

ANGEL ILLYRIA

HAUNTED



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ILLYRIA
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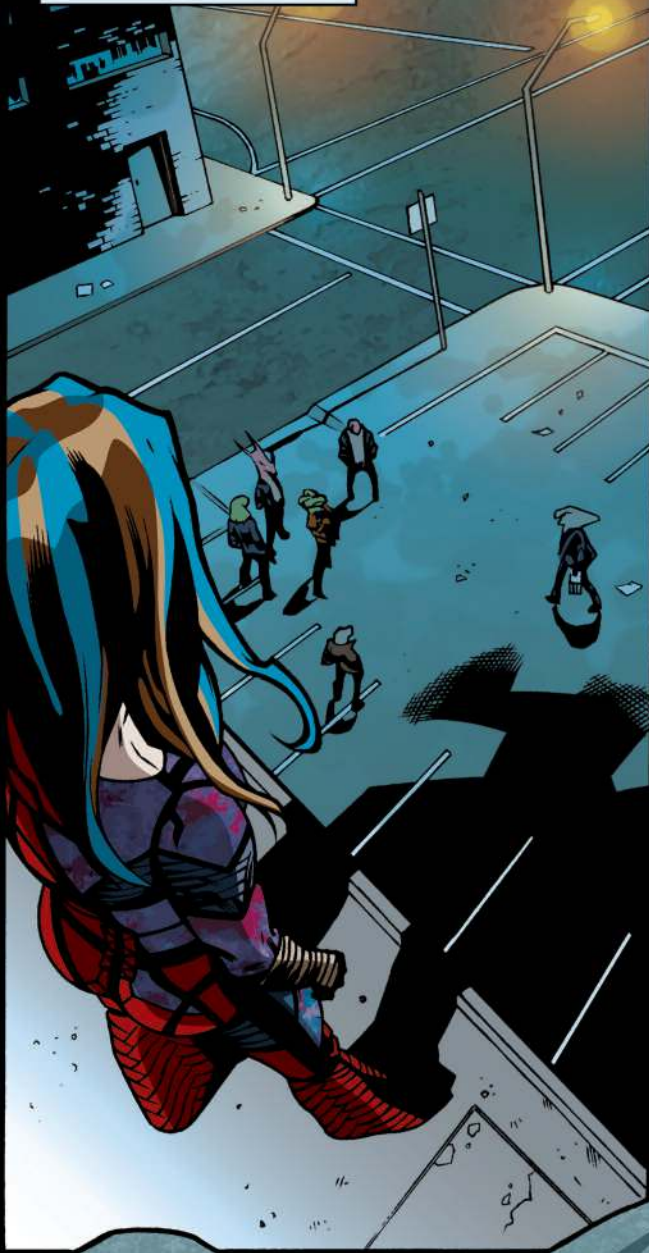
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VENICE, CALIFORNIA. 1:30 A.M.







BIG MISTAKE, HUMAN. KILL HER!



WHZZZZZZ

KRAK

-HHUCH-



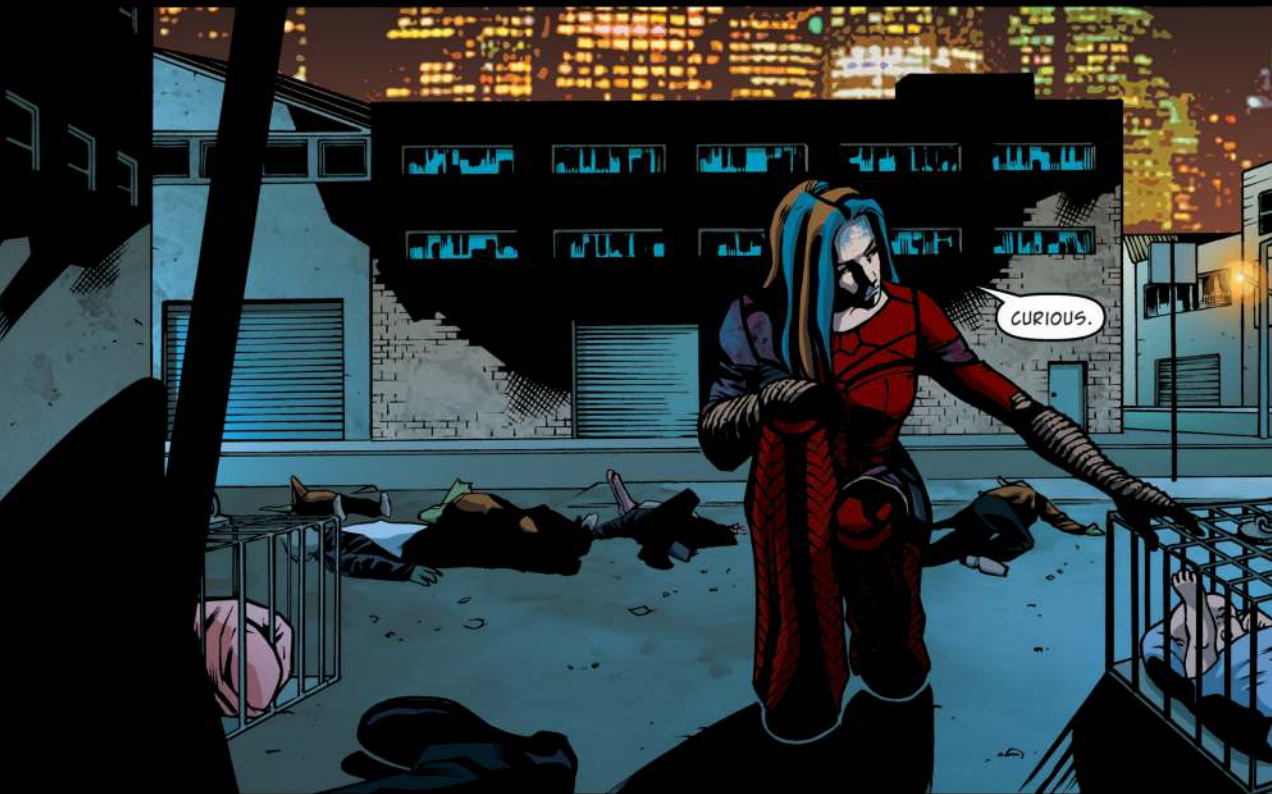
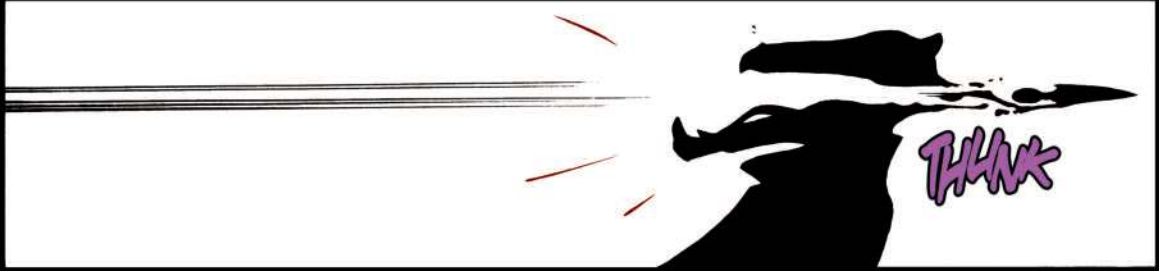
WHAAA-?!

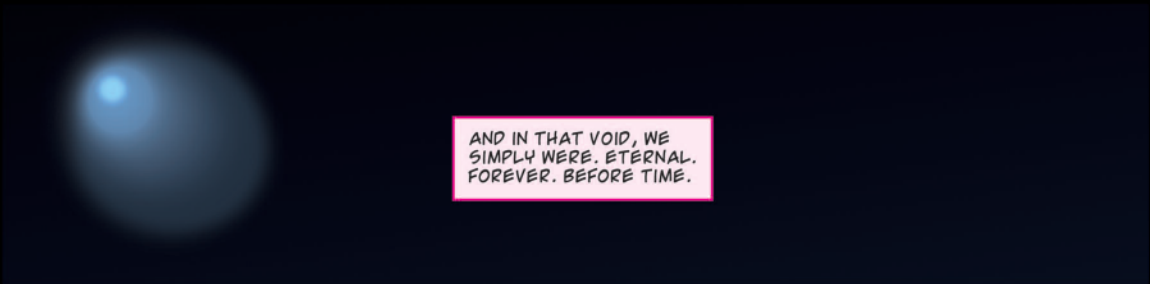


KRAK

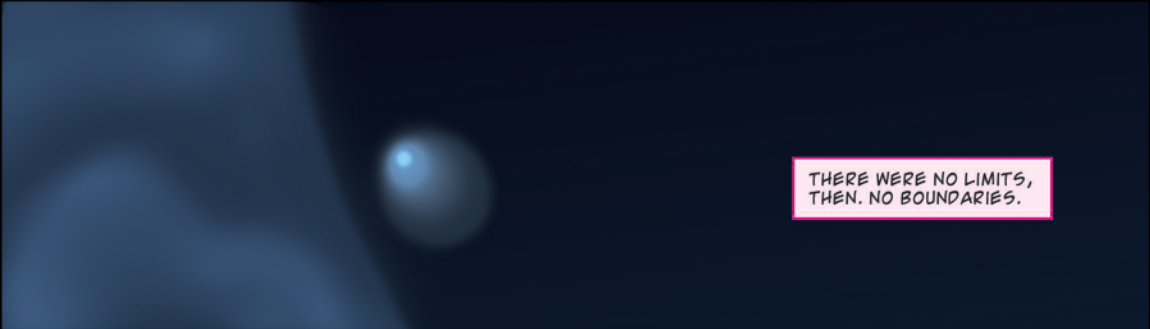
UNNGH!









IN THE BEGINNING... THE REAL
BEGINNING... THERE WAS THE
IMMEASURABLE DARK.



AND IN THAT VOID, WE
SIMPLY WERE. ETERNAL.
FOREVER. BEFORE TIME.



THERE WERE NO LIMITS,
THEN. NO BOUNDARIES.



I WAS THE SHAPER. I
WAS POWER... AND THE
ECSTASY OF DEATH.

I WAS WORSHIPPED.
ADORED. MY IMMENSITY
COULD NOT BE CONTAINED.

THE WORLD TREMBLED
AT MY FEET. I WAS
EVERYTHING. I WAS ALL.

I WAS FREE.








I AM A WALKING CORPSE.


HER DEMISE SHOULD MEAN NOTHING TO ME. A POINTLESS DEATH AMONGST COUNTLESS OTHERS.

THESE MEMORIES, JUST LEFTOVER FRAGMENTS OF THIS HUSK.



BEFORE, I WAS A GOD-KING. ABOVE EVEN THE HIGHEST POWERS OF THE WORLD.

AND FOR A MOMENT, I WAS UNLEASHED AGAIN. IMMENSE.



THEN, THIS... INFECTION AGAIN. ONLY THIS TIME, WORSE. HUMILIATING. BROUGHT DOWN BY GRIEF AND LOSS AND... LOVE.

LOVE THAT I DESTROYED IN MY BECOMING.



THERE SHOULD BE NO ROOM IN ME FOR THIS. A SICKNESS.

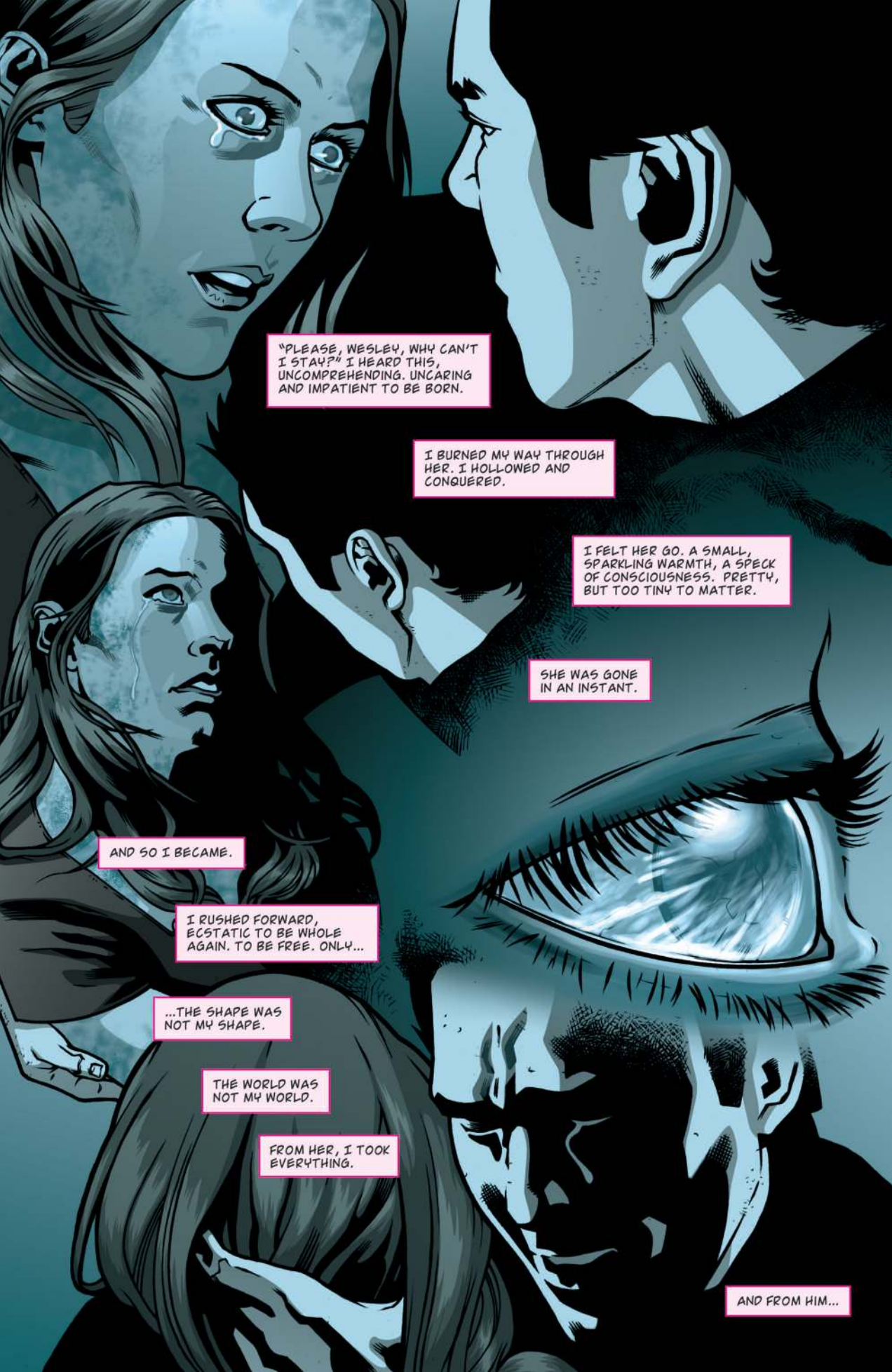
IT IS ENDLESS, THIS REGRET. THIS EMPTINESS WHERE ONLY I SHOULD REMAIN.



INSTEAD, THERE IS A HOLE.

WHERE SHE USED TO BE.





"PLEASE, WESLEY, WHY CAN'T I STAY?" I HEARD THIS, UNCOMPREHENDING. UNCARING AND IMPATIENT TO BE BORN.

I BURNED MY WAY THROUGH HER. I HOLLOWED AND CONQUERED.

I FELT HER GO. A SMALL, SPARKLING WARMTH, A SPECK OF CONSCIOUSNESS. PRETTY, BUT TOO TINY TO MATTER.

SHE WAS GONE IN AN INSTANT.

AND SO I BECAME.

I RUSHED FORWARD, ECSTATIC TO BE WHOLE AGAIN. TO BE FREE. ONLY...

...THE SHAPE WAS NOT MY SHAPE.

THE WORLD WAS NOT MY WORLD.

FROM HER, I TOOK EVERYTHING.

AND FROM HIM...



...I TOOK HOPE.





LATER...



TOO MANY DEMONS WITH SIMILAR CHARACTERISTICS. DO I NEED TO LOOK UNDER HORNED SLIMY THINGS, OR SLIMY HORNED THINGS WITH BUG EYES?

WHY CAN'T IT EVER JUST BE SIMPLE? NO, IT HAS TO BE ANCIENT EVIL WHATSITS AND SOUL EATERS AND...



ILLYRIA? HOW DID YOU...? NEVER MIND.

DO YOU NEED SOMETHING?

A CONVERSATION. I AM... TROUBLED.



TROUBLED? YOU? THAT'S A FIRST.

YES, IT IS... UNFAMILIAR. AND UNWELCOME. I SEEK TO STOP IT.

WELL, IT WOULD HELP IF I KNEW EXACTLY WHAT YOU WERE TROUBLED ABOUT.



IN MY HEAD, THESE MEMORIES. NOT JUST FROM FRED, BUT OF HER.

I AM NOT HER. YET I SEEK TO BE "GOOD."

BUT WHAT IS THE PURPOSE? WHAT WILL I GAIN?



WELL, GENERALLY THAT'S NOT WHY YOU DO GOOD. YOU DO IT BECAUSE IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

AND YET, WE TAKE PAYMENT.



WELL, YES. WE ALSO HAVE TO LIVE. SOME PEOPLE IN THIS HOUSE EAT, YOU KNOW.



FRED LIKED... CHINESE FOOD? AND WESLEY AND GUNN, THEY LIKED TO SEE HER EAT. SOMETHING ABOUT A... HOLLOW LEG.

IT'S JUST AN EXPRESSION. WE ALL... FRED WAS... IT'S COMPLICATED.

YES. IT ALWAYS IS. WITH HUMANS.



TAKE MY ATTEMPTS TO PROCREATE WITH CONNOR—

LET ME STOP YOU RIGHT THERE. WE DON'T... I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT. WE ALL AGREED NOT TO TALK ABOUT THAT NIGHT. EVER.

YOU DO NOT WISH TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR SON AND SEXUAL MATTERS.

UH, NO. I REALLY DON'T.



LOOK, ILLYRIA. I KNOW YOU HAVE A LOT OF QUESTIONS. FRANKLY, I'M SURPRISED YOU'VE MANAGED TO KEEP IT TOGETHER WITH NOT JUST ONE SET OF MEMORIES, BUT MULTIPLE. WES'S ALONE...

YOU DON'T SPEAK OF HIM VERY OFTEN. ARE YOU DONE WITH YOUR GRIEF?

NO. HE WAS MY FRIEND AND I WILL ALWAYS MISS HIM.

LIKE YOU MISS FRED.

YES. AND MANY OTHERS.



THEN WHY DO YOU ALLOW YOURSELF TO CARE? IT DOES NOT SEEM WORTH IT.

BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT LIFE IS. IT'S LOVE AND JOY FOLLOWED BY PAIN AND LOSS. WITHOUT THOSE THINGS IT WOULDN'T HAVE ANY MEANING. IT WOULD BE EMPTY.

LIKE A SHELL.

LIKE ME.





I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT YOU WANT ME TO DO, ILLYRIA.

LOOK, I'M SORRY YOU'RE HAVING YOUR FIRST EXISTENTIAL CRISIS. AND I'D LIKE TO HELP.

FIX THIS. I AM NOT FRED. BUT AS I AM NOW, I AM ALSO...

BUT RIGHT NOW I HAVE AN UBER BADDIE TO DEAL WITH, ALL KINDS OF WEIRD NEW/OLD EVIL THINGS SHOWING UP ALL OVER THE PLACE, AND MY SON'S LIFE TO NOT RUIN.

...LACKING. WANTING SOMETHING MORE THAN THIS.

YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO FIGURE THIS OUT ON YOUR OWN. MEDITATE. KILL A FEW THINGS, I DON'T KNOW.



IT'LL PROBABLY PASS.

PERHAPS I SHOULD SEEK OUT SPIKE. HE WAS A POET, WAS HE NOT?

I'M TOLD POETS UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS.

YEAH, GREAT, FIND SPIKE. I'M SURE HE'LL GIVE YOU ALL KINDS OF ADVICE LIKE "KICK THINGS!" HE'S A FOUNTAIN OF WISDOM.



WAS THIS A "GOOD" TALK? IT DID NOT HELP ME AT ALL, BUT I FEEL AS THOUGH WE... SHARED.

...BUT MS. WEATHERMILL INSISTED. WE THINK WE HAVE FOUND SOME INSIGHT INTO THE LATEST BATCH OF WEEVILLIS DEMON SIGHTINGS. A HOLE BETWEEN OUR DIMENSIONS BEHIND THAT FROZEN YOGURT SHOP ON SUNSET.

GREAT. THAT'LL KILL MY SENSE OF SMELL FOR DAYS. I'LL SEE YOU LATER.

UHM, SURE. WHATEVER YOU SAY.

PARDON ME, I HATE TO INTRUDE...

DAMN. I REALLY LIKED THAT PLACE. ILLYRIA, ARE WE - ?

REMEMBER, WEEVILLIS DEMONS PRODUCE AN OVERWHELMING SCENT OF WHAT YOU CALL "LICORICE." IT MEANS THEY ARE LOOKING TO MATE. AND EAT.



PERHAPS.



SPIKE!
WHERE HAVE
YOU BEEN? IT'S
BEEN DAYS.

OUT
ENJOYING
FREEDOM FROM
MY GHOSTLY
CONFINES,
LUV.



THERE HAVEN'T
BEEN ANY SIDE
EFFECTS SINCE YOU
RECORPorealized,
HAVE THERE?



BIT OF A
HANGOVER, BUT
THAT'S TO BE EXPECTED
AFTER ALL THE
DRINKING.



JUST THOUGHT I'D SWING BY
AND SAY MY FINAL FAREWELLS. FRED...
I WANT YOU TO KNOW... UH, I MEAN, ALL
THAT WORK YOU PUT IN TRYING TO, YOU
KNOW, CURE ME OF THE GHOSTIES...



I DIDN'T DO
ANYTHING.





CROWLEY'S PUB,
WESTWOOD.

ARGH! ARGHLE
BARGHLE GRAGNOG!
GRREAAGH! BLARGH!
GRARGGHLE
NNNARRGHLE!



WHAT THE
BLOODY HELL IS
THIS? I THOUGHT
IT WAS "POETRY
SLAM" NIGHT.

IT IS POETRY.
HE'S SPEAKING IN HIS
NATIVE KANDARIAN
DIALECT. BEAUTIFUL,
INN'IT?

YOU GOTTA
BE KIDDIN'
ME...



HEY,
PETUNIA!
HOW ABOUT
SOMETHIN' IN
ENGLISH?!
SOUNDS LIKE
YOU'RE CHEWIN'
ON A SHOE
FROM OUT
HERE!



DON'T YOU
MARGINALIZE ME!
ALL CULTURES
ARE VALID!



KRASH



WHADDAYA
THINK YOU'RE
DOING!

GET HIM!



HERE WE
GO.









PPFFFFT! TYPICAL. HE WANTS YOU TO SIT AROUND AND WAIT FOR DESTINY TO TOUCH YOU ON THE BLOODY SHOULDER LIKE HE DID. SCREW THAT!

YOU CAN'T JUST PRETEND THIS WILL ALL WORK OUT IN YOUR FAVOR. WE DON'T ALL HAVE THE UNIVERSE TELLIN' US WHAT TO DO.



NOW, ME, I WANTED SOMETHING, I TOOK IT. I WANTED A SOUL, I REACHED OUT AND DAMN WELL EARNED IT. YOU WANT ANSWERS, BLUE, DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. GO GET 'EM!



THAT IS WHAT I AM TRYING TO DO. WHY ELSE WOULD I BE SITTING HERE AMONG THIS OFFAL, TALKING TO YOU?



NOT FROM ME, LUV.



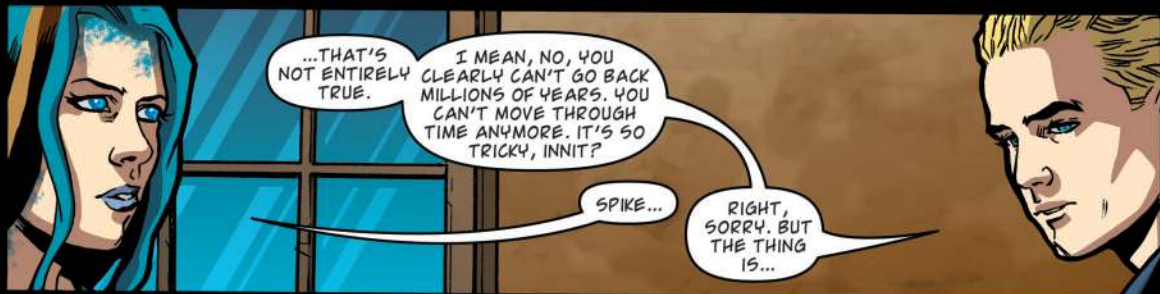
LET'S FACE IT, YOU'RE ABOUT AS ALIEN AS ALIEN GETS, AND YOU LOOK LIKE A DEAD GIRL A LOT OF US LOVED.

IF EVER THERE WAS AN OUTSIDER, IT'S YOU. YOU DON'T BELONG.



YET WHAT'S DONE IS DONE. I CANNOT GO BACK.

WELL...



...THAT'S NOT ENTIRELY TRUE.

I MEAN, NO, YOU CLEARLY CAN'T GO BACK MILLIONS OF YEARS. YOU CAN'T MOVE THROUGH TIME ANYMORE. IT'S SO TRICKY, INNIT?

SPIKE...

RIGHT, SORRY. BUT THE THING IS...



...THERE IS A PLACE YOU COULD GO.

MY ARMY IS DUST. NONE OF MY KIND REMAIN. THIS WORLD IS COLD AND WORN THIN AND...HUMAN. WHERE IS THERE A PLACE FOR ME, AS I AM NOW, THAT WILL GIVE ME THE ANSWERS I NEED?



THE DEEPER WELL.



THE END OF A LONG EVENING.

I DO NOT LIKE YOUR SUGGESTION.

PROBABLY BECAUSE THE DEEPER WELL WAS A PRISON AND YOU DON'T ESPECIALLY WANT TO REVISIT THAT.

BUT I HAVE NO MEMORY OF IT. I SIMPLY WAS NOT... AND THEN I WAS.



BLUE, THAT'S TOO EXISTENTIAL EVEN FOR ME.

BUT IF YOU NEED HELP, I'M HERE.

DO YOU WANT TO HELP ME, OR DO YOU MERELY FEEL A SENSE OF OBLIGATION BECAUSE OF FRED?

ILLYRIA, YOU AND I HAVE BEEN THROUGH HELL. LITERALLY.

I NEED TO DO SOMETHING WORTHWHILE AFTER ALL THAT SOUL FLU NONSENSE.



SO HELPING ME WOULD MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER. AND I—



—I WOULD LIKE YOUR HELP.



...



WOW. OKAY, WELL, THAT'S A LITTLE AWKWARD. WASN'T EXPECTING YOU TO ACTUALLY, YOU KNOW, ASK.



WELL, I THINK I KNOW A DEMON WE CAN GO TO. NAME OF SALLY.

SHE HELPS PEOPLE... FIND THINGS...



...FOR A PRICE.

WOULD SHE PREFER A BLOOD OFFERING OR THE HEAD OF A DEMON OF HER CHOOSING?

HEH. NO, NOTHING THAT SIMPLE.



WHATEVER IT IS, IT'LL TEST YOUR VERY CORE. SALLY'S BIG ON QUESTS. I THINK IT'S PART OF HER FRELLIAN ANCESTRY.

SHE'S A FRELLIAN DEMON? IN MY TIME, THEY WERE CONJURERS. TRICKSTERS.

WELL, NOW SHE HAS A MANSION IN THE HILLS AND A REALLY NICE CONVERTIBLE.

TIMES CHANGE, BLUE.



YES, I HAVE NOTICED THAT TIME DOES. FOR EVERYONE BUT ME.



I COULD HAVE DRIVEN. GUNN SHOWED ME HOW.

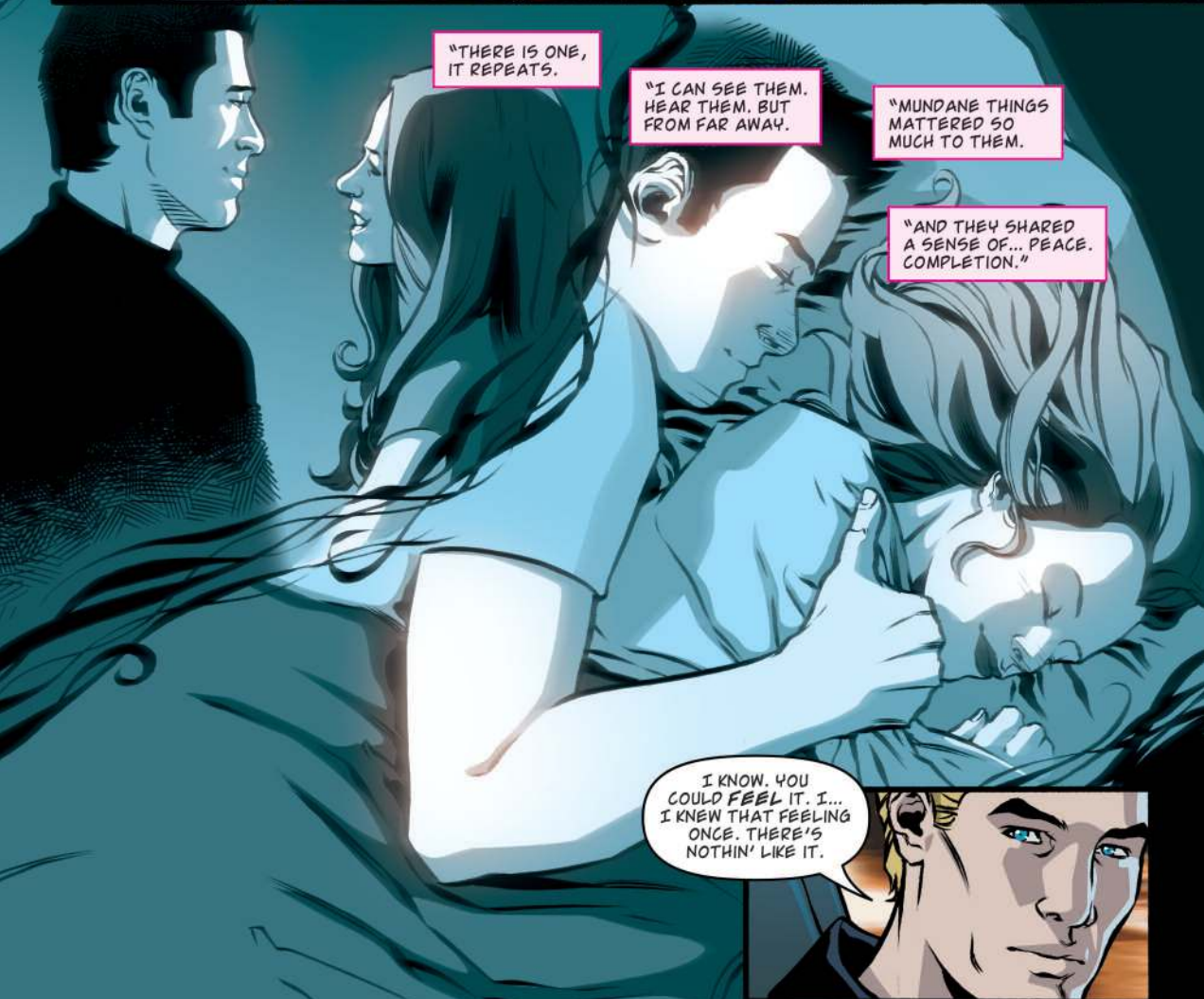
YEAH, I HEARD ALL ABOUT THAT. I PREFER DRIVING ON THE ACTUAL, YOU KNOW, ROAD.

YOU ARE JUST AFRAID I'LL DO IT BETTER THAN YOU.



I... HAVE BEEN HAVING MANY... WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL DREAMS, ABOUT FRED AND... WESLEY.

I DO NOT UNDERSTAND THEM OR WHAT THEY SHOULD MEAN.



"THERE IS ONE, IT REPEATS.

"I CAN SEE THEM. HEAR THEM. BUT FROM FAR AWAY.

"MUNDANE THINGS MATTERED SO MUCH TO THEM.

"AND THEY SHARED A SENSE OF... PEACE. COMPLETION."

I KNOW. YOU COULD FEEL IT. I... I KNEW THAT FEELING ONCE. THERE'S NOTHIN' LIKE IT.



I... THINK IT MAKES ME JEALOUS. WEAK. JUST LIKE EVERY OTHER HUMAN EMOTION.

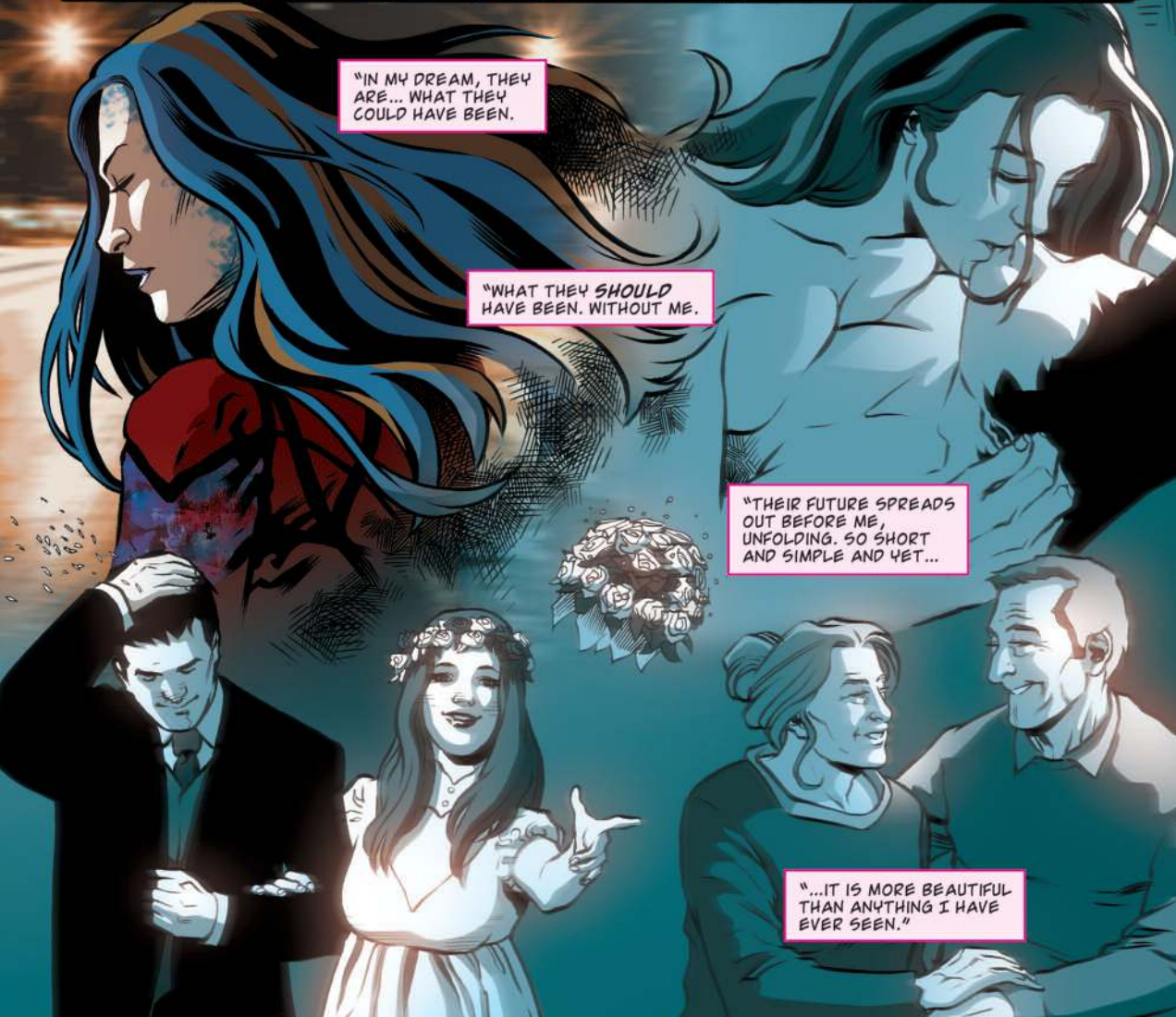
YOU ALWAYS GET THAT WRONG, BLUE. LOVE LIKE THAT MAKES YOU STRONGER THAN ANYTHING.



YOU CAN SAVE THE WORLD WITH A LOVE LIKE THAT.

OH?

NEVER MIND. WE'RE TALKING ABOUT YOU.



"IN MY DREAM, THEY ARE... WHAT THEY COULD HAVE BEEN.

"WHAT THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN. WITHOUT ME.

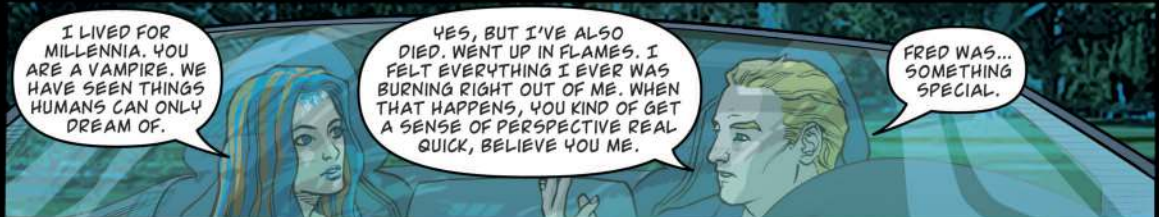
"THEIR FUTURE SPREADS OUT BEFORE ME, UNFOLDING. SO SHORT AND SIMPLE AND YET...

"...IT IS MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN ANYTHING I HAVE EVER SEEN."



ILLYRIA...

...I DON'T KNOW IF YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THIS, BUT THERE CAN BE AN AGONIZING BEAUTY IN TRAGEDY. IT SHOWS YOU HOW BRIEF AND FLEETING LIFE REALLY IS.



I LIVED FOR MILLENNIA. YOU ARE A VAMPIRE. WE HAVE SEEN THINGS HUMANS CAN ONLY DREAM OF.

YES, BUT I'VE ALSO DIED. WENT UP IN FLAMES. I FELT EVERYTHING I EVER WAS BURNING RIGHT OUT OF ME. WHEN THAT HAPPENS, YOU KIND OF GET A SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE REAL QUICK, BELIEVE YOU ME.

FRED WAS... SOMETHING SPECIAL.



YOU LOVED HER. I CAN... REMEMBER IT.

WELL, YEAH. BUT NOT LIKE THAT. NOT LIKE WESLEY DID. AND YOU KNOW THAT.

FRED, SHE BELIEVED IN ME WHEN SHE DIDN'T HAVE TO. HELPED ME. REMINDED ME OF ANOTHER GIRL I KNEW.

FRED WAS WEAK. SHE FELT TOO MUCH.

WRONG AGAIN. FRED WAS STRONGER THAN ANYONE YOU'LL EVER KNOW. TO GO THROUGH WHAT SHE DID AND STILL COME OUT ABLE TO LOVE SOMEONE? IF THAT'S NOT STRENGTH, I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS.

YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND THAT BECAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT LOVE IS.

I KNOW IT MAKES YOU FEEL SICK TO YOUR STOMACH. IF I HAD ONE.



IT ALSO MAKES YOU BETTER THAN YOU EVER THOUGHT YOU COULD BE.



LOOK, BLUE, WE'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT.

AND SOME OF IT IS STILL PRETTY CONFUSING. EVERY TIME ANY OF US TAKES A STEP FORWARD, IT FEELS LIKE WE TAKE NINE STEPS BACK.



I MEAN, TAKE THE FALL. NOW, TECHNICALLY THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN ANYMORE.

TIME IS FLUID. IT MAY NOT HAVE HAPPENED TO US NOW, BUT IT HAPPENED SOMEWHERE IN A TIME AND IN A PLACE. WE REMEMBER IT BECAUSE IT WAS.

THAT'LL GIVE ME A HEADACHE FOR WEEKS. CHEERS.



POINT IS, WE GOT DIALED BACK. AND IT'S KIND OF MONUMENTALLY SCREWED US ALL UP. YOU INCLUDED.

IF YOU ARE REFERRING TO ME AND CONNOR, WE NEVER—

NO, GOD, NO. YOU'RE ALWAYS SO LITERAL.



WE'RE ALL JUST... OFF LATELY. TOO MUCH TO PROCESS.

TOO MUCH THAT DIDN'T ACTUALLY HAPPEN HAUNTING WHAT HAS.

SHOULD WE KNOCK? THAT IS THE CUSTOM?

NOT LIKE THAT. CHOOSE ONE OF THE KNOCKERS. NOT THE ANGRY-LOOKING LITTLE BUGGER.



OH, THANKS VERY MUCH. WHY DON'T YOU LET THE LADY PICK?

BECAUSE HE'S NOT DAFT, JERROLD. LAST TIME SOMEONE KNOCKED ON YOU, THEY ENDED UP IN AN OUBLIETTE.



>SNIFF WHAT IF I WON'T? WHAT WOULD YOU DO THEN?

WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS. TELL SALLY WE'RE HERE, PLEASE, AND FOREGO THE MUTT AND JEFF ROUTINE.

CHRIST, JERROLD, IT'S LATE, OKAY? TELL SALLY AND LET THEM IN. YOU KNOW SHE LIKES BLONDIE OVER HERE.

FINE, BUT DON'T SAY I DIDN'T WARN YOU.

YEAH, YEAH, I'M QUAKIN'.



A FREELIAN DEMON LIVES HERE?

I KNOW, WEIRD, HUH? SHE'S GOT GREAT TASTE, DOES SALLY.

SPIKE, DARLING, COME IN! AND WHO'S YOUR AZURELY BEAUTIFUL FRIEND?



ILLYRIA, SHE'S—

AN OLD ONE, YES? AND A VERY PRETTY ONE AT THAT.

I WAS GETTING READY FOR BED. LOVELY SURPRISE. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

WELL, MY FRIEND HERE, SHE NEEDS SOMETHING. AND I THOUGHT I'D CALL IN THAT FAVOR.

OF COURSE. BUT I NEED A LITTLE MORE INFORMATION. WHAT DOES SHE NEED? A TRINKET? A TRIP?



A TRIP. TO THE DEEPER WELL.





SHE WAS VERY... PINK.

YEAH, SALLY'S ALL RIGHT. WORKED HARD TO GET WHERE SHE IS.

YOU TRUST HER?



'COURSE NOT. SHE'S A TRICKSTER DEMON. BUT SHE MEANS WELL AND HER HEART'S IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

BELOW HER TWO STOMACHS?

RIGHT.



DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS PLACE IS? WILL IT BE FULL OF FELL CREATURES? WILL THERE BE NEED OF MUCH VIOLENCE?

WE-ELL. IN A WAY, YEAH.

SHOULD I HAVE BROUGHT THE AXE?



WOULDN'T DO YOU ANY GOOD.

IT'S GOING TO REQUIRE MORE CHARM THAN MUSCLE.

CHARM?



YEAH. FOLLOW MY LEAD, OKAY?



THIS IS IT?



YEP. WHEN IT ABSOLUTELY, POSITIVELY HAS TO GET TO THE FIFTH CIRCLE OF HELL OVERNIGHT.



MAKES SENSE IF Y'THINK ABOUT IT. NORMAL POST-OFFICE HOURS DON'T REALLY WORK WITH OUR TYPE O' PEOPLE. DAYLIGHT AND ALL.

BESIDES, SOME OF THE STUFF THAT GETS SENT BACK AND FORTH MIGHT SET OFF A FEW ALARMS IF UNCLE SAM GOT HIS MITTS ON IT.



WELL, THEN. LET US CLEAR THIS RABBLE AND GET THE ITEM WE REQUIRE.

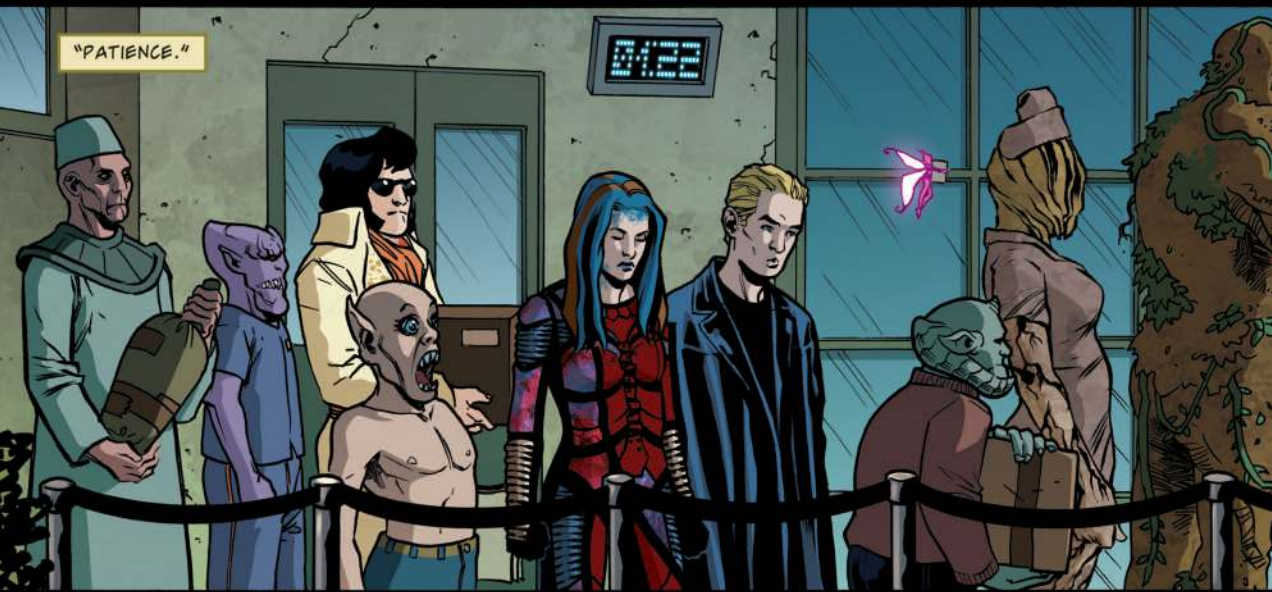
WHOA, WHOA, WHOA! WHAT HAPPENED TO FOLLOWIN' MY LEAD?



I ASSUMED THAT MEANT I WAS TO ALLOW YOU TO SLAUGHTER THE FIRST OPPONENT. I WAS PREPARED TO ACCEDE.

NOT QUITE, LUV. NO, THIS IS GOING TO REQUIRE SOMETHING A LITTLE OUTSIDE YOUR WHEELHOUSE.

AND THAT WOULD BE?







THE VALLEY!

I BLOODY HATE THE VALLEY! DON'T MATTER WHAT TIME O' YEAR OR WHAT TIME O' NIGHT IT IS, IT'S ALWAYS 20 DEGREES HOTTER.



I DO NOT NOTICE SHIFTS IN AMBIENT TEMPERATURE.

DON'T WORRY, YOU WILL.



I THOUGHT FOR SURE THE HELLMOUTH WAS HERE FOR YEARS, JUST BASED ON THE DAMN HEAT...

SPIKE. DID I DETECT... AMUSEMENT EARLIER?



A LITTLE, YEAH. NOT OFTEN YOU SEE THE FORMER QUEEN OF ALL SHE BLOODY WELL SURVEYS LINED UP IN A QUEUE.



FRANKLY, I EXPECTED YOU TO GO SICKHOUSE ON THE LOT OF 'EM A WHOLE HELL OF A LOT SOONER...



HERE WE ARE, THEN.



THIS IS AS FAR AS I GO, DARLIN'.



YOU WOULD COME THIS FAR, ONLY TO ABANDON ME NOW?



NOT MY CALL, LUV. IT'S A RESIDENCE, REMEMBER? NO INVITE, NO ENTRY. ANYBODY LOOKS LIKE ME KNOCKIN' ON THE DOOR THIS TIME OF NIGHT AIN'T LIKELY TO BE INVITED IN. BESIDES, YOU GOT THIS. LIKE I SAID BEFORE: JUST GO AN'... *CHARM WHOEVER'S IN THERE.*





I AM LOOKING FOR A CERTAIN ITEM. HAND IT OVER AND THIS CAN BE ENDED SWIFTLY AND WITHOUT BLOODSHED.



THAT'S INTERESTING. IN THE SENSE THAT I DON'T REALLY SEE ANY REASON TO DO THAT...



HRM.



KRRRNINCH



WELL, NO INVITE NEEDED NOW, THAT'S FOR SURE.

HEY!
HOLD UP THERE,
GRUESOME!
SALLY SENT US!



SALLY?
YOU SAW
SALLY?

HOW DOES
SHE LOOK? DID
SHE MENTION
ME?

JUST RELAX
THERE, PAL, AND
I'LL TELL YOU
ALL ABOUT IT...

A LITTLE LATER, DUE TO TRAFFIC...

AS SOON AS WE MENTIONED YOUR NAME, HE HANDED IT RIGHT OVER.

LARRY ALWAYS WAS A SWEETHEART.

I DO NOT UNDERSTAND. HE MUST HAVE ORIGINALLY WANTED YOU TO HAVE IT, OR ELSE HE WOULD NOT HAVE SENT IT. EVEN NOW, YOU COULD HAVE SIMPLY GONE TO SEE HIM YOURSELF.

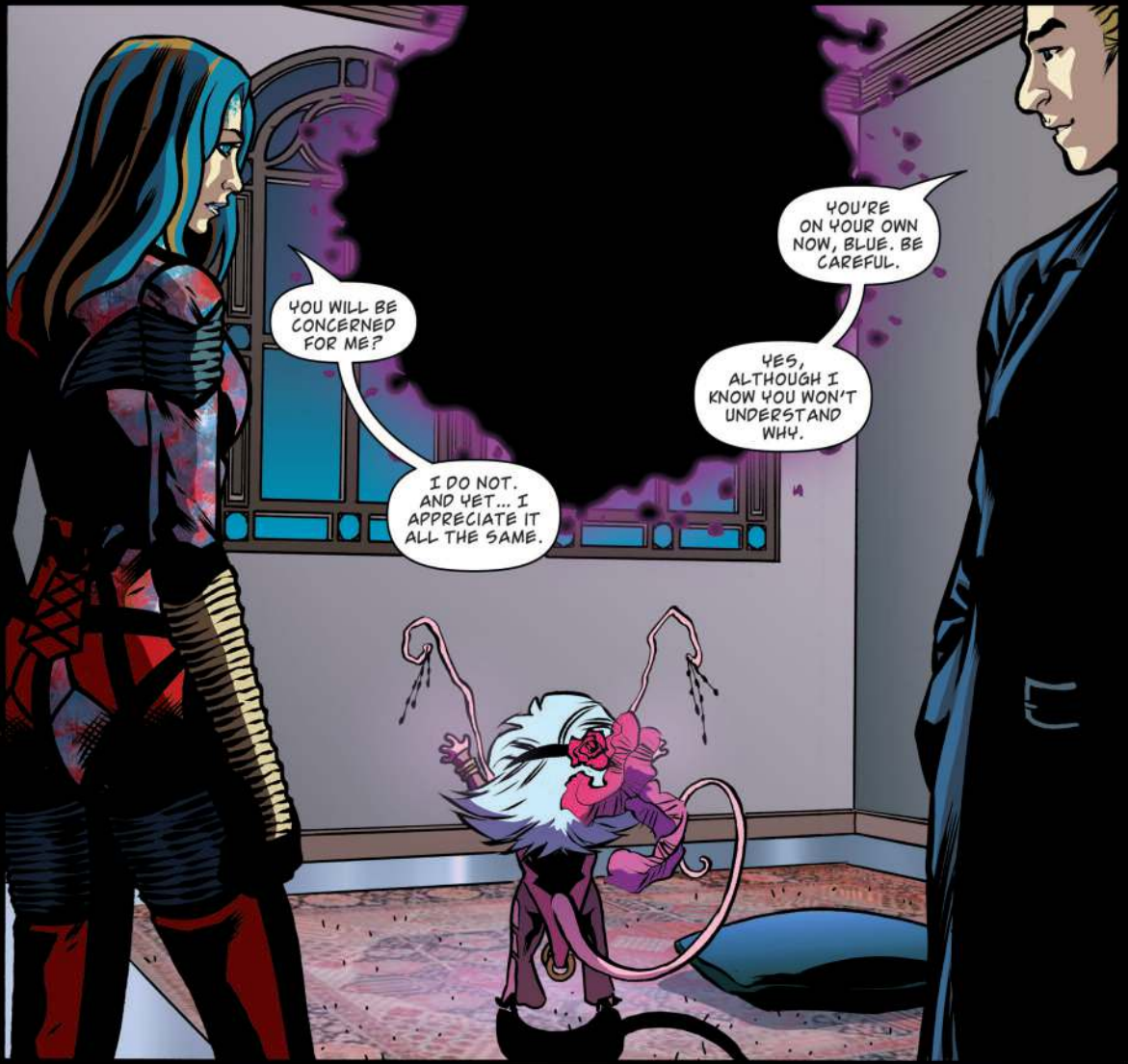
IT'S NEVER THAT EASY WITH RELATIONSHIPS, SWEETIE. YOU KNOW HOW IT IS.

ALL THIS FOR SOME SCRAP OF METAL AND A CRUDELY RENDERED PICTURE?

WE WERE IN LOVE ONCE. I LIKE TO REMEMBER HIM THIS WAY.

POINTLESS SENTIMENTALITY.

NO, BLUE, JUST... FEELINGS. THEY NEVER REALLY GO AWAY.



YOU WILL BE CONCERNED FOR ME?

I DO NOT. AND YET... I APPRECIATE IT ALL THE SAME.

YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN NOW, BLUE. BE CAREFUL.

YES, ALTHOUGH I KNOW YOU WON'T UNDERSTAND WHY.



SO, HOW ABOUT A GAME OF POKER, SPIKE? FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE.

ALL RIGHT, SALLY. I CALL THE CALICOS, THOUGH.



THE FAMILIAR
TASTE OF BLUENESS
FILLS MY MOUTH.

I HAVE MISSED
THE BEYOND.

LIMITLESS.

INFINITIES STRETCHED,
CONDENSED, AND
STRETCHED AGAIN.

IT ENDS
TOO SOON.



THE COTSWOLDS, ENGLAND.

WHY AM I SHIVERING? I HAVE NEVER BEEN HERE, AND YET... I KNOW THIS PLACE.

SNAP

SPIKE MENTIONED THAT I MAY BE MET WITH RESISTANCE. COME ON, THEN!









COME INSIDE, PLEASE. WE DON'T GET VISITORS LIKE YOU VERY OFTEN.

POOR THINGS. THEY DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE. PITY. THEY SANG BEAUTIFULLY.



I WILL TAKE YOU DOWN JUST LIKE I DID THOSE PITIFUL VASTARI DEMONS. SHOW ME WHAT YOU CAN DO, CREATURE.

ME, DEAR? SPLENDID HELLS, NO. I HAVE NO INTEREST IN FIGHTING YOU.



THAT'S BETTER. NOW YOU CAN SEE ME MORE PROPERLY, MY DEAR. I PREFER THE DARK, BUT IT WOULD BE RUDE TO LEAVE YOU AT A DISADVANTAGE. I PRIDE MYSELF ON MY HOSPITALITY.

YOU ARE THE NEW KEEPER OF THE WELL?



NOT QUITE WHAT YOU WERE EXPECTING, DEAR?

CEASE CALLING ME THAT. IT IS DIMINUTIVE.

I EXPECTED A WARRIOR. THE DROGYN WAS A MOST FORMIDABLE FIGHTER.

LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING. YOU, FOR INSTANCE—



—OUTWARDLY, YOU LOOK LIKE A WISPY, WILLOWY, FRAGILE HUMAN.

BUT OF COURSE, WE BOTH KNOW THAT'S JUST THE SHELL.

YOU'RE MORE DANGEROUS THAN MOST THINGS THAT WALK THIS EARTH.



ONLY MOST?

WE SHALL SEE.

I AM CURIOUS, HOWEVER. I CANNOT TELL WHAT SORT OF DEMON YOU ARE. I THOUGHT I KNEW THEM ALL.



OH, I'M VERY RARE, DEAR. NEVER WERE MANY TO BEGIN WITH.

BIT AFTER YOUR TIME, ANYWAY.



IF YOU WILL NOT FIGHT ME, THEN I SHALL BE ABOUT MY BUSINESS.



OH, I DON'T THINK SO, DEAR. I REALLY DON'T.



I'M NOT WITHOUT PROTECTION, AFTER ALL.

AND IF I SAY YOU'RE NOT GOING IN, YOU'RE NOT GOING IN.



HSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS!



HSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS!



TIRMEK!



YOU SET A PAIR OF
HASTIGILIAN HOUNDS
ON ME? HOW...
NOVEL.

DAMN.
THAT DIDN'T
QUITE GO HOW
I PLANNED.



WE ARE KINDRED,
THOUGH OBVIOUSLY
THEY ARE INFERIOR.
STILL...

...THEY WILL
MAKE EXCELLENT
PETS.

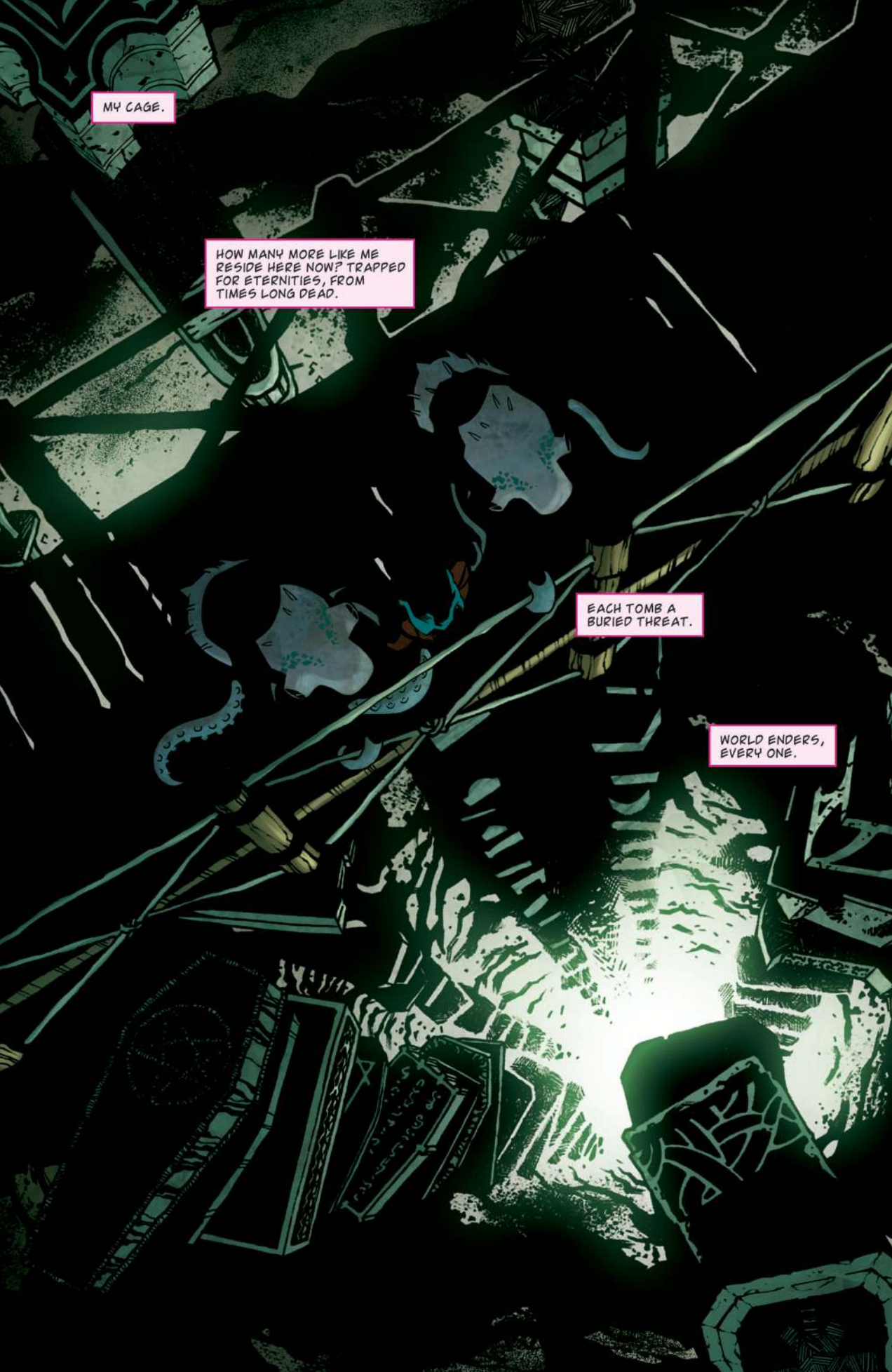
PRRRR...

PRRRR...



WAIT! I WON'T
STAND IN YOUR WAY
THIS TIME, BUT I
SHOULD WARN
YOU...





MY CAGE.

HOW MANY MORE LIKE ME
RESIDE HERE NOW? TRAPPED
FOR ETERNITIES, FROM
TIMES LONG DEAD.

EACH TOMB A
BURIED THREAT.

WORLD ENDERS,
EVERY ONE.



WHERE AM I GOING?

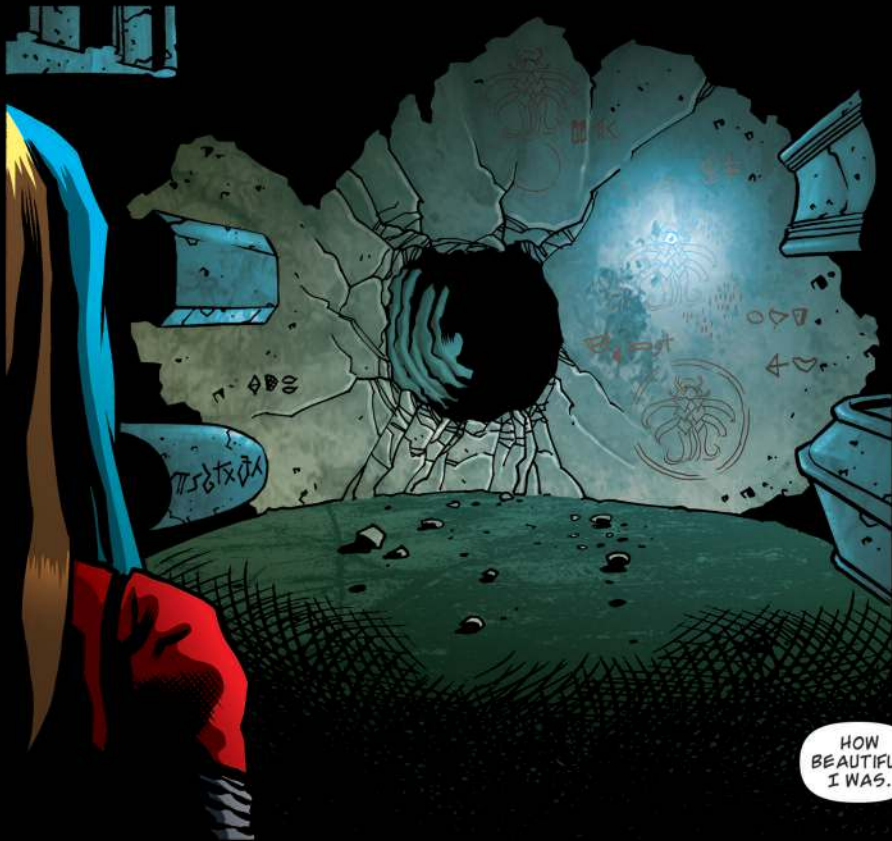
DOWN. ALL I KNOW IS, I MUST GO DOWN.



IS THIS HOME?




KAISTHSTAI, MY PETS. I WILL RETURN FOR YOU.




HOW BEAUTIFUL I WAS.

HOW YOUNG. HOW FREE.



WHICH BATTLE WAS THIS?
THERE WERE SO MANY. THE
VIOLENCE, IT NEVER CEASED.



THESE MILLENNIA OF VIBRANT
CHAOS, WHY DO THEY TASTE
BITTER NOW? SMALL.




THERE ARE NO ANSWERS
HERE. ONLY THE REEK OF
ROTTED GODS.

NOTHING BUT
DECAY AND ROT.










SUCH BURNING...

...I TASTE THE OTHER...

...OH, IT'S SWEET, IT'S...

...EVERYTHING, ALWAYS,
FOREVER...



...YOU AND...HIM? I...

...WE BECOME.

I HAVE ENDED.

I HAVE BEGUN.



WHAT IS MY PLACE? MY PLACE IS HERE.



I BELONG OUTSIDE, IN THE WORLD. I BELONG WHOLE.

ESTAYON, MY PETS. IT IS TIME TO LEAVE. WILL YOU JOIN ME?



MRRRM!

MRRRM!

I WILL GUIDE YOU WELL.





DEAD THINGS,
THAT NO LONGER
MATTER.



THAT'S ALL
WELL AND GOOD,
DEARIE, BUT WHAT
WAS IT I TOLD
YOU?



"DON'T TOUCH
ANYTHING!" THAT'S
WHAT I SAID! LOOKS LIKE
THERE'S BEEN A LOT
MORE THAN TOUCHING
GOING ON IN HERE!



CHRRRRRRMMMMBULLLEEEEE





FREE!

HUH.



FREE! AFTER UNTOLD CENTURIES OF FORCED SLUMBER, FINALLY TO BE FREE ONCE MORE!

HOLD... I SENSE A KINDRED... ANOTHER OF MY KIND...



YOU! ILLYRIA? CAN IT BE?



WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOU?? YOU... REEK OF HUMANITY.

I REMEMBER YOU AS WELL, ARSGOMOR. YOU WERE NEVER ABLE TO WREST MY LANDS FROM ME, TRY AS YOU MIGHT. AND I AM NOT WHAT I WAS.



BUT I AM STILL ABLE TO DISPATCH THE LIKES OF YOU!



KRAK

I DO NOT THINK SO, LITTLE GODLING.



WHATEVER YOU ARE NOW, YOU ARE CORRECT IN ONE THING: YOU ARE NOT WHAT YOU WERE.



WHAM

SO MUCH THE BETTER.





OLD ONE, THIS CANNOT BE ALLOWED. YOUR RESURRECTION SHOULD BE PROOF ENOUGH; THE TRAGEDY IT CREATED AND THE OTHER IT AVOIDED. BUT THAT... **THING** WILL CONSUME THE WORLD.

IT WAS FORTUNATE THAT YOU WERE CHANNIELED INTO SUCH A LESSER FORM. BUT THIS IS ALL THE TERRIBLE MIGHT AND UNSPEAKABLE POWER OF AN OLD ONE, UNDILUTED.



WHAT CAN BE DONE?

I DON'T KNOW. I...



CAN YOU FIGHT?

I CAN ALWAYS FIGHT.



WHAT I SHOULD ASK IS: CAN YOU CARE? CARE ENOUGH ABOUT THIS... NOW... TO DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE? TO MAKE A SACRIFICE?





I REMEMBER. AND THERE IS ONLY ONE ANSWER I CAN GIVE.

YES.



I HOPE YOU'VE LEARNED YOUR LESSON, LITTLE ONE. THIS IS NOT SOMETHING YOU CAN MERELY PUNCH INTO SUBMISSION AS YOU'RE ACCUSTOMED TO.



FOR ALL YOUR TALK ABOUT NOT BEING THE SAME PERSON ANY MORE, MAYHAP YOU SHOULD TRY NOT ACTING LIKE IT.

YOU... ARE NOT WRONG.



I WILL MAKE THIS RIGHT. YOU HAVE MY WORD.

YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN, MY DEAR. I HOPE YOU ARE READY.



FOR ALL OUR SAKES...



I FEEL SO DIFFERENT.
I HEAR... I FEEL...
I KNOW WHAT HE
SEEKS. I KNOW WHAT
HE WANTS.



OH...



NO...







AAIIIIOOOOOO!

NO. OH... NO.



GRIEF, YOU ACTUALLY CARE FOR THINGS NOW, LIKE A HUMAN. YOU ARE BENEATH MY NOTICE.



NO...





SO BROKEN.

FOR ME, IT ENDED. SHE ENDED. SHE HURT AND SACRIFICED. AND I FEEL...

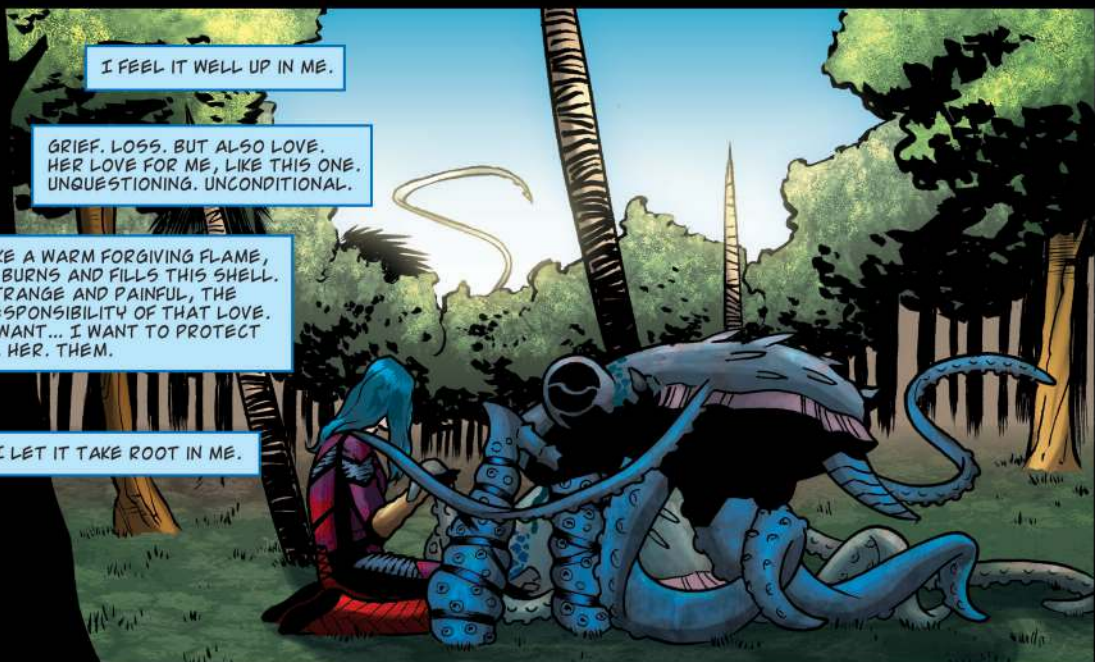


...I FEEL IT.

NOT A MEMORY OF GRIEF, NOT FROM ANOTHER. MINE. HER VOICE IS GONE. WHAT'S LEFT IS SHARP AND EMPTY AND SILENT.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR BRAVERY, KSARTHA.

I WILL TRY AND BE WORTHY.




I FEEL IT WELL UP IN ME.

GRIEF. LOSS. BUT ALSO LOVE. HER LOVE FOR ME, LIKE THIS ONE. UNQUESTIONING. UNCONDITIONAL.

LIKE A WARM FORGIVING FLAME, IT BURNS AND FILLS THIS SHELL. STRANGE AND PAINFUL, THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THAT LOVE. I WANT... I WANT TO PROTECT IT. HER. THEM.

I LET IT TAKE ROOT IN ME.



SO MANY VOICES. FROM MY FEET UP
TO THE TIPS OF MY FINGERS, I CAN
FEEL IT. THAT SHOCK OF LIFE. THE
ROOT THAT IS THE WORLD.

IT BREATHES WITH ME
FOR THIS MOMENT.

I HEAR IT SING, AND I
MUST ADD MY VOICE.

I LET IT RISE.





LET ME GO! THIS IS MY TIME! YOU HAVE NO RIGHT! I WAS FREE!

OUR TIME IS OVER. THE WORLD HAS MOVED ON.



IT'S NOT FAIR!

WE HAD OUR MILLENNIA. WE SHAPED OUR REALITY, WE HAD OUR GREAT WARS AND OUR SEAS OF BURNING DEATH.

WHAT WOULD YOU MAKE OF THIS WORLD THAT WAS NOT AN ATTEMPT TO RECLAIM THE PAST?



I ONCE FELT AS YOU DO.

I SOUGHT MY ARMY, MY SEAT OF POWER, MY OLD LIFE.

I FELT CHEATED. I FELT ALONE.



THEN WHY DO YOU KEEP ME HERE? WE COULD RULE IT TOGETHER, MAKE IT WHAT IT ONCE WAS.

YOU'RE ONLY SAYING THAT BECAUSE I HAVE YOU PINNED WITH TREES.

THERE IS NO GOING BACK. NOT FOR YOU. AND NOT FOR ME.



FWASH





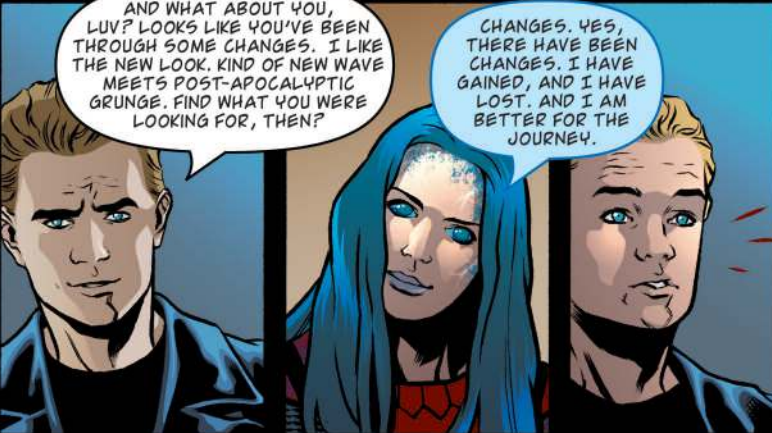
WELL, IF IT ISN'T THE BAD PENNY, TURNIN' UP AGAIN. I WAS JUST ABOUT TO HEAD OUT.



EHHHH... WHO'S THIS, THEN?

THIS IS... MY FRIEND.

HANDSOME FELLOW. BET HE'D BE TASTY WITH MARINARA SAUCE AND A LITTLE DRAWN BUTTER.



AND WHAT ABOUT YOU, LUV? LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH SOME CHANGES. I LIKE THE NEW LOOK. KIND OF NEW WAVE MEETS POST-APOCALYPTIC GRUNGE. FIND WHAT YOU WERE LOOKING FOR, THEN?

CHANGES. YES, THERE HAVE BEEN CHANGES. I HAVE GAINED, AND I HAVE LOST. AND I AM BETTER FOR THE JOURNEY.



HEH. THAT SOUNDS FAMILIAR. SOMEONE'S ACTUALLY LISTENIN' TO ME FOR A CHANGE!



YES. YOU SHOULD NOT GROW ACCUSTOMED TO IT.



HAH HAH! AND BIG BLUE MAKES A JOKE, EVEN! IT'S A BANNER DAY! COME ON, I'LL GIVE YOU AND ROVER A LIFT HOME.



I THINK I'LL WALK.

I'D TELL YOU TO WATCH OUT, BUT I THINK THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S MORE DANGEROUS WITH YOU IN IT.

ME, I'M LEAVIN' TOWN. OFF ON A SECRET MISSION. VERY HUSH-HUSH.



SAFE JOURNEY, SPIKE.

...THANKS. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, LUV.



WELL...



TIME, SPACE. IT OPENS FOR ME AGAIN. I SUSPECTED IT MIGHT.

...WHERE SHALL WE GO FIRST?



SO MANY ENDINGS.

EACH DAY, EACH HOUR.



I CAN STILL FEEL IT, THE GREEN, TINGLING AROUND ME. IT HUMS.

MRMMMPH.

INDEED. WHAT SHALL WE CALL YOU?



VERRMMLLLMMM?

YES, THINGS HAVE NAMES.

VSSSRCH.

I CANNOT CALL YOU "PANCAKES." IT'S NOT DIGNIFIED.



VSSSSSRCH!

OH, VERY WELL. YOU'VE EARNED IT. "PANCAKES" IT SHALL BE.

PRRRRRM.



I AM HER ENDING.

BUT SHE, AND I, AND HIM,
AND THEM... WE... MATTER.
WE LOSE, WE LOVE. AND IN
SO DOING... WE BECOME.

PRRRRRMMMMM...

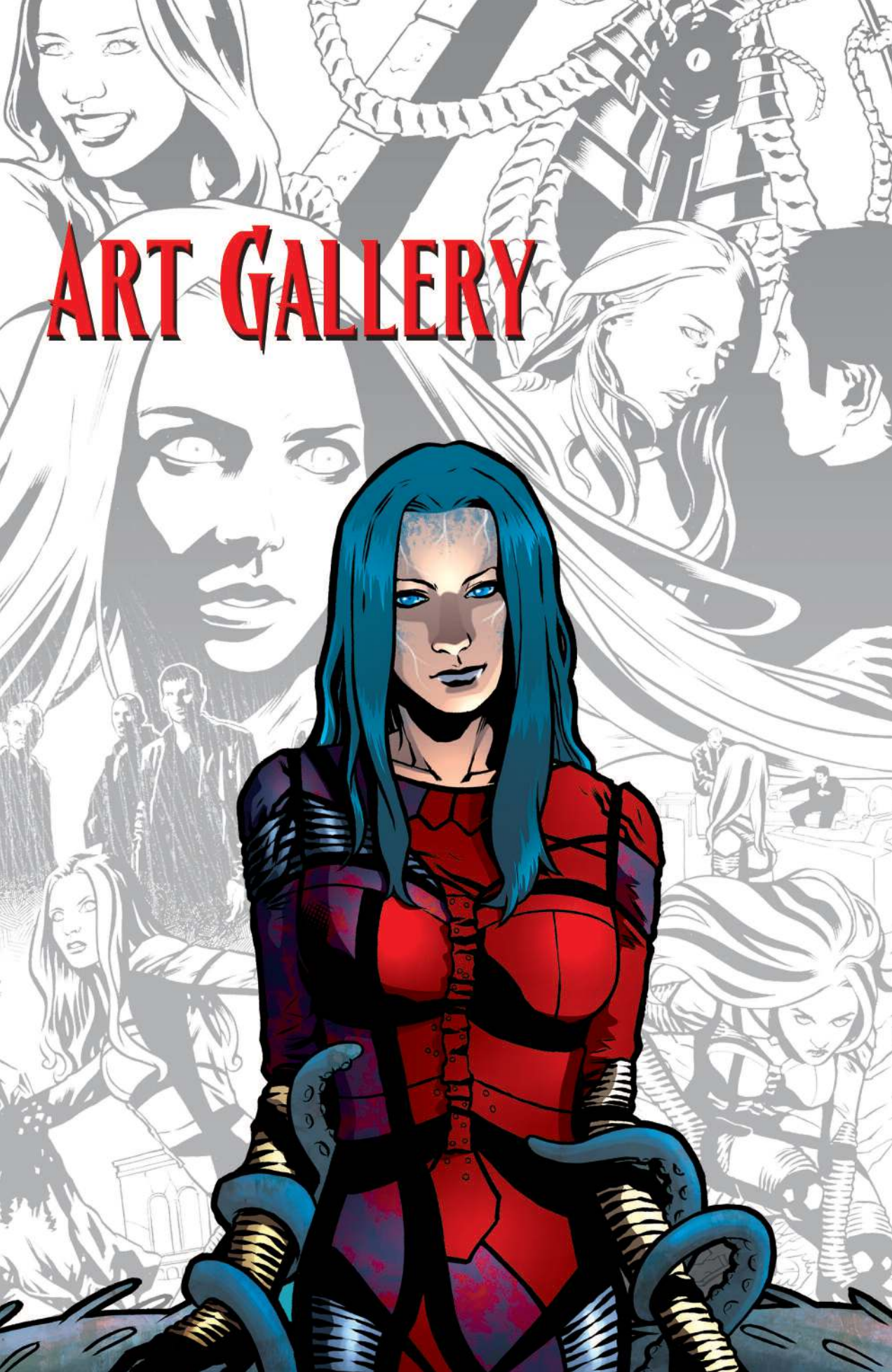
YES... THE
BREEZE IS SWEET.
AND WARM.

COME, MY
FRIEND. IT'S TIME
TO GO.

THE END.



ART GALLERY













art by Elena Casagrande

Elena Casagrande

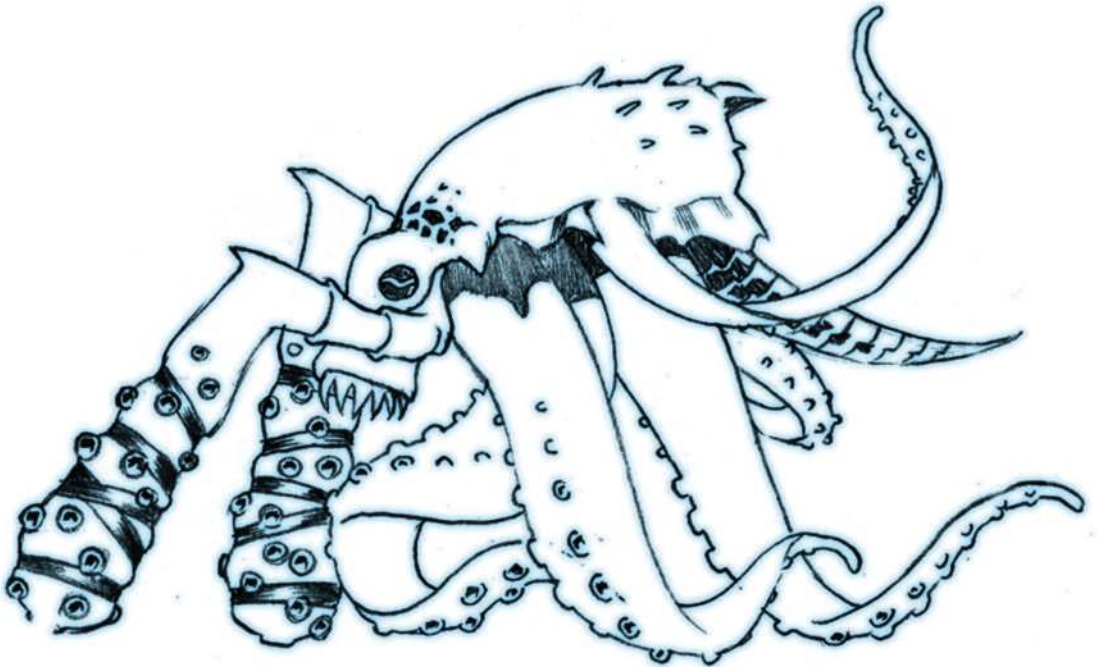
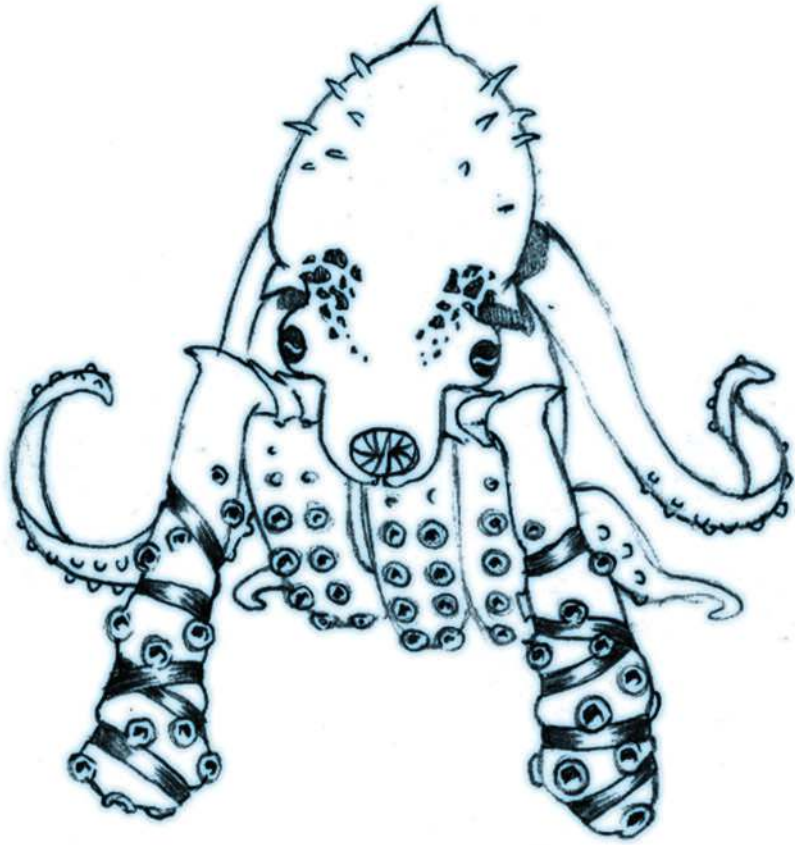


art by Jenny Frison



art by Elena Casagrande

Elena
2018






design sketch by Elena Casagrande



ANGEL
ILLYRIA
HAUNTED





Ancient. Alien. Illyria. Resurrected into the body of Winifred Burkle (and burning away all that she was in the process), Illyria remains one of the most mysterious creatures in the Angelverse. But when she seeks out answers to her existence, she must make her way back to The Deeper Well and confront her own demons, old and new.