

GEORGE R.R. MARTIN'S

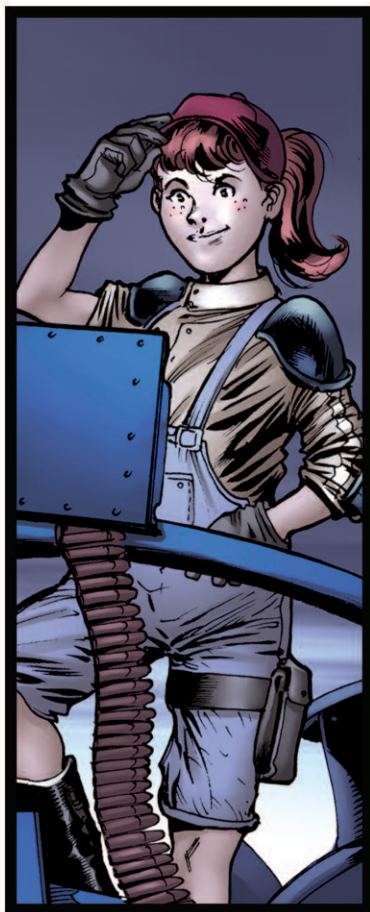
DOORWAYS



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WHAT IF ?

BY GEORGE R.R. MARTIN

*For all sad words of tongue and pen,
the saddest are those, "it might have been."*

- JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

Every life has its turning points, its might-have-beens, the places where the road forks, leading off in two different directions. Sometimes you choose which way to go after long deliberation, carefully weighing your options. At other times you hurry past, taking the broader path or the busiest, hardly even pausing to look down the other fork. And sometimes the choice is made for you by time or chance or other people. However you decide, life is what it is, and there is seldom any turning back... though all of us, I think, look behind us later on and wonder. "What if things had turned out differently?" we ask ourselves. "What if I had done that instead of this, gone left instead of right, bet on red instead of black? What if I had gone to the other school, taken the other job, married the other girl, what would my life have been? What if, what if, what if..."

A writing career is often full of such "what if" moments, both good and bad. What if I had been able to get an actual entry-level job on a newspaper in the spring of 1971, when I left Northwestern with my master's degree in journalism? I might still be a journalist today. Instead, unemployed, I spent that summer writing science fiction and fantasy stories, subsequently sold them all, and took another road. What if my fourth novel, *The Armageddon Rag*, had not been such a huge commercial failure? Most likely I would never have gone to Hollywood or written for television and film. What if I had not put aside the SF novel that I was working on during the summer of 1991 to write this fantasy idea I had, about some direwolf pups found in the summer snows? *Avalon* might have been a good book, even a popular one, but would it have transformed my life and career the way *A Game of Thrones* did? Not likely.

But the biggest "what if" and "might-have-been" in my career, appropriately enough, was a story about what ifs and might-have-beens, called *Doorways*.

The Armageddon Rag did flop, after all. So I found myself unable to sell my journalism novel, *Black and White and Red All Over*, when I offered it to publishers in 1985. So I did go out to L.A., where I joined the writing staff of *The Twilight Zone*, and later *Beauty and the Beast*. After both of those series had run their course, I continued to work in Hollywood, writing screenplays and

pitching television pilots. In that fateful (for me) summer of 1991, finding myself back home in New Mexico and between contracts, I started that SF novel (*Avalon*), then put it aside for the fantasy that would become *A Game of Thrones*. I was only about a hundred pages into the book when my agent Jodi Levine called to tell me that she'd set pitch meetings for me at ABC, NBC, and Fox. So I hopped on a plane and flew back out to L.A. to try and sell a series of my own.

I had a great concept for a show, I thought. I wanted to base a series on "The Skin Trade," my World Fantasy Award-winning novella about a sexy female private eye and an asthmatic, hypochondriac werewolf collection agent. But you don't go into pitch meetings with only one arrow in your quiver. I needed a second idea, in case the suits did not warm to my first. On the flight to Burbank, I found one. I remembered an old fantasy story that I had written back in the '70s, called "The Lonely Songs of Laren Dorr." High fantasy romance, not what the networks wanted back then—but the first line of that story still resonated with me:

"There is a girl who goes between the worlds."

That old line from an old story was the seed that sprouted *Doorways*. The rest of "The Lonely Songs of Laren Dorr," I put aside. This was a whole new story, with new characters. Television had done plenty of shows about space travel and time travel, but there was one huge SF trope that had gone almost (not entirely, but almost) untouched: alternate worlds.

The perfect television pitch, as my old friend and partner in mayhem Michael Cassutt likes to say, goes like this: "He's the pope. She's a chimp. They fight crime." They call it "high concept," and if your idea can't be boiled down into three sentences to fit that pattern, you're probably dead before you open your mouth. My pitch went like this: "He's an emergency room doc. She's a feral slave girl fleeing her alien masters. They travel to parallel worlds."

Over the span of two days, I met with the development execs at NBC, Fox, and ABC, and pitched them my ideas. As the fates would have it, none of them showed the slightest bit of interest in "The Skin Trade," but they all went wild for the concept I was then calling simply *Doors*. Fox had seemed the most enthusiastic in the room, and for a day or two I thought we would end up there, but ABC moved the fastest, and that's where we cut the deal. I needed a studio, so I took the project

to Columbia Pictures. James Crocker, a colleague and friend from my days on *The Twilight Zone*, joined me as an executive producer.

For the next year and a half, my life was *Doors*.

I spent the rest of 1991 plotting out the pilot story, revising it, expanding it when the network decided they wanted to do a ninety-minute pilot instead of just an hour, writing the first-draft teleplay, rewriting the teleplay when the network decided they wanted a completely different second half, revising again, revising again, cutting, polishing, revising, cutting...

In January of 1992, after a few suspenseful weeks, we got great news. ABC loved the script. We got the greenlight to shoot the pilot.

There were more revisions, of course. (In television, there are always more revisions.) We hired a director and a line producer, the director hired a DP and the line producer a crew. We found our Cat in Paris, in the person of a wonderful young French actress named Anne LeGuernec... but the Tom that we wanted, an actor named George Newbern, was tied up filming a movie all through the spring. We looked at a hundred other possibilities, but none of them were as good as George, so finally it was decided to push back filming until he was free. (Which had the unfortunate side effect of taking us out of contention for a slot in the fall schedule for 1992, since we would not be filming until May, when all the other pilots were in the can, and the networks were already deciding which shows to slot for fall.) Rob Knepper, another fine young actor, was cast as our third regular, Thane. The guest cast consisted of Kurtwood Smith as Trager, Carrie Ann Moss as Laura, Hoyt Axton as Jake, and the delightful and vivacious Tisha Putman as Cissy. With Peter Werner at the helm, we started shooting in May of 1992, wrapped in July, then spent a month in editing and post-production. And somewhere along the line, the title was changed to *Doorways*, after the network expressed concern that people might confuse *Doors* with Jim Morrison's band or Oliver Stone's film about the same (though in the script, and in the show, the doors are still called doors, never doorways.)

In August of 1992 we screened a rough cut for ABC.

The network loved it. The reaction could not have been more positive, despite the fact that there was still a lot of work to be done on the pilot (the special effects, in particular). If it had been May, I don't doubt we would have gotten a series order right then and there.

Alas, it was August. ABC's fall schedule was already set. "No problem," the network told us. "We will put you on in February as a mid-season replacement." And they backed up those sweet words with an immediate order for six back up scripts.

Then or now, that sort of order was very unusual, and a real sign of the network's enthusiasm for a show. A pilot that the network is lukewarm about won't get any script order whatsoever. One that they think might be a strong contender might get an order for two scripts. And six scripts? Even the guys at Columbia said that was unprecedented. It was the nearest thing to a series order you could get, aside from an actual series order.

Doorways was so close to prime time that I could taste it.

I spent the rest of 1992 and the first few months of 1993 working on those six back up scripts, intended as the first six episodes of our eventual series. One episode I wrote myself. Another was scripted by Jim Crocker, my fellow executive producer and showrunner. The remaining scripts were assigned to four terrific freelance writers: Michael Cassutt, Ed Zuckerman, Steve DeJarnett, and J.D. Feigelson. We met, we plotted, we outlined, we revised, we wrote, and rewrote, and rewrote, and polished, and rewrote some more... with one eye on the calendar, waiting for that pickup. All that fall and into the winter, I went forward fully expecting to have my own show on the air *Real Soon Now*, and jotting down ideas about the worlds that Tom and Cat might visit, the adventures they might have.

(Meanwhile, I was also going over pattern budgets, frowning a little, then a lot, fretting, worrying, sweating, wondering how the hell we were going to do the show I wanted to do on an episodic television budget. But that's a story for another day).

But as the months passed, things happened, as things often do. Television is inexorable, and even as the new shows are debuting in the fall, pilot scripts are being ordered for the following year's schedule... even newer shows, to take the place of any of the current crop that falter. Meanwhile, one of our biggest supporters at ABC got moved to the New York office, another took a job heading a studio, a third quit when he did not get a promotion. All of them were replaced by people who did not know *Doorways*, and had no part in its development.

We did not go on the air as a mid-season replacement in 1993. Instead we were thrown back in the hopper, to compete for a fall slot with all the new

pilots. But by then we were old news, a leftover show from the previous season and the previous regime... and come May, when ABC announced its fall schedule, we were not on it. "We only had room for one SF show on the schedule," we were told, "and we thought *Lois & Clark* had more name recognition." And that pretty much was the end of *Doorways*... until now.

It was not the end of my stint in Hollywood, mind you. I wrote two more pilots, neither of which got as far as *Doorways*. As a producer, I supervised other writers on other pilots. I wrote three screenplays for the live-action division of Disney, and one for a small indie studio, none of which ever got filmed. I made wheelbarrows full of money. But eventually I got tired of it all, and dusted off that novel I'd been writing in 1991, when I was called out to Hollywood to pitch. It turned into *A Game of Thrones*, the first book in my epic fantasy series *A Song of Ice and Fire*. I'm working on the fifth book in the series now, with two more yet to come.

But I won't say that I've never looked back. We all look back. *Doorways* was a huge turning point for me. If we had not been out of sync with the inexorable timetable of network television... if we had delivered our pilot in May instead of August... if ABC had made a different call... everything might have changed. Would we have lasted ten episodes, or ten years? Would we have been a hit, a flop? Would the critics have thrown laurels or brickbats? Would Anne LeGuernec, George Newbern, and Rob Knepper have become stars (for one of them, at least, I think the answer is "yes")? Would I have gone on from *Doorways* to create more television shows, become the new Steven Bochco, the new Dick Wolf, a Joss Whedon before Joss Whedon, made dump trucks full of money instead of mere wheelbarrows?

Maybe. Maybe not. Probably not. We'll never know. That's the nature of what ifs and might-have-beens. But I will always wonder. We came so close...

One thing is pretty certain, though. If *Doorways* had gone to series, I would have remained in television much longer than I did, *A Game of Thrones* might never have been finished, and no one would be calling me "the American Tolkien" today. So all in all, I can't complain. I'm pretty pleased with the way that all worked out.

I do grieve for the untold stories, though. A writer's characters are like his children, I've often said. Tom and Cat were a huge part of my life for a year and a half, and of course I came to love

them, just as I love Tyrion and Daenerys and Jon Snow, Jay Ackroyd and the Great and Powerful Turtle, Haviland Tuf and Abner Marsh, and all the other characters that I've created over the years. It broke my heart to know that the world would never know them, or share their exploits and adventures.

Which is why this comic series is such a thrill for me. Thanks to Stefano Martino and the good folks at IDW, Tom and Cat live again, and their stories will at last be told. That pleases me more than I can say.

One thing I should make clear, however. A few of you may have seen the pilot that we filmed for ABC back in 1992. Though it was never screened on American television (ABC did schedule it in the summer of 1993, during the dog days of August when all the busted pilots are "burned off," but their bright boys forgot that it was a ninety-minute pilot and put it in a sixty-minute timeslot, so they had to scrap it at the last moment), *Doorways* was released on videotape (VHS) around the world, albeit in a bloated two-hour version.

But this comic and that video are two different animals. Tom and Cat and the other characters depicted here look nothing like the actors who portrayed them in the pilot; these versions were created by Stefano, who has never seen the video. We've changed some things as well. The great thing about a graphic novel is that you don't have the sort of budgetary limitations you do on a television show... you can afford all the special effects you want, elaborate sets, spectacular costumes, astonishing architecture... and your aliens won't need to be actors dressed up in rubber suits. Television requires hard choices and compromises, more often than not. A graphic novel gives you much more freedom. So all in all, I think, this version of *Doorways* is going to be much cooler than the television show could ever have been.

We're thirteen years late, but at last the door is opening, and...

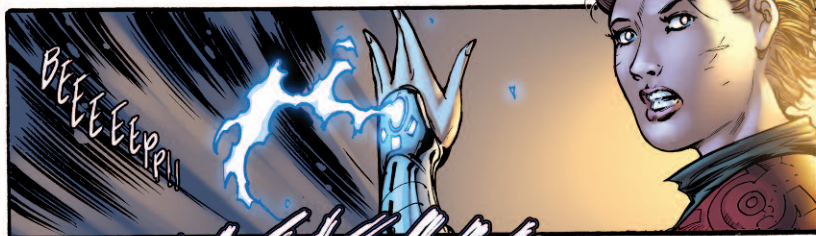
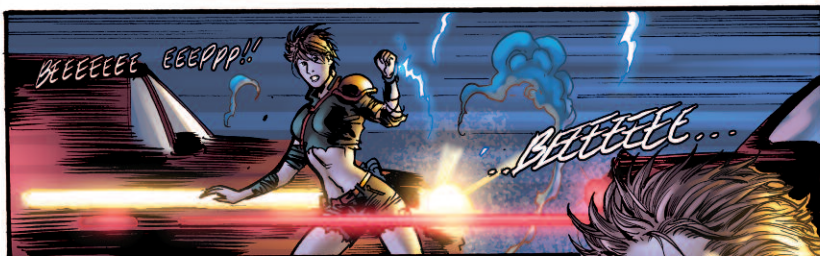
There is a girl who goes between the worlds.

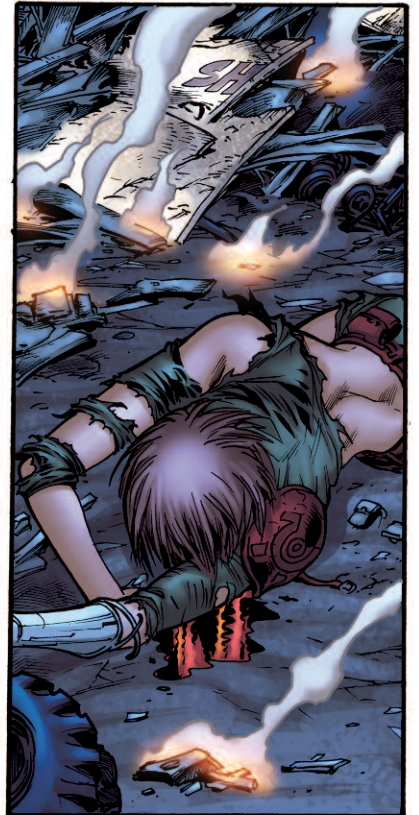
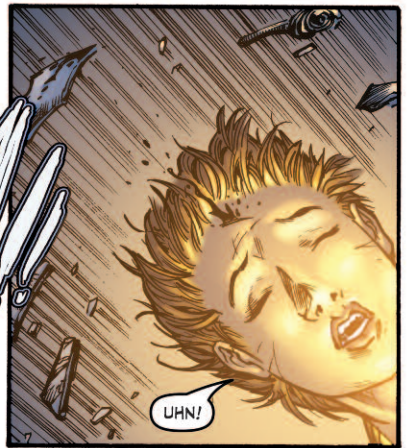
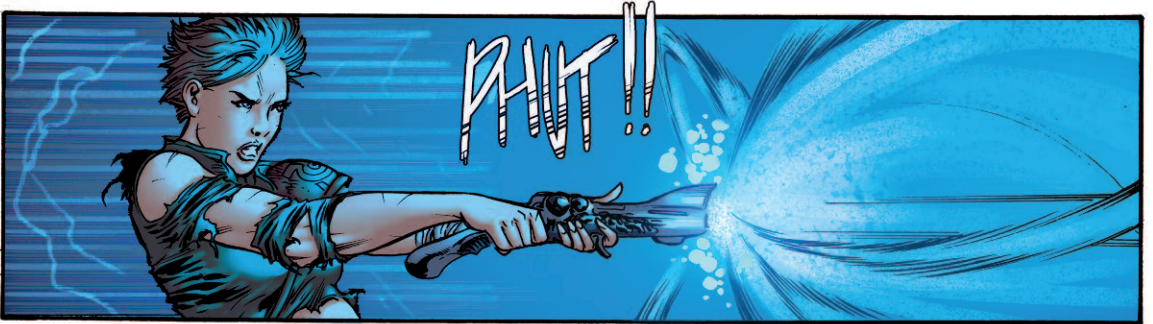
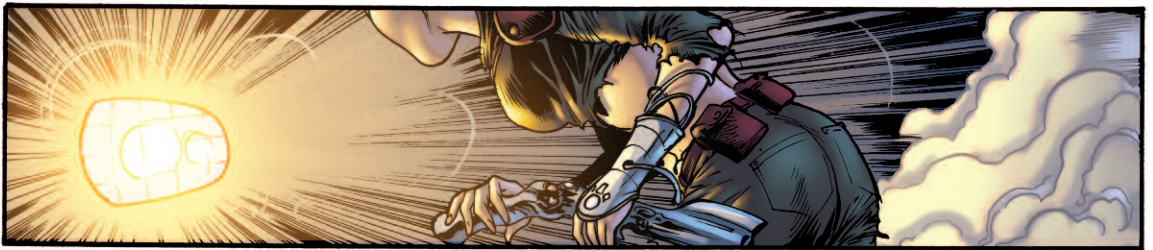
George R.R. Martin

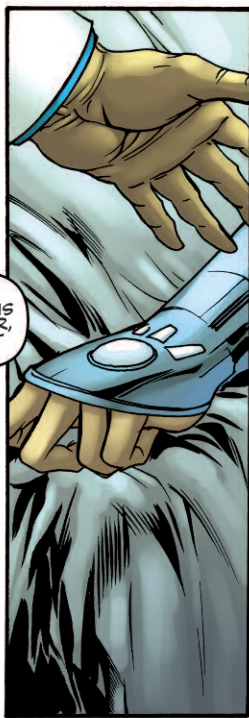
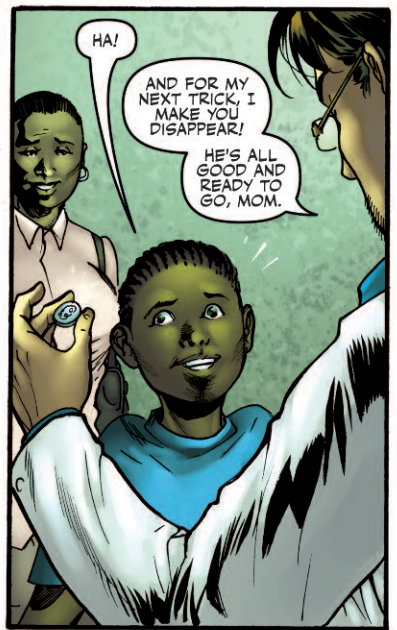
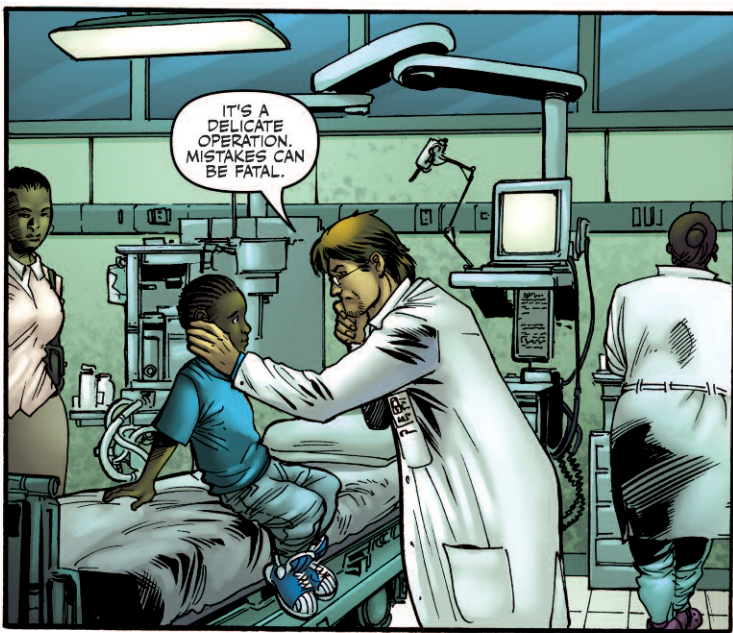
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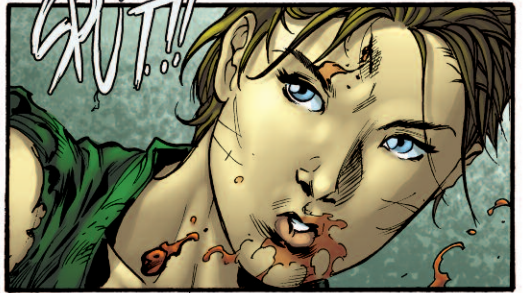
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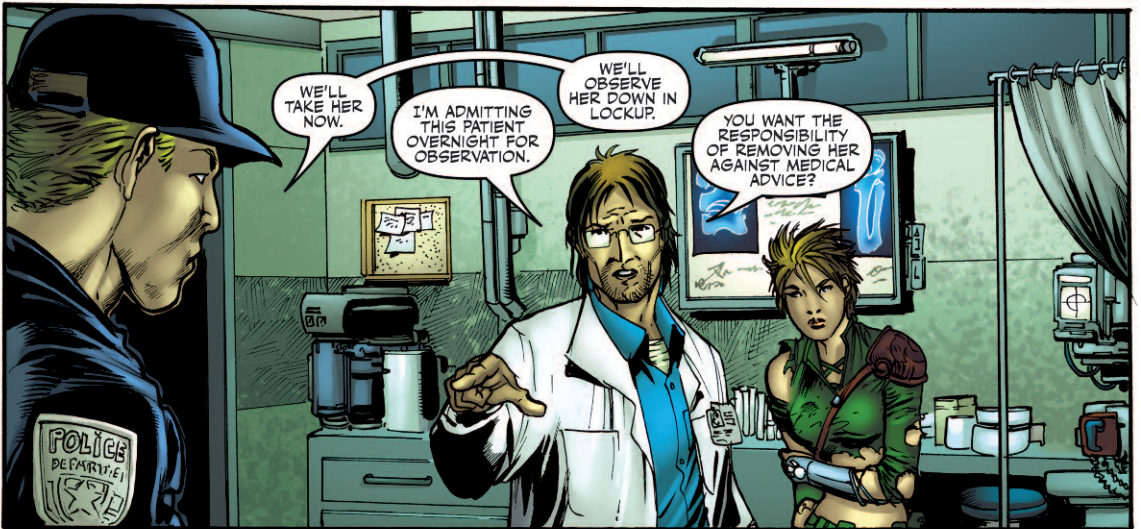
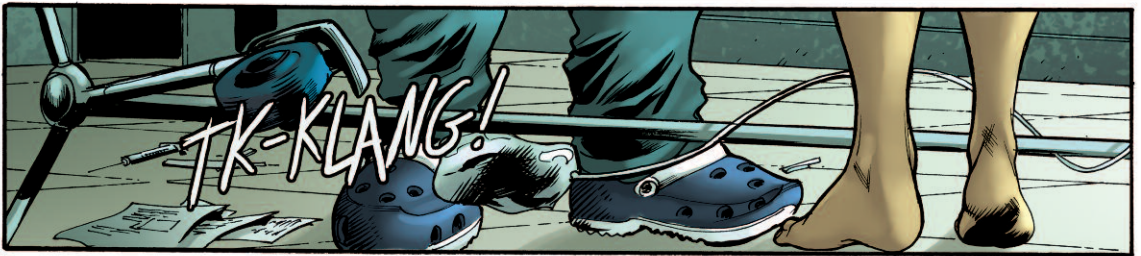
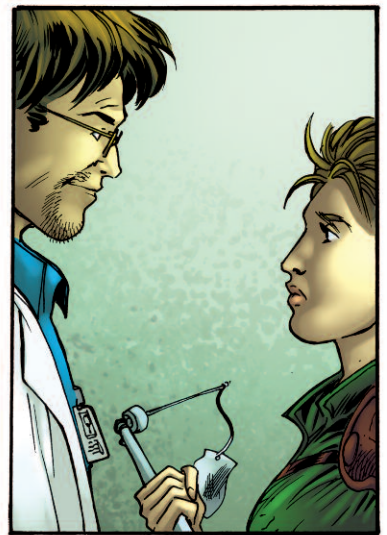
(Did someone mention *Sliders*? *Sliders!!!* Slowly I turned. Step by step... inch by inch...)

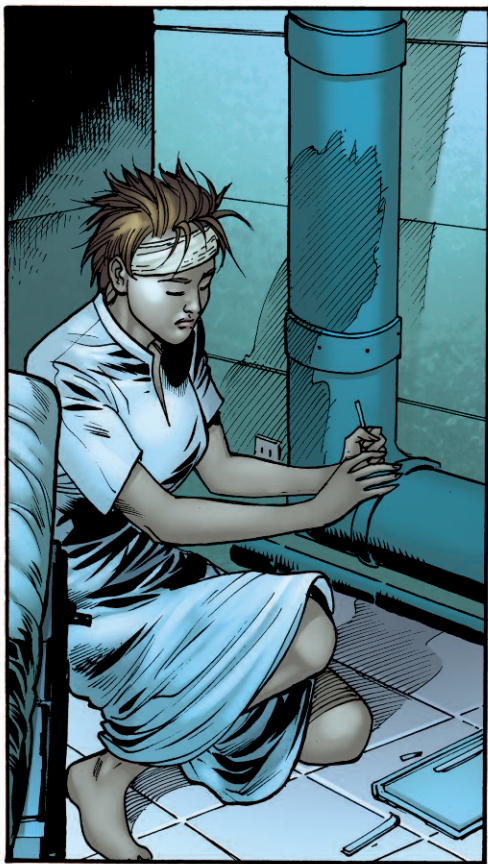


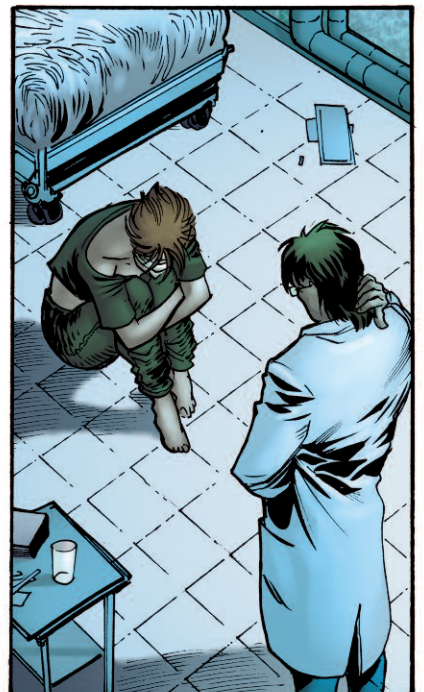
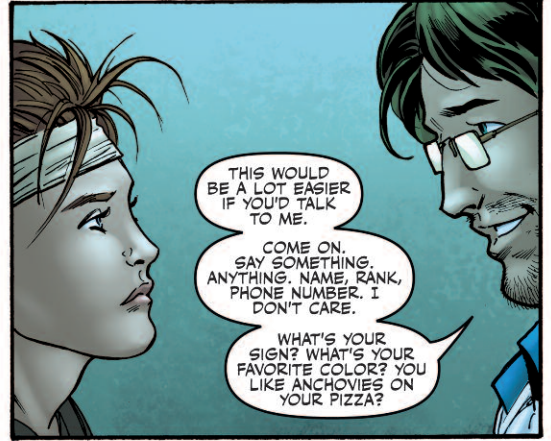
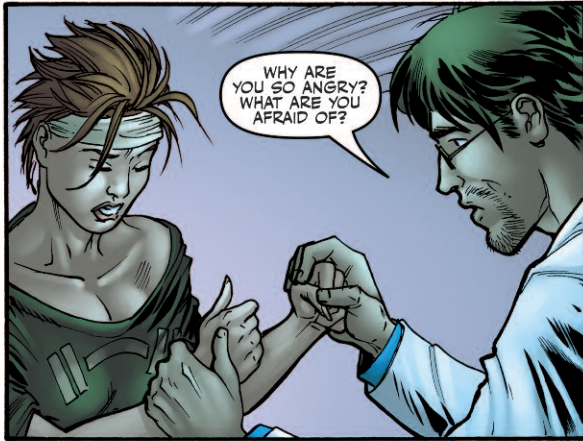


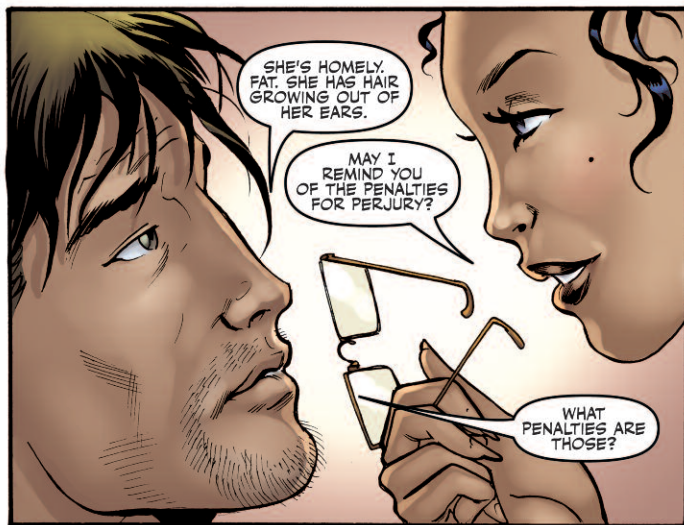
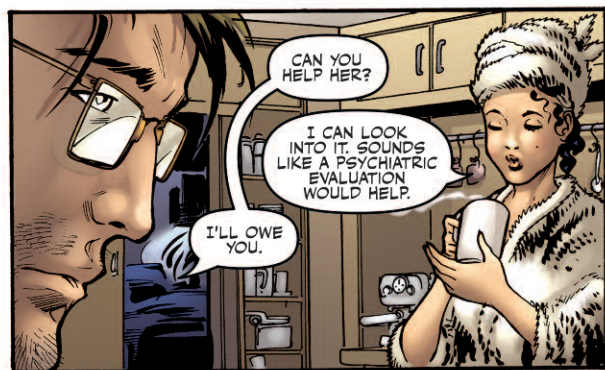


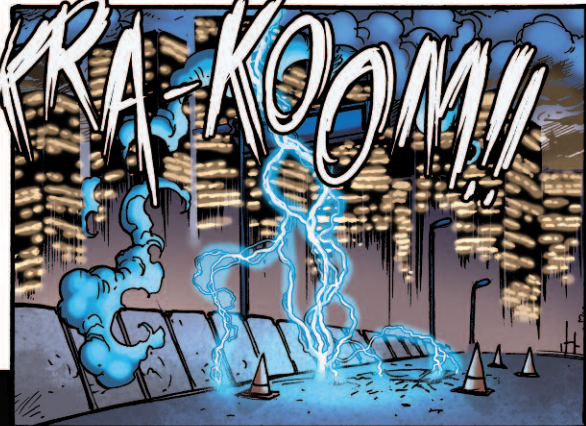


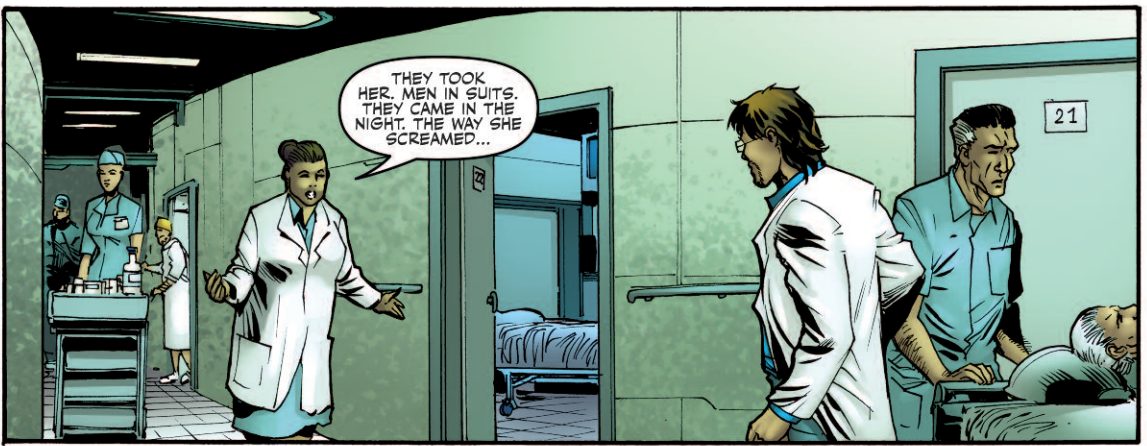


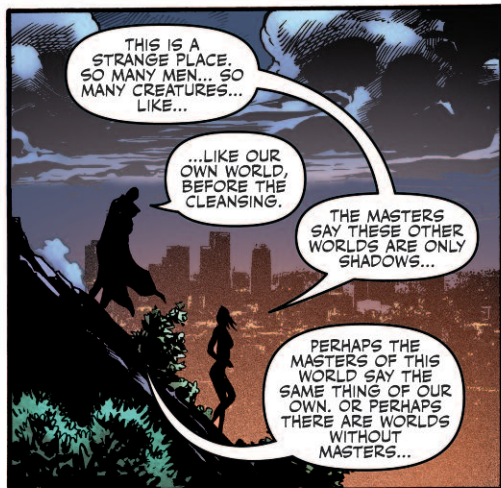
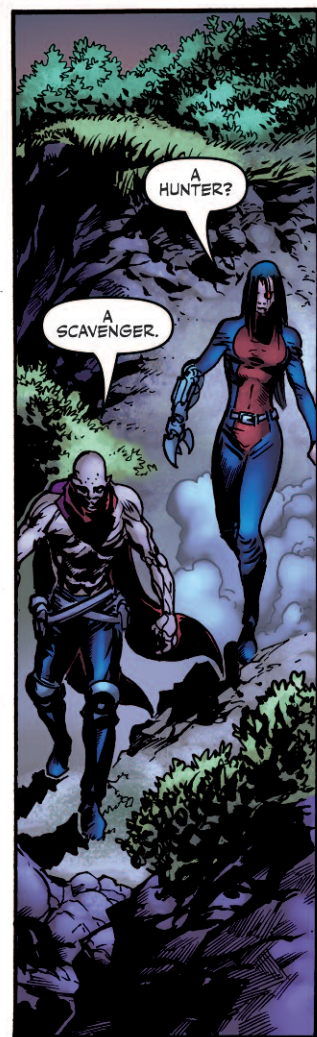


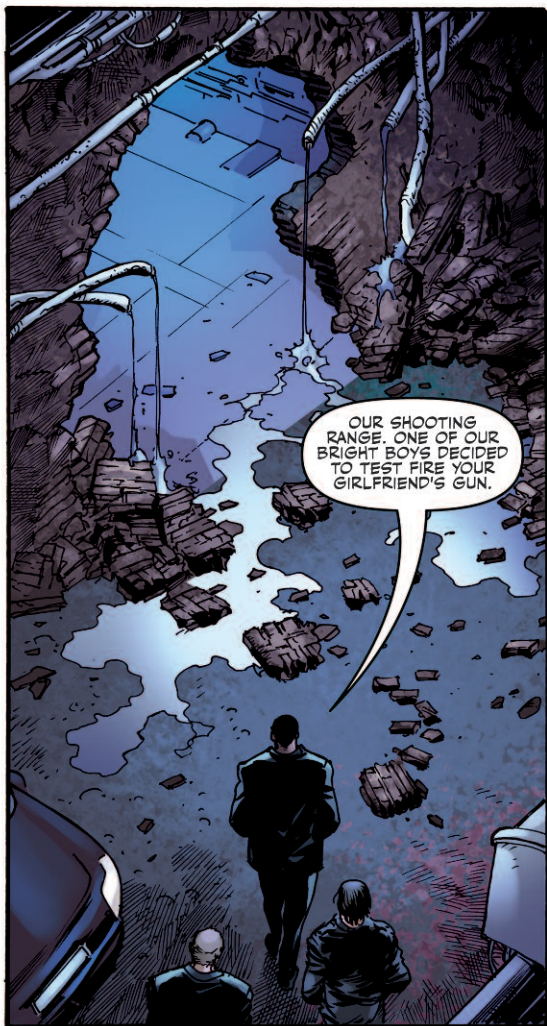
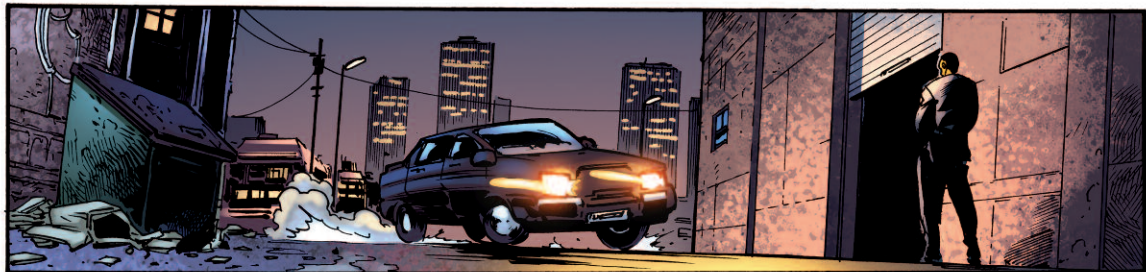


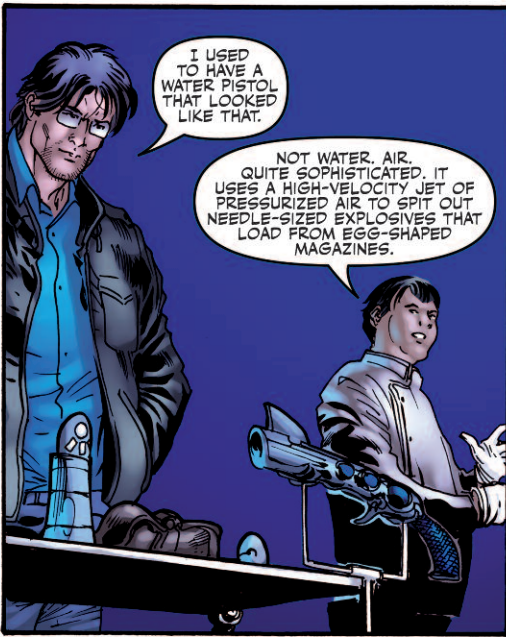






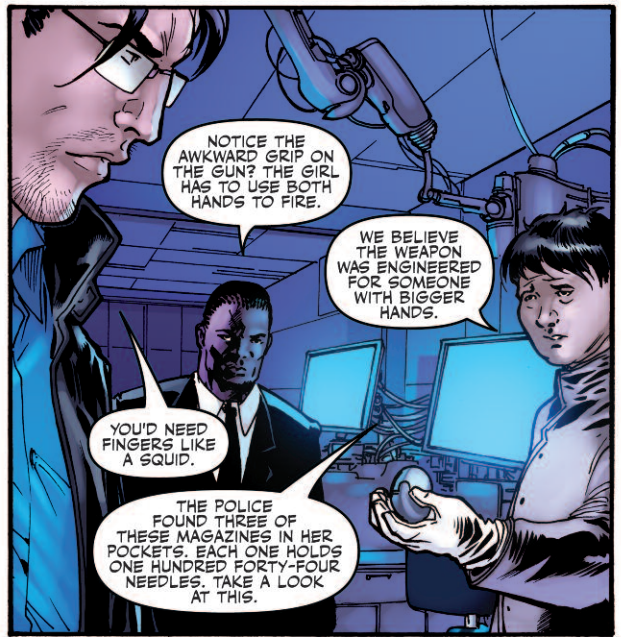






I USED TO HAVE A WATER PISTOL THAT LOOKED LIKE THAT.

NOT WATER. AIR. QUITE SOPHISTICATED. IT USES A HIGH-VELOCITY JET OF PRESSURIZED AIR TO SPIT OUT NEEDLE-SIZED EXPLOSIVES THAT LOAD FROM EGG-SHAPED MAGAZINES.

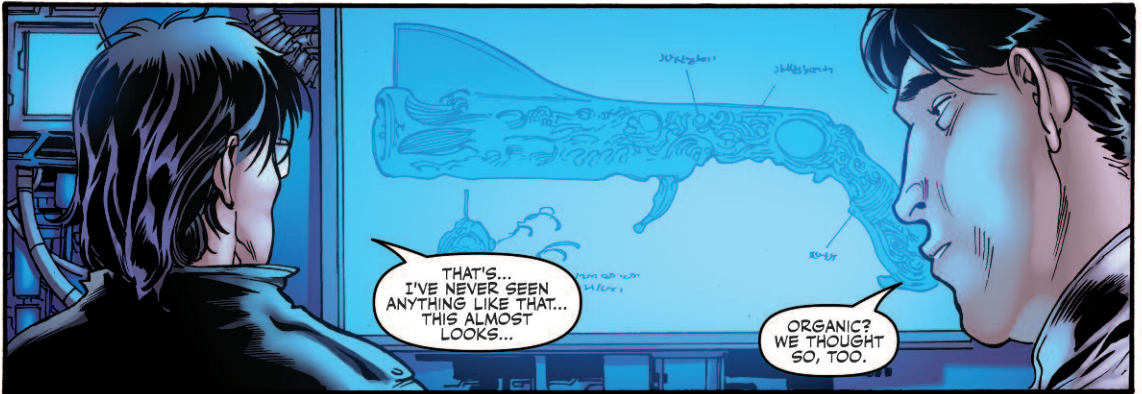


NOTICE THE AWKWARD GRIP ON THE GUN? THE GIRL HAS TO USE BOTH HANDS TO FIRE.

WE BELIEVE THE WEAPON WAS ENGINEERED FOR SOMEONE WITH BIGGER HANDS.

YOU'D NEED FINGERS LIKE A SQUID.

THE POLICE FOUND THREE OF THESE MAGAZINES IN HER POCKETS. EACH ONE HOLDS ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FOUR NEEDLES. TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.



THAT'S... I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THAT... THIS ALMOST LOOKS...

ORGANIC? WE THOUGHT SO, TOO.



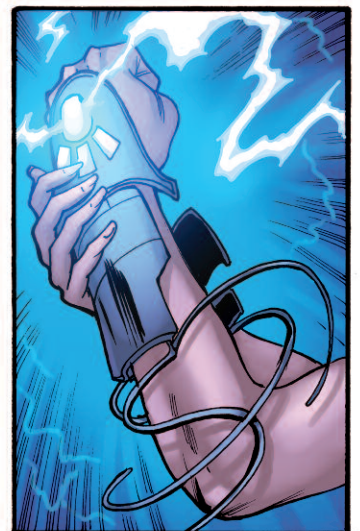
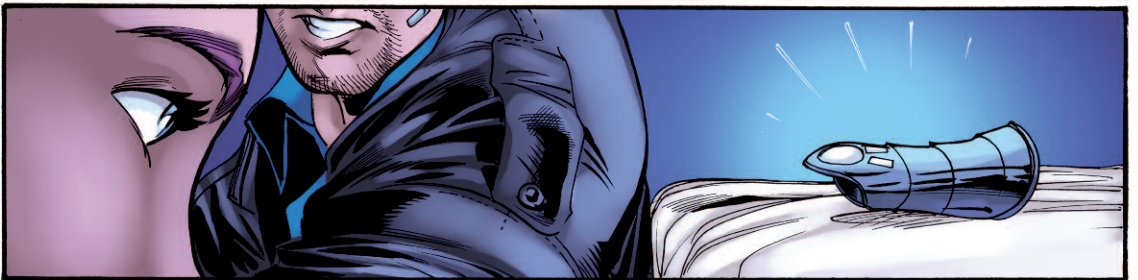
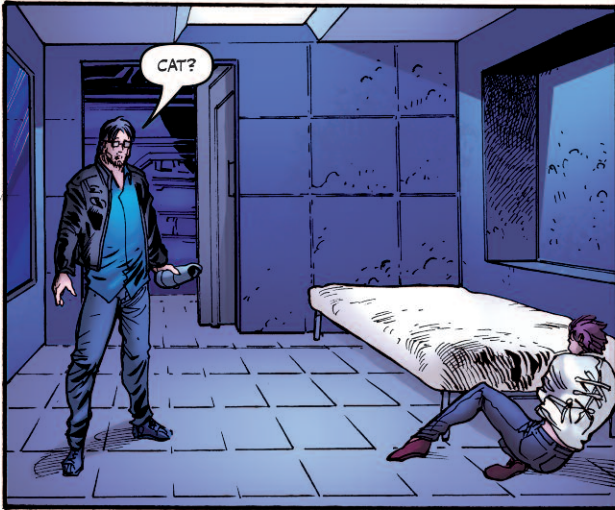
THE SHELL IS MORE LIKE HORN THAN METAL, BUT WITH A TENSILE STRENGTH GREATER THAN STEEL.

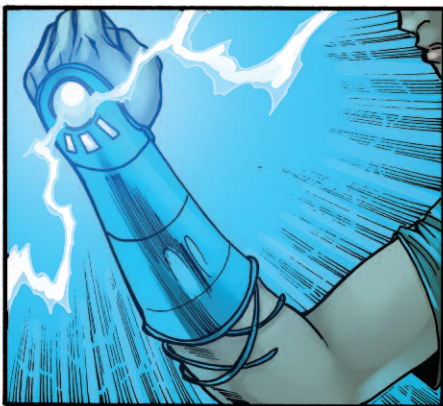
YOU COULD CALL IT MICROCIRCUITRY, BUT ONCE AGAIN IT HAS CERTAIN ORGANIC CHARACTERISTICS. AT FIVE-THIRTEEN THIS MORNING THESE INSETS EMITTED AN INTENSE YELLOW LIGHT FOR ABOUT NINE SECONDS. WE DON'T KNOW WHY.



WELL, I DIDN'T DO IT. LOOK, GUYS, THE SHOW-AND-TELL HAS BEEN FASCINATING, IF SLIGHTLY SURREAL, BUT I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU WANT FROM ME.

I'LL MAKE IT REAL SIMPLE FOR YOU. WE DIDN'T MAKE THESE. WE WANT TO KNOW WHO DID. YOU'RE GOING TO FIND OUT.



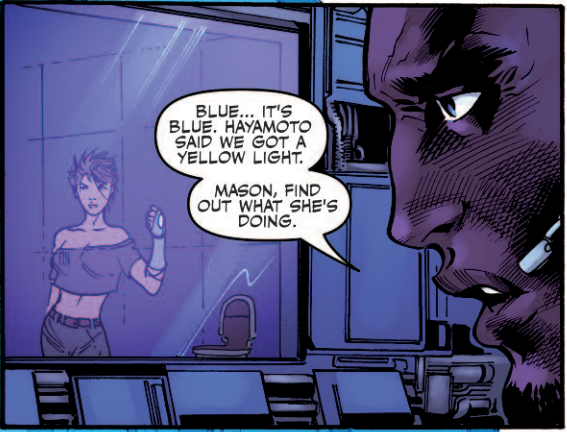


41024



CAT, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

THAT WAY.



BLUE... IT'S BLUE. HAYAMOTO SAID WE GOT A YELLOW LIGHT.

MASON, FIND OUT WHAT SHE'S DOING.



CAT, WHAT ARE YOU POINTING AT?

DOOR.



CAT, WHERE DID YOU GET THAT? AND THE WEAPON, THE AIR GUN?



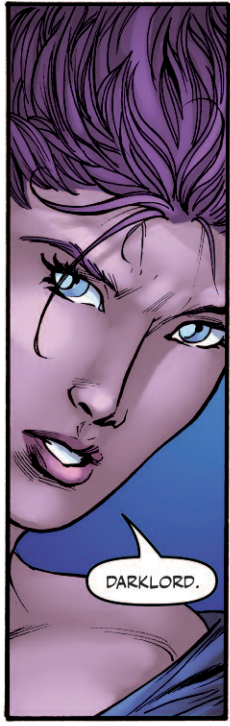
YOU KNOW... PHUT BOOM!



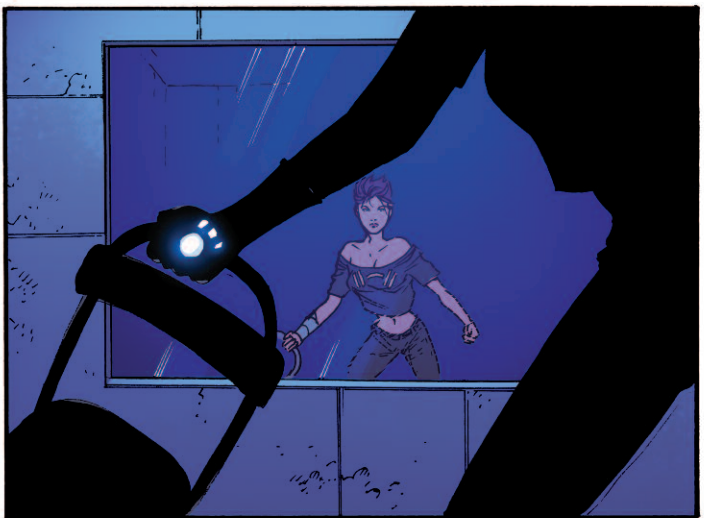
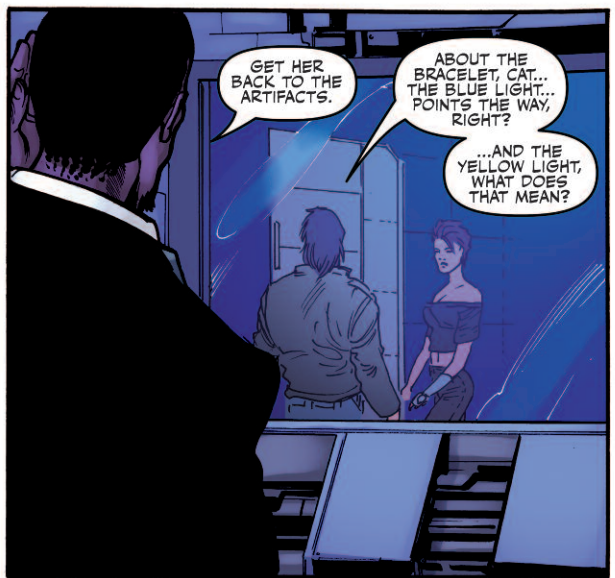
PHUT BOOM?

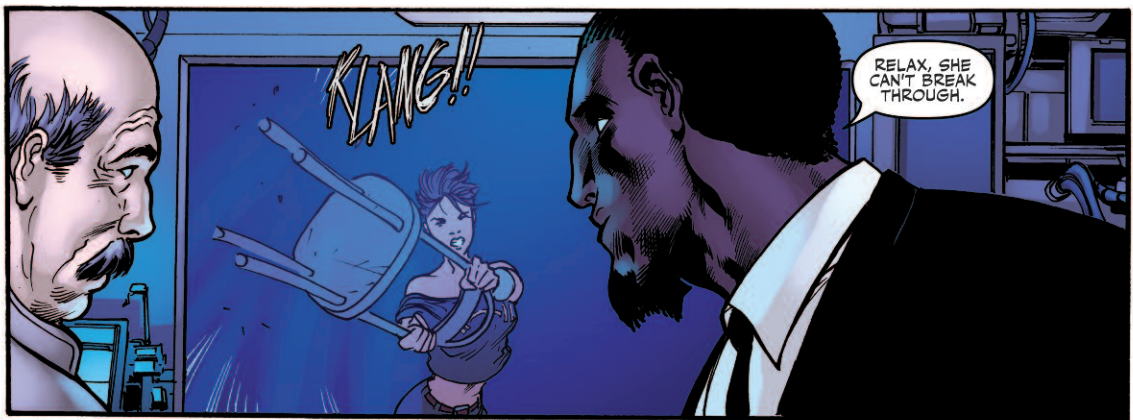
HAND CANNON, TOE MAS, NOT-FOR-MEN, HAND CANNON, NEEDING, TAKING IT, STEALING IT, GOOD FOR KILLING.

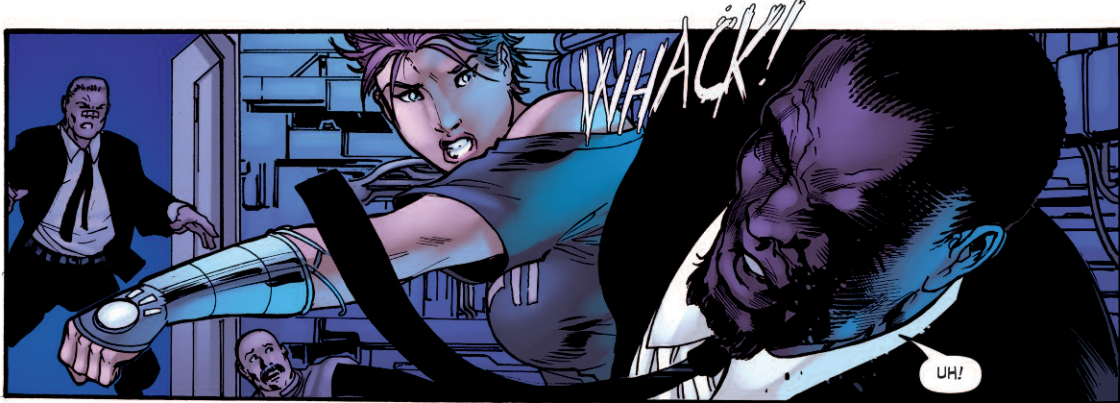
KILLING? CAT, WHO DID YOU KILL?

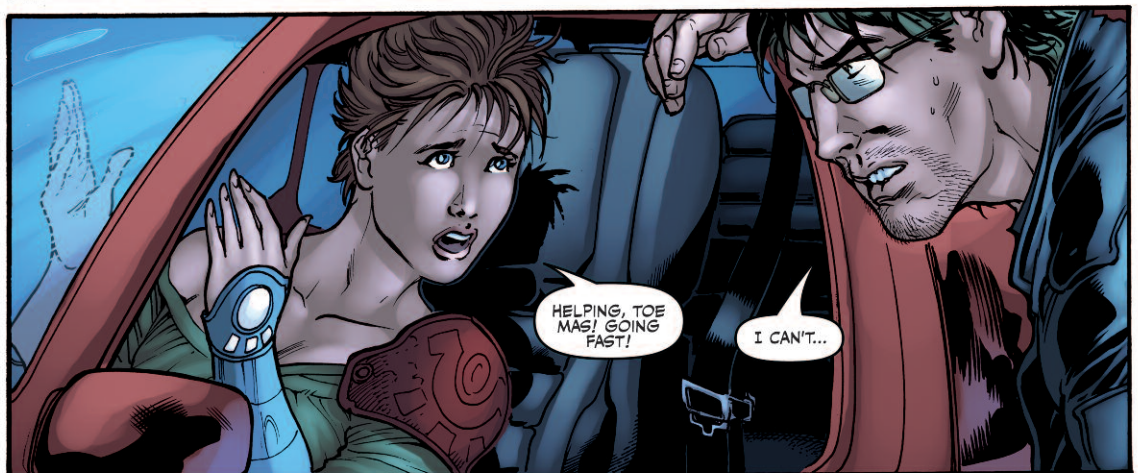
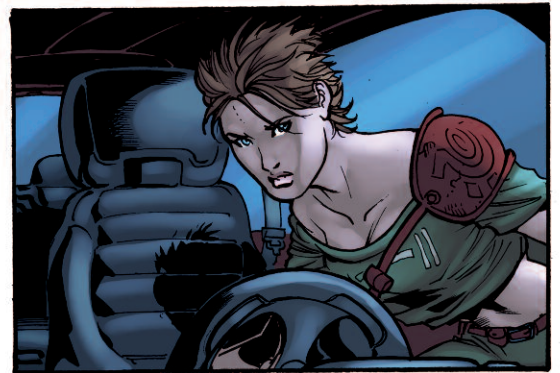


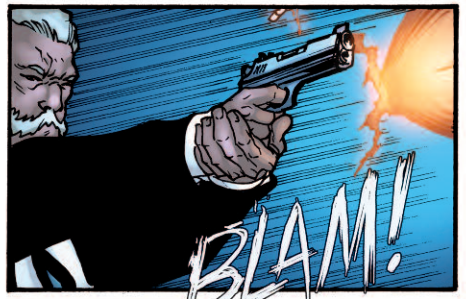
DARKLORD.

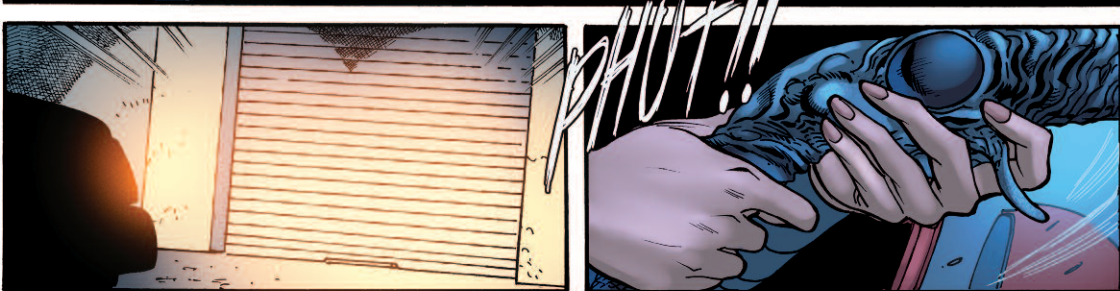
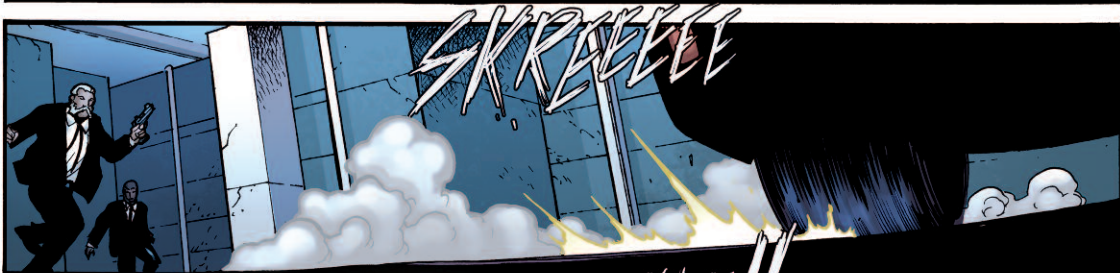
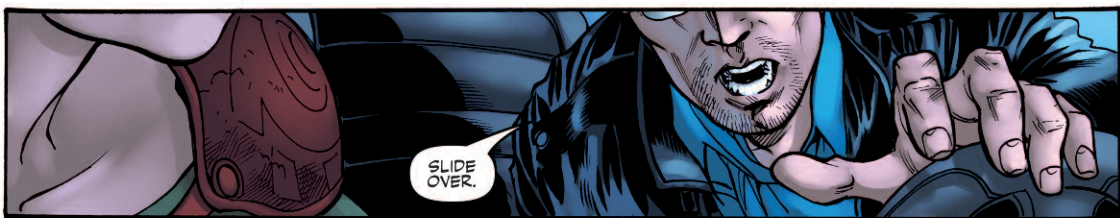


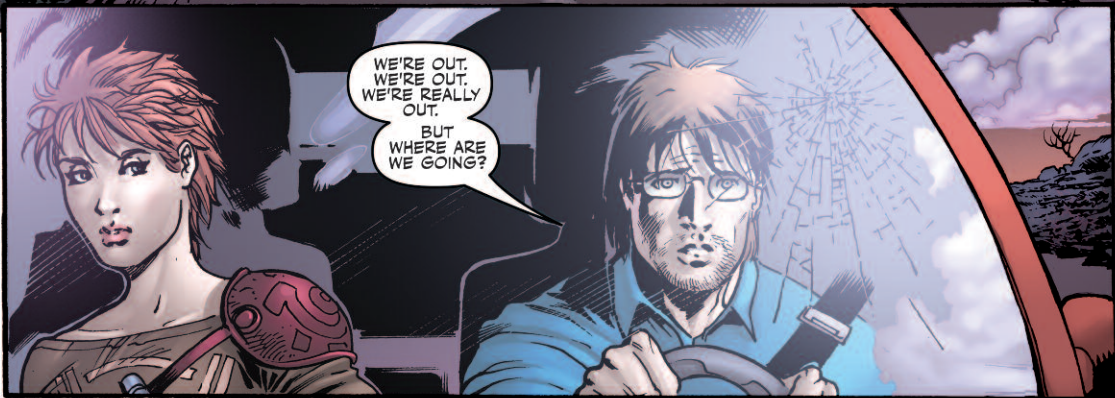


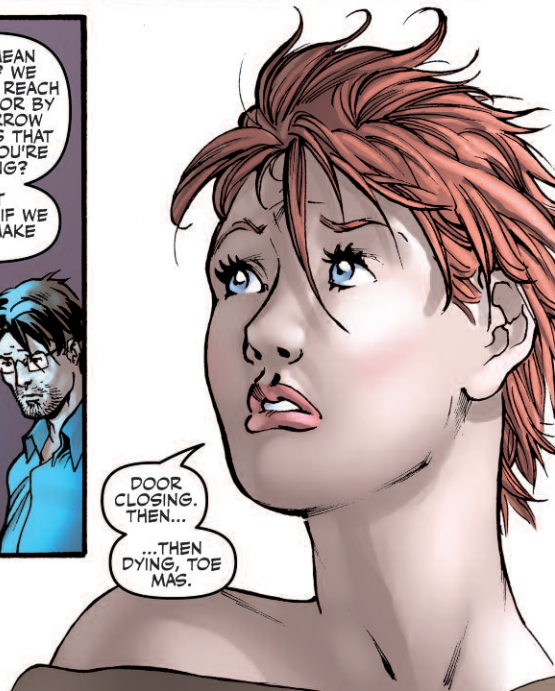
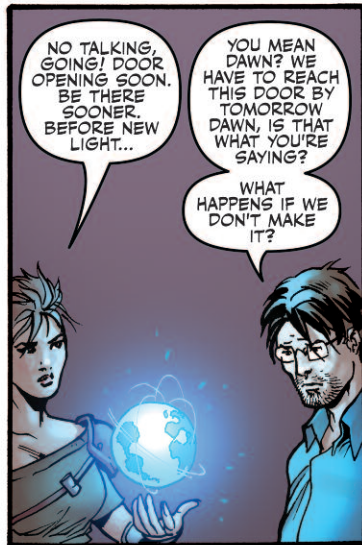
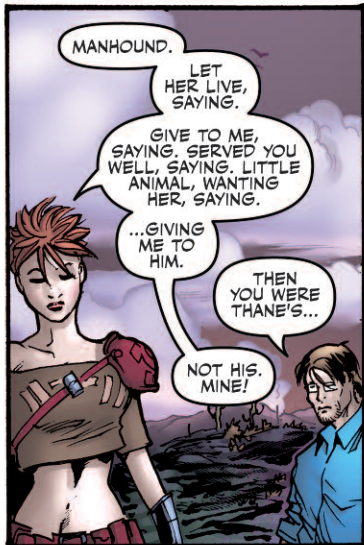
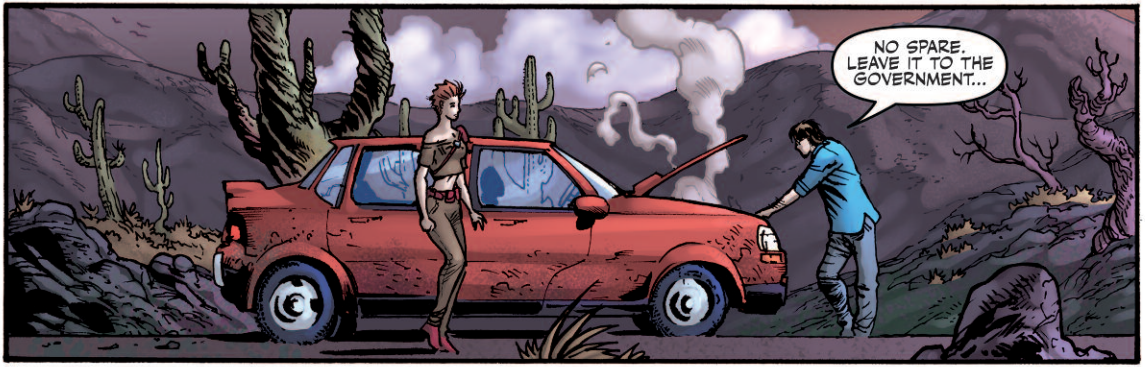


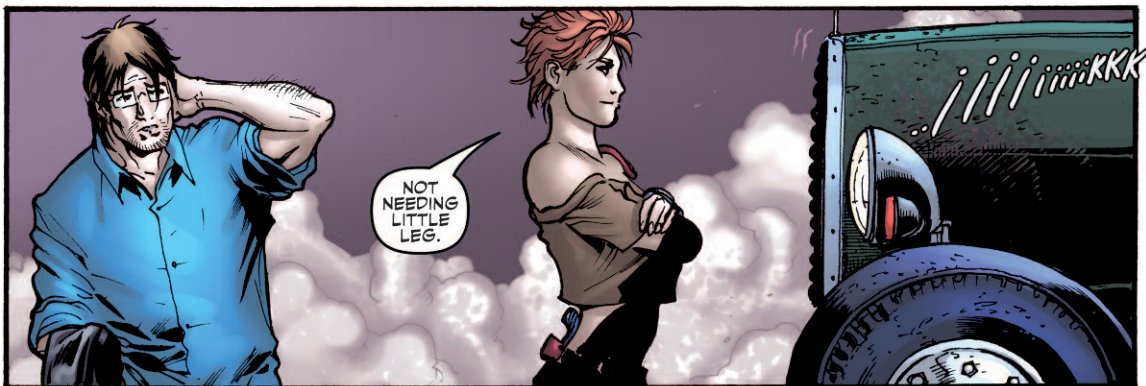
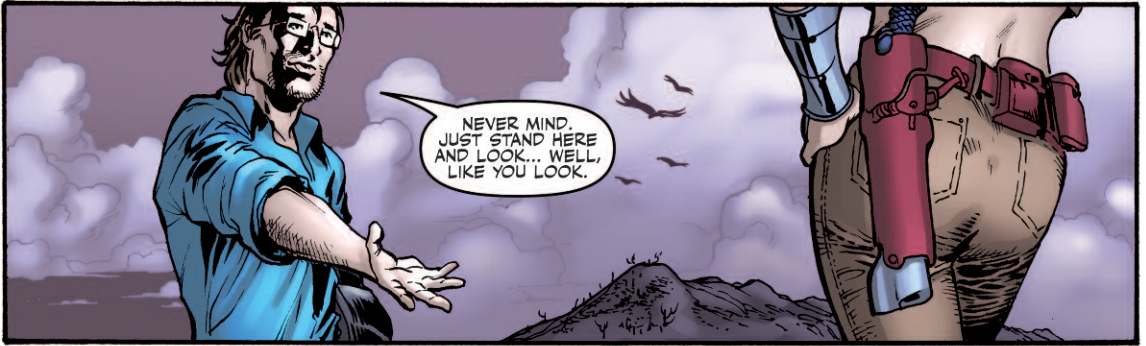
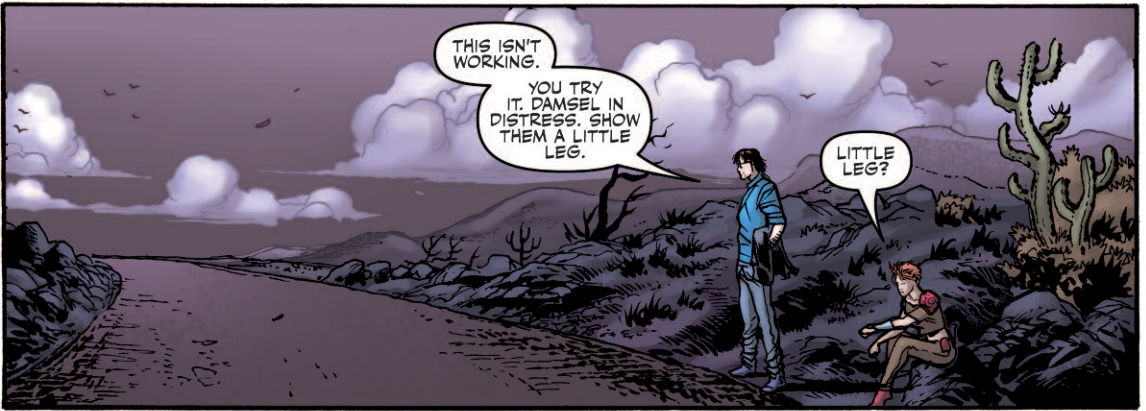


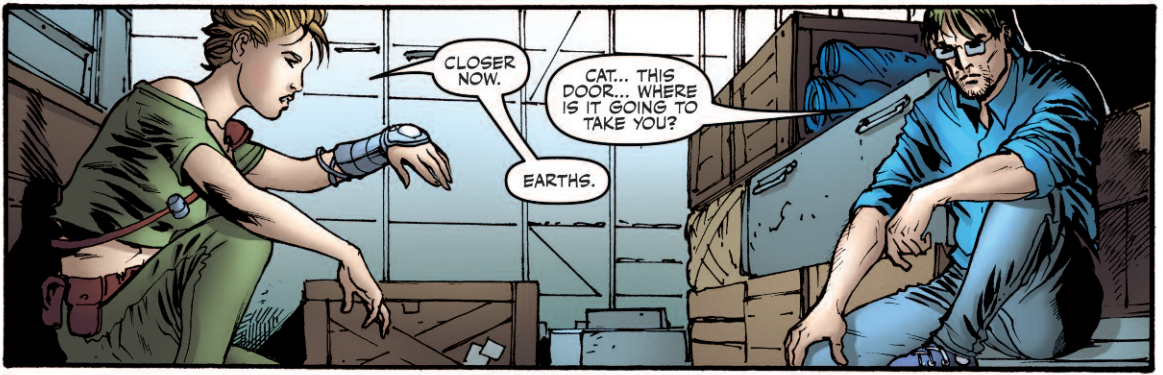








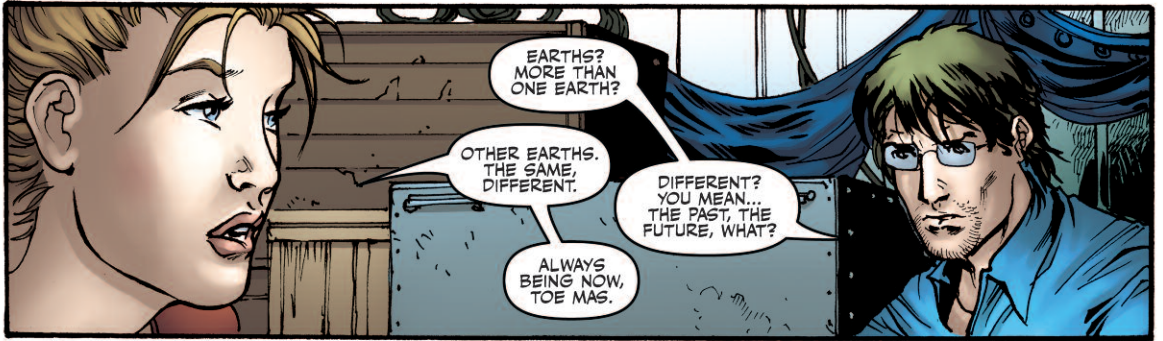




CLOSER NOW.

CAT... THIS DOOR... WHERE IS IT GOING TO TAKE YOU?

EARTHS.

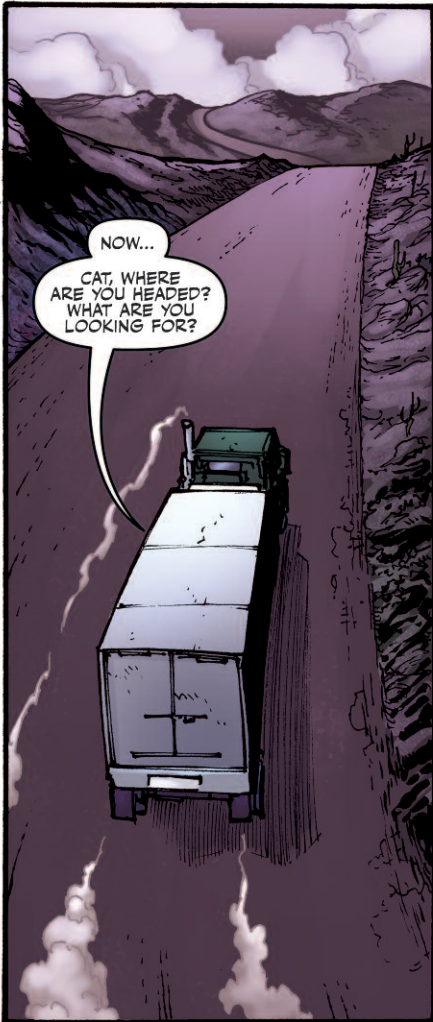


EARTHS? MORE THAN ONE EARTH?

OTHER EARTHS. THE SAME, DIFFERENT.

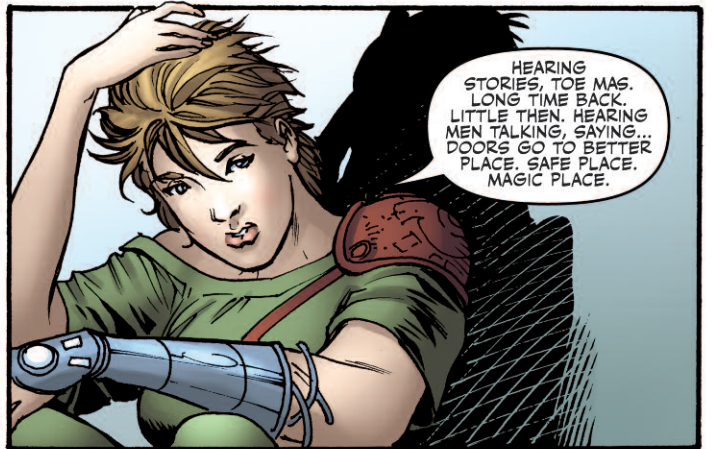
DIFFERENT? YOU MEAN... THE PAST, THE FUTURE, WHAT?

ALWAYS BEING NOW, TOE MAS.



NOW...

CAT, WHERE ARE YOU HEADED? WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?



HEARING STORIES, TOE MAS. LONG TIME BACK. LITTLE THEN, HEARING MEN TALKING, SAYING... DOORS GO TO BETTER PLACE. SAFE PLACE. MAGIC PLACE.



THOSE ARE THE HARDEST KINDS OF DOORS TO FIND, CAT.



HEY, WHERE ARE WE? WHAT TOWN IS THIS?

T OR C. TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES, NEW MEXICO.

YEAH, FIGURES. THANKS FOR THE LIFT.



GOING NOW?

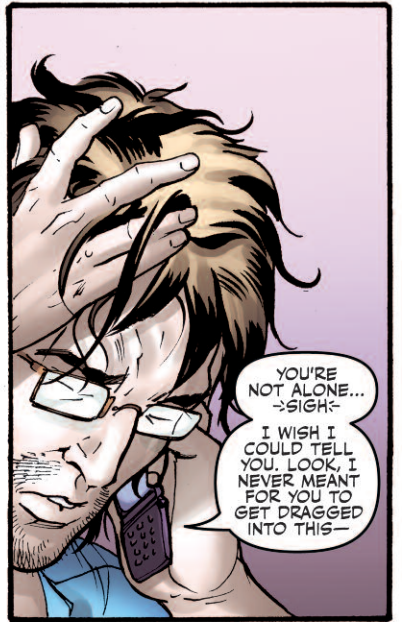
IN A MOMENT. DON'T GO ANYWHERE.



HI, IT'S ME.

THANK GOD. WHERE...

THAT BRIEF WAS SUPPOSED TO BE FILED YESTERDAY. WOULD YOU CARE TO EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED?



YOU'RE NOT ALONE...
->SIGH->

I WISH I COULD TELL YOU. LOOK, I NEVER MEANT FOR YOU TO GET DRAGGED INTO THIS—



IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT. IS YOUR CLIENT IN TROUBLE?

A LITTLE. WELL, MAYBE A LOT. I GUESS I'M IN OVER MY HEAD ON THIS ONE.

GOING NOW, TOE MAS!

TAKE IT EASY. I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.

LISTEN, GIVE ME ANOTHER TWELVE HOURS. TELL THEM I'LL TURN MYSELF IN AS SOON AS I GET CAT TO... TO A SAFE PLACE.

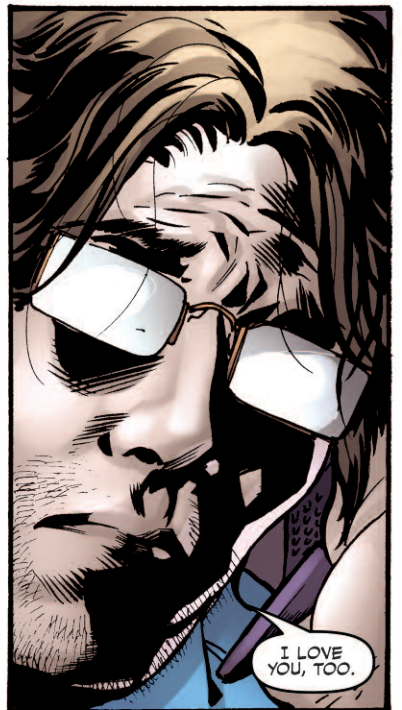


YOU'RE SCARING ME. ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE ALL RIGHT?

IT WON'T BE SO BAD. I KNOW A REALLY GOOD LAWYER.

I BETTER GET GOING. I JUST WANTED TO HEAR YOUR VOICE. YOU OKAY?

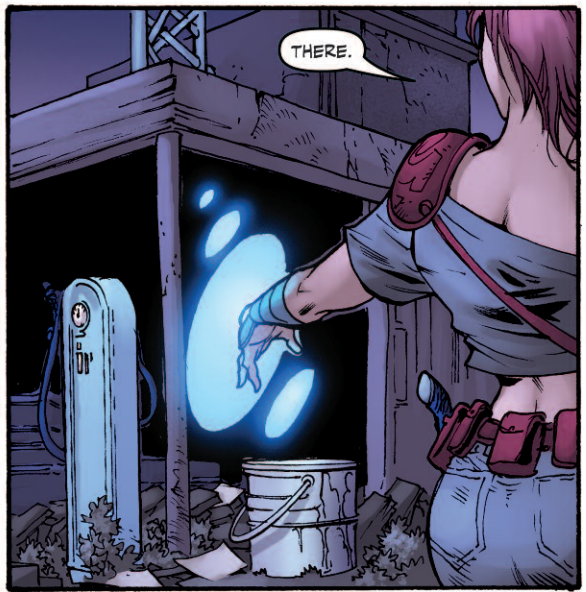
I WILL BE... ONCE YOU'RE HOME. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF. I LOVE YOU.



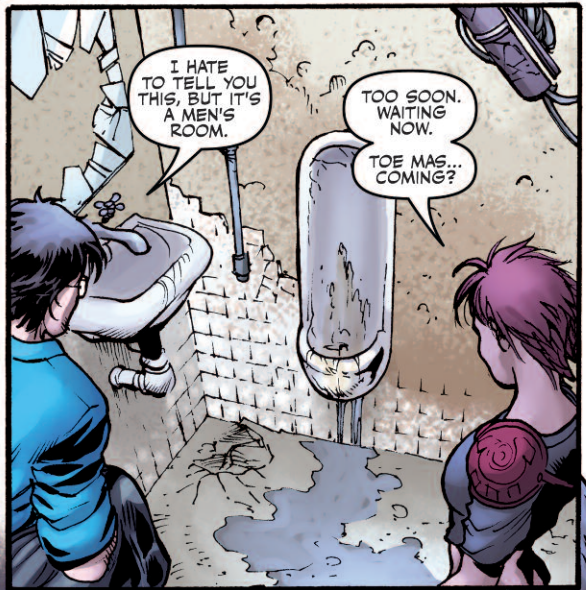
I LOVE YOU, TOO.



WE MUST BE CLOSE.



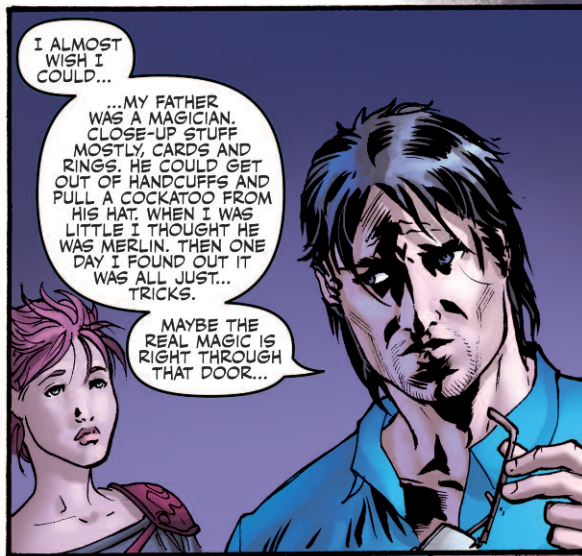
THERE.



I HATE TO TELL YOU THIS, BUT IT'S A MEN'S ROOM.

TOO SOON. WAITING NOW.

TOE MAS... COMING?



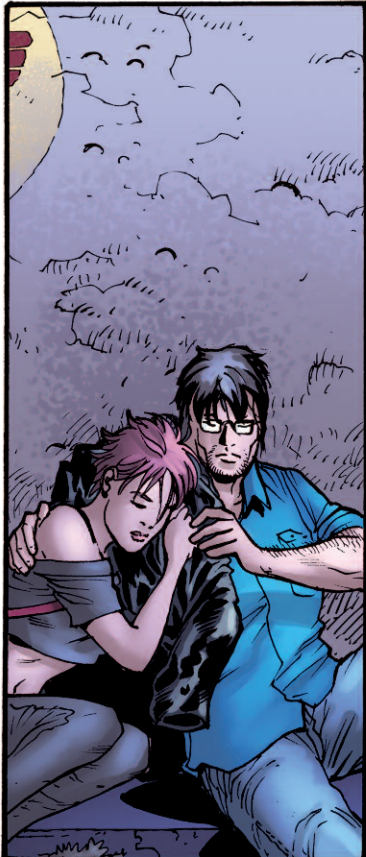
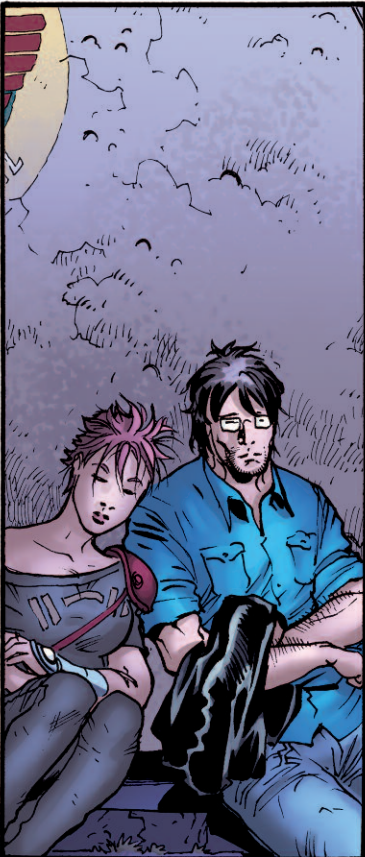
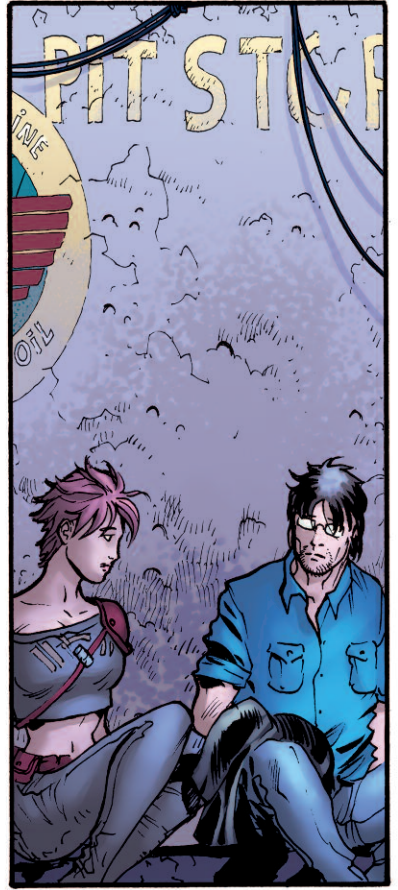
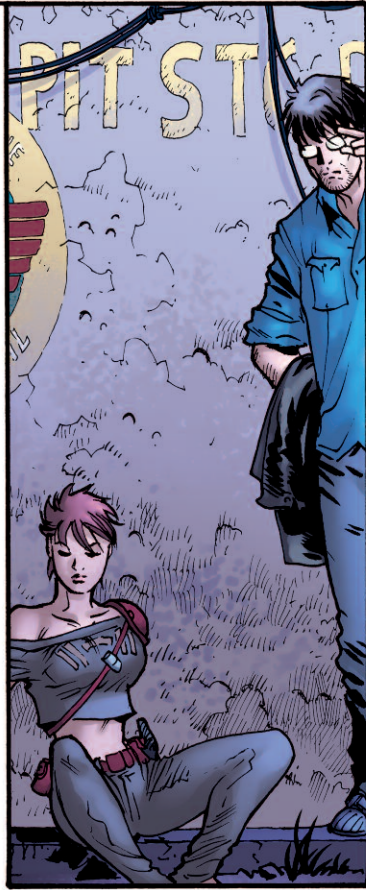
I ALMOST WISH I COULD...

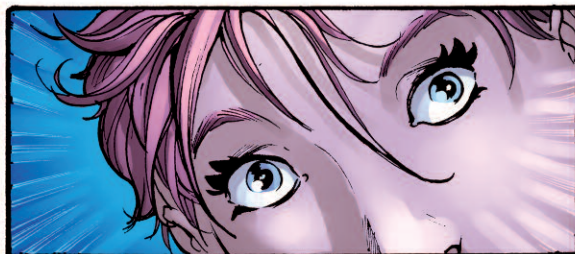
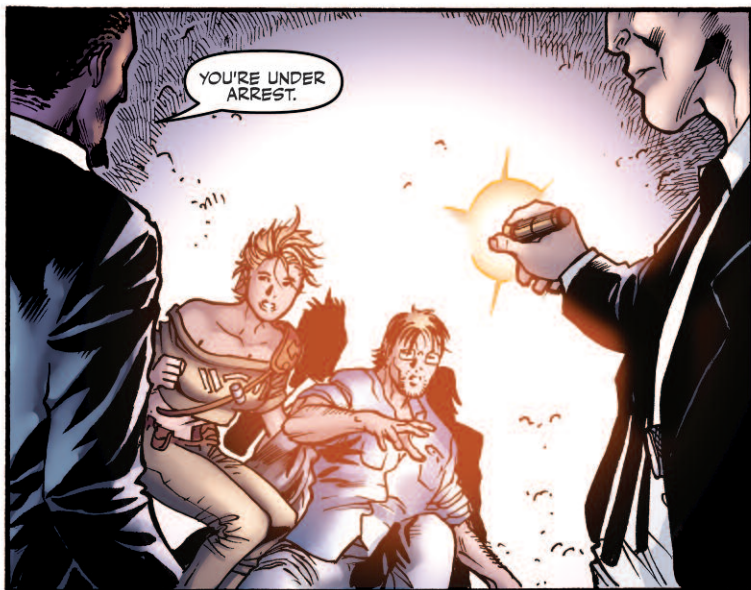
...MY FATHER WAS A MAGICIAN. CLOSE-UP STUFF MOSTLY, CARDS AND RINGS. HE COULD GET OUT OF HANDCUFFS AND PULL A COCKATOO FROM HIS HAT. WHEN I WAS LITTLE I THOUGHT HE WAS MERLIN. THEN ONE DAY I FOUND OUT IT WAS ALL JUST... TRICKS.

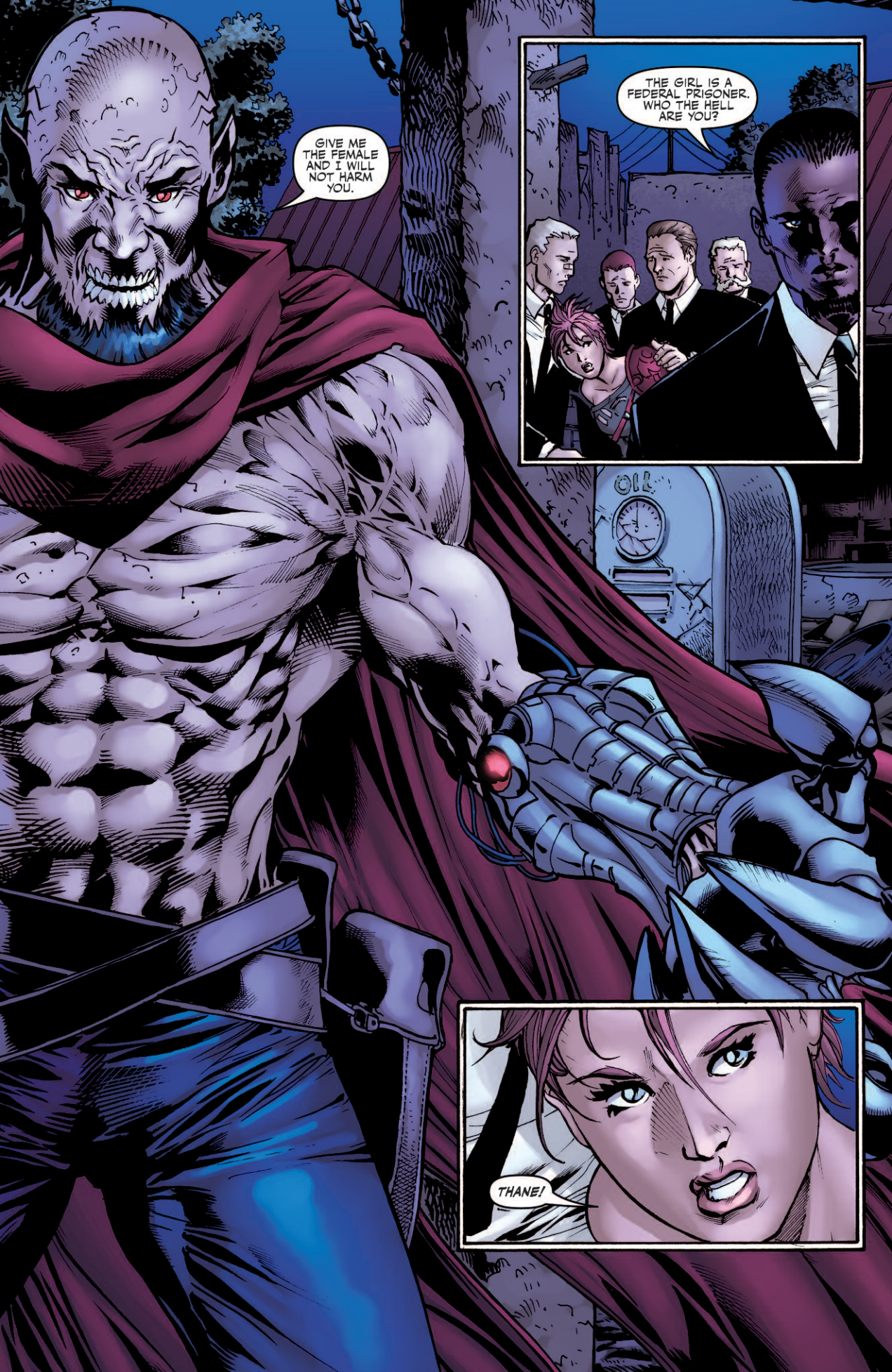
MAYBE THE REAL MAGIC IS RIGHT THROUGH THAT DOOR...



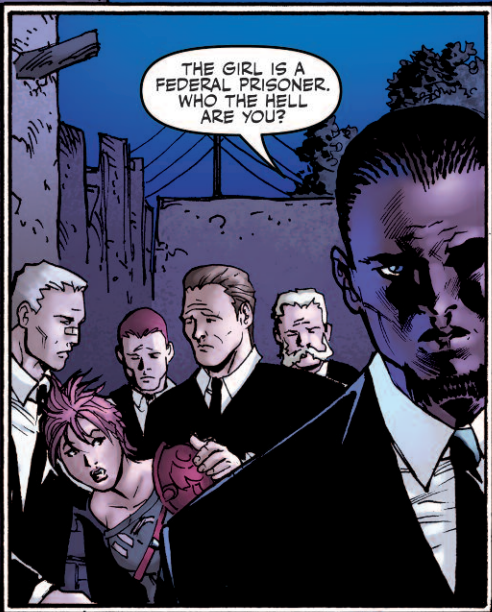
...BUT IT'S TOO LATE, CAT. I'M ALL GROWN UP NOW. I HAVE A GIRLFRIEND, A CAREER... I HAVE STUDENT LOANS TO REPAY, AND I DON'T BELIEVE IN FAIRIES ANYMORE. THIS IS AS FAR AS I GO.



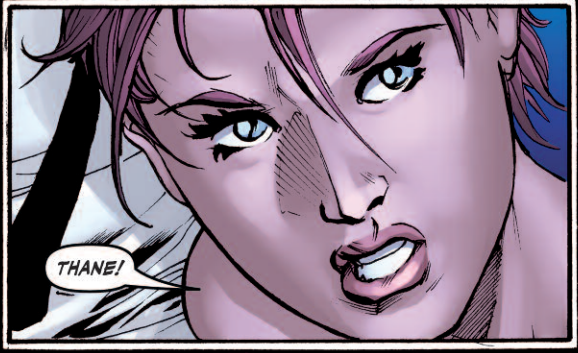




GIVE ME THE FEMALE AND I WILL NOT HARM YOU.

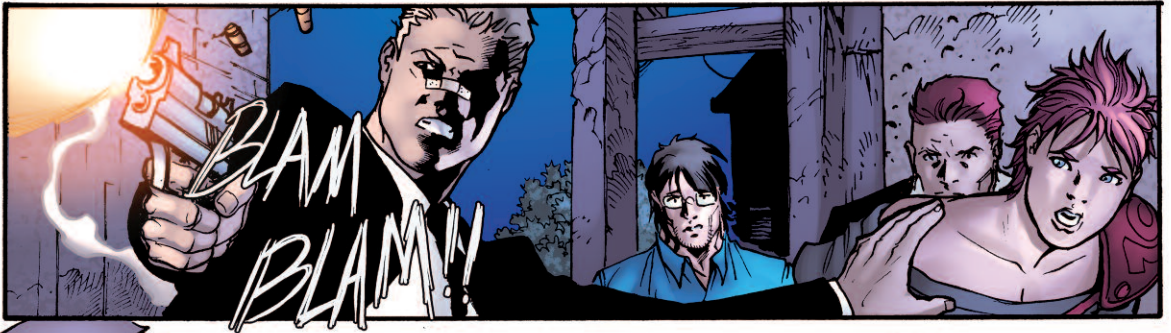
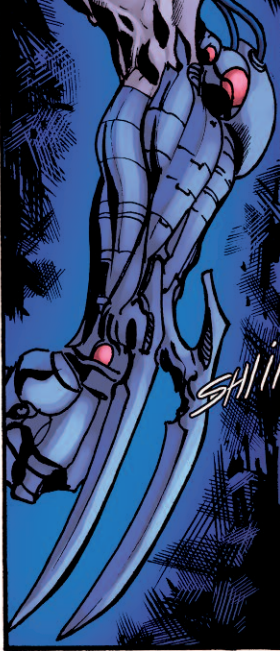


THE GIRL IS A FEDERAL PRISONER. WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?



THANE!







GET HER OUT OF HERE.



WHANN!!

YOU SHOULD HAVE GIVEN HER TO ME. DID YOU REALLY THINK FIVE MEN COULD STOP ME?

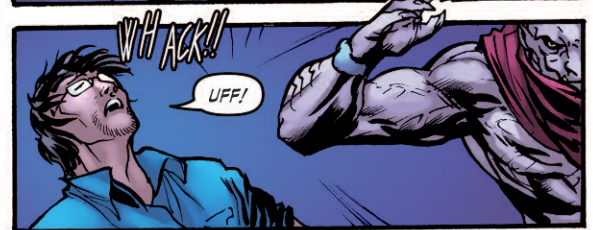


SCRUNCH!!



HOLD STILL. WE'VE GOT TO..

WHACK!



UFF!



DO YOU REMEMBER ME, LITTLE ANIMAL? THE ONE WHO GAVE YOU MERCY AND WAS REPAID IN SHAME?



LET GO OF HER, YOU SON OF A—

TUMPH



IS THIS YOUR NEW MATE, LITTLE ANIMAL? THIS SHADOW OF A MAN?



WHACK!

HE IS EVEN LESS A WARRIOR THAN THESE OTHERS. LOOK AT HIM.

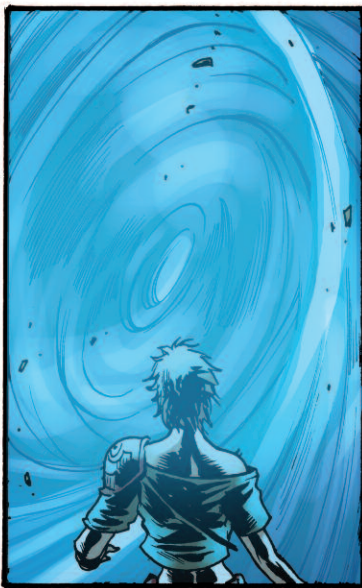


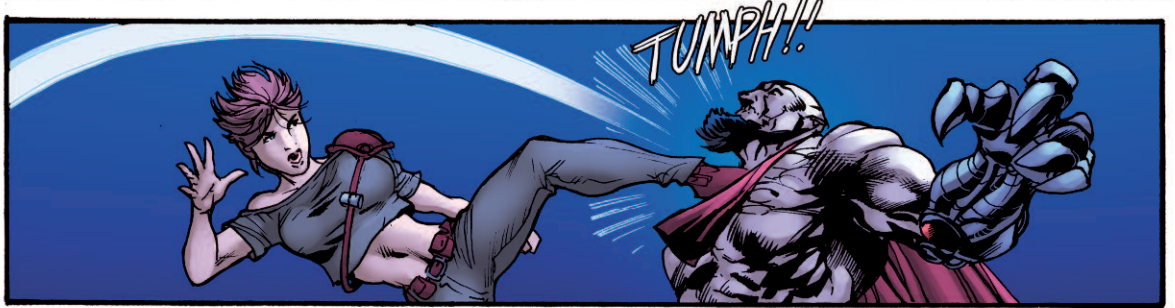
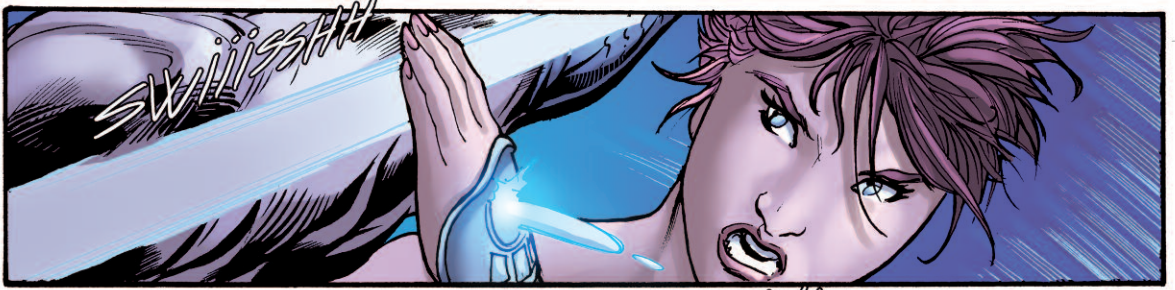
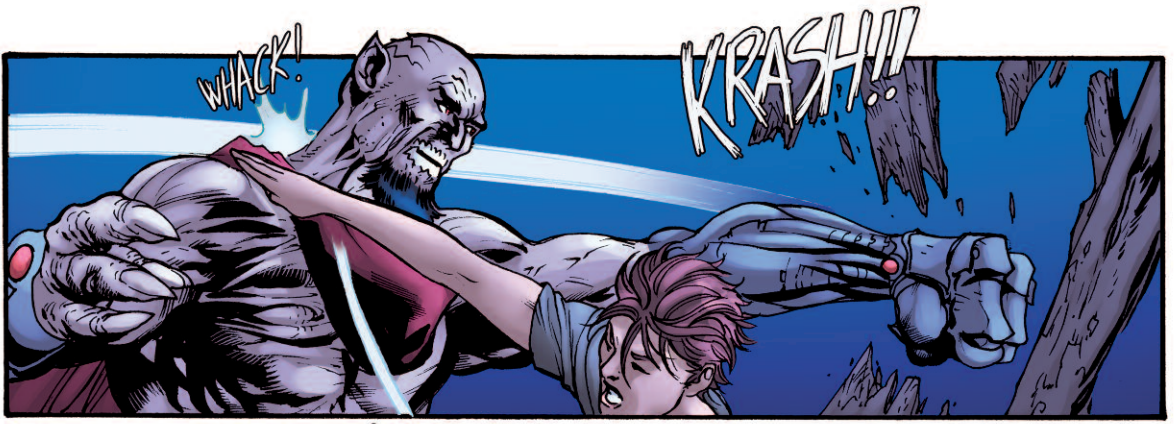
UNH!
CAT... GO...

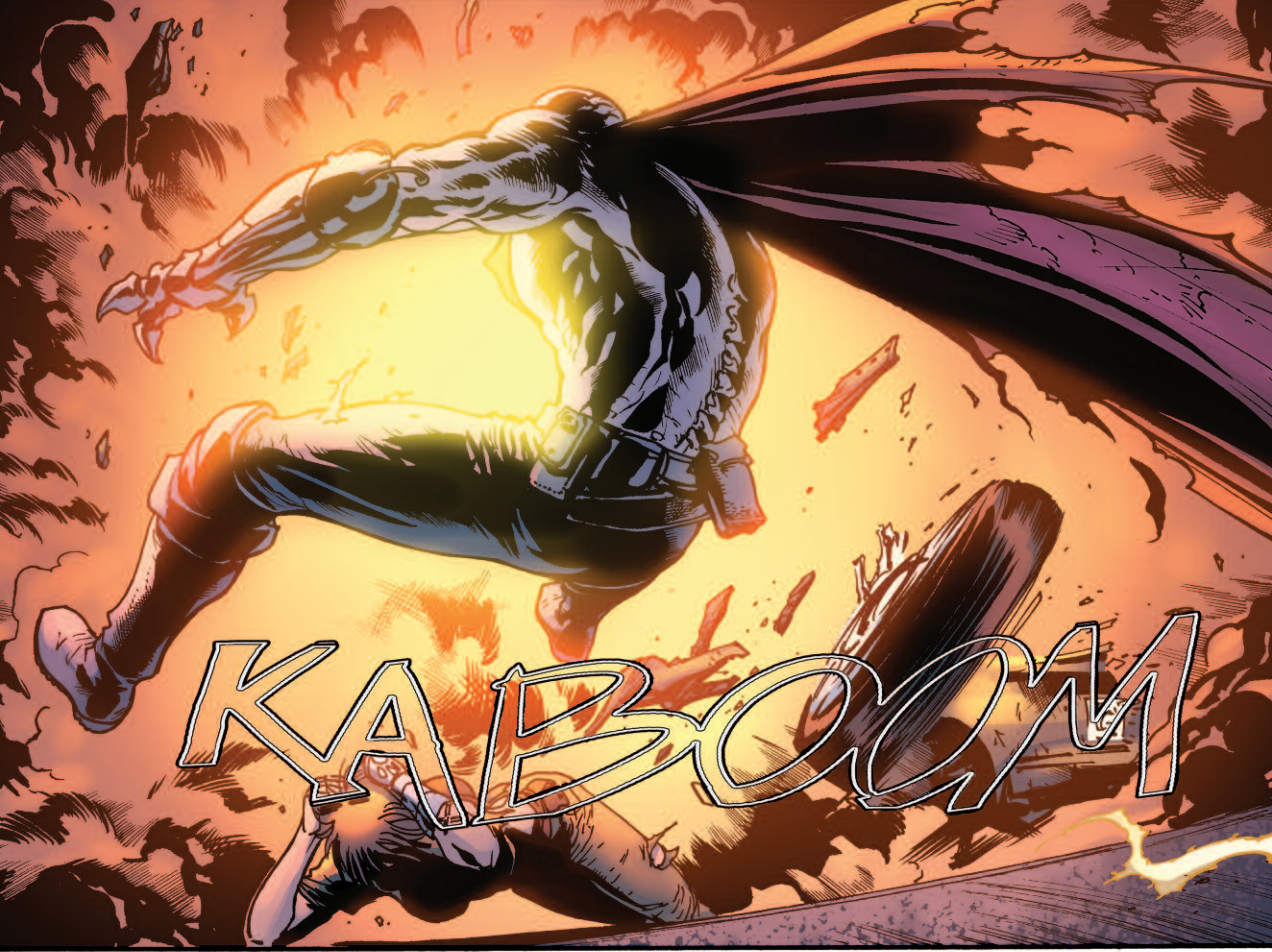
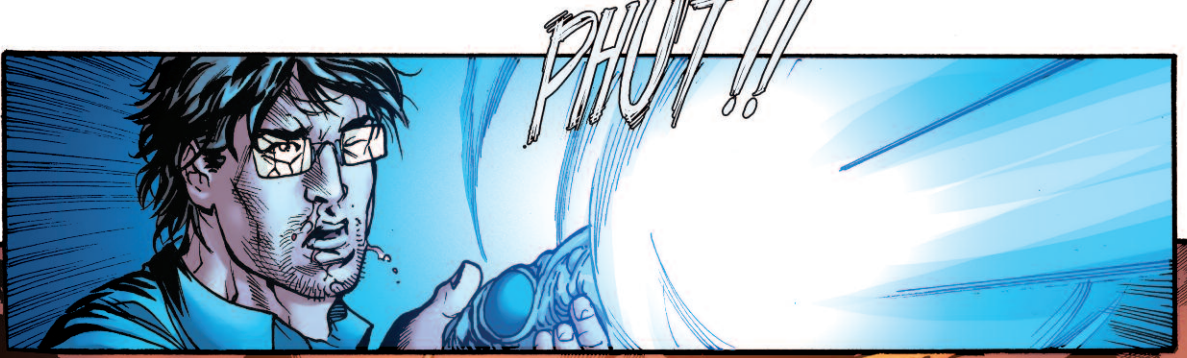


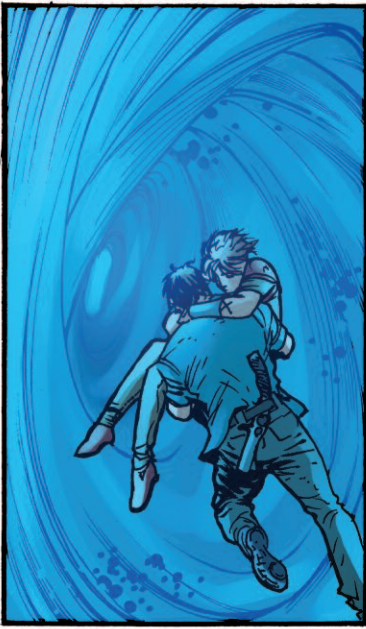
CAT. YES. I GAVE HER THAT NAME, SHADOW MAN. DID SHE TELL YOU THAT?

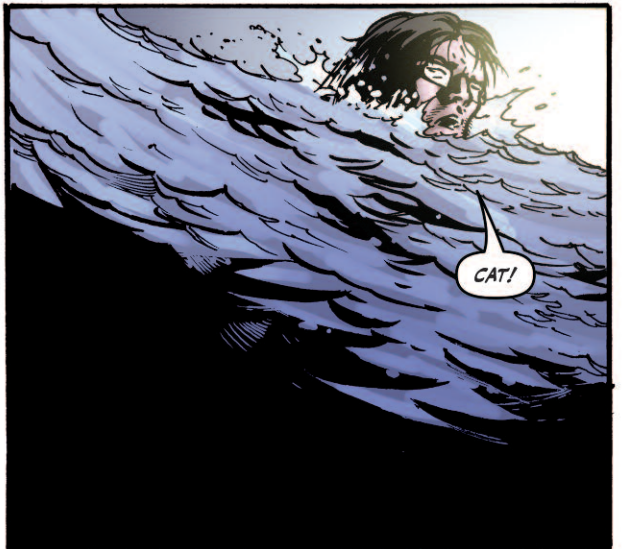
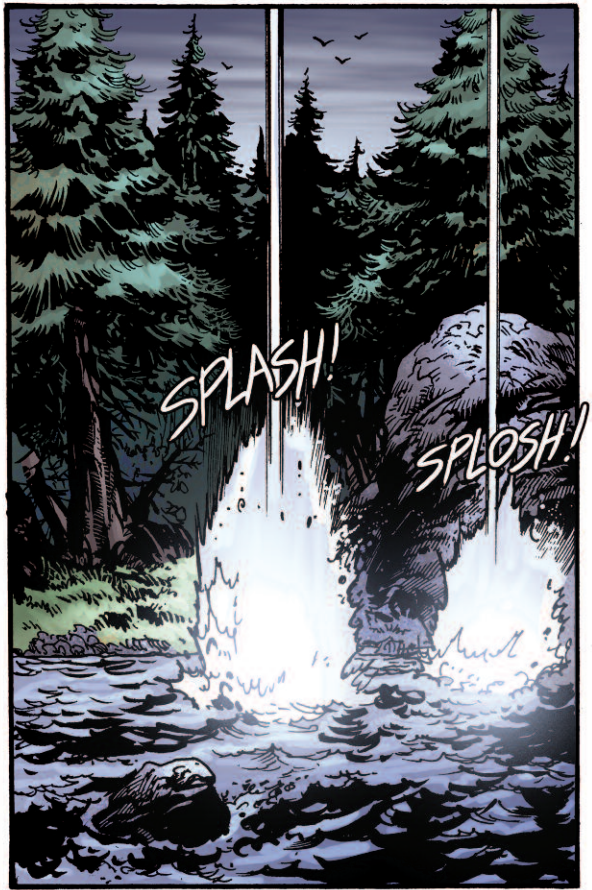
TUMPH!

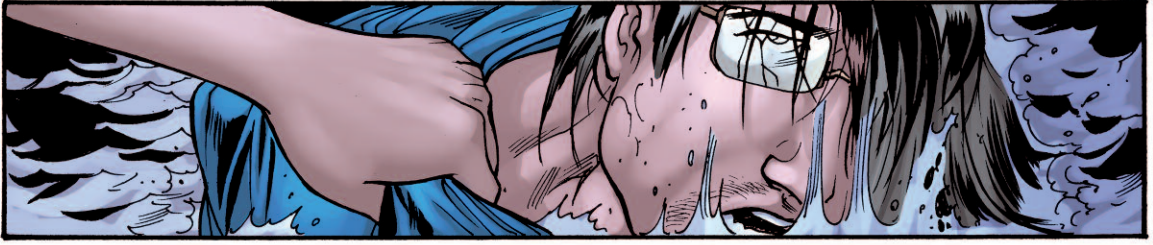
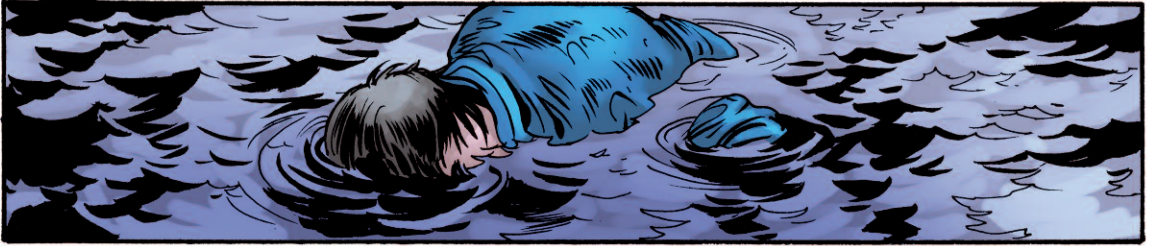
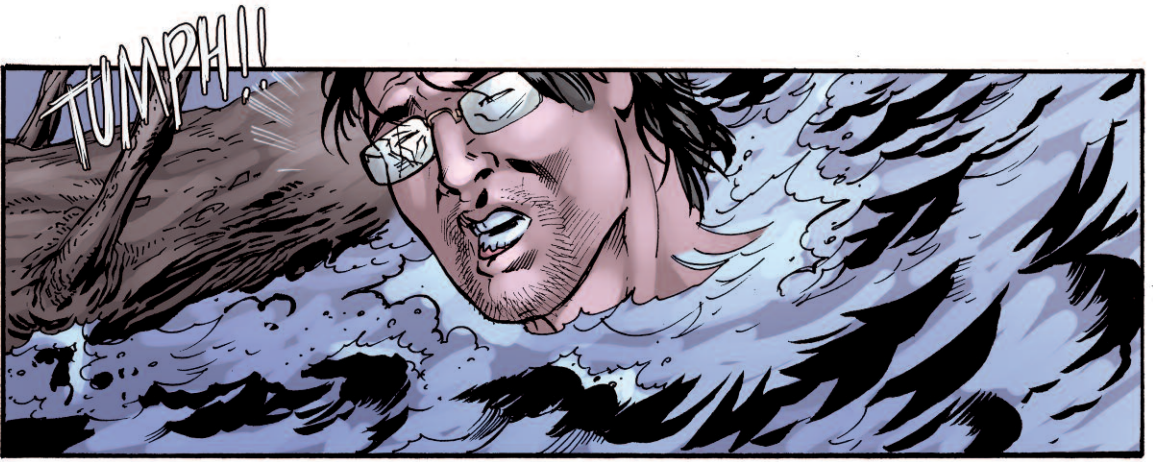












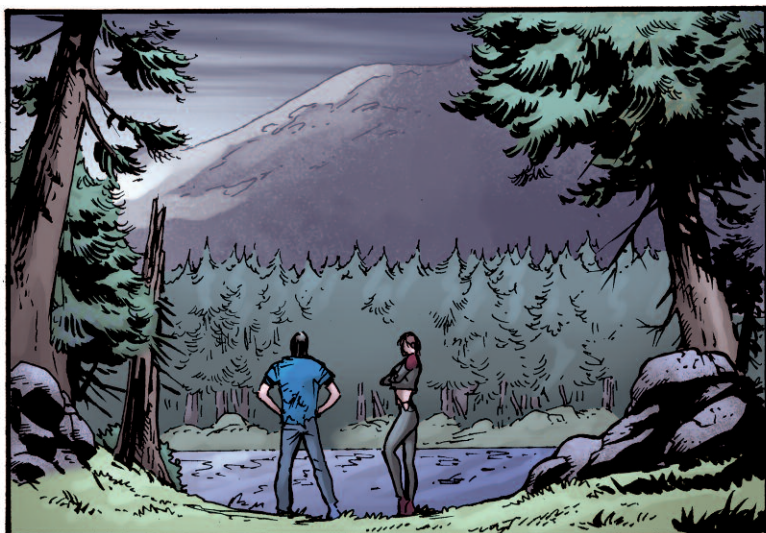


Laura...

Cat.



Cat...
Where...



Where...
Where...
Thane... the feds,
the gas station,
the desert... it's
all gone.

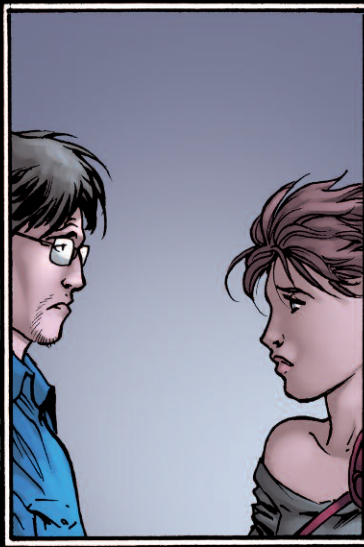
Behind.
Safe now.

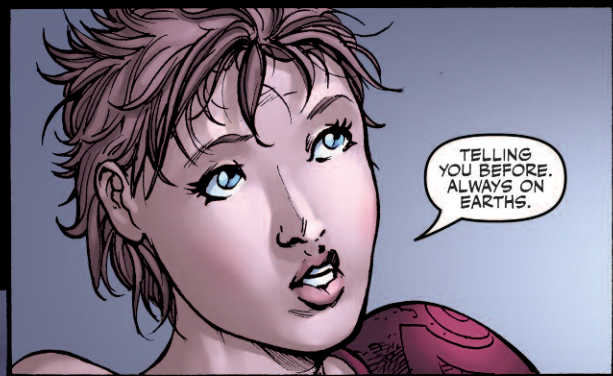
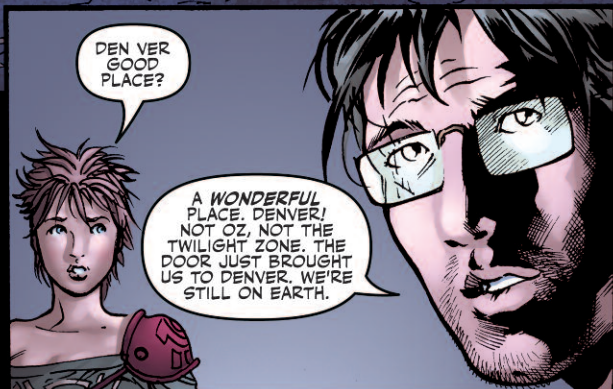
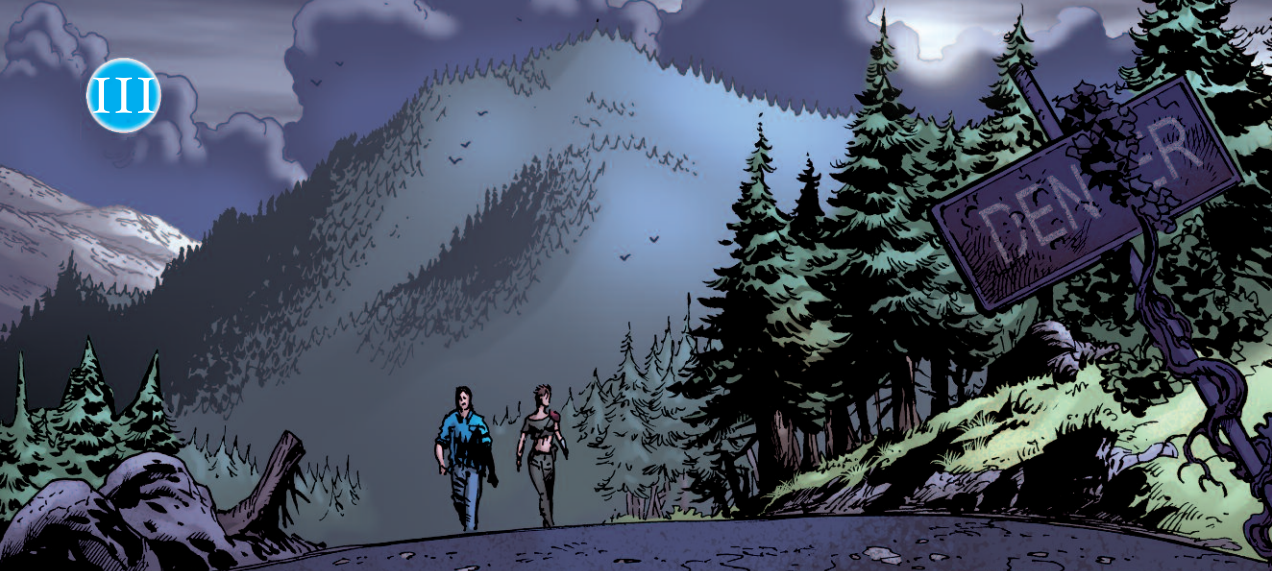


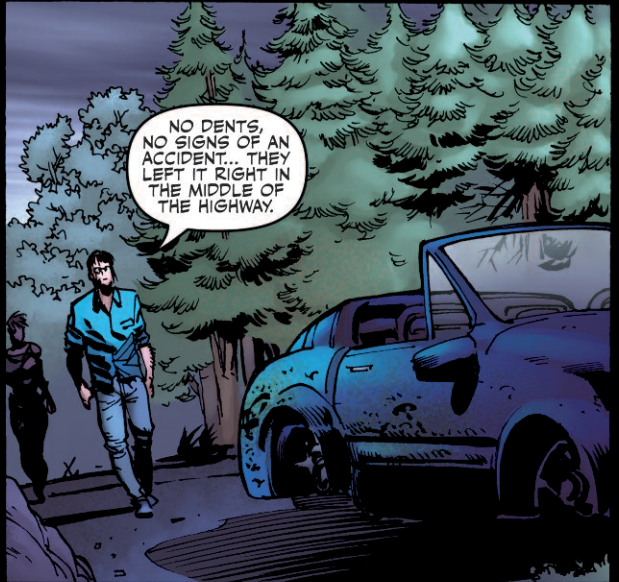
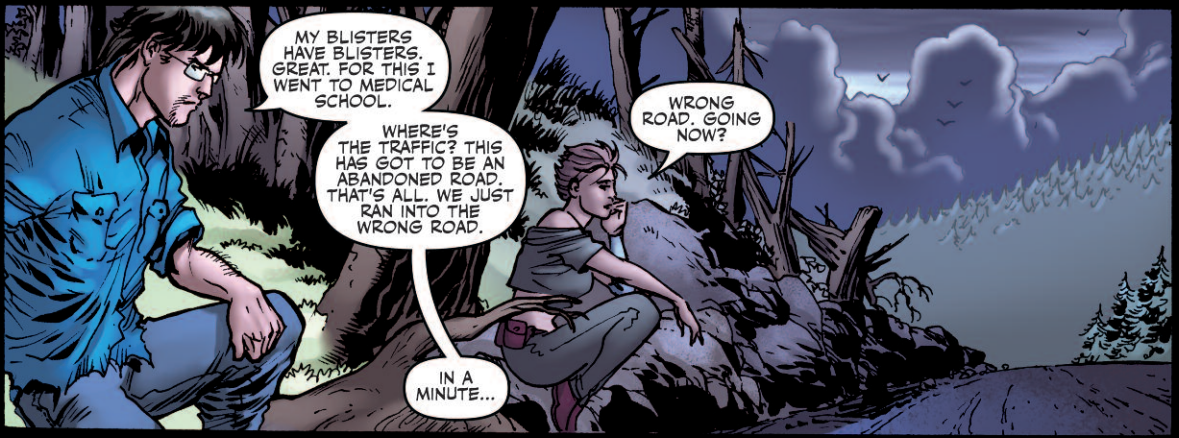
Oh God...
I carried you
through...
my head...

Hurt. Same
like Cat.



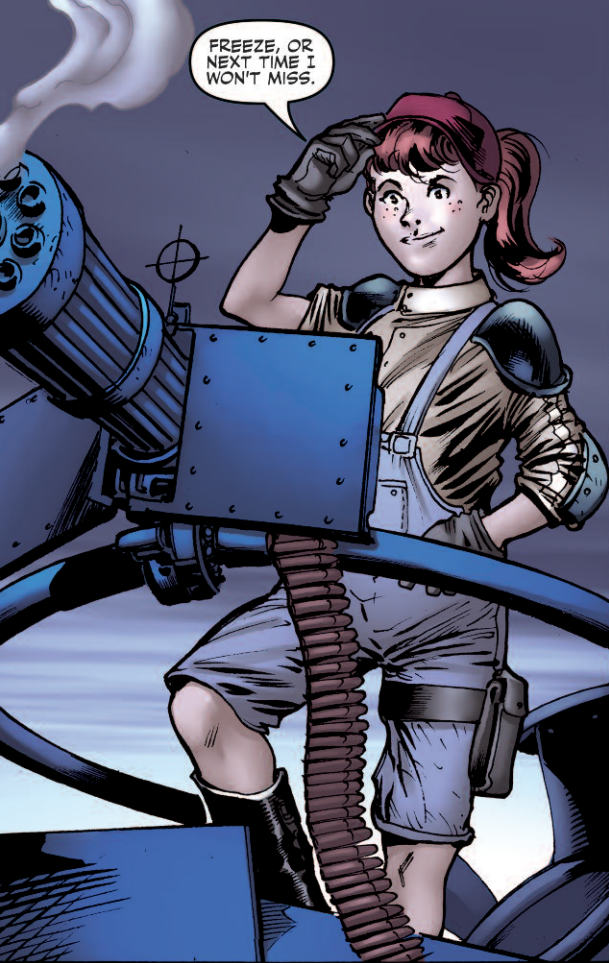






CLOP CLOP CLO-CLOP CLOP CLO-CLOP CLO-CLOP CLO-CLOP





FREEZE, OR NEXT TIME I WON'T MISS.



DON'T SHOOT—



I TOLD YOU, STAY WHERE YOU ARE.

DAMN IT, CISSY, CUT THAT OUT, YOU'RE SCARING THE HORSES.

RATATA-TATATAT



WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOU?

WE NEED A RIDE.

...OUR CAR BROKE DOWN.

ABOUT FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, I'D SAY. WHO'S THIS "WE"?

CAT, STAND UP. SLOWLY.



SHOOTING NOW, TOE MAS?



NO! DON'T! EVERYBODY JUST... TAKE IT EASY...



WE JUST NEED A LIFT. TO DENVER. IF YOU'RE GOING THAT WAY. OR ANY WAY. WHEREVER.

YOU KNOW, IT MUST BE TEN, TWELVE YEARS SINCE THE LAST TIME I PICKED UP A HITCHHIKER.

RIGHT. AH...

WHAT YEAR IS IT NOW?



WELL, IT WAS 2011. WHEN I LEFT CALIFORNIA.

THAT'S GOOD. EXCELLENT. GREAT YEAR, 2011. I LOVE IT.

I'M JAKE EDWARDS. THAT'S MY GRANDDAUGHTER CECILIA UP ON THE SEWING MACHINE. WE CALL HER CISSY.

TOM MASON. THAT'S CAT.



YOU COMING OR AIN'T YOU?

GRANDFATHER! YOU CAN'T!

THEY'RE ALL RIGHT, CISSY. I'M NEVER WRONG ABOUT PEOPLE.



BIG NOT-DOGS...

HORSES, CAT. THEY'RE CALLED HORSES.

HOW SOON TILL WE HIT THE MAIN ROAD?

THIS IS THE MAIN ROAD.



WHEN DO WE GET TO DENVER?

I WANT TO GET BACK TO L.A. AS SOON AS I CAN.

TWO DAYS, MAYBE THREE. THERE'S A TRUCK STOP SIX, SEVEN HOURS UP ROAD WHERE WE PLAN TO SPEND THE NIGHT. YOU IN A HURRY?

I WAS THE SAME WAY WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE. DROVE THE LONG HAIL. EVEN THEN, LIVED FOR SPEED. ALL I NEEDED WAS MY RIG AND AN OPEN ROAD. A MAN COULD FLY IN THE OLD DAYS.

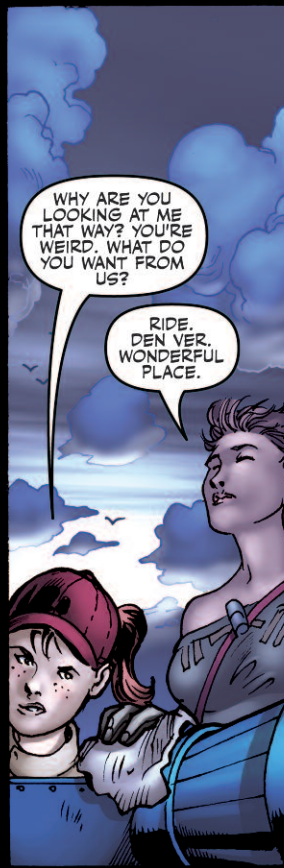
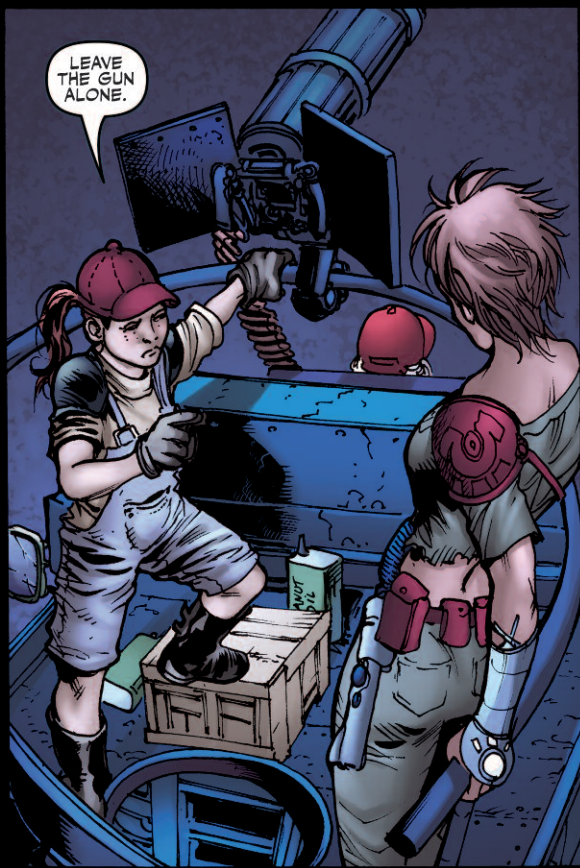


BUT I GUESS YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN IT HAPPENED?

WHEN WHAT HAPPENED?

YOU KIDDING ME?

WHEN THE WORLD RAN OUT OF GAS...





WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON BACK HERE?

SHE WAS SPILLING THE OIL.



WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT PEANUT OIL?

STUFF CAN TAKE TEMPERATURES CLEAR UP TO FIFTEEN HUNDRED DEGREES WITHOUT BREAKING DOWN. CAN YOU THINK OF A BETTER LUBRICANT?

WELL... MAYBE... PETROLEUM?



THEY'RE BOTH CRAZY!

DAMN IT, CISSY, DON'T GET RUDE. SO SHE SPILLED A LITTLE PEANUT OIL. WE GOT ANOTHER FOUR THOUSAND CANS JUST LIKE IT.

GRANDFATHER! ARE YOU GOING TO TELL THEM WHERE THE GUNS ARE HIDDEN, TOO? WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?



LET ME TALK TO HER.



WHAT DO YOU WANT?



CAT DIDN'T MEAN ANY HARM, CISSY. SHE WAS JUST CURIOUS.

YOU KNOW HOW MUCH THAT STUFF COSTS? THAT WAS OUR MONEY SHE WAS POURING AWAY. MAYBE JAKE DOESN'T CARE, BUT I DO...



I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL. MY FATHER... WELL, HE WAS A MAGICIAN, BUT MOM USED TO SAY HIS BEST TRICK WAS MAKING MONEY DISAPPEAR.

A MAGICIAN... REALLY...?



WOULD I LIE?



HOW WOULD I KNOW? I DON'T KNOW YOU. I DON'T WANT TO KNOW YOU.

WHY DON'T YOU JUST LEAVE ME ALONE?





...TRUTH IS, I NEVER REALLY LIKED TO FLY. THEM DAMN AIRLINES TREATED YOU LIKE CATTLE... AND THOSE ITTY-BITTY SEATS... GIVE ME THE ROAD ANY TIME. SEE THE COUNTRY, MEET THE PEOPLE...

HOW'D IT GO?

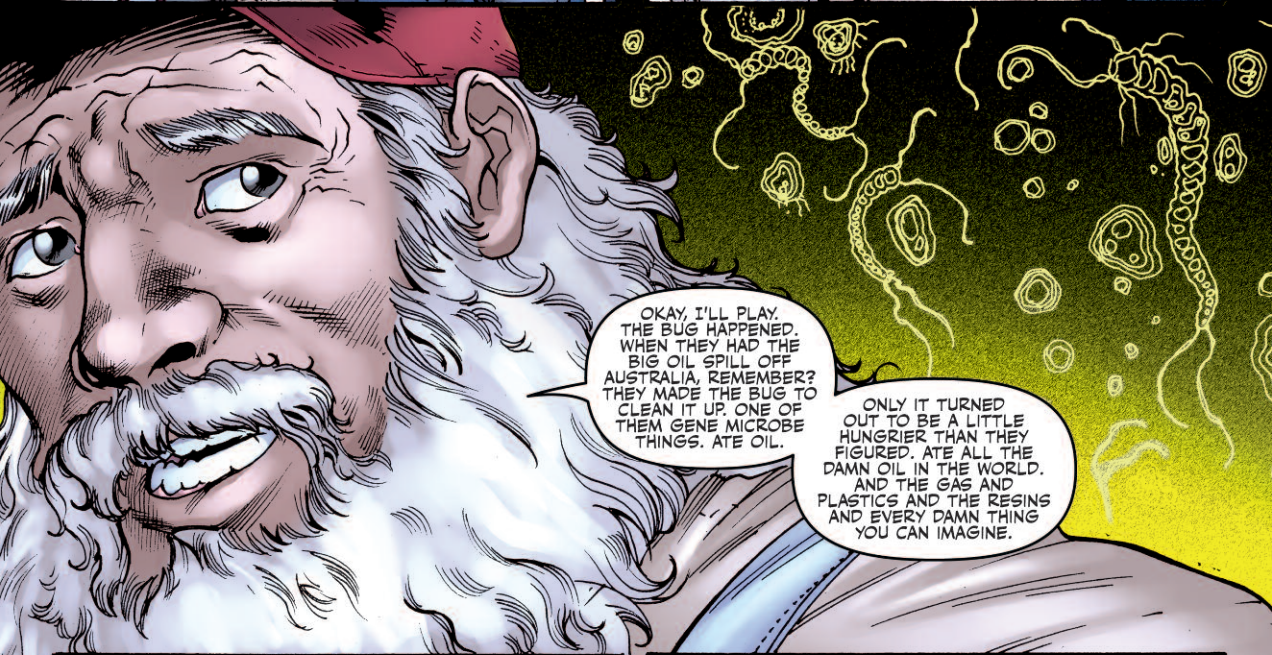
NOT GREAT.



WELL, CISSY'S GOT A SUSPICIOUS NATURE. THE KIND OF FATHER SHE HAD, I DON'T BLAME HER.

JAKE... YOU'RE GOING TO THINK I'M CRAZY, BUT... I'VE GOT TO ASK... THE HORSES, THE PEANUT OIL... YOU SAID THE WORLD RAN OUT OF GAS...

HOW? WHEN? WHAT HAPPENED?



OKAY, I'LL PLAY. THE BUG HAPPENED. WHEN THEY HAD THE BIG OIL SPILL OFF AUSTRALIA, REMEMBER? THEY MADE THE BUG TO CLEAN IT UP. ONE OF THEM GENE MICROBE THINGS. ATE OIL.

ONLY IT TURNED OUT TO BE A LITTLE HUNGRIER THAN THEY FIGURED. ATE ALL THE DAMN OIL IN THE WORLD. AND THE GAS AND PLASTICS AND THE RESINS AND EVERY DAMN THING YOU CAN IMAGINE.



THAT MUST HAVE BEEN...



...DAMNED INCONVENIENT? YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN.

SNAP



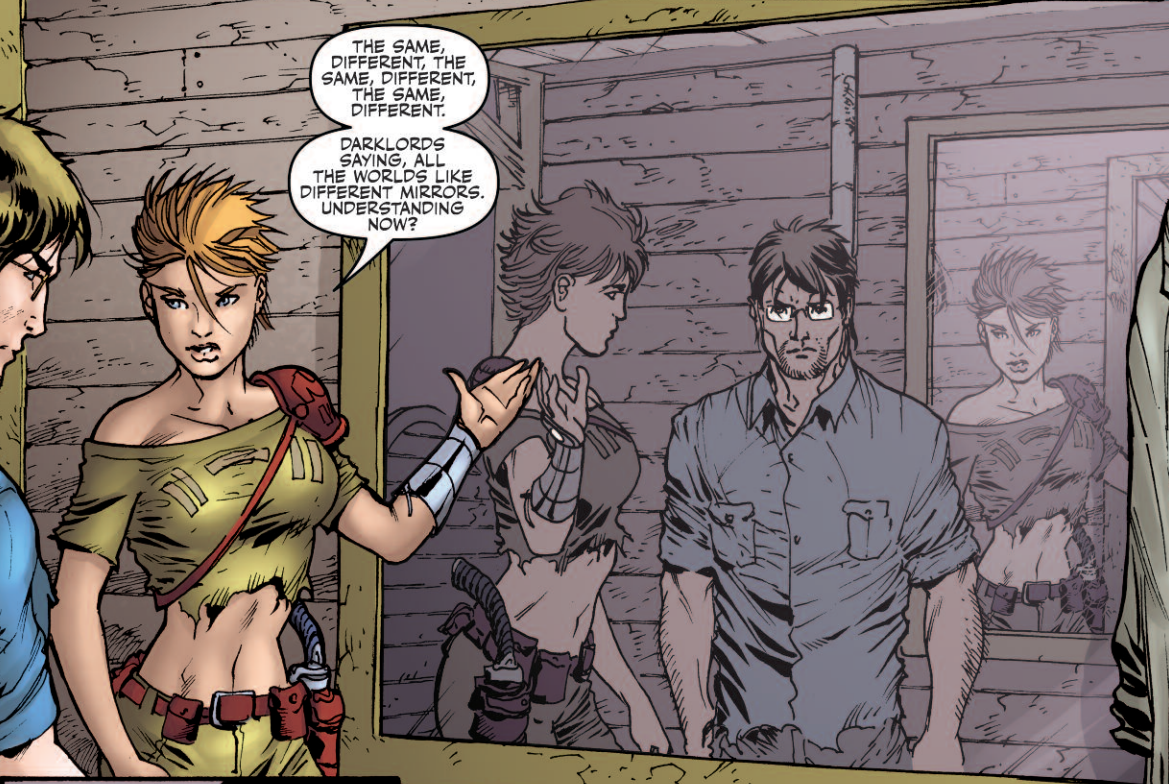




THAT'S TRAGER, I DON'T CARE WHAT HE SAYS, WHAT'S HE DOING HERE? WHY IS HE LYING?

CAT, I SAW HIM DIE. IT'S THE SAME MAN.

THE SAME, DIFFERENT. NO WORDS FOR SAYING, TOE MAS.

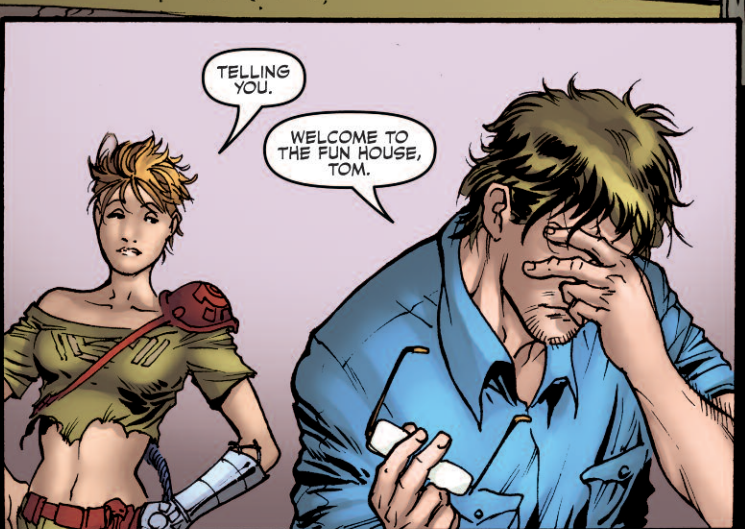


THE SAME, DIFFERENT, THE SAME, DIFFERENT, THE SAME, DIFFERENT.

DARKLORDS SAYING, ALL THE WORLDS LIKE DIFFERENT MIRRORS. UNDERSTANDING NOW?

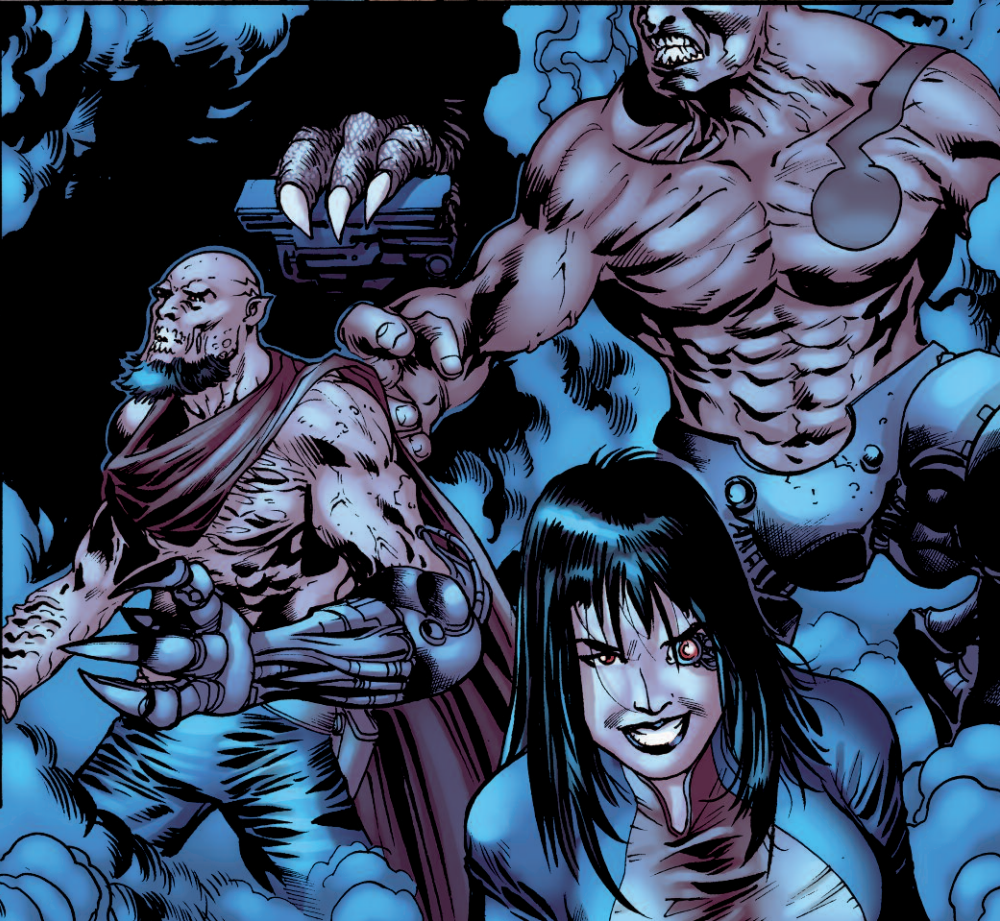
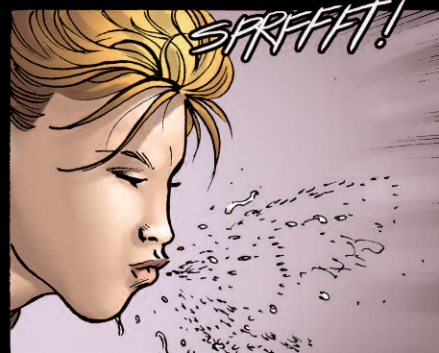
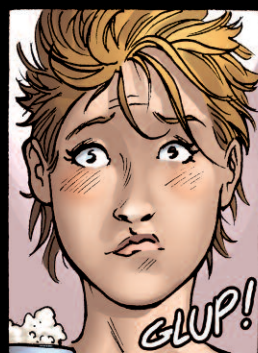


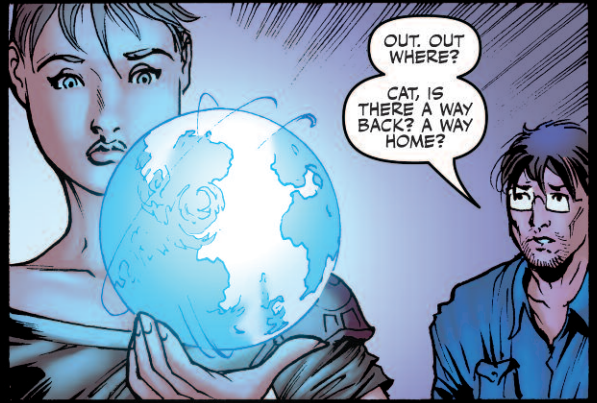
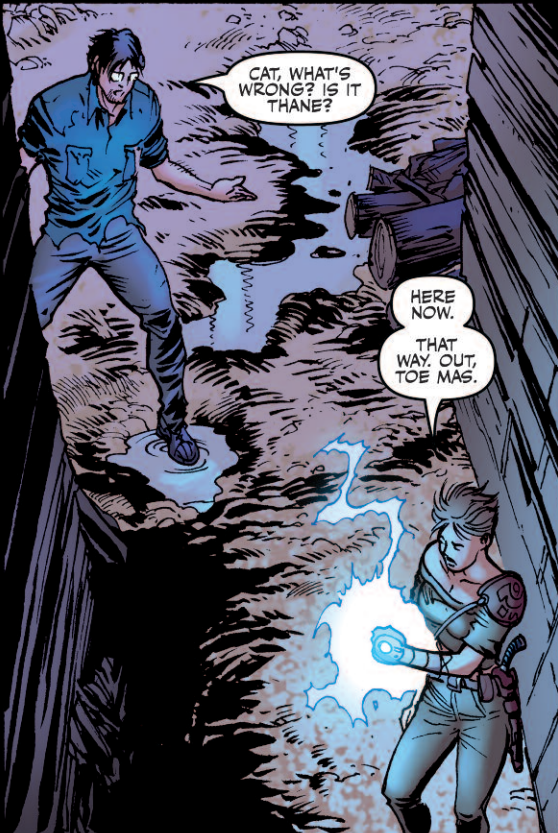
MIRROR IMAGES... OH, GOD. WE'RE IN A PARALLEL WORLD.



TELLING YOU.

WELCOME TO THE FUN HOUSE, TOM.







YOU'VE GOT SOME STRANGE FRIENDS.

THEY'RE NOT OUR FRIENDS. WE PICKED THEM UP ON THE ROAD.

I WOULDN'T HAVE THE COURAGE. TRAVEL IS SO DANGEROUS THESE DAYS.



TRY TELLING MY GRANDFATHER.

NOW CUT IT OUT, CISSY. THOSE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT. I'M NEVER WRONG ABOUT PEOPLE.

WHAT WAS THAT SHE WAS WEARING? SOME KIND OF ELECTRIC JEWELRY? THAT WHAT YOU'RE HAULING? YOU COULD MAKE SOME NICE MONEY OFF SOMETHING LIKE THAT IN DENVER.



NOTHING SO FANCY. WE GOT SOME PEANUT OIL, THAT'S ALL.

DEAR ME. YOU'RE TAKING QUITE A RISK, WITH ALL THE TROUBLE ON THE ROADS THESE DAYS.

WE TAKE CARE OF OURSELVES.



I WISH I HAD YOUR NERVE. THE STORIES YOU HEAR ARE SO FRIGHTENING.

MOM, IT'S NOT THAT BAD. WE'LL BE ALL RIGHT.

MAYBE YOU SHOULD TRAVEL WITH US. YOU KNOW, A CARAVAN. WE'LL KEEP YOU SAFE. YOU OUGHT TO SEE CISSY ON HER SEWING MACHINE.



COULD WE, DO YOU THINK?

WHATEVER YOU WANT, MOM.



QUIET NOW, TOE MAS.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?



GETTING LOOSE NOT-DOGS.

GETTING LOOSE HORSES. GOING NOW. THANE COMING. DARKLORDS COMING.

YOU CAN'T EVEN RIDE. BESIDES, THESE AREN'T OUR HORSES.

NEEDING THEM.

LISTEN TO ME. THE HORSES DON'T BELONG TO US, THEY BELONG TO JAKE AND CISSY.



LEAVING NOW! GOING FAST!

I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU DO THIS. CAT, THERE ARE PLACES WHERE THEY KILL YOU FOR STEALING HORSES.

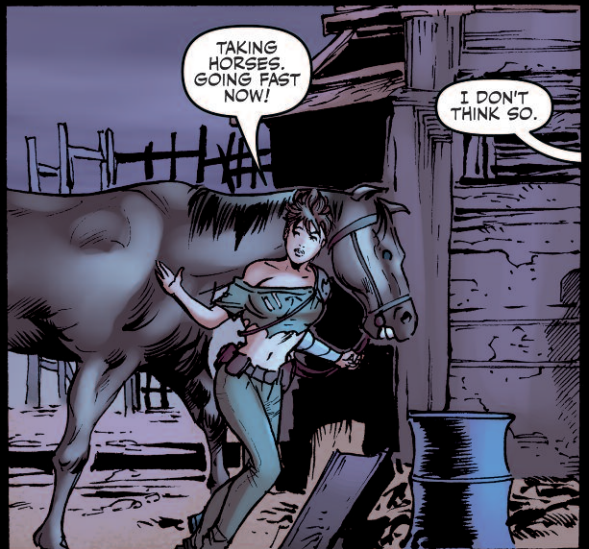
NOT KILLING US. KILLING THEM FIRST.



NO! YOU HEAR ME? ENOUGH OF THIS CRAP. WE'RE IN ENOUGH TROUBLE ALREADY. NO!



NOT TOUCHING. NOT SHAKING.



TAKING HORSES. GOING FAST NOW!

I DON'T THINK SO.



COLORADO HIGHWAY PATROL, UNDERCOVER. GET AWAY FROM THE HORSES, AND DON'T MAKE ANY SUDDEN MOVES.

TRAGER, ALL SHE WANTED--

I KNOW WHAT SHE WANTED. MOVE.



NOW!

TCH-KLACK



WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?

I CAUGHT THEM TRYING TO STEAL YOUR HORSES, PETE, GIVE ME THE KEYS. WE'LL LOCK THEM IN THE STOREROOM TONIGHT. TOMORROW I'LL TAKE THEM BACK TO DENVER.



I KNEW THEY WERE NO GOOD.

SHAME ON YOU PEOPLE.



JAKE, PLEASE--



SLAP



I DON'T WANT TO HEAR NOTHING YOU HAVE TO SAY.



TOE MAS? ALL RIGHT?

SORRY IF I WOKE YOU. I GUESS I'M TOO TIRED TO SLEEP.



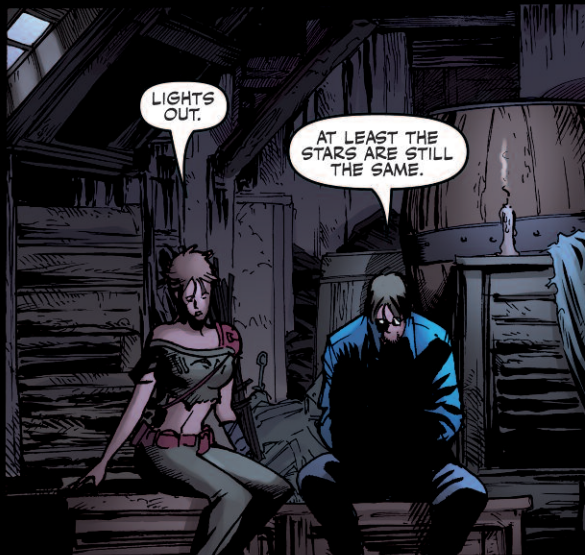
WANTING HER NOW?

I MISS HER, YES.

LOVING HER?

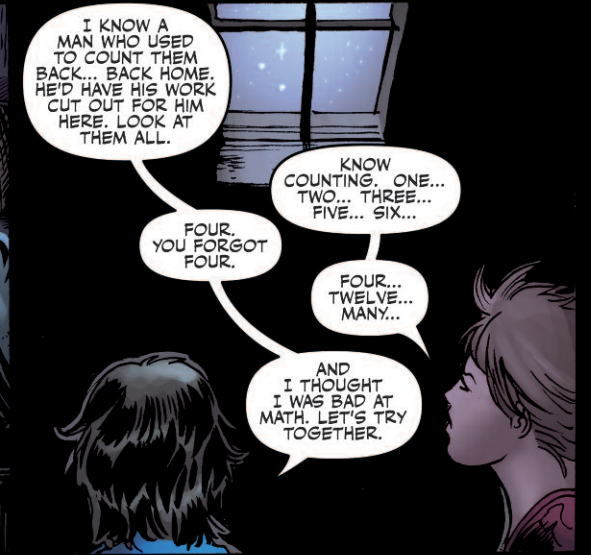
LAURA. HER NAME IS LAURA.

THAT, TOO.



LIGHTS OUT.

AT LEAST THE STARS ARE STILL THE SAME.



I KNOW A MAN WHO USED TO COUNT THEM BACK... BACK HOME HE'D HAVE HIS WORK CUT OUT FOR HIM HERE. LOOK AT THEM ALL.

KNOW COUNTING. ONE... TWO... THREE... FIVE... SIX...

FOUR. YOU FORGOT FOUR.

FOUR... TWELVE... MANY...

AND I THOUGHT I WAS BAD AT MATH. LET'S TRY TOGETHER.

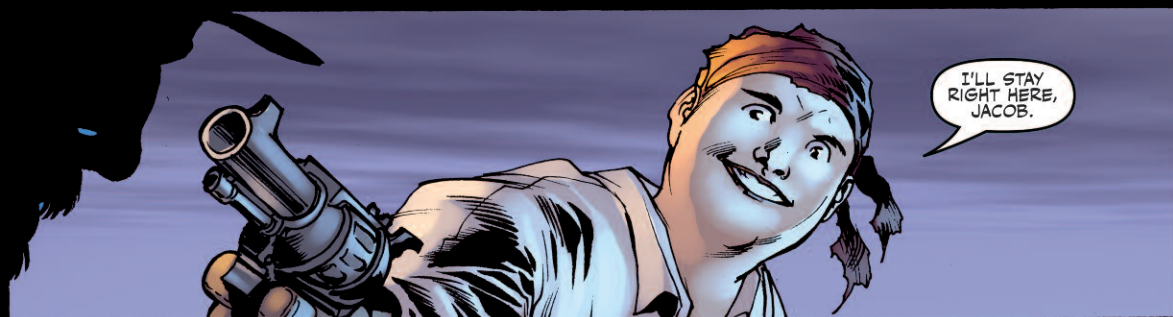




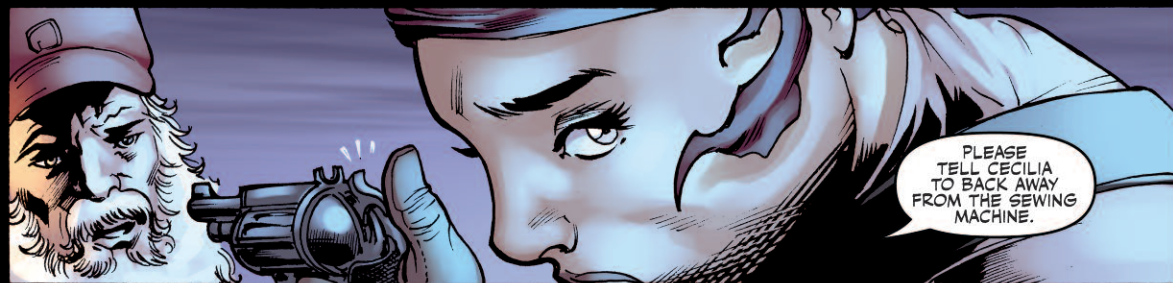
HERE THEY
COME. WAIT TILL
THEY'RE IN RANGE,
CISSY.

MISS, YOU
BETTER GET
INSIDE WHERE
IT'S SAFE...

**BLAM
BLAM**



I'LL STAY
RIGHT HERE,
JACOB.



PLEASE
TELL CECILIA
TO BACK AWAY
FROM THE SEWING
MACHINE.





BLAM!
BLAM!
KPOW!!

WHAT THE...



TUNK!!

UH!



NOTHING TO SAY, TRAGER?

JUST GET IT OVER WITH.

KILLING HIM NOW?

HE'S NOT THE ENEMY, CAT.



AND NEITHER ARE WE...



LOOK, YOU HAVE WHAT YOU WANT. TAKE THE OIL. JUST LET ME KEEP MY RIG.

JACOB, JACOB, YOU DON'T SEEM TO UNDERSTAND. WE'RE TAKING IT ALL.

HAHA HAHA!



LOOK AT THIS STUFF! THERE MUST BE THOUSANDS OF CANS!

HA! LIQUID GOLD! GOD, IT'S SWEET!



IDIOT. THAT STUFF IS WORTH MORE THAN YOU ARE, AND WHEN'S THE LAST TIME YOU TOOK A BATH?

I'LL TAKE ONE RIGHT NOW, MOM.

WANT TO SCRUB MY BACK?



YOU LEAVE HER ALONE.

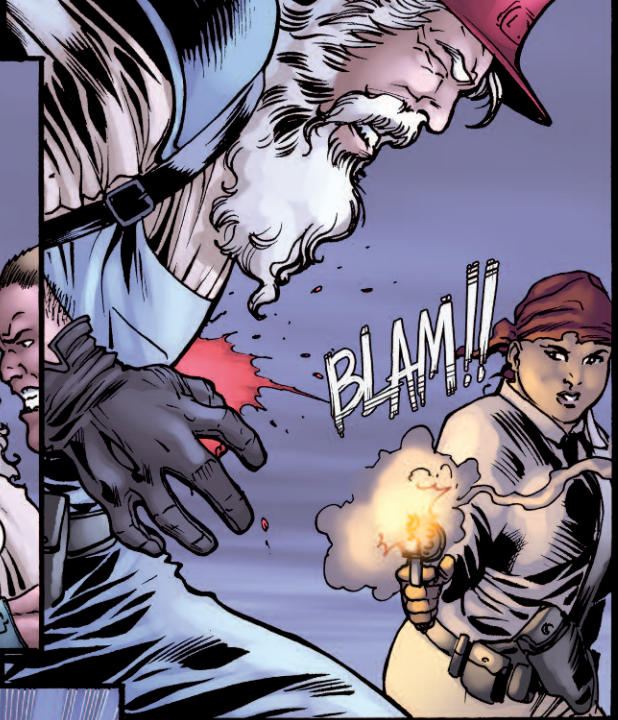
LOAD AS MUCH AS YOU CAN TO THE CAMPER. WE'LL SPLIT UP, TAKE BOTH VEHICLES.

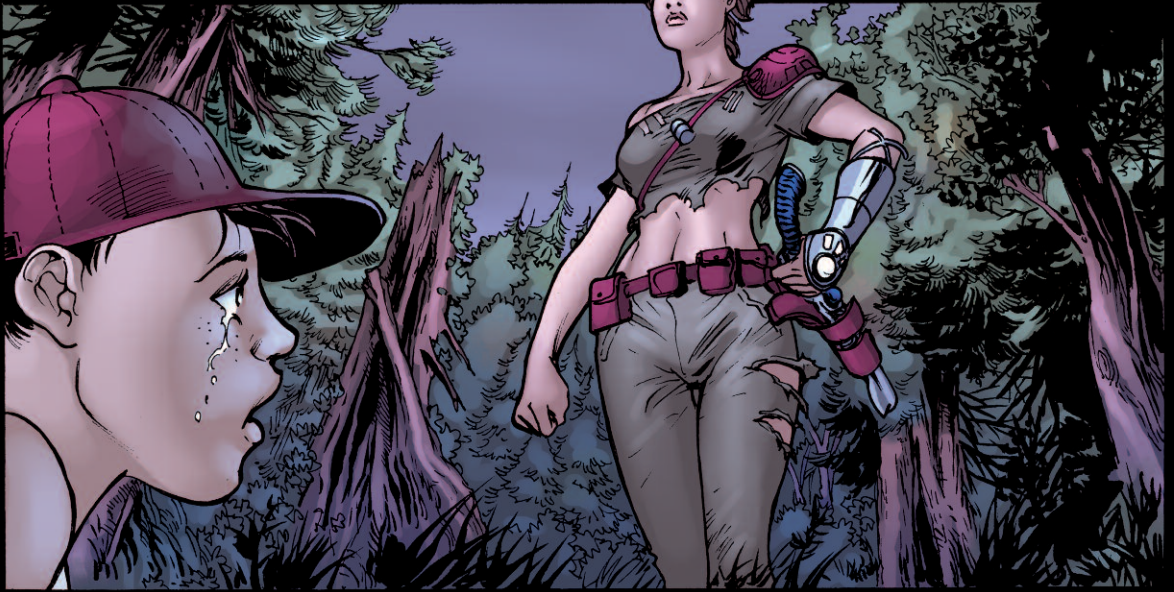


CAN'T WE HAVE SOME FUN FIRST?

HEY, I SAW HER FIRST.

FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, SHE'S ONLY FIFTEEN.







WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?

I DON'T KNOW, BUT I'M NOT HANGING AROUND TO FIND OUT.



YOU COME BACK HERE. STOP HIM!

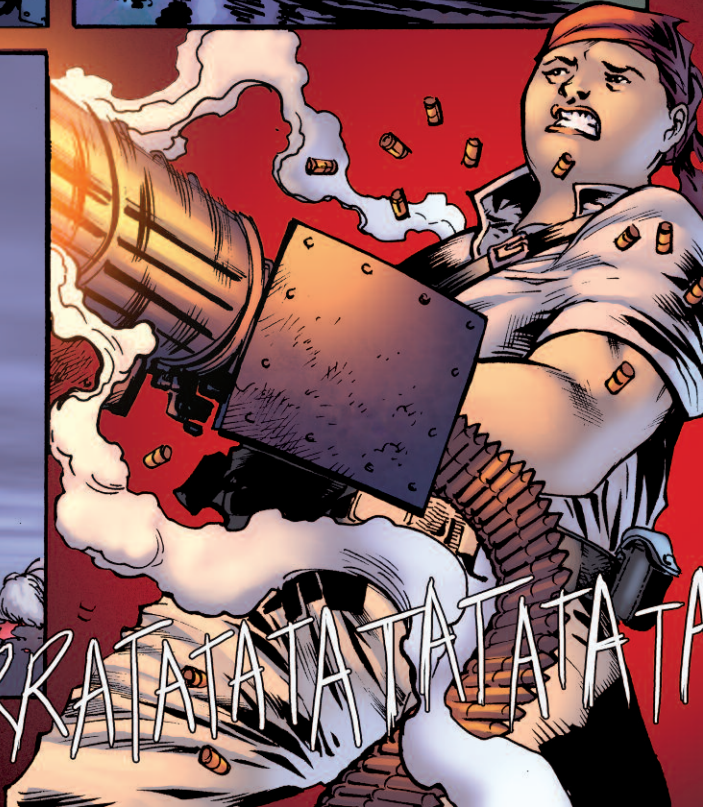
YOU STOP HIM. THEY'RE SHOOTING OFF BAZOOKAS OUT THERE.



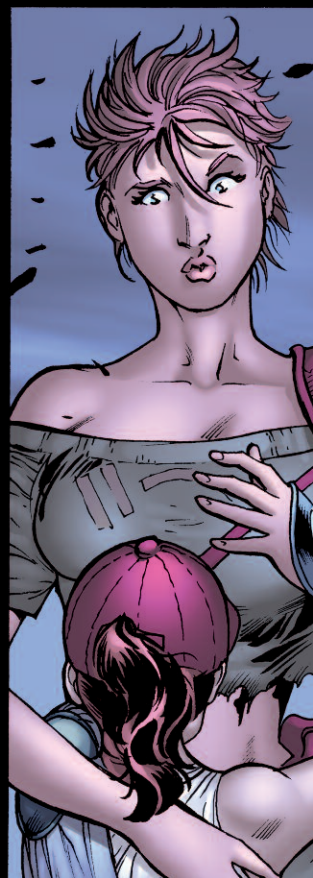
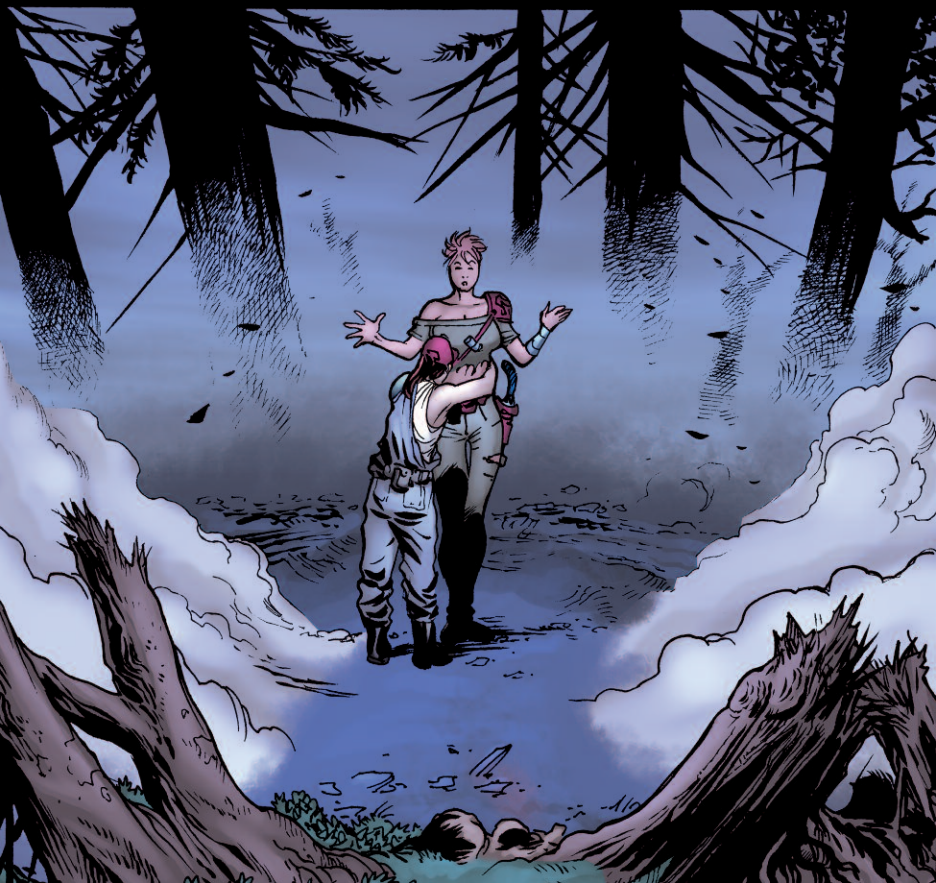
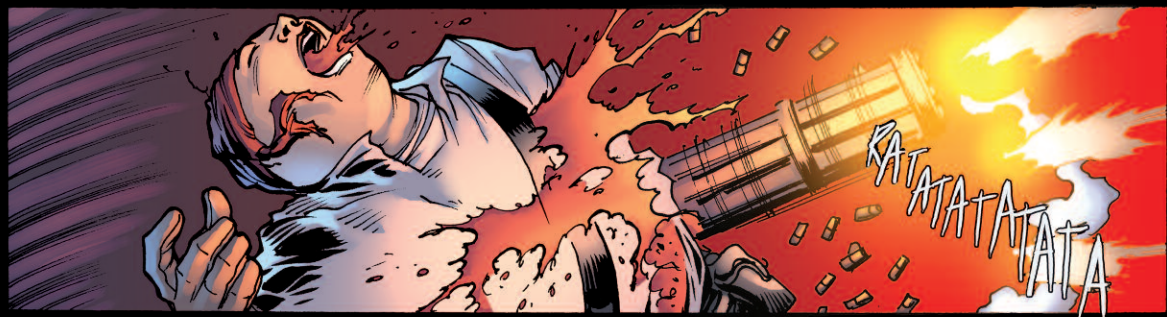
COME BACK HERE. COWARDS!



THROW DOWN THE GUN. YOU'RE UNDER ARREST.



IRKATAATATAATATA





PLEASE... MY TREASURE...



HOW IS HE?

WHERE'S THE NEAREST HOSPITAL?

DENVER. ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THOSE MOUNTAINS. CAN YOU DO ANYTHING FOR HIM HERE?

CLEAN THE WOUND. STOP THE BLEEDING. BESIDES THAT...

YOU BETTER GO FIND CAT AND CISSY.



IT'S ALL OVER.

MY GRANDFATHER...

HE'S WOUNDED. THE DOCTOR IS TAKING CARE OF HIM. YOU ALL RIGHT?

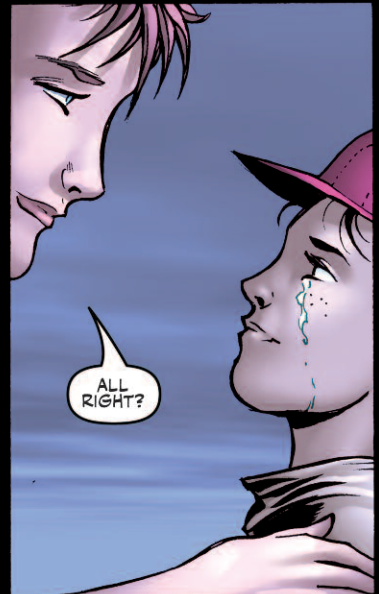


ALL RIGHT.

I. I DON'T... HE HURT ME.



HURT HIM MORE.



ALL RIGHT?



WILL HE BE OKAY?

A WEEK FROM NOW HE'LL PROBABLY BE TELLING ME THAT HE HAD A BETTER DOCTOR IN THE OLD DAYS.



HE'LL DIE OF PERITONITIS UNLESS WE CAN GET HIM TO A HOSPITAL.

WE CAN TAKE THE HORSES, BUT A CLYDESDALE ISN'T EXACTLY BUILT FOR SPEED.

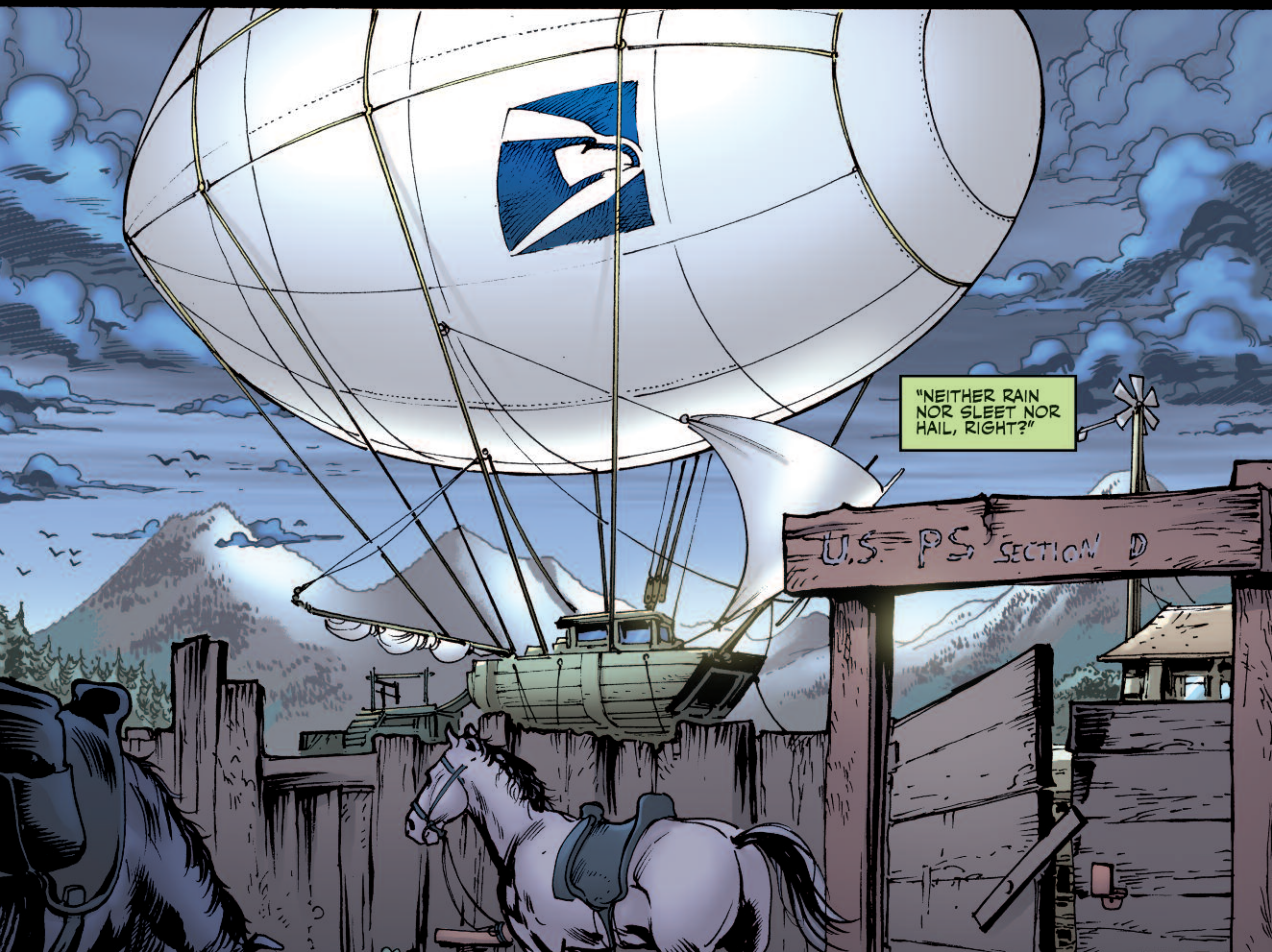
THAT LONG A RIDE WOULD KILL HIM ANYWAY.



I'M BASED OUT OF AN OLD RANGER STATION NOT FAR FROM HERE. IF WE GET HIM THERE, I CAN RADIO DOWN THE AFTERNOON FLIGHT.

AFTERNOON FLIGHT? REALLY?

YOU KNOW THE SAYING...



"NEITHER RAIN NOR SLEET NOR HAIL, RIGHT?"

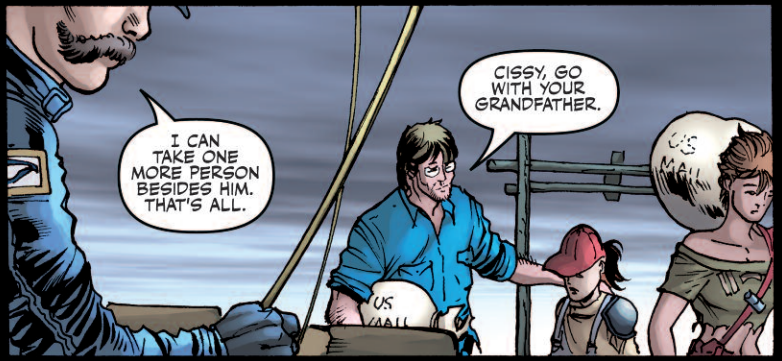
U.S. PS SECTION D



LAY HIM ON THE MAILBAGS.

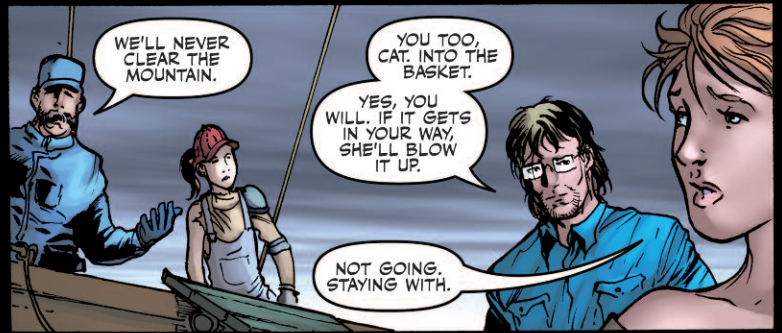
THAT'S THE UNITED STATES MAIL!

DUMP THE UNITED STATES MAIL OUT ON THE GRASS. WE NEED MORE ROOM.



I CAN TAKE ONE MORE PERSON BESIDES HIM. THAT'S ALL.

CISSY, GO WITH YOUR GRANDFATHER.



WE'LL NEVER CLEAR THE MOUNTAIN.

YOU TOO, CAT. INTO THE BASKET.

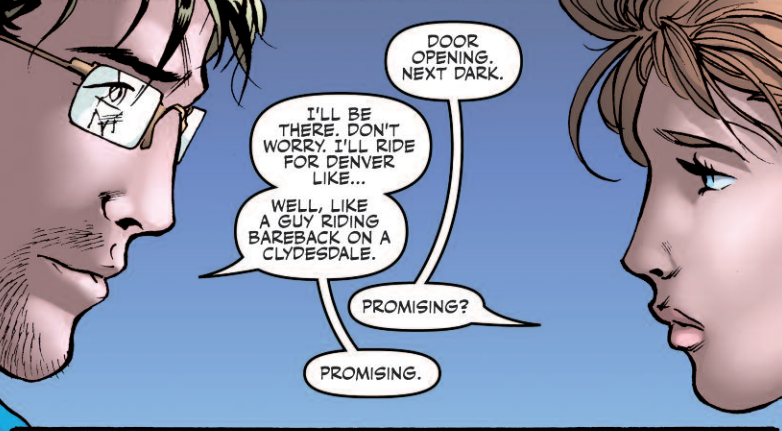
YES, YOU WILL. IF IT GETS IN YOUR WAY, SHE'LL BLOW IT UP.

NOT GOING. STAYING WITH.



CAT, LISTEN TO ME. THANE IS HERE. YOU HAVE TO REACH THE DOOR BEFORE HE REACHES YOU.

BESIDES, CISSY NEEDS YOU.



DOOR OPENING. NEXT DARK.

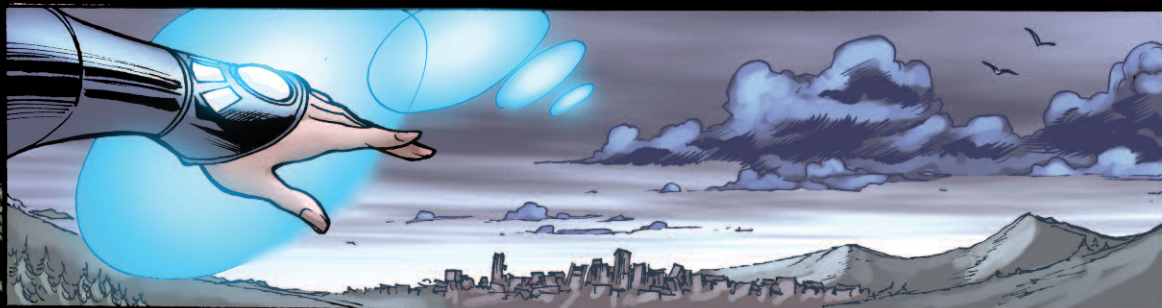
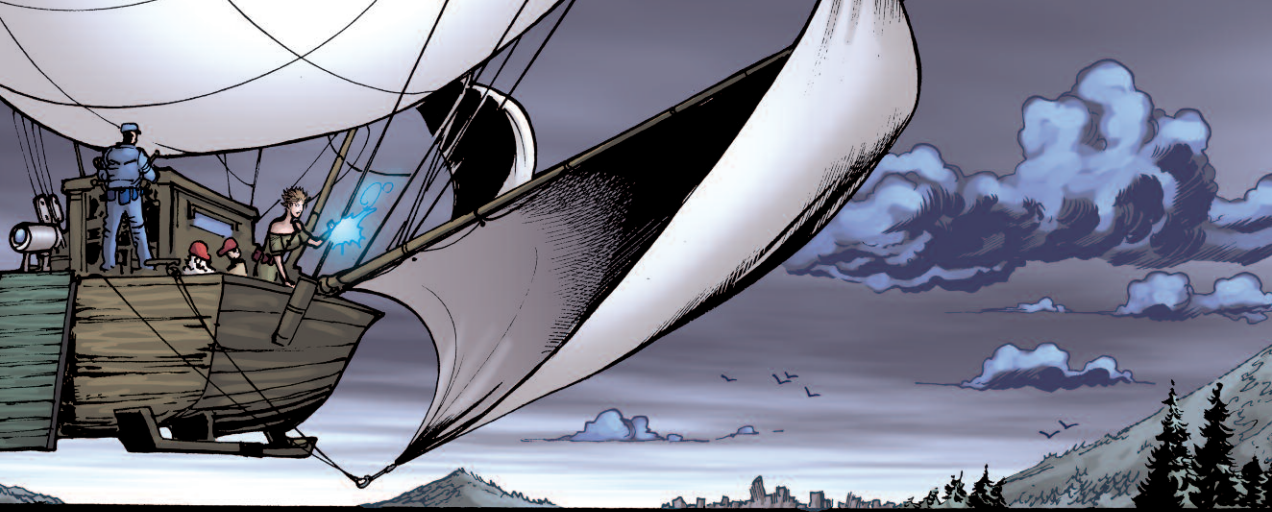
I'LL BE THERE. DON'T WORRY. I'LL RIDE FOR DENVER LIKE... LIKE...

WELL, LIKE A GUY RIDING BAREBACK ON A CLYDESDALE.

PROMISING?

PROMISING.





SHE MOVES EAST, ON THE WIND. SHE WILL BE AT THE DOOR BEFORE THE DAWNING.

TOO SOON. THE DOOR WILL STILL BE CLOSED. WE MUST BE THERE BEFORE IT OPENS.

SHE MAY NOT GO TO THE DOOR. SHE MAY HIDE INSTEAD.



THAT IS WHAT A DOG IS FOR. TO FLUSH OUT THE PREY.

THANE, DISGRACED, TWICE-FAILED... I WILL GIVE YOU ONE LAST CHANCE TO REGAIN YOUR HONOR.

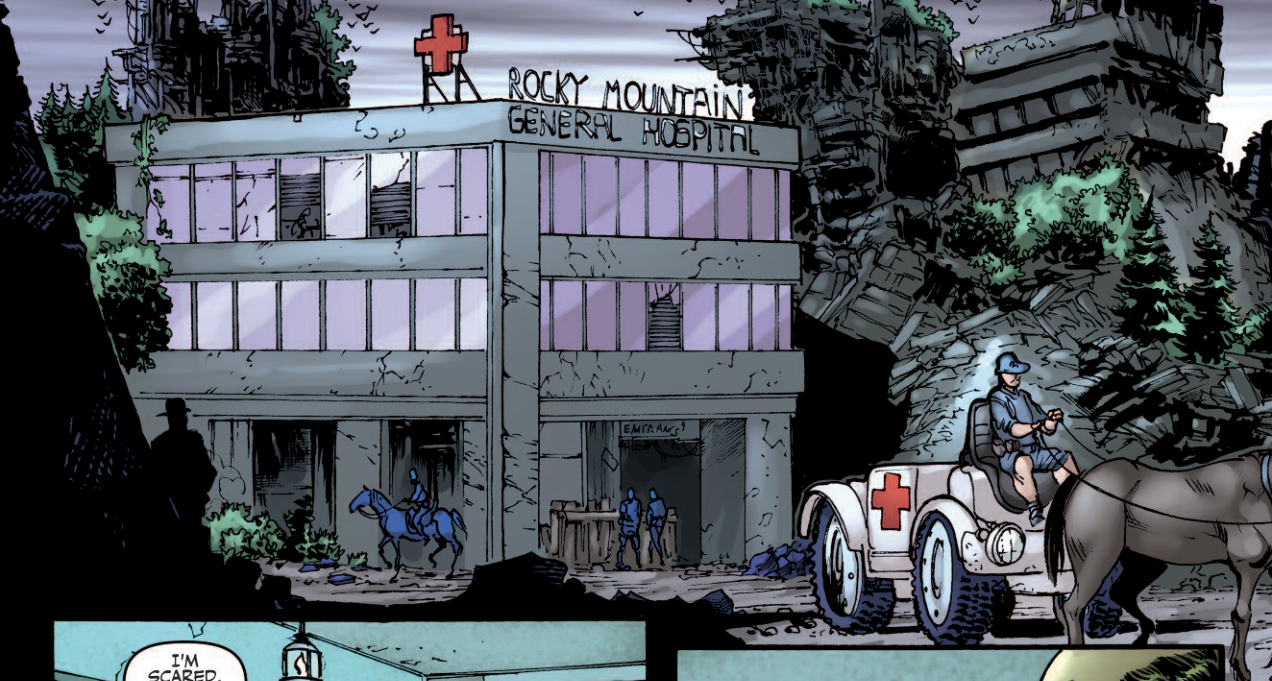
WE WILL SECURE THE DOOR. YOU WILL GO AHEAD OF US, AND BEFORE THE LIGHT HAS COME AND GONE AGAIN, YOU WILL FIND YOUR LITTLE ANIMAL AND DRIVE HER TO US.

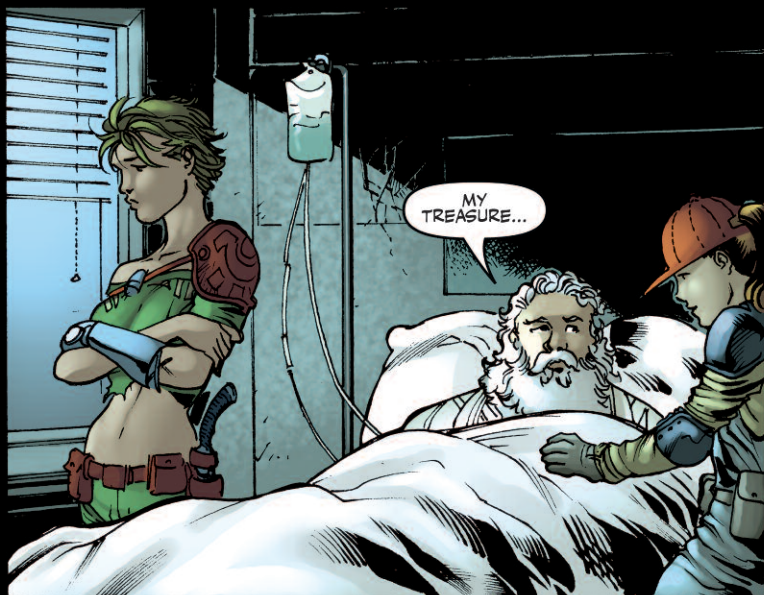
I LIVE TO SERVE.



DO NOT HARM HER. HER CRIME HAS BEEN GREAT. HER ANGUISH MUST BE GREATER. SHE WILL SERVE MY PLEASURE, NOT YOUR EMPTY HUMAN PRIDE.

TO HEAR IS TO OBEY.





MY TREASURE...



THE OIL... THE DRUMS GOT HIT, IT ALL LEAKED AWAY. I'M SORRY.

OH, THAT...

...PEANUTS. YOU'RE MY TREASURE.



THANK YOU. I HEAR YOUR BOYFRIEND PATCHED ME UP. WHERE IS HE?

NOT BOYFRIEND.

NOT HERE. TOO SLOW!



HE WAS TAKEN TO ROCKY MOUNTAIN GENERAL. HOW YOU DOING ON TIME?

CLOSE, BUT I THINK I'M OKAY.

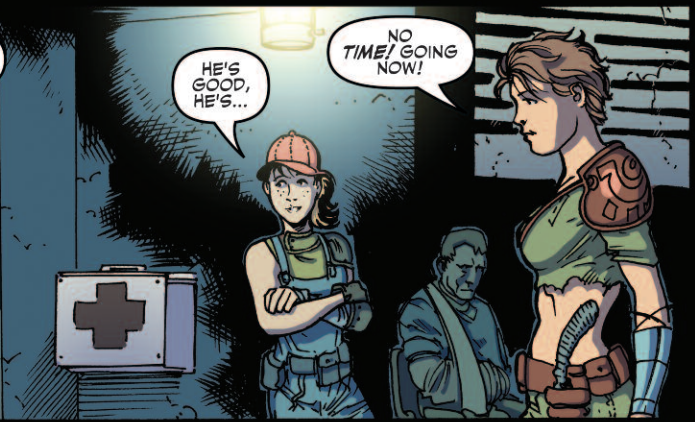


ROCKY MOUNTAIN GENERAL. FAST.





CAT... CISSY... HOW'S JAKE?



HE'S GOOD, HE'S...

NO TIME! GOING NOW!



CAT, NO. THANE'S HERE. I SAW HIM. HE CAN'T BE FAR BEHIND US.

I CAN GIVE YOU A POLICE ESCORT.



IT MAY NOT BE ENOUGH. THIS GUY ALREADY KILLED YOU ONCE, TRAGER.

THEN I'LL CALL FOR BACKUP.



NO TIME! GOING NOW!



HOW?







WHERE IS SHE?

GONE. SHE... SHE SAID...

THAT I WOULD NOT HARM YOU?



SHE KNOWS ME TOO WELL.



COUNT YOURSELF LUCKY, CHILD. THE MANHOUND IS A HUNTER, NOT A BUTCHER.



WAIT A MINUTE. THIS SUBWAY ISN'T OPEN...

THAT WAY! DOWN NOW!

NOT TALKING! HELPING!

AFTER THE BUG—



WE NEED LIGHTS. CAT, WAIT.



WE'LL HAVE TO RIG A TORCH.



CAT,
WHERE ARE
YOU?



CAREFUL
HOW YOU WAVE
THAT THING
AROUND. THEY'RE
STILL BLASTING
DOWN HERE.

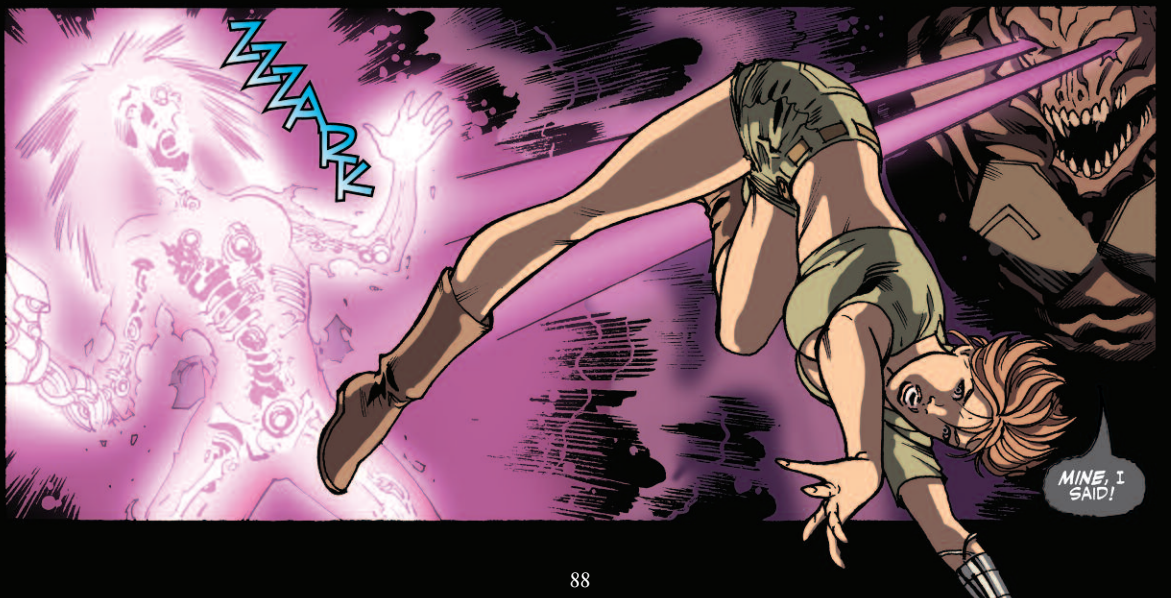


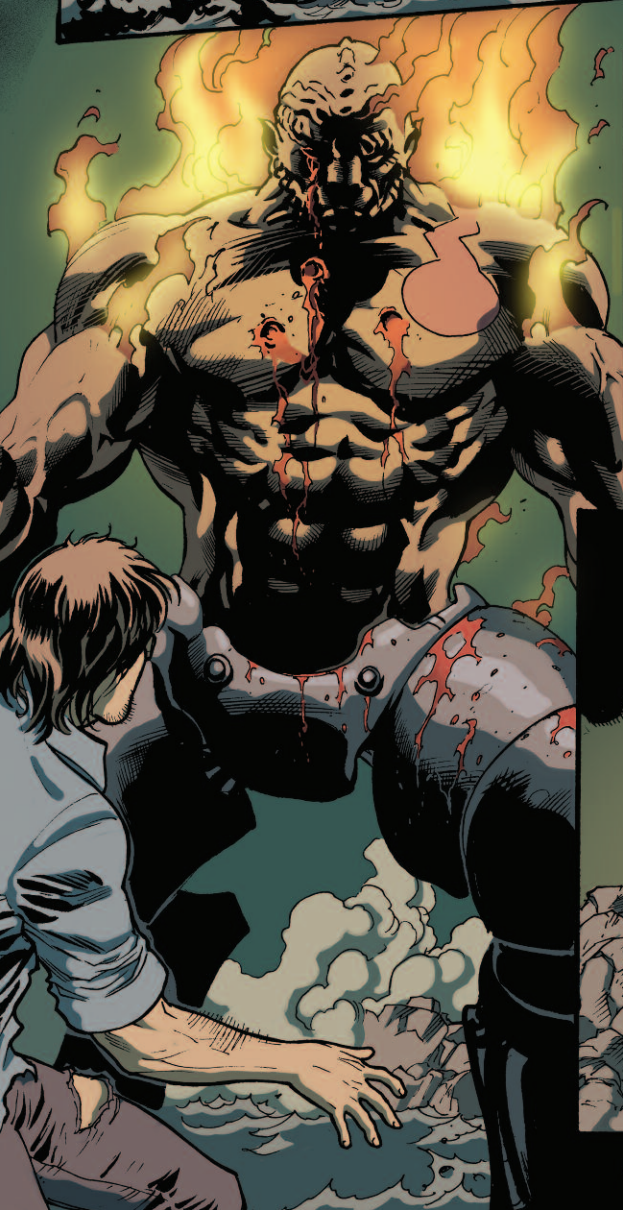
BINGO,
TOE MAG,
BINGO
BINGO.



SON OF
A... IT'S
TRUE.









ZZZARRK
ZZZARRK
KWAHAM!



THIS WAY...



WE'LL NEVER MAKE THE DOOR.

DIE TRYING THEN...

REMEMBER COUNTING?

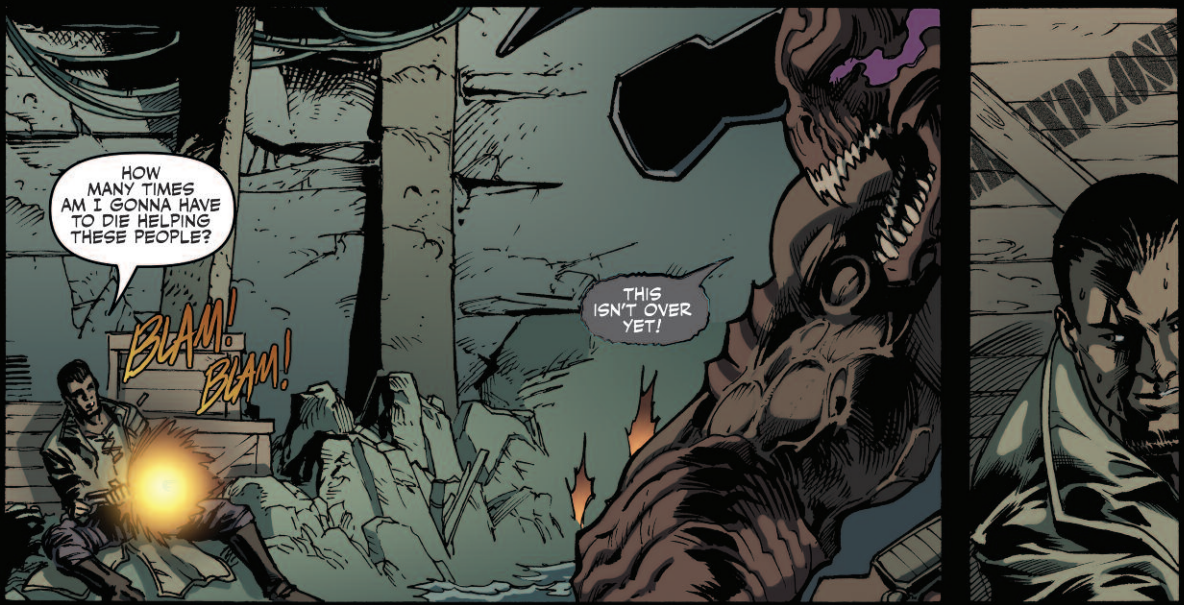
ON THREE, THEN—



HERE, YOU PSYCHO.



ONE. TWO. THREE.



HOW MANY TIMES AM I GONNA HAVE TO DIE HELPING THESE PEOPLE?

BLAM!
BLAM!

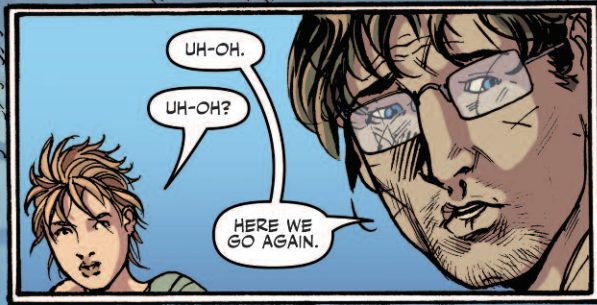
THIS ISN'T OVER YET!



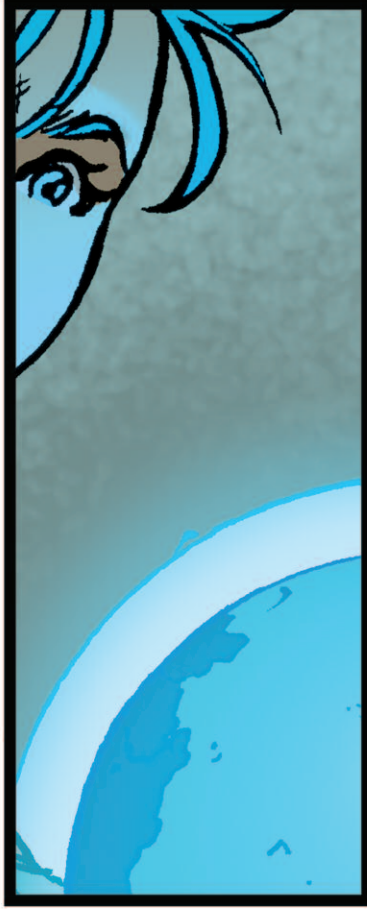
PFWOOSH!!



KA-BOOM!



END.



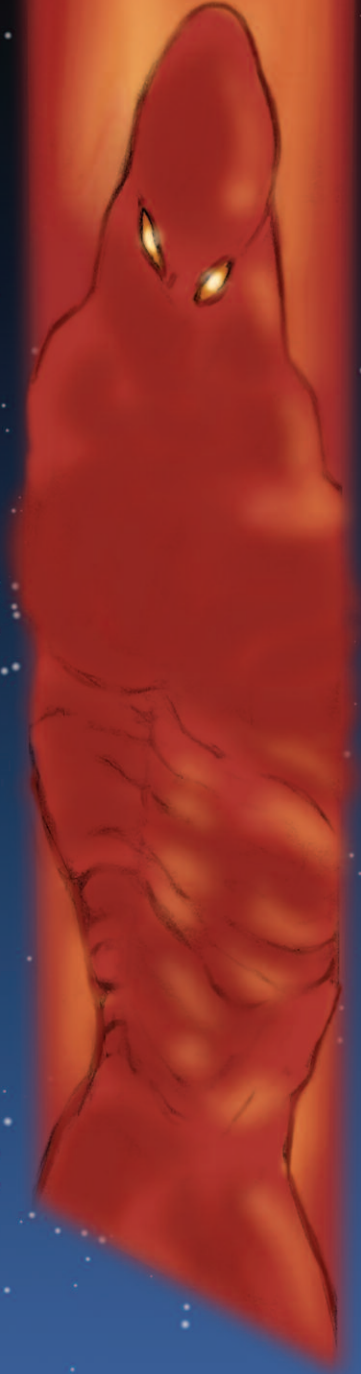
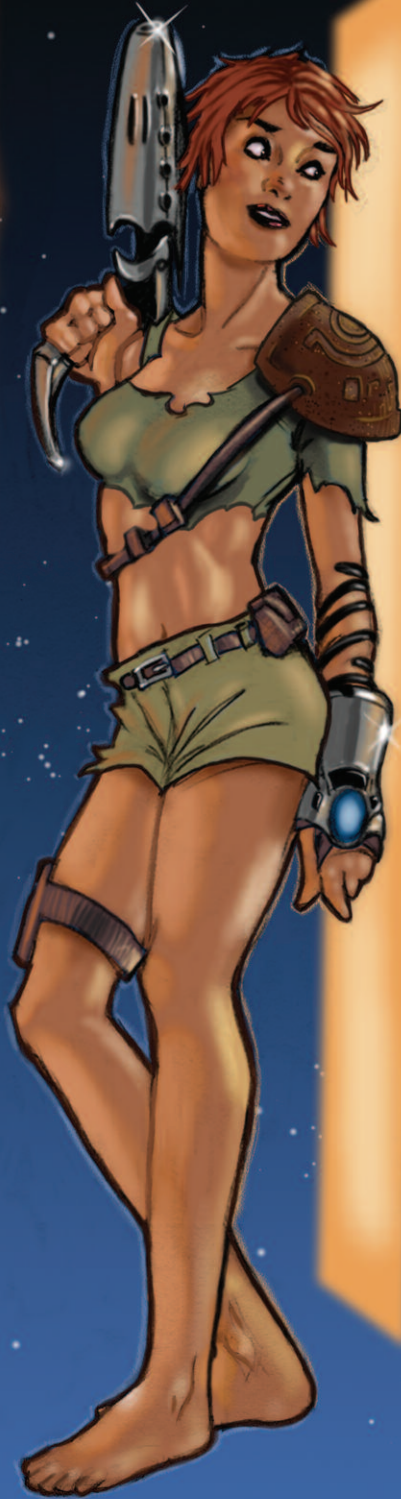


ART GALLERY





Art by Rebecca Wrigley



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Dr. Thomas Mason had a regular life, with a regular job, and a regular girlfriend. Until one night, zapped from somewhere else, a mysterious young woman named Cat ends up in his E.R. Pursued by the government and twisted creatures from her own world, Cat inadvertently embroils Tom in her quest for freedom. Which takes him to alternative Earths he never imagined — and which he may never get back from! Features a new introduction by **George R.R. Martin.**

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