

WITCHBLADE

#177



RON MARZ • LAURA BRAGA • BETSY GONIA

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Laura Braga
2001

Image

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TROY PETERI • *letterer*

DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF TOWN

PART ONE

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Cover B • John Tyler Christopher

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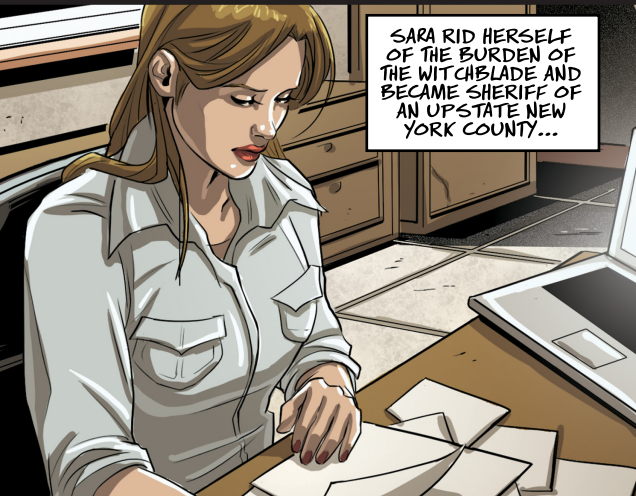
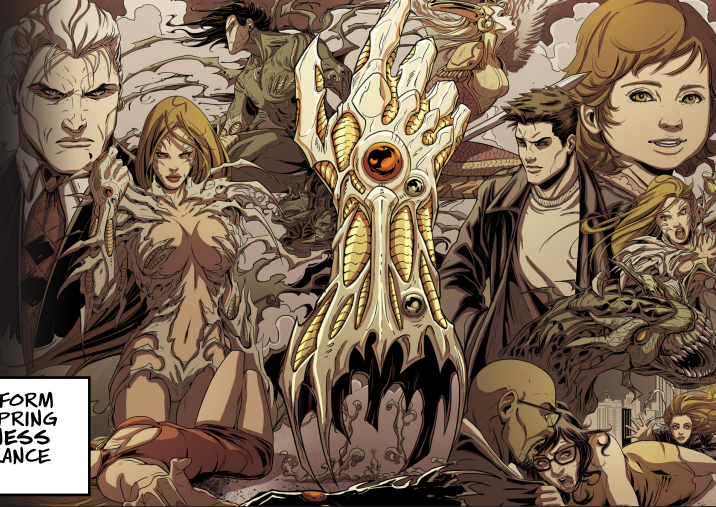
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PREVIOUSLY IN WITCHBLADE

SARA PEZZINI WAS A NEW YORK CITY POLICE DETECTIVE, BUT HER LIFE CHANGED FOREVER WHEN SHE CAME INTO POSSESSION OF A POWERFUL ARTIFACT CALLED THE WITCHBLADE.

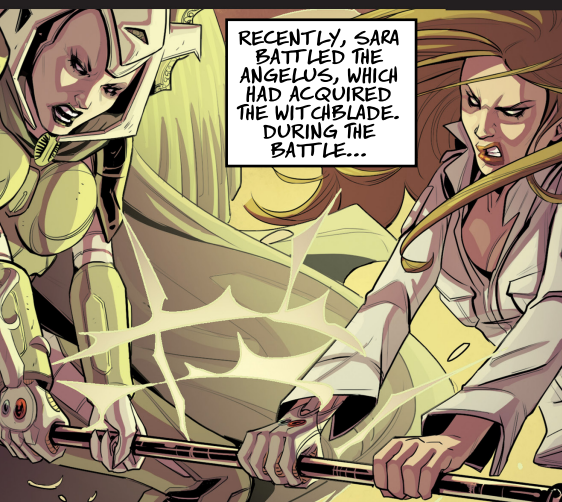
THOUGH THE WITCHBLADE MOST OFTEN TAKES THE FORM OF A MYSTIC GAUNTLET, IN TRUTH IT IS THE OFFSPRING OF THE UNIVERSE'S PRIMAL FORCES, THE DARKNESS AND THE ANGELUS, AND MEANT TO ACT AS A BALANCE BETWEEN THE DARK AND THE LIGHT.



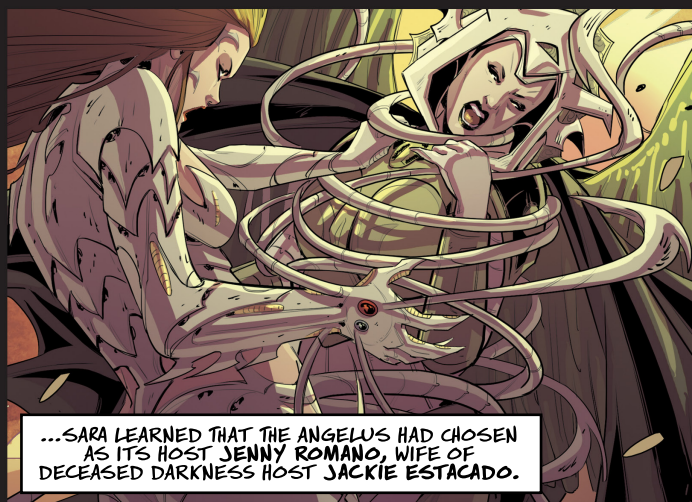
SARA RID HERSELF OF THE BURDEN OF THE WITCHBLADE AND BECAME SHERIFF OF AN UPSTATE NEW YORK COUNTY...



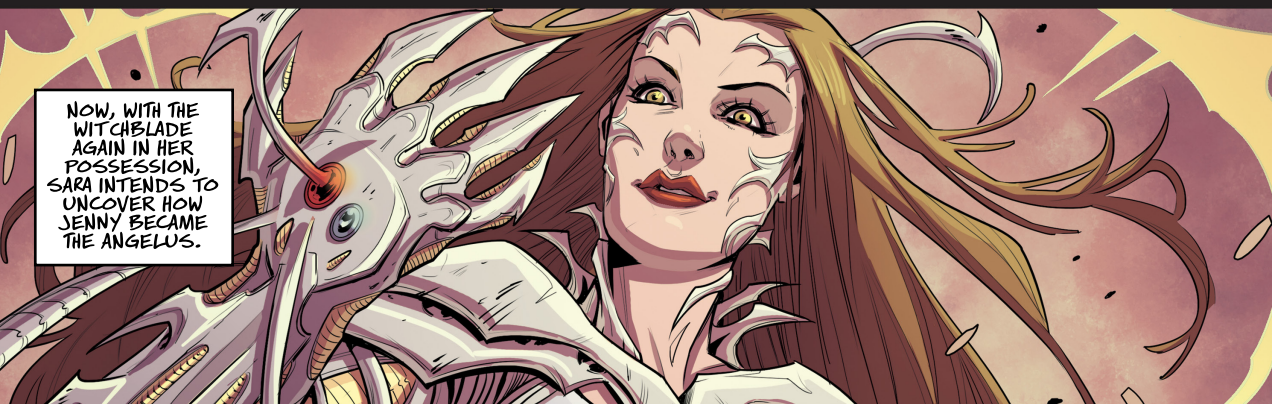
...INHERITING A STAFF THAT INCLUDED DEPUTY KATE ROONEY.



RECENTLY, SARA BATTLED THE ANGELUS, WHICH HAD ACQUIRED THE WITCHBLADE. DURING THE BATTLE...



...SARA LEARNED THAT THE ANGELUS HAD CHOSEN AS ITS HOST JENNY ROMANO, WIFE OF DECEASED DARKNESS HOST JACKIE ESTACADO.



NOW, WITH THE WITCHBLADE AGAIN IN HER POSSESSION, SARA INTENDS TO UNCOVER HOW JENNY BECAME THE ANGELUS.

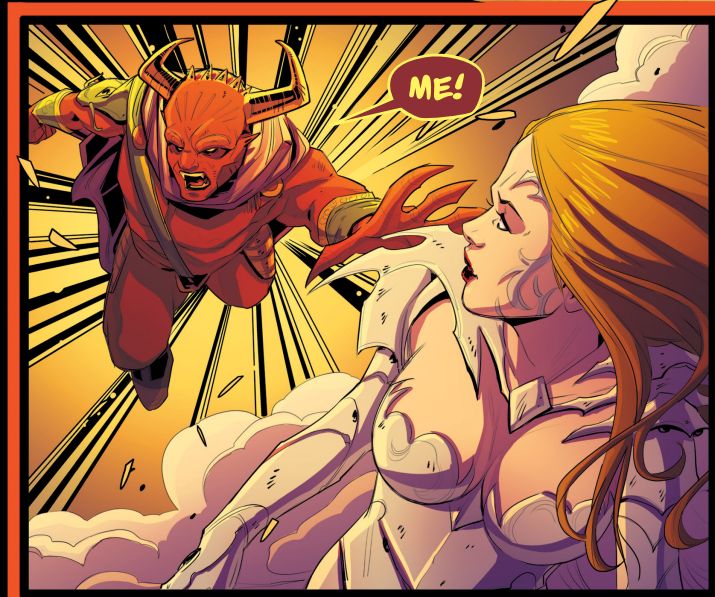


WRONG ANSWER!

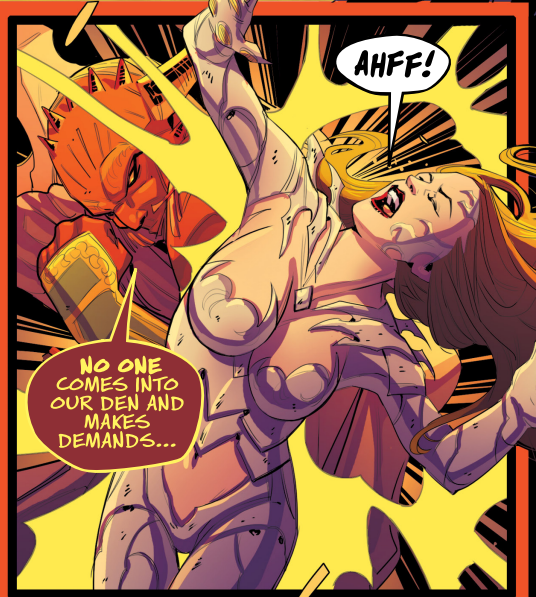
AAAGH!



NEXT?



ME!



AHFF!

NO ONE COMES INTO OUR DEN AND MAKES DEMANDS...





THIS WOULD BE A LOT SIMPLER...



GLLK.

SHLUKT



...IF YOU'D JUST ANSWER MY DAMN QUESTIONS AND NOT TRY TO KILL ME. DEMONS ARE SUCH IDIOTS.



GOOD HELP IS HARD TO FIND.

HARDER, NOW THAT YOU'VE SLAUGHTERED TWO MORE OF THEM.

I THOUGHT I WAS RID OF YOU, DETECTIVE PEZZINI. YET HERE YOU ARE, BREAKING UP MY PLACE OF BUSINESS, KILLING MY EMPLOYEES.



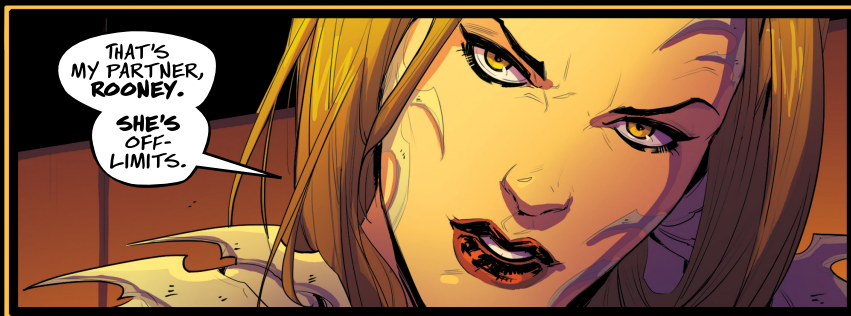
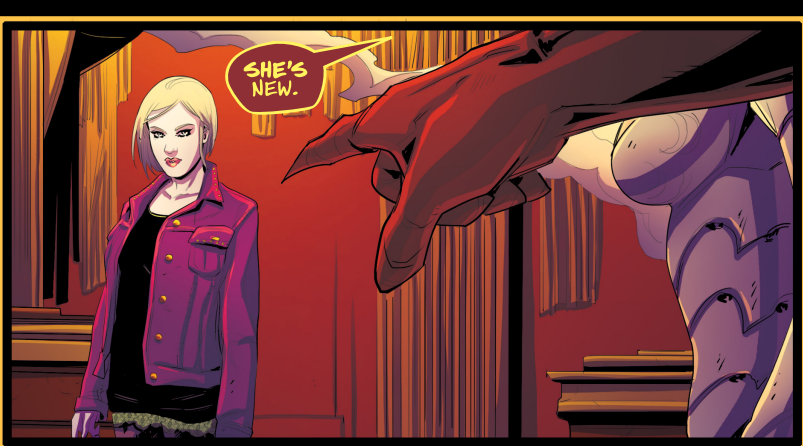
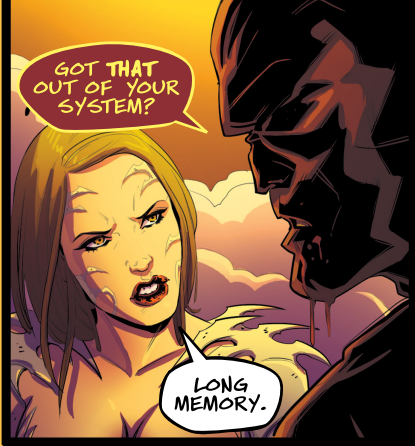
THIS DOES NOT PLEASE ME.

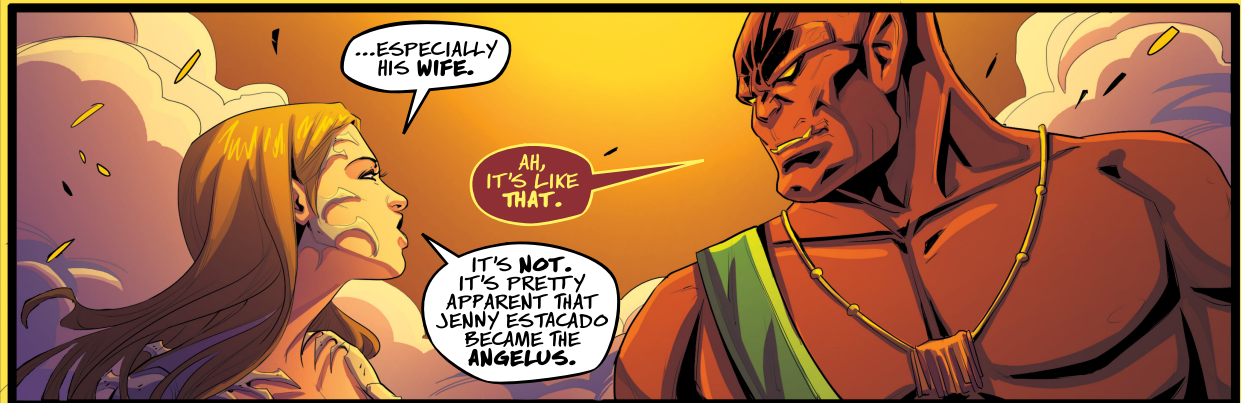
LIKE I GIVE A SHIT, YANG. BY THE WAY...



...I OWE YOU THIS.

GHH.





...ESPECIALLY HIS WIFE.

AH, IT'S LIKE THAT.

IT'S NOT. IT'S PRETTY APPARENT THAT JENNY ESTACADO BECAME THE ANGELUS.



SHE EVEN TOOK THIS FROM ME FOR A TIME. SO I WANT TO KNOW HOW AND WHY.

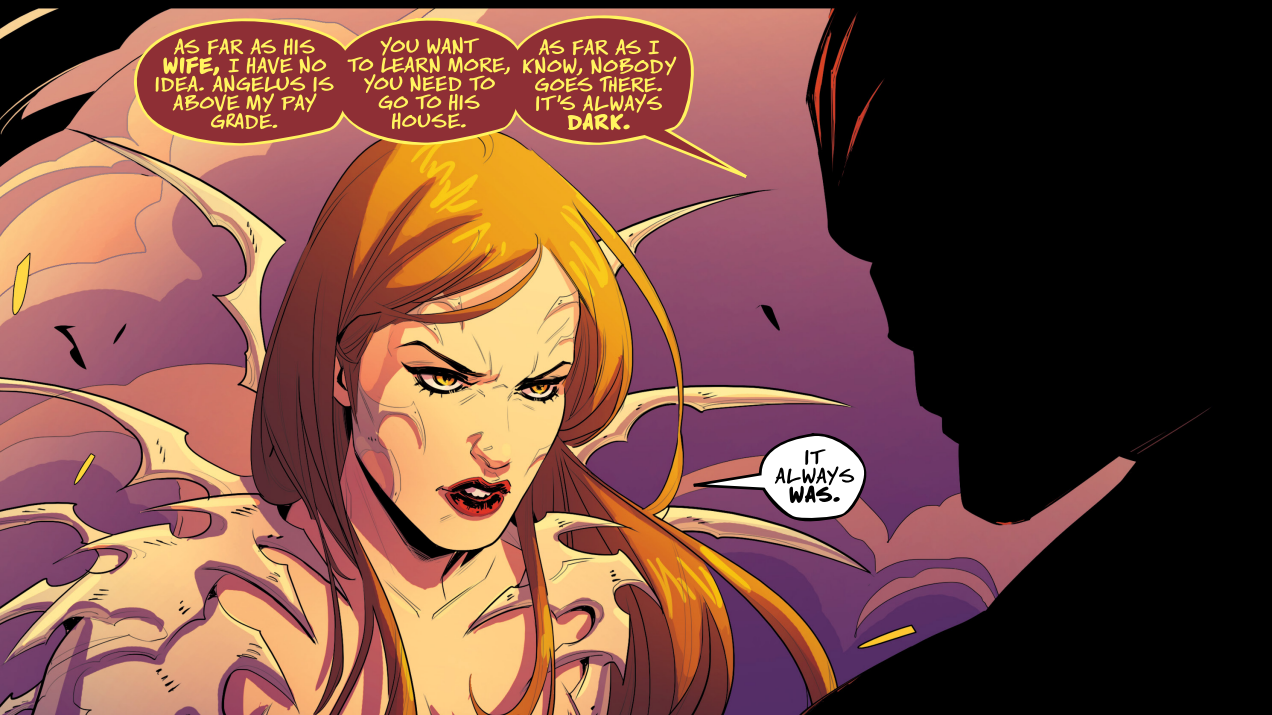


EVER THE DETECTIVE.



IT WAS HARD FOR MY KIND TO COMPETE WITH ESTACADO, HIM BEING WHAT HE WAS. BUT ONCE HE WAS GONE, WE FILLED THE VOID.

YOU HUMANS LIKE YOUR VICES, AND YOU DON'T CARE WHO SUPPLIES THEM.



AS FAR AS HIS WIFE, I HAVE NO IDEA. ANGELUS IS ABOVE MY PAY GRADE.

YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE, YOU NEED TO GO TO HIS HOUSE.

AS FAR AS I KNOW, NOBODY GOES THERE. IT'S ALWAYS DARK.

IT ALWAYS WAS.

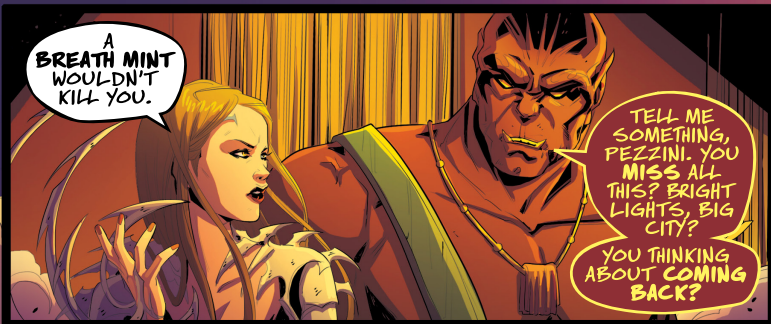


YOU WOULDN'T LIE TO ME TO GET RID OF ME, WOULD YOU, YANG?

THAT'S ALL I CAN TELL YOU, WHETHER YOU OPEN MY THROAT WITH THAT THING OR NOT.

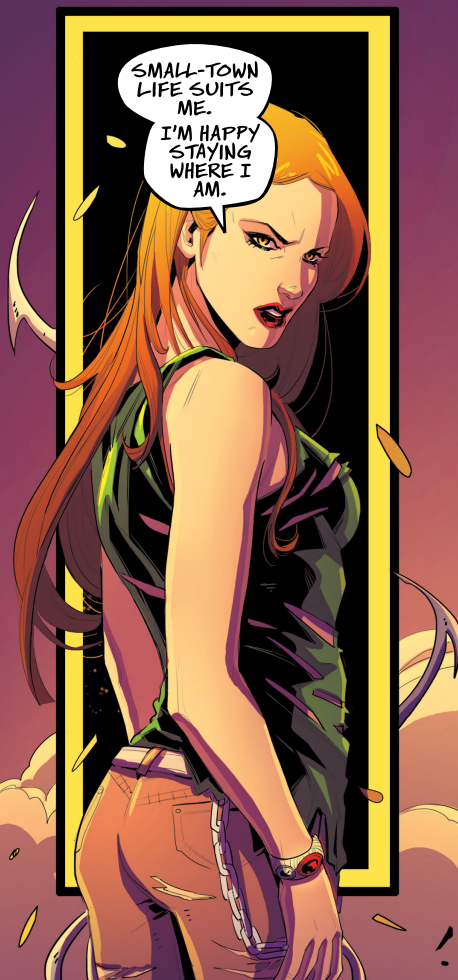


NOW GET THE HELL OUT OF MY ESTABLISHMENT BEFORE I FORGET I LIKE YOU.

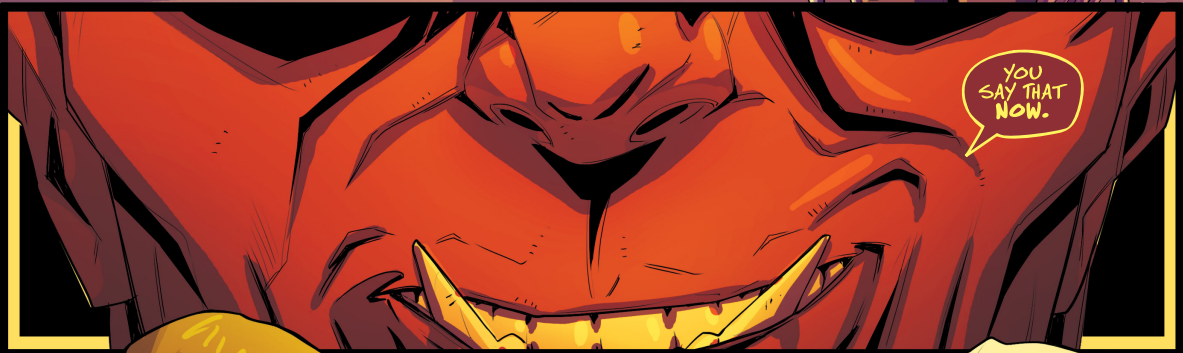


A BREATH MINT WOULDN'T KILL YOU.

TELL ME SOMETHING, PEZZINI. YOU MISS ALL THIS? BRIGHT LIGHTS, BIG CITY? YOU THINKING ABOUT COMING BACK?



SMALL-TOWN LIFE SUITS ME. I'M HAPPY STAYING WHERE I AM.



YOU SAY THAT NOW.



HAVE FUN, RODNEY? YOUR FIRST TIME IN A GAMBLING DEN AND BROTHEL RUN BY FAR EAST DEMONS EVERYTHING YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE?

OTHER THAN NEARLY PEEING MY PANTS, I LOVED IT.



...INTRODUCING ME TO A WHOLE OTHER WORLD, SARA.

DON'T EVER FORGET THIS WORLD HAS TEETH AND CLAWS. AND WORSE.



I'M JUST GLAD YOU LET ME COME WITH YOU. I DON'T EVEN GET INTO NEW YORK CITY VERY OFTEN, MUCH LESS SEE ... WELL, WHAT I SAW.
I DO LIKE IT, EVEN IF IT'S DANGEROUS.



PROBABLY THE MOST DANGEROUS THING WE DID IS LEAVE PILCHER IN CHARGE FOR A FEW DAYS. THE TOWN MIGHT BE GONE BY THE TIME WE GET BACK.



BUT IT'S NOT LIKE WE'VE ACTUALLY SOLVED ANYTHING WITH THIS TRIP. WE STILL DON'T KNOW ANY MORE ABOUT JENNY ESTACADO OR THE ANGELUS.

COMING HERE HAS BEEN A WASTE OF TIME SO FAR.



SO DO YOU?

DO I WHAT?

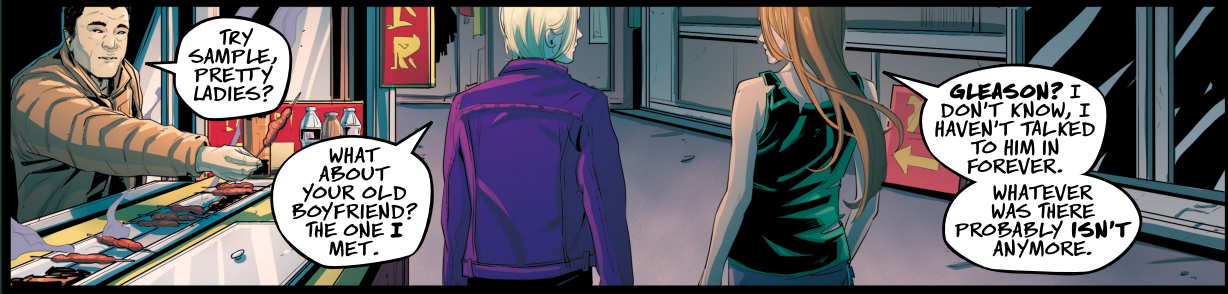
MISS NEW YORK CITY.



WELL... MAYBE A BIT. THIS IS WHERE I GREW UP. THIS IS MOST OF WHAT I KNOW.

THERE'S NO PLACE ELSE LIKE IT, NOT EVEN CHICAGO. BUT LIKE I SAID...

...I'M HAPPY ENOUGH UPSTATE.

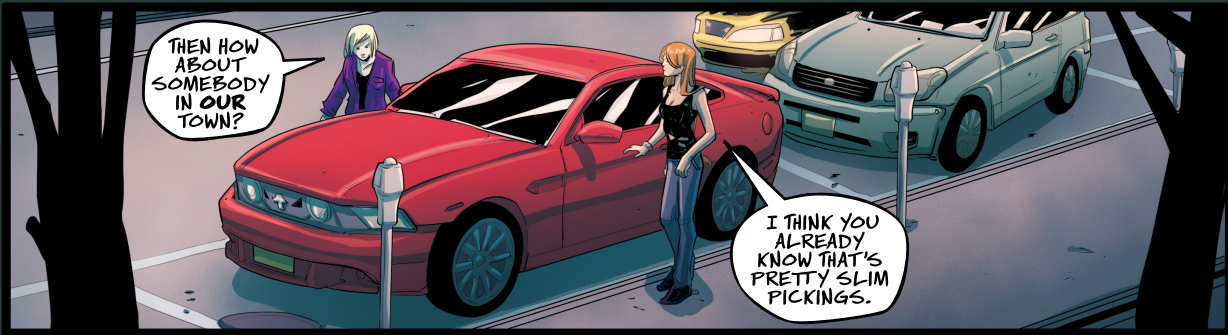


TRY SAMPLE, PRETTY LADIES?

WHAT ABOUT YOUR OLD BOYFRIEND? THE ONE I MET.

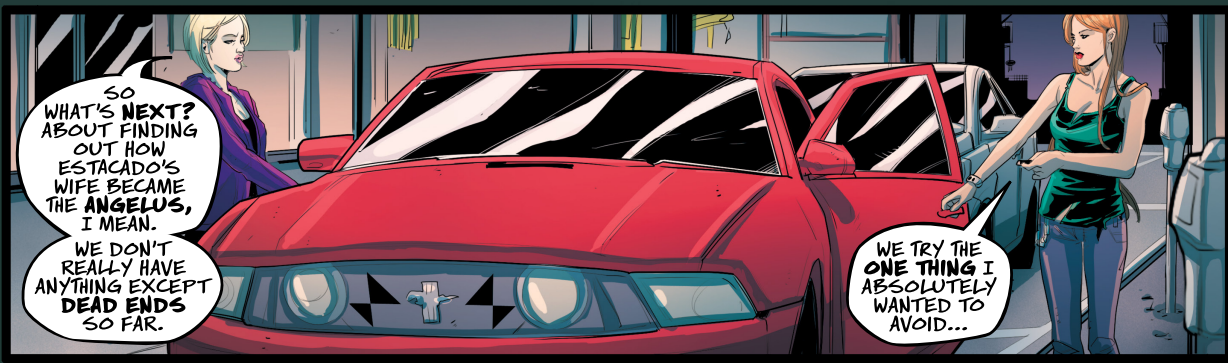
GLEASON? I DON'T KNOW, I HAVEN'T TALKED TO HIM IN FOREVER.

WHATEVER WAS THERE PROBABLY ISN'T ANYMORE.



THEN HOW ABOUT SOMEBODY IN OUR TOWN?

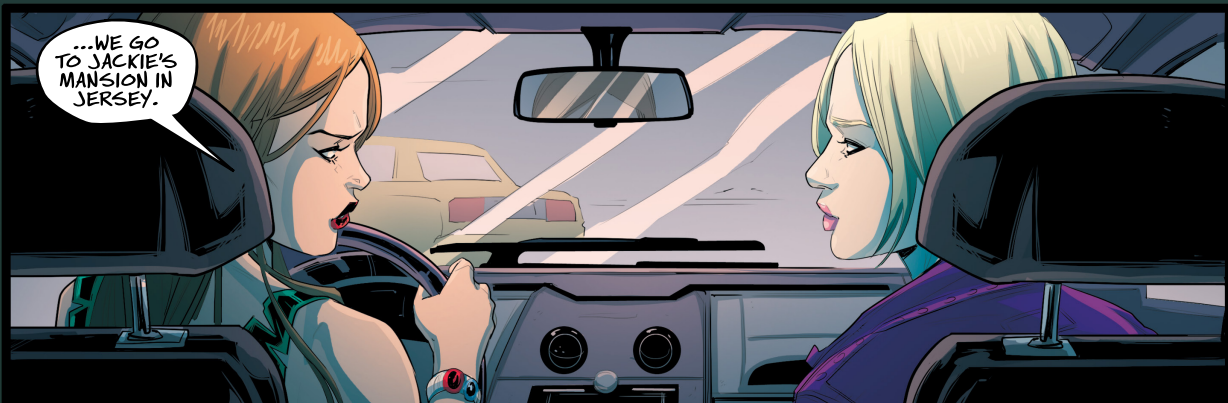
I THINK YOU ALREADY KNOW THAT'S PRETTY SLIM PICKINGS.



SO WHAT'S NEXT? ABOUT FINDING OUT HOW ESTACADO'S WIFE BECAME THE ANGELUS, I MEAN.

WE DON'T REALLY HAVE ANYTHING EXCEPT DEAD ENDS SO FAR.

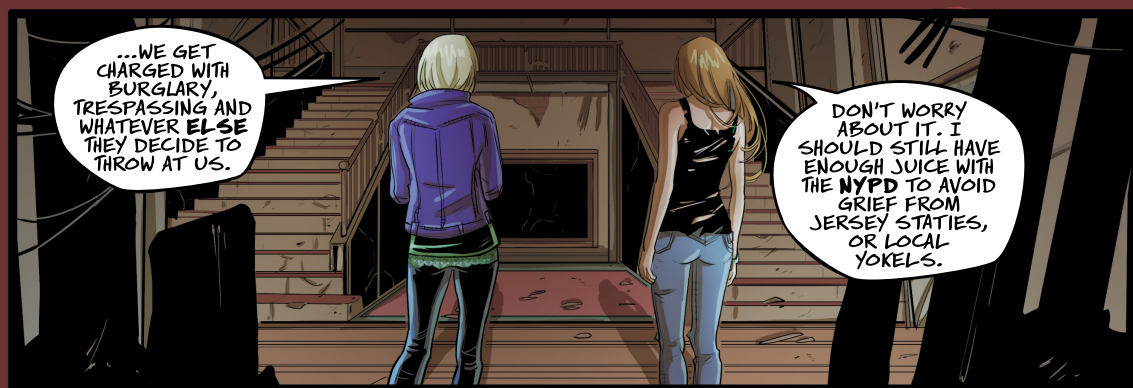
WE TRY THE ONE THING I ABSOLUTELY WANTED TO AVOID...



...WE GO TO JACKIE'S MANSION IN JERSEY.



SO IF WE GET CAUGHT...



...WE GET CHARGED WITH BURGLARY, TRESPASSING AND WHATEVER ELSE THEY DECIDE TO THROW AT US.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. I SHOULD STILL HAVE ENOUGH JUICE WITH THE NYPD TO AVOID GRIEF FROM JERSEY STATIES, OR LOCAL YOKELS.



EXACTLY HOW WE EXPLAIN AN UPSTATE SHERIFF AND DEPUTY BEING IN THE ABANDONED MANSION OF A JERSEY MOB BOSS IN THE FIRST PLACE...

...THAT'S A LITTLE TRICKIER.



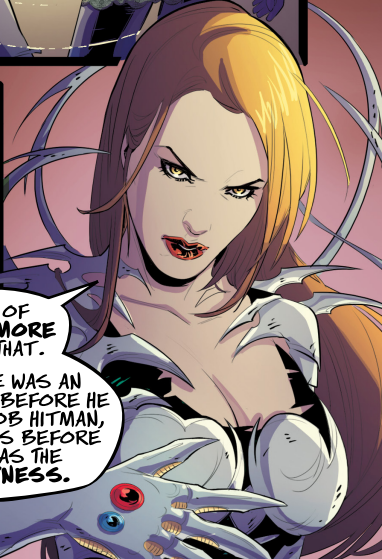
YOU DIDN'T BRING A LIGHT?

NO...



...I'M GOOD.

SO YOU AND ESTACADO WERE... FRIENDS? ENEMIES? FRENEMIES?



ALL OF THAT. MORE THAN THAT.

JACKIE WAS AN ORPHAN BEFORE HE WAS A MOB HITMAN, WHICH WAS BEFORE HE WAS THE DARKNESS.

I'M NOT EVEN SURE HOW TO DESCRIBE HIM. HE HAD HIS CODE, YOU KNOW?

I DON'T THINK HE WAS EVIL, BUT HE DID EVIL THINGS.

HE WAS ALSO THE FATHER OF MY DAUGHTER.

I DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD A DAUGHTER.

I REALLY DON'T. NOT ANYMORE.

IT'S COMPLICATED. NOT "IT'S COMPLICATED" LIKE A MESSY RELATIONSHIP, BUT IN A "THE UNIVERSE WAS REMADE" KIND OF WAY.

I DON'T EXPECT YOU TO UNDERSTAND ALL THIS, RODNEY. BUT HOPE WAS MY DAUGHTER...

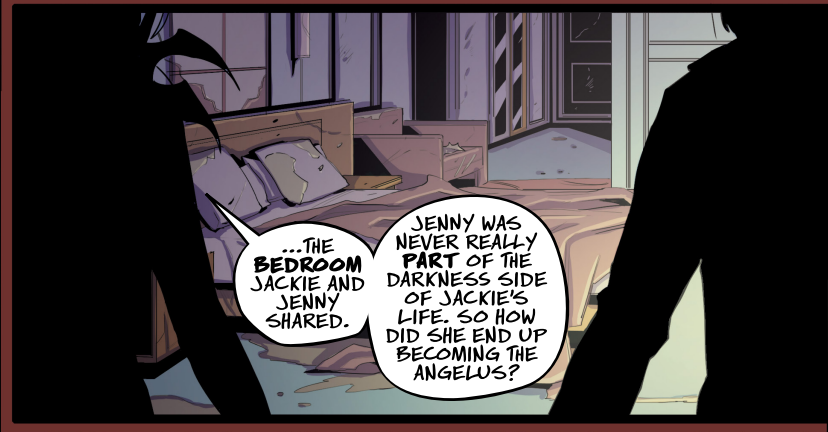
...AND THEN, IN ORDER TO SAVE THE UNIVERSE, SHE WASN'T.

JACKIE MADE HIMSELF A PERFECT LITTLE FAMILY. BROUGHT HIS LADY LOVE BACK, AND TOOK OUR DAUGHTER TO BE THEIRS.

BUT THAT'S IN THE PAST. OR A PAST.



NOT EXACTLY SOMEPLACE I WAS ANXIOUS TO SEE...



...THE BEDROOM JACKIE AND JENNY SHARED.

JENNY WAS NEVER REALLY PART OF THE DARKNESS SIDE OF JACKIE'S LIFE. SO HOW DID SHE END UP BECOMING THE ANGELUS?

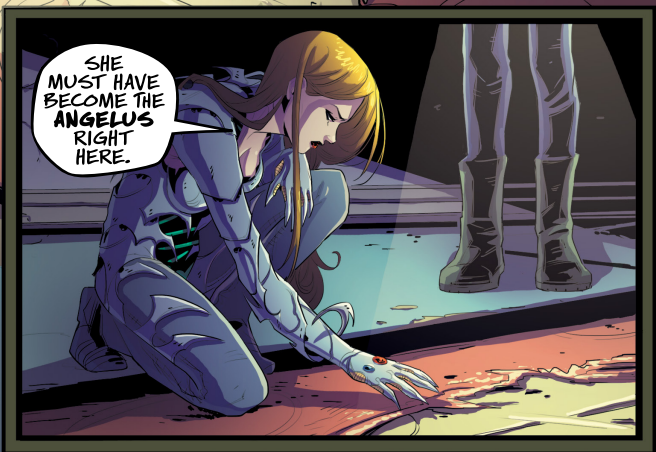


SARA, OVER HERE...



LITTLE BIG FOR A CIGARETTE BURN.

PROBABLY WHERE JENNY TRANSFORMED.



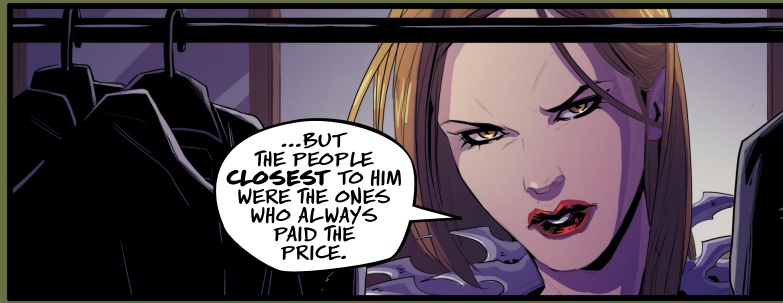
SHE MUST HAVE BECOME THE ANGELUS RIGHT HERE.



JACKIE LEFT
CHAOS IN HIS
WAKE WHEREVER
HE WENT.



FAMILY WAS
ALWAYS SO
IMPORTANT TO
HIM...



...BUT
THE PEOPLE
CLOSEST TO HIM
WERE THE ONES
WHO ALWAYS
PAID THE
PRICE.



THE ONES
HE HURT THE
MOST.



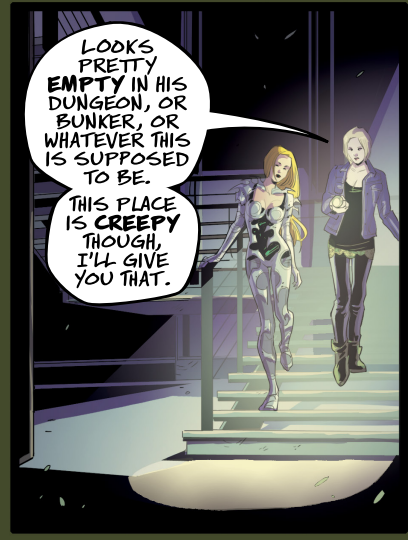
COME ON, WE
NEED TO CHECK
OUT THE REST OF
THE HOUSE.



OTHER THAN SOME PRETTY QUESTIONABLE DECORATING CHOICES...

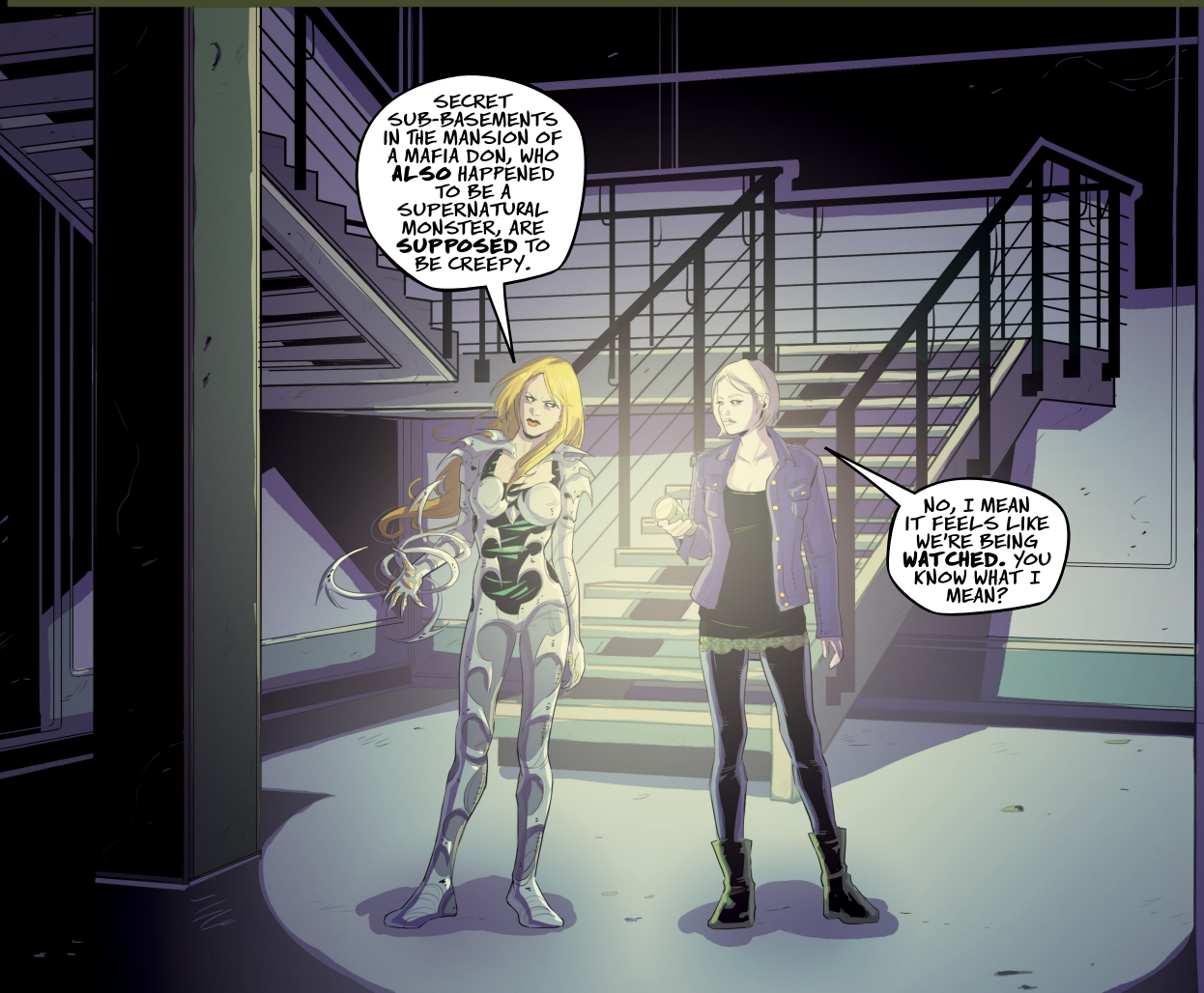


...THERE'S NOT MUCH HERE, SARA.



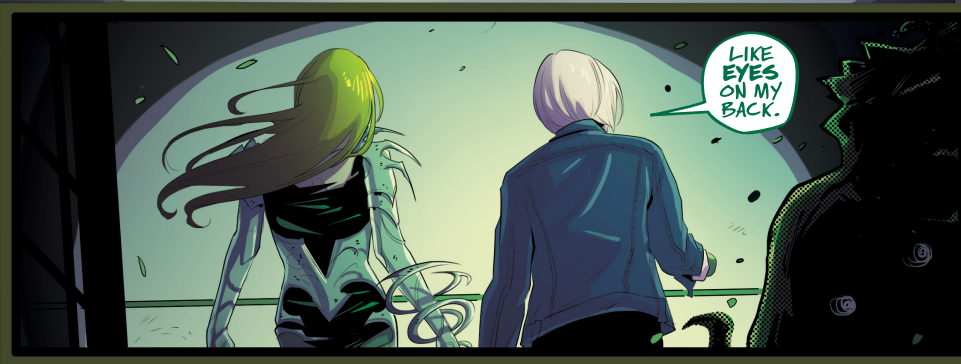
LOOKS PRETTY EMPTY IN HIS DUNGEON, OR BUNKER, OR WHATEVER THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE.

THIS PLACE IS CREEPY THOUGH, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT.

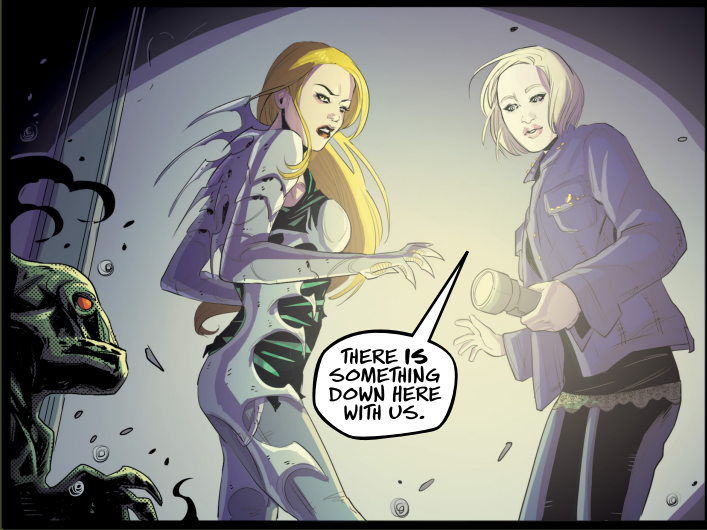


SECRET SUB-BASEMENTS IN THE MANSION OF A MAFIA DON, WHO ALSO HAPPENED TO BE A SUPERNATURAL MONSTER, ARE SUPPOSED TO BE CREEPY.

NO, I MEAN IT FEELS LIKE WE'RE BEING WATCHED. YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?



LIKE EYES ON MY BACK.



THERE IS SOMETHING DOWN HERE WITH US.



SOMETHING STALKING US.



THERE.

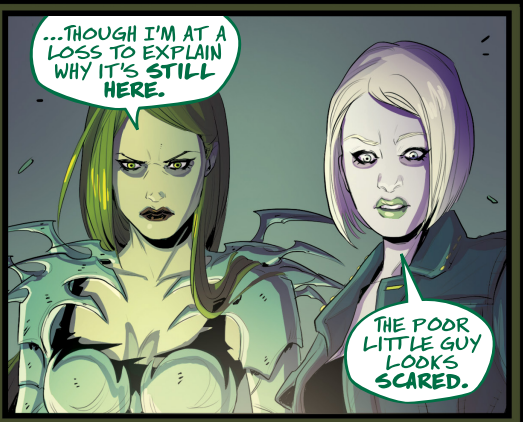


WHAT THE HELL IS IT?

IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A DARKLING.

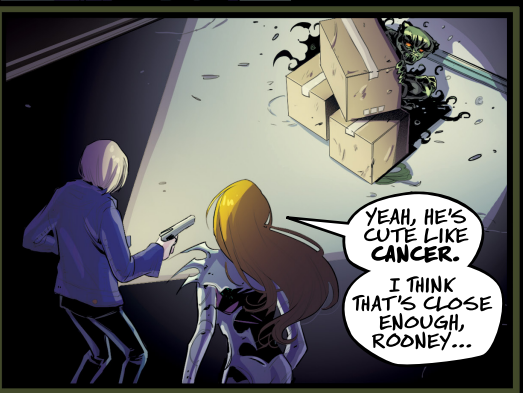
A WHAT?

KIND OF A LONG STORY, BUT THIS ISN'T ONE OF THEM. IT'S SOME OTHER KIND OF DARKNESS CREATURE...



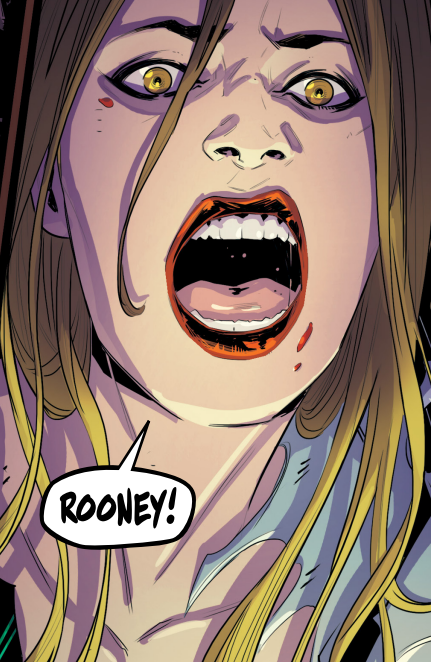
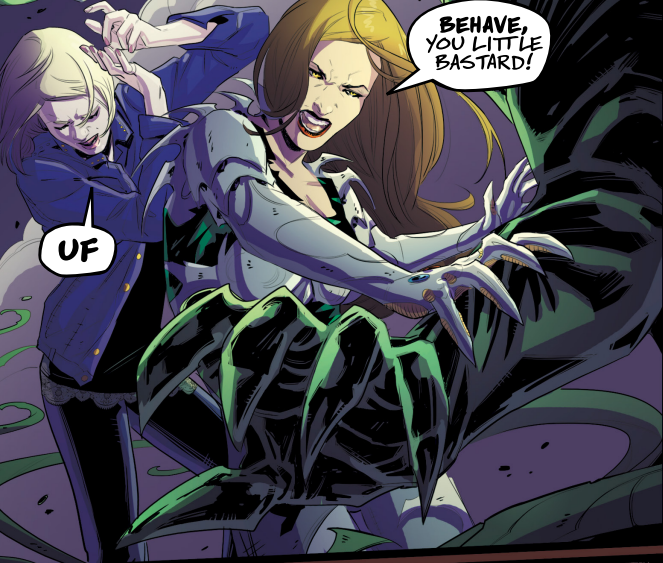
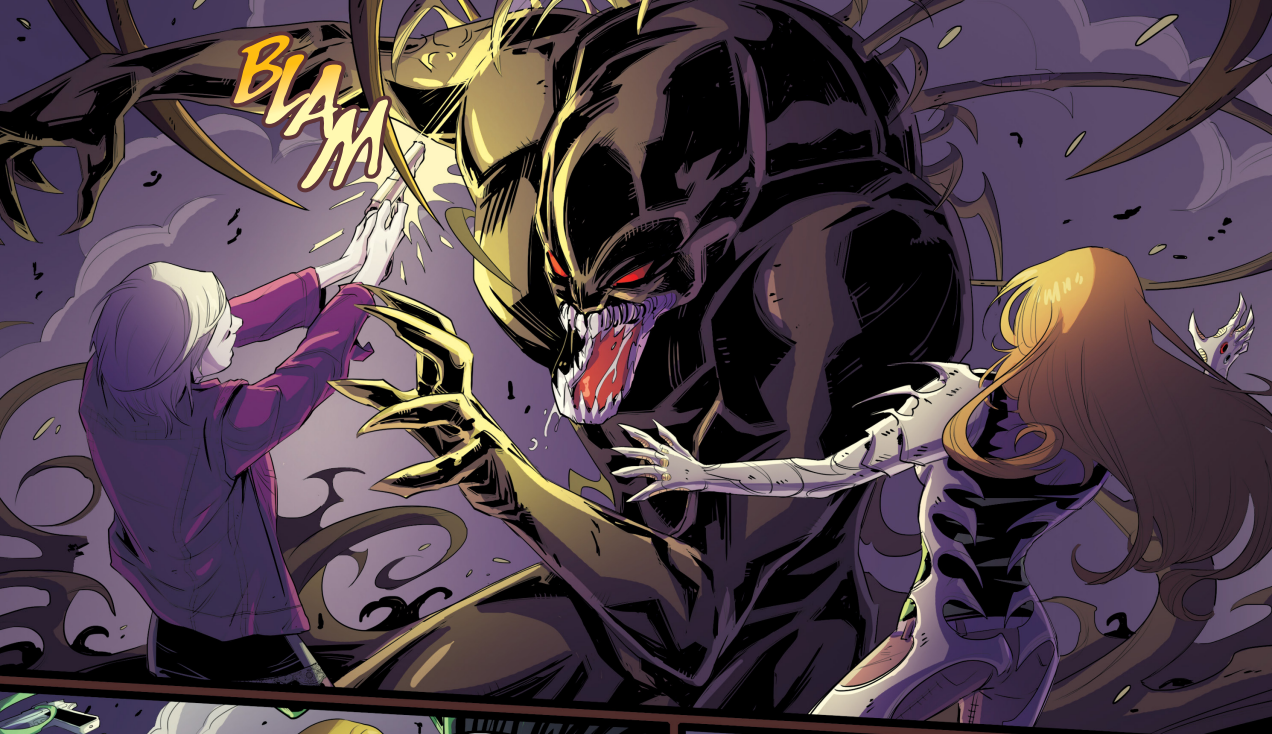
...THOUGH I'M AT A LOSS TO EXPLAIN WHY IT'S STILL HERE.

THE POOR LITTLE GUY LOOKS SCARED.



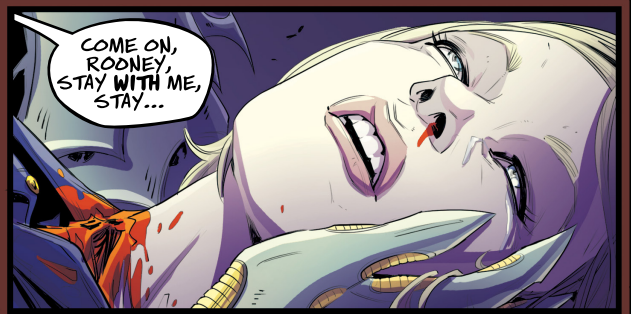
YEAH, HE'S CUTE LIKE CANCER. I THINK THAT'S CLOSE ENOUGH, ROONEY...



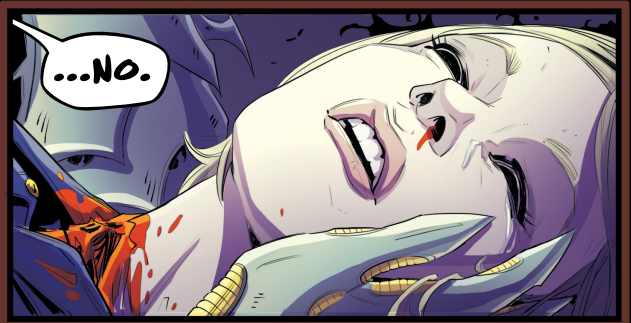




AAHNNN...



COME ON, RODNEY, STAY WITH ME, STAY...



...NO.



IT'S THE DARKNESS VIRUS...

TO BE CONTINUED!

Next Issue:

WITCHBLADE[®]

#178



“Darkness on the Edge of Town, Part Two”



**CAN A CARPET REPAIR BOY
AND A FROG**

**BE HEROES OF THE
UNIVERSE?**

ONGOING

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HAVE GONE
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WRONG**



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A SEQUEL SERIES TO THE FAN-FAVORITE BY JOSH HOWARD

DEAD@17™

THE BLASPHEMY THRONE

THE COUNTDOWN TO EARTH'S FINAL HOURS HAS BEGUN

AUGUST
2014



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ADAM MCGOVERN

PAOLO LEANDRI

NIGHTWORLD™

A FOUR-PART THRILL RIDE TO HELL STARTS
AUGUST 2014



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YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE MAD

about getting partnered with a foul-mouthed, cynical old homicide cop

TO WORK HERE

inside a five-mile tin can packed with a half million people 22,000 miles in orbit

BUT IT damn sure **HELPS,** you prick.



**FU
SE**

THE

VOLUME ONE

22,000 MILES UP, THERE IS NO BACKUP.

ANTONY JOHNSTON • JUSTIN GREENWOOD

with **SHARI CHANKHAMMA • ED BRISSON**

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COMES THIS GENERATION'S BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER IN

Wayward™

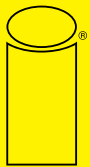
JIM ZUB • STEVE CUMMINGS

RORI IS A BIT OF AN OUTSIDER, A WEIRDO...

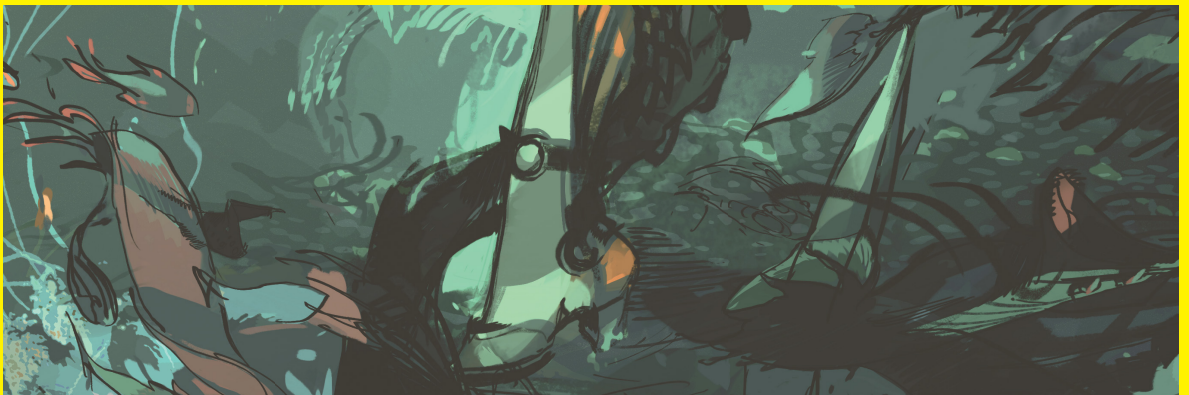
BUT THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET
A WHOLE LOT WEIRDER FOR RORI
WHEN SHE MOVES TO TOKYO.



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