

THE FRONT

REBIRTH



FOR
ANNE
AND
HOOVER.
WITHOUT YOU
THIS BOOK WOULD
NOT EXIST.







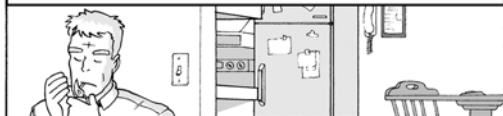
"BUT I'M GETTING AHEAD OF MYSELF..."

"...LET'S BACK UP TO THAT MORNING. THAT'S MY APARTMENT BUILDING IN MT. HAVEN. DON'T LET THE NAME FOOL YOU, IT WASN'T ANYWHERE NEAR A MOUNTAIN.



"AND IT CERTAINLY WASN'T A HAVEN BY ANY MEANS..."

"THAT'S REX, MY EVER-SMOKING ADOPTIVE FATHER. HE HAD SOME GOVERNMENT CONSULTING JOB BACK THEN, AND I DIDN'T SEE HIM MUCH.

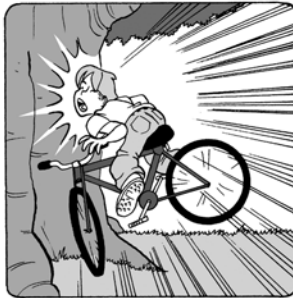




"THAT'S MY BEST FRIEND KNOX. BETTER TELL YOU THIS NOW, SINCE IT COMES INTO PLAY LATER ON: KNOX HAS WEIRD ABILITIES TOO. HE'S IMPERVIOUS TO ALMOST ALL KINETIC ENERGY."

"WHEN WE WERE LITTLE, HE MADE A FORTUNE BETTING OTHER KIDS THAT HE WOULD BASH HIMSELF INTO TREES ON HIS BIKE."

"WE USED TO THINK HE WAS INDESTRUCTIBLE, BUT HE'D OCCASIONALLY HAVE A CUT OR SCRAPE."



"I DON'T KNOW WHAT WAS MORE DISTURBING--SEEING HIM SMILE AFTER SMASHING HIS FACE LIKE THAT, OR HOW MUCH EVERYONE LIKED HIM BECAUSE HE COULD DO IT."



"THAT'S GIBSON. KNOX AND I SPENT THE BETTER PART OF THAT YEAR AVOIDING WALKING TO SCHOOL WITH HIM."

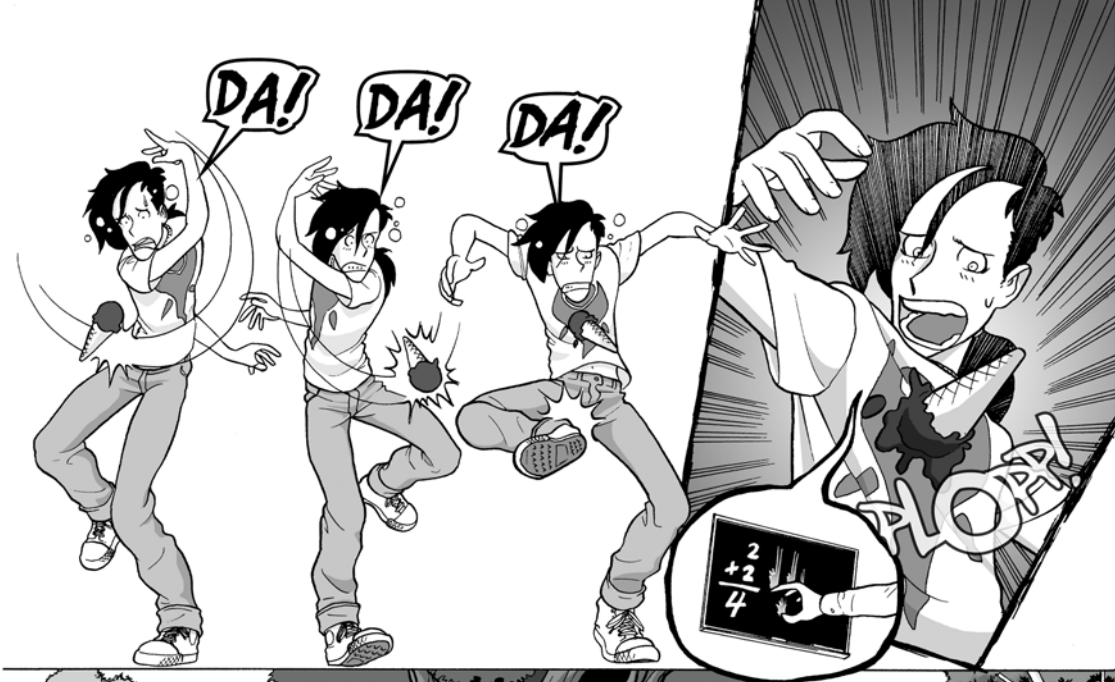
DID HE SEE YOU?

NO, NO... HE'S STILL GOING...

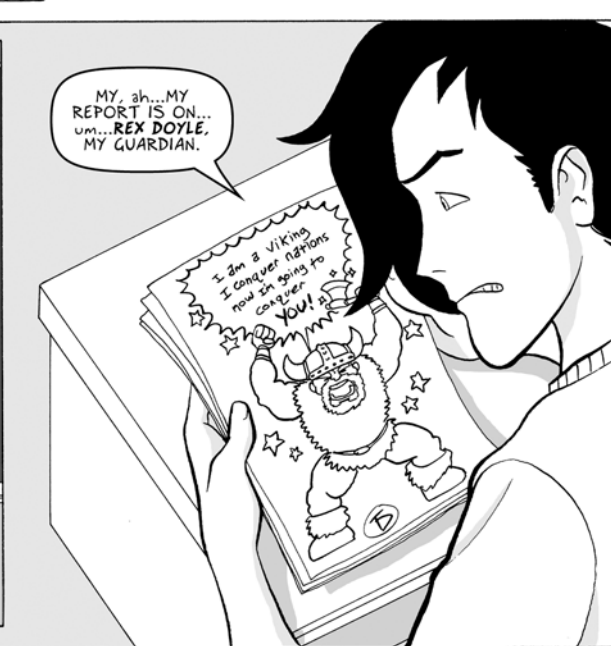
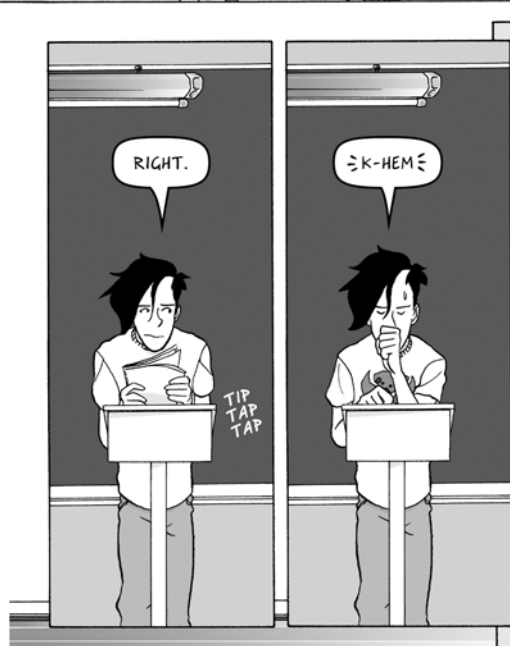
Shark Attack!



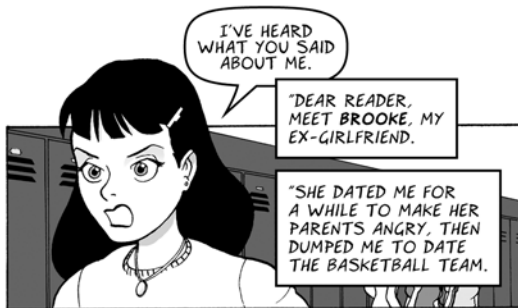
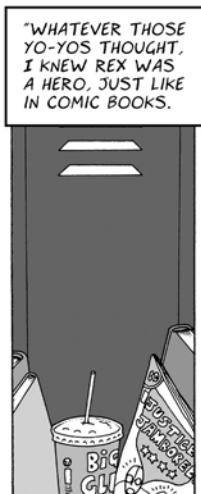


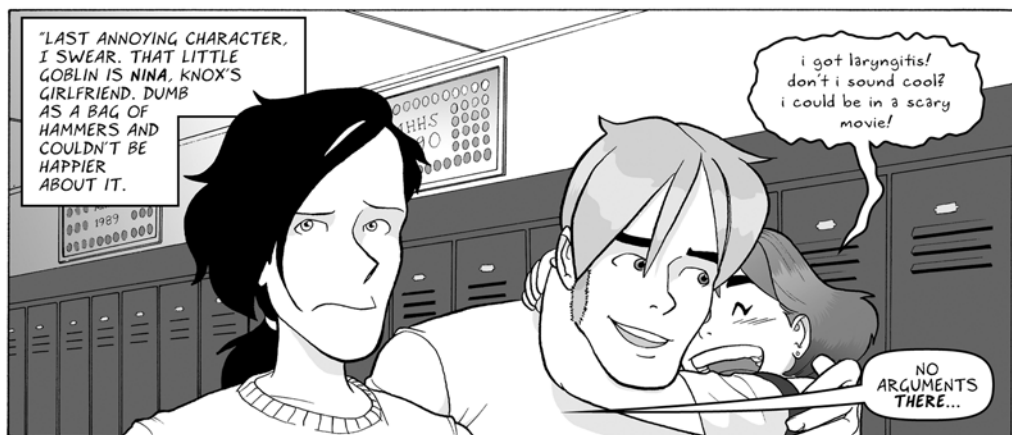






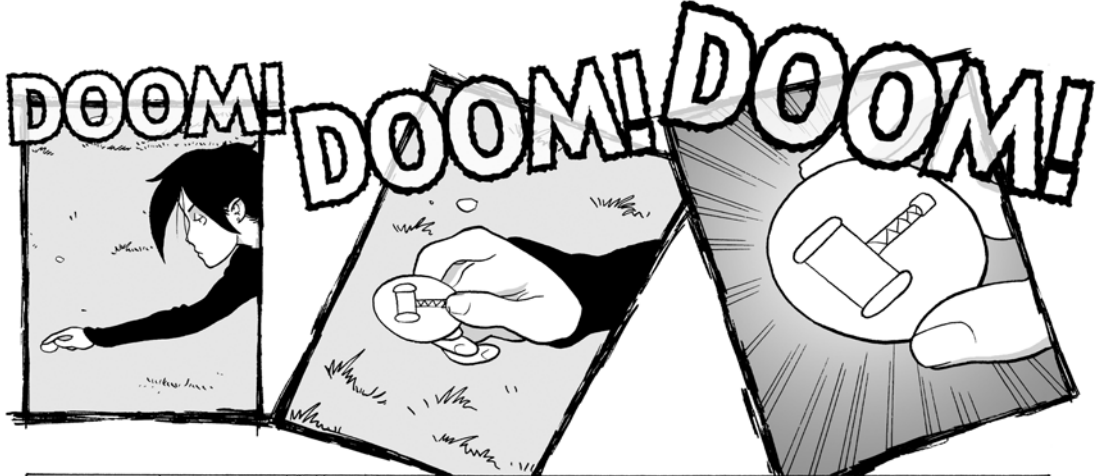




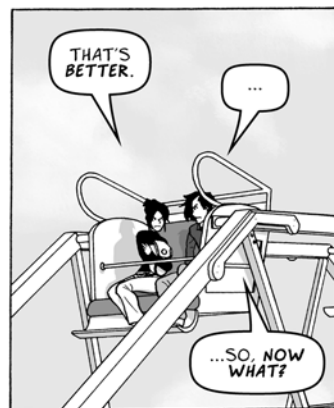
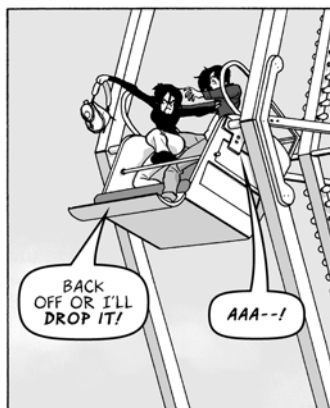
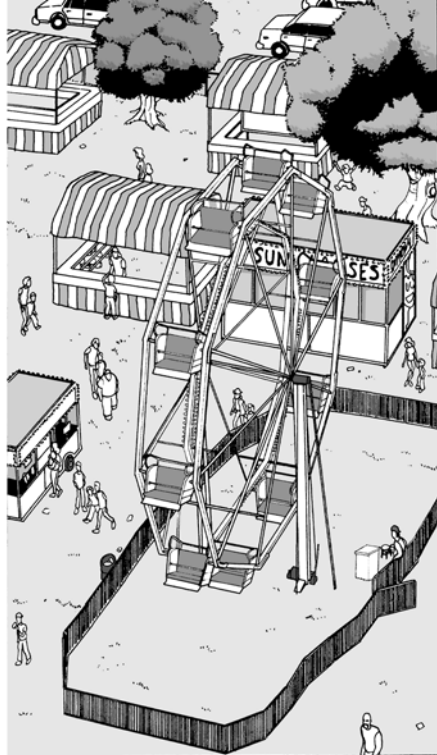






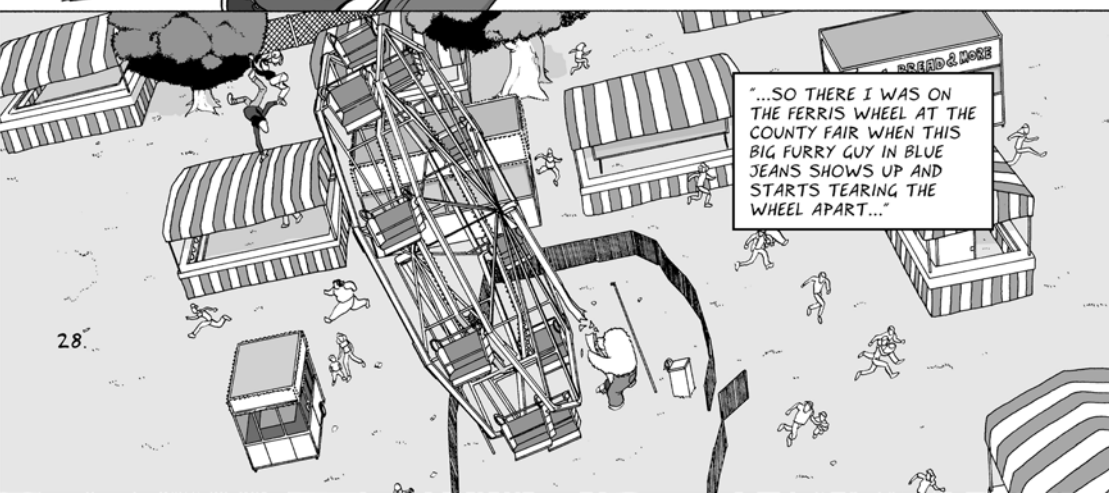


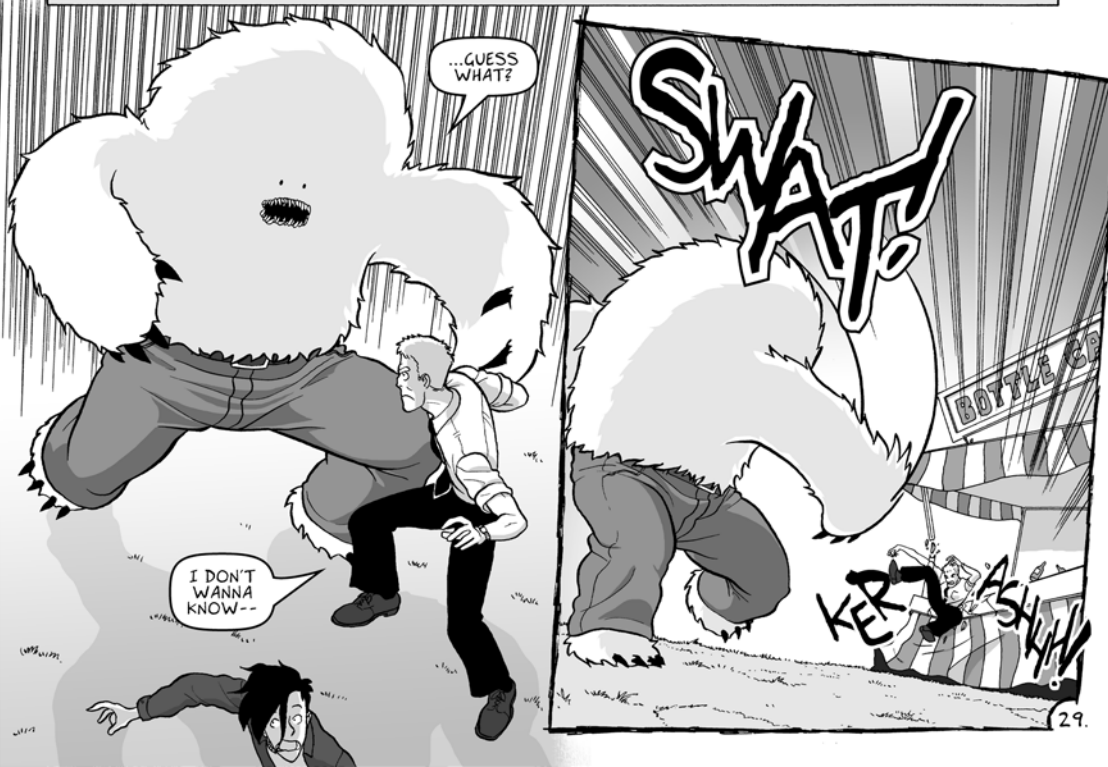


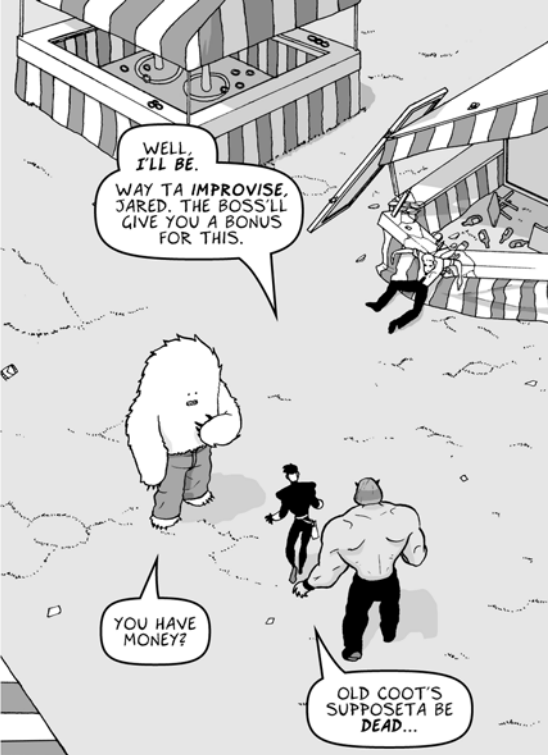














"LET'S GET EVERYONE UP TO SPEED. MY DAY STARTED ON A PRETTY GOOD NOTE. IT WAS MY BIRTHDAY, AND THE LAST DAY OF SCHOOL. BUT THEN I GOT CHOCOLATE ICE CREAM ON MY NEW SHIRT. MY BEST FRIEND CONNED ME INTO GOING TO THE COUNTY FAIR. I MET THE PRETTIEST GIRL I'VE EVER SEEN, BUT SHE WAS TRYING TO STEAL MY ANTIQUE THOR PIN. THEN, TO TOP IT OFF, THESE CRAZY MONSTERS AND GUYS WEARING GOOFY OUTFITS SHOWED UP AND STARTED CHASING ME AROUND. REX POPPED UP OUT OF NOWHERE TO STOP THEM, BUT IT WAS LOOKING LIKE HE WAS OUTNUMBERED..."

ah, NUTS!
THE KID'S GETTING
AWAY!

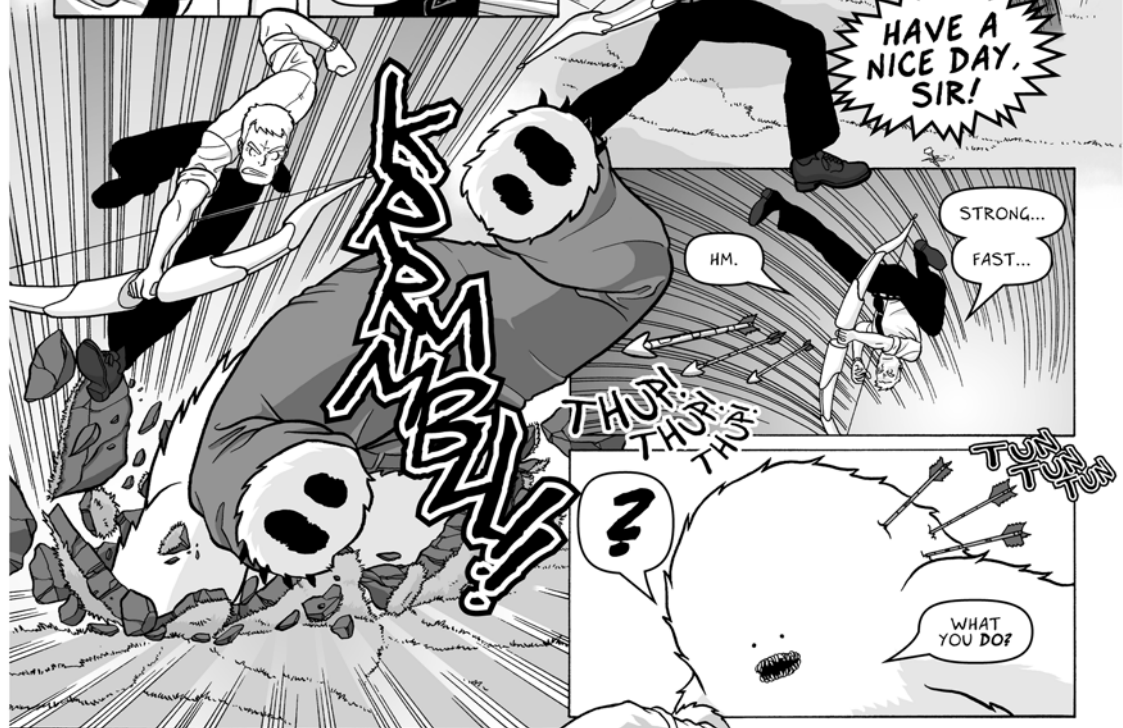
FORGET IT.
MOVE A MUSCLE
AND YOU'LL END UP
LIKE YOUR ORANGE
FRIEND, THERE.

FSST!

FSST!

CHAPTER TWO:

FAIR FIGHT!







...DON'T THINK
THAT THOSE
MONSTERS MADE
ME FORGET!
I WANT MY
PIN BACK!

HANG ON
TO YOUR DREAMS.
THIRSTY! THE FUTURE
IS BUILT ON THEM!



WHAT'S
THAT SUPPOSED
TO MEAN?

"YEAH, I KNOW. YOU
GOT ME. ALL THAT
JABBERING I DID LAST
ISSUE ABOUT HEROISM,
AND WHEN SOME REAL
SUPER-VILLAINS SHOW
UP, ALL I COULD DO
WAS OBSESS OVER
SOME COMIC BOOK
PIN...



'BUT REX DID TELL ME
TO FIND COVER...

THE KID
CAN SWALLOW
ELECTRICITY, SO
LET'S TRY TO
TRANQ 'IM WITH
SONICS.

♪ ping! ♪
let me at
'im, dick!

ATTA GIRL.
YOU'RE MY NUMBER
ONE GUN. YOU
KNOW THAT?



OKAY, ANGEL:
STUN FREQ
BLAST.

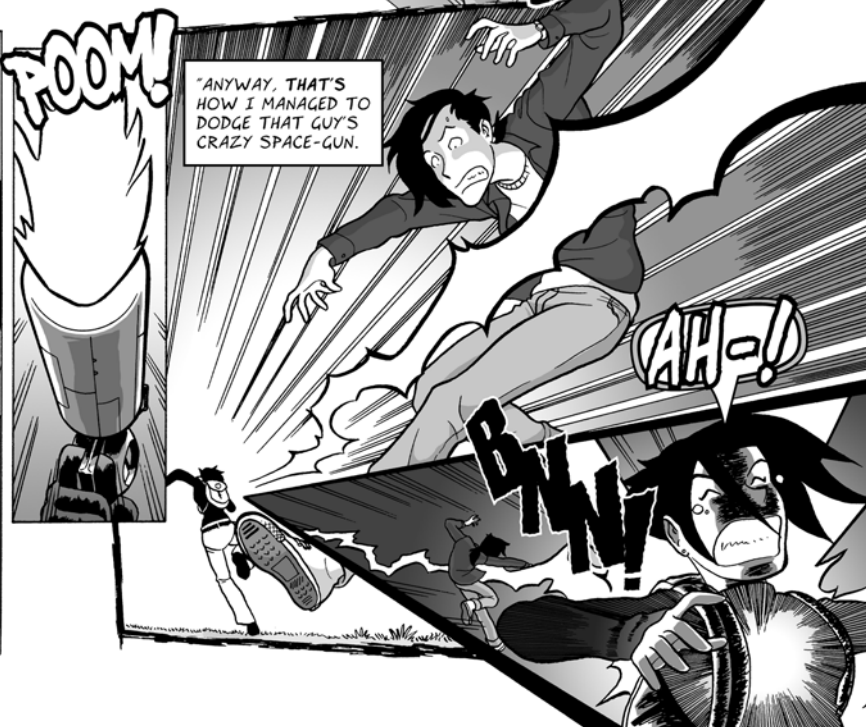
♪ ping! ♪
roger,
dick!

SLEEP
TIGHT,
KID.



"I CAN ALSO
'SENSE' WEIRD OR
INTENSE ENERGIES,
SORTA LIKE A
METAL DETECTOR.

"I'D TRIED FOR
YEARS TO GET
PEOPLE TO REFER
TO IT AS MY
'THIRSTY SENSE'...



POOM!

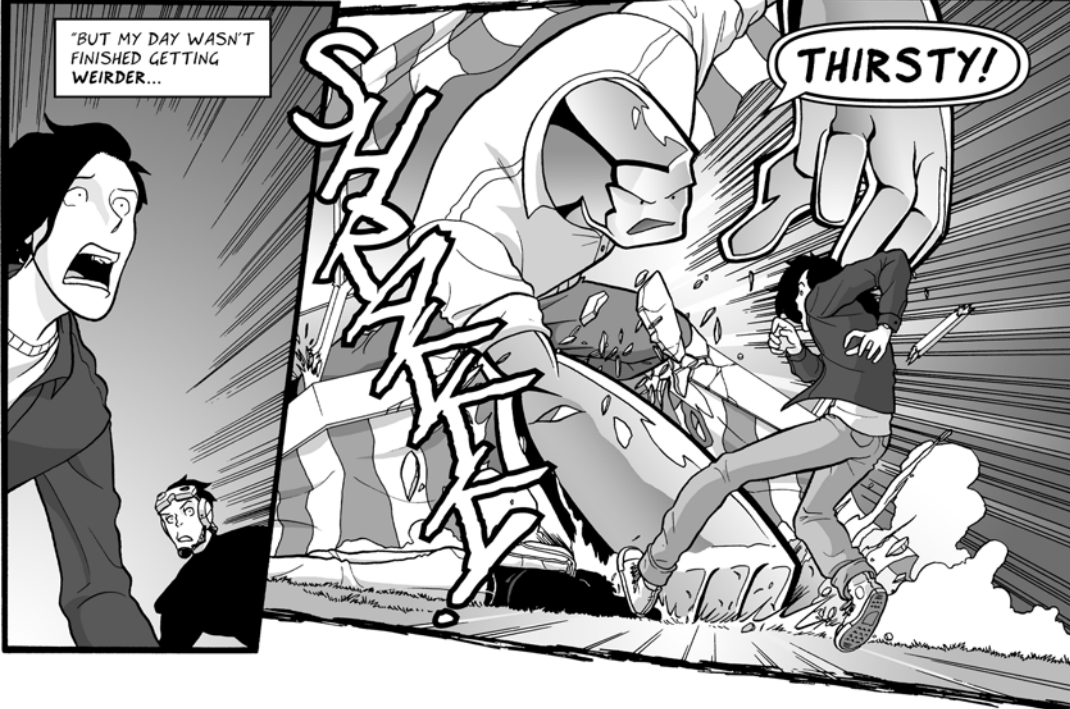
"ANYWAY, THAT'S
HOW I MANAGED TO
DODGE THAT GUY'S
CRAZY SPACE-GUN.

AH-!

BWIT!



"NOW, A HERO WOULD DO ONE OF TWO THINGS:



IF YOU WANT
THIS BOY, YOU'LL HAVE
TO DEAL WITH ME
FIRST.

EEYUCH.
WHATEVER YOU
SAY, CORNBALL.

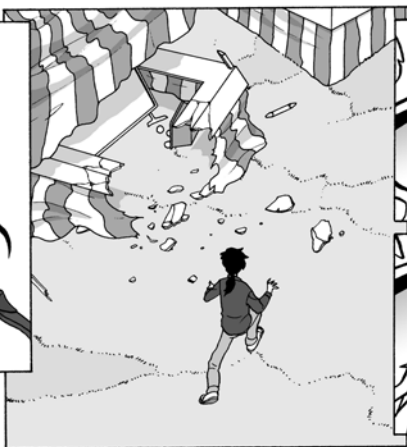
ANGEL:
JIGAWATT
BLAST.

ONE HOT PLATE
OF BLUE RUBBLE--

COMIN'
UP!

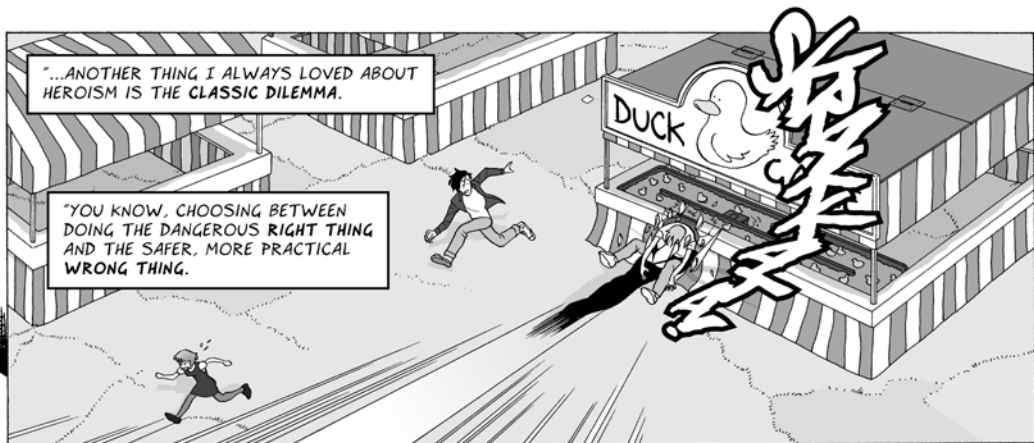
GET THE
GIRL AND
GET OUT
OF HERE!

NO
PROBLEM,
WHOEVER
YOU ARE!









"...ANOTHER THING I ALWAYS LOVED ABOUT HEROISM IS THE CLASSIC DILEMMA.

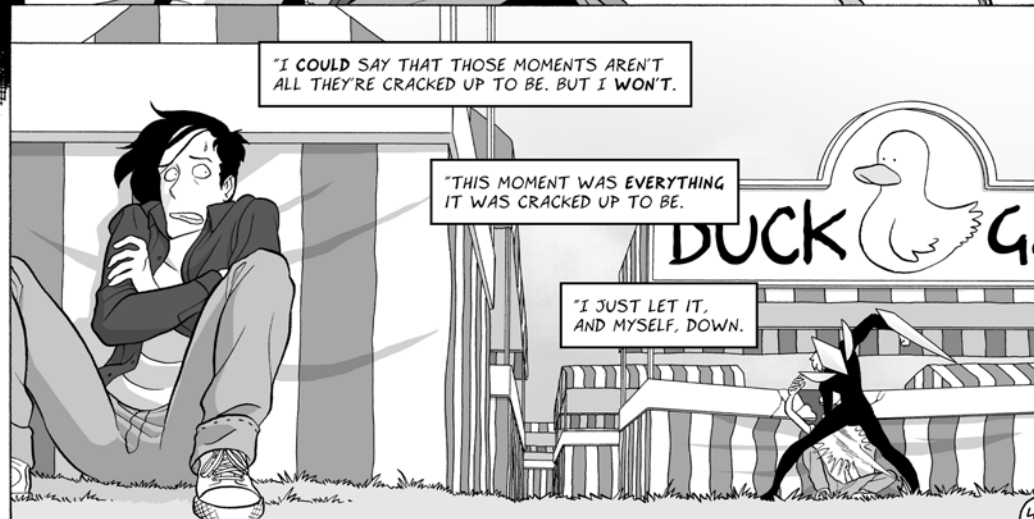
"YOU KNOW, CHOOSING BETWEEN DOING THE DANGEROUS RIGHT THING AND THE SAFER, MORE PRACTICAL WRONG THING.



"THE BEST HEROES ARE USUALLY SCARED STIFF, YET THEY DO THE RIGHT THING.

"I ALWAYS WONDERED WHAT I'D DO IN SUCH A DEFINING MOMENT.

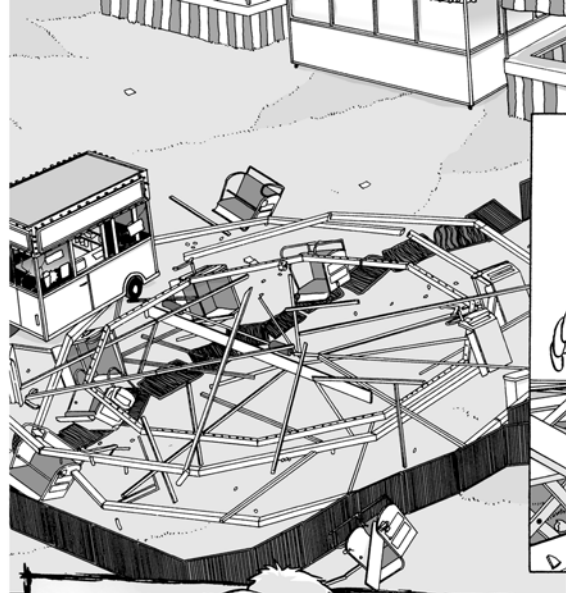
"THERE'S NO QUESTIONING WHAT KIND OF PERSON YOU ARE AFTER THAT.

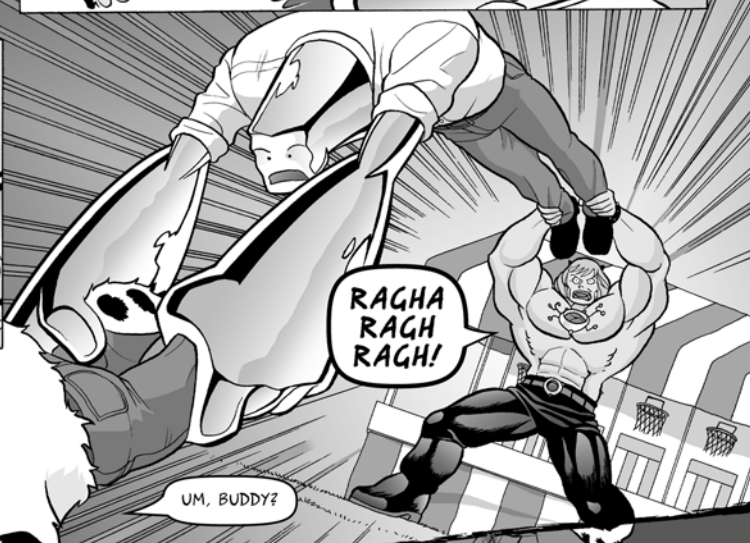


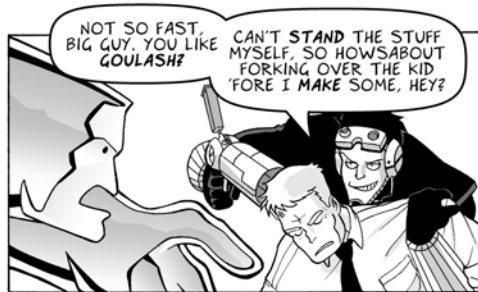
"I COULD SAY THAT THOSE MOMENTS AREN'T ALL THEY'RE CRACKED UP TO BE. BUT I WON'T.

"THIS MOMENT WAS EVERYTHING IT WAS CRACKED UP TO BE.

"I JUST LET IT, AND MYSELF, DOWN.









"UP TO THIS POINT, I STILL HAD JUSTIFICATION FOR MY COWARDICE."

"LIKE I SAID LAST ISSUE, KNOX CAN ABSORB KINETIC ENERGY. THAT NUT WASN'T REALLY HURTING HIM."



"BUT I KNEW HE COULDN'T BREATHE UNDERWATER..."

"...YOU'RE A TOUGH LITTLE CREEP, I'LL GRANT YA THAT...
SO LET'S TRY A DIFFERENT APPROACH!"



"THE POLICE! OF COURSE! IT'S THEIR JOB TO STOP EVIL AND LUNATICS, NOT MINE! WHO WAS I TO STAND UP TO GUYS LIKE THAT, ANYWAY?"

"THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO. NO ONE WOULD DISPUTE IT. I WAS OFF THE HOOK..."



"AND THAT'S WHEN I FELT LIKE THE WORLD'S BIGGEST JERK."

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!"



"...SEEMS LIKE A LOT OF MY CONFRONTATIONS END UP WHERE, TWO DAYS LATER, I THINK OF THE PERFECT THING TO SAY.

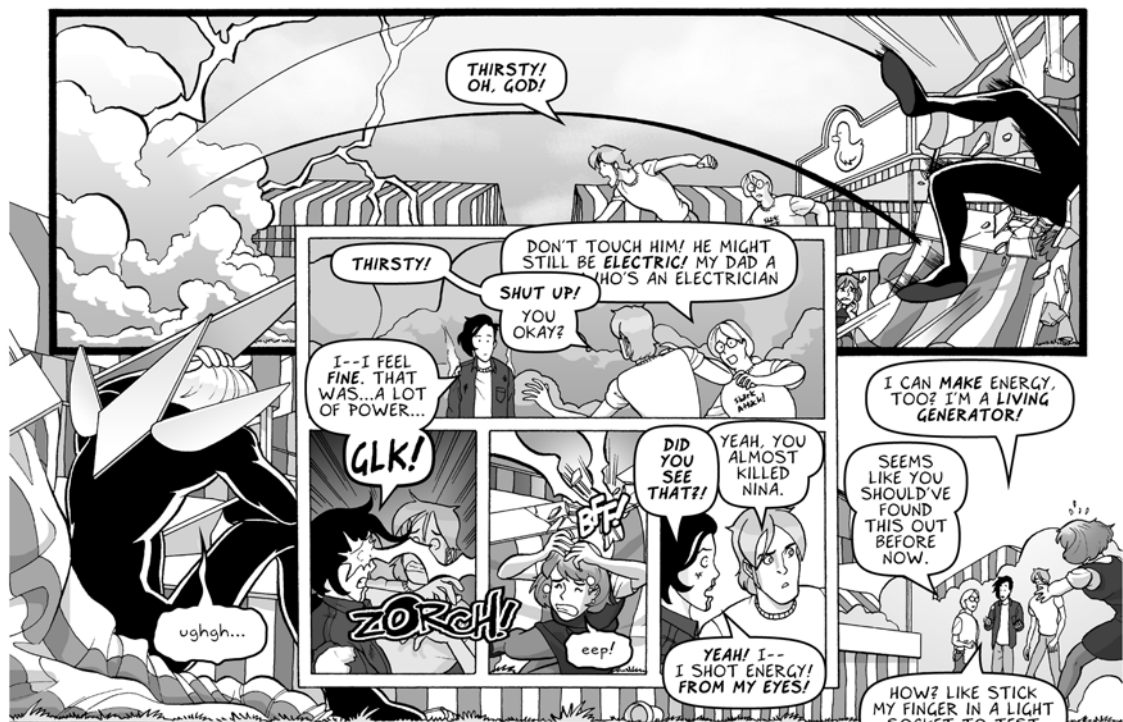
ah, ex...um, EXCUSE ME, BUT, ah, THAT'S-- THAT'S MY FRIEND.

"THIS WAS NO EXCEPTION.

HUH?









...C'MON, YA APE. IT'S NOT THAT HARD. TELL ME WHERE THE KID IS AND I DON'T SHOOT, SEE?

FORGET IT, OPAL. JUST MAKE SURE HE'S NEXT!

oh, PLEASE. TELL YOU WHAT-- I'M GONNA COUNT THREE.

ONE...



TWO...



REX!



RAGHAA!

BRIGHT LIGHT!

WHAT--?



GET YOUR LOUSY HANDS OFF OF THEM OR I'LL RIP THEM OFF FOR YOU!

"YEAH, I KNOW. I CAME UP WITH BETTER LINES LATER. I WAS A ROOKIE. CUT ME SOME SLACK."



DAH, CRUD. THE KID'S ACTUALIZED HIS POWERS.

THE BOSS'S GONNA HAVE ME WITH HIS BACON AND EGGS...

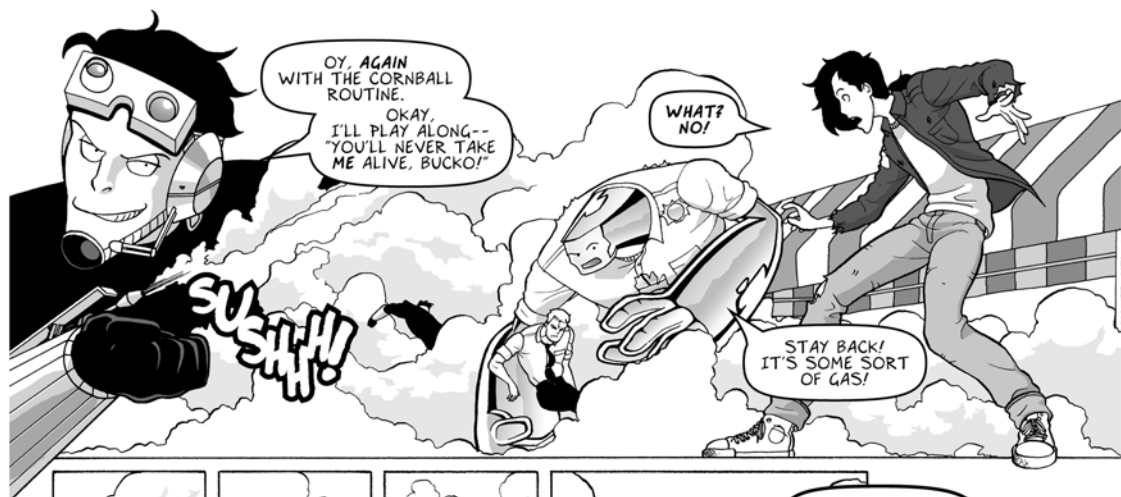


WAKE UP. MORON! WE GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE!

•DUH•



YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE.



I'D PLANNED ON LAYING ALL THIS ON YOU TONIGHT. TURNS OUT THAT, AS PARANORMALS GO, YOU BOYS ARE PRETTY UNIQUE.

SO UNIQUE, IN FACT, THAT THE ENEMY I MENTIONED IS GOING TO HUNT YOU DOWN WHEREVER YOU ARE. SEE, YOU FIGURE INTO HIS PLAN.

WHAT ENEMY? YOU MEAN THAT NUT WITH THE FUTURE-GUN?

THOSE GUYS WERE JUST CRONIES. IF THE ENEMY EVER SHOWS HIMSELF, YOU'LL KNOW IT.

BUT HOW DO I FIGURE INTO HIS PLAN?

I THOUGHT I KNEW UNTIL TODAY. IF HE'S TRYING TO GET YOU NOW IT MEANS HE'S MOVED UP HIS SCHEME BY THREE YEARS.

I'M NOT SURE WHAT THAT MEANS FOR US.

BUT C'MON HOME AN' GET CLEANED UP. I'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT.

dude...lookit the big guy...

ALL ABOUT WHAT?

HEY, KNOX! YOU OKAY?

PEACHY. GOT YOU A PRESENT FOR SAVING MY LIFE.

A PRESENT?

YOUR THOR PIN. I FOUND IT ON THE GROUND JUST BEFORE THOSE FREAKS ATTACKED.

IT WAS RIGHT WHERE YOU WERE STANDING BEFORE YOU BOLTED OFF IN A PANIC TO FIND IT.

then...this was her pin...

HEY, WHO'S THE BIG BLUE GUY?

what's his problem, honey bunny?

ah. NOTHIN' MAKES HIM HAPPY...

EPILOGUE

SOMEPLACE
ELSE...

CHUNG!

AND THEY RETURN,
THE MOST PUISSANT
TETRAD OF VILLAINY
MINTAGE CAN
PROCURE!

JARED, THE
ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN,
AN INEXPUGNABLE
ADVERSARY!

ME LIKE
SNOWMEN.

THE IRASCIBLE
BIO-ENGINEERED
JUGGERNAUT,
APTLY (YET
CURIOUSLY)
CODE-NAMED
ORANGE GUY!

RAGH!

TORPEDO BLACK,
A PERNICIOUS ANTHRO-
POMORPHIC ROCKET,
IMPOSSIBLE TO IMPEDE
ONCE HE HAS FLOUNCED
SKYWARD!

HUH?

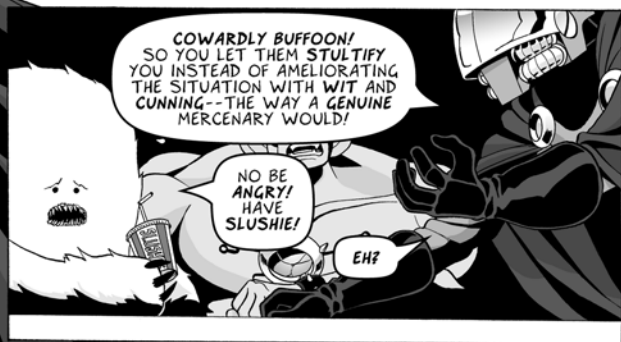
THEN THERE IS
THE COPING STONE
OF MY QUARTERNION
OF EVIL: DICK, PAST
MASTER OF GIZMONETRY
AND MAHATMA OF
MERCENARIES!

BETTER
BELIEVE IT.

SO, MY
UNEXAMPLED UNDERLINGS,
YOU MIGHT EXCOGITATE
WHY I EXPRESS
STUPEFACTION...

WHEN SAID
QUARTET IS
SENT RUNNING
HOME TO
MAMA...

BY A
GIDDYHEADED,
FRECKLE-FACED,
HOBBLEDEHOY!







MY LORD, I GIVE
YOU MY **UNEQUIVOCAL**
ASSURANCES THAT THE
NEXT ENDEAVOR WILL
BE THE **APOTHEOSIS** OF
THE MOST **FIENDISH**
PULCHRITUDE--

I THINK NOT.

I WILL DEVISE
THE NEXT STAGE OF
OUR PLAN.

A MORE...**DEMORALIZING**
APPROACH IS CALLED FOR.

AN ANXIOUS FOE IS
MORE LIKELY TO MAKE
MISTAKES. LET US
INCREASE THE BOW USER'S
TENSION BY **LOWERING**
OUR AMBITIONS.

REPORT TO ME IN
ONE HOUR FOR A FULL
BRIEFING.

OH...AND
GENERAL?

MY
LORD?

DO CLEAN
UP THAT MESS.

I BEG YOUR
PARDON?

THAT WILL
BE ALL.



#@*%!!



"LONG AGO, AN ALIEN VESSEL ENTERED OUR SOLAR SYSTEM. IT WAS DAMAGED FROM DISTANT BATTLES, AND CRASHED ON EARTH..."



CHAPTER THREE:

SENTINELS

"IT EXPLODED AS IT FELL, AND PIECES OF THE SHIP AND ITS CONTENTS WERE SCATTERED ACROSS THE GLOBE.



"PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD SOON DISCOVERED THE DEBRIS.



"BOTH CONSCIOUSLY AND INTUITIVELY THEY FIGURED OUT MANY THINGS ABOUT THE METALLIC FRAGMENTS.

"THE SMARTEST OF THEM FOUND THE METAL HAD STRANGE PROPERTIES.



"FOLKS WHO KEPT IT GREW STRONGER, WISER, AND LIVED A LOT LONGER.



"THIS UNNATURAL WISDOM MADE THEM AWARE OF A LOT OF THINGS UNKNOWN TO MANKIND BEFORE, INCLUDING THE NATURE OF THE METAL ITSELF. THEY LEARNED IT WAS THE REMNANTS OF A CRUEL RACE OF TWISTED METALLIC BEINGS FROM I

"OH, GROSS! YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT, REX?"



...I MEAN, CARRYING
AROUND DEAD ALIEN
BODY PARTS?
MAN, THAT'S CREEPY.



NNN.
GIBSON--

LET REX
FINISH--

TELL ME IT
WAS ONLY PARTS
OF THE SHIP, AND
I'LL BE OKAY WITH
IT, YOU KNOW?

OTHERWISE--
BLECCHH!

GIBSON, PLEASE.
SAVE THE QUESTIONS
FOR WHEN REX
IS DONE.

sigh
THANK
YOU.

THE METAL BONDED TO ORGANIC
LIFE FORMS, AND LIVED ON THROUGH
THEIR SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP.

THE ONES WHO CARRIED THE METAL FOUND OUT
IT HAD A CORRUPTING NATURE--IT EVENTUALLY POISONED
THE MINDS OF THOSE WHO USED IT. BUT THROUGH THEIR NEWLY
ACQUIRED WISDOM, THEY DISCOVERED A WAY DRIVE OUT
THE EVIL INFLUENCES IN THE METAL WITH THEIR WILLS...

"THEY CLEANSED THE
FRAGMENTS AND RESHAPED
THEM INTO TALISMANS.
THE PURIFICATION OF
THE METAL UNLOCKED
ITS POTENTIAL.




"THE USERS DISCOVERED NEW
ABILITIES TO CURE SICKNESS
AND MEND WOUNDS. THEY COULD
ALSO SHARE THEIR WISDOM BY
COMMUNICATING WITH OTHER
METAL USERS, REGARDLESS OF
DISTANCE OR LANGUAGE.

"THESE FIRST METAL USERS
WERE CALLED THE HEALERS.

"BUT NOT ALL OF THE METAL USERS
COULD GET RID OF THE EVIL IN THE
METAL, OR MAYBE THEY WERE EVIL
TO BEGIN WITH...



"OVER TIME, USERS
WHO HAD RESHAPED THEIR
METAL INTO WEAPONS
OF DESTRUCTION BEGAN
TO APPEAR.




"THE HEALERS SOON LEARNED OF THIS. THROUGH THEIR COMMUNION WITH THE METAL, THEY DISCUSSED WHETHER THEY SHOULD INTERFERE AND TRY TO PURIFY THE METAL OF THE WEAPONS USERS."

"SOME OF THEM FELT IT WAS THEIR DUTY TO STOP THEM, WHILE OTHERS VOTED TO KEEP A LOW PROFILE."

"THEN THE OLDEST AND WISEST OF THEM, WHO HAD A SPECIAL KNACK FOR DECIPHERING THE METAL'S SECRETS, TOLD THEM SOMETHING LIKE A PROPHECY."


"THE SHIP'S ARRIVAL HAD DRAWN EARTH INTO THE CONFLICTS FROM WHICH IT CAME. SHE MENTIONED A THING CALLED THE GREAT ORDERING AND ITS PENDING FINAL ACT, THE THIRD DESCENSION."



"AT THAT TIME A NEW RACE OF MEN WOULD COME, AND ONLY THROUGH THEM COULD THE METAL BE CLEANSED."

"FOR MOST OF THE HEALERS, THIS WAS ENOUGH TO SETTLE THE ISSUE."

"BUT SOME OF THEM WERE PROUD AND RIGHTEOUS. THEY WENT SECRETLY TO FIND THE WEAPONS USERS AND PUT A STOP TO THEIR EVIL."



"TURNED OUT THAT WAS A BAD MOVE. YOU SEE, THE WEAPONS USERS DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE HEALERS, OR EVEN ABOUT EACH OTHER."



"THE MAVERICK HEALERS WERE KILLED. THEIR METAL WAS CORRUPTED, AND THEIR SECRETS WERE REVEALED."

"SO A RUTHLESS AND CUNNING WEAPONS USER, WHO HAD SHAPED HIS METAL INTO TWO SWORDS, ALSO LEARNED THE ART OF FINDING OTHER USERS OVER GREAT DISTANCES. WITH HIS STRONG AND TWISTED WILL HE GATHERED THEM TO HIMSELF."



"UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP THEY SET OUT TO KILL THE REMAINING HEALERS, AND A GREAT WAR WAS FOUGHT..."

"IT AIN'T A WAR YOU
CAN LOOK UP IN THE
HISTORY BOOKS.

"THE FIGHTING WAS MOSTLY DONE
THROUGH THE COMMUNION ALL OF
THE USERS SHARED WITH THE METAL.

"IT WAS A RISKY
BUSINESS FOR THE
WEAPONS USERS.
THOUGH THE HEALERS
COULDN'T PUT UP
MUCH OF A FIGHT IN
THE REAL WORLD.
IN THAT OTHER PLACE
THEIR WILLS WERE
STRONG, AND COULD
BE USED AS A SORT
OF DEFENSE.

"BUT THE SWORD USER
WAS A GAMBLING MAN,
AND HIS MIND WASN'T
EXACTLY A MIDDLEWEIGHT.

"THE HEALERS AND THEIR
WISDOM WERE WIPED FROM
THE FACE OF THE EARTH.

"WITH THEM OUT OF THE
WAY, THE SWORD USER GOT
TO THINKING ABOUT HOW
HIS STRENGTH AND LONGEVITY
WOULD MAKE HIM A PERFECT
CANDIDATE FOR GLOBAL
TYRANT.

"AND HOW THAT'S
USUALLY A ONE-MAN
POSITION...

"HE SECRETLY BEGAN TO KILL HIS FORMER
COMRADES, AND WITH THE DESTRUCTION
OR ACQUISITION OF THEIR METAL HIS
STRENGTH AND MALICE KEPT GROWING.

"BUT ONE OF THE
WEAPONS USERS
GOT WISE TO
THIS PLOT...

"LONG LIFE GAVE THE SPEAR USER
PLENTY OF TIME FOR REFLECTION, AND
UNLIKE THE OTHERS, HE HAD RESERVATIONS
ABOUT WHAT THEY'D DONE. HE THOUGHT
HIS IMPULSES TO DESTROY WERE ALL HIS
OWN, BUT THAT WAS BEFORE HE MET THE
HEALERS DURING THE WAR.

"OVER TIME, HE BEGAN TO
RESENT THE IDEA THAT THE
METAL WAS SOMEHOW
INFLUENCING HIS DECISIONS.
HE BELIEVED HE HAD THE
POWER TO CHOOSE.



"THE SWORD USER'S
BETRAYAL BROUGHT THIS
REVELATION TO A HEAD.



"WHEN HIS OLD BOSS CAME FOR HIM,
THE SPEAR USER WAS READY...

"...AND THE SWORD
USER WAS BEATEN.

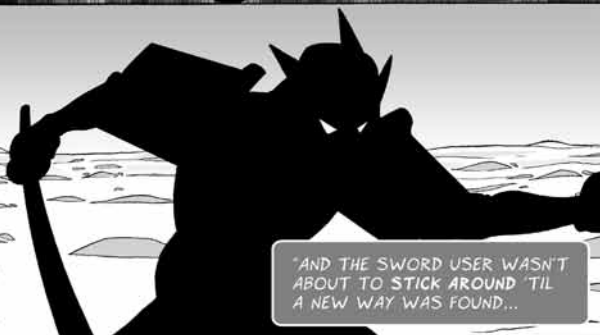
"THE SPEAR USER
FOUND HE NOW HAD
THE STRENGTH TO
RESIST THE EVIL
INFLUENCES OF THE
METAL, AND
WOULDN'T STOOP
TO KILLING HIS
ENEMY.



"THIS CHANGE GAVE HIM NEW
INSIGHTS INTO THE METAL'S
NATURE. HE KNEW THAT UNLESS
THE METAL WAS CLEANSED,
THEY'D ALL END UP LIKE THE
SWORD USER, OR WORSE.



"UNFORTUNATELY, THE ART OF
PURIFYING THE METAL DIED WITH
THE HEALERS.



"AND THE SWORD USER WASN'T
ABOUT TO STICK AROUND 'TIL
A NEW WAY WAS FOUND...

"THE SPEAR USER KNEW BETTER THAN TO THINK IT WAS ALL OVER.



"HE WENT TO THE REMAINING WEAPONS USERS AND TOLD THEM EVERYTHING HE'D LEARNED. MANY OF THEM DECIDED TO JOIN FORCES AGAINST THEIR OLD MASTER.



"BUT SOME OF THEM WERE STILL HUNG UP ON THEIR OWN AMBITIONS OF POWER...



"...AND, WITHOUT THE REST OF THE WEAPONS USERS' HELP, THEY WERE EASY TARGETS FOR THE SWORD USER.

"THE SWORD USER DROPPED OUT OF SIGHT AFTER THAT. THE ALLIED WEAPONS USERS HUNTED HIGH AND LOW FOR HIM, BUT WERE OUT OF LUCK.

"UNITED, THE WEAPONS USERS ONLY GREW IN WISDOM AND POWER. THEY STILL COULDN'T PURIFY THE METAL, BUT THE SPEAR USER TAUGHT THEM HOW TO KEEP THE EVIL INFLUENCES UNDER CONTROL.

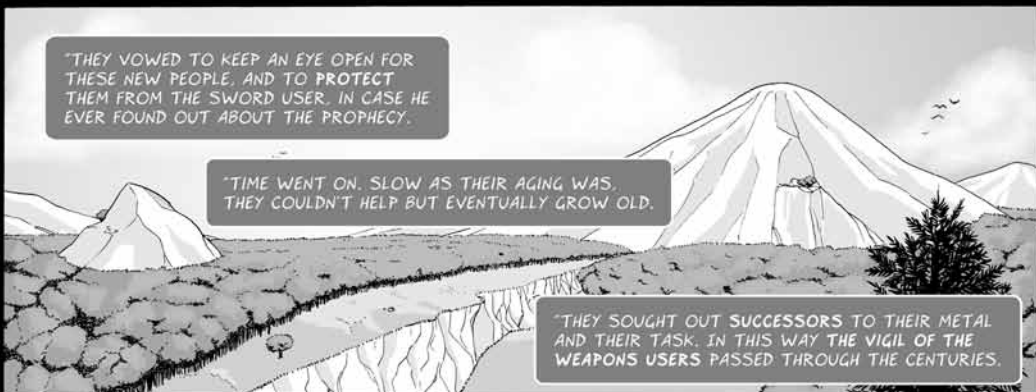
"THEY BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND THE CONFLICT THAT SENT THE ALIEN METAL TO EARTH, AND THE PROPHECY OF THE HEALERS REVEALED ITSELF TO THEM.



"A NEW RACE OF MAN WAS COMING, AND THROUGH IT THE METAL WOULD BE CLEANSED ONCE AND FOR ALL.

"THEY VOWED TO KEEP AN EYE OPEN FOR THESE NEW PEOPLE, AND TO PROTECT THEM FROM THE SWORD USER, IN CASE HE EVER FOUND OUT ABOUT THE PROPHECY.

"TIME WENT ON, SLOW AS THEIR AGING WAS, THEY COULDN'T HELP BUT EVENTUALLY GROW OLD.



"THEY SOUGHT OUT SUCCESSORS TO THEIR METAL AND THEIR TASK. IN THIS WAY THE VIGIL OF THE WEAPONS USERS PASSED THROUGH THE CENTURIES.

"IT WASN'T UNTIL THE 20TH CENTURY THAT I GOT INVOLVED."

"AT THE START IT LOOKED LIKE I WAS IN FOR A PRETTY UNEVENTFUL TOUR OF DUTY."

"BUT NOT LONG AFTER I BECAME THE BOW USER, TWO THINGS HAPPENED:

"FIRST, THE SWORD USER CAME OUT OF HIDING. HE HADN'T AGED WELL, BUT HE WAS READY TO MAKE HIS NEXT BID FOR CONQUEST."

"SECOND, THE PEOPLE WE CALL PARANORMALS, LIKE YOU BOYS AND OPAL, STARTED TO SHOW UP."

"WITH THE HELP OF A NUTTY SCIENTIST, THE SWORD USER BUILT A GIANT MACHINE FROM BOTH ALIEN AND EARTH METALS."

"HE AND HIS PALS WOULD'VE MADE SHORT WORK OF US, IF NOT FOR THE PARANORMALS LENDING A HAND."

"AND EVEN THEN THINGS LOOKED GRIM, BUT OUR ENEMY MADE ONE OVERSIGHT..."

"THE METAL CAN ONLY BE POWERED BY AN ORGANIC BOND OR ITS NATIVE FUEL."

"THE SWORD USER AND HIS ALLIES WERE DEFEATED."

"THEY LOST CONTROL OF THE THING PRETTY QUICK."



"IT WASN'T A DECISIVE VICTORY, THOUGH.

"THE MACHINE FLEW OFF INTO SPACE, BUT WENT INTO AN ORBIT THAT BRINGS IT BACK TOWARDS EARTH EVERY TEN YEARS OR SO.



"AND THAT WAS SEVEN YEARS AGO..."



...I STILL DON'T SEE WHAT ALL THIS HAS TO DO WITH US--

LET ME FINISH!

sorry.

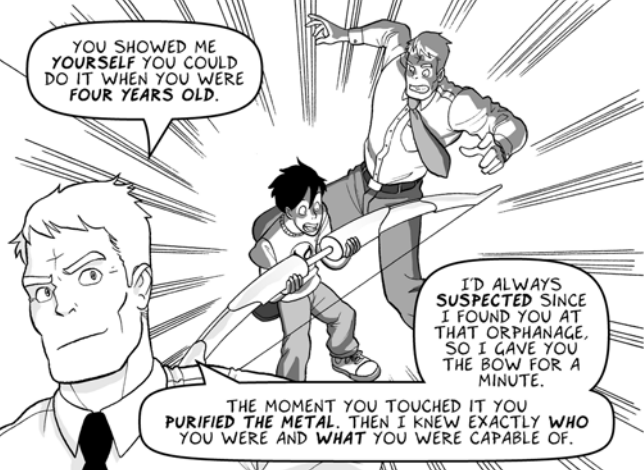
LIKE I SAID, THE METAL ONLY FUNCTIONS PROPERLY BY EITHER BONDING WITH AN ORGANIC LIFE FORM OR BY USING ITS NATIVE FUEL.

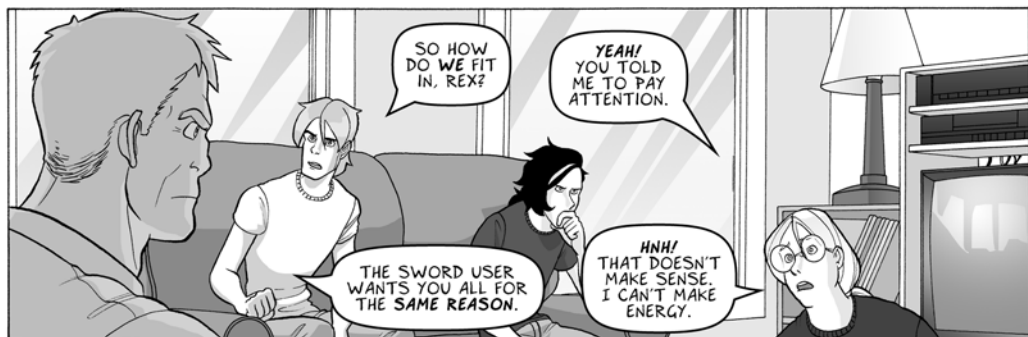
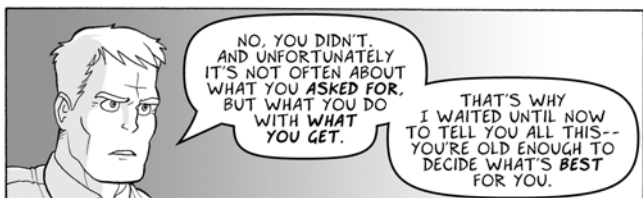
THE BAD GUYS COULDN'T CONTROL THAT BIG MACHINE 'CAUSE THERE WAS TOO MUCH METAL FOR ONE PERSON TO BOND WITH.

NOT WITHOUT AN INCREDIBLE RISK, ANYWAY. EVEN THE SWORD USER WAS AFRAID TO TRY THAT.

AND UNTIL NOW, NO ONE COULD CONVERT CONVENTIONAL ENERGIES INTO THE METAL'S FUEL.

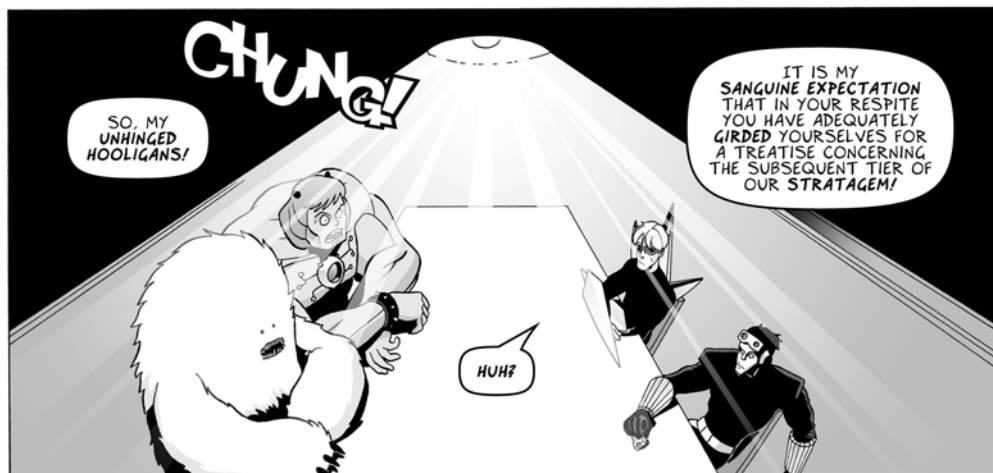
ah...
"UNTIL NOW?"

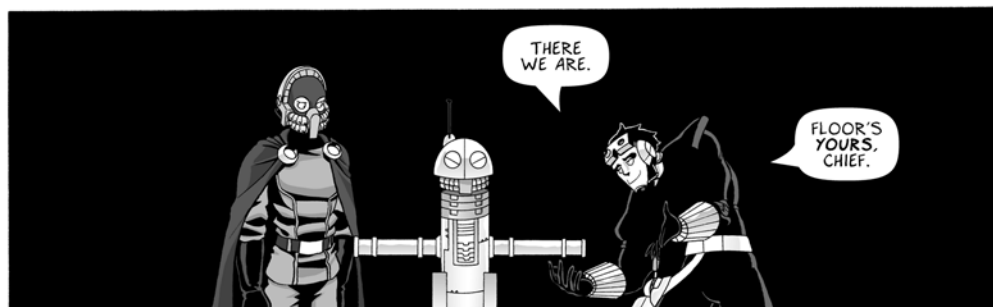




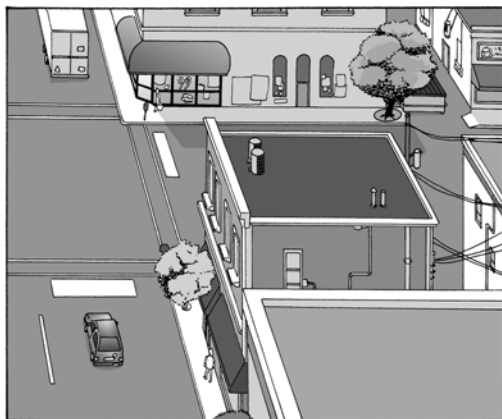


SOMEPLACE ELSE...







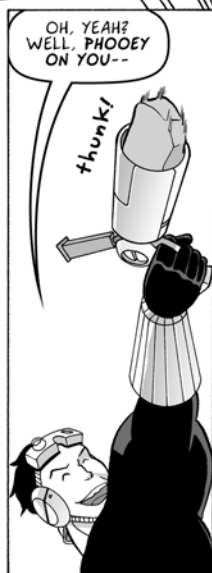






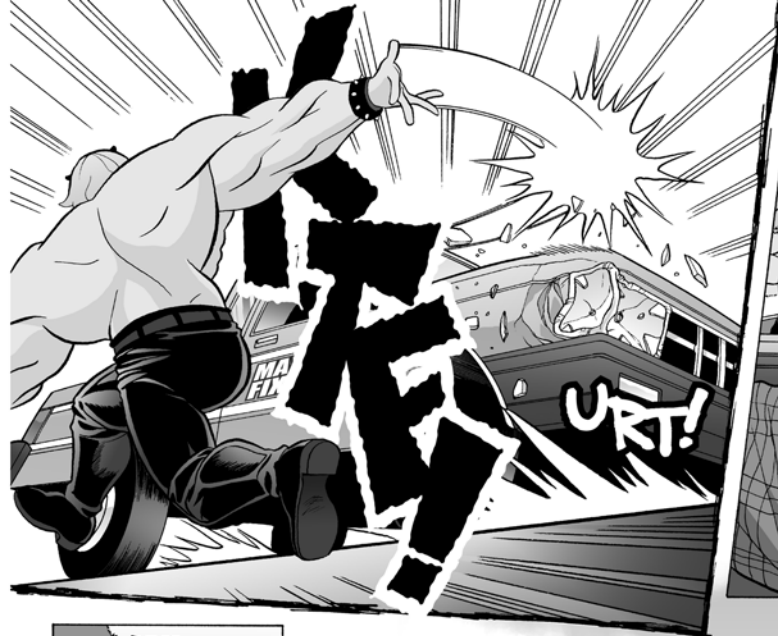




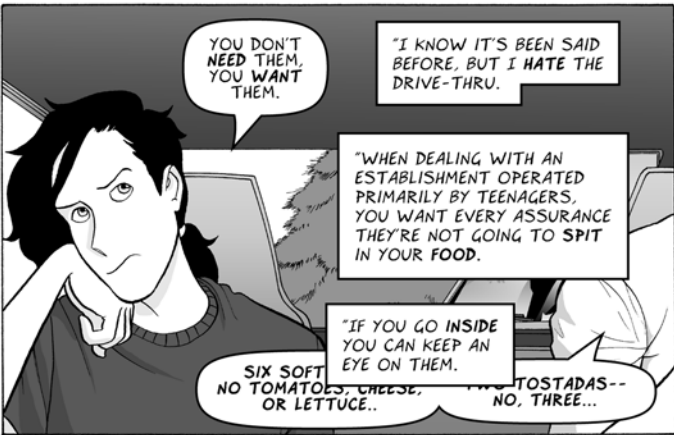






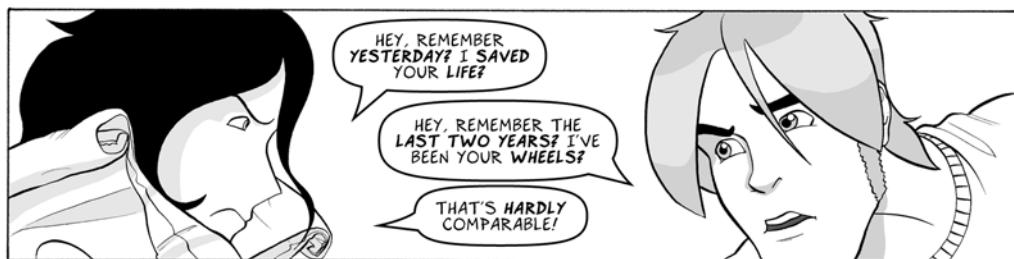
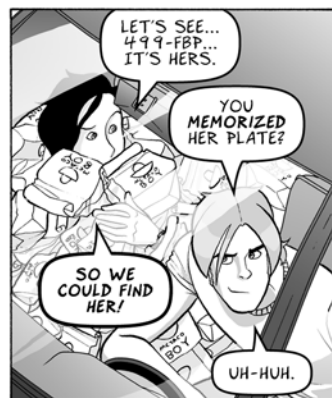














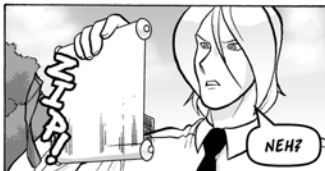


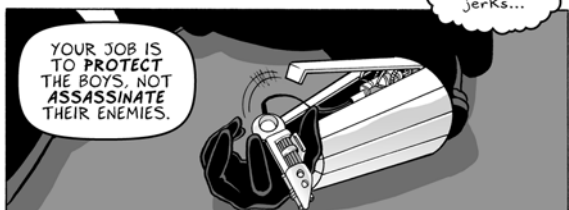




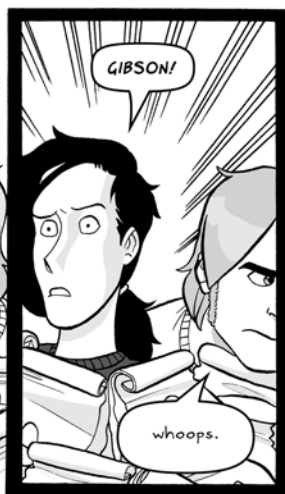


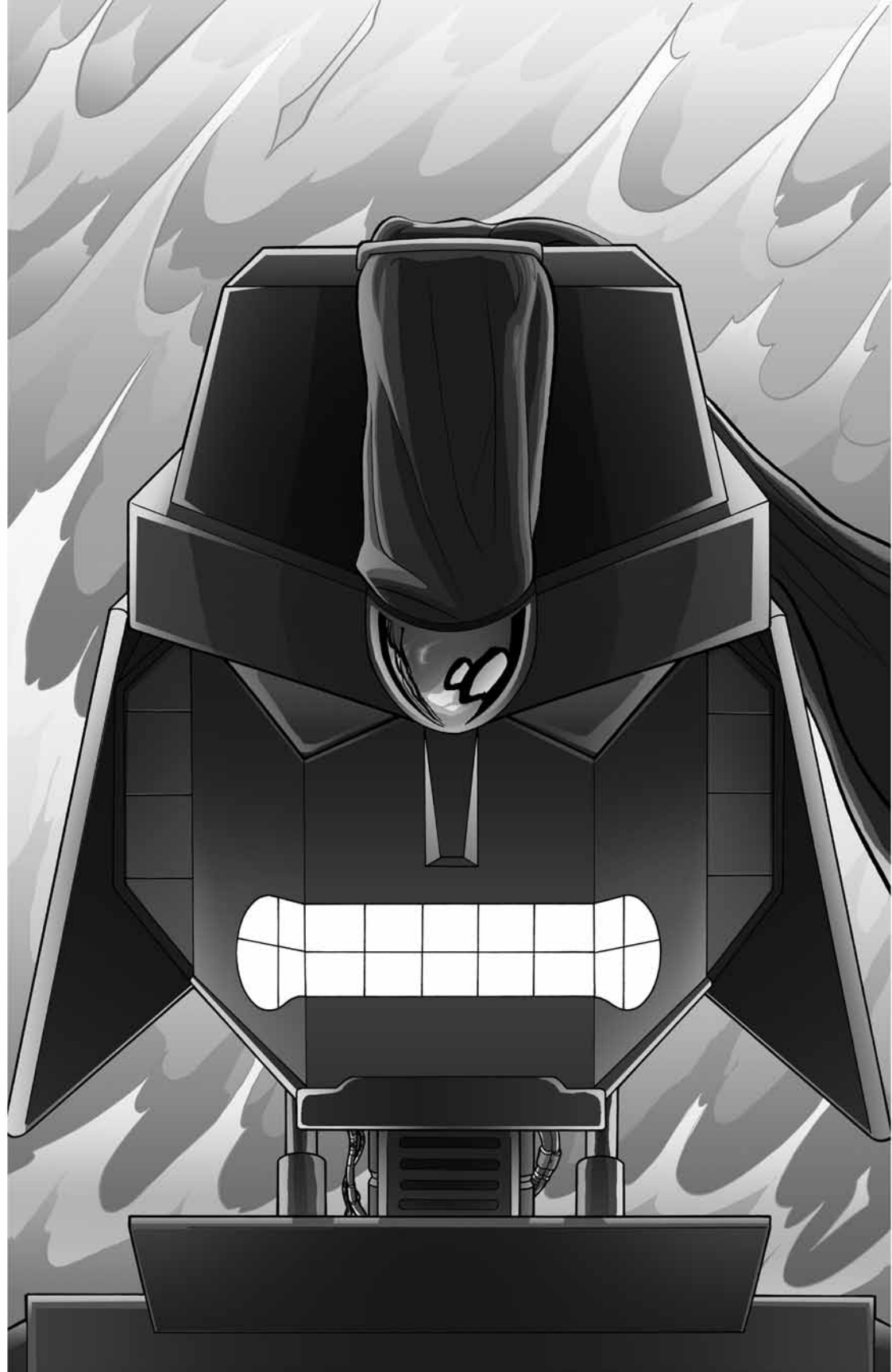














OH, GREAT
HAPPINESS!

WE HAVE PICKED
THE BOW USER'S POCKET
AND PROCURED THE METAL
MUTER! THOSE BEEF-HEADED
HEROES HAVE CRUMPLED
LIKE SO MANY WET
BROWN BAGS!

MOMENTS
SUCH AS THIS
ARE WHAT MAKE A
CAREER IN VILLAINY
A WORTHWHILE
ENDEAVOR!

CHAPTER FOUR:

TRICKY-CON





I AM A
REASONABLE
MAN.

BUT I HAVE BEEN
WORKING TOWARDS
THIS DAY FOR
SOME TIME.

YOUR COMEDIC
BICKERING IS NOT ONLY
AN EMBARRASSMENT
TO YOUR PROFESSION:
IT IS A THREAT TO
MY GOALS.

AS HIRED MERCENARIES,
THE CONSEQUENCE OF FAILURE
HAS MERELY BEEN LOSS
OF YOUR SALARY.

THAT
WILL NOW
CHANGE.

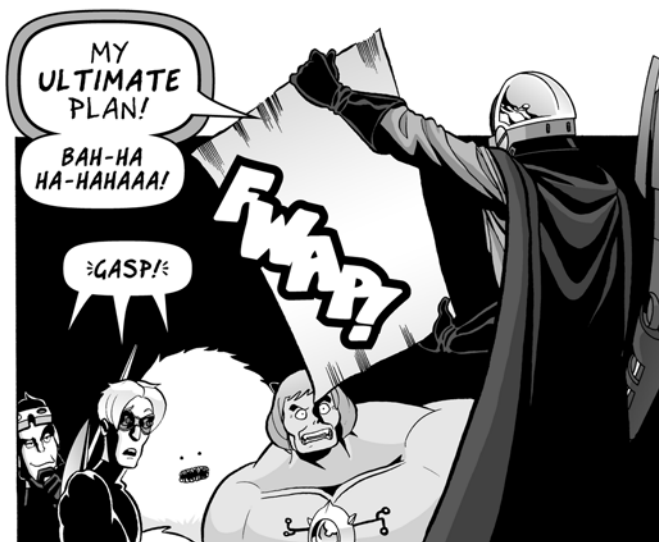
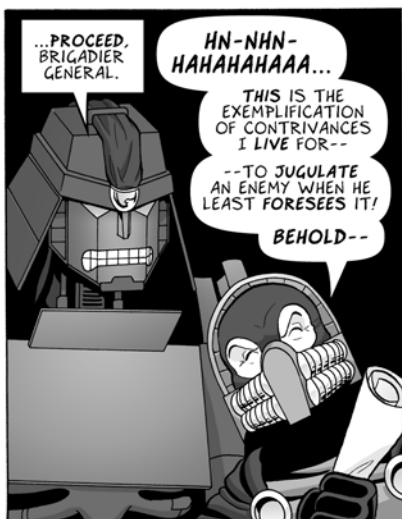
IN THIS CRITICAL
HOUR, THE REWARD FOR
FAILURE WILL BE MY...
UNMITIGATED WRATH.

YEAH, THAT'S GREAT.
HEY BOSS, WHO'S THE
BIG-MOUTH WITH
THE TIKI MASK?

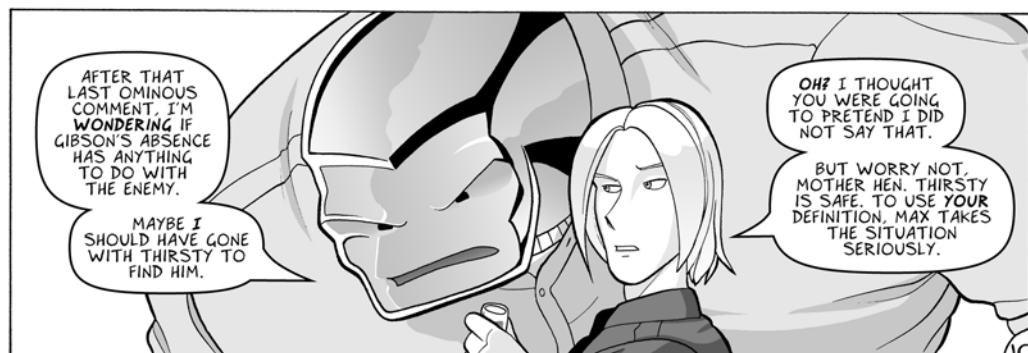
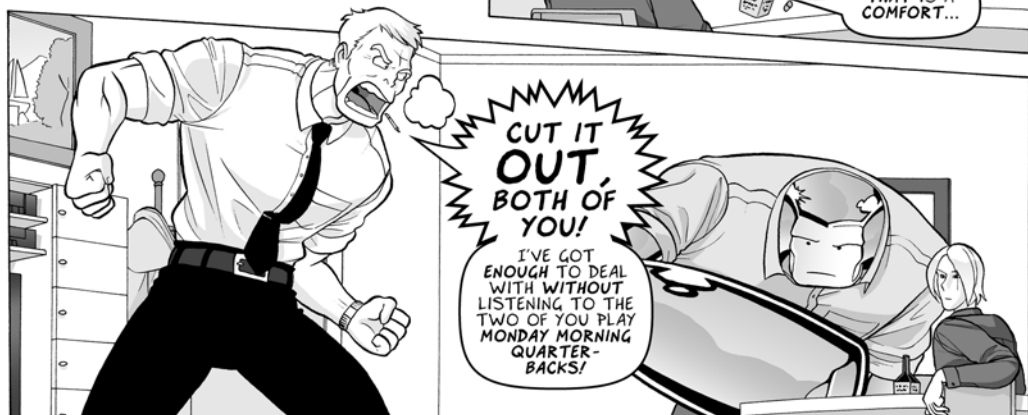
ER--

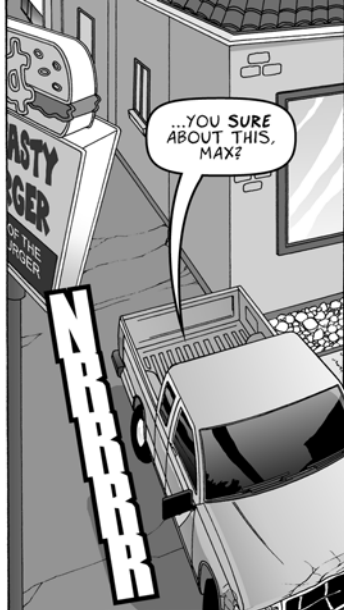
I DO NOT FIND YOUR
CAVALIER ATTITUDE...
AMUSING, DICK.

IT IS A RATHER
UNWELCOME
COUNTERPOINT
TO THE STRENGTHS
OF MY PLANS.









...YOU SURE ABOUT THIS, MAX?

ONCE YOU START, THERE'S NO TURNING BACK...

JES' GIMME THE WORD, AMIGO.

OKAY... GO!

GLOMPF!



CHOMP!

GLUMP!

ROUGH!

BETTER PICK IT UP! KNOX'S RECORD IS NINE SECONDS!



...MAX?

YOU OKAY?

HCK-CK-CK



D'Y-- D'YOU NEED ME TO TAKE THE WHEEL?

BUMP

BUMP



SEVEN SEKKINS, LIL' PARD!

AK!

DISQUALIFIED! I THINK YOU JUST SPRAYED A TENTH OF THE FOOD ALL OVER THE TRUCK!



AH'LL HAFTA
TAKE KNOX ON LIVE
SOMETIME. REX
CAN REFEREE.

REX IN A STRIPEY
SHIRT, YELLING "ROUND
ONE--EAT!" SOUNDS
LIKE ENTERTAINMENT
TO ME...



SPEAKING
OF REX, WE
SHOULD PROBABLY
REPORT IN.

man it
felt cool to
say that.

SO HOW
DO YOU WORK
THIS NUTTY
PHONE?

NO CAN DO.
THE BATTERY'S
DEAD AN' THE
CHARGER'S
BUSTED.



WELL, HEY--
LIVING GENERATOR
ON BOARD. YOU
MIND IF I TAKE
A CRACK AT IT?

KNOW WHAT
YER DOIN'?

I MADE
ENERGY BOLTS
BEFORE.

JUST
GOTTA
TONE IT
DOWN
THIS
TIME--



...didn't
that
suck.

GOSH,
I'M SORRY,
MAX...

AW,
DON'T PAY
IT NO MIND,
LIL' PARD.

AH WAS FIXIN'
TO GET A NEW ONE
ANYWAY. NOthin'
TA GET SHOOK
UP ABOUT.



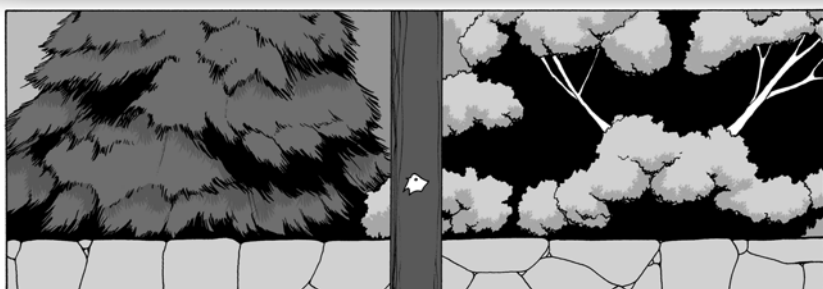
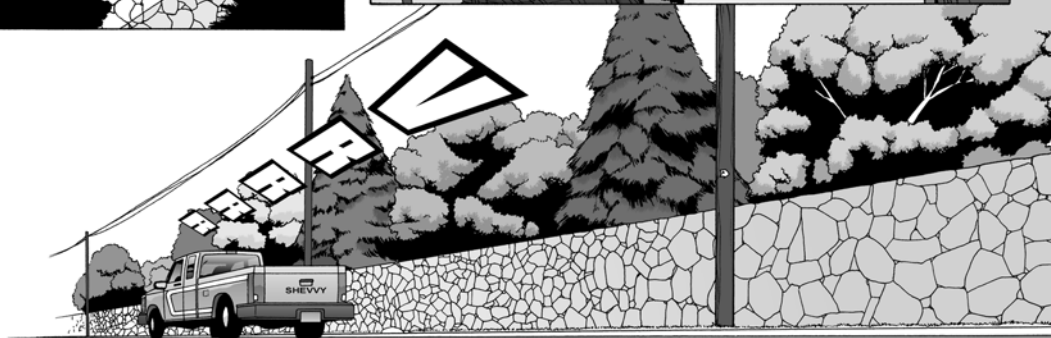
OKAY, BUT I'M
PAYING FOR--

MAX.
STOP THE
CAR.

HUH?

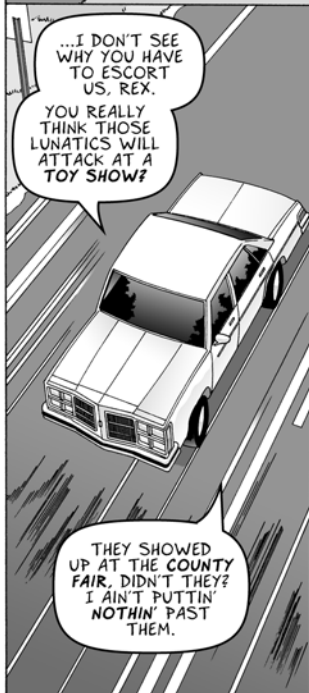
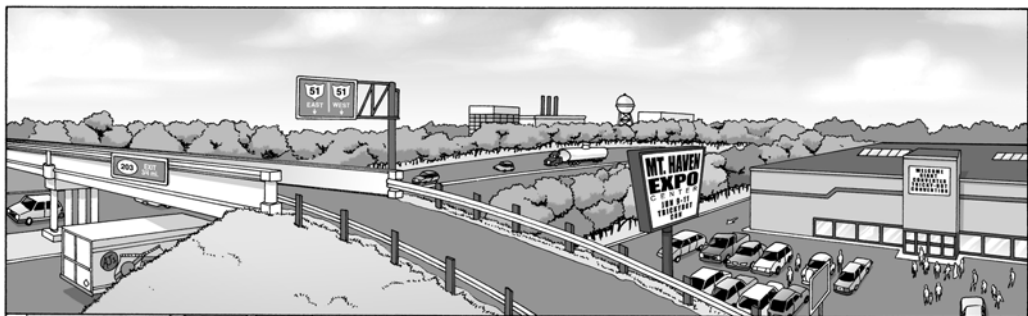
NOW!

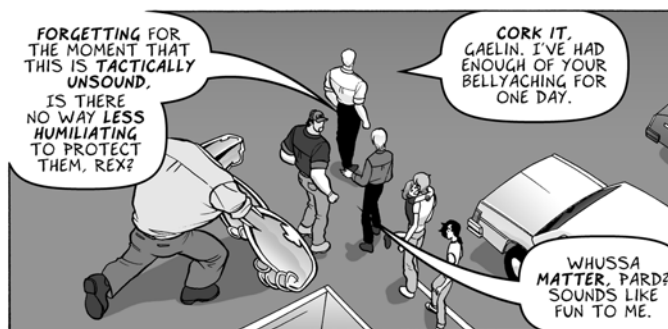
EYIRRRRRRRRRRT!











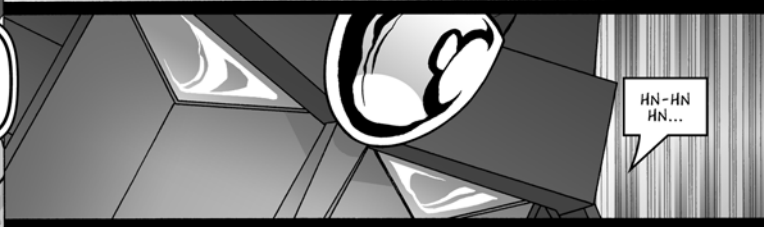
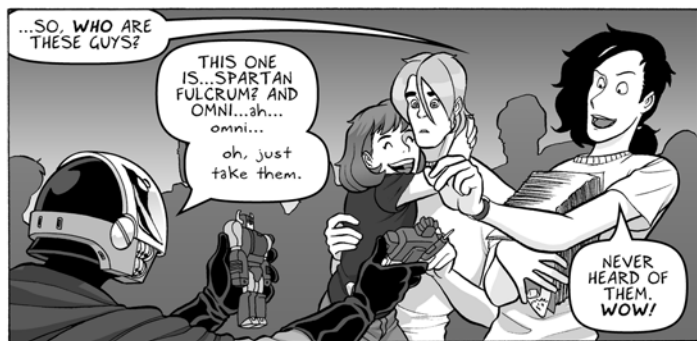
GIANT CONVERTER TRICKY-BOT C



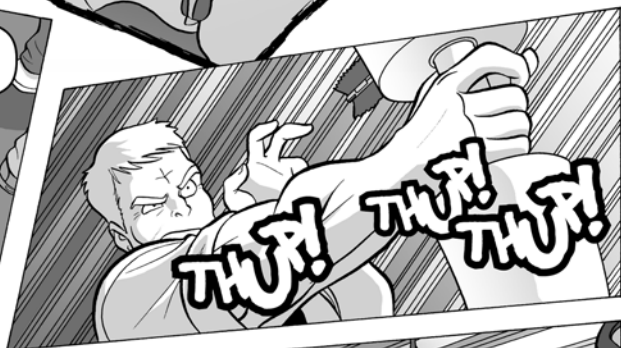


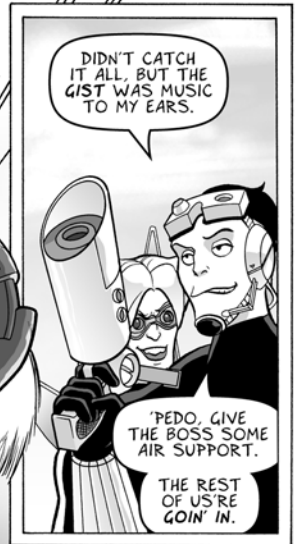












COWARD!

HAH!

HAH!

GREETINGS, YOUNG ONE. IT HAS BEEN SOME TIME.

BETTER PART OF SEVEN YEARS. YOU GOT UGLIER.

AH. HOW... PREDICTABLE. I REALLY MUST THANK YOU FOR GATHERING THE CHILDREN INTO ONE PLACE FOR ME. QUITE CONVENIENT.

FOR ALL THE GOOD IT'LL DO YOU. THAT JUNK HEAP OF YOURS IS STILL THREE YEARS AWAY.

YOU KNOW I'LL GET THE KIDS BACK BEFORE THEN. SO WHAT'S YOUR GAME?

PLEASE, PATIENCE, MY DEAR BOW USER. YOU WILL UNDERSTAND SOON ENOUGH...

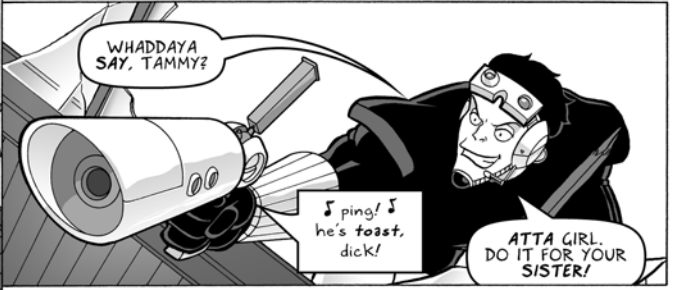
...ONCE I HAVE ABSORBED YOU AND YOUR PATHETIC BAND OF GERIATRIC METAL USERS!

KEEP YOUR THREATS, YOU DEPRAVED MARIONETTE!

THUP!

PANG!

TUT-TUT, DOYLE. YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO CHALLENGE ME...

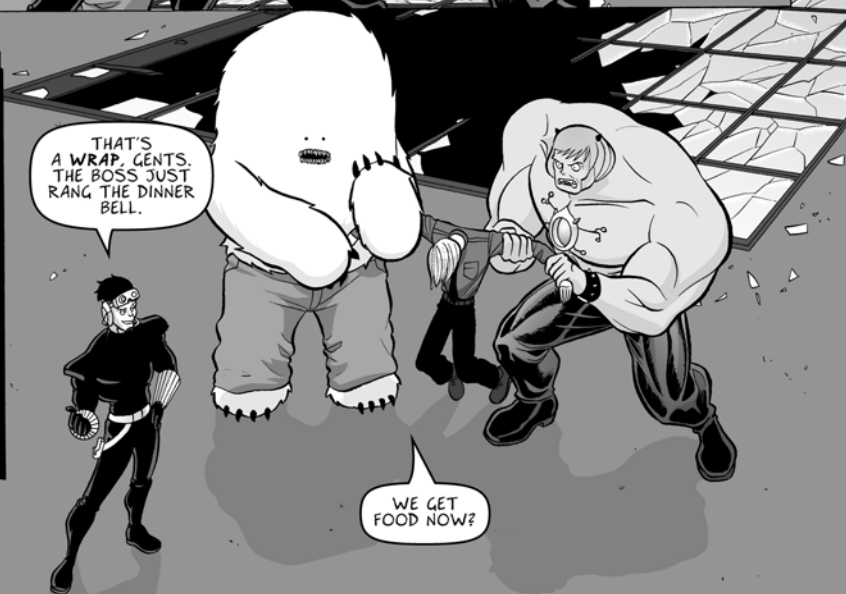














uhh...

...WOW!

WOULDJA
JUST LOOK AT
ALL THE PANICKING
SCI-FI GEEKS!



WONDER
HOW MANY
I'LL GET.

MAN,
I LOVE THIS
JOB!

WEL
GLA
CONVE
TRICK
CONV



NO PUSHING!
STAY CALM,
FOLKS!

LOOK!
UP THERE!









ping!
WE HAVE
REACHED 707
CRESCENT
STREET.

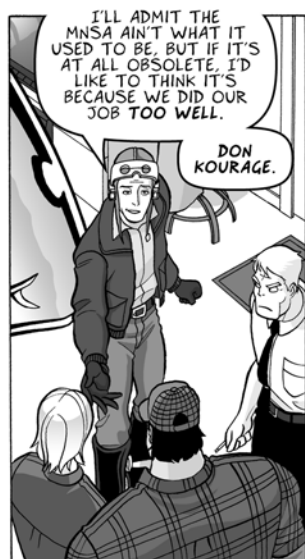
RIGHT ON
TARGET, ROSEMARY.
SWING IN TIGHT
OVER THE ROOF.
REAL VELVETY.

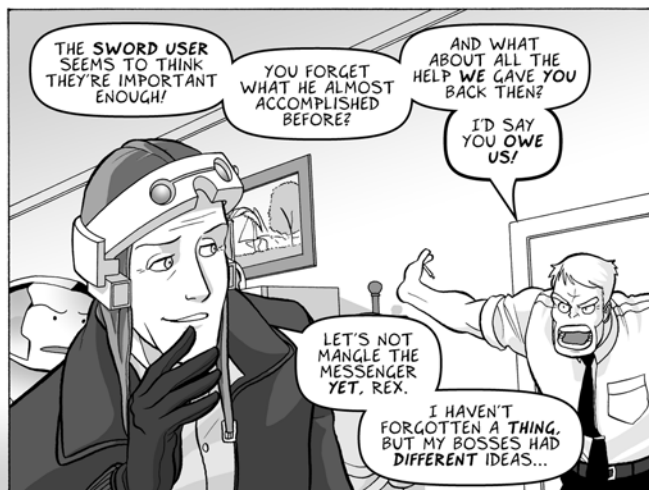
ping!
CAN DO,
DON.

CHAPTER FIVE:

TWO MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT









I FEEL THIS
REQUIRES FURTHER
DISCUSSION--

NOT NOW
GAELIN!

BUT, YOU
SEE, YOU DON'T
PAY US.

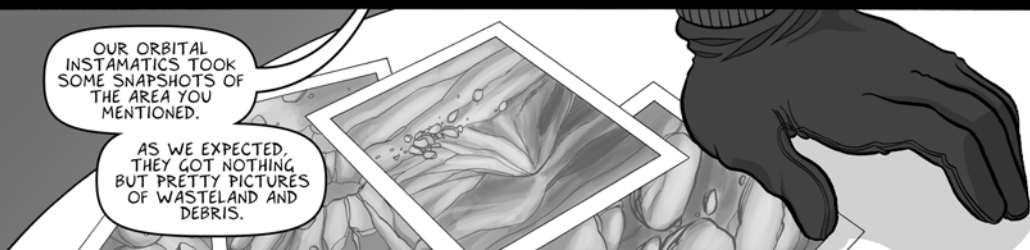
SHUT!
NOT ANOTHER
WORD!



SO IF YOU
DIDN'T BRING
MANPOWER TO HELP,
WHAT DID YOU
BRING?



INTELLIGENCE.
LOOKS LIKE YOU
NEED A LITTLE HELP
WITH THAT ANGLE...



OUR ORBITAL
INSTAMATICS TOOK
SOME SNAPSHOTS OF
THE AREA YOU
MENTIONED.

AS WE EXPECTED,
THEY GOT NOTHING
BUT PRETTY PICTURES
OF WASTELAND AND
DEBRIS.



YOU'RE SURE?
THERE'S NO OTHER
PLACE HE COULD
BE!

WHAT
ABOUT TIGHTER
SCANS?

THOUGHT
OF THAT, TOO.
AGAIN, NOTHING
OF INTEREST...



THEN THIS
ONE CAUGHT
MY EYE.

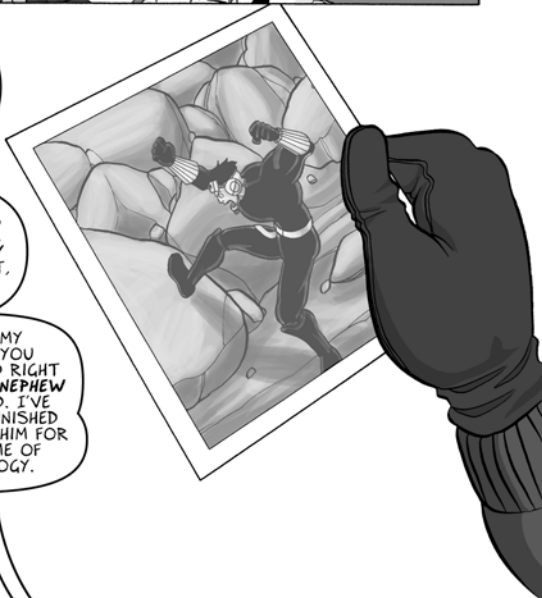
RECOGNIZE
HIM?

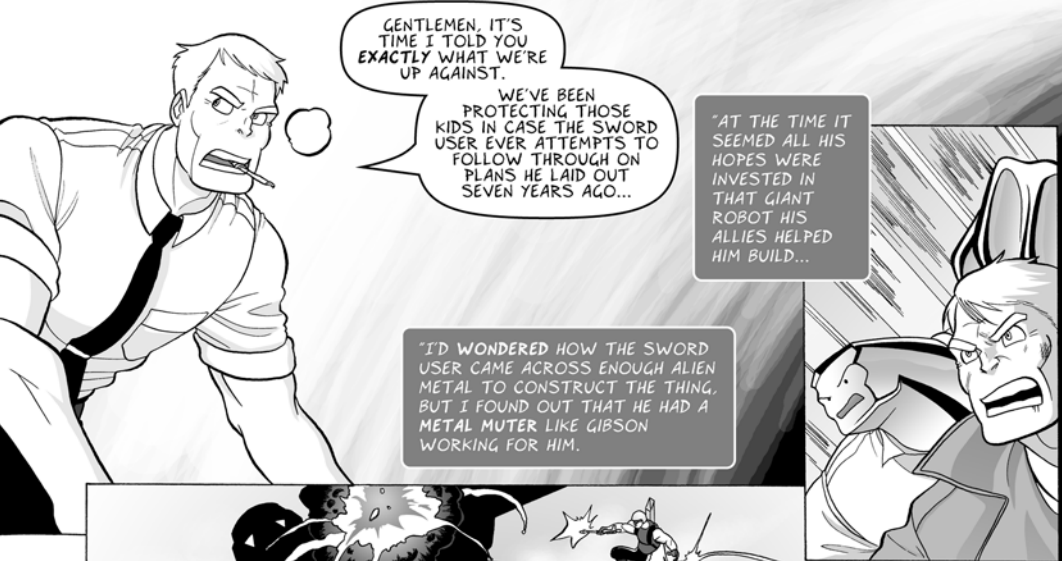
YEP.
THAT'S
ONE OF THE
CREEPS WHO
ATTACKED
US.

MONITOR
BOYS SAY HE
YELLED AT THAT
PILE OF ROCKS FOR
A GOOD FIVE
MINUTES.

SUDDENLY
ONE OF THE STONES
OPENS LIKE A DOOR.
SOME BIG FURRY GUY
STICKS HIS HEAD OUT.
THEN THEY BOTH
GO IN.

THAT GOT MY
ATTENTION. YOU
SHOULD'VE SAID RIGHT
AWAY THAT MY NEPHEW
WAS INVOLVED. I'VE
GOT SOME UNFINISHED
BUSINESS WITH HIM FOR
PINCHING SOME OF
MY TECHNOLOGY.





"I FOUND OUT THE SWORD USER WAS STILL INSIDE THEIR HIDEOUT. SO I WENT AFTER HIM, LEAVING THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BIG MACHINE TO THE HEROES OUTSIDE.

"TURNED OUT HE PLAYED HIS ALLY FOR A SAP. THE SWORD USER KNEW THE ALIEN METAL WOULD CONSUME THE SCIENTIST'S MIND.



"LIKE AN IDIOT, I TRIED TO REASON WITH HIM.

"I ARGUED THAT NO MIND, NOT EVEN ONE AS TWISTED AND POTENT AS HIS, COULD CONTROL SO MUCH OF THE METAL.

"THE SCIENTIST'S MIND WAS UNRAVELLING. THE WHOLE AREA BECAME A MESS OF EXPLOSIONS.



"THE HIDEOUT BEGAN TO FALL APART.

"SO I GAVE UP ON TRYING TO HEAL THE SWORD USER AND STARTED TO FINISH HIM OFF.

"I COULD SEE WHY HE WANTED A NEW BODY.

"ALL THAT POWER, AND HE STILL COULDN'T STOP HIS DETERIORATION.

"HE WAS WEAKENING WITH EVERY BLOW. I THOUGHT IT WAS FINALLY THE END.

"THEN, TWICE THE FOOL, I HESITATED BEFORE DEALING THE KILLING STROKE...

"THE SWORD USER CAPITALIZED ON IT AND DREW HIS TRUMP CARD...

"THAT'S WHEN THE REAL TERROR SUNK IN...





"THE SWORD USER'S MIND
COULDN'T CONTROL THAT
MONSTROSITY UNLESS HE
GAVE UP WHATEVER LEFT OF
HIMSELF THAT WAS HUMAN."

"I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS
POSSIBLE, BUT HE TRANSFERRED
HIMSELF INTO A MACHINE MADE
FROM THE FABRICATED METAL."

"IT WAS THEN THAT THE BIG MACHINE
SHOT ITSELF INTO SPACE..."



"AND THE WHOLE
BASE CAVED IN
ON TOP OF US."



"WHEN THE RESCUE TEAMS DUG
ME OUT, IT WAS APPARENT THAT
THE HIDEOUT WAS DESTROYED..."



"AND, AS YOU MIGHT EXPECT, WE FOUND
NO TRACE OF THE SWORD USER."

"BUT I STILL KEPT HOPE
THAT HIS THREAT WAS
ENDED. HIS ALLIES WERE
DEAD OR CAPTURED.
HIS ROBOT WAS GONE."

I THOUGHT THAT IN THE WORST CASE SCENARIO HE'D COME OUT OF HIDING ONCE THE BIG ROBOT WAS WITHIN GRABBING DISTANCE.

BUT NOW IT SEEMS SO OBVIOUS I CAN'T BELIEVE IT NEVER OCCURRED TO ME-- THAT ROBOT WAS TOO BIG AND TOO QUICKLY CONSTRUCTED FOR ONE METAL MUTER TO FABRICATE.

NO. THE SWORD USER HAD TO HAVE A LARGER SOURCE TO DRAW FROM.

THE ALIEN CRAFT FROM WHICH ALL THE ORIGINAL METAL CAME.

AND WE NEVER FULLY ANALYZED THE WRECKAGE TO CONFIRM OR DISPROVE IT.

YOU DIDN'T KNOW, REX. EVEN THE HEALERS THOUGHT THE SHIP WAS DESTROYED.

I SHOULD'VE KNOWN.

BUT IT'S TOO LATE NOW, SO HERE'S WHERE WE STAND:

IF THE SWORD USER ACTIVATES THAT SHIP, THERE'S NO TELLING HOW MUCH POWER WILL BE AT HIS DISPOSAL.

THERE'S ALSO THE THREAT OF THE SHIP'S CREATORS BECOMING AWARE OF EARTH.

FOR THESE REASONS, BECAUSE THIS IS THE MOST DANGEROUS THING YOU ARE LIKELY EVER TO DO--

--I WON'T TELL ANY OF YOU THAT YOU HAVE TO GO.

I ASK FOR VOLUNTEERS.

WHUT'RE YOU, KIDDIN'? AH AIN'T LETTIN' THAT VARMINT KEEP THE LITTLE PARDS FOR A SEKKIN'!

DON AND I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT WE'RE GETTING INTO--

WE'RE IN.

A RATHER LONG-WINDED WAY TO ASK IF I MEAN TO SETTLE THE SCORE WITH THAT OBNOXIOUS MERCENARY...



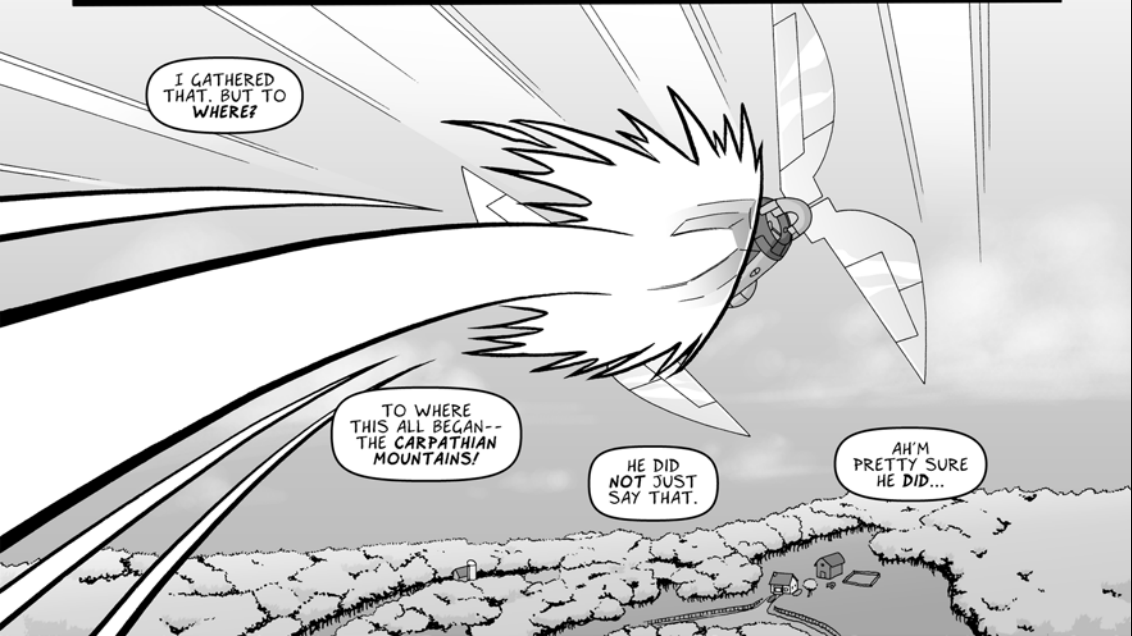
...EVERYTHING
ALL RIGHT BACK
THERE?



IT'S...
ah...
COZY.

I CAN
NEITHER MOVE
NOR BREATHE.
IS THERE A
REASON WHY REX
GETS TO SIT
UP FRONT?

HE'S OLDER.
NOW GRAB ON TO
SOMETHING, WE'RE
ON OUR WAY.



I GATHERED
THAT, BUT TO
WHERE?

TO WHERE
THIS ALL BEGAN--
THE CARPATHIAN
MOUNTAINS!

HE DID
NOT JUST
SAY THAT.

AH'M
PRETTY SURE
HE DID...

"SINCE I CAN REMEMBER, WHENEVER I GOT SICK I'D HAVE THE SAME DREAM.

"IT STARTS IN PITCH DARKNESS. THERE'S THIS LITTLE LIGHT AND A NOISE LIKE THE EMERGENCY BROADCAST SYSTEM.

"THEN I HEAR A VOICE. IT'S REX. HE'S SAYING MEAN THINGS TO ME IN A LOW TONE.

"NEXT THING I KNOW I'M RUNNING. REX MUST BE FOLLOWING ME, 'CAUSE I CAN STILL HEAR HIM.

ARE Y STUPID? CULOUS DO I Y GOOD TO LC IOTHING
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE*
STINK DUMB I HATE Y! LOUS

"I SEE A DOOR IN THE DARKNESS. I MAKE FOR IT.

"THE FLOOR IS COVERED WITH DIRTY, STINKY WOOL.

"NEXT THING I KNOW I'M IN THE CHAIR.

"REX SHOWS UP. HE'S A GIANT HEAD, AND HE'S HOLDING A BIG JAR.

"I LOOK IN AND SEE A HIGH CHAIR IN A KITCHEN.

NEVER EVEI REALLY LIKE YOU STUPID KTH

"THE AIR IS THICK WITH WET WOOL SMELL. I CAN'T BREATHE RIGHT.

EAT THIS ~~shit~~!

BUT I DON'T WANT TO EA-- GLMF!

EAT IT!

ME! ME! ME!

WAIT-- WAIT! WHAT'S THE JAR SAY? I CAN'T READ IT!

"THEN, FOR WHATEVER REASON, I SEE OUR APARTMENT JUST SITTING ON A BLACK FIELD.

"I HAVE THE SENSATION OF FALLING.

"THEN I HEAR REX SCREAM, BUT IT'S A SCREAM OF ANGER.

AAAAAAAAAAAAA

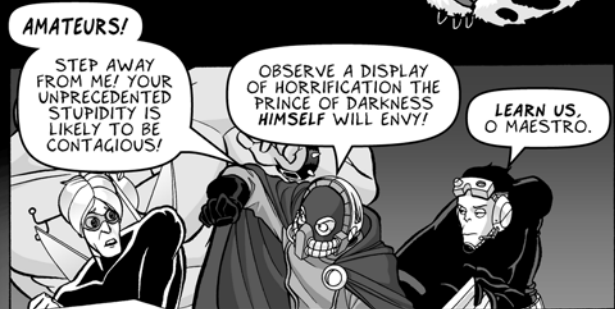
"AND THE APARTMENT BLOWS UP...

"SO WHEN I WOKE UP I THOUGHT, LIKE THE OTHER TIMES BEFORE, THAT REX WOULD BE THERE WITH A BOWL OF SOUP AND THAT WORRIED LOOK ON HIS FACE..."











"AGES AGO, LORD HOOK FOUND THESE REMAINS AND DISCOVERED THEY WERE STILL VIABLE!"

"BUT THE SHIP HAD ITS PERILS, EVEN FOR HIM!"

"INSIDE LAY A SOMNOLENT AND INTACT PENITENT MIND, A NERVE CLUSTER OF THE ALIEN FLEET!"

"HE DARED NOT CONFRONT IT UNAIDED..."

"FOR, THOUGH THE PENITENTS WERE ONCE LEGION, THEY WERE MERELY PUPPETS OF A FINITE NUMBER OF MECHANICAL BRAINS ABOARD THEIR TROOP CARRIERS!"

"SHOULD THE MIND AWAKEN, IT WOULD CLAIM HIM AND ALL WEAPON USERS AS IT DID THE PENITENTS..."

"BUT HOOK IS NO FOOL, AND NO ONE'S SLAVE!"

"HE PERSUADED HIS ALLIES INTO PLACING THE PENITENT MIND INSIDE THE BROBDINGNAGIAN ROBOT AS A RECEPTACLE FOR THE SCIENTIST'S MIND!"

"...DOESN'T THAT JUST MEAN 'REALLY BIG ROCK'?"

SILENCE!

"YOU CAN IMAGINE WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THAT IDIOT SCIENTIST ATTEMPTED TO AMALGAMATE HIS MIND WITH THAT OF THE ALIEN."

"THE ENTERPRISE WAS CODE-NAMED PROJECT MEGALITH!"

"LORD HOOK PLANNED TO INTERVENE WHEN THEIR FUSION WAS MOST IN FLUX--"

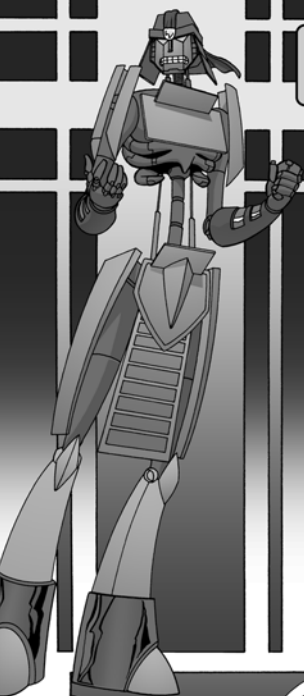
"--THEN TAKE THE ROBOT FOR HIMSELF!"

"YOUR FATHER'S RATHER ILL-TIMED INTERFERENCE AND THE SUBSEQUENT LIFTOFF OF THE MEGALITH DASHED THAT HOPE UTTERLY!"

"BUT IT MATTERED NOT!"

"THOUGH THE MEGALITH WAS GONE, HOOK STILL HAD THIS SHIP. BUT IN ORDER TO PROPERLY INTERFACE WITH IT HE HAD TO BECOME A PENITENT."

"OF COURSE IT WAS PERCEIVED TO BE A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO EXTEND HIS LIFE--IT WAS MEANT TO SEEM SO!"



"AT LAST HOOK WAS
POISED TO BECOME THE
NEW MIND OF THE SHIP.

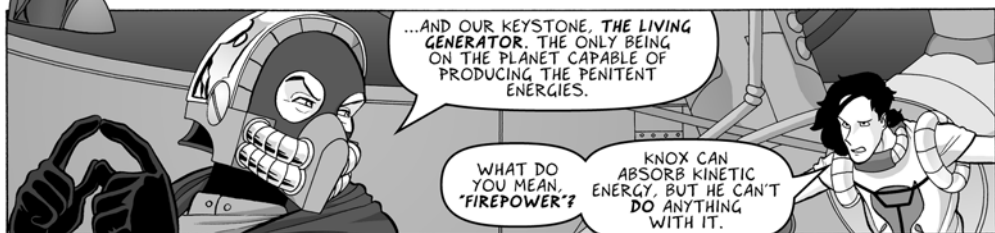
"HOWEVER, WITHOUT HIS
HUMANITY HE NO LONGER HAD
THE ABILITY TO POWER IT WITH
HIS ORGANIC BOND! WE REQUIRED
RESOURCES TO MAKE OUR SHIP
FULLY FUNCTIONAL..."



...A METAL MUTER. TO
REPLENISH OUR RATHER
SHORT-LIVED SUPPLY OF
ALIEN METAL FABRICATED
BY HIS PREDECESSOR...



A KINETIC
ABSORPTION DEFENSE
SYSTEM, ENSURING THE
SHIP'S IMPREGNABILITY
AS WELL AS PROVIDING
AN ADDED BOOST IN
FIREPOWER...



...AND OUR KEYSTONE, THE LIVING
GENERATOR, THE ONLY BEING
ON THE PLANET CAPABLE OF
PRODUCING THE PENITENT
ENERGIES.

WHAT DO
YOU MEAN,
"FIREPOWER"?

KNOX CAN
ABSORB KINETIC
ENERGY, BUT HE CAN'T
DO ANYTHING
WITH IT.



ah, yes...
I NEARLY
FORGOT.

DICK!



I'M
RIGHT
HERE...

EXCELLENT.
THE ONE WITH THE
SIDEBURNS HAS YET
TO ACTIVATE HIS
POWERS.

SEE
TO IT.



watch
his arms,
now...

i got
him, i got
him...

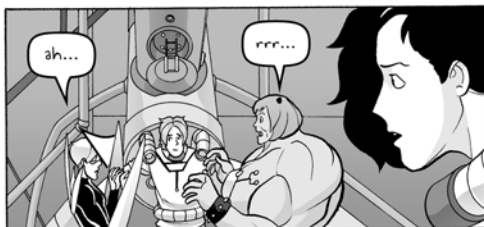
WHAT'RE
YOU GOING
TO DO?

OH, BE
STILL.

WE ARE
MERELY GIVING
HIS DEVELOPMENT
A HELPFUL NUDGE!











THOSE COLLARS AROUND YOUR NECKS ARE NOT MERELY FOR SHOW!

THEY EMIT A MOST PAINFUL AND EVENTUALLY LETHAL DETERRENT ACTIVATED BY UNAUTHORIZED USE OF YOUR POWERS!

I REALIZED THE TEMPTATION MIGHT ARISE TO SACRIFICE YOURSELF, SO EACH COLLAR IS ACTIVATED BY THE POWERS OF ONE OF THE OTHERS!

AND LET US BE HONEST--YOUR TYPE LACKS THE GUTS TO SACRIFICE A COMRADE TO STOP US!

"flaw" in my plan... PSHAW!



do you hear?

WHY, IT IS THE SOUND OF THE IMMINENT SUBJUGATION OF THE HUMAN RACE...

HEH! CUTE!

DID THE BOSS JUST CRACK A JOKE?

SILENCE!



ENOUGH OF YOUR RANTING, GENERAL.

IS ALL IN READINESS?

VERY NEARLY, MY LORD.

TWO SHAKES, BIG BOSS.

YOU WILL ADDRESS HIM AS LORD HOOK!

uh huh.



WELCOME, THIRSTY DOYLE. YOU ARE INDEED AN HONORED GUEST TO WITNESS A TRIUMPH SO LONG IN THE MAKING.

the sword user... LOOK, YOU ONLY NEED ME TO FUEL YOUR SHIP. PLEASE...LET KNOX AND GIBSON GO...

OH, I'M AFRAID THAT WOULDN'T DO. YOUR FATHER AND HIS IMBECILIC MINIONS WILL SOON BE HERE, AND TO ANNIHILATE THEM I WILL NEED ALL THREE OF YOU.

ah...I SEE.

WELL...THEN...ah... I DON'T KNOW HOW TO BREAK THIS TO YOU BUT...THERE'S...THERE'S THIS PROPHECY? AND, uh, THE... THE HEALERS SAID I'M GOING TO--



TO WHAT? PURGE ME OF THE EVIL INFLUENCE IN MY METAL?

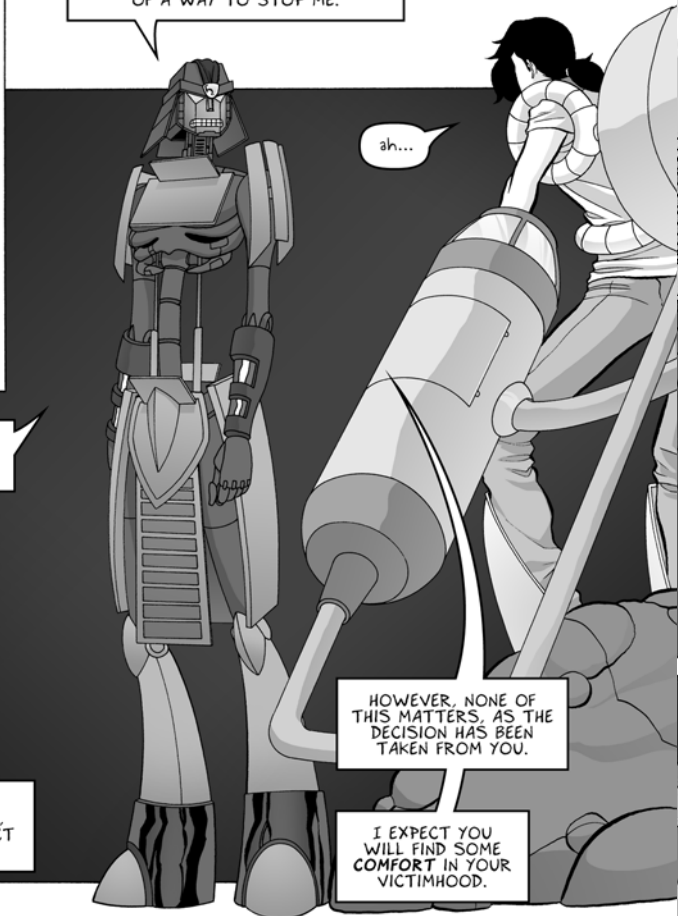
HOW GRATIFYINGLY NAIVE OF YOU.

ah...SO... SO YOU KNOW ABOUT

YES, I KNOW ALL ABOUT THAT RIDICULOUS PROPHECY.



JUST AS I THOUGHT. IN YOUR TERROR YOU SEEK TO HIDE BEHIND WORDS UTTERED BY MEN LONG DEAD. AS IF BY BEING "CHOSEN" BY SOME MYSTICAL ELITE YOU ARE ABSOLVED OF THINKING OF A WAY TO STOP ME.



ONCE AGAIN, YOU HAVE NOTHING TO SAY.

EXCELLENT.

YOU ARE GOING TO DISCOVER, TOO LATE I'M AFRAID, THAT DESTINY DOES NOT CHOOSE A MAN.

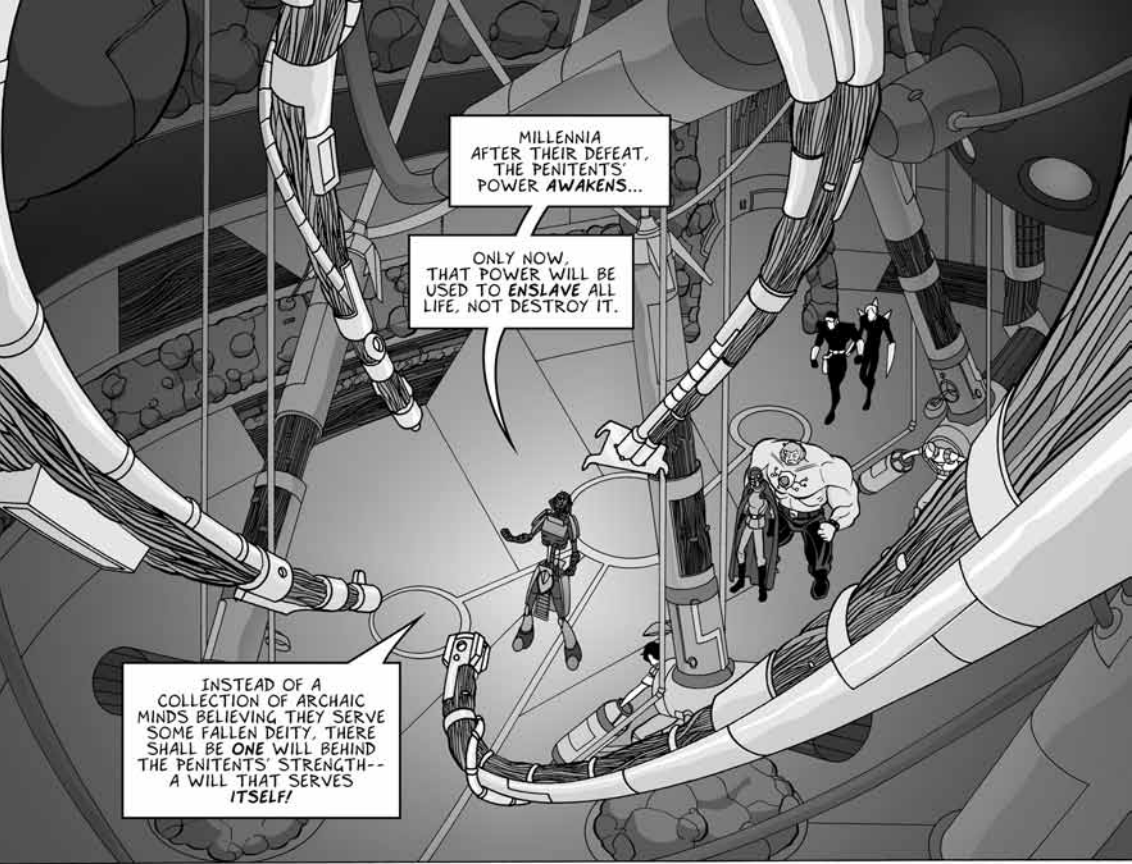
PRECISELY THE REVERSE IS TRUE.

THE BOW USER UNDERSTANDS THIS, BUT I DO NOT EXPECT YOU TO.

HOWEVER, NONE OF THIS MATTERS, AS THE DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN FROM YOU.

I EXPECT YOU WILL FIND SOME COMFORT IN YOUR VICTIMHOOD.





MILLENNIA
AFTER THEIR DEFEAT,
THE PENITENTS'
POWER AWAKENS...

ONLY NOW,
THAT POWER WILL BE
USED TO ENSLAVE ALL
LIFE, NOT DESTROY IT.

INSTEAD OF A
COLLECTION OF ARCHAIC
MINDS BELIEVING THEY SERVE
SOME FALLEN DEITY, THERE
SHALL BE ONE WILL BEHIND
THE PENITENTS' STRENGTH--
A WILL THAT SERVES
ITSELF!

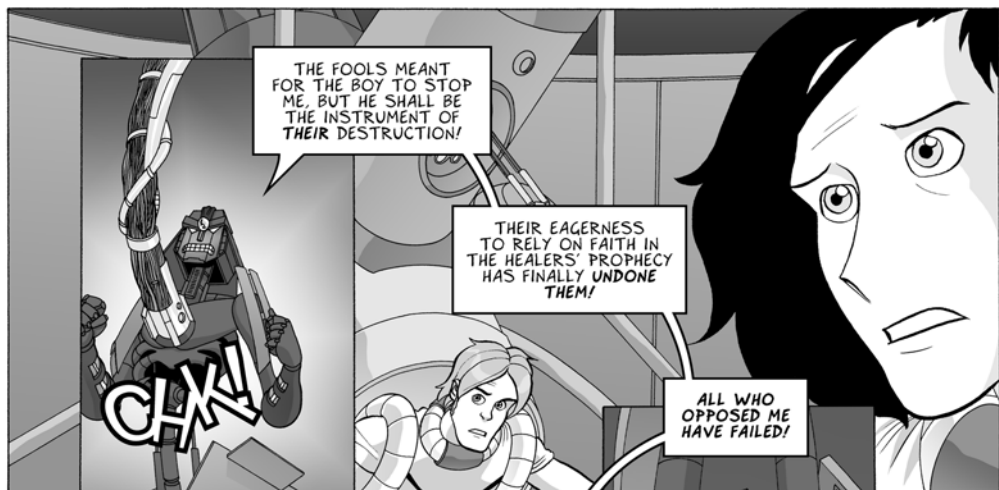


INSTEAD OF A
HORDE OF MINDLESS
SERVANTS ACTING ON
BEHALF OF THE MINDS,
THE MIND ITSELF SHALL
BE THE WEAPON.

AND I WILL
BE THAT MIND!
I WILL BE THE
PENITENTS' REBORN
AS THEY COULD
AND SHOULD HAVE
BEEN!

EVEN THE HEALERS,
FOR ALL THEIR ASSUMED
WISDOM, COULD NOT FORESEE
THIS! THEY DID NOT SUSPECT
THE SHIP'S EXISTENCE!

AND THE VIGILANCE OF
THE TRAITOROUS WEAPONS
USERS WAS FOR NOTHING!
THEIR CHAMPION IS BUT A
CHILD, AND IN MY GRASP!



THE FOOLS MEANT FOR THE BOY TO STOP ME, BUT HE SHALL BE THE INSTRUMENT OF THEIR DESTRUCTION!

THEIR EAGERNESS TO RELY ON FAITH IN THE HEALERS' PROPHECY HAS FINALLY UNDONE THEM!

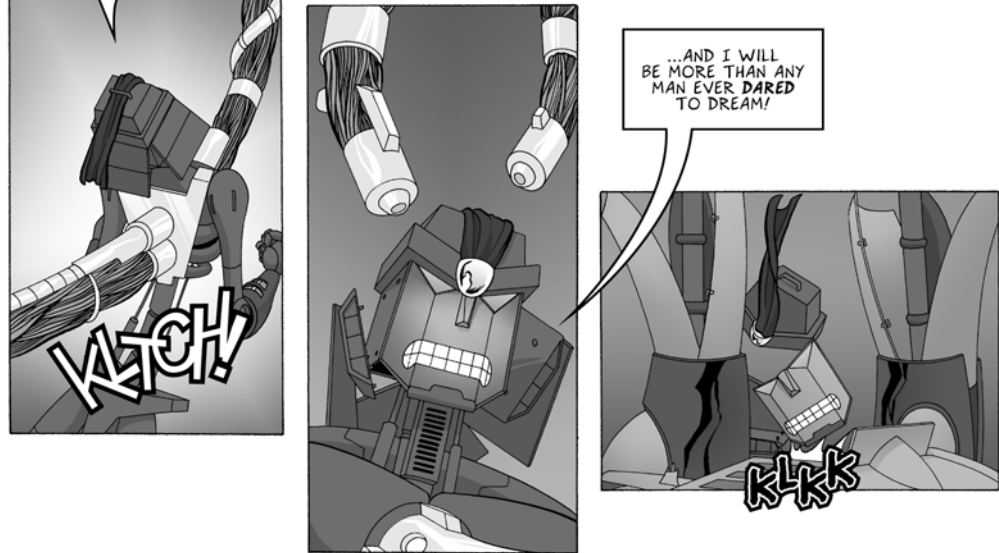
ALL WHO OPPOSED ME HAVE FAILED!



AND ONCE I HAVE ABSORBED THE LAST FRAGMENTS OF THE ALIEN METAL, ALL THAT REMAINS OF THE PENITENTS' POWER SHALL BELONG TO ME ALONE!

HMMM...

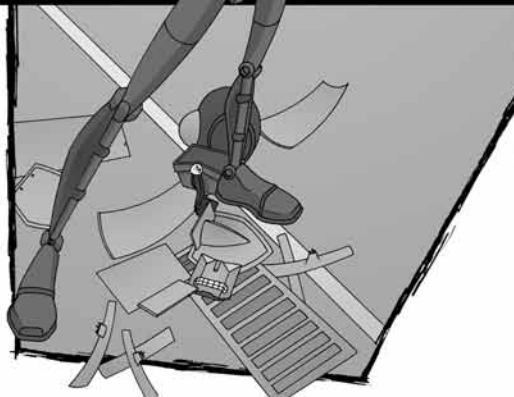
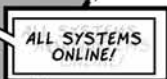
JUST A FEW FINAL CONNECTIONS...



...AND I WILL BE MORE THAN ANY MAN EVER DARED TO DREAM!

WATCH!

KLK





ACTIVATE
MAIN VISUAL.

BRECK!

WORRY NOT.
MY LOYAL MERCENARIES.
I PROMISED YOU MORE
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
DESTRUCTION. AND ONE
HAS PRESENTED ITSELF!

AND NOW THAT I AM
FULLY FUNCTIONAL, IT
IS TIME TO RECALL THE
FIRST OF MY OLD
SOLDIERS...

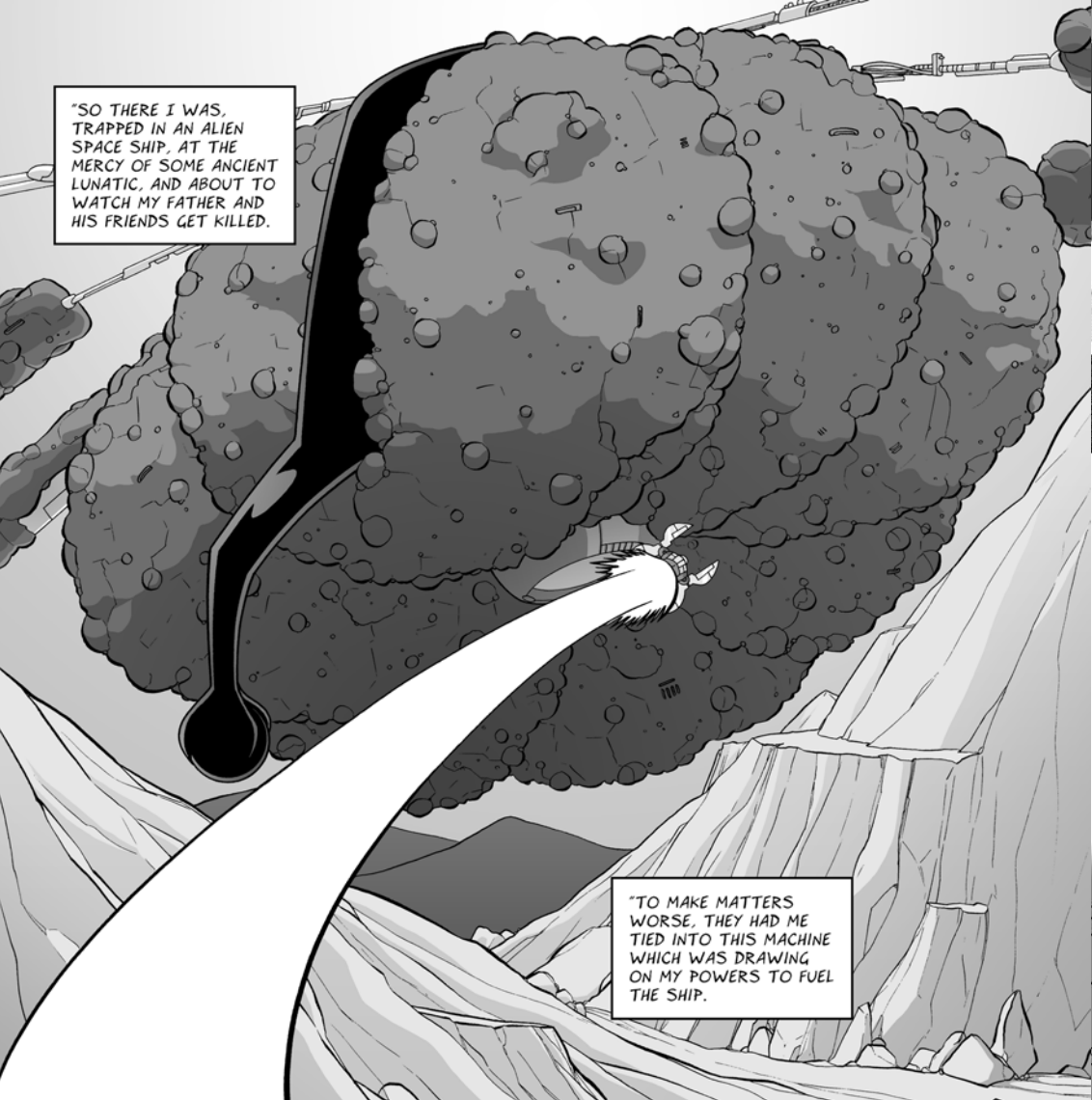
I DO NOT
SEE ANYTHING.

WE'RE ALMOST
ON TOP OF THE
COORDINATES OUR
SPY-GUYS GAVE ME.
STAY FROSTY,
GAELIN.










"SO THERE I WAS,
TRAPPED IN AN ALIEN
SPACE SHIP, AT THE
MERCY OF SOME ANCIENT
LUNATIC, AND ABOUT TO
WATCH MY FATHER AND
HIS FRIENDS GET KILLED.

"TO MAKE MATTERS
WORSE, THEY HAD ME
TIED INTO THIS MACHINE
WHICH WAS DRAWING
ON MY POWERS TO FUEL
THE SHIP.

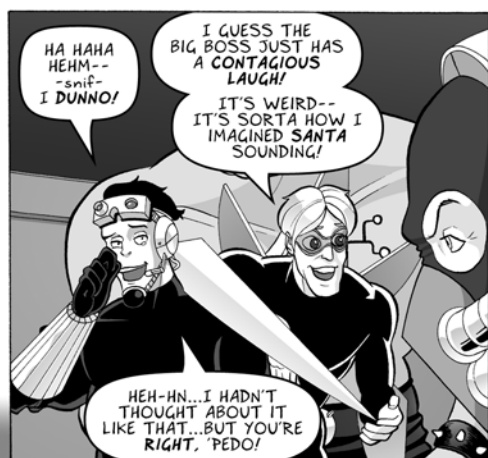


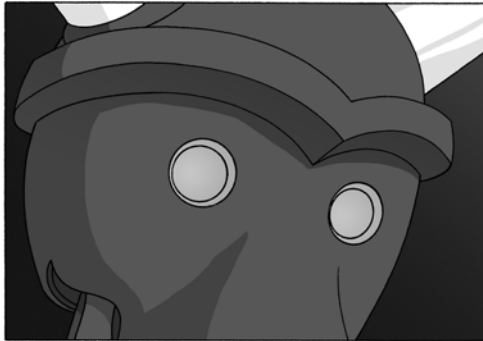
"SO NOT ONLY WAS
REX ABOUT TO GET
BLOWN UP: IT WAS
GOING TO HAPPEN
WITH MY HELP.

"AND FOR SOME REASON,
INSTEAD OF CHEWING ON
THESE FACTS, ALL MY BRAIN
COULD DO WAS RECITE THE
FIRST FEW LINES OF KAFKA'S
'THE TRIAL' OVER AND OVER.

"WHY I SHOULD BE THINKING OF
BOOKS AT THAT PARTICULAR
MOMENT IS A MYSTERY TO ME--
IT'S NOT LIKE I WAS CRAZY
ABOUT LIT CLASS OR ANYTHING...

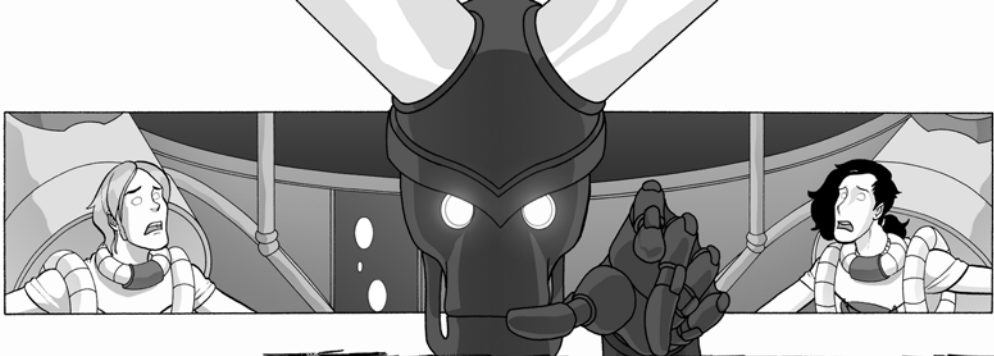
CHAPTER SIX: ***DREAMS BURN/DOWN***













NOW THAT'S
A GUN. HOW
COME
YOU NEVER MADE
ONE LIKE THAT?

I COULD,
BUT I JUST
DON'T WANT
TO.

THEY STILL
ADVANCE, MY
LORD...

HEY. WHAT
YOU DO?

YES, BUT
THEIR SHIP
IS DAMAGED.



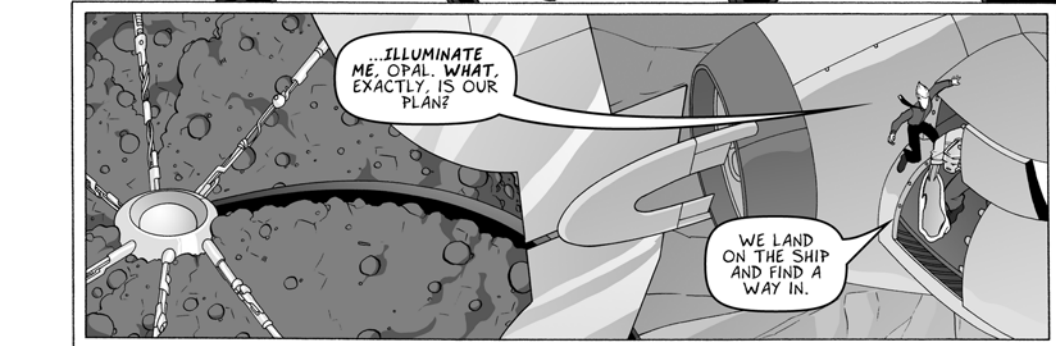
THAT
MATTERS
NOT IF THEY
MOVE OUT
OF FIRING
RANGE...

WHILE THEY
ARE WEAK--
**CRUSH THEM!
ERADICATE
THEM!**

I WISH TO
UPHOLSTER MY
THRONE WITH
THEIR HIDES!

NNN. SEND THE
MERCENARIES.

ASK, AND
YOU SHALL
RECEIVE!



...ILLUMINATE
ME, OPAL. WHAT,
EXACTLY, IS OUR
PLAN?

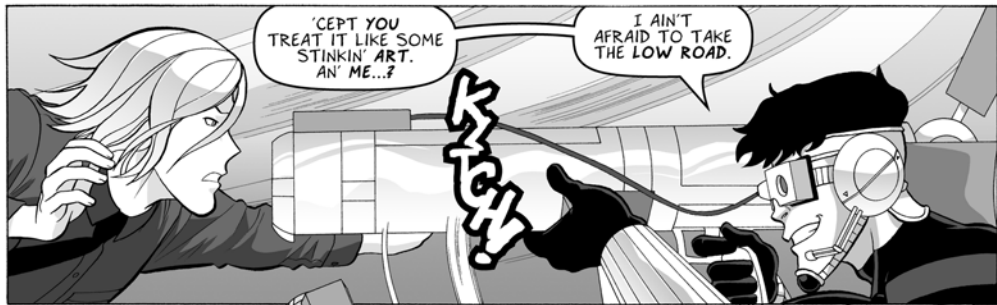
WE LAND
ON THE SHIP
AND FIND A
WAY IN.



YOU TRULY HAVE AN
UNPARALLELED TACTICAL
SENSIBILITY.











ROSEMARY--
CAN YOU DRAW
ENOUGH POWER FOR
AN EMERGENCY
LANDING?

⚡ ping! ⚡
NEGATIVE, DON.
ENGINES ARE
OFFLINE. FUEL
CELL IGNITION
IS IMMINENT.

IT WAS NICE
KNOWING YOU...





HAW!
FINISHING OFF A
CRIPPLED ENEMY!
THIS'S WHAT GETS
ME OUTTA BED--



HOL' ON
THERE, ACE!

HN?
uh-oh.



UGH!
WHAT ARE
YOU DOING,
BOZO?

HITCHIN'
A RIDE, YO-YO!
NOW, GIDDYAP!



ping!
UPLOAD
COMPLETE.
THANKS,
DON.

DON'T THANK
ME 'TIL WE'RE
OUTTA HERE...



BAH
HAHAHA
HAAAA!

GLORIOUS!
TRULY
GLORIOUS!

SUCH IS THE
FATE OF ALL
WHO OPPOSE
ME...



IT AIN'T
OVER YET,
SWORD
USER.

CORRECT.
WE STILL HAVE
BUSINESS TO
CONDUCT, YOU
AND I...



THERE IS THE
SMALL MATTER OF
YOUR TRAITOROUS
BRETHREN--

THE REMAINING
WEAPONS USERS.

I DID NOT KNOW
THEIR NUMBER OR
WHEREABOUTS BEFORE.
BUT NOW THAT I AM
THE PENITENT MIND,
LOCATING THEM WILL BE
SIMPLICITY ITSELF.



YOU CAN'T--!

oh, I ASSURE YOU, I CAN.

I SENSE FOUR ON THIS CONTINENT. LET US SEE IF YOU WERE PRUDENT ENOUGH TO HAVE THE BOY CLEANSE THEIR METAL, AS WELL...



YOU KNOW WHAT KIND OF POWER YOU'RE UNLEASHING IF YOU DO THIS!

YOU CAN'T CONTROL IT, NO ONE CAN!

DELAYING TACTICS, YOUNG ONE?

PLEASE.

LET US FACE THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL YOU HOLD DEAR WITH SOME DIGNITY...

"SO THERE I WAS, MORE AFRAID THAN I'VE EVER BEEN IN MY LIFE.

"MY LEGS WERE SLABS OF BEEF. MY TONGUE WAS A PUMICE STONE. MY BRAIN HAD COMPLETELY SHUT DOWN.

"ONLY SOMETHING WEIRD HAPPENED, JUST THEN.



"IT WAS ALMOST LIKE A DIFFERENT BRAIN I DIDN'T KNOW I HAD WENT AND SUDDENLY KICKED ON, OR LIKE SOMEBODY WAS CONTROLLING ME FROM THE OUTSIDE.

"WHATEVER THE CASE, I DON'T REMEMBER THINKING IT THROUGH, BUT I REMEMBER HEARING AND SEEING MYSELF DOING THIS--"



psst! GIBSON!

oh, man. OH, MAN, THIRSTY! WE'RE GONNA DIE!

PIPE DOWN!

LISTEN, DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT REX'S BOW LOOKED LIKE?



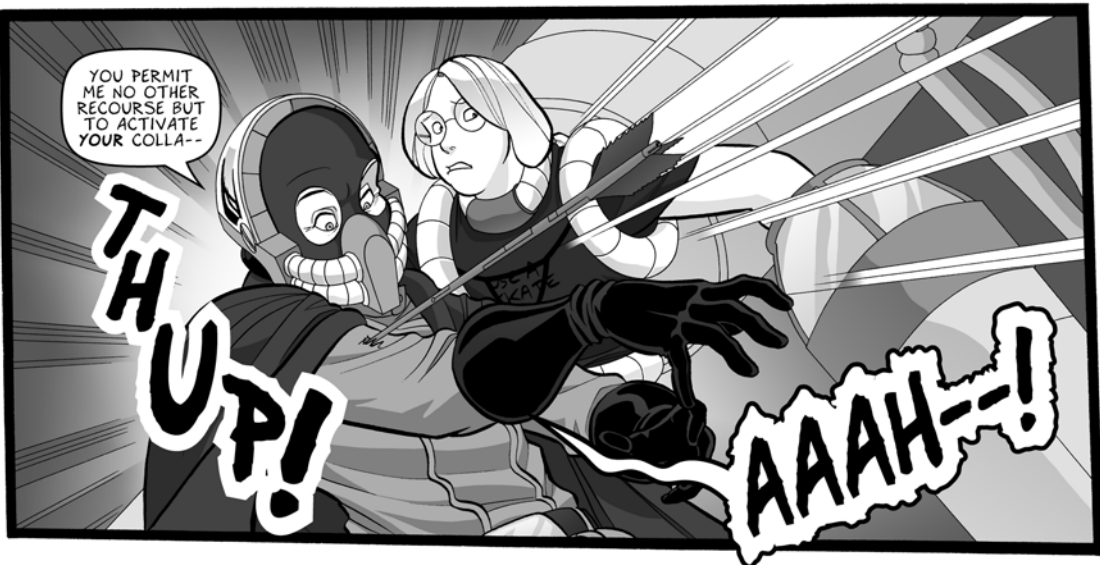
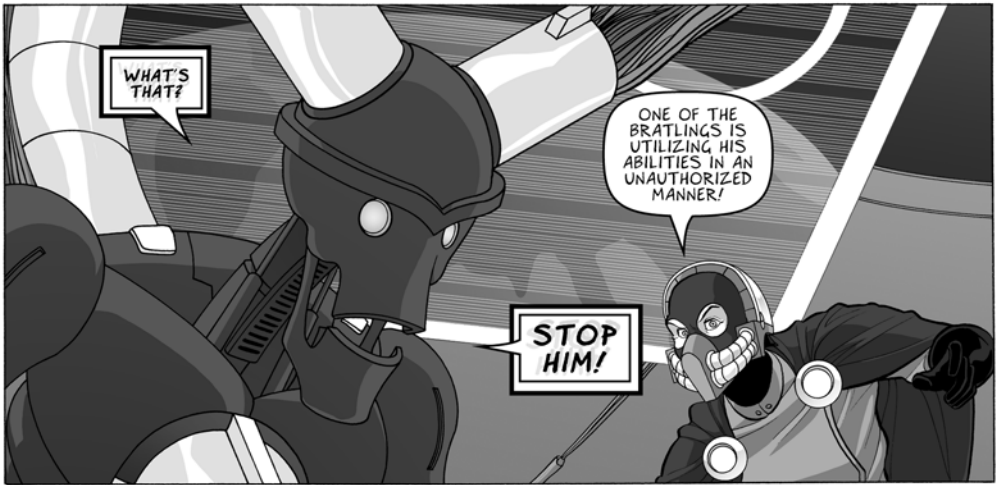
I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING. WE'RE GONNA DIE!

KNOCK IT OFF! STAY WITH ME! WE'RE GONNA BE ALL RIGHT.

REMEMBER HIS BOW? YOU COULD SEE ITS MOLECULAR STRUCTURE, RIGHT?

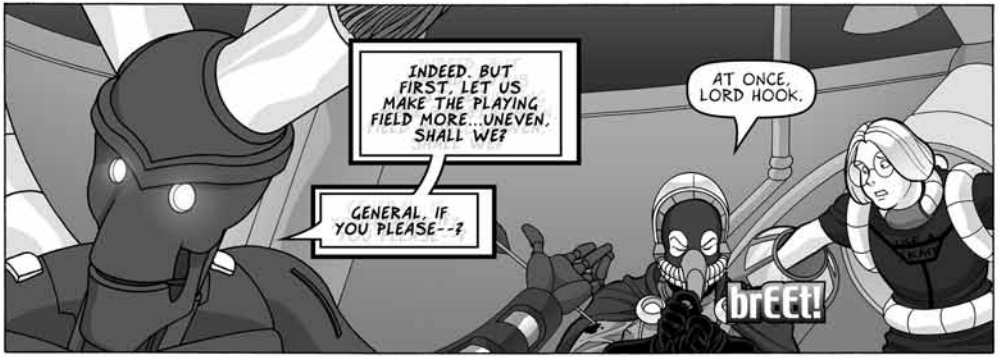
YOU'RE LINKED IN TO ALL THIS SHIP'S METAL. THINK YOU CAN FIND IT?







I BELIEVE WE
HAVE SOME BUSINESS
TO CONDUCT, YOU
AND I...





WHILE I
RETRIEVE A DAINTY
I COMMISSIONED
DICK TO CONCOCT
FOR JUST SUCH AN
OPPORTUNITY!



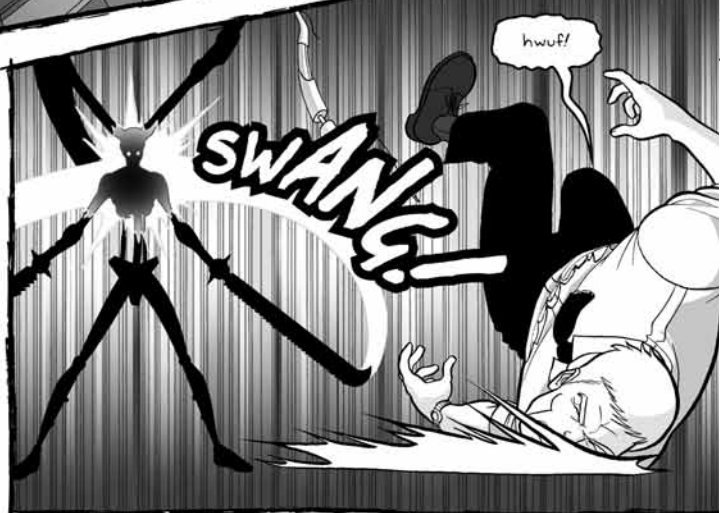
WHICHEVER
WAY THE WIND
BLOWS, I WIN!

BAH
HAHAHAHA
HAAAA!

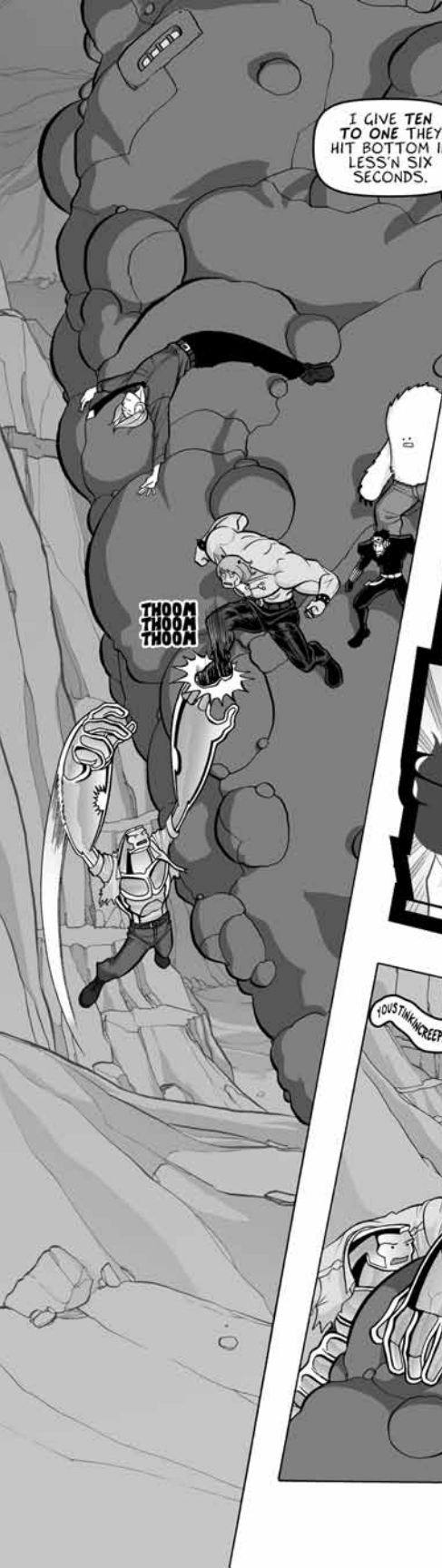










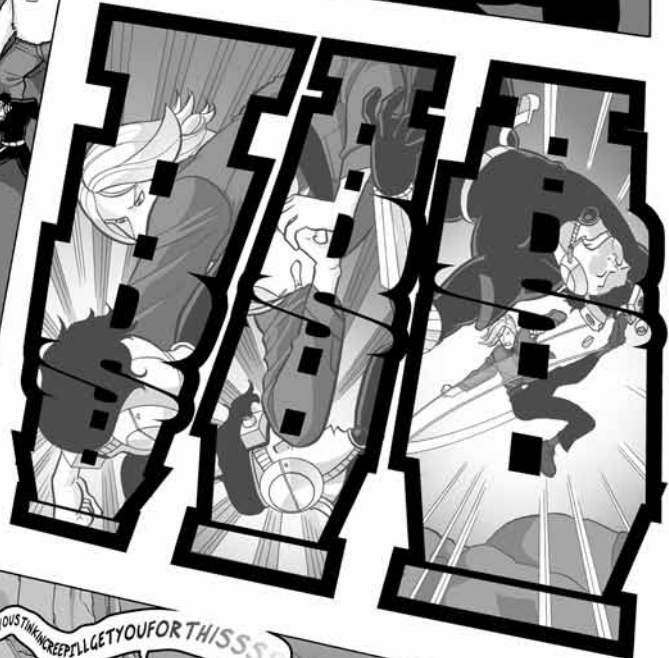


I GIVE TEN
TO ONE THEY
HIT BOTTOM IN
LESS'N SIX
SECONDS.

ANY
TAKER--



DAH,
CRUD.



RRRGH...

NO
NO
NO!



NICE
SHOOTING,
ROSEMARY.

ping!
ANYTIME,
DON!

THEM WAS
THE HORNS
ANNOUNCIN'
THE ARRIVAL
OF THE AIR
CAVALRY!

YEE
HAW!

EYER
RGH!



BUDDY!

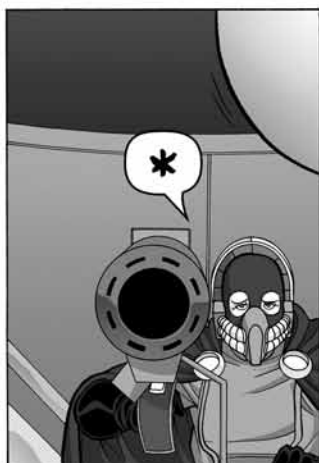
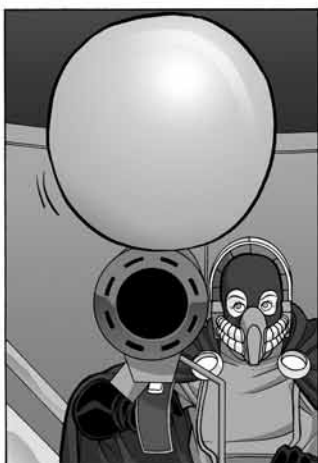
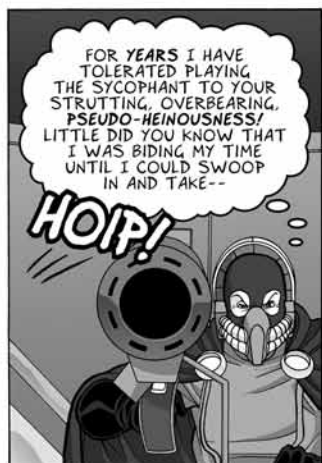


YO, DUDES/
GUESS WHAT?

HOWDY,
HERMANO!
WHAT'D AH
MISS?

MAX--!











I'D HOPED...

THAT IF HE
WAS CLEANSED
IT'D REDEEM HIS
ORIGINAL SELF...

IT'S
OVER.

AFTER ALL
THESE YEARS,
HE'S REALLY
GONE...



YOU BOYS
JUST SAVED
THE WORLD.



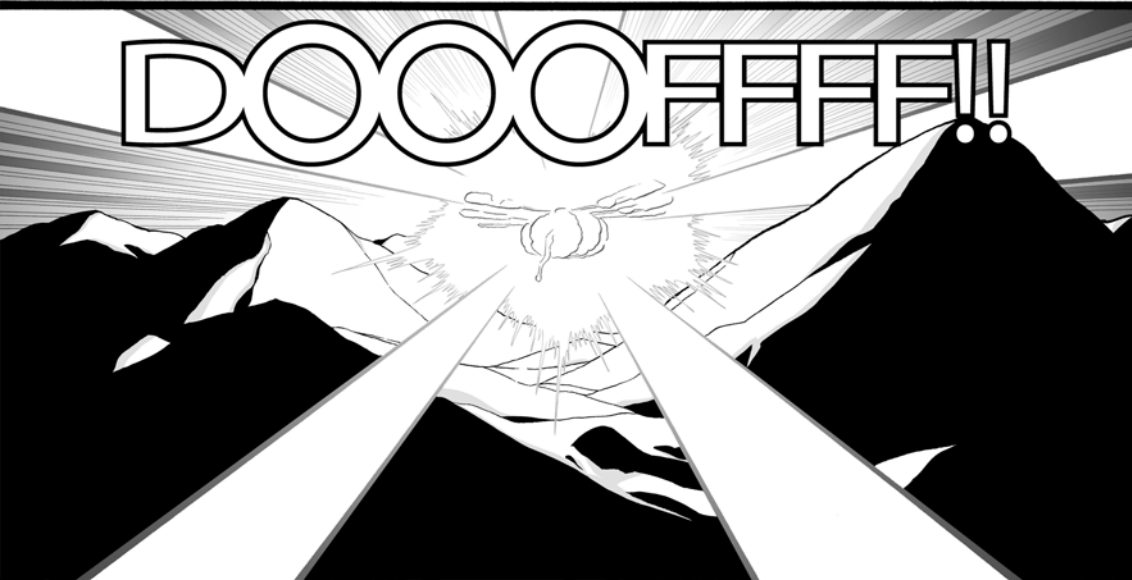
OHMAN
I THOUGHT I
WAS GONNA
DIE...

IT'S OKAY,
NOW... IT'S
ALL RIGHT...

UH...

SO, IS
SOMEONE ELSE
PILOTING THE SHIP
NOW, OR WHAT?















THABOOM!









IF YOU ENJOYED THIS COMIC
(**REALLY** ENJOYED IT)
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