

WITCHBLADE

#183



POWER BROKER PART 2

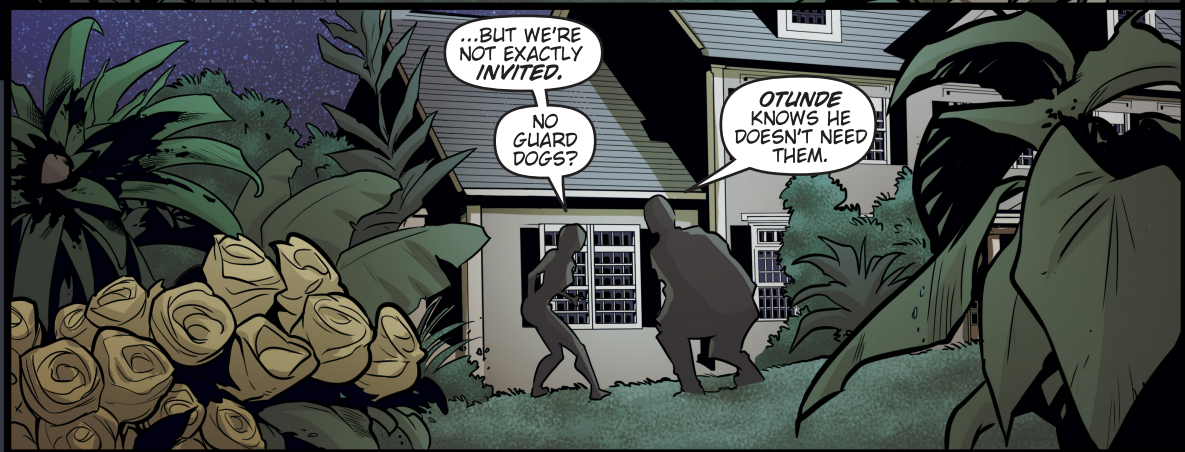
RON MARZ • FRANCESCO MANNA • BETSY GONIA

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NOT EXACTLY INVITING...



...BUT WE'RE NOT EXACTLY INVITED.

NO GUARD DOGS?

OTLINDE KNOWS HE DOESN'T NEED THEM.

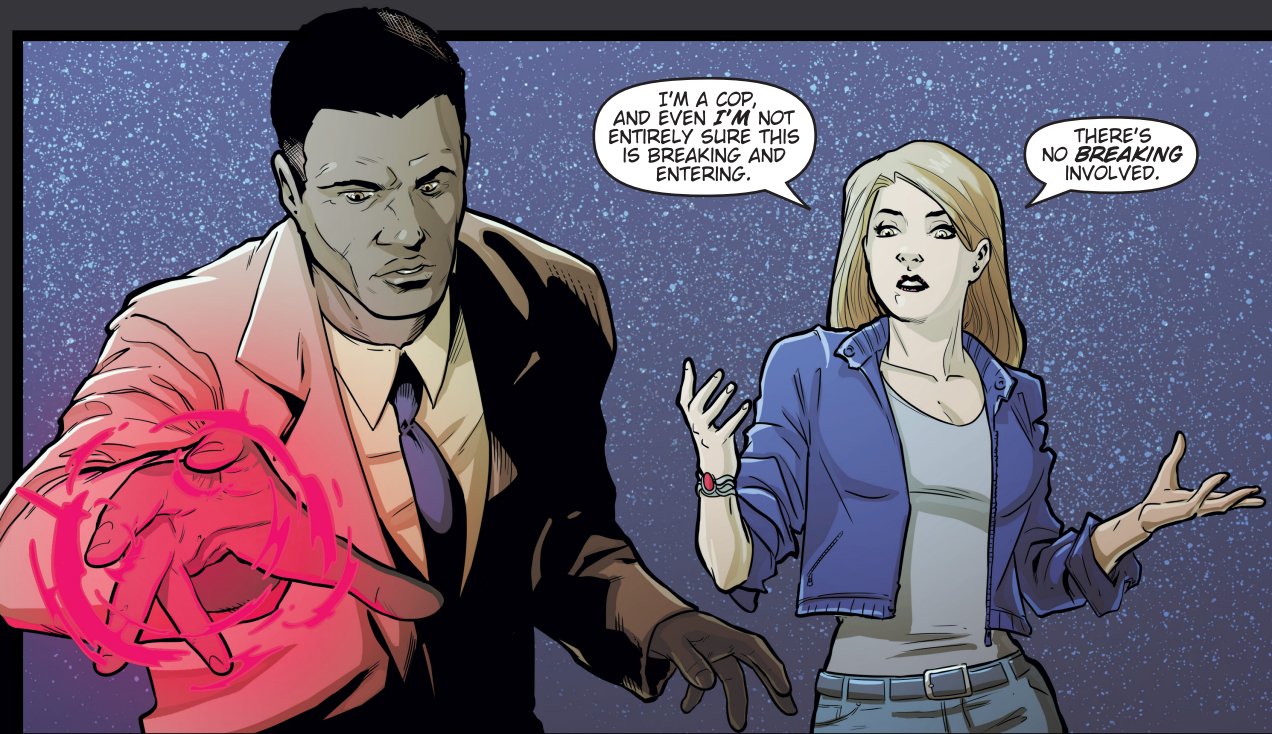


ANYONE WANTING TO BREAK INTO HIS ESTATE WOULD HAVE TO BE *INSANE*.

THE ONLY LOCKS HERE...



...ARE *MAGICAL* ONES.



I'M A COP, AND EVEN I'M NOT ENTIRELY SURE THIS IS BREAKING AND ENTERING.

THERE'S NO **BREAKING** INVOLVED.



IT MIGHT BE LOW LEVEL STUFF, KEENE, BUT THAT **RUNE MAGIC** COMES IN HANDY.

AMARYLLIS DIDN'T HIRE ME JUST BECAUSE I LOOK GOOD IN THE **SUIT**, PEZZINI.



HOPEFULLY IT GETS US IN AND OUT BEFORE ANYONE KNOWS WE'RE HERE.



BIG PLACE.

THE HOUSE DATES BACK TO THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY. OTUNDE'S BEEN HERE FOR AT LEAST A DECADE, AS FAR AS WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO ASCERTAIN. HE'S BEEN A POWER BROKER IN THE SUPERNATURAL COMMUNITY FOR LONGER THAN THAT.

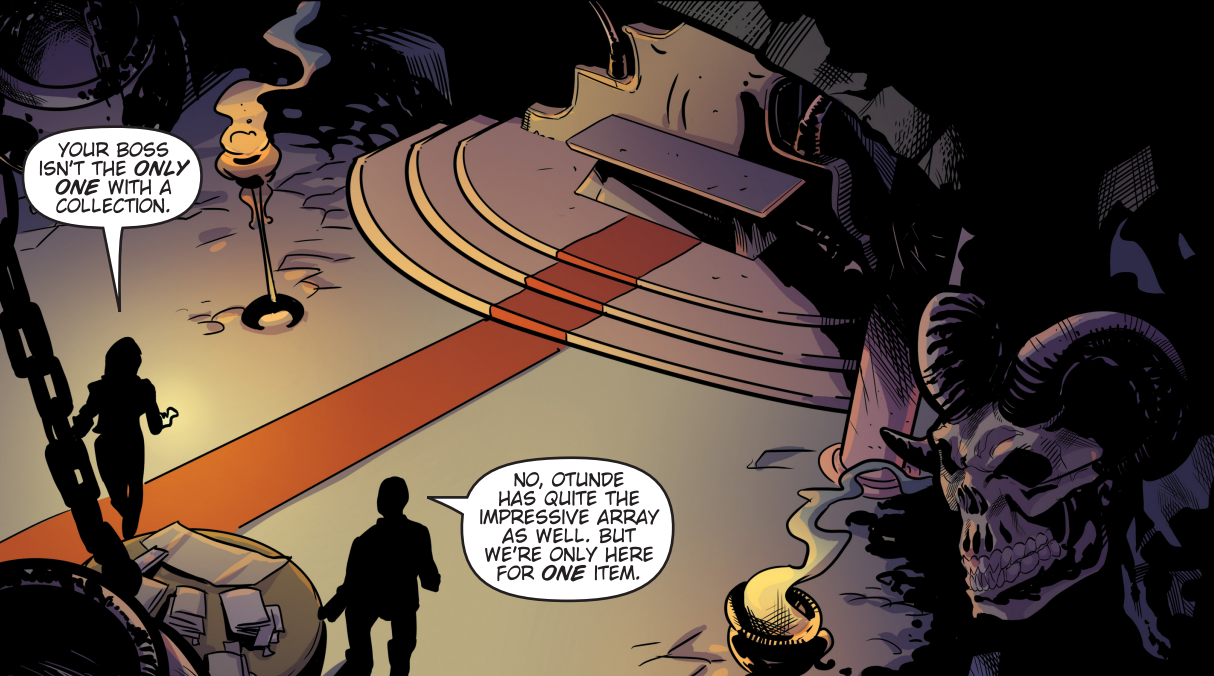


WE'LL HAVE TO RISK A LIGHT TO FIND WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR.

DON'T BOTHER...



...I'VE GOT IT. THIS COMES IN HANDY TOO.



YOUR BOSS ISN'T THE ONLY ONE WITH A COLLECTION.

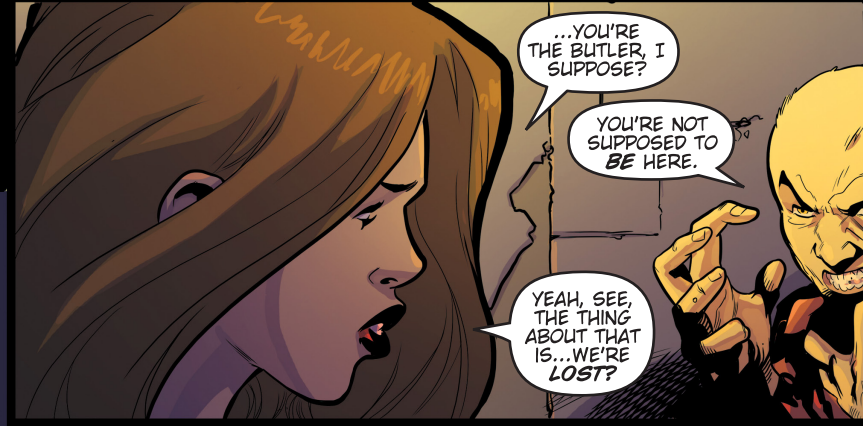
NO, OTUNDE HAS QUITE THE IMPRESSIVE ARRAY AS WELL. BUT WE'RE ONLY HERE FOR ONE ITEM.



THEN LET'S FIND IT AND GET OUT OF HERE.



OH BOY...



...YOU'RE THE BUTLER, I SUPPOSE?

YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO **BE** HERE.

YEAH, SEE, THE THING ABOUT THAT IS...WE'RE **LOST**?



WE'RE **JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES?**

DID YOU THINK THERE WOULD BE NO **SAFEGUARDS...**



WE'RE **SELLING GIRL SCOUT COOKIES?**

...NO **PUNISHMENT?**



SKREEEE



FLAMING
SWORD
TOO.
GOING ALL
BIBLICAL
ON ME?



I HAVE
IT.



THAT'S
GREAT, KEENE.
REALLY, I'M
THRILLED...



...BUT I'M
A LITTLE *BUSY*
RIGHT THIS
SECOND.



YOU
BROUGHT
IT...



...YOU
EAT IT.

YAAGH!



YOU HAVE
INVADED MY
HOME.


A man with a shaved head, wearing a red suit jacket over a white shirt and a dark vest, stands in a gothic-style building. He wears gold-rimmed sunglasses and has a small goatee. His right hand is engulfed in bright yellow and orange flames. The background shows stone arches and a window with a view of a city.

THIS DOES NOT PLEASE ME.

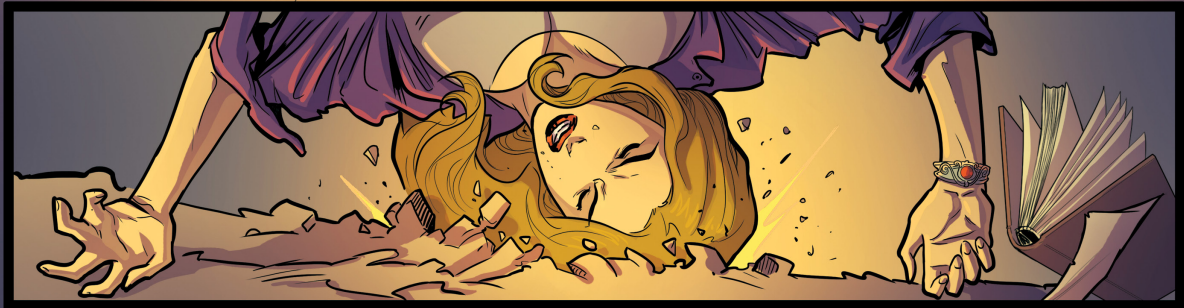
THE SLAUGHTER OF MY *SERVANT* PLEASES ME EVEN LESS.

A close-up of a woman's face with long blonde hair. She has a serious, intense expression with furrowed brows and yellow eyes. Her lips are slightly parted.

OTUNDE?

A close-up of the man's face, showing his sunglasses and goatee. He has a stern, angry expression. His right hand, still engulfed in flames, is visible in the foreground.

WHO ARE YOU, THAT YOU *DARE* STEAL FROM OTUNDE?!





AMARYLLIS SENDS HER REGARDS.



RUNE MAGIC?
YOU MUST BE JOKING.

UH...



...AAAHH!

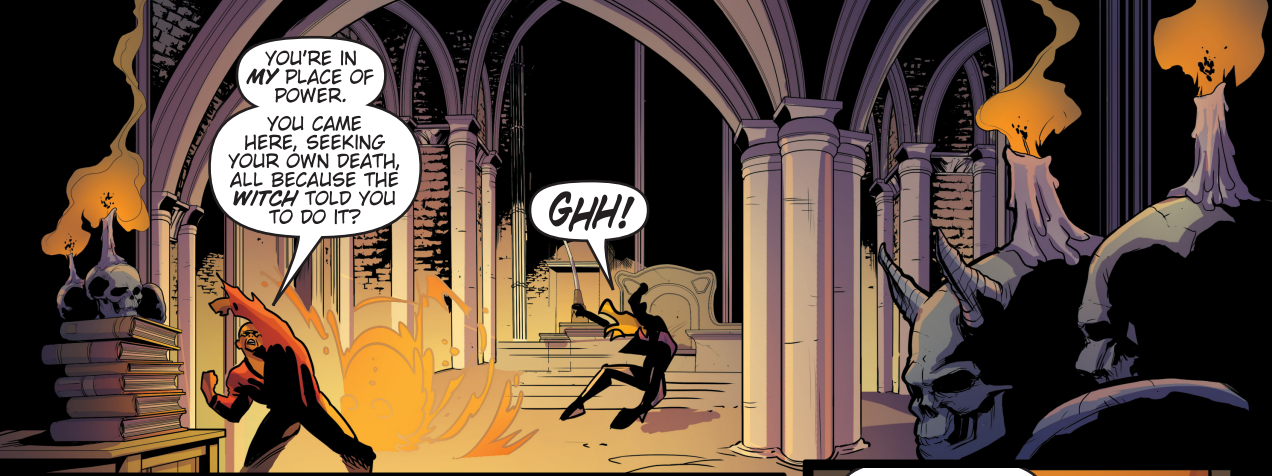


DON'T WORRY...



...I'M NOT JOKING.

AHHF!



YOU'RE IN MY PLACE OF POWER.
YOU CAME HERE, SEEKING YOUR OWN DEATH, ALL BECAUSE THE WITCH TOLD YOU TO DO IT?

GHH!



NNFFF
BECAUSE SHE WANTS... ROGUES LIKE YOU... UNDER CONTROL...



ARE YOU SO NAIVE TO TRULY BELIEVE THAT?



DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHO YOU'RE WORKING FOR?



NO, YOU PROBABLY DON'T.
BUT SHE'S SENT ME A RARE PRIZE IN THE WITCHBLADE.



I'LL FIND GREAT USE FOR IT.



THE ONLY THING YOU'VE ACCOMPLISHED IS GIVING ME A WEAPON TO USE AGAINST THE WITCH.
AND YOUR OWN DEMISE, OF COURSE...



...GLLRK

GAAAAH!



HOW... ARE YOU DOING THIS?

NOT ME.
THE WITCHBLADE.



OBVIOUSLY LIKES ME BETTER THAN YOU.



IN MY OWN HOUSE...

WHATEVER YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, STOP RIGHT THERE.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

KILL ME TWICE?



YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND WHO YOU SERVE.



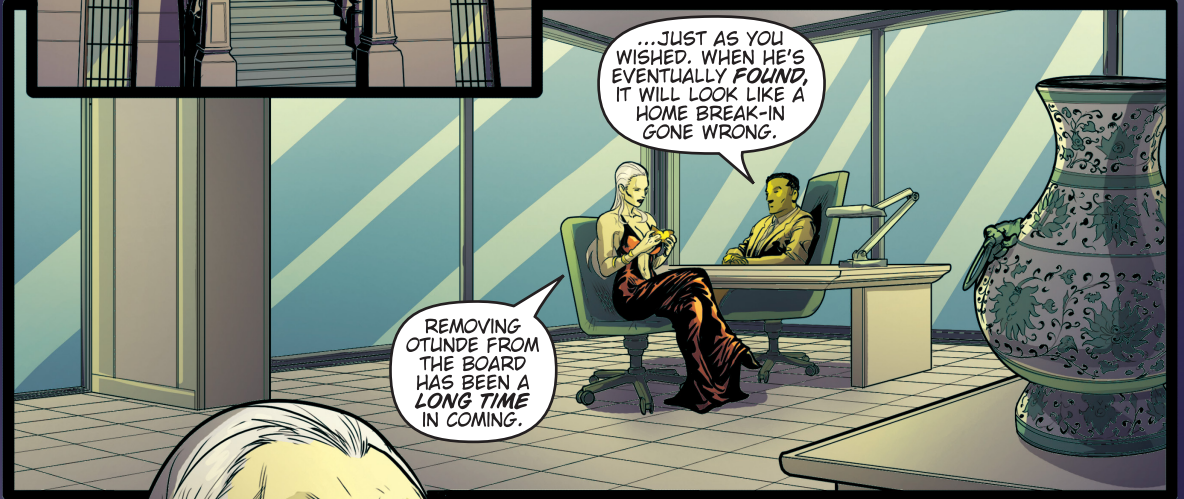
TAKE THIS...

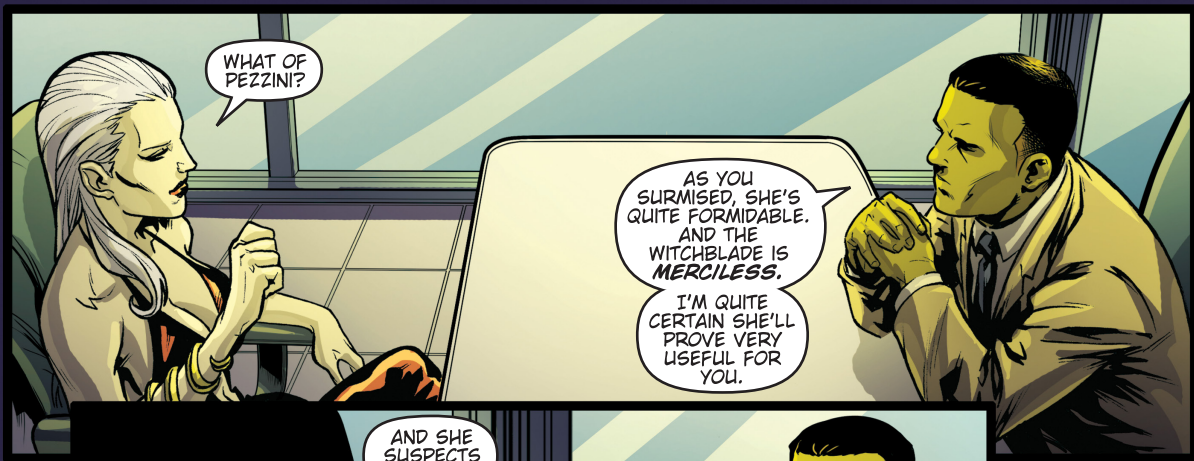


...KNOW THE DEVIL HERSELF.









WHAT OF PEZZINI?

AS YOU SURMISED, SHE'S QUITE FORMIDABLE. AND THE WITCHBLADE IS MERCILESS.

I'M QUITE CERTAIN SHE'LL PROVE VERY USEFUL FOR YOU.



AND SHE SUSPECTS NOTHING?

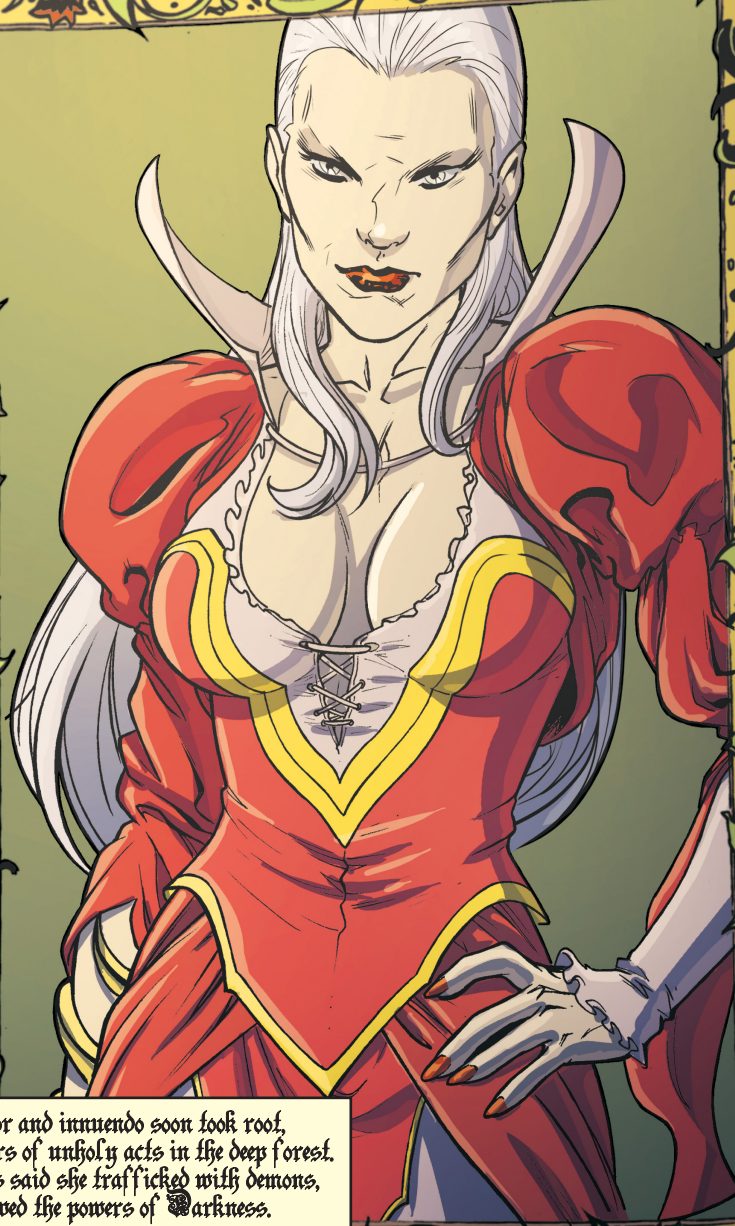
NOTHING.

GOOD.



The woman called herself Maryllis when she appeared in the village of Hamme-les-Messieurs in the year of our lord 1613.

She was long of limb and ripe of body,
with hair the color of new-fallen snow.

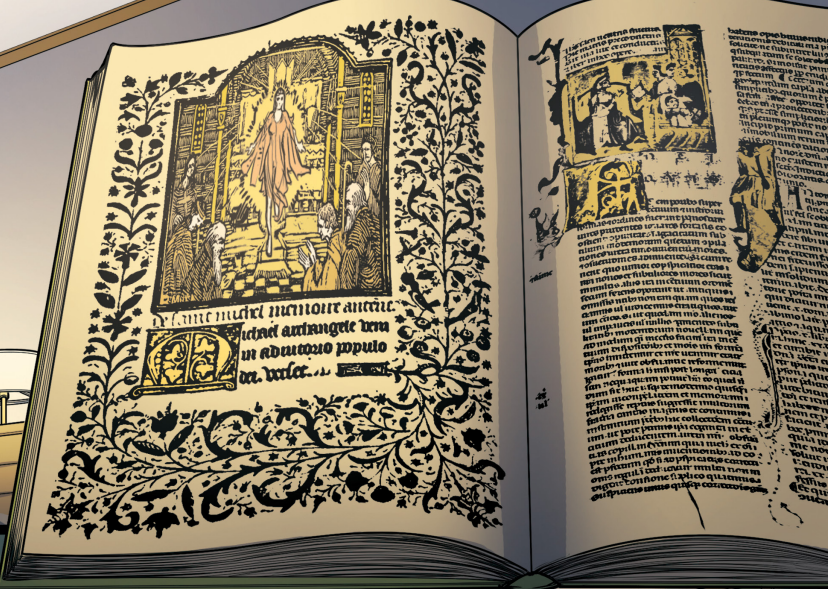


Rumor and innuendo soon took root,
whispers of unholy acts in the deep forest.
It was said she trafficked with demons,
and served the powers of Darkness.

Mary in the village fell
under her sway. Those that
did not meet curious fates, or
simply disappeared.

IT WAS HER...

Those who remained bowed down before her in supplication and subjugation.



Amaryllis extended her domain into neighboring villages, placing them under her thrall as well.



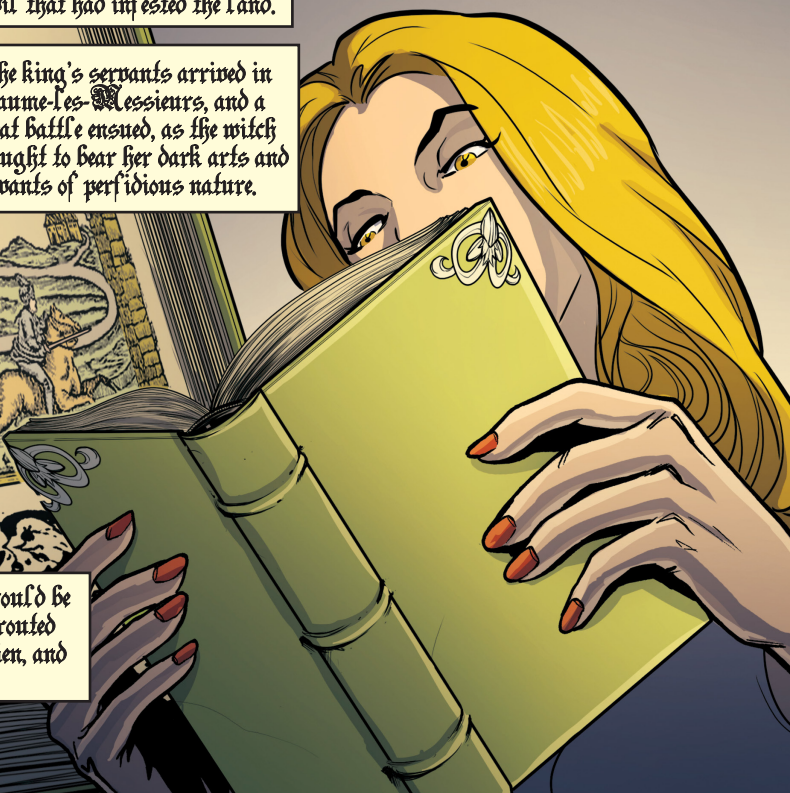
Word eventually reached Paris, and the King's regent dispatched knights good and true to strike down the evil that had infested the land.

The king's servants arrived in Vanne-les-Messieurs, and a great battle ensued, as the witch brought to bear her dark arts and servants of perfidious nature.



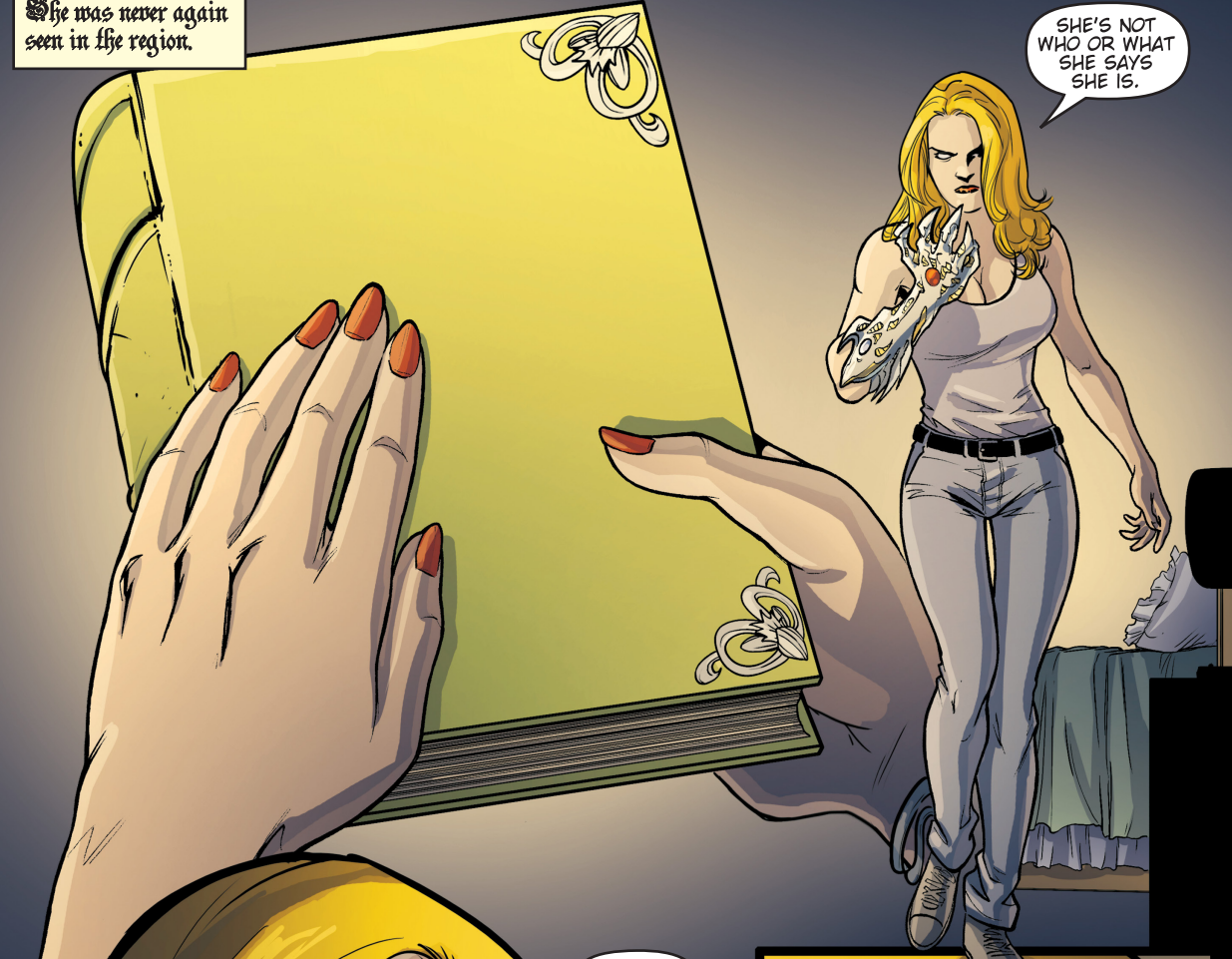
Many brave knights lost their lives in the conflict, but the witch was harried and driven to ground.

Yet before her evil could be extinguished, she sprouted wings of demonic mien, and escaped into the air.



She was never again seen in the region.

SHE'S NOT WHO OR WHAT SHE SAYS SHE IS.



IF IT TAKES A KNIGHT...



...I CAN BE THAT.

TO BE CONTINUED!

NEXT ISSUE

WITCHBLADE

#184

New York
368 miles



TOP COW IS PROUD TO PRESENT:
2013 TALENT HUNT RUNNERS-UP STORY

SOME DAY ONE DAY

JEFFERY BRIDGES & SUSAN BRIDGES • *Writers*

LUIGI CRISK • *Artist*

ROSS CAMPBELL • *Colorist*

TROY PETERI • *Letterer*

BETSY GONIA • *Editor*

EVER WANT SOMETHING SO BAD THAT EVERY FIBER OF YOUR BEING CALLS OUT FOR IT?

EVER WANT SOMETHING SO MUCH THAT YOUR SOUL SCREAMS IN AGONY EVERY SECOND YOU'RE DENIED YOUR DESTINY?

WHAM

FOR ANGELLUS! PROTECT HER REALM!



IN MY SINGLE-MINDED PURSUIT OF A GOAL, I MADE A MISTAKE. I DID SOMETHING THAT PRECLUDES ME FROM EVER HAVING THAT WHICH I DESIRE.

I HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD, AND STILL IT ELUDES ME. SOME DAY...

WE CANNOT EVEN APPROACH THE CREATURE. DOOM IS UPON US. I HAVE FAILED YOU.

THE BEAST CONSUMES TIME. TO DEFEAT IT, ONE MUST BE ABLE TO RESIST ITS PULL.


IT IS BEYOND MY REACH. BUT THERE IS ANOTHER.

SHE CANNOT BE TRUSTED! SHE WOULD TURN ON YOU AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE!

WE HAVE NO CHOICE. GO. NOW. BEFORE THERE IS NO TIME.

THE ANGELUS REQUIRES YOUR ASSISTANCE, SABINE.

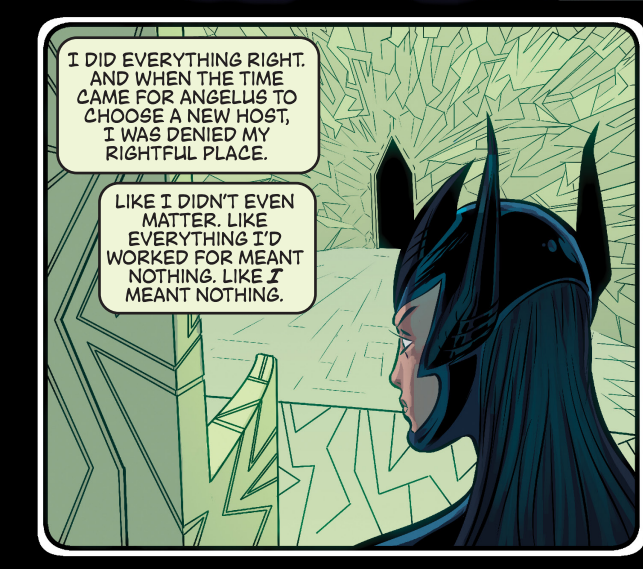
IT'S AMAZING THE "FRIENDS" YOU MAKE THE MOMENT YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING THEY WANT.



I SERVED.
I OBEYED.



I KILLED.



I DID EVERYTHING RIGHT.
AND WHEN THE TIME
CAME FOR ANGELLUS TO
CHOOSE A NEW HOST,
I WAS DENIED MY
RIGHTFUL PLACE.

LIKE I DIDN'T EVEN
MATTER. LIKE
EVERYTHING I'D
WORKED FOR MEANT
NOTHING. LIKE I
MEANT NOTHING.



THE ANGELLUS
SHOULD BE MINE.
SHE HAS THE
AUDACITY TO SEND
YOU HERE? TO ASK
FOR *MY* HELP?

DIE.



CAN'T
YOU SEE WHAT'S
HAPPENING?!

I'M
NOT THE
ONE WHO'S
BLIND.

LOOK
AROUND
YOU!



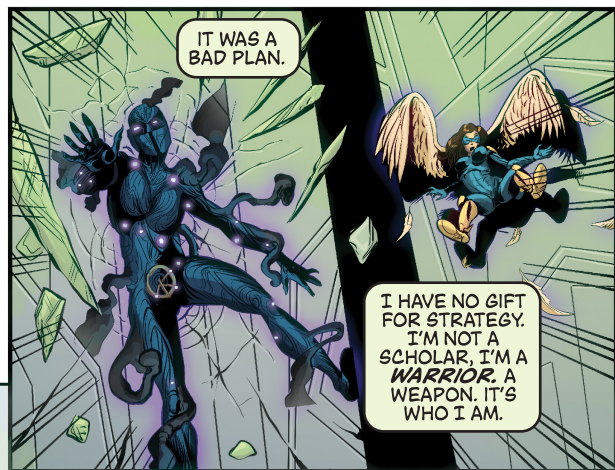
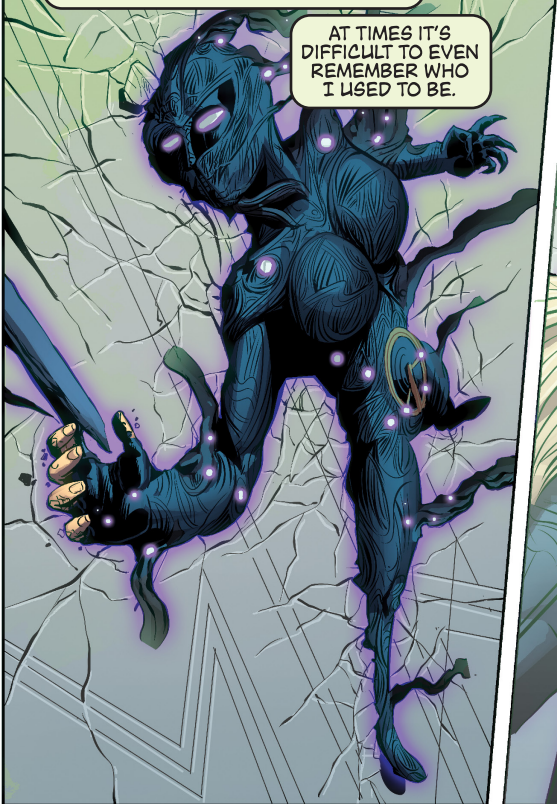
IF
YOU DON'T
HELP US, IT'S
THE END OF
EVERYTHING.
INCLUDING
YOU.

THE WHEEL OF SHADOWS
PROTECTS US, AS BEST IT CAN,
AS WE CHARGE THE BEAST
THAT WOULD DEVOUR US.



THE ANGELUS REALM. IT FEELS LIKE...
HOME. I CAN'T REMEMBER THE LAST
TIME *ANYWHERE* FELT THAT WAY.

AT TIMES IT'S
DIFFICULT TO EVEN
REMEMBER WHO
I USED TO BE.

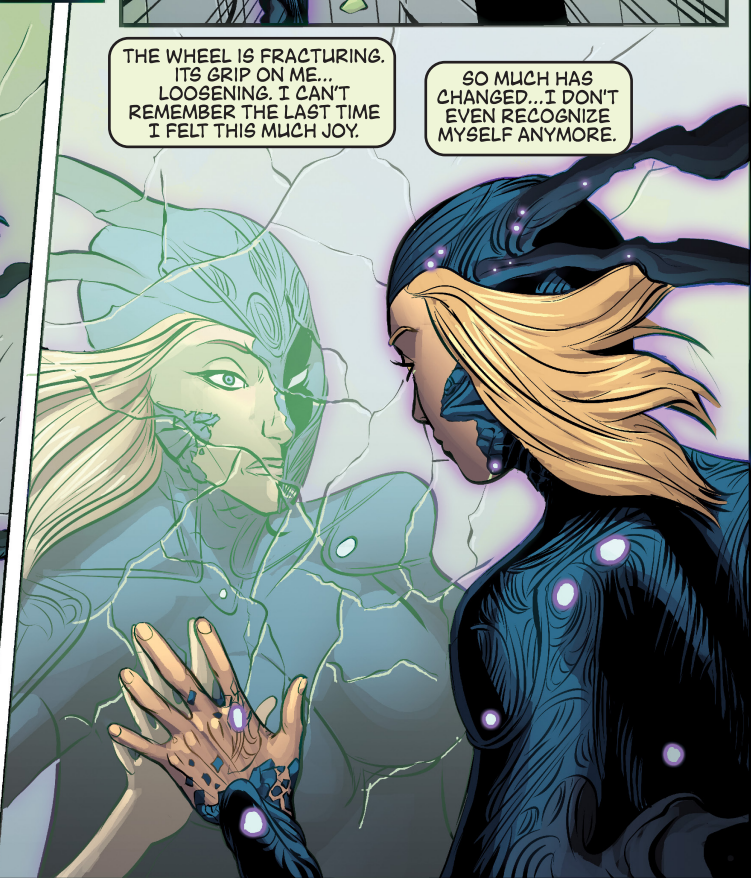



IT WAS A
BAD PLAN.

I HAVE NO GIFT
FOR STRATEGY.
I'M NOT A
SCHOLAR, I'M A
WARRIOR. A
WEAPON. IT'S
WHO I AM.

THE WHEEL IS FRACTURING.
ITS GRIP ON ME...
LOOSENING. I CAN'T
REMEMBER THE LAST TIME
I FELT THIS MUCH JOY.


SO MUCH HAS
CHANGED... I DON'T
EVEN RECOGNIZE
MYSELF ANYMORE.





FREEDOM. THE THOUGHT IS SO OVERWHELMING. MY HEART POUNDS IN MY CHEST. OR WOULD, IF I HAD ONE.

NOT SURE IF I EVER DID.



IF YOU DON'T SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITIES YOU'RE HANDED, YOU DON'T DESERVE TO SUCCEED.

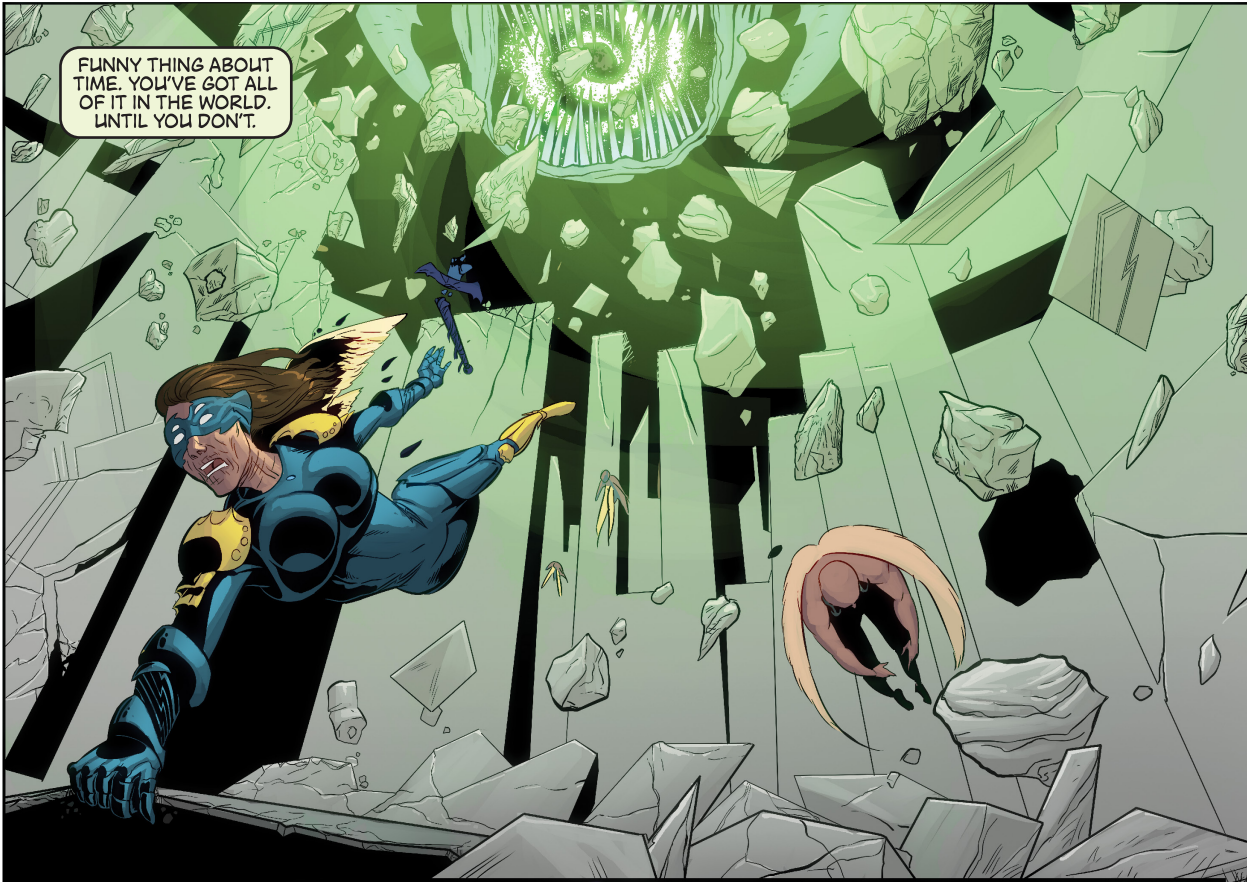


THE WHEEL TOOK EVERYTHING FROM ME.

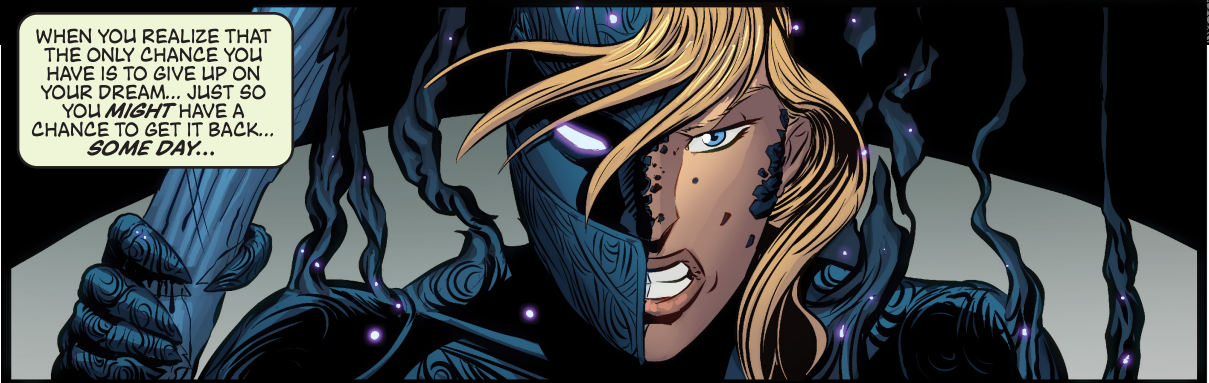
HAVING HAD AN ETERNITY TO PLAN, HAVING PAID FOR IT IN BLOOD, THE ANGELLUS WILL FINALLY BE MINE.

THIS IS MY TIME.

FUNNY THING ABOUT TIME. YOU'VE GOT ALL OF IT IN THE WORLD. UNTIL YOU DON'T.

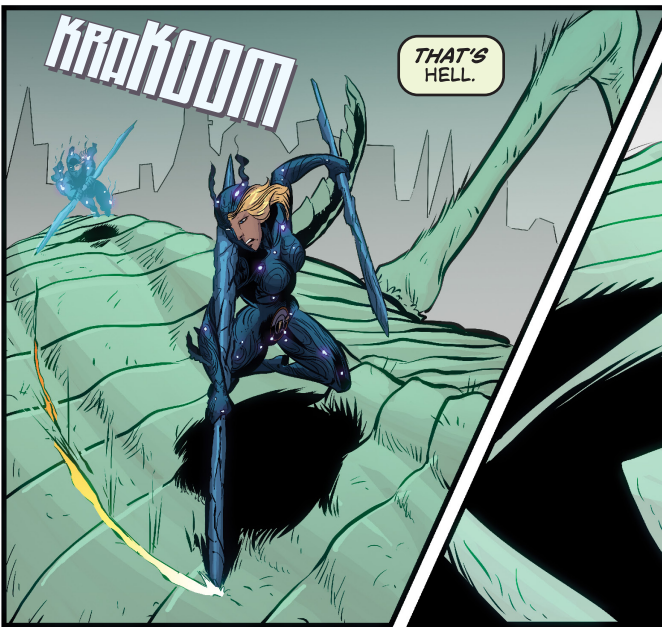


WHEN YOU REALIZE THAT THE ONLY CHANCE YOU HAVE IS TO GIVE UP ON YOUR DREAM... JUST SO YOU *MIGHT* HAVE A CHANCE TO GET IT BACK... *SOME DAY...*



KRAKOOOM

THAT'S HELL.



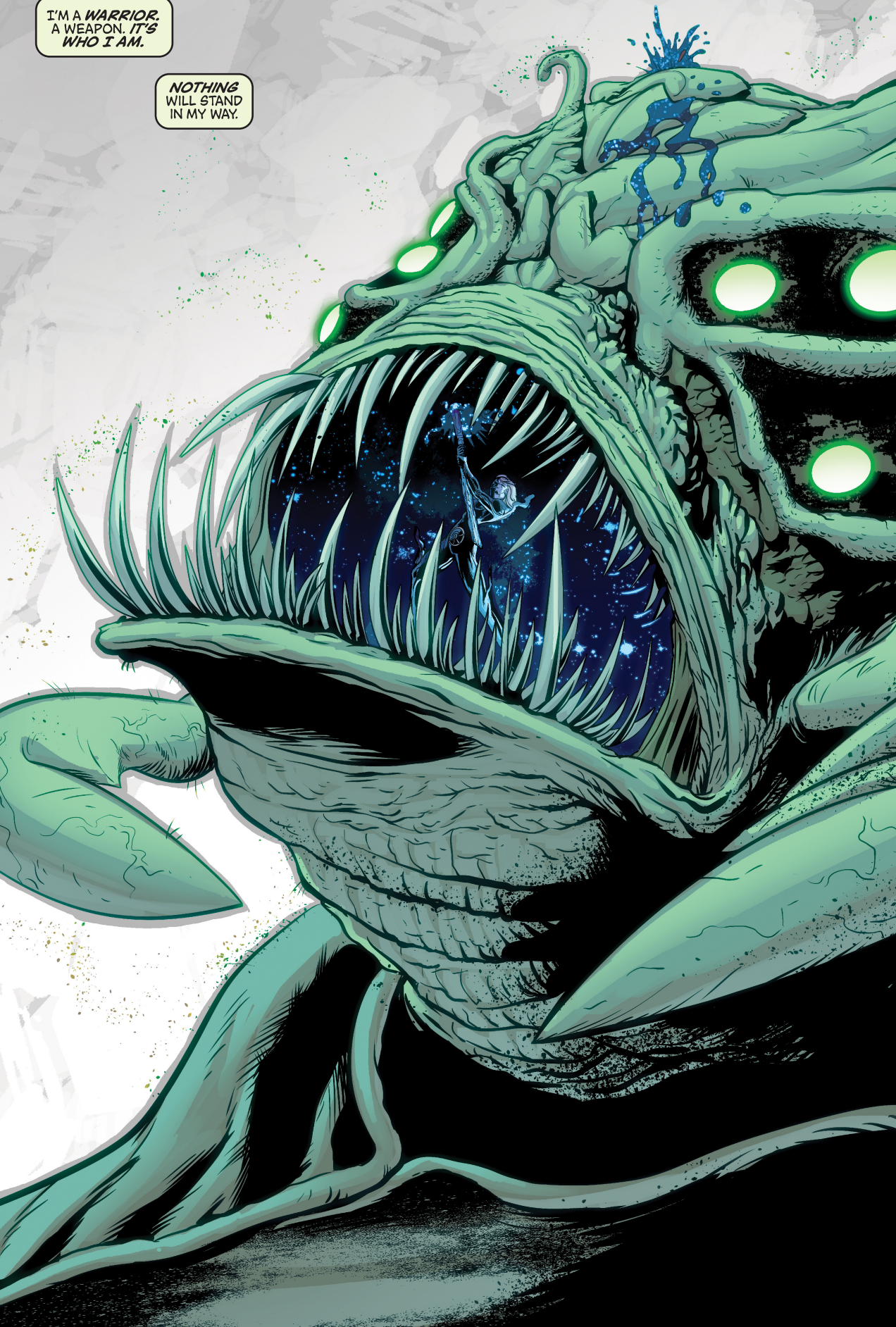
BUT I REMIND MYSELF...



FSSSSSHHHHH

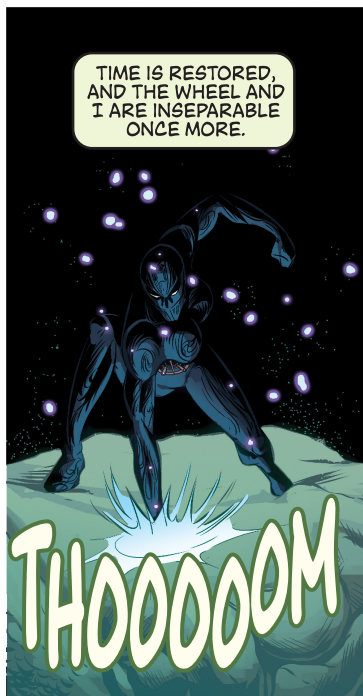
I'M A **WARRIOR**.
A **WEAPON**. IT'S
WHO I AM.

NOTHING
WILL STAND
IN MY WAY.





AND SO ENDS MY CHANCE OF BECOMING THE ANGELUS.



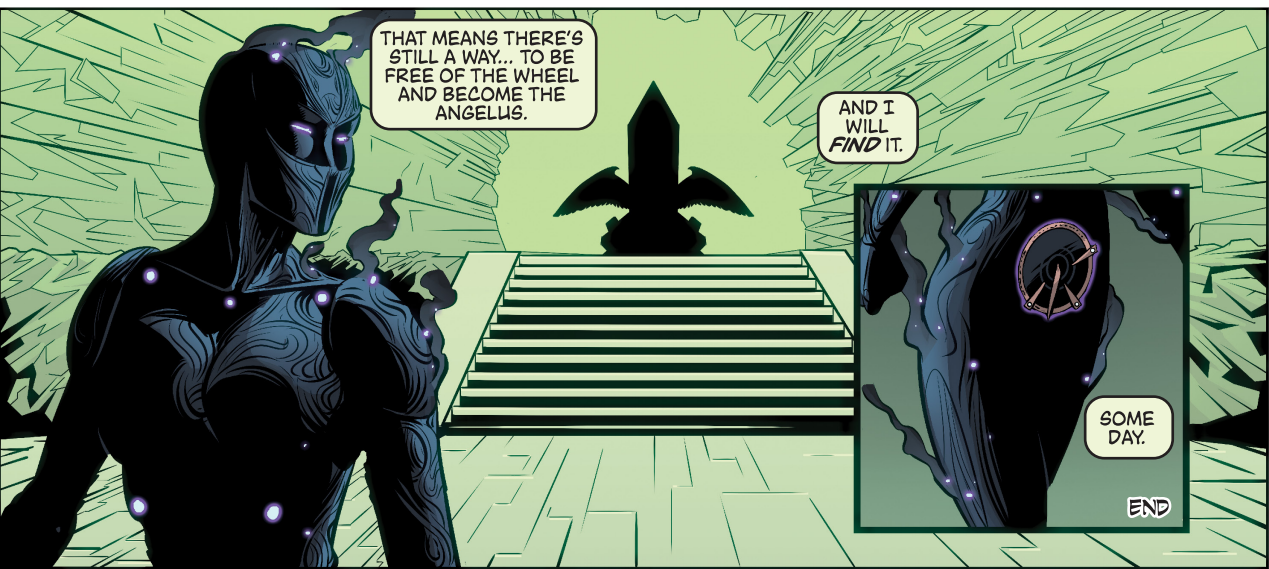
TIME IS RESTORED, AND THE WHEEL AND I ARE INSEPARABLE ONCE MORE.



BUT NOW I KNOW THE TRUTH.

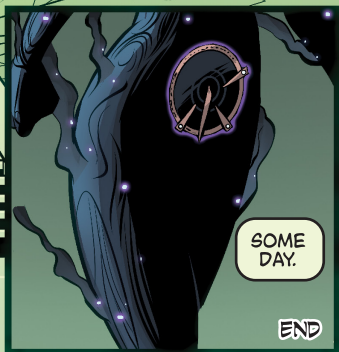


THE BEAST WEAKENED TIME ENOUGH THAT I *COULD* HAVE SEPARATED FROM THE WHEEL.



THAT MEANS THERE'S STILL A WAY... TO BE FREE OF THE WHEEL AND BECOME THE ANGELUS.

AND I WILL FIND IT.



SOME DAY.

END

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