



MAY 14 #1

FRED PERRY

STEAM WARS



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STEAM WARS

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Episode I AN EMBER OF HOPE

It is a period of civil war. Resistance troops, striking from within a hidden base, have won their first victory against the tyrannical Hegemonic Crux.

During the battle, Resistance spies managed to steal the secret formula for the Hegemony's ultimate asset, WARP COAL, a power source that allows them to build enormous, steam-powered dreadnaughts that move in absolute silence.

Pursued by the Hegemony's shock troops, Duchess Imoen and her Resistance cell race to escape aboard a waiting supply ship piloted by honorary Royal Navy officer Hansel Lowe. Imoen carries the stolen formula that can save her people and their allies and restore freedom to their world...

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HEGEMONIC
JUGGERNAUTS
ARE A MILE LONG
AND GILDED WITH
BRASS!!!

HOW DO THEY
ALWAYS SNEAK
UP ON US!?!

THE
ANSWER'S
IN THAT
SACHEL,
HIGHNESS!
DON'T DROP
IT!

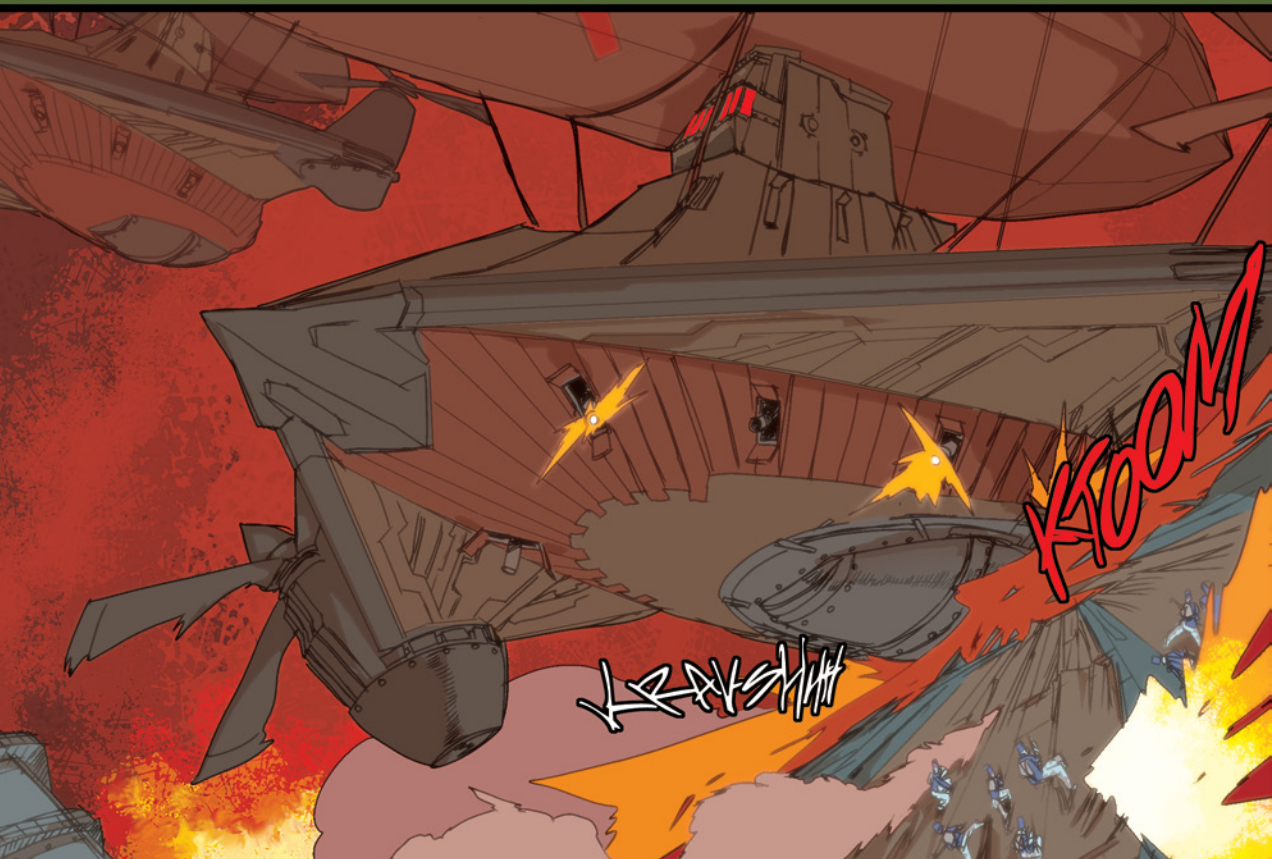
THERE ARE
SUPPLY RUNNERS
STILL DOCKED AT
THE BOW!

THIS WAY!

LIEUTENANT!
BUY US SOME
TIME!

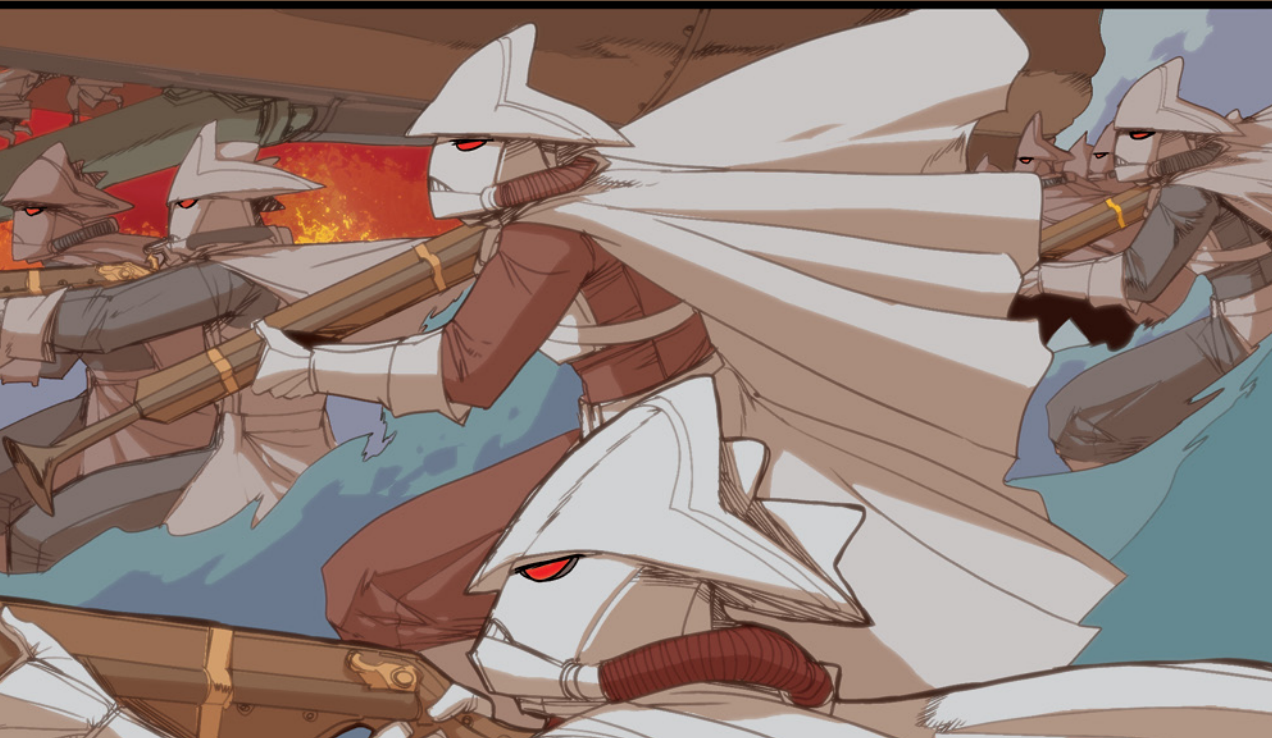
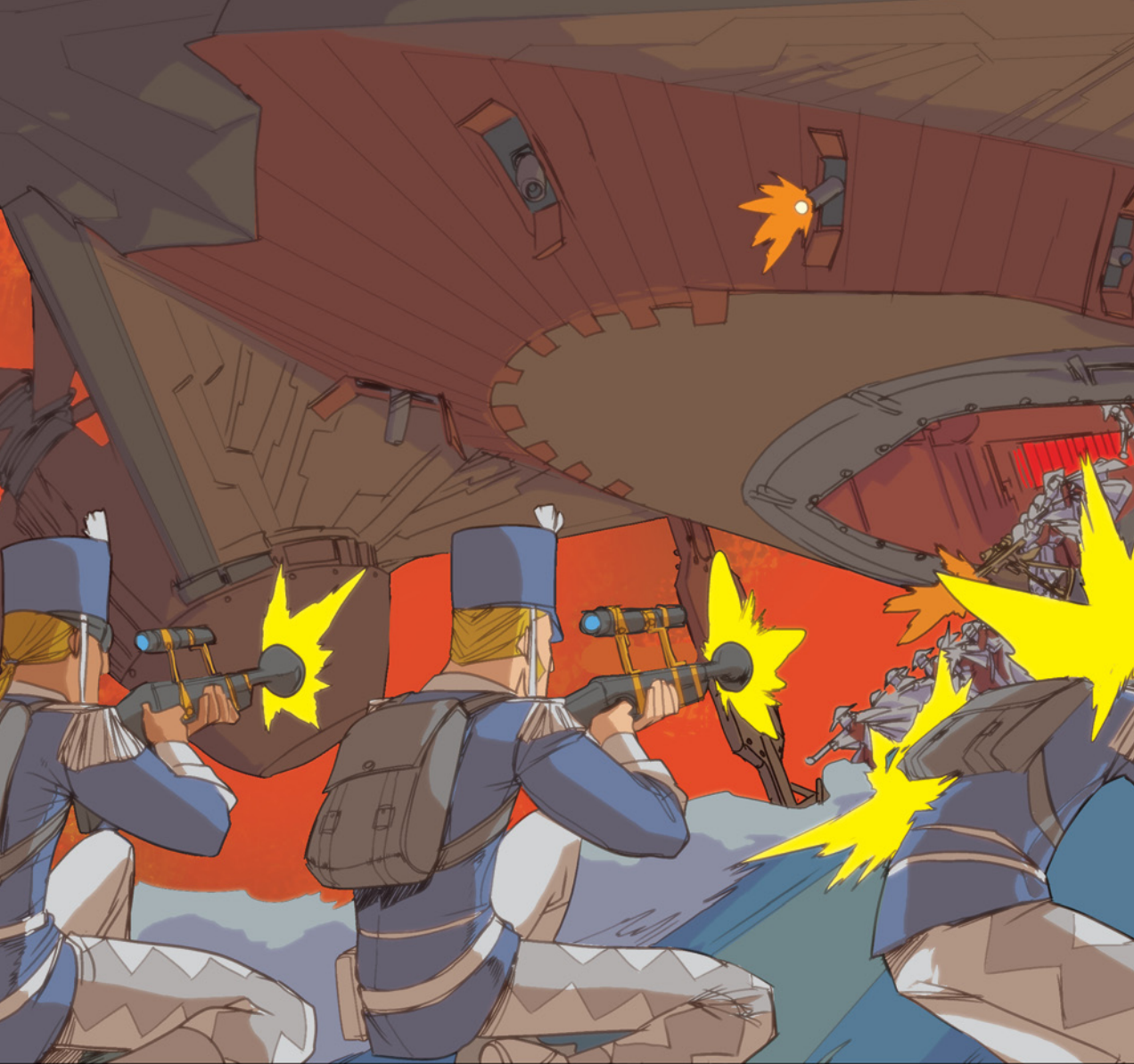
BEG, BORROW
AND STEAL
SOME TIME,
YOU MEAN!

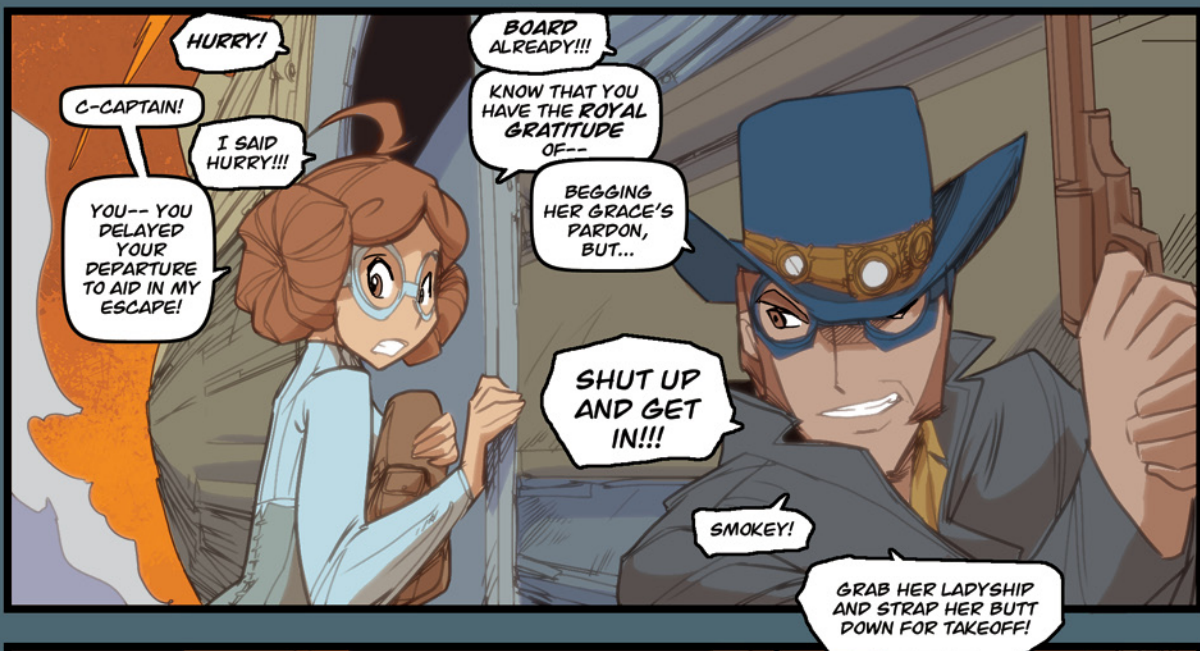
OUR "BUYING"
ACCOUNT
DRIED UP A
LONG TIME
AGO!!!

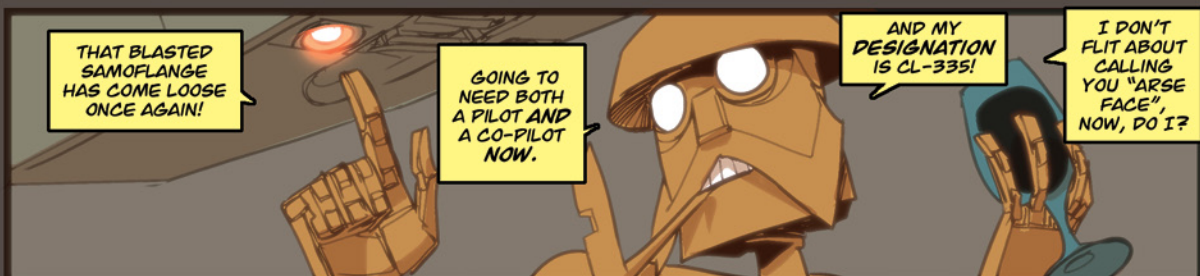
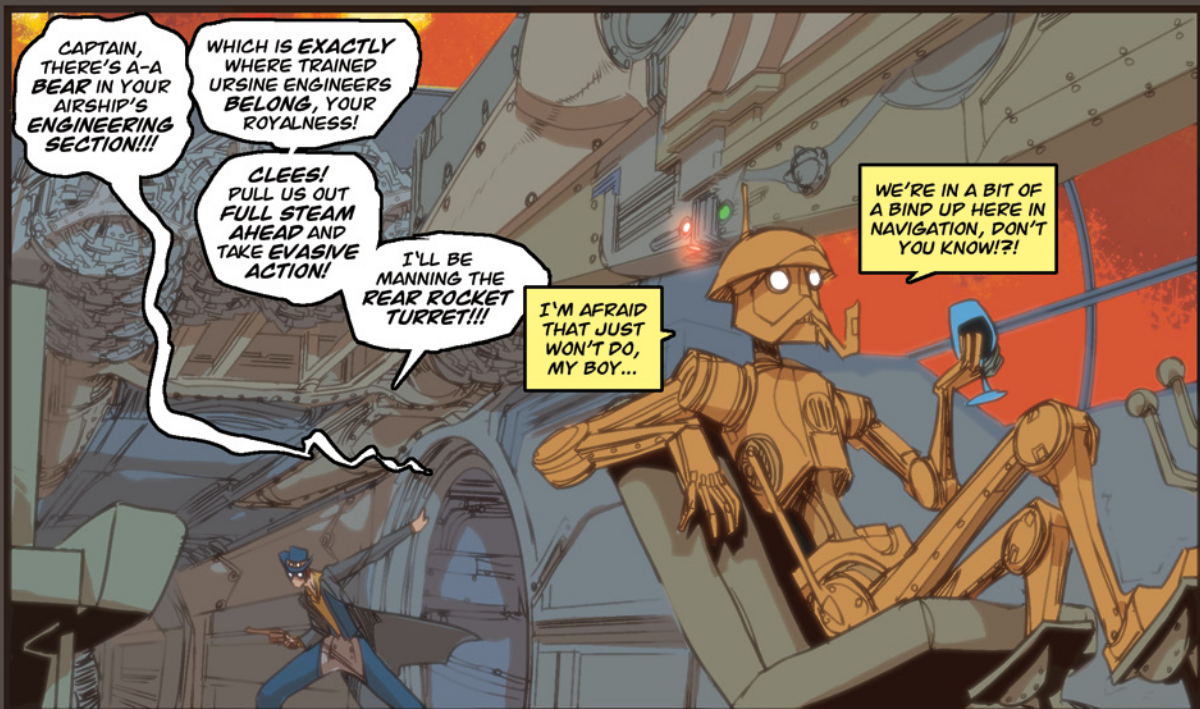
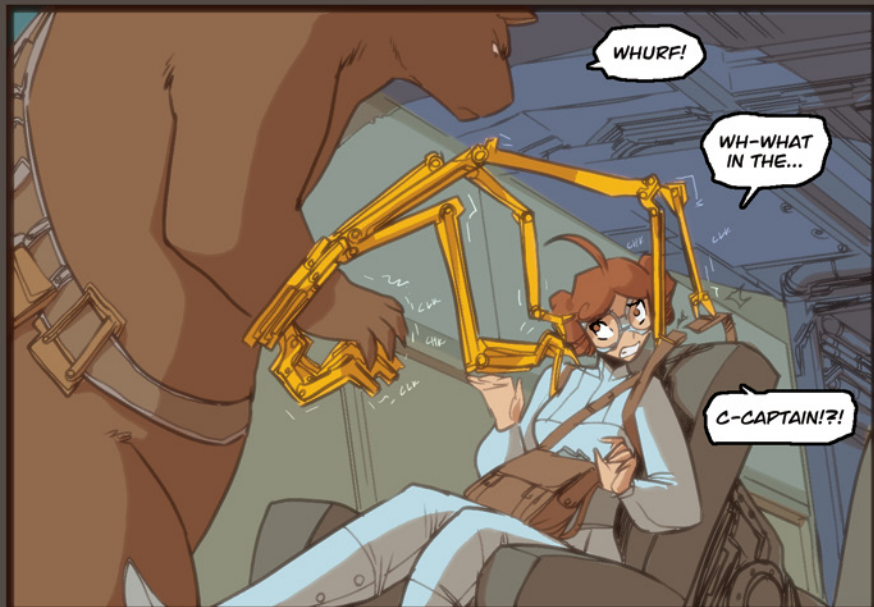














EVERYBODY
ZIP UP AND
BUCKLE
DOWN!!!

BECAUSE WITHOUT A
TAIL-TURRET, WE'LL
BE RUNNING WITH
OUR BARN DOORS
WIDE OPEN!

ONE OF THE DOCKED
SUPPLY SHIPS IS
MAKING A RUN FOR
IT, GENERAL.

REQUEST PERMISSION
TO BRING THE FLIGHT
IN FOR PURSUIT!

DON'T WASTE RESOURCES
ON THE INSIGNIFICANT
AND POWERLESS, WING
COMMANDER!

WITH THIS CARRIER UNDER
HEGEMONIC CRUX CONTROL,
THE RESISTANCE HAS LOST
THE LAST OF ITS CAPITAL
SHIPS!

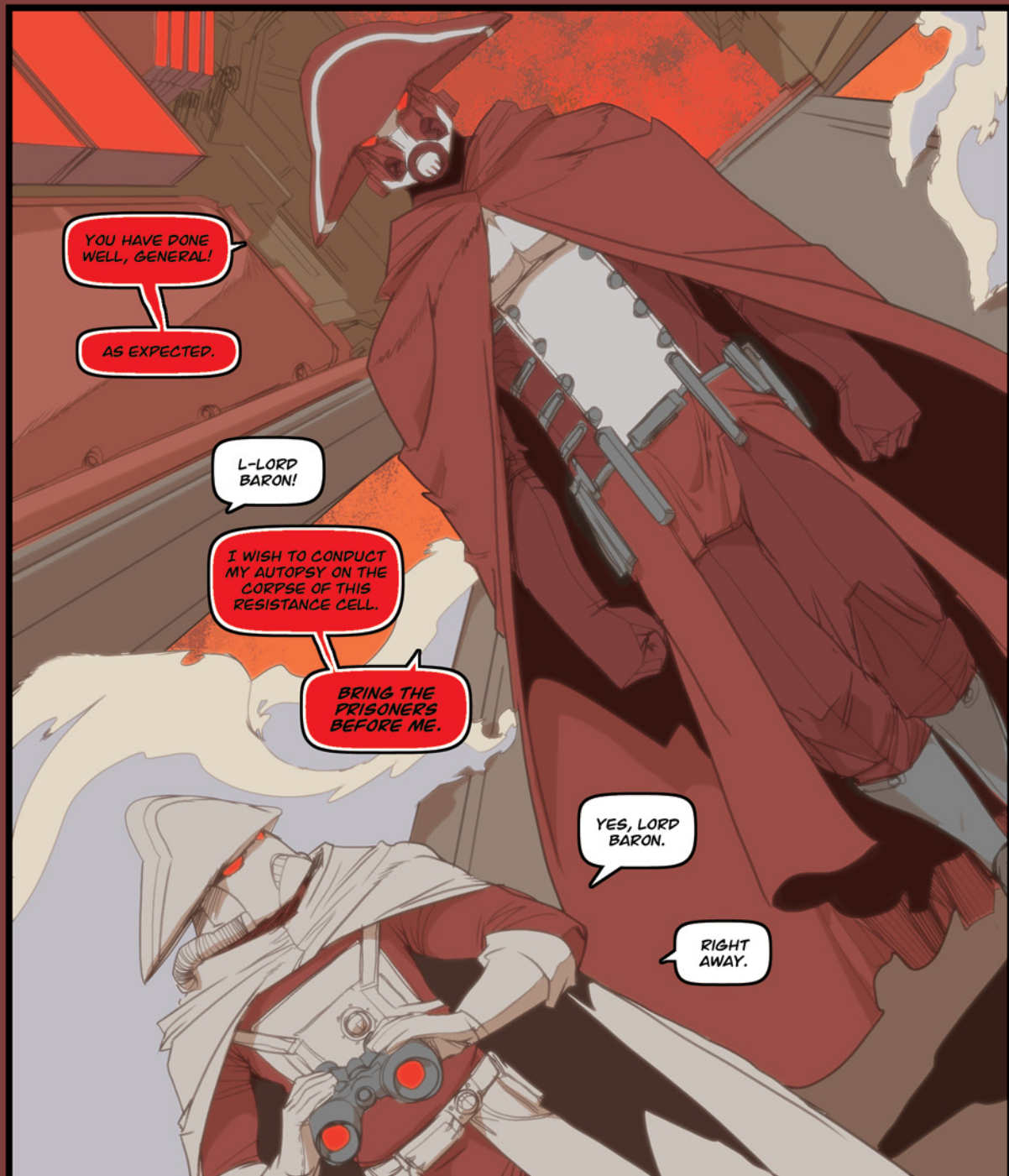


SEND A SMALL PURSUIT
WING TO GUN DOWN
THAT TRANSPORT.

BUT DON'T NEGLECT
THE JUGGERNAUT'S
COMBAT AIR PATROL
REQUIREMENTS!

OUR VICTORY IS
COMPLETE!

THE RESISTANCE
FORCES ARE AS GOOD
AS FINISHED!



YOU HAVE DONE
WELL, GENERAL!

AS EXPECTED.

L-LORD
BARON!

I WISH TO CONDUCT
MY AUTOPSY ON THE
CORPSE OF THIS
RESISTANCE CELL.

BRING THE
PRISONERS
BEFORE ME.

YES, LORD
BARON.

RIGHT
AWAY.



MY MEN HAVE ALREADY
ROUNDED UP THE
SURVIVORS FROM THIS
SHIP'S COMMAND CREW!



THEY SHOULD BE ABLE
TO TELL YOU **EVERYTHING**
ABOUT THE **MILITARY**
STRENGTH OF THE
RESISTANCE AND THE
STATE OF THEIR **CURRENT**
OPERATIONS!

EXCELLENT,
GENERAL!

I SHALL NOW
BEGIN MY
INTERROGATION!



LISTEN WELL, YOU
RESISTANCE SCUM!

YOU CANNOT HOPE HIDE YOUR
SECRETS FROM ME!

THE EPISTEMIC ACCESS TO YOUR
PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE
POTENTIALS IS NOW MINE!

AND HOW CAN
THIS BE?



HOW CAN I, ANOTHER BEING,
OBSERVE THE UN-OBSERVABLE...?
SEE THE INWARD VISIBLE DREAMS
OF YOUR CONSCIOUS REALITY?

HOW CAN I NOT?

MY THOUGHTS EXIST IN
THE INFINITE VEIL OF THE
MYSTERIOUS AND TRUE
FABRIC OF REALITY!

EXISTENTIAL
CAUSALITY AND
ALL OF ITS AXIOMS
ARE MINE TO
BEHOLD!!!

SUCH IS THE POWER OF
A QUANTUM DRAGOON!

UNFORTUNATELY...

...CERTAIN ELEMENTS
TEND TO BECOME
UNSTABLE DURING
FORCED QUANTUM
OBSERVATION!

...

DISTURBING.

MOST
DISTURBING.

THIS WAS NO MERE ASSAULT
CARRIER, GENERAL!

THIS VESSEL ONCE HOUSED AN
INTELLIGENCE NETWORK HUB!

ONE THAT HAS
SOMEHOW STOLEN
THE HEGEMONY'S
MOST GUARDED
SECRET...

...THE FORMULA
FOR WARP COAL!

HUNT DOWN THE CARGO
RUNNER THAT ESCAPED
WITH THE FORMULA,
GENERAL!

IF THE RESISTANCE LEARNS
HOW TO HARNESS WARP
COAL, THEY WILL BE ABLE
TO BUILD AND DEPLOY SHIPS
TO RIVAL OUR STEALTH
JUGGERNAUTS!

YES, LORD
BARON!

"THAT CARGO
RUNNER WON'T
GET FAR!!!"

Waaay

UGHN!!!
DAMN IT!

HEGEMONY
ROCKETS PACK
SERIOUS STOPPING
POWER!

THAT'S JUST ABOUT
THE END OF OUR REAR
QUADRANT ARMOR,
CAPTAIN LOWE!

ONE MORE DIRECT HIT, AND
WE'LL HAVE TO CONTENT
WITH THE "STOPPING POWER"
OF TERRA FIRMA!

WE NEED TO
OUTRUN THOSE
"DIRGES",
CLEES!

KEEP
CONTROL
OF THAT
FLANGE-
CLUTCH!

SMOKEY!

I'LL NEED
EVERYTHING YOU CAN
GET ME FROM THE
HYPER-BOILER!

Wuff!

NCHALLWEE!



THAT'S THE WAY, SMOKEY...

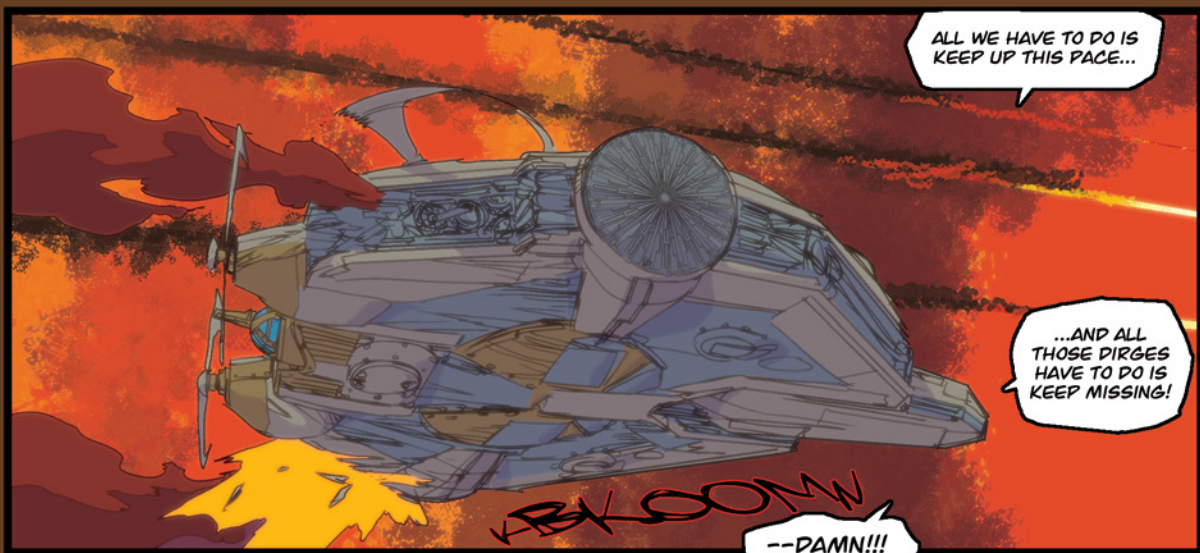
FULL POWER!



AND KEEP IT COMING!

WE'RE MAKING A BREAK FOR THE TOWNSEND SWAMP MAELSTROM!

THE MISTS IN THAT REGION COULD HIDE A WHOLE FLEET!



ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS KEEP UP THIS PACE...

...AND ALL THOSE DIRGES HAVE TO DO IS KEEP MISSING!

--DAMN!!!

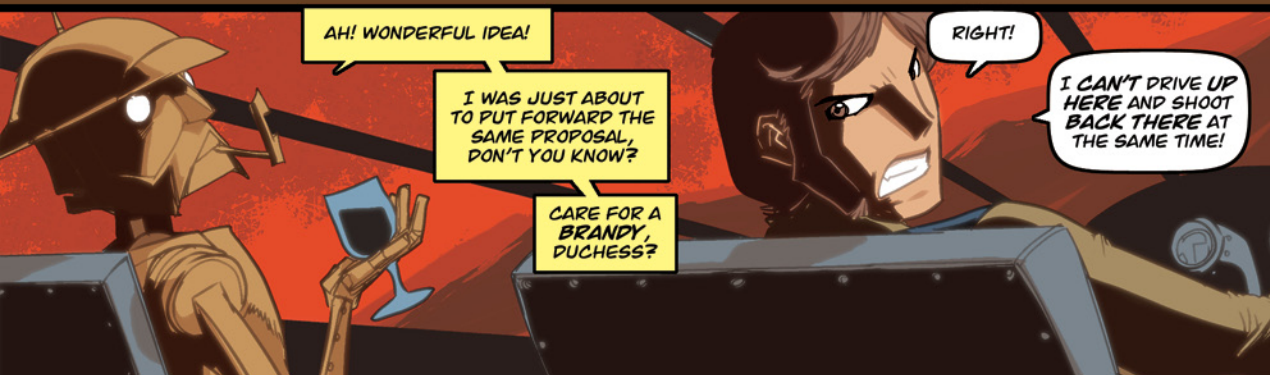


CAPTAIN LOWE!

IF I MAY SUGGEST THE OBVIOUS...

...MIGHT WE TRY USING YOUR INEXPLICABLY UNMANNED ROCKET TURRET TO DEFEND OURSELVES!?!

BEFORE WE DIE!?!



AH! WONDERFUL IDEA!

I WAS JUST ABOUT TO PUT FORWARD THE SAME PROPOSAL, DON'T YOU KNOW?

CARE FOR A BRANDY, DUCHESS?

RIGHT!

I CAN'T DRIVE UP HERE AND SHOOT BACK THERE AT THE SAME TIME!



EVERY VESSEL OF
THE ROYAL NAVY
SHOULD BE RUN AS
A TAUT SHIP!

JUST AS EVERY ROYAL
NAVAL OFFICER, INCLUDING
THOSE WHO HOLD
HONORARY POSITIONS,
SHOULD BE TRAINED IN--

SHUT UP AND SHOOT,
YOUR WORSHIP!!!
SHUT UP AND
SHOOT!!!

HMPH!

POWER: CHECK!
GEAR BOX: CHECK!
MUNITIONS: ARMED!
LOCK PEDAL: DOWN!

LEAD THE
TARGET!
PULL THE
TRIGGER,
AND--

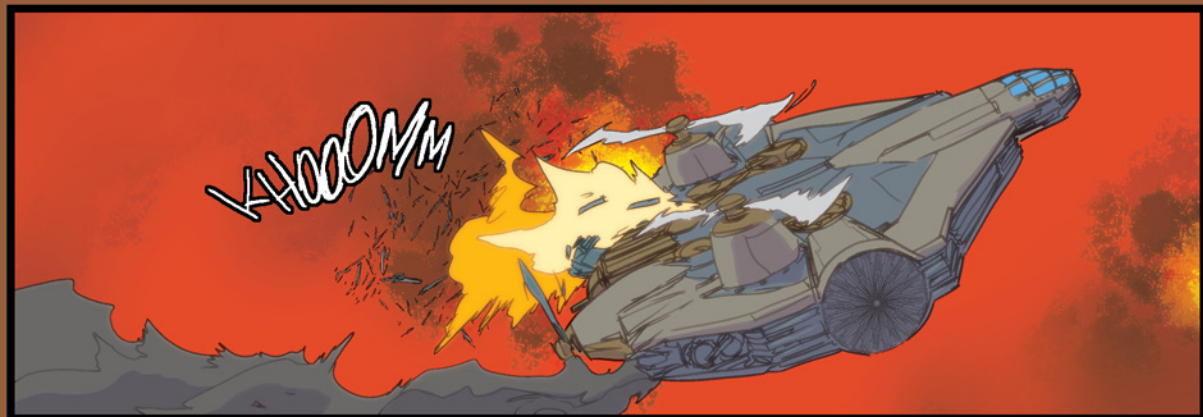
BOOM!

GRACIOUS!

MY VERY FIRST
DIRECT HIT!

ASTOUNDING!







THEY'RE DOWN!

THEY WENT DOWN
IN THE SWAMP
MIASMA!

ALL WINGS!
STRAFE THE
WRECKAGE!!!



WHAT WRECKAGE!?!?

THAT FOG IS TOO
THICK TO SEE
THROUGH!



SURROUND THE AREA
AND CLOSE IN ON
FOOT!

IF THEY SNEAK THE
WARP COAL FORMULA
OUT OF THE SWAMP,
LORD BARON WILL
HAVE OUR NECKS!!!

EVERYONE READY?



THERE'S A GAS-MINING TOWN ABOUT TWO MILES SOUTH OF THIS SWAMP!

WE'LL BORROW A TURBO SPEEDER AND RUN TO THE NEAREST RESISTANCE SAFE HOUSE!

WE'LL HAVE TO SLIP PAST OUR PURSUERS FIRST, CAPTAIN LOWE!

AND WE HAVE A SWAMP'S MIRE TO CONTEND WITH!

I ASSUME YOUR COAT IS MOISTURE-SEALED IN CASE YOU NEED TO LAY IT ACROSS A VILE, IMPASSIBLE PATCH OF MUD FOR ME?



JUST STICK CLOSE, DUCHESS!

STAY LOW, AND KEEP QUIET!

AND YOU WILL SLOG THROUGH ANY BOG I TELL YOU TO, GOT IT?

DEAR ME...

THERE ARE MOSQUITOES HERE!

NO ONE MENTIONED ANYTHING ABOUT MOSQUITOES WHEN I VOLUNTEERED FOR THIS MISSION!



SHOOAM

SHOOAM

SHOOAM

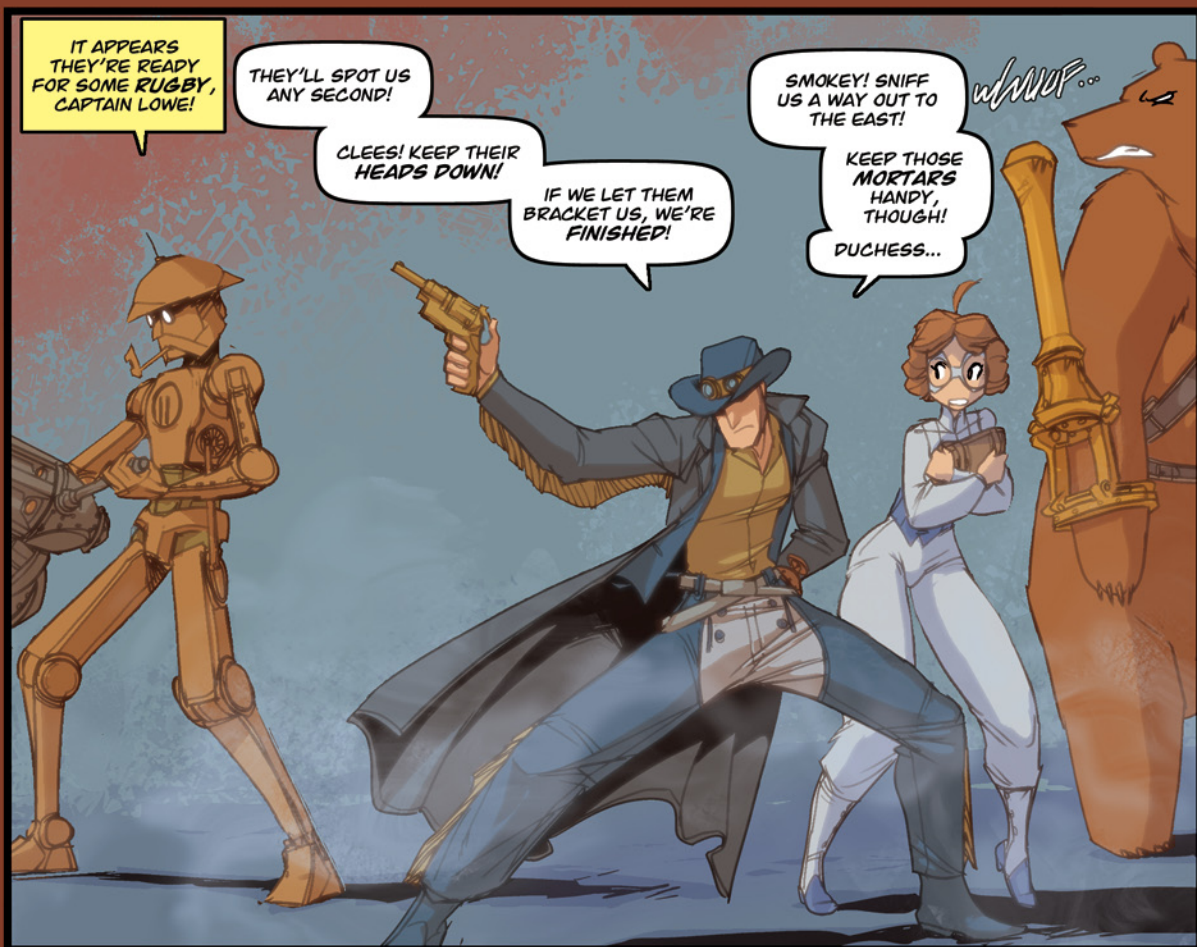
OH, NO!

MORE DIRGES!!!



WHAT'S THIS, NOW!?!?

A WHOLE FLEET OF THOSE BLIGHTERS JUST SLITHERED ONTO THE SOUTHERN RISE!



IT APPEARS THEY'RE READY FOR SOME RUGBY, CAPTAIN LOWE!

THEY'LL SPOT US ANY SECOND!

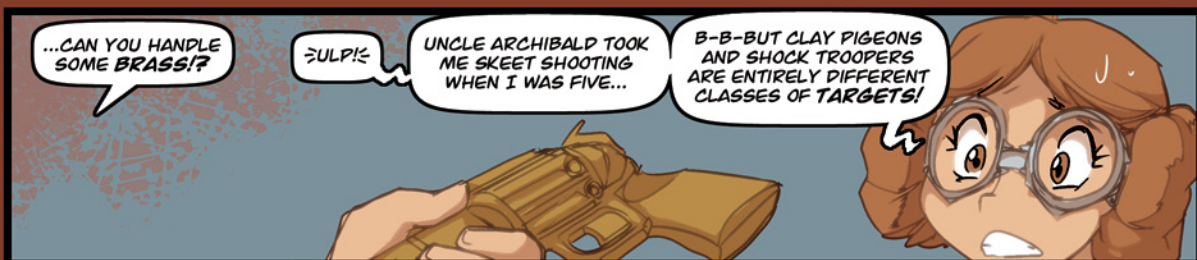
CLEES! KEEP THEIR HEADS DOWN!

IF WE LET THEM BRACKET US, WE'RE FINISHED!

SMOKEY! SNIFF US A WAY OUT TO THE EAST!

KEEP THOSE MORTARS HANDY, THOUGH! DUCHESS...

WHUMP...

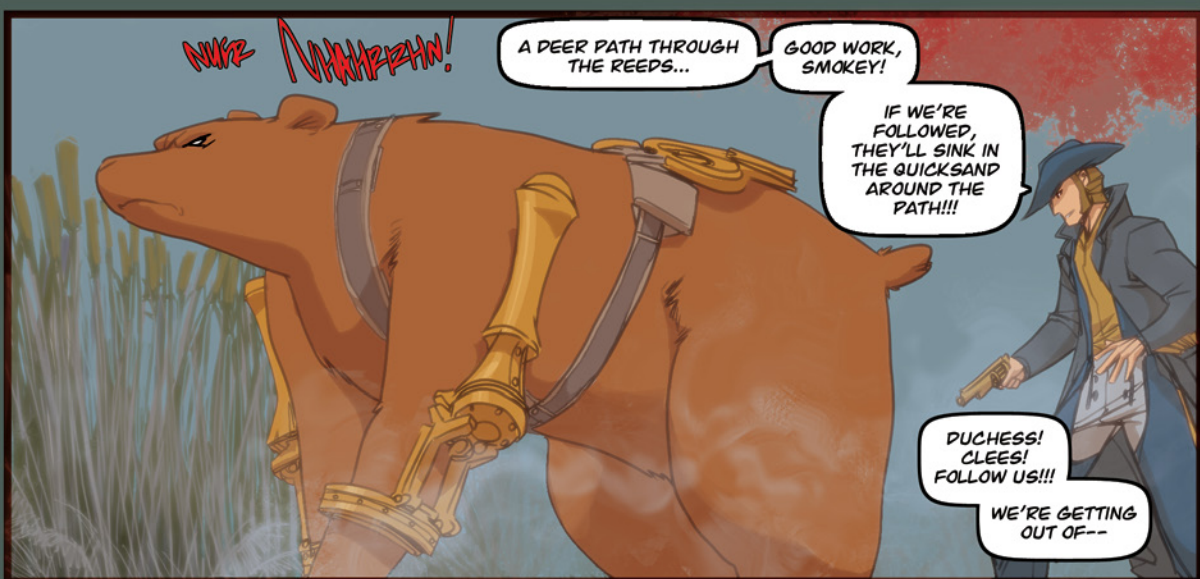
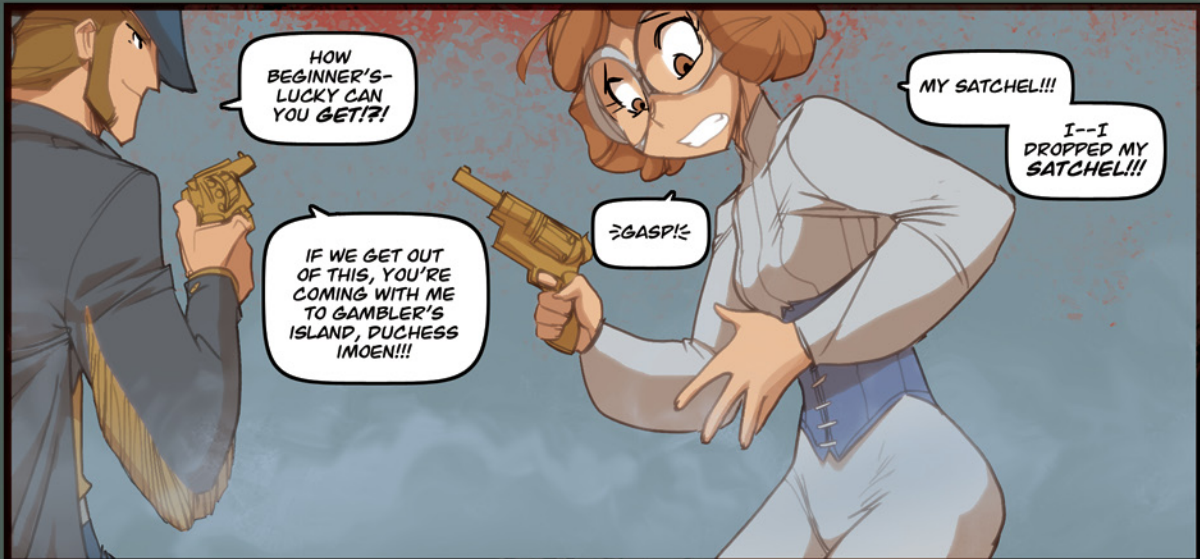


...CAN YOU HANDLE SOME BRASS!?

EWLP!?

UNCLE ARCHIBALD TOOK ME SKEET SHOOTING WHEN I WAS FIVE...

B-B-BUT CLAY PIGEONS AND SHOCK TROOPERS ARE ENTIRELY DIFFERENT CLASSES OF TARGETS!





OH...PEAR...

WELL, WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE, BOYS?

DUCHESS IMOEN OF THE ROYAL FAMILY XENOBIA!

LORD BARON WILL REWARD US WELL FOR BRINGING HIM THE DAUGHTER OF THE RESISTANCE'S FINANCIAL BACKER!

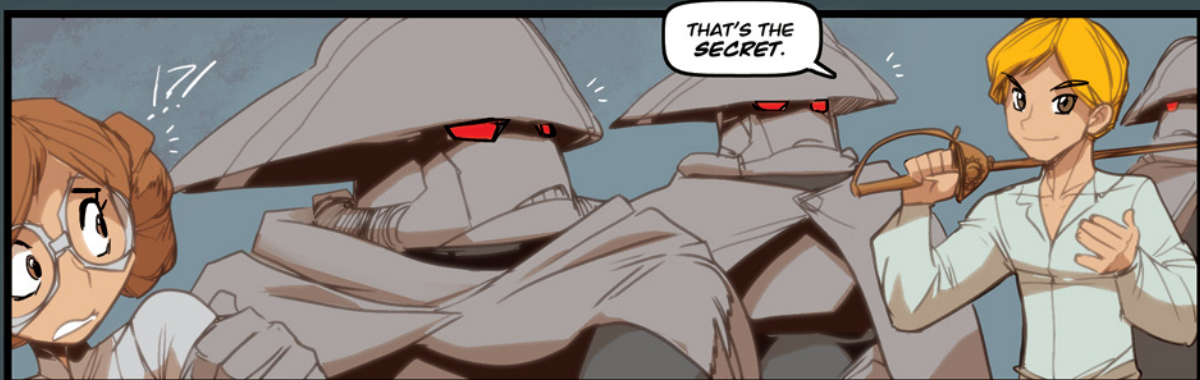


S-STAY BACK!!!

UNHAND ME!!!

DON'T TOUCH ME, YOU-- YOU--

ACTUALLY... THEY AREN'T TOUCHING YOU.



THAT'S THE SECRET.



IT'S ALL ELECTRON CLOUD REPULSION.

NOTHING TOUCHES ANYTHING ELSE.

WHO IN THE...

MY GREAT UNCLE
JESSIE WAS THE
FIRST TO LEARN
THAT SECRET.

HE WAS THE BEST
DRAGOON THAT
EVER WAS!

AND HE TAUGHT ME
EVERYTHING!

LOOK OUT!!!

DAMN!!!

THAT'S A STORM
FOIL!!!

H-HE'S A
QUANTUM
DRAGOON!!!

THEY'RE NOT ALL
DEAD!!!

DUCHESS!!!

DUCHESS, WHERE
ARE YOU!?!?

I-I'M OVER
HERE, CAPTAIN!!

OVER HERE!!!



HOLY...

WHAT IN
THE SAM HILL
HAPPENED
HERE!?!

I WAS ASSISTED
BY THIS KIND
STRANGER,
CAPTAIN!

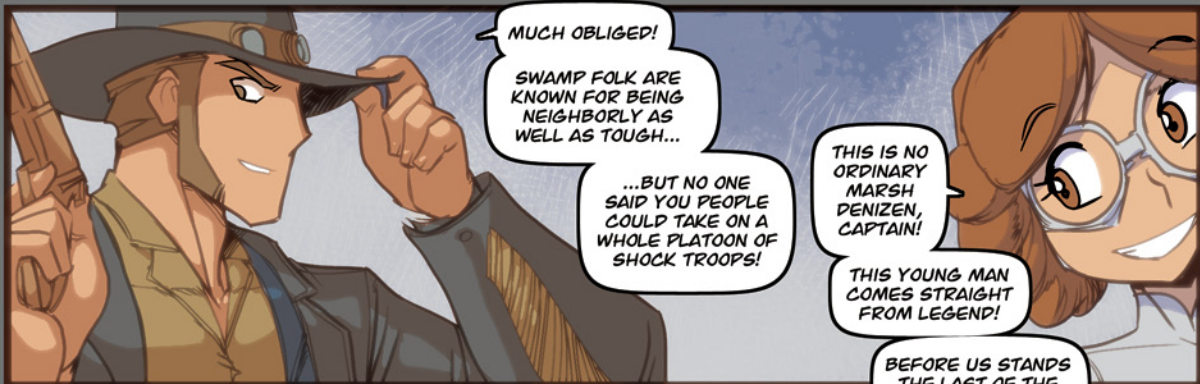
WELL...

...I DON'T
LIKE BULLIES.

**ESPECIALLY BULLIES
FROM THE HEGEMONY!**

DUCHESS IMOEN SAYS
YOU FOLKS NEED A GUIDE
TO THE GAS MINERS'
FORT AT TOWNSEND?

I CAN TAKE YOU
ACROSS THE DEER
PATHS THAT DON'T
HAVE DIRE-CROC
AMBUSH PITS.



MUCH OBLIGED!

SWAMP FOLK ARE
KNOWN FOR BEING
NEIGHBORLY AS
WELL AS TOUGH...

...BUT NO ONE
SAID YOU PEOPLE
COULD TAKE ON A
WHOLE PLATOON OF
SHOCK TROOPS!

THIS IS NO
ORDINARY
MARSH
DENIZEN,
CAPTAIN!

THIS YOUNG MAN
COMES STRAIGHT
FROM LEGEND!

BEFORE US STANDS
THE LAST OF THE
FABLED **QUANTUM
DRAGONS!!!**

THE RESISTANCE WILL
BE OVERJOYED TO HAVE
HIS ASSISTANCE!

WELL...MAYBE
MAYBE NOT, YOUR
HIGHNESS.

I'M BO.

**BEAUREGARD
BARON.**

THE TYRANNICAL
OVERLORD OF THE
HEGEMONY...
...IS **MY FATHER.**



TO BE CONTINUED