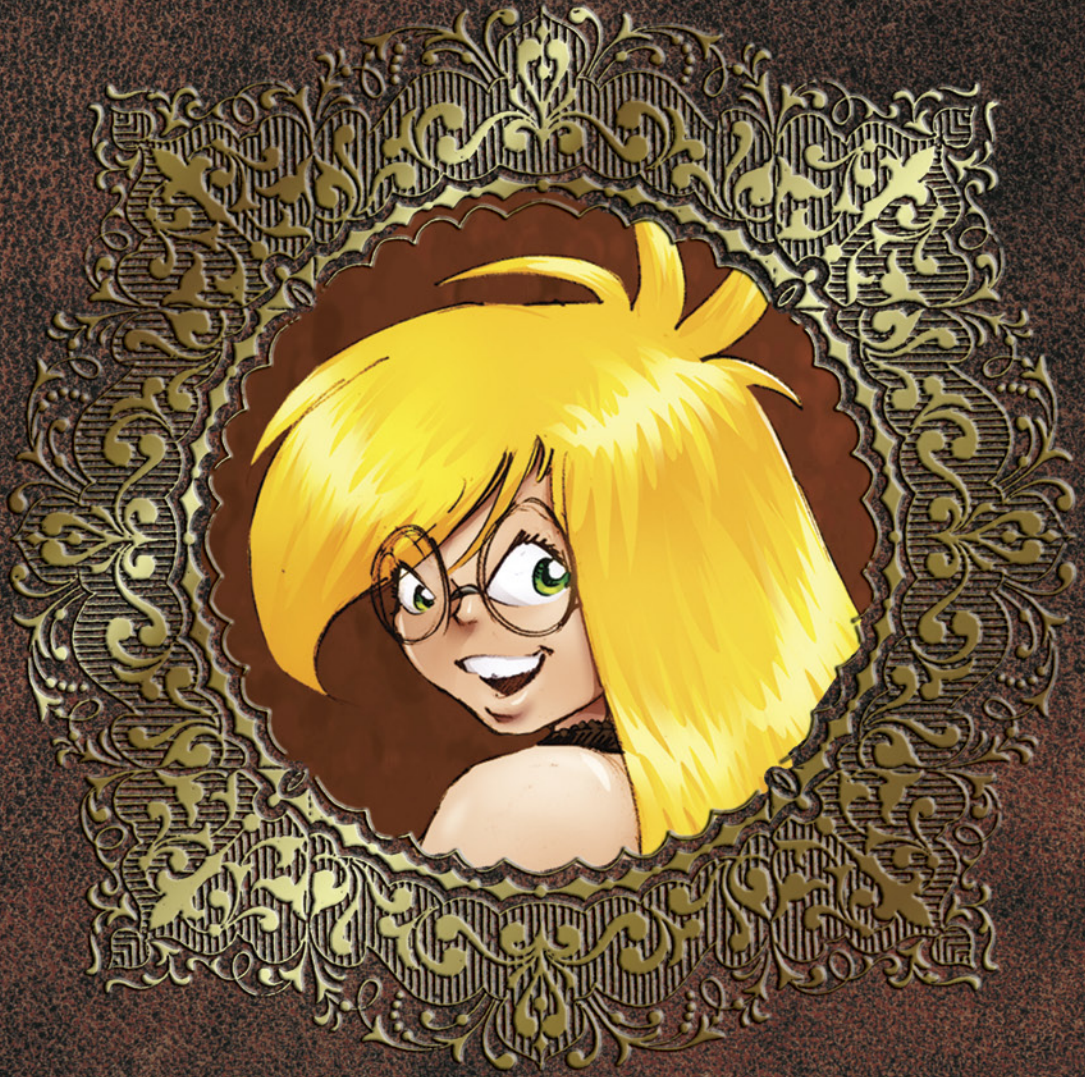
GIRL GENIUS®

ELECTRONIC EDITION



VOLUME TEN

AGATHA HETERODYNE AND THE GUARDIAN MUSE

AIRSHIP ENTERTAINMENT

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Agatha Heterodyne and the

GUARDIAN MUSE

A Gaslamp Fantasy with ADVENTURE, ROMANCE & MAD SCIENCE

GIRL GENIUS®

BY PHIL & KAJA FOGLIO

Girl Genius®

Agatha Heterodyne & the Guardian Muse

A Gaslamp Fantasy with Adventure, Romance & Mad Science



Story by Kaja & Phil Foglio
Pencils by Phil Foglio
Colors by Cheyenne Wright

Airship Entertainment



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Story by Phil & Kaja Foglio. Pencils by Phil Foglio. Main story colors by Cheyenne Wright. *Maxim Buys a Hat* colors by Katrina Hao. Selected spot illustrations colored by Kaja Foglio and/or Cheyenne Wright. Logos, Lettering, Artist Bullying & Book Design by Kaja. Fonts mostly by Comicraft–www.comicbookfonts.com.

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This book is dedicated to Victor & Alexandra Foglio, darling children with a seemingly infinite tolerance for parental nonsense.

Kaja Foglio

While researching the current storyline, Professoressa Foglio was captured by the dreaded Mole Pirates of the Lowlands and taken aboard their fearsome cave-barnacle encrusted fleet of gigantic drilling machines. Although she assures us of her moral repugnance for their cruel lifestyle, we cannot help but note that she was quickly elevated to the rank of "wench." Oddly, a knowledge of tools did not seem to be required. For several months, she was able to observe and chronicle their daring raids against the helpless wine cellars and underground storerooms of Europa, until she was finally freed by a pack of surprisingly well-armed truffle hunters. The Professoressa has been uncharacteristically silent as to the details of her captivity, which, frankly, the University Board finds highly suspicious–but when she's had a few sherries, she will cheerfully demonstrate the forbidden Dance of the Mushroom People. It is not for the faint of heart.

Phil Foglio

Professor Foglio recently traveled with the fierce truffle hunters of Poictesme, in order to better learn their stories, songs, and recipes for truffles (of which, by his calculation, they have over thirty-seven thousand.) To satisfy their insatiable demand for the fungus, they can travel hundreds of kilometers, mounted upon the gigantic domesticated white boars they have used since ancient times. Professor Foglio earned their respect by wrestling one of these gigantic creatures to the ground in less than three hours, armed with nothing but a small death ray, several grenades, and a chainsaw. His recipe for "Chainsaw Boar a la Death Ray with Truffles" is a big favorite at Transylvania Polygnostic University Barbecues.

Cheyenne Wright

Professor Cheyenne Wright was recently visited by a secretive band of monks, who informed him that he is, in fact, the long lost crown prince of the Mushroom People. He was also informed that the usurper who had stolen the throne is now dead–accidentally killed while interceding in a bloody clash between pirates and truffle hunters. Thus, the throne was now vacant, and his people eagerly awaited his return. This sounded intriguing, until he learned that the mysterious language of the Mushroom People has no words for any color other than "black" and "not black." At that point, he struck a deal with the monks, promising them his firstborn child as future heir as long as they would "go away and stop bothering me." This past year, Maxine Danger Wright was born. The faculty and staff of Transylvania Polygnostic University look forward to her future adventures with great interest.

Katrina Hao

For the short story: "Maxim Buys a Hat," Professor Hao bravely volunteered to test-drive the mighty chromatic engines developed by Professor Wright in order to ascertain if they were, in the words of the University Board: "safe for use by actual humans." She has since been assured that magenta hair looks absolutely lovely with viridian skin, and that the effects will no doubt fade in time.





Photo by Kaja Foglio • Hugo Award Base by Nick Stathopoulos • Dingbot by Tiff Hudson


DUE TO UNUSUAL PERTURBATIONS OF THE SOUTHERN MAGNETIC POLE—
THE PROFESSORS FOGLIO WERE ACTUALLY ABLE TO ATTEND LAST YEAR'S WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA.
WE'RE NOT SURE WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM AFTER THEY STOLE THOSE CAMELS—
BUT THEIR CURRENT WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN.
"WHICH IS WHY WE'VE HAD TO ROPE IN SUBSTITUTES TO MAKE THE OFFICIAL COMIC VERSION OF THEIR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH FOR THE HUGO AWARD FOR BEST GRAPHIC STORY OF 2009."
...DUNNO VY / GOTS TO BE DE PROFESSORESSA.
HYU IZ MORE IN TOUCH VIT HYU FEMININE SIDE.
HOW HYU FIGURE DOT?
VELL, FOR SCHTARTERS, YOU IZ VILLINK TO ADMIT YOU GOTS VUN.
MELBOURNE
SO, HOWS 'BOUT DOT?
DEY ACTUALLY GIVE DEM AN AWARD FOR DIS SCHTUFF?
HO, YEZ! HYU COULD HAFF KNOCKED DEM DOWN VIT A FEATHER!
VOT'S SO ODD 'BOUT DOT?
DEY'S VEAKLING ARTISTS! HYU CAN KNOCK DEM DOWN VIT ANYTHING!
HUGO
HOKAY, UND HERE IZ MEESTER CHEYENNE WRIGHT—DE COLOR ARTIST OV DE BOOK!
HOY!
YAZ—IT IZ TOTALLY ME!
ALOHA! THENK HYU FOR BEING A TRICHROMATIC SPECIES! YEZ!
UND VE GOTS TO THENK DE LADIES VOT ACTUALLY RUN DER OFFICE—
ALICE BENTLEY, CAROL MONAHAN, AND ROSE JOHNSON!
HELLO! DIS IZ DE BEST OFFICE EVER!
VE GETS SUNDAYS OFF UND FREE PIE!
DESE ADORABLE CHEELDRUN—
VEEKTOR UND ALEX—
FREE TO GOOD HOME
CAN TIE OWN SHOES
UND ALL DE LUFFLY SCIENCE FICTION SLANS VOT GIVE DEM DIS TING!
THENK HYU, DOLLINKS! DE PROFESSORS IZ VERRA APPRECIATIVE OV DIS GREAT HONOR,
UND DEY PROMISE TO VORK VERRA HARD TO KEEP MAKING FUN SCHTUFF FOR HYU! YEZ!
...HEY, WASN'T THERE SOMETHING WE WERE SUPPOSED TO DO TODAY?
NOPE.



• THE STORY SO FAR •

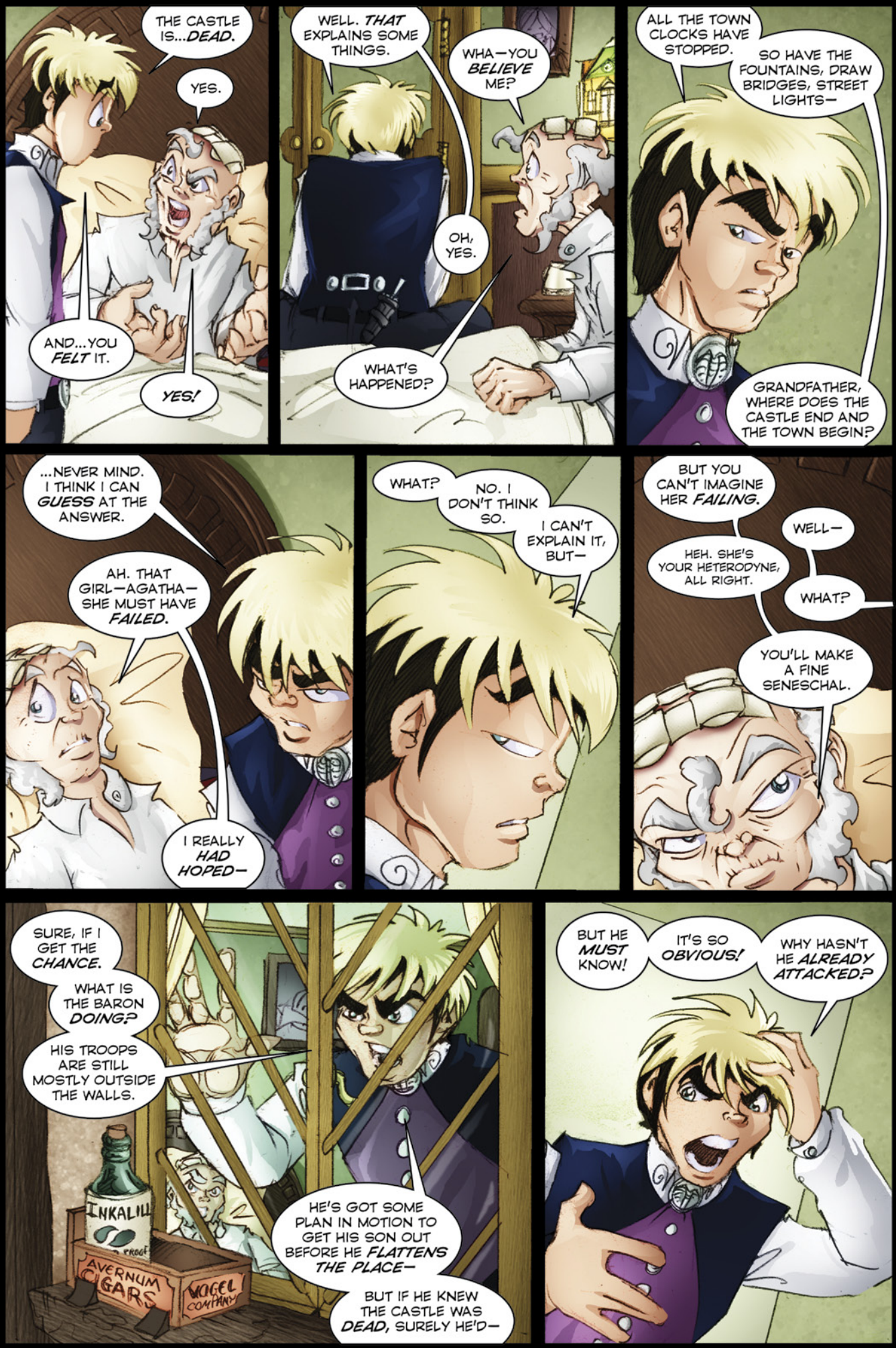
Agatha Clay was an unlucky student at Transylvania Polygnostic University, until an accident revealed her hidden "spark:" a capacity for mad science beyond the reach of all but the most gifted. This alone would have been enough to bring her to the attention of Baron Wulfenbach, the powerful Spark who holds the fractious ruling houses of Europa under his thumb, but Agatha is *also* the last of the famous Heterodyne family–beloved folk heroes who disappeared many years ago. In addition, the Baron now has excellent reason to believe that Agatha is actually a malevolent entity known as "The Other," who almost destroyed Europa twenty years before. He isn't entirely wrong, either. While held prisoner in the town of Sturmhalten, the personality of the "Other," actually Agatha's long-missing mother, took over Agatha's body. Agatha has managed to regain control, but the "Other" is still there, currently held in check by a clever device.

After many adventures, Agatha has made her way across Europa to Mechanicsburg, the ancestral home of the Heterodyne family–and she's not the only one. The Baron is also in the town–as a patient in Mechanicsburg's famous hospital. The Baron has been positioning his forces to destroy Castle Heterodyne, but now his son Gilgamesh has gone inside, hoping that his presence will stall his father's plans. Along with Gil has come a group of friends, also hoping to aid Agatha. Inside, they have encountered a charismatic girl claiming to be the lost Heterodyne heir–part of a larger plan to take control of the Baron's empire–and Prince Tarvek of Sturmhalten–formerly involved with the same plot but now fleeing both captors and co-conspirators. Also in the Castle are a number of prisoners there to make repairs, and Othar Tryggvassen, "Gentleman Adventurer"–a Hero sent by the Baron to "rescue" his son.

The Castle itself is a self-aware mechanical fortress which was badly damaged in the war with the "Other." Agatha had managed to make the Castle accept her as the true Heterodyne, but was then quickly forced to shut it down to keep its out-of-control systems from harming her friends.

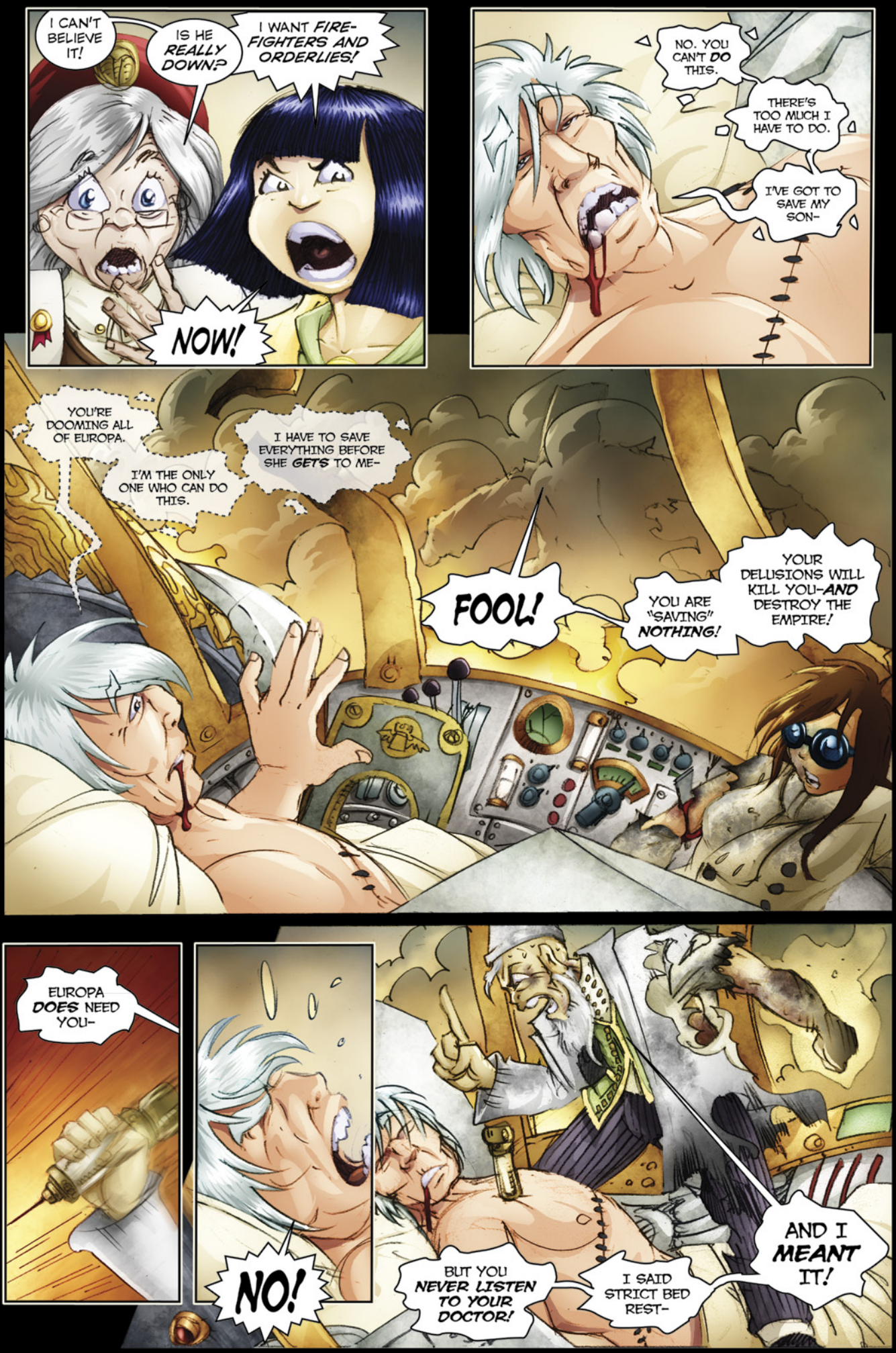
Now, before she can get back to repairing the Castle, Agatha needs to take care of herself–she, Gil and Tarvek have contracted a strange, Spark-created malady that could solve all their enemies' problems once and for all.


MOTHER! HOW IS HE?
I CAME AS SOON AS I HEARD!
MECHANICSBURG
VAN! THERE YOU ARE!
THANK GOODNESS— HE'S BEEN ASKING FOR YOU!
AH—THIS ISN'T BECAUSE OF SOMETHING /—
OF COURSE NOT.
HE JUST SUDDENLY GAVE A YELL AND COLLAPSED.
NOW, GO SEE HIM.
GRANDFATHER?
VAN! FINALLY!
WHAT HAPPENED?
THAT BLASTED HEAP OF RUBBLE!
ALL THESE YEARS, IT MUST HAVE HAD SOME KIND OF HOLD ON ME—
SOMETHING IN MY HEAD, MAYBE—
AND I NEVER— AND, AND NOW IT'S GONE!
GRANDFATHER— WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
THE CASTLE.
THEY'VE KILLED IT.
I FELT IT DIE!


THE CASTLE IS...DEAD.
YES.
AND...YOU FELT IT.
YES!
WELL. THAT EXPLAINS SOME THINGS.
WHA—YOU BELIEVE ME?
OH, YES.
WHAT'S HAPPENED?
ALL THE TOWN CLOCKS HAVE STOPPED.
SO HAVE THE FOUNTAINS, DRAW BRIDGES, STREET LIGHTS—
GRANDFATHER, WHERE DOES THE CASTLE END AND THE TOWN BEGIN?
...NEVER MIND. I THINK I CAN GUESS AT THE ANSWER.
AH. THAT GIRL—AGATHA—SHE MUST HAVE FAILED.
I REALLY HAD HOPED—
WHAT?
NO. I DON'T THINK SO.
I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT, BUT—
BUT YOU CAN'T IMAGINE HER FAILING.
WELL—
HEH. SHE'S YOUR HETERODYNE, ALL RIGHT.
WHAT?
YOU'LL MAKE A FINE SENESCHAL.
SURE, IF I GET THE CHANCE.
WHAT IS THE BARON DOING?
HIS TROOPS ARE STILL MOSTLY OUTSIDE THE WALLS.
INKALIL
AVERNUM CIGARS
VOGEL COMPANY
HE'S GOT SOME PLAN IN MOTION TO GET HIS SON OUT BEFORE HE FLATTENS THE PLACE—
BUT IF HE KNEW THE CASTLE WAS DEAD, SURELY HE'D—
BUT HE MUST KNOW!
IT'S SO OBVIOUS!
WHY HASN'T HE ALREADY ATTACKED?


"MEANWHILE, AT MECHANICSBURG'S GREAT HOSPITAL—"
BOOM!
YOU HEARD ME! ALL OF THEM!
I WANT ALL PATIENTS IN INNER COURTYARD ROOMS EVACUATED NOW!
YES, MISS!
WE'RE ON IT!
STATUS?!
NOT GOOD, HERR BARON!
HYDRAULICS RUPTURED!
LOSING POWER IN THE LEFT LEG!
I'M SHUNTING POWER FROM—
INCOMING!


WHAM!!
THAT DID IT!
HE'S GOING DOWN!
NO!
DOOM!


I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
IS HE REALLY DOWN?
I WANT FIRE-FIGHTERS AND ORDERLIES!
NOW!
NO. YOU CAN'T DO THIS.
THERE'S TOO MUCH I HAVE TO DO.
I'VE GOT TO SAVE MY SON-
YOU'RE DOOMING ALL OF EUROPA.
I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN DO THIS.
I HAVE TO SAVE EVERYTHING BEFORE SHE GETS TO ME-
FOOL!
YOU ARE "SAVING" NOTHING!
YOUR DELUSIONS WILL KILL YOU-AND DESTROY THE EMPIRE!
EUROPA DOES NEED YOU-
NO!
BUT YOU NEVER LISTEN TO YOUR DOCTOR!
I SAID STRICT BED REST-
AND I MEANT IT!


SIGH. I SHOULD HAVE *KNOWN* HE'D PULL SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
AND *NOW?*
AH. DOCTOR SUN HAS PLACED HIM IN THE ARMORED HIGH-PRESSURE HEALING ENGINE.
I'M SORRY, HERR DOLOKHOV,
I KNOW YOU SAID—
DON'T BE.
IT'S WHAT WE *SHOULD* HAVE DONE TO *BEGIN WITH.*
BUT IT'S TERRIBLY *DANGEROUS.* NOT TO MENTION, NOW HE'LL BE *INCOMMUNICADO—*
AND *I'LL* HAVE TO RUN THINGS UNTIL HE'S OUT AND I *HATE* DOING THAT.
ERGH.
SIR, THE DEADLINE FOR DESTRUCTION OF CASTLE HETERODYNE *IS* APPROACHING.
IS MASTER GIL STILL IN THERE?
...YES.
THEN YOU WILL *HOLD OFF.*
I WILL *NOT* BE THE ONE WHO KILLS THE BARON'S *HEIR.*
NEXT?
WE'RE GETTING REPORTS OF *RIOTING* ACROSS THE EMPIRE.
SEVERAL AREAS ARE REPORTING *OUTRIGHT REVOLTS.*
HMM. I'D EXPECT THAT, WHAT WITH THE BARON DOWN.
BUT THIS...THIS IS *TOO QUICK.* IT FEELS—
HOY, MEESTER BORIS BUG MAN!
OH THIS IS ALL I NEED!
WAIT A MINUTE...WHAT ARE YOU EVEN *DOING* HERE?
ALL THE JÄGERS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE UP NORTH—
HEH. YEZ, VELL, VE GOTS A *MESSAGE* FOR HYU, SVEETHOT!


THE GREAT MOVEMENT CHAMBER—THE HEART OF CASTLE HETERODYNE AND THE SOURCE OF ITS POWER—
VIOLETTA—I'M ALMOST DONE HERE.
HOW ARE GIL AND TARVEK DOING?
UM—NOT WELL AT ALL, MY LADY!


THEY'VE COLLAPSED—
AND THEIR FEVER IS WAY UP!
IT'S REALLY BAD!
BUT THEY DID KEEP GOING UNTIL THEY FINISHED THEIR WORK!
AH. THAT'S GOOD.
VON ZINZER?
ANYTHING?
NOPE.
WHATEVER'S DOWN THERE, IT'S KEEPING QUIET NOW.
I HEARD SOME CLANKING AND SAW A GREEN FLASH ABOUT AN HOUR AGO,
BUT NOTHING SINCE THEN.
STILL, IF YOU COULD...YOU KNOW...UM, HURRY...
LADY HETERODYNE!
I HAVE JUST FINISHED SPLICING THE POWER CONNECTORS!
I PREDICT THAT HARDLY ANY WILL EXPLODE!
PERFECT.
VIOLETTA, WIND UP THE DYNAMOS.
PROFESSOR, YOU GET GIL AND TARVEK IN PLACE-
AND SNAUG, YOU HELP ME GET MYSELF CONNECTED TO THE SYSTEM.
LET'S GET THIS DONE.


MY LADY, ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?
YOU'RE TAKING SUCH A TERRIBLE RISK...
I MEAN, BEING AN ASSISTANT, I'M KIND OF USED TO IT BEING ME THAT'S... YOU KNOW...
WELL, I DON'T SEE THAT I HAVE MUCH CHOICE.
BESIDES, THE ONE TAKING THE BIGGEST RISK IS GIL.
HE WASN'T EVEN INFECTED WHEN WE STARTED THIS.
TRUE, BUT NOW, WELL, HE'S SO SICK.
DO YOU THINK HE'S GOING TO BE STRONG ENOUGH TO PULL YOU BOTH THROUGH FULL RESURRECTIONS?
I... REALLY DON'T KNOW.
MASTER WULFENBACH AND PRINCE STURMVORALIS ARE IN POSITION-
THE DYNAMOS ARE COMING UP TO SPEED-
NOW, ALL WE'RE WAITING FOR IS YOU, MY LADY.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
WELL, NO PROFESSOR. I'M NOT.
I KNEW THAT...
OKAY. I'M HOOKING YOU INTO THE CIRCUIT— NOW!
WORGH!
LADY?
THEY'RE... THEY'RE EVEN SICKER THAN I THOUGHT.
OH. GREAT START.


RIGHT. WE'LL START WITH TARVEK, THEN–
BUT WEREN'T WE GOING TO DO YOU BOTH AT THE SAME TIME?
NO. AT THIS POINT, GIL AND TARVEK ARE TOO WORN OUT.
THE SI VALES VALEO PROCEDURE HASN'T GOT A CHANCE OF WORKING WITHOUT SOMEONE STRONGER IN THE DONOR POSITION.
THAT'S ME.
BUT THAT MEANS YOU'LL ALL BE DRAINED WHEN IT'S TIME TO REVIVE YOU.
YES. IT'S POSSIBLE THAT THERE COULD BE PROBLEMS AT THAT POINT–
BUT I'VE GOT A FEW THINGS SET UP THAT WILL FIX THAT.
... PROBABLY.
OH. THAT FILLS ME WITH CONFIDENCE.
TO YOUR STATION, SNAUG.
...YES, MISTRESS.
OKAY, HERE WE GO.
... GOOD LUCK, YOU TWO.
FIRST SWITCH!
YAAA


HE...HE SOUNDS LIKE HE'S DYING...
OF COURSE HE IS.
THAT'S THE POINT.
NOW, COME ON, IT'S TIME TO GET ME STRAPPED IN.
...MAKE SURE THOSE ARE REALLY SECURE.
I KNOW! I KNOW!
AND HURRY! TARVEK'S READINGS ARE ALMOST TERMINAL!
PROFESSOR! THE POWER IS FLUCTUATING!
WE'RE BURNING THROUGH FUSES FASTER THAN EXPECTED-
BUT I CAN DEAL WITH IT.
STURMVORAUS IS FLATTENING ON ALL METERS!
GOOD! KEEP THE POWER RUNNING- AND START THE COUNTDOWN...
NOW!
VIOLETTA-
THIS IS THE LAST STRAP!
PROFESSOR! MY CONTROLS JUST WENT DARK!
THIS THRICE-CURSED FUSE HAS MELTED!
I'M SHUNTING TO NUMBER FOUR ARRAY!
...DID YOU REMEMBER TO STRIP ALL THE METAL OFF THEM?
YES. OF COURSE.
EVEN... EVEN GIL'S RING?
SHEESH. YOU ONLY TOLD ME THREE TIMES.
RIGHT. RIGHT. UM...
YOU'RE NERVOUS.
IF YOU DON'T RELAX, THIS IS REALLY GOING TO HURT LIKE CRAZY.
OH-
I CERTAINLY HOPE SO.


PRINCE STURMVORAUS IS PREPPED FOR REVIVIFICATION!
ALL RIGHT. DO IT.
AND THEN GET BACK!
GOT IT!
NNNEERRGH!
AH! I'M BACK!
WHAT A LOVELY SURPRISE!
WAIT- WHAT IS THIS?!
RELEASE ME AT ONCE!
WOW. THAT REALLY IS WEIRD.
OH! YES, THERE'S SOMETHING VERY WRONG!
THERE'S BEEN A TERRIBLE MISTAKE!
QUICKLY, NOW. UNTIE ME, AND—
SO YOU'RE THE EVIL TWIN THING, EH?
TARVEK SAID YOU COULD BE REALLY CONVINCING.
OH, DID HE?!
DID HE ALSO SAY HE'S NECK-DEEP IN A PLOT TO STEAL MY WORK?!
RELEASE ME RIGHT NOW, AND I'LL SHOW HIM-
HA. TEMPTING, BUT YOU ALREADY HAD YOUR SHOT AT HIM.
NO WAY.
SECOND SWITCH!
CLAK!


CLAK! CLAK! CLAK!
PROFESSOR!
USELESS INFERIOR COPROLITIC COMPONENTS!
I WOULDN'T ELECTROCUTE MY MOTHER WITH THESE!
ZT!
CRACKLE!
YOU-YOU'RE ONE OF THE ORDER'S SMOKE KNIGHTS.
DO YOUR DUTY! RELEASE ME!
I COMMAND YOU!
WHOA.
NOOOO—I THINK YOU'LL CAUSE WAY LESS TROUBLE BY STAYING RIGHT WHERE YOU—
I'LL RELEASE YOU, MISTRESS!
OH, GREAT.
POW!
PROFESSOR!
SOON!
RELEASE ME OR I WILL GRIND YOU TO DUST!
SOMEONE-ANYONE-CAN YOU HEAR ME?
HELP!
AHHH... I HEAR YOU...
LUCREZIA!
UH— GUYS?


UM...WHERE ARE WE... EXACTLY?
HM? OH. BIG POWER CHAMBER UNDER CASTLE HETERODYNE.
AAAAH!
GET ME LOOSE!
GET ME LOOSE! NOW!
HEH HEH HEH.
I'LL GET YOU LOOSE. OOOH, YEEEES...
AAG!!
YOU GUYS REALLY NEED TO HURRY WITH THE ZAPPING—
THOOM THOOM
'CAUSE WHATEVER IS DOWN THERE, IT'S COMING UP HERE.
RELEASE ME!
ARE YOU STILL GOING ON ABOUT THAT?
FOOL! IF THAT THING REACHES ME, THIS GIRL WILL DIE!
AND I KNOW THAT WILL SPOIL YOUR MASTER'S PRECIOUS PLANS!
VIOLETTA! THE POWER SHOULD BE RESTORED!
HIT IT!
...
SORRY. YOU'LL HAVE TO COME UP WITH A BETTER THREAT THAN THAT.
...OH, REALLY?
BUT...
TARVEK'S NOT MY MASTER—
AND THE LADY HETERODYNE WAS PLANNING ON DYING TODAY, ANYWAY.
SECOND SWITCH!
CLAK!


AAAAAAHH!
ALL RIGHT! HER SI VALES VALEO CONNECTION IS NOW FULLY ENGAGED!
TARVEK'S REVIVIFICATION PROCESS SHOULD START ANY SECOND—
AND SHE'S GONNA BE REALLY MAD IF I BLOW HIM UP AFTER ALL THIS TROUBLE, SO I NEED HIS READINGS, NOW!
HELLO?! PROFESSOR?
NO! I DARE NOT LEAVE THIS JUNK UNATTENDED!
FZZT!
FZZT!
WHERE IS MISS SNAUG?!
MOLOCH!
WHAT?!
SNAUG'S... SHE'S KNOCKED OUT!
I NEED YOU ON TARVEK'S SYSTEM!
—KIND OF BUSY, HERE!
HEE HEE HEE—
STOP THAT.
POKE
POKE
MOLOCH!
I SAID—
CHOP!
IT TICKLES.
COMING!


KZAP!
BOOM!
NOT FROM LADY HETERODYNE—SHE'S ALREADY AT HER LIMIT!
I'M BRINGING WULFENBACH'S CONNECTION BACK TO FULL STRENGTH—
IN THREE... TWO...ONE... NOW!
STURMVORAUS' READINGS ARE STUCK AT EIGHTY THREE PERCENT!
WE NEED MORE!
CAN WE INCREASE THE FLOW ON THIS THING?
GUAAAH!
THERE! THAT DID IT!
IT WORKED!
SNAP!
SNAP!
GRHHAAAAAA!
I... LIVE! AND NOW-
WHOA! WORKED A LITTLE TOO WELL!
UH...HEY, CHECK IT OUT.
GOOD HEAVENS.


AAAHHHH- LITTLE RATS-
BUSY IN MY CELLAR-
WHERE IS YOUR QUEEN, LITTLE RATS?
WHERE IS LUCREZIA?


WHAT IS THAT?!
OTILIA.
THE MUSE OF PROTECTION.
SHE'S BEEN LOST FOR OVER TWO HUNDRED YEARS!
WHERE IS LUCREZIA?
SHE HAS BETRAYED THE HOUSE OF HETERODYNE.
GIVE HER TO ME, OR I WILL CRUSH YOU ALL.
THIS IS BAD. SHE'LL KILL AGATHA.
NOT IF I CAN HELP IT.
STOP!
I AM PRINCE TARVEK OF THE HOUSE OF STURMVORAUS.
I AM THE DIRECT DESCENDANT OF ANDRONICUS VALOIS AND HEIR TO THE LIGHTNING THRONE.
I AM THE STORM KING—
AND YOU WERE CREATED TO SERVE ME!
POW!
UM—
THAT NEVER WORKS, YOU KNOW.
TILT
NO! THAT SHOULD HAVE WORKED!
SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT...


LADY HETERODYNE'S READINGS ARE CRASHING!
TARVEK! WE COULD USE ANOTHER SPARK OVER HERE!
GET HER READY FOR THE NEXT STEP! DISENGAGE THE SI VALES VALEO CIRCUIT,
AND BEGIN REVERSING MY SETTINGS!
YOU! HOOK HER UP TO THE ELECTRICALS.
I'LL BE RIGHT THERE!
YESSIR!
HAH. SPARKS...
WHAT ARE YOU PEOPLE UP TO HERE?
WHERE IS THE LORD HETERODYNE? WHICH OF YOU BELLOWS PUMPERS IS HIS CHIEF ASSISTANT?
I AM!
LISTEN TO ME!
YOU DID NOT HEAR LUCREZIA!
I KNOW WHO I HEARD!
AND YOU-A DEGENERATE WHELP OF THE VALOIS?
YOU ARE NO ASSISTANT TO THE HOUSE OF HETERODYNE-
AND I HAVE NO PATIENCE WITH YOUR LIES.
SMAK!
I AM NOT LYING.
DO YOU SEE LUCREZIA HERE?
AH.
YOU ARE... SURPRISINGLY STRONG.
YES. I AM. NOW, LISTEN.
YOU HEARD LUCREZIA'S DAUGHTER.
THE CURRENT LADY HETERODYNE.
YES, SHE SOUNDS LIKE HER MOTHER-
BUT SHE'S THE LAST PERSON WHO WOULD HELP LUCREZIA IN ANY WAY.
AND I WILL NOT LET YOU TOUCH HER.


THE CURRENT LADY HETERODYNE?
THEN THE OLD LORD IS DEAD?
I'M AFRAID SO. AGATHA IS THE LAST OF THE HETERODYNE FAMILY.
THE... THE LAST? BUT HIS BROTHER-
ALSO GONE.
NO!
... MISERABLE LACKEYS!
(huff) (huff)
I'LL FEED YOUR FLESH TO THE SPIDERS-
AND (huff) GRIND YOUR BONES TO POWDER TO SWEETEN MY TEA!
OH, GREAT.
VIOLETTA! HURRY!
I'LL... URFF! MMF!
WE'RE ALL PREPPED, HERE!
HMAM RYU!
SOON!
NO, REALLY— EVERYTHING IS TOTALLY PREPPED AND—OW!— BITING!
I'M WORKING ON IT!
THE LAST OF THE FAMILY...
AND SHE IS A TRUE HETERODYNE?
YOU ARE SURE?
ABSOLUTELY.
SHE'S EVEN BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE CASTLE.
OH, NO SHE HAS NOT!
URK!
NOW!
HIT IT NOW!


HERE WE GO!
ZZZAPP
POWER READINGS—
UM, THEY LOOK PRETTY GOOD, ACTUALLY.
AH, WELL, A CIRCUIT IS LIKE AN ELEGANT LADY—
SPOT-WELD HER ENOUGH, AND—
AAH! WHAT IS THAT?!
I WILL SPEAK WITH YOUR "LADY HETERODYNE."
YOU WILL RELEASE HER FROM THIS ARRAY, AND I WILL JUDGE HER WORTH.
NOT YET!
SHE'S SICK. WE'RE TREATING HER RIGHT NOW.
IF WE DECOUPLE HER BEFORE WE'RE DONE, SHE'LL DIE!
THAT DID IT!
THE READINGS ARE FLATTENING!
AAAND— THERE!
THAT'S IT! SHE'S DEAD AS A DOORNAIL!
WHAT?
IX-NAY ON THE EAD-DAY!
WAIT- YOU'RE TELLING ME THAT THIS GIRL WAS THE LAST OF THE FAMILY-
AND NOW, YOU FOOLS HAVE KILLED HER?
OH. SORRY ABOUT THAT.
ER... WELL, ONLY A LITTLE.


LOOK. IT'S VERY SIMPLE.
YES, SHE'S TECHNICALLY DEAD. BUT IT'S KIND OF A ROLLING DEATH THING—
SO SHE'S NOT ALL THE WAY DEAD DEAD.
SNAP
GRAAAAH!
YEAH, OKAY, I COULD HAVE PUT THAT BETTER.
SMASH!
GET IT AWAY FROM THE MACHINES, YOU IDIOT!
MOLOCH! DON'T JUST STAND THERE CRINGING!
GET LADY HETERODYNE READY FOR THE FINAL STAGE!
AND YOU!
WE'RE GOING TO NEED YOU READY TO REVIVE HER!
OH, NO PROBLEM.
I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.


YOU ALL ARE AWARE THAT ONCE THE REVIVIFICATION PROCESS BEGINS—
SOMEONE ELSE IS GOING TO HAVE TO DO THE FIGHTING HERE?
MOLOCH—
FORGET IT!
THIS MISERABLE EXCUSE FOR A COGNITIVE ENGINE—
—SITUATIONAL DISSIDENCE HAS EXCEEDED OPERATING PARAMETERS—
—GO TO FALL BACK INTERACTION SEQUENCE: KILL EVERYONE.
MASTERS WILL SORT OUT REMAINS.
I WAS AFRAID OF THIS.
YOU MAY BE VAN RIJN'S MASTERPIECE—
AND IT'S A SHAME TO DAMAGE YOU, EVEN IN SELF DEFENSE,
BUT IT APPEARS THAT YOUR MENTAL PROCESSES HAVE SUFFERED SEVERE DETERIORATION.
Krak!
CRUNCH!
I TOLD YOU.
I WON'T LET YOU HURT AGATHA.
CRANG!
...BUT MAYBE I CAN TAKE YOU DOWN QUICKLY,
AND REPAIR YOU LATER.


WHAM!!
HE'S DOING SURPRISINGLY WELL.
...MUST BE THAT POST-REVIVIFICATION RUSH.
HA! SHE'S THE ONE WHO'S DOING SURPRISINGLY WELL.
THE MUSES WERE TOYS! THEY WEREN'T HEAVY-DUTY FIGHTING CLANKS!
OTILIA HAD SOME FANCY SWORD FLOURISHES SHE PERFORMED FOR VISITORS,
BUT SHE WAS ACTUALLY BUILT FOR TEACHING—
NOT RIPPING PEOPLE TO SHREDS!
YOU SOUND LIKE YOU KNOW A LOT ABOUT THEM.
IF I HAD A BELGIAN CHOCOLATE MIMMOTH FOR EVERY HOUR I'VE HAD TO LISTEN TO TARVEK BLATHER ON ABOUT THOSE STUPID MUSES,
I'D WEIGH A THOUSAND KILOS.
...REALLY?
OH YEAH. I WORKED IT OUT ONCE.
VIOLETTA! AGATHA'S CLEAN!
LET'S GO!
TARVEK! HURRY UP! I'M HITTING THE SWITCH IN—
THREE—
YOU'VE GOT TO LISTEN TO ME!
YOU'RE A MUSE! I-
TWO—
AHEH HEH HEH... STUPID LITTLE KING.
I AM NOT ONE OF YOUR PRETTY MUSES-
-ONE!


EVEN TRAPPED IN THIS MISERABLE SHELL-
I AM CASTLE HETERODYNE!
AND YOU- LITTLE RAT KING-
YOU ARE-
THE CASTLE?! BUT-
HIT THE SWITCH!
HIT THE SWITCH NOW!
BUT SHE- IT- IT'LL KILL HIM!
AK- GAAAAAAHH!
WITHOUT THE LADY, IT WILL KILL US ALL!
CLAK!
WAIT!


—SUUUPER LUCKY!
WOOHOO!
BOOT!
HEY YOU! IT SAYS IT'S THE CASTLE!
SHE'S BOUGHT US TIME! GET TO YOUR PLACES!
WHO CARES?!
...AND WHO THE DEVIL IS THIS?!
GIVE IT A KICK FOR ME!


HEY! WULFENBACH'S READINGS AREN'T LOOKING GOOD.
THAT WOULD BE BECAUSE HE WAS TAPPED TO HELP REVIVE STURMVORAUS-
AND HAS NOT YET HAD A CHANCE TO REPLENISH HIS ÉLAN VITAL.
AS LONG AS THE RED METER STAYS ABOVE THIRTY-THREE- HE SHOULD BE FINE.
...PROBABLY.
I NEED SOMEONE TO MONITOR LADY HETERODYNE—!
I CAN DO IT!
UM...
WHAT ARE WE DOING?
MODIFIED SI VALES VALEO ROLLING RESURRECTION CHAIN!
WHAT?!
BUT THAT— THAT'S—
THAT'S AWESOME!
AH!
GOT A FIRE HERE!
FOOM!
I'M ON THAT!
LOOKS LIKE AN OVERLOADED JUNCTION ROUTER!
DO YOU HAVE ANY BUTTER?
UH...
NEVER MIND! BROUGHT MY OWN!
OH. WELL, THEN.
I GUESS EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE OKAY.
GRAAAAA!
HI. YOU'RE NEW TO THIS, AREN'T YOU?
WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE?!


RHAAH AH AHAA!
SNAP!
SNAP! SNAP!
OOOH, YEEESSSS!
LOOK OUT, WORLD!
AAH! SHE'S LOOSE?!
BUT HOW?!
I STRAPPED HER DOWN WITH—
OH, YEAH- I GOT THOSE!
AFTER ALL, WE'RE GOING TO NEED AGATHA TO-
—THAT'S NOT AGATHA!
SHE'S NOT?
OOOH! AREN'T YOU A CUTIE?
HELLO!
WHAT?!
YOU— YOU TOOK HER LOCKET OFF?!
COMING!
HIGGS! DEAL WITH THE CLANK!
...
YOU/YOU/YOU
YOU ARE ALL INTRUDERS AND I/I WILL SQUASH YOU INTO J/JELLY!


HEY.
I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT...
OH/ OH/OH WELL/ WELL...
THAT'S TOO/TOO BA/AD!
CRUNCH!
tsk. SEE? THOSE LEG JOINTS ARE OUT OF ALIGNMENT.
DIEEEE!
SWOOSH!
UH HUH...AND THOSE HIP BEARINGS ARE OUT OF TRUE.
AND LOOK HERE—
OOF!
CRAK
AND NOW/NOW/NOW ALL OF YOU WILL-
HUH. BUT THOSE GALVANIC RELAYS ARE STILL WORKING.
THAT'S GOOD.
'D BE A SHAME IF YOU GOT TOO MESSED UP.


O HO HO HO HO HO HO!
YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE AIDING MY DAUGHTER, EH?
HOW VERY DROLL! BUT NOW–
WAIT– YOU'RE–
YOU'RE AUNT LUCREZIA?!
...PARDON?
I'M THEOPHOLOUS DUMEDD! YOUR NEPHEW!
YOUR SISTER– SERPENTINA MONGFISH– SHE WAS MY MOTHER!
THEO... GOOD HEAVENS, YOU'VE GROWN!
YES! YOU CAME TO MY CHRISTENING!
WHY... SO I DID!
AND YOU BROUGHT ME A CLOCKWORK SNAKE!
MR. HISSYFIT! HE USED TO BE MINE!
YES! HE TRIED TO EAT MY FATHER, AND KNOCKED THE BISHOP INTO THE PUNCH BOWL!
OH, LET ME LOOK AT YOU!
MY YES, YOU DO TAKE AFTER YOUR FATHER!
REALLY?
YESSSS. YOU KNOW, WHEN WE FIRST MET HIM, HE BLEW UP MY FAVORITE LAIR,
AND THEN HAD THE TEMERITY TO LEAVE ME BEHIND, WHILE HE ESCAPED WITH MY SISTER.
AH– REALLY?
AND I NEVER LIKED HER MUCH, EITHER.
gurk. REALLY?
REALLY.


YOU/NON POSSIBLE/ YOU-
/ACCESSING/
I KNOW YOU-
YOU ARE-
SMASH!
BUT-
YOU-
HOW-
tsk. MORE MESSED UP THAN I THOUGHT.
ALL THIS FIGHTING MUST'VE JUST BEEN TOO MUCH FOR IT.
DON'T YOU AGREE-
SIR?
GOODNESS, YES!
WHY, IT'S A MIRACLE IT WAS STILL WORKING AT ALL!
I'LL TELL 'EM YOU SAID THAT, SIR.


OKAY, SPOOKY GIRL—
TIME TO GO BACK TO SLEEP.
HMF.
AAAAAAH!
AH...I MEANT YOU, NOT ME.
...WELL... SHE SEEMS HEALTHY, ANYWAY.
THAT'S GOOD.
I GUESS.
OW.
SHE'S RIDING THE POST-REVIVIFICATION RUSH.
SHE'LL BE FASTER, TOUGHER AND STRONGER FOR A WHILE.
...ALSO MEANER.
YOU—I SAW YOU IN A CIRCUS ONCE, RIGHT?
UH—WELL, PROBABLY—
WELL LISTEN UP. THIS THING INSIDE LADY HETERODYNE IS A KILLER.
WHAT?!
YOU JUST TRY TO STAY OUT OF THE WAY WHILE WE SORT THIS OUT.
STAGE CLOWNING WILL ONLY GET YOU KILLED.
OH, I'VE GOT NEWS FOR YOU.
THAT HARPY IN AGATHA? SHE'S ONLY THE SECOND MOST DANGEROUS THING IN THE ROOM.


WELL, OF COURSE. THERE'S ALL THIS HALF-BAKED MADBOY STUFF LYING AROUND...
EXCUSE ME—
I AM ZEETHA, DAUGHTER OF CHUMP—
ROYAL PRINCESS GUARDIAN OF SKIFANDER!
OH, JEEZ. SERIOUSLY?
SILENCE!
I AM LEAVING.
IF YOU WANT THIS IDIOT TO LIVE, YOU WILL NOT IMPEDE ME!
NO! YOU CAN'T!
YOU'RE STILL—
OH, DON'T BE SILLY.
KILLING YOU WILL BE SIMPLICITY ITSELF!
UH—THAT'S NOT ACTUALLY WHAT I—
—YOU'RE NOT KILLING ANYBODY.
BECAUSE I WON'T LET YOU.
OH, DEAR. JUST LOOK AT YOU.
YOU'RE ONE OF THE ORDER'S SMOKE KNIGHTS.
WITH YOUR PATHETIC ATTEMPTS AT MISDIRECTION—
AND YOUR SILLY SLEIGHT OF HAND.
BUT I AM LUCREZIA MONGFISH—
AND YOUR ORDER SERVES ME!
OH. THIS IS SWEET.
OKAY. TWO THINGS:
FIRST, I NO LONGER SERVE THE ORDER.
AND SECOND...
I SPECIALIZE IN MISDIRECTION AND SLEIGHT OF HAND.
...AND THAT'S SUPPOSED TO IMPRESS ME HOW?
BWAAHG! WHAT IS THIS?!
WOW.
MEH. NOT BAD...
YOUR TURN, "PRINCESS."


FEH. I KNOW BETTER THAN TO FIGHT YOU, SKIFANDRIAN.
DO YOU?
CRIK— CRAK
NOW THAT'S INTERESTING.
STAY BACK-


—OR WHAT? YOU'LL HURT HER?
SO WHAT. SHE'S TOUGH. SHE'LL GET OVER IT.
YOU'LL KILL HER?
I DON'T THINK YOU COULD DO IT HARD ENOUGH.
NOT HERE.


I'LL JUST HAVE TO SETTLE FOR DISTRACTION.
Fling!


HWUHHHHH?
CRASH!


yAaAAa!
ZZZik! ZZZik!

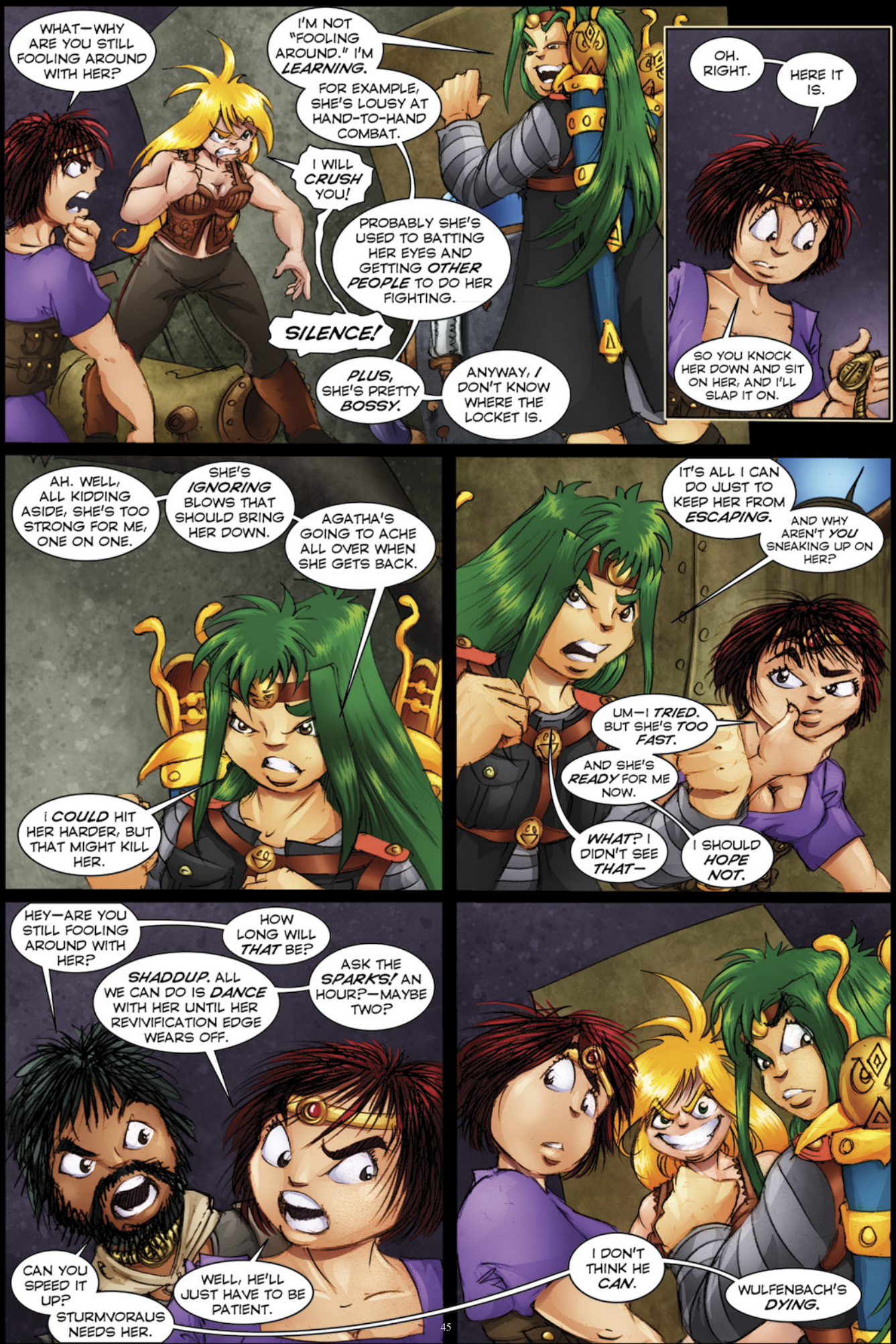

HOW IS THAT SUPPOSED TO DISTRACT ME?
THAT'S A PROBLEM FOR THE SPARKS.
POW!
MY JOB IS TO TAKE YOU OUT SO THEY CAN WORK.

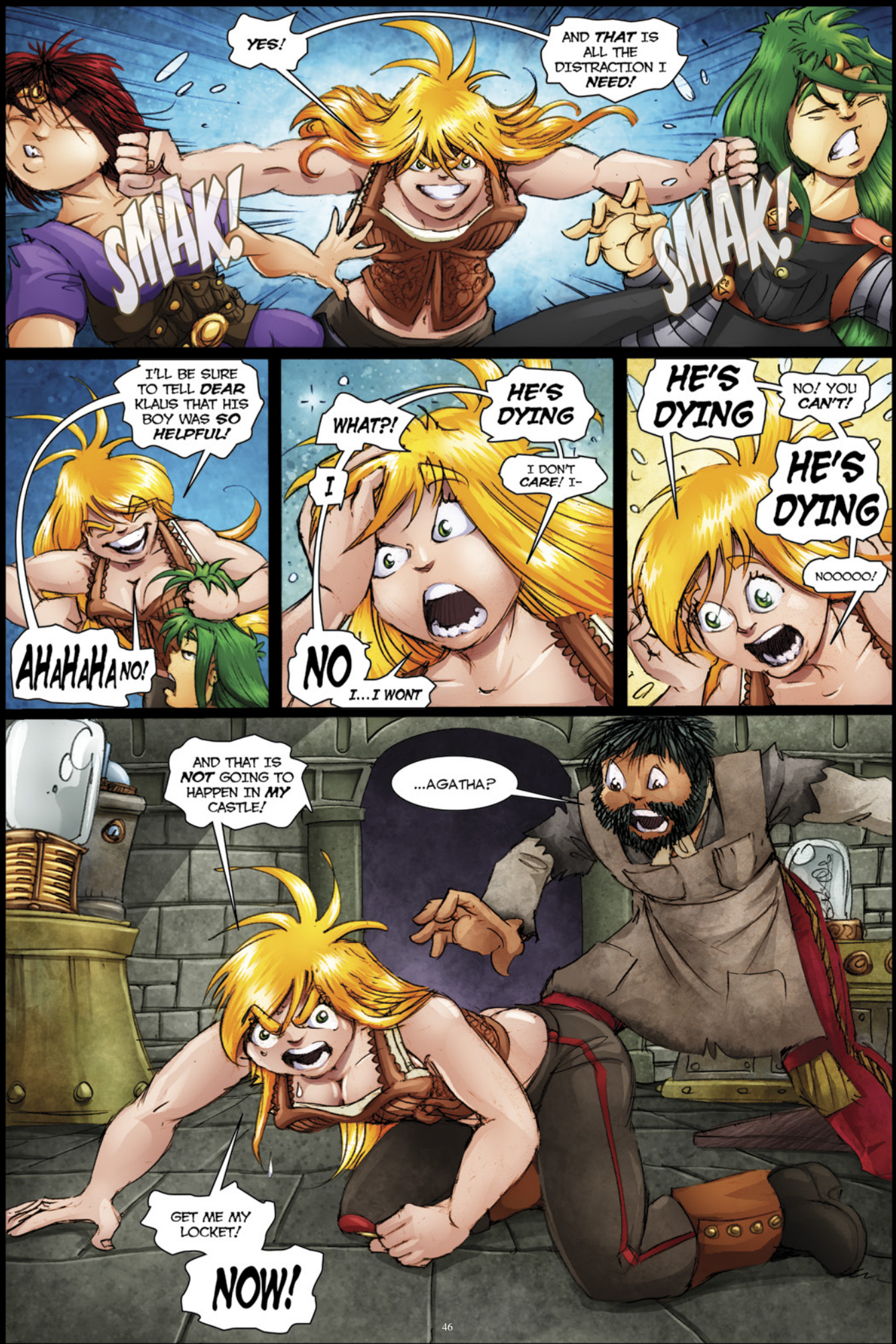

AID THE MISTRESS...
BUT I GUESS IT WAS A NICE TRY.


urk...
POW!
...THAT ONE WASN'T BAD, EITHER.


WRETCHED GIRL.
DID YOU THINK I WOULD FOLD WITH ONE PUNCH?
OR... OR TWO...
OR... UM... WAS THAT THREE?
SNOP!
NAH. IT'LL TAKE TWENTY,
MAYBE THIRTY.
YOU ARE WOUND UP.
THAT'S RIGHT! I AM!
WHICH MEANS I ONLY NEED TO HIT YOU ONCE!
BOOT!
OH, LIKE THAT'S GONNA HAPPEN.
HEY! HEY! I'M WORKING HERE!
YOU GOT THEO OUT, I'M WEARING HER DOWN.
PFT. YOU'RE JUST WALTZING AROUND AND PLAYING WITH HER.
YOU'D BETTER LET UP, OR YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO HURT HER.
SHE'S ALREADY WORN DOWN.
PAF!
NO, SHE'S NOT, I'M JUST REALLY GOOD!
OH, YEAH. GOT IT. THANKS.
DIE!


KZZZZZZZT—
THE CONTROLS ARE FUSED!
I CAN'T SHUT IT DOWN!
HE'S GOING TO FRY-
AND NO POWER ON EARTH CAN STOP IT!
CHNK.
GET HIM OUT OF THERE!
CLEAR OFF THAT TABLE!
FIND ME A MEDICAL BAG!
BAF!
HOW'S HE LOOKING?
NOT GOOD!
WE HAVEN'T FINISHED THE LAST PART OF THE PROCESS YET!
GIL! HANG ON! THE SYSTEM'S DAMAGED!
IF YOU DIE BEFORE WE FIX IT, I'LL... I'LL KILL YOU!
UHHHH... 'FRAID YOU WON'T HAVE TIME...


WHAT—WHY ARE YOU STILL FOOLING AROUND WITH HER?
I'M NOT "FOOLING AROUND." I'M *LEARNING.*
FOR EXAMPLE, SHE'S LOUSY AT HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT.
I WILL *CRUSH* YOU!
PROBABLY SHE'S USED TO BATTING HER EYES AND GETTING *OTHER PEOPLE* TO DO HER FIGHTING.
SILENCE!
PLUS, SHE'S PRETTY *BOSSY.*
ANYWAY, I DON'T KNOW WHERE THE LOCKET IS.
OH. RIGHT.
HERE IT IS.
SO YOU KNOCK HER DOWN AND SIT ON HER, AND I'LL SLAP IT ON.
AH. WELL, ALL KIDDING ASIDE, SHE'S TOO STRONG FOR ME, ONE ON ONE.
SHE'S *IGNORING* BLOWS THAT SHOULD BRING HER DOWN.
AGATHA'S GOING TO ACHE ALL OVER WHEN SHE GETS BACK.
I *COULD* HIT HER HARDER, BUT THAT MIGHT KILL HER.
IT'S ALL I CAN DO JUST TO KEEP HER FROM *ESCAPING.*
AND WHY AREN'T *YOU* SNEAKING UP ON HER?
UM—I *TRIED.* BUT SHE'S *TOO FAST.*
AND SHE'S *READY* FOR ME NOW.
WHAT? I DIDN'T SEE *THAT—*
I SHOULD *HOPE NOT.*
HEY—ARE YOU STILL FOOLING AROUND WITH HER?
HOW LONG WILL *THAT* BE?
SHADDUP. ALL WE CAN DO IS *DANCE* WITH HER UNTIL HER REVIVIFICATION EDGE WEARS OFF.
ASK THE *SPARKS!* AN HOUR?—MAYBE TWO?
CAN YOU SPEED IT UP? STURMVORAUS NEEDS HER.
WELL, HE'LL JUST HAVE TO BE PATIENT.
I DON'T THINK HE *CAN.*
WULFENBACH'S *DYING.*

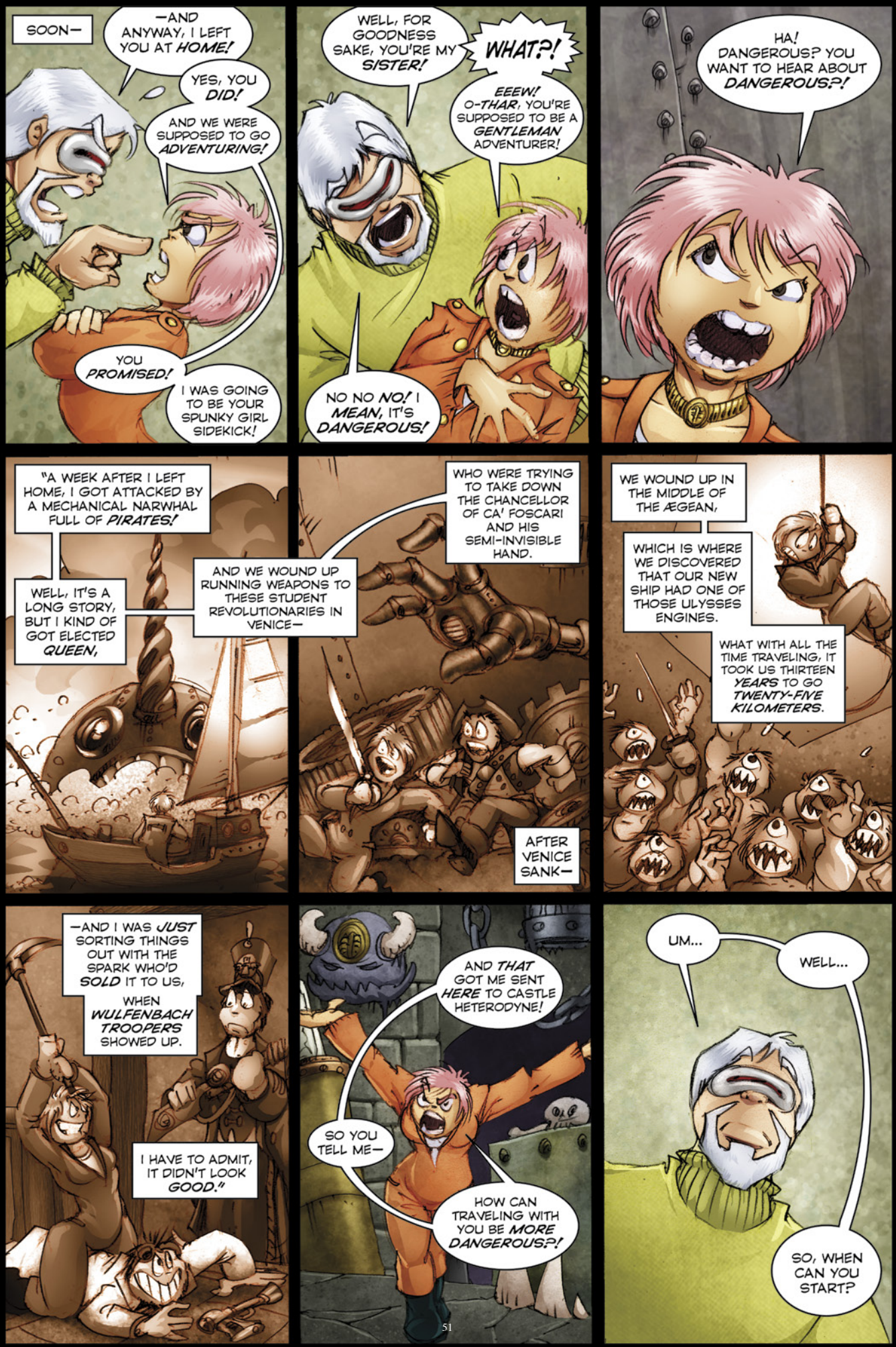

YES!
AND THAT IS ALL THE DISTRACTION I NEED!
SMAK!
SMAK!
I'LL BE SURE TO TELL DEAR KLAUS THAT HIS BOY WAS SO HELPFUL!
AHAHAHA NO!
WHAT?!
I
HE'S DYING
I DON'T CARE! I-
NO I...I WONT
HE'S DYING
NO! YOU CAN'T!
HE'S DYING
NOOOOO!
AND THAT IS NOT GOING TO HAPPEN IN MY CASTLE!
...AGATHA?
GET ME MY LOCKET!
NOW!


AAAAH—
CLIK
THERE.
GOOD GIRL. THAT WAS— IMPRESSIVE.
REMEMBER YOU CAN DO THAT.
...PREFERABLY SOONER, NEXT TIME.
GIL! IT WAS GIL—
HE'S IN TROUBLE...
YEAH. PRINCE STURMVORAUS SAYS HE'S DYING.
DON'T YOU DARE!
SLAM!
WHA—?
IS THAT SUPPOSED TO IMPRESS US?
"OOH, ALL MY FRIENDS WENT AND DIED, SO NOW I HAVE TO DO IT TOO?"
OH, NO YOU DON'T!
URK...
YOU DO NOT GET TO DIE JUST BECAUSE "EVERYONE ELSE DID!"
ERR...
EK...
DO YOU HEAR ME?!
AGATHA!
WHAT THE DEVIL ARE YOU DOING?!
UM— WHATEVER SHE'S DOING, DON'T MAKE HER STOP.
HIS READINGS ARE IMPROVING.

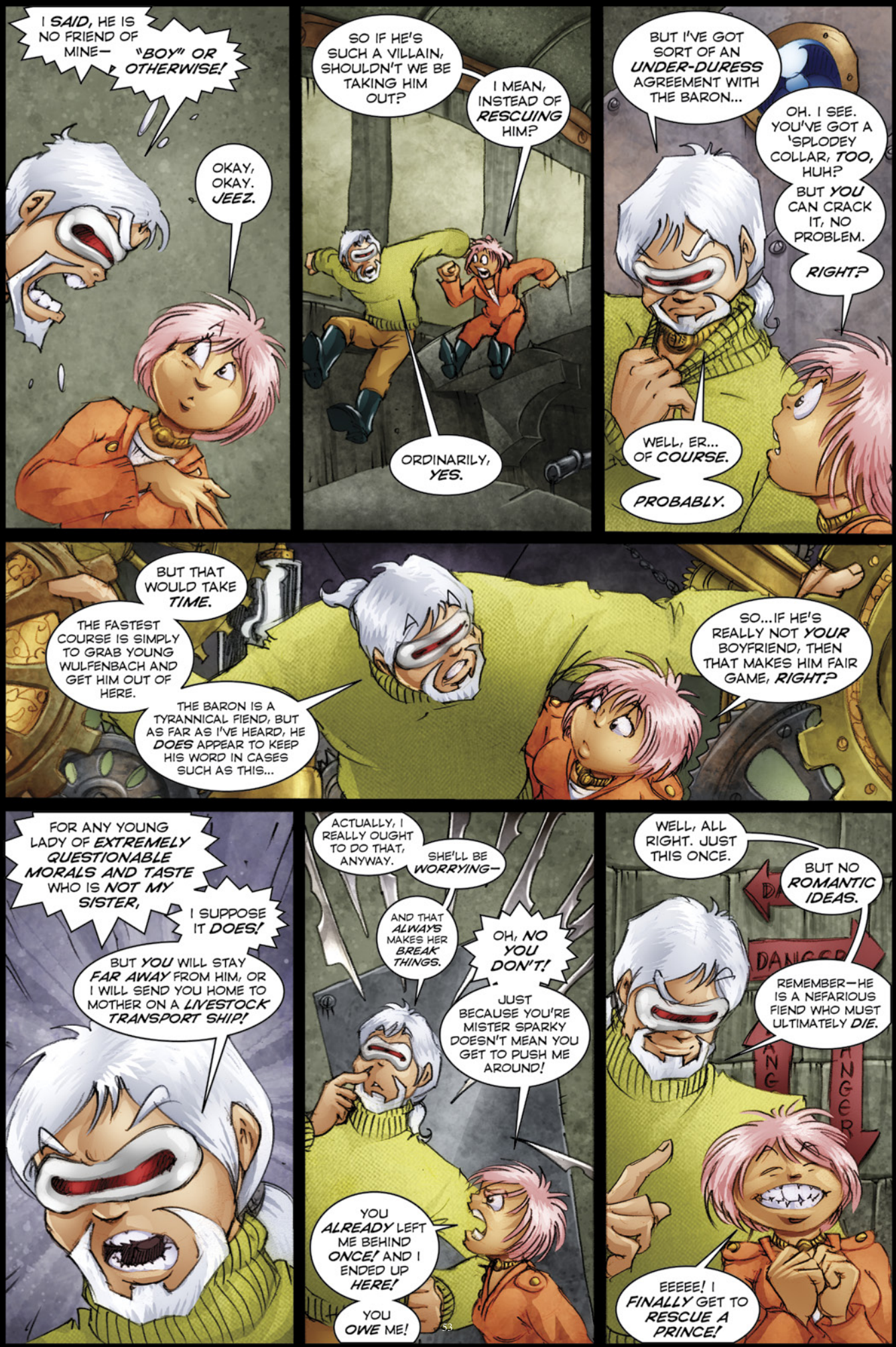

MEANWHILE, ELSEWHERE IN THE CASTLE—
HELLLLP!
THAT IS REALLY GETTING ON MY NERVES.
QUITCH'ER MEWLIN'.
SOMEONE FINDIN' US IS OUR ONLY CHANCE.
WE HAVE NO CHANCE.
NEVER DID.
R-79
DON'T TALK LIKE THAT, PAESANO.
IT'S BAD LUCK.
TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE.
OH. OKAY.
...YOU THINK MAYBE HUMAN FLESH TASTE LIKE CHICKEN?
OH, NO. IT'S MORE LIKE PORK. SWEET, SUCCULENT—
YOU ARE NOT HELPING.
HELLO! IS SOMEONE IN THERE?
YES! YES! WE'RE TRAPPED!
AH! YES, I SEE!
IT'S MOVING! I SEE A LIGHT!
RRRUMBLE!
BUT WHO IN BLAZES IS THAT?
WHY, I AM OTHAR TRYGGVASSEN GENTLEMAN ADVENTURER!
UH OH.


NOW, I DON'T EXPECT ANY THANKS FROM LAWLESS MURDERING SCUM LIKE YOURSELVES,
BUT AS LONG AS I'M HERE, THE LEAST I CAN DO IS RESCUE YOU!
JUST TO KEEP MY HAND IN.
HE BROKE UP SQUINALDO'S SLAVER RING.
HE BROKE R-78 AND R-76.
HE BROKE MY MASTERS DOOM SHIPS.
HE BROKE HIS WORD!
THE OTHAR TRYGGVASSEN?
OH, FRY ME!
I ASSURE YOU, MISS, OTHAR TRYGGVASSEN DOES NOT BREAK—
...GOOD HEAVENS.
SANAA? IS THAT YOU?!
WAIT—YOU KNOW HIM?!
OH, YES.
HE'S ONLY MY STUPID BROTHER.


WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE *DOING* HERE, YOUNG LADY?
AND *WHAT* HAVE YOU DONE TO YOUR *HAIR?*
YOU STAY *RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE—*
WHILE *I* GET A *ROPE.*
YOU—YOU'RE REALLY HIS *SISTER?*
OH, YES.
BUT—YOUR LAST NAME... "WILHELM..."
AND HOW LONG DO YOU THINK I'D LAST AS A "TRYGGVASSEN?"
THE OLD GUY WHO BROUGHT ME IN HERE SUGGESTED I *CHANGE* IT.
SO I USED *HIS.*
I THINK MAYBE MISTER OTHAR WILL NOT BE OUR FRIEND.
OH, I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT *THAT.*
NOT IF HE WANTS HIS *TASTY* LITTLE SISTER HERE BACK IN ONE—
CRAK
SNAP
UH—
I *SAID* I'M HIS *SISTER.*
TSK. EVEN *I* KNOW THAT WAS *STUPID.*
REQUIESCAT IN PACE AND ALL THAT ROT.
DIBS ON HIS BOOTS!
I CAN *SEE THE RESEMBLANCE.*


SOON—
—AND ANYWAY, I LEFT YOU AT HOME!
YES, YOU DID!
AND WE WERE SUPPOSED TO GO ADVENTURING!
YOU PROMISED!
I WAS GOING TO BE YOUR SPUNKY GIRL SIDEKICK!
WELL, FOR GOODNESS SAKE, YOU'RE MY SISTER!
WHAT?!
EEEW! O-THAR, YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE A GENTLEMAN ADVENTURER!
NO NO NO! I MEAN, IT'S DANGEROUS!
HA! DANGEROUS? YOU WANT TO HEAR ABOUT DANGEROUS?!
"A WEEK AFTER I LEFT HOME, I GOT ATTACKED BY A MECHANICAL NARWHAL FULL OF PIRATES!
WELL, IT'S A LONG STORY, BUT I KIND OF GOT ELECTED QUEEN,
AND WE WOUND UP RUNNING WEAPONS TO THESE STUDENT REVOLUTIONARIES IN VENICE—
WHO WERE TRYING TO TAKE DOWN THE CHANCELLOR OF CA' FOSCARI AND HIS SEMI-INVISIBLE HAND.
AFTER VENICE SANK—
WE WOUND UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ÆGEAN,
WHICH IS WHERE WE DISCOVERED THAT OUR NEW SHIP HAD ONE OF THOSE ULYSSES ENGINES.
WHAT WITH ALL THE TIME TRAVELING, IT TOOK US THIRTEEN YEARS TO GO TWENTY-FIVE KILOMETERS.
—AND I WAS JUST SORTING THINGS OUT WITH THE SPARK WHO'D SOLD IT TO US,
WHEN WULFENBACH TROOPERS SHOWED UP.
I HAVE TO ADMIT, IT DIDN'T LOOK GOOD."
AND THAT GOT ME SENT HERE TO CASTLE HETERODYNE!
SO YOU TELL ME—
HOW CAN TRAVELING WITH YOU BE MORE DANGEROUS?!
UM...
WELL...
SO, WHEN CAN YOU START?


YAY! YOU'RE THE BEST!
AW...
SO! HOW ARE WE GONNA GET OUT OF HERE?
WELL, ACTUALLY, WE CAN'T, JUST YET.
WHAT? WHY NOT?
WARNING PIT TRAP PLEASE RESET
YOU'RE THE ONE WITH ALL THE SPARKY PLANS...
TOO TRUE. BUT I'M HERE TO RESCUE THE BARON'S SON.
WHOA, REALLY?!
IT'S TRUE? OLD KLAUS REALLY DOES HAVE A SON?!
WAIT—AND HE'S IN HERE?!
JEEZ—WHAT DID HE DO?!
I HAVE A LIST, IF YOU'RE INTERESTED.
AND—AND YOU KNOW HIM?
OH, YES.
OOOOH. I GET IT. HE'S YOUR BOYFRIEND, RIGHT?
WHAT?!
OTHAR, PLEASE. I'VE BEEN HANGING AROUND WITH PIRATES.
IT'S OKAY.
GILGAMESH WULFENBACH IS A FOUL VILLAIN!
HE IS NOT EVEN A FRIEND, LET ALONE—
SECONDARY PIT TRAP ACTIVATED
YEAH? THEN WHY'D YOU LEAVE GRIMSTAD TO AVOID HELGA GOOTERGUND?
HELGA?! SHE VOWED TO BRAIN ME WITH A MARLINSPIKE IF SHE EVER SAW ME AGAIN!
MOM SAYS YOU SHOULD HAVE TRIED HARDER!
HELGA'S RICH, SMART AND BEAUTIFUL!
PLUS, SHE CAN KILL A FROSTED CAVE BEAR WITH HER BARE HANDS!
MY POINT EXACTLY!
SHE SAID I WAS CRAZY!
YOU ARE NOT CRAZY!
YOU'RE MY BROTHER!
AND YOU'RE A HERO!
WHY... THANK YOU, SANAA. I'M TOUCHED.
NEED A LAUGH?
YES
HELL YES!
YEAH, YOU SURE ARE.
NOW, C'MON. LET'S GO SAVE YOUR BOYFRIEND.

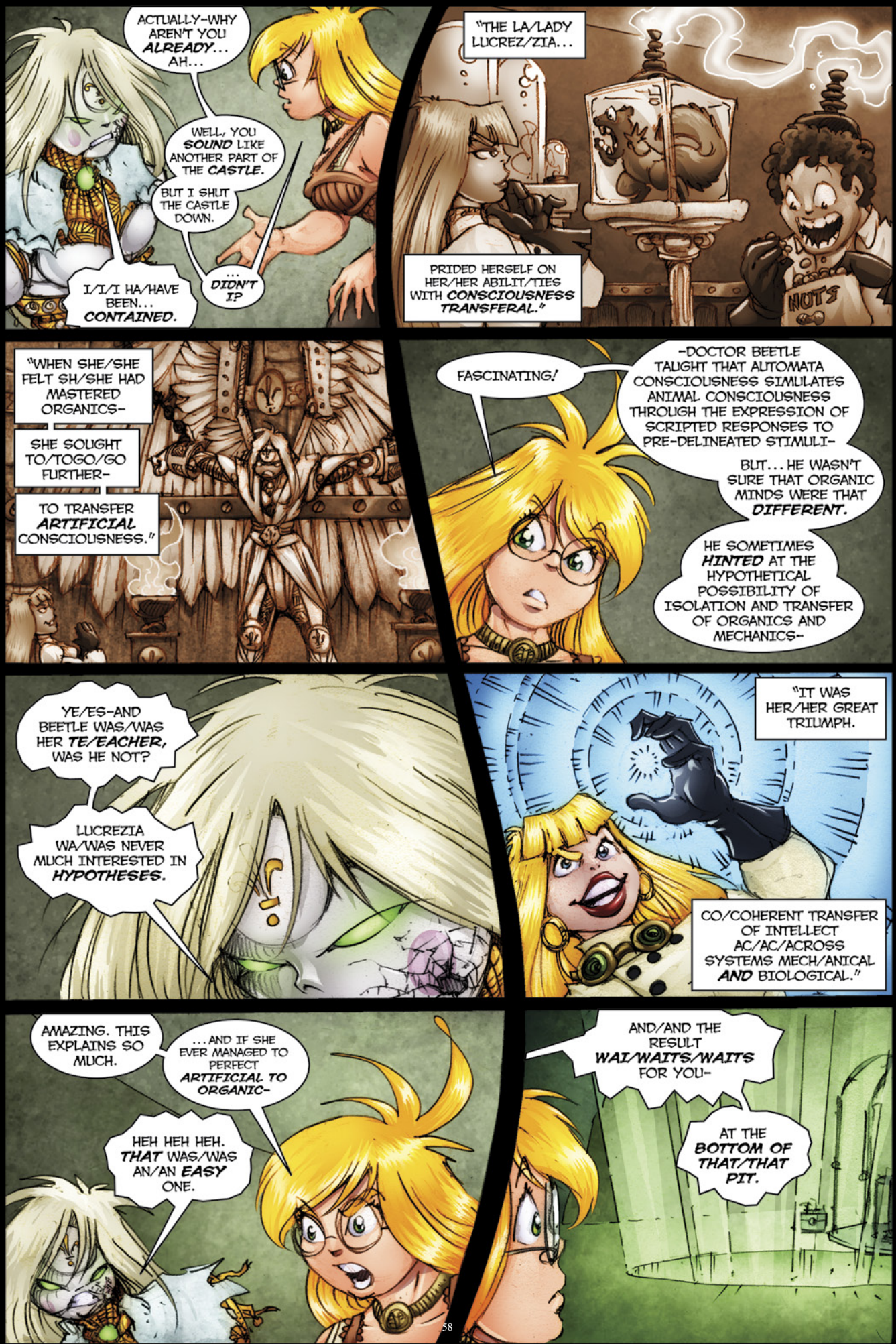

I SAID, HE IS NO FRIEND OF MINE— "BOY" OR OTHERWISE!
OKAY, OKAY. JEEZ.
SO IF HE'S SUCH A VILLAIN, SHOULDN'T WE BE TAKING HIM OUT?
I MEAN, INSTEAD OF RESCUING HIM?
ORDINARILY, YES.
BUT I'VE GOT SORT OF AN UNDER-DURESS AGREEMENT WITH THE BARON...
OH. I SEE. YOU'VE GOT A 'SPLODEY COLLAR, TOO, HUH?
BUT YOU CAN CRACK IT, NO PROBLEM.
RIGHT?
WELL, ER... OF COURSE.
PROBABLY.
BUT THAT WOULD TAKE TIME.
THE FASTEST COURSE IS SIMPLY TO GRAB YOUNG WULFENBACH AND GET HIM OUT OF HERE.
THE BARON IS A TYRANNICAL FIEND, BUT AS FAR AS I'VE HEARD, HE DOES APPEAR TO KEEP HIS WORD IN CASES SUCH AS THIS...
SO...IF HE'S REALLY NOT YOUR BOYFRIEND, THEN THAT MAKES HIM FAIR GAME, RIGHT?
FOR ANY YOUNG LADY OF EXTREMELY QUESTIONABLE MORALS AND TASTE WHO IS NOT MY SISTER,
I SUPPOSE IT DOES!
BUT YOU WILL STAY FAR AWAY FROM HIM, OR I WILL SEND YOU HOME TO MOTHER ON A LIVESTOCK TRANSPORT SHIP!
ACTUALLY, I REALLY OUGHT TO DO THAT, ANYWAY.
SHE'LL BE WORRYING—
AND THAT ALWAYS MAKES HER BREAK THINGS.
OH, NO YOU DON'T!
JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE MISTER SPARKY DOESN'T MEAN YOU GET TO PUSH ME AROUND!
YOU ALREADY LEFT ME BEHIND ONCE! AND I ENDED UP HERE!
YOU OWE ME!
WELL, ALL RIGHT. JUST THIS ONCE.
BUT NO ROMANTIC IDEAS.
REMEMBER—HE IS A NEFARIOUS FIEND WHO MUST ULTIMATELY DIE.
EEEEE! I FINALLY GET TO RESCUE A PRINCE!


MEANWHILE—
-WELL, I GUESS YOU'D SAY IT'S SORT OF LIKE GALVANIZING-
WHAT—YOU'RE GOING TO DIP HIM IN MOLTEN ZINC?
HA! ONLY METAPHORICALLY.
HUH. IT'LL PROBABLY FEEL SIMILAR.
THAT'LL BE A STEP UP, ACTUALLY.
YEAH, BUT THEN YOU'LL BE COMPLETELY STABLE, AND...
AND...
TARVEK? YOU OKAY?
UH-I... I DON'T KNOW...
HEY-WHY'S HE STILL ACTING SICK?
THE SECONDARY CORE ANNEALING PROCESS SHOULD HAVE FIXED ALL THAT.
UM-WE DIDN'T DO ANY SECONDARY PROCESS.
OH.
UH-OH.


STURMVORAUS!
YOU NEVER FINISHED THE PROCEDURE?!
IDIOT!
EXCUSE ME?
WE HAVE BEEN KIND OF BUSY HERE-
RUN
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO STILL NEEDS PROCESSING!
WE FEEL GREAT.
WELL, UH, I DO, ANYWAY.
pft. THAT'S THE POST-REVIVIFICATION RUSH.
YOU'RE BOTH BURNING THROUGH ENERGY AT AN UNSUSTAINABLE RATE.
IF WE DON'T CAP IT,
YOU TWO WILL SLIP INTO A NEUROLOGICAL CASCADE,
AND WE'LL ALL DIE.
WOULD RE-ESTABLISHING THE SI VALES DO THE TRICK?
MAYBE, BUT ARE THE MACHINES EVEN STILL IN ONE PIECE?
WE CAN REWORK THEM. WE'LL BE ARTIFICIALLY EQUALIZING-
DON'T EXPLAIN IT- DO IT!
THEO! PROFESSOR!
CAN YOU GET US A STABLE POWER FLOW?
HM. YEAH...
IT'S TRICKY... BUT I THINK POSSIBLE...
THERE. I'VE CALCULATED THE GALVANIC ESSENCE LEVELS WE'LL NEED FOR EACH OF US.
OH, VERY ELEGANT!
NOW WORK ON THE MOST EFFICIENT SHUNT LAYOUT.
HERE'S THE POWER FIGURES FROM MEZZASALMA—
AND THE LATEST READINGS FROM THE THREE OF YOU.
THANKS! NOW WE-
HEY! WHAT? WHAT'S WRONG?
IT'S TOO LATE.
BETWEEN THE THREE OF US, WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH GALVANIC ESSENCE LEFT.


WHAT?! BUT—
LOOK AT THESE READINGS.
THIS IS THE THREE OF US, FROM TWENTY, FIFTEEN AND TEN MINUTES AGO, RIGHT?
YEAH, BUT I...
OOOOH. IF THIS PROGRESSION CONTINUES...
YES. ALL OF OUR LEVELS ARE DECAYING.
TARVEK JUST FELT IT FIRST.
AND WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH ENERGY BETWEEN US TO FINISH THE PROCESS.
WELL, THEN, WHY NOT JUST ADD SOMEONE NEW (WHO ISN'T ME) TO THE CIRCUIT?
BECAUSE ADDING SOMEONE WHO HASN'T UNDERGONE THE FIRST PART WOULD DESTROY OUR CURRENT LEVEL OF SYNCHRONIZATION.
WE'D ALL JUST FRY.
OKAY, WELL, LET'S GO! WE'VE GOT HOW MANY SPARKS IN HERE?
THE PACK OF YOU ARE SURE TO COME UP WITH SOMETHING, RIGHT?!
NO!
EVERYONE WILL HAVE THEIR OWN IDEAS, AND WE'LL WASTE FAR TOO MUCH TIME WAITING FOR ALL THE SHOUTING TO DIE DOWN!
WE'LL DO THIS MY WAY AND SKIP THE DEBATE.
THE SECOND TO THEO AND THE PROFESSOR,
GIVE THAT ONE TO TARVEK,
AND THE THIRD TO SLEIPNIR.
DON'T LET ANY OF THEM SEE ANYONE ELSE'S.
WHAT ABOUT WULFENBACH?
DON'T LET GIL SEE ANYTHING.
BUT YOU'VE GOT ALL THE ENERGY COMING FROM YOU.
THEY'LL BE FINE,
BUT YOU'LL DIE.
LIKE, FOR REAL.
NO. I WON'T.
BECAUSE AFTER YOU HAND THOSE OUT,
I HAVE ANOTHER JOB FOR YOU.


uuh...
WATER?
OH! THANK YOU.
WHO ARE YOU?
HIGGS, M'LADY. AIRMAN THIRD CLASS.
I'M CURRENTLY ASSIGNED TO HELP MASTER WULFENBACH.
OH? HELP HIM DO WHAT?
UM—HELP YOU.
ARE YOU REALLY THE HETERODYNE?
YES. I COULD CACKLE MANIACALLY IF IT WOULD HELP.
IT MIGHT.
I BEG YOUR PARDON?
OH, NOT FOR ME—
BUT IT SEEMS MIGHTY IMPORTANT TO THIS.
YOU/YOU/YOU CAN/ARE/NOT BE HETERODY/DYNE.
YOU/YOU ARE/WERE/ARE VESSEL FOR LU/LLUCREZIA.
I AM AGATHA HETERODYNE—
DAUGHTER OF BILL AND LUCREZIA HETERODYNE.
MOTHER JUST... VISITS.
YOU/Y/YOU WILL/WILL PROVE THIS-
OR YOU/WE WILL/WILL DIE.


ACTUALLY-WHY AREN'T YOU ALREADY... AH...
WELL, YOU SOUND LIKE ANOTHER PART OF THE CASTLE.
BUT I SHUT THE CASTLE DOWN.
I/I/I HA/HAVE BEEN... CONTAINED.
...DIDN'T IP
"THE LA/LADY LUCREZ/ZIA...
PRIDED HERSELF ON HER/HER ABILIT/TIES WITH CONSCIOUSNESS TRANSFERAL."
NUTS
"WHEN SHE/SHE FELT SH/SHE HAD MASTERED ORGANICS-
SHE SOUGHT TO/TOGO/GO FURTHER-
TO TRANSFER ARTIFICIAL CONSCIOUSNESS."
FASCINATING!
-DOCTOR BEETLE TAUGHT THAT AUTOMATA CONSCIOUSNESS SIMULATES ANIMAL CONSCIOUSNESS THROUGH THE EXPRESSION OF SCRIPTED RESPONSES TO PRE-DELINEATED STIMULI-
BUT... HE WASN'T SURE THAT ORGANIC MINDS WERE THAT DIFFERENT.
HE SOMETIMES HINTED AT THE HYPOTHETICAL POSSIBILITY OF ISOLATION AND TRANSFER OF ORGANICS AND MECHANICS-
YE/ES-AND BEETLE WAS/WAS HER TE/EACHER, WAS HE NOT?
LUCREZIA WA/WAS NEVER MUCH INTERESTED IN HYPOTHESES.
"IT WAS HER/HER GREAT TRIUMPH.
CO/COHERENT TRANSFER OF INTELLECT AC/AC/ACROSS SYSTEMS MECH/ANICAL AND BIOLOGICAL."
AMAZING. THIS EXPLAINS SO MUCH.
...AND IF SHE EVER MANAGED TO PERFECT ARTIFICIAL TO ORGANIC-
HEH HEH HEH. THAT WAS/WAS AN/AN EASY ONE.
AND/AND THE RESULT WAI/WAITS/WAITS FOR YOU-
AT THE BOTTOM OF THAT/THAT PIT.


HEH. CURIOUS?
BUT YOU MA/MAY NEVER SEE/SEE IT.
YOUR... AH... HIGGS HERE SAYS/SAYS YOU CLAIM TO BE THE/THE HETERODYNE.
EVEN IF/IF THIS IS SO, YOU ARE STILL MERELY A/AN UNPROTECTED HATCH/HATCHLING.
BY SHUT/TING DOWN MY/MY MADDENED SYSTEMS, YOU/YOU HAVE REMOVED YOUR BEST DEFENSE.
YOUR FORTRESS IS NOW/NOW MERELY A SLOWLY-CRUMBLING HEAP OF STONES.
THE/THE ENEMIES OF THE HETERODYNES WILL MO/OVE TO CRUSH US WITH/WITHOUT PITY.
THE/EY WILL NOT WAIT/WAIT FOR YOU TO BECOME STRONG.
BUT I/I CAN HELP YOU GAIN STRENGTH QUICKLY, IF/IF YOU ARE TRULY WHAT YOU CLAIM.
AND THEN/THEN, YOU MAY SAVE US/US ALL.
AH. YOU'RE SAYING YOU'VE HAD YOUR LACKEY GIVE ME WATER FROM THE DYNE.
hmf.
HE/HE IS NOT MY LACKEY.
BUT YE/ES.
EXCELLENT.
SO, YOU'RE NOT MA-er- UPSET, THEN?
HA. DON'T BE RIDICULOUS.
ALL YOU DID WAS SAVE ME TIME.
I'LL ADMIT, I WAS PLANNING TO USE IT A LITTLE LATER IN THE PROCESS,
BUT THIS IS PERFECT! SO MANY THINGS BECOME CLEAR!
I CAN- AAAK!
YESSS-BUT LET'S JU/UST ADD THE NEXT STEP, SHA/ALL WE?
ZZRK!


THERE! THAT'S THE LAST OF IT-
HEY- WHAT'S THE MATTER?
ah... I'M NOT SURE...
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THESE MODIFICATIONS-
GET HIM!
WHA-
COME ON! HURRY!
JUST GRAB HIM!
OKAY! WE GOT HIM! GET READY!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
'S OKAY, SIR. IT'S ON THE LADY'S ORDERS!
DUH. WE'RE MANHANDLING YOUR ROYAL PERSONAGE.
RIGHT. HOOK HIM IN!
WHAT? BUT WE STILL HAVE TO TEST IT!
SET THE CLAMPS!
AGATHA, TELL THEM!
JUST IGNORE THE PAIN, SIR.
NONSENSE.
"TESTING" IS FOR WHEN YOU'RE STILL GUESSING.

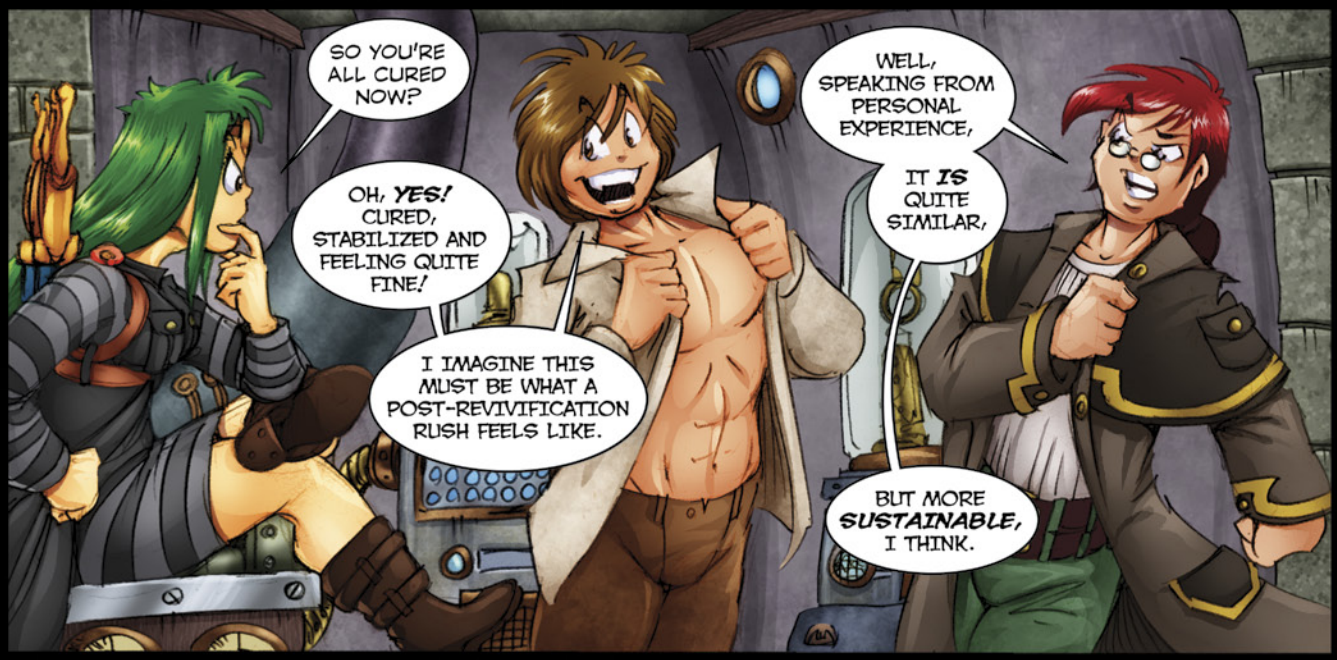

-AND, NOW, I HAVE NO NEED TO GUESS.

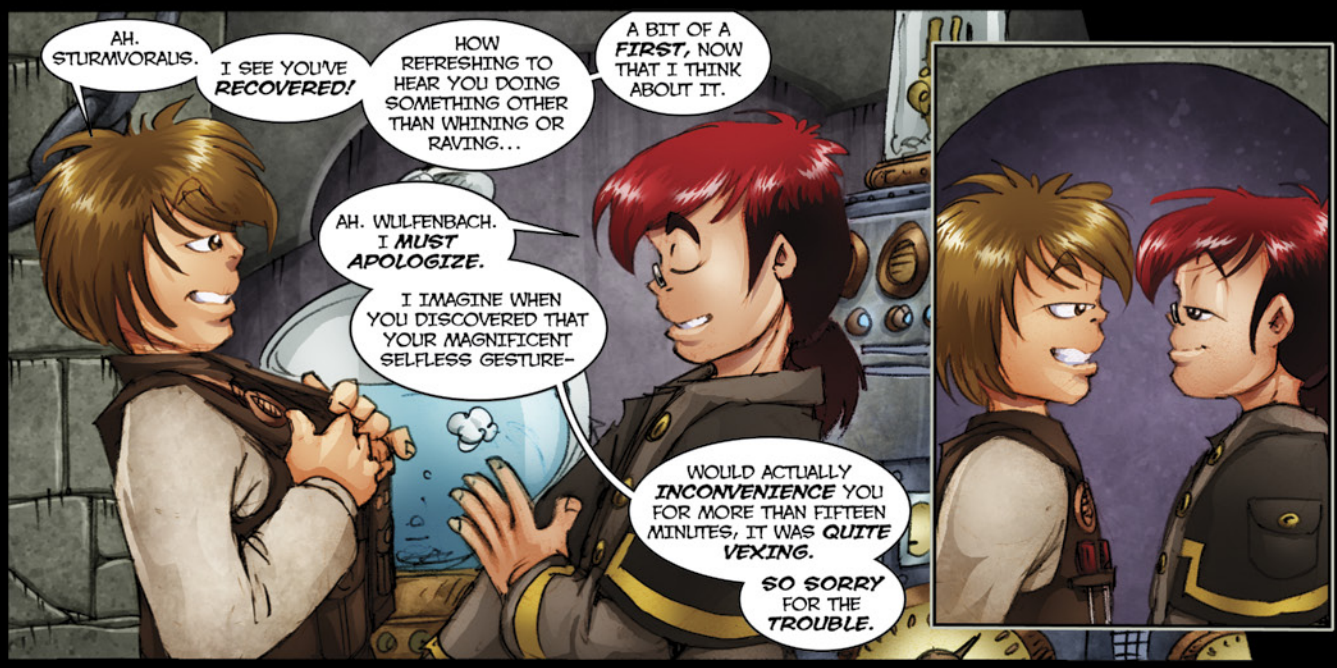

UM— AGATHA?
ARE, AH, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YOU KNOW/OW/OW, I DON'T/CAN'T REMEMBER THAT ANY OF HER ANCESTORS EVER DID/ID THIS...
SURE THEY DID. REMEMBER OLD IGNEOUS?
JUST BEFORE HE EXPLODED?
AH, YES. H/H/HOW TIME DOES FLY.
YEEESSSS! OOOH, YES! I AM FAR MORE THAN ALL RIGHT!
I AM PERFECT!
I FEEL... SUSPENDED IN AN ETERNAL MOMENT OF SUPREME CLARITY.
I CAN DO ANYTHING!
I HAVE SO MANY IDEAS!
SO MUCH I WANT TO TRY!
IT'S ALL SO EXCITING!
AND YET-IT ISN'T REALLY PERFECT, IS IT?
NOT YET.
THERE IS STILL THE ONE DISTRACTION THAT SHATTERS THE TIMELESS EUPHORIA-
IF I LET YOU DIE-


...IF YOU DIE-
THEN... ALL THE REST...
THE REST IS... POINTLESS.
SO THAT WILL NOT HAPPEN!
ZAKWOK


AAAAAAAAAH!
sizzle
POP
PING!
POP


hnggggg...
OH, WOW. TELL ME ABOUT IT.
WHA HAPPEN—
I DUNNO. BUT IF SHE STARTS CALLING US PITIFUL INSECTS, RUN.
...THAT'LL HELP?
NO, NOT REALLY.
OMIGOSH!
IF WE FEEL LIKE THIS,
LADY HETERODYNE—
OH! AND GIL AND PRINCE STURMVORAUS—
THEY WERE RIGHT UP THERE—
THEY MUST BE—
PERFECTLY SPLENDID!
WHAT? YOU—
AGATHA! GIL! I FOUND THE LAST OF THEM!
TARVEK! AREN'T YOU DEAD?
HA! OF COURSE NOT!
AGATHA FIXED EVERYTHING!
I FEEL AMAZING—MY MIND HAS NEVER BEEN MORE CLEAR!
INGE/GE/GENIOUS. TO DISTRIBUTE THE EX/EX/EXTRA ENERGY BETWEEN THE THREE OF YOU.
YES! AND A GOOD THING, TOO—
I BELIEVE ANOTHER FORTY-FIVE POINT THREE SECONDS, AND I WOULD HAVE EXPLODED OR SOMETHING.
... OR SOMETHING.
UNDER THE CIRCIR/ CIRCUMSTANCES—
I/I AM AM AM FORCED TO ADMIT THAT YO/YOU ARE MOST MOST LIKELY ONEONEONE OF THE FAMILY...
YESSS... MOST LIKELY IN/IN/INDEED.
OH YEAH...
I HAVE GOT TO TRY THAT AGAIN!


SO YOU'RE ALL CURED NOW?
OH, YES! CURED, STABILIZED AND FEELING QUITE FINE!
I IMAGINE THIS MUST BE WHAT A POST-REVIVIFICATION RUSH FEELS LIKE.
WELL, SPEAKING FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE,
IT IS QUITE SIMILAR,
BUT MORE SUSTAINABLE, I THINK.


AH. STURMVORALIS.
I SEE YOU'VE RECOVERED!
HOW REFRESHING TO HEAR YOU DOING SOMETHING OTHER THAN WHINING OR RAVING...
A BIT OF A FIRST, NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT.
AH. WULFENBACH. I MUST APOLOGIZE.
I IMAGINE WHEN YOU DISCOVERED THAT YOUR MAGNIFICENT SELFLESS GESTURE-
WOULD ACTUALLY INCONVENIENCE YOU FOR MORE THAN FIFTEEN MINUTES, IT WAS QUITE VEXING.
SO SORRY FOR THE TROUBLE.


RHAAAA!
AGATHA!
YOU'RE MISSING THE SHOW!
DIE!


THERE YOU ARE—WHAT'S THAT?
IT'S JUST AN IDEA I HAD...
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?
UM, WELL, YOU KNOW... THEM.
OH, DEAR.
DIE! DIE! DIE!
YOUR TURN!
THE THING IS, ALL THREE OF US ARE STILL SUFFERING FROM A HUGE BUILDUP OF RAW ENERGY.
IT WILL BE NECESSARY FOR US TO BURN IT OFF WITH SHORT, SUSTAINED BURSTS OF PHYSICAL OR MENTAL ACTIVITY.
I WAS GETTING THROUGH IT BY ASSEMBLING A NEW DEVICE,
BUT SINCE APPARENTLY I'M NOT ALLOWED TO WORK IN PEACE-
I'LL JUST HAVE TO JOIN IN!
YOU TWO OUGHT TO BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELVES!
YOU FIGHT LIKE DUCKS!
HA!
OW! HEY!
TAKE THAT!
IEE!
AH—
SPLOOSH!
GOOD JOB.
...OKAY, THAT WORKED. I FEEL BETTER NOW.
SAME HERE.
ME TOO.
IF IT HADN'T WORKED, I'D HAVE STARTED HITTING THEM WITH THE BUCKET.


BUT...IT ACTUALLY WORKED.
WE REALLY DID IT!
WOW.
...YEAH.
I SAID WE'RE BETTER!
AMAZING! A SUCCESSFUL SI VALES VALEO SHUTDOWN!
YEAH! AND NOBODY'S A MINDLESS RAVENING MONSTER OR ANYTHING!
OOH! OOH! YOU KNOW WHAT WE SHOULD TRY NEXT? LET'S HOOK EVERYBODY UP TO A-
SPLOOSH!
THINK THEY'LL STAY FOCUSED NOW?
GET ANOTHER BUCKET.
OKAY, OKAY. THAT WAS GREAT.
BUT WORK NOW, FUN LATER.
I'VE STILL GOT THE CASTLE TO SORT OUT AND THE TOWN TO DEFEND.
YOU/YOU /YOU-AH-
CLUNK CLUNK
Pfsshah


NICE CLANK. HOW'D IT GET SO MESSED UP?
AAAH! MY CASTLE!
I/I/I MALFUN/FU/ FUNCTION I/I
NONONO! NO MALFUNCTIONING! I HAVE PLANS FOR YOU!
I/I WILL RUN...
SSSSS fizzle
HOW INDEED?
HMM. SPROCKET WEEVILS?
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
WELL, ASIDE FROM THE FACT THAT THE BODY IS A VAN RIJN, AND THEREFORE PRICELESS—
IT'S APPARENTLY BEING RUN BY THE LAST OPERATIONAL PIECE OF CASTLE HETERODYNE.
BUT... DIDN'T YOU WANT THE CASTLE DEAD?
ONLY TEMPORARILY.
THERE WERE SO MANY FRACTURED PERSONALITIES, ALL WORKING AT CROSS-PURPOSES.
I HAD ALREADY BEEN THINKING THAT SHUTTING THEM DOWN FOR A WHILE MIGHT BE NECESSARY—
THAT'S WHY I SAVED ALL THE PARTS FOR THE "LION."
BUT I DIDN'T GET A CHANCE TO TEST THE IDEA BEFORE I HAD TO DO IT.
SO—YOU'RE THINKING WE CAN STILL GET THE CASTLE RUNNING IN TIME?
YES!
WE'VE GOT TO!
IT'S THE ONLY WAY I CAN PROTECT THE TOWN!
HAVING THIS FRAGMENT COULD SPEED THINGS UP ENOUGH TO SAVE US, BUT NOT IF IT SHUTS DOWN, TOO.
FORTUNATELY, I HAVE A PRETTY GOOD IDEA THAT THERE'S SOMETHING DOWN THERE I CAN USE.


URGH. I HOPE THESE CABLES WILL HOLD.
HUH. FROM THE WAY THE CASTLE WAS TALKING,
I DIDN'T THINK THERE WAS ANYTHING BELOW THE MOVEMENT CHAMBER.
I DON'T THINK IT KNEW.
WHAT?! HOW COULD IT NOT KNOW?
WELL, I'M NOT YET SURE, BUT-
I SUSPECT THAT THIS IS MY MOTHER'S SECRET LAB.


AMAZING. HOW DID YOU KNOW THIS WAS HERE?
WELL, I DIDN'T, EXACTLY.
IT JUST... MADE SENSE...
DID YOU KNOW SHE WAS HERE?
IT'S VON PINN!
MADAME VON PINN! DON'T MOVE!
MASTER WULFENBACH...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
SUCH A TROUBLESOME CHILD.
GIL— THIS LOOKS REALLY BAD!
AH. AND PRINCE STURMVORAUS.
OF COURSE... BOTH... NAUGHTY CHILDREN...
ALWAYS GETTING INTO PLACES YOU DO NOT BELONG...
JUST HOLD ON— YOU ARE SEVERELY INJURED—
tsk. NO, CHILD, I AM DYING.
IT FEELS VERY PECULIAR AND I DO NOT LIKE IT...
BUT THEN, I HAVE NOT ENJOYED ANY OF THIS...
JUST AS SOON BE DONE WITH IT...
STILL... TO HAVE FAILED...
YOU/YOU/ YOU WILL NOT CEASE!
THE/THE/ THESE WILL HE/ELP/ HELP.
AH... YOU. YOU HAVE RETURNED...
BUT WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO MY BODY?!


OKAY... EASY... ONTO THE SLAB...
HSSSSS-
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING?
FOOLISH CHILDREN...
VIOLETTA! FIND THE MEDICAL SUPPLIES!
THIS PLACE MUST HAVE SOMETHING!
HEY! I'M NOT-
UM, RIGHT. I'LL FIND SOMETHING.
YOU SEEM UNUSUALLY AGITATED.
YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH THIS CREATURE?
THIS "CREATURE" AS YOU CALL HER-
IS THE CLOSEST THING TO A MOTHER I HAVE EVER KNOWN.
SHE'S THE ONLY CARETAKER I EVER HAD WHO SHOWED ME LOVE OR KINDNESS.
SHE NEVER CARED ABOUT OUR BACKGROUNDS.
SHE NEVER PLAYED FAVORITES.
YES, SHE WAS STRICT-
SHE WAS TERRIFYING!
BUT SHE KNEW THE LIFE WE'D LEAD!
SHE MADE US STRONG!
AND NOW, SHE'S REDUCED TO THIS!
WHO COULD HAVE DONE THIS?!
WHOEVER THEY ARE, THEY WILL PAY!
YES! SLOWLY AND PAINFULLY!
AH, FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH-
SHE DID KILL MY PARENTS...

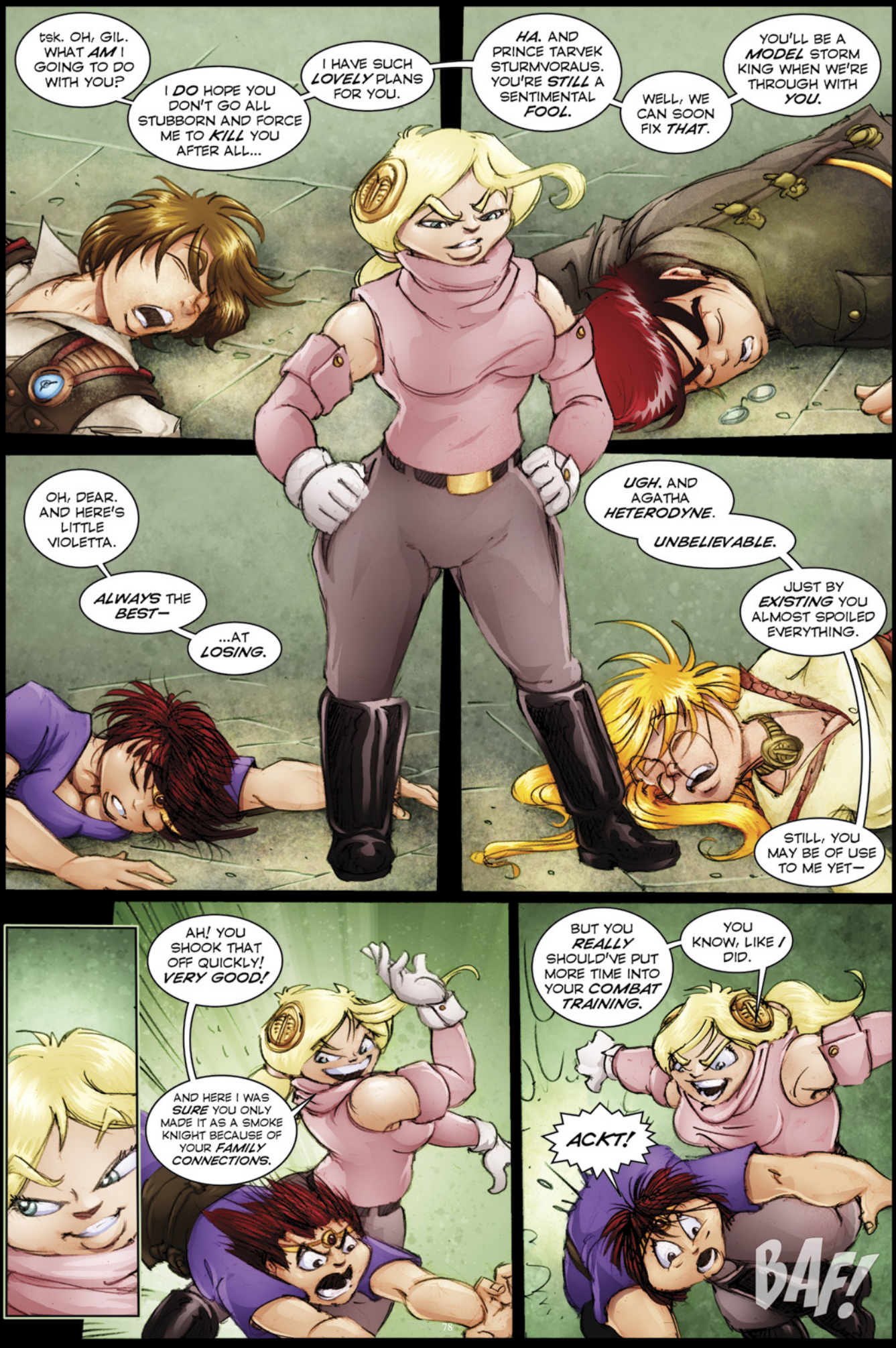

ER...
UM...
BUT IF YOU CAN MANAGE TO HOLD OFF ON THE SLOW PAINFUL VENGEANCE,
I WILL DO WHAT I CAN TO HELP.
UM—ARE YOU SURE IT WAS HER?
I WATCHED HER RIP THEM TO BITS RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME!
O-KAY, THAT'S ALL I'VE GOT. YOU GOT ANYTHING?
HM. MAYBE...
GO FOR IT.
ACTUALLY, I WANTED TO TELL YOU AT...I DON'T KNOW...AT A BETTER TIME,
BUT PUNCH AND JUDY ARE ALIVE.
WHAT?!
YOU—
IT'S... IMPOSSIBLE!
NOT IMPOSSIBLE, JUST VERY, VERY DIFFICULT.
I STITCHED THEM BACK TOGETHER AND REANIMATED THEM.
I WAS ABLE TO GET TO THEM QUICKLY ENOUGH, SO THERE'S ALMOST NO MEMORY LOSS.
THEY'RE STILL RECUPERATING, BUT—
GIL! YOU'RE WONDERFUL!
THANK YOU!
THANK YOU!
SERIOUSLY?
THE OLD "BRING HER FAMILY BACK FROM THE GRAVE" GAMBIT?
HAVE YOU NO SHAME?


I MEAN, JEEZ. IT'S *SUCH* A *CLICHÉ*.
THE LAST TIME I SAW IT WAS IN FEYDEAU'S "THE CLOCKWORK PANTALETTES,"
AND THE REVIEWS FOR *THAT* WERE *TERRIBLE!*
ARE YOU *LISTENING* TO YOURSELF?
...SO THEY'RE BACK ON CASTLE WULFENBACH,
BUT I'VE LEFT ORDERS FOR THEM TO BE TRANSFERRED TO THE GREAT HOSPITAL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
I JUST... IT'S... AMAZING...
SHE TORE THEM TO *SHREDS*—
AND WHAT WILL SHE DO TO *YOU*, IF SHE GETS THE CHANCE?
WELL, YES, BUT SHE'S OBVIOUSLY IMPORTANT TO THESE TWO.
I'LL HELP THEM NOW, AND...WELL...TRY TO *TALK* TO HER *LATER*.
YOU MAY NOT GET THE *CHANCE*.
SHE REALLY *IS* DYING—
AND WE DON'T HAVE A LOT OF *OPTIONS* DOWN HERE.
SSSSS—
AHHH. THIS/IS/IS MUSTMUSTMUSTMUST MUSTMUSTMUSTMUST NOT/NOTNOTNOTNOTNOT NOTNOT HAPPEN.
YOUYOUYOU CANCANCANCANCANV /COULD/WILLWILL WILL DO THIS FOR USUSUS—
SHH. TAKE IT SLOW.
NOW—DO *WHAT?*
THE M/MU/MUSE OTILIA WAS PRIED/TORN FROM THIS VESSEL.
SHE/IT/SHE MUST BE/BE RESTORED TO IT.
AND *I*-RETURNED TO *MY* PROPER FUNCTION/ INSTRUMENTALITY.
YOU WANT TO RETURN HER TO *THIS* BODY?
BUT— *IT'S* DYING, TOO!
NO/NO/ NO.
NOT *DYING.* NOT *ALIVE.*
I AM *CASTLE HETERODYNE.*
I AM/WAS/AM *VAST.*
THIS ENGINE CONSTRAINS ME.
BUT RE/ RE/RESTORE ITS MUSE, AND THIS *CLANK* CAN BE *REPAIRED.*
THIS IS WHERE IT WAS DONE.
THESE ARE THE MACHINES.
YOU/SHE *CAN* DO THIS—
AND YOU MUST DO IT *NOW.*

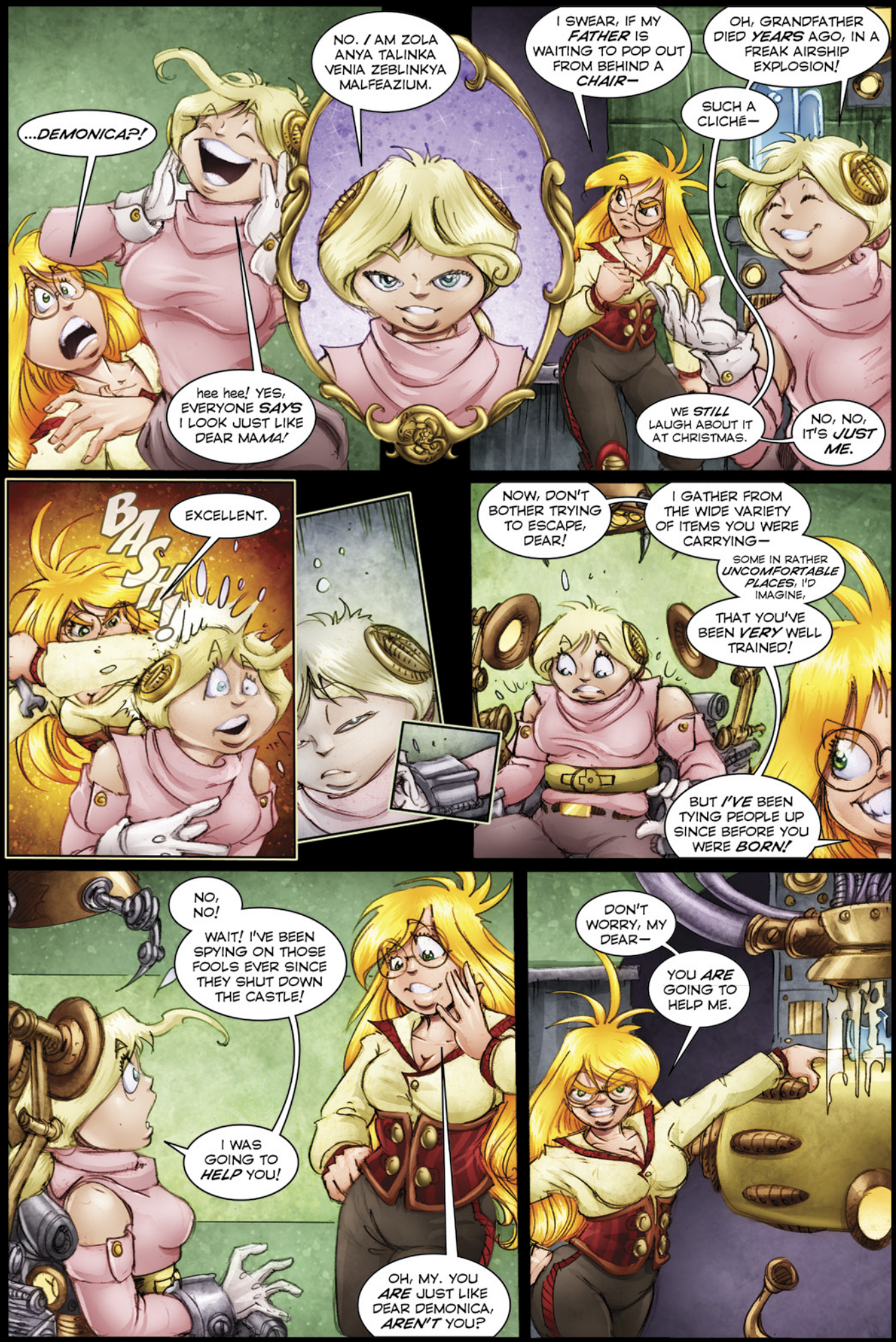

...OH, YEAH...
THERE'S THE PROBLEM.
DOWN PROP
HERR VON ZINZER?
I BROUGHT YOU A SNACK.
OH— FRAULEIN SNAUG.
THEY WANT TO GET GOING SOON.
HEY! THANKS!
YEAH— SO I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT YOU.
OH, REALLY?
SURE. THAT TROUBLE YOU HAD WITH THE LIFT?
NOT YOUR FAULT. SEE?
UP
LOOSE WORM GEAR.
HEE. THANK GOODNESS!
I'D HATE FOR YOU TO THINK I'M CLUMSY.
OH, NOT AT ALL.
HMM. LET ME SEE THAT EYE.
HOO. NICE MOUSE.
WAIT. I FOUND SOME STUFF IN THE RED PLAYROOM.
OH, NO! DON'T LOOK!
THERE. JUST DAB THAT ON EVERY HOUR OR SO.
IT'LL FIX IT RIGHT UP.
YOU'RE TOO KIND!
AND SO... GROUNDED.
GROUNDED?
YOU KNOW, ABLE TO WORK SO WELL WITH SPARKS. IT'S A RARE TALENT.
NO WAY, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN TERRIFIED AROUND THEM.
WHAT? BUT THE WAY YOU'VE BEEN DEALING WITH THEM IS AMAZING.
HUH. YOU KNOW? IT HAS SEEMED... EASIER, LATELY.
EVER SINCE SHE STARTED DRAGGING ME ALONG...
AH, OF COURSE! DR. MITTLEMIND SAYS SOME PEOPLE ARE NATURAL MINIONS.
YOU MUST BE ONE OF THOSE!
DAAAAAH!
WHAT IN THE WORLD IS SNAUG DOING TO VON ZINZER?
LIKE I CARE!

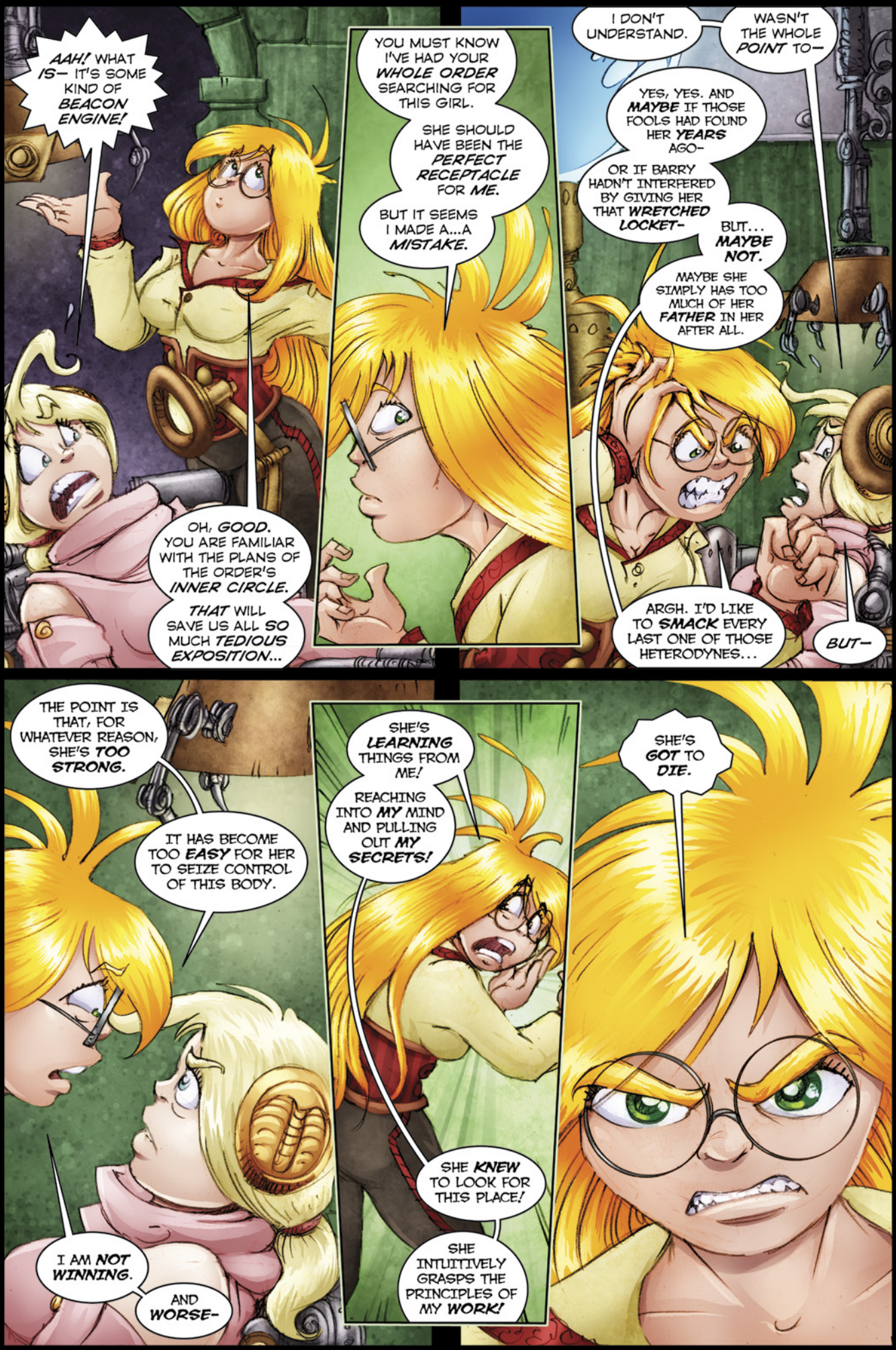

WHAT WE'RE HOPING TO DO IS TRANSFER THE CASTLE MIND OUT OF THE MUSE BODY—
AND INTO ONE OF THE CASTLE'S OWN SUB-SYSTEMS.
THAT WILL BUY US THE TIME WE NEED TO TRANSPORT IT TO AN AREA WHERE WE CAN RESTORE ITS CONTROL OF THE MAIN STRUCTURE.
OUR BEST IDEA IS TO USE THAT BIG WATCHDOG CLANK AT THE TOP OF THE SHAFT.
—YES, BUT SOME OF THE GEARAGE IS *WEAK*.
THE LIFT WILL WORK,
BUT IF WE WANT TO BRING IT DOWN HERE, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO LEAVE SOME OF YOU *BEHIND*.
AND ARE YOU EVEN SURE THIS WILL WORK?
THE CLANK *IS* HEAVILY DAMAGED, NO?
YES, BUT USING IT WILL STILL BE MUCH QUICKER THAN BUILDING SOMETHING FROM SCRATCH.
NOW, WE DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WAITING UP THERE, SO WE'LL TAKE—
—WE'LL *SEND* PRINCESS ZEETHA, MEZZASALMA, SNAUG AND YOUR MAN *HIGGS*.
DON'T BE STUPID. *I*, AT LEAST, SHOULD GO.
NO. WE NEED *YOU* DOWN HERE.
BESIDES. THERE'S SOMETHING WE NEED TO DISCUSS. IN *PRIVATE*.
BUT IT COULD BE *DANGEROUS* UP THERE!
SO? THAT'S WHY I WANT TO SEND...
ERM...
—PRINCESS ZEETHA!
HA! HE *IS* A SMART GUY!
SURE IS.


WAIT! ZEETHA— HERE!
WHAT'S THIS?
WHEN YOU GET TO THE CLANK—
IF YOU NEED ANY HELP—
JUST WIND IT UP AND TELL IT WHAT YOU NEED.
GOOD LUCK!
THAT'LL WORK?
SURE!
...PROBABLY.
WELL, IT WON'T HURT THEM, ANYWAY.
OMIGOD. THEY'RE DOOMED.
NONSENSE. THEY'RE PROBABLY NOT "DOOMED" PER SE.
ALL RIGHT, SO WHAT ARE WE "DISCUSSING?"
I'M THE STORM KING.
YOU— WHAT?!
AGATHA AND VIOLETTA ALREADY KNOW.
YOU NEED TO KNOW, TOO.
ZOLA IS TOO DANGEROUS—
HANG ON— THIS WHOLE THING WITH ZOLA—
THIS IS YOUR PLAN?!
THIS! WAS! NOT! MY! PLAN!
MY PLAN WAS A GEM-LIKE THING OF PERFECT BEAUTY!
POSSIBLY.
PAF!
NOT VERY FLEXIBLE, THOUGH.


tsk. OH, GIL. WHAT AM I GOING TO DO WITH YOU?
I DO HOPE YOU DON'T GO ALL STUBBORN AND FORCE ME TO KILL YOU AFTER ALL...
I HAVE SUCH LOVELY PLANS FOR YOU.
HA. AND PRINCE TARVEK STURMVORAUS. YOU'RE STILL A SENTIMENTAL FOOL.
WELL, WE CAN SOON FIX THAT.
YOU'LL BE A MODEL STORM KING WHEN WE'RE THROUGH WITH YOU.
OH, DEAR. AND HERE'S LITTLE VIOLETTA.
ALWAYS THE BEST—
...AT LOSING.
UGH. AND AGATHA HETERODYNE.
UNBELIEVABLE.
JUST BY EXISTING YOU ALMOST SPOILED EVERYTHING.
STILL, YOU MAY BE OF USE TO ME YET—
AH! YOU SHOOK THAT OFF QUICKLY! VERY GOOD!
AND HERE I WAS SURE YOU ONLY MADE IT AS A SMOKE KNIGHT BECAUSE OF YOUR FAMILY CONNECTIONS.
BUT YOU REALLY SHOULD'VE PUT MORE TIME INTO YOUR COMBAT TRAINING.
YOU KNOW, LIKE I DID.
ACKT!
BAF!


NO! DON'T... DON'T KILL HER!
SHE'S MY—
OOH, YOU HORRIBLE LITTLE TRAITOR! SHE HAS RUINED EVERYTHING YOUR ORDER—HAH, YOUR FAMILY—
HAS WORKED SO HARD FOR ALL THESE YEARS.
...AND YET, YOU'RE DEFENDING HER.
FASCINATING.
IT'S WELL KNOWN THAT SPARKS CAN ENSNARE THE LOYALTY OF THE FEEBLE-MINDED.
BUT DON'T WORRY.
I WON'T KILL HER JUST YET.
YOU SEE, I WAS CHOSEN FOR THIS ROLE BECAUSE I AM VERY GOOD AT IMPROVISING WHEN THINGS GO WRONG.
SO REALLY, I'M IN MY ELEMENT RIGHT NOW, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?
THERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ASPECTS OF THIS OPERATION THAT WERE LESS THAN IDEAL IN MY FAMILY'S OPINION—
YOUR FAMILY? WHO—
HO HO— WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO KNOW?
BONK!
HEE—BUT IT IS TRUE—I CAN TURN THE VERY WORST SITUATIONS TO MY ADVANTAGE,
AND THIS ONE DOES HAVE SUCH POTENTIAL.
WAKEY WAKEY!
sniff
WHA—
NO! DON'T—!
SNAP!
AAAAGGH!
OH! MY GOODNESS— WHO—
HELLO, AUNTIE.


...DEMONICA?!
NO. I AM ZOLA ANYA TALINKA VENIA ZEBLINKYA MALFEAZIUM.
hee hee! YES, EVERYONE SAYS I LOOK JUST LIKE DEAR MAMA!
I SWEAR, IF MY FATHER IS WAITING TO POP OUT FROM BEHIND A CHAIR—
OH, GRANDFATHER DIED YEARS AGO, IN A FREAK AIRSHIP EXPLOSION!
SUCH A CLICHÉ—
WE STILL LAUGH ABOUT IT AT CHRISTMAS.
NO, NO, IT'S JUST ME.
BASH!
EXCELLENT.
NOW, DON'T BOTHER TRYING TO ESCAPE, DEAR!
I GATHER FROM THE WIDE VARIETY OF ITEMS YOU WERE CARRYING—
SOME IN RATHER UNCOMFORTABLE PLACES, I'D IMAGINE,
THAT YOU'VE BEEN VERY WELL TRAINED!
BUT I'VE BEEN TYING PEOPLE UP SINCE BEFORE YOU WERE BORN!
NO, NO!
WAIT! I'VE BEEN SPYING ON THOSE FOOLS EVER SINCE THEY SHUT DOWN THE CASTLE!
I WAS GOING TO HELP YOU!
OH, MY. YOU ARE JUST LIKE DEAR DEMONICA, AREN'T YOU?
DON'T WORRY, MY DEAR—
YOU ARE GOING TO HELP ME.


AAH! WHAT IS— IT'S SOME KIND OF BEACON ENGINE!
OH, GOOD. YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE PLANS OF THE ORDER'S INNER CIRCLE.
THAT WILL SAVE US ALL SO MUCH TEDIOUS EXPOSITION...
YOU MUST KNOW I'VE HAD YOUR WHOLE ORDER SEARCHING FOR THIS GIRL.
SHE SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE PERFECT RECEPTACLE FOR ME.
BUT IT SEEMS I MADE A...A MISTAKE.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
WASN'T THE WHOLE POINT TO—
YES, YES. AND MAYBE IF THOSE FOOLS HAD FOUND HER YEARS AGO—
OR IF BARRY HADN'T INTERFERED BY GIVING HER THAT WRETCHED LOCKET—
BUT... MAYBE NOT.
MAYBE SHE SIMPLY HAS TOO MUCH OF HER FATHER IN HER AFTER ALL.
ARGH. I'D LIKE TO SMACK EVERY LAST ONE OF THOSE HETERODYNES...
BUT—
THE POINT IS THAT, FOR WHATEVER REASON, SHE'S TOO STRONG.
IT HAS BECOME TOO EASY FOR HER TO SEIZE CONTROL OF THIS BODY.
I AM NOT WINNING.
AND WORSE-
SHE'S LEARNING THINGS FROM ME!
REACHING INTO MY MIND AND PULLING OUT MY SECRETS!
SHE KNEW TO LOOK FOR THIS PLACE!
SHE INTUITIVELY GRASPS THE PRINCIPLES OF MY WORK!
SHE'S GOT TO DIE.


HMF. IDEALLY, I WOULD JUST DESTROY THIS BODY NOW, WHILE I STILL HAVE CONTROL.
THAT'S IDEALLY?
OF COURSE!
NOW THAT MY PRIESTESSES HAVE MY BEACON ENGINE WORKING,
ALL THEY NEED TO DO IS CALL ME INTO SOME OTHER SUITABLE VESSEL.
I'VE EXPANDED THE PARAMETERS SO I HAVE EVER SO MANY CHOICES NOW.
DESTROYING THIS ONE SMALL PART OF ME WON'T DESTROY ME AT ALL!
NOT EVEN CLOSE!
BUT IN THIS CALLING, I HAVE GAINED VALUABLE KNOWLEDGE.
A NEW CALLING WILL CAUSE ME TO LOSE ALL I HAVE DISCOVERED HERE.
NO. I WON'T BE USING THE BEACON ON YOU, DEAR.
THIS LITTLE DEVICE ISN'T ANYTHING SO SOPHISTICATED AS THAT.
INSTEAD, I'LL SIMPLY TRANSFER MYSELF FROM THIS TROUBLESOME GIRL'S BODY INTO YOUR OWN, KILL HER,
RENDEZVOUS WITH THE STURMHALTEN HIVE, MAYBE ROUND UP A FEW MORE LUCKY GIRLS,
AND THEN I'LL JUST GIVE MYSELF ALL THE LATEST NEWS OVER TEA.
SO PERFECT...
HMM...I THINK I'LL HAVE THOSE LITTLE JAM SANDWICHES...
NO.
AHAHAHAHAHA!
OH, I DO SO LOVE A TRULY DEFIANT SUBJECT!
WHAT FUN!
IF ONLY I HAD THE TIME!
IT WON'T WORK.
IF YOU TRY TO FORCE YOURSELF INTO MY BRAIN, YOU'LL SUFFER "REZZOK TIG-ZAFFA."
THAT IS WHAT YOUR GEISTERDAMEN CALL MUTUAL BRAIN DEATH, YES?


I SEE. YOU ARE VERY WELL INFORMED, AREN'T YOU?
YES! I AM!
AFTER YOU SENT THEM HERE TO BUILD YOUR MACHINES AND FIND YOUR DAUGHTER—
SOME OF YOUR PRIESTESSES LEARNED TO SEE YOU FOR THE FRAUD YOU ARE!
MOTHER KEPT YOUR LOREMISTRESS MILVISTLE HIDDEN FOR YEARS—
FRAUD?! HOW DARE YOU!
YOU KNOW NOTHING! NOTHING!
WHAK
I'LL SIMPLY BLAST YOUR MIND FROM YOUR BODY AND CLAIM THE SHELL!
YOU CAN'T! JUST LIKE YOU CAN'T USE THE GEISTERS!
FOR PITY'S SAKE, LISTEN TO ME!
OUR FAMILY STUDIED MILVISTLE!
LEARNED HOW TO BLOCK YOU!
I COULDN'T LET YOU TAKE ME OVER IF I WANTED TO!
BUT I CAN LET YOU RIDE ALONG.
I CAN GET YOU OUT OF HERE, AUNTIE.
IF YOU'LL STOP MENACING ME LONG ENOUGH TO LISTEN.
GOOD HEAVENS, DEAR.
YOU SERIOUSLY DID INTEND TO HELP ME?
BUT WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST SAY SO?
tsk. WORKING WITH FAMILY REALLY IS SO INFURIATING.
FINE. I'M LISTENING.


GOOD. NOW— YOU WANT THE HETERODYNE GIRL DEAD?
I AM SO ALL FOR THAT. BUT UNLESS YOU WORK WITH ME, YOU'LL LOSE EVERYTHING YOU'VE LEARNED HERE.
INCLUDING EVERYTHING I'VE JUST TOLD YOU ABOUT THE FAMILY.
...DO GET TO THE POINT, DEAR.
JUST WHAT I SAID. I CAN LET YOU IN—YOU CAN SHARE MY MIND.
HAH. SHARE MY POWER, YOU MEAN.
I DO SEE WHERE THIS IS GOING, YOU PRESUMPTUOUS LITTLE—
PRECISELY. I WANT TO PLAY TOO.
NOW, THE ORDER HAS GONE TO A LOT OF TROUBLE TO SET ME IN PLACE AS THE LOST HETERODYNE HEIR.
THEIR PLAN HAS GONE WRONG IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY, BUT IT HAD ITS GOOD POINTS.
TOGETHER, WE CAN STILL MAKE IT WORK.
AH. THOSE FOOLS IN THE ORDER.
WITH THEIR STUPID, SHORTSIGHTED "PLANS."
I KNEW I SHOULD HAVE KILLED HALF OF THEM YEARS AGO—THE DIFFICULTY WAS IN DECIDING WHICH HALF...
FOOLS, YES, BUT MOST OF THEM ARE STILL LOYAL TO YOU!
OH, LUCKY ME. REALLY.
BUT THE FAMILY—
NOW, DEAR, I ALREADY KNOW EVERYONE IS PLOTTING AGAINST ME.
BUT, PURELY BY ACCIDENT, YOU MIGHT HAVE A POINT.
NOW. STICK TO THE TRUTH, DEAR.
IT'LL BE EASIER TO REMEMBER.
KLAUS WULFENBACH IS REALLY THE RULER OF EUROPA?
THE BARON? YES! YES, HE IS!
AND EVERYONE ACCEPTS THIS? NO ONE CAN OPPOSE HIM?
WE—NO. AT THE MOMENT, HE'S TOO STRONG!
(sigh) THAT IMPOSSIBLE MAN.
HE'S TOO GOOD A PIECE TO LOSE.
ALL RIGHT, MY DEAR.
LUCKY FOR YOU—I SIMPLY MUST STAY.
WE HAVE A BARGAIN.


SOON—
THERE.
NOW, I'VE HAD TO MAKE A FEW MODIFICATIONS, BUT THIS OLD EQUIPMENT SHOULD BE QUITE ADEQUATE.
HMMM...
IS THERE ANYTHING I NEED TO DO?
YOU WILL SHOW THEM ALL
ZOWNF
TRY NOT TO FALL OVER?
OOH. WELL. THIS DOES FEEL DIFFERENT.
AND IS OUR LITTLE NIECE REALLY STILL THERE?
ZOLA? YES, SHE'S HERE.
HOW ODD... THIS HEAD FEELS WRONG...
HARDLY SURPRISING, DEAR, IT IS WRONG.
OH. I'M GETTING HER SURFACE THOUGHTS.
SHE'S... GLOATING?
GOOD HEAVENS, AUNTIE!
YOU GOT THE BARON WITH A SLAVER WASP?
WHAT?! HOW-


OOOOH. AND THAT'S WHY NO ONE'S BEEN ABLE TO FIND THE CITADEL OF SILVER LIGHT.
AMAZING! IT EXPLAINS SO MUCH!
GET OUT OF THOSE MEMORIES!
LUCREZIA, DARLING, AM I EVEN STILL IN THERE?
FOR GOODNESS SAKE, FIGHT HER OFF!
I'M TRYING! I CAN'T!
SHE REALLY CAN'T.
WUMP!
THE FAMILY HAS HAD YEARS TO PREPARE FOR YOUR INEVITABLE REAPPEARANCE,
AND MILVISTLE WAS EVER SO MUCH HELP!
MY COPY OF YOU IS NOW SAFELY ENSNARED IN A NEURAL TRAP—
WHERE I CAN SIFT THROUGH YOUR SECRETS AT MY LEISURE.
AND YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO HELP ME.
AND YET—OH DEAR.
I SEE THAT YOU PLANNED TO VIVISECT ME THE MINUTE YOU GOT YOUR INFORMATION BACK TO YOUR OTHER SELVES. tsk.
DON'T WORRY, AUNTIE DEAR.
I'LL KEEP MY END OF THE BARGAIN.
A VERSION OF YOU WILL MAKE IT OUT OF HERE—
GHAA!
YOUR PLANS WILL GO AHEAD BEAUTIFULLY,
AND NO ONE WILL EVER EVEN SUSPECT THAT I'M THE ONE IN CONTROL.
AND NOW, AS WE AGREED, IT'S TIME FOR THIS HETERODYNE COW TO DIE!


DO ME A FAVOR, AUNTIE.
HAND THAT BODY BACK TO YOUR DARLING DAUGHTER FOR A MOMENT.
I WANT HER TO HEAR MY PLANS FOR THOSE THREE FOOLS YOU SO CONVENIENTLY LOCKED UP FOR ME!
WAIT—I'M GETTING—
WHAT?! YOU ONLY FOUND TWO?
NO— THERE WERE THREE!
VIOLETTA AND GIL—
BUT THAT MEANS YOU MISSED—
OH NO!
DAAAH!
THWAK!
tch. YOU MOVED...
MERDE!
TARVEK! EXCELLENT! KILL HER!
WHUNCH


OW! TARVEK! DON'T BE A FOOL! AID ME!
I AM THE AGATHA GIRL!
YES, AND I'M THE QUEEN OF SKRAL!
WOK!
PRINCE STURMVORAUS! DON'T LISTEN TO HER!
SHE'S THE OTHER!
WE'VE GOT TO STOP HER!
KRANG!
IF I DIE, YOUR AGATHA DIES, TOO!
YOU DARE NOT WORK AGAINST ME!
KRASH!


HA!
HA?
HA!
AMMO
K-CHAK!
I HAD HOPED IT WOULDN'T COME TO THIS
A-HEM.
CLAK!
SLAM!
SLAM!
—beep—
HELLO, INTRUDERS!
THE BLAST DOORS ARE NOW SEALED,
AND MY LAB'S SELF-DESTRUCT MECHANISM HAS BEEN ENGAGED.
SHOULDN'T HAVE SNOOPED, DARLINGS, BUT IT'S TOO LATE NOW!
AHA-HA.
YOU'RE GOING TO DIE HORRIBLY IN:
SIXTY...
FIFTY-NINE...


FIFTY-EIGHT...
FIFTY-SEVEN...
STOP IT!
AHAHAHA!
NO POWER ON EARTH CAN STOP MY PERFECT DEATH TRAP!
NONE OF YOU WILL BE ABLE TO INTERFERE WITH MY PLANS, BECAUSE YOU'LL ALL BE DEAD!
FIFTY-SIX...
FIFTY-FIVE...
OH, I DON'T THINK SO.
FIFTY-FOUR...
FIFTY-THREE...
Choff
Thunk
FIFTY-TWO...
FIFTY-ONE...
LATER, TARVEK.
OH, WELL, MAYBE NOT.
'BYE, AUNTIE! I'LL TELL YOUR OTHER SELVES "HELLO" FROM YOU!
FIFTY...
FORTY-NINE...
UM...SHE HAS THAT BIG GUN. WHY DIDN'T SHE SHOOT US FIRST?
FORTY-EIGHT...
FORTY-SEVEN...
WELL, IT ONLY SHOOTS MARSHMALLOWS, FOR ONE THING...
AND SHE APPARENTLY KNOWS EVERYTHING / KNOW-
SO I'M WONDERING WHY SHE EVEN TOOK IT.
OH, BY THE WAY, NICE "DEATH TRAP."
FORTY-SIX...
THAT HOLE WAS NOT THERE WHEN I LAST LOOKED!


WELL, MAYBE WE CAN GET UP THE SAME WAY—
FORTY-FIVE...
FORTY-FOUR...
BOOM!
FORTY-THREE...
BLUE FIRE!
SHE'S BLOWN THE SHAFT!
RUN!
RRRRR!!!
FORTY-TWO...
FORTY-ONE...


FORTY...
THIRTY-NINE...
THIRTY-EIGHT...
THIRTY-SEVEN...
THIRTY-SIX...
THIRTY-FIVE...
THIRTY-FOUR...
THIRTY-THREE...
THIRTY-TWO...
PRUUMMB
THIRTY-ONE...
THIRTY...
TWENTY-NINE...
TWENTY-EIGHT...
TWENTY-SEVEN...
TWENTY-SIX...
CLANG CLANG
CLUNK
PRUUMMB
PTAM!
PING!
SCREE
TWENTY-FIVE...
TWENTY-FOUR...
WHEW.
YOU—!
AH!
SHOVE
CLANG
ME!
TWENTY-THREE...
TWENTY-TWO...
TWENTY-ONE...
TWENTY...
NINETEEN...
EIGHTEEN...
SEVENTEEN...
SIXTEEN...
FIFTEEN...


FOURTEEN...
THIRTEEN...
TWELVE...
ELEVEN...
TEN...
NINE...
EIGHT...
SEVEN...
tsk. IT WOULD BE SO MUCH EASIER TO KILL EVERYONE HERE-
AND START OVER WITH A NEW CALLING.
BUT I MUST NOT FORGET THAT ONE OF ME HAS BEEN CAPTURED BY THAT TRAITOROUS NIECE OF MINE.
FOR NOW, THIS BODY MUST LIVE.
OH, WELL.
BOOP!
SELF-DESTRUCT CANCELED, DARLINGS! MAYBE NEXT TIME!
YOU SAID NO POWER ON EARTH COULD STOP THAT!
HM. I DID, DIDN'T I?
HOW AMUSING!
AND WE LEARNED SOMETHING ELSE USEFUL, DIDN'T WE?
LITTLE ZOLA SHOULD HAVE KNOWN ABOUT MY SELF-DESTRUCT CONTROLS.
PERHAPS SHE CAN'T GET AT ALL OF MY MEMORIES AS EASILY AS SHE THINKS.
MMM. THIS MAY WORK OUT NICELY, AFTER ALL.
OH, DON'T WORRY. I'M NOT GOING TO KILL YOU-
THAT WOULDN'T BE ANY FUN AT ALL.
NOW. THESE MIND CONTROL DEVICES WERE AN EARLY EFFORT...
MY BEAUTIFUL WASPS ARE EVER SO MUCH EASIER TO ADMINISTER...
BUT SINCE YOU'RE ALREADY HERE, THEY'LL DO QUITE NICELY.
TO HAVE THE YOUNGER WULFENBACH AND THE NASCENT STORM KING UNDER MY CONTROL...
OH, MY. THE POSSIBILITIES DO MAKE ME QUITE... GIDDY.
HEE HEE-
YEEK!


WHAT THE DELICE ARE YOU DOING?!
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD!
SSSSS-
NOT QUITE.
WELL, RELEASE ME THIS INSTANT!
THAT'S AN ORDER!
SSSSS-
THAT WILL NO LONGER WORK, YOU FILTHY THIEF OF SOULS.
IT WAS NOT EASY, BUT I HAVE FOUND WAYS TO BREAK YOUR HOLD.
RIDICULOUS! YOU CANNOT RESIST ME!
I MADE SURE OF THAT WHEN I BUILT YOU!
STOP, I SAY!
AH, BUT YOU DID NOT BUILD ME.
EVEN IN THIS MISERABLE FLESH,
I AM OTILIA- THE MUSE OF PROTECTION.
AND NOW I WILL KILL YOU.
NO! urk! CAN'T DIE...
NOT... YET...
THEN RUN.
CURSE YOU-
I'LL BE BACK, YOU KNOW-
*
URK-
WHA-VON PINN?
ST-ak-
STOP!
koff koff-
WHA...WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?
HEH. YOUR MOTHER ALWAYS WAS A COWARD AT HEART.


"...AND WHAT HAS BEEN GOING ON AT THE TOP OF THE SHAFT?"
DAAAH!
COME BACK WITH THAT!
OH, NOT ANOTHER ONE?!
YES! THOSE CONFOUNDED LITTLE CLANKS HAVE GONE OUT OF CONTROL!
THEY STEAL PARTS! TOOLS!
WE'LL NEVER GET THIS THING MOVING AT THIS RATE!
YOU KNOW, I COULD GO GET THE SPOOKY GIRL AND WULFENBACH, AND THEY COULD—
NO!
WE DO NOT NEED TO RUN TO A WULFENBACH EVERY TIME WE HAVE A PROBLEM!
WE ARE SPARKS!
WE CAN SOLVE THIS!
IT MAY TAKE YEARS!
ENDLESS TOIL!
THE BLOOD OF THOUSANDS OF MINIONS!
YEAH!
TELL IT, BROTHER!
BUT OUR SCIENCE WILL TRIUMPH!
OOO-KAY. I THINK IT'S TIME FOR THIS.
HMM? WHAT'S THAT?
I DON'T KNOW.
BUT AGATHA SAID IT WOULD HELP—
CLIK
AND HOW MUCH MORE TROUBLE COULD IT BE?


MEANWHILE, TWO RIVAL ARMIES WORK FURIOUSLY—
EACH PLOTTING TERRIBLE VENGEANCE AGAINST THE OTHER—
UNTIL *SUDDENLY*:


POIT!
CLANK
CLANG
POP!
CLAK
VUM
POIT!
POIT!
TUMPTY TUMPTY TUMPTY TUMPTY TUMPTY TUMPTY TUMPTY TUMPTY TUMPTY-TUMP-TUMP


WELL! THIS LOOKS PROMISING!
A PROMISING DISASTER!
CAN YOU NOT SEE IT?!
UM... NO?
THEY ARE BUILDING! DESIGNING!
SPITTING IN THE FACE OF THE CREATOR!
WARPING SCIENCE!
... SO...
THEY'RE TAKING OUR JOBS!
WE ARE DOOMED!
DOOOOOMED!
NONSENSE.
THESE THINGS ARE BUT TOOLS!
NEW, COMPLEX TOOLS, YES,
BUT SURELY THERE ARE UNIQUE STRENGTHS THAT WE, AS MEN OF SCIENCE, CAN PROVIDE- THAT THESE LITTLE MECHANISMS CAN NOT.
OH. WELL. CERTAINLY-
WELL...
PERHAPS...
AAAH! I'VE SEEN THIS BEFORE!
THEY'LL START BY BEING HELPFUL,
AND THEN THEY'LL BUILD SOMETHING TERRIBLE THAT WILL KILL US ALL!
DOOOOOMED!
OH, FOR-
BOOM!


WHOA! LOOK AT THAT!
DOWN THERE— IT'S ALL BLOCKED!
THAT WAS AN EXPLOSION!
SOMEONE DID THIS INTENTIONALLY!
AGATHA!
hmf. MASTER GIL IS STILL DOWN THERE.
GUESS I'D BETTER GO MAKE SURE HE'S ALL RIGHT.
WELL, YOU'RE NOT GOING THIS WAY.
LADY HETERODYNE CARVED THIS HOLE.
THERE ARE OTHER PATHS.
YEAH, BUT WHERE ARE THEY?
I...CAN GET THERE.
WHAT?! HOW?
I... FOUND A MAP.
A MAP? WHERE IS IT?
IT'S... DOWN IN THE LAB.
OH, WELL, THAT DOES US A LOT OF GOOD, THEN—
I REMEMBER MAPS.
NOW, WHO'S COMING WITH ME?
I AM!
AH— GOOD.
ME!
YEAH!
WAIT— WHAT?
A MAP? OF THIS PLACE?
THAT DOESN'T EVEN—
SSH! I KNOW.
BUT HE SAYS HE CAN GET THERE.
IF HE NEEDS A MAP TO DO IT?
THEN FINE.
HE FOUND A MAP.


SO, I FIGURE WE'LL TAKE THEO AND SLEIPNIR, FOR WHEN WE RUN INTO SPARK STUFF—
CAN THE REST OF YOU GET THIS THING RUNNING?
OF COURSE! um...IF THOSE WIND-UP MICE WILL LET US...
HEY! QUEENIE!
AGATHA NEEDS THIS DOG MONSTER UP AND RUNNING AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!
HELP THESE GUYS MAKE THAT HAPPEN, GOT IT?
CLIK!
AND I'LL BE CHECKING BACK TO MAKE SURE THAT'S ALL THEY DO.
SO NO BRIGHT IDEAS. I KNOW HOW SPARKS THINK.
OH. HOW...AH... RESPONSIBLE OF YOU.
TO WORK, EVERYBODY! FRAULEIN SNAUG, MAKE A LIST—
UM, ACTUALLY, DOCTOR, I'D LIKE TO GO HELP FIND THE LADY HETERODYNE?
WHAT?!
PLEASE, SIR?
BUT...BUT, WHY?
HEY! ARE YOU COMING?
THESE GUYS'LL NEED HELP!
IN A MINUTE.
AH.
YES, OF COURSE.
OFF YOU GO, GIRL.
BUT NO PERMANENT DAMAGE—
HE BELONGS TO THE LADY!
'KAY!


FOUND IT!
THANK YOU, VIOLETTA.
hmf. MAYBE I'D BETTER JUST WELD IT ONTO AN IRON RING.
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. A GOOD SOLID LOCK WILL DO FINE.
SHEESH. WHOSE ADOLESCENT SLAVE-GIRL FANTASIES ARE WE INDULGING HERE, ANYWAY?
NOT MINE!
WHOA! DON'T LOOK AT ME!
YEAH, RIGHT. WHATEVER. HOW'S YOUR MONSTER LADY DOING?
I'M AMAZED SHE'S STILL ALIVE, ACTUALLY.
CONSTRUCTS OF THIS TYPE ARE NOTORIOUSLY TOUGH,
AND WE'VE MANAGED TO STABILIZE HER FOR NOW,
BUT THIS BODY IS DEFINITELY ON ITS WAY OUT.
WE NEED TO GET THE CASTLE OUT OF HER MUSE BODY SO WE CAN MAKE REPAIRS AND PREP IT FOR THE MIND TRANSFER—
BUT UNTIL THE OTHERS GET BACK WITH THAT WATCHDOG CLANK, WE CAN'T DO MUCH ELSE—BESIDES WAIT.
NO. WE CAN'T.
WE'VE GOT TO GO.


ZOLA NOW HAS ACCESS TO ALL MY MOTHER'S MEMORIES, RIGHT?
WELL, YES, TO A DEGREE...
AND YOUR FATHER IS PROBABLY STILL PLANNING TO DESTROY THE CASTLE, RIGHT?
WELL, I'M HOPING HE WON'T DO IT WHILE I'M INSIDE...
I'M HOPING SO, TOO—
BUT THAT'S TWO VERY POWERFUL ENEMIES.
NOBODY HERE IS SAFE UNTIL I GET THE CASTLE RUNNING AGAIN, AND THAT INCLUDES MADAME VON PINN.
WE'LL LEAVE NOTES FOR THE OTHERS. THEY'RE SMART.
ONCE THEY FIND THEIR WAY BACK HERE, THEY'LL BE ABLE TO GET STARTED ON HER WITHOUT US.
OUR FIRST PRIORITY IS REPAIRING THE CASTLE.
NOW. I'VE GATHERED WHAT I THINK I'LL NEED TO TRANSFER THIS PART OF THE CASTLE BACK INTO THE MAIN SYSTEM.
THAT'S ASSUMING WE CAN FIND A PLACE TO HOOK IT UP—
VUMMMM
I/I CAN SHOW/GUIDE YOU, BUT YOU HAVE T/T/TOO MANY/MUCH EQUIPMENT.
TO TRANSPORT ME/ME/ME ALONE WILL REQUIRE-
I HAVE THAT COVERED. ANY OTHER PROBLEMS?
N/N/NO, NO-WE'RE G/G/GOOD.


MEANWHILE, ABOARD ONE OF THE SMALLER CRAFT WHICH SUPPORT THE GREAT AIRSHIP CASTLE WULFENBACH:
SLAM!
MECHANICSBURG
HERE YOU ARE.
WE NEED TO TALK.
GOSPODIN DOLOKHOV.
HOW DID HYU FIND US, HEY?
YOUR MESSENGER TOLD ME.
VOT? HE VOULD NOT—
OH—NOT RIGHT AWAY...
FWUMP!
WHOO!
OHO! HYU HAZ EARNED THE RIGHT TO A TOK!
ZO TOK.
ALEXI! ZUM TEA FOR OUR GUEST!


YOU SAY YOU'RE LEAVING THE BARON'S SERVICE.
DERE IZ A HETERODYNE.
DOT VAS THE CONTINGENCY.
SHE IS NOT OFFICIAL.
SHE HAS NOT TAKEN THE CASTLE.
THE DOOM BELL HAS NOT RUNG!
FEH! TECHNICALITIES!
ENNYVAY, VE HAS NOT YET ENTERED DE TOWN, YAH?!
YOU MEAN YOU HAVEN'T CLIMBED UPSTAIRS!
OHO! VOT HYU—
NO. NONONO. I CAN'T FIGHT.
WE NEED YOU.
THE EMPIRE NEEDS YOU.
PFT. ZE BARON GOTS LOTS OV TROOPS. THOUSANDS!
BUT YOU SERVE THE HOUSE OF HETERODYNE.
IF YOU ACKNOWLEDGE THIS GIRL PREMATURELY,
IT WILL FUEL TROUBLE ALL OVER EUROPA.
OOOH, YAH! DOT'S TRUE!
COULD BE GOOT TIMES... LOTSA FUN...
OH, REALLY. AND HOW WILL YOUR NEW HETERODYNE LIKE THAT, IF SHE TAKES AFTER HER FATHER?
AWWW...


MEHHHH. SHE DID SEEM A BIT LIKE HER ONCLE, YAH?
HYU SAID: "PREMATURELY."
I DID.
"WAIT. LET HER TAKE THE CASTLE. LET THE DOOM BELL RING.
LET THE BARON FORMALLY RELEASE YOU BACK INTO HER SERVICE.
LET THE PEOPLE OF EUROPA SEE THAT THE LAW OF WULFENBACH STILL HOLDS."
VILL DERE BE... MARCHING?
BRODDERS, MEESTER BORIS MAKES A GOOT POINT.
EMPIRE LAW. PHOOEY.
DUN BE ZO GLUM, ZOG—
DIS VAY, MEES AGATHA KEN CHOOSE HER OWN VAR!
OOH. DOT'S TRUE.
A GURL GOTS TO BE PICKY FOR HER FIRST VAR!
HOKAY, MEESTER BORIS. MEBBE VE DO DIS HYU VAY—
EXCELL—
EEF HYU AGREES TO DE TRADE CONCESSIONS VE GUN DISCUSS NOW.
OY.
SIRS, IF YOU AGREE TO THIS—
THE LADY HETERODYNE WILL DIE.


DO FORGIVE ME FOR LETTING MYSELF IN, GENERALS.
I AM ARDSLEY WOOSTER, OF BRITISH INTELLIGENCE—
AND I REGRET TO SAY THAT HERR DOLOKOV IS NOT PLAYING STRAIGHT WITH YOU.
DON'T!
—KEEP TALKING, HERR WOOSTER.
WHAT HE ISN'T TELLING YOU IS THAT, IF YOU STAND BY,
THERE WON'T BE A MECHANICSBURG TO RETURN TO.
THE BARON PLANS TO DESTROY THE CASTLE AND YOUR LADY HETERODYNE.
DIS IZ A SERIOUS CHARGE.
HERE ARE ORDERS. TROOP MOVEMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE ATTACK AND ITS AFTERMATH.
GRAAAAH!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'VE DONE?!
DESTABILIZED BRITAIN'S GREATEST RIVAL,
AND AIDED AN INNOCENT GIRL.
A MIGHTY GOOD DAY'S WORK, I'D SAY.
SHE'S NOT INNOCENT, YOU DUPE!
SHE'S THE OTHER!
I BELIEVE YOU'RE WRONG.
BUT IF SHE IS,
THEN REST ASSURED THAT HER MAJESTY WILL TAKE AN INTEREST.


YOU... YOU DAMN SPY!
I'LL KILL YOU!
MAYBE NEXT TIME, SIR!
DOSVEDANYA!
ALL RIGHT, FINE.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME, JUST DO IT QUICK.
THUNK.
PERHAPS.
BUT FIRST—
TELL US ABOUT MEEZ AGATHA AND DE OTHER. VE IZ LISTENING.


AND, BACK IN THE HALLS OF CASTLE HETERODYNE—
HERE. I'M BETTING THIS IS IT.
BUT WE HAVEN'T GONE DOWN *NEARLY* FAR ENOUGH!
READ YOUR MAP WRONG?
...
THIS IS ALL *BEDROOMS*.
hah. 'THOUGHT YOU FOLKS WERE *SMART*.
THE CASTLE TOLD VON ZINZER THAT THE GREAT MOVEMENT CHAMBER WAS *SO* SECRET EVEN THE *HETERODYNE BOYS* NEVER KNEW ABOUT IT.
BUT THE LADY LUCREZIA WAS ALL SET UP IN THOSE *SMALLER ROOMS*.
SPARKS'R LIKE *BALLOON BEES*—
THEY LIKE TO SPREAD OUT WHEREVER THEY *CAN*.
IF SHE DIDN'T *KNOW* ABOUT THE BIG ROOM RIGHT OVER HER HEAD—
THE ENTRANCE WOULDN'T *BE* THERE.
BEST PLACE TO LOOK WOULD BE IN HER *PRIVATE CHAMBERS*.
HEY! A DOOR IN THE PANELING!
...AND YOU JUST *HAPPENED* TO KNOW WHERE LUCREZIA'S ROOM IS?
SURE. IT WAS ON THE MAP.


AMAZING! THIS PASSAGE MUST CONNECT TO SECRET DOORS THROUGH HALF THE CASTLE!
AND IT JUST KEEPS GOING DOWN, TOO. WHAT'S DOWN THERE, ANYWAY?
I'M JUST AMAZED THERE WASN'T A TRAP EVERY TWO METERS.
THERE PROBABLY WAS,
BUT THE CASTLE'S SHUT OFF. REMEMBER?
JUST LOOK AT THIS PLACE!
IT'S LIKE HALF THE CEILING CAME DOWN!
...AND THE REST COULD COME DOWN MIGHTY SOON.
WHERE'S GIL? WHERE'S AGATHA?
IT'S OKAY. THEY ALL SURVIVED.
YOU SURE ABOUT THAT?
THEY'VE GONE.
THEY'RE OFF TO FIX THE CASTLE.
GONE?!
THEY WANT US TO HELP VON PINN.
OH, HEY! STAY IN A FORTIFIED SECRET ROOM WHILE THEY RACE AROUND TRYING TO FIX THE DEATH HOUSE?
TWIST MY ARM!
SOON ENOUGH. BUT FIRST THINGS FIRST!


POOR VON PINN.
SHE LOOKS SO... VULNERABLE.
NO NEED TO WORRY.
THIS SETUP IS AMAZING.
SHE COULD LIE HERE FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS IF SHE HAD TO.
SO, WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
WELL, LET'S SEE...
THEY'VE LEFT SOME VERY GOOD NOTES...
HUH. I SEE. AGATHA, GIL AND STURMVORAUS ALL WORKED ON THIS.
INTERESTING.
WHY, THIS IS AMAZING!
OH, HO! AND I'LL BET I CAN EVEN IMPROVE ON THAT!
YES!
I'VE GOT EVERYTHING HERE!
BY THE TIME THEY GET THAT WATCHDOG CLANK DOWN HERE,
I CAN HAVE ALL THE PRELIMINARY WORK DONE, AND THEN SOME!
OH, YES. I CAN DO THIS!
OOOH! NOW THAT'S THE BRILLIANTLY SPARKY BEAST I RAN OFF WITH!
CARE TO ASSIST ME?
RWOWR!
UUUH—WE'RE JUST GOING TO GO TELL THE OTHERS HOW TO GET DOWN HERE—
UM... SLOWLY...
YEAH. UM, WE'LL GO WITH 'EM.
AND...THEN WE'LL GO LOOK FOR LADY HETERODYNE.
YANK!
EH. TOO MANY STEPS. I'LL JUST STICK AROUND HERE.

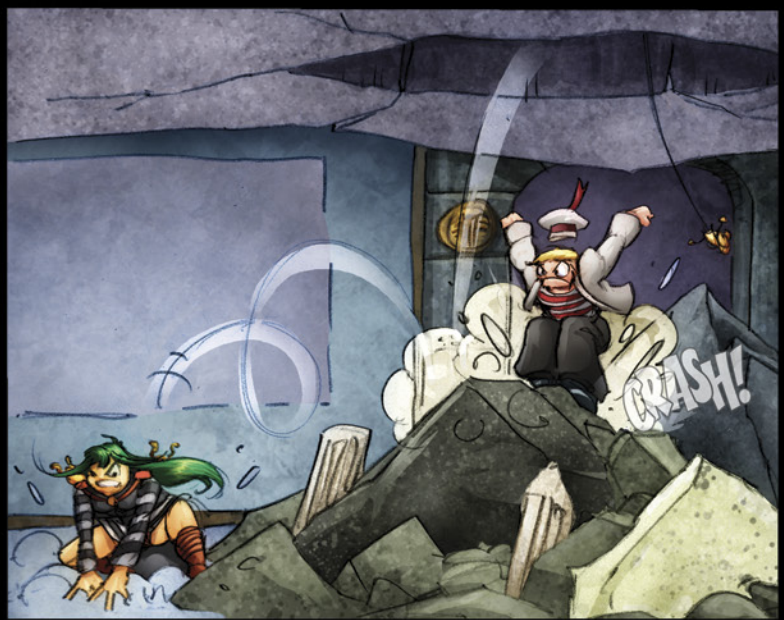

WHAAAAT?!
SPARKS!
THEY'RE CRAZY. THE LOT OF 'EM!
I THINK IT'S ROMANTIC!
WHATEVER.
OH, COME NOW, HERR VON ZINZER!
HAVE YOU NO ROMANCE IN YOUR SOUL?
MAY G-LOAT!
OUT THE TRASH?
SLAY THE HERO?
LOCK THE GATES?
APPEASE THE DARK
TAUNT THE PRISONE
FEED THE BEASTIE
TURN OFF ALL EXPERIMEN
HAVE YOU REMEMBERED TO
WAIT!
DUNNO. NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO FIND OUT.
NO! A DASHING FELLOW LIKE YOURSELF?!
THE WORD YOU WANT ISN'T DASHING, IT'S FLEEING.
OH, BUT SURELY THERE'S SOME GIRL WHO HAS CAUGHT YOUR EYE?
WELL...
YES?
I...I DO KINDA LIKE SANAA.
YOU GOTTA KNOW HER—SHE'S BEEN HERE LONGER'N ME.
SANAA?
SANAA WILHELM?
AAAW! I KNOW! CRAZY, AIN'T IT?!
SHE WILL DIE.
OH, SORRY, WHAT WAS THAT?
I SAID: "NEVER SAY DIE!"
YOU KNOW? GOOD LUCK? HEE HEE!


SO, HOW'S LIFE WORKING WITH MITTELMIND?
OH! HE'S *VERY* SUPPORTIVE OF MY NEEDS!
YEAH? THAT'S GOOD.
OH, I WOULDN'T CALL IT—
AAAAAAAH!
BLAST!
POISON
ILLITERACY REDUCTION




choff



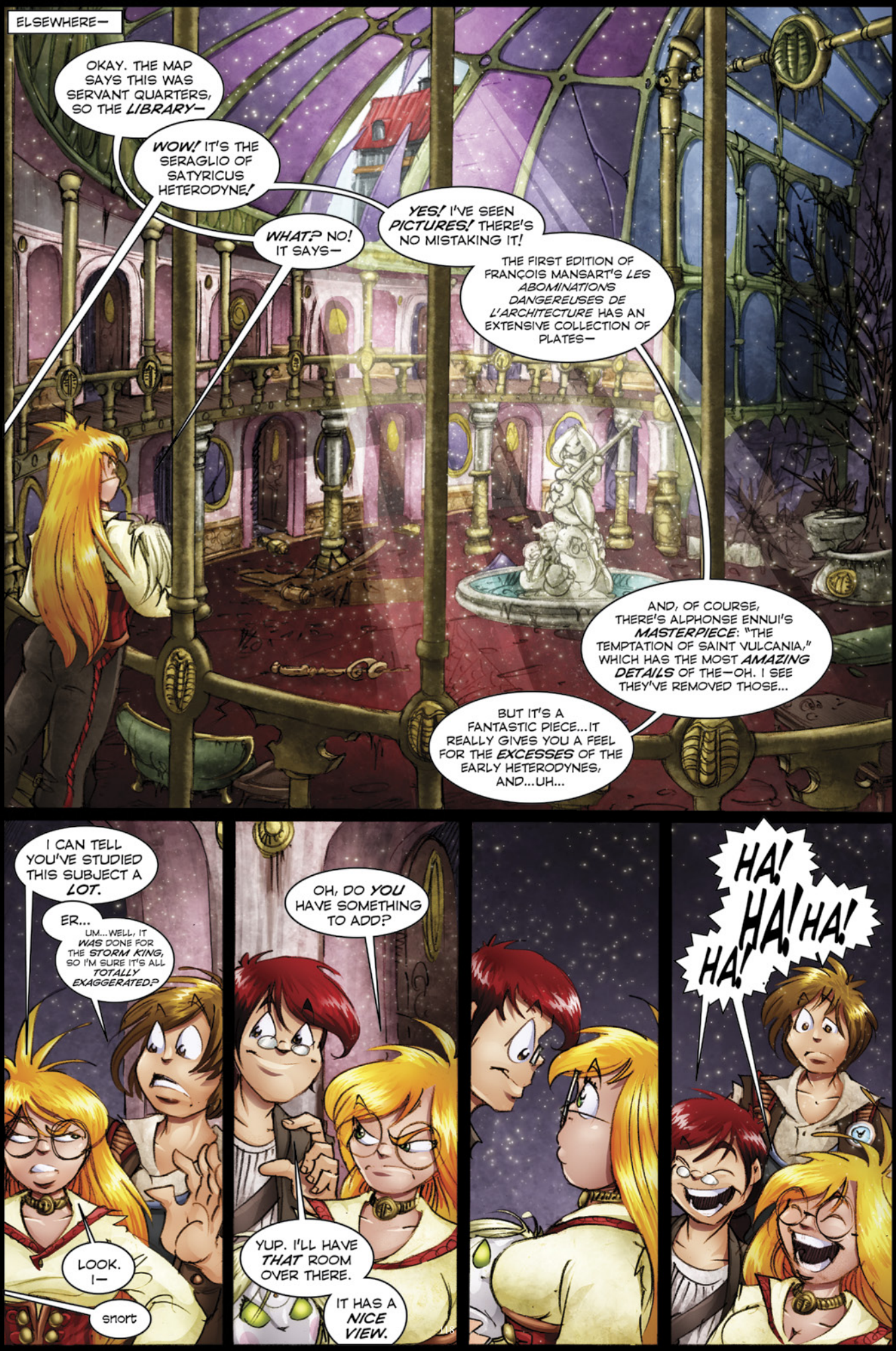

CRASH!

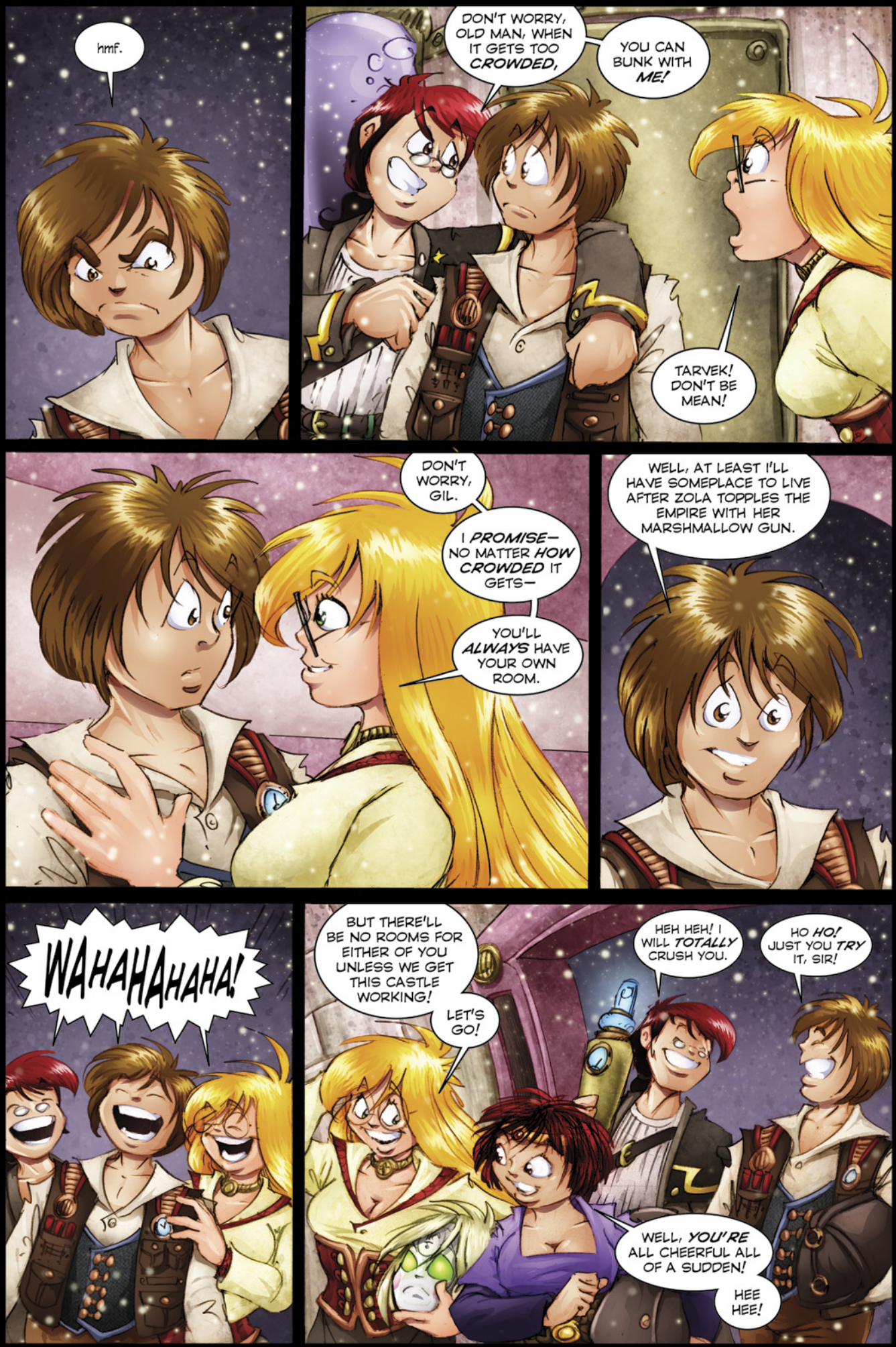

I THINK WE'VE LOST HER.
—DON'T KNOW WHAT SHE WAS DOING UPSTAIRS,
BUT I DOUBT SHE'LL BE BACK.
THAT DOESN'T HELP.
WHILE SHE'S ALIVE, AGATHA'S IN DANGER.
I'M GOING AFTER HER.
I...WON'T ASK YOU TO COME ALONG...
WELL...SHE IS OUT TO GET YOUNG WULFENBACH, TOO...
SO, LET'S SHIP OUT.


JEEZ. WHAT A MESS.
DOCTOR? DOCTOR MITTELMIND?
WHOA! PROFESSOR MEZZASALMA!
AH. VON ZINZER.
HELP ME UP, MY BOY.
THAT...THAT PULSE HAS SHORTED OUT MY LEGS.
WHAT HAPPENED?
WE...YES, WE WERE WORKING, AND SUDDENLY—
THAT BLASTED ADVENTURESS POPPED UP OUT OF NOWHERE, WAVING A GREAT HUGE MARSHMALLOW GUN!
SHE KILLED DIAZ—
KILLED HIM?!
uh—WITH A MARSHMALLOW GUN? REALLY?
SHE BRAINED HIM WITH IT!
SHE OBVIOUSLY MEANT TO KILL US ALL—
OH, DOCTOR! OH, NOOOOO!
BUT MITTELMIND, THERE, HAS A PULSE CANNON BUILT IN.
IT KILLED HIM, OF COURSE, BUT HER GUN DID BLOW UP.
THAT...THAT WAS VERY BRAVE.
OH, PLEASE.
DON'T START. HE'LL BE SMUG ENOUGH AS IT IS.

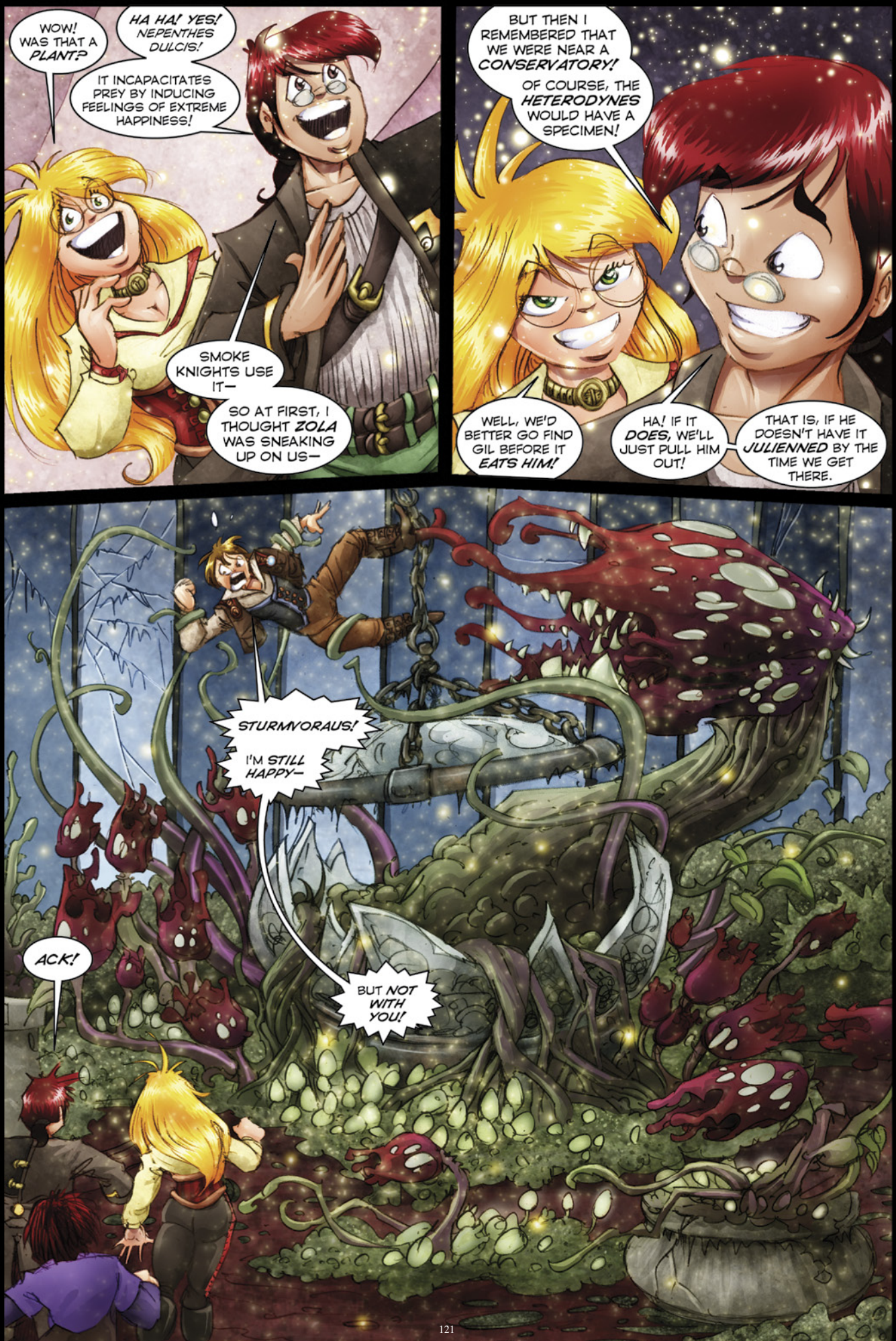

HE... WHAT?
OH. YOU DIDN'T KNOW?
MITTELMIND IS PART MACHINE.
HE HAS DIED SEVERAL TIMES IN HERE.
HE SAYS WE'RE JUST INTERACTING WITH HIS GHOST.
...AND HE'S MADE SURE THAT FRAULEIN SNAUG IS VERY WELL-TRAINED IN THE WHOLE REPAIR AND REVIVIFICATION ROUTINE.
CLEAR!
JUNIOR SCIENTIST LIGHTNING KIT
AAAH! THANK YOU, MY DEAR.
THAT IS ALWAYS EXHILARATING.
HUH. YOU DO THIS A LOT? DON'T YOU GET ANY MEMORY LOSS?
OH, THAT!
AS LONG AS I MAINTAIN A SMALL EXTERNAL POWER SOURCE-
SO—WHAT ABOUT DIAZ?
OH. HEAD TOTALLY SMASHED IN. HE'S DEAD AS A DOORNAIL.
SANS APPEL.
BUT—I THOUGHT SPARKS—
WELL... I COULD TURN HIM INTO AN UNDEAD MECHANICAL SPIDER.
OOH. NOW THAT I CAN WORK WITH! I CAN CONDITION IT TO OBEY OUR EVERY COMMAND!
OOH! OOH! IF WE MAKE IT A GIANT UNDEAD MECHANICAL SPIDER...
-BIG ENOUGH TO INSPIRE FEAR IN THE GENERAL POPULACE?
MY DEAR SIR. YOU THINK TOO SMALL!
BIG ENOUGH THAT IT WILL CONSTRUCT VAST WEBS THAT WILL TRAP AIRSHIPS!
INSPIRED! NEVER AGAIN WILL WE LACK FOR RESEARCH SUBJECTS!
I CAN'T WAIT TO GET OUT OF HERE.
MM. GOOD LUCK WITH THAT.


I MEAN, LISTEN TO THEM.
DID THEY DO ANY WORK ON THAT CLANK?
WE MOST CERTAINLY DID!
IN FACT, IT IS NEARLY COMPLETE!
WE MADE IMPROVEMENTS!
REALLY? WOW— I KNOW SPARKS WORK FAST, BUT—
AH! WE WERE ASSISTED BY THE LADY'S LITTLE CLANKS!
AND, WELL, HEH-HEH... YOU KNOW HOW IT IS...
um...JUST FOR THE SAKE OF CLARITY, ASSUME THAT I'M NOT BARKING MAD.
OH, WHEN YOU BUILD ON ANOTHER SPARK'S WORK.
YOU GET... FLASHES OF INSPIRATION...
AND THE LITTLE CLANKS WERE SO EAGER TO HELP-
THEY ALLOWED US TO RAPIDLY IMPLEMENT SO MANY WONDERFUL IDEAS...
YEAH, YEAH. WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME?
BOOM!


ELSEWHERE—
OKAY. THE MAP SAYS THIS WAS SERVANT QUARTERS, SO THE *LIBRARY*—
WOW! IT'S THE SERAGLIO OF SATYRICUS HETERODYNE!
WHAT? NO! IT SAYS—
YES! I'VE SEEN *PICTURES!* THERE'S NO MISTAKING IT!
THE FIRST EDITION OF FRANÇOIS MANSART'S *LES ABOMINATIONS DANGEREUSES DE L'ARCHITECTURE* HAS AN EXTENSIVE COLLECTION OF PLATES—
AND, OF COURSE, THERE'S ALPHONSE ENNUI'S *MASTERPIECE*: "THE TEMPTATION OF SAINT VULCANIA," WHICH HAS THE MOST *AMAZING DETAILS* OF THE—OH. I SEE THEY'VE REMOVED THOSE...
BUT IT'S A FANTASTIC PIECE...IT REALLY GIVES YOU A FEEL FOR THE *EXCESSES* OF THE EARLY HETERODYNES, AND...UH...
I CAN TELL YOU'VE STUDIED THIS SUBJECT A *LOT.*
ER... UM...WELL, IT *WAS* DONE FOR THE *STORM KING,* SO I'M SURE IT'S ALL *TOTALLY EXAGGERATED?*
LOOK. I—
snort
OH, DO *YOU* HAVE SOMETHING TO ADD?
YUP. I'LL HAVE *THAT* ROOM OVER THERE.
IT HAS A *NICE VIEW.*
HA! HA! HA! HA!


hmf.
DON'T WORRY, OLD MAN, WHEN IT GETS TOO CROWDED,
YOU CAN BUNK WITH ME!
TARVEK! DON'T BE MEAN!
DON'T WORRY, GIL.
I PROMISE— NO MATTER HOW CROWDED IT GETS—
YOU'LL ALWAYS HAVE YOUR OWN ROOM.
WELL, AT LEAST I'LL HAVE SOMEPLACE TO LIVE AFTER ZOLA TOPPLES THE EMPIRE WITH HER MARSHMALLOW GUN.
WAHAHAHAHA!
BUT THERE'LL BE NO ROOMS FOR EITHER OF YOU UNLESS WE GET THIS CASTLE WORKING!
LET'S GO!
HEH HEH! I WILL TOTALLY CRUSH YOU.
HO HO! JUST YOU TRY IT, SIR!
WELL, YOU'RE ALL CHEERFUL ALL OF A SUDDEN!
HEE HEE!


YEAH! I FEEL GREAT!
ME TOO! I'M HAVING THE BEST TIME!
THAT'S 'CAUSE THIS IS FUN!
I HAVEN'T BEEN ADVENTURING IN AGES!
I FEEL FANTASTIC!
YEEEAH... ME TOO—
IN FACT, HEH— I'M UNNATURALLY HAPPY.
YAY! WELL, IT'S NOT THAT BIG A DEAL.
YOU'RE JUST NOT USED TO BEING OUT OF YOUR CAGE.
VIOLETTA—I'M... I'M NEVER THIS HAPPY.
I'M NOT... ALLOWED TO BE THIS HAPPY.
AND IT'S ALL OF US.
WHY ARE WE ALL LIKE THIS?
HA! HA! HA!
AGATHA, CAN I SEE YOUR MAP?
HERE YOU GO, SWEETIE!
EEE!
NO! FOCUS!
OW! OKAY—WE'RE RIGHT HERE, AND...OH, NO—
HEY WULFENBACH! GO CHECK OUT THAT SMASHED WALL OVER THERE.
PINCH
HA HA HA! SURE, IF IT'LL MAKE YOU HAPPY!
GRAB
UH—
YAAA!
GIL!
YES! I WAS RIGHT!
HEE HEE!


WOW! WAS THAT A PLANT?
HA HA! YES! NEPENTHES DULCIS!
IT INCAPACITATES PREY BY INDUCING FEELINGS OF EXTREME HAPPINESS!
SMOKE KNIGHTS USE IT—
SO AT FIRST, I THOUGHT ZOLA WAS SNEAKING UP ON US—
BUT THEN I REMEMBERED THAT WE WERE NEAR A CONSERVATORY!
OF COURSE, THE HETERODYNES WOULD HAVE A SPECIMEN!
WELL, WE'D BETTER GO FIND GIL BEFORE IT EATS HIM!
HA! IF IT DOES, WE'LL JUST PULL HIM OUT!
THAT IS, IF HE DOESN'T HAVE IT JULIENNED BY THE TIME WE GET THERE.
STURMVORAUS!
I'M STILL HAPPY—
BUT NOT WITH YOU!
ACK!


I THINK WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A HARD TIME "JUST PULLING HIM OUT." EEK!
WELL, I DIDN'T EXPECT A WHOLE BUNCH OF THEM! HA HA!
AND THESE ARE WEIRD, EVEN FOR NEPENTHES—
IT MUST BE SOME KIND OF HETERODYNE CULTIVAR!
HEY, GUYS!
GETTING RESCUED WOULD MAKE ME REALLY HAPPY!
HOLD ON!
I'VE ALMOST GOT THESE OLD PRUNING CLANKS WORKING!
HEH—THEN WE'D BETTER TELL WULFENBACH NOT TO ACT SO WOODEN.
HA HA—STOP THAT, YOU—IT'S NOT FUNNY! HEE HEE.
GIL!
OH MY GOSH—
I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!
ERRR—A HEH.
HA HA! AND THIS TIME, I GET TO RESCUE YOU!
I'M SO HAPPY!


TSK. IT'S REALLY GOT YOU.
HMM...AUNTIE LUCREZIA SAYS IF I TRY TO PULL YOU OUT—
YOU'LL GET ALL RIPPED UP ON THE THORNS.
OOH, AND THEY'RE POISONED, TOO.
HEE HEE— THAT'S ADORABLE!
OKAY, ALL YOU'VE GOT TO DO IS WAIT UNTIL YOU'RE ALL THE WAY IN.
—WHAT?!
THEN, I'LL CUT YOU OUT THROUGH THE SOFT PART!
I DON'T—
THESE PLANTS TAKE OVER A YEAR TO FULLY ABSORB LARGE PREY,
SO YOU'LL BE FINE! THE WORST YOU'LL GET IS A LITTLE RASH—
(giggle) AND I HAVE SOME DELIGHTFULLY SOOTHING OINTMENT—
THAT I'LL BE HAPPY TO APPLY TO ALL THOSE HARD-TO-REACH PLACES—
HEY! YOU KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF HIM!
HA! WELL, THEY WON'T BE YOUR GREEDY, BEAU-HOGGING HANDS, YOU HUSSY!
BECAUSE YOU'LL BE DEAD! HEE HEE!
ZOLA! DON'T—
HERE. YOU MIGHT HAVE TO DO THIS YOURSELF, GIL.
REMEMBER TO WATCH OUT FOR THE THORNS!
gomf
I'VE GOT TO PRUNE THE FAMILY TREE!


HURRY! I'M STUCK!
PERFECT! I WILL! HA HA—
WAIT—
WHOA!
SWIT
...YOU MISSED?
NAH. I DIDN'T MISS.
YOU CERTAINLY—
HA HA!
UH—
THERE! THAT'S MUCH BETTER!

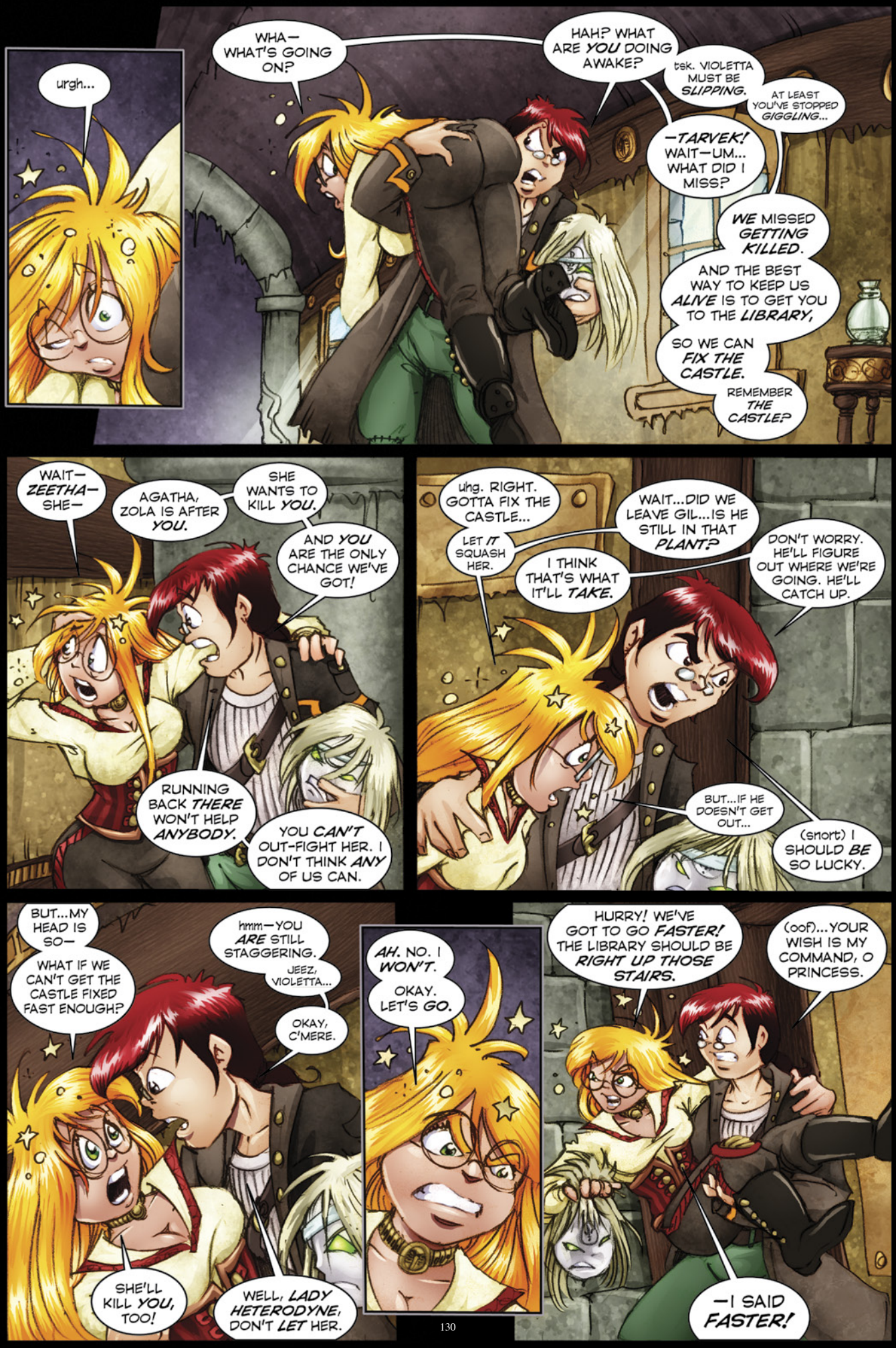

THANKS, ZEETHA! NOW I CAN SORT OUT ALL THE WEEDS IN HERE!
PLEASE. DO YOU HAVE ANY TRAINING WITH THAT THING?
YOU SPARKS REALLY CAN BE STUPID SOMETIMES—
AFTER ALL—
BRINGING A KNIFE TO A GUN FIGHT DOESN'T SEEM VERY SMART, NOW DOES IT?
VOP!
ZIP!
WELL, I SUPPOSE IT ISN'T THAT MUCH WORSE THAN BRINGING A GUN TO A CLANK FIGHT.
OH, REALLY. A CLANK FIGHT.
TOO BAD YOU DON'T HAVE ANY—
AH—
SNAP!
AAAAAH!


SMASH!
OWOUCH...
I'M GOING TO FEEL THAT TOMORROW.
HAH! YOU'D BETTER HOPE SO!
WHY ARE YOU EVEN STILL HERE?
YOU'LL BE LUCKY IF YOU SEE TOMORROW!
HMF. WELL, AT LEAST I'LL MAKE SURE YOU DON'T.
SIP
AAH! MY MOVIT #11!
HOW DID SHE GET THAT?!
ELEVEN?
WAIT— I THOUGHT IT ONLY WENT UP TO SIX!
THAT'S WHAT YOU GAVE ME.
ELEVEN WOULD HAVE KILLED YOU!
IT'D KILL ALMOST ANYONE!
OH, BUT I'M NOT JUST ANYONE.
AND EVEN IF IT DOES, I WON'T GO ALONE!


DON'T MESS AROUND!
KILL HER!
HEE HEE— DON'T BE SCARED!
WE WON'T LET GIL'S PARISIAN TART GET YOU!
AGATHA CAN USE MY SWORD TO CUT YOU OUT OF THERE, AND—
MERCI, MADEMOISELLE— WHAT AN EXCELLENT IDEA!
SMAK!
SNAG
AND I'LL USE YOUR OTHER SWORD—
UK!
TO CUT YOU OUT ENTIRELY!
RUNG!
HA!
SEE? SO ELEGANT EVEN A PARISIAN TART CAN DO IT!
LET'S DO IT AGAIN!


ZEETHA!
ZEETHA! I'M COMING!
AGATHA! NO!
STAY AWAY FROM HER!
SHE'LL SLICE YOU TO RIBBONS!
LET GO OF ME! I'VE GOT TO—
NO! TARVEK IS RIGHT! SHE'LL KILL YOU!
AH!
PAF!
AND THAT IS NOT GOING TO HAPPEN WHILE I'M HERE!
GET HER OUT OF HERE!
VIOLETTA!
GO!
AW— TOO BAD, SAILOR BOY!
HK
GK—
SHE JUST WASN'T AS GOOD AS SHE THOUGHT SHE WAS.
HUK
YES... BUT I VAS STARTING TO LIKE HER.


PFT. PLEASE. I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR YOU.
I'VE GOT TO GO KILL THAT HETERODYNE COW.
IF YOU'RE SMART, YOU'LL BE GONE BY THE TIME I—
NO.
SMASH!
HNN. LOOK. I HATE TO WASTE A NICE-LOOKING BOY.
SO JUST BACK OFF, AND I'LL—
CRUNCH!
I WARNED—
OOF!
BOOT!
OH, THAT'S IT!
JUST DIE!
SLICE!
HA! THERE! GOT YOU!
NOW—
WHAK


urgh...
WHA— WHAT'S GOING ON?
HAH? WHAT ARE YOU DOING AWAKE?
tsk. VIOLETTA MUST BE SLIPPING.
AT LEAST YOU'VE STOPPED GIGGLING...
—TARVEK! WAIT—UM... WHAT DID I MISS?
WE MISSED GETTING KILLED.
AND THE BEST WAY TO KEEP US ALIVE IS TO GET YOU TO THE LIBRARY,
SO WE CAN FIX THE CASTLE.
REMEMBER THE CASTLE?
WAIT— ZEETHA— SHE—
AGATHA, ZOLA IS AFTER YOU.
SHE WANTS TO KILL YOU.
AND YOU ARE THE ONLY CHANCE WE'VE GOT!
RUNNING BACK THERE WON'T HELP ANYBODY.
YOU CAN'T OUT-FIGHT HER. I DON'T THINK ANY OF US CAN.
uhg. RIGHT. GOTTA FIX THE CASTLE...
LET IT SQUASH HER.
WAIT...DID WE LEAVE GIL...IS HE STILL IN THAT PLANT?
I THINK THAT'S WHAT IT'LL TAKE.
DON'T WORRY. HE'LL FIGURE OUT WHERE WE'RE GOING. HE'LL CATCH UP.
BUT...IF HE DOESN'T GET OUT...
(snort) I SHOULD BE SO LUCKY.
BUT...MY HEAD IS SO—
WHAT IF WE CAN'T GET THE CASTLE FIXED FAST ENOUGH?
hmm—YOU ARE STILL STAGGERING.
JEEZ, VIOLETTA...
OKAY, C'MERE.
SHE'LL KILL YOU, TOO!
WELL, LADY HETERODYNE, DON'T LET HER.
AH. NO. I WON'T.
OKAY. LET'S GO.
HURRY! WE'VE GOT TO GO FASTER! THE LIBRARY SHOULD BE RIGHT UP THOSE STAIRS.
(oof)...YOUR WISH IS MY COMMAND, O PRINCESS.
—I SAID FASTER!


HEY! YOU—MISTER HIGGS! WATCH OUT!
SHE'S HAD A WHOLE VIAL OF MOVIT 11!
SHE'LL BE UNSTOPPABLE UNTIL IT WEARS OFF!
DON'T EVEN TRY TO JUST "KNOCK HER OUT," YOU HEAR ME?
NOM NOM
I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS!
HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO HIT YOU?!
I'VE GOT OTHER PEOPLE TO KILL!
MORE IMPORTANT PEOPLE THAN YOU!
I HEAR YOU.


OH? YOU HEAR HER? WELL, GOOD!
THEN YOU DIDN'T MISS THE PART WHERE SHE SAID I'M "UNSTOPPABLE"!
NOW, I'VE GOT TO GET GIL OUT OF THAT PLANT AND HUNT DOWN MY INCONVENIENT COUSIN—
AND YOU ARE GETTING IN MY WAY!
THANKS TO YOU, SHE'S GETTING AWAY RIGHT NOW!
WITH, I MIGHT ADD, MY STORM KING!
SO STAY DOWN!
WAK!
SMAK!
UH—
...
...OUCH?


HA! HA!
TAKE THAT!
THOK!
VIOLETTA! YOU PATHETIC LOSER!
DID YOU JUST TRY TO POISON ME?
AHA!HA!HA!HA!
AS IF THAT COULD STOP ME, NOW!
tsk. I KNOW THAT.
THAT WASN'T POISON.
THAT WAS MORE MOVIT 11.
NOW ALL I HAVE TO DO IS WATCH YOU COMBUST.
NNNOT IF I MOVE FASTFASTFAST ENOUGH TO BURN IT OFF!
HURK!
YANK!
WHAT—


CAN'TDON'T KILLYOUSTUPID FINE!
WAK!
WAK!
WAK!
OW
OW
OW
OW
CHOPHEAD TINYBITS!
HAH!
SPAK!
NOM?
WOW! YOU MUST BE MESSED UP!
THAT NEVER WOULD HAVE WORKED BEFORE!
FINEIDON'T HAVETOSTAYHERE ICANKILLPEOPLE ANYWHERE.
OH, NO YOU CAN'T,
'CAUSE I'M GOING TO MAKE SURE YOU—
NO.
MISS ZEETHA IS STILL ALIVE.
YOU STAY WITH HER. MAKE SURE SHE STAYS ALIVE.
THIS IMPOSTOR IS MINE.


MEANWHILE—
IN A NEARBY VILLAGE—
MAXIM BUYS A HAT!


HAT
EST. 1799
MAXIM! HYU AIN'T TINKIN' BOUT BUYINK A HAT, IZ HYU?!
DUN BE INZULTINK.
A HAT IZ A BADGE OF HONOR!
A TROPHY VOT MUST BE PLUCKED FROM OFF DE HEAD OF A VORTHY ENEMY!
YAH!
VUN WHO HAPPEN TO GOTS HYU SAME HEAD SIZE!
PROBLEM IZ, VOT VIT EVERYTING DAT'S BEEN GOIN' ON—
HY KEEP TELLINIK HYU—IT ONLY SEEM LIKE DEYZ BEEN IN DE KESTLE A LONG TIME!
IZ VOT HY CALL "RELATIVITY!" HYU KNOW, 'CAUSE IT LIKE VEN HYU RELATIVES VISIT AN DUN GO AVAY!
VE AIN'T FINDIN' A WHOLE LOT OV VORTHY ENEMIES TO FIGHT.
DOT'S TRUE.
DEY ALL GOTS LEEDLE TEENY HEADS.
GRR!
A LECTURE BY NOTED ROCKETEER— Melissa Rogers
UND ZO, HY HAFF DECIDED TO FIGHT DE ULTIMATE FIGHT—
VIT DE GREATEST VARRIOR EVER!
AW—HY DIN' EVEN TINK HYU LIKE MY HAT—
BUT, HOKAY—
NO!
HY, MAXIM, VILL CHALLENGE UND FIGHT OL' MAN DEATH!
DE BIG GUY HIMSELF!
YOW!


OKAY, ONE RACING TRILOBITE—
ONE BOTCHED CONSTRUCT—
ONE MARTIAN PRINCESS—
AND ONE RED HETERODYNE. HUH. NEVER SAW THAT ONE BEFORE.
ONE GRILLED SNAIL AND SWISS ON RYE-
ONE CHICKEN SALAD ON A KAISER-
ONE BEEF TONGUE WITH HORSERADISH ON TOAST-
ONE FRIED BAT ON PUMPERNICKEL, WITH EXTRA MUSHROOM SAUCE!
HA! CAN'T STUMP MY GRANDPA!
HEY! WHADDALITBE, PAL?
UM...WELL... DO YOU HAVE ANY SOUP?
NAH—NO SOUP, JUST SANDWICHES.
I'LL MAKE YOU ANY KIND OF SANDWICH YOU CAN NAME,
BUT NO SOUP.
I DON'T DO SOUP.
HO DERE!
OL' MAN DEATH!
HY CHALLENGE HYU!


MAXIM! YOU OLD HORSE-BITER!
IS THAT YOU?!
RHAA!
GOOD TO SEE YA!
SOME OF THE OLD CAVALRY CAME THROUGH A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO—
(TUNA AND SALAMI...)
AND... HMM... THEY SAID YOU WERE DEAD.
HUR. YEZ. VE VOS DETACHED.
TO GO LOOKIN' FOR A HETERODYNE.
AH, RIGHT. SO THE PACK COULD SIGN ON WITH THE BARON.
I HEARD ABOUT THAT.
CHEW YOUR FOOD
WELL, GOOD LUCK WITH THAT, BOSS.
DUN NEEDS IT. VE FOUND VUN.
YOU—YOU WHAT?!
YOU MEAN, ALL THAT BUSINESS IN STURMHALTEN—
IZ ALL TRUE. YEZ.
SHE IZ IN DE KESTEL RIGHT NOW.
DOT'S VY HY NEEDS A NEW HAT.
QVIKLY!
UND VUNCE HYU EMPTY DE GREASETRAP—
HYU ADD LOTS OV CHEEZE—
UND ANY MEAT ZO LONG AS EETZ RAW. HOKAY, SVEETIE?
ER...
BEER HERE
MENU
CRASH!
HO YEZ—UND A BRENDY FOR MY BRODDER HERE.
HOY—ZO DE OLD MAN EEZ LOOKINK GOOT, YAH?
HO, YEZ.
DOT'S VUN.
SHADDAP. HY VOS JUST SAYINK "HELLO."


GRANDPA!
WHUT?
YOU THREW A JÄGERMONSTER THROUGH THE WINDOW!
OH, IT'S OKAY. THEY'RE GOOD FOR IT.
GRANDPA—
WHY DID YOU THROW A JÄGERMONSTER THROUGH THE WINDOW?
HEH. IT'S TRADITIONAL!
DON'T WORRY. THEY ONLY GET THREE TRIES.
I GOT A BUSINESS TO RUN HERE.
GRANDPA! IF YOU DON'T TELL ME—
AAAH! NOT WITH THE SCHLOGNWURST! IT'S EXPENSIVE!
ALL RIGHT, YOU UNGRATEFUL CHILD.
YOU KNOW I USED TO RIDE WITH THE JÄGERS—
WAIT! REALLY? I THOUGHT THAT WAS JUST WHAT GRANDMA SAID TO EXPLAIN YOUR TABLE MANNERS.
HA HA. FUNNY YOU'RE NOT.
NO, A LOT OF THE YOUNG BLOODS FROM THE AREA USED TO DO IT.
THIS WAS WITH THE OLD HETERODYNES, OF COURSE.
THE BOYS PUT A STOP TO ALL THAT.
"IT WAS GREAT IF YOU LIKED TO FIGHT AND DRINK AND MESS PEOPLE UP—
AND YOU DIDN'T MUCH CARE WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU.
PLUS, IT IMPRESSED THE GIRLS."
...IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO. A LONG TIME.
I'M A REFORMED CHARACTER NOW, I AM.
...BUT?
BUT THE THING WAS...THE FIGHTING?
"WELL—TURNS OUT / WAS PRETTY GOOD AT IT."


OH REEEALLY.
HOW GOOD?
YAAHHAAAR!
WHAM!!
SMASH!
BASH!
BONK!
DOT'S TWO!
PRETTY DAMN GOOD.


...THEN ONE DAY, WHILE SACKING A CASTLE, I WAS RAVISHED BY A WILD PRINCESS...
YOU THE WHO WHAT NOW?
HEH. EVEN TODAY, YOUR GRANDMOTHER IS A REMARKABLE WOMAN.
EEEW! GRANDPA!
TSK. POOR SENSITIVE CHILD.
AT ANY RATE, WELL, SHE SORT OF ABDUCTED ME. TOOK ME AWAY FROM ALL THAT, YOU KNOW?
AND NOW, THROUGH MYSTERIOUS PROCESSES I'LL FORBEAR TO MENTION, HERE I AM, AND HERE YOU ARE.
YES—HERE WE ARE. BEING ATTACKED BY JÄGERS!
OH. THEY WANT MY HAT.
YOUR HAT? BUT WHY?
HA! FOR THOSE GUYS, HATS ARE A BIG DEAL!
BUT...BUT YOUR HAT ISN'T PARTICULARLY FANCY, GRANDPA.
NOPE. BUT IT'S MINE. AND EVERY JÄGER KNOWS IT.
RIGHT. AND THEY CARE ABOUT YOUR HAT BECAUSE...?
IT'S PART OF THE GAME. THE BADDER THE ENEMY, THE BETTER THE HAT.
BUT WHY...
BECAUSE I NEVER LOST A FIGHT.
SO?
NO. LISTEN TO ME. I'M JUST A HUMAN. RODE WITH THE JÄGERS. NEVER. LOST. A. FIGHT.
...AH.
YEAH. "AH." THIS OLD HAT HAS BECOME THE STUFF OF LEGEND.
I'LL TELL YOU, THERE'VE BEEN TIMES I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT JUST THROWING IT AWAY—
BUT IT SEEMS TO MEAN SO MUCH TO THEM.
SO MUCH THAT THEY'RE TRYING TO KILL YOU OVER IT?!
ALWAYS YOU GOTTA FIND PROBLEMS!


ANYWAY, STEALING IT, OR TRICKING ME OUT OF IT WOULD BE FINE.
IN FACT, IT WOULD BE MORE IMPRESSIVE.
...YOU DON'T EXPECT A KNIFE TO SING OPERA, Y'KNOW?
BUT AT SUBTLE THEY STINK.
I CAN SEE 'EM COMING TWO STREETS AWAY.
Pickled Herring
HYU VOT?!
DEM!
UH...'COURSE, THEY DO OCCASIONALLY SURPRISE ME.
SLAM!
HOY! DIS "BEIN' SOTTIL" SCHTOFF HEZ POTENTIAL!
HY KEN USE MY HEAD FOR LOTZ OF GOOT SCHTUFF!
YEAH? USE IT FOR THIS!
WHUMP!
HOKAY— NOW HY IZ GUN SOTTIL HYU HEAD CLEAN OFF!
SEZ YOU!
GRHAAA!


HOOG!
PUNCH!
CRUNCH!
PAF!
NAK!
CRASH!
heh heh heh. TENKS FOR DE HAT, OL' MAN.
SMAK!


DON'T YOU HURT MY GRANDPA!
ZEUXIPPE! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
WELL, OBVIOUSLY I'M—
YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO INTERFERE!
BUT, YOU WERE—
NOW I HAVE TO FORFEIT!
NO! NO! SEE? SHE IZ CATEGORIZED AZ COURSE HAZARD!
WHAT— REALLY?
YAH! LIKE IN DOT KREZY GAME VERE DEY HIT STUFF MIT STICKS!
...PIÑATA JOUSTING POLO?
DOT'S DE VUN!
WELL! THAT'S MIGHTY HONORABLE OF YOU, MAXIM!
HEH, IZ NO PROBLEM. GOTS TO LOOK GOOT IN FRONT OF DE PRETTY GURL!
YAH, SVEETHOT? HY TEK HYU FOR A NIZE RIDE LATER, HEY?
AND THAT'S YOUR THREE!
AAH! ON MY HORZE! IZ A NIZE HORZE!
YIPE! YIPE! YIPE!
BOOT!
OUT!
VAIT!
HY IZ NOT DONE MIT TRYINK DE SOTTLE!


YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING.
NO, NO. FOR A JÄGER, THIS IS PRETTY DARN SUBTLE.
BUT THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN SAY THAT'LL KEEP ME FROM CHUCKIN' YOU OUT ON YOUR—
HY VANTS A SAMMICH!
...OKAY... YOU NAME IT, I MAKE IT.
HY VANTS...
HY VANTS A "PRINCE OV STURMHALTEN'S BIG BET."
UH... WAIT, I...
I KNOW THAT ONE...
SHOO-OL' PRINCE VADIM AND DE GOOT HETERODYNE GOTS ARGUIN'—
AND DE PRINCE BET DOT OL GOOT VOULDN' NEVER HEV A CATHEDRAL GET BILDED IN MECHANICSBURG—
BUT HE DID. AN DOT'S VEN DEY SCHTARTED ALL DOT KREZY SEKRIFICE SCHTUFF DURING DE HIGH HOLY DAYZ—
YEAH— THE BOYS PUT A STOP TO—
YAH, YAH, SO ENNYVAY, DE PRINCE SAID IF HE LOST, HE VOULD—
...HE SAID HE'D EAT HIS HAT.
DOT'S RIGHT! UND HE DEED IT, TOO!
BUT... THAT'S...
VUN HAT SAMMICH, PLIZ!
BUT... BUT...
ARGH!
ALL RIGHT... I'LL MAKE YOUR HAT SANDWICH!
AND THEN—
UND I VANTS IT TO GO!
DEM!


ZO, MY LEEDLE NOKEDLI—
VUNCE MY FRIEND COME FLYINK OUT DOT VINDOW, HOWZABOUT VE GO FIND ZUMPLACE—
OH! BUT ISN'T THAT HIM THERE?
VELL? IZ HYU READY TO GO, OR VOT?
IZ DOT—
IT IZ.
HYU MEAN, HYU—
HY DEED!
DEED HYU—
DE OL' MAN IZ FINE.
BUT... HOW...
HY USED MY BRAINZ!
WHO IZ HYU, REALLY?
SHADDAP AN' LETZ GO!
ARE YOU...OKAY, GRANDPA?
BETTER THAN OKAY, MY SWEETLING!
OH?
YOUR GRANDMOTHER ALWAYS HATED THAT HAT.
EAT!
MAXIM— VY HYU GOTS CHEEZE ON HYU HAT?
I TELLZ HYU VEN VE IZ OUT OV TOWN.

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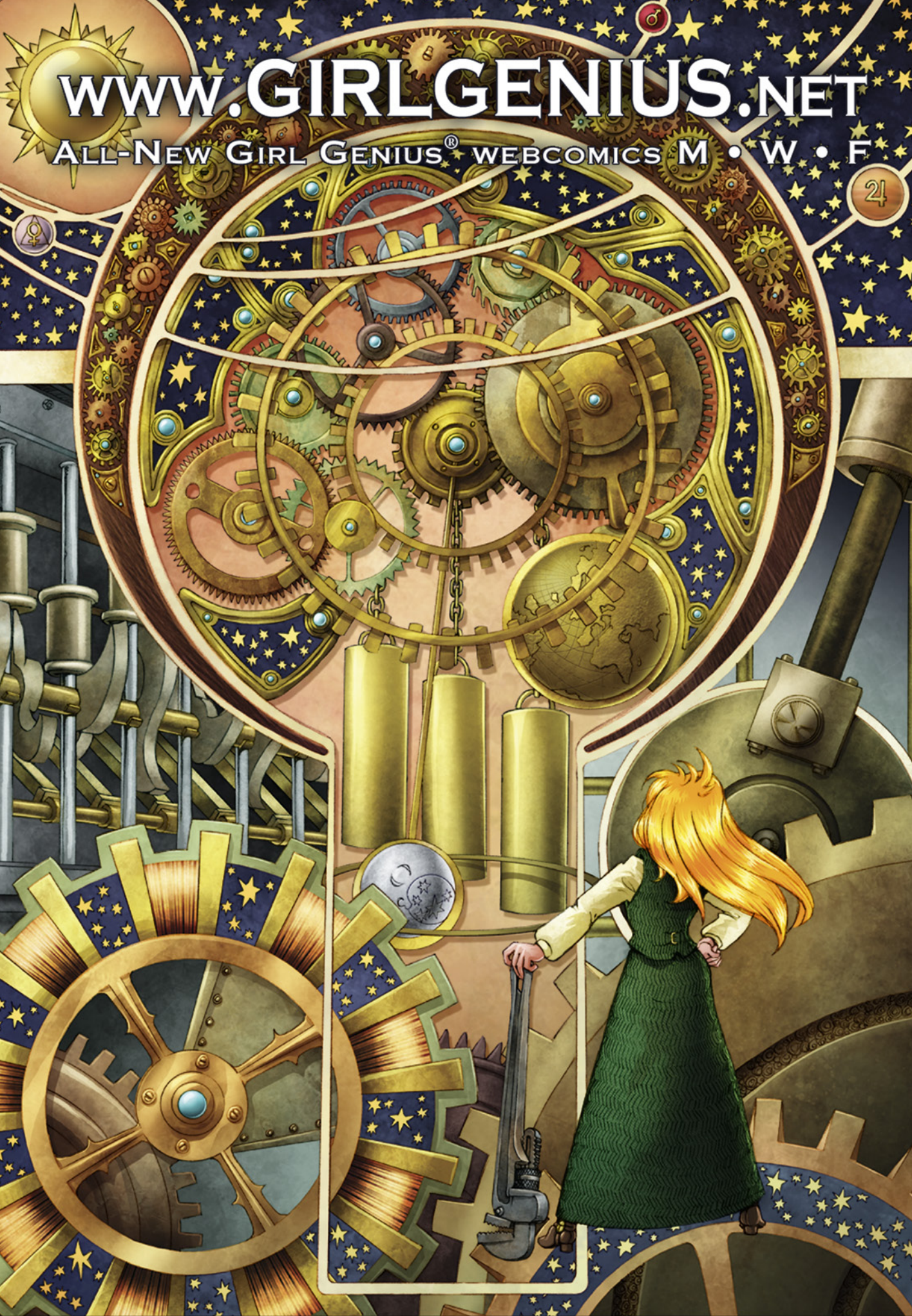
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