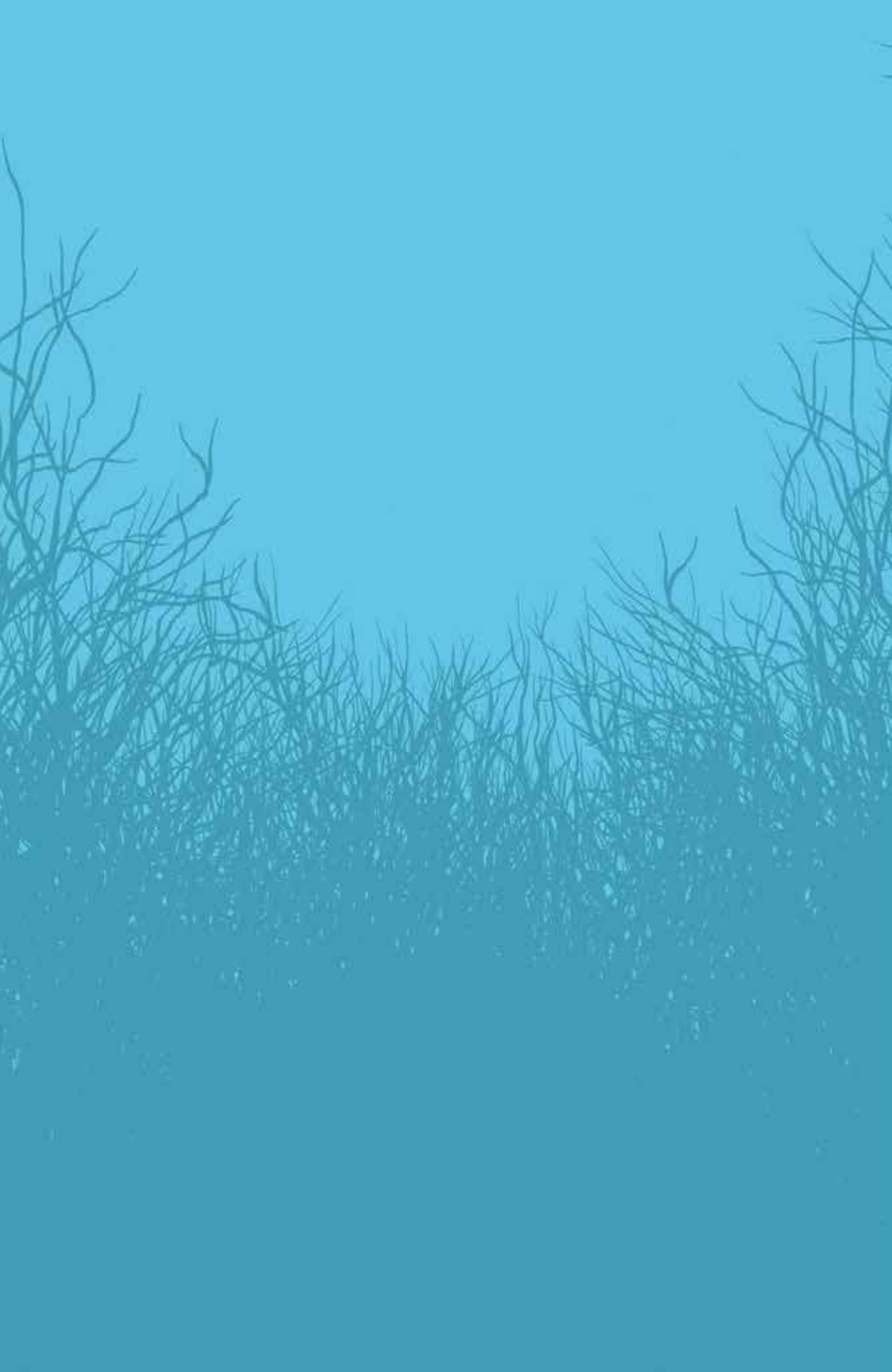


# THE WOODS™

JAMES TYNION IV • MICHAEL DIALYNAS • JOSAN GONZALEZ



VOL. 2  
THE SWARM



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THE SWARM



**BOOM!**™  
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STUDIOS

**THE WOODS** Volume Two,  
May 2015. Published by  
BOOM! Studios, a division  
of Boom Entertainment, Inc.  
The Woods is ™ & © 2015

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A catalog record of this book is available from OCLC and from the BOOM! Studios website, [www.boom-studios.com](http://www.boom-studios.com), on the Librarians page.

BOOM! Studios, 5670 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 450, Los Angeles, CA 90036-5679. Printed in China. First Printing.

ISBN: 978-1-60886-495-9, eISBN: 978-1-61398-349-2







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CHAPTER  
**FIVE**



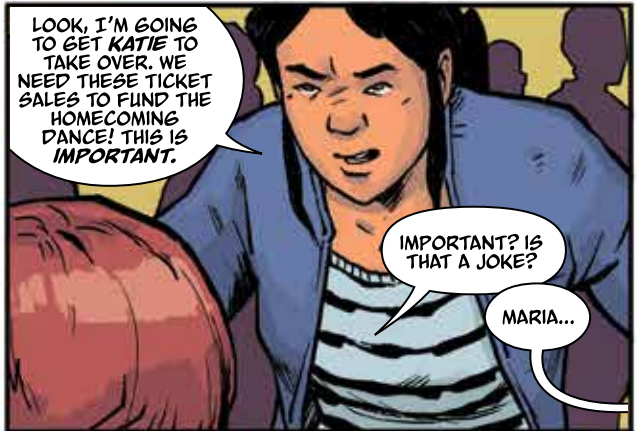
ONE YEAR AGO.



DO I REALLY HAVE TO REMIND YOU THAT YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SIGNED UP TO WORK THE TICKET BOOTH FOR THE PLAY? THIS ISN'T NAPTIME, KAREN.

I WASN'T SLEEPING!

OH, PLEASE.



LOOK, I'M GOING TO GET KATIE TO TAKE OVER. WE NEED THESE TICKET SALES TO FUND THE HOMECOMING DANCE! THIS IS IMPORTANT.

IMPORTANT? IS THAT A JOKE?

MARIA...



CAN WE HAVE A WORD WITH YOU? SOMETHING'S HAPPENED.

MR. AND MRS. OTA?







OH, SO YOU'RE PROUD OF THE FACT THAT SANAMI IS SO ASHAMED OF YOU SHE NEEDS TO LIE ABOUT WHOSE HOUSE SHE'S GOING TO?

AND YOU'RE PROUD OF BEING SO STUCK-UP THAT HER CRAZY-ASS PARENTS ACTUALLY APPROVE OF YOU?

DESPITE THE FACT SHE NEVER GIVES YOU THE TIME OF DAY OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL?



LOOK, I'M SORRY... BUT DO YOU KNOW HOW ROUGH IT IS FOR HER THERE? DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH SHE HATES IT?

YES, AS A MATTER OF FACT, I DO KNOW. OKAY?



JIBUST DUBIE UBALRUBEDY, WUBON'T YUBOU?



DID YOU JUST HAVE A STROKE?

JUST SOMETHING I USED TO DO WITH SANAMI.



THIS IS SERIOUS, KAREN. YOU REALIZE SHE COULD BE IN TROUBLE? LIKE, SERIOUS TROUBLE... I COULD ACTUALLY USE YOUR HELP HERE.

BUT NO, OF COURSE NOT. YOU'VE NEVER TAKEN ANYTHING SERIOUSLY IN YOUR LIFE.



THAT'S WHY YOU DON'T THREATEN ME, KAREN.

ALL YOU DO IS DRAG HER DOWN.







I AM GOING TO PRETEND THEY DID NOT JUST SAY "DRAGONS." I AM GOING TO PRETEND THAT VERY, VERY HARD.



GET HER ON THE BIRD'S BACK. WE'RE LOSING TOO MUCH TIME.

HE DOESN'T LET ANYONE RIDE HIM BUT--

HE'S CARRIED DEAD WEIGHT BEFORE.



KNOCK!



HE'LL DO IT AGAIN.

WHICH WAY, GIDEON?



WHAT? HE HEARD SOMETHING OUT THERE.





THIS IS **POINTLESS**. WE CAN'T GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO HEAR WHERE THEY'RE GOING. WE NEED TO GO BACK TO THE **TEMPLE**. WE NEED TO GET BACK ON THE **PATH**.

BUT WHAT ABOUT--



I'M NOT SURE IF YOU **NOTICED**, KAREN, BUT THEY CAPTURED THE **ONE PERSON** IN OUR LITTLE CADRE WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO THINK OF HOW TO FREE THEM.



THEN... THEN WE HAVE TO GO **BACK**.



WHAT?

THIS IS BIGGER THAN US NOW! THERE ARE **PEOPLE** ON THIS PLANET! WE NEED TO GO BACK TO THE **SCHOOL**. MAYBE ONE OF THE **TEACHERS**...



PATHETIC.

WHAT DID YOU SAY?



I SAID YOU'RE **PATHETIC**.

YOU DON'T EVER DO ANYTHING FOR YOURSELF, DO YOU? YOU'VE ALWAYS RELIED ON **SOMEBODY ELSE** TO SOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS.

OUR **LIVES** ARE ON THE TABLE HERE, AND I WOULDN'T TRUST THOSE HAREBRAINED HACKS BACK AT BAY POINT EVEN IF THEY WEREN'T.



ALL RIGHT. LET'S **PRESS PAUSE** ON THE WHOLE PART WHERE YOU TWO START SHOUTING AND GET US **MURDERED** BY DUDES WITH HORNS ON THEIR HEADS.

IT'S WEIRD... THEY WERE **GEARING UP** TO GO... BUT NOW IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE SETTING UP **CAMP**.



SOMETHING **CHANGED**.

I DON'T LIKE **CHANGES** UNLESS THEY'RE COMING OUT OF THE LIPS OF A **GOBLIN KING**.



SIGH

IF THEY'RE SETTING CAMP, WE SHOULD TOO.



IN THE MORNING WE MAKE OUR WAY BACK TO THE TEMPLE. FROM THERE WE CAN START MOVING BACK ON THE PATH OF THE ARROW.

NO! I WON'T LEAVE SANAMI BEHIND. WE CAN'T JUST TURN OUR BACKS ON ALL OF THEM.



YES. WE CAN.



CALDER...



LET'S JUST GET SOME SLEEP, OKAY?





UM...

TWO TICKETS, PLEASE?



ONE FOR ME AND MY, UH... GIRLFRIEND.

TEN BUCKS.



SO. HERE TO YELL AT ME SOME MORE? OR ARE YOU JUST GOING TO STRAIGHT UP STAB ME THIS TIME?

SALES ARE GOING WELL. HOMECOMING'S NOT CANCELLED. RAH RAH RAH. ANOTHER BRILLIANT SCHEME BY MARIA IS A MASSIVE SUCCESS.



... I DO GET JEALOUS, YOU KNOW?

HUH?



I THINK OF SANAMI AS MY BEST FRIEND. LIKE, SERIOUSLY, THERE'S NOBODY ELSE I REALLY EVEN LIKE IN THIS DUMB SCHOOL.

AND I KNOW I GET REALLY INTENSE SOMETIMES, AND SHE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN DEFLATE THAT. POKE A LITTLE FUN AT ME. MAKE ME LAUGH.



SO I SHOULD MAKE FUN OF YOU MORE OFTEN? THAT'S WHAT'S BEEN MISSING?



GOD, I'M JOKING. JEEZ.



I JUST... I JUST OPENED HER LOCKER.

YOU KNOW HER LOCKER COMBINATION?

NOT THE POINT, HERE.



OH MY GOD... I REMEMBER THIS... THIS IS WHEN SHE HITCHHIKED ALL THE WAY DOWN FROM THEIR CREEPY COMPOUND UPSTATE IN MIDDLE SCHOOL.

SHE GOT TO STAY WITH US FOR TWO WHOLE WEEKS BEFORE THEY THOUGHT TO CHECK MY HOUSE.



IT WAS HANGING IN HER LOCKER.

THE ONLY THING HANGING IN THERE ASIDE FROM HER CLASS SCHEDULE.



NO MATTER WHAT I DO, YOU ALWAYS COME FIRST TO HER. AND I'M SORRY. I DO GET JEALOUS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT SHE SEES IN YOU.

...

I DON'T EITHER, REALLY.



HUH, SHE WROTE SOMETHING ON THE BACK...

"HUBOME UBAWUBAY FRUBOME HUBOME."



THAT SUMMER... WE...



I KNOW WHERE SHE IS.





ARE YOU OKAY, SANAMI?

BEEN THROUGH WORSE.

OKAY, THAT'S NOT REMOTELY TRUE.



IT'S OKAY TO NOT BE OKAY.

NORMALLY WHEN THINGS GO BAD, I JUST RUN SO HARD NOBODY CAN EVER FIND ME.

NOBODY EXCEPT FOR...



HUBOME.

HUH?



WE KNOW WHERE THEY'RE GOING. TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN TO THE NORTHEAST. SIX DAY JOURNEY.



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WE CAN'T RUN...NOT AGAIN. ISAAC'S LEG...AND I'M...I'M NOT FAST ENOUGH.

HERE. REACH INTO MY POCKET. THERE'S A PEN.



CASSIUS.

THERE ARE THREE MORE CHILDREN TRAILING US. THEY SEEM TO THINK THEY'VE GONE UNNOTICED SO FAR.



ANY MORE OF THE--

NO...BUT ONE OF THEM...HE HAS THE LOOK ON HIM.

HE'S BEEN SPEAKING TO THE BLACK ROCKS.



...

THEN HE'S DANGEROUS. WE CAN'T RISK BRINGING SOMEONE LIKE HIM IN.



THE RULES STRICTLY STATE--

DAMN THE RULES. YOU **KNOW** WHAT'S COMING. THE LAST HUNTING PARTIES WHO GOT CAUGHT IN THE MIDST OF A **SWARM**... YOU KNOW WHAT THEY FOUND?



**BONES, BONES AND BRISTLE.**

PULL UP THE STAKES, GIDEON. WE'RE MOVING AGAIN.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING?



JUST PLAYING A LITTLE GAME FROM BACK HOME.

IT'S CALLED TIC TAC TOE.



WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR YOUR **NONSENSE**, GIRL. WE HAVE TO MOVE.

CAN'T LET YOUR **FRIENDS** CATCH UP WITH US, NOW, CAN WE?



NO, DEFINITELY NOT.



YOU'RE BUYING ME NEW SHOES.

YEAH, THAT'S DEFINITELY GOING TO HAPPEN.



I HATE THE WOODS.

OH, PLEASE. THE CRAZIEST THING I EVER SAW OUT HERE WAS A FOX, AND IT HISSED AT ME THEN RAN AWAY.

WHERE THE HELL ARE WE GOING EVEN?



THE RAVINE HERE LETS OUT INTO LAKE MICHIGAN, BUT THE WATER DOESN'T EVER GET THIS HIGH.

SO THAT'S WHERE SANAMI AND I FOUND IT. MUST HAVE BEEN MADE YEARS AGO... BUT THEY MADE IT WELL. WE SPENT THOSE WHOLE TWO WEEKS INSIDE.



HUBOME UBAWUBAY FRUBOME HUBOME.

HOME AWAY FROM HOME.



YOU SURE SHE'S IN THERE?

YEAH.

THEN I'M GOING TO GO CALL HER PARENTS.







NOW BE GOOD THIS TIME, OKAY?



YOU CAN CHEW ON MY HAIR, BUT JUST DON'T PULL.

MREH.



NOW, I'VE BEEN CALLED CRAZY AT LEAST FIVE TIMES A WEEK SINCE I WAS TWELVE.



BUT I'M PRETTY SURE THE WHOLE POINT OF KEEPING LOOKOUT IS STAYING BY THE CAMPSITE.



I JUST... I JUST WANTED TO SEE HER, EVEN JUST FROM FAR AWAY.

I KNOW. I CAME TO HELP.



DO YOU THINK I'M PATHETIC?



WHAT, YOU KIDDING ME?



YOU ACTUALLY CARE ABOUT SOMEONE SO MUCH YOU'RE PROBABLY GOING TO GET YOURSELF KILLED.

THAT'S PRETTY *BAD-ASS* IF YOU ASK ME.



WAIT... WHERE ARE THEY?

THEY TRICKED US... MADE US SET CAMP, THEN WENT OFF ON THEIR OWN.



NO!!



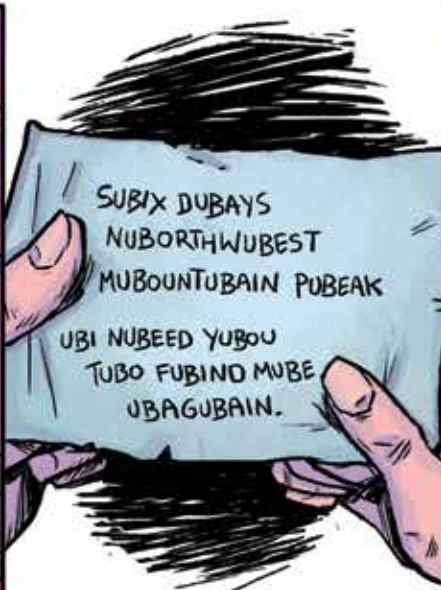
KAREN, WAIT!! THERE'S PROBABLY A--



PLEASE TELL ME YOU HAVE A KNIFE ON YOU.

IS THE POPE A SECRET LIZARD MONSTER FROM THE TWELFTH DIMENSION?

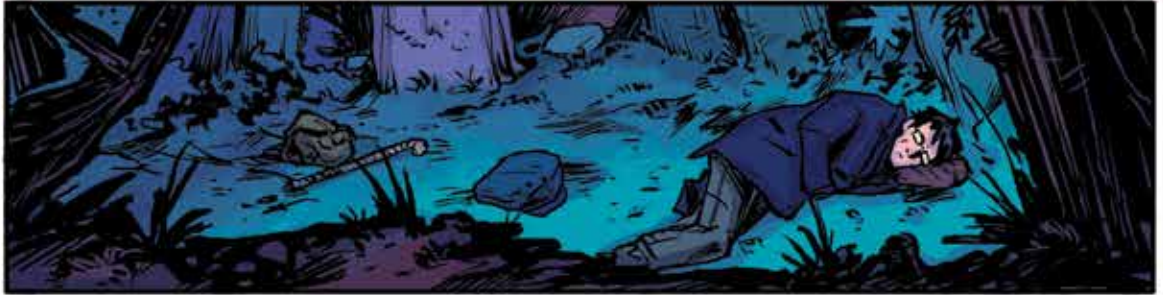
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO ANSWER THAT.





ALL THE  
DIFFERENCE IN  
THE WORLD.

LET'S GET  
ADRIAN.  
I KNOW EXACTLY  
WHAT WE HAVE  
TO DO.



YES, I  
UNDERSTAND...  
I'M READY...



I'M  
COMING.



CHAPTER  
**SIX**





ONE YEAR AGO.

THEY THOUGHT HE WAS CRAZY. LIKE FULL-ON CRAZY.

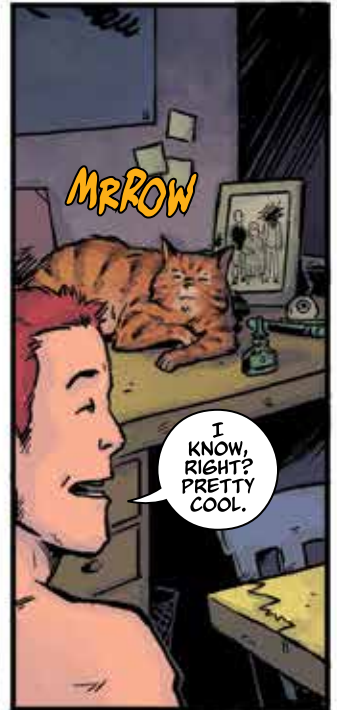
AND HELL, MAYBE HE WAS.



BUT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A DUDE INVADING A COUNTRY WHERE THE AVERAGE SOLDIER HAD NEVER EVEN HEARD OF AN ELEPHANT BEFORE.

YOU KNOW WHAT HE SAID TO HIS GENERALS, WHEN THEY TOLD HIM THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE IN HIM... WHEN THEY SAID IT'D BE IMPOSSIBLE TO LEAD A BATTALION OF ELEPHANTS OVER THE ALPS?

"I WILL EITHER FIND A WAY, OR MAKE ONE."



MRROW

I KNOW, RIGHT? PRETTY COOL.



NOW, ARE YOU HERE FOR MORAL SUPPORT, MARGE, OR ARE YOU JUST HERE TO STEAL MORE OF MY ELEPHANTS?

I KNOW I'M GOING TO FIND THE THREE I'M MISSING BEHIND THE REFRIGERATOR. YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIE TO ME.

I AM SECRETLY VERY NICE.



SO THAT'S HOW YOU'RE GOING TO PLAY IT, HUH?



CREAK

GRAMS, MARGE IS AT IT AGAIN!

CALL THE POLICE!





YOU DON'T TALK TO ME LIKE THAT. GOT IT?

DON'T--



GOT IT?

GOT IT.



GOOD. LOOK. DON'T PLAY THE FREAKING PASTOR OVER HERE. I'M JUST THE ONE WHO'S NEVER GOTTEN CAUGHT, REMEMBER?

YOU'RE THE ONE THEY KEEP THROWING OUT OF SCHOOL AFTER SCHOOL.



YEAH. WONDER HOW THAT HAPPENS.

IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE CRAP AT EVERYTHING YOU TRY TO DO, AND EVERYBODY KNOWS IT.



WHAT DO YOU WANT? GRAMS IS ALREADY PUTTING EVERY DIME SHE HAS INTO YOUR SCHOOL. THERE'S NOTHING MORE FOR YOU TO TAKE. OR SELL.

THESE DUMB LITTLE TOYS WORTH ANYTHING?

I MAKE THEM...



SO THEY'RE WORTHLESS, THEN. IN THE MODEL OF THEIR MAKER.

Flick!



C'MON, BABY BRO, I'M MESSING WITH YOU.



LOOK, I NEED A FEW HUNDRED DOLLARS TO GET SOMETHING GOING BACK AT THE ACADEMY. AND THEY POSTED THIS FLYER UP...



NOTHING LESS SECURE THAN A *CASHBOX* SITTING ON A TABLE WHILE SOME KIDS PRETEND THEY CAN PERFORM SHAKESPEARE AT YOUR CRAPHOLE OF A SCHOOL.



HELP ME DO THIS, AND I WON'T EVEN COME BACK FOR CHRISTMAS.



CASEY? IS THAT YOUR VOICE I HEAR??

GRAMS, YOU LOOK LIKE A MILLION BUCKS.



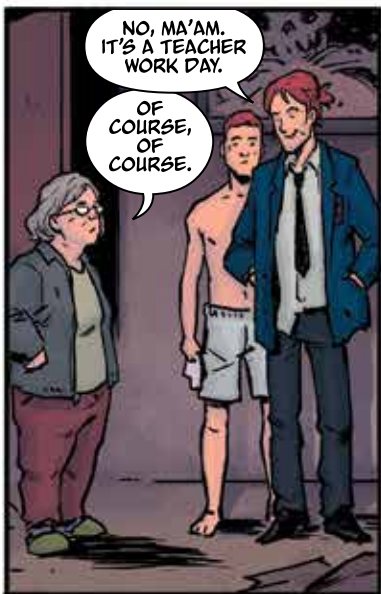
CALDER, I TOLD YOU TO CLEAN THIS MESS...

IT'S A RECREATION OF HANNIBAL CROSSING--

YOU CAN'T KEEP MAKING EXCUSES, CALDER... YOU NEED TO GET IT DONE.



YOU IN TROUBLE, TOO? YOU HAVEN'T BEEN LETTING YOUR *LITTLE BROTHER* DRAG YOU DOWN WITH HIM, HAVE YOU?



NO, MA'AM. IT'S A TEACHER WORK DAY.

OF COURSE, OF COURSE.




HECK, I WANT TO BRING A *LITTLE CULTURE* TO OUR POOR, MISGUIDED CALDER.

I'M TAKING HIM TO THE *SCHOOL PLAY* TONIGHT. ISN'T THAT RIGHT, BABY BRO?



YEAH. OF COURSE.

NOW.



SO, LOOK... YOU CAN SEE THE MOUNTAIN PEAK FROM HERE. TO THE NORTHWEST. SANAMI'S MESSAGE SAID THAT'S WHERE THEY'RE BEING TAKEN.




THAT'S WHERE WE NEED TO GO.



ADRIAN. ARE YOU LISTENING?


KIND OF NEED YOUR HELP HERE.



HRM. OKAY. THERE'S ONE MAJOR PROBLEM. WELL, NO. THERE ARE LOTS OF PROBLEMS, BUT LET'S START WITH THE BIG ONE.



WE DON'T HAVE ANY MEANS OF COVERING GROUND FASTER THAN PEOPLE WHO ACTUALLY KNOW THE GEOGRAPHY OF THIS PLACE.



THAT'S WHY I WAS THINKING THE RIVER... THE CURRENT IS RUNNING IN THAT GENERAL DIRECTION... WE COULD SHAVE A DAY OFF THE JOURNEY AND BEAT THEM THERE.



HMM...

A woman with reddish hair, wearing a brown jacket and a blue scarf, holds a small, blue, insect-like alien creature. She is speaking to a man with glasses and a blue jacket. The background is a dark forest.

**MREH!**

NO... STOP THAT... I NEED TO FOCUS.

AND SO DO YOU, ADRIAN. WHAT THE HELL DO YOU KEEP LOOKING AT?

IT DOESN'T MATTER...IF THE RIVER IS THE BEST WAY, WHY AREN'T THE HUNTERS USING IT?

A close-up of the woman and the man. The woman is on the left, looking towards the man on the right. They are both looking concerned.

THEY HAVE THAT OSTRICH THING. IT'S PROBABLY TOO HEAVY TO CARRY.

AND WHAT IF THE RIVER BRANCHES OFF...WE HAVE NO IDEA IF IT'LL TAKE US WHERE WE NEED TO GO...

WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING, ADRIAN! WE HAVE TO SAVE THEM.

A man wearing a black t-shirt with a white skull design is talking to the woman and the man. The woman is in the foreground, and the man is behind her. The background is a dark forest.

EVERYBODY SHUT UP.

NOT NOW, CALDER.

NO, SERIOUSLY. SHUT UP. I HAVE THE BEST PLAN. THE KING OF PLANS. THE PLAN TO KILL ALL OTHER PLANS.

A close-up of the man with the skull t-shirt. He is smiling and holding a purple jacket. The background is a dark forest.

WE'RE GOING TO CATCH OURSELVES ONE OF THOSE WOLF BEARS.

A close-up of the man with glasses and the woman. They are looking at each other with serious expressions. The background is a dark forest.



NO, SERIOUSLY! IT'S PERFECT. WE ALL SAW HOW FAST THOSE THINGS ARE...IT'S THE LAST THING THEY'D EXPECT.

YES, THEY CERTAINLY WOULDN'T EXPECT US TO FEED OURSELVES TO THE GIANT MONSTERS WE JUST BARELY MANAGED TO ESCAPE FROM.

JUST LISTEN TO ME...



CALDER, WHEN I BROUGHT YOU OUT HERE, IT WASN'T FOR YOUR BRAINS. WE NEED SERIOUS ANSWERS HERE.

CALDER, LOOK--

KAREN...



NO, I GET IT.

FOR A WALK.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?



LET HIM GO. WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR ANY MORE OF HIS NONSENSE.



MREE! MREE!!

SEE, AT LEAST THE MONSTER LIKES MY PLAN.



AWW, YOU'RE SHAKING. YOU SCARED, BOY?

WHAT'S GOT YOU SO SCARED?





GAH!  
GAH!



THEY'RE GETTING CLOSER, CASSIUS, AND WE'RE NOT NEARLY CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE EDGE OF THEIR TERRITORY.

YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO ABEL'S MEN, WHEN THEY GOT CAUGHT IN A SWARM.

SWARM OF WHAT?



I SAID, SWARM OF WHAT?



... WE NEED TO MOVE FASTER.



≡SNIFF≡



ARE YOU... ARE YOU OKAY?

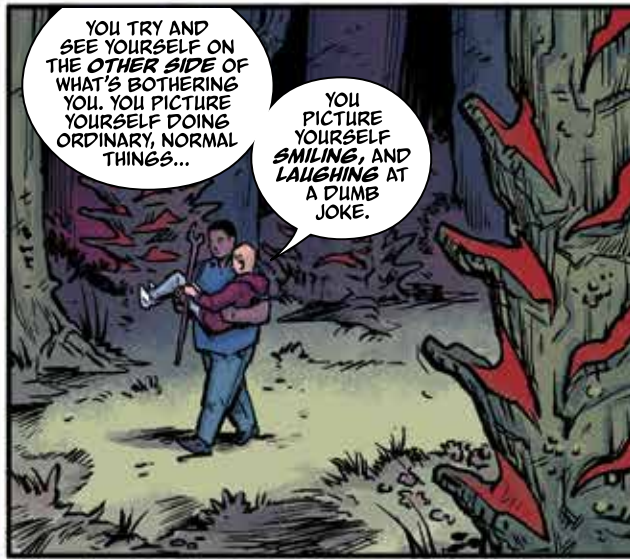
NO.

NOT EVEN A LITTLE BIT. NOT EVEN ENOUGH TO PRETEND.



MY MOM, SHE HAS PRETTY BAD ANXIETY... I GUESS I PROBABLY DO, TOO... BUT SHE ALWAYS TOLD ME THAT WHEN IT STRIKES YOU HAVE TO PICTURE TOMORROW.

YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES AND TELL YOURSELF THAT THE ANXIETY IS RIGHT NOW. IT'S TEMPORARY.



YOU TRY AND SEE YOURSELF ON THE OTHER SIDE OF WHAT'S BOTHERING YOU. YOU PICTURE YOURSELF DOING ORDINARY, NORMAL THINGS...

YOU PICTURE YOURSELF SMILING, AND LAUGHING AT A DUMB JOKE.



BUT THERE'S NO TOMORROW HERE, IS THERE? EVERYTHING JUST KEEPS GETTING WORSE AND WORSE, AND WE'RE PROBABLY GOING TO DIE, AND IN THE BEST CASE SCENARIO, I'M PROBABLY NOT GOING TO SEE MY MOM AGAIN.



ADRIAN WOULD ALWAYS KIND OF LAUGH... I'D GET UPSET AT THE LITTLEST THINGS, Y'KNOW? BUT HE'D LISTEN TO ME. HE'D BE THERE.

PROBABLY WON'T EVER GET TO SEE HIM AGAIN, EITHER.



NOT THAT IT MATTERS. NOBODY REALLY EVER CARED ABOUT ME, NOBODY I WANTED TO, AT LEAST.

BUT AT LEAST ADRIAN WOULD LET ME PRETEND.





WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO GO OVER IN TRIPS ON WALLY...

WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON... WHY ARE THEY DOING THAT?



THE WOODS ARE HUNGRY. THEY KNOW WHAT'S COMING.

THEY'RE GETTING READY.



READY FOR WHAT?



BLOOD.



OH, COME ON, YOU'RE STILL MOPING?



NO, THIS IS MY HAPPY FACE. CAN'T YOU SEE IT? BRIMMING WITH HAPPINESS AND BROTHERLY LOVE.

LET'S JUST GET THIS OVER WITH, ALL RIGHT? AND STICK WITH THE PLAN.



AH, YES, ANOTHER FLAWLESS CALDER PLAN. I'M SURE THAT WON'T BLOW UP AT ALL.

ALSO... YOU MIGHT HAVE TO GET USED TO ME BEING AROUND, KID.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? YOU SAID--



I SAID WHAT I NEEDED TO.

LAKESIDE ACADEMY HAS A THREE STRIKE POLICY. I'M ON STRIKE TWO. TONIGHT GOES WRONG AND MAYBE I'LL WRAP UP SENIOR YEAR HERE WITH YOU IN THIS DUMP.



WE CAN'T DO THIS. IF WE'RE CAUGHT AND THEY CALL THE POLICE...

YOU THINK I CARE?



WAIT... ARE YOU KIDDING ME?

HUH?



THAT CHICK JUST **BAILED** ON THE BOX OFFICE TABLE AND NOBODY NOTICED. HAH! THIS IS PERFECT.



NO! WAIT. THE PLAN!



UH... HELLO, MR. BEARD.

CALDER... I HAVE TO SAY I'M **SURPRISED** TO SEE YOU HERE.

JUST...JUST THOUGHT I'D SEE WHAT ALL THE FUSS WAS ABOUT.

SHAKESPEARE AND ALL.



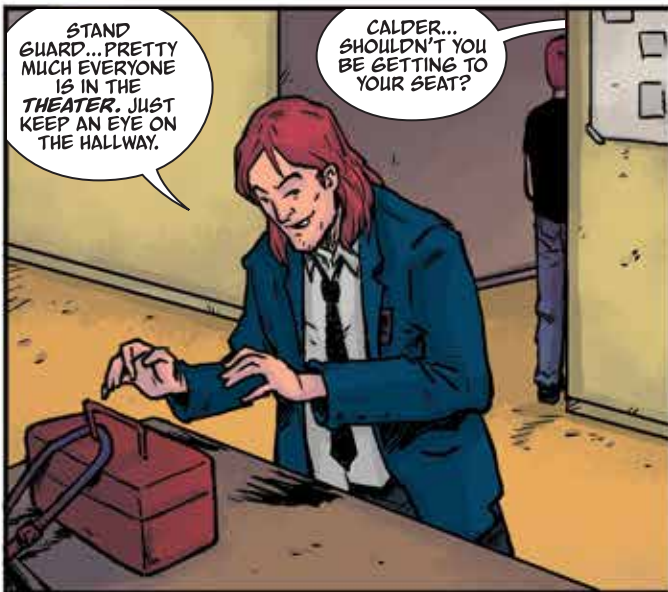
HMM.

WHAT'S YOUR DAMAGE, CALDER...



THERE ARE **TEACHERS** ALL OVER THE PLACE!

STOP BEING SUCH A WISS AND HAND ME THE WIRE CUTTERS. THE CASHBOX IS CHAINED TO THE TABLE.

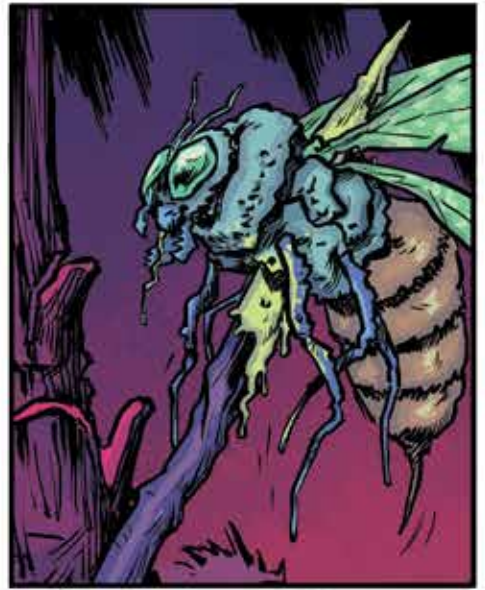


STAND GUARD...PRETTY MUCH EVERYONE IS IN THE **THEATER**. JUST KEEP AN EYE ON THE HALLWAY.

CALDER... SHOULDN'T YOU BE GETTING TO YOUR SEAT?



THE SHOW HAS ALREADY STARTED...

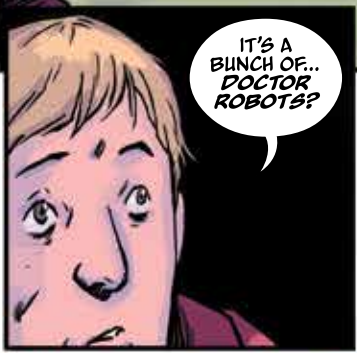












IT'S A BUNCH OF... DOCTOR ROBOTS?



WALLY!  
NO!



RUN.  
OR WE ALL  
DIE.







THIS ISN'T GOING TO WORK.

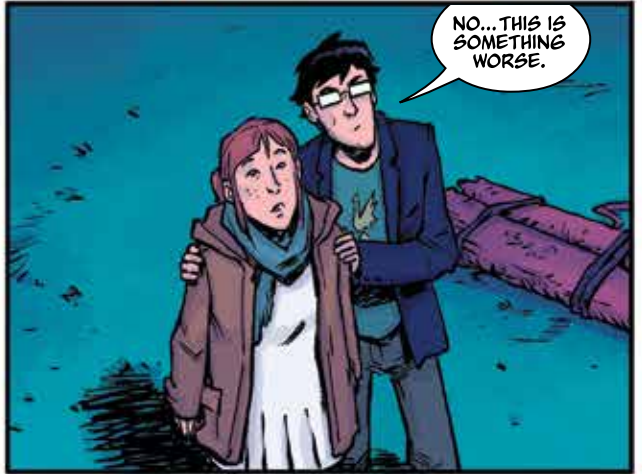
WAIT... DO YOU HEAR THAT...



MRAH



DOCTOR ROBOT?



NO... THIS IS SOMETHING WORSE.



ROOAAA





CHAPTER  
**SEVEN**



ONE YEAR AGO.

STONES  
DON'T BREAK.  
THAT'S WHAT YOUR  
GRANDFATHER  
ALWAYS SAID.

NOW, I'M  
NOT SURE HE WAS  
TALKING ABOUT FIRING  
THE **THIRD** CATERING  
SERVICE THIS MONTH,  
BUT HONEY, IT'S YOUR  
WEDDING AND I'VE  
GOT YOUR  
BACK.

NOW, I TALKED TO THE  
**PASTOR**...AND I'M  
SORRY, HONEY, HE'S JUST  
NOT COMFORTABLE...

NO, YOU  
KNOW HIM. HE  
LOVES **BOTH** OF  
YOU GIRLS. AND HE'S  
BEEN INCREDIBLY  
SUPPORTIVE...

NO. NOT  
SUPPORTIVE  
ENOUGH.

0000 3G 20:20  
ISAAC ANDREWS says  
Aaaahhh! I am freaking out!  
OPENING NIGHT!!!!  
3 NEW EMAILS.

BUT I'M  
WORKING ON  
IT, HONEY.  
REMEMBER  
WHAT I  
SAID?

THAT'S RIGHT,  
GIRL. **STONES**.  
THEY DON'T  
BREAK.

LOVE  
YOU,  
TOO.

CLIK



YOU KNOW THE FUNNY THING, BEN? WHENEVER MY POP WOULD SAY THAT LINE, I'D WINCE SO HARD YOU'D THINK MY FACE WAS TRYING TO FLIP *INSIDE OUT*.

BUT NOW I MIGHT AS WELL *TATTOO* THE DAMN THING ON MY CHEST.



DAD...

WHAT, DON'T THINK YOUR DAD'D LOOK GOOD WITH A BIG OL' CHEST TATTOO?

WATCH THE ROAD.

I'M WATCHING. I'M WATCHING.



YOUR *SISTER*... SHE'S SOMETHING, ISN'T SHE? STRONGEST ONE OF US YET. STILL REMEMBER THE NIGHT SHE *CAME OUT* TO US.

THERE WAS FIRE IN HER EYES, I WAS SO PROUD OF HER. AND NOW SHE'S GETTING MARRIED TO THAT WONDERFUL GIRL...



BUT I HAVE TO SAY, YOUR MOTHER AND I SIGHED A DEEP BREATH OF RELIEF WHEN YOU TOLD US ABOUT THIS *GIRL* YOU WERE TAKING TO THE SHOW TONIGHT.

I'M NOT OLD FASHIONED. YOU KNOW I'M NOT.

BUT WHAT CAN I SAY? PART OF ME JUST WANTS *GRANDKIDS*.



I'M SORRY, I'M SORRY, I KNOW. THIS ISN'T A *DATE*. I PROMISE, I'M NOT GOING TO EMBARRASS YOU.



I'LL BE SITTING ALL THE WAY IN THE BACK.





BEN!



SO, I FIGURED OUT WHERE THE CAST PARTY IS TONIGHT.

I'M PRETTY SURE ISAAC WILL BE THERE... STAGE CREW KIDS USUALLY TAG ALONG AND HIDE IN THE SHADOWS. JUST PROMISE ME YOU'LL ACTUALLY TALK TO HIM THIS TIME.

MANY BOTHAN SPIES DIED TO GET ME THIS INFORMATION. DON'T WASTE IT, BUDDY.



BEN, WHAT'S WRONG? YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'VE SEEN A GHOST.

ARE THERE GHOSTS AROUND HERE, BEN? AM I A GHOST? ARE WE BOTH GHOSTS? ARE WE ABOUT TO HAVE A FUN GHOST PARTY?



JUST... OKAY...

I NEED YOU TO PLAY ALONG.



DAD, I WANT YOU TO MEET KAYLA.



MY GIRLFRIEND.

NOW.

**MRAAAGH!**





WHERE ARE THEY?



THEY'VE DOUBLED BACK...

SOMETHING HAS THEM SPOOKED...



NOT THEM! WHERE ARE ISAAC AND BEN?!



D-DON'T STOP... PANT PANT

CAN'T STOP... PANT PANT



BEN! WATCH OUT!



NO!





HE MUST BE A RUNT... HE'S SO SCARED...

THEY MUST HAVE TRIED TO HURT HIM.

THAT SEEMS WHOLLY IN CHARACTER...

OH, CRAP. HOLD TIGHT. THIS IS GOING TO SUCK.





DON'T LET IT DO THAT!

I THINK THE ONLY REASON IT'S RUNNING THE WAY I WANT IT TO IS BECAUSE IT DOESN'T WANT TO DIE!

















ARE YOU OKAY?

THERE'S... THERE ARE TOO MANY OF THEM. I THINK THEY SMELL DOCTOR ROBOT... THEY'RE A LITTLE CONFUSED... BUT...

I CAN'T RUN ANYMORE.



THAT'S ALL THERE IS... ISN'T IT?



JUST DO IT, THEN!

JUST KILL ME!!



NO!



WHY?! WHY FIGHT?! WE'VE ALREADY LOST EVERYTHING...

OUR FAMILIES... OUR FRIENDS... OUR WHOLE FREAKING PLANET! WE'RE NEVER GOING TO SEE THEM AGAIN! WE'RE JUST HERE ALONE, WAITING TO DIE.

COME ON! IF THERE'S SOME GREAT REASON... JUST TELL ME! TELL ME ONE GOOD REASON I SHOULD KEEP ON FIGHTING!



SAY SOMETHING. SAY ANYTHING!













THIS IS THE SECRET, KAREN.

THIS WORLD IS A WEAPON. AND IT WANTS US TO WIELD IT.



I KNOW, GIDEON... IF THE BOY DOESN'T DIE SOON...



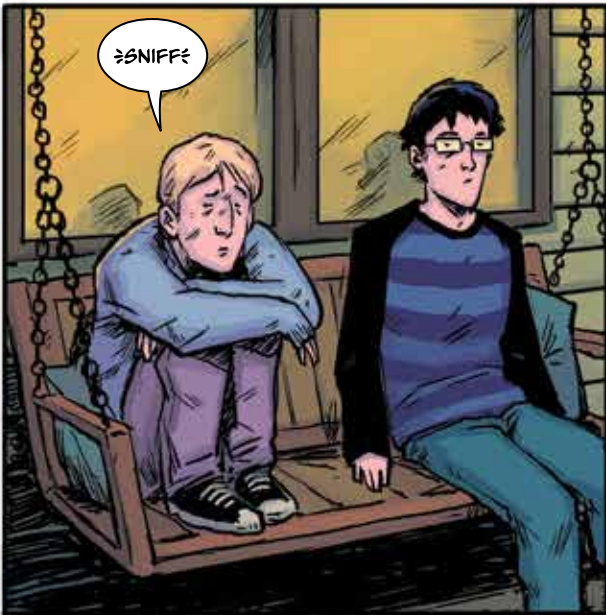
WE ALL WILL.



CHAPTER  
**EIGHT**



ONE YEAR AGO.







HE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT SEEING YOU TOMORROW. WHAT'S TOMORROW?

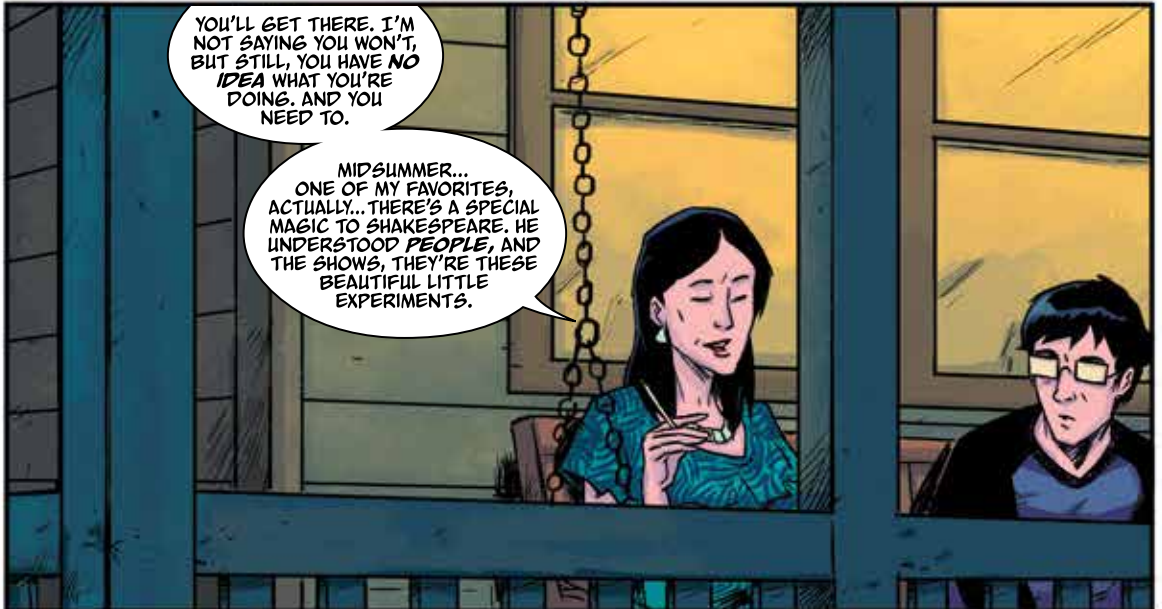
JUST A STUPID *SCHOOL PLAY*. HE DIDN'T EVEN GET IN, BUT HE'S BEEN WORKING ON THE *SETS* FOR THE LAST TWO MONTHS. *MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*.



HM.

ADRIAN, YOU'RE *NOT* AS SMART AS YOU *THINK* YOU ARE. I HOPE THERE'S A PART OF YOU THAT REALIZES THAT.

THANK YOU, MOTHER.

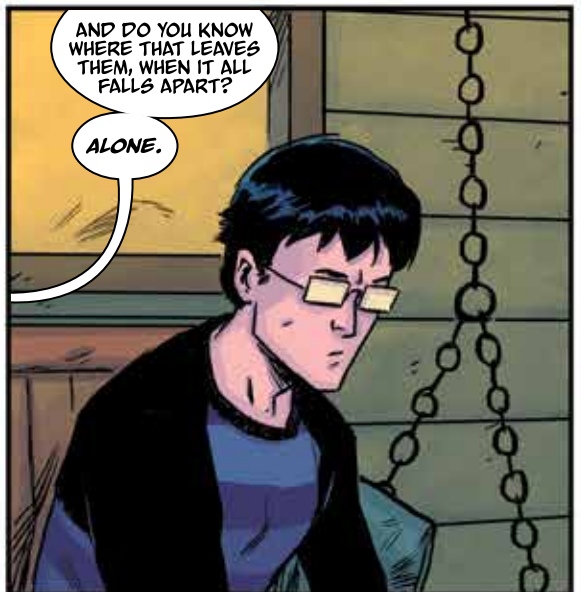


YOU'LL GET THERE. I'M NOT SAYING YOU WON'T, BUT STILL, YOU HAVE *NO IDEA* WHAT YOU'RE DOING. AND YOU NEED TO.

MIDSUMMER... ONE OF MY FAVORITES, ACTUALLY... THERE'S A SPECIAL MAGIC TO SHAKESPEARE. HE UNDERSTOOD *PEOPLE*, AND THE SHOWS, THEY'RE THESE BEAUTIFUL LITTLE EXPERIMENTS.



YOU SEE ALL OF THESE PEOPLE BEING PUSHED OUT OF THEIR SAFE LITTLE LIVES... THEY THINK THEY KNOW WHAT THEY *WANT*. THEY THINK THEY KNOW HOW TO *SHAPE* THEIR OWN DESTINIES, BUT THEY FIND IT CAN ALL *UNRAVEL* IN A MOMENT.



AND DO YOU KNOW WHERE THAT LEAVES THEM, WHEN IT ALL FALLS APART?

ALONE.



**NOW.**

KEEP GOING...



DUDE, YOUR EYES... THEY'RE BLEEDING...

I DON'T CARE! JUST KEEP GOING!



I CAN SEE... I CAN SEE HOW IT ALL CONNECTS... I CAN SEE...



ADRIAN, YOU HAVE TO STOP.



**NO!**



OH, GOD, THEY'RE GETTING CLOSER--



**THERE.**





I HEARD THE STORIES... I DIDN'T BELIEVE THEM.

MY GOD, I NEVER BELIEVED THEM.



WE NEED TO HURRY. THE BOY HAS NO IDEA WHAT HE'S PLAYING WITH HERE.

WHAT IS THIS PLACE?



THESE WOODS... THEY'RE A PRISON. THAT'S HOW WE'VE COME TO UNDERSTAND IT.

AND YOUR FRIEND... HE'S WAKING THAT PRISON BACK UP FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OVER TWO HUNDRED YEARS.



GIDEON'S SPOTTED THEM. JUST OVER THE RIDGE, ALONG THE INVISIBLE WALL...





WAIT... DO YOU HEAR THAT?

BEN, IT'S ADRIAN... I HEARD HIM SCREAMING.



DON'T STAND... YOUR LEG--

WE HAVE TO GO TO HIM.

...OKAY.



BEN...

LOOK. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO REACT TO EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENING. I THINK IT'S FAIR NOT TO HAVE ANY IDEA HOW TO REACT TO ALL OF THIS...

I'M SO FRIGHTENED, MY BRAIN IS *SHORT-CIRCUITING* RIGHT NOW.



BUT... IT WAS *NICE*.

IT'S NICE TO FEEL WANTED.



YOU JUST WISH IT WAS *HIM*.



...



YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND... I DON'T THINK YOU *CAN*. OUR RELATIONSHIP IS COMPLICATED, ME AND ADRIAN...



PEOPLE SEE HIM AS *COLD*... THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND.

HE NEEDS PEOPLE. HE NEEDS ME. SOMETIMES... HE'S JUST NOT VERY GOOD AT *SHOWING* THAT.





MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM



I'M SORRY.

I KNOW I AM TERRIBLE AT SAYING THAT, BUT I REALLY, HONESTLY, AM SORRY. NOT FOR NOT LIKING YOU BACK...I CAN'T HELP THAT I'M STRAIGHT, BUT HOW I HANDLED IT AND HOW I HANDLE YOU IN GENERAL...I KNOW I'M NOT AN EASY FRIEND TO HAVE.

MOST PEOPLE THROW ME AWAY PRETTY MUCH INSTANTLY, BUT YOU'VE BEEN STANDING THERE AT MY SIDE SINCE OUR FRESHMAN YEAR HOMEROOM. I KEPT SAYING SUCH TERRIBLE THINGS, AND YOU STILL SAT DOWN NEXT TO ME EVERY DAY. I'VE NEVER REALLY HAD A FRIEND BEFORE. SOMEBODY WHO CARES ABOUT ME LIKE YOU DO. SOMETIMES I DON'T KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH IT. WELL, MAYBE ALL THE TIMES.

BUT I NEED YOU IN MY LIFE. I NEED YOU TO MAKE FUN OF ME WHEN I DO SOMETHING STUPID, AND CALL ME OUT WHEN I SAY SOMETHING CRUEL. I NEED YOU THERE SO I DON'T COMPLETELY LOSE TRACK OF MYSELF.

I KNOW I COULDN'T SAY THIS OUT LOUD, SO I WROTE IT OUT...BUT ONCE AGAIN. I'M SORRY. YOU'RE THE BEST AND ONLY FRIEND I'VE EVER HAD. PLEASE DON'T GIVE UP ON ME YET.

ADRIAN



GET BACK!

KAREN, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND... THEY'VE BEEN TELLING ME... THIS IS SO MUCH WORSE THAN YOU THINK...



SANAMI? YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY WANT TO LET THEM...

THIS IS BIGGER THAN US, KAREN!

LISTEN TO YOUR FRIEND, GIRL.



WE'RE NOT CRUEL. WE'RE NOT HERE TO HURT YOU...

GOD KNOWS, I'VE LOST A FRIEND TODAY ALREADY... RAISED HIM FROM A CHICK... BUT THAT IS HOW THIS FOREST WORKS.

THERE ARE RULES HERE. A DELICATE BALANCE THAT YOUR FRIEND IS THROWING WILDLY OUT OF CONTROL.



I PROMISE, CHILD. I WILL MAKE IT PAINLESS.



TWAK!

LIKE HELL YOU WILL!







HE'S AWAKE... DAMMIT... EVERYONE STAND BACK!

WHAT DO YOU THINK HE'S GOING TO DO? THIS IS ALL SO STUPID.



CHILDREN. STAND BESIDE ME.

WHAT'S GOING ON... WHAT'S HAPPENING?



DRAGONS...



NONE OF YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS PLACE IS, DO YOU?

THE KIND OF **POWER** THEY'VE OFFERED, GENERATION AFTER GENERATION.



IF YOU DON'T WANT IT, I'LL JUST TAKE IT FOR MYSELF.





GWOMP.

GWOMP?

IT'S MY HUGGING NOISE. FOR HUGS.



YOU SEEM LIKE YOU'RE IN A BETTER MOOD.

I AM. AND I UNDERSTAND NOW.



THANK YOU FOR WRITING ALL THAT... I KNOW IT MUST HAVE BEEN HARD. BUT NOW I KNOW...

I KNEW I MATTERED TO YOU. I KNEW.



MY MOM...

YEAH, GO. I HAVE SOME DUMB AFTER-PARTY TO GO TO. I'LL TEXT YOU AFTER?

...SURE.



WHY DID YOU DO THAT, MOM?

WHY DID YOU WRITE THAT NOTE? WHAT DID YOU EVEN SAY?





I TOLD HIM YOU NEEDED HIM.



BECAUSE YOU DO.

WHY?



THIS IS LUDICROUS.



I KNOW YOU, ADRIAN. I SEE SO MUCH OF MYSELF IN YOU, BUT THERE'S ONE LESSON YOU NEVER LEARNED. ONE YOU REFUSE TO LEARN; TIME AFTER TIME.

THERE'S ONLY ONE KIND OF POWER IN THE WORLD. ONLY ONE WAY TO TAKE THAT MAGNIFICENT BRAIN OF YOURS AND WIELD IT...

AND THAT'S THROUGH THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU. IF YOU MAKE THEM FEEL LIKE YOU NEED THEM AS MUCH AS THEY NEED YOU, YOU CAN MAKE THEM DO ANYTHING.



IT'S A POWERFUL THING. IT'S THE POWER OF CONTROL.

IMAGINE IT, ADRIAN. IMAGINE WHEN YOU MIGHT NEED IT. BEING ABLE TO SHAPE PEOPLE'S LIVES IN ORDER TO GET YOU WHAT YOU WANT. WHAT YOU NEED.

THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT, ISN'T IT?



YES.



THEN STOP BEING AN IDIOT, AND DON'T THROW AWAY THE ONLY PERSON YOU'VE EVER HAD CONTROL OVER.



"AT LEAST UNTIL YOU HAVE SOMETHING FAR BETTER IN YOUR GRASP."



COME ON, BOY... JUST LET THEM GO.



NO.

BUT YOUR FRIEND...

I DON'T CARE.



REALLY. KILL HIM. I DON'T CARE.

I HAVE WORK TO DO, AND I DON'T NEED HIM ANYMORE. I DON'T NEED ANY OF THEM.

YOU DON'T... YOU CAN'T...



OH FOR THE LOVE OF... SHUT THE HELL UP!

DO YOU KNOW HOW SICK TO DEATH I AM OF EVERY LUDICROUS LITTLE PROBLEM IN YOUR LIFE, ISAAC?!



I HAVE A MISSION HERE. I HAVE A HIGHER PURPOSE.

IT'S TIME I GOT ON WITH IT.



Twip!

**BAM!**

**QUICK!  
THE OTHER!  
GET THE  
OTHER.**

**NO!**







WE NEVER SHOULD HAVE LEFT THE SCHOOL. YOU WERE RIGHT...

OF COURSE I WAS RIGHT.

SHUT UP.



AWW... WE DOING THE LOVE THING? LET'S ALL GET IN ON THE LOVE THING.



THEY REALLY ARE JUST CHILDREN...

IT DOESN'T CHANGE ANYTHING. WE HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES. YOU KNOW WHO ELSE IS OUT THERE...

THEY COULD HAVE FOUND THE SITE ALREADY. HUNDREDS MORE TO USE AGAINST US... EVEN BESIDES WHAT THAT BOY COULD DO...



SHE'LL BE ABLE TO HOLD THEM.

YES. WE'LL DROP SOME CARGO, BUT WE CAN MAKE IT IN ONE TRIP. WE SHOULD LEAVE NOW.



NO.



GIDEON IS RIGHT. GIVE THEM A MOMENT. THEY'VE EARNED IT...

BUT WE'LL NEED TO SEND A MESSAGE.





COVER  
GALLERY





ISSUE FIVE COVER **MICHAEL DIALYNAS**



ISSUE SIX COVER **MICHAEL DIALYNAS**



ISSUE SEVEN COVER **MICHAEL DIALYNAS**



SDP  
14

ISSUE EIGHT COVER **MICHAEL DIALYNAS**



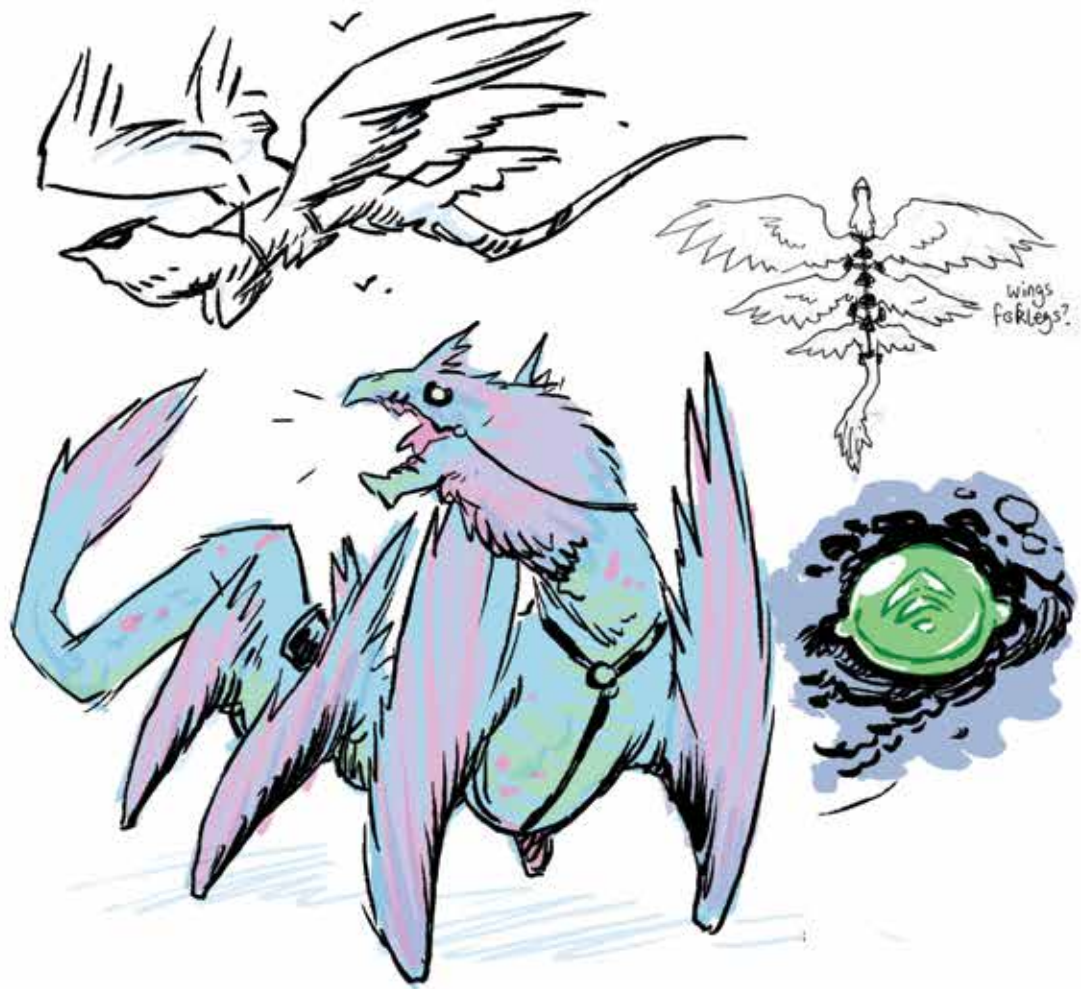
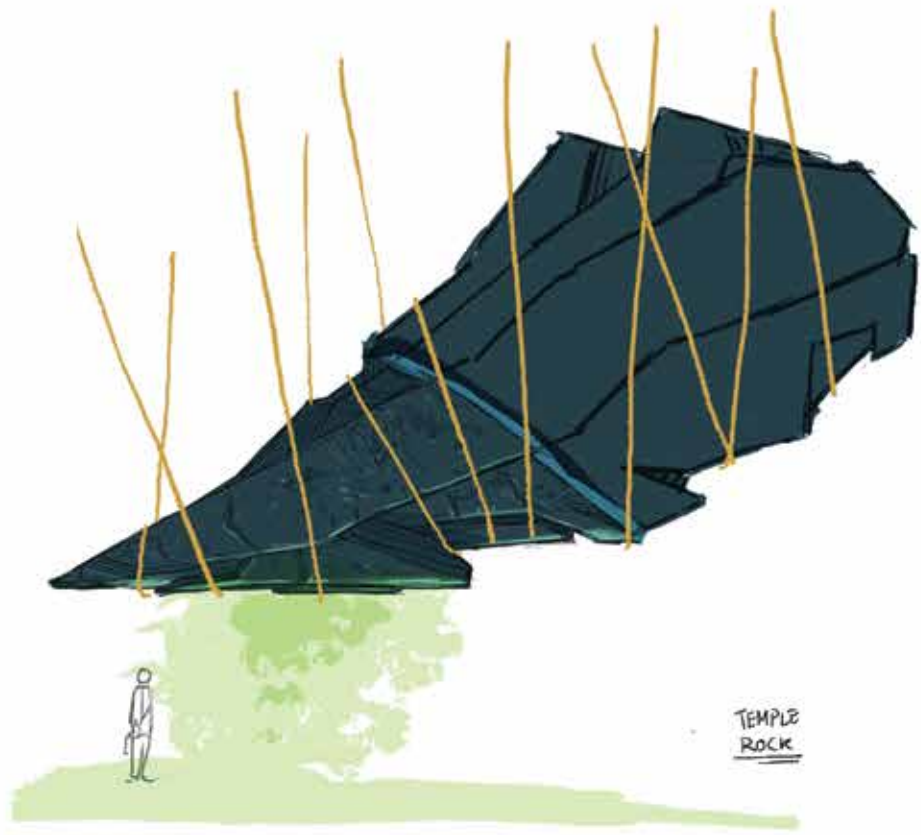
MICHAEL DIALYNAS  
**SKETCHBOOK**



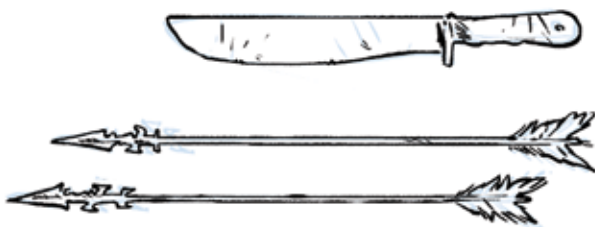
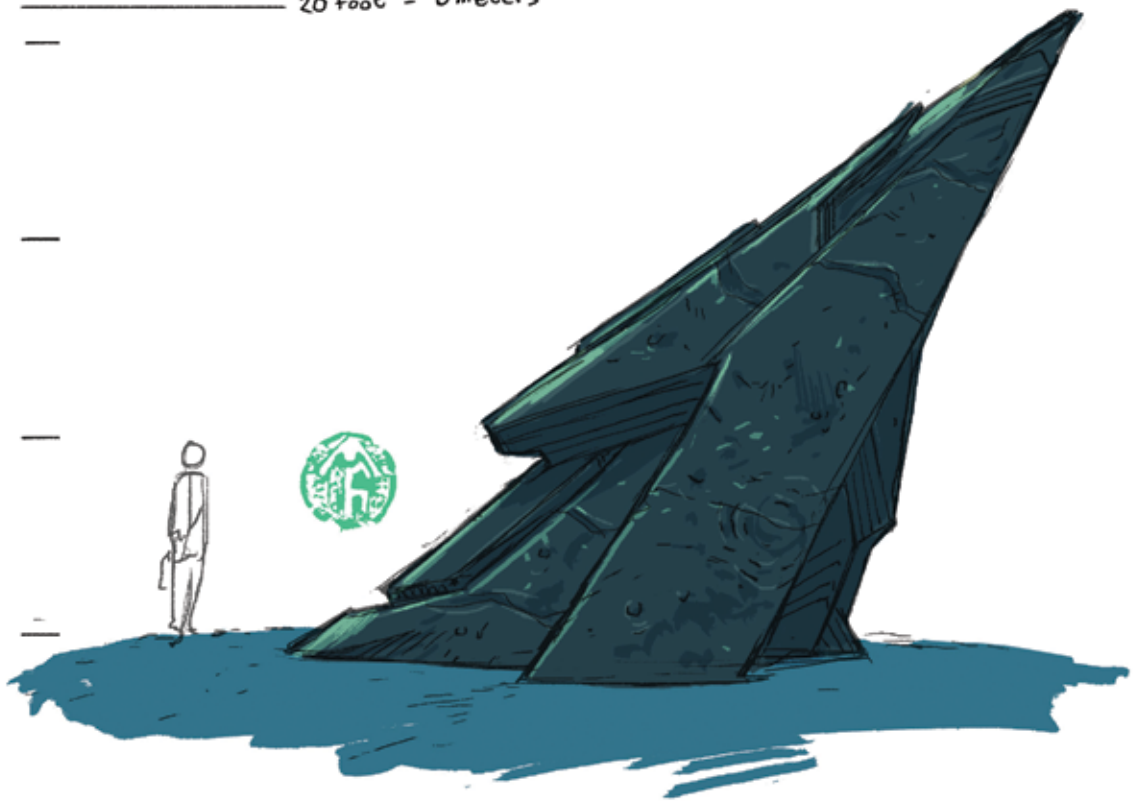


- SCARS
- BROKEN TOOTH
- STRIPES





20 foot - 6 meters







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. One year prior, the school held its first rendition of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” on a night that would prove fateful to both the students and faculty, as their lives crossed paths in an almost premonitory way, seeding the various horrors to come.

Created and written by **James Tynion IV** (*BATMAN ETERNAL*), illustrated by **Michael Dialynas** (*AMALA’S BLADE*), and colored by Josan Gonzalez, “The Swarm” collects the critically-acclaimed second arc of the best-selling series.

“...One of the most important comics being published today..”

—*Newsarama*

“It’s an incredibly emotionally-resonate, feel-good read, with great use of the comics craft...”

—*Graphic Policy*

“This might be my new favorite series!”

—*Forces of Geek*

