

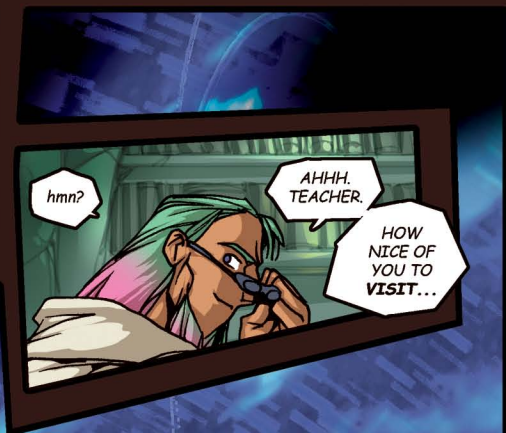


GOLD DIGGER

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FRED PERRY





hmn?

AHHH.
TEACHER.

HOW
NICE OF
YOU TO
VISIT...

OH, NO NEED
TO APOLOGIZE.
I SELDOM HAVE
THE TIME TO
CHECK UP ON
MY OWN
PUPILS ON A
REGULAR
BASIS.

RECENTLY, MY CONCERNS
HAVE BEEN FOCUSED ON
"GOTHWRAIN," THE
WIZARD OF THE WERE-
RAT CLAN ON EARTH-
REALM.

IF EVER ANY MAGE
NEEDED A "BOOT UP
HIS POOTER," IT'S
THAT ONE.

YES. TROUBLING, ISN'T
IT. I CAN'T DIVINE HIS
PLANS EITHER, BUT
HE **IS** UP TO SOMETHING.
AND IT SEEMS WE
WON'T KNOW **WHAT**
UNTIL HE **UNVEILS** IT.

TEACHER...
I'M WORRIED
ABOUT ONE OF
MY STUDENT'S
DAUGHTERS.

THE WERE-CHEETAH
THEODORE ADOPTED...
BRITANNY
DIGGERS.

EVER SINCE THEODORE
RESCUED HER AS AN
INFANT... EVER SINCE
GOTHWRAIN ENGINEERED
THE **SLAUGHTER** OF HER
FAMILY... HIS ATTENTION
HAS BEEN **FIXED** ON
THAT POOR GIRL!

I'M ESPECIALLY
WORRIED **NOW...**
GINA AND BRIANNA,
BRITANNY'S SISTERS,
HAVING LEFT FOR A
JOURNEY TO **JADE-**
REALM...

MEANWHILE,
STRYPGIA, BRITANNY'S
HUSBAND, IS AWAY ON
A QUEST TO **SAVE LIVES**
AND **PROTECT** THE
HELPLESS WITH THAT
"AGENCY ZERO"
ORGANIZATION.



BRITANNY'S
ALONE WITH HER
NEWBORN CHILD.
GOTHWRAIN IS
SURE TO...

TEACHER, I
DO BELIEVE
THIS CALLS
FOR A **SMALL**
MEASURE OF
INTERVENTION,
AT THE VERY
LEAST...





ON AN UNCHARTED
ISLAND IN THE
SOUTH PACIFIC....





XETA-PLASTIC SHIELDING...

...ABSORBS AND DISPERSES ANY IMPACT TO ALL OF ITS SURFACE.

EVEN IF YOU WERE IN YOUR **TRUE FORM**, YOU WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO BREAK FREE...

...LITTLE BOY...



A **HUMAN-MADE PRISON**, O' PRINCESS...

...AND THEREFORE, INHERENTLY... **FLAWED...**

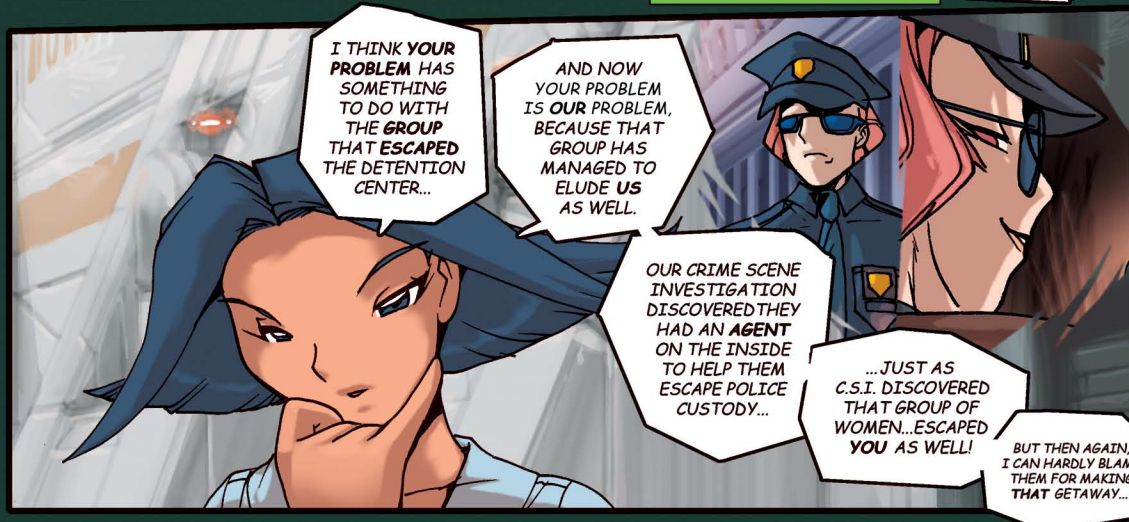
WASN'T IT A "LOWLY" BAND OF **HUMANS...**

...WHO KICKED THE **SNOT** OUT OF **YOU** AND DRAGGED YOUR **UNCONSCIOUS BODY** HERE?

FOILING WHATEVER SCHEME YOU WERE TRYING TO HATCH AT THE **FEDERAL DETENTION CENTER?***

I DON'T THINK **THEIR** FLAWS ARE YOUR PROBLEM, LITTLE BOY.

*COLOR ISSUES #55-58... F.



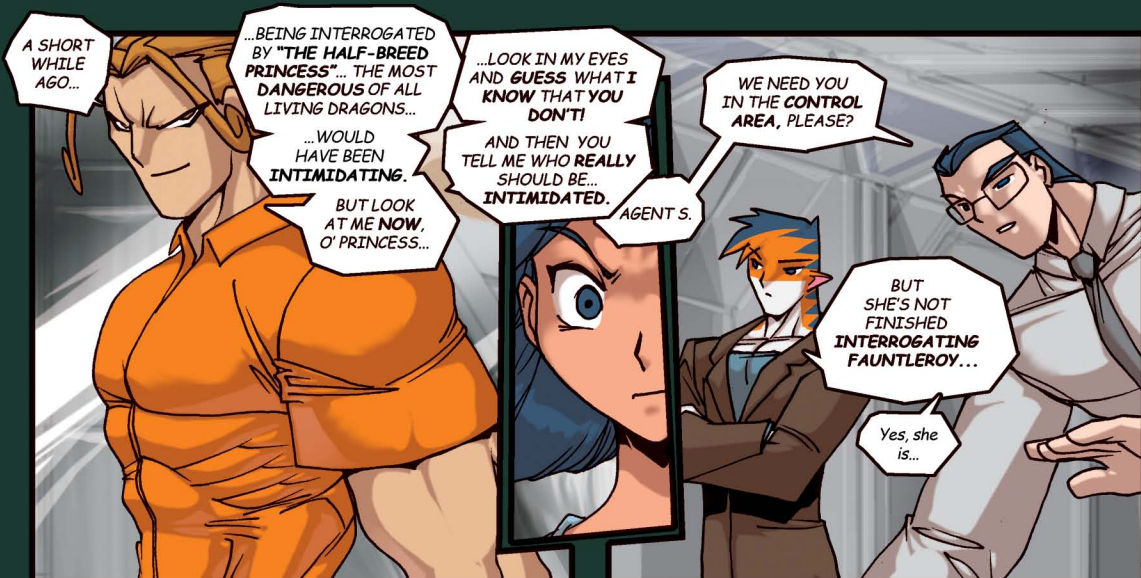
I THINK YOUR PROBLEM HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE **GROUP** THAT **ESCAPED** THE DETENTION CENTER...

AND NOW YOUR PROBLEM IS **OUR** PROBLEM, BECAUSE THAT **GROUP** HAS MANAGED TO ELUDE **US** AS WELL.

OUR CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION DISCOVERED THEY HAD AN **AGENT** ON THE INSIDE TO HELP THEM **ESCAPE** POLICE CUSTODY...

...JUST AS C.S.I. DISCOVERED THAT **GROUP** OF **WOMEN...** ESCAPED **YOU** AS WELL!

BUT THEN AGAIN, I CAN HARDLY BLAME THEM FOR MAKING THAT GETAWAY...





THAT LITTLE PUNK...

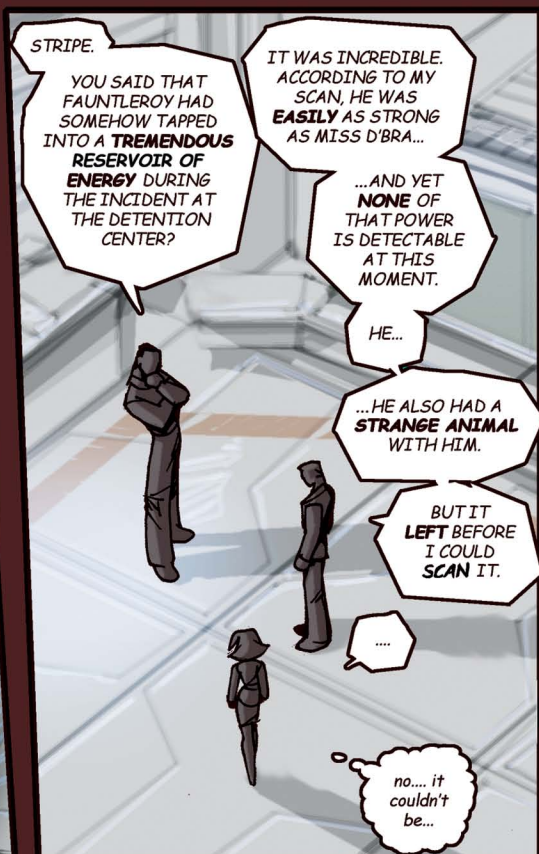
HOW ABOUT I SERVE HIM HIS OWN @\$\$...

...IN A CASSEROLE...

...THEN WE'LL SEE IF HE STILL WANTS FRESH ONIONS!

STAY CALM, D'BRA.

I'M CALM.



STRIPE.

YOU SAID THAT FAUNTLEROY HAD SOMEHOW TAPPED INTO A TREMENDOUS RESERVOIR OF ENERGY DURING THE INCIDENT AT THE DETENTION CENTER?

IT WAS INCREDIBLE. ACCORDING TO MY SCAN, HE WAS EASILY AS STRONG AS MISS D'BRA...

...AND YET NONE OF THAT POWER IS DETECTABLE AT THIS MOMENT.

HE...

...HE ALSO HAD A STRANGE ANIMAL WITH HIM.

BUT IT LEFT BEFORE I COULD SCAN IT.

....

no.... it couldn't be...



W-WELL...

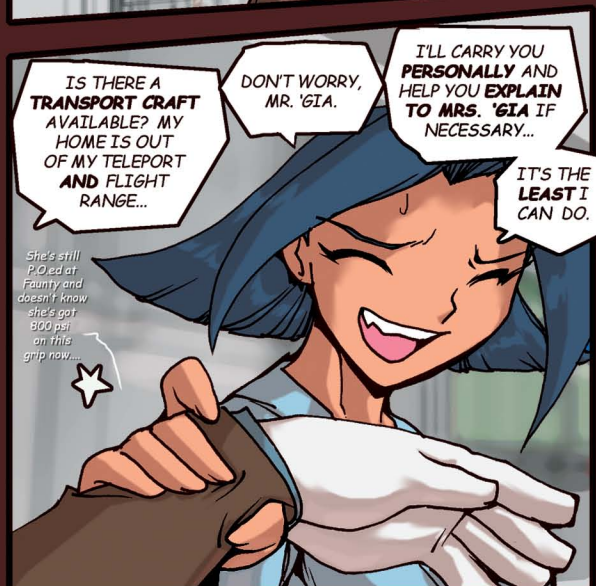
...WITH FAUNTLEROY AND HIS WIVES IN YOUR CONTROL...

...THE SITUATION IS WELL IN HAND.

SO IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I'M ABOUT SIXTEEN HOURS LATE FOR DINNER.

OH! THAT'S RIGHT!

WE CALLED YOU AWAY FROM YOUR FAMILY FOR THIS EMERGENCY!



IS THERE A TRANSPORT CRAFT AVAILABLE? MY HOME IS OUT OF MY TELEPORT AND FLIGHT RANGE...

DON'T WORRY, MR. 'GIA.

I'LL CARRY YOU PERSONALLY AND HELP YOU EXPLAIN TO MRS. 'GIA IF NECESSARY...

IT'S THE LEAST I CAN DO.

She's still P.O.ed at Faunty and doesn't know she's got 800 psi on this grip now...



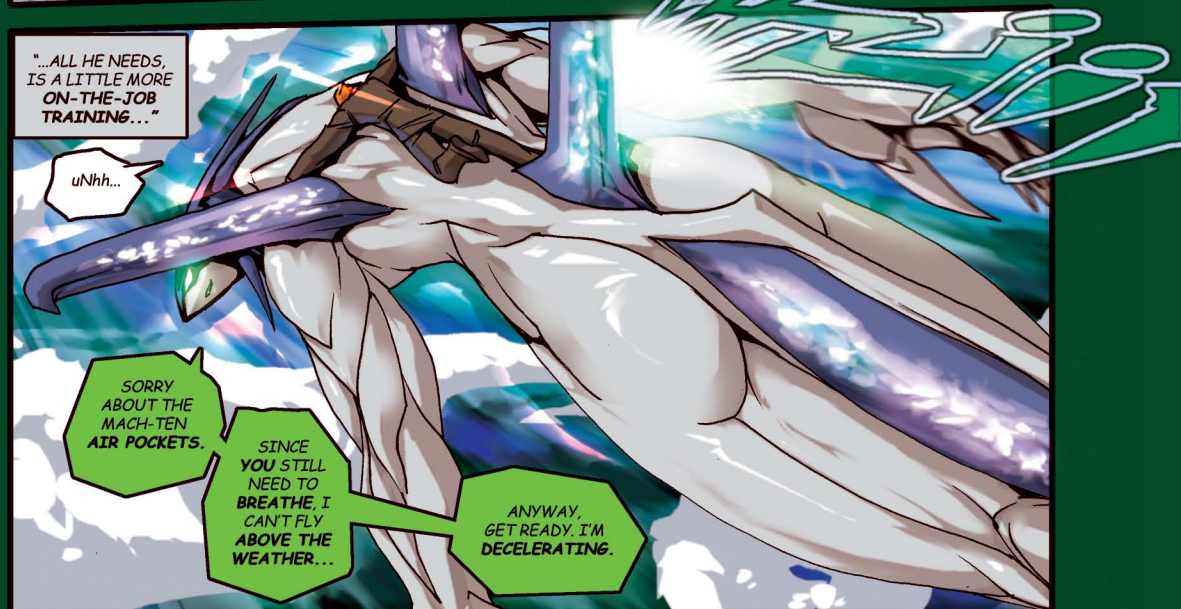
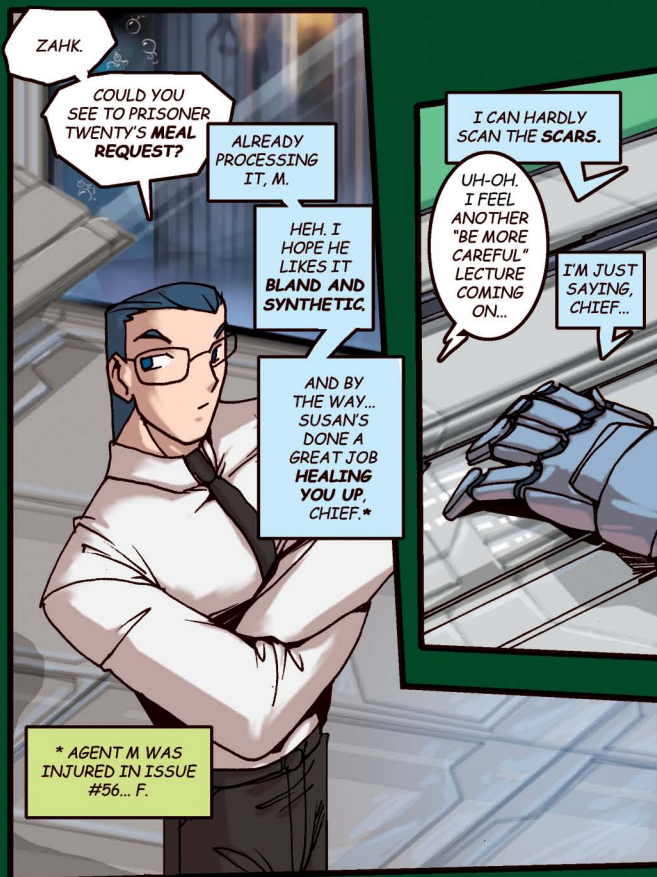
Especially because it was my slip-up that extended the engagement in the first place...*

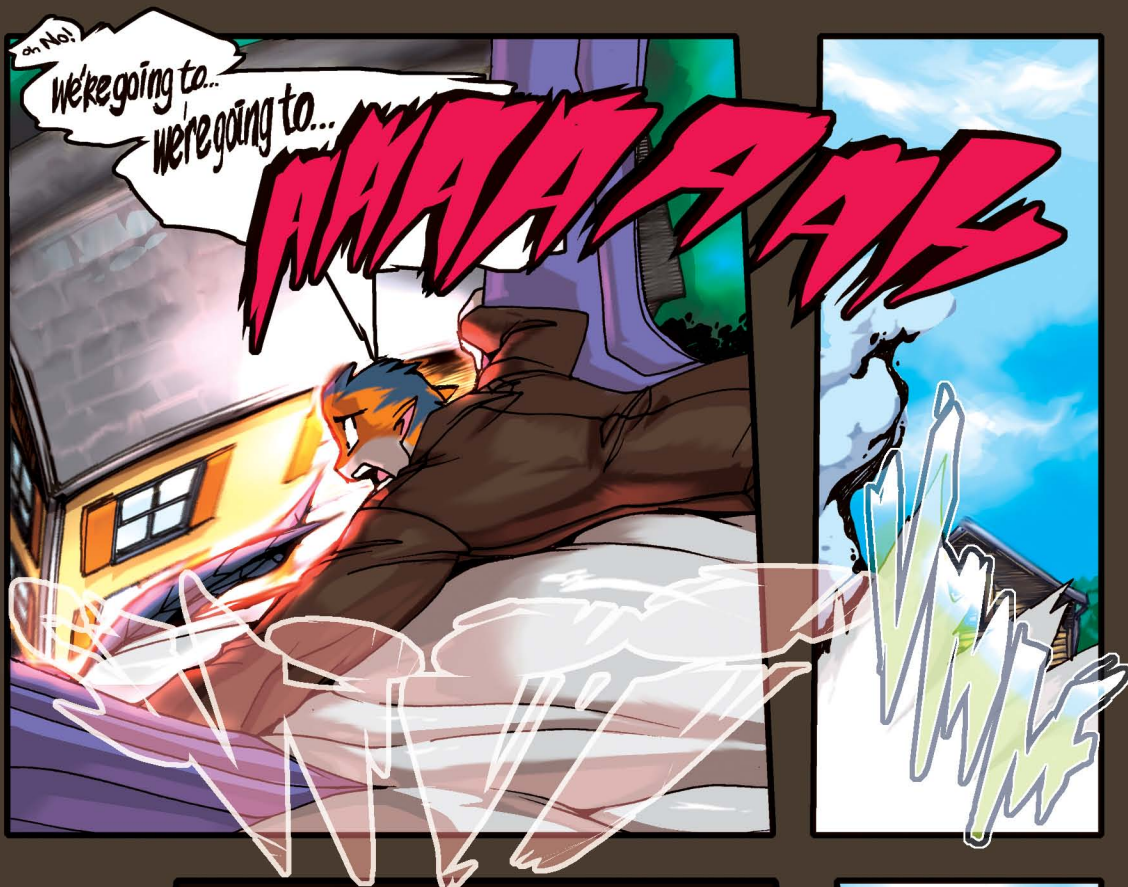
th-THANK YOU... But your grip... ..it hurts.

MAKE HASTE, AGENT S.

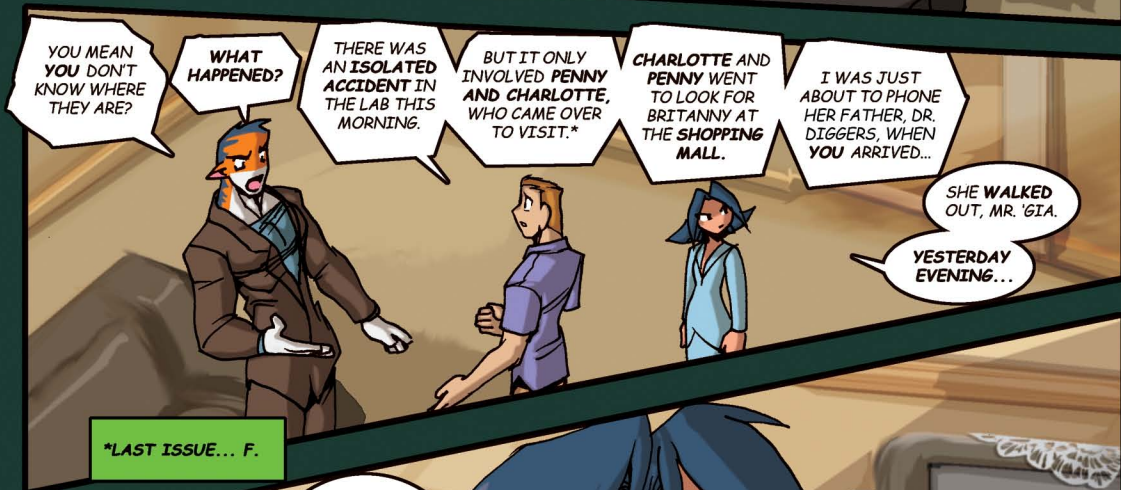
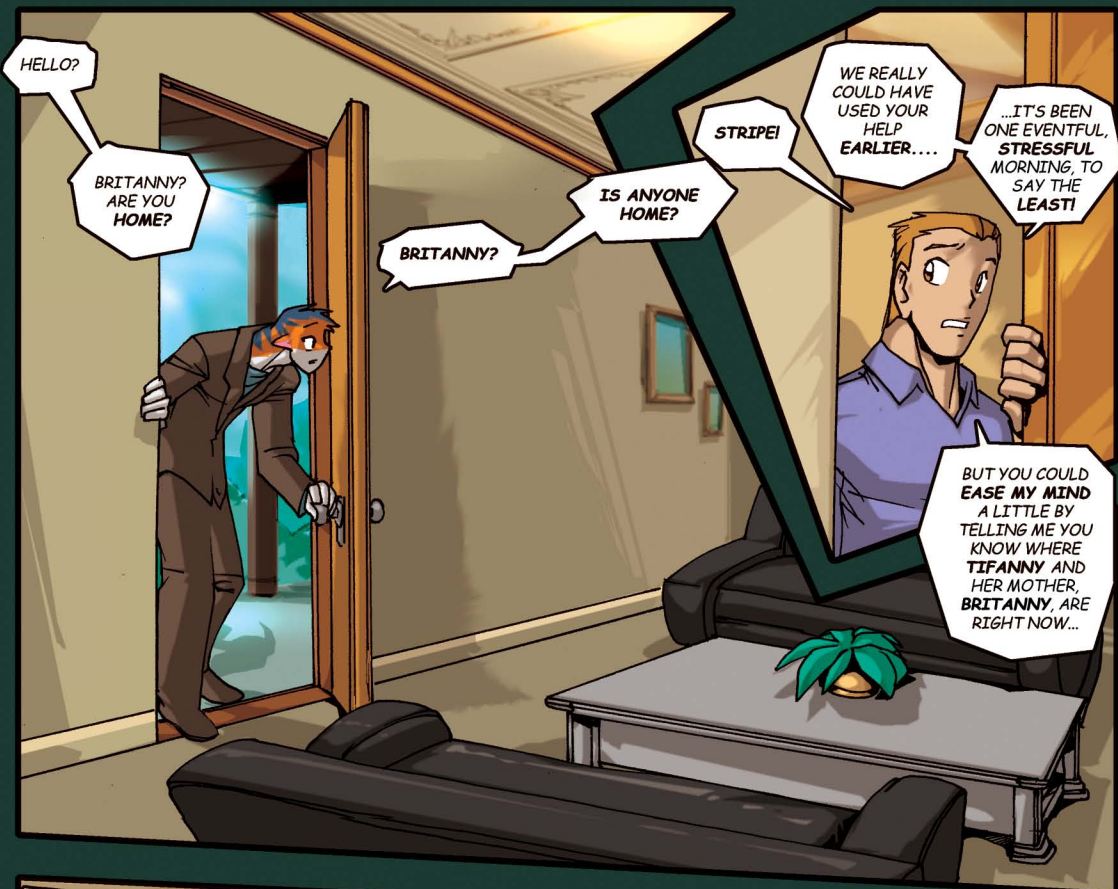
THERE IS STILL WORK FOR US TO DO.







Debbie is tryin' to play like traveling cross-country in under an hour was a snap, but she still worked up a sheen... F.



*LAST ISSUE... F.





W-WHAT DID YOU SAY?

BUT...

...BRITANNY WAS NORMAL LAST NIGHT!

I DIDN'T SENSE ANYONE ELSE COME NEAR THE HOUSE!

AND NO "PRESENCE MASK" SPELL WAS CAST!

IT'S CONFUSING FOR ME, TOO.

A LICH IS A VERITABLE TSUNAMI MOVING AROUND THE ETHER-STREAM.

BUT THIS ONE BARELY MADE A RIPPLE.

ADDITIONALLY, I WAS LUCKY TO CATCH THIS LICH'S TRAIL...

PASSIVE ETHER IS "INVISIBLE" UNLESS YOU'RE "LOOKING" DIRECTLY AT IT.

AND I'M STILL NOT SEEING WHAT I REALLY WANT TO SEE...

...BECAUSE TIFANNY AND BRITANNY'S TRAILS...

...VANISH COMPLETELY FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH ONCE THEY LEAVE THIS HOUSE.

Stripe...
Your wife
and child...
...Are gone.



Lighter...



THEY'RE HERE





a light...

TIFANNY!





A LICH?
ARE YOU
CERTAIN???

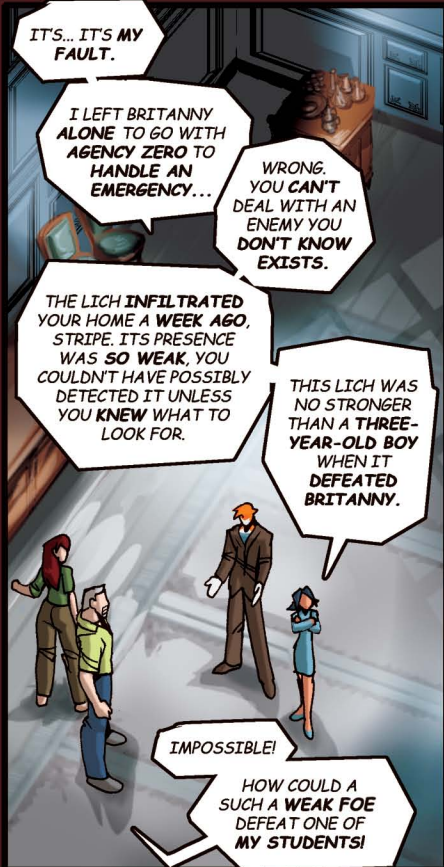
THERE IS
NO MISTAKE,
DR. DIGGERS.



BUT I FELT
NOTHING!

IF SOMETHING--
ANYTHING AS STRONG
AS A LICH WAS
THREATENING ANY
OF OUR DAUGHTERS
IN THEIR OWN
HOME...

I THINK
YOU'D BETTER
EXPLAIN YOURSELF,
MS. DEBRA,
AND QUICKLY!



IT'S... IT'S MY
FAULT.

I LEFT BRITANNY
ALONE TO GO WITH
AGENCY ZERO TO
HANDLE AN
EMERGENCY...

WRONG.
YOU CAN'T
DEAL WITH AN
ENEMY YOU
DON'T KNOW
EXISTS.

THE LICH INFILTRATED
YOUR HOME A WEEK AGO,
STRIPE. ITS PRESENCE
WAS SO WEAK, YOU
COULDN'T HAVE POSSIBLY
DETECTED IT UNLESS
YOU KNEW WHAT TO
LOOK FOR.

THIS LICH WAS
NO STRONGER
THAN A THREE-
YEAR-OLD BOY
WHEN IT
DEFEATED
BRITANNY.

IMPOSSIBLE!

HOW COULD A
SUCH A WEAK FOE
DEFEAT ONE OF
MY STUDENTS!



THAT'S THE
MYSTERY.

BRITANNY
WAS EASILY
MORE POWERFUL
THAN HER
ATTACKER.

EVEN A
SURPRISE
ATTACK SHOULD
HAVE BEEN
NOTHING TO
HER...

MY ONLY
CLUE IS
A STRANGE
RESONANCE.

I'VE YET
TO IDENTIFY
IT, BUT THE
ONLY OTHER
TRACE OF IT
I CAN FIND
ON EARTH-REALM...

...IS IN
YOUR
MANSION,
DR. AND MRS.
DIGGERS...

...IN THE
SUB-BASE-
MENT.

THAT AREA,
MS. DEBRA...

...IS
WHERE
MY FATHER,
THE LICH-
KING,
DIED.

A FEW YEARS
AGO, MY FATHER
LEFT HIS
EXILE IN THE
REALM OF THE
UNDEAD...

...AND CAME
AFTER MY
FAMILY!



I defeated
him...

...AND I WAS
ABLE TO
REMOVE HIM
FROM HIS
MAGIC!

I...still
don't under-
stand how
Britanny was
overcome...

BUT, I'M BEGINNING
TO UNDERSTAND
WHAT OCCURED...!

...AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, I'M BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THAT STRANGE RESONANCE I DETECTED NEAR THE AREA OF BRITANNY'S DISAPPEARANCE...

THEO!
WHY ARE WE WASTING TIME HERE?

WHY AREN'T WE RUNNING TO BRITANNY AND TIFANNY'S RESCUE?

DEBRA IS A DRAGON, JULIA.

NO BEING HAS A SHARPER SENSE FOR MAGIC...

...AN "EAGLE'S EYE" FOR IT, IF YOU WILL...

...AND YET... EVEN SHE DOESN'T KNOW WHERE BRITANNY AND TIFANNY WERE TAKEN!

IF THEY WERE GATED AWAY FROM EARTH-REALM, IT WAS TO A PLACE NO DRAGON HAS EVER VISITED OR WRITTEN ABOUT.

BUT THESE SCROLLS MAY HOLD A CLUE, DR. DIGGERS.

SOME OF THEM RESONATE WITH THE SAME ETHEREAL RHYTHM I FELT AT BRITANNY'S LAST KNOWN LOCATION.

THEY ARE MY FATHER'S SCROLLS.

but he COULDN'T have--

LOOK!
SOME OF THESE SCROLLS ARE FORGERIES!

THE RIDDLE IS SOLVED!

WHOEVER SET THESE FORGERIES HERE GAVE YOUR WEAKENED FATHER THE REAL SCROLLS...

...WHICH WE USED TO ABDUCT BRITANNY!

hmm.

I THINK I MIGHT BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY THE FORGER...

GO TH--

DEBRA! WAIT! DON'T READ THAT--

Klondy

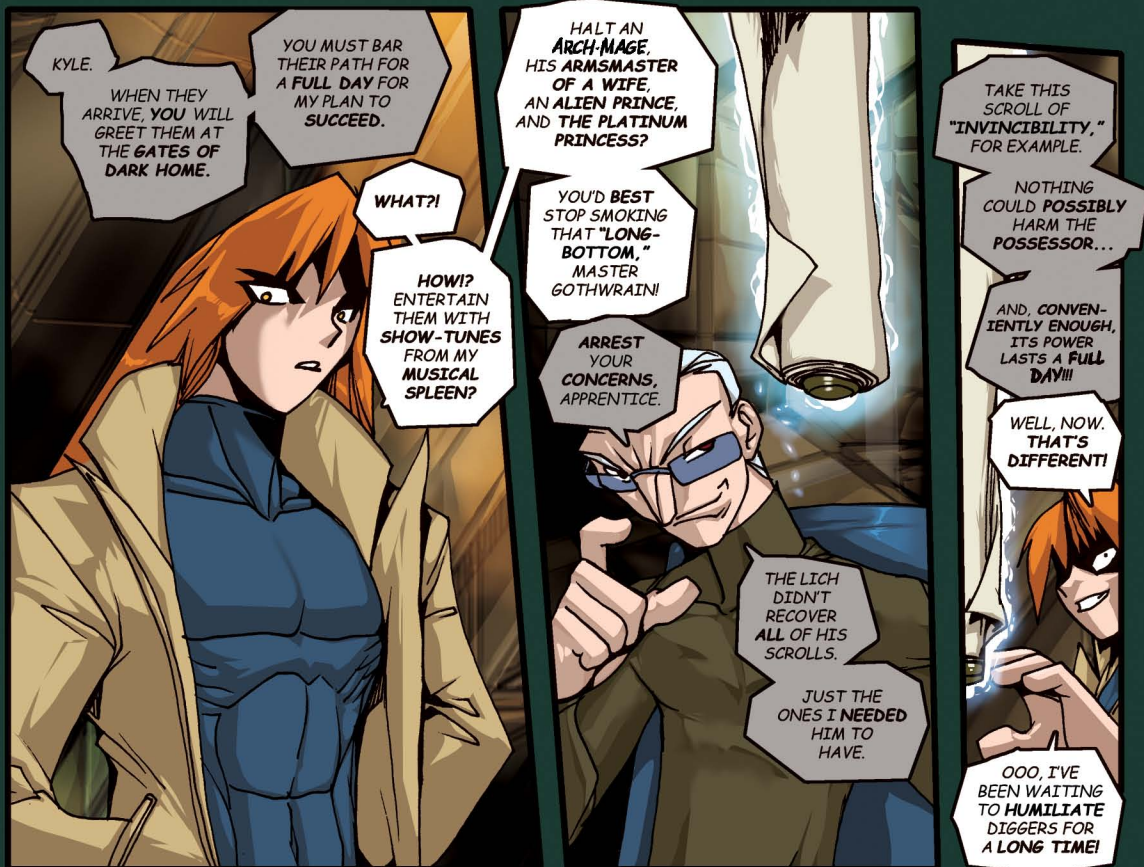
hehm.

"Dragons is sooo stupid!"

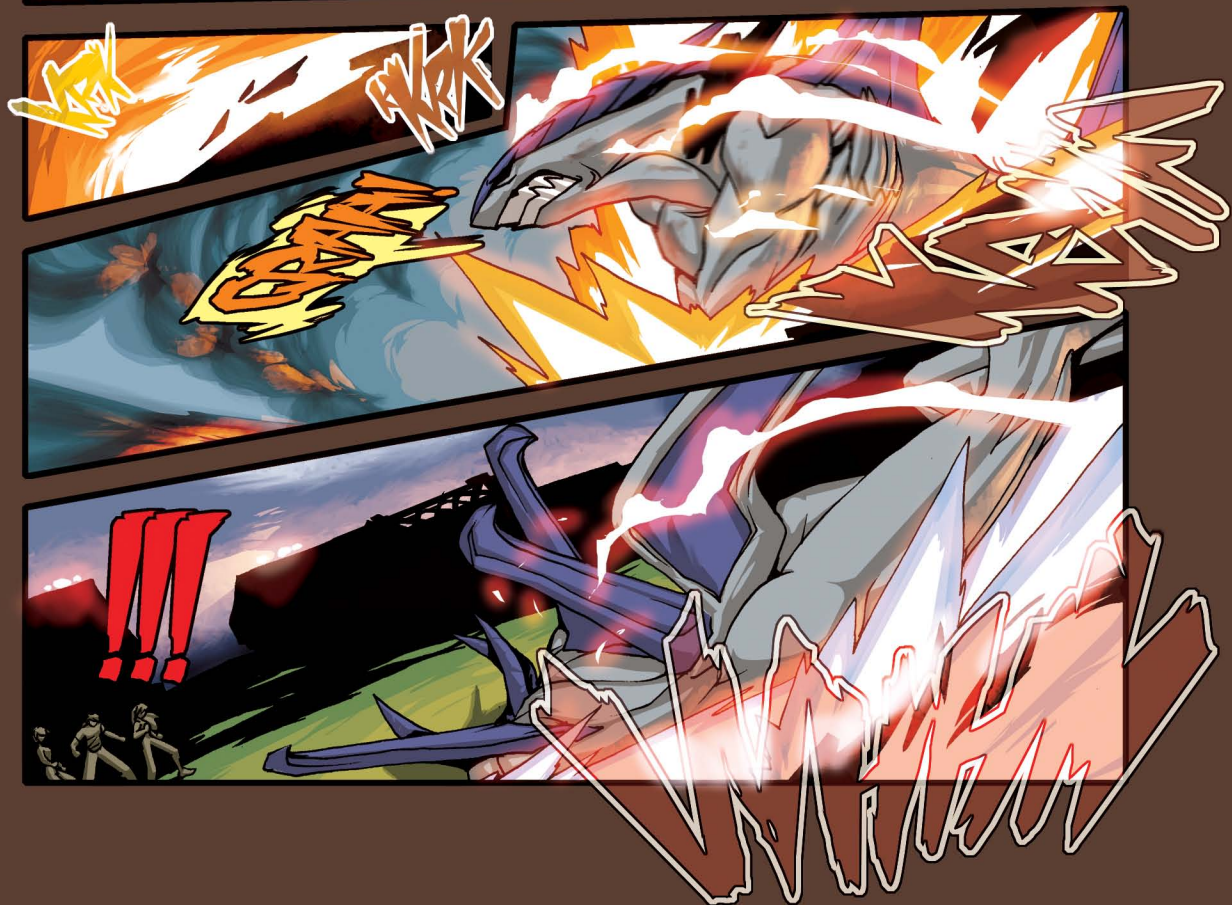
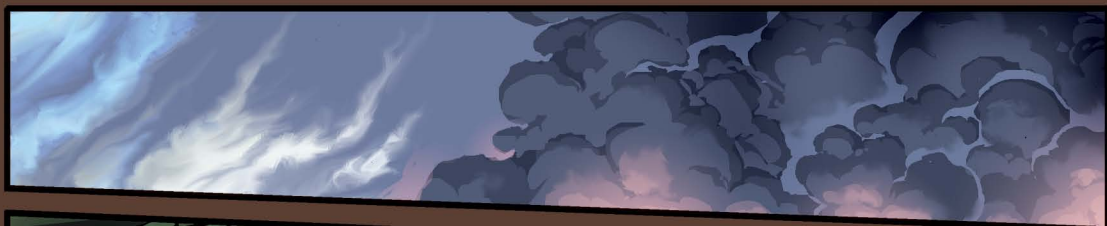


* BACK IN ISSUE #50 OF THE B&W SERIES... F.











HFF
ughh...
THAT'S THE
LAST TIME
I UNDER-
ESTIMATE
"CRUDE, NON-
DRAGONIC
MAGIC"...

...AND,
I'M GLAD
YOU DIDN'T,
DR. DIGGERS.

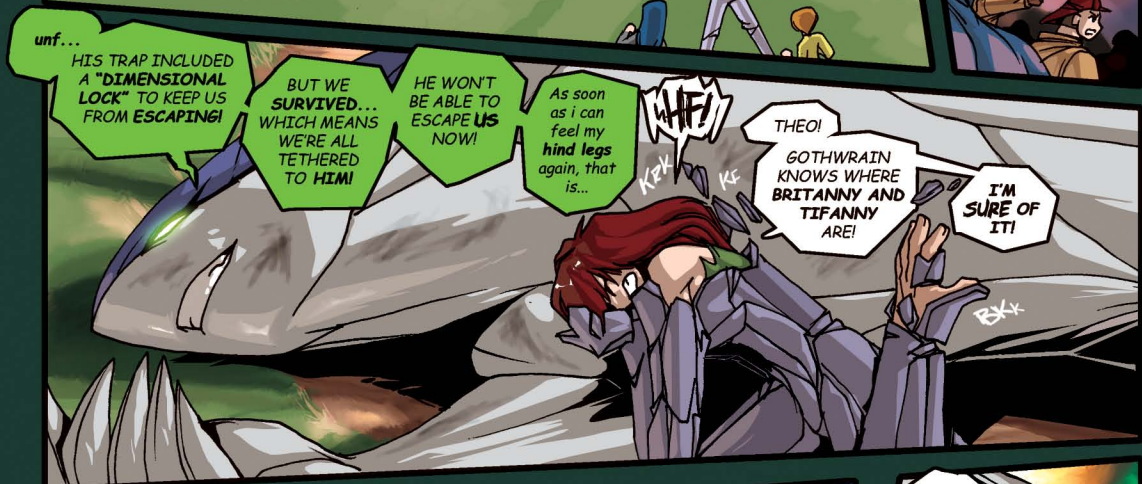
REGARDLESS,
WE'RE SAFE
NOW...

...YOU
CAN COME
OUT.



WHAT
ON JADE...?

heh...
GOTHWRAIN
SLIPPED UP,
HOWEVER...



unf...
HIS TRAP INCLUDED
A "DIMENSIONAL
LOCK" TO KEEP US
FROM ESCAPING!

BUT WE
SURVIVED...
WHICH MEANS
WE'RE ALL
TETHERED
TO HIM!

HE WON'T
BE ABLE TO
ESCAPE US
NOW!

As soon
as i can
feel my
hind legs
again, that
is...

WHE!
KZZ
KE

THEO!
GOTHWRAIN
KNOWS WHERE
BRITANNY AND
TIFANNY
ARE!

I'M
SURE OF
IT!



FIRST, HE
HAND-DELIVERS
MY BABY AND MY
GRAND DAUGHTER
TO THE LICH AND
NOW THIS??

I KNOW,
JULIA.
BUT--
NO
"BUT",
THEO--

--THERE IS NO
DOUBT IN MY MIND
THAT GOTHWRAIN
HAS PLANNED THIS
THOROUGHLY!

THERE IS
NO DOUBT IN
MY MIND THAT
WE ARE ALREADY
"PLAYING HIS
GAME"...

...AND I
SERIOUSLY
DOUBT THAT
WE'RE EVEN
CLOSE TO
WINNING,
LET ALONE
DISCOVERING
ALL OF THE
RULES!



however...

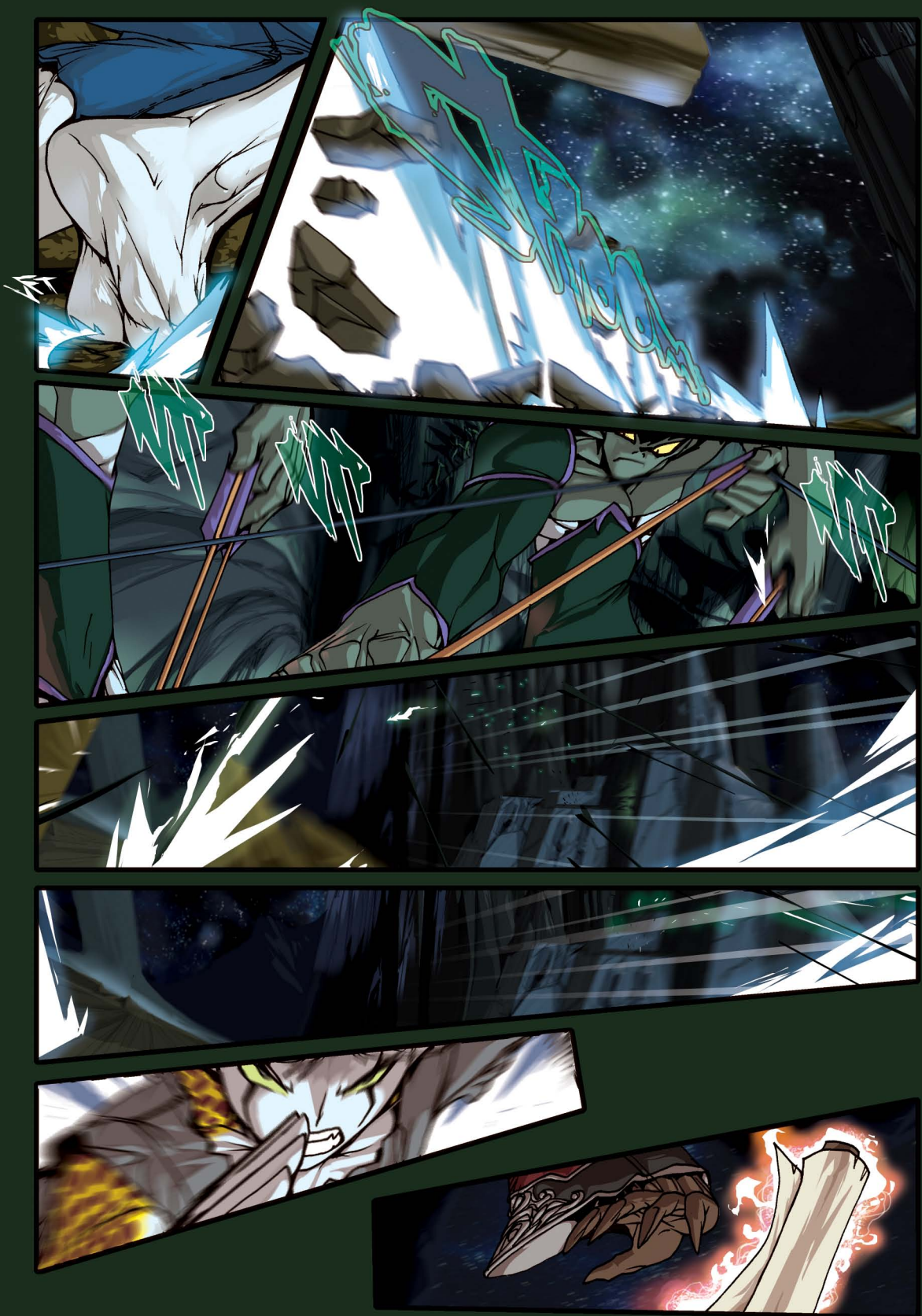
...GOTHWRAIN **HAS**
MADE ONE MISTAKE...

ONE EVEN MY
OWN FATHER
REFUSED TO
MAKE UNTIL
THE LAST
POSSIBLE
MOMENT!

AND I WILL
MAKE DAMN
SURE HE
REGRETS
THAT
MISTAKE...









WHY, BRITANNY...
WHAT AN
UNEXPECTED
SURPRISE...

ESPECIALLY
BECAUSE I
THOUGHT FOR
SURE I HAD
CAST YOU
OFF INTO
THE ABYSS
ON MY WAY
HERE...

OH WELL,
WE'LL SOON
REMEDY THAT
OVERSIGHT.

AND IT **IS**
A BIT NICE
TO HAVE A
"RELATIVE"
VISIT MY
SANCTUM.

WELL,
TRUTHFULLY,
"OBLIVION"
IT ISN'T
QUITE MINE
YET...

... BUT I'LL BE
MORE THAN HAPPY
TO TAKE FULL
POSSESSION OF
THE ELVES'
DIRTY LITTLE
SECRET REALM
SOON ENOUGH.



THE GAOBLIN
HERE ARE SO
VERY WILLING
TO ENFORCE
MY WILL ACROSS
THE REST OF
THIS REALM...

CORRUPT
ELF-KIN
WHO WORSHIP
DEATH ARE
A LICH'S
BEST FRIEND,
YOU KNOW...

AND YOU'VE SEEN
FIRSTHAND HOW
TERRITORIAL
THEY ARE.

PROTECTIVE
AND OBEDIENT.
HOW CAN I
ASK FOR
MORE?



IF ONLY I'D
HAD MY SCROLLS
TWENTY YEARS
AGO...

THEY HAD
THE "MAPS" I
MADE WHEN I
WAS A YOUNG
EXPLORER, LIKE
YOUR "SISTER,"
GINA...

I'D HAVE
PREFERRED
TO LAUNCH
MY "LICH CAREER"
FROM HERE THAN
FROM U'DEUN, THE
REALM OF THE
UNDEAD.

Granddad...
please...

All I want...
is my baby.

PLEASE...

I'll do
ANYTHING...!

Just give
me back my
baby...



NO.



t-Tiffany...

...I'm
sorry...

...I'm...

what?...

N--

Gniess...

Next: "Edge of Oblivion" Part 2 of 4...