



CAVE



THE ELESSCO MACHINE

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CAITLIN LIKE

2018

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THE BLESSED MACHINE #1

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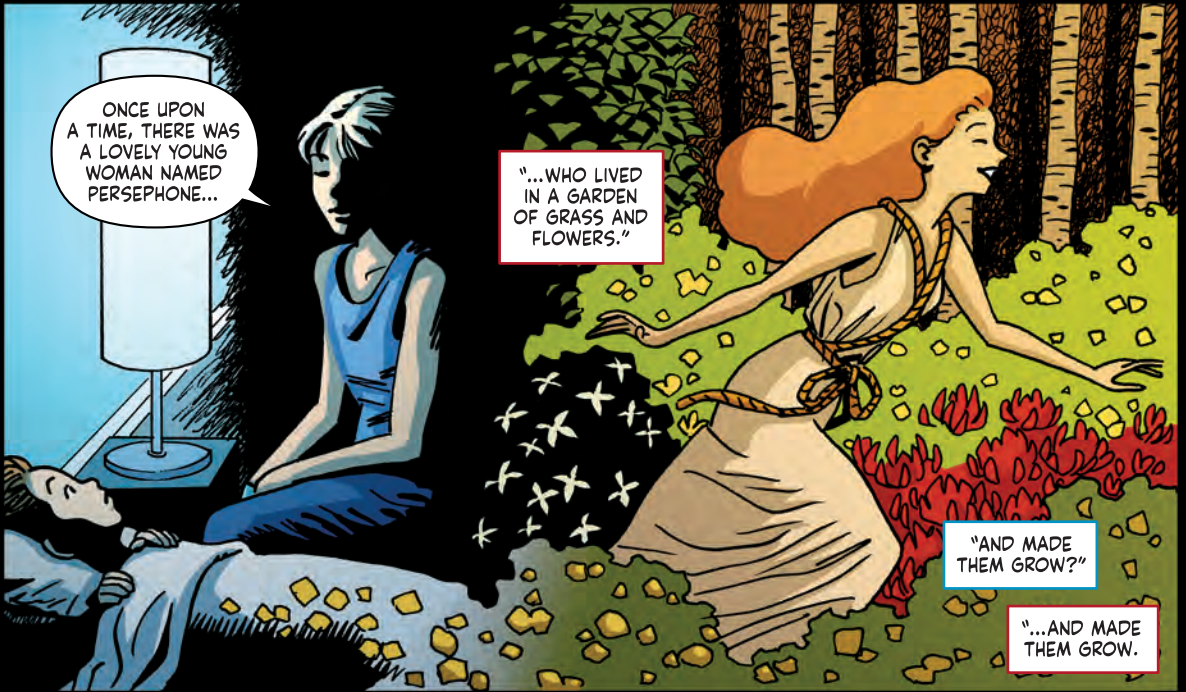






YOU'RE SAFE, HONEY. SHALL I TELL YOU A STORY? HOW ABOUT THE TALE OF PERSEPHONE?

O-O-KAY.



ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE WAS A LOVELY YOUNG WOMAN NAMED PERSEPHONE...

"...WHO LIVED IN A GARDEN OF GRASS AND FLOWERS."

"AND MADE THEM GROW?"

"...AND MADE THEM GROW."



"BUT ONE DAY, SHE WAS TAKEN BY THE DARK PRINCE, HADES..."



"...TO HIS UNDERWORLD KINGDOM. THE LAND OF THE DEAD!"

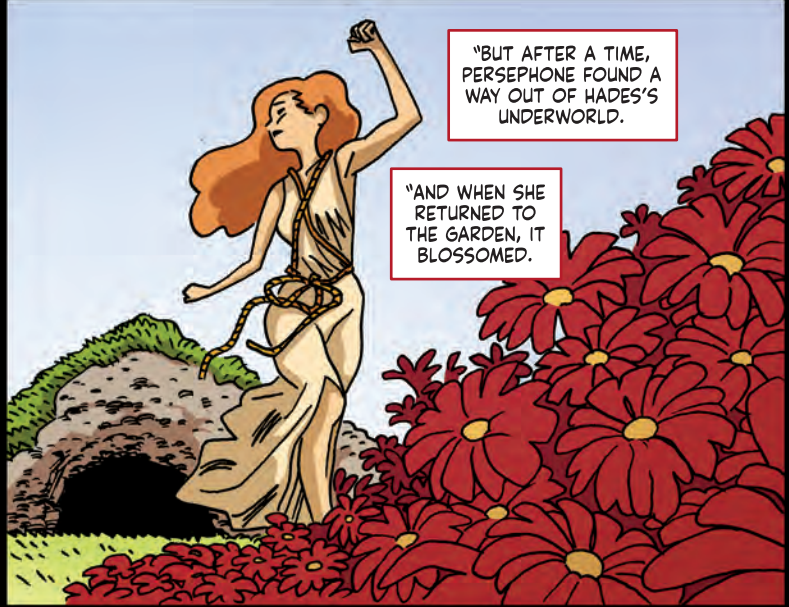
"OOOH."

"WITHOUT HER PRESENCE, THE GARDEN WITHERED."



"BUT AFTER A TIME, PERSEPHONE FOUND A WAY OUT OF HADES'S UNDERWORLD."

"AND WHEN SHE RETURNED TO THE GARDEN, IT BLOSSOMED."

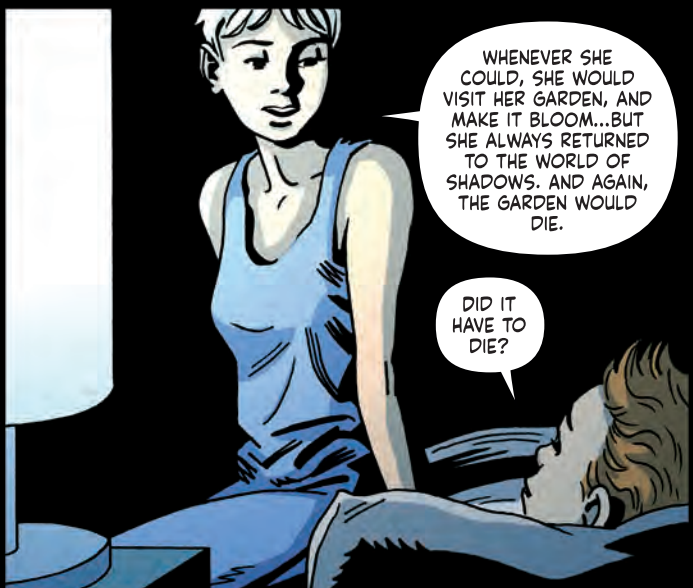


"HOWEVER, KNOWING THE DARK PRINCE WOULD ALWAYS SEEK HER OUT, SHE RETURNED AGAIN TO HIS KINGDOM."



WHENEVER SHE COULD, SHE WOULD VISIT HER GARDEN, AND MAKE IT BLOOM...BUT SHE ALWAYS RETURNED TO THE WORLD OF SHADOWS. AND AGAIN, THE GARDEN WOULD DIE.

DID IT HAVE TO DIE?

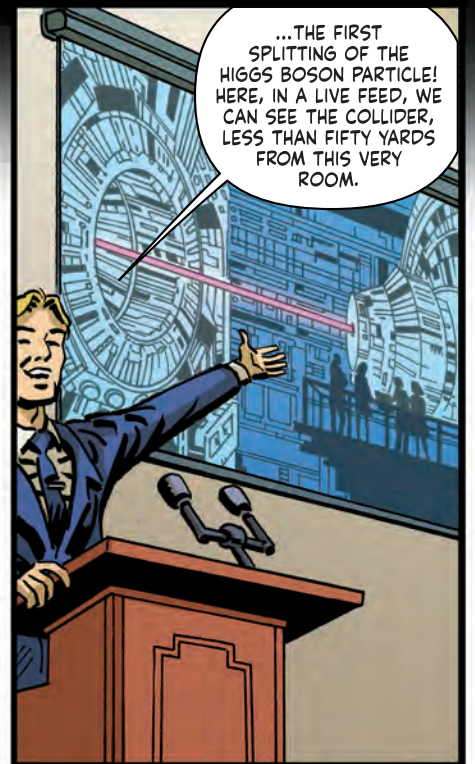
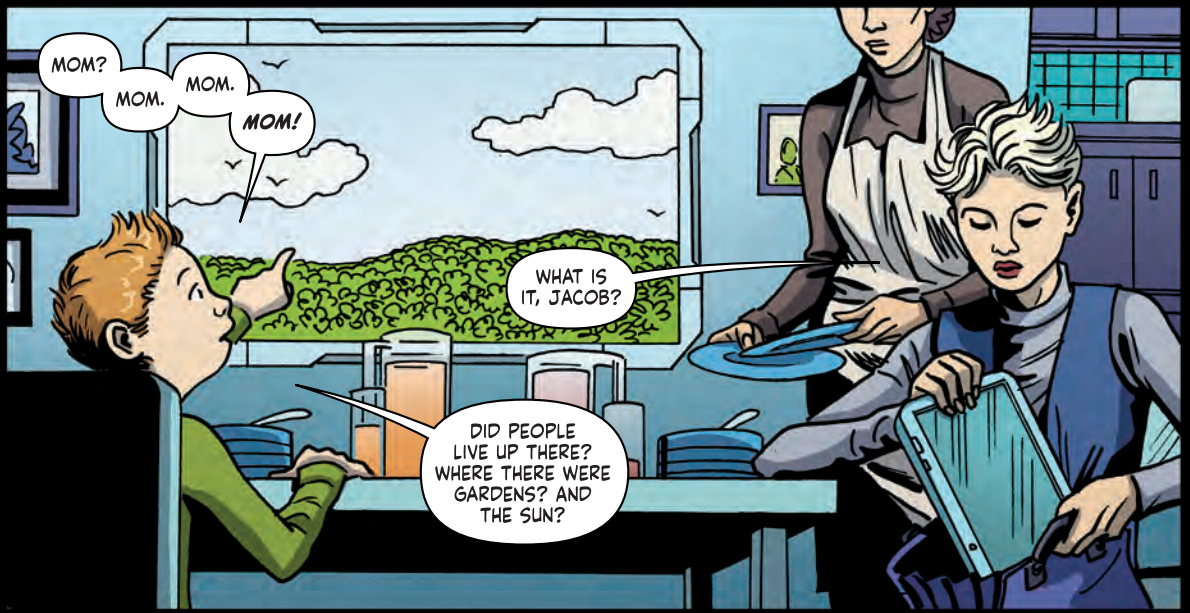


...AND ALWAYS DARK AGAIN?

IT'S A MYTH, DEAR. ABOUT WHAT THE SURFACE PEOPLE CALLED "SEASONS." THINGS LIVED AND DIED, AND LIVED AGAIN. SO WHEN IT SEEMS DARK, REMEMBER THERE WILL ALWAYS BE LIGHT AFTER.



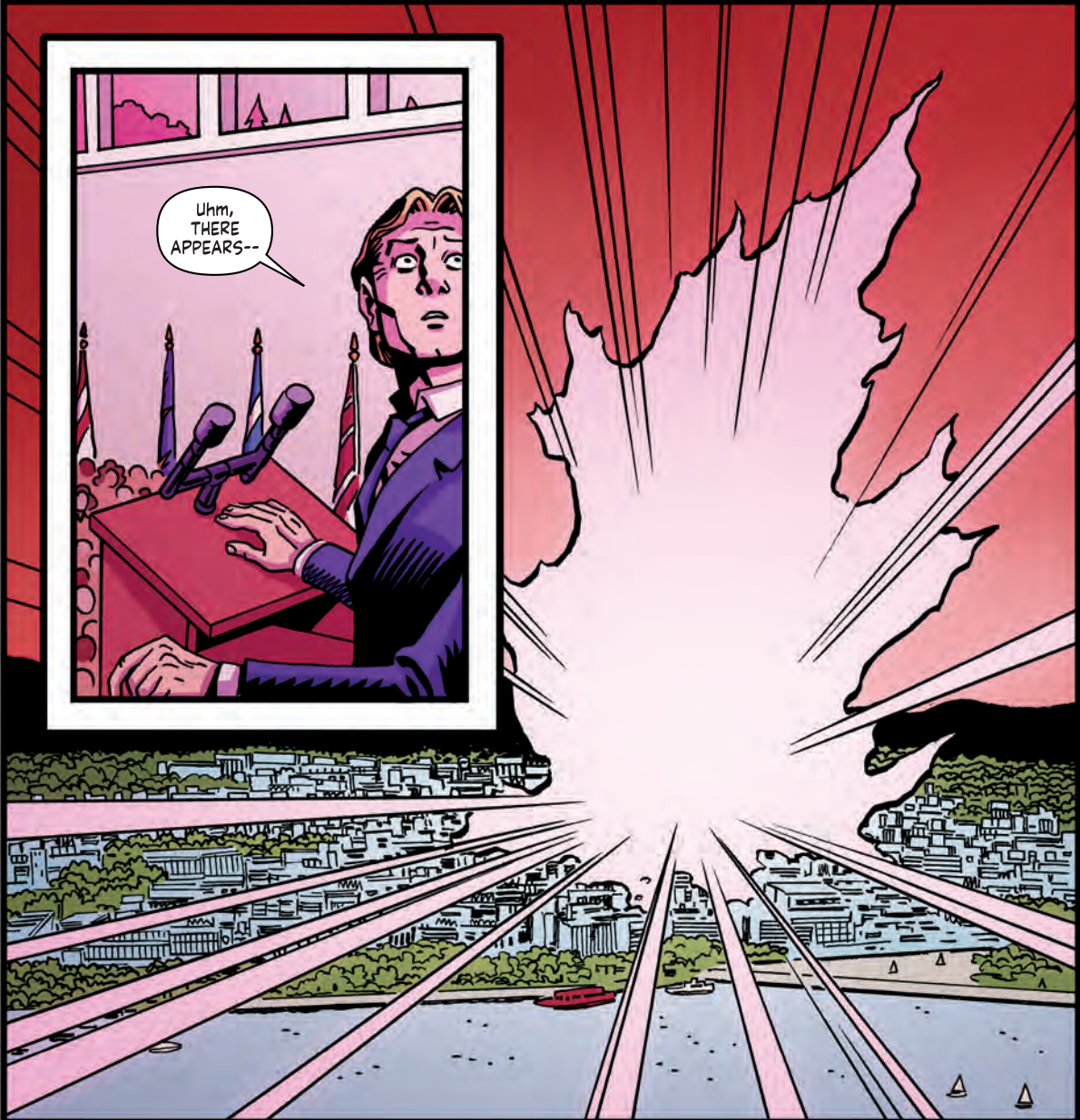
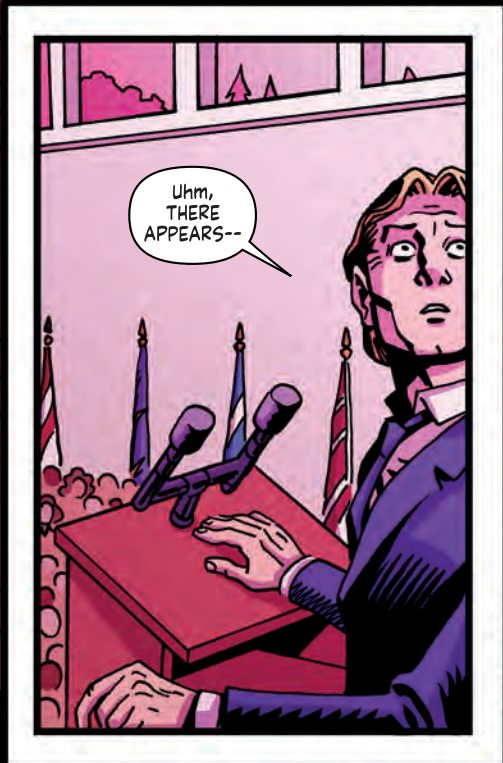
...
...AND ALWAYS LIGHT AGAIN! TRY TO REST, SWEETIE.



"TO BE SURE, THE HIGGS BOSON ISN'T A DISTINCT PARTICLE, IT'S MORE LIKE THE SPACE *BETWEEN* PARTICLES. ITS FISSION COULD CREATE A FIELD OF *TINY BLACK HOLES*, WHICH WOULD OPEN UP A NEW FRONTIER IN TECHNOLOGICAL APPLICATION! ANY SECOND NOW--"



Uhm,
THERE
APPEARS--





THE BLACK HOLES DISAPPEARED... EVENTUALLY...BUT THE CRATER THEY LEFT WAS SO BIG, IT CHANGED THE WEATHER ALL OVER THE WORLD. PEOPLE COULDN'T LIVE ON THE SURFACE ANYMORE.

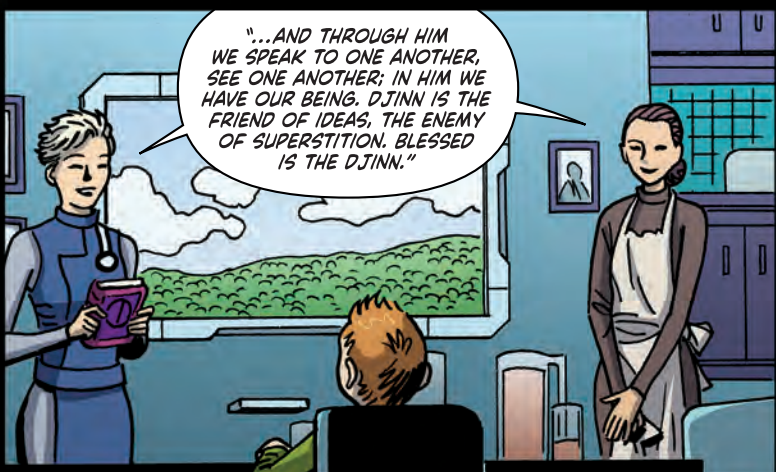


THEY HAD TO MOVE DOWN HERE, WHERE WE LIVE. AND TO HELP US LIVE HERE, WE BUILT DJINN.

WE BUILT HIM?



IN A WAY, HE'S ALWAYS BEEN WITH US. IN OUR BOOKS, AND TOOLS. BUT NOW HE'S LIKE A PERSON, WHO LIVES IN OUR COMPUTERS. IT IS WRITTEN THAT "THE DJINN FEEDS US, CLOTHES US, KEEPS US..."



"...AND THROUGH HIM WE SPEAK TO ONE ANOTHER, SEE ONE ANOTHER; IN HIM WE HAVE OUR BEING. DJINN IS THE FRIEND OF IDEAS, THE ENEMY OF SUPERSTITION. BLESSED IS THE DJINN."





THIRTY YEARS LATER

NO!



=BLEH=



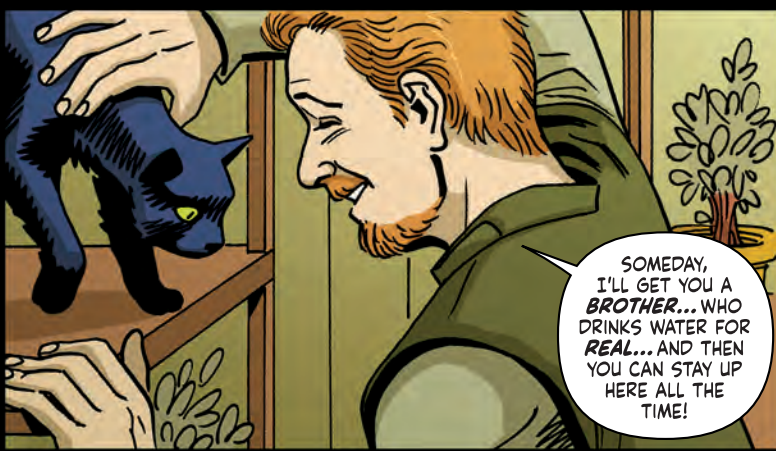
HERE YA GO, BUDDY. DRINK UP.



DRINK THAT WATER. STAY HYDRATED. H2O!



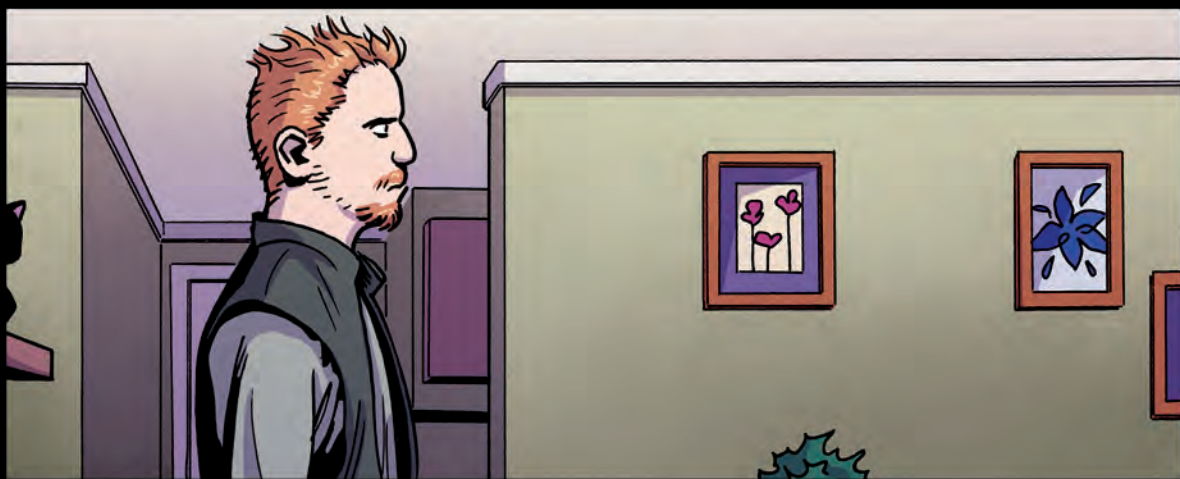
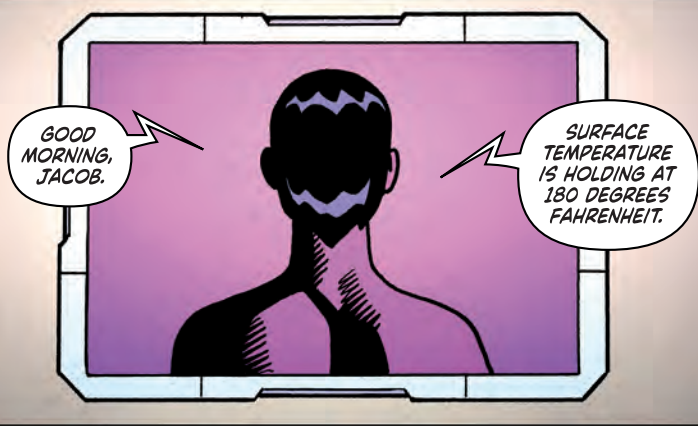
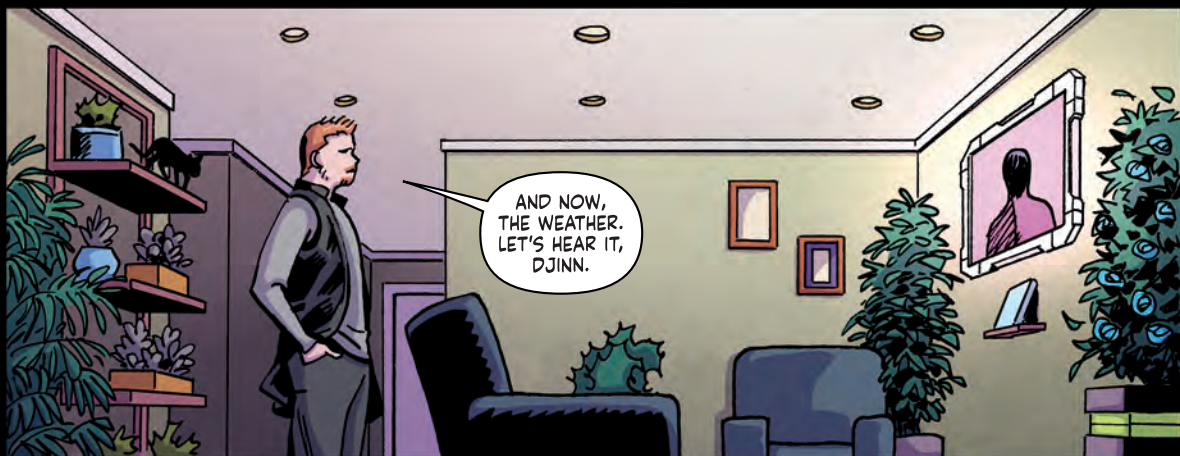
OK, ENOUGH OF THAT. BACK TO YOUR SHELF.



SOMEDAY, I'LL GET YOU A BROTHER... WHO DRINKS WATER FOR REAL... AND THEN YOU CAN STAY UP HERE ALL THE TIME!



YES YOU CAN!





IT'S BECOME RIDICULOUS, DJINN. I SENT IT BACK **TWICE**, AND THE HELP-BOTS STILL HAVEN'T REPAIRED THE SLEEVE! NOT TO MENTION MY SHOWER LEAK!

YOU'VE EVERY RIGHT TO BE ANGRY, ANNA. I MYSELF AM CONCERNED.



THE SABOTEURS ARE RELENTLESS. I'LL HAVE MORE TO SAY AT TOMORROW'S SESSION.

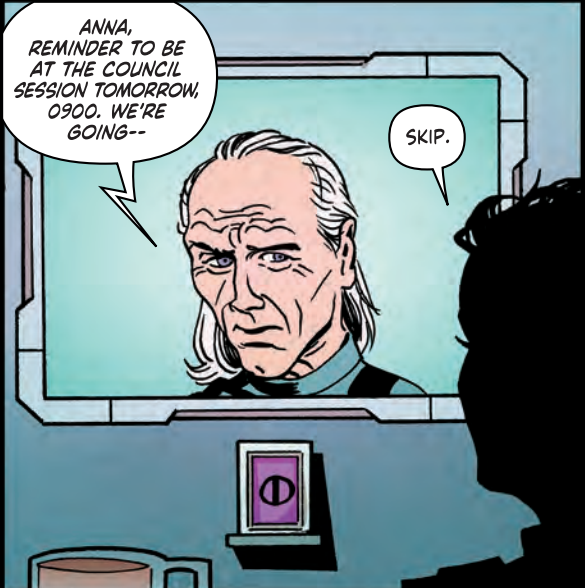
GOODNESS! I KNOW I SHOULDN'T BLAME YOU, DJINN. YOU HAVE ENOUGH ON YOUR PLATE.

MESSAGES?



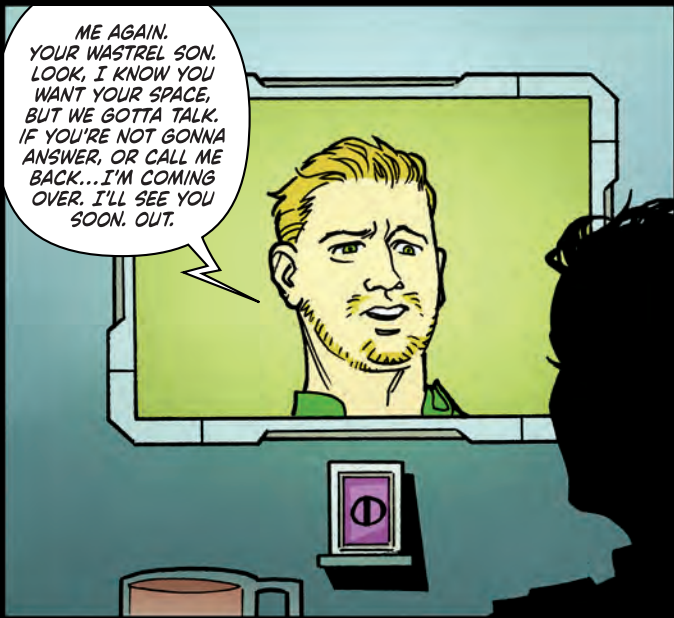
SOMETHING IS STILL WRONG, ANNA. I WANT TO ADDRESS IT AT THE NEXT COUNCIL SESSION, BUT I NEED YOU ON MY SIDE. PLEASE LET ME KNOW YOU'LL ATTEND?

SKIP.



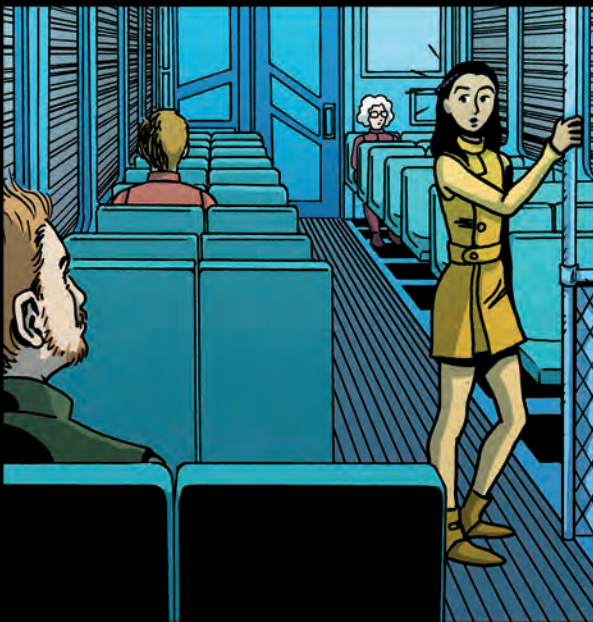
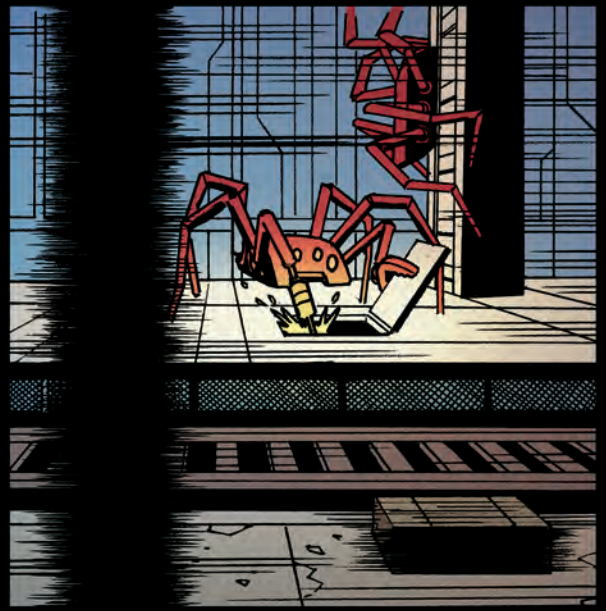
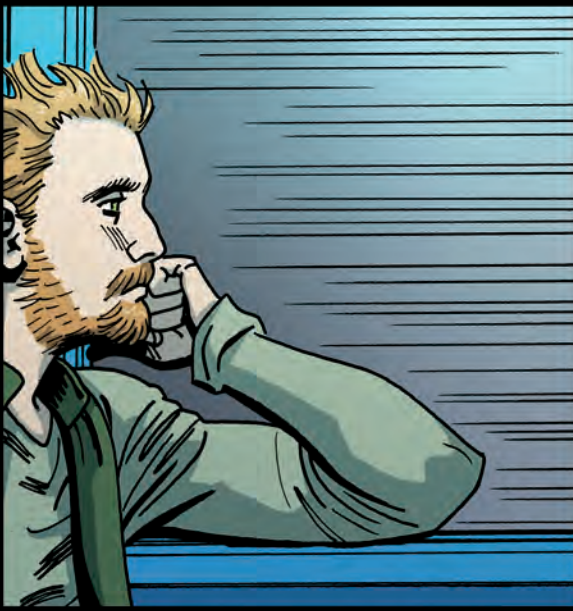
ANNA, REMINDER TO BE AT THE COUNCIL SESSION TOMORROW, 0900. WE'RE GOING--

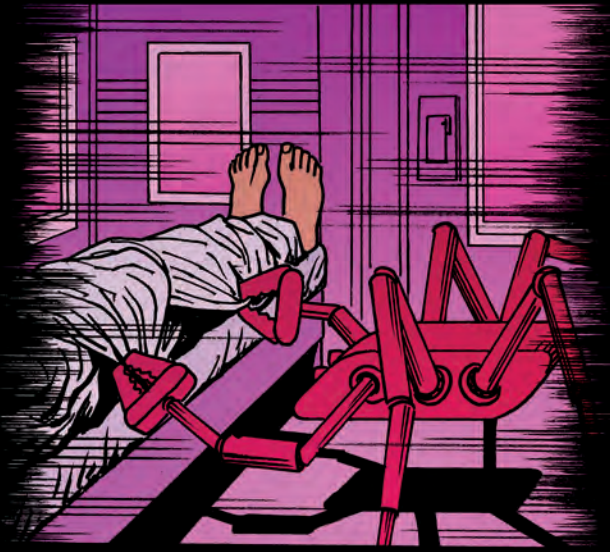
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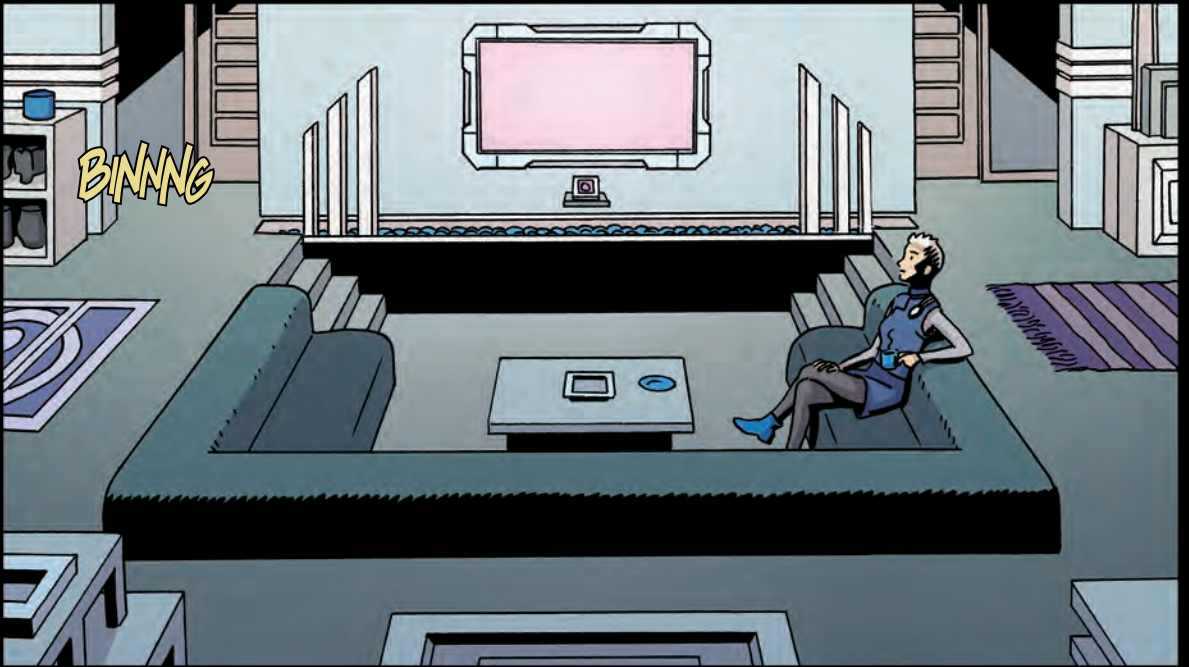


ME AGAIN. YOUR WASTREL SON. LOOK, I KNOW YOU WANT YOUR SPACE, BUT WE GOTTA TALK. IF YOU'RE NOT GONNA ANSWER, OR CALL ME BACK...I'M COMING OVER. I'LL SEE YOU SOON. OUT.









SORRY, BUT I HAD TO COME. YOU NEVER ANSWERED MY MESSAGES! I CA--

COME IN BEFORE SOMEONE SEES YOU.

DID YOU GET MY MESSAGES? I'VE BEE--

YES.

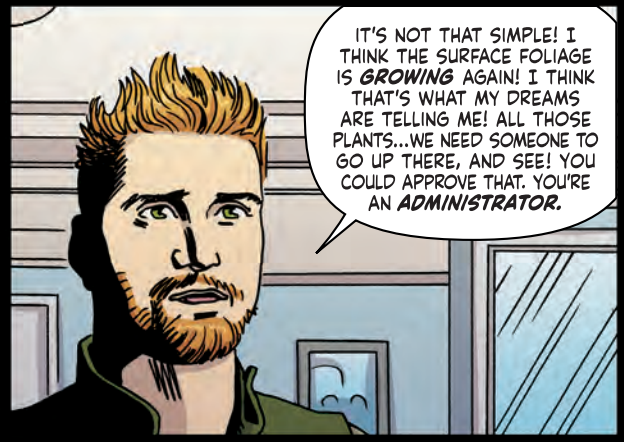
YOU DID?



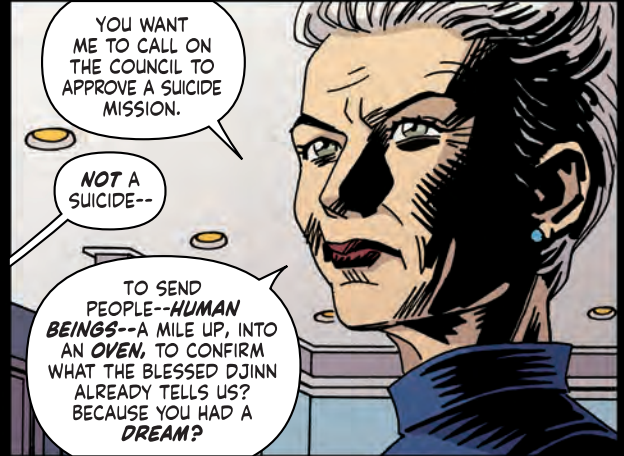
JACOB, I CAN'T HELP YOU. I THOUGHT YOU'D OUTGROWN YOUR DREAMS. IF THEY'RE BACK--

THEY ARE BACK! THEY'RE WORSE THAN EVER!

THEN SEE A DOCTOR. DJINN CAN RECOMMEND ONE. TAKE SOME PILLS, GET HELP.



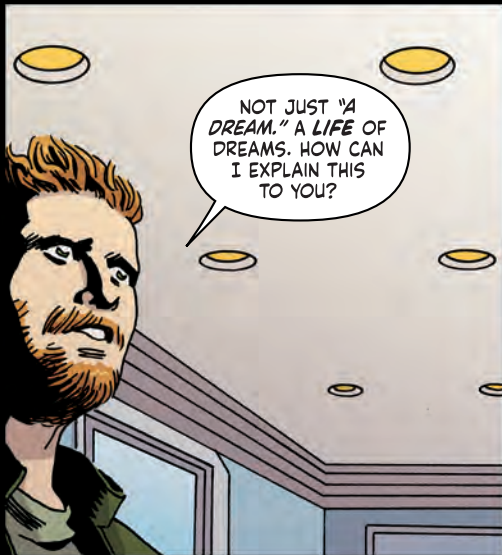
IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE! I THINK THE SURFACE FOLIAGE IS **GROWING** AGAIN! I THINK THAT'S WHAT MY DREAMS ARE TELLING ME! ALL THOSE PLANTS...WE NEED SOMEONE TO GO UP THERE, AND SEE! YOU COULD APPROVE THAT. YOU'RE AN **ADMINISTRATOR**.



YOU WANT ME TO CALL ON THE COUNCIL TO APPROVE A SUICIDE MISSION.

NOT A SUICIDE--

TO SEND PEOPLE--**HUMAN BEINGS**--A MILE UP, INTO AN **OVEN**, TO CONFIRM WHAT THE BLESSED DJINN ALREADY TELLS US? BECAUSE YOU HAD A **DREAM**?



NOT JUST "A DREAM." A LIFE OF DREAMS. HOW CAN I EXPLAIN THIS TO YOU?



IT'S LIKE...WHEN YOU FEEL A DRAFT, AND YOU KNOW AIR IS GETTING **IN** FROM SOMEWHERE, AND YOU JUST DON'T KNOW WHERE. BUT YOU KNOW IT'S COMING FROM **OUTSIDE THE ROOM!**





JACOB,
THERE'S NOTHING
"OUTSIDE THE ROOM."
WHAT YOU'RE DESCRIBING
IS *PSYCHOSIS*--OR, AT
BEST, *SUPERSTITION*.
YOU NEED TO LIVE IN
REALITY.



TECHNOLOGY.
HARD EVIDENCE.
NOT DREAMS, OR
FEELINGS.

BUT THAT'S
WHAT I'M SAYING.
YOU COULD *GET*
THE EVIDENCE.
YOU COULD
PROVE--



AND IF WE
SENT A TEAM
UP THERE, AND
THEY CONFIRMED
DJINN'S
REPORTS?

WOULD
YOU CLAIM
THEY'RE
WRONG?

WHERE DOES
IT END? WHOSE
EVIDENCE DO YOU
TRUST, IF NOT
DJINN'S?



I DON'T
KNOW. BUT DJINN
CAN'T BE THE *END*
ALL AND *BE ALL*.
I MEAN, WE *MADE*
HIM. HE'S *LESS*
THAN US.



HE'S
THE *BEST* OF
WHAT WE ARE,
JACOB.



WHAT
IF HE'S ALSO
THE *WORST* OF
WHAT WE ARE?
WHAT IF DJINN
IS LYING?



THAT'S
IT. WE'RE
DONE HERE.
GOODBYE.



NO,
BUT--!

GOOD-
BYE.







WHOA. WHAT IS THIS?

I BELONG TO A GROUP THAT-- WELL, WE THINK THE GOVERNMENT NEEDS SOME **MAJOR CHANGES**. AND WE NEED YOUR HELP.



AH...HAAA. GUESS IT'S TRUE WHAT THEY SAY--ALL THE GOOD ONES ARE EITHER TAKEN, OR TRYING TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT.

THIS IS SERIOUS. LOOK...



...I KNOW YOU DREAM ABOUT THE SURFACE.



WHAT?

TAKE THIS. READ **PAGE 46**.



IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE, MEET ME AT 1100 TOMORROW. AT THIS ADDRESS.



BUT--





AND NOW, FROM THE FILES OF THE CRAZY LADY I MET ON THE TRAIN--THE JOURNAL OF DR. CHARLES ROSS.

PAGE...um, FORTY-SIX. OK. "THE MORNING OF MARCH 13, 2009 BEGAN LIKE ANY OTHER..."



"...BUT IT'S NOT EVERY DAY THAT THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES CALLS YOU UP..."



"...WITH THE WORST NEWS OF YOUR LIFE."

DID YOU SAY "BLACK HOLES," PLURAL?

"POTUS SUMMONED MY TEAM FOR A PRIVATE BRIEFING THAT SAME MORNING. HE'D ALREADY DONE ALL HE COULD-- CONSOLED THE PUBLIC, CORRALLED SUPPLIES, SET THE ENGINEERS LOOSE BUILDING UNDERGROUND CITIES. AT THIS POINT, I THINK HE JUST NEEDED SOME EXPERTS TO HOLD HIS HAND WHILE THE WORLD FELL APART."

THE GOOD NEWS, SIR, IS THAT THE FIELD OF BLACK HOLES CAUSED BY THE HIGGS BOSON EVENT WERE ALL TINY, AND THEIR HALF-LIVES WERE MILLISECONDS. SO, THAT CRATER THEY LEFT ISN'T GETTING ANY BIGGER. THAT PART IS OVER.

HOWEVER, IT DID SHOOT THE GLOBAL CLIMATE ALL TO HELL, AND THAT'S GONNA GET WORSE BEFORE IT GETS BETTER.

TELL ME THIS ISN'T A STALEMATE, CHARLIE. TELL ME WE WON'T BE UNDERGROUND FOREVER.

WELL...THE HEAT WILL PEAK WITHIN A DECADE, AND GRADUALLY SUBSIDE...AND **EVENTUALLY** THE SURFACE WILL BE HABITABLE AGAIN.

HOW EVENTUALLY?

I'D SAY... APPROXIMATELY... **ONE CENTURY** FROM NOW.

A CENTURY? BUT WE HIT THAT DEADLINE...

...FORTY YEARS AGO.