

# GOLD DIGGER

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**THE SHUN  
PROVING GROUNDS:**

THE MYSTIC HALL OF A  
WORLD APART AT THE  
END OF A LONG AND  
SECRET PATH...



HOW ODD...

...HOW VERY  
ODD.



NO CHIMES  
TO BID US  
ENTER.

TEACHER  
SAID THERE  
WOULD BE  
CHIMES.

AND A **GUARD** AT  
THE PORTCULLIS.

AND A **SPIRIT**  
TO GUIDE US  
BEYOND.



MAYHAP THERE  
EXISTS SOME  
RITE WE MUST  
PERFORM?

OR IT COULD  
BE THAT THE  
**SPECTRAL HOSTS**  
SOMEHOW FEEL  
THAT WE ARE NOT  
WORTHY OF THEIR  
LESSONS?



NO, THAT  
CAN'T BE  
RIGHT,  
CARLA.

TEACHER  
DESCRIBED THE  
GHOSTS OF THE  
OLD TEMPLE AS  
**SPRITELY OLD**  
**CODGERS** WHO  
ADORE NEW  
VISTORS.



AND THAT WE WERE  
JUST AS LIKELY TO RECEIVE  
TRAINING AS WE WERE TO  
HEAR TALES OF THE  
"GOOD OLD DAYS".

SO, IF WE WEREN'T  
WORTHY, THEY PROBABLY  
WOULD HAVE GIVEN  
US A HINT.



VERILY...  
AND PLAIN.





WE NEED  
THIS COURSE,  
YOU GUYS.

RIGHT NOW...  
WE'RE AT A PRETTY  
DANGEROUS STAGE  
OF OUR TRAINING.



REMEMBER...  
MENTAL FOCUS AND  
BATTLE MEDITATION  
ARE AT THE CORE OF  
THE SHUN STYLE  
MARTIAL ART!

OUR MOVES GET  
US "THERE"...  
A HEIGHTENED  
STATE OF MIND  
WHERE TIME  
SEEMS TO  
STAND STILL  
FOR US!

YOU GUYS KNOW  
WHAT I'M TALKING  
ABOUT, RIGHT?

YOU'VE  
BEEN  
"THERE"?



INDEED.

AND SUCH A  
STATE PUTS  
ANY ONE OF  
US AT DIRT  
RISK.

FOR IN THE HEAT  
OF BATTLE, THE  
SHADOW OF OUR  
ART WAXES.

A SHADOW  
LUAN HAS  
ALREADY  
TOUCHED.



CARLA  
SPEAKS OF  
"BATTLE  
EUPHORIA."

PIERCING WAVES  
OF INTENSE  
PLEASURE,  
SURGING FROM  
HEATED BLOOD.

THE FIGHT'S  
THRILL  
MAGNIFIED  
A THOUSAND,  
THOUSAND-  
FOLD.

N-NO SENSATION  
WAS EVER AS  
SWEET.

NOTHING  
COMPARES.



A-AND YET I AM  
CHILLED TO THE  
MARROW WITH  
THOUGHTS OF ITS  
CONSEQUENCE.

THE STATE OF  
"BATTLE EUPHORIA"  
IS EASILY WITHIN  
OUR REACH.

ANY ONE OF US COULD,  
BY CHANCE OR DESIGN,  
ATTAIN ITS PEERING,  
ADDICTIVE HEIGHTS...

...AND FALL  
FOREVER  
AFTER.

CONSUMED  
BODY AND  
SOUL BY A  
LUST FOR  
VIOLENCE  
A-AND  
MURDER.

I FEAR EVEN  
THOSE WE HOLD  
DEAR TO OUR  
HEARTS WOULD  
BECOME  
VICTIMS.





THE GUIDING SPIRITS WOULDN'T TURN US AWAY OR IGNORE US WHILE WE NEED THIS MUCH HELP.

SOMETHING'S UP.

YOU, I AND CARLA SHOULD LOOK INTO THIS, LUAN.



...WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF IT ALONG WITH OUR TRAINING!



THEN...IF WE WEREN'T IN MISFORTUNE'S EASY REACH BEFORE...

...WE TEMPT ITS FINGERS OPENLY TO GO FORTH.



AS TEACHER DESCRIBED IT, THE PROVING GROUNDS CAP A SPECTRAL LEY LINE OF ENORMOUS POWER.

IT SITS ATOP THE ETHEREAL EQUIVALENT OF A VOLCANO'S PEAK.

PERHAPS SUCH ENERGY SUSTAINS THE PHANTOM HOSTS OF THIS SECRET TEMPLE.

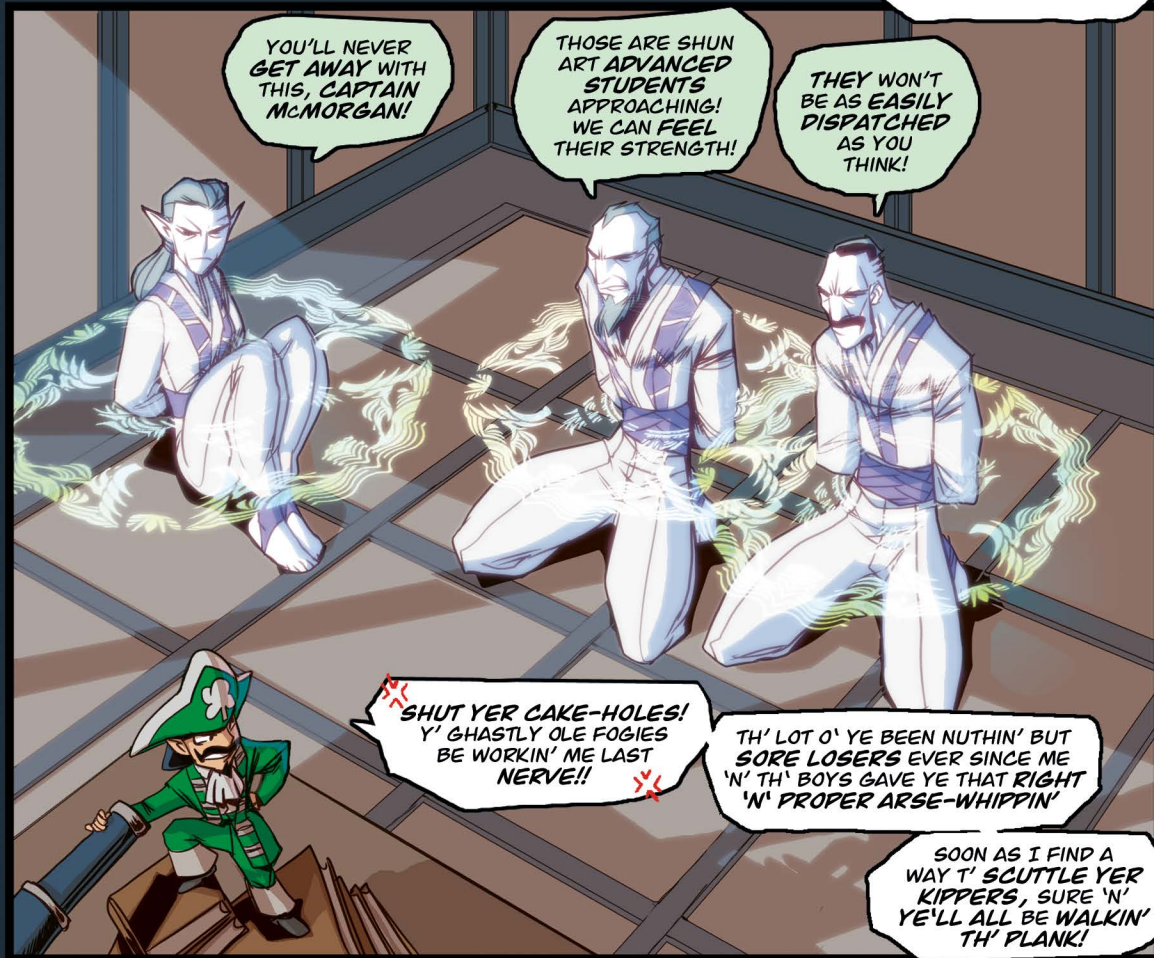
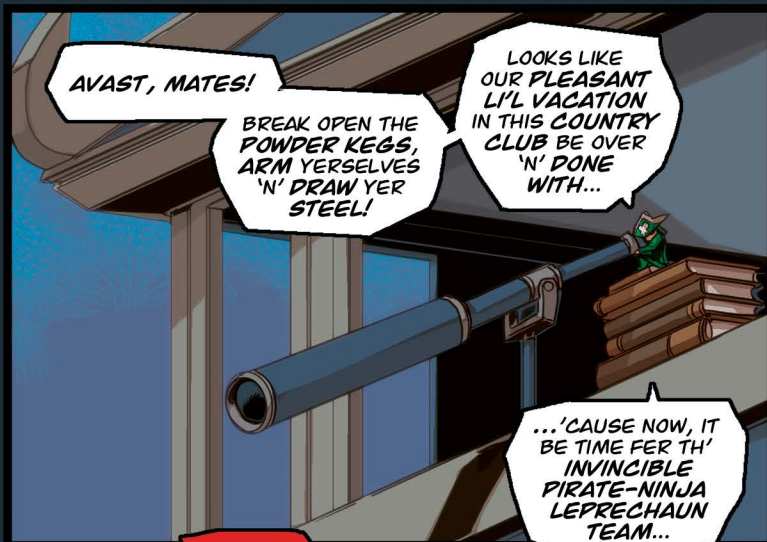
BUT WE CAN ILL AFFORD TO GO POKING AROUND AN UNFAMILIAR STRUCTURE THAT CAPS A SEALED CONFLAGRATION.



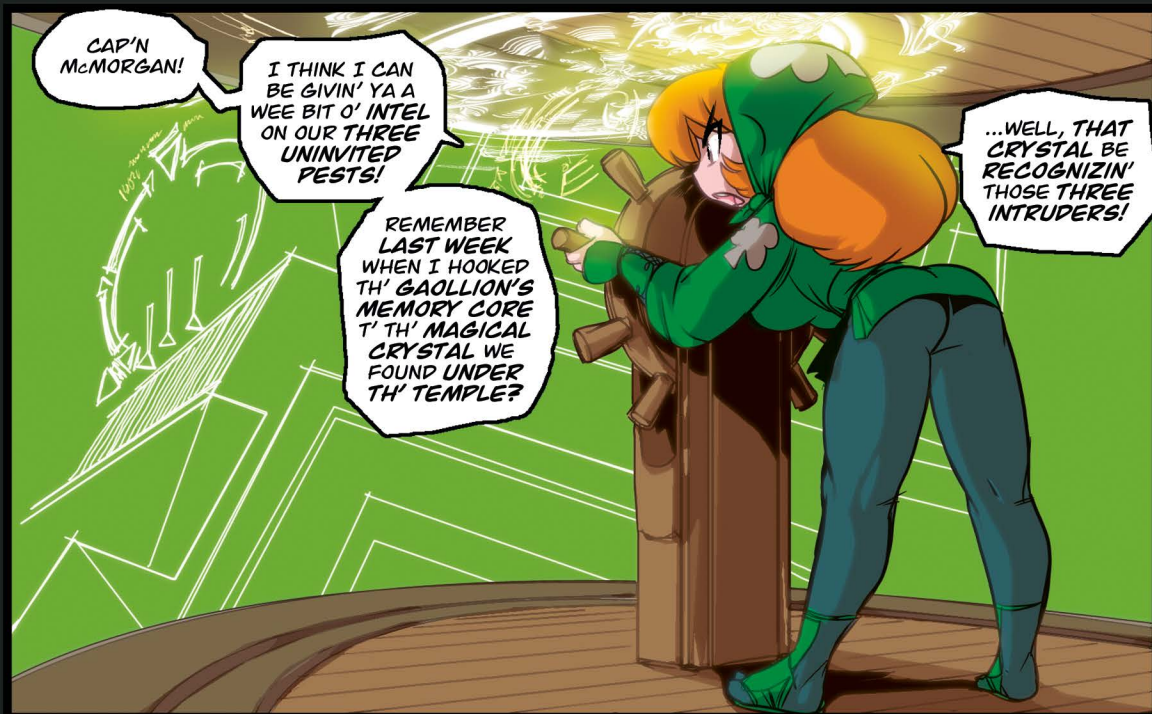
I STILL SAY WE LOOK INTO THIS.

WHAT IF SOMETHING'S WRONG?









CAP'N  
McMORGAN!

I THINK I CAN  
BE GIVIN' YA A  
WEE BIT O' INTEL  
ON OUR THREE  
UNINVITED  
PESTS!

REMEMBER  
LAST WEEK  
WHEN I HOOKED  
TH' GAOLLION'S  
MEMORY CORE  
T' TH' MAGICAL  
CRYSTAL WE  
FOUND UNDER  
TH' TEMPLE?

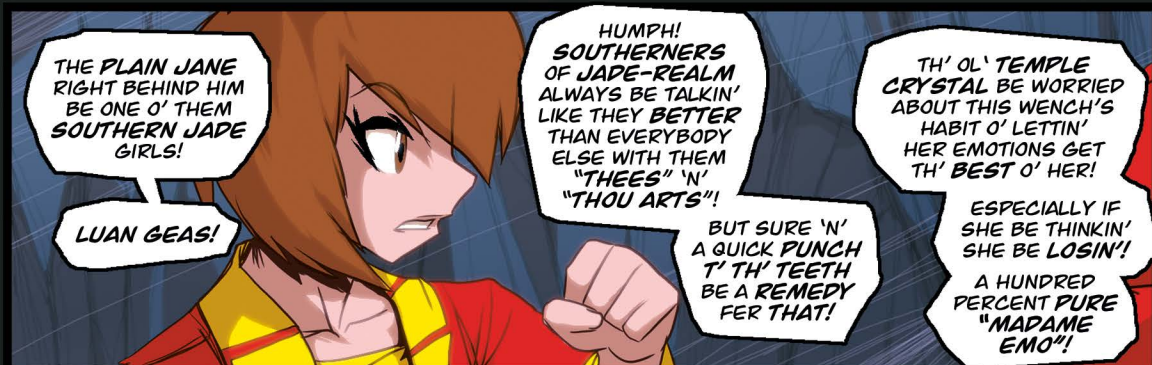
...WELL, THAT  
CRYSTAL BE  
RECOGNIZIN'  
THOSE THREE  
INTRUDERS!



TH' STUPID-LOOKIN'  
REDHEAD LEADIN' TH'  
PACK BE A WERE-CAT...  
GARFIELD SILVEAR  
FROM TH' NORTH O'  
JADE-REALM!

THE CRYSTAL BE  
CONCERNED ABOUT  
HIS LACK O' SELF-  
CONFIDENCE 'N' TH'  
BRAVE FRONT HE  
BE PUTTIN' UP T'  
COMPENSATE!

HEH! LOOKS LIKE WE  
BE HAVIN' US A  
"BOLD LI'L  
SCAREPY-CAT"  
T' PLAY WITH!



THE PLAIN JANE  
RIGHT BEHIND HIM  
BE ONE O' THEM  
SOUTHERN JADE  
GIRLS!

LUAN GEAS!

HUMPH!  
SOUTHERNERS  
OF JADE-REALM  
ALWAYS BE TALKIN'  
LIKE THEY BETTER  
THAN EVERYBODY  
ELSE WITH THEM  
"THEES" 'N'  
"THOU ARTS"!

BUT SURE 'N'  
A QUICK PUNCH  
T' TH' TEETH  
BE A REMEDY  
FER THAT!

TH' OL' TEMPLE  
CRYSTAL BE WORRIED  
ABOUT THIS WENCH'S  
HABIT O' LETTIN'  
HER EMOTIONS GET  
TH' BEST O' HER!

ESPECIALLY IF  
SHE BE THINKIN'  
SHE BE LOSIN'!  
A HUNDRED  
PERCENT PURE  
"MAPAME  
EMO"!



TH' GOOFY-LOOKIN'  
ONE BRINGIN' UP TH'  
REAR BE ANOTHER  
SOUTHERN WENCH  
NAMED CARLA  
DELTOYA!

ACCORDIN' T' THE  
TEMPLE CRYSTAL,  
CARLA BE A BIT  
TOO CAUTIOUS  
'N' REPRESSED  
FER HER OWN  
GOOD!

PRONE TO  
HESITATION  
'N' INDECISION  
WHEN SHITE  
AIN'T GOIN'  
RIGHT!

SO SHE BE  
"LI'L MISS  
TIGHT-ARSE"!





ARR!  
GOOD  
WORK,  
NUMBER  
ONE!

THAT BIT O'  
INFO JES MIGHT  
BE NEEDED T'  
TIP TH' SCALES  
A BIT!



**BATTLE STATIONS!!!**

BIG MAC!

GRNT!

McPUMPED!

HAI!!!

O'SHWING!

HUT!

TH' MEMBERS OF  
TH' PIRATE-NINJA  
LEPRECHAUN  
CREW BE WINKED-  
IN\* 'N' READY  
FER ACTION,  
CAP'N!!!

\*BY TOUCHING A FINGER TO  
THE NOSE AND WINKING, A  
FAERY CAN TELEPORT SHORT  
DISTANCES OR OPEN SECRET  
PORTALS... --F.



**KICK ARSE!!!**

ALL HANDS  
PREPARE FER  
LAUNCH 'N'  
GAOLLION  
TRANSFORMATION  
T' SHINOBI  
MODE!



THERE BE A KING'S  
RANSOM IN GOLD  
NUGGETS, GEMS  
'N' DIAMONDS  
JUST WAIT'N' T'  
BE MINED BELOW  
THIS TEMPLE!



TH' TREASURE WE  
KIN PLUNDER...

...BE EASILY  
WORTH A BILLION  
BUCKS!!!



"SO I PROPOSE  
WE BE PROTECTIN'  
OUR PRECIOUS  
BOOTY..."

"...BY BURSTIN'  
OPEN TH' LOCKS  
ON TH' OFFICIAL  
PIRATE-AMBUSH  
HURT LOCKER!"

"'N' THEN WE  
BE SAYIN'  
'HURRAY!!'"



SWEPT STAIRS...  
CLEAN COURT-  
YARDS...

...EVERYTHING'S  
IN EXCELLENT  
REPAIR.

AND STILL  
NO ONE IN  
SIGHT!

NOT A SOUL!

OFTEN AS NOT,  
THE DIFFERENCE  
BETWEEN SAFETY  
AND DANGER IS  
ONE SECOND  
OF RELAXED  
BREATH.

WE SHOULD  
BEWARE.



GAR SEMPAI...  
WHAT SOUNDS DO YOUR  
WERE-CAT EARS  
DETECT?

WELL...

...I THINK I  
MIGHT NEED  
MY HEARING  
CHECKED.



BECAUSE  
ALL I CAN  
DETECT...

...IS THE MUFFLED  
SOUND OF TALKING  
MICE SNICKERING  
AT US FROM INSIDE A  
REFRIGERATOR?!

HOLD,  
SEMPAI!

I THINK HERE  
IS THE MOUSE'S  
"FRIDGE"!







OF ALL THE STRANGE--

A WOODEN, CAT-SHAPED...

...REFRIGERATOR?

COULD THIS THING HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH OUR MISSING GUIDE SPIRITS?



'TIS FOREIGN TECHNOLOGY. (WHAT DO THEY CALL THE MECHANICAL GOLEMS OF EARTH?)

"ROBOTS"... AND SOMETIMES "MINIVANS." THIS MIGHT BE OF THAT SORT.

IT'S NOT A "MINIVAN".

I DEFER TO YOUR APPRAISAL FOR NOW, SEMPAI.



AND I'M NOT SO SURE IT'S A ROBOT EITHER!

I LIKE IT!

THEY USUALLY DON'T MAKE THEM OUT OF MAHOGANY... WITH IMBUIA AND TEAK ACCENTS!

'TIS A WORK OF GOOPPLY CRAFTSMANSHIP.

IT SEEMS TO ME MORE ART PIECE THAN THREAT OR PUZZLE.

YOU HAVE STRANGE TASTES, CARLA.



BUT THOSE TINY VOICES I OVERHEARD BEFORE ARE ALL QUIET NOW.

I'M NOT EVEN SURE THEY CAME FROM THIS WOODEN CONSTRUCT ANYMORE.



PERCHANCE THE VOICES CAME FROM THE CAT THAT LOOKS JUST LIKE THIS ONE...ACROSS THE WAY?





WHAT IN  
THE...

ARRR! TH'  
PERFECT  
PLACEMENT  
'N' TARGET  
GROUPIN'!

SURE 'N' WE  
GOT 'EM  
COLD!!!

KIXXEN  
GAOLLION!  
TRANSFORMAHALIA!!

NUMBER ONE!  
ARM THEM  
ETHER-  
BOOSTERS  
'N' CHARGE TH'  
PIRATE-NINJA  
PIMP-KNUCKLE  
ATTACK!

SURE 'N'  
IT NOT ONLY  
BE TIME T'  
SHOW THEM  
PRANCIN',  
PAJAMA-CLAD  
LILY-LIVERS  
WHAT BE  
GOOD...

...BUT  
WHAT BE  
REALLY  
GOOD!!!

L-

L-LEPRECHAUNS!?!









OHOO!

THINKIN' YE BE ALL SLICK, EH?

WELL, SURE 'N' Y' AIN'T SEEN SLIPPERY...



... 'TIL Y' TANGLED WITH WEE FOLK WHO BE BEASTIN' TH' RAINBOW MAGIC!



NH!

SO THEY ARE LEPRECHAUNS!



MEAN ONES!

PILOTING A GIANT (TO THEM) ROBOT!



A FIGHT AGAINST TELEPORTING NINJA-FAERIES ARMED WITH EXPLOSIONS AND FIREBALLS???

I'M CERTAIN I-I'VE NEVER TRAINED FOR THAT!

BUT I HAVE!



THUNDER--

THUNDER--

THUNDER EDGE...\*

\*AS A FORMER MEMBER OF THE NORTHERN EDGE-GUARD, GAR HAS EARNED THE ABILITY TO SUMMON THE ELEMENTAL WEAPON "THUNDER EDGE"!









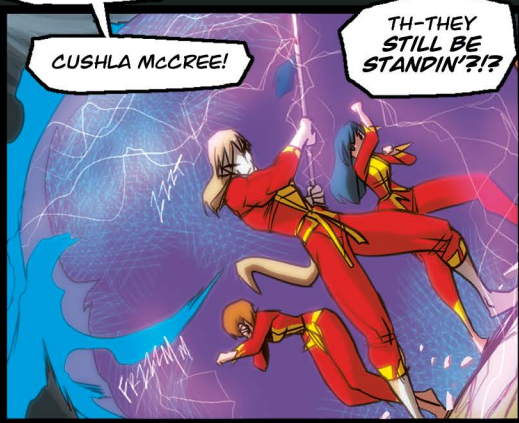
YAR!  
YAR!  
YAR!

TAKE THAT!



THE ONLY THING  
WAITIN' FOR YE  
AT TH' END O'  
THIS RAINBOW  
BE AN OPEN CAN  
O' WHUP-ARSE!

YOU BIG  
FOLK AIN'T  
SHI--



CUSHLA MCCREEE!

TH-THEY  
STILL BE  
STANDIN'?!?



N-NICE  
THUNDER ELEMENTAL  
DEFENSE BUBBLE!

THANKS,  
SEMPAI!

WE SHOULD--



WHA?

HEY!!!  
GET BACK  
HERE!!!

HARD T'  
STARBOARD!  
HAUL ARSE,  
NUMBER  
ONE!!!



FAITH 'N'  
BEGORRAH, CAP'N!  
  
THEY BE IMMUNE  
T' TH' ONLY ANCIENT  
MAGIC WE CAN BE  
FLINGIN' AT 'EM!

OUR ONE ACE  
IN THE HOLE...  
TRUMPED!  
  
WH-WHAT DO WE  
DO NOW?

THIS BE ONLY  
A TEMPORARY LOSS  
O' PIMP-STEADY,  
NUMBER ONE!

SURE 'N' WE  
STILL GOT US A  
PLAN T' FALL  
BACK ON!





WE CAN BE  
USIN' THAT  
MAGIC CRYSTAL  
DOWN BELOW  
AS A WEAPON,  
MATEYS!

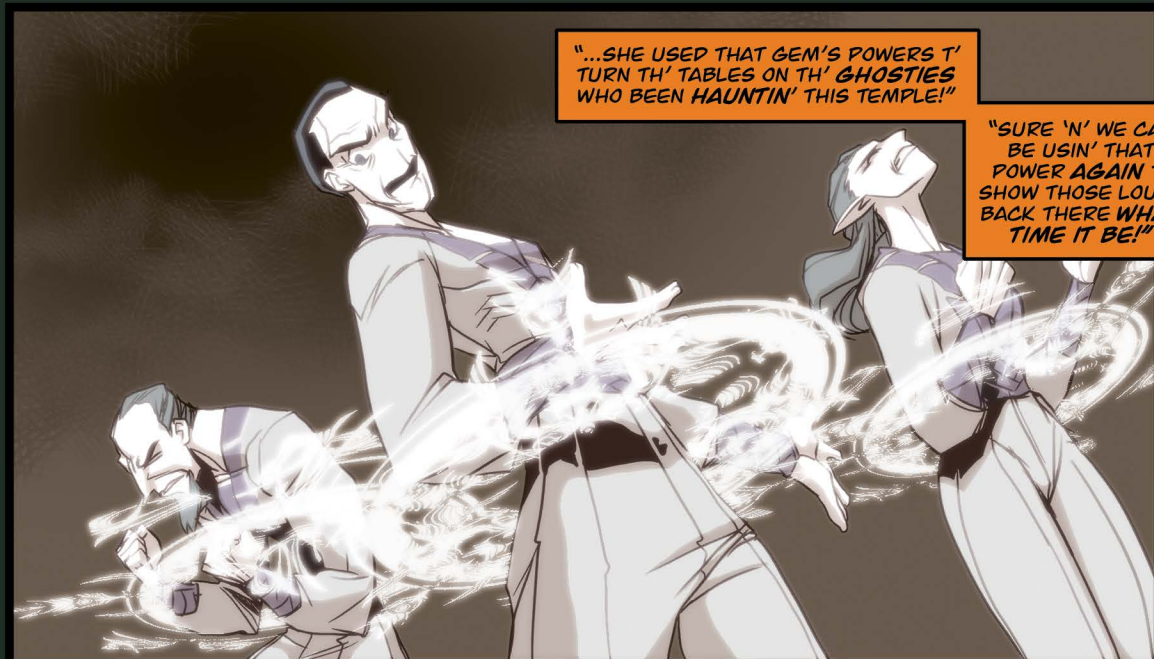
SURE 'N' IT WORKED  
JUST LIKE A CHARM  
BEFORE...



...BACK WHEN  
WE WERE LOOKIN'  
AROUND FOR  
A NEW PLACE  
T' HANG UP  
OUR COATS!



"BACK WHEN  
O'MOMMAH  
FIRST DISCOVERED  
TH' CRYSTAL ON  
'ER ARTIFACT  
SCANNER!"



"...SHE USED THAT GEM'S POWERS T'  
TURN TH' TABLES ON TH' GHOSTIES  
WHO BEEN HAUNTIN' THIS TEMPLE!"

"SURE 'N' WE CAN  
BE USIN' THAT  
POWER AGAIN T'  
SHOW THOSE LOOTS  
BACK THERE WHAT  
TIME IT BE!"



BUT THAT CRYSTAL'S  
POWERS STILL BE A  
MYSTERY, CAP'N!

A MIX O'  
TECHNOLOGY  
'N' MAGIC!

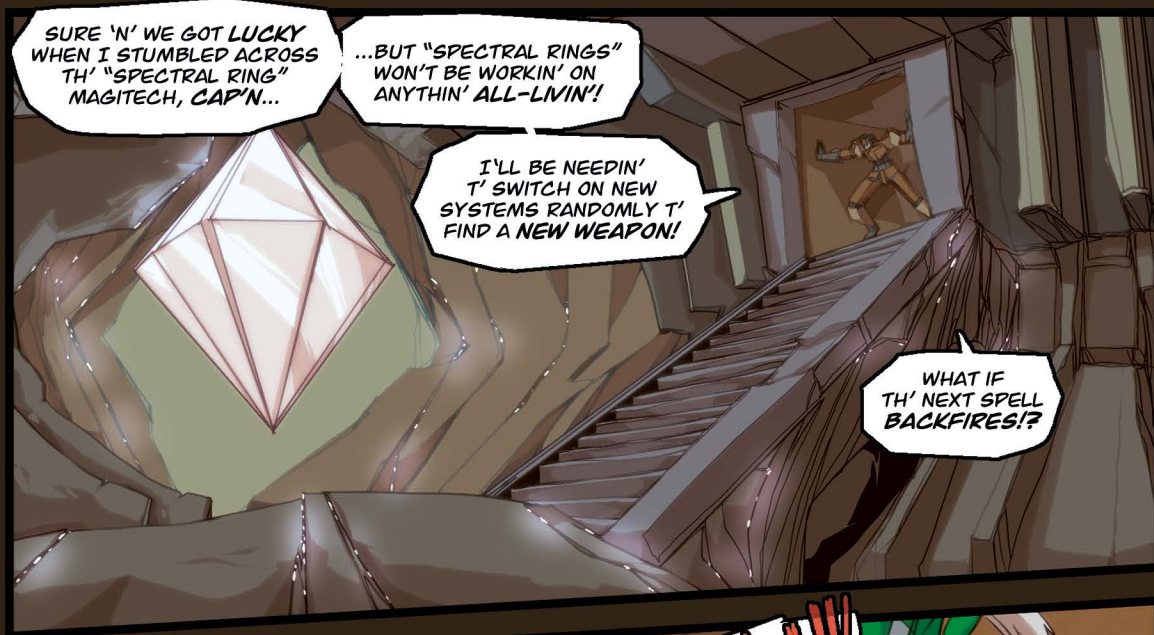
TH' SAME  
MIX O' MAGIC  
'N' TECH THAT  
WE FOUND IN  
OUR OLD UNDER-  
WATER HEAD-  
QUARTERS!

NOW, SPELLS 'N'  
SCIENCE BE MY  
CUP O' IRISH  
COFFEE...



...BUT MY INVENTIONS  
PALE IN COMPARISON  
T' ARTIFACTS LIKE TH'  
WORKER WE FOUND  
AT OUR OLD BASE  
'N' TH' CRYSTAL WE  
FOUND HERE!





SURE 'N' WE GOT LUCKY  
WHEN I STUMBLED ACROSS  
TH' "SPECTRAL RING"  
MAGITECH, CAP'N...

...BUT "SPECTRAL RINGS"  
WON'T BE WORKIN' ON  
ANYTHIN' ALL-LVIN'!

I'LL BE NEEDIN'  
T' SWITCH ON NEW  
SYSTEMS RANDOMLY T'  
FIND A NEW WEAPON!

WHAT IF  
TH' NEXT SPELL  
BACKFIRES!?



HMM!  
GOOD POINT,  
NUMBER  
ONE!

IT MIGHT NOT  
BE WORTH TH'  
RISK!

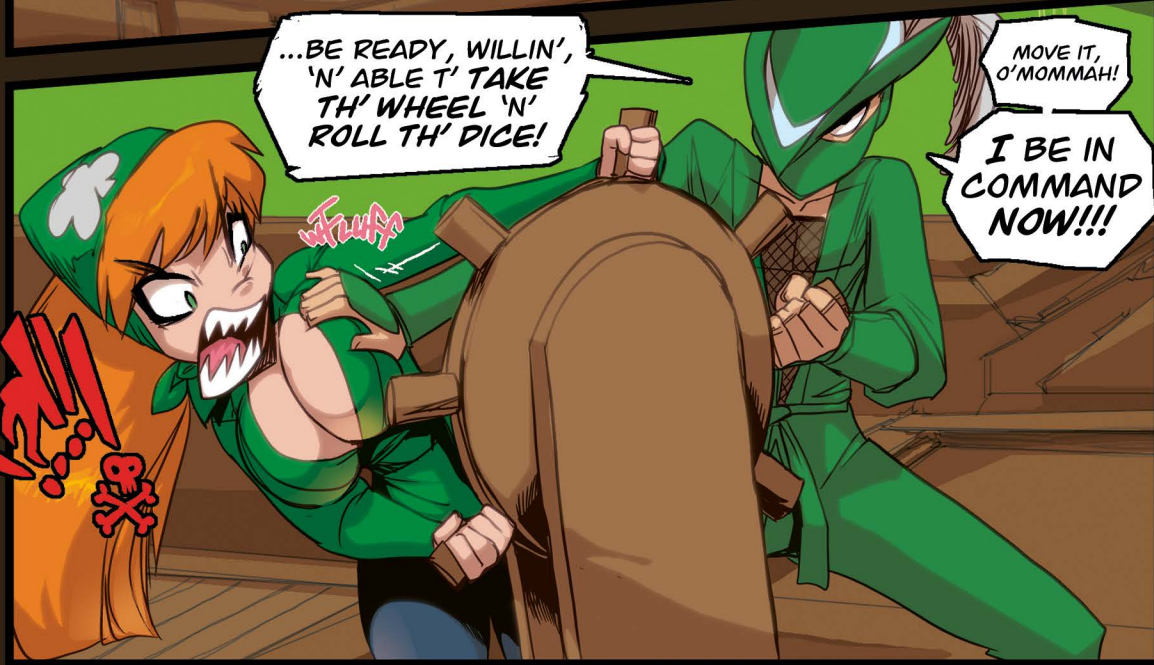
**HogWash!!!**



A TRUE LEADER  
BE NOT AFRAID T'  
TAKE A FEW RISKS T'  
CLAIM VICTORY!

HESITATION BE  
TH' BASTION O' TH'  
WEAK, "CAPTAIN"  
MCMORGAN!

A TRUE  
LEADER...  
LIKE ME...



...BE READY, WILLIN',  
'N' ABLE T' TAKE  
TH' WHEEL 'N'  
ROLL TH' DICE!

MOVE IT,  
O'MOMMAH!

I BE IN  
COMMAND  
NOW!!!



KRAM



SURE 'N' I'LL F#\$%IN' KEELHAUL YER #@\$-#\$%IN', @#\$%IN', #@\$%IN', @#\$%IN', @#\$%IN' NEEDLE-#\$%IN' 'N' SHOVE IT RIGHT UP YOUR #@\$%IN' ARSE, McPUMPED!

'N' DON'T YOU BE TOUCHIN' THAT BUTTO--

RRMBL  
RRMMBLE



THEY CAME THROUGH HERE?

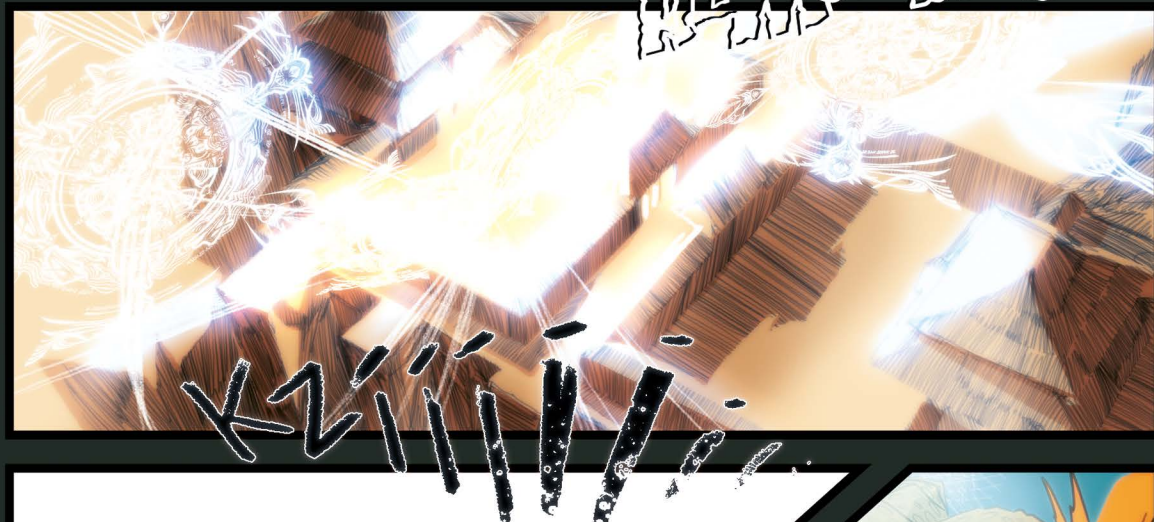
CAREFUL!

THIS PATH IS FITTED BY KIND FOR AMBUSH AND--



--TREACHERY?

RRMMBLE



KZZIIIIII



UGH!!!

GAR!





WELL, THIS IS UNEXPECTED!

BR--  
BRITANNY?

WARN ME THE NEXT TIME YOU PLAN TO POP IN FROM OUT OF THIN FRIGGIN' AIR!

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

OR DID YOUR FACE-PLANT INTO MY PICNIC SPOT SCRAMBLE SOMETHING?



I-I WAS...

I WAS JUST-- IN THE TEMPLE... IN A--A BATTLE AND--

WHERE ARE WE?

I TOLD YOU! WE'RE AT MY PICNIC SPOT!

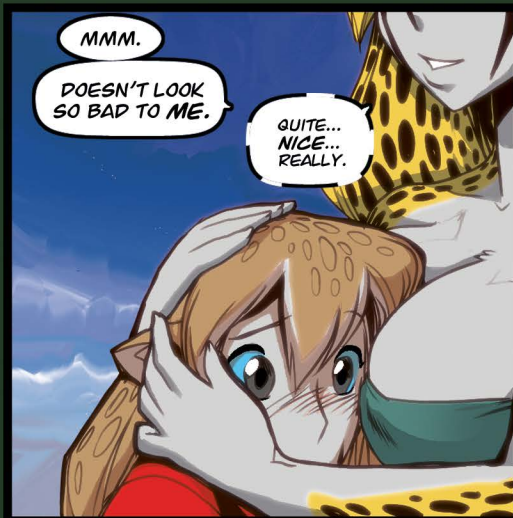
TSK. YOU DID SCRAMBLE SOMETHIN'.

DON'T LAND ON YOUR DOME NEXT TIME, GAR!



COME ON. LET ME LOOK AT IT.

UH.



MMM.

DOESN'T LOOK SO BAD TO ME.

QUITE... NICE... REALLY.



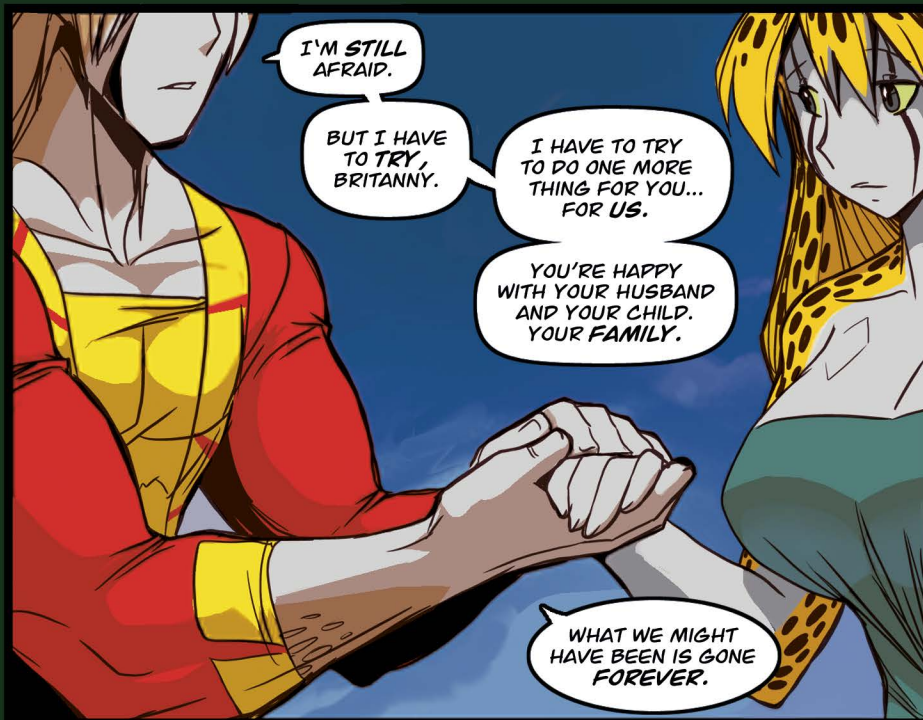
I'M REALLY GLAD...

...YOU DROPPED BY, GAR.













GARFIELD SILVEAR!

WH--

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

WHERE AM I NOW?

YOUR SPIRIT WAS BROUGHT HERE... TO AN EVALUATION AREA WITHIN THE TEACHING CRYSTAL.

THIS IS HOW I AM ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOU.

I AM HENICE, THE INSTRUCTOR IN CHARGE OF THE SPIRITUAL TRIALS.

IT IS MY DUTY TO PREPARE AND EVALUATE TESTS LIKE THE ONE YOU JUST PASSED!

LAST BOX  
O' Cookies  
'n th'  
Whoole  
World!



YOU ARE INDEED AN ASTOUNDING STUDENT, GARFIELD SILVEAR.

TO PASS A TRIAL OF WEAKNESS USUALLY REQUIRES MONTHS OF PREPARATION AND MEDITATION.

AND YET YOU OVERCAME IT AFTER A GROUP OF PIRATES ACCIDENTALLY USED IT AGAINST YOU AS A WEAPON!



AN ACCIDENT TO WHICH THEY THEMSELVES HAVE FALLEN VICTIM.

MY MEETING WITH BRITANNY? THE PICNIC? WAS A TRIAL?

A TRIAL AGAINST YOUR OWN WEAKNESS.

IT IS AMONG THE MOST DANGEROUS OF THE TEACHING CRYSTAL'S TESTS.

ONE CAN EASILY LOSE ONESELF FOREVER INSIDE THAT TRIAL'S ILLUSIONARY PLANE.



WE'RE ALL LUCKY YOU SUCCEEDED, GARFIELD SILVEAR.

I CAN NOW GUIDE YOUR THOUGHTS SO THAT YOU MAY ASK THE TEACHING CRYSTAL TO FREE US AND YOUR FELLOW STUDENTS.

UM... WH-WHAT IS LUAN DOING?

ER...

THE TRIALS ARE USUALLY PRIVATE, GARFIELD SILVEAR.

IN THIS TEST, THE INTIMATE WEAKNESSES OF A STUDENT'S HEART ARE LAID BARE.

A PREPARED STUDENT TRIES TO CONFRONT THAT WEAKNESS AND COME TO UNDERSTAND IT...BUT AN UNPREPARED STUDENT USUALLY... GIVES IN AND... INDULGES.

SO... ...NO PEEKING, PLEASE.

BUT... IS THAT ME SHE'S WITH?!

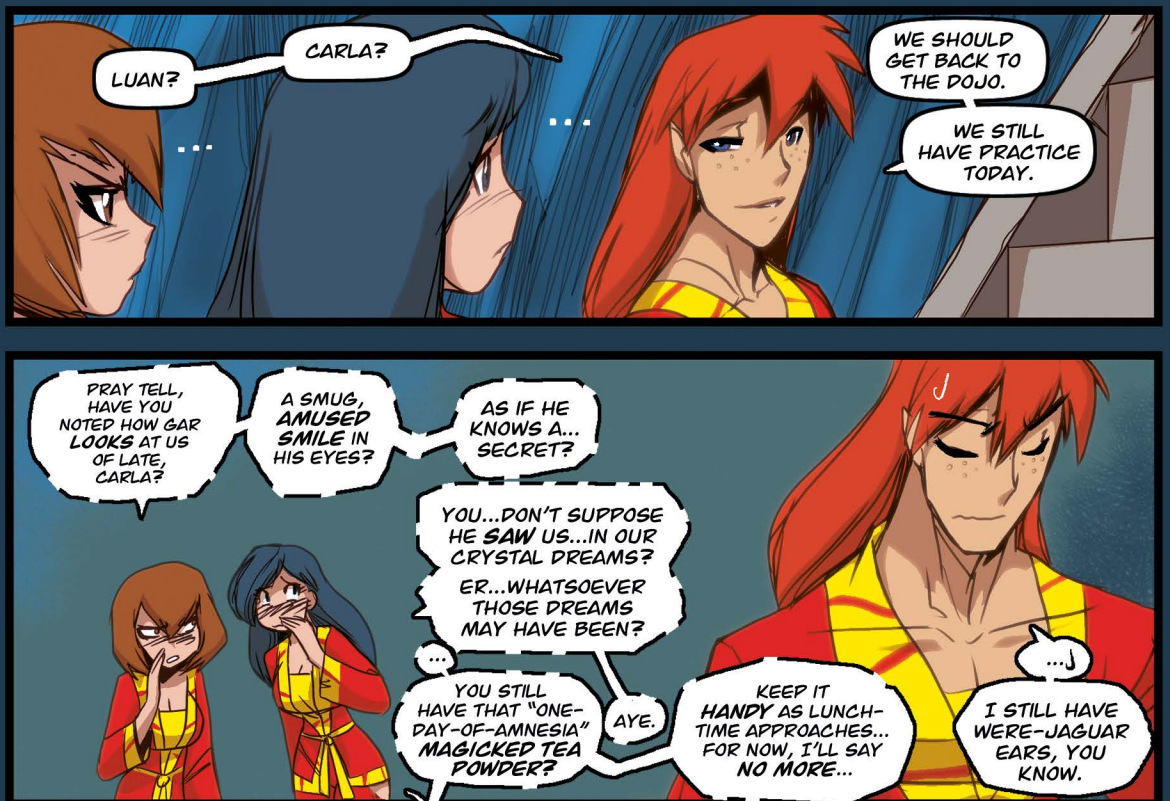
NO PEEKING!!!



EPILOGUE #1



EPILOGUE #2



THE END...OF GAR'S TEA PRIVILEGES AT LUNCH.