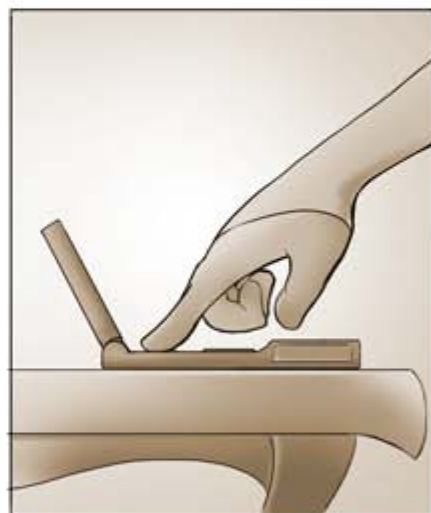




Chapter 5

The Hunt Begins, Part Two: The Tale of Nicole







...AND IF YOU ARE SEEING THIS MESSAGE, IT MEANS THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOU TO LEARN A VERY IMPORTANT TRUTH.

SEASON

The Hunt Begins, Part Two: The Tale of Nicole



NO WAY!

M-MOTHER?

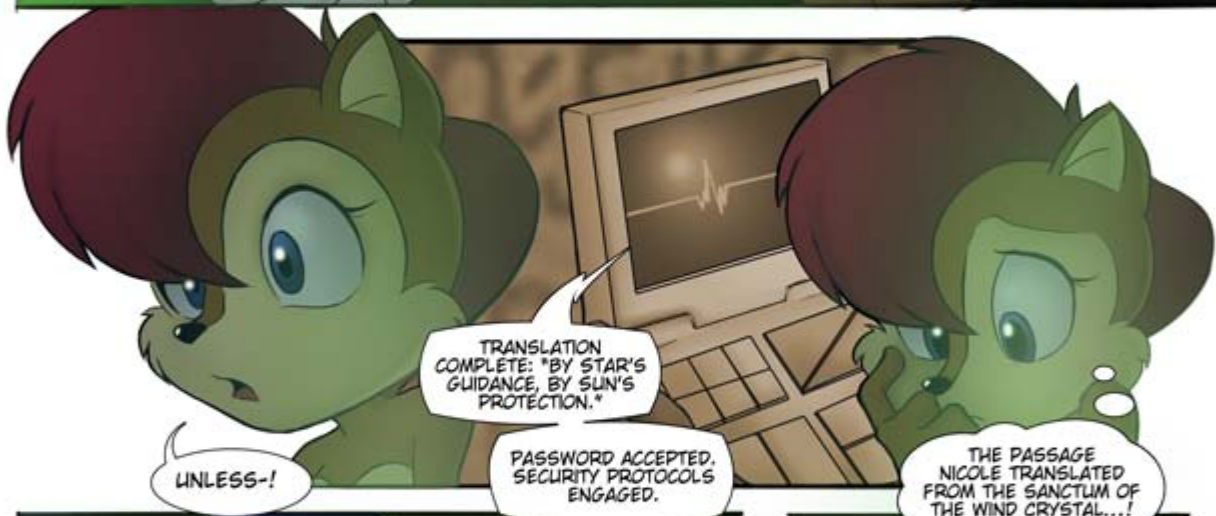
Written by Eric Mason
Illustrated by Steven Wood
Edited by Paul Scott and John Roberts
Based on the "Sonic the Hedgehog" cartoon,
characters owned by DIC and SEGA



WHAT'S GOIN' ON HERE, SAL?

ONE SECOND NICOLE'S GLITCHIN' OUT ON YA, THE NEXT SHE'S SHOWIN' A HOLOGRAM OF SOME LADY SAYING SHE'S YOUR MOM?

I... I DON'T KNOW....



UNLESS-!

TRANSLATION COMPLETE: "BY STAR'S GUIDANCE, BY SUN'S PROTECTION."

PASSWORD ACCEPTED. SECURITY PROTOCOLS ENGAGED.

THE PASSAGE NICOLE TRANSLATED FROM THE SANCTUM OF THE WIND CRYSTAL...!



-BEST TO START AT THE BEGINNING, SO THAT-

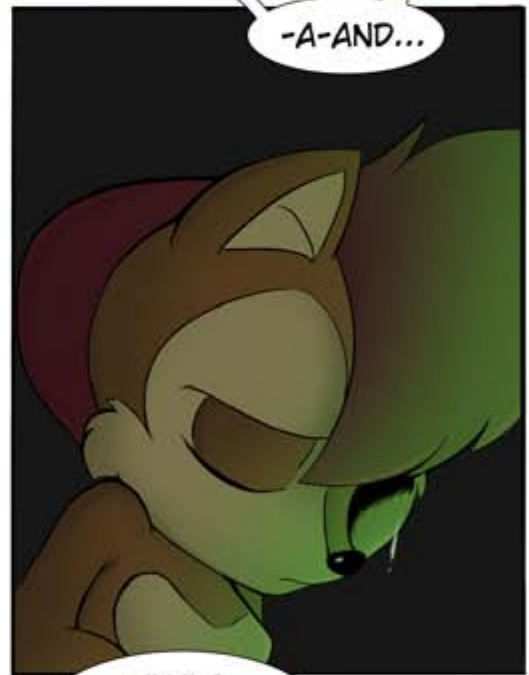
HEY, NICOLE, COULD YOU PAUSE THIS OR SOMETHIN'? I THINK WE NEED A SECOND HERE.

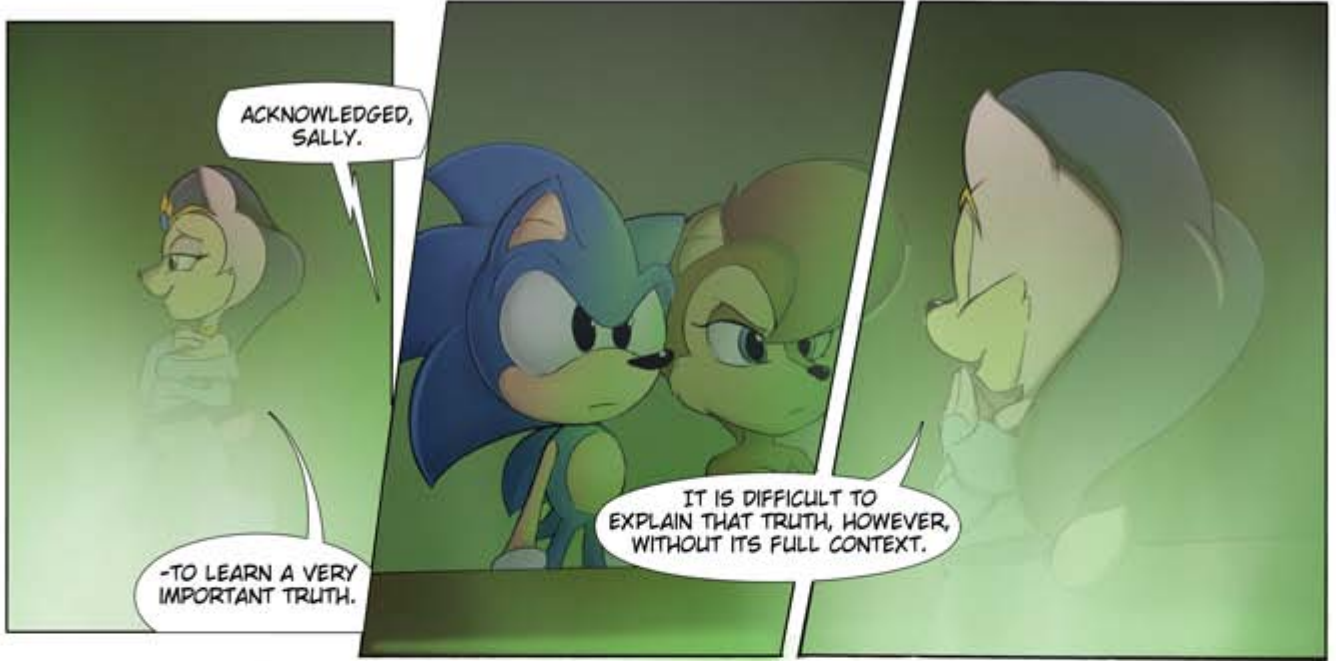
ACKNOWLEDGED, MY MAIN 'HOG.



-YOU MA-

VVRRRR





ACKNOWLEDGED,
SALLY.

-TO LEARN A VERY
IMPORTANT TRUTH.

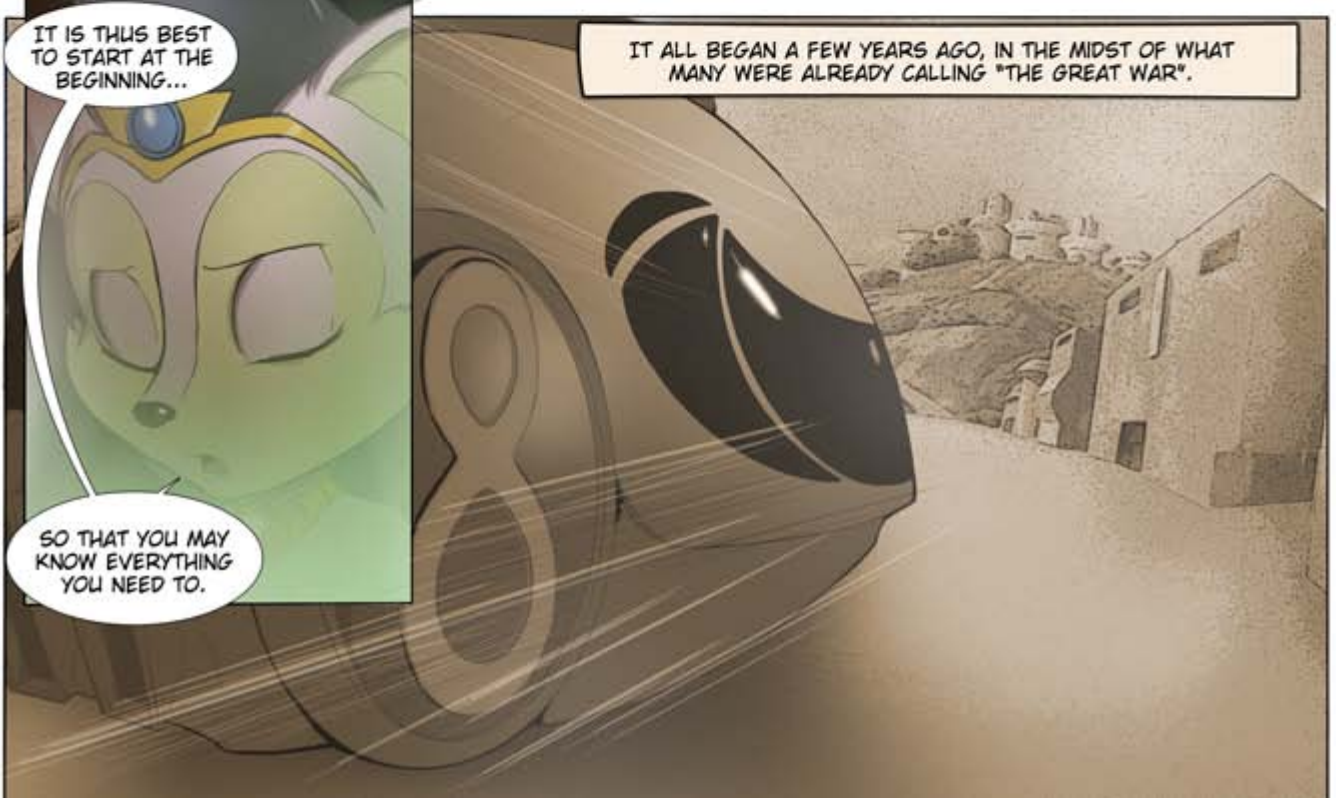
IT IS DIFFICULT TO
EXPLAIN THAT TRUTH, HOWEVER,
WITHOUT ITS FULL CONTEXT.



ESPECIALLY
SINCE I DO NOT
KNOW THAT I WILL
EVER GET TO SPEAK
WITH YOU MYSELF.



NOD



IT IS THUS BEST
TO START AT THE
BEGINNING...

SO THAT YOU MAY
KNOW EVERYTHING
YOU NEED TO.

IT ALL BEGAN A FEW YEARS AGO, IN THE MIDST OF WHAT
MANY WERE ALREADY CALLING "THE GREAT WAR".





OH COME NOW, JULIAN, THERE'S NO NEED FOR SUCH UNPLEASANT TALK RIGHT NOW.



BESIDES...

WE HAD A SECURITY DETAIL WITH US AT ALL TIMES.

TAP



I ASSURE YOU, NO EXPEDITION OF BARTHOLOMEW WALRUS'S IS EVER ANYTHING LESS THAN PERFECTLY SAFE.

MANY PROBABLY THOUGHT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPEDITIONS LIKE THE KIND BART AND I HAD GONE ON TO BE FRIVOLOUS IN A TIME OF WAR.



QUITE WELL, MAX, QUITE WELL. ALL THE BETTER THANKS TO YOU GRACIOUSLY ALLOWING ME TO TAKE MY OLD STAR PUPIL WITH ME ON THIS TRIP.

BUT OF COURSE, HOW FOOLISH OF ME TO FORGET. HOW HAVE YOU BEEN, YOU OLD RASCAL?

THE PLEASURE WAS MINE, BART. IT HAD BEEN TOO LONG SINCE MY LAST REAL DIG ANYWAY.



YET SEARCHING THROUGH HISTORY... LEARNING FROM THE PAST... I BELIEVED THAT STILL HAD VALUE, EVEN WITH THE WAR CLAWS TO WORRY ABOUT.



WE'LL BE RETURNING TO THE PALACE NOW, JULIAN.

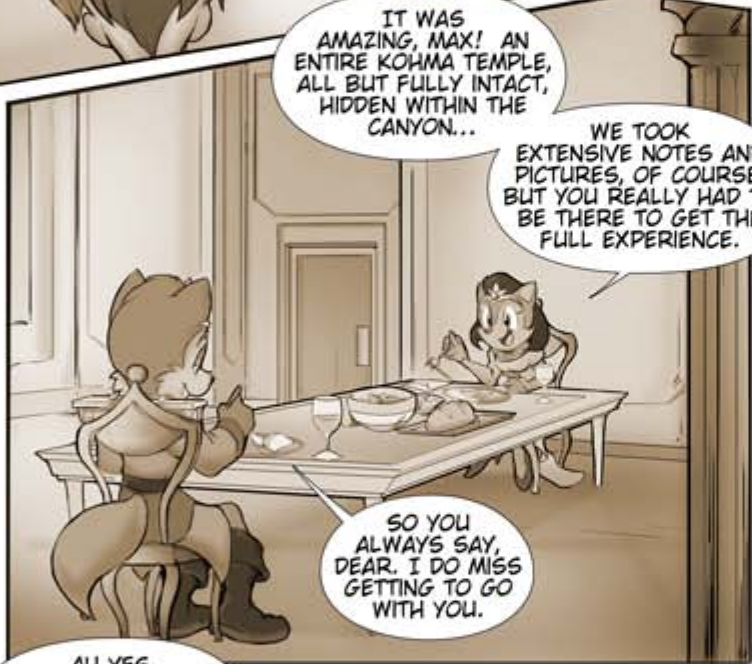
CARE TO JOIN US?

I MUST RESPECTFULLY DECLINE, YOUR MAJESTY.

I'M NEEDED ELSEWHERE.



AFTER ALL, HOW BETTER TO PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE?



IT WAS AMAZING, MAX! AN ENTIRE KOHMA TEMPLE, ALL BUT FULLY INTACT, HIDDEN WITHIN THE CANYON...

WE TOOK EXTENSIVE NOTES AND PICTURES, OF COURSE, BUT YOU REALLY HAD TO BE THERE TO GET THE FULL EXPERIENCE.

SO YOU ALWAYS SAY, DEAR. I DO MISS GETTING TO GO WITH YOU.



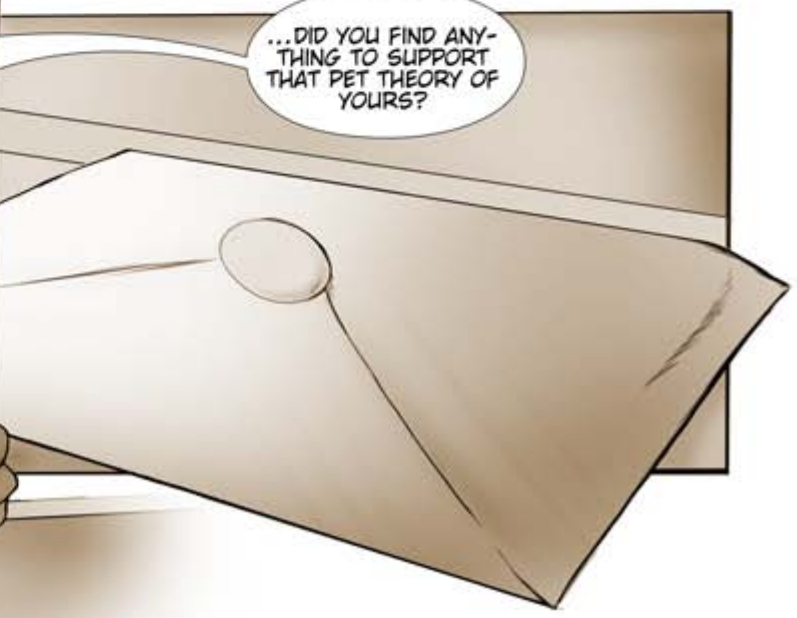
WELL OF COURSE YOU DO. THAT'S HOW WE MET, AFTER ALL. BACK WHEN I WAS BUT A COMMONER AND YOU WERE BUT A PRINCE...

IT WAS TRULY ROMANTIC, REALLY, IN THE CLASSICAL WAY.



AH YES, THOSE WERE THE DAYS. OF COURSE, AS I RECALL, YOU WERE THE ONE WHO MADE THE FIRST MOVE.

SO, TELL ME...



...DID YOU FIND ANYTHING TO SUPPORT THAT PET THEORY OF YOURS?



I'VE BEEN KEEPING TRACK OF IT IN MY STUDIES OVER THE YEARS, THE WAY SO MANY ANCIENT CULTURES SEEMED TO HAVE AT THEIR CENTER VARIOUS KINDS OF MAGICAL STONES.

DEEP POWER STONES, TIME STONES, THAT SORT OF THING....

AH, YES!



I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED IF THESE ANCIENT RELICS WERE MORE THAN JUST MYTHS, IF THEY WERE IN FACT RELATED TO THE POWER CRYSTALS DISCOVERED UNDERGROUND AT THE START OF THE MODERN AGE...

AND IF THEY WERE ALL CONNECTED TO EACH OTHER.



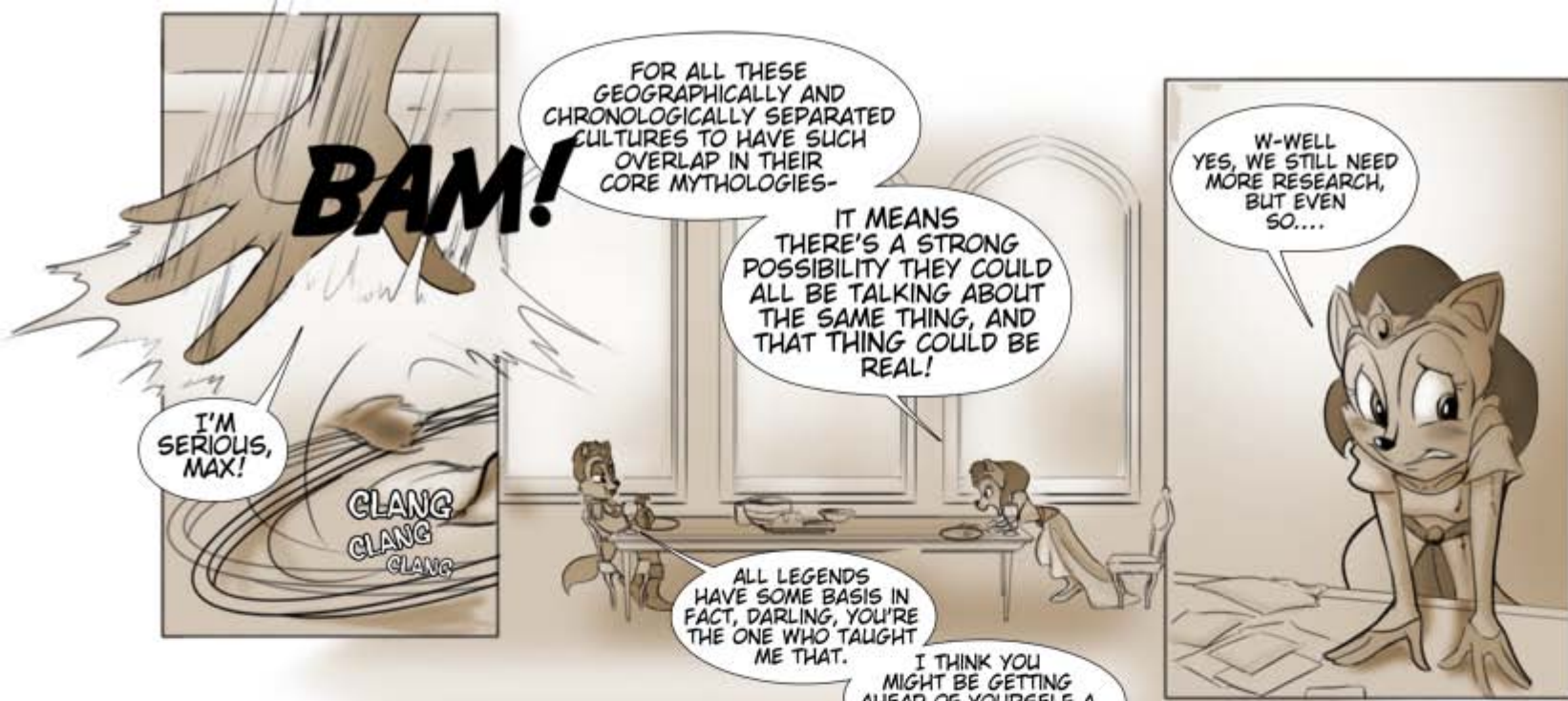
AND NOW LOOK AT THIS!

THESE RUINS SUGGEST AN ENTIRE FAMILY OF MYSTICAL GEMS WHICH SUPPOSEDLY HELD A MULTITUDE OF MAGICAL POWERS!



HM...

YOU ALWAYS HAVE HAD A TALENT FOR DISCOVERY, DEAR.



YOU MAY READ ABOUT IT YOURSELF IN HISTORY BOOKS ONE DAY, BUT NO BOOK CAN DO JUSTICE TO THE EXPERIENCE OF LIVING IN THOSE UNEASY, UNCERTAIN TIMES.



YOUR FATHER AND I DID OUR BEST TO KEEP STABILITY WITHIN THE KINGDOM, BUT OUR ENEMIES PROVED THEMSELVES MORE AND MORE RUTHLESS EVERY DAY.

IT'S AN EXPERIENCE I HOPE YOU NEVER HAVE TO LEARN, MY DAUGHTER...



SO MUCH FOR THAT...

...EVEN IF I FEAR, INEVITABLY, YOU ONE DAY WILL.



THAT DAY IN PARTICULAR, HOWEVER, CARRIED GRAVE NEWS.



ONE OF MINISTER JULIAN'S SENTRY DRONES CAPTURED THIS VIDEO FOOTAGE JUST A FEW HOURS AGO.





THAT AREA IS ONLY A FEW DAYS AWAY FROM MOBOTROPOLIS BY FOOT!

YOU DON'T MEAN TO SAY...?

OUI, YOUR HIGHNESS, I AM AFRAID I DO. COMPUTER, SHOW ZOOM-IN FOOTAGE.



VREEEEEE



WAR CLAW SCOUTS.

SOYEZ ASSURÉ, MY LIEGE, ALL GUARD DRONES HAVE BEEN PLACED ON FULL ALERT, AND MY MEN IN THE FIELD ARE TRYING TO GATHER FURTHER INFORMATION.

WHY WOULD THEY RISK GETTING THIS CLOSE TO THE CAPITAL? THEY KNOW HOW WELL-GUARDED IT IS.

THEY MAY BE PLANNING A SMALL-SCALE INFILTRATION, PERHAPS. OR THEY COULD BE TRYING TO MISDIRECT OUR ATTENTION...

EITHER WAY, IT'S A CLEAR SIGN THEY'RE GETTING BOLDER.

FOR NOW, WE CANNOT SAY FOR SURE WHAT THIS MEANS, BUT WE MUST KEEP ON ALERT.

HEARING THE GENERAL'S WORDS... SEEING THAT IMAGE... IT REMINDED ME OF HOW VULNERABLE THE SECURITY OF MOBOTROPOLIS REALLY COULD BE.



FORTUNATELY, I HAD BEEN WORKING ON AN IMPORTANT, PERSONAL PROJECT FOR GOOD WHILE BY THAT POINT.

USING THE LESSONS IN COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY I HAD BEEN GIVEN BY SIR CHARLES HEDGEHOG, I WAS INTENT ON CREATING A COMPACT DEVICE WHICH COULD STORE AND ACCESS THE MULTITUDES OF CULTURAL INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE MY ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH HAD REVEALED, TO INSURE ITS PRESERVATION.

WITH TIME, HOWEVER, MY VISION FOR ITS FUNCTION HAD BEGUN TO EXPAND.

I BEGAN TO WONDER IF IT COULD HELP PRESERVE THE CULTURE AND HISTORY OF MOBOTROPOLIS AS WELL.



YOUR MAJESTY.

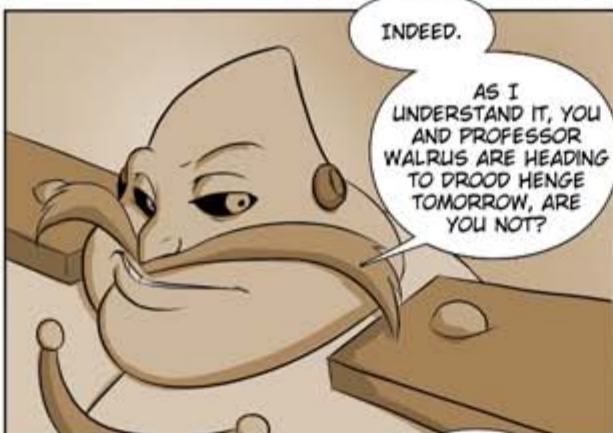
JULIAN! I DIDN'T HEAR YOU COME IN. CAN I HELP YOU?



ACTUALLY, MY QUEEN, I AM HERE FOR YOUR SAKE. I WISH TO APOLOGIZE FOR MY... BRISK TONE AT YOUR RETURN HOME THE OTHER DAY.

I WAS MERELY CONCERNED FOR YOUR SAFETY.

THAT'S... FINE, JULIAN. I'M SURE YOU MEANT NO HARM.



INDEED.

AS I UNDERSTAND IT, YOU AND PROFESSOR WALRUS ARE HEADING TO DROOD HENGE TOMORROW, ARE YOU NOT?



... YES...



SPLENDID.

I TRUST YOU BOTH SHALL KEEP SAFE, THEN.

....



MAX...?

MMM...
YES, DEAR?



HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST WAR MINISTER JULIAN?

JULIAN...?

JULIAN IS NOT ONLY AN INDISPENSABLE ASSET IN OUR FIGHT WITH THE WAR CLAWS, HE HAS PROVEN HIMSELF A STAUNCH ALLY AND A GOOD FRIEND.



I WOULD TRUST HIM WITH MY LIFE.



WHY DO YOU ASK?



...HE FRIGHTENS ME.



FRIGHTENS YOU, DEAR? WHY?



IT'S HARD TO DESCRIBE. THERE'S JUST AN... INSINCERITY TO THE MAN. THIS FEELING THAT EVERYTHING HE SAYS AND DOES IS MERELY A COVER TO HIS OWN SELF-INTERESTS.

LIKE THE WORLD EXISTS TO HIM ONLY AS LONG AS HE CAN MAKE IT SERVE HIS NEEDS.

NOW NICOLE, DEAREST, DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S A BIT UNFAIR? JULIAN HAS GIVEN SO MUCH OF HIMSELF TO THIS WAR, OUR WAR, AND HE ISN'T EVEN ONE OF OUR OWN PEOPLE.

WOULD A MAN AS SELFISH AS ALL THAT REALLY DO SUCH A THING?



MAYBE IF HE THOUGHT THERE WAS SOMETHING IN IT FOR HIM...



HE AND HIS NEPHEW CAME TO US, MAX.

THEY OFFERED US THEIR SERVICES. WHAT IF THE REASON WHY IS BECAUSE THEY HAD THEIR OWN PLANS IN MIND FOR OUR KINGDOM?

THAT WAS MONTHS AGO, DEAR.

DON'T YOU THINK, IF THEY WANTED TO DO SOMETHING, THEY WOULD HAVE BY NOW?



JULIAN IS A... DETERMINED MAN. I WILL NOT DENY THAT AND HE CARRIES HIMSELF WITH AN INTIMIDATING AIR.

IT'S ONLY NATURAL YOU'D BE A LITTLE SCARED OF HIM. BUT YOU MUSTN'T LET FEAR GET THE BEST OF YOU, MY DARLING.



NOW COME BACK TO BED. I PROMISE, ONCE YOU GET HOME FROM YOUR TRIP WITH BART TOMORROW, YOU'LL BE SO REFRESHED THESE THOUGHTS WILL BE OUT OF YOUR HEAD ENTIRELY.

YOU DO MAKE A CONVINCING ARGUMENT, MAX....

SO BART AND I SET OUT FOR DROOD HENGE, AS SCHEDULED. IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A ROUTINE EXPEDITION, SMALL AND LOW-KEY... BUT THAT WOULD BE THE DAY THAT CHANGED MY LIFE FOREVER.

WHOOOSH

STILL WORKING ON THAT DEVICE OF YOURS, I SEE.

THE ACTUAL COMPUTER IS ALMOST FINISHED NOW. AFTER THAT, IT'S JUST A MATTER OF PROGRAMMING THE INTERFACE....

NORMALLY, YOU JUST ENJOY THE TRIP. IS SOMETHING TROUBLING YOU, NICOLE?

JUST... FEELING ANXIOUS, I SUPPOSE.

WHOOOOOSH



I WILL KEEP AN EYE ON THINGS FROM THE OUTSIDE AND KEEP THE HOVERCRAFT READY, JUST IN CASE.

SIGNAL ME THE MOMENT YOU NEED ANYTHING, MY QUEEN. BONNE CHANCE TO YOU BOTH!

THANK YOU AS ALWAYS, EVANGELINE! I'VE GOT MY COMMUNICATOR IF WE NEED ANYTHING!

WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE IT WAS YOU SAW, NICOLE?

I DON'T KNOW, HONESTLY. I DON'T SEE ANY SIGN OF IT NOW THAT WE'RE ON THE GROUND...

...
BUT SINCE WE'RE HERE...

LOOKS DEEP, DARK, AND DANGEROUS TOO.

PERFECT FOR ARCHAEOLOGISTS.



FASCINATING...IT WOULD SEEM THE DROODS WERE CRAFTIER THAN WE GAVE THEM CREDIT FOR, HIDING A TEMPLE WITHIN THIS OLD ROCK.

BUT WHY HIDE IT? THE DROOD SITES WE'VE STUDIED BEFORE WERE RIGHT IN THE OPEN.

THIS, THOUGH...THEY WENT TO A LOT OF TROUBLE TO CONCEAL IT.

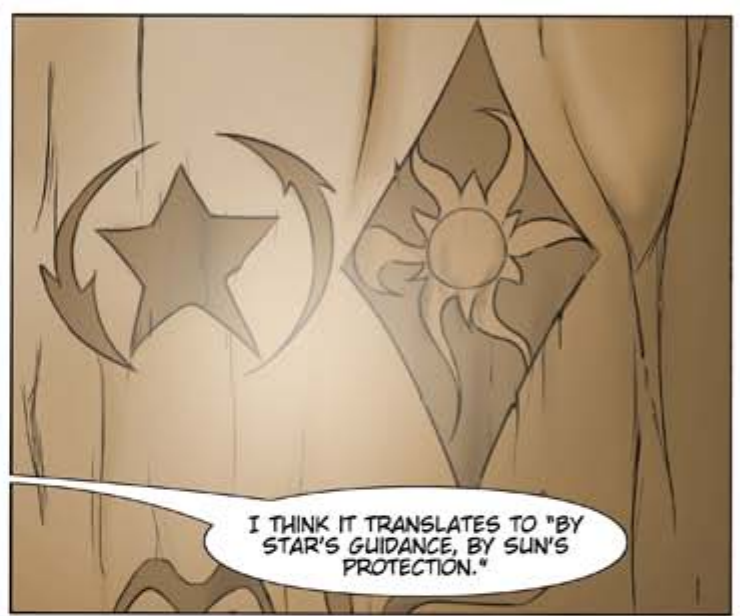


HMM...



SOMETHING CATCH YOUR ATTENTION, NICOLE?

MY DROOD'S A LITTLE RUSTY, BUT THIS PHRASE ON THE WALL...



I THINK IT TRANSLATES TO "BY STAR'S GUIDANCE, BY SUN'S PROTECTION."



THAT PHRASE... I'VE SEEN IT BEFORE, AT THE MANDARRA OUTPOST WE FOUND IN THE DEEP MOUNTAINS, AND AGAIN AT THE CITY OF MAGA.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN A DROOD LOCATION USE IT, THOUGH.

HM... THINKING ABOUT THAT OLD THEORY OF YOURS, ARE YOU?



A SHARED MYTHOS... A CONNECTED CULTURE. ONE LEGEND, A THOUSAND TRUTHS...



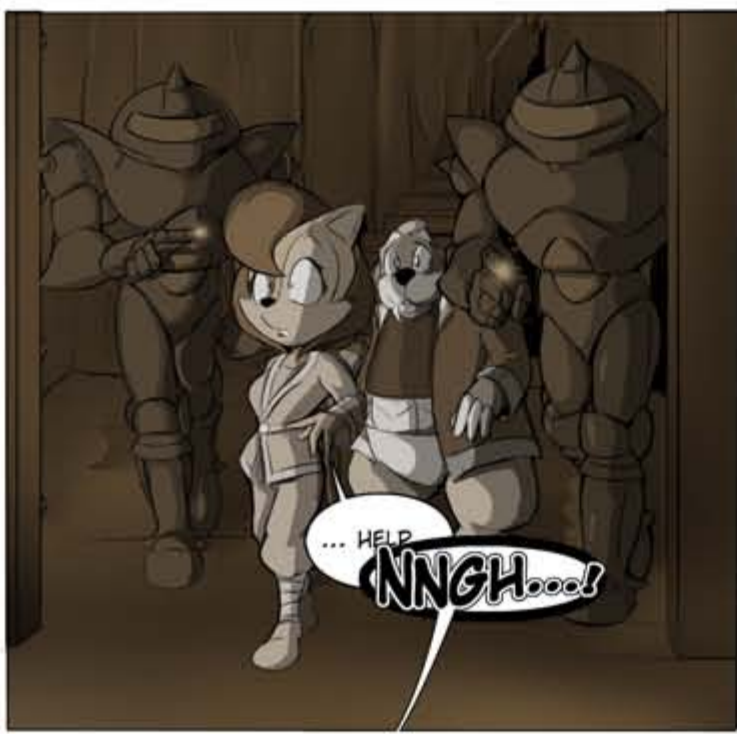
NYAAAAAAAAAAAAARGH!!!

THAT CAME FROM BELOW US...!

SOMEONE ELSE IS INSIDE? WHO? HOW?



WHOEVER THEY ARE, THEY SOUND LIKE THEY'RE IN TROUBLE. WE'VE GOT TO...!





YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO, ZEPHYR.



ROGER.



M-M-MALEFFF-FUNCT-T-TION !!!



EMP DARTS? WHERE DID THE WAR CLAWS GET THAT KIND OF TECH?



CLUNK CLUNK



... OH DEAR.



WELL PUT.



RUN!



EVANGELINE!



EVANGELINE, EVANGELINE! WE NEED HELP!



WE'RE- HNNGH!!

KZZSH!

I THINK NOT, MY DEAR.



GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON WHY I SHOULDN'T SKIN YOUR INTERLOPING HIDES RIGHT NOW.

CLANK
CLANK



... BECAUSE...



... BECAUSE WE BOTH WANT THE SAME THING.



OH?

I HEARD WHAT YOU SAID BEFORE... YOU NEED THAT BOOK.

MY FRIEND AND I... WE'RE ARCHAEOLOGISTS, WE KNOW A LOT ABOUT ANCIENT CULTURES AND HOW THEY WORKED.

NICOLE...!

WE WANT THE BOOK, TOO... AND I THINK I MAY KNOW HOW TO GET IT.



JUST KILL THEM AND BE DONE WITH IT, KALE! WE DON'T NEED THEM!



I GIVE THE ORDERS AROUND HERE, ZEPHYR! AND SHE'S RIGHT ABOUT ONE THING...



WE NEED THAT BOOK!

SO LET'S HOPE YOU WERE BEING HONEST ABOUT THE REST OF WHAT YOU SAID.

BECAUSE YOU'RE GOING TO GET THAT BOOK FOR US, AND IF YOU'RE LYING... WELL...



HEH... YOU'LL WIND UP IN WORSE SHAPE THAN ME!
HEE HEE HEE....



AND JUST TO PROVIDE SOME EXTRA INCENTIVE....



FAIL, OR TRY TO PULL ANYTHING FUNNY, AND YOU LOSE YOUR FRIEND. GOT IT?

I'D RECOMMEND AGAINST IT.

DO I AT LEAST GET TO STAND UP?



NOW GET TO WORK!

THE TRUTH WAS, I DIDN'T KNOW ANY MORE ABOUT THAT BOOK OR HOW TO GET IT THAN THE WAR CLAWS.

I WAS JUST DESPERATELY STALLING FOR TIME.

I HAD NO IDEA WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT.

By STAR'S GUIDANCE, BY SUN'S PROTECTION.

WOULD I DIE?
WOULD BART? WOULD I BE
BURNED LIKE THAT WAR CLAW
HYENA?

WOULD I SUCCEED?

By STAR'S GUIDANCE, BY SUN'S PROTECTION.

... DID I WANT TO?

THE ONLY THING I COULD THINK OF TO KEEP MY HANDS STEADY WERE THE WORDS I HAD READ BEFORE ON THE WALL...

By STAR'S GUIDANCE,
BY SUN'S PROTECTION.

AND THAT IS WHEN IT HAPPENED.





ONE MYTH...



A THOUSAND TRUTHS.



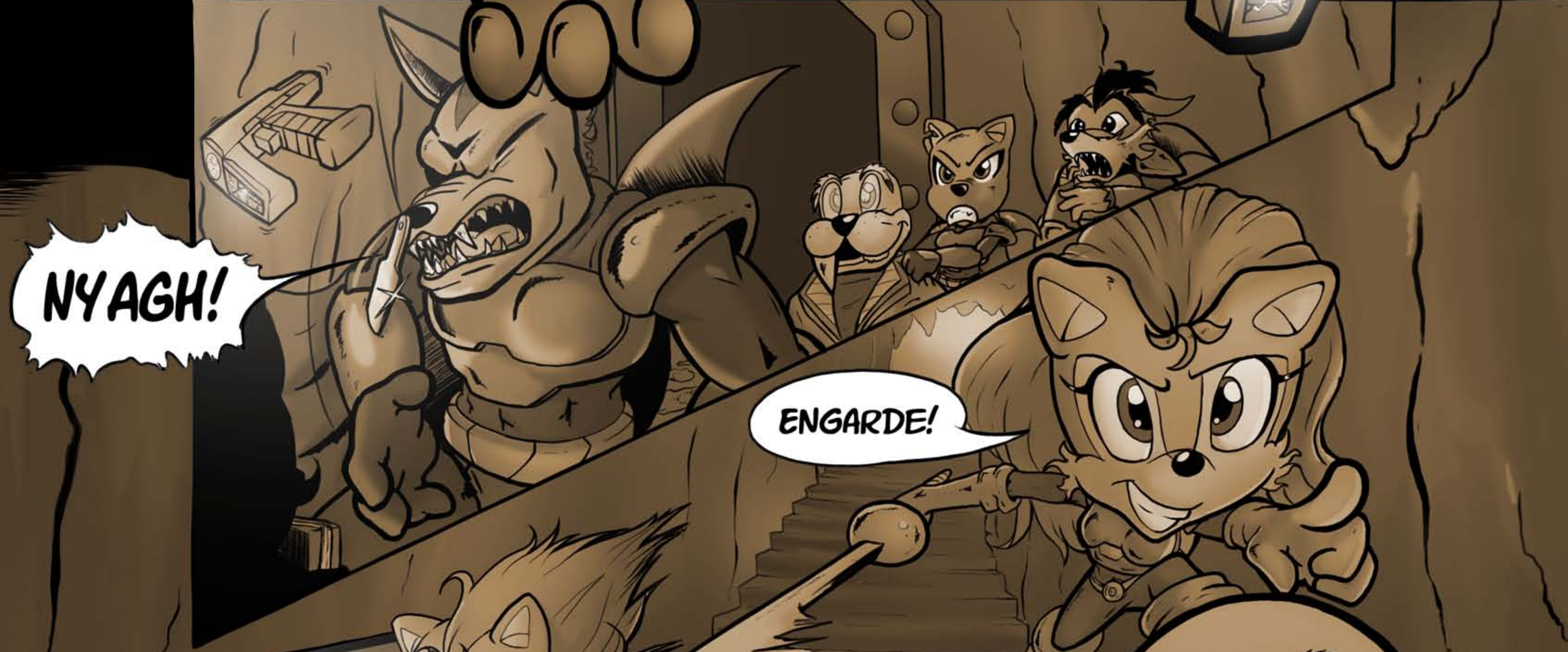
FOR THAT ONE, FLEETING MOMENT, MY MIND WAS OPENED TO THEM ALL.





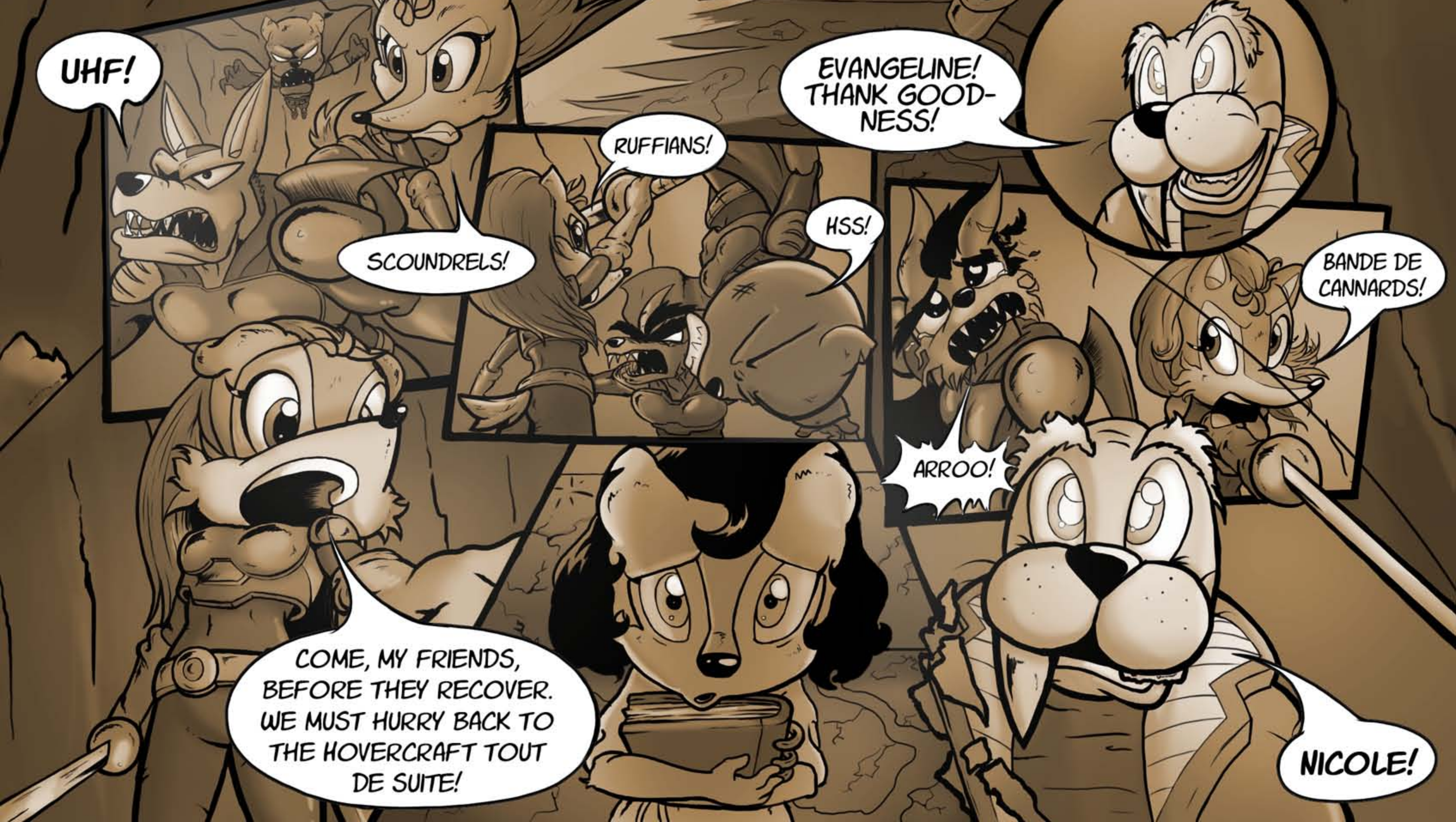
THE BOOK.
GIVE IT TO ME.
NOW.

I SAID...!



NYAGH!

ENGARDE!



UHF!

EVANGELINE!
THANK GOOD-
NESS!



SCOUNDRELS!

RUFFIANS!

HSS!

BANDE DE
CANNARDS!



ARROO!

COME, MY FRIENDS,
BEFORE THEY RECOVER.
WE MUST HURRY BACK TO
THE HOVERCRAFT TOUT
DE SUITE!

NICOLE!



R-RIGHT!



GRRRR...
AFTER THEM! WE NEED THAT BOOK!

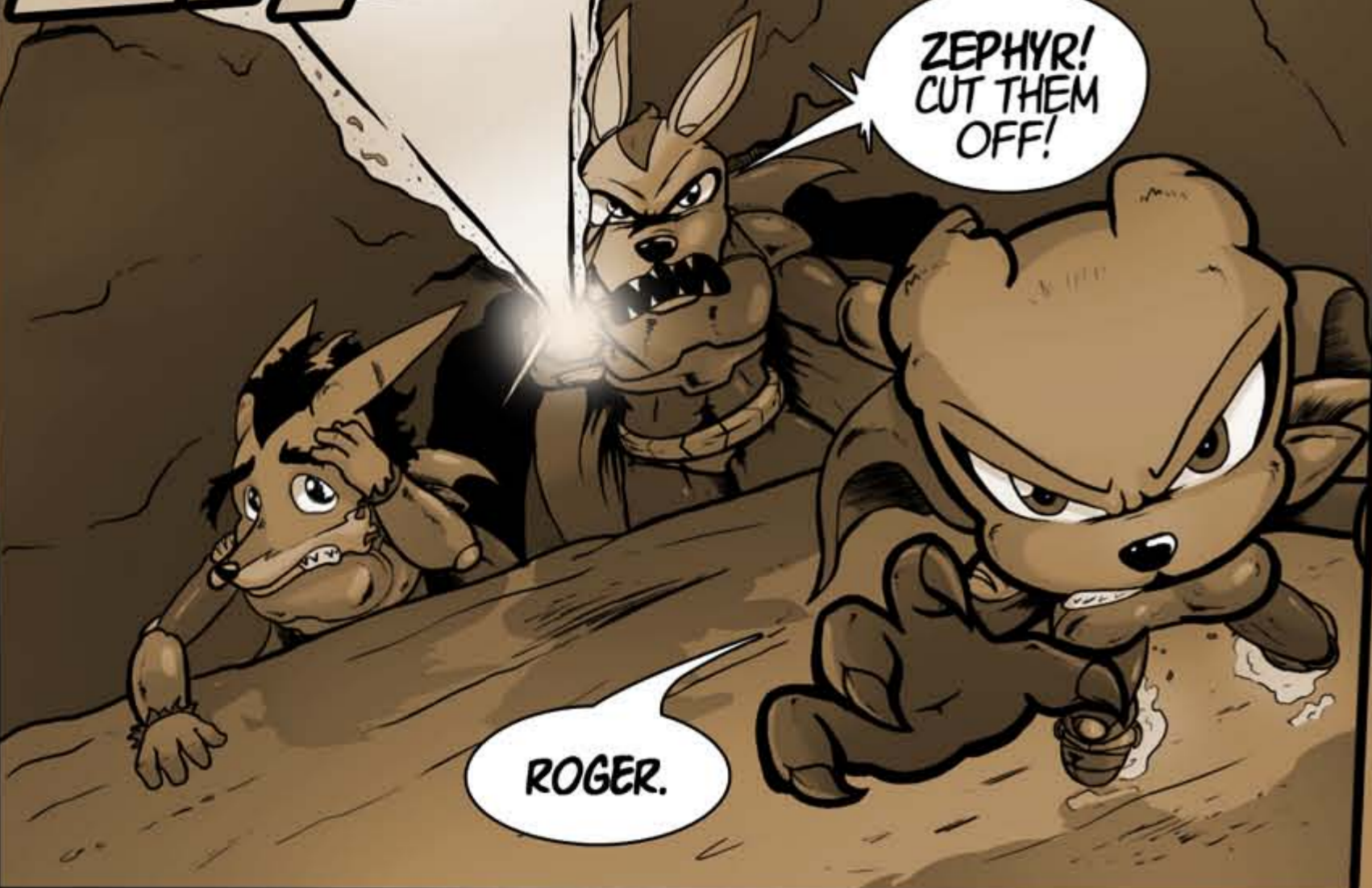
BRZZT!



OH DEAR, OH DEAR!

EN AVANT! WE ARE ALMOST THERE!

BRZZT!

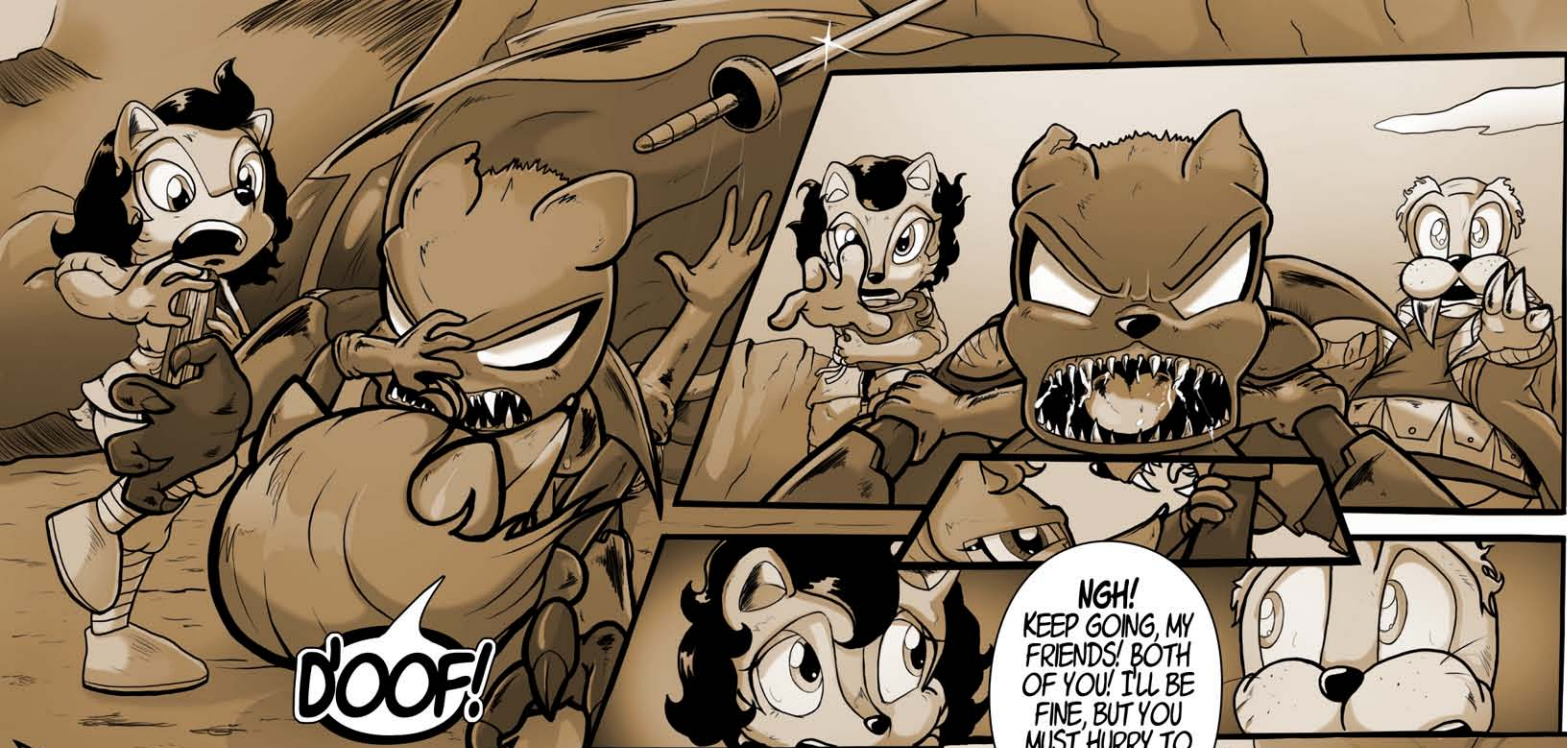


ZEPHYR! CUT THEM OFF!

ROGER.



HSS!



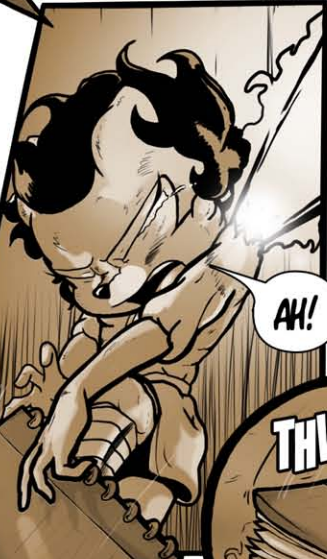
DOOF!

NGH!
KEEP GOING, MY FRIENDS! BOTH OF YOU! I'LL BE FINE, BUT YOU MUST HURRY TO THE HOVER CRAFT!

GO!



I WILL HAVE THAT BOOK!



AH!

LEAVE IT, BART, WE HAVE TO KEEP GOING! FOR EVANGELINE!

BRZZT!



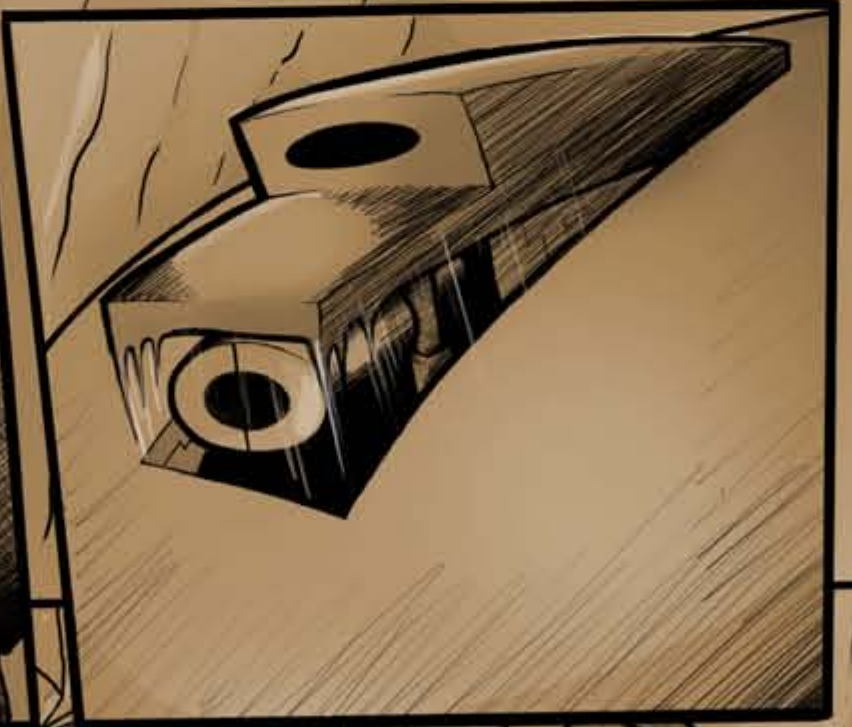
THWAP

I'LL DEAL WITH THE SQUIRREL AND THE WALRUS! ROMERO, YOU GET THAT BOOK, AND DON'T YOU DARE SCREW IT UP THIS TIME!

R-RIGHT..!

WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE EVANGELINE BEHIND!

WE WONT, BART.



KLEERK!

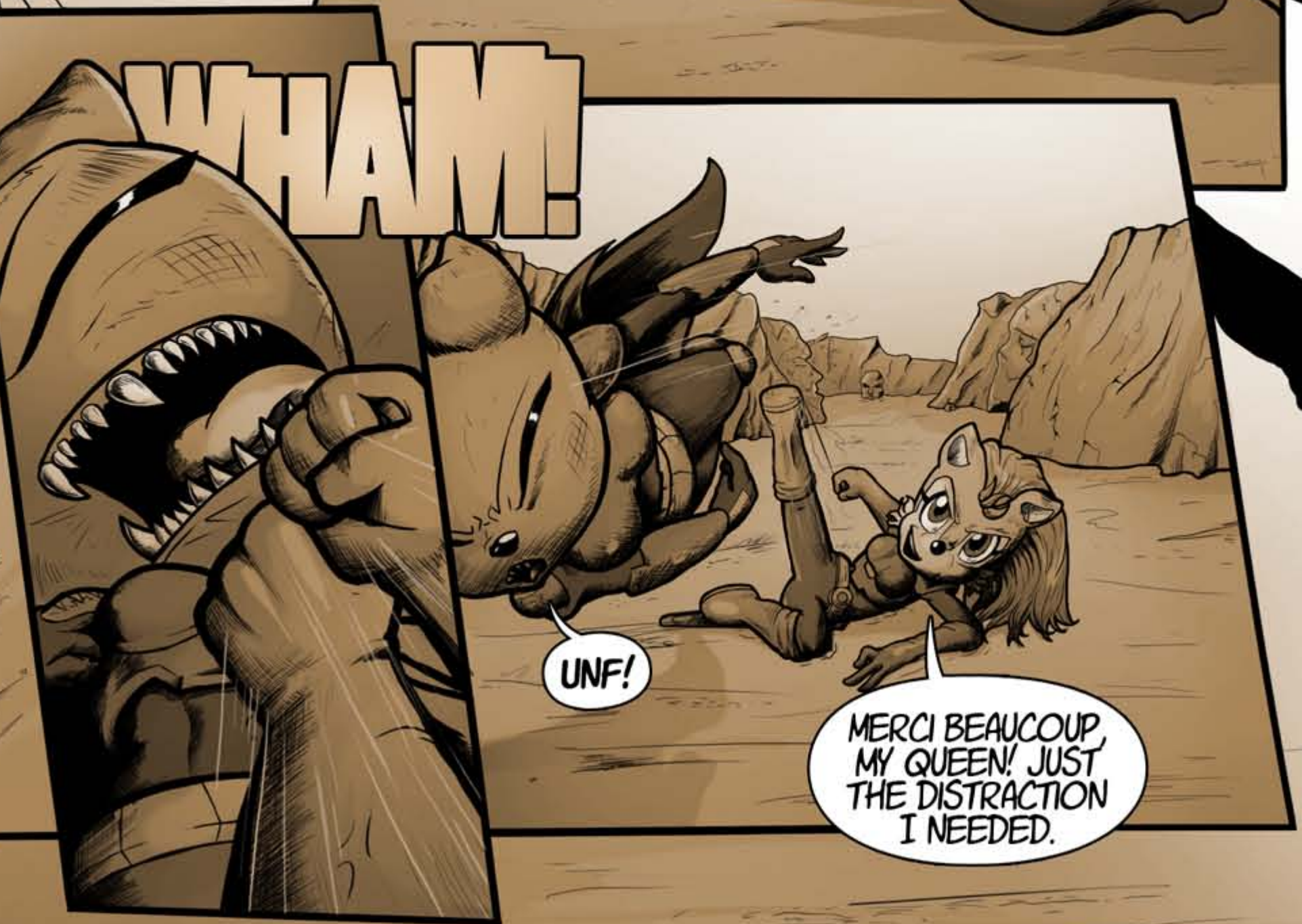
GAH!

TCH!

WHAM!

UNF!

MERCI BEAUCOUP, MY QUEEN! JUST THE DISTRACTION I NEEDED.



DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT YOU'RE DOING?

THE SHOOTING PART YES, THE AIMING PART NOT SO MUCH.



EEK!
IMPOLU!

THK

I'LL BE TAKING THAT, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.



CRASH!

BRZZT!



BOOOM!

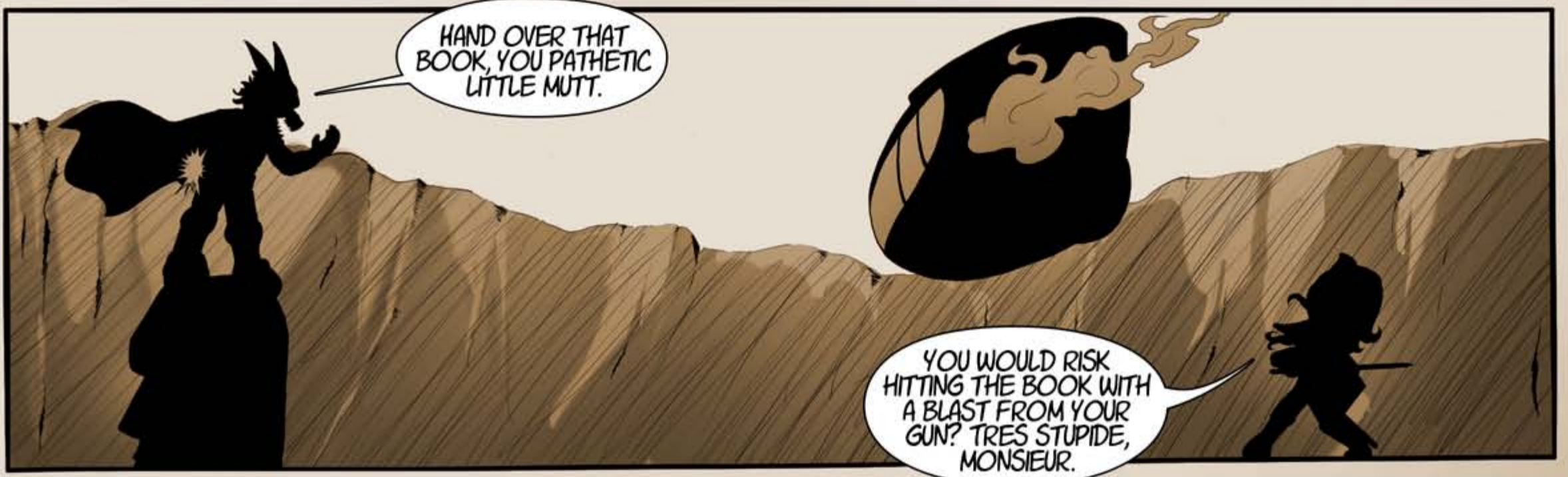


!!!

GASP!

OH DEAR!





HAND OVER THAT BOOK, YOU PATHETIC LITTLE MUTT.

YOU WOULD RISK HITTING THE BOOK WITH A BLAST FROM YOUR GUN? TRES STUPIDE, MONSIEUR.



I WANT THAT BOOK. AND WHETHER I HAVE TO KILL YOU OR YOUR TWO LITTLE FRIENDS TO GET IT, I DON'T CARE. I HAVE THE FIREPOWER NOW, NOT YOU.



BEEP! BEEP!



IS THAT SO?



DROP YOUR WEAPON, WAR CLAW!



OOPS...

DID I FORGET TO MENTION I CALLED IN REINFORCEMENTS BEFORE GOING INTO THE TEMPLE? SUIS-JE BÊTE.



AS SOON AS
EVANGELINE'S DIS-
TRESS SIGNAL CAME IN,
I INSISTED JULIAN AND
I TAKE THE FASTEST
SHIP AND THE BEST
SOLDIERS WE COULD
AFFORD.

WE CAME AS
QUICKLY AS WE
COULD.

LIKE I ALWAYS SAY, MAX, YOU
WORRY TOO MUCH...

...BUT THAT'S ONE OF THE
MANY REASONS I LOVE YOU.

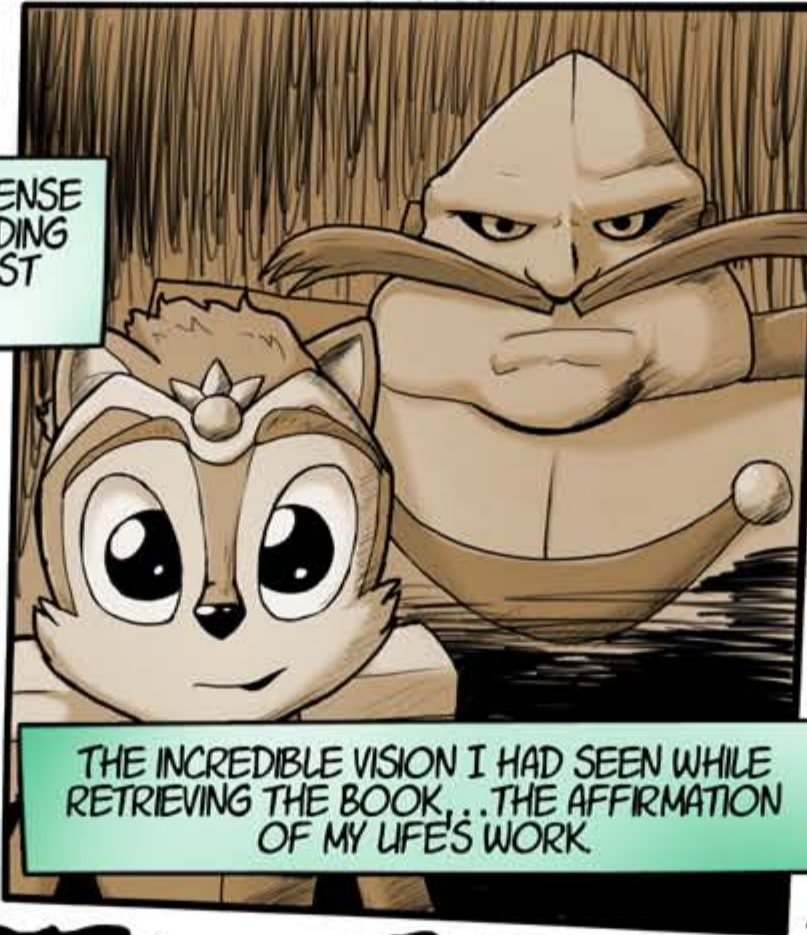
AND YOU'RE CERTAIN
YOU'RE ALRIGHT, NICOLE?
PLEASE, TELL ME
EVERYTHING.

THIS BOOK...
THE WAR CLAWS
WERE AFTER
IT.

THE BOOK?
WHATSOEVER
FOR?

I WANTED TO TELL HIM EVERYTHING THEN AND THERE.

HOW THE BOOK MUST'VE BEEN AN ITEM OF IMMENSE IMPORTANCE TO THE DROOD, PERHAPS PROVIDING CLUES ON THE WHEREABOUTS OF THEIR MOST SACRED TREASURES...



THE INCREDIBLE VISION I HAD SEEN WHILE RETRIEVING THE BOOK... THE AFFIRMATION OF MY LIFE'S WORK.

BUT THEN IT HIT ME. THE UNUSUALLY ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY THE WAR CLAWS HAD BEEN USING...

HIS INTEREST IN MY EXPEDITION TO DROOD HENGE...

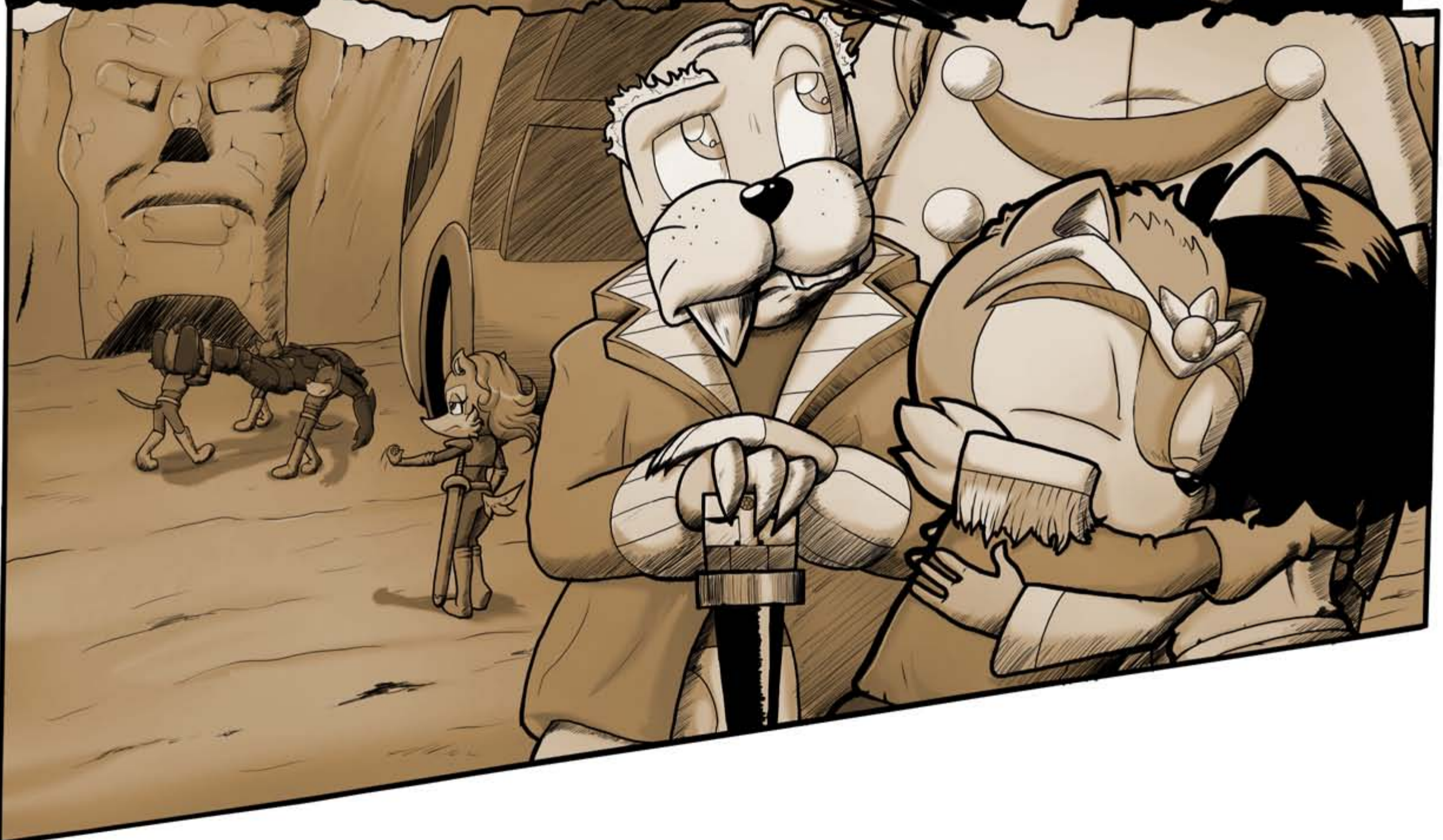


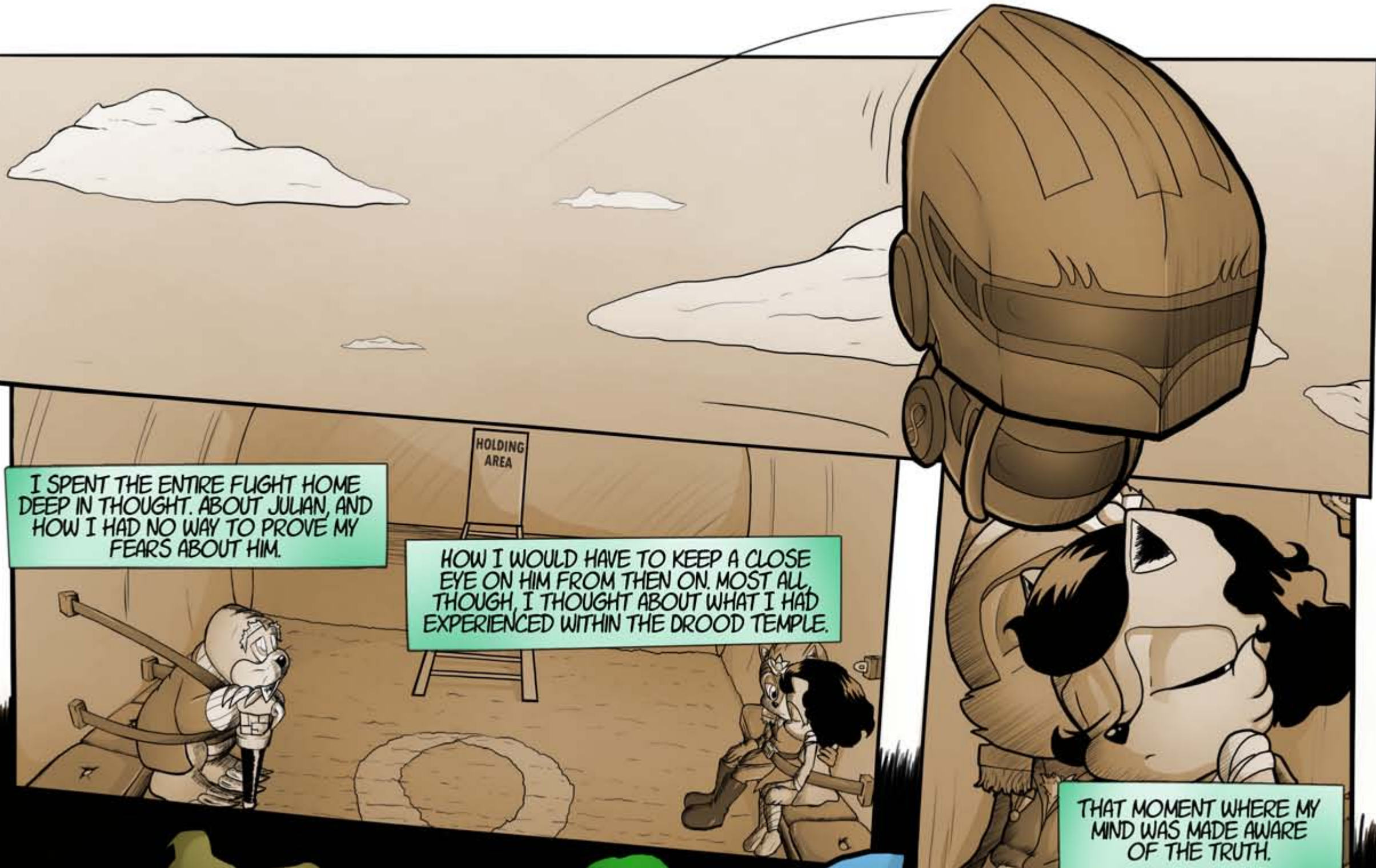
I COULDN'T TELL HIM. I COULD NEVER TELL HIM, NO MATTER HOW MUCH I WANTED TO.

BECAUSE HE TRUSTED JULIAN... AND NOW MORE THAN EVER, I COULD NOT.



...I HAVE NO IDEA.





I SPENT THE ENTIRE FLIGHT HOME DEEP IN THOUGHT, ABOUT JULIAN, AND HOW I HAD NO WAY TO PROVE MY FEARS ABOUT HIM.


HOW I WOULD HAVE TO KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON HIM FROM THEN ON. MOST ALL, THOUGH, I THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT I HAD EXPERIENCED WITHIN THE DROOD TEMPLE.

THAT MOMENT WHERE MY MIND WAS MADE AWARE OF THE TRUTH.

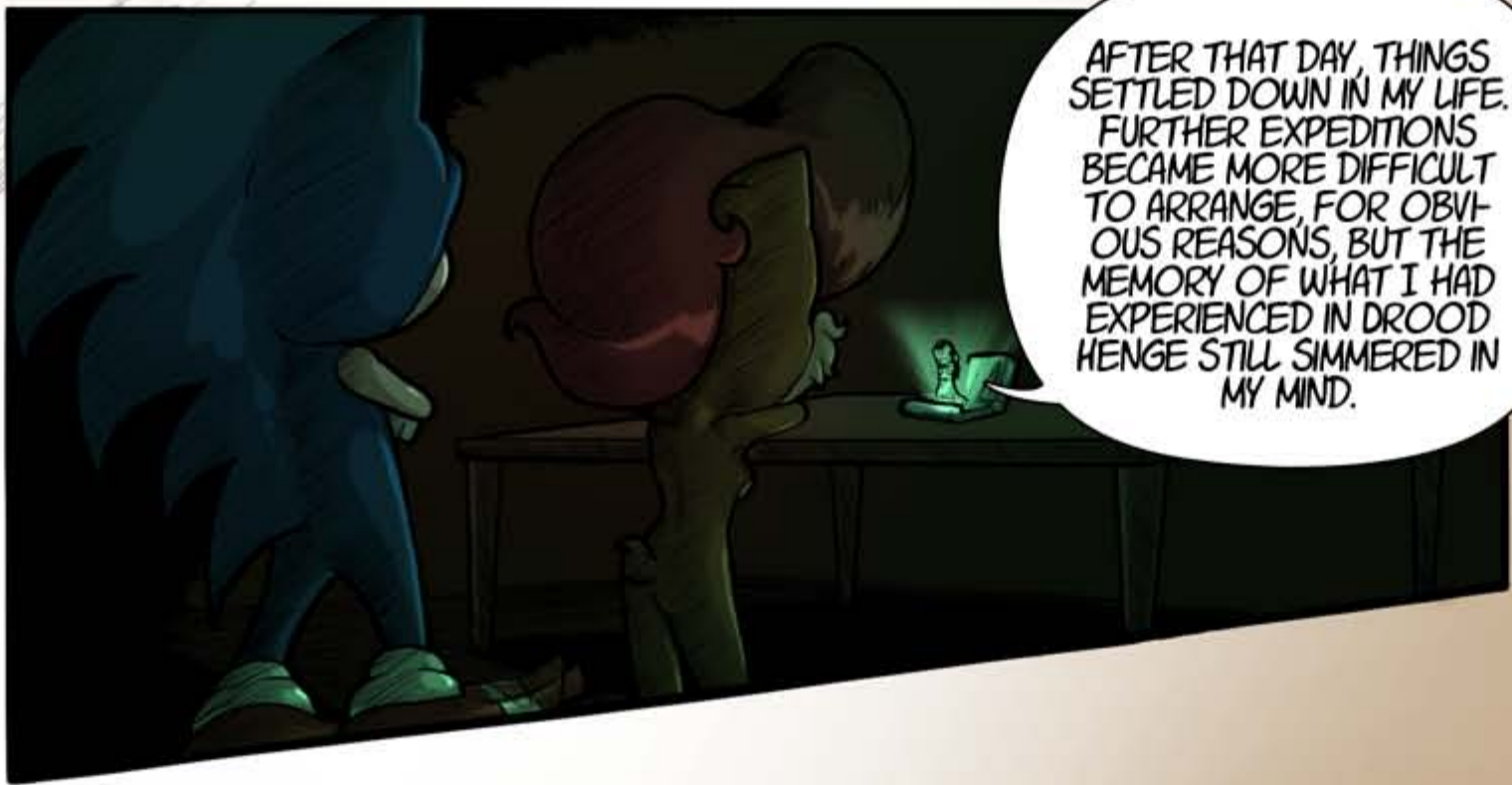
ALREADY, IT WAS HARD TO HOLD ON TO THE SPECIFIC IMAGES I HAD SEEN, BUT THE REALITY OF IT... THE FORCES I HAD BEEN MADE AWARE OF... THAT REMAINED CRYSTAL-CLEAR IN MY MEMORY.

EVEN IF I COULDN'T TELL MAX, I KNEW WHAT I HAD SEEN... WHAT I HAD LEARNED... WAS IMPORTANT.

BECAUSE IF THE WAR CLAWS HAD BEEN SEEKING THAT POWER...



...WHO ELSE MIGHT ONE DAY TRY TO FIND IT? AND TO WHAT END?



AFTER THAT DAY, THINGS SETTLED DOWN IN MY LIFE. FURTHER EXPEDITIONS BECAME MORE DIFFICULT TO ARRANGE, FOR OBVIOUS REASONS, BUT THE MEMORY OF WHAT I HAD EXPERIENCED IN DROOD HENGE STILL SIMMERED IN MY MIND.



BUT, WITH TIME, THE URGENCY OF THOSE THOUGHTS PASSED, AND LIFE RETURNED TO ITS REGULAR RHYTHM.



BY THE END OF THE NEXT YEAR, I HAD JUST ABOUT FINISHED MY MINI-COMPUTER.



THE WAR CONTINUED, BUT MAX AND I KEPT VIGILANT. WE DREW STRENGTH FROM EACH OTHER...AND COMFORT.



AND OF COURSE, TWO YEARS AFTER THAT....



MY CONCERNS ABOUT JULIAN REMAINED, AND STILL DO, BUT AS CLOSE AS I WATCHED HIM, I STILL HAVE YET TO FIND ANY PROOF OF HIS TREASON.



BESIDES, I HAD OTHER THINGS ON MY MIND.



WELL, THE GOOD NEWS IS, YOUR BABY IS PERFECTLY HEALTHY AND SHOULD COME ALONG RIGHT ON SCHEDULE IN JUST A FEW WEEKS.



PRE-ECLAMPSIA? W-WHAT IS THAT...?



HOWEVER, THE REST OF THE TEST WORK HAS COME BACK, MY QUEEN, AND I'M AFRAID THERE ARE SOME... IRREGULARITIES.



ABNORMALLY HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, COUPLED WITH A LOW PLATELET COUNT... YOUR MAJESTY, I'M AFRAID YOU MAY HAVE PRE-ECLAMPSIA.



IT'S A DANGEROUS CONDITION THAT SOMETIMES DEVELOPS IN A MOTHER DURING PREGNANCY.

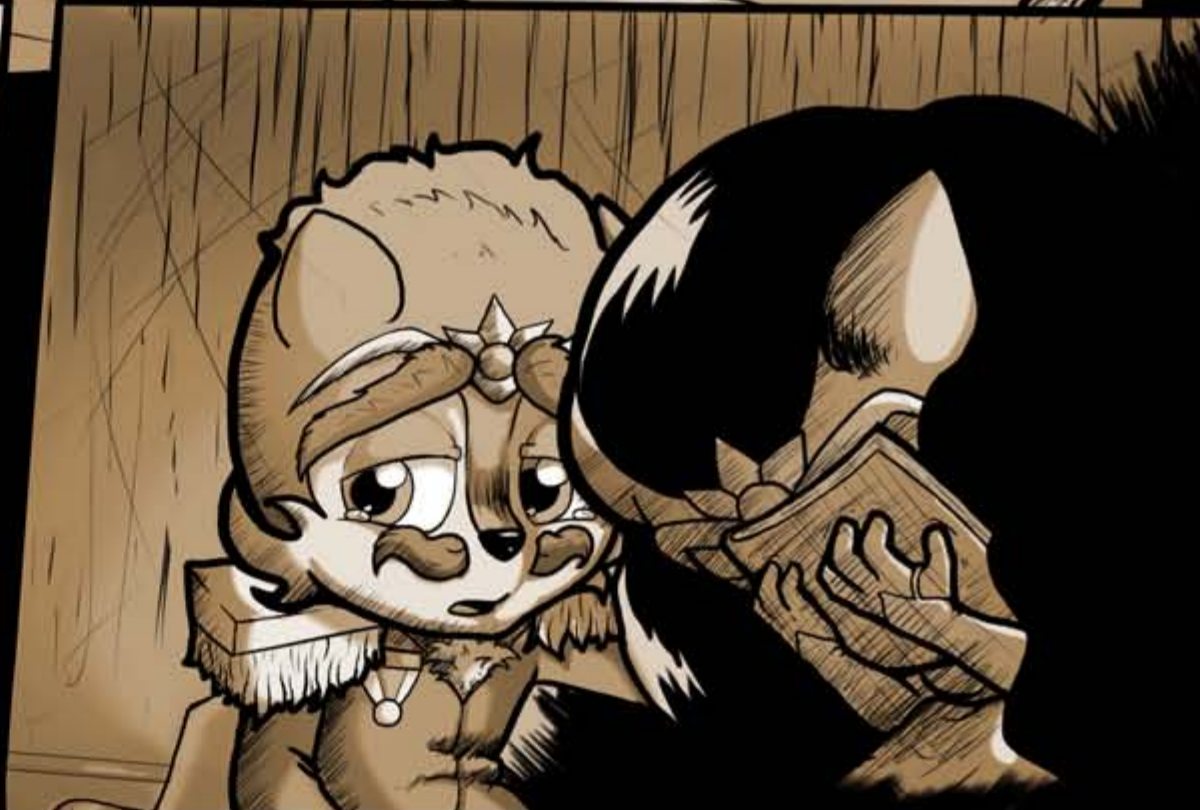
IT DOESN'T ALWAYS CAUSE IMMEDIATE SUFFERING, BUT IT MAY POTENTIALLY PROVE FATAL DURING THE BIRTHING.



I'D LIKE A FEW DAYS TO LOOK OVER THE RESULTS WITH THE REST OF MY STAFF MORE THOROUGHLY SO WE CAN CONFIRM THE DIAGNOSIS AND PLAN A COURSE OF ACTION.

BUT, AS A WARNING... WE MAY NEED TO STIMULATE AN EARLY BIRTH FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THE BABY.

...I UNDERSTAND.





BEGIN SAMPLE RE-
CORDING FOR VOCAL
INTERFACE.

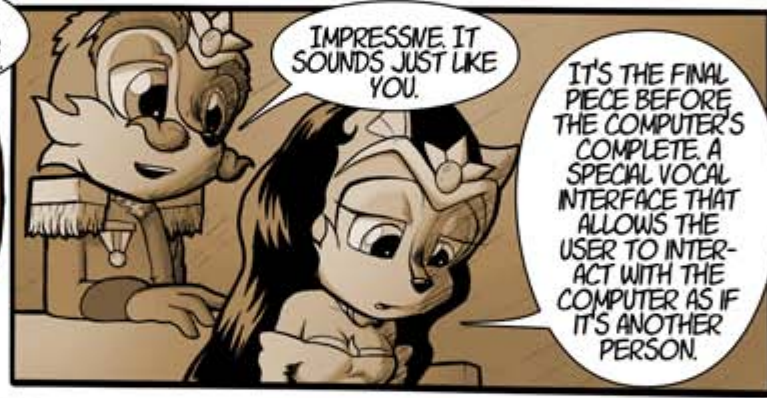
BE-BEEP!



VOCAL TEST ONE.
TESTING, TESTING, 1, 2,
3. STOP RECORDING,
REPEAT.



VOCAL TEST
ONE, TESTING,
TESTING, 1, 2, 3.



IMPRESSIVE. IT
SOUNDS JUST LIKE
YOU.

IT'S THE FINAL
PIECE BEFORE
THE COMPUTER'S
COMPLETE. A
SPECIAL VOCAL
INTERFACE THAT
ALLOWS THE
USER TO INTER-
ACT WITH THE
COMPUTER AS IF
IT'S ANOTHER
PERSON.



THIS WAY... I'LL
MAKE SURE OUR
DAUGHTER HAS A
PIECE OF ME
WITH HER.



YOU MUSTN'T TALK LIKE THAT,
NICOLE. YOU WILL SEE OUR
DAUGHTER YOURSELF.

AS AN INFANT ON THE DAY OF
HER BIRTH, AS A CHILD ON HER
FIRST BIRTHDAY, AS THE BEAUTIFUL
YOUNG WOMAN SHE WILL GROW
UP TO BE.



AND ALL THE TIMES
IN-BETWEEN?



AND ALL THE TIMES
IN-BETWEEN.




AND THAT... THAT BRINGS US TO RIGHT NOW. I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT'S...WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME NOW.

BUT I DO KNOW THAT THE SECRETS I HOLD...MY FEARS ABOUT JULIAN, MY EXPERIENCE AT DROOD HENGE...THESE THINGS CAN NOT DIE WITH ME.




THE RISK TO OUR PEOPLE...TO MAX...TO YOU...IS TOO GREAT TO LET THAT HAPPEN.



I SINCERELY HOPE YOU NEVER SEE THIS MESSAGE, MY DAUGHTER. I HOPE YOU AND I WILL KNOW EACH OTHER FACE-TO-FACE, BUT IF YOU ARE SEEING THIS MESSAGE...

THEN IT MOST LIKELY MEANS SOMEONE ELSE IS SEEKING THE INCREDIBLE POWER I LEARNED ABOUT THAT DAY AT DROOD HENGE, AND YOU NEED TO KNOW WHAT I KNOW.



THERE ARE SEVEN... CHAOS EMERALDS. THEY HAVE DIFFERING FORMS, DIFFERENT POWERS, AND THEY ARE HIDDEN ALL ACROSS MOBIUS, BUT THEY ARE ALL SOME FORM OF STONE OR CRYSTAL.

AND AS POWERFUL AS THEY ARE INDIVIDUALLY, IF ALL SEVEN ARE GATHERED IN ONE PLACE...I FEAR FOR THE SAFETY OF THE ENTIRE PLANET.

SEARCH THROUGH THE RUINS OF THE DROOD, OF MAGA, OF THE MANDARRA...OF ALL THE ANCIENT PEOPLES OF MOBIUS. THEY ALL CONTAIN CLUES THAT MAY HELP REVEAL THE EMERALDS' LOCATIONS, THAT THEY MAY BE PROTECTED.



I WISH THERE WERE SOME OTHER WAY TO DO THIS... SOMEONE ELSE I COULD ASK. I KNOW WHAT A TERRIBLE BURDEN THIS IS TO PLACE ON YOU, AND I HOPE YOU NEVER HAVE TO BEAR IT.

OR IF YOU DO, THAT YOU HAVE GROWN INTO THE AMAZING YOUNG WOMAN I KNOW YOUR FATHER WILL RAISE YOU TO BE.



BUT NO MATTER WHAT... THERE IS SOMETHING ELSE I WANT YOU TO KNOW.



I LOVE YOU. NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS TO ME, NO MATTER IF YOU EVER SEE THIS MESSAGE OR NOT... NO MATTER IF WE NEVER ACTUALLY MEET...

I LOVE YOU WITH ALL MY HEART. MY DEAREST DAUGHTER.



SAL... ARE... ARE YOU GONNA BE...?

IT ALL ADDS UP NOW. THESE CHAOS EMERALDS... THEY'RE WHAT NAUGUS IS AFTER. THEY ARE THE SEVEN WONDERS OF MOBIUS.





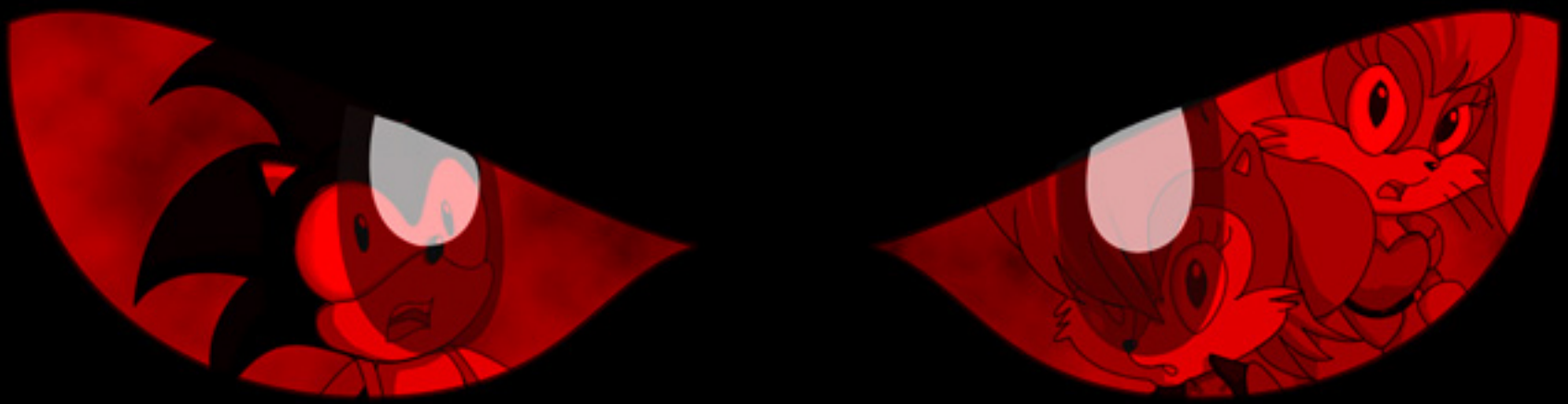






THE END





Head Writer and Story Developer: E. Mason

Colours and Character Design: Stephen Wood

Pencils, Ink, and Character Design: Tim "J" Campbell

Head Producer and Editor of Main Chapters: Paul Scott

Head Producers and Editors of Side Story's: Paul Scott, John Roberts

Producers and Directors of Sea3on and FUS: Paul Scott and John Roberts

Download Organizer: Douglas G. Bigelow

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Thank you.

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He's the Fastest thing ALIIIIIIIIIIIVE!





SEASON 3

New artist coming soon

20TH ANNIVERSARY

