



CELEBRATING 20 GOLDEN YEARS!

GOLD DIGGER

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FRED PERRY



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NOVEMBER 2011



SORRY
WE'RE LATE,
PROFESSOR
DIGGERS.

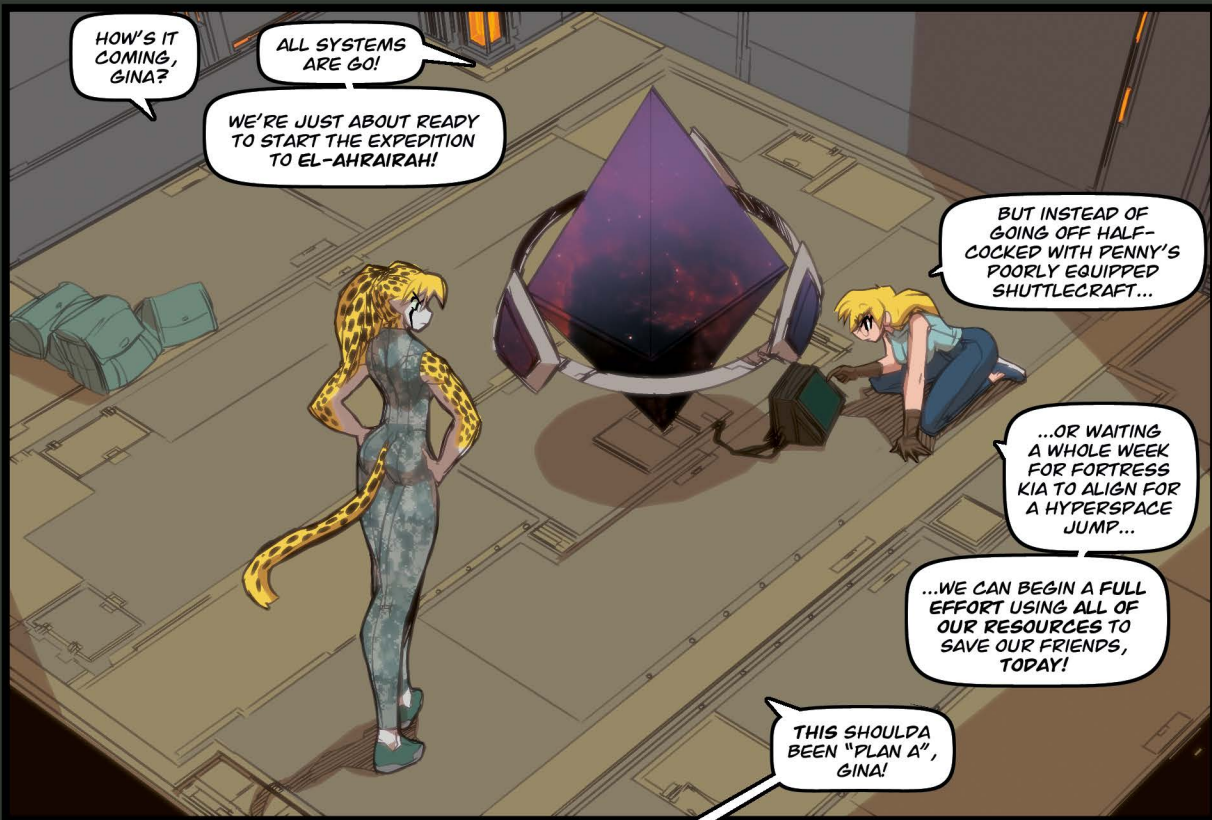
WE HAD A DIFFICULT
TIME BRINGING THE
COMPATIBILITY
MODULES UP TO
DATE.

BUT SOON, YOU'LL
HAVE DIGITAL ACCESS
TO THE AGENCY'S
SUPER COMPUTER
CLUSTER!

OKAY, AGENT
DORTON.

THE MATH'S
JUST ABOUT
DONE ON MY
END.

BUT WITH THOSE
WEIRD AGENCY ZERO
COMPUTERS, WE CAN
SHAVE OFF THE LAST
THIRTY MINUTES OF
THIS TWENTY-HOUR
PROCESS!



HOW'S IT
COMING,
GINA?

ALL SYSTEMS
ARE GO!

WE'RE JUST ABOUT READY
TO START THE EXPEDITION
TO EL-AHRAIRAH!

BUT INSTEAD OF
GOING OFF HALF-
COCKED WITH PENNY'S
POORLY EQUIPPED
SHUTTLECRAFT...

...OR WAITING
A WHOLE WEEK
FOR FORTRESS
KIA TO ALIGN FOR
A HYPERSPACE
JUMP...

...WE CAN BEGIN A FULL
EFFORT USING ALL OF
OUR RESOURCES TO
SAVE OUR FRIENDS,
TODAY!

THIS SHOULD
BEEN "PLAN A",
GINA!



WE SHOULD HAVE USED
YOUR HYPERSPACE
PYLON THINGIE FROM
THE BEGINNING!



IT WAS JUST PENNY, ACE, STRIPE AND ME OUT THERE TRYING TO SAVE EVERYBODY FROM THAT SUPER-SIZED DYNASTY SOUL FURNACE!

OUR TEAMWORK CUT A WAY OUT FOR A FEW INNOCENT BYSTANDERS...

...BUT WE WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO MAKE A RUN FOR IT IF WE'D HAD SOME BACKUP OUT THERE, GINA.

JAN, ROL AND THEIR WHOLE FAMILY MIGHT HAVE BEEN SAVED!

WELL, AS WEIRD AS MY SCIENCE SEEMS TO BE, I STILL CAN'T CHANGE THE LAWS OF PHYSICS, BRIT'.

PYLON HYPERSPACE PORTALS ABSOLUTELY NEED TO KNOW THE AMOUNT OF MASS THEY'RE ANCHORED ON.

I CAN'T SIMPLY GUESS THE MASS OF A PLANET A FEW HUNDRED MILLION LIGHT YEARS AWAY!

MY COMPUTER GOT THE MEASUREMENTS FROM SCANS TAKEN DURING YOUR RESCUE MISSION.

SO WE COULDN'T START THIS PROJECT WITHOUT "PLAN A" GOING FIRST!



WE'LL INITIALIZE THE
SUPER-COMPUTER UPLINK
RIGHT AWAY, PROFESSOR
DIGGERS.

LET'S GO,
"MS. FORKLIFT!"
I ANTED UP FOR
EIGHT DOZEN GLAZED
GOURMET DONUTS THIS
MORNING 'CAUSE YOU
WANTED THE "EXTRA
ENERGY!"

I EXPECT A
RETURN FOR MY
INVESTMENT!

TSK!<
I'M NOT
ASKING YOU
TO COVER MY
TAB NO MORE,
DORTY!

AND I MEAN IT
THIS TIME!!!

THANKS FOR COMING
OUT TO HELP US, Y'ALL.

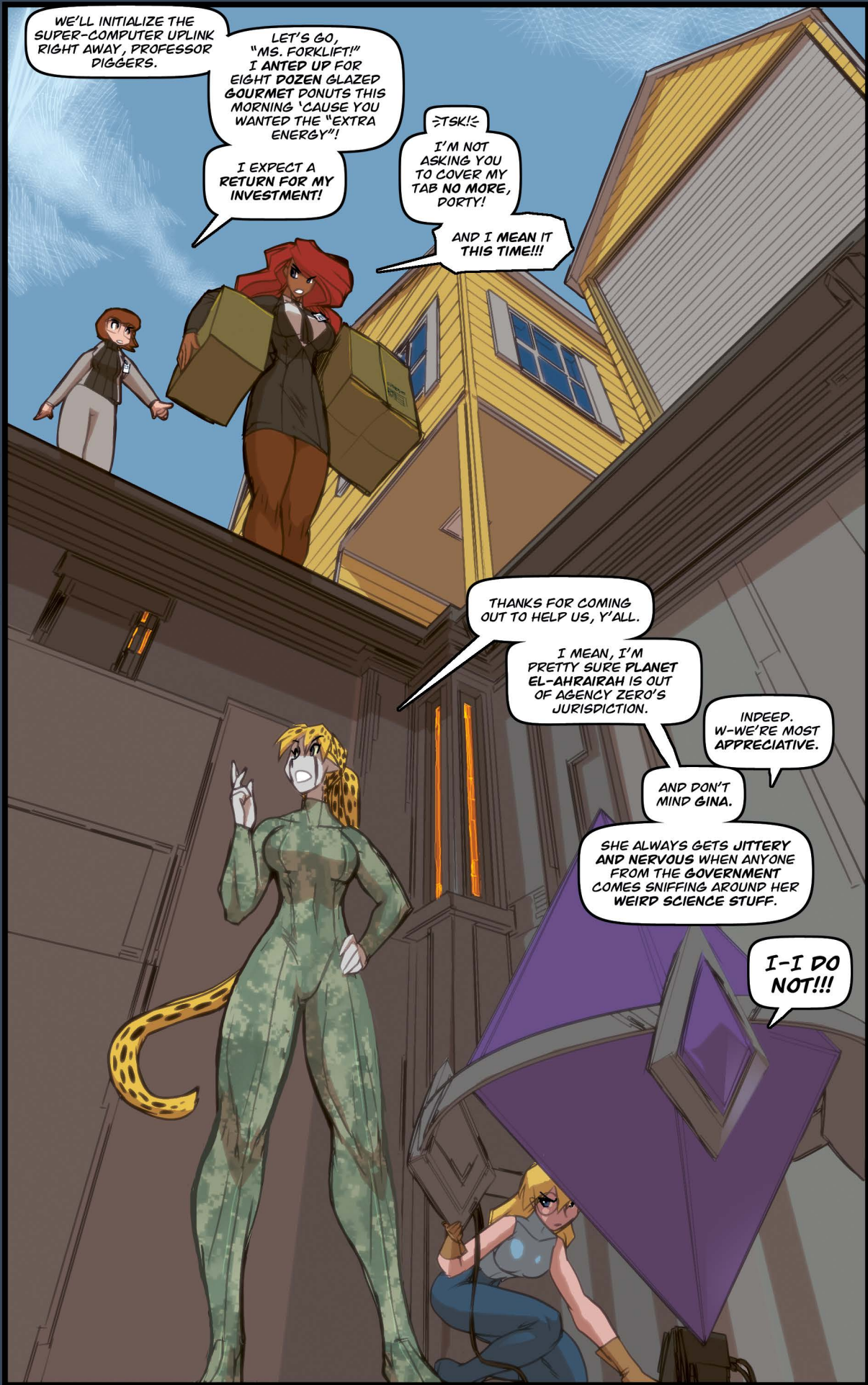
I MEAN, I'M
PRETTY SURE PLANET
EL-AHRAIRAH IS OUT
OF AGENCY ZERO'S
JURISDICTION.

INDEED.
W-WE'RE MOST
APPRECIATIVE.

AND DON'T
MIND GINA.

SHE ALWAYS GETS JITTERY
AND NERVOUS WHEN ANYONE
FROM THE GOVERNMENT
COMES SNIFFING AROUND HER
WEIRD SCIENCE STUFF.

I-I DO
NOT!!!





SANE, RESPONSIBLE
SUPER-SCIENTISTS
ARE PRETTY LOW ON
THE AGENCY'S LIST
OF CONCERNS,
MRS. 'GIA...

NOT WHEN WE RECEIVE
NEWS OF AN INTERGALACTIC
THREAT ATTACKING...
INCINERATING...
A FRIENDLY ALIEN
SETTLEMENT!

BESIDES BEING YOUR FRIENDS,
AGENCY ZERO FEELS THAT THE
AMARANS ARE A VERY ADVANCED,
VERY IMPORTANT PART OF EARTH'S
FUTURE RELATIONS WITH OUR
NEIGHBORS.

IF WE DON'T
SUPPORT
THAT, WHAT
CAN WE
SUPPORT?

BRIANNA AND HER
INVENTIONS, ON
THE OTHER HAND,
MAKE US A TINY
BIT NERVOUS.

SPEAKING OF
BRIANNA...

...WHERE
DID SHE
RUN OFF
TO?

BRI'S
IN THE
TECH
FORGE,
BRIT'...



...SHE WANTED TO START PUTTING
TOGETHER THE EXPEDITION'S
"CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION"
EQUIPMENT.

HRMMM.

YOU THINK GINA'S
NEW BATTLE-
SCIENCE
BRASSIERE HAS
ENOUGH GRENADE
PODS, PEEBRI?

HECK, NO!
MAX LOADOUT!
GO BIG OR
GO HOME!

BUT...
WHAT IF SHE
NEEDS TO...
YOU KNOW...
PUT HER
ARMS DOWN?
OR SCRATCH
HER NOSE?

PFT...RIGHT!
LIKE THAT'S
GONNA HAPPEN!?



ALL RIGHT, THEN.
EVERYBODY
READY?

PYLON
HYPERSPACE
TRANSLATION IN
NINETY SECONDS!



ROGER,
PROFESSOR!

UPLINK
ESTABLISHED!

THE
AGENCY'S MAGI
COMPUTERS
ARE SENDING
THEIR
CONTRIBUTIONS
RIGHT N--

XANE!



YOU HAVE TO HOLD
THAT 400 LB. DISH
ABSOLUTELY
STILL!

YEAH,
YEAH.

HOW COME I
GOTTA BE THE
BRAWN WHEN
WE'RE DOING
SCIENCE
STUFF?



HERE COMES
THE LAST OF
THE FORMULA
RESOLUTIONS,
PROFESSOR!

GRAVITATIONAL
PILATION
ACHIEVED!

SETTING TO
A NICE, QUIET
NEGATIVE
POINT FOUR.

ANNNND
LIFT
OFF!

LOOKING
GOOD...
...WE'RE
THERE!



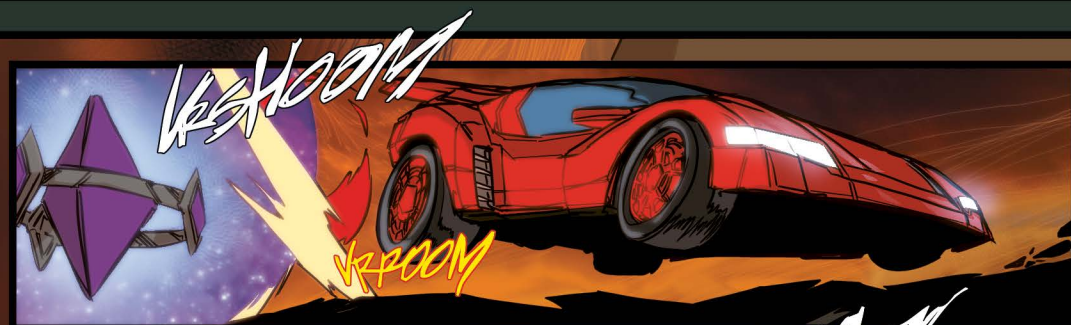
NOW ALL WE HAVE
TO DO IS BRING A
COMPANION PYLON
TO THE EXPEDITION
STAGING AREA IN
CUSCO, PERU.

PENNY'S
STANDING BY AT
HER HAZARDOUS
PROJECT LAB IN A
REMOTE PART OF
THAT TOWN...

...ALONG WITH
ALL THE LUGGAGE
WE'VE PACKED
FOR THIS TRIP.

LET'S GRAB OUR
GEAR AND GET TO THE
BOTTOM OF THIS WHOLE
DYNASTY MYSTERY!

PLANET EL-AHRAIRAH OF THE FRITH SYSTEM
BRITANNIA CONTINENT
PATRIARCH FORTRESS CRASH SITE



ATMOSPHERIC
TESTS COMPLETE.

NITROGEN: 60%,
OXYGEN: 18.5%. LOTS
MORE CARBON THAN
ON EARTH, THOUGH.

BREATHABLE.





ASHES.

THE DYNASTY BURNED A FOREST PLANET TO ASHES IN JUST TWO DAYS!

AND THE AIR'S SO...STILL...

THERE'S NO SIGN OF THE ENEMY.

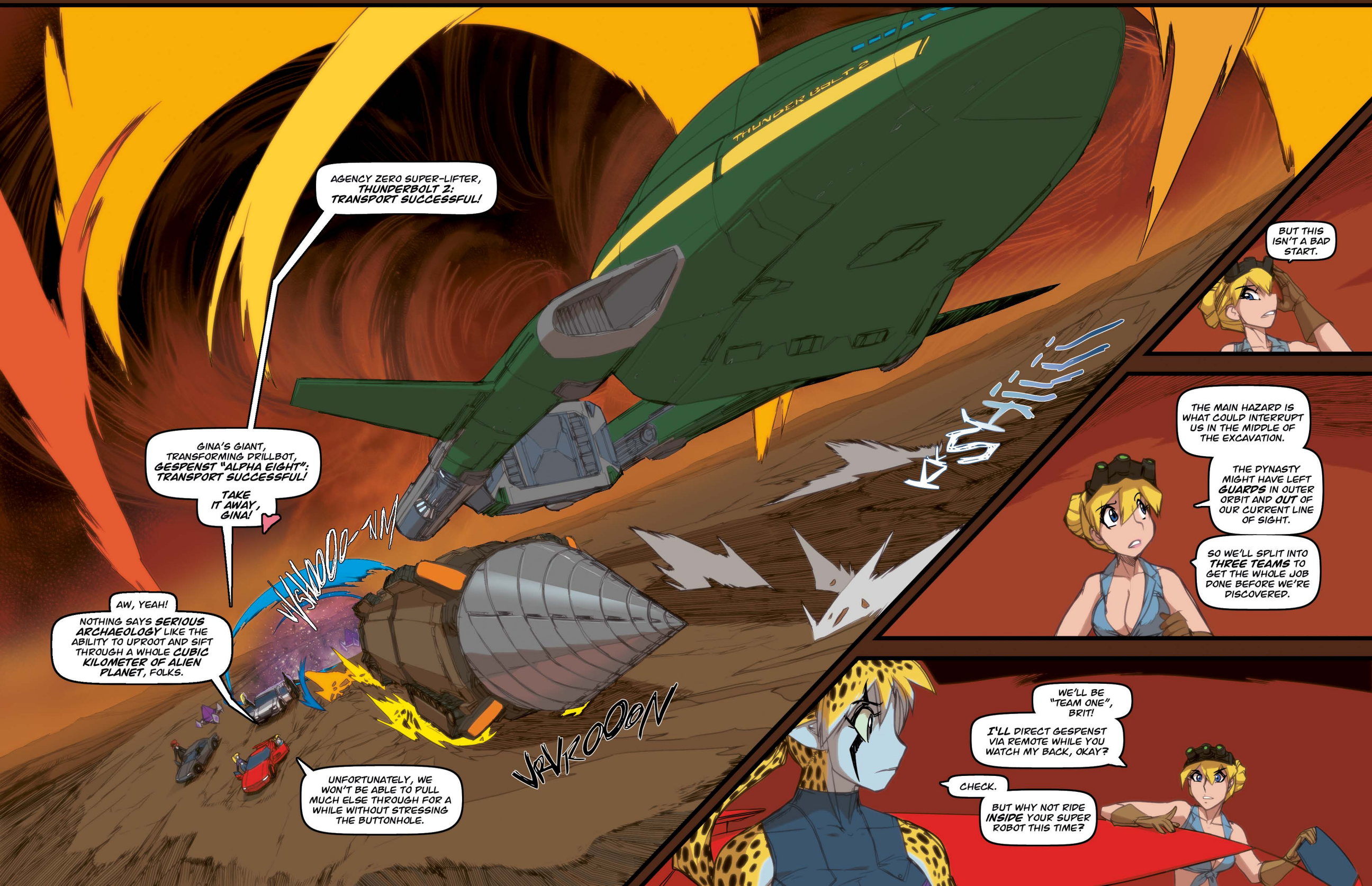
OR ANYTHING ELSE FROM HERE TO LOW ORBIT!

BRIANNA, "SLAVE" THOSE TWO HYPERSPACE PYLONS TO THE PRIMARY AND WIDEN THE BUTTONHOLE.

TIME TO BRING IN THE HEAVY EXCAVATION EQUIPMENT!

RIGHT!

HEADS UP, EVERYBODY!



AGENCY ZERO SUPER-LIFTER, THUNDERBOLT 2: TRANSPORT SUCCESSFUL!

GINA'S GIANT, TRANSFORMING DRILLBOT, GESPENST "ALPHA EIGHT": TRANSPORT SUCCESSFUL!

TAKE IT AWAY, GINA!

AW, YEAH!

NOTHING SAYS SERIOUS ARCHAEOLOGY LIKE THE ABILITY TO UPROOT AND SIFT THROUGH A WHOLE CUBIC KILOMETER OF ALIEN PLANET, FOLKS.

UNFORTUNATELY, WE WON'T BE ABLE TO PULL MUCH ELSE THROUGH FOR A WHILE WITHOUT STRESSING THE BUTTONHOLE.

BUT THIS ISN'T A BAD START.

THE MAIN HAZARD IS WHAT COULD INTERRUPT US IN THE MIDDLE OF THE EXCAVATION.

THE DYNASTY MIGHT HAVE LEFT GUARDS IN OUTER ORBIT AND OUT OF OUR CURRENT LINE OF SIGHT.

SO WE'LL SPLIT INTO THREE TEAMS TO GET THE WHOLE JOB DONE BEFORE WE'RE DISCOVERED.

WE'LL BE "TEAM ONE", BRIT!

I'LL DIRECT GESPENST VIA REMOTE WHILE YOU WATCH MY BACK, OKAY?

CHECK.

BUT WHY NOT RIDE INSIDE YOUR SUPER ROBOT THIS TIME?



WELL...

...THE DYNASTY
VAPORIZED AN ENTIRE
PLANET TO COVER
WHATEVER TRACKS
EXISTED HERE,
RIGHT?

BUT THEY LEFT THE
WRECKAGE OF AN
ASSAULT FORTRESS
FULL OF EVIDENCE
AND SECRETS SITTING
IN PLAIN VIEW ON THE
SIDE OF A MOUNTAIN!

BOOBY TRAP!



SO MY TRUSTY, BRAVE
LITTLE DROID'S GOING
IN FOR A PLANETARY-
CLASS BOMB DETECTION
AND DISPOSAL MISSION
FIRST...WHILE WE
WATCH FROM THE
OTHER SIDE OF THE
HORIZON!

PATY PAT PAT

GOOD BOY!
YOU SO
BRAAAVE!

DON'T WORRY,
GESPENST.
YOU WON'T BE
ALONE.



THE AGENCY'S **THUNDERBOLTS**
ARE ALSO AUTONOMOUS,
ARTIFICIALLY INTELLIGENT
SUPER-MACHINES!

ALTHOUGH THEY USE 1960'S
STATE-OF-THE-ART EIGHT-
TRACK TAPES INSTEAD OF GINA'S
MAG-GRAV FLEX BUBBLES
FOR MEMORY BANKS.



**THUNDERBOLT
TWO** IS PRETTY
MUCH A METAL
SUPERHERO!

AN INCREDIBLE
HULK OF A MACHINE,
ACTUALLY!

NH!

UNDER MY REMOTE
DIRECTION, T.B. 2 WILL
PROVIDE AIR COVER.

WITH XANE AS
MY BODYGUARD,
WE THREE MAKE
"TEAM TWO".





HEY, DORTY?

WE'RE DEALING WITH
PLANET-VAPORIZING
BADDIES ON THIS
RUN, RIGHT?

WHY AREN'T MORE
OF THE AGENCY'S
HEAVY HITTERS
HERE TO HELP
GINA OUT?

I'VE BEEN
WONDERING ABOUT
THAT MYSELF,
XANE.

BUT THIS IS PROFESSOR
DIGGER'S PARTY, AND
SHE'S BEEN PRETTY
SPECIFIC ON WHICH
GUESTS TO INVITE.

OUR GROUP IS
PERFECTLY BALANCED
FOR THIS SCENARIO,
AGENT DORTON.



GINA'S RIGHT.

WE CAN'T DO ANY GOOD
RUSHING IN FULL FORCE
WHEN WE DON'T KNOW HOW
TO SAVE THE DAY YET.

WE'RE HUNTING
FOR INFO.

FULL COMBAT
TEAMS SUCK AT
GATHERING INFO IN
HAZARDOUS AREAS.

IN DED TERMS,
YOU DON'T SEARCH
A ROOM FOR
SECRETS WITH THE
WHOLE PARTY
STANDING ON THE
TRAP DOOR!

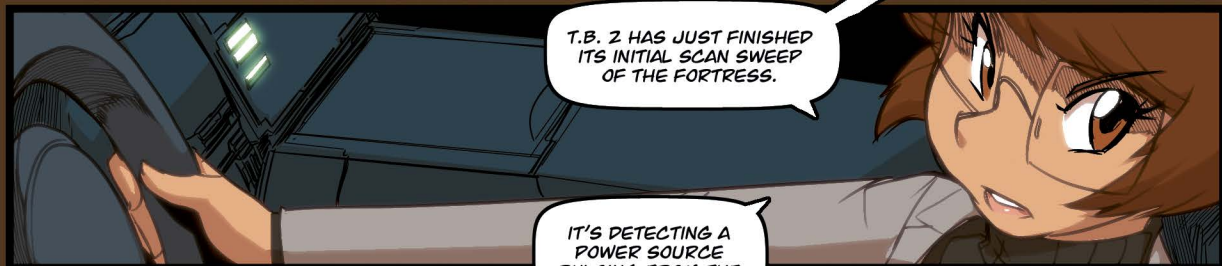


OKAY, TWENTY MILES AWAY
FEELS PRETTY SAFE.

LET'S SET UP THE
SURVEY EQUIPMENT.

BRIANNA CAN RE-DEPLOY
OUR PYLONS IN CASE WE STILL
NEED A QUICK GETAWAY.

PROFESSOR
DIGGERS!



T.B. 2 HAS JUST FINISHED
ITS INITIAL SCAN SWEEP
OF THE FORTRESS.

IT'S DETECTING A
POWER SOURCE
PULSING FROM THE
FORTRESS CORE!



I'M SENDING YOU
THE INTERFEROMETRY
SCAN RESULTS.

HRMMM.

THAT'S...

...I KNOW
THAT ENERGY
SIGNATURE!

PULL
THUNDERBOLT
TWO AWAY FROM
THERE, AGENT
DORTON.

GESPIE?

CAN YOU
HEAR ME?

I NEED YOU TO
START DRILLING
US A NEW FRONT
DOOR...

...CAREFULLY.

YES, MA'AM!

WE GOT
SOMETHING?

A CLUE?

WHAT THUNDERBOLT
TWO FOUND WAS A
GIGA-ENGINE!

BETA-TECHNOLOGY!

THAT FORTRESS IS
PROVIDING POWER TO
SOMETHING INSIDE!

IF I HAD TO MAKE A
GUESS, I'D SAY THAT
"SOMETHING" IS A
"PHANTOM RING"!

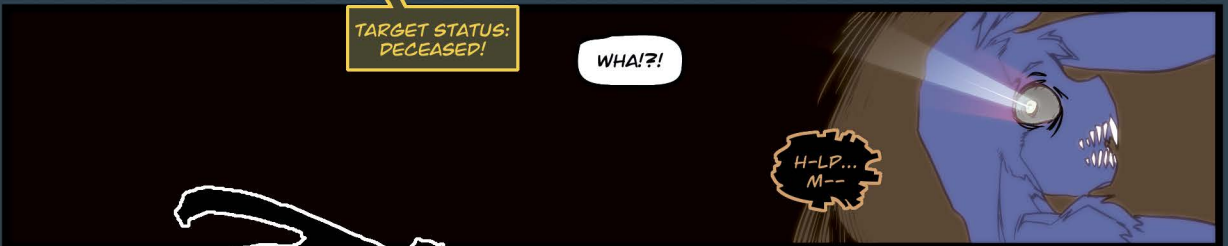
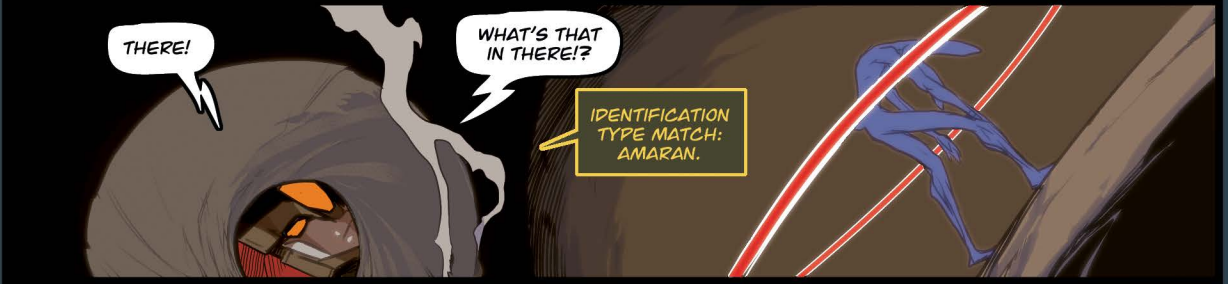
AND THAT'S WHAT'S
MAKING ME REALLY,
REALLY NERVOUS!

A PHANTOM RING
IS JUST THE KIND OF
ANCIENT TECHNOLOGY I
WAS HOPING TO FIND
AROUND HERE!

IT MIGHT TELL US
EVERYTHING THAT
HAPPENED TO OUR
FRIENDS AND MORE!

HOWEVER...

...I'VE SEEN THE OLD
"GLITTERING TREASURE
CHEST IN THE MIDDLE OF
A DARK AND SPOOKY
CASTLE" SET-UP
BEFORE!





GESPIE, SAY
SOMETHING!
SPEAK TO M-

EEK!!

ERROR:
OI-E...
B-B...T
FUNC...NAL...
MA'AM!



GESPIE!
PUT UP FULL
SHIELDS IF
YOU CAN!

GINA!

EVERYBODY!!!
STAY PUT
AND REMAIN
STILL!



THAT POOR GUY
IN THERE...

...SOMEONE
CHANGED HIM
INTO AN ANIMUS!

AN UNDEAD
ELEMENTAL!

H-LP...
M--



THAT BLAST
WAS A SPELL
CALLED
"RUIN"!

THERE IS NO
DEFENSE
AGAINST IT!

BUT
IT'S HARD
TO AIM!

WE JUST DODGED A
RIGGED SHOTGUN
AT THE DOOR!



CRESCENS AND
I FOUGHT THOSE
THINGS BEFORE...

...BACK WHEN I
WAS TRAPPED ON
OBLIVION!



BUT SINCE THE COST
FOR CASTING "RUIN" IS
SO HIGH, THOSE FIGHTS
WERE PRETTY SHORT.



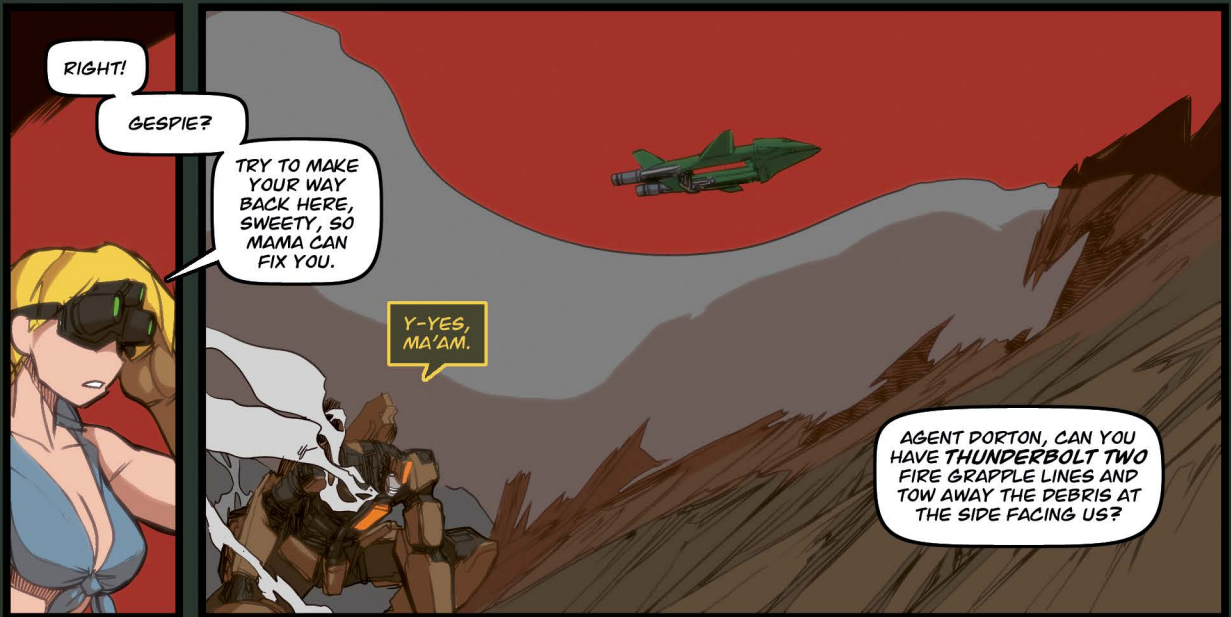
GOOD PLAY POKING THAT
TRAP WITH A TWENTY-MILE-
LONG STICK, GINA.

WELL...

HOPEFULLY, WE CAN START
OUR INVESTIGATION WITHOUT
FURTHER INCIDENT.

WE'LL SEARCH
THE RUINS
FROM HERE!

I STILL HAVE A
BAD FEELING ABOUT
APPROACHING THE
SITE PERSONALLY.



RIGHT!

GESPIE?

TRY TO MAKE
YOUR WAY
BACK HERE,
SWEETY, SO
MAMA CAN
FIX YOU.

Y-YES,
MA'AM.

AGENT DORTON, CAN YOU
HAVE **THUNDERBOLT TWO**
FIRE GRAPPLE LINES AND
TOW AWAY THE DEBRIS AT
THE SIDE FACING US?



PERFECT!

OKAY,
BRIANNA,
READY WHEN
YOU ARE.

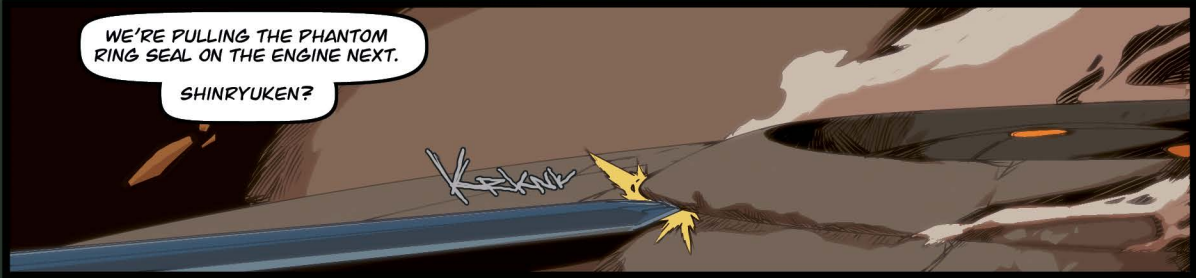


BUT IF YOU'RE NOT
CONFIDENT, I COULD CUT
THE LIP OFF FOR YOU WITH
MY COMPUTER-ASSISTED
GINA-BLASTER.

NAWP. I GOT IT.



MY COMPUTER-ASSISTED
BLASTER IS **BIGGERER**
AND **BETTERER**,
ANYWAY! ❤️



WE'RE PULLING THE PHANTOM
RING SEAL ON THE ENGINE NEXT.

SHINRYUKEN?



GN...

CNNK...

SL--
SLIGHT
PROBLEM.

MY MYSTIC BLADE HAS
STRENGTH ENOUGH...
BUT MY MORTAL
FLESH HAS NOT!



TOGETHER, THEN.

ON THE COUNT
OF THREE...



"...THREE"!!!

EASY DOES IT,
YOU GUYS.



THERE.
ALL
CLEAR!

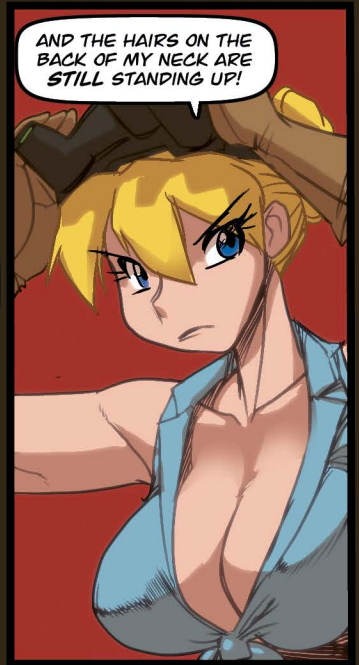
INCREDIBLE,
PROFESSOR
DIGGERS!

THIS ARCHAEOLOGY
IS...MUNCHAUSIAN!



ACTUALLY, I'M
BEING OVERLY
CAUTIOUS,
AGENT DORTON.

TWENTY MILES IS
THE MAXIMUM
DISTANCE FROM
WHICH I CAN
MANIPULATE BETA
TECHNOLOGY.



AND THE HAIRS ON THE
BACK OF MY NECK ARE
STILL STANDING UP!



HOW LONG
BEFORE YOU CAN
START PULLING
INFORMATION FROM
THE ARTIFACT WE
JUST EXCAVATED,
PROFESSOR?

I'LL SAY THIS...
EVERYONE SEND DOCTOR
PENELOPE "C-3PO"
PINCER A CHRISTMAS
CARD THIS YEAR!

SHE DISCOVERED
BETA-TECH...

...SHE DID THE
RESEARCH THAT'S
MAKING THIS EASY...

...AND HER DEVICE DRIVERS
ARE FLUENT IN OVER SIX
MILLION FORMS OF BETA-
TECH COMMUNICATION!



HERE COMES
THE FOOTAGE.



IT'S SO DARK!

THESE...THESE AREN'T AMBIENT IMPRESSIONS.

THESE ARE LOG ENTRIES!

ENTRY TWO... I'VE SUCCESSFULLY INTERFACED WITH THE RUIN'S ABERRANTLY MURKY LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEM!

FASCINATING.

IS THIS ON?



THIS AMARAN SCIENTIST MUST HAVE JUST DISCOVERED HOW TO INTERFACE WITH DYNASTY BETA-TECH HERE!

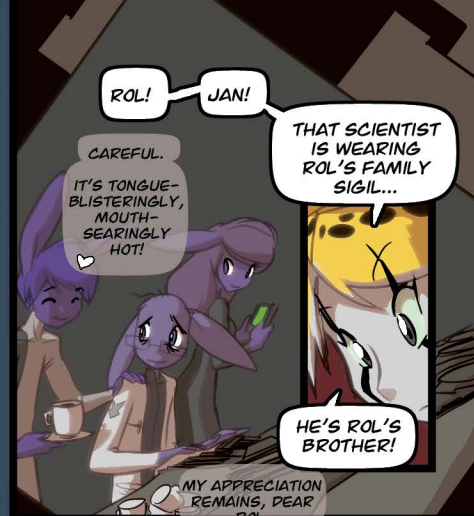
HE DOESN'T KNOW PHANTOM RINGS CAN STORE NTH-BYTE DATA!

HE'S TREATING IT LIKE SOME KIND OF ALIEN LAPTOP!

AND HE'S MADE HUNDREDS OF PROGRESS ENTRIES!

ENTRY FOUR HUNDRED AND THIRTY-EIGHT: WE'RE OUT OF HOT BRANKY.

GETTING PROWSY.



ROL!

JAN!

CAREFUL. IT'S TONGUE-BLISTERINGLY, MOUTH-SEARINGLY HOT!

THAT SCIENTIST IS WEARING ROL'S FAMILY SIGIL...

HE'S ROL'S BROTHER!

MY APPRECIATION REMAINS, DEAR ROL.



BUT WHAT ARE THEY WORKING ON?

YOU'RE RIGHT! THERE'S SOMETHING... ALIVE...IN THE SIXTH CHAMBER!

ROL, ALTER THE SCAN FREQUENCY PATTERN.



A VAULT?

HOW'S THAT. IS THAT CLEAR?



IT'S RIO! THE DYNASTY PATRIARCH...

...HIDING IN THAT CHAMBER... RECOVERING FROM THE CRASH!

THEY FOUND HIM!

THE ANCIENT BASTARD WHO BURNED BILLIONS OF AMARANS FOR FUEL.

TRAPPED!



LAST ENTRY...

...IT LOOKS LIKE THEY GATHERED A POSSE OF NEIGHBORS TO KILL THE PATRIARCH BEFORE HE COULD HEAL AND REGAIN HIS STRENGTH HERE!

AND I CAN SEE ROL'S BROTHER WASN'T TAKING CHANCES, EITHER!



THAT PHANTOM RING IS ALIGNED TO FOCUS TRANSMISSION WAVES...

...WITH THE PATRIARCH'S SYMBIOTS AS THE INTENDED AUDIENCE!

SO THAT BOX IS DESIGNED TO INTERFERE WITH THE DYNASTY'S POWERS?

THE SYMBIOT OVERRIDE SYSTEM IS SOMETHING I DEVELOPED DURING BRIT' AND MY FIRST CONTACT WITH THE DYNASTY, AGENT DORTON!

AND I SEE OUR FRIENDS HAVE MADE A FEW IMPROVEMENTS USING AMARAN TECHNOLOGY!



WITH THE PATRIARCH IN THAT WEAKEND STATE, THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO--

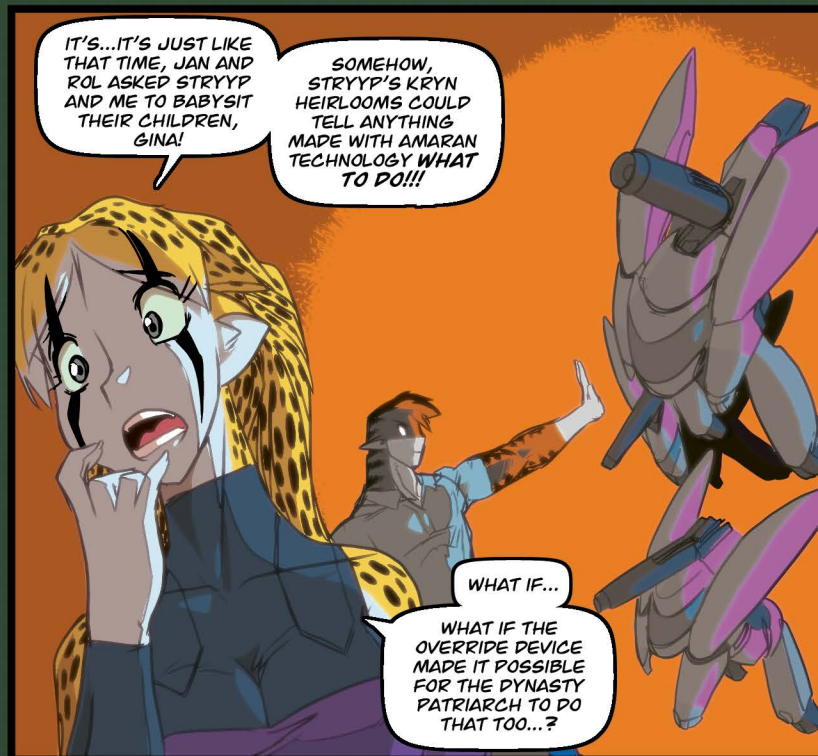
WHAT IN THE WORLD!?!?

WH-WHAT HAPPENED!?!?



IT'S LIKE ALL OF THE AMARAN BIOTECH AND BATTLETECH TURNED ON EVERYBODY!

HOW THE HECK DID THAT HAPPEN?

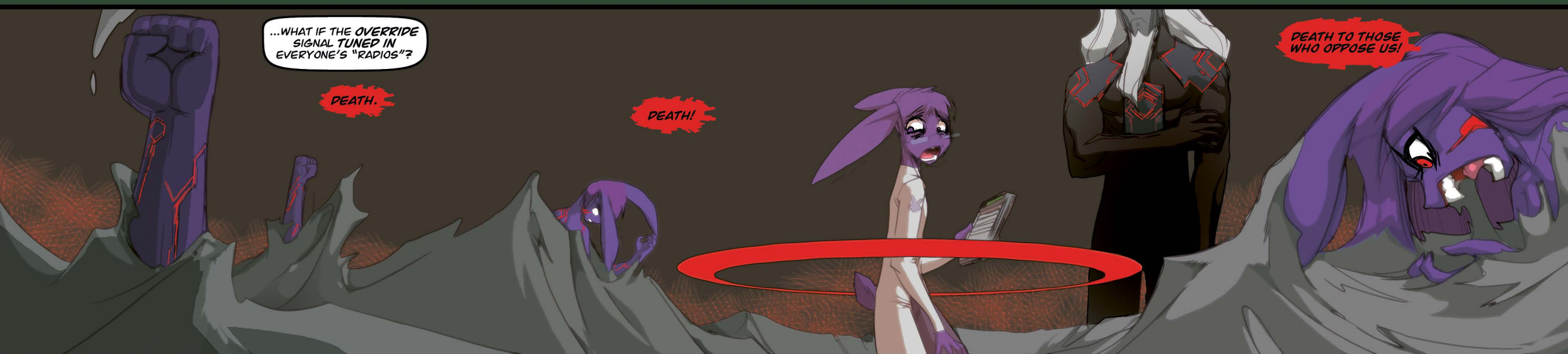


IT'S...IT'S JUST LIKE THAT TIME, JAN AND ROL ASKED STRYYP AND ME TO BABYSIT THEIR CHILDREN, GINA!

SOMEHOW, STRYYP'S KRYN HEIRLOOMS COULD TELL ANYTHING MADE WITH AMARAN TECHNOLOGY WHAT TO DO!!!

WHAT IF...

WHAT IF THE OVERRIDE DEVICE MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE DYNASTY PATRIARCH TO DO THAT TOO...?



...WHAT IF THE OVERRIDE SIGNAL TUNED IN EVERYONE'S "RADIOS"?

DEATH.

DEATH!

DEATH TO THOSE WHO OPPOSE US!

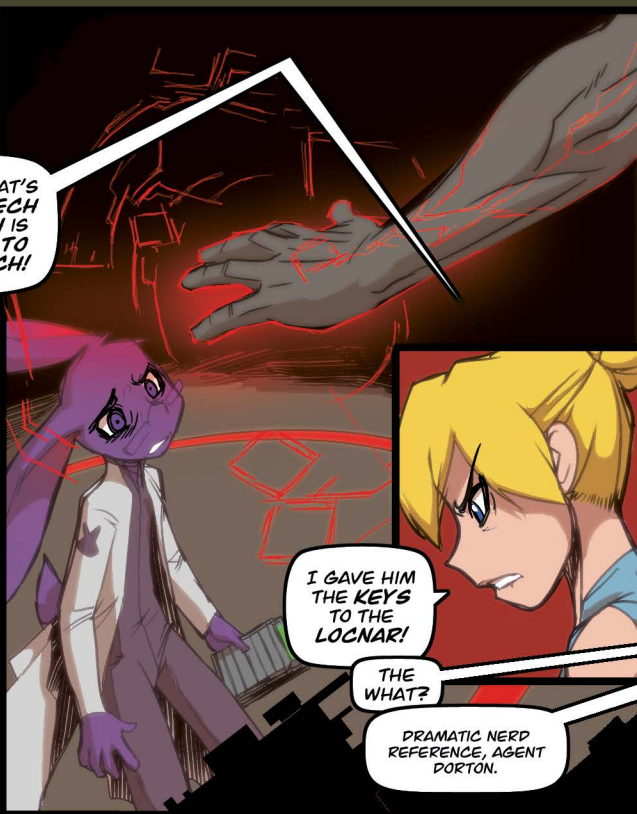


PAMN!

THIS IS ALL MY FAULT!

I BRIDGED THE GAP FOR THE DYNASTY!

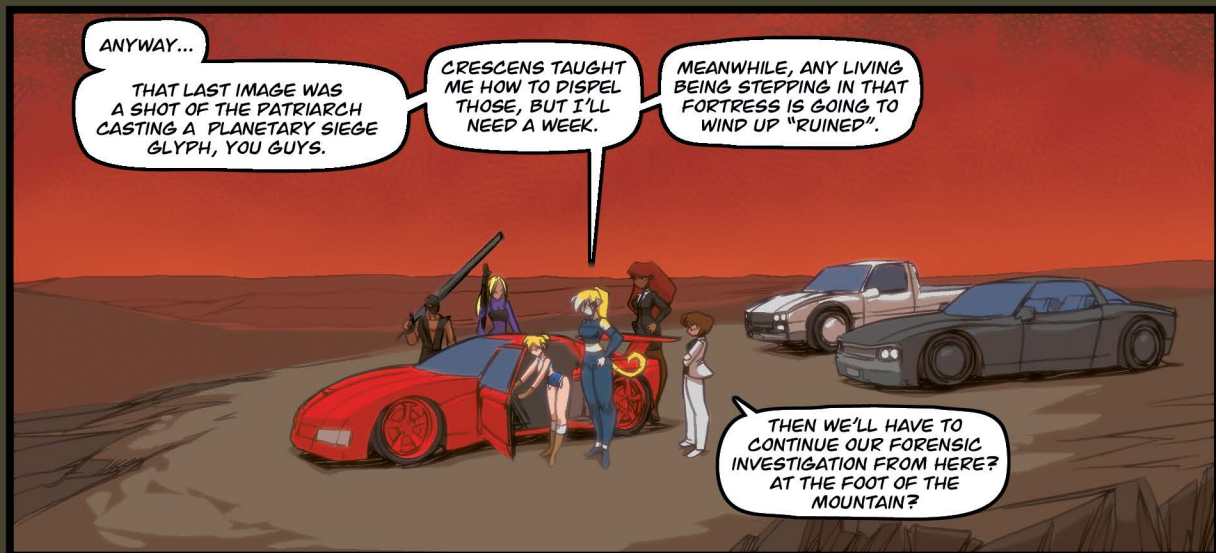
ANY AMARAN THAT'S MIXED THEIR TECH WITH MY TECH IS VULNERABLE TO THE PATRIARCH!



I GAVE HIM THE KEYS TO THE LOCNAR!

THE WHAT?

DRAMATIC NERD REFERENCE, AGENT DORTON.



ANYWAY...

THAT LAST IMAGE WAS A SHOT OF THE PATRIARCH CASTING A PLANETARY SIEGE GLYPH, YOU GUYS.

CRESCENS TAUGHT ME HOW TO DISPEL THOSE, BUT I'LL NEED A WEEK.

MEANWHILE, ANY LIVING BEING STEPPING IN THAT FORTRESS IS GOING TO WIND UP "RUINED".

THEN WE'LL HAVE TO CONTINUE OUR FORENSIC INVESTIGATION FROM HERE? AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN?



I'M HEADING BACK TO MY LAB, AGENT DORTON.

MAYBE IF I COME UP WITH A WAY TO CANCEL MY TECHNOLOGY'S INTEGRATION WITH JAN AND ROL AND THEIR NEIGHBORS, I CAN BREAK THE DYNASTY'S CONTROL OVER THEM.

I'VE GOT TO SET THIS RIGHT.

IT'S TIME TO START PHASE TWO OF THIS QUEST.

IT'S TIME TO SAVE JAN AND ROL...



...AND BURY THE DYNASTY OF STARS ONCE AND FOR ALL!

TO BE CONCLUDED...