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VARIANT ISSUE #01

DRYAD

ISSUE #1

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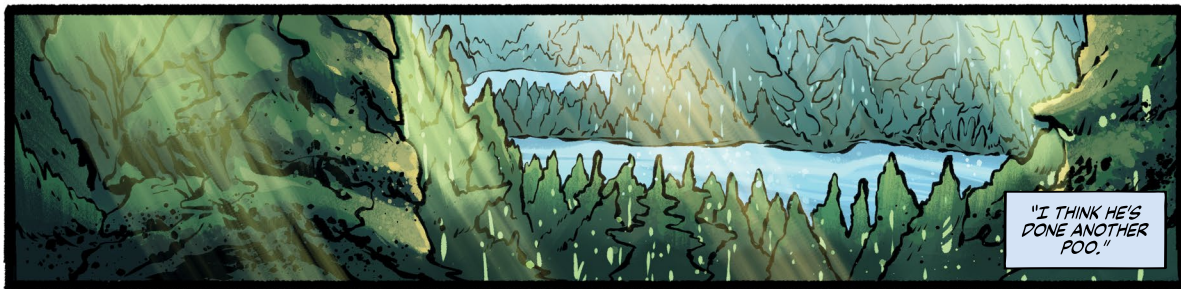
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LATER.

WE'RE
GOING TO
DIE OUT
HERE!

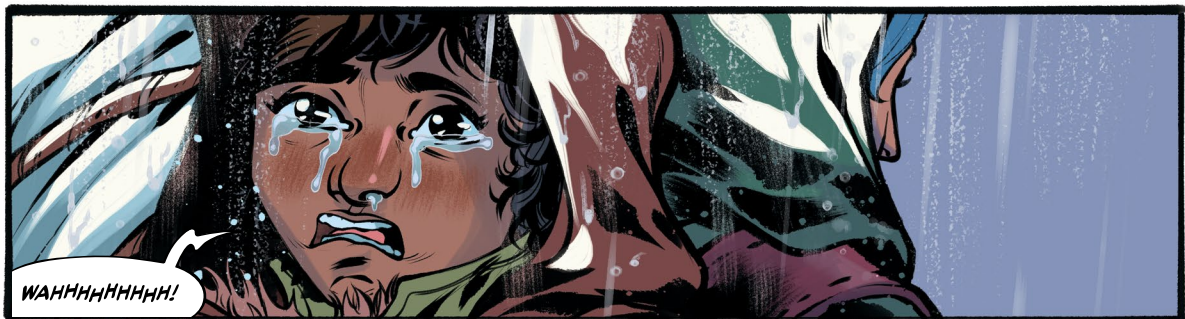
WE SHOULD'VE
ASKED FOR HELP! WE
KNOW PEOPLE, YALE! A
CITY FULL OF PEOPLE WHO
COULD'VE DROPPED US ON
THE DOORSTEP! THE
CHILDREN WOULD
BE SAFE!

NO! WE MAKE
THIS JOURNEY
ALONE! IT'S THE
ONLY WAY WE'LL BE
ACCEPTED!

WHY DID
WE THINK WE
COULD DO THIS?
WE'VE NEVER LEFT
THE CITY! I
CAN'T--

WE **HAVE**
TO BE CLOSE,
MORGAN!

CITY
OR NOT, YOU
BELIEVED THIS
WAS THE RIGHT
PATH!



WAHHHHHHHHH!



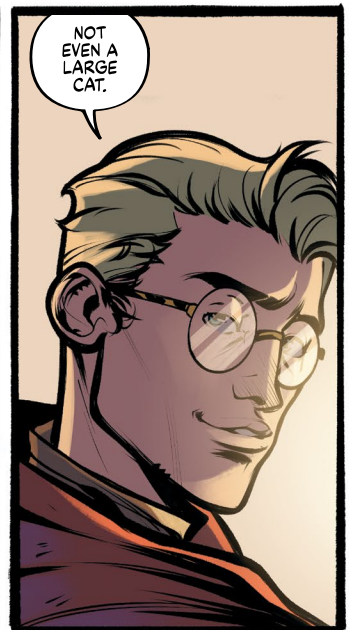
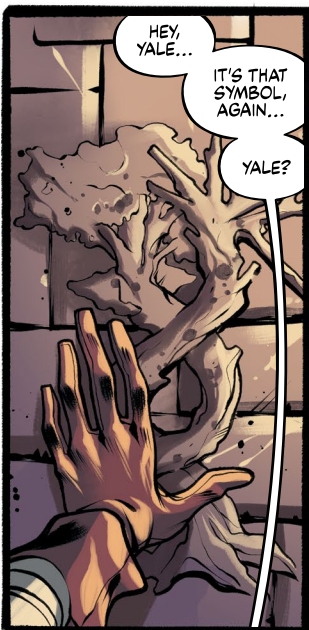
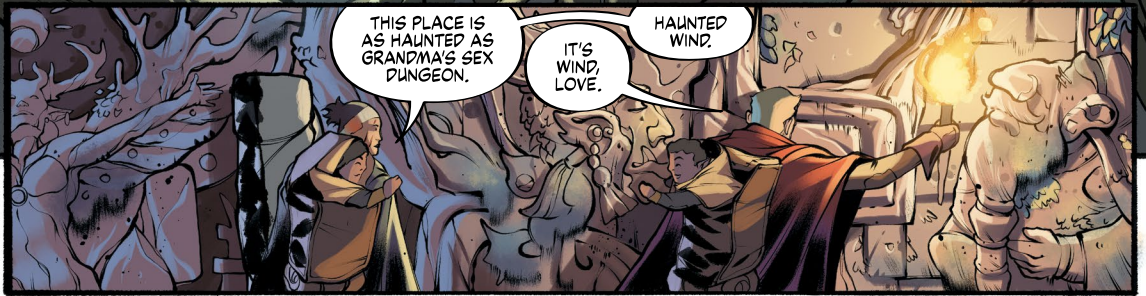
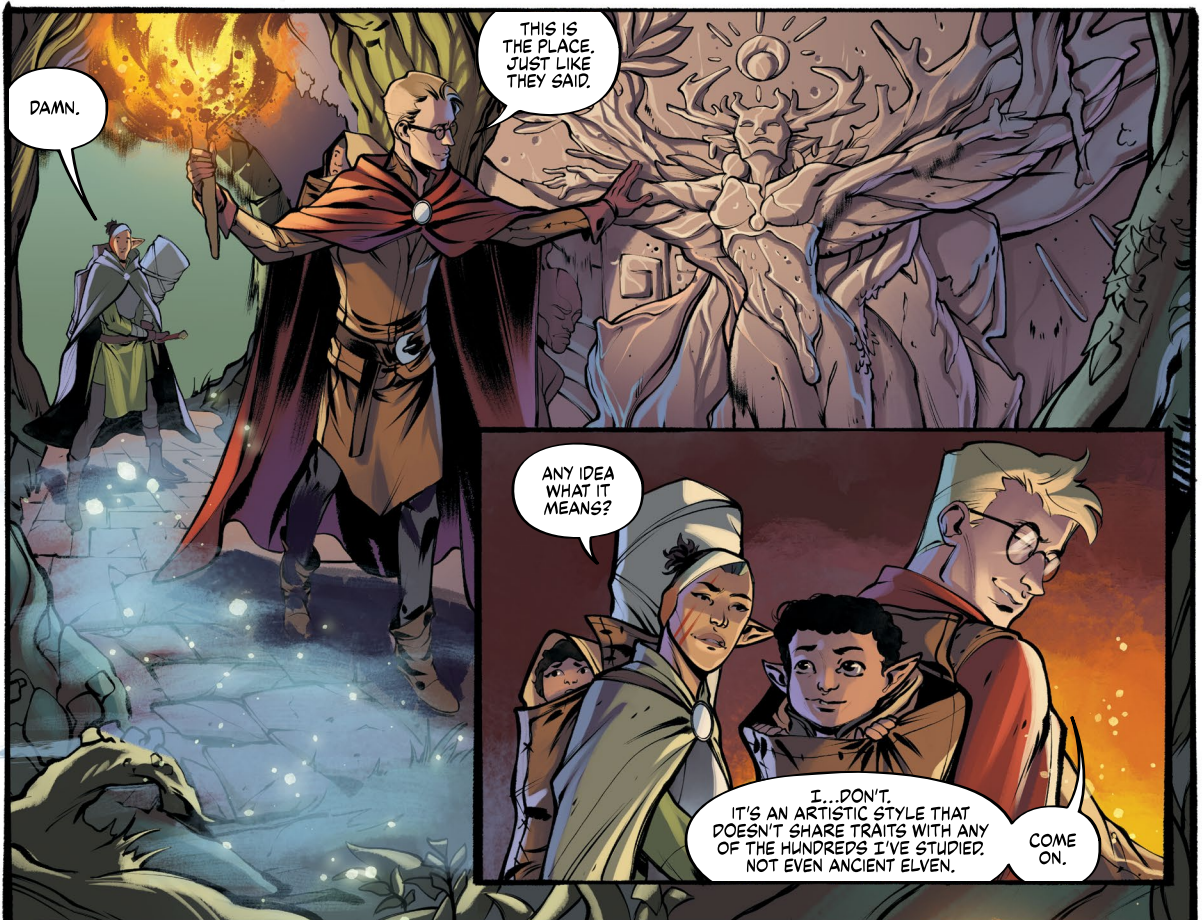
MAYBE,
I WAS
WRONG.



WAHHHHH!

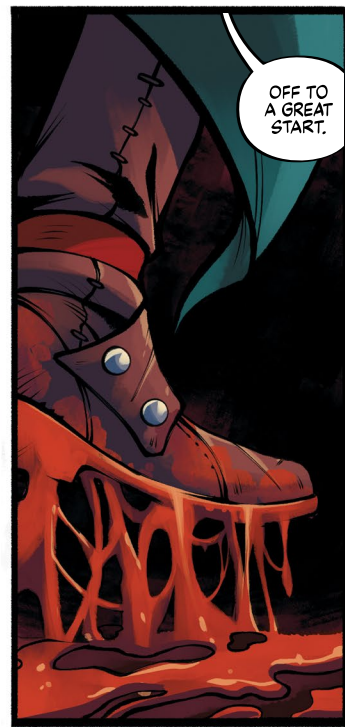
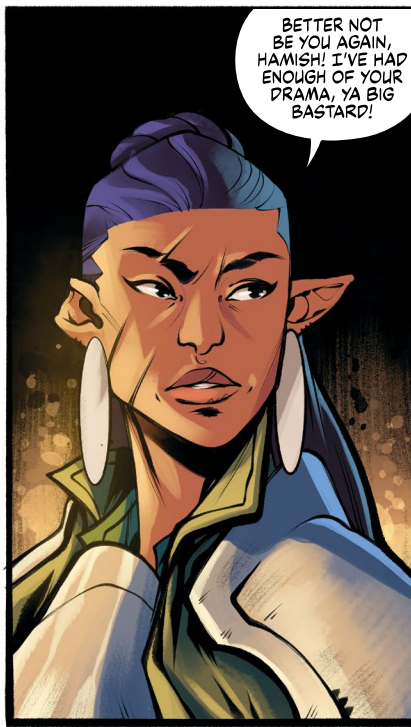
IT'S OKAY,
KID. I'M
HERE.











ESPECIALLY
WITH WHAT
YOU'VE DONE
TO COBY.

CHIT

CHIT

CHIT

CHIT

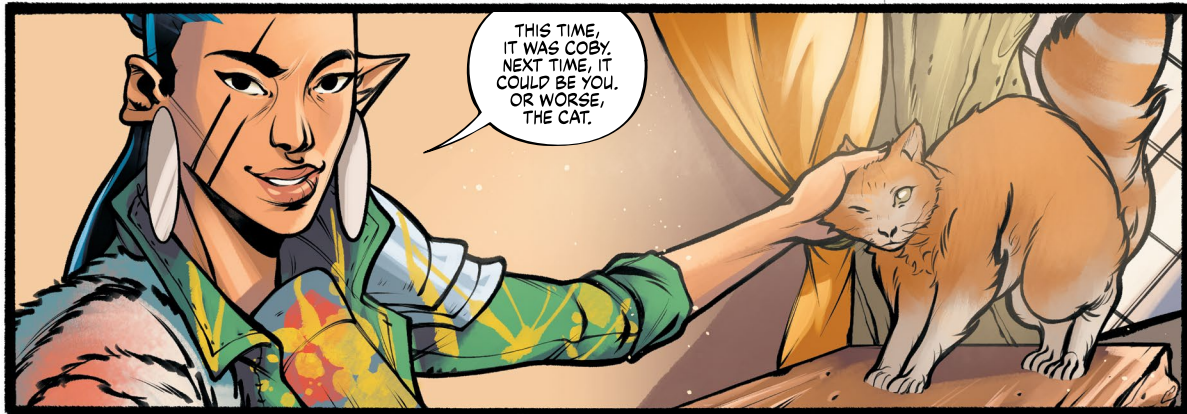
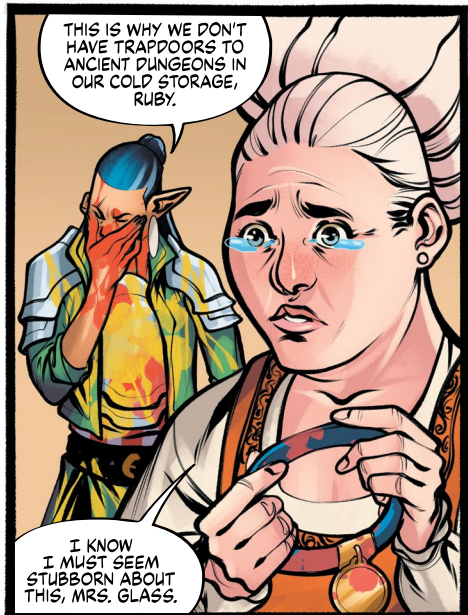
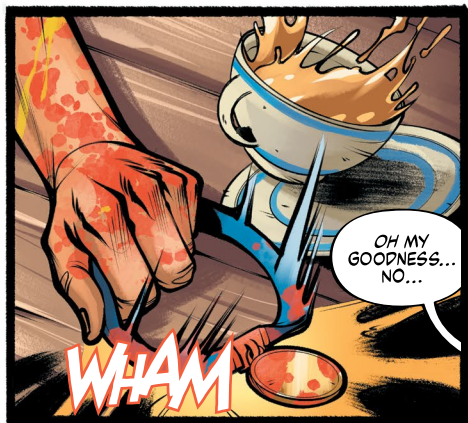
CHIT

SPURCH

SPLUT

A BIT MUCH,
DON'T YOU
THINK?

YAAAAHHHHH!







NOW THAT WE'RE INSIDE THE ANTECHAMBER, YOU'LL NOTICE JUST HOW **BEAUTIFUL** THE ARCHITECTURE TRULY IS. FROM THE SUPPORT PILLARS TO THE FLOOR, EVERY SURFACE WAS HAND-CARVED WITH A SYMBOL.

CAN YOU BELIEVE WE NOW STAND IN THE EXACT SPOT THESE MAGNIFICENT ARTISANS DID SOME **THIRTY-THOUSAND** YEARS AGO?



WHAT WAS THEIR WORLD LIKE? I AM **DYING** TO KNOW. DID THEY HAVE GRAND AMBITIONS, LIKE US? LOVE LIKE WE DO? PONDER PHILOSOPHY AND ART...

MR. GLASS.



RIGHT, SORRY.



POOR BASTARDS LIVED MORE INTERESTING LIVES THAN WE DO. CRAZY SACRIFICES, ORGIES. THIS TOWN COULD USE A GOOD ORGY.

THAT IS DISGUSTING. EVERYONE HERE IS **OLD**.



AS IF YOU WOULDN'T RATHER BE IN A DRUNK ORGY THAN HISTORY CLASS.

... SORRY, DAD, I'LL SHUT UP.

MR. GLASS...



NOW, IF YOU THOUGHT THE ANTECHAMBER WAS ASTONISHING...WELL, UP NEXT IS THE TEMPLE'S MAIN CHAMBER. FOLLOW ME...**IF YOU DARE!**



WELCOME TO THE BEATING HEART OF HISTORY, CLASS. WE'RE UNCERTAIN IF THERE WAS A GARDEN IN THE TEMPLE BEFORE IT WAS ABANDONED. WE **DO** KNOW THAT THE ACOLYTES OF THIS DEAD RELIGION WERE WELL-VERSED IN HERBALISM.

HOW?

THAT IS AN EXCELLENT QUESTION. WHILE THERE'S VERY LITTLE EVIDENCE ABOUT THIS PARTICULAR CULTURE, WE CAN LEARN A GREAT DEAL BY THEIR ART.



THE VIHIRI WERE PROLIFIC ARTISTS. WHILE SOME MIGHT VIEW THEIR WORK TO BE PRIMITIVE, THOSE WITH AN EYE FOR CRAFT CAN SPOT METAPHORICAL MEANING IN SIMPLE ICONOGRAPHY.



THE VIHIRI ART WITHIN THE TEMPLE WAS MADE BY TWO, OR THREE INDIVIDUALS WITH A PREDOMINANT THEME OF NATURE, PLANTS, ANIMALS.

A BALANCE OF LIFE BETWEEN THOSE THAT WORSHIPPED IT AND THAT WHICH NATURE, ITSELF WAS MADE UP OF.

THESE PEOPLE COMMITTED THEIR LIVES TO THIS PLACE. I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY GOD WOULD ABANDON THEM.



IT *IS* A MYSTERY. NO ONE KNOWS WHY GOD ABANDONED THIS WORLD.

PERHAPS HE FELT IT WAS TIME FOR US TO MAKE A GO OF LIFE ON OUR OWN.

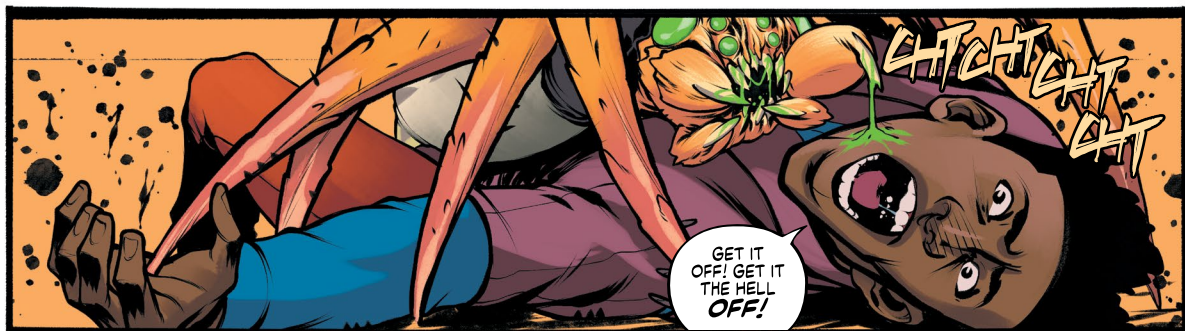
DID HE TAKE MAGIC WITH HIM, TOO, MR. GLASS?

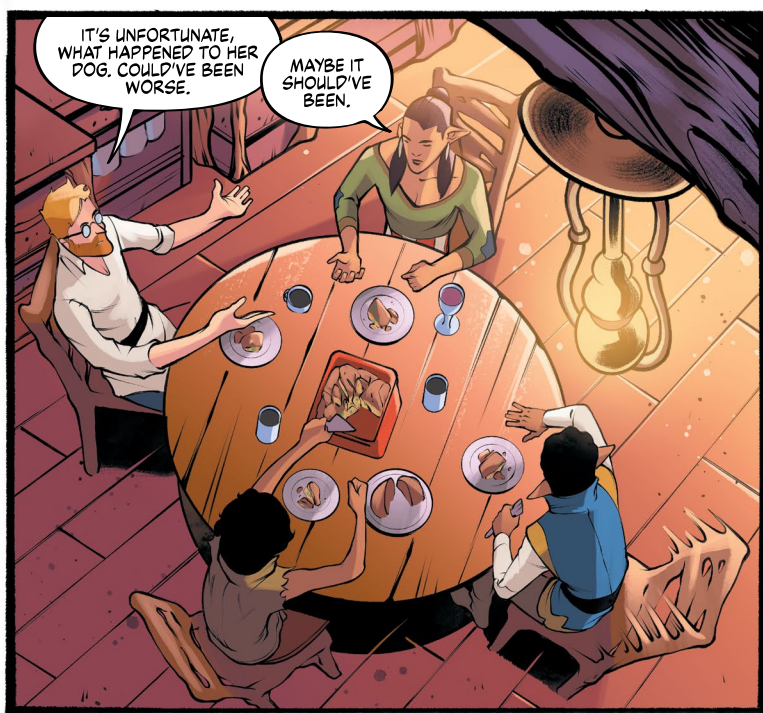
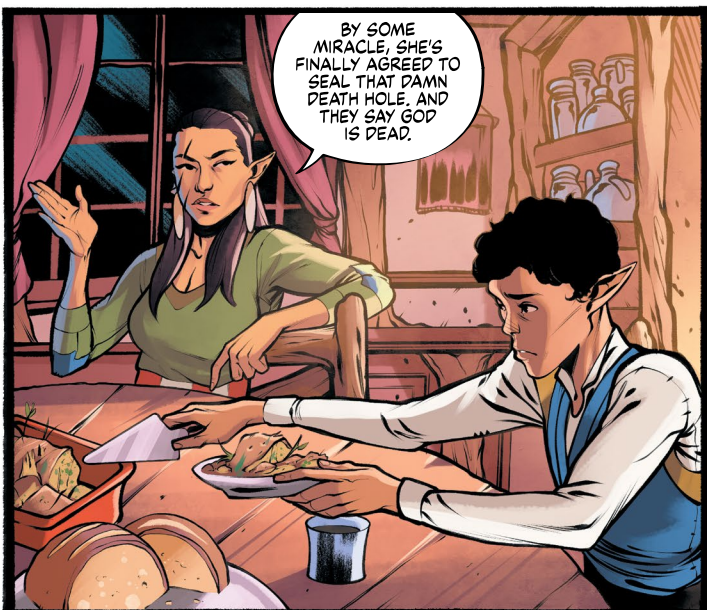
SOME BELIEVE.

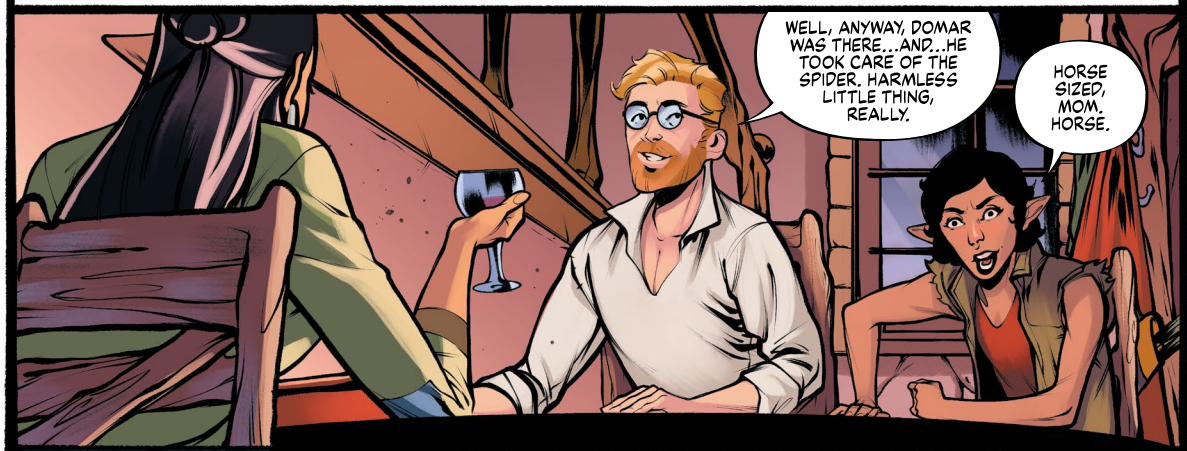
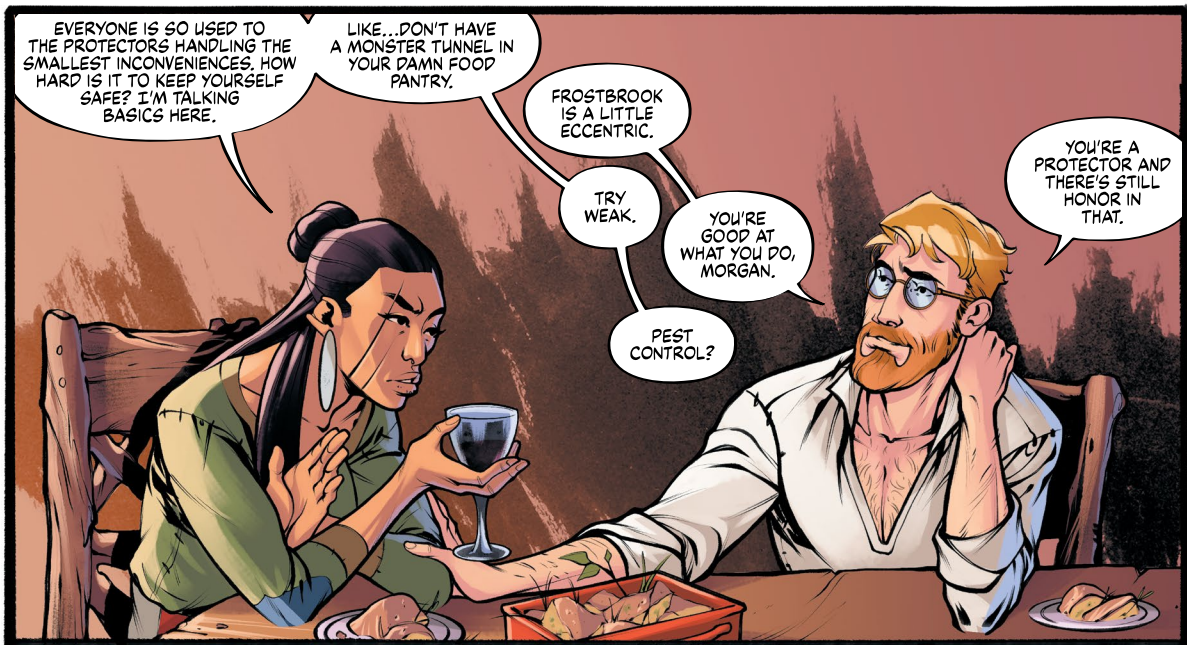
WHAT DO *YOU* BELIEVE?

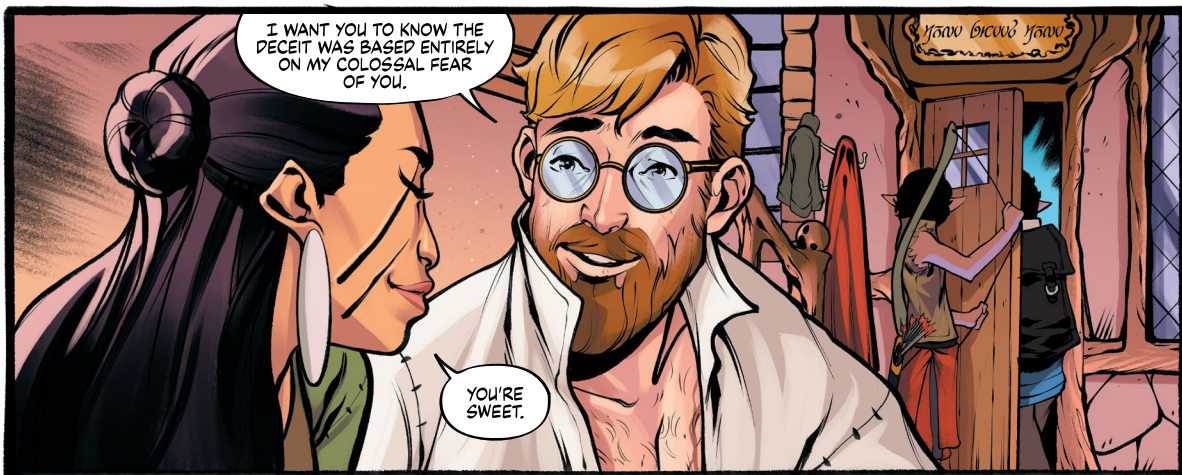
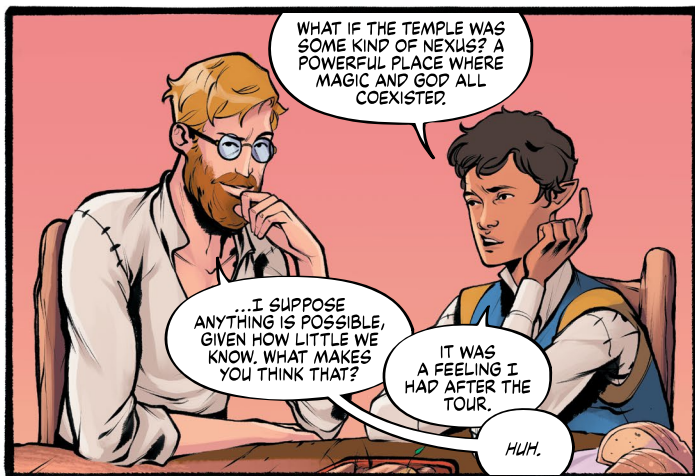
I'D SAY IT'S NEVER REALLY GONE AWAY--IT LIVES IN ALL OF US.

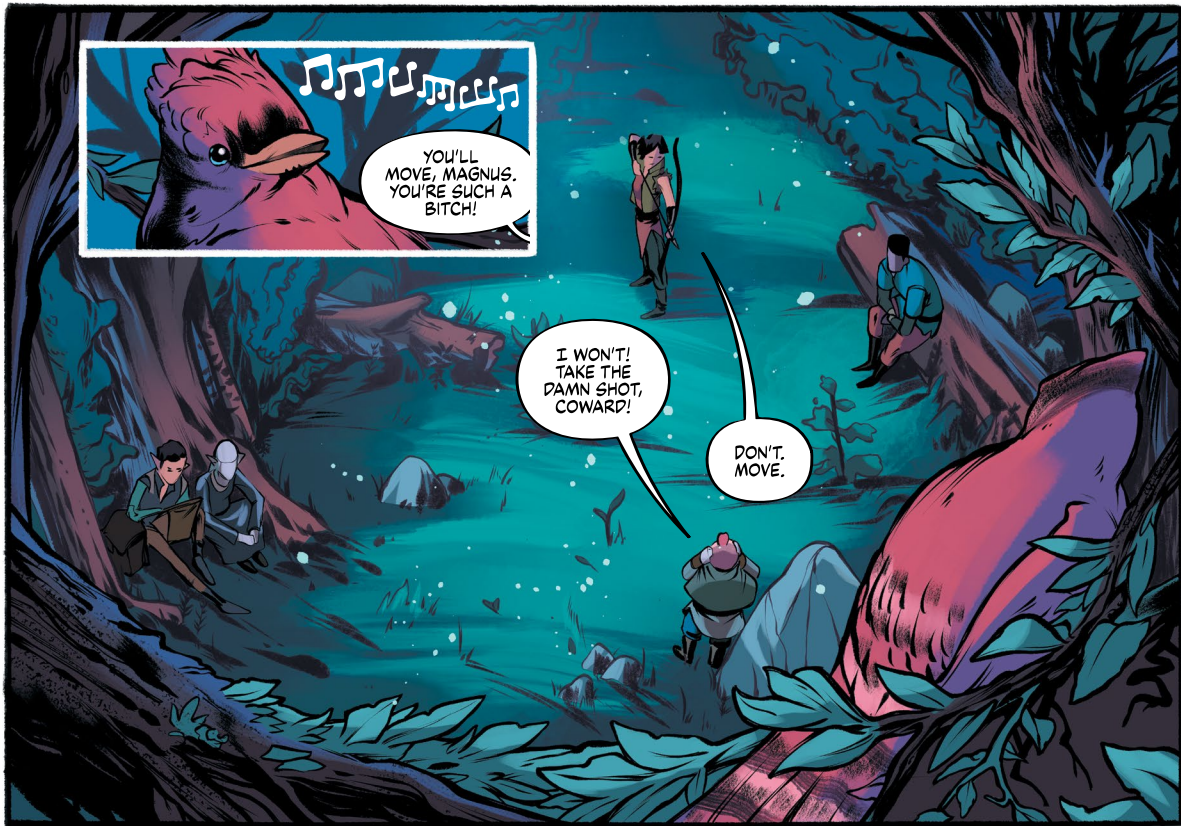
AHHHHH!

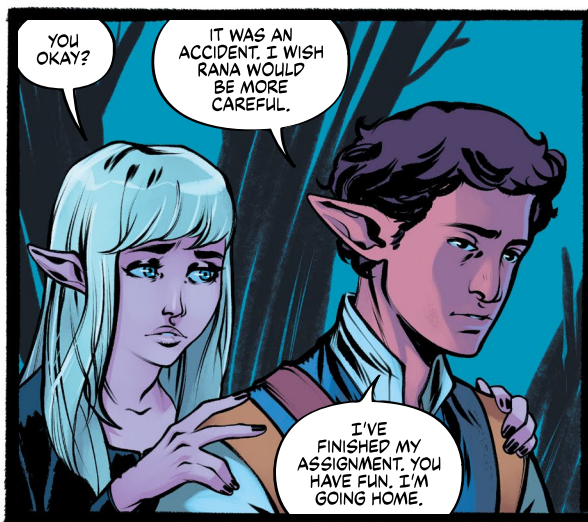
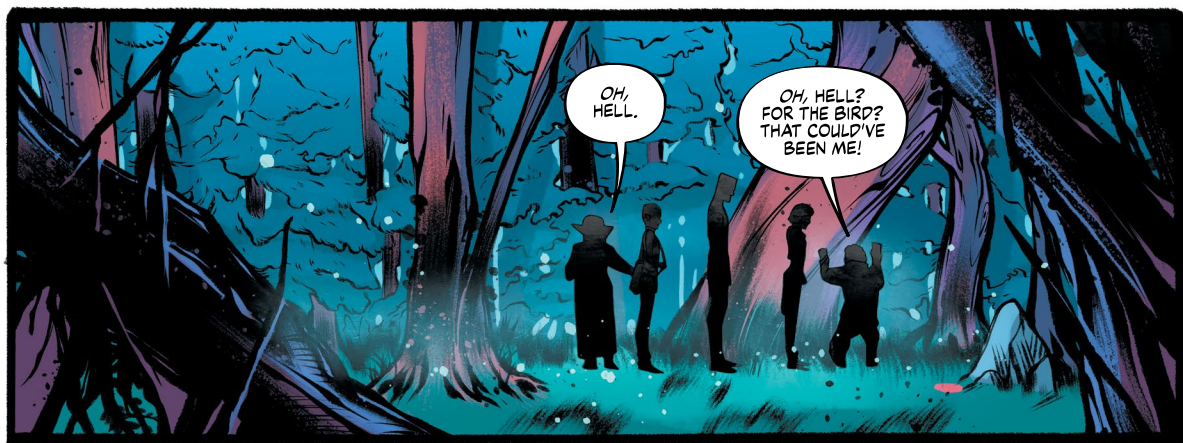










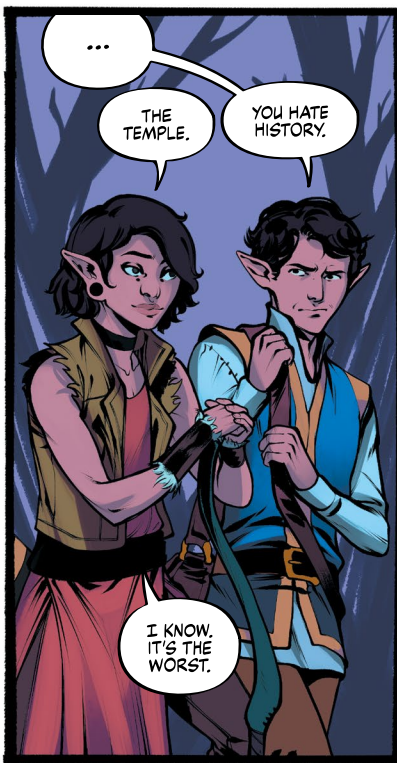




YOU ACT LIKE I'M THIS HUGE PAIN IN YOUR ASS, BUT, WE'RE NOT SO DIFFERENT.

YEAH, RIGHT.

WHAT YOU SAID TO MOM AND DAD ABOUT THE NEXUS THING, I HAD THE SAME THOUGHT.



...

THE TEMPLE.

YOU HATE HISTORY.

I KNOW, IT'S THE WORST.



YOU ACTUALLY LISTENED TO DAD?

NO, I'M TELLING YOU, IT'S LIKE YOU SAID, A FEELING.

WE SHOULD GO SNOOP AROUND.

NO.



WE BOTH SENSED IT, OUR CONNECTION... IT'S NEVER LET US DOWN BEFORE.

I GUESS...

THERE WERE A FEW INTERESTING GLYPHS. COULD BE WORTH SKETCHING IN MY JOURNAL.



I'M IN!

NIGHT'S YOUNG!

NO WAY! RANA ALMOST KILLED ME! REMEMBER?



MAN UP, MAGNUS.



YEAH,
MAN UP,
MAGNUS.



YOU
MAN UP...
RANA.



SO.
THANKS.

FOR
WHAT?

THIS.
BEING
HERE.

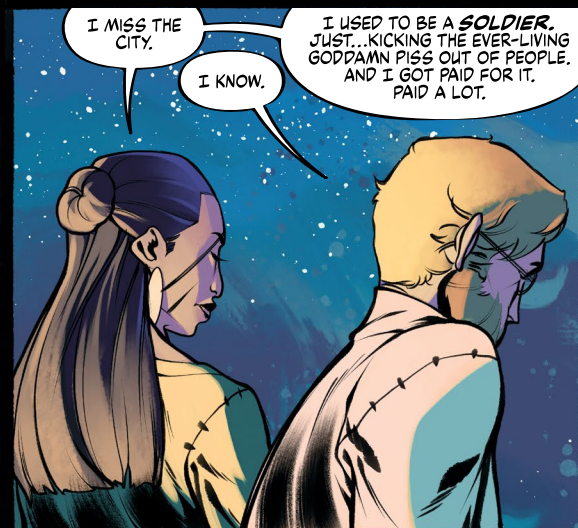
WE'RE
ADULTS. WE LIVE
WITH OUR CHOICES.
DOESN'T MEAN WE
WON'T HAVE
REGRETS.



YOU
HATE IT
HERE.

BUT I LOVE OUR KIDS. AND THAT'S
WHAT THEY CALL A BALANCED
LIFE. YOU'RE ALWAYS GOING
ON ABOUT THAT.

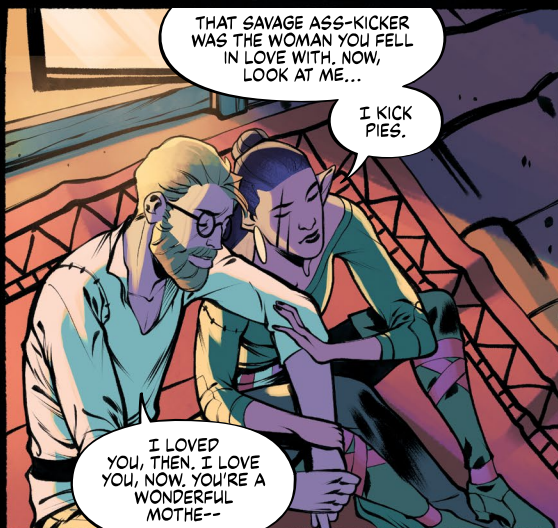
TALK
TO ME,
MORGAN.



I MISS THE
CITY.

I KNOW.

I USED TO BE A **SOLDIER**.
JUST... KICKING THE EVER-LIVING
GODDAMN PISS OUT OF PEOPLE.
AND I GOT PAID FOR IT.
PAID A LOT.



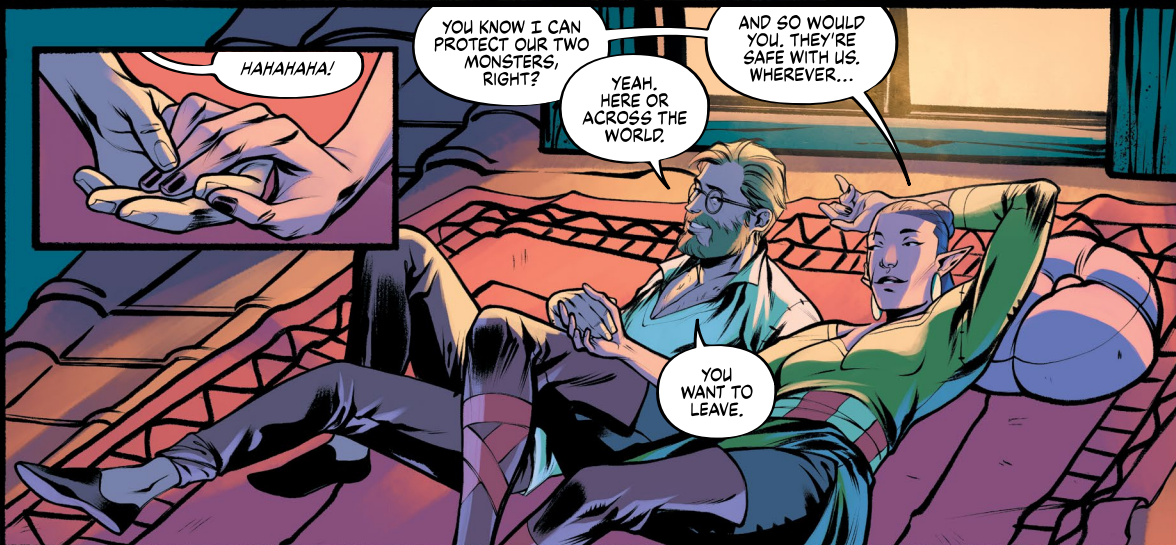
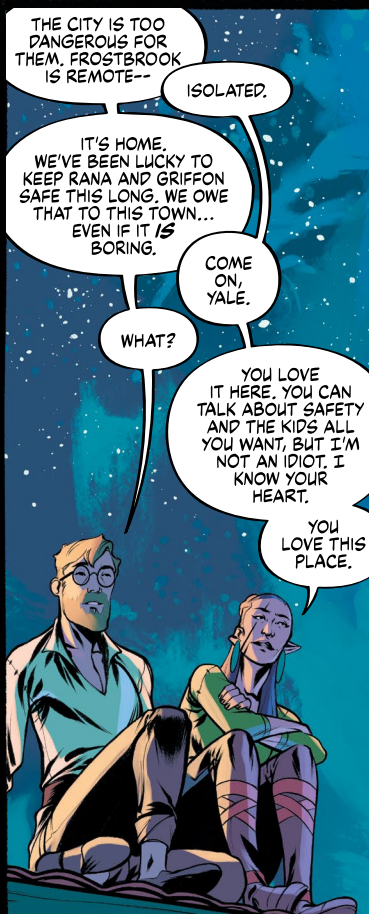
THAT SAVAGE ASS-KICKER
WAS THE WOMAN YOU FELL
IN LOVE WITH. NOW,
LOOK AT ME...

I KICK
PIES.

I LOVED
YOU, THEN. I LOVE
YOU, NOW. YOU'RE A
WONDERFUL
MOTHE--



I'M AN AVERAGE
MOTHER ON A GOOD
PAY. BUT I'D GIVE MY
LIFE TO PROTECT THEM.
WHAT PARENTS COULD
ACTUALLY SAY THE
SAME?





IT'S QUITE STRANGE. ALMOST LIKE...

LIKE WE'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE?

YEAH.

SAME. MAYBE THAT'S WHY THE DUNGEONS ARE OFF LIMITS.



WHAT ABOUT THOSE SPIDERS? THERE'S PROBABLY MORE OF THEM, ESPECIALLY HERE!

DEFINITELY! ON THE PROWL, LOOKING FOR A BIT OF REVENGE FOR KILLING ONE OF THEIR BROTHERS.



SHUT UP. ALL OF YOU.

LOOK AT THIS.

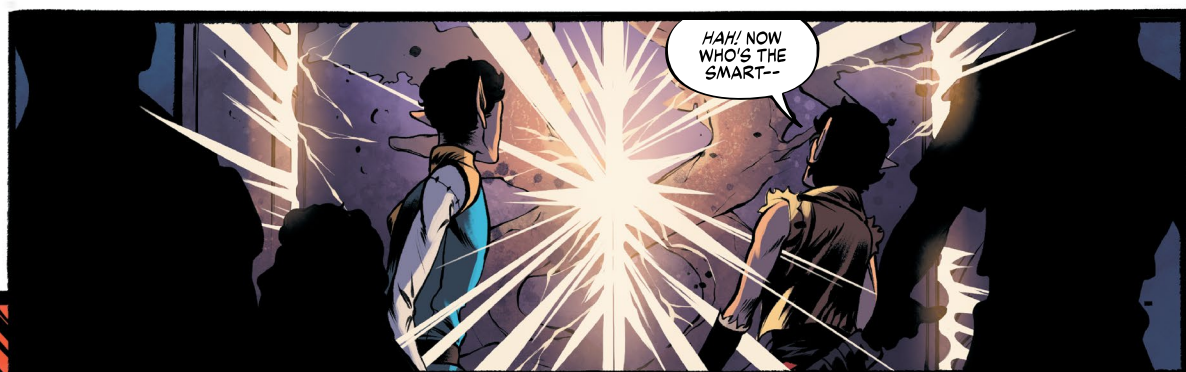
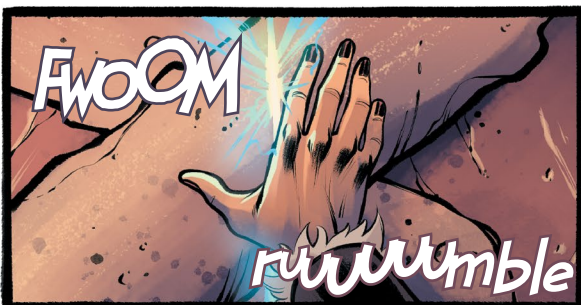
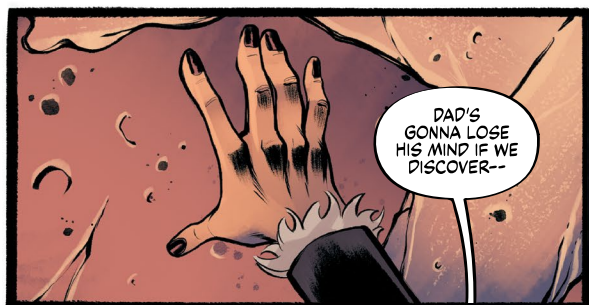


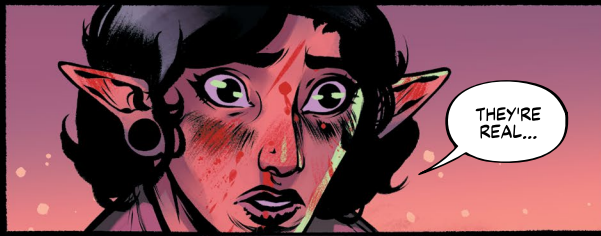
THE AIR FEELS DIFFERENT HERE. COLD.

LET'S OPEN IT.

NO.

OH, YES.





TO BE CONTINUED...

THE SAGA CONTINUES...



WIEBE
OSTERLING

ON 4/15/20!



NAMES: Ozma & Orion

PARENT: Zack Soto, Editor

AGE: Not quite 1 year old

SPECIAL SKILLS: Extreme snuggling, purring so loud they keep you from falling asleep

SECRET ORIGIN: Litter mates found in a Walmart parking lot and turned over to kitty foster care, which in this case turned out to be my son's mom Krista's girlfriend (Complicated? Or just really Portland—you be the judge). Krista fell in love with them immediately and they were adopted as soon as humanly possible.

KNOWN WEAKNESSES: Both cats are *obsessed* with metallic pipe cleaners

MEOWING: More like croaking, it's a little Godzilla sound

FILTHY HABITS: Orion nibbles on the chandelier just above the top bunk of our son's bed

FAVORITE HANG SPOT: Both of them LOVE crawling up to the top of a Christmas tree and just hanging out on the limbs. No matter where they are, though, they are completely inseparable.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

FRANÇOIS VIGNEAULT is a freelance illustrator, designer, and cartoonist (not necessarily in that order) living and working in Montréal, Québec. His work with Geneviève Pettersen on *13e Avenue (La Pastèque)* was recently awarded the prestigious Prix des Libraires. His sci-fi graphic novel *TITAN* comes out from Oni Press in September!



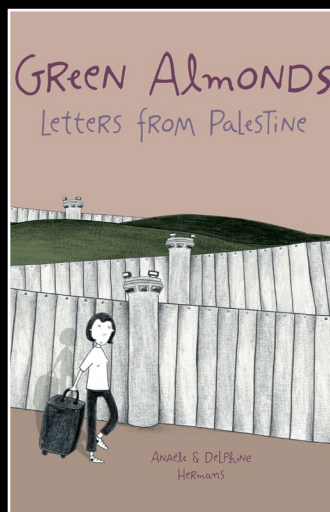
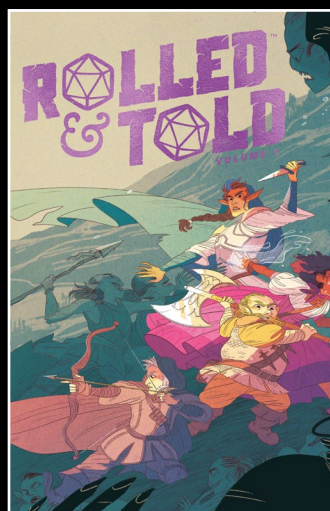
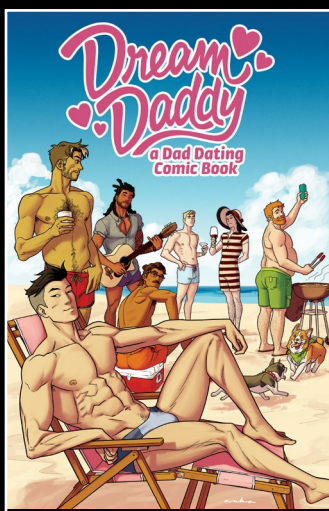
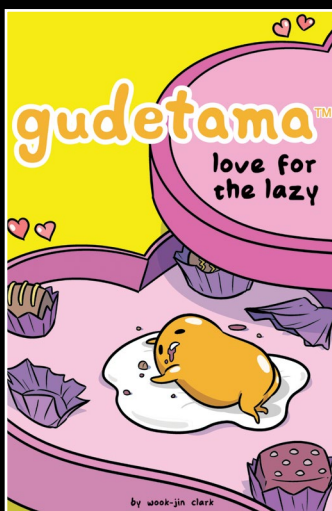
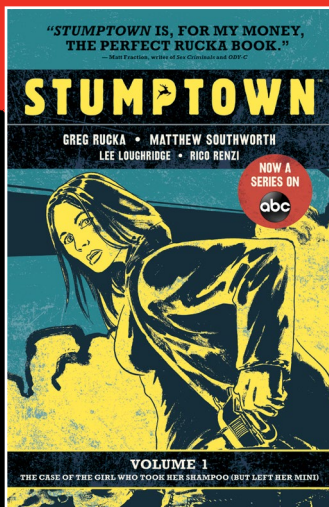
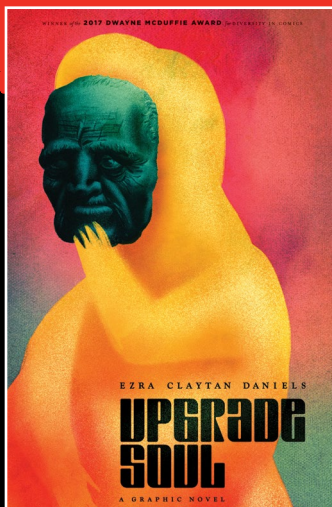
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