



CELEBRATING 20 GOLDEN YEARS!

GOLD DIGGER

JAN 11 #125

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JANUARY 2011

SPECIAL
125TH
ISSUE!

TWO HUNDRED YEARS
BEFORE THE END OF
EARTH'S MAGICAL AGE...

...BEGAN A DAY OF
NIGHTMARES.

NIGHTMARES
UNENDING...

QUICKLY!!!

HOW MANY OF
THE SEALS
HAVE BEEN
BROKEN?

IS THERE TIME
TO LOCK THE
TEMPLE!?

IMPOSSIBLE
TO TELL FROM
THE OUTSIDE,
QUEEN T'MAT!

THEN WE'LL LAUNCH
AN INVESTIGATION
INTO THE ENIGMA
TEMPLE
IMMEDIATELY!

XIAMUIN!
XROTH!

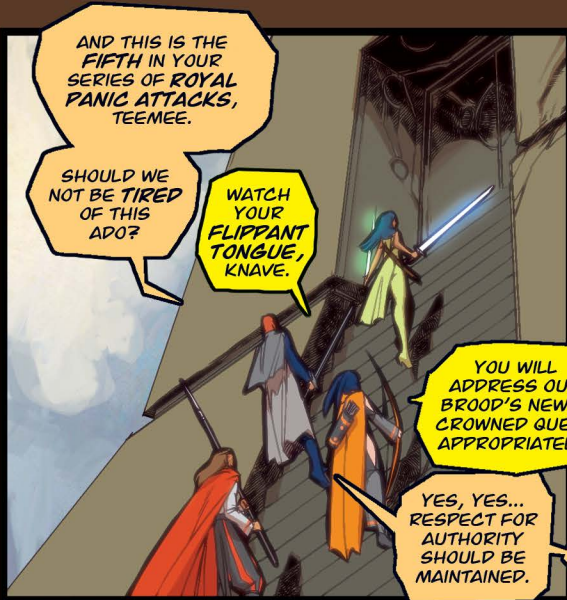
SHIFT INTO
HUMAN FORM!

YOU'RE COMING
WITH R'ZAAN
AND ME INTO THE
TEMPLE TO FIND
THE INTRUDERS!

SUMMON A
WEAPON AND
STEEL YOUR
RESOLVE.
THIS IS AN
EMERGENCY!

IT HAS
ALWAYS BEEN
AN EMERGENCY
OF LATE, YOUR
HIIGNESS.

YOU NEVER
HAVE US OVER
FOR TEA ANY-
MORE!



AND THIS IS THE FIFTH IN YOUR SERIES OF ROYAL PANIC ATTACKS, TEEMEE.

SHOULD WE NOT BE TIRED OF THIS ADO?

WATCH YOUR FLIPPANT TONGUE, KNAVE.

YOU WILL ADDRESS OUR BROOD'S NEWLY CROWNED QUEEN APPROPRIATELY!

YES, YES... RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY SHOULD BE MAINTAINED.

BAD R'ZAAN.



QUEEN T'MAT, I LOATHE TO ADMIT THIS, BUT IT SEEMS R'ZAAN MAY HAVE A FIRM GRASP OF THE TRUTH HERE...

YOU'LL GET USE TO IT, XIA'.

THE ENIGMA TEMPLES, RIDDLED WITH TRAPS AND AUTOMATONS DEADLY EVEN TO DRAGONS, HAVE HALLS SUITED ONLY FOR HUMANOID FORMS!

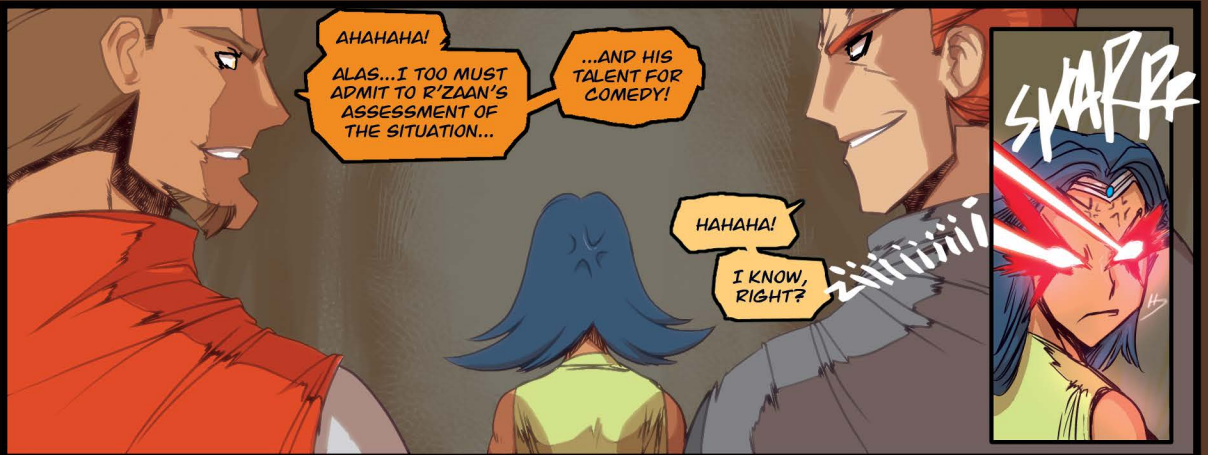
NOTHING COULD BE MORE SECURE!



QUITE SO, XIA'!

IT'S AS THOUGH WE'RE RUSHING OFF TO STOP SOME ROGUISH CHIPMUNKS FROM RAIDING A LION'S DEN!

...AND IF WE DON'T HURRY AND STOP THOSE WILY RODENTS, THE LIONS MIGHT HAVE THEIR MEALS STOLEN RIGHT FROM UNDER THEIR FANGS!



AHAHAHA!

ALAS...I TOO MUST ADMIT TO R'ZAAN'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION...

...AND HIS TALENT FOR COMEDY!

HAHAHA!

I KNOW, RIGHT?







IS THIS A CHALLENGE, XIAMUIN?

FAR FROM IT YOUR, HIGHNESS.

THIS IS AN APPEAL TO YOUR SENSES!

ONLY SIXTY OF US SURVIVED THE FROZEN AGE AND HIBERNATION INTO THIS STRANGE, NEW ERA ON EARTH.

WE'LL ALL PERISH WITHOUT A STRONG LEADER.

THAT LEADER SHOULD BE YOU, YOUR GRACE...

...THE MOST POWERFUL AND MOST INTELLIGENT OF ALL DRAGONS.

BUT LOOK AT YOU!

YOUR HEAD IS STUCK IN THE CLOUDS!

FILLED WITH GRANDFATHER EXTHILION'S WEAK, NONSENSICAL IDEALS.

DRAGONS DO NOT PRESERVE. DRAGONS DO NOT PROTECT.

DRAGONS COMMAND AND CONQUER!



WE NEGLECTED TO "PROTECT AND PRESERVE" ONCE BEFORE, XIAMUIN.

EONS AGO, WHEN A DRAGON, SEEKING TO "COMMAND AND CONQUER", TRIED TO CONTROL THE ANTI-THERMAL CORE ENIGMA...

...AND NEARLY BURIED US ALL IN A WORLDWIDE TOMB OF ICE!

'T WAS AN ACCIDENT!

I SAID I WAS SORRY!



DOES ANYONE TRULY WANT TO RISK THE CHANCE OF SOME... "ACCIDENT"... WITH THIS ENIGMA?

THE TIME RAFT!?!

COMRADES?

AND I'M TELLING YOU THAT THERE IS NO RISK, HIGHNESS!

THE TEMPLES ARE ALL SECURE, AND THE TIME RAFT HAS NEVER FUNCTIONED IN ANY CASE!

COMRADES?

MIGHT SOMEONE REMIND ME OF THE DEFENSIVE PROPERTIES INHERENT IN THE "HUMAN BODY"?

ANY USEFUL INFORMATION WOULD BE WELCOME...

...SEEING AS HOW I'VE JUST TREAD UPON A TRAP'S TRIGGER.

REDUNDANT VITALS? REINFORCED SKELETON?



XROTH!!!
YOU IDIOT!

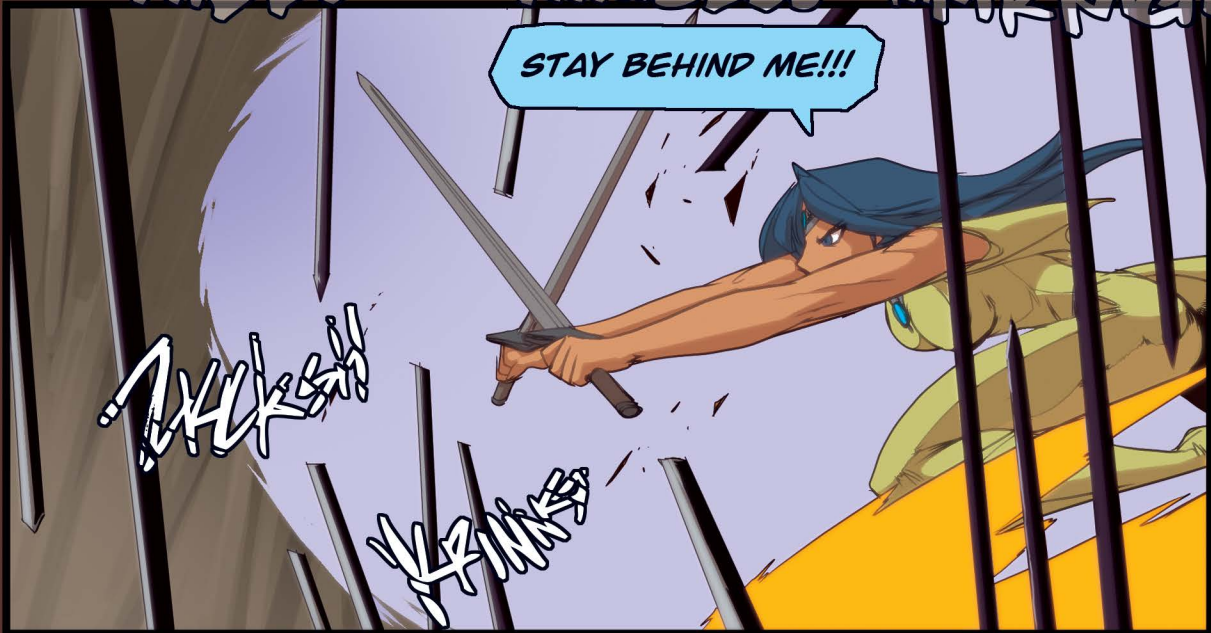


DRAIN
TURRETS!

WE CAN'T
USE MAGIC
TO ESCAPE
THESE
SPIKES!

MY BLADES
STILL HAVE
ENOUGH!

RM MBLBLBL MMBLLL MMRNGM



STAY BEHIND ME!!!

TKKSH

TKKSH



GNFT



TKKSH

NFFH!
I BIT MY
TONGUE!



NFFH!



H--
HIGHNESS!
ARE YOU
HURT?

I'M FINE!
EVERYONE'S
FINE!
NO SERIOUS
WOUNDS!

SAVE FOR
ME!
SEVERE
TONGUE-
BITE
INJURY.



QUICKLY
NOW!
WE'LL MAKE
ANOTHER
ATTEMPT
INTO THE
TEMPLE.

OH, NO!
THIS HAS
GONE ON FAR
ENOUGH!

THE TEMPLE IS
SECURE, T'MAT!
EVEN YOU
COULDN'T
BREACH ITS
THRESHOLD!

XIA!!!
NGH!
WATCH--
WHERE YOU
SHIFT FORMS!

NO
DRAGON
CAN!
AND ENIGMAS
ONLY RESPOND
TO DRAGONS!



HOW DARE YOU
QUESTION MY
COMMANDS,
XIAMUINI?!

OW!
K PLOOSH

ARE YOU
TRYING TO
MAKE ME
ANGRY?

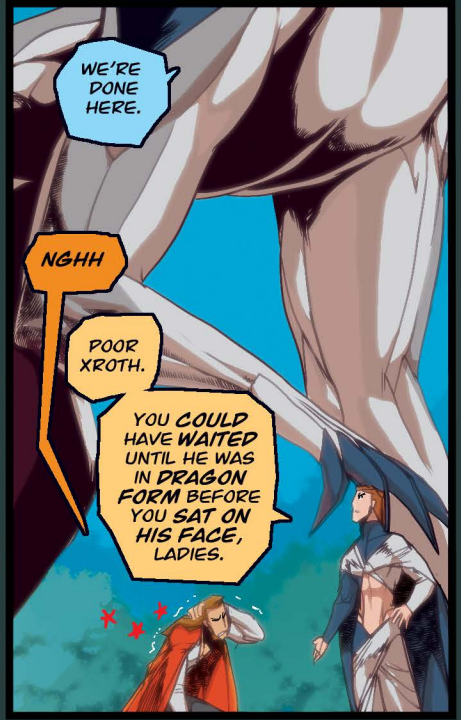
I QUESTION
MY QUEEN'S
REASON!

AND I WILL
RISK HER WRATH
IF IT MEANS THE
LAST HOPE OF
OUR KIND CAN
BE BROUGHT
BACK TO HER
SENSES!

A LEADER LISTENS.

BUT A LEADER ALSO COMMITS TO WHAT **MUST** BE DONE TO PROTECT HER PEOPLE.

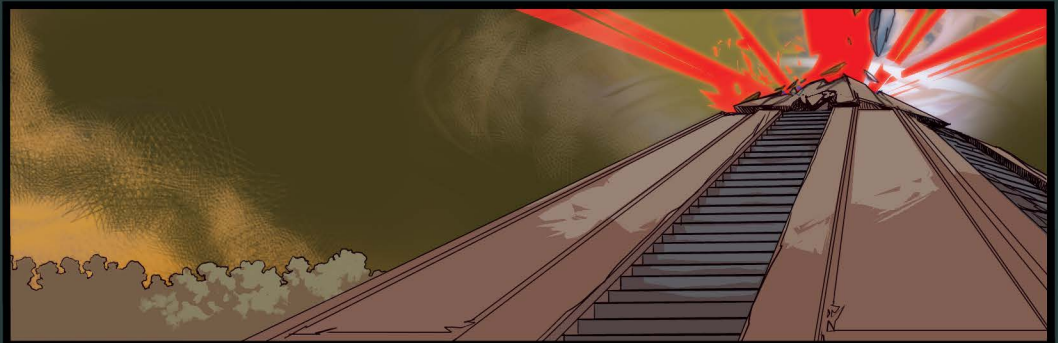
EVEN WHEN HER PEOPLE REFUSE TO DO SO.



A TRUE LEADER WOULD HAVE PUSHED AHEAD AND FOLLOWED HER INTUITION.



A TRUE LEADER WOULD HAVE STOPPED THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE IT HAD A CHANCE TO **BEGIN**.



TWO HUNDRED
YEARS BEFORE
THE END OF
EARTH'S
MAGIC AGE...

...DRE'YAS,
MY FORMER
LIFEMATE,
WAS SOMEHOW
ABLE TO
BREACH THE
DEEPEST
CHAMBER OF
THE ENIGMA
TEMPLE AND
SEIZE THE
ARTIFACT
SEALED
WITHIN.

WHEN HE WAS
BANISHED FOR
CHALLENGING
MY AUTHORITY,
DREY WAS
BITTER.

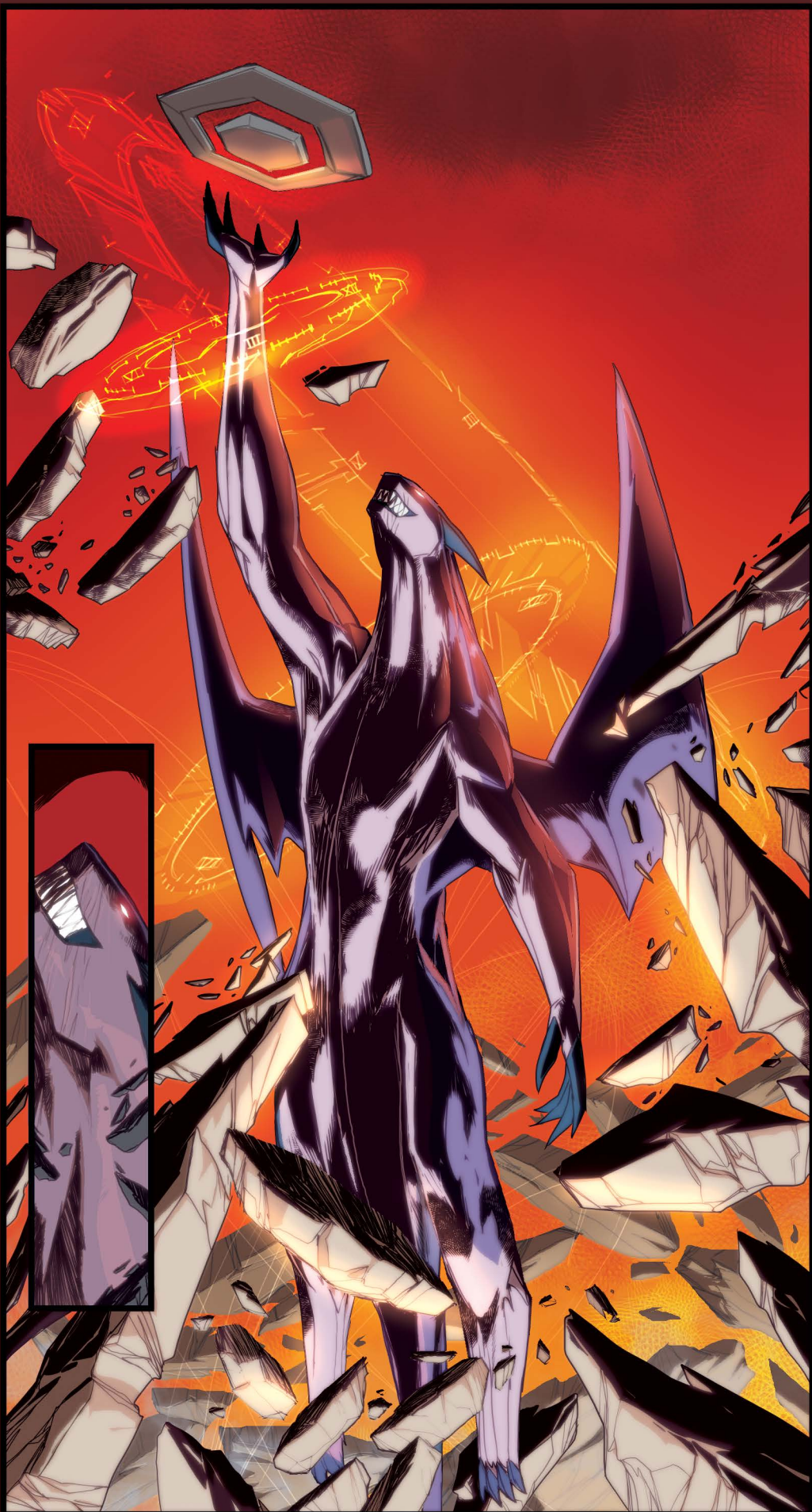
VENGEFUL.

BUT WHEN HE
RETURNED TO
MY COURT
WIELDING THE
TIME RAFT,
DREY WAS
INVULNERABLE.

INVINCIBLE.

I LEARNED
THEN THE
DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN A
LEADER...
AND A
VICTIM...
CAN BE AS
SLIGHT AS THE
DECISION NOT
TO ACT WHEN
SHE KNOWS
SHE SHOULD.

AND TO
THIS DAY, I
AWAKEN FROM
NIGHTMARES
OF WHAT
DREY DID TO
MY FIRST
COURT...



...NIGHTMARES
OF WHAT DREY
DID TO ME.

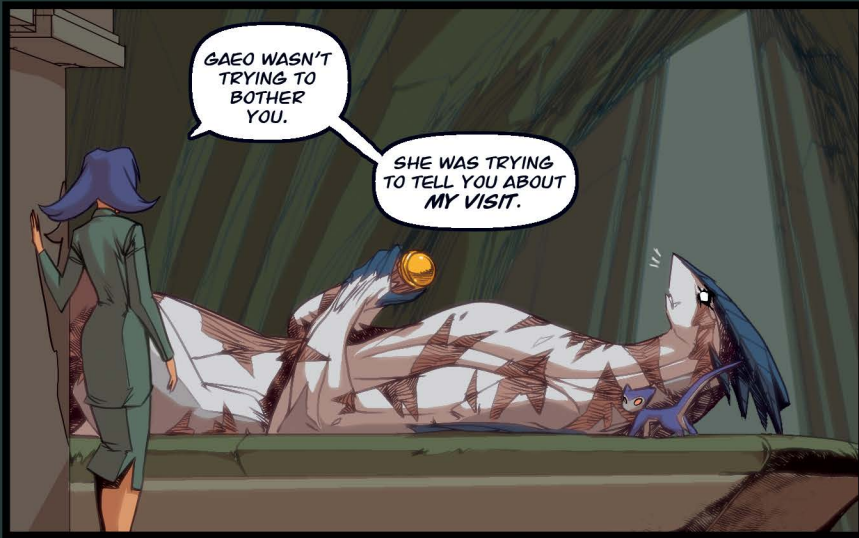


I'M SORRY,
GAEO...

...IT'S NOT YOUR
FAULT AT ALL,
BUT...

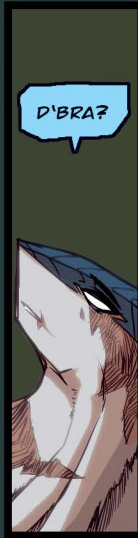
GAEO...
DON'T.

...PLEASE DON'T
TOUCH ME
RIGHT NOW.



GAEO WASN'T TRYING TO BOTHER YOU.

SHE WAS TRYING TO TELL YOU ABOUT MY VISIT.



D'BRA?



MOTHER.



IT'S BEEN NEARLY FIFTY YEARS, D'BRA.

YOUR AURA HAS GROWN STRONG.

I HEARD REPORTS OF YOU WORKING WITH POWERFUL HUMANS ON EARTH...

PROTECTING VICTIMS OF UNFORESEEN CATASTROPHES AND ACCIDENTS.



OH, YOU MEAN "AGENCY ZERO".

A SECRET EMERGENCY RESCUE TEAM.

SECRET?

ANONYMOUS GOOD DEEDS ARE THE BEST KIND.

NO ONE GROWS WEAKER DEPENDING ON A "HERO". NO ONE GROWS ANGRY OR JEALOUS AT SAID HERO'S NOTORIETY.

I'VE LEARNED A LOT FROM THE AGENCY.



YOU HAVE MATURED...

...LIVING WITH THE HUMANS OF EARTH... AWAY FROM OUR PEOPLE'S SELF-INDULGENT WAYS.

A-AND WHEN I'M GONE...

...YOU'LL MAKE A FINE QUEEN, D'BRA.

GRANDFATHER EXTHILION WAS CORRECT.

YOU CAN SAVE OUR PEOPLE.



NOW, I WISH YOU WOULDN'T SAY THINGS LIKE THAT, MOTHER.

SAY THINGS LIKE WHAT?

YOU SPEAK AS IF YOU'RE GOING TO DIE.



I AM... SOMEDAY.

...



MOTHER... I WANT TO TAKE BACK THE WORDS I SAID AS I LEFT ALL THOSE YEARS AGO.

I WAS A SPOILED BRAT.



BUT MY TIME ON EARTH HAS SHOWN ME HOW THE TRULY STRONG USE THEIR POWERS TO BENEFIT THOSE WHO NEED IT.

I LEARNED THE STRENGTH OF PATIENCE, FORETHOUGHT AND CHARITY.

LESSONS I BELIEVE WE DRAGONS HAVE NEGLECTED FOR FAR TOO LONG.



AND I... ALSO LEARNED SOMETHING DISTURBING MOTHER...



...I LEARNED SOMETHING ABOUT MY FATHER.

W--WHAT?

VREEE! VREEE! VREEE!



MOTHER! IS THAT YOUR... MYMOR?

YOUR SPELL DIARY?!?

WHAT HAPPENED TO IT!?

VMM

VHSHHH



H-HOW
CAN THAT
BE?

D'BRA...

...THOSE SIGILS
ON MY MYMIOR
KEEP TRACK OF THE
ENCHANTMENTS
I'VE WRITTEN AND
CAST ALL OVER
JADE-REALM.



LET'S
SEE...

THE SIGIL
THAT JUST
SHATTERED
REPRESENTS
A SEAL!

AN OLD
ONE THAT
HASN'T
BEEN
TOUCHED
SINCE--

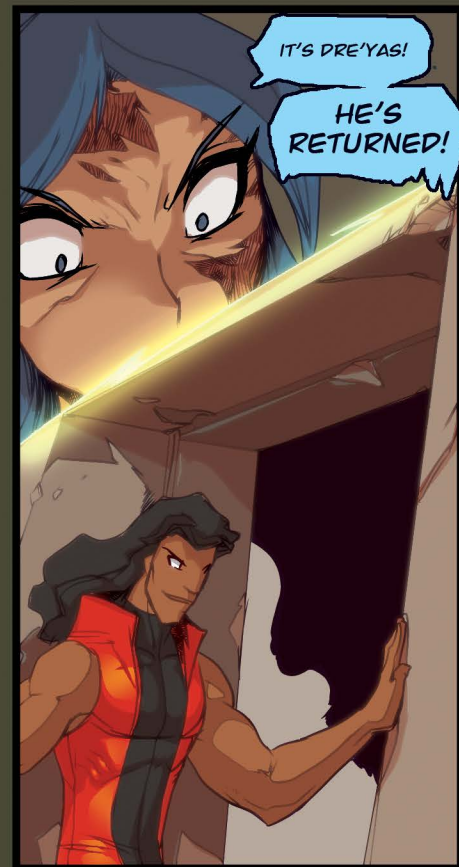


D'BRA!!!

THAT SIGIL
GUARDED THE
SEAL TO AN
ENIGMA
TEMPLE!!!



IT'S HIM!



IT'S DRE'YAS!

HE'S
RETURNED!



AND HE'S
GOING
AFTER
ANOTHER
ENIGMA
DEVICE!?!?

PLEASE,
MOTHER,
REMAIN
CALM.

AND THINK FOR
A MOMENT.

THAT MONSTER
HAS BEEN IN
HIDING FOR
AGES!

BUT HE SUDDENLY
DECIDES TO INVAD
A TEMPLE?

SURELY
HE KNEW
YOU WOULD
SENSE THE
INTRUSION!

WHY DOES HE
REVEAL HIMSELF
NOW?

WHY DOES
HE PROVOKE
YOU?

SKR
BROOM

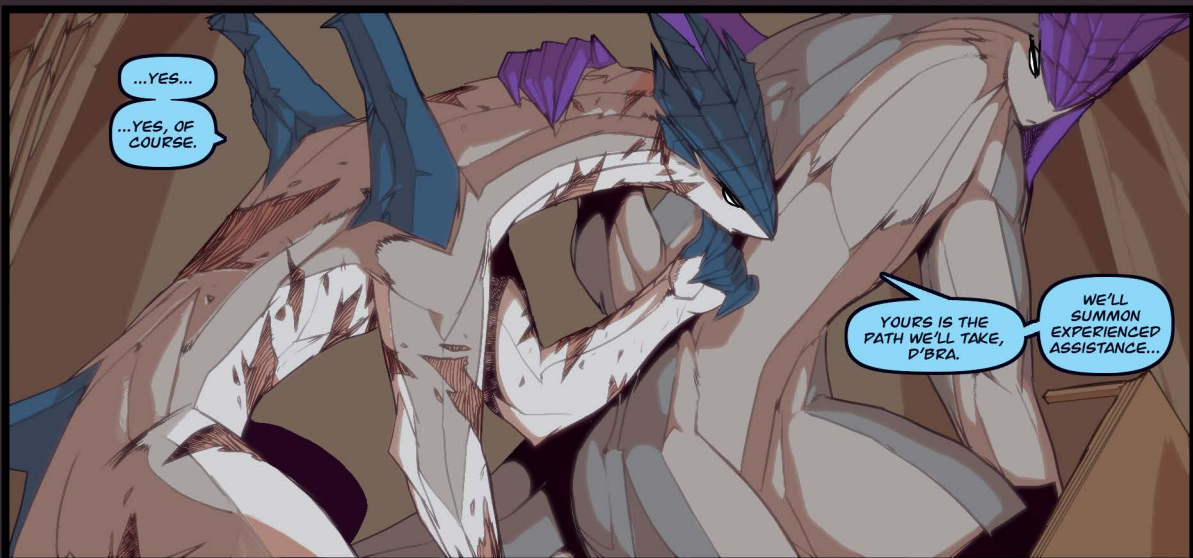


...

JUST STAY CALM.
I'M GOING TO MAKE
SOME CALLS.

WE'LL STOP HIM,
BUT WE'LL NEED
HELP IF WE'RE
GOING INTO A
TEMPLE...

WE'LL NEED
EXTRA EYES IF
WE ARE TO SEE
AND THWART
THAT FIEND'S
PLANS!



...YES...
...YES, OF
COURSE.

YOURS IS THE
PATH WE'LL TAKE,
D'BRA.

WE'LL
SUMMON
EXPERIENCED
ASSISTANCE...

"...WE'LL BESECH
THE AID OF
DUNGEONEERING
EXPERTS!"



BROOD QUEEN
MOTHER, ALLOW ME TO
INTRODUCE PROFESSOR
GINA BABETTE DIGGERS,
CHAIRWOMAN OF EARTH'S
EXPLORER SOCIETY
AND RENOWNED
ARCHAEOLOGIST!

THE WERECAT
ASSISTING PROFESSOR
DIGGERS IS HER
ADOPTED SISTER,
MRS. BRITANNY
ELIN 'GIA...

...A MASTER-CLASS
MARTIAL ARTIST WHO
HAS SOMEHOW GAINED
KNOWLEDGE OF A
STRANGE "GAOBLIN"
SPELLCRAFT
TECHNIQUE.

OH, I RECOGNIZE
THESE EXPLORERS,
DAUGHTER.

I'VE
FOLLOWED
THEIR EXPLOITS
FROM AFAR.

PROFESSOR
DIGGERS.
MRS. 'GIA.

THANK YOU
BOTH FOR
ANSWERING
MY CALL.

WE CAME AS
QUICK AS WE
COULD, YOUR
MAJESTY.

HOW BIG OF
A LEAD DOES
DREADWING
HAVE ON US
IN THERE?

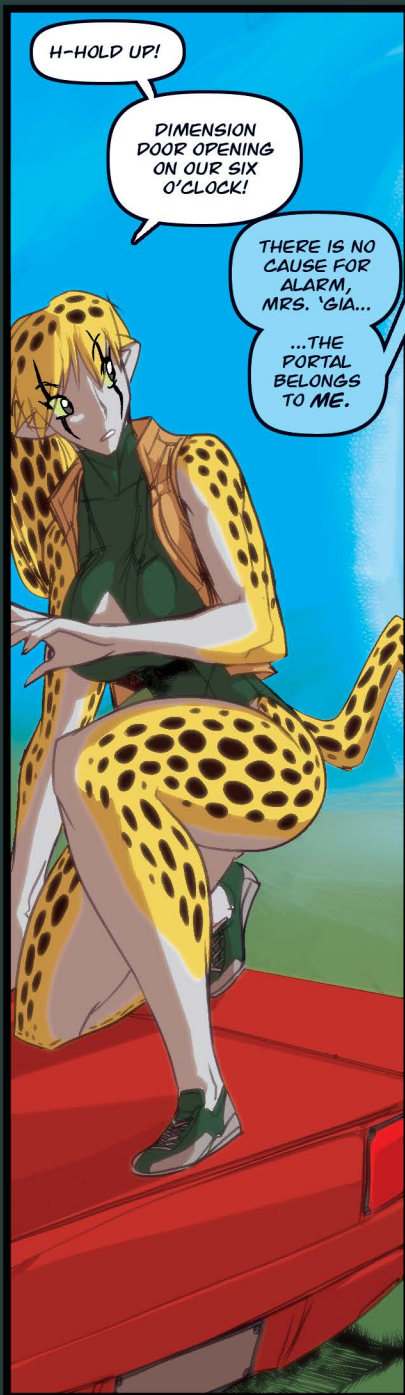
ENIGMA TEMPLE
EXCURSIONS ARE
UNPREDICTABLE,
PROFESSOR.

IN THE PAST,
SUCH JOURNEYS
HAVE TAKEN GROUPS
OF ADVENTURING
DRAGONS OVER
THREE WEEKS
TO COMPLETE.

HOWEVER,
I SENSE THE
BEAST DELVING
INTO THIS TEMPLE
IS NO LONGER
A DRAGON!

THEN WE
BEST GET
THIS PARTY
STARTED,
Y'ALL!





H-HOLD UP!

DIMENSION
DOOR OPENING
ON OUR SIX
O'CLOCK!

THERE IS NO
CAUSE FOR
ALARM,
MRS. 'GIA...

...THE
PORTAL
BELONGS
TO ME.



I CALLED
FOR THE
ASSISTANCE
OF A FEW
ADDITIONAL
EXPERTS.

TARKANION
AND MESHALA
OF THE ELDRITCH
FOREST AND
DESERT
TRIBES...

...AND MISTER
MONTGOMERY,
GRANDFATHER
EXTHILION'S
PERSONAL
ASSISTANT.

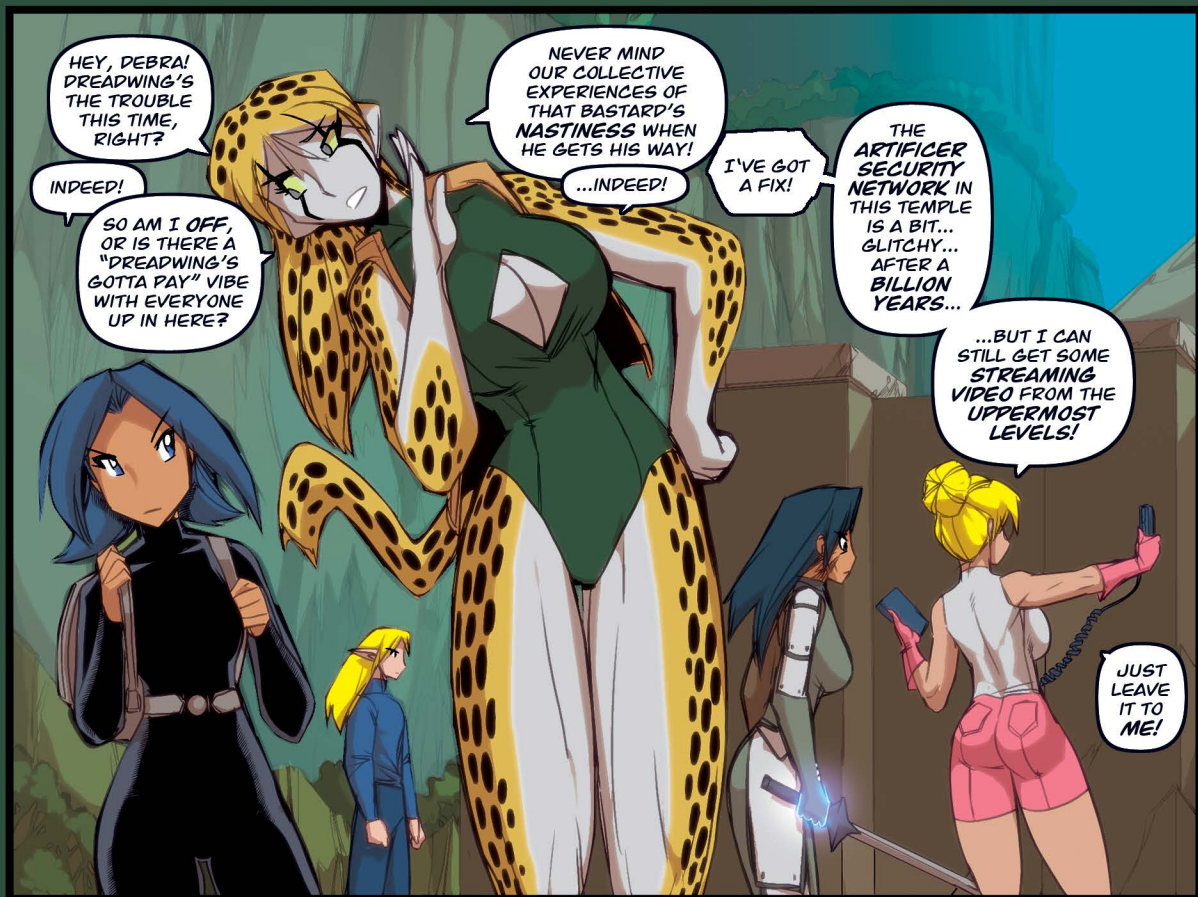
ALL THREE
HAVE...
**EXTENSIVE
EXPERIENCE...**
IN NAVIGATING
THE DANGERS
OF ENIGMA
TEMPLES.

WELCOME,
FRIENDS.
I EXTEND MY
MOST HEART-
FELT GRATITUDE
FOR YOUR
HEEDING MY
PLEA FOR
HELP.



MAJESTY.

THIS IS
TH' LEAST
WE KIN
DO.



HEY, DEBRA!
DREADWING'S
THE TROUBLE
THIS TIME,
RIGHT?

INDEED!

SO AM I OFF,
OR IS THERE A
"DREADWING'S
GOTTA PAY" VIBE
WITH EVERYONE
UP IN HERE?

NEVER MIND
OUR COLLECTIVE
EXPERIENCES OF
THAT BASTARD'S
NASTINESS WHEN
HE GETS HIS WAY!

...INDEED!

I'VE GOT
A FIX!

THE
ARTIFICER
SECURITY
NETWORK IN
THIS TEMPLE
IS A BIT...
GLITCHY...
AFTER A
BILLION
YEARS...

...BUT I CAN
STILL GET SOME
STREAMING
VIDEO FROM THE
UPPERMOST
LEVELS!

JUST
LEAVE
IT TO
ME!



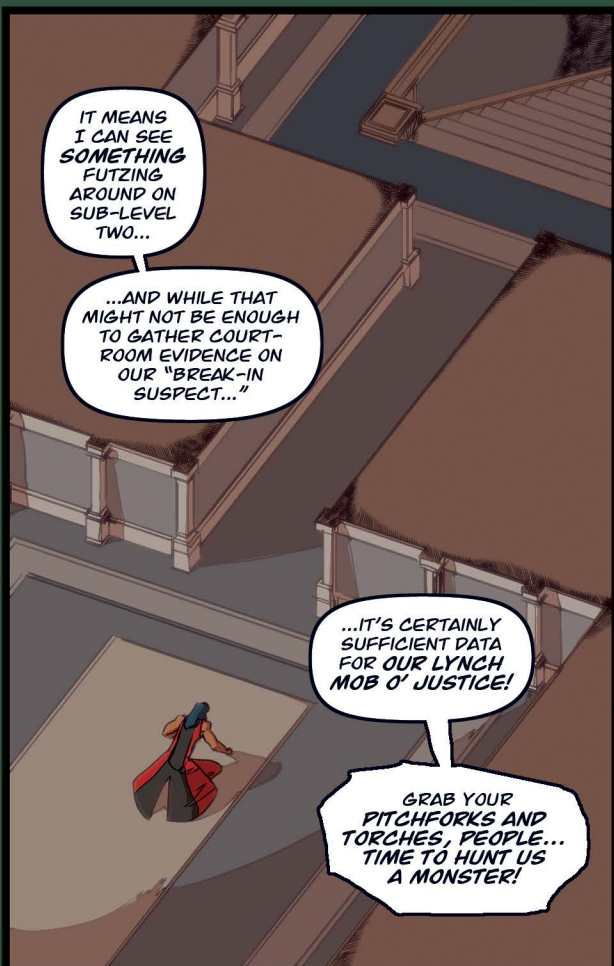
I JUST
DECODE THE
SIGNAL AND---
CRAP...

WHAT DO
YOU SEE?
HOW
FAR ALONG
IS PRE'YAS?

WELLL...
THE BEST I CAN GET
FROM THE TEMPLE'S
SENSORS IS A TWO-
BY-TWO-PIXEL
RESOLUTION
IMAGE!

WHICH IS ONLY
SLIGHTLY BETTER
THAN THE PICTURE
QUALITY OF A DIGITAL
MOVIE PLAYING ON A
TRAFFIC SIGNAL.

A-AND...
AND THAT
MEANS?



IT MEANS
I CAN SEE
SOMETHING
FUTZING
AROUND ON
SUB-LEVEL
TWO...

...AND WHILE THAT
MIGHT NOT BE ENOUGH
TO GATHER COURT-
ROOM EVIDENCE ON
OUR "BREAK-IN
SUSPECT..."

...IT'S CERTAINLY
SUFFICIENT DATA
FOR OUR LYNCH
MOB O' JUSTICE!

GRAB YOUR
PITCHFORKS AND
TORCHES, PEOPLE...
TIME TO HUNT US
A MONSTER!





I WENT THROUGH
A BIT OF EFFORT
TO TRACK YOU
DOWN.

BUT I HAVE SOME
EXPERIENCE WITH
ENIGMA TEMPLES.



THEY ARE, ALL
OF THEM, HUGE
SUBTERRANEAN
VAULTS.

BETWEEN
THE LEVELS OF
SECURITY DEVICES
ARE VAST
CHAMBERS.

STORAGE
SPACES.

THE ORIGINAL
DESIGNERS INTENDED
THESE STRUCTURES TO
HOLD MORE THAN JUST
ONE ENIGMA EACH--
QUITE POSSIBLY
HUNDREDS OF VARIOUS
SIZES AND ABILITIES...

HAD THEY THE TIME
TO CRAFT THEM.

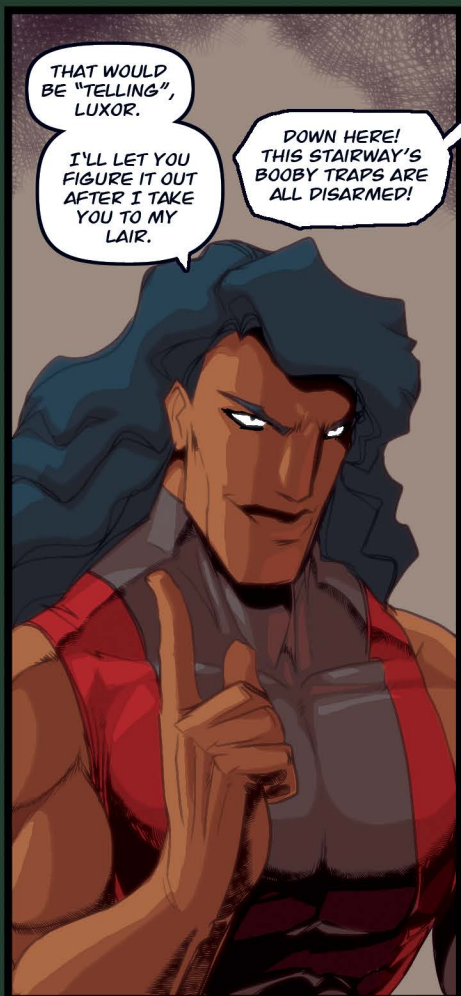
THERE'S EVEN ENOUGH
ROOM FOR A HUGE,
SELF-AWARE ENIGMA...

LIKE YOU, LUXOR.



H-HOW DID YOU
FIND ME?

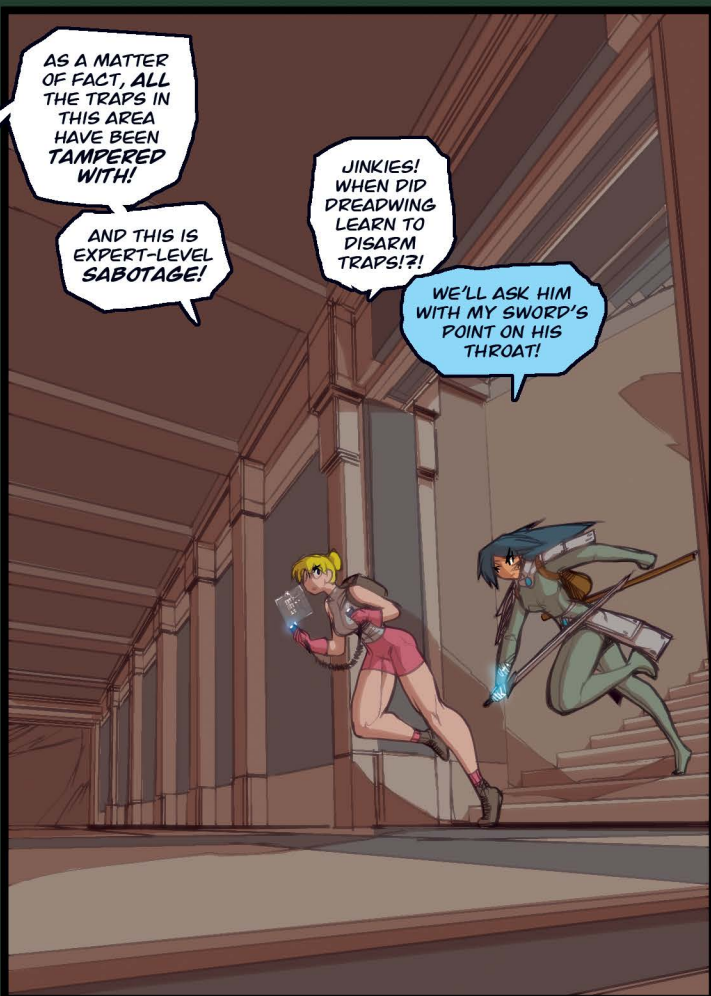
HMHMHM...



THAT WOULD BE "TELLING", LUXOR.

I'LL LET YOU FIGURE IT OUT AFTER I TAKE YOU TO MY LAIR.

DOWN HERE! THIS STAIRWAY'S BOOBY TRAPS ARE ALL DISARMED!



AS A MATTER OF FACT, ALL THE TRAPS IN THIS AREA HAVE BEEN TAMPERED WITH!

AND THIS IS EXPERT-LEVEL SABOTAGE!

JINKIES! WHEN DID DREADWING LEARN TO DISARM TRAPS!?!?

WE'LL ASK HIM WITH MY SWORD'S POINT ON HIS THROAT!



AND WITH CONFESSIONS DONE, I'LL DECIDE WHERE BEST TO SHEATHE THE BLADE...MY SCABBARD OR HIS--

--THROAT...

W-WAIT! WE ALL NEED TO STAY COOL HERE!

THIS MAY BE AN IMPROMPTU "ANGRY MONSTER MOB"...

BUT WE GOTTA GIVE DREADY A CHANCE TO SURRE--

WHAT? WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S OVER--

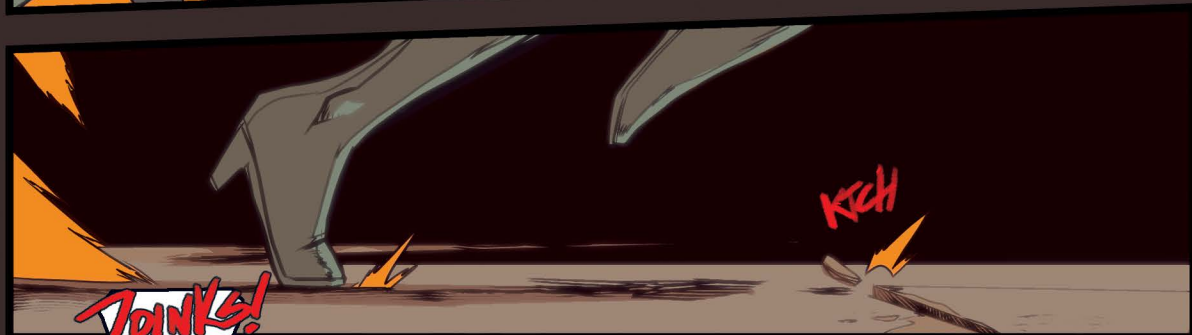


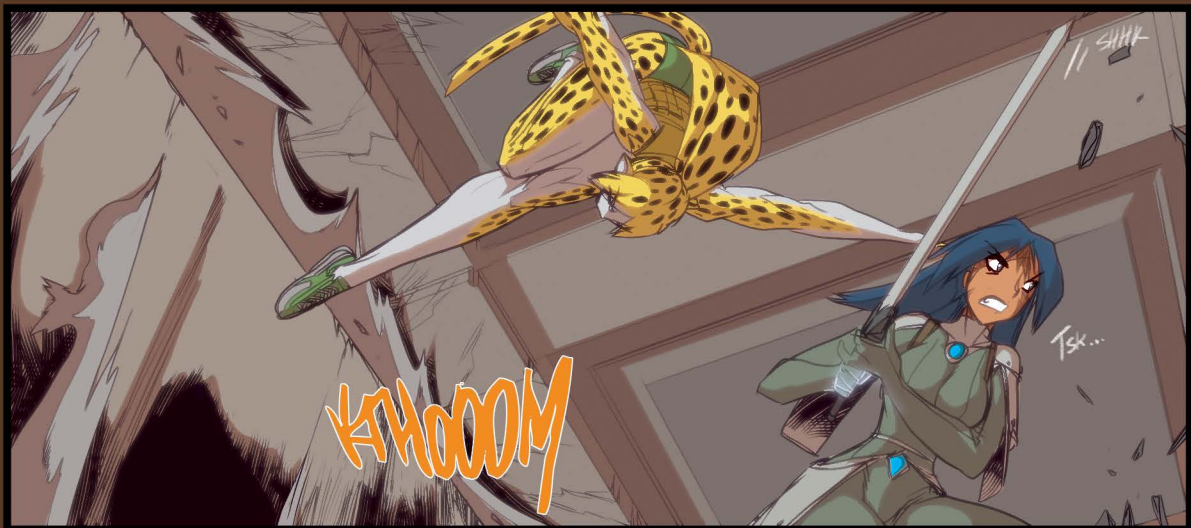
--THERE...

WELL, WELL.

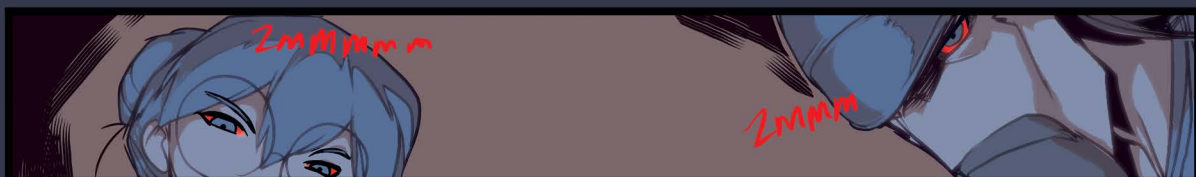
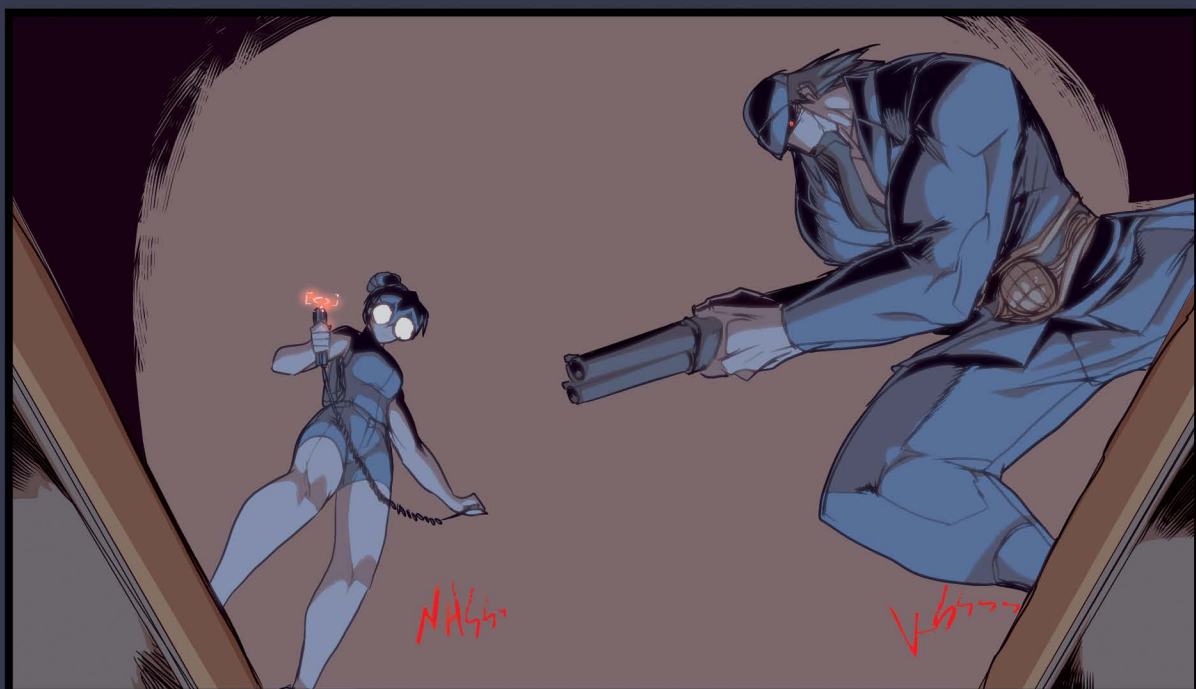
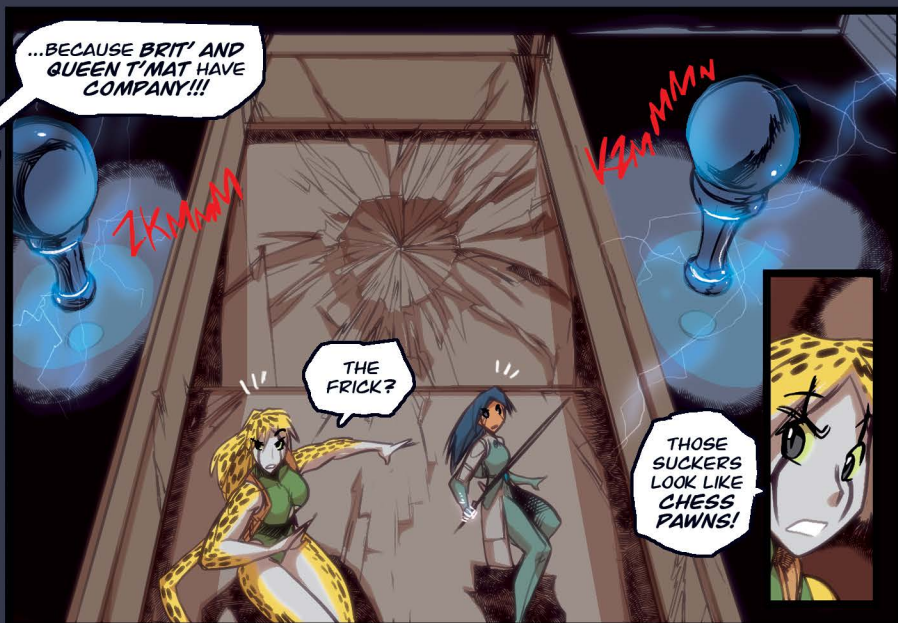
T'MAT.

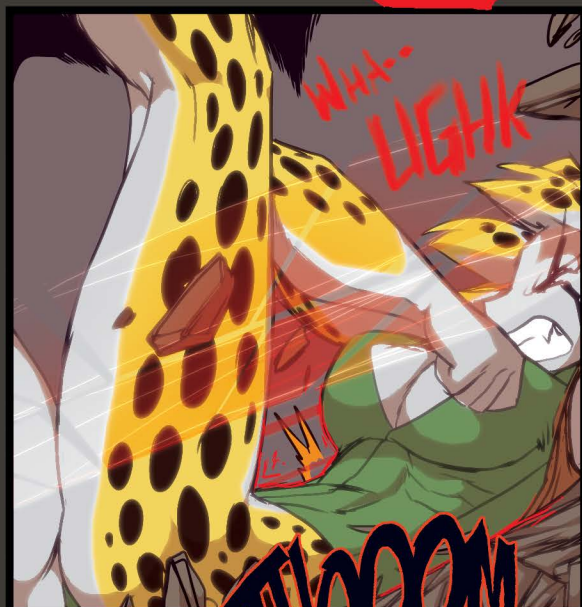
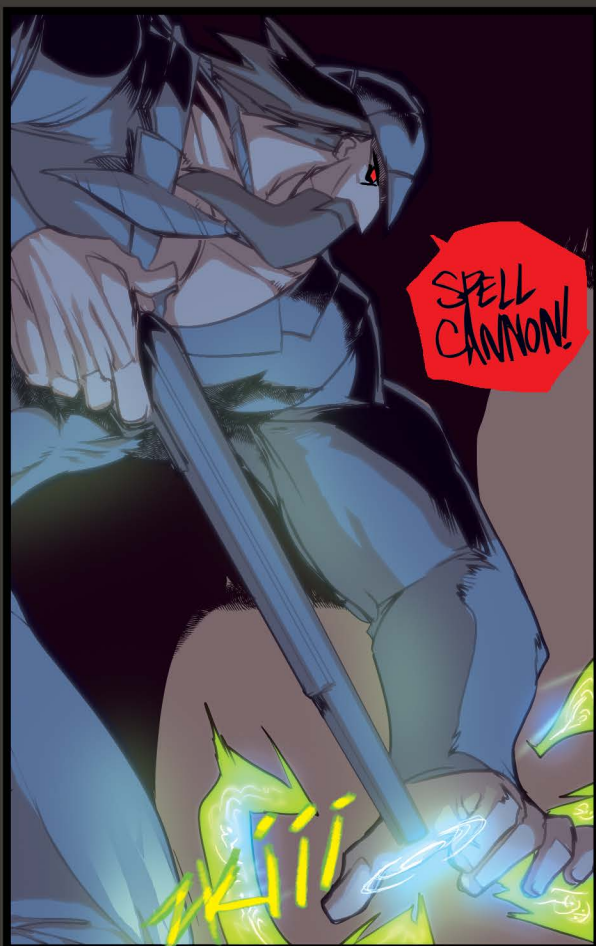
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, HASN'T IT?

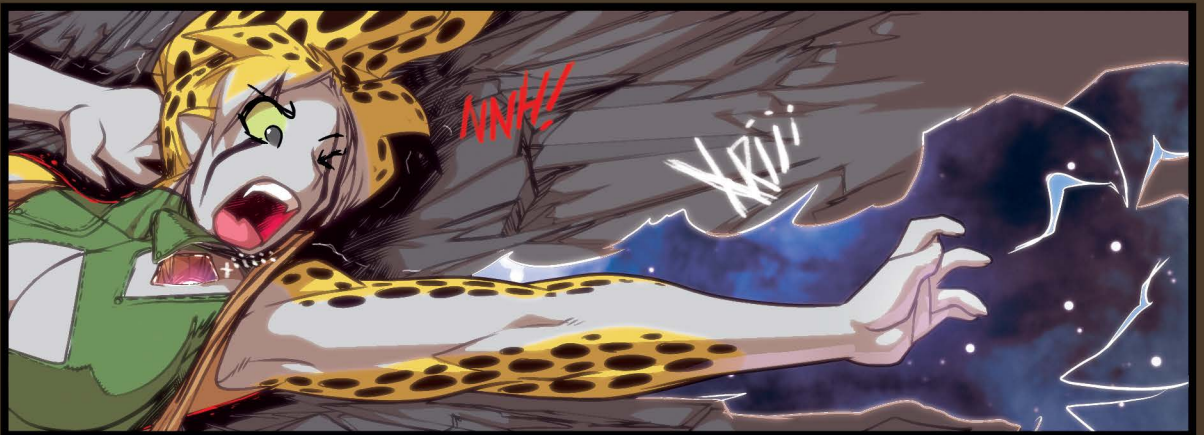


















A NEW PAWN
ENTERED THE
AREA WHILE
WE WERE
MOVING THE
TRAP WALL...

...AND THEN
ANOTHER!

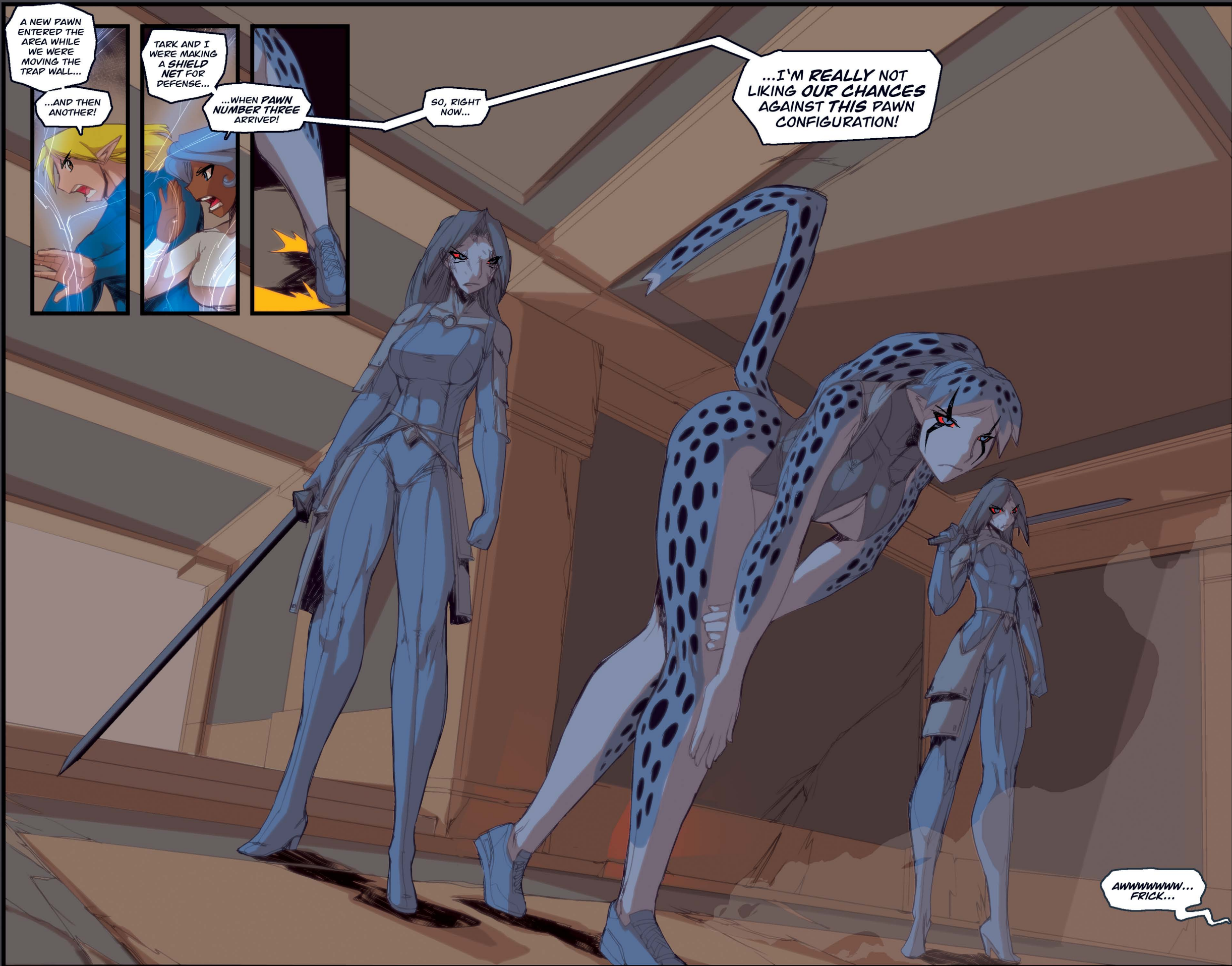
TARK AND I
WERE MAKING
A SHIELD
NET FOR
DEFENSE...

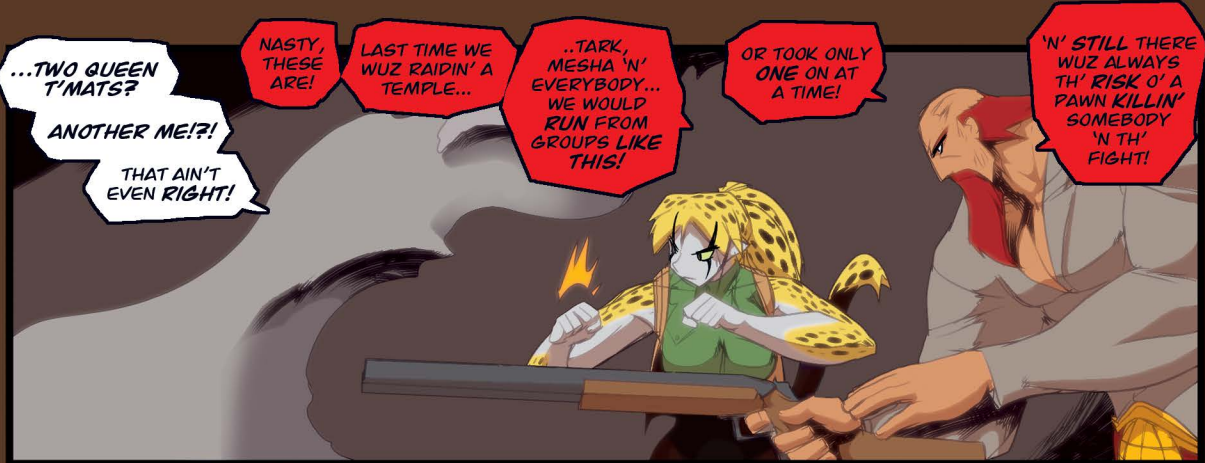
...WHEN PAWN
NUMBER THREE
ARRIVED!

SO, RIGHT
NOW...

...I'M REALLY NOT
LIKING OUR CHANCES
AGAINST THIS PAWN
CONFIGURATION!

AWWWWWW...
FRICK...





...TWO QUEEN T'MATS?
ANOTHER ME?!

NASTY, THESE ARE!

LAST TIME WE WUZ RAIDIN' A TEMPLE...

..TARK, MESHA 'N' EVERYBODY... WE WOULD RUN FROM GROUPS LIKE THIS!

OR TOOK ONLY ONE ON AT A TIME!

'N' STILL THERE WUZ ALWAYS TH' RISK O' A PAWN KILLIN' SOMEBODY 'N TH' FIGHT!

THAT AIN'T EVEN RIGHT!



BUT THEY HAVE A WEAKNESS, MONTY!

SAME AS WE DO, DIGGERS! THEY GOT OUR BODIES 'N' BRAINS!

'N' THEY WANT US DEAD, WHATEVER IT TAKES!

BUT THEY DON'T CARE!

THEY DON'T CARE ABOUT EACH OTHER!

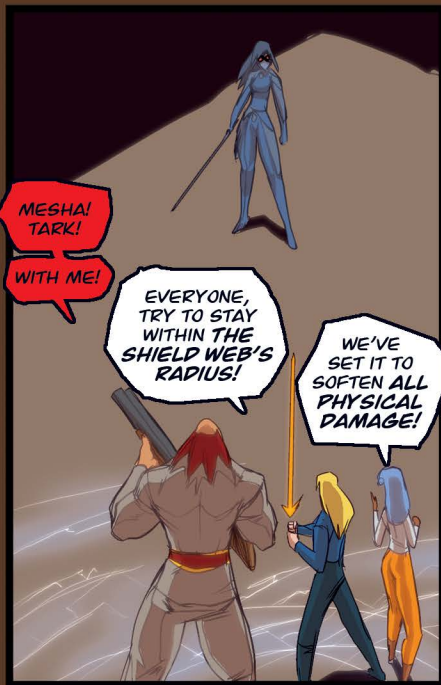
THEY MIGHT COORDINATE OFFENSE--



--BUT THEY'RE NOT WATCHING EACH OTHER'S BACKS!

GINA'S ON POINT HERE!

ROIGHT!



MESHA! TARK!
WITH ME!

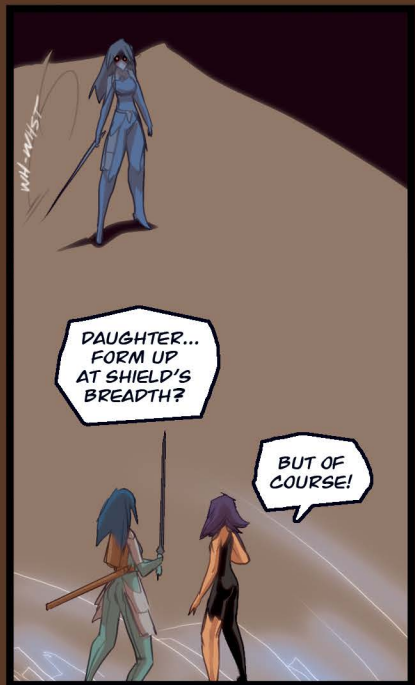
EVERYONE, TRY TO STAY WITHIN THE SHIELD WEB'S RADIUS!

WE'VE SET IT TO SOFTEN ALL PHYSICAL DAMAGE!



GINA! STAY CLOSE!

=NOD=



DAUGHTER... FORM UP AT SHIELD'S BREADTH?

BUT OF COURSE!



DRE'YAS...

...YOU'RE NOT GETTING YOUR WAY.

NOT THIS TIME!

TO BE CONCLUDED...