

GOLD DIGGER NO. 58

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GOLD DIGGER



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THIS SERIES OF INCREDIBLE EVENTS HAS BEEN INITIATED BY THE ACTIONS OF A SINGLE, YET VOLATILE CATALYST: FAUNTLEROY...



...A COPPER DRAGON CURSED WITH HUMAN FORM AND EXILED FROM JADE-REALM ALONG WITH HIS TWO SUB-WIVES, "THIRTY-EIGHT" AND "SIX"...



THOUGH HIS INSATIABLE HUNGER FOR THE **FORBIDDEN**, **SEALED** AND **CONCEALED** ANCIENT POWERS OF MAGIC HAD EARNED HIM THIS PUNISHMENT, HE **CONTINUES** HIS QUEST **UNABATED** ON EARTH-REALM.



ON THIS OCCASSION, FAUNTLEROY'S ACUTE, ENCHANTED SENSES HAVE LED HIM TO WHAT HE AT FIRST BELIEVED WAS A "LAIR GUARDIAN" OF EXHILION, ELDEST OF ALL DRAGONS.

"LAIR GUARDIANS," WHILE **NOTORIOUSLY DANGEROUS**, ARE ALSO VERITABLE TREASURE TROVES OF **RARE SPELL COMPONENTS** ONCE DESTROYED.

I GUESS THE FACT THAT THE "LAIR GUARDIAN" WAS LOCATED INSIDE A HUMAN STRONGHOLD CALLED A "FEDERAL DETENTION CENTER"...

...WAS OF MEAGER CONSIDERATION...



THE HUMANS **UNKNOWNLY** POSSESSED A TREASURE... SO WE PROCEEDED IN THE **TRUE SPIRIT** OF ALL HUMAN ADVENTURERS.

HE MEANS, "KILL 'EM ALL AND TAKE THEIR STUFF."

AT THE SAME MOMENT
FAUNTLEROY AND HIS
DRACONIC SUB-WIVES
ASSAULTED THE MIAMI
FEDERAL DETENTION
CENTER...

...ANOTHER GROUP, WHO
SHARED A PAST AS "SUPER-
VILLAIN" TEAMMATES,
BEGAN THEIR ESCAPE:

SLASHER, A DANGEROUS,
SADISTIC, AND CURRENTLY,
QUITE LASCIVIOUS
CONVICT...

(SHE'S BEEN
LOCKED UP FOR A
LOOOONG TIME,
Y'ALL...)

...WHO IS ALSO A
TALENTED
INFILTRATOR...



...AND "ARRAY," A WOMAN WHO
HAS THE SUPERNATURAL ABILITY
TO CREATE **INDEPENDENT,**
SPECIALIZED BODIES.



EACH NEW BODY IS BORN
WITH ITS OWN PERSONA,
AND WHILE UNIQUE, EACH
PERSONA IS STILL VERY
MUCH A PART OF ARRAY'S
COLLECTIVE
CONSCIOUSNESS.

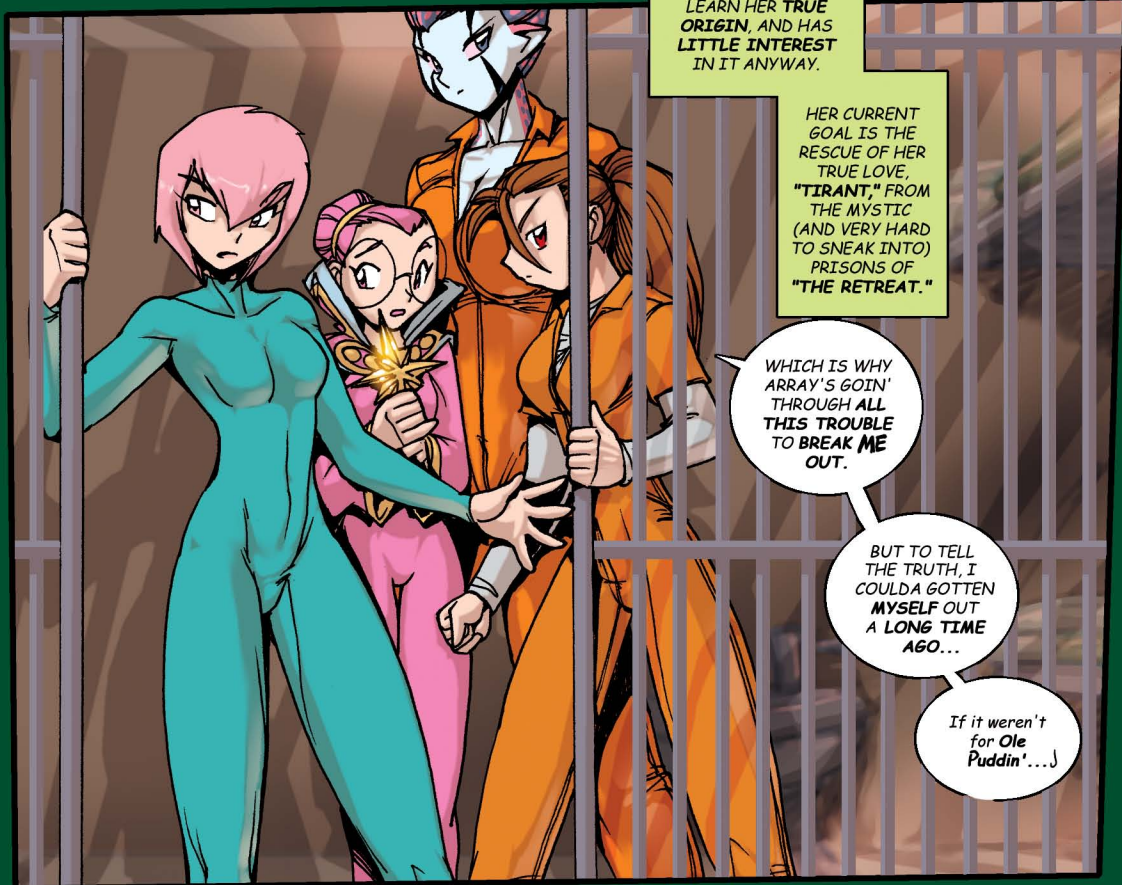
ARRAY HAS YET TO
LEARN HER **TRUE**
ORIGIN, AND HAS
LITTLE INTEREST
IN IT ANYWAY.

HER CURRENT
GOAL IS THE
RESCUE OF HER
TRUE LOVE,
"TIRANT," FROM
THE MYSTIC
(AND VERY HARD
TO SNEAK INTO)
PRISONS OF
"THE RETREAT."

WHICH IS WHY
ARRAY'S GOIN'
THROUGH ALL
THIS TROUBLE
TO BREAK ME
OUT.

BUT TO TELL
THE TRUTH, I
COULDA GOTTEN
MYSELF OUT
A LONG TIME
AGO...

If it weren't
for Ole
Puddin'....♪



"PUDDIN'", A.K.A.:
BARBRA DUNCAN,
ALSO KNOWN
AS "**CRUSH**"...

ARRESTED AFTER
JOINING **CRIME
SYNDICATE-X**
UNDER MYSTERIOUS
CIRCUMSTANCES,
CRUSH BECAME A
MODEL INMATE,
ACTIVELY ASSISTING
GUARDS IN MAIN-
TAINING ORDER
THROUGHOUT
THE CENTER.

THOUGH SHE
IS CONSIDERED
THE **STRONGEST**
HUMAN ALIVE...

... AND THOUGH SHE
HAS SERVED HER
MINIMUM
SENTENCE...

... SHE HAS VOLUNTARILY
REMAINED **CONFINED**,
ADAMANTLY REFUSING
EVERY PAROLE
HEARING...

...FOR REASONS
SHE KEEPS
TO HERSELF.

WHEN THE DETENTION
CENTER CAME UNDER
ASSAULT, CRUSH WAS
AMONG THE **FIRST**
TO RUSH TO ITS
DEFENSE...

...WHICH DIDN'T
SIT QUITE WELL
WITH **XANE**
OF THE SECRET
EMERGENCY
RESPONSE TEAM
"**AGENCY ZERO**."

AGENT XANE, WHILE
MEANING WELL, TENDS
TO SEE SITUATIONS
IN **BLACK AND WHITE**.

HER INFLEXIBILITY
TENDS TO LEAD TO
CONFRONTATION...
VIOLENT
CONFRONTATION...

HER ASTONISHING **STRENGTH**,
SPEED AND SKILL AS A DEMI-
GODDESS, THE **NUBIAN AVATAR**
OF BATTLE, USUALLY MEANS
SHE'S **IN CONTROL** OF THOSE
CONFRONTATIONS.

FORTUNATELY,
AGENT
XANE HAS A
CAPABLE
PARTNER...

...THE **NEWLY**
RECRUITED
AGENT '**GIA**...
PRINCE OF **EL**
DORADO AND
WIELDER OF
ITS **ANCIENT**
HEIRLOOMS.

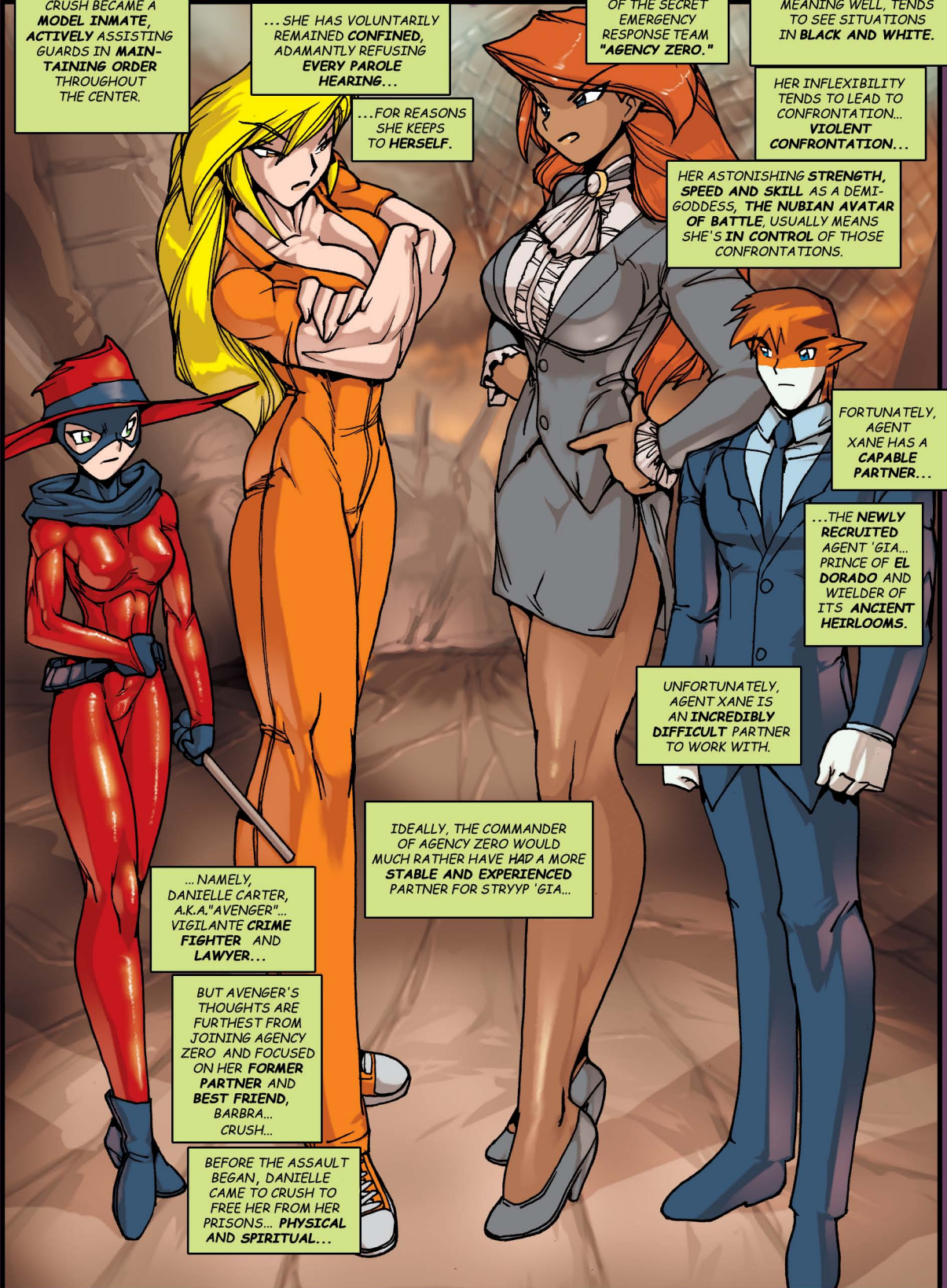
UNFORTUNATELY,
AGENT XANE IS
AN **INCREDIBLY**
DIFFICULT PARTNER
TO WORK WITH.

IDEALLY, THE COMMANDER
OF **AGENCY ZERO** WOULD
MUCH RATHER HAVE HAD A MORE
STABLE AND EXPERIENCED
PARTNER FOR STRYYP '**GIA**...

... NAMELY,
DANIELLE CARTER,
A.K.A. "**AVENGER**"...
VIGILANTE **CRIME**
FIGHTER AND
LAWYER...

BUT AVENGER'S
THOUGHTS ARE
FURTHEST FROM
JOINING **AGENCY**
ZERO AND FOCUSED
ON HER **FORMER**
PARTNER AND
BEST FRIEND,
BARBRA...
CRUSH...

BEFORE THE ASSAULT
BEGAN, DANIELLE
CAME TO CRUSH TO
FREE HER FROM HER
PRISONS... **PHYSICAL**
AND **SPIRITUAL...**



XANE, BEING WHO SHE IS, ACTED **FIRST** DURING THE INITIAL CONFLICT IN THE PRISON COURTYARD...

...ATTACKING BOTH CRUSH AND AVENGER BEFORE THEY COULD OFFER ASSISTANCE IN RESTORING THE PEACE...

...THUS GIVING EVERYONE WHO ACTUALLY CAUSED THE CHAOS, A HEAD START TO FREEDOM.

EVENTUALLY, AFTER XANE CALMED DOWN, SHE, ALONG WITH STRYYP, CRUSH AND AVENGER, FORMED AN **UNEASY ALLIANCE**.

From now on, I'm callin' you "Sugar-lips"!

Don't ask... if you missed that issue, just don't ask--F.

FORCED TO PURSUE **BLINDLY**, THE NEWLY UNITED HEROES GAVE CHASE INTO THE **SEALED DRAINAGE SYSTEM** BENEATH THE PRISON...

I didn't get a chance to show this angle last time, but in recaps, ANYTHING GOES!!--F.

...AND STUMBLED RIGHT INTO A **HASTILY IMPROVISED, YET CRIPPLING AMBUSH**...

...AN AMBUSH MADE OVERWHELMINGLY EFFECTIVE BY THE **ACCIDENTAL CREATION OF A MAGEND**...

...A SENTIENT DRAGON SPELL OF **IMMENSE MAGICAL POWER**, SHAPED INTO THE FORM OF SLASHER'S WEAPON.

IT EVEN **VIBRATES!!**
Oooh! This is gonna come in soooo handy!

WE MADE THAT?

PERHAPS THERE IS SOME **TRUTH** TO WHAT MR. FAUNTLEROY SAID ABOUT US BEING SOME KIND OF **SACRED DRAGON-MAGIC BEING**, AFTER ALL...

TOO BAD WE DIDN'T FIGURE THAT OUT **SOONER!**

BEFORE WE **ACCIDENTALLY** MADE FAUNTLEROY A **STRONGER VERSION!!!**

WE WERE **ONLY** TRYING TO GET AWAY FROM HIM!

HOW COULD WE HAVE KNOWN THE **BARRIER** WE CREATED TO SEPARATE US COULD BE USED AS A **WEAPON!?**

TALK LATER! HAUL A\$\$ **NOW!!**

EVERYONE CAUGHT UP? **GOOD!** LET'S GET THIS ON!!



RUN!

HAUL THAT A\$\$, GIRL!!

WE'RE AT THE EDGE OF THE SWAMP, AND I CAN FINALLY START CASTING "NATURE'S GATE"!!

BUT IF WE GET CAUGHT NOW, IT'S OVER!

I ONLY HAVE ENOUGH ETHER TO CAST ONE MORE SPELL!



WELL, F%#\$! WHY DID YOU WAIT 'TIL NOW TO SAY SOMETHING?!

THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A SMOOTH OPERATION!

NO DRAGONS!
NO CRAZY AMAZONS
OR TELEPORTING
TIGER-MEN...

...AND NO
PUDDIN'!!

WAH---AAAHH!!

MYRIA!
I GOT 'ER,
RANIS!

AT LEAST WE GOT A HEAD START ON THE ONES SLASHER'S WHIP BEAT DOWN...

PUDDIN',
AVENGER
AND THAT
"TIGER-BOY"...

He was cute, tho'

Not as cute as Ti', but...

WHAT THAT MEANS,
SHRIKE, IS THAT ALL
WE HAVE TO WORRY
ABOUT NOW IS
FAUNTY, HIS
DRAGON-HO'S, AND
THAT BIG-A#@
AMAZON B%#\$&!

IF WE'RE LUCKY,
THEY'RE FIGHTING
EACH OTHER!

WHICH IS
KIND OF A
SHAME...

...CAUSE I'M SURE
FAUNTY WOULDN'T
BE ANY TROUBLE
AT ALL IF I GAVE
HIM SOME "MMM,
MMM, GOOD"!

DAMN...
WHAT A
WASTE...
HIS **BOOTY**
WAS JUST
CRYIN' OUT
FOR A
SPANKY--

HUH?

KKAM KAM!



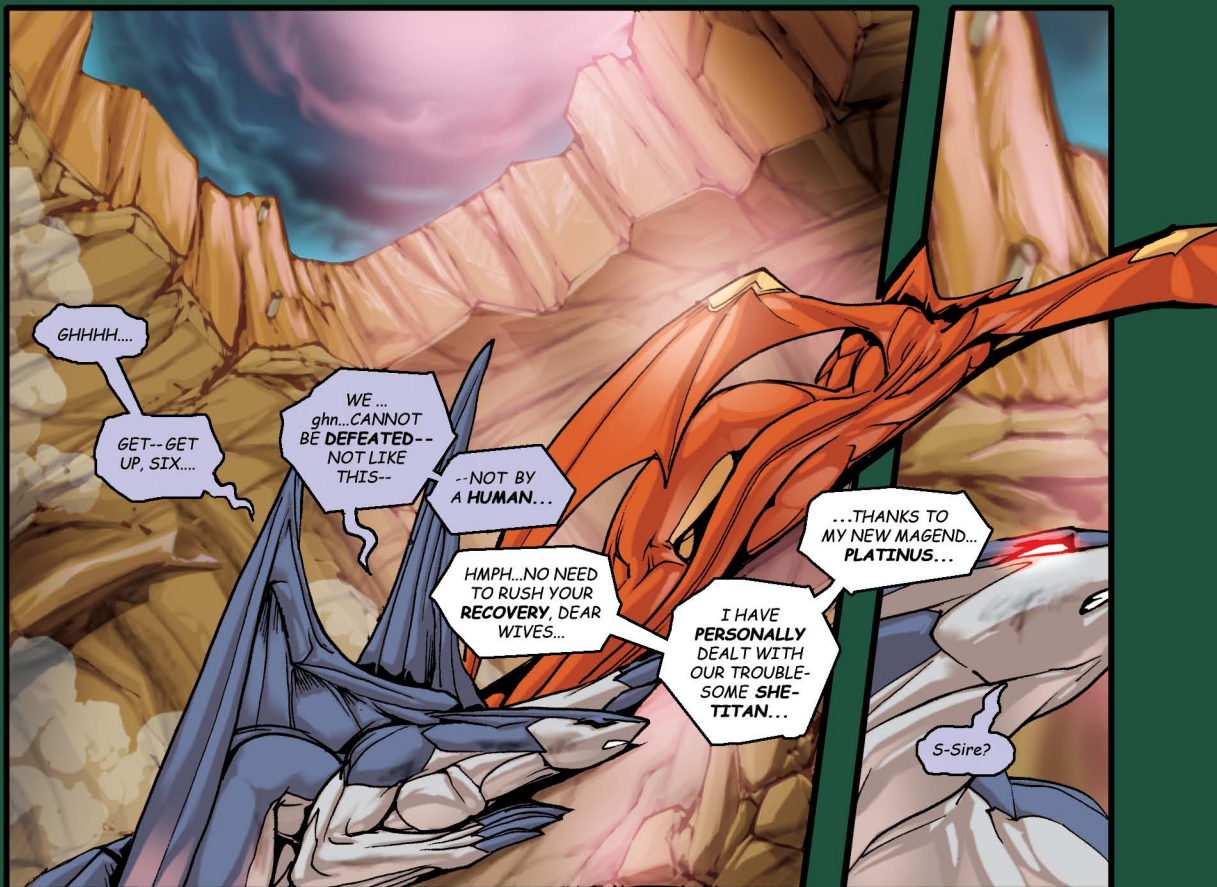
uhhha...

"LOOKS LIKE
FAUNTY FIGURED
OUT HOW TO
USE THAT
WEAPON YOU
GAVE HIM,
ARRAY..."

"...AND I'M
NOT QUITE
SURE WHETHER
TO BE **F#@\$IN'**
SCARED..."

OH,
S#@%...!

"...OR A
LITTLE
TURNED
ON..."



GHHHH...

GET--GET
UP, SIX....

WE ...
ghn...CANNOT
BE DEFEATED--
NOT LIKE
THIS--

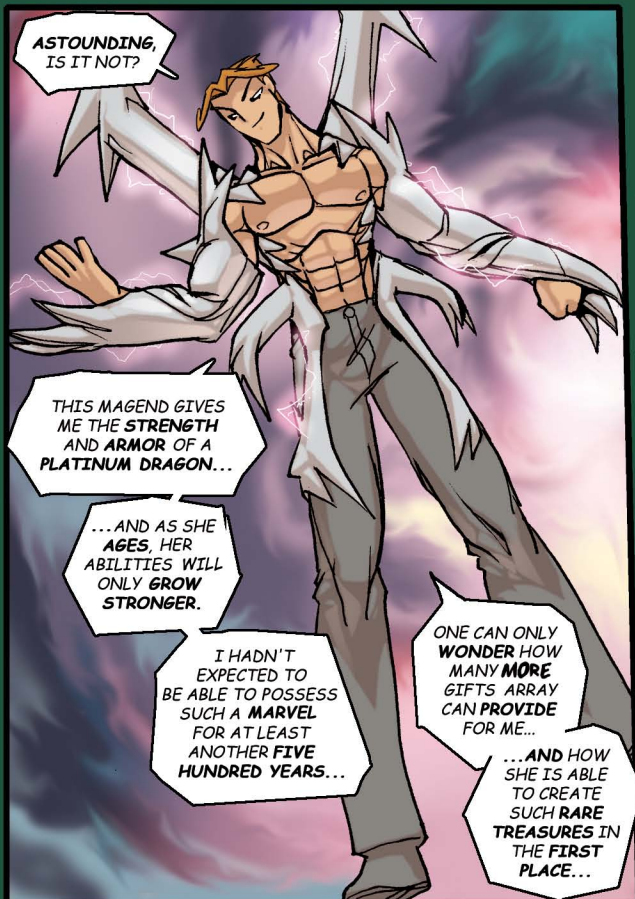
--NOT BY
A HUMAN...

HMPH...NO NEED
TO RUSH YOUR
RECOVERY, DEAR
WIVES...

...THANKS TO
MY NEW MAGEND...
PLATINUS...

I HAVE
PERSONALLY
DEALT WITH
OUR TROUBLE--
SOME SHE-
TITAN...

S-Sire?



ASTOUNDING,
IS IT NOT?

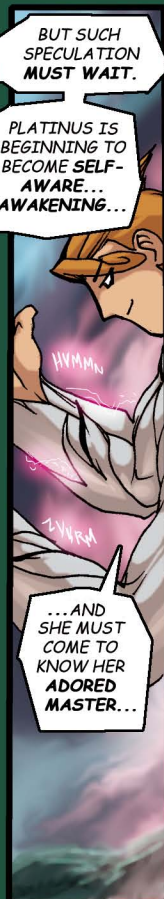
THIS MAGEND GIVES
ME THE **STRENGTH**
AND **ARMOR** OF A
PLATINUM DRAGON...

...AND AS SHE
AGES, HER
ABILITIES WILL
ONLY **GROW**
STRONGER.

I HADN'T
EXPECTED TO
BE ABLE TO POSSESS
SUCH A **MARVEL**
FOR AT LEAST
ANOTHER FIVE
HUNDRED YEARS...

ONE CAN ONLY
WONDER HOW
MANY **MORE**
GIFTS ARRAY
CAN **PROVIDE**
FOR ME...

...AND HOW
SHE IS ABLE
TO **CREATE**
SUCH **RARE**
TREASURES IN
THE **FIRST**
PLACE...



BUT SUCH
SPECULATION
MUST WAIT.

PLATINUS IS
BEGINNING TO
BECOME SELF-
AWARE...
AWAKENING...

HMM...

ZVVR

...AND
SHE MUST
COME TO
KNOW HER
ADORED
MASTER...



....

GR-OPE!



PLATINUS!!



**BLAM
BLAM**

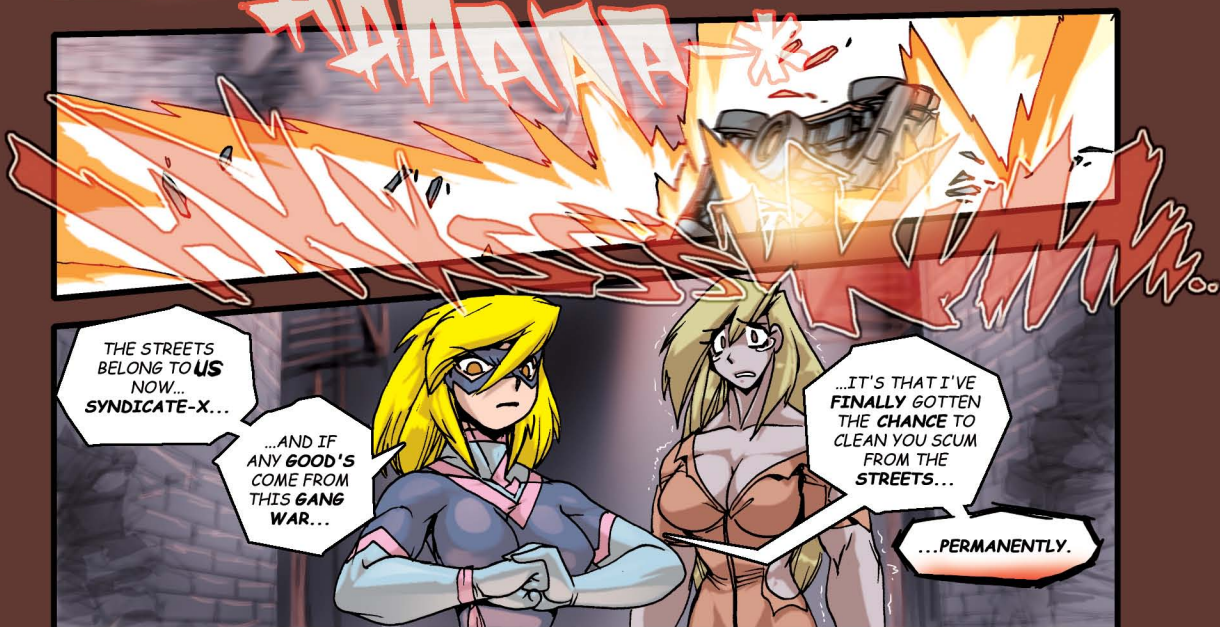
DIS WAY!!
MOVE!!

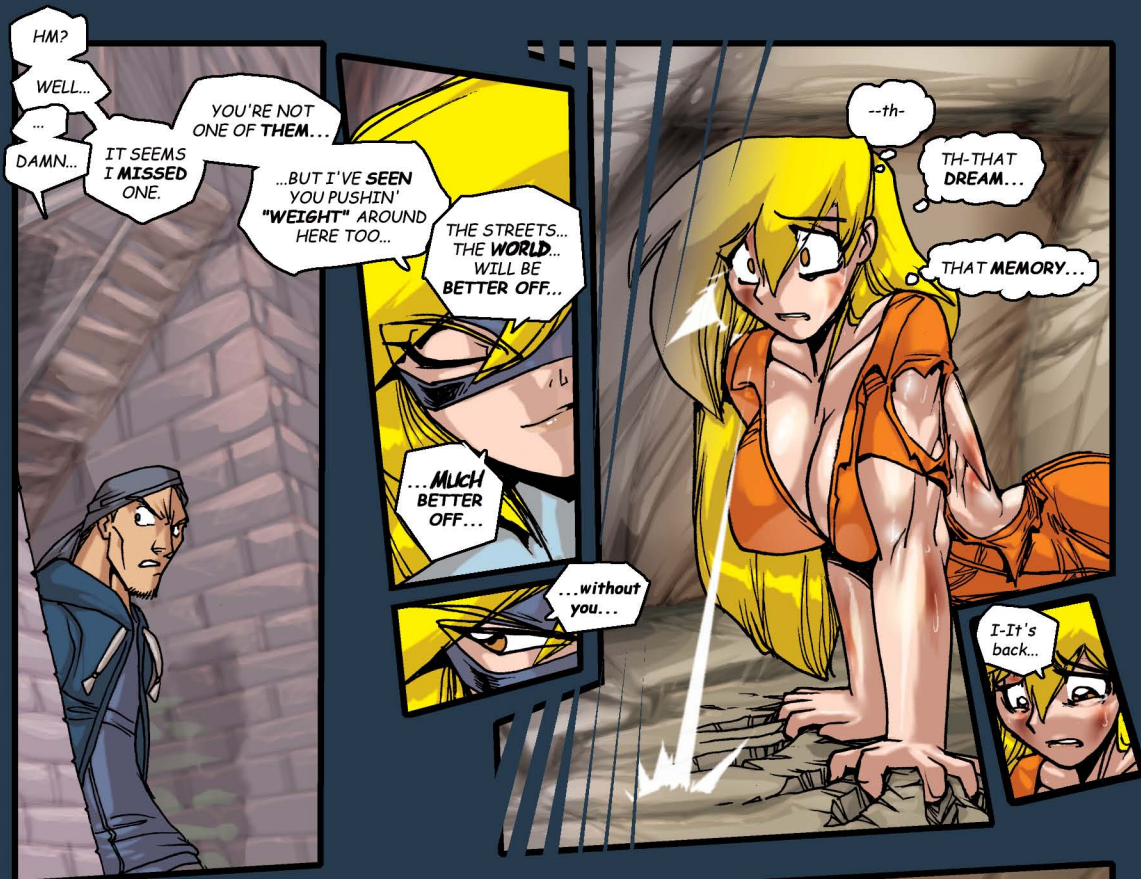
DAMN! SHE
SAW US!
AND SHE'S
GOT A CAR!!

**SHOOT!
SHOOT!!**

KEEP SHOOT'N!!

KEEP
SHOOT'N!!







...ALL
RIGHT,
THEN...

...I'LL GO AFTER
THEM ALONE.

IT'S BETTER
IF I'M THE
ONLY ONE
AT RISK,
ANYWAY...

I'M THE
ONE WHO
HAS TO
ATONE...

IT WAS MY
PEACE THEY
DISTURBED...

...AND IT'S
MY DUTY
TO FULFILL...

...my debt
to justice...



A BIT FURTHER
SOUTH...



S-Sire?

I-if... I may
ask...

What is
Platinus doing
on your shoulder
in "null-form"?

GUESS.

...FORGIVE
ME, SIRE... THE
PROPER QUESTION
SHOULD HAVE
BEEN... "WHY"?

~SIGH~
I WAS
HASTY...

CALLING
FORTH
PLATINUS'
TRUE NATURE
TOO EARLY...

...WITHOUT
A MYMOR TO
TAME IT...

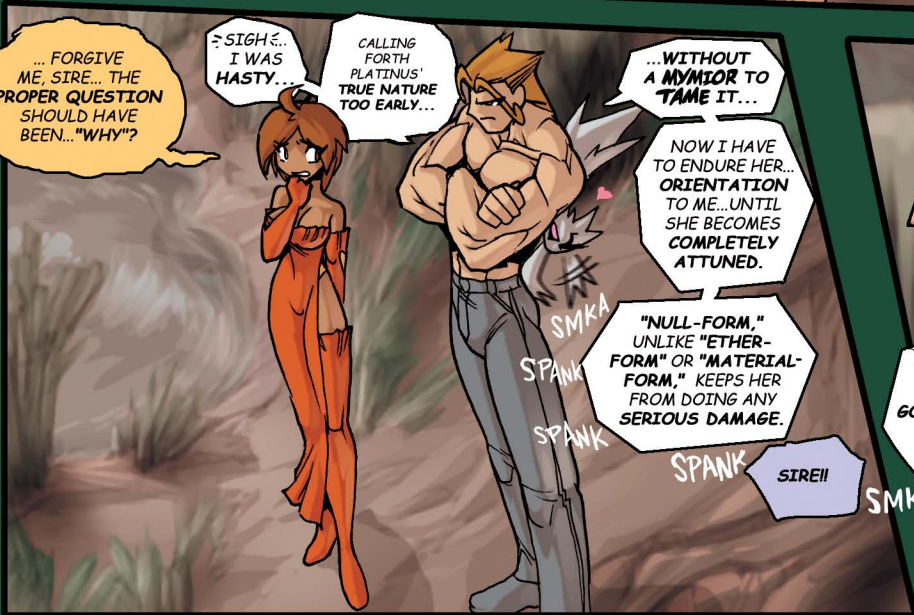
NOW I HAVE
TO ENDURE HER...
ORIENTATION
TO ME...UNTIL
SHE BECOMES
COMPLETELY
ATTUNED.

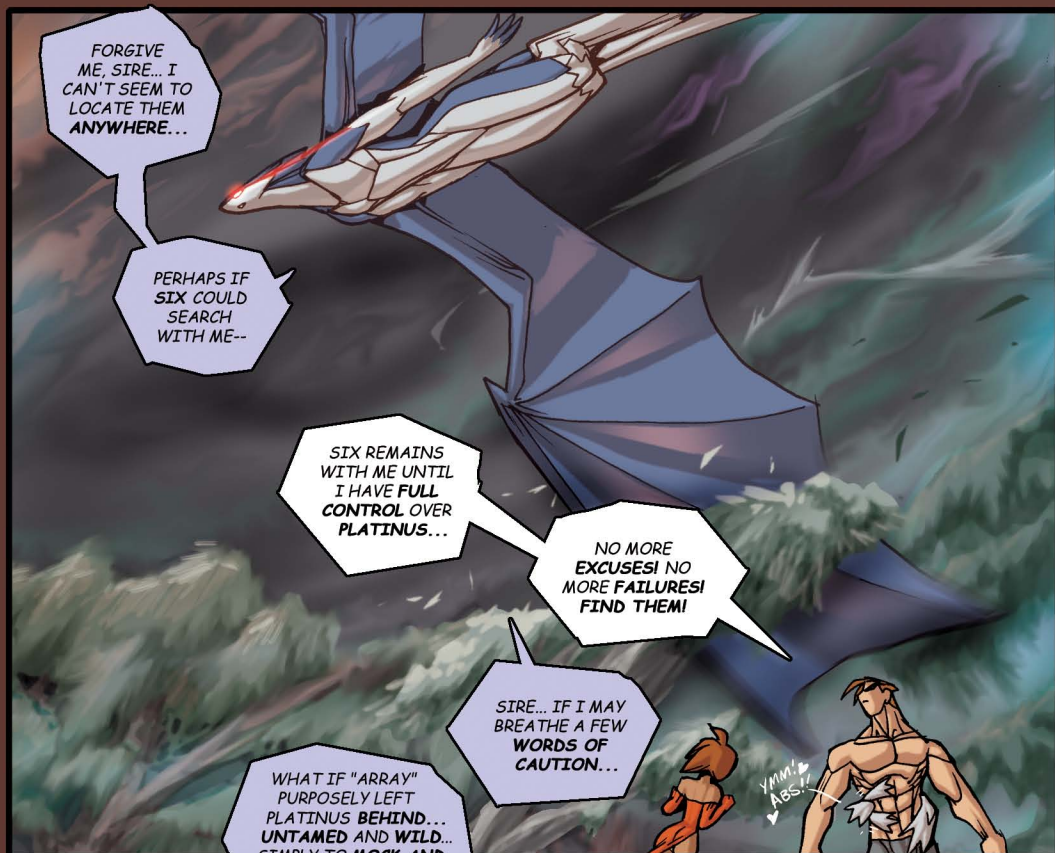
"NULL-FORM,"
UNLIKE "ETHER-
FORM" OR "MATERIAL-
FORM," KEEPS HER
FROM DOING ANY
SERIOUS DAMAGE.

SIRE!!

THIS HAD
BEST BE
GOOD NEWS,
THIRTY-
EIGHT...

DID YOU
LOCATE
"ARRAY'S"
CURRENT
HIDING
PLACE?





FORGIVE ME, SIRE... I CAN'T SEEM TO LOCATE THEM ANYWHERE...

PERHAPS IF SIX COULD SEARCH WITH ME--

SIX REMAINS WITH ME UNTIL I HAVE FULL CONTROL OVER PLATINUS...

NO MORE EXCUSES! NO MORE FAILURES! FIND THEM!

SIRE... IF I MAY BREATHE A FEW WORDS OF CAUTION...

WHAT IF "ARRAY" PURPOSELY LEFT PLATINUS BEHIND... UNTAMED AND WILD... SIMPLY TO MOCK AND HUMILIATE US?

WHAT IF "ARRAY" IS MORE POWERFUL THAN WE ANTICIPATED AND IS MERELY TOYING WITH US?

AFTER ALL... ANYONE WHO CAN MANIPULATE THE MAGEND SPELL-CIRCLE... ANYONE WHO CAN CAST MAGENDS AT WILL...

...COULD BE JUST AS POWERFUL AS THE LEGENDARY DREADWING AND HIS TIME-RAFT!!

yes...

YES... OF COURSE!!

"ARRAY"!! THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE!!

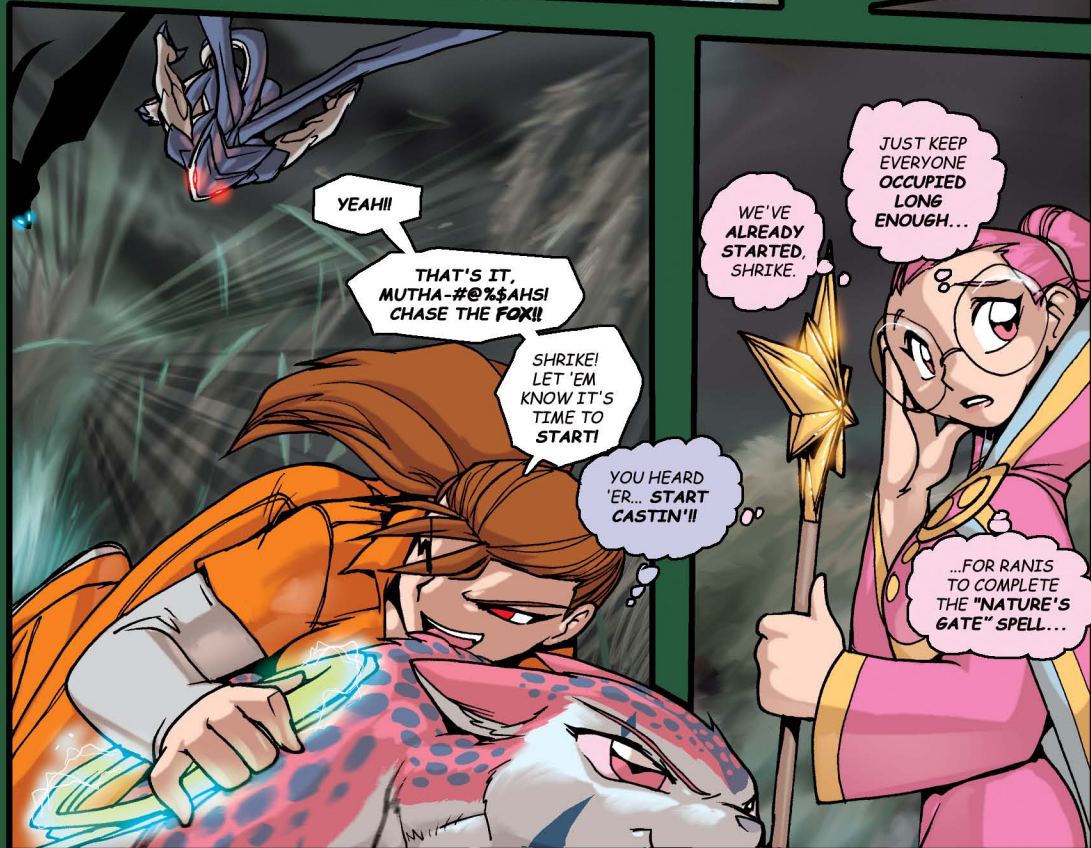
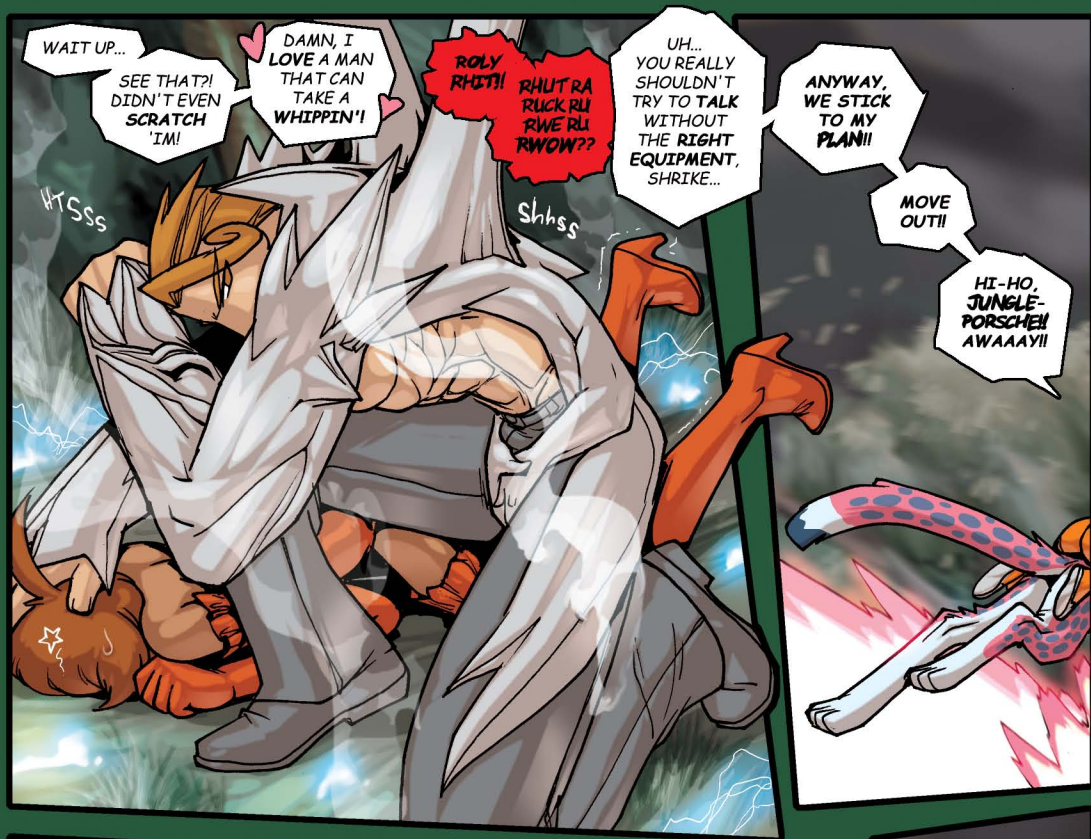
AT LAST!!!

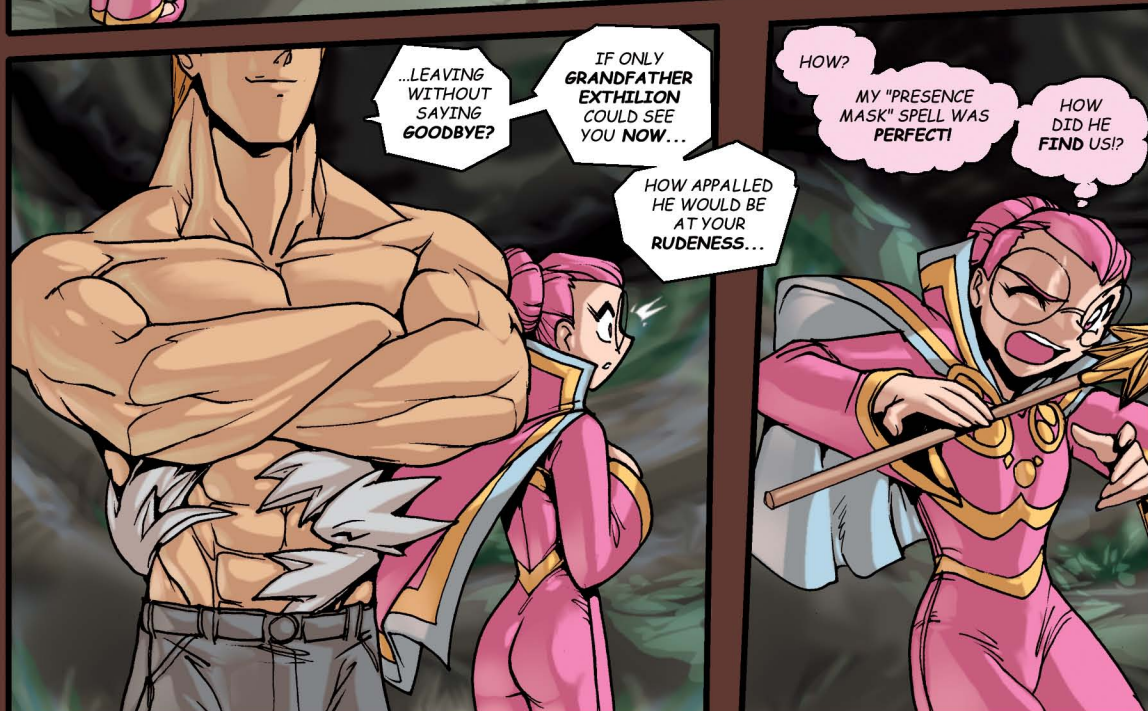
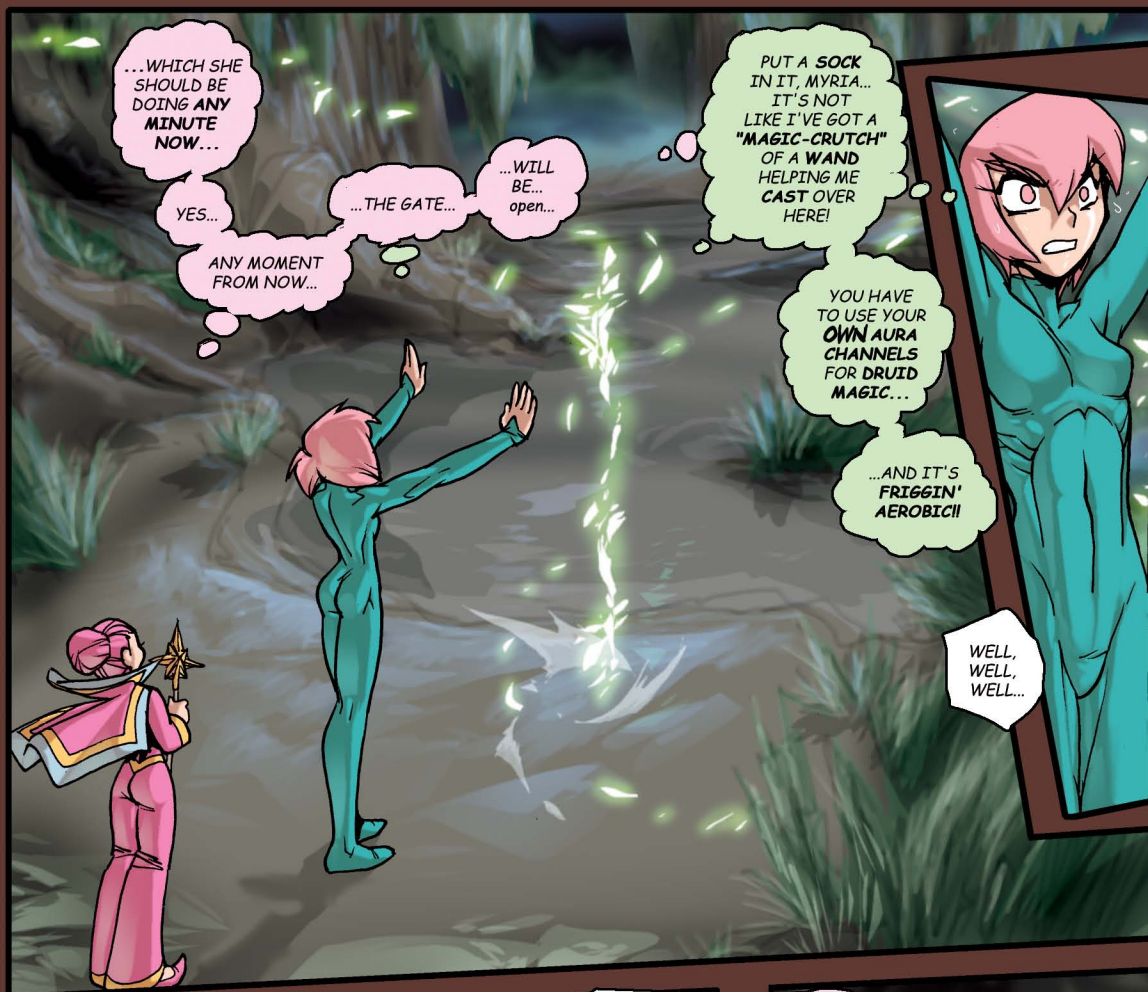
I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU ARE!!

h-huh?

i-- I THINK I HEAR SOMETHING...









MYRIA!!

DELAY HIM
AS LONG AS
YOU CAN!!

IF I STOP
CASTING NOW,
WE'RE ALL
STUCK!



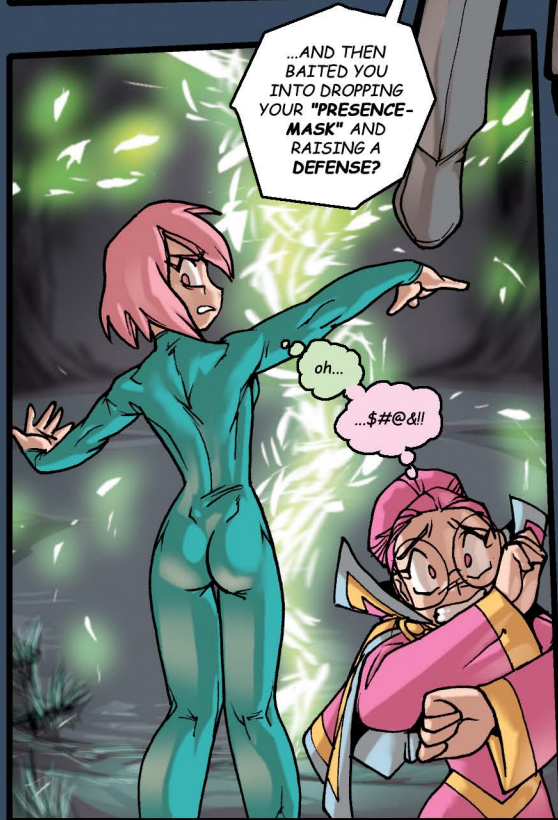
D-DON'T WORRY!
I'VE GOT PLENTY
OF SPELLS TO--

♥ Myria
♥ Myria
♥ Myria

>Sigh<...

YOU REALIZE
NOW, OF
COURSE,
THAT I WAS
BLUFFING?

THAT I
SIMPLY RAN
IN THE
OPPOSITE
DIRECTION
THAT YOUR
"DISTRACTION"
WENT AND
LOOKED
FOR A
CLEARING?



...AND THEN
BAITED YOU
INTO DROPPING
YOUR "PRESENCE-
MASK" AND
RAISING A
DEFENSE?

oh...

...\$#@&!!



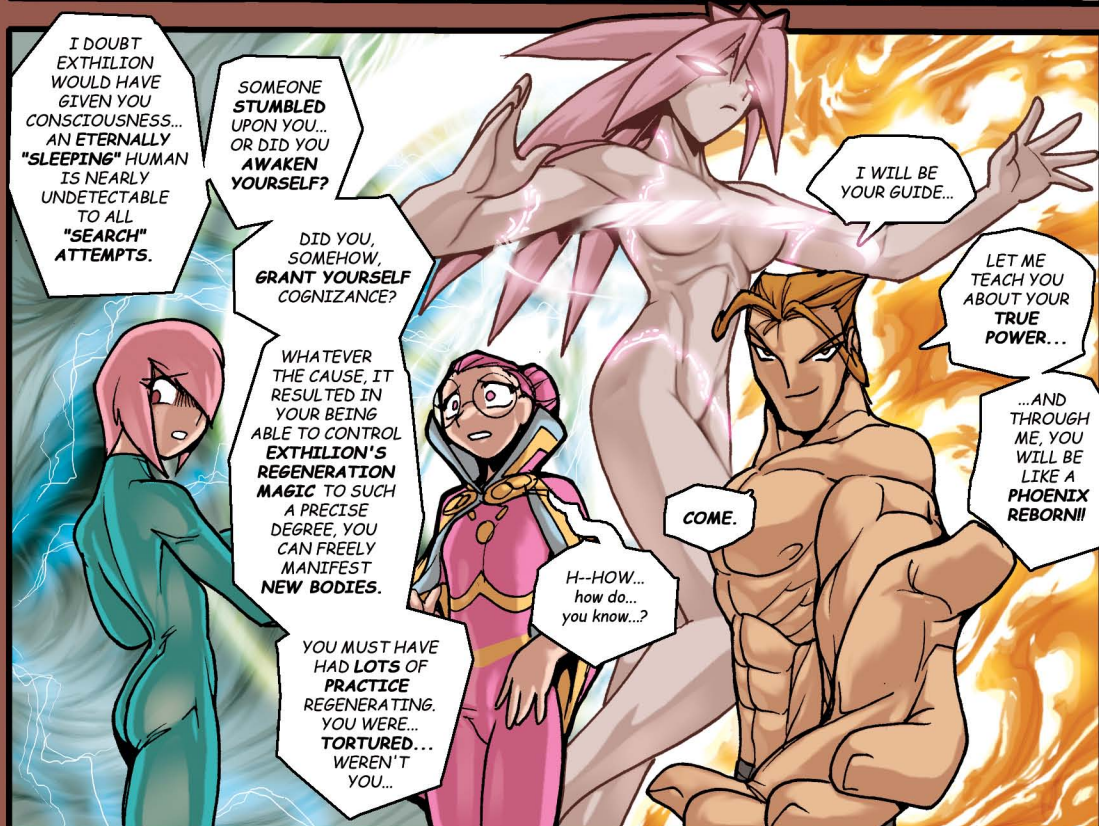
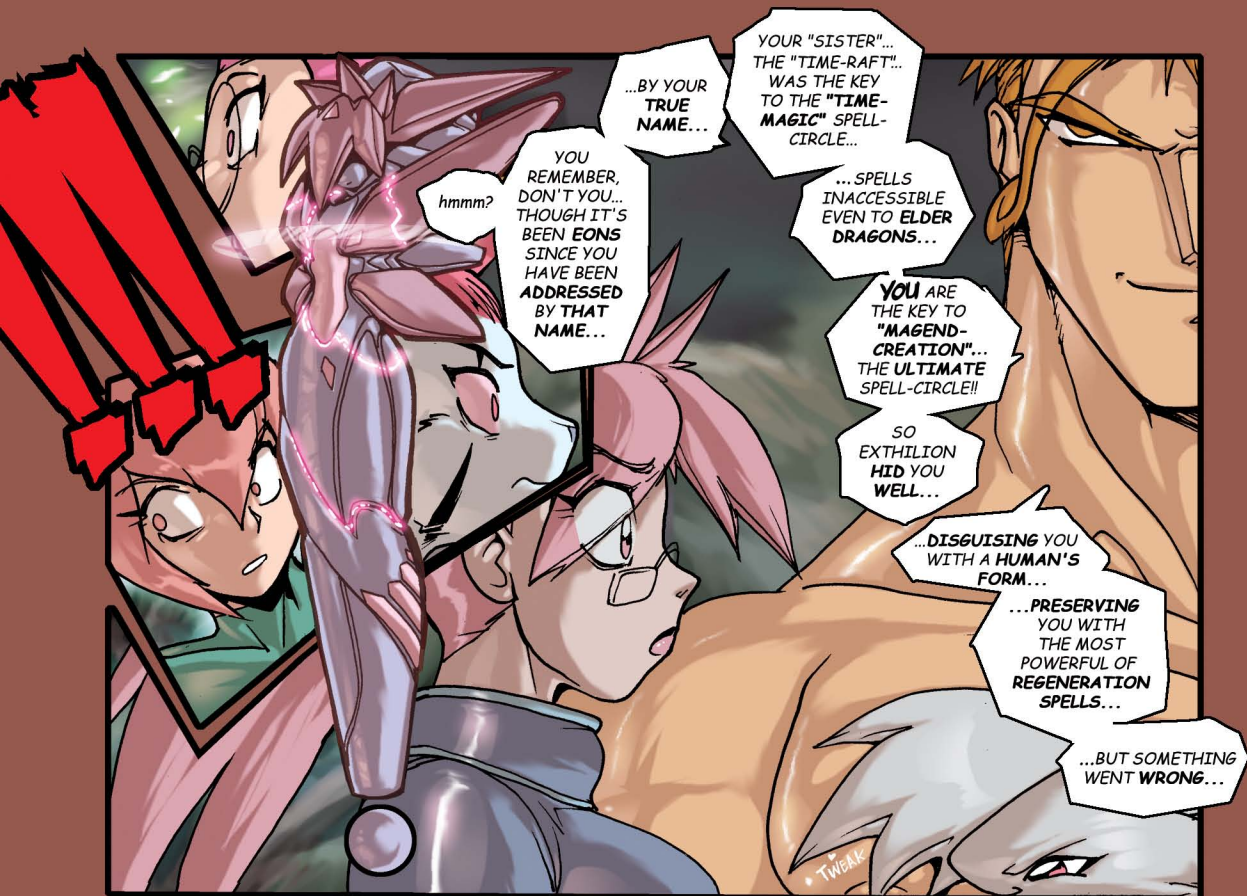
BUT
FEAR
NOT...

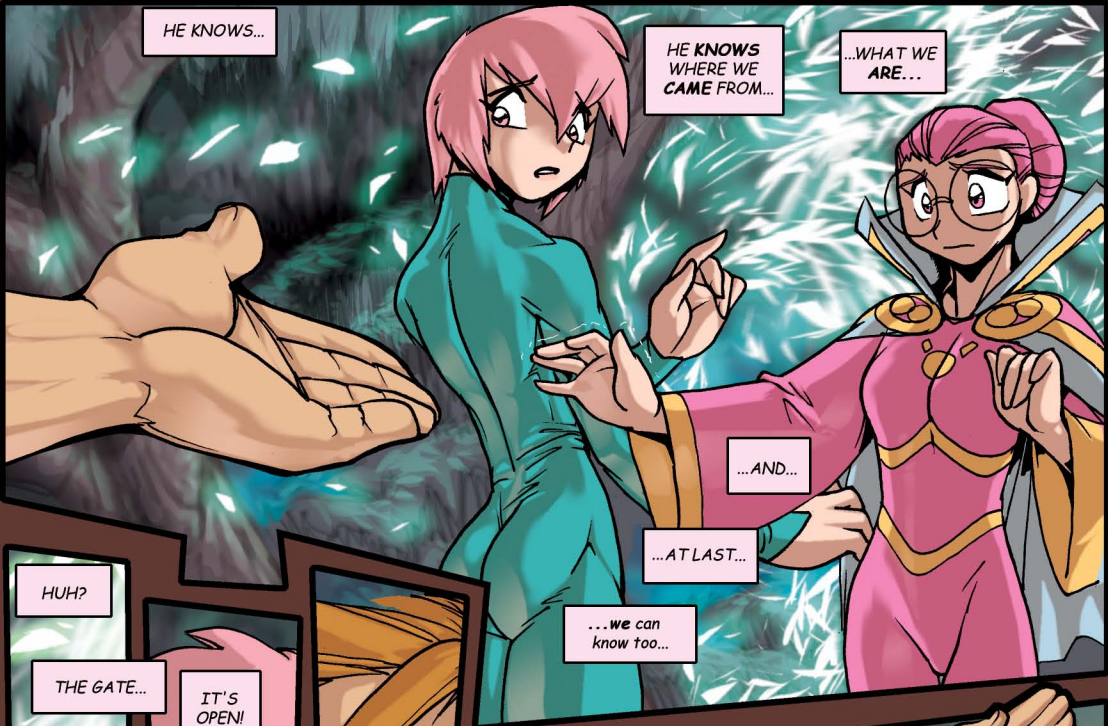
I WOULD
NEVER DREAM
OF DAMAGING
ONE OF
EXTHILION'S
PRECIOUS
TALISMANS...

ONE
OF THE...
ENIGMAS...

AND JUST
AS THE MIGHTY
DREADWING
CLAIMED THE
ENIGMA "TIME-
RAFT"...

...SO SHALL
I CLAIM
YOU...
"SUMMONER"...





HE KNOWS...

HE KNOWS
WHERE WE
CAME FROM...

...WHAT WE
ARE...

...AND...

...AT LAST...

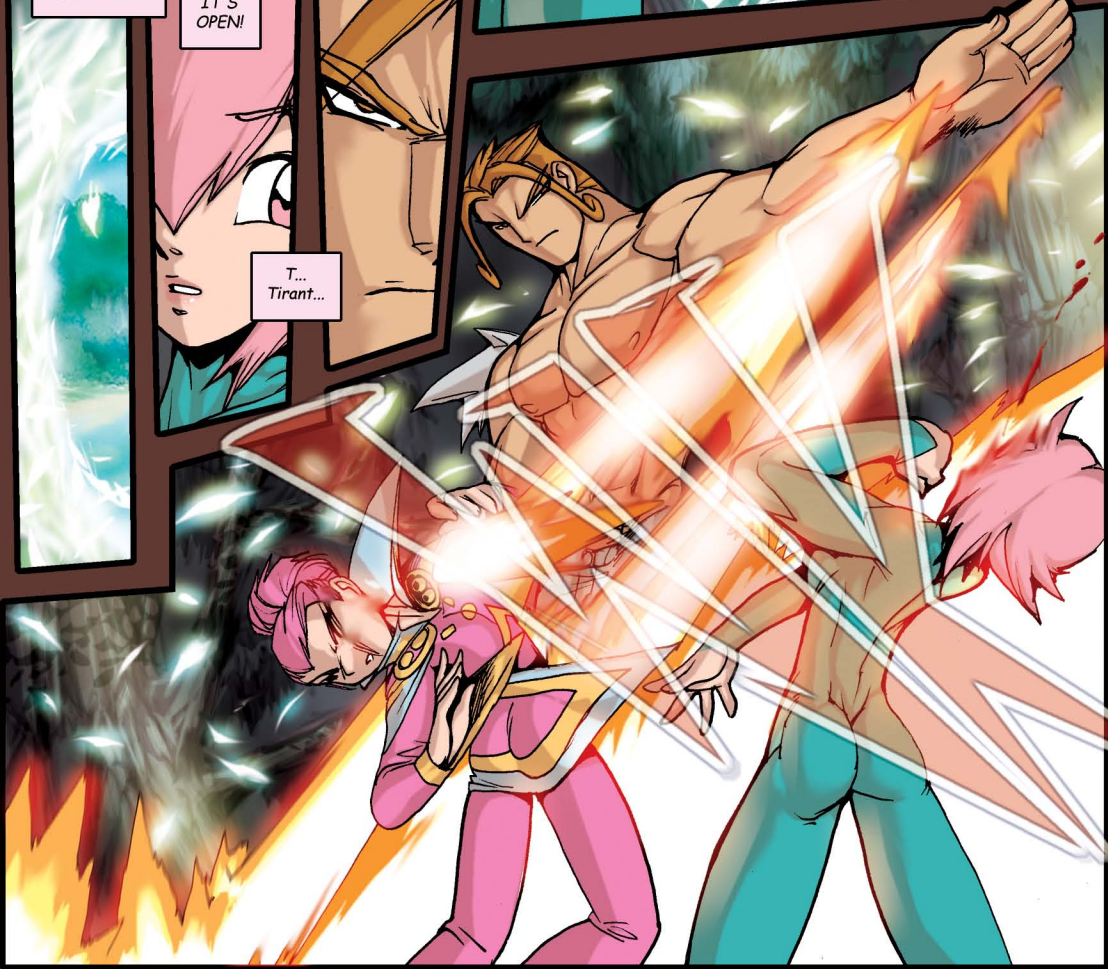
...we can
know too...

HUH?

THE GATE...

IT'S
OPEN!

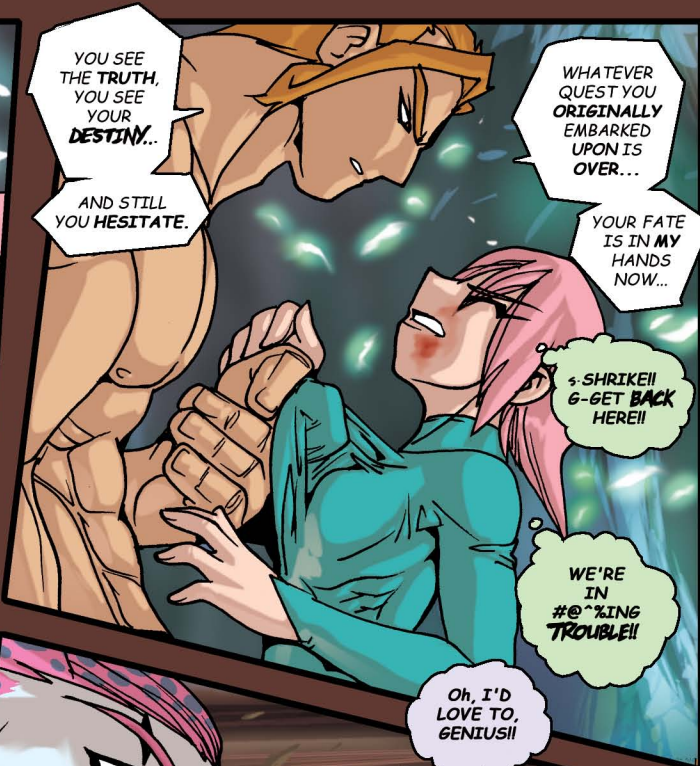
T...
Tirant...





MY PATIENCE HAS WORN BEYOND IT'S THRESHOLD, SUMMONER...

Ghhn...



YOU SEE THE TRUTH, YOU SEE YOUR DESTINY...

AND STILL YOU HESITATE.

WHATEVER QUEST YOU ORIGINALLY EMBARKED UPON IS OVER...

YOUR FATE IS IN MY HANDS NOW...

SHRIKE!! G-GET BACK HERE!!

WE'RE IN #@%ING TROUBLE!!



Oh, I'D LOVE TO, GENIUS!!

IF I DIDN'T HAVE TWO FIRE-BREATHING, JET-PROPELLED LIZARDS ON MY @\$\$!

THEY'RE BLOCKIN' ME OFF WITH FLAME!

THEY'RE PUSHING ME AWAY FROM YOU!!

I SEE YOU'VE STOPPED TRYING TO LEAD US AWAY...

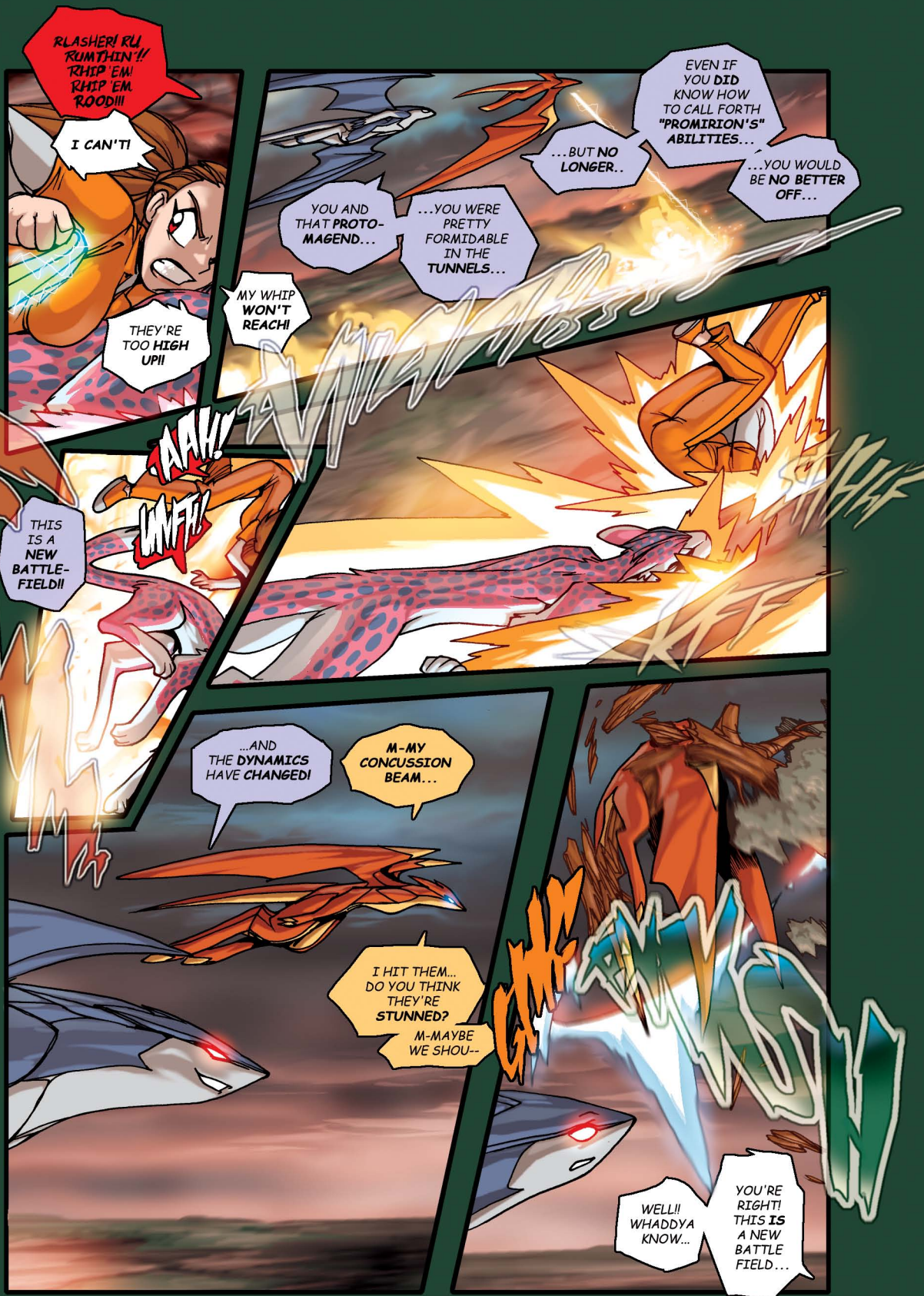
DECOY!!



IS SOMETHING...

...AMISS?

DID YOUR INFANTILE LITTLE PLOY BACKFIRE ON YOU?



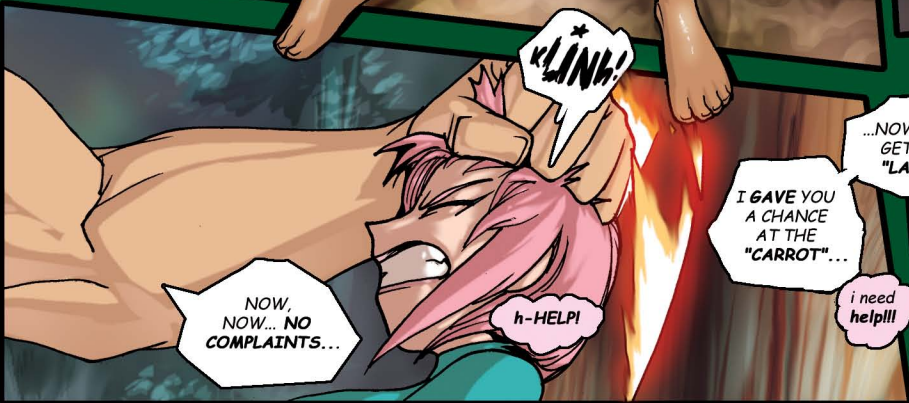


...AND DAMN!!

WHEN THOSE
"DYNAMICS"...

...UP AND
CHANGE
ON YOU...

...AIN'T IT
A B&%\$#!??



KLING!

NOW,
NOW... NO
COMPLAINTS...

h-HELP!

I GAVE YOU
A CHANCE
AT THE
"CARROT"...

...NOW YOU
GET THE
"LASH"...

i need
help!!



SHRIKE?

MYRIA...?

ANY-
BODY??



HMM...
i--I'm sorry, Ranis... I'm the only other one here on Earth-realm!

CYNTHIA!??
YOU SEEM
AWFULLY
CONCERNED
WITH THAT
GATE YOU
CREATED...

A-and... I know I'm the "back-up plan"... but...
I'd be no more effective than a meter maid...

Even if you made another one of us right there, she'd be a "newbie"... She wouldn't stand a CHANCE...

WHY NOT?

WATCH... CYNTHIA...

IT FADE...

AWAY...

IT'S OVER... WE LOST!

WE... CAN'T RESCUE IT'...

We failed...

NOW...

...LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR DESTINY...

...SLAVE...

NAHW.

...LET'S TALK ABOUT THE BACK OF MY FIST...

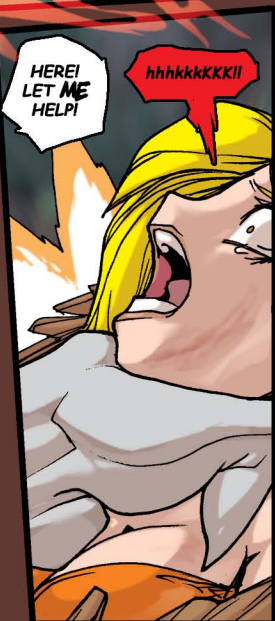
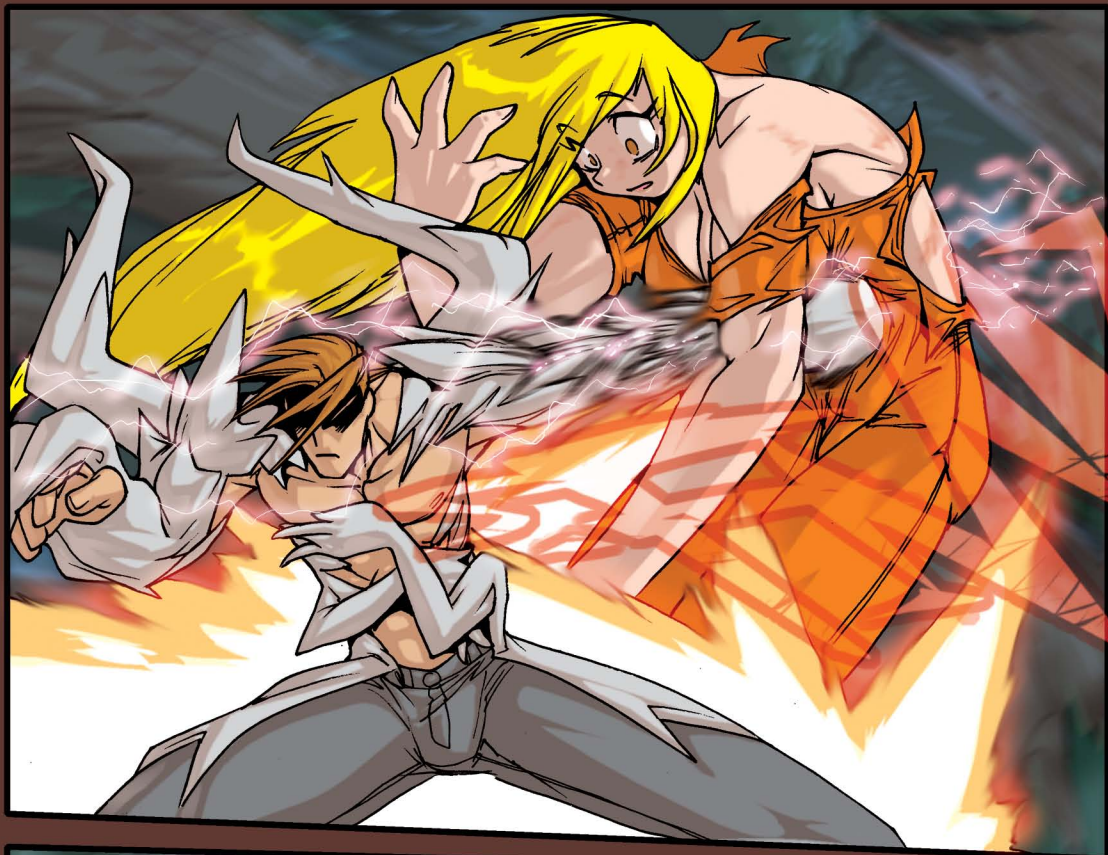
...BEYACHII

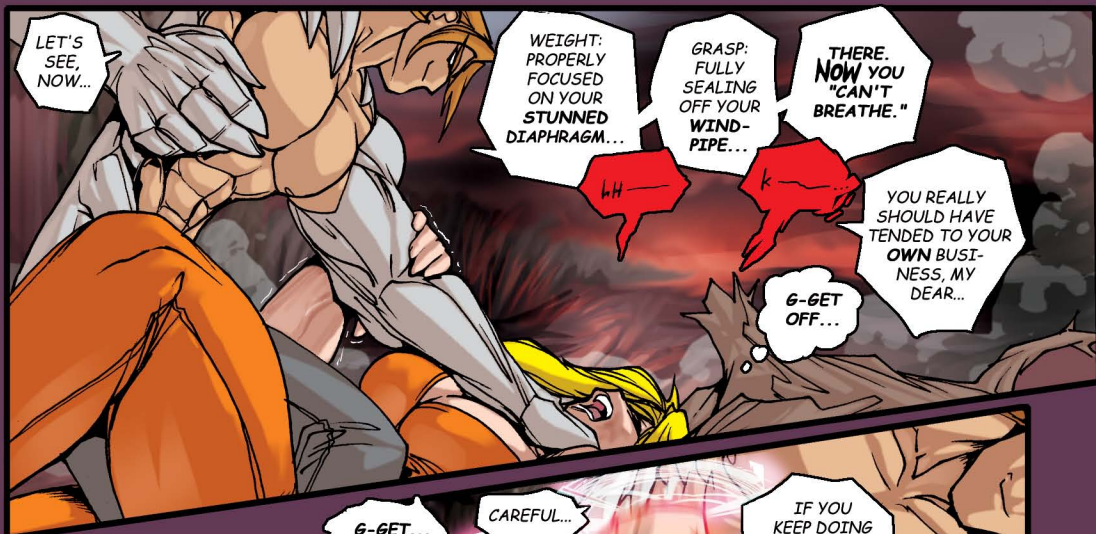
I REMEMBER WHAT YOU TOLD YOUR DRAGON HO-BAG TO DO TO THOSE GUARDS...*

GET Y'@\$ UP...

... 'CAUSE YOU'RE GOIN' DOWN!

*FAUNTY ORDERED THIRTY-EIGHT TO TORTURE AND KILL OVER SIXTY GUARDS IN ISSUE 55... -F.





LET'S SEE, NOW...

WEIGHT: PROPERLY FOCUSED ON YOUR STUNNED DIAPHRAGM...

GRASP: FULLY SEALING OFF YOUR WIND-PIPE...

THERE. NOW YOU "CAN'T BREATHE."

YOU REALLY SHOULD HAVE TENDED TO YOUR OWN BUSINESS, MY DEAR...

G-GET OFF...



G-GET... OFF... ME!!

CAREFUL...

IF YOU KEEP DOING THAT, YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO HURT YOURSELF...

A "PLATINUM SHIELD" IS A TAD UNFORGIVING...



HE'S...

--T-TOO STRONG...

i'm...

...i'm going to die...

this...

...t-this fits.



this... is what i deserve...

this is justice...



YOU'VE STOPPED STRUGGLING.

...special agent 'Charlie'...

I SEE YOU'VE ACCEPTED YOUR FATE.

...federal undercover operative...

...this is how i can finally...

...atone...

HOW WISE OF YOU.

CRASH!



AVENGER!
NO! STAY
BACK!!

BUT--

THE ENERGY
LEVELS I'M
SENSING
FROM HIM
RIGHT NOW...

HE'S TOO
STRONG...

THE ONLY
ONE OF US
WHO CAN
POSSIBLY
BREAK HIS
GRIP NOW...

...IS CRUSH...

THEN
YOU **DO**
HAVE A
PROBLEM,
DON'T
YOU...

CRUSH...
DON'T GIVE
UP...

YOU'RE NOT
ALONE ANYMORE!

JUST AS
MY WIFE
ONCE SAID
TO ME...

...AND AVENGER
ONCE SAID TO
HER...

...WHEN THOSE
WHO CARE
ABOUT YOU
ARE BEHIND
YOU...

...YOU CAN
FACE--

--'NY-'TH'NG...

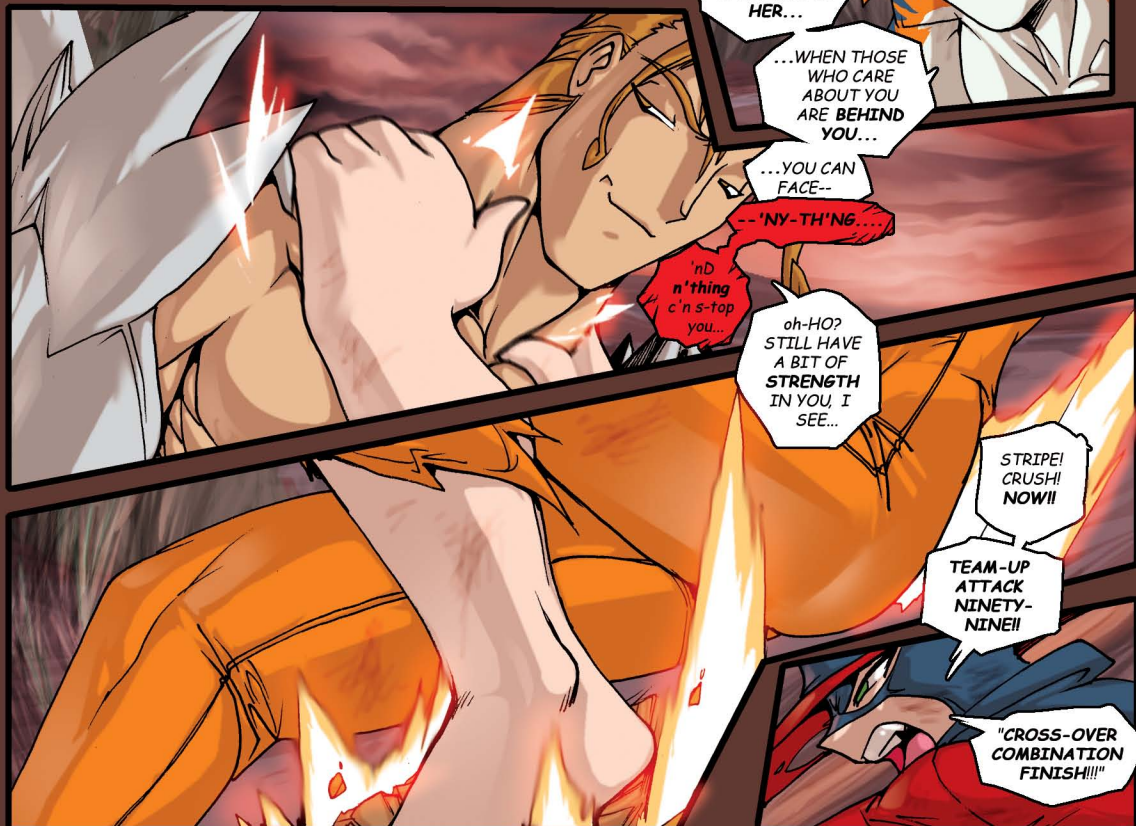
'nD
n'thing
c'n s-top
you...

oh-HO?
STILL HAVE
A BIT OF
STRENGTH
IN YOU, I
SEE...

STRIPE!
CRUSH!
NOW!!

TEAM-UP
ATTACK
NINETY-
NINE!!

"CROSS-OVER
COMBINATION
FINISH!!!"



CHEETAH-SECRET COMBO:

ULTRA-

QUEEN

BOMB!

BOMB!

HAHA-HAA!

WHAT A LAUGHABLE MANUEVER!

ONCE CIRCUS MONKEYS, ALWAYS CIRCUS MONKEYS, SO IT SEEMS...

PLATINUS! "ELECTRIFIED SHIELDS," PLEASE...

Platinus?

