

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

Courtney VOLUME FIVE Crumrin



The Witch Next Door

—❖— TED NAIFEH —❖—

Courtney
BY TED NAIFEH
Crumrin

The Witch Next Door





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The Witch Next Door

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Originally published as issues 1-5 of the Oni Press comic series
Courtney Crumrin.

Courtney Crumrin: The Witch Next Door. June 2019. Published by Oni Press, Inc. 1319 SE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Suite 240, Portland, OR 97214. Courtney Crumrin is TM & © 2019 Ted Naifeh. All rights reserved. Oni Press logo and icon TM & © 2019 Oni Press, Inc. Oni Press logo and icon artwork created by Keith A. Wood. The events, institutions, and characters presented in this book are fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental. No portion of this publication may be reproduced, by any means, without the express written permission of the copyright holders.



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Suite 240
Portland, OR 97214

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onipress.tumblr.com · instagram.com/onipress

First Edition: June 2019

ISBN 978-1-62010-640-2

eISBN 978-1-62010-039-4

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013916421

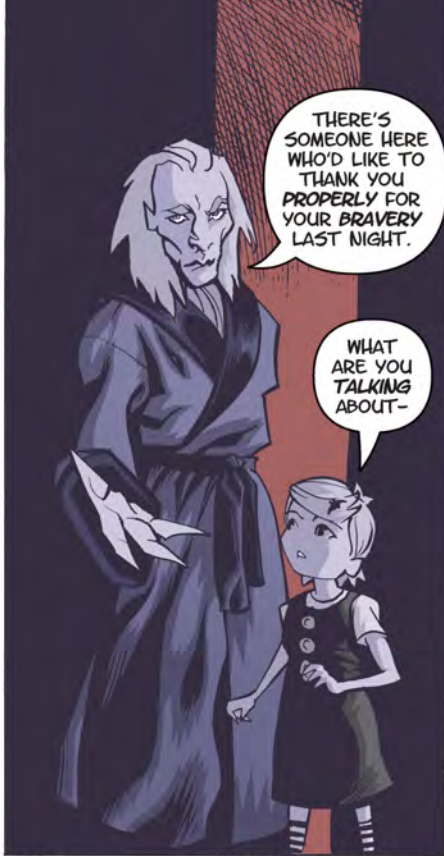
For Jill and James



Chapter One

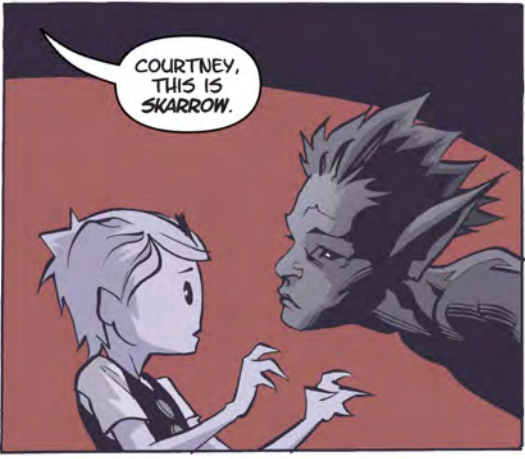






THERE'S SOMEONE HERE WHO'D LIKE TO THANK YOU PROPERLY FOR YOUR BRAVERY LAST NIGHT.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT-



COURTNEY, THIS IS SKARROW.



HE'LL BE STAYING AS MY GUEST FOR A WHILE. WHY DON'T YOU TWO GET ACQUAINTED?



SO, ERR...

WHAT'S IT LIKE BEING A FAERIE?



DON'T TALK MUCH, DO YOU?



I'VE BEEN DOWN THERE. NOT A GOOD PLACE FOR US MORTALS.



BUT IT WAS PRETTY NEAT. IF THAT'S WHERE YOU BELONG, I DON'T SEE WHY YOU'D LEAVE TO COME UP HERE.



I GUESS IT GETS LONELY DOWN THERE TOO.

ISN'T THERE ANYWHERE THAT ISN'T LONELY?



BUT THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO, AND SKARROW WAS GONE NOW.



AND COURTNEY STILL LONGED FOR AN ANSWER.



THE AUCTION IS SUNDAY, IF YOU'RE INTERESTED.



SHE HAD NO WILL. THE PROCEEDS GO TO THE HALL.

YOU THINK SHE'S DEAD?

I THINK SHE'S GOT NOTHING TO COME BACK FOR.



YOU NEVER FORGAVE ME, DID YOU?

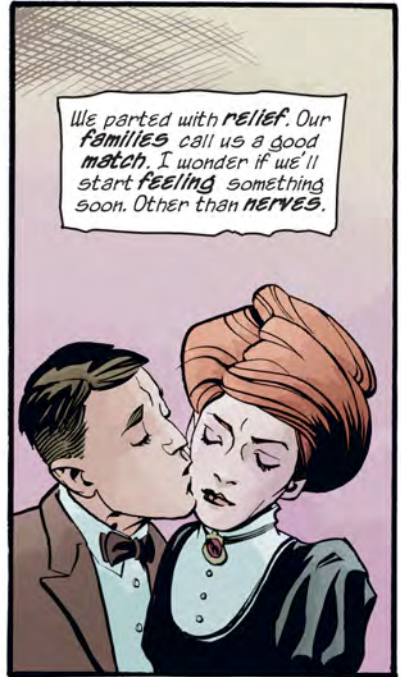
IT WAS MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY AGO, ALOYSIUS. BELIEVE IT OR NOT, I'VE LET IT PASS.







He's so *uncomfortable* with it. Sometimes I wish I could put it away in a *drawer* when it *upsets* people.



We parted with *relief*. Our *families* call us a good *match*. I wonder if we'll start *feeling* something soon. Other than *nerves*.



I suppose I'm *old* enough now to leave the house after dark by the *front door*, but old habits die *hard*.



When I was *young*, I pretended I was a *changeling*, abandoned by the *Twilight Queen* for being too *ugly*.



It seemed so much *easier* than being too *beautiful*.



When you're *ugly*, people want to see anything *else*. When you're *beautiful*...



That's *all* they see.

LOVELY.

OH, ER... THANK YOU.

MAY I?



I SEE YOU OUT HERE OFTEN. AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF THEM LIKE EVERYONE ELSE?

WHAT'S TO BE AFRAID OF?





THAT'S
WHAT I KEEP
SAVING.



We talked about the night
things I'd *befriended*, and the
ones I'd *avoided*, and the ones
I *dreamed* of encountering.



He wasn't *courting*
me. He wasn't even
being *polite*. He was
genuinely interested.



I can't
remember
the last time
I'd felt
listened to
rather than
looked at.



Of course, I *knew* who he
was, The last *Crumrin* in
Hillsborough, who
stayed in that crumbling
old house even after all
the others *drifted away*.



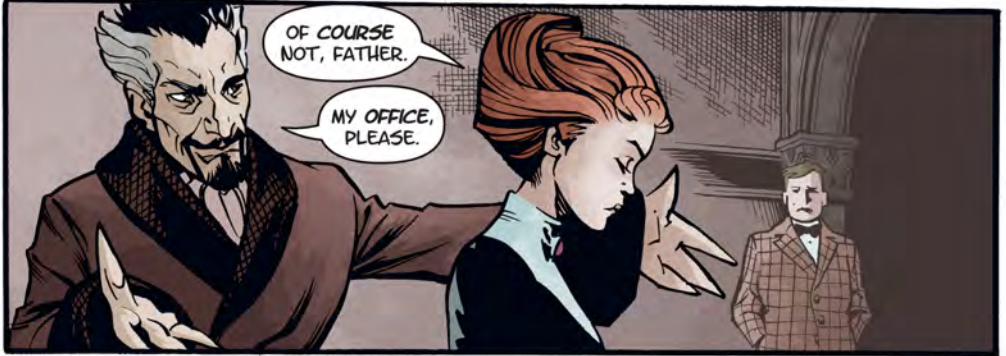
Sun. 7th June-
 One thing I learned early
 in life is that **nothing** in
 this house belongs to **me**.



That includes the **clothes** on my **back**, the contents of my **diary**...

Even the **thoughts** in my **head**.

I HOPE YOU
 DIDN'T THINK YOU COULD
 KEEP LAST NIGHT'S LITTLE
 TRYST TO YOURSELF.



OF COURSE
 NOT, FATHER.

MY OFFICE,
 PLEASE.



At first I thought I was in for a **thrashing**. I'd be **humiliated** in front of Woodrue, and the world would return to **normal**.

Instead, things took a turn for the downright **sinister**.


GENTLEMEN,
 THANK YOU FOR
 COMING.

I
 HAVE SOME
 INTERESTING
 NEWS.

IT SEEMS WE
 HAVE INADVERTENTLY
 FOUND A WAY TO
 PROGRESS.




I DON'T UNDERSTAND.



WOODRUE,
SINCE YOU BROUGHT
THIS TO MY ATTENTION,
AND SINCE YOU'LL SOON
BECOME MY SON, I FEEL
I SHOULD BRING YOU
UP TO SPEED.


WHILE WE IDLE
AWAY OUR LIVES IN THIS
COMFORTABLE BOROUGH,
WAR RAVAGES THE
WORLD.

THIS IS
NOTHING NEW.




WE SORCERERS HAVE
SAT BY AND WATCHED THIS
COUNTRY ENDURE DEPRESSIONS,
WARS, POVERTY, AND MORAL
DEGRADATION...

...AS THOUGH WE WERE
NOT UNIQUELY CAPABLE OF
STOPPING IT.



BUT THE LAW
FORBIDS US TO
INTERFERE...

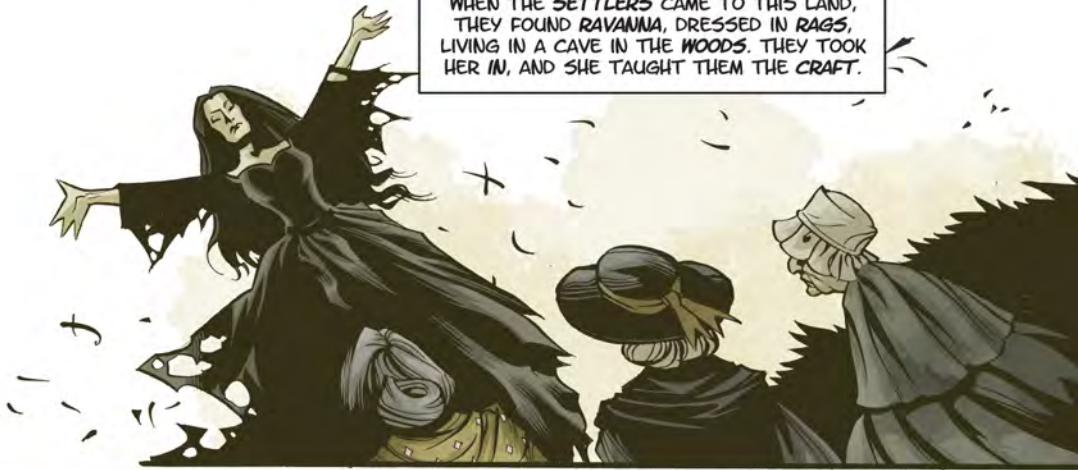
INDEED SO.
THE COVEN'S LAWS
ARE STRICT AND
PRECISE.



WE MAY NOT TAKE
MAGIC OUT OF HILLSBOROUGH,
NOR USE IT TO DOMINATE
ORDINARY FOLK.

EVER
WONDER
WHO MADE
THE LAW?

WHEN THE SETTLERS CAME TO THIS LAND, THEY FOUND RAVANNA, DRESSED IN RAGS, LIVING IN A CAVE IN THE WOODS. THEY TOOK HER IN, AND SHE TAUGHT THEM THE CRAFT.



SHE WAS A WILD, HALF-FAERIE CREATURE. WHO KNOWS WHERE SHE CAME FROM?

IT REQUIRED THE IRON WILL OF COLONEL FORREST CRUMRIN, A FORMER CONFEDERATE SOLDIER, TO TAME HER.

SHE TOOK A RESPECTABLE NAME, AND EVENTUALLY BECAME HIS WIFE.



AFTER COLONEL CRUMRIN DIED, IT CAME TO HER EARS SOME OF THE TOWN FOLK WERE TALKING ABOUT USING MAGIC TO SEEK FORTUNE IN THE WIDER WORLD.



IT WASN'T LILLIAN CRUMRIN, RESPECTABLE WIDOW, WHO STORMED INTO THAT TOWN HALL MEETING, BUT RAVANNA, THE WILD HALF-FAERIE WITCH.



SHE LAID DOWN THE LAW RIGHT THEN AND THERE. NO ONE DARED ARGUE.



THEN TO EVERYONE'S GREAT SURPRISE, SHE DIED. WE THOUGHT THE OLD GOAT WOULD LIVE FOREVER.



OH, THEY DISCUSSED CHANGING THE LAW. A FEW LEFT TOWN QUIETLY.



ALL THAT CAME BACK WAS THE RUMOR OF THEIR BITTER ENDS.

IT SEEMS A CURSE WAS LAID ON THOSE WHO VIOLATED RAVANNA'S LAW.



BUT I DIDN'T BELIEVE IT. I'VE MADE A STUDY OF CURSES AND HEXES. THEY'RE GREATLY MISUNDERSTOOD.

AND RELY TOO HEAVILY ON THE FEAR OF THE VICTIM.

I HAVE ANOTHER THEORY.



ALL VERY INTERESTING SIR, BUT WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH ALOYSIUS CRUMRIN? OR HERMIA?

DON'T YOU SEE?



CRUMRIN IS THE CURSE.

I'VE WATCHED HIM OVER THE YEARS, SLIPPING AWAY IN SECRET, SOMETIMES FOR MONTHS.



I FIRMLY BELIEVE HIM TO BE AN ASSASSIN OF SORCERERS.



WHICH BRINGS ME TO HERMIA.

YOU, MY DEAR, HAVE MANAGED TO CATCH THE EYE OF THE MOST SECRETIVE WARLOCK IN HILLSBOROUGH.

EVEN YOU MUST SEE THE OPPORTUNITY.

I felt *sick*. I turned to *Woodrue*, but he was no help. He'd do *anything* for Father's approval.



So there I *sat*, waiting for *Aloysius* to appear. I would *throw* myself at him like a *fool*, be *rejected*, and that would be *that*.



Suddenly, all thought of *Aloysius* *vanished*.



I'd never heard of any night thing *like* it. So *beautiful* and *deadly*...



I wondered what it was *hunting*, and hoped it wasn't *me*...





Then I realized-



I felt pulled into the *wake* of the creature. I had no *idea* what I hoped to *accomplish*.



I'd only seen his eyes for a *second*.



But I *knew* I must help him.



My stomach lurched when I saw Aloysius.



His eyes told me he faced death itself.



Then suddenly...



Death blinked.



AH, MISS HARKEN. I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE.



HE'S HAD
A TRYING
EVENING.



I doctored his
wounds while
Aloysius played
nurse, following
my instructions
wordlessly.

HE'LL BE
FINE IN A
FEW DAYS.

SHALL I
MAKE SOME
COCOA?



I'd never felt so at ease.
How could such a gentle
man be an assassin?

DELICIOUS.
IS IT MAGICAL?

MMMM. THE
CAYENNE PEPPER
IS WHAT DOES IT.



Tuesday, 9th June-
I considered keeping
that night a secret, but
Woodrue, Father's
faithful *servant*, had
spied the whole *thing*.

Father was
overjoyed.

I COULDN'T
HAVE PLANNED
IT BETTER.
NOW...



TONIGHT,
YOU WILL PLACE
THIS UNDER HIS
PILLOW.

WHAT
IS IT?



A POWERFUL
LOVE CHARM. I
ENCHANTED IT
MYSELF.



What can I do, trapped
as I am between my
father and my fiancée?



Wednesday, 10th June-
I returned, pretending only
to look in on my *patient*.



HERMIA?



I BEG
YOUR PARDON.
I THOUGHT YOU
WERE UPSTAIRS.



I'M SORRY,
ALOYSIUS. I CAN'T
IMAGINE WHAT YOU
MUST THINK
OF ME.



ON THE
CONTRARY. I ADMIRE
ANYONE BRAVE ENOUGH
TO FOLLOW THEIR
HEART.

*What fools men are,
seeing only what
they want to see.*



I suppose they're
just like us.

SO, IT'S
TRUE.

NOT ONLY WAS
HE RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE
DEATHS, HE INVOLVED ORDINARY
FOLK IN HIS MISDEEDS.



FROM WHAT I READ, THOSE SORCERERS HAD SIGNIFICANT MISDEEDS TO THEIR CREDIT AS WELL.

MY DEAR, YOUR TASK WAS TO FETCH THIS EVIDENCE, NOT TO READ IT.



DOES OUR ENGAGEMENT MEAN NOTHING TO YOU?



IF YOU'LL RECALL, IT WAS YOU WHO DREW ME INTO THIS BUSINESS.

YOU COULD HAVE SAID NO. I NEVER THOUGHT IT'D GO THIS FAR.



YOU MIGHT WOUND HIM IN WAYS NO MAN CAN HEAL FROM.

LET'S HOPE SO.



THIS IS NO TIME TO LOSE YOUR NERVE, BOY. TONIGHT, HERMIA WILL FIND A WAY TO ALLOW ME ENTRANCE INTO CRUMRIN HOUSE.



THE WORLD AWAITS US, WOODRUE. AND IF ALOYSIUS CRUMRIN STANDS IN MY WAY...

I WILL DESTROY HIM.

I sent Aloysius into the woods to gather medicinal herbs for Skarrow. He went dutifully, trusting in my expertise.

My father waited at the back door. I led him to the heart of the house.

HIS INNER SANCTUM. WHAT SECRETS MUST IT HOLD, I WONDER?

HIERONYMUS HARKEN, YOU'RE UNDER ARREST.

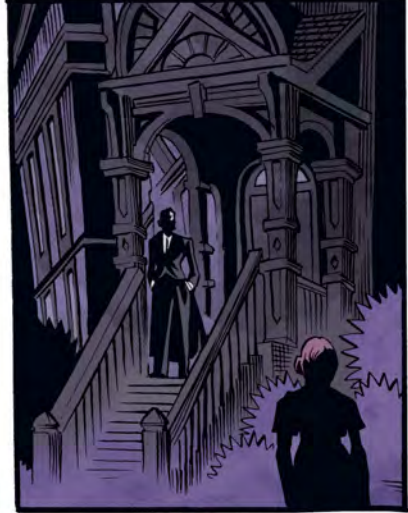
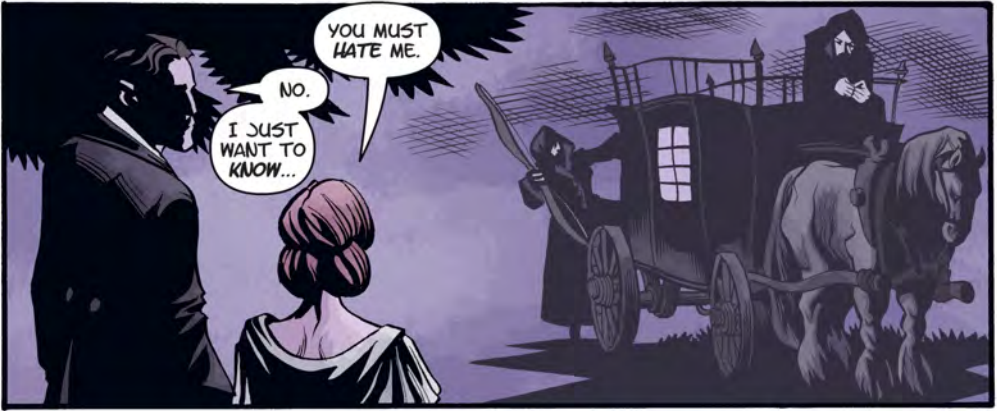
HERMIA!
HOW COULD YOU BE SO FOOLISH?

DON'T BLAME HER, HARKEN.

YOU BETRAYED ME? YOU!?!

WHY SO SURPRISED?

YOU WATCHED ME BETRAY YOUR DAUGHTER, DIDN'T YOU?





LET HIM COME FOR ME IF HE DARES. I'LL BE READY.



Everything in me wanted to beg for forgiveness, to be taken back.

But what a fool I would look, after all I'd done?



Loneliness was what I deserved.

OH. HELLO.



LOOKS LIKE IT'S JUST YOU AND ME, MISTER.

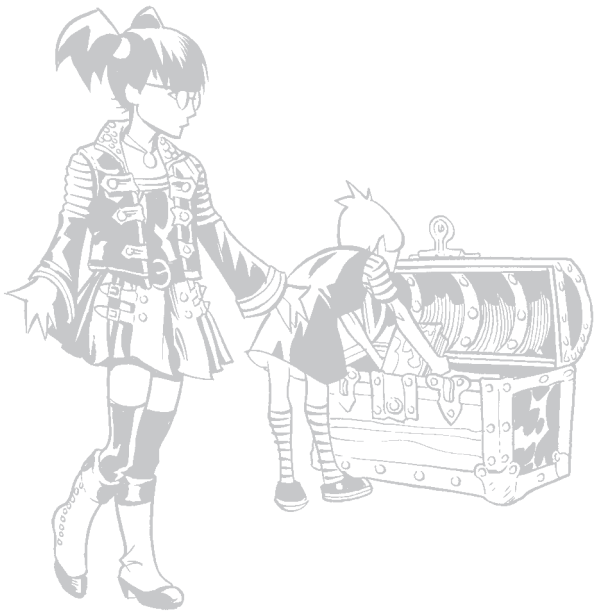


WOULD YOU HAVE TAKEN HER BACK?



Chapter Two





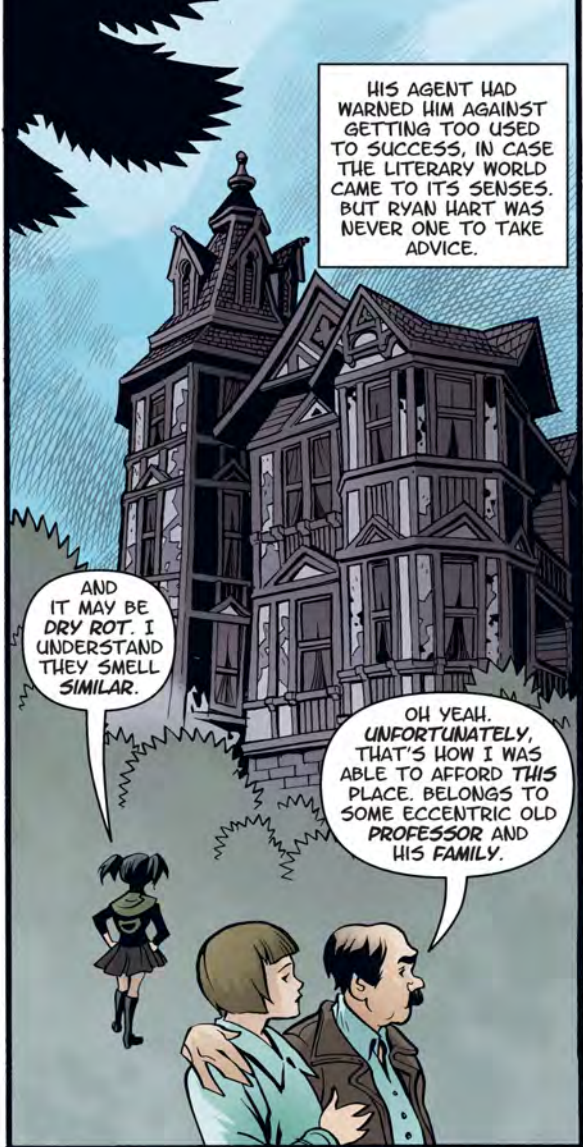


I'VE ALWAYS HEARD THAT IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANYTHING NICE TO SAY, YOU SHOULD KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT. SO I WON'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THE POLITICAL THRILLER THAT MADE HOLLY HART'S FATHER A RICH MAN.

ESCROW CLOSES TODAY. IT'S OURS. ISN'T IT PERFECT?

OH, RYAN! YOU CAN ALMOST SMELL THE OLD MONEY AROUND HERE.

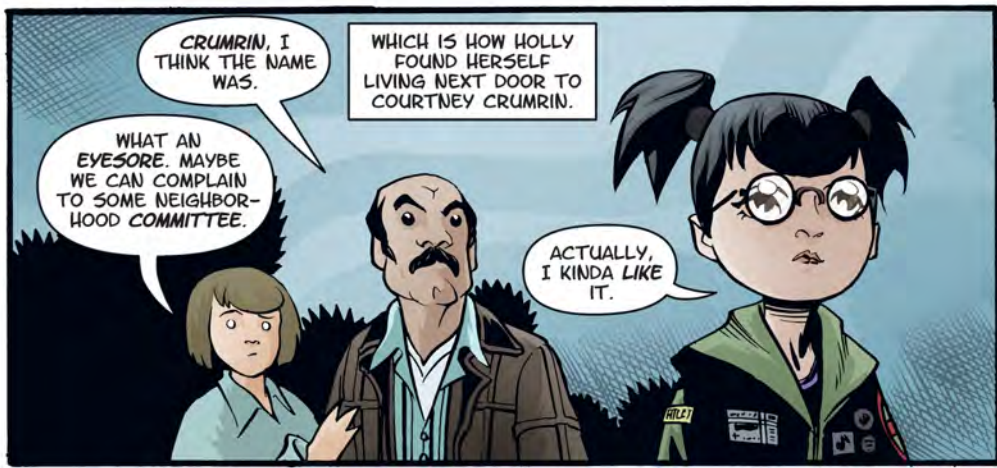
I THINK THAT'S THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR.



HIS AGENT HAD WARNED HIM AGAINST GETTING TOO USED TO SUCCESS, IN CASE THE LITERARY WORLD CAME TO ITS SENSES. BUT RYAN HART WAS NEVER ONE TO TAKE ADVICE.

AND IT MAY BE DRY ROT. I UNDERSTAND THEY SMELL SIMILAR.

OH YEAH. UNFORTUNATELY, THAT'S HOW I WAS ABLE TO AFFORD THIS PLACE. BELONGS TO SOME ECCENTRIC OLD PROFESSOR AND HIS FAMILY.



CRUMRIN, I THINK THE NAME WAS.

WHICH IS HOW HOLLY FOUND HERSELF LIVING NEXT DOOR TO COURTNEY CRUMRIN.

WHAT AN EYESORE. MAYBE WE CAN COMPLAIN TO SOME NEIGHBORHOOD COMMITTEE.

ACTUALLY, I KINDA LIKE IT.

ORDINARILY, THE "TWEEN" POPULATION OF HILLSBOROUGH WERE READY ENOUGH TO ACCEPT A NEW ADDITION TO THEIR CADRE, ESPECIALLY IF HER FATHER'S LATEST BOOK WAS BEING DEVELOPED FOR A FEATURE FILM WITH LOTS OF EXPENSIVE EXPLOSIONS.

LOOK AT THOSE CLOTHES.

LOOKS LIKE SHE MADE THEM HERSELF. WHAT IS SHE, A REFUGEE OR SOMETHING?

FROM GLOOM-LAND, MAYBE. YOU'D THINK SHE'S NEVER HEARD OF, LIKE, COLOR.

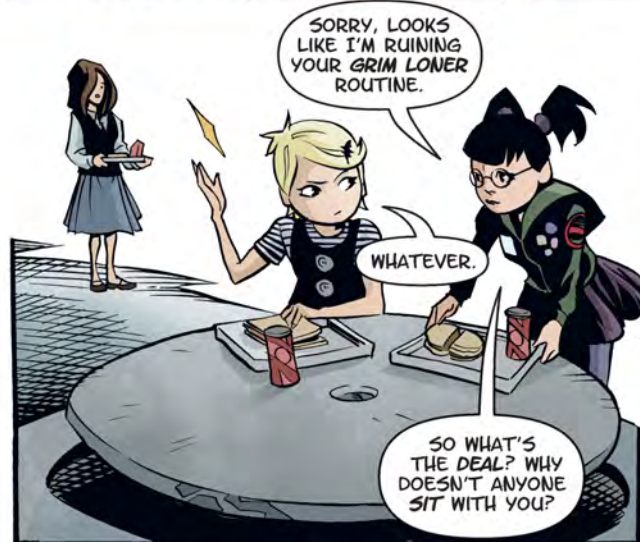
BUT HOLLY KNEW SHE WAS THE SORT OF PERSON WHO INEVITABLY FELL INTO THE CATEGORY MARKED "OUTSIDER."

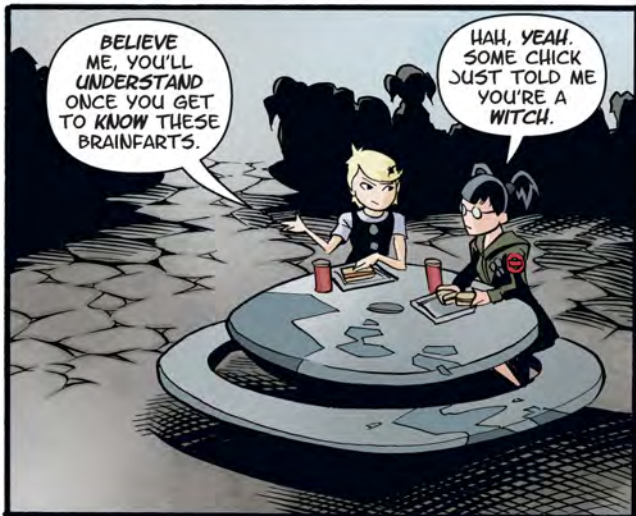
SO SHE HARDLY FOUND HER RECEPTION SURPRISING.

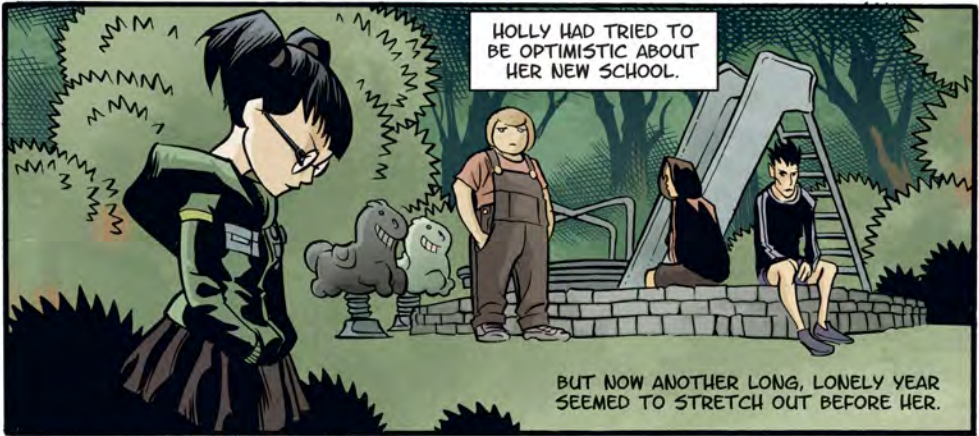
FINE, SHOW ME THE WAY TO THE LOSER TABLE. I KNOW MY PLACE.

BINGO.

I WOULDN'T SIT THERE.

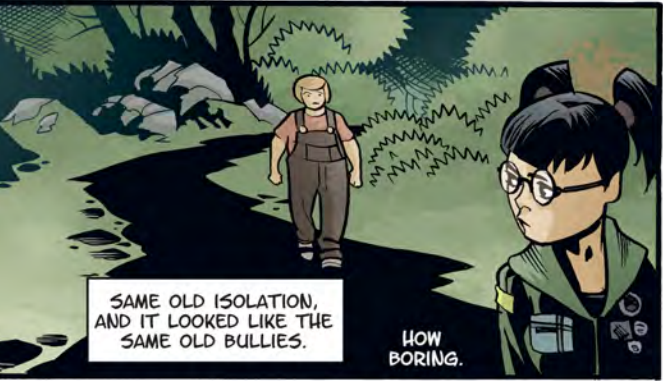






HOLLY HAD TRIED TO BE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT HER NEW SCHOOL.

BUT NOW ANOTHER LONG, LONELY YEAR SEEMED TO STRETCH OUT BEFORE HER.



SAME OLD ISOLATION, AND IT LOOKED LIKE THE SAME OLD BULLIES.

HOW BORING.



SHE FOUND HERSELF WISHING FOR SOMETHING, ANYTHING, NEW.

WE DON'T GO IN THE WOODS. NO ONE DOES.



WHY, WHAT'S IN THERE?

I DON'T KNOW.



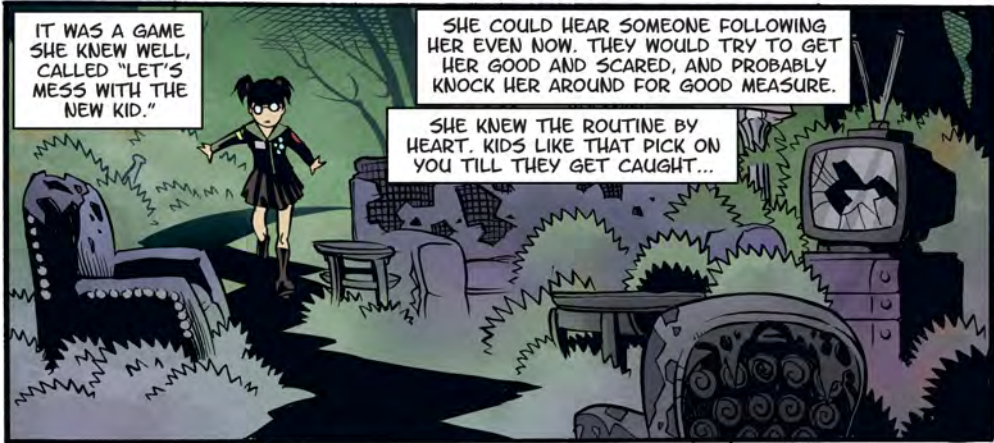
BUT THAT KID WENT IN ONCE AND NEVER CAME OUT.

MISSING



THAT'S YOUR STORY?

A COMATOSE CHIMP COULD DO BETTER.



IT WAS A GAME SHE KNEW WELL, CALLED "LET'S MESS WITH THE NEW KID."

SHE COULD HEAR SOMEONE FOLLOWING HER EVEN NOW. THEY WOULD TRY TO GET HER GOOD AND SCARED, AND PROBABLY KNOCK HER AROUND FOR GOOD MEASURE.

SHE KNEW THE ROUTINE BY HEART. KIDS LIKE THAT PICK ON YOU TILL THEY GET CAUGHT...



...OR TILL YOU TEACH THEM A HARD LESSON.



ALRIGHT, FARM GIRL, LET'S DO THIS.



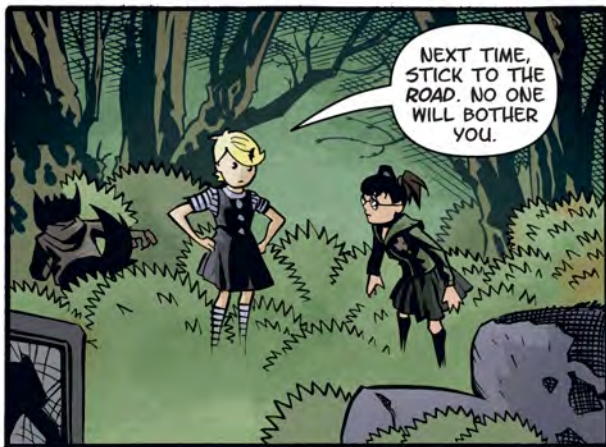
TRICK OR-



-TREAT...?

GRUNCH





NEXT TIME, STICK TO THE ROAD. NO ONE WILL BOTHER YOU.



I'LL SEE TO THAT.



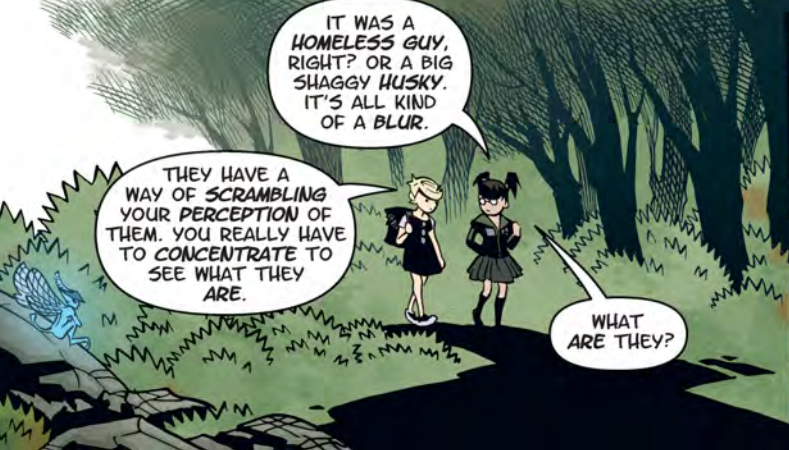
COURTNEY DIDN'T EXPECT EVER TO TALK TO THE NEW GIRL AGAIN. MOST PEOPLE, WHEN CONFRONTED WITH MAGIC, TENDED TO AVOID ANY FUTURE CONFRONTATION.

THEY EVEN AVOIDED REMEMBERING IT, EDITING OUT OF THEIR MINDS ANYTHING UNEXPLAINABLE.



SO THIS WAS THE LAST THING SHE EXPECTED.

OKAY, WHAT WAS ALL THAT ABOUT YESTERDAY?



IT WAS A HOMELESS GUY, RIGHT? OR A BIG SHAGGY HUSKY. IT'S ALL KIND OF A BLUR.

THEY HAVE A WAY OF SCRAMBLING YOUR PERCEPTION OF THEM. YOU REALLY HAVE TO CONCENTRATE TO SEE WHAT THEY ARE.

WHAT ARE THEY?

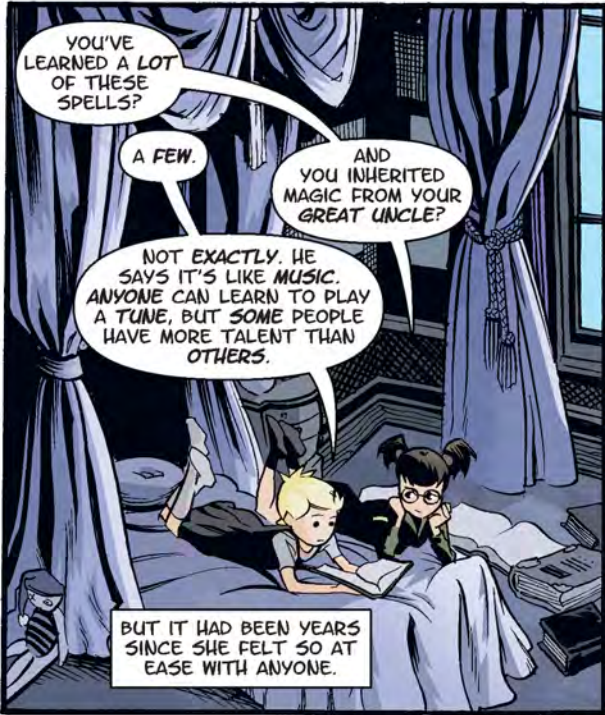


NIGHT THINGS.





AND HERE WAS ANOTHER KIND OF MAGIC. COURTNEY GOT ALONG OKAY WITH THE OTHER KIDS IN THE COVEN, AND SHE FELT AS CLOSE TO HER UNCLE ALOYSIUS AS ONE CAN WITH ANYONE A HUNDRED YEARS OLDER.



YOU'VE LEARNED A LOT OF THESE SPELLS?

A FEW.

AND YOU INHERITED MAGIC FROM YOUR GREAT UNCLE?

NOT EXACTLY. HE SAYS IT'S LIKE MUSIC. ANYONE CAN LEARN TO PLAY A TUNE, BUT SOME PEOPLE HAVE MORE TALENT THAN OTHERS.

BUT IT HAD BEEN YEARS SINCE SHE FELT SO AT EASE WITH ANYONE.



SO I COULD LEARN MAGIC?

I DON'T SEE WHY NOT.

THEY JUST CLICKED.



WHAT ABOUT THIS ONE?

OH. ERRR...



OF COURSE, THAT'S WHEN IT ALL STARTED TO GO WRONG.

YEAH, IT'S NOT HARD. BUT THE THING IS...



SURELY THERE'S SOMETHING, HOWEVER DRASTIC.



NECROMANCY, YOU MEAN?



DON'T BE SO OLD-FASHIONED.

DARK OR LIGHT IS ALL IN HOW YOU USE IT. YOU TAUGHT ME THAT.

INDEED. AND SHALL I KEEP MY HEART BEATING BY MAGIC? OR REPLACE IT WITH AN ENCHANTED STONE?



REPLACE MYSELF, LITTLE BY LITTLE, WITH MAGICAL PARTS, UNTIL I'M JUST A MARIONETTE?



OR ENCHANT THIS WITHERING BODY UNTIL ALL HUMAN LIFE IS REPLACED BY MAGICAL QUICKENING. THERE'S A WORD FOR SUCH A BEING, WOODRUE.



IF I AM TO DIE, I WILL DIE WITH WHAT'S LEFT OF MY SOUL INTACT.



I NEVER THOUGHT YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, WOULD BELIEVE IN SUCH A THING AS THE SOUL, GIVEN THE QUESTIONABLE THINGS YOU'VE DONE.

WHY NOT? I BELIEVE IN LOTS OF MAGICAL THINGS. DON'T YOU?



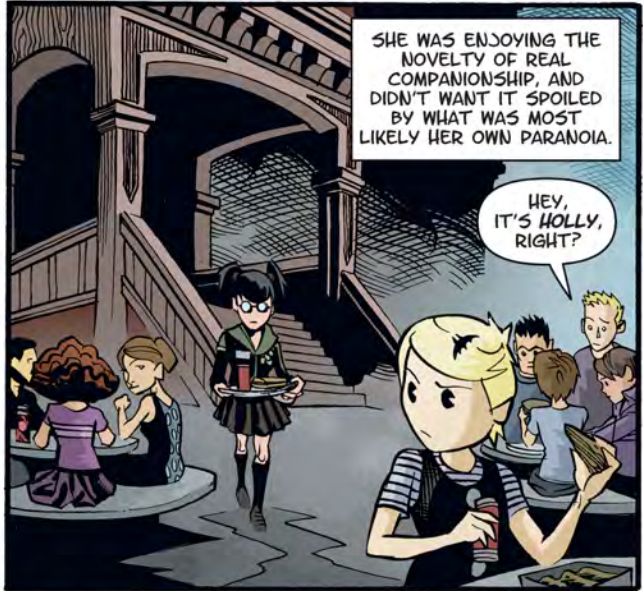
PERHAPS I'M A FOOL. BUT IN THE END, THE ONLY THING THAT STILL MATTERS IS TO LOOK IN A MIRROR AND SEE A MAN I DON'T ENTIRELY DESPISE.



COURTNEY TRIED TO PUT HER CONCERNS ABOUT HOLLY OUT OF HER MIND.



SHE WAS ENJOYING THE NOVELTY OF REAL COMPANIONSHIP, AND DIDN'T WANT IT SPOILED BY WHAT WAS MOST LIKELY HER OWN PARANOIA.



HEY, IT'S HOLLY, RIGHT?

WANT SOME PHRUICE?

I LOVE THAT SWEATER! DID YOU MAKE THAT?

ANGIE AND I WERE GONNA HIT THE MALL LATER. WANNA COME?

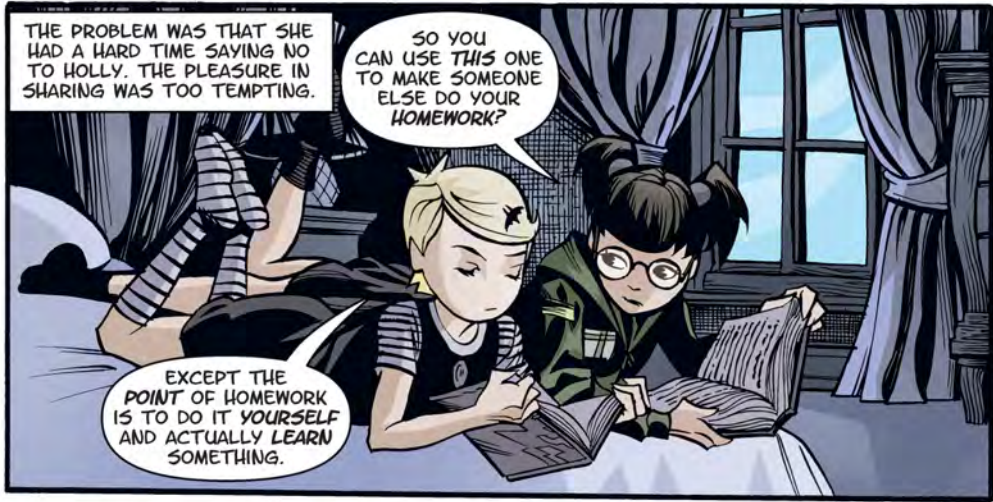
OR NOT.



WOW, THAT WAS WEIRD.

SHE DECIDED TO KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON THE NEW GIRL.

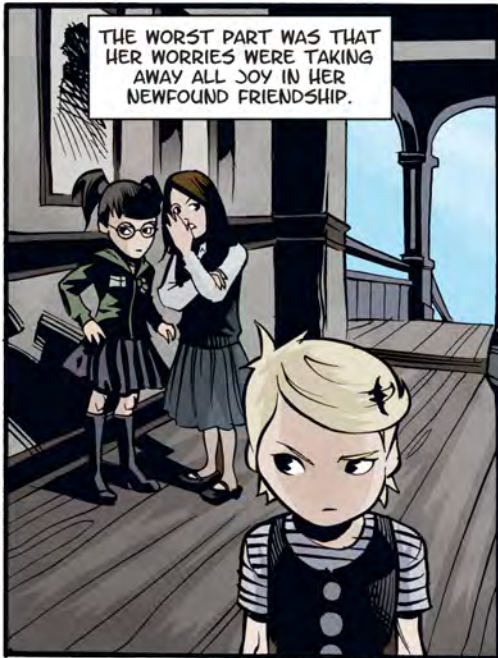




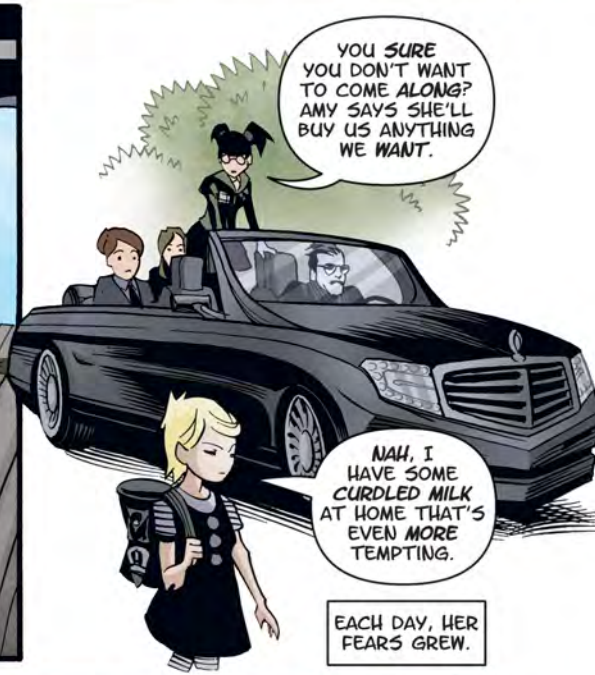
THE PROBLEM WAS THAT SHE HAD A HARD TIME SAYING NO TO HOLLY. THE PLEASURE IN SHARING WAS TOO TEMPTING.

SO YOU CAN USE THIS ONE TO MAKE SOMEONE ELSE DO YOUR HOMEWORK?

EXCEPT THE POINT OF HOMEWORK IS TO DO IT YOURSELF AND ACTUALLY LEARN SOMETHING.



THE WORST PART WAS THAT HER WORRIES WERE TAKING AWAY ALL JOY IN HER NEWFOUND FRIENDSHIP.



YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO COME ALONG? AMY SAYS SHE'LL BUY US ANYTHING WE WANT.

NAH, I HAVE SOME CURDLED MILK AT HOME THAT'S EVEN MORE TEMPTING.

EACH DAY, HER FEARS GREW.



I THINK YOU'VE LEARNED ENOUGH SPELLS FOR THE TIME BEING.



IS THERE A PROBLEM?

I JUST THINK YOU NEED TO TAKE THINGS A LITTLE SLOWER.



MAGIC CAN DO STRANGE THINGS TO YOUR HEAD.



MAKE YOU THINK YOU CAN DO WHATEVER YOU WANT.

COURTNEY WAS SHOCKED AT THE HARSH WORDS COMING FROM HER OWN MOUTH.



SHE WAS USED TO CONFRONTING ENEMIES, BUT CONFRONTING SOMEONE SHE CONSIDERED A FRIEND WAS A LOT HARDER.



WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?

NOTHING.



BUT WAS HOLLY A FRIEND, OR WAS SHE THE WORST ENEMY COURTNEY HAD?

UNCLE A? HOW DO YOU KNOW WHETHER YOU CAN TRUST SOMEONE?



WHAT, NOW? SORRY, I WAS MILES AWAY.

HOW DID YOU KNOW YOU COULD TRUST ME WITH WITCHCRAFT?

YOU MEAN TRUST YOU NOT TO ABUSE IT?



I DIDN'T, AND I WAS RIGHT, AS I RECALL.

WHAT IF I USED IT AGAINST YOU?

WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT?

I DON'T KNOW. BUT IF I DID...



MAYBE I'M A FOOL, BUT I THINK EVERY YOUNG WITCH SHOULD HAVE THE FREEDOM TO MAKE MISTAKES.

GOOD JUDGMENT COMES FROM DEALING WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF BAD JUDGMENT.



BESIDES, THERE ARE WAYS TO TAKE MAGIC AWAY IF NEED BE.



JUST BE CAREFUL I NEVER NEED TO USE THEM ON YOU.



AS EVER, UNCLE ALOYSIUS MANAGED TO BE TERRIFYING AND REASSURING AT THE SAME TIME.

BUT COURTNEY WAS RELIEVED THAT, IF WORSE CAME TO WORSE, SHE COULD HAVE HIM DEAL WITH HOLLY.



I THOUGHT I WARNED YOU TO STAY OUT OF THE FOREST.

NO ROAD IS A-DAY BEYOND THIS POINT

MORTALS STAY OUT!

SO THIS IS THE ENTRANCE TO GOBLIN TOWN?

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST CLUE?



COURTNEY HAD A SINKING FEELING, AS THOUGH EVENTS WERE PULLING HER TOWARD THE INEVITABLE.

I SUPPOSE YOU WANT TO CHECK IT OUT.

I'M GAME IF YOU ARE.



SHE REALISED SHE WAS A FOOL TO HOPE ALOYSIUS WOULD TAKE CARE OF THIS. HOLLY WAS HER PROBLEM.

AND SHE HAD TO DEAL WITH IT SOONER OR LATER.

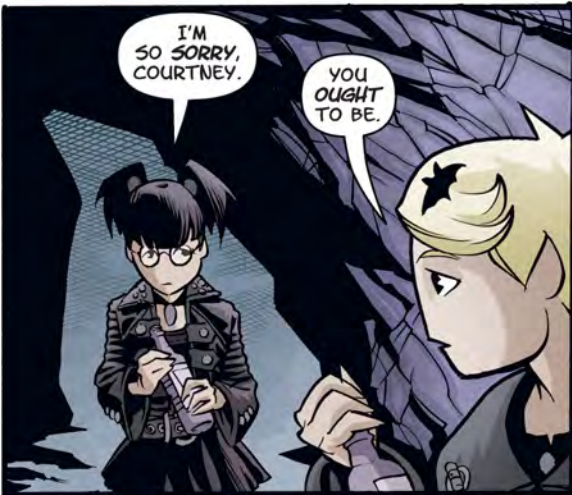




WOW, I DIDN'T THINK THERE'D BE SO MANY OF THEM.

I'D REALLY HATE TO GET TRAPPED DOWN HERE.

IT'S NOT FUN.

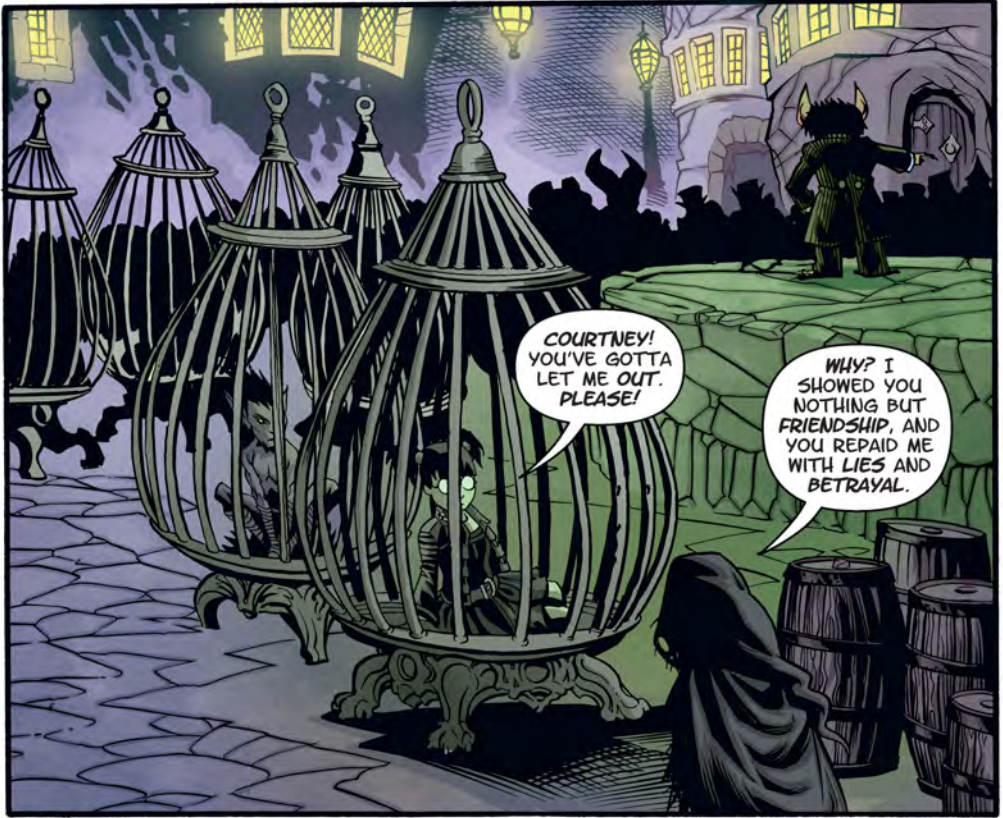




SEVENTY TO HIS DARK MAJESTY. I HAVE SEVENTY, DO I HEAR EIGHTY?

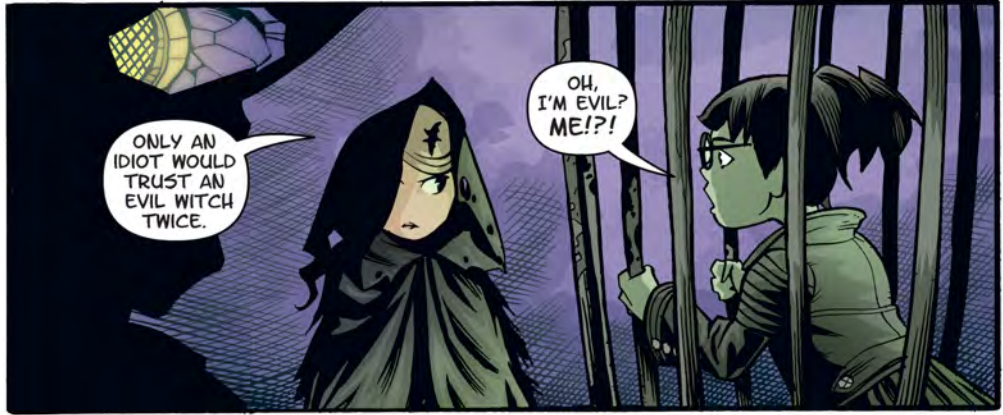
IT'S A CRYING SHAME, REALLY.

MEH?



COURTNEY! YOU'VE GOTTA LET ME OUT. PLEASE!

WHY? I SHOWED YOU NOTHING BUT FRIENDSHIP, AND YOU REPAID ME WITH LIES AND BETRAYAL.



ONLY AN IDIOT WOULD TRUST AN EVIL WITCH TWICE.

OH, I'M EVIL? ME!?!



THAT'S RICH
COMING FROM
YOU, COURTNEY
CRUMIN!



THINK
YOUR FRIEND
AXEL WOULD
AGREE?



WHAT DID
YOU SAY?



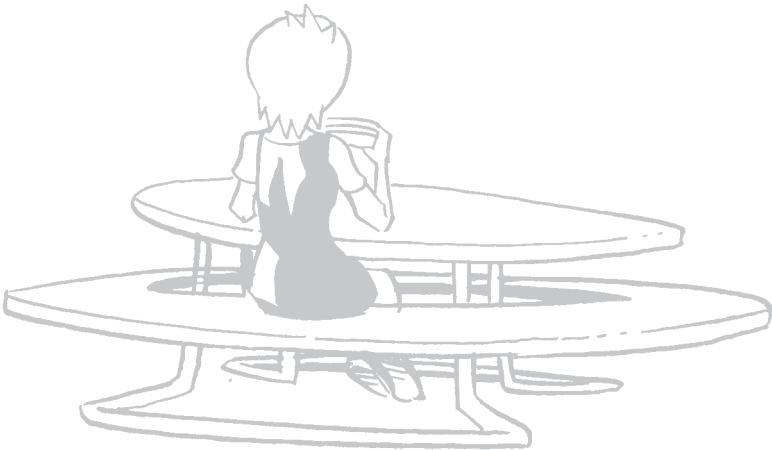
AXEL
ARTAUD. RING A
BELL? HOW ABOUT
ALICIA OUDLER?
OR GARETH
ROSSER?



WHICH OF
US WOULD THEY
SAY WAS THE
EVIL ONE?

Chapter Three





ONCE UPON A TIME, A GIRL NAMED HOLLY HART, BORED TO TEARS WITH THE DULLNESS AND PREDICTABILITY OF LIFE, FOUND HERSELF WISHING FOR SOMETHING, ANYTHING, NEW.

IF SHE WASN'T SO TERRIFIED, SHE'D PROBABLY HAVE LAUGHED AT THE IRONY.

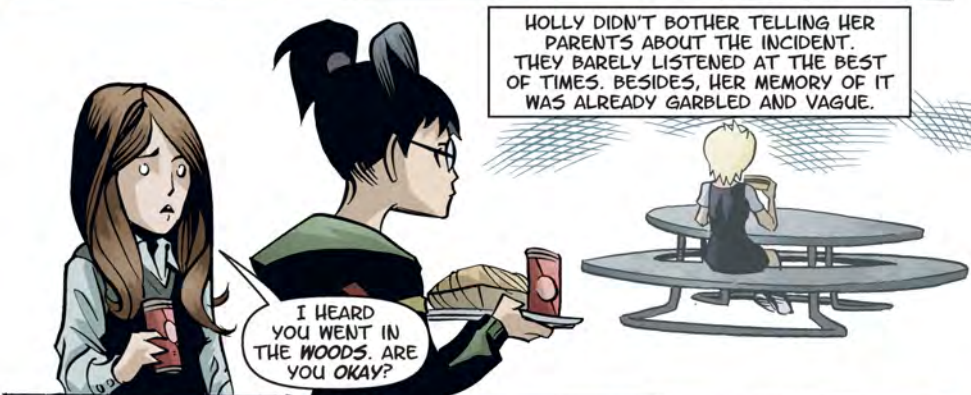


BUT SOMETIMES LIFE MOVES SO FAST, YOU DON'T NOTICE THE LITTLE PRANKS IT PLAYS ON YOU.

BUTTERWORM!



AND ONLY LATER DO YOU SUSPECT THAT SOME UNKIND GOD OR OTHER BEING MUST BE HAVING A LAUGH AT YOUR EXPENSE.





TO HER AMAZEMENT, HOLLY FOUND HERSELF MAKING FRIENDS WITH A GIRL EVERYONE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD SEEMED TO BE AFRAID OF.

A MAGIC STONE? YOU'RE JOKING.

JUST TAKE A LOOK.



BUT COURTNEY WASN'T REALLY FRIGHTENING AT ALL. ON THE CONTRARY, SHE WAS PROBABLY THE COOLEST GIRL HOLLY HAD EVER MET.

WOW!

PRETTY GOOD, RIGHT?



AND YOU CAN DO ALL THESE SPELLS?

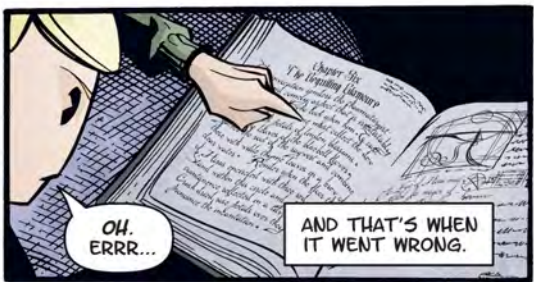
BY NOW, HOLLY WAS ONLY MILDLY SURPRISED TO FIND THAT COURTNEY LIVED IN THE CREEPY OLD HOUSE NEXT DOOR.



SHE COULDN'T BELIEVE HER LUCK. AS SHE LEAFED THROUGH THE SPELLS, IT CREEPT OVER HER THAT HER LIFE MIGHT NEVER BE THE SAME.

SOME OF 'EM.

WHAT ABOUT THIS ONE? LOOKS USEFUL.



OH. ERRR...

AND THAT'S WHEN IT WENT WRONG.





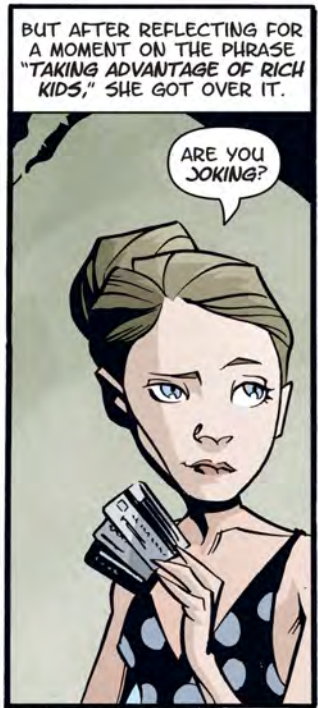
AND JUST LIKE THAT, SHE WAS THE MOST POPULAR KID IN SCHOOL.



AT FIRST SHE FELT A LITTLE ASHAMED OF HERSELF.

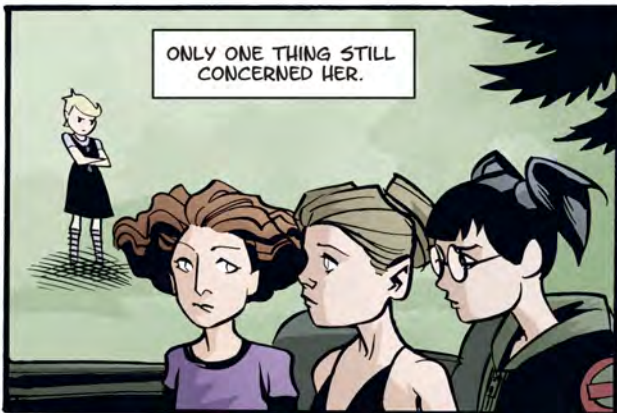
ANYTHING YOU WANT. I LOVE PLAYING DRESS-UP.

YOU SHOULDN'T SPEND YOUR ALLOWANCE ON ME.



BUT AFTER REFLECTING FOR A MOMENT ON THE PHRASE "TAKING ADVANTAGE OF RICH KIDS," SHE GOT OVER IT.

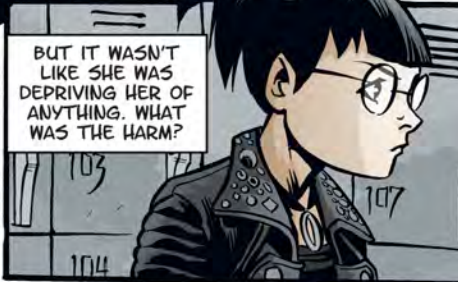
ARE YOU JOKING?

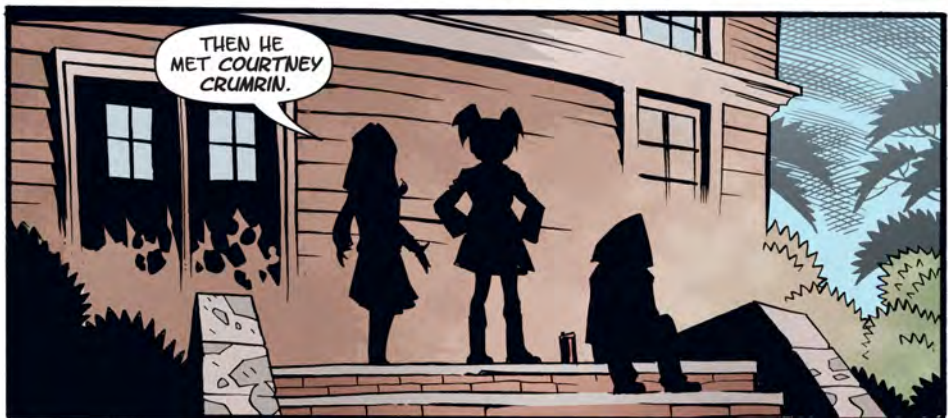
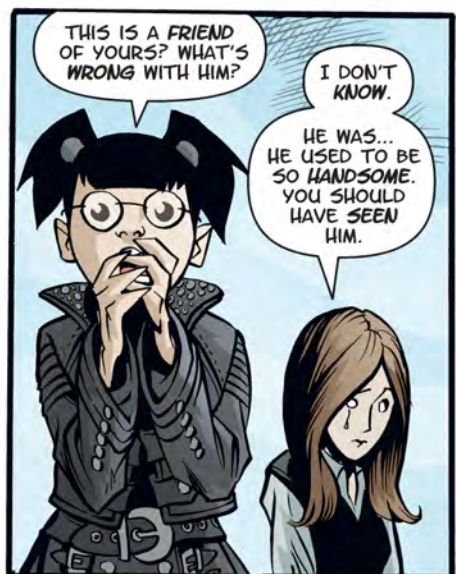
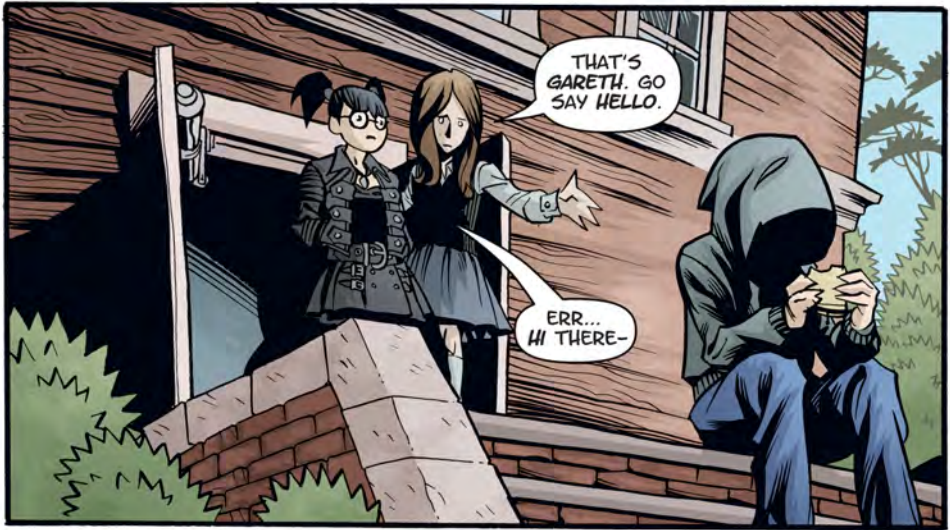


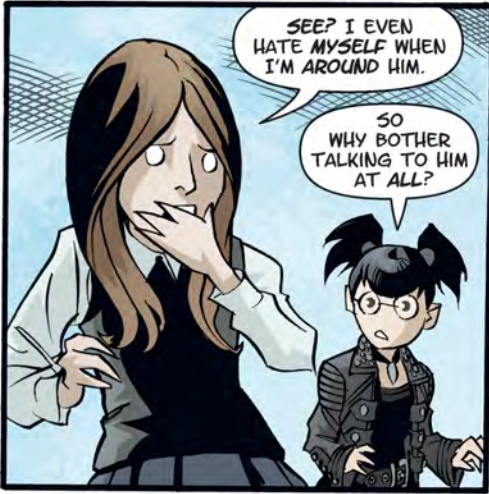
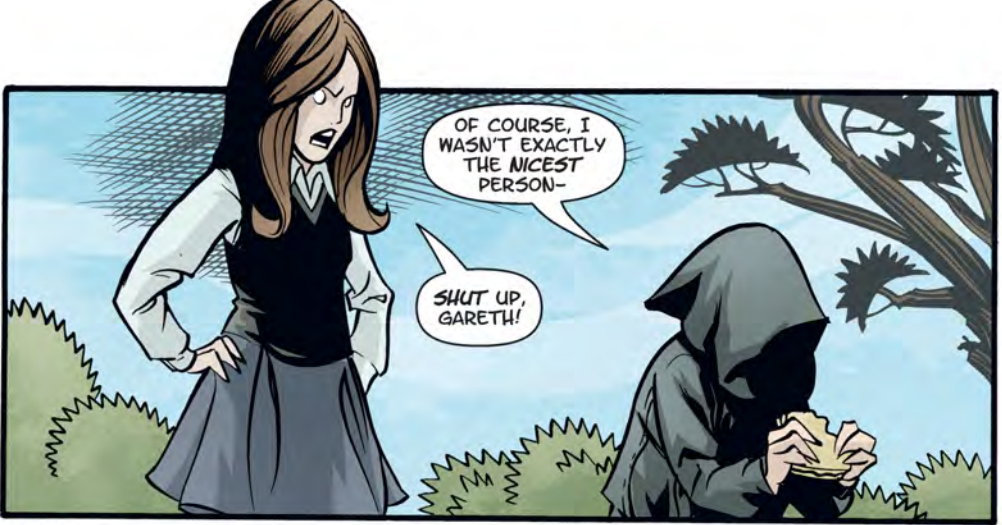
ONLY ONE THING STILL CONCERNED HER.

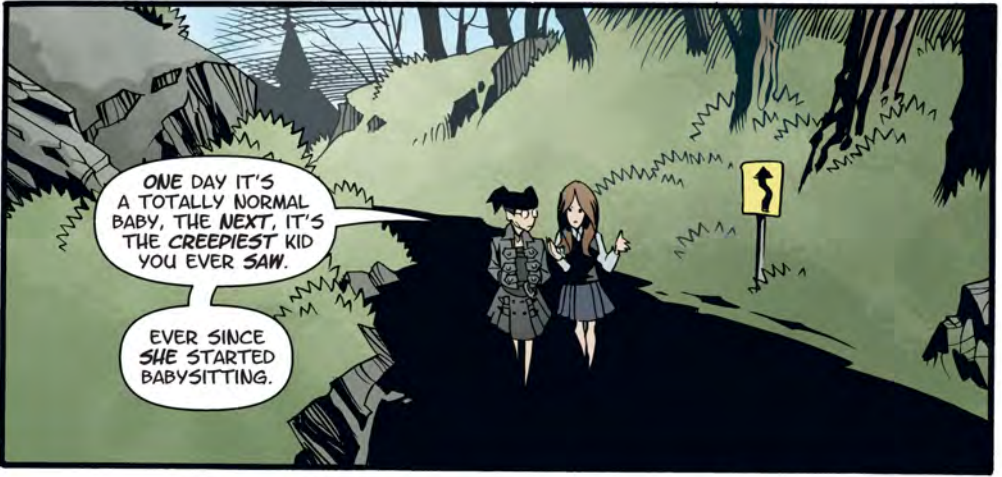


COOL, HUH?









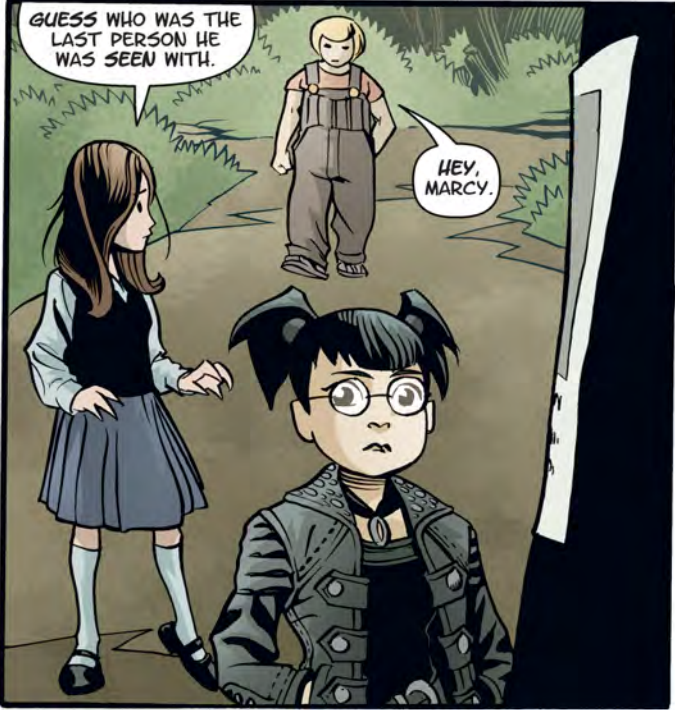
ONE DAY IT'S A TOTALLY NORMAL BABY, THE NEXT, IT'S THE CREEPIEST KID YOU EVER SAW.

EVER SINCE SHE STARTED BABYSITTING.



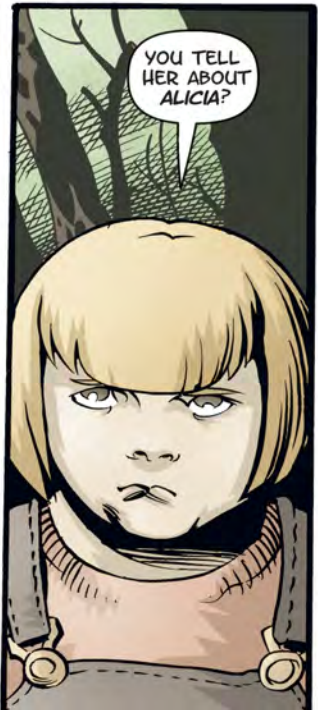
AND THAT'S AXEL. HE WAS A DORK, BUT A NICE ONE.

MISSING
Axel
Last seen near the old mill
Call 555-1234



GUESS WHO WAS THE LAST PERSON HE WAS SEEN WITH.

HEY, MARCY.



YOU TELL HER ABOUT ALICIA?



MISS OUDLER?
YOU HAVE COMPANY.



HEY, ALLIE.
HOW'S IT GOING?

IT'S NOT
A GOOD DAY.
TRY NOT TO
ALARM HER.



ALLIE?
IT'S ME,
SUSAN.

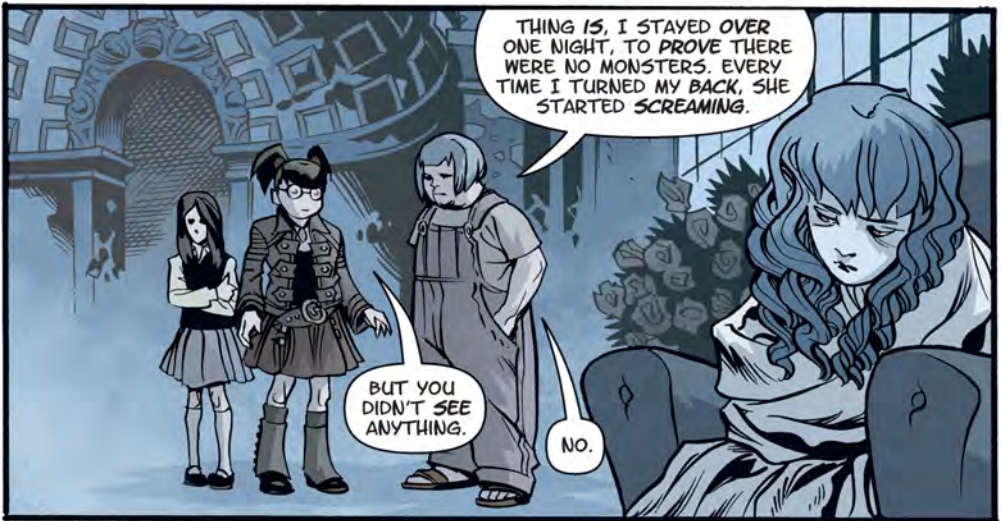


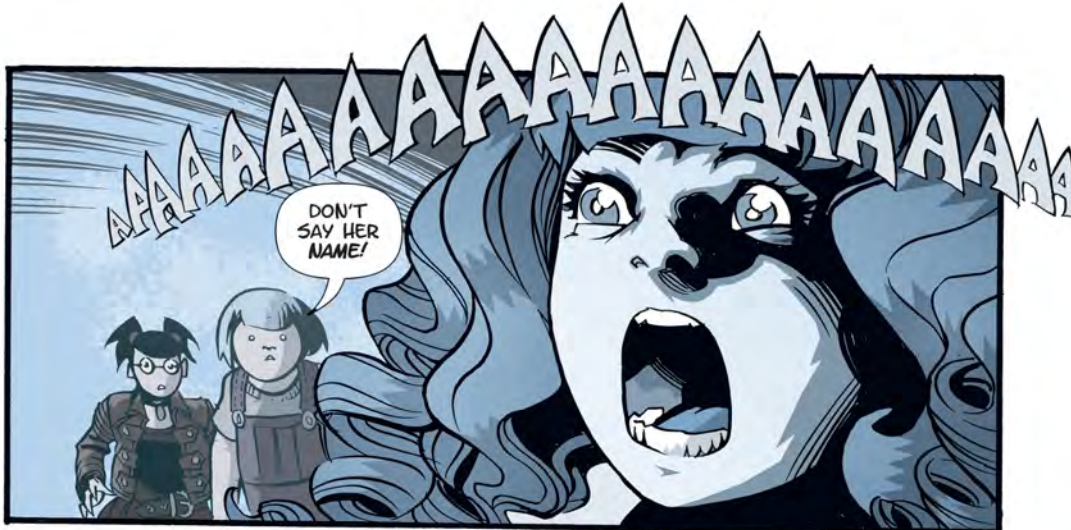
SHE JUST
KEEPS GETTING
WORSE.

WHAT'S
WRONG WITH
HER?

SHE HAS
NIGHTMARES.

NIGHTMARES.
RIGHT.





DON'T SAY HER NAME!



WE USED TO BULLY OTHER KIDS FOR THEIR LUNCH MONEY.

NICE. IS THAT HOW RICH KIDS GET THEIR KICKS?



OUR FOLKS FOUND OUT WE WERE SAVING UP TO RUN AWAY, AND STOPPED OUR ALLOWANCE.

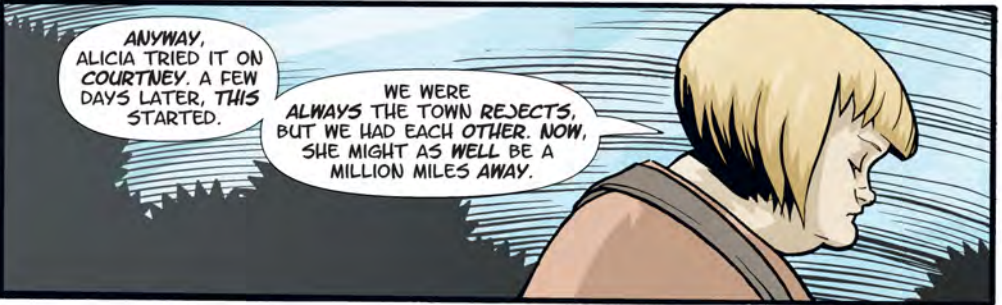
WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RUN AWAY FOR? I THOUGHT YOU GUYS ALL HAD IT MADE AROUND HERE.

THEY WOULDN'T LET US HANG OUT ANYMORE.



WHY NOT?

NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.



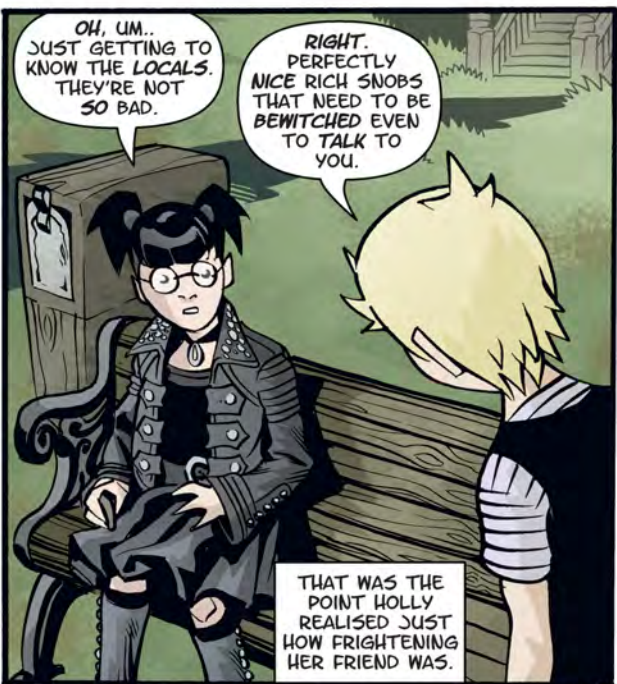
ANYWAY, ALICIA TRIED IT ON COURTNEY. A FEW DAYS LATER, THIS STARTED.

WE WERE ALWAYS THE TOWN REJECTS, BUT WE HAD EACH OTHER. NOW, SHE MIGHT AS WELL BE A MILLION MILES AWAY.



IT DIDN'T MAKE SENSE. GRUMPY AS COURTNEY COULD BE, HOLLY COULDN'T RECONCILE THE GIRL SHE KNEW WITH DARK PORTRAYAL CREATED BY THE STORIES.

HAVING FUN WITH THE COOL KIDS?



OH, UM.. JUST GETTING TO KNOW THE LOCALS. THEY'RE NOT SO BAD.

RIGHT. PERFECTLY NICE RICH SNOBS THAT NEED TO BE BEWITCHED EVEN TO TALK TO YOU.

THAT WAS THE POINT HOLLY REALISED JUST HOW FRIGHTENING HER FRIEND WAS.



WHATEVER. IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT TO DO WITH WITCHCRAFT, I CAN'T STOP YOU.



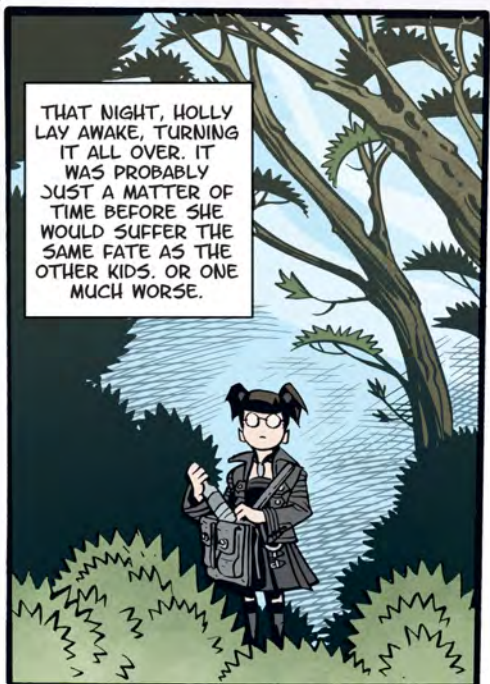
CAN'T YOU?



WHAT WAS THAT?

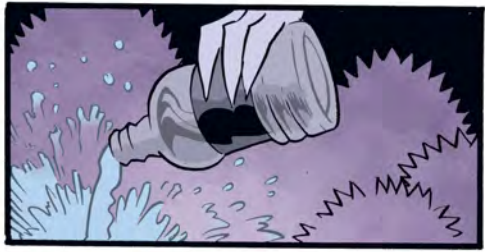


NOTHING.



THAT NIGHT, HOLLY LAY AWAKE, TURNING IT ALL OVER. IT WAS PROBABLY JUST A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SHE WOULD SUFFER THE SAME FATE AS THE OTHER KIDS. OR ONE MUCH WORSE.

SHE HAD ONLY HALF BELIEVED COURTNEY'S TALES OF HER ADVENTURES IN GOBLIN TOWN AND BEYOND.



BUT THEY TURNED OUT TO BE QUITE USEFUL.





WHAT WAS THAT?

I KNOW NOT, SISTER, BUT IT DOOTH SMELL DELICIOUS.



AS DID THE MICROWAVE LASAGNA HER MOTHER HAD LEFT HER FOR DINNER.



THE NEXT PART WAS LESS PLANNED OUT.

FRESH FRUIT, MILADY?

GOBLIN TOWN WAS A WAKING NIGHTMARE.

ERR... NO THANKS.



BUT I'M OUT OF WATER.

IN THAT CASE, CAN I INTEREST YOU IN SOME HONEYSUCKLE NECTAR?

NOW SHE KNEW WHY ALICIA HAD CRACKED UP.

Goblin Town

BEING SURROUNDED BY THOSE GOBLIN FACES JUST FOR A FEW MINUTES WAS EASILY THE MOST HARROWING EXPERIENCE OF HER LIFE.



AND IT WASN'T OVER YET.

THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO STICK TO THE ROAD.



SHE HAD TO PLAY IT COOL. COURTNEY CRUMRIN WAS MANY THINGS, BUT SHE WASN'T STUPID.

SO... THIS IS THE ENTRANCE TO GOBLIN TOWN?



SHE SOUNDED HORRIBLY ARTIFICIAL TO HERSELF.

I SUPPOSE YOU WANT TO CHECK IT OUT.

I'M GAME IF YOU ARE.



SHE WONDERED HOW LONG IT WOULD TAKE FOR COURTNEY TO CATCH ON.

AND WHETHER BEING CAUGHT WOULD BE WORSE THAN WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF HER PLAN SUCCEEDED.

I BROUGHT WATER.





SHE WONDERED IF SHE
COULD EVER LOOK IN
THE MIRROR AGAIN.

I'D REALLY
HATE TO GET
TRAPPED DOWN
HERE.



GLAD WE
HAVE THESE,
RIGHT?

IT'S NOT
FUN.

SHE COULD
BARELY LISTEN
TO THE LIES
COMING FROM
HER OWN MOUTH.



THAT'S WHEN
SHE REALIZED
THAT SHE HAD
MADE A TERRIBLE
MISTAKE. WHAT-
EVER COURTNEY
HAD DONE, OR
MIGHT DO, THIS
WAS NOT THE
SOLUTION.

WAIT,
I...



WHEN SHE AWOKE, IT WAS TO THE SOUND OF THE GOBLIN SLAVE AUCTION.



SHE TRIED TO EXPLAIN WHAT SHE LEARNED ABOUT GARETH ROSSER, ALICIA OUDLER, AND AXEL ARTAUD. COURTNEY LISTENED IN SILENCE.



HOLLY DIDN'T EXACTLY EXPECT HER TO BREAK INTO TEARS OF REGRET, SO SHE WASN'T DISAPPOINTED.



AND NOW THE FULL HORROR OF HER SITUATION SUDDENLY CAME UPON HER.

SHE WANTED MORE THAN ANYTHING TO RETURN TO THE MOMENT WHEN SHE'D WISHED FOR SOMETHING NEW IN HER LIFE, AND SQUASH THE THOUGHT FOREVER.



CAN I WAKE UP NOW?



WHERE'D YOU GET THOSE?

FROM A SLEEPING GUARD.



HOW?

YOU DIDN'T THINK I'D COME DOWN HERE WITHOUT A TRICK OR-



OOF!

Smack



REMEMBER ME, LITTLE HUMAN? NOT SO SMUG NOW, ARE YOU?

OH NO...

YOU KNOW THIS GUY?



DON'T WORRY. WE WON'T PUT YOU ON THE AUCTION BLOCK THIS TIME.



Chapter Four







THIS IS MY WILL. IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'D LIKE YOU BOTH TO REVIEW IT NOW.

I WON'T HAVE ANY FOOLISH ARGUMENTS AFTER I'M GONE.



HOW THOUGHTFUL. I SEE YOU'RE LEAVING ME A THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL ALONG WITH SOME NICE BOOKS AND A CAR I'LL NEVER DRIVE.



YOU NEVER APPROVED OF MY SUPERVISION OF HER. LET'S SEE IF YOU CAN DO BETTER.



WHAT ABOUT YOUR, ER, OTHER DUTIES TO THE COMMUNITY? THERE'S NO REFERENCE TO WHO WILL BE TAKING THEM OVER.



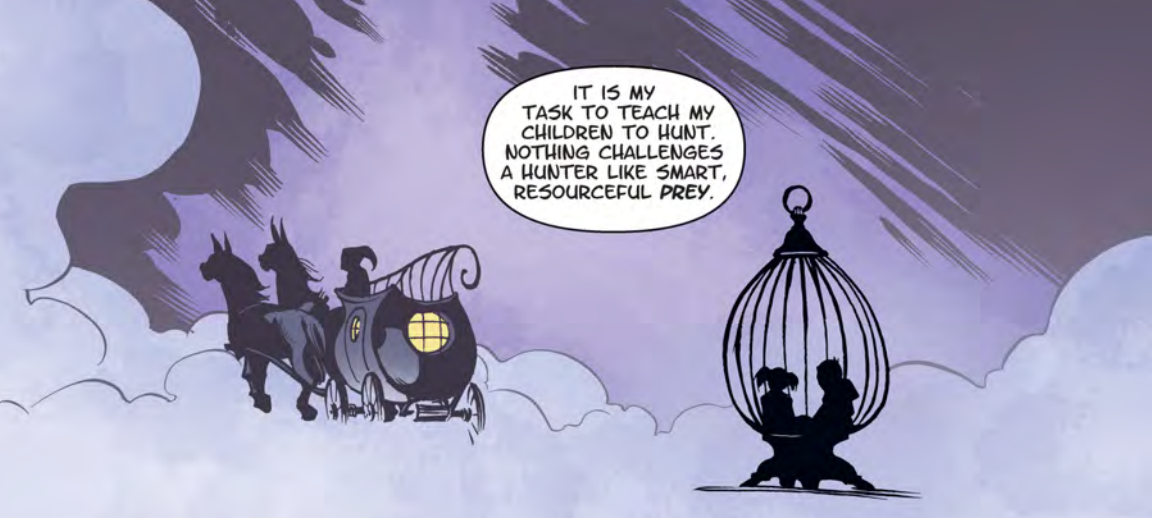
NOT EXACTLY SOMETHING ONE CAN HAND DOWN, LIKE A TASTELESS DIAMOND TIARA.




SPEAKING OF SUPERVISION, WHERE IS COURTNEY?




GOOD QUESTION.



IT IS MY
TASK TO TEACH MY
CHILDREN TO HUNT.
NOTHING CHALLENGES
A HUNTER LIKE SMART,
RESOURCEFUL PREY.



AND WITCHES
ARE THE MOST
RESOURCEFUL OF
ALL MORTALS.



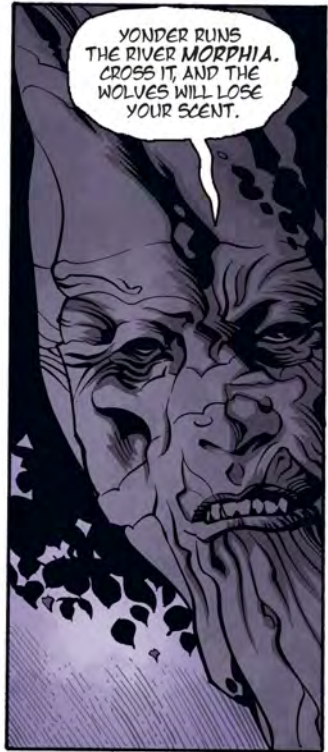
I WILL GIVE
YOU AN HOUR'S
HEAD START.



ALREADY LEAVING ME BEHIND?

I DIDN'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY WHEN YOU DOSED MY WATER BOTTLE.







I THINK I'M GOING TO HAVE TO COME UP WITH SOMETHING EVEN BETTER.



HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO CROSS THIS? CLIMB DOWN? THE HOUR IS ALMOST UP!

ACTUALLY, I THINK IT WAS UP A LITTLE WHILE AGO.



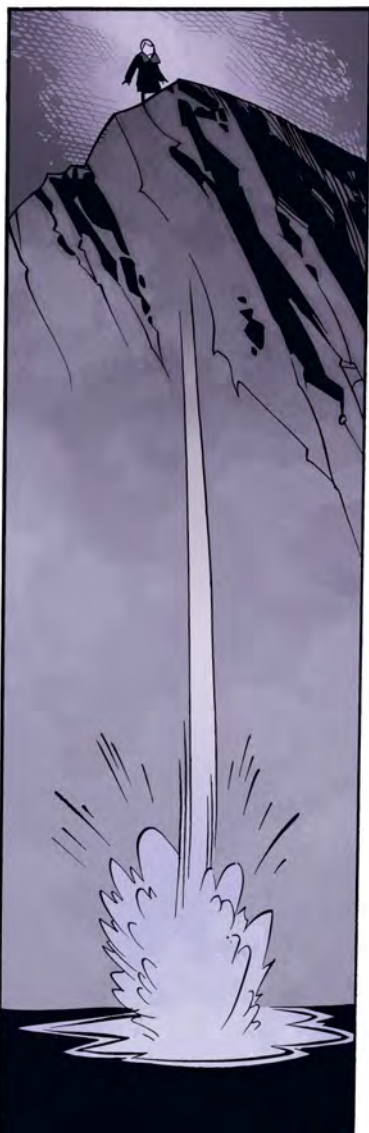
WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?

'CAUSE WE'RE SURROUNDED.



THAT WASN'T A VERY LONG HUNT. MAYBE THEY'LL GIVE US A DO-OVER.

DON'T BE STUP-





EAT THIS!



XGASPX



XCOUGHX
COURTNEY!
XCOUGHX
YOU JERK!



ANYONE HOME?



SORRY TO WAKE YOU, BUT I, UH, I NEED HELP.

SHE WON'T WAKE, I'M AFRAID. NOT EVER AGAIN.



WHAT?

SHE WAS ONCE A BEAUTIFUL, KINDLY MAIDEN, YOU KNOW. A THOUSAND YEARS AGO.



HER FATHER BETROTHED HER TO A CRUEL, UGLY DUKE. SO SHE CALLED TO THE TWILIGHT KING.



AND HE TOOK HER AWAY TO BE HIS DAUGHTER, AND TO BE MERRY IN HIS LAND FOREVER.

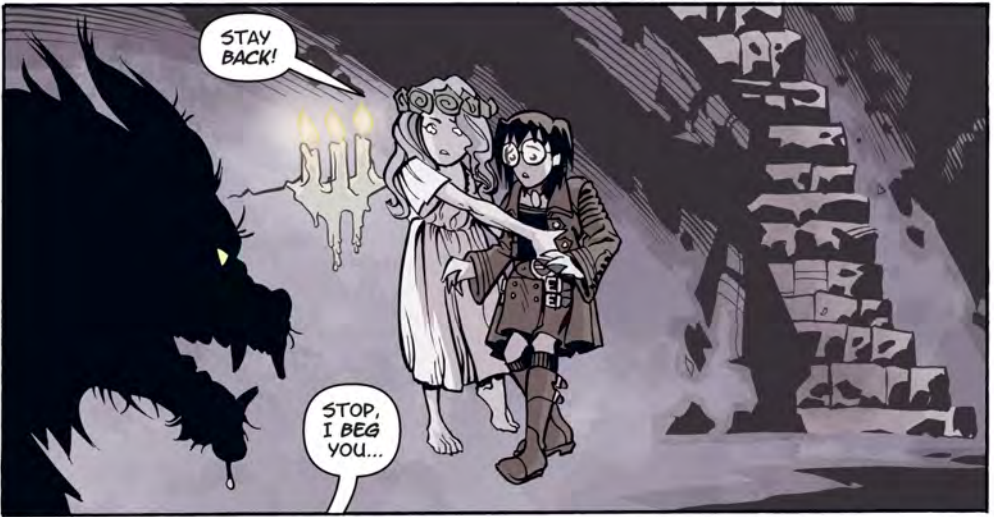




I MUST STAY HERE UNTIL I FIND FORGIVENESS.



OH NO!



STAY BACK!

STOP, I BEG YOU...

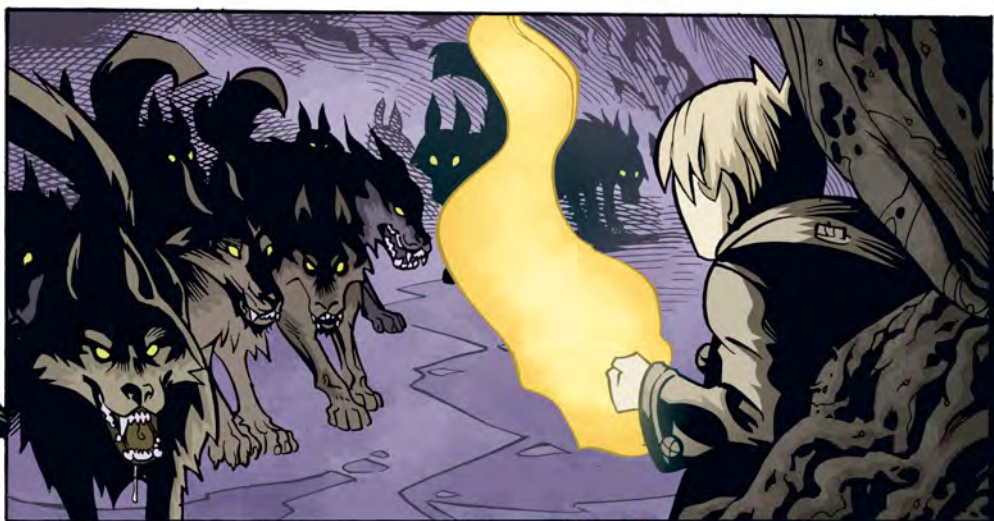


THIS MORTAL IS MY RIGHTFUL PREY.

JUST LEAVE US, PLEASE.



DON'T MAKE ME DO THIS.



COME AND GET IT, FIDO!

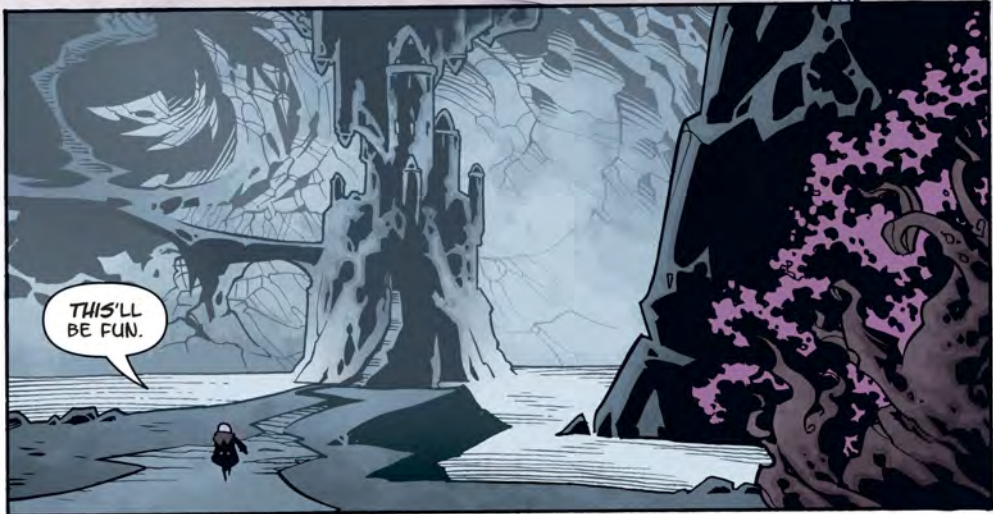




RAAAAAAAAAAGH!



THAT'S MY EXIT!



THIS'LL BE FUN.



HELLO!?!
ANYONE
HOME?



NO BIG
DEAL, JUST
BEING CHASED
BY BLOODTHIRSTY
FAERIE WOLVES!
LITTLE HELP?



BEGONE,
MORTAL. I'LL HAVE NO
FURTHER TUCK WITH
YOUR KIND.



NOW
WHAT DID
I DO?

YOU TAKE
EVERYTHING, AND
LEAVE ONLY A TRAIL
OF GRIEF.

WELL, THE
SOONER YOU HELP
ME, THE SOONER I'LL
LEAVE YOU AND YOUR
PEOPLE ALONE.



AND HOW
MANY MUST
SUFFER TO
SAVE YOU
THIS TIME?

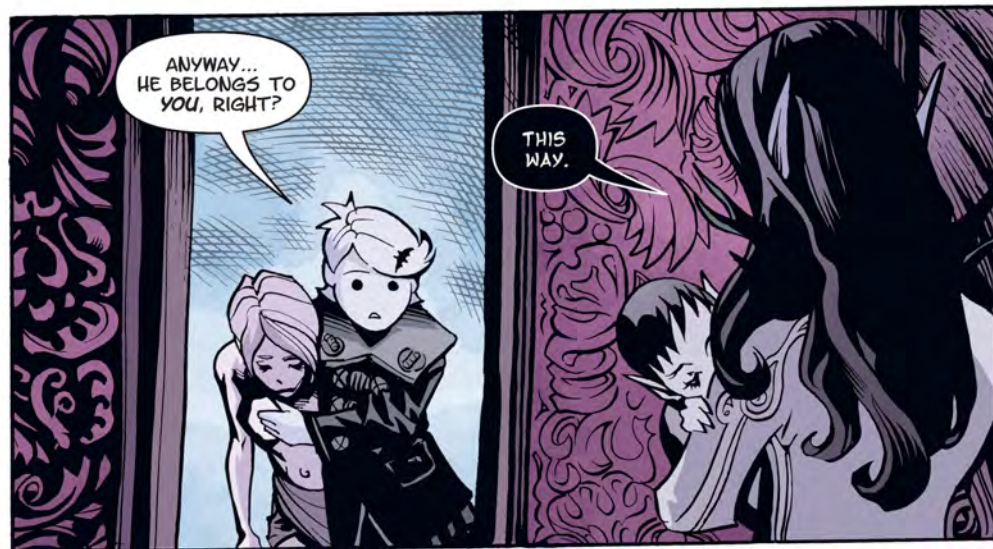


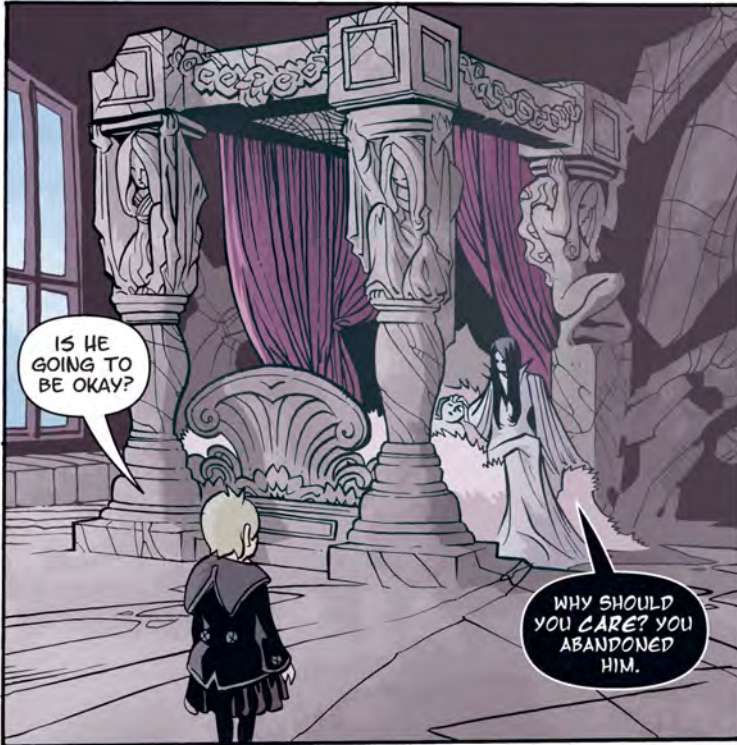
HOW MANY
HAVE YOU LEFT
DYING, AS MY
DAUGHTER DID,
THAT YOU MIGHT
ESCAPE?











IS HE GOING TO BE OKAY?

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? YOU ABANDONED HIM.



HEY, I CAME BACK, DIDN'T I?



IT IS SILVER THAT POISONS HIM, FROM THE BULLET HE TOOK FOR YOU A YEAR AGO.

SOON, IT WILL CLAIM HIS FAERIE LIFE.



SORRY.



YOU'LL NEVER LEAVE ME, WILL YOU, MY LOVE.

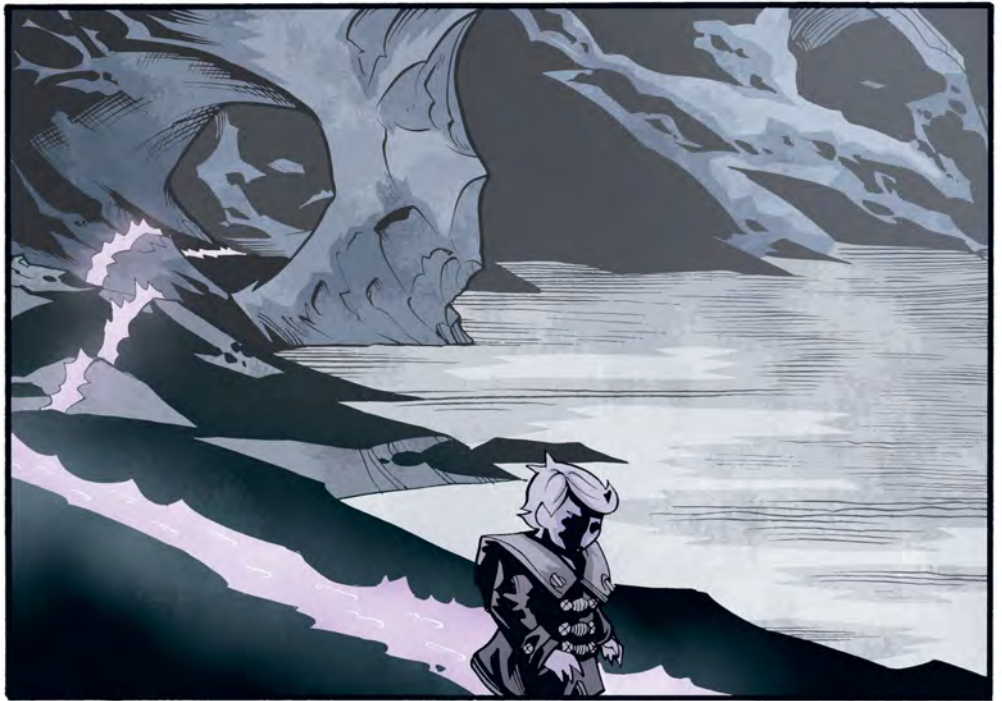




Chapter Five









TEMPLETON!

STAY BACK.
MY UNCLE TAUGHT ME
SOME NEW TRICKS
SINCE LAST TIME.



ESPECIALLY
FOR JERKS LIKE
YOU.

PLEASE.
I WELCOME
DESTRUCTION.



I THOUGHT I
COULD FIND FOR-
GIVENESS HERE.
BUT WE'RE POISON
TO THIS PLACE.



I CAN'T EVEN
DO GOOD WITHOUT
DOING EVIL AS
WELL.

I CAN
RELATE.

I'M LOOKING
FOR A FRIEND
OF MINE. WELL,
MAYBE NOT A FRIEND.
JUST ANOTHER KID
I DRAGGED INTO
TROUBLE.



I DIDN'T
MEAN TO, BUT
THAT'S HOW IT
WORKED OUT.

AFTER I
KILLED THE WOLF,
CONSTANCE TOOK
HER AWAY.





THIS IS THE WAY OUT?

A *SECRET* WAY, KNOWN ONLY TO THE KING AND HIS DAUGHTERS.

SHOULDN'T WE FIND *COURTNEY* FIRST? I CAN'T JUST LEAVE HER HERE.



I WILL FIND HER AND SEND HER HOME.

YOU'RE NOT COMING?



I CAN'T DESERT THE KING. IT'D BREAK HIS HEART.

BESIDES...

THIS IS MY HOME NOW. I DON'T BELONG UP THERE ANYMORE.



HOLLY WANTED MORE THAN ANYTHING TO ESCAPE THIS PLACE AND NEVER SEE ANYTHING MAGICAL AGAIN.



BUT THE THOUGHT OF ABANDONING COURTNEY MADE HER FEEL PHYSICALLY ILL.

COURTNEY HAD SAVED HER LIFE. SHE HAD TO GO BACK, HOPELESS AS THE TASK WAS.



SHE WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD HELP COURTNEY NOW.



EXCEPT THAT WAS THE DUMBEST IDEA EVER. SOMETIMES, BRAVERY AND NOBILITY TAKE A BACK SEAT TO COMMON SENSE.



AND THE SENSIBLE THING TO DO WAS FIND COURTNEY'S UNCLE ALOYSIUS AND EXPLAIN EVERYTHING.



IT WASN'T EXACTLY THE SOFT OPTION. SHE KNEW SHE COULDN'T WORM HER WAY OUT OF RESPONSIBILITY.

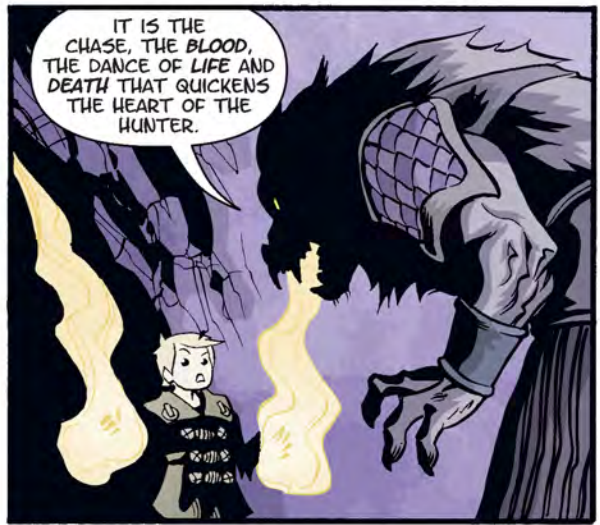
BUT WHATEVER THE OLD WARLOCK MIGHT DO TO HER...



SHE HAD TO TELL THE TRUTH AND FACE THE MUSIC.









IS THAT REALLY YOUR GAME?

VERY WELL. THEY MAY GO.



AND HOW DO YOU INTEND TO ESCAPE US?

BUT WE CAN'T-

WE NEED MY UNCLE. NOW!



I DON'T. I CAME IN SEARCH OF ATONEMENT.



I'M READY.





BUT SHE ALSO
KNEW THAT
HOPES WERE
FOOLISH THINGS.

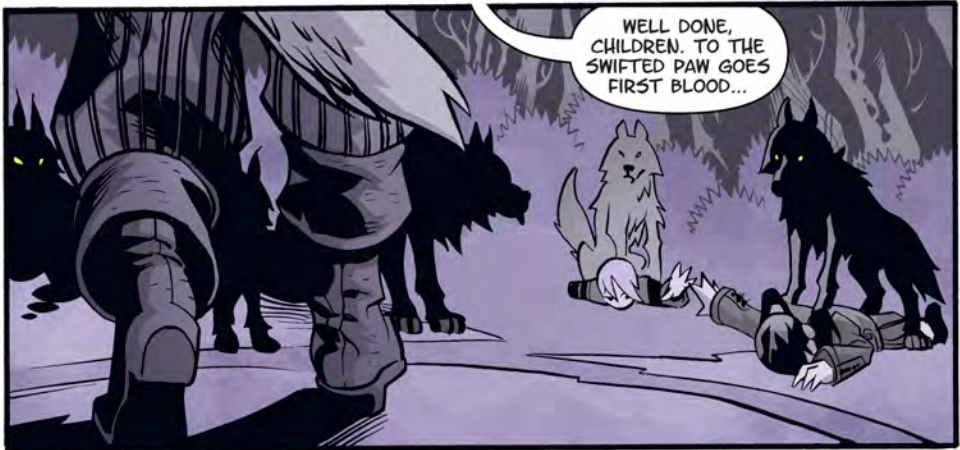


AND ONLY THE
INDIFFERENT
MOON WOULD SEE.

NO!



COURTNEY!






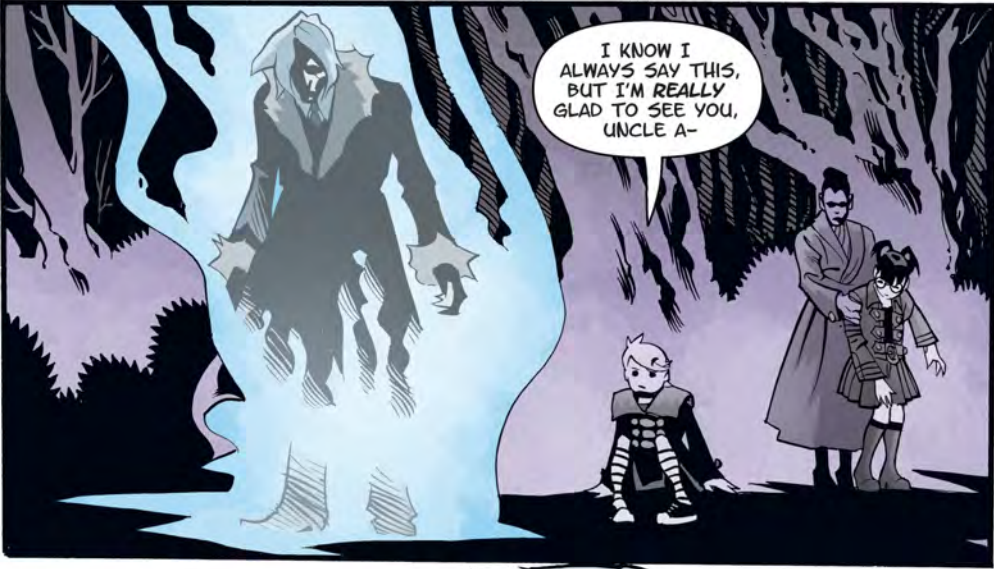
PREY?
MY BLOOD?
MY KIN? ON MY
GROUND!?!



MY NAME IS
WARLOCK!!!



I AM LORD
HERE, FAERIE!
NOT YOU!



I KNOW I ALWAYS SAY THIS, BUT I'M REALLY GLAD TO SEE YOU, UNCLE A-



UNCLE A!?

COURTNEY, GET HELP!



GO TO RADLEY HALL. I'LL LOOK AFTER THEM.

WHO DO I GET? MR. WOODRUE?



ANYONE!



COURTNEY CRUMRIN!

OH, DEAR. MISS CRUMRIN, ARE YOU HERE?

FATHER...



TEMPLETON? GOOD GOD! WHAT HAPPENED!?!

THE TWILIGHT KING... TOLD ME I MUST FIND... ATONEMENT...



WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? I THOUGHT YOU'D RUN AWAY...



WHO DID THIS TO YOU?

I THINK, MAYBE...

...I FOUND IT...



WHO DID THIS TO YOU?



I THOUGHT YOU WERE OKAY.



I THOUGHT YOU TOOK THAT POTION IN GERMANY.

I GAVE IT TO YOU.

WHY?

THREE BITES FROM A VAMPIRE.



IT WAS THE ONLY THING THAT WOULD SAVE YOU.

YOU SHOULD HAVE SAVED YOURSELF.

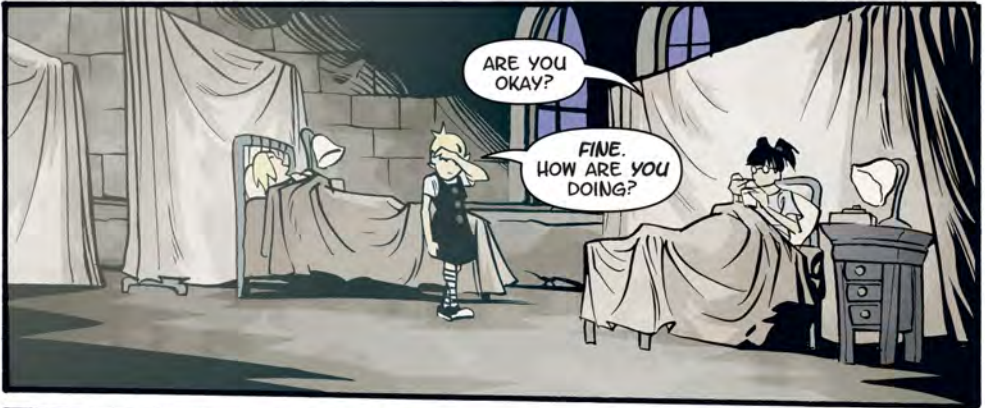


FOR ANOTHER FEW YEARS AT BEST?

I'VE HAD MY LIFETIME.



YOURS IS YET TO COME. I NEED YOU TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF IT.

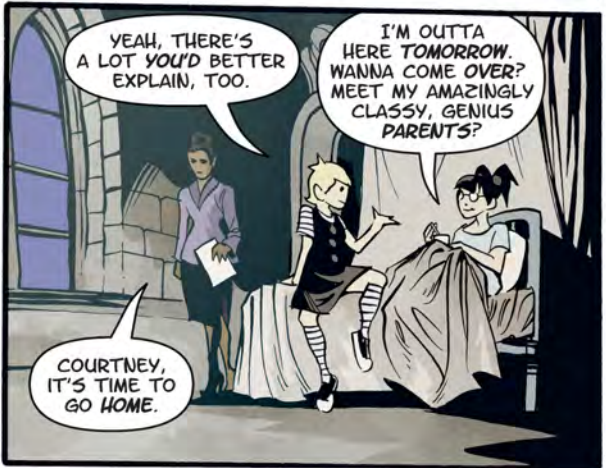


ARE YOU OKAY?

FINE. HOW ARE YOU DOING?



YOU SAVED MY LIFE. I STILL DON'T GET THAT.



YEAH, THERE'S A LOT YOU'D BETTER EXPLAIN, TOO.

I'M OUTTA HERE TOMORROW. WANNA COME OVER? MEET MY AMAZINGLY CLASSY, GENIUS PARENTS?

COURTNEY, IT'S TIME TO GO HOME.



HOLLY HART?

YES?



I'M MARSHAL TRIANNE. WE HAVE SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU.

I WANT YOU TO TELL US EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED.

COURTNEY WOULD BE THE FIRST TO TELL YOU THAT, THOUGH ADVENTURES AND DEADLY PERIL DO WONDERS TO BUILD TRUST AMONG FRIENDS, ICE CREAM IS EASIER.



REGARDLESS, SHE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING IF SHE REALLY HAD FOUND A REAL FRIEND IN HOLLY HART.



UH, GOING SOMEWHERE?

OH, HI. YEAH, MY DAD JUST GOT A SIX BOOK DEAL, AND THE MOVIE GOT GREEN-LIT.

SO WE'RE MOVING TO HOLLYWOOD.



IT'S WEIRD. ONE DAY THEY'RE SAYING THE BOOK SALES ARE DROPPING...



AND THEN, JUST LIKE MAGIC, BOOM.

YOU'RE COURTNEY, RIGHT?







YOU NEED TO ASK? YOU SUMMONED RAWHEAD AND BLOODY BONES TO MURDER A COVEN MARSHAL!

YEAH, BUT HE WAS A HUGE JERK!

COURTNEY!!!



THESE PEOPLE AREN'T ON YOUR SIDE. WITHOUT ALOYSIUS TO PROTECT YOU...

COURTNEY WAS HARDLY SURPRISED. ALL HER LIFE, SHE'D FELT HELPLESS IN A COLD WORLD WITH NO ONE TO PROTECT HER.



YEAH, I GET IT.

FOR JUST A LITTLE WHILE, SHE THOUGHT THAT HAD CHANGED, AND SOMEONE WOULD LOOK OUT FOR HER UNTIL SHE BECAME STRONG ENOUGH TO LOOK OUT FOR HERSELF.



SHE FELT A FOOL FOR EVEN THINKING IT.

STUPID, STUPID!

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?





I KNOW
THE WHOLE STORY,
ALOYSIUS.



THE CHILDREN
SHE CURSED. THAT
CHANGELING IN
EERIE LANE.

TEMPLETON.

TELL ME,
OLD FRIEND...



WHAT DOES
ONE DO WITH A
SORCERER WHO
BREAKS COVEN
LAW?



MIGHT I REMIND
YOU THAT SHE'S
JUST A THIRTEEN-
YEAR-OLD GIRL.

WHO CURSES
OTHER CHILDREN, OR
LEADS THEM INTO THE
GOBLIN UNDERWORLD,
SOME NEVER TO BE
SEEN AGAIN.



WHO SUMMONED A
HOBGOBLIN TO MURDER
A COVEN MARSHAL?



IT'S ALL
IN TEMPLETON'S
NOTES. WHAT I
WONDER IS...



HOW MUCH
DID YOU ALREADY
KNOW ABOUT?



AND HOW MUCH DID YOU PUT HER UP TO?

DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. THIS IS ALL HEARSAY.



SORCERERS HAVE BEEN SENTENCED TO DEATH FOR LESS. BUT YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT THAT, DON'T YOU?



YOU'RE IN LUCK, OLD FRIEND. THE COVEN REQUIRES YOUR SERVICES.



BRING THIS WAYWARD WITCH TO HEEL AND SEE THAT SHE IS PREVENTED FROM DOING FURTHER HARM, AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE ELIXIR VITAE.

AFTER FIFTY YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP, THIS IS HOW YOU TREAT ME?



IT IS FOR FRIENDSHIP'S SAKE THAT I SEND YOU ON THIS ERRAND AT ALL. FAIL, AND WE SHALL DISPATCH A NEW ENFORCER...



...WHO WILL DOLE OUT A PUNISHMENT FIT FOR SORCERERS THAT DEFY RAVANNA'S LAW.

Courtney BY TED NAIFEH Crumrin

The Witch Next Door

Bonus Material & Cover Gallery





Cover artwork for *Courtney Crumrin* issue #1.



Cover artwork for *Courtney Crumrin* issue #2.



Cover artwork for *Courtney Crumrin* issue #3.



Cover artwork for *Courtney Crumrin* issue #4.



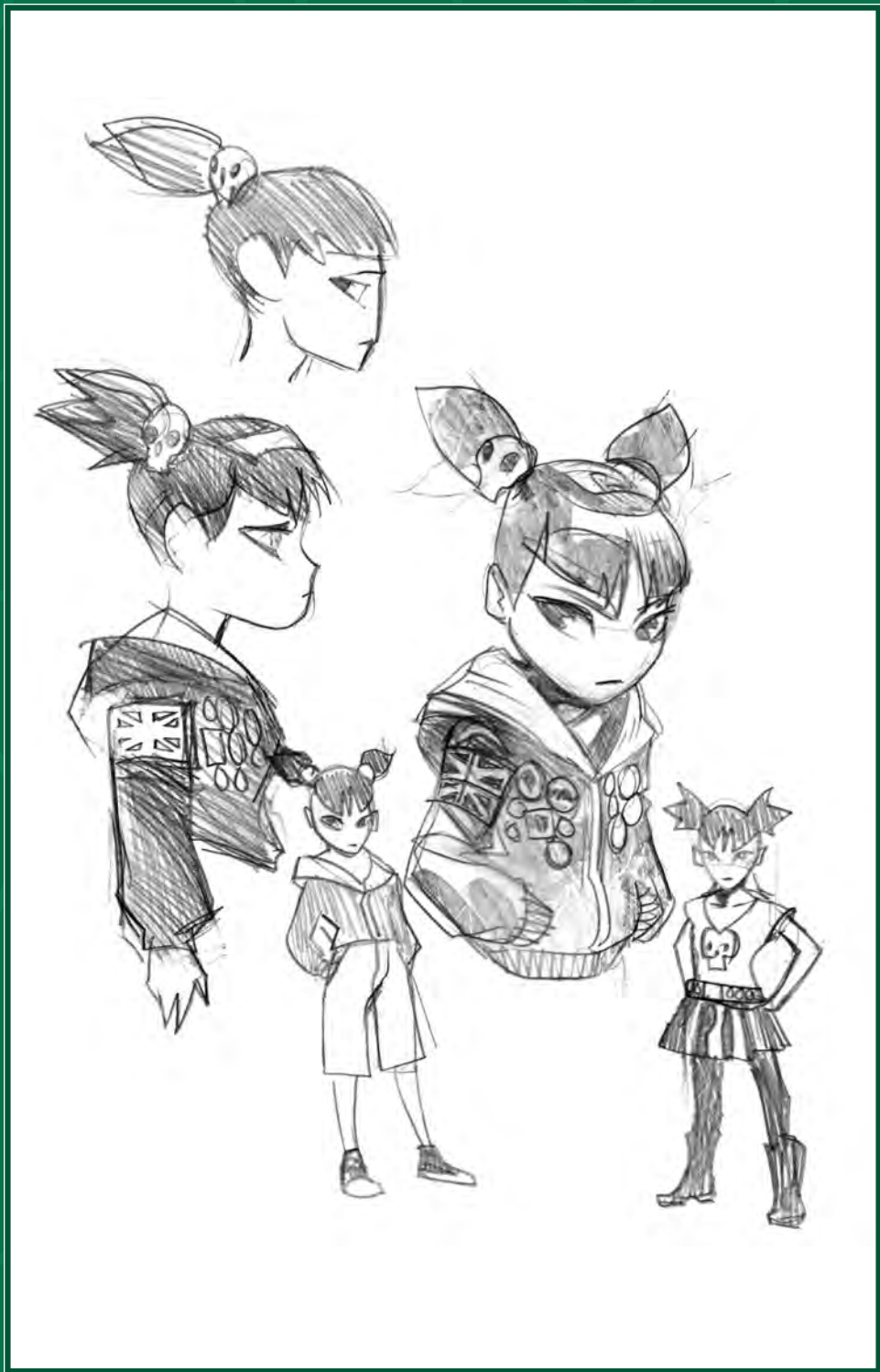
Cover artwork for *Courtney Crumrin* issue #5.



A design for a potential Courtney Crumrin t-shirt.

for
Marisa











ASB
12

— ✦ • TED NAIFEH • ✦ —

Ted Naifeh first appeared in the independent comics scene in 1999 as the artist for *Gloomcookie*, the goth romance comic he co-created with Serena Valentino for SLG Publishing. After a successful run, Ted decided to strike out on his own, writing and drawing *Courtney Crumrin and the Night Things*, a spooky children's fantasy series about a grumpy little girl and her adventures with her Warlock uncle.

Nominated for an Eisner Award for best limited series, *Courtney Crumrin's* success paved the way for *Polly and the Pirates*, another children's book, this time about a prim and proper girl kidnapped by pirates convinced she was the daughter of their long-lost queen.

Over the next few years, Ted wrote four volumes of *Courtney Crumrin*, plus a spin-off book about her uncle. He also co-created *How Loathsome* with Tristan Crane, and illustrated two volumes of the videogame tie-in comic *Death Junior* with screenwriter Gary Whitta. More recently, he illustrated *The Good Neighbors*, a three volume graphic novel series written by *New York Times* bestselling author Holly Black, published by Scholastic.

In 2011, Ted wrote the sequel to *Polly and the Pirates*, and illustrated several *Batman* short stories for DC Comics. In 2012, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of *Courtney Crumrin*, he wrote and illustrated the final two volumes of the series. Currently, you can find Ted everywhere: from the pages of *Batman '66* to his newest original series for adults, *Night's Dominion*.

Ted lives in San Francisco, because he likes dreary weather.



Courtney BY TED NAIFEH Crumrin

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“Ted Naifeh gives his not-inconsiderable wellspring of imagination full sway with Courtney Crumrin. Smartly drawing from fairy tale and mythology, as well as more modern horror archetypes, he’s created a deliciously madcap nightmarescape for his readers to get lost in.” — Colin Meloy (Wildwood Chronicles)

Courtney BY TED NAIFEH Crumrin

The Witch Next Door



Courtney Crumrin doesn't have many friends, and she prefers to keep it that way. But new girl Holly Hart is on her way to discovering the magical side of Hillsborough almost exactly like Courtney did—face-first and woefully unprepared. So Courtney takes the opportunity to show Holly the ropes—just like Uncle Aloysius did for her. But it turns out Holly doesn't want her help, because she knows the real Courtney Crumrin. The one the Night Things whisper about. The one the other kids are afraid of. Will Courtney be able to convince her that she's not the vengeful witch she appears to be? Or will Holly take matters—and magic—into her own hands?

