



Title
Author



Witch

Will Irma Taranee Cornelia Hay Lin

Part III.
A Crisis on Both Worlds
Volume I



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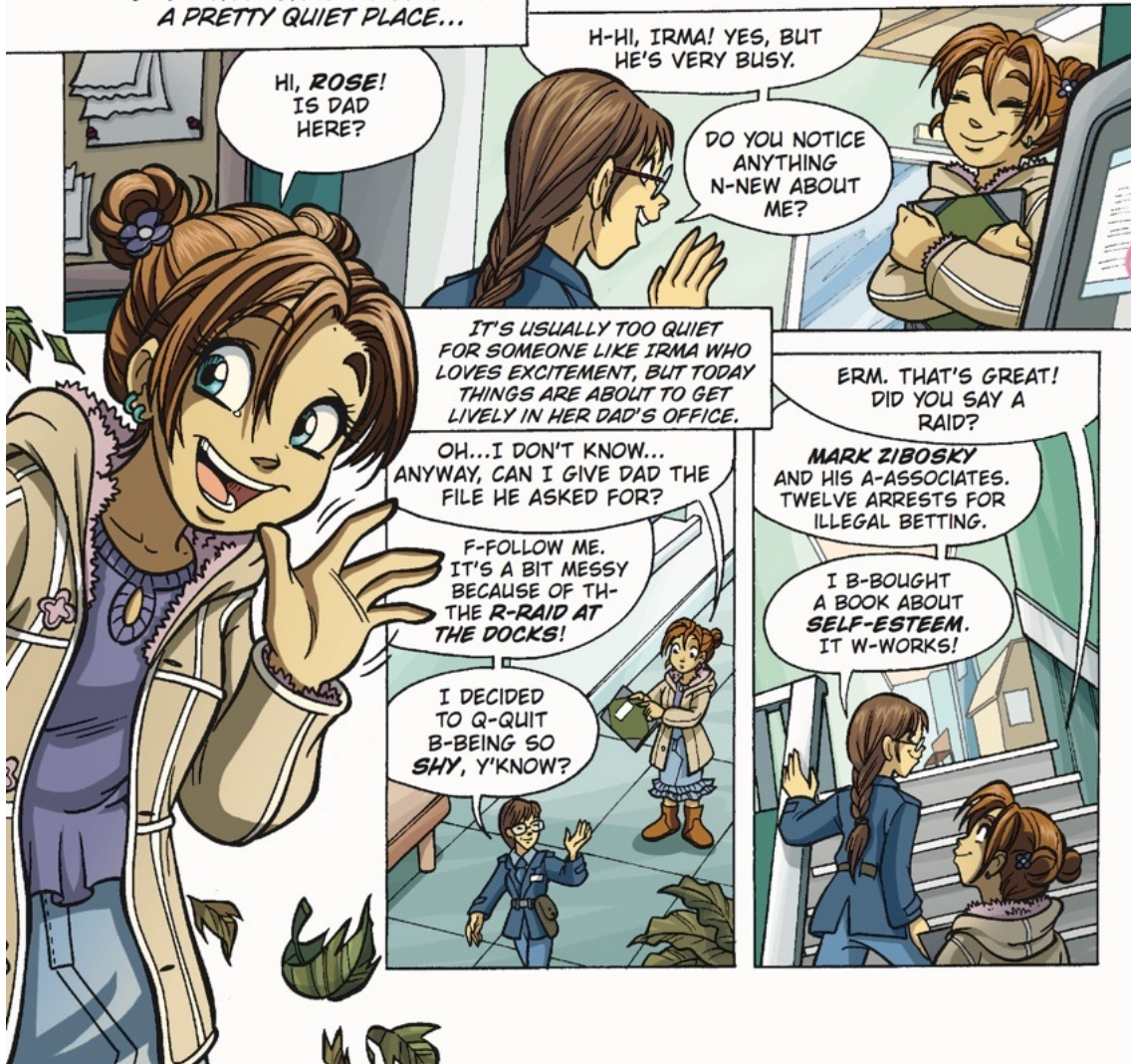
Water Shadows

"I can still hear his voice..."

IT'S UNDENIABLE. HEATHERFIELD POLICE STATION IS A BIT SCARY.



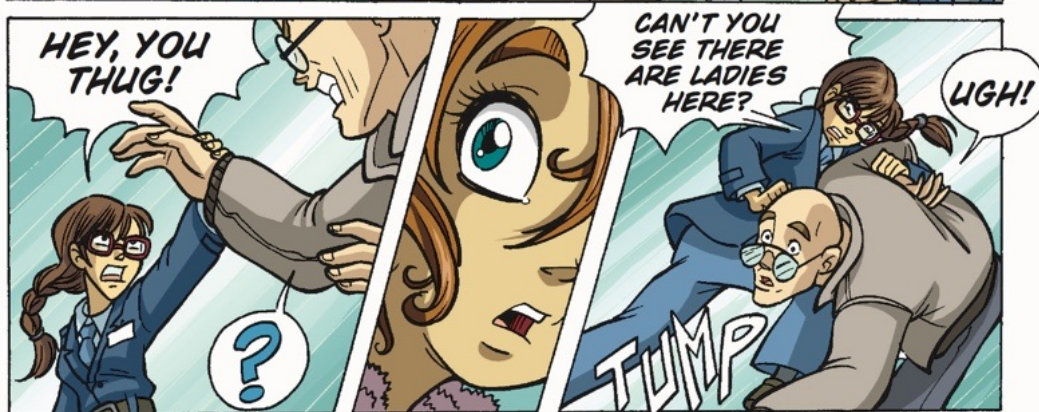
EVEN THOUGH IT'S ACTUALLY A PRETTY QUIET PLACE...





HEY! COME BACK!

OUT OF MY WAY!



HEY, YOU THUG!

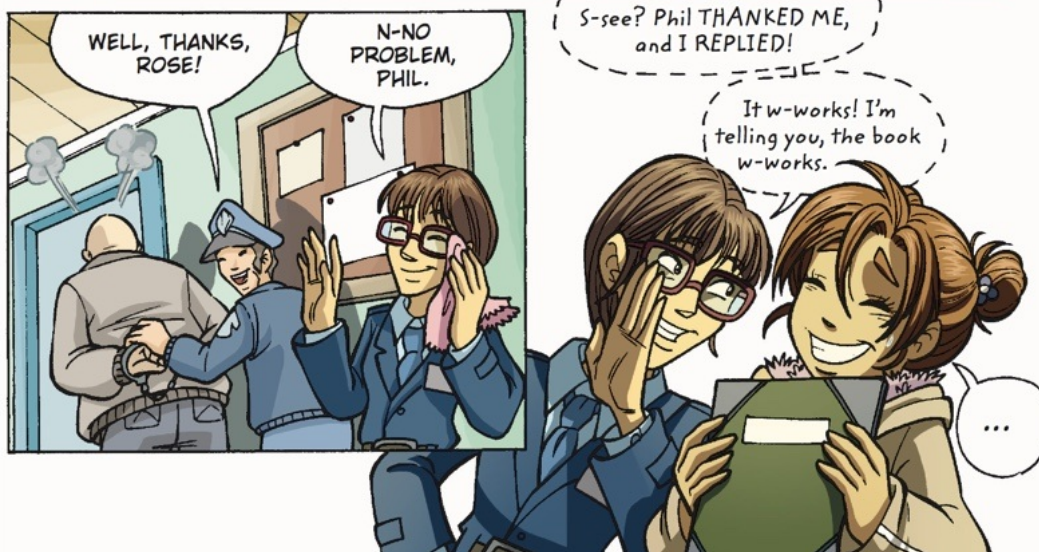
CAN'T YOU SEE THERE ARE LADIES HERE?

UGH!

TUMPH



ARGH! GET HER OFF ME! SHE'S BREAKING MY ARM!



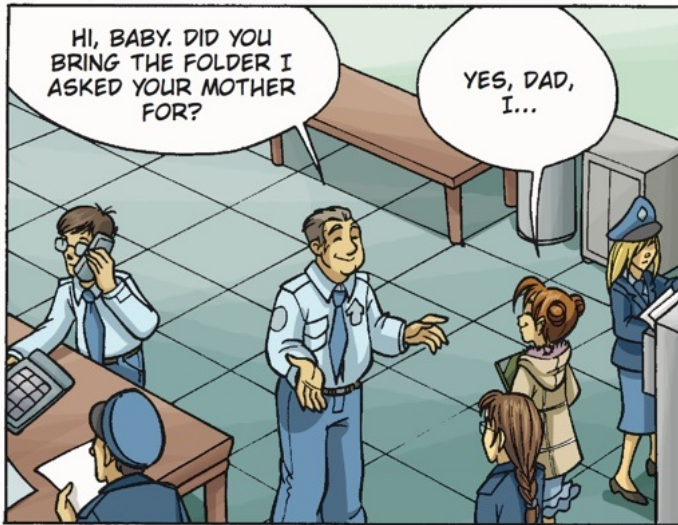
WELL, THANKS, ROSE!

N-NO PROBLEM, PHIL.

S-see? Phil THANKED ME, and I REPLIED!

It w-works! I'm telling you, the book w-works.

...



HI, BABY. DID YOU BRING THE FOLDER I ASKED YOUR MOTHER FOR?

YES, DAD, I...



TOM! ANOTHER ONE IS KICKING OFF!

COMING!



WHAT A DAY. ROSE, CAN YOU PLEASE KEEP HER COMPANY?

Y-YES. B-BUT DON'T YOU NEED A HAND?

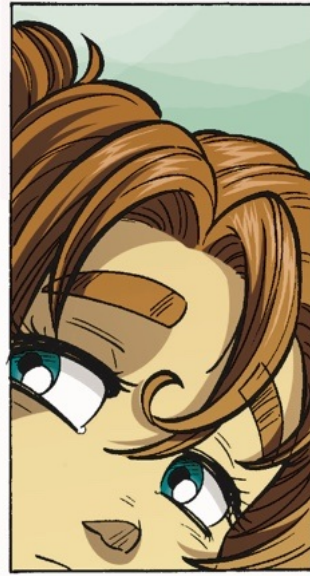
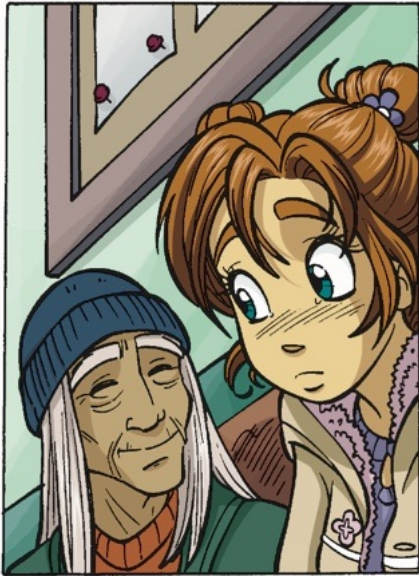


GO, GO. I THINK THEY NEED YOU BACK THERE.

TH-THANKS, SWEETIE. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.



?

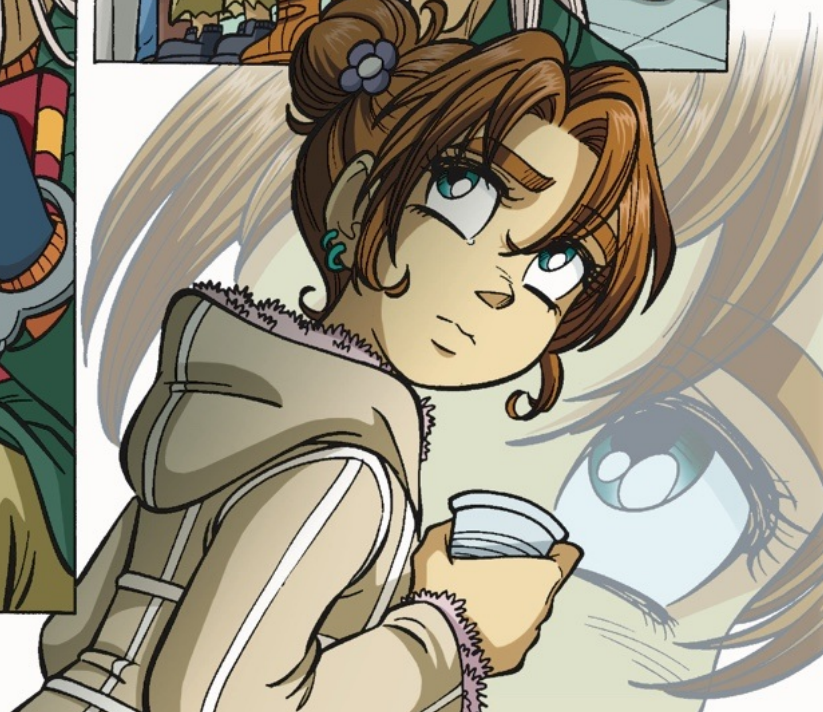
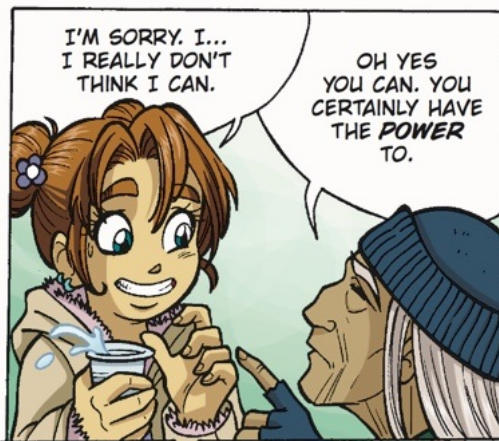
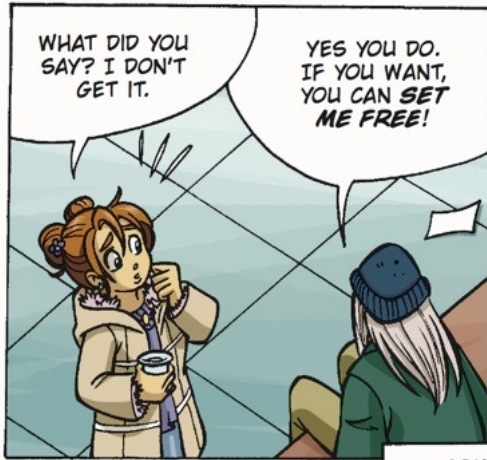


UM,
ARE YOU
THIRSTY?

ONLY YOU
COULD OFFER
ME A GLASS OF
WATER IN THIS
SITUATION.



YOU, THE
**QUEEN OF
WATER!**

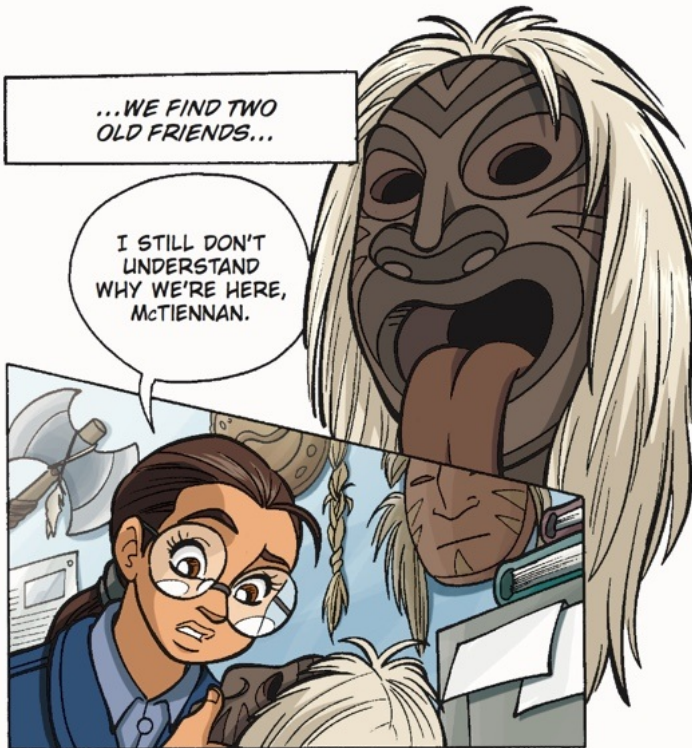


MEANWHILE,
FAR FROM HEATHERFIELD,
IN ANOTHER OFFICE...



...WE FIND TWO
OLD FRIENDS...

I STILL DON'T
UNDERSTAND
WHY WE'RE HERE,
McTIENNAN.



RELAX, MEDINA. A
COLLEAGUE WANTS
TO TALK TO US.
THAT'S ALL.

FEH. LOOK AT
THIS PLACE. LOOKS
LIKE NOBODY
EVER COMES
HERE.



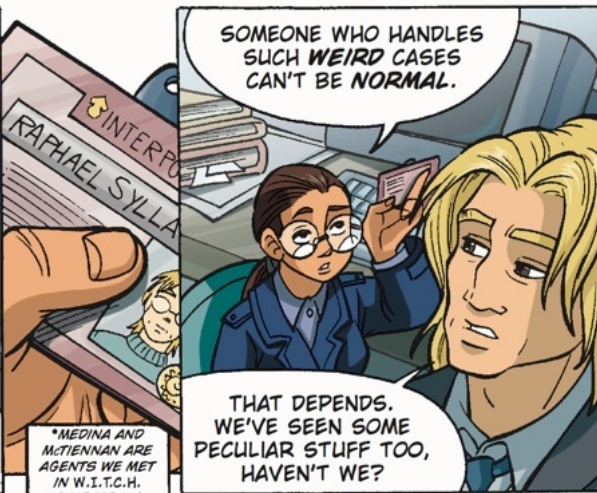
SYLLA IS ALWAYS OFF
ON SOME MISSION. HIS
OWN BOSSES BARELY
KNOW HIM.

BUT YOU DO.
WHAT'S HE LIKE?



SOMEONE WHO HANDLES
SUCH *WEIRD* CASES
CAN'T BE *NORMAL*.

THAT DEPENDS.
WE'VE SEEN SOME
PECULIAR STUFF TOO,
HAVEN'T WE?



*MEDINA AND
McTIENNAN ARE
AGENTS WE MET
IN W.I.T.C.H.
CHAPTER 10!



LIKE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT GIRL WHO DISAPPEARED IN HEATHER-FIELD? YES, ELYON...

THAT CASE IS CLOSED. BUT HAVE YOU SEEN THOSE FILES ON THE DESK?



WILL VANDOM. CORNELIA HALE. HAY LIN. IRMA. TARANEE...WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

I THINK SYLLA'S JUST GATHERING INFORMATION ABOUT THEM.



FROM WHAT I HEARD, LAST SUMMER HE WAS CONTACTED BY A CERTAIN INSPECTOR HAMILTON ...

"HE TALKED ABOUT **STRANGE THINGS** HAPPENING AT THE SEASIDE RESORT OF **GREEN BAY**..."

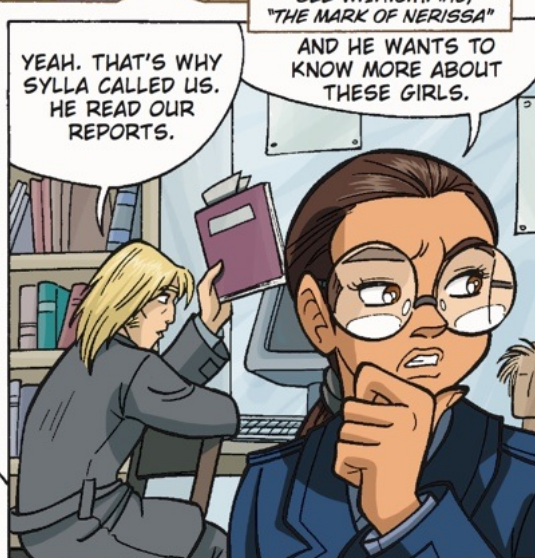


*SEE W.I.T.C.H. #16, "THE MARK OF NERISSA"



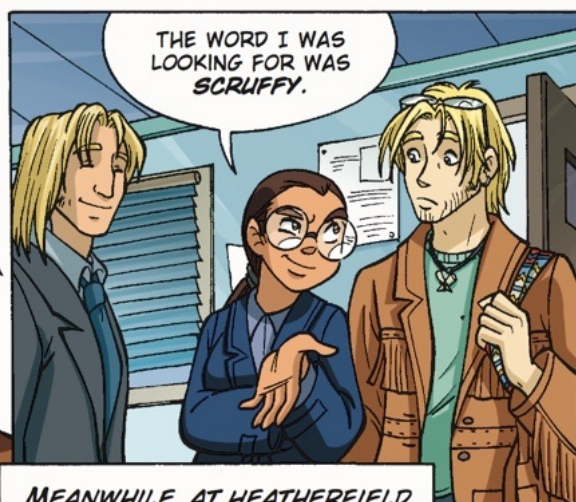
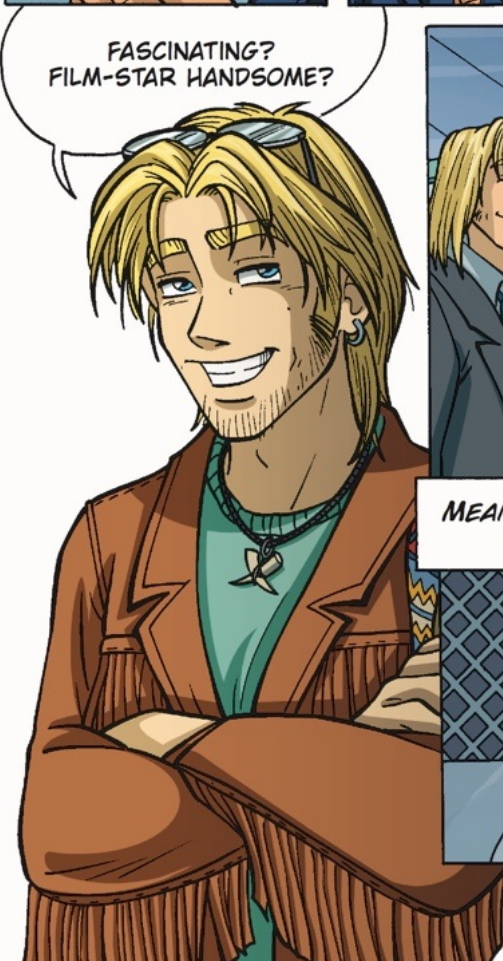
GUESS WHOSE NAMES ARE ON THE LIST OF WITNESSES?

DON'T TELL ME. OUR FRIENDLY **TEENAGERS** WERE THERE ON VACATION.



YEAH. THAT'S WHY SYLLA CALLED US. HE READ OUR REPORTS.

AND HE WANTS TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THESE GIRLS.



MEANWHILE, AT HEATHERFIELD POLICE STATION...





DAD, WAS THAT GUY
THREATENING YOU?

MARK ZIBOSKY BARKS A
LOT BUT DOESN'T BITE.
LET'S CHANGE THE
SUBJECT, OKAY?



OKAY, THEN...HOW ABOUT:
WHAT ARE WE DOING
OUT HERE?

WAITING FOR SOMEONE.
AND HERE HE COMES!



HE'S A-ALL
YOURS, TOM. CAN
YOU STILL GIVE
ME A LIFT?



SURE, ROSE. IRMA,
WOULD YOU MIND
SITTING NEXT TO
MR. JEWELL?



ERM...WASN'T THAT
THE OLD GUY IN
HANDCUFFS?

DON'T WORRY,
JUST A MIX-UP
DURING THE
RAID.



LOOKS LIKE JEWELL WAS
A VICTIM, NOT ONE OF
ZIBOSKY'S MEN.

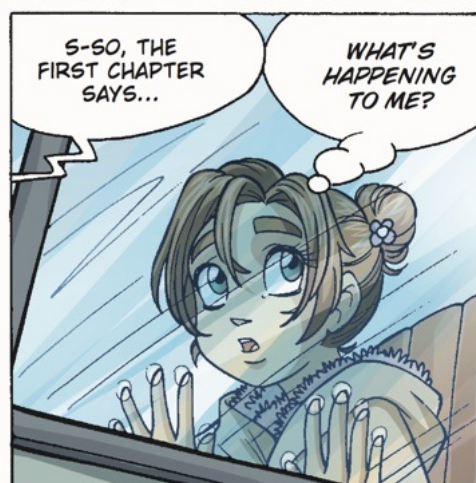
POOR GUY.
THEY KEPT HIM
LOCKED UP IN
A DAMP, DARK
CELLAR.

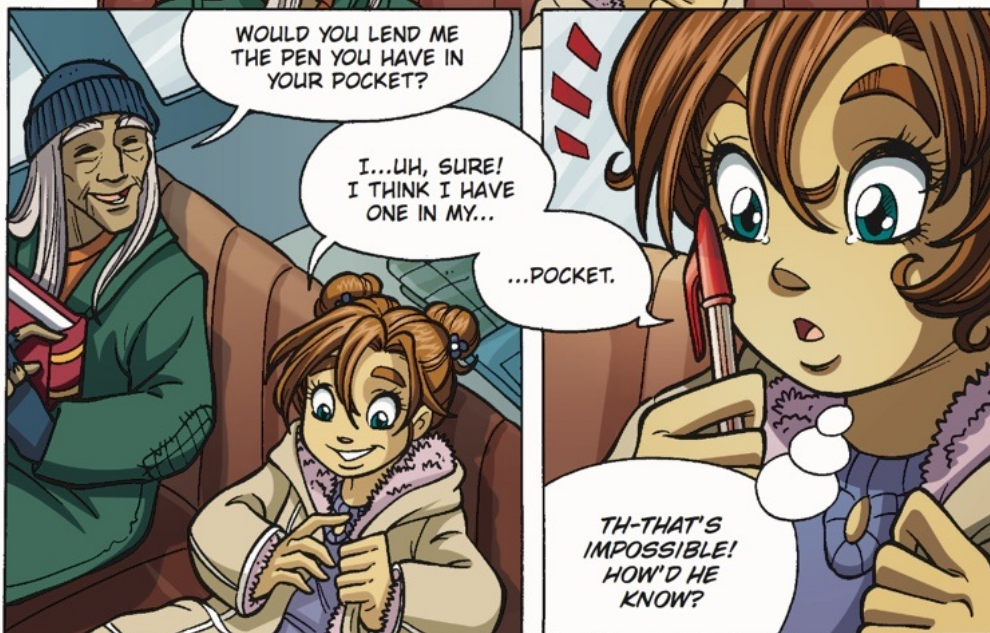
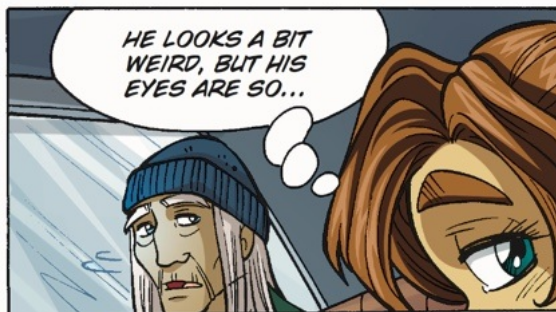


YEAH. CAN YOU IMAGINE?
SOMEONE TOLD US
HE'S SOME KINDA
PSYCHIC!



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16



AT THE SHEFFIELD INSTITUTE,
DURING RECESS, IT'S NOT UNUSUAL
TO HEAR THIS VOICE...

**ARE WE
CLEAR?**

PRINCIPAL KNICKERBOCHER
OFTEN USES IT WITH
HER STUDENTS...



**I DON'T
WANT ANY
SCUFFLES
IN MY
SCHOOL!**

...BUT SOMETIMES SHE
MAKES AN EXCEPTION AND
BENDS THE TEACHERS'
EARS WITH IT TOO!

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT.
COLLINS IS GOING TO
APOLOGIZE TO ME.

**WHAT? I
DON'T THINK
SO!**

GENTLEMEN,
PLEASE...

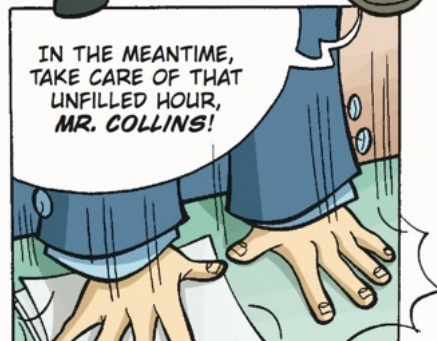
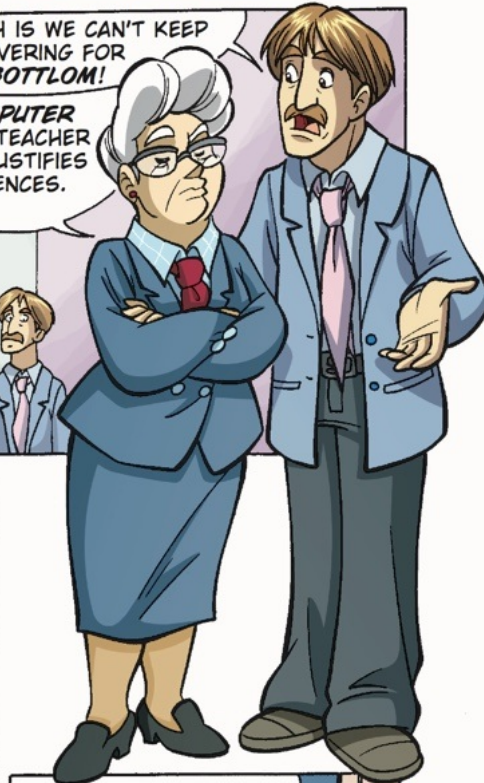
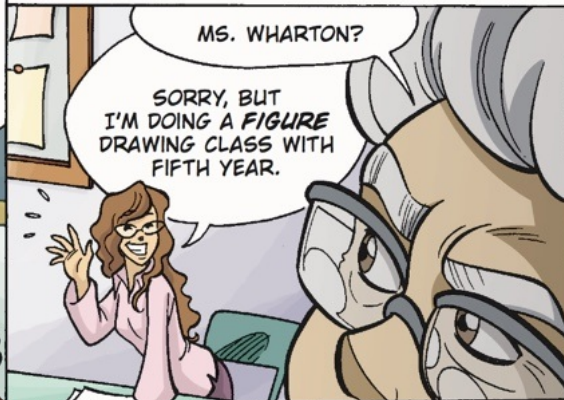
CAN'T YOU SEE
YOU'RE MAKING A
FUSS OVER
NOTHING?

IT'S AN EXTRA HOUR
OF CLASSES THAT I
REFUSE
TO
COVER!

COME ON, O'NEILL!
THE KIDS WOULD
RATHER HAVE ONE
MORE HOUR OF P.E.
THAN HISTORY.

WHAAAT? D'YOU
HEAR THAT?





WITH SUCH A BAD START,
IT MIGHT NOT BE A GREAT
DAY AT SCHOOL.



AND THE STUDENTS SUFFER
THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE
EXTRA HOUR OF HISTORY...

COME ON, IRMA. SOONER OR
LATER, COLLINS WOULD HAVE
GRILLED YOU. YOU SHOULD
HAVE KNOWN THAT.

TELL MY DAD.
WITH THAT GRADE, I
COULD BE UNDER HOUSE
ARREST FOR LIFE.

Then, even though we
shouldn't, why didn't you
MANIPULATE him?

Yeah, I close my eyes,
rub my hands, and...
poof, he asks me
whatever I
want!



YOU THINK I DIDN'T
TRY THAT, HAY LIN?
I COULDN'T FOCUS.

STILL
THINKING
ABOUT THAT
OLD MAN,
HUH?



YOU'RE NOT GONNA
TELL THE OTHERS,
ARE YOU?

ARE YOU KIDDING?
I SWORE
I WOULDN'T!



GOOD, BECAUSE JEWELL
MADE ME PROMISE I
WOULDN'T TELL
ANYONE.

SECRETS SURE ARE
SAFE WITH YOU!





BUT TELL ME AGAIN WHAT HE SAID ABOUT *ME* AND *MY FUTURE*.

I CAN'T REALLY TALK ABOUT YOUR FUTURE OR DESTINY.



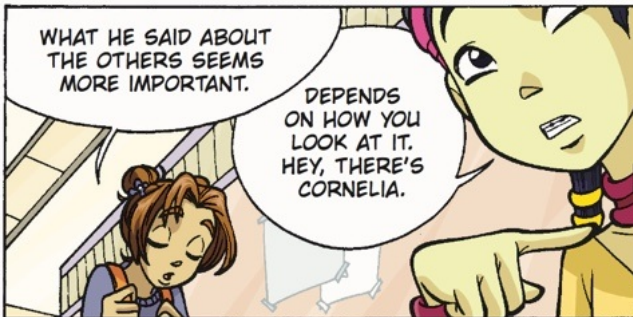
HE JUST MENTIONED THAT YOU'D RECENTLY FOUND A TRUE FRIEND...

YAY!
I BET HE WAS TALKING ABOUT ERIC.



...AND THAT TRANQUIL TIMES LIE AHEAD. NOTHING BIG.

THAT'S YOUR OPINION. FOR ME, IT'S HUGE!



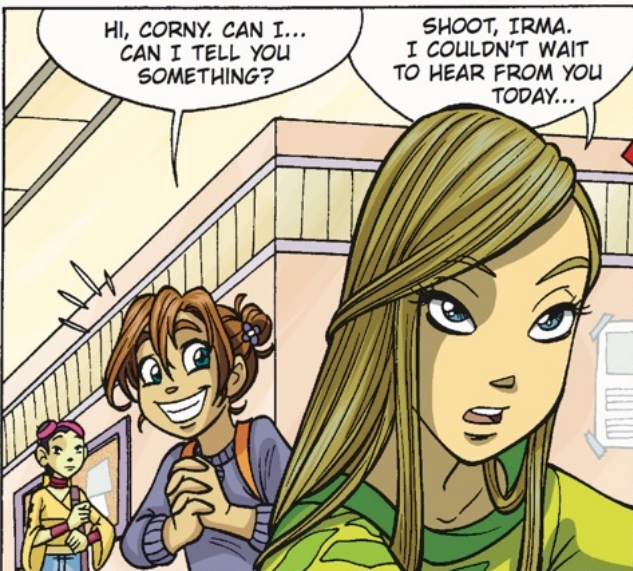
WHAT HE SAID ABOUT THE OTHERS SEEMS MORE IMPORTANT.

DEPENDS ON HOW YOU LOOK AT IT. HEY, THERE'S CORNELIA.



WHAT DO YOU THINK, HAY LIN? SHOULD I TELL HER?

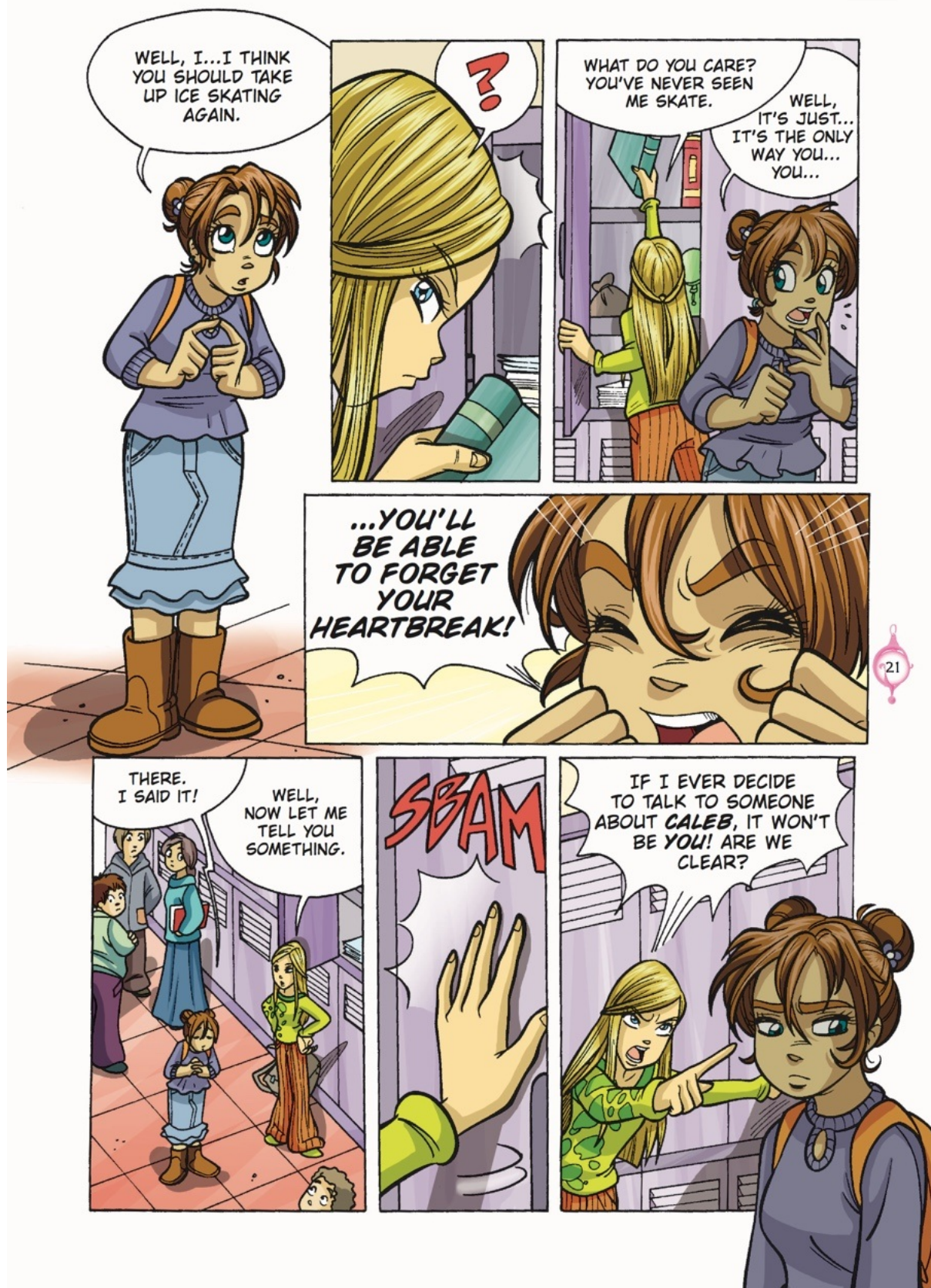
YEAH, IF YOU WANT TO MAKE NICE WITH HER. BUT GO EASY—SHE'S NOT IN A GREAT MOOD.

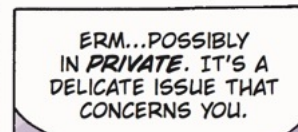
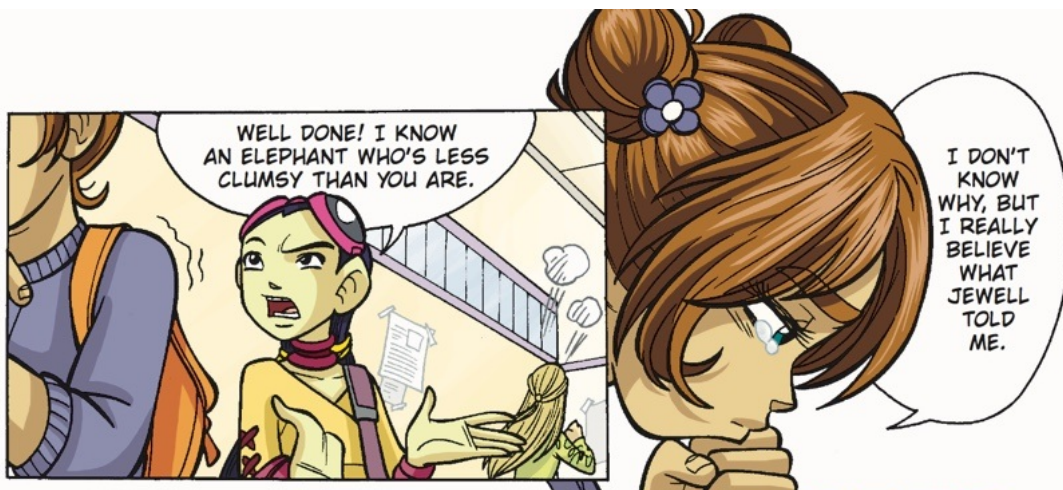


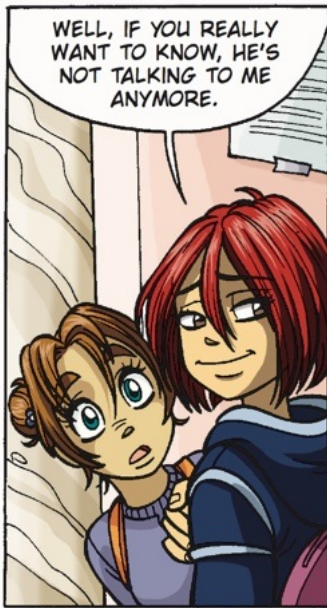
HI, CORNY. CAN I... CAN I TELL YOU SOMETHING?

SHOOT, IRMA. I COULDN'T WAIT TO HEAR FROM YOU TODAY...









WELL, IF YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW, HE'S NOT TALKING TO ME ANYMORE.



HE MUST STILL BE UPSET ABOUT MY SCENE OVER MANDY ANDERSON.*

*SEE W.I.T.C.H. CHAPTER 24



WOULD IT OFFEND YOU IF I SAID MAYBE HE'S GOT A POINT?

I WAS SO STUPID... I KEEP TELLING MYSELF THAT.



ANYWAY, I DIDN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT MATT.

AH...NO?

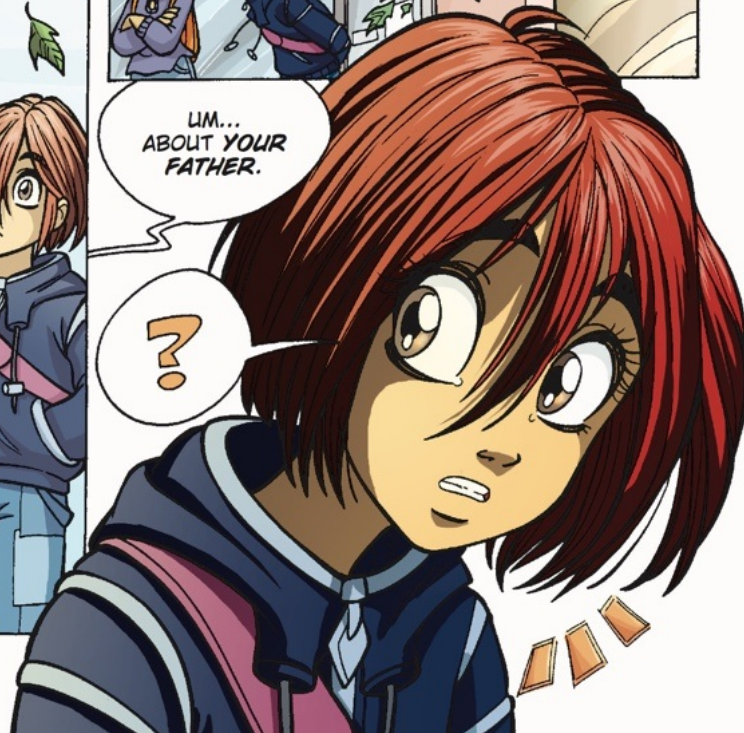


I WOULD NEVER STICK MY NOSE INTO YOUR **BUSINESS**.

WELL THEN, MY BAD. WHAT'D YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT?

UM... ABOUT YOUR **FATHER**.

?



LATER, OUTSIDE
OF THE SHEFFIELD
INSTITUTE...

SO WILL
REALLY TOLD
YOU TO BUZZ
OFF?

TO PUT
IT MILDLY,
YES.

WHAT DID
JEWELL SAY
THAT WAS SO
PERSONAL?

HE TOLD ME SHE
SHOULDN'T GET TOO
ATTACHED TO HER DAD
'COS HE'LL MAKE
HER *SUFFER*.

OUCH. I THINK THAT
QUALIFIES AS *WAY*
TOO PERSONAL!

IF YOU ADD THE FACT
THAT SHE'S FIGHTING
WITH HER MOM AND
MATT...

"...IT'S NORMAL SHE'D TAKE
HER DAD'S SIDE. HE'S A COOL GUY,
OR AT LEAST SO IT SEEMS..."

24

ALL RIGHT.
YOU *BOTCHED*
IT WITH TWO
FRIENDS.
YOU'RE MISSING
OUT WITH
TARANEE.

YEAH. I WANTED
TO END WITH A BANG,
BUT SHE RAN
OFF RIGHT
AFTER CLASS.

JEWELL
GOT REALLY
MYSTERIOUS
ABOUT HER. HE
SAID SHE HAS A
SECRET...

"...AND THAT SHE'LL HAVE TO
MAKE AN IMPORTANT DECISION
ABOUT TELLING IT TO THE
RIGHT PERSON!"



I HOPE YOU
HAVEN'T TOLD
ANYONE.

DON'T WORRY,
MOM. YOUR DEVIOUS
PLANS ARE SAFE.



WHAT'S THE MATTER,
TARANEE? I'VE NEVER
HEARD YOU SAY ANY-
THING LIKE THAT.

IT MEANS
I'VE **CHANGED**...
AND YOU HAVEN'T
NOTICED.



THE FACT THAT YOU FOUND SUSAN
VANDOM'S FILE IN MY OFFICE
DOESN'T MEAN...

DON'T
TREAT ME
LIKE I'M
STUPID!



YOU'RE ABOUT TO PUT
MY **FRIEND'S** MOTHER
ON **TRIAL**!

OH, COME ON! I'M A
JUDGE. HER FILE LANDED
ON MY DESK. I'M JUST
DOING MY **JOB**.



FOR AN INSTANT, IT FLARED
WITHIN A CONFUSED DAUGHTER...



IN A SECOND, IT CONSUMED
THE CERTAINTIES OF A MOTHER...



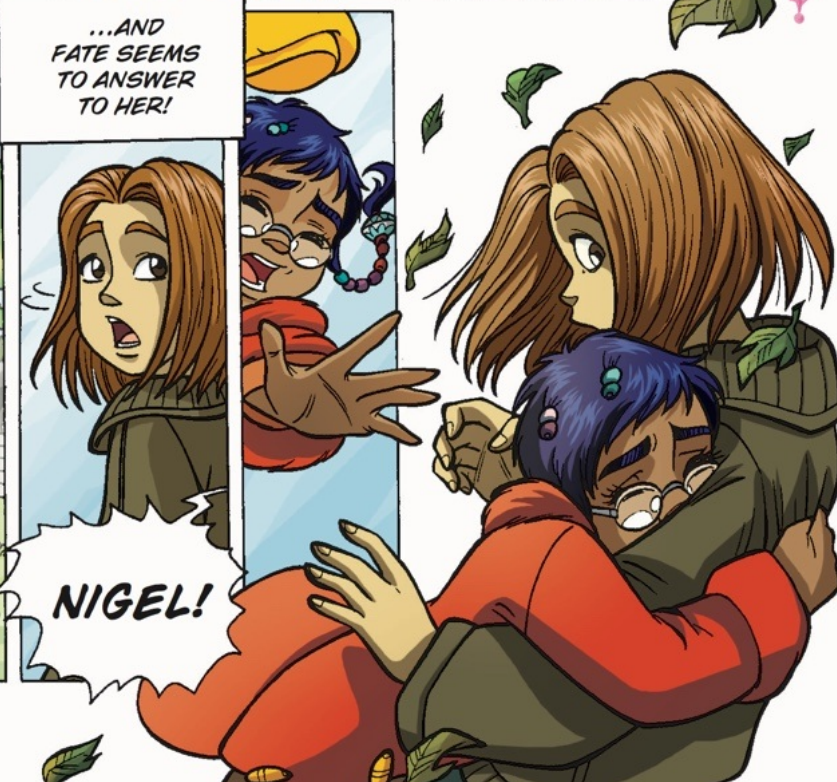
...BUT IT FIZZLED OUT FAST,
AND A WISH WAS BORN
FROM ITS ASHES!



NOW, IN THIS
MOMENT,
TARANEE WOULD
LIKE NOTHING
MORE THAN A SIGN
FROM DESTINY...



...AND
FATE SEEMS
TO ANSWER
TO HER!



NIGEL!



DO YOU BELIEVE IN DESTINY, DAD?

I CAN'T AFFORD THAT LUXURY WITH MY JOB.

BUT WHAT IF YOU FOUND OUT IT EXISTS? THAT YOUR FUTURE IS ALREADY **WRITTEN**?

THEN I'D TRY TO FIGURE OUT IF I CAN CHANGE IT OR REWRITE IT.

GOOD IDEA. MAYBE IT'S WRITTEN IN INVISIBLE INK OR...

...ON WATER!

HOW DEEP. I BET IT WAS THE **PSYCHIC** WHO GAVE YOU THOSE IDEAS.

28

DLIN DLON

I'LL GET IT.

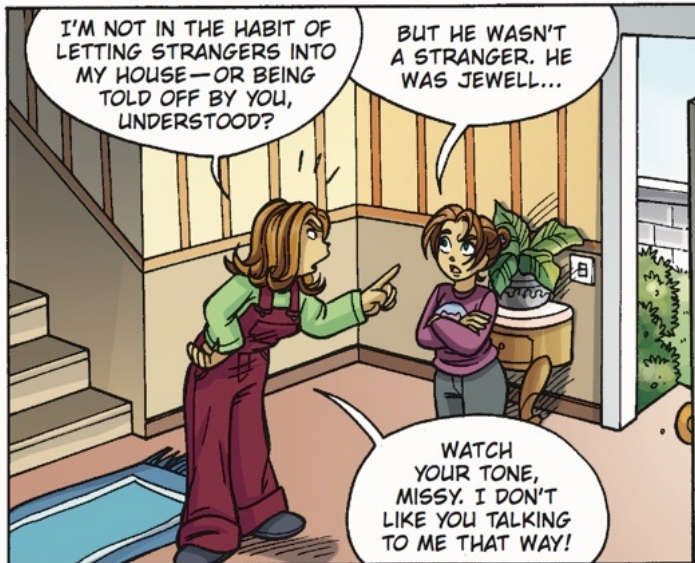
I HEARD YOU TWO CHATTING IN THE BACK SEAT YESTERDAY.

WELL...UM... LET'S JUST SAY HE MADE ME THINK. BY THE WAY, DO YOU KNOW HOW HE'S DOING?

NO, HE DISAPPEARED. HE HASN'T BEEN BACK TO THE SHELTER.

TROUBLE IS THAT ZIBOSKY'S VANISHED AS WELL. WE LET HIM OUT ON BAIL.





I'M NOT IN THE HABIT OF LETTING STRANGERS INTO MY HOUSE—OR BEING TOLD OFF BY YOU, UNDERSTOOD?

BUT HE WASN'T A STRANGER. HE WAS JEWELL...

WATCH YOUR TONE, MISSY. I DON'T LIKE YOU TALKING TO ME THAT WAY!



IT'S IMPORTANT! THAT MAN'S LIFE IS IN DANGER. WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?

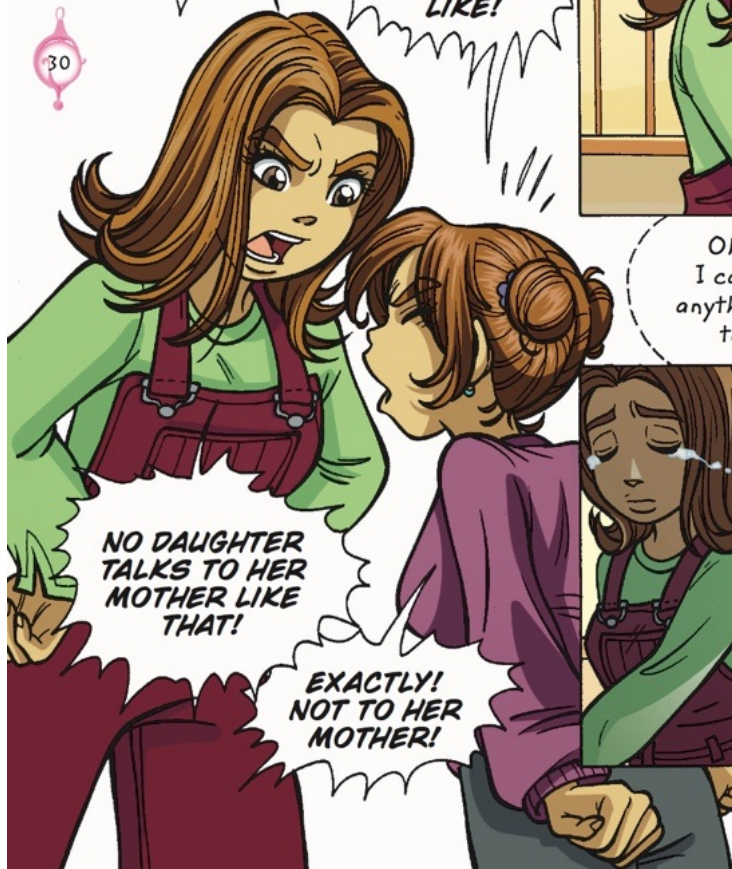


I SAID, DON'T TAKE THAT TONE WITH ME!

AND I'LL USE WHATEVER TONE I LIKE!

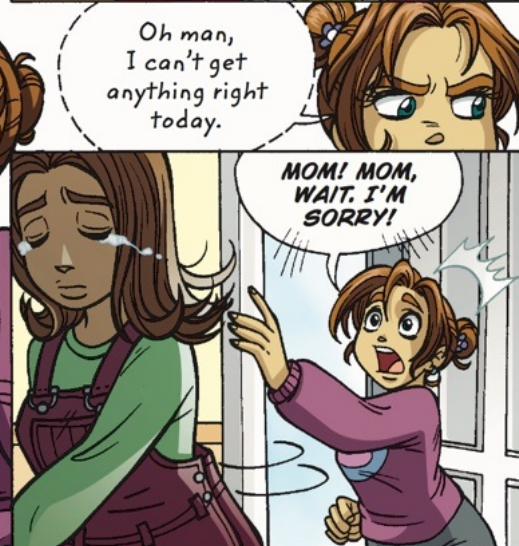


Oh man, I can't get anything right today.



NO DAUGHTER TALKS TO HER MOTHER LIKE THAT!

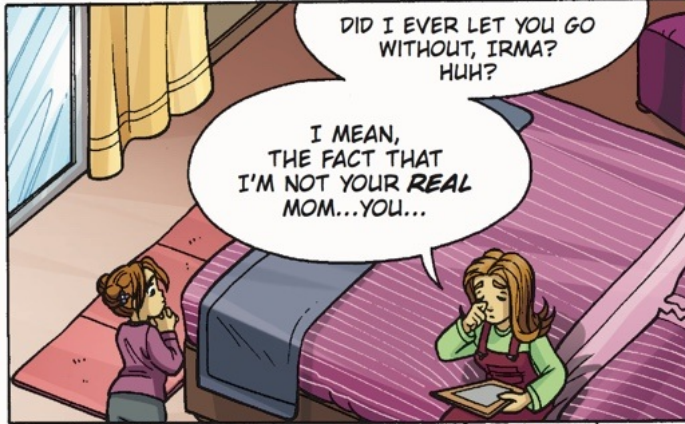
EXACTLY! NOT TO HER MOTHER!



MOM! MOM, WAIT. I'M SORRY!



MOM, I...

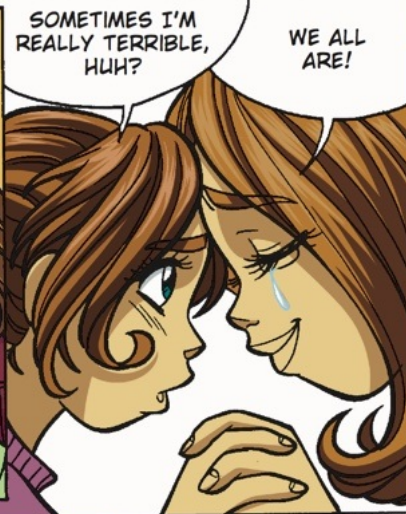


DID I EVER LET YOU GO WITHOUT, IRMA? HUH?

I MEAN, THE FACT THAT I'M NOT YOUR *REAL* MOM...YOU...



I LOVE YOU, AND YOU KNOW IT. WE BOTH KNOW IT, OKAY?



SOMETIMES I'M REALLY TERRIBLE, HUH?

WE ALL ARE!



ANYWAY, THAT MAN WAS HERE FOR *YOU*, NOT YOUR FATHER.



HE DIDN'T WANT ME TO BOTHER YOU AND LEFT THAT *BOOK*.

"HE TOLD ME YOU
WOULD UNDERSTAND."



BUT I
DON'T GET
IT!

32

WHY DID IRMA ONLY
TELL YOU ABOUT
THIS JEWELL?

YEAH. IT SEEMS
CLEAR THIS IS ABOUT
ALL OF US.



SHE THOUGHT WHAT
HE SAID ABOUT ME
WAS LESS **HEAVY**
THAN WHAT HE SAID
ABOUT YOU.

THAT'S
NOT THE
POINT.



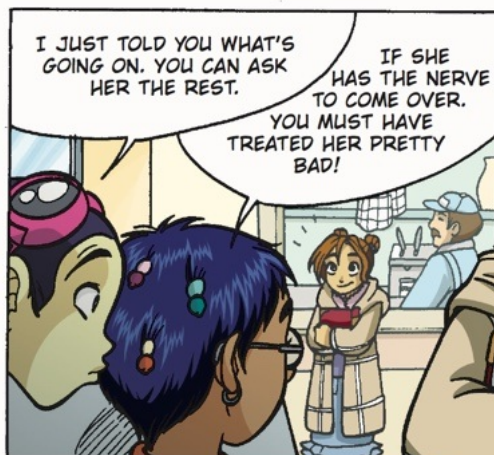
A TOTAL STRANGER SEEMS TO
KNOW ALL ABOUT US. WHO IS
HE? WHERE'D HE COME FROM?
DIDN'T SHE ASK HERSELF
THAT?

SHE SAYS SHE
JUST KNOWS
SHE CAN TRUST
HIM. IT'S A
HUNCH.



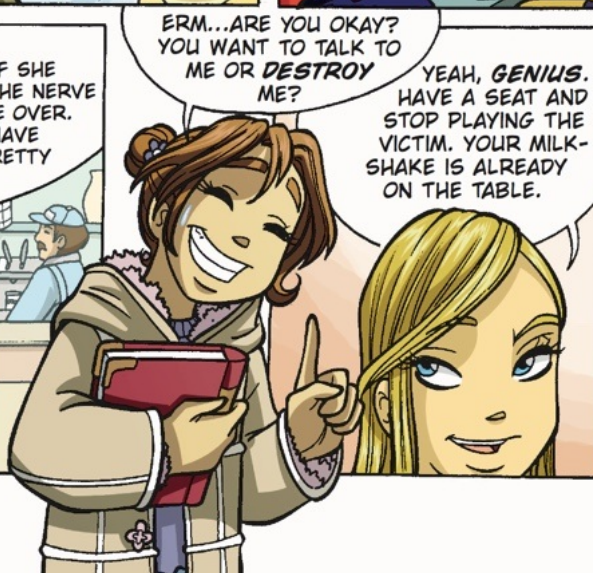
I JUST TOLD YOU WHAT'S
GOING ON. YOU CAN ASK
HER THE REST.

IF SHE
HAS THE NERVE
TO COME OVER.
YOU MUST HAVE
TREATED HER PRETTY
BAD!



ERM...ARE YOU OKAY?
YOU WANT TO TALK TO
ME OR **DESTROY**
ME?

YEAH, **GENIUS**.
HAVE A SEAT AND
STOP PLAYING THE
VICTIM. YOUR MILK-
SHAKE IS ALREADY
ON THE TABLE.





MEANWHILE, AT THE
SHEFFIELD INSTITUTE...



SORRY, MS. KNICKERBOCHER,
BUT IF YOU DON'T NEED
ANYTHING ELSE, I'LL
BE OFF.

COME IN A
MINUTE. I WANT
TO INTRODUCE YOU
TO SOMEONE.



NICE TO
MEET YOU.

THIS IS
GIDEON, ONE
OF OUR VALUED
JANITORS.

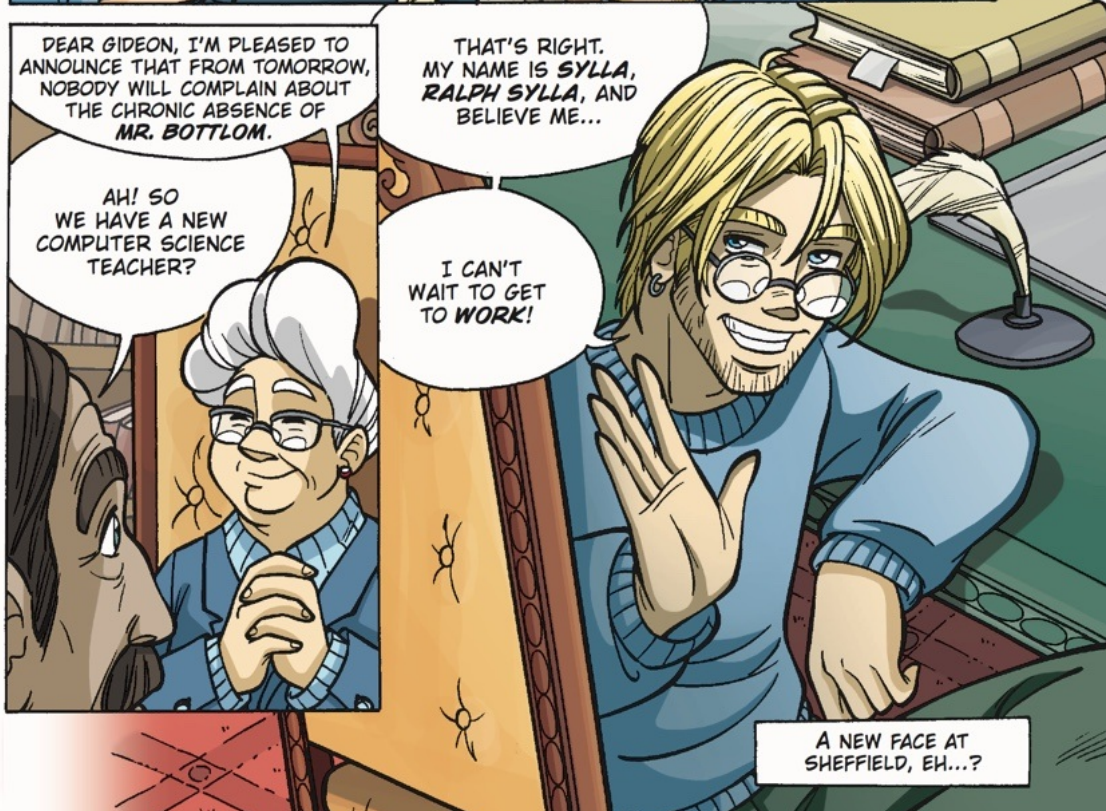


DEAR GIDEON, I'M PLEASED TO
ANNOUNCE THAT FROM TOMORROW,
NOBODY WILL COMPLAIN ABOUT
THE CHRONIC ABSENCE OF
MR. BOTTLOM.

THAT'S RIGHT.
MY NAME IS SYLLA,
RALPH SYLLA, AND
BELIEVE ME...

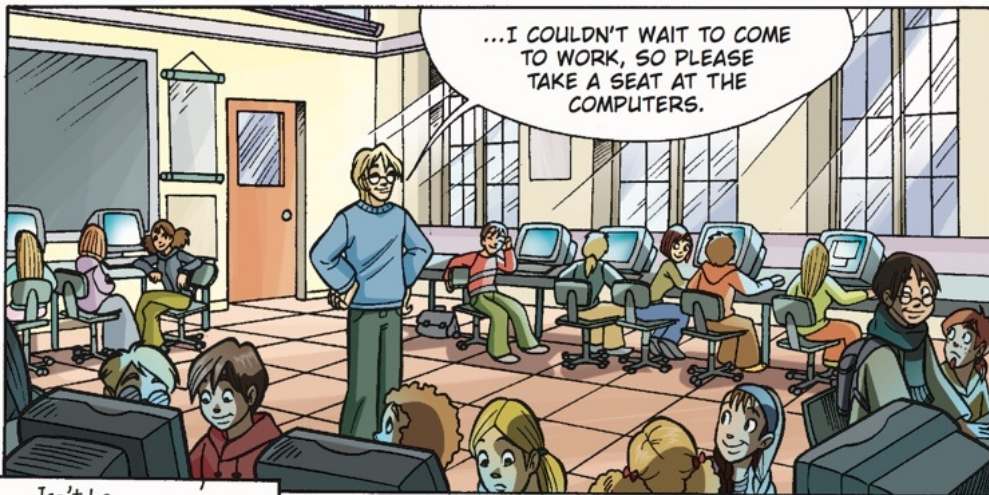
AH! SO
WE HAVE A NEW
COMPUTER SCIENCE
TEACHER?

I CAN'T
WAIT TO GET
TO WORK!

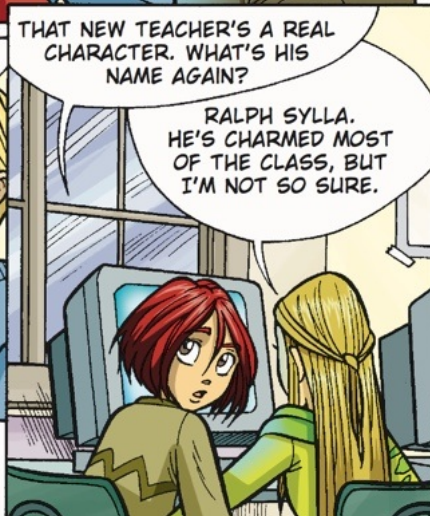
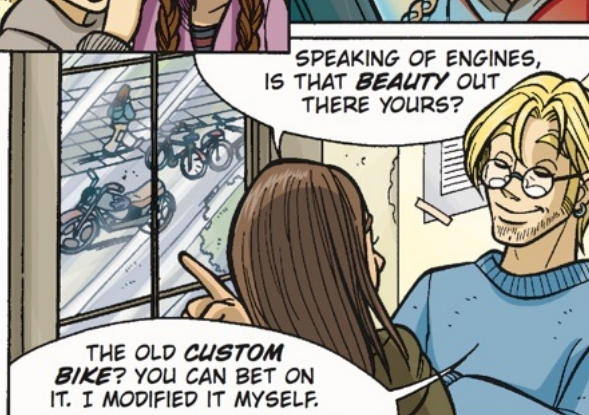
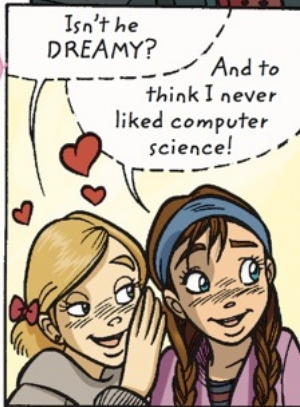


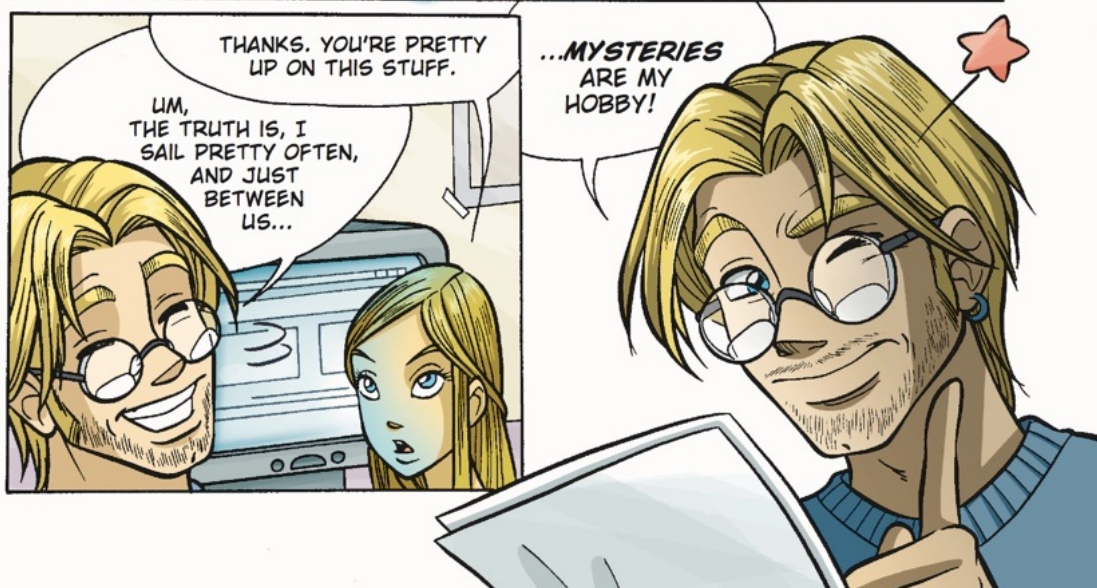
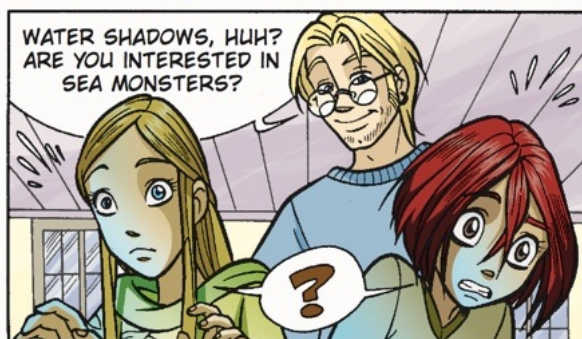
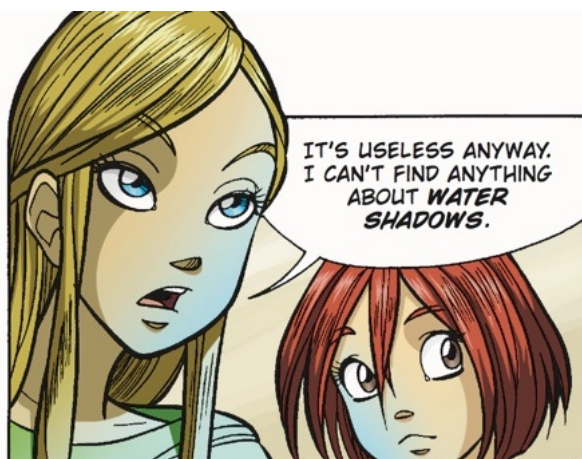
A NEW FACE AT
SHEFFIELD, EH...?





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LATER, IN THE GARDEN OF THE SHEFFIELD INSTITUTE...

SO?
DID YOU FIND
ANYTHING?

WHEN TALKING ABOUT
SHADOWS, IT USUALLY
REFERS TO CREATURES
WITH MAGICAL
PROPERTIES...

...IN SOME WAYS AKIN
TO **ELEMENTAL
SPIRITS**.

SO
CREATURES
TIED TO THE **FOUR
ELEMENTS**, A BIT
LIKE US. WATER,
FIRE, EARTH,
AND AIR.

NOT
MUCH. JUST
A FEW THINGS,
NOT VERY
INTERESTING.

THESE SPIRITS ARE MADE OF
THEIR ELEMENT. FIRE ONES
ARE MADE OF FIRE, AIR
ONES ARE MADE
OF AIR...

WAIT A MINUTE.
ARE YOU SAYING THESE
CREATURES HAVE NO **BODY**?

MORE OR LESS. WATER
SHADOWS, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE
ALMOST INVISIBLE TO
THE NAKED EYE.

"BUT SOME SAILORS CLAIM
TO HAVE SEEN THEM IN
PODS OF DOLPHINS..."

"SWIFT **SHADOWS** THAT
LOOK ALMOST HUMAN..."



THEY SAY THIS IS WHERE
STORIES ABOUT **MERMAIDS**
CAME FROM.

CREATURES MADE OF
WATER LIVING IN WATER?
UNBELIEVABLE.



I'D SAY IMPOSSIBLE.
WE'RE ON EARTH, NOT
MERIDIAN.

WHY ARE YOU
RULING OUT THE
IDEA OF **MAGICAL
CREATURES**
LIVING HERE
TOO?



BECAUSE I USE MY BRAIN
WHEN I THINK, NOT
MY IMAGINATION.

BUT WE
EXIST, DON'T
WE?



OH, COME ON. YOU TALK
TO HER. I GIVE UP.

SO WHY DID
JEWELL WANT
TO BRING WATER
SHADOWS
TO YOUR
ATTENTION?

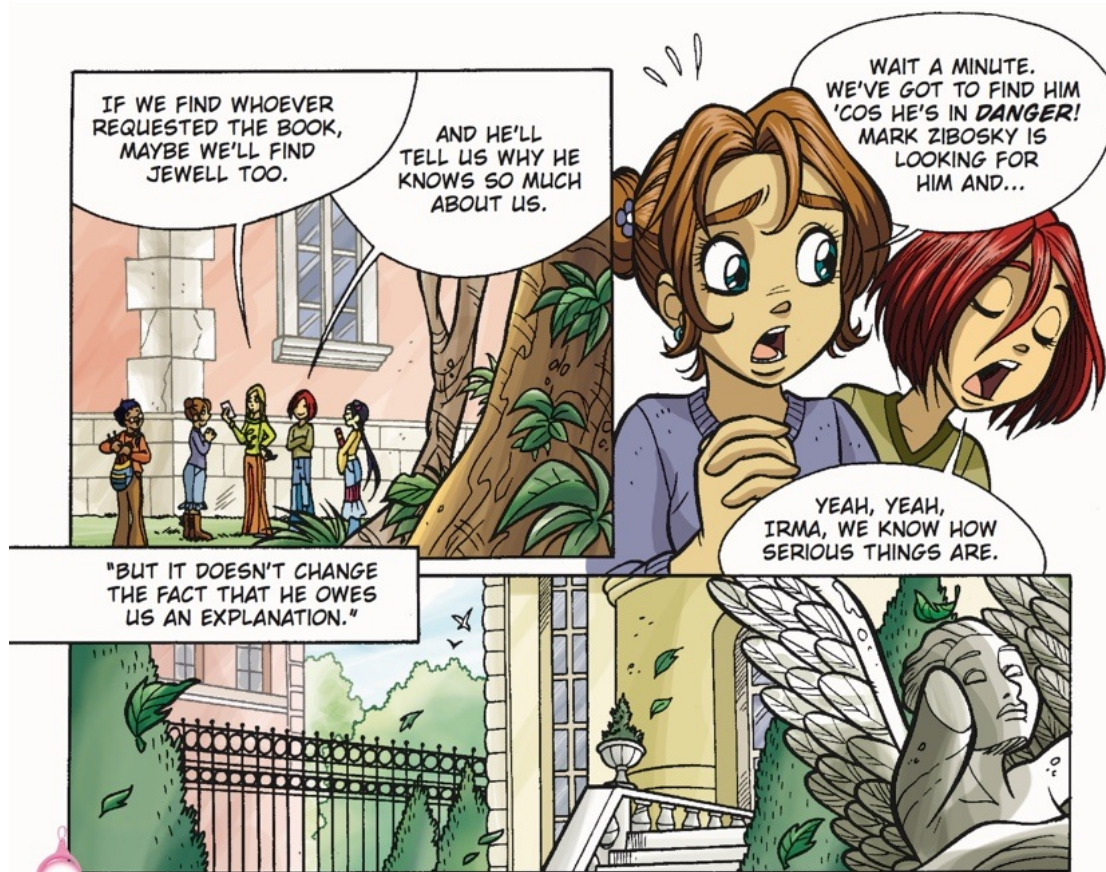


MAYBE HE WANTED
US TO FIND SOMETHING
ELSE. LOOK WHAT'S
BETWEEN THE
PAGES OF
HIS BOOK.



IT'S A **LIBRARY**
TICKET.

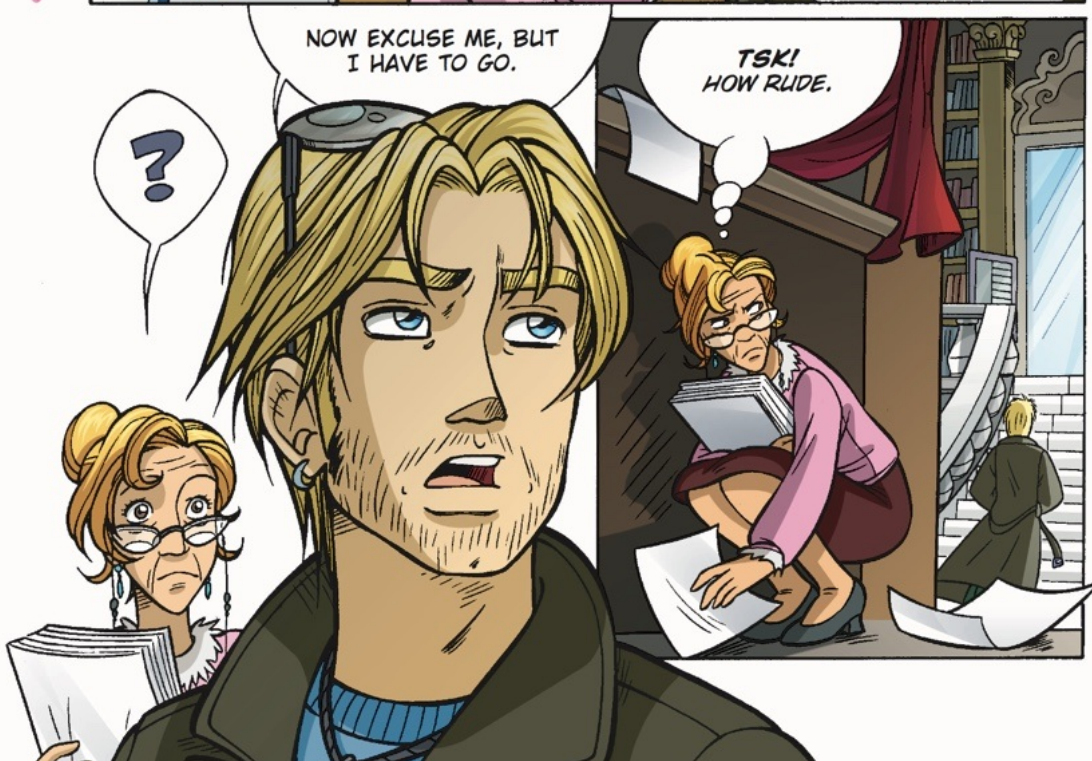
FORGET
ABOUT LEGENDS.
FINALLY SOMETHING
REAL WE CAN
INVESTIGATE.



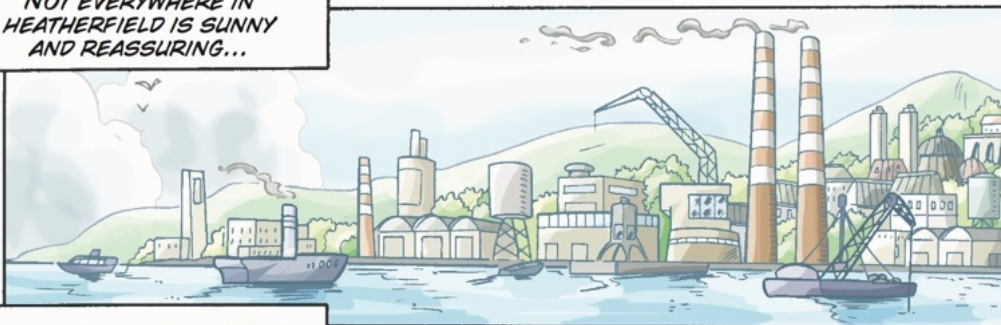
40







NOT EVERYWHERE IN
HEATHERFIELD IS SUNNY
AND REASSURING...



THE INDUSTRIAL PORT, FOR
EXAMPLE, ISN'T A PRIME
TOURIST SPOT.

LOOK AT THIS. IF MY
PARENTS KNEW I WAS
HERE NOW...

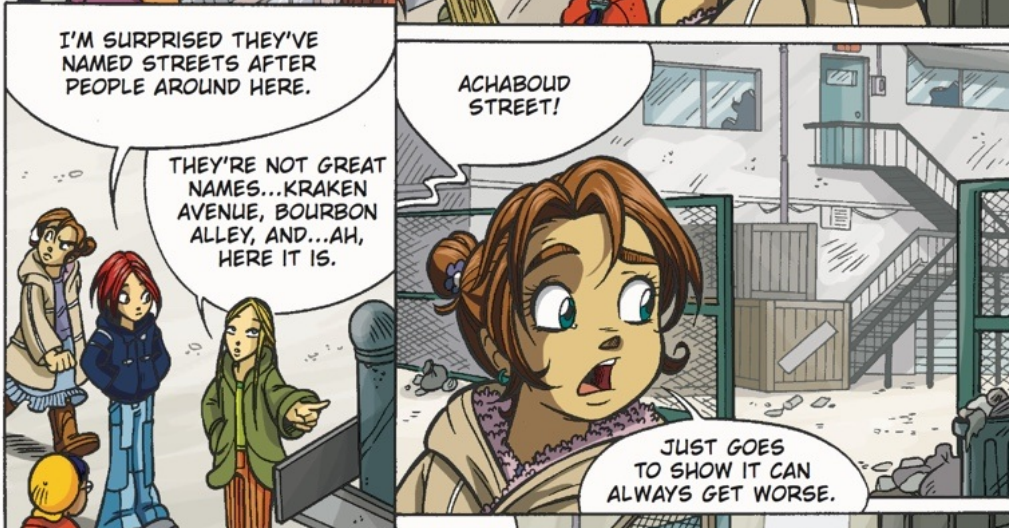


I'M SURPRISED THEY'VE
NAMED STREETS AFTER
PEOPLE AROUND HERE.

THEY'RE NOT GREAT
NAMES...KRAKEN
AVENUE, BOURBON
ALLEY, AND...AH,
HERE IT IS.

ACHABOUL
STREET!

JUST GOES
TO SHOW IT CAN
ALWAYS GET WORSE.



NO BELL. SHOULD
I KNOCK?

NO, HUFF AND
PUFF. WITH THE STATE
OF THIS DUMP, THE DOOR
WILL PROBABLY FALL DOWN!





"IT'S ONE OF ZIBOSKY'S MEN.
I SAW HIM THE OTHER DAY AT
THE POLICE STATION."



WHAT WAS THIS
THUG DOING
HERE?



GUESS WE'LL
NEVER KNOW. HE
PASSED OUT.

JEWELL!

MMMH!
MMMH!

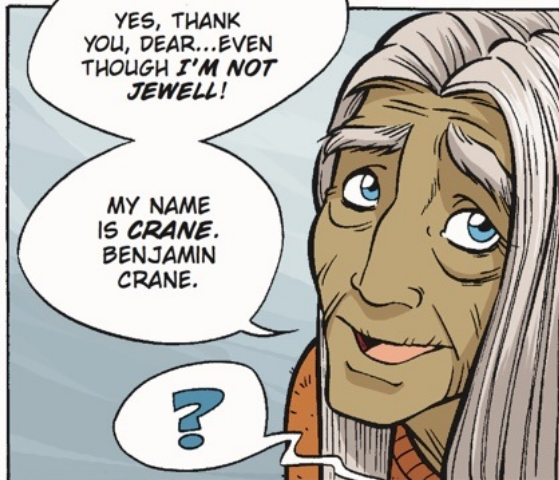


ARE YOU
ALL RIGHT?
EVERYTHING
OKAY?

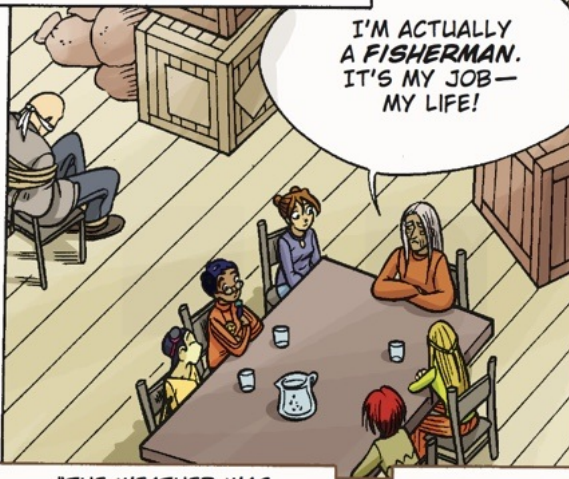
YES, THANK
YOU, DEAR...EVEN
THOUGH I'M NOT
JEWELL!

MY NAME
IS *CRANE*.
BENJAMIN
CRANE.

?

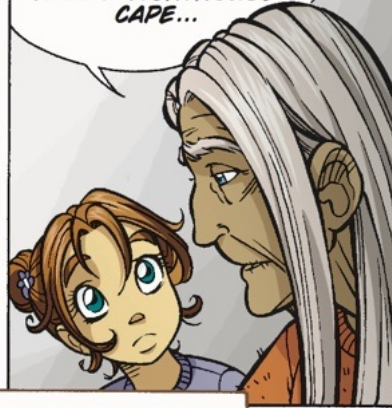


LATER, AFTER TAKING CARE
OF THE SCOUNDREL...



I'M ACTUALLY
A FISHMAN.
IT'S MY JOB—
MY LIFE!

IT ALL STARTED ABOUT
SIX MONTHS AGO. I
WAS ON A FISHING TRIP,
NOT HAVING MUCH LUCK,
AROUND LIGHTHOUSE
CAPE...



"THE WEATHER WAS
LOUSY, AND THE BOAT WAS
IN BAD SHAPE. BUT I
NEEDED TO WORK.

"THE SEA STARTED GETTING ROUGH,
AND SOON, I WAS TAKING ON WATER.
I REMEMBER THE WATER WAS DARK,
FREEZING, MERCILESS.



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"I TRIED TO SWIM TOWARD THE COAST. THE BLINKING LIGHTHOUSE TOLD ME SAFETY WAS RIGHT THERE, WITHIN REACH..."



"...BUT I'M NOT THAT YOUNG ANYMORE, AND THE CURRENTS ARE MEAN. I STARTED TO STRUGGLE."

"THEN SOMETHING **LIFTED ME UP!** A MASS OF BUBBLING WATER CARRIED ME TOWARD THE SHORE."



"AT FIRST, I THOUGHT IT MUST'VE BEEN A **DOLPHIN**. I COULD SEE SOME JUMPING NEARBY."



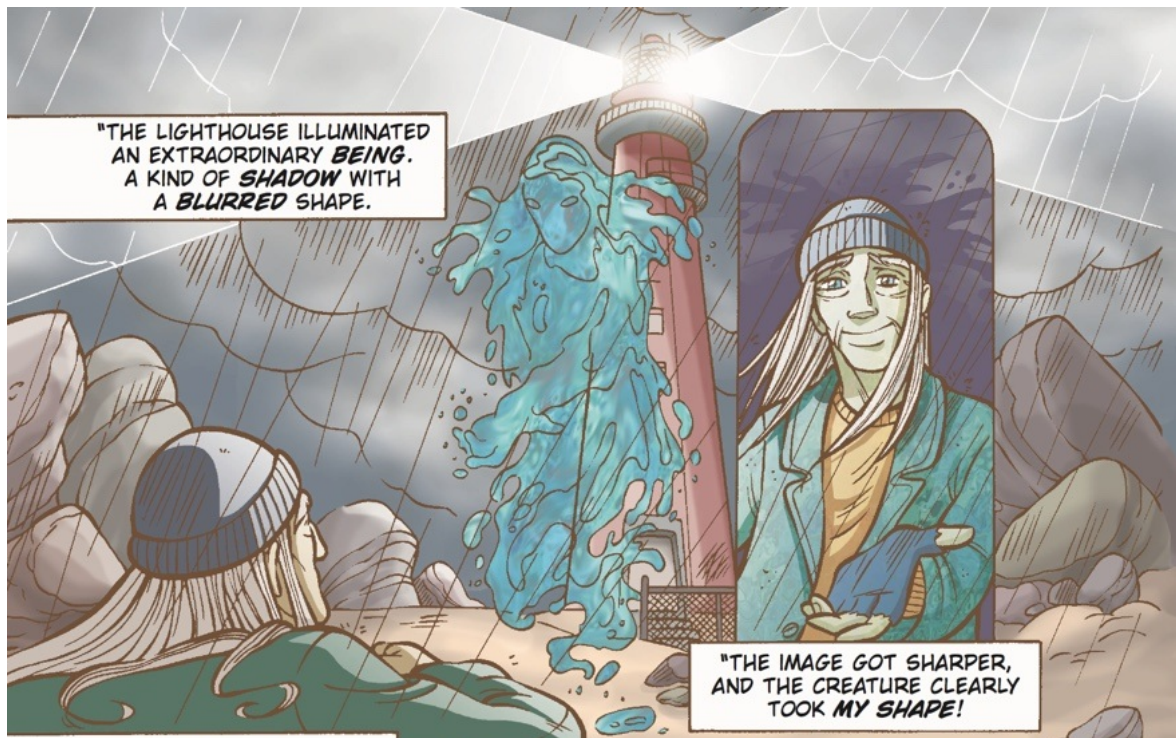
"WHEN I GOT TO THE ROCKS, I REALIZED I WAS TOO WEAK TO CLIMB UP."



"I FELT TWO **HANDS** GRAB ME AND CARRY ME TO SAFETY, AND THEN..."



"...THEN I **SAW IT!**"



"THEN THE **PREDICTIONS** STARTED. JEWELL WOULD TELL ME THE AREAS WHERE I'D HAVE LUCK FISHING.



"AT FIRST, I BORROWED A BOAT. THEN BUSINESS STARTED GOING WELL, AND I BOUGHT A NEW ONE.



"JEWELL DIDN'T ASK FOR ANYTHING. HE JUST WANTED TO SEE ME HAPPY. HE WAS LIKE AN ANGEL COME FROM THE SEA.



"UNFORTUNATELY, MARK ZIBOSKY NOTICED HOW WELL I WAS DOING AND DISCOVERED MY SECRET.

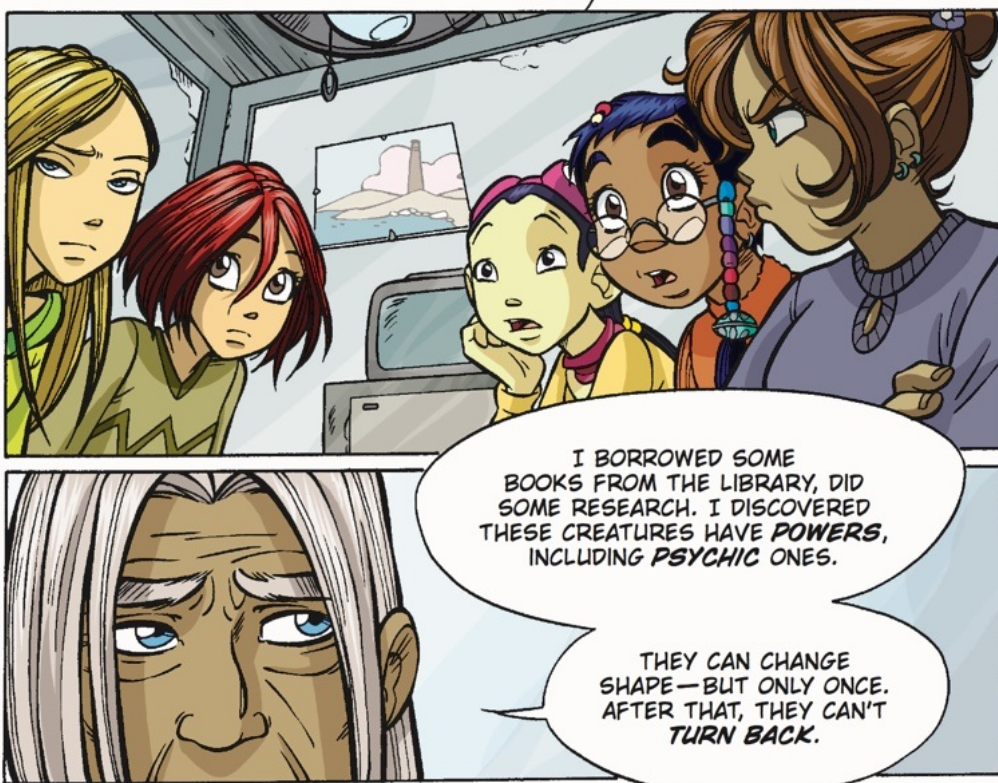
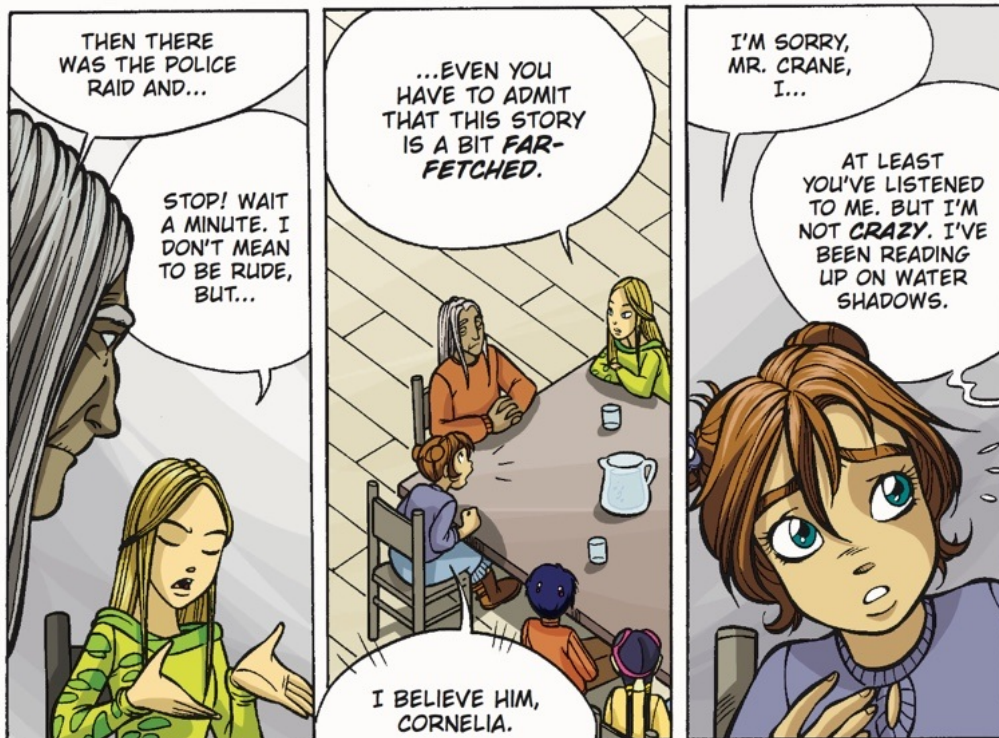


"HE THOUGHT JEWELL WAS MY BROTHER. HE TOOK ME HOSTAGE AND STARTED **BLACKMAILING** HIM.

PREDICTIONS OF THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE IN EXCHANGE FOR YOUR LIFE.

HE USED JEWELL FOR HIS DIRTY DEEDS...ILLEGAL BETS AND OTHER RACKETS.





SHORTLY AFTERWARD,
OUTSIDE CRANE'S HOUSE...

HERE WE
GO. THEY'RE
COMING OUT.

I KNOW WHAT
YOU'RE THINKING,
GUYS, BUT THAT
MAN IN THERE *IS*
NOT JEWELL.

IF YOU'D SEEN
HIS *EYES* AT THE
STATION, YOU'D
UNDERSTAND.

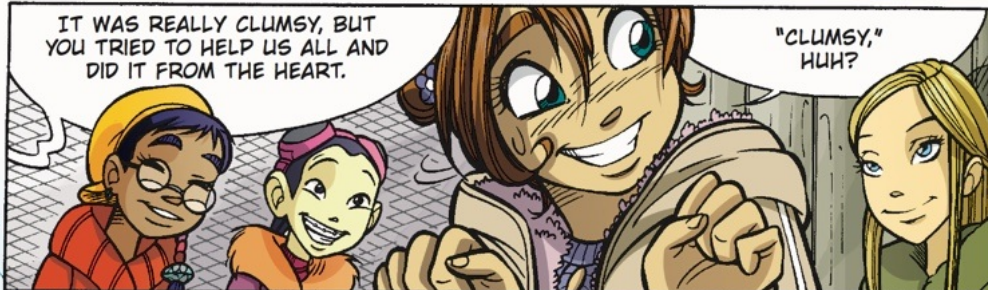
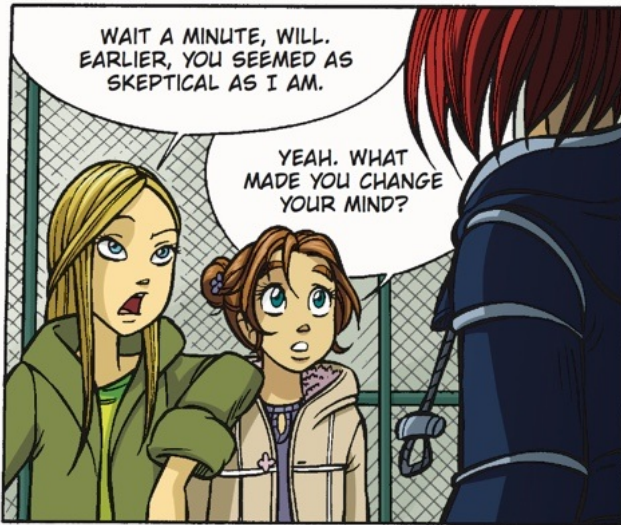
IF YOU WANT,
YOU CAN SET
ME FREE.

HE KNEW THAT ONLY
I CAN BRING HIM BACK
TO HIS *ORIGINAL*
SHAPE.

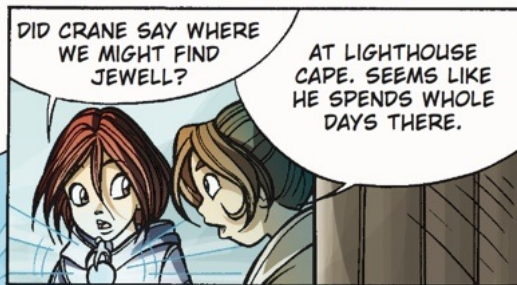
THEN WHAT ARE
WE WAITING FOR?
LET'S GO LOOK
FOR HIM.

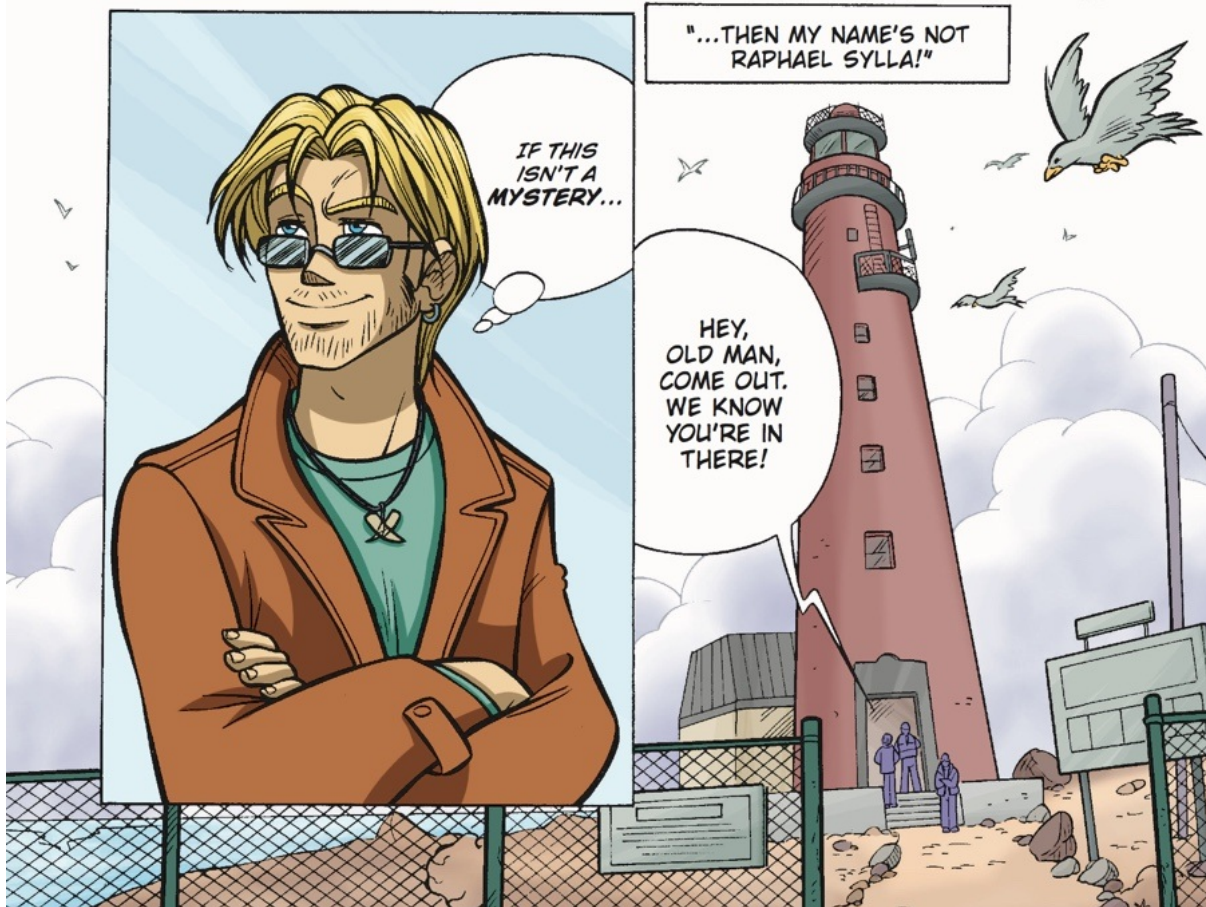
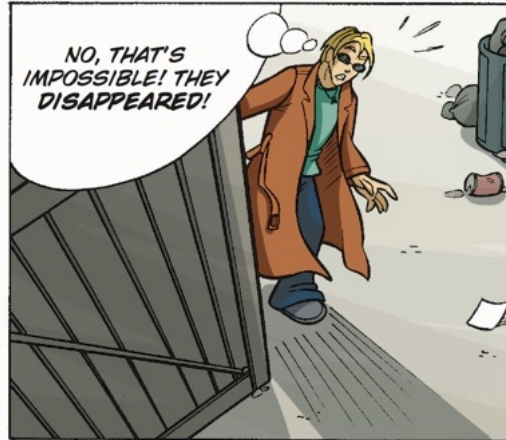
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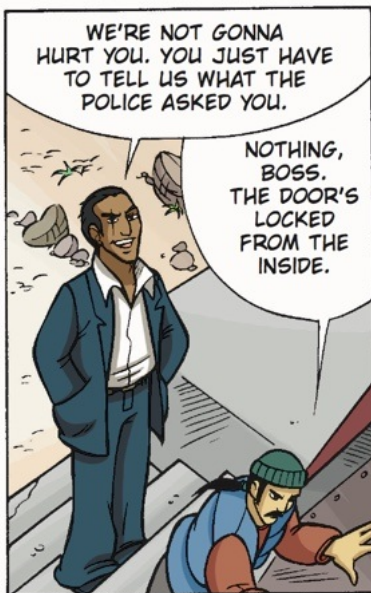
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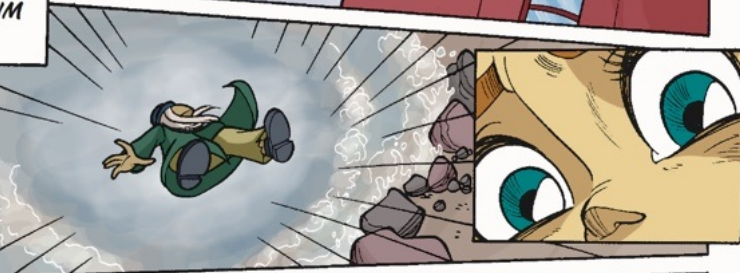






IRMA HOPES THAT IT'S TRUE, THAT JEWELL IS JUST A SHADOW PASSING BY...

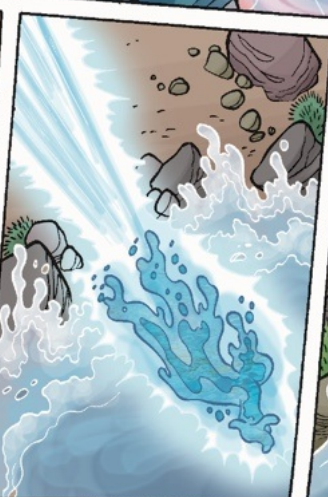
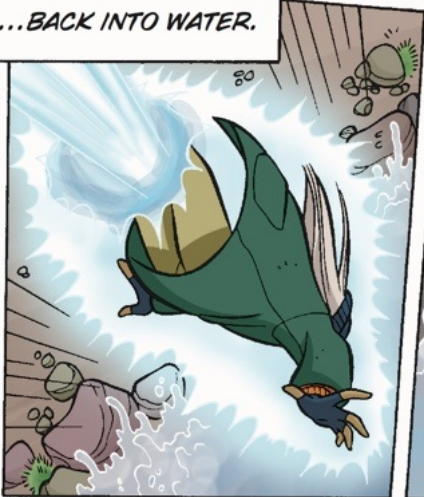
...BECAUSE THE ONLY WAY TO SAVE HIM IS TO GIVE HIM BACK WHAT'S HIS.

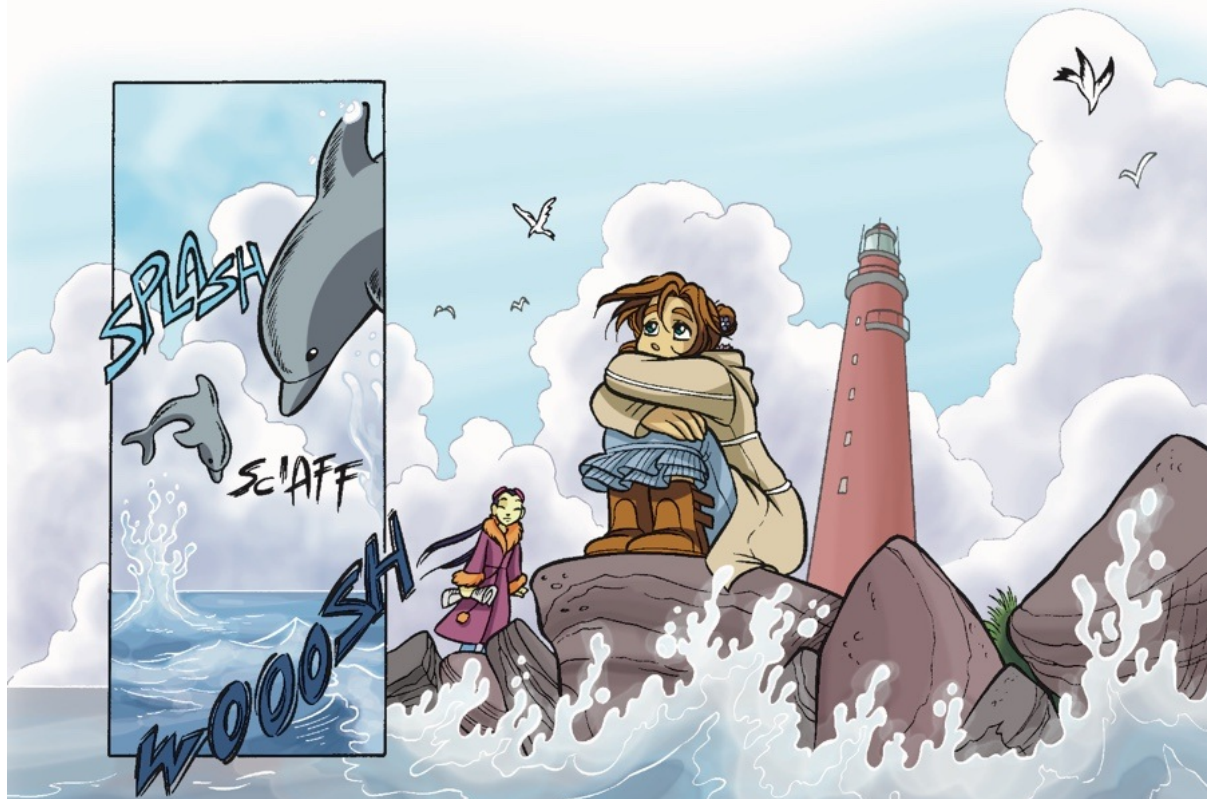


AND TURN WATER...



...BACK INTO WATER.





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HOW'D YOU
FIND ME?

WITH A BIT OF
LUCK AND A LOT
OF IMAGINATION.

THE DOLPHINS ARE
STILL THERE?

YEAH. THEY'RE PLAYING
RIGHT WHERE JEWELL
DISAPPEARED TWO
DAYS AGO.



SO YOU
THINK HE'S
REALLY...?



GONE BACK TO
HIS ELEMENT? WHY?
DON'T YOU?



BUT YOU SAW HIM
TURN INTO WATER AND
DISAPPEAR AMONG
THE WAVES.

I KNOW,
BUT IT ALL
HAPPENED
SO FAST!



ANYWAY,
I BROUGHT
YOU THE PAPER.
THERE'S AN
ARTICLE ON
THE ZIBOSKY
TRIAL.



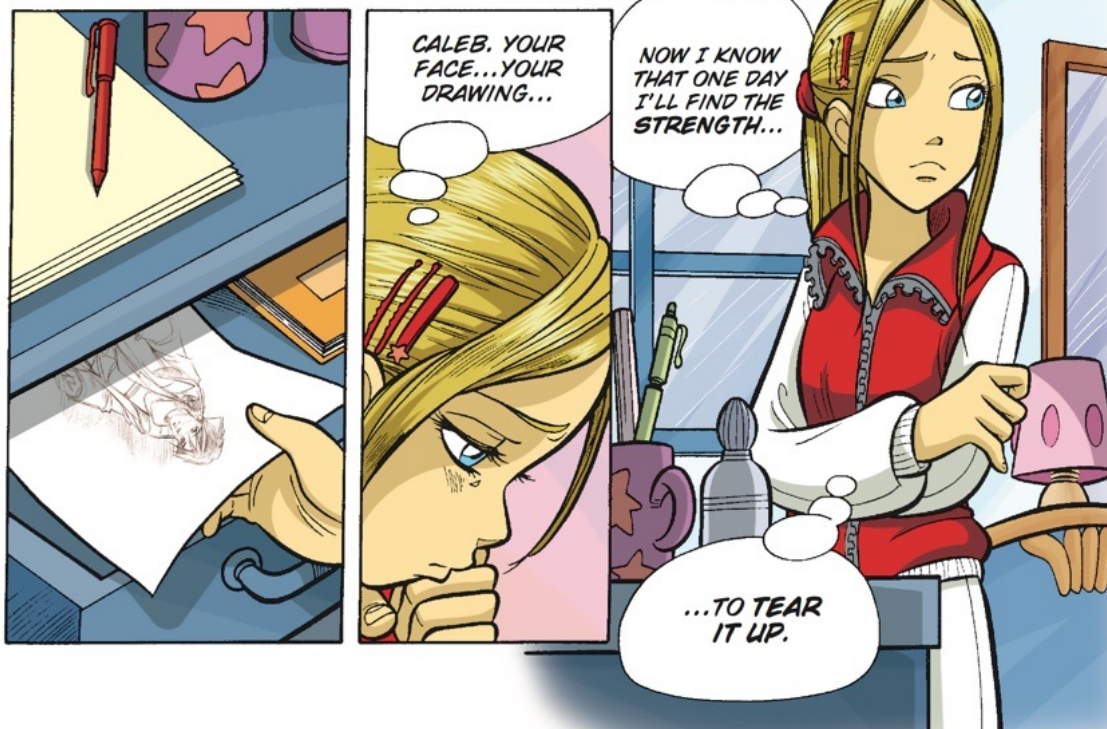
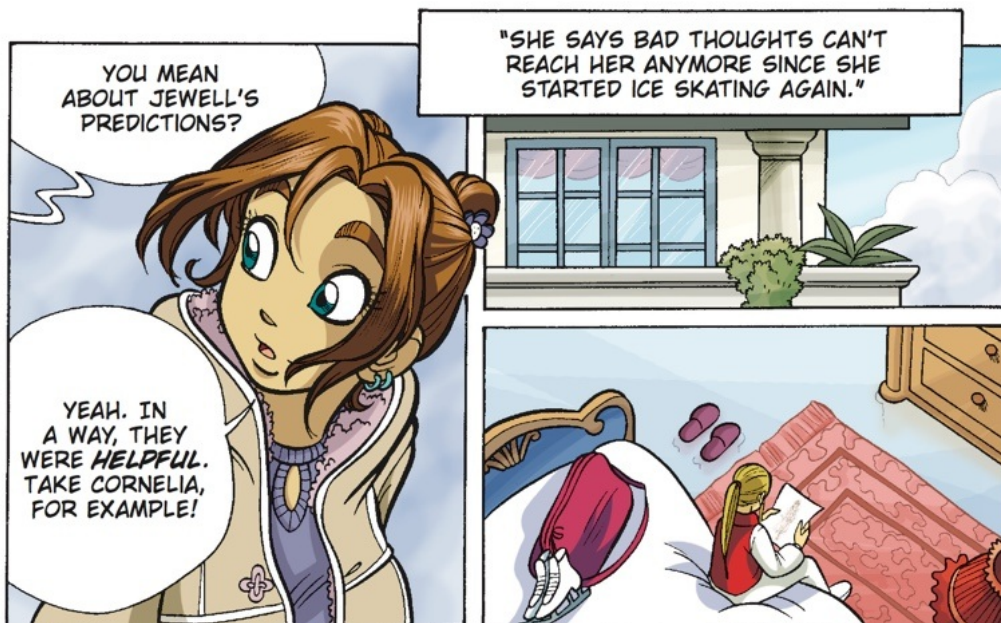
CRANE TESTIFIED AGAINST OUR
FAVORITE CRIMINAL?

YEAH, BUT THAT'S
NOT ALL. ZIBOSKY'S
LAWYERS ARE PLEADING
INSANITY BECAUSE
NOBODY BELIEVES THE
FAIRY STORY HE'S
TELLING.



AREN'T YOU HAPPY? ANY
OTHER DAY, YOU'D HAVE
LAUGHED.

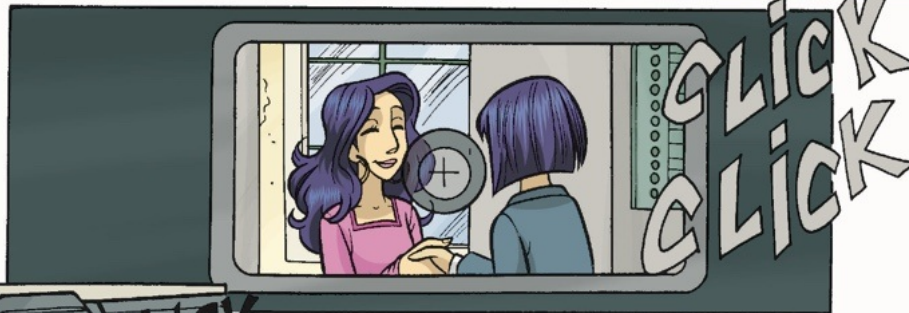
I KNOW IT SEEMS
IMPOSSIBLE, BUT THIS
WHOLE THING REALLY
MADE ME THINK.

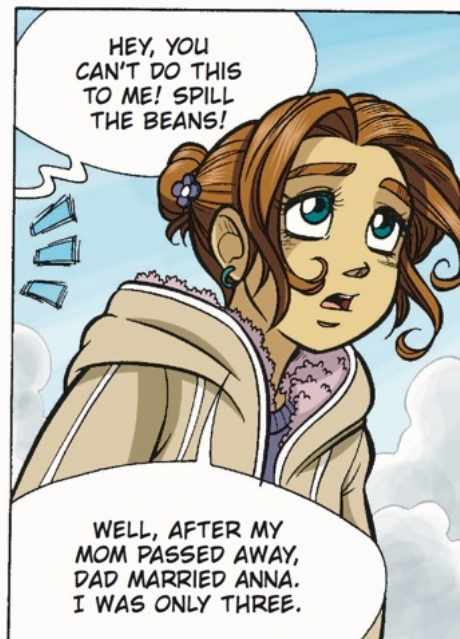
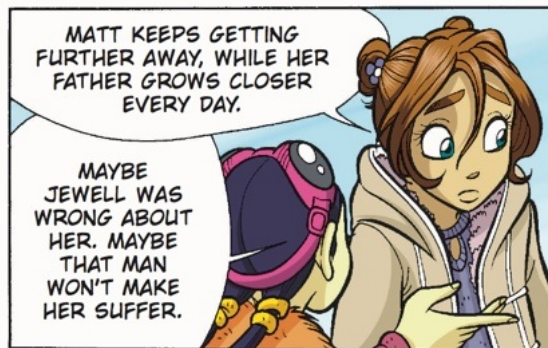


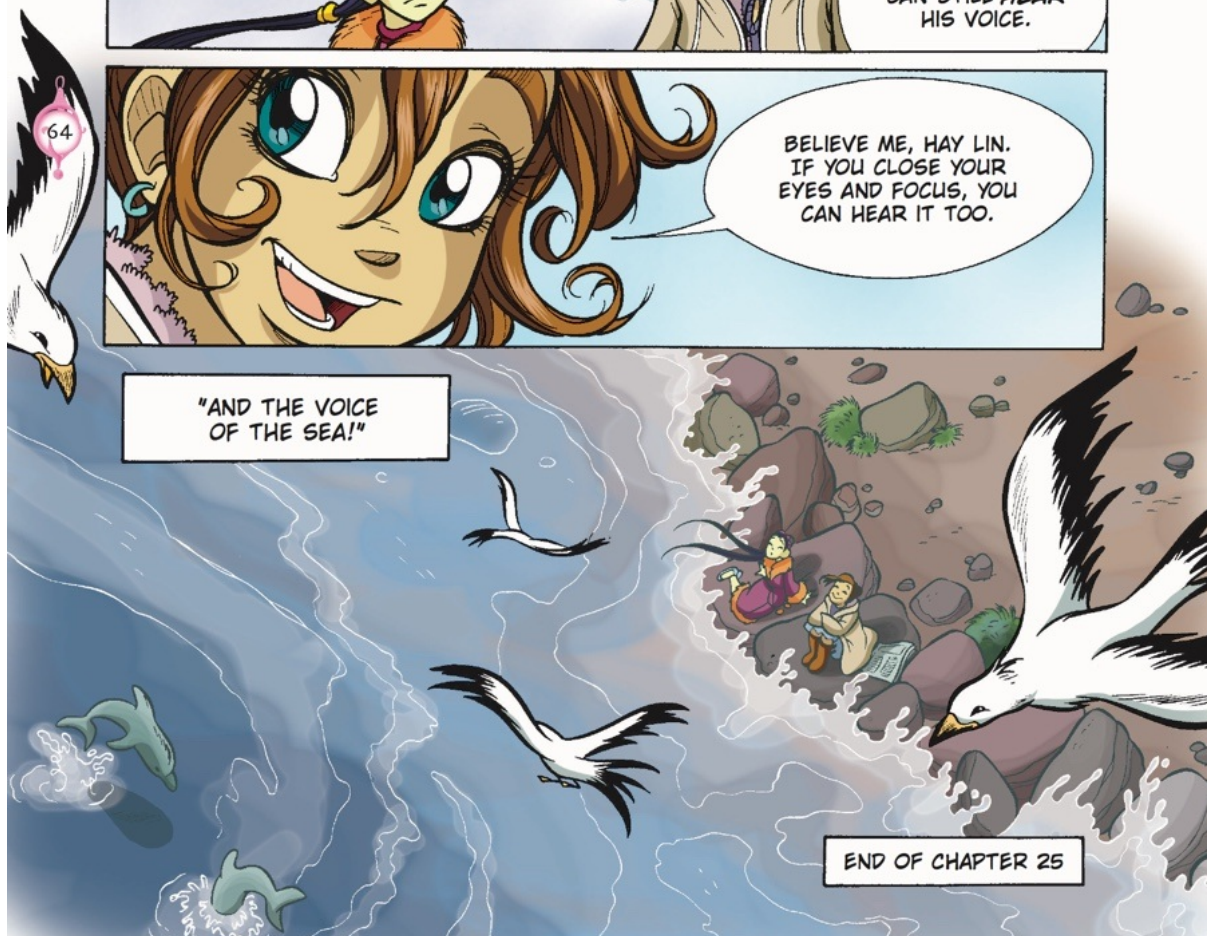
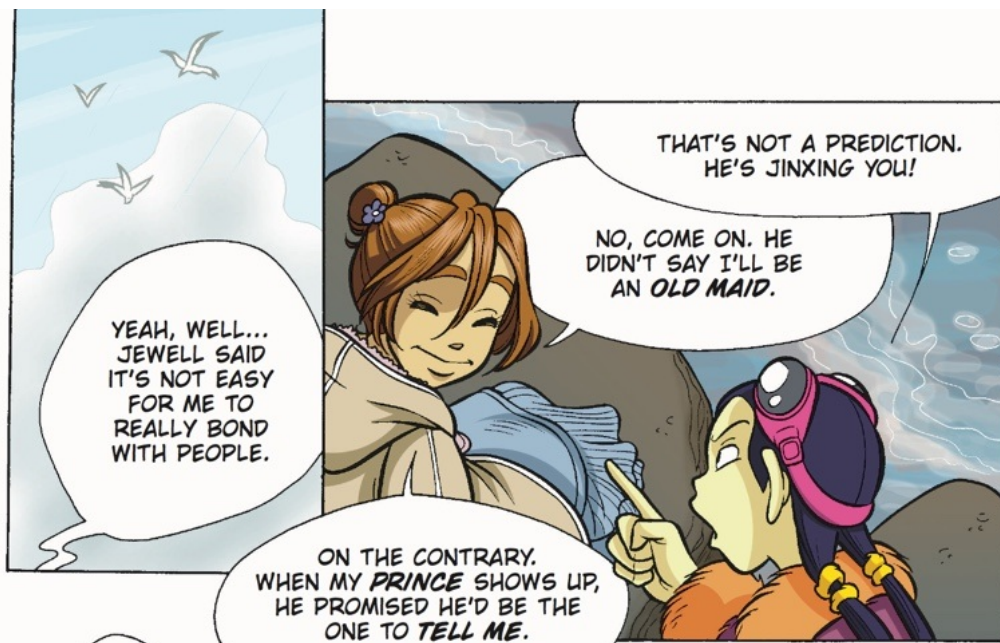




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The Ultimate Blackmail

"Your advice was very helpful..."





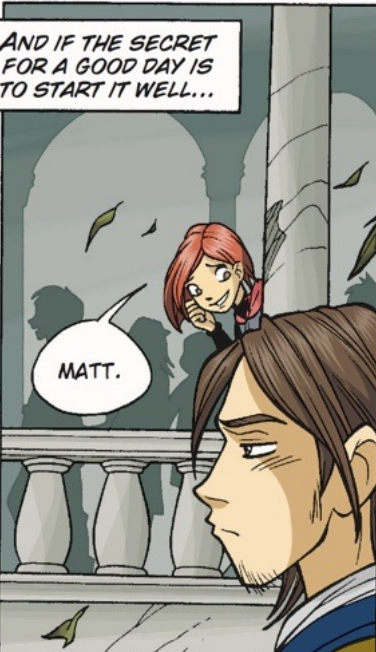
BEYOND THIS GATE, A
NEW DAY OF SCHOOL IS
ABOUT TO BEGIN...



FOR SOME, IT WILL BE
GREAT, BUT FOR OTHERS
THE HOURS WILL BE
ENDLESS AS ALWAYS.



AND IF THE SECRET
FOR A GOOD DAY IS
TO START IT WELL...



...FOR WILL VANDOM
THIS WON'T BE A DAY
TO REMEMBER.



DID YOU
SEE? HE DIDN'T
SAY HI... DIDN'T
EVEN TRY TO
PRETEND HE
DIDN'T SEE
ME.





THAT
SHOULDN'T
SURPRISE YOU
AFTER THE WAY
YOU TREATED
HIM.

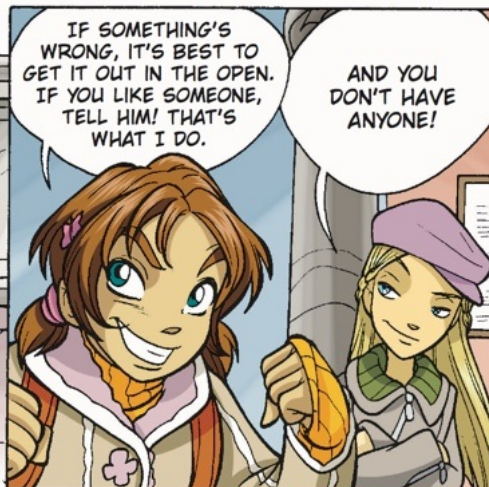
BUT I
THOUGHT
THAT HE AND
MANDY...

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WHAT YOU
THINK DOESN'T
MATTER. YOU
SHOULD'VE
CONFRONTED
HIM.

KEEPING YOUR
DOUBTS TO YOUR-
SELF IS THE WORST
THING YOU CAN DO.
I SPEAK FROM
EXPERIENCE.



IF SOMETHING'S
WRONG, IT'S BEST TO
GET IT OUT IN THE OPEN.
IF YOU LIKE SOMEONE,
TELL HIM! THAT'S
WHAT I DO.

AND YOU
DON'T HAVE
ANYONE!



SUBTLE AS ALWAYS,
MISS SENSITIVITY.
ANYWAY, I DIDN'T
SAY IT
WORKS!



THAT'S NOT THE
ISSUE, IRMA. I HAVE
TO APOLOGIZE
TO HIM.

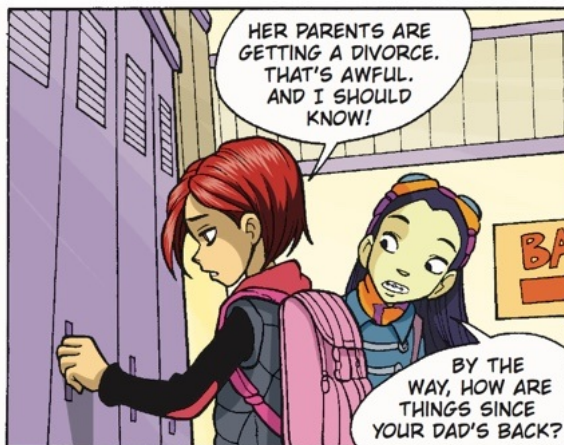
ARE YOU
CRAZY? **NEVER**
APOLOGIZE
TO A BOY.



NOT EVEN
WHEN YOU'RE
COMPLETELY IN
THE WRONG?



I WAS WRONG ABOUT HIM AND MANDY. SHE'S JUST AN OLD FRIEND. SHE'S A COOL GIRL WHO'S GOING THROUGH A DIFFICULT TIME...



HER PARENTS ARE GETTING A DIVORCE. THAT'S AWFUL. AND I SHOULD KNOW!

BY THE WAY, HOW ARE THINGS SINCE YOUR DAD'S BACK?



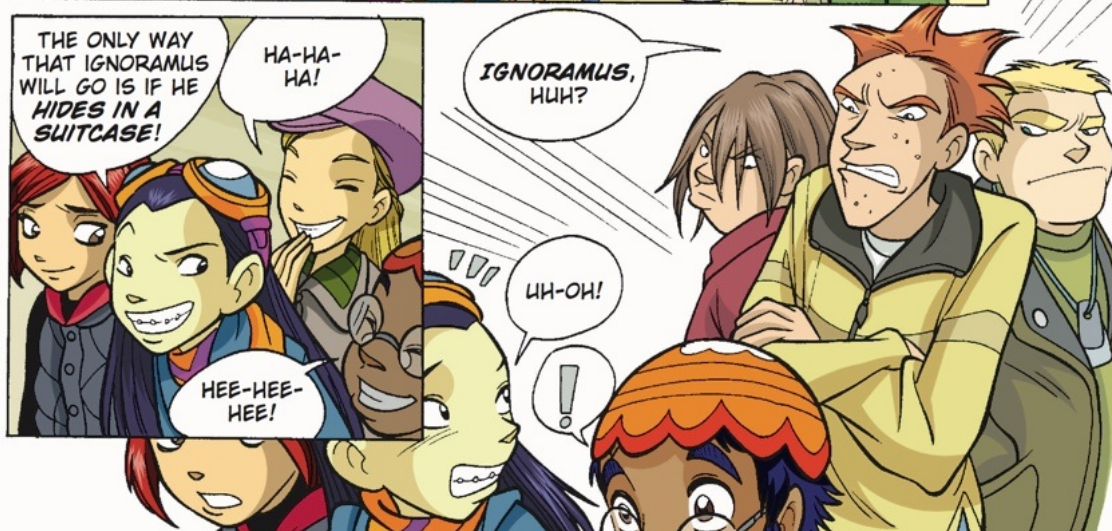
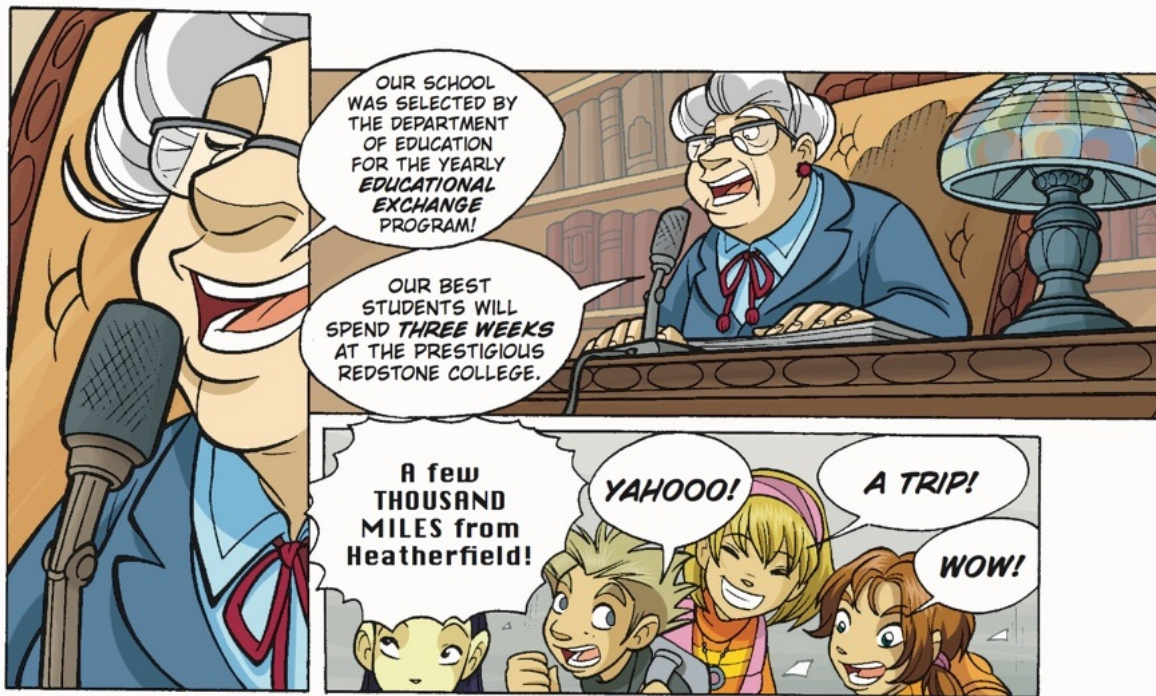
NOT WELL AT ALL. MOM'S VERY NERVOUS. I DON'T THINK SHE'S TOLD ME EVERYTHING.

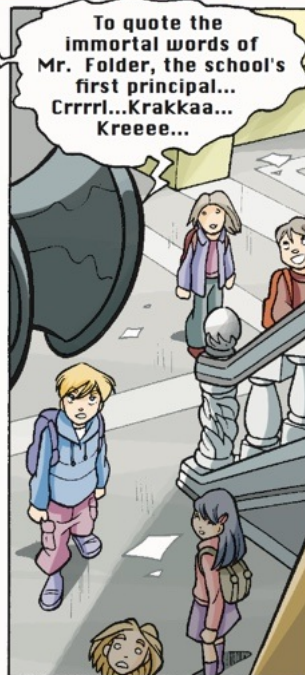


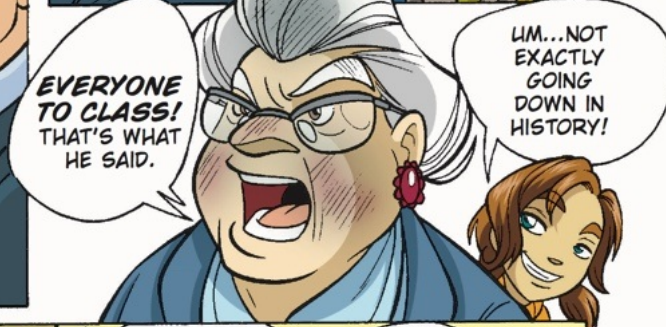
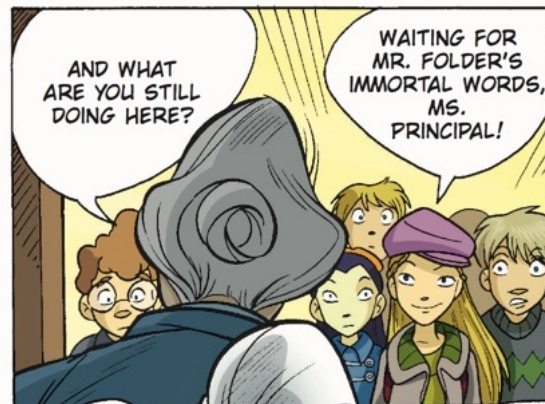
WHAT'S THAT?

THE INSTITUTE'S NEW P.A. SYSTEM. AN IDEA I HAD THAT MS. KNICKERBOCHER WAS KIND ENOUGH TO IMPLEMENT.

Good morning, kids. This is your principal, and I have an important announcement!







ELSEWHERE, IN A
RUN-DOWN HOTEL
IN THE SLUMS...



OH,
IT'S YOU.



COME ON IN,
HARVEY.

DID YOU
SLEEP WELL,
MR. VANDOM?



WONDERFULLY.
AT LEAST UNTIL YOUR
PHONE CALL WOKE
ME UP.

I HAD
EXCELLENT
REASONS
TO CALL.



I SURE
HOPE SO.

YOU'LL THANK
ME. HAVE A LOOK
AT *THESE*.





WHO'S THE
WOMAN TALKING
TO SUSAN?

YOU WON'T
BELIEVE IT,
BUT...



...THERESA
COOK— **JUDGE
COOK**. SHE'LL BE
PRESIDING OVER
YOUR **CUSTODY
HEARING**.

HMM...



I WAS STAKING
OUT YOUR WIFE'S
HOUSE TO KEEP AN
EYE ON HER, LIKE YOU
ASKED ME, WHEN I
SAW HER ARRIVE.

GREAT STUFF,
HUH? AN IMPARTIAL
JUDGE SHOULDN'T
HANG OUT WITH THE
DEFENDANT.

RIGHT...



YOU HAVE
JUDGE COOK IN YOUR
POCKET, MR. VANDOM.
YOU CAN **THREATEN** OR
BLACKMAIL HER,
IF YOU WANT.

SEE, HARVEY, THIS
IS WHY PEOPLE LIKE
YOU NEVER GET
VERY FAR.



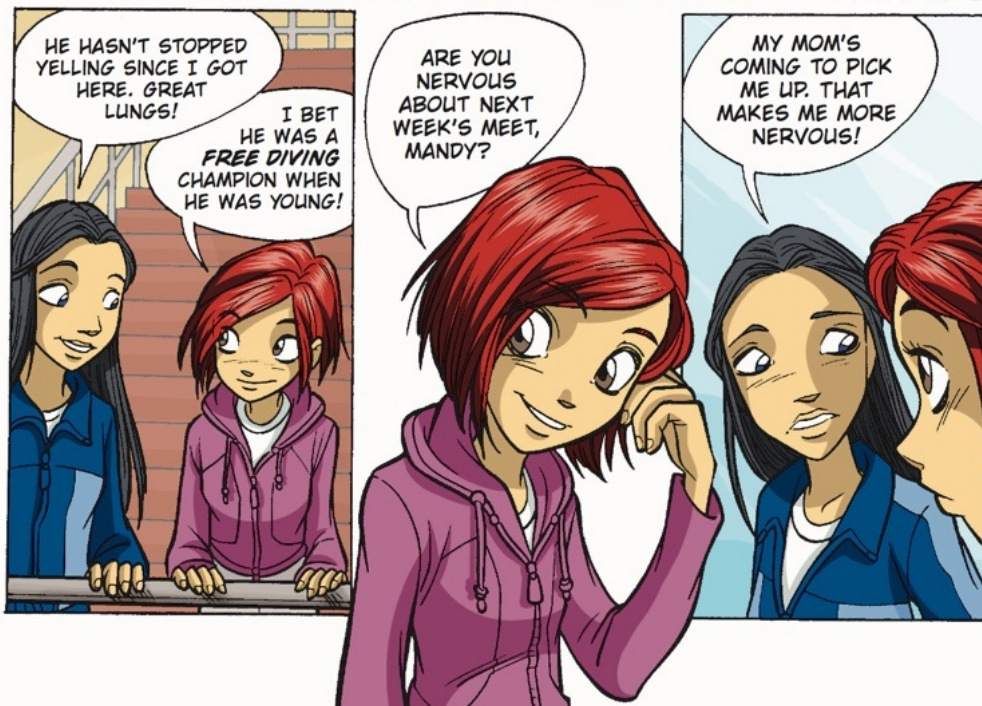
YOU'LL BE
PLAIN OLD **HARVEY
LIMERICK** YOUR WHOLE
LIFE BECAUSE YOU
DON'T GET IT. YOU
LACK VISION.

WHAT'S THERE
TO SEE?

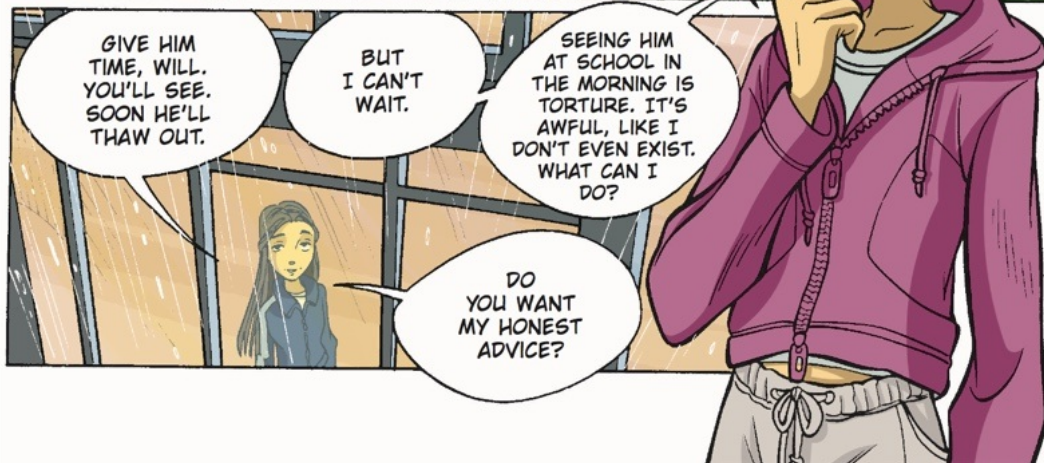


THESE AREN'T
TWO DEFENSELESS
WOMEN. THEY'RE
GETTING READY
TO **FIGHT**.

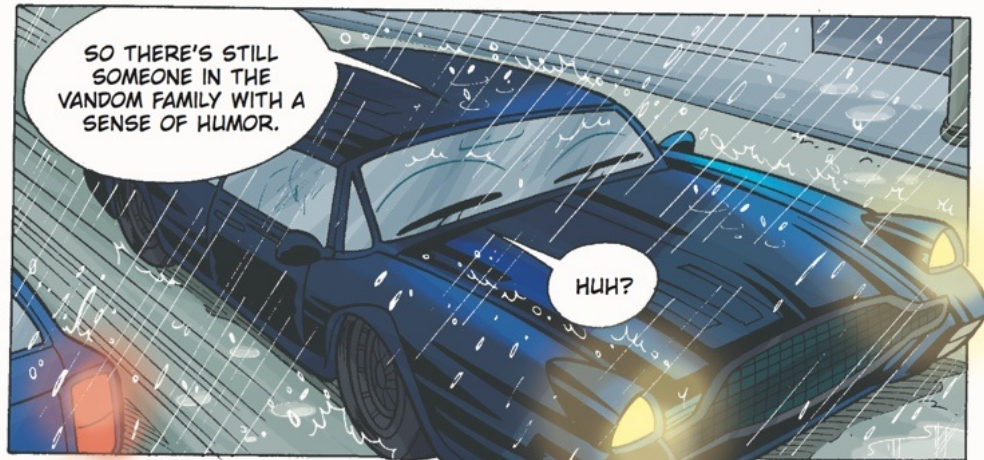
HUH?











SO THERE'S STILL SOMEONE IN THE VANDOM FAMILY WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR.

HUH?



YOU'RE SO DIFFERENT FROM YOUR MISERY OF A MOTHER.

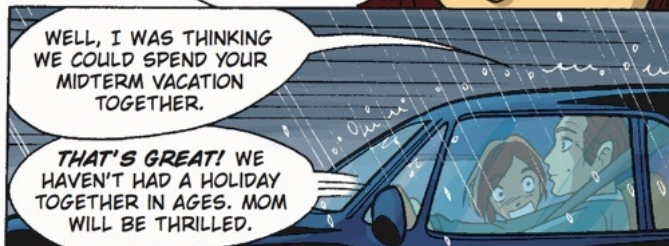
MOM IS NOT A MISERY!



OH YES SHE IS. YOU SAW HOW SHE WELCOMED ME. SHE WASN'T EXACTLY JUMPING FOR JOY.

AND THE SITUATION MIGHT GET WORSE SOON.

WHY'S THAT?



WELL, I WAS THINKING WE COULD SPEND YOUR MIDTERM VACATION TOGETHER.

THAT'S GREAT! WE HAVEN'T HAD A HOLIDAY TOGETHER IN AGES. MOM WILL BE THRILLED.

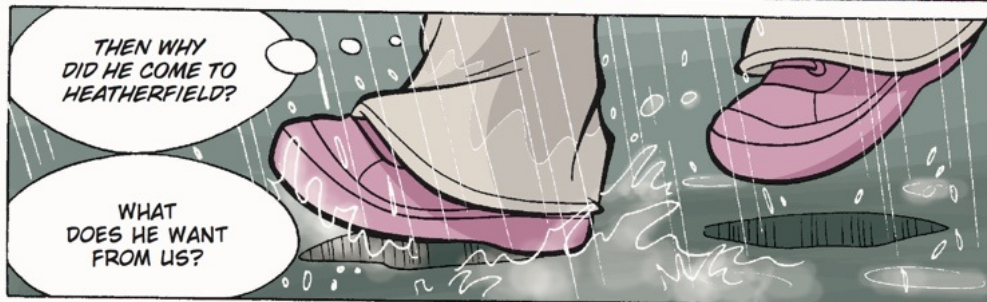
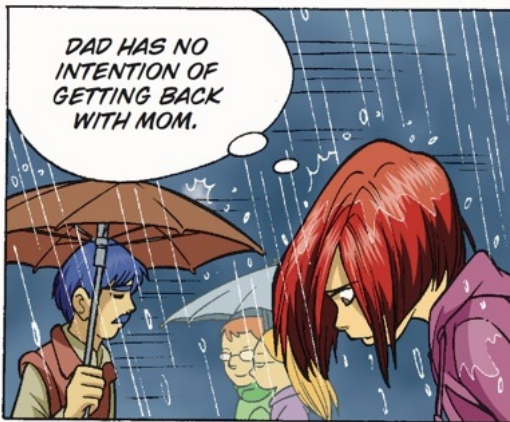


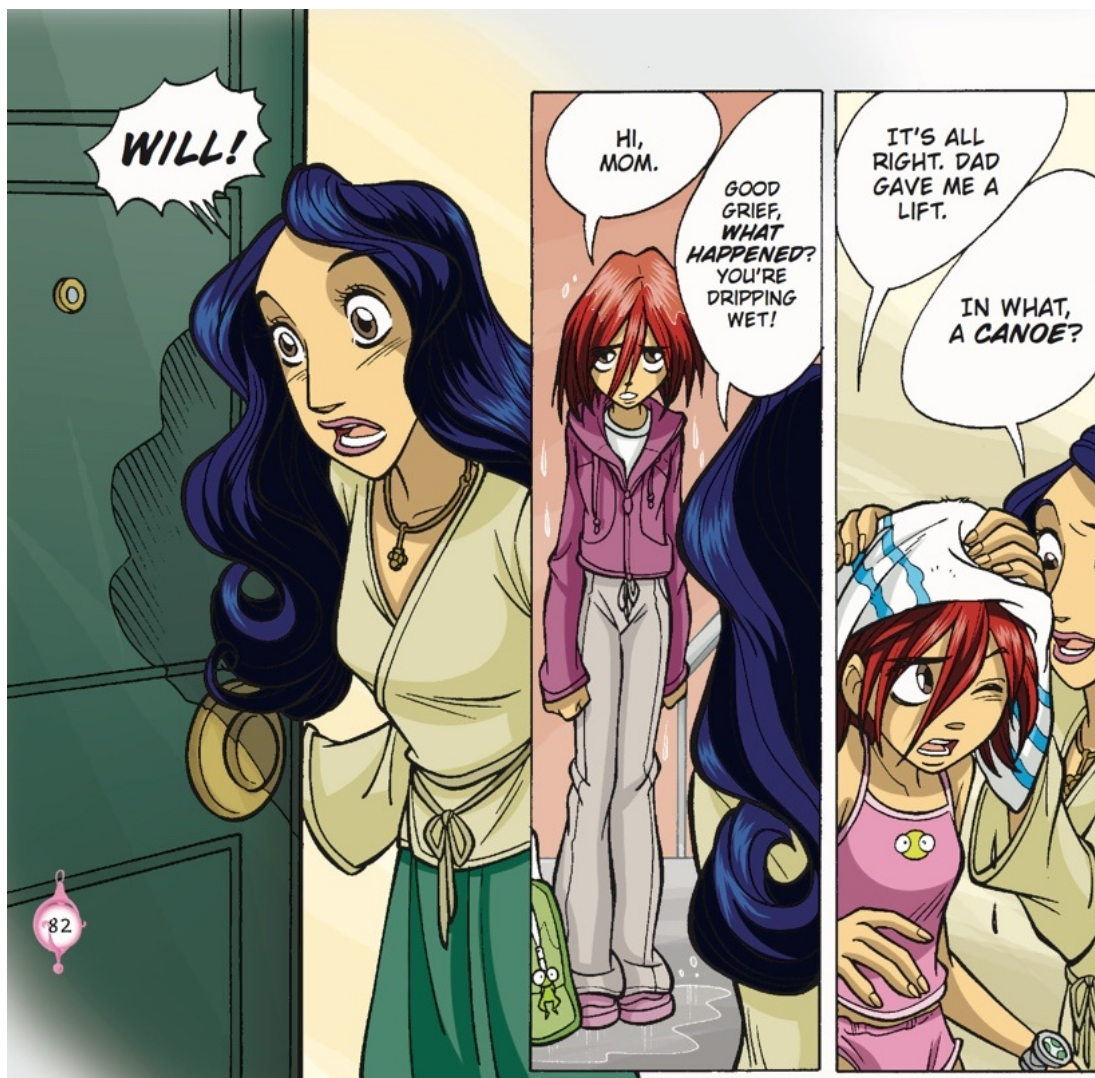
I WASN'T THINKING OF INVITING HER ALONG. I PICTURED JUST **YOU AND ME**, ALONE FOR A WHOLE WEEK.

IN ANY BEAUTIFUL PLACE **YOU WANT** AWAY FROM THIS CITY. WHAT DO YOU SAY?

I...I DON'T KNOW.

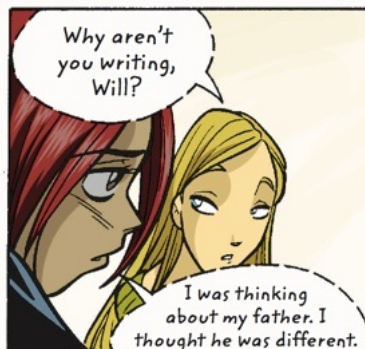
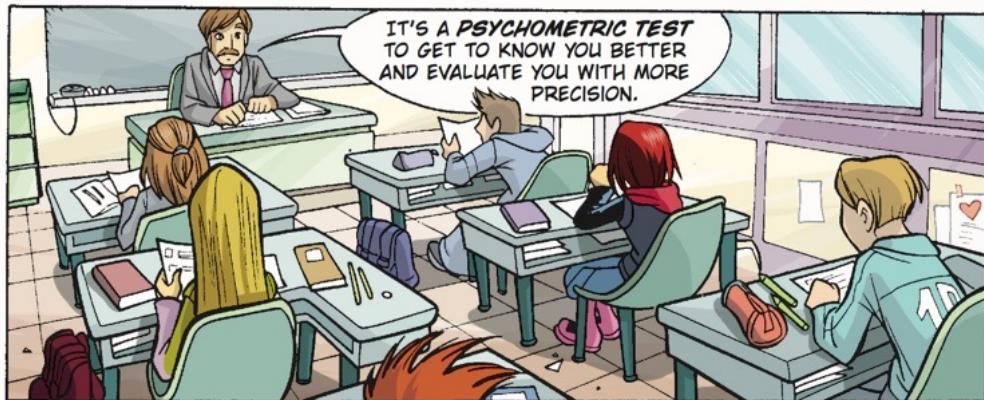
















STUPID QUESTIONNAIRE!
I THINK IT WAS JUST
ANOTHER EXCUSE
TO **TORMENT US.**
WHY ALL THOSE
QUESTIONS?

IT WAS
A KIND OF
I.Q. TEST.
THE PRINCIPAL
WANTS TO LOOK
GOOD WITH THE
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION.



AFTER ALL, GOOD
GRADES DON'T ALWAYS
GUARANTEE
A **SHARP**
MIND!

WHAT GRADES
ARE THEY TALKING
ABOUT? SCHOOL'S
JUST BEGUN!



THEY'LL
CONSIDER
LAST YEAR'S
GRADES. I
KNOW IT.

THEN I HAVE
NO CHANCE
OF GOING.



CLANG

I COULD
ALWAYS GIVE
YOU A **LIFT.**



IF WE
SQUASH YOU
DOWN, YOU'LL
FIT IN
MY **SUIT-
CASE.**

URIAH!
WHAT A NICE
SURPRISE.



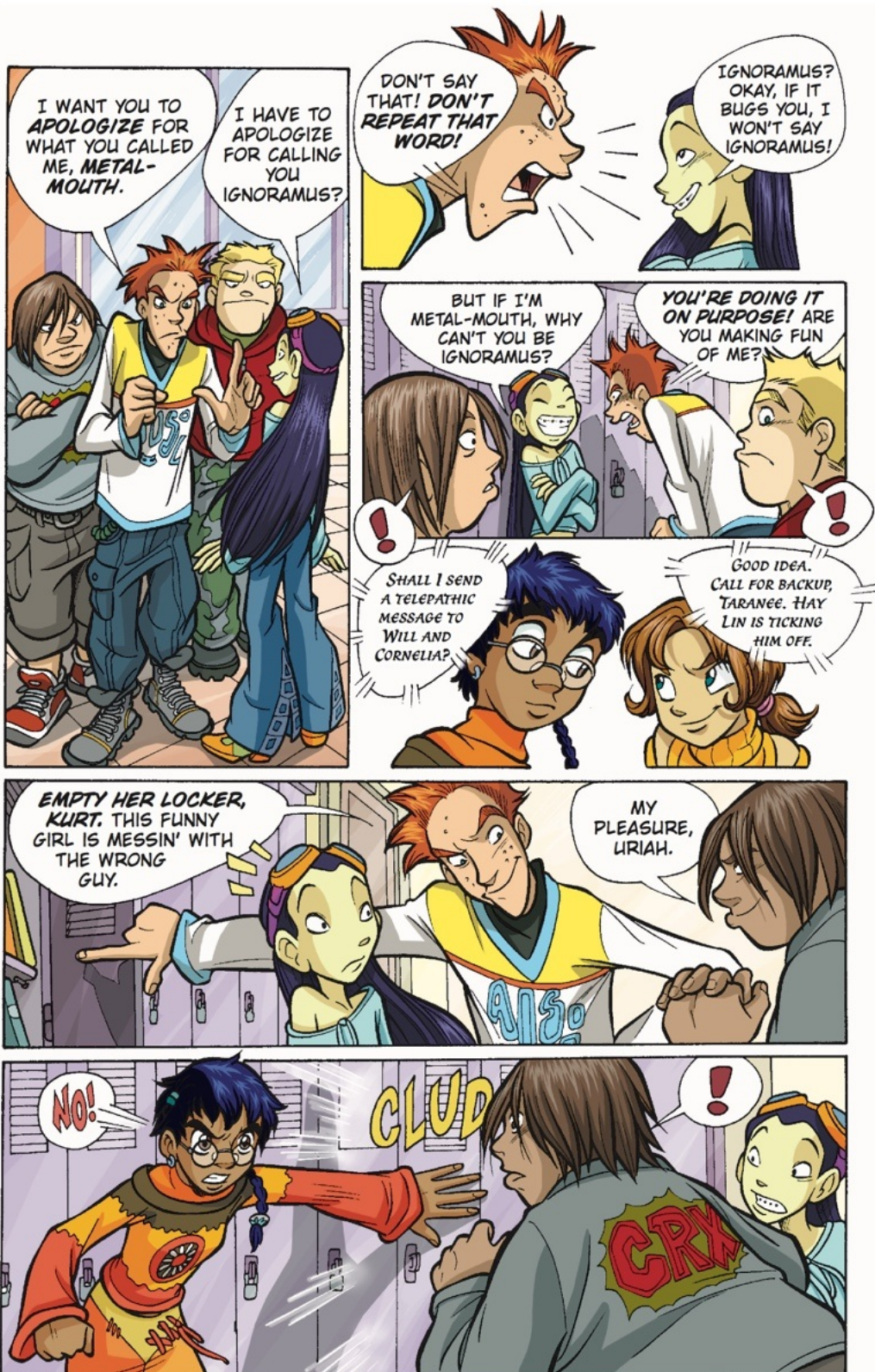
YOUR JOKE
YESTERDAY
WASN'T
VERY FUNNY,
**MISS
METAL-
MOUTH.**

ARE
YOU NUTS?
I WAS JUST
KIDDING!

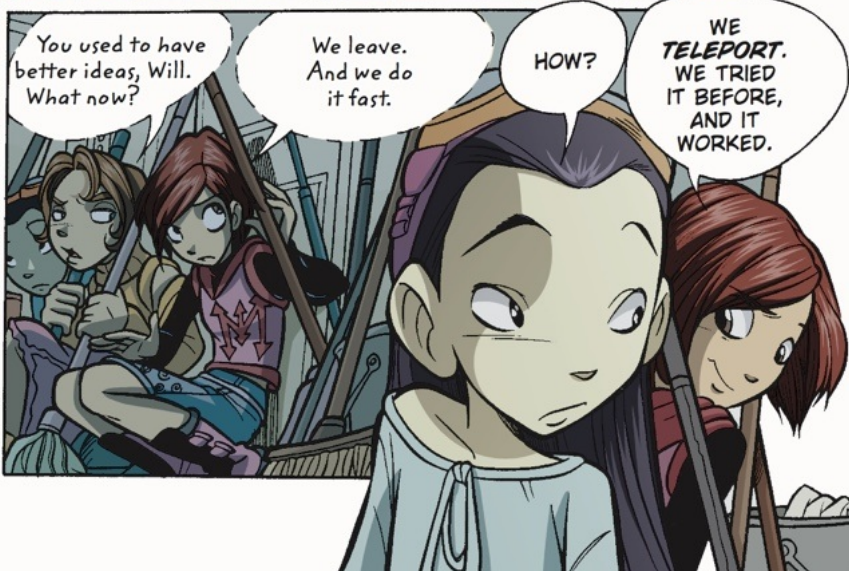
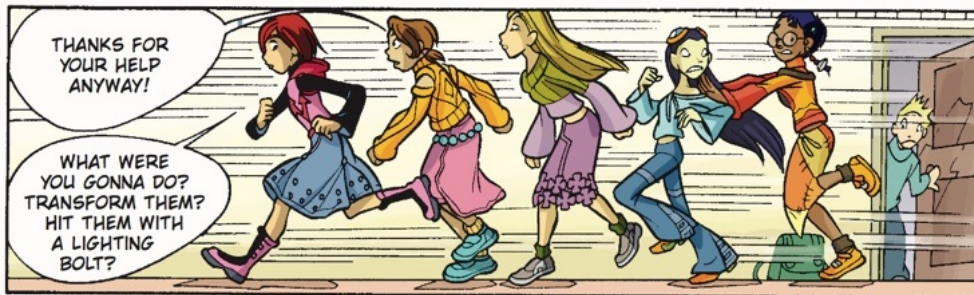


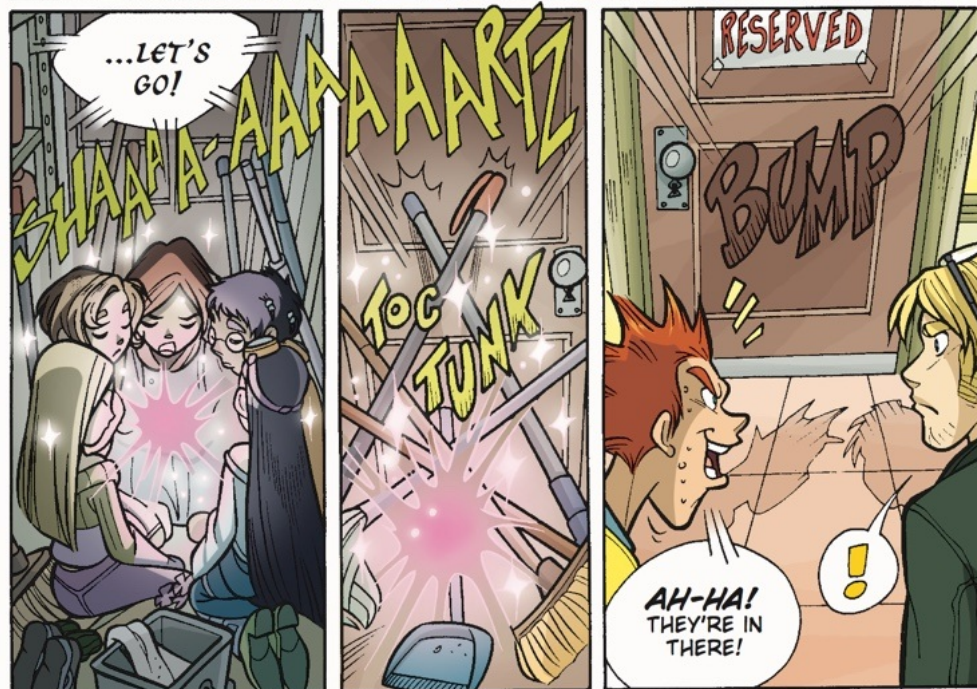
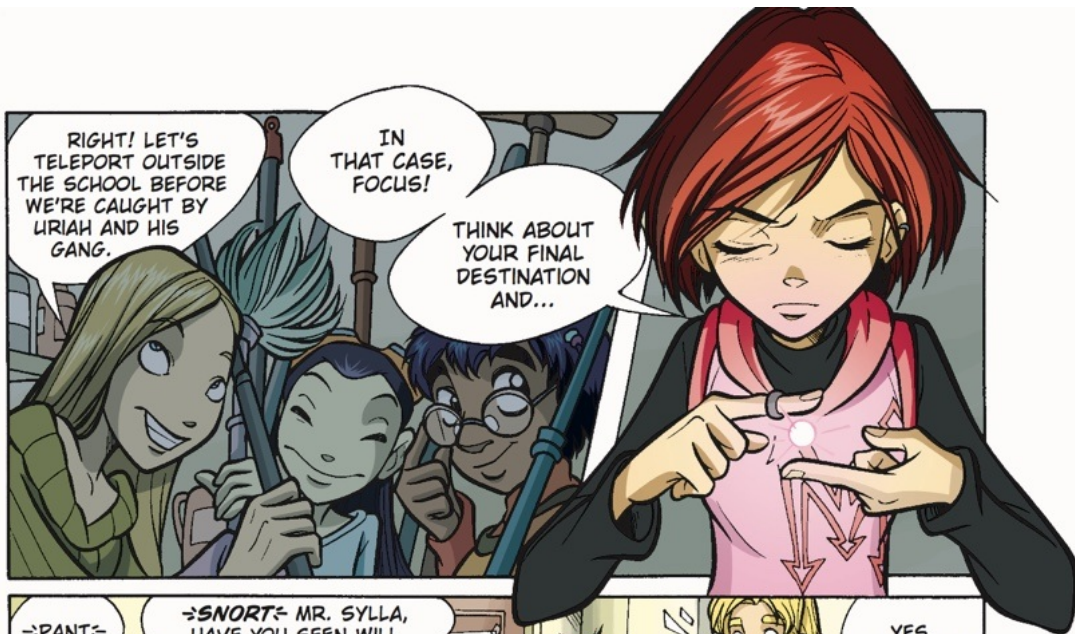
SHE'S RIGHT.
WHY DON'T
YOU DROP IT,
URIAH?

WHY DON'T YOU
GO FOR A WALK?
I WANT TO HAVE A
CHAT WITH YOUR
FRIEND.











GOTCHA!



HUH?

THERE'S NOBODY HERE, UURIAH.

IT'S EMPTY, LIKE AN EMPTY CLOSET!



MAN! THEY MUST'VE GOT OUT.

WE LOST 'EM!



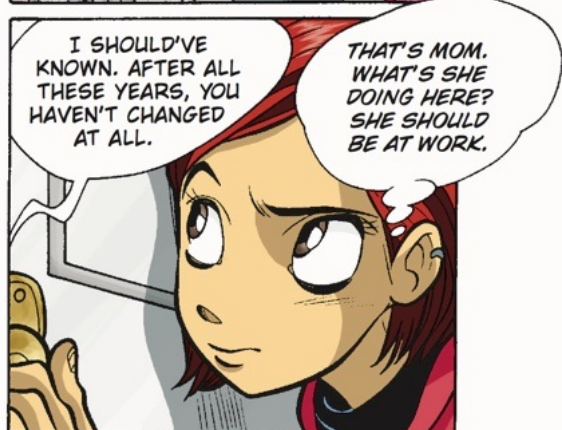
DO YOU SMELL SMOKE, MR. UURIAH? PUT THAT FIRE EXTINGUISHER BACK THIS INSTANT!



OR YOUR HOPES OF STAYING IN MY GOOD GRACES WILL GO UP IN SMOKE.

SURE! RIGHT AWAY, MS. KNICKER-BOCHER.

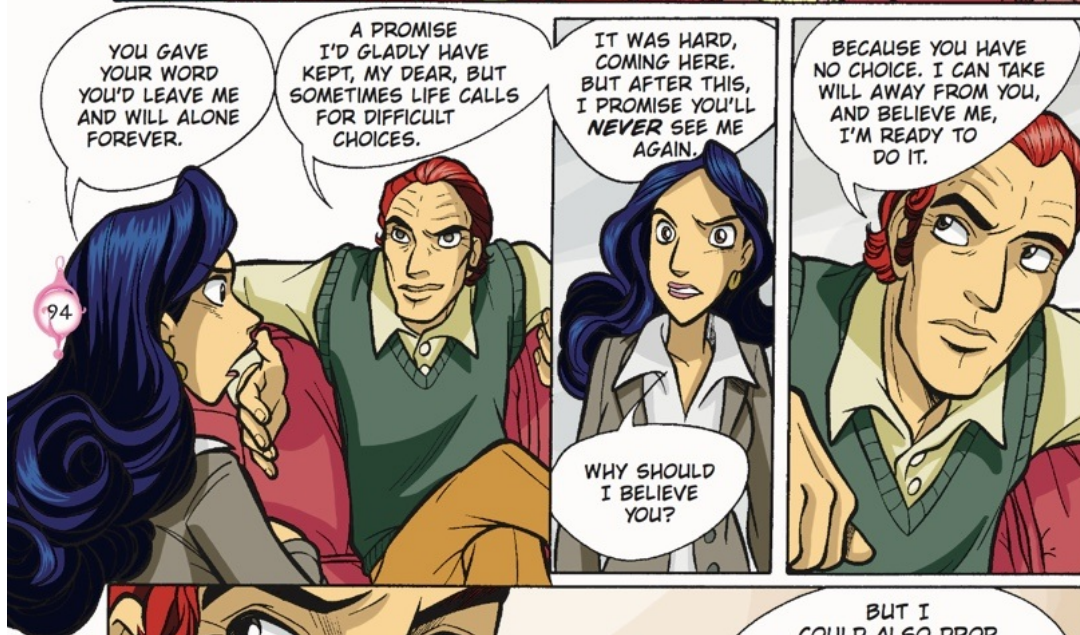
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE...





I'M CONSISTENT, SUSAN, AND THAT'S A QUALITY THAT'S USUALLY APPRECIATED.

YOU'RE DESPICABLE, THOMAS.



YOU GAVE YOUR WORD YOU'D LEAVE ME AND WILL ALONE FOREVER.

A PROMISE I'D GLADLY HAVE KEPT, MY DEAR, BUT SOMETIMES LIFE CALLS FOR DIFFICULT CHOICES.

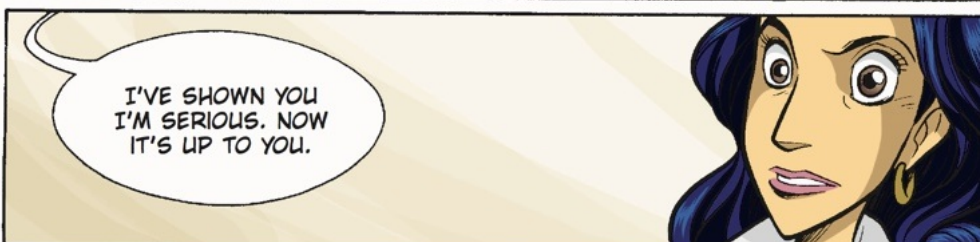
IT WAS HARD, COMING HERE. BUT AFTER THIS, I PROMISE YOU'LL NEVER SEE ME AGAIN.

BECAUSE YOU HAVE NO CHOICE. I CAN TAKE WILL AWAY FROM YOU, AND BELIEVE ME, I'M READY TO DO IT.

WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE YOU?



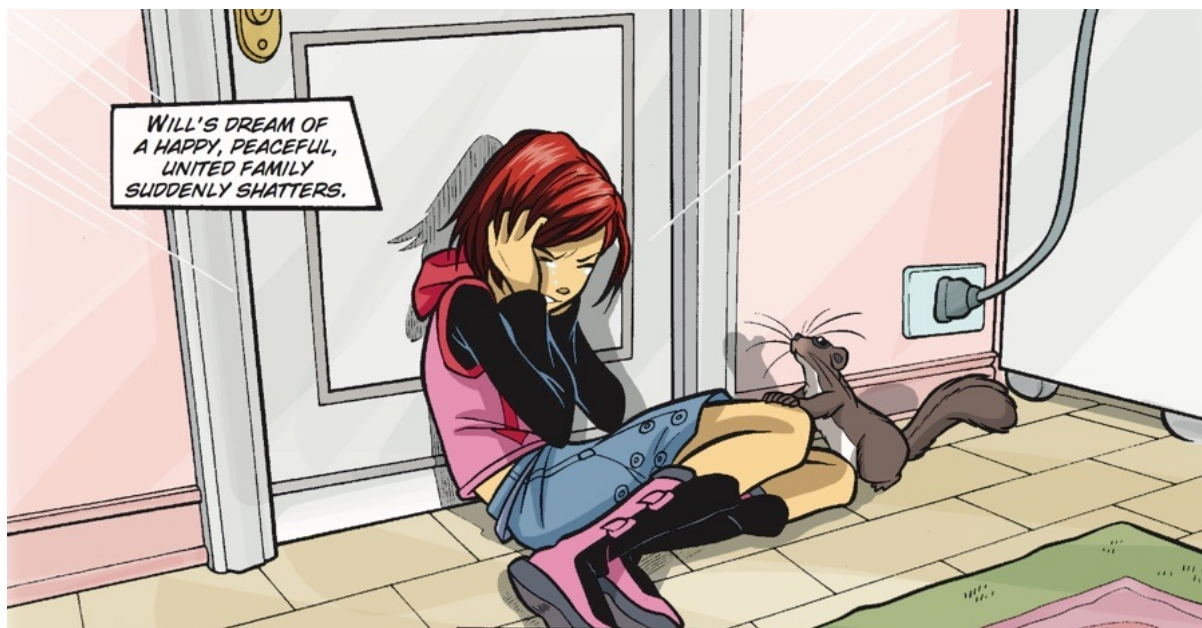
BUT I COULD ALSO DROP PROCEEDINGS AND LEAVE YOU TO YOUR PEACEFUL LIFE AND YOUR HISTORY PROFESSOR.



I'VE SHOWN YOU I'M SERIOUS. NOW IT'S UP TO YOU.







IN THE NEXT ROOM,
HER MOM AND DAD
ARE ARGUING.



FOR THE FIRST TIME
AFTER SO MANY
YEARS, WILL SEES
THOMAS VANDOM'S
TRUE COLORS.



AND SHE
DOESN'T
LIKE THEM
AT ALL.



IT'S YOUR
CHOICE, HONEY.
WILL'S DESTINY
IS IN YOUR
HANDS.

LIKE I SAID, I'M
WILLING TO DROP
PROCEEDINGS IN
THE CUSTODY
HEARING.



FOR MONEY! HAVE YOU
NO SHAME, THOMAS?
YOU'RE EXTORTING
ME FOR YOUR
DAUGHTER!



HOW COULD
YOU SINK SO
LOW?

I'D BE FLYING
MUCH HIGHER IF
BUSINESS HAD
GONE BETTER,
SUSAN.





I HAVE A HUGE DEBT TO PAY TO SOME PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING IMPATIENT, AND YOU'RE MY LAST HOPE.



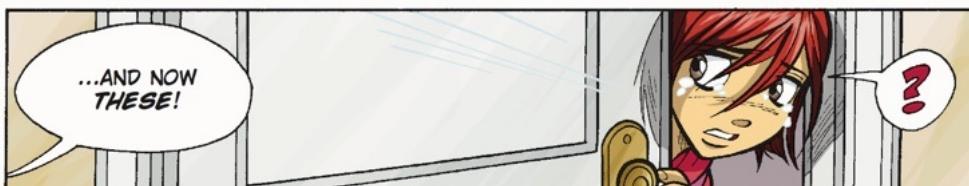
THIS BLACKMAIL IS SICKENING, THOMAS. YOU'RE A SCAMMER. I PITY YOU!

I HAD NO OTHER CHOICE. YOU'D NEVER WILLINGLY HELP ME.



I JUST HAD TO ASK MY DETECTIVE FRIEND HARVEY LIMERICK TO FOLLOW YOU. THE REST WAS EASY.

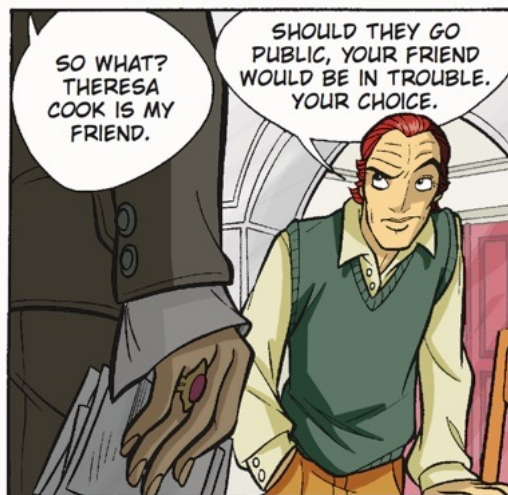
FIRST, THE PICTURES WITH YOUR DEAR MR. COLLINS...



...AND NOW THESE!



YOU AND YOUR JUDGE FRIEND LOOK GREAT!

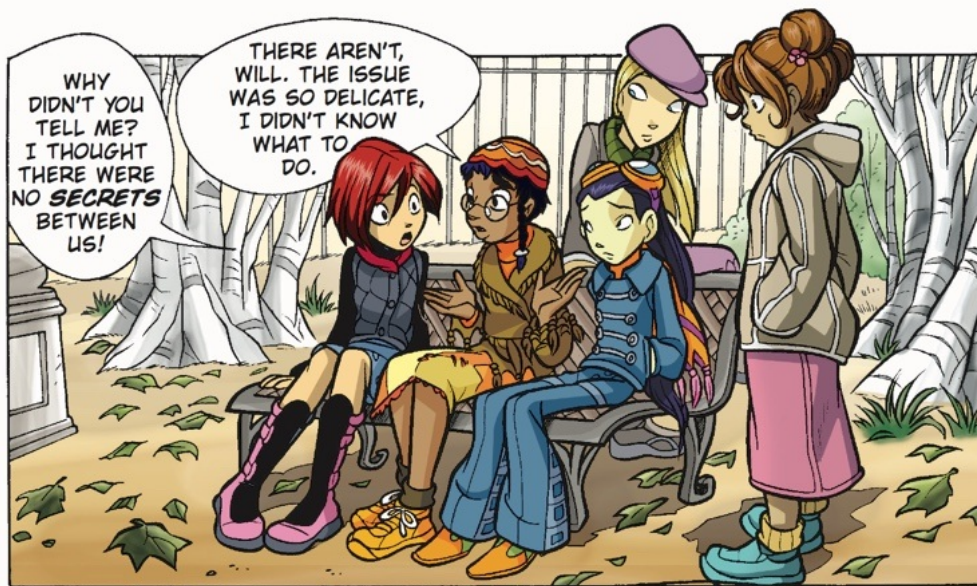


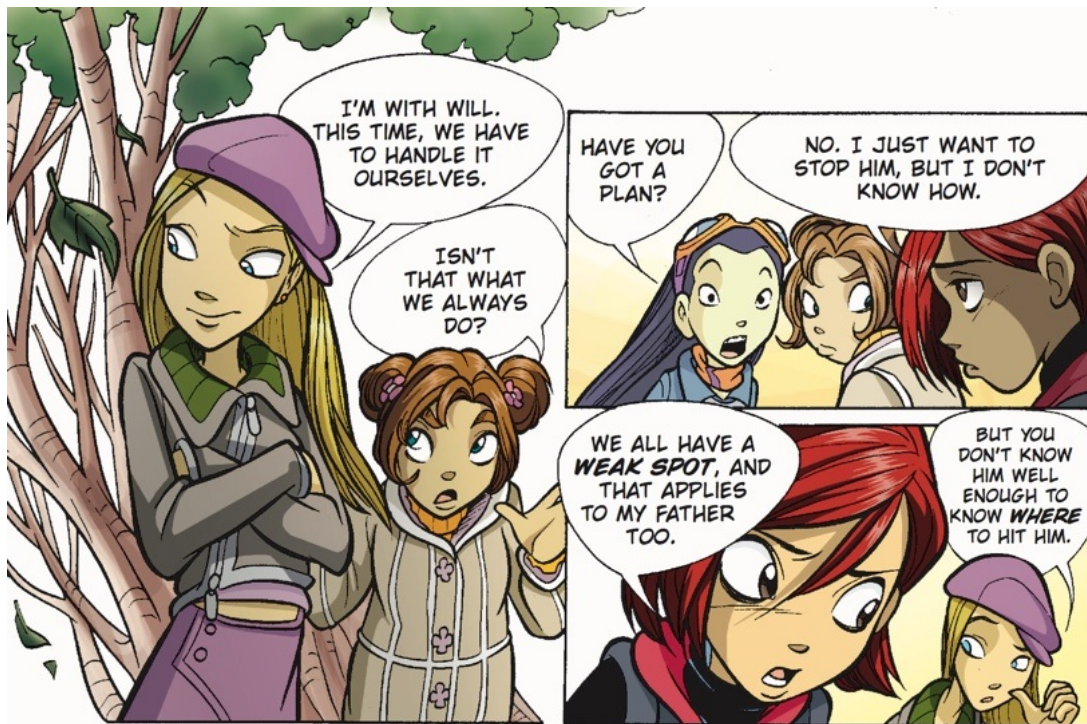
SO WHAT? THERESA COOK IS MY FRIEND.

SHOULD THEY GO PUBLIC, YOUR FRIEND WOULD BE IN TROUBLE. YOUR CHOICE.



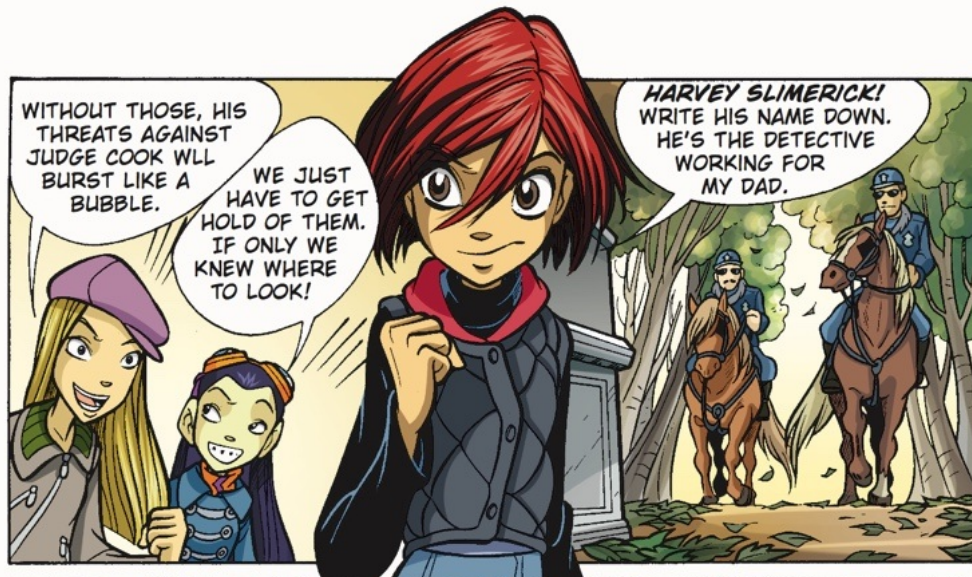


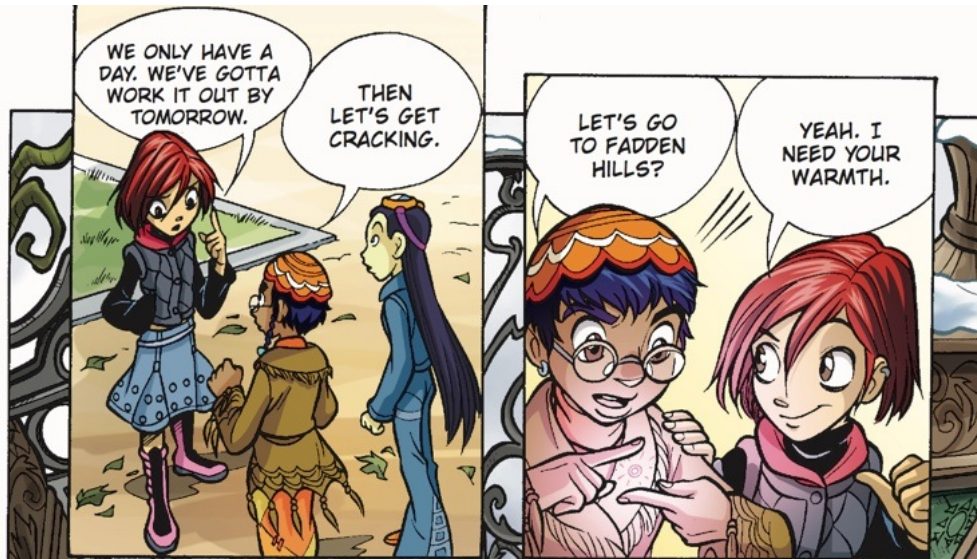




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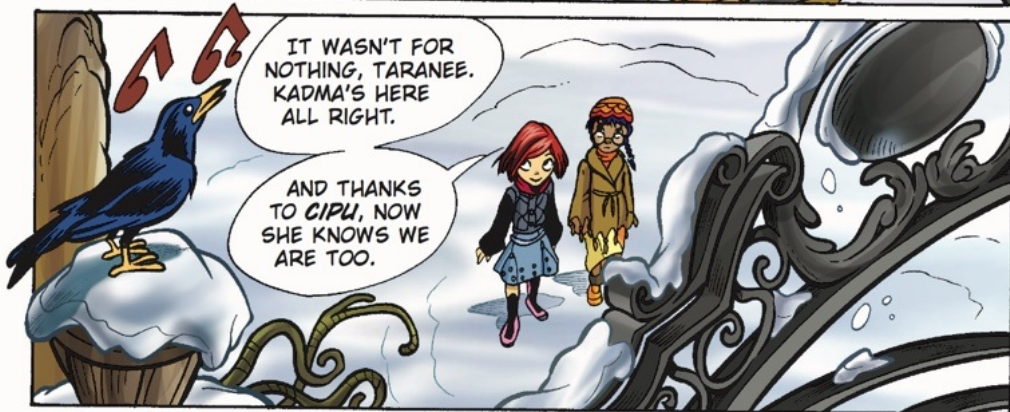
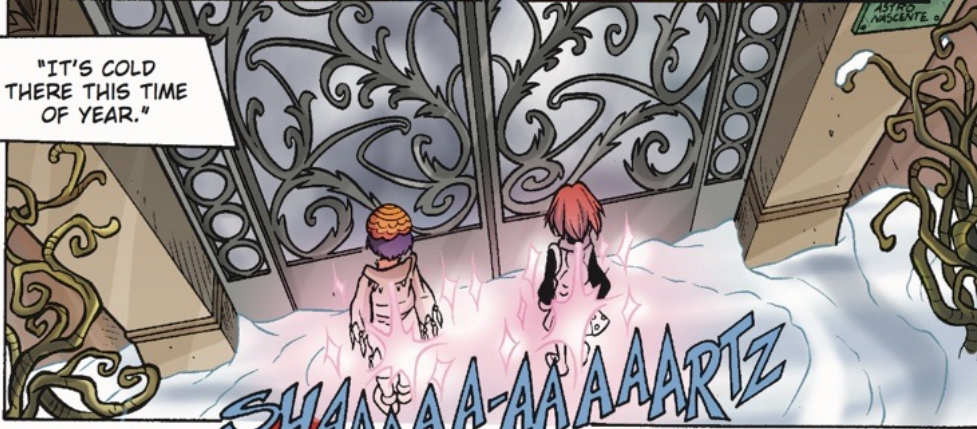






"IT'S COLD THERE THIS TIME OF YEAR."

104



So...

I KNOW THOMAS VANDOM WELL. WHEN HE LEFT, YOU WERE JUST A FEW YEARS OLD.

TELL ME EVERYTHING. MY MOM DOESN'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT HIM.

YOUR FATHER HAS ALWAYS BEEN INTO BUSINESS. HE'S AN AMBITIOUS MAN, OBSESSED WITH MONEY AND SUCCESS.

HIS STORY WOULD BE TOO LONG TO TELL, AND ANYWAY, IT'S NOTHING NEW.

I DON'T BLAME HER. THAT MAN MADE HER LIFE HELL.

LIKE MANY OTHERS, HE SACRIFICED THE THINGS HE LOVED IN THE NAME OF GREED AND SELFISHNESS.

A LOT OF PEOPLE SUFFERED BECAUSE OF HIM, AND THAT'S WHY HE'S LOST FOREVER.



THE MAN YOUR MOTHER MARRIED WAS VERY DIFFERENT. HIS JOB LURED HIM AWAY FROM HIS FAMILY.



THINGS WERE GOING WELL, BUT HE WAS NEVER HAPPY. HE STARTED MAKING RISKIER AND RISKIER INVESTMENTS.



HE WAS CAUGHT IN A **FRENZY**, LIKE A GAMBLER.



THE MORE HE EARNED, THE MORE HE LOST. AN ENDLESS CHAIN OF LUCKY BREAKS AND BIG LOSSES.

WHAT ABOUT MY MOTHER?



SHE TRIED TO HELP HIM, GIVING HIM EVERY LAST CENT OF HER SAVINGS.



NOT SATISFIED, HE SOLD HER PARENTS' HOUSE WITHOUT TELLING HER. THE LIST OF HIS MISDEEDS IS LONG, WILL...

AND IT LOOKS LIKE OLD HABITS DIE HARD.



SUSAN HAD TO FEND FOR HERSELF, MAKING HUGE SACRIFICES TO HANG ON TO WHAT WAS LEFT OF HER FAMILY.



YOUR MOTHER IS A VERY STRONG WOMAN, WILL.



I KNOW.

BUT MAYBE THIS TIME, EVEN HER STRENGTH WON'T BE ENOUGH.

WHAT YOU TOLD ME IS REALLY SAD AND AWFUL.



WE'RE HERE TO ASK FOR YOUR COOPERATION, KADMA.

I CAN GUESS THE REASON FOR YOUR VISIT.



SORRY TO DISAPPOINT YOU, GIRLS, BUT I **CAN'T** HELP IN ANY WAY.



I BEAR YOU NO ILL WILL, BUT I WANT NOTHING MORE TO DO WITH KANDRAKAR OR ITS GUARDIANS.



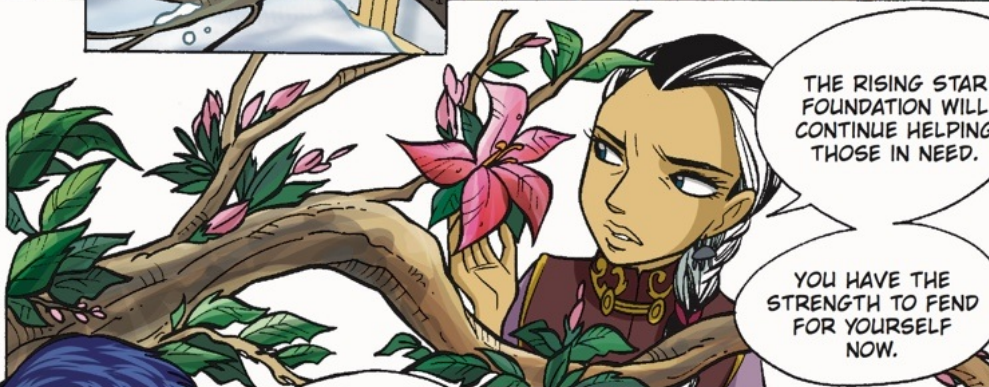
I HAD A TASK,
AND I COMPLETED
IT. I FOLLOWED AND
PROTECTED YOU UNTIL
THE MOMENT OF
REVELATION.



AND WHEN
I GAVE YOU
HALINOR'S
DIARY, MY
MISSION WAS
OVER.*

*SEE
W.I.T.C.H. #19

108



THE RISING STAR
FOUNDATION WILL
CONTINUE HELPING
THOSE IN NEED.

YOU HAVE THE
STRENGTH TO FEND
FOR YOURSELF
NOW.



WHY DON'T
YOU CARE? IF
WILL LEAVES
HEATHERFIELD,
WHAT'S GOING
TO HAPPEN TO
W.I.T.C.H.?



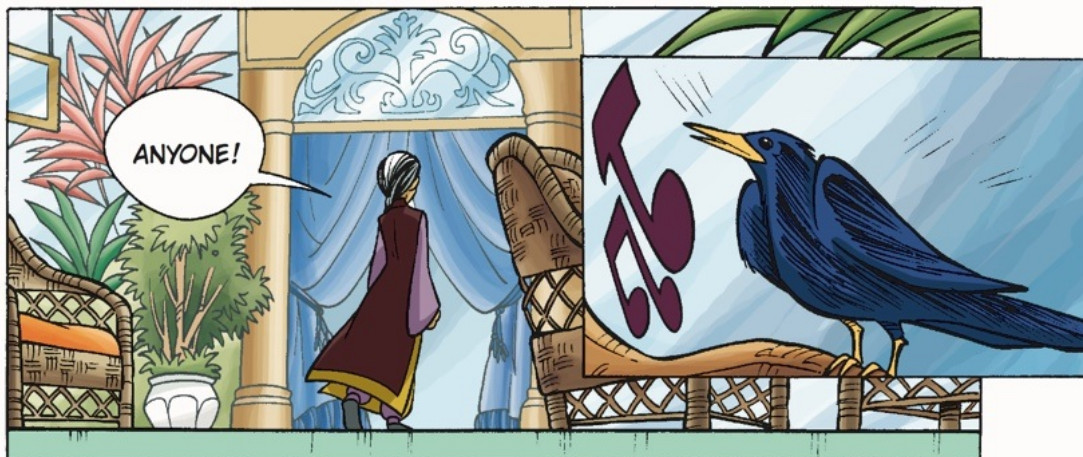
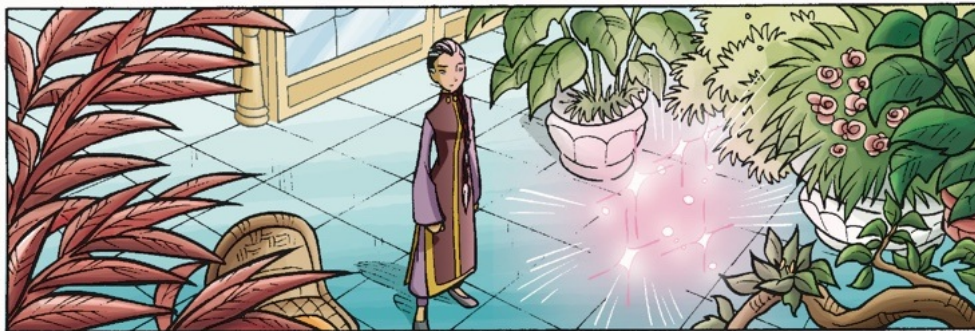
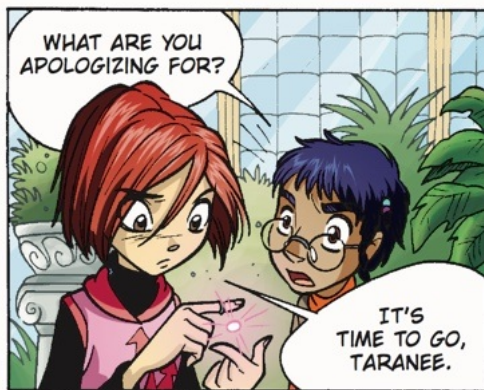
IT MAY
SURPRISE YOU,
TARANEE,
BUT THAT HAS
NOTHING TO DO
WITH ME.

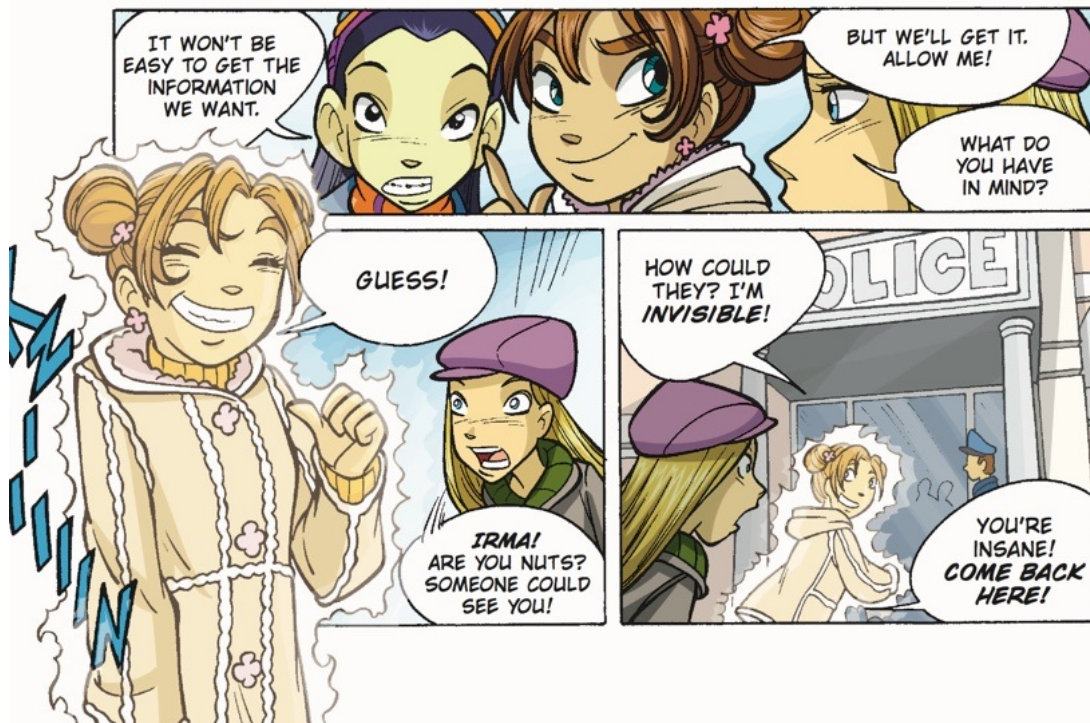
WHAT?
YOU...YOU'RE...

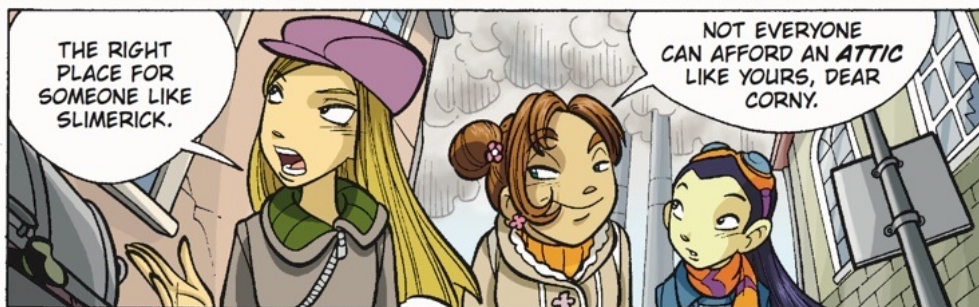
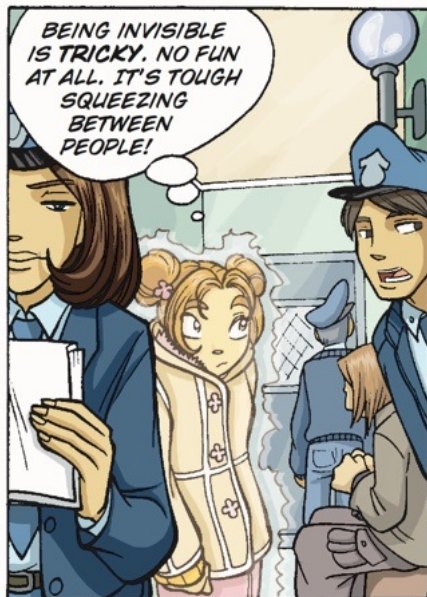
YOU'VE BEEN
VERY KIND. THANK
YOU FOR WHAT
YOU'VE TOLD US, AND
I'M SORRY TO HAVE
BOtherED YOU.



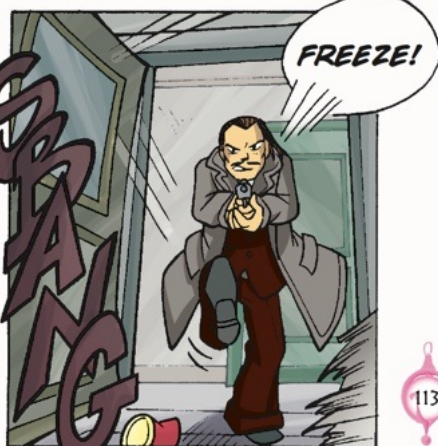
?

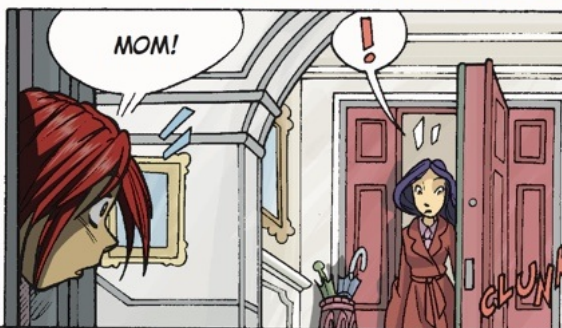
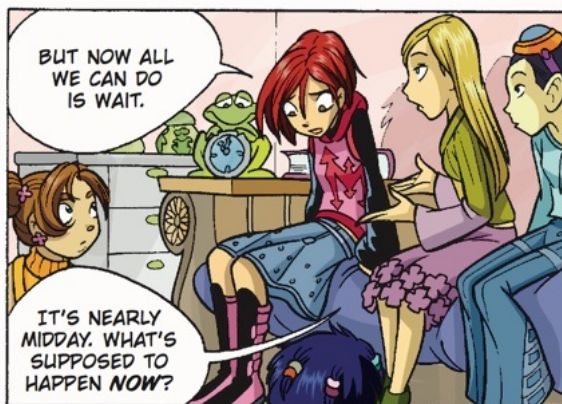


















GOOD. THIS IS FOR YOU. AS YOU CAN SEE, THE AMOUNT IS **GREATER** THAN WHAT YOU ASKED FOR.



CONSIDER IT A LITTLE INCENTIVE TO DISAPPEAR ONCE AND FOR ALL.

YOU CAN COUNT ON IT, MISS. I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE OR WHY YOU DID THIS, BUT WE HAVE A DEAL.



AND DON'T FORGET, MR. VANDOM...

I'M WATCHING YOU.



WE CAN GO, PERKINS.



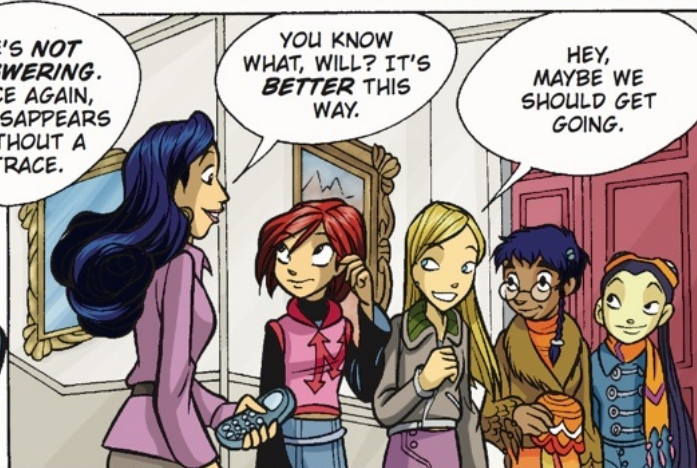
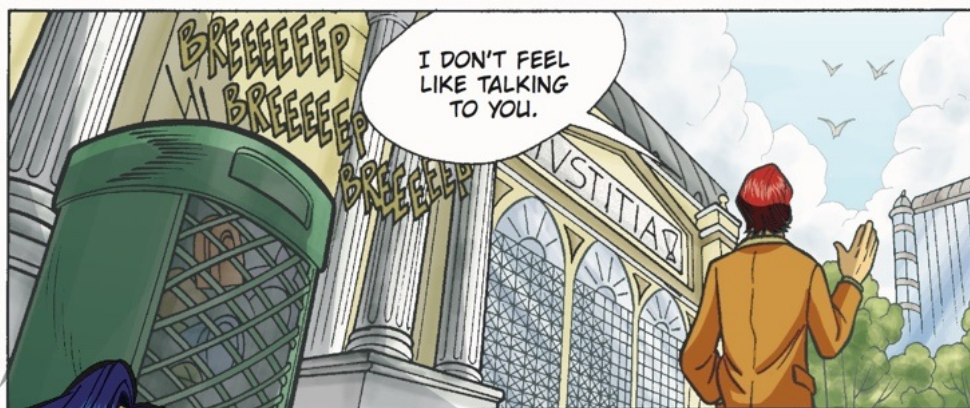
I SAID I WOULD STAY OUT OF IT, BUT AFTER ALL, WHY SHOULD I BEHAVE LIKE THE ORACLE?



HAPPY, CIPU? LET'S GO HOME.

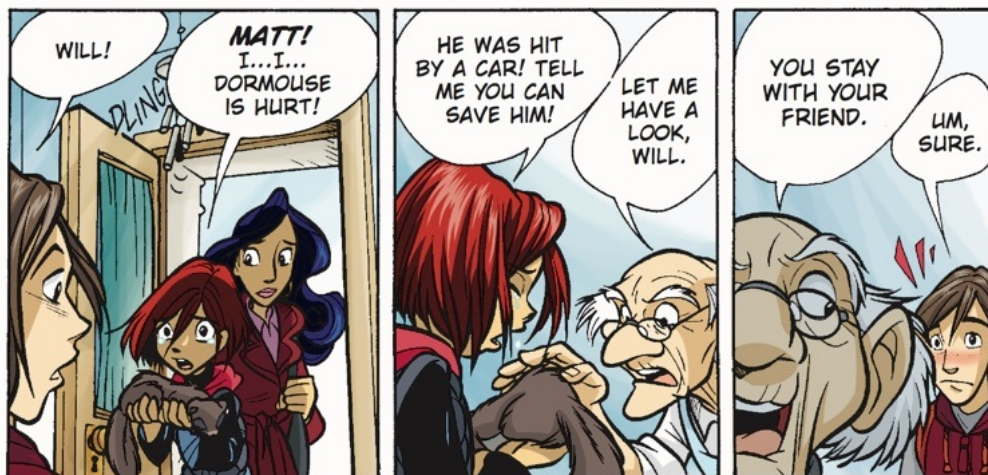
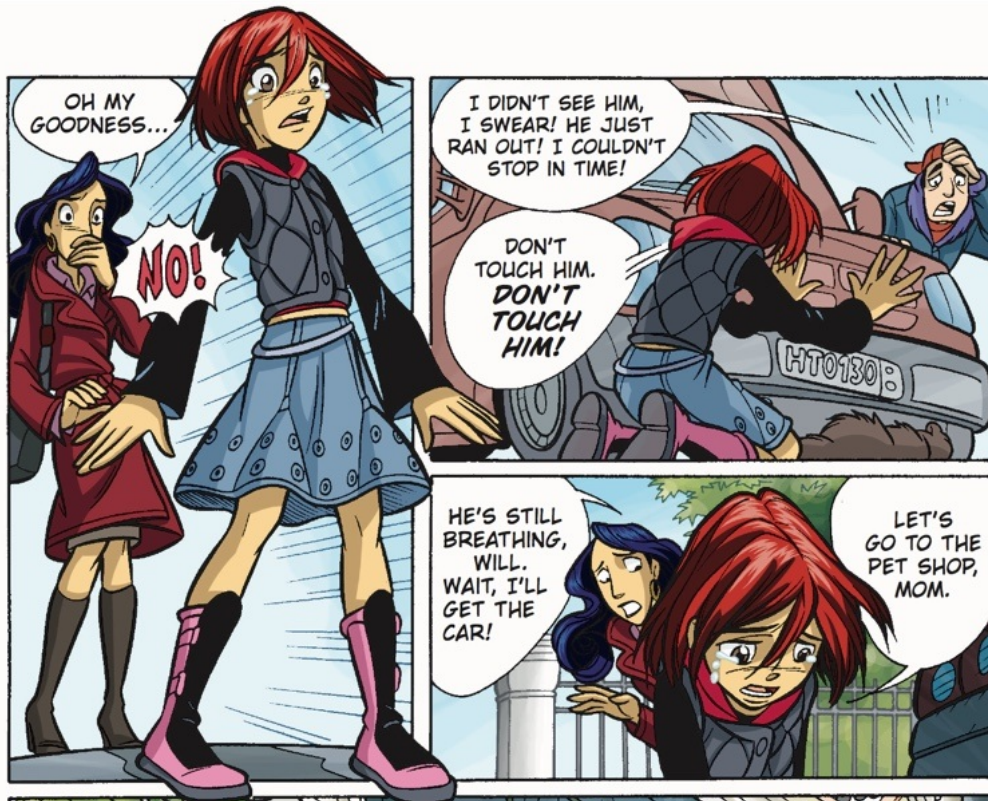


BKEEEEP
BREEEEEP
BREEEP







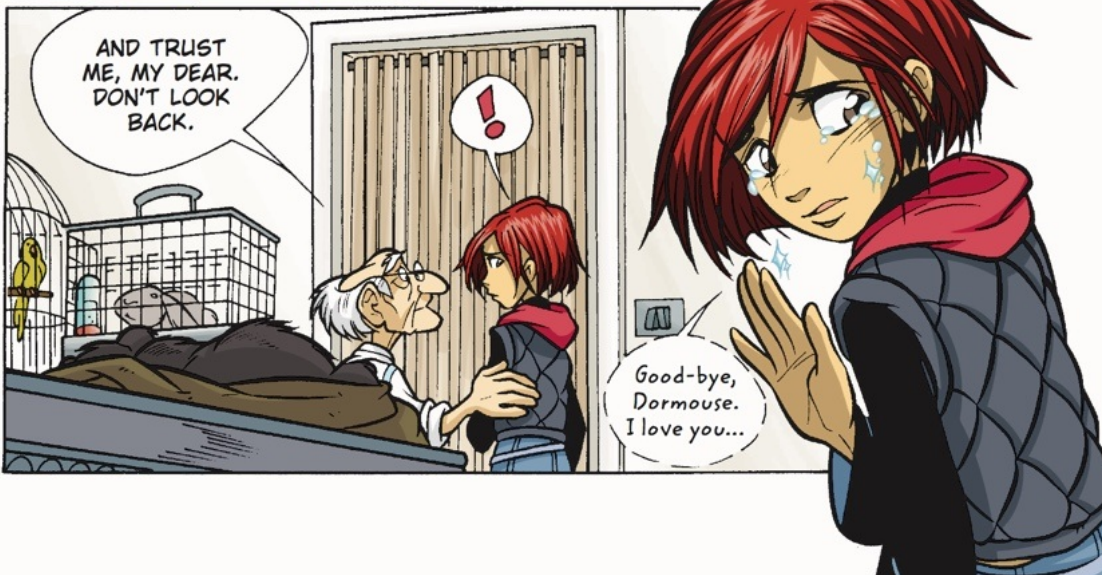
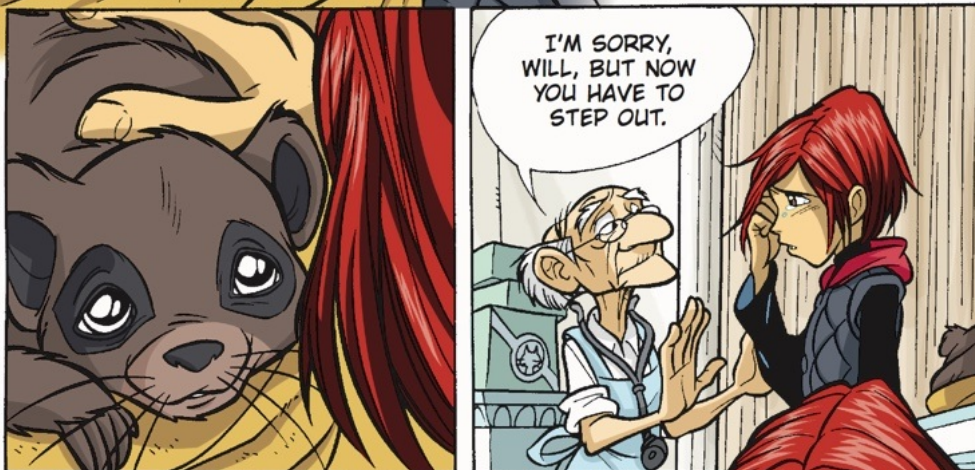




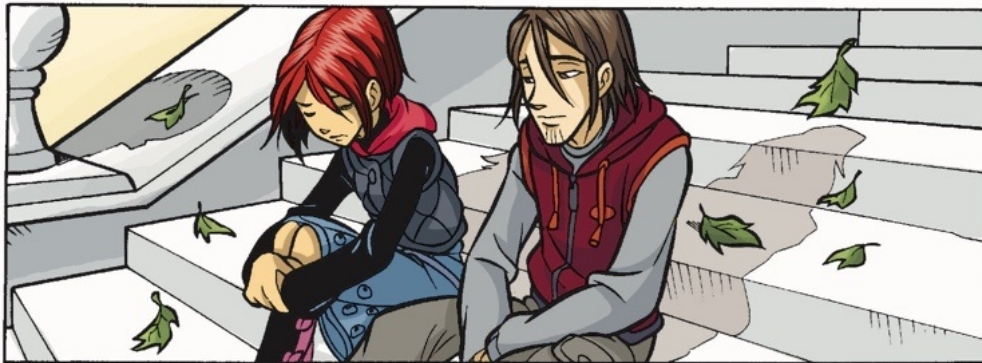




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END OF CHAPTER 26



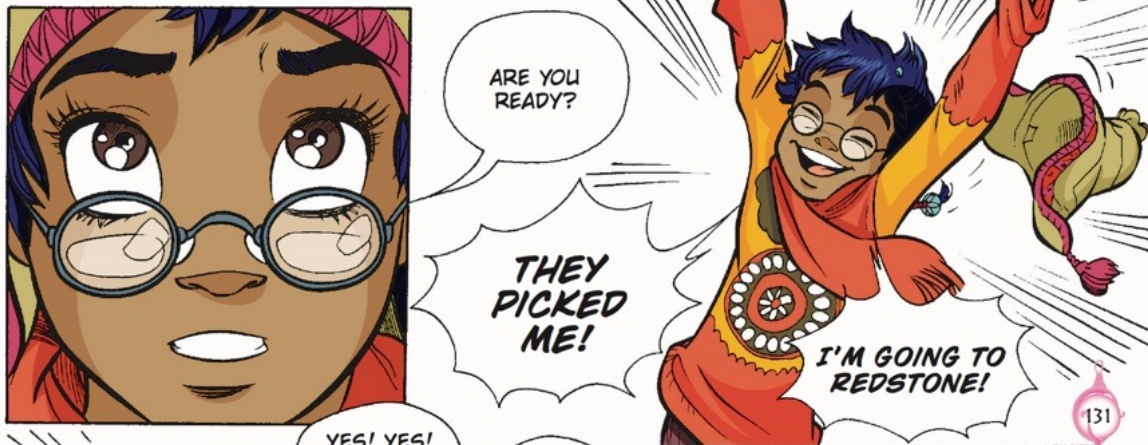
The Departure

“When will we be free to choose?”

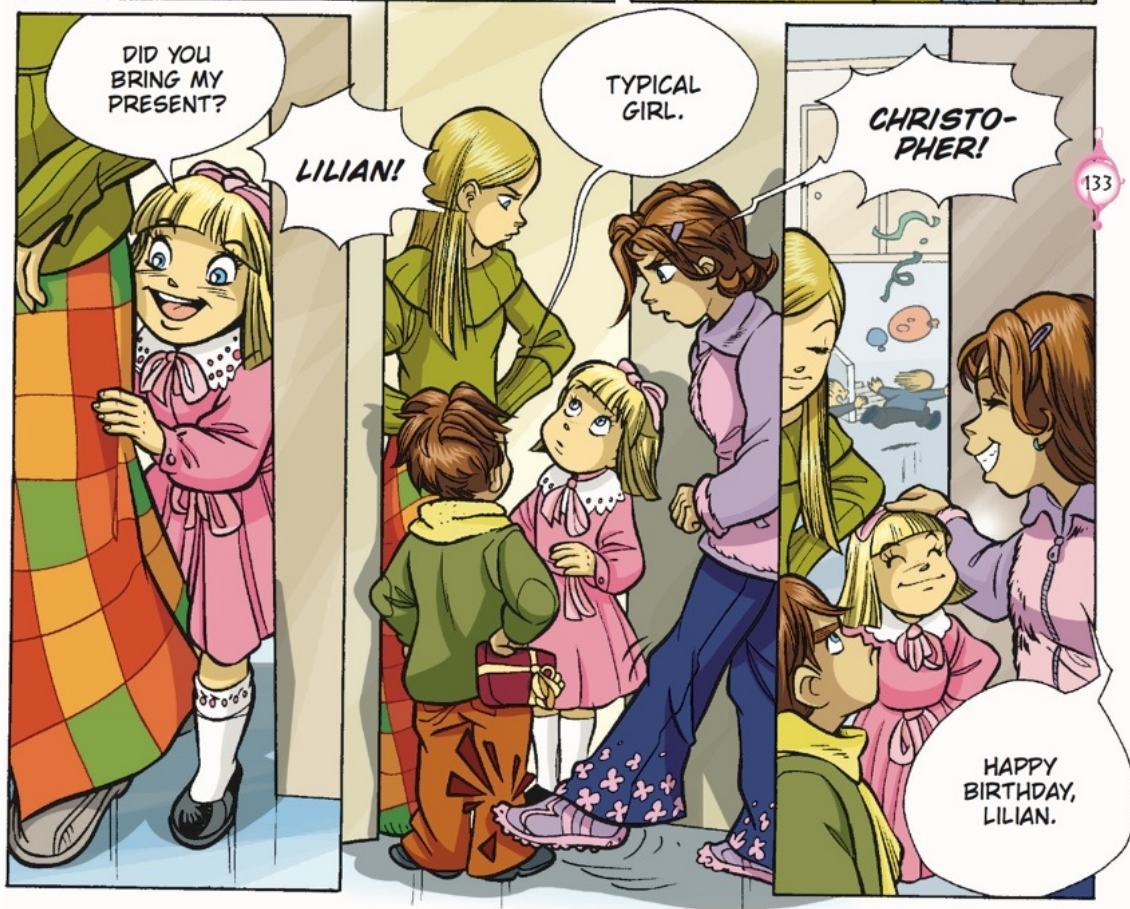
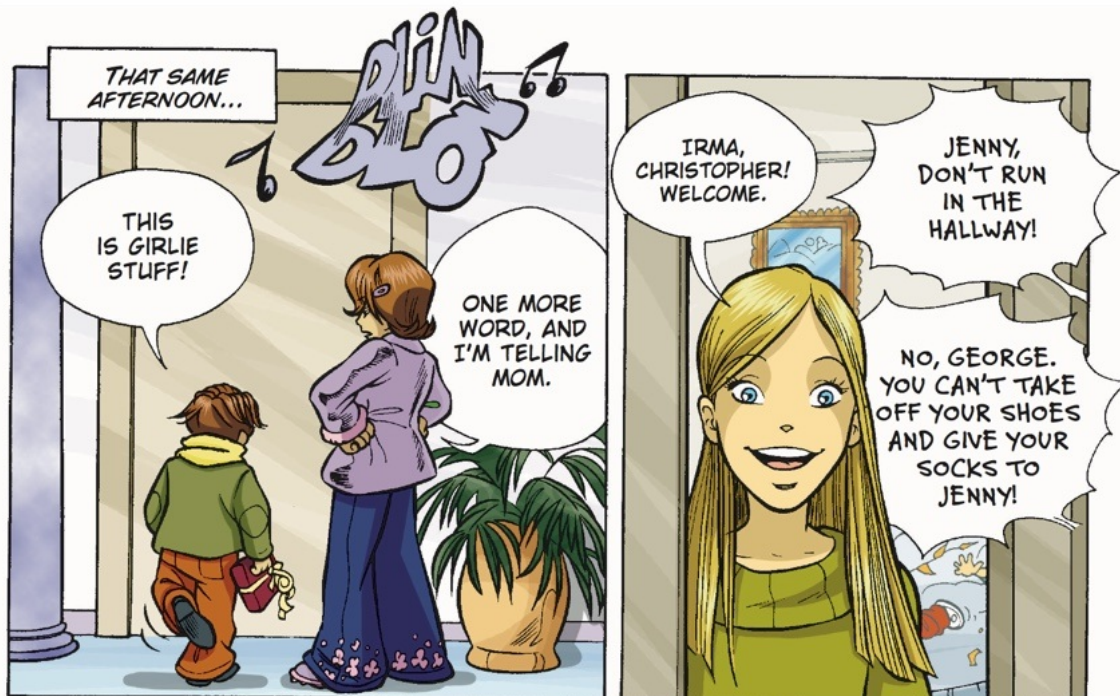


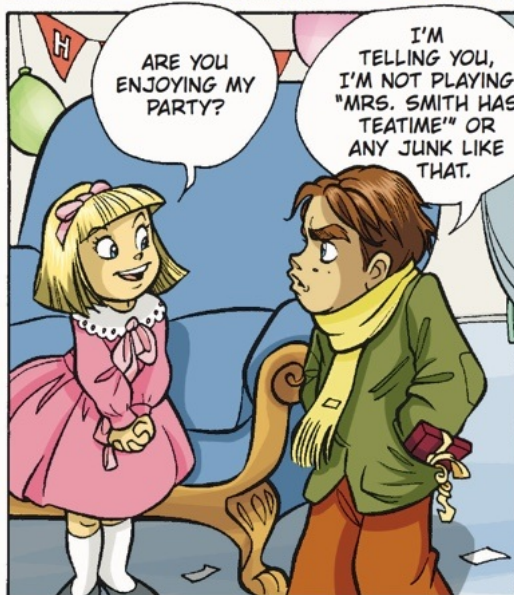


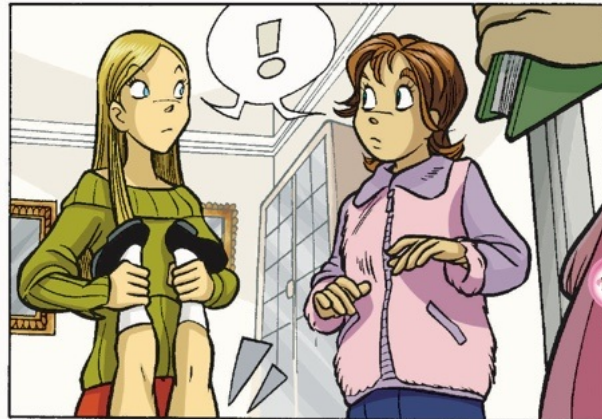
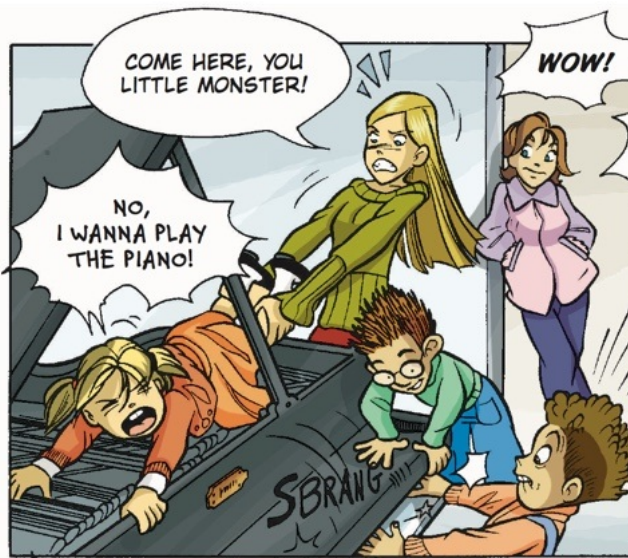






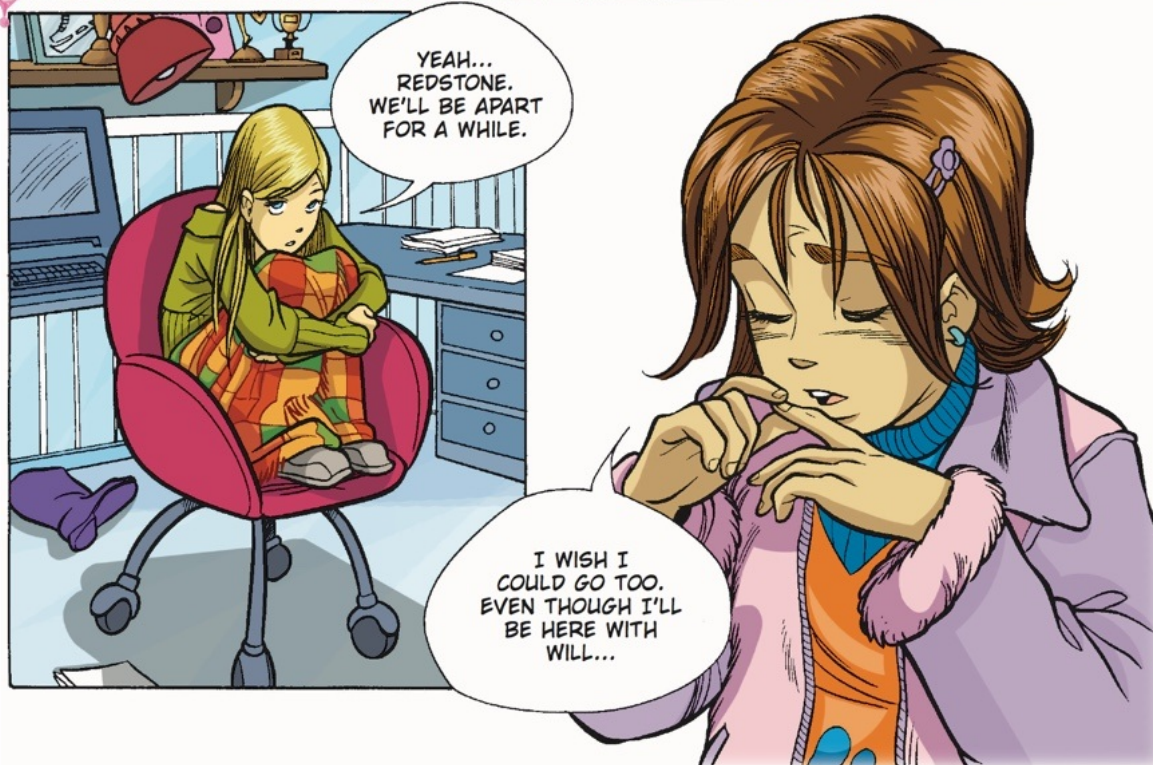








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YOU ATE ALL THOSE SEEDS? YOU GREEDY BOYS! YOU TOO?! YOU'RE SUCH GLUTTONS.



HI, BUDDY. YOU'RE SO CUTE! YOU REMIND ME OF MY DORMOUSE...



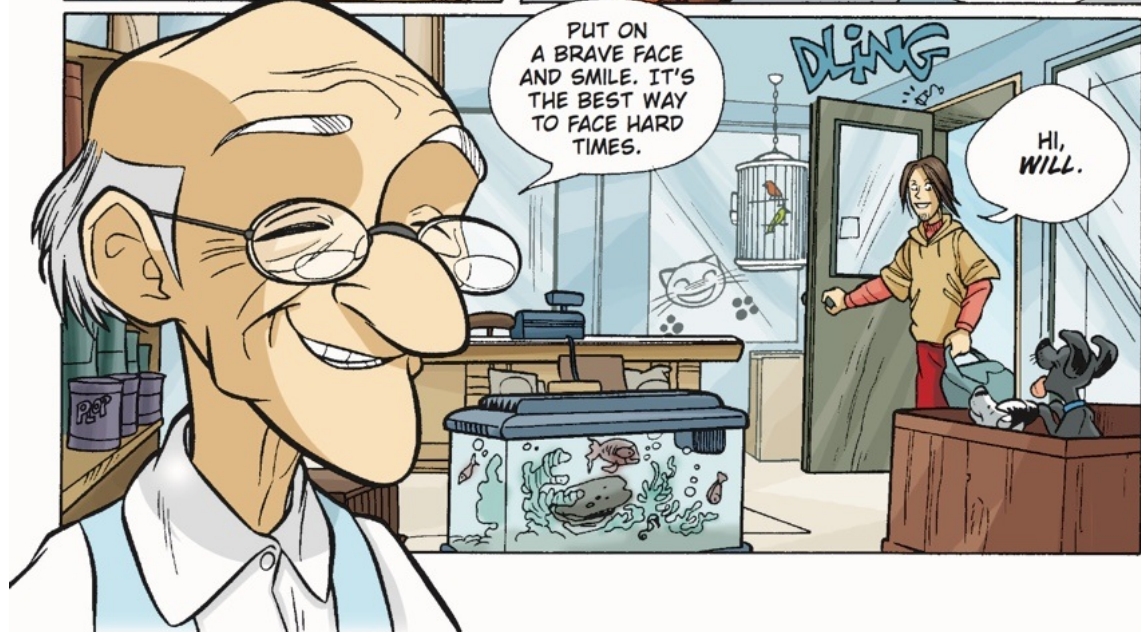
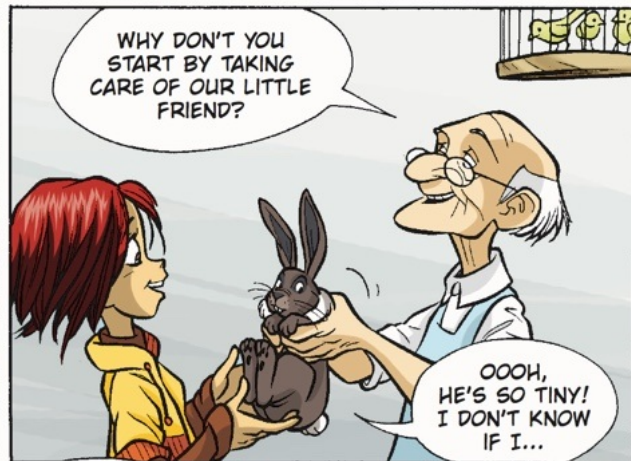
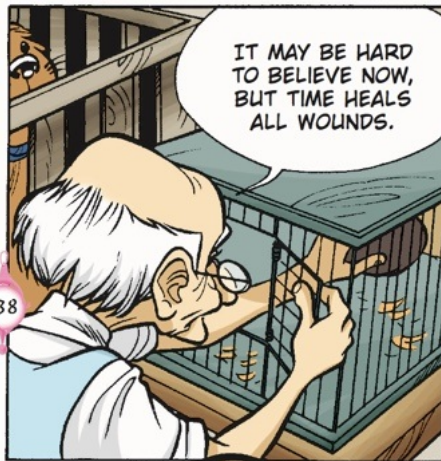
I MISS HIM SO MUCH, YOU KNOW.

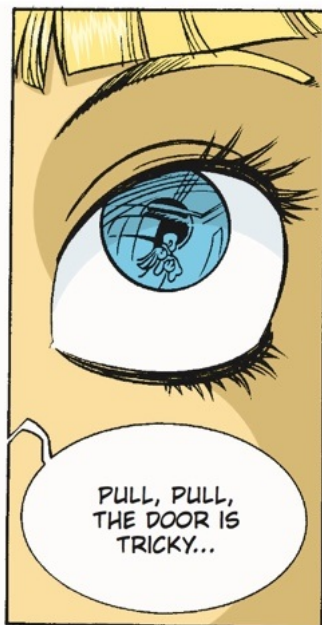


EVERYTHING SUCKS. MY DORMOUSE IS GONE, MY FRIENDS ARE LEAVING, AND I'LL BE ALL ALONE.



UM... ->COUGH<- DID YOU SAY SOMETHING, WILL?

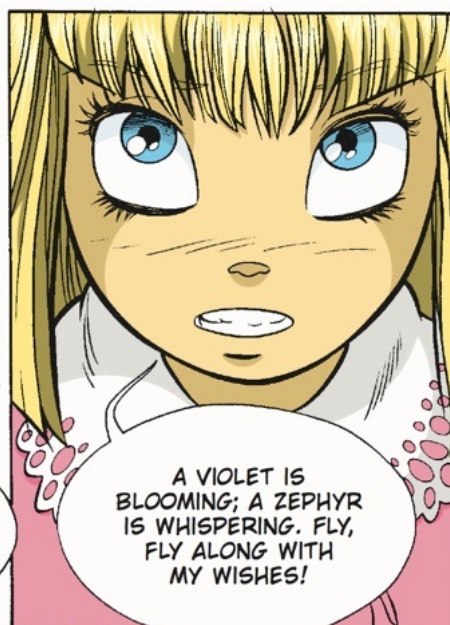




PULL, PULL,
THE DOOR IS
TRICKY...



FALL, FALL,
FIND A
PIGGY...



A VIOLET IS
BLOOMING; A ZEPHYR
IS WHISPERING. FLY,
FLY ALONG WITH
MY WISHES!



N-NOW WHAT?

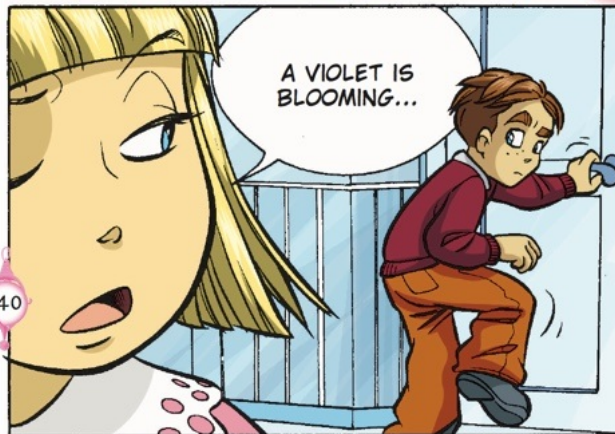
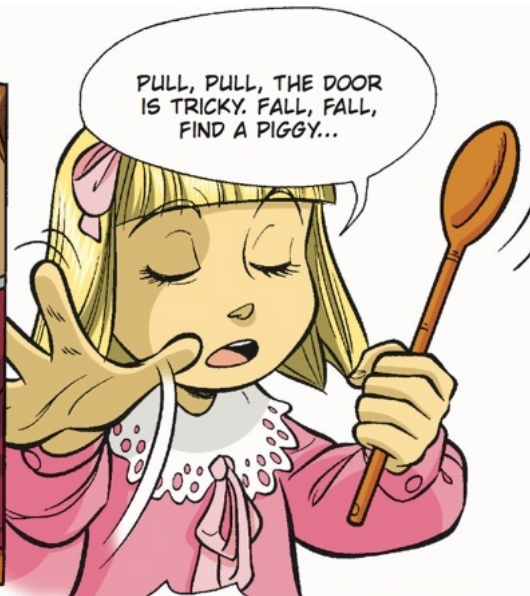
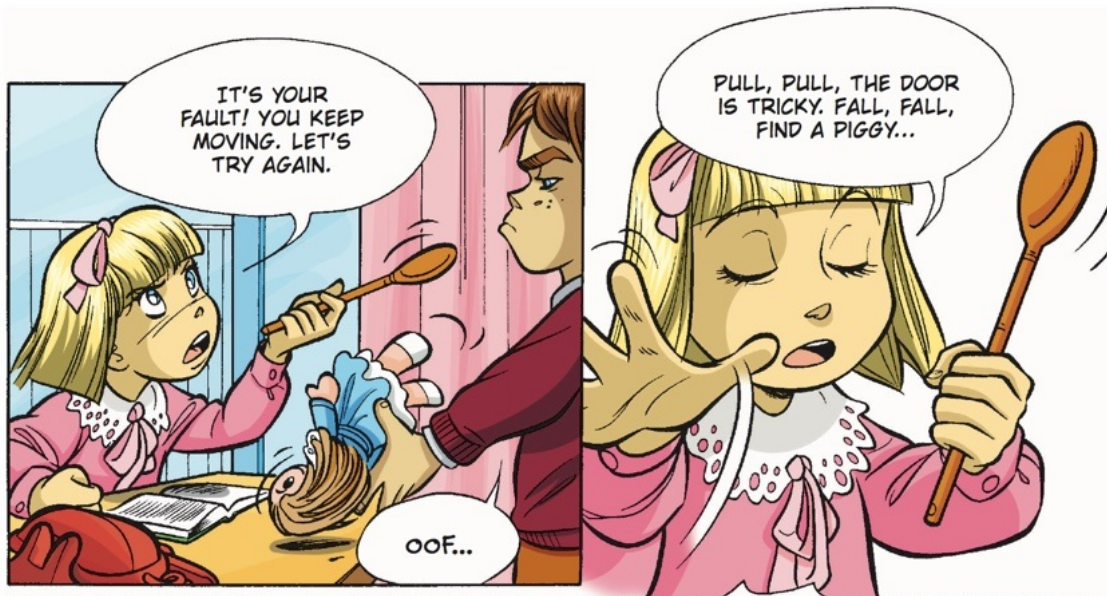


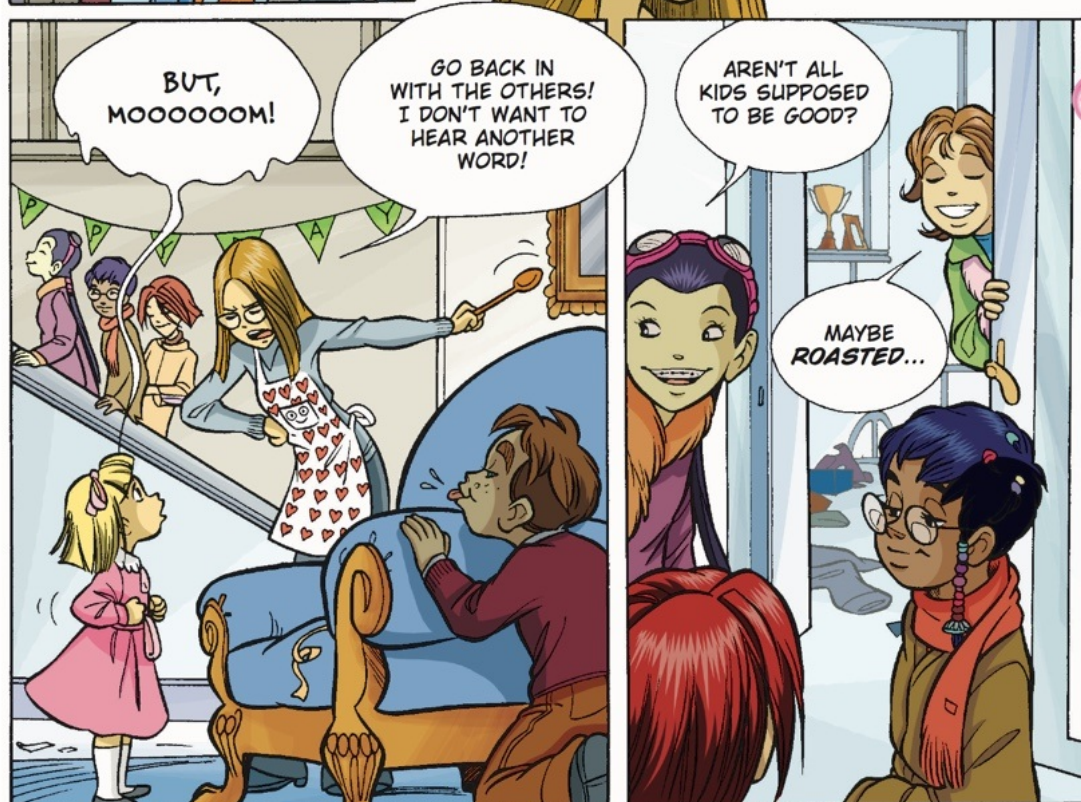
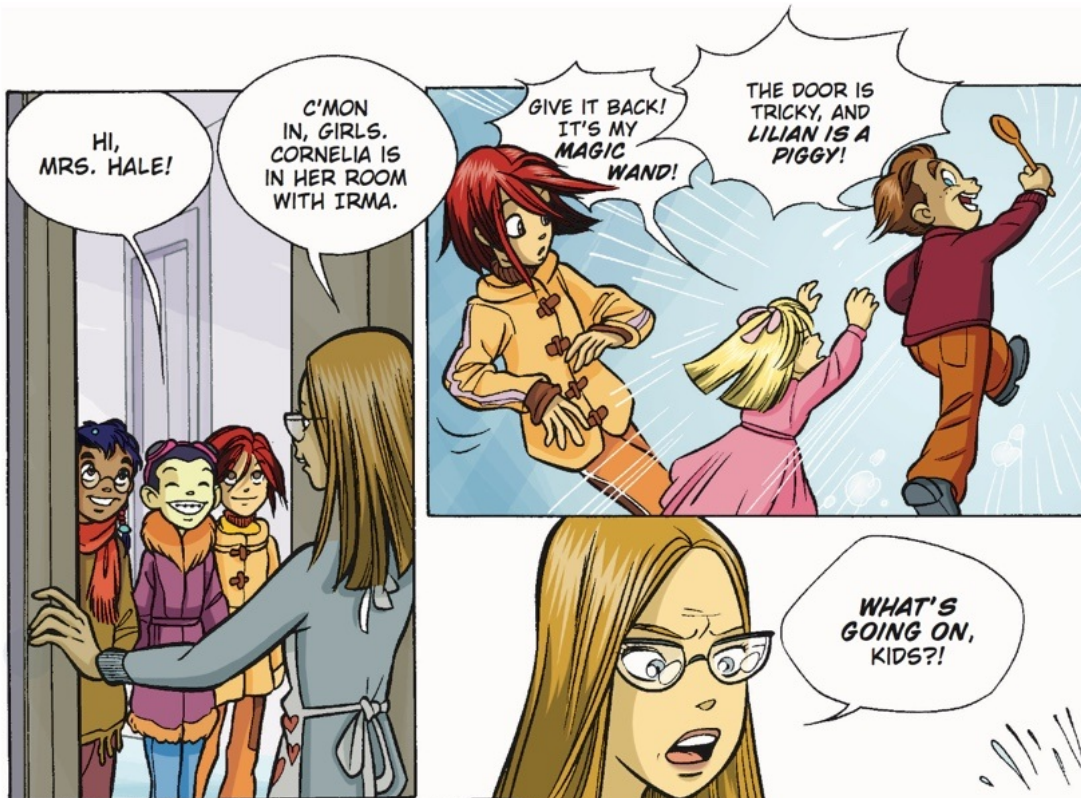
HMM...
I DON'T GET IT.
IT SAYS TO DO
IT THIS WAY.



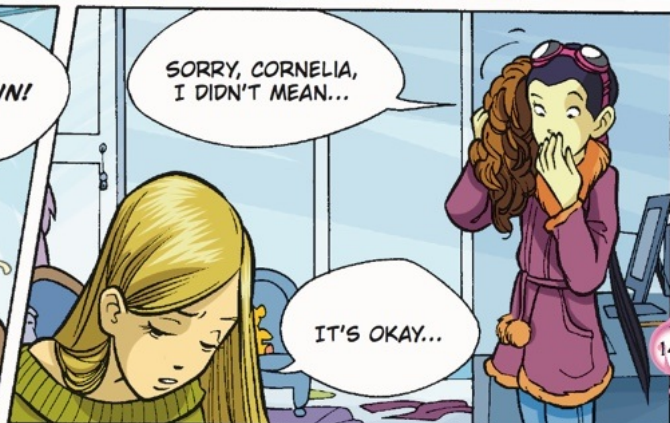
BUT IT ALSO
SAYS IT MIGHT NOT
WORK THE FIRST
TIME.

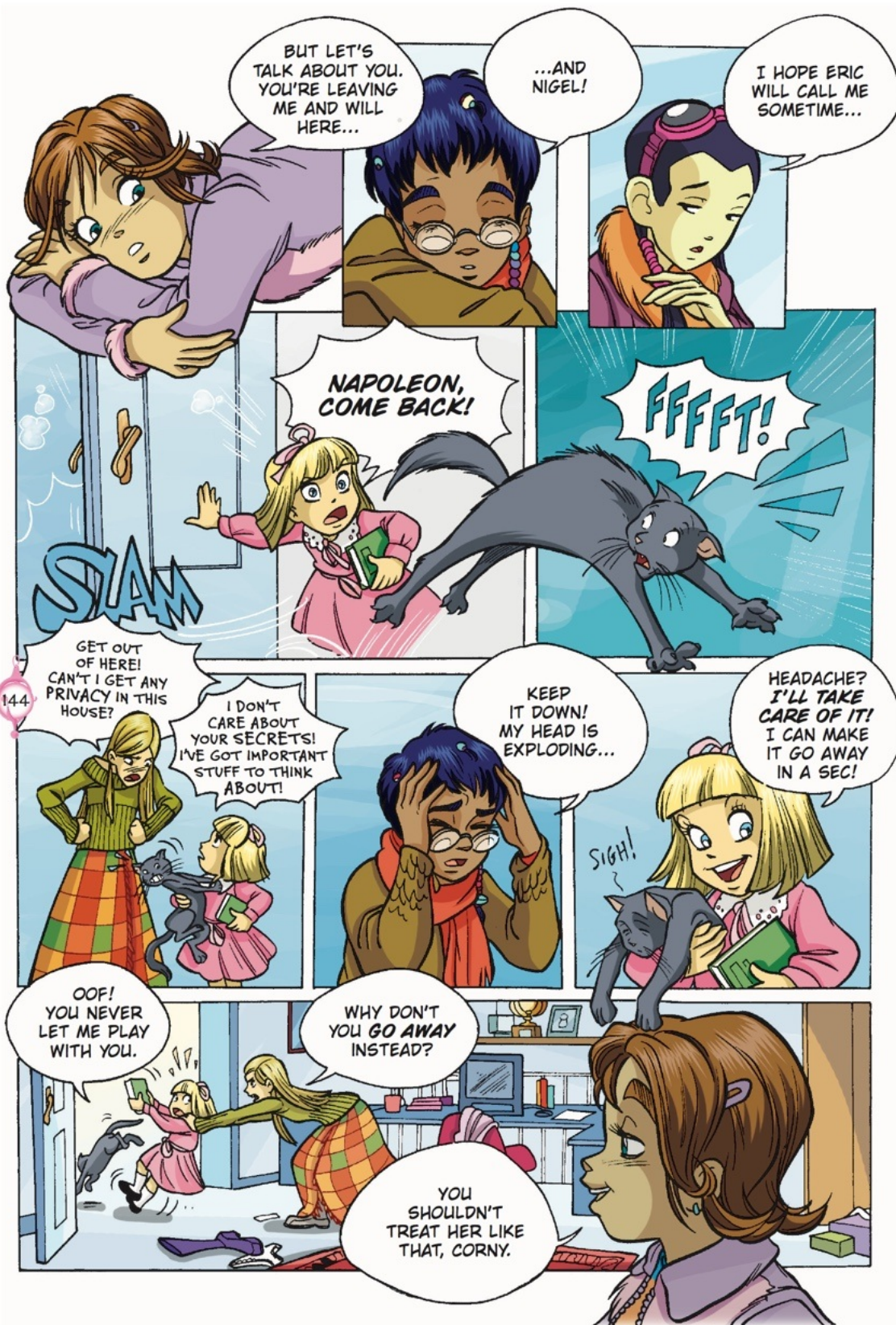
OKAY...NOW
CAN I PUT YOUR
DOLL DOWN?

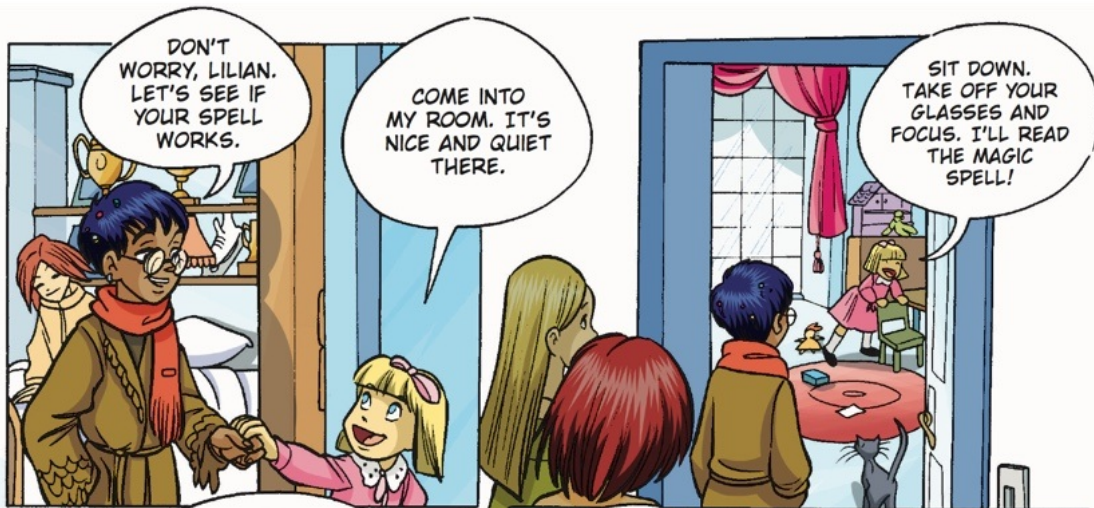














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IN A PLACE FAR AWAY FROM SPACE AND TIME, STANDS THE CONGREGATION'S FORTRESS...

AND HERE'S WHERE, AN INSTANT LATER, WE FIND THE FIVE MEMBERS OF W.I.T.C.H.

HAY LIN!
WHAT A LOVELY SURPRISE.

SHAW-WAH!

WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?

WE NEED ANSWERS, GRANDMA. SOMETHING WEIRD HAPPENED TO TARANEE...

YOU DISCOVERED XIN JING'S GIFT, MY YOUNG FRIEND. NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT...

NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT? SUDDENLY I HAVE EYES LIKE A HAWK, AND I SHOULDN'T BE WORRIED?

THIS IS JUST ONE OF THE BENEFITS YOU WILL DISCOVER OVER TIME...

THE GIFT OF THE NYMPH XIN JING IS A SPECIAL FORCE THAT RUNS THROUGH EVERY GUARDIAN...

"WHEN THE NYMPH CREATED THE GUARDIANS' POWERS, SHE DID NOT MERELY GIVE THEM THE STRENGTH OF THE FOUR DRAGONS*..."

"SHE ALSO GAVE THEM THE GIFT OF **REGENERATION**. CONSTANTLY CHANGING SHAPE EXHAUSTS THE BODY..."

*SEE W.I.T.C.H. #9

"...BUT XIN JING'S GIFT INSURES BALANCE OF BODY AND MIND."

EVERY TIME THE POWER OF THE HEART OF KANDRAKAR TOUCHES YOU, YOU GROW **STRONGER**.

149

YOU'LL WITHSTAND TIME BETTER. SMALL AILMENTS OR FLAWS WILL DISAPPEAR ...

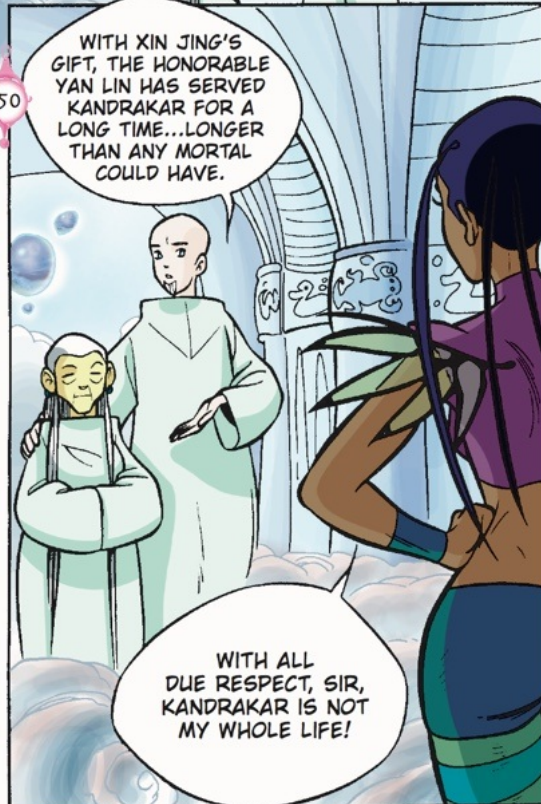
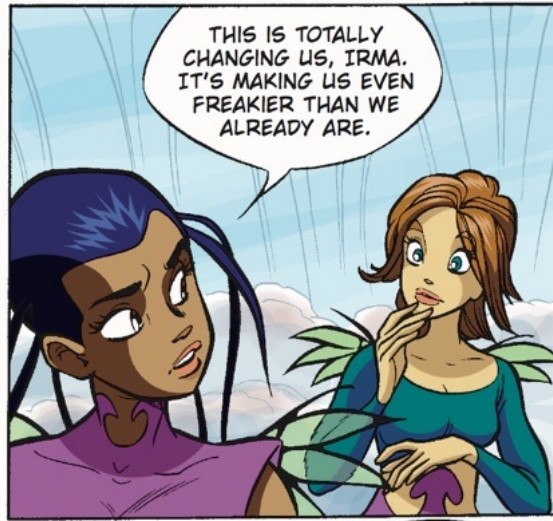
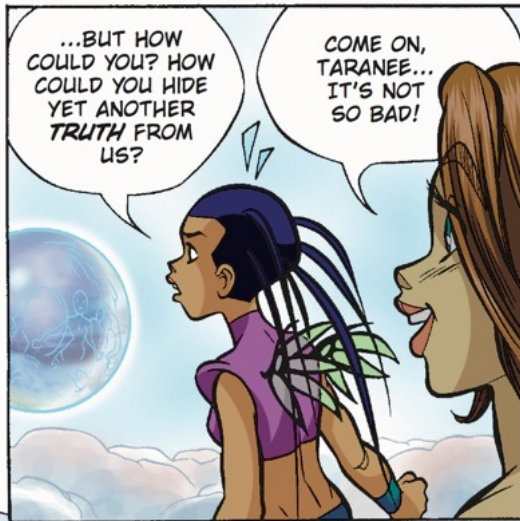
NOW I GET IT... MY SIGHT WAS GETTING BETTER, AND I DIDN'T REALIZE.

THAT EXPLAINS YOUR HEADACHE.

YOU WERE WEARING GLASSES WITHOUT NEEDING THEM, STRAINING YOUR EYES.

THERE IS NO NEED TO THANK ME...

I DIDN'T FOR AN INSTANT INTEND TO SAY THIS...







YOU ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THIS, TARANEE. DO NOT BE RASH. CONSIDER YOUR ACTIONS.

I WILL. NOW, IF YOU DON'T MIND, SIR, I JUST WANT TO...



...GO HOME!



CRIPES, TARANEE. THEM'S FIGHTING WORDS! WERE YOU SERIOUS?

YOU'LL MANAGE WITHOUT ME—AND DON'T MAKE THAT FACE. IT'S NOT FOREVER.

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I JUST WANT THE ORACLE TO STOP TREATING US LIKE CHILDREN. IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME WE'VE ASKED HIM.

XIN JING'S GIFT...THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW!



WHY DIDN'T THEY GIVE US AN INSTRUCTION MANUAL WITH THE WINGS AND COSTUMES?

BUT TODAY YOU WERE MORE DIRECT THAN I EVER WAS. YOU WERE BRAVE!

YEAH... BEING A W.I.T.C.H. ISN'T EASY. THAT GETS CLEARER EVERY DAY.









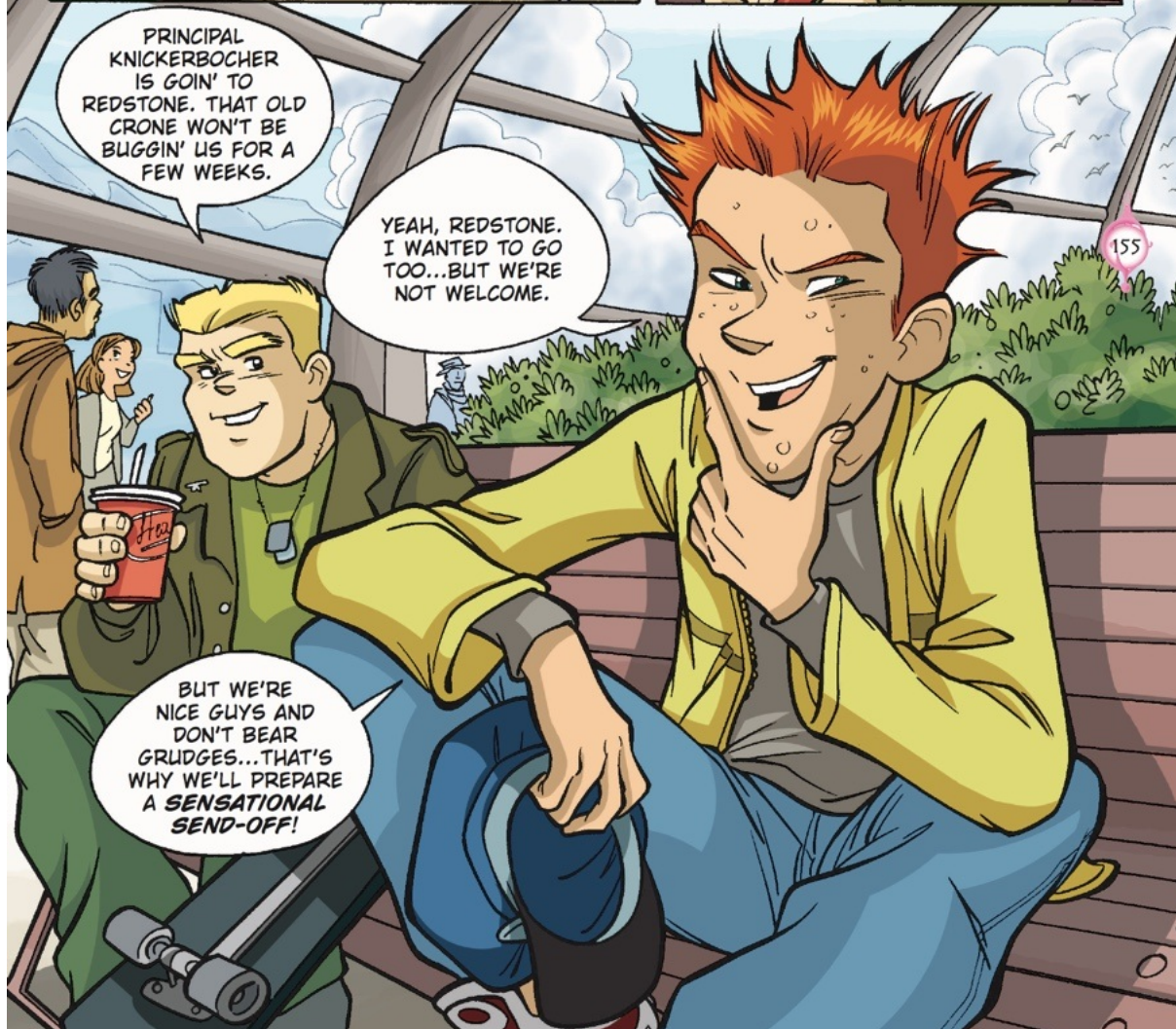
THAT FATTY DOESN'T GET TO BOSS US AROUND.

RIGHT! NOBODY CAN TELL US WHAT TO DO.

WISH SCHOOL WAS LIKE THAT...



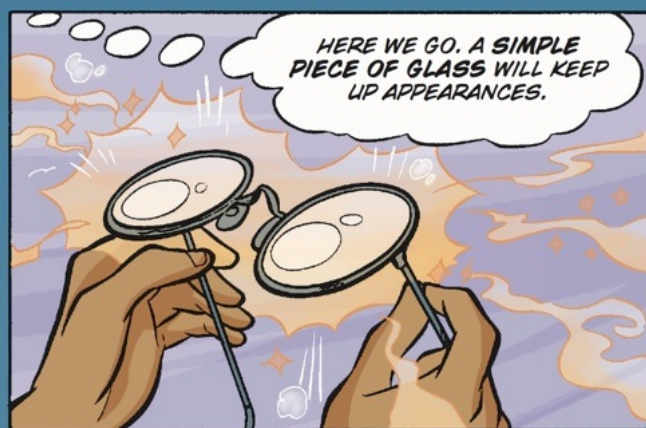
BUT WE CAN HAVE FUN FOR A WHILE.

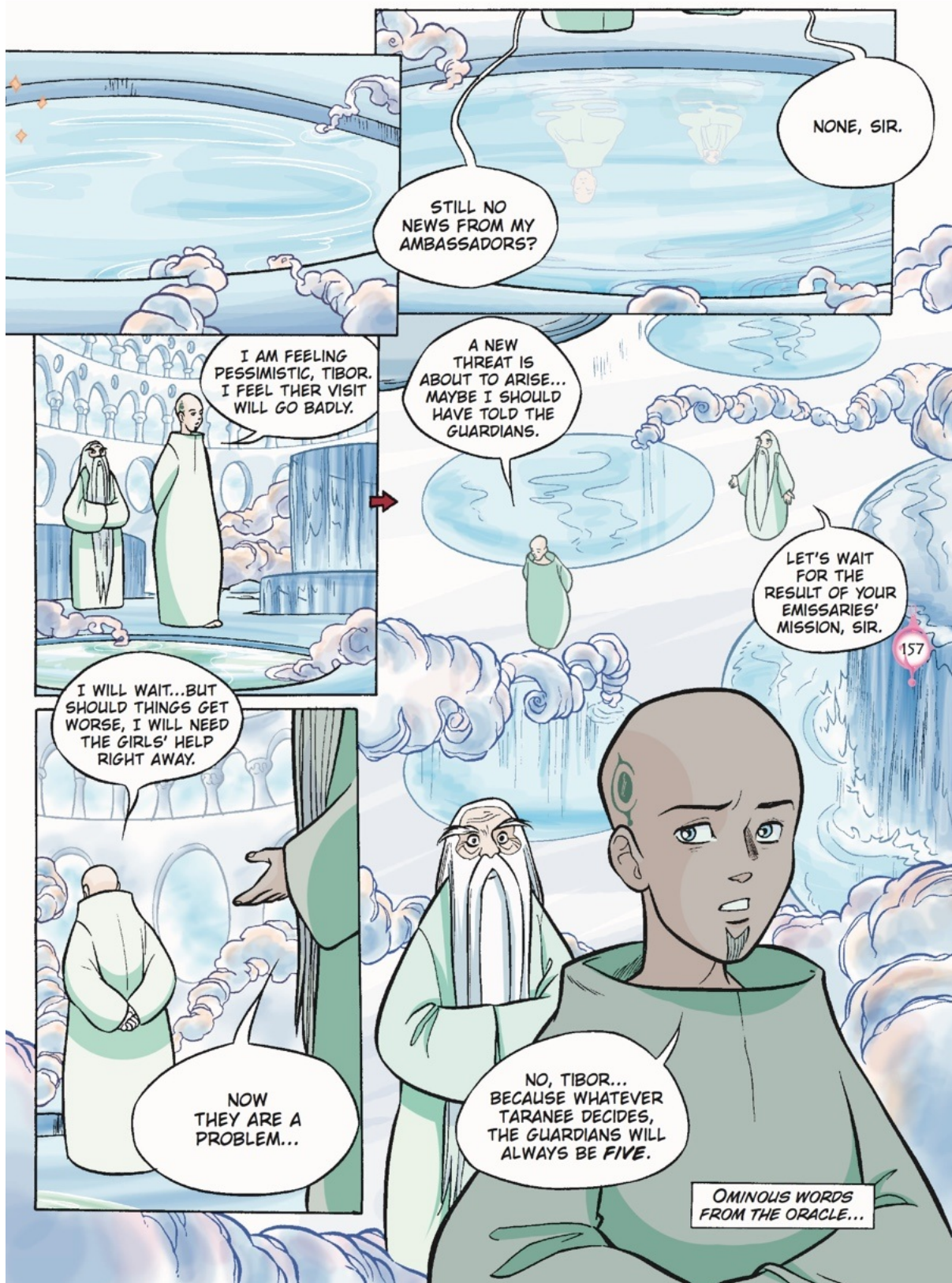


PRINCIPAL KNICKERBOCHER IS GOIN' TO REDSTONE. THAT OLD CRONE WON'T BE BUGGIN' US FOR A FEW WEEKS.

YEAH, REDSTONE. I WANTED TO GO TOO...BUT WE'RE NOT WELCOME.

BUT WE'RE NICE GUYS AND DON'T BEAR GRUDGES...THAT'S WHY WE'LL PREPARE A SENSATIONAL SEND-OFF!





NONE, SIR.

STILL NO
NEWS FROM MY
AMBASSADORS?

I AM FEELING
PESSIMISTIC, TIBOR.
I FEEL THEIR VISIT
WILL GO BADLY.

A NEW
THREAT IS
ABOUT TO ARISE...
MAYBE I SHOULD
HAVE TOLD THE
GUARDIANS.

LET'S WAIT
FOR THE
RESULT OF YOUR
EMISSARIES'
MISSION, SIR.

I WILL WAIT...BUT
SHOULD THINGS GET
WORSE, I WILL NEED
THE GIRLS' HELP
RIGHT AWAY.

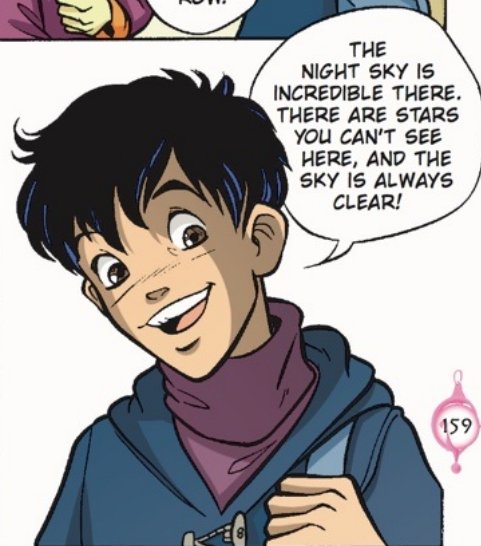
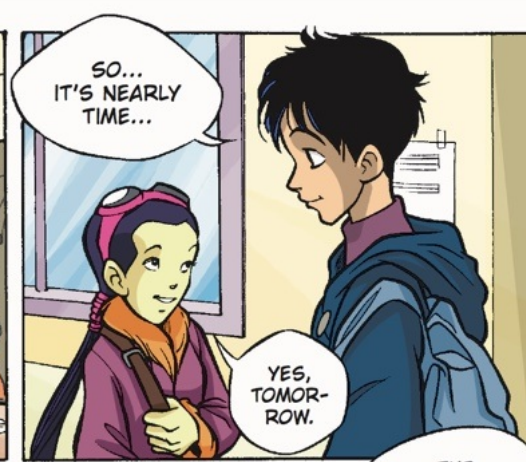
NOW
THEY ARE A
PROBLEM...

NO, TIBOR...
BECAUSE WHATEVER
TARANEE DECIDES,
THE GUARDIANS WILL
ALWAYS BE FIVE.

OMINOUS WORDS
FROM THE ORACLE...

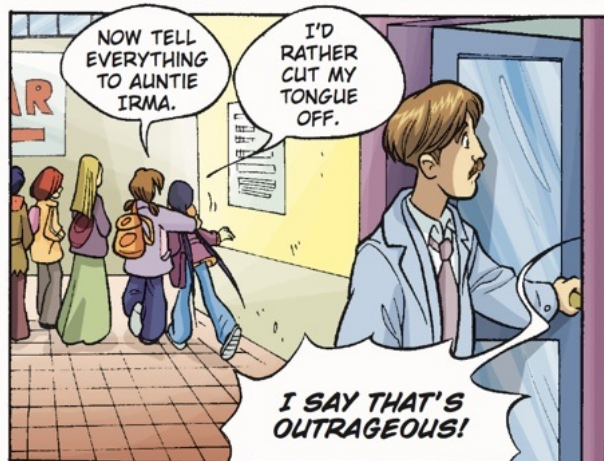
157

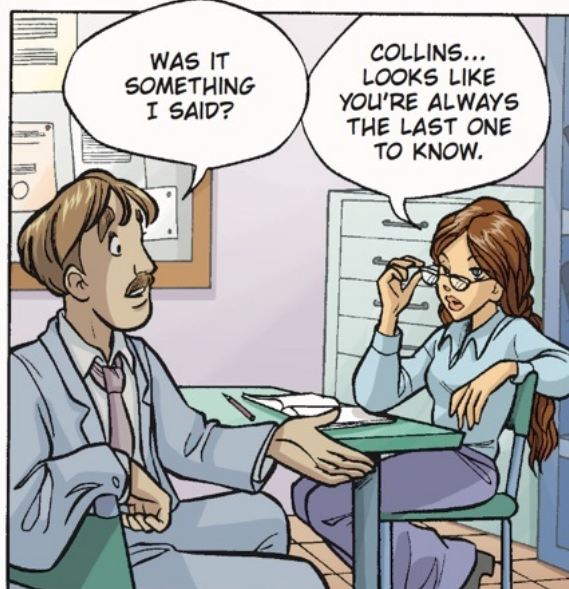
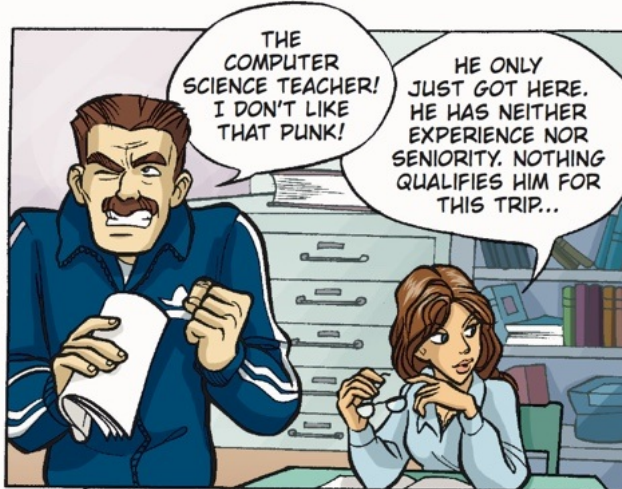


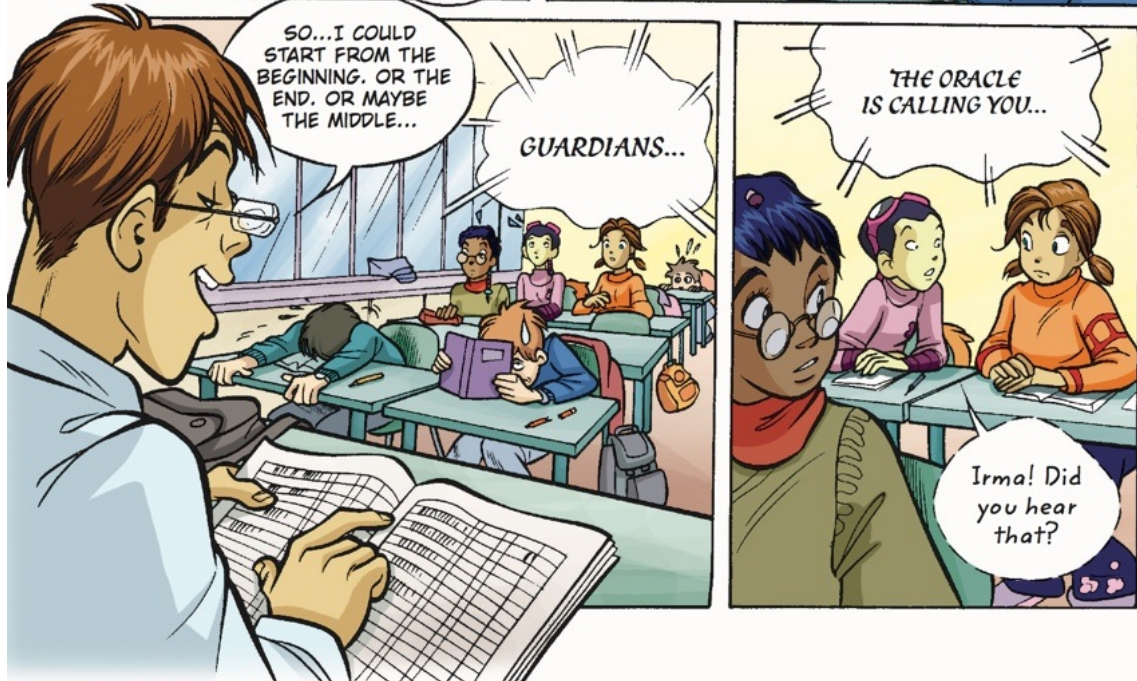


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FOR THE ORACLE'S SAKE, I HOPE THIS IS IMPORTANT.

LOOK. WILL AND CORNELIA ARE COMING.



DID YOU HEAR IT TOO?

WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? LET'S FIND A QUIET SPOT AND GO TO KANDRAKAR.



UH... ISN'T THERE ANYWHERE MORE "ROMANTIC" ?



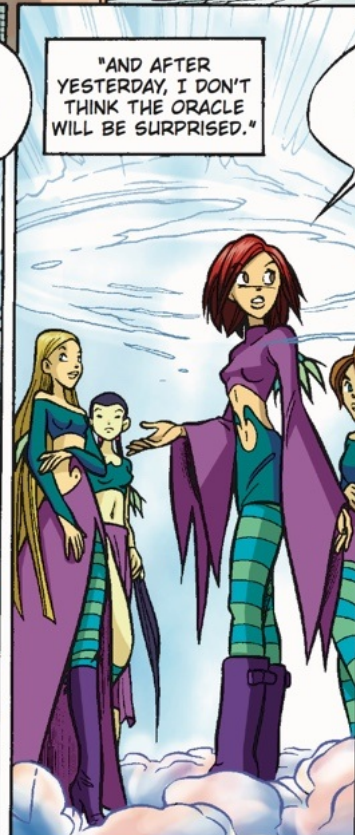
NOW'S NO TIME TO BE PICKY.



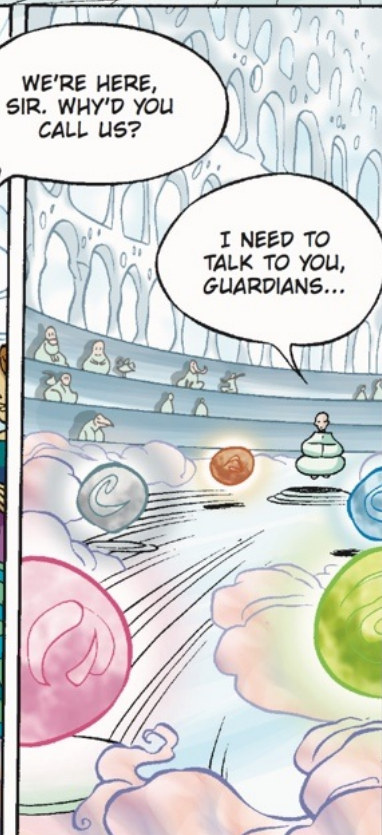
164

TARANEE'S ON STRIKE?

INDEED.

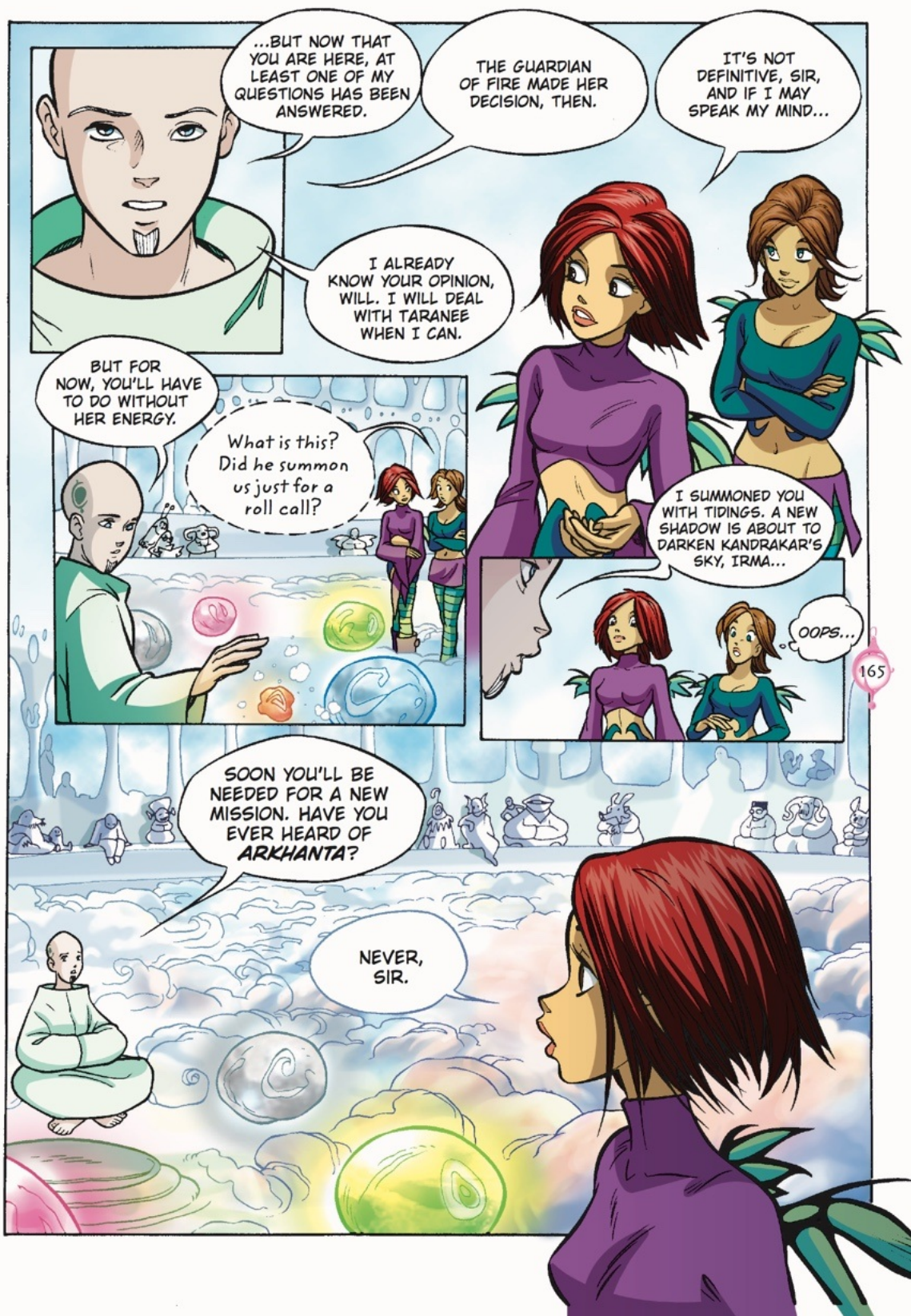


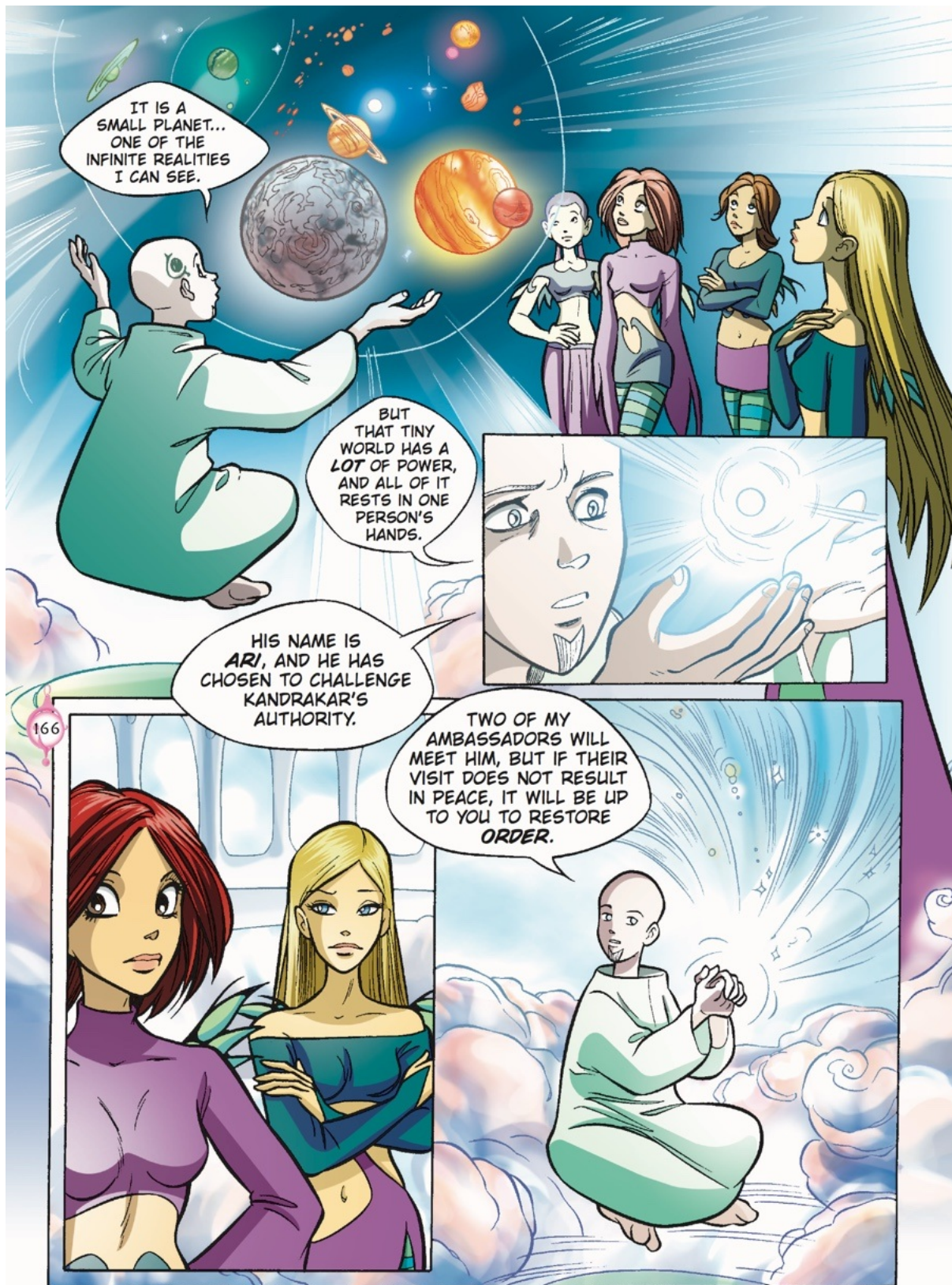
"AND AFTER YESTERDAY, I DON'T THINK THE ORACLE WILL BE SURPRISED."



WE'RE HERE, SIR. WHY'D YOU CALL US?

I NEED TO TALK TO YOU, GUARDIANS...



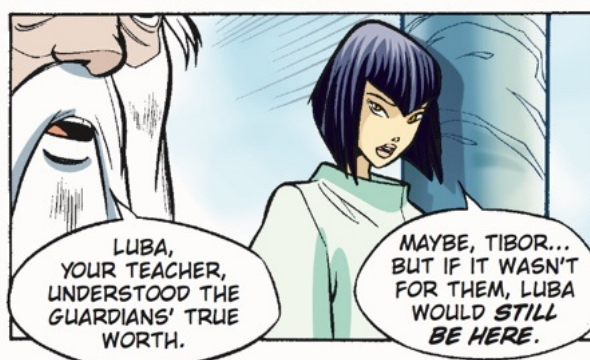


IT IS A
SMALL PLANET...
ONE OF THE
INFINITE REALITIES
I CAN SEE.

BUT
THAT TINY
WORLD HAS A
LOT OF POWER,
AND ALL OF IT
RESTS IN ONE
PERSON'S
HANDS.

HIS NAME IS
ARI, AND HE HAS
CHOSEN TO CHALLENGE
KANDRAKAR'S
AUTHORITY.

TWO OF MY
AMBASSADORS WILL
MEET HIM, BUT IF THEIR
VISIT DOES NOT RESULT
IN PEACE, IT WILL BE UP
TO YOU TO RESTORE
ORDER.





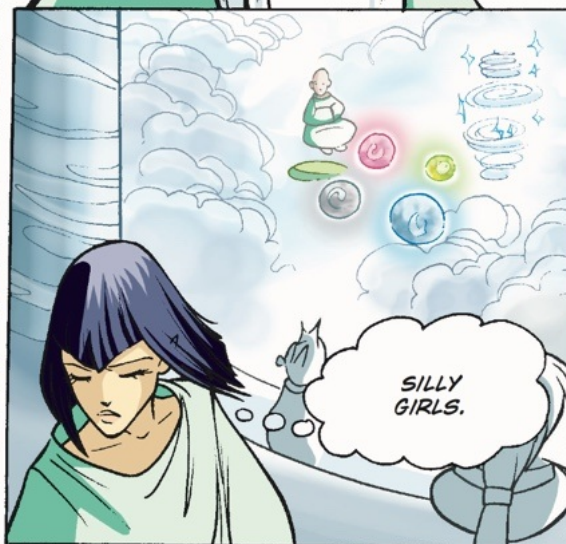
DON'T JUDGE WITHOUT KNOWING THEM. LOOK AT THEIR FACES. THEY'RE BRAVE YOUNG GIRLS...

"THAT'S *WILL*, THEIR LEADER. SHE GUARDS THE HEART OF KANDRAKAR WITH GREAT PRIDE.

"*HAY LIN*, THE YOUNGEST, SUPPORTED BY AIR.

"*IRMA*, FAST AND POWERFUL LIKE WATER, HER ELEMENT.

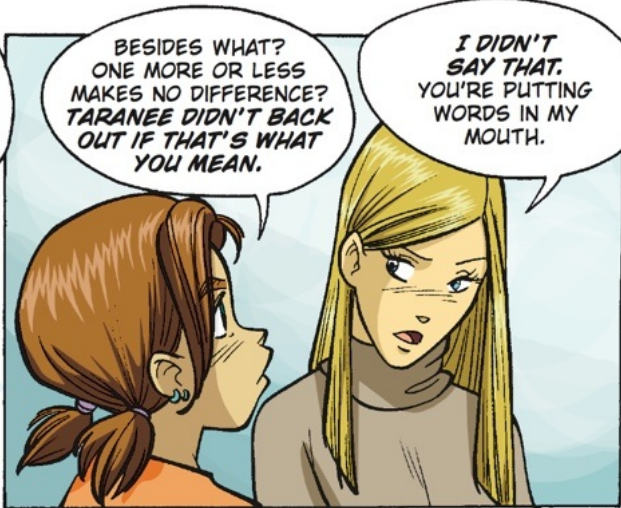
"BRAVE *CORNELIA*. SHE HOLDS EARTH'S ENERGY."





NOT AGAIN!
I'D NEVER HEARD OF
ARKHANTA, AND I WAS
JUST FINE...

WE MADE A
COMMITMENT,
IRMA. IF YOU
WANT TO BACK
OUT, YOU'RE FREE
TO. BESIDES...



BESIDES WHAT?
ONE MORE OR LESS
MAKES NO DIFFERENCE?
**TARANEE DIDN'T BACK
OUT IF THAT'S WHAT
YOU MEAN.**

**I DIDN'T
SAY THAT.**
YOU'RE PUTTING
WORDS IN MY
MOUTH.



LISTEN,
THERE'S NO
NEED TO ARGUE.
I'M SURE TARANEE
WILL COME BACK
SOONER OR
LATER.



AND WHY WORRY
ABOUT ARKHANTA
BEFORE WE HAVE
TO?

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LET'S GO.
SEE YOU OUTSIDE
AFTER
CLASSES.

I LOVE
EASTERN
WISDOM!



HAY LIN'S OPTIMISM
DOESN'T CHANGE
ANYTHING, AND WE
LEAVE TOMORROW.

DON'T
WORRY.

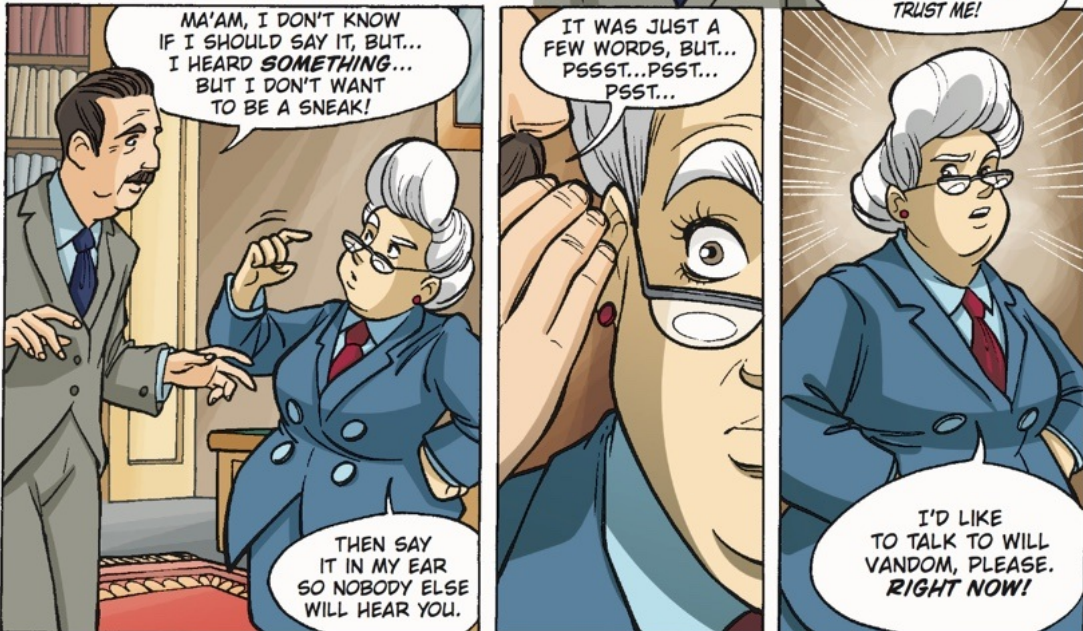


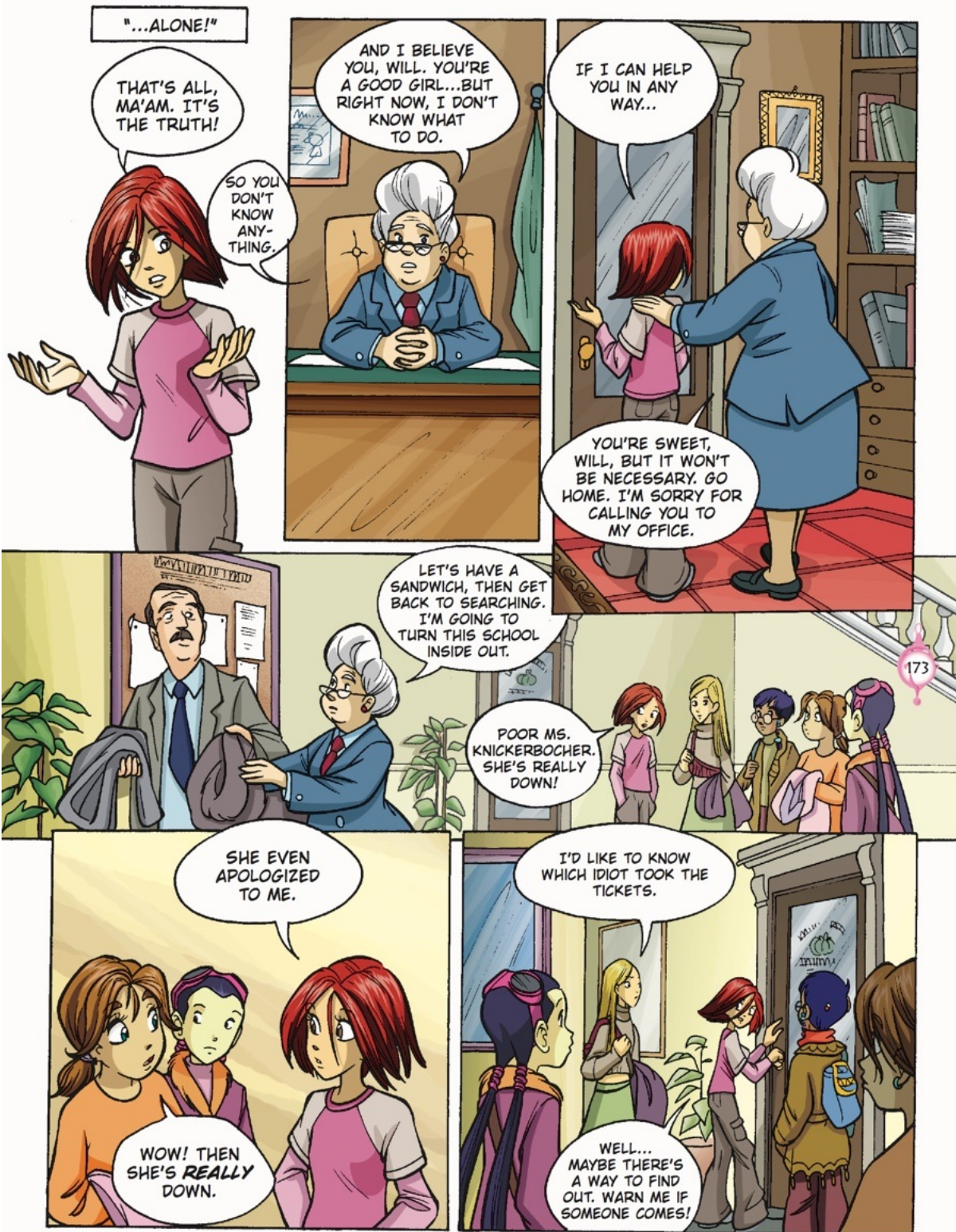
I THINK
WE'LL MANAGE
TO STICK
TOGETHER.



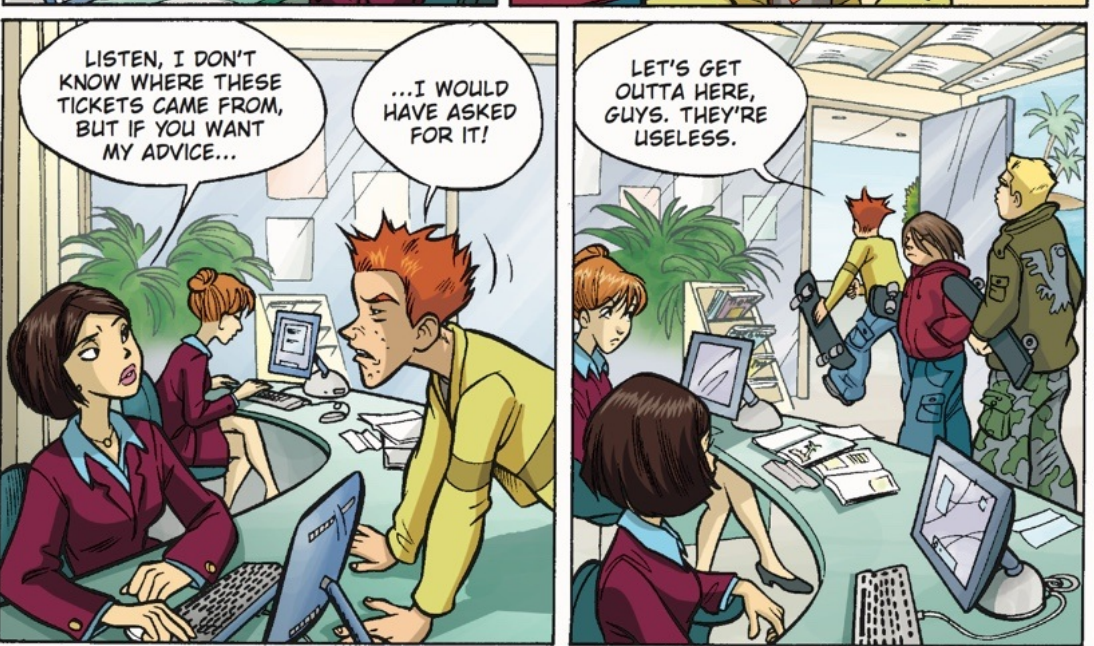
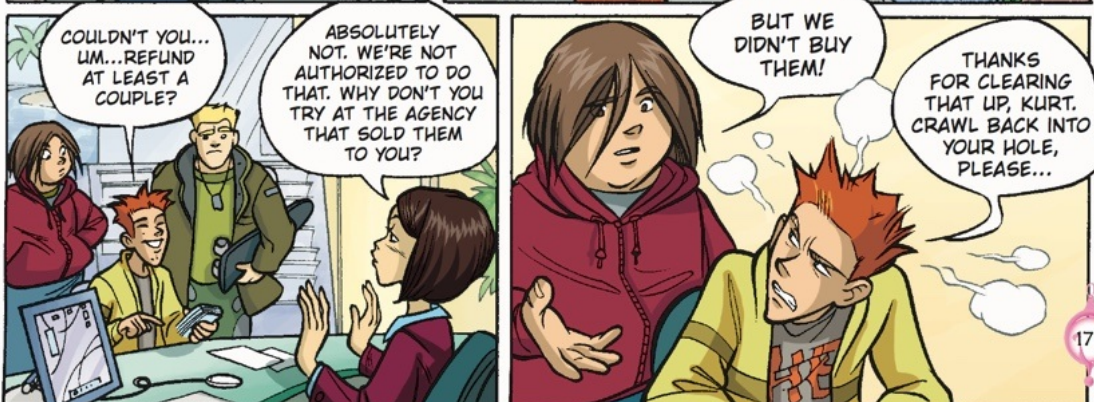
WE WON'T SPLIT
UP. TRUST ME!













BUNCHA
CHEAPSKATES.

WHAT ARE
WE GONNA DO
WITH THOSE
TICKETS?



NOT MUCH, I GUESS.
IF WE GO BACK WHERE
KNICKERBOCHER
BOUGHT 'EM, WE'LL
GET BUSTED.



YOU'RE ALREADY
BUSTED!

WHY
DON'T WE STEP
IN? WE'VE BEEN
FOLLOWING THOSE
THREE MORONS
ALL DAY.



YEAH. WE'VE
BEEN TO EVERY
TRAVEL AGENT
IN TOWN.



LET'S WAIT
A BIT LONGER.
I REALLY DON'T
FEEL LIKE TAKING
THEM ON.



THEY MIGHT TOSS
THE TICKETS IN THE
TRASH, AND WE'LL GET
THEM BACK THE EASY
WAY.

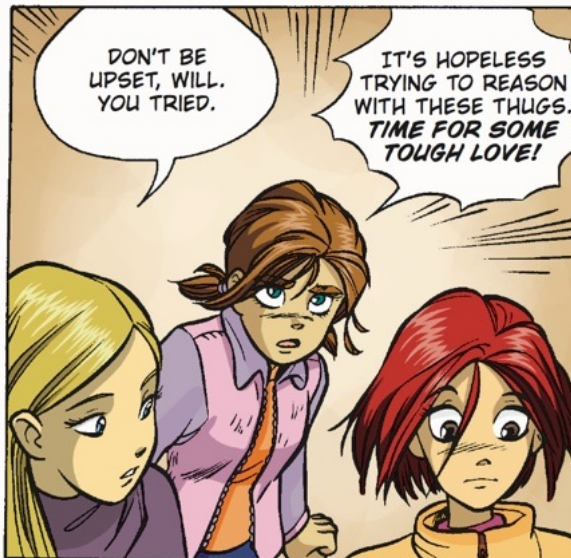
WHAT IF THEY
MAKE THEM INTO
PAPER PLANES?

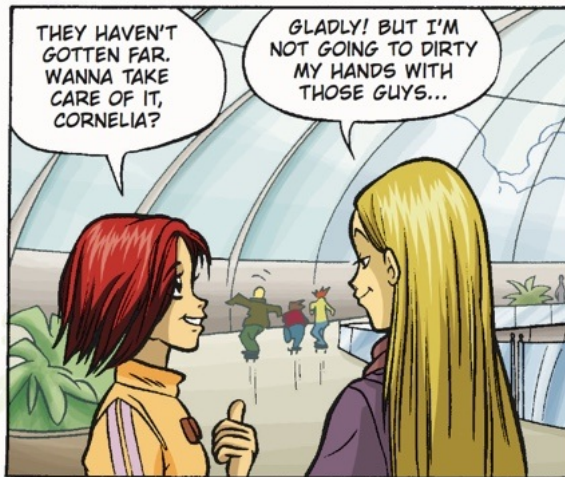


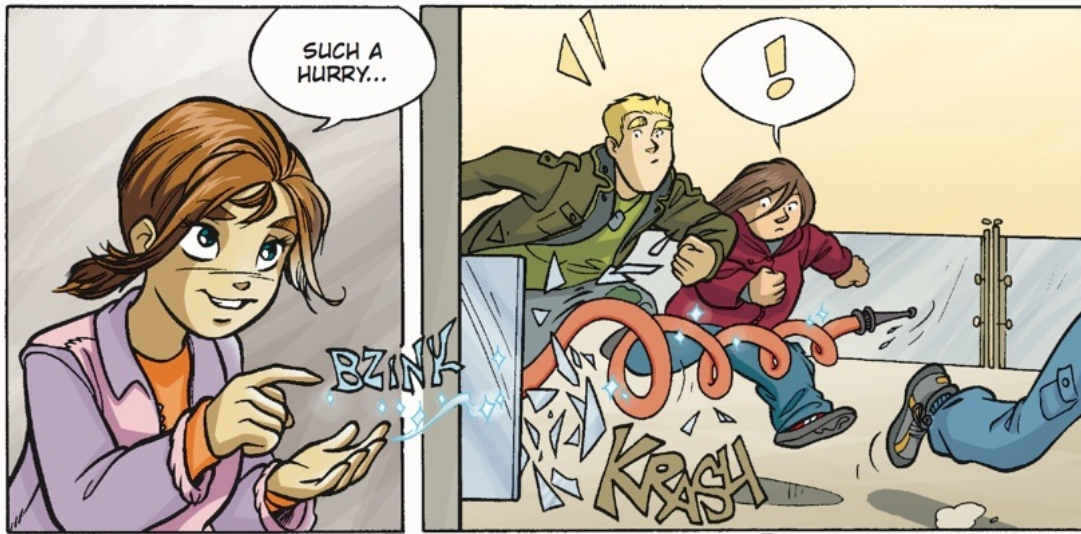
WHY
WOULD
THEY DO
THAT?

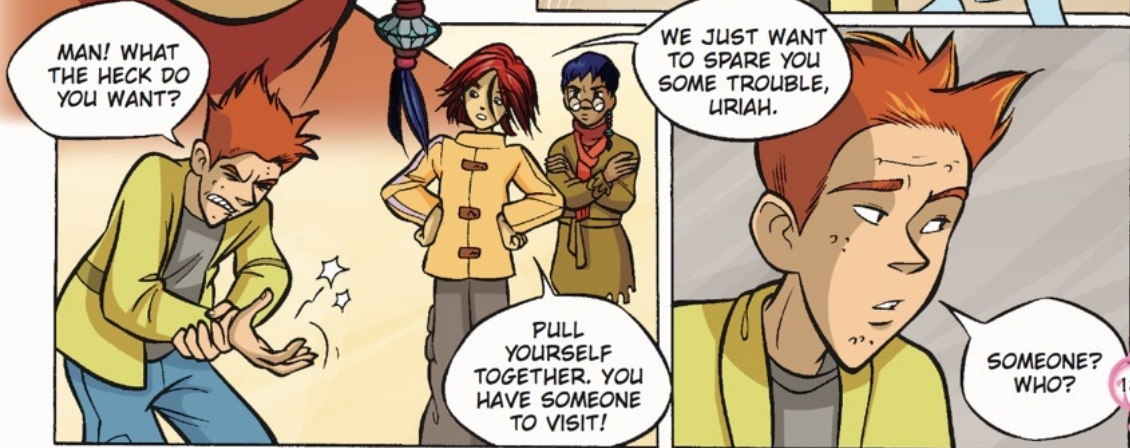
BECAUSE
THEY ALREADY
ARE. LOOK!





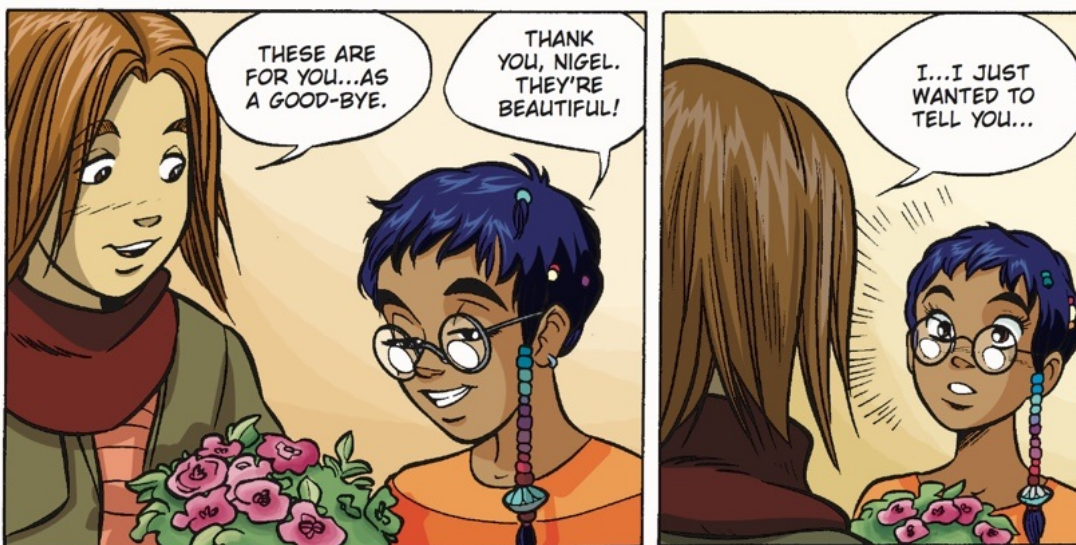
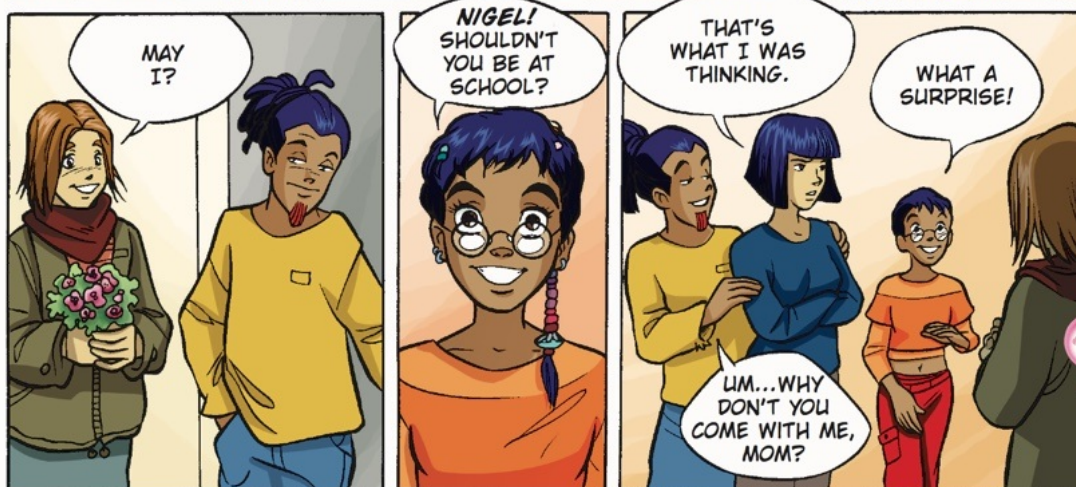


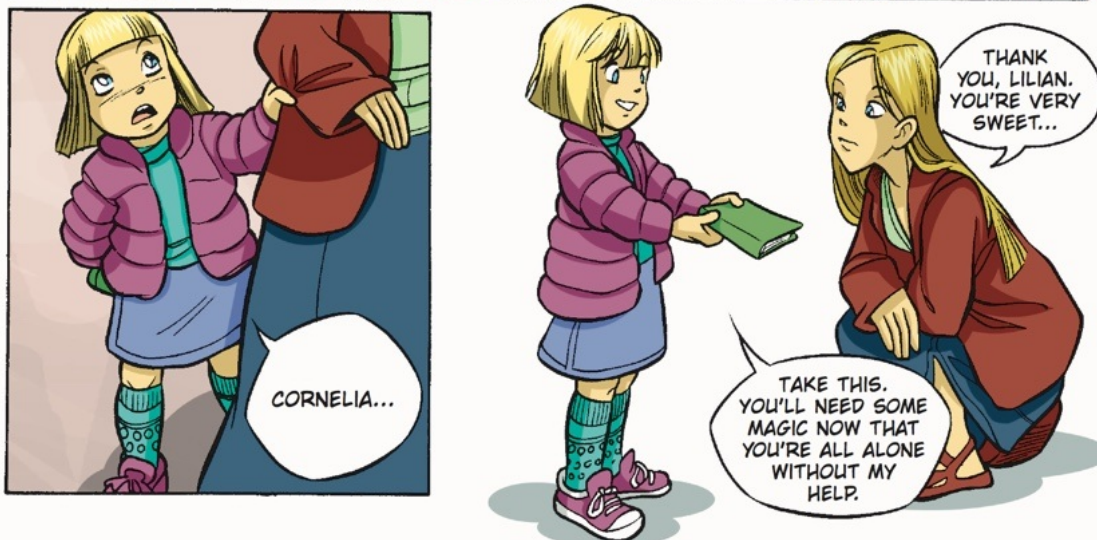
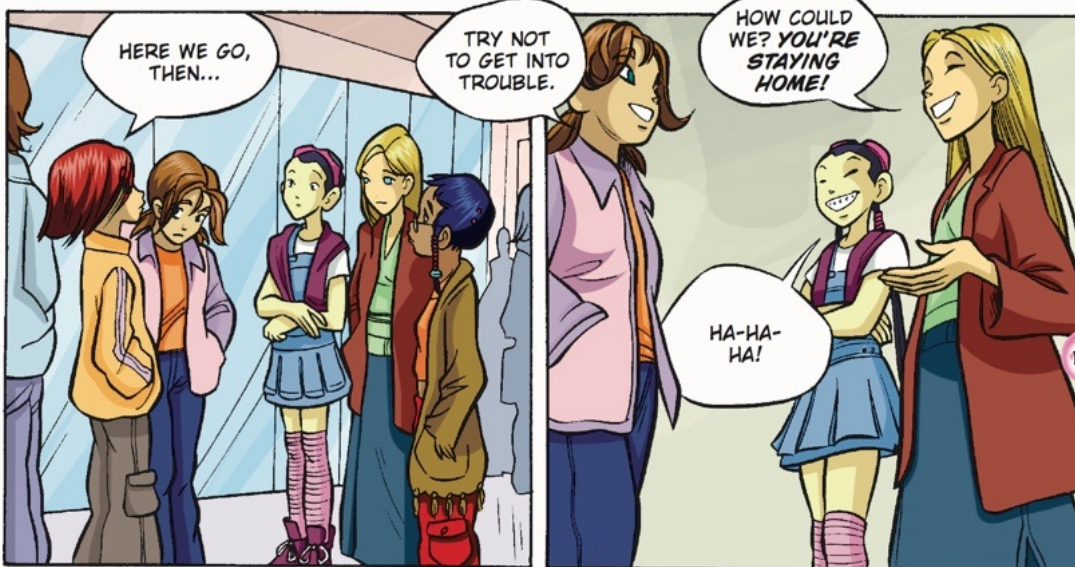


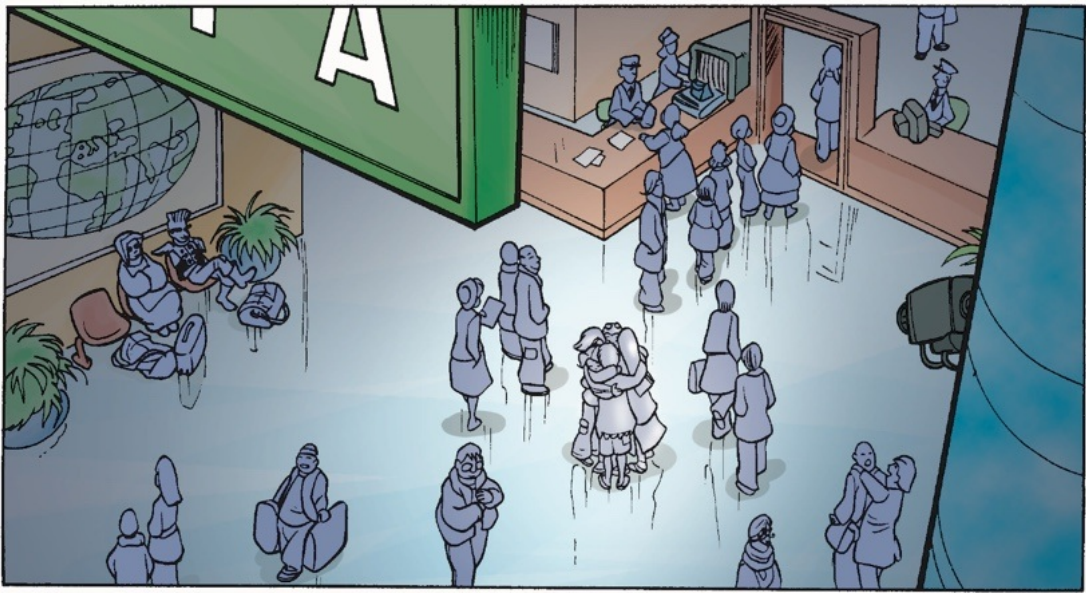
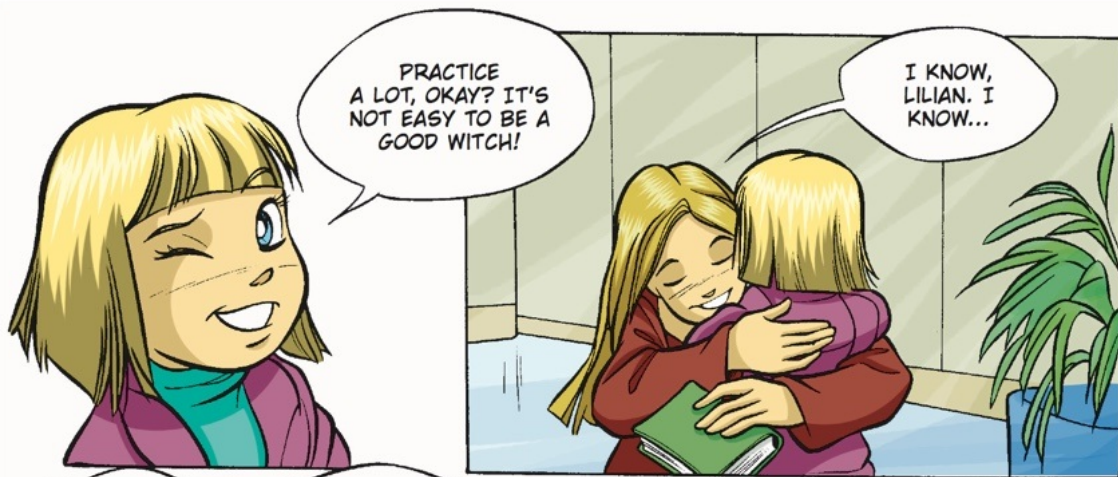


THE NEXT DAY, IT'S
TIME TO GO.





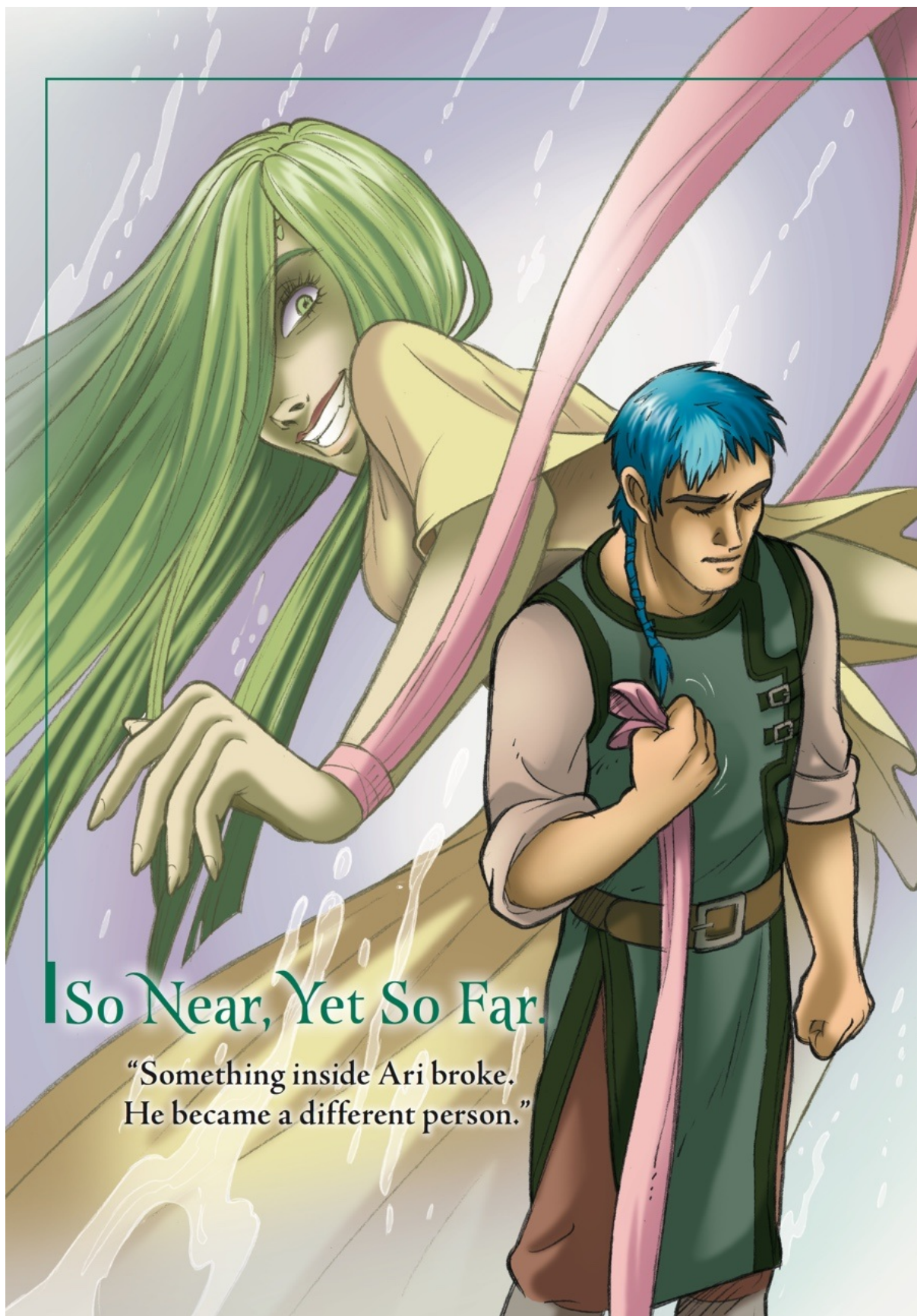








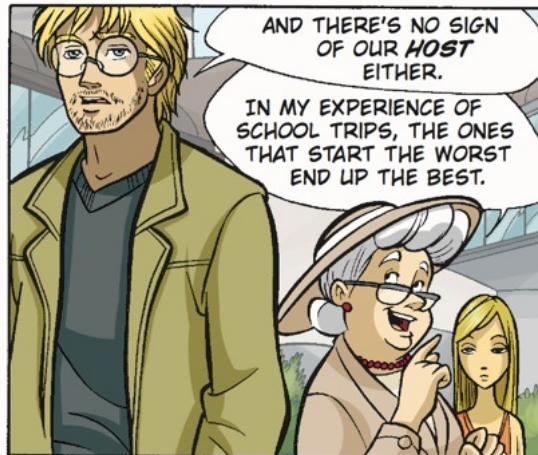




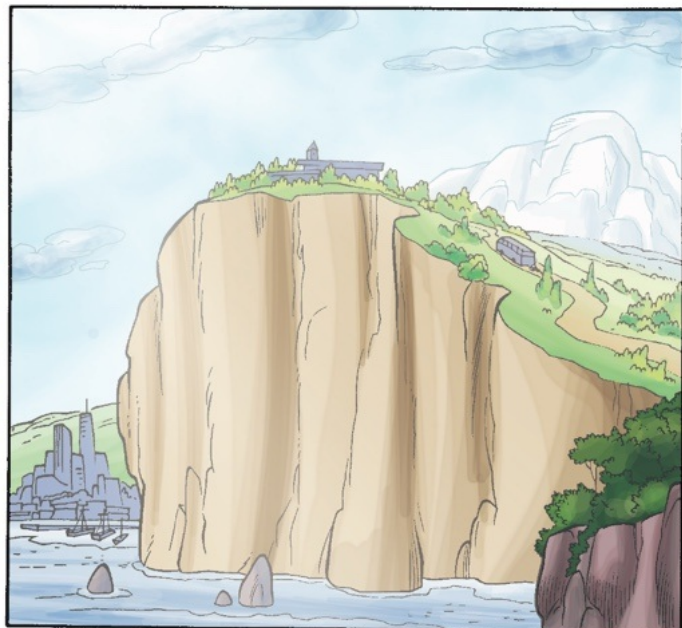
So Near, Yet So Far.

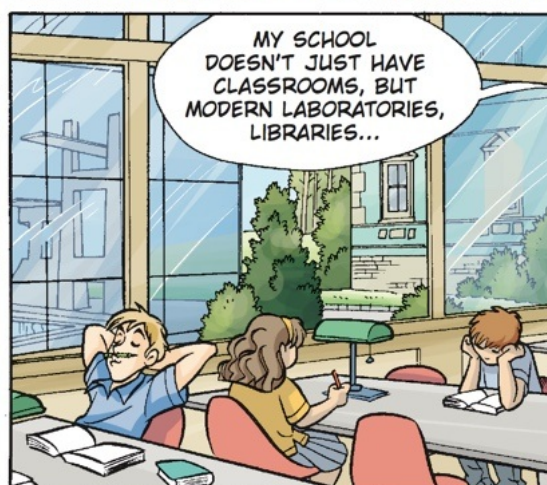
"Something inside Ari broke.
He became a different person."

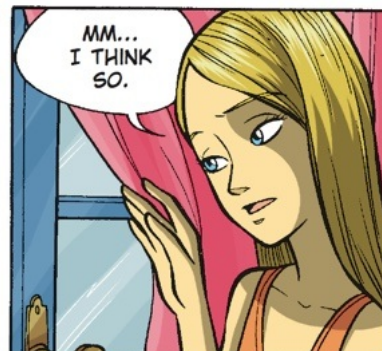
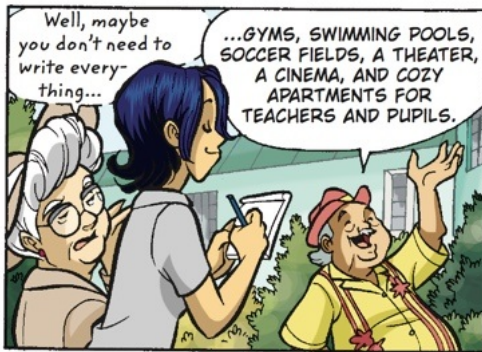












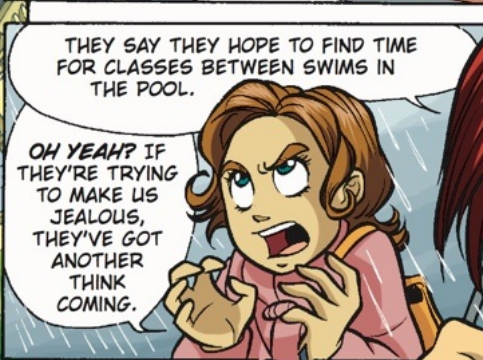


THE NEXT
DAY IN
HEATHERFIELD...

AN E-MAIL?
WHAT'D
IT SAY?



SOUNDS LIKE THEY'RE
HAVING A GREAT TIME.
HAY LIN WILL SEND YOU
A POSTCARD.



THEY SAY THEY HOPE TO FIND TIME
FOR CLASSES BETWEEN SWIMS IN
THE POOL.

OH YEAH? IF
THEY'RE TRYING
TO MAKE US
JEALOUS,
THEY'VE GOT
ANOTHER
THINK
COMING.



WE'LL GET
BY JUST FINE
WITHOUT THEM.
THEY CAN KEEP
THEIR POOL.
I DON'T NEED
TO GO TO THE
OTHER SIDE
OF THE WORLD
TO SPLASH
AROUND!



SHAWAASH



UM...



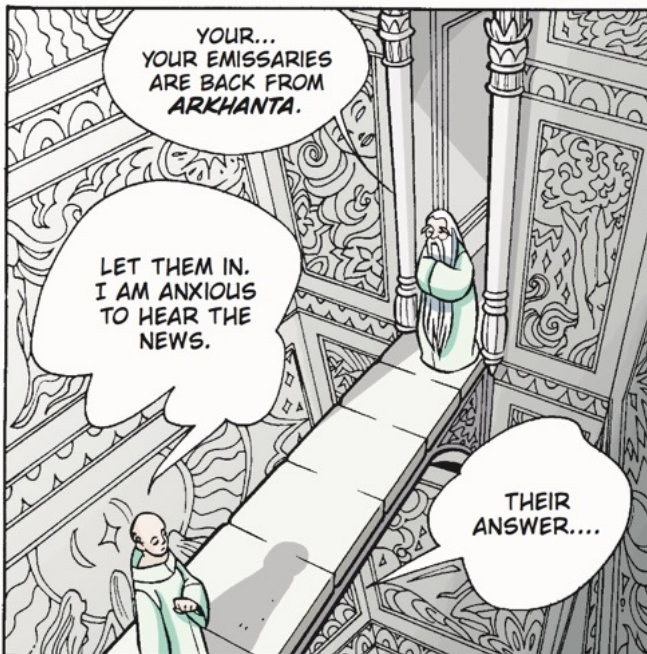
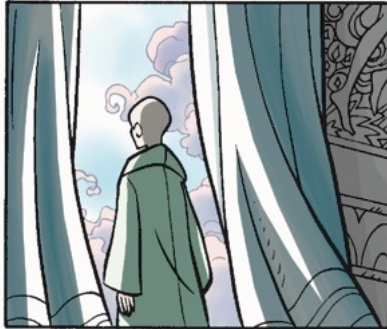
YOU CAN CRY, IF YOU WANT TO...
WITH ALL THIS RAIN, NOBODY WILL
NOTICE A FEW *TEARS*.

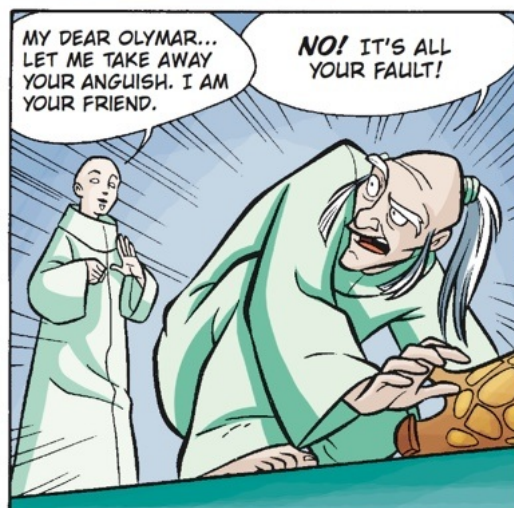
WILL...
I WANT TO BE ALONE
WITH MY DIGNIFIED
PAIN, PLEASE.

Far from Heatherfield
and Redstone, far from
everything that is known,
there's a secret and
mysterious place.

A place called Kandrakar.

Right at the center
of infinity.



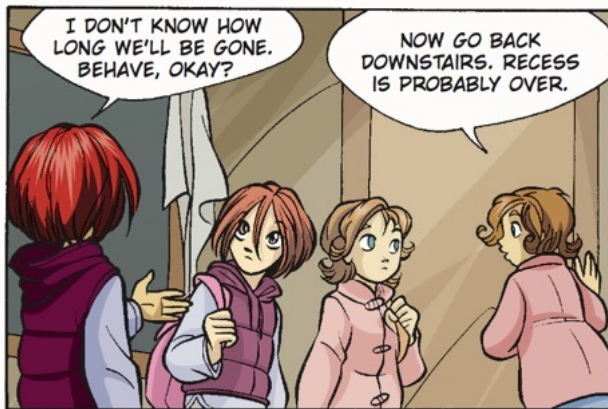








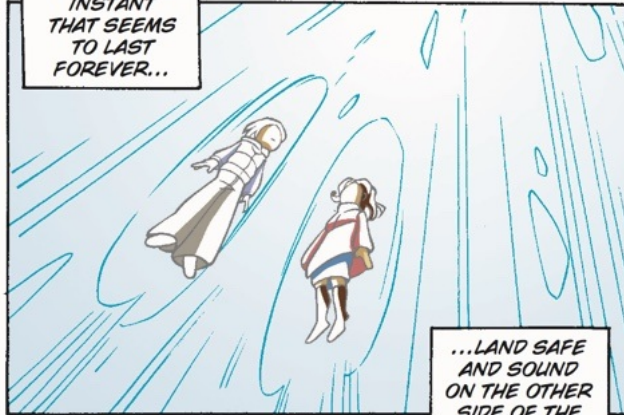
*REMEMBER W.I.T.C.H. #23?



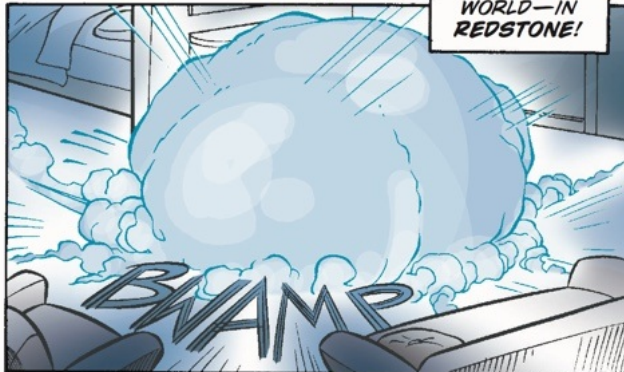
THANKS
TO THE
TELEPOR-
TATION
SPELL,
WILL AND
IRMA
LEAVE
HEATHER-
FIELD...



...AND
AFTER AN
INSTANT
THAT SEEMS
TO LAST
FOREVER...



...LAND SAFE
AND SOUND
ON THE OTHER
SIDE OF THE
WORLD—IN
REDSTONE!



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We did it!

You were worried
too, huh?



The girls are still
sleeping.

Rooon
zzz
Rooon

Listen to
'em snore! I bet that's
Cornelia. She looks so classy,
but she sounds like a trombone.

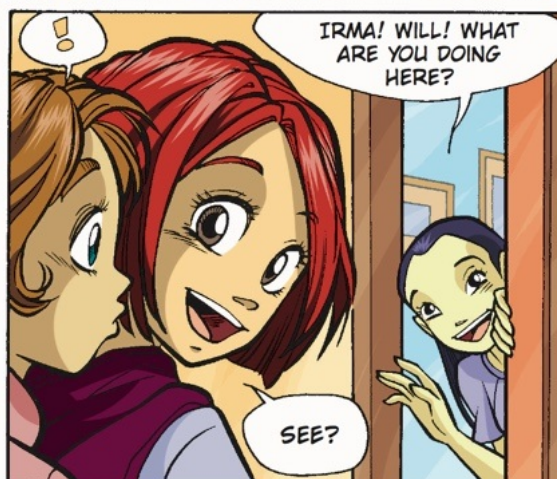
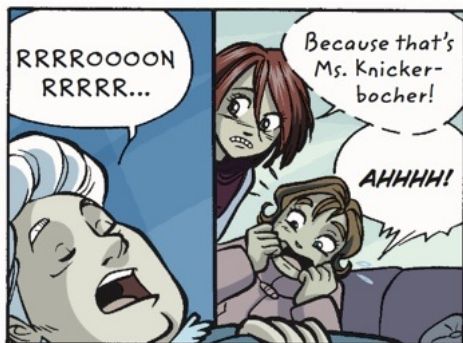


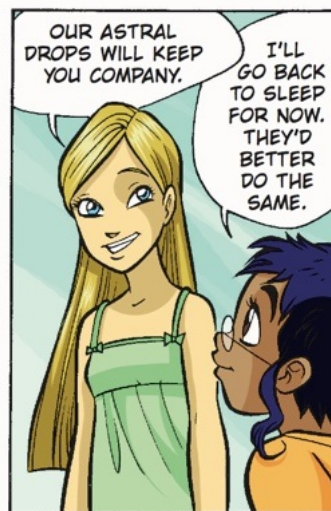
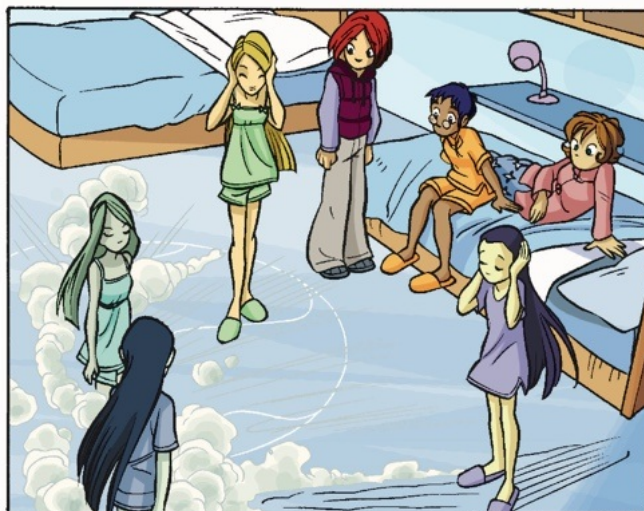
Man, she's louder than my
dad. I'll hit her with a pillow.
That'll wake her!



I think that's a
terrible idea.









SADLY, THINGS
HAVE DETERIORATED,
AND OUR WORST FEAR
HAS BECOME **PAINFUL
REALITY.**

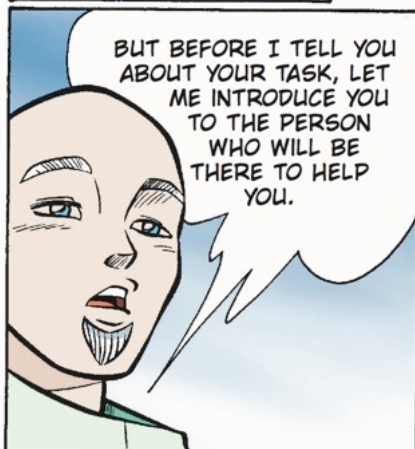


THANK
YOU FOR
PROMPTLY
ANSWERING
MY CALL,
GUARDIANS.

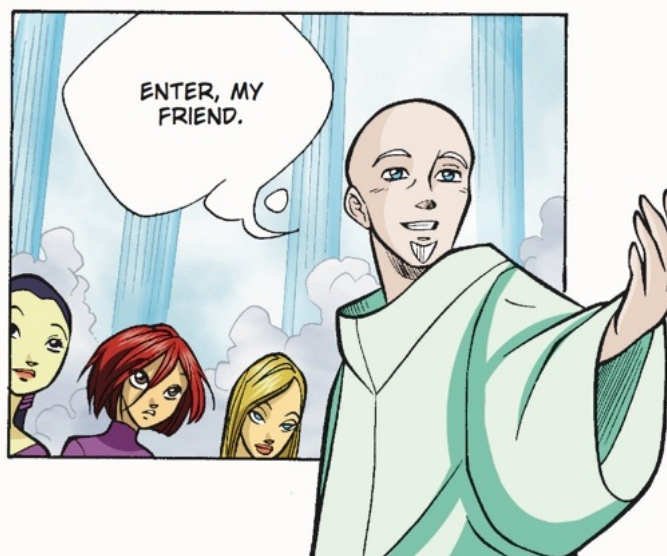
MY AMBASSADORS'
MISSION FAILED, AND
NOW KANDRAKAR'S
DESTINY IS IN
YOUR HANDS.



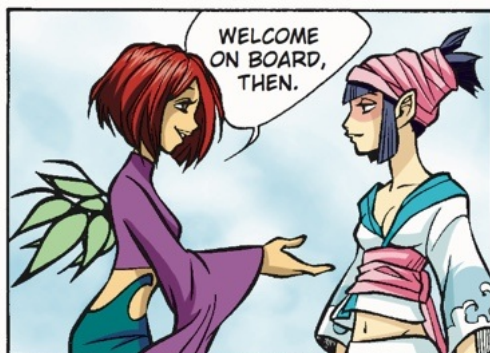
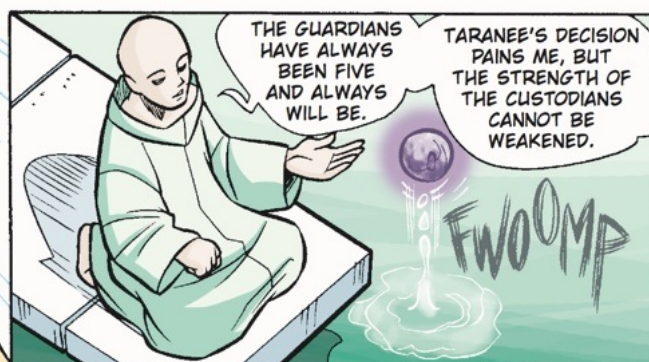
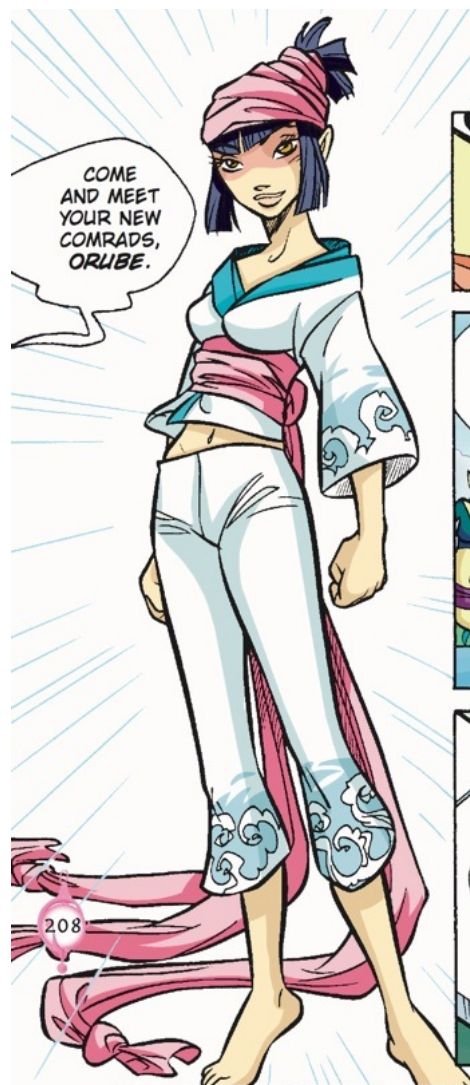
HERE
COMES
TROUBLE...

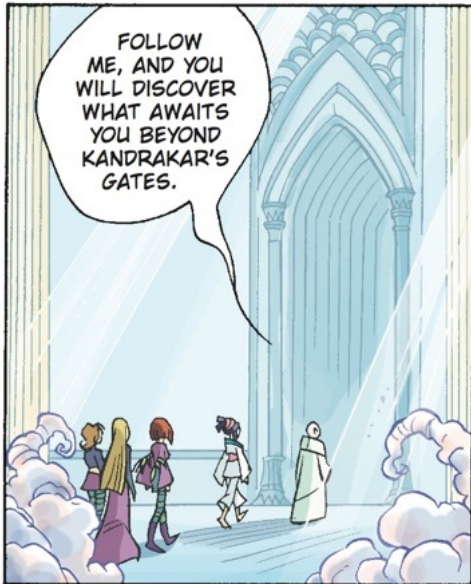


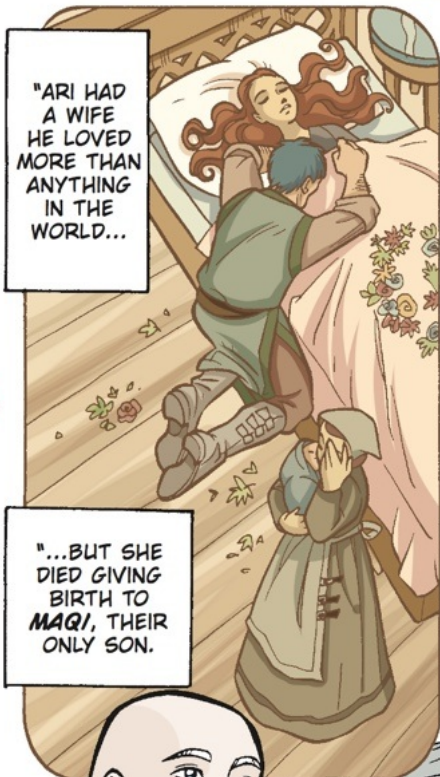
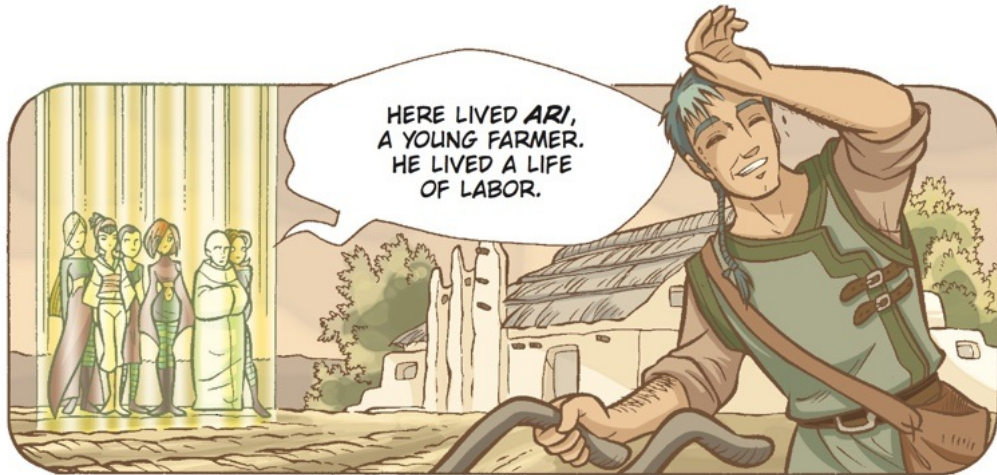
BUT BEFORE I TELL YOU
ABOUT YOUR TASK, LET
ME INTRODUCE YOU
TO THE PERSON
WHO WILL BE
THERE TO HELP
YOU.



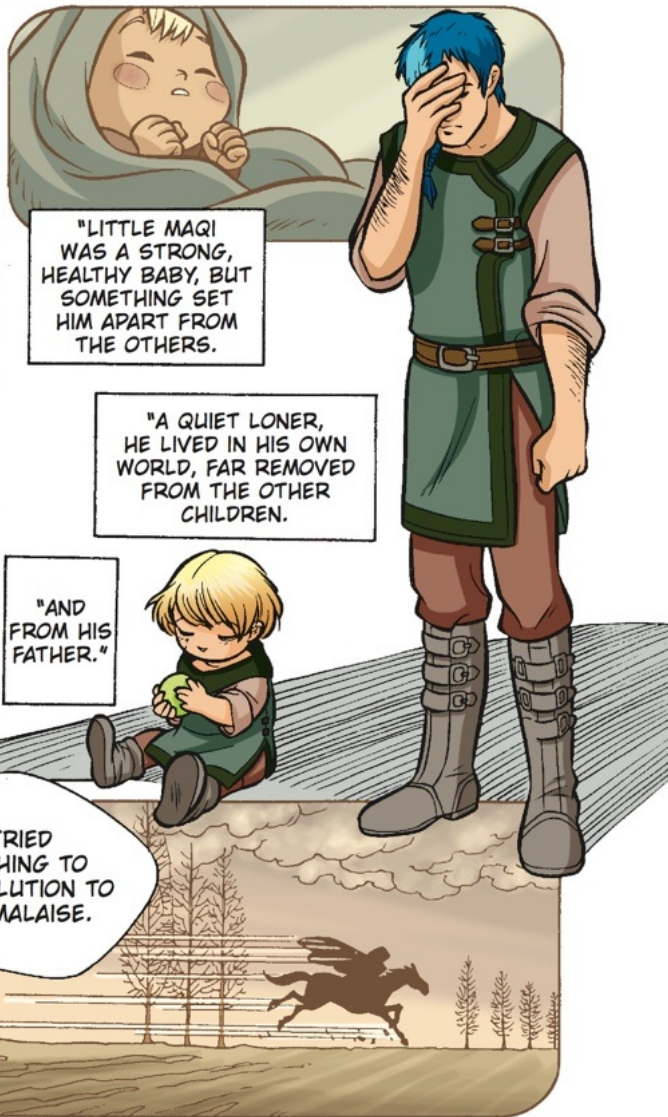
ENTER, MY
FRIEND.







"...BUT SHE DIED GIVING BIRTH TO MAQI, THEIR ONLY SON."



"LITTLE MAQI WAS A STRONG, HEALTHY BABY, BUT SOMETHING SET HIM APART FROM THE OTHERS."

"A QUIET LONER, HE LIVED IN HIS OWN WORLD, FAR REMOVED FROM THE OTHER CHILDREN."



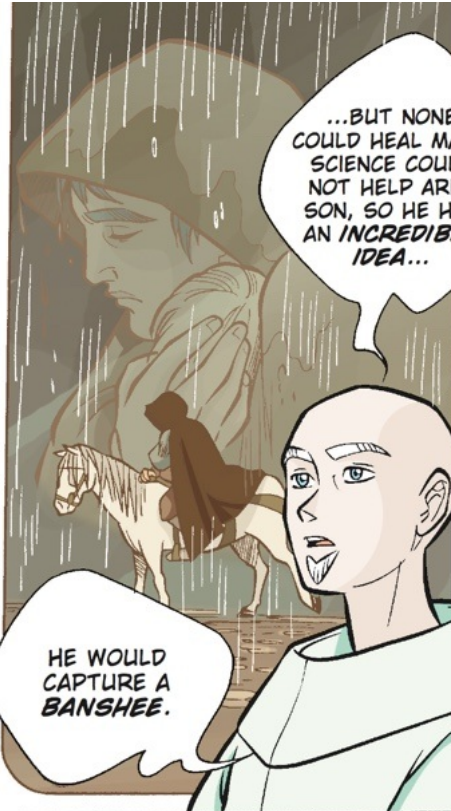
ARI TRIED EVERYTHING TO FIND A SOLUTION TO MAQI'S MALAISE.

"HE ASKED
FOR THE HELP
OF EVERY
WISE MAN IN
ARKHANTA,
VISITING
SCHOLARS,
AND
DOCTORS..."



...BUT NONE
COULD HEAL MAQI.
SCIENCE COULD
NOT HELP ARI'S
SON, SO HE HAD
AN **INCREDIBLE**
IDEA...

HE WOULD
CAPTURE A
BANSHEE.



OH!

YOU KNOW WHAT
A BANSHEE IS?



NO!

THEN WHY
DID YOU SAY
"OH"?



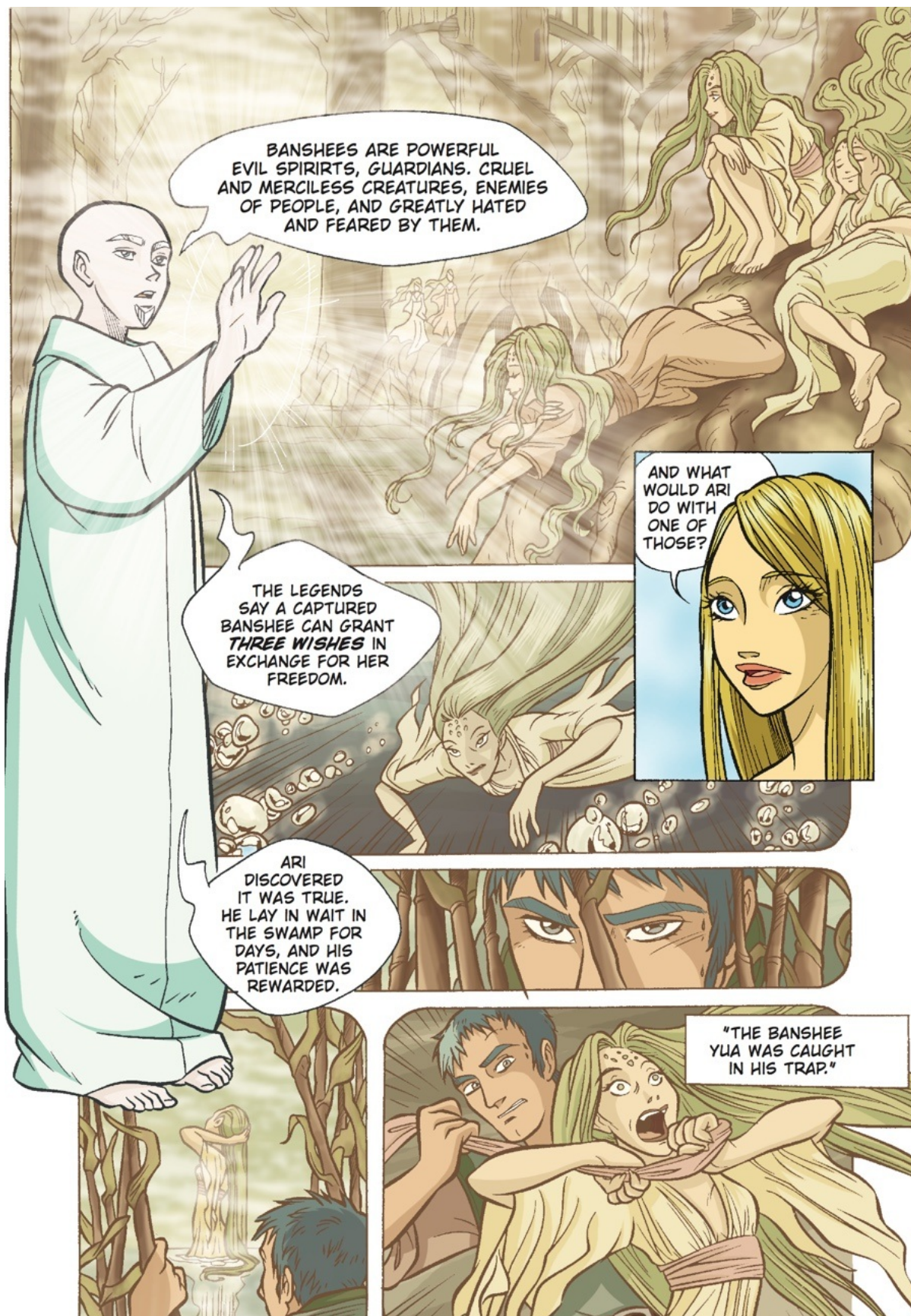
SEEMED LIKE THE
RIGHT THING TO DO.

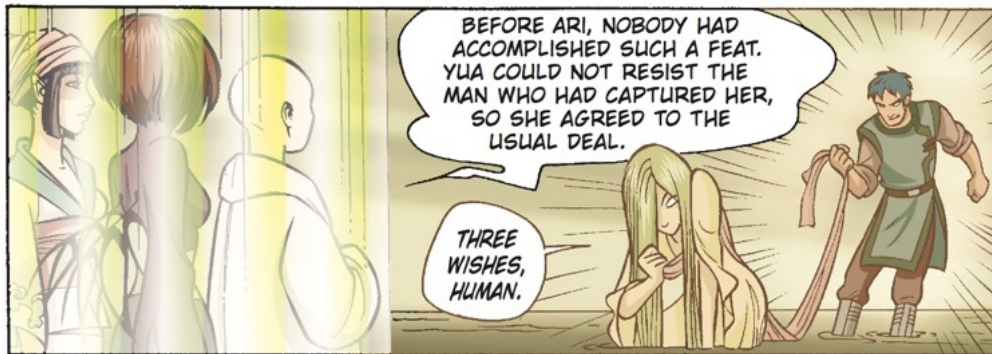


I LIKE HER LESS
AND LESS.

DON'T GO LOOKING FOR
TROUBLE,
IRMA.

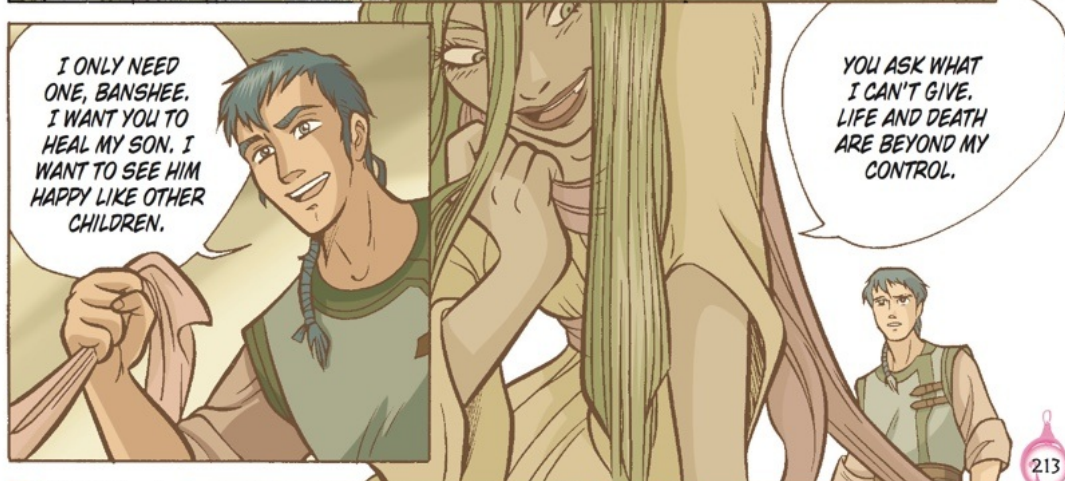






BEFORE ARI, NOBODY HAD ACCOMPLISHED SUCH A FEAT. YUA COULD NOT RESIST THE MAN WHO HAD CAPTURED HER, SO SHE AGREED TO THE USUAL DEAL.

THREE WISHES, HUMAN.



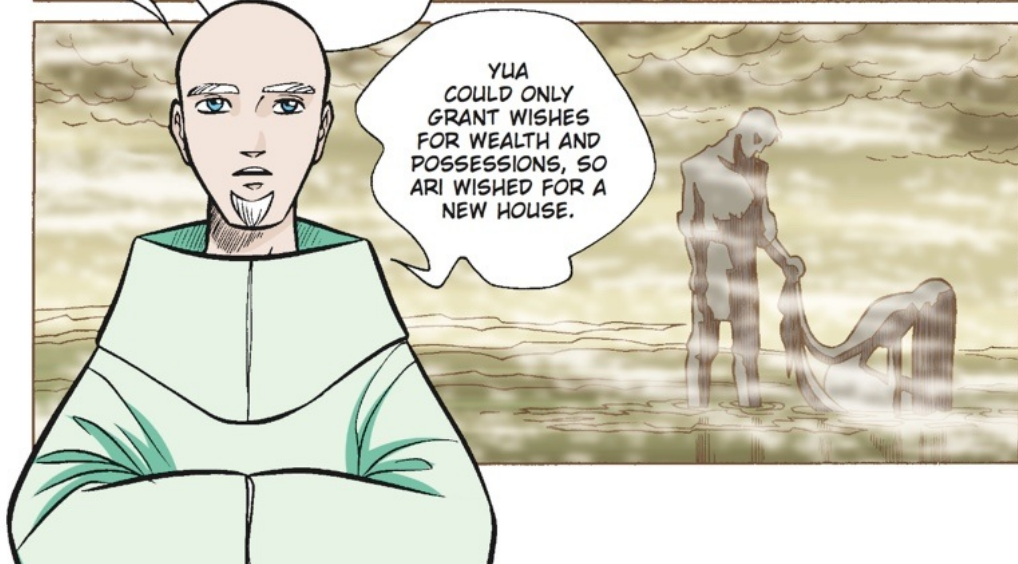
I ONLY NEED ONE, BANSHEE. I WANT YOU TO HEAL MY SON. I WANT TO SEE HIM HAPPY LIKE OTHER CHILDREN.

YOU ASK WHAT I CAN'T GIVE. LIFE AND DEATH ARE BEYOND MY CONTROL.



NOT EVEN THE BANSHEE'S MAGIC COULD HELP HIS MAQI.

ARI'S WORLD COLLAPSED.



YUA COULD ONLY GRANT WISHES FOR WEALTH AND POSSESSIONS, SO ARI WISHED FOR A NEW HOUSE.



"THE **SCARLET STRONGHOLD**, A HUGE, WONDERFUL PALACE WHERE MAQI COULD LIVE IN PEACE."



HIS SECOND WISH WAS FOR MONEY TO BUY MAQI ANYTHING HE WANTED.

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AND HIS LAST WISH?

IT WAS THE BIGGEST.



YOU'LL BE FOREVER AT MY SERVICE, TO GRANT EVERY WISH I HAVE.

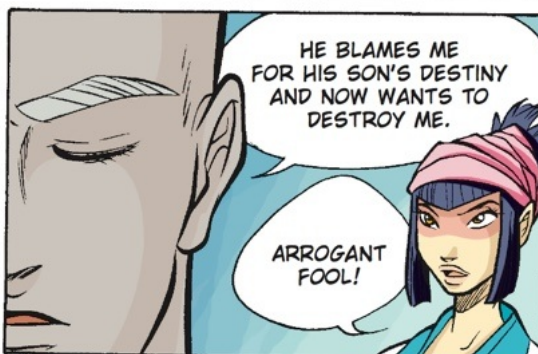
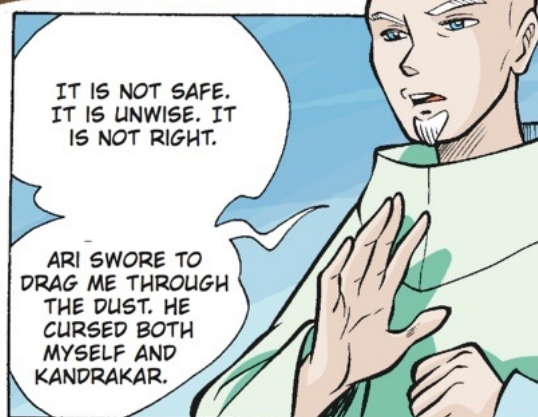
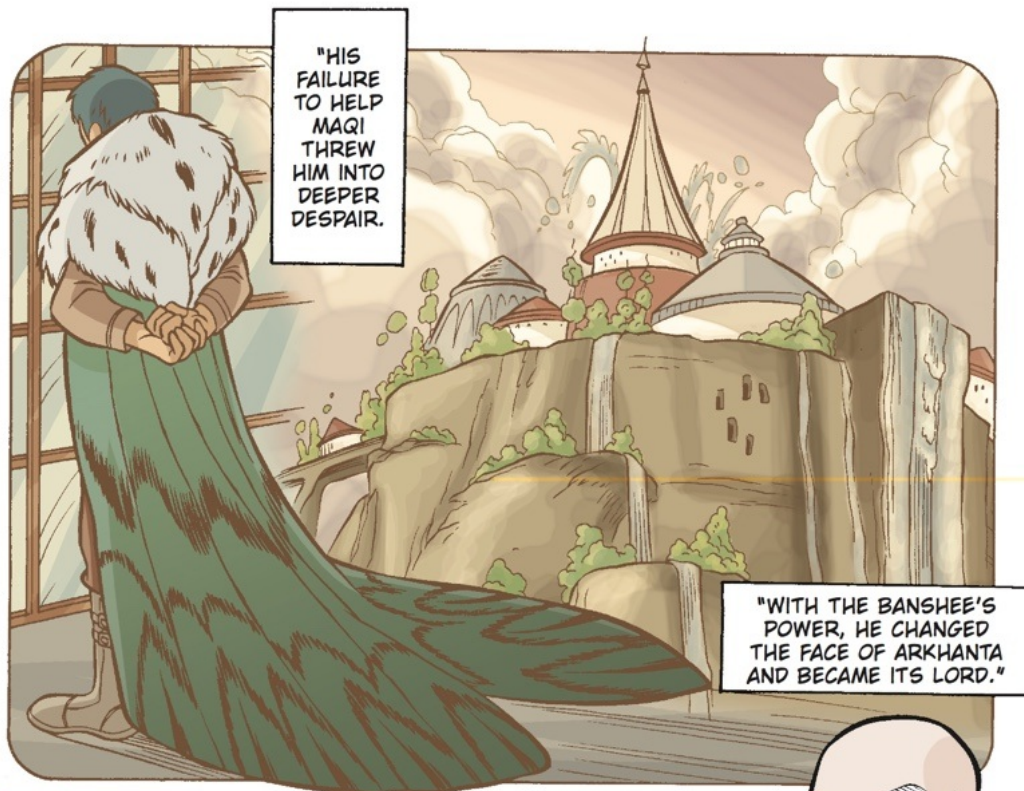
YOU... YOU TRICKED ME!

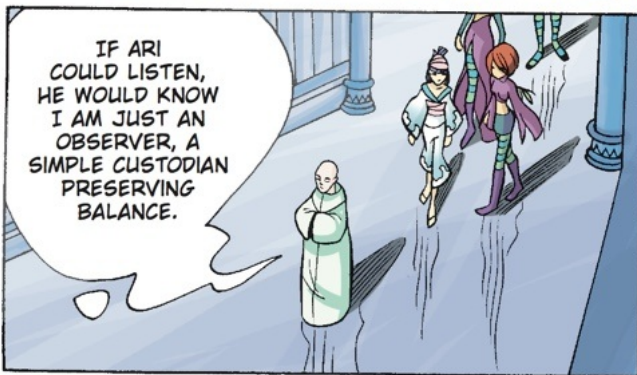


WRETCHED HUMAN. YOU TRICKED ME!

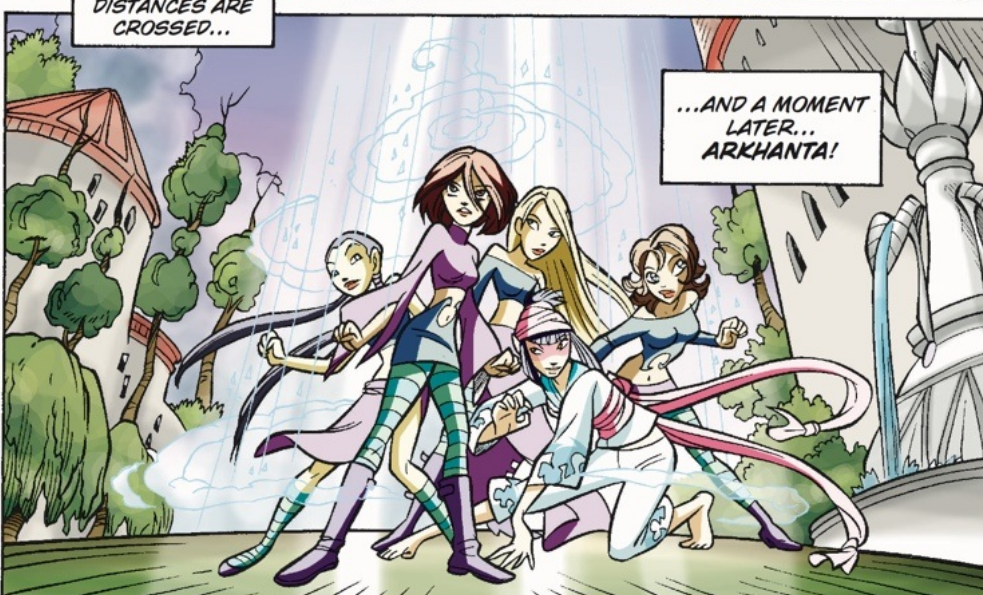
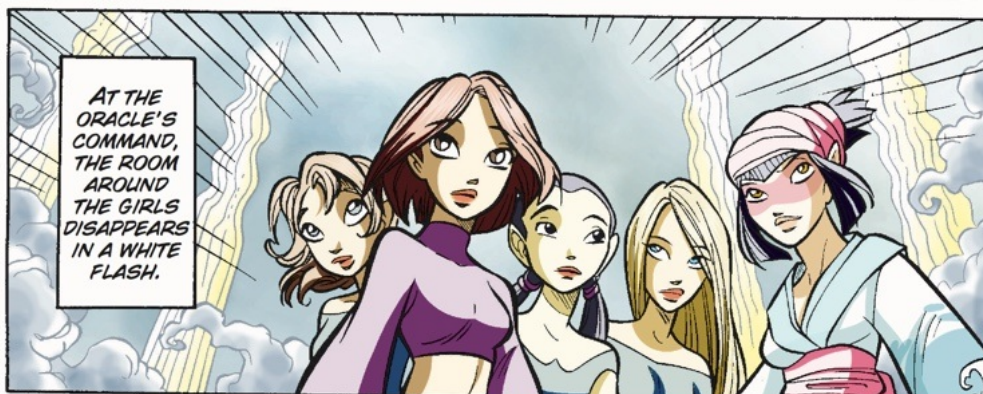
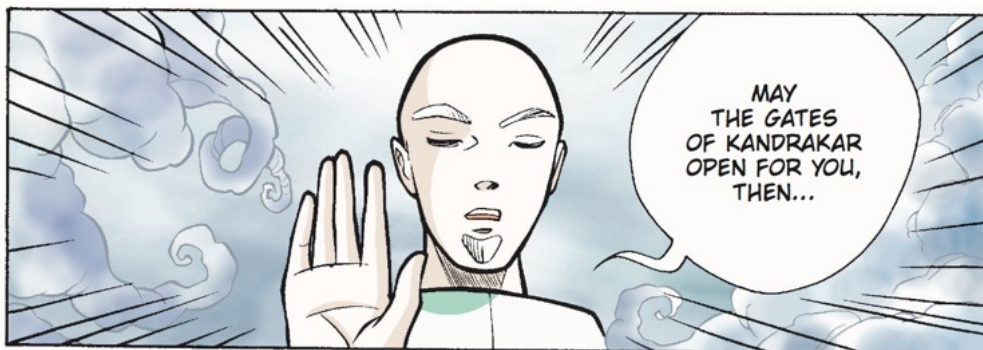
QUIET, YUA. THAT'S NOT HOW A SERVANT ADDRESSES HER MASTER.

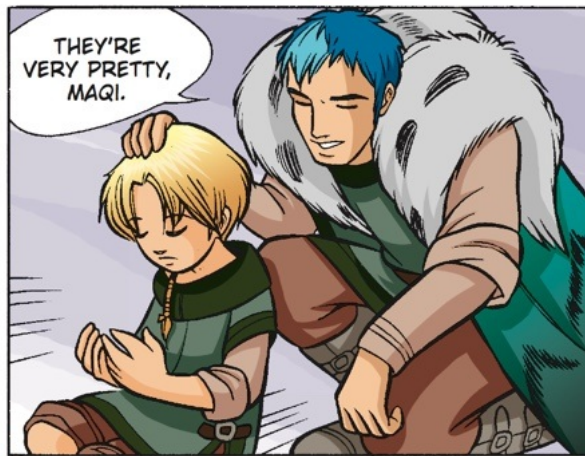
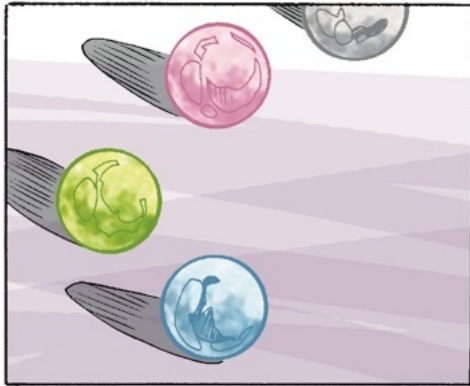
"THAT WAS WHEN ARI LOST ALL HOPE AND BECAME A DIFFERENT PERSON."

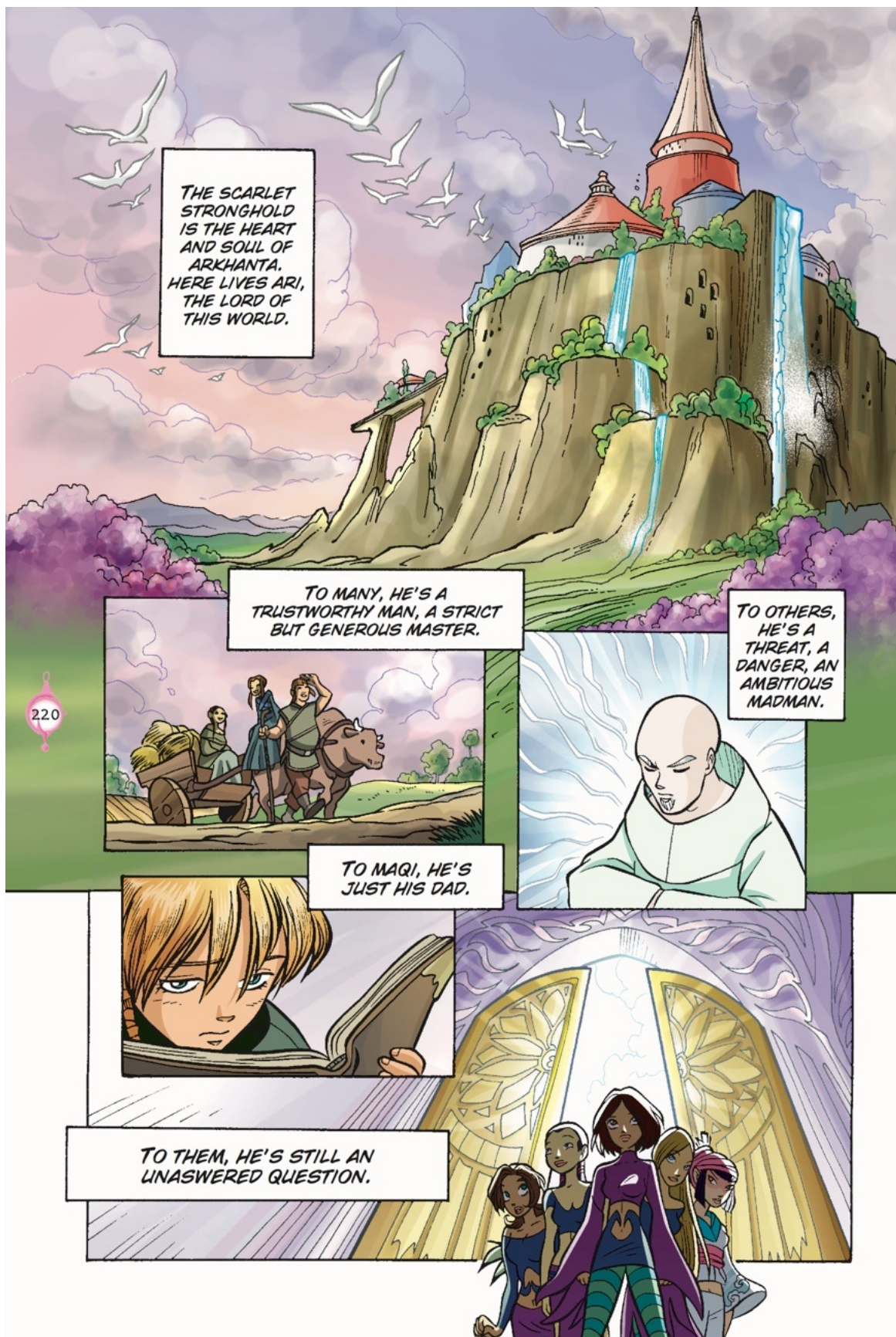












THE SCARLET
STRONGHOLD
IS THE HEART
AND SOUL OF
ARKHANTA.
HERE LIVES ARI,
THE LORD OF
THIS WORLD.

TO MANY, HE'S A
TRUSTWORTHY MAN, A STRICT
BUT GENEROUS MASTER.

TO OTHERS,
HE'S A
THREAT, A
DANGER, AN
AMBITIOUS
MADMAN.

TO MAQI, HE'S
JUST HIS DAD.

TO THEM, HE'S STILL AN
UNANSWERED QUESTION.



SO
THAT'S OUR
PLAN TO TAKE
ON ARI?

NOT
CONVINCED?
IT'S PRETTY
STRAIGHT-
FORWARD.



WE GO IN AND
ASK HIM TO
SURRENDER.

AND IF WE
DON'T LIKE
HIS ANSWER,
WE KNOCK
HIM AROUND
A BIT.



THAT'S
RIDICULOUS.
WHAT MAKES
YOU THINK HE'LL
LISTEN TO YOU
AFTER REJECTING
THE ORACLE'S
AMBASSADORS?



BECAUSE
WE'RE
PRETTIER!

YOU SHOULD
TAKE THINGS MORE
SERIOUSLY, GIRL!

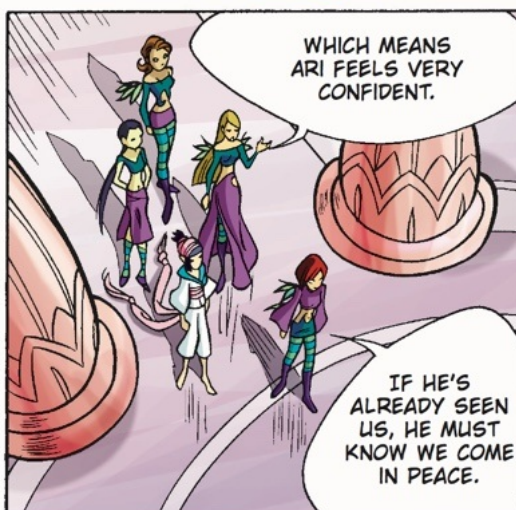
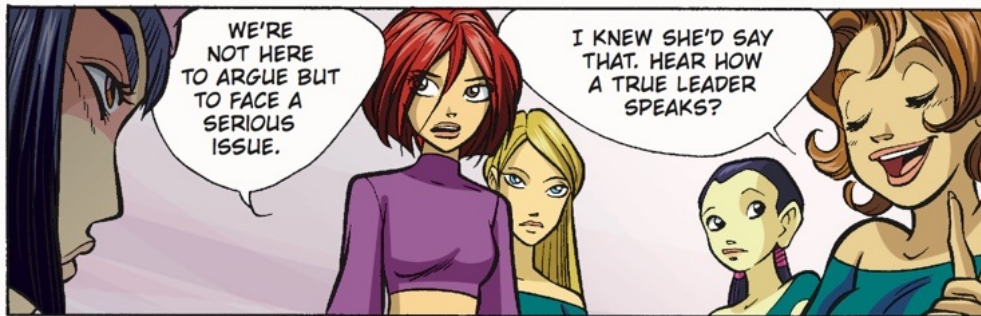
MY NAME IS
IRMA!

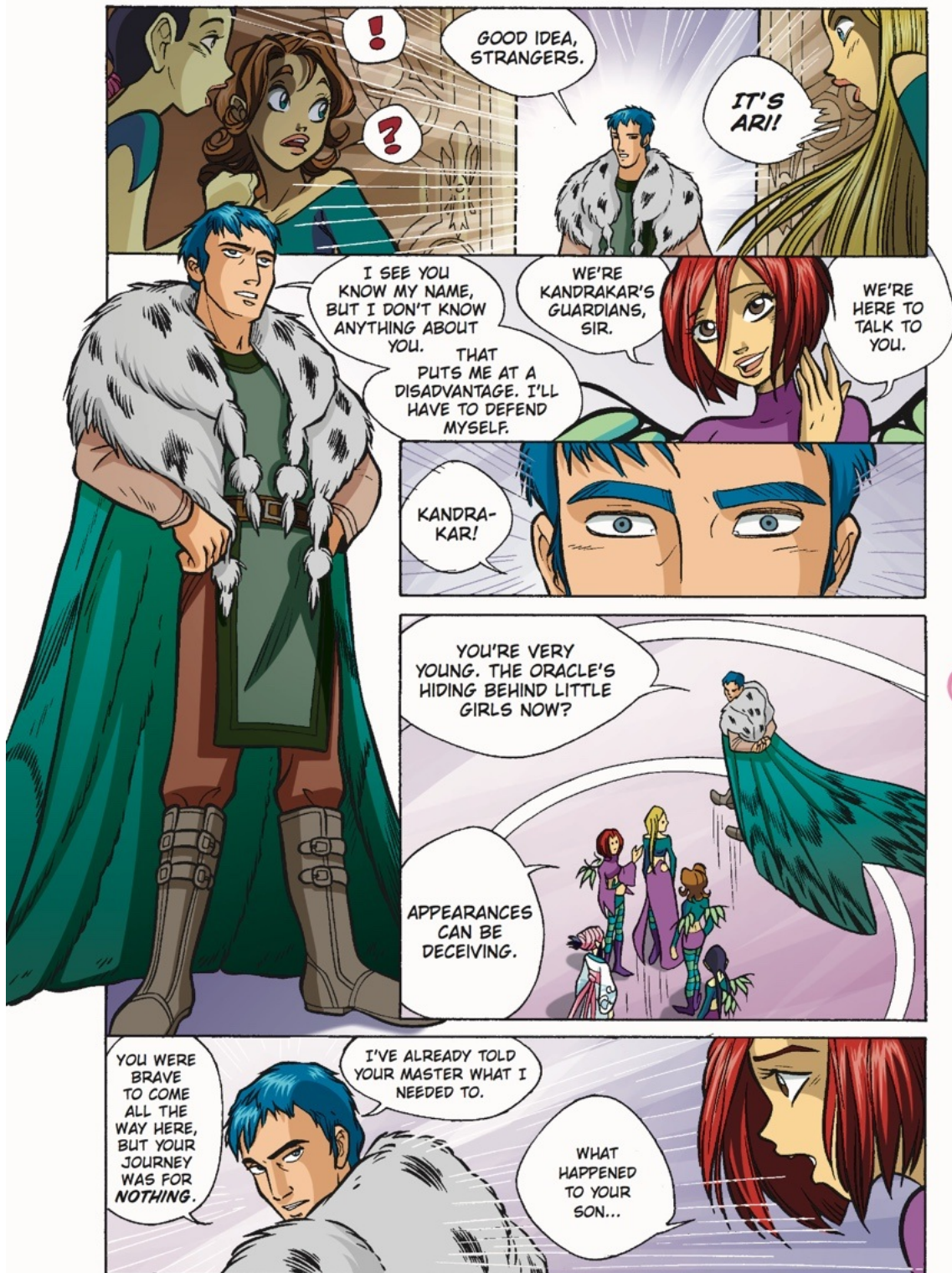
AND MINE IS
ORUBE!



NICE NAME,
FOR A CAT!











THE ORACLE IS UNWORTHY
TO SIT ON THE HIGHEST
THRONE IN KANDRAKAR.

THAT'S WHY I'LL
DRAG HIM THROUGH THE DIRT.
I HAVE THE POWER TO DO IT, AND
**YOU CAN BE SURE
I WILL!**

NOW LEAVE AND
CONSIDER YOURSELF
LUCKY TO DO SO
UPRIGHT.

WELL, YOU
MADE YOUR MOVE.
NOW WHAT?

YEAH...
NOW WHAT?

NOW THE TIME
FOR WORDS
IS OVER!

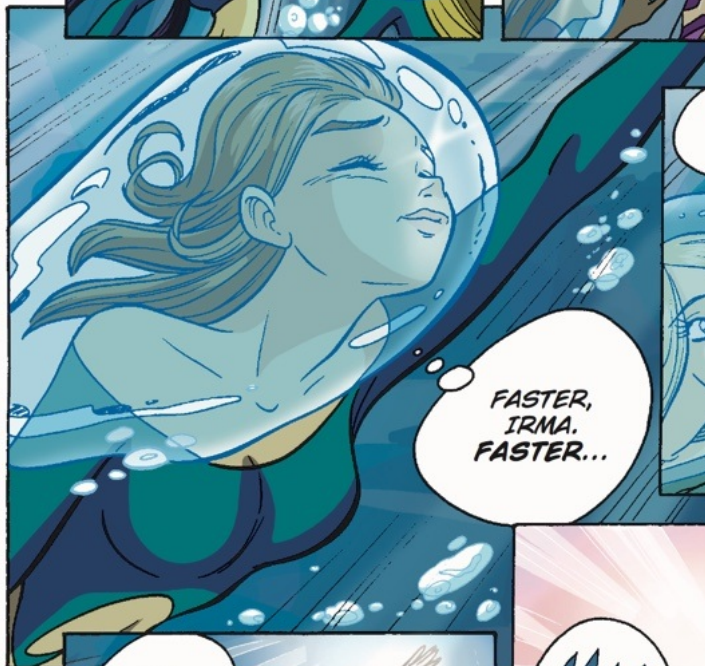
**TURN AND FACE ME,
ARI OF ARKHANTA!**

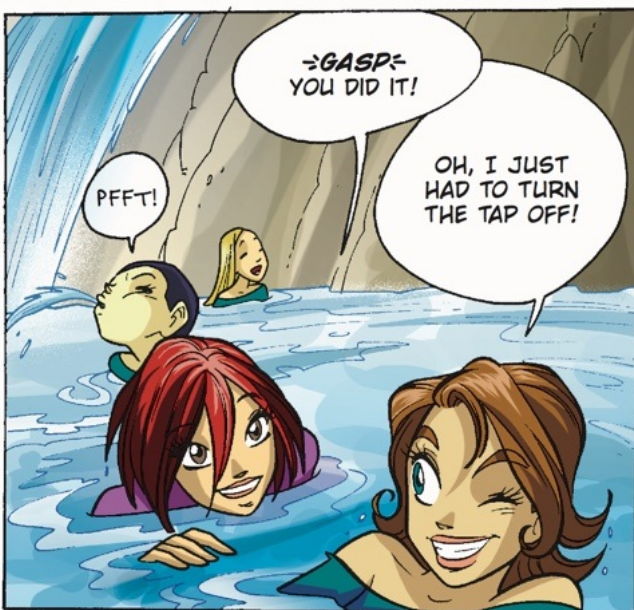
?



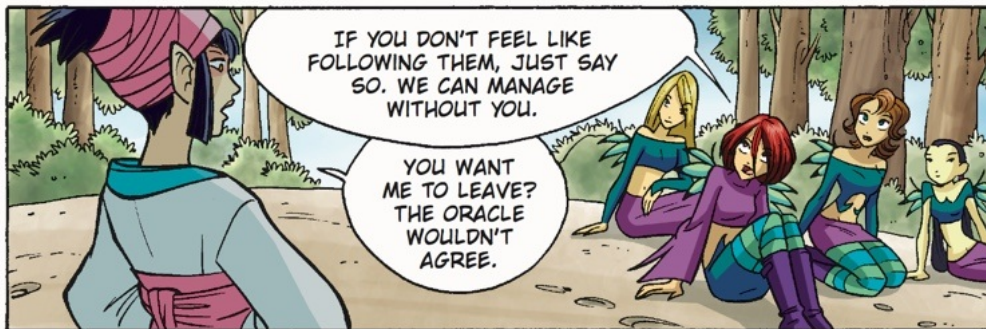












IF YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE FOLLOWING THEM, JUST SAY SO. WE CAN MANAGE WITHOUT YOU.

YOU WANT ME TO LEAVE? THE ORACLE WOULDN'T AGREE.

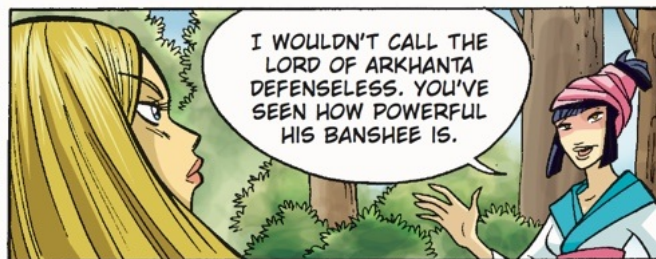


YEAH, WELL, I DON'T AGREE WITH THE ORACLE EITHER! IF YOU REALLY WANNA KNOW, I HATE WHAT HE ASKED US TO DO.



A TRUE GUARDIAN NEVER QUESTIONS KANDRAKAR'S ORDERS.

A TRUE GUARDIAN DOESN'T ATTACK A DEFENSELESS, DESPERATE MAN!



I WOULDN'T CALL THE LORD OF ARKHANTA DEFENSELESS. YOU'VE SEEN HOW POWERFUL HIS BANSHEE IS.



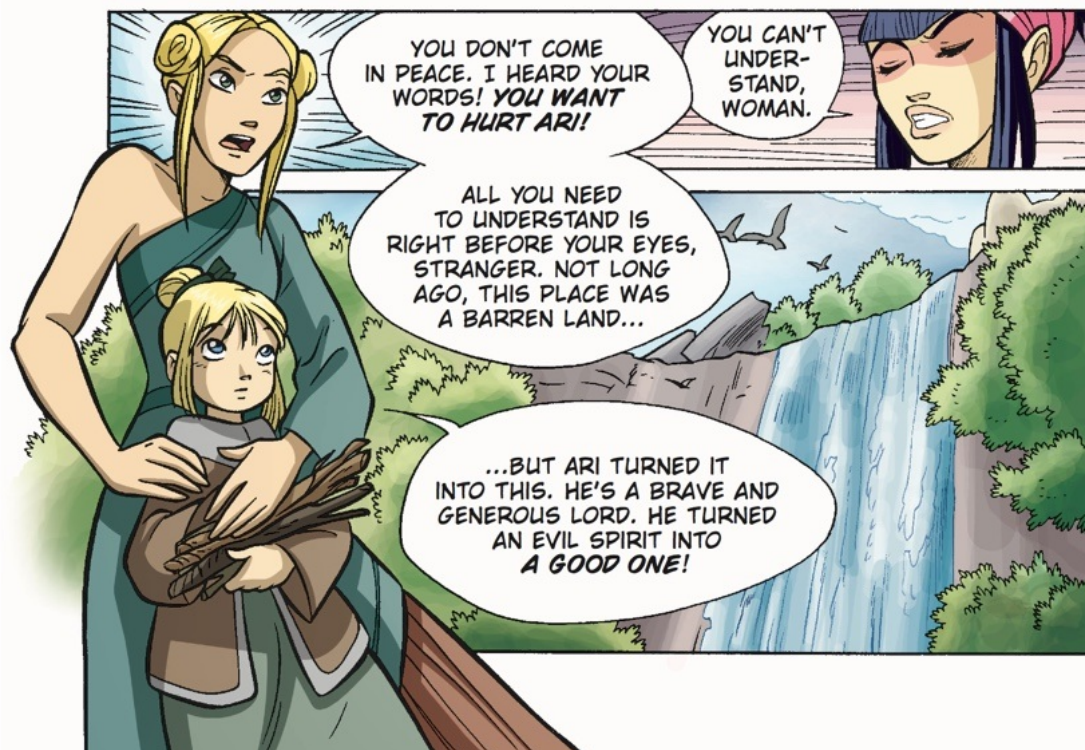
THAT CREATURE HAS NO LIMITS!

WHY DON'T WE FREE THE BANSHEE? WITHOUT HER, HE WON'T BE A THREAT.

THAT MIGHT WORK.



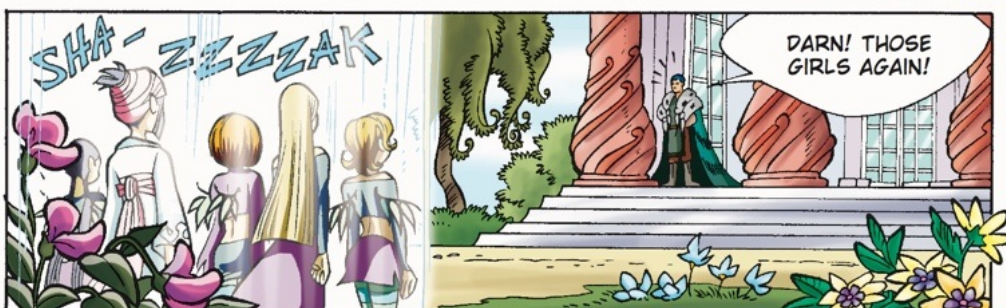
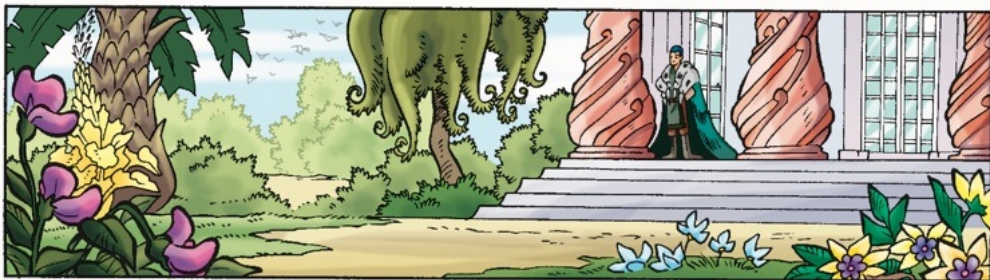
FORGET IT! A BANSHEE CAN **ONLY** BE FREED BY THE ONE WHO CAPTURED HER.

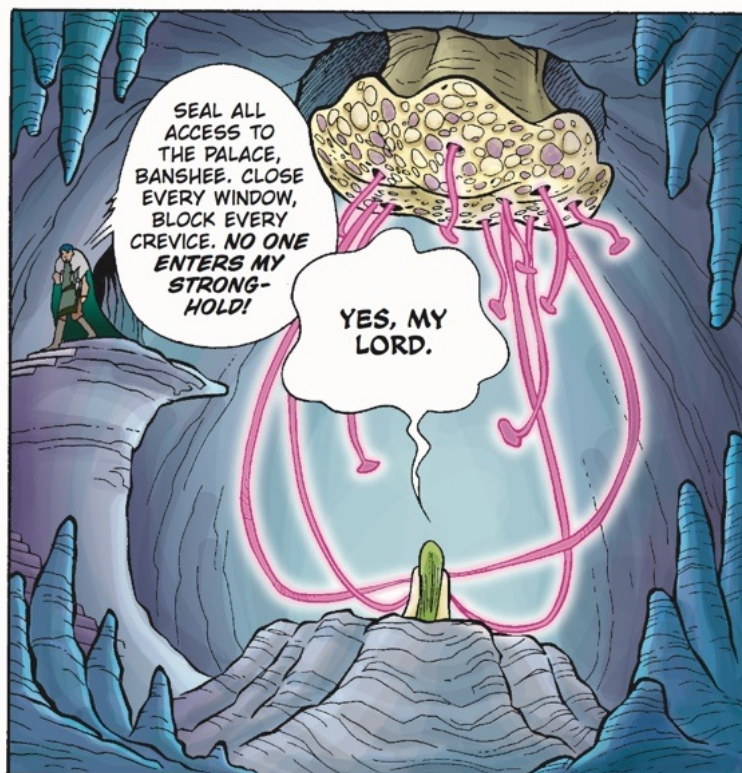




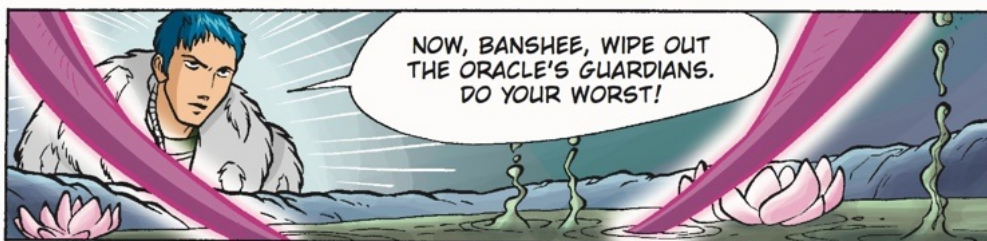
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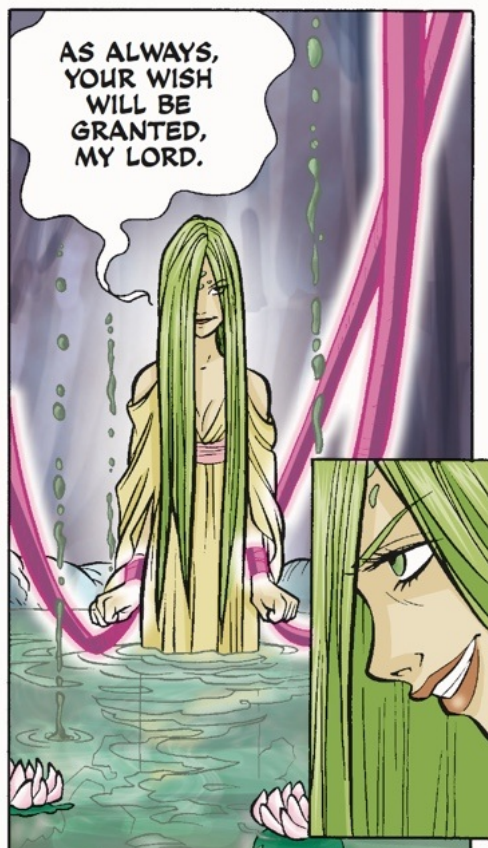




AND DON'T
DISAPPOINT
ME AGAIN!



PLIT
PLIT



AS ALWAYS,
YOUR WISH
WILL BE
GRANTED,
MY LORD.

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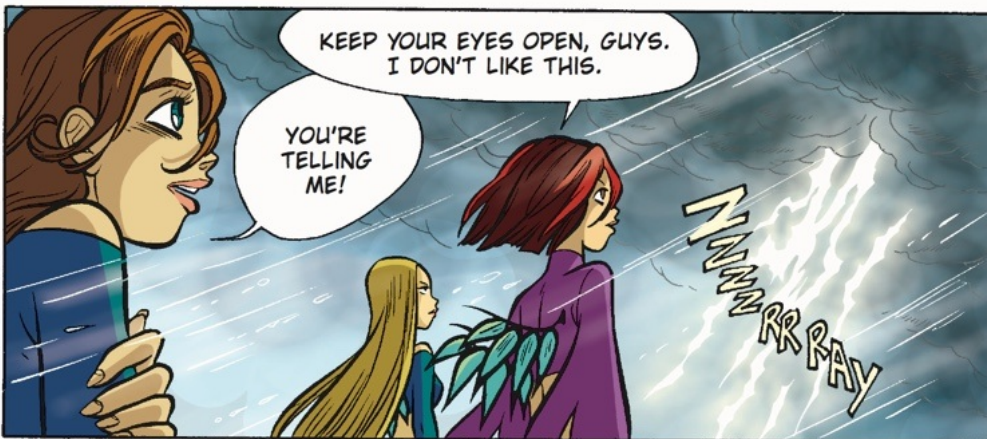


GREAT HOSPITALITY!
HE SEES US COMING AND
DOES THIS?

STOP
WHINING.
HE COULD'VE
DONE MUCH
WORSE.

BROOOOOM

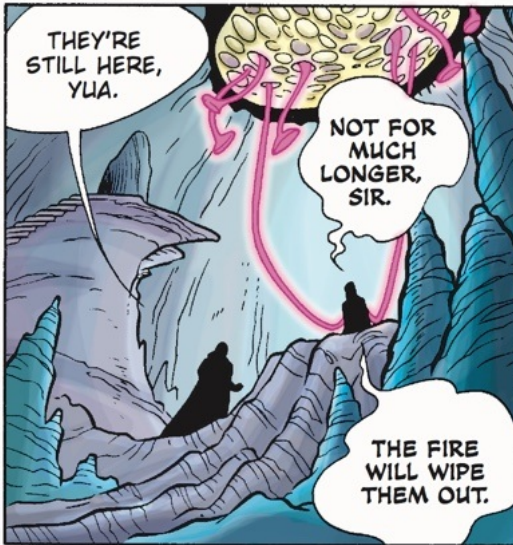
MAYBE
HE IS...



KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN, GUYS.
I DON'T LIKE THIS.

YOU'RE
TELLING
ME!

ZZZZZRRRAY





THESE FLAMES ARE
ALIVE, AND THEY HAVE
IT IN FOR US!



IF TARANEE WERE
HERE, SHE'D KNOW
WHAT TO DO!

TARANEE...



I KNOW THEY THINK
I'M A ROOKIE...THAT
THEY'RE BETTER
THAN ME...



...BUT NOW
THEY'LL SEE
I'M NOT
AFRAID OF
ANYTHING!

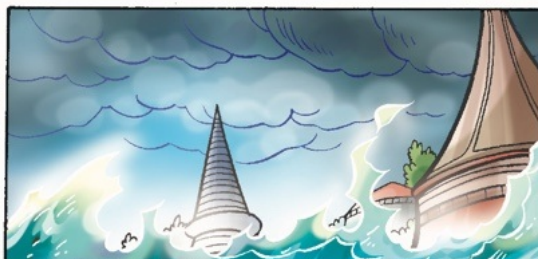
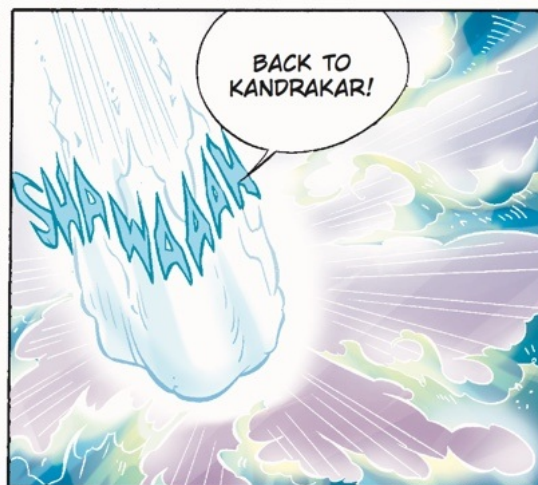


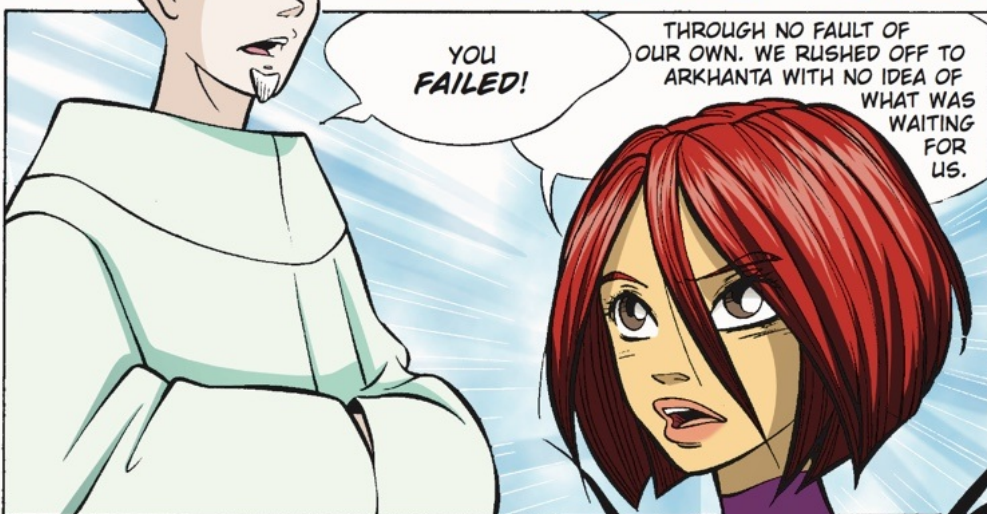
WHAT'S SHE
DOING? IS SHE
NUTS?

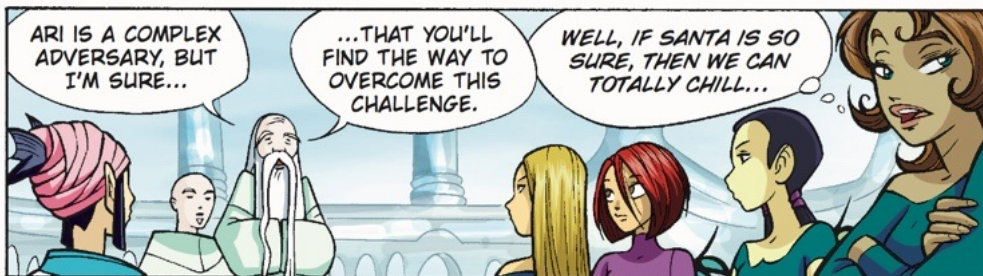
ORUBE!
MOVE!



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YOU WILL
HAVE TO LEARN
TO STAND
UNITED AND
WELCOME ORUBE
AS A
FRIEND...



AND PERHAPS YOU, ORUBE,
WILL HAVE TO SHOW GOOD
WILL AND OVERCOME
YOUR OWN **DOUBTS AND
RESENTMENT.**

I WILL,
ORACLE.



YOU JUST HAVE
TO GET TO **KNOW ONE
ANOTHER BETTER...**
AND I KNOW HOW YOU
CAN DO THAT.



TAKE
THIS.

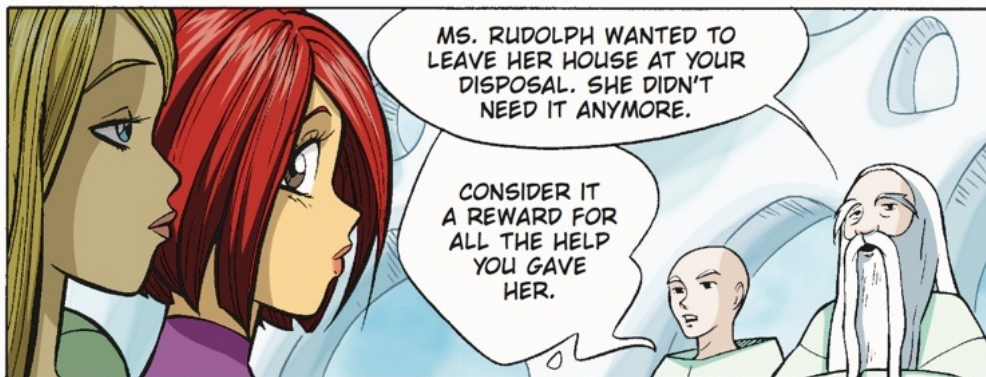


IT'S A
KEY.

NOT JUST
ANY KEY.
THIS OPENS
THE DOOR
OF A HOUSE
YOU KNOW
WELL.



IT'S THE KEY TO MS. **RUDOLPH'S**
HOUSE. BEFORE GOING BACK
TO MERIDIAN, YOUR TEACHER
GAVE IT TO TIBOR.



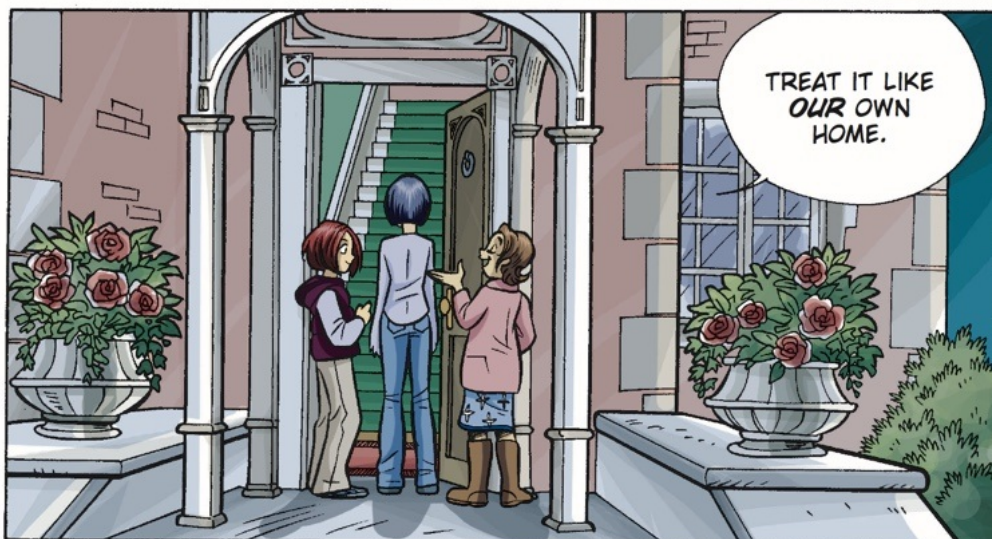
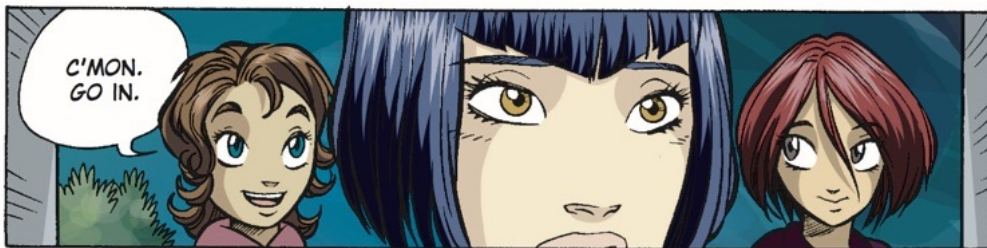
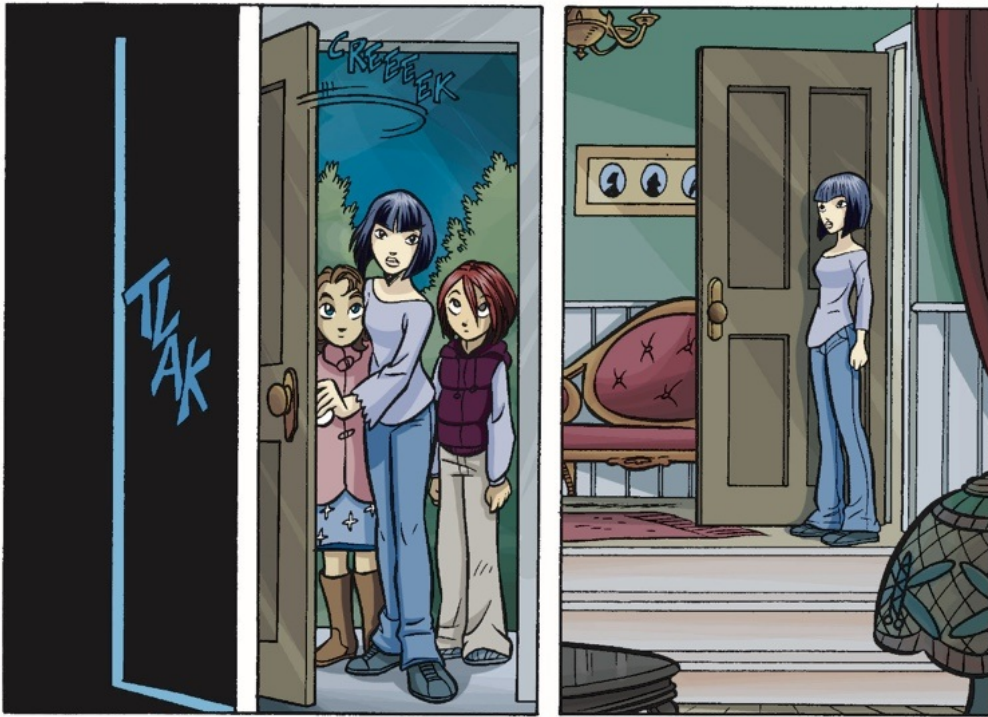


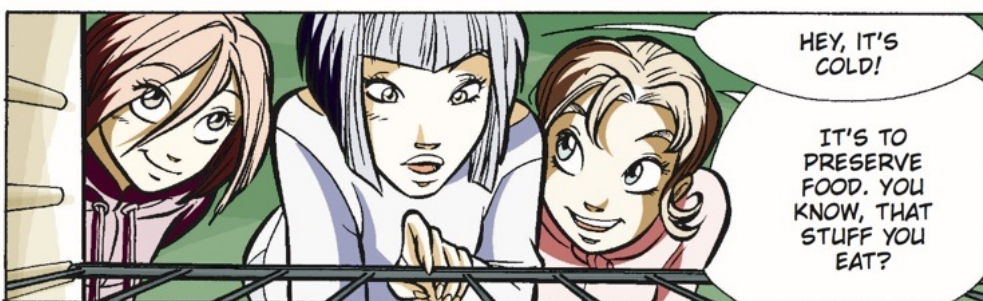
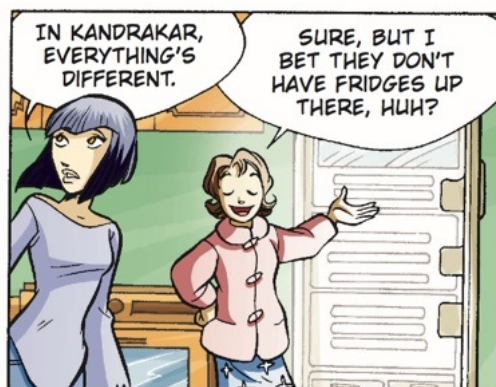
REDSTONE...



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THE END



Read on in Volume 8!



Ralph Sylla



Substitute Teacher

The new computer science substitute teacher at Sheffield Institute. He was brought in as a temporary replacement for the mysterious Mr. Bottlom.



Charming

Behind his handsome looks, charming Sylla hides a secret identity: He's a special agent tasked with investigating Will & Co., though they don't know that...



Super-detective

A colleague of Agents Maria Medina and Joel McTiennan (with whom Will, Irma, Taranee, Cornelia, and Hay Lin have already had dealings), Ralph Sylla is a very experienced detective.

Mystery Buff

Often embarking on dangerous undercover missions, Sylla specializes in unusual cases, revealing his passion for "mysteries." Detective Sylla is determined to discover W.I.T.C.H.'s secrets at all costs!



Orube

Who Is She?

Orube is a warrior from the distant world Basiliade. She was the favorite pupil of Luba, one of the most important members of the Congregation and the Custodian of the Droplets, who perished in a battle for W.I.T.C.H.'s and Caleb's lives in the dramatic days of the fight against Nerissa.



Powers

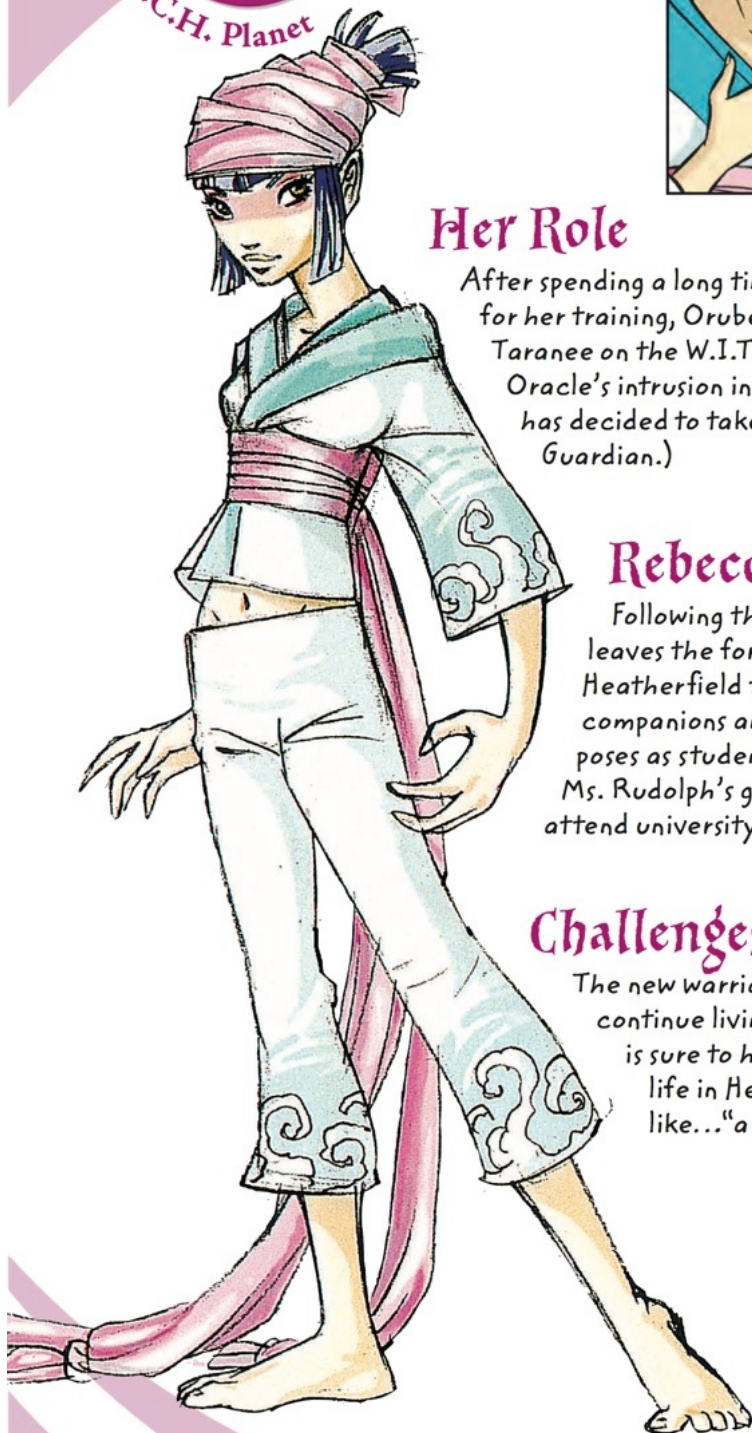
Orube doesn't have powers connected to the four elements, but she can rely on her strong magical energy and her perfect knowledge of every fighting technique — two qualities that make her an invincible warrior.



Temperament

Proud and strict, Orube faithfully follows her missions and the Oracle's orders. She knows how to control her emotions perfectly, and she fights fearlessly, facing any risk and never backing down.





Her Role

After spending a long time in Kandrakar's fortress for her training, Orube temporarily replaces Tarane on the W.I.T.C.H. team. (After the Oracle's intrusion into her private life, Tarane has decided to take a break from her role as a Guardian.)

Rebecca Rudolph

Following the Oracle's orders, Orube leaves the fortress and moves to Heatherfield to get to know her new companions and their world. Publicly, she poses as student Rebecca Rudolph, Ms. Rudolph's granddaughter, in order to attend university.

Challenges

The new warrior, with her catlike traits, will continue living in Ms. Rudolph's house and is sure to have some trouble adapting to life in Heatherfield, where she'll feel like... "a cat out of water!"



Part III. A Crisis on Both Worlds • Volume I



Series Created by Elisabetta Gnone
Comic Art Direction: Alessandro Barbucci, Barbara Canepa

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