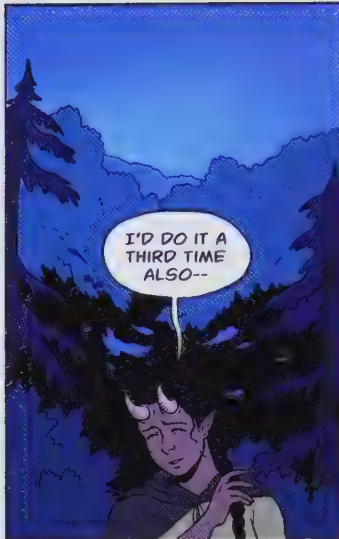






YOU SAVED ME.

AGAIN.



I'D DO IT A THIRD TIME ALSO--



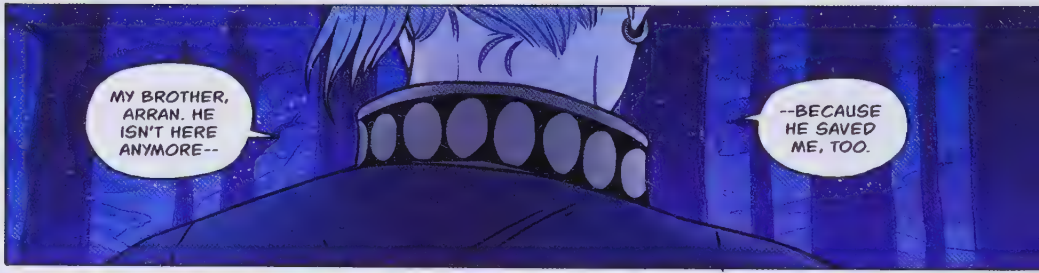
I THOUGHT I WAS BEGINNING TO CHANGE. THAT I WAS LESS SCARED, BUT...



...  
I NEVER TOLD YOU ABOUT HIM.



WHO?



MY BROTHER, ARRAN. HE ISN'T HERE ANYMORE--

--BECAUSE HE SAVED ME, TOO.



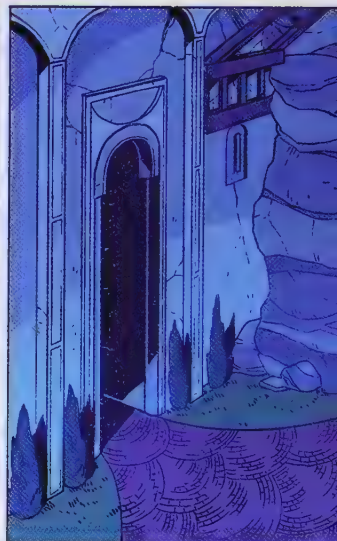
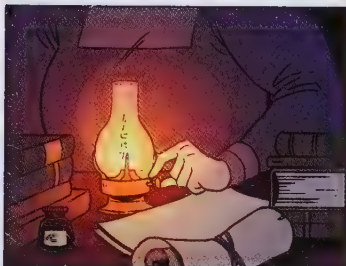
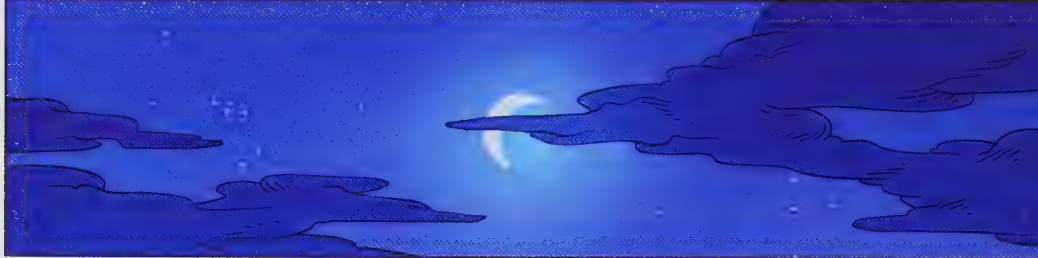
FIFE...

I STILL CAN'T PROTECT THE PEOPLE I CARE ABOUT.



WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE SO MANY CHANCES?

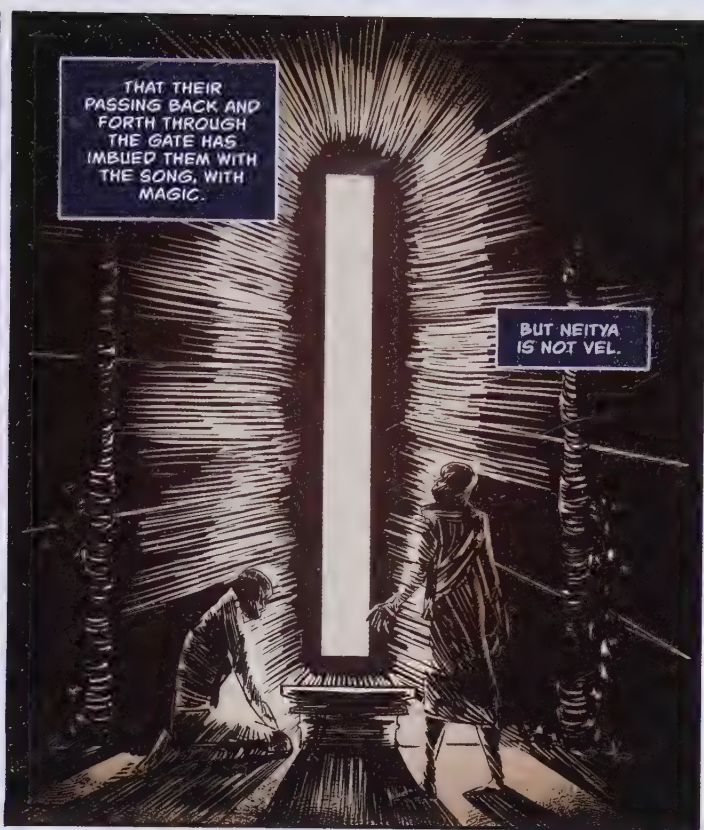




THE WRITING OF LADIS TELLS US THAT VEL ARE DISTORTIONS OF THE ANCIENT DEAD.



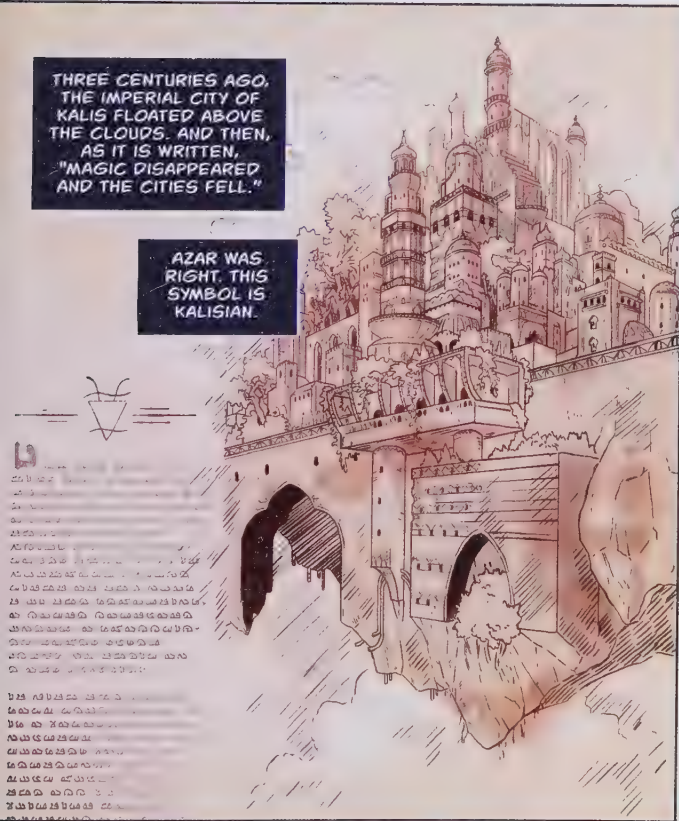
THAT THEIR PASSING BACK AND FORTH THROUGH THE GATE HAS IMBUEE THEM WITH THE SONG, WITH MAGIC.



BUT NEITYA IS NOT VEL.

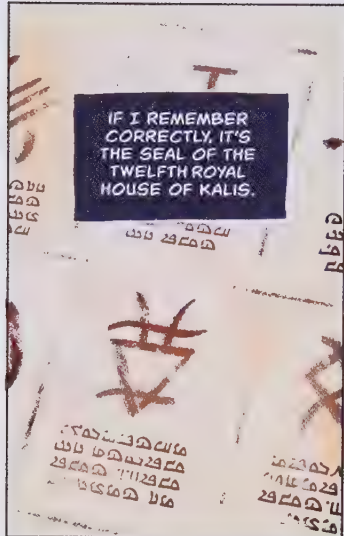
THREE CENTURIES AGO, THE IMPERIAL CITY OF KALIS FLOATED ABOVE THE CLOUDS. AND THEN, AS IT IS WRITTEN, "MAGIC DISAPPEARED AND THE CITIES FELL."

AZAR WAS RIGHT. THIS SYMBOL IS KALISIAN.

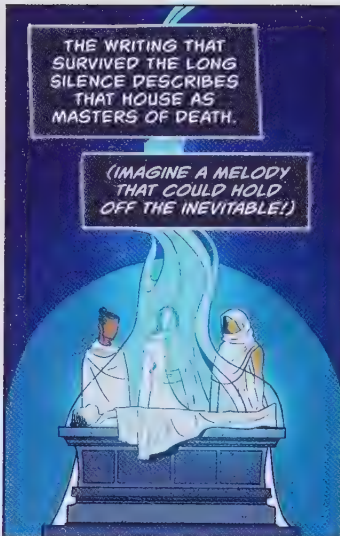


BUT IT PREDATES ANY THIEVES' GUILD.



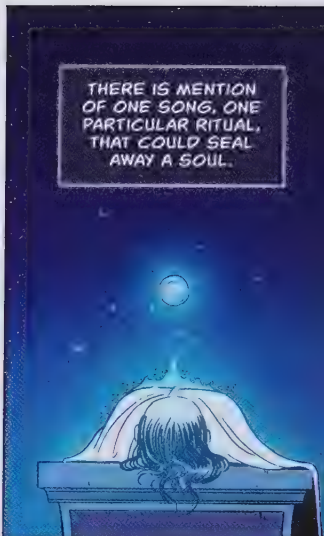


IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, IT'S THE SEAL OF THE TWELFTH ROYAL HOUSE OF KALIS.



THE WRITING THAT SURVIVED THE LONG SILENCE DESCRIBES THAT HOUSE AS MASTERS OF DEATH.

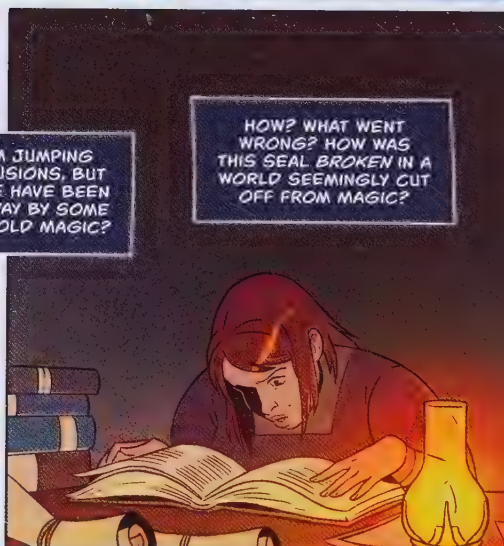
(IMAGINE A MELODY THAT COULD HOLD OFF THE INEVITABLE!)



THERE IS MENTION OF ONE SONG, ONE PARTICULAR RITUAL, THAT COULD SEAL AWAY A SOUL.



THERE ARE TOO MANY COINCIDENCES TO IGNORE. A GIRL MATERIALIZING OUT OF NOTHING, THIS AMULET, HER INNATE MAGICAL ABILITY...



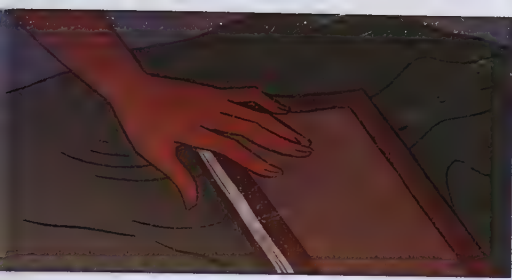
MAYBE I'M JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS, BUT COULD SHE HAVE BEEN SEALED AWAY BY SOME FORCE OF OLD MAGIC?

HOW? WHAT WENT WRONG? HOW WAS THIS SEAL BROKEN IN A WORLD SEEMINGLY CUT OFF FROM MAGIC?



IF THIS IS THE RIGHT ANSWER, IT ONLY RAISES MORE QUESTIONS.

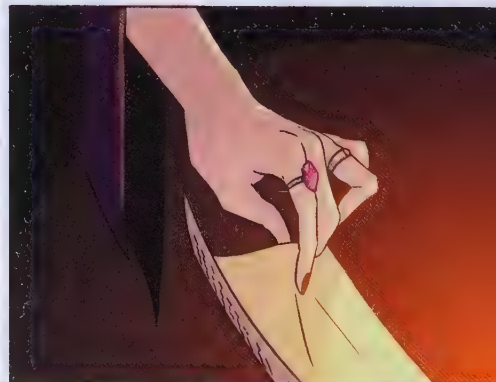
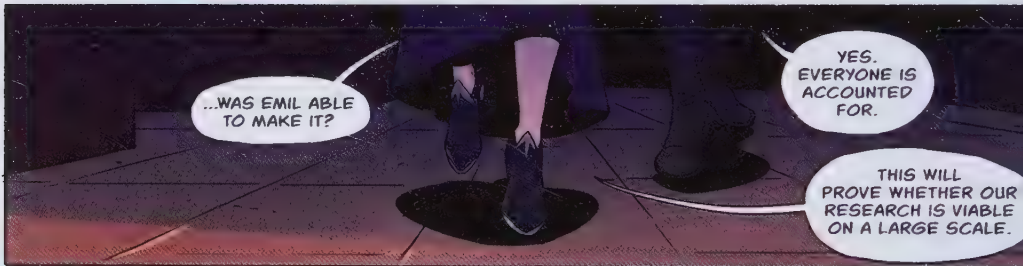
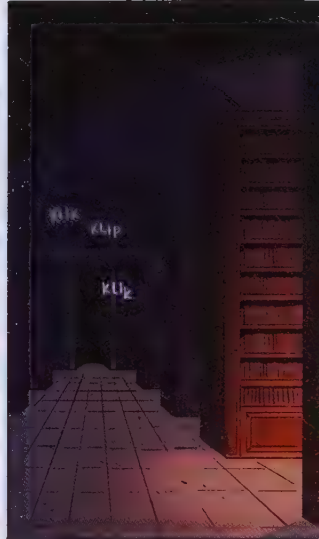
THIS HAS TO BE IT.



*Kesha Mazahr Veshari*  
 כֶּשָׁה מַזְאֵר וְשָׂרִי  
 נִשְׁבַּח וְשִׁבְּחָהּ וְשִׁבְּחָהּ וְשִׁבְּחָהּ

*Neitya Revathi Veshir*  
 נֵיטְיָה רֵבָתִי וְשִׁיר  
 נִשְׁבַּח וְשִׁבְּחָהּ וְשִׁבְּחָהּ וְשִׁבְּחָהּ







MAGDALENA?

BRANCA!

W-WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THE COLLEGE AT THIS HOUR?



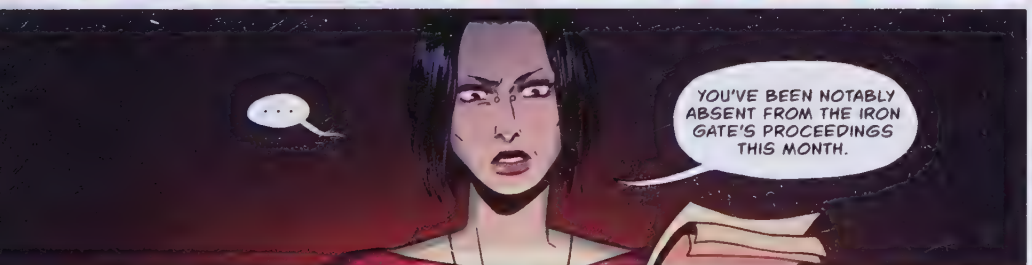
WE ARE BOTH SEEKERS OF KNOWLEDGE. THE SPARK OF CURIOSITY CANNOT BE IGNORED.



OF COURSE!

WELL...

I WAS JUST LEAVING.



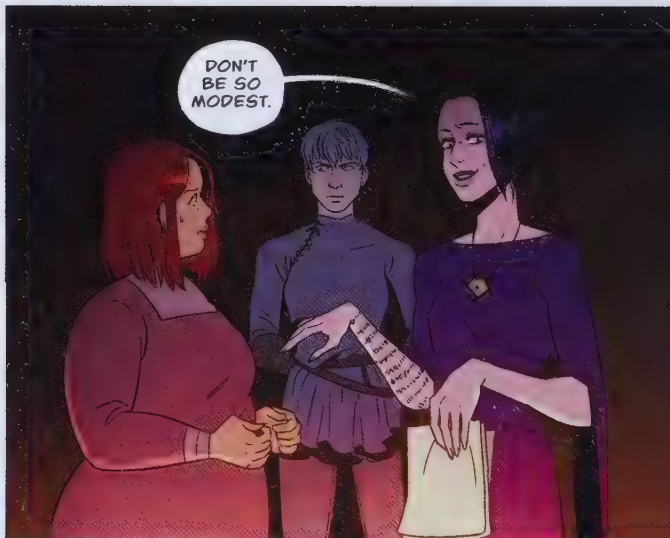
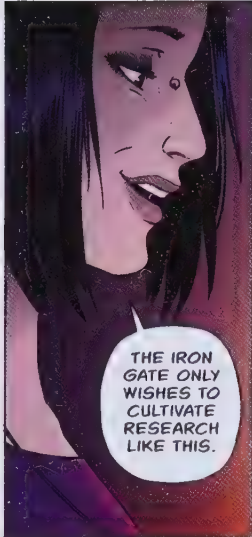
YOU'VE BEEN NOTABLY ABSENT FROM THE IRON GATE'S PROCEEDINGS THIS MONTH.



I APOLOGIZE AS YOU KNOW, I HAVE FAMILY IN THE CITY THAT NEED HELP.

THEIR BUSINESS IS EXPANDING AND...







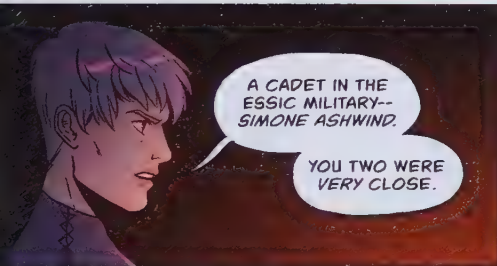
IT'S A UNIQUE SITUATION... I NEEDED TIME. I WANT NOTHING MORE THAN THE SUCCESS OF THE--

MAGDALENA ASTRANTIA.



YOU WERE SUCH A PROMISING SCHOLAR, EAGER AND WILLING... WE LIVE IN A DANGEROUS TIME. I WORRY WHEN FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE IRON GATE GO MISSING.

I HAD LIV SPEAK TO SOMEONE YOU LIVED WITH TO ENSURE YOU WERE ALIVE AND WELL.

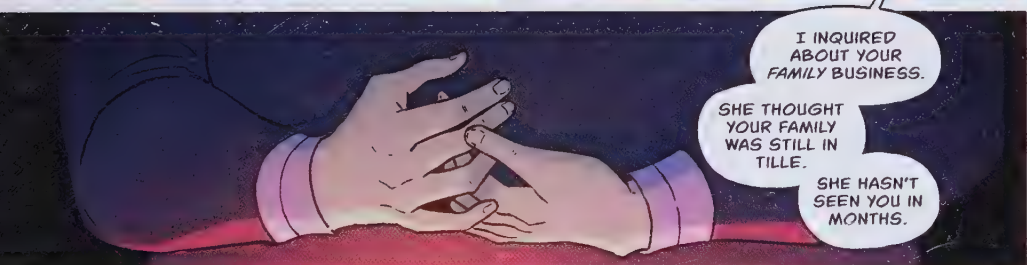


A CADET IN THE ESSIC MILITARY-- SIMONE ASHWIND.

YOU TWO WERE VERY CLOSE.



BUT EVEN BEDFELLOWS KEEP SECRETS, I SUPPOSE.



I INQUIRED ABOUT YOUR FAMILY BUSINESS.

SHE THOUGHT YOUR FAMILY WAS STILL IN TILLE.

SHE HASN'T SEEN YOU IN MONTHS.



PEOPLE MOVE, THOUGH. AND SURPRISINGLY, THERE ARE ASTRANTIAS IN ESSEAR.

THEY LIVE IN THE SOUTH LOWLANDS-- TURNIP FARMERS-- WITH NO DAUGHTERS TO SPEAK OF.

THERE'S A SIMPLE EXPLANATION! IF YOU LET ME--

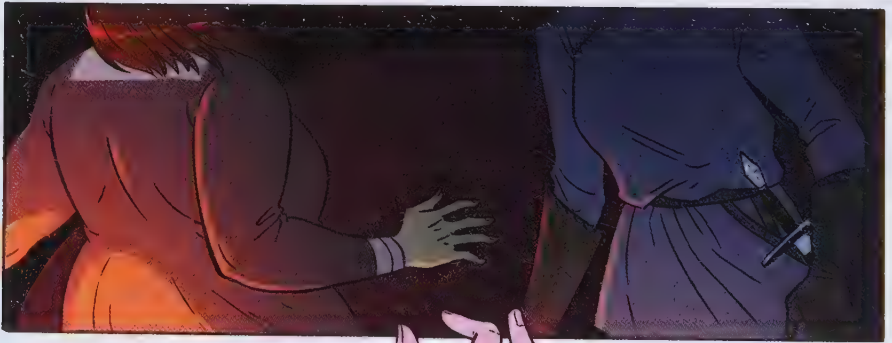


SHH.  
IT DOESN'T  
MATTER NOW.

YOU HAVE BEEN  
HIDING THINGS  
FROM THE IRON  
GATE, FROM ME...

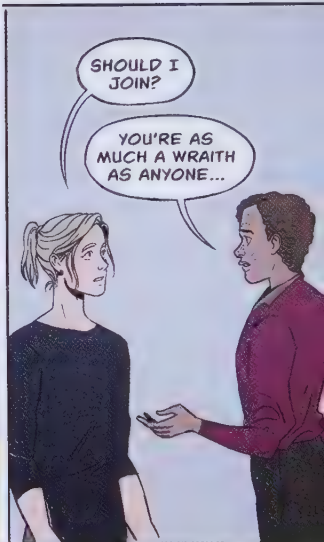
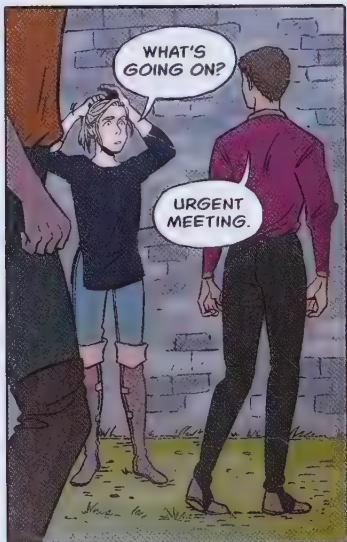
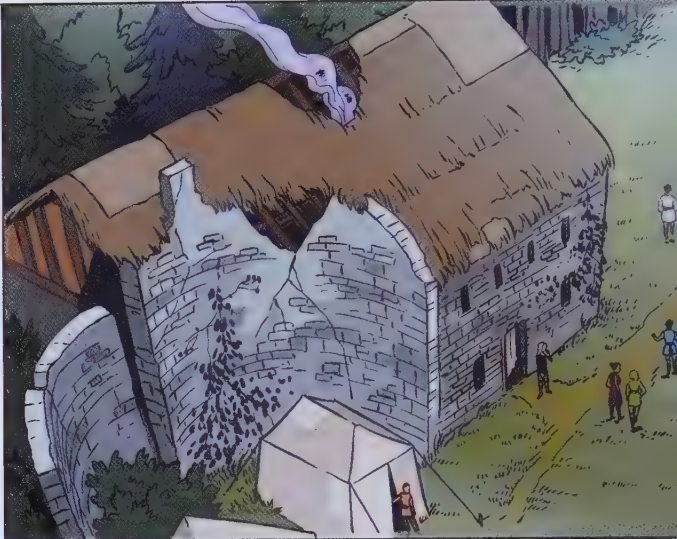
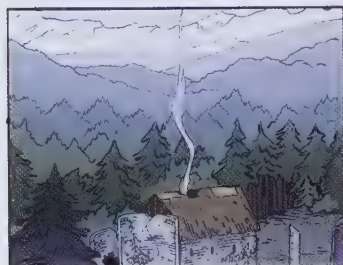
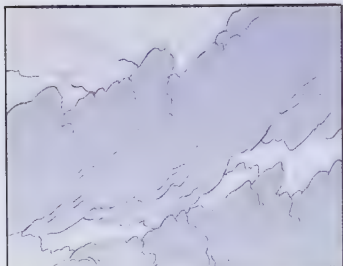


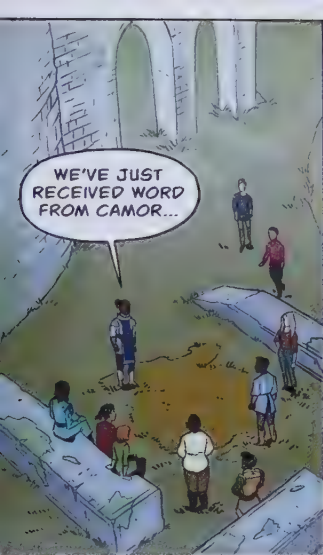
...AND I  
AM VERY  
CURIOUS.



## CHAPTER 4







WE'VE JUST RECEIVED WORD FROM CAMOR...



...AN UNNATURALLY LARGE NUMBER OF VEL ATTACKS HAVE BEEN REPORTED...



ISN'T CAMOR STILL IN FAVOUR WITH THE CROWN? THEY SHOULD HAVE REGULAR PATROLS.

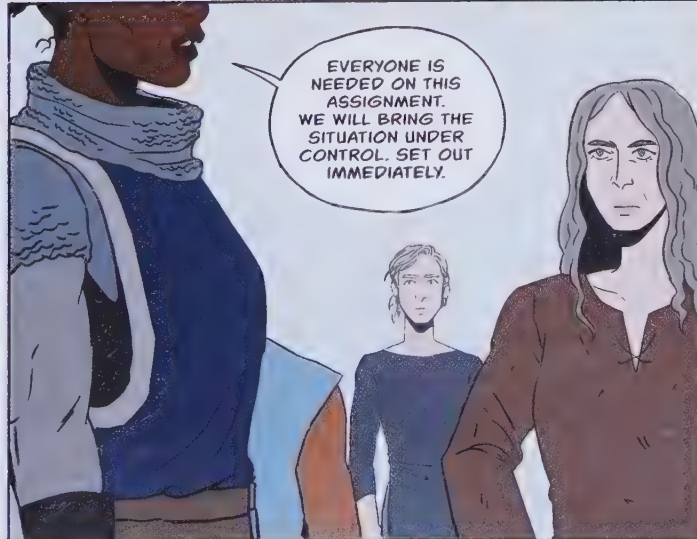
TCH. AS IF THAT DOESN'T CHANGE WITH THE SLIGHTEST BREEZE.



...IT'S UNCLEAR HOW MANY THERE ARE, OR THE NUMBER OF SURVIVORS.



VILLAGES HAVE PROTOCOLS FOR THIS. I HAVE HOPE THAT WE AREN'T TOO LATE.



EVERYONE IS NEEDED ON THIS ASSIGNMENT. WE WILL BRING THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL. SET OUT IMMEDIATELY.



HAVEN'T HAD A GOOD FIGHT IN A WHILE!



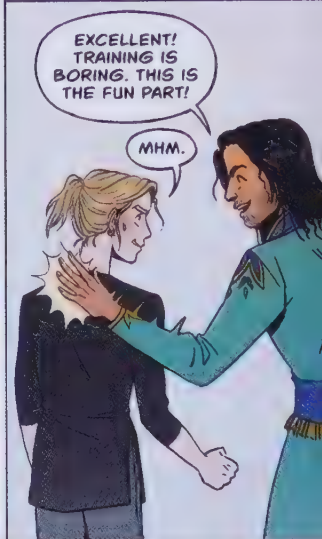
NERVOUS?

NO.



IF YOU AREN'T READY THEN STAY BACK.

I'M FINE.



EXCELLENT! TRAINING IS BORING. THIS IS THE FUN PART!

MHM.



IF EVERYTHING IN THAT NOTEBOOK IS TRUE THEN...I'M NOT A MONSTER. I CAN DO WHAT I DO BECAUSE...

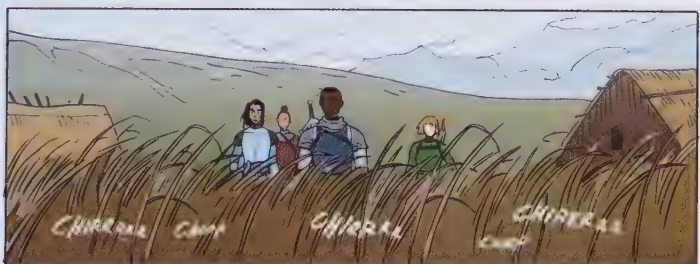
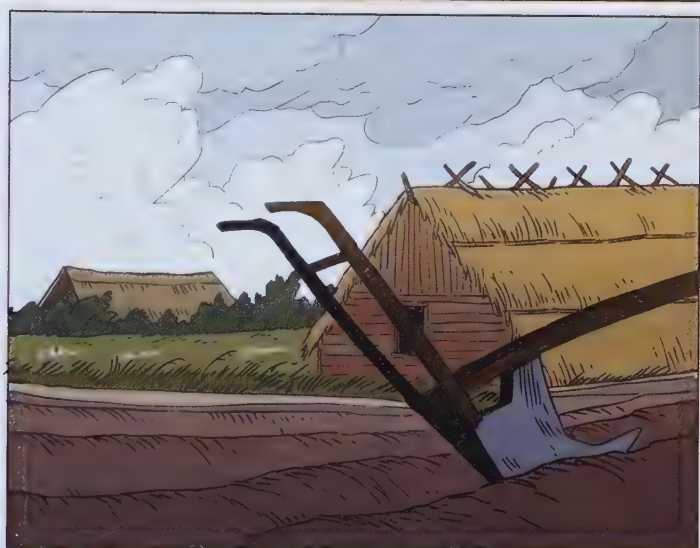
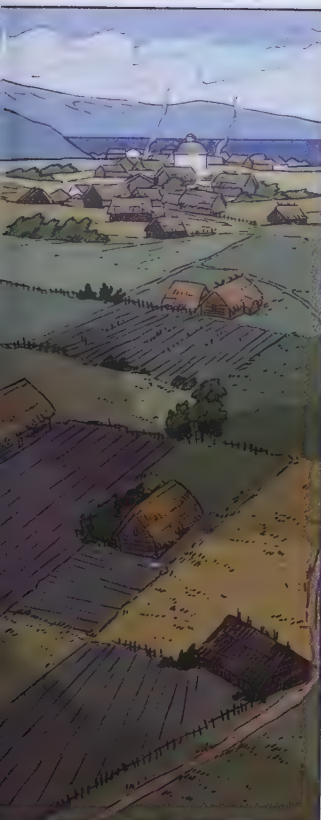
I MIGHT BE 300 YEARS OLD.

OK. BREATHE. THAT'S--NOT AN ISSUE AT ALL.

THOSE VOICES ARE TRIGGERED BY THE VEL. MAYBE THEY CAN EXPLAIN SOME THINGS.



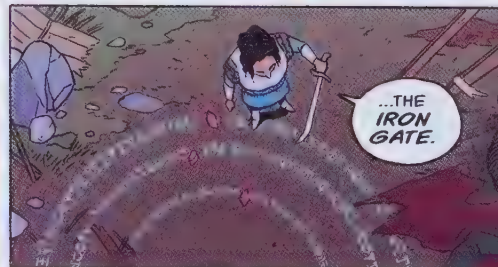
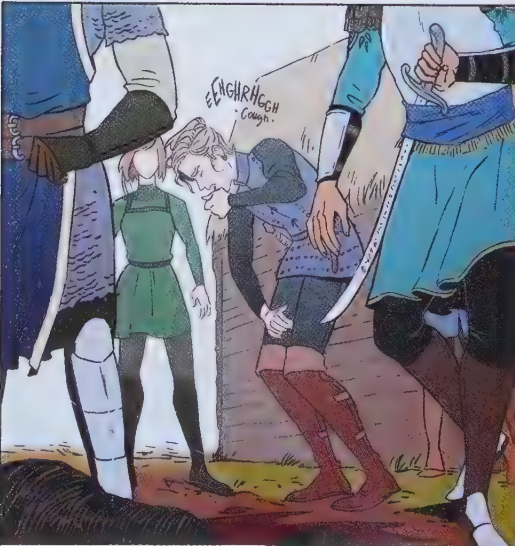
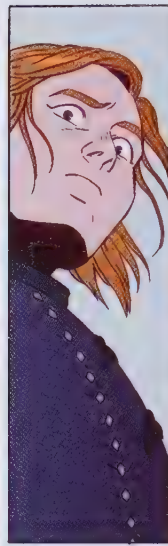
...AND MAGDALENA IS STILL IN THE CITY, SO I'M ON MY OWN FOR NOW.



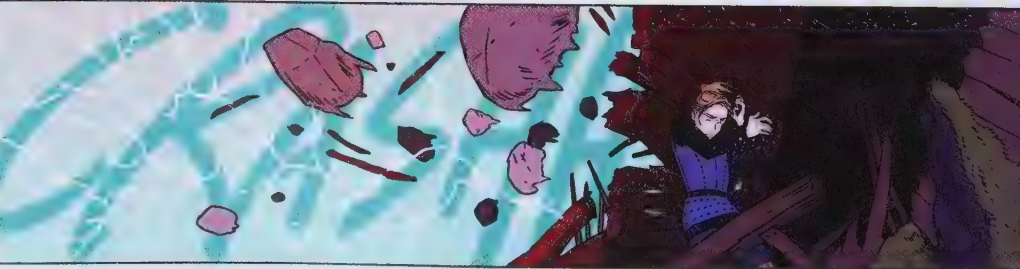
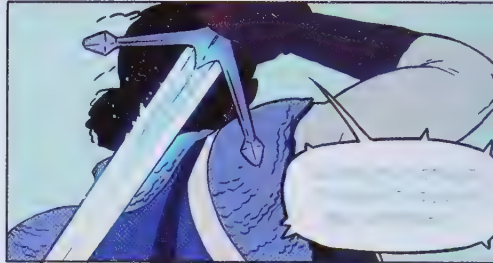
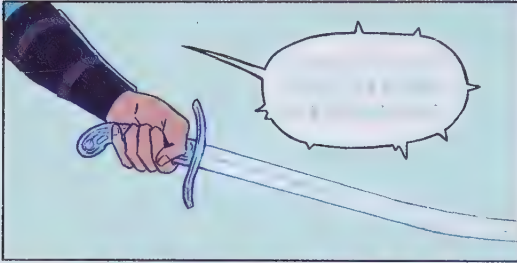
NO SIGN OF VEL. DID THEY RUN OFF ALREADY?

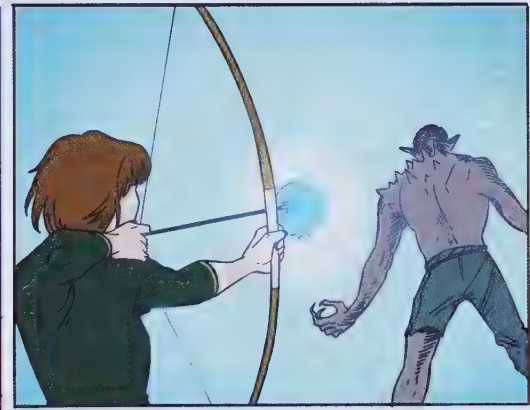
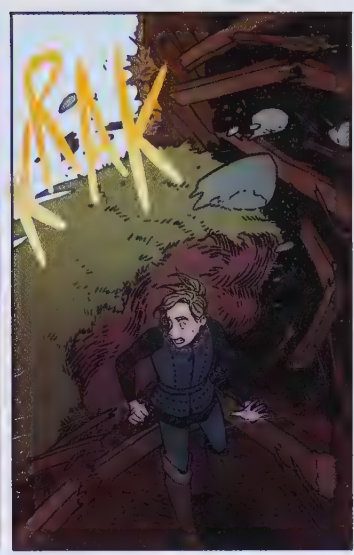
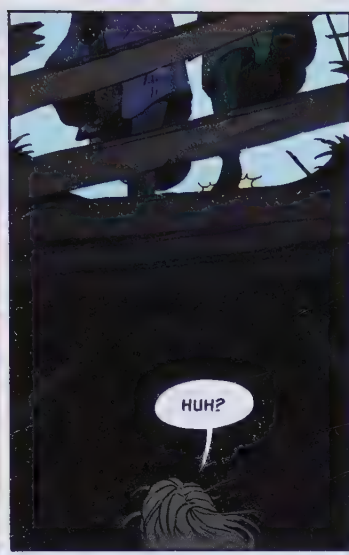
SPLIT UP AND SEARCH THE VILLAGE.

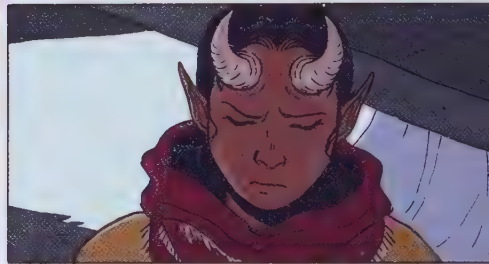














LADIS!

IS THAT YOU?

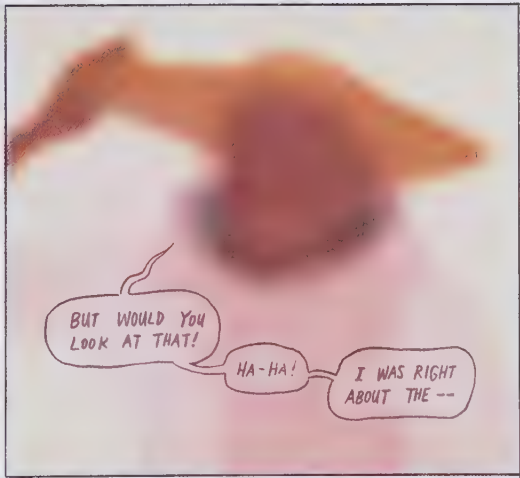


HELLO? CAN YOU HEAR ME? WHO ARE YOU!

LADIS?



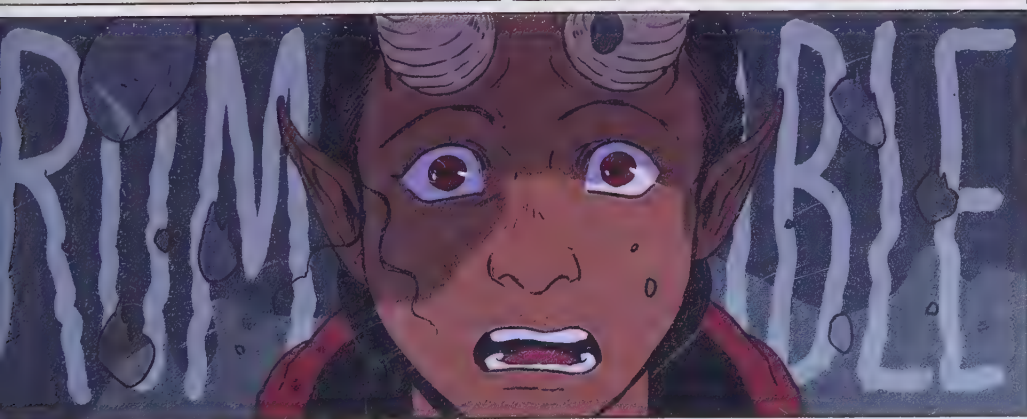
NO... OF COURSE NOT.

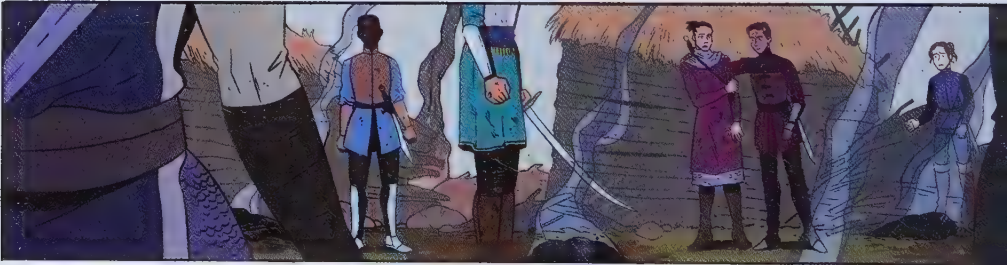
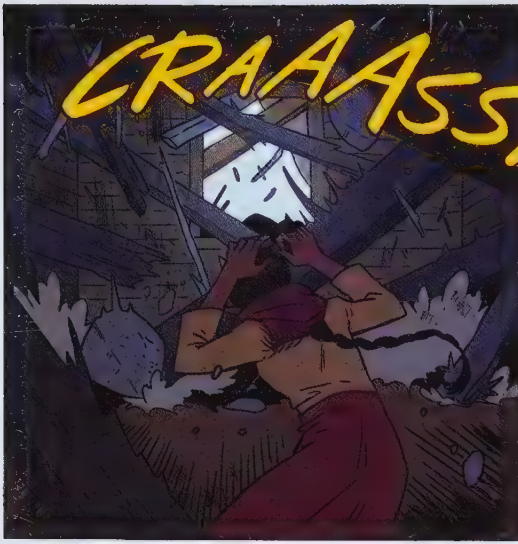


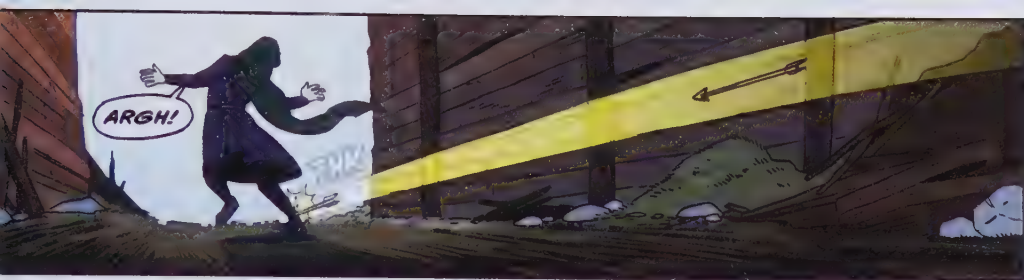
BUT WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT!

HA-HA!

I WAS RIGHT ABOUT THE --



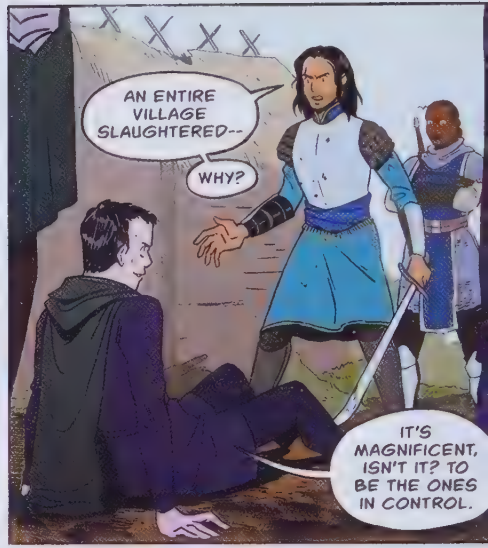






IT SEEMS THE IRON GATE HAS A SPY IN OUR MIDST...

HA-HA...



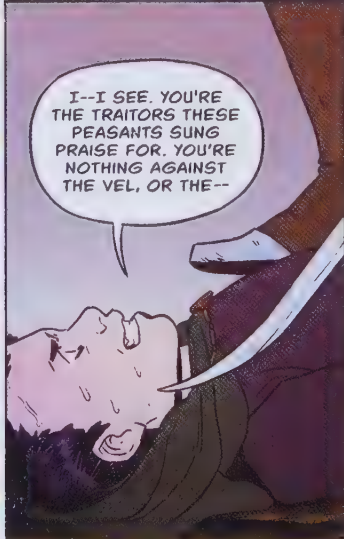
AN ENTIRE VILLAGE SLAUGHTERED--

WHY?

IT'S MAGNIFICENT, ISN'T IT? TO BE THE ONES IN CONTROL.



URGH!



I--I SEE. YOU'RE THE TRAITORS THESE PEASANTS SUNG PRAISE FOR. YOU'RE NOTHING AGAINST THE VEL, OR THE--



WHAT WERE YOUR ORDERS?



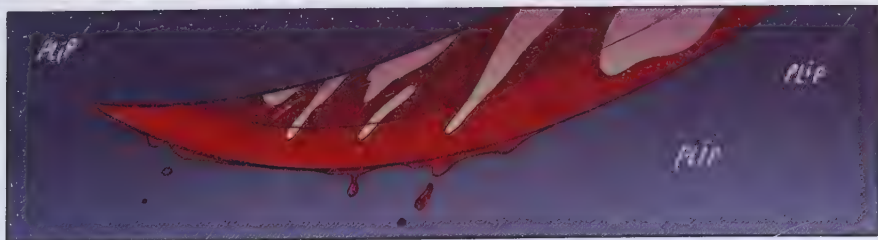
THE IRON GATE SEEKS KNOWLEDGE. OUR WORK WILL BALANCE THE SCALES, IT WILL RIGHT THE WRONGS OF THE DIVINE MESSENGERS--

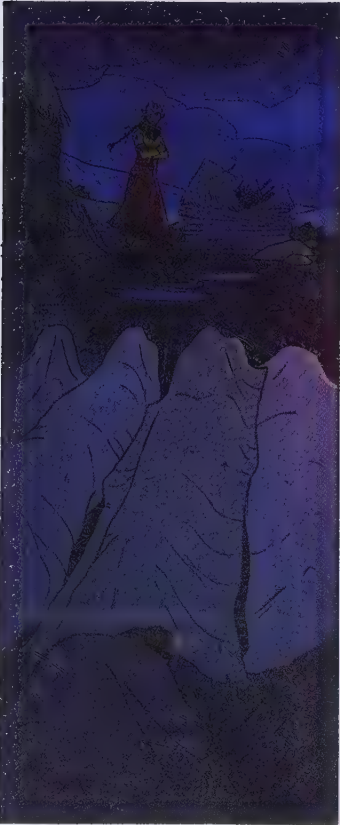
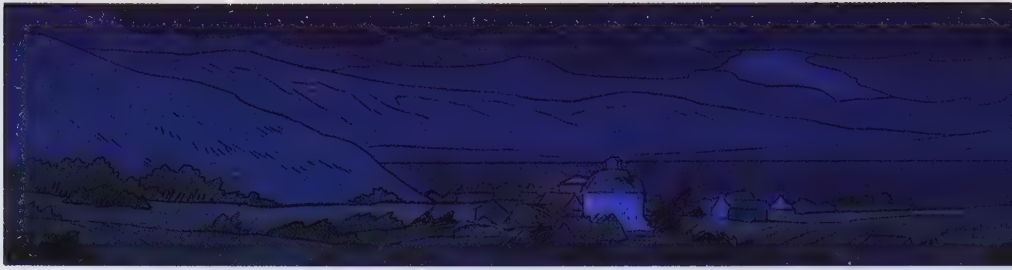


NNNGH!

I WON'T REPEAT MYSELF.

A SMALL TEST ORDERED BY BRANCA VASS. TO MEASURE WHAT WE ARE CAPABLE OF.









CAN'T I DO ANYTHING TO HELP?

NO.

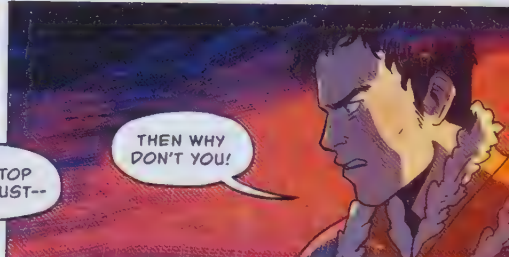
YOU'VE SEEN THE DAMAGE. NOW LEAVE.



YOU STILL THINK I'M LIKE THOSE MONSTERS.

I'M NOT.

I CAN STOP THEM, I JUST--



THEN WHY DON'T YOU!



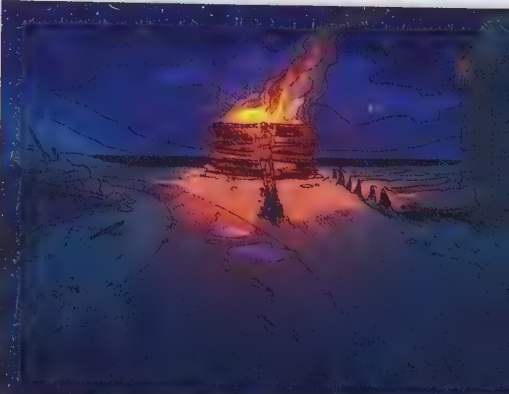
CAN YOU EVEN UNDERSTAND THE PAIN OF LOSING SOMEONE IN SUCH A BRUTAL AND CHAOTIC WAY?

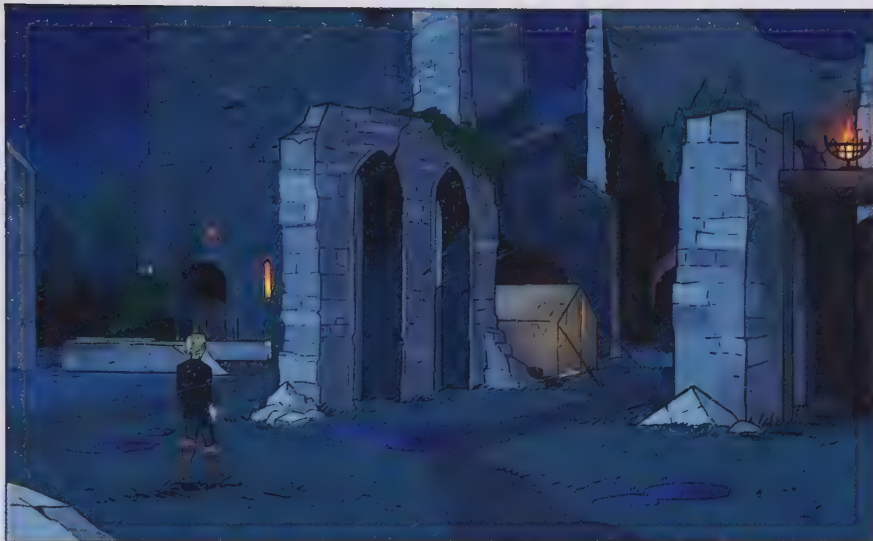
THIS ISN'T AN ADVENTURE, IT'S AN EVERYDAY REALITY.

IT NEVER GETS EASIER.



...I'M ASKING YOU CALMLY TO GO.







...SO TO SUMMARIZE, I'M 300 YEARS OLD AND WAS TRAPPED IN AN AMULET UNTIL RECENTLY. THAT'S PROBABLY WHY I CAN USE MAGIC?

AND SOMEONE IS DEFINITELY TRYING TO COMMUNICATE WITH ME THROUGH MY MIND.

THE THING IS, AFTER LEARNING ALL THIS, I STILL CAN'T REMEMBER MY FAMILY OR WHO I WAS!

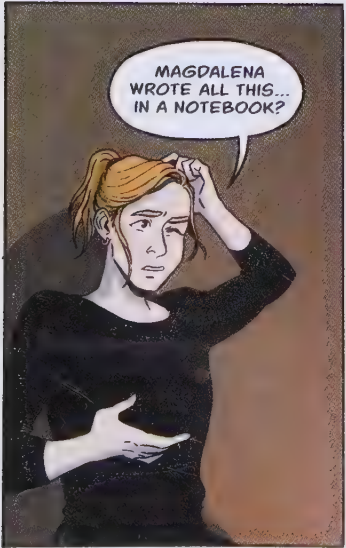


...



SAY SOMETHING!

IT'S A LOT TO GRASP!



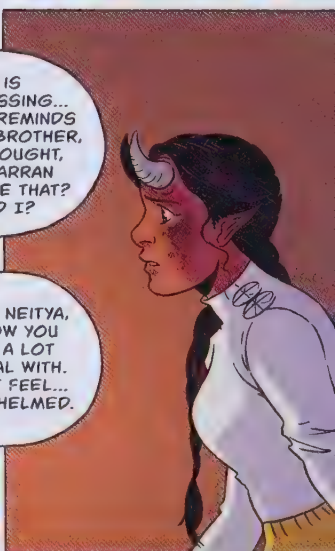
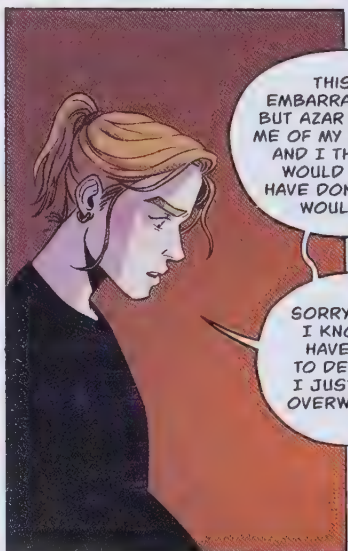
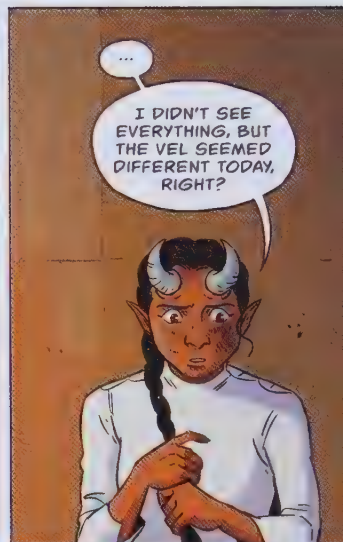
MAGDALENA WROTE ALL THIS... IN A NOTEBOOK?

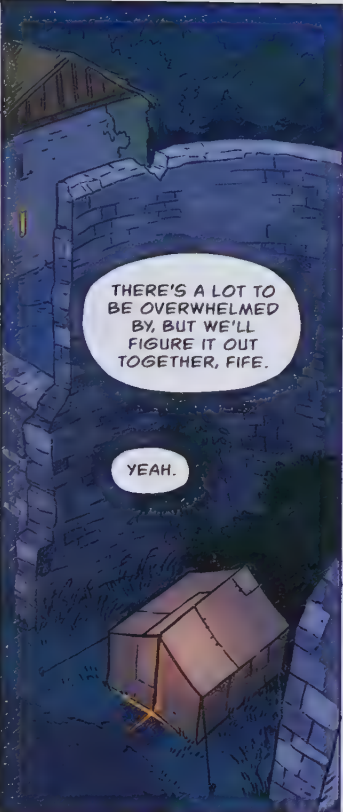


MOST OF IT... I WISH I COULD TALK TO HER RIGHT NOW. I HAVE A THOUSAND QUESTIONS.

DO YOU KNOW WHO OR WHAT WAS TRYING TO SPEAK TO YOU?

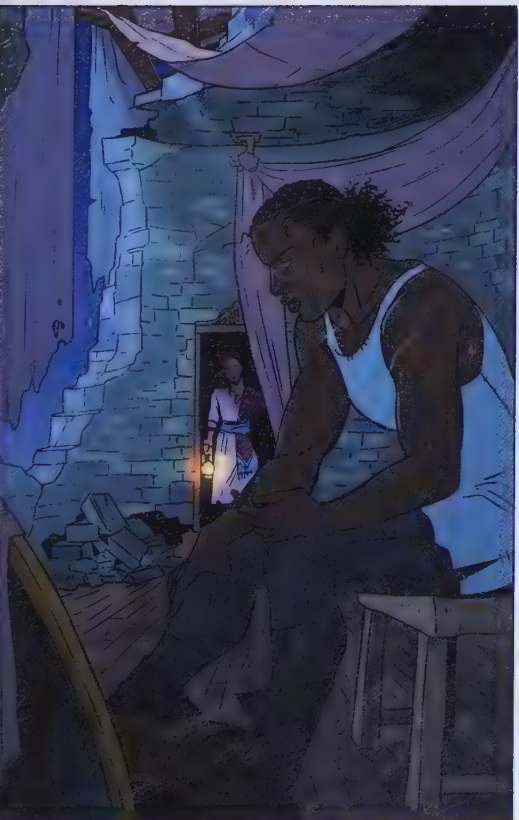
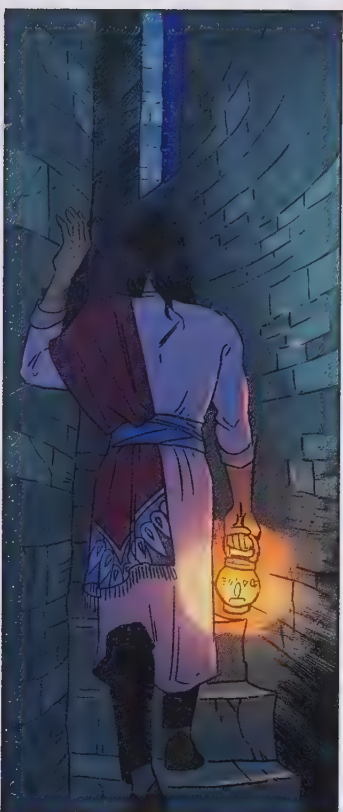
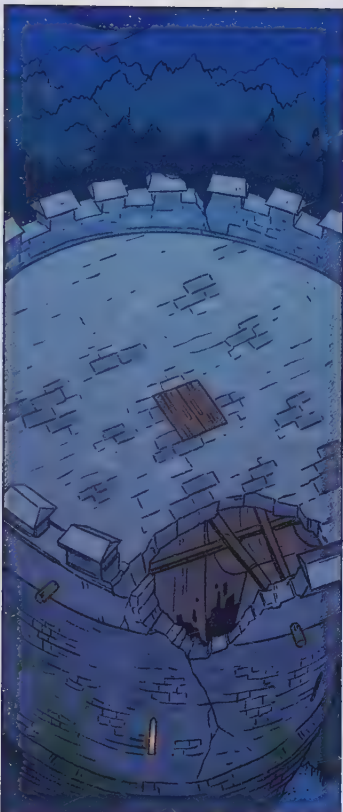






THERE'S A LOT TO BE OVERWHELMED BY, BUT WE'LL FIGURE IT OUT TOGETHER, FIFE.

YEAH.



YOU NEED A BETTER HIDING PLACE.



\*SIGH\*

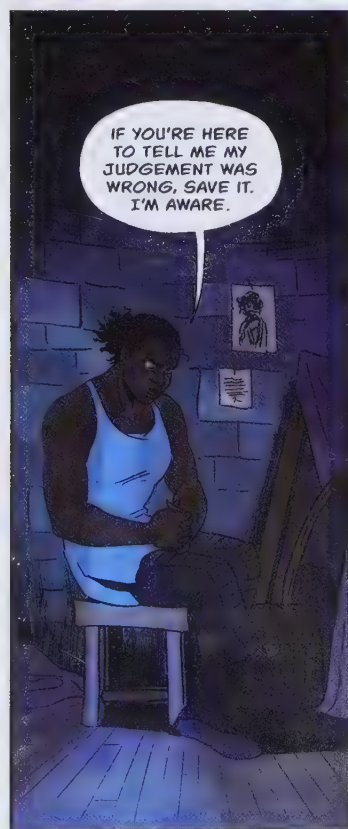


YOU KNOW, WHEN MAGS HEARS ABOUT CAMOR, SHE'S GOING TO THINK IT'S HER FAULT.

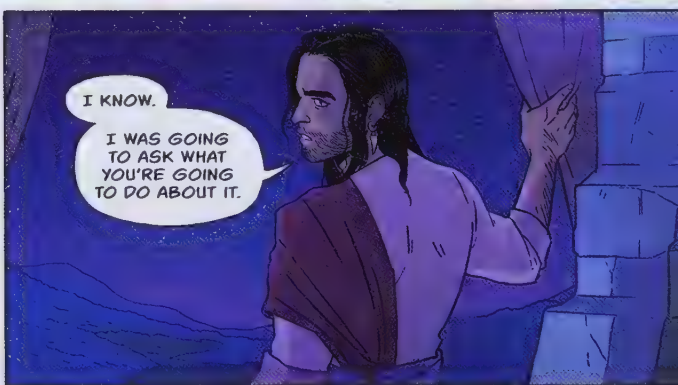
IT'S NOT.



OPHELIA--

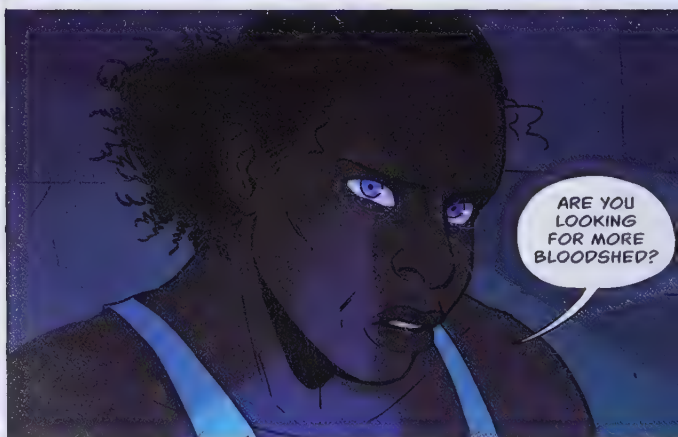


IF YOU'RE HERE TO TELL ME MY JUDGEMENT WAS WRONG, SAVE IT. I'M AWARE.

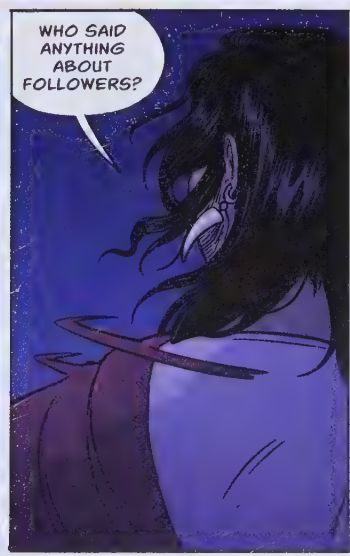
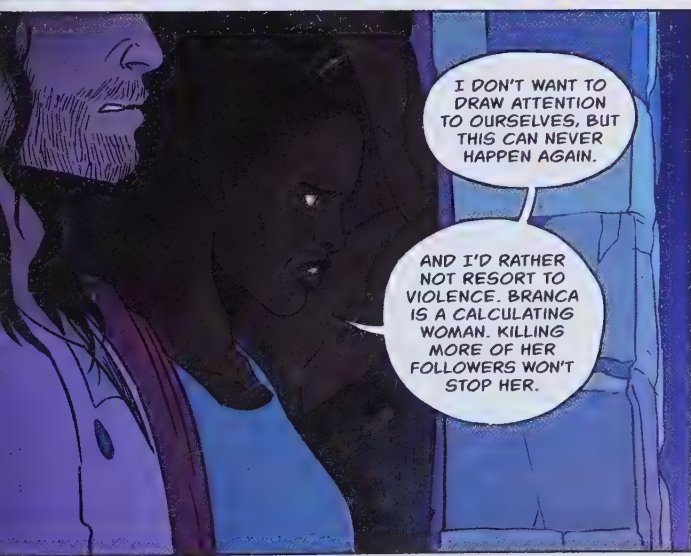


I KNOW.

I WAS GOING TO ASK WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO ABOUT IT.



ARE YOU LOOKING FOR MORE BLOODSHED?





WHAT SHE DID WAS INEXCUSABLE.

I'LL WALK STRAIGHT INTO THE CITY AND PUT AN END TO THIS.

DON'T BE IRRATIONAL--

NO.



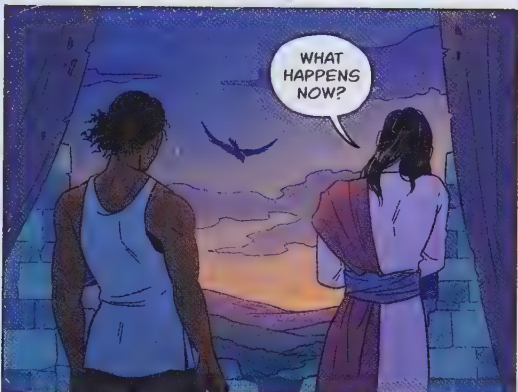
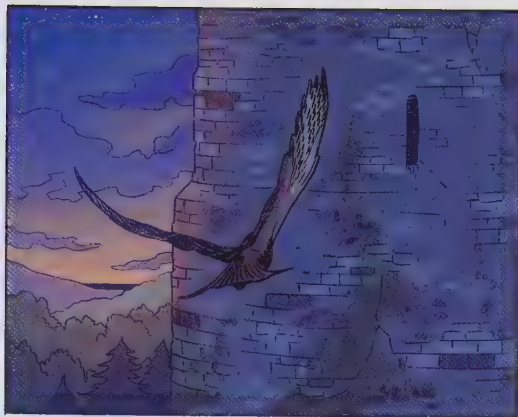
YOU'RE PLAYING IT SAFE.

THIS IS WHAT THE OLD OPHELIA WOULD HAVE DONE, AND HOW MANY SUFFERED BECAUSE OF THAT--

AZAR.



...  
I TRUST YOU...





GOOD EVENING,  
OR IS IT THE  
AFTERNOON?



HARD TO  
TELL  
DOWN HERE.



CARE TO DIVULGE  
ANYTHING ELSE  
ABOUT THE  
MYSTERY GIRL?



I'VE BEEN  
EXCEEDINGLY KIND,  
MAGDALENA, BUT  
MY PATIENCE HAS  
ITS LIMITS.

YOU HAVE MY  
RESEARCH.



YES. IT'S A SOLID THEORY, BUT I'M INTERESTED IN THESE GATES SHE CAN CREATE. AND I CAN'T DO MUCH UNLESS I SEE IT FOR MYSELF.

SO...IF YOU HAVE A LOCATION

YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING?



CONTROLLING THE VEL ISN'T ENOUGH. YOU WANT TO SEE IF NEITYA CAN SOMEHOW...FORCE OPEN THE GATE.

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN. IT COULD BE DISASTROUS!



OH! OH? PREACHING COMING FROM YOU?

YEARS OF STUDY AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO CHANGE THE COURSE OF HISTORY FALLS INTO YOUR LAP, AND YOU WANT TO TELL ME YOU WOULDN'T DO THE SAME?



DON'T TRY AND CONVINCE YOURSELF THAT YOU ONLY WANTED TO HELP RECOVER A GIRL'S LOST MEMORY.



I THOUGHT SO.

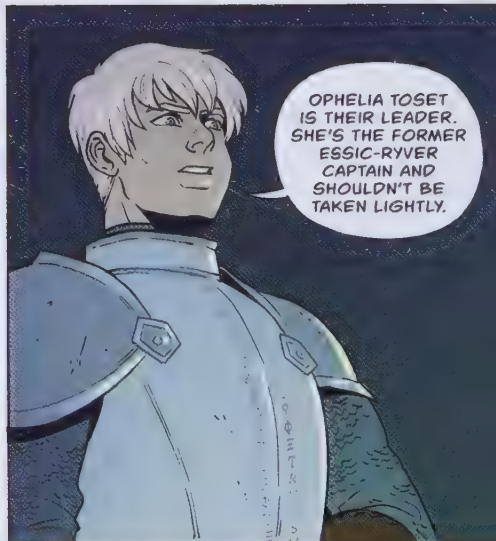
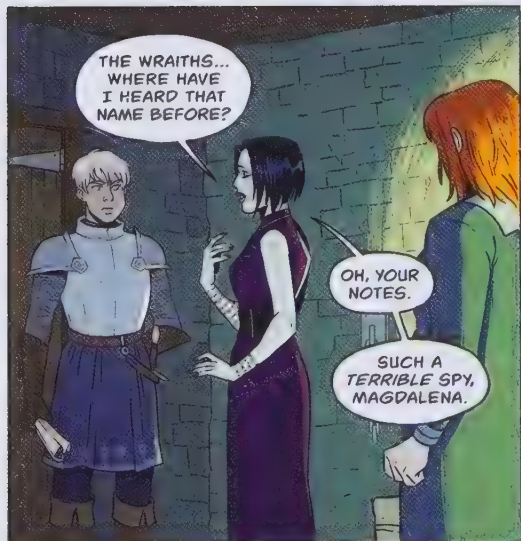


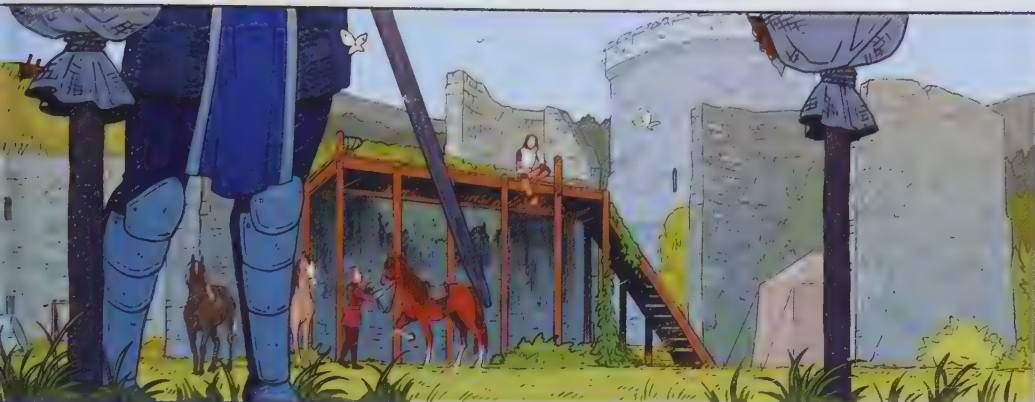
I'M GOING TO ASK ONE MORE TIME--



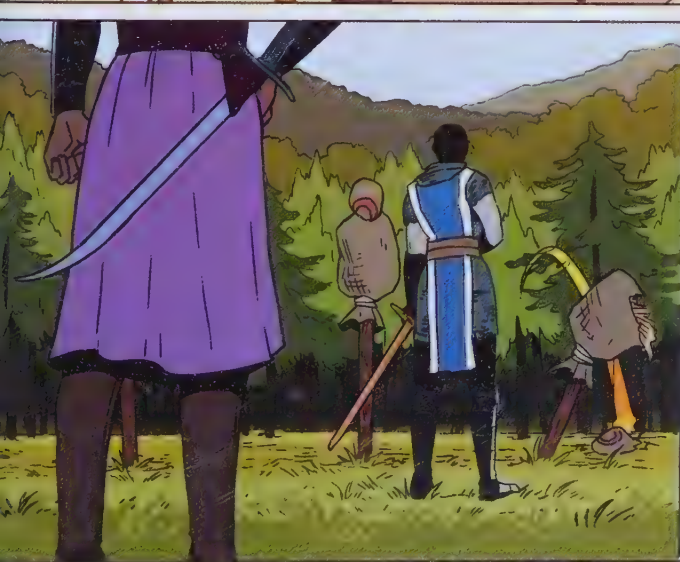
KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

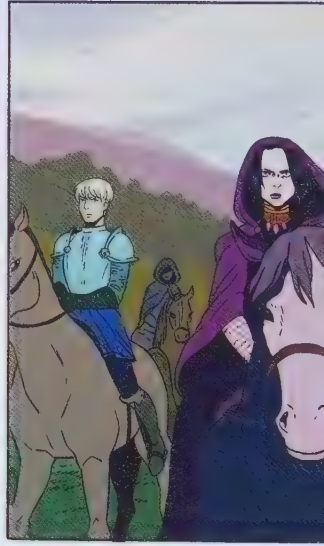
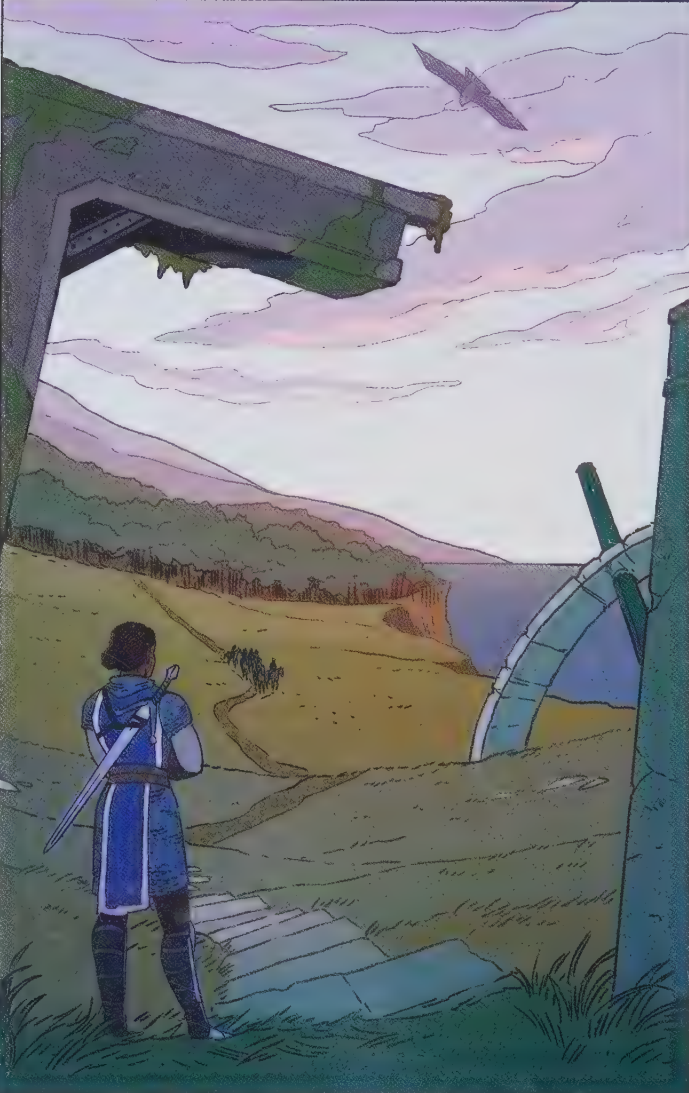
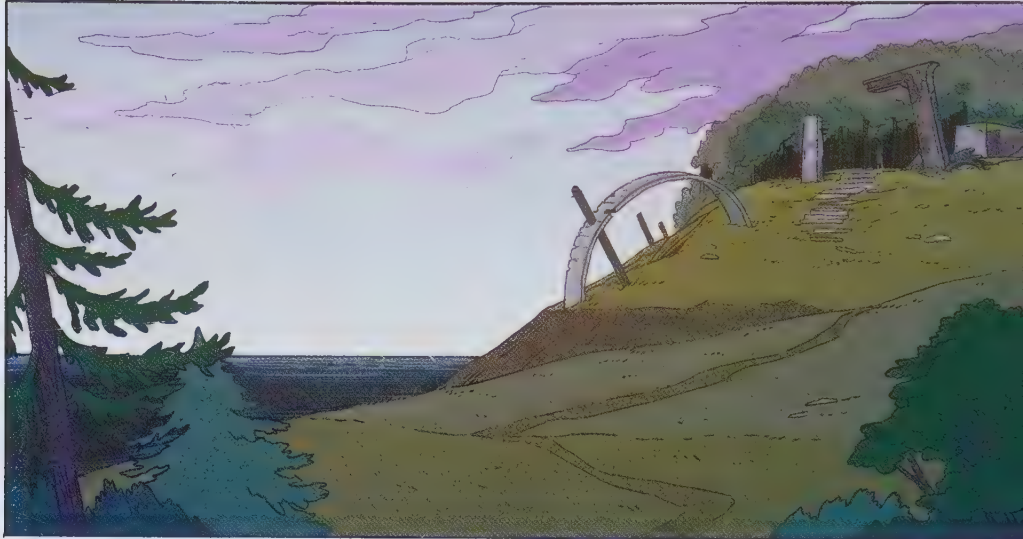
WHAT?!

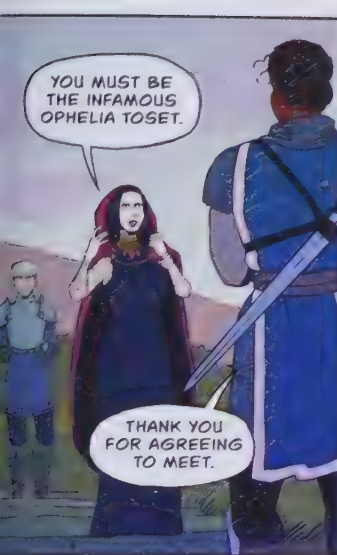












YOU MUST BE THE INFAMOUS OPHELIA TOSET.

THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO MEET.



I HOPE WE CAN HAVE A CIVIL CONVERSATION ABOUT WHAT TRANSPIRED AT CAMOR AND THE IRON GATE'S... ROLE IN IT.



VERY WELL.



OUR POSITION ON THE VEL IS CLEAR. THEY ARE ABOMINATIONS, AND WE BELIEVE CONTROLLING THEM DOESN'T MAKE THEM ANY LESS DANGEROUS.



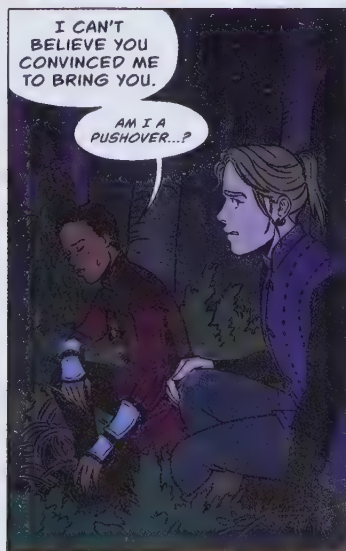
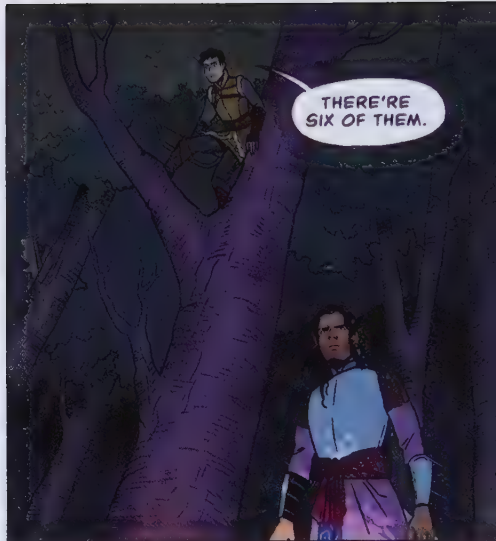
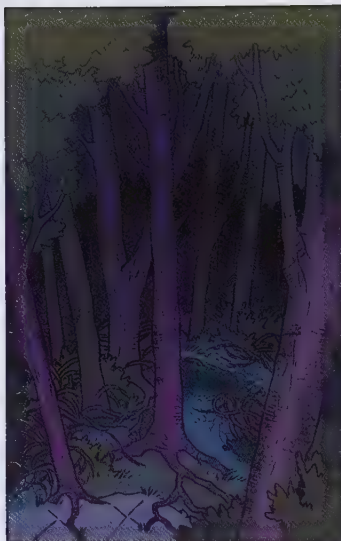
WHAT A SIMPLE VIEWPOINT.



I WOULD LIKE YOU TO CONSIDER THAT WE WANT THE SAME THING.

TO PROTECT OURSELVES AND OUR COMMUNITIES.

WE JUST HAVE DIFFERENT METHODS, AND SOMETIMES DISCOVERY OF THESE PROTECTIONS COMES WITH A STEEP PRICE.



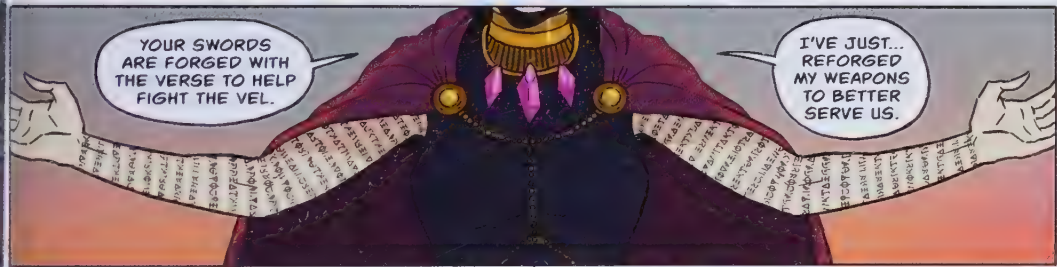


WE MIGHT WANT THE SAME THING, BUT HUMAN LIFE ISN'T SOMETHING I'M WILLING TO NEGOTIATE ON.



I ADMIT, WHAT HAPPENED IN CAMOR WAS...UNFORTUNATE. THINGS GOT OUT OF HAND.

BUT I'VE REPRIMANDED THE OFFENDERS AND ENSURED THAT IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.



YOUR SWORDS ARE FORGED WITH THE VERSE TO HELP FIGHT THE VEL.

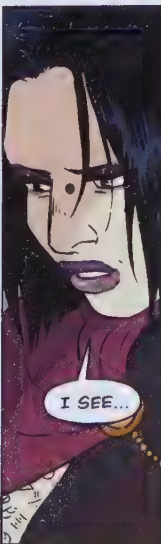
I'VE JUST... REFORGED MY WEAPONS TO BETTER SERVE US.



OPHELIA, ESSEAR IS FALLING APART. ISN'T THERE SOME WAY WE COULD WORK TOGETHER?



UNDER DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES, PERHAPS. BUT THE PATH YOU'VE TAKEN IS ONE I WON'T FOLLOW, AND IT ENDS HERE.



I SEE...



I HAVE ONE LAST QUESTION FOR YOU.



FOR ALL YOUR HATRED OF THE VEL, HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN SHELTERING A GIRL WHO HAS THE MARKS OF ONE?



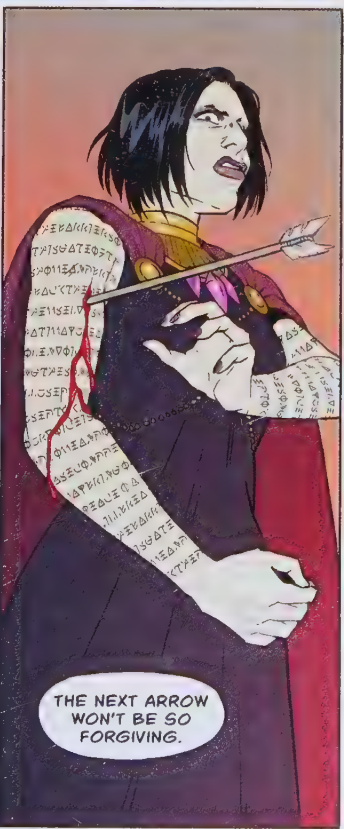
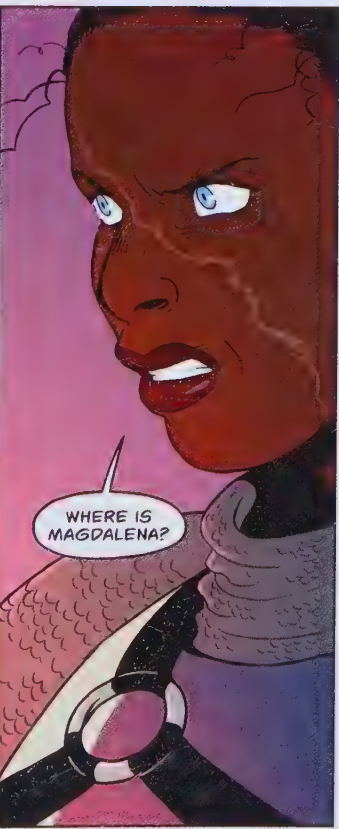
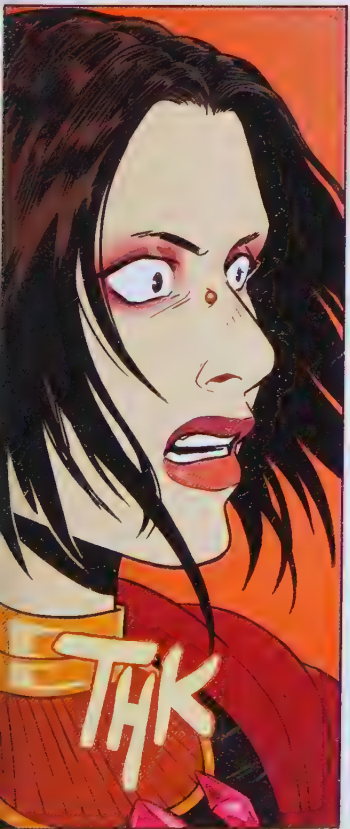
HOW--

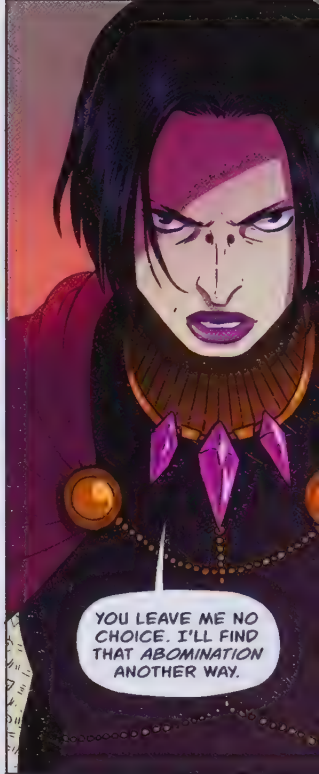
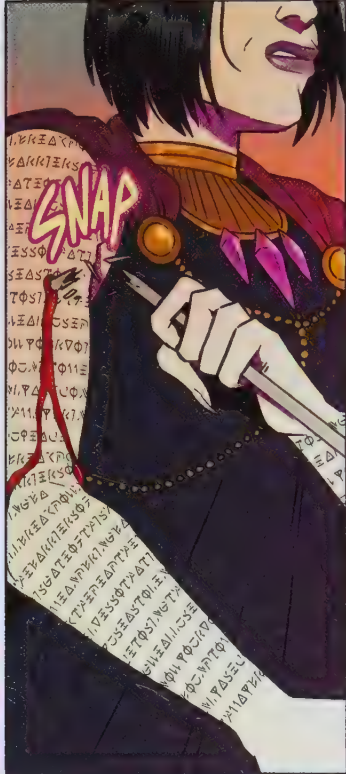


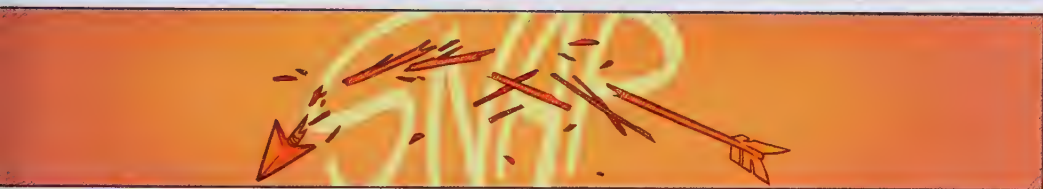
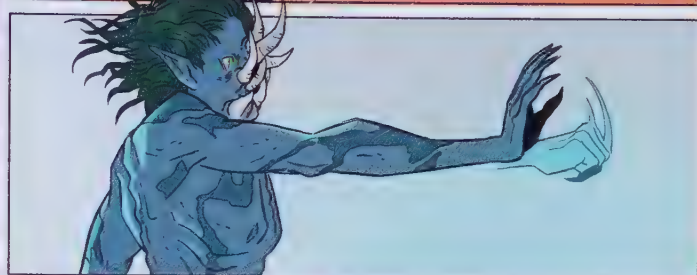
I'LL SAVE YOU THE TROUBLE OF MAKING AN EXCUSE.

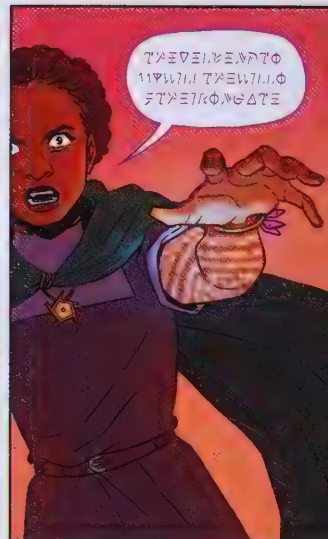
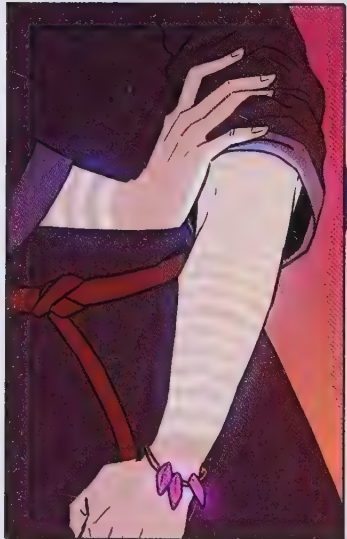
YOUR SPY DID HER JOB POORLY, AND IF YOU CARE TO SEE HER AGAIN, YOU WILL DELIVER NEITYA TO ME.



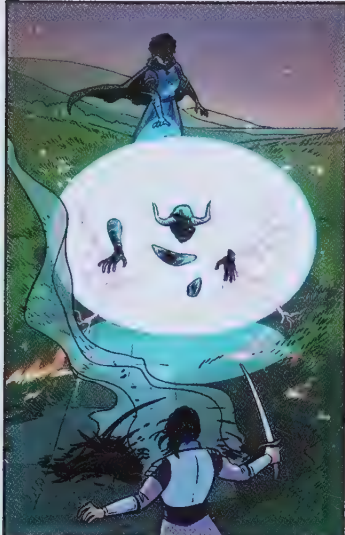
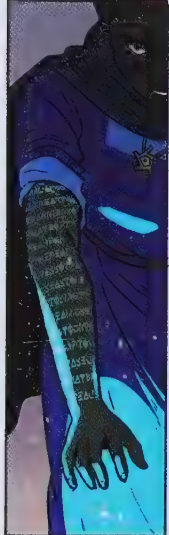




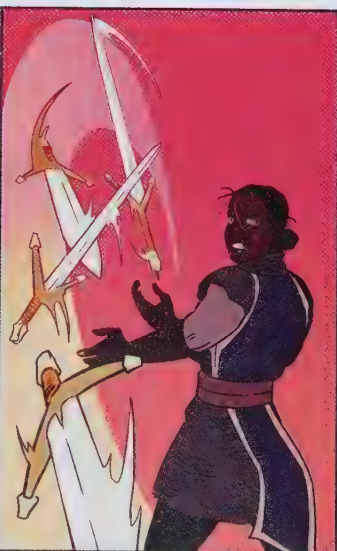
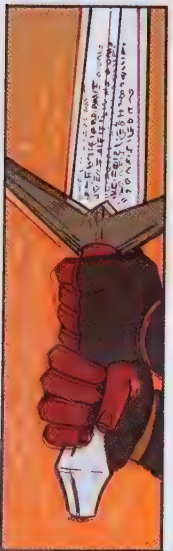


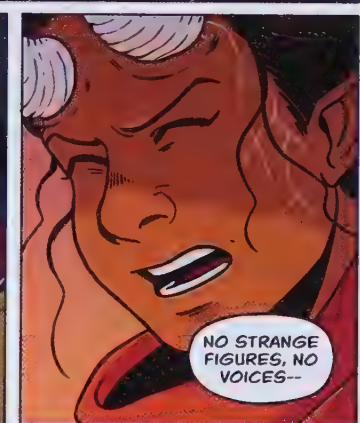
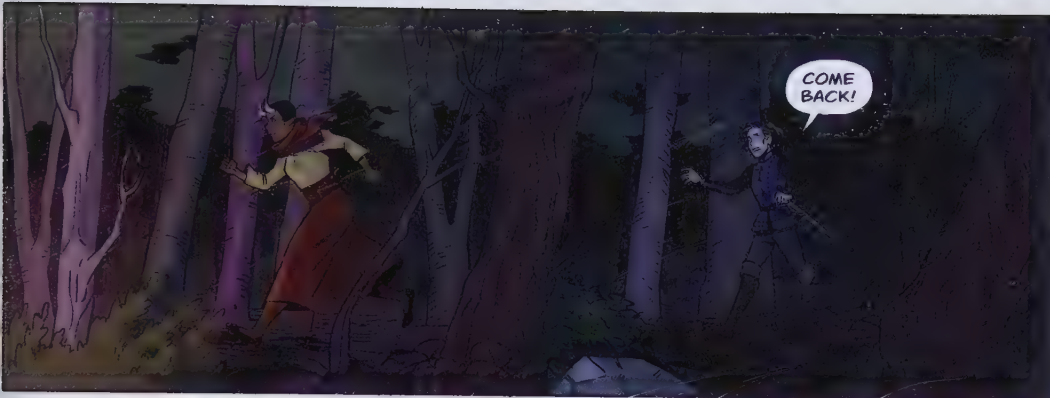


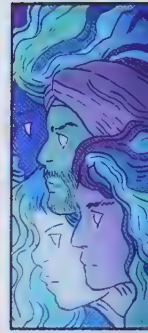
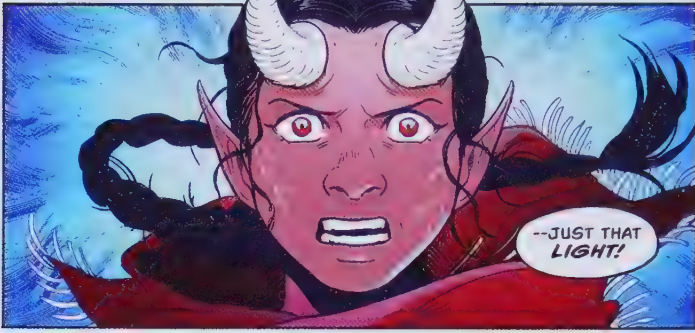
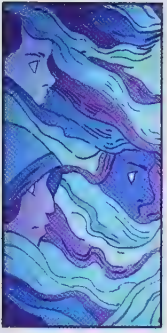




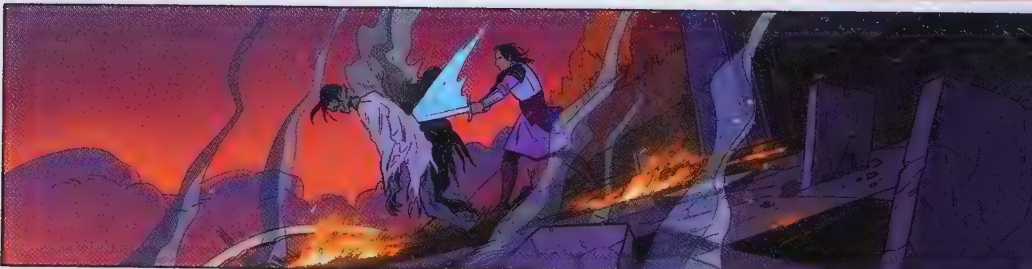
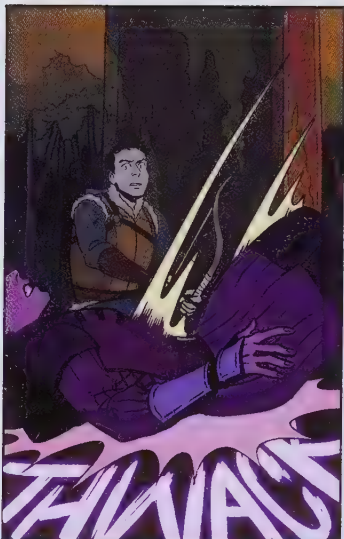
THEY CAN  
KEEP  
SUMMONING  
THEM?!

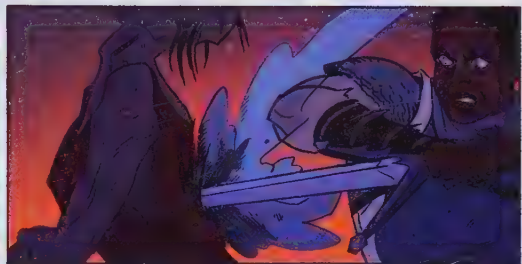
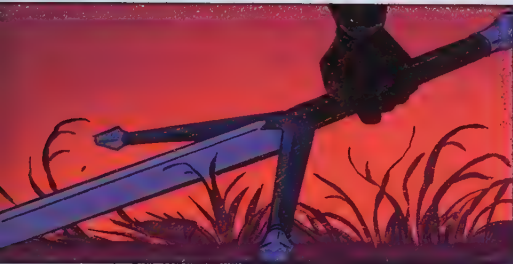
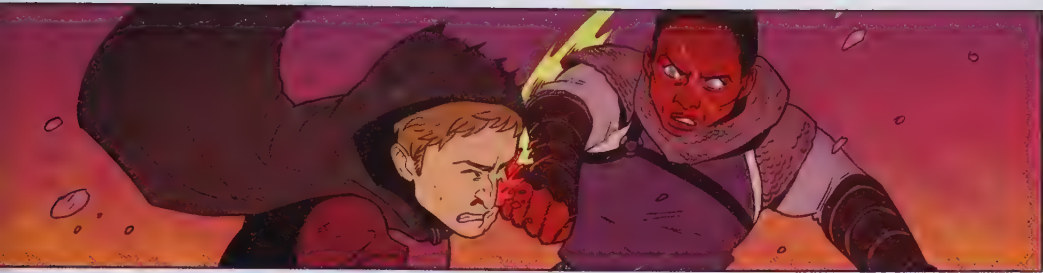




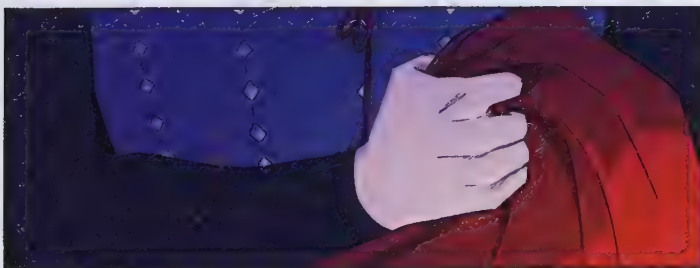












END OF

BOOK ONE: THE BROKEN HALF

YEARS WILL ELAPSE IN  
BOOK TWO: THE SECOND GATE



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sam Beck is a writer and illustrator living in Toronto. She likes to explore themes of identity and relationships through the lens of fantasy. Sam has done work with Dark Horse, Vault Comics, and BOOM! Studios. When she's not drawing, find her admiring the forests of northern Ontario or playing the ocarina and guitar.

## AUTHOR'S NOTES

Verse started as a couple of little sketches made one evening after a long day at work. Things were feeling a bit dull and stuck in place, but thinking about this story offered me a small window into somewhere magical. *A place with rolling hills and mysterious ruins. Characters traveling across a vast and wondrous world.* Throughout making this comic, not only have these characters grown and changed, but I have as well, and I hope you're as excited as I am to continue on their journey with me.



(AN INCOMPLETE)

# MAP OF THE WORLD



## THE VERDANT TRIO



**THE VERSE** or ▽≡/≈≡

Each letter of the Verse is an abstracted version of a letter from the English alphabet. Use this chart to decode the Verse phrases found in the comic!

				
A	B	C	D	E
				
F	G	H	I	J
				
K	L	M	N	O
				
P	Q	R	S	T
				
U	V	W	X	Y
				
		Z		

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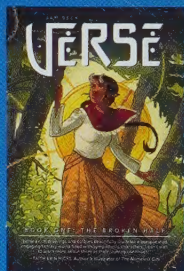
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## SEPTEMBER



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