

MATT KINDT ◊ MATT SMITH ◊ CHRIS O'HALLORAN

folklords™



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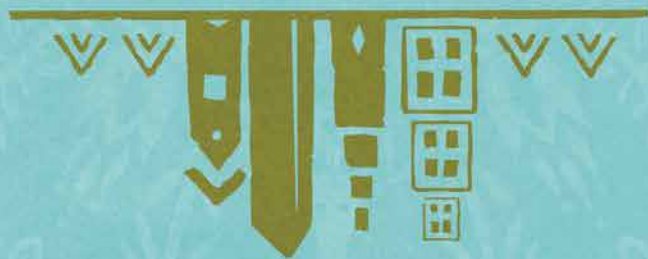
MATT SMITH

Created by

**MATT KINDT
& MATT SMITH**



CHAPTER
ONE



ONCE UPON
A TIME...

No... Just this
one time.

ANSEL!

This Kid...

AREN'T
YOU SUPPOSED
TO BE THERE
BY NOW?

Sigh
This thing
never
works.

This Kid REALLY
did not belong.

This Kid dressed
crazy.

This Kid was way
too curious.

DON'T WORRY!
I WON'T BE!

YOU CAN
BE LATE TONIGHT,
BUT DON'T BE LATE
TOMORROW!

What this kid had
yet to realize?

YOU'RE STILL
INSISTING ON
WEARING THAT
OUTFIT?

ABSOLUTELY!

Curiosity?
Answers?

Knowledge?

Knowledge is a
freaking curse.





HEY, CHARLES!
BROUGHT YOU A
GOAT-CURRY
PIE.

HOW
ARE YOU
DOING?

STILL BLIND.
THANKS FOR
ASKING.



BIG DAY
TOMORROW.

GOOD
LUCK! I'LL
BE THINKING
OF YOU.



THANKS.
I APPRECIATE
THAT.

I-I'D
INVITE YOU, BUT
IT'S A VILLAGE
THING... I'M
SORRY--

I'M A
TROLL. I LIKE
WHAT I DO. AND
I AIN'T A FAN OF
CROWDS.



OKAY, OKAY...
HAVE A GOOD
NIGHT!



HA
HA!

NO
WAY!

GIMME
ANOTHER!

YOU'VE HAD
ENOUGH!



HEY,
EVERYBODY!

ANSEL'S
HERE!



--SO SICK OF TALKING ABOUT QUESTS...

WHAT?! THIS IS OUR LAST CHANCE TO DO SOMETHING AMAZING BEFORE WE BECOME COBBLERS, IRONSMITHS, CARPENTERS, AND FARMERS.



YOU PICK THE RIGHT QUEST, YOU CAN GET OUT OF THIS VILLAGE. SEE THE WORLD. MAYBE SCORE A PRINCESS AND SOME GOLD AND NEVER COME BACK.



YEAH? SO WHAT'S YOUR QUEST?



I'M GONNA EAT SOME MERMAID FLESH. LIVE FOREVER!



Lgh. THAT'S BARBARIC. AND IT'S NOT TRUE. IT'S A MYTH.



YOU CAN'T EVEN SWIM.



BILLY FOUND MERMAID FLESH FIVE YEARS AGO. IT'S TRUE.

BUT BILLY DIED. HE DEFINITELY WASN'T IMMORTAL AFTER EATING IT.

DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT ME.

WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF YOU? DEMIURE? ARCHER?



I DID MINE LAST YEAR. GOLDEN GOOSE. FOUND IT. THE END. IT'S NOT ABOUT ME ANYMORE.



I STILL DON'T KNOW. I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING.



THE PUBLIC QUESTION ANNOUNCEMENT IS TOMORROW! YOU BETTER FIGURE IT OUT!

WHAT ABOUT YOU, ANSEL?

AND CAN YOU PLEASE EXPLAIN, WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU WEARING?



IT'S MY, uh... QUESTING SUIT.



OOKKAY.

WELL, WHAT'S YOUR QUEST?



I'M GOING TO FIND...

...THE **FOLKLORDS.**



ARE YOU NUTS? FOLKLORDS? THEY'RE LESS REAL THAN THE MERMAIDS.

WE'RE NOT EVEN SUPPOSED TO TALK ABOUT THE FOLKLORDS.



IF YOU ANNOUNCE THAT TOMORROW? YOU BETTER HOPE THE LIBRARIANS AREN'T AROUND.

THEY'LL THROW YOU IN PRISON FOR A QUEST LIKE THAT.

OR AS PUNISHMENT FOR THAT OUTFIT YOU'RE WEARING.

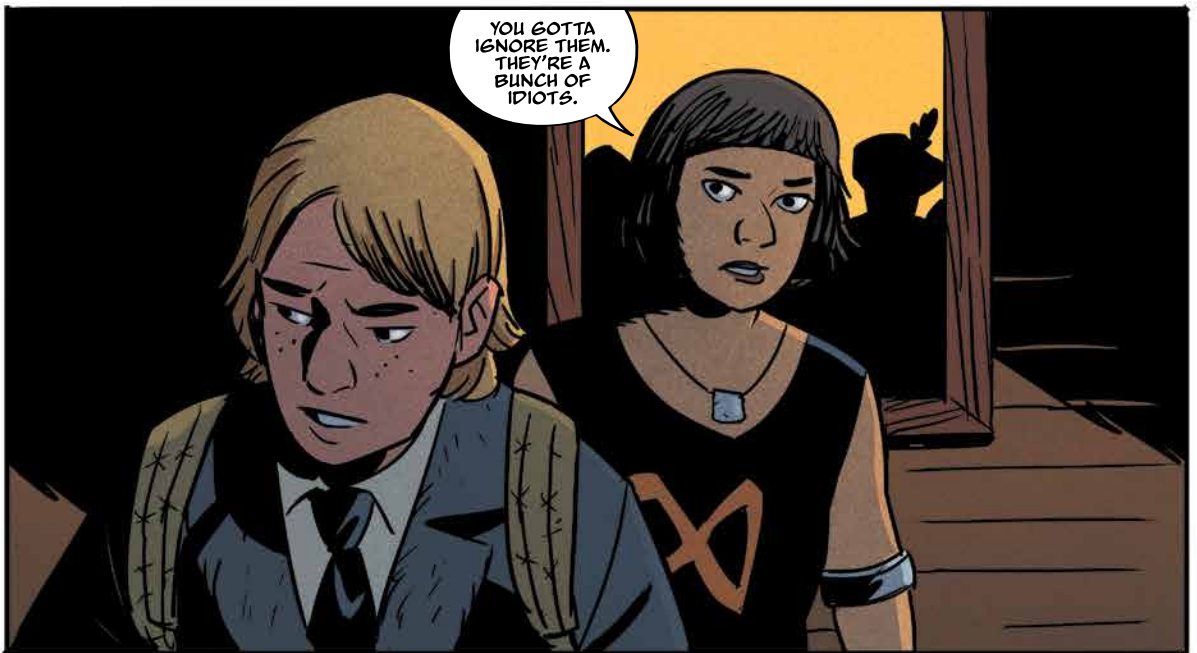
HAHAHAHAHA

WHATEVER.



YOU GUYS JUST DON'T GET IT.

Aw! C'MON, ANSEL... DON'T BE LIKE THAT!





BUT...
YOUR
QUEST.
I--

I DON'T
THINK YOU
SHOULD DO
THAT ONE.



WHAT ARE YOU
TALKING ABOUT?
WHY DO YOU
CARE?

I... I DO
CARE. I CARE
ABOUT YOU,
ANSEL.

WE'VE
BEEN FRIENDS
SINCE WE WERE
KIDS. I...



DEE... I
HAVE TO
DO THIS
ONE.

WHY?!



BECAUSE...

YOU'RE
GOING TO
THINK I'M
CRAZY.

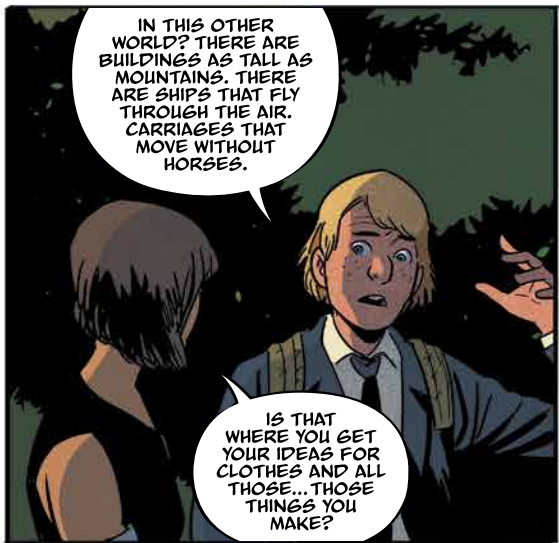


WHAT
IS IT?



I'VE HAD DREAMS. BUT... MORE THAN THAT. THEY'RE LIKE VISIONS.

WHEN I SLEEP, BUT SOMETIMES WHEN I'M AWAKE, TOO. I HAVE THESE VISIONS OF... OF ANOTHER WORLD.



IN THIS OTHER WORLD? THERE ARE BUILDINGS AS TALL AS MOUNTAINS. THERE ARE SHIPS THAT FLY THROUGH THE AIR. CARRIAGES THAT MOVE WITHOUT HORSES.

IS THAT WHERE YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FOR CLOTHES AND ALL THOSE... THOSE THINGS YOU MAKE?



THIS IS HOW THE PEOPLE THERE DRESS. PEOPLE AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE. NO TREES AT ALL, AND THEY LIVE IN GIANTIC VILLAGES...

LOOK. I THINK THIS PLACE IS REAL. I THINK I CAN ACTUALLY GET THERE. AND I THINK THE FOLKLORDS KNOW THE WAY.



YOU'RE GREEDY.

WHAT?



YOU'RE GREEDY FOR SECRETS.

WHAT'S THE POINT OF EVERY STORY YOUR PARENTS TOLD YOU WHEN YOU WERE A KID?

THE GLUTTONOUS GOOSE? THE UNHAPPY BEAR?

WHAT'S THE LESSON OF THOSE TALES?



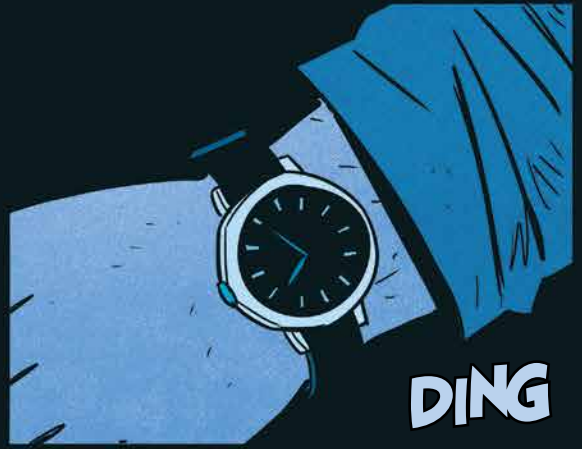
"DON'T BE GREEDY. BE CONTENT. ENJOY WHAT YOU HAVE."



DING



DING



DING



DING



DING



DING



DING



DONG





DING
DONG

DING
DONG



Oh
NO!

DING
DONG



HOW MANY WAS
THAT? EIGHT?
NINE RINGS?

DING
DONG



I'M
LATE!

I'M
LATE!



RUNNING
LATE.



I KNOW, I KNOW!
PLEASE HURRY!
I REALLY OWE
YOU ONE.



YOU OWE ME.
ONE GOAT
PIE.



HUFF

HUFF



--GOING TO FIND THE GOLDEN BOWL OF FORESIGHT!



I AM GOING ON A QUEST TO RESCUE THE LADY AND THE TIGER!



Ansel! Where have you been?! Get up there!

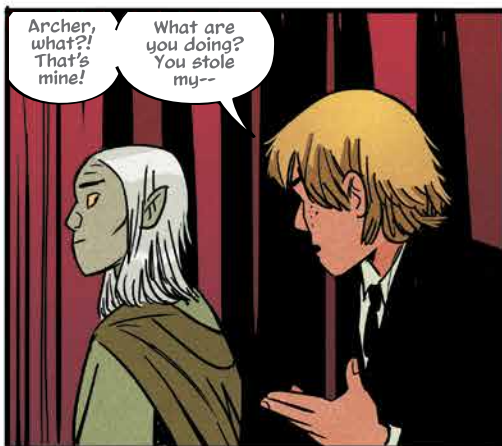
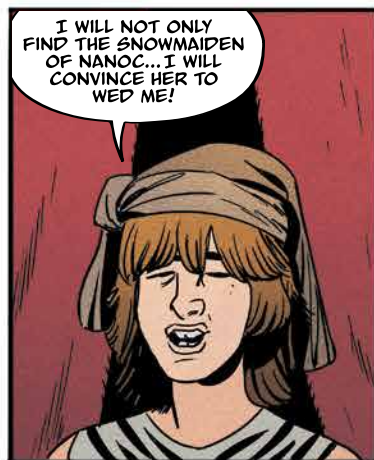
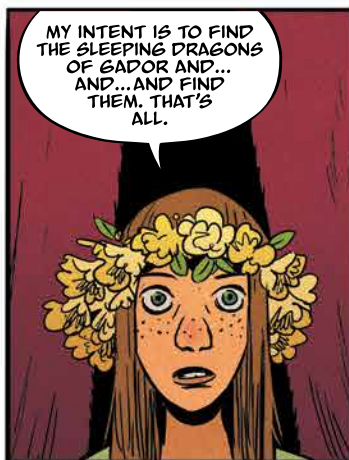


Oh... You made it...

Barely.



--ATTEMPT TO FIND THE LEGENDARY GLOBE OF SNOW!







THE GUILD OF LIBRARIANS REQUIRES YOUR ABSOLUTE SILENCE.



THIS YEAR'S QUEST CEREMONY IS HEREBY CANCELED.



What?

PURSUIT OF FALSE KNOWLEDGE LEADS TO THE PERPETUATION OF LIES.

Can they do that?



IT IS OUR SWORN DUTY TO GUARD YOU AGAINST ALL DANGERS. THIS INCLUDES DANGEROUS... IDEAS.



They run it. I guess they can do that?



THIS IS WHY KNOWLEDGE OF...OR EVEN THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE FOLKLORDS OR ANY OTHER FICTIONAL NARRATIVES IS EXPRESSLY FORBIDDEN!



IN ADDITION, THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS OF WILD THING ATTACKS AT THE EDGES OF OUR LANDS.

AS A RESULT, QUESTS BEYOND OUR BORDERS HAVE BEEN DEEMED UNSAFE.



Isn't that the point? Quests are always unsafe.



THEREFORE, THIS YEAR'S QUEST-TAKERS WILL HAVE THEIR QUESTS ASSIGNED TO THEM.

IT IS A MATTER OF VILLAGE SECURITY.



ANY VIOLATION WILL BE PUNISHABLE BY IMMEDIATE EXECUTION.



PLEASE FORM AN ORDERLY LINE AND YOUR QUESTS WILL BE HANDLED TO YOU AS YOU EXIT THE BUILDING.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.



THIS IS TOTAL BULL-SHEEP.

"YOUR QUEST IS TO FIND A REBELLIOUS GNOME AND REPORT THEM TO THE LIBRARIANS."



WHAT IS THAT EVEN? TAKE FIVE STEPS AND YOU'RE GOING TO TRIP OVER A REBELLIOUS GNOME. THEY'RE ALL TROUBLE-MAKERS.

NOT SO BAD.

"MONITOR A TROLL FERRY AND REPORT ANY SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY TO THE LIBRARIANS."



THESE AREN'T QUESTS. THE LIBRARIANS ARE TURNING US INTO SPIES AND INFORMANTS.

ANSEL... PLEASE. JUST DO AS THEY SAY.



THEY CRACKED DOWN LIKE THIS ONCE BEFORE. NEARLY TWENTY YEARS AGO. SAME THING. THEY HANDED OUT DIFFERENT QUESTS.

IT'S JUST ONE OF THOSE OFF-YEARS, KID.

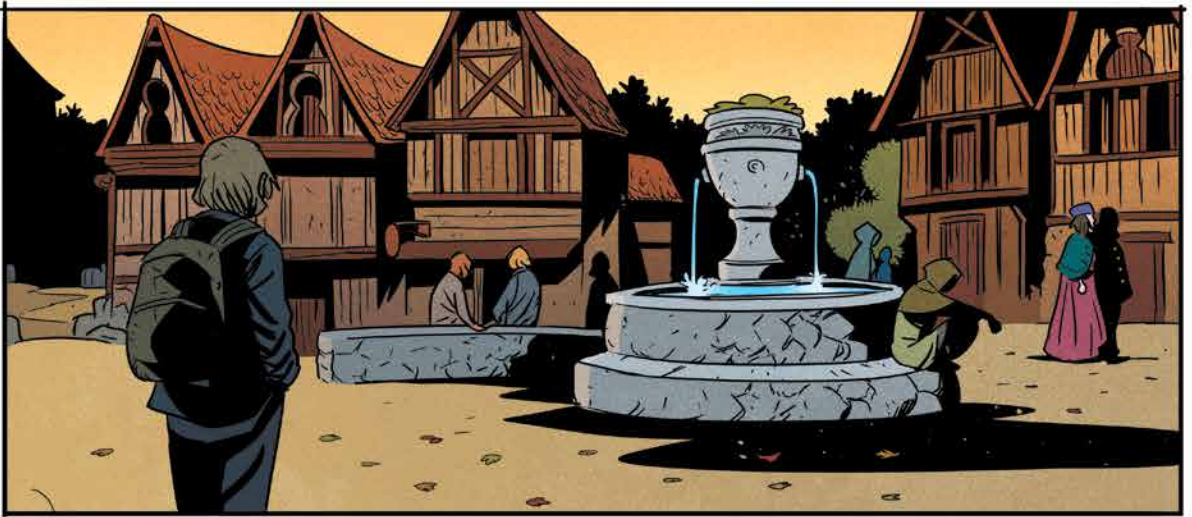


THIS IS MY QUEST, DAD. MINE.

I'VE BEEN WAITING EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR IT AND I'M NOT LETTING THEM TAKE IT AWAY FROM ME.



Dee didn't show up. I guess that's it...





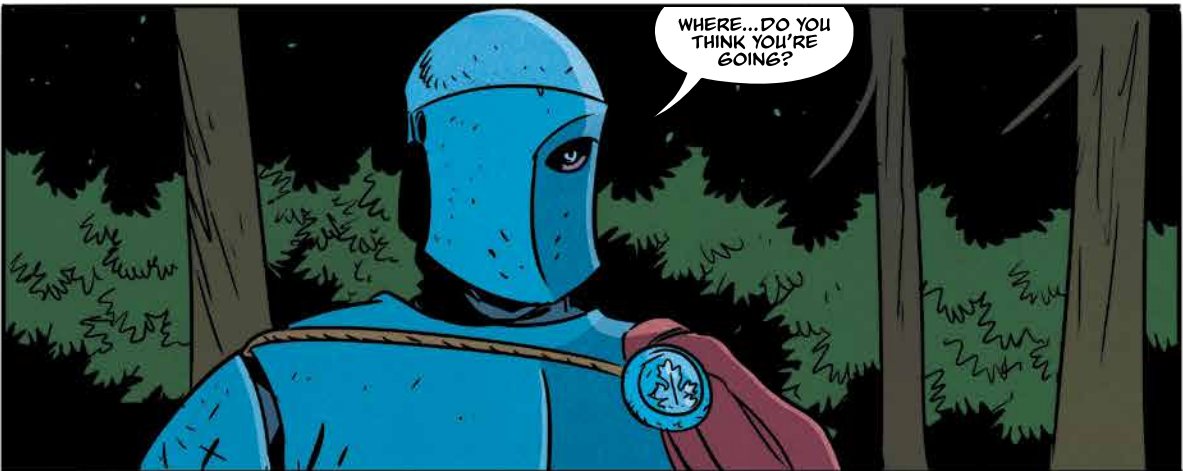


...begins...



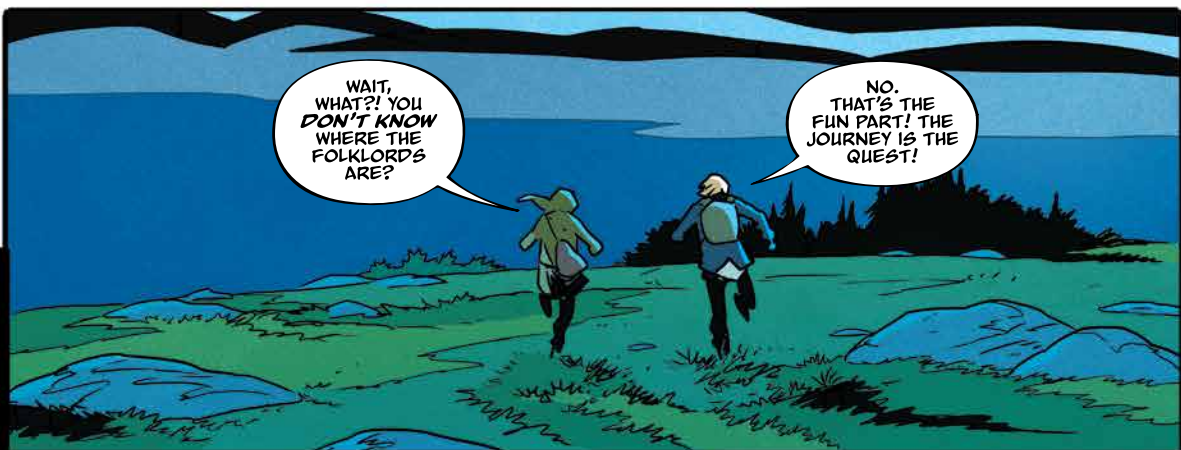
YOU BOYS ARE IN CLEAR VIOLATION OF THE GUILD OF LIBRARIANS' GUIDELINES.

PUNISHABLE BY IMMEDIATE EXECUTION.



WHERE...DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?





WAIT, WHAT?! YOU **DON'T KNOW** WHERE THE **FOLKLORDS** ARE?

NO. THAT'S THE **FUN PART!** THE **JOURNEY IS THE QUEST!**

*Literally...literarily?
A curse is just a word.*



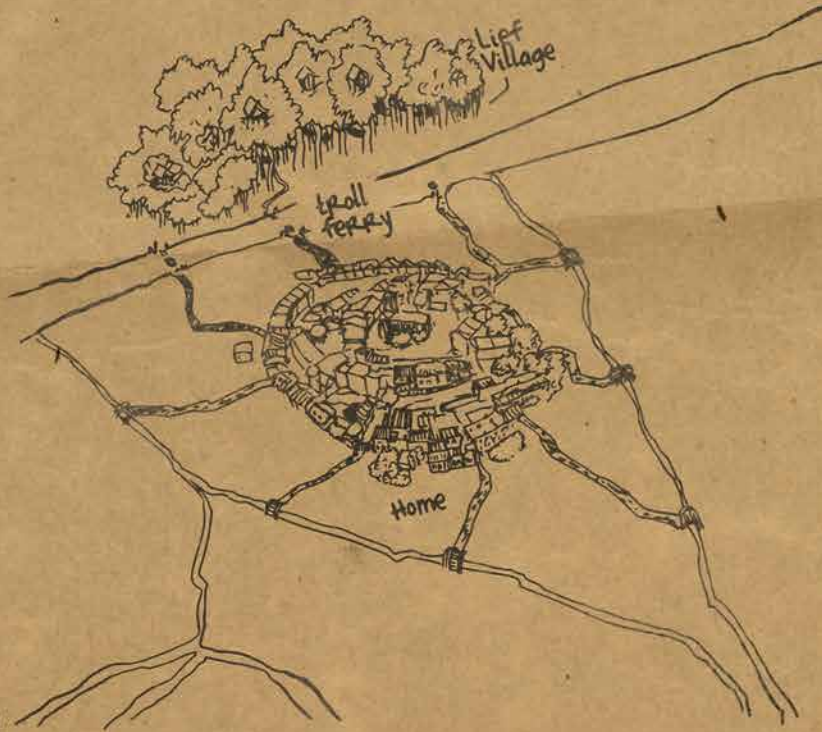
THIS IS OUR CHANCE. WE'RE GOING TO **PROVE** THE **FOLKLORDS** ARE **REAL**.

WE'RE GOING TO **WRITE** OURSELVES INTO **LEGEND**.

And what power do words really have, anyway?



To be continued...



Ansel's
Known
World



CHAPTER
TWO





ONCE UPON A TIME...

SO... YOUR ENTIRE LIFE, YOU'VE BEEN OBSESSED WITH FINDING THE "FOLKLORDS."

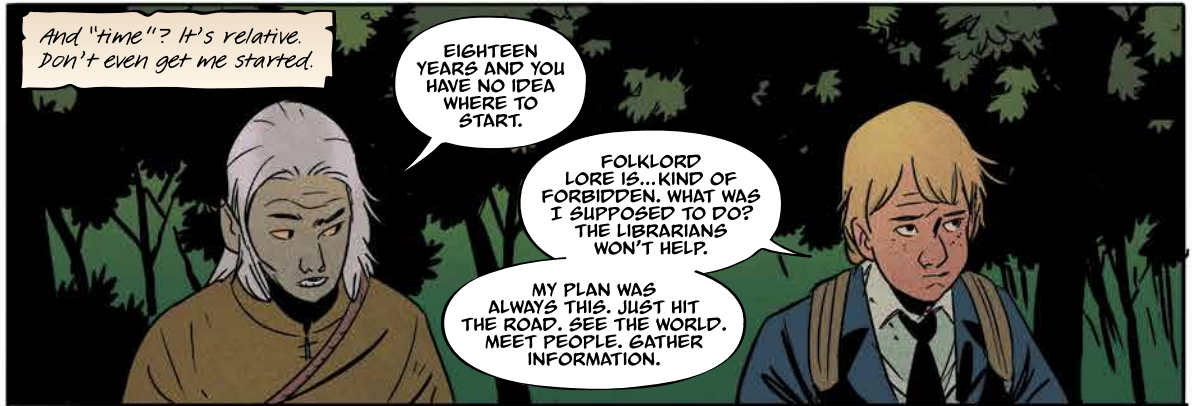
YEAH.



"Once"? Was it just once? We'd better hope so.

AND YOU'VE BEEN WAITING EIGHTEEN YEARS TO ANNOUNCE THAT AS YOUR QUEST, YOU'VE HAD EIGHTEEN YEARS TO PLAN. JUST LIKE WE ALL DO...

YEAH.

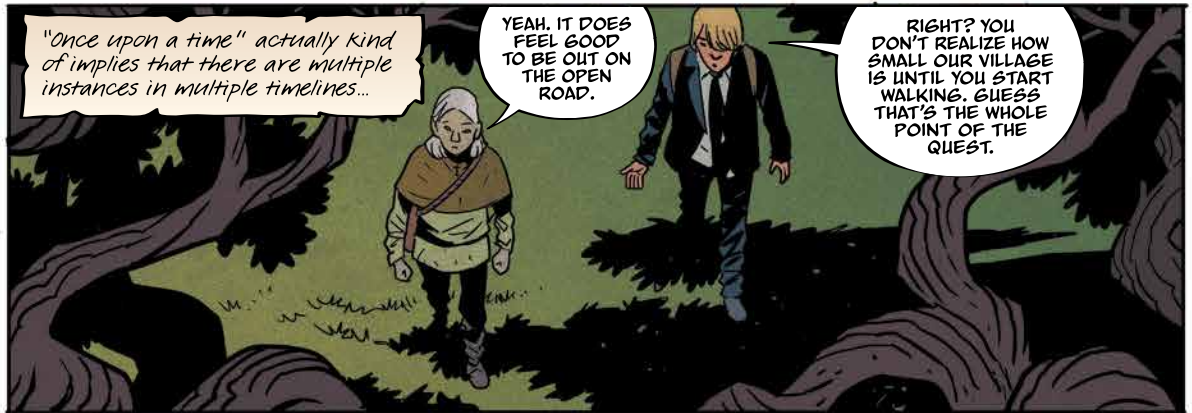


And "time"? It's relative. Don't even get me started.

EIGHTEEN YEARS AND YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHERE TO START.

FOLKLORD LORE IS... KIND OF FORBIDDEN. WHAT WAS I SUPPOSED TO DO? THE LIBRARIANS WON'T HELP.

MY PLAN WAS ALWAYS THIS. JUST HIT THE ROAD. SEE THE WORLD. MEET PEOPLE. GATHER INFORMATION.



"Once upon a time" actually kind of implies that there are multiple instances in multiple timelines...

YEAH. IT DOES FEEL GOOD TO BE OUT ON THE OPEN ROAD.

RIGHT? YOU DON'T REALIZE HOW SMALL OUR VILLAGE IS UNTIL YOU START WALKING. GUESS THAT'S THE WHOLE POINT OF THE QUEST.



Is that what all this is? Please, god, no.

SEE THE WORLD. BROADEN OUR HORIZONS. OUR VILLAGE IS DOWNRIGHT CLAUSTROPHOBIC.

WHERE ARE YOU FROM ORIGINALLY? IS THAT--IS THAT RUDE TO ASK?



I'M THE ONLY ELF IN THE VILLAGE. I'VE BEEN ASKED THAT MY ENTIRE LIFE.



WHEN YOU'RE THE ONLY KID WITH POINTY EARS... YOU DEFINITELY GET TREATED A LITTLE DIFFERENT.

I'M SORRY...



Nah. IT'S OKAY. I GOT TREATED BETTER THAN THE GNOME'S, THAT'S FOR SURE.



FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER I LIVED IN OUR VILLAGE.



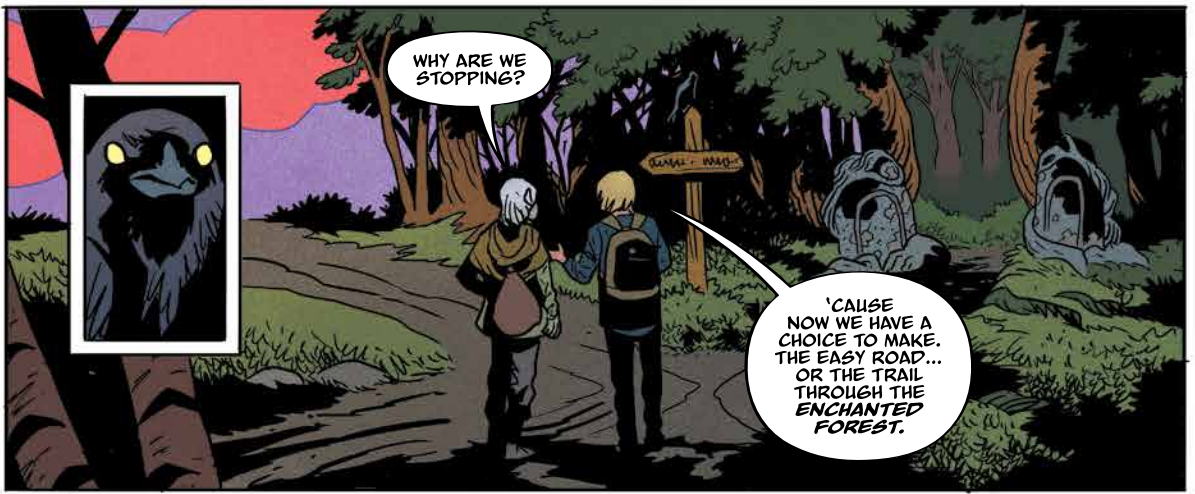
BUT ACCORDING TO MY DAD...



"...I WASN'T BORN THERE."







WHY ARE WE STOPPING?

'CAUSE NOW WE HAVE A CHOICE TO MAKE. THE EASY ROAD... OR THE TRAIL THROUGH THE ENCHANTED FOREST.



WELL, CONSIDERING OUR QUEST IS TO FIND THE FOLKLORDS AND NOT "VENTURE INTO THE ENCHANTED FOREST," WHY MAKE IT HARDER THAN IT ALREADY IS?



REALLY? IT'S A QUEST, ARCHER. YOU NEVER TAKE THE EASY ROAD.



YOU'VE BEEN READING TOO MANY BOOKS, ANSEL.



BUT WHATEVER YOU SAY, YOU'RE THE ONE WITH THE CHARMED LIFE.





HOLD UP, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

SEEMS HARMLESS...



... BUT THIS FOREST IS ANYTHING BUT. LET'S JUST KEEP OUR DIST--



WHOA!



NFFF



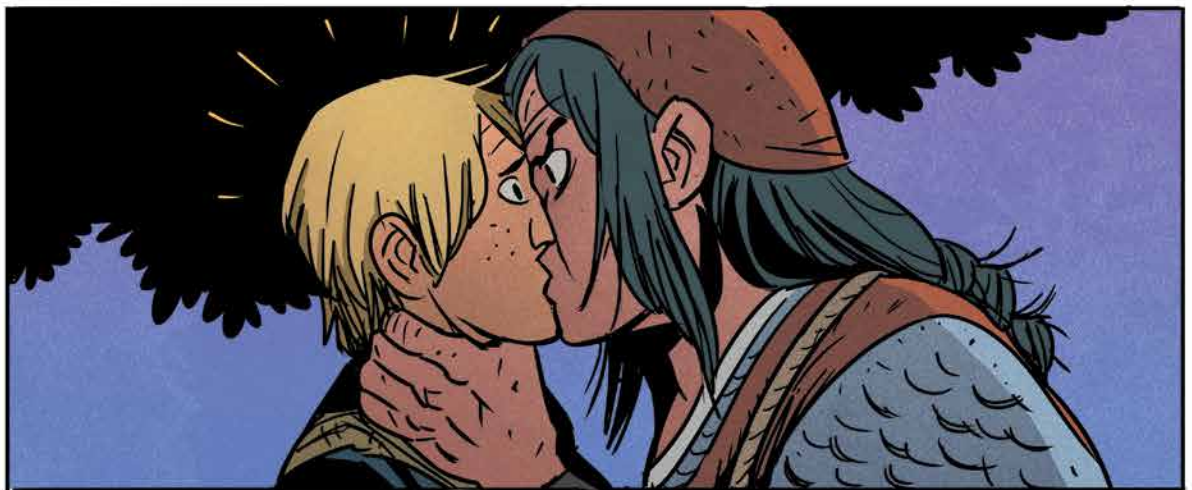
SORRY! DIDN'T SEE YOU THERE--



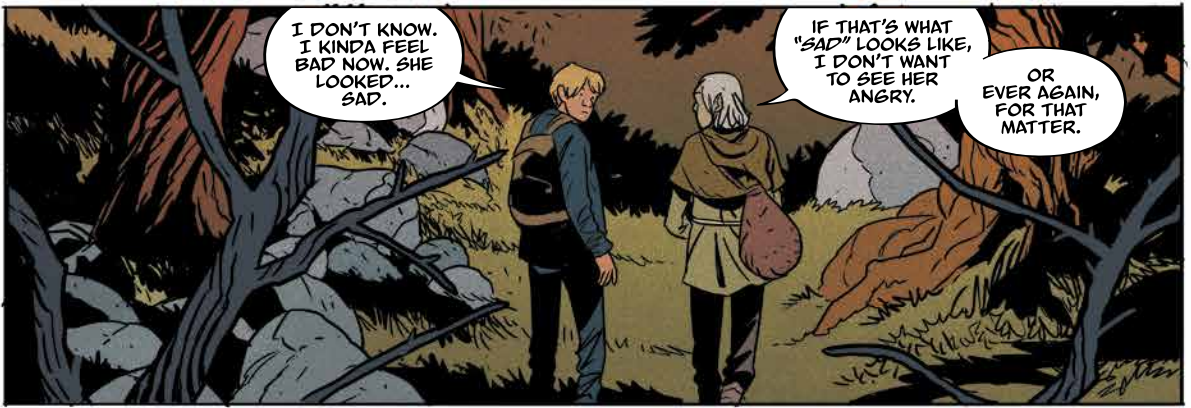
I GOT THIS.











I DON'T KNOW. I KINDA FEEL BAD NOW. SHE LOOKED... SAD.

IF THAT'S WHAT "SAD" LOOKS LIKE, I DON'T WANT TO SEE HER ANGRY.

OR EVER AGAIN, FOR THAT MATTER.



EITHER WAY, YOU PROBABLY SHOULDN'T HAVE HIT HER WITH A ROCK.

I SAVED YOUR LIFE.

YOU MADE AN ENEMY. WE WERE ONE GOAT-CURRY PIE FROM MAKING AN ALLY.

THAT THING IS NEVER GONNA BE YOUR--



YOU HEAR THAT?

...sobbbb...sobbbb...



sobbbb...sobbbb...sobbbb...



!sobbbb!

THIS IS TOTALLY A TRAP.



Come on. We haven't helped a *single person* so far on this quest. That's a bad sign.

We're *not* passing up another chance.



MA'AM? CAN WE HELP?



SNIFF? HELP? SNIFF?



I-I'M NOT SURE. I'M LOST. I'M HUNGRY. I'M TIRED.

I'VE BEEN IN THESE WOODS SO LONG, I...

...I'M SCARED.



HERE, HAVE SOME FRESH WATER.



TH-THANK YOU. THESE WOODS... THEY'RE A CRUEL PLACE.

EVERYONE LOOKING OUT FOR THEMSELVES.



I'M ANGEL, AND THIS IS MY GOOD FRIEND ARCHER.

I-I AM GRETA.



WELL, GRETA. YOU'RE NOT ALONE ANYMORE.

LET'S FIND A PLACE TO SET UP CAMP AND WE'LL GET IT ALL SORTED.

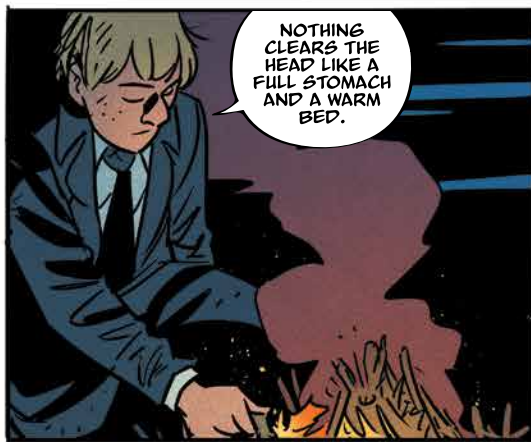


Are you flirting right now? You think Demure would approve?

I'm helping. It's nothing more than that.



I HAVE SNACKS IN MY PACK IF YOU'RE HUNGRY.



NOTHING CLEARS THE HEAD LIKE A FULL STOMACH AND A WARM BED.



WHAT IS THIS MAGIC?

ARE YOU WIZARDS?



YEAH, ANGEL. ARE YOU A WIZARD?

WHERE DO YOU GET ALL THAT STUFF?

NO, NO... THEY'RE JUST SOME LITTLE GADGETS I MAKE UP.



JUST SOME TOOLS TO HELP US ON OUR QUEST.



Oh, YOUR QUEST? WHAT IS IT?



WE'RE TRYING TO FIND THE FOLKLORDS.

BUT WE HAVE NO IDEA WHERE TO LOOK.



THE FOLKLORDS? ARE YOU SERIOUS?!

YOU TWO MUST BE VERY BRAVE.



Uh... YEAH. GUESS WE ARE.

LIBRARIANS WILL EXECUTE US IF WE'RE FOUND OUT. PRETTY GUTSY.

WHAT ABOUT YOU, GRETA?



I...

I WAS SEPARATED FROM MY BROTHER AS WE BECAME LOST IN THE WOODS, AND I'M AFRAID...

...AFRAID THE WORST HAS HAPPENED.



I HAVE HEARD TALES OF THE **WEeping WOOD KILLER** THAT HAS ROAMED THIS FOREST FOR YEARS. BUT I THOUGHT IT WAS A STORY TO SCARE CHILDREN.



IT HAS BEEN MANY DAYS SINCE I LOST MY BROTHER, AND I THINK THE KILLER MAY HAVE TAKEN HIM.



THE LEGEND SAYS THAT THE KILLER CHOKES THEIR VICTIMS...



...AND FORCES THEM TO SWALLOW A SEED HIDDEN INSIDE A SWEET CANDY.



"AFTER TORTURING THE VICTIMS, THEY ARE SAID TO BURY THEM IN THE GROUND."



"THE SEED INSIDE THE CORPSE CONTINUES TO GROW..."



CREATING THIS FOREST FULL OF BONE-TREES... THE BONES OF THEIR VICTIMS GROWN OVER THE YEARS. THE TREES ACTING AS GRAVESTONES...



YIKES. WHAT KIND OF MONSTER WOULD DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

Oh wait. I think we already bumped into her.

I hit her with a rock. Ansel offered her food.



I DON'T THINK THAT WAS THE KILLER.

DON'T WORRY, GRETA. TOMORROW WE'RE GOING TO FIND YOUR BROTHER.

YOUR QUEST IS OUR QUEST.





...hurry...!



...help...!



ARCHER?!



WHAT'S THIS?



CANDY...?



Oh NO...



NO...
WHOLE THING
COVERED IN
CANDY...

GRETA
WAS
RIGHT...



GRETA...



CANDY
COATING...
MUST BE
DRUGGED...



Hee!

Too
laaaate...!



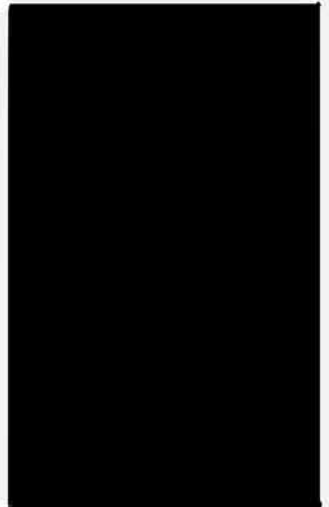
...GOT
TO...



...got
to...



...help...






folklords


is just a clever title. To intrigue you. A hook.

The **ONCE UPON A TIME...** is real. Trust me.


Are you reading this?
Or are you living it?




For the longest time
I thought it wasn't.



Your "wizard items"
that you make?



You're going
to need them.



You're going
to need all of
that and
more...

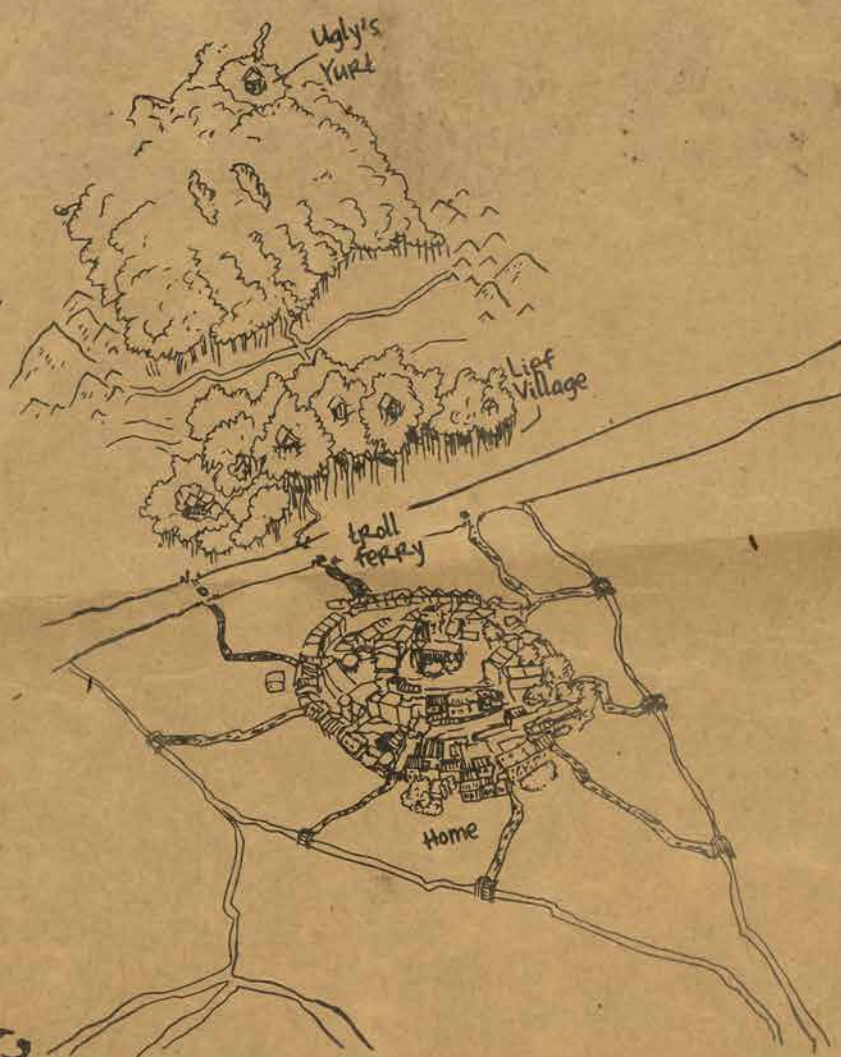


...if you want to
make it to your
real home...alive.



WAKEY?

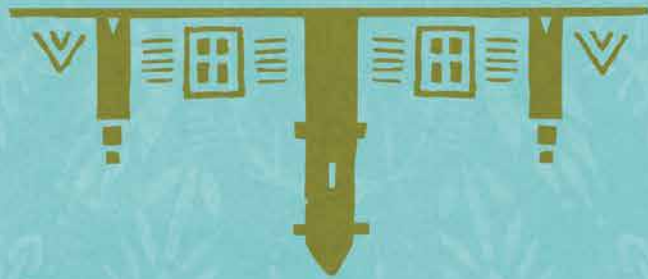




Ansel's
Known
World



CHAPTER
THREE



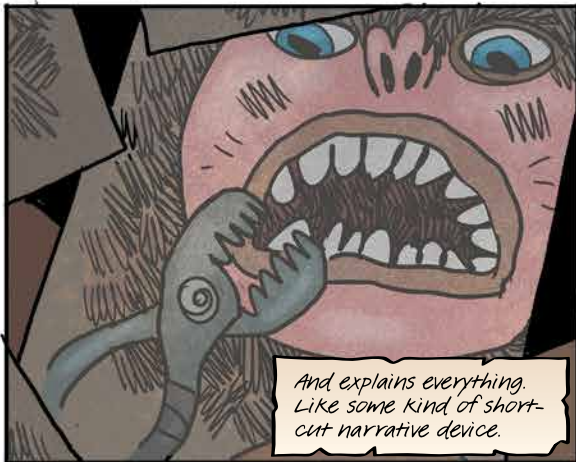


"ONCE UPON A TIME"?

Maybe this was a bedtime story.



But I swear. I am NOT the voice that's gonna hold your hand through this...



And explains everything. Like some kind of short-cut narrative device.



At least...God...I hope I'm not that.



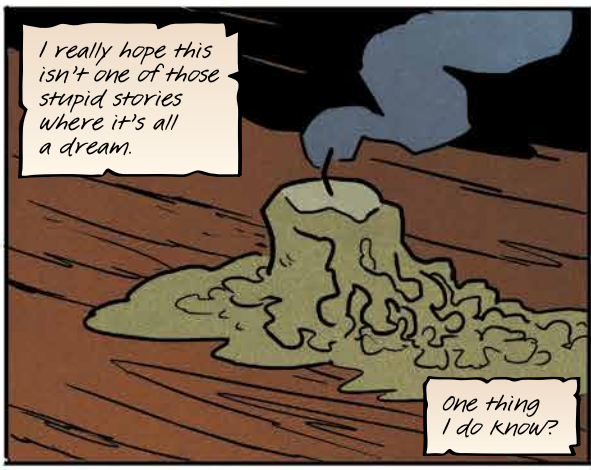
I'm definitely not omniscient. I wish.



In a lot of ways, I'm just as in the dark as you are.



Taking up space until I can make sense of it all.



I really hope this isn't one of those stupid stories where it's all a dream.

One thing I do know?

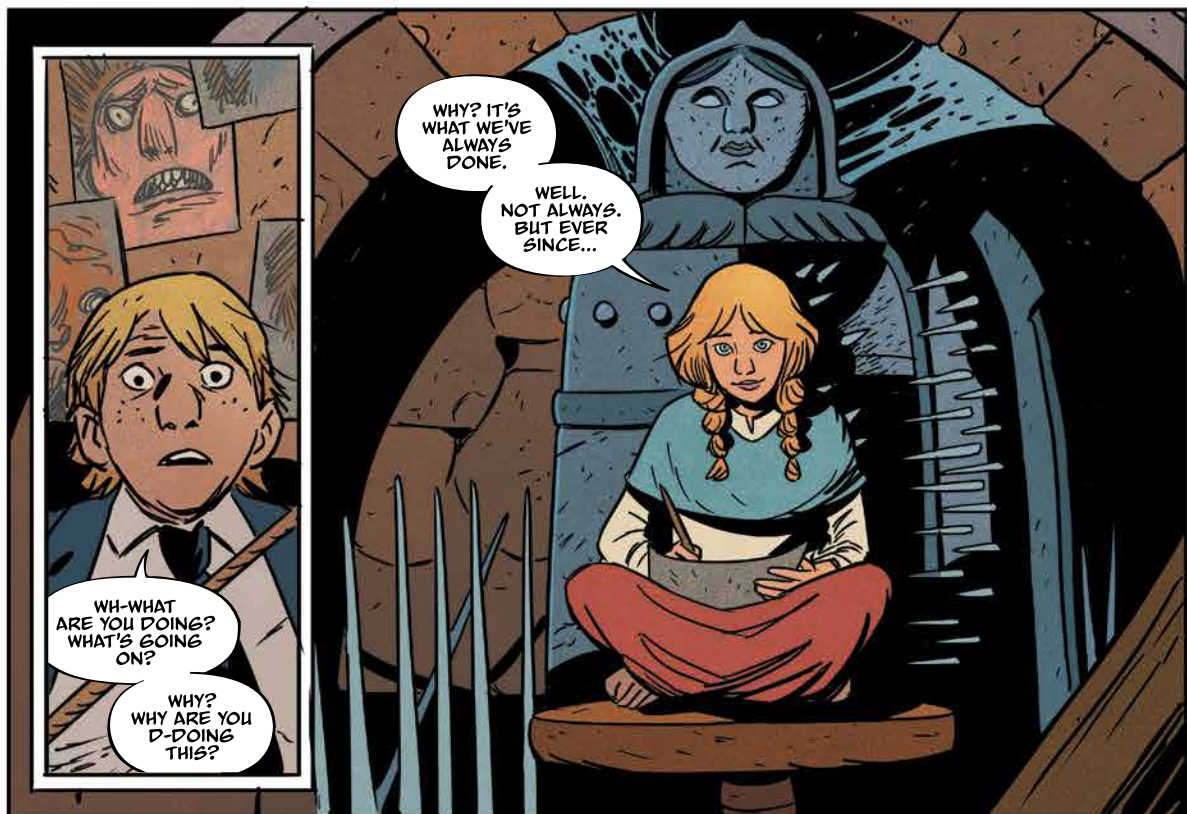


This is all very real.

WOW. YOU ACTUALLY FAINTED.



IT'S WAY LESS GOOD WHEN THEY LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS.

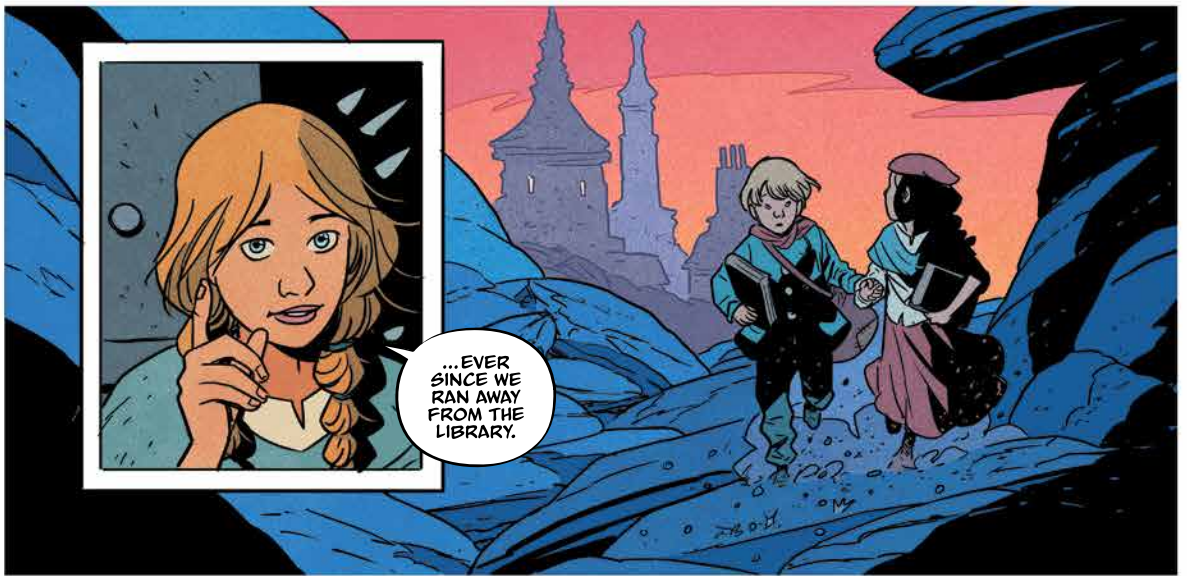


WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WHAT'S GOING ON?

WHY? WHY ARE YOU D-DOING THIS?

WHY? IT'S WHAT WE'VE ALWAYS DONE.

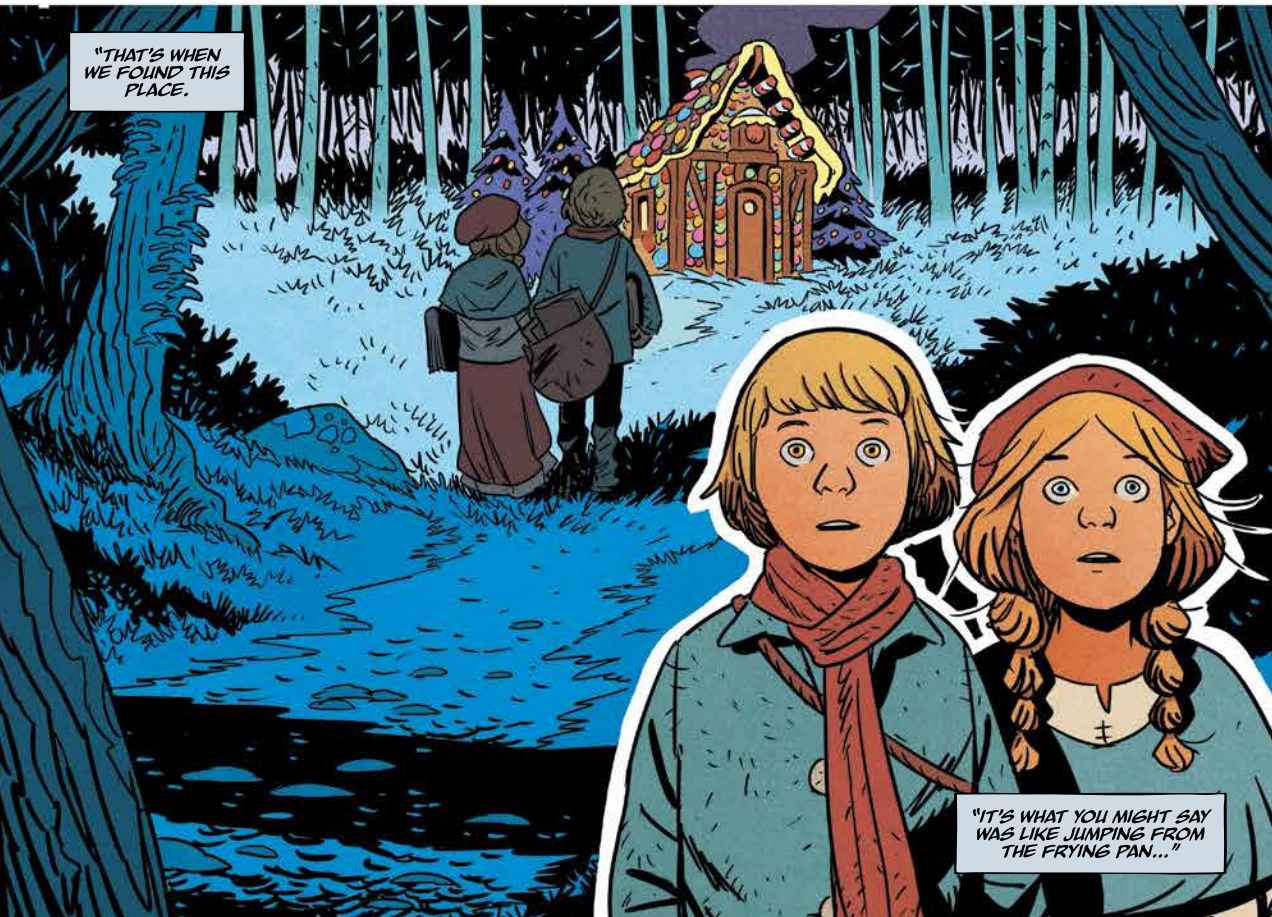
WELL. NOT ALWAYS. BUT EVER SINCE...



...EVER SINCE WE RAN AWAY FROM THE LIBRARY.



"ME AND HANZ WERE KIDS BACK THEN. WE STOLED SOME BOOKS AND FIGURED WE'D NEVER GO BACK.



"THAT'S WHEN WE FOUND THIS PLACE.

"IT'S WHAT YOU MIGHT SAY WAS LIKE JUMPING FROM THE FRYING PAN..."



"...INTO THE FIRE."

"HOW WERE WE SUPPOSED TO KNOW? WE SAW A HOUSE COVERED IN CANDY. IT WAS A DIFFERENT TIME."



"BACK THEN? NO ONE LOCKED THEIR DOORS, AND YOU COULD TRUST A GINGERBREAD COTTAGE."



"HOW WERE WE SUPPOSED TO KNOW THIS OLD GUY, TINES, WAS IN LEAGUE WITH THE LIBRARIANS?"



"HOW WERE WE SUPPOSED TO KNOW THAT ALL THE KIDS THAT EVER ESCAPED ENDED UP HERE..."



"...AND WERE NEVER SEEN AGAIN?"

"TINES TOLD US ALL KINDS OF STORIES, ABOUT FOLKLORDS AND WRITERS' ROOMS AND THE TWISTED WORLDS THEY COME FROM.

"WORLDS FULL OF PAIN AND DARKNESS.

"HE TAUGHT US ALL KINDS OF THINGS... DESPAIR. CONTROL. POWER.

"HE TAUGHT US SO WELL, WE FINALLY TRIED HIS IDEAS OUT ON HIM.

"PROBLEM WAS, AFTER WE 'ET HIM? ALL WE HAD LEFT TO EAT WAS THE CANDY.

"WASN'T LONG, I FIGURED OUT THE CANDY WASN'T ANY GOOD."





NOT MUCH TO EAT OUT HERE BUT THE CANDY, SO WE DID WHAT WE COULD.



HANZ STILL EATS THE CANDY BUT I DON'T MUCH CARE FOR IT.



WH-WHAT DID YOU DO WITH MY FRIEND? WHERE IS ARCHER?!



Oh...DON'T WORRY. YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO SEE HIM AGAIN.



WHAT? WHAT DID YOU DO?!



DON'T WORRY 'BOUT IT. WHAT I MEANT TO SAY IS: YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO SEE ANYONE AGAIN.



GRETT...UHHH?



YOU
GET PURTTY
PITCHURR
DONE?

ALMOST,
HANZ. YOU CAN
GET STARTED
AGAIN, NOW
THAT HE'S
AWAKE.



HEEE
I GO GET
TOYZ!



YOU SEE? I
ALWAYS LOVED
PAINTING.

AND AFTER WE
'ET THAT WITCHY
LIBRARIAN?



I STARTED
GETTIN' THESE VISIONS.
I LIKE TO CALL THEM
INSPIRATIONS.



THE DARK WORLD TINES SHOWED US? IT DIDN'T HAVE NO TREES. SO WE'RE DOIN' THE OPPOSITE: PLANTIN' 'EM.

AND EVERY TIME WE GET A NEW VISITOR?



I MAKE A LITTLE PAINTING OF THEM.



ALL OF THOSE... TH-THOSE ARE PEOPLE YOU'VE HAD HERE?



I MAKE A LITTLE SOLVENIR OF 'EM. SO WE DON'T FORGET.



P-PLEASE, GRETA... DON'T DO THIS. THERE'S MORE... MORE TO LIFE THAN THIS.

IF YOU JUST GET OUT OF THIS PLACE, YOU CAN--



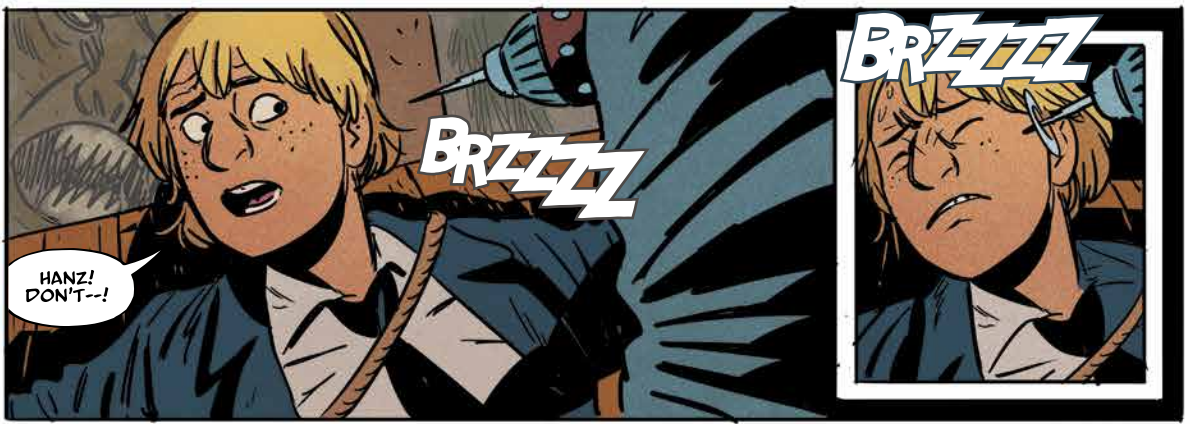
THAT'S ENOUGH TALK.

HANZ? YOU READY?

NEHHHAH!









BANG

COME ON!



CRASH

NGHH!



THUNK



GET OFF MY BROTHER, YOU UGLY BRUTE!



HANZ HUG YOU TIL YOU CRACK!



NGGH!

THAT'S IT, HANZ! HUG UNTIL SHE STOPS MOVING!









WHAT ARE YOU DOING?



I-I...



TOLD YOU TO CLEAR OUT.

I-I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT NEED HELP.

DOES IT LOOK LIKE I NEED HELP?



SHOULD'VE DONE THIS A LONG TIME AGO. THEY WERE NOTHING BUT COLD-BLOODED KILLERS.

scrтч
scrтч



TRIED TO GIVE THEM THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT. IT'S JUST HARD TO REALLY KNOW SOMEONE.

scrтч

scrтч

DAMMIT! THING WON'T LIGHT.



HEY...



BETTER GET FAR AWAY. FUMES FROM THIS PLACE WILL PROBABLY BE... DANGEROUS.



THANKS FOR THAT BACK THERE.

I'M... I'M SORRY MY FRIEND ATTACKED YOU THE OTHER DAY.



DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. I'M USED TO IT.



YOUR NAME ISN'T "UGLY." WHAT IS IT, REALLY?

I'VE BEEN CALLED THAT SO LONG, KID, I DON'T REMEMBER WHAT MY NAME IS ANYMORE.



THING IS? I DON'T REALLY CARE. I JUST OWN IT.



YOU CAN THINK OF YOURSELF HOWEVER YOU WANT. BUT AT THE END OF THE DAY? IT'S THE WORLD THAT'S GONNA NAME YOU.



DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOU CALL YOURSELF.



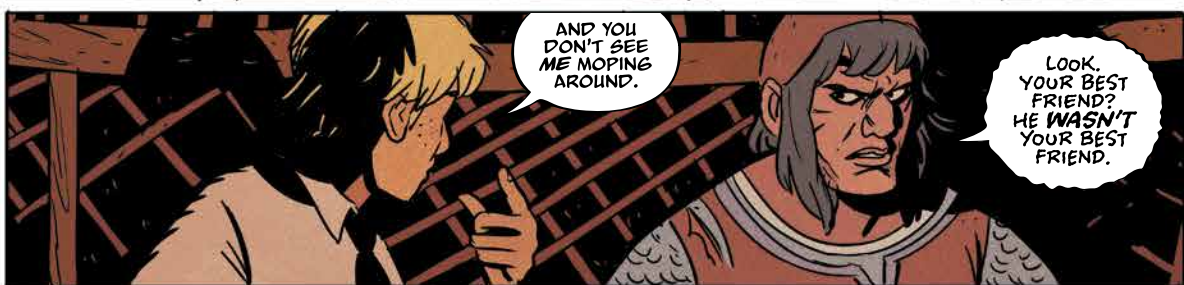
NOW, COME ON. THAT'S A REALLY JADED THING TO SAY. YOU DEFINE YOU. NOT THE "WORLD."

YEAH? GET BACK TO ME IN A FEW YEARS, KID. LET ME KNOW HOW THAT GOES.



I'LL TELL YOU HOW IT'S GOING NOW.

I ALREADY LEFT MY VILLAGE, LOST MY POTENTIAL/MAYBE GIRLFRIEND, GOT MY BEST FRIEND KILLED, AND STARTED AN ILLEGAL QUEST THAT'S PUNISHABLE BY DEATH.



AND YOU DON'T SEE ME MOPING AROUND.

LOOK. YOUR BEST FRIEND? HE WASN'T YOUR BEST FRIEND.



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

I FOLLOWED YOU TWO. THAT NIGHT AFTER YOU ATTACKED ME?



I WATCHED YOU BY THE FIRE THE NIGHT YOU FOUND GRETA. AND I SAW GRETA AND ARCHER WHISPERING. HE RAN OFF.

YOUR BEST FRIEND? SOLD YOU OUT.



WHAT? WHY WOULD HE? THAT CAN'T BE.

BELIEVE ME OR DON'T. NO SKIN OFF MY NOSE.



... WHAT'S YOUR QUEST?

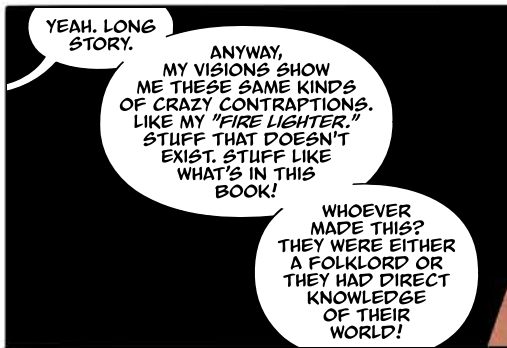


I'M TRYING TO FIND THE FOLKLORDS. AND AS IT HAPPENS? I FOUND THIS IN THE COTTAGE BACK THERE. LOOK!



THE FOLKLORDS? I THINK THEY'RE CONNECTED TO MY VISIONS.

"VISIONS"?



YEAH. LONG STORY.

ANYWAY, MY VISIONS SHOW ME THESE SAME KINDS OF CRAZY CONTRACTIONS. LIKE MY "FIRE LIGHTER." STUFF THAT DOESN'T EXIST. STUFF LIKE WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK!

WHOEVER MADE THIS? THEY WERE EITHER A FOLKLORD OR THEY HAD DIRECT KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR WORLD!



HUH.



"IF FOUND, PLEASE RETURN TO THE BRANCH LIBRARY OF BANNED BOOKS-- ON PENALTY OF DEATH."

WELL. IF THIS IS THE CLUE TO THE FOLKLORDS? THEN I KNOW WHERE YOU NEED TO GO.



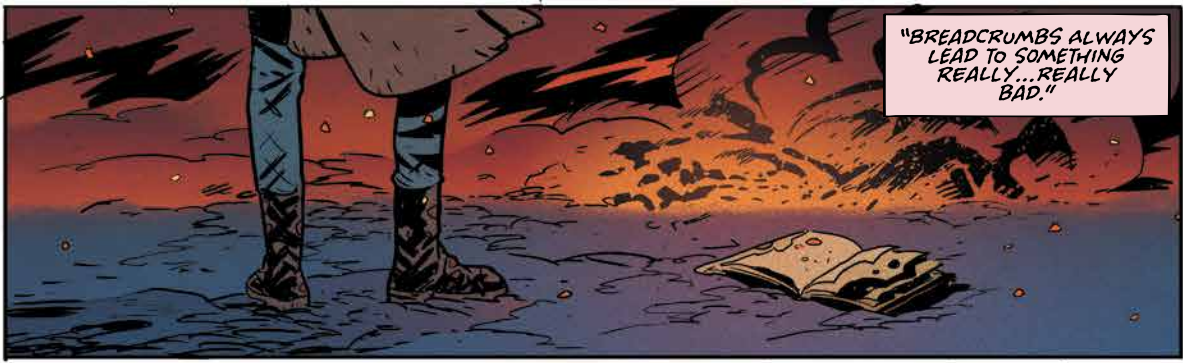
THIS IS IT! THIS IS JUST THE BREADCRUMB WE NEED!



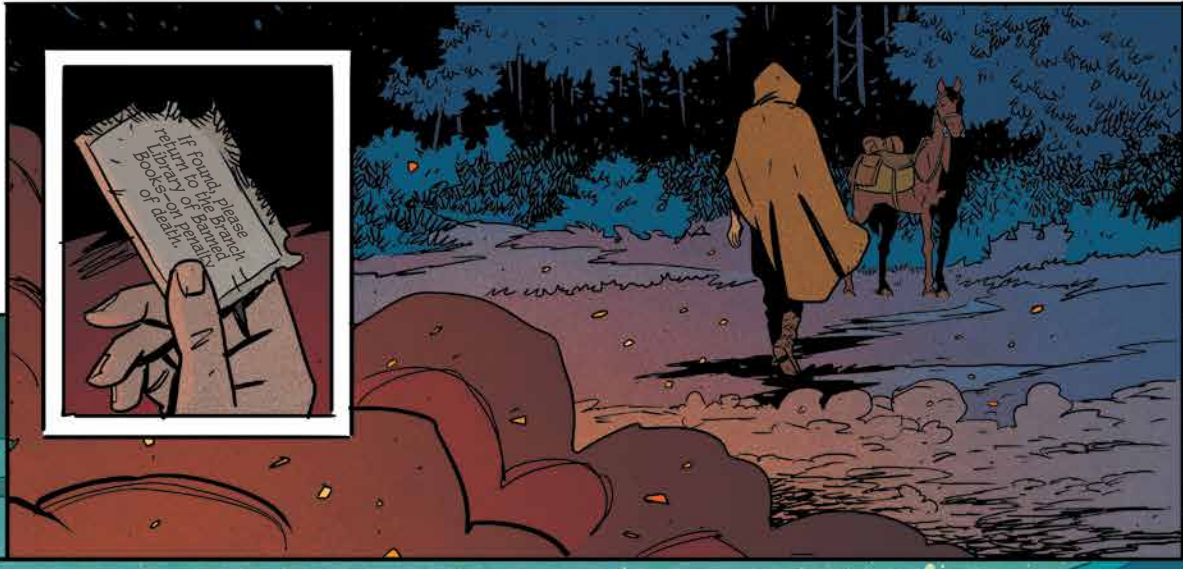
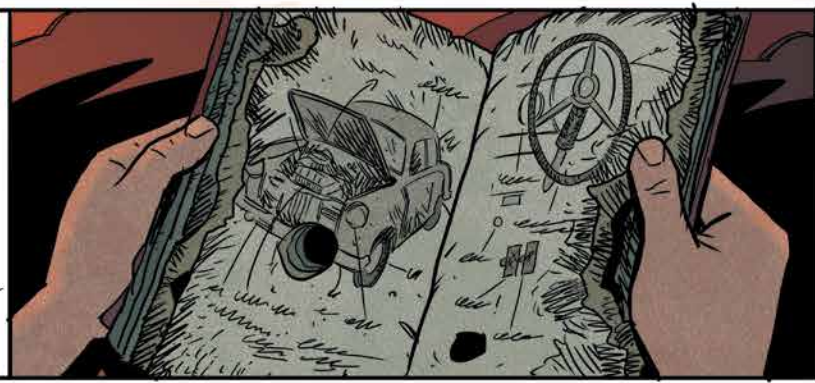
"WE"?



UGH. JUST, PLEASE. DON'T SAY "BREADCRUMB."



"BREADCRUMBS ALWAYS LEAD TO SOMETHING REALLY...REALLY BAD."



If found, please return to the branch library of nearest Books-of-Death.



So, if I WAS omniscient?



This is where I'd talk about the dark clouds on the horizon.

But are there dark clouds? Is there impending doom?

I don't know. I told you. I'm NOT omniscient.

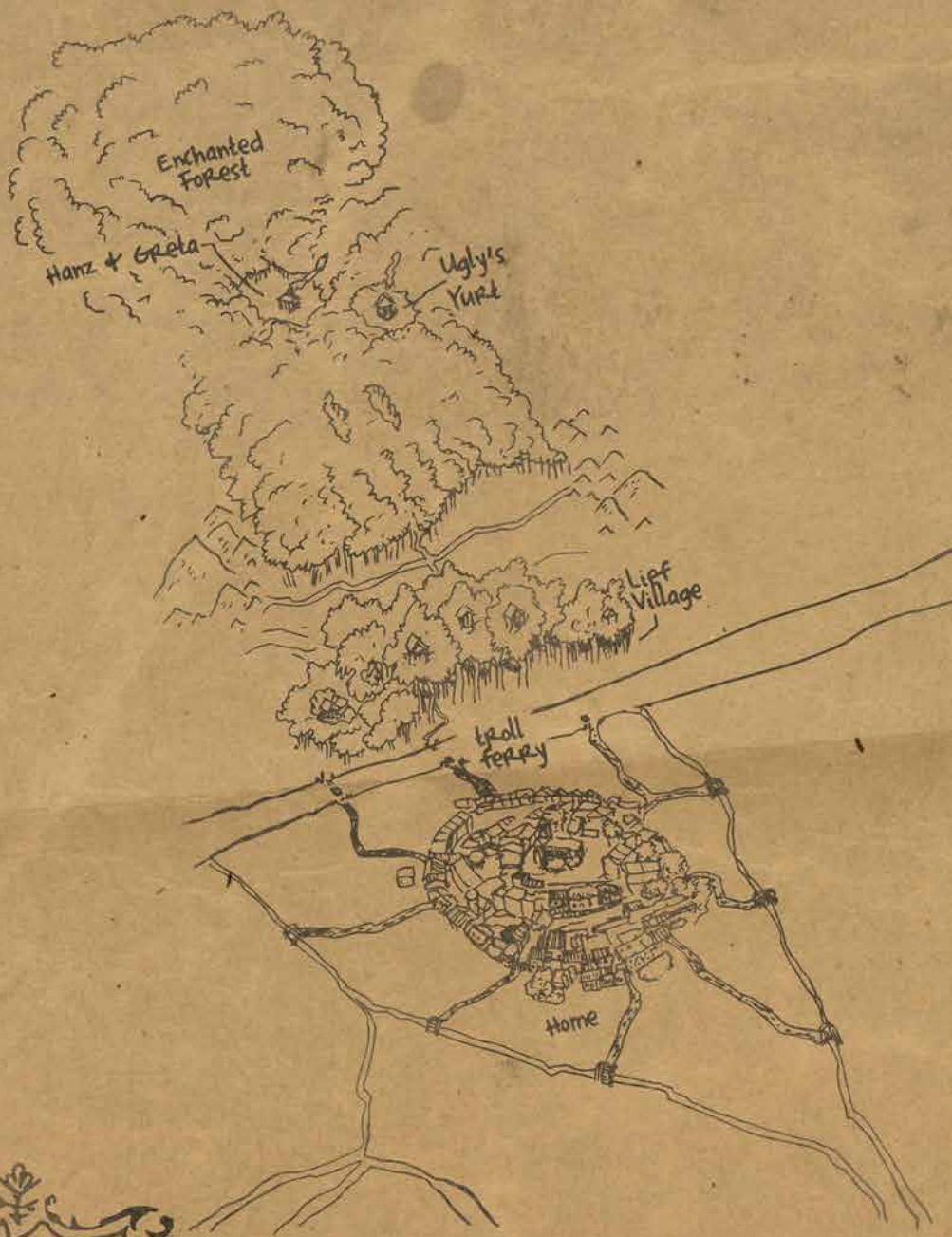


If you're reading this? Maybe YOU'RE the omniscient one.



YOU'VE read a lot of books. Why don't YOU tell me?

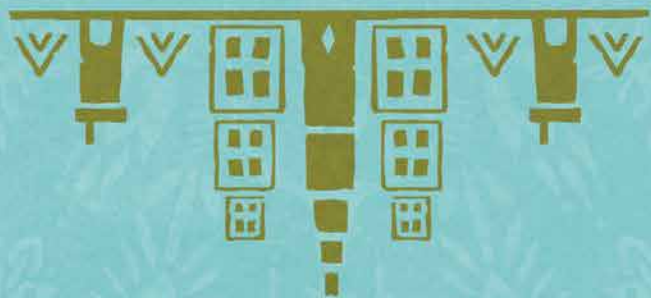
BRANCH LIBRARY OF BANNED BOOKS




Ansel's
Known
World



CHAPTER
FOUR





Have you figured it out yet?


IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE ANYONE'S ASKED ME A QUESTION ABOUT...ANYTHING. YOU'RE SURE?

ONCE UPON A TIME...

Yeah. I know. I've said that before.

YEAH. REALLY, I WANT TO HEAR IT. IT'S THE WHOLE POINT OF THE QUEST.

LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF BY LEARNING ABOUT THE WORLD AROUND YOU, RIGHT?



But it's like an incantation. Repetition with a purpose.

'Cause I'm pretty sure this has happened a lot of times. Don't worry. You're getting there. You're nearly caught up...

ALL RIGHT. WELL...EVERY KID THINKS THEY'RE AN OUTCAST AT SOME POINT. FEELS LIKE THEY DON'T BELONG.

IT'S A "PHASE." SOMETHING EVERY KID GOES THROUGH. BUT ME?



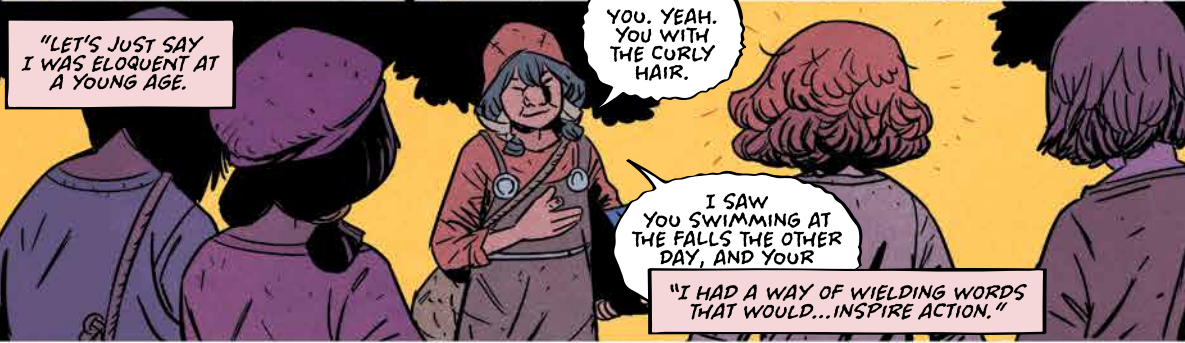
"IT WAS REAL OBVIOUS I WASN'T GOING TO EVER BELONG."

HEY! UGLY!



snicker

giggle



"LET'S JUST SAY I WAS ELOQUENT AT A YOUNG AGE."

YOU. YEAH. YOU WITH THE CURLY HAIR.

I SAW YOU SWIMMING AT THE FALLS THE OTHER DAY, AND YOUR

"I HAD A WAY OF WIELDING WORDS THAT WOULD...INSPIRE ACTION."



WHY YOU BIG NASTY TROLL--!



IN FACT, WHEN I SAW IT

"REALLY I WAS JUST SEARCHING FOR A REASON. I HAD TO BE LIKE I WAS FOR SOME REASON."

"I WAS CONVINCED I WAS SPECIAL. DIFFERENT."



OOF!

"CURSED."



UGH... YOU'RE EVEN WORSE UP CLOSE...

"I HAD READ A LOT OF BOOKS. I WAS ALSO CONVINCED I KNEW HOW TO LIFT THE CURSE."

"IT WAS GOING TO TAKE FOREVER TO GET 'TRUE LOVE'S KISS.'"



EH...
N-NO...WHY'D YOU--?!



"SO I WAS TRYING TO ACCELERATE THE PROCESS."



"NO WAY WAS I GOING TO GO MY WHOLE LIFE LIKE THIS. I KNEW SOMETHING WASN'T RIGHT."

"THE WAY I LOOKED? IT DIDN'T MAKE SENSE."



HONEY?
ARE YOU OKAY?

I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT.



YOU KNOW YOU WILL ALWAYS BE LOVED.



"BUT I WAS OKAY WITH IT. I WAS BEING FORGED INTO IRON."



"NOTHING BOTHERED ME."





"MY QUEST WAS AN EASY ONE. 'LIFT MY CURSE,' I LEFT AT EIGHTEEN AND I NEVER CAME BACK.



"YEARS ON THE ROAD AND ALWAYS THE SAME."

GHKE



"SPREADING PEACE AND LOVE..."

"ONE KISS AT A TIME."



"EVENTUALLY I STOPPED EXPECTING RESULTS."



"AND JUST STARTED HAVING FUN."

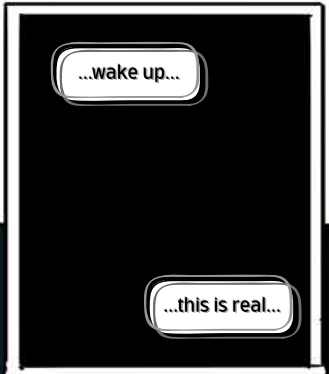


"ENJOYING LIFE..."



"...INSTEAD OF FIGHTING WHO I WAS."

"I GUESS I JUST GREW INTO MY SKIN."



WAKE UP





THIS IS IT.
THE BRANCH
LIBRARY OF
BANNED BOOKS.



YOU SURE
ABOUT
THIS?

WE'VE COME THIS
FAR, AND THERE'S A
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
ALL YOUR OTHER
ADVENTURES AND
THIS ONE.



YEAH?
WHAT'S
THAT?



YOU HAVE
A PARTNER.
WE'RE WORKING
TOGETHER. AND
NOTHING IS
GONNA...



...stop
us...

AW,
HELLHOUNDS...



YOU'RE A LONG WAY FROM LIEF VILLAGE, ANSEL. I SEE YOU'VE FOUND A QUESTING COMPANION.

BUT YOU'RE MAKING SO MUCH NOISE, THE LIBRARY WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO--



RUN.



RUN!



NOT SO FAST.

LUNGH!



BACK OFF!



YOU DARE SILLY THE ARMOR OF A LIBRARIAN?!



NOT...=NGHE...
AFRAID OF YOU PUNK
LIBRARIANS...!

Shhh! STOP
TALKING!



GAHHH! THAT'S
ALL YOU GUYS
DO! SHUSHING
EVERYBODY ALL
THE TIME. IT'S...
GETTING...
REAL...



...OLD!



SHUKK

ARGH!

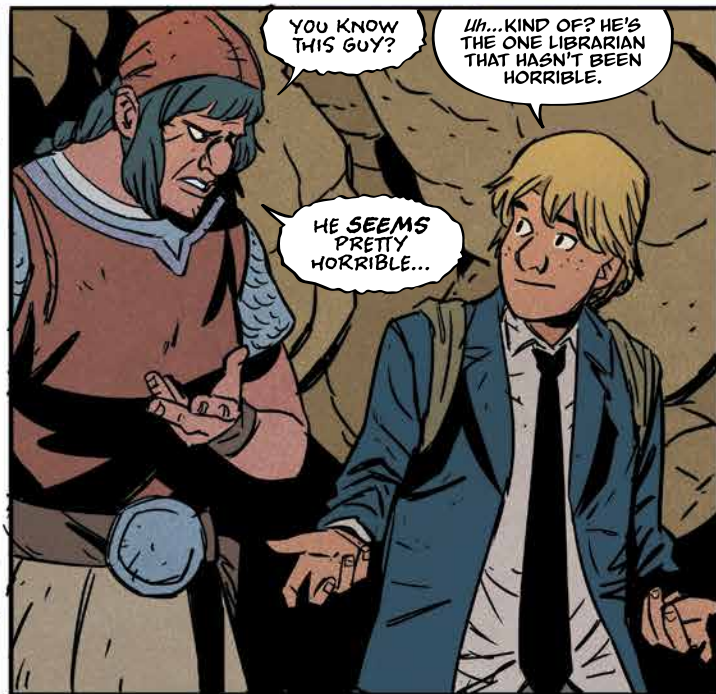


GHKK!



LET...
=NGHE
ME...
UP!







Shh!

YEAH, YEAH. WE GET IT.



SO... ARE YOU LIKE SOME KIND OF ROGUE LIBRARIAN? SPURNED BY THE ORDER? OUT FOR REVENGE?!

YOU NEED TO STOP LIVING IN A FANTASY, KID, AND FOCUS ON THE TASK AT HAND. TAKE A PAGE OUT OF THE LIBRARIAN'S HANDBOOK...



YEAH? WHICH PAGE?

THE ONE THAT SAYS "DON'T TALK SO MUCH!"

THE ONLY WAY YOU'LL MAKE IT IN ALIVE IS IF YOU DO EVERYTHING I SAY.



DON'T MAKE ANY NOISE OR THE BLOOD FALCONS WILL HEAR YOU. THEY'RE THE ONLY OUTER DEFENSE... BUT THEY CAN HEAR EVERYTHING.



"Blood Falcons"? He's kidding, right? That's a Librarian joke?

YOU EVER SEE A LIBRARIAN JOKE?



HERE.



QUICK!
JUMP
IN...!



THIS COULD BE A TRAP. IS HE SETTING US UP?

SOMETIMES... YOU JUST HAVE TO HAVE FAITH IN PEOPLE.

I DID, KID. TRUST ME. IT GETS OLD QUICK.



NOTICE THAT HE DIDN'T FOLLOW US DOWN HERE. I DON'T LIKE IT--

SHH!



YOU BOTH TALK AND SPLASH WAY TOO MUCH. IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL YOU'LL GET US ALL KILLED.

HOW'D YOU--?



FOLLOW ME, QUIETLY, AND STICK TO THE EDGES.



SO WHAT IS YOUR ROLE IN ALL THIS? I SAW YOU IN MY VISION.

WE ALL HAVE VISIONS. IF I KNEW WHAT IT MEANT, I'D TELL YOU.



DO YOU HAVE A NAME OR...?

CALL ME SAL.

SAL PARADISE.



OKAY, SAL. DID THEY DO SOMETHING TO Y--



snif
sniff



GHI KAHN
SHMELL
GHOO...



W-WHAT WAS THAT?

LIBRARIANS HAVE BEEN EXPERIMENTING. BLINDING TROLLS. HEIGHTENING THEIR OTHER SENSES.

THAT'S AWFUL! I-I KNOW A TROLL.

CONGRATULATIONS. BUT RIGHT NOW, YOU NEED TO FOCUS.



THERE'S A LOT MORE TO THIS WORLD THAN THEY LET YOU KNOW. THE LIBRARIANS LIKE YOU TO THINK THEY'RE THE AUTHORITY.



THEY PRETEND THEY'RE KEEPING YOU SAFE. THEY WANT YOU TO THINK THEY'RE SHARING KNOWLEDGE. ENCOURAGING IDEAS.

THIS PLACE...IT AIN'T A REPOSITORY OF KNOWLEDGE. IT'S A PRISON.

PRISON?



plnk
plnk

DAMMIT!

YOU'LL SEE SOON ENOUGH.



THEY'RE CONTROLLING IDEAS. STEERING THOUGHT.

BUT YOU'RE ONE OF THEM.



I WAS. I TRIED TO FIGHT THEM ONCE.

I STARTED FOLK WAR ONE. MAYBE YOU'VE HEARD OF IT.

TH-THAT WAS YOU?!

YEAH. GOT ME EXILED.

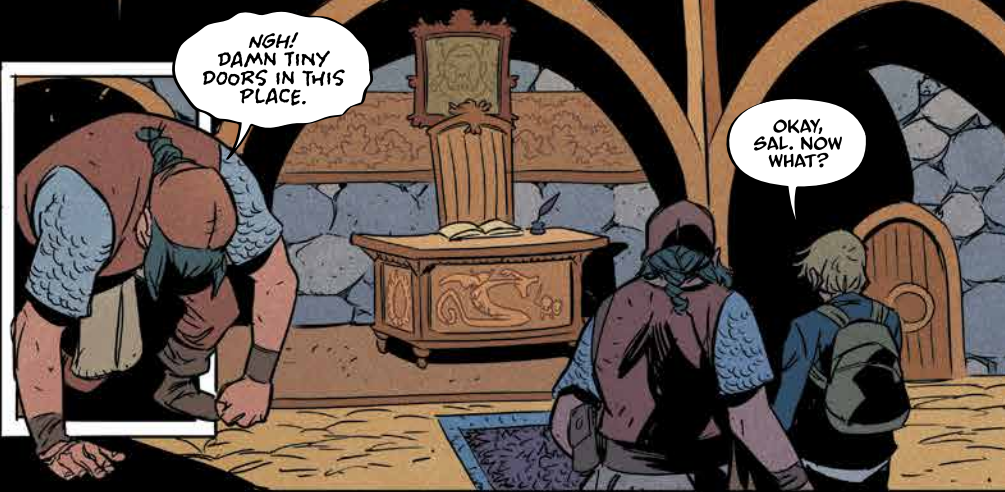


THEN I REALIZED I NEEDED HELP. IT'S BIGGER THAN ONE LIBRARIAN. OR ONE KID ON A QUEST.



THIS IS IT. YOU READY?

YOU KNOW I AM.









QUIET...
LOOK...!



...stem
to stern...
just like the
vision...



Who goes
there?!

No
witnesses...



Uh... JUST
PASSING
THROUGH,
FELLAS...!





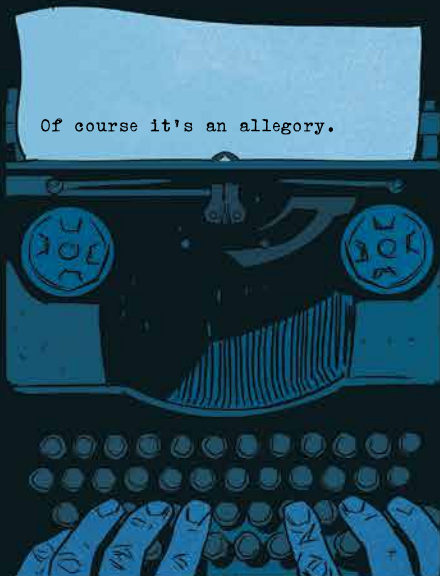
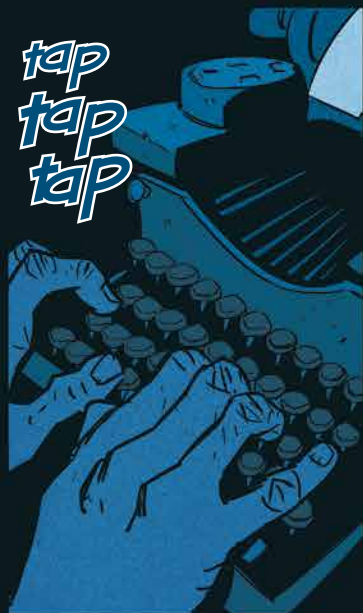
WHOA!



ARCHER?!
IS THAT
YOU?

*Allegories. I really
hate 'em.*

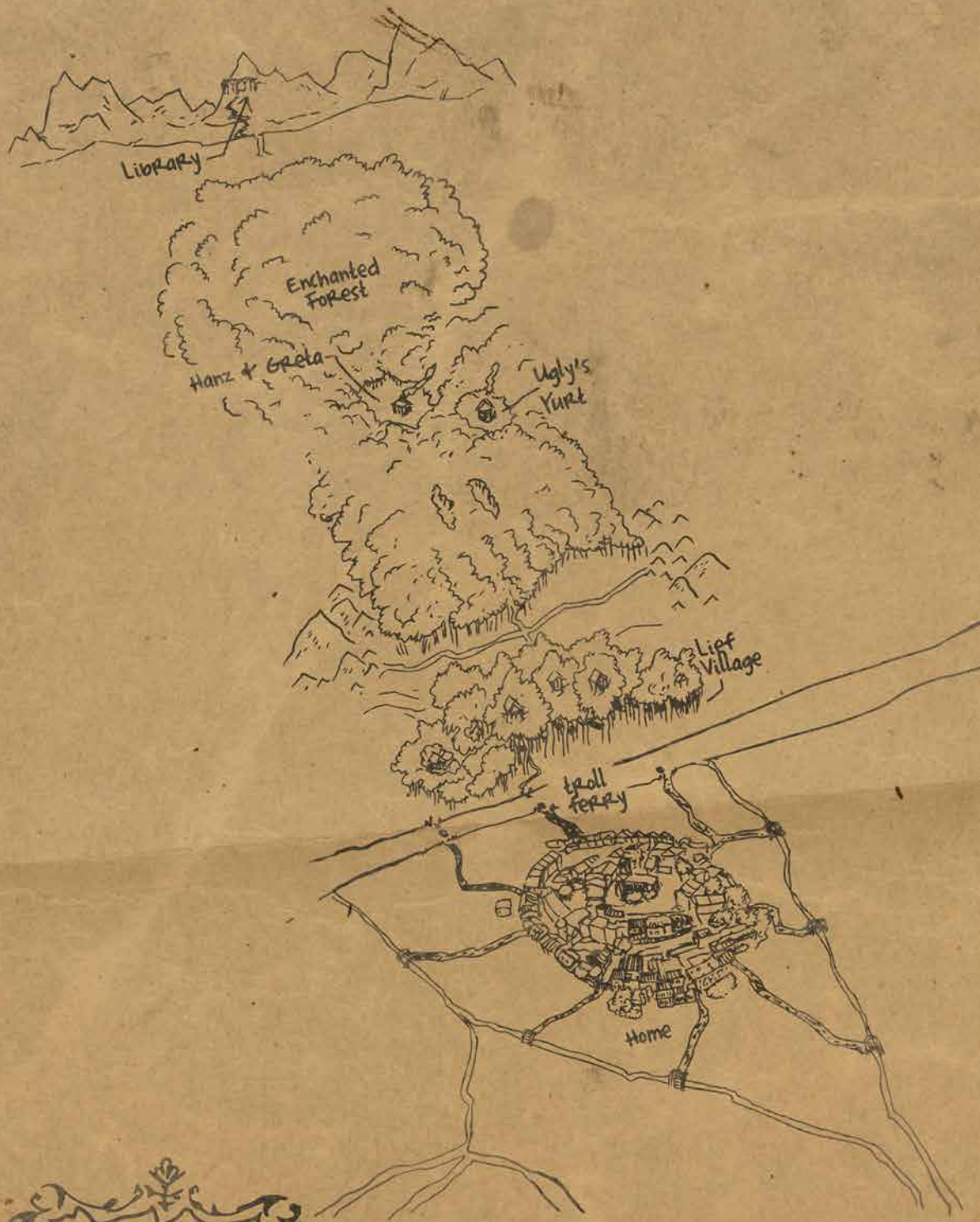




Life is
nothing but
allegory.

To be
continued.





Ansel's
Known
World



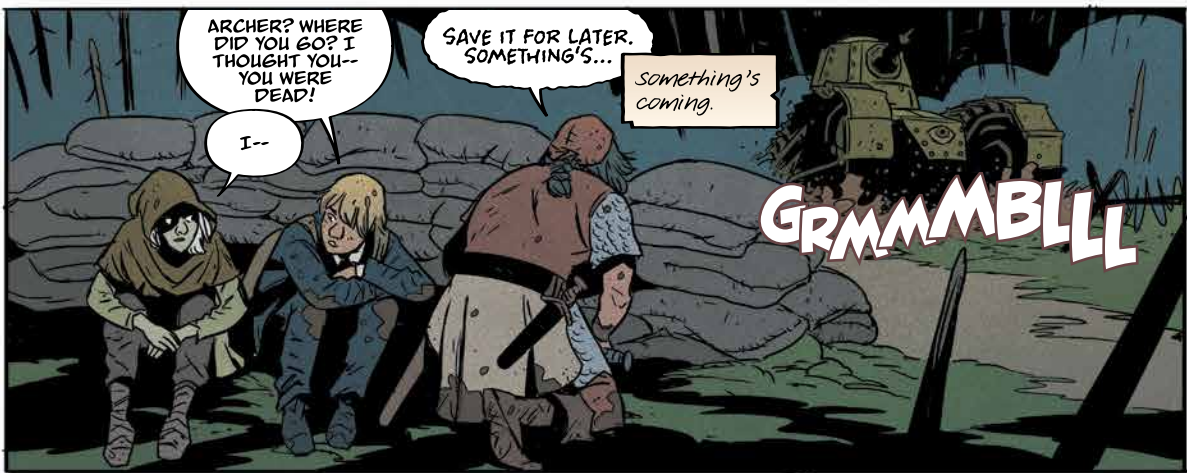
CHAPTER
FIVE





This is it. No more running.

RUN!



ARCHER? WHERE DID YOU GO? I THOUGHT YOU-- YOU WERE DEAD!

SAVE IT FOR LATER. SOMETHING'S...

something's coming.

I--

GRMMMBLLL



Oh boy. I've seen one of these before, but something's wrong with it...

something is wrong.




ANSEL! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WE DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S CAPABLE OF.

JUST LIKE... MY VISION.

COME ON. IT'S

ONCE UPON A TIME...

to do something about it.



BUT... THIS ONE IS WOOD. THAT'S NOT RIGHT...


But will he know what to do?



HUP!



I KNEW IT!



Will he see through the illusion?

Either way...



IT'S SAFE! C'MON! I NEED YOUR HELP!

He's going to need help.



THIS IS WHY THE GNOMES ARE SO ANGRY. THEY'RE BEING DRUGGED UP AND USED AS SLAVE LABOR FOR SOME TERRIBLE EXPERIMENTS.



SO...WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?



HE SNUCK OFF AND BETRAYED YOU, IS WHAT HE DID. I SAW HIM THAT NIGHT.



TH-THAT'S NOT TRUE! WHAT DO YOU KNOW? WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ME?!



THE TRUTH IS... I DID LEAVE YOU THAT NIGHT.

YOU DID? BUT WHY?!



I-I WAS TALKING TO GRETA. SHE LET SLIP WHAT HER PLAN WAS. I WAS GOING TO...TO SNEAK OFF, AND THEN COME RESCUE YOU BEFORE--

YOU LET ME GET CAPTURED? HOW COULD YOU--?!

FELLAS. HEY--



YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WITH HISTORY, ANSEL. OR THE ONLY ONE WITH A QUEST.

I'VE GOT MORE TO WORRY ABOUT THAN ANY OF YOU EVEN KNOW--

WHAT I KNOW IS YOU'VE BACK-STABBED ME AT EVERY TURN--

GUYS! STOP FIGHTING!



Uh-oh.



UGLY, WHAT?! I NEED TO SORT THIS--

WE'RE IN TROUBLE.



YOU STOLE MY QUEST. THEN YOU ABANDONED ME. AND NOW WE'RE PRISONERS OF THE LIBRARIANS. PROBABLY ABOUT TO BE EXECUTED.

LOOK. I KNOW ON PAPER...IT LOOKS BAD. BUT YOU HAVE TO KNOW, MY INTENTIONS WERE GOOD. WE'RE A TEAM...WE'RE GONNA DO THIS...



WE'RE GONNA BE DEAD.



THIS IS SO UNFAIR. EVERY OTHER YEAR, KIDS GET TO GO ON WHATEVER QUEST THEY WANT. THIS YEAR THEY MAKE UP SOME ARBITRARY RULE.



FOLKLORDS PROBABLY DON'T EVEN EXIST. NO ONE'S EVER FOUND ONE.

ON THE CONTRARY.



HUH.

YOU--!

WHO IS THAT?



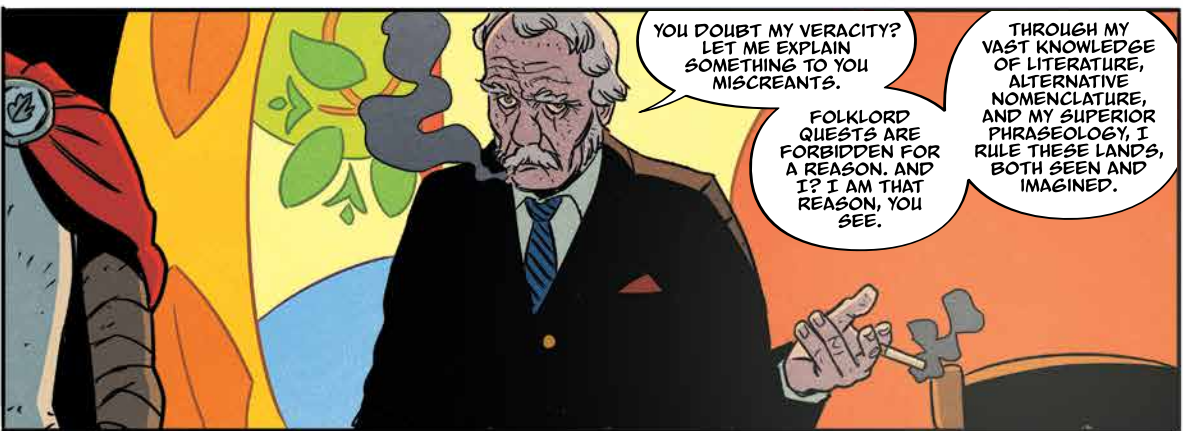
MY NAME IS JOHN RONALD.

I AM THE **FOLKLORD.**

WHA? FOR REAL?

KIND OF DISAPPOINTING, REALLY.

I DON'T KNOW...



YOU DOUBT MY VERACITY? LET ME EXPLAIN SOMETHING TO YOU MISCREANTS.

FOLKLORD QUESTS ARE FORBIDDEN FOR A REASON. AND I? I AM THAT REASON, YOU SEE.

THROUGH MY VAST KNOWLEDGE OF LITERATURE, ALTERNATIVE NOMENCLATURE, AND MY SUPERIOR PHRASEOLOGY, I RULE THESE LANDS, BOTH SEEN AND IMAGINED.



I AM WHAT THE PEOPLE OF MY HOMELAND CALL A WORDSMITH. I BUILD WORDS WITH VOCABULARY. I AM... THE CREATOR.



I AM A WEAVER OF WORLDS. A MAGICIAN.



...A SPEWER OF DRIVEL...



CONJURING UP LIFE FROM NOTHING BUT MY IMAGINATION.

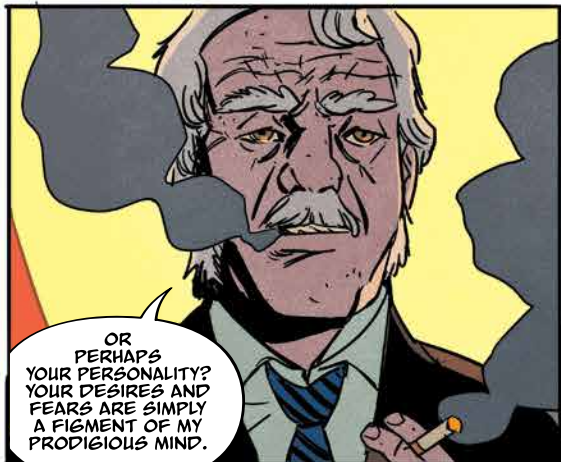


IF YOU DON'T LIKE THAT SCENARIO? NOT A GOOD ENOUGH TWIST? WELL, THEN-- LET'S CHANGE IT.

HOW ABOUT THIS? YOU'RE ASLEEP. IN A COMA.



DREAMING ALL OF THIS UP YOURSELF.



OR PERHAPS YOUR PERSONALITY? YOUR DESIRES AND FEARS ARE SIMPLY A FIGMENT OF MY PRODIGIOUS MIND.



NO, THAT'S A LIE.

I HAVE VISIONS. FLYING CARRIAGES. CITIES OF GLASS. PEOPLE DRESSED LIKE YOU.

BUT I FEEL ANGER. I DOUBT MY ABILITIES. I FEEL LOVE. DEEPER THAN ANYTHING YOU COULD SAY OR PUT ON PAPER.



HA! ANSEL. YOU ARE CORRECT.

YOU'RE NOT IN A COMA. I DIDN'T CREATE THIS PLACE. OR YOU.

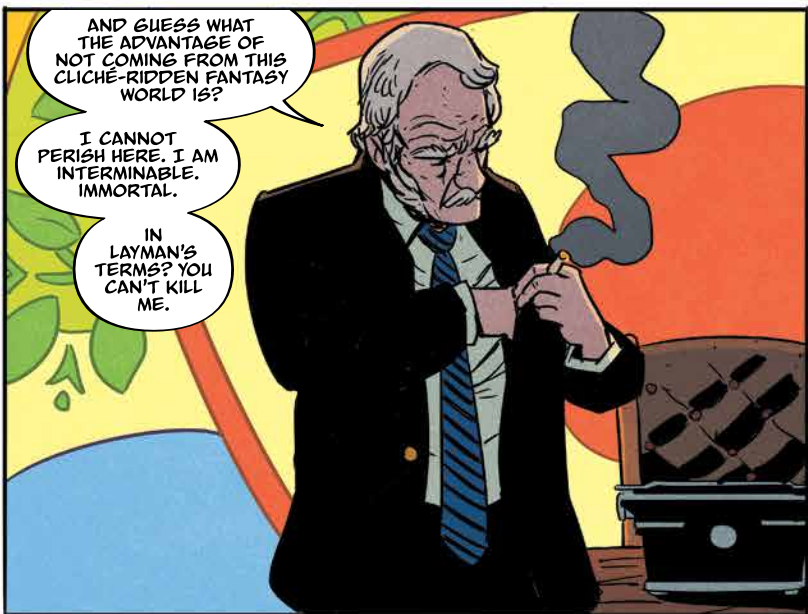
WHY WOULD I WASTE MY INVALUABLE TIME CREATING SUCH PEDESTRIAN AND JUVENILE EMOTIONS FOR YOU? TRUST ME, YOUR INANE PRATTLING IS ONE-HUNDRED-PERCENT YOU.

BUT... I DO RULE THIS WORLD. BECAUSE I DO NOT COME FROM HERE.



Hm. AND YOU FEEL LIKE YOU DON'T BELONG? WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS?

MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE YOU DON'T BELONG.



AND GUESS WHAT THE ADVANTAGE OF NOT COMING FROM THIS CLICHE-RIDDEN FANTASY WORLD IS?

I CANNOT PERISH HERE. I AM INTERMINABLE. IMMORTAL.

IN LAYMAN'S TERMS? YOU CAN'T KILL ME.



BUT ALL OF YOU, ON THE OTHER HAND? YOU ARE ALL VERY MORTAL.

IT'S FUNNY. I PULL A GUN IN MY WORLD? EVERYONE PANICS. HERE? NO ONE HAS ANY IDEA.

NO ONE BUT YOU, ANSEL. YES, I'VE HAD MY EYE ON YOU.



WELL, NOT *JUST* YOU. DON'T GO THINKING YOU'RE SPECIAL.

I'VE HAD MY EYE ON THE PHENOMENON YOU'RE EXPERIENCING. YOU ARE LIKE A WINDOW. NEITHER HERE NOR THERE.

JUST A TRANSPARENT VEIL BETWEEN HERE...AND A PLACE KNOWN AS THE WRITERS' ROOM--



I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR STUPID CHATTER, BUDDY.



UGLY, NO! THAT GUN! HE CAN KILL YOU--



YOU-- YOU--!



YES. WELL SAID, ANSEL.

BUT I LIKE TO CONSIDER "KILLING" PART OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS. A FORM OF...EDITING.



PLEASE...!

SOMETIMES EDITS ARE NECESSARY. FOR THE GREATER GOOD.





LOOK. MY QUEST WHEN I TURNED EIGHTEEN? IT WASN'T TO FIND A GOLDEN GOOSE OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT.



I LIED... TO EVERYONE. EVEN YOU.



I REQUESTED TO FIND THE FOLKLORDS. JUST LIKE YOU. AND I RAN INTO RONALD. HE...HE KILLED MY FRIEND. I BARELY ESCAPED.

I DIDN'T WANT...



...I DIDN'T WANT THE SAME THING TO HAPPEN TO YOU.



YOU COULD HAVE TOLD ME. WE COULD HAVE DONE THIS TOGETHER. YOU KNOW I'VE ALWAYS WANTED YOU TO--





WHAT PART OF "IMMORTAL" DID SHE NOT UNDERSTAND? ONLY SOMEONE FROM MY REALITY CAN HURT ME.



YOU--YOU'RE A MONSTER. WHEREVER YOU COME FROM? I'M GONNA SEND YOU BACK!



Ngh!



EDITS. THIS ENTIRE ROOM NEEDS EDITS!



YOU'RE ALL FAILING TO APPRECIATE THE POWER I WIELD HERE. I CAN KILL YOU. AND YOU? YOU CAN'T HARM ME--





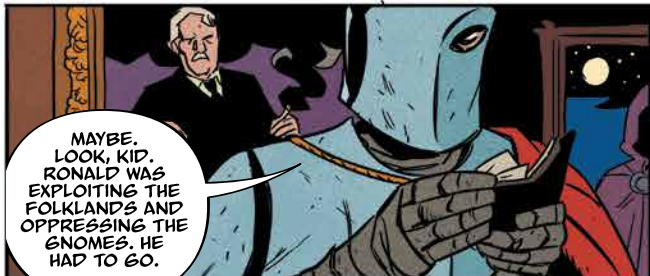
LOOK. HE HAD IT COMING. BEEN TRACKING THIS GUY FOR A LONG TIME. SINCE BEFORE MY EXILE.

BUT I NEEDED TO DRAW HIM OUT. WHEN WORD GOT OUT ABOUT ANSEL'S QUEST AND HIS VISIONS. I KNEW HE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO RESIST.

AND I'D BE ABLE TO GET SOME REVENGE FOR...WHAT WAS DONE TO ME.



YOU HAD ME COME HERE TO THE LIBRARY AS... AS BAIT?



MAYBE. LOOK, KID. RONALD WAS EXPLOITING THE FOLKLANDS AND OPPRESSING THE GNOMES. HE HAD TO GO.



Oh my GOD! UGLY?! SH-SHE'S...



I'M SO SORRY. AFTER ALL YOU DID...



NGH... WHA?!



YOU'RE OKAY! THANK GOD! ARE YOU... A FOLKLORD TOO?!

THIS MAIL HAS TAKEN HARDER HITS FROM A TROLL HAMMER. KNOCKED MY HEAD PRETTY GOOD, THOUGH.



BUT... RONALD WAS A FOLKLORD. SO TECHNICALLY... WE DID FINISH ANSEL'S QUEST, RIGHT?

RONALD WASN'T A GOD. AND HE DEFINITELY WASN'T IMMORTAL.

EVEN THOUGH HIS STORY NEVER SEEMS TO GET OLD.

A POWER-HUNGRY MAN EXPLOITING EVERYONE AROUND HIM TO GET EVEN MORE.



THE QUEST IS FINISHED. BUT... BUT IT HASN'T ANSWERED ANYTHING.



LISTEN, ANSEL. WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.

YOUR QUEST ISN'T OVER. IT'S JUST BEGINNING.





Shhh!

Shhh!

Shhhh!

Shhhh!

Shhhh!

Shhhh!

Shhhh!

Shhh!

Shhhh!

Shhhh!

Shhhh!

Shhh!

THIS WAY.

STICK TOGETHER.



FOLLOW MY LEAD. I'VE GOT AN IDEA, BUT I NEED YOU TO BUY ME SOME TIME.





Hmm.



THIS'LL DO.



SAL?!
WHATEVER YOU HAVE PLANNED,
YOU'D BETTER MAKE IT QUICK!



SAL?!
WHERE ARE YOU?!



GAH!

SILENCE!

Has he lost his mind?

LISTEN TO ME, MY LIBRARIAN BRETHREN!

BY GUILD LAW, I REQUEST SILENCE-- AND WHEN SILENCE IS REQUESTED, YOU MUST OBEY.

I HOLD HERE THE SACRED SCREED OF SILENCE. THIS IS FOLKLORD RONALD'S AMENDMENT TO OUR SCRIPTURE.

DANGEROUS IDEAS ARE FORBIDDEN. THE PURSUIT AND/OR HARBORING OF DANGEROUS IDEAS IS THEREFORE ALSO FORBIDDEN.

AS SUCH, I FIND THAT YOUR ALLEGIANCE TO THE FOLKLORD RONALD TO BE IN BREACH OF OUR SACRED CODE OF ETHICS.

YOU ARE ALL GUILTY.

whisper...

mutter...

mutter...

mutter...

whisper...

mutter...

whisper...

whisper...

AS THE SOLE OUTSIDER, I ALONE AM GUILTYLESS. AND IT IS I ALONE THAT COMMAND YOU NOW TO LAY DOWN YOUR WEAPONS!



BOW TO YOUR NEW LEADER AND HEAD LIBRARIAN!



WOW.

HE IS CRAZY.

BUT HE'S GOT THEM ALL BOWING!



YOU THREE--



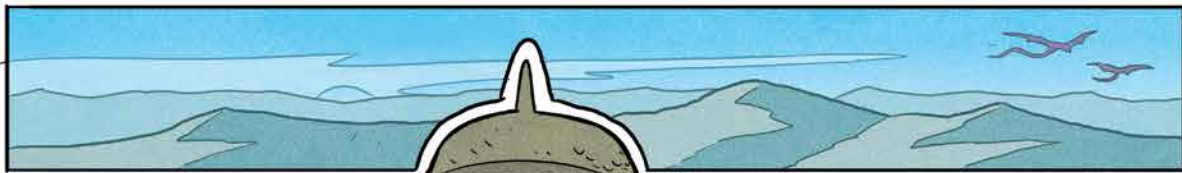
--WITH ME.



HEY, uh...SAL? THIS BOOK IS ALL ABOUT BIRDS.

YEAH. WELL. IT WAS THAT OR FIGHT OUR WAY OUT.

I'M ACTUALLY EMBARRASSED THAT I WAS PART OF AN ORGANIZATION SO EASILY MANIPULATED.



I WISH I COULD ACCOMPANY YOU. BUT I MUST REMAIN HERE. THE LIBRARIANS ARE A FORMIDABLE FORCE THAT MUST BE MONITORED AT ALL TIMES.

FIND THE WRITER'S ROOM, ANSEL. COMPLETE YOUR QUEST.

THERE ARE MORE ANSWERS FOR YOU OUT THERE. ANSWERS I DON'T HAVE. OF THAT, I AM SURE.

THANK YOU, SAL.



SAL SEEMED KIND OF ANGRY.

WELL, HE JUST VOLUNTEERED TO BE THE LEADER OF AN INSANE, BLOOD-THIRSTY CULT THAT COULD TURN ON HIM AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE.

TRUE.



AND WHAT ABOUT ARCHER?

DISAPPEARED AGAIN. AS SOON AS THINGS GET TOUGH...

BUT HE'S GOT HIS OWN BAGGAGE. I THINK SOMETIMES? HE JUST DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.





YEAH, WELL, ONE OF THESE DAYS HE'S GONNA LET US DOWN WHEN WE REALLY DO NEED HIM.

MAYBE. BUT MAYBE ONE DAY? WE'LL BE THERE FOR HIM. AND THAT WILL MAKE THE DIFFERENCE.



MEH.



WAS YOU EVER TRAPPED IN THE LIBRAR-EE?
WORRIED ABOUT FEEDIN' THE FOLKLORD TREE?



DIDTA EVER MEET THE STOUT YOUNG ANSEL?
WHO SAVED US ALL WITH HIS SWEET DANSEL?

NO ONE 'OLDS A CANDLE TO ANSEL!
'E'S SO SUBSTANTIAL! THAT ANSEL!



WELL, FREE GNOMES. AT LEAST ONE GOOD THING CAME OUT OF THIS QUEST SO FAR.

ANSEL, ANSEL!
'IM AND 'IS DANSEL!

AND WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED.



ONCE UPON
A TIME...



I wasn't always
running late.



ONCE UPON
A TIME...



I felt like
I belonged.



I didn't dress
crazy.



I knew who
I was.



But what
I realized?



Playing along doesn't
solve any problems.



"Fitting in" doesn't
answer any questions.

And answers?
Answers can be a
freaking curse.



But sometimes...to beat
the curse you have to
find the cause.



But the "cause" in this case? Is
a person. And right now? I really
need you to meet me halfway...



"ANSEL"
Whoever
you are.



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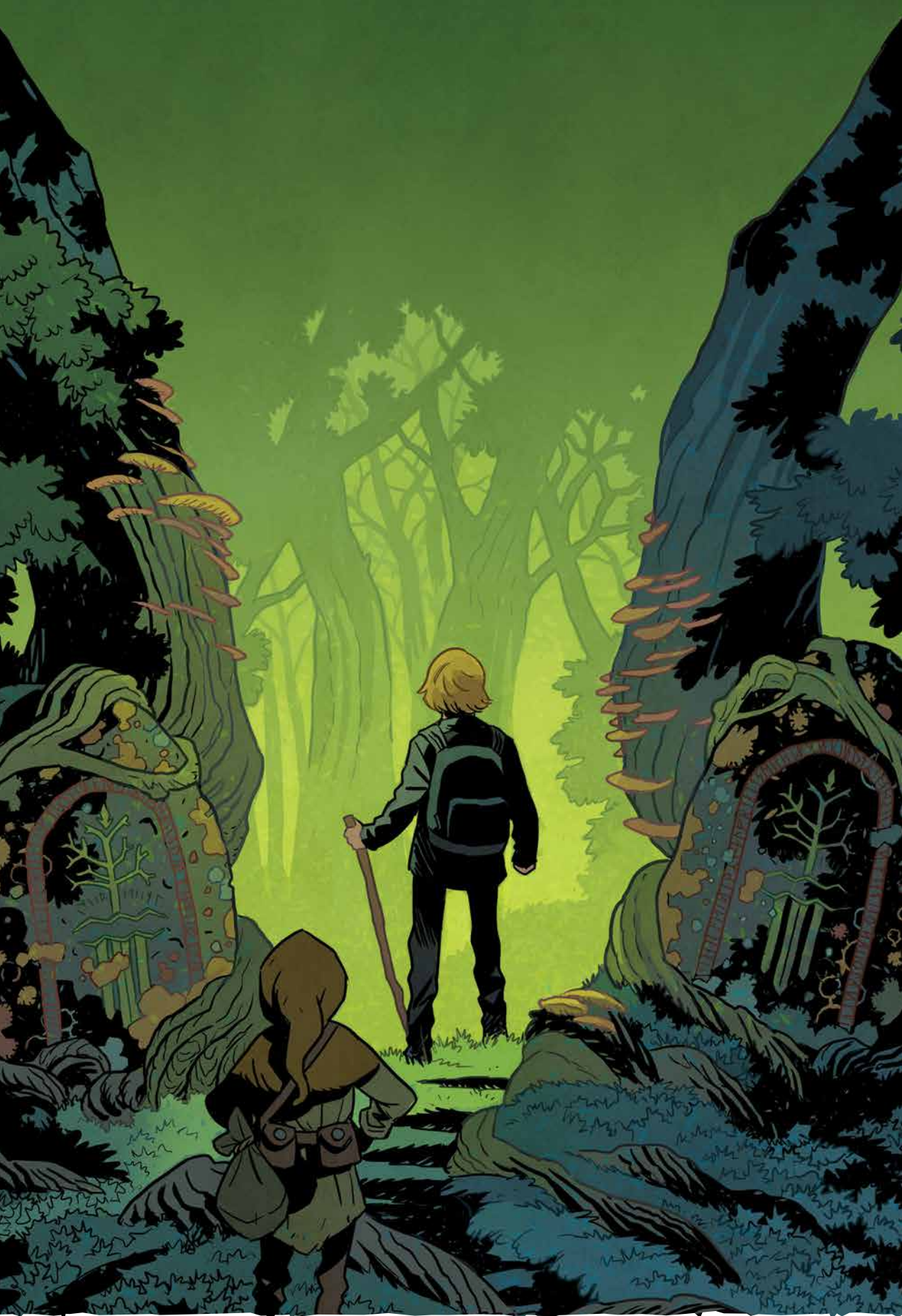
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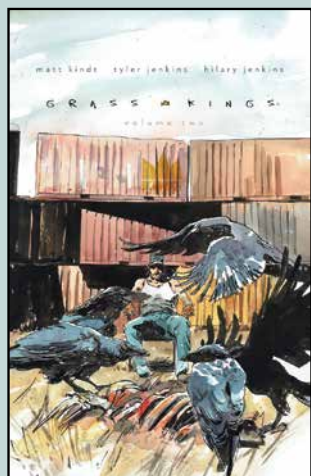
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In a world of magic and monsters, Ansel is an outsider haunted by visions of well-pressed suits and modern technology. When it comes time for him to declare his Quest, Ansel decides to seek out the mysterious Folklords, hoping they can explain his visions...but looking for the Folklords is strictly forbidden, punishable by death. How much is Ansel willing to risk to find out about the world he has never truly belonged in?

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