



GOLD DIGGER

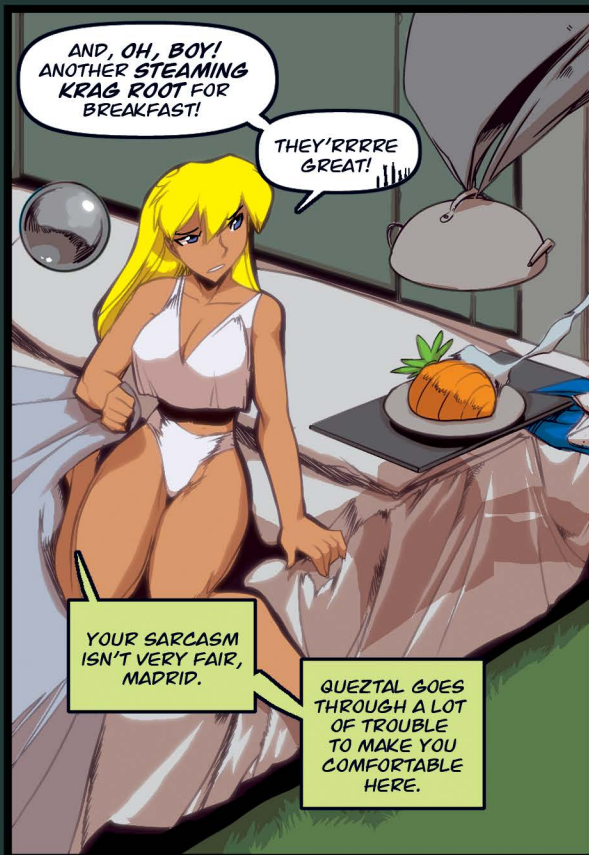
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FRED PERRY



OCTOBER 2010





AND, OH, BOY!
ANOTHER STEAMING
KRAG ROOT FOR
BREAKFAST!

THEY'RRRRE
GREAT!

YOUR SARCASM
ISN'T VERY FAIR,
MADRID.

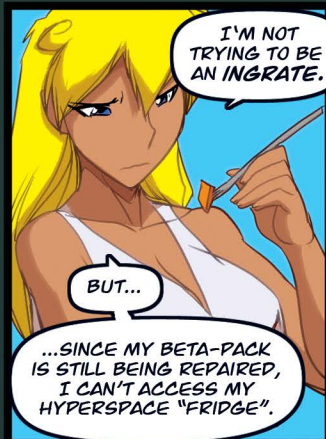
QUEZTAL GOES
THROUGH A LOT
OF TROUBLE
TO MAKE YOU
COMFORTABLE
HERE.



A FEMALE
AETHER PHOENIX
SHARING THIS REGION
OF THE ASTRAL RIFTS
WITH YOU AT ALL IS
A TREMENDOUS
GESTURE OF TRUST
AND HOSPITALITY.

~SIGH~
I KNOW,
I KNOW...

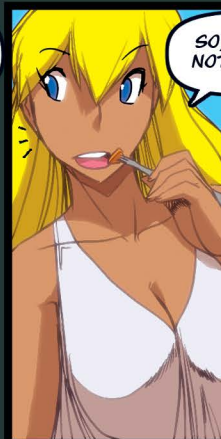
THANKS,
QUEZTAL.



I'M NOT
TRYING TO BE
AN INGRATE.

BUT...

...SINCE MY BETA-PACK
IS STILL BEING REPAIRED,
I CAN'T ACCESS MY
HYPERSPACE "FRIDGE".



SO, IT'S BEEN
NOTHING BUT...

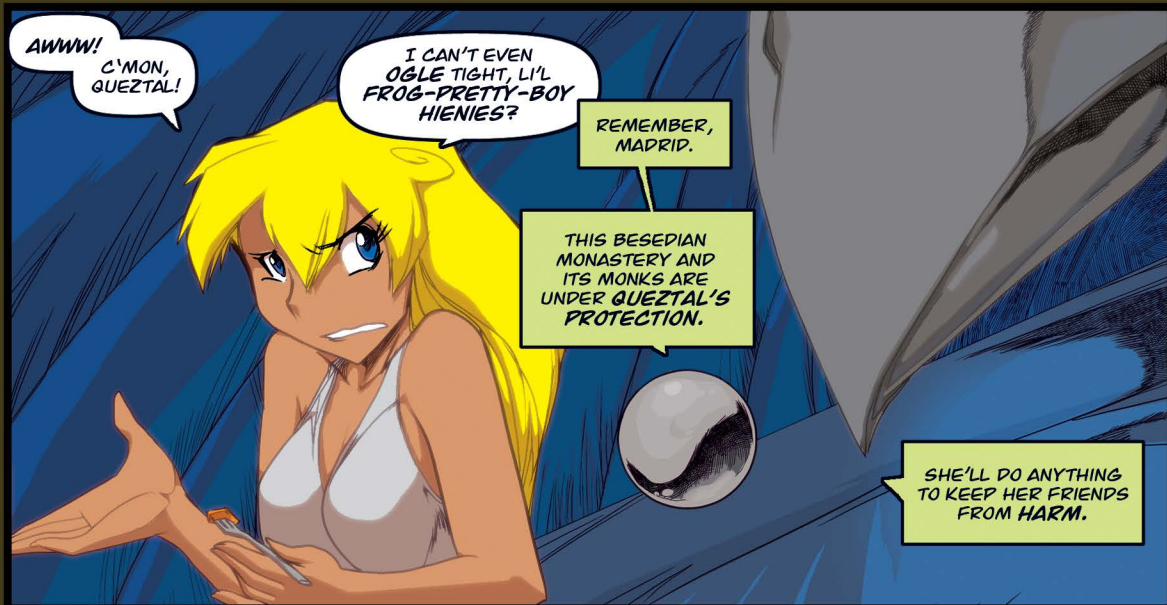
...STEAMED
KRAG
VEGGIES...

...AND AN
UNSATISFIED
APPETITE...

...F--FOR
WEEKS
NOW...







AWWW!
C'MON,
QUEZTAL!

I CAN'T EVEN
OGLE TIGHT, L'L
FROG-PRETTY-BOY
HIENIES?

REMEMBER,
MADRID.

THIS BESEDIAN
MONASTERY AND
ITS MONKS ARE
UNDER QUEZTAL'S
PROTECTION.

SHE'LL DO ANYTHING
TO KEEP HER FRIENDS
FROM HARM.



BUT "HARMING" I-IS THE
LAST, AND I'M TALKING
LAST, THING I'D DO TO
ANY OF THEM!!!

AND-->GASP<
OMAGOSH!!!
LOOK AT THAT
ONE!!!

OOO!
HE SO
FRIGGIN'
HEALTHY!!!

WANT!!!



AND LOOK AT
THEM!

EVERY TIME
THEY SEE
ME...

...THEIR CHEEKS PUFF OUT
IN THAT CUTE FROG-BOY
BLUSH OF THEIRS!

THEY WANT
TO TOO!!!

I DON'T SEE
WHY I AND MY
PICK OF ONE OF
THEM CAN'T--
YOU KNOW--
BOW-CHICKA-
WOW-WOW!



...

WTF

OKAY, OKAY,
QUEZTAL.

YOU'RE
RIGHT.

BESEDIAN
MALES ARE
WIRED TO "HOOK
UP" FOR LIFE.

SUPER
CLINGY.

FOR THEM
A "FLING" IS
A PRETTY
ALIEN THING...

...AND DYING
OF A BROKEN
HEART MIGHT
NOT BE A
FIGURE OF
SPEECH FOR
THEM.

F#@\$.



WELL....
THANKS AGAIN
FOR **BREAKFAST**,
QUEZTAL!

GUESS I'M GOING
TO HAVE TO SETTLE FOR
BIG, THICK VEGGIES
AND **MY IMAGINATION**
FOR A WHILE.

THAT IS, AT
LEAST UNTIL MY
BETA PACK'S
REPAIRS ARE
DONE!

I'M NOT GOING
TO RISK OPENING A
HYPERSPACE PORTAL
WITH ONLY **TWENTY**
PERCENT POWER
AVAILABLE UNLESS
THERE'S A **REAL**
EMERGENCY.

IF THAT IS
YOUR CONCERN,
PERHAPS I MAY
SUGGEST AN
ALTERNATIVE
SOLUTION?



WE COULD GO
THROUGH THE
PORTAL MS.
GINA DIGGERS
IS OPENING
LATER TODAY,
MADRID.

YOUR LAST ASTRAL RIFT
EXPLORATION LOG ENTRY
WAS TRANSMITTED JUST
BEFORE WE ARRIVED
IN THIS REGION.

??

IT STANDS TO
REASON THAT
GINA'S PORTAL
FROM EARTH WILL
APPEAR AT THAT
LOCATION.

DON'T YOU
REMEMBER?

WHA?

MADRID, TODAY IS
THE DAY OF THE
ANNUAL DIGGER'S
FAMILY COOKOUT.

THE DAY EVERYONE
COMES TO VISIT
YOU DURING YOUR
GREAT ASTRAL RIFT
EXPEDITION?

TO MAKE SURE YOU
DON'T GET TOO
LOVELY OR UNGLUED
BEING OUT HERE
FOR SO LONG?



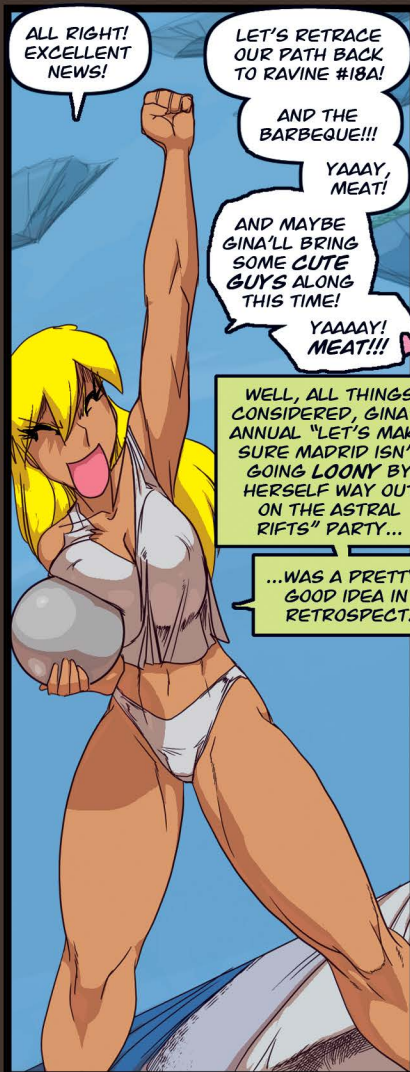
YOU MEAN I COULD
HAVE BEEN SAVING
MY STOMACH FOR
HAMBURGERS AND
GRILLED TUNA...

...AND "**COWBOY**
STRYP'S ORIGINAL,
RED-HOT, EXTRA-
BOLD, RICOCHET
'PEW-PEW-PEW'
BBQ SAUCE"!?!?

WHY DIDN'T
YOU REMIND
ME SOONER,
SUBTRACTO?

I'M YOUR
FRIEND.

I'M **NOT** YOUR
CALENDAR OR
YOUR PERSONAL
COMPUTER,
MADRID.



ALL RIGHT!
EXCELLENT
NEWS!

LET'S RETRACE
OUR PATH BACK
TO RAVINE #18A!

AND THE
BARBEQUE!!!

YAAAY,
MEAT!

AND MAYBE
GINA'LL BRING
SOME CUTE
GUYS ALONG
THIS TIME!

YAAAAAY!
MEAT!!!

WELL, ALL THINGS
CONSIDERED, GINA'S
ANNUAL "LET'S MAKE
SURE MADRID ISN'T
GOING LOONY BY
HERSELF WAY OUT
ON THE ASTRAL
RIFTS" PARTY...

...WAS A PRETTY
GOOD IDEA IN
RETROSPECT.



AND BY THE
WAY, QUEZTAL'S
ALMOST FINISHED
MAKING A
NEW SHOWER
FOR YOU.

OH, YEAH.

MY BETA PACK'S
SONIC SHOWER'S
STILL DOWN FOR
REPAIRS.

OR MAYBE
SHE'S TRYING
TO GIVE ME
A HINT.



YOU KNOW,
ROOMIE...

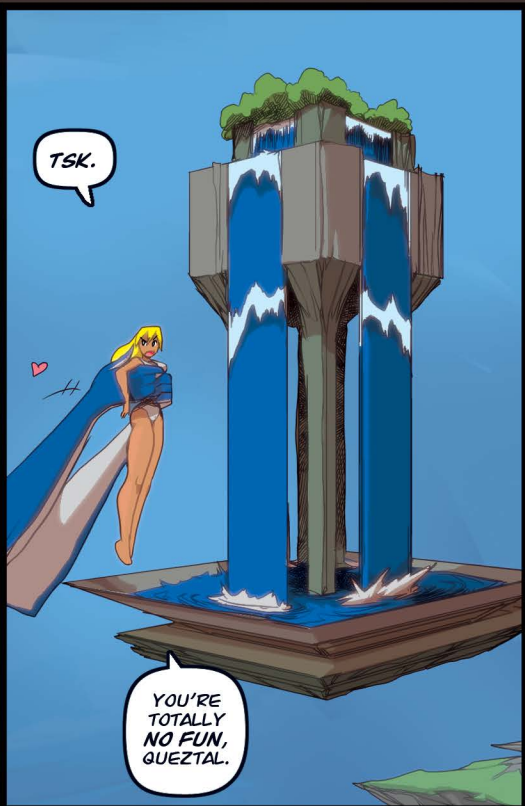
...THOUGH I
APPRECIATE
IT, YOU DIDN'T
HAVE TO USE
YOUR ELEMENTAL
MANIPULATION
POWERS JUST TO
MAKE ALL THIS
STUFF FOR
LITTLE OL'
ME.

I COULD
HAVE SLEPT IN
A MONASTERY
BED...W-WITH
THE BOYS...

...AND I COULD
HAVE USED THE
PUBLIC BATH ALONG
WITH EVERYONE
ELSE.

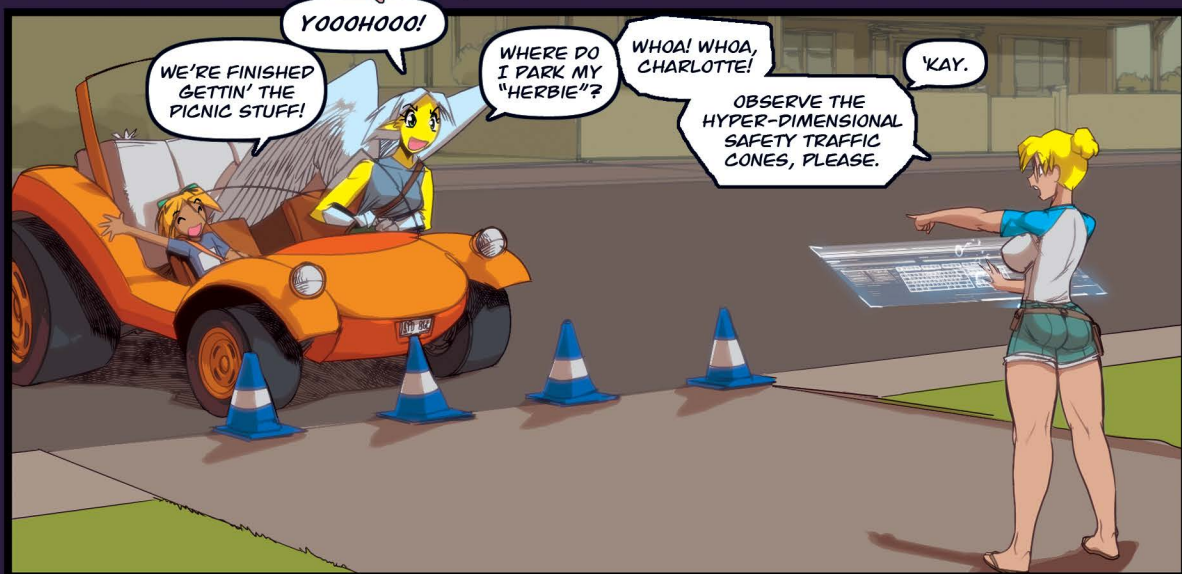
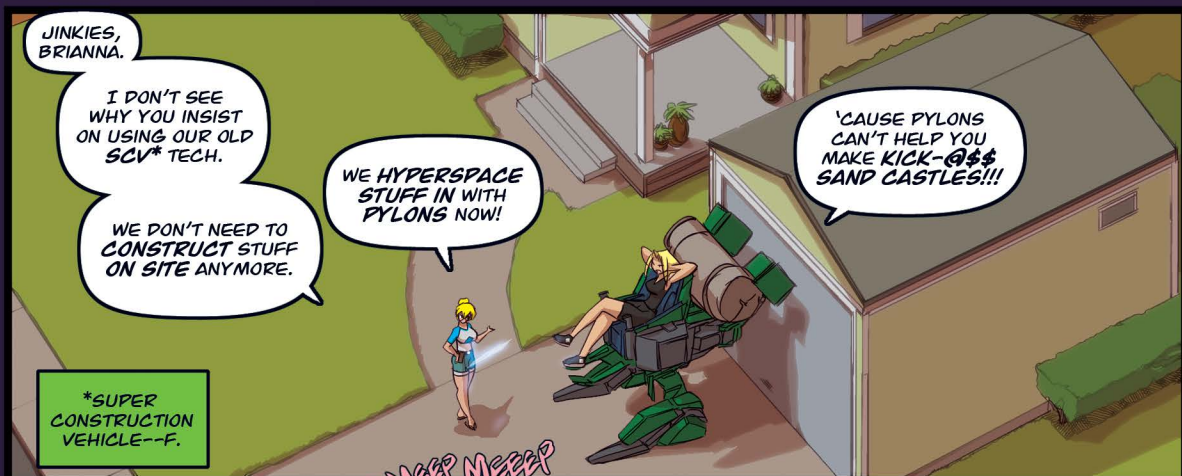
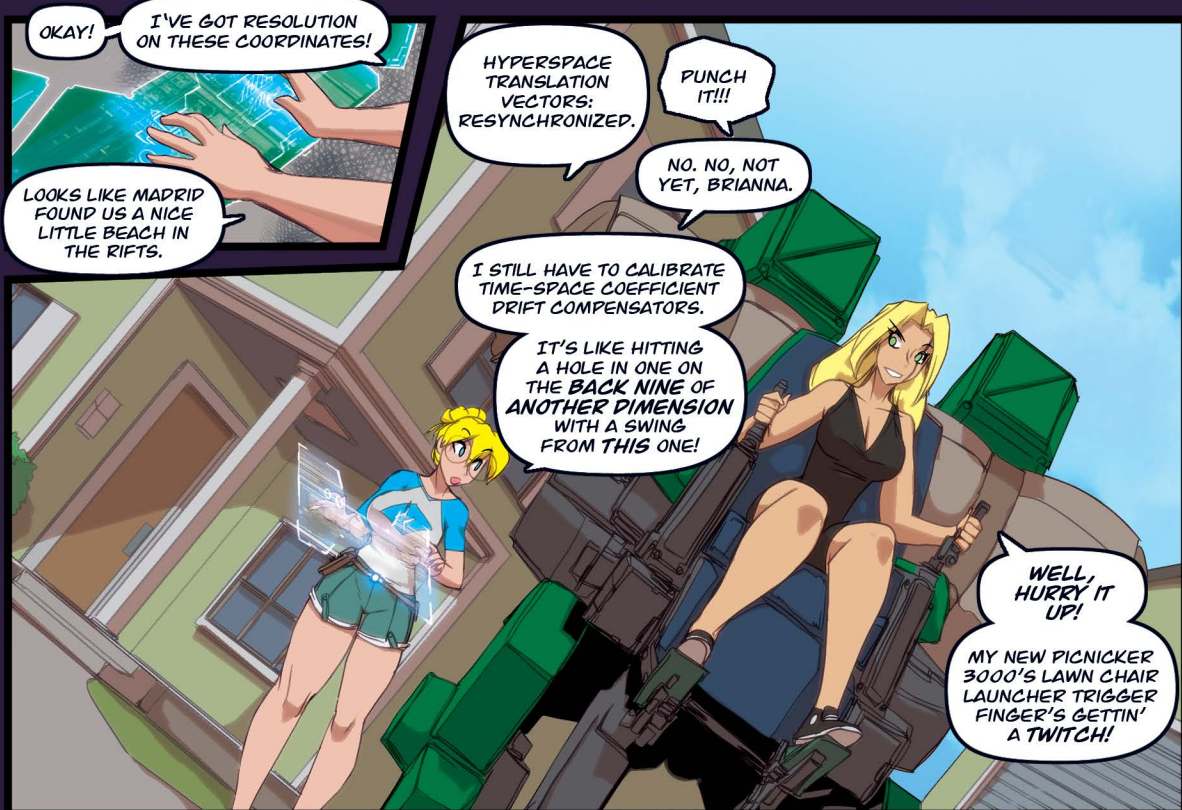
I'D
HAVE
BEHAVED!
REALLY!

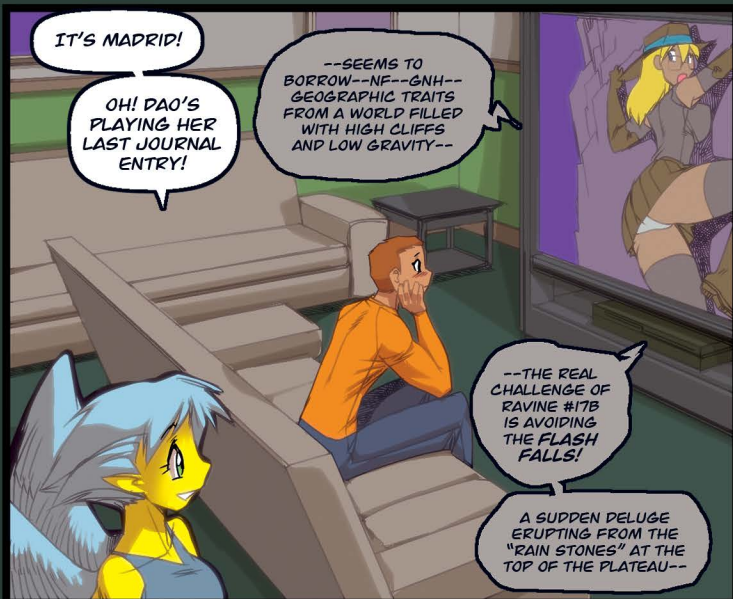
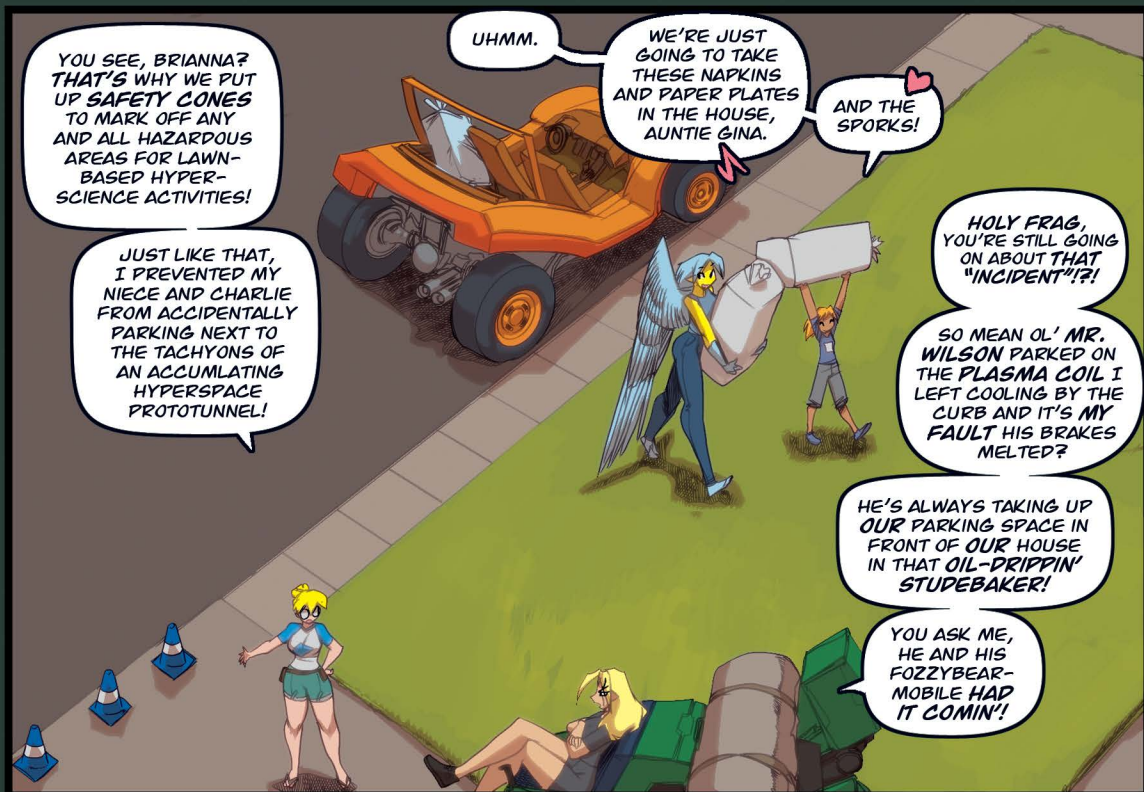
MM-
HM.



TSK.

YOU'RE
TOTALLY
NO FUN,
QUEZTAL.







I STILL CAN'T GET OVER HOW CLOSELY MADRID AND AUNT GINA RESEMBLE EACH OTHER!

IT'S LIKE THEY'RE TWINS!

IF IT WEREN'T FOR MADRID'S TAN, I DON'T THINK I COULD TELL THEM APART!

PAUSE



I COULD. PENNY TAUGHT ME WHAT TO LOOK FOR.

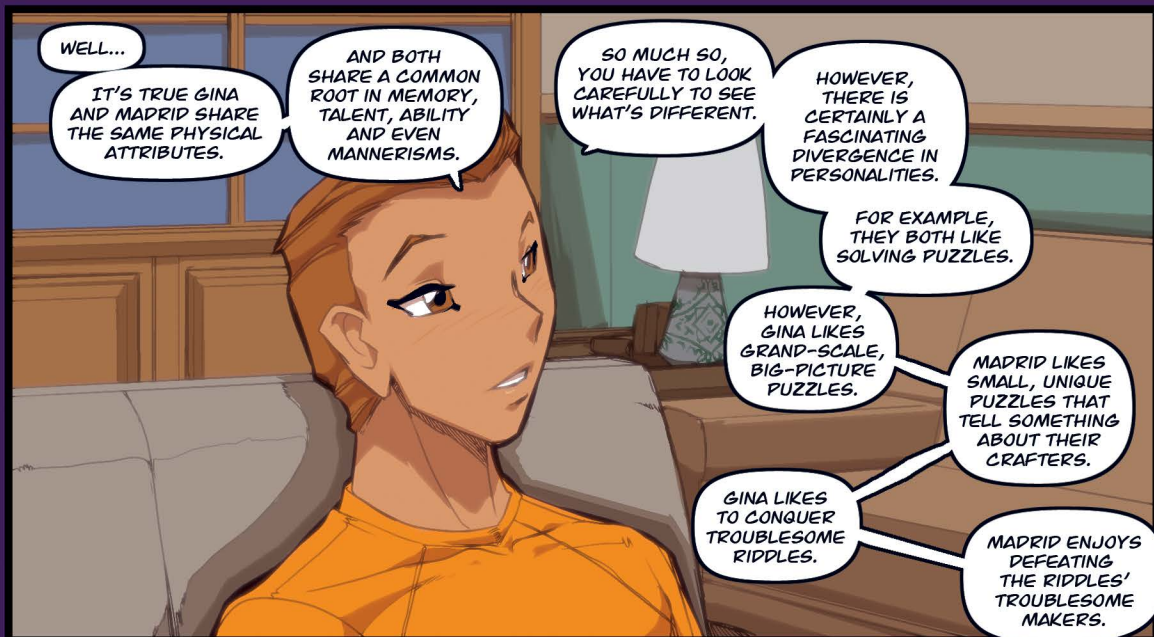
MADRID'S HAIR IS A TINY BIT SHINIER.

AND MADRID'S SKINNIER THAN GINA.

LIKE PENNY SAID... "THE ONE WHO LOOKS MORE LIKE A MUSCLY, HEAVYWEIGHT FEMALE WRESTLER IS GINA!"

CAME IN TO GET A BOTTLED WATER...

OH. OKAY.



WELL...

IT'S TRUE GINA AND MADRID SHARE THE SAME PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES.

AND BOTH SHARE A COMMON ROOT IN MEMORY, TALENT, ABILITY AND EVEN MANNERISMS.

SO MUCH SO, YOU HAVE TO LOOK CAREFULLY TO SEE WHAT'S DIFFERENT.

HOWEVER, THERE IS CERTAINLY A FASCINATING DIVERGENCE IN PERSONALITIES.

FOR EXAMPLE, THEY BOTH LIKE SOLVING PUZZLES.

HOWEVER, GINA LIKES GRAND-SCALE, BIG-PICTURE PUZZLES.

MADRID LIKES SMALL, UNIQUE PUZZLES THAT TELL SOMETHING ABOUT THEIR CRAFTERS.

GINA LIKES TO CONQUER TROUBLESOME RIDDLES.

MADRID ENJOYS DEFEATING THE RIDDLES' TROUBLESOME MAKERS.



BEFORE SHE MANAGED TO DESTROY HERSELF, THE OLD MADRID EXISTED AS THE SELF-CENTERED, SPOILED-BRAT PRINCESS OF ALL DJINNI.

SHE ALWAYS SOUGHT THE EASIEST PATH THROUGH TO ANY OF HER GOALS OR DIFFICULTIES.

SHE WAS A MANIPULATOR... A SEDUCER... A USER.

MADRID EVEN GOT ME TO HELP REMAKE HER MIND AND BODY INTO A COPY OF GINA'S IN AN ATTEMPT TO STEAL THE SOURCE OF ALL DJINNI MAGIC, "THE MAGIC SUN OF YL' DAHJIM".



BUT THAT MADRID WAS ALSO AN EXPLORER.

BACK WHEN WE LIVED ON YL'DAHJIM, SHE LED EXPEDITIONS TO THE MAGIC SUN.

SHE ALWAYS HAD QUESTIONS... ABOUT OUR ORIGINS. ABOUT THE REALMS BEYOND.

ONLY BACK THEN, SHE MANIPULATED OTHERS INTO DOING THE EXPLORATION FOR HER.



BUT HERE, I SEE MADRID BRAVELY ATTEMPTING EVERYTHING ON HER OWN!

WH-
WHOOAAAA!

I SEE MADRID TESTING HERSELF!

OOOF!

GINA'S STILL A BETTER ARCHAEOLOGIST, A BETTER EXPLORER.

NGH...

GINA'S EXPERIENCE AND INSTINCTS AREN'T DILUTED AS THEY ARE IN MADRID.

H--
I'M OKAY...
--OW.

BUT IT'S FASCINATING TO WATCH THIS NEW MADRID...

...TRYING.





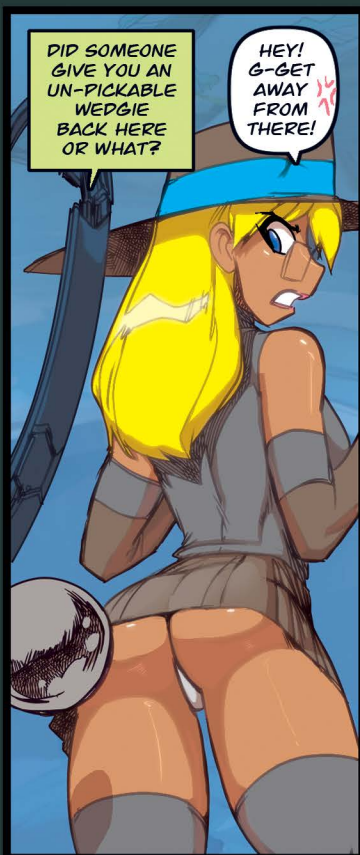
I SURE WISH THERE WAS A WAY TO CONVINCE YOU TO STAY FOR THE PICNIC.

MADRID?

I MEAN, I KNOW YOU HAVE TO GET BACK TO PROTECTING THE MONASTERY.

BUT YOUR PHOENIX AURA MAKES ALL PHOTOS AND VIDEOS OF YOU PRETTY BLURRY, AND DESCRIBING YOU WITHOUT HARD EVIDENCE IS WHAT GINA AND I WOULD CALL A "SNUFFLEUPAGUS REPORT"!

MADRID?



DID SOMEONE GIVE YOU AN UN-PICKABLE WEDGIE BACK HERE OR WHAT?

HEY! G-GET AWAY FROM THERE!



AND MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!

YOU'RE NOT GIVING ANY SINGLE GUYS GINA MIGHT BRING TO THE PICNIC THE SLIGHTEST CHANCE TO ESCAPE, ARE YOU, MADRID.

I-IT JUST SO HAPPENS THAT THIS MINI, MY TIGHTEST BLOUSE AND MY BEACH THONG...

...WERE THE VERY LAST ARTICLES OF CLEAN GARMENTS I COULD FIND!

AND ALL ARE APPROPRIATE FOR A BEACH PICNIC!

OR A STRIP CLUB.

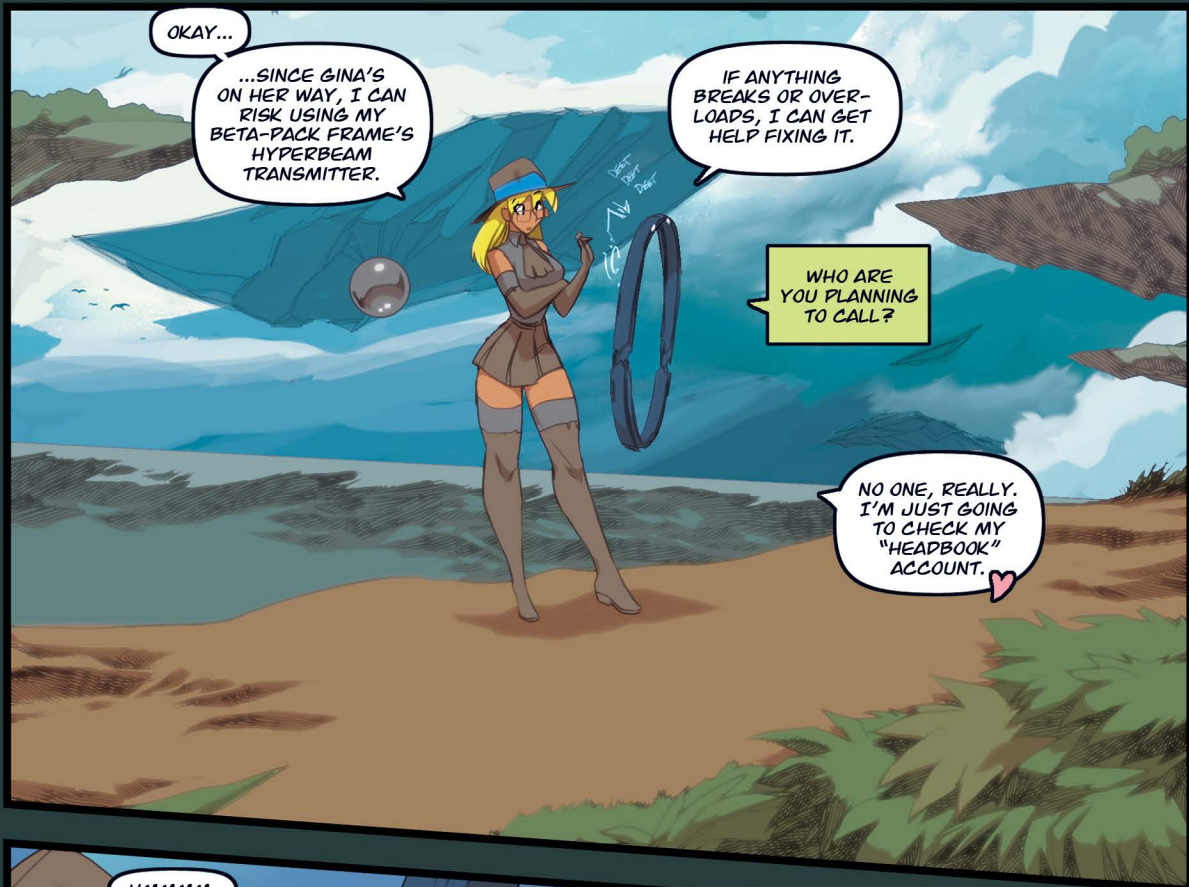
SILENCE!



SEE YOU LATER, QUEZTAL.

DON'T WAIT UP! ❤️

skittin



OKAY...

...SINCE GINA'S ON HER WAY, I CAN RISK USING MY BETA-PACK FRAME'S HYPERBEAM TRANSMITTER.

IF ANYTHING BREAKS OR OVERLOADS, I CAN GET HELP FIXING IT.

WHO ARE YOU PLANNING TO CALL?

NO ONE, REALLY. I'M JUST GOING TO CHECK MY "HEADBOOK" ACCOUNT. ♡



HMMMM.

EXCELLENT.

LOOKS LIKE THIS PICNIC'S GOING TO HAVE A FAVORABLE "SAUSAGE TO EGG" RATIO!

headbook



Professor Gina Diggers:

Time for the annual cookout in the Astral Rifts! Who's comin'? Madrid found a beach for us this time!



Ryan Tabbot:

So it's a beach party? Bringin' my Speedos!



Cid Alkaline:

Ayane and Jotaru have a date, so they can't come. I'll see you guys there, though. Can't wait to meet everybody!



Jet Hassan:

I'm coming too, you guys! It's a private beach, right? Do we "need" swimsuits? <Hopes for skinnydip opportunity!>



Fish Hassan:

Pay no attention to my exhibitionistic brother. I'll be there to make sure he behaves!



Kahn:

Empress Lynn and I are coming. We're bringing Shangri-La lo mein!



Anton Fist:

Thanks for inviting the class, Professor!

RAMBLER RAMBLER

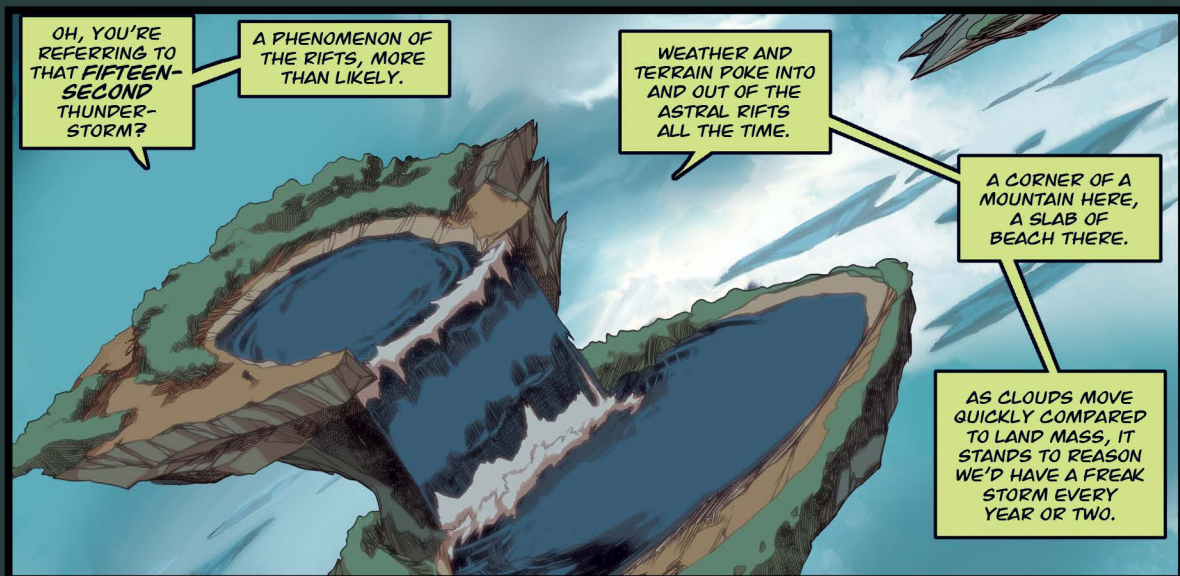


WH--WHAT THE...

AW, NAW.

RAIN?

BUT THIS REGION DOESN'T SUPPORT RAIN CLOUDS IN THE "DAYLIGHT HOURS"!



OH, YOU'RE
REFERRING TO
THAT **FIFTEEN-
SECOND**
THUNDER-
STORM?

A PHENOMENON OF
THE RIFTS, MORE
THAN LIKELY.

WEATHER AND
TERRAIN POKE INTO
AND OUT OF THE
ASTRAL RIFTS
ALL THE TIME.

A CORNER OF A
MOUNTAIN HERE,
A SLAB OF
BEACH THERE.

AS CLOUDS MOVE
QUICKLY COMPARED
TO LAND MASS, IT
STANDS TO REASON
WE'D HAVE A FREAK
STORM EVERY
YEAR OR TWO.



EVEN IN A REGION
OF THE RIFTS THAT
ISN'T HOSPITABLE
TO DAYLIGHT-
HOUR STORMS.

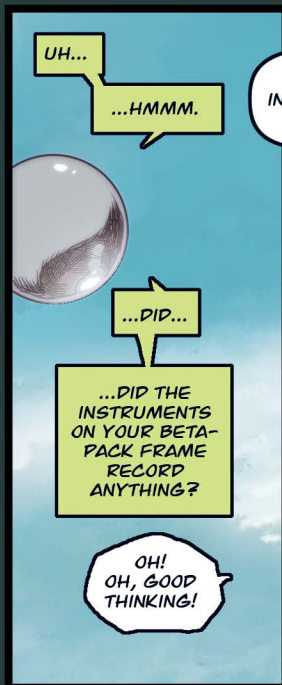
N-NO, NOT THAT!
THOSE **BIG** PEOPLE
IN THE SKY!

THEY TOOK UP
THE ENTIRE
STRATOSPHERE!

EACH MUST
HAVE BEEN
MILES...

...**HUNDREDS**
OF MILES
ACROSS!

BIG! HUGE!
QUITE POSSIBLY
P-PLANETARY!



UH...

...HMMM.

...DID...

...DID THE
INSTRUMENTS
ON YOUR BETA-
PACK FRAME
RECORD
ANYTHING?

OH!
OH, GOOD
THINKING!



THE AMBIENT
INTERFEROMETRY
SENSORS...

IT SHOULD
BE RIGHT...
HERE...



...

NOTHING.

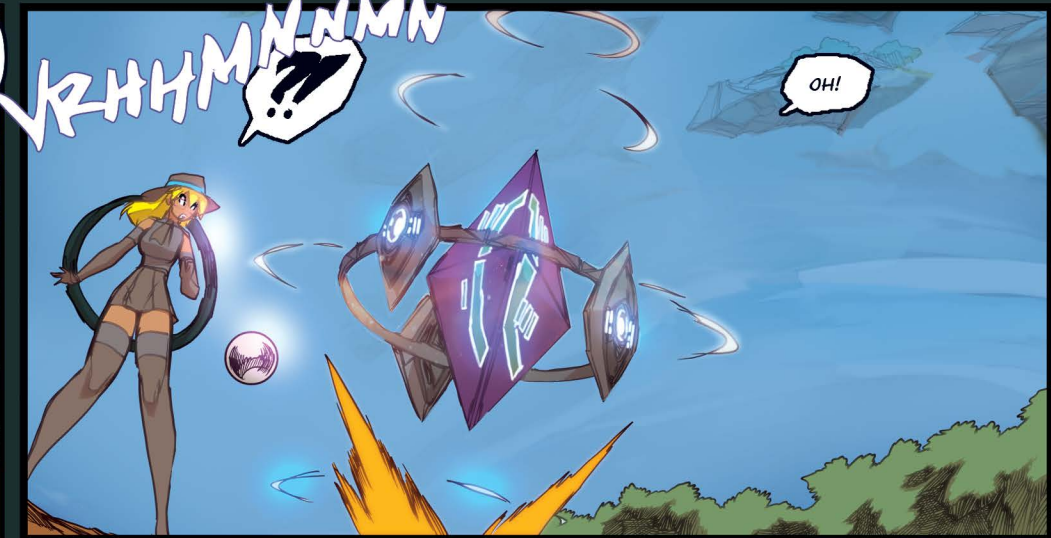


JINKIES.

MAYBE I
HAVE BEEN
OUT HERE
A LITTLE
TOO LO--



HUH?



OH!



OH, HEY!

GINA'S
HERE!



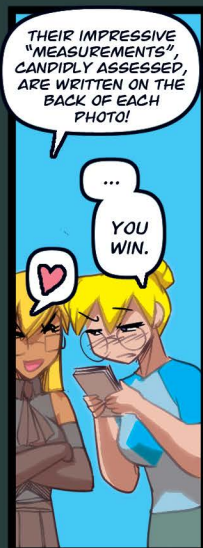
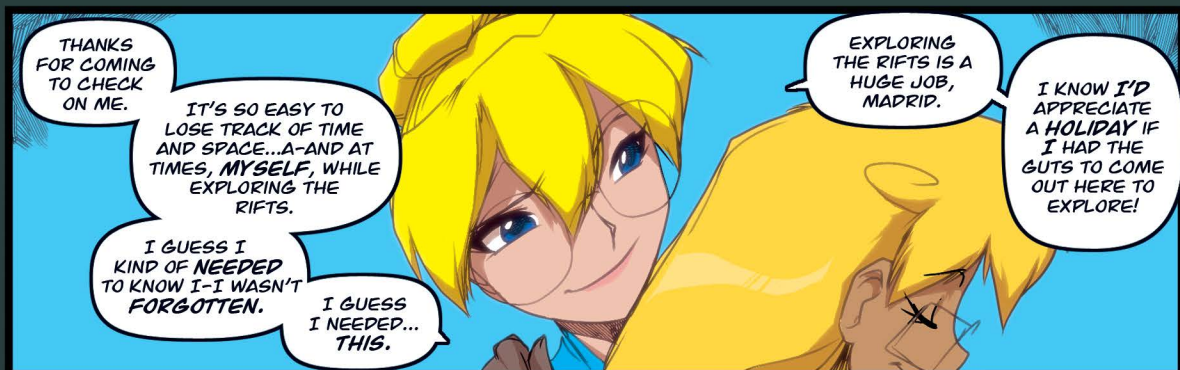
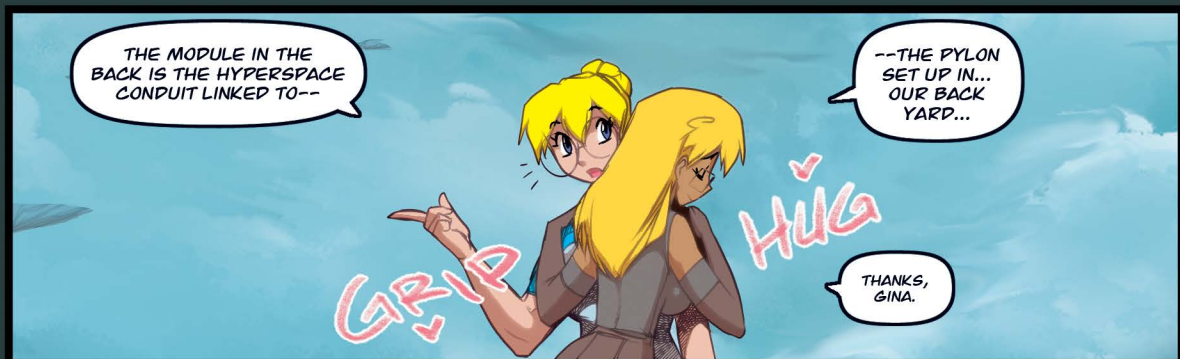
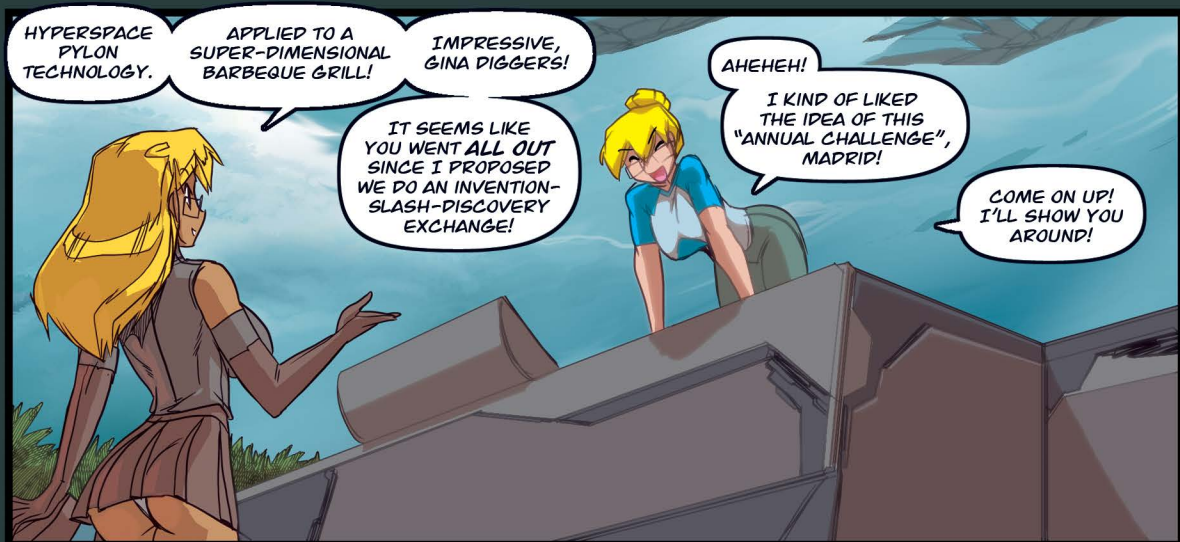
GINA TO
BRIANNA!

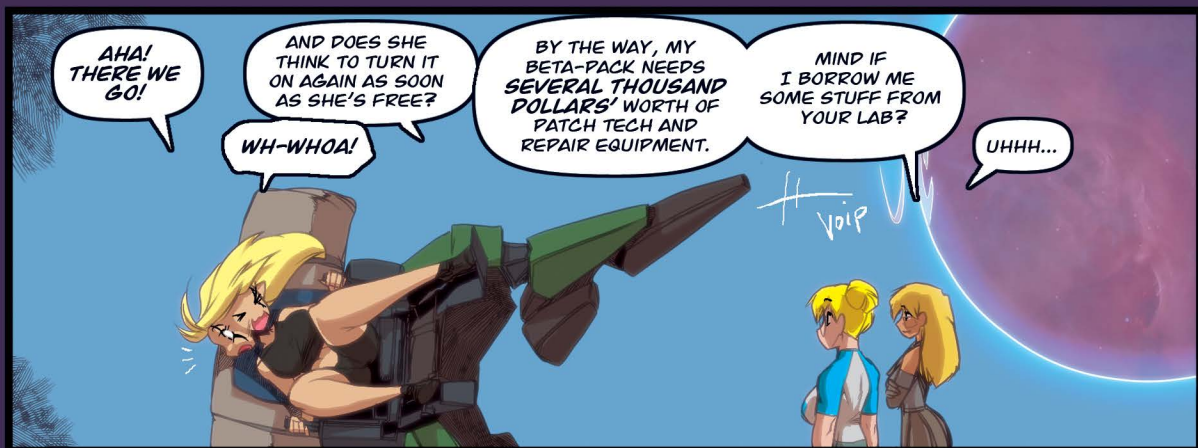
WOO-HOO!

THE PICNEXUS
HAS JUST TOUCHED
DOWN, AND RIGHT
ON TARGET!

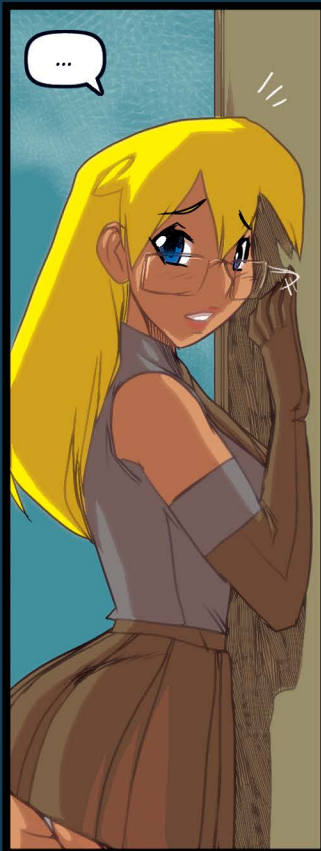
HYPERSPACE
CONDUIT LINK
ESTABLISHED!

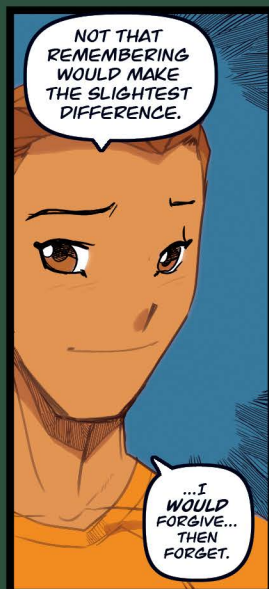
CHARGING
ALL CHARCOAL
BRIQUETTES!

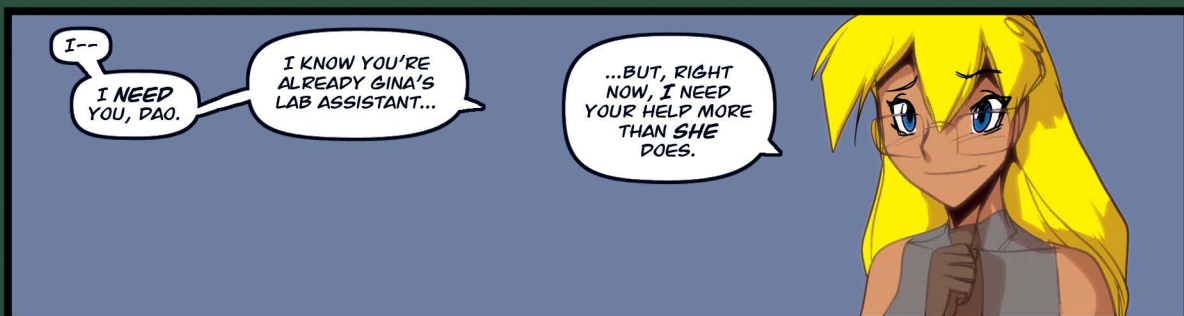
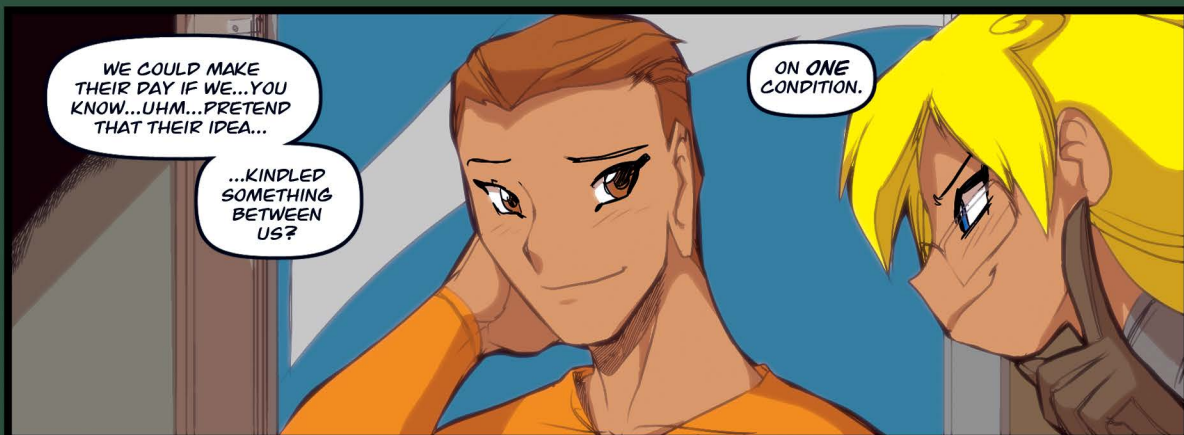












I-I NEED
A FAVOR.

SOMETHING
EXISTS IN THE
ASTRAL RIFTS.

JUST THIS
AFTERNOON,
I WITNESSED A
"SNUFFLEUPAGUS"
THE SIZE OF
JUPITER...
OR LARGER.

PERHAPS IT
WAS SOME KIND
OF TIME-SPACE
DISTORTION...

...OR AN EXTRA-
DIMENSIONAL
BEING.

WHATEVER
IT WAS...I
HAVE TO
LEARN
ABOUT ITS
NATURE.

SCIENTIFIC
CURIOSITY
DEMANDS IT!

YOU CALLED
IT A "SNUFFLE-
UPAGUS."

THAT'S GINA'S
TERM FOR
PHENOMENA
THAT DEFY
SUBSTANTIATION.

I COULDN'T
PHOTOGRAPH
OR SCAN IT.

NO
INTERFEROMETRY
DISTANCE
MEASUREMENTS
REGISTERED.

EVEN
SUBTRACTO
COULDN'T "SEE" IT...
BUT I KNOW IT
WAS THERE.

THIS ISN'T
EXPLORATION
ANYMORE.

AFTER THE PICNIC,
I'M JOURNEYING
THROUGH THE
ASTRAL RIFTS...
"IN SEARCH OF!"

SOMETHING
IMPORTANT
OCCURRED.

BUT WHAT?

I REMEMBER HOW
MUCH GAEO DJINN
LIKE MYSTERIOUS,
CURIOUS GAMES.

SO I WAS
HOPING YOU'D BE
INTERESTED IN A
COSMIC GAME
OF "I SPY"?

A JOURNEY
INTO THE RIFTS...

...IN SEARCH OF EPHEMERAL
PHENOMENA OF STELLAR
PROPORTIONS...

...WITH A
BEAUTIFUL,
LONELY
EXPLORER.

...J
.....

AND YOU SAY
I'M DOING YOU
A FAVOR?

MADRID'S QUEST: ACCEPTED...