

Courtney Crumpin

VOLUME ONE



The Night Things

— ❖ TED NAIFEH ❖ —

Courtney VOLUME ONE Crumrin

The Night Things





Courtney VOLUME ONE Crumrin

The Night Things

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*To Magic, for helping awaken my imagination, and to Ron,
for telling me of the Night Things.*



A Few Words About Children, Nightmares, And Outcasts

Childhood is a much darker world than most adults care to remember. If anything, childhood is even more full of terror and passion than life becomes after a few decades spent killing off brain cells. Small children are straight outta nature, all id, tribal survivalists to the core. They drive the weak away from the village, instinctively hating those who are different, ugly, or slow. Sure, they're preoccupied with stockpiling toys instead of guns, but the principle is always the same. Behind the big shiny eyes and dimples is The Lord of the Flies, ticking and buzzing. We learn sweetness and the ability to sit still later on in order to fit into society and get grown-up things like jobs and apartments and girl- or boyfriends, things that seem yucky and boring until the moment we're ready for them. Among the byproducts that boil off and are lost in the process of growing up are simplicity, lots of dreams, and a huge amount of fear.

Children understand fear. But there are also childhood terrors that go even deeper than the social torture experienced daily in every grammar school in the world. One of the worst nightmares I ever had seemed to be trying to explain the bedtime fears that all kids go through. While I was asleep, my brain told me a story about children and their common, silly childhood fears: the dark, the bogeyman, the creature in the closet, the monster under the bed. The stuff we learn to laugh at and later humor and comfort in our own children. Then I saw the human predators, the real-life monsters such as serial killers and child murderers, and their helpless prey. My mind suggested that it was the terror suffered by these victims that, via some kind of collective unconscious, shows up as the Thing at the Foot of the Bed. That even the most sheltered kid lovingly tucked in every night somehow knows about these very real bogeymen and feels the horror of the unlucky ones, the ones who got caught. At 4 a.m. I woke up screaming and sat with all the lights on and my back to the wall until the watery winter sun came up. I'd never been so glad to be an adult before.

Strangely enough, despite all of the more or less real terrors they contend with on a daily and nightly basis, children love to be scared, love to be grossed out, love, above all, to be shocked.

The only children's stories that are truly classic, timeless, and beloved are also subversively honest about life's ugliness. Kids experience reality on a much simpler level than adults, and don't buy stories that are too sugary. They're realists in the sense that they know there's much more to reality than what we see around us every day or what we learn in school. There almost has to be a tragic, a bitter, or a vicious edge to the story, or they know it for the load of bull it is. Mark Twain, Roald Dahl, and Judy Blume, three of the all-time best-beloved children's authors, knew this. Their books are often banned from schools and libraries because of parents' need to believe that children are innocent of pain and cruelty and can be protected from knowledge about the darkness of human nature.

I grew up on those and other great authors, whose books gave me a glimpse at life's beautiful and horrible truths. Now that I'm an adult, at least in the sense that I have to pay taxes and worry about gingivitis, I see that I'm a part of the diaspora of kids that was driven from the village, for various reasons, and spent adolescence observing it all from the outside. We've formed our own tribes, and as far as I can see, we, the geeks, won. We're smarter, we're independent, we're more courageous, and we value each other more than the kids who fit in without effort, blending in and never really getting to know themselves. I only wish I could tell my little sister, who's about Courtney's age, and rapidly moving from the unicorn stage to the moody poetry stage and reading everything she can get her hands on, to hang in there. Sure, it'll be a rough eight or ten years, but at the end of it, she'll be a conscious, brilliant, confident woman with a loving, like-minded community and her own unique style. It's worth the pain you feel now. Trust me. And grown-up geekboys do make the best partners. I should know.

Actually, come to think of it, that doesn't sound particularly comforting—eight years is a lifetime to a kid. And of course, you can't tell kids anything.

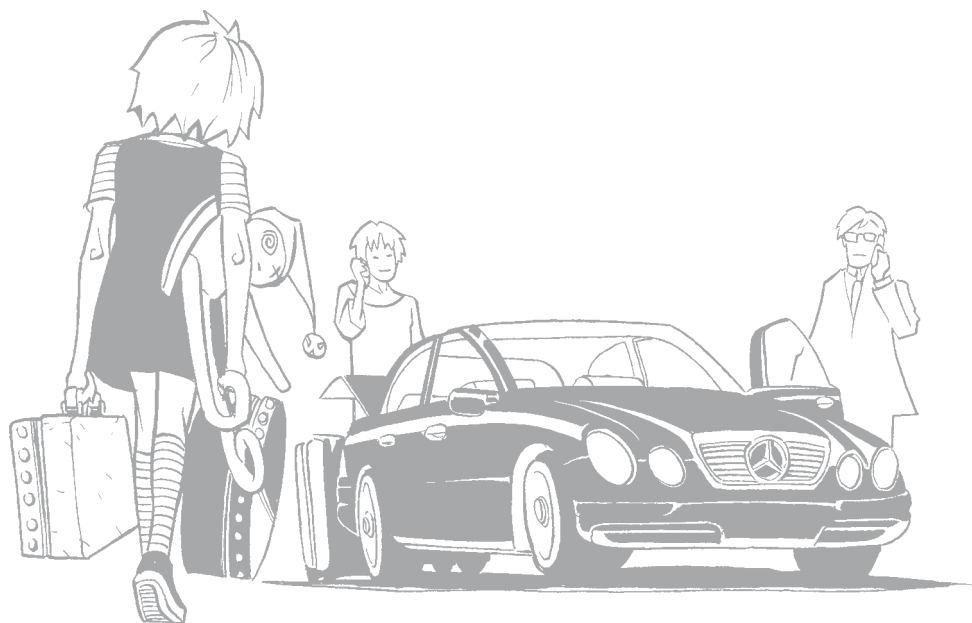
—KELLY CRUMRIN, FALL 2002

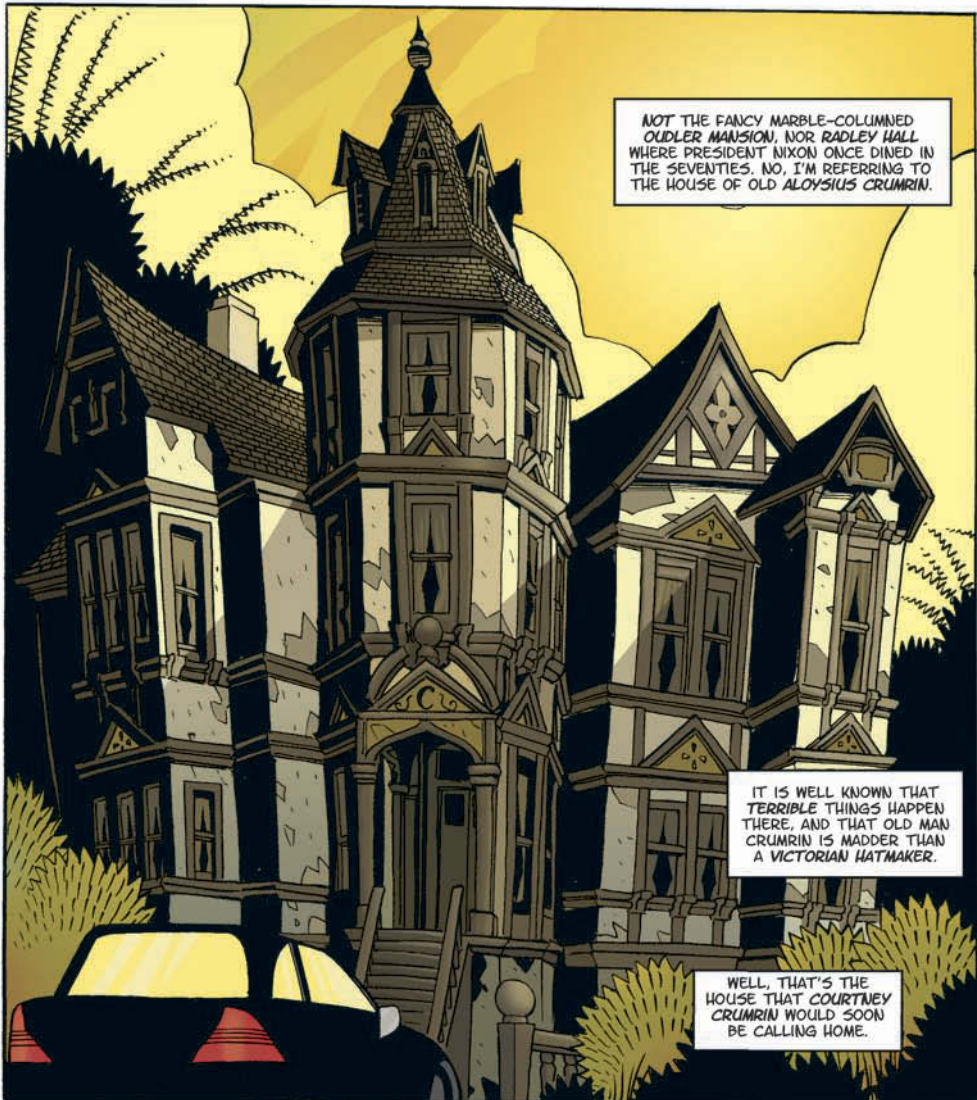
Kelly Crumrin is a freelance writer who lives in San Francisco and would head the campaign to elect Emperor Norton as president if only he weren't so dead.



Chapter One







UNCLE ALOYSIUS WAS GETTING ON IN YEARS, AND WOULD SOON NEED LOOKING AFTER.



...AND COURTNEY'S PARENTS WERE RUNNING OUT OF CREDIT CARDS, SO THE CHANCE TO LIVE RENT-FREE IN A WEALTHY SUBURB WAS TOO GOOD TO PASS UP.

SHE HAD BEEN TO THE HOUSE BEFORE AS A YOUNG CHILD.

HER MEMORIES OF IT WERE NOT PLEASANT ONES.



THE DISREPAIR AND GENERAL GLOOM OF THE PLACE ONLY ADDED TO HER APPREHENSION.



THE LOWER FLOORS ARE YOURS...

BUT DON'T YOU DARE STICK YOUR NOSES IN MY PRIVATE CHAMBERS.



HE SHOT HER A WITHERING GAZE WITH HIS TERRIBLE EYES.

WOULD YOU CARE FOR SOME HOT COCOA?

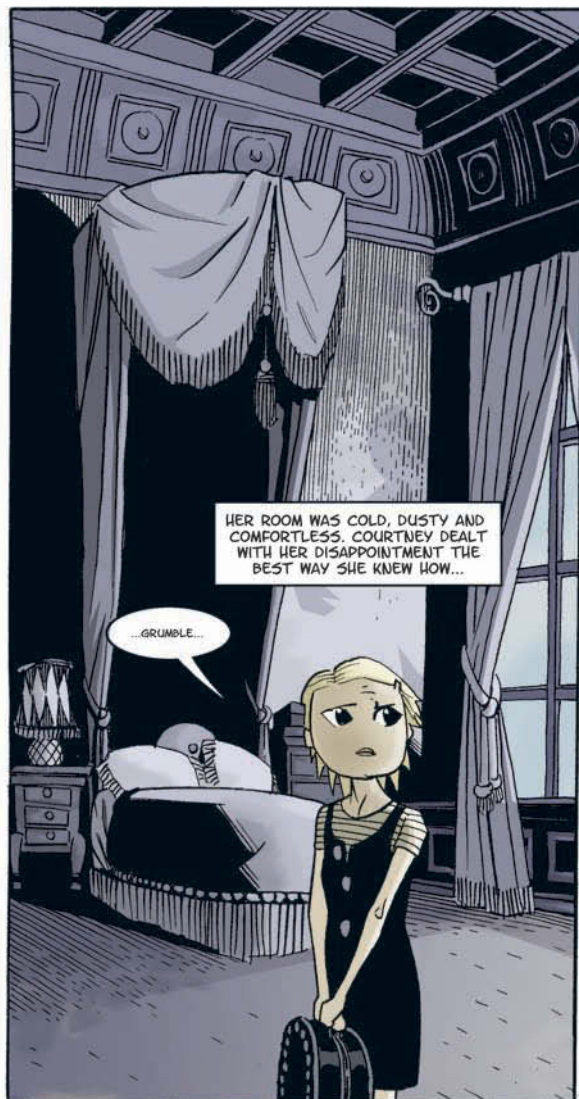
NO, THANK
YOU, SIR.

UNCLE ALOYSIUS WAS EVEN
NASTIER THAN SHE REMEMBERED
HIM, WITH A FACE THAT WOULD
CURDLE NEW MILK.

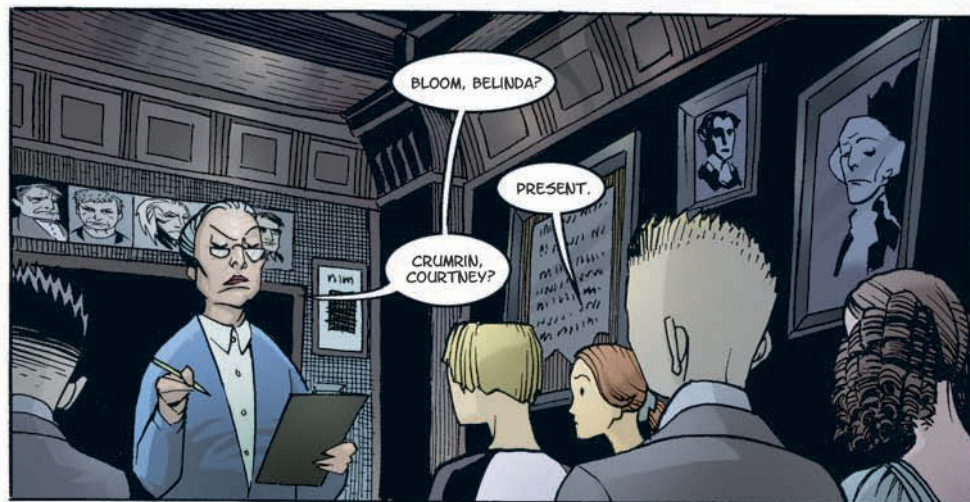
THE PROSPECT OF LIVING
UNDER HIS ROOF BEGAN TO
SINK IN THEN, AND COURTNEY'S
STOMACH TURNED TO ICEWATER.

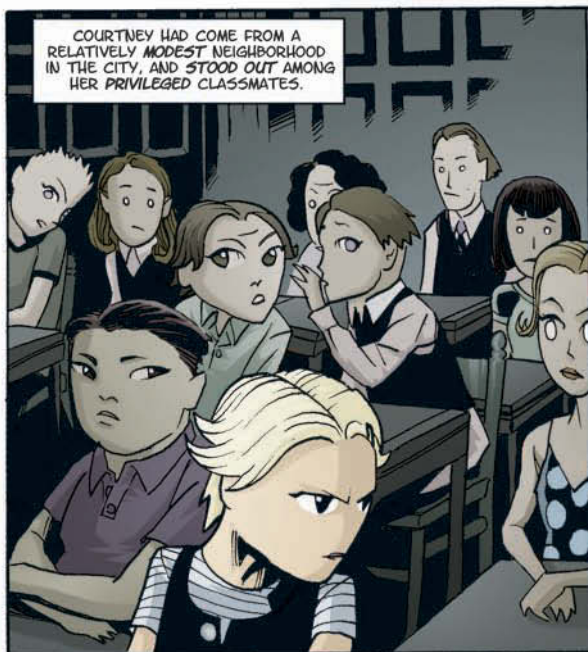
"I MUST HAVE BEEN REALLY
ROTTEN IN MY PREVIOUS LIFE,"
THOUGHT COURTNEY.

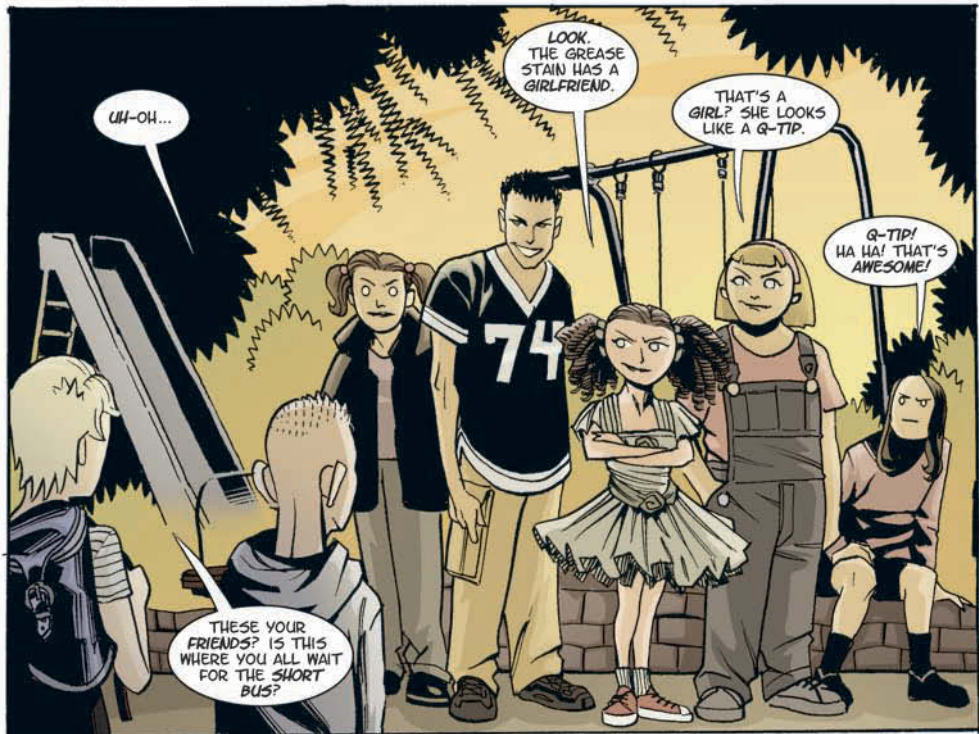
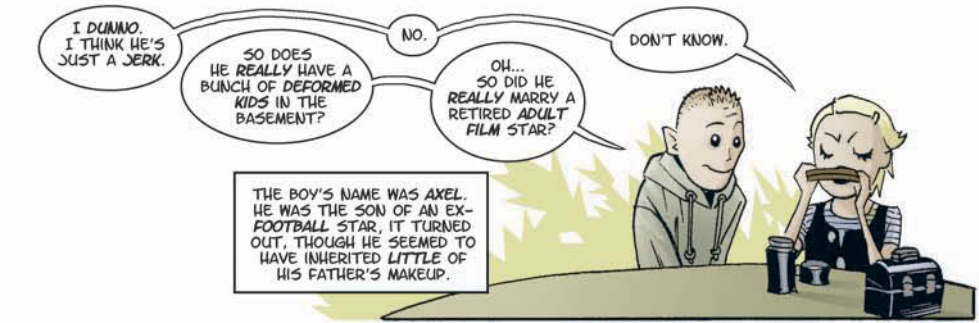
"MAYBE A GYM TEACHER."

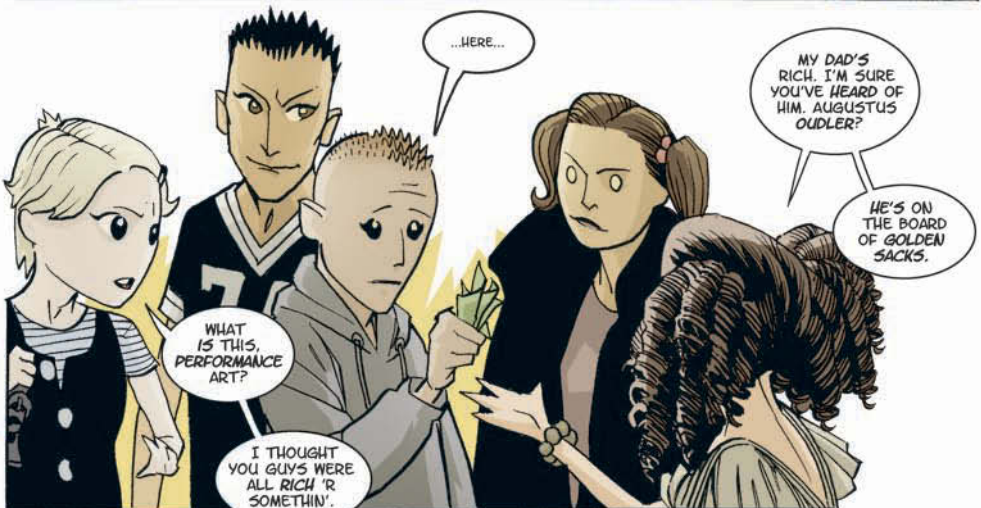
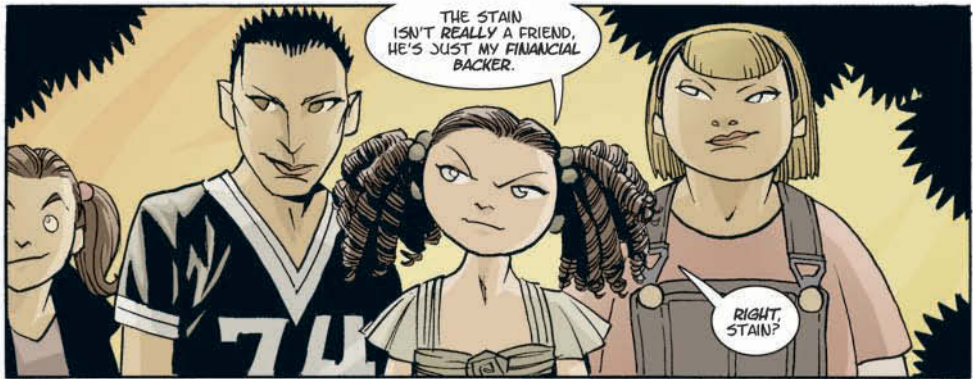
















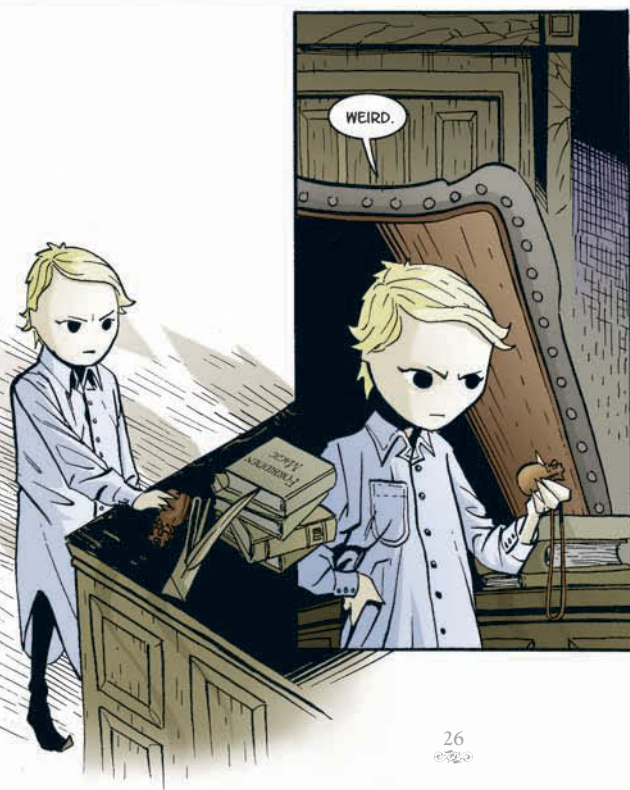
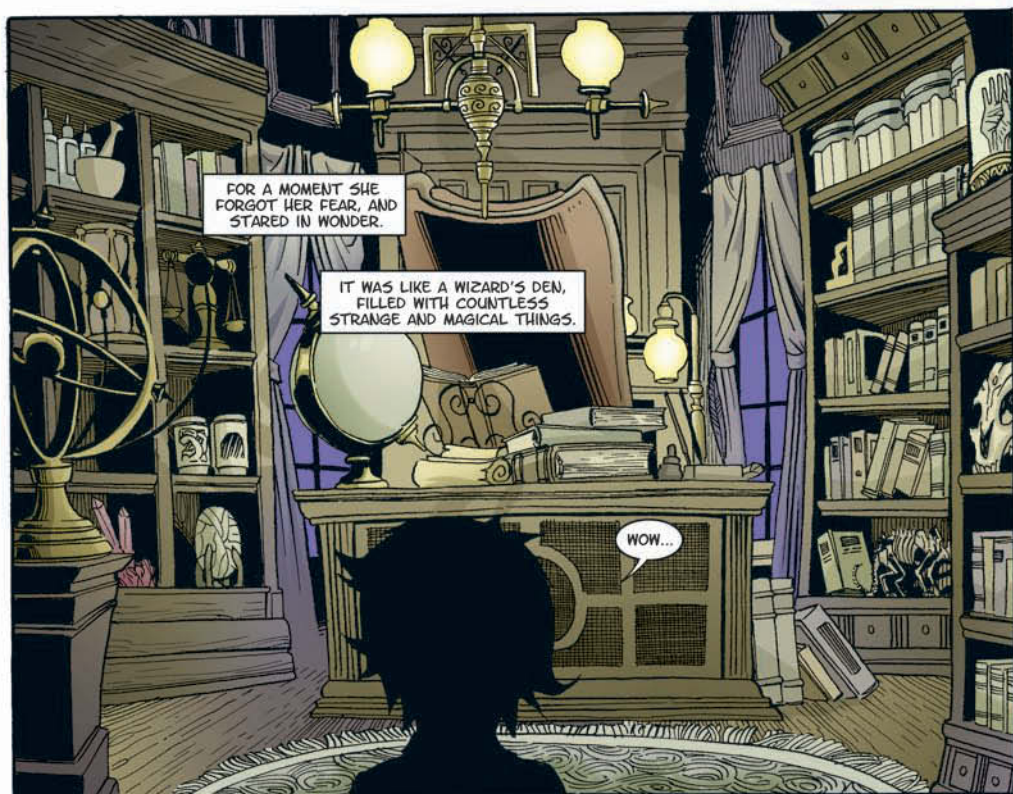


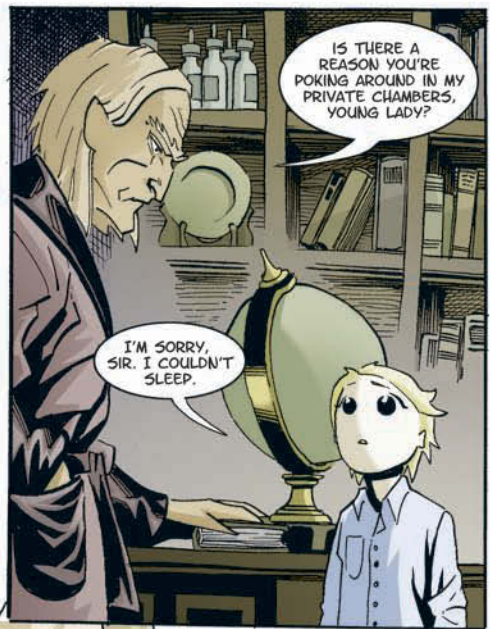


THAT NIGHT, COURTNEY
AGAIN FOUND HERSELF UNABLE
TO SLEEP. SHE WANDERED THE
STILL, QUIET HALLS, FILLED
WITH A NAMELESS DREAD.







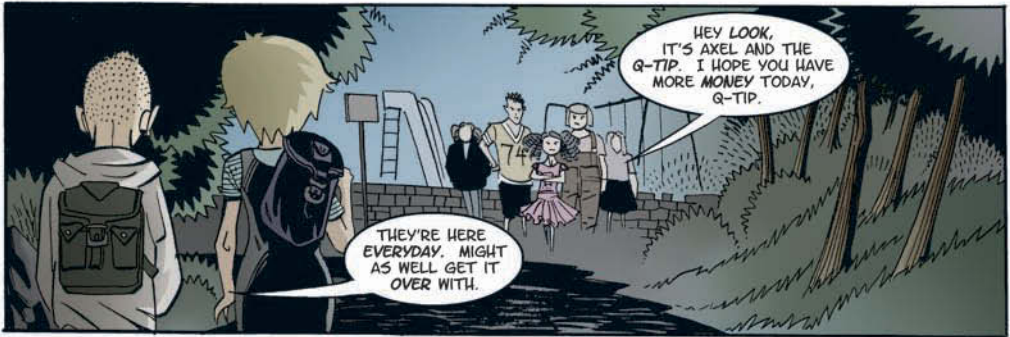


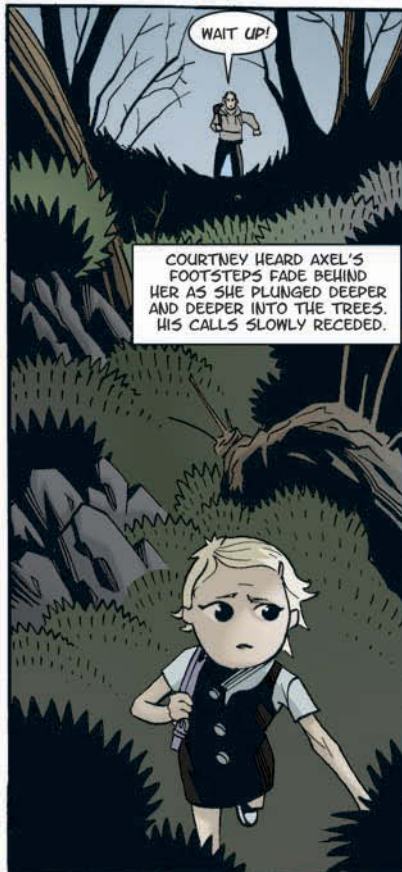
TO COURTNEY'S WONDER AND RELIEF, THE OLD MAN'S EXPRESSION SOFTENED.

THIS HOUSE TAKES SOME GETTING USED TO. I'LL TAKE YOU BACK TO YOUR ROOM.

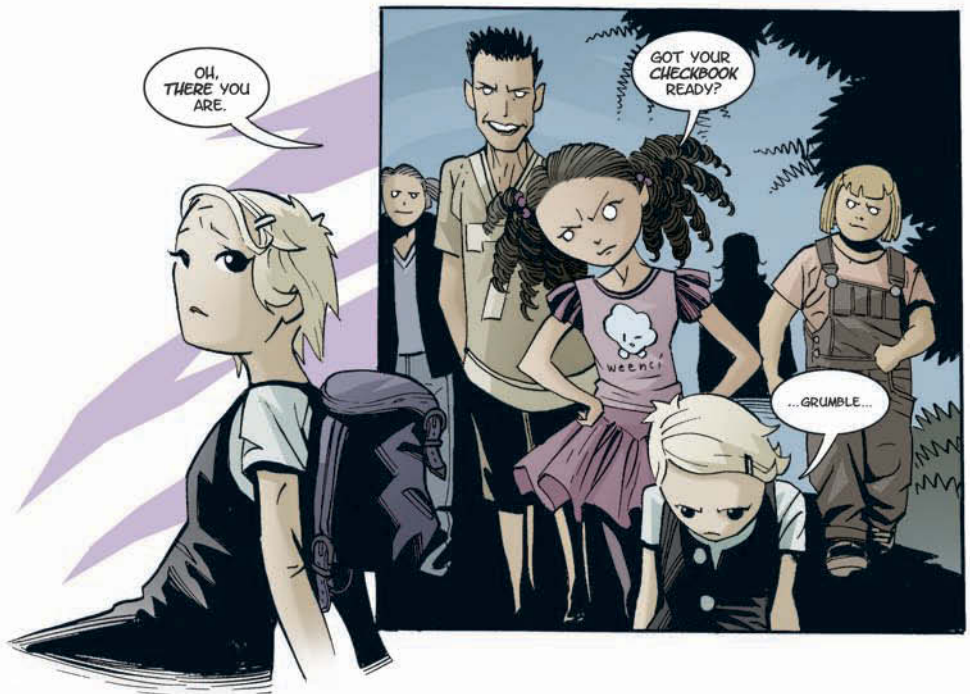






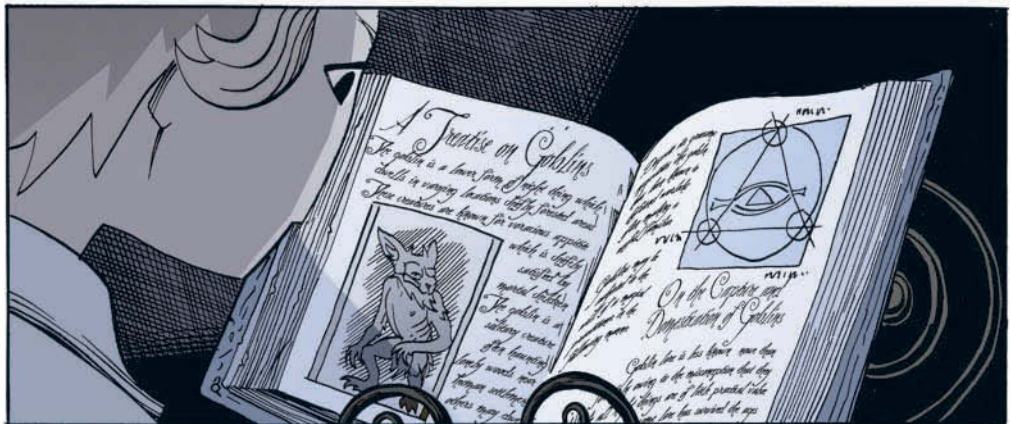












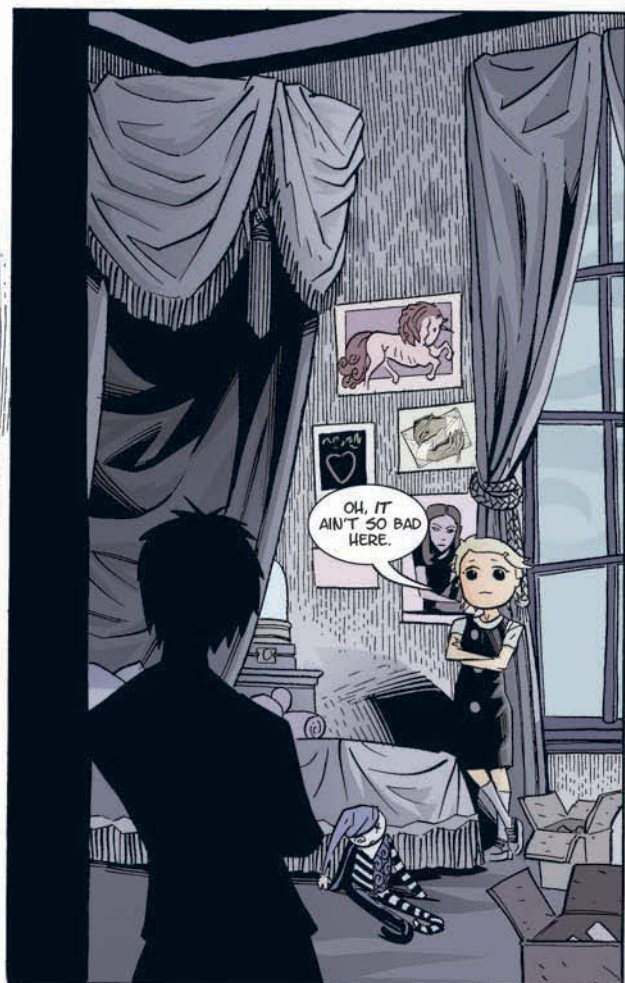
















Chapter Two











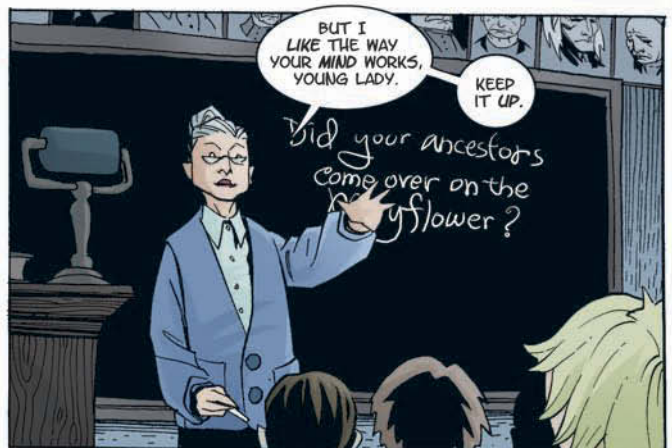
BUT IT MUST MEAN SOMETHING, SHE TOLD HERSELF.

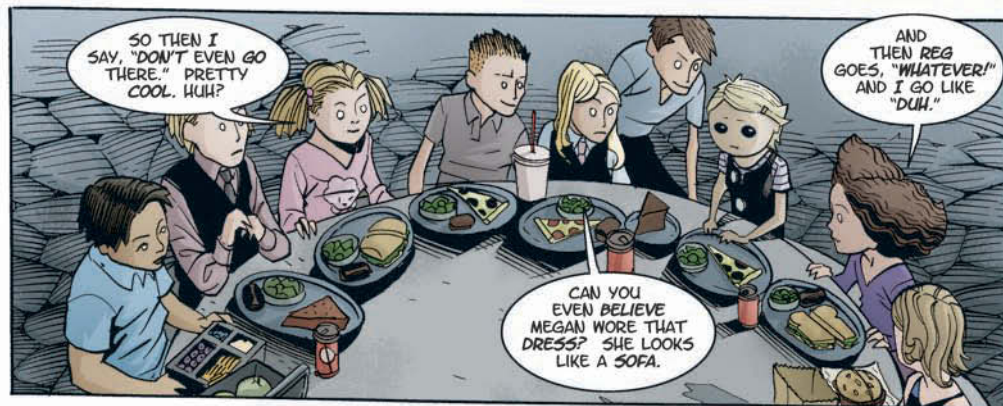


IT WAS DIFFICULT TO DECIPHER, BUT SHE THOUGHT SHE WAS BEGINNING TO GET THE IDEA.

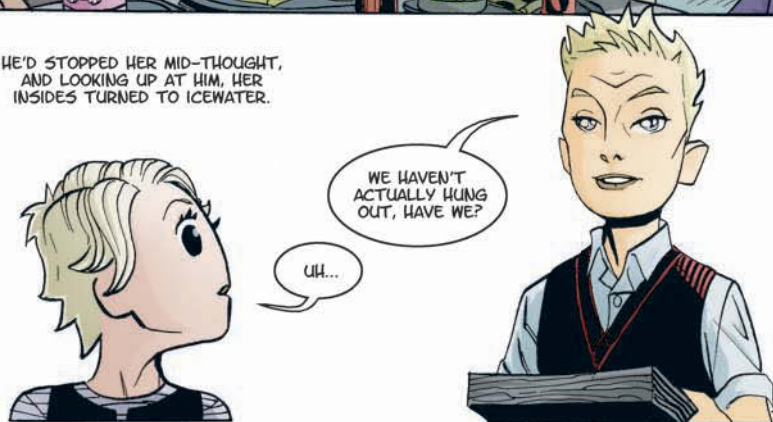


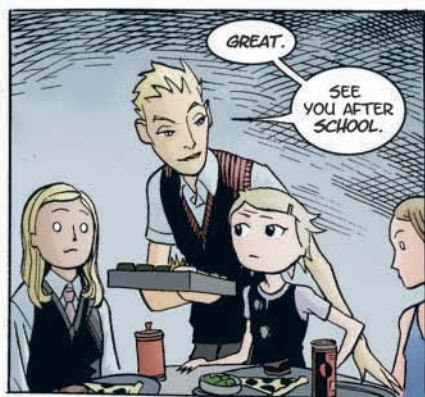
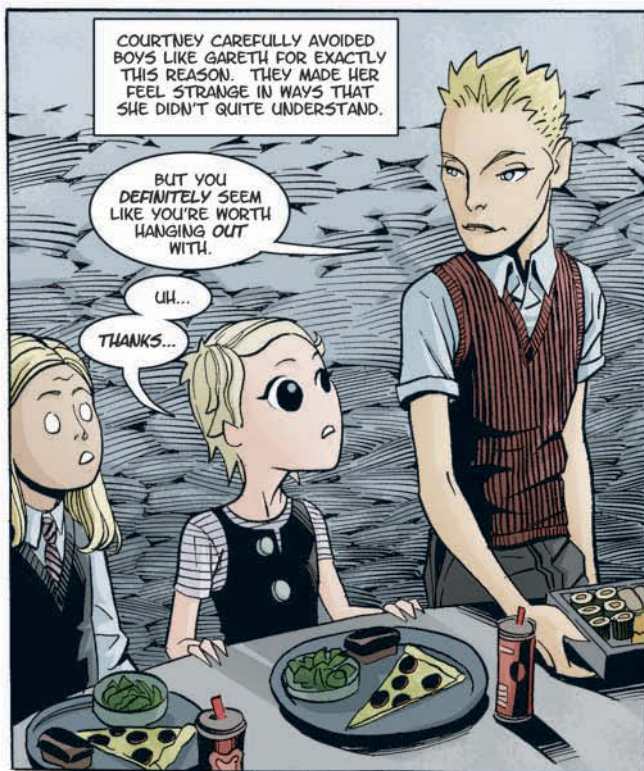


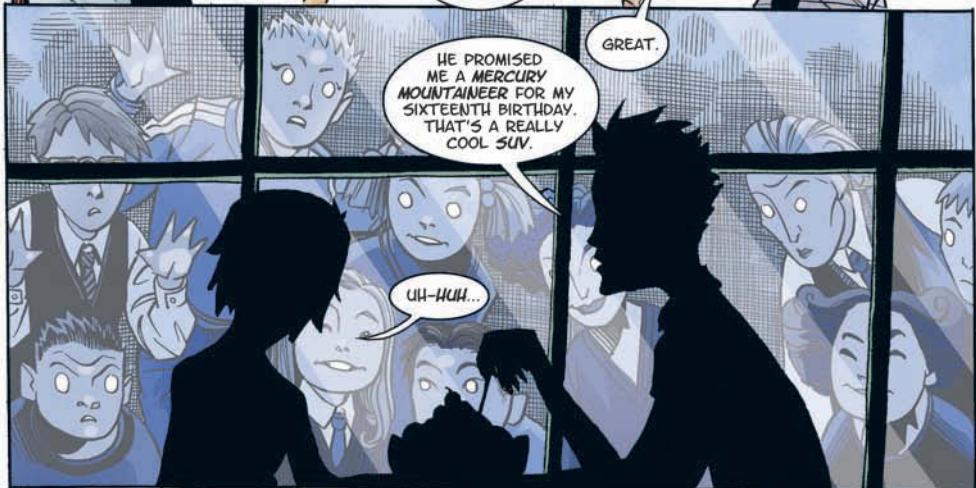
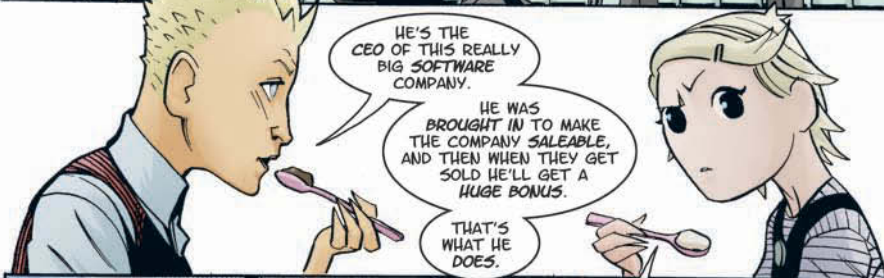


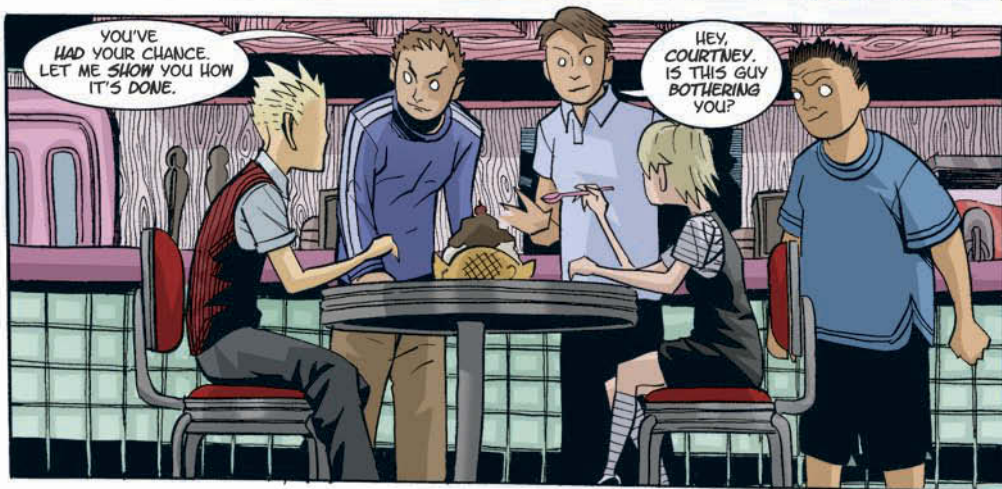


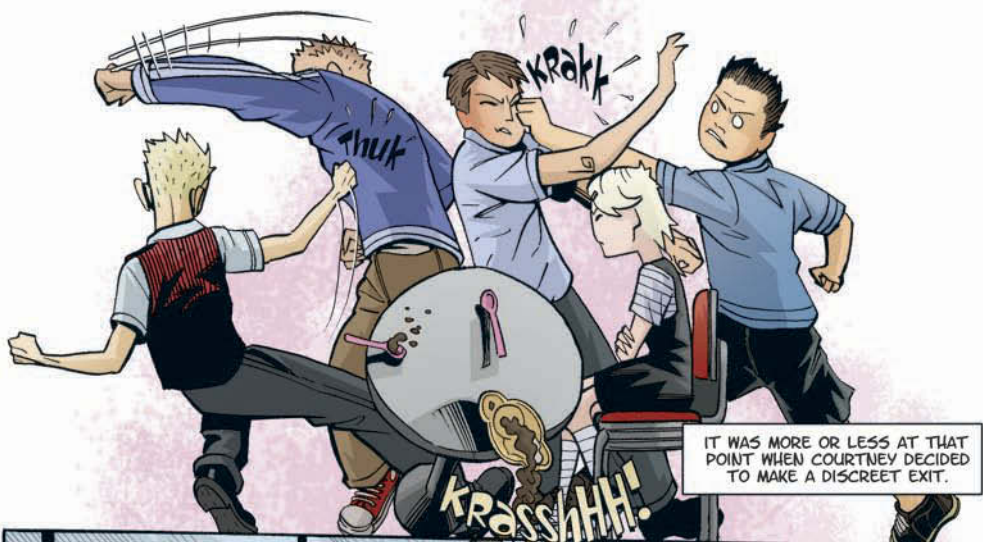
HE'D STOPPED HER MID-THOUGHT, AND LOOKING UP AT HIM, HER INSIDES TURNED TO ICEWATER.

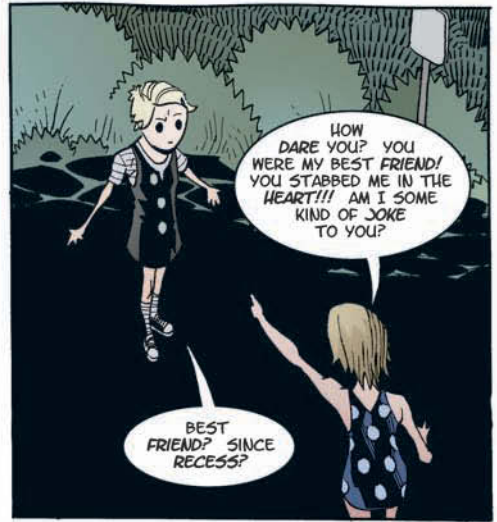


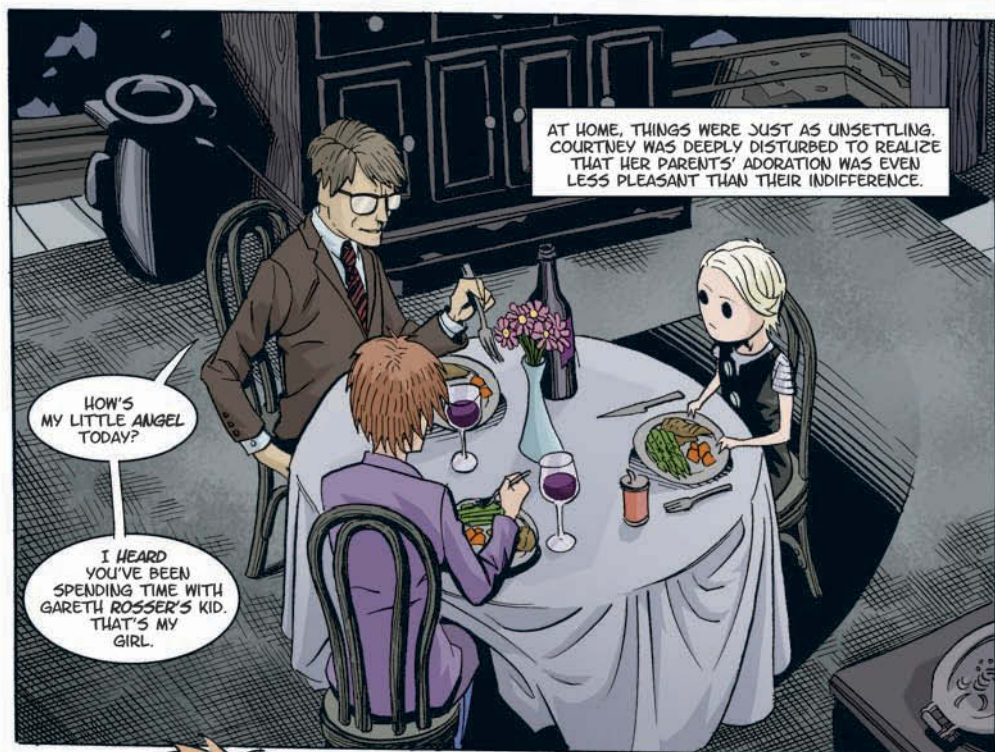




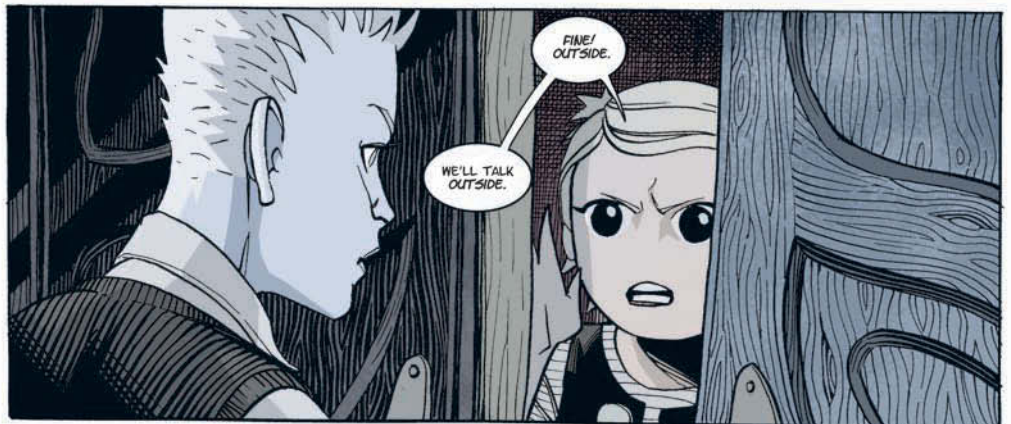
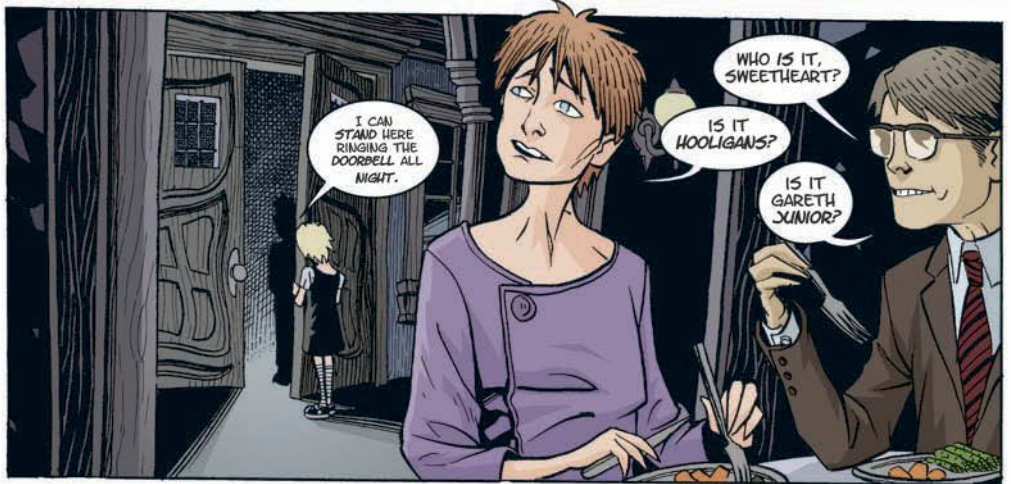
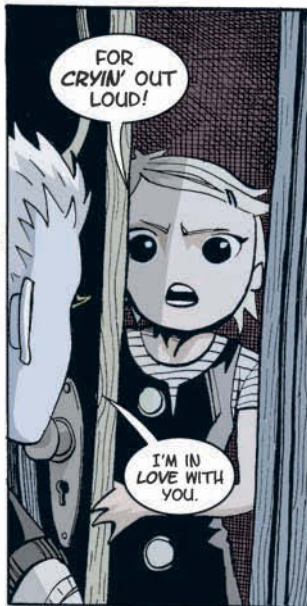




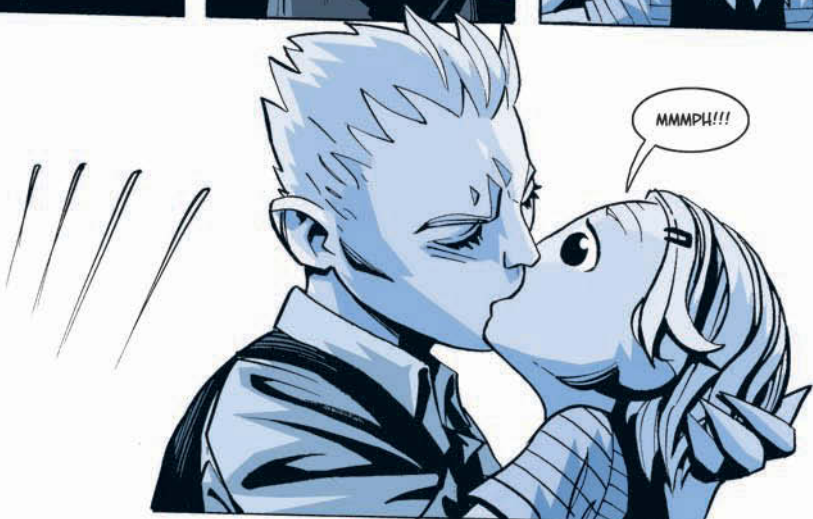


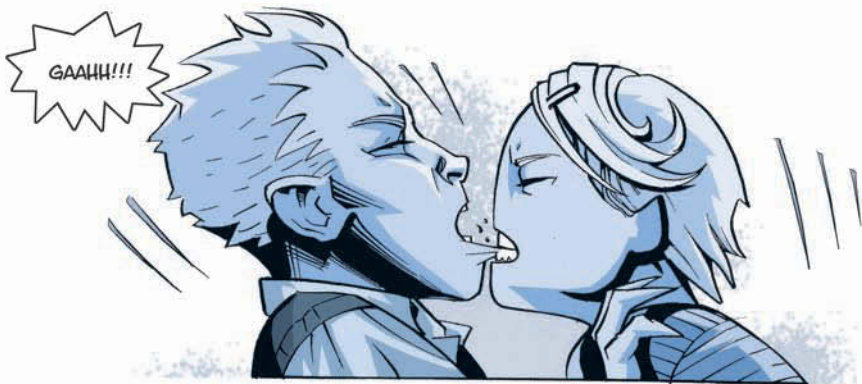










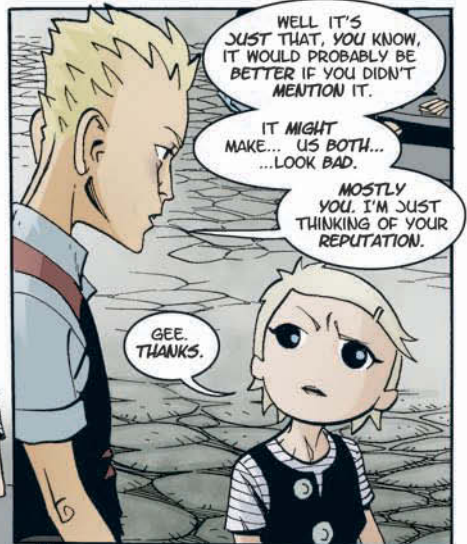
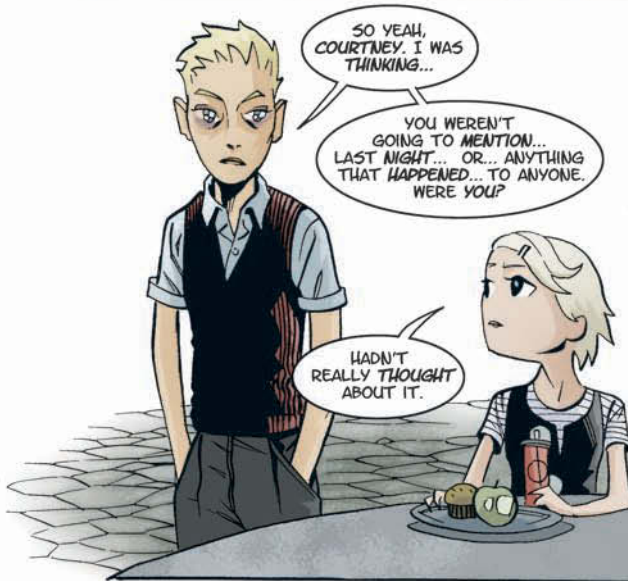


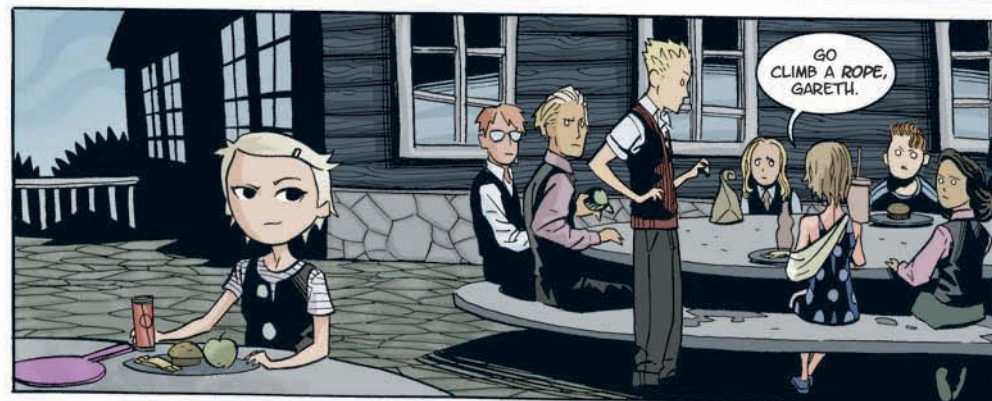










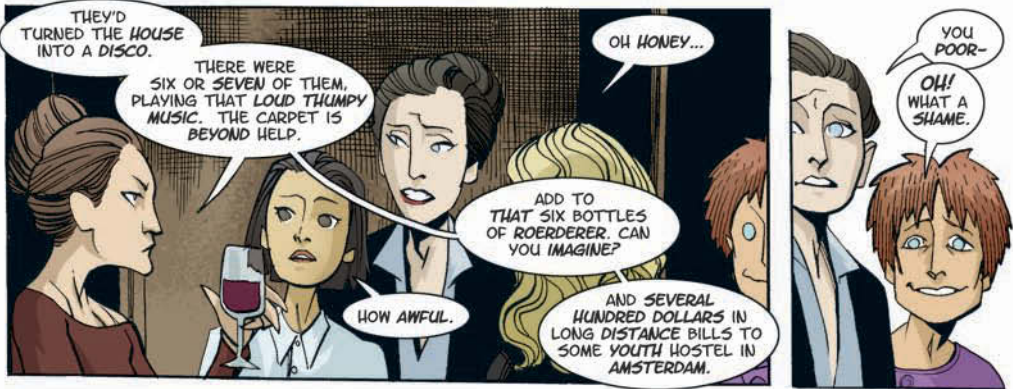


Chapter Three

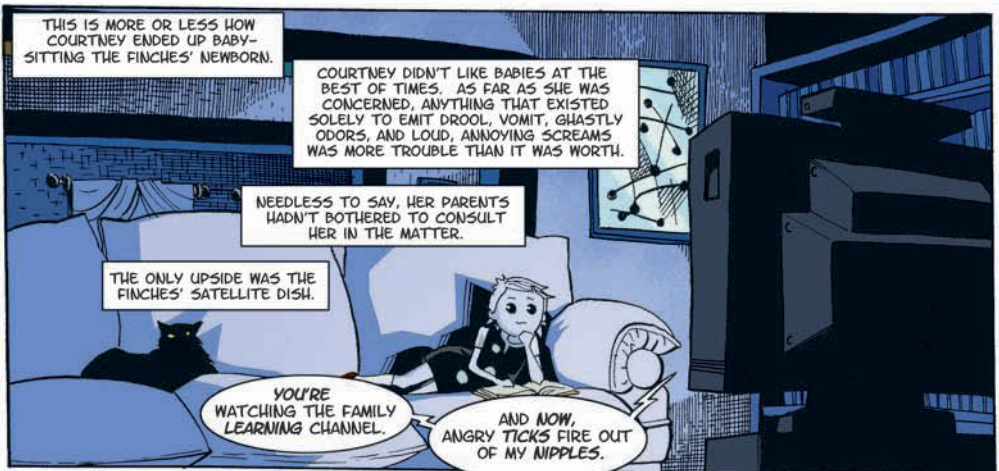




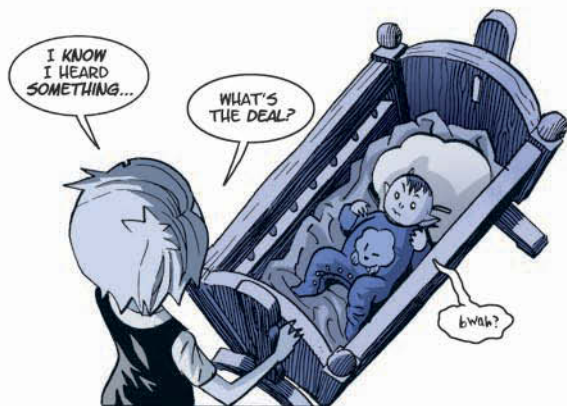


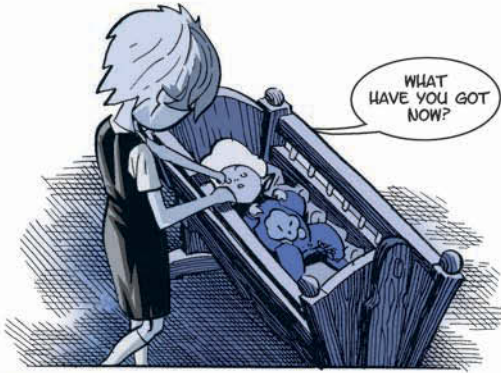


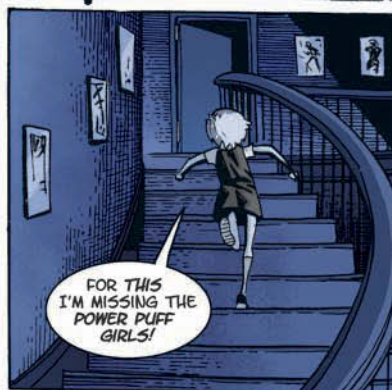






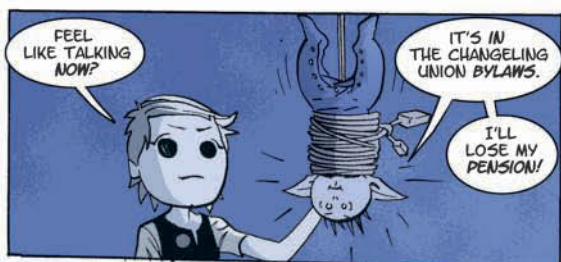


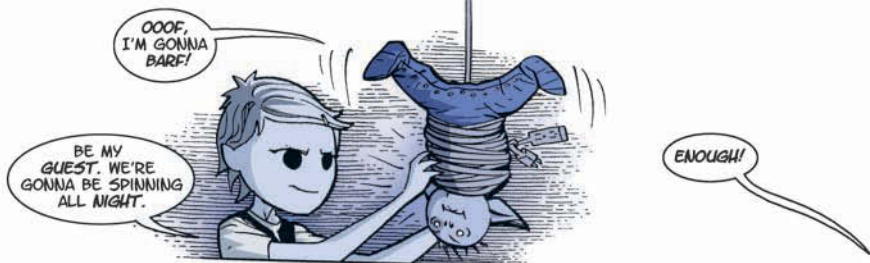




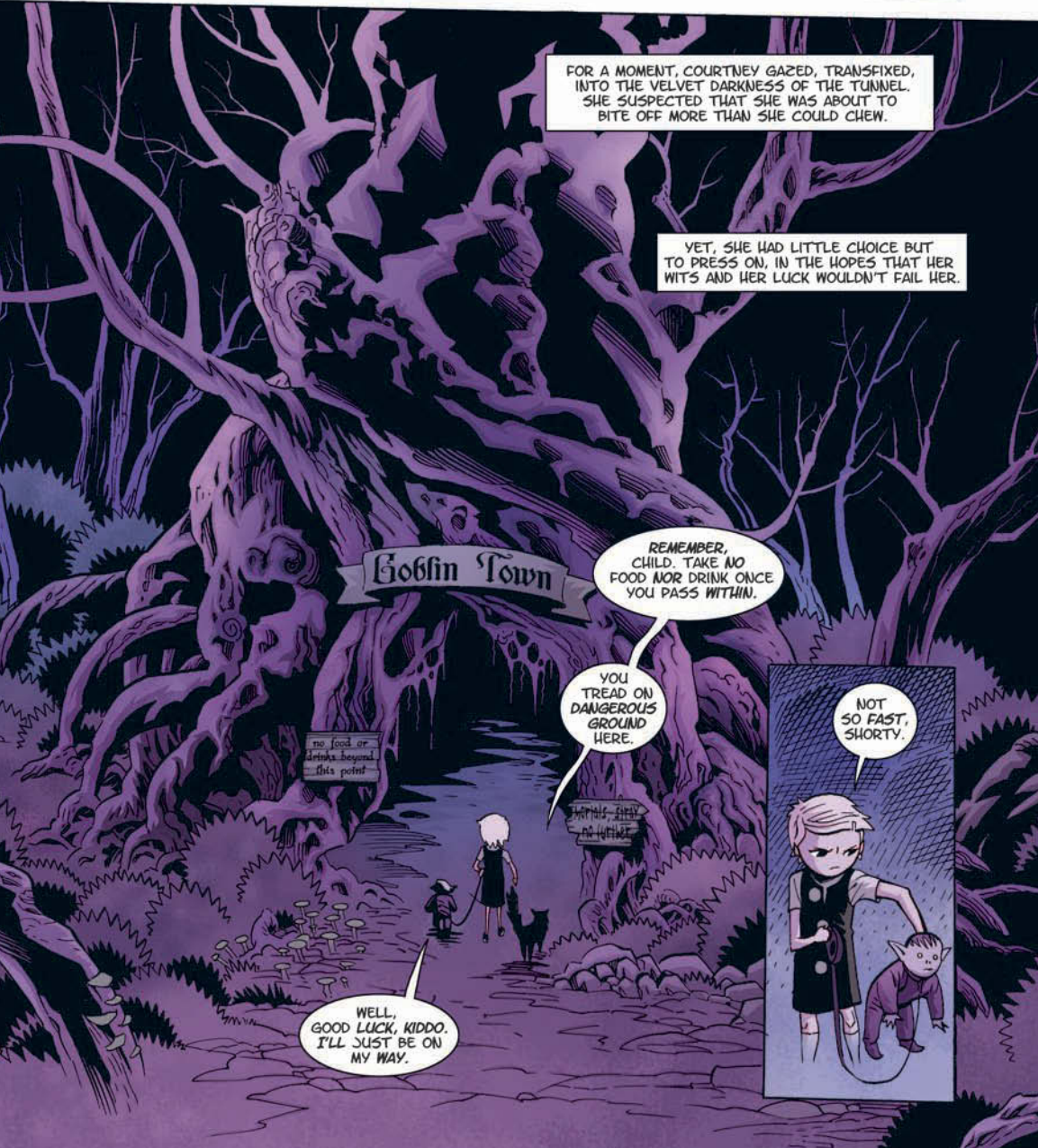
















SOON COURTNEY
COULD NO LONGER
RECALL WHICH WAY
THEY HAD COME.



SHE BEGAN TO
SUSPECT THE
CHANGELING WAS
LEADING HER
ASTRAY.

THIS
BETTER NOT TAKE
MUCH LONGER,
PIPSQUEAK.



WE'RE
ALMOST
THERE.

WHERE?

THE DARK
MARKET.



AS HE SPOKE, THE TUNNEL OPENED OUT,
AND COURTNEY FOUND HERSELF BREATHLESS,
LOOKING UPON A CITY OF NIGHT THINGS.

OH BOY.

SHE SAW STRANGE OUTLANDISH
CREATURES EVERYWHERE, SHOUTING
AND LAUGHING IN UNEARTHLY VOICES.

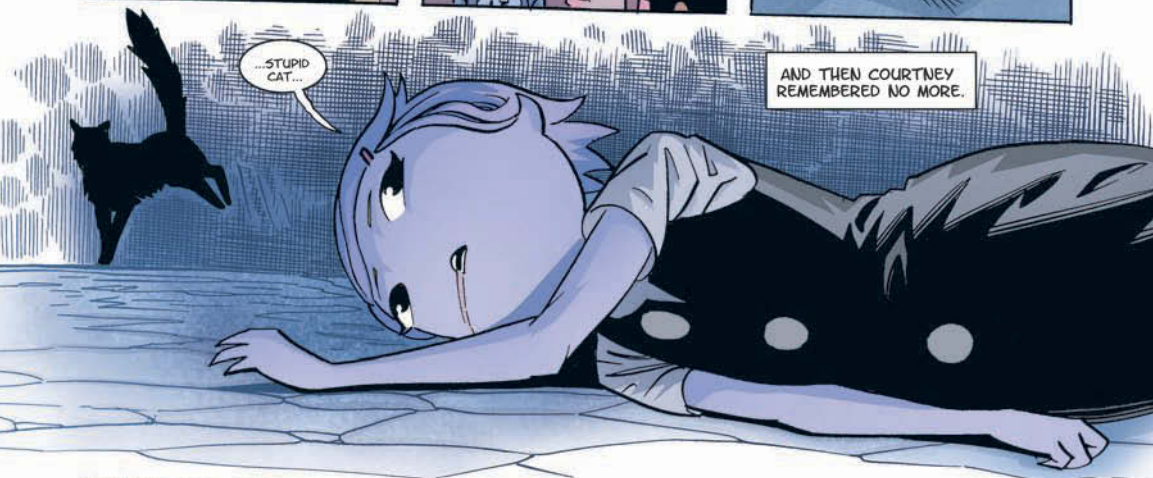


THE SCENT OF MAGICAL FRUIT AND SPICES ASSAILED HER NOSTRILS, AND THE BRILLIANT LANTERNS DAZZLED HER EYES. SHE BEGAN TO GROW DIZZY.



















I WOULDN'T TROUBLE ABOUT IT IF I WERE YOU.

LITTLE ROGER WAS LONG GONE, BUT THE CHANGELING STILL HAD A JOB TO DO.



THEY FOUND HIM AT A LOCAL ALEHOUSE, GAMBLING AWAY THE MONEY HE'D MADE SELLING COURTNEY.

WOO HOO! BOYS, LOOKS LIKE MY LUCK IS FINALLY CHANGING....

EHEM!



REMEMBER ME?

OH BUGGER!



ULTIMATELY THEY PERSUADED HIM TO RETURN TO HIS DUTIES.

IT'S JUST NOT FAIR.



BE MORE CAREFUL NEXT TIME. I WON'T ALWAYS BE THERE TO RESCUE YOU.

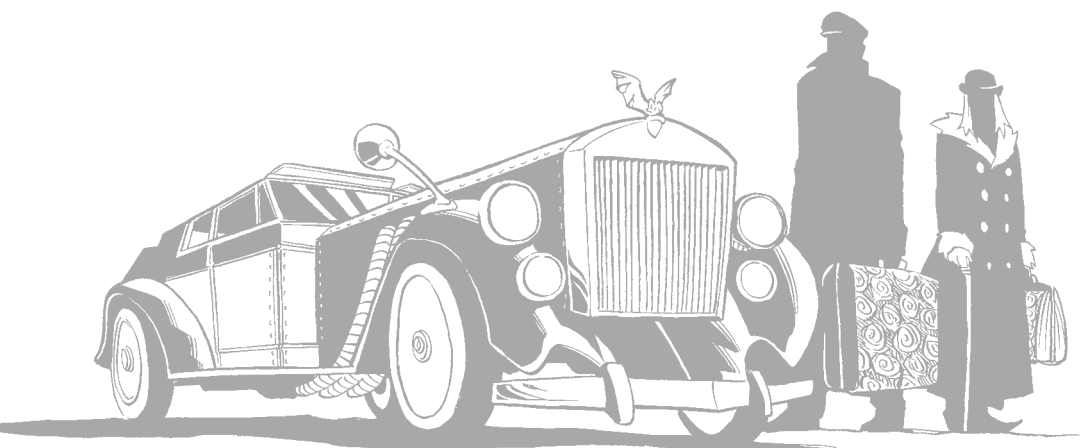
THANKS, UNCLE A.

AND AFTER A FEW HELPFUL SPELLS THAT DEALT WITH THE REFORMING OF DISJOINED MATTER, HE DEPARTED.

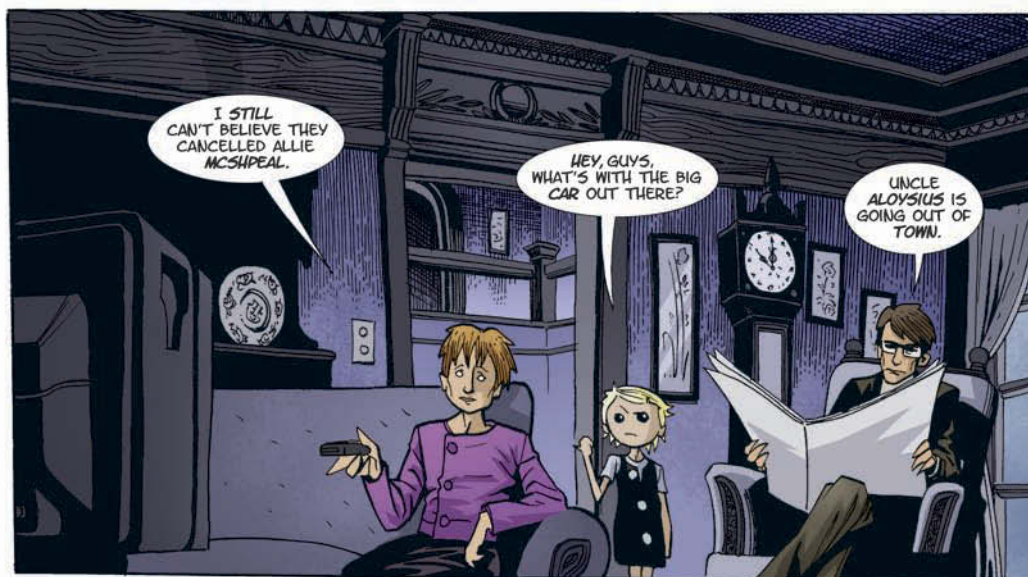


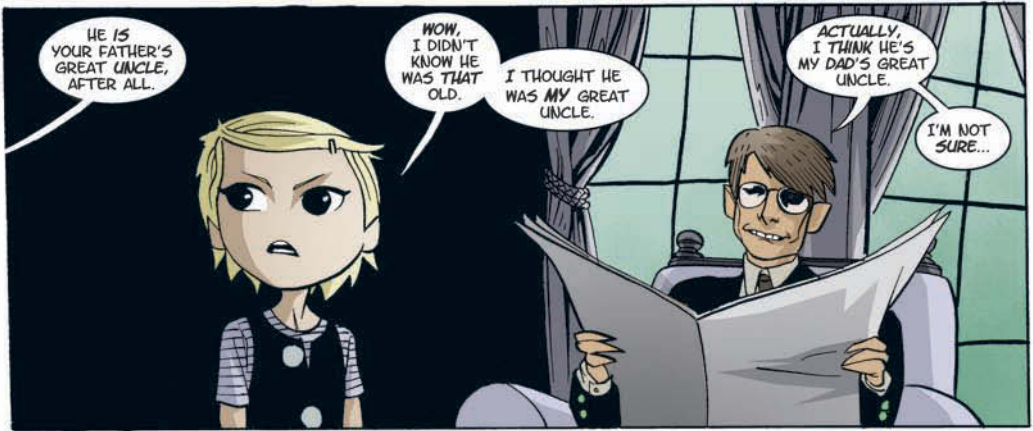
Chapter Four











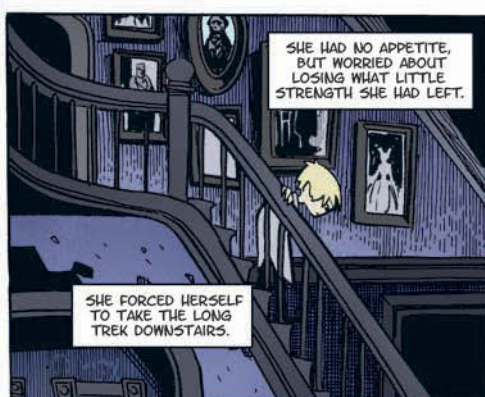






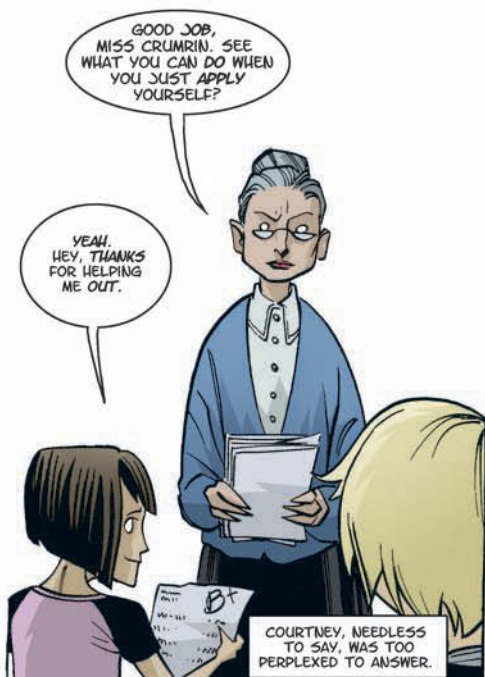




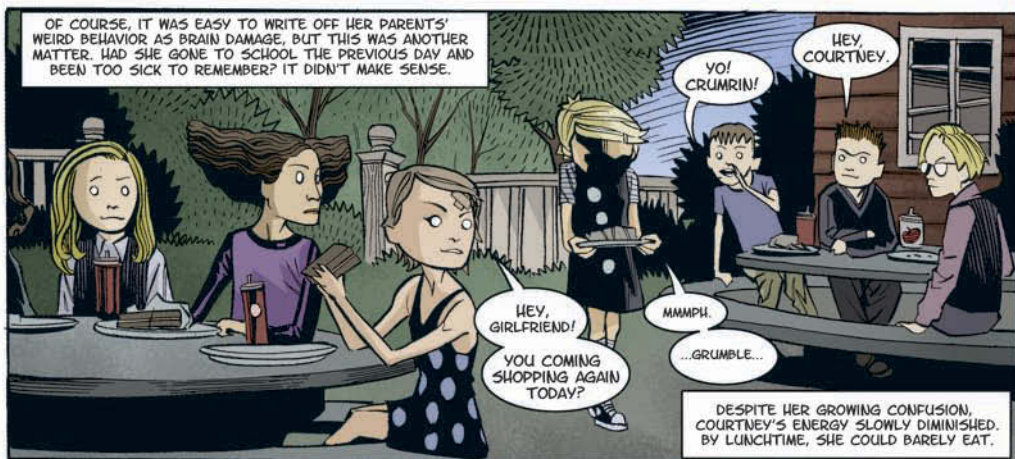


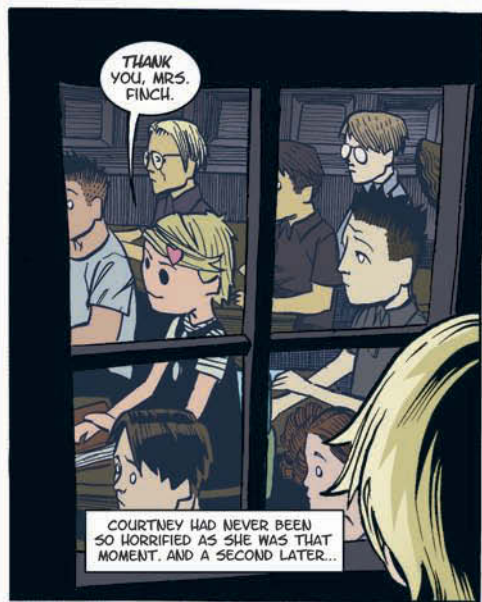






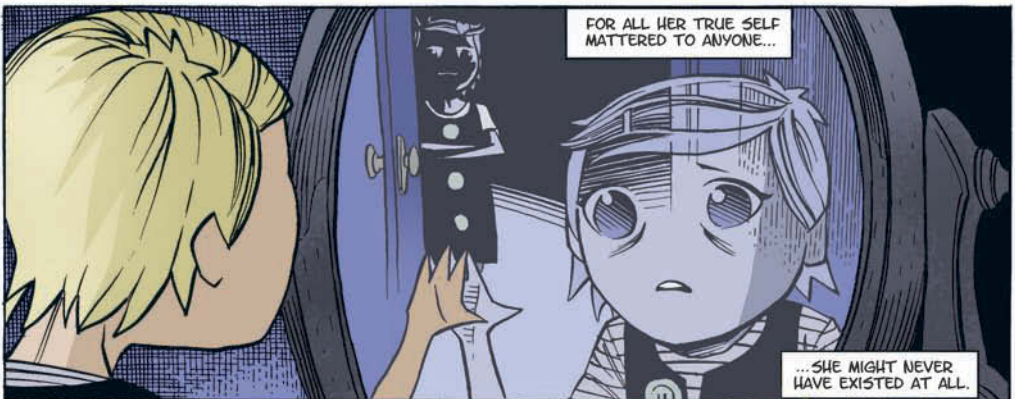
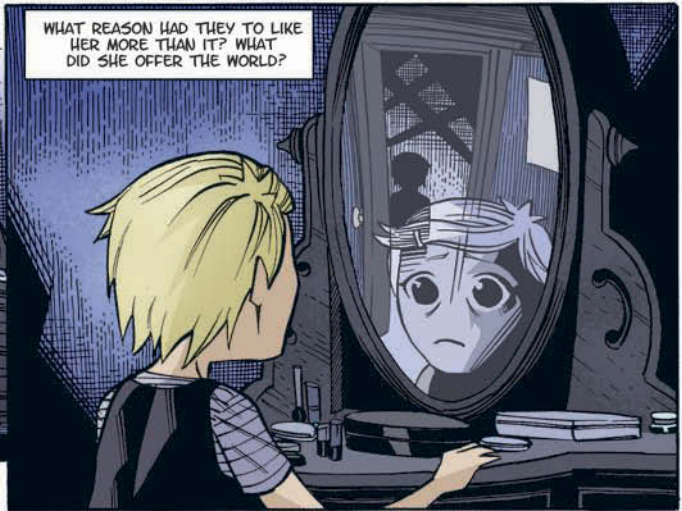




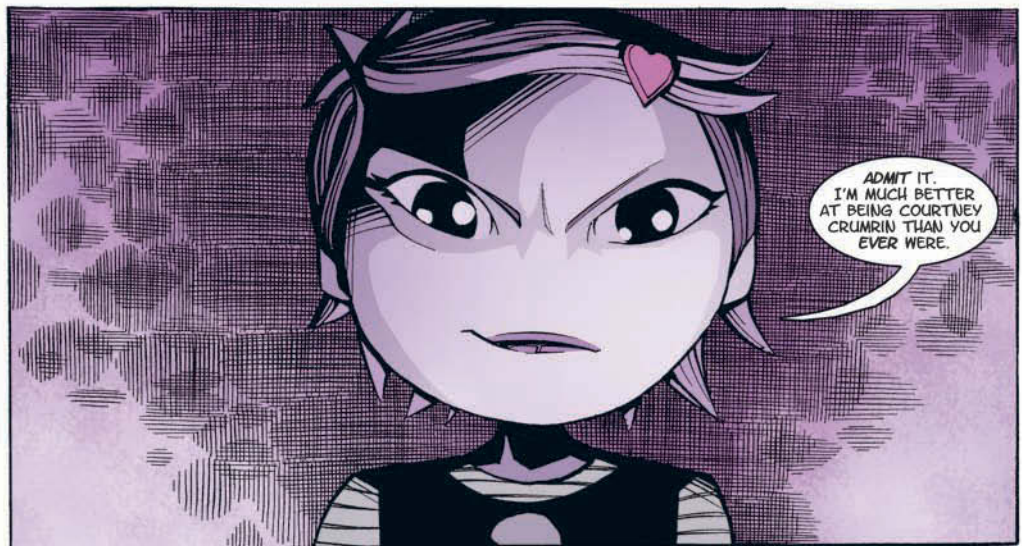
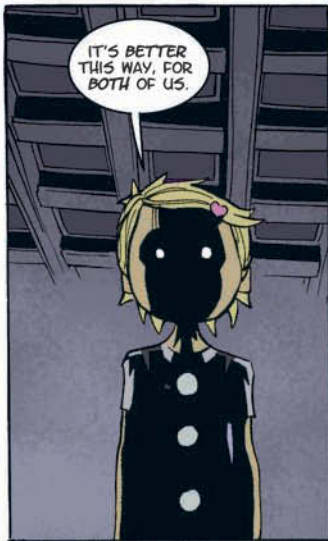


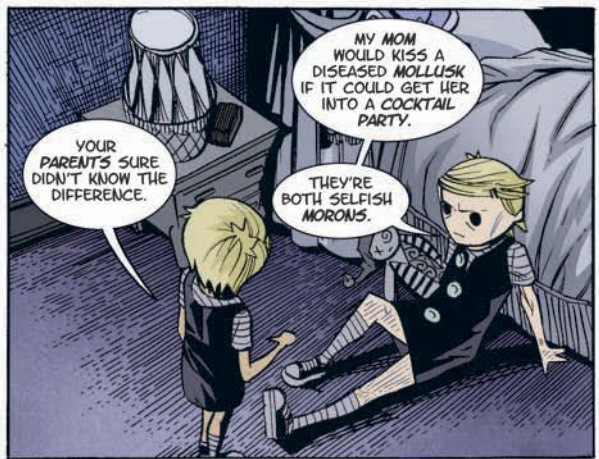




















YEH
STILL HANGIN'
ABOUT?



WELL,
THAT'S THE
STORY A' HOW
YOUNG COURTNEY
COME TO LIVE
IN CRUMRIN
HOUSE.



SHE AND OL' MAN CRUMRIN ARE THICK AS
THIEVES NOW. NEVER THOUGHT A LITTLE
BRAT LIKE 'ER COULD MELT 'IS ICY HEART.

THOUGH 'E TRIES TO
KEEP 'ER AWAY FROM
CERTAIN BOOKS.



'ER FOLKS'RE STILL TRYIN'
TE BE ALL POSH, FIT IN WITH
THE NEIGHBORHOOD GENTRY.

BLEAGH!

MARK YEH, THEY
THINK "BOURGEOIS"
IS A BEDROOM.



BUT
EVERYONE'S
TUCKED IN THERE
ALL COZY NOW,
BLESS 'EM.



A'COURSE,
IT WON'T LAST. NOT
IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD.
THERE'RE BAD THINGS
LURKIN' ABOUT.

WORSE
EVEN THEN
ME.



SO IF
YEH COME BACK
THIS WAY, WATCH
YER STEP.

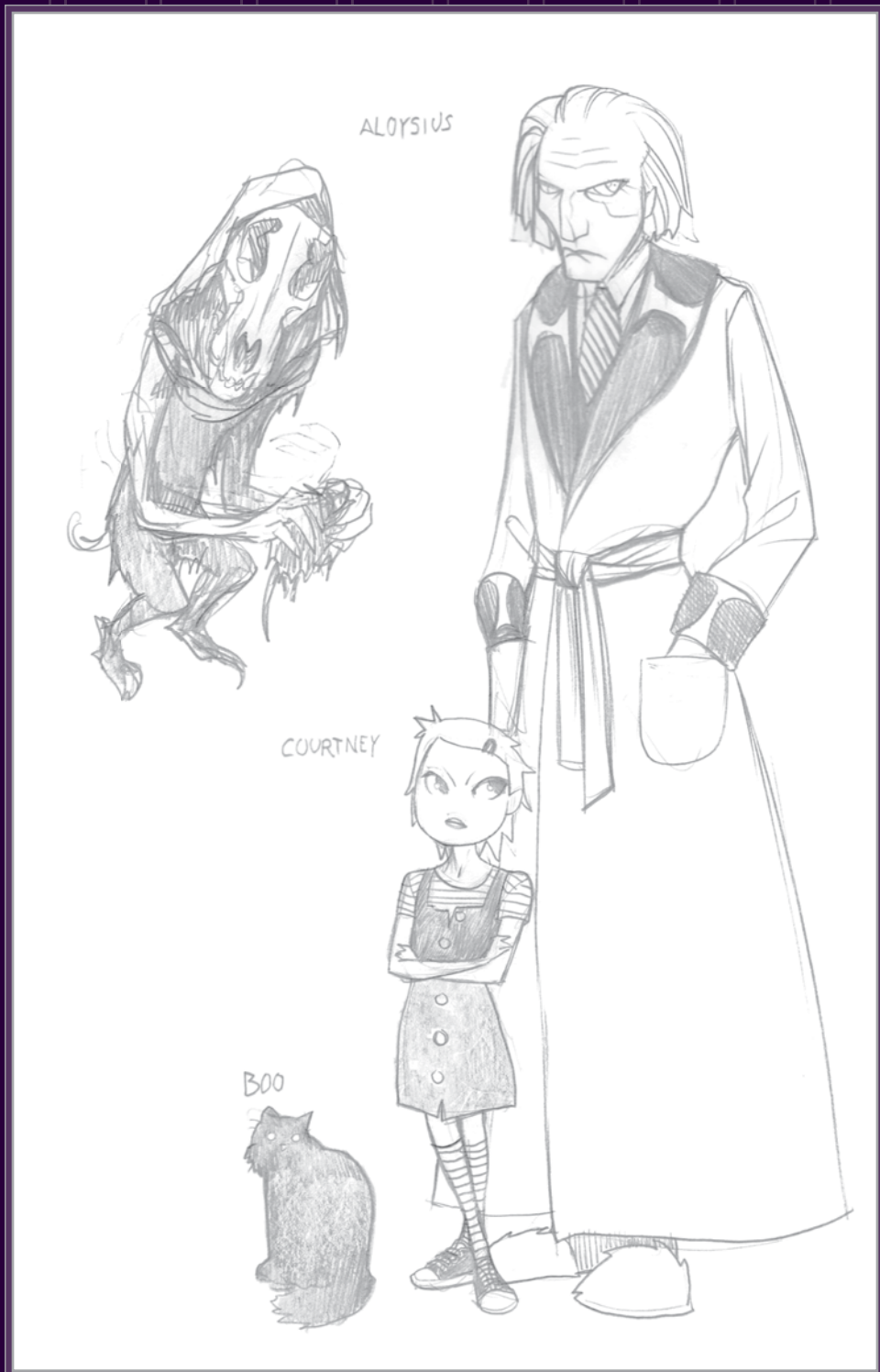
YEH
AIN'T SEEN
NOTHING
YET.

Courtney VOLUME ONE Crumrin

The Night Things

Bonus Material & Cover Gallery





Initial character sketches for *Courtney Crumrin and the Night Things*.

NIGHT THINGS



THE WUG



Gritch



MUH



MR. NOG



Courtney
CRUMRIN



WENDEL



More of the original character designs for the debut issue of *Courtney Crumrin*.

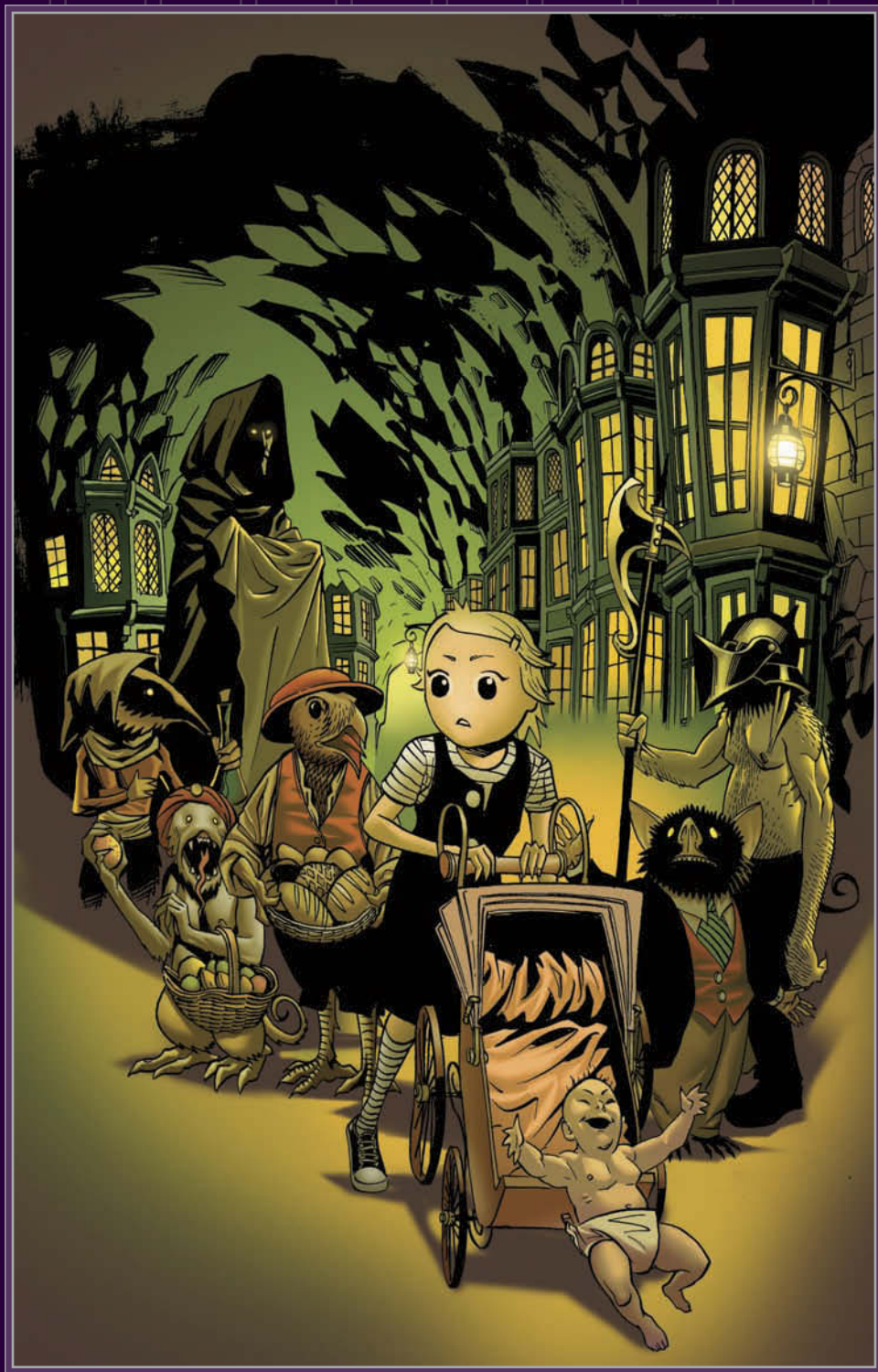




Cover for Issue 1 of *Courtney Crumrin and the Night Things*.



Cover for Issue 2 of *Courtney Crumrin and the Night Things*.



Cover for Issue 3 of *Courtney Crumrin and the Night Things*.



Cover for Issue 4 of *Courtney Crumrin and the Night Things*.

— ✧ • TED NAIFEH • ✧ —

Ted Naifeh first appeared in the independent comics scene in 1999 as the artist for *Gloomcookie*, the goth romance comic he co-created with Serena Valentino for SLG Publishing. After a successful run, Ted decided to strike out on his own, writing and drawing *Courtney Crumrin and the Night Things*, a spooky children's fantasy series about a grumpy little girl and her adventures with her Warlock uncle.

Nominated for an Eisner Award for best limited series, *Courtney Crumrin's* success paved the way for *Polly and the Pirates*, another children's book, this time about a prim and proper girl kidnapped by pirates convinced she was the daughter of their long-lost queen.

Over the next few years, Ted wrote four volumes of *Courtney Crumrin*, plus a spin off book about her uncle. He also co-created *How Loathsome* with Tristan Crane, and illustrated two volumes of the videogame tie-in comic *Death Junior* with screenwriter Gary Whitta. More recently, he illustrated *The Good Neighbors*, a three volume graphic novel series written by *New York Times* best-selling author Holly Black, published by Scholastic.

In 2011, Ted wrote the sequel to *Polly and the Pirates*, and illustrated several *Batman* short stories for DC Comics. He is currently writing and illustrating the ongoing *Courtney Crumrin* series, which will celebrate its 10th year in 2012.

Ted lives in San Francisco, because he likes dreary weather.



Courtney COMING SOON Crumrin

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Courtney Crumrin

VOLUME ONE

The Night Things

Courtney Crumrin grumbles about everything, but now she's really got something to grumble over. Having run out of credit cards, her parents are moving to the wealthy suburb of Hillsborough, to live rent-free with their creepy old uncle Aloysius. Courtney is now an outcast among her rich, snobby classmates. And if that weren't bad enough, the musty, decrepit old mansion that she now calls home is occupied by stranger creatures than just her parents or Uncle Aloysius.

They crawl about the house, just out of sight. They crunch bones in the corner. They climb up on the bed and watch Courtney while she sleeps. Mom and Dad don't notice them, but Uncle Aloysius calls them the Night Things.



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