



**AUG 06 #77**  
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**FRED PERRY**

# GOLD DIGGER

**15th Anniversary**  
**1991-2006**

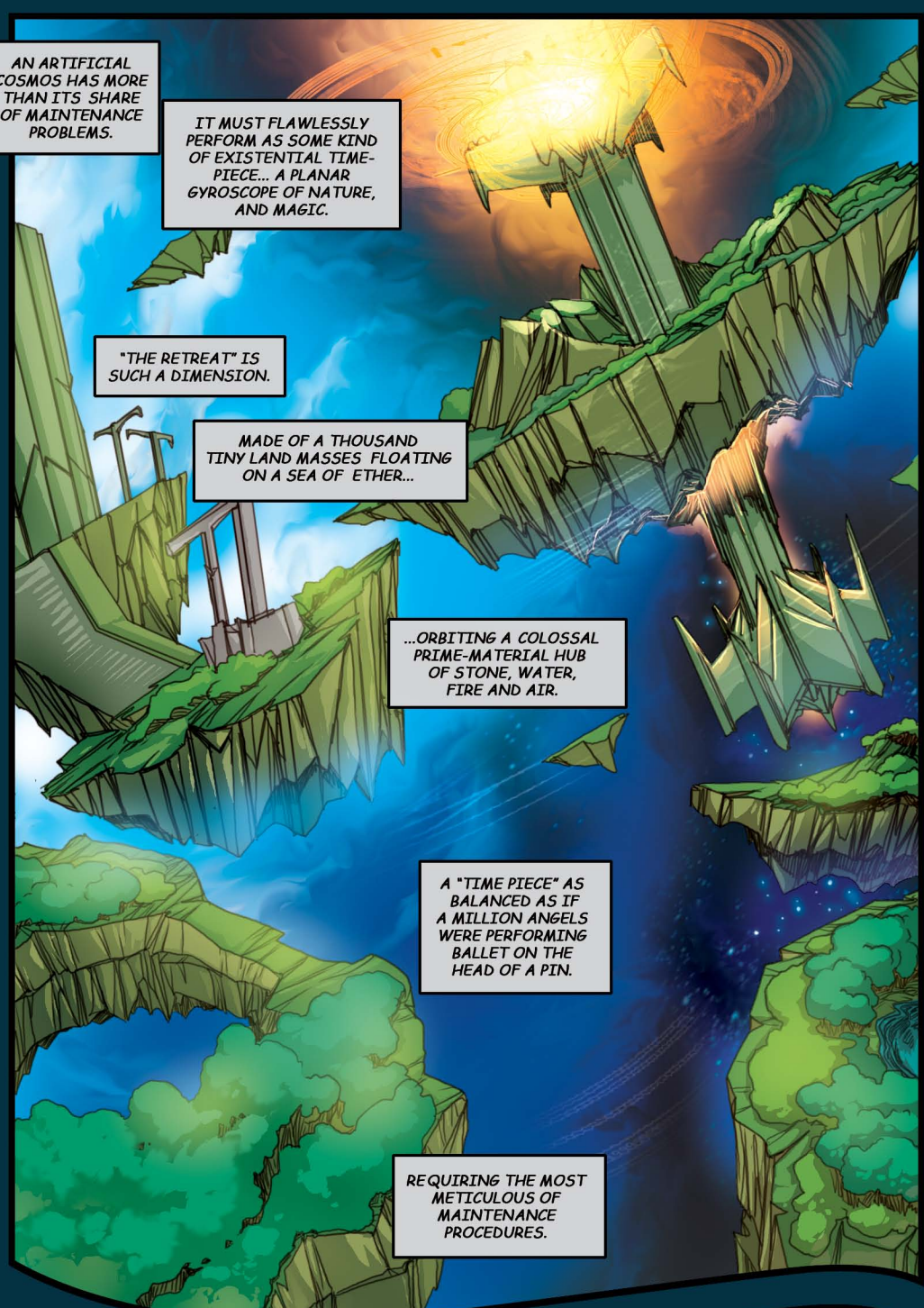


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**AUGUST 2006**

A large, floating island with jagged green cliffs and patches of vegetation. In the upper right, a bright, glowing orb resembling a sun or a fireball is surrounded by swirling orange and yellow energy. The sky is a deep blue with wispy white clouds. The island appears to be part of a larger, broken structure.

AN ARTIFICIAL  
COSMOS HAS MORE  
THAN ITS SHARE  
OF MAINTENANCE  
PROBLEMS.

IT MUST FLAWLESSLY  
PERFORM AS SOME KIND  
OF EXISTENTIAL TIME-  
PIECE... A PLANAR  
GYROSCOPE OF NATURE,  
AND MAGIC.

"THE RETREAT" IS  
SUCH A DIMENSION.

MADE OF A THOUSAND  
TINY LAND MASSES FLOATING  
ON A SEA OF ETHER...

...ORBITING A COLOSSAL  
PRIME-MATERIAL HUB  
OF STONE, WATER,  
FIRE AND AIR.

A "TIME PIECE" AS  
BALANCED AS IF  
A MILLION ANGELS  
WERE PERFORMING  
BALLET ON THE  
HEAD OF A PIN.

REQUIRING THE MOST  
METICULOUS OF  
MAINTENANCE  
PROCEDURES.

WHICH MEANS TODAY  
IS A REALLY SUCKY  
DAY TO BE ONE  
OF THE REALM'S  
"CLOCKSMITHS..."

A close-up of a character's face, showing a large, expressive blue eye and a portion of an orange, flame-like headpiece. The character has a weary or grumpy expression.

BY THE ASTRAL  
WHEEL...

...I hate  
mondays...





EVERYONE TO THE  
NORTH IMMEDIATELY!

THE "WEIGHT"  
IS STILL  
TIPPING CORE-  
WARD!!!

BALANCE COUNCILORS  
OF THE RETREAT.

EQUIPPED WITH  
"DENSITY RINGS".  
THEY FLY TO THE  
WEAKENED AREAS  
OF THE REALM  
AND "NUDGE"  
AGAINST THE  
PLANAR FABRIC.

HOWEVER...

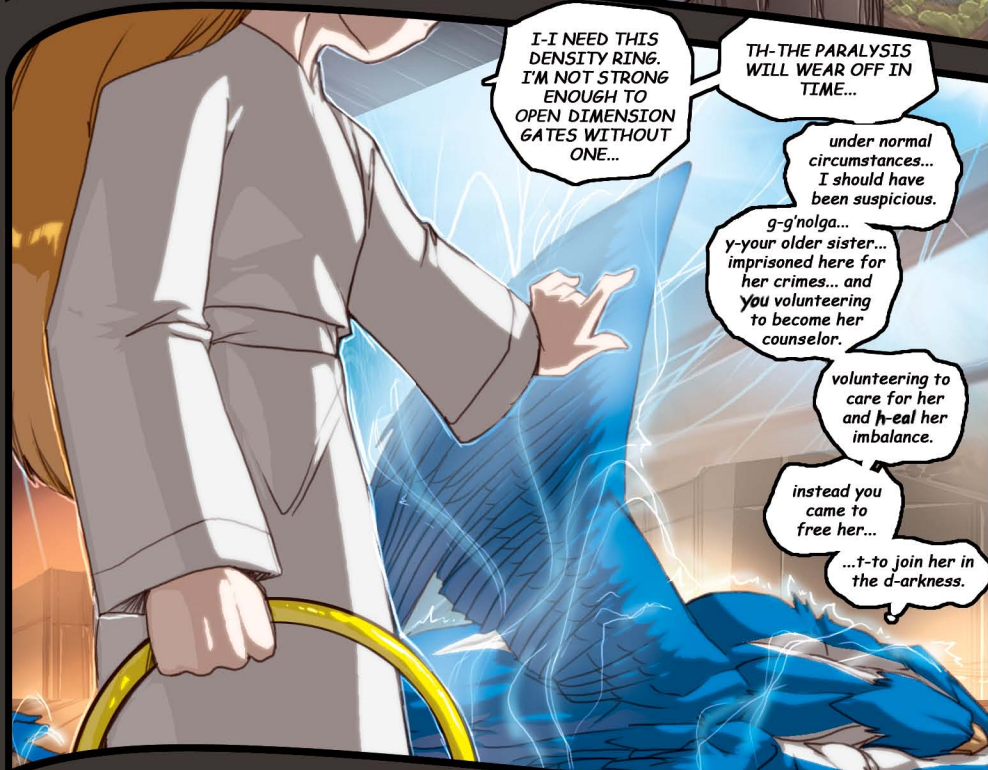
AEGIUS!

WE WON'T  
HAVE ENOUGH  
RINGS TO  
COUNTER THE  
"SLIP".

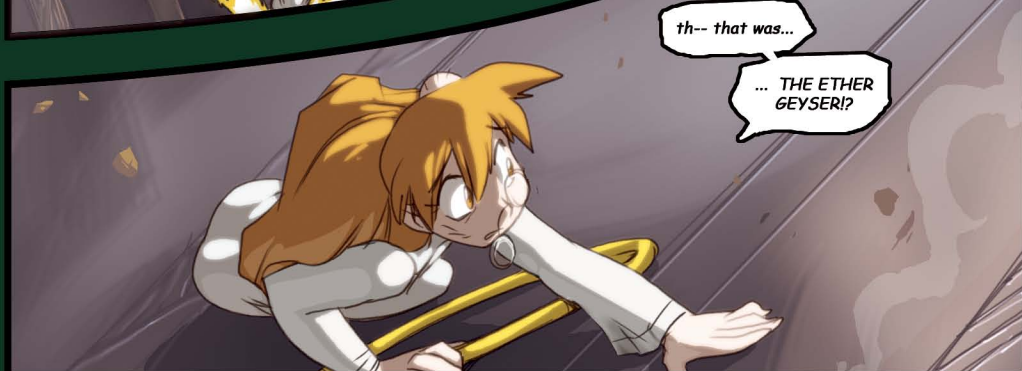
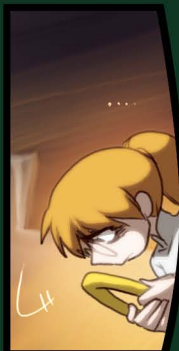
WE CAN'T COMPENSATE  
FOR THE ETHER GEYSER  
ERUPTING ON THE  
STRONGHOLD!

A COUNCILOR  
IS MISSING!



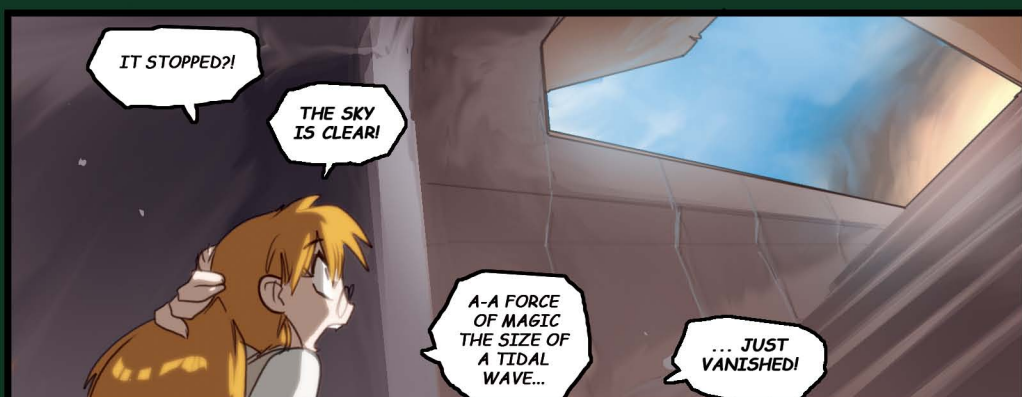






th-- that was...

... THE ETHER  
GEYSER!?



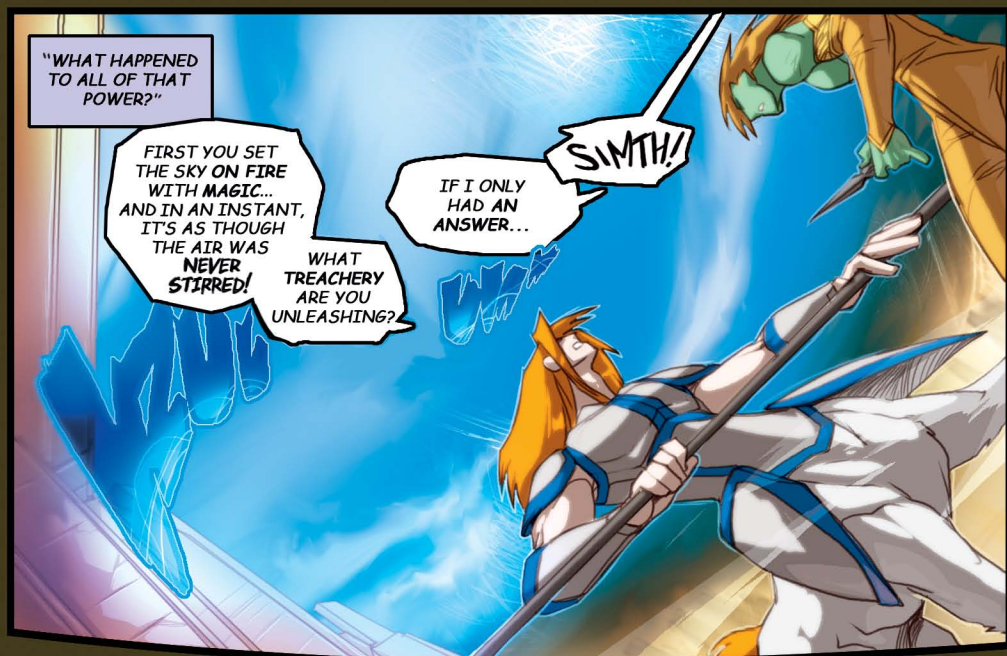
IT STOPPED?!

THE SKY  
IS CLEAR!


A-A FORCE  
OF MAGIC  
THE SIZE OF  
A TIDAL  
WAVE...

... JUST  
VANISHED!









Um... SIMTH, YOU KNOW, OF COURSE, THAT THE "POLITE" SLEEP GAS COMES IN GREEN AND PRODUCES BLUE SMOKE--

--AND THE "PUTRID" SLEEP GAS COMES IN BLUE AND PRODUCES GREEN SMOKE!

I KNOW.

"NOBODY'S PERFECT."

GHHKK....

D-DAMMIT...

OF A--GHF- ALL THE FOUL MANUEVERS...

GHACK--

THOSE TROLLS ATTACK THE STRONGHOLD, CAUSE UNTOLD HAVOC AND CHAOS...

...AND NOW THIS???

POTPOURRI MY \$\$\$!!!

HAVE TO PURS-UE...

DUSQUEI

DUSQUE, ANSWER Y-YOUR LINK-CRYSTAL!

I NEED YOU HERE IMMEDIA---

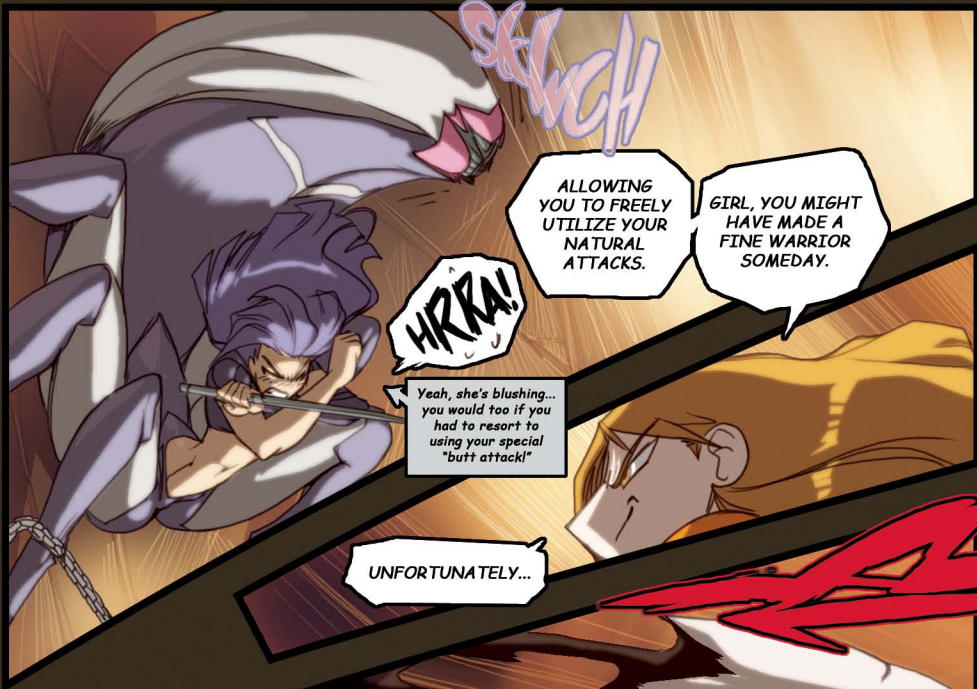
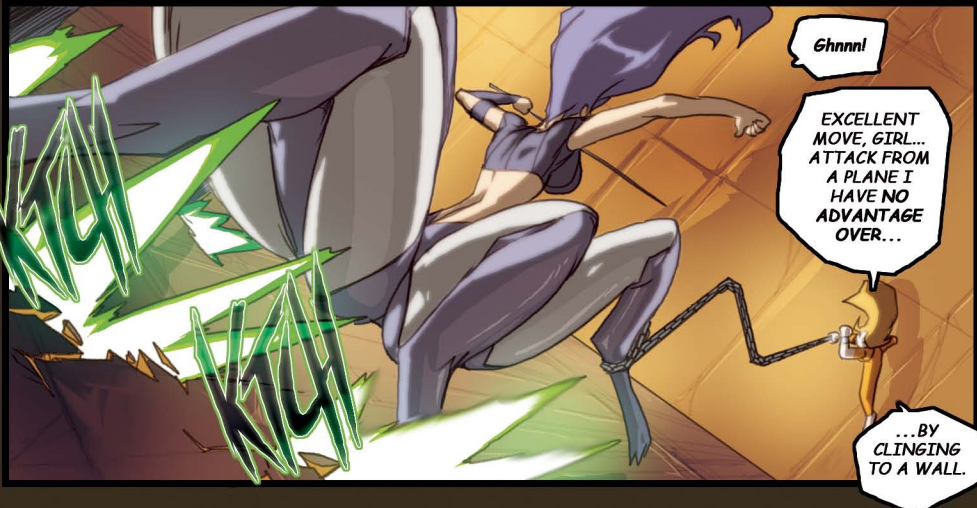
--APTAINI ARE YOU THERE? PLEASE ANSWER!

I-I THINK I'M GOING TO NEED A LITTLE HELP--

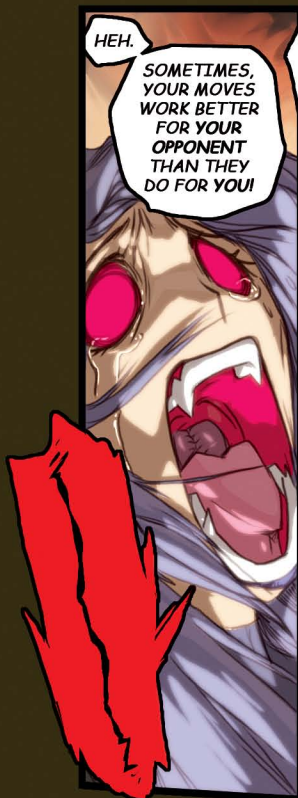












HEH.

SOMETIMES,  
YOUR MOVES  
WORK BETTER  
FOR YOUR  
OPPONENT  
THAN THEY  
DO FOR YOU!

I DIDN'T HAVE  
THAT KIND OF  
LEVERAGE  
WHILE YOU  
WERE ON THE  
GROUND.

PLUS YOU  
ANCHORED YOUR-  
SELF SO THAT  
YOU COULD  
ACCURATELY  
"WEB" ME.

A HARSH  
LESSON.

BUT THEN  
AGAIN, I'M  
A HARSH  
TEACHER.



EWWWW.  
That's gotta  
hurt.

LET'S NOT  
DELAY ANY  
LONGER.

WHERE IS  
MERIGOLD?

SHE'LL BE HERE.  
WE'LL WAIT IN  
THE NEXT HALL.

YOU GUYS  
GO AHEAD.

SPIDER B!\$##  
SUCKER-PUNCHED  
THE HELL OUTTA  
ME,\* AND NOW  
IT'S TIME...

...FOR ME AND  
PRECIOUS TO  
EVEN THE  
SCORE!

HEHEH... LOOK AT  
HER! SHE THINKS  
SHE'S IN PAIN!

TIME FOR  
HER TO **KNOW**  
SHE'S IN  
PAIN!!!

S-  
STOP!!!

NO MORE  
VIOLENCE!



\*LAST  
ISSUE-F.

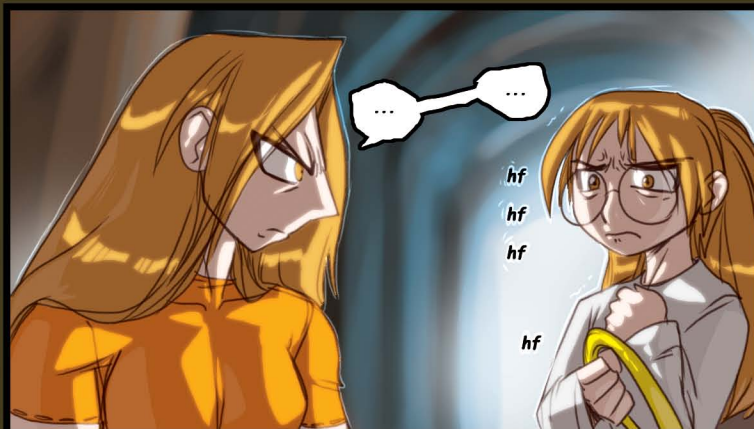
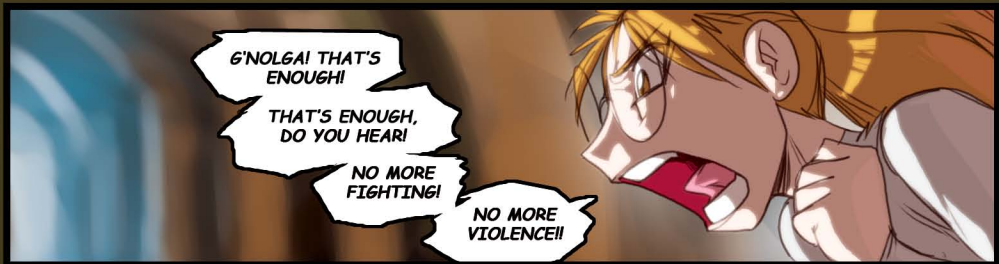
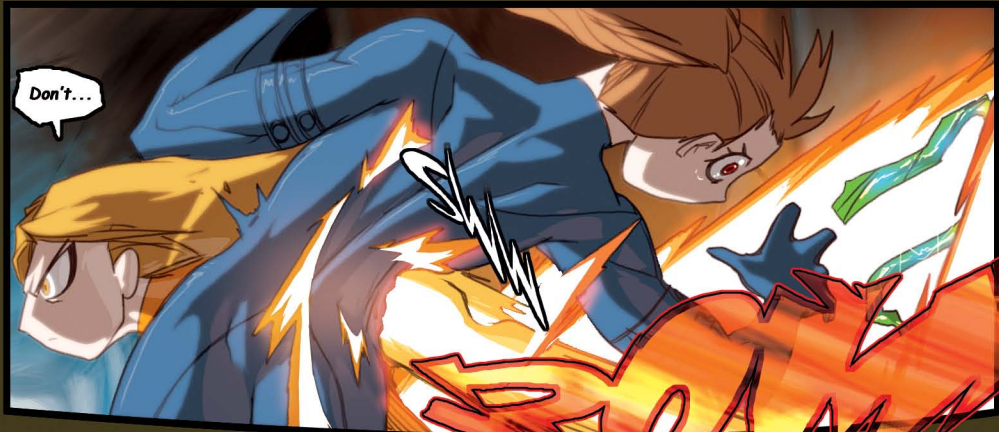
THAT POOR  
GIRL HAS  
HAD ENO--

GIT TH' F%#\$  
AWAY, B#@%\$!  
AND WAIT  
'TIL I'M  
DONE!

DON'T  
MAKE ME  
KICK YOUR  
@\$ \$ TOO!











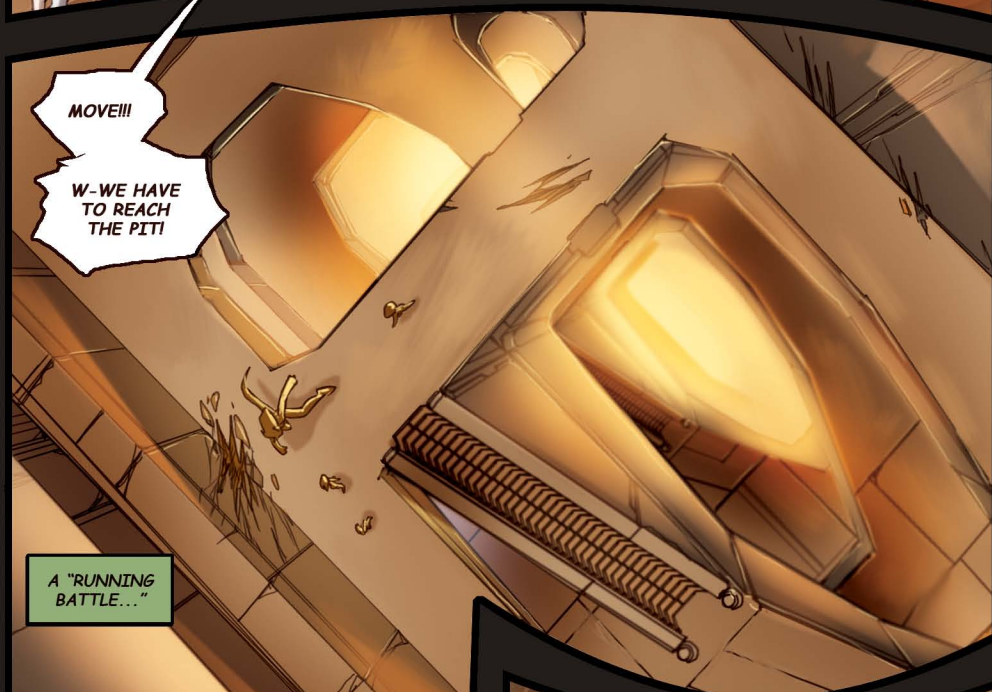




OLGA!

I'M--I'M  
OKAY!

KEEP  
MOVING!



MOVE!!!

W-WE HAVE  
TO REACH  
THE PIT!

A "RUNNING  
BATTLE..."

DESPITE MY BEST  
EFFORTS TO NEUTRALIZE  
GAEO'S MAGICAL POWER,  
SHE'S STILL TOO  
STRONG!

FIGHTING A  
DEFENSIVE  
"RUNNING  
BATTLE" IS  
THE ONLY  
WAY OLGA  
AND HER  
FRIENDS  
AVOID  
DEATH!



I--I HAVE  
MISCALCULATED!

GAEO  
IS STILL  
TOO  
STRONG!



EVEN WITH HER  
TRUE POWER TRAPPED  
WITHIN MY GRASP...

...GAEO WILL  
EVENTUALLY  
PREVAIL!

H-have we  
already  
failed?



Have I sent  
these poor  
girls straight  
to their  
deat--

HA!

Wh--  
What's  
this???

I-i don't  
believe  
it!

The battle is  
actually going  
AGAINST  
Gaeo!

Olga and her friends  
are co-ordinating  
their attacks!

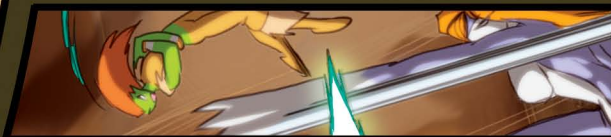
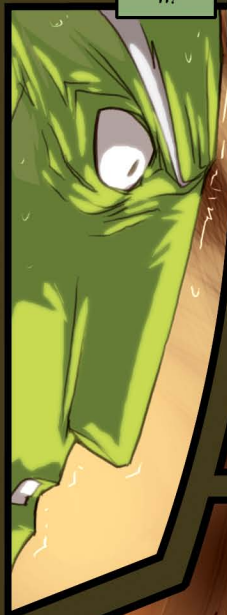
"Hit and  
run..."

"Charge..."

"...and feint!"

"Punish  
the opening!"

But Gaeo's  
strength and  
speed should  
have given  
her an  
IMPOSSIBLE  
ADVANTAGE!







Could it be...

Olga, Ahlea and  
Kelith are  
succeeding...

...Because  
they don't  
KNOW  
what they're  
doing is  
"impossible?"

O-of course!

When I was their  
age...ignorant of  
the ways of the  
world and magic...

...Before the  
age of conflict...

...Before I  
lost my  
friends  
to the  
war...

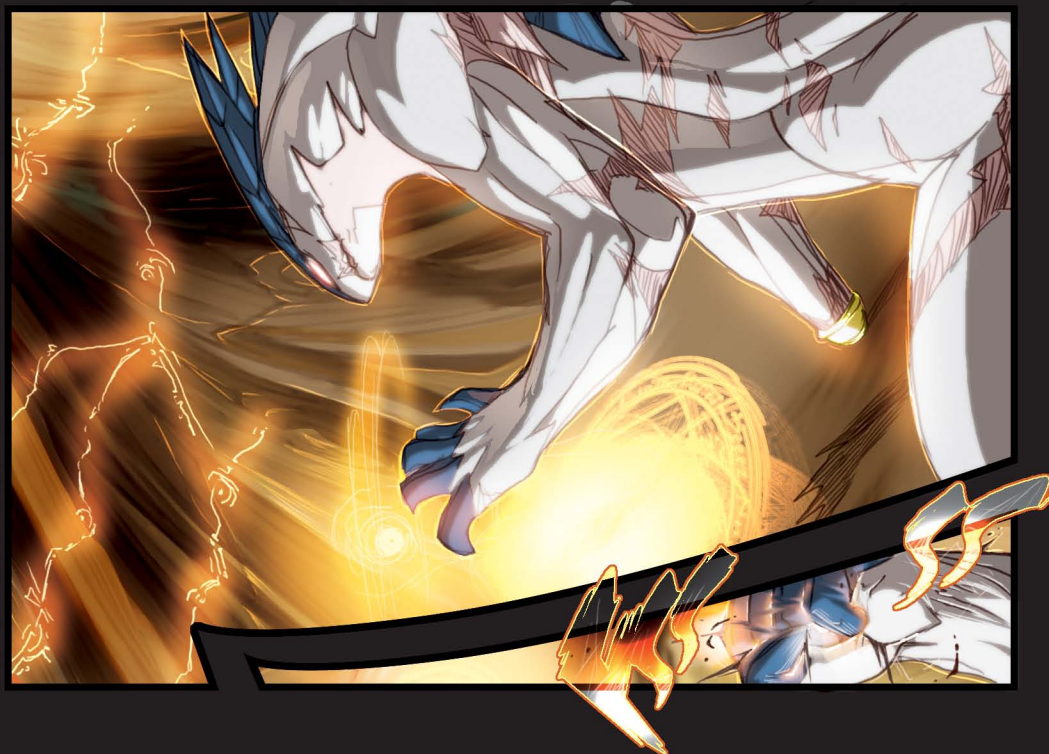
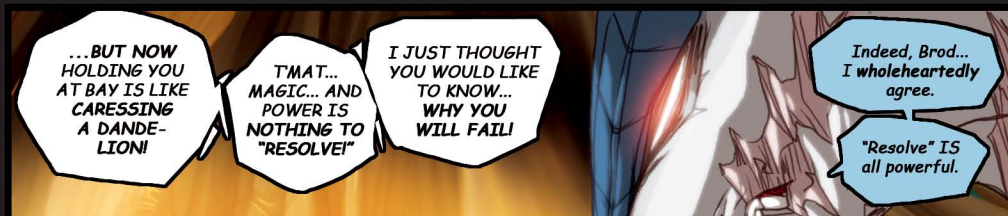
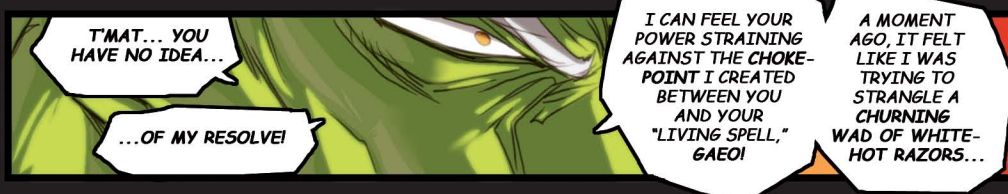
...We did the  
"impossible"  
with each  
adventure!

Olga,  
Ahlea and  
Kelith...

...We were  
once just  
like you!

Our friendship...  
our bond...  
was just  
like yours!









You want Mesha and Tark returned... but what of JUSTICE, Brod?

If it weren't for them, Dreadwing NEVER would have found the enigma!

IF IT WEREN'T FOR THEM, DREADWING NEVER COULD HAVE "SCARRED" ME!

YOU WANT YOUR FRIENDS?

YOU WANT TO ROB ME... OF THE ONLY THING I HAVE LEFT!



"YOU WANT TO TAKE AWAY MY JUSTICE..."

She... she's grasped the other side of the ethereal tether!

SHE'S ENGAGED ME IN SOME KIND OF DIMENSIONAL "ARM-WRESTLING MATCH" TO WEAKEN MY HOLD!

B-beware!

S--SOME OF THE GAEO'S POWER IS ESCAPING!

**BEWARE!**



EVERYONE! GET DOWN!!



### ANCIENT SPELL: "DIRE WARP"

AN INCREDIBLY VIOLENT MATTER-TELEPORT SPELL THAT EXCHANGES A COLUMN OF MATTER ONE MILE LONG WITH WHAT EVER IS IN THE SPELL'S DIRECT PATH TWO MILES AWAY...

...NORMALLY USED AGAINST FORTRESSES OR MOUNTAIN LAIRS.

THE PROVERBIAL "SHOTGUN TO KILL THREE HOUSE-FLIES" HERE, HOWEVER.



A--Ahlea...

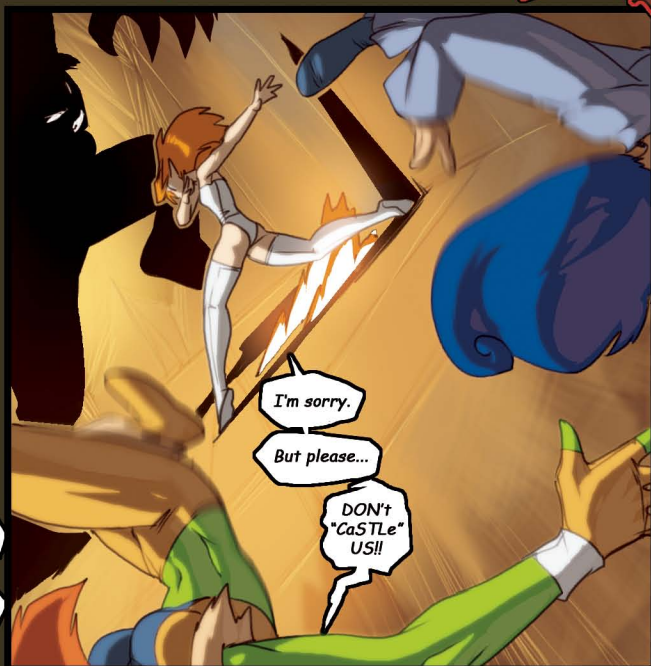
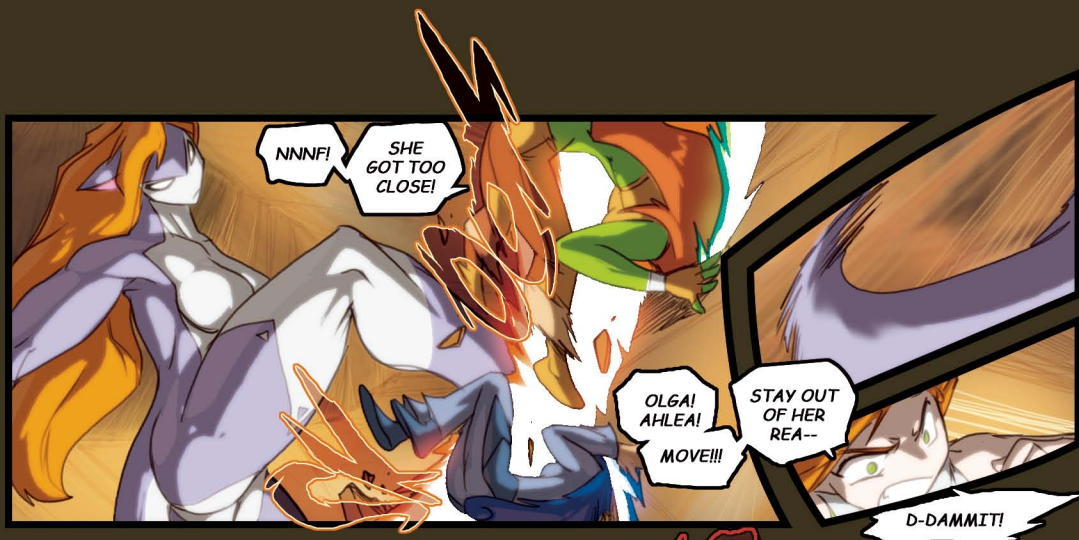
Don't tell the "elf chick"... but...

...i-I think I'll need that spare loin-cloth from your side pack.

What makes you think I don't need it?

**SWH**

















Gaeo... stay here in the lair.

I'll be back shortly.



I FEEL YOU ALREADY BROD...

...UNLIKE THE THUNDERING OF A GATE CRYSTAL OPENING A PORTAL...

...YOU'RE TAKING A STEALTHIER ROUTE!



I CAN FEEL YOU SLIPPING EVER SO SILENTLY ONTO THE PLANES...

...I CAN HEAR YOU... LIKE THE CREAKING OF A TINY DOOR SLOWLY OPENING.

YOU'VE ALREADY BEGUN OPENING YOUR "SECRET ESCAPE PASSAGE!"



I SEE YOU.

I HAVE YOU.

YOU AND YOUR COHORTS!

AND THE "WEATHER" IS PERFECT FOR YOUR DEATHS!



I ENCHANTED MESHA AND TARK WITH AURA-SHIELD VIOLET...

...A PROTECTIVE BARRIER AGAINST LIGHTNING.

SO THEY COULD BE PUNISHED BUT NOT DAMAGED.

THEY TOO WILL SUFFER... BUT... UNLIKE YOU... THEY SHALL SURVIVE.









You brought  
this on  
yourself  
Brod.

Y-you forced  
me...



...to KILL  
you.



You force  
m--

HUH?

ANOTHER  
DOOR IS...  
IS OPENING?



B--

BRODI??

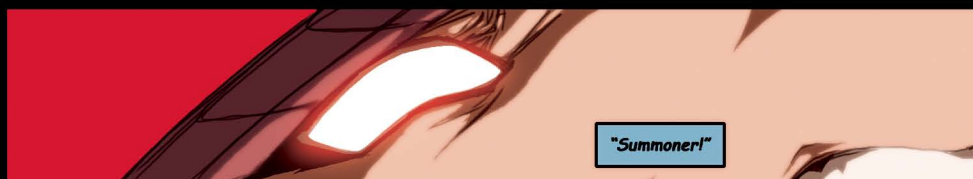








it...  
it can't  
be...



"Summoner!"

And I think  
I just killed  
her man...

TO BE CONCLUDED.