



# THE ADVENTURE ZONE

The Crystal Kingdom

#1 New York Times bestselling creators

Clint McElroy • Griffin McElroy • Justin McElroy  
Travis McElroy • Carey Pietsch













# THE ADVENTURE ZONE

The Crystal  
Kingdom

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:01

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**First Second**

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BEFORE WE GET TO  
SCIENCE CLASS...

LET'S TAKE A  
MINUTE TO CATCH UP ON  
WORLD HISTORY!





Now YOU can relive  
all the THRILLS, SPILLS,  
and CHILLS of the  
**GREAT GOLDCLIFF RACE!**

**1 THE MAGNIFICENT GOLDCLIFF TRUST BUILDING**

- ☆ BESIEGED BY A GIGANTIC WALL OF POISONOUS PLANTS, SWEET-TALKED INTO SUBMISSION BY **MERLE!**
- ☆ GUARDED BY THE TERRIFYING **TRENT THE TREANT**, BATTLED BY THE MIGHTY **MAGNUS!**
- ☆ CROWNED BY THE VAULT, WHERE MASTER CRIMINAL **THE RAVEN** FACED OFF AGAINST THE ARCAINE WONDERS OF **TAAKO!**

**2 THE MILITIA STAGING AREA**

- ☆ COMMANDED BY THE ILL-FATED **CAPTAIN CAPTAIN BANE**, SECRETLY A SEEKER FOR THE BUREAU OF BALANCE.
- ☆ WHERE THE COURAGEOUS MONK **HURLEY** BROUGHT OUR HEROES BACK FROM THE BRINK OF DEATH!

**3 THE HAMMERHEAD HEADQUARTERS**

- ☆ SITE OF THE TITANIC BATTLE WITH THE FIENDISH **HAMMERHEAD GANG!**

**4 HURLEY'S GARAGE**

- ☆ WHERE **HURLEY** RECRUITED OUR ADVENTURERS INTO THE PERILOUS SPORT OF BATTLEWAGON RACING—A RACE THEY HAD TO WIN TO DEFEAT THE **RAVEN**, REVEALED AS HURLEY'S GREAT LOVE, **SLOANE!**

**5 THE RACEWAY**

- ☆ SPEED AND MENACE COMBINED AS OUR INTREPID TEAM ZOOMED OUT ON THEIR **RAMWAGON** TO FIGHT OFF BLOODTHIRSTY RIVALS!



WINDY SANDS

2



FANTASY COSTCO

1



BUSINESS DISTRICT

PICNIC PARK

START!

MANSION ROW

FAST CREEK

8



7



SW














# Chapter 1







ADMITTEDLY, IT'S  
BEEN A STRANGE  
YEAR, FELLAS...

...BUT, WHEN I LOOK DOWN  
AT EVERSUMMER, ALL DECORATED  
FOR CANDLELIGHTS, I GET  
THIS FEELING OF—

NAUSEA?

LIKE THE ROOM IS  
SPINNING AND YOU  
WANT TO YARTZ?

THAT'S  
FANTASY VERTIGO,  
MAGPIE.

**Magnus**

RACE HUMAN  
CLASS FIGHTER

+PROFICIENCIES+

- Bringing the ruckus
- Turning chunks of wood into works of art
- Height-induced queasiness

**Merle**

RACE DWARF  
CLASS CLERIC

+PROFICIENCIES+

- Horticulture
- unfamiliarity with holidays
- Awesome taste in comfort footwear

**Taako**

RACE ELF  
CLASS WIZARD

+PROFICIENCIES+

- Feasts of legendmain
- Magically delicious baked goods
- Party hosting

























**SHIELD of HEROIC MEMORIES**  
+ DESCRIPTION +  
doubles as a journal  
+ STATS +  
recount your past battles (real or imaginary) as extra defense





























LOOK, LUCRETIA, I KNOW IT'S BAD, THAT'S WHY I'M CALLING!



DON'T MOVE A MUSCLE, DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?!



HAVE MAUREEN CALL ME IMMEDIATELY!

~~THE DIRECTOR~~  
**LUCRETIA**  
RACE HUMAN  
CLASS DIRECTOR  
+ PROFICIENCIES +  
→ keeping the world safe  
→ keeping secrets  
→ keeping on keeping on

























I'M TELLING YOU: I'M A COOL SUMMER.

THIS IS REALLY GOING TO CLASH WITH MY PINK UNDERTONES.



BY THE SOUND OF THINGS, WE'RE ALL GONNA HAVE PINK UNDERTONES IF THIS JOB GOES SOUTH.

FSST

FSST

FSST

**NULL SUITS**  
+DESCRIPTION+  
protective gear  
+STATE+  
cancels magic effects



THESE NULL SUITS—ANOTHER OF LUCAS' INVENTIONS—WILL MAKE YOU IMPERVIOUS TO THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE'S TRANSMUTATIONAL EFFECTS.

UNFORTUNATELY, TAAKO, THAT MEANS ANY OUTBOUND TRANSMUTATION SPELLS AREN'T GOING TO WORK.

COULDN'T I JUST TAKE MY GLOVES OFF AND—



AGAIN, IF EVEN A FINGERTIP WERE EXPOSED, YOU RISK CRYSTALLIZATION AND DEATH.

OR, AT THE VERY LEAST, AMPUTATION.



THE LAB IS SEPARATED INTO DIFFERENT CHAMBERS BY ARCAINE AIRLOCKS. THEY'RE ALL THAT'S PREVENTED THE ENTIRE FACILITY FROM BEING TRANSFORMED.

IN THE SECTIONS THAT ARE ALREADY CRYSTALLIZED, YOUR SUITS WILL BE THE ONLY THING KEEPING YOU SAFE.



WE CAN GIVE LIMITED SUPPORT OVER YOUR BRACERS, AND THE REGULATORS WILL BE THERE TO HANDLE LUCAS IF NECESSARY.



BUT RETRIEVING THE RELIC AND STOPPING THE CRYSTAL FROM ENDING LIFE ON OUR PLANET AS WE KNOW IT...



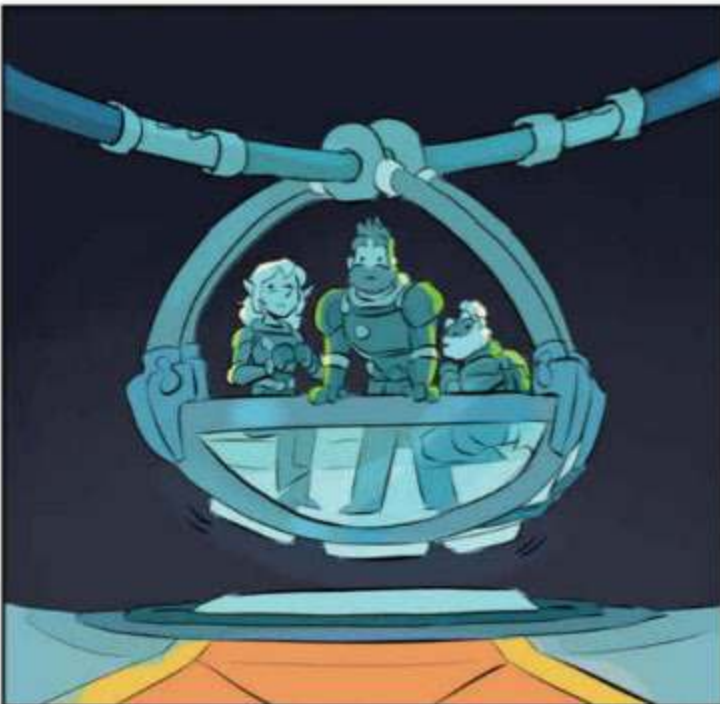
...THAT'S ULTIMATELY UP TO YOU.















SHOVE





AAAAAAA!!

IS THIS  
A BAD TIME?

YOU KNOW,  
I TAKE MY G.M.  
DUTIES SERIOUSLY. I'M  
NOT GONNA LIE TO YOU,  
FELLAS...YOU'RE HEADED  
INTO SOME PRETTY  
DICEY SHIT!

**GRiffin McEIRON**  
RACE ACTUAL HUMAN BEING  
CLASS GAME MASTER  
+PROFICIENCIES+  
→ World building  
→ providing much-needed  
traveling  
→ poorly timed entrances

YES!!

I FIGURED  
LEVELING UP  
MIGHT HELP YOU  
SURVIVE, BUT  
IF YOU DON'T  
WANT TO—


WE WANT TO!  
WE WANT TO!

OH GEEZ,  
DON'T BEG  
HIM!

EXXXXXXCELLENT...

GM NO PECKING! (TOP SECRET) GM





THE NEW ABILITY  
BASICALLY LETS YOU  
KNOW IF AN ENEMY  
CAN KICK YOUR ASS!

I DON'T NEED  
AN ABILITY TO TELL ME  
MY ASS IS UN-KICKABLE!  
BUT THANKS! I WILL  
PROBABLY USE THIS  
ALL THE TIME!

**MAGNUS**  
Fighter Level 8  
CONSTITUTION +2  
STRENGTH +1  
WISDOM +1  
NEW ABILITY  
Know Thy Enemy

GOOD NEWS!  
YOUR TRANSMUTATION  
MAGIC JUST BECAME  
MAGNITUDES MORE  
EFFECTIVE!

SHITBIRDS!

YOU'RE  
GONNA DIG THAT  
NEW ABILITY! IT  
ADDS SIGNIFICANT  
ATTACK POWER TO  
YOUR WEAPON  
STRIKES!

**MERLE**  
CLERIC Level 8  
Nature Domain  
CONSTITUTION +1  
WISDOM +2  
NEW ABILITIES  
Strike Divine

**TAAKO**  
TRANSMUTATION WIZARD  
Level 8  
INTELLIGENCE +1  
DEXTERITY +1  
NEW ABILITIES  
Transmutation Mastery

AND I'VE  
ALREADY INSTANTLY  
FORGOTTEN ABOUT IT!  
THANKS G.M.!!













# Chapter 2









A comic book page with a pink and purple crystalline background. A large, tilted rectangular frame on the left shows three characters falling. A speech bubble from the top character says 'HOLY HELL!'. In the center, a circular portal with a starry pattern is visible. To the right, a yellow sign with red text reads 'SLOWFALL' and 'Localized Levitation Spell'. Below the sign, a speech bubble says 'LOOK AT THIS PLACE!'. At the bottom, a horizontal frame shows two characters falling, with speech bubbles saying 'WOULDN'T IT BE FUNNY IF THE NULL SUITS DON'T WORK?', 'YEAH!', and 'HILARIOUS!'. A large pink title 'CONSERVATORY' is in the middle.

HOLY HELL!

**SLOWFALL**

DESCRIPTION  
Localized  
Levitation Spell

LOOK  
AT THIS  
PLACE!

## CONSERVATORY

WOULDN'T  
IT BE FUNNY IF  
THE NULL SUITS  
DON'T WORK?

YEAH!

HILARIOUS!

AND THE WAY  
WE FIND OUT IS  
BY TURNING TO  
PINK CRYSTAL THE  
INSTANT WE TOUCH  
THE FLOOR?





























UMMM,  
SHIELD?

WOULD YOU  
BELIEVE I'VE FOUGHT  
CRYSTAL MONSTERS  
IN A HOVER LAB  
BEFORE?

HAH!!

KRINKLE!  
TINKLE!

HUMMMSHIIX!

BWOMM

HAIL AND  
WELL MET, MY  
GEODUDE.

GOLEM MADE  
OF LIVING GEMSTONES...  
ALSO POSSESSED BY  
A SPIRIT?

SO, WHAT'S  
YOUR STORY?

KINDA FEELS  
LIKE A HAT ON A HAT,  
BUT, YOU KNOW...  
DO YOUR THING.

### CRYSTAL GOLEM

RACE CRYSTAL, I GUESS?  
CLASS MAN, I DON'T KNOW?  
NEVER SEEN ONE OF THESE  
BEFORE.

+PROFICIENCIES+

- I'm guessing it's pretty sturdy.
- And sharp, too.
- And... pink. It's got pink proficiency.

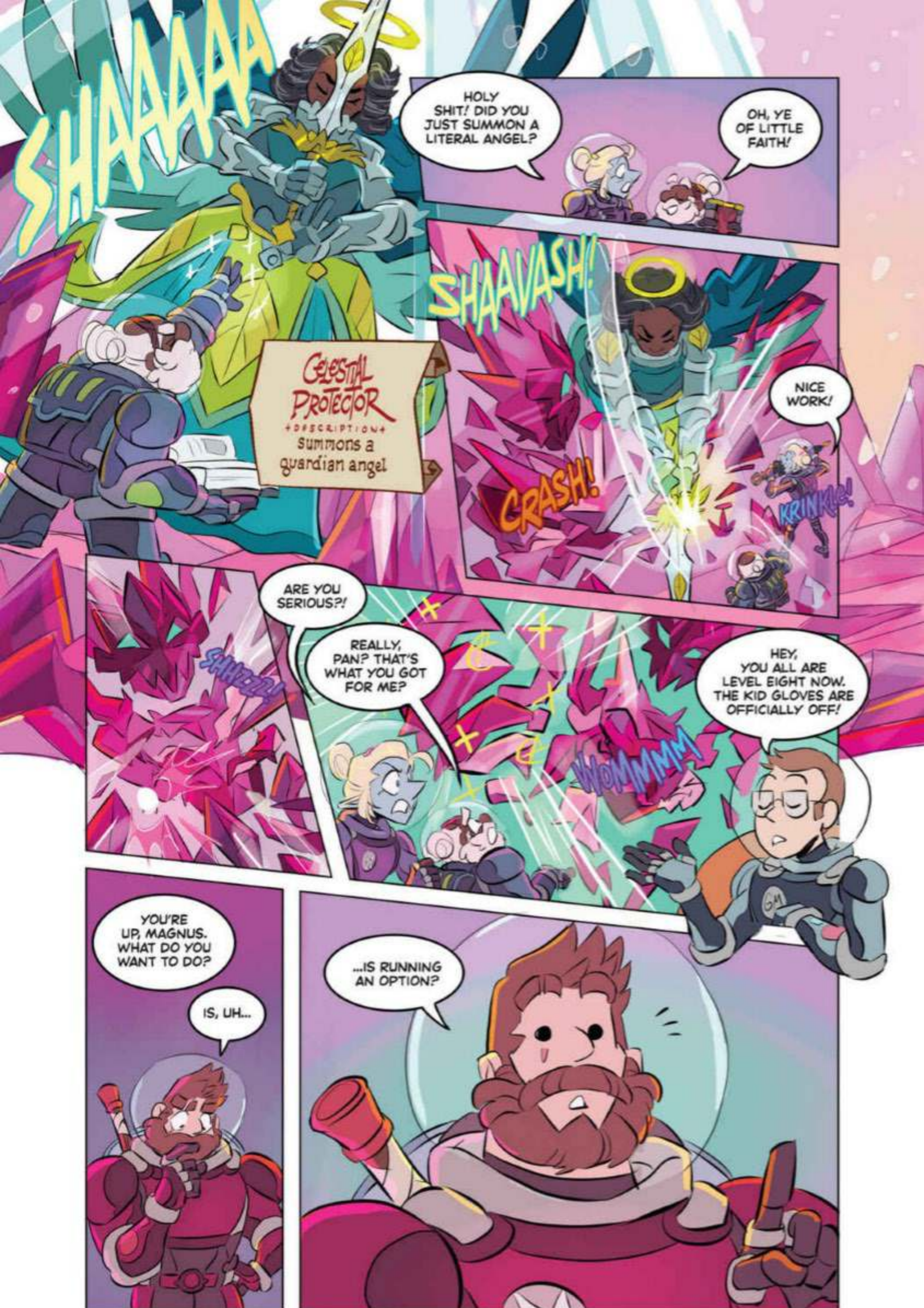












HOLY SHIT! DID YOU JUST SUMMON A LITERAL ANGEL?

OH, YE OF LITTLE FAITH!

*Celestial Protector*  
+DESCRIPTION+  
summons a guardian angel

SHAAVASH!

CRASH!

NICE WORK!

KRINKLE!

ARE YOU SERIOUS?!

REALLY, PAN? THAT'S WHAT YOU GOT FOR ME?

HEY, YOU ALL ARE LEVEL EIGHT NOW. THE KID GLOVES ARE OFFICIALLY OFF!

YOU'RE UP, MAGNUS. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?

IS, UH...

...IS RUNNING AN OPTION?









STAB!

SKREEEEEE

SHATTER!

HUMSH

HUMSH

SH-SHUNK

SHAAAA~

LOOKS LIKE  
SOMEONE JUST  
GOT...

...TOUCHED  
BY AN ANGEL.

PEFT

WHERE  
DID YOU GET  
THOSE?

TAKE  
THEM OFF!













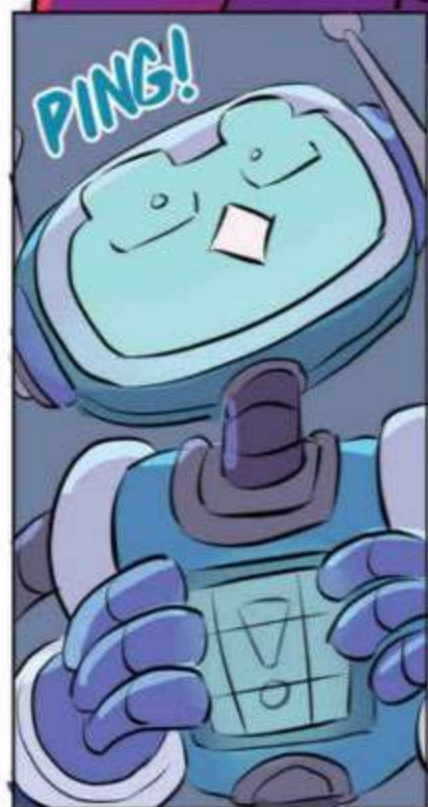
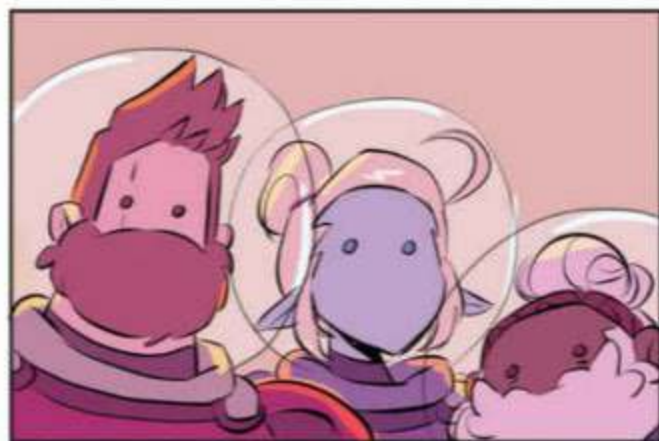




## BUDDY BOT CHAMBER

























# POCKET SPA

TAAKO, IF WE DON'T STUMP THE ROBOT HE'LL BURN THIS THING DOWN WITH YOU IN IT.

JEEZ, FINE!

SORRY, FELLAS!

I THOUGHT YOU HAD IT COVERED!

Peel

FANTASY T.V. GUIDE  
 SPELL SLOTS AND YOU  
 TIME L...  
 COM...  
 I-CAN'T-IP COSTS!

ALL THAT IMMOLATION WAS JUST HELL ON MY PORES.

ARE YOU GONNA EAT THESE CUCUMBERS?

KNOCK YOURSELF OUT.









**BLOOMF!**











# Chapter 3













STATE YOUR INTENTIONS, MECHANICAL MENACE!



I AM A MED BOT, DESIGNATED "NOELLE."

ARE Y'ALL IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE?

**Noelle**  
RACE ROBOT  
CLASS MEDIC  
+ PROFICIENCIES +  
→ Checkups  
→ Treatment  
→ Billing



BY "ASSISTANCE," DO YOU MEAN TRYING TO CREMATE US?

LIKE "ASSISTING YOU VIOLENTLY INTO THE NEXT LIFE"?

KRAK



WELL, I NEVER!

I AM PROGRAMMED TO HELP ALL ADMINISTRATORS AND GUESTS AT THIS FACILITY!

YEAH, YOUR BUDDY THE TEACHER BOT THOUGHT HE WAS HELPING, TOO.



OHhhh! Y'ALL MET HODGE-PODGE! I GET IT NOW!

I RAISED A STINK ABOUT HIS METHODS AT THE LAST QUARTERLY STAFF MEETING.



YOU SEEM TO BE A LOT MORE... **INFORMAL** THAN HODGE-PODGE, THAT'S FOR CERTAIN. WHAT'S YOUR DEAL?

AW, HECK! THAT'S JUST GOOD BEDSIDE MANNER!

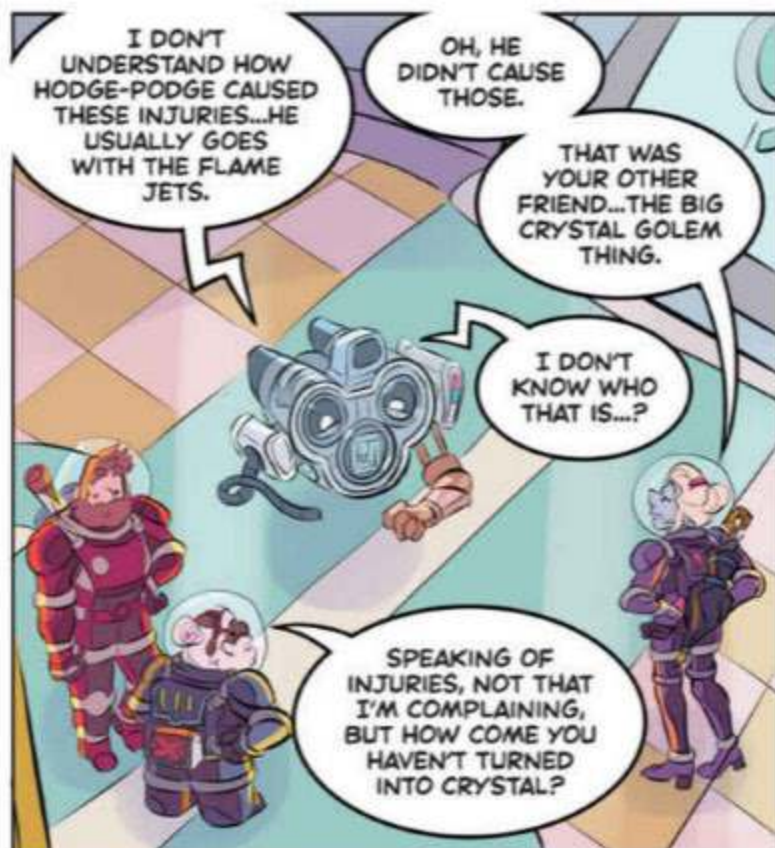
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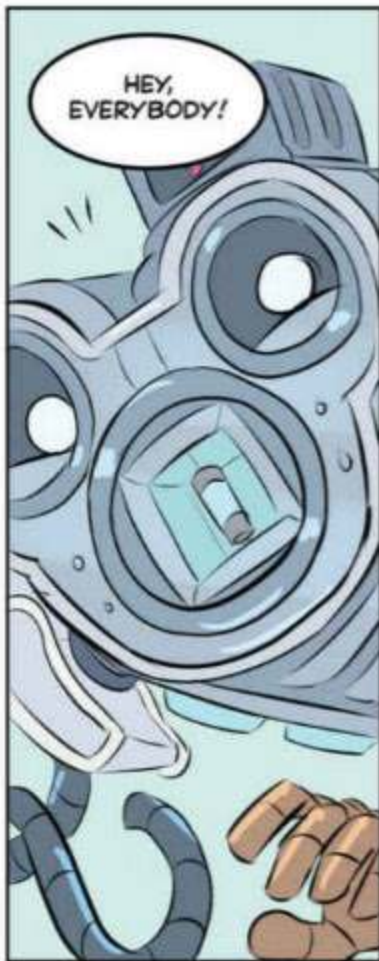
PING!











HEY,  
EVERYBODY!



IT'S ME,  
DR. MILLER!

WHAT'S  
HAPPENIN'?



DOCTOR! I  
THOUGHT YOU  
WERE IN THE  
MED BAY!

I CAME DOWN  
HERE TO MEET OUR  
DISTINGUISHED  
GUESTS!



WOULD  
YOU BE A DEAR  
AND LET US INTO  
MY ROOM?

I'VE GOT  
SCIENTIST GOO  
ALL OVER MY  
HANDS.



BUT DR. MILLER,  
UNDER PROTOCOL—

WOULD YOU  
MIND STAYING  
OUT HERE?

MY ROOM'S  
ALSO COVERED IN  
SCIENTIST GOO!

GROSS.



# LUCAS' QUARTERS

IT MUST BE REALLY GRATIFYING FOR YOU PEOPLE TO WATCH ME DO ALL THE CREATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING FOR THIS TEAM.

SHIT  
SHHHH

HOW'S ABOUT NOW YOU CLOWNS TRY AND FIND SOMETHING THAT'LL TELL US WHAT THE SHIT IS GOING ON WITH THIS LAB?

ANNNNNND NONE OF THIS MEANS... ANYTHING TO ME.

HEY, ANGO, LITTLE HELP?

KSSSSSHHHHHH

DAMN, LOOKS LIKE OUR STONES ARE STILL OUT.

THERE'S A BUNCH OF TEENY-TINY CHUNKS OF GEMSTONES, NOTHING MUCH ELSE—

NO, WAIT!

EUREKA! A MYSTERIOUS, LOCKED, HIDDEN COMPARTMENT!

WAIT!  
WAIT! WAIT!

I'VE GOT JUST THE THING!

MY NITPICKER!





**NITPICKER**  
RACE: PLOT DEVICE  
CLASS: NOT MUCH  
+PROFICIENCIES+  
→ expert at lock-picking!  
→ extremely rude!  
→ picks locks while being extremely rude!







SHAAAAAAA



WUWWWWW























# SUPPLY ROOM

THAT PINK SHIT GETS TO EVERYTHING!!

MAN!

AND EVERYBODY!

SHFF

KRINKLE!

TINKLE!

DAMN! IS THAT BOYSTOWN?

HIS NAME WAS BOYLAND, AND... HIS GRUFFNESS WAS JUST A FACADE.

HE GAVE TO LOCAL CHARITIES. VOLUNTEERED ON THE WEEKENDS.

HE WAS A DEVOTED FATHER TO FORTY-ONE KIDS. HE WAS SUPPOSED TO TAKE THEM ALL CAMPING NEXT WEEKEND.

STILL... PRETTY STUPID STANDING UNDER THE OPEN AIR VENT WITH THE DANGEROUS CRYSTAL SHIT COMING IN THROUGH IT.

POOR GUY PROBABLY JUST WANTED TO BURN ONE.

STOOD NEAR THE VENT TO BLOW THE SMOKE OUT...OPENED HIS HELMET AND BINGO-BANGO-BONGO...

DO YOU THINK KILLIAN AND CAREY ARE OKAY?

TUNK

SHFF

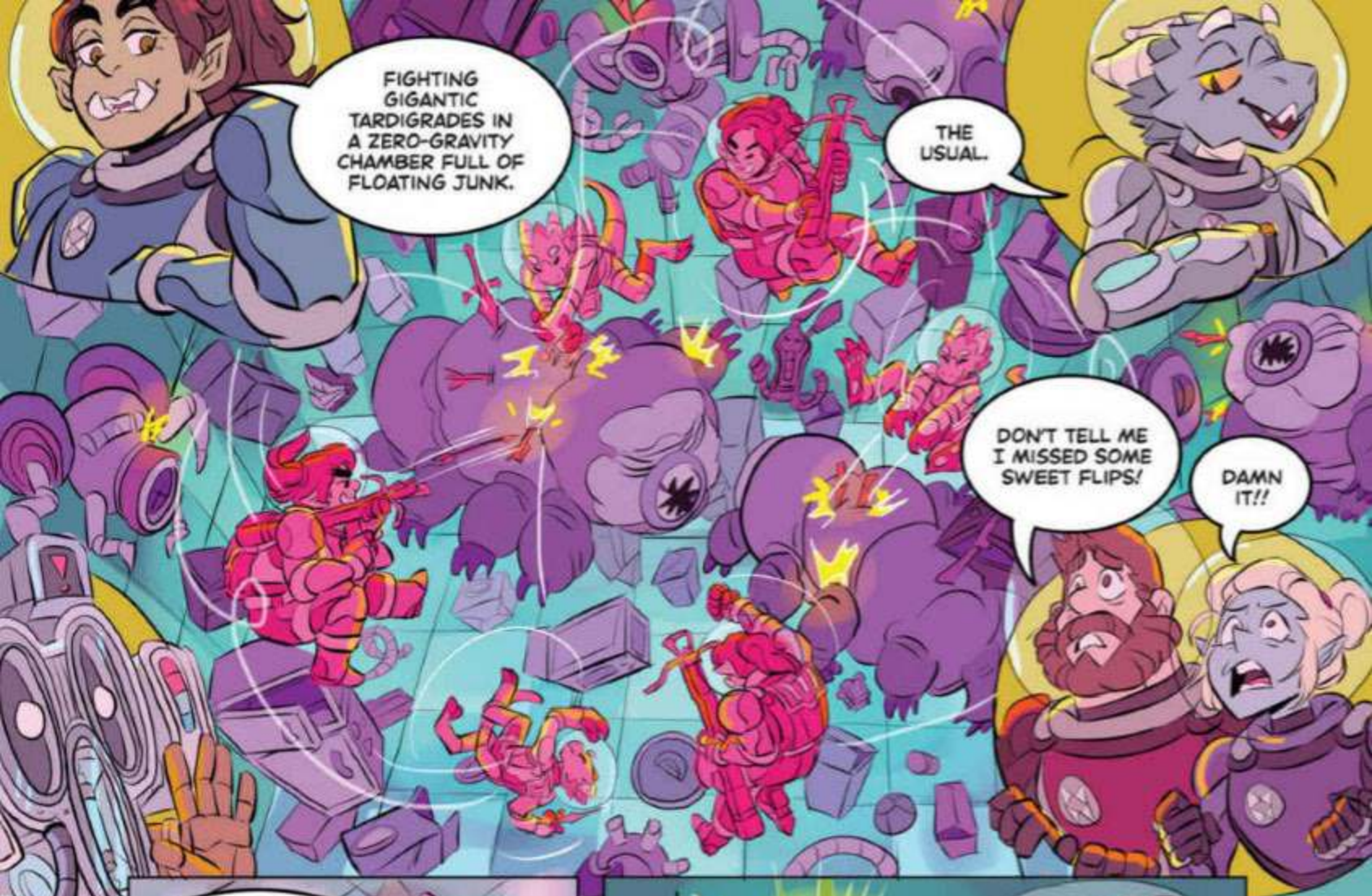












FIGHTING  
GIGANTIC  
TARDIGRADES IN  
A ZERO-GRAVITY  
CHAMBER FULL OF  
FLOATING JUNK.

THE  
USUAL.

DON'T TELL ME  
I MISSED SOME  
SWEET FLIPS!

DAMN  
IT!!



WISH THERE WAS  
SOMETHING I COULD  
DO FOR YOU, DWARF-  
BUDDY, BUT—



YOU  
COULD...

...HEAL  
HIM, MERLE...

SHLLIP!  
VWOMM



IT'S  
ME, PAN!

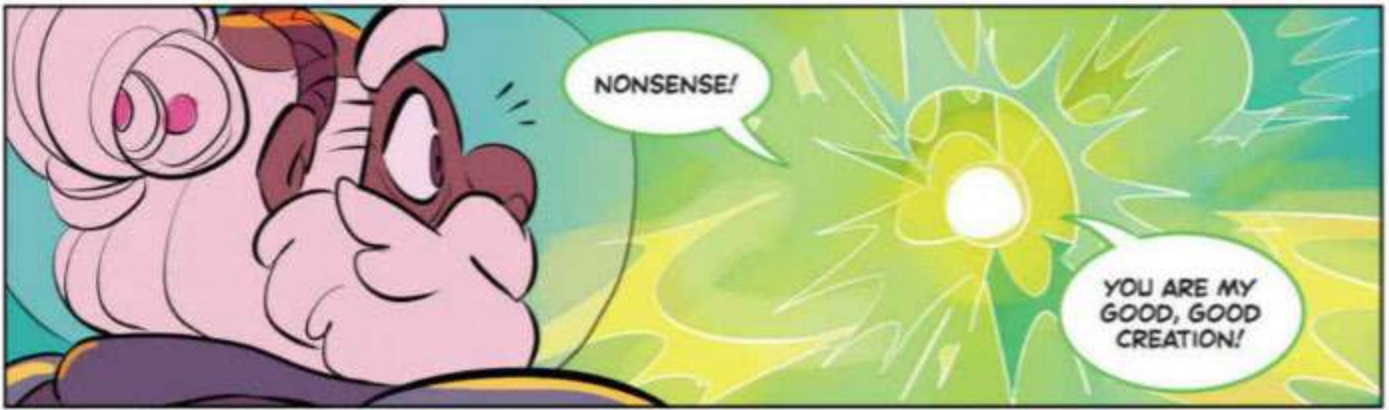
ARE YOU  
SHITTING  
ME?!



GODS DON'T  
SHIT, MERLE.

I HAVE HEARD  
YOUR PRAYER AND I  
AM ANSWERING IT!













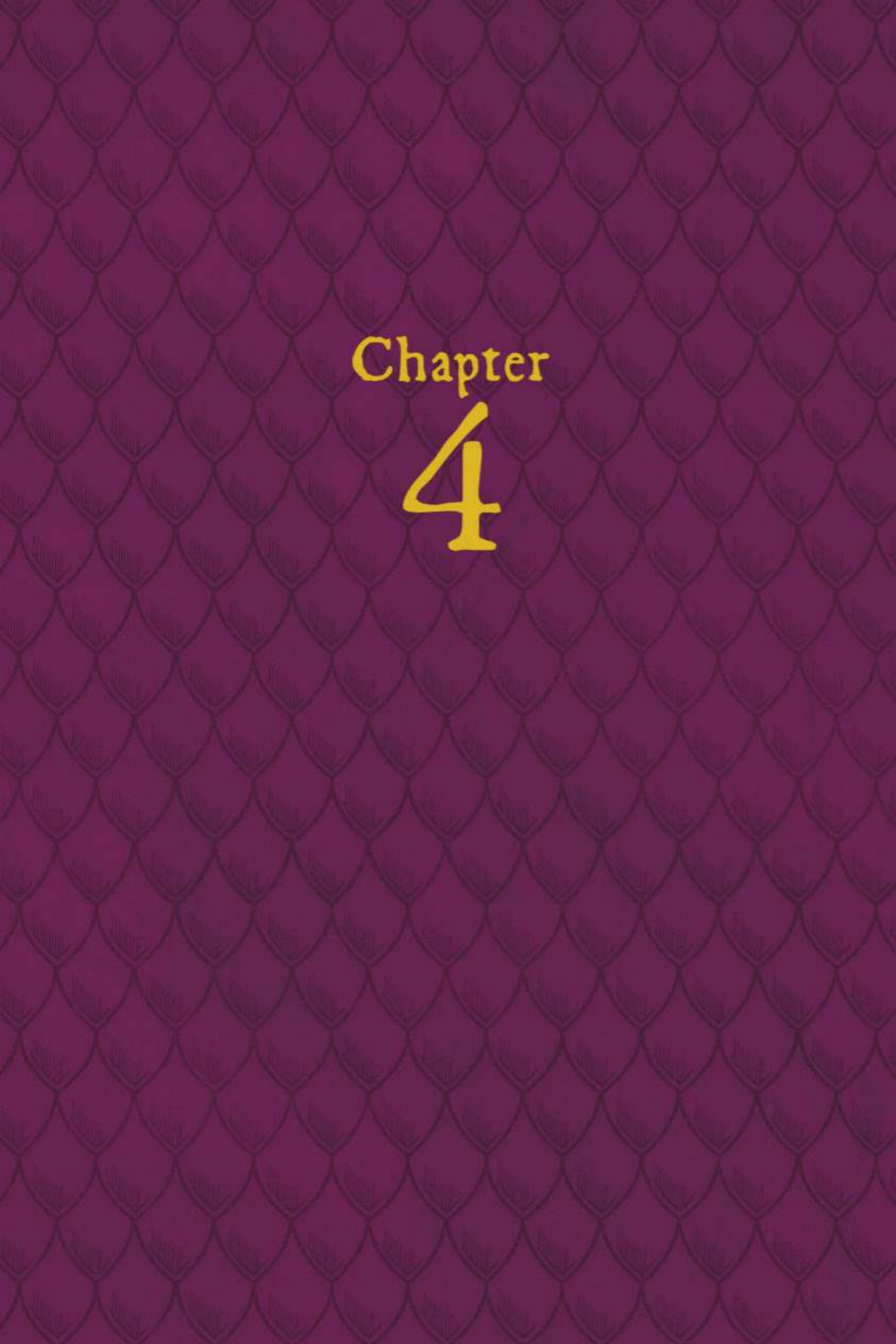












# Chapter 4









COME ON,  
Y'ALL! THE MED BAY  
IS RIGHT UP THERE!

MERLE!  
BUDDY! WHAT  
THE HELL WERE YOU  
THINKING?! WHY DID  
YOU TOUCH IT?

TMP  
TMP TMP  
TMP!

...PAN  
TOLE ME...  
EVERYTHING  
WOULD BE...  
OKAY...

...THA' HE  
WOULD...TAKE  
CARE...OF  
ME...

...BIG LIAR...

THE  
DOOR'S  
LOCKED!

MED  
BAY  
→

BWOMM!

OPEN UP,  
ASSHOLE!!

YOUR  
FUCKING LAB  
BROKE OUR  
DWARF!

AND  
YOU'VE GOTTA  
FIX HIM!!

BANG  
BANG BANG



SHOOM

UGH.

IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU PEOPLE GOT HERE!

DO YOU REALIZE WE'RE MAYBE AN HOUR FROM THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT?!

Lucas Miller  
RACE HUMAN  
CLASS SUPER-GENIUS  
+ PROFICIENCIES +  
→ Off-the-charts  
brainpower  
→ Ignoring protocol  
→ Nerd

## MED BAY

SHOVE IT, POINDEXTER!

GRAB!

THIS HAS BEEN THE SHITTIEST MISSION EVER! WE ARE TWO PEOPLE DOWN—

—AND YOU HUNG UP ON US!!!!

SHUFF!!

GUYS?

GUYS!!



















WHAT  
HAPPENED  
TO YOUR  
MOTHER?













SO, MERLE,  
YOU NOW HAVE  
A PERMANENT  
DISADVANTAGE ON  
SLEIGHT OF HAND  
ROLLS...

IT'S GONNA  
CUT BACK ON  
MY FIREWORKS  
USAGE, TOO.

ON THE  
PLUS SIDE: IT'S  
IMMUNE TO MAGICAL  
ENCHANTMENT,  
MEANING THIS  
ARM CAN'T GET  
CRYSTALLIZED!

OH, MAN!  
LUCKY!!

WE NEED  
TO MAKE A BRIEF  
DETOUR BEFORE  
WE GO AFTER  
THE STONE.

LIKE  
HECK WE  
DO!

LOOK, THE MORE  
THIS LAB CRYSTALLIZES,  
THE MORE STRAIN THAT  
WEIGHT PUTS ON  
THE ENGINES.

WE NEED  
TO REROUTE POWER  
FROM ALL NONESSENTIAL  
EQUIPMENT INTO KEEPING  
THIS LAB IN THE AIR.

THERE'S AN  
EXPERIMENT NEARBY  
THAT CONSUMES A TON  
OF POWER. IF YOU CAN  
GET ME THERE, I CAN  
SHUT IT DOWN AND  
CHANNEL THE ENERGY  
INTO THE ENGINES.

THAT'LL BUY  
US ENOUGH TIME TO  
HEAD BELOW DECK  
AND RECOVER THE  
STONE.

FINE, BUT...  
WHAT KIND OF  
EXPERIMENT ARE  
WE TALKING  
ABOUT?

NOTHING  
MUCH. JUST  
UNLOCKING THE  
SECRETS OF THE  
UNIVERSE.

UH,  
TEAM?

DOES  
EVERYBODY'S  
HELMET HAVE A  
CRACK IN IT,  
OR IS IT JUST  
KILLIAN'S?

OH NO!







YOU NEED TO GET YOURSELF TO SAFETY. WE'VE BEEN OUT OF CONTACT WITH HOME BASE FOR A WHILE NOW.

YOU CAN EXTRACT YOURSELF, APPRISE THEM OF THE SITUATION.

THAT...

...MIGHT BE A GOOD IDEA...

I WOULDN'T MIND PUTTING SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN ME AND THIS GRAND RELIC ANYWAY.



THIS PRINTOUT WILL GUIDE YOU TO AN ESCAPE POINT OUT OF THE LAB.

YOU'RE NOT COMING WITH ME?

I'D LIKE TO SEE THIS ONE THROUGH. THERE'S SOMETHIN' I NEED TO... FIGURE OUT.

...IF I CAN STICK WITH Y'ALL?

IT'S YOUR CYBER FUNERAL!













# Chapter 5







BEFORE I CAN  
SAFELY SHUT THE  
COSMOSCOPE DOWN,  
I HAVE TO LET IT RUN  
THROUGH ITS DEMO.

I AM ABOUT TO  
GET INTO SOME PRETTY  
HEAVY CONCEPTS THAT  
WILL PROBABLY BLOW  
YOUR WHOLE MIND AND  
RESHAPE THE WAY YOU  
THINK ABOUT EXISTENCE  
AND STUFF...

SO, YOU  
KNOW.

HOLD  
ON TO YOUR  
BUTTS.

MUCH OF  
MY MOTHER'S  
SCIENTIFIC PURSUITS  
WERE FOCUSED AROUND  
THE CONCEPTS OF  
TAXONOMY AND  
HIERARCHY...

FOR EVERYTHING  
THAT EXISTS, THERE IS  
ALWAYS A BIGGER THING  
THAT CONTAINS IT.

*Cosmoscope*  
+DESCRIPTION+  
MULTIPLANAR OBSERVATORY  
+STATE+  
can pierce the veil  
between realities

## COSMOSCOPE CHAMBER

MY LAB...

...BUT WE  
CAN WIDEN  
THE VIEW...

...THE  
REGION  
AROUND  
US...

...WIDEN  
AGAIN...



OUR REALM.

OUR PLANET.

HERE'S OUR  
SOLAR SYSTEM...

...THE LOCAL  
INTERSTELLAR CLOUD...

...THE GALAXY...

...THE LOCAL GROUP...

...THE LOCAL CLUSTER...

...THE LOCAL  
SUPER-CLUSTER...

...AND  
FINALLY...



...THE  
OBSERVABLE  
UNIVERSE!

EVERYTHING WE  
KNOW, EVERY PLACE  
WE'VE EVER BEEN,  
EVERY PLACE ANYONE'S  
EVER BEEN IS  
*IN HERE!*

BUT MORE  
IMPORTANTLY,  
SO ARE THE  
IMMUTABLE RULES OF  
THIS UNIVERSE.

THINGS LIKE  
GRAVITY, THERMODYNAMICS,  
ARCAINE INTERACTIONS...ALL  
THE MATTER AND ENERGY  
AND LAWS THAT GOVERN  
THEM!

PRETTY  
COOL, RIGHT?

SURE...  
BUT...

YES,  
TAAKO?

BUT...

...WHAT'S  
BIGGER  
THAN  
THAT?

TAAKO,  
YOU'VE MADE  
ME VERY,  
VERY HAPPY.

CLICK!









EACH OF THESE MIRRORS REPRESENTS ONE OF TWELVE PLANES OF EXISTENCE, EACH WITH THEIR OWN UNIQUE PROPERTIES AND ENERGIES...

...AND YET, ALL CONNECTED.



THERE'S THE SIX BUILDING BLOCK PLANES: FIRE, WATER, AIR, EARTH, SHADOW, AND LIGHT.



AND HEART!

...WHY DO PEOPLE ALWAYS SAY THAT? NO!

HAHA!



THEN, THERE'S THE OUTER DOMAINS: THE CELESTIAL PLANE, WHERE THE ENTITIES SOME CALL GODS RESIDE...

THAT'S WHERE PAN KICKS IT!



THE PLANE OF MAGIC, THE SOURCE OF ALL ARCANES ENERGIES...

AND AT THE OPPOSITE END, ITS COUNTERPART, THE PLANE OF THOUGHT, THE DOMAIN OF LOGIC AND REASON.

THAT'S WHAT WE SAW IN THE COMPACT!



AND THEN THERE'S THE ETHEREAL PLANE.

THE RAW ENERGIES OF THE REST OF THE PLANES ARE FILTERED INTO OUR PRIME MATERIAL PLANE...
















THIS ROOM,  
THE COSMOSCOPE,  
WAS THE PINNACLE  
ACHIEVEMENT OF MY  
MOTHER, DR. MAUREEN  
MILLER.




SHE WAS AN  
ASTROPHYSICIST  
WHO DEDICATED HER  
LIFE TO STUDYING  
NOT ONLY OUR  
PLANARVERSE, BUT THE  
THEORETICAL REALITIES  
THAT EXIST BEYOND  
ITS BORDERS.



REALITIES  
THAT ONE MIGHT  
VIEW USING A  
COMPLETE SET OF  
PLANAR MIRRORS,  
ALL ARRANGED  
IN—


AAAAAAND...  
TIME!



THIS IS ALL  
VERY FASCINATING,  
LUCAS. TAMPERING  
WITH THE FORCES  
OF REALITY?  
INTERSTELLAR  
PLAGIARISM?  
LOVING IT.



BUT  
IT'S GETTING  
LATE, SO I'LL  
SKIP TO THE  
CHASE:




YOUR MOM USED  
THE PHILOSOPHER'S  
STONE TO TRANSMUTE  
THESE GEMSTONE MIRRORS,  
BUT BEFORE SHE COULD FINISH  
HER SCIENCE PROJECT, SHE  
FELL PREY TO ITS THRALL,  
LOST CONTROL,  
AND—

NO.



NO...?



MY MOTHER  
FINISHED HER  
LIFE'S WORK.

SHE COMPLETED  
THE COSMOSCOPE.







FWASHH

OH,  
GOODY.

THE  
DEVIL'S  
BACK.

SO, WHAT IS IT  
THIS TIME? COME  
TO TALK SOME MORE  
BULLSHIT ABOUT  
OUR EMPLOYER?

GOT A CRYPTIC  
REMINDER ABOUT THE  
SELF-DESTROYING  
GREED AT THE HEART  
OF ALL MANKIND?

DO YOU  
REQUIRE A  
REMINDER?

BECAUSE I  
BELIEVE THE PLIGHT  
OF OUR ANGUISHED  
SCIENTIST  
SHOULD SERVE  
SUFFICIENTLY.

LISTEN, BUB.  
I APPRECIATE YOU  
KEEPING US FROM  
DOWNING A TALLBOY  
OF POISON BACK  
IN GOLDCLIFF—

WHEN  
DID THAT  
HAPPEN?

LAST BOOK.  
TRY AND  
KEEP UP.

BUT DON'T YOU  
THINK IT'S TIME FOR  
YOU TO COME OUT AND  
JUST TELL US WHAT  
YOU WANT, EXACTLY?

THEREIN LIES  
THE DILEMMA,  
TAAKO.

IT WOULD  
BE QUITE  
IMPOSSIBLE  
TO EXPLAIN  
EXACTLY WHAT  
I WANT.

FORTUNATELY,  
THIS INFERNAL  
MACHINE SERVES AS  
A CONVENIENT...

...VISUAL AID.









ONCE IT REACHES  
THIS PLANE, THERE WILL  
BE NO MORE RUNNING.  
THERE WILL BE  
NO ESCAPE.

...THE...  
SCREAMING...

MAKE  
IT STOP!!

ON  
THAT  
DAY...

SNAPTT!



...I WILL  
REQUIRE YOUR  
TRUST.




SO THAT'S IT?  
YOUR WHOLE  
REASON FOR ALL  
THIS WAS TO FREEZE  
OUR FRIENDS, SHOW  
US THE HORRIFYING  
DESTRUCTION  
OF MULTIPLE  
REALITIES...

...AND TO  
TELL US THERE  
ARE THINGS  
YOU'RE *NOT*  
GOING TO  
TELL US?

*NO,*  
MAGNUS.  
THERE ARE  
THINGS I *CAN'T*  
TELL YOU.

BUT *SURELY,*  
SOME PART OF  
YOU UNDERSTANDS  
WHAT'S AT STAKE...  
AND WHAT'S ALREADY  
BEEN LOST.





IT'S WHY  
YOU FOUND EACH  
OTHER.

IT'S WHY YOU  
CONTINUE TO FIGHT  
FOR EACH OTHER.

IT'S WHY  
TAAKO FELT DRAWN  
TO CREATE HIS UMBRA  
STAFF!

THIS  
OL' THING?

ACTUALLY,  
I TOOK IT OFF  
A GROSS OLD  
SKELETON THAT  
SHARED YOUR  
WEIRD PENDANT  
FOR RED  
CLOAKS.

SORRY TO  
RAIN ON YOUR  
PARADE.

YOU...  
FOUND HER?

YOU  
FOUND  
HER?!

FWAAASH!









# Chapter 6















HOW ARE YOU HOLDIN' UP, MERLE?

GREAT, THANKS! WHY DO YOU ASK?

...BECAUSE YOUR ARM WAS JUST AMPUTATED AND REPLACED WITH LIVING WOOD?

EH, I'M ADAPTABLE.

HOLD UP, LUCAS.

THERE'S SOMETHING YOU'RE NOT TELLING US.

WHY WOULD ONE OF YOUR ROBOTS SUDDENLY GO HAYWIRE AND BEAT YOU SENSELESS?

I'M... I DON'T...

I MEAN, I COULD THINK OF A DOZEN REASONS OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD WHY SOMEONE WOULD WANT TO KICK LUCAS' ASS...

YOUR ASS, LUCAS... IT'S HUGELY KICKABLE.

HA HA!

AND THIS CRYSTAL GOLEM... IT'S A COMPLETELY UNRELATED THING?

IT WOULD APPEAR SO. IF I HAD THE CHANCE TO THOROUGHLY EXAMINE—

GHOST.

I MEAN, IT'S CLEARLY A GHOST, RIGHT?



EXHIBIT A:  
IT IS SPOOKY,  
AND IT SCARES ME  
VERY MUCH, JUST LIKE  
A GHOST WOULD.

EXHIBIT B: IT'S  
A WEIRD LITTLE BALL  
OF LIGHT THAT CAN  
POSSESS INANIMATE  
OBJECTS. NOW THAT'S  
WHAT I CALL  
GHOSTS.

EXHIBIT C:  
IT'S CLEARLY  
GOT SOME  
UNFINISHED—

YOU  
KNOW...

I COULD  
JUST DO A QUICK SCAN  
FOR SPECTRAL ENERGY  
SIGNATURES.

NOELLE!  
THAT WON'T  
BE—

YOU CAN  
DO THAT?

I'M  
DOIN' IT!

WEEEEEEEE

UH.

HUH.

WLOOM  
WLOOM  
WLOOM

SO THERE'S,  
LIKE, A TON OF  
SPECTRAL ENERGY  
UP IN HERE.  
A *TON*.

WE'RE  
TALKING GHOSTS,  
POLTERGEISTS...  
I'M PICKING UP  
HINTS OF...

...A LICH?

IS ONE  
OF Y'ALL  
A FUCKIN'  
LICH?

LANGUAGE.

LET ME  
GUESS. YOU  
DON'T KNOW  
ANYTHING  
ABOUT—

WE'RE  
HERE!

ZOOM!



# UPSY CHAMBER

WELL, THIS CONFIRMS IT.

PAN IS DEAD.

THIS IS UPSY, YOUR LIFTING FRIEND!

HE'LL TAKE US TO THE LOWER LEVEL WHERE WE CAN RECOVER THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE.

OH, THERE IS NO *WAY* I'M GETTING INTO THAT MONSTROSITY!

**UPSY**

RACE: elevator  
CLASS: Your Lifting Friend  
\*PROFICIENCIES\*  
→ Getting you where you need to go  
→ Showing up when least expected  
→ Buckets and buckets of creepiness

AND NEITHER ARE YOU, LUCAS.

I'M TAKING YOU IN...

...NOW.















WELL, THIS DOESN'T SEEM VERY FAIR...

SORRY. NO CAN DO, FRIEND.

SCHEDULE IS ALREADY PRETTY TIGHT.

YOU SEE, I CAME HERE FOR SOMEBODY NAMED "LUCAS MILLER"...

YOU BUNCH ARE JUST... A BONUS.

YOU'RE RIGHT... WHY DON'T YOU JUST...GO BACK IN YOUR RIFT...UNTIL WE'RE ABLE TO DEFEND OURSELVES?

FASSHI!

### Soul LEDGER

+DESCRIPTION+

Ledger of life and death

+STATS+

keeps track of who's beefed it

WHAT THE SHIT?! IT'S THE... PAN IMITATOR... FROM BEFORE!

YOU BIG... FAKERTON! YOU...OWE ME... A LIMB!

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING, I'M NOT THE ONE WHO..."DIS-ARMED" YOU. I'M JUST MAKING USE OF THE MATERIALS AT...

...HAND.

KOFF

HEH.

SO, YOU'RE SORT OF... LIKE A FANTASY MACGYVER... COOL, COOL...

PINKY DOES HAVE A...GOOD POINT...HE DIDN'T...DEPRIVE ME OF MY...PRECIOUS, PRECIOUS ARM...

OH, GIMME A...BREAK...

YOU THREE...

...YOU'RE ON A ONE-WAY TRIP TO THE ASTRAL PLANE!













WAY TO GO, NOELLE!

YOU DID GREAT! NOW, THEN...

IT TOOK ME A WHILE TO LOCK IN ON THE ENERGY SIGNATURE—

...LET'S TAKE THIS ASSHOLE!

FINALLY! ROLL FOR INITIATIVE!



NO.



...NO...?

THIS IS DUMB.

LET ME TELL YOU WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN.



YOU'RE GONNA  
TRY AND KILL US WITH  
A BUNCH OF FLYING  
SHARP CRYSTAL  
MISSILES...

...BUT MAGS  
IS GONNA USE HIS  
SHIELD OF MEMORY  
RECALL OR WHATEVER  
TO PROTECT US.

MERLE WILL  
CONJURE UP A  
SACRED FLAME...

...PROMPTLY  
SETTING HIS  
NEW ARM  
ABLAZE.

HUMMMMM

FWASH!

YEAH,  
THAT SOUNDS  
RIGHT.

NOELLE AND  
CAREY WILL DO SOME  
KINDA TEAM-UP LASER  
KNIFE MANEUVER...

THIS IS  
SOUNDING GREAT  
SO FAR!

LAUNCH!

FLING!  
FLING!

...AND THEN I'LL  
CAST "TENTACLES  
OF DARKNESS" AND  
SHOUT OUT SOMETHING  
COOL LIKE:

I DON'T KNOW  
WHO YOU ARE,  
BUT I'M ABOUT  
TO TENTACLE  
YOUR DICK!!!

...OR SOMETHING  
COOLER. I DON'T  
KNOW. I'D NEED TO  
BE IN THE MOMENT.

BEEP!

BEEP!

BEEEEEEEEEP!!!

AND WE'LL ALL  
BE HAVING SUCH A  
FUN TIME WREAKING  
SENSELESS HAVOC  
THAT TIME WILL  
RUN OUT...



...THE PRETTY  
PINK LAB FALLS  
INTO THE SEA...

...AND  
EVERYBODY  
DIES!!

KRINKLE

TINKLE

FWAAASHH

SO HOW  
ABOUT WE  
TALK THIS  
OUT—

—YOU KNOW,  
LIKE FUCKING  
ADULTS—

—AND WORK  
TOGETHER TO SAVE  
THE WORLD?

VWIP!

....









CRASH!!

...IT'S KRAVITZ.

**KRAVITZ**  
RACE HUMAN  
CLASS REAPER  
+ PROFICIENCIES +  
→ Harvesting truant souls  
→ Making bad first impressions  
→ cleaning up nicely

CRINKLE TINKLE

...CHARMED.
















I'M A BOUNTY  
HUNTER FOR QUEEN  
MORIOR, THE GODDESS OF  
THE NATURAL ORDER OF  
LIFE AND DEATH.




WHEN A BEING'S  
SOUL DEPARTS THIS  
WORLD, IT PASSES  
INTO THE ASTRAL  
PLANE.

THE SOULS WHO...  
TAKE UMBRAGE WITH  
THAT ARRANGEMENT  
ARE SENTENCED  
TO RESIDE IN THE  
ETERNAL STOCKADE.




ANYONE ATTEMPTING TO  
ESCAPE THE STOCKADE, OR  
ANYONE SEEKING TO DISRUPT  
THE BARRIERS BETWEEN LIFE  
AND DEATH...IT'S MY JOB TO FIND  
THEM, AND PUNISH THEM.

AND, WOW,  
I HAVE TO  
TELL YOU...



...THIS  
LABORATORY IS A  
VERITABLE PIÑATA OF  
PUNISHMENT!



BUT...WHAT DID  
THE THREE OF US  
DO WRONG?

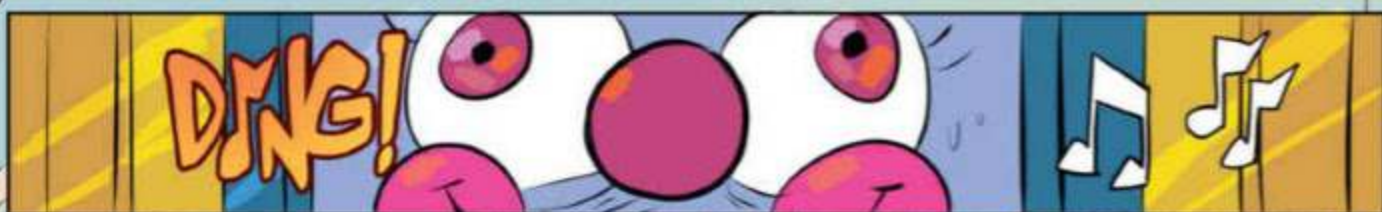
FOUR.

YOU  
THREE...



AND HER.





**ROBOT  
MANUFACTURING  
CENTER**

























NOT BAD,  
CLERIC.

BELIEVE ME,  
I'M JUST AS  
SURPRISED AS  
YOU ARE...



NOW...



I'LL TAKE IT  
FROM HERE.



SO,  
HOLD ON...



...THOSE WERE  
THE SOULS OF YOUR  
FORMER ARCHNESES?  
INSIDE OF ROBOTS?

CALLING JENKINS  
AN "ARCHNESES" IS  
GIVING HIM WAY TOO  
MUCH CREDIT, BUT THAT'S  
THE LONG AND  
SHORT OF IT.

KRANTZ

RACE ...SKELETON????  
CLASS REAPER.  
\*PROFICIENCIES\*  
→ bad third impressions







I REMEMBER NOW...

MY NAME IS NOELLE REDCHEEK. MY FAMILY RAN A CIDER PRESS OUT IN HOGSBOTTOM.

Noelle

RACE HALFLING  
CLASS CIDERIST  
+PROFICIENCIES+  
→ Apple Pressing  
→ Stem and seed removal  
→ Adorable donkey wrangling

THIS MAN CAME RUSHING DOWNSTAIRS, YELLING AT EVERYONE!

YOU ALL NEED TO HIDE IN THE STOCKROOM!

EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE OKAY!

I WAS WRAPPING UP A DELIVERY IN A NEARBY TOWN...

WHEN FROM OUTSIDE WE HEARD...SCREAMS!

FWOOSH

RRUMBLE

FLASH





THE WHOLE  
WORLD GOT  
BURNED UP.











YES...  
FOR NOW.



WE ARE PART OF  
A...*GROUP* TRYING TO  
KEEP CATASTROPHES  
LIKE WHAT OCCURRED  
IN HAVERDALE FROM  
OCCURRING AGAIN.



WE HAVE A  
PRETTY GOOD  
SUCCESS RATE...

...IF YOU DON'T  
COUNT *THAT* ONE...  
WHICH WE CAN ALL  
AGREE WAS A WORLD-  
CLASS BONER.



WHAT HAPPENED  
IN HAVERDALE...IT WAS  
TERRIBLE. BUT IF WE DON'T  
STOP LUCAS, IT'S GONNA  
BE THE WHOLE PLANET  
TURNED INTO SOMETHING  
SHINY AND DEAD.

AND YEAH,  
SAYING IT OUT LOUD,  
I REALIZE IT'S KIND OF A  
LEITMOTIF WITH US.



YOU CAN HELP  
SAVE THE WORLD,  
NOELLE.



OKAY.

KWAASHH!!



WASH!

HAMMMMMM!!!

SH-KLIK!

KLUNK!

HELL YEAH,  
VOLTRON!

TOSS!

CATCH!!!

MRMMMMM

Noelle  
RACE GHOST BOT  
CLASS BATTLE BOT  
+PROFICIENCIES+  
→ weapon bristling  
→ ass-whupping  
→ More than  
meets the eye

HERO  
TIME!

CH-CHACK



# Chapter

# 7









LOOK AT US! SEVEN  
BRAVE COMPANIONS!  
ONCE AGAIN CHARGING  
INTO CERTAIN DEATH TO  
RECOVER ANOTHER...  
THING!

WE SHALL BE  
KNOWN AS... "THE  
FELLOWSHIP OF  
THE THING!"

THERE'S  
SIX OF US...



"CERTAIN  
DEATH"...HUH...  
THAT'S FUNNY.

YEAH, I  
WAS GONNA SAY  
SOMETHING HOKEY  
LIKE "DEATH IS  
OUR CONSTANT  
COMPANION"...

...BUT THAT'S  
PROBABLY NOT  
POSSIBLE...



...OR  
IS IT?



...



AHEM!  
I'D SAY WHERE  
YOU THREE ARE  
CONCERNED...

...IT'S  
DEFINITELY  
POSSIBLE.



OOH, CHECKING  
OUT MY PROFILE?  
DON'T JUDGE THE PIC,  
I'M OVERDUE FOR  
NEW HEADSHOTS.

IT'S...  
SOMETHING  
LIKE THAT.

IS THERE AN  
ABOUT THE AUTHOR  
SECTION? YOU'VE GOT  
ME AT A BIT OF AN  
INFORMATIONAL  
DISADVANTAGE.

HA.  
I'M AFRAID I  
DIDN'T WRITE THE  
SOUL LEDGER.

THOUGH, I SUPPOSE  
I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR  
KEEPING IT UP TO DATE,  
AS IT WERE.

WITH THE  
REAPING,  
YES.

OH,  
WITH ALL THE  
REAPING?

SNAP!

SOUNDS  
EXHAUSTING!

SAYS THE  
ELF ABOARD  
THE FLOATING,  
HAUNTED  
DEATH LAB.

THIS?  
PLEASE. I EAT  
APOCALYPSES  
LIKE THIS FOR  
BREAKFAST.

ACTUALLY, I EAT  
GRAPEFRUIT FOR  
BREAKFAST MOST  
MORNINGS.

IT'S GOT  
ANTIOXIDANTS  
FOR DAYS.

I'M MORE OF  
AN OATMEAL GUY.

WOOF,  
REALLY?

WOW.

SORRY,  
KRAVITZ. LOOKS  
LIKE IT WASN'T  
MEANT TO BE.

WE'RE  
HERE, Y'ALL...

NO...

\*DER  
INVENTING  
ROOM\*?





...THE MAIN  
EXPERIMENTAL  
LAB.

THIS  
CERTAINLY  
LOOKS LIKE THE  
TYPE OF ROOM  
WHERE A CLIMACTIC  
FINAL BATTLE  
MIGHT OCCUR!

# MAIN EXPERIMENTAL LAB



LUCAS SURE  
LEANS INTO THE  
"GIANT CRYSTAL  
MIRROR" MOTIF.

I HOPE HE  
BUYS THEM  
IN BULK.



BUT WHAT  
PLANE DOES THIS  
ONE SHOW?

THE  
ASTRAL  
PLANE...



...MY  
HOME.



WHAT WAS  
HE TRYING—

**WHANG!**

SHIT!



**WHANNG!**

SHIT!













MY MOTHER WAS  
ON THE VERGE OF A  
SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH,  
THE LIKES OF WHICH THIS  
PLANARVERSE HAS  
NEVER SEEN!



TELL ME  
WHAT HAPPENED,  
LUCAS.



**MAUREEN  
MILLER**  
RACE HUMAN  
CLASS VISIONARY  
+PROFICIENCIES+  
+ scientific breakthroughs  
+ Multiversal pioneering  
+ single parenting



WELL,  
MOTHER.

UPON INITIAL  
OBSERVATION, IT WOULD  
APPEAR THE SPECIMEN IS  
RAPIDLY LOSING RIGIDITY,  
LIKELY AS A RESULT OF  
DETERIORATED HYDROSTATIC  
PRESSURE.



YOU  
FORGOT TO  
WATER IT.

I FORGOT  
TO WATER IT.













IF SOMETHING  
SHOULD GO WRONG  
IN HERE TODAY...



YOU TAKE  
THAT STONE  
TO LUCRETIA.

YOU  
APOLOGIZE.

AND  
YOU SEE IT  
DESTROYED.

WUMMMMM  
HUMMMMM  
SPINNN

FWOOM



OH...



BANG!

...IT'S...

BANG!



...IT'S  
BEAUTIFUL.

HUMMMMM

HUMMMMM





FWUMMMMM





OUR CALCULATIONS  
WERE PERFECT. THE  
COSMOSCOPE PARTED  
THE VEIL BETWEEN  
REALITIES, AND MY MOM  
PEEKED THROUGH.

TMP  
TMP  
TMP

AND...  
WHATEVER  
SHE SAW...

SHE EXPERIENCED  
A SUDDEN INTRACRANIAL  
HEMORRHAGE.


MY MOM SPENT  
HER LIFE SEARCHING  
FOR THE ANSWER TO  
A SINGLE QUESTION:  
WHAT WORLDS LIE  
BEYOND OUR OWN?

AND IN THE  
MOMENT SHE FOUND  
HER ANSWER, SHE  
WAS KILLED.

IT  
WASN'T  
FAIR.

SO I DECIDED TO DO  
SOMETHING ABOUT IT.





I'M NOT A  
BRILLIANT PHYSICIST  
LIKE MY MOTHER. BUT  
I KNOW A THING OR  
TWO ABOUT ROBOTS.

AFTER DELVING INTO  
SOME QUESTIONABLE  
READING ON THE  
SUBJECTS OF  
ASTRAL ENERGY  
SIGNATURES AND—

☠️ **NECROMANCY.**

...YES. I DEvised  
A DEVICE CAPABLE OF  
STORING A...WELL, A SOUL.  
AND GIVING IT AGENCY  
OVER A ROBOTIC BODY.

ALL I NEEDED WAS  
A WAY TO LOCATE AND  
RETRIEVE HER ASTRAL ENERGY  
FROM THE ASTRAL PLANE.  
A SIPHON, IF YOU WILL.

YOU MUST  
UNDERSTAND, THERE  
WERE NO TEXTS TO AID  
ME IN THIS ENDEAVOR.

EXPERIMENTATION  
WITHOUT PRIOR RESEARCH  
TO LEAN ON REQUIRES...  
RIGOROUS TRIALS.

SO, AFTER I FINISHED  
MY WORK ON THE SIPHON,  
I TESTED IT...

**SIPHON**  
+DESCRIPTION+  
SPOOKY GHOST  
funnel  
+STATS+  
retrieves souls from  
the astral plane

























NO WAY!

I MAY HAVE  
DIPPED MY TOES  
IN THE ETHEREAL  
POOL A COUPLE  
OF TIMES—



CUT THE  
GOOFS!

THE BOOK SAYS  
YOU'VE DIED EIGHT  
TIMES AND CHECKED  
INTO THE ASTRAL  
PLANE EXACTLY  
ZERO TIMES!



MAGNUS  
BURNSIDES...  
YOU'VE DIED...

...NINETEEN  
TIMES!



THAT  
DOESN'T  
SOUND  
RIGHT!

AND AGAIN:  
**ZERO** TRIPS TO THE  
ASTRAL PLANE.

I THINK I'D  
REMEMBER  
THAT!!



AND FINALLY  
YOU, MERLE FUCKIN'  
HIGHCHURCH...

HEY! HOW'D  
YOU GUESS MY  
MIDDLE NAME?

CARE TO WAGER A  
GUESS AS TO HOW  
MANY TIMES YOU  
HAVE DIED?

WELL,  
LET'S SEE...

YOU HAVE  
DIED **FIFTY-  
SEVEN TIMES!**

**FIFTY-SEVEN!!**

**FIFTY-  
SEHHH-VEHHNNN!!!**

DON'T  
LOOK AT ME,  
MERLE! I DON'T  
KNOW WHAT  
HE'S TALKING  
ABOUT!

BUT YOU  
MIGHT WANT TO  
TAKE A PEEK AT  
METAL MAMA  
OVER THERE...

THAT'S  
GOTTA BE A TYPO,  
MY MAN!

JUST SMELL  
ME! COULD ANY  
OCTUPLE DEAD  
GUY SMELL  
THIS GOOD?

GREAT  
QUESTION!

I'VE BEEN  
WRESTLING  
WITH THAT  
MYSELF!!













YOU  
KNOW  
WHAT?

NOTHING.  
NEVER MIND.

SHRUG!



CAREY! PLEASE!  
YOU CAN'T LET HIM  
TAKE ME!

OHhh,  
I AM SO  
TEMPTED...



BUT...NO!

HE'S NOT  
TAKING ANY  
OF US!



THAT'S  
ENOUGH!!



I WANT  
YOUR  
ANSWER!!

ARE YOU GOING  
TO COME WITH  
ME PEACEFULLY  
OR NOT?



THE  
ANSWERRRR...

...TO WHETHER  
OR NOTTTT...

...WE'RE  
COMING WITH YOU,  
ISSSSSS...

WOMMMM













KEPT FROM OUR  
CHILDREN, LOVERS, FRIENDS

SUBJECT TO LAWS  
WE DID NOT MAKE

THIS IS WHERE SEPARATION ENDS

AND SOULS OF THE  
LOST WILL COME AWAKE

ENTER THIS  
CRYSTAL KINGDOM

OH, SHIT.

SON  
OF A...

PAN  
DAMMIT...

ZHHMM

MMHSH!

ENTER...

...THIS...





...CRYSTAL  
KINGDOM.






# Chapter 8









DR.  
MAUREEN  
MILLER.

YOUR RELUCTANT  
ROLE IN OUR EXODUS  
IS FULFILLED.

YOUR FORM  
WAS THE UNWILLING  
VESSEL THAT HOUSED  
OUR...MULTITUDE.

WE HONOR  
OUR PART OF THE  
ARRANGEMENT...YOU  
ARE RELEASED.

LIVING ONES!  
WE ARE...LEGION!

JOIN  
US IN OUR  
CAUSE!

PERMIT US  
ENTRY INTO THIS  
WORLD SO THAT WE  
MAY TEAR DOWN THE  
BARRIERS BETWEEN  
LIFE AND DEATH!

**LEGION**

RACE AN ENORMOUS  
TANGLE OF GHOSTS  
CLASS UNDEAD HIVE MIND  
+ PROSCIENCIES+  
+ robot manipulation  
+ escaping otherworldly  
prisons

Woooooooo

COULD YOU  
BE A PAL AND  
GIVE US JUST  
A SECOND?





UHHP...

WE...  
SUPPOSE...?

MERLE!  
MAGNUS!

HUDDLE  
UP!

OKAY, SO THAT'S  
A LOT OF DEAD PEOPLE,  
RIGHT? AND ODDS ARE,  
WE PROBABLY PUT A  
WHOLE BUNCH OF THEM  
IN THERE...

AND...THEY'RE  
PROBABLY PRETTY  
SORE ABOUT IT.



I SEE  
WHAT YOU'RE  
SAYING...

...WE'RE NOT  
GONNA GET VERY  
GOOD TREATMENT  
AT THE HANDS OF A  
BUNCH OF PEOPLE  
WE OFFED.

OOF,  
YEAH...



...SOME  
OF THEM  
TWICE!

HHWOOOooooo



WILL YOU  
JOIN US IN OUR  
CAUSE TO MERGE  
OUR WORLDS?!

WILL YOU  
REUNITE THE  
WORLDS OF THE  
LIVING AND  
DEAD?

WE'RE  
GONNA HAVE  
TO GO WITH...

NO.

BUT IF  
YOU HAVE ANY  
PAMPHLETS  
YOU WANT TO  
LEAVE...

AND WE  
REALLY APPRECIATE  
YOU ASKING FIRST.  
THAT SHOWS REALLY  
GOOD MANNERS ON  
YOUR PART!

...

ONE WAY  
OR ANOTHER...

...YOU WILL  
JOIN US!!

HHUMMMM

WHOOOM!

WHAM!

KWASH!!

WHAM!







NOELLE, IS IT WEIRD TO ASK YOU TO KICK A FELLOW ROBOT'S ASS?

WE'RE WAY PAST WEIRD, SUGAR.

YOU THREE TAKE CARE OF THE GIANT GHOST-Y THING!

COOL.

LUCAS! GET YOUR ROBOT MOM TO CHILL THE FUCK OUT!!

YES, MA'AM!

SCWHING! NOW... SCWHING!

...LET'S LIGHT 'EM UP!

FLING!

WOWWWWWWWW!!!





**CHUNK!**

I REALIZE  
IN A COUPLE OF  
SECONDS WE'RE GOING  
TO HAVE TO FIGHT THE  
GHOST THING...



**CHOOM!  
CHAM!  
CHOAM!**

BUT CAN  
I JUST SAY...



THEY ARE *WAY*  
MORE CAPABLE  
THAN WE ARE!

THAT'S NOT  
REALLY NEW  
INFORMATION,  
MAGS.

**CHOMM!!**

**STAB!  
STAB!**

I'M SO  
GLAD WE'RE  
HERE TO SEE  
THIS.

















YOU WANT  
TO TAKE A TURN,  
T-MAN?



GET BACK  
TO ME IN A  
MINUTE...

OHH...  
OKAY...

UHH,  
GANG...?



...I HAVE A  
PROBLEM...?



LUCAS!!





Y'ALL/ LUCAS  
AIN'T BREATHIN'! AND  
I SWAPPED MY MED  
GEAR FOR BALLISTIC  
WEAPONRY!

THE FLOOR  
IS YOURS.

REAL QUICK:  
HAVE WE FOUND ANY  
MAGICAL EARPLUGS  
THROUGHOUT OUR  
JOURNEY?

NOT TO MY  
KNOWLEDGE.

OKAY...  
I'M READY.

THAT'S  
TOO BAD.

BECAUSE  
THIS IS GOING  
TO BE LOUD  
AS *FUCK*.

Y'WUUMMM



The SHATTERING

+DESCRIPTION+  
POWERFUL  
CONCUSSIVE FORCE

WHOOOMASSH!

SHINKLE!  
TINKLE!

CRASH!

SHHHHAAA

SIAM!



















ENOUGH!

OUR  
ASCENSION  
WILL NOT BE  
DELAYED!

WBOOM!

SORRY...

SO SORRY  
TO INTERRUPT.  
QUICK QUESTION,  
LUCAS...

...IF I SMASH  
THAT MIRROR THING,  
WILL LEGION GO  
AWAY?

IN...  
THEORY?

THE MIRROR HAS  
TO BE IN PERFECT  
SHAPE TO MAINTAIN  
ITS CONNECTION  
TO THE—

HEY, BUDDY,  
REMEMBER THAT  
MIRROR COVERED  
IN GOO FROM  
BEFORE?

HOW'S  
ABOUT WE TAKE  
ANOTHER SHOT  
AT IT...

TMP

TMP  
TMP







YOU WILL  
BE THE FIRST  
TO JOIN US...

...IN DEATH!!



I DON'T  
SUPPOSE...  
I GET A  
VOTE?

SNATCH!!

PAD  
PADD  
PAD!



FWUMMMM

YOU DO  
NOT!







KRONSHIT!

SKIIIIID!



BAM!

SO, HOW'S YOUR DAY?

I'VE HAD BETTER, YOU?

NOT BAD, MIGHT HAVE MET SOMEONE!

THAT'S NICE.

YEAH, THOUGH HE SEEMS A LITTLE OBSESSED WITH HIS WORK.

BAM!  
BAM!  
BAM!



YOU KNOW, I COULD SO GET YOU GUYS OUT OF THIS MESS!

YOU COULD JUST USE ME TO TURN THAT MIRROR INTO AIR OR A GIANT PIECE OF CANDY!

MAAAA, WOULDN'T THAT BE GREAT? CAN-DY??



WHAM!

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

IGNORE THE PEBBLE. WE'LL BE DISINTEGRATING IT SOON ENOUGH.





DO SOMETHING!!

MERLE!!!

U.P!

HEY, PAN, IF YOU'RE THERE...

I'VE BEEN HAVING A REALLY ROUGH CAMPAIGN HERE...

...I'VE HAD GOLEMS TRYING TO KILL ME EVERY TIME I TURN AROUND... GOT MY ARM CHOPPED OFF...

...FOR A MOMENT, I EVEN... HAD DOUBTS ABOUT... YOU...





BUT...THAT  
MOMENT HAS  
PASSED.

I CHOOSE  
TO BELIEVE THAT  
YOU'RE STILL THERE,  
STILL LISTENING  
TO ME...

...AND THAT  
YOU'RE NOT A  
BIG FAT LIAR.

**BAM!**

**BAM!**

!!

**BAM!!**



SO  
WHADDDAYA  
SAY...



...L'L  
HELP  
HERE?



HHMMMM



WOOOOO





SHIAAAAA

IS THAT...  
YOU?

SHIAAA

WHUMM

THANK  
YOU...

...FOR THIS  
BOUNTY THEY  
ARE ABOUT  
TO RECEIVE!!

WAMMMMM

WUMMMMM

**BANISH**  
+ DESCRIPTION +  
obliterates the  
otherworldly



SKRSHKK!

NO-O-O-O-O!!

KRRSHHH!

CRASH!  
CRUMBLE!

SHAAAAA

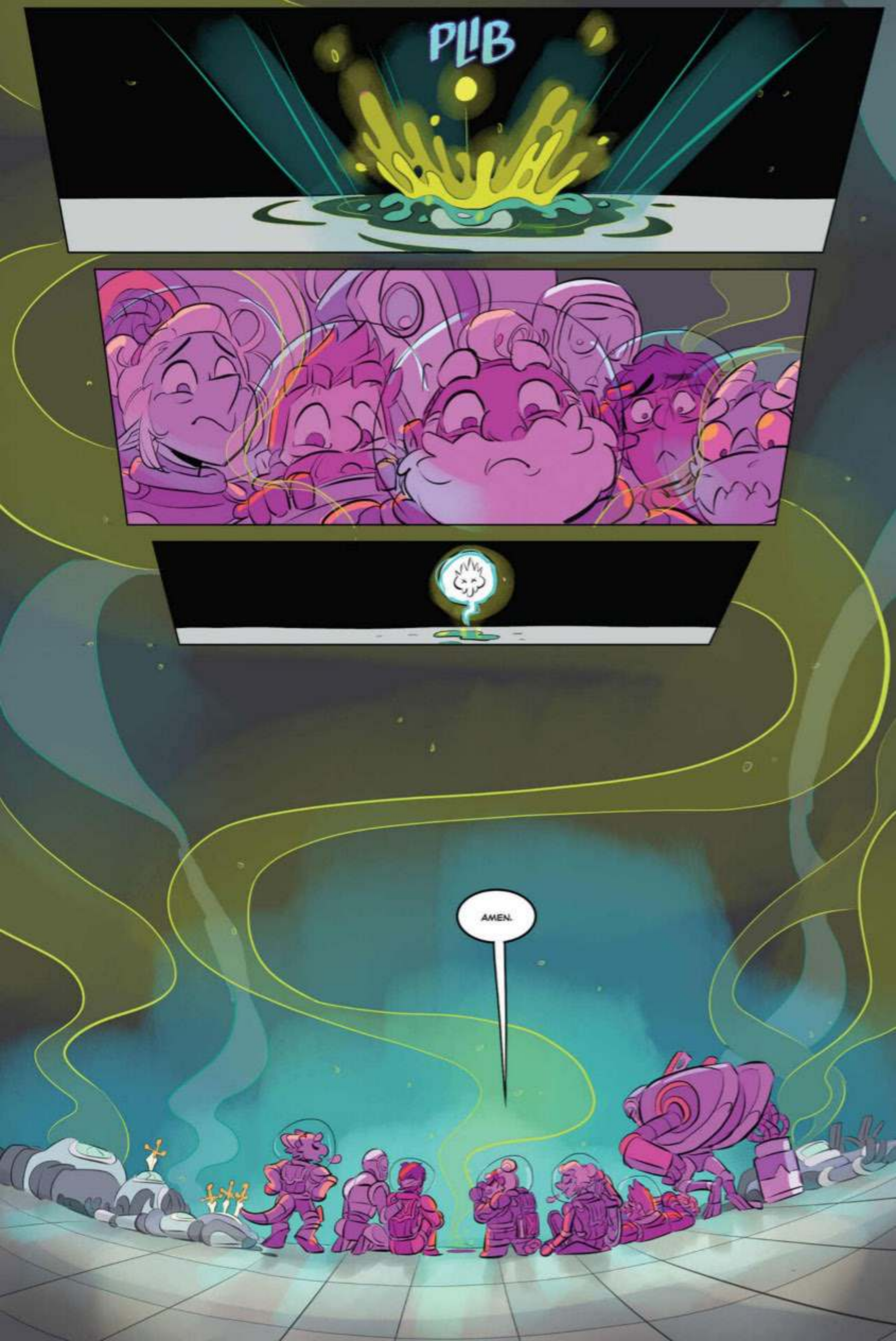
CLUNK!  
WHUNK!

WASH!

VWUMP!

VWUUMMM





PLIB

AMEN.









# Chapter 9













FUCKING GHOSTS...



YOU ALL RIGHT, TAAKO?

WELL, I DIDN'T GET GRABBED BY A GIANT HAND AND SLAMMED AROUND AND DRAGGED THROUGH A MIRROR, SO...



COMPARATIVELY, I'M GREAT.

heh

I'M OKAY, TOO!

ME! MAGNUS!



I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU DID IT, BUT YOU SURE SAVED MY BACON!

IF LEGION HAD OPENED A PERMANENT PORTAL CONNECTING THE ASTRAL PLANE WITH THIS ONE...

...IT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE APOCALYPSE FOR BOTH OF OUR WORLDS.



AND A *REAL* BAD STEP IN MY CAREER TRAJECTORY.

I FEEL LIKE I OWE YOU...









LUCAS,  
YOU'VE TECHNICALLY  
NEVER DIED...

...BUT MY FIRM  
TAKES A DIM VIEW  
OF NECROMANCY,  
WHICH YOU WERE  
DEFINITELY  
PRACTICING!



AND YOU  
TWO...YOU'RE  
BOTH ESCAPED  
SPIRITS.

I HAVE TO  
TAKE YOU BACK  
TO THE ASTRAL  
PLANE.



KRAVITZ,  
IS IT?

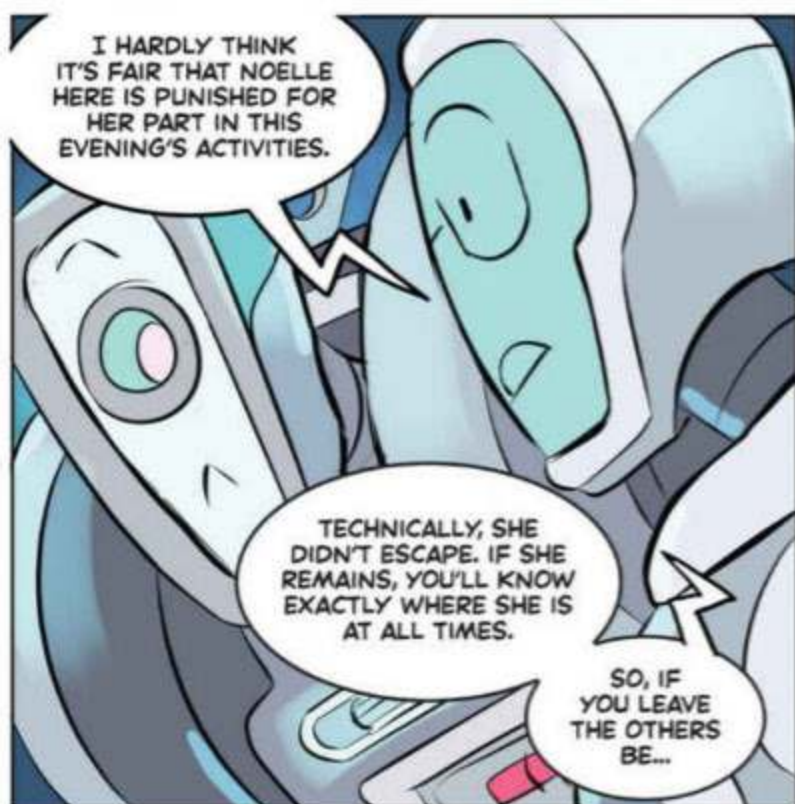
IF I  
MAY.



THE SIPHON HAS  
BEEN DESTROYED. I'M  
PRETTY CERTAIN MY  
SON ISN'T LOOKING TO  
CAUSE ANY MORE  
TROUBLE.

RIGHT,  
DEAR?

YES,  
MA'AM.



I HARDLY THINK  
IT'S FAIR THAT NOELLE  
HERE IS PUNISHED FOR  
HER PART IN THIS  
EVENING'S ACTIVITIES.

TECHNICALLY, SHE  
DIDN'T ESCAPE. IF SHE  
REMAINS, YOU'LL KNOW  
EXACTLY WHERE SHE IS  
AT ALL TIMES.

SO, IF  
YOU LEAVE  
THE OTHERS  
BE...



...I'LL TAKE  
RESPONSIBILITY  
FOR EVERYTHING  
THAT HAPPENED,  
AND RETURN WITH  
YOU OF MY OWN  
FREE WILL.

NO!

































POP!



















SO, LET  
ME GET THIS  
STRAIGHT.

YOU'RE  
SAYING LUCAS  
ESCAPED...

...ON A  
ROCKET?

A ROCKET  
SHAPED LIKE HIS  
OWN HEAD, YES.  
CORRECT.

WE WERE JUST  
ABOUT TO ARREST  
HIM, AND HE PULLED  
OUT HIS GRAPPLING  
HOOK, AND—

AND HE DRANK A  
POTION THAT TURNED  
HIM INVISIBLE! SO  
THERE'S NO POINT  
LOOKING FOR HIM!

OOH,  
THAT'S GOOD.

WHAT  
HE SAID.

AND YOU  
WITNESSED THIS,  
FANGBATTLE?

YES, MA'AM.  
I WITNESSED...  
THAT.

















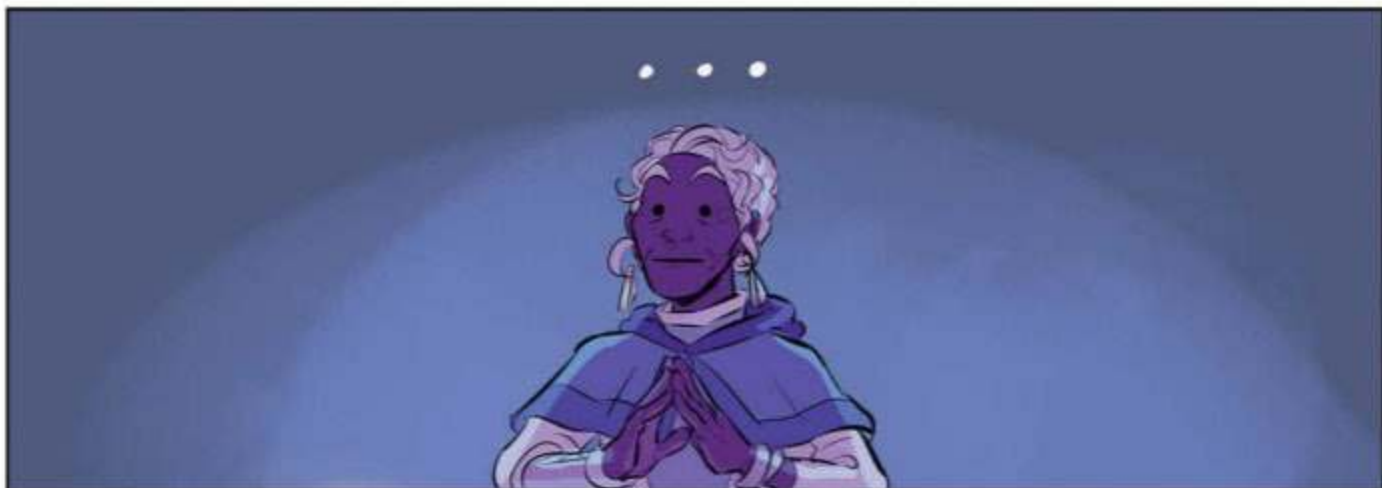




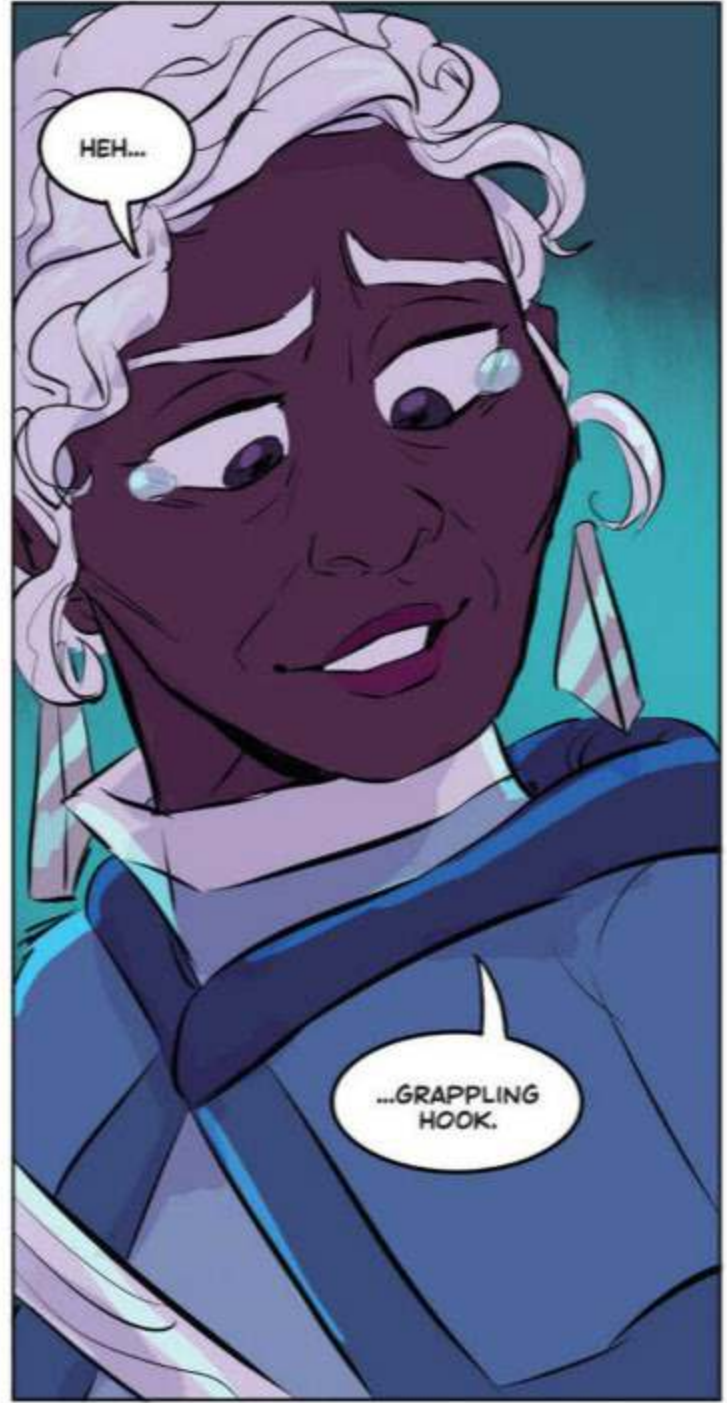












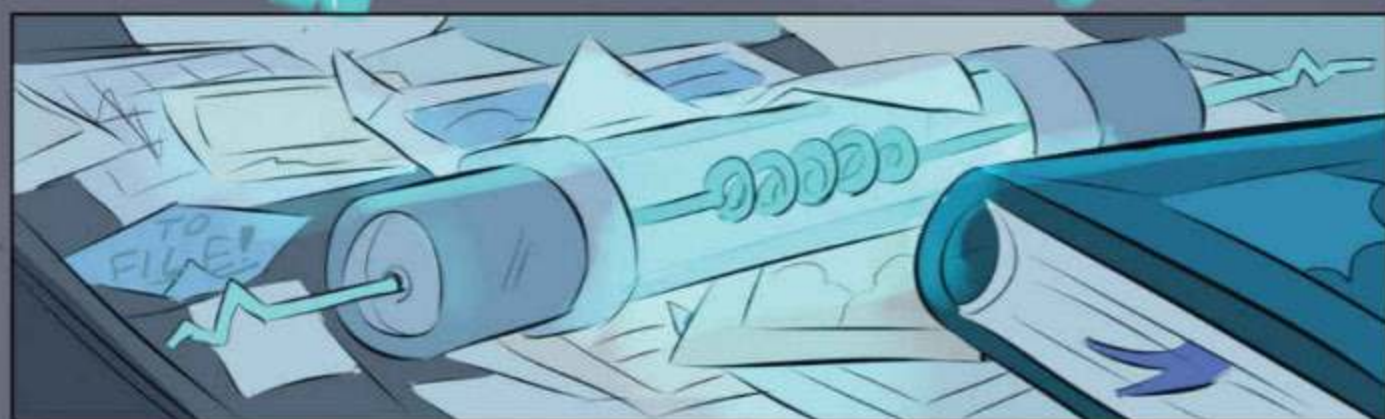








I SAW ALL OF EXISTENCE...



...ALL AT ONCE.



I SAW A DARK STORM—  
A LIVING HUNGER—  
EATING IT FROM WITHIN.



AND I SAW A BRIGHT LIGHT FLYING  
TIRELESSLY AWAY FROM THIS STORM.



THIS LIGHT WAS  
HERALDED BY SEVEN BIRDS.





THE TWINS.

THE LOVER.

THE  
PROTECTOR.





THE LONELY  
JOURNAL-KEEPER.

THE PEACEMAKER.

AND, THE  
WORDLESS  
ONE.









The ADVENTURE CONTINUES in

# THE ADVENTURE ZONE

The Eleventh  
Hour

Coming Soon!



# Making a Page: Script to Final

A peek into the process with artist and co-adaptor, Carey Pietsch!

PAGE THIRTY-TWO  
PANEL ONE - MERLE and TAAKO look  
amazement.  
GRIFFIN INSERT: GRIFFIN quickly if  
a TAZ TRANSCRIPT.  
GRIFFIN: I MEAN...IT'S AN OP  
MAGNUS: SOMETIMES MAC  
OUT!

PANEL TWO - MAGNUS and  
him. GOLEM also begins pur  
back at him.

TAAKO: WHAT ABOUT  
ANGULAR?  
MAGNUS: OH, HE'S

PANEL THREE - The  
enough to GUARDIA  
radiant sword out of

PAGE THIRTY-THREE

PANEL ONE - GUARDIAN stabs the GOLEM  
right in the chest, doing tremendous damage.  
GOLEM shrieks

SFX: SKRASSHHMM!!!

GOLEM: SHRRREEEEEEEEEE!!!!!!

PANEL TWO - Heavily damaged GOLEM  
crashes to the ground. As it falls, the globe of  
light flies out of it

SFX: HUMSSSHZZZ

SFX: CRRRAANSHHH!!!

PANEL THREE - BALL of light escapes into a rift.  
SFX: HUMSHZ--

PANEL FOUR - GUARDIAN sheathes her sword  
and starts to vanish.

MERLE: LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE JUST GOT  
TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL--

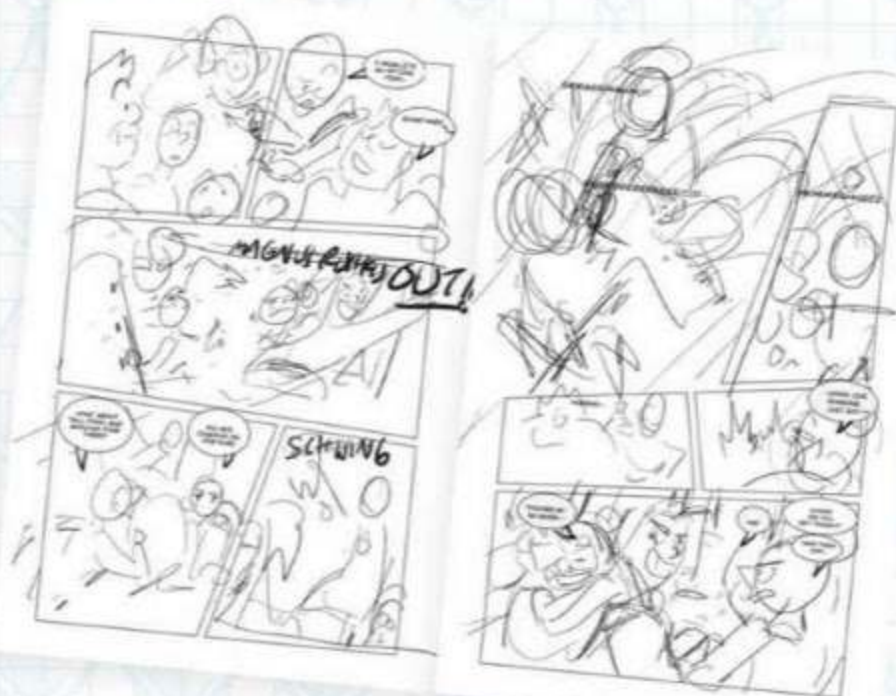
## Scripts

By the time the script is set and I'm ready to start drawing, I'm very excited to go! At that point, we've all been talking about the outline, script, and overall story for months, and I've gone back and relistened to the relevant chunk of the podcast so the flavor we're all working to translate to the graphic novel is fresh in my mind. There's a lot of information in there—cadence, tone, music—that's a huge help in figuring out details like character acting on the page.

## Layouts

I'm usually the only person who ever sees these, so enjoy! They have a lot of really wonderful energy and are essential to the process, but they also use shorthands that are by and large illegible to anybody else.

Layouts are like an outline for the artwork! This is the point where I try to make all the biggest decisions about how to pace the action. It's also where I try to think through the composition of the page/spread as a whole as well as the general shapes of each individual panel...but I'm not fussed about little things like...uh, well, pretty much anything else quite yet.



## Thumbnails

This is the first step I actually pass back to the rest of the team so we can all review it and talk about notes, changes, and fixes!

You can see my note calling out the balloon I added as a placeholder—I wanted to check in with the team about whether it might work to add a beat there that required more text.

This is where we're talking about big gestural actions and body language, checking whether the action is clear, if there are places where I need to add another panel or beat to flesh things out... Looking at this spread now, six months later, I wish I had given the angel a different pose in the last panel on the left-hand page to really sell a stab, not a slash... live and learn!! We'll get it next time.







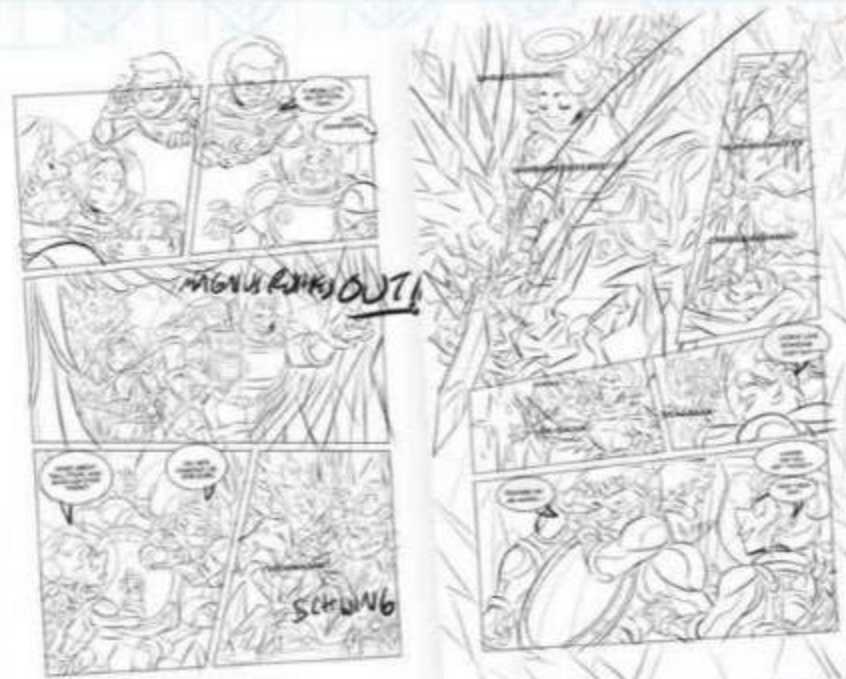
## Pencils

OK, NOW we're talking—this is the first place where expressions oughta be legible and we can all give it another read as a team to make sure the beat-to-beat transitions are working! This is a rare instance of using color in pencils—there were just too many lines to parse what was happening otherwise.

## Inks

ONE LAST PASS on the lines to clean things up! At this stage I'm making decisions about tiny expression tweaks to really sell an emotion, plus how line weights can help emphasize volume and spatial relationships.

Once inks are done, I hand them off to our letterer, Tess Stone (one of my favorite cartoonists!)—it's always such a treat to see his final lettering on the page at the next step!



## Colors

A big challenge in this book was figuring out a visual language for coloring the crystal environments & the crystal golem. I didn't want to have them competing too strongly for your attention, so there's a little more detail and layering going on with the golem—he's more important, and ideally the thing you're spending more time "reading."

And that's it!! Wow! Repeat for 217 more pages and you have a book!! I love getting to work on these pages, but my favorite part is absolutely when I finish a stage and get to send it around for all of us to talk about and polish—it's a really wonderful collaboration to get to be a part of.



# Designing the Cover (Carey continues!)

Once we have a script and the artwork is well underway, it's time to figure out what the cover will look like!

1. **Layouts:** I start by doing a bunch of layout drafts on my own. At this point, the look of the series covers is pretty established, with the main trio in a loosely central composition—I try to rotate which of them gets to be in the center, and Merle seemed a natural fit for this book for uh, spoiler reasons, in case you've flipped to the back to read these pages first. I worked up a big list of visual elements that might be a good fit to set the tone on the cover: cosmoscope mirror, crystals, horrible skeleton, crystal golem, unsettling angle, reaching for the die.

2. **Thumbnails:** After I've made a couple pages' worth of layouts and slept on it, it's time to winnow the field down to my faves, do a quick clean-up pass, and send those thumbs in! I have finally learned not to share any thumbs that I'm not genuinely excited about executing because, inevitably, someone else will think the ones I'm not into are the best options, and I will complain, and then none of us will be happy.

So these are the three thumbnails I sent! I think they all have really strong shapes! The one we went with has the clearest Merle silhouette, but I do really like the off-balance angle of the center thumbnail... Look forward to me trying to find a way to reuse it in a future book.

3. **Pencils with Tones:** Once we've picked a thumbnail to move forward with, I clean it up into pencils & tones to be brought to a cover meeting for (hopefully) official internal approval! The tones are a big help in making these rough drawings legible. (You can see that I still had a floating crystal golem skull as a compositional element up top at this stage. I ended up deciding that didn't work and replacing it with more crystals in inks.)

4. **Inks:** I ended up moving the characters around a tiny bit to try to eliminate some tangents with the title... thrilling stuff.

5. **Color Rough:** While I'm picking away at inks, I'm also picking away at a color rough based on my pencils! I paint this at a pretty tiny size to try to avoid overworking it; the goal is to give myself a plan that I can execute in final colors.







6. **Flats:** A pleasantly chill and meditative step! I really liked the flats on their own, which is a good sign. I'm big on lighting as a way to heighten drama and emotion, rather than as a literal reflection of what lighting would "actually" look like, so I've been working hard to try to make palettes that work as flat colors to give me more leeway there.



7. **Finals:** Several days of off-and-on crystal painting later, here they are!! Every cover is my favorite when I finish it, and this one is no exception. Spooky tone, vague skull shape in the lighter colors of the background elements if you squint, rock candy pink crystals, a mysterious mirror... What's not to love???

Special **SNEAK PEEK** of rejected\* covers for earlier books in the series!



\* These are less "rejected covers" and more "fanart covers I made for a nonexistent GN packaging rebrand to keep myself sane while wrestling with actual cover layouts." It is a long process with a lot of idea iteration, and WE GOTTA MAKE TIME TO HAVE FUN. Very excited to finally be at the book where it makes sense to include these as a back matter treat! Maybe someday First Second will want to do an "Oops! All Romance Covers Edition" for the books as a super secret boxed set... I live in hope.



# Visual Development (Carey concludes!)

**Overall Notes on Designs:** Before I dive into drawing the actual book, we all talk as a team about designs! I start out with a very loose but legible pass that I send around so we can all collectively figure out what's working and what needs tweaks and fixes. I tend to work really small at this stage, as it helps me not be precious about changes— I want to be as flexible as possible so we can land on designs that we all agree on!



**Main Trio Null Suits:** I loved the all-red-null-suit-squad bit from the podcast, but it absolutely did not work on the page. RIP. All the important null suit life support is packed into the Fantasy (sci-fi) Backpack... Don't worry about it!!!

**Main Trio Alt Outfits:** I want Merle's panpipe candlelights sweater and Magnus' dog pj's. Merle is constantly wearing his slippies of haste, and his BoB onesie is a nod to a bit from the Rockport arc in the podcast. Was Taako's book one outfit pj's all along? Maybe!!!!



**Crystal Kingdom NPCs:** Shamefully, I didn't even pick a null suit color for Boyland... Sorry, Boyland, you were taken from us too soon.





**Kravitz:** HE'S HERE! Very fun to come up with a multistage look for him with different levels of spookiness. Also a fun challenge to try to translate his acting between different forms, crystal golem and all!

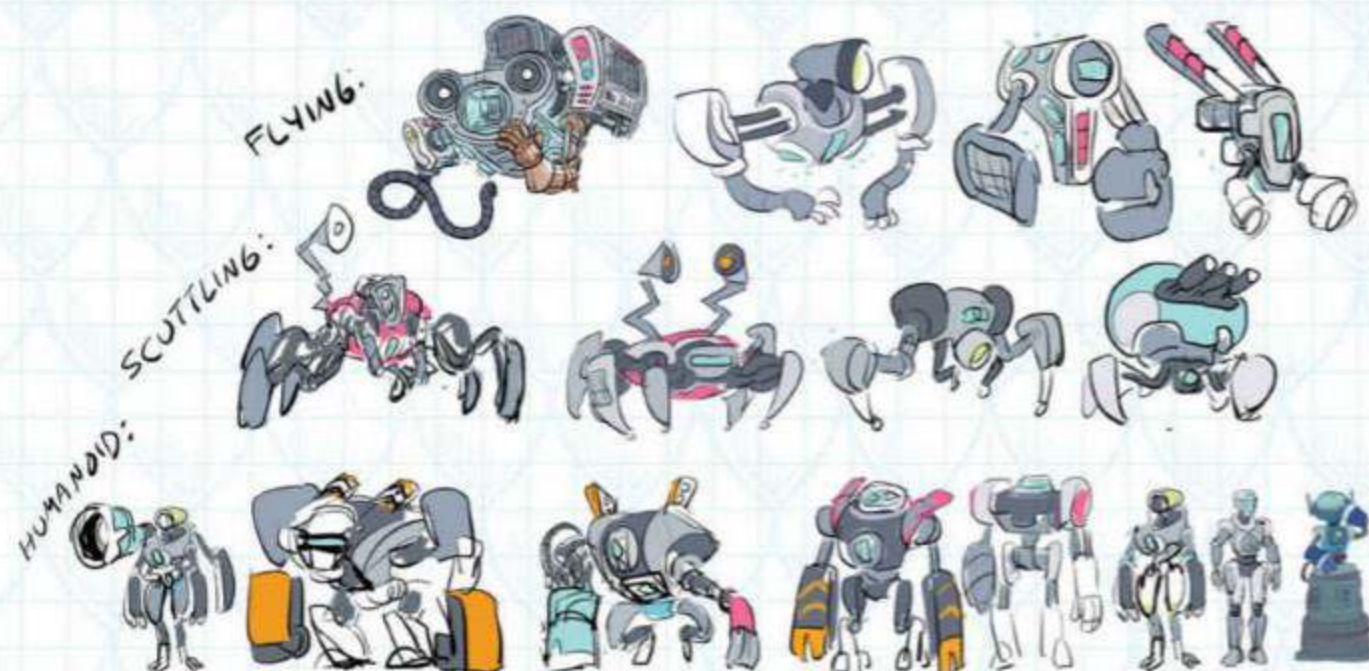
**The Scythe:** I think the file name for this one was "hottopicgothbird.psd"—lots of bearded vulture motifs going on with Queen Morior-adjacent designs.

**Hodge-Podge:** I made Hodge-Podge's design too cute and then immediately felt bad about the ending of that scene. SORRY!!



**Legion:** Gross, drippy, A++ would draw again.

**Bot Math:** I had to kind of reverse engineer designs for the robot rematch trio from a final design for Big Noelle... Fun math problem!



**Misc Bots:** The central aesthetic for these was vaguely: You know those translucent iMacs that were extremely round and chunky and huggable? Like that, but also it could kill you.





**Compact:** I want this compact... I made the reflections look a little too much like the Girl Scouts logo and so I also want a cookie every time I look at it.

**Siphon:** The siphon is meant to visually echo Killian's MillerTech robo-animator from way back in *Gerblins*!

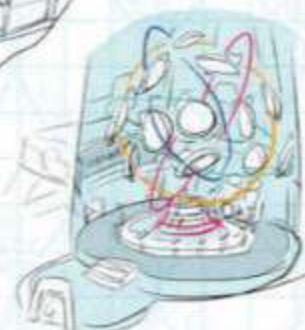
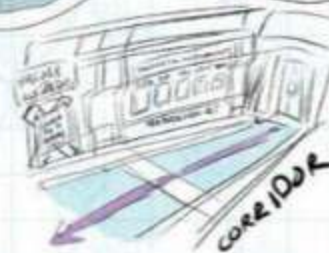
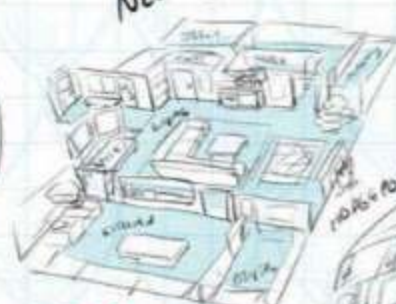
**Upsy:** Upsy is short for "upsetting...y."

## B.O.B. NEW PLACES -

### LAUNCH DOME



### NEW DORM



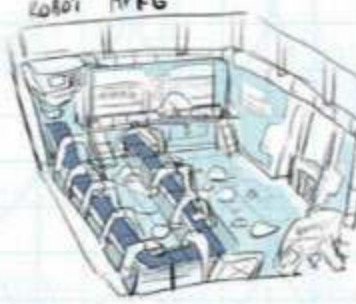
### NOELLE'S LOBBY



### EXPERIMENT RM | LEGION FIGHT



### LUCAS'S ROOM



**Places:** It's really nice to be able to talk as a team about the setting in an early stage, so we can make any changes BEFORE we get to actual book artwork. And when I get to thumbnailing, I have a much easier time mentally moving characters around while staging a scene when I can look at the space they're in—who knew! I obviously don't end up perfectly following these designs, but they're

a great starting point. For instance, I gave Lucas a lofted bed while I was thumbnailing, when I realized he needed way more space for gear and tech! We also ended up tweaking the cosmoscope design a bit from its original pass to give it a little more structure with all those rails! They are attached... with fantasy MillerTech. I am begging you to please not worry about it.



# Fan Art Gallery

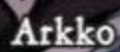
*The Adventure Zone* has been lucky enough to garner a passionate and deeply creative fandom. Many thanks to the fan artists who contributed pieces to this gallery—and to all the writers, artists, creators, and fans of all stripes who have made *The Adventure Zone* what it is.



























PLANAR  
SYSTEM'S  
BEST  
REAPER









Kelenia









# CRYSTAL KINGDOM

GRIFFIN MCELROY + TRAVIS MCELROY + JUSTIN MCELROY + CLINT MCELROY

Michael Pounds

































Praise for  
The Adventure Zone series:

"Full of charm and snark and wit.  
Join the party!"

—FELICIA DAY, author of  
*Embrace Your Weird*

"A plot that's not only **epic**, but also  
secretly poignant and life-affirming."

—TOR.COM

"Captures perfectly the **humor** and **charm**  
that made the podcast such a delight."

—NEWSARAMA