

WENDY PINI

RICHARD PINI

ELFQUEST[®]

THE
FINAL QUEST



VOLUME ONE

THE FINAL QUEST

ELFQUEST®



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VOLUME ONE

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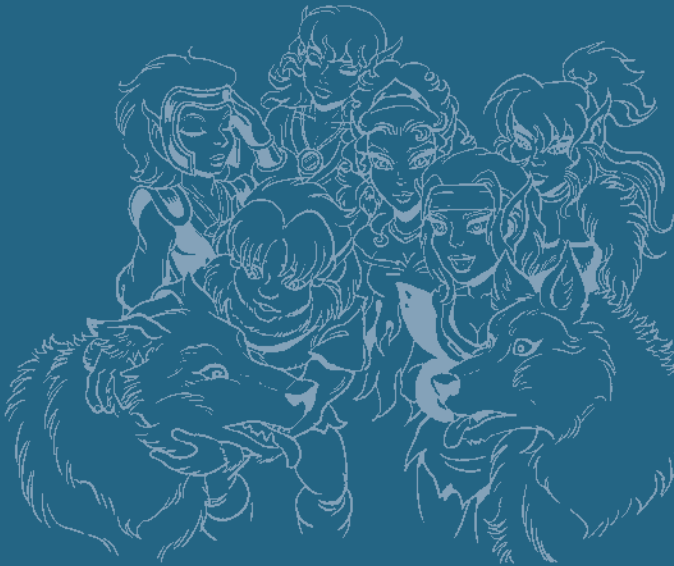
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ELFQUEST: THE FINAL QUEST VOLUME 1

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This volume collects and reprints the comic books ElfQuest: The Final Quest Special and The Final Quest #1-#6.

FOR GENERATIONS, the elves sought
refuge from a primitive, savage world.
After much strife they found it in the Palace
of the High Ones. In this sanctuary, Chief
Cutter and his Wolfriders avoid nature's
wrath and the threat of an ever-expanding
human population. And yet comfort comes at
a price as certain elves begin to lose the skills
that once aided them in battle and allowed
them to survive the harshest circumstances.
The magical palace's influence may lead
to their undoing when the Wolfriders start
upon the ultimate quest for survival!





A SULTRY TWILIGHT IN THE HOLT, DURING AN ESPECIALLY HOT SEASON OF "THE GREEN"...

WELL, BLOOD OF TEN CHIEFS...

WHO KNEW THE FIRST OF YOUR CUBS TO MAKE YOU A GRANDSIRE WOULD BE THE ROUND-EARED ONE?!

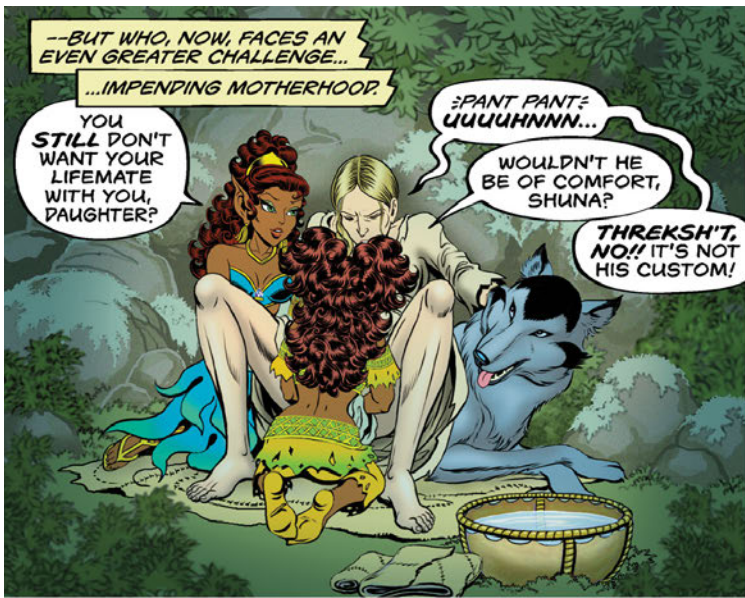


SMILING WITH EYES EVEN OLDER THAN HIS FIVE-HUNDRED-ODD YEARS, HE SAYS NOTHING. THERE IS NO NEED.

HIS SECRET SOUL NAME IS TAM. HIS FOLK, THE WOLFRIDERS, CALL HIM BY MANY NAMES--

--"CUTTER" FOR HIS SKILL WITH A SWORD... "KINSEEKER"... "BLOOD OF TEN CHIEFS"... "CHIEF OF CHANGES"...

EVENTFUL, INDEED, HAS BEEN HIS LEADERSHIP OF THIS ELFIN TRIBE-- A TRIBE THAT INCLUDES ONE HUMAN GIRL WHO HAS HUNTED AND FOUGHT BESIDE THEM--



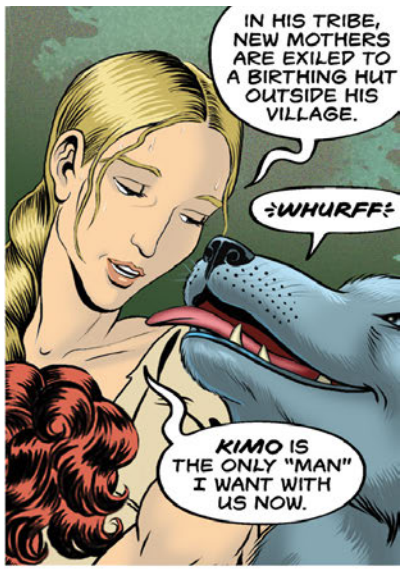
--BUT WHO, NOW, FACES AN EVEN GREATER CHALLENGE...
...IMPENDING MOTHERHOOD.

YOU STILL DON'T WANT YOUR LIFEMATE WITH YOU, DAUGHTER?

≡PANT PANT≡
UUUUHNNN...

WOULDN'T HE BE OF COMFORT, SHUNA?

THREKSH'T, NO!! IT'S NOT HIS CUSTOM!



IN HIS TRIBE, NEW MOTHERS ARE EXILED TO A BIRTHING HUT OUTSIDE HIS VILLAGE.

≡WHURFF≡

KIMO IS THE ONLY "MAN" I WANT WITH US NOW.



WHEN ALL'S WELL WITH US, WE FEEL ONLY PLEASURE IN THE WORK OF BRINGING LIFE.

≡GASP≡
UUUHHH!

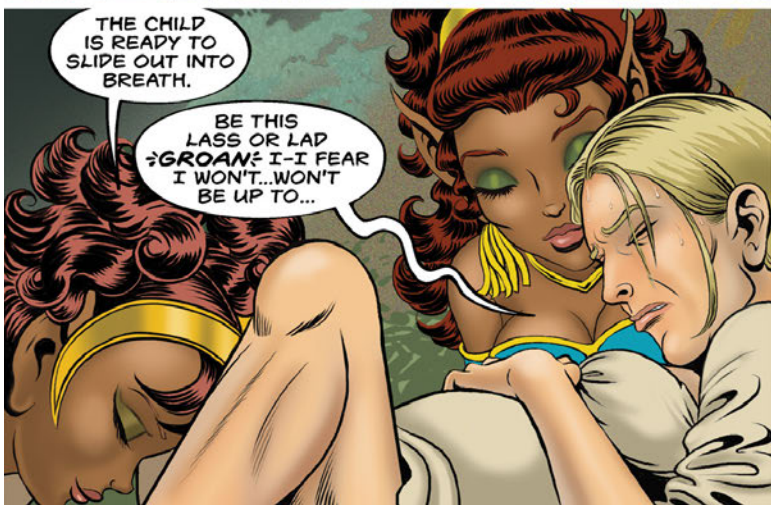
WON'T YOU ALLOW ME TO--?



GREAT SUN, LEETAH! LET HER FEEL THE PANGS A BIT!

≡PANT-PANT≡ AUNT SHENSHEN'S RIGHT! WE-WE HUMANS ARE BORN TO THIS...

≡MAMNH≡ LIKE ALL ORDINARY CREATURES.



THE CHILD IS READY TO SLIDE OUT INTO BREATH.

BE THIS LASS OR LAD
≡GROAN≡ I-I FEAR I WON'T...WON'T BE UP TO...



I, TOO, WAS AFRAID...

...AFRAID MORE WOULD BE ASKED OF ME THAN I WISHED TO GIVE.



"BUT WHEN *SUNTOP* AND *EMBER* WERE BORN, THE LOVE IN MY HEART GREW AND GREW, PRESSING ALL NEEDLESS FEARS ASIDE."

WHO KNEW THE BIRTH OF A HUMAN CUB'D BE SOMETHING WE'D REJOICE ABOUT, EH?

DID YOU FORGET OUR **LITTLE PATCH, UNCLE?**

LITTLE PATCH...LITTLE... PATCH...

NEVER MIND. IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO.

"CUTTER," FOR HIS SWORD SKILLS, YES...BUT MORE, FOR HIS POWER TO CUT THROUGH SECRETS AND SHADOWS TO FIND THE TRUTH.

TRUTH MADE OF COUNTLESS FRAGMENTS OF MEMORIES--

--HIS MEMORIES--

--OF GAINS--

--AND LOSSES--

--AND LESSONS HARD LEARNED.

MORTAL BUT LONG ENDURING, IF LUCKY, WOLFRIDERS LIKE HUNTRESS NIGHTFALL AND REPLANCE THE PLANT SHAPER LIVE IN THE "NOW OF WOLF THOUGHT."

PAINFUL MEMORIES FADE ALTOGETHER, WITH TIME--



--BUT SO, TOO, DOES LEARNING. IN THE BLESSING AND CURSE OF FORGETFULNESS--

--MISTAKES WOULD BE REPEATED AND WRONG CHOICES MADE--



--BUT FOR A CHIEF WHO WATCHES OVER THE BLENDED ELF TRIBES...



...SCATTERED THOUGH THEY BE TO THE FAR CORNERS OF THE WORLD OF TWO MOONS--



--OR ACROSS THE VASTDEEP WATER, A CHIEF WHO CAN NEVER AGAIN COMPLETELY KNOW THE "NOW," FOR HE IS A CHIEF--

--WHO REMEMBERS.



BEFORE MOTHER MOON AND CHILD MOON ARE HALF FULL IN THE SKY, SUNSTREAM'S SEA CUB WILL BE BORN, TOO!

I'LL BE A GRANDSIRE TWICE!



WELL...

GET READY TO GREET YOUR FIRST!



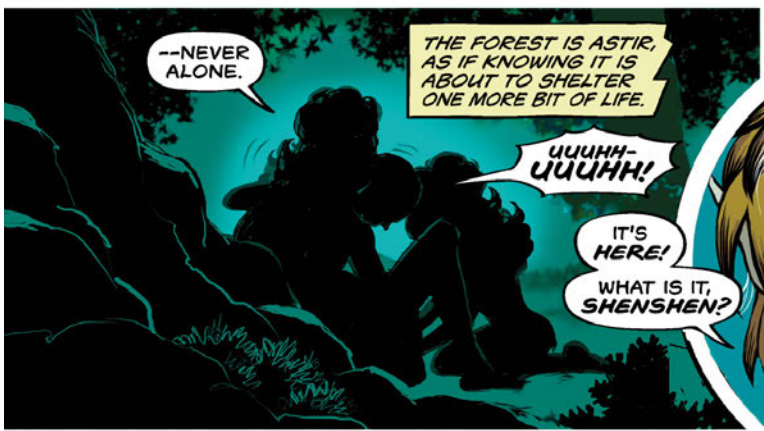


THE NEARBY BROOK BABBLES...DUSK BIRDS AND CRICKETS TRILL...AND GENTLE FLUTE SONG BLENDS SUBTLY WITH ALL.



REDPLANCE'S PLAYING...SO... SWEET!

YOU NEED NEVER FEEL LOST, MY CHOSEN DAUGHTER--



--NEVER ALONE.

THE FOREST IS ASTIR, AS IF KNOWING IT IS ABOUT TO SHELTER ONE MORE BIT OF LIFE.

UUUHH-
UUUHH!

IT'S HERE!

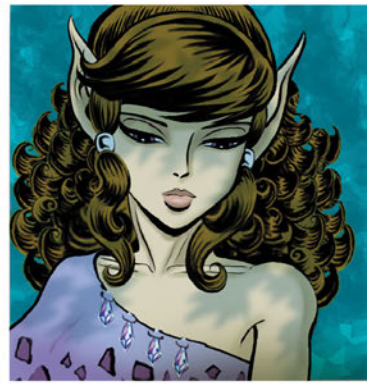
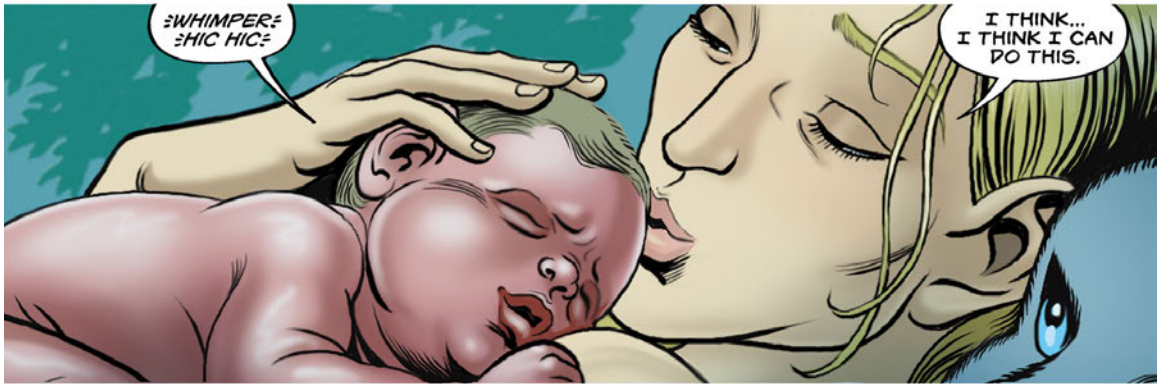
WHAT IS IT, SHENSHEN?



ONE MORE POWERFUL, STUBBORN, FRAGILE BIT OF LIFE.

WAAAHH...
AWAAAHH



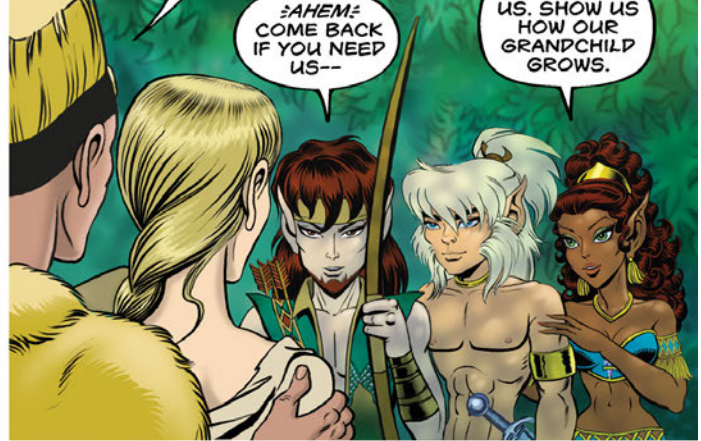


MUCH AS YOU FOLLOW THE WOLVES, MY ELF FAMILY, SOME HUMAN TRIBES--LIKE BEE'S HILLHOPPER CLAN--FOLLOW THE WAYS OF INSECTS.



AND YOU'VE TRAVELED FAR TO LEARN FROM THEM.

BUT NOW OUR SON NEEDS ROOTS. WE'LL BUILD A LODGE SOMEPLACE GOOD. I'LL MAKE MARKERS TO GUIDE FRIENDS--ONLY FRIENDS--TO OUR HIVE.



SAHEM! COME BACK IF YOU NEED US--

--OR WANT US. SHOW US HOW OUR GRANDCHILD GROWS.



WE'LL TEACH HIM TO BE A PEACEMAKER, TOO. WE'LL TEACH ALL WHO'LL LISTEN TO **RESPECT** AND **HONOR** THE FOREST SPIRITS.

BUT WHERE TO FIND YOU WILL ALWAYS BE OUR SECRET.



NEARBY...

YOU'RE GOING TOO, MY FRIEND?

TO DO WHAT I DO BEST--PROTECT SHUNA.



AND TO SHINE WHERE YOU LOVE.

HMM?

I LEARNED IT FROM A DREAM, **KIMO**.



WHEN YOU DO WHAT YOU LOVE BEST, YOU "SHINE WHERE YOU LOVE."

I TRUST DREAMS.



YES! IT IS FOR LOVE! FOR THE SHORT TIME THEY HAVE TO RUN--

--I'LL RUN WITH MY HUMAN PACK!



AND YOU, DART...? WHERE DO YOU SHINE?

HEH HEH! IT'S MORE LIKE I FLICKER THIS WAY AND THAT! IF YOU EVER SEE A STEADY GLOW, LET ME KNOW!



HRRRR
HRRRR
HRRRR!

WHEN EYES MEET EYES AGAIN, PURRRRHAPS?

FARE WELL--



--MUTHRRRRR-RRR.

YOUR EYES ALWAYS STAY YOURS, KIMO!

AND MINE SEE YOU, COMING OR GOING, WITH JOY.





AND...

I COULDN'T LOOK AT THEM LONG ENOUGH.

WHEN WILL I SEE THEM AGAIN?

SMILE, WOMAN! A GOOD SPIRIT WALKS WITH US! WHEN OUR SON LOOKS AT KIMO--

--HE WILL KNOW ALL OUR STORIES ARE TRUE!



ENFOLDING HIS LIFEMATE IN HIS ARMS, CUTTER GAZES UP AT THE FOREST-COVERED MOUNTAIN TOWERING ABOVE THE HOLT.

A GREEN-GROWING WOODLAND TO HUMAN EYES, YES--

SO MUCH HAS CHANGED, EVEN WHAT "FAMILY" MEANS.

NOT JUST THAT, BELOVED...



-- BUT TO ELFIN SIGHT IT IS THE PALACE OF THE HIGH ONES, DISGUISED BY MAGICAL ILLUSION.

LIVING WITHIN THE PALACE'S AURA--

--EVERYTHING ABOUT US IS CHANGING.





LATER, IN FARAWAY DJUNSLAND, AS EMBER'S SPLINTER TRIBE OF WOLFRIDERS RELAX AFTER A SUCCESSFUL HUNT...

EMBER! DON'T THE HALF-MOONS SAY IT'S TIME FOR YOUR BROTHER'S CHILD--?

UH-HMM.



PART SEA ELF, PART LAND ELF. THINK HOW LOVELY SHE'LL BE!

SOON THE PALACE WILL FLY YOU TO THE WAVE-DANCERS' HOME IN THE VASTDEEP TO GREET HER.



NO, TYLEET.



Y-YOU'LL MISS THE CHANCE TO HOLD SUNSTREAM AND BRILL'S NEW CUB IN YOUR ARMS?!

MISS "EYES MEETING EYES" WITH YOUR FAMILY?!



THAT MAKES ME HURT HERE, CHIEFTESS.

OUR HOLT'S PEACEFUL ENOUGH, K'CHAIYA.

YOU NEEDN'T FRET OVER US LIKE A NEST OF KEENER HATCHLINGS.







TEIR! COME HELP ME WORK THIS BURR OUT OF MOLEDIGGER'S RUFF!

SURE, DEWSHINE.



I'VE TOLD YOU ABOUT MY SON? ABOUT HOW WINNOWILL STOLE HIS WOLF BLOOD--

--AND HOW HE DRIFTED AWAY, A WANDERER?

WINDKIN...?



YES. STRANGE THAT I RECALL HIS VERY FIRST NAME, BUT NOT WHETHER HE CHOSE ANOTHER.

YOU... MADE ME THINK OF HIM JUST NOW. I HOPE, WHEREVER HE IS--



--HIS ROOTLESS WAYS HAVEN'T PUT INTO HIS EYES WHAT I SEE IN YOURS.

"ROOTLESS WAYS"...?

BEING ACCEPTED INTO A TRIBE BUT NEVER QUITE KNOWING HOW TO BELONG TO IT.



SOMETHING LIKE THAT TROUBLES EMBER, TOO.

BUT... WHY?!

DAUGHTER OF CUTTER KINSEEKER... SISTER OF SUNSTREAM... ADORED CHILD OF THE WOLFRIPEERS AND THE SUN FOLK... RESPECTED CHIEF!



ALL THAT, YES. BUT STILL NEVER QUITE SURE SHE DESERVES IT.

THROUGH VERY DIFFERENT PATHS, IT SEEMS, YOU AND SHE TURNED OUT MUCH ALIKE.

"MORE ALIKE IN SPIRIT, PERHAPS, THAN EMBER AND HER OWN TWIN BROTHER!"

YOU'RE PULLING OUR TAILS, SUNSTREAM!

¡SIGH! I'LL TRY BETTER TO EXPLAIN.

WHEN WE NEED TO TRAVEL SOMEWHERE...OR SOMEWHEN...FAR AND FAST--

--WE FLY IN THE PALACE SHIP! WE KNOW!

WELL, WHAT IF SMALLER BANDS OF US TRAVELED IN A PIECE OF THE PALACE--

--LIKE RIDING IN A SEED POD THAT'S BLOWN FROM A THISTLE BY THE WIND?

WITHOUT DAMAGE?! WHAT FILLS IN THE HOLE?

THE PALACE ITSELF, LITTLE COUSIN. THINK HOW A LIZARD GROWS BACK HIS LOST TAIL.

THE PALACE CAN HEAL ITSELF RATHER LIKE THAT. LIVING HERE, WE SUN FOLK KNOW THIS DEAR HOME AS WE ONCE KNEW OUR DESERT VILLAGE.

OUR MINDS HOLD THE TOTALITY OF THIS ANCIENT VESSEL'S SHAPE. ANY PART THAT MAY FLY OFF ON AN ERRAND--

--WILL FIT PERFECTLY WHEN IT RETURNS! AYOOOAH!





SHHH!



IT'S BRILL!

SHE'S READY!
TIME TO GO,
SKYWISE!

THE DELICATE BEING, UNITED BY RECOGNITION WITH SUNSTREAM'S VERY SOUL, SMILES...AND THAT WINNING SMILE IS PERCEIVED BY ALL--

--AS THE PALACE'S YOUNG PILOT MANIFESTS BRILL'S IMAGE ON A CRYSTAL WALL.

HUNH!
TOOK HER LONG ENOUGH!

OH, WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT, SWELLHEAD?!
WAVEDANCER CUBS TAKE MORE TIME TO COOK!

WELL, AT LEAST I KNOW HOW TO DO A GOOD JOB OF STEERING!

:=GIGGLE:=



GOOD...NOT PERFECT!

NOT UNLESS WE DO IT TOGETHER.

YOU KNOW, CUB, YOU WERE A LOT MORE RESPECTFUL WHEN YOU WERE MY SIZE!



GUIDE YOUR SMALL VESSEL WELL, BROTHER.



IT CARRIES YOU...MY SON--



--AND MY SOUL FAR AWAY!

ONLY TO RETURN SOON, BELOVED, WITH TIPINGS OF A GRAND-DAUGHTER!

TIPINGS AND TIDES!



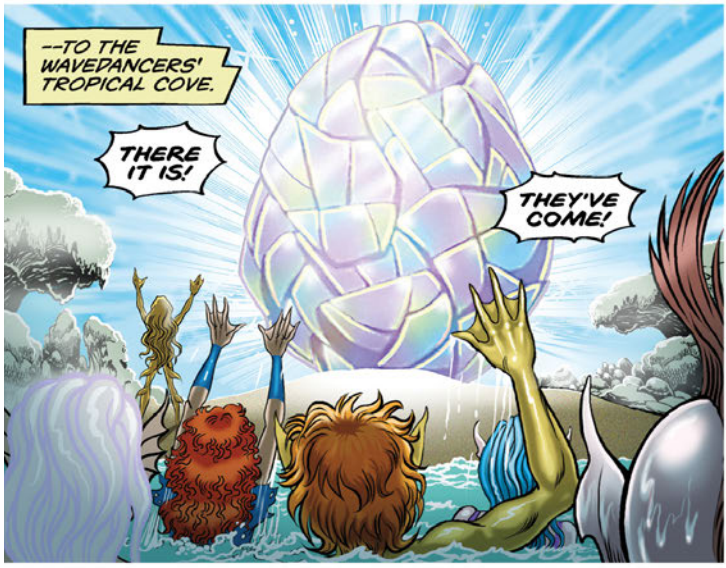
"HURRY!"

KROOSH





SWIFT AS THOUGHT IS TRAVEL IN THE POP--



--TO THE WAVEDANCERS' TROPICAL COVE.

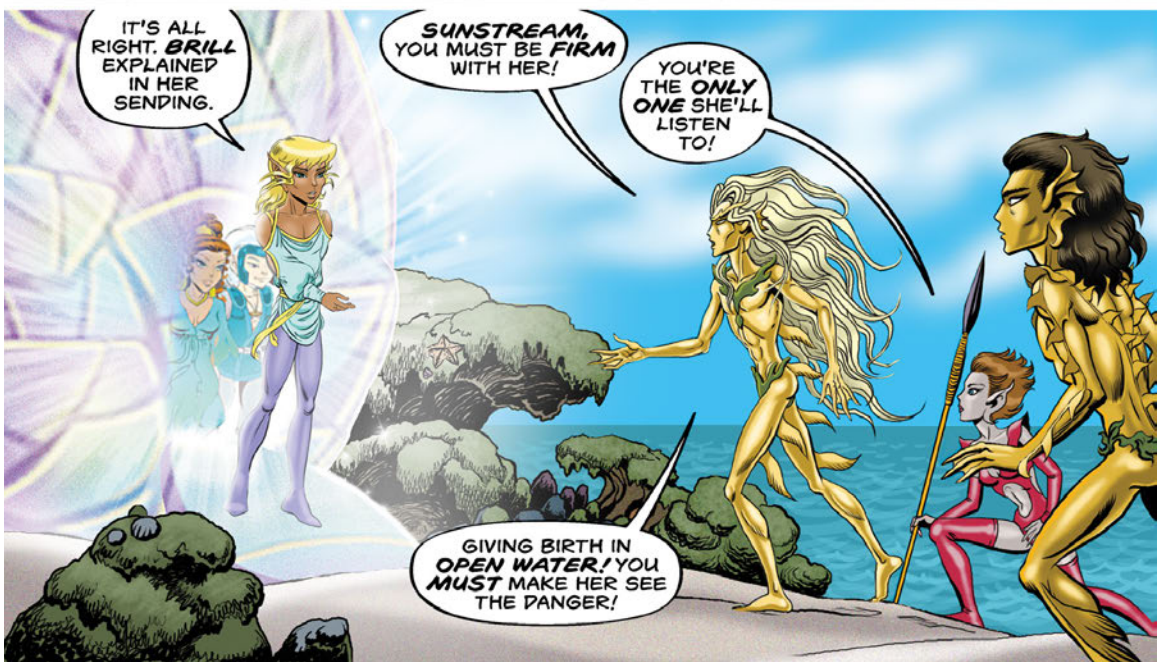
THERE IT IS!

THEY'VE COME!



I EXPECTED FACES FULL OF JOY, BUT THEY LOOK SO... TROUBLED!

THAT'S NEWS? :HEH: THOSE FISH ELVES COULD WHIP THEMSELVES INTO A FRENZY OVER A FLEABITE.



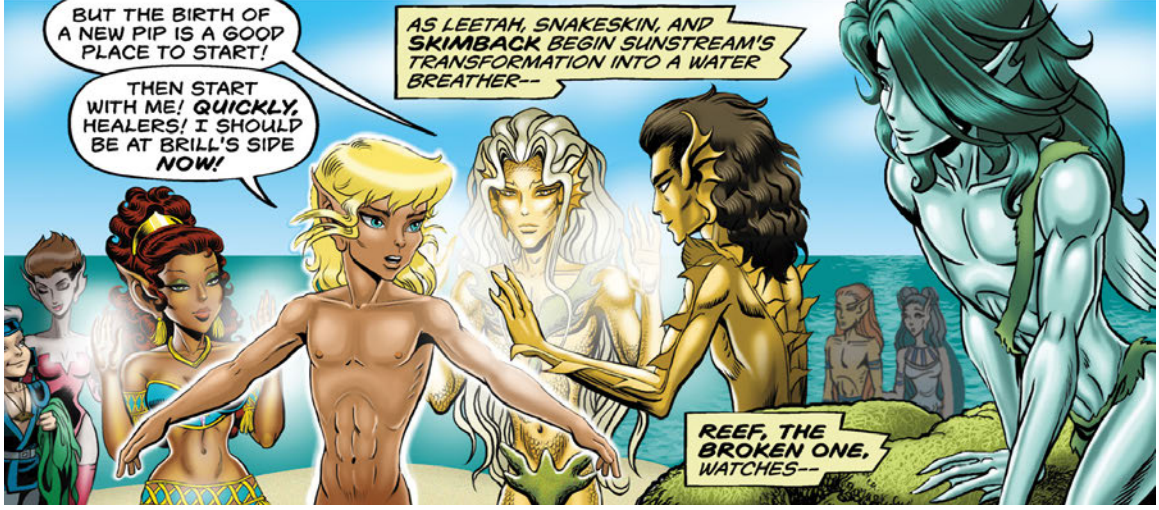
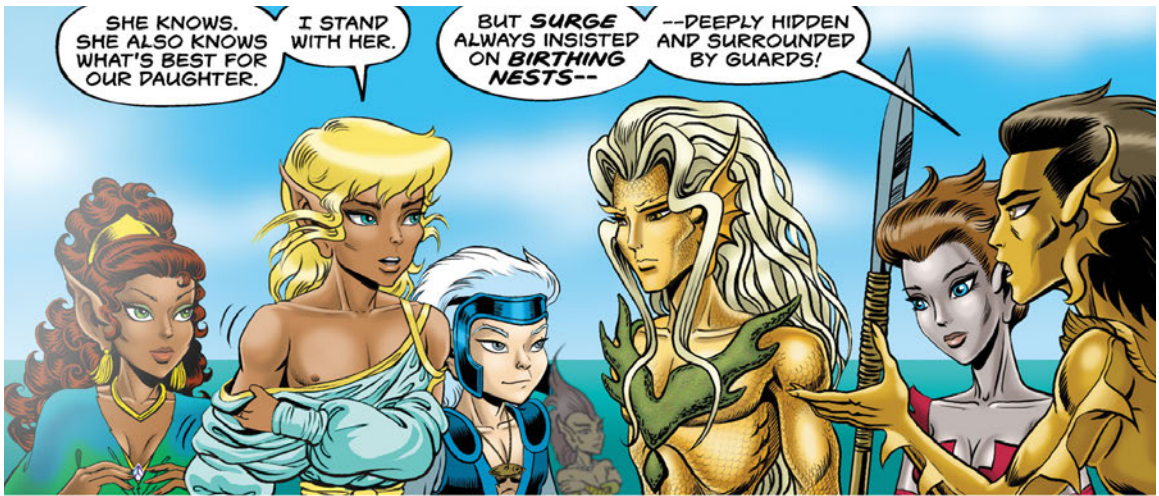
IT'S ALL RIGHT. BRILL EXPLAINED IN HER SENDING.

SUNSTREAM, YOU MUST BE FIRM WITH HER!

YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE SHE'LL LISTEN TO!

GIVING BIRTH IN OPEN WATER! YOU MUST MAKE HER SEE THE DANGER!







--AND THINKS BACK.

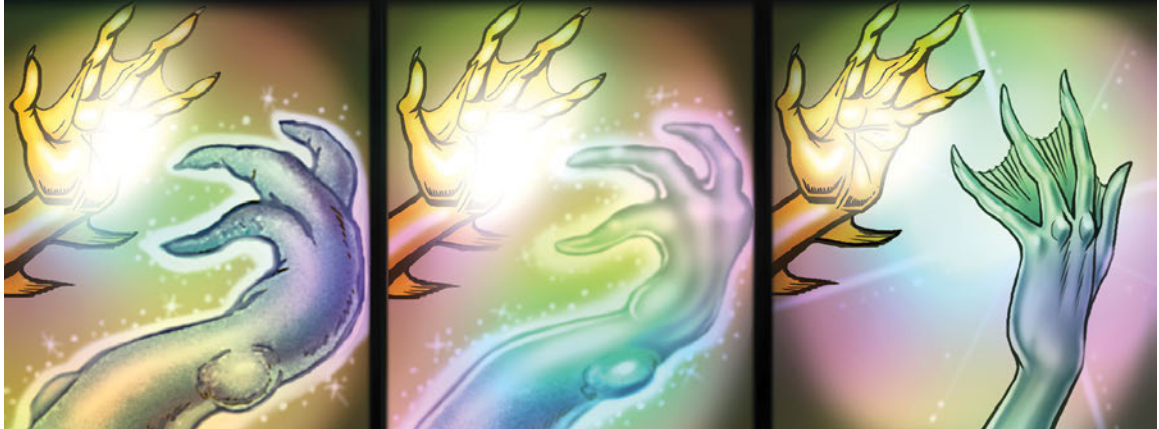
THERE WAS A SHAPE--

--HIDEOUS AND AGONIZING TO INHABIT; THAT WAS, FOR TIME UNTOLD, HIS OWN. SO LONG AS THE WAVEDANCERS HID THEMSELVES, AFRAID TO SEEK OTHERS OF THEIR KIND--

--THE POSSIBILITY OF TRUE HEALING STAYED AS REMOTE AS BEING LOOKED UPON WITHOUT PITY BY HIS WELL-MEANING TRIBEMATES.

THEN...THREE TURNS OF THE SEASONS AGO, SURROUNDED BY THE EUPHORIC ENERGIES OF THE HIGH ONES' PALACE SHIP, THE BROKEN ONE WAS RESTORED. HIS TORTURED MIND, TWISTED AS HIS BODY BY A DARK SHAPE SHIFTER'S SORCERY--

--FOUGHT TO COMPREHEND AS BONE PAINLESSLY STRENGTHENED AND LENGTHENED AND MUSCLES TIGHTENED INTO PLEASING CONTOURS. THE SHROUD OF MADNESS LIFTED, ONE TRUTH BECAME CLEAR--



--RENEWED GRACE AND BEAUTY, EVEN IF
ATTENDED BY GREATER LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE,
IS NO GUARANTEE OF SERENITY.

AND YET THE TENDER HEART
THAT NOT EVEN THE "BLACK
SNAKE" WINNOWILL COULD
CORRUPT CAN STILL REJOICE
FOR ANOTHER.



THANK
YOU, MOTHER,
SKIMBACK! EACH
TIME YOU DO
THIS FOR ME,
I-I...

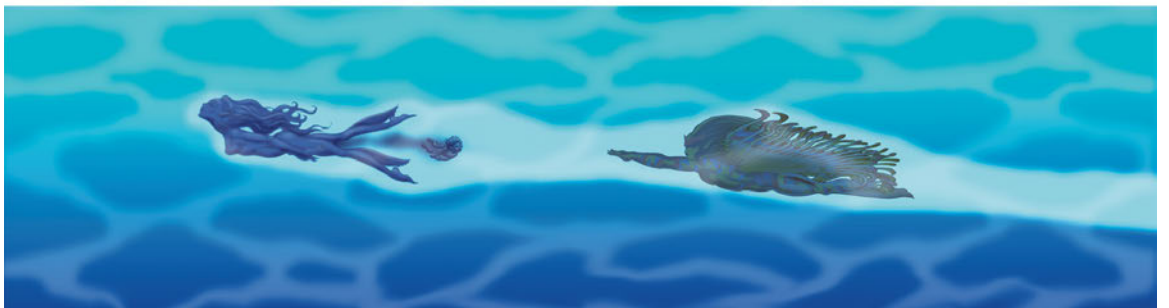
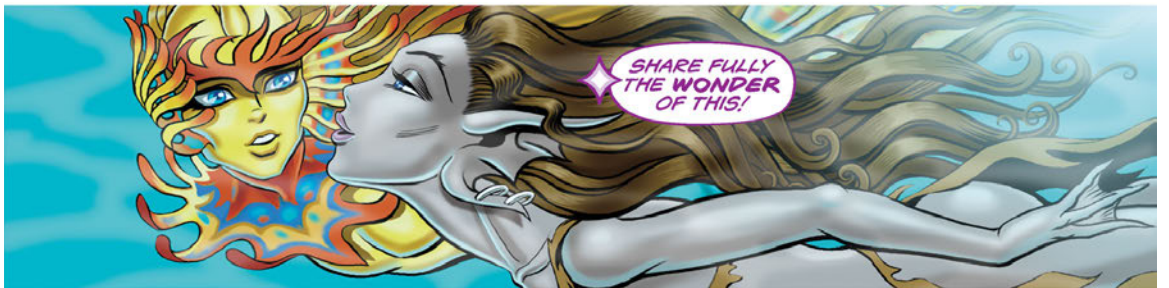


IT'S A FAR
MORE BEAUTIFUL
SHAPE THAN I
DESERVE!

IT'S HOW
BRILL SEES
YOU...WITH ALL
HER LOVE.

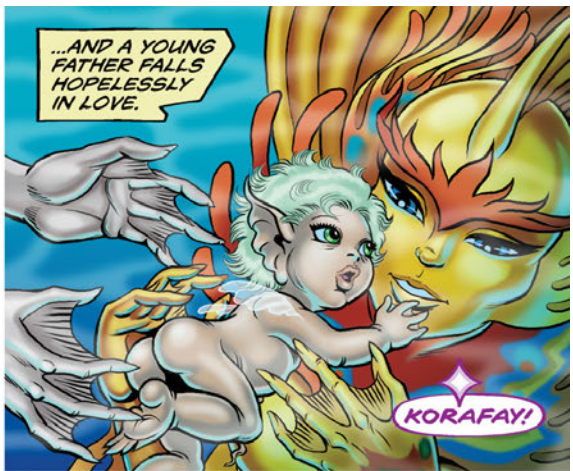
"NOW GO!"







EYES MEET BLINKING,
QUICKLY ADJUSTING
EYES...



...AND A YOUNG
FATHER FALLS
HOPELESSLY
IN LOVE.

KORAFAY!



HER TRIBE NAME, SO OFTEN
RECEIVED IN THE WOMB--

KORAFAY!

KORAFAY!

--JOYOUSLY WELCOMES
THE NEWBORN INTO THE
WORLD AND SETS HER
ASQUIRM WITH DELIGHT.



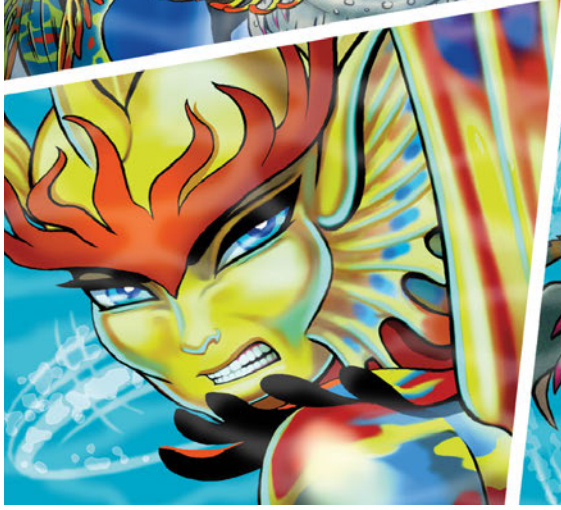
MERE MOMENTS AFTER
BIRTH, SHE SPINS AND
FROLICS AS IF--

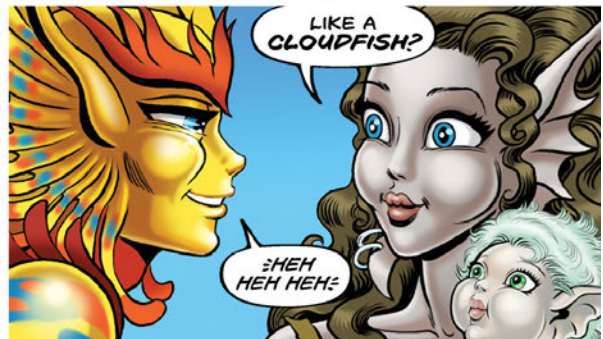
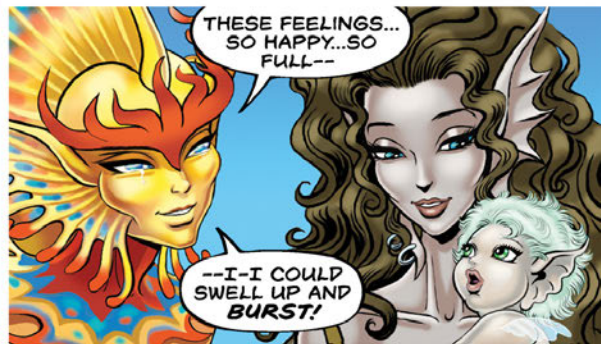
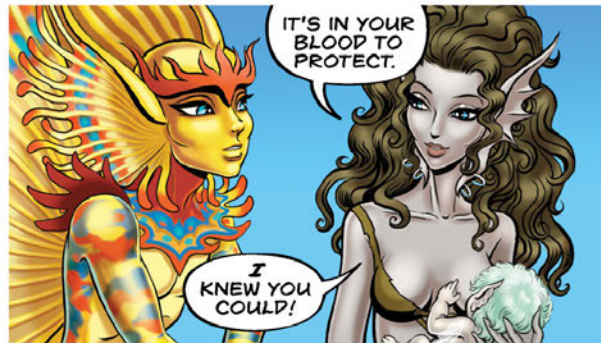
--DANCING!!

SEE HOW
STRONG
SHE IS!

YES, STRONG...BECAUSE
TINY LIMBS HAVE BEEN
ALLOWED TO STRETCH.







A NOISY, DAYLONG CELEBRATION--UNHEARD OF DURING SURGE'S RULE--BREAKS OUT ABOVE THE SURFACE, SO SKYWISE AND LEETAH MAY JOIN IN.





CHUCKLE: I SEE THEY'LL NEED TO HARNESS AND TETHER YOU, DEAREST KITLING, AS DEWSHINE ONCE TETHERED HER BABY BOY!

JOURNEY WELL, LEETAH AND SKYWISE. THIS DAY WILL LIVE IN OUR HEARTS AS LONG AS THE VASTDEEP WATERS FLOW.

AND FOR US TOO, SNAKESKIN. WE'LL BE BACK!

AFTER ALL, KRILL HAS TO KEEP HER PROMISE TO TEACH ME TO SWIM LIKE ONE OF YOU!



ONCE SETTLED INSIDE THE PALACE POP...

HATE TO LEAVE?

NO... CUTTER IS WAITING.

SIGH...IT'S JUST THAT IT HAS BEEN SUCH A WHILE SINCE I DANCED WITH THE SAND BETWEEN MY TOES.



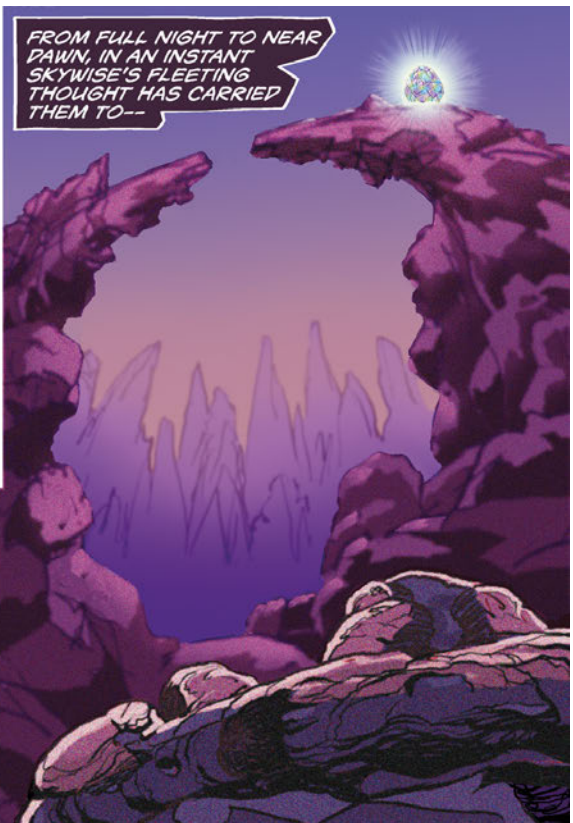
?!?

GREAT SUN!





I-I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT...



FROM FULL NIGHT TO NEAR DAWN, IN AN INSTANT SKYWISE'S FLEETING THOUGHT HAS CARRIED THEM TO--



--THE SUN VILLAGE?!

UNABLE TO RESIST, THE ELFIN PAIR CLIMB DOWN TO THE ANCIENT DESERT SETTLEMENT, LONG ABANDONED AND FALLEN TO RUIN.



SOMBERLY, THEY NOTE CHANGES WROUGHT BY TIME...

...AND UNEXPLAINED VIOLENCE.

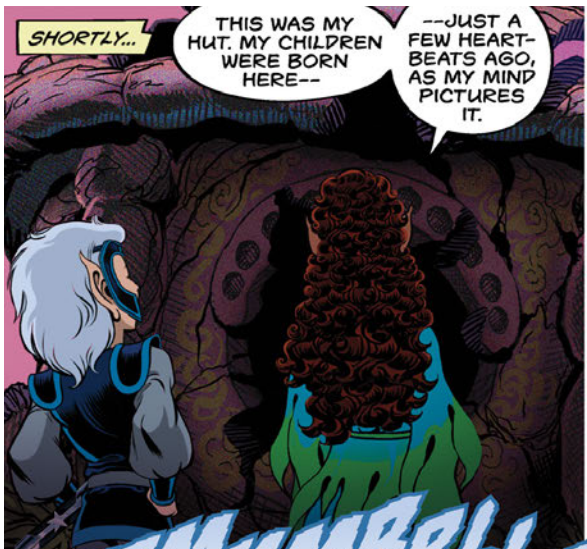
BONES...
HUMAN ONES...



SOME FRESH... SOME MUCH OLDER!

ARROW NICKS... BUT WHOSE?





SHORTLY...

THIS WAS MY HUT. MY CHILDREN WERE BORN HERE--

--JUST A FEW HEART-BEATS AGO, AS MY MIND PICTURES IT.



YET I KNOW, TOO, HOW THEY, YOU, AND I--

--TRAVELED FAR AHEAD IN TIME WHILE TAM AND THE REST WAITED TO CATCH UP.



EH?!

GROUND-QUAKE!!



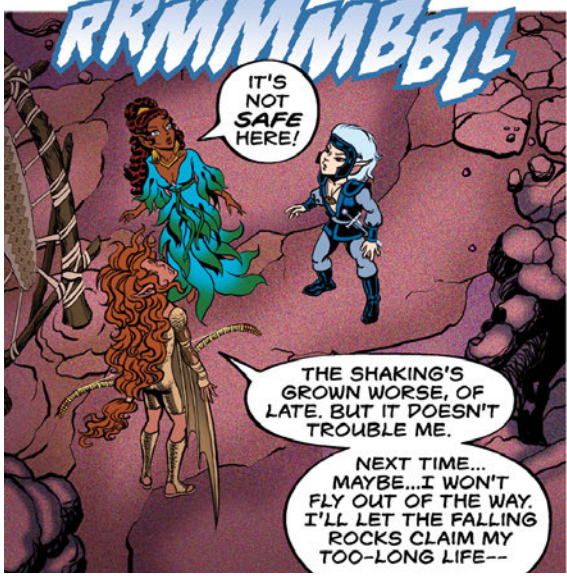
UNH!

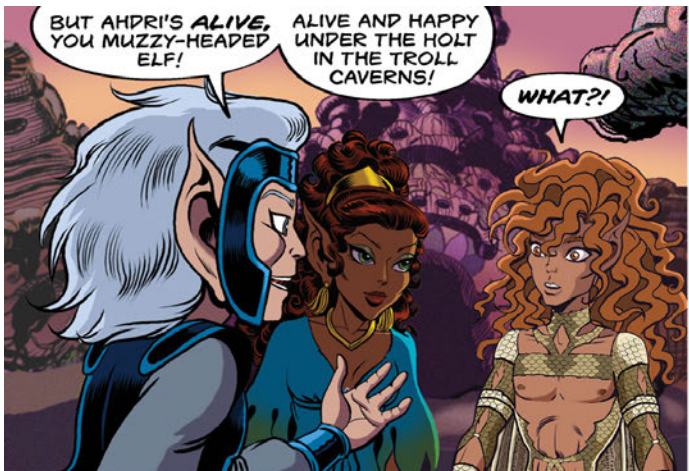


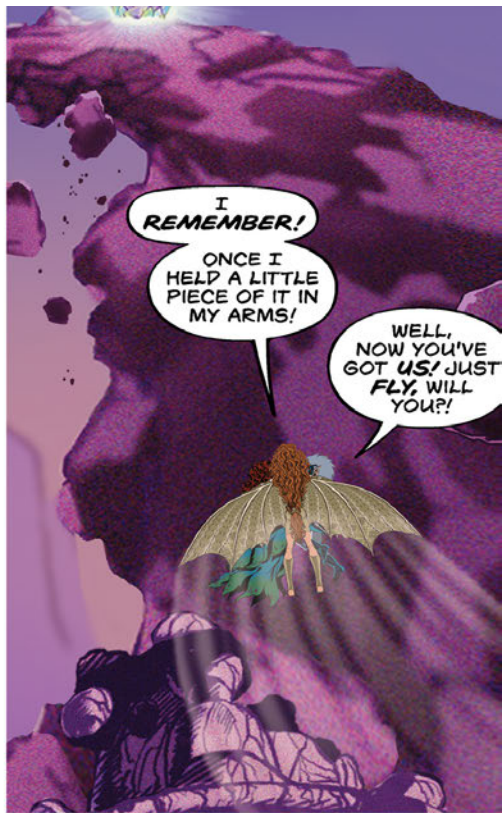
¿GASP¿

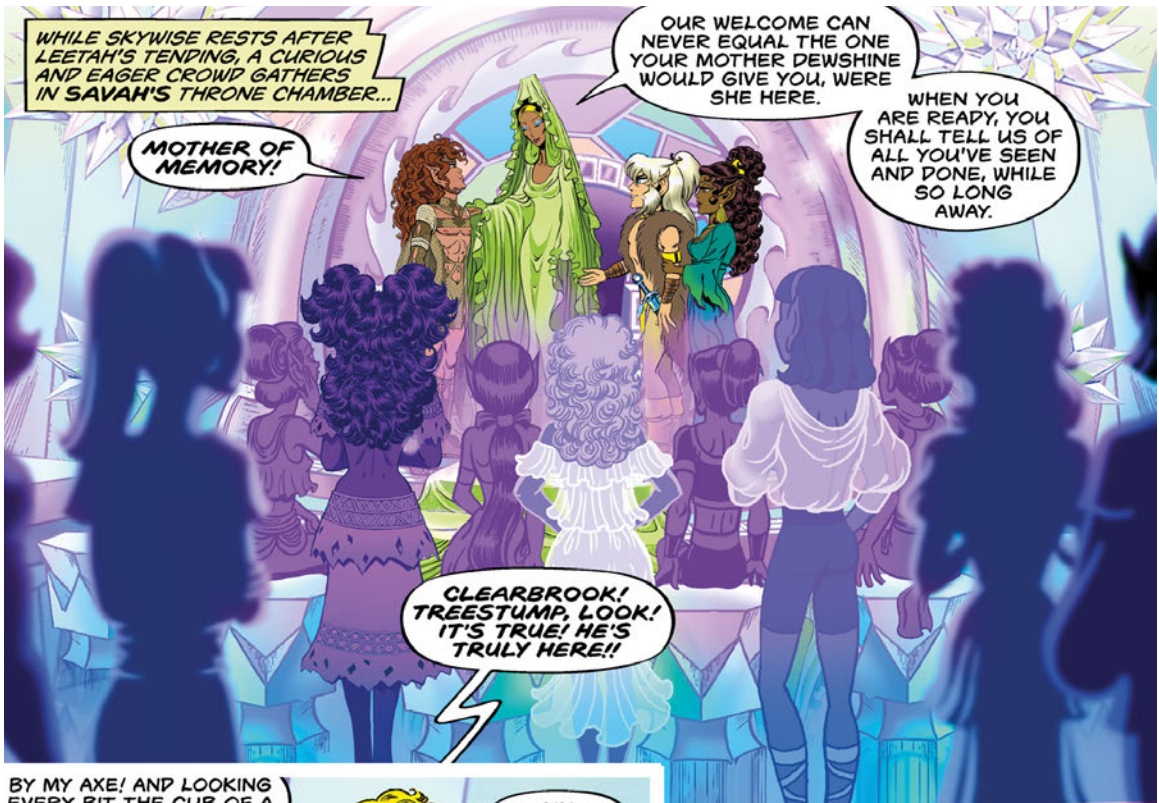












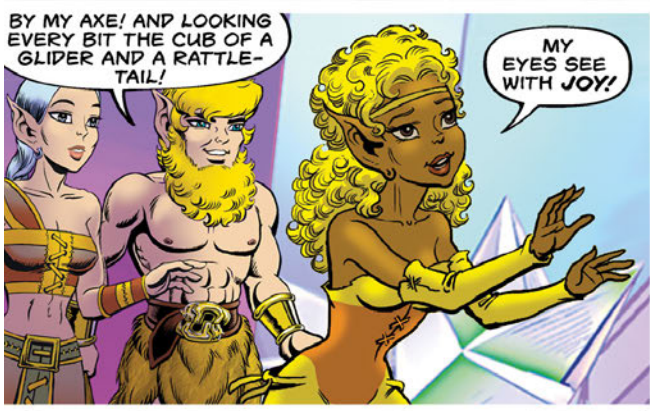
WHILE SKYWISE RESTS AFTER LEETAH'S TENDING, A CURIOUS AND EAGER CROWD GATHERS IN SAVAH'S THRONE CHAMBER...

MOTHER OF MEMORY!

OUR WELCOME CAN NEVER EQUAL THE ONE YOUR MOTHER DEWSHINE WOULD GIVE YOU, WERE SHE HERE.

WHEN YOU ARE READY, YOU SHALL TELL US OF ALL YOU'VE SEEN AND DONE, WHILE SO LONG AWAY.

CLEARBROOK! TREESTUMP, LOOK! IT'S TRUE! HE'S TRULY HERE!!



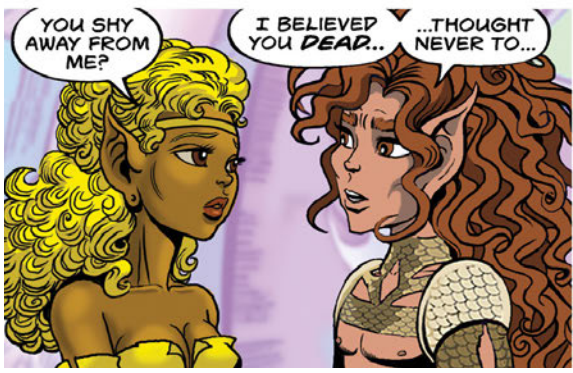
BY MY AXE! AND LOOKING EVERY BIT THE CUB OF A GLIDER AND A RATTLE-TAIL!

MY EYES SEE WITH JOY!



MY HANDS TOUCH WITH--?!

AHRI, WAIT! I-I DON'T...
...I...



YOU SHY AWAY FROM ME?

I BELIEVED YOU DEAD...

...THOUGHT NEVER TO...



...NEVER TO TOUCH YOU AGAIN!





LATER, UNDER THE FATHER TREE'S TWINING BRANCHES...

BEING WITH SAVAH--

--MAKES ME WANT TO RELIVE MORE. MY MOTHER... YOU SAY SHE'S IN THE NEW LAND?

AYE, GRANDSON! THOUGH NONE OF US HAS WINGS, SOME OF US DO A LOT OF MOVING ABOUT THESE DAYS.



WINKIN LOOKS SO LIKE TYLPAK!

THAT HE DOES!

MY SIRE? YOU REMEMBER HIM?



WHO COULD FORGET THAT TALL BIRD ELF? HE AND KAHVI LEFT US MANY TURNS OF THE SEASONS BEFORE OUR LONG SLEEP IN WRAP-STUFF.

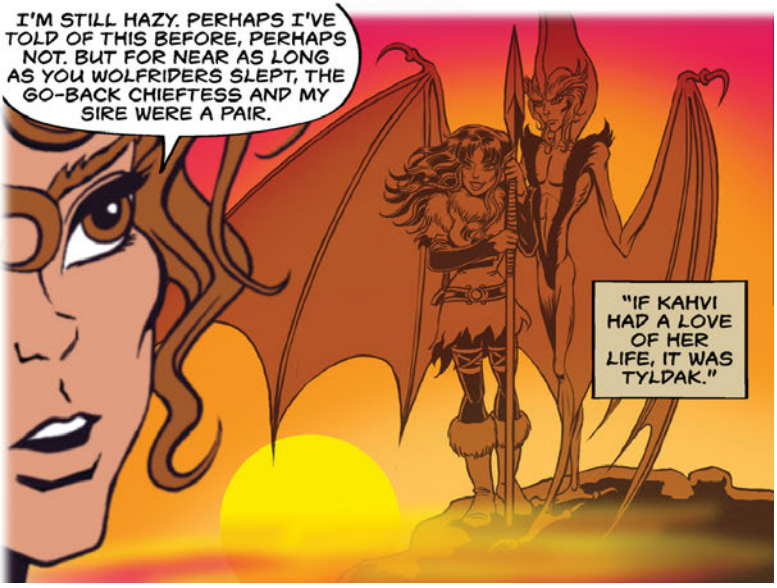
I'VE WONDERED WHAT BECAME OF THEM.



WHILE I SLEPT, I DREAMED KAHVI TORE MY COCOON OPEN AND WOKE ME.

OR...

...DID I DREAM?



I'M STILL HAZY. PERHAPS I'VE TOLD OF THIS BEFORE, PERHAPS NOT. BUT FOR NEAR AS LONG AS YOU WOLFRIDERS SLEPT, THE GO-BACK CHIEFTESS AND MY SIRE WERE A PAIR.

"IF KAHVI HAD A LOVE OF HER LIFE, IT WAS TYLPAK."






"HE'D DO ANYTHING FOR HER...FLEW HER TO THE FROZEN MOUNTAINS--"

"--WHERE SHE ROUNDED UP THE GO-BACKS AND BROUGHT THEM, BRIEFLY, BACK INTO ORDER.

"BUT THE SNOW ELVES' WAYS WERE TOO LIMITED.




"TYLPAK HAD SHOWN HER TOO MUCH OF THE WORLD. IN TIME, SHE CHOSE TOTAL FREEDOM OVER THE DUTIES OF A CHIEF.



"AND ONE DAY, IN THE RUBBLE OF *BLUE MOUNTAIN*, THEY HAPPENED UPON ME.



"LIKE THEM, I WAS ON A QUEST TO FIND *WINNOWILL*. SO WE JOINED FORCES, PLOTTING AND PLANNING HOW TO MAKE THE BLACK SNAKE RETURN TYLPAK'S RIGHTFUL SHAPE--AND GIVE ME *REAL WINGS*."



"WE GOT TO LIKING EACH OTHER'S COMPANY...LOOKED OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER AS WE SEARCHED AND SEARCHED OVER GREAT DISTANCE AND GREAT TIME.

"ALL IN VAIN."

YOU THREE
COULD NEVER
HAVE FOUND
OL' WINNO-
WICKED!

NOT
UNLESS YOU COULD
BREATHE WATER LIKE
WAVEPANCERS.

THE
SEA ELVES?!
I KNOW OF
THEM!

AND WINNOWILL
BECAME LIKE
THEM? IS SHE
STILL...?





"SOME TREATED US WITH RESPECT. KAHVI LOVED TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THEM.

"BUT TO OTHERS... THE GREEDY ONES--



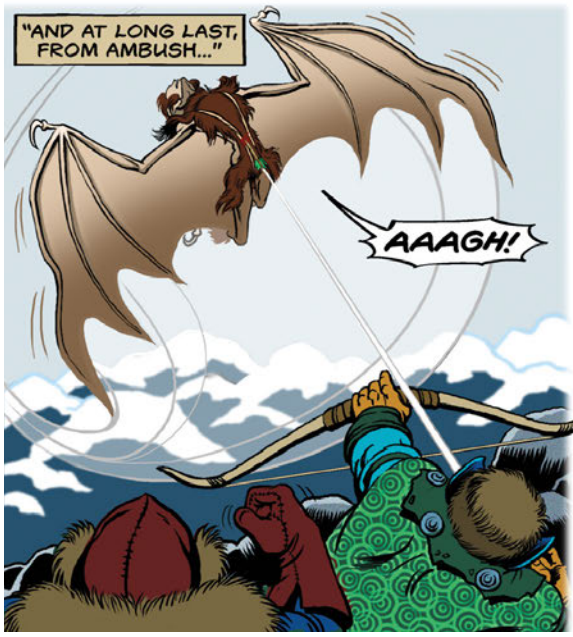
"--MY SIRE WAS A PRIZE TO BE TRADED, DEAD OR ALIVE, FOR GOLD!

"AS TIME PASSED, HE NEEDED OUR PROTECTION MORE AND MORE.



"ONE BRUTALLY COLD DAY, OUR EMPTY BELLIES GROWLING WITH PAIN--

"--WE RISKED A LOW-FLYING SKY HUNT.



"AND AT LONG LAST, FROM AMBUSH..."

AAAGH!

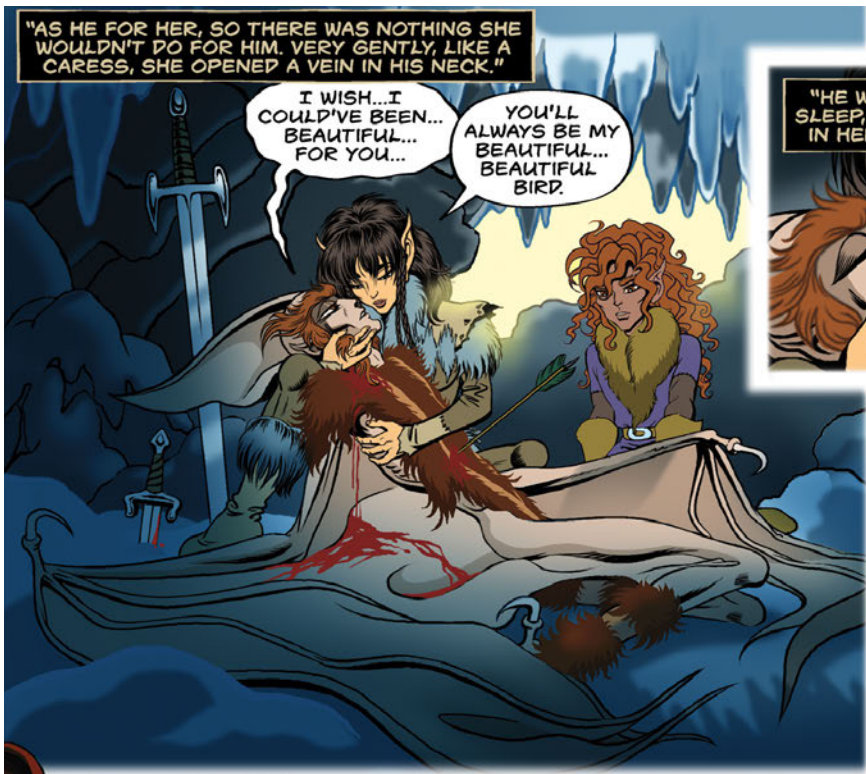


FILTHY PUNG EATERS!!

D-DON'T... LET THEM... TAKE ME!

BE QUICK!





"AS HE FOR HER, SO THERE WAS NOTHING SHE WOULDN'T DO FOR HIM. VERY GENTLY, LIKE A CARESS, SHE OPENED A VEIN IN HIS NECK."

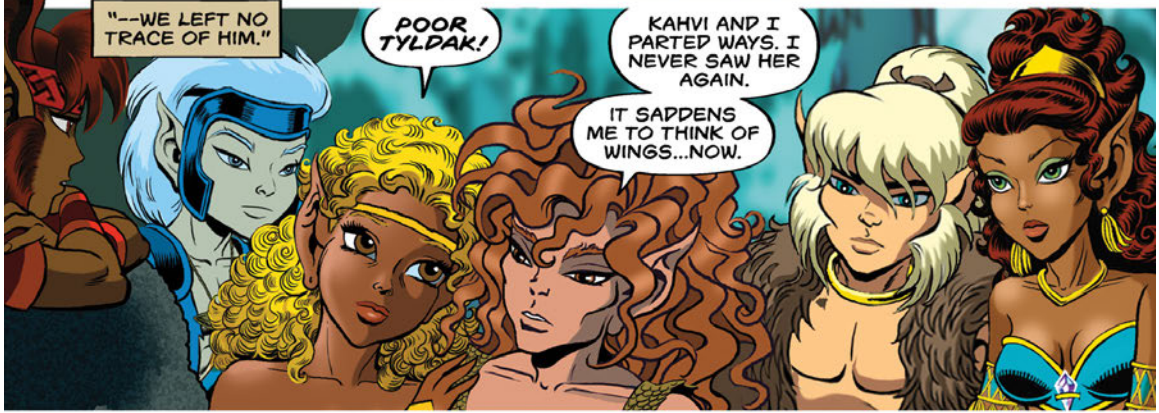
I WISH... I COULD'VE BEEN... BEAUTIFUL... FOR YOU...

YOU'LL ALWAYS BE MY BEAUTIFUL... BEAUTIFUL BIRD.



"HE WENT TO SLEEP, SMILING, IN HER ARMS."

"TOGETHER WE AVENGED HIM. THEN, AS HE WISHED--"



"--WE LEFT NO TRACE OF HIM."

POOR TYLDAK!

KAHVI AND I PARTED WAYS. I NEVER SAW HER AGAIN.

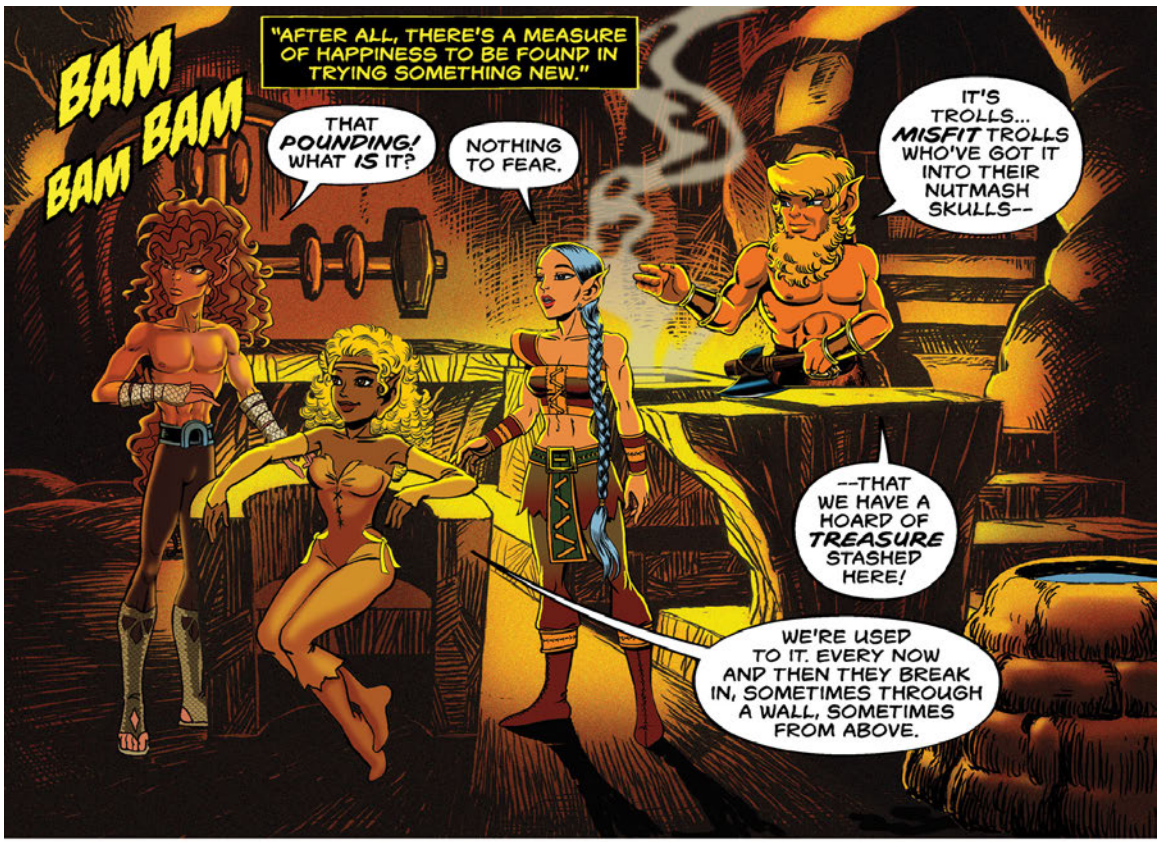
IT SADDENS ME TO THINK OF WINGS...NOW.



OH, PLEASE DON'T DRIFT AWAY ON THE WINDS! PLEASE, PLEASE STAY!

SHE'S RIGHT, LAD. COME LIVE AND WORK WITH US UNDERGROUND!





"AFTER ALL, THERE'S A MEASURE OF HAPPINESS TO BE FOUND IN TRYING SOMETHING NEW."

**BAM
BAM
BAM**

THAT POUNDING! WHAT IS IT?

NOTHING TO FEAR.

IT'S TROLLS... MISFIT TROLLS WHO'VE GOT IT INTO THEIR NUTMASH SKULLS--

--THAT WE HAVE A HOARD OF TREASURE STASHED HERE!

WE'RE USED TO IT. EVERY NOW AND THEN THEY BREAK IN, SOMETIMES THROUGH A WALL, SOMETIMES FROM ABOVE.



AND WHEN THEY DO--

BAM



KRIMMBL



~GIGGLE~ THEN I EARN MY KEEP WITH A LITTLE ROCK SHAPING!

WE'LL SEE THEM AGAIN, MAYBE, BY THE NEXT NEW GREEN.



HERE, BELOVED YOU ARE THE FIRST AND BEST OF US TO WIELD THIS.

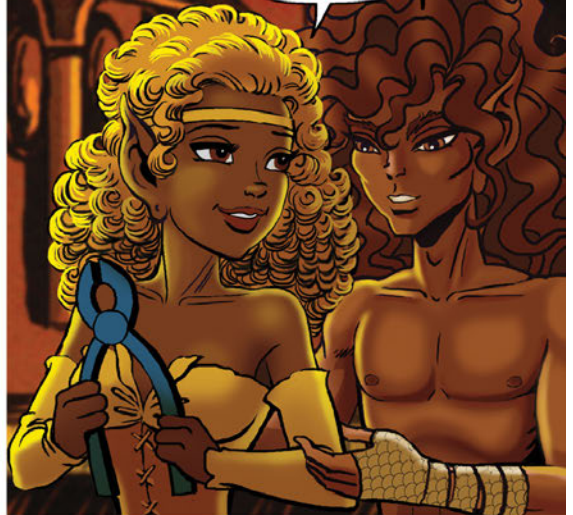
SHOW WINDKIN HOW IT'S DONE.



MY LIFE OF LONE WANDERING HASN'T ADDED UP TO MUCH-- NOT COMPARED TO WHAT YOU DO HERE.

YOU SEEM... I DON'T KNOW HOW TO SAY IT--

--HAPPY?



KLANG-TA-TINK

KLANG-TA-TINK



♪ THE HAMMER FALLS, THE ANVIL RINGS, AND EACH STRONG STROKE A "MAKING" BRINGS. ♪

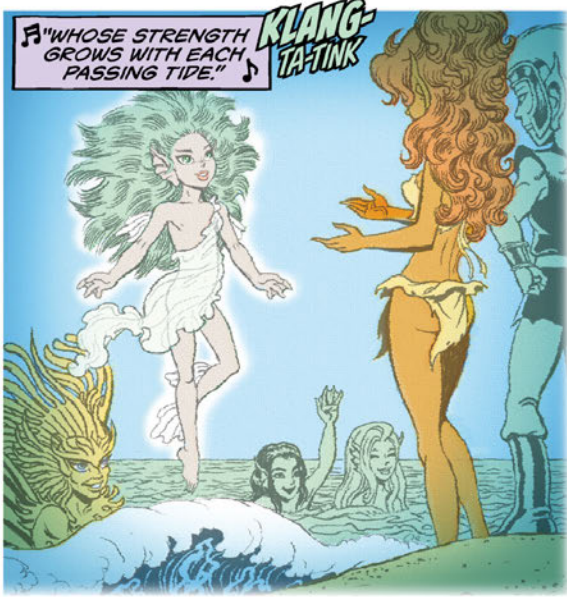


♪ AND EACH STRONG STROKE A "MAKING" BRINGS! ♪

♪ "THE NEW-MADE THING'S A CHILD UNTRIED, WHOSE STRENGTH GROWS WITH EACH PASSING TIDE." ♪

KLANG-TA-TINK

KLANG-TA-TINK



♪ "WHOSE STRENGTH GROWS WITH EACH PASSING TIDE." ♪

KLANG-TA-TINK



KLANG-TA-TINK



♪ "ALL THE THINGS WE MAKE HAVE LIFE--" ♪

TODAY YOUR TRIBE NAME IS SHUKOPEK--

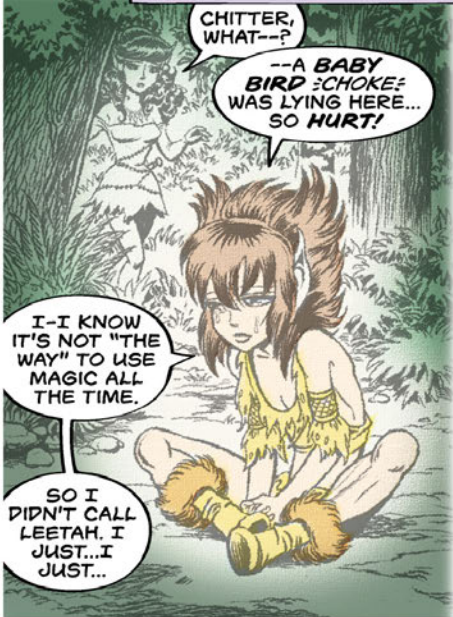
KLANG-TA-TINK

--FOR YOU DWELL IN TWO WORLDS, BUT WITH ONE HEART AND ONE MIND.

♪ "--BE THEY MADE OF ROCK OR SKIN." ♪

KLANG-TA-TINK

♪ "BOLT OF BRIGHT FIRE IN THE NIGHT, SKIN LIVES FAST UNTIL DEATH WINS." ♪



CHITTER, WHAT--?

--A BABY BIRD ☹️CHOKE☹️ WAS LYING HERE... SO HURT!

I-I KNOW IT'S NOT "THE WAY" TO USE MAGIC ALL THE TIME.

SO I DIDN'T CALL LEETAH. I JUST...I JUST...



...DUG A HOLE ☹️SOB☹️ AND COVERED HIM UP! ☹️SOB☹️

BUT IT MOOOOVED! THE DIRT MOVED! SO I SAT ON IT!

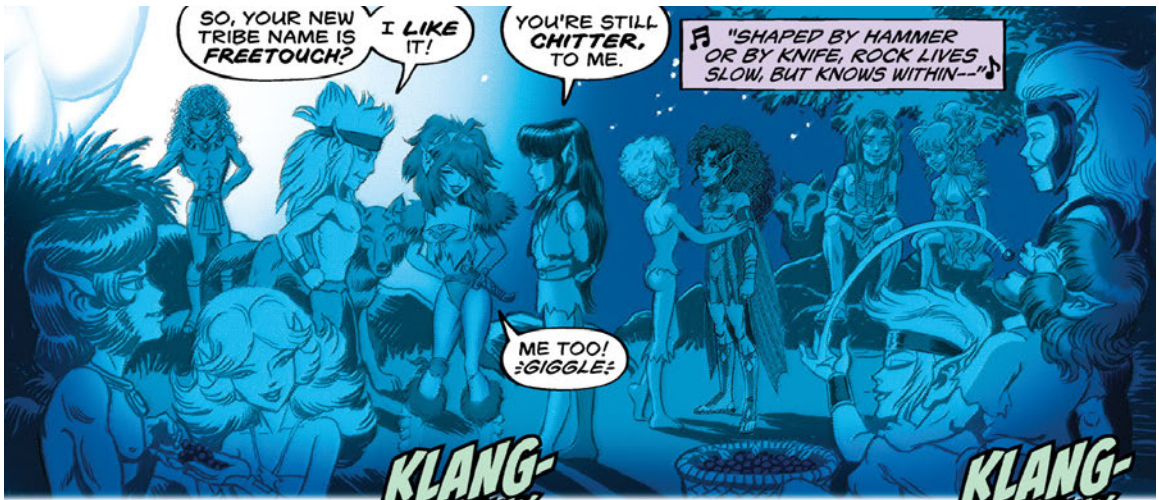


HE WAS STILL TRYING TO LIVE...STILL HURTING! ☹️SOB SOB☹️

KLANG-TA-TINK

KLANG-TA-TINK





SO, YOUR NEW TRIBE NAME IS **FREETOUCH?**

I LIKE IT!

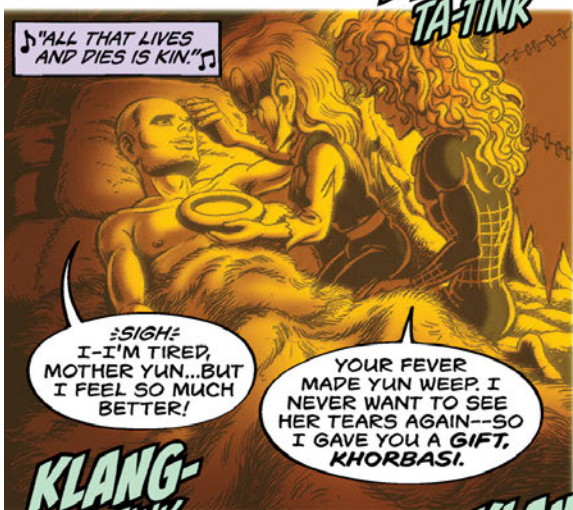
YOU'RE STILL **CHITTER**, TO ME.

♪ "SHAPED BY HAMMER OR BY KNIFE, ROCK LIVES SLOW, BUT KNOWS WITHIN--" ♪

ME TOO! **≡GIGGLE≡**

KLANG-TA-TINK

KLANG-TA-TINK



♪ "ALL THAT LIVES AND DIES IS KIN." ♪

≡SIGH≡ I-I'M TIRED, MOTHER YUN...BUT I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER!

YOUR FEVER MADE YUN WEEP. I NEVER WANT TO SEE HER TEARS AGAIN--SO I GAVE YOU A GIFT, **KHORBASI**.

KLANG-TA-TINK

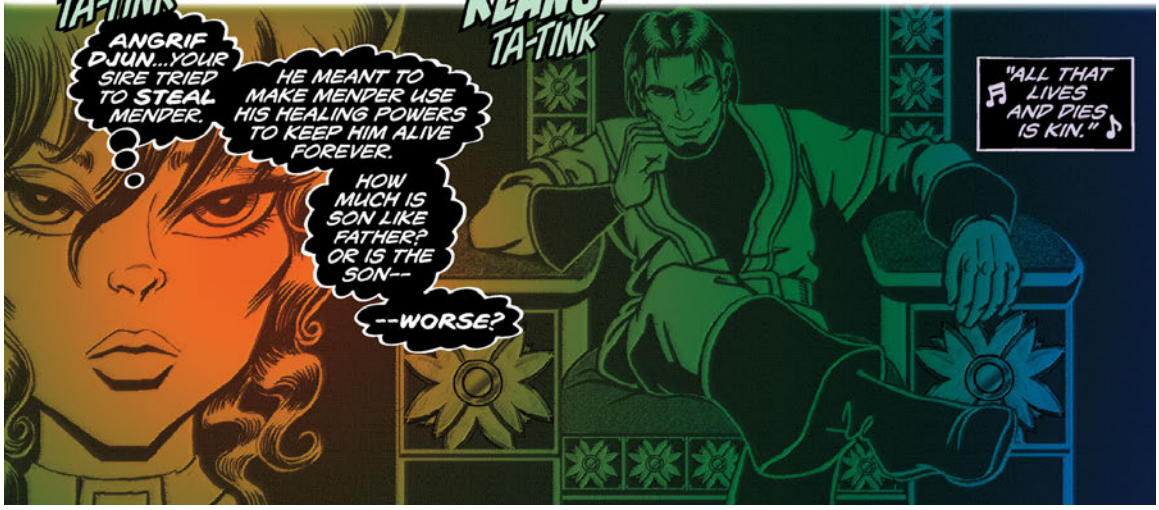


YOU'LL BE **STRONG** OF BODY--

--AND LIVE MANY TIMES LONGER THAN OTHER ROUND EARS!

YOU'RE MORE ONE OF OURS THAN EVER, **HUMAN CUB!**

KLANG-TA-TINK



ANGRIE DJUN...YOUR SIRE TRIED TO STEAL MENDER.

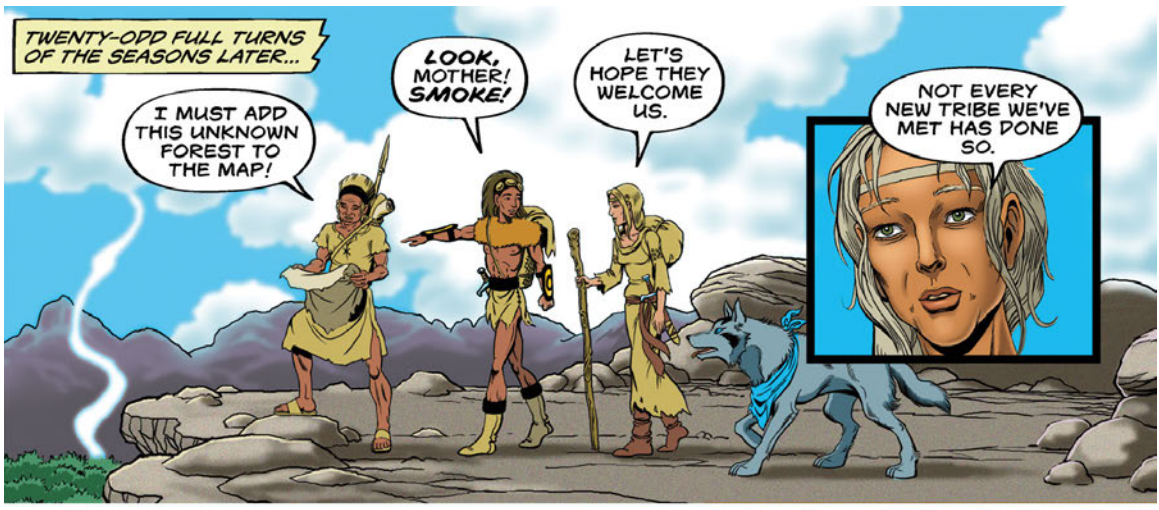
HE MEANT TO MAKE MENDER USE HIS HEALING POWERS TO KEEP HIM ALIVE FOREVER.

HOW MUCH IS SON LIKE FATHER? OR IS THE SON--

--WORSE?

♪ "ALL THAT LIVES AND DIES IS KIN." ♪







AND AFTER SEVERAL UNCERTAIN DAYS...

⚡SIP: I AM WITH KIMO IN THIS, MY WOMAN.

THESE PEOPLE HAVE NO WISH TO BEFRIEND US, LET ALONE LEARN OF OTHER TRIBES.

⚡SIGH: I THINK, PERHAPS, YOU'RE RIGHT. WE'LL COUNT THIS A NOBLE FAILURE--



--AND LEAVE TODAY.

RRRUFF!

IN THE INSTANT, THERE IS ONLY ONE CHOICE...



...ONLY ONE WHO CAN BE--MUST BE--SAVED!!



IKOPEK! OH, THREKSH'T!

THEY CAN BLEED! AFTER THEM!!

FATHER!



NO! SOB: NOOO!!

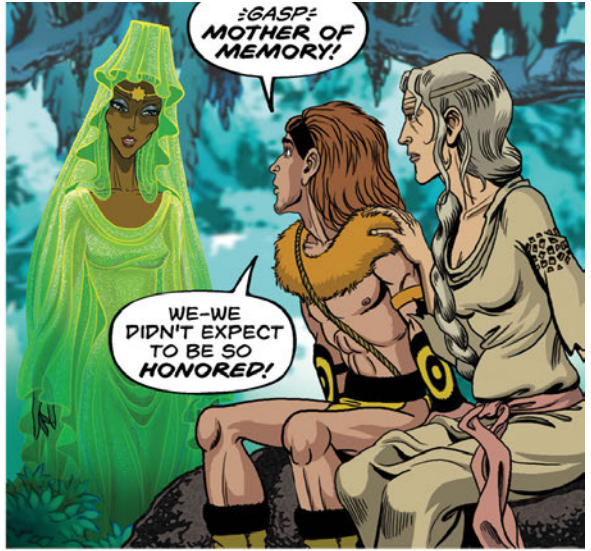
THOUGH THE KILLERS SOON ABANDON THE CHASE, THE SHOCK AND SORROW ENDURE ALL THE WAY BACK TO--



--THE HOLT.

IT SEEMS HOPELESS. SO FEW OF MY KIND WILL SEE PAST THEIR FEARS TO ACCEPT THAT THEY SHARE THIS WORLD WITH YOU.

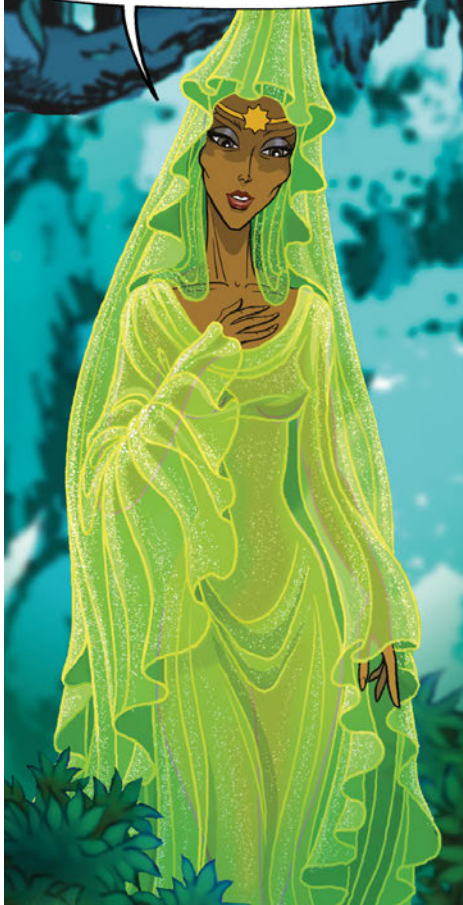
THAT IS BECAUSE HUMANS AND ELVES RIDE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WHEEL OF ALL-THAT-IS.



!GASP! MOTHER OF MEMORY!

WE-WE DIDN'T EXPECT TO BE SO HONORED!

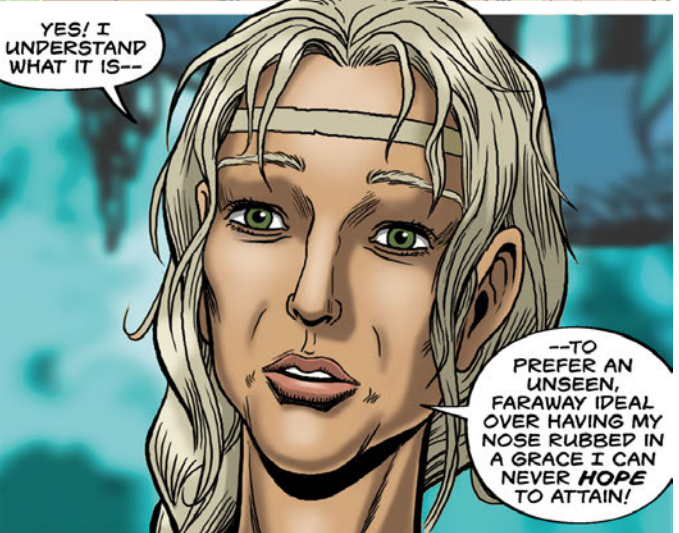
RIDING AT THE OUTER RIM, OUR BODIES "HUM" MUCH FASTER THAN YOURS. SINCE HUMANS RIDE CLOSER TO THE HUB--



--TO ALL BUT A CERTAIN FEW, LIKE YOU, WE SEEM STRANGE AND FRIGHTENING.



MOST FIVE-FINGERED ONES WOULD RATHER HALF LISTEN TO WHAT YOU TEACH, SHUNA, THAN TRULY SEE US.



YES! I UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS--

--TO PREFER AN UNSEEN, FARAWAY IDEAL OVER HAVING MY NOSE RUBBED IN A GRACE I CAN NEVER HOPE TO ATTAIN!



BOWING HER HEAD, SHUNA TURNS TO MEET HER ELF MOTHER'S GAZE.

I'M SORRY. IT'S JUST THAT BEE BELIEVED IN MY QUEST... BELIEVED IN ME.

I'M GETTING OLD.

BUT SOMEHOW... I **MUST** GO ON!

GRANT ME TIME, MOTHER LEETAH, AS MENDER DID FOR KHORBASI.

WE'VE TALKED OF THIS BEFORE, KITLING.

ARE YOU SURE? IS THIS WHAT YOU REALLY WANT?

I HAVE THOUGHT-- AND I AM SURE.

WHEN I TAKE A WIFE, I WOULD **NOT** WANT TO OUTLIVE HER AND OUR CHILDREN.

I LOVE YOU. LET ME GO ON AND ON... TRYING TO SPREAD THAT LOVE TO ALL HUMAN BEINGS.

VERY WELL. BUT IF THIS GIFT PROVES TOO MUCH TO BEAR, DAUGHTER--

"--IT CAN BE UNDONE."

LOOKS LIKE YOU'LL RUN MUCH LONGER WITH HER THAN YOU THOUGHT!

HER LOVE FOR US IS UNMATCHED BY ANY OF HER KIND. SHE'S A HUMAN... BUT SHE'S ALSO ONE OF US.

NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, MY LIFE IS TWINED WITH HERS.





WHAT SEEMS LIKE NEAR-RECOGNITION BETWEEN KIMO AND SHUNA DRAWS A PENSIVE NEWSTAR INTO THE PALACE.

LUTEI, BELOVED...

...YOU WERE ALWAYS MY COMFORT AND PLEASURE.

IF YOUR SPIRIT IS AT EASE WITH OUR SON'S PATH, THEN SO IS MINE.

EVERYONE'S GATHERING TO EAT NOW. HOW I WISH YOU COULD JOIN ME.

WHAT? YOU SAY "LET THERE BE ANOTHER"?! **CHUCKLE** AS IF THE FULFILLMENT THAT CREATED KIMO COULD EVER BE MATCHED!

OH!

OHLER! I...WASN'T PAYING ATTEN--

--AND THAT'S A BIT OF LUCK FOR ME! MY BROTHER LUTEI'S SPIRIT HAS BEEN QUITE BUSY OF LATE, HASN'T IT?

QUITE FULL OF SOUND ADVICE. HE REMINDS ME HOW GOOD IT WAS TO DIG IN MY GARDEN--

"--AND HOW MUCH I'VE BEEN MISSING IT."

AND SO, ENRICHED BY BOTH UPHEAVAL AND CONTINUITY, TIME PASSES.



ON AN OVERCAST AFTERNOON IN THE SEASON OF THE NEW GREEN, WILDFLOWERS BLOOM IN ABUNDANCE, NOURISHED BY SOFT RAINS.

IT WILL LAST A WHILE, THIS WEATHER. YOU'LL NOT SEE THE **DAYSTAR** FOR THREE...MAYBE FOUR DAYS.

THAT WAS SUCH A BLESSING IN THE SUN VILLAGE, WASN'T IT, **SUN-TOUCHER**.

WE COULD CELEBRATE THE **FEAST OF FLOOD AND FLOWER** WITHOUT THE DESERT'S PUNISHING HEAT.

I REMEMBER.

YOU LOOK **TALLER, RUFFEL!** AND, MAYBE, A BIT **PALER!**

≡GIGGLE≡
REALLY?

SHE SHOWS THE SIGNS OF CHANGE THAT THE PALACE CREATES IN ALL IMMORTALS.

SLOWLY, WE WHO WERE ONCE **YOUR** SIZE, **STAR-GAZER**, GROW CLOSER IN APPEARANCE TO **SAVAH** AND **TIMMAIN** THE HIGH ONE.

DON'T YOU WAIT FOREVER TO BECOME TALL, LOVEMATE, OR WE WON'T BE SUCH A PERFECT MATCH!

I'M FINE WITH HOWEVER LONG YOUR BONES GET. JUST DON'T LOSE ALL THAT **PADDING** I LIKE SO MUCH!

REMEMBER OUR ENDLESS ROLLS IN THE SOFT, THICK FLOWER-BEDS...?



...OUR SECRET GAMES IN THE STEAMING POOLS OF SORROW'S END?

¡GIGGLE!
IF ONLY WE COULD MAKE IT SO HERE!

IF ONLY THE HARD, CRYSTAL LOVELINESS OF THE PALACE--



--COULD JOIN WITH THE BREATHING BEAUTY OF THE GREEN GROWING PLACE!

ONE DAY, WHEN ALL ELVES UNITE TO RETURN AND RESTORE THE STAR HOME--

WE'LL MAKE IT A PLACE THAT HAS THE BEST OF BOTH.



A MOMENT'S RUN DOWNSTAIRS... AND A DOOR OPENS IN THE MAGIC-GUISED MOUNTAIN'S BASE.

MEANTIME, WE CAN BRING THE COLORS OF THE NEW GREEN INTO THE PALACE!

HA HA HA!
OF COURSE WE CAN!

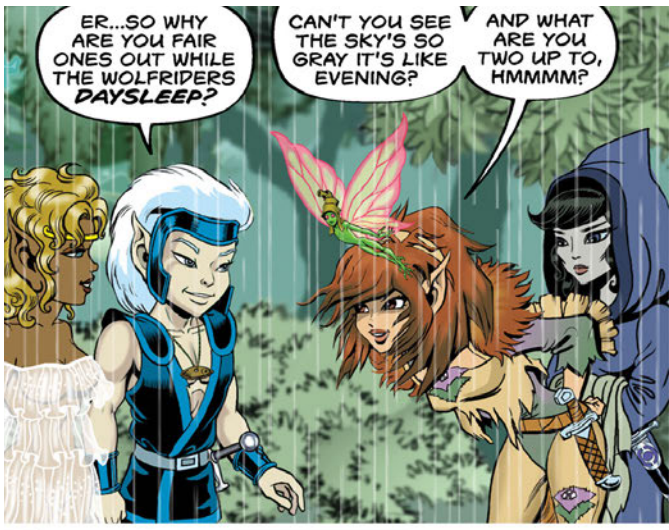


OOPS! MOONSHADE--

--AND FREETOUGH.
¡HEH HEH!

HELLO!





ER...SO WHY ARE YOU FAIR ONES OUT WHILE THE WOLFRIDERS DAYSLEEP?

CAN'T YOU SEE THE SKY'S SO GRAY IT'S LIKE EVENING?

AND WHAT ARE YOU TWO UP TO, HMMMM?

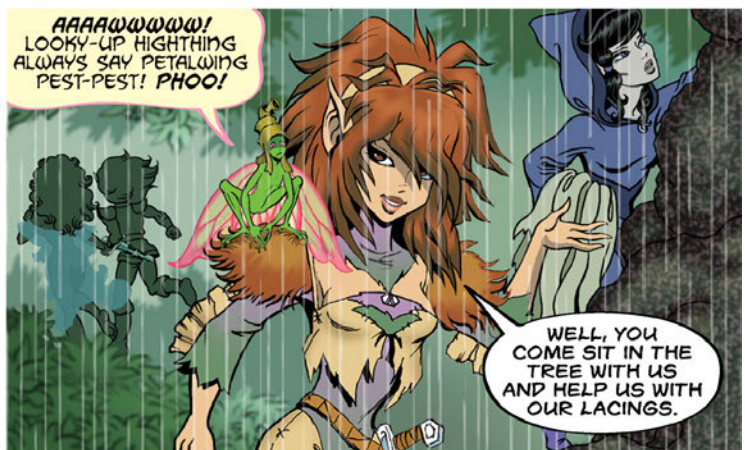


≠HMPH≠ NEEDLESS QUESTION! GET ALONG, THEN. WE'LL KEEP WATCH.

no no no! PETALWING LOOK AFTER SOFTPRETTY HIGHTHINGS!

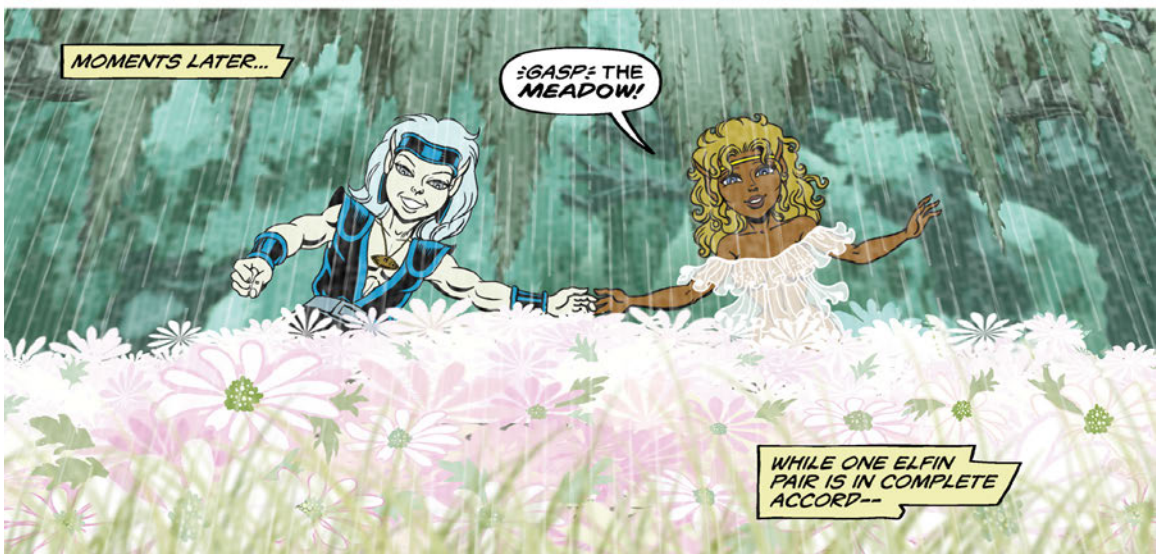


UH-UH! YOU'RE NOT INVITED, BUG!



AAAAWWWW! LOOKY-UP HIGHTHING ALWAYS SAY PETALWING PEST-PEST! PHOO!

WELL, YOU COME SIT IN THE TREE WITH US AND HELP US WITH OUR LACINGS.

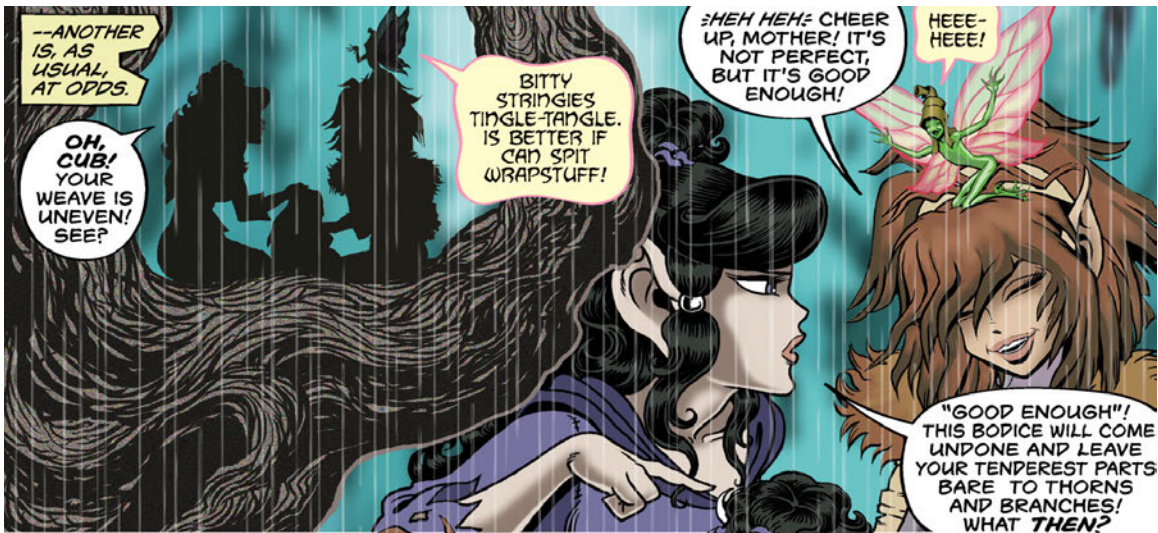


MOMENTS LATER...

≠GASP≠ THE MEADOW!

WHILE ONE ELFIN PAIR IS IN COMPLETE ACCORD--





--ANOTHER IS, AS USUAL, AT OPDS.

OH, CUB! YOUR WEAVE IS UNEVEN! SEE?

BITTY STRINGIES TINGLE-TANGLE. IS BETTER IF CAN SPIT WRAPSTUFF!

HEH HEH! CHEER UP, MOTHER! IT'S NOT PERFECT, BUT IT'S GOOD ENOUGH!

HEEE-HEEE!

"GOOD ENOUGH"! THIS BODICE WILL COME UNDONE AND LEAVE YOUR TENDEREST PARTS BARE TO THORNS AND BRANCHES! WHAT THEN?



THEN I'LL WAIT 'TIL THE HEAT OF THE GREEN, WHEN BEING BARE DOESN'T MATTER!

MOTHER...

WHY DO YOU WEAVE? WHY IS SUCH DECORATION IMPORTANT?

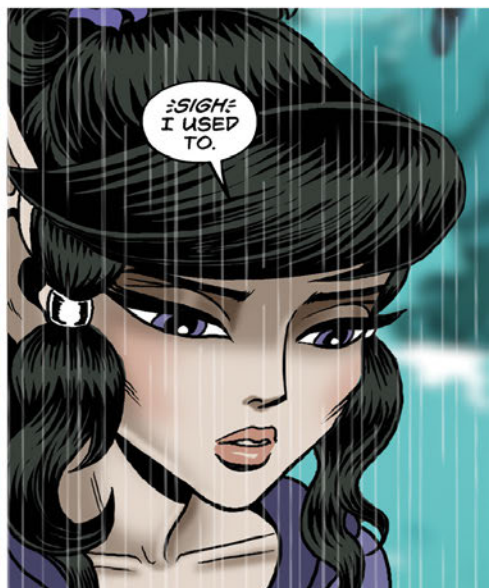
IT ISN'T... REALLY.

NOTHING I DO IS SO FINE AS A PRESERVER'S WING OR A WAVEDANCER'S FIN.



I'M JUST IN THE HABIT OF DOING THINGS AS WELL AS I CAN.

BUT...DO YOU LOVE WHAT YOU DO?

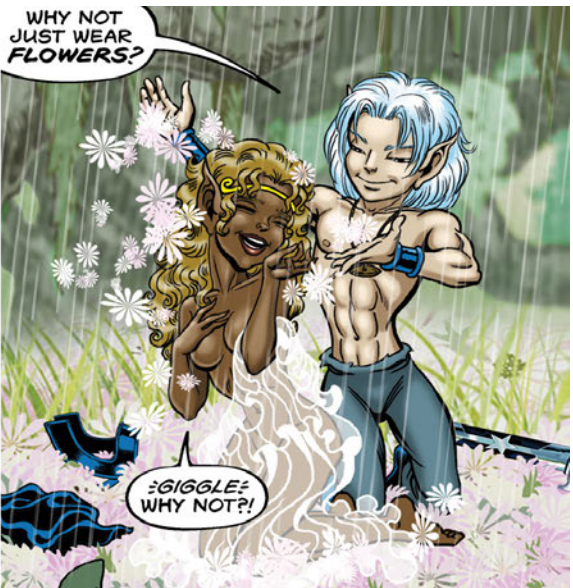


SIGH! I USED TO.



YOU KNOW, LOVEMATE, I **STILL** DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS THING IS FOR!

WELL...LIKE SO MANY **OTHER** THINGS...IT'S FOR **TAKING OFF!**



WHY NOT JUST WEAR **FLOWERS?**

≡GIGGLE≡
WHY NOT?!



≡MMMM≡
I'M **ITCHING** TO VISIT **EMBER'S** TRIBE IN THE **NEW LAND** AGAIN.

SUST...POOL... MENDER...TEIR... EVEN PIKE! SO DIFFERENT, BUT ALL SO GOOD TO LOOK AT! MAKES ME **DIZZY!**



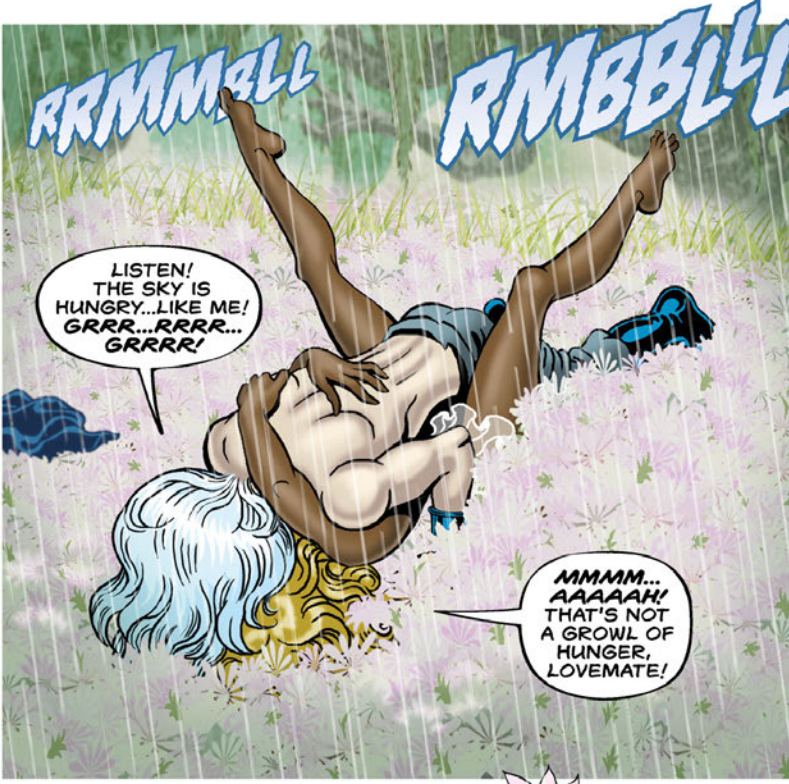
AND YOU THINK **SKYWISE** WILL JUST MAKE A **PALACE** POP FOR YOU WHENEVER YOU'RE **ITCHY?**

≡HEH HEH≡
OF **COURSE!** **SKYWISE** UNDERSTANDS ME BEST OF ALL!



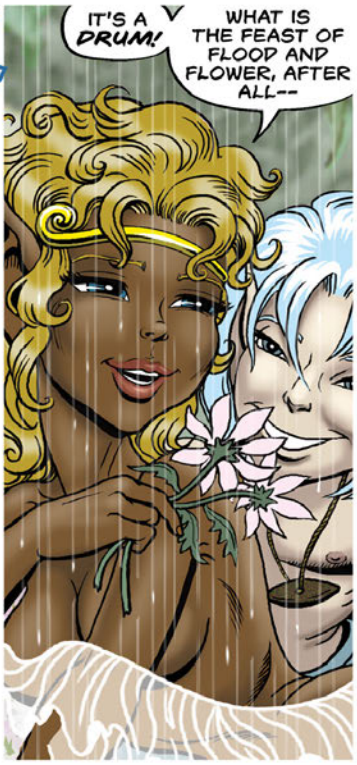
HE AND **RUFFEL** SHOULD COME BACK.

OH, NO! IT'S SO **EXCITING** WHEN THE **AIR** GROWLS LIKE AN **ANGRY BEAR!** I LOVE THE **SOUND!**



LISTEN!
THE SKY IS
HUNGRY...LIKE ME!
GRRR...RRRR...
GRRR!

MMMM...
AAAAAH!
THAT'S NOT
A GROWL OF
HUNGER,
LOVEMATE!



IT'S A
DRUM!

WHAT IS
THE FEAST OF
FLOOD AND
FLOWER, AFTER
ALL--



--WITHOUT
DANCING?

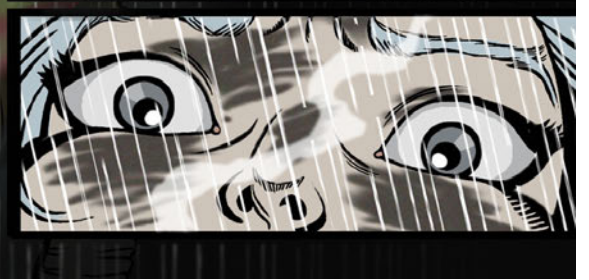
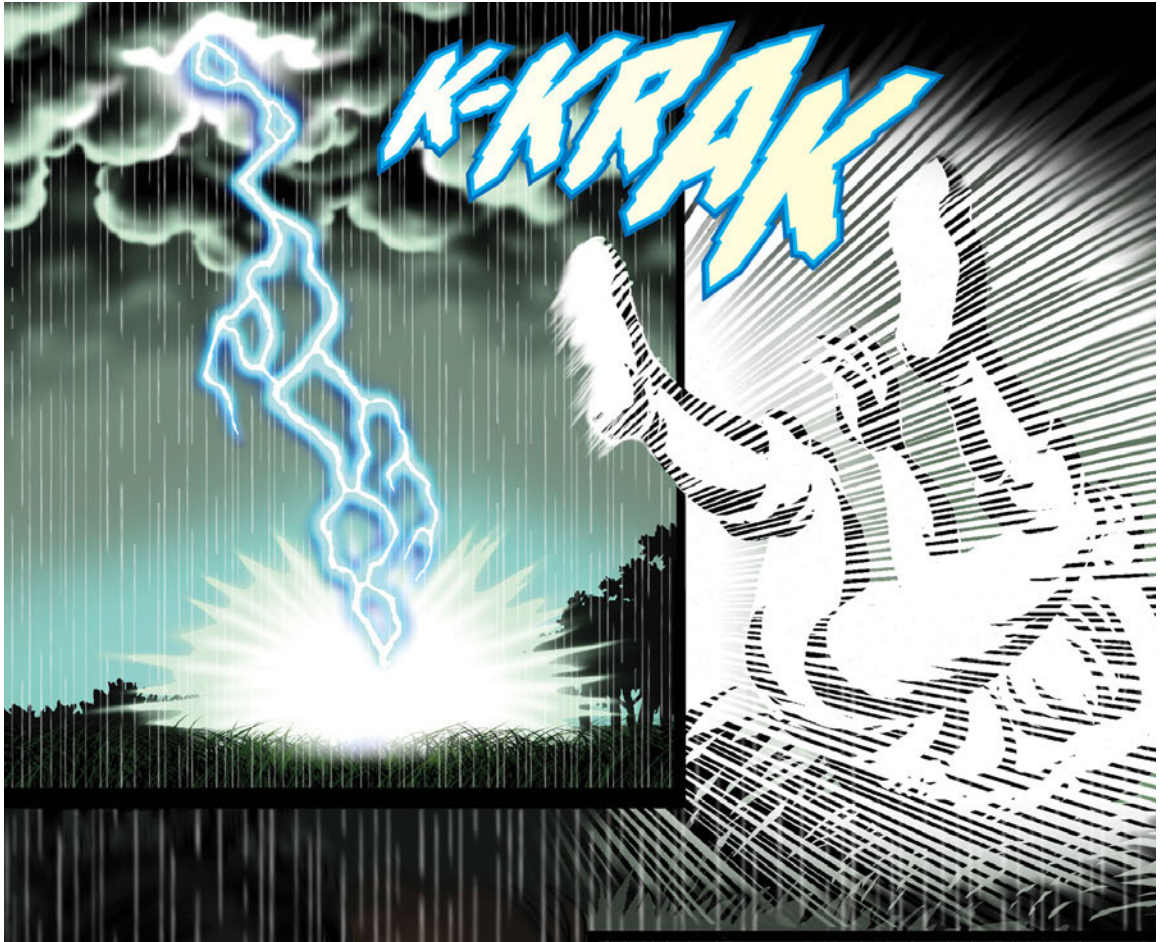


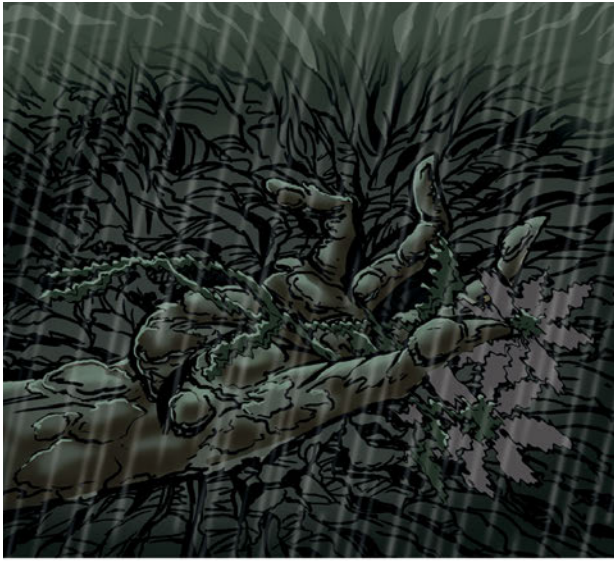
DRUM,
DRUM!
BLOSSOMS
COME!



WHAT
JOY!









SOON...

ONE MOMENT HAPPY AND DANCING. THE NEXT...

HOW... HOW CAN IT BE?

SOB SOB= RUFFEL! OH, RUFFEL!

THERE'S NOTHING TO UNDERSTAND IT'S ALL PART OF THE WAY.



MAY YOUR OPEN SENDING COMFORT THE TRIBE, LIFE-MATE.

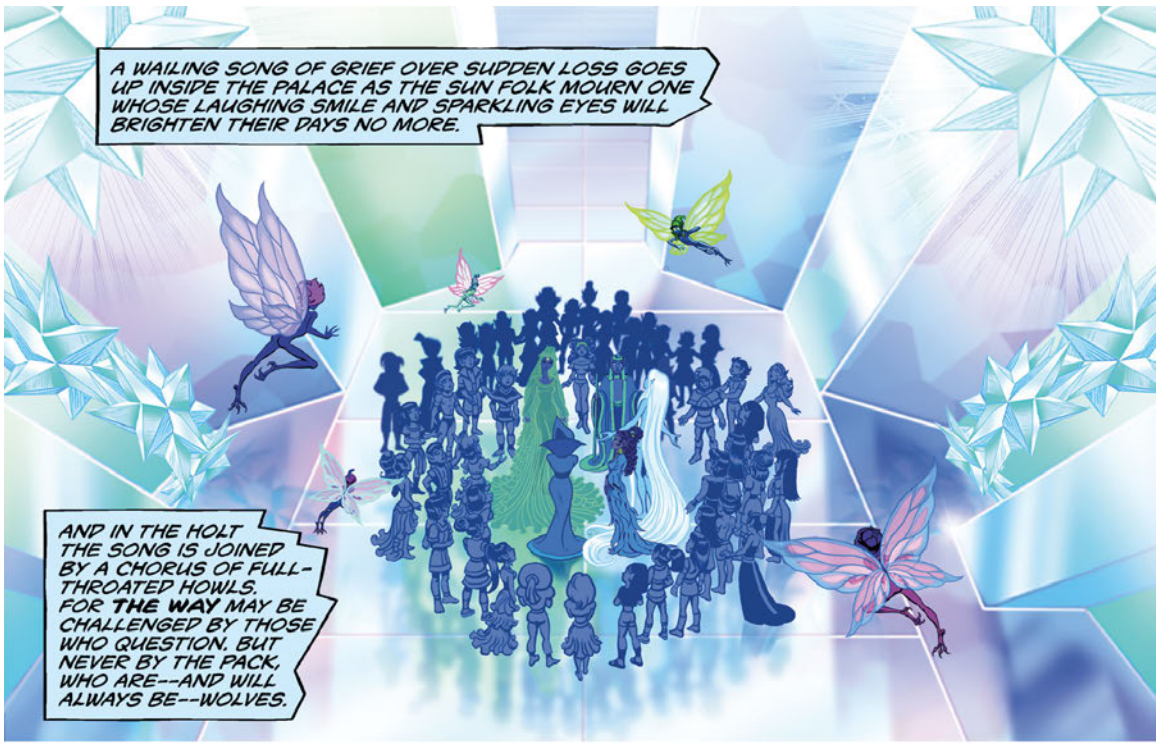
FOR ME, THIS IS JUST ONE MORE BIT OF PROOF OF THIS WORLD'S UNENDING HARSHNESS.

UNTIL NOW I'VE ACCEPTED THINGS AS THEY ARE WITHOUT PROTEST. BUT NO MORE!



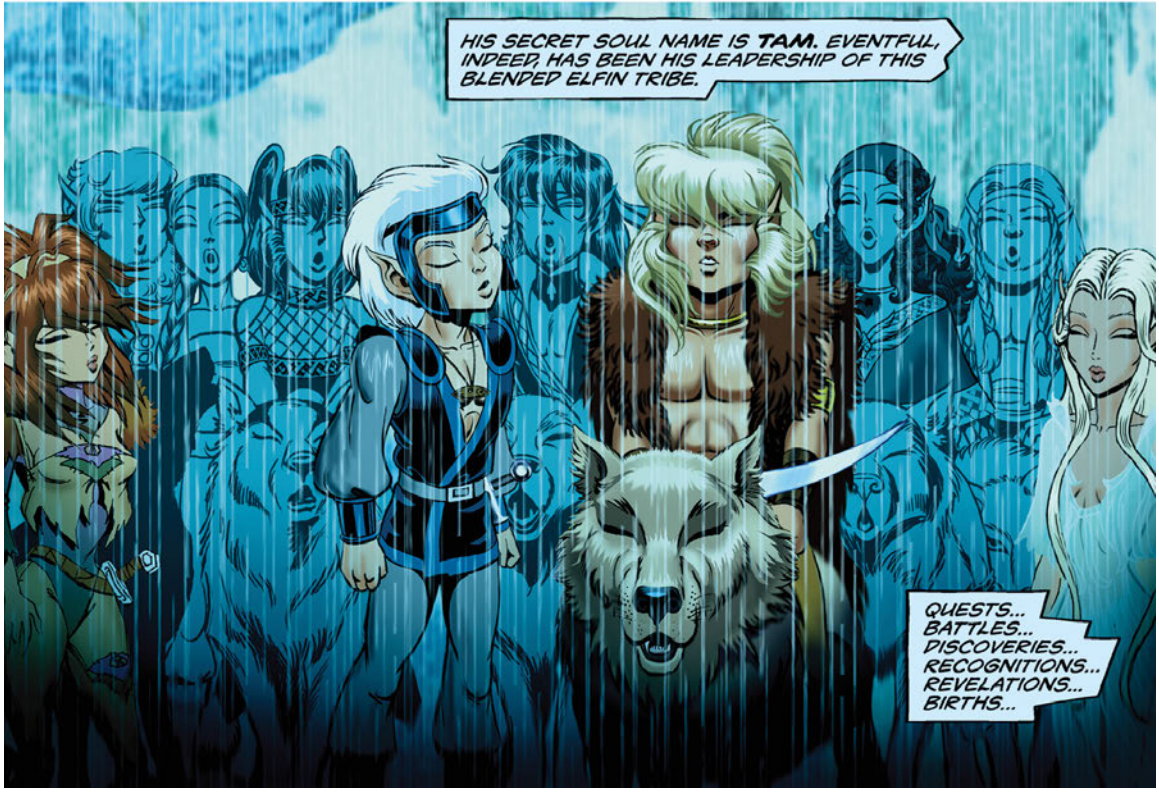
NOT WHEN THERE'S ANOTHER CHOICE!



A large group of people in a palace with flying creatures. The scene is set in a brightly lit, geometrically patterned room with large, faceted crystals. A large group of people, including men, women, and children, are gathered in the center. Several flying creatures with large, colorful wings (pink, purple, yellow, and green) are scattered around the group, some appearing to be in flight. The overall atmosphere is one of a significant event or ceremony.

A WAILING SONG OF GRIEF OVER SUDDEN LOSS GOES UP INSIDE THE PALACE AS THE SUN FOLK MOURN ONE WHOSE LAUGHING SMILE AND SPARKLING EYES WILL BRIGHTEN THEIR DAYS NO MORE.

AND IN THE HOLT
THE SONG IS JOINED
BY A CHORUS OF FULL-
THROATED HOWLS.
FOR THE WAY MAY BE
CHALLENGED BY THOSE
WHO QUESTION. BUT
NEVER BY THE PACK,
WHO ARE--AND WILL
ALWAYS BE--WOLVES.

A group of diverse people and a wolf. The scene shows a group of people with various features and expressions. In the center, a man with white hair and a headband looks to the left. To his right, a woman with long blonde hair and a fur collar looks forward. In the foreground, a large white wolf with a black collar and a knife in its mouth looks towards the viewer. The background is a blurred, outdoor setting with trees.

HIS SECRET SOUL NAME IS **TAM**. EVENTFUL, INDEED, HAS BEEN HIS LEADERSHIP OF THIS BLENDED ELFIN TRIBE.

QUESTS...
BATTLES...
DISCOVERIES...
RECOGNITIONS...
REVELATIONS...
BIRTHS...



AND NOW, A DEATH. NATURAL ENOUGH IN A DANGEROUS WORLD OF CONSTANT CHANGE--



--WHERE SAVAGE LIFE, SEASONED WITH CHANCE AND MYRIAD EXPERIENCE, IS TO BE EMBRACED--



--OR HIDDEN FROM IN DARK PLACES--



--OR, JUST NOW, PONDERED.

IF ONLY SHE'D STAYED IN THE PALACE WHERE IT WAS SAFE, SHE'D HAVE LIVED FOREVER.

BUT SHE WANTED WILD-FLOWERS.



A RISKY LIFE OUTSIDE... OR ENDLESS QUIET AND SAFETY BEHIND DOORS.

THERE **MUST** BE SOMETHING ELSE... A PERFECT MIX OF IMMORTALITY AND EXCITEMENT.

THAT'S WHAT YOUR DREAM OF THE STARS IS FOR.

BUT ONE THING'S SURE NOW. "THE WAY" **ISN'T** THE ONLY WAY!





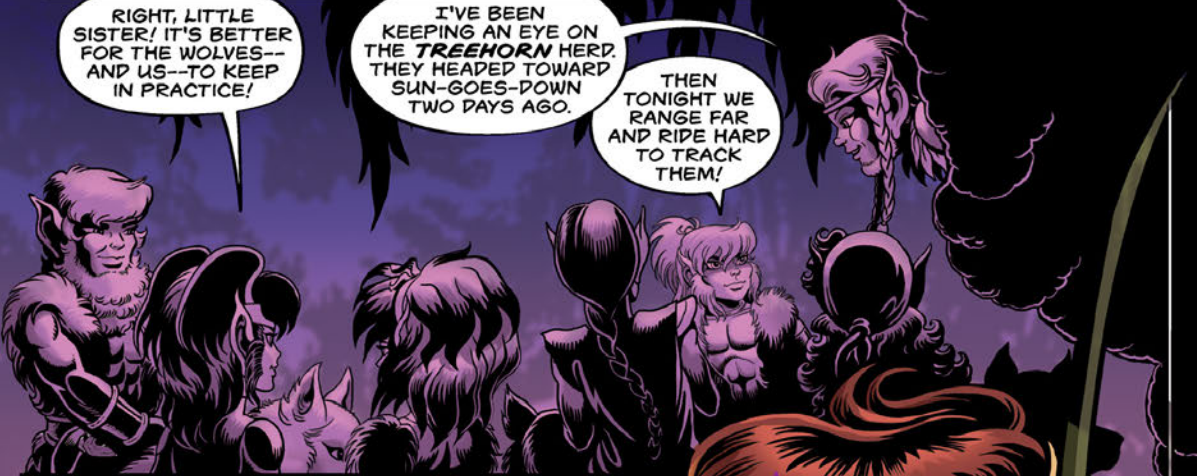
woooooo

WE'RE
READY,
CUTTER!
TROUBLE,
LAD??



TROUBLE,
TREETUMP?
I'LL SAY!

LOOK AT
STONECHEST'S
GUT!



KIND OF YOU TO NOTICE.

BUT I'VE BEEN SO LOST IN THOUGHT I HAVEN'T YET WELCOMED **SUNSTREAM** BACK.

IT'S GOOD TO BE HERE.

WITH **KORAFAY** WELL GROWN, I'LL BE COMPLETING MY TRAINING WITH THE **HIGH ONE** AND **SAVAH**.

HEY! I HEAR ONE BIG, THUNDERING HUNT'S ON!

NOT JOINING IN?

NO, **SKYWISE**. FOR NOW, I CHOOSE TO STAY IN THE PALACE.

NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT. BUT IT MUST BE HARD ON **STRONGBOW**.

"CHANGE IS GOOD. BUT HE'S SO **STUBBORN** ABOUT IT!"

AND BECAUSE HE IS, **STARGAZER**, WOULDN'T IT BE THE WORST BETRAYAL OF ALL TO DO WHAT I'M THINKING...

...TO DO AS YOU DID...GIVE UP MY WOLF BLOOD...

...AND BECOME IMMORTAL?



IMMORTALITY...THE FARTHEST THING FROM THE HUNTERS' MINDS AS THEY CLOSE IN ON THE PREY.

AS ONE, ELVES AND WOLVES SCENT THE ONE THAT MUST FALL--A DOE THAT CAN NO LONGER KEEP PACE WITH HER HERD.

BRIGHT BLADES FLASH, READY TO SLICE WARM MEAT FROM BONE. BUT THE KILL ITSELF IS LEFT TO ONE TRUSTED MARKSMAN...

...ONE WHOSE SPECIAL GIFT IS TO DEAL A CLEAN DEATH--

--SURELY, INSTANTLY, PAINLESSLY.





RED AS BLOOD-TINGED LIPS,
DAWN'S FIRST GLOW IS THE
SOLE WITNESS TO AN ANCIENT,
TIMELESS CUSTOM.

LET DANGER
COME! LET FOES
INVADE!

LET
THUNDER
AND SKY FIRE
ROAR! WE ARE
WOLFRIDERS!

I WISH IT
COULD ALWAYS
BE LIKE THIS!

oooooooooooo



SKYWISE, MY
BROTHER-FRIEND..
MOONSHADE,
GENTLE LEATHER
WORKER...

YOU'RE
NOT HERE.
AND SO IT'S
NOT THE
SAME.

BUT I
WOULDN'T PULL
EITHER OF YOU
BACK FROM THE
PALACE'S SWAY.
THERE'S NO
STOPPING THE
CHANGES.



STILL, FILCHER,
YOU RAGGED OLD
THIEF, YOU...I'M GLAD
EMBER LIVES IN HER
OWN HOLT IN THE
NEW LAND--

--KEEPING
TO "THE WAY"
JUST AS IT WAS
IN THE DAYS OF
OUR FIRST
CHIEFS--

"--AT LEAST, AS MUCH AS SHE'S ABLE."

THAT'S **GRO-MUL JUNN'S SON**, AND ALL HIS WARRIORS, CAMPED DOWN THERE!

SURE LOOKS LIKE HE'S COZYING UP TO THOSE HUMAN **LONGRIDERS' LEADER!**

WHAT'S A "JUNN," CHIEFTESS?

A BIG, PUSHY, GREEDY HUMAN CHIEF, **KHORBASI**. MY FATHER, **CUTTER**, FOUGHT THAT ONE'S FATHER FOR THE PALACE OF THE HIGH ONES.

AND THAT ONE-- **ANGRIF**-- SWORE TO WIPE US OUT FOR WINNING!

SUST! POOL! TAKE FIRST WATCH! AND, SUST... NO FOOLISH RISKS!

FAR AS THOSE JUNN WAR MEN KNOW--

--WE'RE NOT HERE. WE DON'T EXIST!

HEH, HEH! RIGHT!

NO RISK IS FOOLISH IF IT TAKES OUT A FEW OF THOSE ARMORED ROUND EARS! OUR SUST WOULD **DIE** JUST TO MAKE 'EM SQUIRT THEIR METAL BREECHES, EH, LIFEMATE?

EVEN SO, LET'S KEEP 'IM AROUND FOR A BIT. HE CHIPS OUT A PRETTY GOOD SPEAR TIP.

PIKE AND **KRIM** CAN JOKE ABOUT THEIR SON'S LIFE.

THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS TO YEARN FOR--

OH, THEY DO **TOO** KNOW! GET YOUR MIND OFF MAKING CUBS, LOVEMATE!

YOUR VOICE, FIREHAIR... FLOWS LIKE SWEET WATER...

IF-IF WE WAIT THEM OUT, THE WAR MEN MAY GO AWAY!

IF THEY STAY, THEY MAY--

--MMM... YOUR SCENT! YOUR WORDS WASH IN ONE EAR--

--THEY MAY COME UP HERE AND--

--THEIR MEANING OUT THE OTHER!

TEIR! FOR FREEFOOT'S SAKE!

MY HEAD MUST BE CLEAR!

WHA--?! ER...OF COURSE!

MENDER! IS IT... RECOGNITION?

ON THE CLIFF'S EDGE, DEWSHINE.

DON'T MOVE! I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO--

COUGH COUGH

"AND IF SO, IT'S CURSED BAD TIMING!"

THAT SOUND! NEITHER ELF NOR BEAST MADE IT!



HIGH ONES! YOU!



AND AT THE HOLT'S EDGE...

NO SENDINGS FROM SUST OR POOL YET. WE CAN GO ABOUT THE NIGHT'S TASKS--

--BUT SILENT AS OWLS IN FLIGHT, MIND YOU!

RUSTLE
WAIT!



POOL...! THERE'S A STRANGE SCENT WITH YOU! WHAT--?

I THINK IT'S ALL RIGHT, MOTHER.



!GASP!
BY THE PALACE!

!RRRF WHINE WHINE!
S-STILL ONE...? LEHRIGEN?!



!PANT, PANT!
!AAAAROOO!
DOWN, SHUY!

I'VE CHANGED MUCH IN APPEARANCE, EH, LITTLE RED BIRD?

BUT YOU AND YOUR TRIBE, OF COURSE, HAVE NOT.

AS TEIR'S ANIMAL-SPEAK POWERS CALM THE MASSIVE HUNTING HOUND, THE AGED HUMAN SITS PAINFULLY.

!GROAN!
SWEET MOTHER MOON, I'VE MISSED WOOPS LIKE THESE...NOT HACKED TO BITS AND OVERRUN BY MEN!

WHY HAVE YOU COME?

TO DIE...HERE WITH YOU, IF YOU'LL ALLOW IT.

YOU ARE VERY SICK, STILL ONE. WITHIN YOUR CHEST--

LEAVE IT, HEALER! MY LAST HUNT IS DONE! I'VE WASTED MY LIFE!

APART FROM ALL OF YOU, THERE'S NO ONE I CHERISH...NOTHING I VALUE.
!COUGH!
LEAST OF ALL THIS DECAYING FORM!

N-NOT MUCH TIME...! I'M HERE...I'M HERE TO PROMISE YOU...WHEN I'VE DIED AND COME ROUND AGAIN--

--I WILL REMEMBER YOU...DO BETTER BY YOU, WHO HAVE SHOWN ME THE ONLY PURITY I'VE EVER KNOWN.

"COME AROUND AGAIN"?

LOOK AT YOU, EM-BERR. THREKSH'T KNOWS HOW OLD YOU REALLY ARE!

YOU COUNT BY EIGHTS, YES?

WELL, I'VE LIVED CLOSE TO TEN EIGHTS...AND I FEEL EVERY ONE! WE HUMANS MUST DIE, EVEN WITH THINGS LEFT TO LEARN--

--MISTAKES TO MAKE UP FOR.

SO WE START OVER IN NEW BODIES--



--GET OURSELVES REBORN, AGAIN AND AGAIN, UNTIL WE GET IT RIGHT.

ANYWAY... I BELIEVE SO.

SO NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES WE KILL YOU, WE CAN NEVER GET RID OF YOU FOR GOOD?!

THAT STINKS!

HEH, HEH? I LIKE YOU, WARRIOR. YOU REMIND ME OF ANOTHER.



FROM THE SNOW COUNTRY, SHE WAS... WITH A SWORD ARM LIKE **THREKSH'T'S OWN DEMON QUEEN!**



UNTIL MY EYES WERE OPENED, I HUNTED DOWN MANY OF YOUR KIND. BUT **SHE** WAS THE PRIZE OF ALL!



STUNNED, THE TWO GO-BACKS TOUCH THE SHINING LOCK OF HAIR... CATCH THE FADED BUT ALL-TOO-FAMILIAR SCENT...

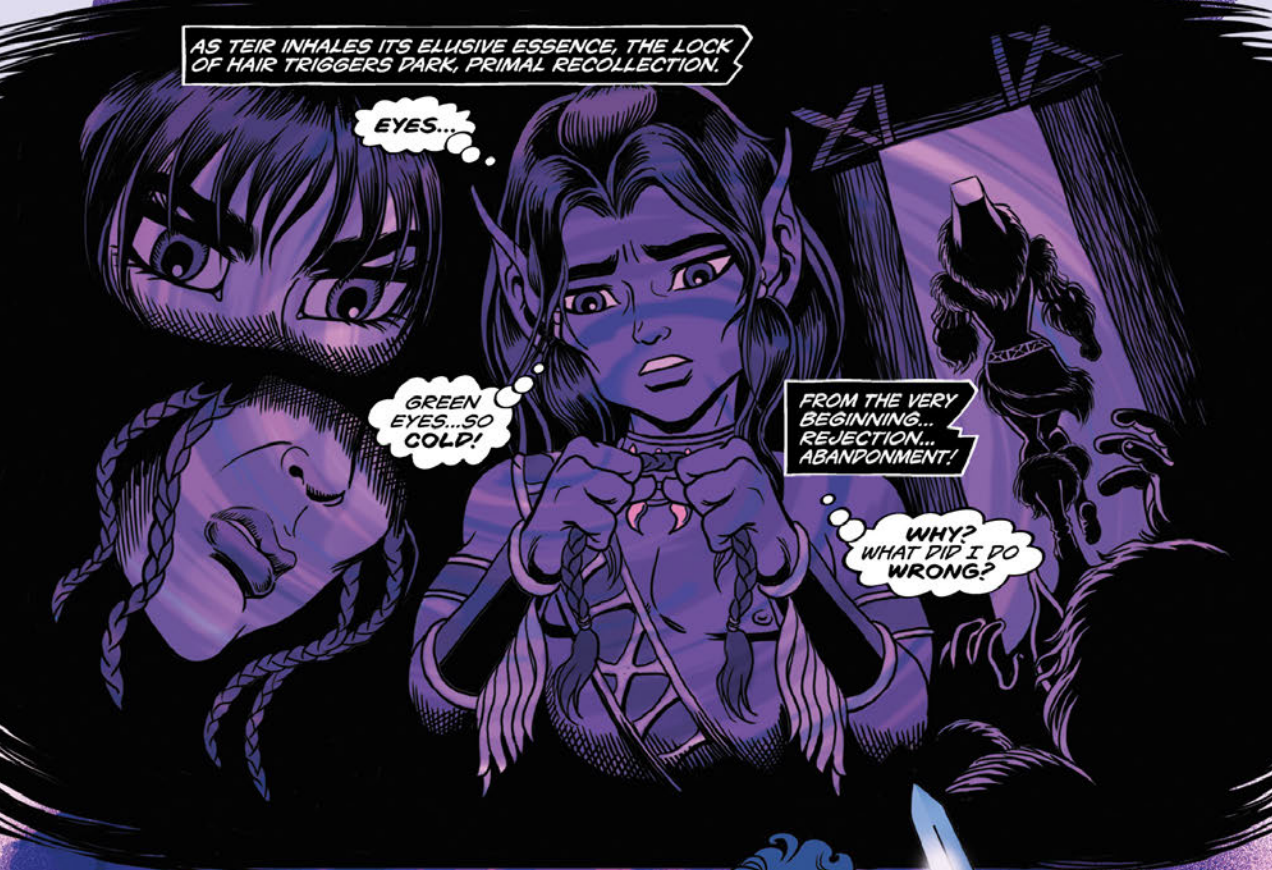
KAHVI...!



YOU!
YOU KILLED HER!



AS TEIR INHALES ITS ELUSIVE ESSENCE, THE LOCK OF HAIR TRIGGERS DARK, PRIMAL RECOLLECTION.



EYES...

GREEN EYES...SO COLD!

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING... REJECTION... ABANDONMENT!

WHY? WHAT DID I DO WRONG?



ENOUGH, KRIM! LET THE STILL ONE B--! :GASP:

DON'T LEAVE ME!

WOLF FATHER! WHAT IS IT?

NAUGHT ELSE IN THE WORLD EXISTS--OR MATTERS--AS EMBER RUSHES TO HIS SIDE.

SHHH... SHHHH...

WHAT ABOUT THIS-- ABOUT KAHVI-- HURTS YOU? I FEEL--

--YOU FEEL...?! YOU WALK THROUGH MY SHADOWS WITH ME?

"WITH YOU...AS IF I AM YOU!" SHE SENDS, TENDERLY AND, LIKE A CHILD, HE RELAXES IN HER ARMS.

WHILE NEARBY...

OF COURSE YOU WANT REVENGE FOR YOUR CHIEFTESS OF LONG AGO!

TAKE IT!

BUT, FIRST... KNOW SHE GAVE ME THAT BRAID AS A TOKEN OF RESPECT!

BUCKROT! YOU LIE!

ALL THAT I HAVE BEEN... MASTER HUNTSMAN AND KILLER... I OWE TO HER TEACHINGS.

I KNEW KAHVI THROUGH AND THROUGH! SHE WOULD NEVER TRAIN A HUMAN TO KILL HER OWN KIND!

NO. NOT TO SLAY ELVES...

...TO SLAY HER!

SCOUTER'S OPEN SENDING SUDDENLY ALERTS HIS TRIBE...

THE JUNN, HIS TWO CUBS, HIS WAR MEN, AND THE LONGRIDERS--

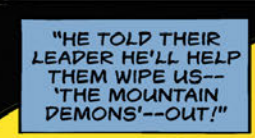


"--THEY'RE COMING UP OUR MOUNTAIN!"



CHIEFTESS! I CREPT CLOSE... OVERHEARD ANGRIF JUNN WHISPER TO HIS SONS!

HE'S RECEIVING THE LONGRIDERS!



"HE TOLD THEIR LEADER HE'LL HELP THEM WIPE US-- 'THE MOUNTAIN DEMONS'--OUT!"

I DO NOT UNDERSTAND, BROTHER ANGRIF.

THIS LEDGE LEADS AWAY FROM THE MOUNTAIN-TOP. HOW DOES POSITIONING THE CATAPULTS HERE--



--AID OUR ASSAULT ON THE POINT-EARED DEMONS' LAIR?



"BUT THE JUNN REALLY
WANTS SLAVES--"

OUR
FRIENDS...!
THEY TURN
ON US!

SURRENDER
OR DIE!



"--SLAVES TO BUILD
SHIPS MADE FROM
THE WOOD OF OUR
FOREST!"



"HE MEANS TO KILL
EVERYONE IN THE TOWN
WHO IS OF NO USE TO HIM!"



WHILE THE SOUND OF DISTANT, AGONIZED SCREAMS CHILLS HER TO THE MARROW, EMBER SUMMONS HER TRIBE.

I'M SICK TO SAY IT, BUT THIS HOLT IS **LOST**...LOST TO THE JUNN, JUST LIKE OUR LAST ONE! ONCE HE'S TAKEN THE TOWN, HE'LL SURELY COME AFTER US!



SADNESS... ANGER...VENGEANCE... I SMELL IT ALL ON YOU, BRAVE TRIBEMATES. YOUR LIVES ARE IN MY CARE.

BUT, CURSE IT, YOU HAVE A SAY IN THIS, TOO! YOU TELL ME... WHAT'S OUR NEXT MOVE?

IF THE HUMANS ARE GOING TO TAKE OUR HOME FROM US AGAIN, LET'S MAKE 'EM **PAY** FOR IT!

AYE! AND DEARLY!



FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH...YOU CUT THE ROPES ON THOSE "FIRE SLINGS," AS YOU CALL THEM-- DISABLE THEM--

--AND THEY'LL HURL BLAZING DEATH NO MORE.



SHUT UP, STAG CHIP!


THIS IS NONE OF YOUR--



TEIR! WHAT...?!

THE STILL ONE'S RIGHT! I CAN DO THIS!





**IMPULSIVELY FOLLOWING
HER FERAL LOVEMATE--**

**--EMBER HALTS
AT THE THICKET'S
EDGE, UNWILLING
TO LEAD THE
OTHERS INTO
MORTAL DANGER.**

**OH HIGH
ONES, YOU
FOOL!**

HOWEVER...



**HA, HA!
WHAT THE
POKE! I'M
ALL FOR
IT!**



**DEMON!
BEWARE!**

**LEAPING WITH ASTONISHING HEIGHT
AND SPEED, TEIR SLASHES THE FIRST
CATAPULT'S LAUNCH ROPE.**



**MENDER,
PIKE, KRIM! SUST!
WITH ME!**

**THE REST,
TAKE TO
THE TREES!
SCOUTER,
POSITION THE
ARCHERS!**



A HEARTBEAT LATER, THEIR SECOND WAR MACHINE MADE USELESS, THE STARTLED DUJHNSMEN GALVANIZE.

SLAY IT!



MONSTER! YOU'RE MINE!



SLASH

AAAGH!

LIKE DUNG HE'S YOURS!



UNNOTICED AND UNINVITED, ANOTHER JOINS THE FRAY...



HEEYAH!

BEHIND YOU!

SWAAARRR!!

EEXAAGH!



I HATE YOUR GUTS,
ROUND EARS, BUT
I LIKE THE WAY
YOU KILL!

WHAT YOU
SAID ABOUT
KAHVI RINGS
TRUE--

--SOUNDS
JUST LIKE
HER.



I HAVE
DONE MUCH
AGAINST YOUR
KIND, WARRIOR,
BUT I HAVE
NEVER LIED.

FOR THAT
REASON
ALONE, I
ASK ONE
FAVOR...



HELP ME
GET TO
THE JUNN!
IT'S ALL I
WANT...

...JUST
ONE
CRACK
AT HIM!



AFTER, IF I STILL
LIVE, I'LL MAKE A
QUICK, CLEAN END
OF YOU.

THEN
WE'LL **BOTH**
GET WHAT
WE WANT!





DEMONS!
THEY'VE WRECKED
THE CATAPULTS!

CRUSH
THEM! SPIT
THEM ON YOUR
SPEARS!

AAAGH!

THREKSH'T!
THEY'RE QUICK!

KRIM!
TEIR! ALL
OF YOU--

--RUN FOR
THE TREES!
NOW!



FARE WELL,
YOUNG CHIEFTESS!
ANGRIF JUNN IS
MINE!



NO!

THEY'LL
CUT HER TO
PIECES!



IT'S
TIME,
MY FINE
LADS!

I
WANT
IT LIKE
THIS!



...
AS YOU
WILL, FRIEND
OF MY BODY
AND SPIRIT.



SUST!

UUUHH!



UUAAAHH!

A SMALL
HEART--LET'S
SHRINK IT
SMALLER!



THAT ONE!
THE GOLDEN-HAIRED HEALER!
BRING HIM TO ME--ALIVE!

MENDER,
TAIL IT! THE JUNN WANTS
YOU FOR YOUR MAGIC!



AIM TO
KILL, POOL!
MEET FIRE
WITH FIRE!

TWUNNING

RIGHT,
FATHER!

PIKE!
GIVE SUST
TO ME!



SSSS-THUNK

THOR

AAAGH!

GLUH-K!

IN A KIND
OF ECSTASY,
IGNORING
MANY GRAVE
WOUNDS--

--AGED HUNTER
AND ELFIN WARRIOR
SLASH THEIR WAY
TOWARD THE DJUN.

AND IN THE TREES...

KRIM!
I-I CAN'T LET HER--

HSSS!
OW! I-I'M COMING TOO!

A young elf with a spear and a woman with a glowing chest are in a forest. The elf looks distressed.

STAY!
OBEY ME THIS ONCE, CUB!

BUT...

IN A MOMENT, YOU MAY BE ALL THAT'S LEFT OF OUR FAMILY!

A close-up of the young elf and the woman with the glowing chest. The elf is shouting, and the woman looks somber.

FOOLS! CAN'T YOU KILL A FEW PUNY DEMONS AND ONE OLD MAN?!

"PUNY"? RRRGH--! I'LL SHOW 'IM "PUNY"!

KIANNNG

SHRAK

¡PANT PANT! GO, ELF!
NOW!

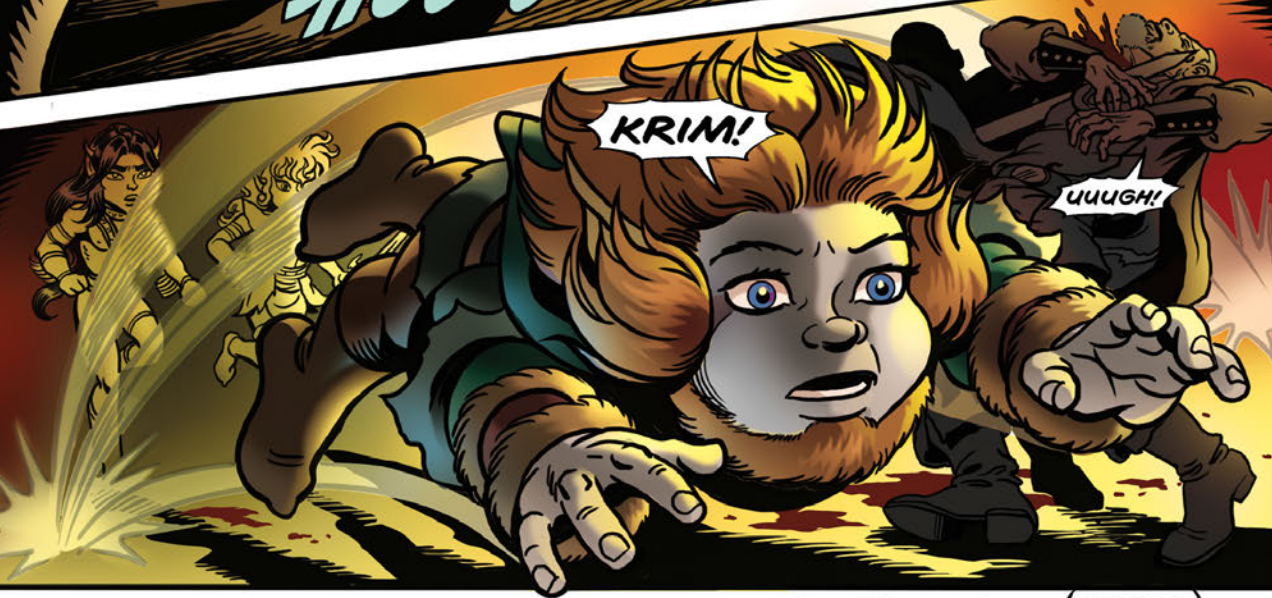
A large battle scene showing several warriors in armor fighting. One warrior is being thrown. Sound effects 'KIANNNG' and 'SHRAK' are present.



AS LEHRIGEN
MAKES HIMSELF
A DISTRACTING
TARGET...

THERE'S
ADVANTAGES
TO BEING
SMALL!

SHOOOSH



KRIM!

UUUGH!



TEN THOUSAND
SILVER SHEKS
TO THE ONE WHO
BRINGS ME THE
HEALER!



EH...?!



HEH HEH
EVEN
MENDER
COULDN'T
HEAL--

--THIS!



FATHER!

DOMINANCE!

EYARGH!

SHE HEARS...
AND IT IS
MUSIC TO
HER POINTED
EARS!



PHYSICIAN!
HURRY! TEND TO
THE DJUN!

OOOUNN...





SO QUICKLY HAS IT HAPPENED... SO VERY QUICKLY! NOW, IN THE FADING MOMENTS LEFT...

HEH HEH! AT LEAST... SOUNDS... AT LEAST THERE WILL BE... NO MORE JUNNS!

GOOD WORK, BRIGHT BLADE!



FOR SUST!



PIKE! GET OUT OF THERE!



GOING BACK...IT ISN'T...JUST TO THE PALACE...

WHAT...?

RUN, ROCK SKULL... RUN!



AAUGH!

SLAY THE DEMONS!

SPANG

AS PIKE, TEIR, AND
EMBER MAKE THEIR
TEARFUL ESCAPE...

UUUU...
UUUNNHH...

≡GASP
GASP≡

HOW...
HOW DID
KAHLI...
DIE?

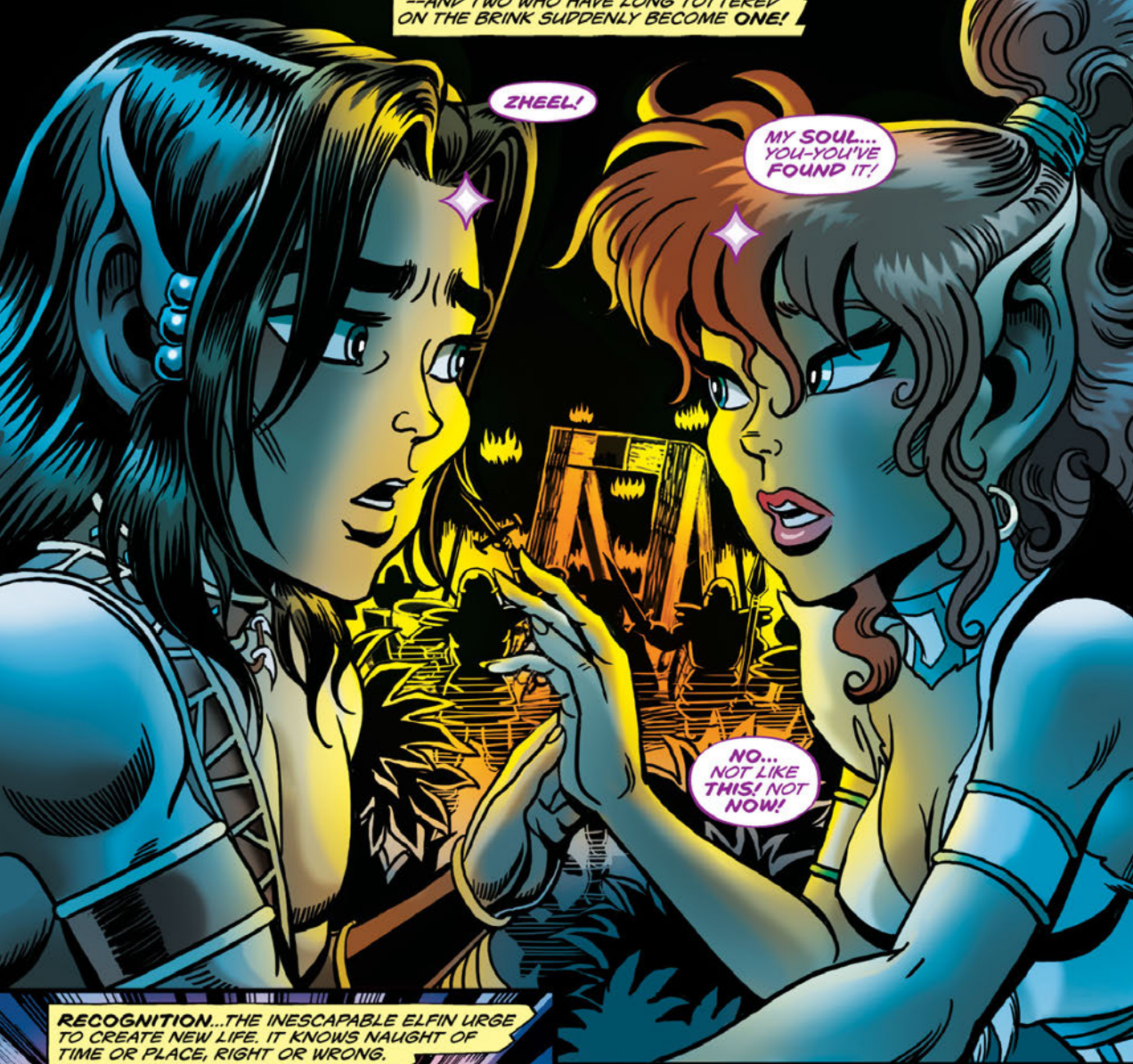
MAG...
NIFICENT...
LY...

TURN
TO ME...

...LOOK...
SCOUGH...
LOOK AT ME,
PLEASE!



--AND TWO WHO HAVE LONG TOTTERED ON THE BRINK SUDDENLY BECOME ONE!



ZHEEL!

MY SOUL...
YOU-YOU'VE
FOUND IT!

NO...
NOT LIKE
THIS! NOT
NOW!

RECOGNITION...THE INESCAPABLE ELFIN URGE TO CREATE NEW LIFE. IT KNOWS NAUGHT OF TIME OR PLACE, RIGHT OR WRONG.

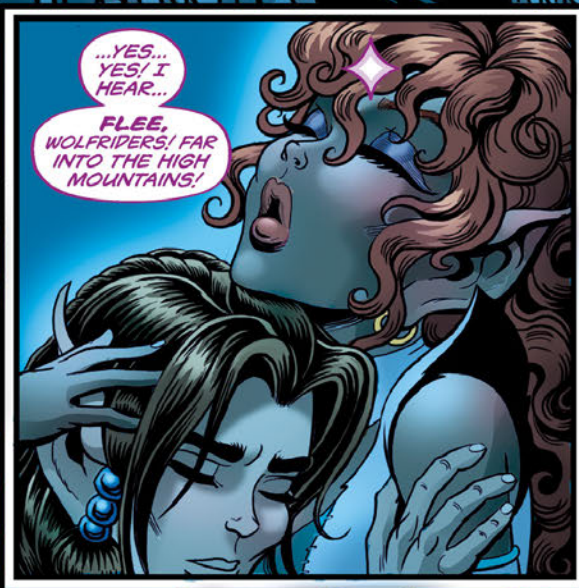


ZHEEL!
MY OWN!
THERE'S
NOTHING
BUT YOU!

NO,
BELOVER...
NOTHING...
BUT YOU!



EMBER!
TEIR!
WAKE
UP!



...YES... YES! I HEAR...

LEE, WOLFRIDERS! FAR INTO THE HIGH MOUNTAINS!



MOTHER'S SWORD... STAINED WITH JUNN'S BLOOD!

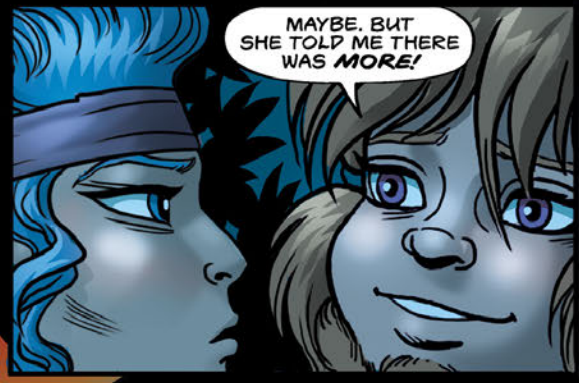
YOU NEVER KNEW SKOT, YOUR OTHER SIRE.

PREPARING ONCE AGAIN TO ABANDON A CHERISHED HOLT, THE ELVES GRIEVE--AND YET ARE AT PEACE WITH KRIM AND LEHRIGEN'S TRIUMPH.



KRIM'S SPIRIT IS WITH HIS NOW, FIGHTING OVER WHO HAD THE MORE GLORIOUS END.

IN THE PALACE?



MAYBE. BUT SHE TOLD ME THERE WAS MORE!

WHILE MOST OF HIS FATHER'S MEN SUBDUED THE BETRAYED LONGRIDERS, ANGRIF'S SON LODOK AND HIS PERSONAL GUARD CLOSE IN ON...



THERE! THE HEALER DEMON!

FATHER'S PROMISED REWARD IS MINE!



HA HAH! PARALYZED WITH FRIGHT!

TAKE HIM!

THE GUARDSMEN PAUSE, CONFOUNDED BY EERIE BEAUTY AND A WOLFISH GRIN--

--A FATAL HESITATION FOR LOPOK!

URRK!

THIS IS FOR KRIM!

SCARED OUT OF HIS WITS, ONE MAN DESERTS AND RUNS UPHILL--

--RIGHT INTO...

WHOK

OUT OF MY WAY!

BELOVED!

HOLY THREKSH'T!

AAAGH!

UUUNNH...



TAKE ME TO YOUR CHIEF.

THUD



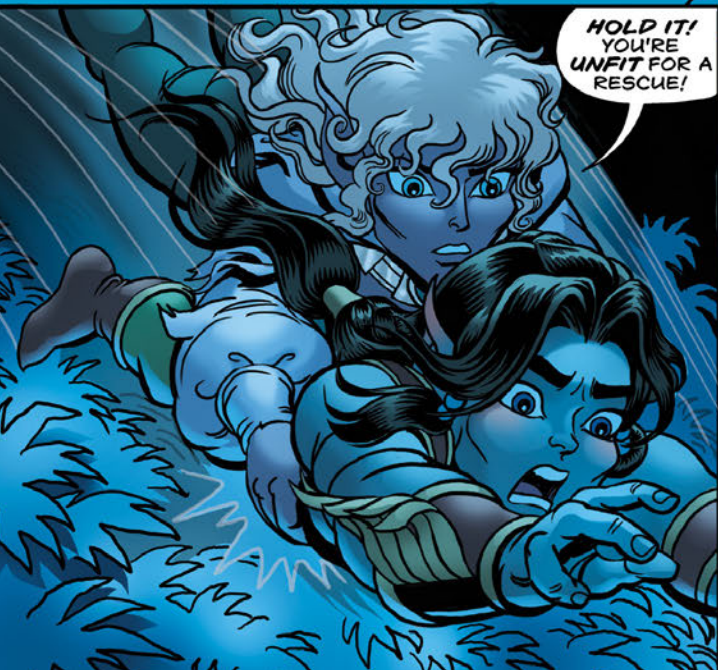
HOW TO FIND MY TRIBE HE WILL NEVER LEARN FROM **ME.**

BUT HE'S WELCOME TO TRY.



ZHEEL! THEY CAN'T TAKE YOU!

TEIR!



HOLD IT! YOU'RE UNFIT FOR A RESCUE!



SHE DID IT FOR YOU, SO YOU COULD **ESCAPE!**

DON'T THROW HER GIFT AWAY--

--BY GETTING YOURSELF SKINNED!



BATTERED BY HER BELOVED'S CONSTANT SENDINGS, EMBER STEELS HERSELF AS...

¿NNG¿ SO...MY ELDEST, LODOK--

--HAS GONE TO THREKSH'T'S HOLDING PEN.

THE IDIOT!

I'M SURE MY ONE REMAINING HEIR--WHO, NO DOUBT, WISHES ME ¿NHH¿ A FULL AND SWIFT RECOVERY-- IS AS GRIEF STRICKEN AS I.

YOU UNDERSTAND ALL I SAY, YES, DEMONESS? THEN KNOW THIS. A BAND OF HANDPICKED TRACKERS--



--LED BY MY SON RATHOL, HERE, WILL PURSUE YOUR POINT-EARED TRIBE--

--AND DESTROY THEM!



ALL SAVE THE ONE THAT HEALS, FOR HE SHALL RESTORE ME!

FOOL!

MENDER KILLED YOUR CUB WITH A TOUCH!

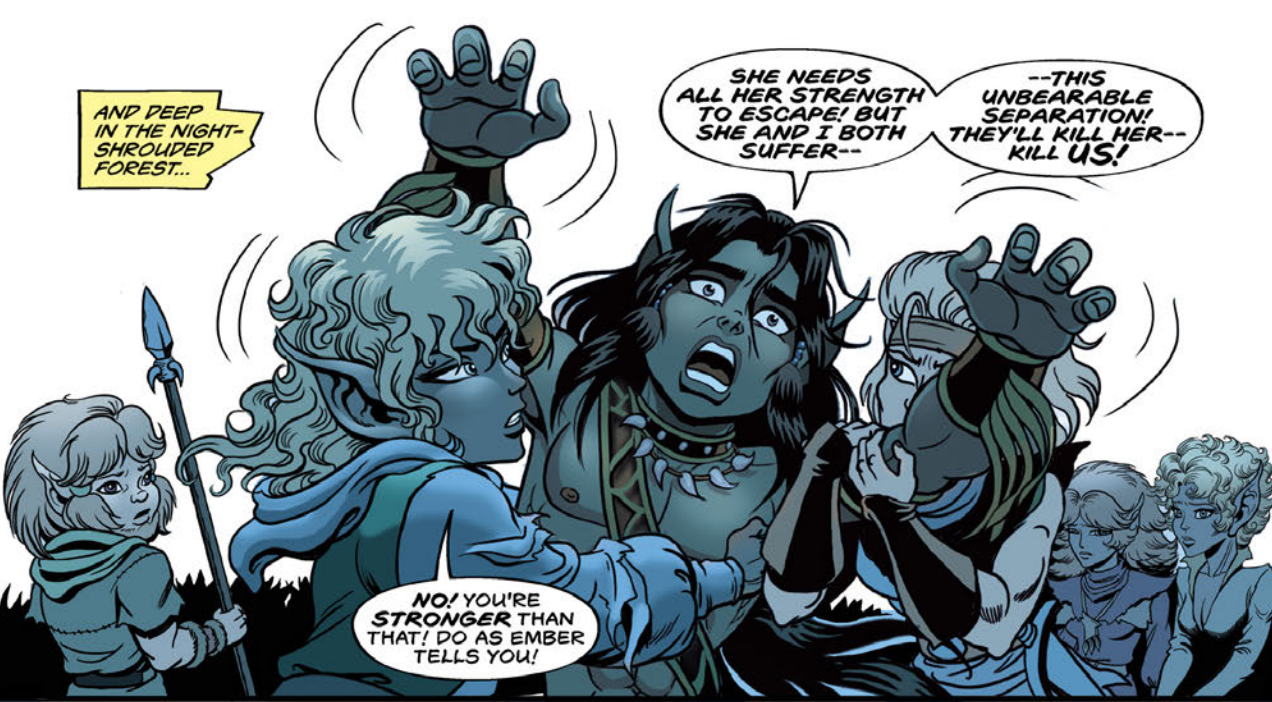
HE'LL DO THE SAME FOR YOU!



NOT WITH A BLADE POISED TO LOP OFF YOUR HEAD!



YOU DON'T KNOW MENDER.

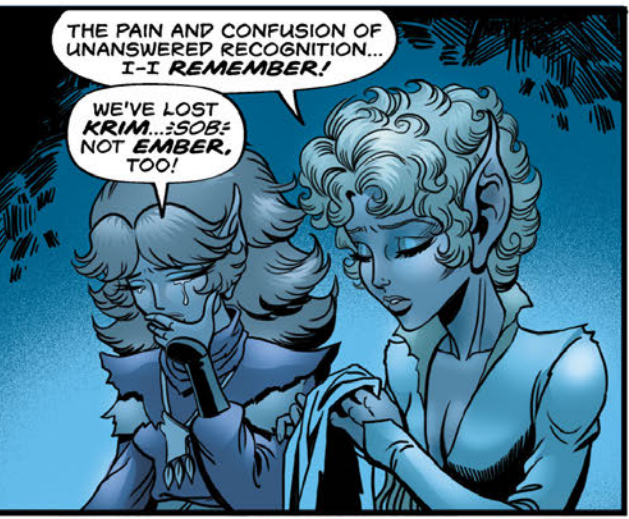


AND DEEP IN THE NIGHT-SHROUDED FOREST...

SHE NEEDS ALL HER STRENGTH TO ESCAPE! BUT SHE AND I BOTH SUFFER--

--THIS UNBEARABLE SEPARATION! THEY'LL KILL HER-- KILL US!

NO! YOU'RE STRONGER THAN THAT! DO AS EMBER TELLS YOU!



THE PAIN AND CONFUSION OF UNANSWERED RECOGNITION... I-I REMEMBER!

WE'VE LOST KRIM...:SOB: NOT EMBER, TOO!



TEIR... FEEL IT! KNOW IT! I'M NOT AFRAID!

THIS JUNN MEANS TO HOLD ME... TO LURE MENDER!

WE CAN STAND THIS, BELOVED... FOR THE TRIBE!

LEAP THEM AS I WOULD!



SUDDENLY... ONLY KHORBASI'S FAMILIAR SCENT, AS HE RETURNS TO HIS ELFIN FAMILY, PROTECTS HIS NEWLY RESCUED CHARGES...

SCOUTER! IT'S ALL RIGHT! EMBER GAVE ME PERMISSION!

THEIR HOMES ARE BURNED... PARENTS KILLED OR TAKEN!

:GASP: D-DEMONS! SO MANY!

JUST... :SULP: JUST LIKE MY AUNTIE SAID THEY'D LOOK!

YES, THEY'RE HUMANS...LIKE ME...
LIKE THOSE WHO TOOK KRIM'S
LIFE. BUT ONE IS DYING!
WE **MUST** HELP!

AFRAID OF THEIR SAVIOR,
WHOM THEY KNOW ONLY AS
THE "MOUNTAIN MADMAN"...

...AFRAID OF THE FIRE AND CHAOS BELOW IN THEIR VILLAGE...
THE ORPHAN REFUGEES ARE BEYOND TERRIFIED OF THE
WOLVES WHO GATHER TO INVESTIGATE.

GRROWWLLL

MENDER...
CAN YOU...?

WHIMPER?

AND YET, BENEATH THE
APPEARANCE OF STRANGENESS
AND THREAT LIES--

--A KINDNESS
UNEXPECTED.

THE LONGRIDERS
HAVE AN ANCIENT STORY
OF A **SANCTUARY** HIDDEN
FAR AWAY, AMONG THE
HIGHEST PEAKS.

YES!
I'VE
HEARD
THAT
TALE.

WELL,
ESCAPE
WITH THE
ELVES IS
OUR ONLY
HOPE OF
FINDING
IT.

BOUND AND BORNE IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION,
DOWN TO ANGRIF DJUN'S ENCAMPMENT AT THE
LONGRIDERS' BURNING TOWN GATES--

--THE YOUNG CHIEFTESS, DAUGHTER OF
CUTTER KINSEEKER, MOURNS THE VALIANT
PASSING OF KRIM AND LEHRIGEN...

...GRIEVES THE LOSS
OF YET ANOTHER HOLT...

...AND HEARS, HELPLESS TO
RESPOND, RECOGNITION'S
RELENTLESS CALL.

TEIR...
LIFEMATE!

DON'T
LET THE
HEALER
WEAKEN!
DON'T LET
HIM COME
FOR ME!

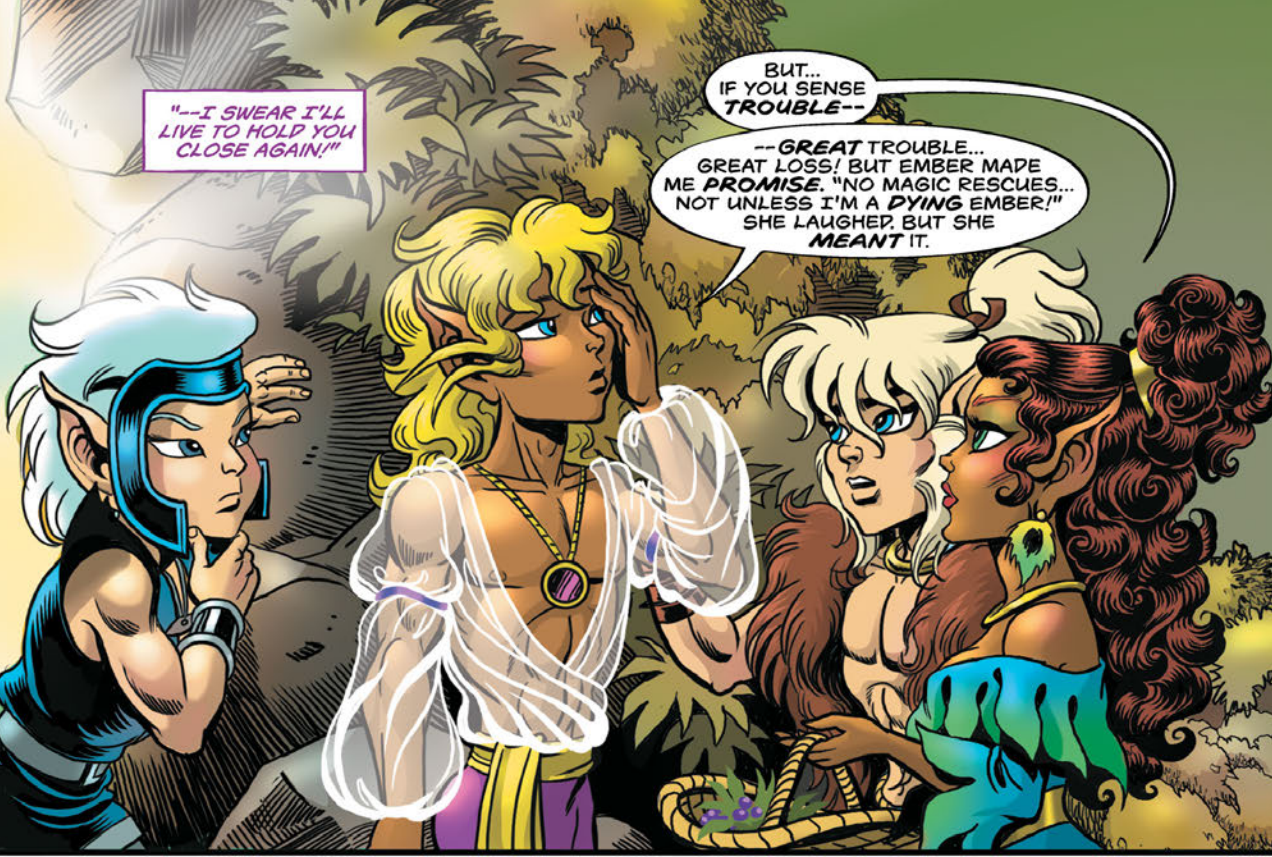
I WILL
SURVIVE
THIS ON MY
OWN!

BY ALL
THAT NOW BINDS
OUR SOULS
TOGETHER--

"--I SWEAR I'LL LIVE TO HOLD YOU CLOSE AGAIN!"

BUT...
IF YOU SENSE
TROUBLE--

--**GREAT TROUBLE...**
GREAT LOSS! BUT EMBER MADE ME **PROMISE**. "NO MAGIC RESCUES... NOT UNLESS I'M A **DYING EMBER!**" SHE LAUGHED BUT SHE **MEANT** IT.



"THROUGH HARDSHIP AND STRUGGLE, SHE'S DETERMINED TO PRESERVE **THE WAY**. AND HER WOLFRIDERS AGREE."



"UNTIL SHE CALLS, ALL WE CAN DO IS HONOR EMBER'S DECISION."

AN ILLUSORY ROCK WALL RIPPLES LIKE WATER AND PARTS TO REVEAL THE CRYSTAL INTERIOR OF THE PALACE OF THE HIGH ONES.

MAGIC...



...IT MAKES THE RESPECTFULLY UNARMED **STRONGBOW** UNCOMFORTABLE.

ESPECIALLY THE CHANCE OF AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE HIGH ONE, **TIMMAIN**.

WHAT IF HE SHOULD MEET WITH HER OVERWHELMING PRESENCE--



--BEFORE HE FINDS--



EYRN!

I WAS IN THE CHAMBER OF THE SCROLL OF COLORS, WYL.

TIMMAIN IS TURNING IT! IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL!



YOU'RE HIDING IN THE PALACE MORE AND MORE.

WE'VE NEVER BEEN SEPARATED SO MUCH.

NOT HIDING... LEARNING!

MANY THINGS...



...HOW TO BE CLOSER TO OUR DAUGHTER CRESCENT'S SPIRIT AND--

--AND MEANWHILE, NEGLECTING YOUR LIVING, BREATHING DAUGHTER!



THERE WAS NO KINDNESS IN THAT THOUGHT!

NO ONE THINKS SUCH THINGS HERE--EVER!



FORGIVE ME! I WAS ANGRY. I MISS YOU SO!

"AND YOU KNOW THAT I MISS YOU!"

...COMES HER GENTLE, HEARTFELT RESPONSE.



IT'S ALMOST DAWN. I WILL DEN WITH YOU TODAY.

IN MY ARMS...?

IN YOUR ARMS, BELOVED. ALL DAY.

HIDDEN IN THE OUTSIZED BOLES OF THE FATHER TREE, DENS SOFTLY LINED WITH ANIMAL FURS AND FRAGRANT, DRIED LEAVES BECKON THEIR WOLF-RIDING OWNERS TO THEIR DAYSLEEP.



WELL, HE CONVINCED HER.

FOR TODAY. IF SHE'S WEARING HER OLD LEATHERS TONIGHT, WE'LL KNOW WE HAVE HER BACK FOR A WHILE.



YAWN! OH, I DON'T CARE!

WHY SHOULDN'T MOTHER DO WHAT SHE WANTS?

CHUCKLE! WHILE FATHER GROWLS AND GROWLS!



AT LEAST
THEY KNOW *THEIR*
CHILDREN ARE HAPPY
AND SAFE.

EMBER...

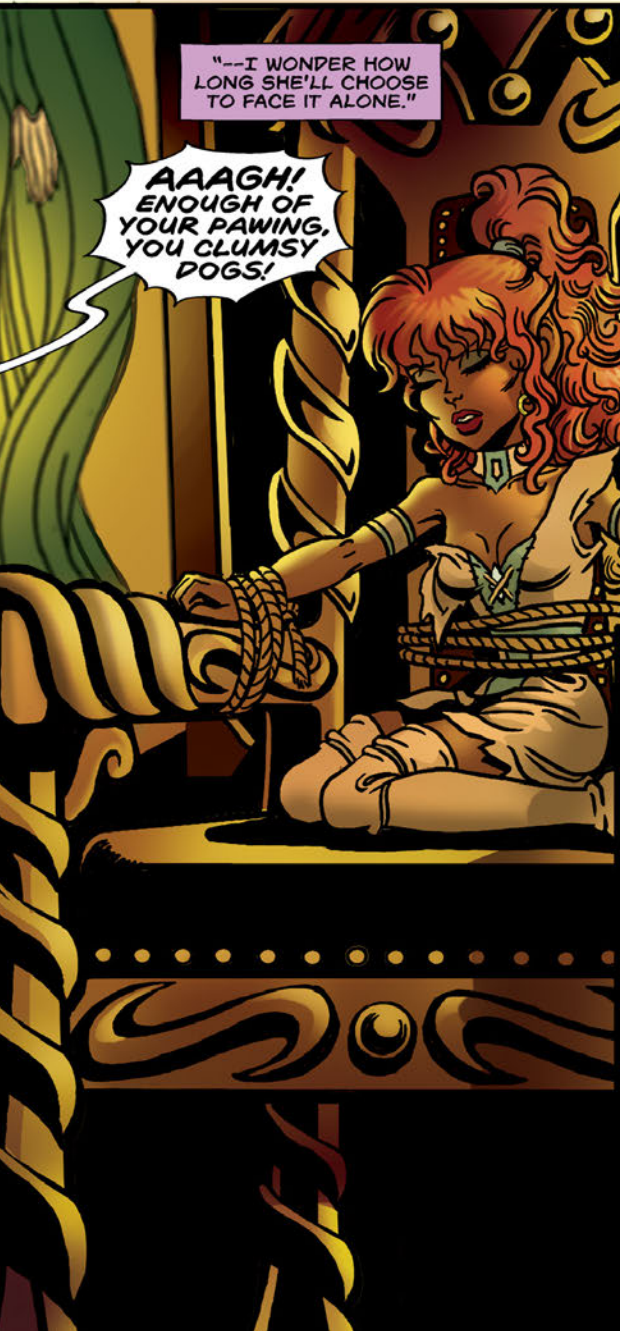
SHE
HASN'T LEFT
MY THOUGHTS
FOR A MOMENT,
LIFEMATE!



LEETAH...
CUTTER...IT'S SO
SIMPLE! THE PALACE
WILL FLY US TO HER
IN AN *INSTANT*.

ONLY IF
SHE *SENDS*
FOR US.

WHATEVER
HER TROUBLE--



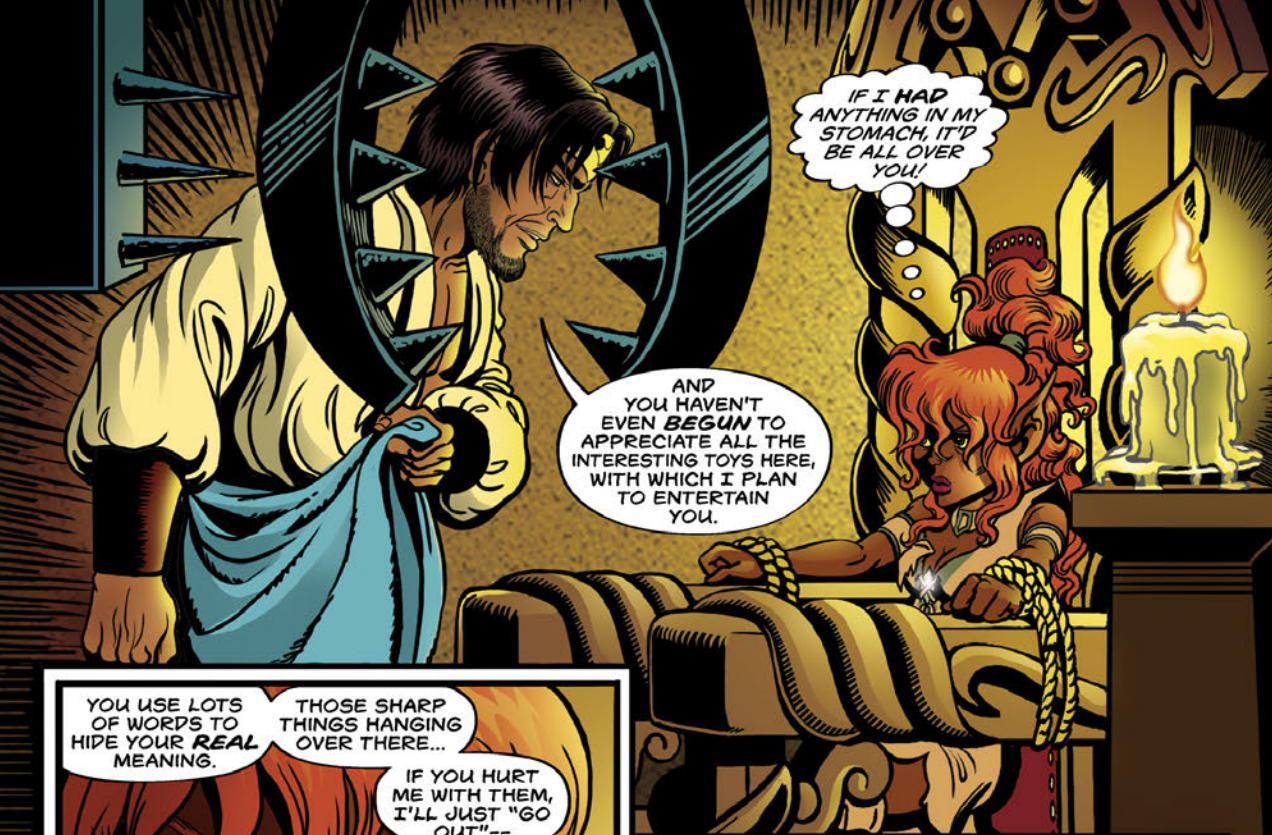
"--I WONDER HOW
LONG SHE'LL CHOOSE
TO FACE IT ALONE."

AAAGH!
ENOUGH OF
YOUR PAWING,
YOU CLUMSY
DOGS!



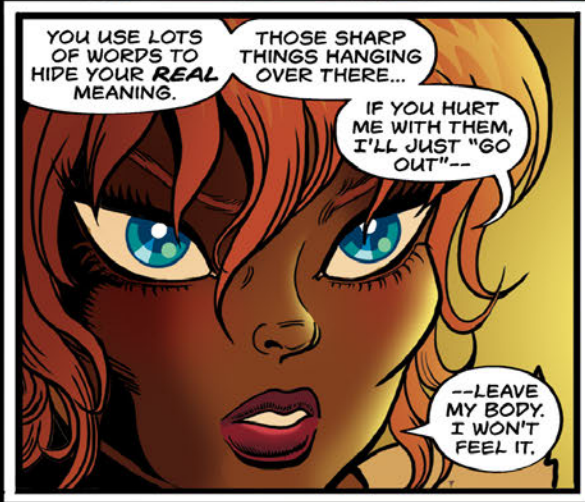
DID I BRING
YOU, ALONG WITH
MY OTHER COMFORTS,
TO THIS THREKSH'T-
FORSAKEN TWIG
PILE--

--ONLY
TO BE FURTHER
BUTCHERED?!



IF I HAD ANYTHING IN MY STOMACH, IT'D BE ALL OVER YOU!

AND YOU HAVEN'T EVEN **BEGUN** TO APPRECIATE ALL THE INTERESTING TOYS HERE, WITH WHICH I PLAN TO ENTERTAIN YOU.



YOU USE LOTS OF WORDS TO HIDE YOUR **REAL** MEANING.

THOSE SHARP THINGS HANGING OVER THERE...

IF YOU HURT ME WITH THEM, I'LL JUST "GO OUT"---

--LEAVE MY BODY. I WON'T FEEL IT.



WHAT?! IS THIS SOME DEMON TRICK? I DON'T BELIEVE YOU!

SPEAK! WHAT AILS YOU, RED-THATCH?



SICK WITH FEAR, MAYHAP? OR IS IT SOME ARCANAL MALAPY KNOWN ONLY TO YOUR PUTRID PACK, EH? PERHAPS BROUGHT ON BY **SEPARATION?**

YES...THAT'S IT! YOUR DEMON'S STRENGTH COMES FROM THOSE UNNATURAL WOLVES AND THEIR EVEN LESS NATURAL **RIDERS!**



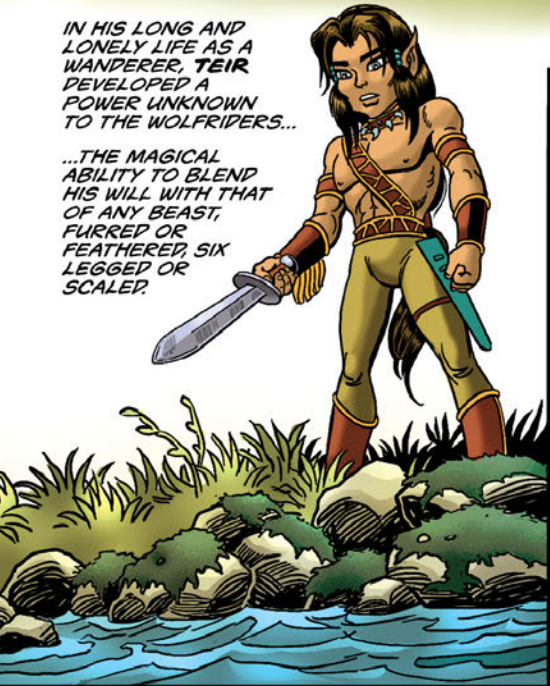
"WITHOUT THEM, YOU'RE HELPLESS!"

MY STOMACH HURTS! I'M SO HUNGRY!

IF ONLY IT WERE SAFE TO STOP AND HOWL FOR KRIM!

IN HIS LONG AND LONELY LIFE AS A WANDERER, TEIR DEVELOPED A POWER UNKNOWN TO THE WOLFRIDERS...

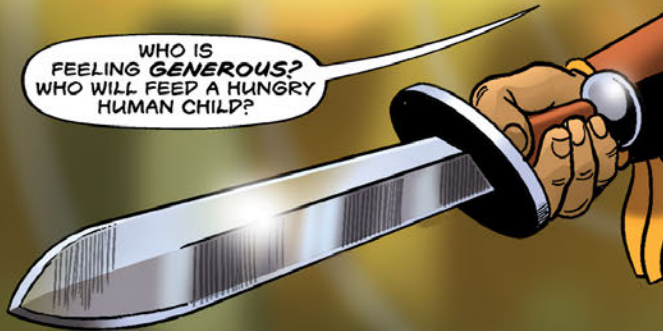
...THE MAGICAL ABILITY TO BLEND HIS WILL WITH THAT OF ANY BEAST, FURRED OR FEATHERED, SIX LEGGED OR SCALED.



MAGIC...IT IS THE WORD THE ELVES USE TO DESCRIBE ANY POWER SUMMONED FROM THE MIND AND WILL TO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN.

MAGIC...NOT TO COMMAND, NOT TO ENSLAVE, BUT TO CALL FORTH AID FOR THE GOOD OF THE GROUP.

WHO IS FEELING GENEROUS? WHO WILL FEED A HUNGRY HUMAN CHILD?



SQUIT

SPLASH



HE'S WILLING TO FEED YOU, NOT SUFFER FOR YOU!

STRAIGHT THROUGH IT'S HEAD! QUICK!

EEEWWW!



NOW!!

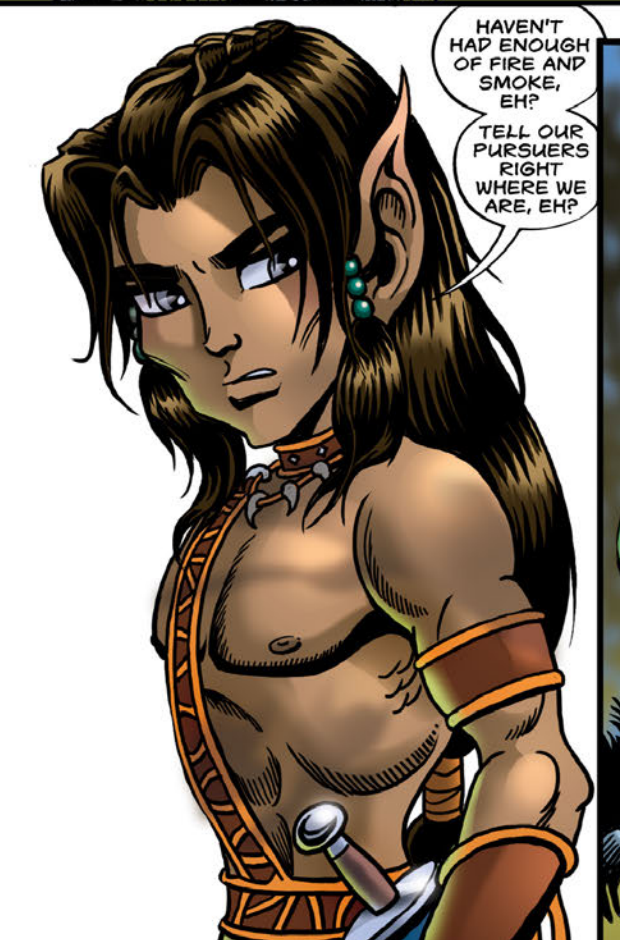


SHARE!

HUH? W-WE CAN'T--



--WHO COULD EAT THAT RAW? WE HAVE TO COOK IT!



HAVEN'T HAD ENOUGH OF FIRE AND SMOKE, EH?

TELL OUR PURSUERS RIGHT WHERE WE ARE, EH?



THOUGH THE LARGE, GRIM, GRAY EYES ARE NOT HUMAN, THE WARNING THEY HOLD IS CLEAR ENOUGH...

COOPERATE, OR BE LEFT BEHIND!

AND ELSEWHERE...

YOU ARE SMALL AND PINK OF SKIN LIKE THE ONE MY FATHER KEPT AS A PET.

WERE YOU TALL, LIKE THAT OTHER ONE...

--THAT SORCEROUS SLATTERN **VENOVEL**, I MIGHT WREST SOME AMUSEMENT FROM THAT ODDLY FETCHING FORM.

IF I UNDERSTAND YOU RIGHT, DIDN'T **KRIM** WHITTLE ALL CHANCE OF THAT AWAY?

FOX-FACED WENCH! YOUR HEALER FRIEND WILL MAKE OF ME ALL THAT I WAS-- AND MORE!

IF HE REFUSES, I HAVE A **THOUSAND** WAYS TO PERSUADE HIM! NOT THROUGH HIS--

--BUT THROUGH YOUR AGONY!

G-GUH!



BLANK...
EMPTY EYED AS
A BEAST OF PREY
DRIVEN BY SHEER
INSTINCT!

THIS
IS *NOT*
BRAVERY!

YOU, A
SAVAGE FOREST
SPIRIT ABLE TO SLAY
WITH EASE...IS IT
POSSIBLE YOU KNOW
NOTHING--

--OF
CRUELTY
AS AN **ART**
FORM?



BY THREKSH'T,
IT'S **TRUE!** YOU HAVE
NO IDEA WHAT WE
HUMANS ARE REALLY
CAPABLE OF!

THIS
CHANGES MY
USUAL THINKING.
TO BREAK YOU,
I SEE THAT
FIRST--




--I MUST
EDUCATE
YOU!



*INDEED, NOT FULLY COMPREHENDING, EMBER LOOKS PAST THE
BIG HUMAN'S PIERCING STARE INTO AN UNSEEABLE DISTANCE.*

WOLF DROPPINGS,
LORD RATHOL!
SOME HOURS OLD!
THE DEMONS ARE
CLIMBING.


BUT WHERE? TO A
DESTINATION THEY ALREADY
KNOW? OR DO THEY BLINDLY
FLEE BEFORE US?



EITHER WAY, OVER THIS MOUNTAIN'S CREST LIE RUGGED PEAKS AND VALLEYS CUT BY DEADLY **WHITE WATER**--

--ALL UNEXPLORED, YOUNG DOMINANCE.

OUR HORSES WILL NOT SERVE US WELL FOR LONG IN SUCH TERRAIN. WE MUST GAIN ON THE QUARRY NOW!



BUT DO OUR MOUNTS HAVE STRENGTH ENOUGH TO MATCH THE UNWORLDLY SPEED OF **SPIRIT WOLVES**?



THERE! A CLUE THAT MAY AID US!

A FOOTPRINT... SMALL, LIKE A DEMON'S.



YET, SEE HERE? **FIVE TOES, NOT FOUR!**



A CHILD'S FOOTPRINT, PERHAPS?

BUT WHY WOULD THE DEMONS...?



LISTEN, I KNOW YOU'VE LOST MUCH...SEEN YOUR LOVING KINFOLK AND COMFORTABLE HOMES DESTROYED.

BUT LAST NIGHT--

--THE ELVES LOST KIN AND HOME, TOO.

EVEN THOUGH THEY LOOK FIERCE AND RIDE WOLVES, YOU MUST SEE THEM NOT AS DEMONS, BUT AS PEOPLE.

THEY HAVE NAMES. YOU SHOULD LEARN THEM.

"SUST AND POOL ARE YOUNG ONES, LIKE YOU. SUST'S MOTHER KRIM PIEP LAST NIGHT, AS DID YOURS, MOLLI.

"PIKE IS SUST'S FATHER. THEY ARE BOTH STRONG, CHEERFUL WARRIORS.

"BUT NOW, THEIR HEARTS ARE HEAVY.

"DEWSHINE, SCOUTER, AND TYLEET ARE POOL'S PARENTS. TO GUARD HIS FAMILY, SCOUTER'S EYES SEE FARTHER THAN FAR.

"MENDER, THE HEALER, COMES FROM A DISTANT DESERT...

"...AND TEIR, FROM THE PLAINS. HE IS OUR CAPTURED CHIEF EMBER'S LOVEMATE.

"HE HEARS HER THOUGHTS LIKE THEY ARE HIS OWN. THAT'S WHY HE LEADS US NOW.

"AND YUN...SHE IS MY MOTHER IN ALL BUT BLOOD. BUT ALL OF THEM RAISED ME. WE ARE ALL ONE FAMILY."



STOP COMPLAINING. WORK HARDER THAN EVER TO KEEP UP WITH US. ALL OUR LIVES DEPEND ON IT!

WE WILL, KHORBASI! WE'LL BE GOOD!



THANK YOU FOR LEARNING MY NAME!



ZHEEL, BECAUSE OF THE HUMAN CUBS OUR ENEMIES WILL CATCH UP WITH US!

THE TRIBE MUST COME FIRST!



SPEED, BELOVED! FOUR LEGS... NOT TWO!

THINK! WHO CAN CARRY THE YOUNG HUMANS?



THE GOOD OF THE GROUP...



TO NO ANIMAL'S MIND IS THAT AN ALIEN CONCEPT.



AND SO, THE LONGRIDER YOUNGSTERS, WHO TOOK TO THE SADDLE ALMOST BEFORE THEY WERE WEANED, GAIN GRACEFUL NEW MOUNTS--



--WHILE, FOR THE WEARY WOLVES, LIFE GOES ON.

AND...

ONLY HOOF AND PAW PRINTS, YOU SAY? BY THE DOOM PIT!

DO THEY NOW RIDE DEMON DEER?!

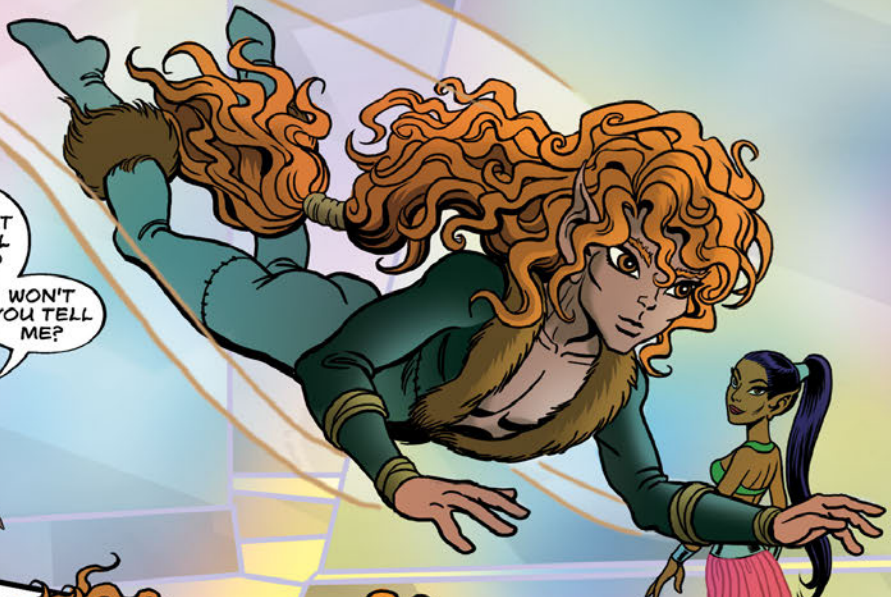
NO TIME TO PUZZLE...FOR RATHOL, LAST SON OF ANGRIF DJUN, KNOWS FAILURE MEANS BECOMING THE HUNTED-- AND BY HIS OWN SIRE, WHO IS INFINITELY MORE RUTHLESS THAN HE.

OH, HOW THIS YOUNG LORD REGRETS THAT HIS IS A LAND "VISITED" BY DEMONIC CREATURES!



AND HOW MUCH MORE WOULD HE QUAKE IN HIS BOOTS TO KNOW THAT ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD...

WINDKIN! YOU SPEE OUT OF THE TROLL TUNNELS SO SUDDENLY!
WON'T YOU TELL ME?



MOONSHADE! A WORD...?

NOT EVEN A GREETING FOR SAVAH?
:TSK:

THAT'S HOW HE IS THESE DAYS, SHENSHEN!

WHAT...?

DO SPIRITS EVER...ANSWER QUESTIONS?

SOFTLY, SHE SMILES--

--KNOWING THAT NOT EVEN FOR SUNSTREAM, THE PALACE SHIP'S YOUNG PILOT, DO ALL ANSWERS COME SWIFTLY.

BUT WHY?

WHY AM I SUDDENLY MORE UNEASY ABOUT EMBER'S WOLFRIDERS--





"--THAN ABOUT MY OWN TWIN SISTER?"

SKREEE



SHSSSHHROARR



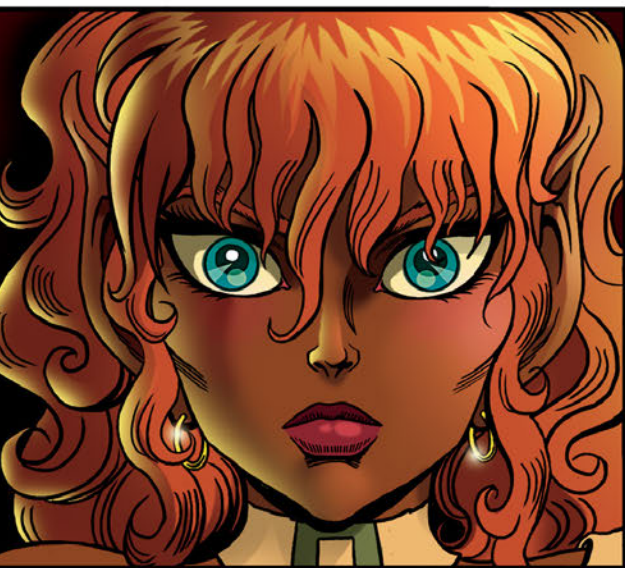
EVEN TO OUR SENDINGS THERE'S A RANGE, K'CHAIYA.

THE HIGHER WE GO INTO THIS "NOWHERE," THE GREATER THE PAIN OF BEING APART FROM YOU!



TO TURN BACK AND TRY TO FREE YOU, EMBER, WOULD BE A FOOL'S TASK--

--BUT I CAN'T BEAR TO THINK OF YOU--



BLAM



GASP!

TEIR!!

WHAT IS IT--?

IS IT EMBER? IS SHE--?

SH-SHE LIVES...

BUT SCARED...SO SCARED!



THAT'S THE
FIRST REAL FEAR
I'VE SEEN IN YOU,
PEMONESS.

GOOD.



YOUR
LEARNING HAS
BEGUN.



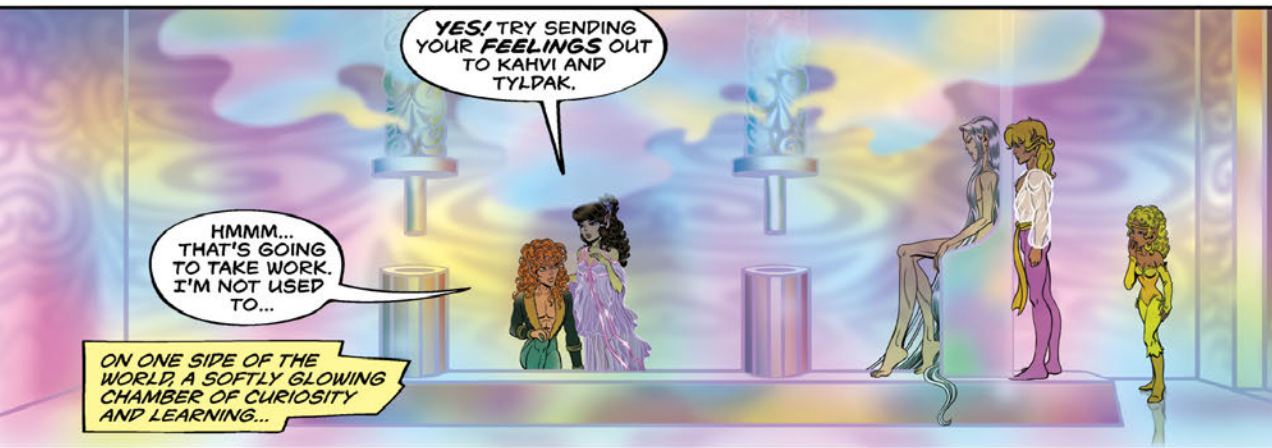
SHE?

KAHVI! AFTER MY SIRE'S DEATH, WE PARTED.

THEY TELL ME HER SPIRIT'S NEVER SPOKEN TO ANYONE.

NOR HAS TYLDAK'S. SO I WONDER...IS THE GO-BACK CHIEFTESS STILL ALIVE?

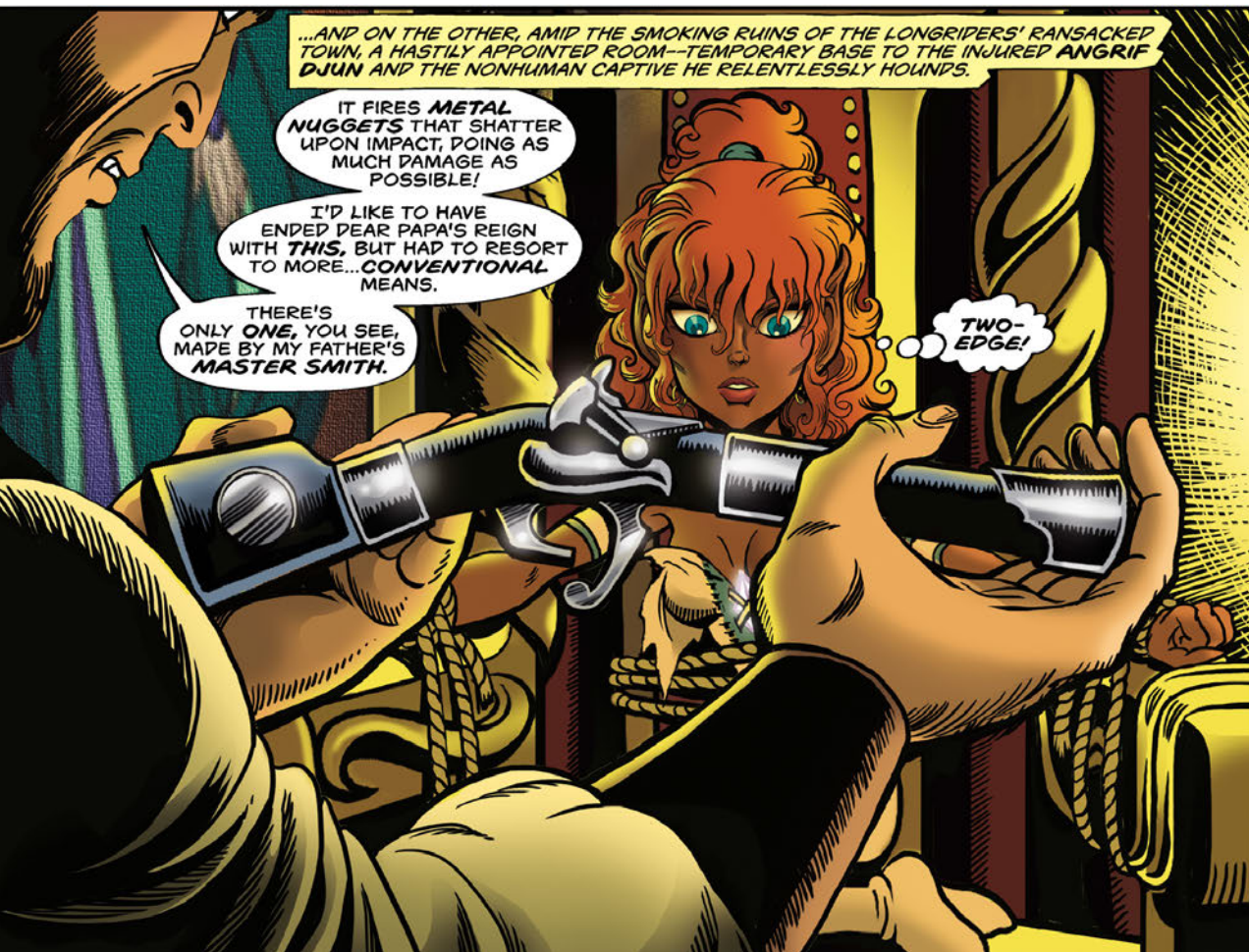
NOT ALL SPIRITS SPEAK. SOME YOU MUST FEEL.



YES! TRY SENDING YOUR FEELINGS OUT TO KAHVI AND TYLPAK.

HMMM... THAT'S GOING TO TAKE WORK. I'M NOT USED TO...

ON ONE SIDE OF THE WORLD, A SOFTLY GLOWING CHAMBER OF CURIOSITY AND LEARNING...



...AND ON THE OTHER, AMID THE SMOKING RUINS OF THE LONGRIDERS' RANSACKED TOWN, A HASTILY APPOINTED ROOM--TEMPORARY BASE TO THE INJURED ANGRIF DJUN AND THE NONHUMAN CAPTIVE HE RELENTLESSLY HOUNDS.

IT FIRES METAL NUGGETS THAT SHATTER UPON IMPACT, DOING AS MUCH DAMAGE AS POSSIBLE!

I'D LIKE TO HAVE ENDED DEAR PAPA'S REIGN WITH THIS, BUT HAD TO RESORT TO MORE...CONVENTIONAL MEANS.

THERE'S ONLY ONE, YOU SEE, MADE BY MY FATHER'S MASTER SMITH.

TWO-EDGE!

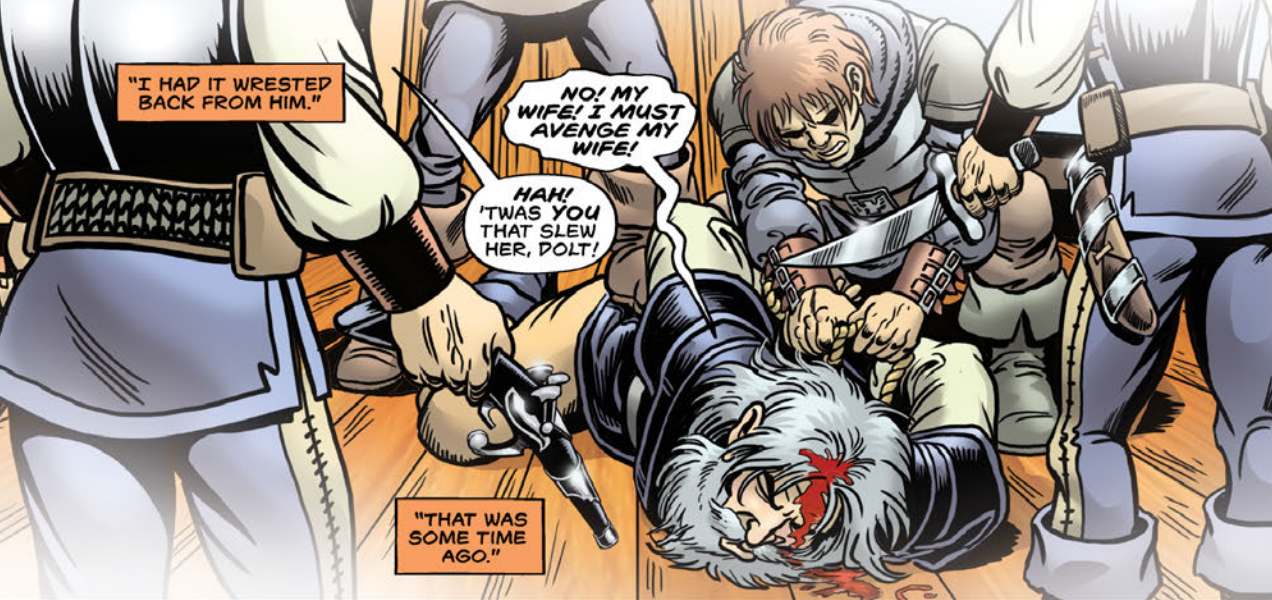
THE CREATURE
DISAPPEARED, ALONG
WITH HIS SECRET OF HOW
TO MAKE MORE. AND
THEN THE THING WAS
STOLEN--

--BY A PRETENDER...
ONE OF **GROHMUL
DJUN'S** THOUSAND
BASTARD SPAWN
WHOM I'VE, SINCE,
SYSTEMATICALLY
ELIMINATED.

"**ARDAN DJARUM** IS HIS NAME...
NUISANCE AND FANATIC, IMMERSED
IN HIS OWN DELUSIONS. NOT CONTENT
MERELY TO BE ONE OF FATHER'S
MISBEGOTTEN MONGRELS--

--HE SET OUT TO SEA, CLAIMING
TO BE A MAN OF THE FUTURE--
GROHMUL DJUN'S DESCENDANT
FROM CENTURIES HENCE.

"DO YOU FOLLOW? TO PROVE HIS
IMAGINED POWER AND LEGITIMACY,
HE RISKED **ALL** BY STEALING
THIS VISIONARY WEAPON.



"I HAD IT WRESTED BACK FROM HIM."

NO! MY WIFE! I MUST AVENGE MY WIFE!

HAH! 'T WAS YOU THAT SLEW HER, DOLT!

"THAT WAS SOME TIME AGO."



AND SINCE THEN, DJARUM HAS BECOME INTIMATELY ACQUAINTED WITH MY "TOYS."

I'VE HAD HIM BROUGHT HERE TO MEET YOU.

RATTLE RATTLE



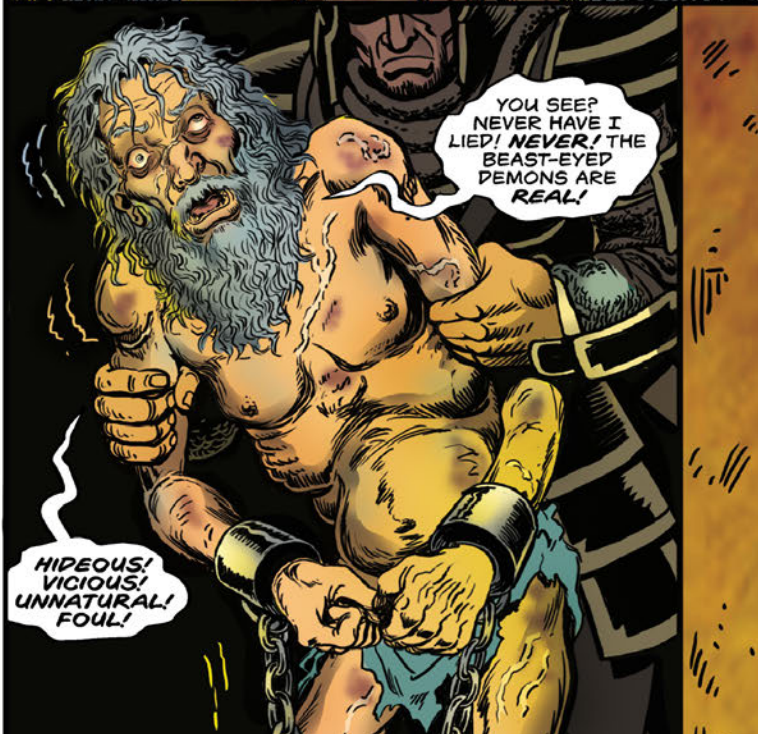
RATTLE

RATTLE



≠GASP≠

ONE OF THEM...ONE OF THEM!



YOU SEE? NEVER HAVE I LIED! NEVER! THE BEAST-EYED DEMONS ARE REAL!

HIDEOUS! VICIOUS! UNNATURAL! FOUL!

"THEY'RE EVERYWHERE!"

IS IT MUCH FARTHER, KHORBASI?

HOW CAN I KNOW, LAD? A MUSTY OLD TALE OF A HIGH MOUNTAIN RETREAT--

"--IS ALL WE HAVE TO GO ON."

THEY'RE WITHIN RANGE OF OUR WRIST BOLTS!

SEE! RIDING UP FRONT! THE YELLOW-HAIRED HEALER DEMANDS!

TAKE HIM AND SLAY THE REST!

START WITH THEIR MOUNTS!



THERE'S NO TREE COVER AND PRECIOUS FEW SHRUBS!

THEN THE ROCKS MUST SHIELD US, SCOUTER!

RUN FOR THE BEND AHEAD!



AND...

PAY ATTENTION, DEMONESS!

SMALL IS THAT SHE-THING IN THE CHAIR...

...BUT MAN SIZED ARE THE DEADLY, OCEAN-DWELLING MONSTERS...

...THAT ONLY I, SCION OF DJUNS, HAVE BATTLED AND LIVED TO EXPOSE!

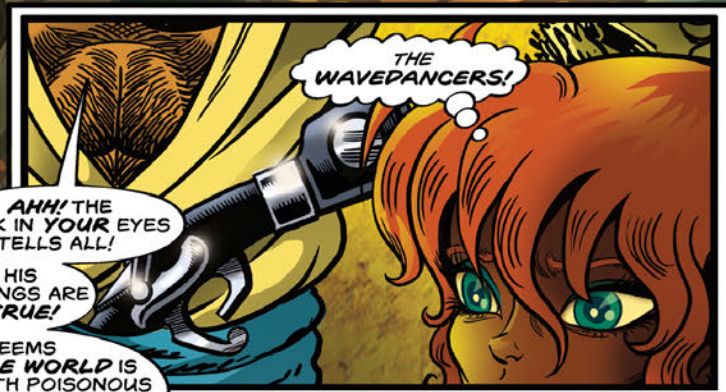


LONG, BARBED FINS THEIR LEADER HAS, STANDING UP RIGID LIKE SAW-TOOTHED KNIVES!

THE REST--EVEN THE FEMALES--SPINES, NO DOUBT VENOM ENGORGED... NEEDLE-LIKE TEETH...WEBBED TALONS THAT RIP AND REND...

"FLASHING SCALES THAT CATCH THE LIGHT, BLINDING THE EYE..."

"...THE EYE...THE FISH DEMONS' EYES, BURNING WITH COLD FIRE!"



THE WAVEDANCERS!

AHH! THE LOOK IN YOUR EYES TELLS ALL!

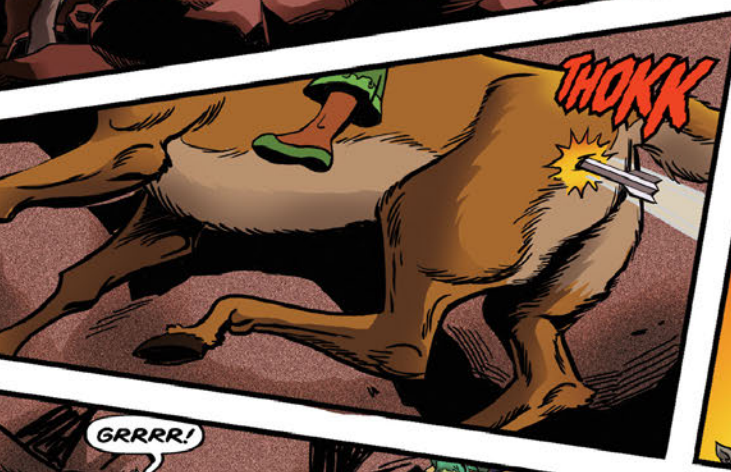
HIS RAVINGS ARE TRUE!

IT SEEMS THE ENTIRE WORLD IS INFESTED WITH POISONOUS NESTS OF YOU! BEGINNING WITH YOUR TRIBE, THEN--



SHIIING

"--I SHALL MAKE IT MY LIFE'S WORK TO FIND THEM AND **CRUSH THEM**, ONE BY ONE, OUT OF EXISTENCE!"

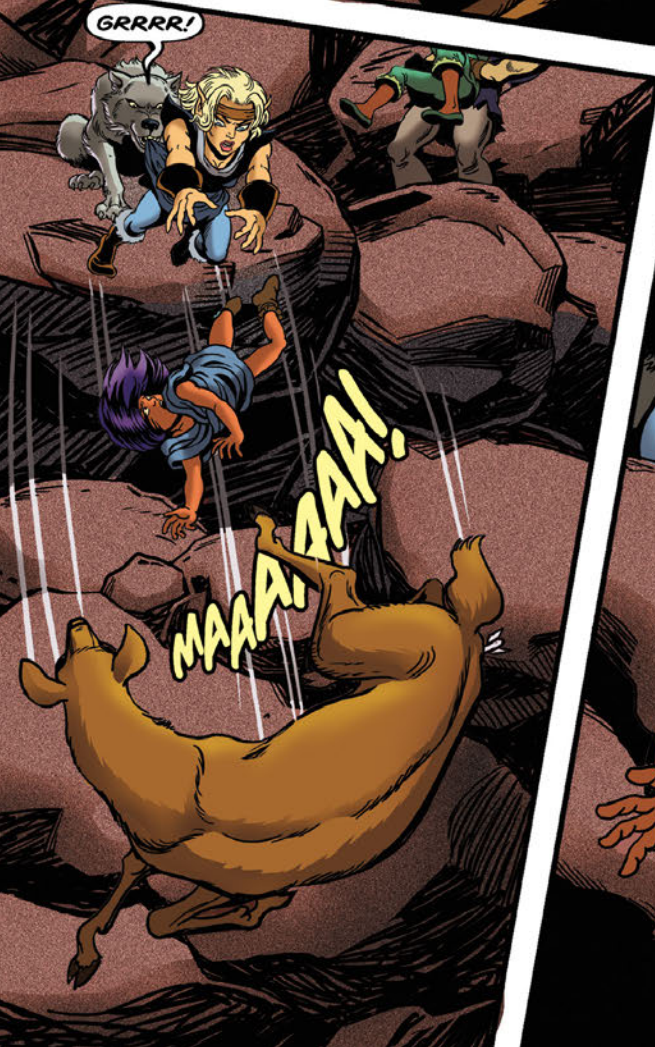


THOKK



AAAIIIEEE!

CUBS!



GRRRR!

AAA! AAA!



GOT YOU!

**THE DEER!
THE POOR
DEER!**

AND AT THAT SAME INSTANT...

="GASP=" THIS IS... ANOTHER KIND OF "SEEING."

LOOK AT YOU! JUST LOOK AT YOU!

WELL...?



EMBER FINALLY "SENT" FOR US?

NOT FOR HERSELF, FATHER-- FOR TEIR!



WHO CARES? LET'S GO GET 'EM!

...WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?



GASP BY THE STARS!



*S*HE HAS DENIED RECOGNITION... QUELLED IT FOR THE SAKE OF SETTING HER BELOVED FREE.

BUT EVEN AS IT FADES, EMBER'S LAST BIT OF CONNECTION WITH TEIR TELLS HER--

DROWNING?! NO! SAVE HIM! PLEASE--

"--SAVE HIM!"

JOYOUS, IRRESISTIBLE AS EVER, KAHVI GATHERS IN HER SLAIN COMRADES AND KIN.

ACTING ON EMBER'S PLEA, THEY MERGE WITH THE GO-BACK CHIEFTESS, SWELLING HER POWER BEYOND THAT OF ANY SINGLE SPIRIT FORCE SKYWISE AND SUNSTREAM HAVE EVER KNOWN.

**WINDKIN!
HURRY YOUR
COMELY BUTT
ALONG WITH THE
WOLF CHIEF!**

**ME,
KAHVI?!**

**STRONGBOW!
WE'RE GOING!
TAKE MY PLACE!**

**WHOA!
IT'S KAHVI!
SHE'S--**

**--HELPING
US SHAPE THE
POP IN LESS
THAN A
MOMENT!**



TUMBLER AND
BROKEN...

UUNH!

...LUNGS FILLED
WITH WATER...

{CHOKE}

...NO SCALY FRIENDS
TO SUMMON FOR AID
AGAINST THE BRUTAL
CURRENT...

**ZHEEL....I'VE
LOST YOU...! LOST...
EVERYTHING...**

CLINGING TO THE MOUNTAIN'S RUGGED BROW, EMBER'S WOLFRIDERS SEND AND SEND TO THEIR FALLEN TRIBEMATE. BUT...

CAN'T SEE HIM!

HE--HE DOESN'T ANSWER!

WE'VE GOT TO GET DOWN THERE!

HE'S BEEN CARRIED SO FAR AWAY ALREADY!

THE FALL... THE DEATH WATER DASHING HIM AGAINST THE ROCKS...

"DON'T LEAVE ME!" HE CRIED, EMBER... DO YOU FEEL? DO YOU KNOW HE'S--

OH, THANK THE HIGH ONES!

!GASP! WH-WHAT'S THAT?!

SHE DID IT! EMBER SENT FOR HELP!

BUT TEIR...! IS IT--

"--TOO LATE?"

ALONE...

...ALWAYS
CURSEZ...TO
END UP...
ALONE...!

THEN...
SO IT
IS...

...I...
YIELP..

OH, NO,
DUCKLING!

???

M-
MOTHER...?

YOU DON'T
GET TO HAVE
IT AS GOOD
AS ME...

...NOT
YET!

SO CLOSE IS HE TO WHERE **SHE** IS,
HER SPIRIT FORM, EVER SHIFTING,
SEEMS MORE REAL THAN HIS OWN
PAIN-RACKED BODY.

TIME CEASES.
COMMUNICATION IS
INSTANTANEOUS.

WHEN YOU'D
BARELY SEEN YOUR
FIRST ICE CRUSTING,
I GAVE YOU TO
TRIBEFOLK I COULD
TRUST TO RAISE YOU
AS THEIR OWN...

...AND TO
KEEP IT **FROM**
YOU THAT IT WAS
ONE LAST, STRONG-
HEARTED **GIRL-FAWN**
I WANTED, NOT THE
DISAPPOINTMENT
OF A LAD!





YOU HAD FINE CARETAKERS, ONE OF THEM UNUSUALLY GIFTED-- FOR A MALE GO-BACK!

BUT, AHH, NO! YOU, BABY DUCK, HAD TO GO AND BOND WITH ME THE INSTANT YOU OPENED YOUR NEWBORN EYES!

I DESERTED YOU AND YOU'VE PESTERED ME ABOUT IT EVER SINCE! PUH! WHY? A STAG NEVER PINES FOR THE DOE THAT DROPPED HIM!

YOU-YOU'VE KNOWN MY THOUGHTS?

HEH-HEH! ESPECIALLY THE ANGRY ONES. THEY GOT MY ATTENTION!

WITH THESE SPIRIT EYES, I'VE FOLLOWED YOU, NOW AND THEN, OFTEN, YOU MADE ME LAUGH.

SOMETIMES... RARELY... YOU MADE ME PROUD.


*—AND THANK
THE HIGH ONES
YOU'VE NOT ONLY
MY BLOOD IN
YOU—*

*⚡GASP⚡
⚡GULP⚡*



*"—BUT YOUR
SPLENDID SIRE'S
AS WELL!"*

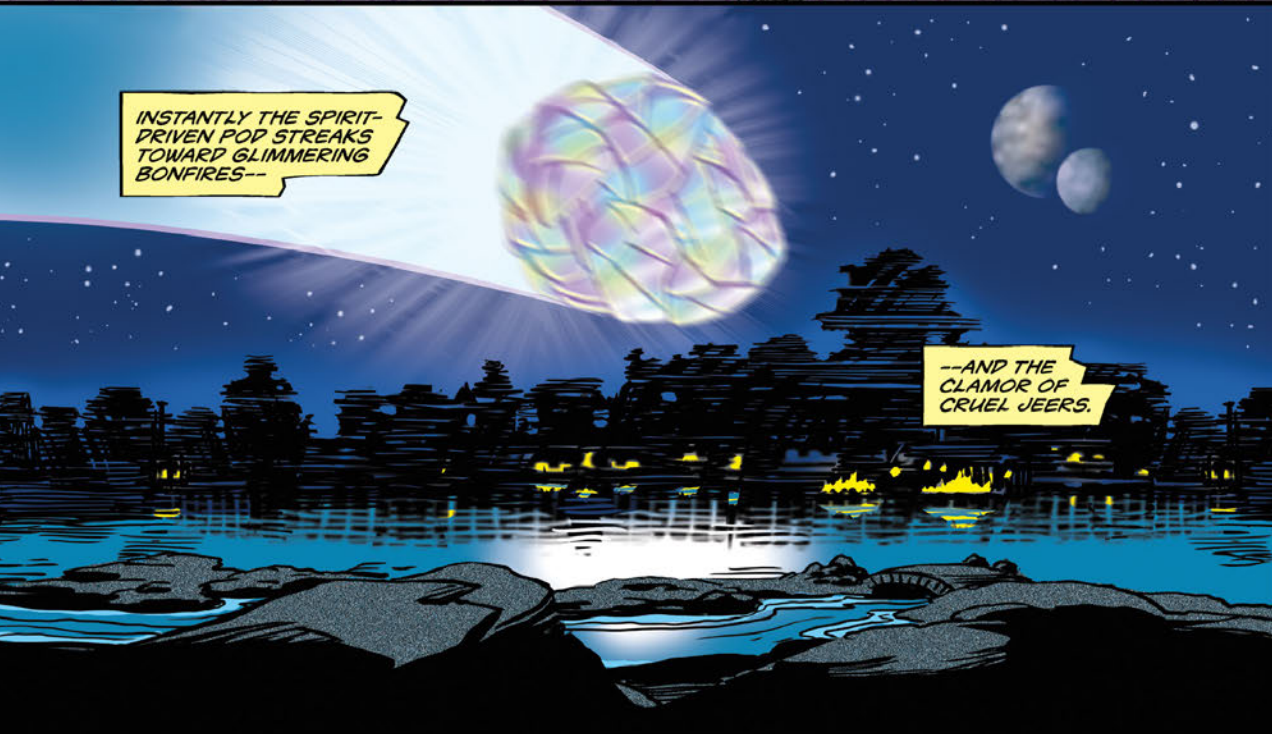




CRADLED IN LEETAH'S HEALING ARMS, THEIR KNOWS HIS LIFELONG PAIN HAS FAILED TO IMPRESS ITS INDIFFERENT SOURCE.

*EMBER!
HE'S SAFE!
WE'RE COMING!*

YET SHE WHO BORE HIM AND WALKED AWAY IS THE ONE WHO HAS, JUST NOW, SAVED HIS LIFE!



INSTANTLY THE SPIRIT-DRIVEN POD STREAKS TOWARD GLIMMERING BONFIRES--

--AND THE CLAMOR OF CRUEL JEERS.

UNH!

IF ANGRIF JUNN DIDN'T WANT ME ALIVE--

--THIS WOULD BE A STAKE...AND THOSE FLAMES WOULD BE FOR ME!

IT'S SAID DEMONS CAN SEE AND HEAR ONE ANOTHER ACROSS GREAT DISTANCES!

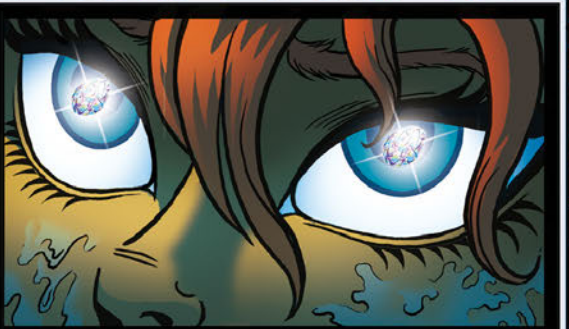
HA! THEN LET THEM SEE HOW WE TREAT THOSE THAT **THREKSH'T** ABOMINATES!

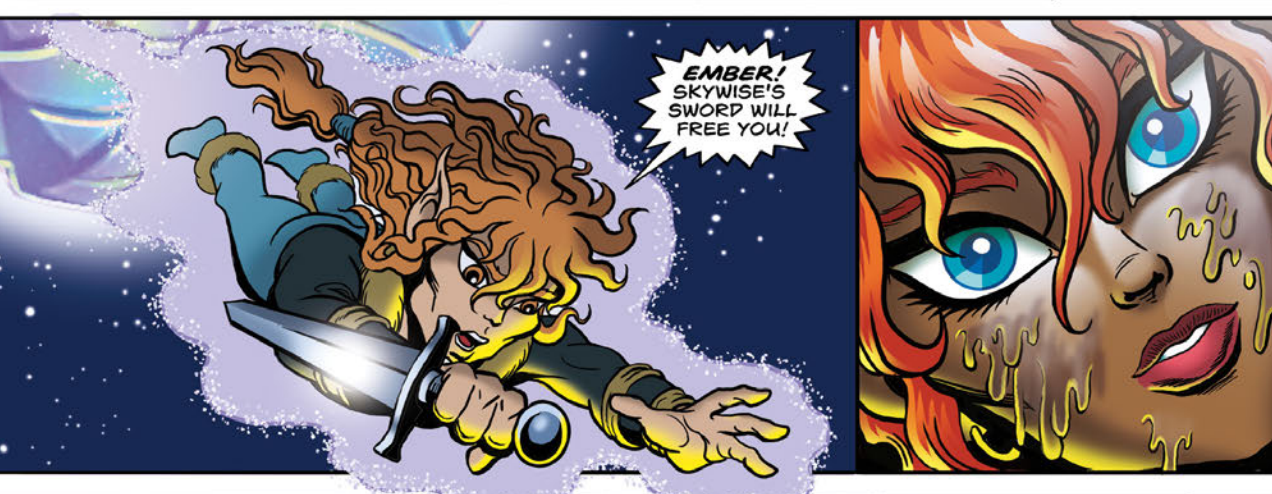
I TRAVELED SO FAR AHEAD TO THIS NEW TIME AND PLACE--

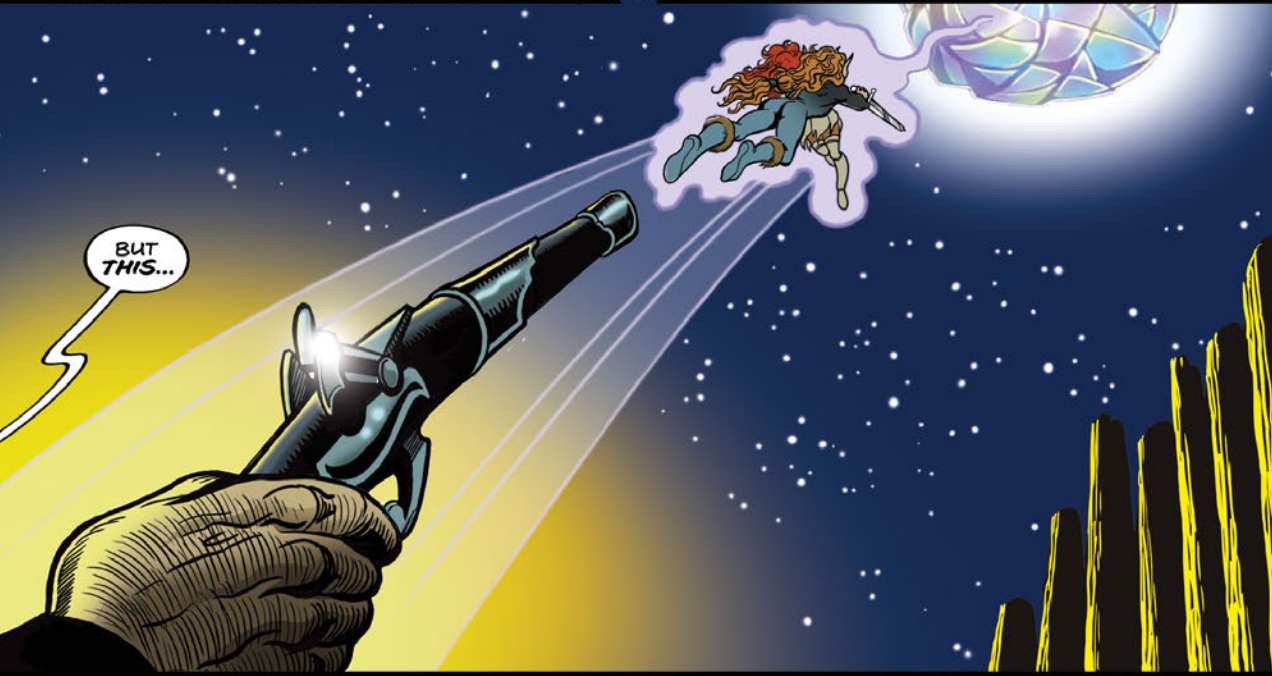
--I KNOW THE HUMANS WHO ONCE CAUGHT AND TORTURED **REDLANE** ARE DEADER THAN DUST.

BUT THE TALE OF WHAT THEY DID STILL SEEMS BARELY OLDER THAN I.

HUMANS DON'T CHANGE. THEY JUST GET WORSE!









ZHEEL...
WHAT THEY
DID TO
YOU--

--DOESN'T
MATTER! ALL
I NEED IS TO
HOLD YOU!



THAT LOUD
POP... THAT FLASH...
THE TINY ROCK
WHIZZING OUR
WAY--

--WHAT
WAS IT?



ANOTHER
"GIFT" TO THE
HUMANS...

"...FROM TWO-EDGE."

GONE!

AND WITH HER GOES MY ONE SURE MEANS OF LURING THE DEMON HEALER DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAINS.

BEGINNING TO SINK IN, IS IT, HALF BROTHER? BOTH SONS DEAD--

--AND A WEAPON THAT CANNOT REACH ITS MARK! Hahaha!

FOR A SCANT MOMENT, HE IS TEMPTED TO HURL THE THING FROM HIM.

HOWEVER...

I CAME HERE FOR WOOD, AND WOOD I SHALL HAVE!

I'LL STRIP THE DEMONS' FORMER STRONGHOLD TO THE NAKED SOIL AND FROM THAT DEAD TIMBER SHALL RISE A WAR FLEET TO MAKE THE WORLD TREMBLE!



LEETAH...WE'VE NOT TRIED THIS BEFORE, BUT TOGETHER--


--I THINK WE CAN DO WHAT'S WANTED.

WHEN THEY'RE BOTH READY TO RAISE A CHILD--

"--RECOGNITION'S FLAME, I HOPE, CAN BE REIGNITED."

WONDER, SADNESS, DOUBT, AND APPROVAL MINGLE ON WATCHING ELFIN FACES--

--AS THE LOVEMATES ARE FREED OF THE ANCIENT REPRODUCTIVE URGE THAT HAS, AGAINST ALL ODDS, KEPT THEIR FURTIVE, VULNERABLE RACE ALIVE.



ONCE THE MAGIC TAKES HOLD, ONLY THEN DO ALL HOWL FOR A DEAR FRIEND FALLEN IN BATTLE.

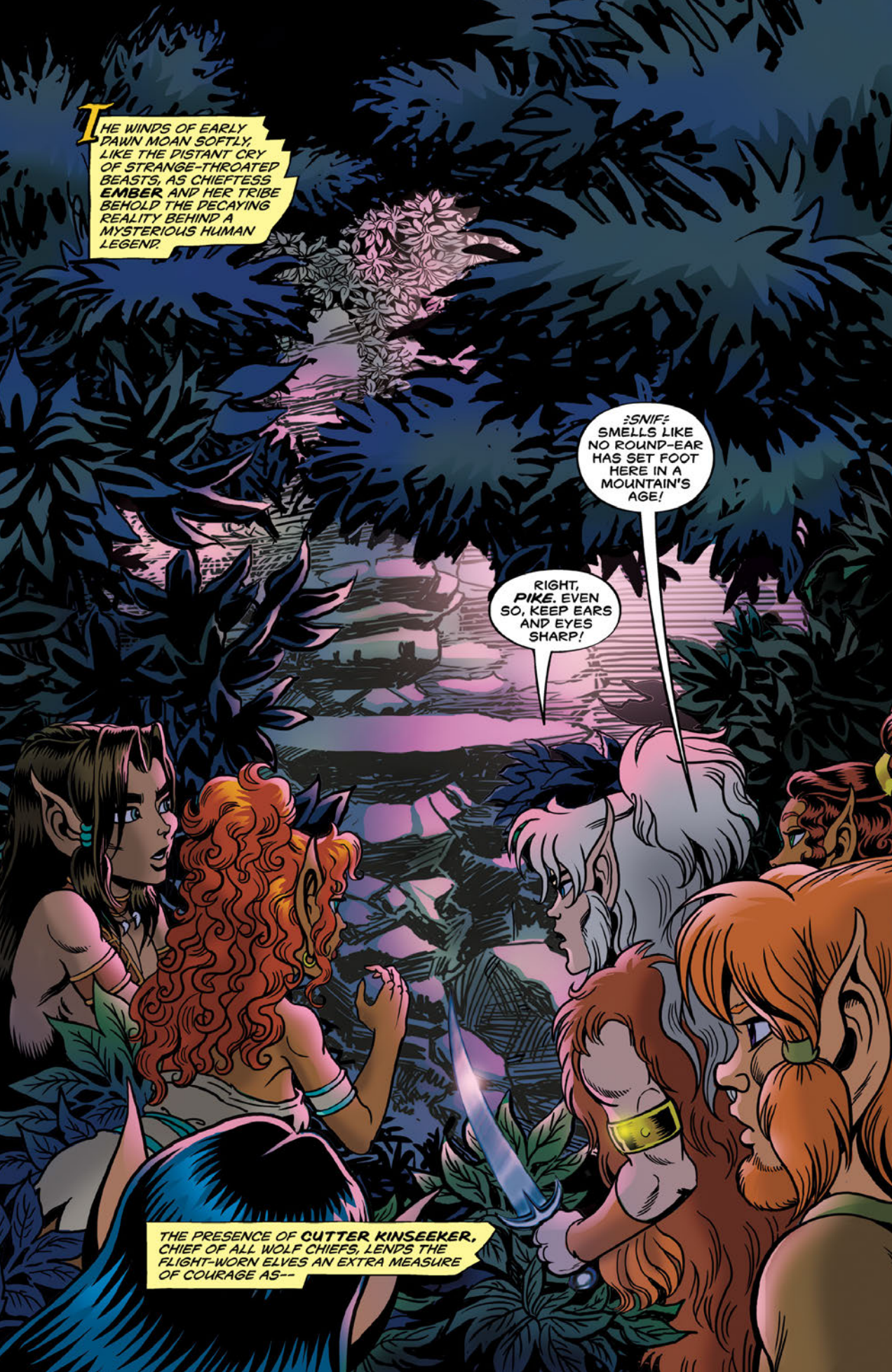
FALLEN, BUT STILL VERY MUCH PRESENT... AND STILL BEAMING A WARRIOR'S GRIN.


THE WINDS OF EARLY DAWN MOAN SOFTLY, LIKE THE DISTANT CRY OF STRANGE-THROATED BEASTS, AS CHIEFTESS EMBER AND HER TRIBE BEHOLD THE DECAYING REALITY BEHIND A MYSTERIOUS HUMAN LEGEND.

=:SNIF=:
SMELLS LIKE
NO ROUND-EAR
HAS SET FOOT
HERE IN A
MOUNTAIN'S
AGE!


RIGHT,
PIKE. EVEN
SO, KEEP EARS
AND EYES
SHARP!

THE PRESENCE OF CUTTER KINSEEKER,
CHIEF OF ALL WOLF CHIEFS, LENDS THE
FLIGHT-WORN ELVES AN EXTRA MEASURE
OF COURAGE AS--





--THEY BEGIN TO EXPLORE, THEIR WAY SOFTLY ILLUMINATED BY THE NEARBY POD VESSEL'S GLOW.



RUNNING STREAMS...SMALL GAME...BUT BEST OF ALL--



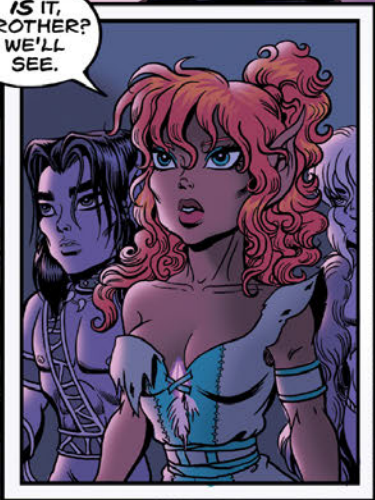
--NO HUMAN CAMPS AS FAR AS I CAN SEE!

"LIKE THE *SUN VILLAGE* AS IT IS NOW!" *MURMURS LEETAH*. "THE STONES, ONCE PILED SO ARTFULLY, WHISPER KINDLY OF THE LONG-AGO HUMANS WHO BUILT THIS."

ANY "MAGIC FEELINGS," *SUNSTREAM*? ANYTHING OLD AND NASTY HANGING ABOUT?

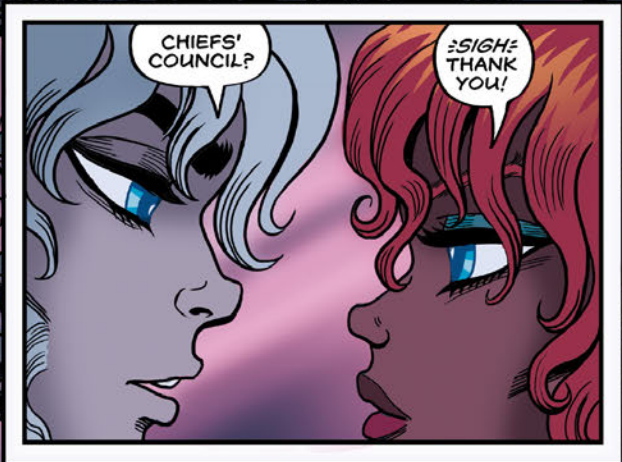
NO, IT'S GOOD... PEACEFUL.

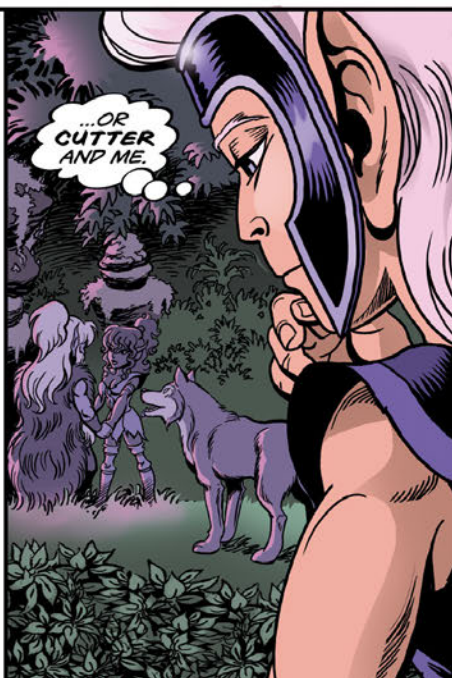
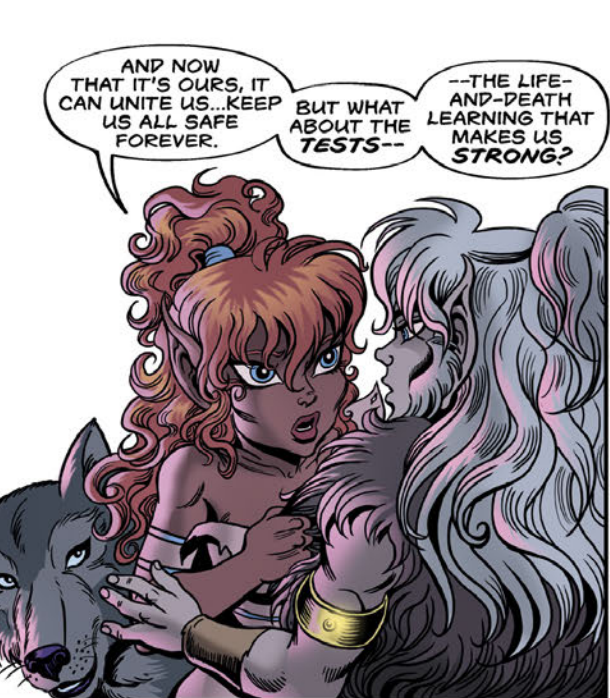
IS IT, BROTHER? WE'LL SEE.



TO HER FATHER, *EMBER* TURNS EYES SUBTLY AGED BY HARROWING, UNASKED-FOR EXPERIENCE.

INSTANTLY HE KNOWS HER NEED.







IN THE FLESH YOU ANSWERED TO NONE, BELOVED. GIFT THESE WITH AN ANSWER NOW.

NOW...?
OH, YES...
"TIME."

OH, VERY WELL!
THAT ROUND-EARED PEST, LEHRIGEN! I THINK I SEE HIS SPIRIT FLASH BY ON ITS OWN JOURNEY.

BUT IT'S JUST BEFORE YOU WOLFRIDERS WAKE FROM YOUR LONG SLEEP THAT THE STRIPLING BRAGGART AND I MEET FOR THE FIRST TIME.

TROLL
DUNG!

A WOMAN'S BODY... BUT SMALL-- WITH THE EYES AND EARS OF A WILD BEAST!

HOLY
THREKSH'T!
WHAT IS
IT?!

WHAT LUCK!
ALL MY LIFE I'VE
HOPED FOR THIS--
TO SIGHT A
DEMON!

WE MUST
PROVE IT! WE
MUST TAKE HER
ALIVE!



"I HEAR THEM...SMELL THEIR INTENT."

"AND AM IN NO MOOD."

TWAAANG
TWAANNNG
TWINNNGG

"THEIR COVER IS WORTHLESS! TWO GO DOWN INSTANTLY."

"BUT THE THIRDP.."

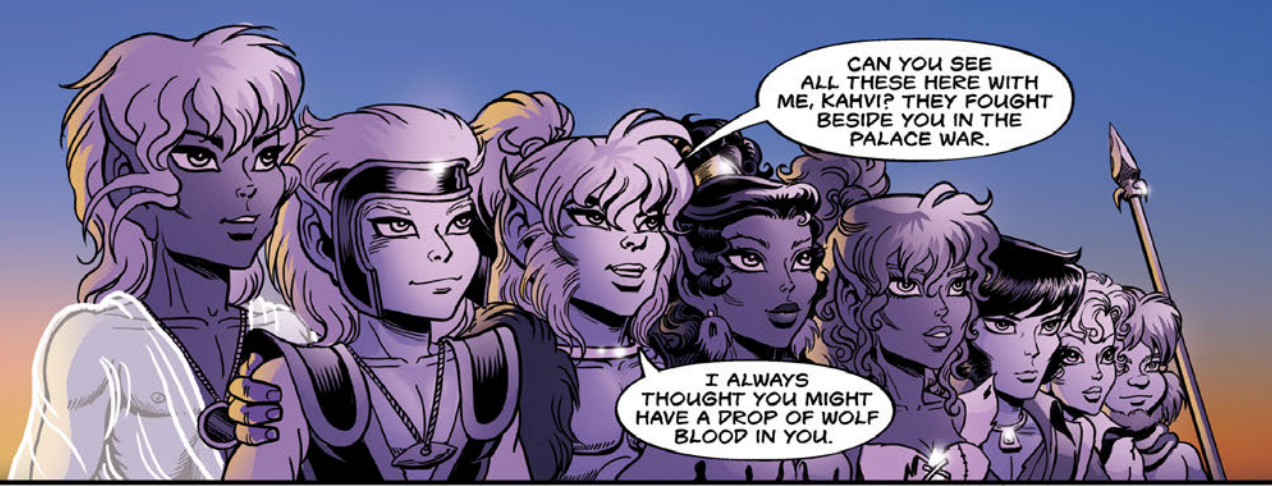
MONSTER!
WHORE OF THE DOOM PIT!

COUGH: I AM LEHRIGEN!
AND I'LL AVENGE THEM, DEMON!

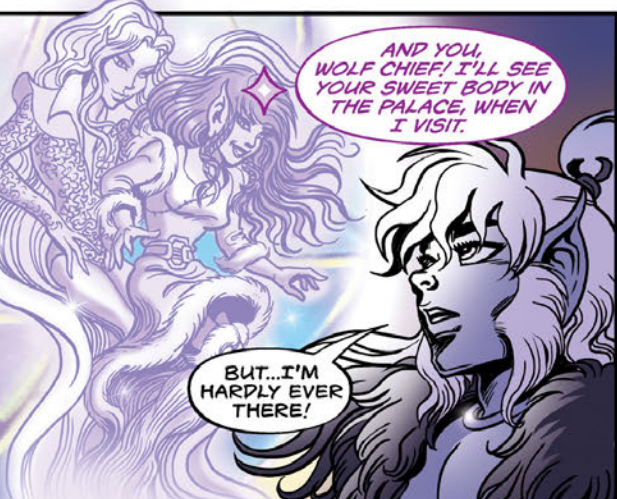
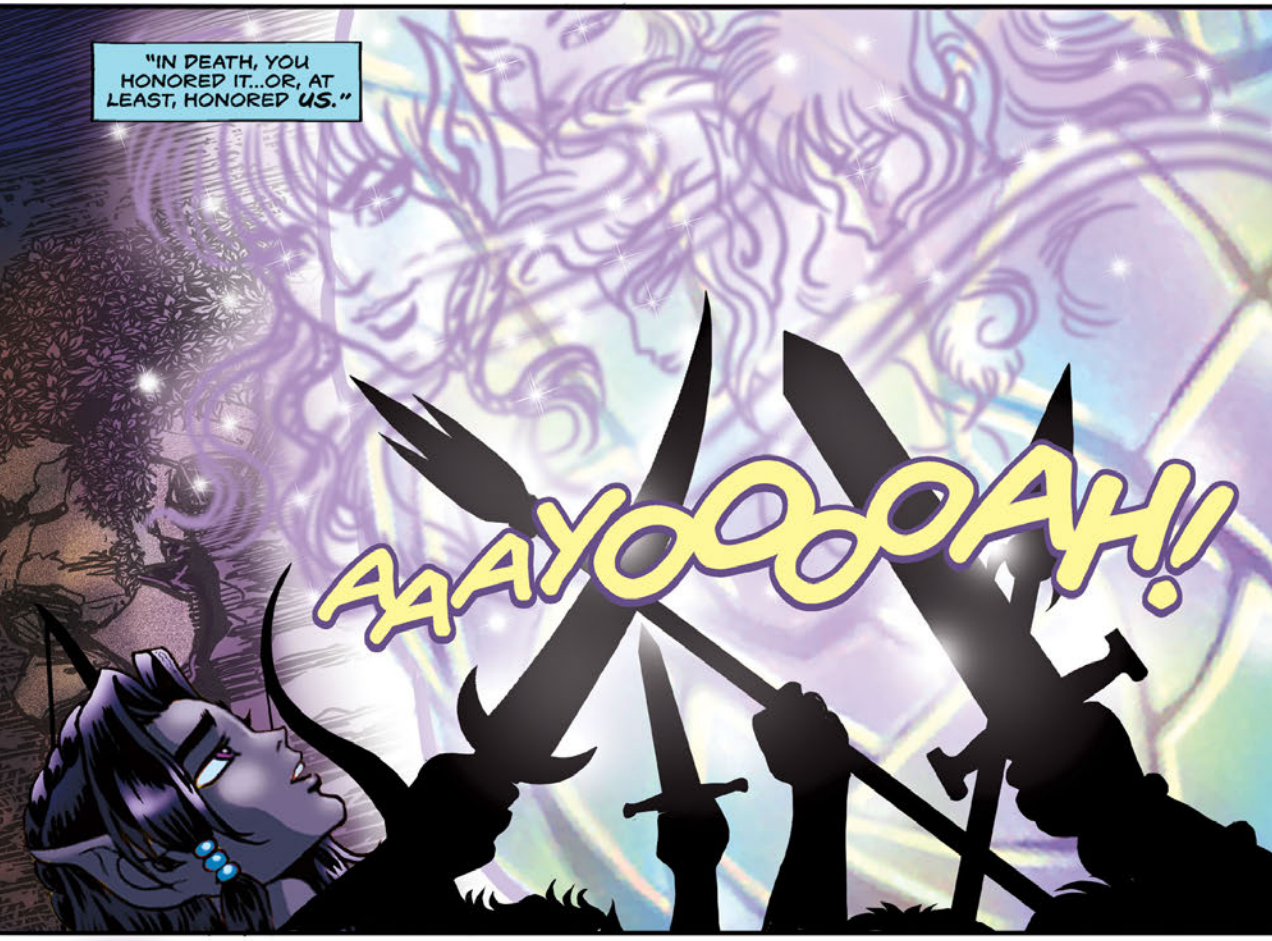
ELF! SAY "ELF"! IT'S A WORD I'LL TEACH YOU BEFORE YOU DIE, YOUNG PIG-ON-A-SPIT!

UUUNNNH!
YOU KNOW MY TONGUE?! THEN KNOW THIS--

COUGH: NO MATTER HOW MANY HOLES YOU PUT IN ME, I WILL HUNT YOU COUGH: TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD!



"IN DEATH, YOU HONORED IT...OR, AT LEAST, HONORED US."





ANOTHER FLIGHT!
ANOTHER NERVOUS PAIR
OF WOLVES! :WHEW:

OH, TUFT
WILL MAKE
THE TRIP
JUST FINE!

WHURF?



THEN
EMBER'S TRIBE
WILL MOSTLY BE
MADE UP--

--OF
WOLFRIDERS
BORN AFTER WE
CLAIMED THE
PALACE.

AND YET,
EXCEPT FOR VISITS,
THEY'LL TRY TO DO
WITHOUT IT.



THAT'LL MAKE ME
ONE OF THEIR ELDERS,
ALONG WITH SCOUTER
AND DEWSHINE.

AND
I'LL BE THE
YOUNGEST!
IT'S SO
EXCITING!

REMEMBER,
CUB...



YOU'VE NEVER
BEEN AWAY FROM THE
PALACE'S WARMING
MAGIC.

THERE
WILL BE NO
PRESERVERS
TO STORE UP
FOOD...NO SURE
PROTECTION
FROM
COLD AND
HUNGER.



OH, BUT I'LL
BE THEIR TANNER
AND DRESS THEM
ALL SNUG AND
WARM!

:SIGH:
JUST TRY TO
BE PRACTICAL
AS WELL AS
FANCIFUL,
CUBLING!



AND...

THEY CAN'T
EVEN KEEP
THEIR OWN
HAIR OUT
OF THEIR
EYES!

WELL,
WHO DO
YOU SUPPOSE
THEY TAKE
AFTER,
LIFEMATE?

C O V E R G A L L E R Y





Every Final Quest cover is symbolic. For Final Quest Special (page 6), Wendy used the classic trio design, set against the shimmering Palace of the High Ones, but also hinted via the broken Bridge of Destiny that things could start falling apart. Issue #1 (frontispiece) puts Ember front and center. She's strong, she's the pivotal character, and she makes no apologies! In issue #2 (opposite), Ember and Teir finally experience Recognition, but the normally happy event is assaulted from all sides as the lovers seek to protect each other.

We don't often realize how diminutive the elves are, compared to humans. The cover to issue #3 (above) brings the disparity home, as Ember is dwarfed by the Djun's massive chair. Final Quest #4's cover (right) paints the issue's main story elements in bold colors to create visual tension and excitement. Issue #5's cover (next page) was the most difficult for Wendy. She hates the very idea of bondage yet dug deep to show Ember in that awful state. Finally, the cover to issue #6 (page 191) features two swords that were lost, symbolizing the losses Ember and Teir have both had to make.







PRAISE FOR WENDY & RICHARD PINI'S *ELFQUEST*

“ElfQuest is a well told and exquisitely illustrated story that should be in every teen and graphic novel collection.” —SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL



The *ElfQuest* adventures continue with brand-new tales of your favorite elfin heroes. The Wolfriders' chief, Cutter, knows that change is coming. His tribe's proximity to the Palace of the High Ones, a mysterious and magical oasis, makes this inevitable. As Cutter's daughter Ember, chief of her own tribe, shares her father's efforts to preserve the old ways among their kin, the human tyrant Angrif Djun ascends the mountain her clan call home and rocks the foundation of their peaceful existence.

This collection combines ElfQuest: The Final Quest Special and issues #1–#6 in beautiful full color, including a gallery of covers, all from the inimitable Wendy and Richard Pini.

