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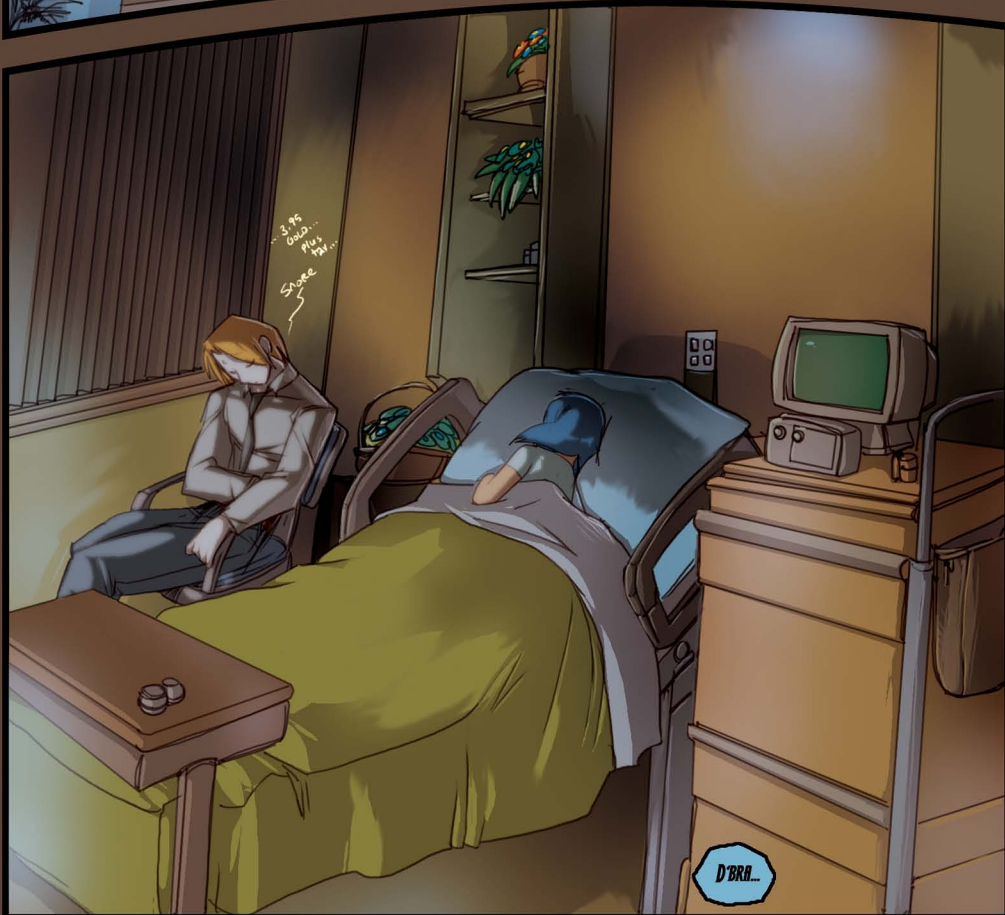
GOLD DIGGER



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JUNE 2006

Earth-Realm...





D'BRA...

Oh...
GRANDFATHER
EXTHILION.

Tsk...

WHAT DO YOU
WANT FROM ME?

A LITTLE LESS
BELLIGERENCY WOULD
DO FOR A START.



I'M HERE
BECAUSE DRAGON-
KIND'S FUTURE
HAS BECOME
ENDANGERED.

QUEEN T'MAT HAS
BECOME DERELICT IN
THE MOST IMPORTANT
OF HER DUTIES.

HUH?
EXPLAIN.



...D'BRA...YOUR
MOTHER IS NO
LONGER THINKING
PROPERLY.

HER HATRED AND
RAGE TOWARDS
DREADWING...
YOUR FATHER...

...HAS FINALLY
CONSUMED
HER.



SHE IGNORES
THE DEFENSE
AND PROTECTION
OF OUR ANCIENT
SITES.

IT IS ONLY
BY THE GREATEST
OF FORTUNES THAT
THE HUMAN, CINA
DIGGERS, FAILED
TO DISCOVER WHAT
WAS SEALED AWAY
AT OUTPOST
THETA.

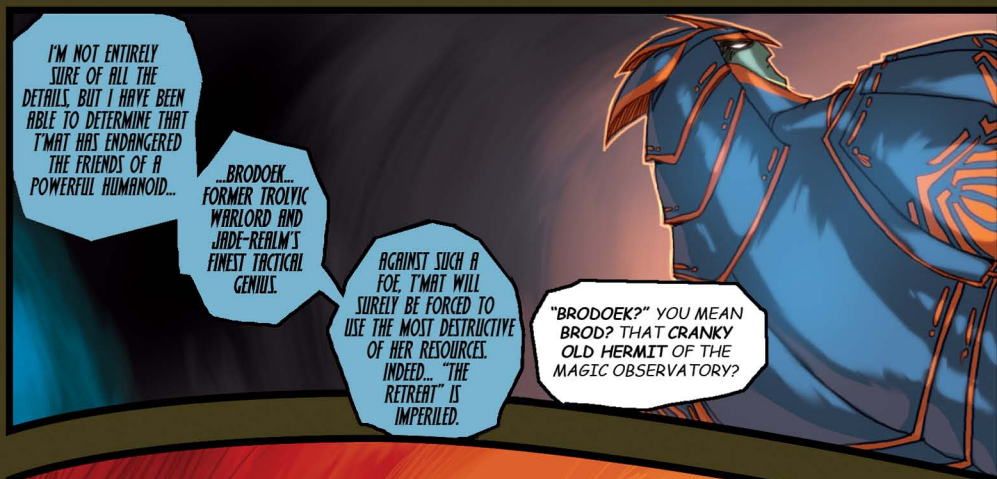
HER ATTENTION
IS FIXED ON SOME
CONFLICT THAT
THREATENS THE
SAFETY OF THE
ARTIFICIAL REALM...
"THE RETREAT."

T'MAT'S MAGEN
THREATENS TO RIP
THE REALM'S ETHER
TO SHREDS JUST
TO GUARD A PAIR
OF ELVES!

I BELIEVE A HUMAN
WOULD DESCRIBE HER
MOOD AS "...EEYORE
GONE PIZZOSTAL!"...

Grandfather,
please refrain
from using
phrases you
learn from
"Cable T.V."

...SORRY.

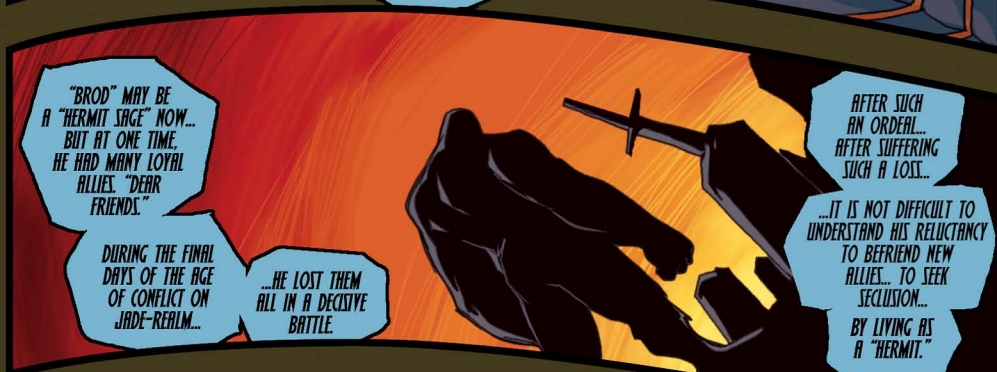


I'M NOT ENTIRELY SURE OF ALL THE DETAILS, BUT I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DETERMINE THAT T'MAT HAS ENDANGERED THE FRIENDS OF A POWERFUL HUMANOID...

...BRODOEK... FORMER TROYIC WARLORD AND JADE-REALM'S FINEST TACTICAL GENIUS.

AGAINST SUCH A FOE, T'MAT WILL SURELY BE FORCED TO USE THE MOST DESTRUCTIVE OF HER RESOURCES. INDEED... "THE RETREAT" IS IMPERILED.

"BRODOEK?" YOU MEAN BROD? THAT CRANKY OLD HERMIT OF THE MAGIC OBSERVATORY?



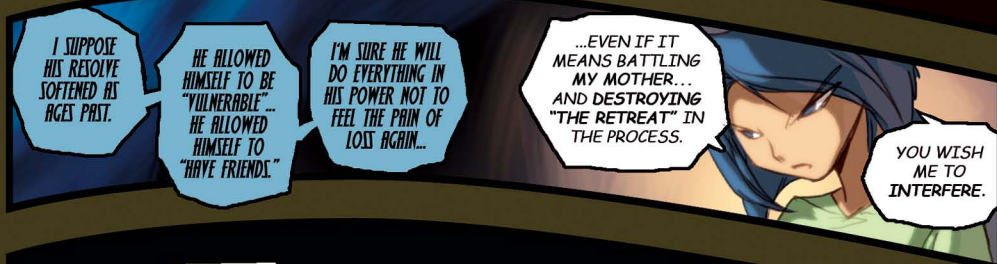
"BROD" MAY BE A "HERMIT SAGE" NOW... BUT AT ONE TIME, HE HAD MANY LOYAL ALLIES. "DEAR FRIENDS."

DURING THE FINAL DAYS OF THE AGE OF CONFLICT ON JADE-REALM...

...HE LOST THEM ALL IN A DECISIVE BATTLE.

AFTER SUCH AN ORDEAL... AFTER SUFFERING SUCH A LOSS...

...IT IS NOT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND HIS RELUCTANCY TO BEFRIEND NEW ALLIES... TO SEEK SECLUSION... BY LIVING AS A "HERMIT."



I SUPPOSE HIS RESOLVE SOFTENED AS AGES PAST.

HE ALLOWED HIMSELF TO BE "VULNERABLE"... HE ALLOWED HIMSELF TO "HAVE FRIENDS."

I'M SURE HE WILL DO EVERYTHING IN HIS POWER NOT TO FEEL THE PAIN OF LOSS AGAIN...

...EVEN IF IT MEANS BATTLING MY MOTHER... AND DESTROYING "THE RETREAT" IN THE PROCESS.

YOU WISH ME TO INTERFERE.



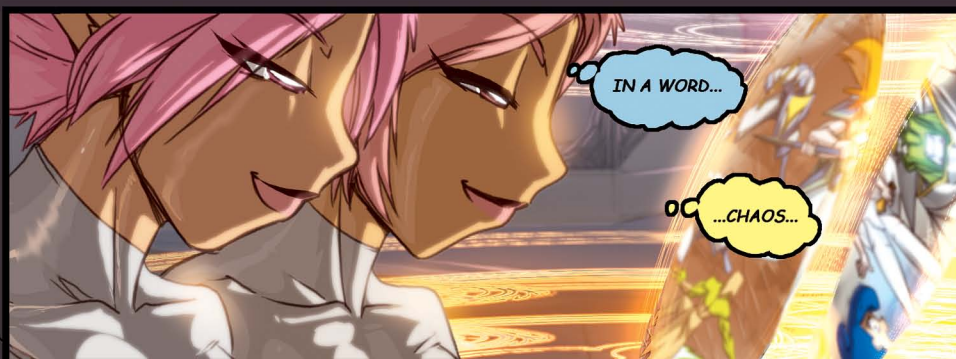
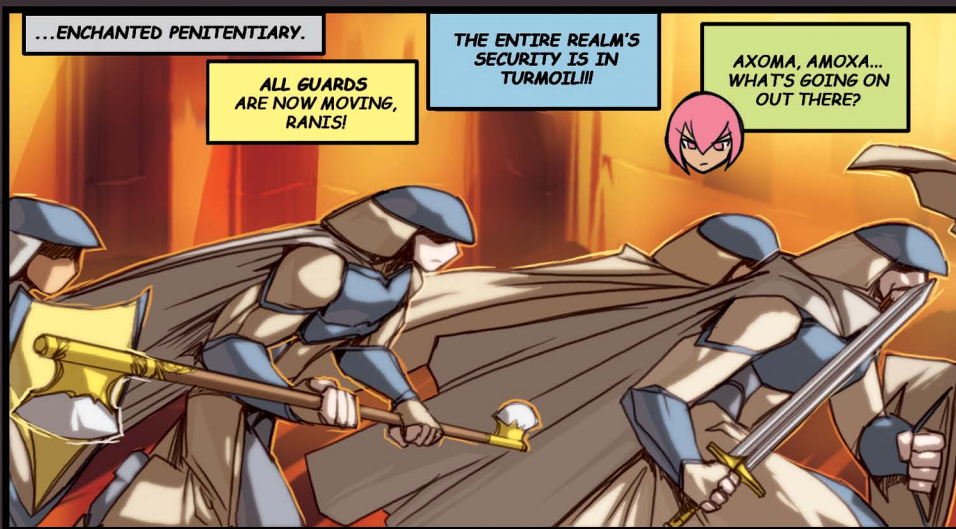
YOU WISH ME TO SAVE YOUR "RETREAT."


NO... THE RETREAT IS DOOMED.

I COME TO YOU NOW...

...BECAUSE IT IS TIME FOR THE QUEEN'S SANE AND REASONABLE SUCCESSOR TO CLAIM THE THRONE.

oh, crap.





THE SECURITY FORCES OF THE REALM'S STRONGHOLD ARE ENGAGED WITH SEVERAL TEAMS OF ELITE TROLVIC INVADERS, RANIS.



THE TROLLS SEEM TO BE ATTEMPTING AN INVASION OF SEVERAL KEY INSTALLATIONS WITHIN THE STRONGHOLD PRECINCTS!

TOP PRIORITY HAS BEEN GIVEN TO DEFENDING THE SOUTH CENTRAL PRECINCT.

THE REAL-CORE ACCESS KEEP.



THE "WHAT" CORE?

THE REALM CORE STABILIZES THIS DIMENSION, RANIS. ITS POWER KEEPS IT "AFLOAT" WITHIN THE PLANAR CURRENTS.

THE PRISONS ARE A MUCH LOWER SECURITY PRIORITY!

THE SECURITY FORCES HAVE EVEN CALLED UPON THE SOUTHERN EDGE GUARD TO HELP DEFEND THE CORE!

THEIR ACTING CAPTAIN, TWYLIGHT, HOLDS THE LINE CURRENTLY, AND HIS REINFORCEMENTS ARE ON THE WAY!



MEANWHILE,
NORTH OF THE
REALM CORE,
THE ELDRITCH
STRONGHOLD
SEEMS TO BE
UNDER SOME
KIND OF
STRANGE
ETHEREAL
ASSAULT!

TREMENDOUS GEYSERS
OF ENERGY ARE FLOWING
WILDLY FROM BENEATH
THE STRONGHOLD'S
FOUNDATIONS!

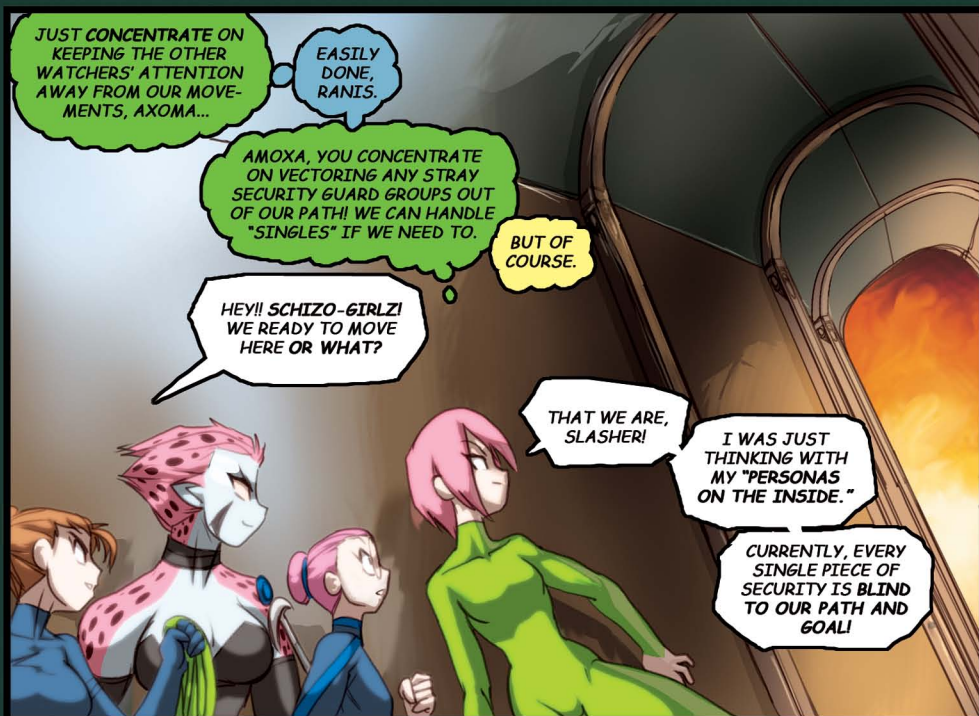
THE RETREAT'S SECURITY
FORCES ARE BUSY WITH
THE TROLVIC ASSAULTS
AT OTHER KEY PRECINCTS,
LEAVING THE ELDRITCH
GUARD TO FEND FOR
THEMSELVES AT
THEIR STRONGHOLD.



IF THE REALM CORE
IS NOT THE GOAL
OF THE TROLLS,
THEN WHATEVER
IS HIDDEN AT
THE BOTTOM OF
THE ELDRITCH
STRONGHOLD MOST
CERTAINLY IS!

AXOMA AND I
CAN BARELY SENSE
WHAT'S HAPPENING
DOWN THERE!

THE AMOUNT OF
ENERGY FLOWING
FROM THE BEINGS
ENGAGED IN BATTLE
IS BLINDING EVEN
TO THE ETHEREAL
SECURITY "EYES."



JUST CONCENTRATE ON
KEEPING THE OTHER
WATCHERS' ATTENTION
AWAY FROM OUR MOVE-
MENTS, AXOMA...

EASILY
DONE,
RANIS.

AMOXA, YOU CONCENTRATE
ON VECTORING ANY STRAY
SECURITY GUARD GROUPS OUT
OF OUR PATH! WE CAN HANDLE
"SINGLES" IF WE NEED TO.

BUT OF
COURSE.

HEY!! SCHIZO-GIRLZ!
WE READY TO MOVE
HERE OR WHAT?

THAT WE ARE,
SLASHER!

I WAS JUST
THINKING WITH
MY "PERSONAS
ON THE INSIDE."

CURRENTLY, EVERY
SINGLE PIECE OF
SECURITY IS BLIND
TO OUR PATH AND
GOAL!



YEAH!

-- THAT MEANS WE'VE GOT CLEAR SHOTS ALL THE WAY UP TO TYRANT'S CELL BLOCK!

DAMN, IT FEELS GOOD T' BE A GANGSTA!

WE...WE'RE ACTUALLY DOING IT!

WE'RE GOING TO SUCCEED!

THIS IS ACTUALLY GOING TO WORK!

SHRIKE! DART UP AHEAD AND SCOUT THE AREA...

MYRIA! GET READY TO DOUBLE-CHECK THE FORGED "MAGE COUNCIL KEY ENCHANTMENT."

NOW'S OUR CHANCE!

LET'S BREAK OUR BOYFRIEND THE HELL OUT OF THIS DUMP!
▼

AFTER WE FIND SOME MORE GUARDS FOR ME TO PUNISH!

OH, YEAH! PRECIOUS AND ME? WE'RE JUST GETTIN' WARMED UP OVER HERE!

TIRANT... HOLD ON, BABY!

THIS TIME...

...IT'S *US* COMING TO SAVE YOU!

I'LL NEVER FORGET
THE NIGHT BEFORE YOU
RESCUED ME, TI...

THE SECRET LAB THAT
WAS KEEPING ME PRISONER
AND TORTURING ME WAS
DISCOVERED BY THE F.B.I.
AND THE "GOOD GUYS!"

BUT THEY
COULDN'T
SAVE ME...

ALL THEY COULD DO
WAS ARGUE ABOUT
THE "BEST INTERESTS
OF THE NATION" AND
"BENEFITS TO
MANKIND..."

...AND "PROFIT
MARGINS."

SHERISHA, THE LAB'S OWNER,
PRODUCED SECRET DOCUMENTS AND
AGREEMENTS THAT DECLARED THE
AREA SECURED IN THE INTERESTS
OF NATIONAL SECURITY.

SHE PRODUCED
"EVIDENCE" THAT I
WAS NOT HUMAN...OR
EVEN ALIVE...AND THAT
I HAD NO RIGHTS.

i was her
property.

THE "GOOD GUYS"
WOULD HAVE TO
BREAK THE LAW
TO SAVE ME.

BUT THEY
WOULDN'T...
SO THEY
LEFT.

AN "I'M SORRY, CHILD"
WAS ALL THE LEADER
COULD SAY... AS THE
SONIC CUTTERS WERE
TURNED ON ME FOR THE
MILLIONTH TIME...

...TO REMOVE ANOTHER
ARM OR LEG OR LUNG
OR HEART FOR ME TO
GROW BACK IN AGONY.



I CAN'T REMEMBER
HOW MANY STUN
SHOCKS THEY USED
TO PARALYZE ME.

I CAN'T REMEMBER
WHAT THE CUTTERS
CARVED FROM ME.



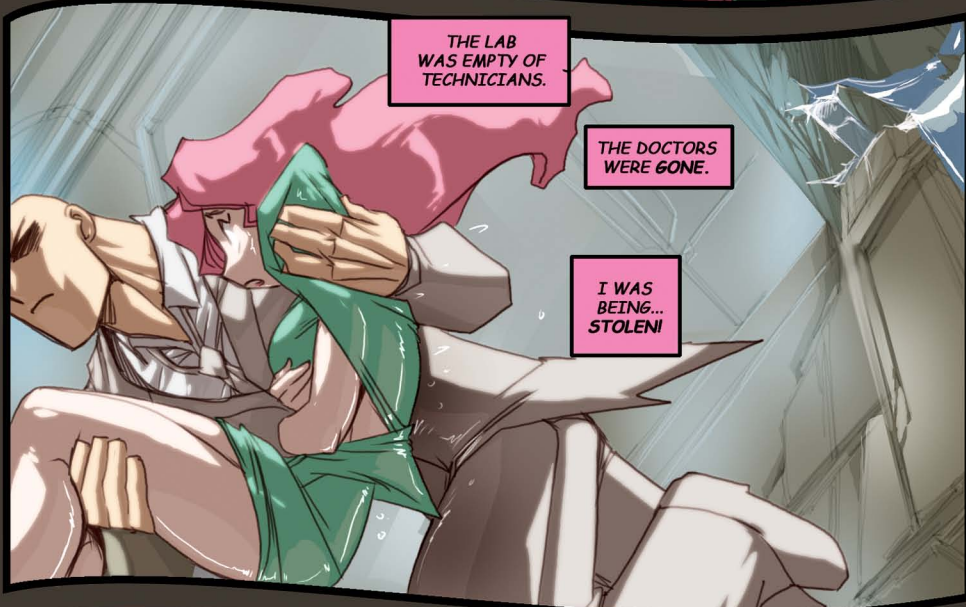
I ONLY
REMEMBER
PAIN.

I ONLY REMEMBER
RETREATING FROM
CONSCIOUSNESS...
MY ONLY DEFENSE.



BUT THEN,
I RECALL
RETURNING
TO MY
SENSES...

I WAS OUTSIDE
OF MY NUTRIENT
CHAMBER.



THE LAB
WAS EMPTY OF
TECHNICIANS.

THE DOCTORS
WERE GONE.

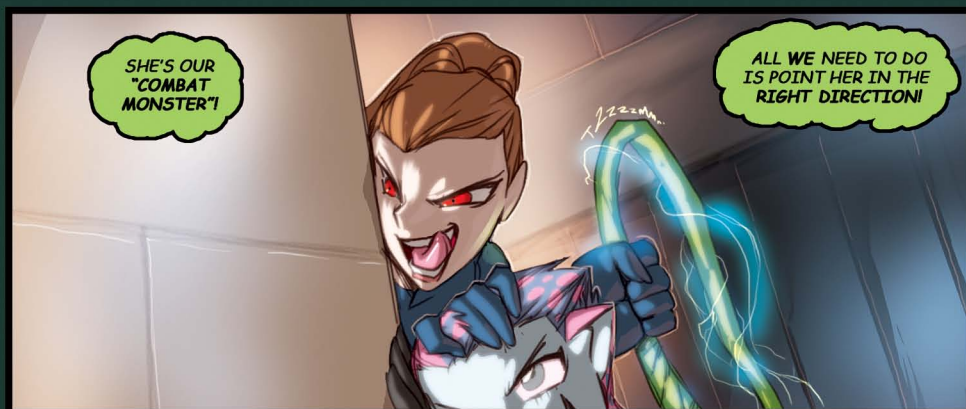
I WAS
BEING...
STOLEN!

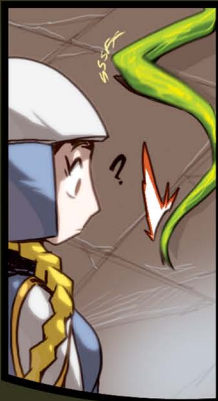


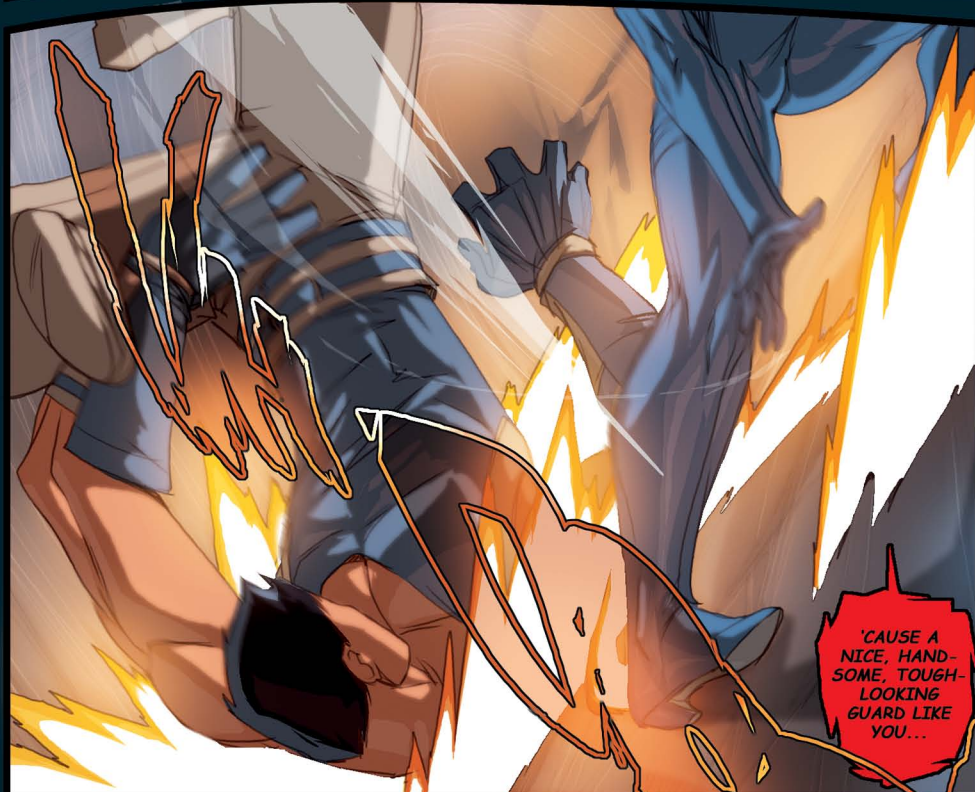
TIRANT.

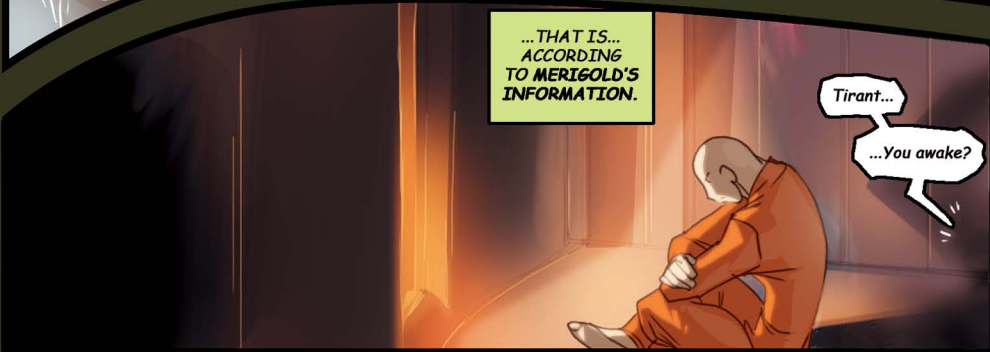
A "SUPER CRIMINAL"
WHO'D INVADDED THE
LAB TO GAIN EXPENSIVE
AND EXOTIC MEDICAL
SECRETS AND ITEMS
TO SELL ON THE
BLACK MARKET.

HE TOOK ME
AWAY... AND
FORGOT THE
SECRETS.













....

THE ONLY THING
I'M WORRIED ABOUT
HERE IS YOU,
TIRANT.

YOU'VE BEEN
QUIET ALL
DAY.

TOO QUIET.

I...HAVE
A FEELING.

A FEELING
I'VE NEVER
HAD BEFORE.

A BAD
FEELING.



I REMEMBER
FIFTEEN YEARS
AGO...

...THE
MORNING
BEFORE MY
FATHER
DIED...

...WAS THE
ONLY TIME HE
EVER HAD A
"BAD FEELING"
TOO.

MEANWHILE...
BENEATH THE
ELDRITCH
STRONGHOLD.



GAEO!

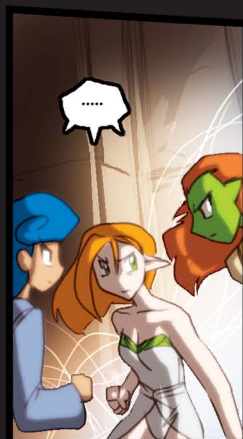
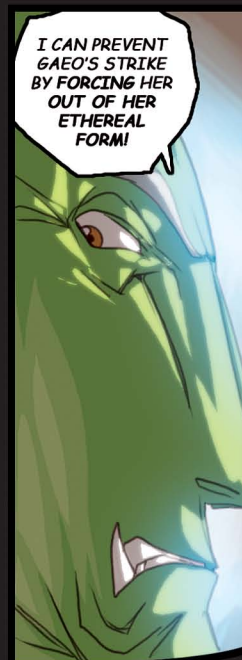
YOU'VE
STOPPED!

YOU'VE
FINISHED
GATHERING
STRENGTH.

YOU COULD DRAIN
THE ETHER FROM
THE ENTIRE REALM
IF WHOEVER
CONTROLS YOU
COMMANDED...

...BUT YOU
STOPPED.

YOUR OWNER
IS SURE THAT
YOUR POWER
IS SUFFICIENT
TO CRUSH ME.





I HAVE YET
TO UNDERSTAND
THE FULL SCOPE
OF THIS ORDEAL!

WHY WAS
MY HOME
INVADED?

WHY WERE
MY FRIENDS
ABDUCTED?



WHY AM I BEING
FORCED TO BATTLE
THE DRACONIC QUEEN'S
MOST POWERFUL
"SUMMON" FOR
MESHA AND TARK'S
FREEDOM?

BUT I DO
UNDERSTAND
THAT I MUST NOW
HOLD NOTHING
IN RESERVE!

The Magic Observatory of Jade-Realm



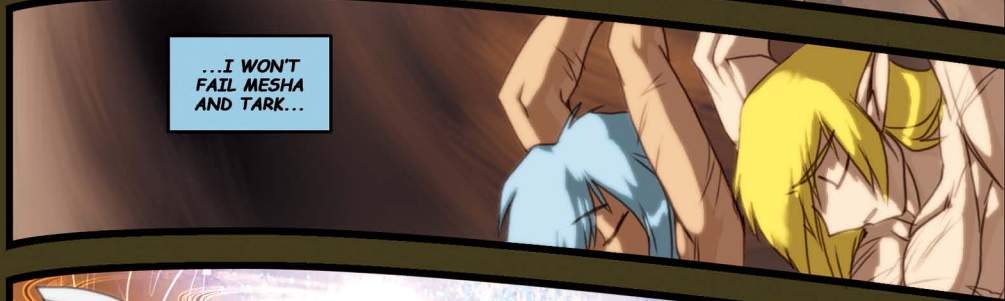
I MUST USE
ALL OF MY
RESOURCES...

...ALL MY
POWER.



I WON'T LOSE
MY FRIENDS...

The Eldritch "Deep Cells" of their Retreat stronghold.



...I WON'T
FAIL MESHA
AND TARK...



...FOR LACK
OF TRYING.

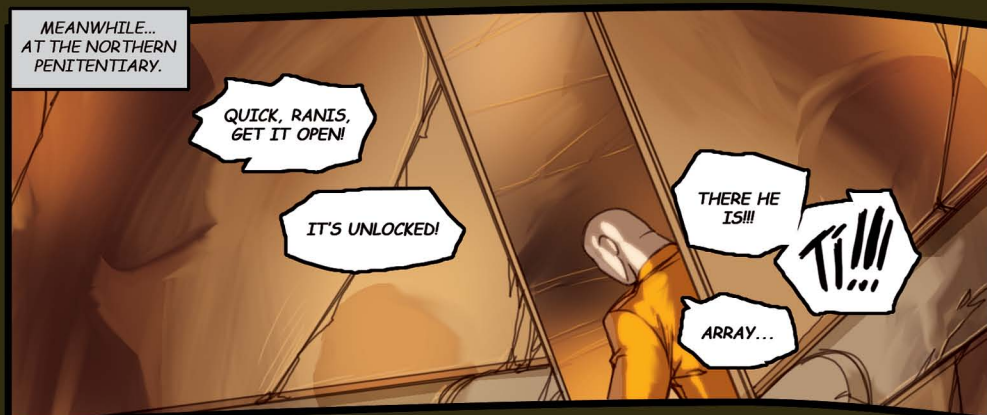
WUUN





ATTACK





CLASH





TO BE CONCLUDED...(UNLESS I COME UP WITH SOMETHING EVEN MORE KICK-@\$\$!!!)