

GIRL GENIUS[®]

ELECTRONIC EDITION



VOLUME ELEVEN

AGATHA HETERODYNE AND THE HAMMERLESS BELL





Agatha Heterodyne
and the

HAMMERLESS BELL

A Gaslamp Fantasy
with
ADVENTURE, ROMANCE & MAD SCIENCE

GIRL GENIUS

BY PHIL & KAJA FOGGIO

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THE HAMMERLESS BELL

A Gaslamp Fantasy
with
ADVENTURE, ROMANCE & MAD SCIENCE



Story by Kaja & Phil Foglio
Pencils by Phil Foglio
Colors by Cheyenne Wright



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Story by Phil & Kaja Foglio. Pencils by Phil Foglio. Colors by Cheyenne Wright. Selected spot illustrations colored by Kaja Foglio and/or Cheyenne Wright. Logos, Lettering, Artist Bullying & Book Design by Kaja. Fonts mostly by Comicraft—www.comicbookfonts.com.

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This book is dedicated to Maxine Danger Wright: girl genius and adorable baby *extraordinaire*.

PHIL FOGLIO

The co-chair of Transylvania Polygnostic University's Department of Very Nearly True History is internationally recognized for his fieldwork chronicling the early life of Agatha Heterodyne. Lately, due to a generous endowment from the "Jägerkin Fund for Education und Promotion Ov De Idea Dot Ve Iz Not Really Baby-Eating Monsters *All De Time*," his usual research has been sidetracked by an attempt to document all the instances when the Lady Heterodyne is known to have worn a hat.

KAJA FOGLIO

The Professoressa recently completed a six-month tour of the Paris Institute of Technology and Cuisine, The London Museum of Electromagnetic Atrocities & Chocolate Factory, and Prague University's Department of Egregious Experimentation & Distillery; all while continuing her award-winning work upon the Heterodyne saga. Unfortunately, she has lately been distracted by a new project which attempts to examine and catalog the number of major technological breakthroughs that the Lady Heterodyne made while eating scones. This is due to a timely research grant from the Mechanicsburg Elevenses, Luncheon and Teatime Society.

CHEYENNE WRIGHT

Transylvania Polygnostic's current Chief Chromatic Engineer, and also the person who has managed to survive the longest while working with the Professors on their continuing graphic biography-like chronicle of the adventures of Agatha Heterodyne. Due to certain conditions attached to a joint endowment from the Eastern European Council of Visible Light and The Noble Alliance of Higher Wavelengths, he has just completed a painstakingly documented record of every instance where the Lady Heterodyne wore pastel colors. He claims to have found the assignment: "profoundly nerve-racking, and far from the comfort zone of my people."

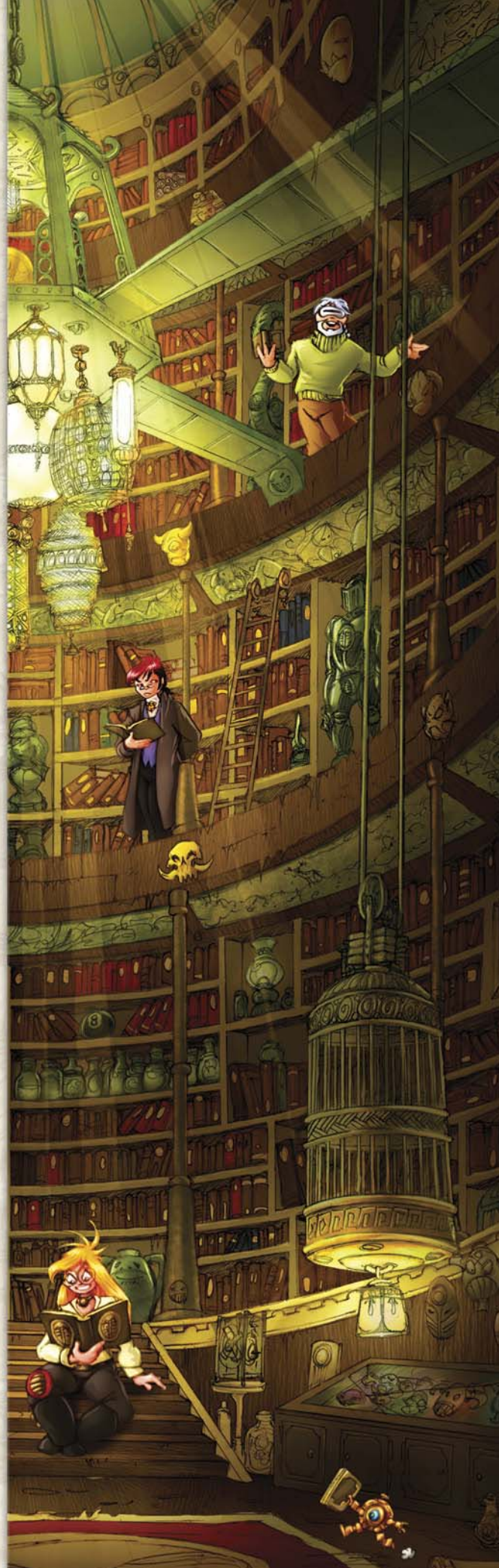




PHOTO BY KAJA FOGGIO • HUGO AWARD BASE BY MARINA GÉLINEAU • DINGBOT BY TIFF HUDSON

2011 Hugo Award for Best Graphic Story
Girl Genius, Volume 10: Agatha Heterodyne and the Guardian Muse
Written by Phil and Kaja Foglio; Art by Phil Foglio; Colors by Cheyenne Wright
Renovation ~ The 69th World Science Fiction Convention

Melissa Nuno (order #7702076)

WELCOME TO

RENO!

HOME OF **RENOVATION**: THE 69th WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION—WHERE **GIRL GENIUS** HAS JUST WON THE HUGO AWARD FOR BEST GRAPHIC STORY FOR THE **THIRD TIME!** ACCEPTING TONIGHT ARE: PROFESSOR CHEYENNE WRIGHT, PROFESSOR KAJA FOGLIO, AND PROFESSOR PHIL FOGLIO OF **TRANSYLVANIA POLYGNOSTIC UNIVERSITY!**



THANK YOU, PEOPLE OF THE SURFACE WORLD!

THIS AWARD ENSURES THAT, WHEN MY PEOPLE ARE READY TO LEAVE THEIR CAVERNS, MANY OF YOU WILL SURVIVE!

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK MY WIFE: **ELI**, AND MY CHILD: **MAXINE DANGER!**

OBEY THEM AS YOU WOULD ME!



...AND SPECIAL THANKS TO MY MOM, WHO IS WATCHING OUR CHILDREN, VICTOR AND ALEX—

SO THEY DON'T BLOW ANYTHING UP!

YAY!

WELL, ANYTHING IMPORTANT, ANYWAY.

THIS AWARD MEANS SO MUCH TO US—WE ARE SO HAPPY RIGHT NOW!



...AND THANK YOU TO ALL THE **GIRL GENIUS** READERS WHO VOTED FOR US!

BECAUSE WE HAVE NOW BEEN HONORED WITH THIS AWARD **THREE TIMES IN A ROW—**

WE WILL BE REMOVING OURSELVES FROM CONSIDERATION IN THIS CATEGORY FOR NEXT YEAR!



WHAT?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? MY MECHANICAL HUGO-NALT IS NOWHERE NEAR COMPLETE!

TRAITOROUS FOOL! I WARNED YOU! YOUR PRECIOUS "CHROMATIC WHEEL" WILL FEEL MY WRATH!

URK!



WAIT! IT'S FOR THE GOOD OF THE CATEGORY!

IT'S **REALLY NEW!** WORLDCON STILL HAS TO VOTE ON WHETHER OR NOT THEY'LL EVEN KEEP IT!

WE WANT PEOPLE TO SEE IT'S A **VIABLE AWARD!**



WELL...

YOUR WORDS HAVE THE UNCHARACTERISTIC RING OF TRUTH.



...AND YOU CAN ALWAYS TURN IT BACK ON AGAIN LATER, RIGHT?

DON'T BE SO SURE ABOUT THAT, BRIGHT BOY.

WAIT A MINUTE...

WHY ARE WE NOT INVADING THE SURFACE WORLD **RIGHT NOW?!**



• THE STORY SO FAR •

Agatha Clay was an unlucky student at Transylvania Polygnostic University, until an accident revealed her hidden “spark:” a capacity for mad science beyond the reach of all but the most gifted. This alone would have been enough to bring her to the attention of Baron Wulfenbach, the powerful Spark who holds the fractious ruling houses of Europa under his thumb, but Agatha is *also* the last of the famous Heterodyne family—beloved folk heroes who disappeared many years ago. In addition, the Baron now has excellent reason to believe that Agatha is actually a malevolent entity known as “The Other,” who almost destroyed Europa twenty years before. He isn’t entirely wrong, either. While held prisoner in the town of Sturmhalten, the personality of the “Other,” actually Agatha’s long-missing mother, took over Agatha’s body. Agatha has managed to regain control, but the “Other” is still there, currently held in check by a clever device.

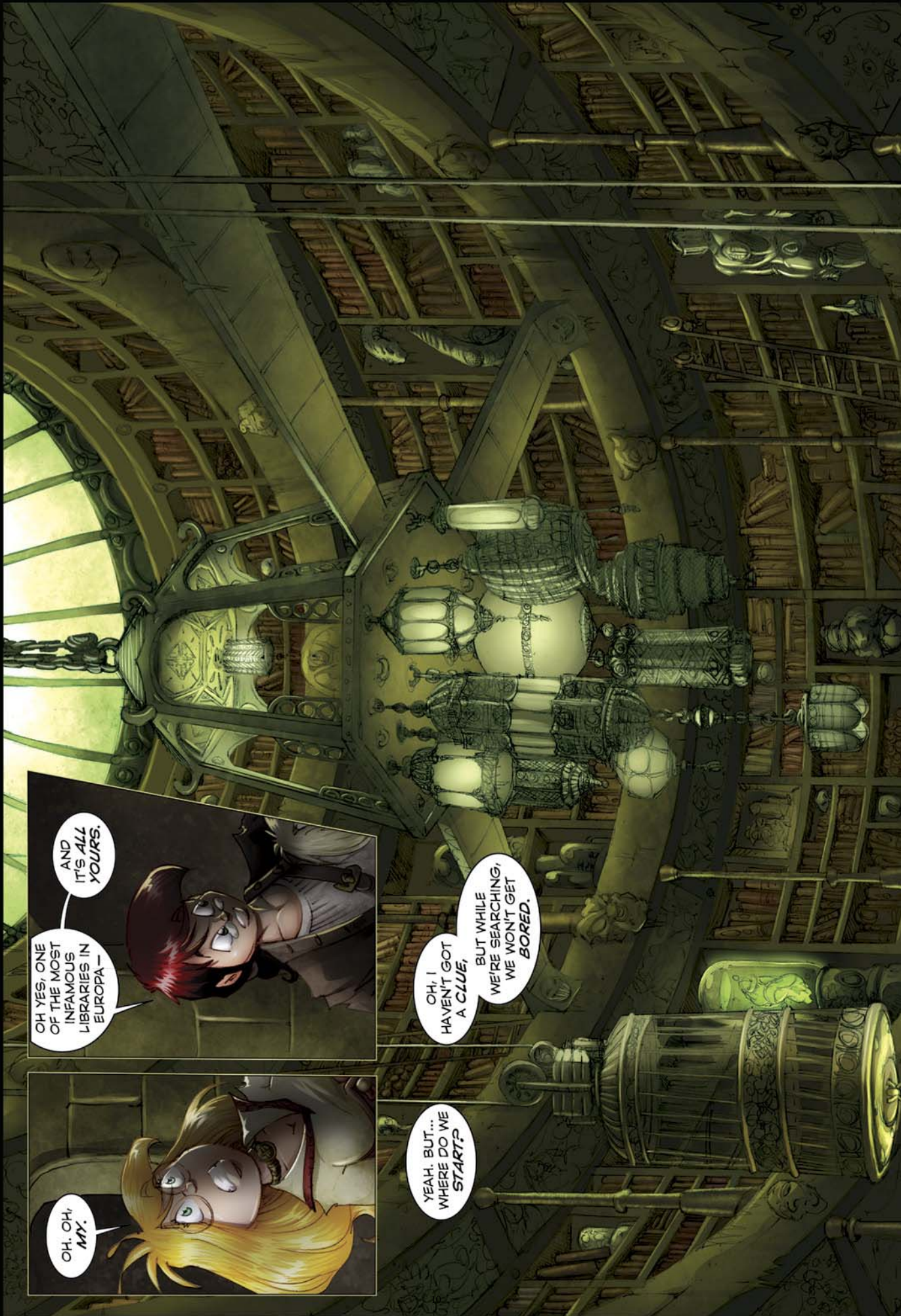
After many adventures, Agatha has made her way across Europa to Mechanicsburg, the ancestral home of the Heterodyne family—and she’s not the only one. The Baron is also in the town—as a patient in Mechanicsburg’s famous hospital. The Baron has been positioning his forces to destroy Castle Heterodyne, but now his son Gilgamesh has gone inside, hoping that his presence will stall his father’s plans. Along with Gil has come a group of friends, also hoping to aid Agatha. Inside, they have encountered Zola, a charismatic girl claiming to be the lost Heterodyne heir—part of a larger plan to take control of the Baron’s empire—and Prince Tarvek of Sturmhalten—formerly involved with the same plot but now fleeing both captors and coconspirators. Also in the Castle are a number of prisoners there to make repairs, and Othar Tryggvassen: “Gentleman Adventurer”—a Hero sent by the Baron to “rescue” his son.

The Castle itself is a self-aware mechanical fortress which was badly damaged in the war with the “Other.” Agatha had managed to make the Castle accept her as the true Heterodyne, but was then quickly forced to shut it down to keep its out-of-control systems from harming her friends.

Agatha has now arrived at the heart of the Castle, hoping to reset its systems using the last, dying fragment of its mind. Zola is close behind—bent on killing Agatha to cement her power, while most of Agatha’s friends are far away, working to save the life of the mysterious construct who once guarded the children of Castle Wulfenbach.



THIS SHOULD
BE IT—
THROUGH
HERE.



OH YES, ONE OF THE MOST INFAMOUS LIBRARIES IN EUROPA —

AND IT'S ALL YOURS.

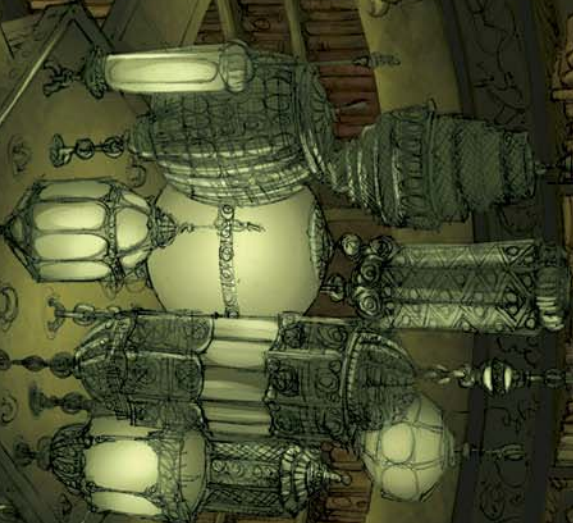



OH. OH. MY.



YEAH. BUT... WHERE DO WE START?

OH, I HAVEN'T GOT A CLUE, BUT WHILE WE'RE SEARCHING, WE WON'T GET BORED.





AGATHA, I'VE DECIDED. I'M GOING TO MARRY YOU FOR YOUR LIBRARY.

hmf. IT'S NOT MINE YET—

ZOLA COULD BE HERE ANY MINUTE, AND WE'RE **DEFENSELESS.**

WELL, WE COULD ALWAYS CLIMB UP THERE AND **THROW** STUFF AT HER.

THAT'LL BUY US FIVE, MAYBE TEN SECONDS.

YOU'RE NOT HELPING.

SORRY. LET'S SEE IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN USE AS A **WEAPON.**

IF SHE MAKES IT PAST HIGGS,

I'LL TRY TO HOLD HER OFF, WHILE YOU GET THE CASTLE RUNNING.

ONCE IT'S RESTORED, **SHE'LL** BE THE ONE IN TROUBLE.



THAT'S TRUE, BUT... THE SUPPLIES WE SENT AHEAD— THEY AREN'T HERE YET.

WHAT? BUT YOUR LITTLE CLANKS—



SOMETHING MUST HAVE HAPPENED TO THEM.

THAT'S BAD. THEY WERE CARRYING A LOT OF IMPORTANT EQUIPMENT.

YES, BUT IT'S NOT LIKE WE COULD HAVE CARRIED IT ALL.

ANYWAY, WITH THE CASTLE SHUT DOWN, THERE ISN'T MUCH HERE THAT CAN GIVE THEM TROUBLE—



THAT WE KNOW ABOUT!

...*etc.* THEY PROBABLY JUST GOT LOST.

THEY'LL FIND US—

AND WE'VE GOT THE HEAD, THAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT PART.

BUT HOW DO WE HOOK IT INTO THE MAIN SYSTEM WITHOUT ANY EQUIPMENT?!

WELL, WE WON'T KNOW UNTIL WE SEE WHAT WE'VE GOT TO WORK WITH!



ER... AND, TO BE HONEST, I'M NOT EVEN SURE WHERE TO HOOK IT UP.

I GUESS I WAS EXPECTING SOME KIND OF OBVIOUS INTERFACE, LIKE DOWN IN THE CRYPTS.

WELL, I SEE A FEW POSSIBILITIES...

LET'S CHECK THEM OUT.



SEVERAL DISAPPOINTING MINUTES LATER—

NOTHING! THERE'S NOTHING USEFUL HERE AT ALL!

JUST TROPHIES AND ARTIFACTS AND SOUVENIRS!

BUT THIS IS WHERE THE CRYPT TOLD YOU TO COME, RIGHT? SOMETHING HAS TO BE HERE!



YES.

IT SAID THAT ONCE I GOT TO THE LIBRARY, IT WOULD GIVE ME A MAP.



DOWN IN THE CRYPT, THE CASTLE PRIDED ITSELF ON ITS STRENGTH.

GIVEN ITS PERSONALITY, I THINK IT WOULD CONSIDER EVEN THE EXISTENCE OF A DETAILED MAP OF ITS INTERIOR A MAJOR WEAKNESS.

I SUSPECT WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO TALK TO IT AGAIN BEFORE I GET ANY MORE HELP.



WELL, ALL THE MORE REASON TO FIND A PLACE TO LINK THE MUSE'S HEAD INTO THE MAIN SYSTEM.

IT'S SO WEAK, IT ISN'T EVEN MAKING SNARKY COMMENTS ANY MORE.

SHH—WHAT WAS THAT?

... DAMAGE SUSTAINED ...



HELP ME ROLL THIS UP.

WHAT—THE CARPET?

... DAMAGE SUSTAINED ...



YES... THAT MAKES SENSE...

WHAT DOES?

THE CASTLE IS AMAZINGLY STRONG.

IT WAS DESIGNED TO BE HARD TO SHUT DOWN.

SO I DON'T THINK IT HAS A CENTRALIZED "BRAIN" EXACTLY—



I THINK THE WHOLE CASTLE IS THE BRAIN.

UH—HUH. AND I THINK THAT WE MIGHT BE REALLY LUCKY RIGHT NOW.

OH, THAT DOES MAKE SENSE. THAT'S WHY, WHEN IT WAS ORIGINALLY HIT, IT FRAGMENTED LIKE IT DID.

LOOK AT THIS PLACE. OBVIOUSLY THE HETERODYNES THOUGHT THE LIBRARY WAS IMPORTANT.

I'LL BET IT'S THE MOST SECURE AREA IN THE CASTLE.

I THINK THAT WHEN I USED THE "LION"—

IT DIDN'T KILL EVERYTHING.

AH! LOOK AT THAT! IT'S BRILLIANT!

WOW—IT'S A MAP THAT CAN'T BE STOLEN.

...AND IT CAN BE UPDATED ON THE FLY—DURING ATTACKS IT WOULD BE INVALUABLE.

YES, AND THE CASTLE CAN SHOW OR HIDE WHATEVER IT CHOOSES.

LOVELY!

...DAMAGE SUSTAINED...

DEEP BENEATH CASTLE HETERODYNE,
IN LUCREZIA MONGFISH'S SECRET
LABORATORY—



THEO!
PLEASE! WE'VE
GOT TO MOVE
HER!



IMPOSSIBLE!

VON PINN IS
PREPPED AND
READY!

I CAN'T JUST
DISCONNECT HER
AND HOOK HER BACK
UP LIKE A SET OF
TOY TRAINS!

IT
SHOULDN'T
BE MUCH
LONGER—

THE OTHERS
WILL BE HERE SOON,
AND THEN WE CAN
COMPLETE THE
TRANSFER.



—BUT I'M
TELLING YOU,
THE CEILING IS
UNSTABLE!

IT COULD
COLLAPSE AT
ANY MOMENT!



THAT IS WHY
YOU ARE OVER
THERE.

OUT OF
HARM'S WAY!



IF YOU DIE
I'LL HATE YOU
FOREVER, YOU
SELFISH PIG!



GOOD!
YES!

HATE ME FOR
YEARS AND YEARS
AND YEARS.



RRRRUMBLE! RRRUMBLE!

AAH! NO!
THEO!

LOOK
OUT!



IT... IT'S
NOT THE
CEILING!

WHAT
COULD
IT—



THEO! IT'S
OVER
HERE!

IT'S
COMING FOR
ME!





YIPPEE!
THAT WAS SO
FUN!

AHEH
AHEH



...AGATHA
REALLY WANTS
US TO LOAD VON
PINN INTO
THIS?

YEAH!

HAS SHE...
SEEN IT?

UH-
HUH!

IT'S JUST...NOW
THAT IT'S MOVING
AROUND, IT LOOKS,
UH, **BIGGER**
SOMEHOW.

IT IS! WE
GAVE IT **MORE**
TEETH!



-AND IT'S
ALL READY
TO GO!

RIGHT NOW,
IT'S BEING
DRIVEN BY THESE
LITTLE CLANKS-

SO ALL
YOU HAVE TO
DO IS HOOK
YOUR PATIENT IN,
DISCONNECT THE
EXTERNAL
CONTROLS, AND
PRESTO!



YES! I
SEE!

WELL DONE,
EVERYONE! **VERY**
ELEGANT!

ALL RIGHT!
LET'S GET
STARTED!



UM...
HERR VON
ZINZER...

YOU CAN
LET GO,
NOW.

NYRRRRG

...OOR
NOT.



HOW DO YOU
THINK YOUR
PATIENT WILL
HANDLE THE
CHANGE?

WHAT?

WELL,
PSYCHOLOGICALLY,
I MEAN.



SHE'S BEEN IN
HER CURRENT
SHELL FOR WHAT,
MAYBE **TWENTY**
YEARS?

AND NOW
YOU'RE
PUTTING HER
INTO A GIANT
TIGER CLANK
WITH STEEL
CLAWS.

HMM...
TRUE-



BUT GIVEN THE
SIMILARITIES, I THINK
IT QUITE LIKELY THAT SHE
WON'T NOTICE **ANY**
DIFFERENCE **AT ALL**.

OOOOH! YOU
PEOPLE ARE
FUN!



MY, MY! THIS DOES LOOK LIKE AN INTERESTING SETUP!

HUH. RATHER MODEST AS SECRET LABS GO.

AH! DOCTOR! PROFESSOR!

I'D WONDERED WHERE YOU WERE.

WELL, WE DID HAVE TO SEE TO POOR PROFESSOR DIAZ.



DO YOU THINK THIS LIVER WOULD MAKE ME LOOK FAT?

BAH! CALL THIS A CAST-IRON STOMACH?!

I DON'T! THIS IS ZINC!



OH...OF COURSE. THE LOSS OF YOUR FRIEND MUST—

HE HELPED MAKE US THE MEN WE ARE TODAY.

HE'D HAVE DONE THE SAME TO US!



WAIT—"TO?"

HE DID DO THE SAME TO YOU, REMEMBER?

THAT TIME WHEN YOU WERE KNOCKED OUT?

AND NOW IT'S BACK!

THE NERVE OF THE MAN!

THAT WAS MY FAVORITE PANCREAS!



GENTLEMEN, PLEASE!

WE HAVE A DELICATE PROCEDURE TO UNDERTAKE, AND I REQUIRE YOUR ASSISTANCE!

SO PLEASE—FOCUS ON THE MATTER AT HAND!



GOOD HEAVENS—HOW SERIOUS!

HA! REMEMBER WHEN WE HAD THAT YOUTHFUL ZEAL?

THAT UNWAVERING CERTAINTY THAT EACH EXPERIMENT WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE LAST?!

WHEN WE KNEW WE COULD CHANGE THE WORLD?!

AH—YOUTH!

GLORIOUS, OPTIMISTIC YOUTH!



LET ME CRUSH HIS SPIRIT.

OH, NOT FAIR! YOU DISILLUSSIONED THAT CHAP LAST MONTH.

THAT HARDLY COUNTS— HE COMMITTED SUICIDE!

IT'S STILL MY TURN.

... LET'S SQUASH HIM TOGETHER.

DONE!



BACK IN THE LIBRARY—

A-HA!

YOU FOUND SOMETHING?

I THINK SO.

IT'S HARD TO TELL, BUT YOU KNOW THOSE LINES WE THINK REPRESENT THE CASTLE'S NERVOUS SYSTEM?

WELL...IF THAT'S REALLY WHAT THEY ARE...



IT WOULD BE EASIER TO BE **SURE** IF THE THING WASN'T SO MESSED UP AND **BLURRY**...

WELL, WE'RE HERE TO **FIX** IT, AREN'T WE?

ANYWAY, ONE OF THE MAIN ONES RUNS **RIGHT** THROUGH THIS LIBRARY.

THAT MAKES SENSE...

BUT HOW DO WE GET TO IT?



OBVIOUSLY, THERE'S SOME SORT OF HIDDEN ROOM.

IF I'M READING THE MAP CORRECTLY, IT SHOULD BE **HERE-ISH**.

OH, GREAT.

SO ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS FIGURE OUT WHERE AN EVIL INSANE GENIUS WOULD PUT A **SECRET ROOM**.

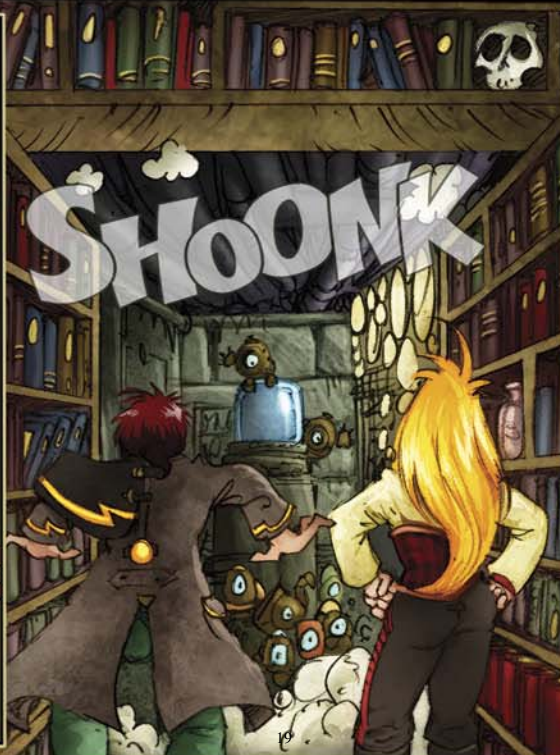


TRUE. WELL, LET'S TRY TO THINK LIKE A **DIABOLICAL, PARANOID, AMORAL MEGALOMANIAC**.

...WHERE WOULD YOU PUT IT?

OH. WELL, **HERE**. BUT—

CLIK



SHOONK



HA! **PERFECT!** THANKS, TARVEK!

NOW JUST A **MINUTE!**

—AND **HERE'S** ALL OUR EQUIPMENT, TOO!



AND LOTS OF MY LITTLE CLANKS! THEY DIDN'T GET LOST, THEY JUST TOOK ANOTHER ROUTE!

HMF. THERE ARE PROBABLY SMALLER SECRET PASSAGEWAYS ALL THROUGH THE CASTLE.

THAT'S WHAT WE PARANOID MEGALOMANIACS WOULD DO.



REALLY? WHERE WOULD YOU PUT AN ACCESS PANEL?

...

OVER THERE—



AMAZING! HERE IT IS!

HEY! I SAID OVER THERE!

OH, I KNEW YOU WERE LYING!



LET'S GET THE HEAD HOOKED IN, AND—

AW, NOW YOU'RE MAD.

...AM NOT.

HEE! AND YOU'RE LYING AGAIN.

DAARGH!



OH, TARVEK. I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE JUST USING THE EXPERIENCE YOU GAINED—

AT GREAT PERSONAL PAIN—

FROM LIFE WITH YOUR FAMILY.

I KNOW THAT, DEEP DOWN, IN YOUR HEART OF HEARTS, YOU HAVE A NOBLE SOUL.



AGATHA—I... YOU...



NO FAIR! YOU'RE MESSING WITH ME ON PURPOSE!

OOH! YOU CAN TELL!



GIVE ME THAT.

I'VE HAD A LOT OF EXPERIENCE WITH THE MUSES, SO I'LL DO THE SETUP.



hmf.



OKAY, FINE. YOU KNOW WHAT?

I ADMIT IT. I'M TOTALLY ONE OF THE BAD GUYS, OKAY?

I'M A GREAT BIG DEVIOUS WEASEL.



IT'S NOT LIKE THAT'S SOME KIND OF GREAT BIG NEW SURPRISE!

AND I WON'T APOLOGIZE FOR IT, EITHER—

BECAUSE I'M WITH YOU, AND I'M EXACTLY THE KIND OF PERSON YOU'RE GOING TO NEED ON YOUR SIDE NOW THAT YOU'VE BEEN REVEALED AS THE HETERODYNE.

OOH!



OH, DEAR, YOU ARE MAD—

—AND YOU ARE ACTING VERY STRANGE!

AND NOT IN A GOOD WAY! hee hee!

YOU'RE ACTING—



GAH!

YOU'RE ACTING LIKE LUCREZIA!



HOW DARE YOU! I'LL—



GYAH!

IT—IT'S OKAY. SHE'S NOT IN CONTROL.

SHE'S NOT IN CONTROL.

"BUT—"

BUT YOU'RE RIGHT... SHE IS HERE.

SHE'S ALWAYS PUSHING—

SHE CAN'T TAKE CONTROL, NOT WHILE I WEAR THE LOCKET—

AND, WELL, FRANKLY, I'M REALLY TIRED. WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER, I WANT TO SLEEP FOR A WEEK.

BUT SHE'S INFLUENCING ME.

UGH! IT'S HORRIBLE! I CAN'T EVEN TRUST MY OWN EMOTIONS!

TARVEK, WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?!

YOU CAN'T TRUST YOUR OWN EMOTIONS? FINE.

YOU CAN TRUST MINE.

I KNOW HOW YOU ACT—

I KNOW HOW LUCREZIA ACTS.

AND YES, THERE IS A DIFFERENCE.

WE'LL BEAT HER. YOU'LL SEE.

I'M GOING TO STAY BY YOUR SIDE UNTIL WE COMPLETELY ERADICATE ALL TRACES OF HER PERSONALITY FROM YOUR MIND.

BETWEEN WHAT I ALREADY KNOW FROM MY FATHER,

WHAT LUCREZIA TAUGHT ME HERSELF IN STURMHALTEN—

AND WHAT I CAN LEARN FROM HER LAB HERE—

I'M CONVINCED THAT I CAN REMOVE HER RATHER EASILY, ONCE I GET A CHANCE.

THANK YOU, TARVEK.

AND...I'M SORRY FOR TEASING YOU.

HA. AS LONG AS IT'S YOU—

YOU CAN TEASE ME ALL YOU WANT.

...WAIT. ARE THESE MY FEELINGS, OR HERS?!

MM. PROBABLY YOURS.

SHE'D NEVER BE SORRY.

NOW, LET'S FINISH GETTING THIS TRANSFER SET UP.



HIT THE FIRST SWITCH!



YEAH, YEAH, HERE IT GOES.

psst—IT'S "YES, MASTER!"

...NOT EVEN IF IT WOULD GET ME OUT OF THIS CASTLE TONIGHT.



GENERATORS COMING UP TO SPEED—

BAH!—THIS EQUIPMENT IS ALL SO OLD!

I'M GETTING HUGE AMOUNTS OF EXCESSIVE VIBRATION!



DON'T WORRY—THE NEURAL TRANSLATORS ARE ALMOST FINISHED—

HA HA! THAT LUCREZIA—WHAT A BEAUTIFULLY TWISTED MIND!

HER SYSTEM MAKES IT ALL SO SIMPLE!



POWER HOLDING STEADY—

Whoa— AGATHA'S LITTLE CLANKS ARE PATCHING SHORT CIRCUITS ALMOST BEFORE THEY HAPPEN!



OKAY, WE'RE DISENGAGING THE DRIVER CLANKS FROM THE CONTROL SYSTEM—

THE HOST CLANK IS NOW FULLY AUTONOMOUS!



HEY—THAT'S NOT GOING TO CAUSE ANY PROBLEMS, IS IT?

AAAH! JINX!

NEURAL INTERFACES ARE **SYNCHRONIZED**— BUT WE'RE FIGHTING SIGNAL DEGRADATION ON THE ORGANIC SIDE—

THE STRAIN IS **TOO MUCH!**

THE ORGANIC BODY IS NEARLY SPENT!

WE **MUST DO THIS RIGHT THE FIRST TIME!**

ALL SWITCHES—

NOW!

WE'RE GETTING SIGNAL TRANSFER!

ALL CIRCUITS ENGAGED!

WE'RE GETTING DANGEROUS AMOUNTS OF OSCILLATION!

THE SHOCK MOUNTS ARE CRUMBLING!

CUT THE POWER!

CUT THE—



THE WHOLE SYSTEM IS--
AAH!



WE'RE EXPERIENCING A RESONANCE DISASTER!
SHUT IT DOWN!

NO! NOT YET!



THEO! THE CEILING!

SLEIPNIR! STAY WHERE IT'S SAFE!

YOU PROMISED!

I WILL! BUT YOU'VE GOT TO MOVE! IT'S GOING TO COLLAPSE!

JUST A FEW MORE SECONDS--



THEO! NOW!

YOU'VE GOT TO MOVE NOW!





cough cough

THEO! cough THEO! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?



uhhh— SLEIPNIR?

I...I'M...I'M OKAY.

AMAZING. I...I REALLY AM.



FRAULEIN SNAUG? ARE YOU—?

FINE! OH YES INDEED!

REALLY. FINE.

BUT HOW—? WHY AREN'T WE—?

HEH HEH HEHRARRR—

WELL, TINY MINION—

AM I NOT OTILIA—

THE MUSE OF PROTECTION?



YAAH!



AH... WERE IT NOT FOR YOU... ER... UH... MADAME—

WITHOUT YOU, WE WOULD HAVE BEEN CRUSHED.

HRRAH!

INDEED YOU WOULD HAVE—



WERE I STILL IMPRISONED WITHIN THAT FRAIL SHEATH OF DYING MEAT.

WELL DONE, CHILDREN.

WHILE THIS BODY CANNOT COMPARE WITH THE WORK OF VAN RIJN, I FIND IT...

ACCEPTABLE.



AND NOW, CHILDREN.

THE CASTLE CRUMBLES, AND THIS ROOM IS STILL DANGEROUSLY UNSTABLE.

WE MUST LEAVE THIS PLACE IMMEDIATELY.

AH— ACTUALLY, WE CAN'T.

WHY NOT? WHAT HAPPENED TO THE STAIRS?

THE CEILING NEAR THE STAIRS WAS FINE.



IT *STILL IS*. BUT THE VIBRATIONS THAT TRIGGERED THE FALL OVER HERE, SET OFF SOME KIND OF BOOBY TRAP OVER THERE.

THE STAIRWELL IS SEALED.

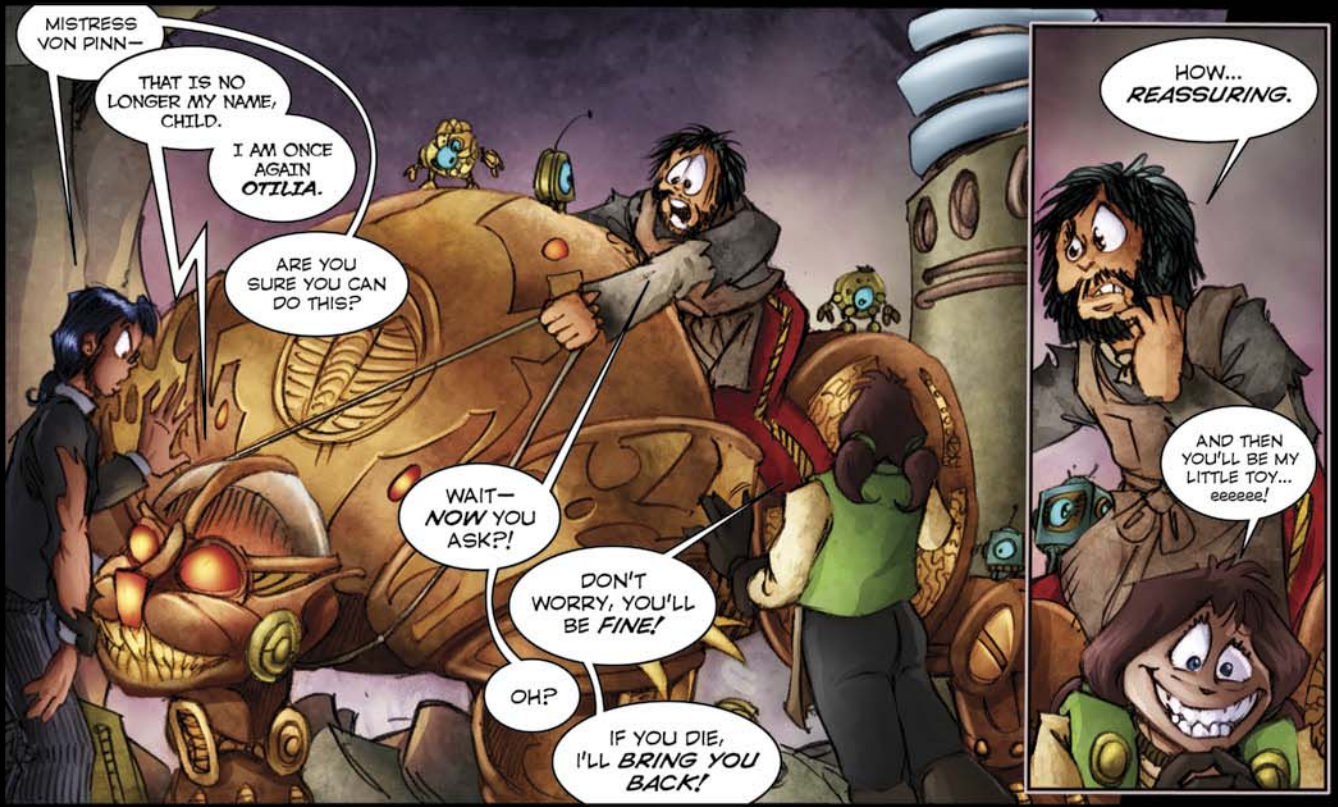


HRM. TYPICAL. NO MATTER.

THE COLLAPSE HAS REOPENED THE PATH MADE BY THAT TROUBLESOME HETERODYNE GIRL.



WE SHALL SIMPLY GO UP.



MISTRESS VON PINN—

THAT IS NO LONGER MY NAME, CHILD.

I AM ONCE AGAIN OTILIA.

ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN DO THIS?

WAIT—NOW YOU ASK?!

DON'T WORRY, YOU'LL BE FINE!

OH?

IF YOU DIE, I'LL BRING YOU BACK!

HOW... REASSURING.

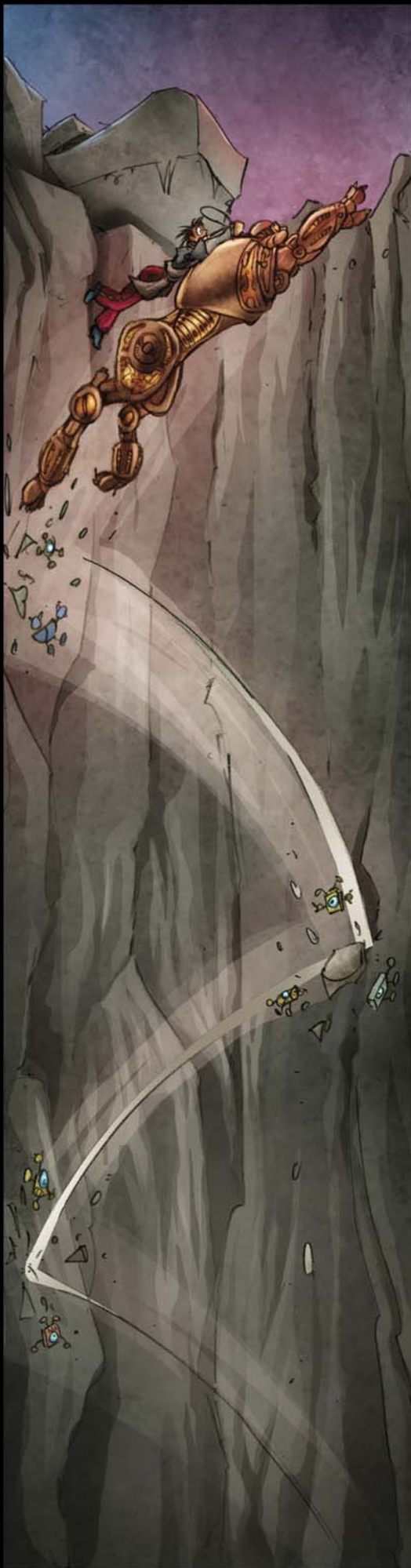
AND THEN YOU'LL BE MY LITTLE TOY... eeeee!



PREPARE.

YOU HAVE GOT TO BE...

ZZZZZZZZ







SOON—

HA! I *KNEW* I'D GET IT RIGHT *EVENTUALLY*.

eyurghhh...

OKAY, THEY'RE ALL UP, *AND* EVERYBODY'S *STILL* ALIVE!

WHA'CHA DOIN'?

WORKING.

OHP ON WHAT?



LOOK.

SEEP EVEN ONCE OUR MADGIRL GETS THE CASTLE'S *MIND* SORTED OUT—WE'RE *STILL* IN TROUBLE.

THERE'S NOWHERE NEAR ENOUGH *POWER*.

NOT WITH *THIS* THING BROKEN.

BUT WHAT CAN WE *DO*?



WELL, I'M THINKING WE'LL FIX IT.

WHAT?! *US?* FIX *THAT?* IT'S *IMPOSSIBLE!*

EVEN WITH THE *SPARKS*, WE—



NAH. WE DON'T EVEN *NEED* THE *SPARKS* FOR *THIS*.

SURE, THIS IS TOUGH, BUT IT'S NOT *BRAINS* TOUGH.

IT'S JUST *HARD* WORK TOUGH.



...AND I *THINK* I'VE GOT US SOME *HELP*.

BACK IN THE LIBRARY—



ALL RIGHT!
IF IT'S ALL
READY—

IT'S TIME TO
THROW THE
SWITCH!

WAIT!

NO!



NO?

NO! IT'S
MY
CASTLE—

I SHOULD
THROW THE
SWITCH.



AW,
BUT...

BUT
WHAT?



hmf.
NOTHING.
YOU GO
AHEAD.

hee—YOU
DON'T LIKE A
GIRL THROWING
YOUR SWITCH?

DON'T BE
RIDICULOUS.
THESE ARE
MODERN
TIMES.



I PROMISE I'LL
THROW IT IN A
VERY MANLY
WAY.

I...I DON'T
THINK THAT'S
ACTUALLY
NECESSARY...

OR EVEN
POSSIBLE...





YOU!

IF YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU, YOU'LL KEEP OUT OF THIS!

I'VE GOT ALL OF AUNTIE LUCREZIA'S SECRETS! ONCE THIS HETERODYNE COW IS DEAD, I CAN'T LOSE!

BE NICE, AND I'LL LET YOU PLAY OUT THE ORIGINAL PLAN. HA! YOU CAN EVEN BE MY STORM KING!



I AM NOT YOUR STORM KING!

WOOP!

WHAK!



AND MY PLAN WAS MUCH BETTER!



OH, REALLY?

AND DID YOU PLAN ON DYING LIKE A PIG?!

um... not really, no...

THEN DO AS I SAY, AND STAY DOWN!

GOT IT?

1



YOU!
YOUR "PLAN" IS OVER!

YOU'VE FAILED!

I AM THE HETERODYNE!
CASTLE?



I AM SORRY, MISTRESS...

SOON...

THERE! YOUR STUPID WINDUP CASTLE IS STILL GRINDING ITS GEARS—



AND THAT GIVES ME ALL THE TIME I NEED TO KILL YOU KILL YOU KILL YOU!



AAAH!

POW!







THE CASTLE!
YOU *REALLY*
MANAGED TO...

BUT,
WAIT—



HA! HEY,
CASTLE!

YOU'RE STILL
NOT IN
CONTROL, ARE
YOU?

IF YOU WERE,
YOU WOULDN'T
WARN ME, YOU'D
JUST KILL ME!



AND
YOU!

I'VE GOT A
LOVELY LITTLE
GARROTTE
AROUND HER
NECK!

YOU'VE HAD
TRAINING, SO
YOU KNOW
WHAT I CAN DO.
WHAT I CAN DO.
RIGHT?

SO *STAY
BACK*, AND I
WON'T KILL HER
JUST YET!

STALEMATE.



MM. BUT ONLY UNTIL
THE CASTLE IS FULLY
AWAKE. COME ALONG,
DEAR COUSIN—

IT'S TIME
FOR US TO
LEAVE.

LEAVE...
HOW?



WE'LL GO
THROUGH THE
DOME!

YOU SEE, I
KNOW
EVERYTHING
AUNTIE KNEW,

AND THERE IS
SO MUCH MORE
IN HERE THAN
JUST BOOKS!



YOUR FAMILY
COLLECTED ALL
SORTS OF
INSTRUCTIVE
LITTLE TOYS.

INCLUDING THE
FLIGHT RAIMENT
OF KING DARIUS THE
INCANDESCENT!

WAIT...
BUT... DIDN'T
HE—

tsk. THE
MK2, OF
COURSE.



LOOK AT
THAT! GOOD
AS NEW!

I CAN
SHRUG RIGHT
INTO IT,

AND I'LL
TAKE US BOTH
UP UP!



ZOLA! NO!
LEAVE HER
HERE!



NON! I DON'T
TRUST YOU, OR
THE CASTLE, OR
ANYONE!

erk!

SHE
LEAVES WITH
ME!

NEVER FEAR—
ONCE I'M AWAY, I'LL
RELEASE HER
INSTANTLY!

HEEHEEE!



OKAY. YOU'VE GOT THE COAT.

LEAVE AGATHA HERE, AND I *SWEAR* I WON'T STOP YOU.

OH! YOU'RE SUCH A LIAR!

I AM GIVING YOU *SOME* CREDIT, FOR SMARTS, YOU KNOW!

THERE IS *NO* WAY THAT YOU'RE THE KIND OF NOBLE FOOL WHO WOULD ACTUALLY KEEP A PROMISE LIKE THAT!



SO— FAREWELL, O MIGHTY STORM KING!

HAAAAH HAAAAH AHAHA!

AAAAH!



THE EDGE! WE'RE TOO HIGH! WE'LL—

HA HAA! UP AND AWAY!

CLAK!



WUM WUM



I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! IT WON'T CARRY TWO?

ALTHOUGH IT'S HARDLY SURPRISING, REALLY, WITH YOUR GREAT BIG BUTT!

OH, WE ARE SO NOT GOING THERE, MISS FATTY PANTS!

AND YOU'VE LET GO OF YOUR GARROTTE!



WELL, THAT'S BECAUSE IT LOOKS LIKE I'M GOING TO HAVE TO DROP YOU SOONER THAN I'D PLANNED!

ER—



AGATHA!
HOLD ON!

WHAAAAA-?!



OW! LET GO,
YOU BUFFOON!
YOU'RE DRAGGING
US DOWN!

THAT'S
THE IDEA!
AGATHA—
WHEN WE'RE
LOW ENOUGH,
JUMP!

HER
HANDS!
TARVEK!
GRAB HER
HANDS!

GET OFF
ME, YOU
INTERFERING
SOW!

OOF!



I
SAID—



LET
GO!

STAB!

AAAAH!



AGATHA!

HA!



OH, FOR PITY'S SAKE!
THAT PROBABLY DIDN'T KILL HER AT ALL!



WELL, AT LEAST IT'LL SLOW HER DOWN FOR THE COUP DE GRACE AFTER I TAKE CARE OF—



SMASH!



ENOUGH!
ENOUGH!

SMAK THUNK



YOU VICIOUS, POISONOUS REMNANT OF MY STUPID FAMILY'S STUPID INTERFERENCE— WITH YOUR STUPID SCHEMES AND YOUR STUPID BACKSTABBING PLOTS—

TAM
PAF
POW

I HAVE LOST MY CASTLE! MY MUSES! MY TOWN! MY HAND IS REVEALED TO THOSE BLASTED! UPSTART! WULFENBACHS!



YOU AND LUCREZIA HAVE DONE NOTHING BUT DESTROY MY LIFE AND MY PLANS, AND NOW YOU'RE TRYING TO DESTROY THE ONE BRIGHT SPOT LEFT—

AND THAT I WILL NOT PERMIT!

ALL RIGHT... I GIVE UP...

OH, NONONO NO, YOU DO NOT "GIVE UP!"



YOU DIE!

AK—
HELP...







WELL, FOR ONE THING, I— HEY!

CAREFUL, NOW—

URRRGH... I THINK IT HURT LESS WHEN I WAS DEAD.

WHERE'S... WHERE'S ZOLA?



AGATHA!

GIL! URGH—TARVEK SAID YOU'D GET OUT!

I'M... I'M GLAD YOU'RE ALL RIGHT.

ARGH... SORRY, THIS REALLY HURTS...

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ZOLA.

THE CASTLE WILL GET HER.



OH, IS MY FACADE RED.

I AM SORRY, MISTRESS. SHE IS ALREADY OUT OF MY RANGE.

AH... WELL, (OW...) AT LEAST SHE'S GONE.

SURE. FOR NOW.

LET ME TAKE A LOOK AT THAT.



...ALREADY DOING IT.

HEY! I AM A DOCTOR, YOU KNOW.

PFT. SO, WHO ISN'T?



OUCH—WELL, THEY WOULDN'T LET ME TAKE THE EXAMS...

BUT I'M PRETTY SURE THIS IS SUPERFICIAL.

OWW—LUCKY THIS THING IS HEAVILY REINFORCED.



...AH... NEVERTHELESS, YOU SHOULD STILL LET ME TAKE A LOOK.

BUT IT'S—

ZOLA DID THIS, DIDN'T SHE?

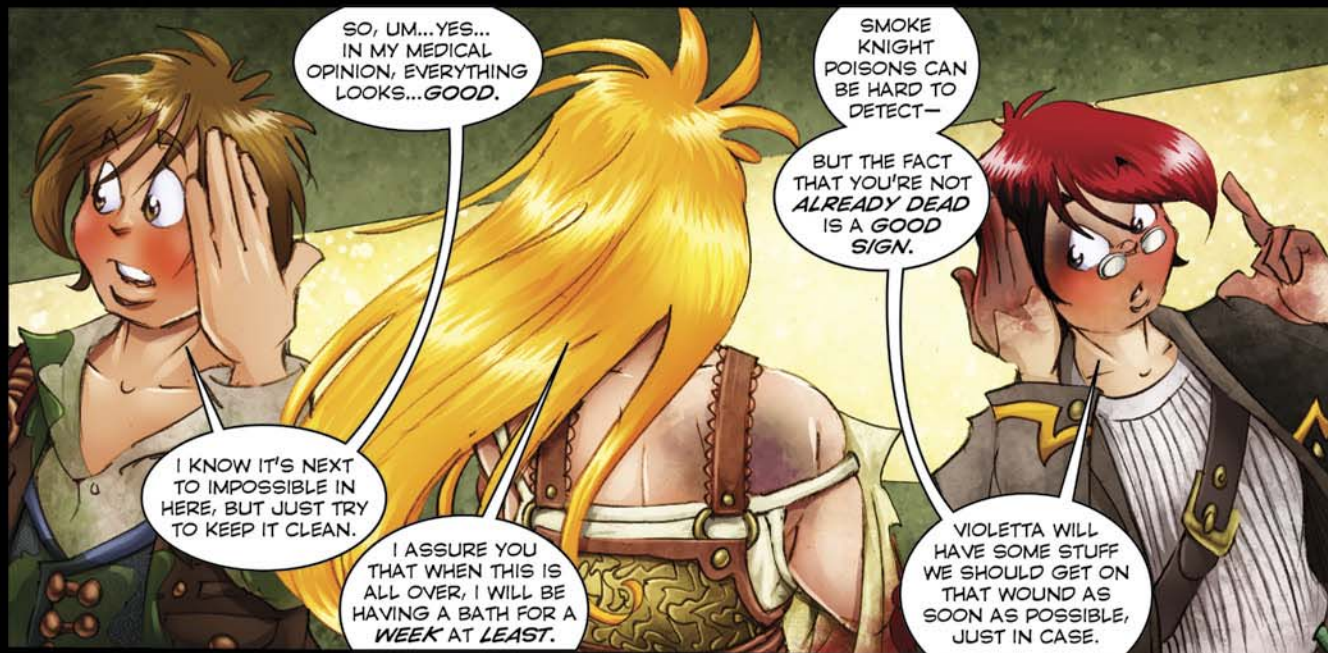
WE NEED TO MAKE SURE IT ISN'T POISONED.



SHE USES POISON?!

WELL, I ALWAYS THOUGHT SHE JUST COULDN'T MAKE COFFEE,

BUT NOW, I'M NOT SO SURE.



SO, UM...YES...
IN MY MEDICAL
OPINION, EVERYTHING
LOOKS...GOOD.

SMOKE
KNIGHT
POISONS CAN
BE HARD TO
DETECT—
BUT THE FACT
THAT YOU'RE NOT
ALREADY DEAD
IS A GOOD
SIGN.

I KNOW IT'S NEXT
TO IMPOSSIBLE IN
HERE, BUT JUST TRY
TO KEEP IT CLEAN.

I ASSURE YOU
THAT WHEN THIS IS
ALL OVER, I WILL BE
HAVING A BATH FOR A
WEEK AT LEAST.

VIOLETTA WILL
HAVE SOME STUFF
WE SHOULD GET ON
THAT WOUND AS
SOON AS POSSIBLE,
JUST IN CASE.



HYRRRRGH...

HIGGS!

HE'S
ALIVE!



IF EVEN HALF
THIS BLOOD IS
YOURS, DON'T
MOVE.

—LOOKS
WORSE THAN IT
IS, SIR.



SEEP FIT
AS A FIDDLE,
SIR.

...APPARENTLY
SO.

AND HOW
ARE YOU
FOLKS?

WHAT?



YOU OKAY,
SIR?

I MEAN, YOU
WERE BEIN'
CHOMPED BY
A PLANT.

ARE YOU AND
THE LADY
HETERODYNE DOIN'
ALL RIGHT?

WE'RE FINE,
MISTER
HIGGS.



WELL,
THAT'S A
RELIEF.

SO—

REQUESTING
PERMISSION TO
LEAVE THE
CASTLE, SIR.



I THINK YOU MISSED THAT PART OF THE FIGHT, BUT MISS ZEETHA GOT STABBED.

I WANT TO TAKE HER—
AH! TO THE HOSPITAL! OF COURSE!

I'LL GIVE YOU A NOTE. GIVE IT TO DOCTOR SUN. HE'LL—

uh—NO, SIR.

NO?



NOT THE HOSPITAL.

TOO PUBLIC. MISS ZEETHA— SHE'S BEEN SEEN WITH YOU.

WITH THE LADY HETERODYNE. PEOPLE WILL REMEMBER HER.

I'LL TAKE HER TO—

MAMMA GKIKA'S!

YESSIR.



MAMMA—?

IT'S A DEGENERATE— UH—

IT'S...IT'S A BAR. FOR TOURISTS.

WHAT? BUT THEN WHY—



WHERE IS ZEETHA? STILL BACK WITH THOSE PLANTS?

WE'VE GOT TO—

WITH ALL RESPECT, LADY, I'VE GOT TO.

YOU LOT STILL NEED TO GET THIS CASTLE BACK IN FIGHTING TRIM.



THAT ZOLA GIRL GOT OUT.

SOMEONE'S GONNA FIND HER, AND SHE'LL TELL 'EM THE CASTLE'S DOWN.

THEN, IF THE BARON DON'T FLATTEN THE PLACE—

HER PEOPLE WILL.

I CAN'T FIX THE CASTLE, BUT I CAN GET MISS ZEETHA TO SAFETY—

BY Y'R LEAVE, OF COURSE.



BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT MAMMA'S?

...DID MAMMA A FAVOR ONCE. SHE'S GOT A LONG MEMORY.

AND THIS "MAMMA" AT THIS "TOURIST BAR"— SHE CAN KEEP ZEETHA ALIVE?



WELL, I HAVEN'T ACTUALLY SEEN ZEETHA'S INJURIES, BUT—

IF SHE'S REALLY THAT BADLY HURT, MAMMA'S IS PROBABLY HER BEST SHOT.

IT'S A GOOD PLACE. I'VE BEEN THERE.

I KNEW IT.

WELL—



ALL RIGHT. BUT ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN GET OUT OF HERE SAFELY?

HMF. I DON'T THINK HE'S GOING TO HAVE ANY TROUBLE AT ALL.

HEH. YOU LISTEN TO YOUR FRIEND HERE, M'LADY.

HE'S A SMART GUY.



YOU DIDN'T MENTION VIOLETTA.

IS SHE ALL RIGHT?

YESSIR. LAST I SAW HER, SHE WAS LOOKIN' AFTER MISS ZEETHA.

hm. THEN YOUR MISS ZEETHA WILL PROBABLY BE OKAY.



UH—SHE—SHE AIN'T MY MISS ZEETHA, SIR.

OH, HEAVEN FORBID.

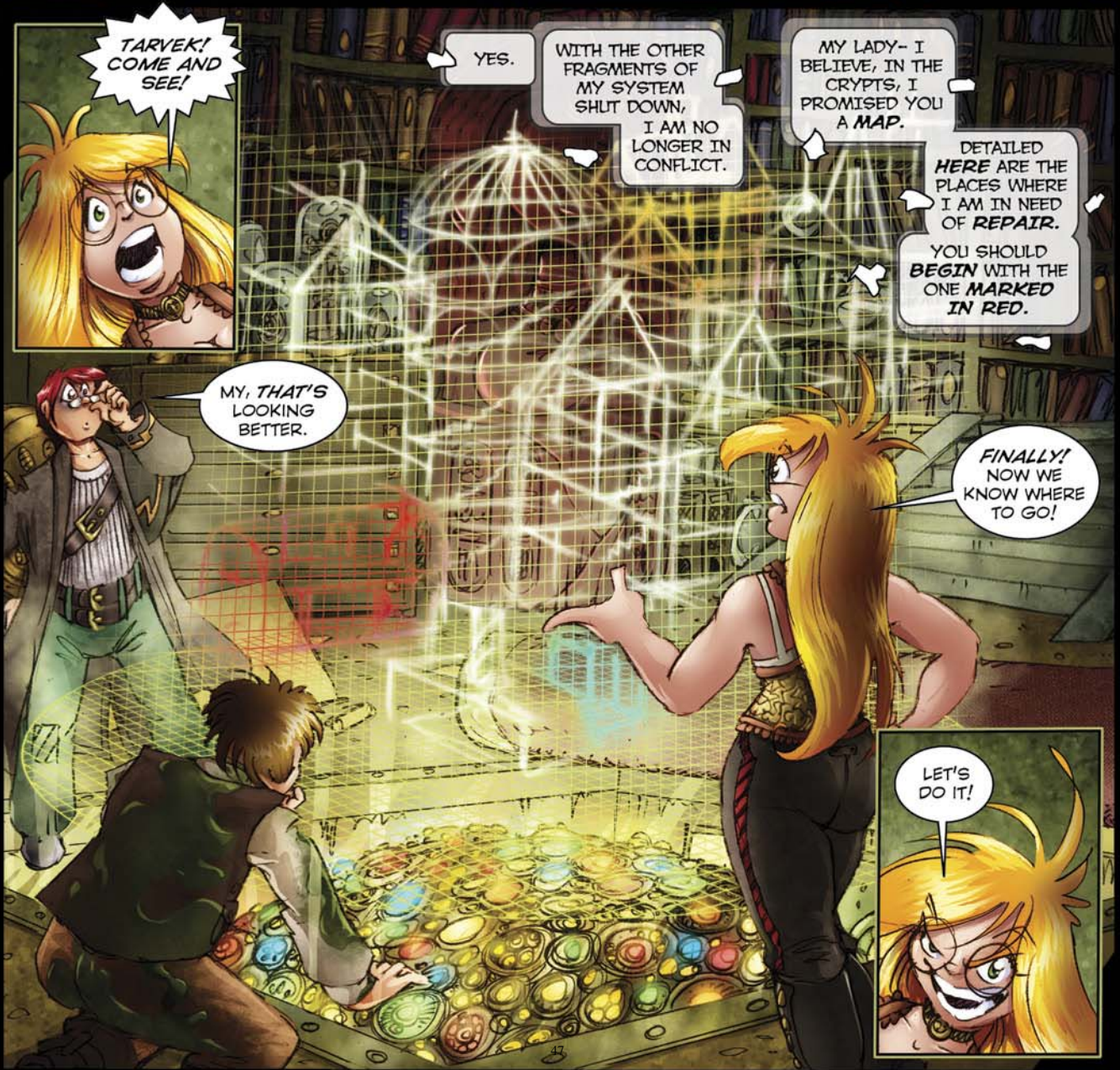
I'M SURE YOU'D DESERT YOUR POST AND HARE OFF TO SAVE ANY GREEN HAURED AMAZON.

AIN'T DESERTIN', SIR.

GOT PERMISSION.

OH, YES. SO YOU DID.

FROM THE LADY HETERODYNE, TOO, I NOTICED.



TARVEK! COME AND SEE!

YES.

WITH THE OTHER FRAGMENTS OF MY SYSTEM SHUT DOWN, I AM NO LONGER IN CONFLICT.

MY LADY- I BELIEVE, IN THE CRYPTS, I PROMISED YOU A MAP.

DETAILED HERE ARE THE PLACES WHERE I AM IN NEED OF REPAIR.

YOU SHOULD BEGIN WITH THE ONE MARKED IN RED.

MY, THAT'S LOOKING BETTER.

FINALLY! NOW WE KNOW WHERE TO GO!

LET'S DO IT!





OH, NOW THIS IS **ABSURD!**
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO **SHAVE?**

...YOUR LORDSHIP ACTUALLY SHAVES HIMSELF?

AS IF I'D TRUST ANYONE / KNOW TO PUT A RAZOR TO MY THROAT!

mm. TECHNICALLY? NO LONGER A PROBLEM.

AH, YES. THAT "SUN-NY BEDSIDE MANNER" EVERYONE TALKS ABOUT.

ALSO NO LONGER APPLICABLE.



ER...DO THEY **REALLY** TALK ABOUT MY—

WHAT'S **THE PRICE?**

I BEG YOUR PARDON?



DON'T BE DISINGENUOUS. WHY AM I STILL ALIVE?

heh. YOU WERE PLUCKED FROM THE WRECKAGE OF AN ARMY OF WAR CLANKS,

AND YOU HAD A LOVELY BIG FANCY HAT.

THE BARON BELIEVES YOU KNOW MANY THINGS.

WHEN HE ALSO KNOWS THEM—



THEN YOU WILL GET YOUR **FINE, STRONG NEW BODY.**

—AND THE FREEDOM TO ENJOY IT?

AH... FREEDOM IS SUCH A **RELATIVE TERM.**

IF YOU KNOW AS MUCH ABOUT THESE "KNIGHTS OF JOVE" AND THEIR MACHINATIONS AS THE BARON BELIEVES—



THEN, WHEN YOU ARE WRUNG DRY, A GREAT MANY POWERFUL PEOPLE WILL HATE YOU **VERY MUCH.**

WHILE YOU WOULD **CERTAINLY** BE "FREE" TO LEAVE THE BARON'S SERVICE AND PROTECTION... **WELL...**

ZOTT. HE'S **GOOD** AT THIS.



HE DOES HIS TEACHERS **PROUD.**

THE **DEPRESSING** THING?

TWISTED AND RUTHLESS AS YOU PEOPLE ARE, THROWING IN WITH YOU IS A **STEP UP.**



FOR YOUR SAFETY, WE RELEASED YOUR NAME AS ONE OF THE DEAD.

AW—EVERYBODY'S GOING TO KNOW I DIED?



CONFOUND IT. THAT MEANS MY LANDS AND TITLES WILL GO TO THAT INSUFFERABLE NEPHEW OF MINE.

...I'LL BE RUINED SOCIALLY...

BARRED FROM MY CLUBS...

NONE OF MY OLD FRIENDS WILL BE IN IF I CALL... THE WRETCHED SNOBS...

EVEN MY WIFE WON'T—



SAY—CAN I GET A BRASS PLATE THAT SAYS: "REANIMATED ABOMINATION OF SCIENCE" BOLTED TO MY FOREHEAD?

...ER... PERHAPS?

GRANDFATHER! COME QUICKLY!



AH. PARDON ME. YOU'RE WITH A PATIENT.

...HELLO, SIR. YOU'RE LOOKING MUCH BETTER.

GRANDFATHER, SHALL WE STEP OUTSIDE?



WHAT IS IT?

THE HETERODYNE GIRL FROM THE PINK AIRSHIP! SHE'S OUT OF THE CASTLE!

THEY'RE BRINGING HER IN!



SHE WAS USING SOME KIND OF EXPERIMENTAL FLIGHT SUIT, AND THE GARGOYLE SWEEPERS SHOT HER DOWN.

SHE'S APPARENTLY A REAL MESS.

PREP THEATER THREE! DOUBLE GUARDS!



OH! DOCTOR SUN!

WHAT IS IT? ARE WE IN DANGER?

AH—NOTHING TO FEAR, PRINCESS.

SOMEONE WILL BE BY TO SEE YOU SOON.



OH, THANK YOU, DOCTOR.

THAT'S SO REASSURING.

I HEARD SHOUTING, AND I WAS SO FRIGHTENED!



BACK IN CASTLE HETERODYNE—

I'VE PATCHED HER UP AS MUCH AS I CAN...

SO I'LL BE OFF. GOOD LUCK!



YOU GOT SOMETHIN' TO SAY, YOU BETTER SAY IT BEFORE YOU BUST A WINDOW OR SOMETHIN'.

YOU ARE ABANDONING THE HETERODYNE.



YOU THINK KLAUS WULFENBACH'S KID, THE STORM KING, A SMOKE KNIGHT AND ALL THOSE OTHERS AIN'T ENOUGH?

THEY ARE NOT YOU.



UNTIL THERE IS AN HEIR—

OH, NOT THAT AGAIN!

I SWEAR— EVERY TWENTY YEARS...IT'S LIKE SOME KIND OF ECHO.

I HAVE MY PRIORITIES.



THE HETERODYNE NEEDS THE STRONGEST PROTECTORS—

SHE NEEDS THIS GIRL!



HMF. SHE IS A VERY GOOD FIGHTER, BUT SHE WILL BE NO HELP AT ALL IN HER CURRENT STATE.

WHICH IS WHY I'M TAKING HER TO MAMMA.

...AND ANYWAY, IT AIN'T THE FIGHTING THE LADY NEEDS HER FOR.



... AH! YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECTS!

NO.

MONSTER FODDER?

I'M TALKING ABOUT FRIENDS, YOU MUD HUT.

HOW MANY OF THE MASTERS HAVE HAD REAL FRIENDS?

PEOPLE THEY COULD TRUST?

PEOPLE WHO ACTUALLY LIKED THEM?



UGH. THAT SOUNDS SO... SO MESSY.

I THINK YOU'RE THE ONE WHO "ACTUALLY LIKES" THIS GIRL.

YOU THINK WHAT YOU LIKE.

AND IN ANOTHER PART OF THE CASTLE—

YES! I THINK THAT DID IT!

AAAH! YES, INDEED!

WHY, I'D FORGOTTEN I EVEN HAD AN IMPLUVIUM!

RIGHT! SO, AH, YOU HAVE CONTROL, NOW?

OH, YES, OF COURSE. SORRY ABOUT THAT, GENTLEMEN.

PLAYTIME IS O-OVER YOUNG MASTERRRRRS.

ARE YOU TWO OKAY?

(huff huff) WE'RE GOOD.

Whew. YEAH, WE'RE OKAY.

SO THIS WAS THE NURSERY?

IT EXPLAINS... SO MUCH...

YOU GUYS SHOULD TAKE A REST.

I'LL BE READY TO GO IN A FEW MINUTES.

THANK YOU!

WELL, THAT'S TWO DOWN, AND TWO MORE TO GO.

UNLESS THE REPAIRS REVEAL MORE BREAKS...

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING AT?

...PARDON?

YOU'RE UP TO SOMETHING.

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I'M—

YOU'RE BREATHING.

YOU'LL REALLY HAVE TO BE A BIT MORE DESCRIPTIVE.

ZOLA GOT AWAY BECAUSE OF ME—

AND YOU HAVEN'T SAID A WORD.

WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?

AH.

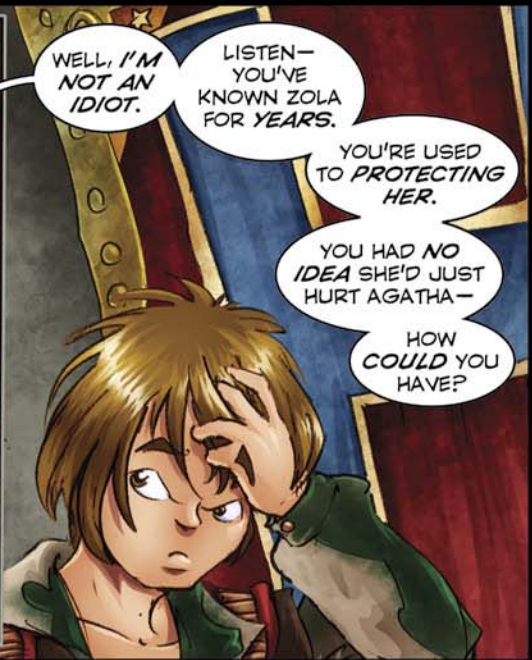


I SEE. YOU'RE WAITING FOR ME TO TWIT YOU ABOUT LETTING ZOLA ESCAPE—
IN FRONT OF AGATHA, OF COURSE,
IN ORDER TO MAKE YOU LOOK BAD.

...PRETTY MUCH.



tsk. YOU REALLY DO THINK EVERYONE ELSE IS MENTALLY DEFICIENT, DON'T YOU?



WELL, I'M NOT AN IDIOT.

LISTEN— YOU'VE KNOWN ZOLA FOR YEARS.

YOU'RE USED TO PROTECTING HER.

YOU HAD NO IDEA SHE'D JUST HURT AGATHA—

HOW COULD YOU HAVE?



PLUS, YOU WERE ALL MESSED UP FROM THAT PLANT.

YOU CAME RUNNING IN AND SAW SOMEONE YOU HATE AND FEAR TRYING TO KILL HER—

OF COURSE YOU REACTED.

I DO NOT FEAR YOU.



REALLY? YOU SHOULD.

ANYWAY, THERE'S ALSO NO WAY YOU COULD HAVE KNOWN THAT ONCE I LET GO OF HER, SHE'D FLY AWAY.

IT STARTLED ME, I'LL ADMIT.



AS FOR AGATHA, SHE'S ONE OF THE SMARTEST PEOPLE WE'LL EVER MEET.

GIVE HER SOME CREDIT FOR LOGICAL THOUGHT.

SHE'D THINK I WAS A FOOL IF I GAVE YOU A HARD TIME ABOUT THIS—

AND SHE'D BE RIGHT.

WOW. I... I GUESS I MISJUDGED YOU.



NO NO NO! YOU HAVEN'T MISJUDGED ME,

YOU'VE UNDERESTIMATED ME!

EVEN IF I NEVER BREAK YOUR ILLEGITIMATE EMPIRE—

EVEN IF I CAN'T RECLAIM THE CROWN OF LIGHTNING—

I CAN AND WILL FORCE YOU TO REVEAL YOURSELF TO AGATHA AS THE BASE SCOUNDREL YOU REALLY ARE!



YOU BACKSTABBING SNEAK! I'LL—

GIL! PUT HIM DOWN!





AUNTIE MEHITABEL'S—

I'VE NEVER HEARD OF IT.

I'M NOT SURPRISED. IT'S *SUBTLE*.

OH, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

ALSO *SLOW*—

UH, HUH.

AND REALLY HARD TO DETECT.

—WAIT, *WHAT?*

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING WITH *THAT ONE*.

(sigh.)

I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE WITH THAT ONE.

IT REALLY IS A *SUBTLE* POISON.

—BUT EASY TO GET RID OF: IF YOU KNOW IT'S THERE AND IF YOU HAVE THE ANTIDOTE,

WHICH MEANS, IT'S USUALLY *DEADLY*.

YOU'RE JUST LUCKY YOU'VE GOT A SMOKE KNIGHT ON YOUR SIDE.

BUT—IT'S REALLY OKAY NOW?

SURE. YOU STILL SHOULD HAVE *WAITED* FOR ME,

BUT I GOT TO YOU IN TIME.



YOU'RE JUST GOING TO REALLY NEED SOME *SLEEP* WHEN YOU'RE DONE IN HERE.

SPEAKING OF WHICH, WHAT'S NEXT?

I AM STILL CUT OFF FROM MOST OF MY STRUCTURE, AND ALMOST ALL OF MY DEFENSIVE SYSTEMS.

YOU ARE NOW NEARING WHAT I BELIEVE TO BE A *MAJOR PROBLEM AREA*.

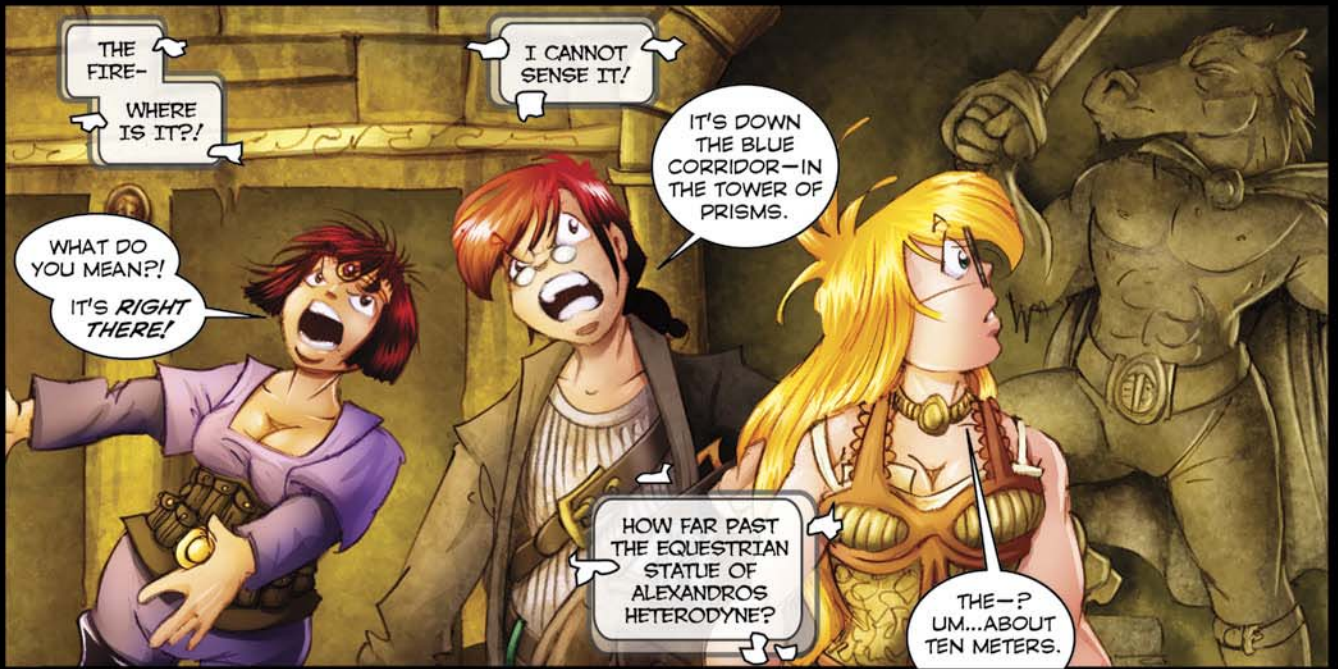
Um—
YOU THINK?

WAIT. THIS IS *CASTLE HETERODYNE*. MAYBE IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE ON FIRE.

FIRE?! AAAAAH! PUT IT OUT! SAVE MEEEE!



...APPARENTLY *NOT*.





WELL, THERE WE GO.

LOTS OF MINOR INJURIES, BUT NOTHING TOO SERIOUS—

METABOLISM STABILIZED FOR NOW, BUT SHE WAS CRASHING HARD FROM WHATEVER CARTLOAD OF DRUGS SHE GOT DOSED WITH.

...AND I CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR THE STORY BEHIND THAT.

YES... I IMAGINE KLAUS WILL BE VERY INTERESTED IN SPEAKING WITH THIS ONE.



I HOPE HE GETS THE CHANCE.

SHE'S STILL APPALLINGLY TOXIC, AND THE AFTERAFFECTS OF SOME OF THIS STUFF...

WELL, IT'S GOING TO BE SOME SLOW, CAREFUL WORK FLUSHING THIS MESS OUT OF HER SYSTEM WITHOUT KILLING HER.

OH, I HAVE SOME INTERESTING NEW IDEAS ON HOW TO PROCEED WITH THAT...

OF COURSE.

UM... YOU KNOW, GRANDFATHER...



I KNOW IT SOUNDS CRAZY, BUT... I THINK WE SHOULD HAVE SOME RESTRAINTS PUT IN JUST... JUST IN CASE.

AH, YOU'RE LEARNING, MY DEAR. IT DOES NOT SOUND CRAZY. IT SOUNDS PRUDENT.

...EXTRA GUARDS AS WELL, I THINK.

THANK YOU, GRANDFATHER.

tsk. UNDERESTIMATE ME MORE, LITTLE GIRL.



STILL— GUARDS— RESTRAINTS— NOT GOOD.

TIME TO LEAVE...

NNNGR!



CURSE THIS WRETCHED, WEAK BODY!



AH, NOW THAT SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE I—

OH!



OH! PLEASE EXCUSE ME!

I MUST HAVE THE WRONG ROOM!

LUCREZIA! WAIT! DON'T GO!



... WHO ARE YOU?

... WHY, YOU SILLY GIRL!

I'M LUCREZIA!



EVENTUALLY—

—AND THEN I BURIED HIM IN HIS PRECIOUS ANT FARM!

YES! AND IT WAS EVER SO SATISFYING!

OH, YOU ARE ME!

WHAT FUN!



BUT I'M DYING TO KNOW, DEAR—

WHO IS THIS YOU'RE WEARING?

WHEN I HEARD THEM SAY "HETERODYNE GIRL," I NATURALLY ASSUMED I'D FIND THE ME I LEFT WITH OUR DAUGHTER.

AH—



YOU PROBABLY CAN'T TELL, SINCE THE SILLY THING GOT HERSELF FRIGHTFULLY BASHED UP—

BUT THIS IS ZOLA. DEAR DEMONICA'S DAUGHTER.

DEMONICA! REALLY?!



YES! AND SHE'S AS GULLIBLE AS HER DEAR MAMA!

SHE'S PART OF SOME SCHEME THE KNIGHTS OF JOVE HAVE GOT UP TO—

AND THE DARLING GIRL DECIDED TO RESCUE ME!

...AND THERE WE WERE IN THE OLD SECRET LABORATORY, SO—

I JUST COPIED MYSELF RIGHT OVER HER, NEAT AS YOU PLEASE!

RESCUE YOU? AND IN THE CASTLE—

WHATEVER WERE YOU DOING THERE, OF ALL PLACES?



OUR DAUGHTER HAS REGAINED CONTROL.

WHAT?! HOW?!

I COULDN'T STOP HER. SHE MADE A BEELINE FOR THE HORRIBLE PLACE.

SHE'S GOT A DEVICE—AROUND HER NECK— A LOCKET—

IT'S KEEPING ME LOCKED DOWN TIGHT INSIDE HER.

ANOTHER ANNOYANCE COURTESY OF THAT MEDDLING BARRY.



WIK! HE'S HERE?!

NO, NO. HE MADE IT TO KEEP HER FROM BREAKING THROUGH.

BUT HE'S BEEN MISSING FOR YEARS.

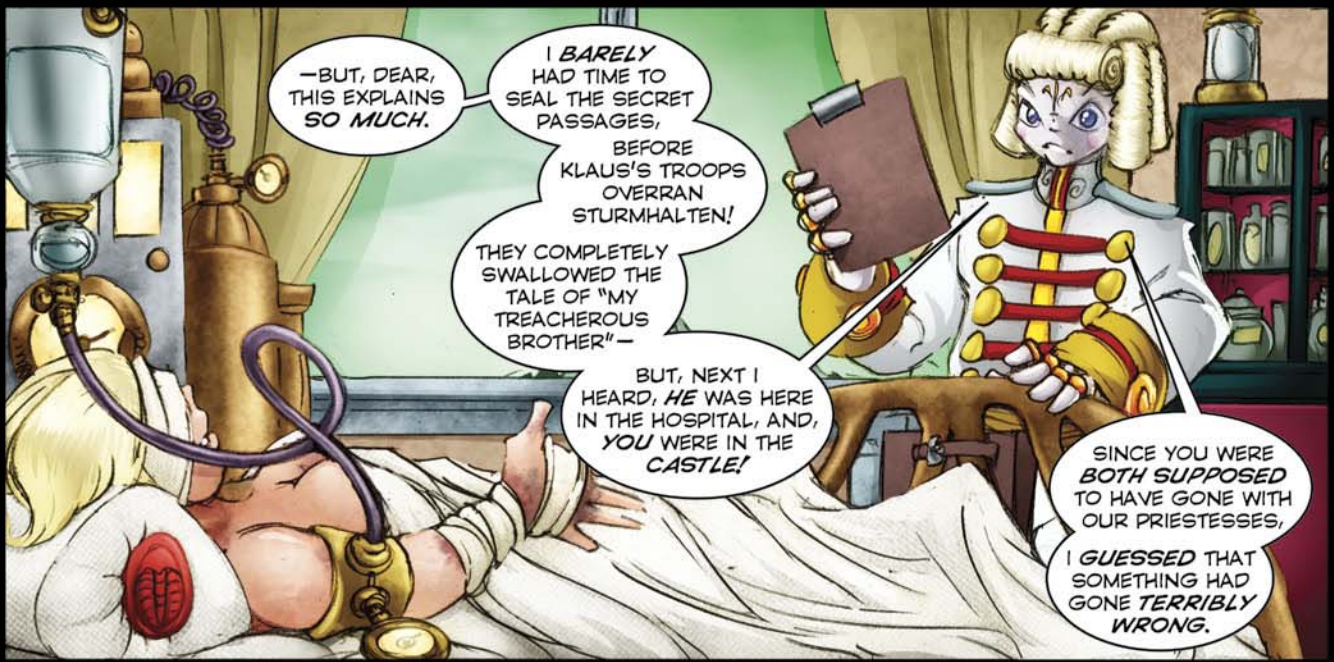
HE'S NO THREAT—



DO YOU WANT HIM TO SHOW UP?!

OOH...SO SORRY, DEAR.

I CAN'T THINK WHAT CAME OVER ME!



-BUT, DEAR, THIS EXPLAINS SO MUCH.

I BARELY HAD TIME TO SEAL THE SECRET PASSAGES, BEFORE KLAUS'S TROOPS OVERRAN STURMHALTEN!

THEY COMPLETELY SWALLOWED THE TALE OF "MY TREACHEROUS BROTHER" -

BUT, NEXT I HEARD, HE WAS HERE IN THE HOSPITAL, AND, YOU WERE IN THE CASTLE!

SINCE YOU WERE BOTH SUPPOSED TO HAVE GONE WITH OUR PRIESTESSES, I GUESSED THAT SOMETHING HAD GONE TERRIBLY WRONG.



AH-WE WERE CAPTURED BEFORE WE COULD JOIN THEM.

NEATLY AMBUSHED BY DEAR KLAUS HIMSELF!

mmm. HOW DOES HE LOOK?

BETTER.

NO!

OH, YES. YOU KNOW THAT ANNOYING, SOFT-HEARTED ROMANTIC STREAK HE ALWAYS HAD?

GONE! SOMEONE'S BURNED IT RIGHT OUT OF HIM!

hmmm... THAT SOUNDS PROMISING.

IS HE SMARTER?



...MAYBE A LITTLE TOO SMART.

HE RECOGNIZED ME, EVEN THOUGH I WAS SO WELL DISGUISED-

AND THEN, HE TRIED TO KILL ME!

sigh. THAT MAN.

WE OUGHT TO SMOTHER HIM BEFORE HE WAKES UP.



WHAT-HE'S STILL HERE?!

OH, YES. THESE MARVELOUS EARS CAN HEAR THE MOST AMAZING THINGS.

HE'S IN RECOVERY.

OH, MY, SUN MUST'VE HAD TO KNOCK HIM SENSELESS.

-AND THAT'S WHY I, "PRINCESS ANEVKA OF STURMHALTEN" AM STILL HERE.



I'M JUST WAITING FOR MY AUDIENCE.

YOU MUST GET TO HIM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

OH, THERE'S NO RUSH...

IT'S NOT AS IF I COULD REALLY SMOTHER HIM.

GUARDS, YOU KNOW.



ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS TALK, DARLING.

DEAR KLAUS IS ALREADY OURS.



AND SO—

THERE YOU ARE, DEAREST—

THESE SILLY MACHINES OF SUN'S JUST NEEDED A LEEETLE TWEAK, AND VOILA!

...BUT PERHAPS IT IS TOO MUCH?



NO! THIS BODY CAN... TAKE IT!

WE NEED EVERY... ADVANTAGE!

IF I CAN...HEAL FASTER...THAN THEY EXPECT—

YES, THAT'S VERY TRUE.

NOW... YOU GO!

IF YOU'RE FOUND HERE...



ALSO TRUE. ALL RIGHT, DARLING. HANG IN THERE!

GNNNRG!

QUIETLY, DEAR!

NNG! SO SORRY!



HEE HEE!



GERMS!

PRINCESS! THERE YOU ARE!

OH! DOCTOR ROTHFUSS! HELLO!



YOU ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO LEAVE YOUR ROOMS!

HOW DID YOU GET PAST YOUR ATTENDANTS?

OH! I'M SO SORRY!

ALL THESE TERRIBLE EVENTS—

I JUST NEEDED TO WALK AND... AND THINK A BIT.



MY POOR TOWN—

MY POOR PEOPLE!

WHAT WILL BECOME OF THEM?

OH, DOCTOR, I'M SO WORRIED!

YES, WELL.. THAT'S QUITE UNDERSTANDABLE. BUT THE BARON WILL HAVE IT ALL UNDER CONTROL IN NO TIME. YOU'LL SEE.



OH, YES!

I'M SURE I'LL FEEL EVER SO MUCH BETTER ONCE I'VE SPOKEN TO HIM!

ELSEWHERE, IN CASTLE HETERODYNE—

I DUNNO, BIG BROTHER, SOMETHING'S **WRONG**.

...WE'RE IN CASTLE HETERODYNE WITH EXPLODING COLLARS AROUND OUR NECKS—

CAUGHT BETWEEN A FAKE HETERODYNE AND A REAL ONE, (AS WELL AS ASSORTED CRIMINALS, MANIACS, AND VARIOUS MONSTERS)

AND I SUSPECT THAT EVEN IF WE FOUND ANY BEER IN HERE, IT WOULD BE EVIL OR, AT THE VERY LEAST, **FLAT**.

TRY TO BE A BIT MORE **SPECIFIC**.

WHERE IS EVERYBODY?

IF I KNEW WHERE YOUNG WULFENBACH WAS,

I'D FINISH THE JOB AND WE COULD LEAVE THIS PLACE!

NOT JUST HIM. I MEAN **ANYBODY**.

THERE'S A WHOLE BUNCH OF PRISONERS IN HERE.

HM. YES. WE'VE CERTAINLY COVERED ENOUGH GROUND— WE SHOULD HAVE FOUND MORE PEOPLE.

MAYBE IF YOU STOPPED SHOUTING: "OTHAR TRYGGVASSEN—

GENTLEMAN ADVENTURER—

HAS ARRIVED!" EVERY TIME WE WALK INTO A ROOM—

BUT... THAT'S MY **THING!**



SANAA? WHAT WAS THAT?

I DON'T KNOW!

I'VE NEVER FELT ANYTHING LIKE THAT.

...MAYBE IT WAS SOMETHING GOOD?

OOOOOH! WELL, WELL-AND WHOM DO WE HAVE HERE?!

HM. THAT DOESN'T SOUND GOOD.

NO, NO— WE'RE NOT DEAD. I'M ENCOURAGED.







OOOH! A REAL HERO!

I HAVEN'T SQUASHED ONE IN YEARS!

NO!

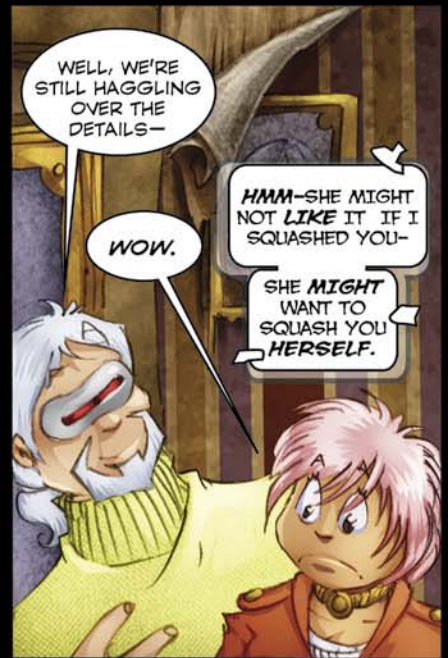
I CAN SEE I SHALL HAVE TO SPEAK WITH AGATHA ABOUT MAKING SOME SERIOUS HOME REPAIRS.



AH—YOU KNOW THE MISTRESS?

WHY, SHE'S GOING TO BE MY SPUNKY GIRL SIDEKICK!

REALLY?



WELL, WE'RE STILL HAGGLING OVER THE DETAILS—

WOW.

HMM—SHE MIGHT NOT LIKE IT IF I SQUASHED YOU—

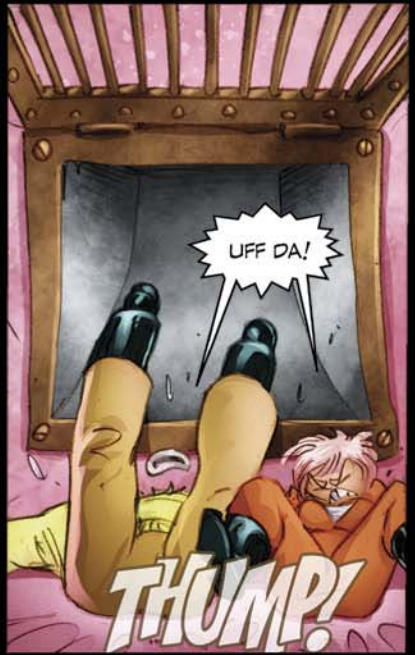
SHE MIGHT WANT TO SQUASH YOU HERSELF.



STILL... A HERO...

WELL, THERE'S ALWAYS THE TORTURE ROOM.

CLACK!



UFF DA!

THUMP!



CLANG

WILHELM!

PROFESSOR TIKTOFFEN!

...THIS IS A TORTURE ROOM?



INSIDIOUS!

THE TORTURER IS NOW SERVING VICTIM NUMBER 03

LOOK AT YOU! YOU'RE NOT DEAD!

I'M GLAD YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, PROFESSOR!



WHAT?! OUT OF NUMBERS?!

FIENDS!

VICTIM? TAKE A NUMBER

—WELL, I WON'T SAY THAT UNTIL WE'RE OUT OF HERE.

IT DOESN'T SEEM THAT BAD...



IT'S MORE OF A PSYCHOLOGICAL TORTURE CHAMBER.

DOES THAT EVEN WORK?

...AND THAT MUSIC! WHAT IS THAT MUSIC?!

AND AT MAMMA GKIKA'S—



URGH—



UGH—
UM—



SIP



HOW D'YOU FEEL?

ERRRR!

THAT'S GOOD.

AGATHA—



DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT HER—

SHE'LL BE JUST FINE.

AT LEAST, FOR A WHILE.



NO THANKS TO ME.

I'VE COMPLETELY FAILED HER—

NOW, YOU STOP THAT.



YOU'RE GOOD—

BUT YOU'RE WHAT? MAYBE EARLY TWENTIES?

AND THAT STURMVORAU FELLA CALLED YOU "PRINCESS..."



PROBABLY FROM SOME CUT-OFF BACKWATER, YES?

WHERE, I'M GUESSIN', YOU WERE USED TO BEIN' ONE O' THE TOUGHEST THINGS AROUND.

—AND THAT OVERCONFIDENCE ALMOST GOT YOU KILLED.

BUT THE IMPORTANT WORD THERE IS "ALMOST."



DON'T TALK TO ME LIKE YOU'RE MY WISE OLD GRANDMA, YOU—

heh. I'M GUESSIN' YOUR OLD GRANDMA'S ONE O' THE FEW BACK HOME WHO COULD TAKE YOU ON—

AND I'LL BET SHE'D SAY THE SAME.

THERE'S OLD FOLKS HERE THAT CAN TEACH YOU PLENTY—

IF YOU'RE SMART ENOUGH TO REALIZE YOU STILL HAVE STUFF TO LEARN.



I—I WILL LEARN WHATEVER IT TAKES TO PROTECT AGATHA!

AND THEN—I WILL KICK YOUR BUTT!

...THAT'S A DATE!

SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE MECHANICSBURG...



HOY!
SIRS, DEY IZ
HERE!



OH HO!
COME IN, MY
BOYZ!
IZ GOOT
TO SEE
HYU!



hmf.
—UND HEFF
HYU FORGOTTEN
HOW TO
SALUTE?



...UM
...YEZ?

NO, NO—I TINK
DIS IZ VUN OV
DOES TRICK
QVESTIONS,
BRODDER.

VE VOS
DETACHED.



AH—INDEED
HYU VOS.
UND HYU
FOUND UZ A
HETERODYNE
GURL!

VELL...
EACTULLY,
SHE KINDA
FOUND US.
DOZ
DOT STILL
COUNT?

HO,
YEZ.

whew!



HYU
DONE
GOOT,
BOYZ!

VE'S GUN
HAFF A BEEG
PARTY VIT
DRINKS
AND VIMMIN
IN
HATS—

UND LOTSA
FIGHTINK!

HOO,
YEZ!



OH, VUN
LEEDLE
TING:
SHE
VOULDN'T BE
DE ODDER—

VOULD
SHE?



VOT?!

DOT'S
KREZY!

UM...



BUT MEBBE HYU DUN WANT ME TO GIFF MY REPORT VIT DOT GUY HIDINK BEHIND DER CURTAIN?



HOW ABOUT IF I'M NOT BEHIND THE CURTAIN?

HO— IZ HOKAY, DIMO.

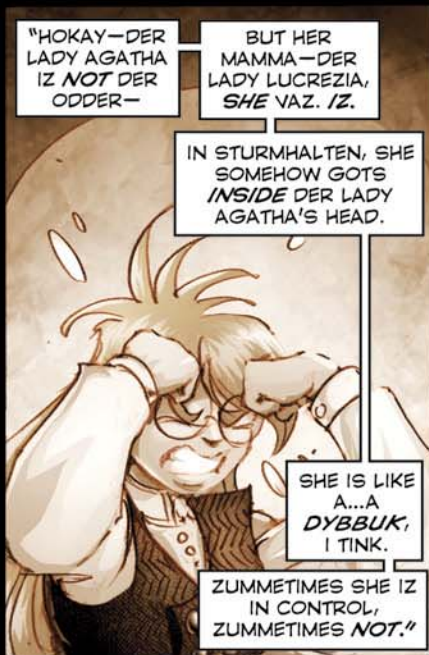
BUT HOW DID HYU KNOW HE VOS DERE?

...SCHMELED SOAP.



BUT THAT COULD HAVE BEEN ANY ONE OF— AH, NEVER MIND.

GO ON—



"HOKAY—DER LADY AGATHA IZ NOT DER ODDER—

BUT HER MAMMA—DER LADY LUCREZIA, SHE VAZ. IZ.

IN STURMHALTEN, SHE SOMEHOW GOTTS INSIDE DER LADY AGATHA'S HEAD.

SHE IS LIKE A...A DYBBUK, I TINK.

ZUMMETIMES SHE IZ IN CONTROL, ZUMMETIMES NOT."



"DER LADY AGATHA, SHE FIGHTS HER, BUT DER ODDER IS VERRA STRONK.

NOW MEEZ AGATHA GOTTS A LEEDLE DEVICE DOT KEEPS HER MAMMA QUIET IN HER HEAD.

IT VOS BUILT BY MASTER BARRY.

HE VOS LAST SEEN ELEFFEN YEARS AGO. HY HAFF HEARD NOZZINK OF MASTER WILLIAM."



VITOUT HER MAMMA IN HER HEAD, HY TINK DER LADY VILL BE MEBBE KINDA BORINK, LIKE HER POPPA,

BUT SHE IZ A HETERODYNE. —UND A PRETTY STRONK YUN.

UND HOW DOES HYU KNOW ALL DIS?

DER LADY GOTTS DIS VARRIOR GURL TRAININ' HER. DEY IS GOOT FRIENDS.



AT MAMMA GKIKA'S, DIS MIZZ ZEETHA TOLD HYU MASTER GILGAMESH ALL 'BOUT IT.

AH—THAT'S WHY HE WENT INTO THE CASTLE.

...DOT'S VUN REASON, YEZ.

EEZ ALL VERRA HOSH-HOSH.



BUT HOW DOES HYU KNOW—

HY VAS LISTENING AT DER DOORS!

LIKE A GRETT BEEG SNEEKY PENTS— HOKAY?!



DIMO! HY AM SHOCKED AT DIS BEHAVIOR!

STILL, IT WAS RATHER CLEVER OF HIM...

HY SAID HY VOS SHOCKED!



...BUT HYU DUN LOOK TOO HEPPY.

I'M NOT.

WITH THIS GIRL INSTALLED AS THE HETERODYNE—

THE JÄGERS WILL VERY LIKELY WIND UP AS TOOLS IN THE OTHER'S WAR OF CONQUEST.

DOT VOULD NEFFER HEPPEN.



OH? THERE WAS CERTAINLY A TIME WHEN THE JÄGERS HAD NO QUALMS ABOUT HELPING THE OLD HETERODYNES LAY WASTE TO EUROPA.

—AND EVEN NOW, IF THE OTHER, AS THE NEW HETERODYNE, WERE TO ORDER YOU, WOULDN'T YOU BE FORCED TO—



HO. HYU GOTS IT WRONG.

HYU KNOWS VY JÄGERS HATES DER ODDER'S BUGZP

DEY SQVEEZ PIPPLE'S MINDS. FORCE DEM TO OBEY.

VE JÄGERS IZ NOT COMPELLED TO SERVE.

EFFRY VUN OV US REACHED OUT OUR HANDS UND TOOK DER JÄGERDRAUGHT BY CHOICE—

UND VE GOT DER GOOT END OV DER DEAL, HYU BET VE DID!

VE SERVE DER HETERODYNES FREELY, OUT OF LUFF UND LOYALTY—

UND OUR HETERODYNES HAFF ALWAYS EARNED DOT! YAH!



"BUT DOT LUCREZIA—

SHE VOS ALWAYZ BAD KREZY, UND NOT IN DE FUN VAY.

TREATED EFFRYVUN LIKE DEY VOS HER SERVANTS.

TREATED DER JÄGERS LIKE LEEDLE PETZ— NO—LIKE DEY VOS PROPERTY.

VE PUT OP VIT HER ONLY BECAWZE VE IZ PATIENT.

...UND BECAWZE MASTER BILL VOS IN LUFF."



BUT DER JÄGERS IZ NOT LEEDLE PETZ!

HY AM NOT SURPRISED AT ALL TO HEAR DOT KREZY LADY IZ DER ODDER!

SHE ALWAYZ WANTED TO MAKE EFFRYBODY OBEY HER!

BUT DER JÄGERS VILL NOT BE FORCED!

VE VILL NEFFER SUBMIT TO SOCH A TING!



YAH! UND NOW SHE TINKS SHE VILL TEK CONTROL OV OUR HETERODYNE?

DOT IZ TOO MUCH!



HO HO! BUT OUR HETERODYNE FIGHTS!

SHE FIGHTS FOR HER LIFE!

IZ HIGH DRAMA—AZ GOOT AS DER OLD DAYZ!

VE VILL SUPPORT HER!



AND KEEP HER SAFE, UNTIL SHE KEN GET HER KREZY MAMMA OUT OF HER HEAD.

VOOF.

OH REALLY.

...AND HOW WILL SHE DO THAT?



HOW SHOULD VE KNOW?

SHE IS DER HETERODYNE—UND SHE LOOKS LIKE A STRONK VUN, TOO.

SHE VILL VOURK IT OUT ZUMHOW.



OR MEBBE DOT YOUNG WULFENBACH OV HYOURZ FIND A VAY, HEY?

HE IZ VUN SCHMOT GUY—

UND HE IZ ALREDDY IN LUUUURY VIT HER, YAH?



WHAT?! NO! WE CAN'T LET THEM GET TOGETHER!

IT'S THE SAME AS HANDING THE EMPIRE TO THE OTHER!



EEDIOT. DEY IZ ALREDDY TOGEDDER!

UND DOT'S DER BEST TING DOT COULD HAFF HAPPENED!

HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT?

BECAUSE HY KNOWS PIPPLE!



"TINK! DEY IZ YOUNG. DEY IZ IN LURY!"

DEY GETS DER KESTEL FEEEXED UP, AND DERE DEY ARE, NIZE UND SAFE...

DEY STARTS VIT DER KEESING—"



"AND DEN DEY REALIZE DOT HER MAMMA GUN BE RIGHT DERE DE WHOLE TIME!"



heh heh heh. DEY VILL HAFF DE ODDER OUT OF DERE IN LESS DEN A VEEK!

HYU CHUST VAIT UND SEE!



...AND THAT'S YOUR ANSWER.

YOU'RE GOING TO RISK EVERYTHING TO FOLLOW A NEW HETERODYNE,

ON THE OFF CHANCE THAT THIS—THIS YOUNG GIRL CAN DEFEAT THE OTHER—

JUST LIKE THAT.

HY TINK SHE GOTTS A GOOD CHENCE.

DE HETERODYNES HAFF FACED LOTS OV BAD TINGS,

UND DEY ALWAYS COME OUT PREDDY MOCH HOKAY.

<Sigh.>

I SEE.



WELL. THIS HAS BEEN MOST INFORMATIVE.

...AND NOW, I MUST RETURN TO MY DUTIES.

IF YOU WOULD, PLEASE ADVISE YOUR NEW MISTRESS—

THE THREAT THE OTHER PRESENTS, NOT ONLY TO HER, BUT TO EUROPA, IS VERY GRAVE.

THE BARON HAS STUDIED THE OTHER.

SHE CAN AND MUST COME TO HIM, PEACEFULLY FOR... ASSISTANCE.

...I WISH I COULD BELIEVE SHE WILL DO SO, BUT SPARKS CAN BE... WELL...

GOOD DAY, GENTLEMEN. ...AND GOOD LUCK.

DOT DID NOT GO VERRA WELL, DID IT?

NO, BRODDER, I DUN TINK IT DID.

HYU GOTTS DOT RIGHT.

MEESTER BORIS MUST KNOW DOT VE KNOW...



YEZ. EVEN IF MEEZ AGATHA DESTROYS DER ODDER IN HER HEAD—

SHE VILL NEFFER BE ABLE TO PROOF DIS TO DER BARON'S SATISFACTION.

NO! HE VILL WANT HER LOCKED OP— STUDIED.

...UND EFFENTUALLY, DESTROYED.

HE VILL NOT TAKE DE RISK.

HY MUST CONCUR.

GENERAL ZOG?

DIS IS HYOUR TIME, NOW.

DIS HY AKCEPT.

DER HAUS UF HETERODYNE MUST NOW PREPARE FOR VAR.

CASTLE HETERODYNE—

AAAH!
EVERYBODY
HOLD ON!

AGATHA!
I'VE GOT
YOU!



HEH.
LOSERS.



IS THE
FIRE OUT?



BUT *WHY* ARE THERE MECHANICAL SQUID IN THE CISTERN?

WHY IS EVERYONE SO **SURPRISED** ABOUT THAT?

WHERE ELSE WOULD WE KEEP THEM?

(Musical note symbol)

WELL, IT'S MIGHTY USEFUL, ANYWAY.

I DON'T KNOW HOW WE WOULD HAVE REACHED THIS BREAK *WITHOUT IT*.

...

AT THIS RATE, WE MIGHT ACTUALLY GET THIS SECTION REPAIRED BEFORE NIGHTFALL.

YOU'RE BEING AWFULLY QUIET.



I'VE BEEN THINKING.

REALLY.



YES. WHEN WE GET THE CASTLE FIXED, *THEN WHAT?*

WE'RE COUNTING ON IT STILL BEING FUNCTIONAL ENOUGH TO DEFEND THE TOWN. MAYBE EVEN THE *PASS*.



SO FAR, SO GOOD, BUT MY FATHER STILL THINKS SHE'S THE OTHER—

AND HE ISN'T *ENTIRELY WRONG.*



I'LL *NEVER* BE ABLE TO CONVINCE MY FATHER THAT SHE ISN'T A THREAT.

WE'RE GOING TO BE *UNDER SIEGE*—



PROBABLY FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES.

...



I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS!

I'M ACTUALLY GOING TO HAVE TO TELL YOU, JUST TO SHUT OFF YOUR DRAMA VALVE!

WHAT?



I MEAN, JUST LISTENING TO YOU IS KILLING ME ALREADY.

OH? AND YOU DON'T THINK THIS IS SERIOUS?

WE'VE NEVER FOUND A CURE EVEN FOR REVENANTS—

AND THIS IS MUCH WORSE!

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS?

AS A MATTER OF FACT, I DO.



OKAY. I KNOW... SOME THINGS ABOUT LUCREZIA'S WORK.

BETWEEN WHAT I ALREADY KNEW, AND WHAT SHE TAUGHT ME BACK IN STURMHALTEN,

PLUS, WHAT I WAS ABLE TO SEE DOWNSTAIRS IN HER LAB—



I AM FAIRLY CERTAIN I CAN FIND A WAY TO ERASE LUCREZIA'S PRESENCE FROM AGATHA'S MIND,

AND BE ABLE TO PROVIDE ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO PROVE IT— EVEN TO YOUR FATHER.



WAIT—"TAUGHT?" YOU'RE SAYING YOU STUDIED WITH LUCREZIA?





AFTER MY FATHER WAS KILLED,

I TRIED TO GET AGATHA OUT OF STURMHALTEN.

BUT--?

BUT THE GEISTERS CAUGHT HER AND INSTALLED LUCREZIA.



"THE GEISTERS DIDN'T TRUST ME. IF I HADN'T MOVED QUICKLY, THEY WOULD HAVE KILLED ME.

I SUCKED UP TO LUCREZIA AND FLATTERED HER OUTRAGEOUSLY.

IT'S WHAT SHE EXPECTS FROM PEOPLE. SHE LOVES IT."



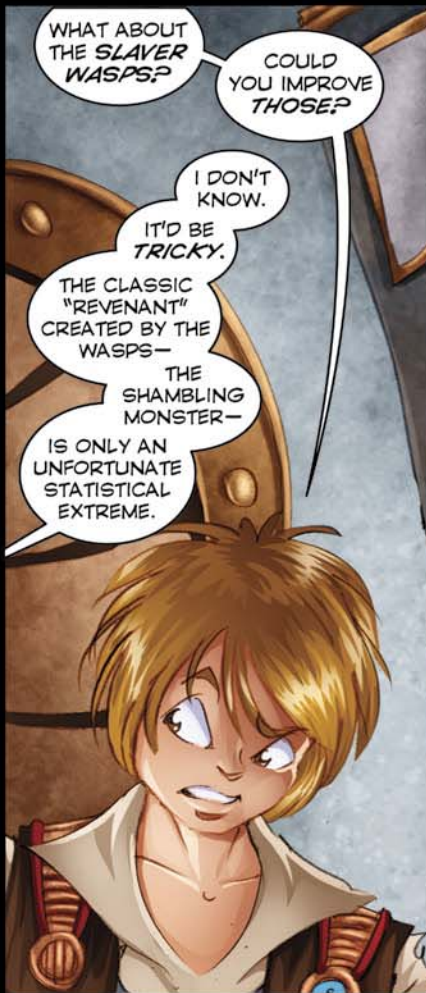
...SO SHE KEPT ME AROUND AND HAD ME ASSIST HER.

SHE TAUGHT ME ENOUGH BASIC PRINCIPLES THAT, WITH ACCESS TO HER MACHINES, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO OPERATE THEM.

THAT STUFF IN HER LAB--IT MIGHT BE DESTROYED.

CAN YOU REBUILD IT?

PROBABLY WITH IMPROVEMENTS.



WHAT ABOUT THE SLAYER WASPS?

COULD YOU IMPROVE THOSE?

I DON'T KNOW.

IT'D BE TRICKY.

THE CLASSIC "REVENANT" CREATED BY THE WASPS--

THE SHAMBLING MONSTER--

IS ONLY AN UNFORTUNATE STATISTICAL EXTREME.



...BUT IT WAS USEFUL IN THAT IT OBFUSCATED THE FACT THAT THE LARGER POPULATION REMAINED OUTWARDLY NORMAL,

JUST CONTROLLABLE.

BRILLIANT, REALLY.

MY FATHER JUST DISCOVERED THIS WHEN STURMHALTEN FELL!

YOU KNEW?!



MY FATHER... WORKED WITH LUCREZIA BEFORE SHE BECAME THE OTHER.

SO THERE ARE THINGS THAT WE--



YOU. YOUR FAMILY.

YOUR KNIGHTS OF JOVE.

YOUR STUPID "STORM KING" PLOTTING.

YOU WERE WORKING WITH THE MONGFISHES— WITH LUCREZIA,

AND YOU **KNEW** SHE WAS THE OTHER?

KNEW ABOUT SLAYER WASPS? NO WONDER STURMHALTEN WAS CRAWLING WITH REVENANTS.

I THOUGHT AT LEAST YOU WOULD STOP AT THAT—

BUT HERE YOU ARE, PRACTICALLY HER SUCCESSOR!

IS THAT HOW YOU PLAN TO "RECLAIM YOUR THRONE?"

YOU— YOU—



COULD YOU TWO PUT OFF KILLING EACH OTHER LONG ENOUGH TO MIND THE CONTROLS?

UH, WELL, BUT—

HELP.

RIGHT.

SORRY.

I'M GOING TO SEE TO IT THAT YOU ARE **PUBLICLY FLOGGED FOR A WEEK BEFORE YOUR EXECUTION.**

FINE.

THAT'S JUST WHAT I'D EXPECT FROM A DESPOT'S SPOILED BRAT.

AFTER ALL, IT DOESN'T MATTER THAT IT WAS MY FATHER AND HIS FRIENDS WHO DID ALL THAT.

I WAS WHAT? THREE, MAYBE?

I'M NOT SAYING THAT SHE ISN'T A TERRIFYING LUNATIC—

IT'S SIMPLY THAT I CAN, AS A SCIENTIST, APPRECIATE THE ELEGANCE OF HER DESIGNS.

WELL NO.

NO, OF COURSE NOT!

IT SHOULDN'T HAPPEN TO... WELL, TO ANYBODY.

TRUE...AND I GUESS EVEN YOU WOULDN'T WANT THAT TO HAPPEN TO AGATHA.

UH—

THE STREETS OF
MECHANICSBURG—



—SO EVEN
THOUGH THE
BARON HAS THE
CITY SEALED,
THE SMUGGLER'S
GUILD HAS BEGUN
BRINGING IN ENOUGH
FOOD TO LAST SIX
MONTHS.

...THAS
GOOD.

THEY SAID WE
COULD DISCUSS
TERMS *LATER*.

...THAS
BAD.

I AGREE.
SO I DEMANDED
A BULK DISCOUNT OF
AN ADDITIONAL 20%
OFF OR THEY COULD
DISCUSS TERMS
LATER WITH THE
JÄGERS.



THAS...
WAIT. IS
THAT
GOOD?

WELL, I
ADMIT, IT
WASN'T VERY
NICE.

I ALSO TOLD
THEM WE'D BEEN
APPROACHED BY THE
WULFENBACH DARK
FLEET,
SO THEY
TOOK IT.

—THOUGHT THE
DARK FLEET WAS A...
WHACHACALLIT...
RUMOR.

OH, YES, BUT
IT'S ONE
THEY'VE *HEARD*.



WHO ARE
YOU?

OH, NOT
THIS
AGAIN.

I AM THE
PERSON WHO
IS PUTTING
YOU TO BED.

BUT—

FOR THE
FIRST TIME IN
DAYS.

BUT—



BECAUSE
YOU'VE
ALREADY DONE
EVERYTHING YOU
POSSIBLY
CAN—

AND YOU
NEED TO *SLEEP*
NOW,
OR YOU WILL
BE OF NO USE
WHATSOEVER TO
THIS TOWN WHEN
THE *ATTACK*
COMES!

BUT I—
WAIT.
STOP.



THAT'S MY
HOUSE.

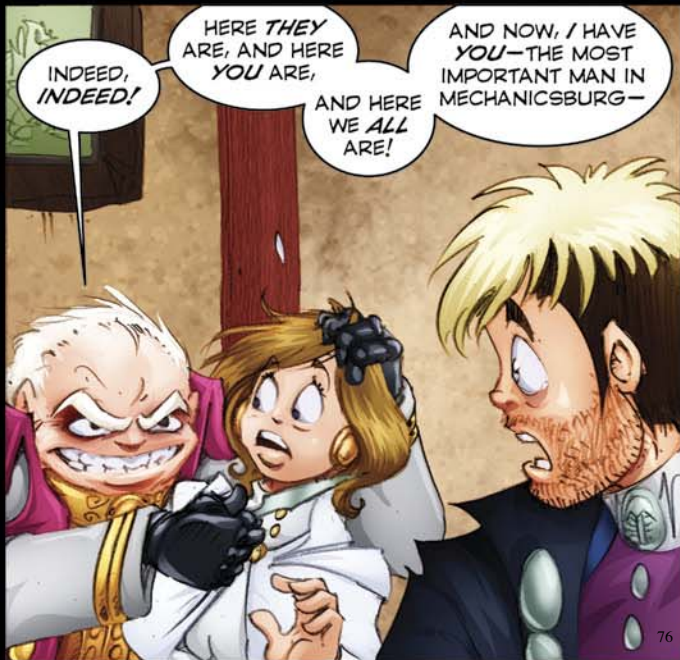
I
KNOW.

LOOK!



THE DOOR'S
BEEN
BROKEN.

SOMETHING'S
WRONG.





THE DOOM BELL?

BIG BELL... MIDDLE OF TOWN...

OH SURELY YOU'VE SEEN IT?



OF COURSE I'VE—

WHAT DO YOU WANT?!

WHY, I WANT YOU TO DO YOUR JOB, SIR!

I WANT YOU TO RING THE DOOM BELL!



MY JOB—

THIS IS YOUR FAMILY'S JOB, IS IT NOT?

A NICE, SOFT PLACE, SIR, YES?!

LIVE ON THE PAYROLL OF THE TOWN, BUT NEVER DO THE WORK?

tsk. NO, THAT WILL NEVER DO.

I WILL HAVE YOU RING THAT BELL.



BUT...BUT WHY?!

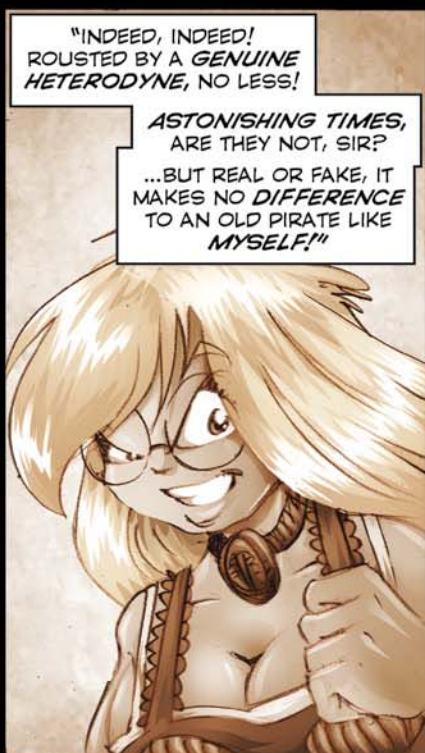
YOU'RE OUBLENMACH, RIGHT?

ONE OF THE MEN WHO BROUGHT IN THAT FALSE HETERODYNE GIRL!

YOUR PLAN IS RUINED!

YOUR "HETERODYNE" WAS SEVERELY INJURED WHILE FLEEING THE CASTLE!

SHE'S UNDER HEAVY GUARD IN THE GREAT HOSPITAL!



"INDEED, INDEED! ROUSTED BY A GENUINE HETERODYNE, NO LESS!

ASTONISHING TIMES, ARE THEY NOT, SIR? ...BUT REAL OR FAKE, IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE TO AN OLD PIRATE LIKE MYSELF!"



HOW—BUT YOUR FAKE HETERODYNE! YOUR PLAN!

AHAHAHA! ...AND WHAT A GLORIOUS PLAN IT WAS!

A MAGNIFICENT EDIFICE OF DREAMS AND IRON—

AND THOSE ARISTOCRATIC FOOLS DID LOVE IT SO!



BUT I AM A LESSER MAN, ALAS—

AND I WAS SIMPLY IN IT FOR THE TREASURE!



TREASURE...

YOU'RE AFTER THE *TREASURE OF THE HETERODYNES?*

ARE YOU *SERIOUS?!*



OH, I KNOW, I KNOW!

"THE FABLED TREASURE, ACCUMULATED BY GENERATIONS OF BRIGANDS TOO MAD TO ACTUALLY PAY FOR ANYTHING."

ABSURD, YES?



"IT'S A *FAIRY STORY* TREASURE HUNTERS HAVE TOLD EACH OTHER FOR A *HUNDRED YEARS!*"

RIGHT DOWN TO THE *LOYAL GUARDIAN*, WHO WOULD RATHER *DIE* THAN BETRAY HIS MASTERS."



MORE LEVEL HEADS, OF COURSE, KNOW THAT THERE IS NO TREASURE.

A CASTLE, A TOWN, A *MONSTROUS FIGHTING HORDE*—

ALL THESE MUST BE MAINTAINED—PAID—*FED*—

AND NO DOUBT THE OLD SENESCHALS, AT LEAST, WERE *PRACTICAL MEN*.



"...AND THE STORY THAT SAYS THE *MAIN VAULT* ONLY OPENS WHEN THE *DOOM BELL* RINGS—

SURELY IT IS NOTHING BUT A *FANCIFUL EMBROIDERY* ON A *DREAMER'S TALE!*"



BUT STILL...I THINK WE SHALL RING IT *ANYWAY*.

YES?!

eep!



YOU DO REALIZE THAT THE BELL IS ONLY TO BE RUNG AT THE HETERODYNE'S COMMAND?

AH, YES, BUT THERE IS A HETERODYNE, ISN'T THERE?

YES, GENTLEMEN, I BELIEVE THE BELL SHOULD RING!

WHY, TRADITION PRACTICALLY DEMANDS IT!

NO DOUBT, A SMALL EXCESS OF ENTHUSIASM ON YOUR PART WILL BE SEEN AS QUITE FORGIVABLE.



NO! NOT YET! THE BELL CAN'T RING UNTIL THE CASTLE ACCEPTS HER!

IT'S TRUE. WE CAN'T JUST—



AH, WHAT IS THIS? IT SEEMS THERE IS A GRAIN OF TRUTH TO THE STORY!

THE LOYAL GUARDIANS, YES?

WHAT ELSE IS TRUE, I WONDER?

AH, CURSE THIS INSATIABLE CURIOSITY OF MINE! heh heh.



WOULD YOU TRULY SACRIFICE YOUR LIVES?

QUITE POSSIBLY, QUITE POSSIBLY. YOU ARE NOBLE MEN, YES?

...BUT, AS I SAID BEFORE, I AM MADE OF LESSER STUFF.



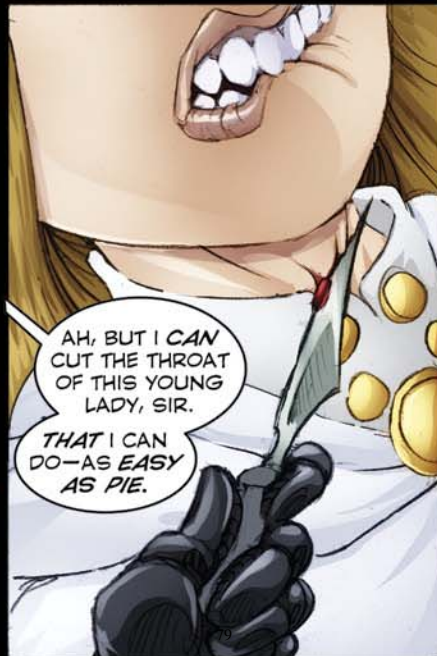
AS YOU SEE—I HAVE NO SCRUPLES ABOUT HITTING A WOMAN—

EVEN YOUR DEAR OLD MOTHER...

AND I'LL DO IT AGAIN, IF I MUST—

BUT I MUST ADMIT, SIR, MY HEART WOULDN'T BE IN IT.

MOTHERHOOD, AND ALL THAT—



AH, BUT I CAN CUT THE THROAT OF THIS YOUNG LADY, SIR.

THAT I CAN DO—AS EASY AS PIE.



...GRANDFATHER—

WHERE ARE THE KEYS TO THE BELL TOWER?



BUT—

AGATHA IS THE HETERODYNE.

YOU KNOW IT. I KNOW IT!

I SHOULD HAVE REPAIRED THE BELL DAYS AGO!



REPAIR—? TALK FAST, SIR.

ER, YES... PLEASE DO...



DO YOU THINK YOU'RE THE FIRST TO HEAR OF THE TREASURE?

THE HUNDRETH?

"RING THE BELL AND GOLD WILL FALL OUT OF THE SKY!"

MINSTRELS HAVE BEEN BLEATING THAT DRIVEL FOR CENTURIES!



HAVE YOU SEEN THE BELL?

SURELY YOU'VE NOTICED THAT THE STRIKER HAS NO HAMMER?!



"WE HAD A STEADY STREAM OF TREASURE HUNTERS FOR YEARS AFTER THE HETERODYNES VANISHED.

BEFORE THE BARON TOOK OVER, WE HAD TO DEAL WITH THEM OURSELVES—"



SO WE DISABLED THE BELL.

REMOVED THE HAMMER. IT CAN'T RING.

—BUT AS A LOYAL SERVANT, YOU WILL BE PREPARED FOR YOUR MASTER'S RETURN—YES?

DO NOT EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE THAT YOU CANNOT REPAIR IT EASILY, IF YOU SO CHOOSE!



OF COURSE I CAN.

THE HAMMER IS HANGING IN A BAR.



BACK IN CASTLE HETERODYNE—

THERE. NOW TRY IT!

AHHH—YES!

YESSSS! I AM ONCE AGAIN IN CONTROL OF THIS AREA!

WELL DONE, MISTRESS!

AH-I... OH. THAT... LITTLE INCIDENT BACK IN THE KITCHEN... SO SORRY ABOUT THAT... (HEH HEH.)



THAT'S OKAY, BUT—HOW ARE YOU? DID THAT FIRE DO MUCH DAMAGE?

OH.

YES... I SEE...



IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE LIKE THAT.

PART OF MY HEATING SYSTEM, YOU KNOW.



ALL THIS? TO HEAT THE PLACE?

IT'S A VENT OF COALBED METHANE YOUR ANCESTORS HARNESSSED.

HEH. TOLD YOU SO.

YOU WERE GUESSING!

I'M TOLD SOME OF THE TOWERS CAN GET QUITE CHILLY IN THE WINTER.



WELL, THANKS FOR THE LOVELY SURPRISE BATH, THEN.

... AND MY ANCESTORS...

DID THEY EVER BUILD ANYTHING SMALL?

HMM... WELL, THE MASTER'S BEDROOM ONLY SLEEPS SIX...

I AM SO SORRY I ASKED.



A LITTLE LATER—

WELL, SHE'S STILL GOT A FEW THINGS TO FINISH UP, AND THEN WE MOVE ON.

...WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU NOW?

I'M THINKING.

YOU? NO WAY.

SHUT UP. I AM UNHAPPY AND WISH TO BROOD IN PEACE.



WAIT—I BET I CAN GUESS WHAT'S BUGGING YOU.

BECAUSE AGATHA IS INVOLVED, IT'S FINALLY HIT YOU THAT— JUST *MAYBE*—

USING THE OTHER'S TECH TO CONTROL PEOPLE MIGHT BE CONSIDERED, I DON'T KNOW, KIND OF *WRONG*?

LOOK, IT'S NOT THAT I— JUST LEAVE ME ALONE, OKAY?



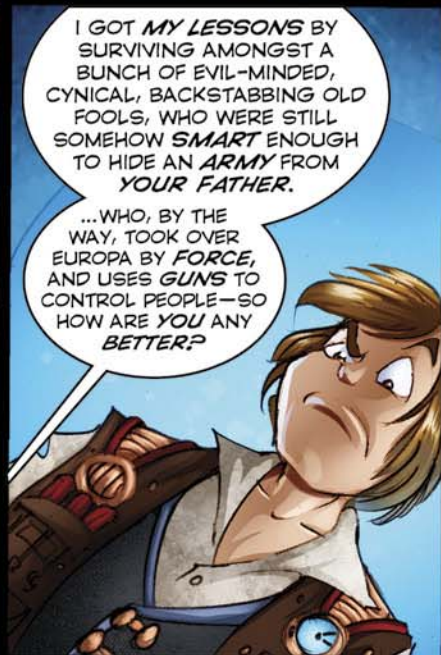
SURE. YOU'RE JUST NOW REALIZING THAT YOU'RE A SLIMY TOAD WHO FAILED "ETHICS OF GOVERNMENT 101," RIGHT?



YEAH, WELL, I DIDN'T TAKE THAT CLASS.

I DIDN'T TAKE ANY OF THEM.

I WAS THROWN OFF YOUR HIGH AND MIGHTY AIRSHIP.



I GOT MY LESSONS BY SURVIVING AMONGST A BUNCH OF EVIL-MINDED, CYNICAL, BACKSTABBING OLD FOOLS, WHO WERE STILL SOMEHOW SMART ENOUGH TO HIDE AN ARMY FROM YOUR FATHER.

...WHO, BY THE WAY, TOOK OVER EUROPA BY FORCE, AND USES GUNS TO CONTROL PEOPLE—SO HOW ARE YOU ANY BETTER?



...AND, YOU KNOW, EVEN AT A DISTANCE, I STILL LEARNED A LOT FROM YOUR FATHER:

IF SOMEONE CAN'T HANDLE AN UNPLEASANT TRUTH?

LIE TO THEM.

IF SOMEONE WON'T LISTEN TO REASON?

MAKE THEM.

IF PEOPLE DON'T CHOOSE TO LIVE PEACEABLY?

DON'T GIVE THEM A CHOICE.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RULES—



WHAT IS THIS?!

I LEAVE TO GET YOU GUYS SOMETHING TO EAT, AND YOU SET THE PLACE ON FIRE AGAIN?!



THIS IS SOMEHOW YOUR FAULT, ISN'T IT?

NO!

RRGH!

WHONG!



—CHANGE THE GAME.



I'M SORRY, VIOLETTA—

AS MY DAYS OF NEEDING THE FAMILY TO UNDERESTIMATE ME APPEAR TO BE OVER—

I WILL NO LONGER REQUIRE YOUR ASSISTANCE IN THAT PARTICULAR CHARADE.

YOU—



WHA—YOU'RE IMPLYING THAT, ALL THIS TIME, YOU'VE BEEN *LETTING* ME BEAT ON YOU?

YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO FIND SOMEONE ELSE TO VENT YOUR FRUSTRATION ON.

MAYBE THAT VON ZINZER FELLOW—?



AAAH! SHUT UP!

THERE'S NO WAY I'LL EVER BELIEVE YOU'RE ANYTHING BUT A WORTHLESS FOOL!



UH—



Poit!

WELL, YES, THAT WAS THE IDEA, NOW WASN'T IT?



YOU...AND YOUR STUPID GAMES...

THOSE "STUPID GAMES," DEAR COUSIN, ARE WHAT KEPT US ALIVE.



...BUT ENOUGH OF THAT.

I'M STARTING TO THINK SOMEONE HERE IS PLAYING HIS OWN GAME.



YOU'RE REALLY SMART.

I KNOW THIS.

YOU GOT ALL THAT INFORMATION OUT OF ME JUST NOW, SIMPLY BY MOONING AROUND LIKE A DRUNKEN POET.

DON'T THINK I DIDN'T NOTICE.



I JUST WISH I'D NOTICED SOONER.

BETWEEN THAT, AND FINDING OUT WHO YOU REALLY ARE—

I'M GUESSING YOU MIGHT BE JUST AS MUCH OF A SNEAKY, MANIPULATIVE WEASEL AS ME.

PROBABLY EVEN FOR A LOT OF THE SAME REASONS.

FINE. GOOD. YOU'RE MORE USE SMART.



...BUT IF— WHATEVER GAME YOU'RE PLAYING—IT TURNS OUT THAT YOU'RE LYING ABOUT BEING HERE TO HELP AGATHA—

THEN WE'LL HAVE TO SEE IF YOU CAN BE AS DEADLY AS ME!



...AND ACROSS THE ROOM—

THERE WAS A BUNCH OF STUFF IN THE SUPPLY CLOSETS—YOU'RE SURE THIS IS GOOD?

IT'S PERFECT. BUT... YOU'RE SAYING TARVEK'S BEEN PLAYING THE FOOL—

I CAN'T REALLY SAY I'VE SEEN IT...

HUH. WELL, NOT AROUND YOU SO MUCH.

AH—BUT AROUND HIS FAMILY? I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT.

OH YEAH, BUT NOW WE WON'T KNOW WHAT EITHER OF THEM ARE UP TO!

I MEAN, WHAT ABOUT WULFENBACH?

IF HE'S SO MUCH SMARTER THAN HE LETS ON, WHAT'S HE REALLY IN HERE FOR?

hm. PROBABLY JUST WHAT HE SAYS.

...BUT SINCE HE'S THE ONE WHO HAS BEEN PLAYING THE IDIOT AROUND ME, I CAN'T BE SURE.



hee. YOU WEREN'T PLAYING THE IDIOT WITH HER, WERE YOU?

SHUT UP!



I AM HERE TO HELP HER—
BUT IT'S LIKE I DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO MAKE MYSELF LOOK BAD AROUND HER.
I MUST HAVE INHERITED MY FATHER'S NATURAL ABILITY TO INFURIATE WOMEN!



BUT YOU—ALL THAT STUFF YOU TOLD ME ABOUT YOUR WORK WITH LUCREZIA?
I WASN'T ACTUALLY FISHING FOR THAT—YOU SPILLED THAT ALL BY YOURSELF.
MAYBE YOU'RE NOT AT YOUR BEST AT THE MOMENT EITHER, HAS THAT OCCURRED TO YOU?



STILL, YOU'RE RIGHT—
I DO PLAY GAMES.
I'M GOOD AT THEM.
DEFINITELY BETTER THAN YOU.
...IF ONLY BECAUSE I DON'T GO ON ABOUT THEM TO MY ENEMIES.



I AM GILGAMESH WULFENBACH—HEIR TO THE EMPIRE AND DEFENDER OF THE PAX TRANSYLVANIA—
AND I WILL CRUSH THIS WHOLE KNIGHTS OF JOVE/STORM KING MESS OF YOURS.



OOH, DON'T WORRY—
I'LL LET YOU ESCAPE. YOU CAN GO SKULKING AROUND WITH YOUR LITTLE PLANS—
AFTER ALL, I'LL ALWAYS NEED SOMEONE TO TAKE THE BLAME.



HEY! ARE YOU GUYS READY?

OH, I'M READY.
ARE YOU READY?
I AM SO READY.

THE GREAT HOSPITAL AT MECHANICSBURG—

...AND *THUS*, THE EVIL PRINCESS WAS DEFEATED, AND THE WIZARD WAS SAVED!



THANK YOU SO MUCH! IT'S ALWAYS BEST IF THEY CAN SLEEP DRUG-FREE!

DOCTOR SUN SAID, IF YOU'D LIKE A RESIDENCY—



THANKS. GOTTA GO.

HEY! IS THAT THE BORING GUY?

OH, YES.

—GOT A JOB FOR HIM!



SO THIS IS FAME.

I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER BEEN IN THIS PART OF THE HOSPITAL BEFORE.



DON'T ACT STUPID, AND WE'LL LET YOU LEAVE IT.

UM... CLEAN, I GUESS...

YEAH, YEAH.

NOW, HE NEVER SLEEPS MUCH ANYWAY,



AK! PFUI!

AND HE'S IN A FUNNY MOOD—

SO DO THE BEST YOU CAN, OR I'LL SLICE YOUR LIVER OUT.

WHAT? WAIT—WHO IS THIS—?

THE *BARON*. YOU FOOL. MAKE HIM GET SOME SLEEP.



I...I'M PRETTY SURE HE CAN'T REALLY DO THAT.

...SO GET IN THERE!

DUPREE, IF YOU COME IN HERE, I WILL KILL YOU—

WITH THE POWER OF MY MIND.







YES...NOW. AS TO WHY YOU ARE HERE.

AH, A STORY! OF COURSE!

SO, THIS DUCK WALKS INTO A BAR—

WAIT—



I HAD SOMETHING ELSE IN MIND.

A STORY OF THE STORM KING?



OH, THE ONE ABOUT HOW THE MUSES WERE **STOLEN**—

AND HE WON THEM BACK IN A PIE-EATING CONTEST?

WHAT? NO—

NO, OF COURSE NOT, THAT'S FOR KIDS, REALLY...

KIDS AND THE BAKER'S GUILD...



er—YOU CAN'T MEAN THE ONE WHERE HE SEDUCES THE THOUSAND WIVES OF THE MOON,

'CAUSE THAT'S HARVEST FESTIVAL STUFF.

I KNOW WE'RE BOTH MEN OF THE WORLD, BUT—

CERTAINLY NOT!

WHEW.



YOU—YOU DON'T WANT THE ONE ABOUT HOW HE WAS BROUGHT DOWN BY THE HETERODYNE GIRL?

HEH. NO.

GOOD! I COULD GET IN REAL TROUBLE TELLING THAT ONE IN THIS TOWN!



I'LL BET.

NO. DO YOU KNOW THE STORY OF HOW HE **BECAME KING**?

OF COURSE! THE QUEEN OF THE MINES AND THE LAMP THAT SUMMONED THE NIGHT!

GOOD SUMMER SOLSTICE STORY.

NO, NOT THAT ONE. THE OTHER ONE.



AH, YES. THE OTHER ONE.

THE OTHER ONE...

HUH. WHY I HAVEN'T TOLD THAT ONE IN...

UH...



WELL, NEVER.

I DON'T KNOW ANOTHER ONE.

REALLY? YOU SHOULD.

LET ME TELL IT TO YOU.

"IN THOSE DAYS, THERE WAS NO SHORTAGE OF *EVIL WIZARDS*—AND THE WORST OF THEM ALL WAS PRINCE CLEMETHIOUS, PATRIARCH OF THE DREADED *HETERODYNES*—A FAMILY OF MONSTERS SO FEARSOME, THEY WERE ONLY SPOKEN OF IN *WHISPERS*.

CLEMETHIOUS WAS KNOWN FOR HIS WICKED SENSE OF HUMOR. IT WAS SAID THAT HE *ALWAYS SMILED*—EVEN AS HE SLEPT—FOR HE DREAMT EACH NIGHT OF NEW HORRORS TO UNLEASH UPON HIS HAPLESS ENEMIES."

"AFTER YEARS OF VILLAINY, HE WAS CHALLENGED BY A GOOD AND NOBLE KING, WHO DROVE THE HETERODYNES BACK TO THEIR DARK LAIR.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, CLEMETHIOUS DID NOT SMILE, FOR HE WAS DEAD AT LAST."



"...BUT THE ELDEST DAUGHTER OF CLEMETHIOUS WAS A *WITCH*."



"BY FORGOTTEN MAGICS AND ARCANESCIENCE, SHE CURSED THE GOOD KING—AND HE BECAME A GIGANTIC *MADWOLF*."

"LIGHTNING LEAPT FROM HIS JAWS, AND HE RAN WILD—DESPOILING THE COUNTRYSIDE AS THE WITCH RODE UPON HIS BACK—LAUGHING IN TRIUMPH AT HER REVENGE."



"IN THEIR WAKE, THE *NEW HETERODYNE* LED HIS REAVERS TO BATTLE—AND HE DID NOT SMILE—FOR HE WAS GRADOK THE DOUR—LATER KNOWN AS THE "*GOOD HETERODYNE*."

"THINGS WERE WORSE THAN EVER, AND THE PEOPLE DESPAIRED."

"THE KING'S CASTLE BECAME A RUIN—INHABITED ONLY BY MONSTERS."

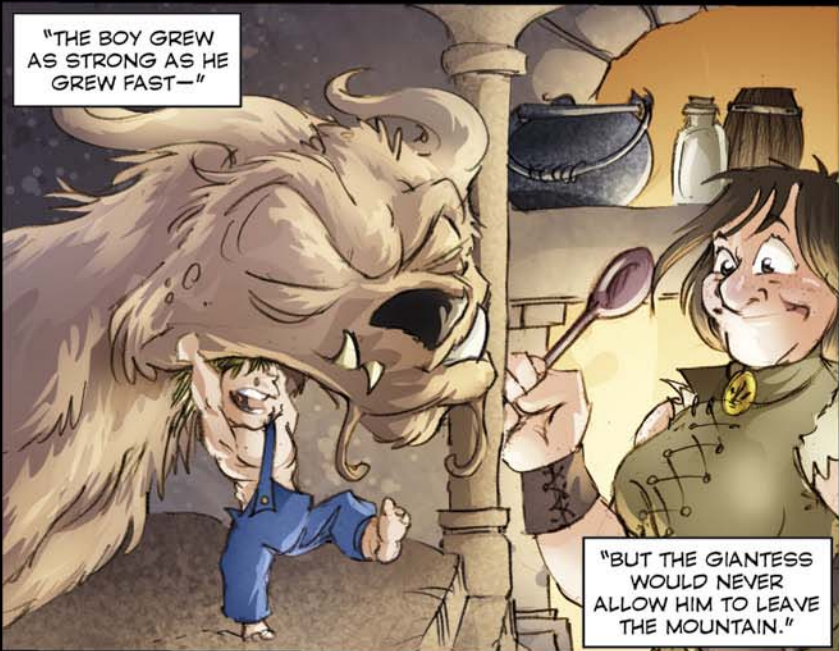


"...BUT THE KING'S YOUNG SON HAD A NURSE, WHO WAS A GIANTESSE."



"SHE TOOK HIM FAR AWAY, TO A CAVE HIGH IN THE MOUNTAINS, AND RAISED HIM IN SECRET."

"THE BOY GREW AS STRONG AS HE GREW FAST—"



"ONLY WHEN HE COULD TAKE THE COPPER PIN FROM HER HAIR, SAID THE GIANTESSE, WOULD HE BE READY TO VENTURE INTO THE WORLD OF MEN."



"BUT THE GIANTESSE WOULD NEVER ALLOW HIM TO LEAVE THE MOUNTAIN."



"SO THE BOY TRIED..."



"AND TRIED..."



"AND THEN ONE DAY, HE REALIZED THAT HE DIDN'T HAVE TO BE STRONG ENOUGH, HE JUST HAD TO BE SMART ENOUGH."

"TAKING THE HAIRPIN AS A SWORD, THE PRINCE LEFT TO SEEK HIS FORTUNE."



"MEANWHILE, THE KINGDOM BOWED BEFORE THE WITCH AND HER TERRIBLE WOLF."



"...BUT THE WITCH HAD GROWN WEARY OF HER GAMES—"



"FOR ALTHOUGH THE WITCH CONTROLLED THE WOLF—"

THE PEOPLE STILL REMEMBERED THAT IT WAS THE WOLF WHO WAS THEIR KING."



"THE CROWN STAYED TIGHTLY FIXED TO THE WOLF'S HEAD. TRY THOUGH SHE MIGHT, THE WITCH COULD NOT REMOVE IT."



"SHE COULD ONLY RULE THROUGH HIM, AND THE IDEA ATE AWAY AT HER, DRIVING HER MAD WITH ENVY."



"SEEING THIS, THE PRINCE DISGUISED HIMSELF AS A FORTUNE-TELLER, AND GAINED AN AUDIENCE WITH THE WITCH."



"HE CONVINCED HER THAT THE CROWN COULD BE REMOVED, BUT ONLY BY THE MAGIC OF THE COPPER SWORD."

"AND THE KINGDOM WAS SOON FREE—"



"FOR NEITHER WITCH NOR WOLF WAS EVER SEEN AGAIN."

"THE PRINCE TOOK THE THRONE AND RULED THE KINGDOM WISELY AND WELL FOR THE REST OF HIS DAYS."





THE END.

YOU REALLY HAVEN'T HEARD THAT ONE BEFORE?



UM... NO.

IT'S GOT NO BASIS IN ACTUAL HISTORY, AND IT DOESN'T EVEN FIT IN WITH ANY OF THE OTHER STORIES...

NO. I'VE NEVER EVEN HEARD ONE LIKE THAT BEFORE.

NOT ABOUT THE *STORM KING*.

AMAZING. AND YOU'RE SUCH A *COLLECTOR*, TOO.

YOU... YOU KNOW MY WORK?

"TALES OF THE DESPOT—THE PORTRAYAL OF THE BARON IN TAVERN JOKES AND SONGS." THAT WAS YOURS, YES?



erk! A...A *MINOR* WORK, HERR BARON, OF NO REAL IMPORTANCE...I WAS DRINKING—

ANYWAY, I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO REMEMBER THE NAME OF THAT BOOK—

IT'S GONE COMPLETELY OUT OF MY HEAD...



THE...THE *BOOK*?

OH, YES. IT WAS A LARGE ONE, AND VERY OLD...ALL STORIES OF THE *STORM KING*.

THEY WERE GREAT FAVORITES OF MY SON WHEN HE WAS YOUNG.

NOW, WHO WAS THE AUTHOR...? HE WAS A HUNGARIAN...

MASAT?



MASAT?! THE MASTER STORYTELLER?

BUT—ALL HIS WORK WAS *LOST!*

OH, SURELY NOT *ALL* OF IT.

WELL, NEVER MIND.

MY SON *DOES* STILL HAVE THE BOOK—

HE *HAS*—?!

OH YES. I'M CERTAIN *HE* WILL BE ABLE TO TELL ME ITS NAME.



BUT, I *MUST*—!

AH, AND I *AM* TIRED, NOW.

TELL DUPREE I SAID: "GOOD JOB."

ERK! BUT, I... AH... THANK YOU, HERR BARON.



WELL, I THOUGHT IT WAS A LOAD OF *NONSENSE*.

AH. REALLY?

WELL, IT WASN'T FOR YOU.



OH, YOU'RE IMPOSSIBLE. JUST GO TO SLEEP.

Z

MEANWHILE, AT MAMMA GKIKA'S BAR—

LADIES ARE DELICATE CREATURES WHO SHOULD NEVER BE STRUCK...

OR AWAKENED TOO EARLY IN THE MORNING...
UM—NINETY NINE...

LADIES ARE DELICATE CREATURES WHO SHOULD NEVER BE STRUCK...

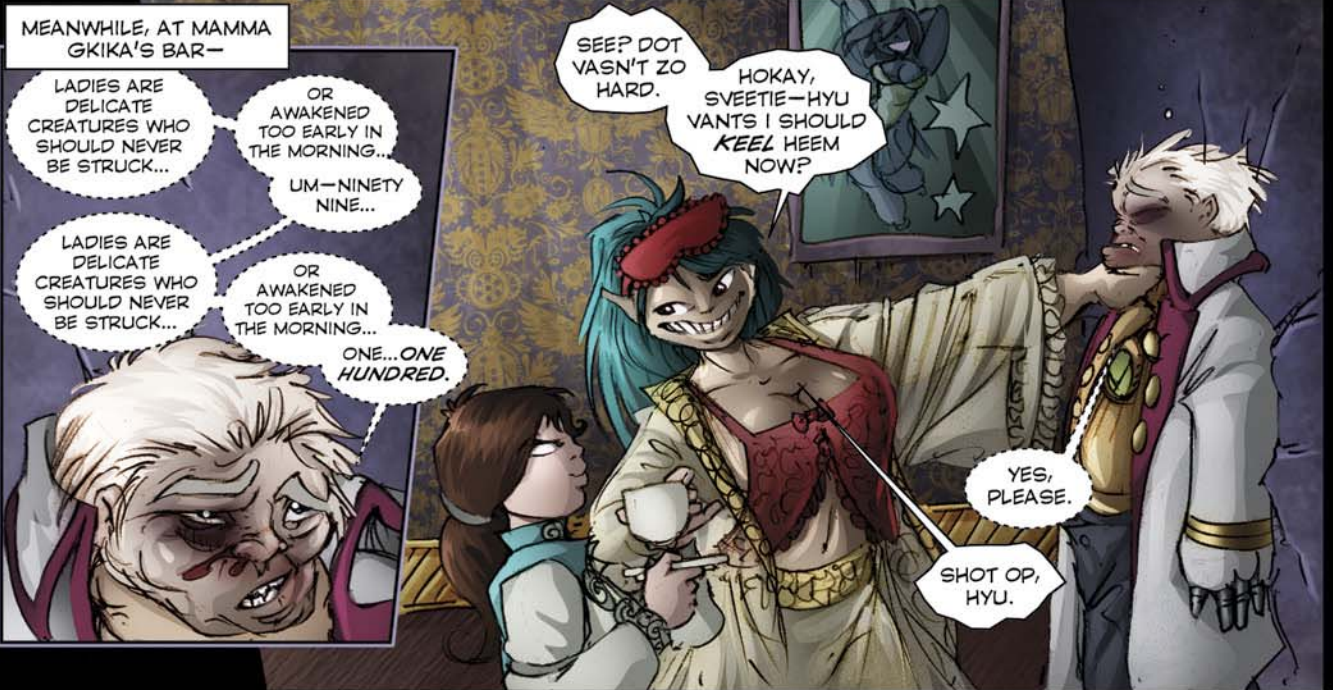
OR AWAKENED TOO EARLY IN THE MORNING...
ONE... ONE HUNDRED.

SEE? DOT VASN'T ZO HARD.

HOKAY, SVEETIE—HYU VANTS I SHOULD KEEL HEEM NOW?

YES, PLEASE.

SHOT OP, HYU.



NO. I BELIEVE HE WILL BE... **USEFUL.**

hmf. HYU TINK SO?

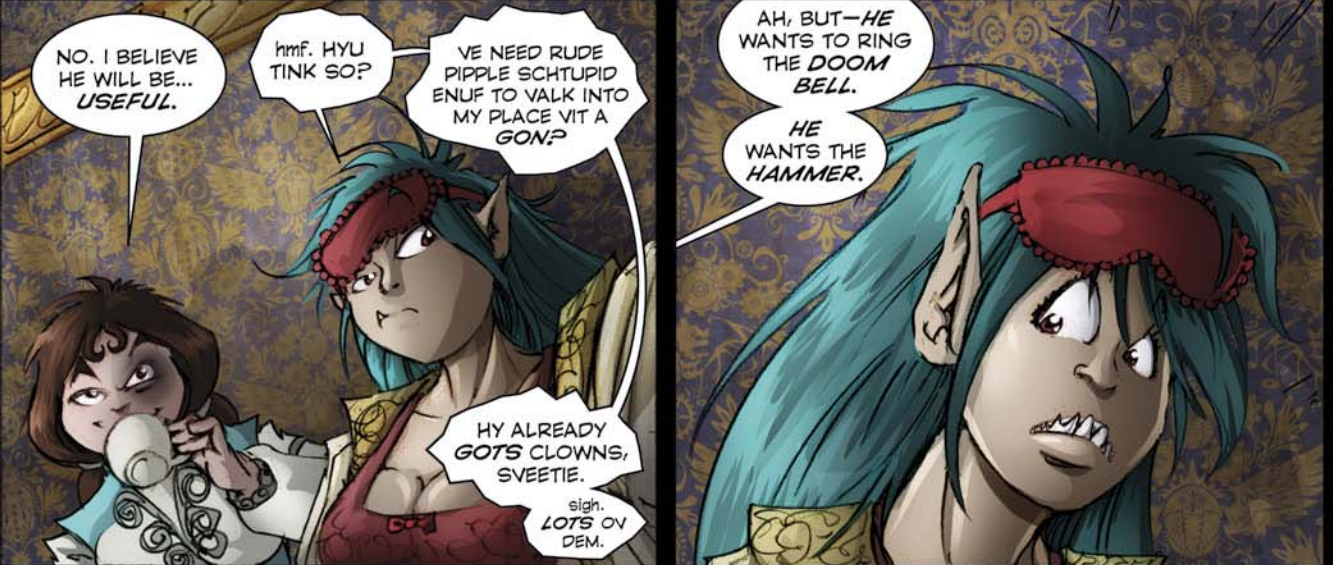
VE NEED RUDE PIPPLE SCHATUPID ENUF TO VALK INTO MY PLACE VIT A GON?

HY ALREADY GOTS CLOWNS, SVEETIE.

sigh. LOTS OV DEM.

AH, BUT—HE WANTS TO RING THE DOOM BELL.

HE WANTS THE HAMMER.



VOT?! HYU VANTS DE HAMMER?

DE HAMMER VE GUARD?

DE HAMMER VOT RINGS DE DOOM BELL?

DE BELL VOT IZ ONLY RUNG TO ANNOUNCE TO DE WORLD DOT DE HETERODYNE IZ HERE?!

...YES?



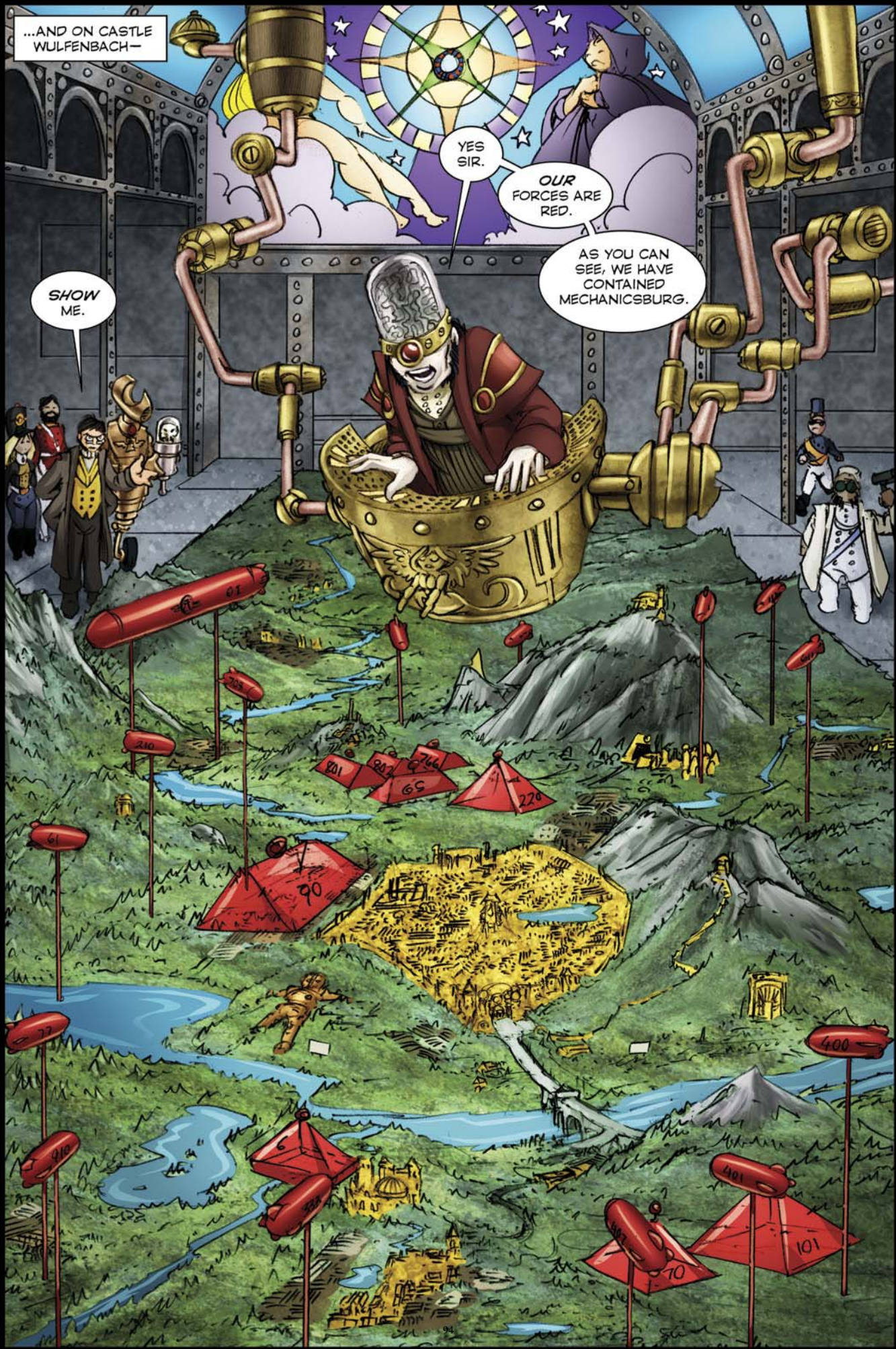
...AND ON CASTLE WULFENBACH—

SHOW ME.

YES SIR.

OUR FORCES ARE RED.

AS YOU CAN SEE, WE HAVE CONTAINED MECHANICSBURG.





...BUT, WE HAVE SEVERAL **OUTSIDE FORCES** APPROACHING. THEIR STATED GOALS ARE IRRELEVANT—

AS THEIR **ACTUAL PURPOSE** IS SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY.

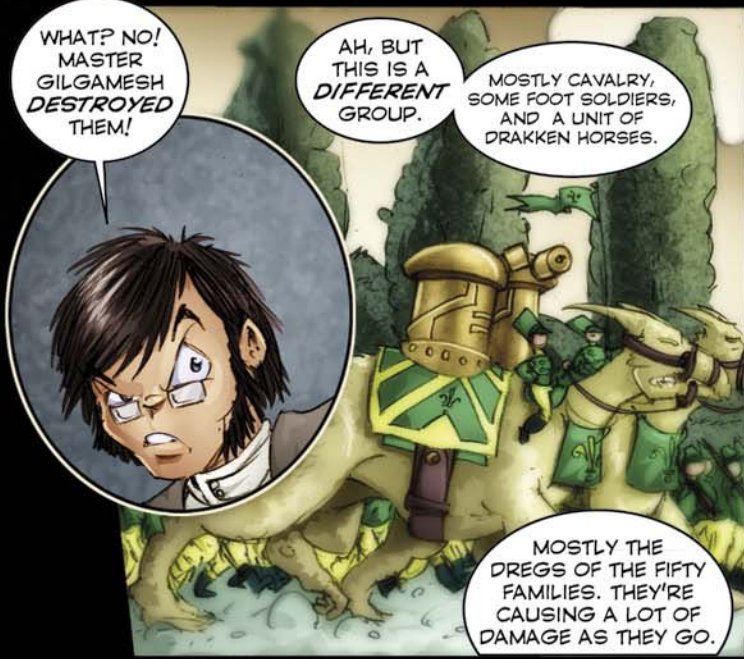


THE FIRST IS A LOOSE COALITION OF THE OLD SMATTERBURG DUCHIES, LED BY THE PHILOSOPHER KING OF THE UNIVERSITY OF AALBORG.

HE BELIEVES THAT THE BARON AND THE HETERODYNE WILL DESTROY EACH OTHER, AND IS DETERMINED TO PICK UP THE PIECES.

ABOUT TWO THOUSAND MEN, FOUR AIRSHIPS—
THEY'RE A BIT ENCUMBERED BECAUSE THEY'RE MOVING TWO SHOCK CANNONS OVERLAND.

THEN, THERE ARE THE FORCES LOYAL TO THE HOUSE OF VALOIS—



WHAT? NO! MASTER GILGAMESH DESTROYED THEM!

AH, BUT THIS IS A **DIFFERENT GROUP**.

MOSTLY CAVALRY, SOME FOOT SOLDIERS, AND A UNIT OF DRAKKEN HORSES.

MOSTLY THE DREGS OF THE FIFTY FAMILIES. THEY'RE CAUSING A LOT OF DAMAGE AS THEY GO.



THE LAST APPEARS TO BE A GENUINE POPULAR UPRISING.

BUT THEY ARE **SUSPICIOUSLY WELL-SUPPLIED**.

THEY CLAIM TO BE MARCHING TO MECHANICSBURG TO DEFEND THE HETERODYNE GIRL.

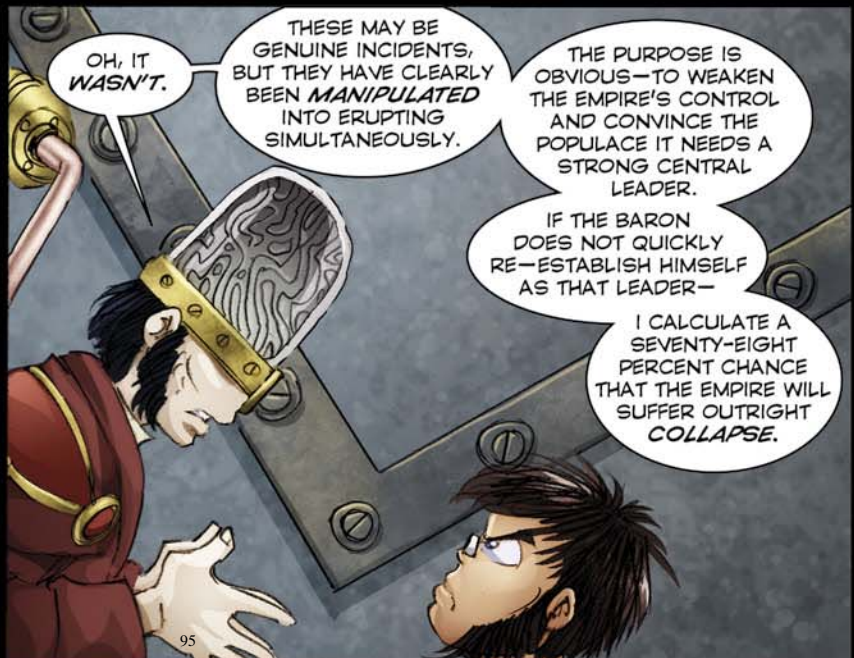
...MOST LIKELY BY KEEPING HER CAPTIVE UNTIL THEIR OWN "STORM KING" CAN TAKE OVER.



THE MAJORITY OF OUR FORCES NOT CURRENTLY HERE OR AT STURMHALTEN ARE DEALING WITH REBELLIONS, MUTINIES AND OUTBREAKS.

IT'S AS IF THE WHOLE EMPIRE WAS JUST **WAITING** FOR A REASON TO REVOLT.

I...I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS **THIS BAD**—



OH, IT **WASN'T**.

THESE MAY BE GENUINE INCIDENTS, BUT THEY HAVE CLEARLY BEEN **MANIPULATED** INTO ERUPTING SIMULTANEOUSLY.

THE PURPOSE IS OBVIOUS—TO WEAKEN THE EMPIRE'S CONTROL AND CONVINCE THE POPULACE IT NEEDS A STRONG CENTRAL LEADER.

IF THE BARON DOES NOT QUICKLY RE-ESTABLISH HIMSELF AS THAT LEADER—

I CALCULATE A SEVENTY-EIGHT PERCENT CHANCE THAT THE EMPIRE WILL SUFFER OUTRIGHT **COLLAPSE**.



THESE ARE ALL ATTACKS OF OPPORTUNITY.

AYE! THE JACKALS GATHER WHILE THE WOLF LIES WOUNDED!

HELLO, DOCTOR. I KNEW WE COULD COUNT ON YOU FOR HIGH DRAMA.

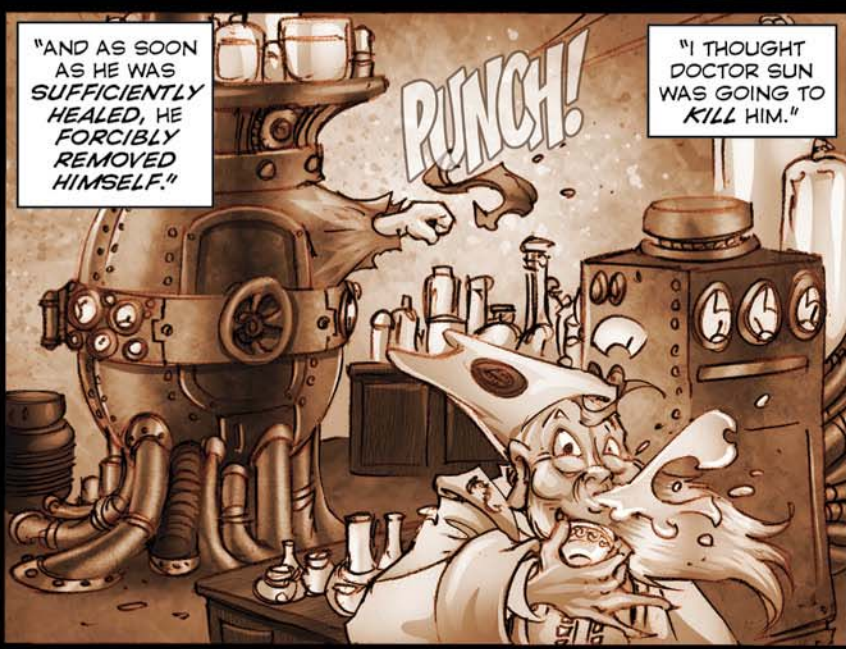
...BUT DON'T WORRY. THE BARON WILL BE BACK IN THE MORNING.



WHAT?! BUT AFTER HIS DISASTROUSLY QUIXOTIC BATTLE,

HE LIES INSENSATE—AT DEATH'S DOOR—IN THE HEALING ENGINE, YES?

WELL, HE WAS PLACED THERE...



"AND AS SOON AS HE WAS SUFFICIENTLY HEALED, HE FORCIBLY REMOVED HIMSELF."

"I THOUGHT DOCTOR SUN WAS GOING TO KILL HIM."



"EVENTUALLY, SUN AND PRINCESS ANEVKA MANAGED TO CALM HIM DOWN.

HE STILL HAS SOME MINOR WOUNDS, BUT HE WILL BE ABLE TO RESUME COMMAND."

PRIN—? OH, THAT'S THE CLANK THAT THINKS IT'S ANEVKA STURMVORAU, YES?

AN ABOMINATION OF SCIENCE THAT CURDLES THE MILK OF ALL HONEST MEN!

WELL, AREN'T WE ALL?

OH, I SAY, SIR!

BUT SHE'S STRONG, SHE CAN'T BE WASPED, SHE DOESN'T SLEEP— PLUS, HE LISTENS TO HER. AND THAT'S AN ABOMINATION WE CAN USE.





WHAT WAS THAT?!

NOT GOOD!

WE'RE UNDER ATTACK, OF COURSE.

I WAS AFRAID OF THIS.



UNDER ATTACK?!

PERFIDY! WHO WOULD DARE?!

WELL, ONLY EVERY SPARK WITHIN FIVE HUNDRED KILOMETERS.

WHAT I WANT TO KNOW IS HOW.

I'VE HAD ALL OUR DEFENSES ARMED AND READY FOR— AAH!

THUMP

SCREE!

WAS... WAS THAT A FLYING MONKEY?

I THOUGHT THEY WERE SMALLER THAN THAT?

GIANT MONKEY!

PROFESSOR SENEAR. I THOUGHT HE'D BEEN AWFULLY QUIET LATELY.



...BUT NONE OF THE ARMIES IS CLOSE ENOUGH—

THESE AREN'T THE ARMIES— THEY'RE SPARKS! BLASTED LUNATIC, SCHEMING, UNPREDICTABLE SPARKS!

THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF WAYS FOR THEM TO SNEAK—

SIR!

MECHANICSBURG IS UNDER ATTACK!

SPOTTERS REPORT CLANKS, UNKNOWN AIRSHIPS AND ARTILLERY.

THE GREAT HOSPITAL HAS TAKEN A DIRECT HIT!

THE BARON!

...BUT HOW THE DEVIL COULD YOU LOSE HIM?!

HE'S DRAGGING A HAMMER BIGGER THAN HE IS!

WELL, THE RESCUE ALARM GONGS RANG, AND—

YOU DID THE RIGHT THING, OZKER.

BESIDES... WE KNOW WHERE HE'S GOING.

NOW WE NEED TO CLEAR THE STREETS FOR THE FIREFIGHTERS!



VAN! WE'VE GOT SOME REALLY CRAZY MOLE MACHINES COMING UP IN THE HOSPITAL GROUNDS!

GOOD. THAT'LL GIVE DOCTOR LAZAR'S GOLEMS SOMETHING TO HIT.
GREGOR?

MY BOYS ARE DOING WHAT THEY CAN, BUT A LOT OF THE AUTOMATED DEFENSES ARE STILL DEAD.

WELL, KEEP TRYING, OR WE'LL ALL BE DEAD.



IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE ALMOST THERE...

UM...BUT THAT'S OKAY... TAKE YOUR TIME.

OH, RELAX. IT'S NOT *THAT* DEEP.



CASTLE! YOU'RE *ACTIVE* HERE?

OH, YES, MISTRESS.

THE DEAD AREA IS UP AHEAD.

...BUT, THEN, WHY IS THERE STILL SO MUCH DAMAGE?

I THOUGHT... YOU COULD SELF-REPAIR?



WELL, NORMALLY, *YES*-BUT RIGHT NOW, I AM... *WEAK*.

I LACK THE MECHANICAL VITAE I REQUIRE.

ALL THOSE DRAINED STORAGE DEVICES IN THE POWER ROOM.

YES. AS IT IS, IT HAS BEEN A *STRAIN* TO DO ALL I *HAVE*.



WAIT--IN *THAT* CASE, ISN'T ALL THIS JUST A HUGE WASTE OF TIME?

THE WHOLE POINT WAS FOR YOU TO *DEFEND* THE TOWN, WASN'T IT?

I WILL DO WHAT I *CAN*, CERTAINLY.

BUT I AM *CASTLE HETERODYNE*.

MY *FIRST* CHARGE IS THE SAFETY OF THE HETERODYNE FAMILY.

ALL OF EUROPA BELIEVES I HAVE *FAILED*--

AND THEY WILL NOT BELIEVE OTHERWISE UNTIL YOU ARE *RECOGNIZED*.

PUBLICLY.

BY *ME*.

...AND YOU *WILL BE*--

EVEN IF IT IS MY *FINAL* ACT.



...WELL, LET'S JUST HOPE IT DOESN'T COME TO THAT.

NOW—

HEY! IT'S ONE OF THOSE HETERODYNE GIRLS!

AH YES—I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF GATHERING SOME MINIONS FOR YOU.

THE PRISONERS!

TCH. JUST OUR LUCK—IT'S THE WRONG ONE.

YEAH, THAT'S THE ONE WE WERE S'POSED TO KILL!



BOOM!

WHOA.



DOOM!

HEY!



SQUOOOSH

EEP.



YOU DIDN'T EXPLAIN WHO I AM!

OH, DON'T WORRY. THEY'RE VERY OBEDIENT, ONCE YOU GET THEIR ATTENTION.



AH—PERHAPS WE HAVE BEEN MISINFORMED?



YES. YOU HAVE BEEN MISINFORMED.

SO LET ME SET YOU STRAIGHT.

I AM THE RIGHTFUL HETERODYNE!

YOUR PINK FAKE LEFT HERE IN BLOODY SHREDS!

-BECAUSE THIS IS MY CASTLE!

I AM THE ONE WHO KILLED IT-

I AM THE ONE WHO BROUGHT IT BACK-

AND I AM THE ONE WHO WILL RESTORE IT TO ITS FULL STRENGTH!

YOU ARE GOING TO HELP ME-

OR YOU'LL FEEL THAT FULL STRENGTH ON THE BACKS OF YOUR NECKS!

DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

BUT... WON'T WULFENBACH-

YES, MISTRESS.

YES, MISTRESS.

YES, MISTRESS.



I AM GILGAMESH WULFENBACH!

THE HOUSE OF WULFENBACH WILL HONOR ITS WORD-

WHEN THE CASTLE IS REPAIRED, YOU ARE ALL FREE TO LEAVE!

...AND I'LL MAKE SURE HE KEEPS THAT PROMISE!

...AND WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?



WHAT ARE YOU-

GO AHEAD. TELL THEM WHO I AM.

YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS.

OH, COME ON. IT'LL IMPRESS THEM.



(sigh.) THIS IS PRINCE TARVEK STURMVORAUSS-

HEIR TO THE THRONE OF THE STORM KING,

OOOOOH!

AND A LOYAL VASSAL OF THE HOUSE OF WULFENBACH.

OR ELSE.



HEY, NOW—WAIT A—

OH, FOR THE LOVE OF—WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU LOT?

THE CASTLE SAYS SHE'S THE HETERODYNE? FINE.

BONK!

...BUT YOU IDIOTS CAN'T REALLY BELIEVE THESE TWO CLOWNS ARE—



UM, THANOS—THAT IS PRINCE STURMVORAU.

WHA—REALLY?

YEAH. GUY I DID KNIFE WORK FOR HAD A PORTRAIT.

'SAID HE WAS GONNA BE THE STORM KING.

WOW.

...AND WULFENBACH'S KID IS IN TOWN, SO THAT'S PROBABLY HIM, TOO.



—AND YOU'VE GOT THEM BOTH ON YOUR STRING, EHP?

WELL DONE, MY LADY.

UM... THANKS?



"—LOYAL VASSAL?!"

...AND WE'RE BOTH "ON AGATHA'S STRING!"

WELL... THAT I CAN LIVE WITH!

SO, YEAH, THE CASTLE BROUGHT US HERE—



IT'S BEEN ACTING PRETTY WEIRD THE PAST COUPLE'A DAYS.

WE'VE ALREADY HAD A LOOK—THE BREAK'S PRETTY OBVIOUS.

WELL, THAT'S A RELIEF.

WE COULD USE AN EASY ONE!



UM, HE SAID "OBVIOUS."

NOT "EASY."

OOOH...



THEY'RE NOT ATTACKING?

YOU'RE COMPLAINING?

WELL, NO, BUT...

THEY'RE JUST AS HAYWIRE AS THE REST OF THIS PLACE, I GUESS.

...BUT THEY'LL STILL GET YOU QUICK ENOUGH IF YOU'RE IN THE WRONG AREA.

WHICH IS—?

SEE THAT DARK SMEAR AT THE BOTTOM OF THE LADDER?

DR. OTT FIGURED THAT WAS WHERE IT STARTED.

DID HE SAY WHY?

NOPE. ALL HE SAID WAS: "AIEEEE!"



IF YOU KNOW HOW TO TAKE THOSE THINGS OUT, I'M ALL EARS.

SO WHAT'S THE—
AAAAAH!
THOSE THINGS AGAIN!



YES. I'M GUESSING THAT THIS IS THEIR CONTROL CENTER.

OH, PERFECT!

SO WHAT'S THE—
OH. THOSE THINGS AGAIN.



WE HAD THE OTHERS PUT VON PINN INTO ONE OF THOSE, YES?

THAT'S ALL YOU'VE GOT TO SAY?

I'VE FOUGHT LOTS OF CLANKS.

THESE DON'T LOOK THAT BAD.



...I WILL RENOUNCE MY CROWN IF YOU WALK DOWN THERE RIGHT NOW.

...THAT BAD?

OH, YES.

...BUT DON'T TAKE THE WORD OF A LOWLY VASSAL—

RIGHT. SO, GOT ANY USEFUL IDEAS?



hmF. WELL, IF WE THREW IN EVERY MINION WE HAVE, WE MIGHT TAKE OUT ONE OF THEM.

THAT'S A TERRIBLE PLAN!

THANK YOU, SIR!

THERE'S ANOTHER TWENTY OF THEM! WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH MINIONS!

ER...



WHAT DO YOU THINK, AGATHA?

...AGATHA?

WHERE DID SHE GO? SHE WAS RIGHT HERE...



AAAAH!



TA-DAH! A BRIDGE!

WHAT?! YOU BROUGHT THAT HUGE THING IN FOR A BRIDGE?! WHY NOT JUST SQUASH THEM?!

NO. THE CASTLE WOULDN'T LIKE IT IF WE BROKE THEM.

AW C'MON—THE CASTLE ISN'T EVEN ACTIVE IN HERE. WE WON'T TELL!

OH YEAH—THEY WERE TOTALLY SMASHED UP WHEN WE FOUND THEM.

EXCUSE ME? THOSE ARE MY FUN-SIZED MOBILE AGONY AND DEATH DISPENSERS. THEY'RE WORKS OF ART!

YOU CAN BREAK YOUR OWN STUFF, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

YOU JUST HEAD FOR THAT PLATFORM ON THE FAR SIDE.

COME ON, YOU GUYS, IT'S PERFECT!

LOOK AT THIS! AN ELEPHANT COULD WALTZ DOWN THIS THING!

...AND TARVEK? THIS TIME, DON'T JUMP ON THEM, OKAY?

...YOU JUMPED ON THEM?

THAT MUST HAVE GONE WELL.

SHUT UP. IT SEEMED LIKE THE THING TO DO AT THE TIME.

YEAH! BECAUSE HE'S STUPID!

HEY, YOU KNOW WHAT?

MAYBE YOU SHOULD BOTH TRY IT THIS TIME!



...AND YOU'D BETTER START WITH THIS ONE—

'CAUSE I'M NOT PLANNING ON RIDING IT.

R?



OKAY, WE CAN DO THIS. THERE'S ONLY THIS ONE ON THE LEDGE—

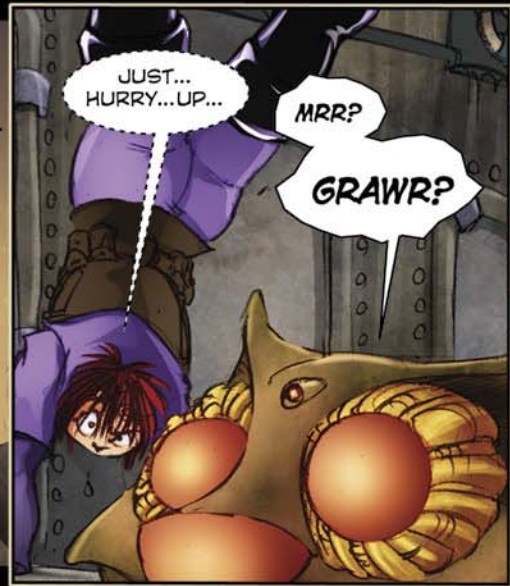
RR!

AND REMEMBER, IT CAN'T SEE ME IF I HOLD STILL.



AH, I GET IT. GOOD. NOW WE'LL LURE IT PAST YOU.

WOOHOO! HERE, KITTY KITTY!



JUST... HURRY...UP...

MRR?

GRAWR?



UM, WHY ARE WE DOING THIS, EXACTLY?

WE'RE USING OUR WITS. DON'T TRY TO TAKE NOTES.

JUST WORK WITH US.

WORKING NOW. WILL SMACK YOU LATER.

HERE, KITTY KITTY!



OKAY, VIOLETTA, IT'S ALMOST PAST...



THERE WE GO— NOW YOU HOLD STILL, AND I'LL LURE IT DOWN OFF THE LEDGE.



UM... SOMEHOW...

VIOLETTA, IT'S GETTING CLOSE...





ROW!
ROW!
OW!

VIOLETTA!

THOSE ARE SHOTS!

WHAT NOW?!

AGATHA?



SHE'S HERE!

THE LADY HETERODYNE IS HURT!

HURRY!



HURT?

TIKTOFFEN!
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?!

WE'LL BE RIGHT THERE!

NO—
WAIT.

AGATHA LOOKS ODD—



GIL?

TARVEK?



YOU!

OOF!



RUN!



BLAST IT!

STOP!

I WANT YOU ALIVE, BUT I DON'T NEED YOU ALIVE!



SIGH.

FINE. SO MUCH FOR TRICKS AND FOOLISHNESS.

I'LL CATCH THE GIRL. KILL EVERYONE ELSE.

YEZ MASTER!







...AND NOW, IT'S IN DANGER OF ALL FALLING APART...

A REAL HETERODYNE, FOR PITY'S SAKE.

AH, BUT I IMAGINE YOU GET THAT A LOT.

WELL, PERHAPS IT'S ACTUALLY JUST ALL COMING TOGETHER.



IT'S ALL HOW YOU LOOK AT IT, I SUPPOSE.

WAIT—THEY'RE WITH YOU! WHY ARE YOU KILLING THE OTHER PRISONERS?



pft. BECAUSE I KNEW THEM.

FRANZ HERE LIKED TURNING PEOPLE INTO BEETLES.

ZONIA BELIEVED THAT ORPHAN BLOOD HAD MEDICINAL PROPERTIES.

KRAG PUT HIS FEET ON MY BED.

...AND YOU THINK YOU'RE ANY BETTER?



tsk—AND I THOUGHT YOU WERE A SMART GIRL...

SMARTER THAN YOU.

SMART ENOUGH TO KNOW WHERE I AM.

THIS IS ONE OF THE SECTIONS I'VE ALREADY FIXED.



CASTLE! ARE YOU THERE?

YES, MISTRESS?

CATCH THESE INSECTS FOR ME!



I AM SORRY, MISTRESS...

I... I CANNOT.

OH, DIDN'T I MENTION THAT?



I LOVE THIS PLACE!

OLD FAUSTUS CREATED SOMETHING... EXTRAORDINARY!

NOTHING LESS THAN A NEW FORM OF LIFE!

BEAUTIFUL!



I READ EVERYTHING I COULD BEFORE I CAME HERE,

BUT IT WAS ALL RUBBISH AND HYSTERIA.

I WAS STILL UNPREPARED FOR THE REALITY.

IT WAS BROKEN, INSANE-

LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE AROUND HERE, IT NEEDED A MASTER-

ME!



"REPAIRING IT, LEARNING HOW IT WORKED-

HOW IT THOUGHT-

IT WAS EXHILARATING!

... BUT IT WAS ALSO DANGEROUS-

LIKE A FERAL CHILD WITH A DOOMSDAY DEVICE!"



I WORKED ON THE LION, BUT I DOUBT I WOULD HAVE EVER USED IT.

YOU SAW MORE CLEARLY THAN I DID THERE, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT.

A BRILLIANT SOLUTION.



I'LL FREELY ADMIT MINE WAS NOWHERE NEAR AS ELEGANT.

NO, I SIMPLY LEARNED TO TAME THE POOR CREATURE.



... AND SO I MUST BEG YOUR PARDON, LADY HETERODYNE-

BUT YOUR HOUSE BELONGS TO ME NOW.



BELONGS TO YOU? YOU?!

YOU TALK TOO MUCH... AND YOU GOT TOO CLOSE.



HOW DARE YOU-YOU UNGRATEFUL TROLLOP!

I WAS GOING TO LET YOU LIVE!

KILL HER!



RIGHT!



AH. JUST AS I THOUGHT.



CASTLE?! I ORDERED YOU-

TSK. REALLY, PROFESSOR.

I MAY NOT BE ABLE TO HURT YOU-



BUT NO ONE MAY HURT MY HETERODYNE.



WELL WELL... AND IT APPEARS THAT I CAN HURT YOU JUST FINE.

SMAK SMAK

GOOD.

TRY TO STEAL MY BEAUTIFUL CASTLE, WILL YOU?



STEAL? MEP? ... YOU ARROGANT UPSTART.

SNAP!

LET'S FIND OUT JUST WHO CAN HURT WHOM.



GIVE UP, GIRL- YOU COULDN'T MANAGE THIS WITHOUT ME, ANYWAY!



BY "THIS," YOU MEAN KILL PEOPLE AND BLUSTER?

I'LL COPE.



NO!

AH!



I MEAN JUGGLE THE THOUSAND ENEMIES THAT WILL COME TO TAKE THIS PLACE-

NOW THAT THE BARON IS DEAD!



DEAD?!



SLICE!



URGH! I CAN'T BELIEVE I FELL FOR SUCH A CHEAP BLUFF!

WHAM

BA

SHAWHAK

SMASH!



IT'S NO BLUFF!

THE BARON DIED WHEN THE HOSPITAL COLLAPSED!

THE EMPIRE WILL GO UP IN FLAMES!



... AND I WILL BE THE MASTER OF THE STRONGEST CASTLE-

IN THE MOST UNCONQUERABLE TOWN IN EUROPA!



BLISSFULLY UNENCUMBERED, I MIGHT ADD, BY A CHIT OF A GIRL STUPID ENOUGH TO BRING A SPANNER TO A KNIFE FIGHT!



IT'S HARDER TO BREAK THINGS WITH A KNIFE.



WHAT-?

CRACK
FZZT
FZZT



ARGH!

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!

I'VE FREED MY CASTLE.

IT'S OFF YOUR LEASH, NOW.



YOU THINK IT'S **THAT SIMPLE?**

YOU THINK YOU'VE WON?

THE HETERODYNE BOYS **HATED** THIS PLACE!

YOUR FAMILY **ABANDONED** IT!

THE CASTLE IS MINE! IT **WANTS** TO BE MINE!

IT'S BEEN WORKING WITH ME FOR YEARS!



CASTLE! DO YOU **HEAR ME?**

I CAME HERE **WILLINGLY!**

I'VE SPENT YEARS REPAIRING YOU!



HELPING YOU!

MAKING YOU **STRONGER!**

YOU'VE **GOT** TO CHOOSE ME!

YOU **KNOW** I'M YOUR FRIEND!

I'M THE ONE WHO **LOVES** YOU!



...AND I AM FOND OF YOU, PROFESSOR-

WHICH IS WHY I SHALL DO THIS **QUICKLY.**

... BUT YOU DID NOT **REPAIR** ME.

I DON'T BELIEVE YOU EVER **COULD** HAVE.

I AM NOT COMPLETE WITHOUT A **HETERODYNE.**



AH—THANK YOU.

I... WAS A LITTLE WORRIED YOU MIGHT NOT CHOOSE ME AFTER ALL.

WHEN.

NONSENSE, MY LADY.

THE PROFESSOR WAS AMUSING, BUT I HAVE NO NEED OF **OUTSIDERS** WHO PUT ME, AS YOU SAY, **ON A LEASH.**



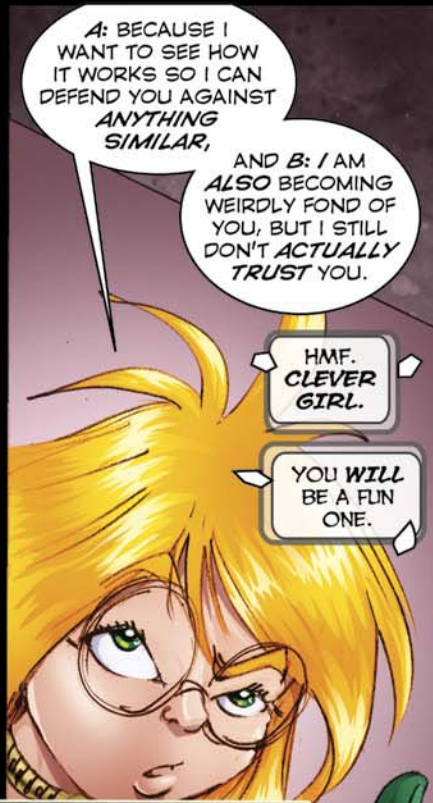
YES, WELL, WE'LL JUST MAKE SURE THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN AGAIN.

NOW—LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT THAT **DEVICE** OF HIS.

WHAT?! OH, NO! I'M SURE IT'S **TOTALLY DESTROYED!**

I'LL BE THE JUDGE OF THAT.

... BUT **WHY?!**



A: BECAUSE I WANT TO SEE HOW IT WORKS SO I CAN DEFEND YOU AGAINST **ANYTHING SIMILAR,**

AND B: I AM ALSO BECOMING WEIRDLY FOND OF YOU, BUT I STILL DON'T **ACTUALLY TRUST** YOU.

HMF. **CLEVER GIRL.**

YOU **WILL** BE A FUN ONE.



... BUT THE PROFESSOR WAS **NOT FAMILY.** I WOULD NOT CRUSH YOU.

AH—BY THE WAY, IN MY CURRENT STATE, I CANNOT SEE **DETAILS—**

BUT THE **HOSPITAL HAS** BEEN DESTROYED.

WHAT?! **HOW?!**

I DO NOT KNOW. THERE ARE **MULTIPLE ATTACKERS.**

IT IS QUITE LIKELY THAT THE **BARON TRULY IS** DEAD.

A **PITY...**



REALLY?! TIKTOFFEN WASN'T JUST TRYING TO THROW ME OFF?!

I DO NOT THINK SO. HE SOUNDED **SINCERE.**

AH, WELL, IT COMES TO ALL OF YOU, EVEN THE **DEVIOUS ONES...**

OH, BUT THEN, **GIL—**

AH. UNFORTUNATELY, YOU PROBABLY WON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT **HIM** MUCH LONGER.



FROM WHAT I CAN HEAR, **VOLE** IS INTENT UPON **KILLING HIM—**

AND THEY ARE CURRENTLY **OUT OF MY REACH.**

I **AM SORRY,** MY LADY. I WOULD DO SOMETHING IF I COULD.

OH, **NO—**

DON'T CRY—WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER, WE SHALL FIND YOU SOME **LOVELY NEW CONSORTS—**



LOTS OF THEM!

NO!



NONSENSE, MY LADY. YOU STILL HAVE A **SPARE-**

OH... PERHAPS **NOT**. IT SOUNDS LIKE **VOLE** INTENDS TO KILL **BOTH** OF THEM.

AH, WELL, BACK TO SQUARE ONE...

FIRST OF ALL, THEY ARE **NOT** **REPLACEABLE!**

AH. OF **COURSE** **NOT**, MY LADY.

...AND SECOND OF ALL, I SINCERELY DOUBT THAT THUG CAN ACTUALLY BEAT THEM, UNLESS HE SNEAKS UP ON THEM SOMEHOW.

...AND YET, YOU DROP EVERYTHING AND RUSH TO THEIR RESCUE?

I STILL HAVE **WORK** TO DO BACK THERE, **REMEMBER?**

ANYWAY, IF I LET ALL THAT...ALL THAT **OTHER STUFF** DISTRACT ME, WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO **YOU?**

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT **THAT?**

DO YOU **REALLY** WANT MECHANICSBURG TO FALL BECAUSE I WAS TOO **BOY CRAZY** TO THINK ABOUT ANYTHING **USEFUL?**



HMM, TRUE... ONCE OR TWICE, SOME OF THE MORE **ROMANTICALLY-MINDED** MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY **HAVE** CAUSED PROBLEMS...

AND I **STILL** HAVE STRUCTURAL DAMAGE FROM THE GREAT SAINT VALENTINE'S DAY RIOT. BUT THAT WAS **SUCH FUN...**



EVEN SO, I SHOULD POINT OUT THAT, IN YOUR HURRY TO GET BACK TO WORK,



YOU HAVE **COMPLETELY** FORGOTTEN PROFESSOR TIKTOFFEN'S **NASTY LITTLE** DEVICE.

AH... OH. ER— CAN YOU KEEP IT SOMEWHERE SAFE FOR NOW?

WELL, IT WAS UNDER A **LARGE, HEAVY** PILLAR, BUT... YES.



GOOD. JUST REMEMBER THAT I WANT IT **BACK** LATER.

NO DUMPING IT INTO A FURNACE OR SOMETHING.

PERISH THE THOUGHT.



...AND I AM **SO** GLAD THAT YOU ARE NOT ONE TO LET **ROMANTIC** CONCERNS **DISTRACT** YOU—

OF COURSE NOT.

THAT WOULD JUST BE **SILLY.**

BECAUSE **MORE** ENEMIES HAVE ARRIVED. THE BATTLE IS ABOUT TO BEGIN.



MEANWHILE—

HOKAY, DIS GUN BE SIMPLE-PEEZY, YEZ?

NO FANCY SCHTUFF—

JUST SHOOT DEM, HOKAY?

GRAH?

GRAH?

GRAH?

GRAH?

GRAH?

GRAH?



GRAH!

SURE, SIR, BUT—WHERE'D THEY GO?!



NOW!



WAK!

CRACK



IDIOT! YOU MISSED VOLE!

SO DID YOU!

QUICK—THROW SOMETHING ELSE!

GRAAAAH!

AAAAAH!



bonk!

bonk!



HYU DIE NOW.

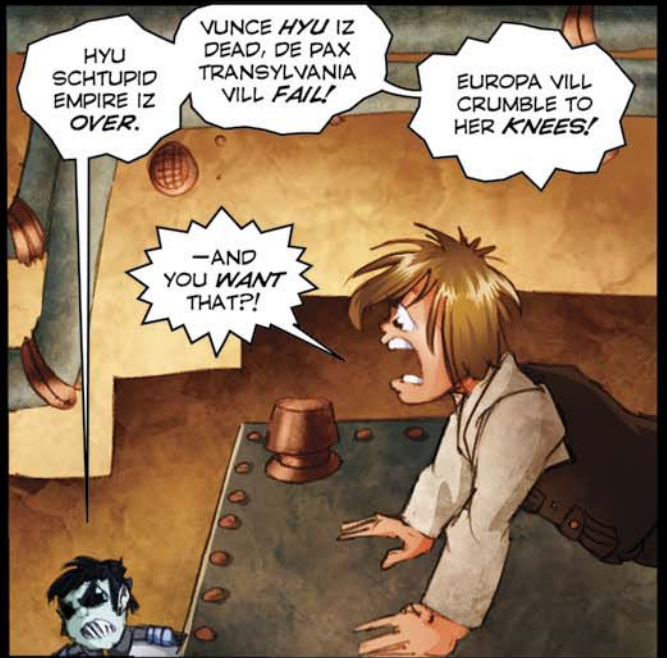
YOU CALL THAT "THROWING?"

HEY, AT LEAST I GOT HIS HAT!



tch. SCHTUPID BRAT. HYU IZ ALREADY DEAD.

HYU JUST NEEDS TO HOLD STILL SO HY KEN FINISH DE JOB.



HYU SCHTUPID EMPIRE IZ OVER.

VUNCE HYU IZ DEAD, DE PAX TRANSYLVANIA VILL FAIL!

EUROPA VILL CRUMBLE TO HER KNEES!

-AND YOU WANT THAT?!



OV CAWZE!

DEATH UND DESTRUCTION EVFFRYERE!

KEEL OR BE KEELED!

DE RULE OV DE MOST VICIOUS!

EET VILL BE GLORIOUS!

DE JÄGERS VILL VUNCE AGAIN BE DE SHTUFF OV NIGHTMARES!



-I THOUGHT YOU WEREN'T A JÄGER ANY MORE!

YOU SAID SO YOURSELF!



HA! DOSE OLD VEAKLINGS IZ ALL GONNA DIE!

DE PROFESSOR SEZ HY IZ GUN LEAD A NEW PACK OV JÄGERS!

STRONK, RUTHLESS, JÄGERS!

VE VILL BURN EUROPA TO DE GROUND UND GNAW HER BONEZ!



THIS GUY'S NUTS.

YOU THINK?

IT'S WHY THE JÄGERS DISOWNED HIM.

HE TRIED TO KILL BILL AND BARRY.

SAID THEY WERE TOO WEAK.

THE IDIOTS FORGAVE HIM, OF COURSE.



hmf. I COULD TAKE HIM, IF IT WEREN'T FOR THAT GUN.

OH, REALLY?

ALLOW ME!



HA! GIVE IT UP YOU ELEPHANTINE KITCHEN GOBLIN!

EVEN WHEN THE PAX TRANSYLVANIA FAILS—
I WILL MAINTAIN THE PEACE AS THE STORM KING!



VOT?!
HO NO HYU VONT! DIE, HYU—



VOT DER DUMBOOZLEP?

YOU ROYAL FOOL! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

YOU ARE NOT MY PROBLEM ANY MORE!
DON'T JUST JUMP IN AND EXPECT ME TO SAVE YOUR BLUE-BLOODED BUTT!



LIKE YOU COULD RESIST SUCH A BEAUTIFUL OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW OFF.

BESIDES—I KNEW YOU MUST HAVE ESCAPED WHEN VOLE'S MEN ATTRACTED THE CLANKS,

BUT I COULDN'T SEE WHERE YOU WERE, SO—



SHODDOP HYU ANNOYING SCHTUPID SCHMOT GUY! NOW HY'M GUNNA KEEL HYU, TOO!

SNAK!



NO—



YOU SHUT UP.

THWOK!



(sigh) DO WE REALLY HAVE TO DO THIS AGAIN, CAPTAIN?

I HAD THOUGHT THRASHING YOU ONCE WOULD BE ENOUGH.

HOKAY—FONNY TING ABOUT DOT.



BOOM!

D/S TIME, HY DUN GOTTA VORRY 'BOUT HYU POPPA!



D/S TIME, HY DUN HAFF TO KEEP HYU ALIVE.

BOOM!



UND D/S TIME, HYU KNOCKED OFF MY HAT.



ZO D/S TIME, HY IZ GONNA VIN, UND HY IS GONNA DO IT BY KEELINK HYU INTO LEEDLE BITS!

IZ DOT DIFFERENT ENOUGH FOR HYU, BRAT? HY DUN VANT IT TO BE BORING, YAH?

EXCUSE ME—



SO, WULFENBACH—JUST CHECKING—IS THIS GOING TO BE SOME KIND OF MACHO EXERCISE WHERE YOU INSIST ON BATTLING A POTENTIALLY SUPERIOR OPPONENT ALONE—

IN SOME KIND OF MISGUIDED ATTEMPT TO "PROVE" YOUR INTRINSIC WORTH?

NO, NO!

I'M ONLY THAT STUPID IN FRONT OF AGATHA!

DRAT.



ACK!

WHACK!



HO HO HO!
VOT A JOKE!

PAH! NEITHER OF HYU VAZ EVEN TAKING ME SERIOUSLY, VICH IS *INSULTINK*—
JUST STANDINK AROUND BEINK ALL SCHMARTARSE—
INSTEAD OV JUST *HITTINK* ME.

HYU IZ NOT FIGHTINK, HYU IZ *PLAYINK* AT FIGHTINK!

BONG!

—UND NOW HYU GETS TO *DIE* FOR REALS!
VOT A *DISGRACE*.

HYU NOS GONNA BE DE *STORM KING*?

UND HYU—HYU POPPA SERIOUSLY THOUGHT HYU NOS VORTHY OV HIZ EMPIRE?

tsk. DERE AIN'T EVEN ANY SPAWT IN KILLINK HYU *PAMPERED CLOWNS*—



(sigh) BUT IT GOTS TO BE DONE.

ENNVYWAY, IT VILL BE FUN TO TELL DOT *HETERODYNE* SOW ABOUT IT LATER, YAH?

...urk!

gleek!

AW—DUN' FEEL TOO BAD—

DER TWO UF HYU VOULD HAFF BEEN *DEM DANGEROUS* HIFFEN HYU'D GROWN OV A *LEEDLE*.



HYOUCH!

PAF!

(gasp)



ech. FANCY, FIDDLY CUSTOM GUN LIKE THIS—

AND IT STILL PULLS RIGHT?

SLOPPY.



SHOT OP!

DOT VOS A NIZE TRY, SVEETHOT—

BUT DEY'S STILL GUN' BE DEAD GUYZ!



HOY, HEROES!

HY GOTTS A FUN IDEA!

IF VUN OV HYU JUMPS UP NOW FOR DE KITTEHS,

DE ODDER MIGHT BE ABLE TO GET AWAY IN TIME TO VATCH ME KEEL HYU GURRL FRIEND!



GRAH!

GRAH!

GRAH!

DON'T SCREW THIS UP!



YOU KNOW, PERHAPS WE SHOULD HAVE DISCUSSED THIS...

TOO LATE NOW!



GRAAAAHRGH!

MEEP?

WHOA! WHAT-

UM...



Ptoo

HAWK

OOF!

OW!



HMMM... LOOKS LIKE I ARRIVED JUST IN TIME!

KROSP! DID YOU—



HURR HURR HURR—
YOU ARE **VERY AMUSING**, LITTLE EMPEROR.

GIVE ME THE MOMENT!

HEY, GIL! WE BROUGHT VON PINN—AH—MADAME OTILIA!

WE FIXED HER UP, JUST LIKE YOUR NOTES SAID! SHE'S GOING TO BE FINE!

—AND, LUCKY FOR YOU, WE HAVE MADE IMPROVEMENTS!



WHAT WAS THAT?!

RRROW!

OUR TIME'S RUN OUT! THE CASTLE'S UNDER ATTACK!



IF WE CAN SIGNAL CASTLE WULFEN— AAAAH!

AAAAH!

THEO!



KNIVES UND SAND, BETWEEN HYU AND DER DEM KESTLE RATTLINK, HOW IZ A GUY SUPPOSED TO SHOOT SOMEYUN?!

YOU GIVE THAT BACK, YOU THIEF! I STOLE THAT GUN OFF YOU FAIR AND SQUARE!

HO! GROW OP, SVEETHOT! HYU JUST MAD 'CAUSE HY STOLE IT BACK!

FINDERS KEEPERS, LOOZERS BLEEDERS!



GIL!
TARVEK!
WE'VE
GOT TO
HURRY!

THE CASTLE IS
UNDER ATTACK
FROM ALL SIDES!

WE'VE
GOT TO—



WHAT? YOU
GUYS HAVEN'T
GOT RID OF HIM
YET?

WELL TO BE
FAIR, HE'S
REALLY
TOUGH!

HYU?!

SO HYU
HAFF KEELED
PROFESSOR
TIKTOFFEN,
DEN, HEY?

WHY IZ HY
NOT
SOOPRIZED?!



YAH!

FLING!

DIS IZ JUST
VUNNA DOSE
DAYS!

HY SVEAR. IF
HYU VANTS AN
ATROCITY DUN
RIGHT,
HYU GOTTS TO
DO IT
HYUSELF.

VELL—HY
COME IN HERE TO
KEEL SPARKS,

UND DOT'S
VOT HY IZ
GONNA DO!



HOOGH!

WRONG.

SWAN!





HO HO!

SOUNDS LIKE COUNT NIKOLABA'S THUNDER HOGS HAFF ARRIVED!
IT WON'T BE LONG NOW—HYU IS ALL GONNA DIE!

... OKAY. CHANGE OF PLAN.

YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT, CAPTAIN.

I SHOULD TAKE YOU SERIOUSLY.

IF MY FATHER IS DEAD—

SCHTARTING VIT HYU, BRAT!



THEN THE EMPIRE IS IN DANGER.

... AND IF THE EMPIRE FALLS NOW, WITH THE CASTLE STILL WEAK, THIS TOWN WILL FALL. EVERYTHING WE'VE DONE HERE WILL BE POINTLESS.

I WILL HAVE TO HOLD IT TOGETHER.

AT THE MOMENT, I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN.

YOU'LL COME WITH ME. YOU'RE BIG AND MENACING—YOU'LL MAKE A FINE LACKEY.

OH, YOU'LL TRY.

YOU'LL TRY AGAIN AND AGAIN!

WON'T YOU?



VOT? IZ HYU KREZY?

HY VILL RIP HYU HEART OUT!



HYU...HYU IZ KREZY! HYU IZ TALKINK LIKE HYU VANTS ME TO KEEL HYU!

NO, NO! I WANT YOU TO TRY!



AFTER ALL, I HAVE TO SHOW THAT I'M STRONG ENOUGH TO RULE THE EMPIRE!

WE'LL MAKE IT A GAME:

"WHO'S THE SCARIEST MONSTER?!"



URG...MEBBE HYU COULD JUST KEEL ME, INSTEAD?

OH, NO! JUST THINK HOW IMPRESSIVE IT WILL BE WHEN WORD GETS OUT—

THAT I KEEP A PET JÄGER AROUND TO ATTACK ME—JUST TO KEEP ME SHARP!

GIL!



AGATHA!
I-

YES, BUT...I
WILL BE
BACK...

THERE'S NO
TIME! YOU'VE
GOT TO GO!
NOW!

WELL, OF
COURSE!

...

LISTEN TO
EVERYTHING
THIS DUPLICITOUS
SNAKE SAYS!

HIS TAIL IS ON
THE LINE HERE,
TOO, SO HE'LL GIVE
YOU GOOD
ADVICE.

OH, YES!
DO DROP IN,
SOMETIME!

WE'LL
BAKE A
CAKE!

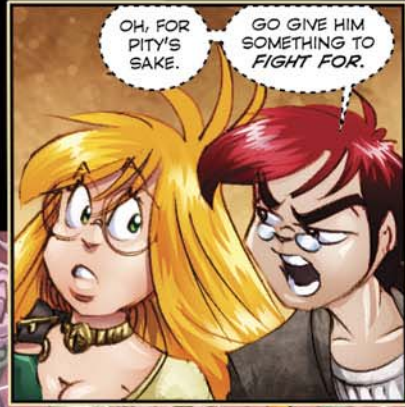
I
KNOW.

HEY!



RIGHT.

I...I'M
OFF.

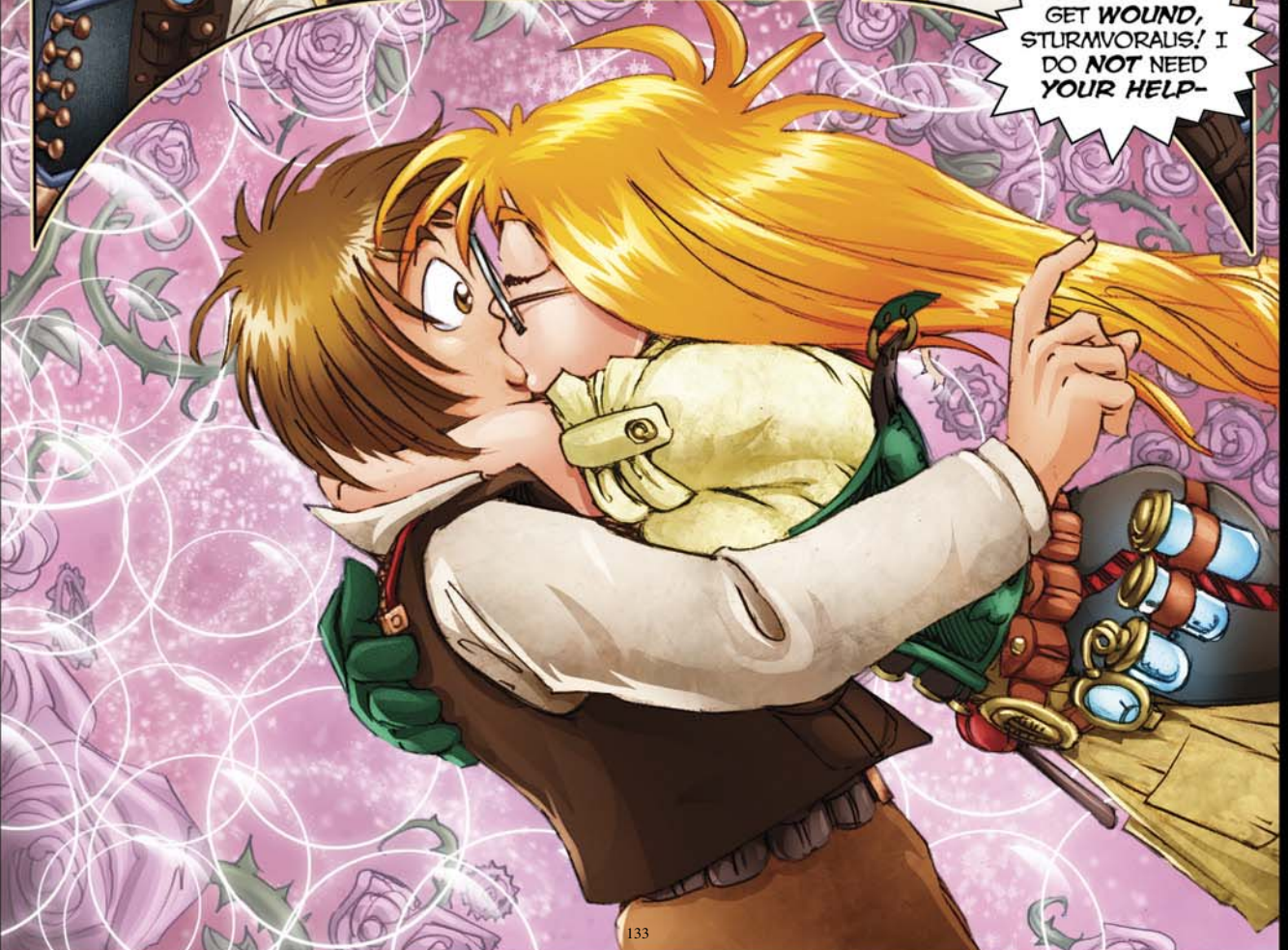


OH, FOR
PITY'S
SAKE.

GO GIVE HIM
SOMETHING TO
FIGHT FOR.



GET WOUND,
STURMVORAU! I
DO NOT NEED
YOUR HELP-





WOW. I WISH SHE TOOK *MY* ADVICE SO READILY.

JUST—SHUT UP.

HE'S RIGHT.

IF THE EMPIRE FALLS NOW, WE'RE ALL FINISHED.

VOLE! COME ON!

OKAY. GOTTA GO.

SAVE THE EMPIRE AND...AND STUFF.

RIGHT.

GOOD.

I'LL JUST...YOU KNOW...FIX MY CASTLE.

SPEAKING OF WHICH, I'D BETTER TELL IT NOT TO *KILL* YOU ON THE WAY OUT.

I'D APPRECIATE THAT.

AND HERE I KEPT EXPECTING YOU TO *ATTACK* HIM.

DUN BE SCHTUPID.

SHE VOULD RIP MY FANGS OUT.



SOON—

OKAY, THIS SHOULD BE FAR ENOUGH.

CASTLE? CAN YOU HEAR ME IN HERE?

HMM? AH. YES, MY LADY. YES, I CAN HEAR YOU.

I NEED YOU TO GET GILGAMESH WULFENBACH AND CAPTAIN VOLE TO THE NEAREST OUTER GATE—

AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.



AND NO KILLING THEM ALONG THE WAY, GOT IT?

WHAT? OH, OF COURSE NOT!

WORK NOW, PLAY LATER...



...AND NO MAIMING THEM, EITHER.

COMPLETELY UNHARMED, UNDERSTAND?



YES, YES, FINE, THEN. OFF THEY GO!



WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!

DONE? OH, YES—THIS CHUTE WILL TAKE THEM DIRECTLY TO... UM... AH, THE GATE OF CHIMES.

OH. GOOD, THEN. ONCE THEY'RE OUT OF THE CASTLE—

WHAT? OUT OF—? OH, BUT I THOUGHT YOU WANTED THEM UNHARMED?



I TOLD YOU—

NO! NOT IN THE FACING! IT'S JUST THAT, ONCE THEY LEAVE MY PROTECTION, THEY WILL FACE ALL OF OUR ATTACKERS.

WITH MY REMAINING STRENGTH IT IS DIFFICULT ENOUGH KEEPING THEM AWAY.



REMAINING— THEN— THEN JUST DON'T LET GIL LEAVE!

ERM—THE GATE OF CHIMES IS STILL ONE OF MY DEAD AREAS...

I AM SORRY I'M DISTRACTED, MY LADY, BUT I AM RUNNING OUT OF POWER.



I HAVE TO USE IT FOR DEFENSE—

OH, BOTHER—THERE GOES THE TOWER OF GREEN BONE...

OH, NO! HURRY!



EVERYBODY!
WE'VE GOT
TO—



THEO! WHAT
HAPPENED?!

THAT
JÄGER SHOT
HIM!

I'LL BE
FINE—HE WAS
AIMING FOR
GIL.

SAY—
WHERE IS
GIL?



HE DIDN'T
LEAVE *WITHOUT*
US, DID HE?

I'M SORRY—
IT'S ALL MY
FAULT!

I ASKED
THE CASTLE
TO GET HIM
OUT QUICKLY,

AND NOW HE'S
ABOUT TO GET
DUMPED RIGHT INTO
THE MIDDLE OF AN INVADING
ARMY OR SOMETHING!



...BUT SINCE
YOU'VE FIXED
THE BREAK—

MAYBE WE
CAN USE THE
FUN-SIZED DEATH
DISPENSERS TO
CATCH UP WITH
HIM AND—

WE HAVEN'T
FIXED THE
BREAK.



...ER, YOU
HAVEN'T?

GRAH?

THEN...
HOW—



THEIR CENTRAL
CONTROL SYSTEM
REMAINS DAMAGED.
THEY ARE SOMEWHAT
WEAK AND SLOW.

THEY CANNOT
HEAR YOUR
CASTLE—

BUT THEY
OBEY *ME*.

AH!
MADAME
VON PINN?

OTILIA
NOW,
BUT... YES.



EXCELLENT!

THEN GIL
WILL BE
FINE!

MOBILIZE AS
MANY OF THESE
THINGS AS YOU
CAN CONTROL!

I'D LIKE TO
SEE THE ARMY
THAT CAN STAND
UP TO YOU!

WELL, WE'D
BETTER *HURRY* IF
WE'RE GOING TO
CATCH HIM!



THAT'S
TRUE. *COME
ON!*

GAK!

*WATCH
YOURSELF,
HETERODYNE—*

MY GOOD
HUMOR AT FINDING
MYSELF ONCE AGAIN
IN A LOVELY
MECHANICAL BODY
DOES HAVE ITS
LIMITS!



OKAY, I'M GOING TO TRY TO GET THIS RIGHT THIS TIME.

CASTLE—I WANT TO SEND THESE CLANKS TO HELP GIL GET BACK TO CASTLE WULFENBACH SAFELY.

WHAT IS GOING TO GO WRONG, AND HOW CAN I PREVENT IT?

AH. MISTRESS. HELLO.

L.M... WELL, UNTIL THAT BREAK IS REPAIRED, THEY... L.M... THEY WILL NOT FUNCTION OUTSIDE OF MY WALLS.

THAT'S ALL RIGHT. I'LL BE STAYING HERE TO FIX THE BREAK.

IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE IT SHOULD TAKE TOO LONG.

IF MADAME OTILIA CAN CATCH GIL BEFORE HE LEAVES, THEY'LL BE ALL SET.

AHHHH... LADY HETERODYNE-IF YOU STAY IN THE CASTLE, THEN I MUST ALSO STAY.



WHAT? BUT WHY?!

I SAID I'D FIX THE BREAK! IT WON'T TAKE THAT LONG!



...AND, AND GIL NEEDS YOU!

I... MY DUTY IS TO STAY BESIDE YOU. THE HETERODYNE GIRL.

THAT IS MY SACRED TRUST.

TO DO OTHERWISE WOULD BE TO BETRAY MY KING...



NOW, THAT, AT LEAST, I CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT!



OTILIA, MUSE OF PROTECTION: I, THE TRUE HEIR TO THE STORM KING,

-RELEASE YOU FROM YOUR GUARDIANSHIP OF THE HETERODYNE GIRL.

YOU? THE STORM KING?

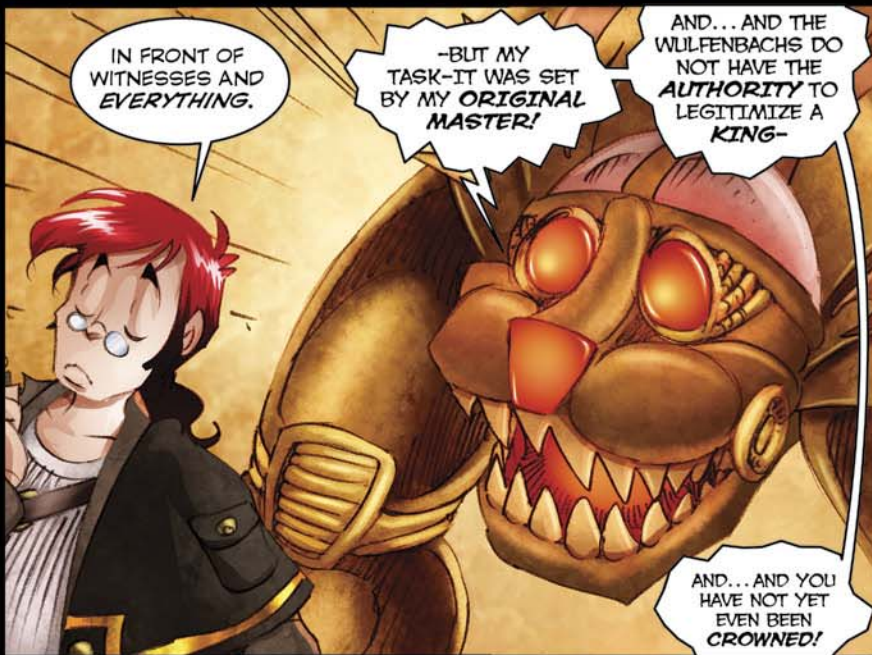
DO NOT PLAY GAMES, CHILD.



I AM! EVEN WULFENBACH ACKNOWLEDGED IT!

GREAT HEAVENS- DID HE REALLY?

AH-HE DID, ACTUALLY.



IN FRONT OF WITNESSES AND EVERYTHING.

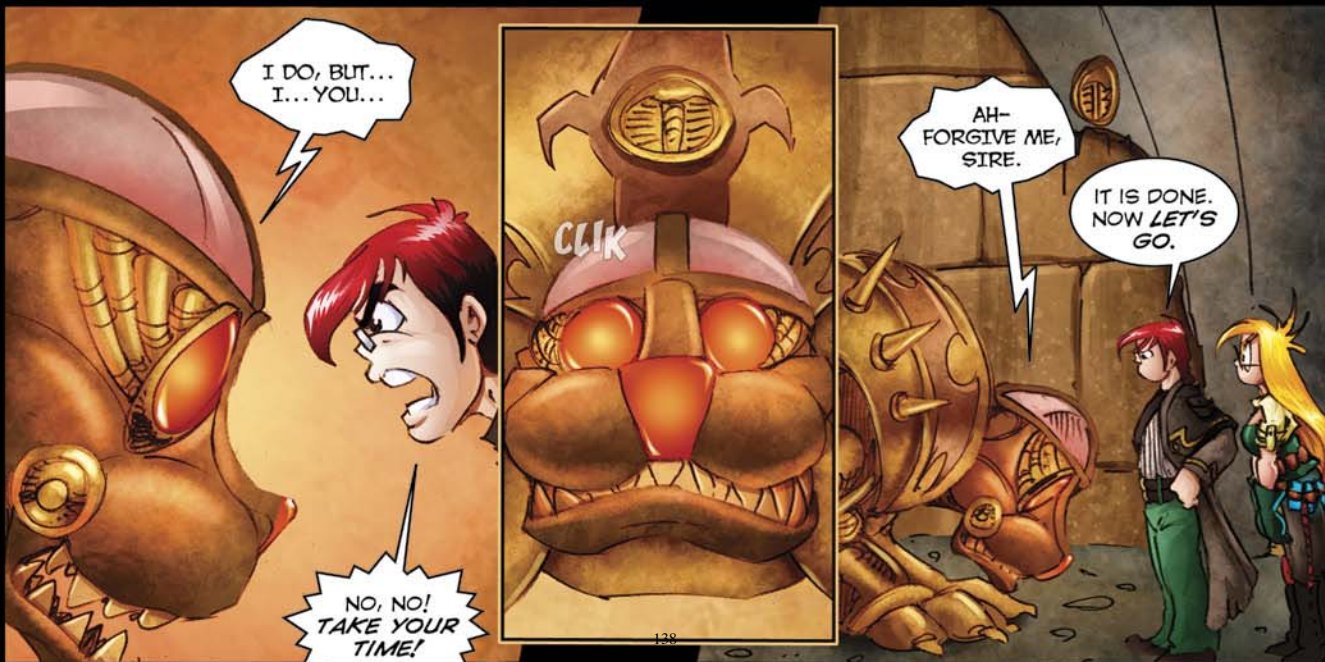
-BUT MY TASK-IT WAS SET BY MY ORIGINAL MASTER!

AND... AND THE WULFENBACHS DO NOT HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO LEGITIMIZE A KING-

AND... AND YOU HAVE NOT YET EVEN BEEN CROWNED!



DO YOU WANT TO SAVE WULFENBACH, OR DO YOU WANT TO ARGUE WITH ME?



I DO, BUT... I... YOU...



NO, NO! TAKE YOUR TIME!

AH-FORGIVE ME, SIRE.

IT IS DONE. NOW LET'S GO.



HA!
THIS'LL BE
GREAT!

I CAN'T WAIT
TO SEE
WULFENBACH'S
FACE—



TSK.
YOU AND
YOUNG MASTER
WULFENBACH—



SUCH A
TROUBLESOME
PAIR.
NO—
YOU
WILL STAY
HERE—
WHERE
YOU WILL
BE SAFE.

WHAT?!
NO!
LOOK—I'LL
COME RIGHT
BACK AS SOON AS
WE'VE SAVED HIS
BACON, OKAY?!



I AM THE
MUSE OF
PROTECTION.
MY KING WILL
NOT GO HARING
OFF INTO A WAR
UNPREPARED!



THAT IS THE
PRICE OF MY
ACKNOWLEDGE-
MENT.

BUT...
BUT...



OH, VERY
WELL.

THE WISEST
PATH IS OFTEN
THE MOST
DIFFICULT—

HMF.



SO I WILL
LEAVE YOU WITH
SOMETHING TO
ENSURE THAT YOU
BEHAVE.

MROWF!



NOW.
I GO.
DO NOT
ATTEMPT TO
FOLLOW.



OH, DON'T
WORRY. I'LL
JUST STAY
HERE—

AND SIT ON
MY USELESS,
ROYAL BUTT.

COME
ON—LET'S GO
FIX THAT LAST
BREAK.

TARVEK—



WE'VE STILL GOT SOME WORK TO DO IF THEY'RE GOING TO MAKE IT PAST THE CASTLE GATE.

TARVEK— YOU'RE NOT—

éch. NOW, IT LOOKS LIKE A FAIRLY SIMPLE BREAK, SO YOU PROBABLY DON'T EVEN NEED—



SHUT UP AND LISTEN TO ME!



TARVEK—I'M SURE GIL WILL BE ALL RIGHT... MADAME OTILIA WILL GET HIM THROUGH TO CASTLE WULFENBACH—

HE'LL...HE'LL TAKE OVER THE EMPIRE— AND WE'LL HAVE TIME TO FULLY REPAIR THE CASTLE.

I KNOW THIS IS ALL...DIFFICULT FOR YOU, AND YET, YOU'VE STILL DONE EVERYTHING YOU CAN FOR HIM...

WITHOUT YOU, WELL...YOU'VE BEEN WONDERFUL.



...THAT'S NONSENSE. I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING FOR HIM—

OBVIOUSLY, IT'S ALL FOR YOU.

THAT, AT LEAST, ISN'T GOING TO CHANGE.



TARVEK— I—

AGATHA—NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, I'LL—I'LL ALWAYS BE YOUR ALLY!

I'LL ALWAYS DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO HELP YOU!



EVEN IF YOU DON'T—

UM—I MEAN, EVEN IF YOU AND—AND...

OH— THANK YOU...!... UM—



OH, AH—HEY! LISTEN TO ME BLATHER! WE'D BETTER GET TO WORK!

YES! YES, WE CERTAINLY SHOULD!



YOU—YOU GO AHEAD AND GET STARTED.

I'LL...GET THE REST OF THE TOOLS AND STUFF OUT OF THE SQUID, AND BRING IT IN.

UM...YEAH, OKAY.

...LET'S GET THIS PLACE FIXED!



I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

AH—VIOLETTA.

HERE TO PLAY "TAUNT THE LOSER?"

WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT?!

YOU'RE ALL SET TO GET THE GIRL, SO YOU TRY TO RUN OFF AND GET YOURSELF KILLED?

I WAS NOT GOING TO...



WAIT—ALL SET TO—WHAT?!

I'M TOTALLY GONNA WIN THAT BET WITH VON ZINZER!

WOW!



VIOLETTA—HAVE YOU BEEN LICKING YOUR KNIVES AGAIN?

NO! SERIOUSLY! YOU'VE WON!

THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING, YOU'RE GOING TO BE THE ONE SHE KEEPS!



DON'T BE INSULTING.

WHEN SHE KISSED WULFENBACH, MY GLASSES STARTED TO MELT.

THERE'S NO WAY I CAN—

SHE WAS KISSING HIM GOODBYE!



...EXPLAIN.

YOU ARE JOKING!

I REALLY HAVE TO EXPLAIN THIS TO YOU?

YOU LIVE FOR THIS STUFF!

VIOLETTA—

ARGH! IT MUST BE LOVE.

POWER BALANCE!

THINK! THE BARON IS DEAD—



...GIL IS THE HEIR. HE'S THE NEW RULER OF THE EMPIRE.

AND MY LADY HETERODYNE IS—?

AH—A POWERFUL SPARK IN CHARGE OF AN HISTORICALLY TROUBLESOME ROGUE STATE.

OH DEAR.

"OH DEAR" IS RIGHT!



BUT IF SHE CAN GET THE CASTLE REPAIRED, AND MECHANICSBURG'S DEFENSES BACK TO THEIR FULL STRENGTH—

THEN THERE'S EVEN LESS CHANCE SHE'LL WANT TO SIGN ON AS HIS HAPPY VASSAL—

AND AS RULER OF THE EMPIRE, HE'LL FEEL LIKE HE CAN'T JUST LET A HETERODYNE RUN LOOSE.



BUT...BUT SURELY IF SHE MARRIES HIM...

OH? AND WHAT HAPPENS THE FIRST TIME THERE'S A CONFLICT?

ANYWAY, WITH THAT MUCH OF A POWER IMBALANCE, IS HE ASKING HER? OR ORDERING HER?

OH PLEASE.

ALL HE HAS TO DO IS ASK HER—UM—IN A POLITICALLY RESPECTFUL YET ROMANTIC MANNER...



... SWEET LIGHTNING! THIS IS ALL GOING TO END IN FLAMES!

AH, NOT NECESSARILY.

THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN.



WHERE I COME IN—*WAIT*. A *BET*?

YOU BET ON *ME*?

...AND HOW IS IT EVEN *POSSIBLE* THAT YOU'RE ON *MY* SIDE, HERE?

OH, WELL, YOU KNOW... *FAMILY*...

—*THAT* MEANS I SHOULD BE LOOKING FOR THE *KNIFE* IN MY BACK.

YEAH, YEAH, *OKAY*.



I WAS BROUGHT UP TO BE ONE OF *YOUR* SMOKE KNIGHTS. KEEPING YOU ALIVE AND OUT OF TROUBLE—

USELESS JUNK LIKE THAT.

THEN SUDDENLY, I'M *REASSIGNED*.



"I'M SENT OUT HERE TO MECHANICSBURG—*SUPPOSEDLY* TO SPY ON A BUNCH OF USELESS IDIOTS WHO DON'T KNOW WHICH END OF A PRETZEL TO HOLD."

"OF COURSE, EVERYBODY KNEW THAT THE *REAL* REASON WAS THAT I WASN'T *GOOD* ENOUGH."



"AND THEN I FOUND OUT, IT WAS *YOUR* FAULT.

YOU WEAASELED AROUND, PULLED A BUNCH OF STRINGS, AND GOT ME SENT HERE!"

"NO MATTER HOW MUCH I HATED YOU *BEFORE*, I HATED YOU *MORE* AFTER THAT."



"AND THEN, MY CONTACT WHO TOLD ME YOU WERE HERE—IN THE HOSPITAL—

MENTIONED THAT, IN THE LAST THREE YEARS, SOMEONE'S TAKEN OUT *TWELVE* OF YOUR KNIGHTS."

"THREE OF THEM DIDN'T EVEN LAST A *FULL* MONTH!"



SO *SOMETHING* WAS GOING ON, AND YOU *KNEW*!

YOU GOT ME OUT OF THE WAY ON PURPOSE, *DIDN'T* YOU?

VIOLETTA, IT'S NOT LIKE YOU EVER *LIKED* BEING A SMOKE KNIGHT!

SO WHAT IF IT WAS *BORING* OUT HERE—

AT LEAST YOU DIDN'T GET *KILLED* DOING SOMETHING YOU *HATE*!



YEAH. THAT'S WHAT I *THOUGHT*.

...AND I FIGURE, IF YOU'LL DO THAT FOR *ME*, YOU'LL *BURN* DOWN HELL TO KEEP SOMEONE YOU *LOVE* ALIVE—

AND I WANT THE LADY HETERODYNE KEPT *ALIVE*!



...AND YOU THINK I CAN DO THAT?

THAT'S WHAT I'M BETTING ON.

YOU'RE A SPARK, USE YOUR BRAIN!



SURE—IF SHE MARRIES KISSY-BOY, SHE'LL BE HAPPY—

VERY HAPPY—



OKAY, SUPER BLISSSED OUT IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY—

YES, YES! I GET IT, ALL RIGHT?!



...BUT SHE'D BE GIVING UP A LOT OF HER POWER—

AND I'M WORRIED ABOUT HOW LONG SHE'D LIVE.



NOW YOU, YOU'RE A TOTAL SNEAK.

OH, THANK YOU! AND WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH—

YOU'LL WEAVE TREATIES, BUILD ALLIANCES—

YOU'LL REBUILD THE EMPIRE OF THE STORM KING FROM SCRATCH—RIGHT HERE IN MECHANICSBURG!

...AND BECAUSE YOU'RE BOTH STARTING FROM THE SAME LEVEL,

YOU'LL HAVE A MUCH BETTER CHANCE OF WORKING TOGETHER—AND BEING HAPPY—FOR A LONG, LONG TIME!



...AND THERE'LL BE LOTS OF PARTIES... AND I'LL GET TO DRESS UP...

SURE, YOU'LL WIND UP SOME KIND OF EVIL DARK LORD, OR SOMETHING,

BUT I'LL BET THE LADY HETERODYNE IS ONE OF THOSE GIRLS WHO LIKES THAT KIND OF THING, YOU KNOW?

...AND I THINK SHE COULD REALLY MAKE THE "EVIL QUEEN" LOOK WORK!

OOH, TRICKY. SHE'S AN AUTUMN.



ANYWAY, YOU JUST STOP TRYING TO BE A HERO—

AND STICK TO "PLAN B—" *BE HELPFUL, BE PATIENT, AND BE THERE.*

NOW, I'M GOING TO GO MAKE SURE NOTHING TRIES TO EAT HER WHILE SHE'S WORKING.

YOU HURRY UP AND PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER!

PUT THOSE ROYAL MADBOY SKILLS TO WORK AND HELP HER WIN!

OKAY, OKAY, I'LL BE RIGHT BEHIND YOU.



hm. THE FIRST THING SHE'LL WANT TO DO IS GET THE ORDER ON HER SIDE.

WHOM TO APPROACH FIRST...

VAN BULEN, I THINK...

HE LOVES HETERODYNE STORIES.



WEEDING OUT LUCREZIA'S LOYALISTS WILL BE TRICKY...

THE SMOKE KNIGHTS WILL HELP THERE—

THEY'VE GOT A GRUDGE.



... tsk. LISTEN TO ME.

I'M PLOTTING LIKE THERE'S A CHANCE THIS COULD EVEN HAPPEN.

STILL, WHETHER SHE WANTS ME OR NOT, IT WON'T BE WASTED EFFORT...

SHE'LL STILL NEED STRONG ALLIANCES...



AND SHE REALLY WOULD LOOK LOVELY IN BLACK...

MAYBE WITH A LITTLE BAT WING MOTIF—free!



MAYBE VIOLETTA IS RIGHT!

MAYBE I DO HAVE A CHANCE!

YES! THINGS ARE LOOKING—



UH—

WHAT ON—?



HA!
GOTCHA!

FWUMP!



SORRY!

KONK!



HEE HEE!
RESCUING THE
PRINCE!
RESCUING THE
PRINCE!

SANAA?

IN
HERE!



AH, SANAA!
THERE YOU
ARE!

BIG
BROTHER!
LOOK!
I GOT
WULFENBACH
FOR YOU!

SPLendid!
WELL
DONE!



YOU DIDN'T HIT HIM TOO HARD, DID YOU?

I AM SUPPOSED TO BRING HIM BACK ALIVE, YOU KNOW.

NAH, HE'S FINE!

...BUT YOU SAID HE'S ALL DANGEROUS AND STUFF, SO I KNOCKED HIM OUT QUICK.



MMF! WHMVF, MF!

GOOD GIRL!

HEE HEE! I RESCUED HIM GOOD!



AH! BUT IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU DIDN'T HIT HIM HARD ENOUGH!

GO TO SLEEP, YOU.

URK!

WELL, HE IS AWFULLY CUTE...



YOUNG LADY, THAT'S NO REASON TO BE SOFT ON A VILLAIN!

WHAT DID I TELL YOU ABOUT GETTING ROMANTICALLY INVOLVED WITH EVIL?

"...IT'S NOT A BAD WAY TO KILL TIME, AS LONG AS IT ULTIMATELY RESULTS IN THE TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF HER LAIR AND THE RUINATION OF HER NEFARIOUS PLANS!"

OH. YES. WELL, I MEANT-

tsk. DON'T WORRY, BIG BROTHER!

IT SOUNDS LIKE HE'S IN LOVE WITH THE HETERODYNE GIRL, ANYWAY.



...BUT DON'T FORGET TO TELL HIM IT WAS ME WHO RESCUED HIM!

OOOH, I WISH I COULD GO WITH YOU-IT'LL BE SO COOL!

DARN THIS STUPID 'SPODEY COLLAR...

OF COURSE YOU SHALL HAVE THE CREDIT!

...AND FEAR NOT-

WHEN I DELIVER HIM TO THE BARON, I'LL DEMAND THAT YOU BE RELEASED IMMEDIATELY-

OR I SHALL THROW THIS LOU OFF A BUILDING!

MEANWHILE, IN THE TOWER
OF THE DOOM BELL—

ERRRUMFF!

CLUNK

EERUMPF!

CLUNK

HUFF
HUFF

EEAAAGGH!

CLUNK



EEEARRRRGGGH!



CLUNK

HUFF
GASP
HUFF



HEH!



HEEARGH!



HUFF
HUFF
HUFF...

OUTSIDE, ON THE STREETS OF MECHANICSBURG—

...BUT I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE'RE DOING THIS?

SHUT UP, YOU PIG!

YEAH, MAN— SHUT UP.

DgDgDgDgDgDgDgDgDg

IMBECILE! HOW DARE YOU QUESTION MY ORDERS?!

I MEAN— ATTACKING A HOSPITAL—

...TOOK OUT THE BARON.

STINKING POLTROON! YOUR TORTURES WILL BE EXQUISITE!

...AND NOW WE'RE ATTACKING A BUSTED CASTLE?

HEY. SOME OF US ARE TRYIN' TO KILL THINGS, HERE.

LOOK. THEY SAID THE BARON'S KID IS IN THERE. SO BRINGIN' IT DOWN IS JUST SMART.

KILL HIM, KILL THE EMPIRE.

<Sigh.> YES, YES. BUT WE ALSO GET TO KILL THE HETERODYNE GIRL, IF YOU MUST KNOW.

OOH! A TWOFER! SWEET!

BUT—BUT I THOUGHT WE NEEDED HER ALIVE TO MARRY THE STORM KING!

LACKWIT! CRETIN! WRONG HETERODYNE!

WRONG STORM KING!

WRONG! WRONG! WRONG!

THWACK! THWACK! THWACK!

SEEP I NEVER KNOW WHAT THE HECK WE'RE DOING.

YA GOTTA ENJOY THE LITTLE THINGS, MAN.

LIKE THE KILLIN'.



...AND YOU'RE SURE THE STREET OF THE GOLDMAKERS HAS BEEN EVACUATED?

YES.

AND THEY—

LEFT THE ACID SPRAYERS RUNNING? OH, YES.

...ALSO, THE TUNNEL RATS ARE ALL IN PLACE.

THEY SAY THEY CAN COLLAPSE ANY STREET WE WANT, "JUST SAY THE WORD."

WELL... I DO LIKE THE BLOWING THINGS UP...

THAT'S IT! START SMALL!

WELL, WE CAN ONLY DESTROY THE TOWN ONCE, SO WE'D BETTER MAKE IT COUNT.



WE SHOULD GET GOING, TOO.

YES, YES. I KNOW. HAVE ALL THE CHILDREN MADE IT TO THE CATHEDRAL?



THEY HAVE—AND THE CRYPT MASTERS WILL KEEP THEM SAFE—

THISS WE SSO VOW!

URGH!

...WHATT?!



OH COME ON, GREAT GREAT GRAN'PA—

TALK NORMAL!

WHATT? BUT THISS ISS THE SSSPEECH OF VOWING, YOU SSSNOY'LOISS CHILD!

WELL / VOW YOU ARE SOOO EMBARRASSING!

I WILL SSMITE YOUR ALLOWANCE!



um—I WONDER IF GROWING UP HERE MIGHT MAKE US A LITTLE... WEIRD...

WHOA! LOOK OUT!





THAT WAS TOO CLOSE!

NOW CAN WE GO?

YES!

EVERYONE GET OUT! QUICKLY!

I'VE HEARD ABOUT THESE!

tik tik tik



FREEZE! STAY WHERE YOU ARE, OR DIE!

I CAN HEAR YOU, YOU KNOW!

tik tik ting

CLIK



AH, THERE YOU ARE!

CLIK

SNAP CLAK!



HA! WHY, THIS IS MARVELOUS! I CAN SEE EVERYTHING!

WHERE IS THAT IDIOT'S SPEECH— AH!



ahem—LEADERS OF MECHANICSBURG! PREPARE TO—

WAIT A MINUTE... WHO THE DEVIL ARE YOU FOOLS?

BAH! WELL, I'LL JUST KILL THEM ANYWAY!



I THINK NOT.

CHOP!



WHAT ON—

WAIT...IS IT POSSIBLE?



GRANDFATHER?

AH—MY HEAD—

THE CASTLE—



HEY! HEY! COME LOOK AT THIS!

SOMETHING'S HAPPENING!



LOOK! THAT WALL JUST COLLAPSED—RIGHT ON TOP OF THOSE CLANKS—

BUT—BUT / DIDN'T ORDER THAT.

YOU SHOULD HAVE. ITS BOTTLED UP A WHOLE UNIT OF THOSE GUYS.



...AND LOOK—DOWN THE OTHER WAY—

BOTH SIDES OF THE FOLDING BRIDGE HAVE GONE UP!

THOSE SOLDIERS ARE STUCK ON TINY MONSTER ISLAND.

WHAT?! WE'VE GOT TO—

RELAX. THEY'VE GOT BOOTS.

THEY'LL BE FINE AS LONG AS THEY DON'T SIT DOWN.



BUT—WHO?



splooosh



HEH HEH HEH. HELLO, CARSON!

I HAD A BIT OF TROUBLE FINDING YOU! BUT I DID IT! YES, I DID!

... AND YOU'RE STILL ALIVE TO APPRECIATE IT! THAT'S A BIT OF A BONUS!

AH—BUT WE HAVE NO TIME TO PLAY—THERE IS WORK TO BE DONE! HURRY!

... AND THAT'S THE LAST ONE!

CASTLE? CAN YOU HEAR ME?

YES!

WELL DONE, MISTRESS!

WITH THIS, YOU HAVE VASTLY EXTENDED MY REACH!

WHOOPS-HOLD ON-

...

AH... MY POWER IS STILL FAILING, BUT I CAN NOW ACT TO DEFEND THE TOWN.

...AND NOW MADAME OTILIA WILL BE ABLE TO REACH GIL, RIGHT?

THAT I CAN DO, MISTRESS.

UM-TARVEK? SAY, WHERE'D HE GO?

WHAT?! OH, I CAN'T BELIEVE HE MISSED THIS!

CASTLE? IS TARVEK ALL RIGHT?

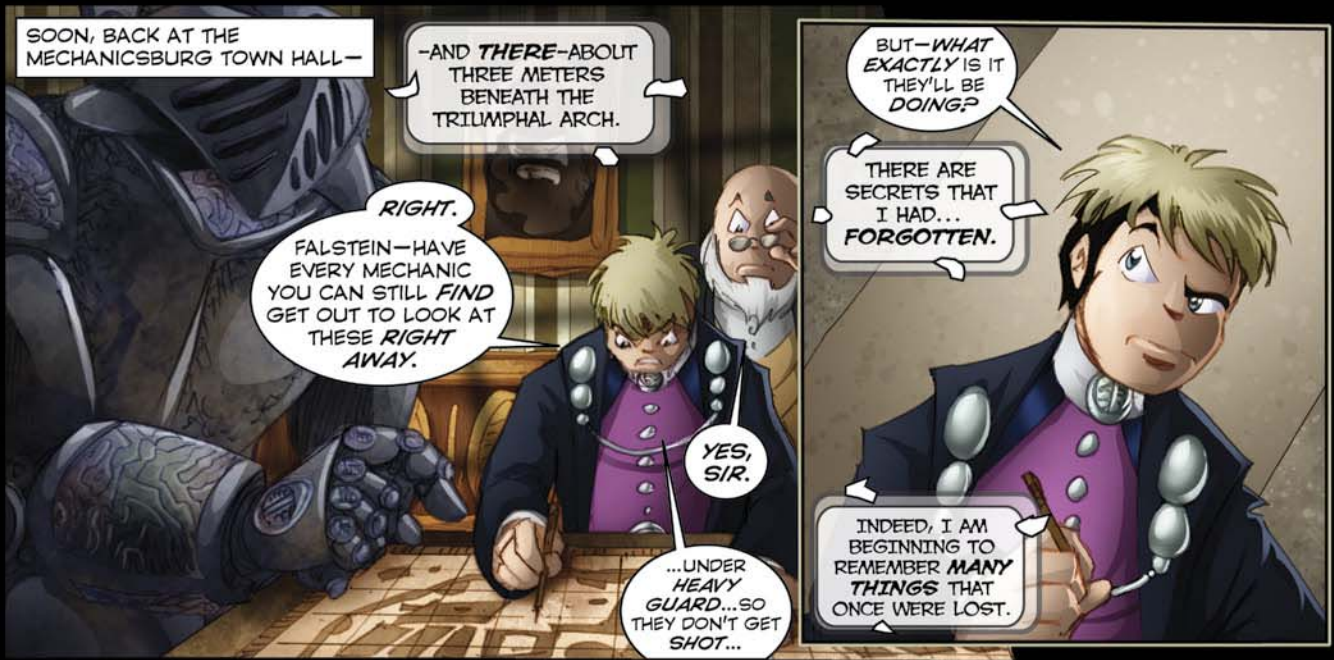
WHERE IS HE?

GREAT! COME ON, TARVEK, LET'S-

I'LL GO GET HIM! HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE HERE BY NOW!

AH-I AM SORRY, MISTRESS...

I... CANNOT SEEM TO LOCATE HIM.



SOON, BACK AT THE MECHANICSBURG TOWN HALL—

—AND **THERE**—ABOUT THREE METERS BENEATH THE TRIUMPHAL ARCH.

RIGHT.

FALSTEIN—HAVE EVERY MECHANIC YOU CAN STILL **FIND** GET OUT TO LOOK AT THESE **RIGHT AWAY**.

YES, SIR.

...UNDER **HEAVY GUARD**...SO THEY DON'T GET **SHOT**...

BUT—**WHAT EXACTLY** IS IT THEY'LL BE **DOING**?

THERE ARE SECRETS THAT I HAD... **FORGOTTEN**.

INDEED, I AM BEGINNING TO REMEMBER **MANY THINGS** THAT ONCE WERE LOST.



THAT'S VERY **CRYPTIC**, EVEN FOR YOU.

THE TOWN IS UNDER **HEAVY ATTACK**, AND YOU WANT US TO RISK VALUABLE PEOPLE TO CHASE **VAGUE MEMORIES**?

WHAT **KIND** OF "THINGS THAT ONCE WERE LOST?"

SOCKS?!



HMF. CARSON VON MEKKHAN. YOU ALWAYS WERE A **SUSPICIOUS OLD GROUCH**—

EVEN WHEN YOU WERE **YOUNG**.

HEAR ME NOW: I HEREBY **RECOGNIZE AGATHA HETERODYNE AS THE LADY OF MECHANICSBURG, AND VANAMONDE VON MEKKHAN AS HER SENESCHAL**.

SO STOP **CARPING**!

YOUR **YOUNG ONE** HERE HAS BEEN **WELL TRAINED**.

HE HAS ALREADY DISPATCHED MINIONS, WITHOUT A STRING OF **BADGERING QUESTIONS**!

HIS NAIVE TRUST IN ME GIVES ME HOPE FOR THE ENTERTAINMENT VALUE OF THE **YOUNG GENERATION**.

WHAT?



WELL DONE, **YOUNG MAN**!

WE'LL GET SOME **LOVELY HOLES** DRILLED IN YOUR HEAD **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**!

WHAT?!

poke poke

SUCH **JOLLY TIMES** WE'LL HAVE!



THAT IS, ASSUMING YOU AND THE **LADY HETERODYNE** MANAGE TO **PULL THIS OFF**. HEH.

THE **LADY HETERODYNE**! SO SHE'S ALL RIGHT? WHERE IS SHE?

NEVER FEAR. SHE IS ON HER WAY.

SOON THE **HETERODYNE** WILL ONCE AGAIN SCREAM DEFIANCE FROM ATOP THE WALLS OF **MECHANICSBURG**!

HOW **GLORIOUS**!



NOW, MY POWER IS **FADING**, AND I HAVE **MANY THINGS YET TO DO**.

YOUR TASK IS TO DEFEND THE TOWN.

I WILL PROVIDE AID, WHERE I **CAN**...

WAIT! BUT—

CLATTER

CASTLE HETERODYNE, JUST
INSIDE THE GATE OF CHIMES—

SEE? NOW
DOT'S JUST
SCHTUPID.

DOSE
GUNHEDZ IZ FOR
FIGHTING DER
INFANTRY.

VY AREN'T DEY
DOWN BY DE TOWN
GATES, VERE DERE'S
LOTS OV PIPPLE
TO SHOOT?

DEY KEN'T DO
NOTTINK TO DE
KESTLE BUT
KNOCK OUT
VINDOWS.

YES, WELL, *WE*
COUNT AS
"INFANTRY" AT THE
MOMENT, AND
WE'RE HERE—

HO! UND SO
DO DOSE SNEPPY
DRESSERS FROM
MACTOVIA DOWN
DERE.

DEYS GOINK
OUTTA DER
VAY TO BE GOOT
TARGETS.

EYOUCH.

HOO! NIZE
SPLASH!

YEEES...THE
TRICK IS GOING
TO BE KEEPING *THAT*
FROM HAPPENING
TO US.

YEZ, VELL.
DOT'S A BRIDGE
VE GOTTS TO
CROSS VEN VE KEN
GETS TO IT.

TRUE. THIS
PLACE IS
AMAZING, BUT
RIGHT NOW...

—RIGHT NOW
DIS PLAZE IZ
ANNOYING.
sigh. BUT
DIS IZ
NOTTINK.

HYU TRY PUTTINK
OP VIT IT FOR A
HUNDRED UND
FIFTY YEARS.

...I KEEP
FORGETTING
HOW *OLD* YOU
JÄGERS ARE.

OLD? HY
GUESS...

HAS THE
CASTLE
CHANGED
MUCH?

NAH. IT
SCHTILL TINKS
IT IZ FONNY.

OH, COME ON.
THIS IS
HILARIOUS.



SO, AGATHA DID IT? YOU'RE FINALLY REPAIRED?

MY CORE SYSTEMS ARE NOW... FUNCTIONAL... YES.

... WHAT?! QUIET, YOU.

I HAVE NO POWER TO SPARE FOR SUPERFICIALITIES-

UM-AND MANY SECONDARY SYSTEMS ARE STILL IN NEED OF REPAIR-

BUT, AH, I AM FUNDAMENTALLY WHOLE...

... SO LUCKY TO FIND YOU STILL HERE WHEN I REGAINED ACCESS TO THIS AREA...

tch. HYU IZ SCHTILL PRIDDY MESSY, THOUGH.



STILL, WITHOUT POWER, YOU'LL SOON-

HYU'LL STILL BE A USELESS PILE OV ROCKS!



QUIET!

IT IS TRUE. UNTIL MY GENERATORS ARE RESTORED, I CANNOT DEFEND THE TOWN AS I NORMALLY WOULD-

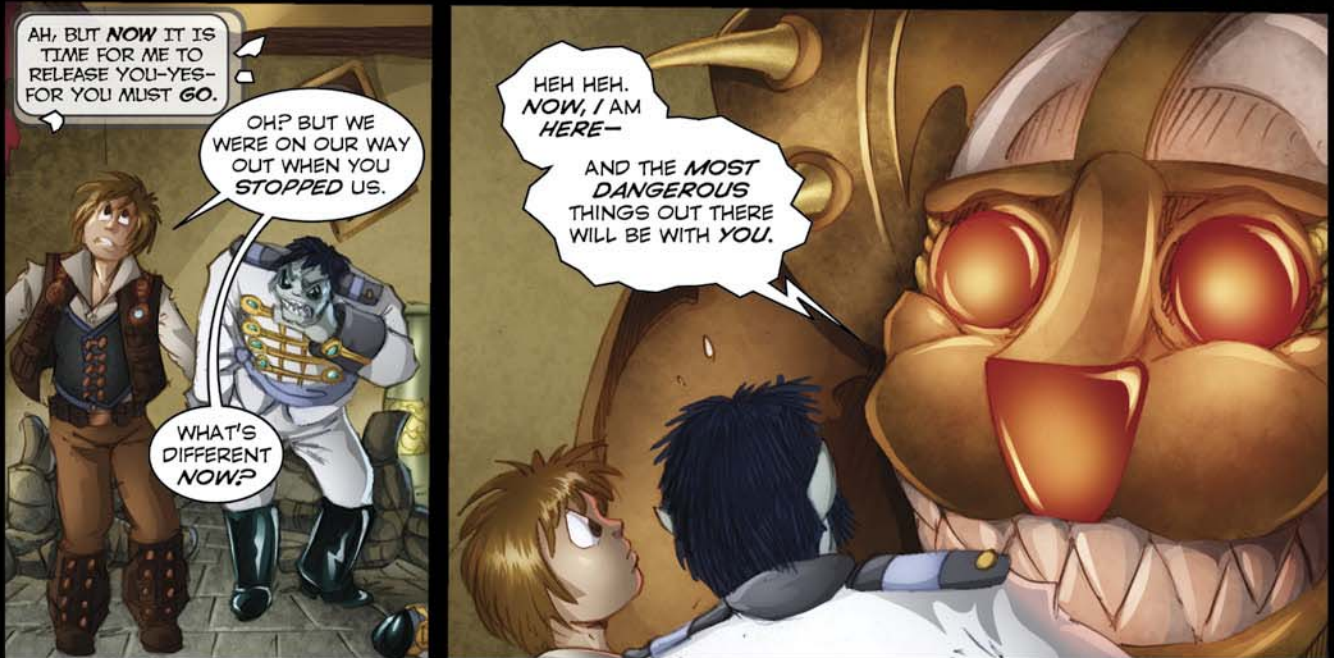
AND I AM... AH, ONE MOMENT...

I AM INORDINATELY DISTRACTED BY THE TASK OF ACTING IN MANY PLACES AT ONCE.

I MUST USE MY REMAINING POWER SPARINGLY. CLEVERLY. WITH SUBTLETY.

I AM AWARE OF THE CHALLENGE.

HYU COULDN'T DO SOTTLE VIT A TON OV BRICKS!



AH, BUT NOW IT IS TIME FOR ME TO RELEASE YOU-YES-FOR YOU MUST GO.

OH? BUT WE WERE ON OUR WAY OUT WHEN YOU STOPPED US.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT NOW?

HEH HEH. NOW, I AM HERE-

AND THE MOST DANGEROUS THINGS OUT THERE WILL BE WITH YOU.





WE HAVE BEEN SENT TO ACCOMPANY YOU.

THE LADY HETERODYNE INSISTED.

DID SHE NOW?

OH YES. NOW AT THIS TIME, WE CAN GO ONLY AS FAR AS THE CITY WALLS.

AH. THAT WILL BE FINE.



THE PLAN IS TO START AT THE HOSPITAL SITE.

YOU ARE AWARE IT HAS BEEN ALMOST COMPLETELY DESTROYED?

I...YES.

YOUR FATHER WAS AN AMAZING MAN, GILGAMESH. I OWE HIM A GREAT DEBT.

-I KNOW HE'S GONE, MADAME...

BUT THERE WILL STILL BE WULFENBACH TROOPS IN THE AREA.



AT LEAST SOME OF THEM MUST HAVE SEEN ME TAKE OUT THOSE WAR CLANKS.

AND THEY'LL KNOW MY FATHER IS...IS DEAD...

UNTIL I CAN GET TO CASTLE WULFENBACH ITSELF, THEY'LL BE THE MOST LIKELY TO ACCEPT MY AUTHORITY.

I'LL NEED THEM.

ASSUMING I CAN CONVINCE THEM OF WHO I AM, OF COURSE.



OH, HO! THAT WE HAVE COVERED!

SLEIPNIR! THEO!

ARE YOU COMING WITH ME?!

OF COURSE!

SORRY WE'RE LATE-BUT WE ALMOST FORGOT SOMETHING!



TA-DAH!

YOU CAN'T GO OUT THERE WITHOUT YOUR WONDERFUL HAT!



YESSSS...

WITH MY LUCK, THAT WILL BE EXACTLY WHAT I NEED.



IF WE ARE TO MAKE IT TO THE HOSPITAL SITE, WE MUST FIND A WAY PAST THOSE AERIAL FORCES.

OH? BUT SURELY, NOW THAT THE CASTLE'S BEEN REPAIRED—?



ORDINARILY, YES... AND... I AM DOING MY BEST...

BUT UNDER THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES—

I HAVE... SO FAR... ONLY BEEN ABLE TO TAKE OUT A FEW OF THEM.



THEN WHY WASTE ANY OF YOUR REMAINING POWER DETAINING ME?!

IT SEEMS THE LADY HETERODYNE... WOULD PREFER YOU ALIVE.

AH WELL, ALL OF THE MASTERS HAD THEIR LITTLE QUIRKS...



...AND SHE REALLY THINKS I'M GOING TO JUST WANDER OUT INTO THE MIDDLE OF A BATTLEFIELD?

OH? AND DIDN'T YOU DO JUST THAT THE OTHER DAY?

BIG ARMY OF WAR MACHINES? YOU WITH A WALKING STICK? RING ANY BELLS?

...ONCE. I DID THAT ONCE.

MAYBE YOU JUST HAVEN'T HAD ANOTHER CHANCE.



OH COME ON!

GIVE ME SOME CREDIT!

YOU WERE SURPRISED TO FIND ME STILL HERE, RIGHT?

WHAT DID YOU THINK I WAS DOING?

OKAY, SURE, I AM GOING OUT THERE—



BUT I'M NOT GOING UNARMED!



WAIT—WHAT DO YOU MEAN? TARVEK'S NOT IN THE CASTLE AT ALL!

AH, I AM... CURRENTLY FIGHTING BATTLES ON MANY FRONTS, BUT...

ONE MOMENT...

YES, THAT SEEMS TO BE THE CASE.

... BUT YOU WILL BE HAPPY TO KNOW THAT I HAVE... AH...



I HAVE CAPTURED YOUR *OTHER* CONSORT, AND AM... HOLDING HIM UNTIL MADAME OTILIA CAN REACH HIM.

WELL, THAT'S GOOD.

BUT TARVEK—GOSH, I...! I GUESS HE LEFT AFTER ALL.

HE'S PROBABLY PRETTY MAD—

NO WAY! THAT'S NOT IT!



BUT...IF HE DID LEAVE THE CASTLE, HE'LL BE FACING ALL THOSE ATTACKERS, TOO—

AND HE DOESN'T HAVE THE MOBILE FUN UNITS TO HELP HIM!



HM. HE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE CURRENTLY ENGAGING THE ATTACKERS...

BUT, MY LADY, HE... STRUCK ME AS A RESOURCEFUL YOUNG MAN. WE WILL...

EXCUSE ME...

WE MUST TRUST IN HIS STRENGTH. SEARCH FOR HIM LATER.



I HAVE ACCEPTED YOU AS THE LADY HETERODYNE.

MECHANICSBURG NEEDS YOU.

THERE IS FIGHTING IN THE STREETS. I SHALL INFORM THE TOWN LEADERS THAT YOU ARE ON THE WAY.

... YOU MUST GO FORTH AND DEFEND YOUR TOWN, AS THE HETERODYNE SHOULD.



OKAY, GREAT! BUT HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO GET TO THEM ALIVE?

ALL THOSE ARMIES AND THINGS ARE STILL OUT THERE!

... I HAVE A FEW LAST TRICKS SAVED UP—

... HEH, AND... IT LOOKS LIKE THE LADY'S SURVIVING CONSORT SHOULD PROVIDE YOU WITH MORE THAN ADEQUATE COVER.

CASTLE HETERODYNE—
THE FIRST GATE HOUSE.

LET'S GO!
KICK THOSE FEET
INTO SECOND
GEAR! MOVE!

SIR! YES
SIR!

GET BACK,
YOU YOUNG
FOOL!

DO YOU WANT
THEM TO START
SHOOTING AT
US AGAIN?

WELL, I HAVE
TO WATCH FOR
HER, DON'T I?

TSK. DON'T
WORRY.
YOU'LL KNOW.

BUT, I TELL
YOU, SHE'LL BE
SHOT INSTANTLY
IF SHE COMES
OUT HERE!
SURELY ONE OF
THE OLD
TUNNELS—P

HEH HEH HEH. I
THINK SHE WILL
SURPRISE YOU.

SHE'LL
HAVE TO!

WE'RE LOSING
GROUND
EVERYWHERE!

WE'VE GOT AT
LEAST SEVEN
DIFFERENT FACTIONS
BRAWLING OUT
THERE!

IF THIS GIRL
CAN'T COME UP
WITH SOMETHING
PRETTY
AMAZING, THIS TOWN
IS FINISHED!

I AM WELL
AWARE OF THAT,
LADY VITRIX.
...BUT YOU'VE
GOT TO GIVE
HER CREDIT!

SHE'S THE
HETERODYNE! DON'T
YOU OLD-TIMERS
REMEMBER WHAT THAT
MEANS?

AH-DO NOT WORRY.
THEY... ARE ABOUT
TO BE REMINDED.

I BELIEVE YOU
MAY ALL NOW
SAFELY APPROACH
THE WINDOW.

THE SHOW IS
ABOUT TO
BEGIN.



HA!
... AND THAT
ONE'S FOR
AGATHA!

GRAAAAH!

WHOO!
YEAH!

PZOW!
PZOW!

SLOWN!

AAAAH!
RETREAT!

YES,
SIR!

THE DOOM BELL—

HUFF
HUFF
HUFF...

HUFF
HUFF

EEEARRGGH!

HUFF
GASP
WHEEZE...

CLUNK

CRACK
CRACK
CRACK
CRACK



AAAAAH! IT
CERTAINLY
TOOK YOU
LONG
ENOUGH!

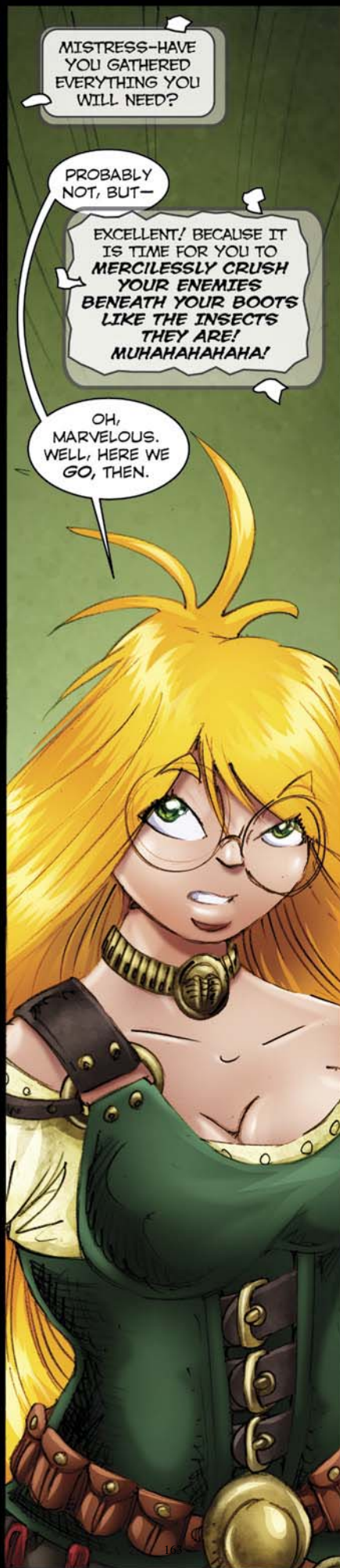


HEH HEH HEH.
THANK YOU,
LITTLE MAN.

... YOU MAY
WANT TO **COVER**
YOUR EARS.

YEEK!

NOT THAT IT
WILL DO ANY
GOOD...



MISTRESS-HAVE
YOU GATHERED
EVERYTHING YOU
WILL NEED?

PROBABLY
NOT, BUT-

EXCELLENT! BECAUSE IT
IS TIME FOR YOU TO
MERCILESSLY CRUSH
YOUR ENEMIES
BENEATH YOUR BOOTS
LIKE THE INSECTS
THEY ARE!
MUHAHAHAHA!

OH,
MARVELOUS.
WELL, HERE WE
GO, THEN.



YOUNG VON
MEKKHAN-

SHE IS
COMING.

YOU WILL ALL
GO OUT TO
GREET HER NOW.

BUT-
ISN'T IT STILL
DANGEROUS-

LET'S GO,
LADIES AND
GENTLEMEN.



WOW. THERE HE GOES. WULFENBACH'S REALLY TEARING THROUGH TOWN.

WULFENBACH?! YOU MEAN, THAT WAS—

hmf. HIS FATHER WOULD'VE HIT THE GATE AND BEGUN ANOTHER SWEEP BY NOW.



HUM. ACTUALLY, I DON'T LIKE THAT—

IT'S BAD FORM TO LET THE EMPIRE STEAL OUR THUNDER RIGHT FROM THE START...

OH, COME, THERE'S HARDLY ANY FEAR OF THAT, NOW IS THERE?

WAIT! HE'S TOO YOUNG! HE HASN'T HEARD IT!

NONE OF THE YOUNG ONES HAVE HEARD IT!



UM...AM I MISSING SOMETHING?

WHEN THERE'S A NEW HETERODYNE— THE DOOM BELL RINGS!

...SO?

SO EVEN IF YOU'RE USED TO IT, IT TENDS TO HAVE AN EFFECT—

NOBODY'S HEARD IT FOR AGES! EVEN WHEN THE HETERODYNE BOYS WERE HERE, THEY HARDLY EVER RANG IT!

SURE, IT'LL HINDER ANY ENEMIES ALREADY IN THE AREA—

BUT IT'LL ALSO CRIPPLE OUR OWN DEFENSES! AND THERE ARE MORE INVADERS COMING!

...OH, COME ON. YOU'RE JUST MESSING WITH THE NEW KID AGAIN, AREN'T YOU?

I MEAN, WHEN ALL'S SAID AND DONE—IT'S JUST A BELL, RIGHT?



I LOVE THIS PART.

OKAY,
EVERYBODY'S
HERE, THEY'RE
ALL LOOKING
AT ME—

YOU CAN
GET STARTED
ANY TIME!

COME ON, YOU
HAVE TO SAY IT!
JUST LIKE I
TOLD YOU!

OH, ALL
RIGHT...

PEOPLE OF
MECHANICSBURG,
THE CASTLE IS
MINE!

**I AM THE
HETERODYNE!**

GO ON, THE
WHOLE
THING!

sigh.
OKAY,
OKAY!

**TREMBLE
BEFORE ME!**

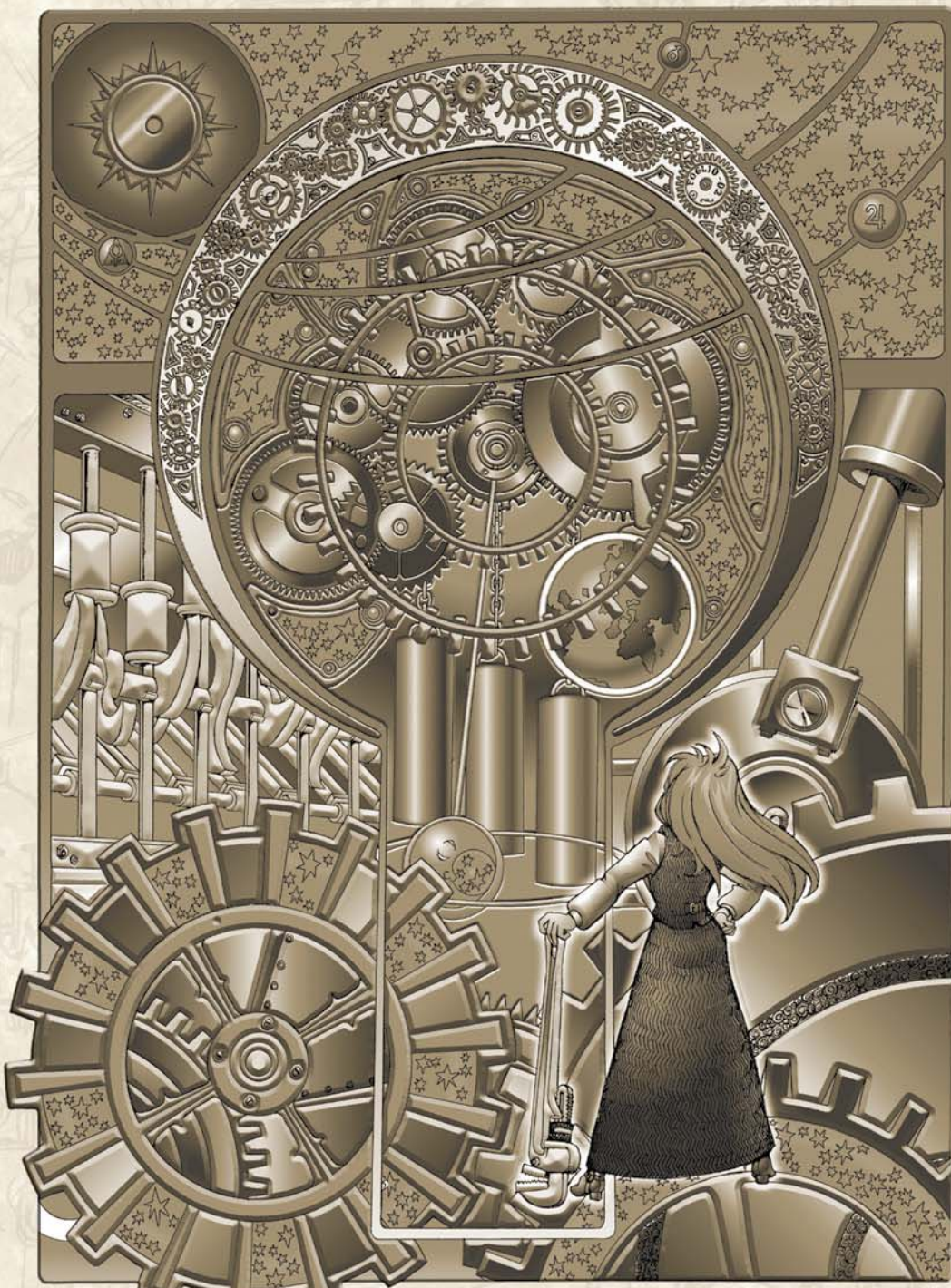




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AGATHA HETERODYNE

THE MONSTER ENGINE



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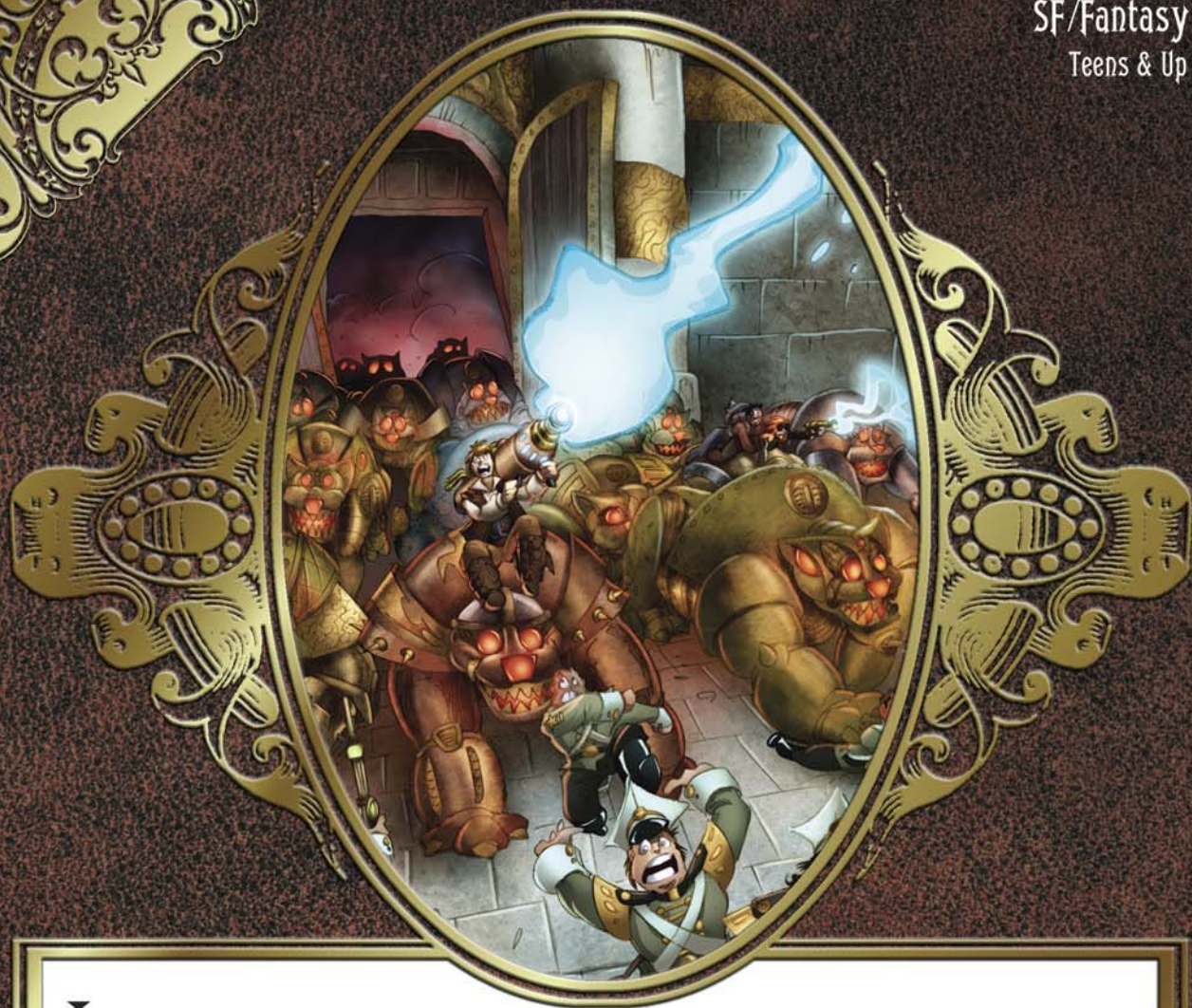


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