

JOSEF
ROTHER

ECKART
BREITSCHUH

ARGSTEIN UNDERGROUND



**HEAVY
METAL**

DIGITAL

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“Imagine Marvel Comics doing the Brothers Grimm.”
Steve Pugh, *Animal Man*

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David Lloyd, *Aces Weekly*

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Dawn Reshen-Doty, *For Beginners Books*

ARGSTEIN UNDERGROUND

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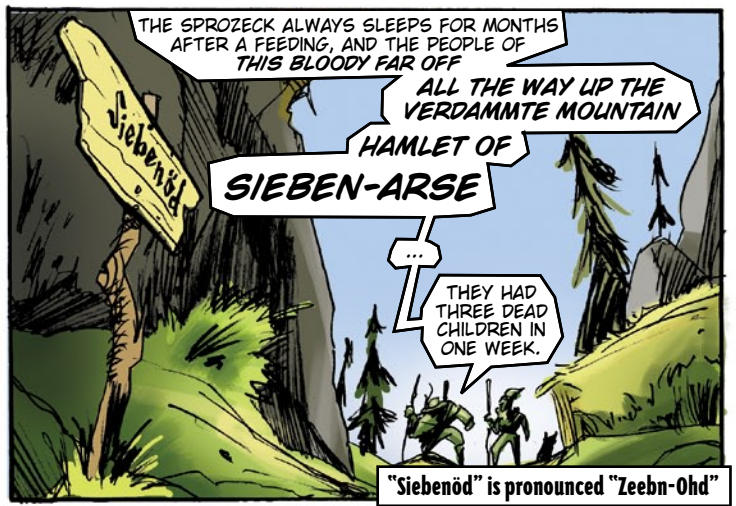
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SO, WHO DO YOU THINK IS RESPONSIBLE, GEREON?

I DON'T THINK.

COULD IT BE A SPROZECK?



THE SPROZECK ALWAYS SLEEPS FOR MONTHS AFTER A FEEDING, AND THE PEOPLE OF THIS BLOODY FAR OFF

ALL THE WAY UP THE VERDAMMTE MOUNTAIN

HAMLET OF
SIEBEN-ARSE

...
THEY HAD
THREE DEAD
CHILDREN IN
ONE WEEK.

"Siebenöd" is pronounced "Zeebn-Ohd"



A RUPPERICH?

ONLY PULPS KIDS THAT ARE OLD ENOUGH TO HAVE BEEN NAUGHTY. WE'RE TALKING INFANTS HERE.



A SIMANDL?

WE HAVE NO SIMANDLS IN ARGSTEIN*, STUPID.

*Pronounced "Ark-Shtine"

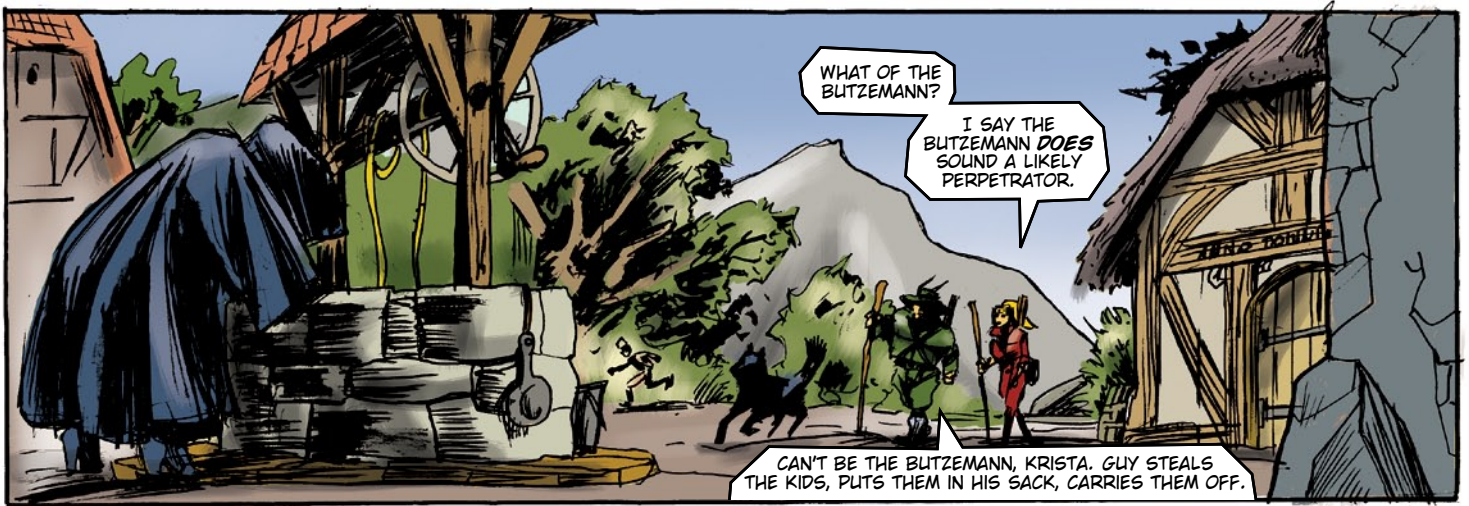


WHICH OTHER DEMONS DO YOU THINK COULD BE CANDIDATES?

FOR ALL I KNOW, IT COULD BE THE SMALLPOX.

IF IT IS THE SMALLPOX, YOU SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT A DOCTOR ALONG.

I DEFINITELY SHOULDN'T HAVE BROUGHT YOU ALONG.



WHAT OF THE BUTZEMANN?

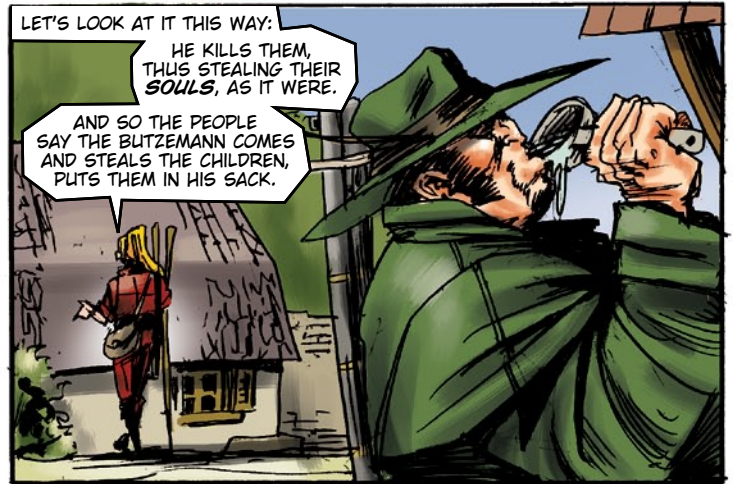
I SAY THE BUTZEMANN **DOES** SOUND A LIKELY PERPETRATOR.

CAN'T BE THE BUTZEMANN, KRISTA. GUY STEALS THE KIDS, PUTS THEM IN HIS SACK, CARRIES THEM OFF.



I'VE READ THAT AS WELL. BUT MAYBE IT'S JUST A METAPHOR.

MAYBE THE BUTZEMANN DOESN'T TAKE THE CHILDREN AWAY. NOT LITERALLY, I MEAN.



LET'S LOOK AT IT THIS WAY:

HE KILLS THEM, THUS STEALING THEIR **SOULS**, AS IT WERE.

AND SO THE PEOPLE SAY THE BUTZEMANN COMES AND STEALS THE CHILDREN, PUTS THEM IN HIS SACK.



AND THAT'S HOW THEY EXPLAIN THESE HORRIBLE, TRAGIC DEATHS.



YOU'RE TALKING BULLSHIT.



THE BUTZEMANN DOES TAKE THE KIDS AWAY VERY VERY **LITERALLY**.

SELLS THEM TO THE MOSSPEOPLE, AND YOU KNOW THOSE GUYS' EATING HABITS.

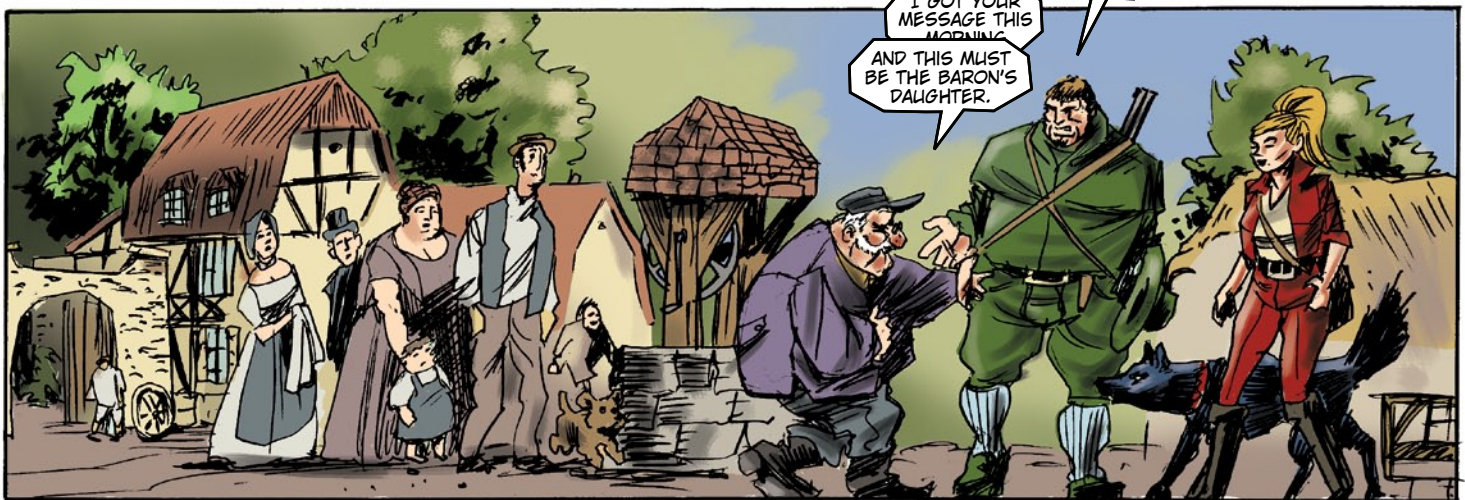


SO YOU DON'T THINK IT WAS THE BUTZEMANN?

NOPE.

I THINK IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN SOMEONE ELSE.





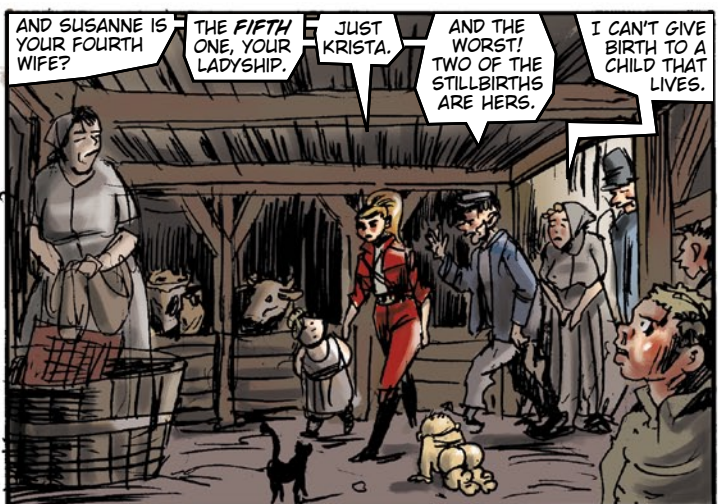


*Pronounced "Mouter Shruhmuh"











I DO NOT THINK THAT I CAN DO A GOOD JOB OF GUARDING THE CHILD WITH SO MANY PEOPLE AROUND.

I AGREE, YOUR LADYSHIP.

WE BETTER WATCH LITTLE HERMANN WITHOUT THIS BUSY BATCH CLATTERING ABOUT.



OUT WITH THE LOT OF YOU.

LEAVE YOUR FATHER AND HER LADYSHIP ALONE.



YOU HAVE TO GO, TOO, BERTHOLD NÜSS.

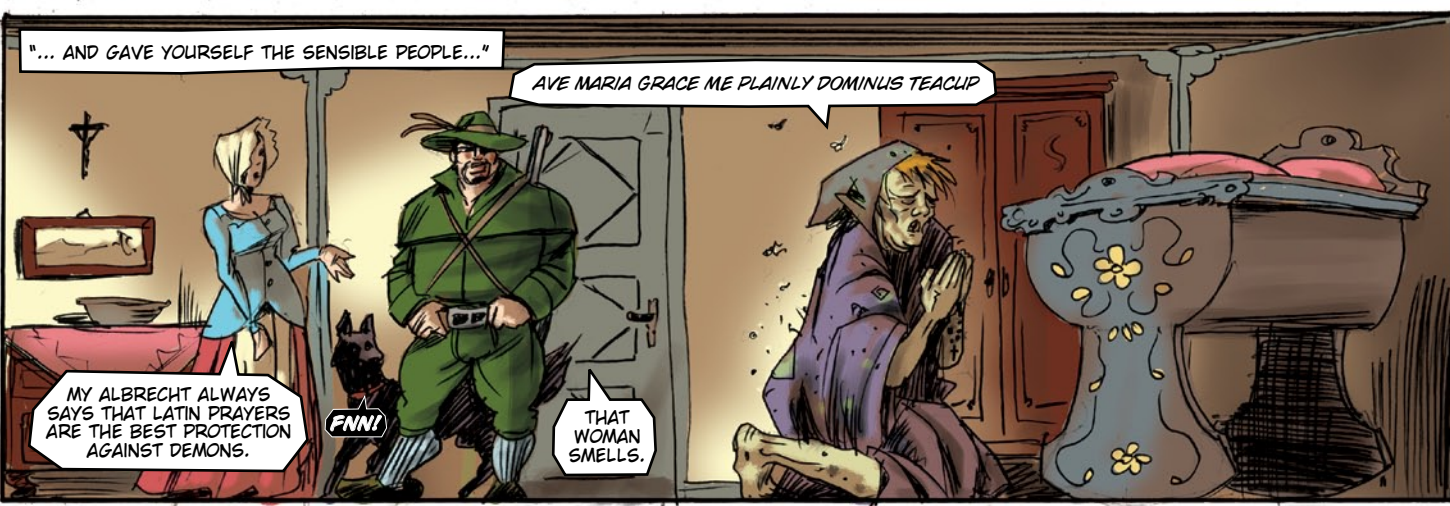
BUT I THOUGHT YOUR LADYSHIP--

THAT'S MILADY BARONESS VON ARGSTEIN!



FMP

DAMN YOU, GEREON. HAD TO HAND ME TO THIS BRUTE...



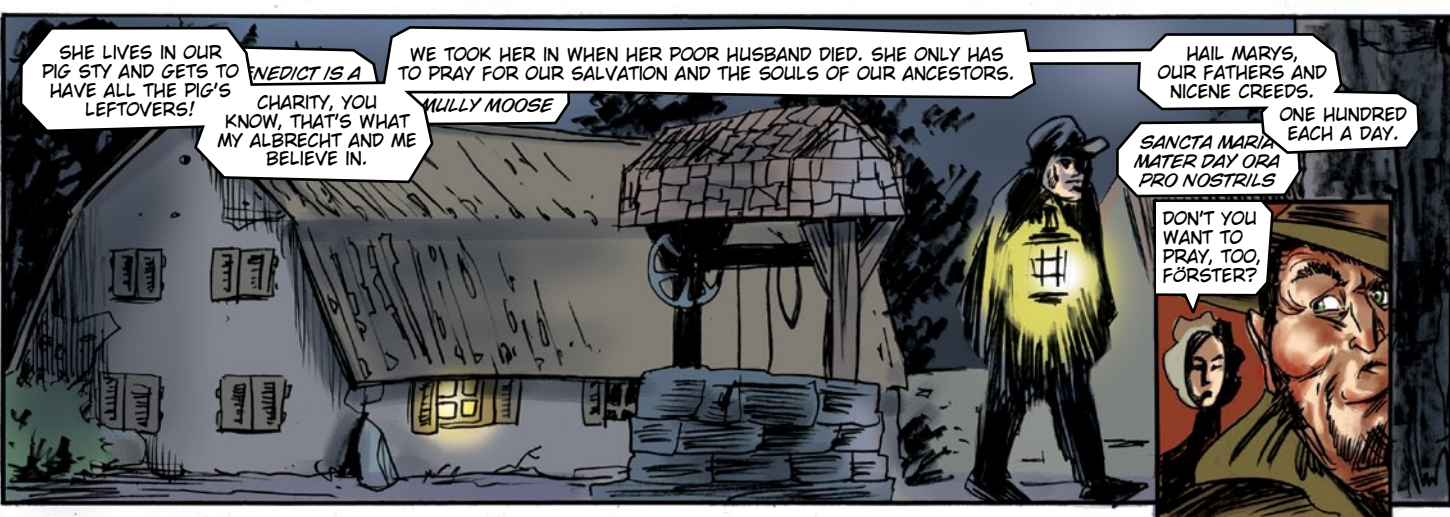
"... AND GAVE YOURSELF THE SENSIBLE PEOPLE..."

AVE MARIA GRACE ME PLAINLY DOMINUS TEACUP

MY ALBRECHT ALWAYS SAYS THAT LATIN PRAYERS ARE THE BEST PROTECTION AGAINST DEMONS.

FNNI

THAT WOMAN SMELLS.



SHE LIVES IN OUR PIG STY AND GETS TO HAVE ALL THE PIG'S LEFTOVERS!

BENEDICT IS A

CHARITY, YOU KNOW, THAT'S WHAT MY ALBRECHT AND ME BELIEVE IN.

WE TOOK HER IN WHEN HER POOR HUSBAND DIED. SHE ONLY HAS TO PRAY FOR OUR SALVATION AND THE SOULS OF OUR ANCESTORS.

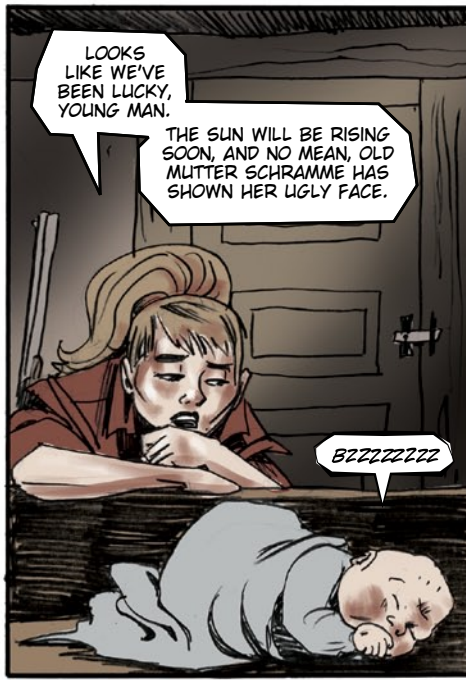
MULLY MOOSE

HAIL MARYS, OUR FATHERS AND NICENE CREEDS.

ONE HUNDRED EACH A DAY.

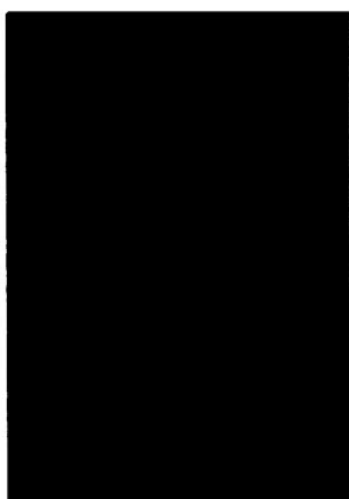
SANCTA MARIA MATER DAY ORA PRO NOSTRILS

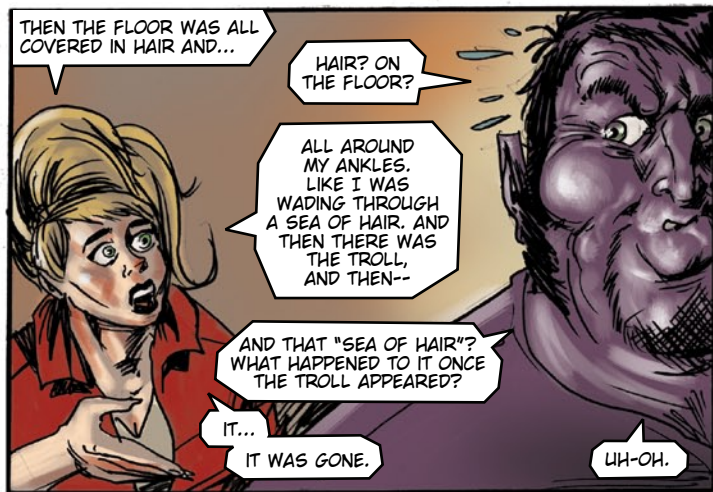
DON'T YOU WANT TO PRAY, TOO, FÖRSTER?













LOOKS LIKE A BADLY SHAVEN DWARF SWAPPED NAPPIES WITH YOUR SON.



A CHANGELING?
IT WAS THE ALBEN*?!

BLOODY CHILD THIEVES!

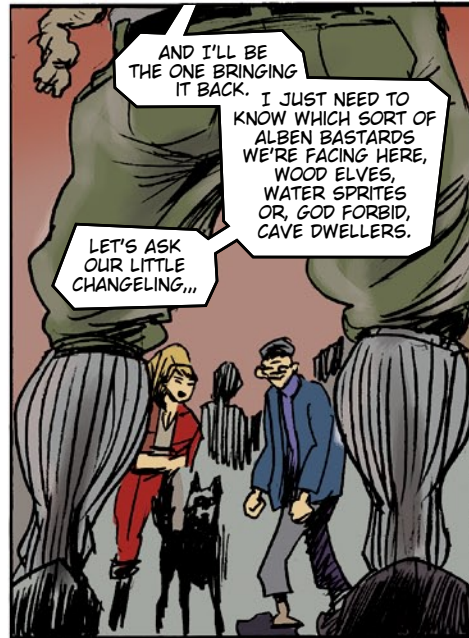
HNNFF

*Pronounced "Ul-Buhn"



THIS IS ALL THE FAULT OF THE BARONESS!

NO, IT IS MINE. I SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE ONE GUARDING THIS CHILD.



AND I'LL BE THE ONE BRINGING IT BACK.

I JUST NEED TO KNOW WHICH SORT OF ALBEN BASTARDS WE'RE FACING HERE, WOOD ELVES, WATER SPRITES OR, GOD FORBID, CAVE DWELLERS.

LET'S ASK OUR LITTLE CHANGELING...



WHO ARE YOU WORKING FOR?

AAAAAAA!



HELP!
HELP!

WHO DO YOU SERVE?

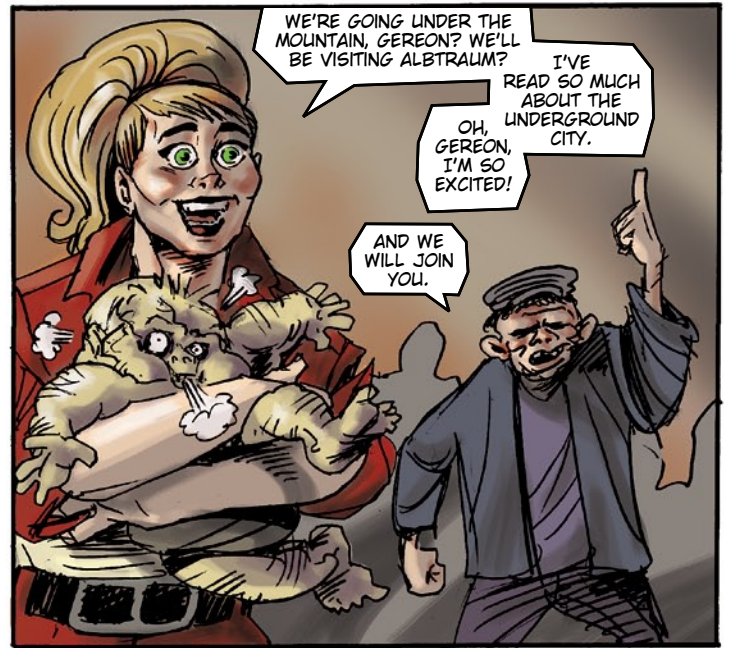
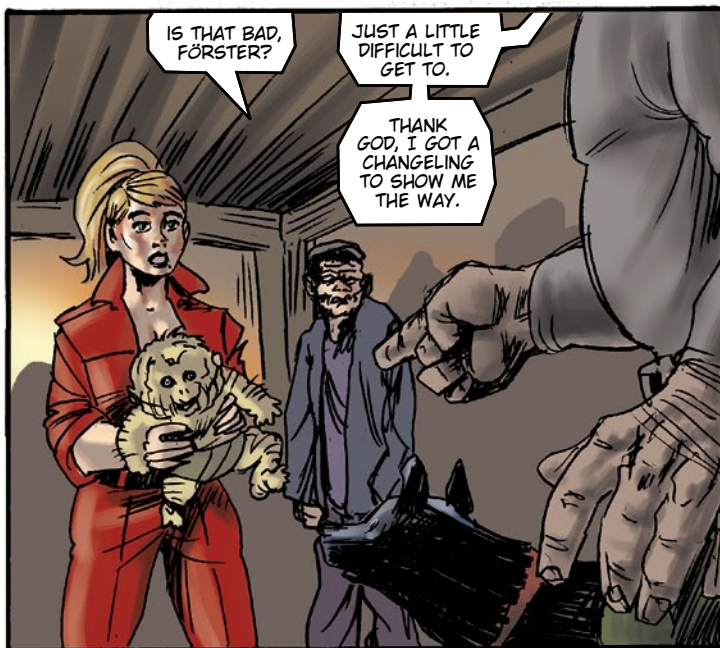
DON'T, GEREON!

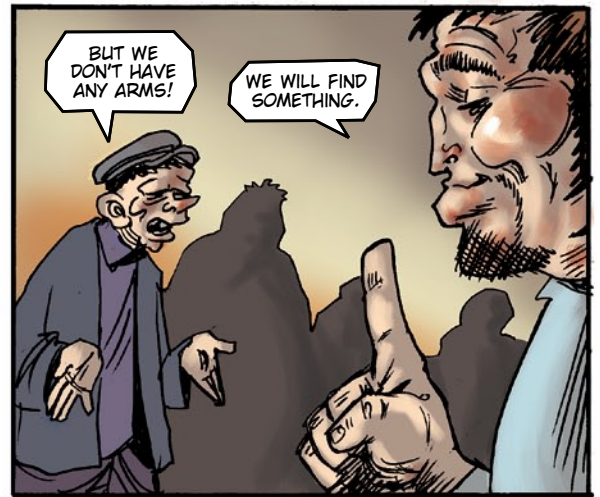


YOU ARE HURTING HIM!

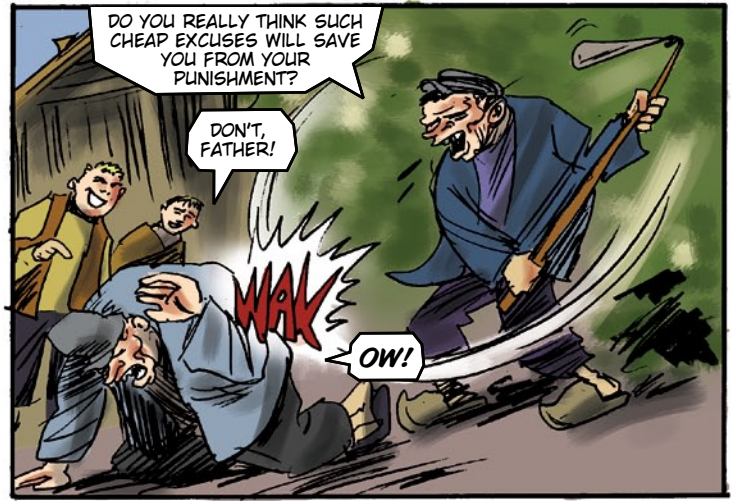
I WAS ONLY BEGINNING!

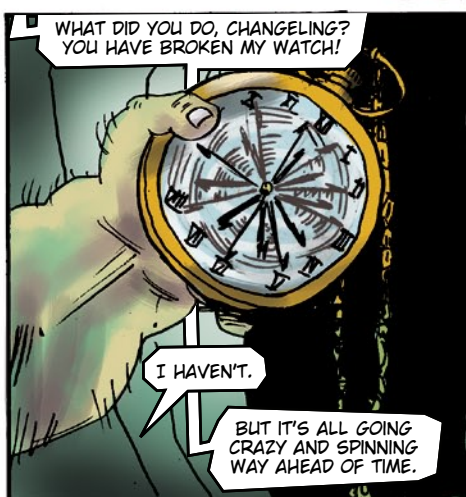
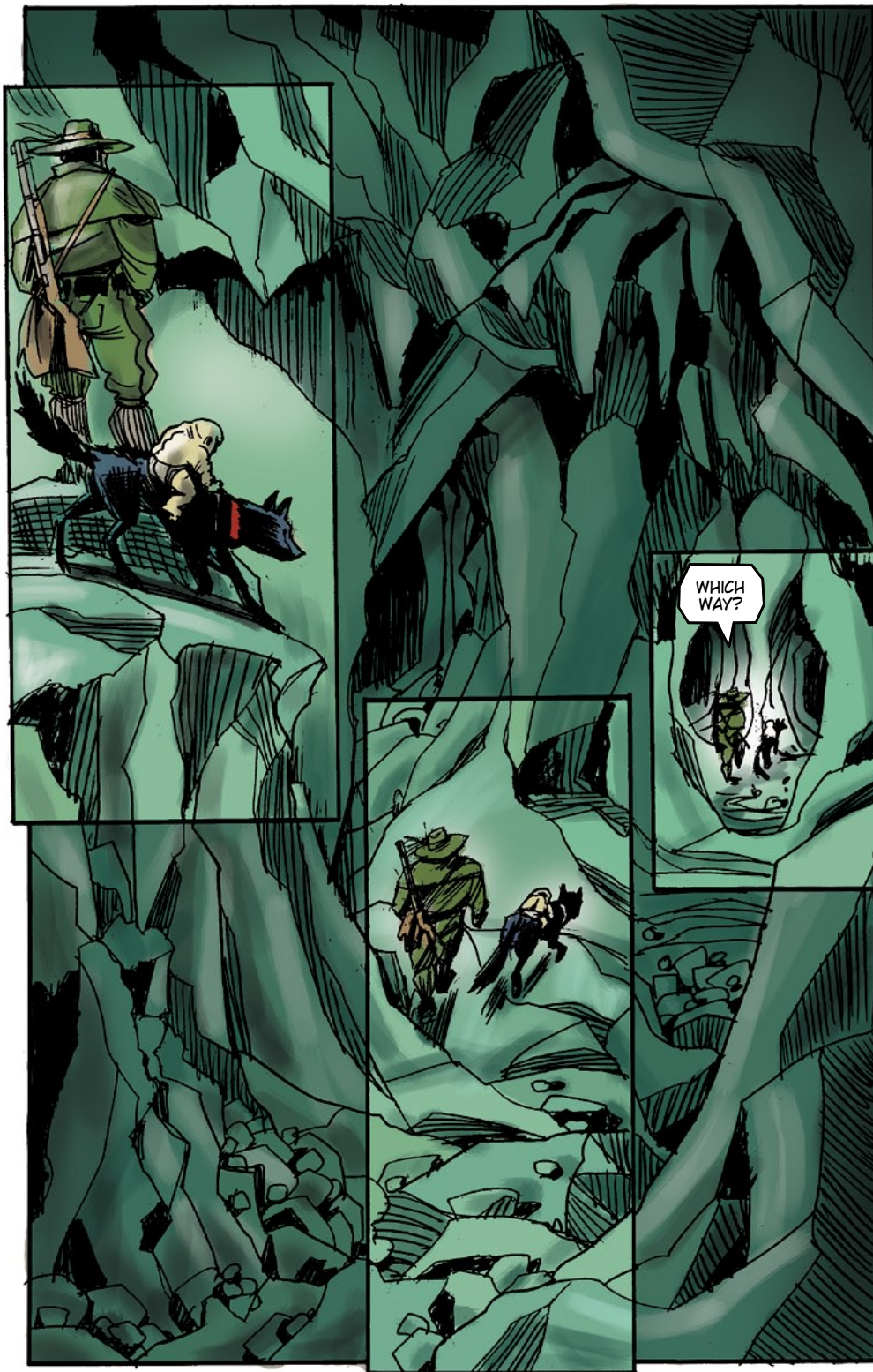
STOP IT!

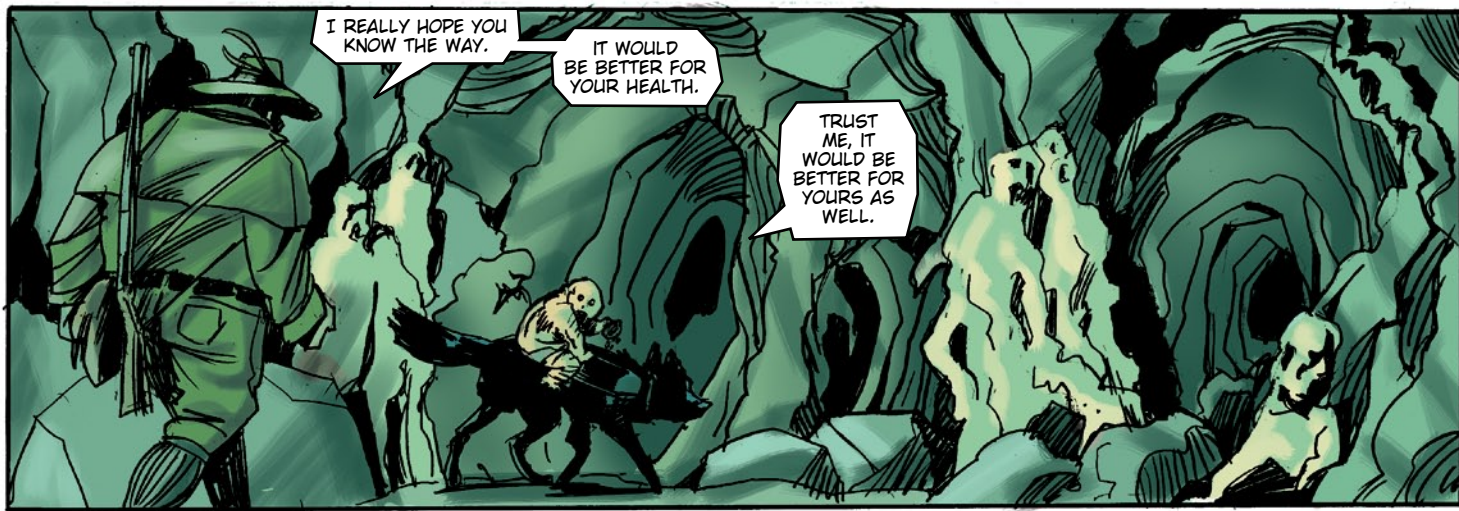














WHERE ARE ALL THESE TUNNELS LEADING TO ANYWAY?

ONE IS LEADING TO ALBTRAUM.



"THE OTHER ONES..."



"LET'S JUST SAY, THEY LEAD THE WRONG WAY."

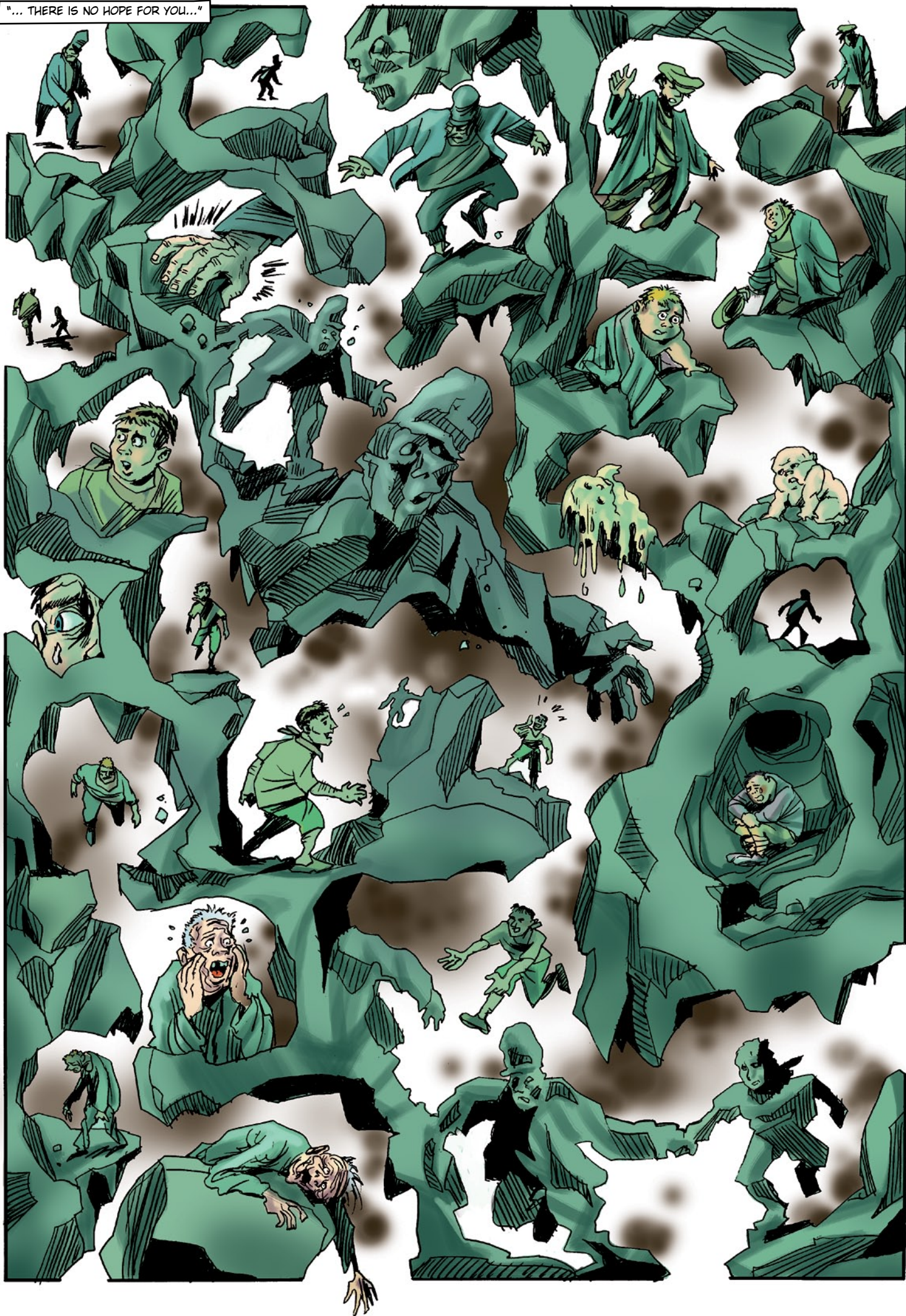


"IF YOU LOSE YOUR WAY IN THIS PLACE..."



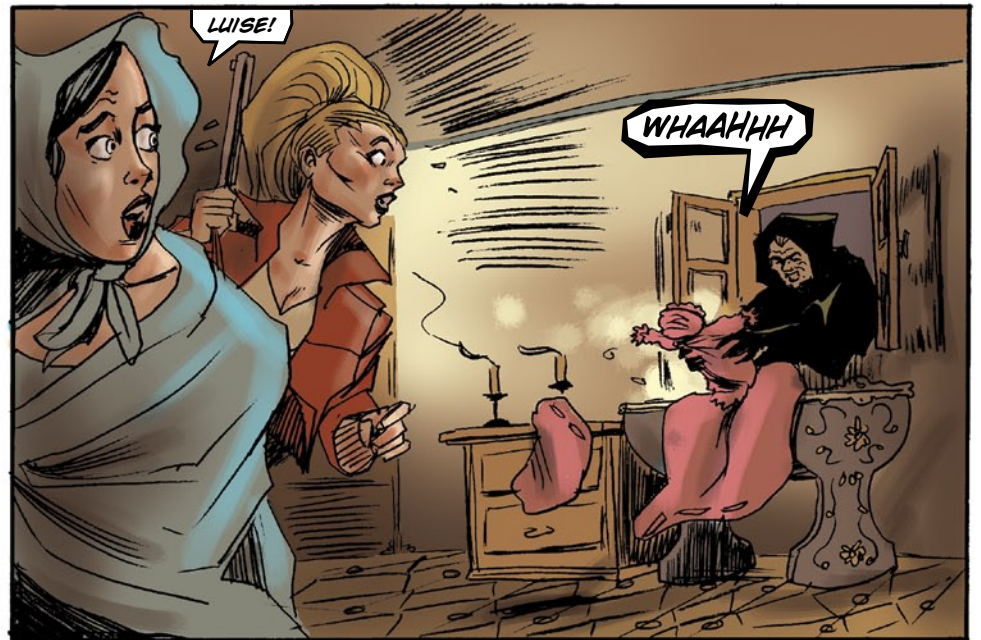
"YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE THEM."

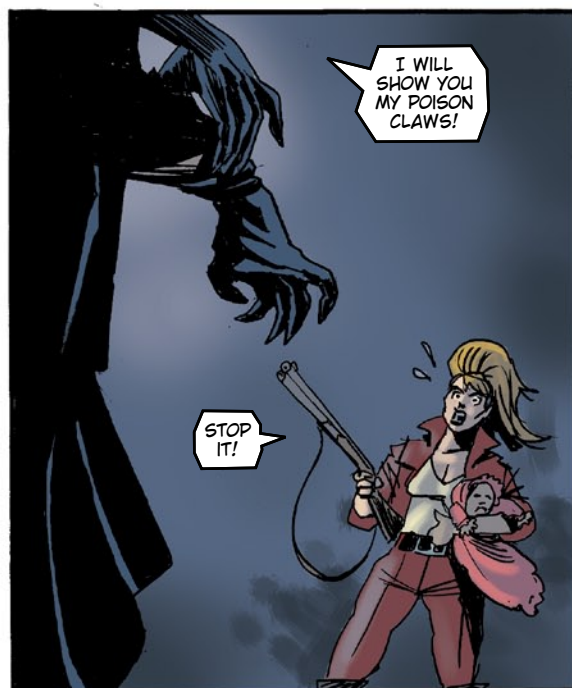
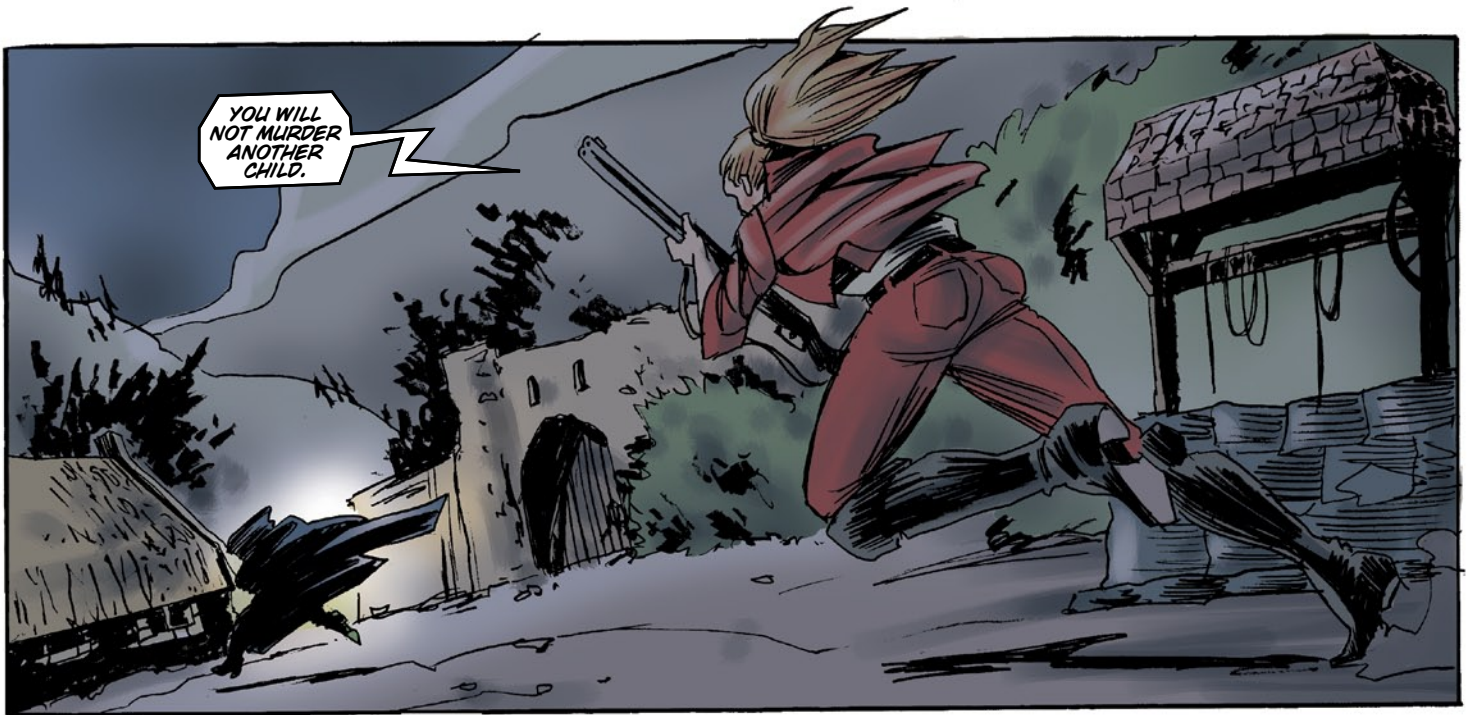
"... THERE IS NO HOPE FOR YOU..."

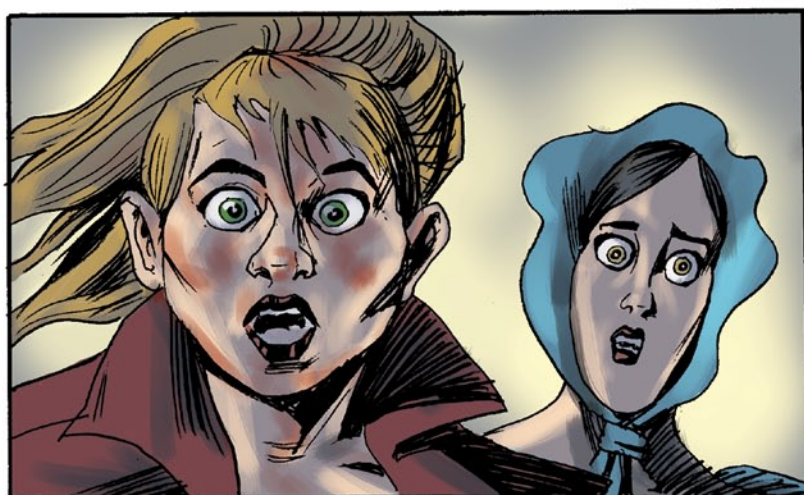
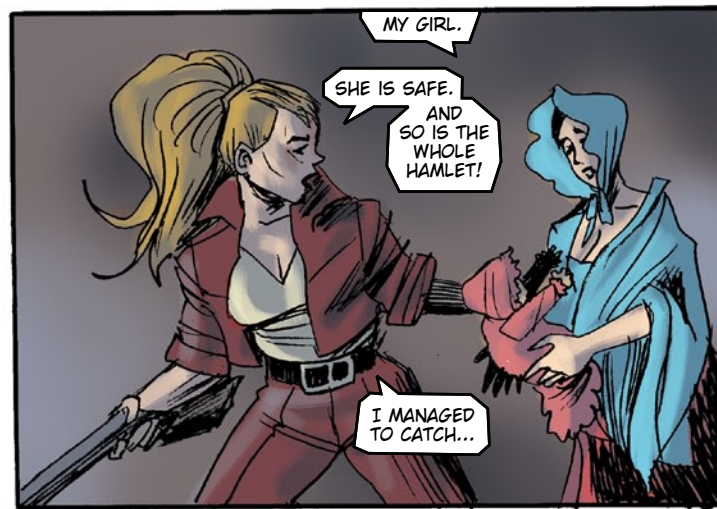
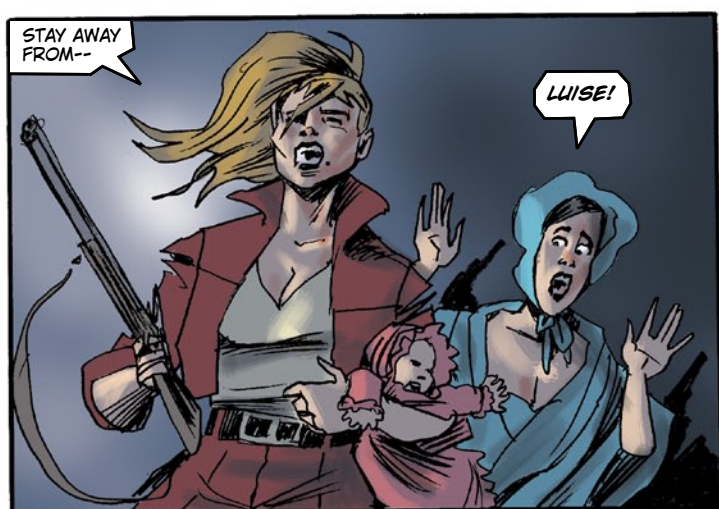
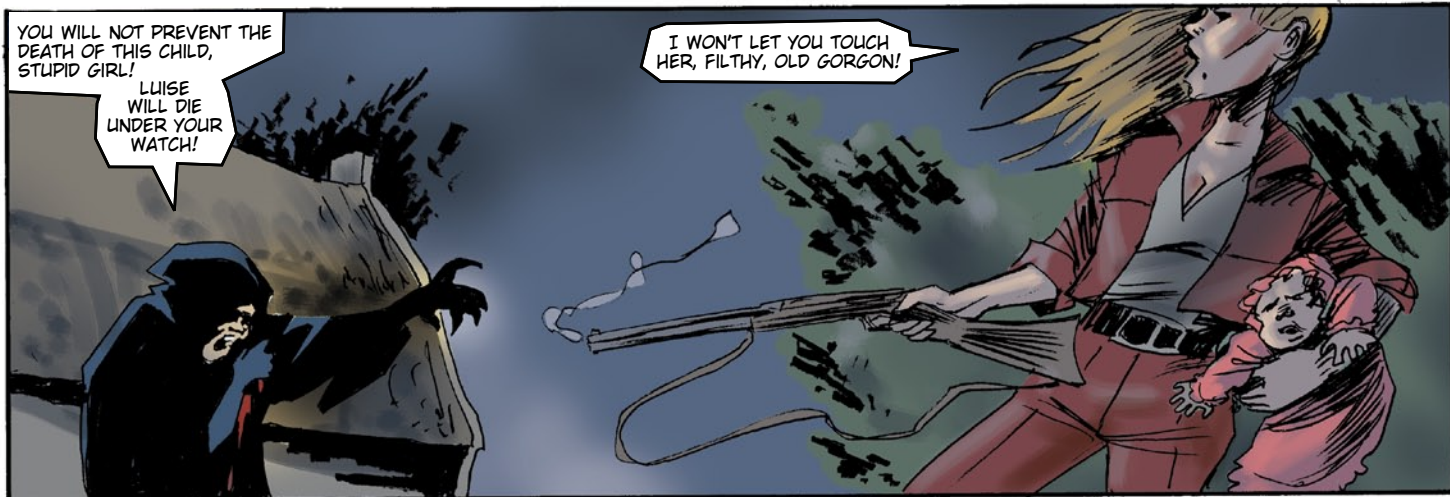














HER NAME MEANS
ELVENDREAM.

ISN'T THAT ALSO ANOTHER
WORD FOR "NIGHTMARE"?

SHE'S SO BEAUTIFUL.

IF YOU SAY SO.



MIND YOU,
THESE GUYS
ARE UGLY.

SAY,
ARE THOSE
DWARVES
RIDING THE
OVERGROWN
BATS?

A
FLEDERLING*
PATROL!

*Pronounced "Flayderling"



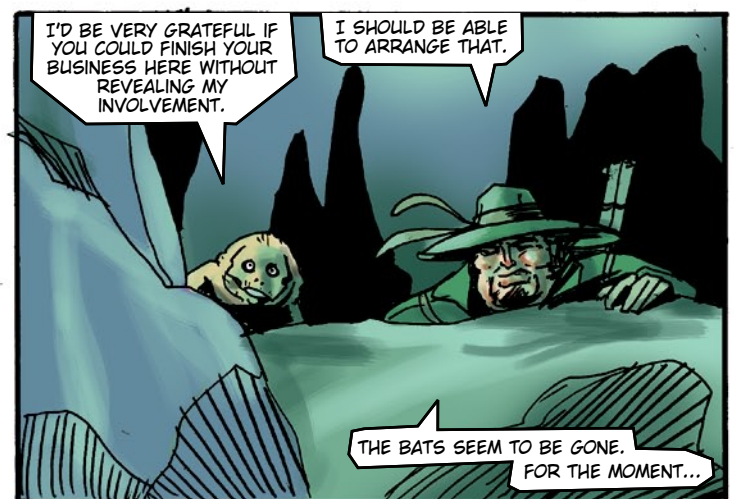
WE
GOT TO
HIDE!

HIDE!



IF THEY CATCH
YOU, THEY WILL BRING
YOU BEFORE THEIR
MASTERS.

AND IT WOULD COME OUT THAT IT WAS YOU
WHO SHOWED ME THE WAY THROUGH THE MAZE.



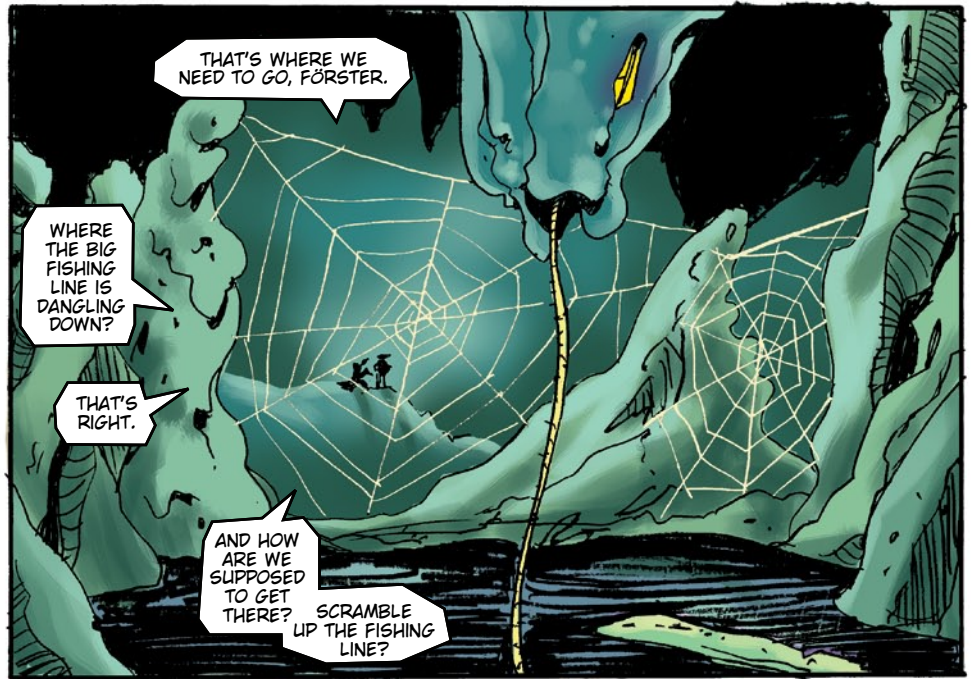
I'D BE VERY GRATEFUL IF
YOU COULD FINISH YOUR
BUSINESS HERE WITHOUT
REVEALING MY
INVOLVEMENT.

I SHOULD BE ABLE
TO ARRANGE THAT.

THE BATS SEEM TO BE GONE.
FOR THE MOMENT...



SO WHICH OF THESE UPSIDE DOWN AND DOWNSIDE DOWN TOWERS IS ROSE QUARTZ' PLACE?

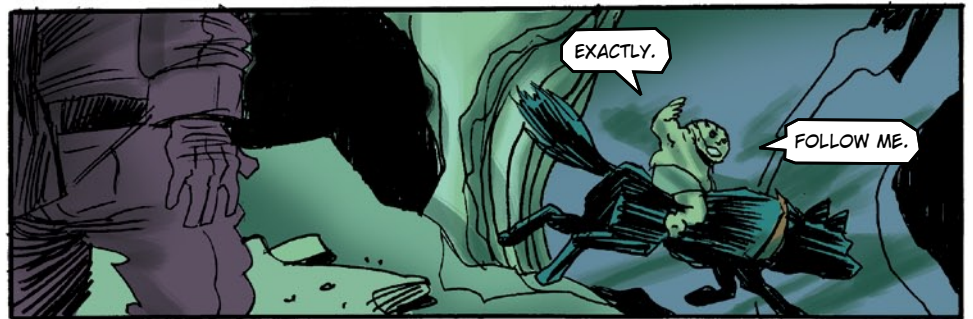


THAT'S WHERE WE NEED TO GO, FÖRSTER.

WHERE THE BIG FISHING LINE IS DANGLING DOWN?

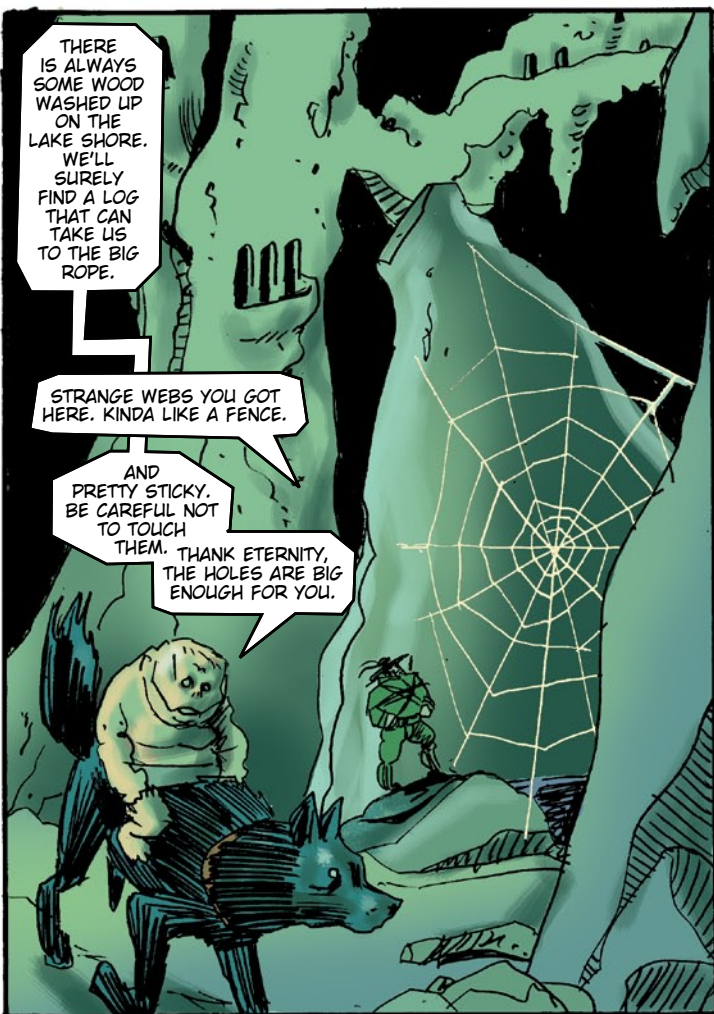
THAT'S RIGHT.

AND HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO GET THERE? SCRAMBLE UP THE FISHING LINE?



EXACTLY.

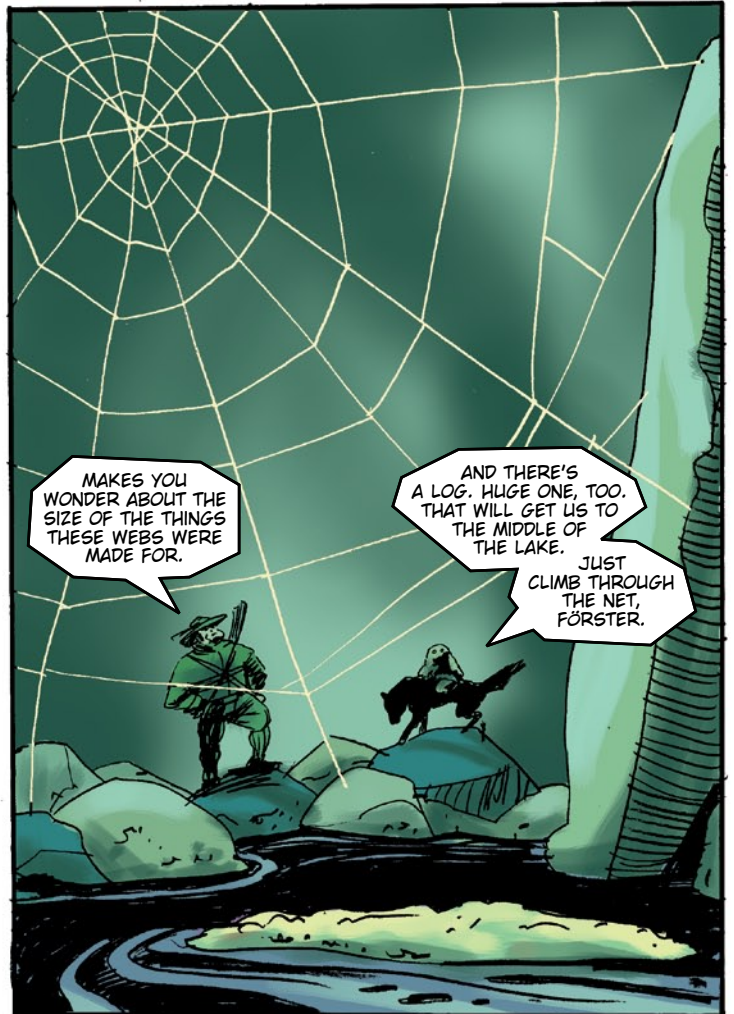
FOLLOW ME.



THERE IS ALWAYS SOME WOOD WASHED UP ON THE LAKE SHORE. WE'LL SURELY FIND A LOG THAT CAN TAKE US TO THE BIG ROPE.

STRANGE WEBS YOU GOT HERE. KINDA LIKE A FENCE.

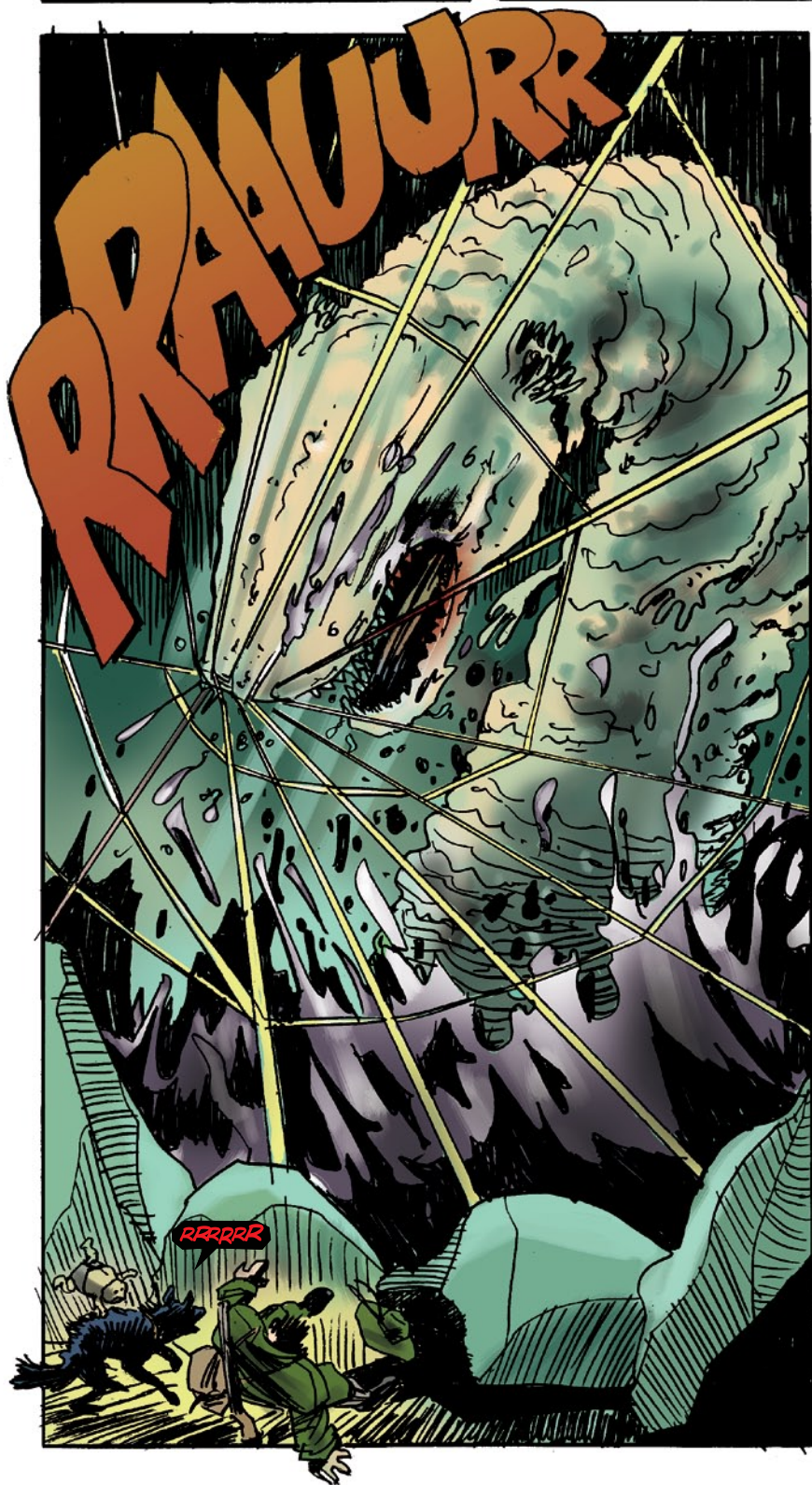
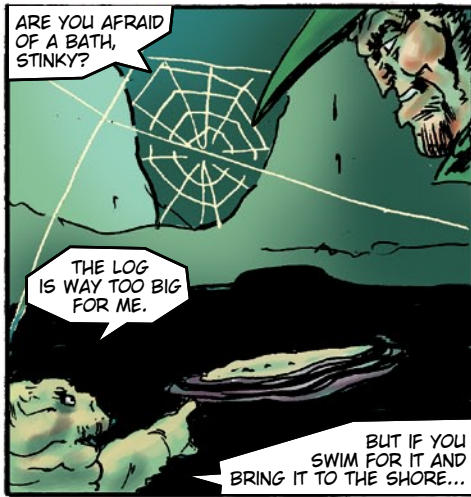
AND PRETTY STICKY. BE CAREFUL NOT TO TOUCH THEM. THANK ETERNITY, THE HOLES ARE BIG ENOUGH FOR YOU.



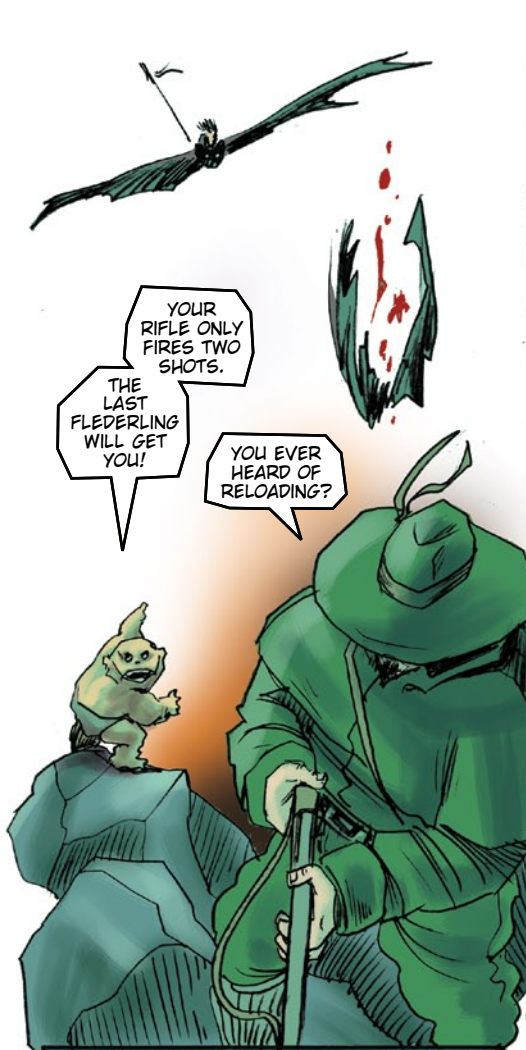
MAKES YOU WONDER ABOUT THE SIZE OF THE THINGS THESE WEBS WERE MADE FOR.

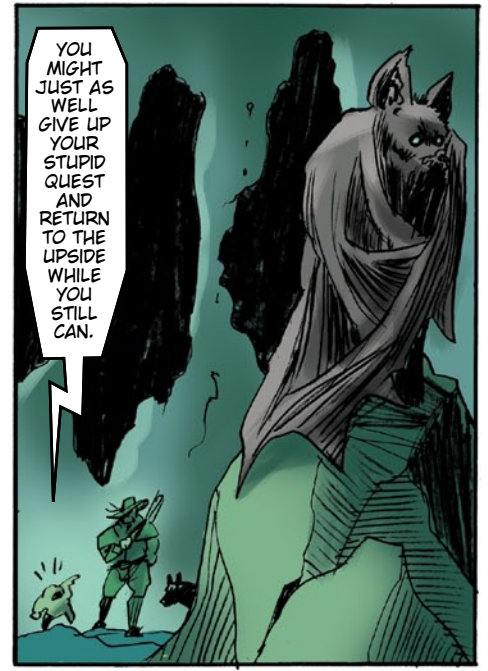
AND THERE'S A LOG. HUGE ONE, TOO. THAT WILL GET US TO THE MIDDLE OF THE LAKE.

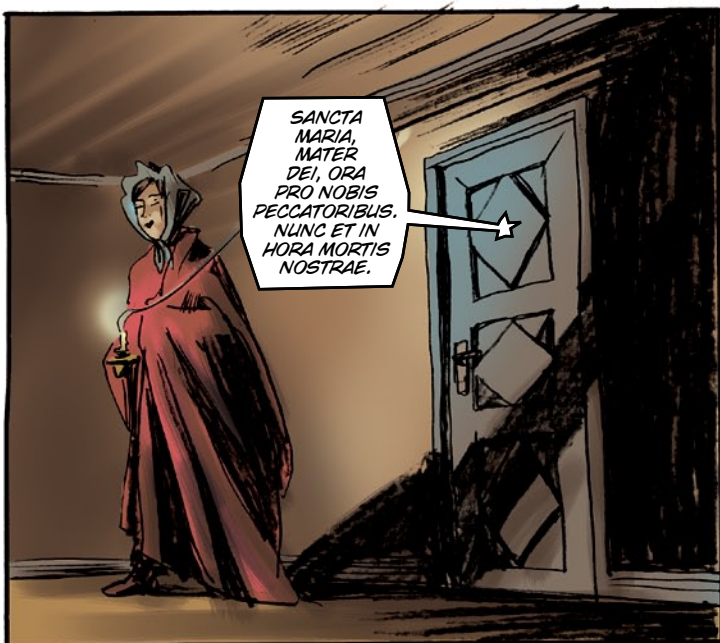
JUST CLIMB THROUGH THE NET, FÖRSTER.

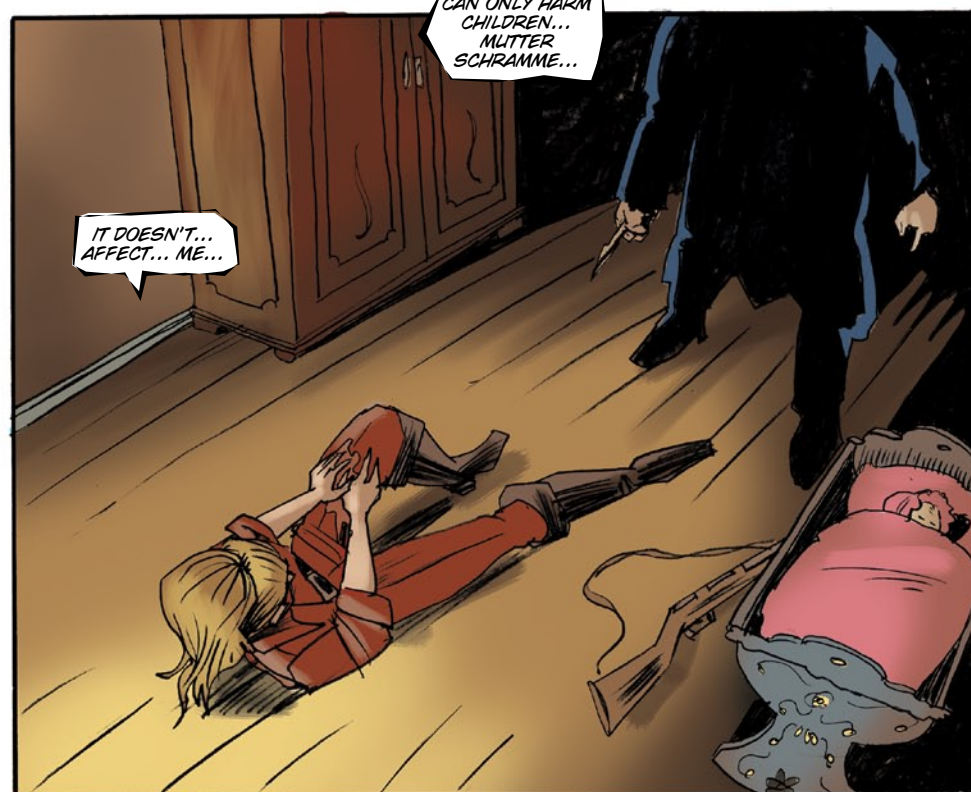
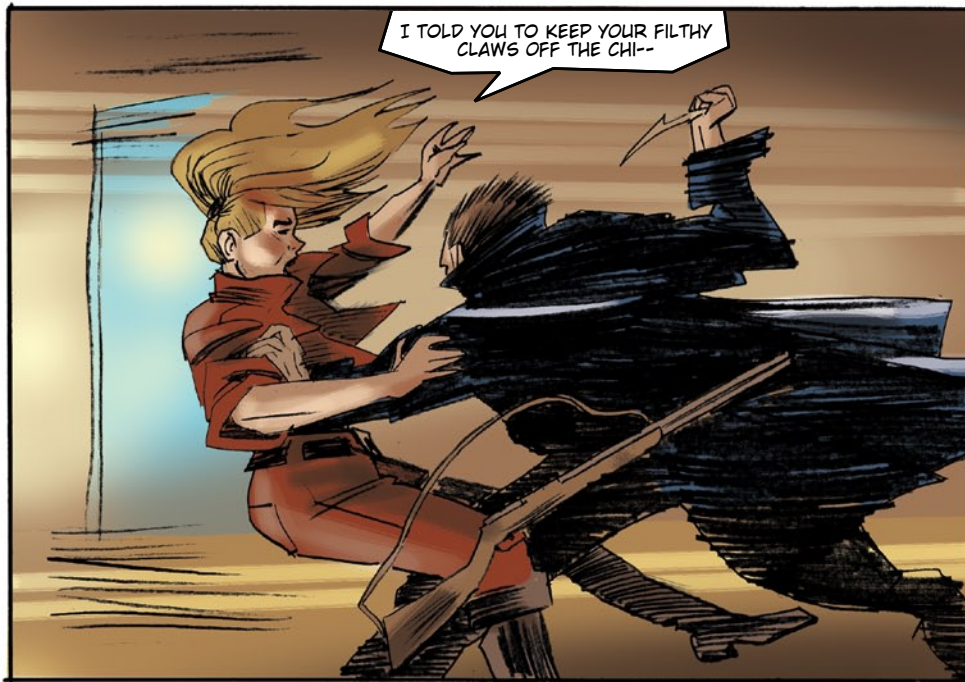




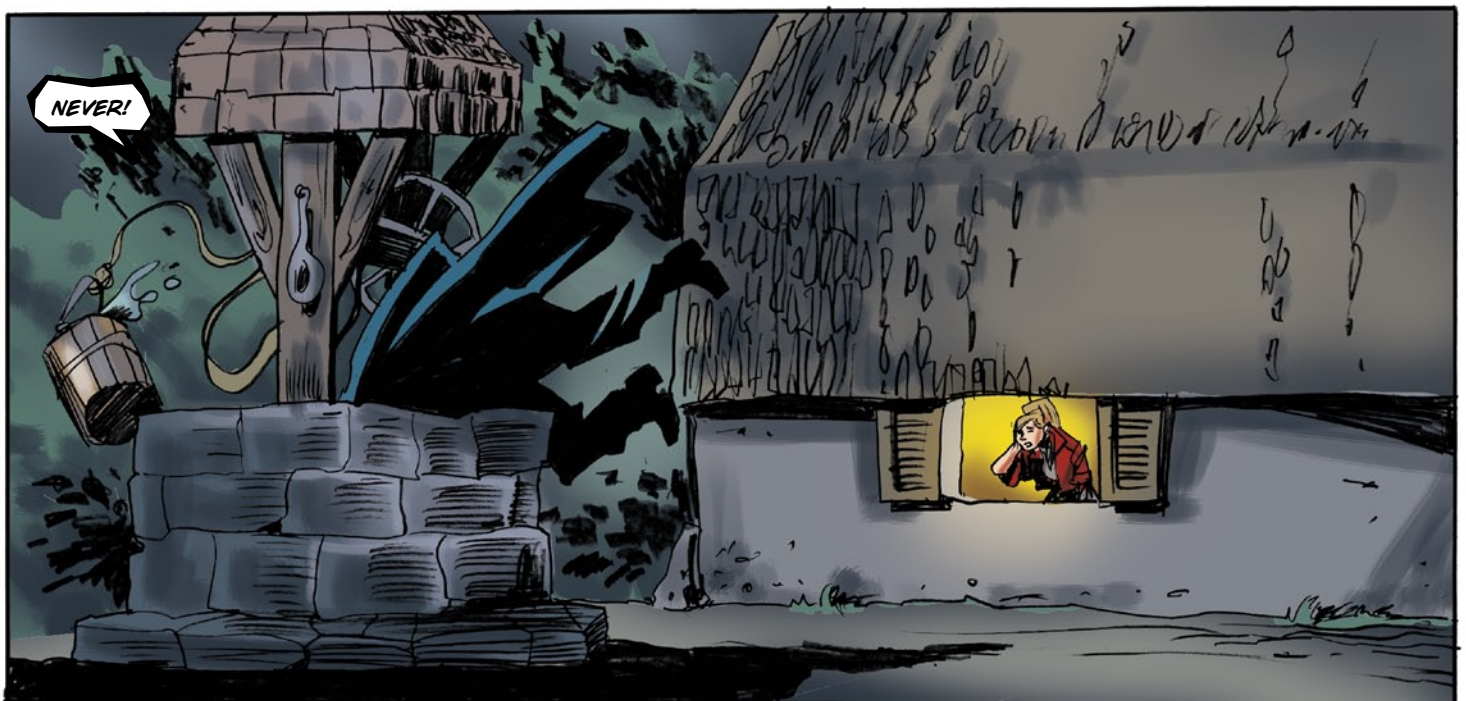
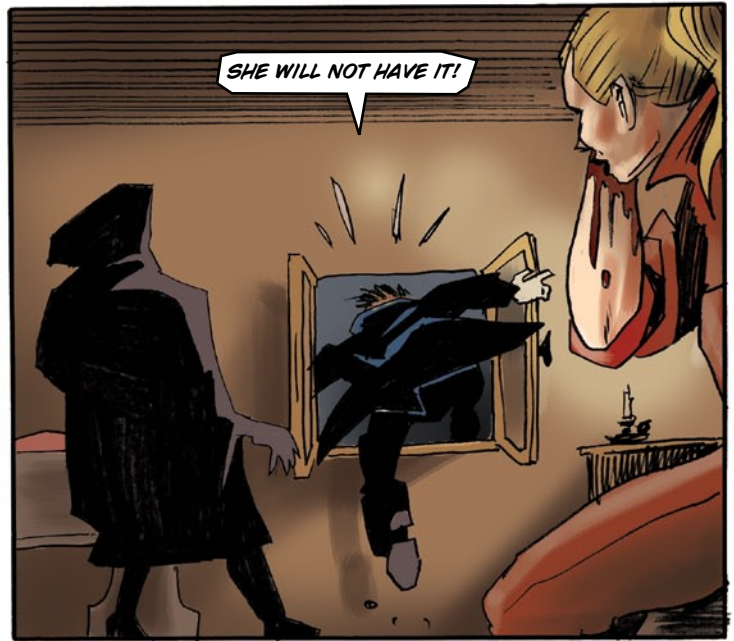


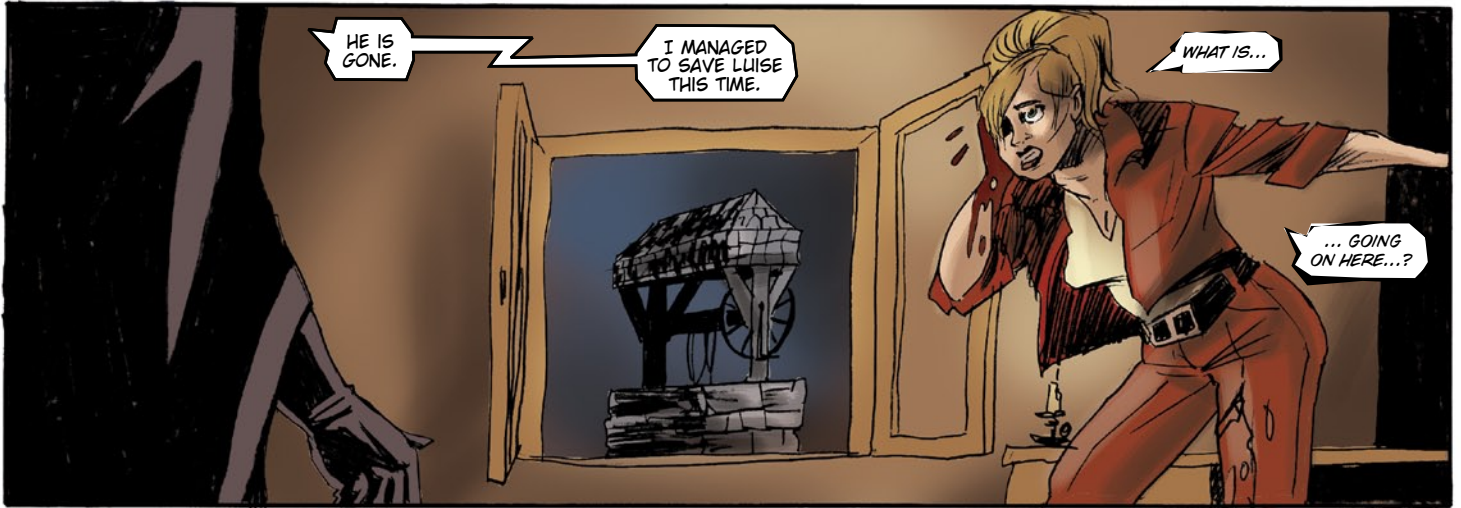








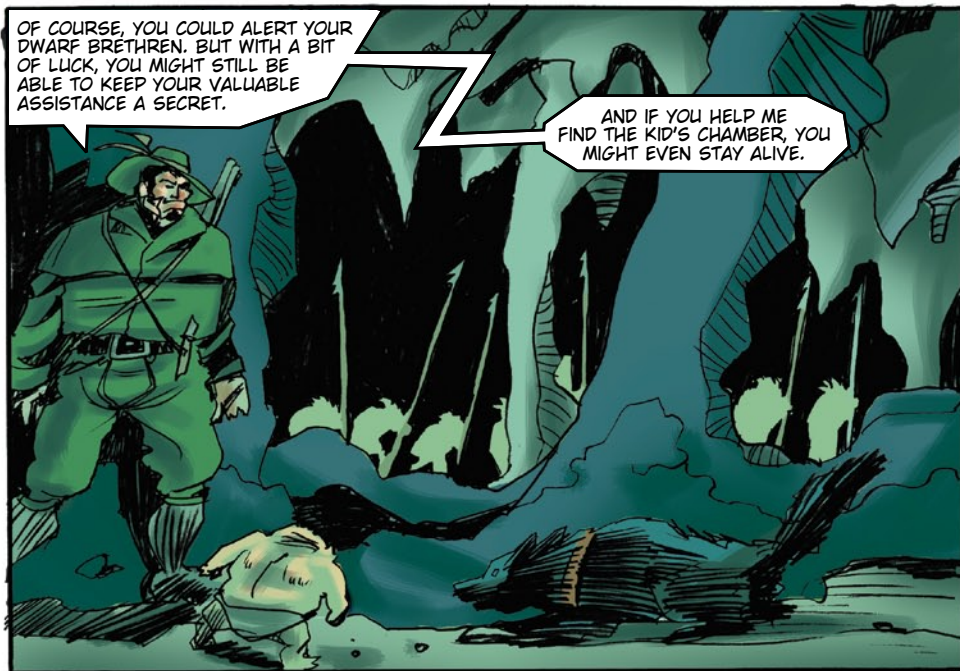






"WE NEED TO CALL THE FÖRSTER, ALBRECHT."

"WHERE IS HE?"



OF COURSE, YOU COULD ALERT YOUR DWARF BRETHREN. BUT WITH A BIT OF LUCK, YOU MIGHT STILL BE ABLE TO KEEP YOUR VALUABLE ASSISTANCE A SECRET.

AND IF YOU HELP ME FIND THE KID'S CHAMBER, YOU MIGHT EVEN STAY ALIVE.



BUT I DON'T KNOW WHERE THE CHILD IS!

I FIND THAT HARD TO BELIEVE.

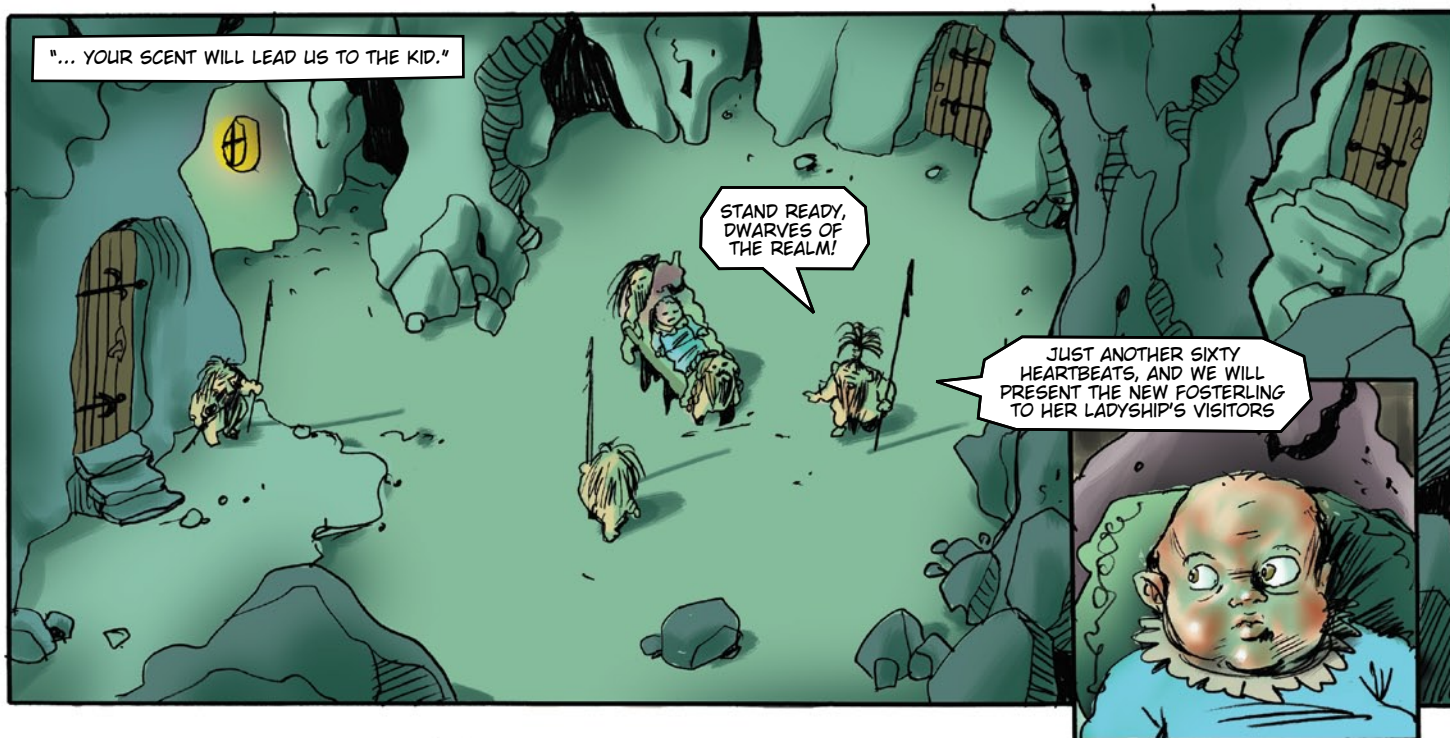
THANKFULLY, THOUGH, YOU TRADED NAPPIES WITH THE NIPPER...



... AND RHEIN'S NOSE IS VERY SHARP.

SNIF

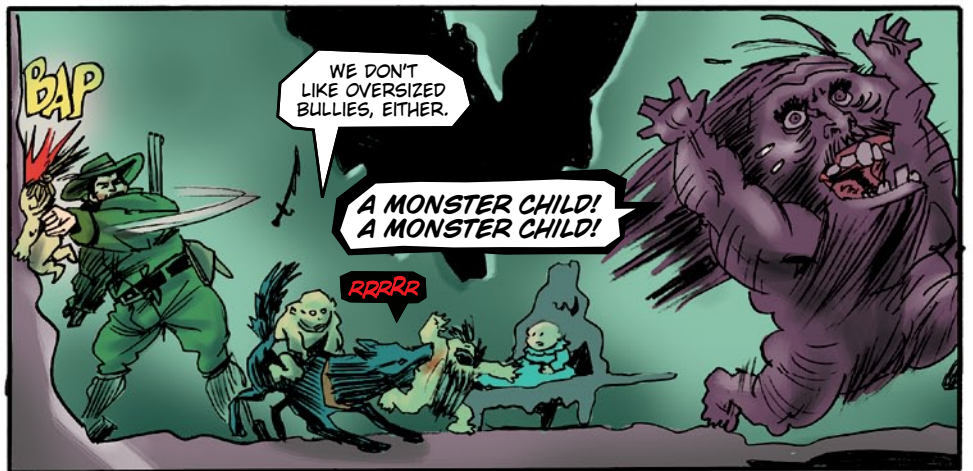
DON'T WORRY...



"... YOUR SCENT WILL LEAD US TO THE KID."

STAND READY, DWARVES OF THE REALM!

JUST ANOTHER SIXTY HEARTBEATS, AND WE WILL PRESENT THE NEW FOSTERLING TO HER LADYSHIP'S VISITORS





VERDAMMT!
VERDAMMT!
VERDAMMT!

WE CAN'T
GO BACK
THAT WAY!

WE NEED
TO TAKE THE
OTHER DOOR!

NO! DON'T
FÖRSTER!

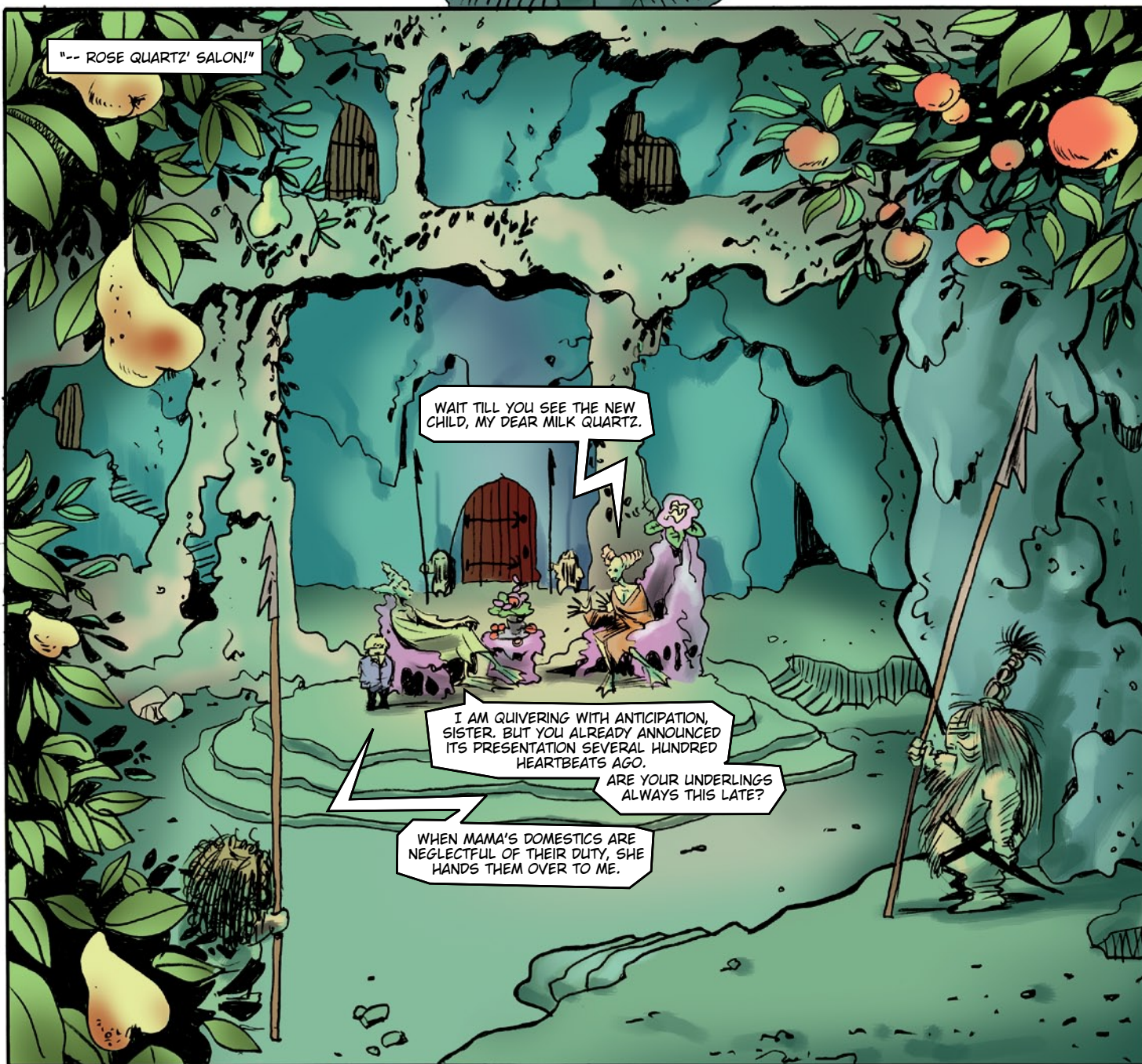


NOT THAT ONE!

YEAH. I'VE LEARNED
TO TRUST YOUR WORD, MY
CONSTANT CHANGELING.

NO, NO,
THAT DOOR
ONLY LEADS TO
A HALLWAY.

AND THAT HALLWAY
ONLY LEADS
TO --



"-- ROSE QUARTZ' SALON!"

WAIT TILL YOU SEE THE NEW
CHILD, MY DEAR MILK QUARTZ.

I AM QUIVERING WITH ANTICIPATION,
SISTER. BUT YOU ALREADY ANNOUNCED
ITS PRESENTATION SEVERAL HUNDRED
HEARTBEATS AGO.

ARE YOUR UNDERLINGS
ALWAYS THIS LATE?

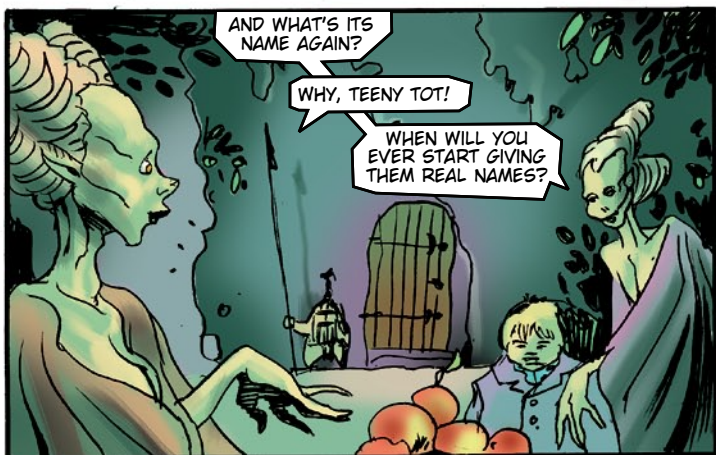
WHEN MAMA'S DOMESTICS ARE
NEGLECTFUL OF THEIR DUTY, SHE
HANDS THEM OVER TO ME.



DEAR GENTIAN LOVES TO SET THEIR BEARDS ON FIRE.

HE IS THE MOST IMAGINATIVE FOSTERLING I'VE EVER HAD.

WAIT TILL YOU SEE MY TEENY TOT!



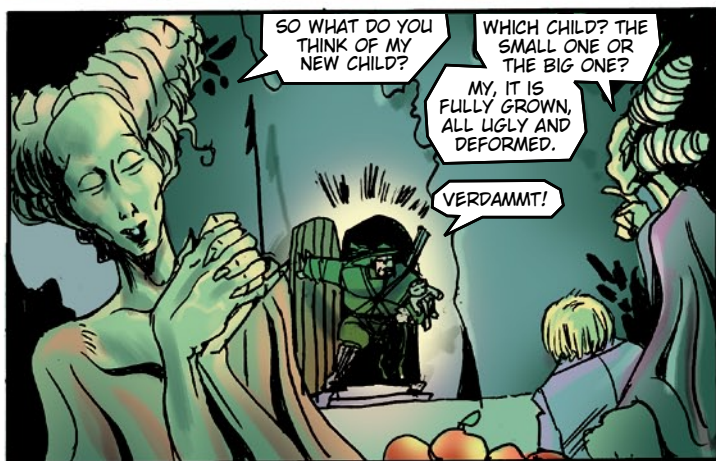
AND WHAT'S ITS NAME AGAIN?

WHY, TEENY TOT!

WHEN WILL YOU EVER START GIVING THEM REAL NAMES?



AHH, THERE THEY COME.

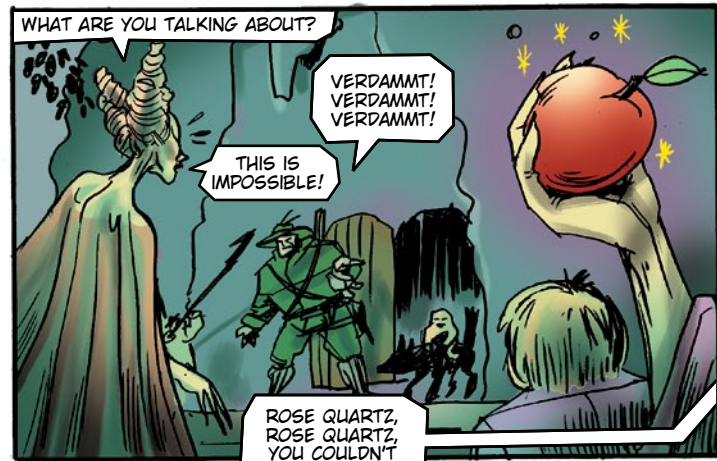


SO WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MY NEW CHILD?

WHICH CHILD? THE SMALL ONE OR THE BIG ONE?

MY, IT IS FULLY GROWN, ALL UGLY AND DEFORMED.

VERDAMMT!



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

VERDAMMT! VERDAMMT! VERDAMMT!

THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE!

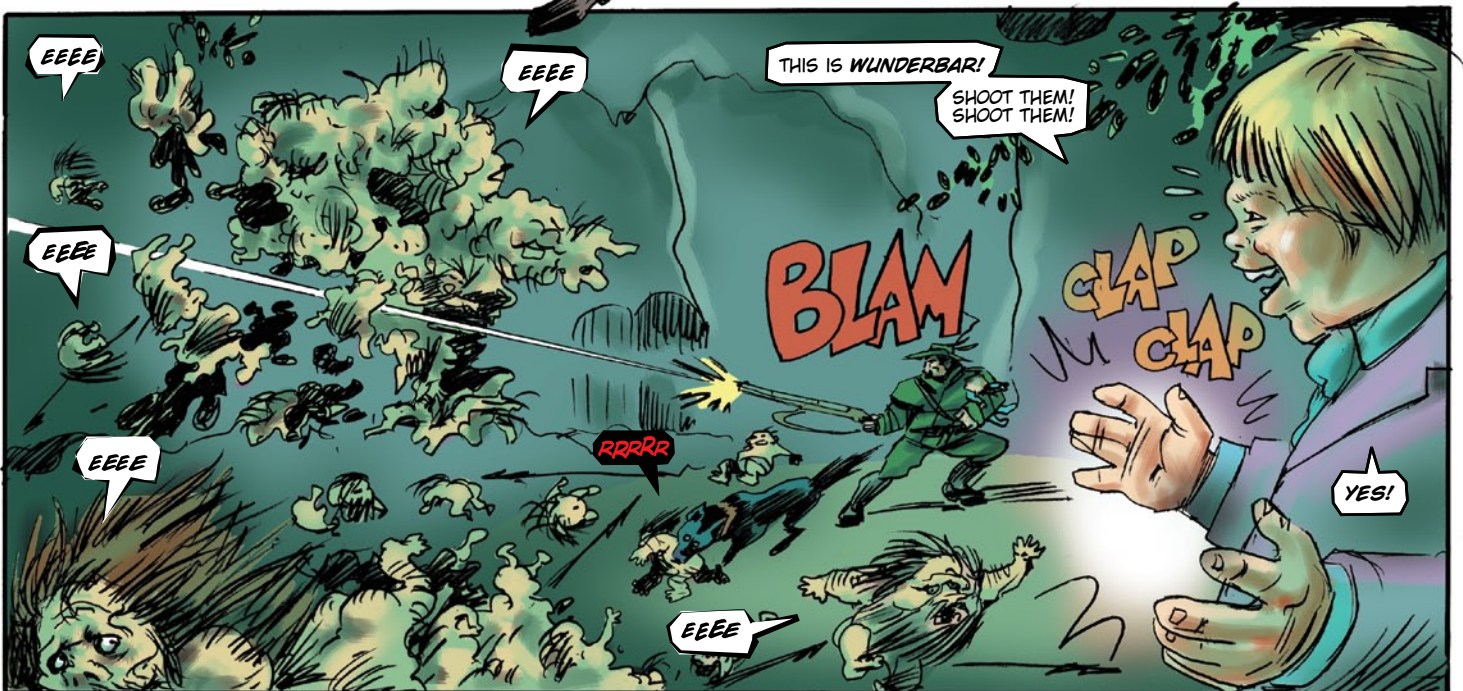
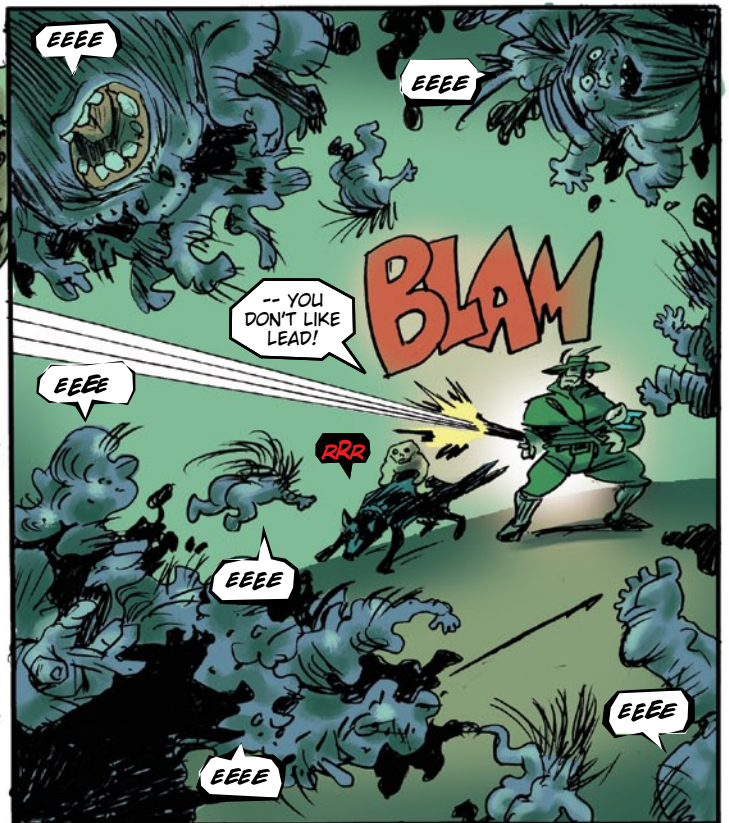
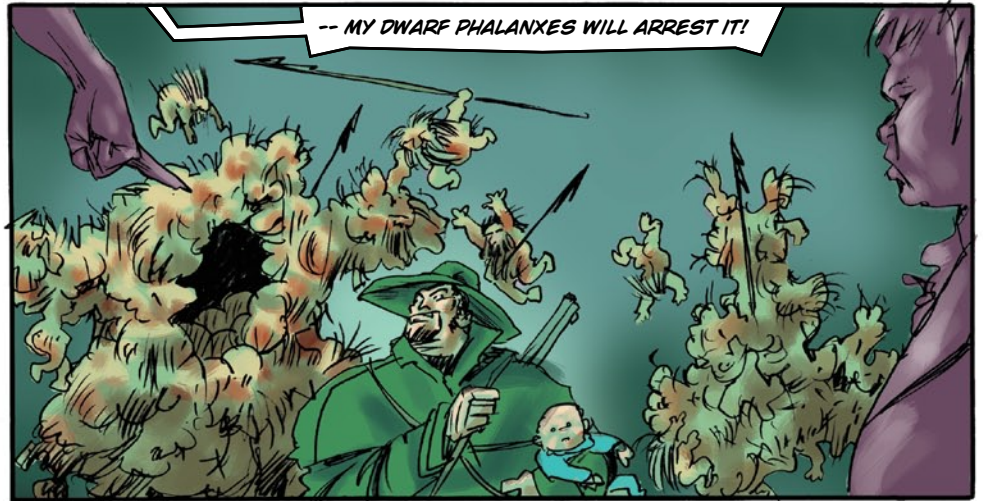
ROSE QUARTZ, ROSE QUARTZ, YOU COULDN'T TELL A PEACH...



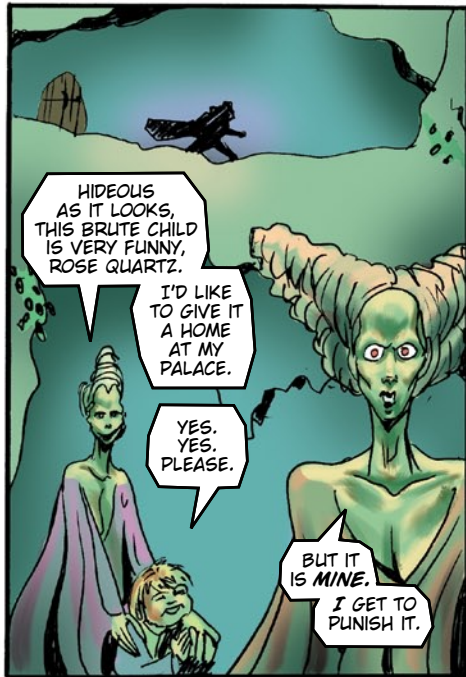
... FROM A PEAR.

GIVE IT TO ME, AUNTIE. I HAVE A PRESS THAT CAN SQUEEZE BIG THINGS SMALL AND TIGHT.

RRRRN!







HIDEOUS AS IT LOOKS, THIS BRUTE CHILD IS VERY FUNNY, ROSE QUARTZ.

I'D LIKE TO GIVE IT A HOME AT MY PALACE.

YES. YES. PLEASE.

BUT IT IS *MINE*. I GET TO PUNISH IT.



WHY MUST YOU ALWAYS BE SO SELF-CENTRED, ROSE QUARTZ?

IT INVADDED ALBTRAUM, AND SO, BY RIGHTS, IT BELONGS TO ALL OF ALBTRAUM.

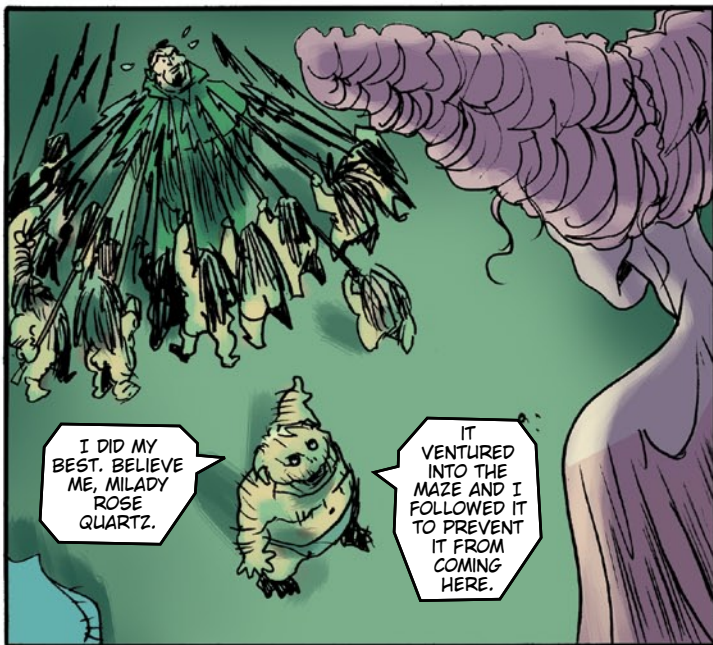
I'M SURE IF I WERE TO CONSULT THE COUNCIL, THEY WOULD TAKE IT AWAY FROM YOU ANYWAY.



SO YOU MIGHT JUST AS WELL GIVE IT TO ME.

I'LL LET YOU VISIT AND PUNISH ANY TIME YOU WANT.

I TRIED TO STOP THE BIG CHILD.

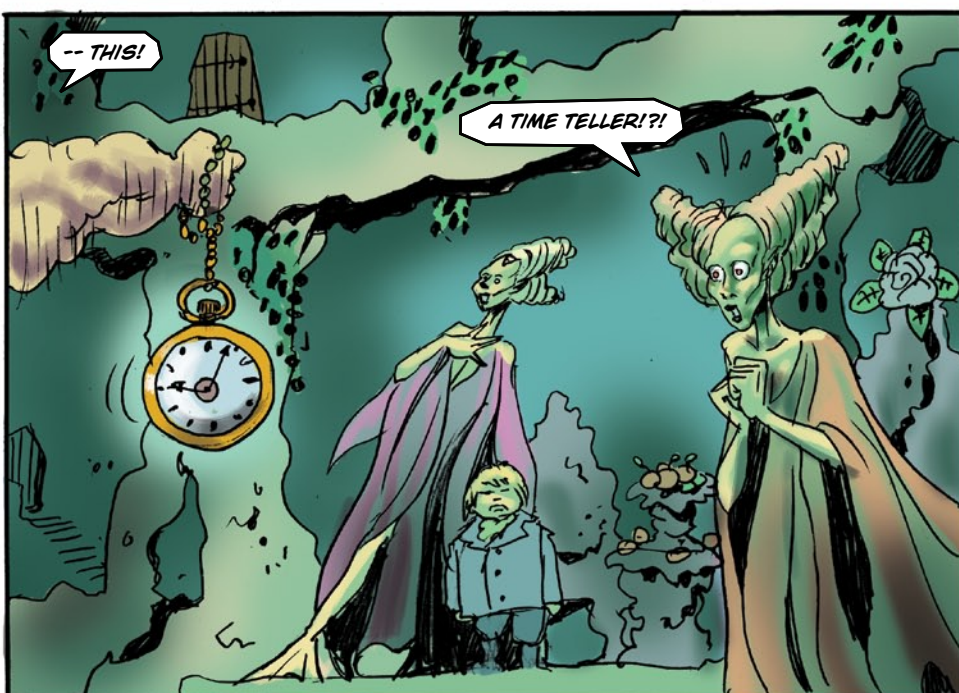


I DID MY BEST. BELIEVE ME, MILADY ROSE QUARTZ.

IT VENTURED INTO THE MAZE AND I FOLLOWED IT TO PREVENT IT FROM COMING HERE.



BUT IT TOOK ME PRISONER AND NAVIGATED THE MAZE USING --



-- THIS!

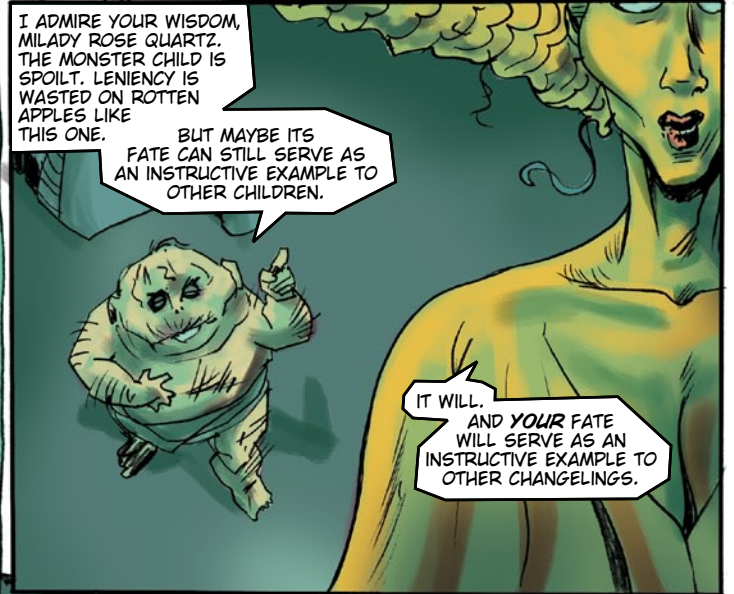
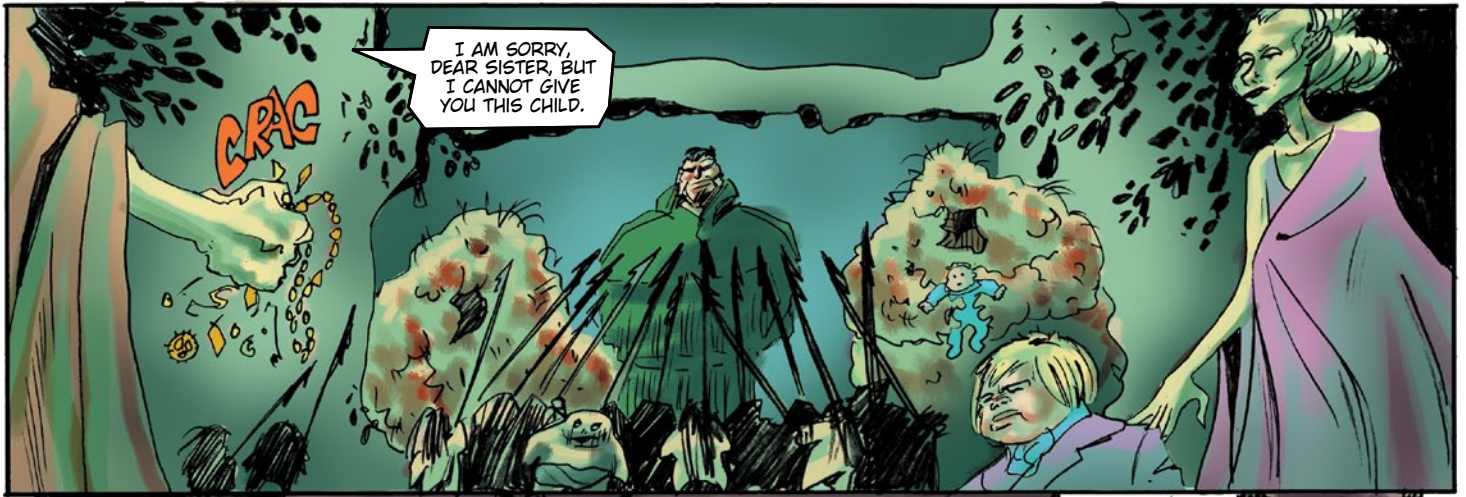
A TIME TELLER!?!?

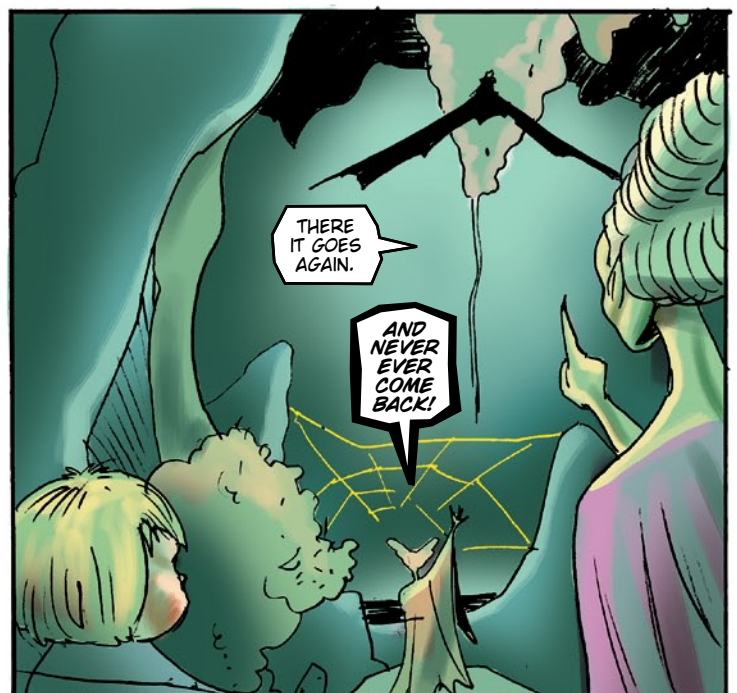
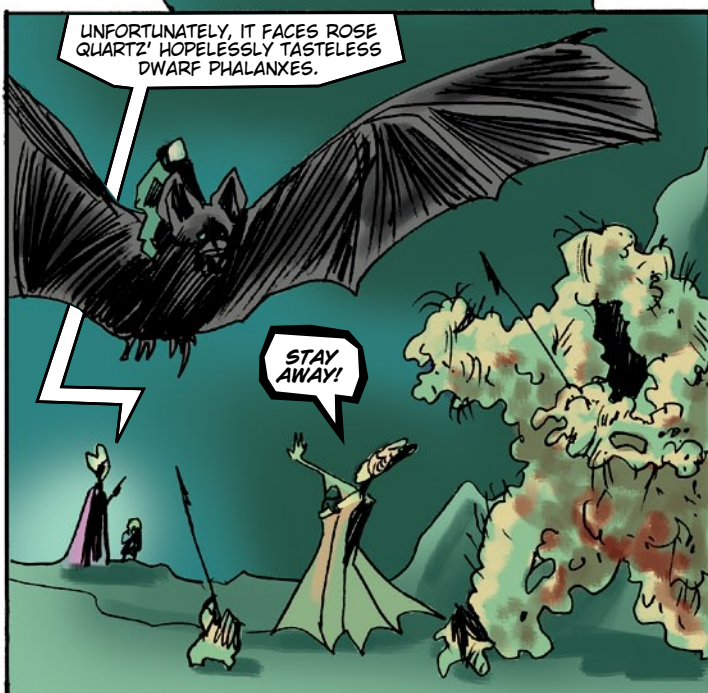
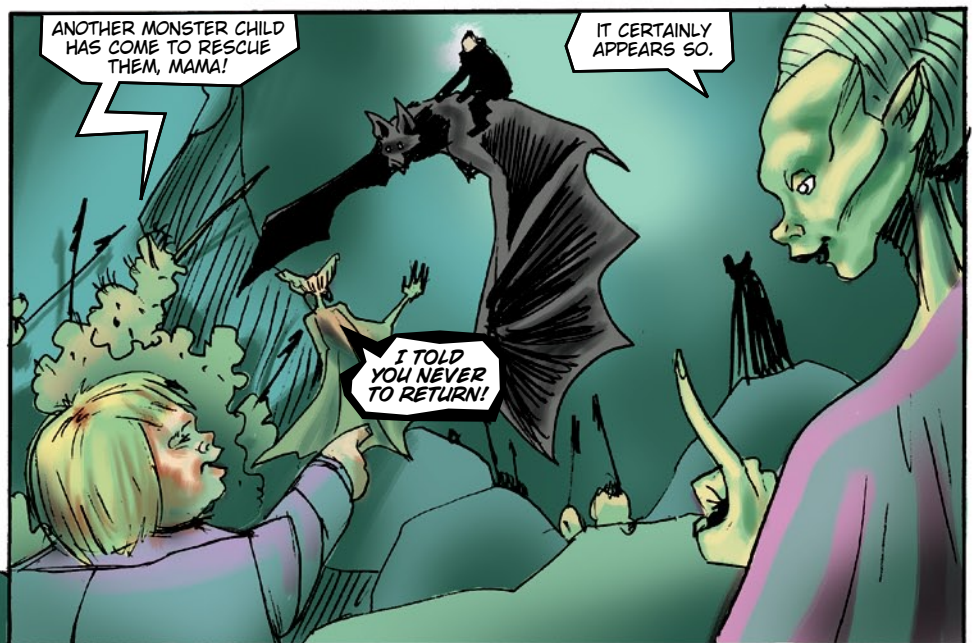


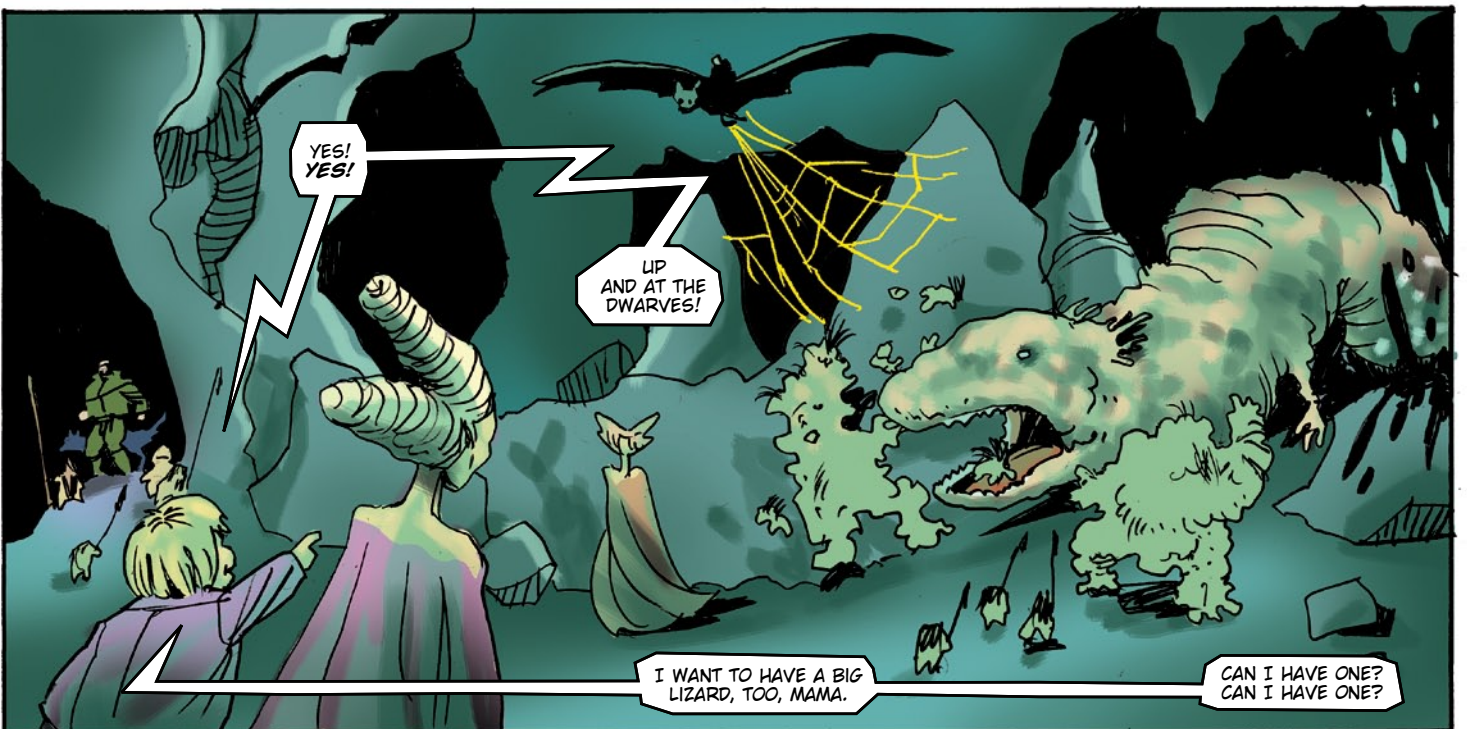
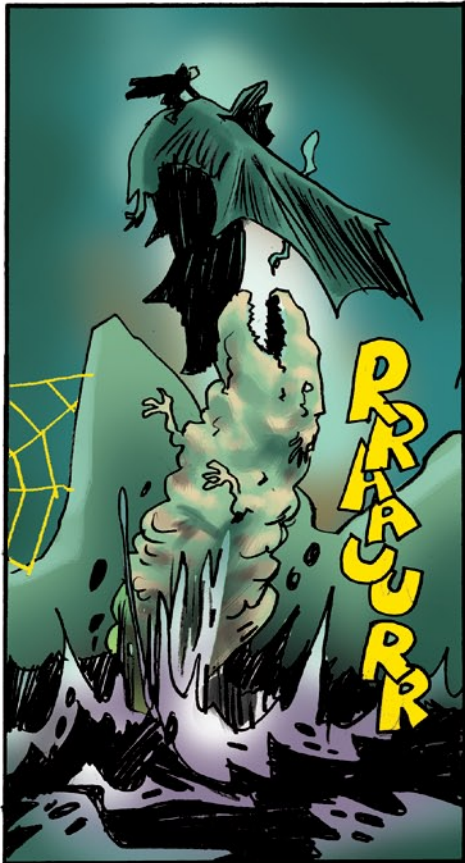
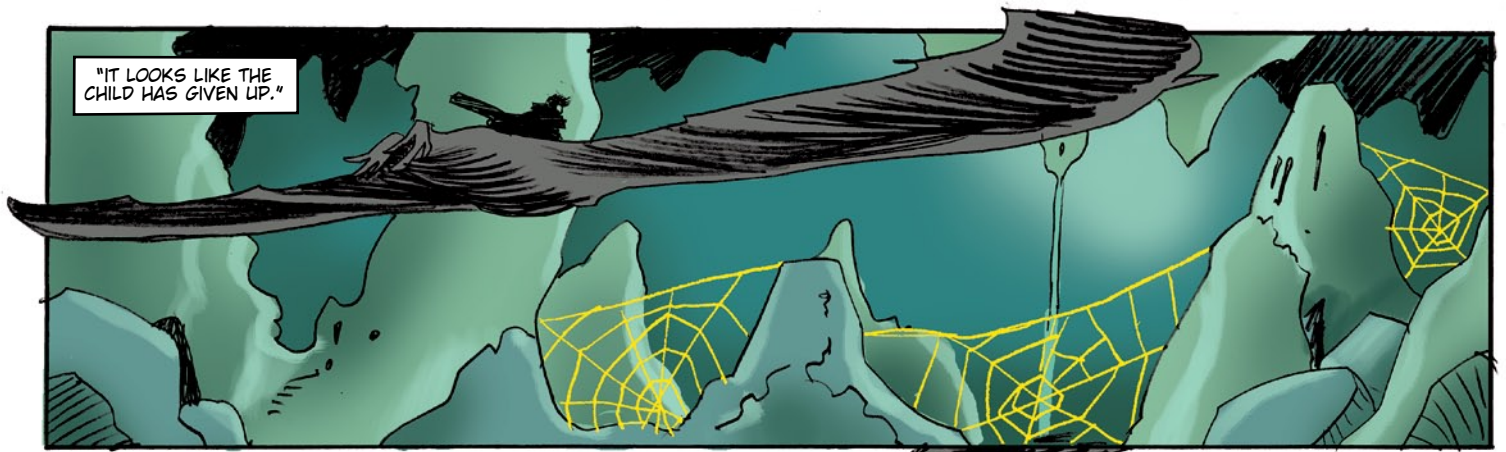
YOU BROUGHT A TIME TELLER TO ETERNAL ALBTRAUM!?!?

TIME IS FOR THE WORLD UPSIDE!

YOU COMMITTED THE GREATEST CRIME AND SACRILEGE IMAGINABLE!















YOUR
TINY
TOT
?!?



WHAT *IS* YOUR STORY WITH THIS GUY?

IT...

IT...

IT IS MY FORMER
FOSTERLING.

WHAT?

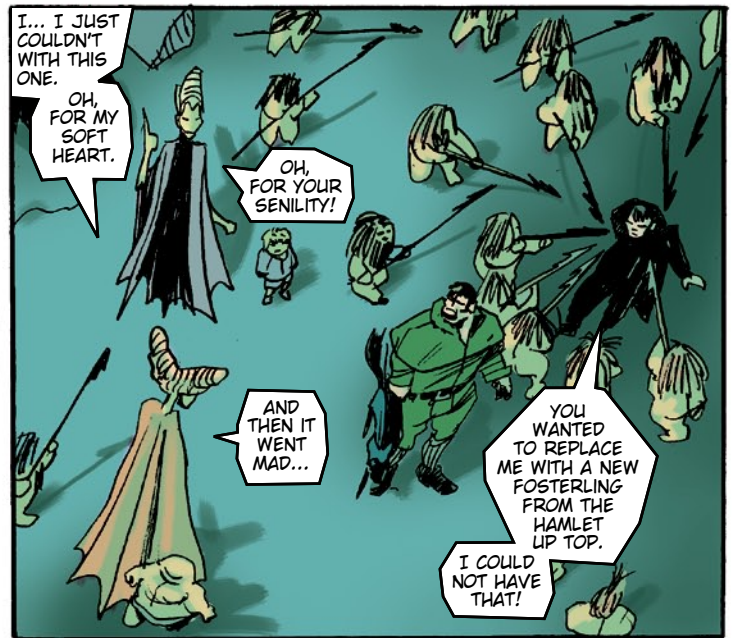


I... I LOVED MY TINY TOT. I
CARED FOR IT, NURSED AND
RAISED IT LIKE THE GOOD
MOTHER THAT I AM.

BUT IN THE END...
IN THE END IT GREW
SO BIG AND UGLY.

THEY
ALWAYS
DO, SILLY.

AND THEN
ONE KILLS
THEM.



I... I JUST
COULDN'T
WITH THIS
ONE.

OH,
FOR MY
SOFT
HEART.

OH,
FOR YOUR
SENILITY!

AND
THEN IT
WENT
MAD...

YOU
WANTED
TO REPLACE
ME WITH A NEW
FOSTERLING
FROM THE
HAMLET
UP TOP.

I COULD
NOT HAVE
THAT!



YOU WENT
TO SIEBENÖD
AND--

I KILLED
EVERY
SINGLE
ONE OF
THEM!



ALL THIS
TROUBLE WAS
YOUR FAULT,
ROSEBUD!

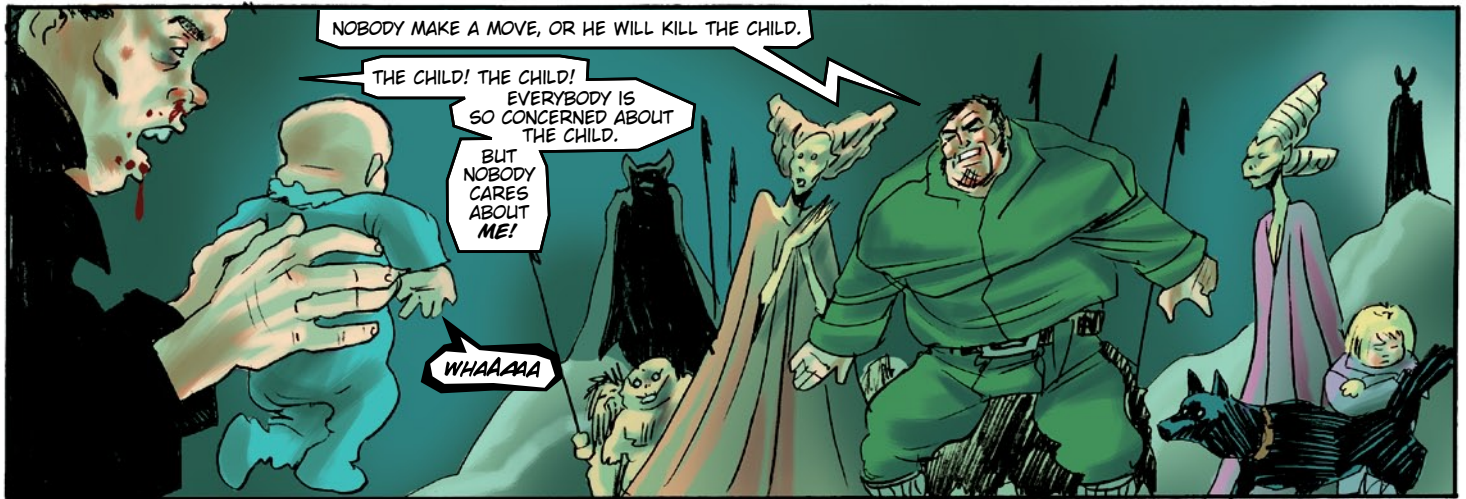
GOOD THING I LEFT
KRISTA UP THERE TO
GUARD THE LAST CHILD.

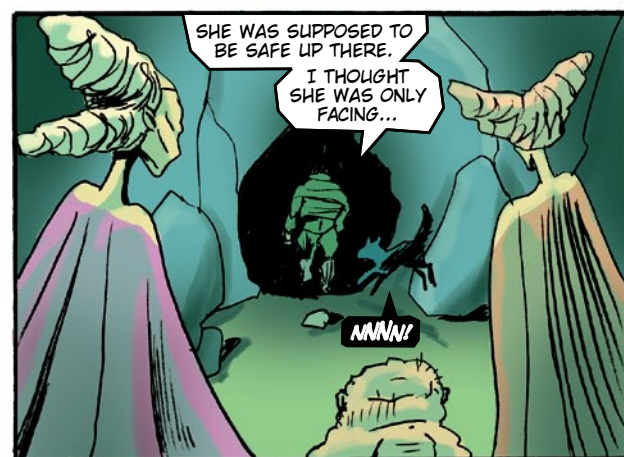
ARE YOU
THE ONE WHO
TOLD THE GIRL
THE VENOM WAS
HARMLESS?



YOUR
PRECIOUS
KRISTA IS
DYING. I
POISONED
HER.









YOU BROUGHT BACK THE LOST ONES, YOUR LADYSHIP. THANK ETERNITY, YOU MANAGED TO SAVE MY TEENY TOT.

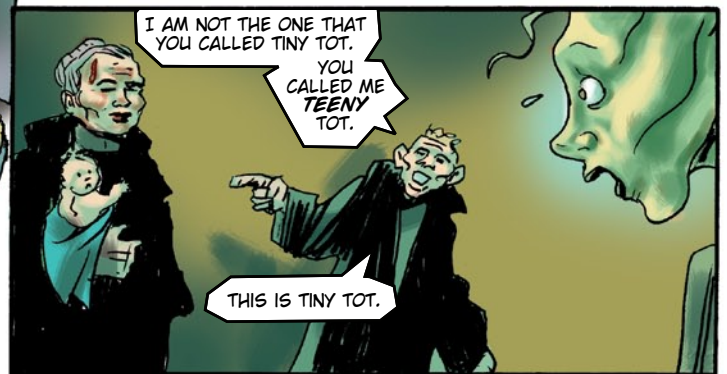


WHILE YOU GOT YOUR JUST DESSERTS, TINY TOT.

YOU'RE WRONG, GREAT LADY ROSE QUARTZ.

WRONG?!? JUST LOOK AT YOU, ALL OLD, KAPUTT AND ROTTEN.

PLEASE CALM YOURSELF, MILADY, AND LISTEN.



I AM NOT THE ONE THAT YOU CALLED TINY TOT. YOU CALLED ME **TEENY** TOT.

THIS IS TINY TOT.



THIS WILL NOT DO, YOUR LADYSHIP.

I WON'T TAKE BACK MY FOSTERLING IN SUCH A BAD SHAPE!

CAN YOU RETURN HIM TO THE MAZE AND TURN BACK HIS WHEEL?

BUT I HAVE DECIDED TO STAY THIS AGE, LADY ROSE QUARTZ.

MY FAMILY HAS LOST ITS FATHER AND ALL ITS SONS. THEY NEED A NEW FATHER TO LOOK AFTER THEM.



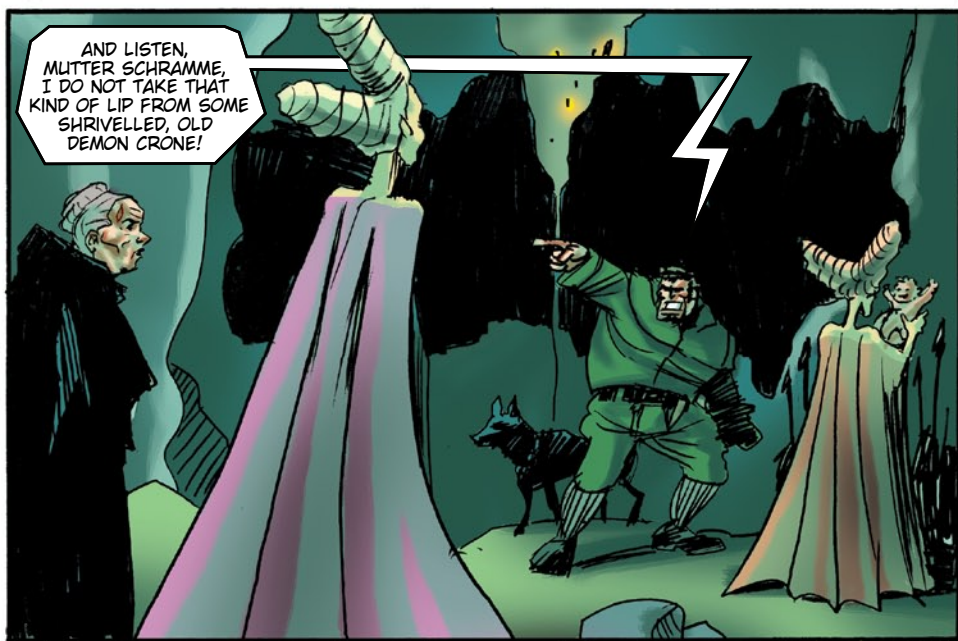
THEN I TAKE THE OTHER ONE.

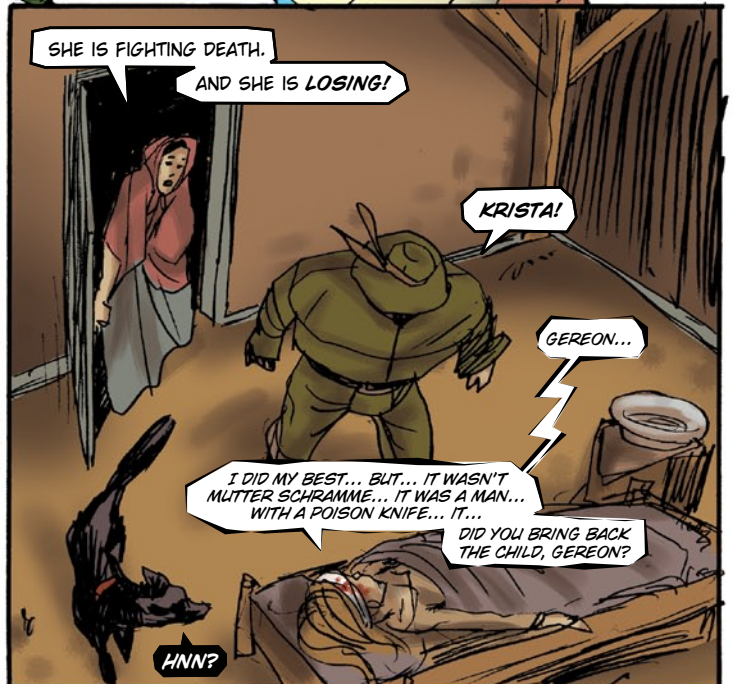
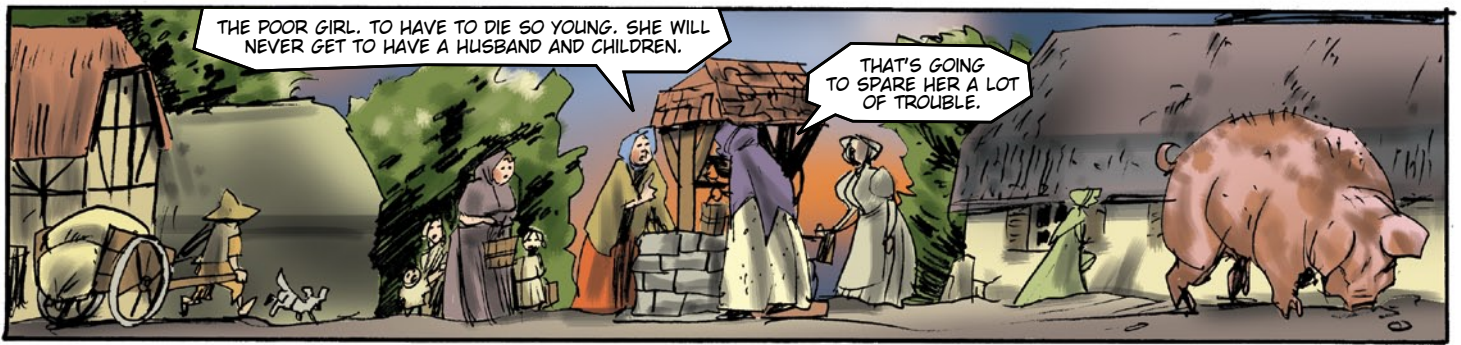
LOOKS LIKE EVERYBODY IS SORTED.

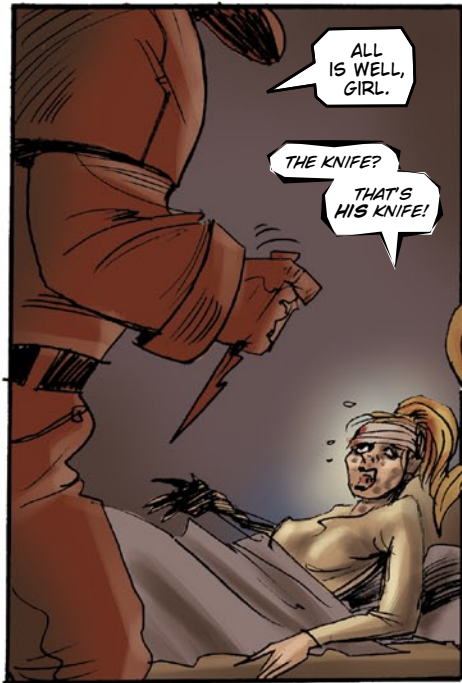


EXCEPT FOR...

GEREON!









German-born yarnspinner **Josef Rother** is a regular contributor to *HEAVY METAL MAGAZINE*, where his tales explore the fantastic and the uncanny. He has worked with artists as diverse as David Lloyd and Donna Barr. In 2012, Heavy Metal published *Josef Rother's NIGHTMARES ON THE TOWN*, collecting some of his best stories. Josef's *FATHER DRACULA* series chronicles the exploits of a notorious vampire lord after his conversion to Catholicism. These days, Dracula only drinks the communion wine, the transsubstantiated Blood of Christ and very nourishing to vampires. As a translator, Josef has put German words into the mouths of almost every DC and MARVEL superhero, including Alan Moore's *SWAMP THING*. Josef only wears black and is never seen without his distinctive (and black) pirate bandana.

www.josefrother.com

Freelance illustrator and writer **Eckart Breitschuh** lives in Hamburg, Germany, with his wife, webdesigner Lorraine Flack, and their three children. He made his comic book debut drawing *LINDENSTRASSE*, a cartoon version of Germany's most popular soap opera.

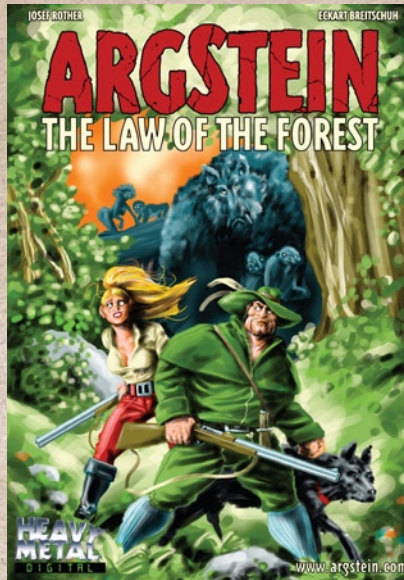
In 1998, the mini-series *WANDA CARAMBA: DYING FOR A SCREW* established Eckart's buxom crimefighter Wanda Caramba as a household name among German comic book readers. The sequel, *WANDA CARAMBA: BEAR CAGE*, won the 2001 ICOM Independent Comic Award for Best Script. Eckart's further comic book accomplishments include *GRIMM*, an irreverent, new look at the notorious brothers' fairytales (2002 ICOM for Best Script), and *APOCALYPSE: THE REVELATION OF JOHN* with theologian Dr. Andreas Köhn. In June 2005, Eckart's first collaboration with writer Josef Rother, *A MOTHER'S LOVE*, was published in *HEAVY METAL MAGAZINE*.

www.eckart-breitschuh.de



GET THEM ALL

**ARGSTEIN
Book One**



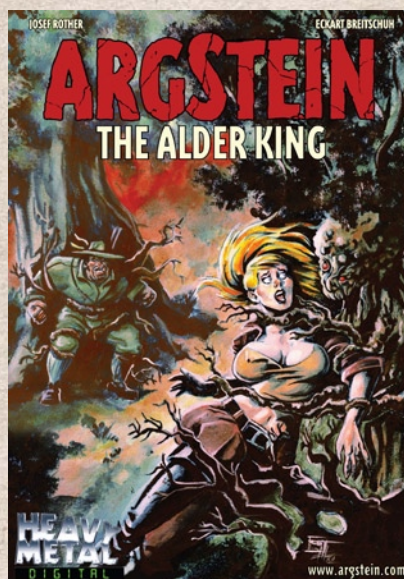
**THE LAW OF
THE FOREST**

**ARGSTEIN
Book Two**



**ARGSTEIN
UNDERGROUND**

**ARGSTEIN
Book Three**



**THE ALDER KING
[Coming Soon]**

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ARGSTEIN UNDERGROUND

Germany. The 1800s.

Creatures roam the forest, and only
the fist and the rifle of the Förster stand
between the murderous monsters
and the human denizens of
the Argstein valley.

When he investigates a
strange series of infant murders,
the Förster soon finds himself face to face
with hairy trolls, shaven dwarfs,
and duck-footed elves...

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