

# THE WOODS™

JAMES TYNION IV • MICHAEL DIALYNAS • JOSAN GONZALEZ



VOL. 3  
NEW LONDON



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**BOOM!**™  
STUDIOS

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CHAPTER  
**NINE**



200 YEARS AGO.





MY GOD. MORE AFRICANS?

PERHAPS. BUT YOU KNOW THE LAWS OF INCORPORATION.



GENTLEMEN.

OUR LEADER, OUR DUKE, HE HAS BEGUN TO FASHION A CITY FOR ALL REFUGEES LIKE OURSELVES. MEN OF EARTH, BROUGHT TO THIS STRANGE PLACE.

WE HAVE BROUGHT MANY TRIBES AND PEOPLE TOGETHER. WE ARE BUILDING A HOME FOR OURSELVES HERE.



COME JOIN US. JOIN US IN NEW LONDON. LET US STAND TOGETHER AGAINST THE HORDE.



HER NAME IS LYDIA COLE... SHE IS A KILLER, AND A WITCH... SHE DID UNNATURAL THINGS WITH THE BLACK STONES IN THREE CAMPS ALREADY.





YOU'VE LOST YOUR CHANCE FOR THAT.



YOU WON'T STOP US.

YOU'RE ALL ALONE OUT HERE...



AM I?



THIS WORLD IS A WEAPON, SEEKING SOMEONE TO WIELD IT.

AND WIELD IT, I SHALL.



THEY ARE OFFERING US A PATH HOME. TO OUR TRUE HOME. NOT TO THE DUKE'S ABOMINATION OF A CITY.

LET THE COWARDS BURN. I WILL RISE.



AND BECOME SOMETHING FINER THAN YOU CAN COMPREHEND.



**NOW!**

OH GOD...WE'RE DEAD. DEAD DEAD DEAD. LIKE, TWENTY WHOLE DEADS ROLLED UP TOGETHER.



STOP IT, CALDER. WE CAN DO THIS. WE PROMISED.

KAREN, DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT A SINKBERRY LOOKS LIKE? BECAUSE I GOTTA SAY, I'M PRETTY SURE WE DIDN'T HAVE THOSE IN THE BACKYARD GROWING UP.

MREH



DO YOU KNOW WHAT A SINKBERRY IS, FELLA? CAN YOU HELP US FIND IT?

NO! WE NEED THAT! IT IS NOT A SNACK.



MA'AM, CAN YOU HELP US? WE'RE LOOKING FOR SINKBERRIES...

THE FINEST BERRIES FROM THE FINEST SINKS IN THE LANDS.

QUIET.



OH, GOODNESS, YOU'RE THE CHILDREN, AREN'T YOU? THE ONES THEY FOUND IN THE FOREST.

YES, WE ARE.

WELCOME TO NEW LONDON! THIS ISN'T EVEN A FRUIT STAND, DEARY. THESE ARE FOR YOUR SKIN. KEEP IT NICE AND YOUNG-LOOKING.

YOU HAVE YOUR AUDIENCE WITH THE DUKE TOMORROW, YES? YOU WANT TO LOOK NICE.



THANK YOU, BUT WE HAVE A LIST. WE'VE GOT TO STICK TO IT.

OKAY, IF I WAS A FRUIT STAND, WHERE WOULD I HIDE? WHAT WOULD MY MOTIVATION FOR HIDING BE? WHO WOULD I BE HIDING FROM?



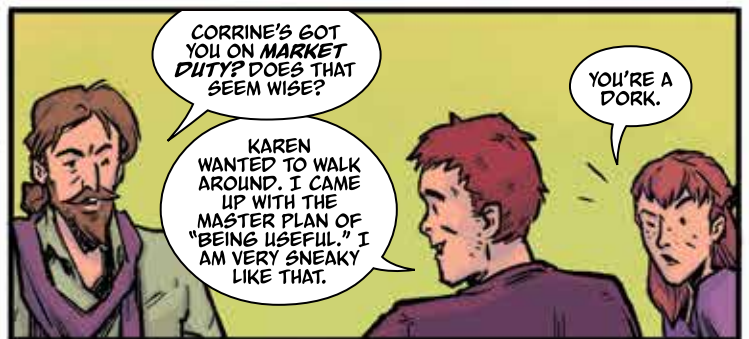
HEH.

COME ON, I'M SURE WE'LL FIND SOMETHING AROUND HERE.











HASTA LA VISTA, BABIES!

AH, SANDER. DELIGHTFUL. YOUR FATHER SHOULD BE HERE ANY MOMENT.



AM I DOING IT RIGHT?

NOPE. NOT EVEN A LITTLE BIT.



THEY'VE BEEN TEACHING ME ALL SORTS OF AMAZING THINGS, NIGEL...

THEY HAVE THESE BIG RECTANGLES, AND THEY PUT MACHINE PEOPLE IN THEM...

THEY'RE CALLED "MOVINGS." MOVIES.

RIGHT. WOW. IT'S AMAZING, ISN'T IT, NIGEL?



CERTAINLY. MOVING RECTANGLES. DELIGHTFUL.



YOU LOOK REALLY NICE TODAY, KAREN.

ME TOO.

I MEAN, YOU TOO.



COME ON. LET'S GET GOING, WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME.



SEE YOU AT DINNER, SANDER?

OF COURSE.



WHAT WAS IT YOU WANTED TO ASK ME?

IT'S...NOT IMPORTANT. LET'S GET THIS TAKEN CARE OF. GOTTA BE BACK BEFORE SANAMI AND BEN IRRITATE SANDY'S DAD TO DEATH.



YOU KNOW WHAT'S STRANGE? SO MUCH IS HAPPENING, AND HONESTLY WHAT I WANT MORE THAN ANYTHING IS JUST TO TEACH ENOUGH OF THESE PEOPLE HOW TO PLAY SOME REAL AMERICAN FOOTBALL.



AND YOU! YOU WON'T GET AWAY FROM ME THIS TIME, STONE!

LOOK AT YOU, YOU'LL KNOCK THESE BRITS FLAT ON THEIR ASSES.



IT'S STILL SUCH A RELIEF THAT YOU WERE ABLE TO MAKE IT HERE ON YOUR OWN.



I'M JUST GLAD THOSE HUNTERS FOUND YOU AND GOT YOU HERE SAFE AND SOUND.

I SAW SOME PRETTY HORRIBLE THINGS OUT IN THOSE WOODS.

SIR KENDRICK, YOU'RE A SAINT.



CASSIUS, PLEASE. I'M NO KNIGHT. JUST A HUNTER.

WE WERE JUST LUCKY THAT WE'D DECIDED TO GO SO FAR AFIELD FOR THE LATEST HUNT.



WELL, YOU ARE HELD IN HIGH RESPECT IN COURT, WITH THE DUKE, ESPECIALLY.

HM... THANK HIM FOR ME.

CHILDREN, I NEED TO GO. I WILL SEE YOU BACK AT THE HOUSE.



HAVE THEY BEEN TREATING YOU WELL? THE KENDRICKS?

THEY'VE BEEN WONDERFUL. I MEAN, I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED NOT TO WAIT TWO WEEKS TO SIT DOWN WITH THE DUKE...



WE'VE BEEN PLANNING A LOT. I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BEST TO LET YOU KIDS REST A BIT, NOT BOTHER YOU WITH THE NITTY GRITTY.

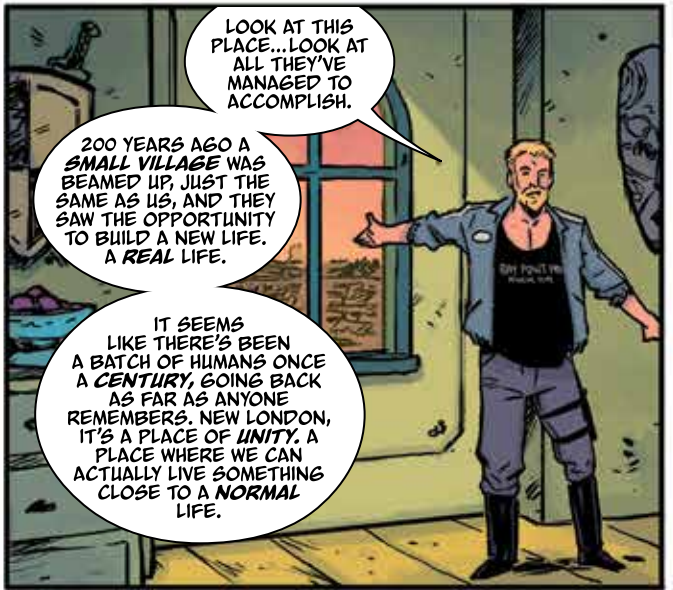
WE DON'T WANT TO BE LEFT OUT OF THIS, COACH CLAY...

OF COURSE NOT.



LOOK, I WANT TO LET YOU KNOW WHAT WE'RE THINKING, ME AND THE DUKE. THIS PLACE...IT HAS A **STANDING ARMY** OF ABOUT 200.

I'M GOING TO LEAD ALL OF THEM BACK, AND WE'RE GOING TO GET EVERYONE FROM THE SCHOOL AND TAKE THEM HERE. IT'S EVEN BETTER THAN WHAT WE **HOPED** WHEN THEY SENT ME OUT TO EXPLORE THE FOREST.



LOOK AT THIS PLACE...LOOK AT ALL THEY'VE MANAGED TO ACCOMPLISH.

200 YEARS AGO A **SMALL VILLAGE** WAS BEAMED UP, JUST THE SAME AS US, AND THEY SAW THE OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD A NEW LIFE. A **REAL LIFE**.

IT SEEMS LIKE THERE'S BEEN A BATCH OF HUMANS ONCE A **CENTURY**, GOING BACK AS FAR AS ANYONE REMEMBERS. NEW LONDON, IT'S A PLACE OF **UNITY**. A PLACE WHERE WE CAN ACTUALLY LIVE SOMETHING CLOSE TO A **NORMAL LIFE**.



AND JUST THINK, IN OUR LIBRARY WE HAVE BOOKS ON **ELECTRICITY, BASIC MECHANICS...** WE COULD HELP BRING A WHOLE NEW WAY OF LIFE HERE. A **MODERN LIFE**.

IT SOUNDS INCREDIBLE.

YEAH. IT SOUNDS GREAT.



GOD, I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE THEM ALL AGAIN...I CAN ONLY IMAGINE THE KIND OF **HEADACHES** MARIA IS GIVING PRINCIPAL BEAUMONT.

... SHE'S A REAL PAIN IN THE BUTT, THAT'S FOR SURE.



WHERE'S YOUR FRIEND? I THOUGHT THAT LITTLE **STAGE CREW KID** WAS SUPPOSED TO COME WITH YOU?

ISAAC?



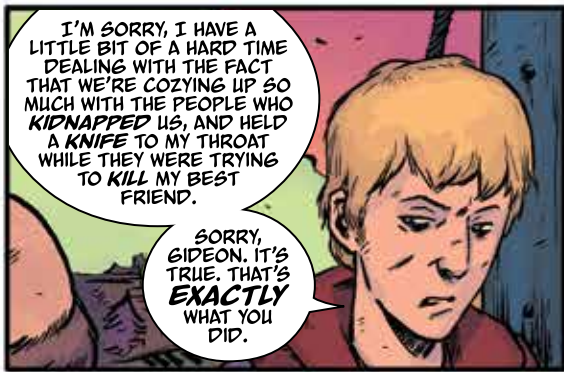
HE'S... HE'S COPING.



HE'S OUT THERE.

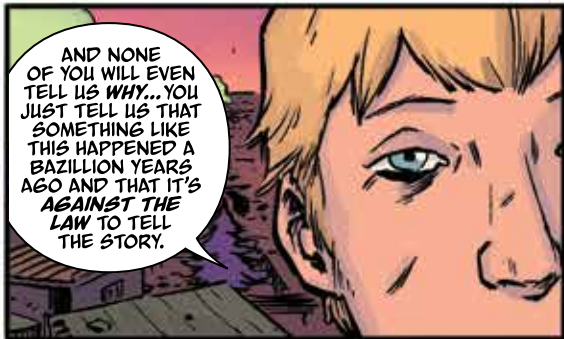
THAT'S WHAT'S DRIVING ME CRAZY. IT'S LIKE EVERYONE JUST FORGOT ABOUT HIM THE SECOND THEY HAD A BED, AND A HOT BATH, AND A HOME-COOKED MEAL.

THEY NEVER REALLY GAVE HIM A SECOND THOUGHT BEFORE, SO I GUESS IT MAKES SENSE...



I'M SORRY, I HAVE A LITTLE BIT OF A HARD TIME DEALING WITH THE FACT THAT WE'RE COZYING UP SO MUCH WITH THE PEOPLE WHO KIDNAPPED US, AND HELD A KNIFE TO MY THROAT WHILE THEY WERE TRYING TO KILL MY BEST FRIEND.

SORRY, GIDEON. IT'S TRUE. THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT YOU DID.



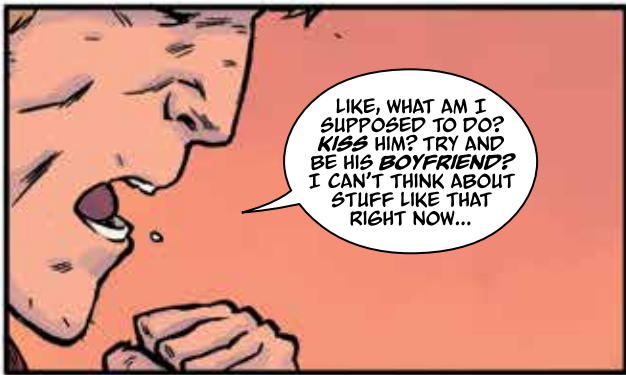
AND NONE OF YOU WILL EVEN TELL US WHY... YOU JUST TELL US THAT SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAPPENED A BAZILLION YEARS AGO AND THAT IT'S AGAINST THE LAW TO TELL THE STORY.



AND IT DOESN'T SEEM TO BOTHER ANY OF THEM! IT'S FREAKING INFURIATING!

THEY ALL JUST WANT NORMAL. THEY JUST WANT TO BE KIDS AND THINK ABOUT KID THINGS.

AND THEN THERE'S BEN...



LIKE, WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO? KISS HIM? TRY AND BE HIS BOYFRIEND? I CAN'T THINK ABOUT STUFF LIKE THAT RIGHT NOW...



"ALL I CAN THINK ABOUT IS ADRIAN, OUT THERE, ALONE, PLANNING SOMETHING.

"AND HONESTLY, I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO IF HE CAME BACK."



SO, TELL ME AGAIN... WHO WAS IT THEY ASSASSINATED?



THE ARCH-DUKE OF AUSTRIA.

HOW FASCINATING...

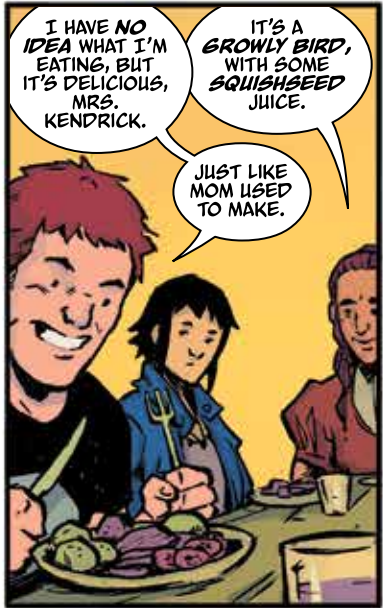
YOU CAN GRILL THEM LATER, CORRINE. LET THE CHILDREN ENJOY THEIR MEALS.



I JUST WANT TO SEE THE BOOKS... THEY SAID THERE WAS A LIBRARY, CASSIUS. A REAL LIBRARY WITH REAL BOOKS. SO MANY GAPS IN OUR HISTORY WE'LL BE ABLE TO FILL...

I KEEP PICTURING MYSELF SHELVING THEM DOWN IN THE OFFICES. GIVES ME TINGLES IN ALL THE RIGHT PLACES.

CORRINE... PLEASE.



I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'M EATING, BUT IT'S DELICIOUS, MRS. KENDRICK.

IT'S A GROWLY BIRD, WITH SOME SQUISHSEED JUICE.

JUST LIKE MOM USED TO MAKE.



MR. AND MRS. KENDRICK, I JUST WANT TO SAY HOW GRATEFUL WE ARE THAT YOU LET US STAY WITH YOU THESE LAST FEW WEEKS.

AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CITY GOVERNMENT, IT WAS MY PLEASURE. AS A HOST, HOWEVER...



OH, COME ON, YOU KNOW YOU LOVE US.

I AM SIMPLY TRYING TO FATTEN YOU UP. GET YOU ON THE NEXT DINNER TABLE.

I'VE OFTEN SUSPECTED THAT I MIGHT BE DELICIOUS.





I...ISAAC?



BEN, JUST GO TO SLEEP, OKAY? I'M NOT IN THE MOOD TO TALK.

I JUST WANT TO HELP.

THAT'S NOT *JUST* WHAT YOU WANT AT ALL.



...

HARSH, MAN.

HAVE YOU GUYS EVEN REALIZED THE FUNNIEST PART OF ALL OF THIS YET?



THEY DON'T KNOW *WHO* BROUGHT THEM HERE EITHER. 200 YEARS AND THEY'RE STILL IN THE DARK.

SAY WHAT YOU WILL ABOUT ADRIAN--

LIKE HOW HE'S A FREAKING *SOCIOPATH* WHO ALMOST LET YOU DIE?



SAY WHAT YOU WILL...

BUT HE WASN'T TRYING TO BUILD A *HOME*. HE WAS TRYING TO FIND A WAY BACK. HE WAS TRYING TO SAVE YOU ALL.

KEEP TELLING YOURSELF THAT, WHY DON'T YOU.



SHE SNUCK OUT, YOU KNOW...

SHE WENT UP TO HIS ROOM. TO TALK TO *HIM*. TELL HIM MORE STORIES.



...

JUST GO TO SLEEP, ISAAC.



I LOOK RIDICULOUS.

YOU ALWAYS LOOK RIDICULOUS.



HEY, WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM? YOU'VE BEEN ACTING WEIRD FOR DAYS.

NOT EVERYTHING IS ABOUT YOU, KAREN.



ISAAC, DIDN'T YOU GET THE NEW CLOTHES MRS. KENDRICK MADE YOU?

I WANTED TO WEAR THIS.



COME, CHILDREN. HE'S READY FOR US.



LOOKING SPIFFY, MR. K.

I'D FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE IN MY HELMET.

AH, YES. THE HORNED LOOK. A CLASSIC.

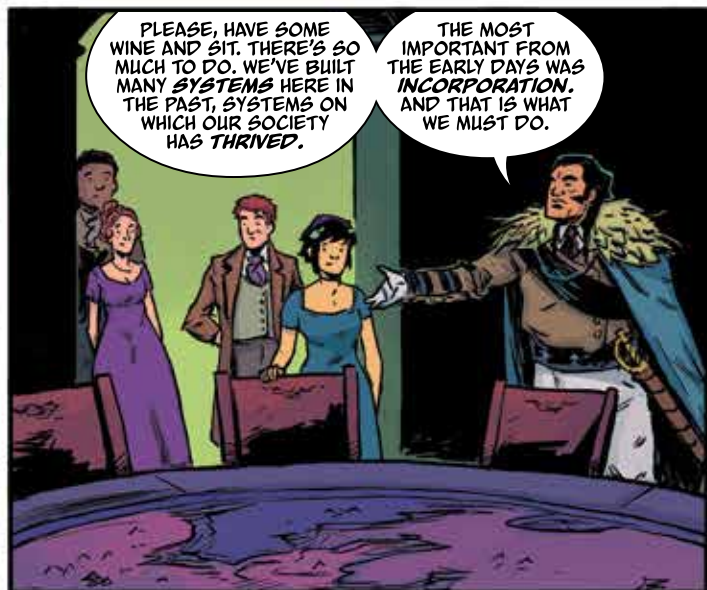


I'M SORRY, THAT ATTIRE WON'T BE ACCEPTABLE.

NEITHER WILL YOUR...AMUSING LITTLE COMPANION.



IT'S FINE. I'LL WAIT OUT HERE.







INCORPORATION, NIGEL. DID YOU HEAR THAT?

BLOODY INCORPORATION.



SETTLE, CASSIUS. WE'RE STILL IN THE CENTER RING. YOU DON'T WANT TO VOICE THIS TOO LOUDLY...

YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS, NIGEL. YOU KNOW **PRECISELY** WHAT THIS MEANS.



ENSLAVEMENT.



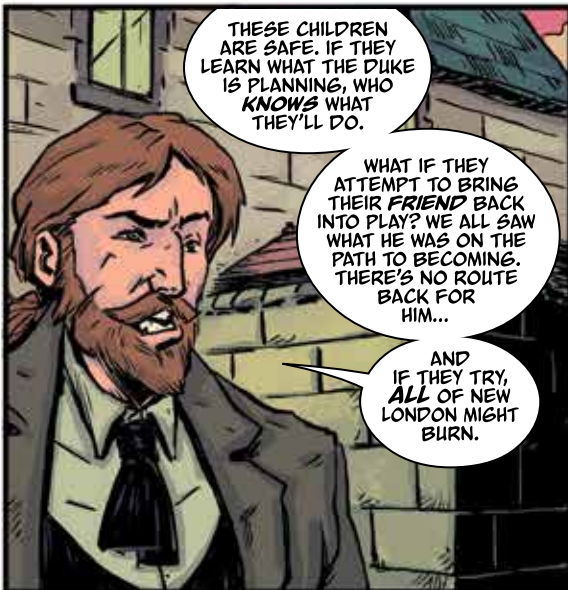
ALL THOSE CHILDREN... THEY'LL BE **CONSCRIPTED** TO WAR AGAINST THE HORDE. AND THOSE WHO CAN'T FIGHT WILL BUILD THEIR **WEAPONS**.

WHAT KIND OF LIFE IS THAT?



IF THEY TRIED IT WITH **SANDER**, I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO.

CASSIUS. CALM YOURSELF.



THESE CHILDREN ARE SAFE. IF THEY LEARN WHAT THE DUKE IS PLANNING, WHO **KNOWS** WHAT THEY'LL DO.

WHAT IF THEY ATTEMPT TO BRING THEIR **FRIEND** BACK INTO PLAY? WE ALL SAW WHAT HE WAS ON THE PATH TO BECOMING. THERE'S NO ROUTE BACK FOR HIM...

AND IF THEY TRY, **ALL** OF NEW LONDON MIGHT BURN.



THEY HAVE A CHANCE AT **NORMALCY** NOW. THEIR PEERS MIGHT NOT, NOT AT FIRST... BUT WHAT HOPE IS THERE TO FIGHT BACK?

YOU KNOW WE NEED TO KEEP THIS SECRET. LET THEM LIVE THEIR LIVES.

MREH.

NO, DOCTOR ROBOT. NOT NOW.





YOU FEAR ME, DON'T YOU?

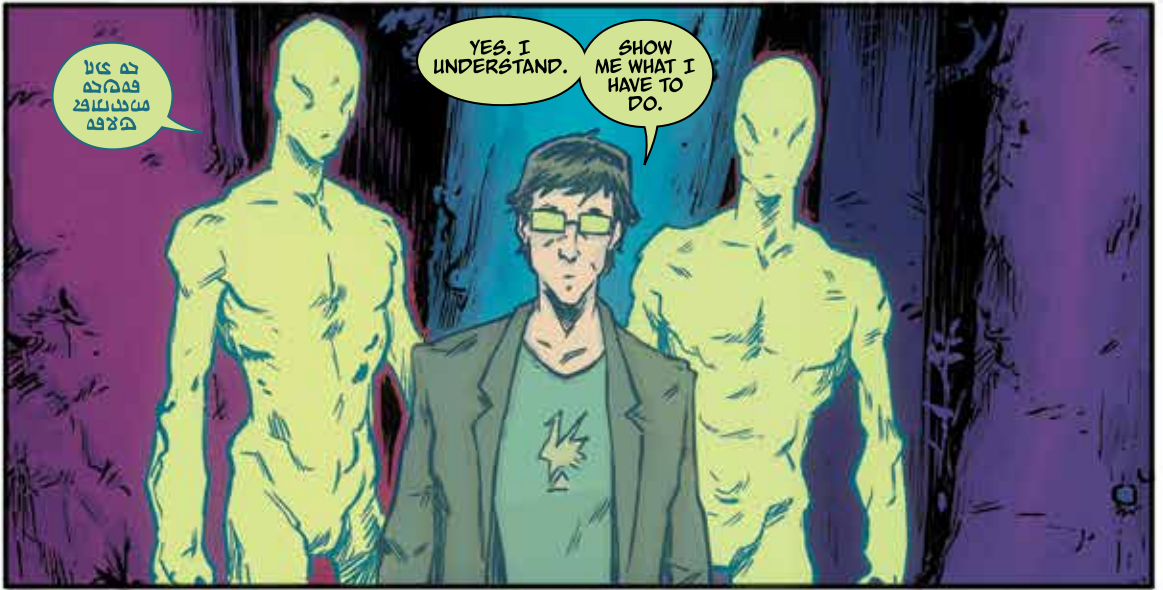
YOU KNOW I HAVE SEEN THE BLACK CITY IN MY MIND. I HAVE WALKED ITS STREETS AND LEARNED ITS SECRETS.



IT HAS CALLED TO ME, AND I WILL ANSWER.



AND I WILL TAKE US HOME.





CHAPTER  
**TEN**



200 YEARS AGO.  
NEW LONDON.



TO THINK I  
USED TO FIND  
THESE DAMNED  
THINGS  
BEAUTIFUL.

THE STRANGE GREEN LIGHT  
THAT CRACKED THROUGH THE  
SURFACE FROM TIME TO TIME...  
A WHISPER OF ARCAINE  
LIFE...

THE WAY LYDIA  
COULD MAKE THEM  
SPARK... THE  
SECRETS SHE  
STARTED TO  
TELL ME...



NO,  
THAT TIME  
IS OVER.



HOW MANY  
HAVE WE  
GATHERED?

SEVEN, MY  
LORD. FROM EACH  
OF THE SITES WE'VE  
INCORPORATED  
INTO OUR TERRITORY.  
WE HAD THE LOCALS  
DRAG THEM HERE, TO  
THE CITY CENTER.  
THEY'LL GO INTO  
THE CAVERNS  
BELOW.

AND THE  
SMITH... HAS HE  
COMPLETED THE  
DESIGN?





IT'S POSITIVELY MEDIEVAL, IF YOU ASK ME.

I DIDN'T.



LOCK THEM ALL AWAY. EACH ONE SHE TOUCHES MAKES HER STRONGER...IF SHE GETS HER HANDS ON THESE, OUR ARMY WON'T BE ABLE TO STOP HER.

GET THE MASONS HERE IMMEDIATELY. WE'LL BUILD THE TOWER HERE, UP AROUND THIS SUBSTRUCTURE. IT WILL NEVER GO UNGUARDED.



WHAT HAPPENED TO LYDIA MUST NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN.



I SEE.



SIRE...  
YOU MUST  
COME TO THE  
CITY WALLS  
AT ONCE...



THE FOREST...  
IT'S LIGHTING UP  
ALL AROUND  
US...

LIGHTING  
UP... I DON'T  
UNDERSTAND...



EYES, MY  
LORD.

THERE  
ARE GREEN EYES  
EVERYWHERE.



"MY GOD...SHE'S  
COME FOR THEM..."

"GET EVERYONE  
AWAKE. GIVE  
EVERYONE A  
WEAPON..."

"WE MUST  
GO TO  
WAR."



**NOW.**

CASSIUS... YOU NEED TO TELL US... WHAT ARE THE ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION?

**SIGH**  
IT STARTED WITH THE FIRST SIEGE... THAT'S WHEN WE KNEW WE WEREN'T ALONE IN THIS WORLD. THAT THERE WERE OTHER MEN LIKE US, AND THEY WERE NOT HERE TO MAKE PEACE.

WE HAD CENTURIES OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AT OUR BACK, AND WITH SOME GUNPOWDER AND A FEW TRICKS WE MANAGED TO SCARE THEM OFF THAT FIRST NIGHT.



"BUT THE FIRST DUKE, A MAN WHO HAD LIVED IN THE MANOR ON THE EDGE OF OUR VILLAGE. THE MAN WHO EMPLOYED MANY OF OUR ANCESTORS..."

"HE TOLD US WE NEEDED TO FIGHT BACK. WE NEEDED TO FIND OTHERS LIKE OURSELVES IN THESE STRANGE WOODS, AND DRAW THEM IN."



"IT STARTED WILLINGLY. A BRIEF MILITARY SERVICE UNDER HIS GUARD, AND THEY'D GET CITIZENSHIP, AND THE CHANCE TO HELP US BUILD A SOCIETY THAT COULD FIGHT BACK."



"THE LAWS WERE WRITTEN *STRICTER* THAN THEIR INTENT. THE LINE OF DUKES BEGAN TO TAKE THEM MORE AND MORE *LITERALLY*."

"OVER TIME... THE CITY FILLED, AND THE PROCESS BECAME LESS... *VOLUNTARY*."

"AND NOW THEY PLAN ON INCORPORATING YOUR SCHOOL... *BAY POINT*."

"THE FIRST LARGE-SCALE INCORPORATION IN DECADES."





SO, YEAH. TOTAL ENSLAVEMENT OF OUR FRIENDS AND TEACHERS. HOW DOES THAT SOUND TO THE REST OF YOU?

PRETTY NOT GREAT, RIGHT? I THINK WE'RE ALL IN AGREEMENT THAT THAT IS A NOT GREAT, GENERALLY TERRIBLE PROSPECT.



NOT GREAT MORE OR LESS COVERS IT. YEAH.



WE HAVE TO STOP THEM.

WELL, YEAH. OBVIOUSLY. BUT WHAT THE HELL ARE WE GOING TO DO? CLAY HAS CLEARLY GOTTEN THE DUKE ON HIS SIDE.

THEY'RE NOT GOING TO LISTEN TO A BUNCH OF ANGRY TEENAGERS.



CAN YOU HELP US?



WELL, THERE'S A--



**CORRINE.**  
THINK FOR A DAMN SECOND.  
REMEMBER WHO WE'RE TALKING ABOUT.

NO. WE CAN'T HELP YOU.



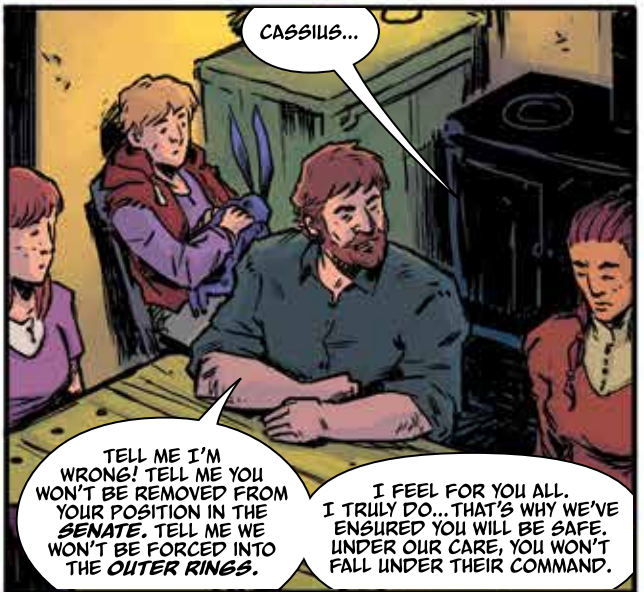
FATHER...



NO. I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS.



IF THE DUKE REVOKES OUR **HUNTING LICENSE...** WE LOSE OUR LIVELIHOOD. WE LOSE OUR HOME.



CASSIUS...

TELL ME I'M WRONG! TELL ME YOU WON'T BE REMOVED FROM YOUR POSITION IN THE SENATE. TELL ME WE WON'T BE FORCED INTO THE OUTER RINGS.

I FEEL FOR YOU ALL. I TRULY DO... THAT'S WHY WE'VE ENSURED YOU WILL BE SAFE. UNDER OUR CARE, YOU WON'T FALL UNDER THEIR COMMAND.



YOU'LL HAVE A LIFE HERE. A **GOOD LIFE.**

THERE ARE **HUNDREDS** OF KIDS AT BAY POINT... WE CAN'T JUST SIT HERE WASHING DISHES AND SELLING WEIRD BIRD MONSTERS AND PRETEND THIS ISN'T HAPPENING!



AND I CANNOT IGNORE **THEM, KAREN!** I WON'T HAVE MY CHILDREN THROWN OUT INTO THE WOODS TO DIE!



I KNOW HOW WE CAN STOP THEM.

HOW TO DO IT WITHOUT GETTING ANYONE HERE IN TROUBLE.



HOW?



ADRIAN. WE NEED TO GET ADRIAN BACK.



ISAAC... YOU'RE NOT THINKING...



THIS ISN'T JUST SOME KIND OF STUPID CRUSH THING! I... I KNOW WHAT HE DID TO ME... TO US... BUT HE HAS POWER. REAL POWER... POWER ENOUGH TO STOP THAT ARMY, MAYBE...

WE CAN'T TRUST HIM, ISAAC. I KNOW YOU WANT TO... BUT WE CAN'T.



WELL, THEN, WHAT IF WE GOT THAT POWER OURSELVES? ONE OF US... OR EVEN ALL OF US...

WOULD THAT WORK?

I THINK IT COULD...



CORRINE... DOES THIS PLACE HAVE A STONE... A BLACK, JAGGED ROCK. SOMETHING THAT GLOWS GREEN IN ITS SEAMS?

I... I...



THIS CONVERSATION IS OVER.

IT'S BEEN DECADES SINCE NEW LONDON HAS USED THE ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION... THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE I WAS SIMPLY MISTAKEN ABOUT THEIR INTENT.



CORRINE... I HAVE TO SEE TO THE STABLES. GET THIS LOT TO BED.



DO YOU REMEMBER THE HAYASHI SIEGE?



I WAS ONLY SEVEN, BUT I REMEMBER. CLEARLY YOU'VE FORGOTTEN.

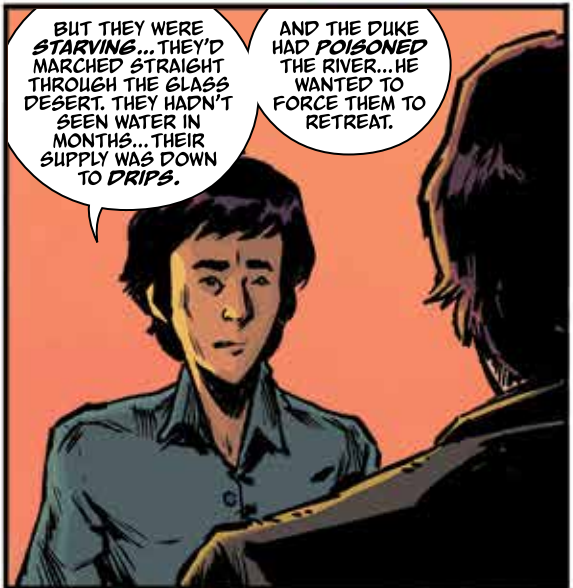
SANDER, PLEASE.



YOU DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS COMING, HOW COULD YOU? YOU WERE JUST TAKING YOUR KID OUT FOR THEIR FIRST HUNT. YOU DIDN'T KNOW THE HORDE WOULD ATTACK THE CITY. NOT THEN.

I WAS SO HAPPY, I GOT THREE PANTHERDOVES IN ONE AFTERNOON. WE WERE RIDING BACK TO THE CITY...AND THERE, WE SAW THEM...

AN ARMY THE SIZE OF THE CITY ITSELF, WRAPPED AROUND IT. CLAMORING AT THE GATES.



BUT THEY WERE STARVING...THEY'D MARCHED STRAIGHT THROUGH THE GLASS DESERT. THEY HADN'T SEEN WATER IN MONTHS...THEIR SUPPLY WAS DOWN TO DRIPS.

AND THE DUKE HAD POISONED THE RIVER...HE WANTED TO FORCE THEM TO RETREAT.



WE WAITED IN THE TREELINE FOR HOURS...AND THAT'S WHEN WE SAW THEM. TWO DESERTERS. THEIR MOUTHS WERE CHAPPED AND BLEEDING. THEY WERE DELUSIONAL.

YOU TOLD ME TO WAIT, AND YOU WENT DOWN TO THEM. THEY COULDN'T LIFT THEIR RIFLES. THEY COULDN'T DO ANYTHING.

I WAITED FOR YOU TO PULL YOUR KNIFE...BUT INSTEAD YOU PULLED OUT OUR FLAGON.



WHEN THE WATER TOUCHED THEIR LIPS, THEY CRIED. YOU GAVE THEM ONE OF THE PANTHERDOVES AND YOU TOLD THEM WHICH WAY TO RUN.

...THEY WOULD HAVE DIED IF I HADN'T.

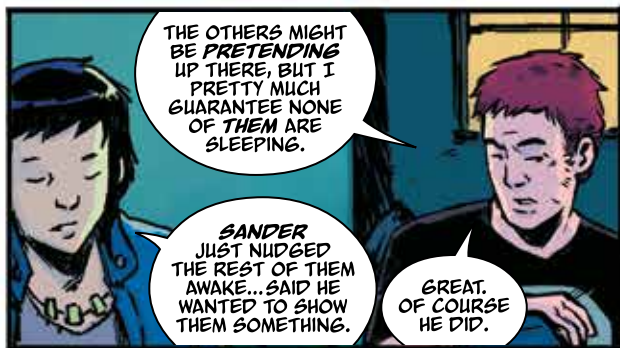


AND YOU WOULD HAVE, TOO, IF THE DUKE HAD FOUND OUT.

THAT WAS THE NIGHT I THOUGHT I LEARNED THE STUFF MY FATHER WAS MADE OF.



CAN'T SLEEP, HUH?



THE OTHERS MIGHT BE *PRETENDING* UP THERE, BUT I PRETTY MUCH GUARANTEE NONE OF THEM ARE SLEEPING.

*SANDER* JUST NUGGED THE REST OF THEM AWAKE... SAID HE WANTED TO SHOW THEM SOMETHING.

GREAT. OF COURSE HE DID.



HERE. BE VERY VERY QUIET. FULL-ON *ELMER FUDD*.

WHAT?

JUST SHUT UP. DO YOU HEAR THAT?



THAT THUDDING...

THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN *TWO HUNDRED SOLDIERS* ARMED TO THE TEETH MARCH IN UNISON. ASK THE CALDER OF SIX WEEKS AGO, AND HE'D HAVE TOLD YOU THAT HE THOUGHT IT SOUNDED *ROMANTIC*.

OR, I MEAN, HE MIGHT HAVE CALLED IT TOTALLY FREAKING *BAD-ASS*. BUT THE MEANING WOULD BE THE SAME.



NOT A LOT OF ROMANCE TO IT NOW.

NOT A LOT OF ROMANCE *ANYWHERE* 'ROUND THESE PARTS.



COME TAKE A WALK WITH ME.

HUH? DON'T YOU HATE ME OR SOMETHING? I AM PRETTY SURE YOU TRIED TO *MURDER ME* WITH A FIELD HOCKEY STICK ONCE UPON A TIME.



YOU GOING TO TAKE YOUR *CLOTHES* OFF AGAIN?

ONLY IF COMMANDED TO DO SO.



OWW! THAT HURT.

GOOD. NOW COME. I THINK BOTH OF US NEED TO CLEAR OUR MINDS A BIT.



I FEEL LIKE THERE SHOULD PROBABLY BE SOME DANCING AND SINGING SILVERWARE AND A TALKING CLOCK TO GO ALONG WITH THIS PLACE.

TALKING CLOCKS?

IT'S FROM A MOVIE. IT DOESN'T MATTER.



LOOK AT THIS...



HEH, I THINK MY MOM'S READ THAT ONE BACK TO BACK A FEW HUNDRED TIMES. THERE'S NOT A WHOLE LOT OF FICTIONAL STORIES FROM THE OLD WORLD.



HAVE YOU HEARD OF IT?



I'VE SEEN THE BBC MINISERIES, BUT MY MOM NEVER LET ME WATCH THE KEIRA KNIGHTLY VERSION.



MREH?



SOMEHOW IT'S COMFORTING TO KNOW THAT IT'S POPULAR WITH MOMS ON BOTH ENDS OF THE UNIVERSE...



SANDER, THIS PLACE IS BEAUTIFUL.



THANK YOU FOR SHOWING US THIS.

WELL, OF COURSE... BUT... THIS ISN'T WHY WE CAME HERE.



I THINK IT'S TIME YOU GUYS UNDERSTOOD WHAT YOU'RE FACING...



WOW.  
LOOK AT  
THIS...

DO  
YOU THINK  
THEY'RE **FRUIT**  
OF SOME  
KIND?

I DON'T  
KNOW, BUT  
GIVEN OUR **TRACK**  
**RECORD** ON THIS  
PLACE, IT'S MOST  
LIKELY SOME KIND  
OF EXPLODING  
GLOWING **DEATH**  
THING.



THAT'D  
BE SO COOL.  
A TREE WITH  
**GRENADE**  
**FRUITS**.

COME  
ON. WE  
NEED TO BE  
FASTER...



SO, THIS  
ISN'T JUST A  
PLEASANT  
EVENING  
STROLL?

NO. OF  
COURSE  
NOT.



WE'RE GOING  
TO STEAL  
OURSELVES A  
**DRAGON**.





THE BLACK CITY?

I REMEMBER THAT FIRST NIGHT YOU GUYS GOT HERE... YOU WERE SO TIRED AND UPSET, AND YOU DIDN'T REALLY UNDERSTAND THAT WE WEREN'T TRYING TO HURT YOU YET.



BUT YOU WERE THE ONE WHO ASKED US. BECAUSE WE'D BEEN HERE FOR SO MANY YEARS... WHO BROUGHT US HERE? WHY ARE WE HERE?



AND YOU SAID YOU DIDN'T KNOW.

BUT THE BLACK STONES KNOW... THERE'S ONE AT EVERY LANDING SITE... ONE EVERY PLACE OUR SPECIES HAS BEEN TAKEN TO ON THIS WORLD.

WHY?

THEY'RE TRYING TO TELL US WHY WE'RE HERE... THEY'RE TRYING TO GUIDE US TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD.



THEY'RE TRYING TO TAKE US TO THE BLACK CITY.

ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE GLOBE... THERE'S A HUGE, TOWERING CITY OF OBSIDIAN, GLITTERING WITH GREEN LIGHTS.

EVERY TWENTY YEARS, NEW LONDON HAS SENT A PARTY TO INVESTIGATE. ONLY ONCE HAS SOMEONE RETURNED...



HIS EYES GLOWED BRIGHT GREEN...SO DID HIS BLOOD, THROUGH HIS SKIN... BUT HE COULDN'T SPEAK...ALL THAT WAS LEFT IN HIM WAS SCREAMS.

HE ENDED UP RIPPING OPEN HIS WRISTS, TRYING TO BLEED THE ESSENCE OF THE BLACK CITY OUT OF HIMSELF...



WHEN THEY DID THE AUTOPSY...HIS BRAIN...IT WASN'T HUMAN ANYMORE.



IS THAT...IS THAT WHAT HAPPENS WITH THE STONES? WHEN YOU START TALKING TO THEM?

AS FAR AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, YES.



THEY WANT US TO BE SOMETHING WE'RE NOT. SOMETHING WE CAN NEVER BE...AND INEVITABLY IT DESTROYS US.

THAT'S WHY YOU CAN'T LET YOURSELF PLAY WITH THAT POWER. THAT'S WHY MY FATHER TRIED TO END YOUR FRIEND'S LIFE.



IT WASN'T MALICE. IT WAS MERCY.

BECAUSE HE'S ON THE PATH TO DEATH'S DOOR EITHER WAY.



ISAAC!



I'M SORRY, KAREN. I JUST NEEDED TO SHOW YOU WHY IT WAS HOPELESS. I WANT TO HELP YOU GUYS...

I WANT TO HELP YOU, ESPECIALLY. I JUST DON'T KNOW HOW.



SANDER...

YOU REALLY THINK WE DIDN'T HAVE A PLAN THE SECOND WE WALKED AWAY FROM THAT DINNER TABLE?



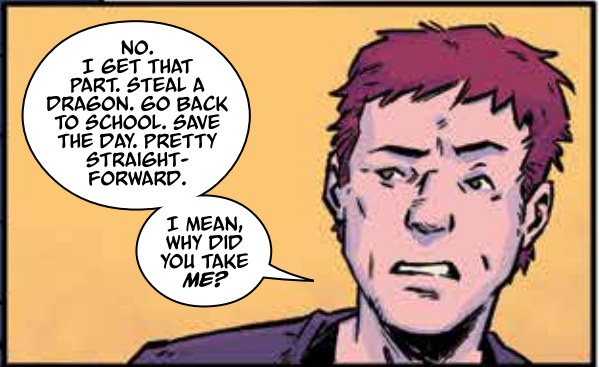
SO, I AM GUESSING I MISSED THE EPISODE ON DISCOVERY. THE ONE WHERE YOUR DAD TOLD YOU HOW TO RIDE A SPACE DRAGON.



YEP. IT WAS A BIG RATINGS HIT.

I STILL DON'T GET IT.

I GRABBED A MAP... I'M PRETTY SURE I CAN FIND THE SCHOOL WITH IT...



NO. I GET THAT PART. STEAL A DRAGON. GO BACK TO SCHOOL. SAVE THE DAY. PRETTY STRAIGHT-FORWARD.

I MEAN, WHY DID YOU TAKE ME?



SHE TOLD ME TO.



HUH?

KAREN. SHE SAID THAT YOU WERE THE GUY WE COULD RELY ON MOST TO DO SOMETHING CRAZY, BUT THAT YOU'D DO ANYTHING IN YOUR POWER TO KEEP US SAFE.



I TOLD HER SHE WAS NUTS, BY THE WAY.

BUT SHE INSISTED.



WELL, PLUS, THIS WAY SHE GETS TO HANG OUT WITH SANDER PLENTY WITHOUT ANYONE TO BOTHER HER.

YEAH. MAYBE.

BUT STIFF UPPER LIP. WE'VE GOT WORK TO DO.



DO YOU, NOW?

CASSIUS?



I HAD A FEELING I OUGHT NOT HAVE SHOWN YOU THIS PLACE... THE DRAKOPTERA DON'T LIKE STRANGERS.

THEY SEEM TO LIKE US JUST FINE.



WHO IS A PRETTY DRAGON?

WHRRREEEE

YES, I TOO AM A PRETTY DRAGON.



GET BACK TO THE HOUSE.

WAIT...



YOU HAVE YOUR SADDLES.

GO HOME, SANAMI.



IN THE TIME YOU'VE KNOWN ME, HAS THERE EVER BEEN ANY INDICATION THAT YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO CHANGE MY MIND IN A MOMENT LIKE THIS?

YOU WERE GOING TO GO WITHOUT US.



... WE NEED TO BE QUICK.



SUH...  
OH  
GOD...



≡PANT≡  
≡PANT≡  
ISAAC...  
ARE YOU  
O--



WHY  
IS THIS ALL  
HAPPENING?



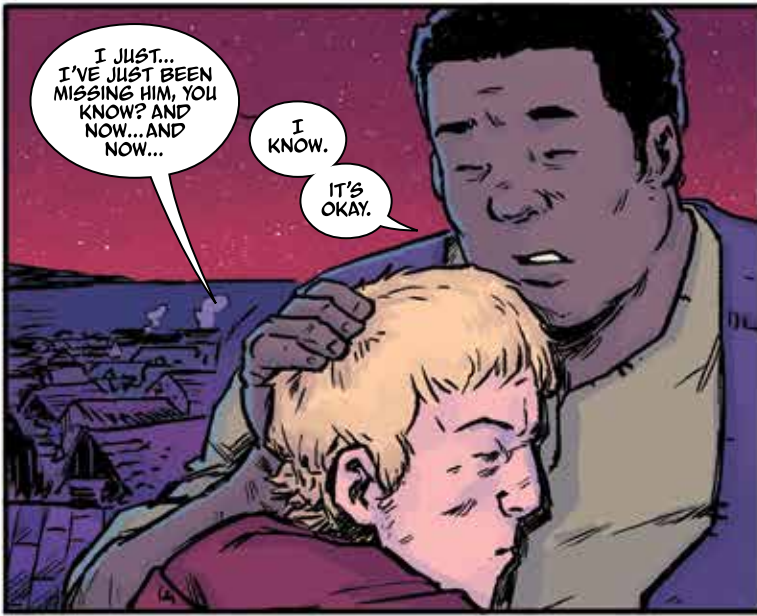
I JUST... I KNOW  
WE'VE **LOST** HIM.  
HE'S SOMETHING  
ELSE NOW... AND  
MAYBE HE NEVER  
EVEN WAS THE GUY  
I THOUGHT HE  
WAS.  
  
MAYBE...  
MAYBE HE  
WANTED **THIS**  
MORE THAN HE  
EVER CARED  
ABOUT ME.



IT...  
IT'S  
GOING TO  
BE ALL  
RIGHT.



I'M  
SORRY.  
  
I'VE BEEN  
SUCH A  
JERK. I'M  
SO SORRY.



I JUST... I'VE JUST BEEN MISSING HIM, YOU KNOW? AND NOW... AND NOW...

I KNOW.

IT'S OKAY.



WHAT?



OH... OH, I'M SORRY.



NO. THAT'S NICE. KEEP DOING THAT.

OKAY.



I JUST THOUGHT I SAW SOMETHING, ON THE EDGE OF THE FOREST...



IT LOOKED LIKE A BUNCH OF EYES.

GLOWING GREEN EYES...



mumble

DON'T WORRY, DEAR. I'LL SLEEP SOON.



THIS LINE... WE'VE HAD TO DO SUCH TERRIBLE THINGS, JUST TO KEEP THE PROMISE... THE PROMISE OF KEEPING OUR PEOPLE ALIVE.



NO MATTER THE COST.



THE DUKE AND DUCHESS BERTRAM AND LYDIA COLE



SIR... SOMETHING'S HAPPENING ON THE EDGE OF THE FOREST.



THERE ARE EYES... BURNING A BRIGHT GREEN... SIR, WE'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.





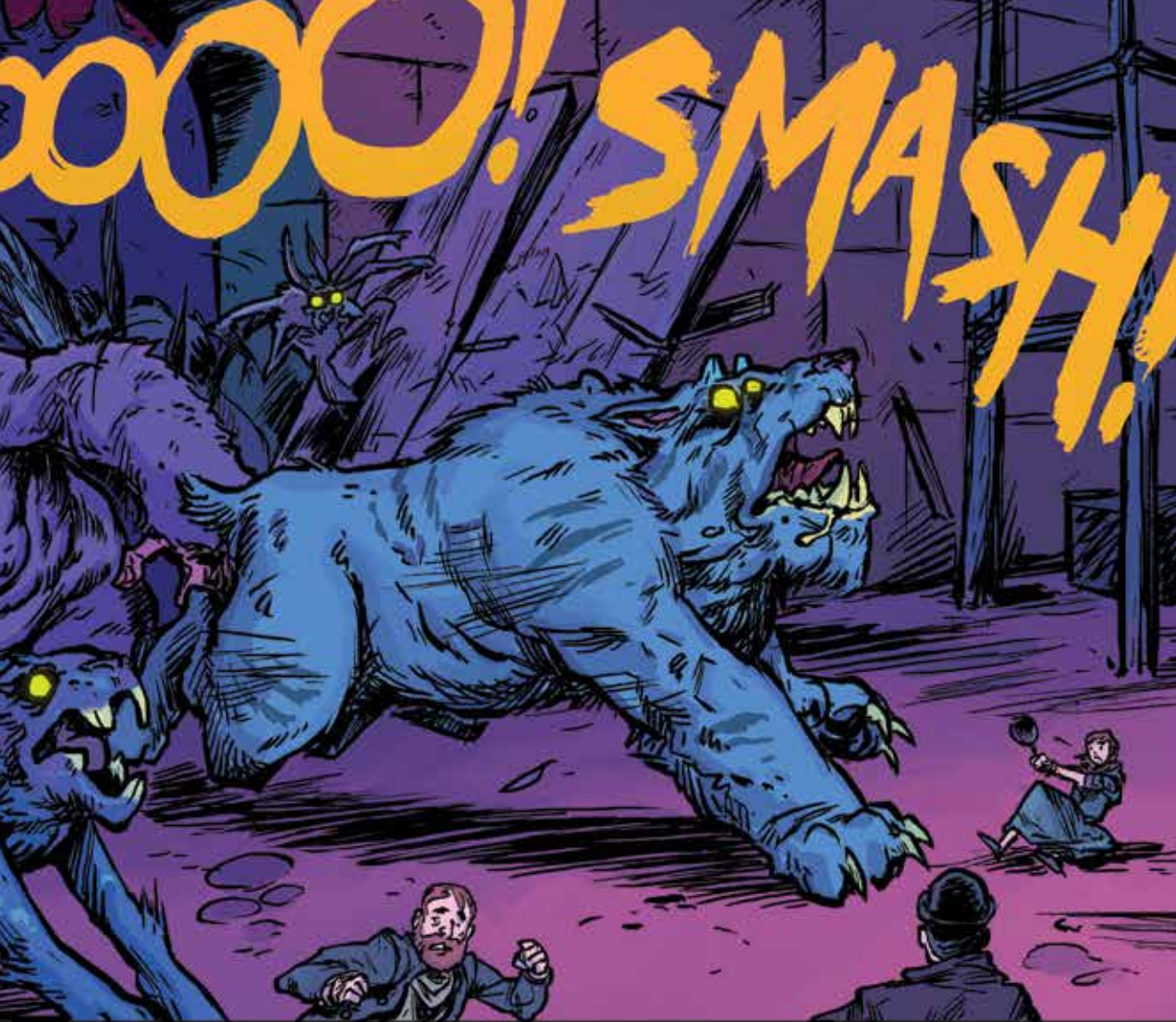
CHAPTER  
**ELEVEN**



200 YEARS AGO.







LYDIA...



WHAT HAVE YOU BECOME?



OUR SALVATION.



**NOW.**

"IT FELT LIKE THE END OF THE WORLD. I SWEAR TO GOD."



BACK IN THE LIBRARY?

WHAT? NO. I MEAN BEFORE. BEFORE ALL OF THIS STUFF.



I'VE AUDITIONED FOR EVERY SCHOOL PLAY SINCE I WAS ONLY A FRESHMAN. NEVER GOT IN, NOT ONCE.

HELL, I EVEN JOINED THE SCHOOL CHORUS BECAUSE I KNEW MRS. DEWEY WAS ALWAYS WAY MORE PARTIAL TO HER STUDENTS, BUT SHE NEVER GOT MY NAME RIGHT.

I WAS LIKE A FOOT SHORTER AND SHE ALWAYS PUT ME IN BACK, YOU KNOW?



BUT STILL, I GOT BETTER. AND THIS YEAR THEY WERE DOING ONE OF MY FAVORITE SHOWS... URINETOWN. AND I WANTED IT SO BADLY.

THAT'S A MUSICAL?

HEH. NOT IMPORTANT. BUT I SANG MY HEART OUT AT THE AUDITION. AND HECK, IT EVEN GOT MR. LEADING MAN HIMSELF KEN TURNER TO LOOK UP FROM HIS CELL PHONE.



I WAS SO SURE. SO FREAKING SURE. BUT THE LIST WENT UP THE MORNING WE ALL CAME HERE. AND MY NAME WASN'T ON IT. NOWHERE.

I THINK I CRIED IN THE BATHROOM FOR AN HOUR. MISSED A WHOLE CLASS AND A HALF.

I'M SORRY...



IT'S JUST SO FREAKING RIDICULOUS, IS WHAT IT IS! I MEAN...LIKE, I NEVER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT HURTING MYSELF, BUT I WANTED TO BE THE KIND OF PERSON WHO DID IN THAT MOMENT...DOES THAT MAKE SENSE?

LIKE, WHAT WAS THE POINT OF ANY OF THIS IF I WASN'T GOING TO FINALLY BECOME THE PERSON I WANTED TO BE?



HA!

DON'T LAUGH! I'M BEING SERIOUS.

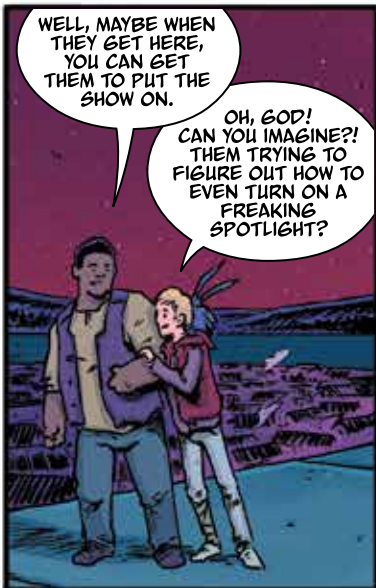


ISAAC, YOU'VE HAD A KNIFE AT YOUR THROAT. YOU'VE HAD YOUR LEG RIPPED OPEN BY A WEIRD CRAZY ALIEN THING. A WHOLE ARMY IS OUT THERE TO TURN OUR WHOLE SCHOOL INTO A WEIRDO SLAVE ARMY, AND YOUR BEST FRIEND IS TURNING INTO A DEMON SPACE ROBOT.

AND HERE YOU ARE, AT THE END OF SPACE AND TIME, AND YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT URINETOWN?



PRIORITIES REALLY HAVE SHIFTED, HUH?



WELL, MAYBE WHEN THEY GET HERE, YOU CAN GET THEM TO PUT THE SHOW ON.

OH, GOD! CAN YOU IMAGINE?! THEM TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO EVEN TURN ON A FREAKING SPOTLIGHT?



WELL, YOU'D HAVE TO SCHEDULE REHEARSALS IN BETWEEN THEIR MILITARY EXERCISES.

NO, GOD... STOP. IT HURTS. IT HURTS.

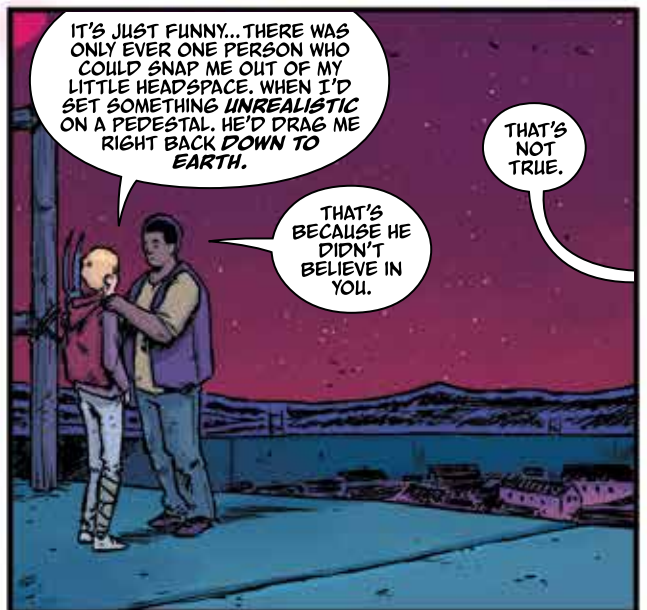


... YOU'RE PRETTY GREAT. DO YOU KNOW THAT?



I... UH...

NO, YOU DON'T KNOW THAT. BUT YOU ARE.



IT'S JUST FUNNY...THERE WAS ONLY EVER ONE PERSON WHO COULD SNAP ME OUT OF MY LITTLE HEADSPACE. WHEN I'D SET SOMETHING UNREALISTIC ON A PEDESTAL, HE'D DRAG ME RIGHT BACK DOWN TO EARTH.

THAT'S BECAUSE HE DIDN'T BELIEVE IN YOU.

THAT'S NOT TRUE.



IT'S BECAUSE I KNEW WHAT WAS REALLY IMPORTANT, AND WHAT WASN'T.



ADRIAN... HOW...

STAY BACK...



NO, BEN... I THINK YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S GOING TO STEP BACK RIGHT NOW.



THE BELLS YOU'RE HEARING, IT'S THE ALARM... CREATURES ARE SURROUNDING EVERY GATE OF THE CITY... THEY'RE GETTING READY FOR WAR. WAR AGAINST ME.

THEN WHY ARE YOU HERE?



THAT'S SOMETHING THAT'S JUST BETWEEN THE TWO OF US.

ADRIAN... PLEASE. DON'T HURT HIM.

I'LL COME WITH YOU. JUST DON'T HURT HIM.



OKAY. BUT HE STAYS HERE.



WHERE ARE WE GOING?

WE'VE COME A LONG WAY FROM BAY POINT, ISAAC... WE ONLY HAVE A LITTLE BIT FURTHER TO GO.



EVERYONE'S  
IN PLACE.

WHAT'S  
WRONG, MARIA?  
YOU LOOK  
DISTRACTED.

THE  
GROUND...IT'S  
SHAKING  
AGAIN...



IT'S JUST IN  
YOUR HEAD, MARIA.  
YOU'RE JUST  
NERVOUS THIS  
WON'T WORK.

OF COURSE  
I'M NERVOUS THIS  
WON'T...LOOK,  
JUST GIVE THE  
SIGNAL. TELL THEM  
TO RIDE.



COME  
ON...COME  
ON...COME  
ON...



YES.

YES!!



"I PRESENT  
TO YOU,  
DINNER."




...POSITIVELY  
DELECTABLE.

MR. KEARNS  
WAS ABLE TO HOOK  
UP THE EXERCISE  
BIKES TO THE  
SPOTLIGHTS...  
THANKS FOR HELPING  
ORGANIZE THAT,  
KAYLA... WE CATCH  
THEM WITH A  
NET.

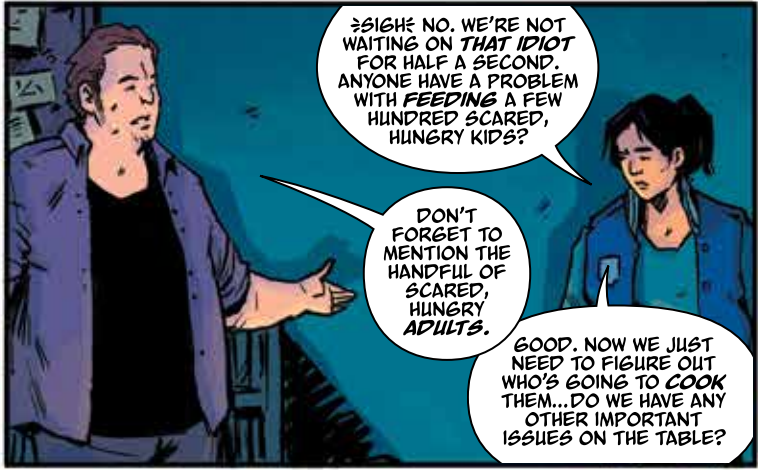
JUST  
THIS ONE GO  
AND WE GOT  
150 OF  
THEM.

THEY'RE  
PRACTICALLY THE  
SIZE OF A LOBSTER,  
AND THE FEW PEOPLE  
WHO'VE TRIED THEM  
SAY THEY TASTE  
WEIRDLY LIKE TURKEY.  
LIKE A CRAB,  
TURKEY, MOTH  
THING...



IT'S NOT ENOUGH,  
BUT THE **BIGGER** THINGS  
ARE STAYING FURTHER  
AWAY NOW...UNTIL WE'RE  
CONFIDENT WE CAN  
ACTUALLY GO HUNT, THIS  
IS GOING TO WORK.

SHOULD WE  
PUT IT TO A VOTE?  
OR DO WE NEED TO  
WAIT FOR OUR  
FAVORITE CLASS REP?



⚡SIGH NO. WE'RE NOT  
WAITING ON **THAT** IDIOT  
FOR HALF A SECOND.  
ANYONE HAVE A PROBLEM  
WITH **FEEDING** A FEW  
HUNDRED SCARED,  
HUNGRY KIDS?

DON'T  
FORGET TO  
MENTION THE  
HANDFUL OF  
SCARED,  
HUNGRY  
ADULTS.

GOOD. NOW WE JUST  
NEED TO FIGURE OUT  
WHO'S GOING TO **COOK**  
THEM... DO WE HAVE ANY  
OTHER IMPORTANT  
ISSUES ON THE TABLE?



I SAID  
IMPORTANT,  
KEN.



WE HAVE  
A FULLY  
CAST--

I'M NOT  
LISTENING  
TO THIS.

A FULLY CAST  
MUSICAL, AND A  
BUNCH OF KIDS WHO,  
FRANKLY, HAVE **NO**  
**IDEA** WHICH END OF  
A HAMMER IS UP. WE  
NEED **SOMETHING**  
FUN. SOMETHING TO  
KEEP OUR MINDS  
OFF OF EVERYTHING  
WEIRD THAT'S  
GOING ON.



I'M NOT PUTTING  
UP A **MUSICAL**  
ABOUT **FECES** IN  
FRONT OF A  
SCHOOL THAT HAS  
BARELY SOLVED  
ITS **LATRINE**  
**PROBLEM!**

THERE  
ARE **OTHER**  
SHOWS! I WANT  
TO PUT IT TO  
A VOTE.

WHY THE HELL  
DID WE GIVE **ARTS**  
A REPRESENTATIVE?



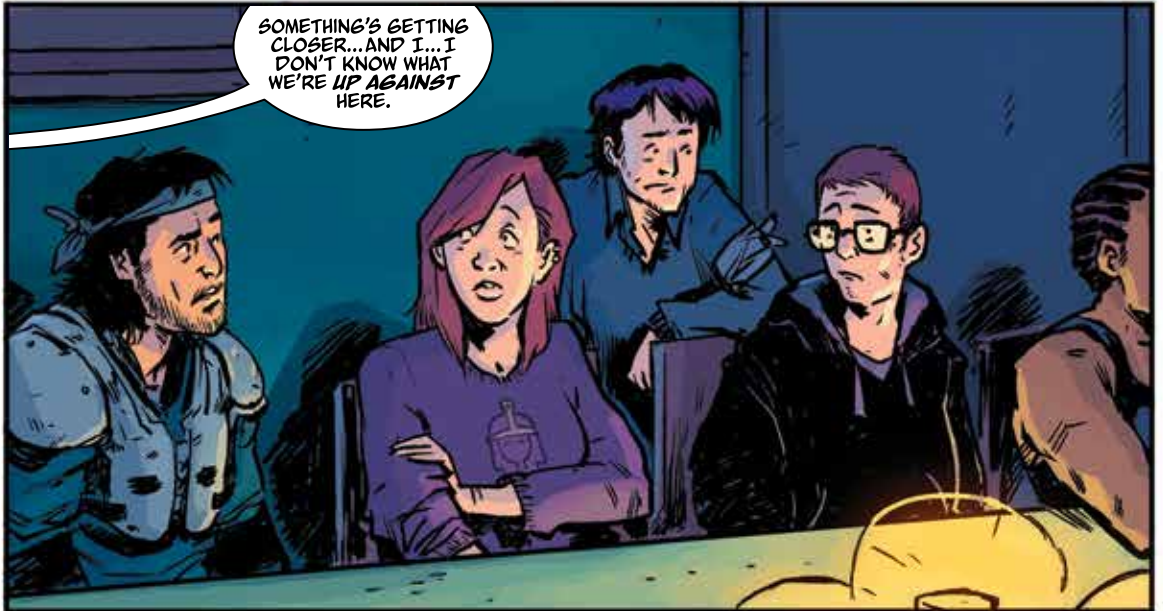
BECAUSE  
YOU'RE  
BUILDING A  
SOCIETY AND  
A SOCIETY  
**REQUIRES**  
**ART!**

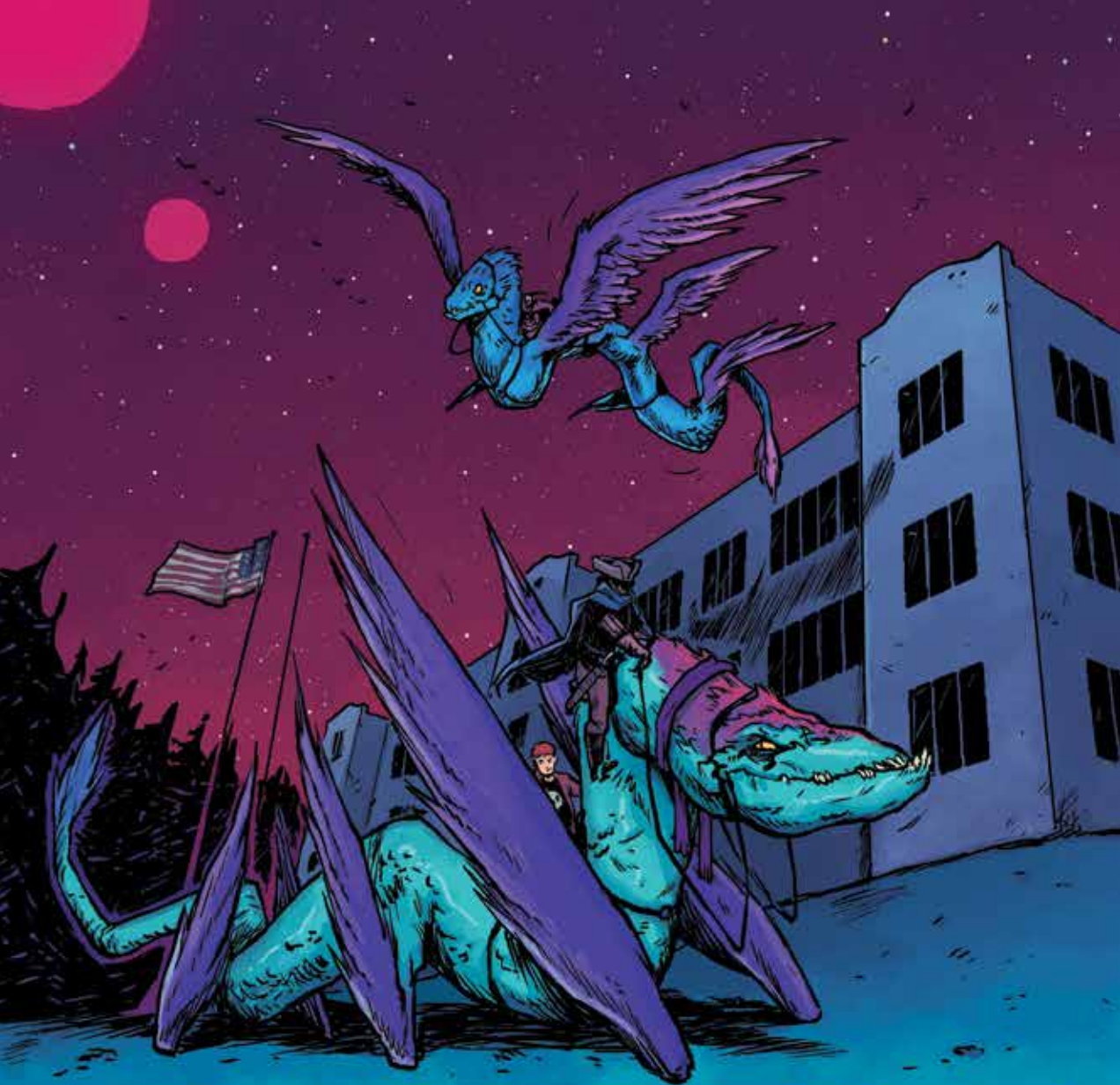


IT HASN'T EVEN BEEN  
A MONTH! WE DON'T  
EVEN HAVE A  
PERMANENT HOUSING  
SITUATION! WE'VE  
BARELY FIGURED  
OUT **FOOD!**



KEN. I PROMISE  
YOU WE'RE NOT  
GOING TO LET THE  
**ARTS** DIE OUT ON  
US. JUST GIVE US A  
LITTLE TIME.







OH GOD, THERE HE IS...

BEN... BEN, WHAT HAPPENED?



ADRIAN.



THEY'RE SOUNDING THE ALARMS... THEY'RE SHOUTING FOR PEOPLE TO ARM THEMSELVES AND GO TO THE GATES.

OH GOD...

HE'S NOT AT THE GATES. HE'S ALREADY INSIDE. IT'S A TRICK.



SANDER, GET HIM FREE...

I...DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS IS. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT...

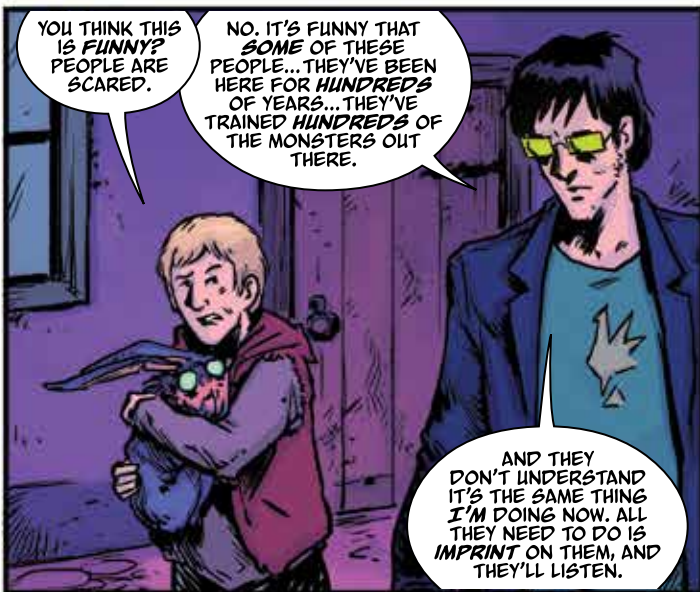


THEN GO!

**FAST!**

WE ALL KNOW WHAT HE'S AFTER. BUT HE HAS ISAAC...

DON'T LET HIM HURT HIM AGAIN!





STOP IT! LET HIM GO!

IT'S BARELY AN ANIMAL, ISAAC. IT'S A *TOOL*. THEY'RE ALL *TOOLS*. THEY ALL SERVE PURPOSES AND THEY WERE *DESIGNED* FOR US.

I'M NOT HURTING HIM. I'M USING HIM FOR HIS *FULL POTENTIAL*.



STOP IT. GIVE HIM BACK TO ME.



≈SIGH≈ FINE.



THEY'RE PART OF THE *TEST*. THE TEST THEY'VE BEEN RUNNING HUMANITY THROUGH OVER AND OVER FOR *THOUSANDS* OF YEARS.

PEOPLE ARE SO *STUPID*. IT'S REALLY ASTONISHING. THEY CARE MORE ABOUT FINDING SOME LITTLE BIT OF *COMFORT* THAN DISCOVERING THE *TRUTH*.

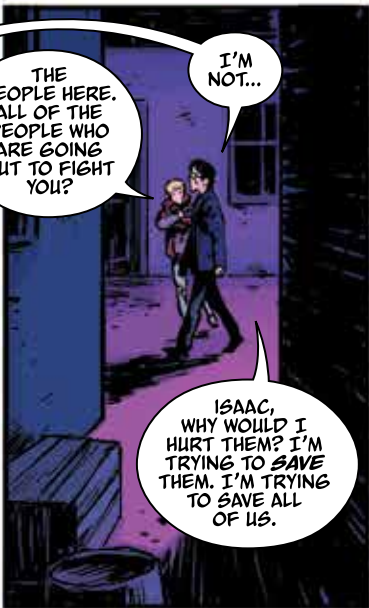
ARE YOU GOING TO HURT THEM?



WHAT?

THE PEOPLE HERE. ALL OF THE PEOPLE WHO ARE GOING OUT TO FIGHT YOU?

I'M NOT...



ISAAC, WHY WOULD I HURT THEM? I'M TRYING TO *SAVE* THEM. I'M TRYING TO *SAVE* ALL OF US.



YOU... YOU TRIED TO HURT ME.

NO. I SAVED YOUR LIFE.

YOU SAID THEY COULD KILL...



I CALLED THEIR BLUFF TO SAVE BOTH YOU AND ME. WHY ON EARTH WOULD I WANT YOU TO DIE? WHAT KIND OF PERSON DO YOU THINK I AM?

A KIND OF CRAPPY ONE, TO BE HONEST.



THAT'S... THAT'S FAIR.  
...



WHY WERE YOU EVER MY FRIEND?

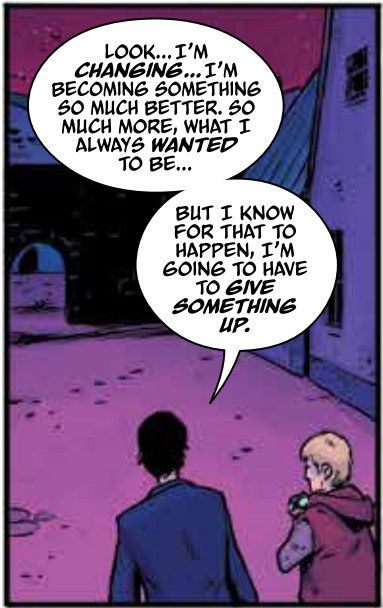


WHAT?

THAT'S... THAT'S WHY I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU. I JUST... I DON'T UNDERSTAND. I NEVER REALLY DID.



ADRIAN...



LOOK... I'M CHANGING... I'M BECOMING SOMETHING SO MUCH BETTER. SO MUCH MORE, WHAT I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE...

BUT I KNOW FOR THAT TO HAPPEN, I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GIVE SOMETHING UP.



WHEN SHE... WHEN SHE TOUCHED THE FIFTH STONE, SHE KILLED HER SISTER BECAUSE IT WAS THE EASY THING TO DO. AND SHE DIDN'T CARE ANYMORE.



I JUST WANT TO UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU EVER SAW IN ME, BEFORE I DO THIS TO MYSELF.

BEFORE I STOP BEING ANYTHING CLOSE TO HUMAN.



I THOUGHT...  
GOD, I  
THOUGHT YOU  
WERE DEAD.

NOT FOR  
LACK OF  
TRYING.



I SWEAR TO  
GOD, I AM GOING  
TO KILL KAREN  
WHEN I SEE HER  
NEXT.

NO,  
YOU'RE  
NOT.

(NO,  
I'M  
NOT.)



HEY,  
BEARDY.

CALDER...  
I SEE THE  
REPORTS OF YOUR  
DEATH HAVE BEEN  
GREATLY  
EXAGGERATED.

YOU HAVEN'T  
LOST YOUR  
CHANCE YET.  
THAT'S FOR  
SURE.



SO...UH...IS EVERYBODY  
ELSE JUST IGNORING THE  
VIKINGS OVER THERE? I  
MEAN, NOBODY SLIPPED ME  
ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE  
MUSHROOMS FROM LAST  
WEEK, DID THEY?



WE  
CERTAINLY  
AREN'T  
VIKINGS.



OKAY. NOW THEY  
ARE TALKING. THE  
VIKINGS SPEAK  
ENGLISH AND THEY  
RIDE WEIRD  
BIRD SNAKE  
THINGS.

DRAGONS.



CASS, I'D LOSE  
THE HAT... I THINK  
IT MIGHT GIVE  
THE WRONG  
IMPRESSION.



WE HAVE A LOT WE NEED TO TELL YOU. IS **PRINCIPAL BEAUMONT** ANYWHERE? WE SHOULD PROBABLY GET HIM.



A LOT'S HAPPENED HERE, TOO...



MARIA. I LOVE YOU. BUT I PROMISE YOU THIS IS 1000% MORE IMPORTANT.

THIS IS LITERALLY "AN ARMY IS COMING TO ENSLAVE ALL OF YOU" IMPORTANT.

BECAUSE THAT IS **LITERALLY** WHAT'S ABOUT TO HAPPEN.



WH-WHAT?

"AND, HOW MANY DID YOU SAY?"

"ABOUT 200... AND WELL-TRAINED... I DON'T THINK THERE'S MUCH HOPE IF YOU WERE TO TRY AND FIGHT THEM."



THIS PLAN SEEMS LUDICROUS.

THAT IT DOES. BUT IT'S STILL YOUR **BEST CHANCE** OF MAINTAINING ANY KIND OF AUTONOMY ON THIS WORLD.

LISTEN TO THEM. WE **TRUST** THEM... CASSIUS HAS TAKEN US IN AT NEW LONDON. THESE ARE **GOOD** PEOPLE. THEY'RE HERE TO HELP.

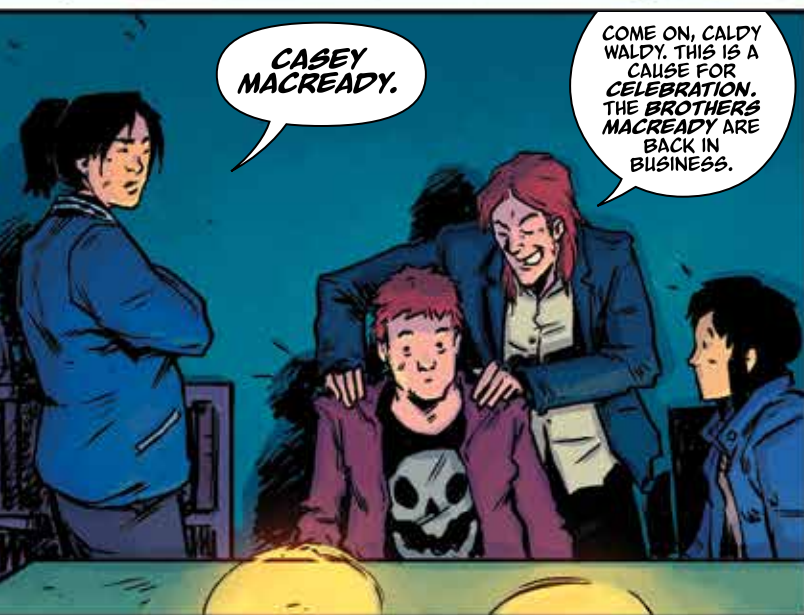


THEY PUT OUR LUNATIC, **MURDEROUS** COACH IN CHARGE OF THEIR WHOLE FREAKING ARMY! AND THEY'RE TRYING TO **ENSLAVE** US!!

WELL, THOSE ARE **OTHER** PEOPLE. TRUST **THESE** ONES.

WE NEED TO ACT **FAST**... THEY'LL BE HERE WITHIN **HOURS**. WE COULD SEE THEIR PATH FROM OVERHEAD.







"WHY THE HELL IS **SANAMI** NOT HERE...? I NEED HER TO BE HERE... I'M NOT GOOD AT THIS KIND OF THING WITHOUT HER."



WHEN WE SAT DOWN AND LAID OUT THE PLAN TO STEAL THE DRAGONS, IT TOOK **BOTH** OF US WORKING TOGETHER.



BUT MAYBE I DON'T NEED A GOOD PLAN RIGHT NOW. I NEED WHATEVER DUMB PLAN IS GOING TO WORK.

I JUST NEED **SOMETHING**.



AND... IT'S IN MY MOM'S **TRUNK**?

YES. WELL. NO... BUT SOMETHING...



JUST HOLD ON. I'M TRYING TO THINK THIS THROUGH. WE KNOW WHAT HE'S **GOING** AFTER. WE KNOW HOW **DANGEROUS** HE IS...

WE SHOULD GET **GIDEON**... HE'LL KNOW WHAT WE SHOULD DO. HE CAN RALLY THE HUNTERS TOGETHER...

YOU SHOULD DEFINITELY DO THAT. THAT SOUNDS GREAT. BUT I'M GOING RIGHT INTO THE **HEART** OF IT ALL.



BUT YOU'LL GET HURT.



HEH.



GOD, IF THAT'S THE LEAST SCARY THING THAT ANYONE'S SAID TO ME SINCE THIS ALL STARTED HAPPENING.

OF COURSE I'M GOING TO GET HURT.



THIS WHOLE WORLD. THIS WHOLE LIFE IS JUST HURT NOW. BUT YOU KNOW THE FUNNIEST THING?

I'M CALM. I SHOULDN'T BE CALM. I LITERALLY HAVE NO REASON IN THE WORLD TO BE CALM RIGHT NOW. BUT I'M CALM.

I'VE NEVER BEEN GOOD WITH PLANS... BUT WHEN EVERYTHING FALLS APART AND I NEED TO PUT IT BACK TOGETHER... I GUESS I'VE ALWAYS BEEN PRETTY OKAY AT THAT.



I'M SURE YOU'RE BETTER AT PLANS THAN YOU THINK...

I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT MY COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS SOMEDAY AND YOU'LL FIGURE OUT EXACTLY HOW CLEVER I AM.

I'M... I'M NOT SURE I'M FOLLOWING.



IT'S OKAY.

HERE IT IS.



SO,  
WHAT ARE  
YOU GOING TO  
DO? DO YOU  
HAVE ANY  
IDEA?



YES.  
I DO.



CHAPTER  
**TWELVE**



200 YEARS AGO.

I STILL REMEMBER THE FEAR...THE WAY IT GRIPPED ALL OF US THAT NIGHT. WE THOUGHT WE'D FALLEN INTO HELL ITSELF.

BUT THIS IS NO HELL. THIS PLACE IS A GIFT. A GIFT JUST RESTING HERE, READY FOR US TO TAKE IT.

STAND YOUR MEN DOWN. NO MORE NEED DIE TONIGHT.

WE WILL WALK THE ROADS TO THE **BLACK CITY** TOGETHER, HUSBAND AND WIFE. WE WILL TAKE OUR PEOPLE **HOME**, AND TAKE THIS POWER WITH US.

YOU ARE LOST, LYDIA. WHATEVER **DEVILRY** DID THIS TO YOU, I CANNOT ALLOW IT TO INFECT THE REST OF US...

IF THIS IS WHY WE ARE HERE, IF THAT IS OUR PURPOSE, I WILL NEVER STAND DOWN. MY PEOPLE WILL NEVER STAND DOWN.

I ONLY WISH I COULD SAY GOODBYE TO THE WOMAN I LOVE, BUT SHE WAS EATEN AWAY FROM INSIDE OF YOU, WASN'T SHE?

MY... DEAR.

I AM HERE. I'M RIGHT HERE IN FRONT OF YOU.

NOT FOR LONG.

GCUKKK

NOW.

BONG!



WHERE ARE THEY?! WHERE ARE THE CHILDREN??!



GIDEON, WHAT DO YOU KNOW? WHERE IS MY HUSBAND? WHERE IS MY SON?



GIDEON!

I... I DON'T KNOW.



DID... DID YOU HEAR THAT? FROM THE WALL... IT SOUNDED LIKE A SCREAM.





I...I THINK IT WAS YOUR **CONFIDENCE**. THAT'S ALWAYS WHAT I LIKED BEST ABOUT YOU. EVEN THOUGH IT WAS STUPID.

STUPID?



YEAH. YOU ALWAYS KNEW THE **RIGHT THING**. HALF THE TIME IT WOULDN'T EVEN WORK, BUT YOU STILL NEVER QUESTIONED THE FACT THAT YOU WERE RIGHT.

I QUESTION **EVERYTHING**. EVEN THE LITTLE STUFF. YOU... YOU NEVER DID.



I THOUGHT YOU HAD EVERYTHING I NEEDED TO BE A **BETTER** KIND OF PERSON, AND EVEN THOUGH YOU COULD BE TERRIBLE, YOU COULD ALSO BE KIND OF GREAT, TOO.

I MEAN, YOU'RE FUN TO WATCH A MOVIE WITH. YOU **PICK IT APART** PIECE BY PIECE IF YOU HATE IT. LIKE, YOU EVEN **PAUSE** IT WHILE IT'S GOING TO START RIPPING IT TO SHREDS.



BUT SOMETIMES...I'D SEE YOU GET **LOST** IN SOMETHING. SOMETHING THAT GOT IN UNDER YOUR SKIN. AND I'D SEE YOU SMILE. YOU WOULDN'T SAY ANYTHING.

FOR A MOMENT, IT DIDN'T MATTER THAT THE PLOT DIDN'T ADD UP. IT DIDN'T MATTER THAT THE STORY WAS TOTALLY OUT OF SYNC. IT JUST MATTERED THAT IT FELT **GOOD** TO YOU.



AND I GUESS...I GUESS I THOUGHT I WAS THAT TO YOU.

BECAUSE I KIND OF SUCK, DUDE. I DON'T KNOW IF YOU PICKED UP ON THAT, BUT I KIND OF REALLY DO. I'VE NEVER BEEN GOOD AT **ANYTHING**.

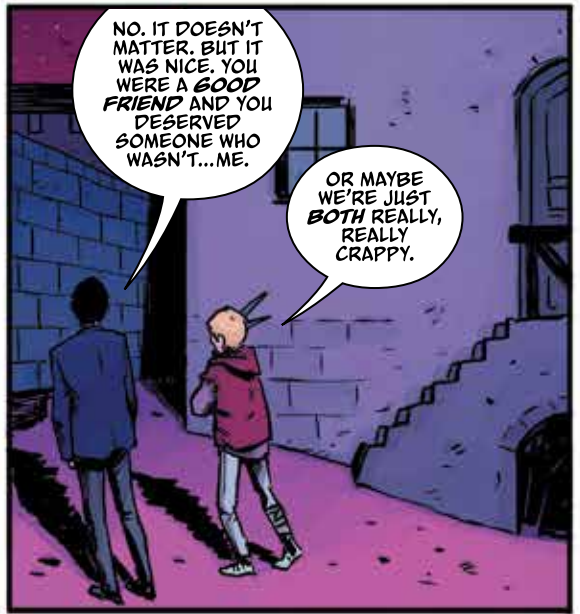


THAT'S NOT TRUE.



I...LIKED THAT YOU CARED ABOUT ME. I DON'T THINK ANYONE ELSE EVER DID. BUT YOU DID. AND THAT WAS NICE.

I DON'T KNOW...MY MOM...



NO. IT DOESN'T MATTER. BUT IT WAS NICE. YOU WERE A **GOOD FRIEND** AND YOU DESERVED SOMEONE WHO WASN'T...ME.

OR MAYBE WE'RE JUST **BOTH REALLY, REALLY CRAPPY.**



HAH.

HA  
HAHA  
HA!



WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS, ADRIAN? YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO ANY FURTHER. YOU SAID...YOU SAID YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S DOING TO YOU. SO JUST **STOP.**

IT'S...IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT NOW.



YOU DON'T HAVE TO LOSE YOUR **HUMANITY**. I DON'T...I DON'T WANT YOU TO, OKAY? DON'T DO IT, FOR ME.



ISAAC. I'M DOING IT FOR **ALL OF US.**





I CAN SEE YOU HIDING THERE, DUKE.

I CAN SEE YOU THROUGH A HUNDRED EYES.



I WILL NOT LET YOU DO THIS.

I HAVE SWORN ON THE GRAVE OF MY GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GRANDMOTHER. THE FIRST DUCHESS OF NEW LONDON.



THIS MAD WORLD CLAIMED HER FOR ITS OWN. AS IT HAS CLAIMED YOU.



YOU WOULD NEED AN ARMY TO STOP ME.

BUT YOUR ARMY ISN'T HERE, IS IT?



COME ON OUT, KIDS. WE'RE NOT HERE TO HURT YOU.

I'VE FOUND A NEW HOME FOR ALL OF US...JUST COME OUTSIDE AND WE'LL TAKE YOU THERE.



ALRIGHT, CLAY! YOU WANT TO TALK, LET'S TALK!

I AM THE DULY-APPOINTED LEADER OF BAY POINT PREP, AND I DEMAND A NEGOTIATION UNDER THE CHARTER LAWS OF NEW LONDON.



WHAT THE--

HOW THE HELL DID YOU...NO. THIS ISN'T HAPPENING.

GET ME THE FACULTY. I'M NOT HAVING THIS CONVERSATION WITH A LITTLE GIRL.

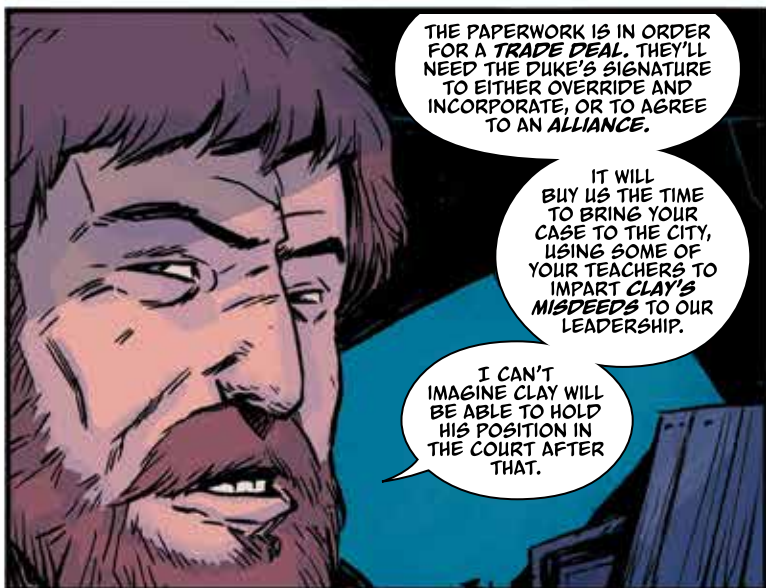






IS THIS REALLY GOING TO WORK?

IT'S A **BUREAUCRATIC** MOVE, BUT THE DUKE HAS ALWAYS FETTERIZED BUREAUCRACY.



THE PAPERWORK IS IN ORDER FOR A **TRADE DEAL**. THEY'LL NEED THE DUKE'S SIGNATURE TO EITHER OVERRIDE AND INCORPORATE, OR TO AGREE TO AN **ALLIANCE**.

IT WILL BUY US THE TIME TO BRING YOUR CASE TO THE CITY, USING SOME OF YOUR TEACHERS TO IMPART **CLAY'S MISDEEDS** TO OUR LEADERSHIP.

I CAN'T IMAGINE CLAY WILL BE ABLE TO HOLD HIS POSITION IN THE COURT AFTER THAT.



SEE, KID, WE SAVED THE DAY.



WHOOPEE.



WHAT'S GOT YOU SO **TENSE?**

IT'S NOTHING... JUST GIVE ME A MINUTE, ALRIGHT?





I WON'T LET YOU PASS.



PLAYING THE SANDALF CARD, HUH? THAT'S TOO BAD. IT DIDN'T END WELL FOR HIM, EITHER.



TAKE HIM DOWN.

YOUR MEN HAVE ALREADY RUN OFF... YOU'RE ALONE HERE.



BUT ME... I STILL HAVE MY FRIENDS... AND THEY'RE HUNGRY.



ADRIAN! NO! YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS--

**CHOMP!**



**FOOM!**









SEE, IT'S  
A **COMPUTER**.  
IT'S A COMPUTER AT  
THE HEART OF THIS  
WHOLE WORLD, AND  
IT'S BEEN TRYING  
TO SEE IF WE'RE  
**READY** FOR  
IT.

IT'S BEEN  
CHECKING ON US  
ONCE EVERY HUNDRED  
YEARS, BUT WE'RE THE  
FIRST ONES WHO ARE  
CAPABLE OF  
UNDERSTANDING  
IT. **CONTROLLING**  
IT.



LOOK, KAREN!  
LOOK AT THE  
**POWER** WE CAN  
TAKE FOR  
OURSELVES.



**ADRIAN,  
STOP!**



**STOP PRETENDING  
YOU'RE OKAY WITH THIS.  
STOP PRETENDING THAT  
YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS  
GOING TO DO!**

**YOU JUST  
KILLED  
SOMEONE! A  
REAL-LIFE  
PERSON!  
YOU DID IT  
WITHOUT EVEN  
BLINKING.**



**YOU DON'T HAVE  
TO BECOME  
WHAT THESE  
STUPID ROCKS  
WANT YOU TO BE.  
YOU'RE STILL  
YOU.**

**YOU  
CAN STILL  
CHOOSE  
TO BE HUMAN.  
YOU CAN  
CHOOSE  
TO STAY WITH  
US.**

**DON'T  
DO THIS,  
ADRIAN.**



**SHNK!**



NO!

FSHOOM!



ISAAC... I'M SORRY... I HAD TO DO IT... IT WAS THE RIGHT THING. THE ONLY--

HE WAS GOING TO STOP. HE WAS GOING TO STEP DOWN... THERE WAS STILL ENOUGH OF THE REAL HIM IN THERE...



NO, ISAAC, THERE WASN'T...

GET AWAY FROM US!





COVER  
GALLERY





ISSUE NINE COVER **MICHAEL DIALYNAS**



ISSUE TEN COVER **MICHAEL DIALYNAS**



ISSUE ELEVEN COVER **MICHAEL DIALYNAS**



ISSUE TWELVE COVER **MICHAEL DIALYNAS**



MICHAEL DIALYNAS

# SKETCHBOOK



LYDIA COLE  
THE WITCH  
OF THE WOOD

9/14



SANDER - MARKET.



CASSIUS

NIGEL



GIDEON

FLORENCE



(11)  
DRAGONS  
SCHOOL  
MARIA  
BATTLE-READY

(12)  
ADRIAN  
STONE-NE  
KIDS DEFEATED  
'SAPC  
TEACHING

CORRINE

MISSY + MARIE



THE DUKE  
OF NEW  
LONDON

09  
14





On October 16, 2013, 437 students, 52 teachers, and 24 additional staff from Bay Point Preparatory High School in suburban Milwaukee, WI vanished without a trace, finding themselves countless light years away in the middle of an ancient, primordial wilderness. Now, having barely escaped their confrontation with the swarm, the hunters have led Adrian, Karen, Calder, and the others to their breathtaking home base. But just when they think they may have found answers to what brought them to this alien world, a horror from the teens' past rears its ugly head...

Created and written by **James Tynion IV** (*BATMAN ETERNAL*), illustrated by **Michael Dialynas** (*AMALA'S BLADE*), and colored by Josan Gonzalez, "**New London**" collects the critically-acclaimed third arc of the best-selling series.



“...a fantastic read and one of my favorite comics being published.”

—*Comic Bastards*

“*The Woods* continues to be one of the strongest comics BOOM!—or any publisher, for that matter—is putting out right now.”

—*Newsarama*