

WITCHBLADE®

#185



MICHAEL
TURNER

BRIAN:



DOUBLE-SIZED SERIES FINALE



DOUBLE-SIZED SERIES FINALE



COVER A

MICHAEL TURNER & BRIAN HABERLIN

COVER B

KEU CHA, D-TRON & STEVE FIRCHOW

COVERS C & D

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TROY PETERI • *letterer*

WITCHBLADE CREATED BY MARC SILVESTRI, DAVID WOHL, BRIAN HABERLIN, & MICHAEL TURNER



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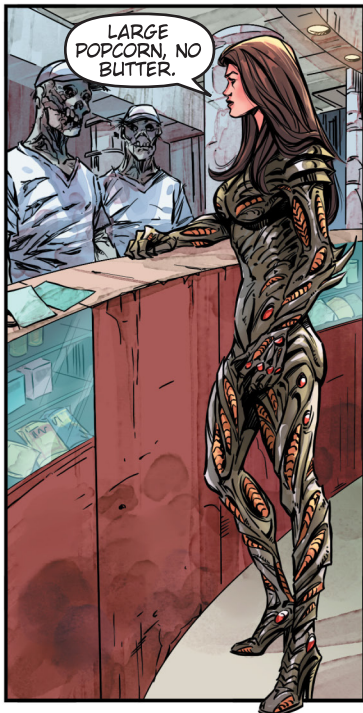
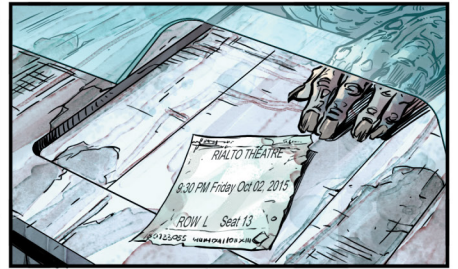
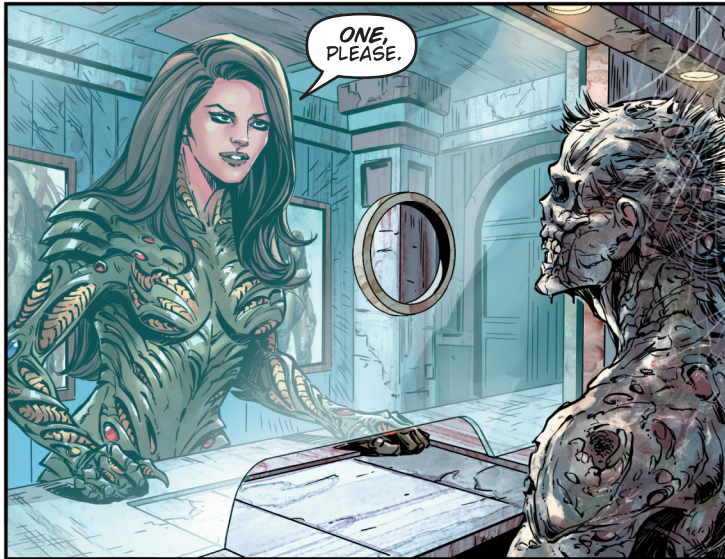
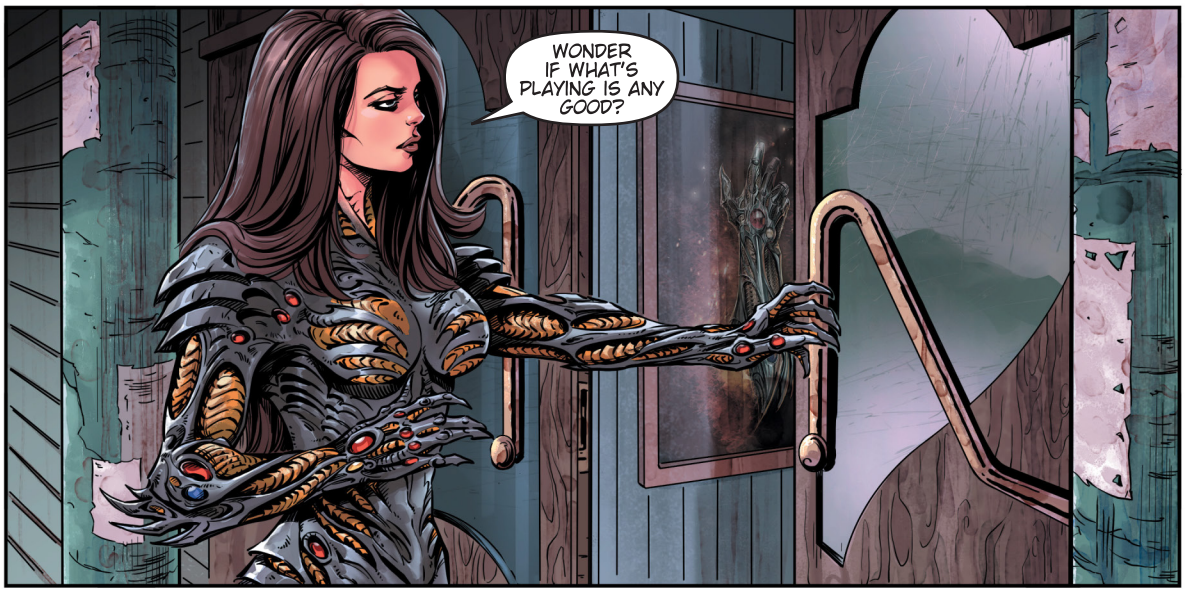
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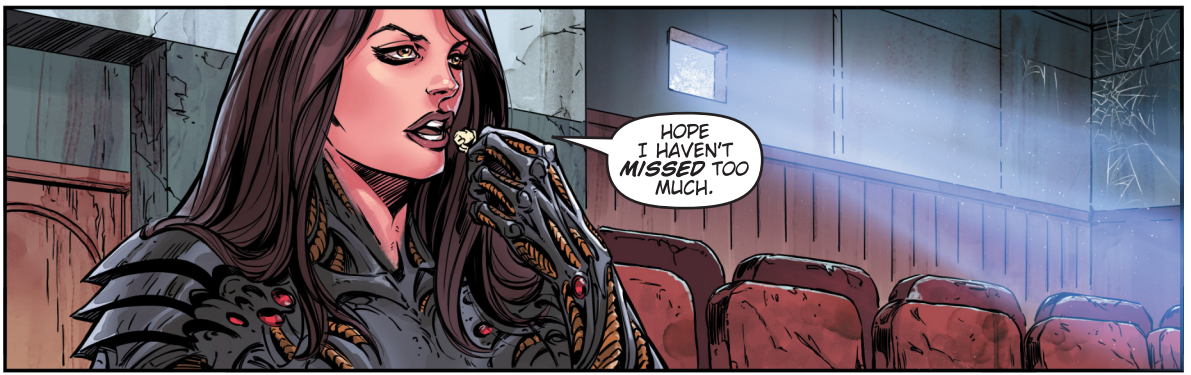
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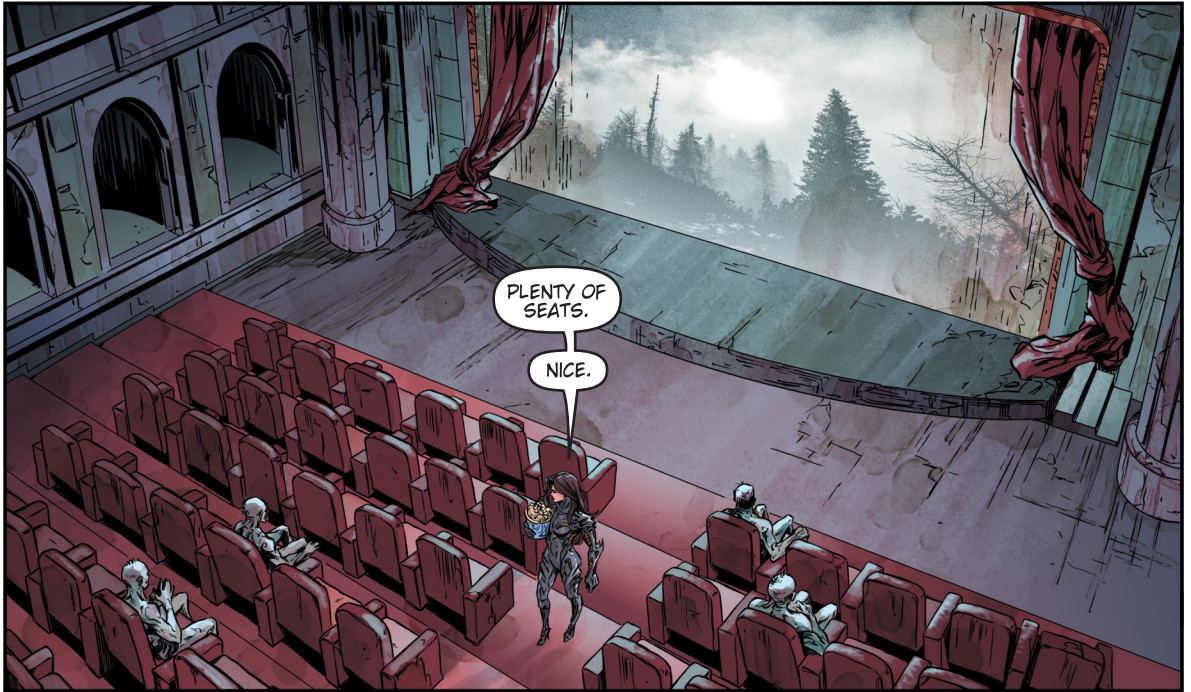
HOME AGAIN.

NOW PLAYING
WITCHBLADE



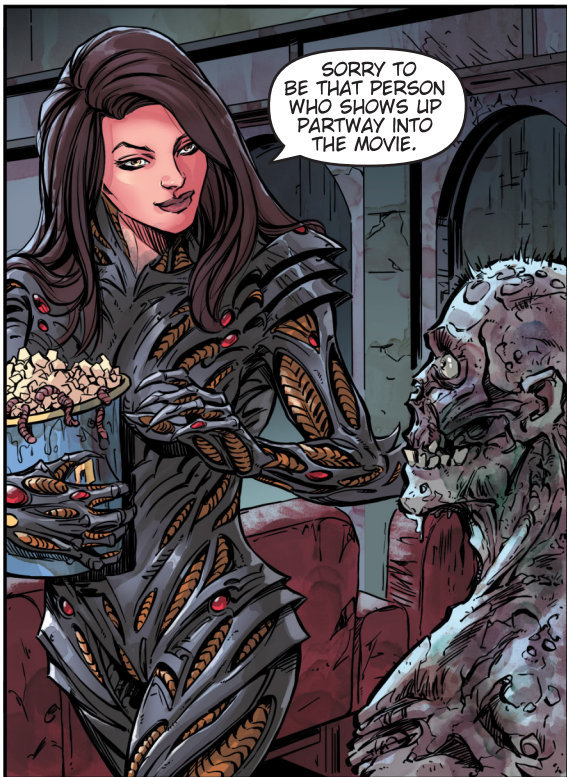


HOPE I HAVEN'T MISSED TOO MUCH.

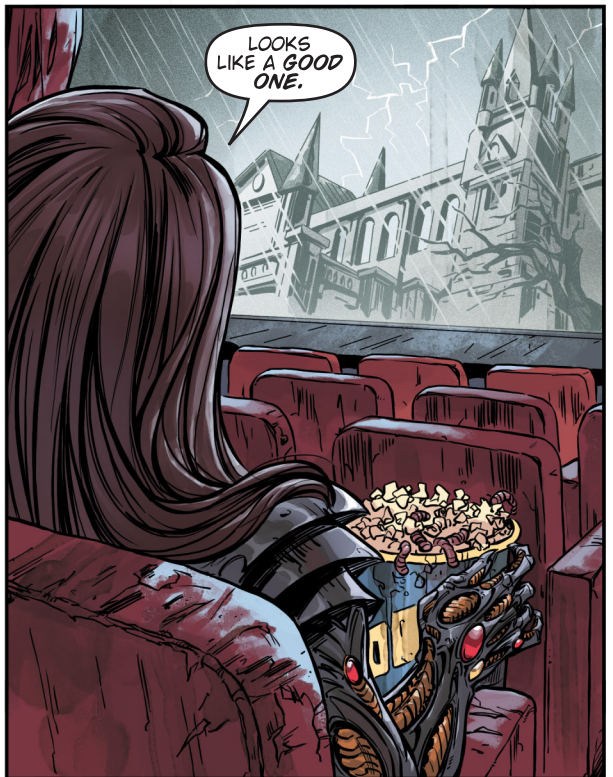


PLENTY OF SEATS.

NICE.



SORRY TO BE THAT PERSON WHO SHOWS UP PARTWAY INTO THE MOVIE.



LOOKS LIKE A GOOD ONE.



EVERYBODY
LOVES
MONSTERS,
RIGHT?



WAIT,
WHAT'S...



...THIS ISN'T
SUPPOSED TO BE
HAPPENING!



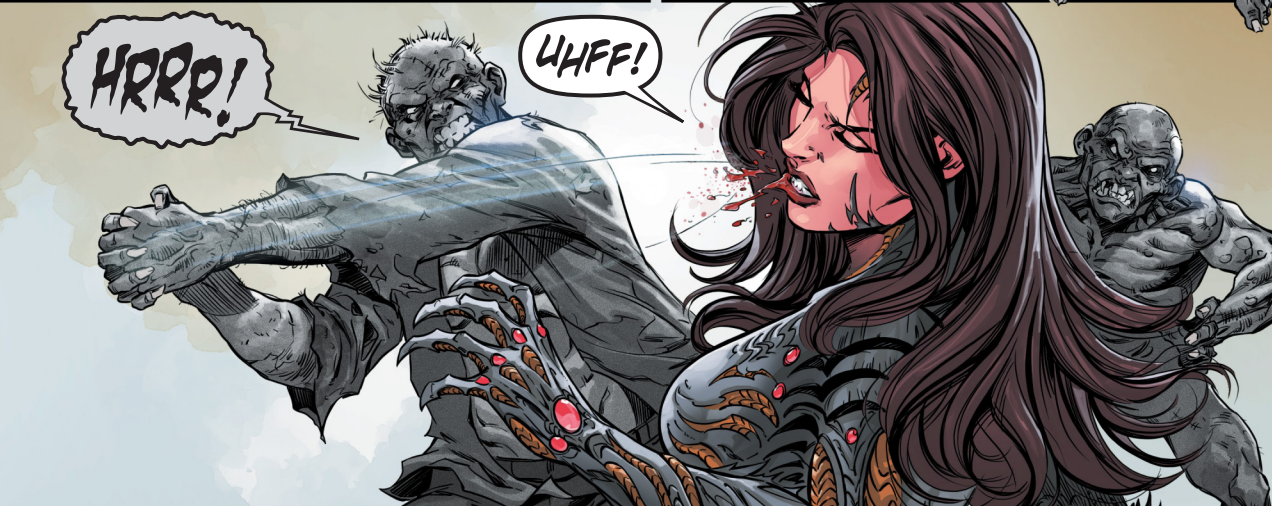
BUT I CAN PUT A STOP TO IT.



"EVERYBODY LOVES MONSTERS..."



SHRIIP



HRRR!

UHFF!



YOU'RE ONE OF US. YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN ONE OF US.

NO...



AAAAAH!



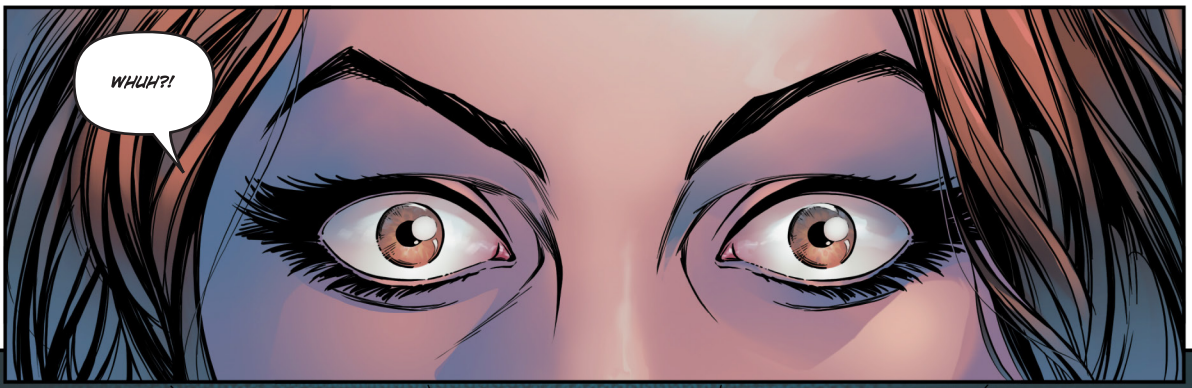
NOW YOU COME WITH US.

PLEASE, THIS ISN'T WHO I AM...



...THIS ISN'T WHAT I WANT!





WHUUH?!



I'M...
AT THE
RIALTO
AFTER
ALL?

HOW DID
I EVEN GET
HERE?

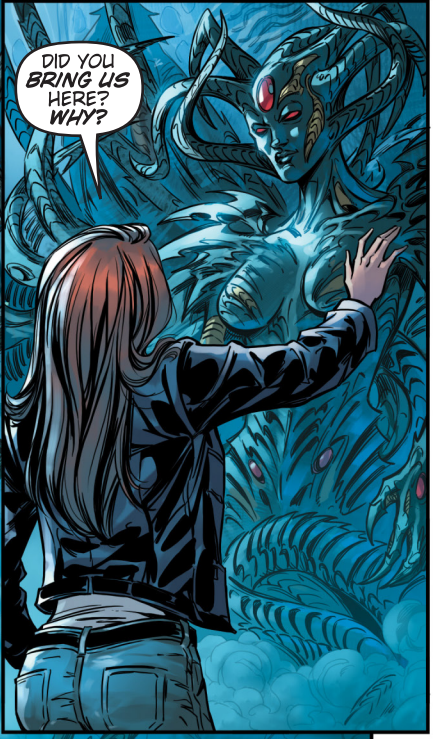


AND WHERE'S THE
WITCHBLADE?

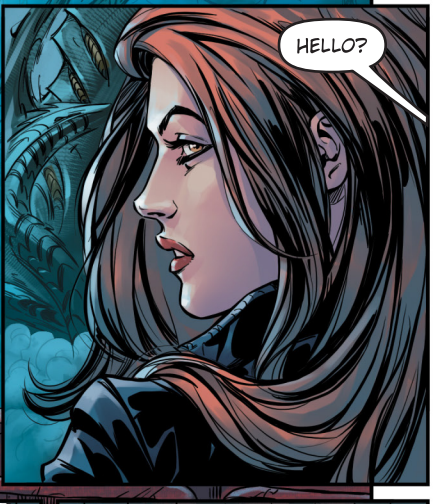




WHAT'S GOING ON?



DID YOU BRING US HERE? WHY?



HELLO?



THERE SOMEBODY IN HERE?



YOU HAD TO SEE THE NO TRESPASSING SIGNS OUTSIDE.



SHOW YOURSELF, I'M A POLICE OFFICER.



GLEASON?

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE?



I THINK I'M SUPPOSED TO BE ASKING YOU THAT. I'M THE ONE WHO'S STILL A COP, REMEMBER?

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I DON'T KNOW HOW I GOT HERE, MUCH LESS WHAT I'M DOING HERE.



WELL, APPARENTLY YOU **BROKE IN**, BECAUSE SOMEBODY CALLED IT IN. I WAS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, SO I TOOK IT.

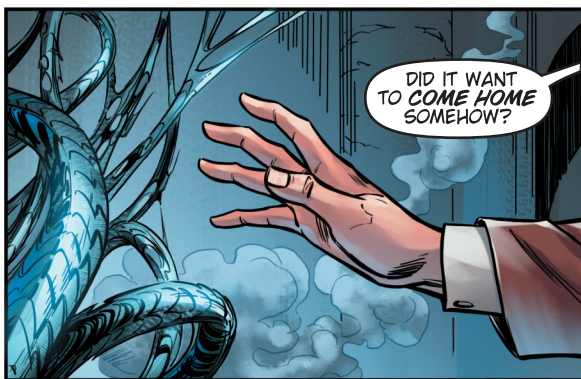
THOUGH, TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST, WHEN I HEARD **RIALTO THEATER**, I THOUGHT IT MIGHT POSSIBLY HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH YOU...



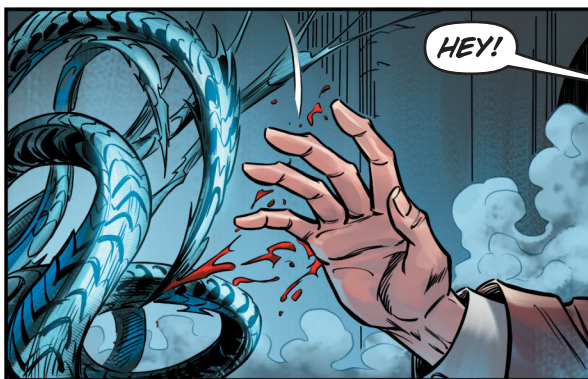
...AND THAT.



ANY IDEA WHAT THE WITCHBLADE'S UP TO, SARA?



DID IT WANT TO **COME HOME** SOMEHOW?



HEY!



I ALWAYS WONDERED IF THE WITCHBLADE REALLY DIDN'T **LIKE** ME. GUESS I'M NOT **WONDERING** ANYMORE.

I DON'T KNOW IF **THAT'S** EXACTLY TRUE. I MEAN, IT LET YOU GET CLOSE TO **ME**.



YEAH, I WON'T BE STICKING MY HAND CLOSE ENOUGH TO **CONFIRM** IT ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, THANKS.

IS THIS SORT OF THING...**UNUSUAL**? I MEAN, UNUSUAL BEYOND HAVING A SENTIENT, SUPERNATURAL WEAPON ATTACHED TO YOU?

THE WITCHBLADE'S NEVER DONE THIS BEFORE. AT LEAST NOT LIKE **THIS**.



IT'S HARDLY **EVER** SEPARATED FROM ME WILLINGLY. IT'S BEEN A **PART** OF ME FOR SO MANY YEARS, I ASSUMED IT WOULD **ALWAYS** BE A PART OF ME.

I THOUGHT I'D ALWAYS HAVE A PART OF ME THAT WAS... WELL, A **MONSTER**. AND IT WAS **MY** JOB TO KEEP IT FROM CONSUMING ME...

...OR ANYONE ELSE.



I THOUGHT THIS WAS GOING TO BE MY **LIFE**...

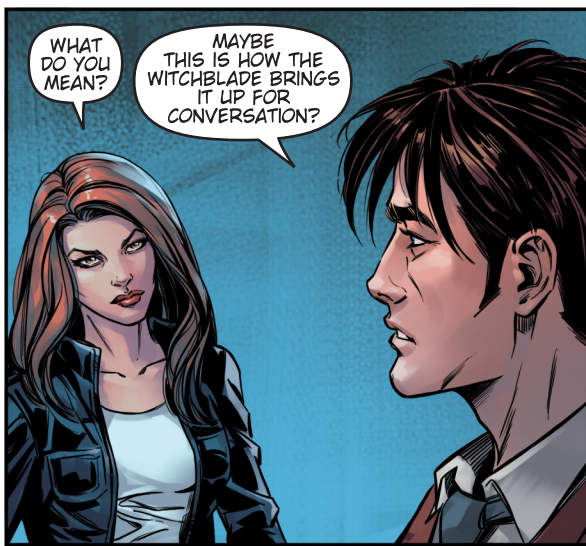
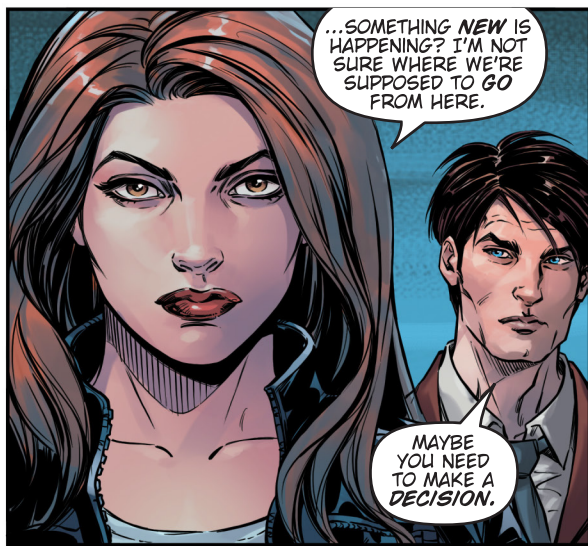


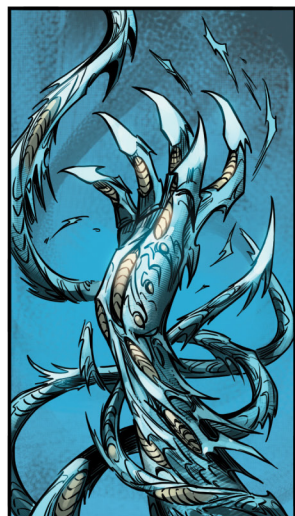
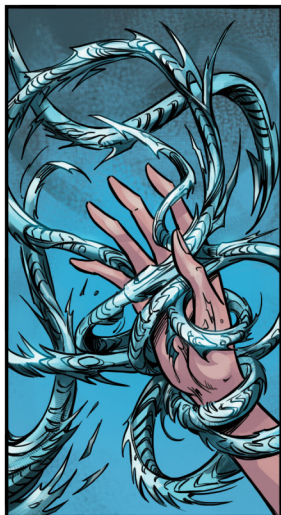
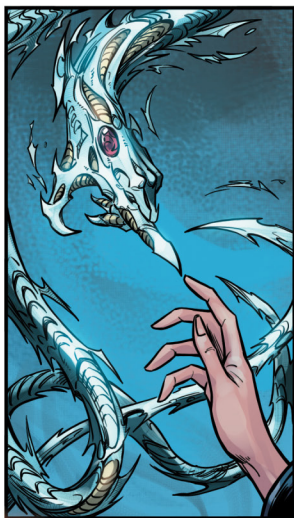
"...THE WITCHBLADE,
THE TRINITY WITH THE
ANGELLUS AND THE
DARKNESS.

"IT'S BEEN THIS WAY
FOR SO LONG, I CAN
HARDLY REMEMBER
WHAT MY LIFE WAS
LIKE BEFORE.

"YEARS AGO IT WAS JUST
THE WITCHBLADE, BUT I
LEARNED THERE'S SO
MUCH MORE TO IT -- THE
THIRTEEN ARTIFACTS,
AN ENTIRE UNIVERSE.

"SO NOW WHEN
I'M STARTING TO
GET A HANDLE
ON ALL OF IT..."







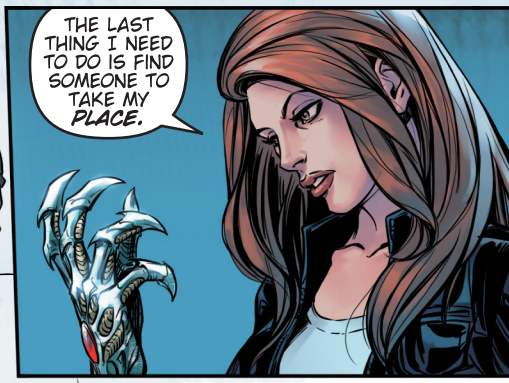


...UHHN?

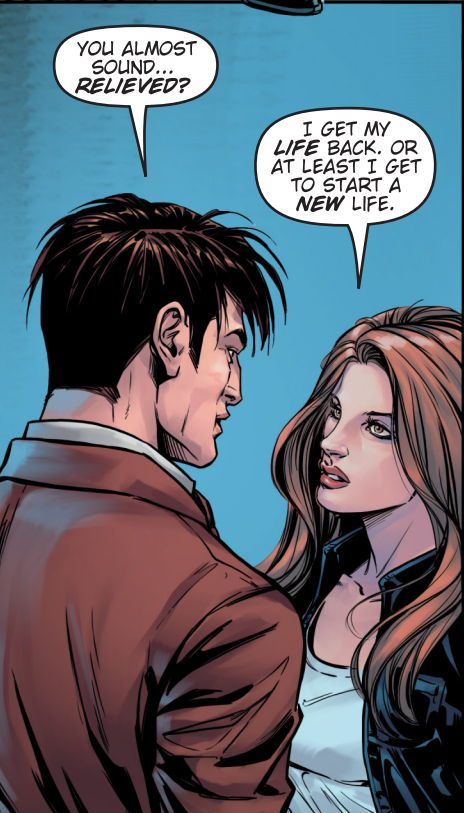
SARA?!
WHAT JUST HAPPENED?
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?



I'M FINE. BUT THIS...
...THIS WHOLE THING IS OVER. AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, WE'RE DONE WITH EACH OTHER. WE'RE MOVING ON.

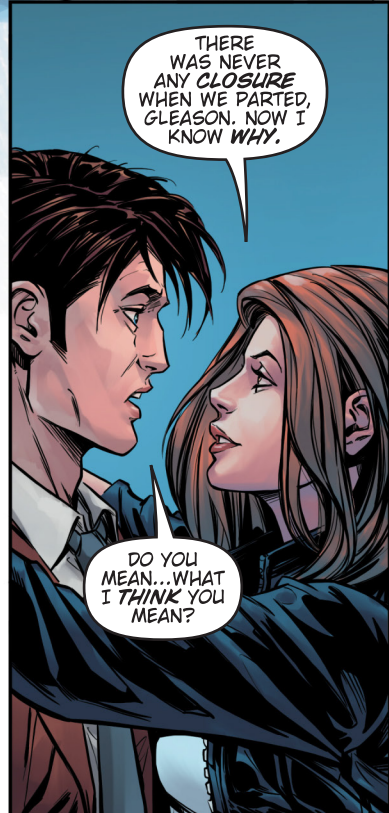


THE LAST THING I NEED TO DO IS FIND SOMEONE TO TAKE MY PLACE.



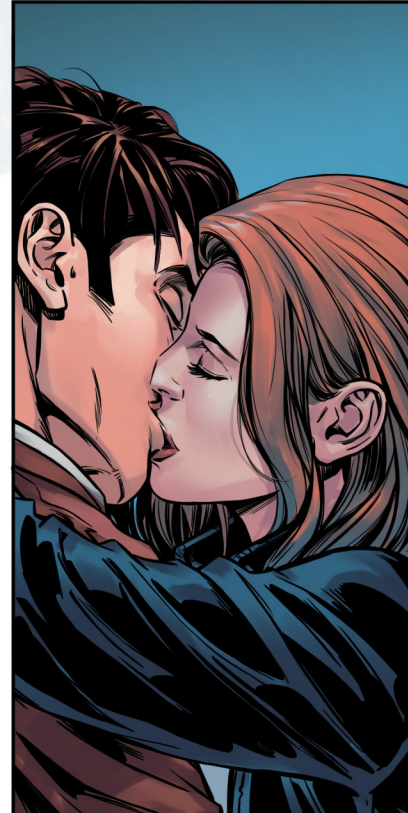
YOU ALMOST SOUND... RELIEVED?

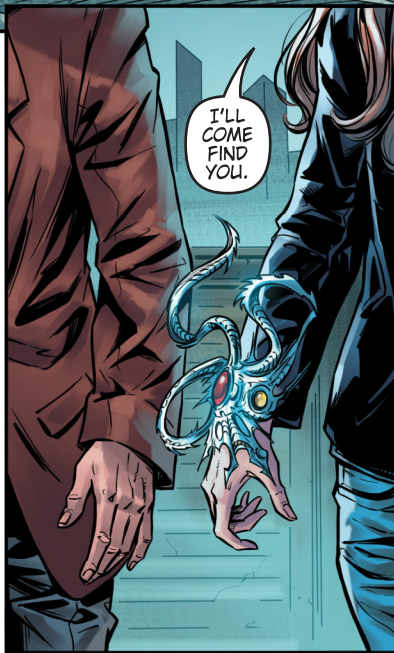
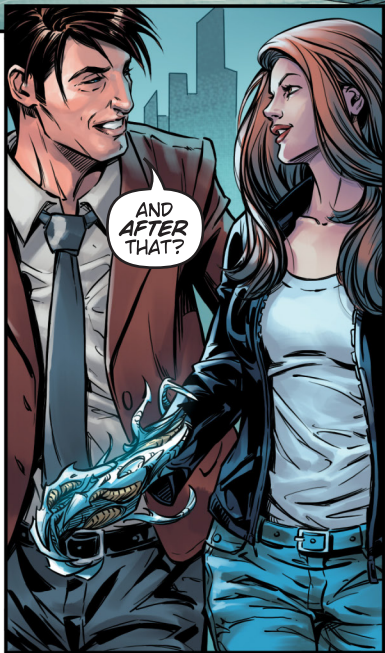
I GET MY LIFE BACK. OR AT LEAST I GET TO START A NEW LIFE.



THERE WAS NEVER ANY CLOSURE WHEN WE PARTED, GLEASON. NOW I KNOW WHY.

DO YOU MEAN...WHAT I THINK YOU MEAN?





END CHAPTER 1

A LETTER FROM RON MARZ

Breaking up is hard to do.

I've been writing *Witchblade*, with a slight break in the middle, since 2004. My daughter was a toddler when I wrote my first *Witchblade* script. Now she's old enough to read even the mature-themed issues. Sara Pezzini has been "the other woman" in my life for more than a decade. But it's over.

With this issue, we reach the end of *Witchblade*, for a while at least. It's bittersweet, of course, as there's sadness in bringing down the curtain a final time. But there's also satisfaction in keeping the series running for 185 issues, especially in an era when relaunches, reboots and revamps are commonplace. It's been a hell of a run.

When I was initially offered the writing duties on *Witchblade*, I had never read an issue of the series. I was familiar with it, but it wasn't on my pull list. Throughout my career, I've found that those assignments, the ones with less familiarity and no pre-conceived notions, are often the ones that turn out the best. You can approach the material with fresh eyes, and more easily sort what works from what doesn't. For me, that meant digging into Sara herself, trying to flesh out her character (no pun intended) and make readers care about her. And in the process, of course, make me care about her.

I've probably written more stories about Sara than any other character in my career. We've been through a lot together. Sara lost a partner, lost the *Witchblade*, regained the *Witchblade*, got a good boyfriend, got pregnant by a bad boyfriend, had a baby, sacrificed the baby, moved away from New York, and moved back to New York. I'm sorry we've come to the end of the road, but I'm proud of the journey we've taken. I think I grew as a writer, and I hope Sara grew as a character.

Comics are inherently a collaborative medium, a marriage of words and pictures making a greater whole. None of these 185 issues could have existed without a long list of writers, artists, letterers, editors, production people and more. I personally want to thank everyone at Top Cow past and present, all the artists I worked with, and of course all the readers. Lastly, any mention of *Witchblade* would not be complete without honoring the late Michael Turner, who helped bring Sara and the *Witchblade* into the world.

This chapter is done. I'm going to miss Sara. I hope you will too.

Ron Marz
October, 2015



CHAPTER
TWO

writer

MATT HAWKINS

artists

MICHAEL TURNER

STJEPAN SEJIC

LINDA SEJIC

ISAAC GOODHART

PHILLIP SEVY

NELSON BLAKE II

RANDY GREEN

D-TRON • *inker*

J.D. SMITH & BILL FARMER • *colorists*

BETSY GONIA • *editor*

TROY PETERI • *letterer*

ONE POLICE PLAZA NEW YORK

RETIRING FROM THE WITCHBLADE ISN'T LIKE QUITTING THE POLICE FORCE. THERE'S NO GOLD WATCH, NO DRUNKEN PARTY... JUST A FEAR THAT IT WILL FALL INTO THE WRONG HANDS.

I'M FORTY-FIVE NOW AND IT'S BEEN TWENTY YEARS SINCE THE WITCHBLADE FIRST LATCHED ONTO ME.

AT TIMES, IT'S HARD FOR ME TO ACCEPT WHAT I'VE SEEN AND EXPERIENCED AS REAL. THERE'S A WORLD OF SUPERNATURAL WONDERS AND HORRORS WE AREN'T MEANT TO SEE...AND MOST SHOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR THEIR IGNORANCE.

I'VE IDENTIFIED THREE WOMEN WHO I THINK COULD BE GOOD CANDIDATES TO BEAR THE WITCHBLADE AND I PRAY THAT IT WILL ACCEPT ONE OF THEM.

YOU SURE YOU WANT TO DO THIS? YOU'RE LEAVING A LEGAL RECORD OF WHAT INCLUDES SOME ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES.

LET'S GET STARTED, I'VE ONLY GOT THE ROOM FOR FOUR HOURS.

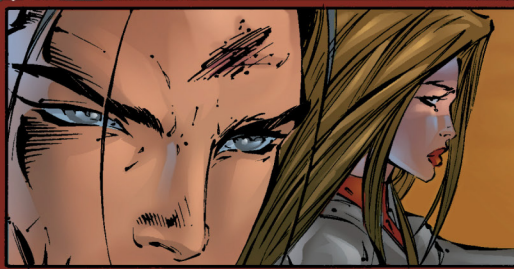
YES, GLEASON, I WANT TO MAKE A RECORD FOR THE NEXT BEARER TO HELP THEM.

I'LL OF COURSE COUNSEL THEM DURING THE TRANSITION, BUT I DON'T WANT ANY OF THIS IN MY LIFE MUCH LONGER.

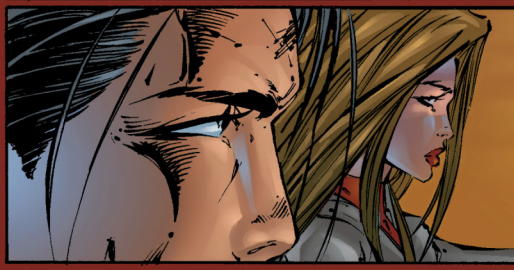
I'M SARA PEZZINI, YOU KNOW THAT ALREADY IF YOU'RE WATCHING THIS.

00:09:23





I WAS YOUNGER THAN MOST WHEN I MADE DETECTIVE AND I WAS PRETTY HIGH ON MYSELF.



LOOKING BACK I WAS RECKLESS, BUT I WAS TWENTY-FIVE AND THOUGHT I WAS INVINCIBLE.



I'M GIVING YOU THIS BACKGROUND SO YOU CAN UNDERSTAND WHO I WAS AND HOPE THE CONTEXT EXPLAINS SOME OF MY ACTIONS AND WHY I CAN NO LONGER BE PART OF THIS WORLD.



MY PARTNER BACK THEN WAS MICHAEL YEE. HE AND I WERE FOLLOWING UP ON A TIP OF SOME ILLEGAL CONTEST GOING ON AT THE RIALTO THEATER.



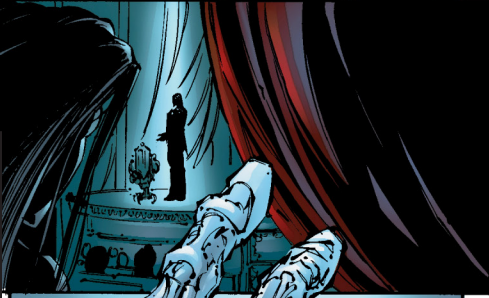
THE THEATER HAD BEEN CLOSED SINCE BEFORE I WAS BORN BUT IT WAS PACKED THAT NIGHT.

A VERITABLE WHO'S WHO OF THE CRIMINAL UNDERGROUND AND WANNABES WERE ALL THERE.



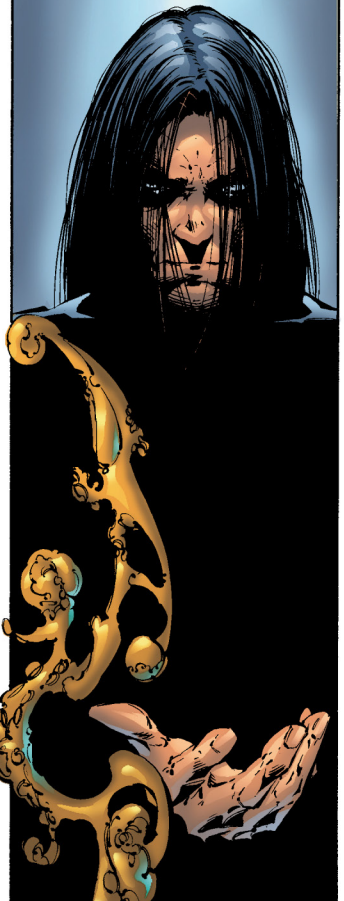
IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I SAW THE WITCHBLADE.

THE BRITISH CHARMER IAN NOTTINGHAM AND HIS BOSS KENNETH IRONS WERE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE WHO COULD WEAR IT... APPARENTLY IT HAD RIPPED OFF IRONS' AND OTHERS' ARMS WHEN THEY TRIED IT ON.



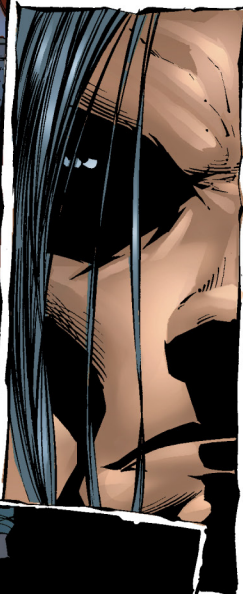
THE WITCHBLADE MUST CHOOSE ITS WIELDER.

I DIDN'T REALIZE IT AT THE TIME, BUT THAT MEETING WOULD COME TO DEFINE ME FOR TWO DECADES.

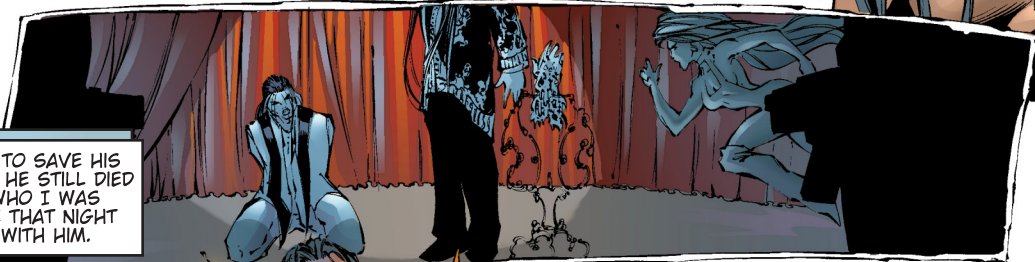


WHILE I WAS UNDERCOVER IN MY BEST TIGHT FITTING RED DRESS TO... AHM... BLEND IN... MY PARTNER MICHAEL YEE WAS CAUGHT.

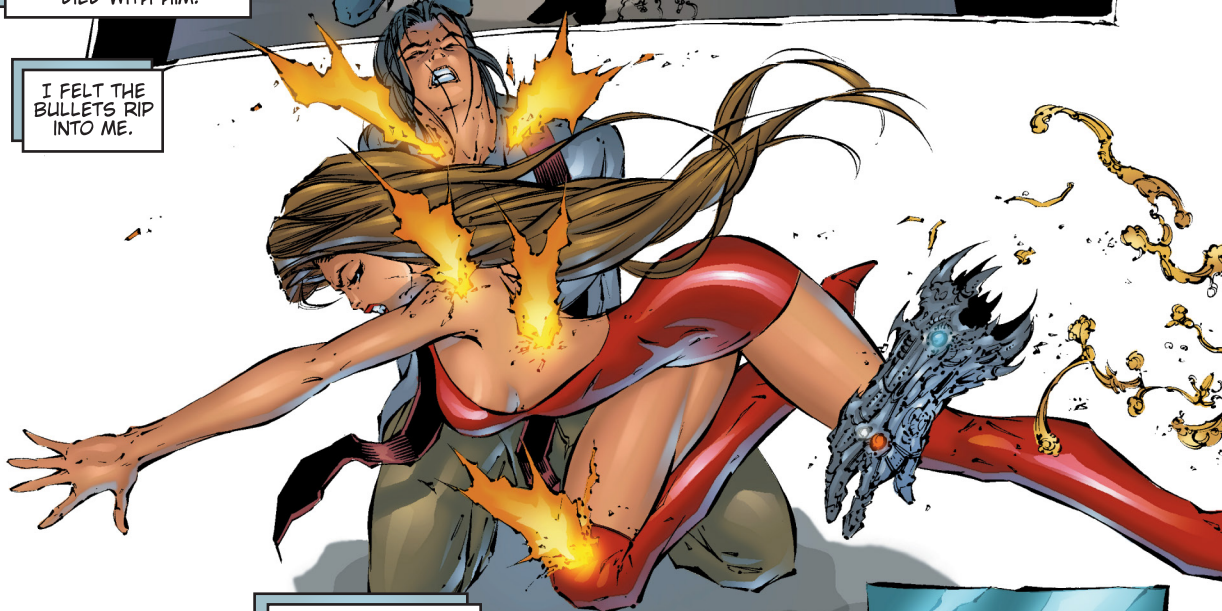
THEY WERE GOING TO EXECUTE HIM AS PART OF THE EVENING'S ENTERTAINMENT.



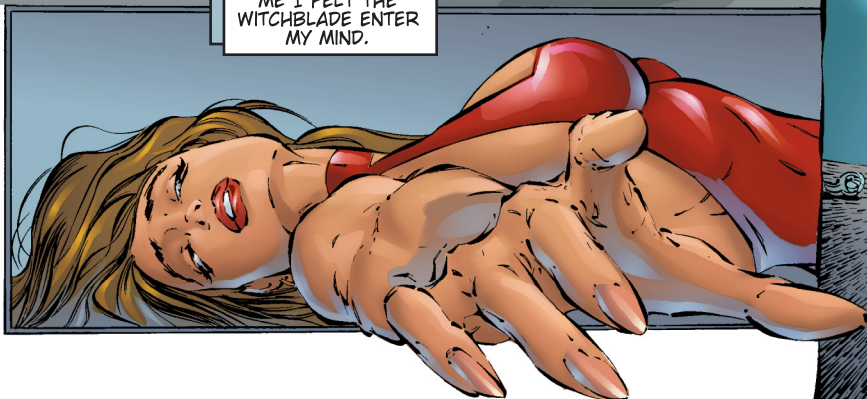
I TRIED TO SAVE HIS LIFE, BUT HE STILL DIED AND WHO I WAS BEFORE THAT NIGHT DIED WITH HIM.



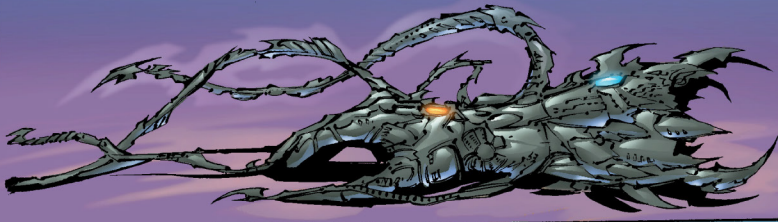
I FELT THE BULLETS RIP INTO ME.



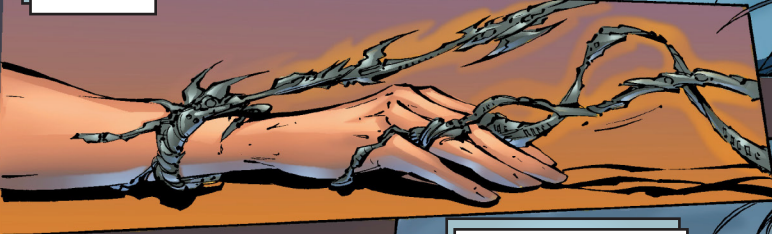
RIGHT BEFORE THE DARKNESS CLAIMED ME I FELT THE WITCHBLADE ENTER MY MIND.



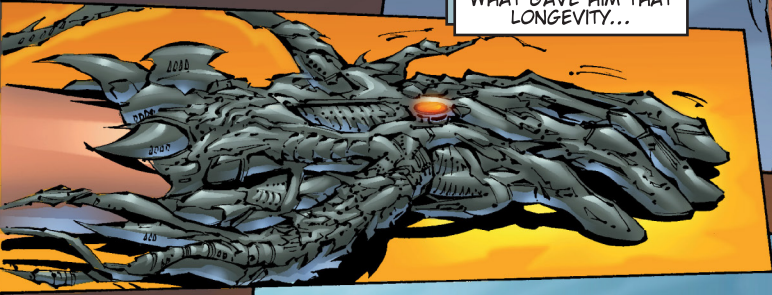
ITS VOICE
WAS CLEAR.



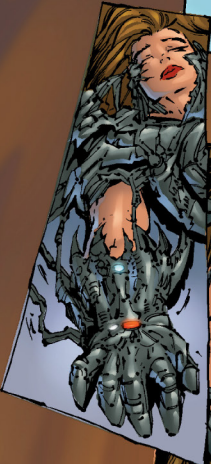
I FELT ITS
POWER.



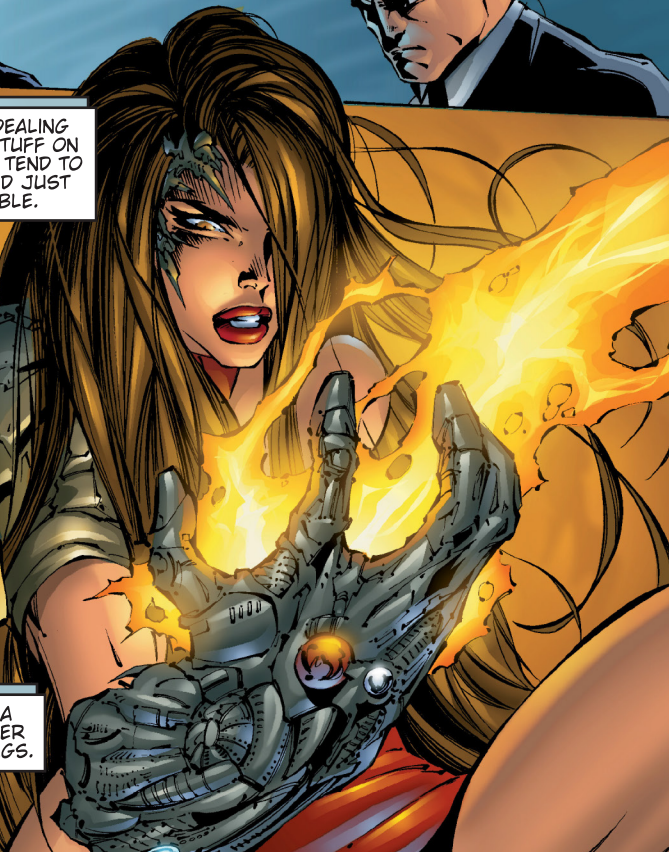
IRONS HAD SOUGHT A
BEARER FOR OVER A
CENTURY, I NEVER
QUITE UNDERSTOOD
WHAT GAVE HIM THAT
LONGEVITY...



... BUT WHEN YOU'RE DEALING
WITH SUPERNATURAL STUFF ON
A REGULAR BASIS, YOU TEND TO
STOP QUESTIONING AND JUST
BELIEVE IT'S POSSIBLE.



I'VE NEVER FOUND A
SATISFACTORY ANSWER
FOR THE WHY OF THINGS.



BUT MAYBE THAT'S
THE WHOLE POINT?

SOME THINGS
ARE MEANT TO BE
BEYOND HUMAN
UNDERSTANDING.

I WAS RAISED CATHOLIC.
I STILL BELIEVE IN GOD
ALTHOUGH MY EXPERIENCE
WITH ANGELS AND DEMONS
IS THAT THEY DON'T QUITE
LINE UP WITH WHAT'S
WRITTEN IN THE BIBLE.

CONCEPTS OF
GOOD AND
EVIL ARE
MORE FLUID
THAN I
WANTED TO
BELIEVE.

FOUR HOURS LATER

WE'RE OUT OF TIME. I CAN BOOK ANOTHER SESSION IF YOU NEED MORE.

NO I THINK THAT'S ENOUGH. THANK YOU, GLEASON.

I CAN GIVE THIS TO THE NEXT BEARER AND TELL THEM CONFIDENTLY THAT THIS IS ALL I KNOW.

SO WHO'S FIRST ON YOUR LIST?

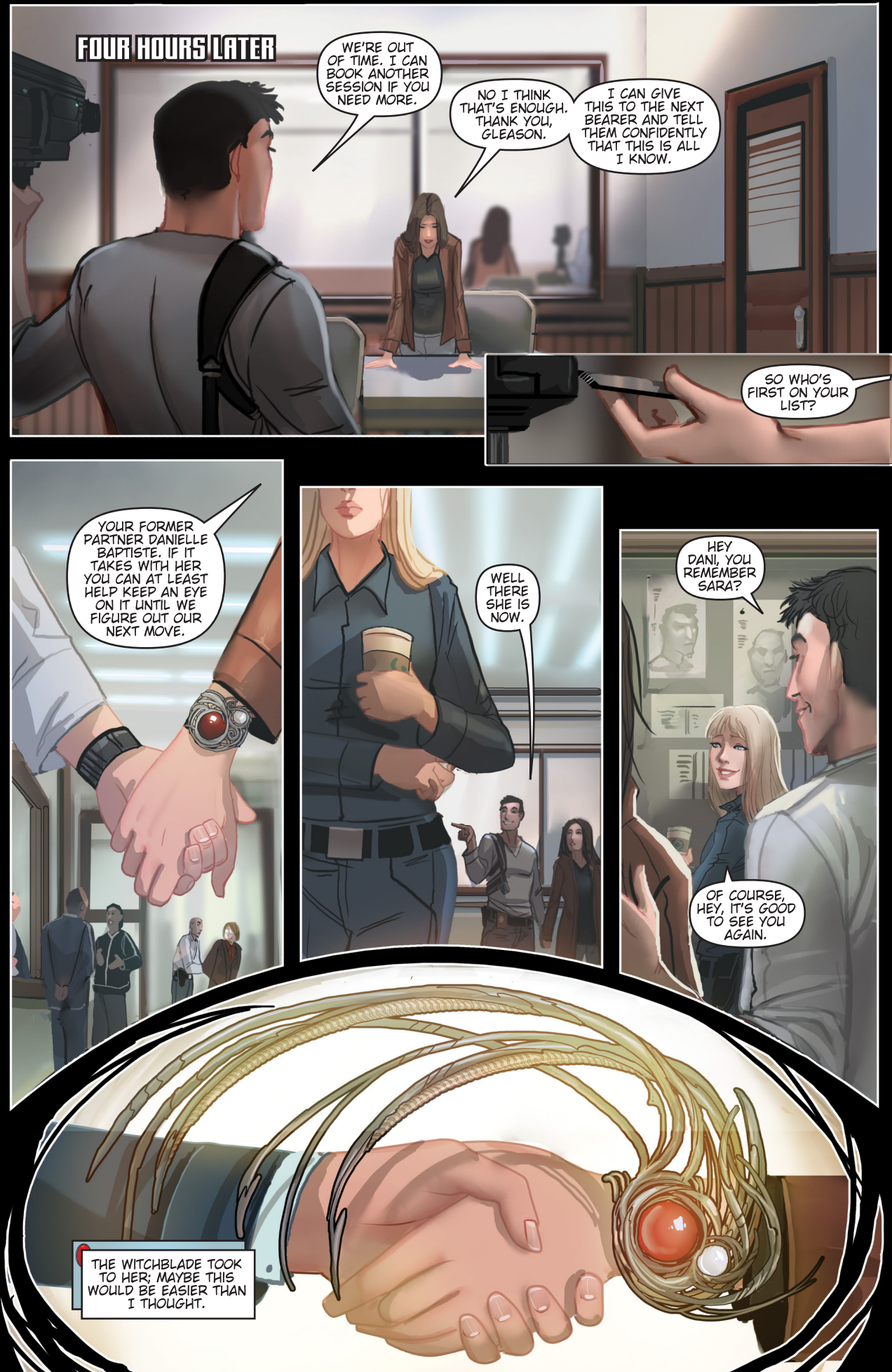
YOUR FORMER PARTNER DANIELLE BAPTISTE. IF IT TAKES WITH HER YOU CAN AT LEAST HELP KEEP AN EYE ON IT UNTIL WE FIGURE OUT OUR NEXT MOVE.

WELL THERE SHE IS NOW.

HEY DANI, YOU REMEMBER SARA?

OF COURSE, HEY, IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

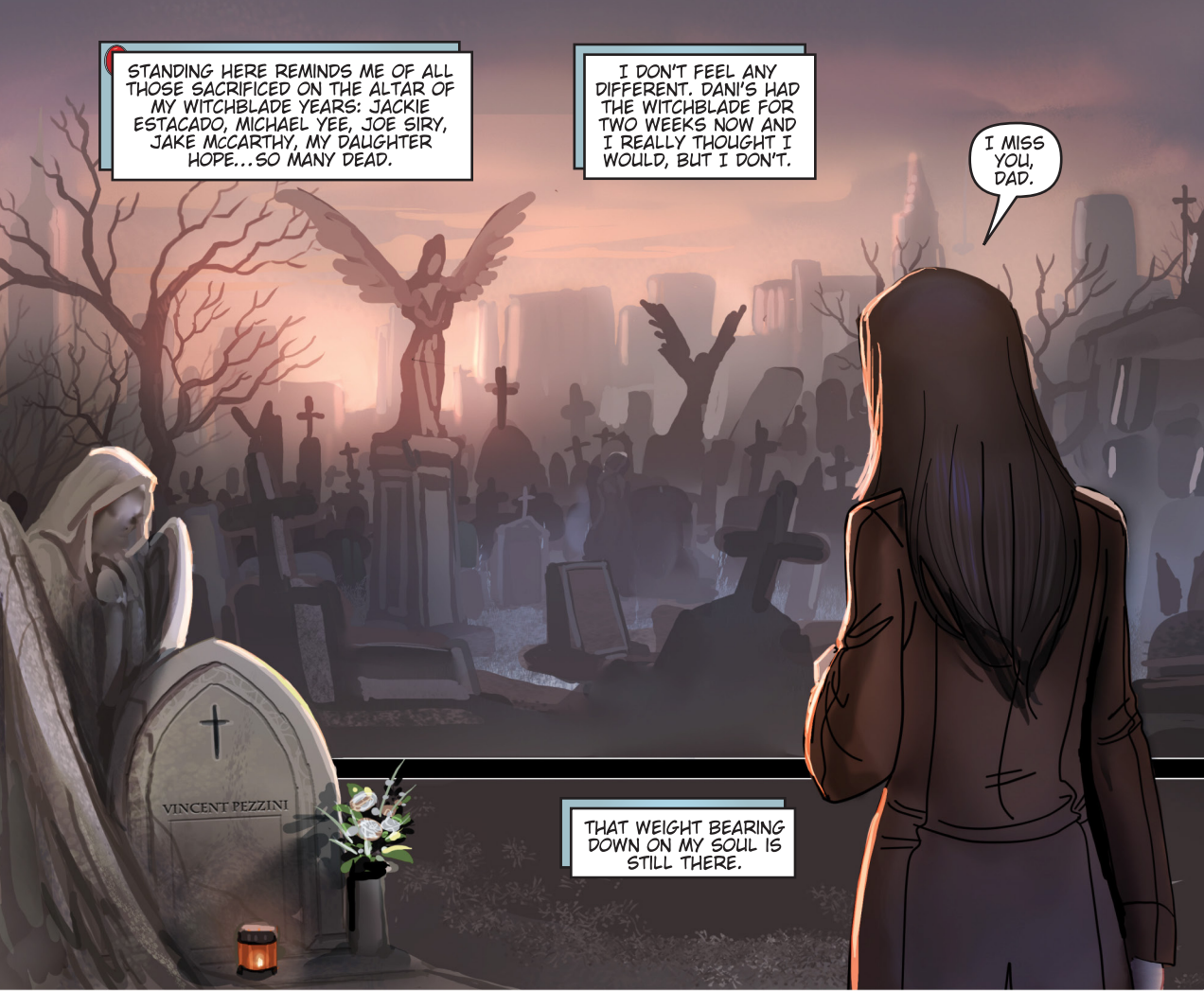
THE WITCHBLADE TOOK TO HER; MAYBE THIS WOULD BE EASIER THAN I THOUGHT.



STANDING HERE REMINDS ME OF ALL THOSE SACRIFICED ON THE ALTAR OF MY WITCHBLADE YEARS: JACKIE ESTACADO, MICHAEL YEE, JOE SIRY, JAKE MCCARTHY, MY DAUGHTER HOPE... SO MANY DEAD.

I DON'T FEEL ANY DIFFERENT. DANI'S HAD THE WITCHBLADE FOR TWO WEEKS NOW AND I REALLY THOUGHT I WOULD, BUT I DON'T.

I MISS YOU, DAD.



THAT WEIGHT BEARING DOWN ON MY SOUL IS STILL THERE.



WHAT THE? HOW'D YOU SNEAK BACK WITHOUT MY EVEN NOTICING?



THE WITCHBLADE... IT CAME BACK.

THREE WEEKS LATER ROME

DANI SAID SHE WOKE UP AND IT WAS SIMPLY GONE. SHE DIDN'T KNOW WHY BUT DIDN'T WANT IT BACK.

SO ONTO NUMBER TWO ON THE LIST, A WOMAN I'VE WORKED WITH BEFORE AND KNOW WELL: THE MAGDALENA, WHO ALREADY HAS A SISTER ARTIFACT, THE SPEAR OF DESTINY.

HER REAL NAME WAS PATIENCE AND SHE WAS ABOUT TEN YEARS YOUNGER THAN ME AND HER HEART WAS STILL IN THE FIGHT.



WHEN I SPOKE TO HER ABOUT IT, SHE WAS HESITANT BUT ULTIMATELY AGREED. SHE DIDN'T WANT THE WITCHBLADE TO FALL INTO THE WRONG HANDS EITHER.



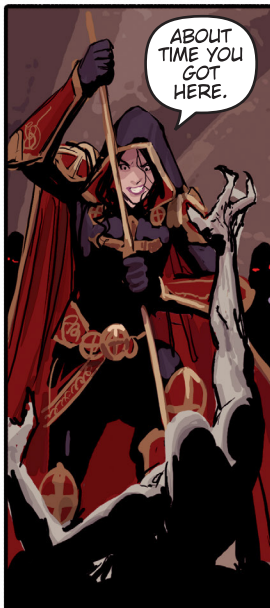
AND OF COURSE SHE COULDN'T MEET ME AT, YOU KNOW, A STARBUCKS OR SOMETHING. SHE ASKED ME TO MEET HER IN A SEWER NEAR THE VATICAN.

I GUESS WHEN YOU'RE A WARRIOR FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH YOU'RE USED TO WEIRD MEETINGS.

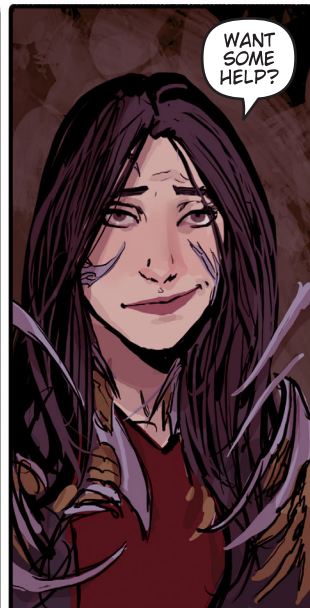


WHO AM I TO TALK? I'VE DONE WEIRDER.

ABOUT TIME YOU GOT HERE.




WANT SOME HELP?





IT FELT GOOD TO
UNLEASH A BIT.

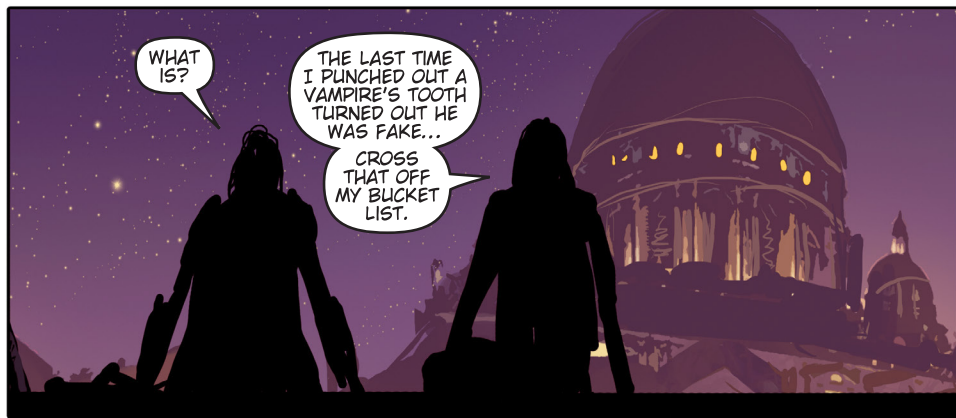


I DON'T UNDERSTAND
THE THIRTEEN
ARTIFACTS OR WHO
MADE THEM, BUT I
DO KNOW THEY'RE
WEAPONS.

AND WEAPONS
ARE DESIGNED
TO KILL.



IT'S KINDA FUNNY...



WHAT IS?

THE LAST TIME I PUNCHED OUT A VAMPIRE'S TOOTH TURNED OUT HE WAS FAKE...

CROSS THAT OFF MY BUCKET LIST.



I CAN'T LIE I'M GOING TO MISS THIS.

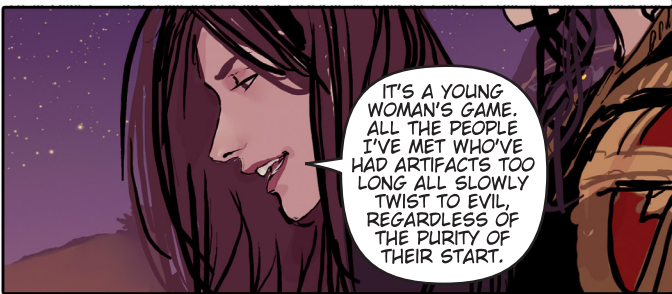


I WILL CARRY YOUR LEGACY WITH HONOR, SARA.

WE WON'T MEET AGAIN, GOD BE WITH YOU.



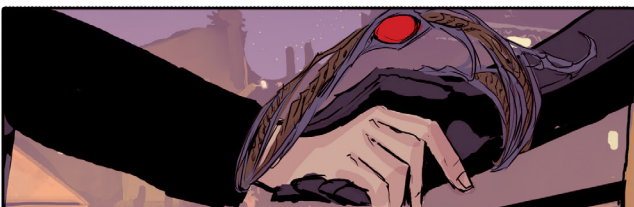
THEN WHY GIVE IT UP?



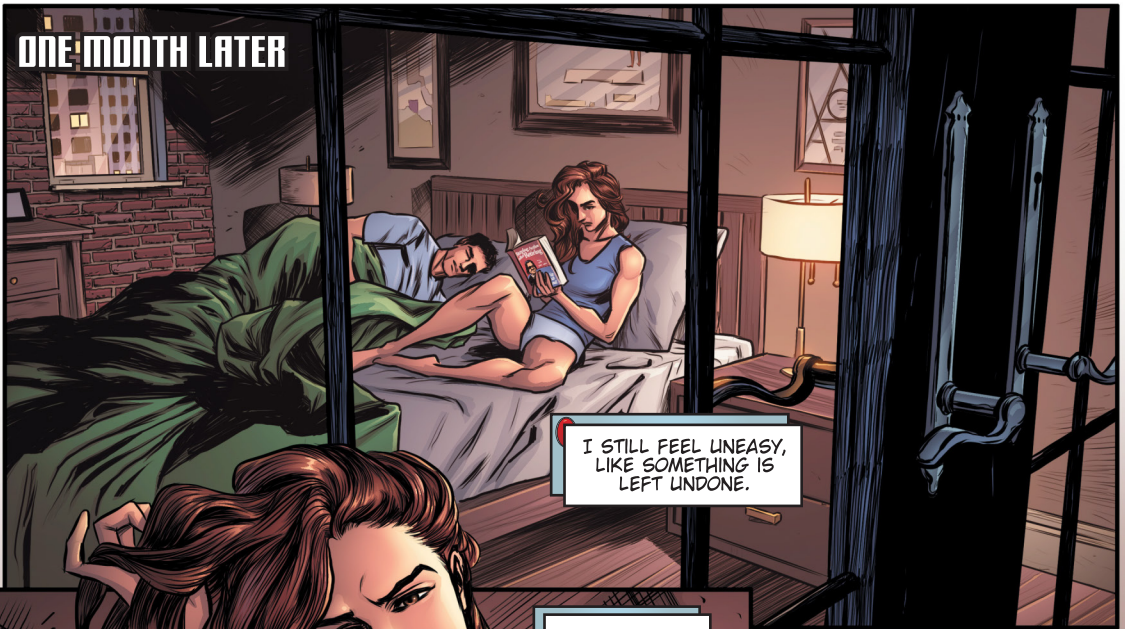
IT'S A YOUNG WOMAN'S GAME. ALL THE PEOPLE I'VE MET WHO'VE HAD ARTIFACTS TOO LONG ALL SLOWLY TWIST TO EVIL, REGARDLESS OF THE PURITY OF THEIR START.



THE IDEA OF HAVING TWO ARTIFACTS IS SCARY, BUT I WILL NEVER SHIRK FROM DUTY.



ONE MONTH LATER



I STILL FEEL UNEASY,
LIKE SOMETHING IS
LEFT UNDONE.



I NEED TO FIND
A HOBBY.



START A NEW
CAREER.

MAYBE HAVE
A BABY.



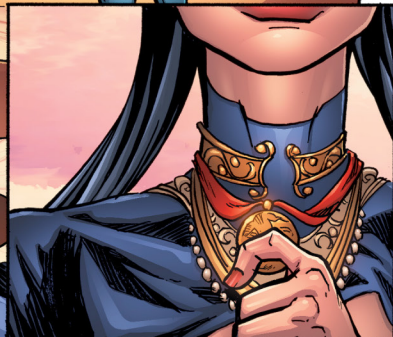
PATIENCE SENT WORD THAT THE WITCHBLADE HAD ABANDONED HER, SHE DIDN'T KNOW WHY, SHE DIDN'T KNOW WHY BUT WAS NO LONGER WILLING TO TAKE IT.

WHICH LEFT ONE LAST WOMAN ON MY LIST. IF THIS ONE DIDN'T TAKE, I WASN'T SURE WHAT I WAS GOING TO DO.

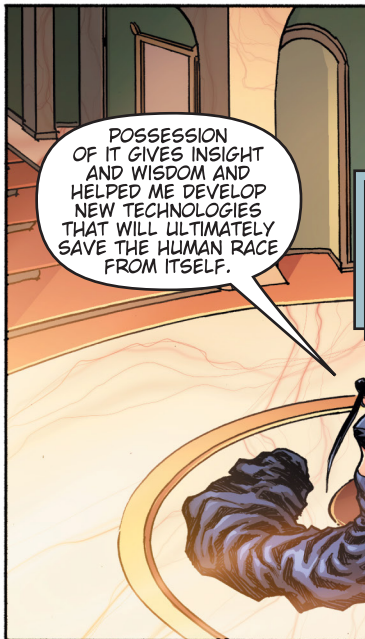
I'M GLAD YOU CAME TO ME MISS PEZZINI. I'M NO STRANGER TO THESE ARTIFACTS.



I FOUND THE COIN OF SOLOMON YEARS AGO AND HAVE USED IT TO HELP BUILD CYBER DATA FROM A SMALL START UP TO WHAT YOU SEE TODAY.



I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT THE COIN.



POSSESSION OF IT GIVES INSIGHT AND WISDOM AND HELPED ME DEVELOP NEW TECHNOLOGIES THAT WILL ULTIMATELY SAVE THE HUMAN RACE FROM ITSELF.

TWENTY YEARS ON THE FORCE, I'M A GOOD JUDGE OF CHARACTER. THIS FRANCESCA TAYLOR IS CERTAINLY A NARCISSIST OF THE FIRST ORDER, BUT I BELIEVED HER GOALS WERE GENUINE.

AND USING SCIENCE TO STUDY THE WITCHBLADE COULD BE A GOOD THING... WHO KNOWS?

TWO DAYS LATER

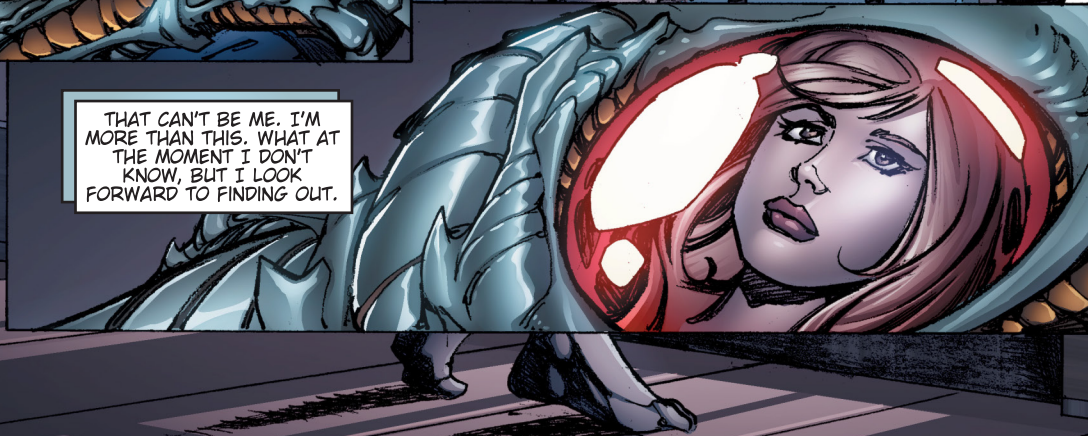
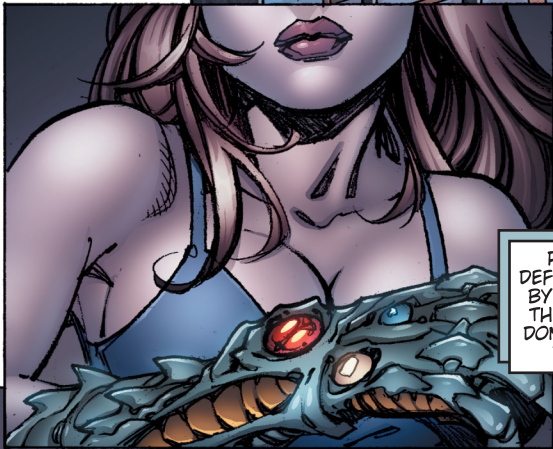
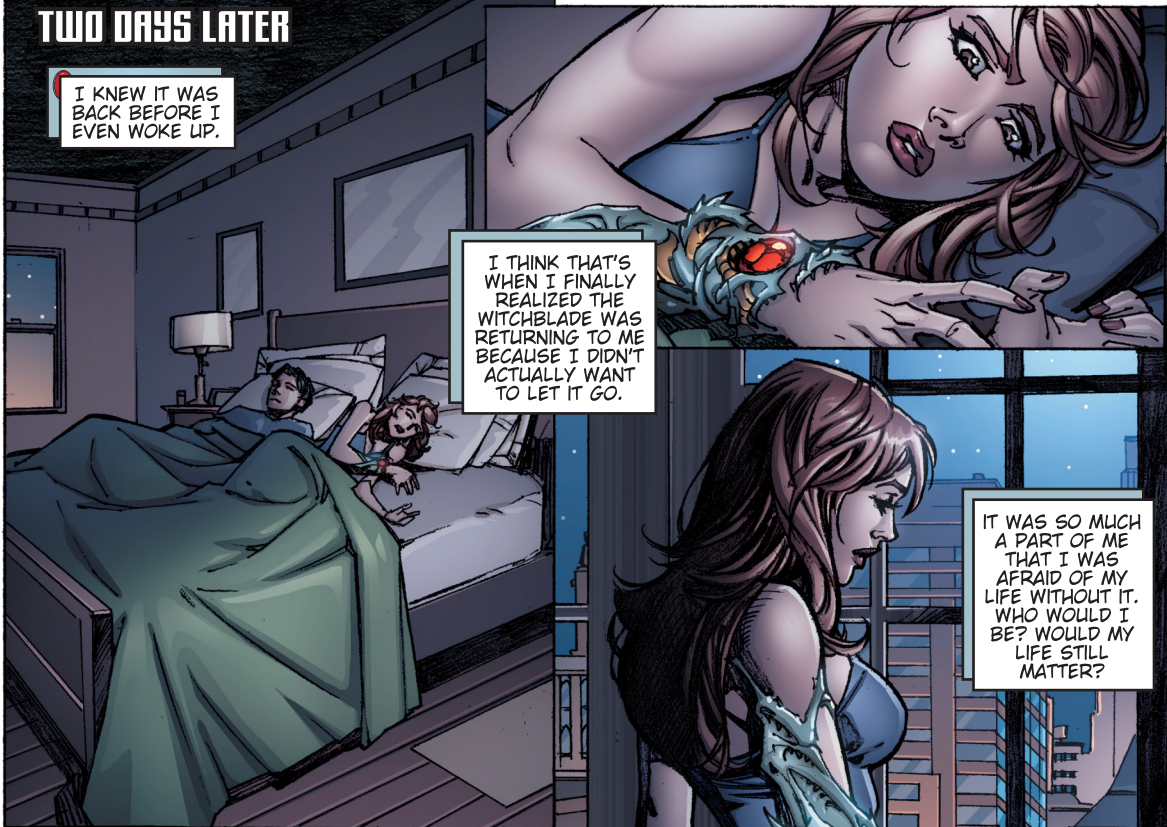
I KNEW IT WAS BACK BEFORE I EVEN WOKE UP.

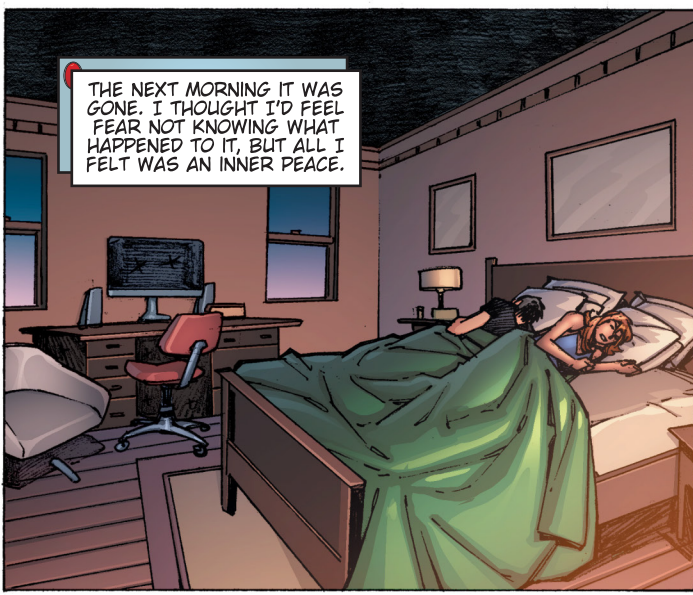
I THINK THAT'S WHEN I FINALLY REALIZED THE WITCHBLADE WAS RETURNING TO ME BECAUSE I DIDN'T ACTUALLY WANT TO LET IT GO.

IT WAS SO MUCH A PART OF ME THAT I WAS AFRAID OF MY LIFE WITHOUT IT. WHO WOULD I BE? WOULD MY LIFE STILL MATTER?

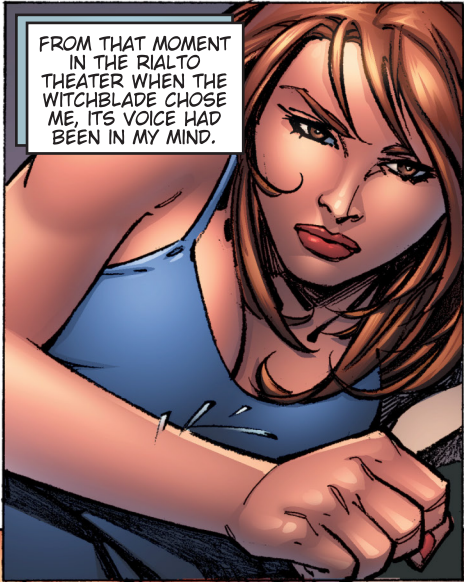
PEOPLE OFTEN DEFINE THEMSELVES BY THE TRAUMA IN THEIR LIVES. THEY DON'T WANT TO LET THE PAIN GO.

THAT CAN'T BE ME. I'M MORE THAN THIS. WHAT AT THE MOMENT I DON'T KNOW, BUT I LOOK FORWARD TO FINDING OUT.

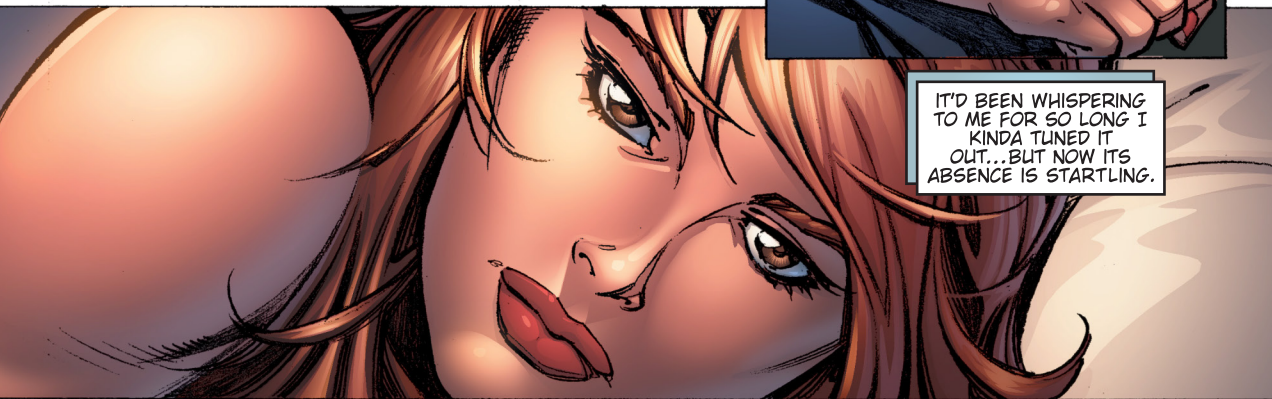




THE NEXT MORNING IT WAS GONE. I THOUGHT I'D FEEL FEAR NOT KNOWING WHAT HAPPENED TO IT, BUT ALL I FELT WAS AN INNER PEACE.



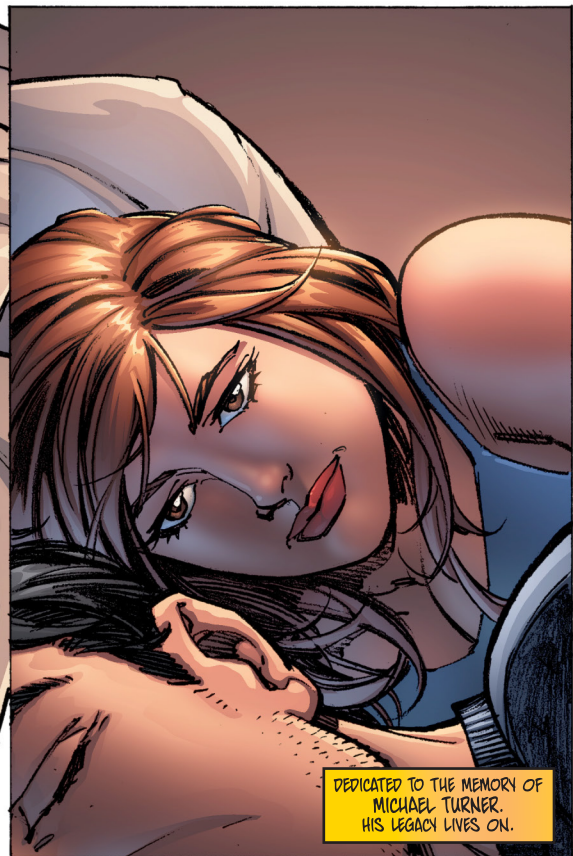
FROM THAT MOMENT IN THE RIALTO THEATER WHEN THE WITCHBLADE CHOSE ME, ITS VOICE HAD BEEN IN MY MIND.



IT'D BEEN WHISPERING TO ME FOR SO LONG I KINDA TUNED IT OUT...BUT NOW ITS ABSENCE IS STARTLING.



SO QUIET.



DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF MICHAEL TURNER. HIS LEGACY LIVES ON.

MARC SILVESTRI & BRIAN HABERLIN — CO-CREATORS OF WITCHBLADE

It's hard to believe it's been over twenty years since Brian Haberlin pitched the idea of a female King Arthur to Brad Foxhoven and me over at Top Cow. Back in the mid 1990's, the comic market was in a vicious downward spiral and everyone was grasping for even a mid-level hit. When *Witchblade* landed in the comic shops it truly was as if Excalibur had been pulled from the stone. Because not only was *Witchblade* the hit Top Cow needed, but combined with the talents of David Wohl and the late Michael Turner stirred into the mix it became a sensation. And really, things were never the same after that.

The fan response to David Wohl, his writing partner Christina Z and the "Where the hell did this guy come from" talent that Michael Turner brought to the book was nothing short of astonishing. The early days of *Witchblade* from concept, to production, to marketing, was a literal clinic in how to produce and promote a successful comic book. Heck, it even gave birth to another Top Cow hit, *The Darkness!* Everyone involved was at the top of their game and it was exhilarating to watch and be a part of. Creative lunches with David and Mike were always short because all of us wanted to get back to actually doing the physical work on *Witchblade*. It was rarified air and I'll never forget the experience.

Michael Turner was taken from his family and from all of us fans far too soon. When I look back at those early days, hanging out with Mike and tossing ideas back and forth with him, it will always bring a smile to my face, even if it's sometimes bittersweet. All of us at Top Cow would marvel at the sheer talent this man possessed and to this day I believe he was one of the best creators our business had ever seen. I often find myself wondering how much he would have contributed to our industry had he not passed at such an early age. It is in no exaggeration to say that Top Cow would not have become what it is without Mike and the work he did on *Witchblade*.

In closing, I'd like to thank all of the talented writers, artists, editors, marketers, and especially the fans that made Sara Pezzini and *Witchblade* such a success and pleasure over the years. I'm humbled and honored to have had a small part in her beginnings.

Again, thank you all.

-Marc Silvestri

Hubris... *Witchblade* was born of it.

In 1995 *Shi* and *Lady Death* were the heavy hitters in comics. We thought we could do better. (Both Brian and Billy have since become my friends and I have huge respect for them both...but at the time, they were the competition...so think about it that way.) David Wohl and I headed down to the Santa Monica Pier with notebooks in hand to see what we could come up with. We both loved Michael Moorcock's Eternal Champion series: Elric of Melniboné, Dorian Hawkmoon, Corum, etc. So we started with the power. An obvious accessible focus, as it were. One with a dark past, and sentient nature. I always thought it'd be interesting if Green Lantern's ring rebelled one day and took control...sort of saying, "Frankly, I'm sick of being used." That was the threat, here. Would the *Witchblade* stay in line? Would it be the good little "power ring" and do what the hero wants? Well, not exactly.

Then it was on to the bearer of the *Witchblade*. She had to have a job and a real life, complete with friends, car keys, etc. Did you know she was originally Sara Lopez? Most folks don't. Anyway, that name didn't stick and we moved on to Sara Pezzini. Always thought we could do some interesting visual things with Pez dispensers and how she would be given them as gifts all the time, but always hated them. Anyway, first we played with her being a firefighter. But if we really wanted to have her job help drive stories with action and mystery, then a cop was the way to go. We gave her a unique set of problems, unique set of friends, and unique villains... Really fun villains, cuz if you don't have a good villain, the hero is kinda pointless.

Then it was time to talk to Marc. He liked it, though we had to tell him the *Witchblade* title enough times to have him think he came up with it... ;)

Now...to find an artist... We knew Marc would do the *Cyblade/Shi* crossover, so first appearance was covered. But what about the series? Well, that was easy. I'd just finished the Ballistic miniseries with this young talented kid, Mike Turner. Mike was obviously a star on the rise...and with a grin that was incredibly infectious. So Marc, David, Mike and I did more pow-wowing and fleshing out and...well... hubris won out.

I'm very proud of all of the *Witchblade* books and I know we'll be seeing many more in the future as she was built from the very beginning to be the eternal champion. And whoever wields The *Witchblade* in the future I'm sure will fill the shoes quite admirably.

All the best to the bearers of the blade!

-Brian Haberlin

Top Cow is Proud to Present...



Issue #1 Preview

Written & Drawn by Stjepan Sejic

In Stores Now

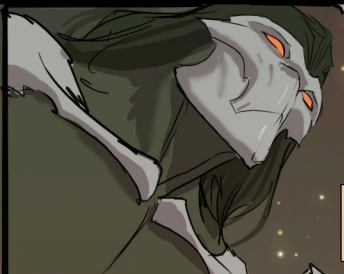


AWW, LOOK AT HIM...LITTLE WITCHBLADE. AIN'T HE CUTE? YEAH... THAT'S A HE.

AND THESE ARE HIS PARENTS:

HIS DAD...THE DARKNESS. PHYSICAL EMBODIMENT OF THE...WELL... DARKNESS.

AND THIS IS THE LITTLE FELLA'S MOM. THE ANGELUS, PHYSICAL EMBODIMENT OF LIGHT.




SO...UM, YEAH...

MOM AND DAD DIDN'T REALLY GET ALONG.

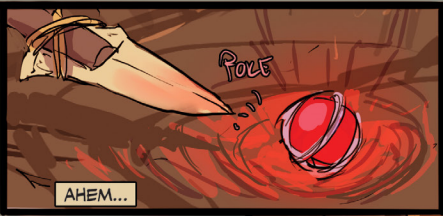


IT WAS...A DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY TO SAY THE LEAST.

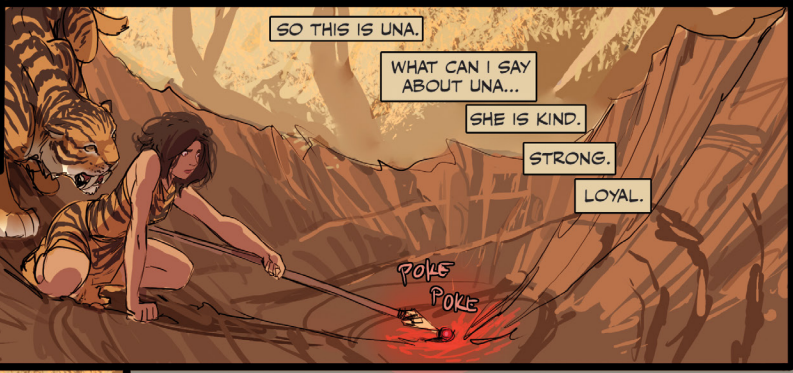


SO, ONE DAY LITTLE WITCHBLADE LEFT HIS HOME AND WENT TO SEE THE WORLD...

AND TO FIND SOME FRIENDS.



AHEM...



SO THIS IS UNA.

WHAT CAN I SAY ABOUT UNA...

SHE IS KIND.

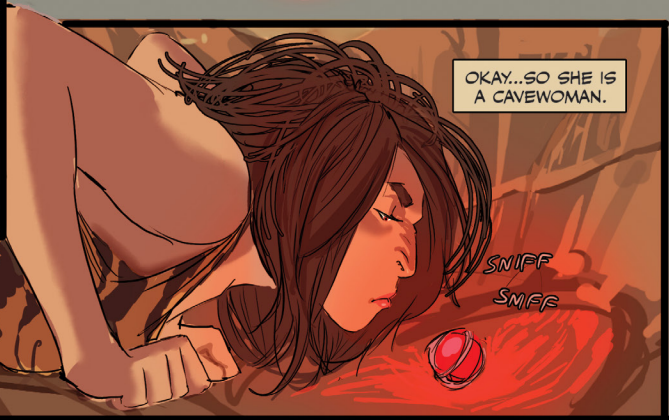
STRONG.

LOYAL.

POKE
POKE

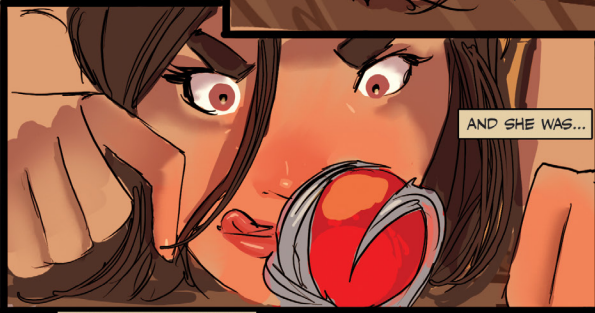


BRAVE...

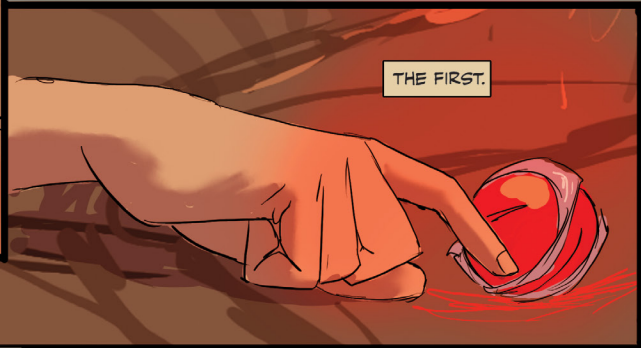


OKAY...SO SHE IS A CAVEWOMAN.

SNIFF
SNIFF

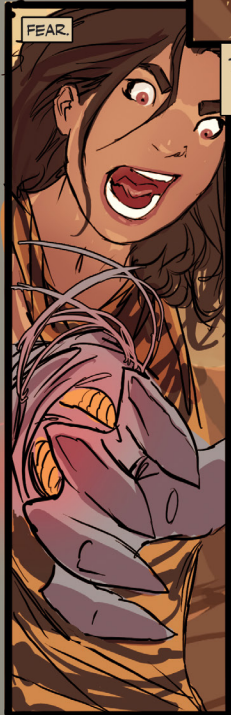


AND SHE WAS...



THE FIRST.

NOW, PAST THIS POINT, THINGS GO EERILY SIMILAR FOR MOST BEARERS. THERE'S SHOCK...

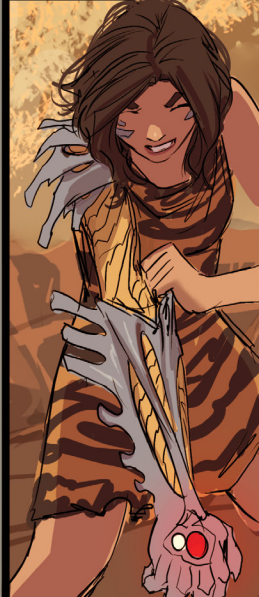


FEAR.

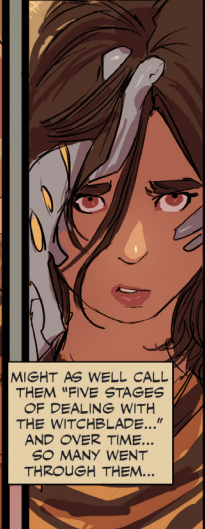
THAT GROWS INTO ALL-OUT PANIC.



THEN WE TRY RESISTANCE.



AND THEN, INEVITABLY... ACCEPTANCE.



MIGHT AS WELL CALL THEM "FIVE STAGES OF DEALING WITH THE WITCHBLADE..." AND OVER TIME... SO MANY WENT THROUGH THEM...

UNA WAS THE FIRST.

MANY FOLLOWED.

QUEENS.

WARRIORS.

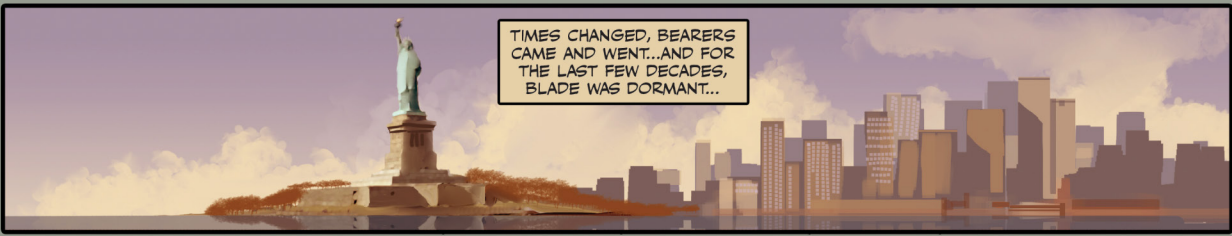
SCHOLARS.

ADVENTURERS.

ALL EXCEPTIONAL WOMEN
IN THEIR OWN WAYS, AND
ALL POSSESSING THE
HEART OF COURAGE...

AND EVERY SINGLE ONE
OF THEM, A BEARER
OF THE WITCHBLADE.
SO YEAH...BLADE HAD
HIGH STANDARDS...





TIMES CHANGED, BEARERS CAME AND WENT..AND FOR THE LAST FEW DECADES, BLADE WAS DORMANT...



AND THEN IT FELT THE CALL.



A NEW BEARER WAS READY.

THE TIME WAS RIGHT!

THE WITCHBLADE KNEW THAT THE BEARER WAS TO BE AN EXCEPTIONAL WOMAN...



LIKE THOSE BEFORE HER...

A PARAGON OF COURAGE...

EXCEPTIONAL WILLPOWER...



AND, MOST LIKELY, GREAT BEAUTY...



SO...WHY DID IT CHOOSE ME?

I HAD MY THEORIES, BUT THE ONE I SETTLED WITH -- AT LEAST FOR A WHILE -- WAS: YOU EAT ENOUGH STEAK, AND AFTER A WHILE YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF CRAVING FOR A BURGER.

AS IT HAPPENS, I WAS WRONG ON THAT ONE...BUT WE'LL GET THERE.



HEY, MARY!!! SPACIN' OUT?

YAAAHHH!!!



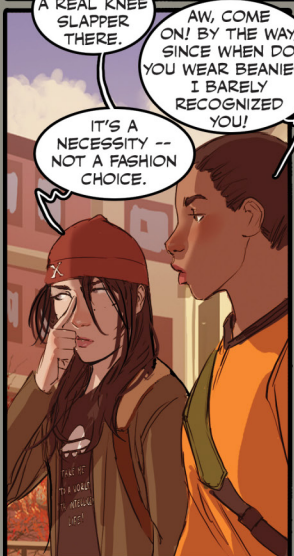
THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU, RUDY? JEEZ!

HAAAAHA... OH MAN, TOO EASY... ALSO, SEE WHAT I DID THERE? SPACIN' OUT? PRICELESS.

I...HAVE A THING FOR UFOLOGY...

RUDY THOUGHT IT WAS DUMB...

I REGRET NOTHING!



MMYEAH... A REAL KNEE SLAPPER THERE.

AW, COME ON! BY THE WAY, SINCE WHEN DO YOU WEAR BEANIES? I BARELY RECOGNIZED YOU!

IT'S A NECESSITY -- NOT A FASHION CHOICE.



YOU ROCKIN' A BALDSPOT?

ON THE CONTRARY... NOT HIDING A LOSS...

WHATCHA COVERING THEN?



A FRIGGIN' HORN, OKAY???



EW...UM...ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, YOU JUST PROVED THAT UNICORNS EXIST.

I BELIEVE IN EXTRATERRESTRIALS, NOT FAIRYTALES!

AND THE DIFFERENCE IS?

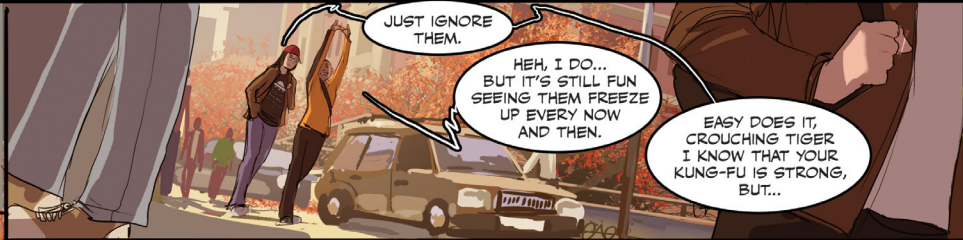
I HATE YOU!



RUDY WAS A WISE-ASS...

RUDY WAS MY BEST FRIEND...

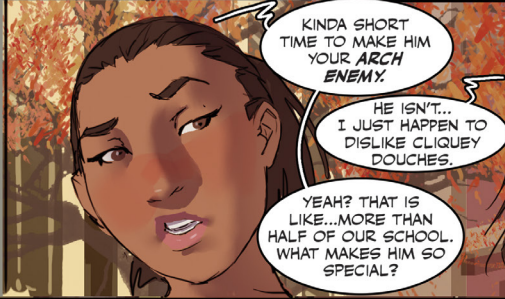
RUDY WAS ALSO A **BLACK BELT.**





MARY?
THAT GUY TRANSFERRED A WEEK AGO...

HUH?
YOUR POINT BEING?



KINDA SHORT TIME TO MAKE HIM YOUR ARCH ENEMY.
HE ISN'T... I JUST HAPPEN TO DISLIKE CLIQUEY DOUCHES.
YEAH? THAT IS LIKE... MORE THAN HALF OF OUR SCHOOL. WHAT MAKES HIM SO SPECIAL?



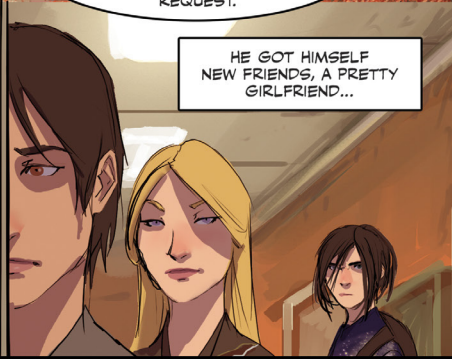
TONY... HE WAS MY BEST FRIEND BACK IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL...
HE HAD NO DAD, AND HIS MOM WORKED TWO JOBS, SO HE SPENT A LOT OF TIME AT OUR PLACE.
HE WAS... A PART OF THE FAMILY...



THEN ONE DAY THEY MOVED AWAY. APPARENTLY IT WAS SOMETHING ABOUT HIS FATHER HAVING LEFT HIM WITH SOME INHERITANCE OR SOMETHING...
AND FROM THAT DAY ON... NOTHING. NOT A PHONE CALL, NO LETTERS, NO EMAILS... HELL, NOT EVEN A FACEBOOK FRIEND REQUEST.



BUT I GUESS THAT'S FINE... PEOPLE CHANGE, HE CHANGED -- HE FORGOT...



HE GOT HIMSELF NEW FRIENDS, A PRETTY GIRLFRIEND...



SO... I JUST DON'T CARE ABOUT HIM.
YEAH, NO, I CAN FEEL THE MAGNITUDE SIX NOT-CARING RIGHT HERE.



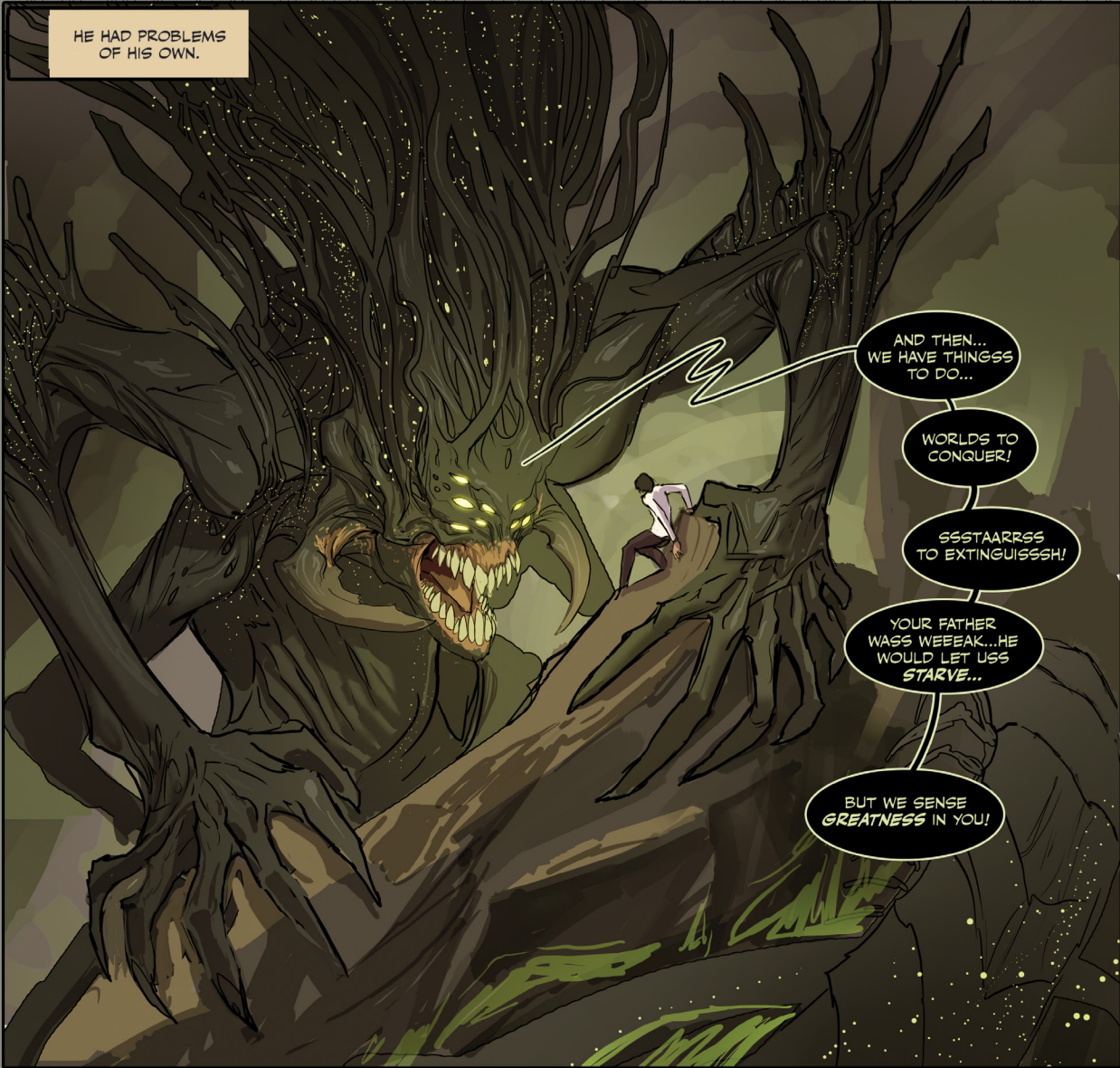
I MEAN IT...I
COULDN'T CARE LESS!
TONY ESTACADO CAN HAVE
HIS PERFECT, DREAMY
EXISTENCE!



WE ARE CLOSE
ESSTACADOOOO...

IN HINDSIGHT...
I MIGHT HAVE BEEN
WRONG ABOUT TONY...

WE HAVE BEEN
WAITING...SIXTEEN YEARSSS
AND FIVE MORE WE SSSSHALL
WAIIIIT...



HE HAD PROBLEMS
OF HIS OWN.

AND THEN...
WE HAVE THINGSS
TO DO...

WORLDS TO
CONQUER!

SSSTAARRRS
TO EXTINGUISSSH!

YOUR FATHER
WASS WEEEAK...HE
WOULD LET USS
STARVE...

BUT WE SENSE
GREATNESS IN YOU!

WE WOULD KNOW,
TONY! AFTER ALL WE ARE
THE GREATNESS IN YOU!

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

AAAAHHHHHH!!!!

OH, FOR
CRYING OUT LOUD...
THIS CRAP AGAIN?

A NIGHT LIGHT?
OH, THIS IS JUST TOO
PRECIOUS.

HUH?

AN ESTACADO
IS AFRAID OF THE
DARK...

BUT I
ASSURE YOU,
LIGHT WILL OFFER
NO COMFORT
TO THE LIKES
OF YOU.

W-WHO
ARE YOU?

JUST SOMEBODY
SENT TO HELP YOU,
BOY. I WILL RID YOU OF
THIS DARKNESS IN
YOUR HEART...

To find out what happens next, pick up *Switch #1*—in stores now!

SWITCH™

I CAN TEACH YOU TO FIGHT SMART!

WITH ME, IT'S ONE SHOT! THAT'S ALL! YOU WIN!



I COULD TRAIN YOU TO FIGHT THE GODS THEMSELVES!

IT'S CALLED THE WITCHBLADE FOR A REASON, TOGETHER WE CAN SHOW THEM WHY!

LISTEN, I'VE FOUGHT USING A SPEAR MY WHOLE LIFE. TRUST ME, IT GETS THINGS DONE!

OH YEAH... THIS IS ALL JUST SUPER HELPFUL.

STJEPAN SEJIC

IN STORES NOW

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