PATRICIA BRIGGS'

MERCY THOMPSON™



homecoming

DYNAMITE®

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thanks to thematic consultants:
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CHAPTER ONE:
WOLF AT THE DOOR!



cover artwork by:
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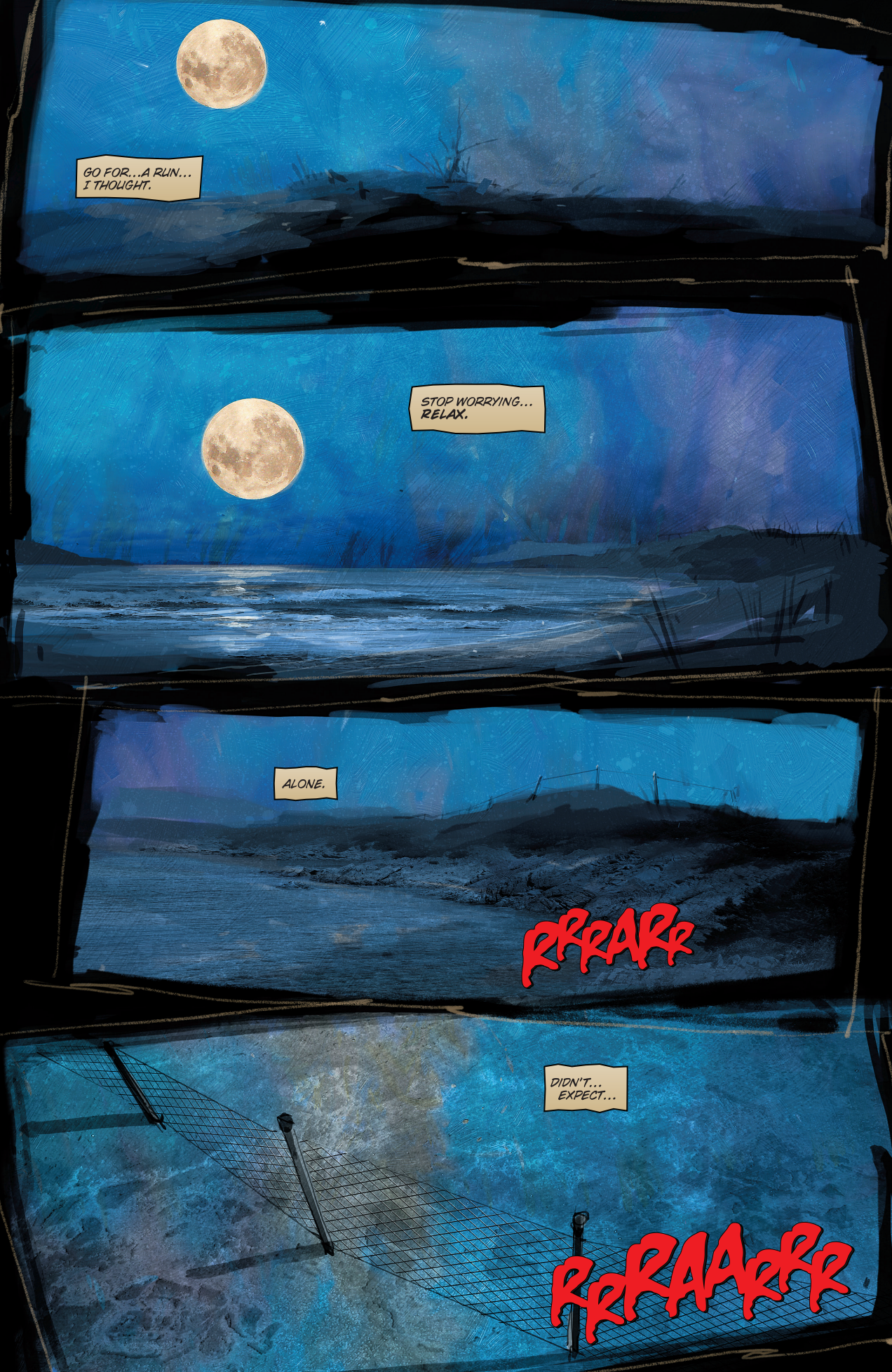

GO FOR...A RUN...
I THOUGHT.
STOP WORRYING...
RELAX.
ALONE.
RRRARR
DIDN'T...
EXPECT...
RRRAARRR


...WEREWOLVES TO JOIN ME!
MAYBE MOM WAS RIGHT.
I SHOULD HAVE WORKED IN COMPUTERS.



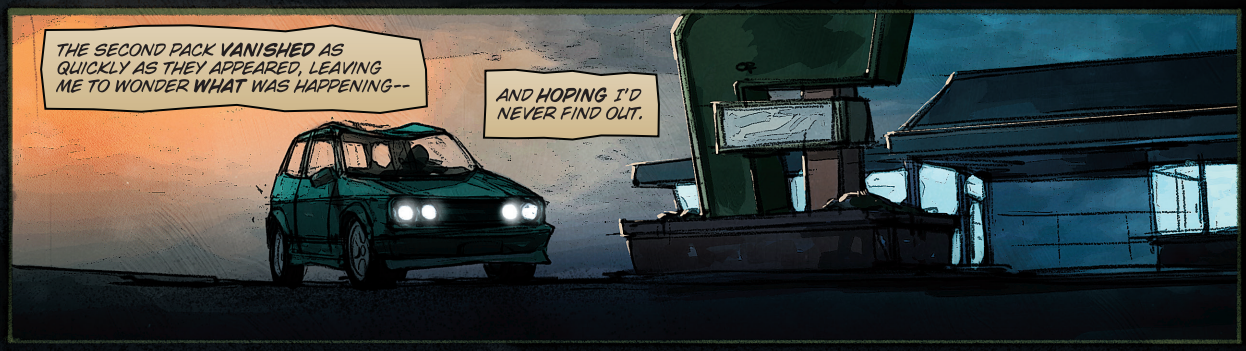

I'M A LITTLE FASTER AND MORE AGILE THAN THE WEREWOLVES.
ENOUGH TO BUY SOME TIME--
BUT THE CAR'S MY ONLY CHANCE.
CLICK!
SHIT!
IT USUALLY STARTS THE SECOND TRY--
CRASSH!
BUT TIME JUST RAN OUT.


CAN'T STAY.
CAN'T RUN.
MY ONLY CHANCE--
FIGHT!
KRAK!!


BUT--
IN THE END--
IT'S NO CHANCE AT ALL.
WHEN THE MARROK COMES LOOKING FOR ME--


TELL HIM I WENT DOWN FIGHTING!
GRRRRR
RRRARR

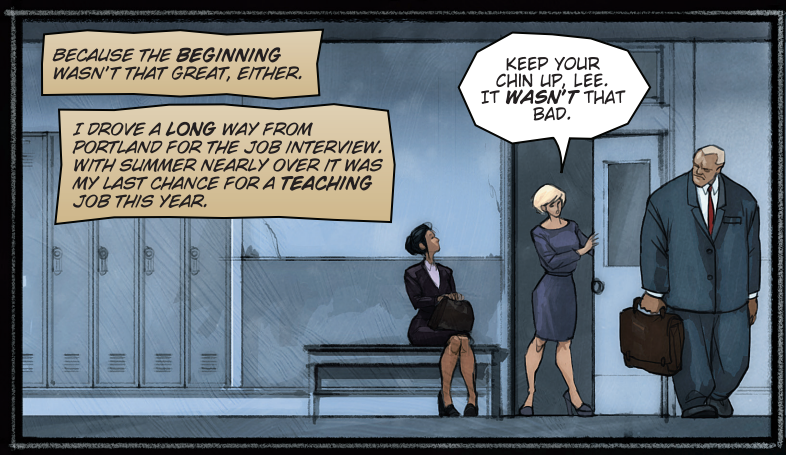

A SECOND WOLF PACK--
PROTECTING ME FROM THE FIRST?
BUT WHY?


THE SECOND PACK VANISHED AS QUICKLY AS THEY APPEARED, LEAVING ME TO WONDER WHAT WAS HAPPENING--
AND HOPING I'D NEVER FIND OUT.

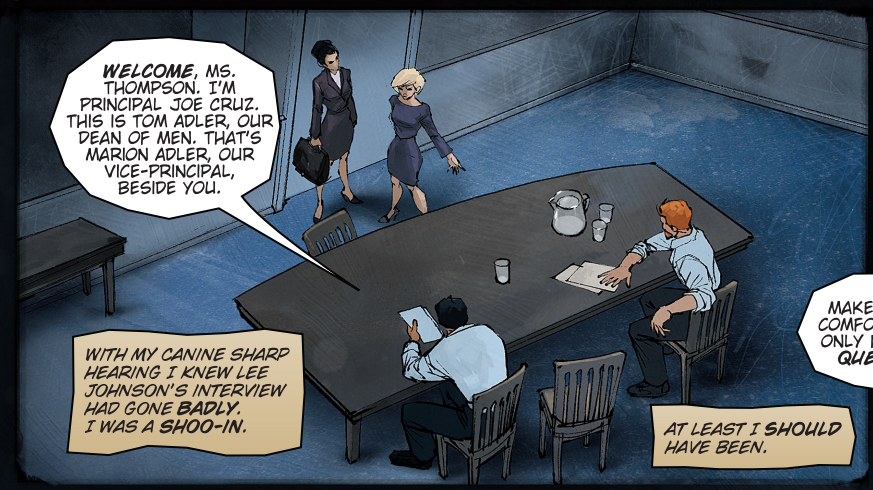

WELCOME BACK, MISS THOMPSON! HOW WAS YOUR...


RUN...

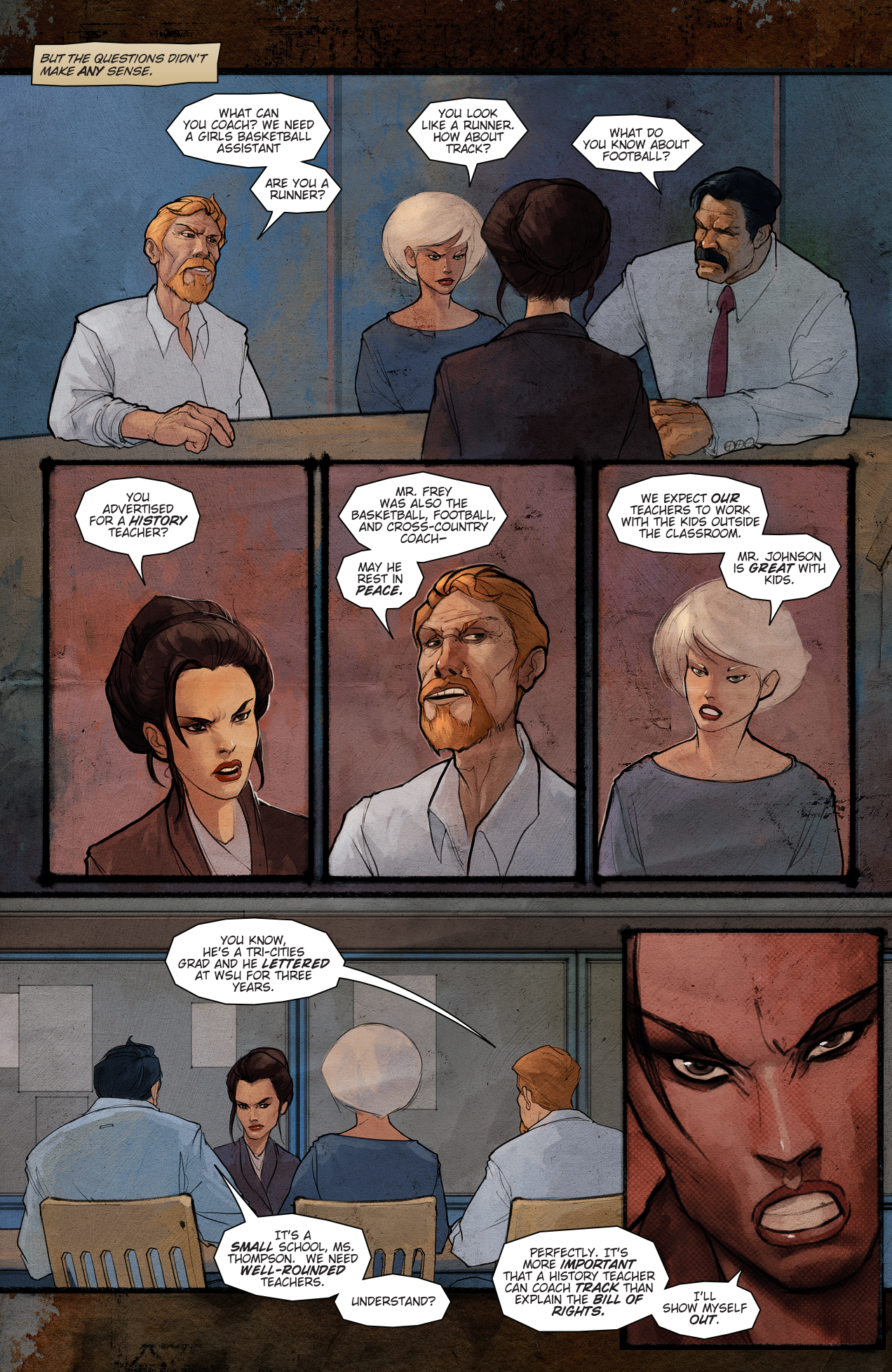

GREAT EXERCISE, MITCHELL.
THANKS SO MUCH FOR THE SUGGESTION.
IT WAS A FITTING END TO MY FIRST DAY IN THE TRI-CITIES--


BECAUSE THE BEGINNING WASN'T THAT GREAT, EITHER.
I DROVE A LONG WAY FROM PORTLAND FOR THE JOB INTERVIEW. WITH SUMMER NEARLY OVER IT WAS MY LAST CHANCE FOR A TEACHING JOB THIS YEAR.
KEEP YOUR CHIN UP, LEE. IT WASN'T THAT BAD.


MS. THOMPSON? YOU'RE NEXT.


WELCOME, MS. THOMPSON. I'M PRINCIPAL JOE CRUZ. THIS IS TOM ADLER, OUR DEAN OF MEN. THAT'S MARION ADLER, OUR VICE-PRINCIPAL, BESIDE YOU.
WITH MY CANINE SHARP HEARING I KNEW LEE JOHNSON'S INTERVIEW HAD GONE BADLY. I WAS A SHOO-IN.
AT LEAST I SHOULD HAVE BEEN.


MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE. WE ONLY HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS.


BUT THE QUESTIONS DIDN'T MAKE ANY SENSE.
WHAT CAN YOU COACH? WE NEED A GIRLS BASKETBALL ASSISTANT
ARE YOU A RUNNER?
YOU LOOK LIKE A RUNNER. HOW ABOUT TRACK?
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT FOOTBALL?
YOU ADVERTISED FOR A HISTORY TEACHER?
MR. FREY WAS ALSO THE BASKETBALL, FOOTBALL, AND CROSS-COUNTRY COACH–
MAY HE REST IN PEACE.
WE EXPECT OUR TEACHERS TO WORK WITH THE KIDS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM.
MR. JOHNSON IS GREAT WITH KIDS.
YOU KNOW, HE'S A TRI-CITIES GRAD AND HE LETTERED AT WSU FOR THREE YEARS.
IT'S A SMALL SCHOOL, MS. THOMPSON. WE NEED WELL-ROUNDED TEACHERS.
UNDERSTAND?
PERFECTLY. IT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAT A HISTORY TEACHER CAN COACH TRACK THAN EXPLAIN THE BILL OF RIGHTS.
I'LL SHOW MYSELF OUT.


IT LOOKED LIKE ANOTHER YEAR IN PORTLAND AND "WOULD YOU LIKE FRIES WITH THAT?"
3:18AM
COMPUTERS? MAYBE MOM WAS RIGHT.
WE NEVER DID SEE EYE-TO-EYE. I KNOW MOM WANTED WHAT WAS BEST FOR ME--
SHE COULDN'T KNOW IT WAS A TOSS UP WHETHER HE'D SIMPLY SNAP MY NECK--
BUT I DON'T THINK SHE EVER UNDERSTOOD THAT SHE HANDED ME OVER TO THE BIGGEST, BADDEST WEREWOLF OF ALL.
OR PERMIT A MEMBER OF THE PACK TO RAISE ME.


VW AND FOREIGN CAR REPAIR
DAY TWO DIDN'T LOOK PROMISING, EITHER. THIS WAS THE CLOSEST VW REPAIR SHOP IN THE PHONE BOOK.
HELLO?
HELLO, LADY. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
IS THERE ANYBODY *WORKING* HERE?
FOREIGN CAR REPAI
- A/C SERVI
- COMPUTER
SURE. WHAT DO YOU *THINK* I'M DOING?
WELL, I HAD A LITTLE *ACCIDENT*--
WHEW! LITTLE ACCIDENT? I'D SAY YOU BROKE EVERYTHING *BUT* THE FAN BELT!
WHAT HAPPENED?
I WENT RUNNING. WHEN I CAME BACK IT WAS LIKE *THIS*.
LOOKS *WORSE* THAN IT IS. IF YOU JUST NEED THE GLASS REPLACED I CAN FINISH IT TODAY.


BUT YOU SHOULD BE MORE CAREFUL, LADY–
IT CAN BE DANGEROUS AROUND HERE.
THE KID WENT STRAIGHT TO WORK, AND HE WAS GOOD.
SW
IT WAS A LONG WAY BACK TO THE HOTEL SO I HUNG AROUND THE SHOP.
I HAD A BLACK AND WHITE TV THAT GOT NOTHING BUT JERRY SPRINGER FOR COMPANY.
THANKS TO HEAT, BOREDOM AND THE SLEEPLESS NIGHT, BEFORE LONG I DOZED OFF.
TILL AN ANGRY VOICE WOKE ME.
STILL NOT DONE?


FATHER HASN'T BEEN IN THIS WEEK.
YOU FOUND TIME TO WORK ON THE GIRL'S CAR.
THAT WAS EASY. I CAN'T PULL A CLUTCH BY MYSELF.
THE MISTRESS DOESN'T WANT EXCUSES. YOUR FATHER WILL PAY FOR HIS CARELESSNESS!
I'D MET HIS KIND BEFORE. HE SMELLED LIKE VAMPIRE BUT IT WAS DAYLIGHT. HE WAS A SHEEP. SOMEONE VAMPIRES FED ON AND USED FOR ERRANDS.
IS THERE A PROBLEM HERE?
NICE CAR. NEEDS A CLUTCH, HUH?
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT. THE WHOLE CAR REEKED OF VAMPIRE.
I'VE REPLACED A FEW IN MY DAY. CAN YOU USE SOME HELP?
I RECOMMEND THE CAR BE FINISHED. SOMEONE WILL BE BACK FOR IT TONIGHT AND--
HE'S NOT AS FORGIVING AS I AM.


DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU'RE WORKING FOR?
SURE.
CAN YOU REALLY CHANGE A CLUTCH?
CAN I?
I DID THE CLUTCH IN A 1943 WILLYS JEEP!
WOW! HOW MUCH EXPERIENCE DO YOU HAVE?
I DID COMMUNITY SERVICE ONE SUMMER AS A MECHANIC'S APPRENTICE.
"COMMUNITY SERVICE? FOR WHAT?"
"TEENAGE SILLINESS."
I DON'T KNOW WHY THE MARROK WAS SO MAD. HE PRACTICALLY DARED ME TO TAKE IT.


HOW'S IT LOOK, LADY?
I'VE NEVER BEEN ACCUSED OF BEING A LADY. CALL ME MERCY.
DO YOU HAVE A NAME?
I'M TAD.
TAD, DOES ANYBODY ELSE WORK HERE? YOU SEEM PRETTY YOUNG TO DO THIS ALL BY YOURSELF.
HEY! I'M OLDER THAN I LOOK!
PRACTICALLY NINE!
IT'S MY FATHER'S GARAGE. I HELP OUT.
NEUSPEED
NINE? WELL I'M SORRY. I GUESS YOU ARE OLD ENOUGH TO HANDLE THE SHOP--
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE VAMPIRES?
YOU KNOW ABOUT VAMPIRES?
I KNOW ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT YOU SHOULDN'T BE DEALING WITH THEM. WHERE IS YOUR FATHER?
NEUSPEED


MOM DIED A FEW WEEKS AGO. DAD'S TAKING IT PRETTY HARD.
NEUSPEED
SUCH A TOUCHING STORY, BUT I'M MORE INTERESTED IN HEARING--
WHY THIS HUMAN KNOWS OF US?
IF YOU'VE BEEN TALKING BOY I'LL DEAL WITH YOU NEXT!


IDIOT!
DO NOT MISJUDGE THE FAE!


SIEBOLD ADELBERTSMITER PAYS US BECAUSE IT IS EASIER THAN FIGHTING.
HARM HIS SON AND I'M CERTAIN HE'LL CHANGE HIS MIND.
STEFAN, SHE IS HUMAN AND SHE KNOWS.
USE YOUR SENSES, FOOL. SHE IS NO MORE HUMAN THAN THE BOY.
NOW GO BEFORE YOU MAKE ANOTHER MISTAKE. I'LL BRING THE MISTRESS HER CAR.
I WAS RIGHT TO WATCH MARKUS. HE IS TOO HOT-HEADED.
IT MAKES HIM A DANGER TO US ALL.
I'M STEFAN. I APOLOGIZE TO BOTH OF YOU FOR THE TROUBLE.
ADEL... BERT...SMITER?
SO YOU SMITE... ADELBERTS?
SHUT UP, LADY.
IF YOU'RE NOT HUMAN, WHAT ARE YOU?
IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN SHE'S A WALKER.


NEOSPEED
A SKINWALKER?
JUST A WALKER. A COYOTE SHAPESHIFTER. SKINWALKERS ARE DIFFERENT--
AND BAD NEWS, ALL OF THEM.
HOW DID YOU KNOW?
I'VE MET A FEW OF YOUR KIND. A LONG TIME AGO. I THOUGH YOU WERE ALL DEAD.
COULD BE.
BEATS BEING UNDEAD, THOUGH.
FIRST TIME I'VE MET A FAE.
FIRST TIME I'VE MET A WALKER.
SO LONG, KID. IT'S BEEN... FUN.
MERCY--
WOULD YOU LIKE A JOB? YOU'RE A GREAT MECHANIC.
NEOSPEED
AND WE SURE COULD USE SOME HELP AROUND HERE.


I CAN'T TAD. I WANT TO BE A TEACHER.
WELL, I'M SURE YOU'LL BE A GOOD ONE. THE BEST.
WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH ME?
WHY DID I LOSE MY TEMPER? MAYBE I STILL HAD A SHOT.
YES, MOM. I'LL BE HOME TOMORROW.
YEAH. COMPUTERS.
KNOCK KNOCK
GOTTA GO, MOM. MY PIZZA'S HERE.
SAVED BY THE BELL!


OR WAS I?
MERCEDES THOMPSON--
I HAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOU.


CHAPTER TWO:
HUNGRY LIKE THE WOLF!



cover artwork by:
francis tsai


THE TARGET'S IN SIGHT.
THE SHAPESHIFTER'S ON THE MOVE--
BUT SHE'S STILL NOT ALONE.
WE CAN HANDLE HIM--
BUT IT WOULD BE PUBLIC, IN FRONT OF MUNDANES. MIGHT GET MESSY.
RIGHT. WHEREVER SHE GOES--
WE'LL BE THERE.


MY NAME IS MERCY THOMPSON. I'M A WALKER, WITH TWO SPECIAL GIFTS. THE ABILITY TO TRANSFORM INTO A COYOTE AT WILL--
AND AN UNFORTUNATE KNACK FOR FINDING TROUBLE.
WHAT ABOUT THE CREEPY HAPPENINGS AT THE OLD KURTZBERG PLACE?
I'LL BET IT'S SIMON THE CARETAKER.
AH, I UNDERSTAND--
YOU JOKE BECAUSE YOU ARE NERVOUS.
DON'T WORRY, MERCY.
LIKE TONIGHT, FOR EXAMPLE.


I'M GOING TO DINNER WITH A VAMPIRE!
I'M NOT GOING TO BITE YOU!


STEFAN, I'M NOT THE ONE WITH THE SCOOBY DOO OBSESSION.
YOU'VE GOT THE VAN PAINTED LIKE THE MYSTERY MACHINE. I'M JUST PLAYING ALONG WITH YOUR JOKE.
LOOKS CLASSY. SO WHAT IS IT?
UNCLE MIKE'S? IT'S THE HANG OUT FOR THE LOCAL FAE--
UNCLE MIKE'S
AND THE THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT.
AH, GOOD EVENING, SELLA--
IF I COULD HAVE ANYTHING IN THE WORLD I'D WISH TO BE BEAUTIFUL AS YOU.
IF YOU WERE YOU'D GET TIRED OF IT RIGHT FAST. BEST JUST TO STAY AS CHARMING AS YOU ARE.
BUT CHARMING OR NOT YOU CAN'T BE BRINGING IN YOUR OWN FOOD...


YOU KNOW UNCLE MIKE DOESN'T ALLOW IT!
TAKE A CLOSER LOOK, SELLA. SHE'S ONE OF US.
NOT FOOD, BUT FRIEND.
MERCY THOMPSON, MEET SELLA.
NICE TO MEET YOU. YOUR OUTFIT IS LOVELY.
SHE SEEMS ALL RIGHT, BUT MIKE WILL HAVE TO CHECK HER OUT.
I UNDERSTAND. WE'LL WAIT.
IS THERE A PROBLEM?
NO. UNCLE MIKE JUST TAKES GUESTING LAWS SERIOUSLY--
TO AVOID PROBLEMS.
VAMPIRE--
WHAT HAVE YOU BROUGHT TO MY HOUSE?
SOMETHING STRANGE AND DIFFERENT--


A VW MECHANIC!
AH, YOU MUST BE THE GIRL THAT ZEE'S SON HIRED! A PLEASURE MY DEAR!
WELCOME! COME IN!
MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME. I'LL BRING YOU A MENU.
YOU EAT FOOD?
I DON'T--
BUT AFTER A HARD DAY I THOUGHT YOU'D BE HUNGRY.
AWFULLY GALLANT--
YOU KNOW, FOR AN EVIL BLOODSUCKER.
I HAVE HELPED YOU. TWICE.
YOU COULD GIVE ME THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT.


I'M HERE, AREN'T I?
AND YOU'RE CERTAINLY MORE *PLEASANT* THAN YOUR FRIEND WAS LAST NIGHT.
UNCLE MIKE


MARKUS? IT WAS A *MISTAKE* TO SEND HIM TO THE GARAGE. HE IS YOUNG, DRUNK WITH HIS POWER AND HAS A PARTICULAR *DISLIKE* FOR THE FAE.
I THOUGHT THERE MIGHT BE *TROUBLE*.


AND OUT OF THE *GOODNESS* OF YOUR HEART YOU THOUGHT YOU'D PREVENT IT?
IT IS *POSSIBLE*, YOU KNOW.

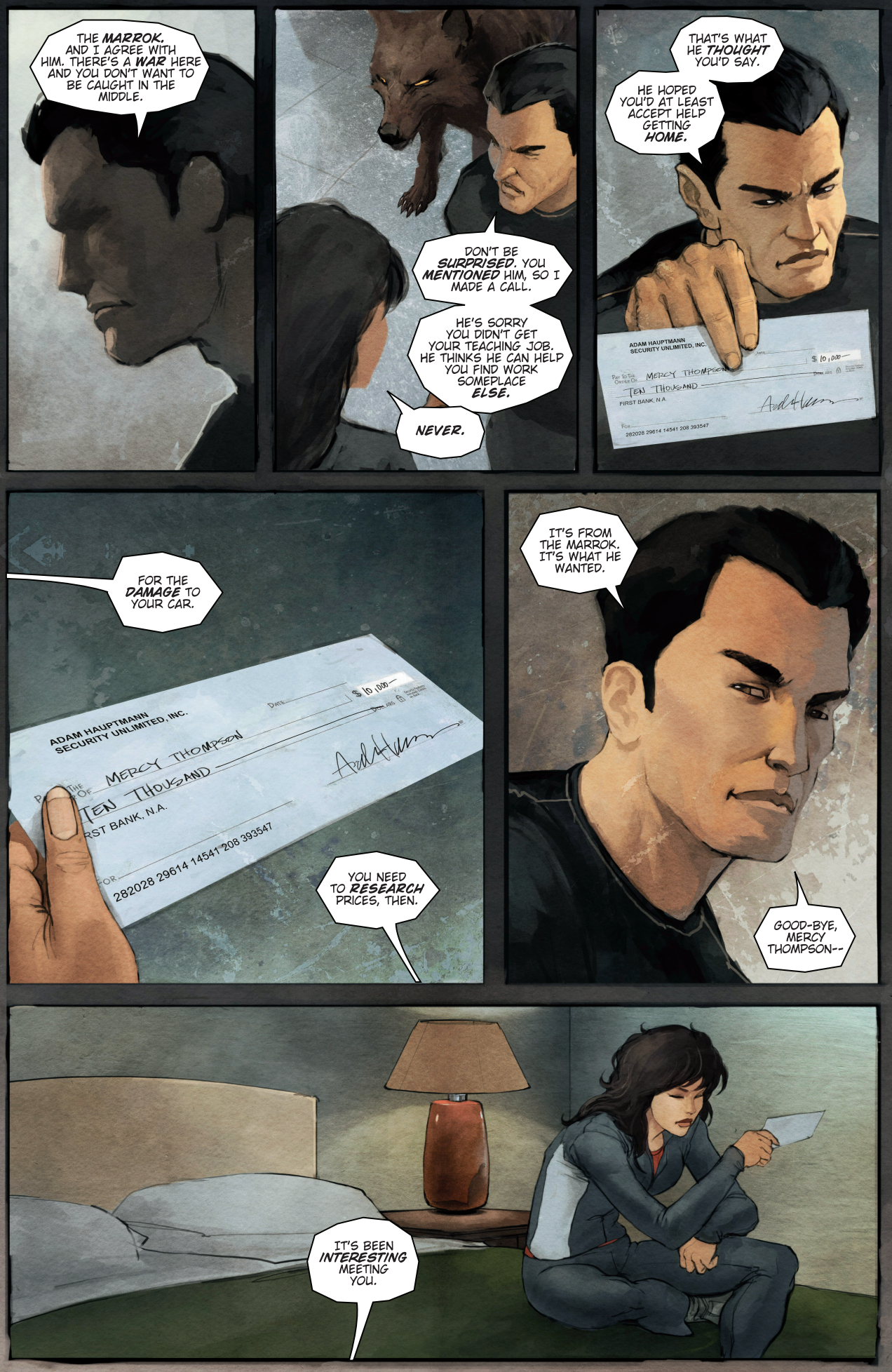

HONESTLY, THE *SEETHE* DOES NOT NEED AN ENEMY AS *POWERFUL* AS SIEBOLD ADELBERTSMITER--
PARTICULARLY IN HIS *CURRENT* STATE OF MIND.


"HAVE YOU MET YOUR EMPLOYER?"
"THAT'S *HIM*?"


"HE HASN'T BEEN IN HIS RIGHT MIND SINCE HIS WIFE DIED. HE'S A DANGER TO HIMSELF AND *OTHERS*."
"HUMAN AND IMMORTAL FAE SHOULD *NOT* MATE."


SORRY I TOOK SO LONG. I DON'T LIKE TROUBLE IN MY PLACE.
THERE, STEFAN. FRESH TONIGHT.
CABERNET?
I DUNT DRINK...
...VINE.
FOR YOU DEAR, A COLA. NO DRINKING ON YOU FIRST VISIT--
ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU COME WITH A VAMPIRE.
I NEARLY FORGOT. SOMEONE LEFT A MESSAGE FOR YOU WITH SELLA AT THE DOOR.
Mercy
LET ME GUESS. I'VE JUST WON A MILLION DOLLARS.
BAD NEWS?
MERCY—
GO HOME.
—BRAN
WHY IS BRAN CORNICK, THE MARROK WHO RULES THE WEREWOLVES, SO INTERESTED IN YOU?
YOU ARE NOT A WEREWOLF.


HE RAISED ME–
AND THINKS HE CAN STILL GIVE ME ORDERS.
MERCEDES THOMPSON, I HAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOU...
WELL, YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY NOT THE PIZZA MAN--
DO YOU MIND TELLING ME JUST WHO YOU ARE?
OF COURSE, I KNEW WHAT HE WAS, IF NOT WHO--
AN ALPHA WEREWOLF, LEADER OF HIS PACK.
I'M ADAM HAUPTMAN, OF THE COLUMBIA BASIN WOLF PACK. BESIDE ME IS MY SECOND, DARRYL ZAO.
ARE YOU GOING TO ASK US IN?
DO I HAVE A CHOICE?
GET INSIDE BEFORE SOMEONE CALLS ANIMAL CONTROL. THE COLLAR REALLY DOESN'T MAKE HIM LOOK LIKE A DOG.
YOU'D ATTRACT LESS ATTENTION IF HE WERE HUMAN, YOU KNOW.
AND BE LESS READY TO RESIST AN ATTACK.
THE FAMILIAR BRINDLE PATTERNED WOLF WAS REASSURANCE. I RECOGNIZED HIM FROM THE PACK THAT SAVED ME THE NIGHT BEFORE.
I SHOULD THANK YOU FOR THE HELP LAST NIGHT.
YOU WERE LUCKY. THIS TIME.
IT'S NOT SAFE FOR YOU HERE.
SAYS WHO?


THE MARROK. AND I AGREE WITH HIM. THERE'S A WAR HERE AND YOU DON'T WANT TO BE CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE.
DON'T BE SURPRISED. YOU MENTIONED HIM, SO I MADE A CALL.
HE'S SORRY YOU DIDN'T GET YOUR TEACHING JOB. HE THINKS HE CAN HELP YOU FIND WORK SOMEPLACE ELSE.
NEVER.
THAT'S WHAT HE THOUGHT YOU'D SAY.
HE HOPED YOU'D AT LEAST ACCEPT HELP GETTING HOME.
ADAM HAUPTMANN
SECURITY UNLIMITED, INC.
Pay To The Order Of MERCY THOMPSON
$ 10,000
TEN THOUSAND
FIRST BANK, N.A
282028 29614 14541 208 393547
FOR THE DAMAGE TO YOUR CAR.
ADAM HAUPTMANN
SECURITY UNLIMITED, INC.
MERCY THOMPSON
TEN THOUSAND
$ 10,000
282028 29614 14541 208 393547
YOU NEED TO RESEARCH PRICES, THEN.
IT'S FROM THE MARROK. IT'S WHAT HE WANTED.
GOOD-BYE, MERCY THOMPSON--
IT'S BEEN INTERESTING MEETING YOU.


Holiday Inn
OF AMERICA
WELCOME
ZTA ARCHITECTS


HEY, KID--
FLOWMASTER
THAT JOB STILL AVAILABLE?
MERCY!
SURE, BUT I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING HOME?
THINK I'LL STICK AROUND FOR A WHILE.
IT'S TOO LATE TO FIND A TEACHING JOB THIS YEAR--
AND MERCY THE MECHANIC SOUNDS A WHOLE LOT BETTER THAN "WOULD YOU LIKE FRIES WITH THAT BURGER" TO ME!


THE WORK WAS HARDER THAN I REMEMBERED--
BUT IT BEAT SWEATING OVER A DEEP-FRYER. FUNNY--
IF IT WASN'T FOR THE MARROK, I'D HAVE BEEN HOME IN PORTLAND BY NOW.
I'D HAVE TO REMEMBER TO THANK HIM.
YOU NEED A LIFT HOME?
NAH. I LIVE RIGHT UP THE STREET.
SEE YA TOMORROW!


HEY!!!
NO USE FIGHTING, MISSY--
YOU'RE COMING WITH ME!
GETTING SNATCHED BY A GOON WAS BAD ENOUGH--
BUT I RECOGNIZED THE SCENT. THIS WAS A WEREWOLF--
PART OF THE PACK THAT ATTACKED ME!
GET IN!
OW!!!
LITTLE BITCH!
SMACK!
LIKE I SAID--
YOU'RE COMING WITH ME.


NO--
I DON'T THINK SO.
THIS IS NOT YOUR AFFAIR, VAMPIRE--
AND YOU DON'T FRIGHTEN ME.
I CAN TAKE YOU.
PERHAPS, WOLFEN. IF YOU CAN COMPLETE YOUR TRANSFORMATION--
BEFORE I RIP OUT YOUR THROAT.
THIS ISN'T OVER, BLOOD-SUCKER.


AND THEN SOME IDIOT TURNED OUT THE LIGHTS...
THIS IS THE SECOND TIME I WOKE UP AND FOUND YOU HOVERING AROUND. ARE YOU FOLLOWING ME?
WORD TRAVELS FAST IN OUR LITTLE COMMUNITY. I HEARD YOU WERE WORKING HERE--
AND WISHED TO APOLOGIZE AGAIN FOR LAST NIGHT.
I'M WOOZY, NOT STUPID. WANT TO TRY AGAIN?
VERY WELL. YESTERDAY, YOU WERE MERELY A VISITOR, BUT NOW IT APPEARS YOU MAY TAKE UP RESIDENCE AND MY MISTRESS LIKES TO KEEP TRACK OF ANY NIGHT CREATURES THAT MOVE TO TOWN.
ARE MORE OF YOU COMING?
MORE?
I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF THERE ARE MORE OF ME.
WHOA--
YOU OBVIOUSLY CAN'T DRIVE.
I'LL TAKE YOU HOME TO CLEAN UP. MAYBE GET YOU A BITE TO EAT IF YOU LIKE?
OKAY--
BUT PLEASE DON'T SAY "BITE"...


INTERESTING TO MEET YOU, DEAR. DO COME AGAIN.
WHY DOES EVERYBODY SAY THAT WHEN THEY MEET ME?
YOU'D THINK NO ONE EVER ASKED FOR A DOGGIE BAG BEFORE.
VRRRRRMM
SCREEEECH!
WHAT?!?
I SAID THIS WASN'T OVER!
YOU DON'T LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES, DO YOU?


ACTUALLY, I DO.
THIS TIME, I BROUGHT A FRIEND.
RRRAARRR




MIKE! THERE'S TROUBLE OUTSIDE!
BAD TROUBLE!


THUNK!
THAT FELT GOOD.
VAMPIRE--


THIS IS THE SECOND TIME YOU'VE INTERFERED IN MY BUSINESS.
DON'T DO IT AGAIN.
MS. THOMPSON--
WE WILL TALK--
LATER.


CHAPTER THREE:
CRY WOLF!

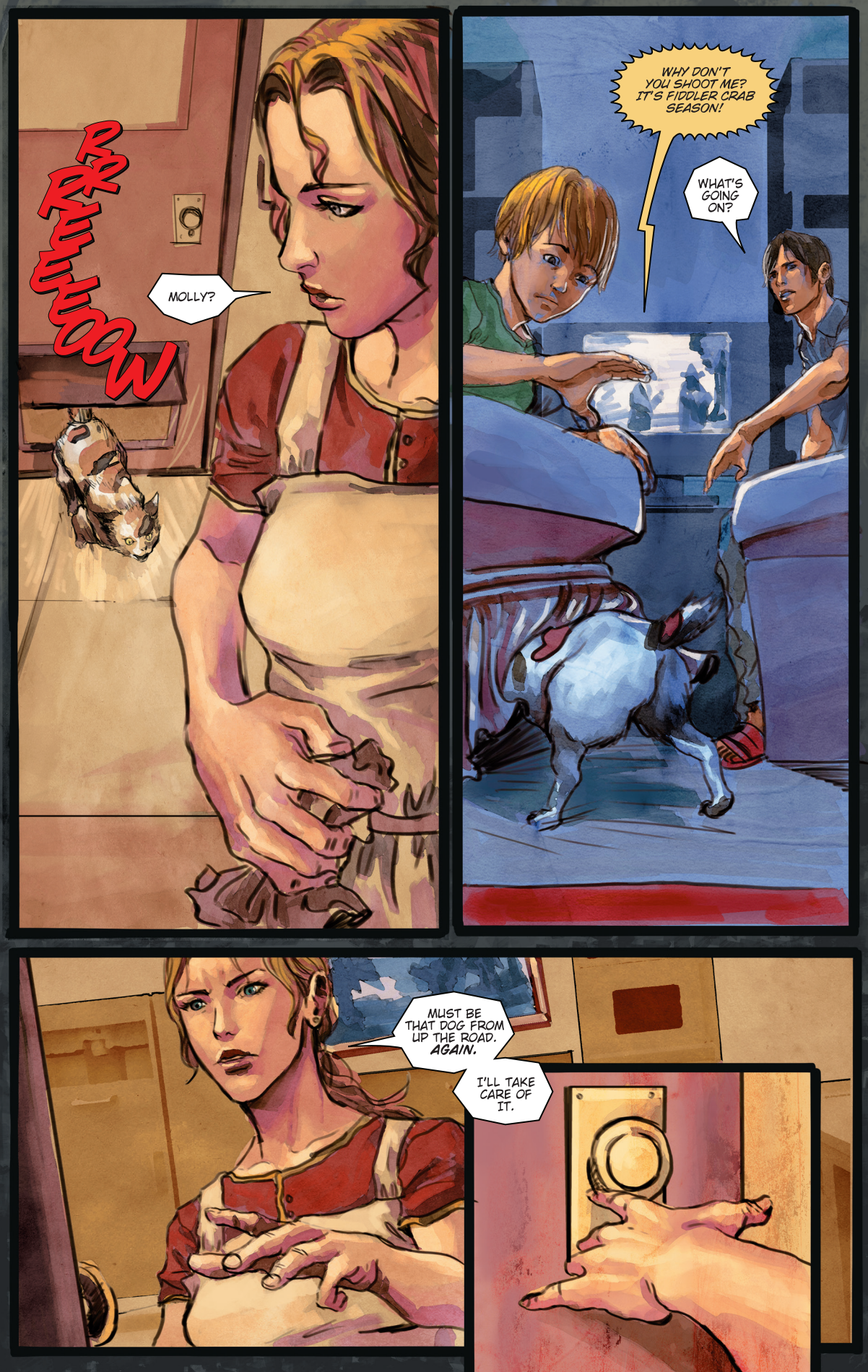


cover artwork by:
francis tsai


I GREW UP WITH WEREWOLVES. I UNDERSTAND THEM.
I KNOW WHAT THEY'LL ATTACK--
AND WHAT THEY WON'T.
BUT I NEVER FACED ROGUE WOLVES BEFORE.


NORMALLY, WEREWOLVES SHUN HUMANS.


THEY CLING TO THE SHADOWS, AVOIDING THE LIGHT.
BECAUSE THEY KNOW, DESPITE THEIR STRENGTH THEY'RE GREATLY OUTNUMBERED, SAFER WHEN HUMANS THINK THEM A MYTH.
BUT ROGUES ARE DIFFERENT...


RRREEEOOW
MOLLY?
WHY DON'T YOU SHOOT ME? IT'S FIDDLER CRAB SEASON!
WHAT'S GOING ON?
MUST BE THAT DOG FROM UP THE ROAD. AGAIN.
I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.


THEY JUST DON'T CARE.
RRRAARRR
NO!


LITTLE OLD LADY GOT MUTILATED LATE LAST NIGHT...WEREWOLVES OF LONDON AG--
CLICK
MERCY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
HUH? OH, NOTHING STEFAN--
JUST A CHILL, I GUESS.
YOU SHOULD SEE A DOCTOR. YOU TOOK A BEATING TODAY.
THAT WOULD GO WELL. "WHAT HAPPENED, MISS?"
"I GOT TOSSED AROUND BY A WEREWOLF. OH, AND I WAS A COYOTE AT THE TIME..."
LET'S JUST GET THIS OVER WITH.
VERDAMMTE WOLVES...
GUESS I SHOWED 'EM...
IS HE ALWAYS THIS CHARMING?

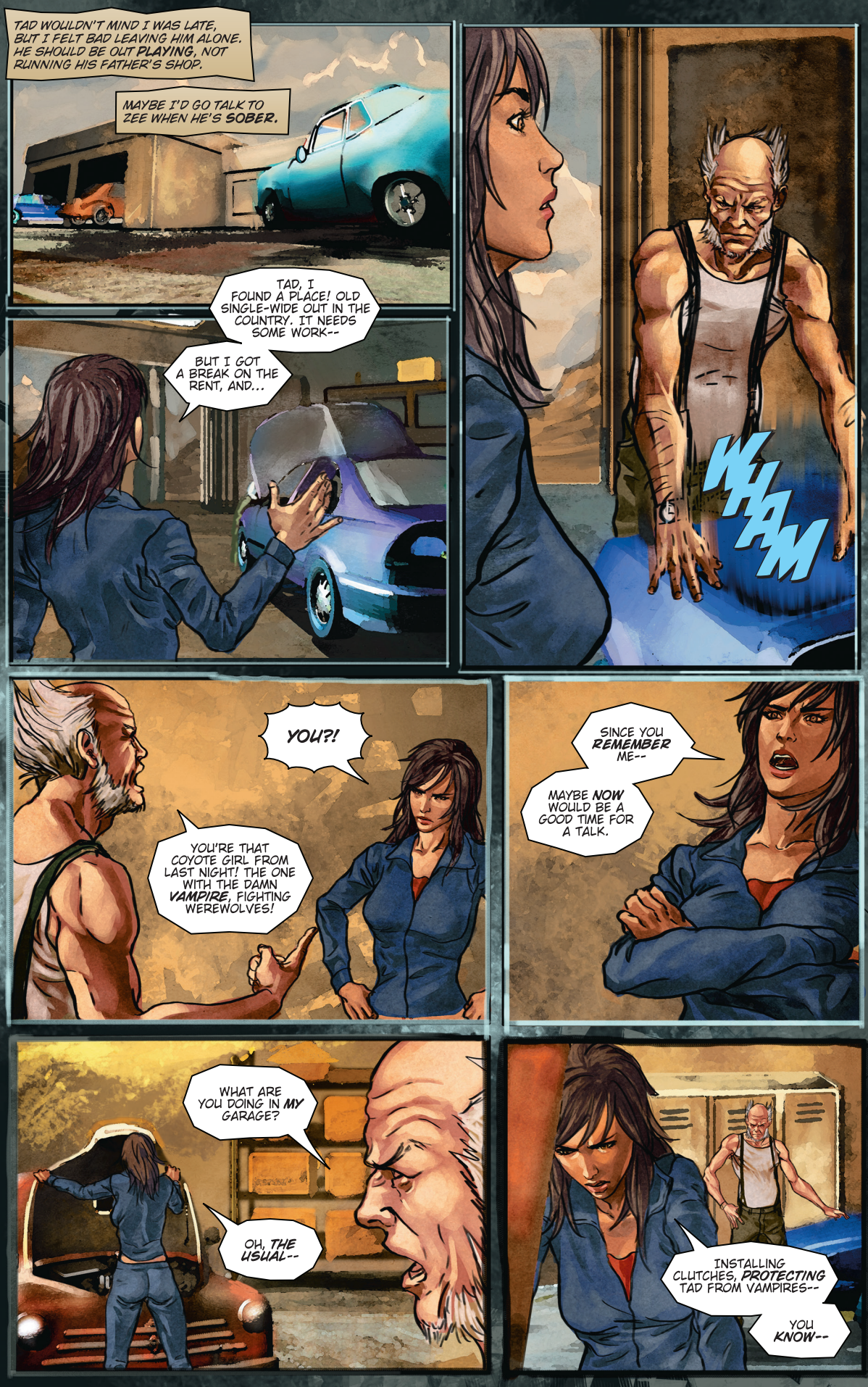

HE'S NOT BEEN HIMSELF SINCE HIS WIFE DIED.
USUALLY HE'S MUCH WORSE.
DO YOU ALWAYS DO THAT?
WHAT?
HELP.
WHEN THE WEREWOLF ATTACKED, YOU SHOULD HAVE RUN WHEN YOU HAD THE CHANCE. YOU COULD HAVE BEEN KILLED.
MAYBE FOR A MINUTE I FORGOT YOU WERE AN EVIL BLOODSUCKER--
OR MAYBE I REMEMBERED THE TIMES YOU HELPED ME. THAT MAKES YOU A FRIEND, STEFAN--
AND I DON'T RUN OUT ON MY FRIENDS.
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE WE WAKE TAD. I DON'T WANT HIM TO SEE HIS FATHER LIKE THIS.
"POOR KID'S BEEN THROUGH ENOUGH."


HELLO, MS. THOMPSON.
YOU!
MR. HAUPTMAN. I'LL NEVER BE LONELY HERE, WILL I?
STILL IN TOWN, I SEE. NOT VERY SMART.
MAYBE NOT--
BUT I DISLIKE BEING TOLD WHAT TO DO. DIDN'T BRAN MENTION THAT?
I HEARD ABOUT THE FIGHT AT UNCLE MIKE'S. YOU MAY NOT BE SO LUCKY NEXT TIME.
THE MARROK HAS YOUR BEST INTERESTS AT HEART.
GO HOME. WHILE YOU CAN.


THE NEXT MORNING...
CHECKING OUT, MS. THOMPSON.
YES.
TIME TO GO HOME.
LIKE I SAID--
I DON'T LIKE BEING TOLD WHAT TO DO.
AT $59 A NIGHT, I COULDN'T AFFORD THE HOLIDAY INN ANY LONGER.
NO WAY I WAS GOING BACK TO MOM'S AND FAST FOOD--
BUT IF I WERE GOING TO STAY I NEEDED TO FIND A PLACE FAST.
THE FIRST WAS TIDY BUT SO SMALL--
I COULD HEAR THE NEIGHBORS VOICES AND SMELL SOMEONE UPSTAIRS SMOKING POT.
IT WOULD NEVER DO.


I THOUGHT THE NEXT APARTMENT, OVER A GARAGE, MIGHT WORK.
IT WOULD CERTAINLY OFFER MORE PRIVACY--
BUT THAT WAS THE ONLY GOOD THING I COULD SAY ABOUT IT.
PLUS, IT WAS OWNED BY A JUDGMENTAL OLD HAG--
WHO GOT ONE LOOK AT MY TATOO AND DECIDED I WAS THE DRUG-DEALING WHORE OF BABYLON.
I HAD A GOOD LAUGH AT HER EXPENSE--
BUT IT DIDN'T GET ME ANY CLOSER TO FINDING A HOME.


ONE LAST STOP, AND IT DIDN'T LOOK LIKE MUCH EITHER.
STILL, THERE WAS FRESH AIR AND PLENTY OF SPACE.
SURE, IT NEEDED WORK, BUT IT WASN'T THAT BAD.
MAYBE, JUST MAYBE--
IT WAS A PLACE A COYOTE COULD CALL HOME.


TAD WOULDN'T MIND I WAS LATE, BUT I FELT BAD LEAVING HIM ALONE. HE SHOULD BE OUT PLAYING, NOT RUNNING HIS FATHER'S SHOP.
MAYBE I'D GO TALK TO ZEE WHEN HE'S SOBER.
TAD, I FOUND A PLACE! OLD SINGLE-WIDE OUT IN THE COUNTRY. IT NEEDS SOME WORK--
BUT I GOT A BREAK ON THE RENT, AND...
KHAM
YOU?!
YOU'RE THAT COYOTE GIRL FROM LAST NIGHT! THE ONE WITH THE DAMN VAMPIRE, FIGHTING WEREWOLVES!
SINCE YOU REMEMBER ME--
MAYBE NOW WOULD BE A GOOD TIME FOR A TALK.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY GARAGE?
OH, THE USUAL--
INSTALLING CLUTCHES, PROTECTING TAD FROM VAMPIRES--
YOU KNOW--


STUFF YOU SHOULD BE DOING. TAD'S A GREAT KID, BUT DESPITE WHAT HE THINKS HE'S JUST A KID.
SOMEONE SHOULD TAKE BETTER CARE OF HIM!
IF THERE IS TROUBLE HERE YOU AND YOUR VAMPIRE FRIEND BROUGHT IT.
THIS IS MY SHOP. NO ONE WORKS HERE BUT ME. GET OUT!
YOU WORK HERE, THEN. IT'S ABOUT TIME, I'D SAY!
TELL TAD I SAID GOOD-BYE!
SLAM


AND I THOUGHT WEREWOLVES WERE TERRITORIAL.
BUT WHY DID I PUSH ZEE SO HARD? DAMN TEMPER.
SOMEDAY--
THUD
IT'S GONNA GET ME IN TROUBLE...


GREETINGS, MS. THOMPSON.
I WAS AFRAID WE'D *LOST* YOU.
THEN YOUR *GOON* THERE SHOULDN'T HAVE CRACKED ME OVER THE HEAD. IT'S A PRETTY FINE LINE BETWEEN KNOCKING SOMEBODY OUT AND *KILLING* THEM--
AND YOU'VE GONE TO SO *MUCH* TROUBLE TO GET ME HERE I'M PRETTY SURE YOU WANT ME ALIVE.
YOU'VE TURNED DOWN SO MANY *FRIENDLIER* INVITATIONS THAT VICTOR HAD NO OTHER CHOICE.
HE *HATES* TO DISAPPOINT ME.
SO WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
TIPS ON DECORATING?
DON'T *TRY* MY PATIENCE! YOU'VE BEEN TROUBLE *ENOUGH!*
STUPID. ANGER AN *ALPHA.*
I SHOULD KNOW BETTER.


I'M NOT AS STRONG AS THE WOLVES. I'M OUTNUMBERED.
BUT THEY'RE OVERCONFIDENT. WHAT I NEED IS A PLAN--
AND TO RUN LIKE HELL!
SHE'S GETTING AWAY!
STOP HER!


GGRRRAAGHHRRR


HA! HA! HA!
MS. THOMPSON, YOU'RE PRICELESS! YOU'RE EVERYTHING THEY SAID YOU WERE AND MORE!
DID YOU REALLY THINK WE'D LEAVE THAT DOOR UNGUARDED?
I WAS SORT OF HOPING.
WOLVES ARE KNOWN MORE FOR RAW STRENGTH THAN BRAINS, AFTER ALL.
I'M A DIFFERENT KIND OF WOLF--
AND I GET WHAT I WANT.
WHICH IS--
ASIDE FROM HASSLING ME FOR NO PARTICULAR REASON, EXACTLY WHAT?
THIS TERRITORY. IT'S MINE--
BRAN HAD NO RIGHT TO SEND HAUPTMAN AND HIS PACK TO TRY TO STEAL IT!
SINCE HE WON'T TALK TO ME--
YOU'RE GOING TO HELP.


I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU THINK I--
YOU BELONG TO BRAN, HIS PRECIOUS PET. EVERYONE KNOWS IT.
HE'LL LISTEN TO YOU.
I DON'T THINK SO.
FIRST, I DON'T BELONG TO BRAN. OR ANYBODY. SECOND, FROM THE LOOKS OF THINGS--
YOU'VE BEEN BREAKING ALL THE RULES.
I UNDERSTOOD NOW WHY BRAN HAD SENT ADAM HAUPTMAN. THESE OUT OF CONTROL ROGUES ENDANGERED EVERYBODY.
AFTER WHAT YOU'VE DONE HERE, I CAN'T HELP YOU--
AND I WOULDN'T IF I COULD.
PROBABLY NOT FOR YOUR OWN SAKE, NO MATTER WHAT WE TRIED--
BUT IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE.
HOPE, BRING DOWN THE BOY.


THE POOR ORPHAN HAD SUCH AN AWFUL DAY ALREADY.
I HOPE YOU'LL RECONSIDER?
I'LL DO WHAT YOU WANT. JUST LET HIM BE.
I WANT A MEETING. TALK TO HAUPTMANN--
AND LET HIM KNOW WHAT HAPPENS IF HE DECLINES.
ADAM? THIS IS MERCY THOMPSON. THERE'S SOMEONE HERE WHO WANTS TO SPEAK WITH YOU--
AND HE HAS HOSTAGES.
HOSTAGES?
YES. A BOY, ABOUT FOUR--
AND ME...
PUT HIM ON.
HAUPTMANN, THIS IS ORSON PARK.
I WANT YOU OUT OF MY TOWN.


I SAW TO THE BOY WHILE PARK NEGOTIATED WITH ADAM.
IT WAS ALL CLEAR NOW.
BRAN HAD SENT ADAM'S PACK TO WIPE OUT THE ROGUES.
THEY MIGHT HAVE DONE IT THAT FIRST NIGHT, IF I HADN'T GOT IN THE WAY.
PARK ISSUED A CHALLENGE FOR THE TERRITORY. ADAM ACCEPTED. HE HAD NO CHOICE, REALLY.
HE DIDN'T WANT INNOCENT BLOOD ON HIS HANDS--
ANY MORE THAN I DID.
HE ACCEPTS.
A FIGHT TO THE DEATH BETWEEN HAUPTMAN AND PARK FOR CONTROL OF THE TERRITORY.
THE ROGUES HAVE JUST WHAT THEY WANTED.
SUCKERS.


MY RELEASE WAS PART OF ADAM'S PRICE FOR ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE.
THEY WERE KEEPING THE BOY TILL JUST BEFORE THE FIGHT, FOR INSURANCE.
I WAS SAFE NOW. THE ROGUE WOLVES DIDN'T CONSIDER ME A THREAT--
AND THEY HAD NO MORE USE FOR ME EITHER.
THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO TO HELP ANYONE. NOT THE BOY, NOT ADAM, NOT EVEN TAD.
NO ONE NEEDED ME.
I HAD A NEW HOME AND NO JOB.
I COULD PUT MY TAIL BETWEEN MY LEGS AND RUN--
OR I COULD DO THE UNTHINKABLE.
I'D LIKE AN APPLICATION, PLEASE.


CHAPTER FOUR:
BLOOD MOON



cover artwork by:
francis tsai


HOPE, LET HIM BE. YOU'VE TOO LITTLE SELF-CONTROL AS IS--
AND WE NEED THE BOY 'TILL I KILL HAUPTMAN. AFTER THAT, HE'S ALL YOURS, BUT HONESTLY--
HE'S HARDLY EVEN A SNACK.


IT'S THE WAY COYOTES ARE MEANT TO LIVE.
IN THE WILD, AWAY FROM THE CLAUSTROPHOBIC CROWDING OF A CITY.
SKY ABOVE, MOTHER EARTH BENEATH MY FEET.
FREE...
THOMPSON!


$2.95
99¢
STOP DAYDREAMING AND GET TO WORK!
IF YOU STILL WANT MORE HOURS THAT'S NOT THE WAY TO GET THEM!
SORRY, CHRISTINE. IT'S BEEN A LONG DAY. I'M WORKING A SPLIT.
WOULD YOU LIKE FRIES WITH THAT, SIR?


UNDERSTAND, I WANTED TO DO THE BEST JOB I COULD--
BUT I COULDN'T GET THAT POOR ORPHAN BOY OUT OF MY MIND.
OR THE FIGHT TO THE DEATH THAT WOULD SETTLE HIS FATE, EITHER.
IT DIDN'T HELP THAT, EVEN IN HUMAN FORM, MY SENSES ARE HEIGHTENED. I NEEDED THIS JOB, BUT IT WAS A NIGHTMARE COME TRUE.
I COULD HEAR EVERY MEANINGLESS WORD AT THE TABLES--
ALMOST TASTE THE OVERPOWERING STENCH OF SEARING ANIMAL FLESH AND CHEMICAL ADDITIVES.
I FELT LIKE A FLAT FAILURE. I HADN'T GOT THE JOB AS A TEACHER THAT I'D COME FOR.
GOTTEN FIRED FROM A JOB I LOVED, AS A MECHANIC.
NOW THE QUESTION IS--
WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?


...DAMNED LOUSY PIECE OF--
GOOD EVENING, ZEE.
PLEASANT AS ALWAYS, I SEE.
I'M CLOSED FOR THE NIGHT, VAMPIRE.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
YOU WERE IN NO SHAPE FOR BUSINESS LAST TIME WE MET--
AND THANKS TO THE TROUBLE WITH MARKUS, I NEGLECTED TO PAY WHEN I PICKED IT UP.
TO GIVE YOU THIS. PAYMENT FOR THE WORK ON MARSILIA'S CAR.
TROUBLE?
AN ALTERCATION WITH MARKUS AND YOUR SON. YOU DIDN'T KNOW?
MERCY STEPPED IN. WITHOUT HER, TAD MIGHT HAVE BEEN INJURED BEFORE I COULD ACT.
DID SHE LEAVE FOR THE DAY?


IT'S CALLED JUMP OFF JOE, AND I'D OVERHEARD ENOUGH OF THEIR PHONE CALL TO KNOW THAT THIS WAS THE PLACE WHERE ADAM HAUPTMAN WOULD FACE ORSON PARK.
IT SEEMED A GOOD PLACE TO DIE. I'VE NEVER SEEN A PLACE SO DESOLATE OR FELT MORE...
ALONE?
AH, MR. HAUPTMAN. WE'VE GOT TO STOP MEETING LIKE THIS.
WE COULD, IF YOU'D DO AS YOU'RE TOLD AND GO HOME. THE MARROK...
ISN'T IN CHARGE OF ME ANYMORE.
WHAT BRINGS YOU OUT HERE ON THIS LOVELY NIGHT? ANOTHER LECTURE?
I CAME TO CHECK OUT THE GROUND. PARK IS FAMILIAR WITH IT. I'M NOT.
I DON'T WANT ANY SURPRISES.


THAT INCLUDES YOU, BY THE WAY.
PARK'S BRINGING THE BOY WITH HIM. I'LL HAVE MY HANDS FULL. DON'T NEED TWO OF YOU HERE TO WATCH OUT FOR.
DON'T WORRY. I'LL STAY OUT OF YOUR WAY.
THAT WAS TRUE. BUT I DIDN'T PROMISE I WOULDN'T BE AROUND.
THERE'S NO POINT LYING TO A WEREWOLF, ESPECIALLY AN ALPHA LIKE ADAM HAUPTMAN. WITH THEIR SHARP SENSES THEY'LL CATCH YOU EVERY TIME.
BEST TO LET THEM THINK YOU AGREE WITH THEM AND CHANGE THE SUBJECT.
YOU KNOW, I COULD ALMOST FEEL SORRY FOR PARK. I'VE GOT A SOFT SPOT FOR WOLVES WHO STAND UP TO THE MARROK.
BUT WHAT THEY DID TO THAT FAMILY...
ADAM, THEY'VE BEEN EATING HUMANS, THAT WHOLE PACK. YOU'VE GOT TO KILL THEM ALL.
I WILL. AND SAVE THE HOSTAGES, TOO.
HOSTAGES? ISN'T IT JUST THE BOY?
THEY WOULDN'T LET YOU GO UNLESS I AGREED TO AN EXCHANGE. THEY'VE GOT DARRYL.
YOU TRADED YOUR SECOND? I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU THOUGHT I WAS WORTH IT.
I DON'T--
BUT THE MARROK DOES.

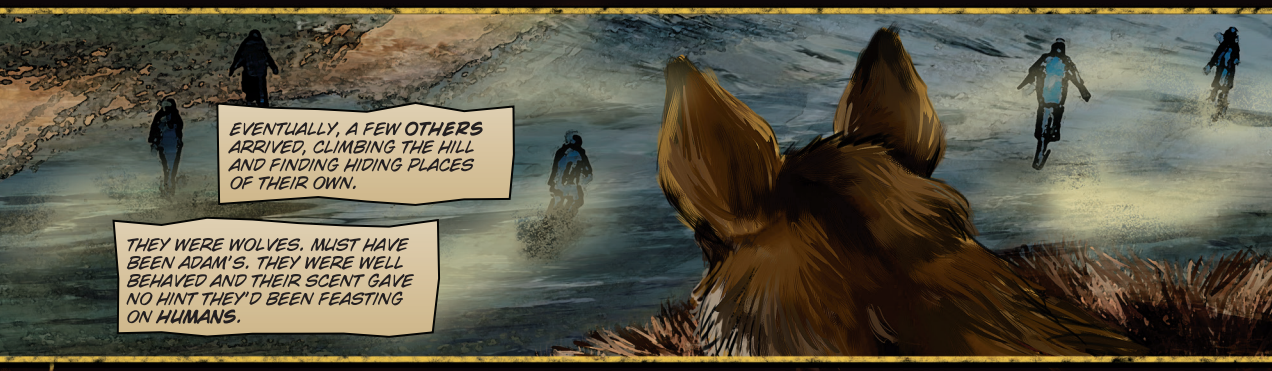

SO WHY DID I HAVE MY FOSTER FATHER'S GUNS OUT?
HAUPTMAN COULD TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF, OR THE MARROK WOULDN'T HAVE SENT HIM.
BESIDES, I WASN'T A WEREWOLF, AND CLEARLY THEY DIDN'T WANT ME AROUND--
ANY MORE THAN BRAN HAD, WHEN I WAS SIXTEEN AND HE SENT ME AWAY...
KNOCK KNOCK

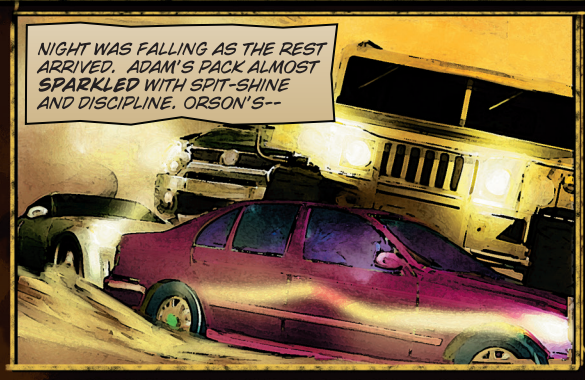

IT'S A LITTLE LATE FOR VISITORS. I HAVE TO WORK IN THE MORNING.
THIS WON'T TAKE LONG.
I HAD A CHAT WITH OUR FAVORITE VAMPIRE.
WE HAVE A FAVORITE VAMPIRE?
STEFAN SAYS THAT YOU STOOD UP FOR MY SON.
TAD'S COOL.
CAN'T HELP WHO HE'S RELATED TO.
SO--

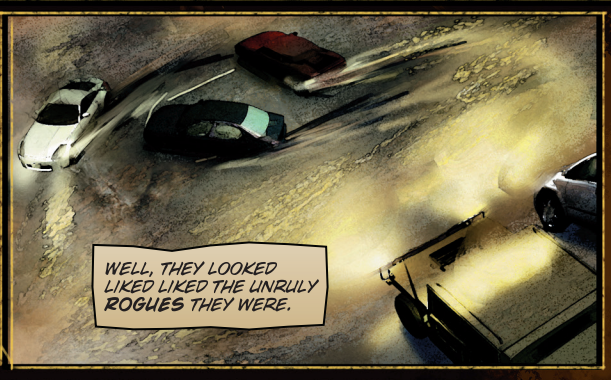

GUY FROM EUGENE BROUGHT IN A VANAGON WITH RUNNING LIGHTS THAT SWITCH ON AND OFF AT RANDOM.
ANY IDEA WHAT THE PROBLEM IS?
IT'S PRETTY WET IN EUGENE. PROBABLY THE FUSES. OLD EUROPEAN ONES ARE COPPER ON BOTH ENDS.
WHEN THEY SIT IN THE DAMP TOO LONG, THEY GET THAT GREEN STUFF. WON'T CONDUCT ELECTRICITY.
GREEN STUFF?
A PATINA-- SOMETIMES CALLED VERDIGRIS, MADE MOSTLY FROM THREE DIFFERENT COMPOUNDS.
ONE IS AZURITE, BUT I FORGET THE OTHER TWO. COMES FROM OXIDIZATION OF COPPER IN THE PRESENCE OF MOISTURE. YOU KNOW...
GREEN STUFF!
IS THIS AN INTERVIEW?
SOMEONE BRINGS A BUG IN, SAYS THE VALVES ARE NOISY.
OLDER VW VALVES ARE USUALLY NOISY. YOU CAN TRY ADJUSTING THEM, BUT USUALLY THEY JUST GO BACK TO BEING NOISY. SOMETIMES CHANGING THE KIND OF OIL YOU USE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
MISS THOMPSON, I'D LIKE TO OFFER YOU A JOB IN MY SHOP.
I'LL BE GRUMPY MOST DAYS, AND WORSE THAN THAT ON THE OTHER. I'LL RIDE YOU HARD AND YOU'LL WORK SEVEN DAYS A WEEK.
BUT I PAY BETTER THAN BURGER KING AND YOU WON'T SMELL LIKE COOKING OIL AND POWDERED EGGS.


I WON'T WORK SUNDAYS AND IF YOU'RE GRUMPY WITH ME *EXPECT* GRUMPY RIGHT BACK!
AGREED! I'LL SEE YOU AT THE SHOP MONDAY.
JUST DON'T DO ANYTHING *STUPID* TOMORROW NIGHT.
LIKE *BURN* MYSELF ON THE DEEP FRYER?
HAH. I'M A METALLZAUBERER. I CAN *SMELL* YOUR SILVER, LEAD AND GUNPOWDER.
YOU'VE GOT AMMO MEANT TO STOP *WEREWOLVES*. I'VE HEARD ADAM HAUPTMAN IS FIGHTING A ROGUE AT JUMP OFF JOE.
I CAN GUESS WHAT YOU'RE UP TO. SINCE I *KNOW* YOU WON'T BE CAREFUL--
DON'T BE *STUPID*.
HELLO. CHRISTINE, I'M SORRY BUT I *WON'T* BE IN TOMORROW NIGHT...
LIKE I SAID, I'M *SORRY* BUT SOMETHING UNAVOIDABLE CAME UP...
OH REALLY? WELL, WHY *DON'T* YOU JUST DO THAT!
SLAM


I DIDN'T WANT TO BE SPOTTED SO I GOT THERE EARLY.
THE CLIMB WOULD HAVE BEEN EASIER AS A COYOTE--
BUT AS A COYOTE I COULDN'T HAVE BROUGHT THE GUNS.
AND I WANTED TO BE READY FOR ANYTHING.
THERE WERE PLENTY OF COYOTE IN THE TERRITORY, SO A CHANGE MADE IT LESS LIKELY I'D BE RECOGNIZED.
PLUS, AFTER A WEEK OF GRILLING BURGERS FOR THE KING--
IT JUST FELT GOOD.


EVENTUALLY, A FEW OTHERS ARRIVED, CLIMBING THE HILL AND FINDING HIDING PLACES OF THEIR OWN.
THEY WERE WOLVES. MUST HAVE BEEN ADAM'S. THEY WERE WELL BEHAVED AND THEIR SCENT GAVE NO HINT THEY'D BEEN FEASTING ON HUMANS.


NIGHT WAS FALLING AS THE REST ARRIVED. ADAM'S PACK ALMOST SPARKLED WITH SPIT-SHINE AND DISCIPLINE. ORSON'S--


WELL, THEY LOOKED LIKED LIKED THE UNRULY ROGUES THEY WERE.


YOUR CALL, PARK. HUMAN--
OR WOLF?


WOLF.
IT SUITS MY TRUE NATURE.


BEFORE WE BEGIN--
THE BOY AND MY WOLF.


SAFE.
THAT'S NOT THE AGREEMENT.
PARK, IF YOU'VE DONE SOMETHING STUPID--
I'LL SPLATTER YOUR BRAINS HERE AND NOW--
AND THEN WHATEVER HAPPENS, HAPPENS.
NICK! SHOW 'EM!
SO MUCH FOR THE FAIR FIGHT.
AND THAT BITCH HOPE WAS ALREADY IN WOLF FORM, BETTER TO TORMENT THE BOY.


IF ADAM WON, THE HOSTAGES WOULD DIE. AND IF HE LOST--
THEY WOULD STILL DIE.
HOW MUCH DO YOU VALUE YOUR SECOND, HAUPTMAN?
WHAT ABOUT THE CHILD? WOULD YOU TRADE YOUR LIFE TO SAVE HIM?
I THINK YOU WOULD.
BUT THAT'S YOUR WEAKNESS, NOT MINE!
IT LOOKED PRETTY BAD FOR OUR SIDE.
BUT PARK DIDN'T KNOW THERE WAS A JOKER IN THE DECK.
BLAM


IT WAS A GOOD SHOT, FOR THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THOUGH NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO KILL.
DON'T!
DARRYL'S CHANGE WOULD TAKE TOO LONG TO HELP THE BOY--
AND I COULDN'T MANAGE A DECENT SHOT AT A WOLF RUNNING IN THE DARK.


BUT I CHANGE WAY FASTER THAN A WEREWOLF--
SO I DID THE ONLY THING I COULD.
AS A COYOTE I'M NO MATCH FOR A WOLF--
BUT I'M FASTER--
AND I PISSED HOPE OFF ENOUGH TO FORGET THE BOY AND FOLLOW ME.
JUST HOPE I'M FAST ENOUGH...
BLAM BLAM BLAM


BUT THE .38 WASN'T ENOUGH TO KILL A WEREWOLF. I WAS FIGHTING A WOUNDED ANIMAL FOR MY LIFE.
A FIGHT I WAS SURE TO LOSE--
EXCEPT DARRYL HAD FINALLY GOT LOOSE.
ADAM! THE HOSTAGES ARE SAFE!
DO IT!
RRRAARRR


WILL HE BE OKAY, EVER?
HARD TO SAY. I WAS WITH HIM LONG ENOUGH TO LEARN HE DIDN'T SEE THE WORST OF THE ATTACK.
I HOPE WHATEVER FAMILY HE HAS LEFT GETS HIM THE HELP HE NEEDS.
THE POLICE WILL RECEIVE AN ANONYMOUS CALL ABOUT A BOY WANDERING BY THE HIGHWAY. WE'LL KEEP A HIDDEN WATCH TILL THEY ARRIVE.
WHEN THEY TRACE HIM TO HIS HOUSE, THEY'LL THINK IT WAS A HOME INVASION.
WE'LL GET THERE BEFORE THEY DO AND CLEAN UP JUST ENOUGH TO HIDE THE TRUTH. THEY'LL DISMISS A CHILD'S TALE OF MONSTERS, I'M SURE.
I KNOW IT'S DISAPPOINTING, BUT IT'S THE BEST WE CAN DO.
IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE.
THAT WAS NICE WORK, THOMPSON.
MAYBE BRAN WAS RIGHT ABOUT YOU.

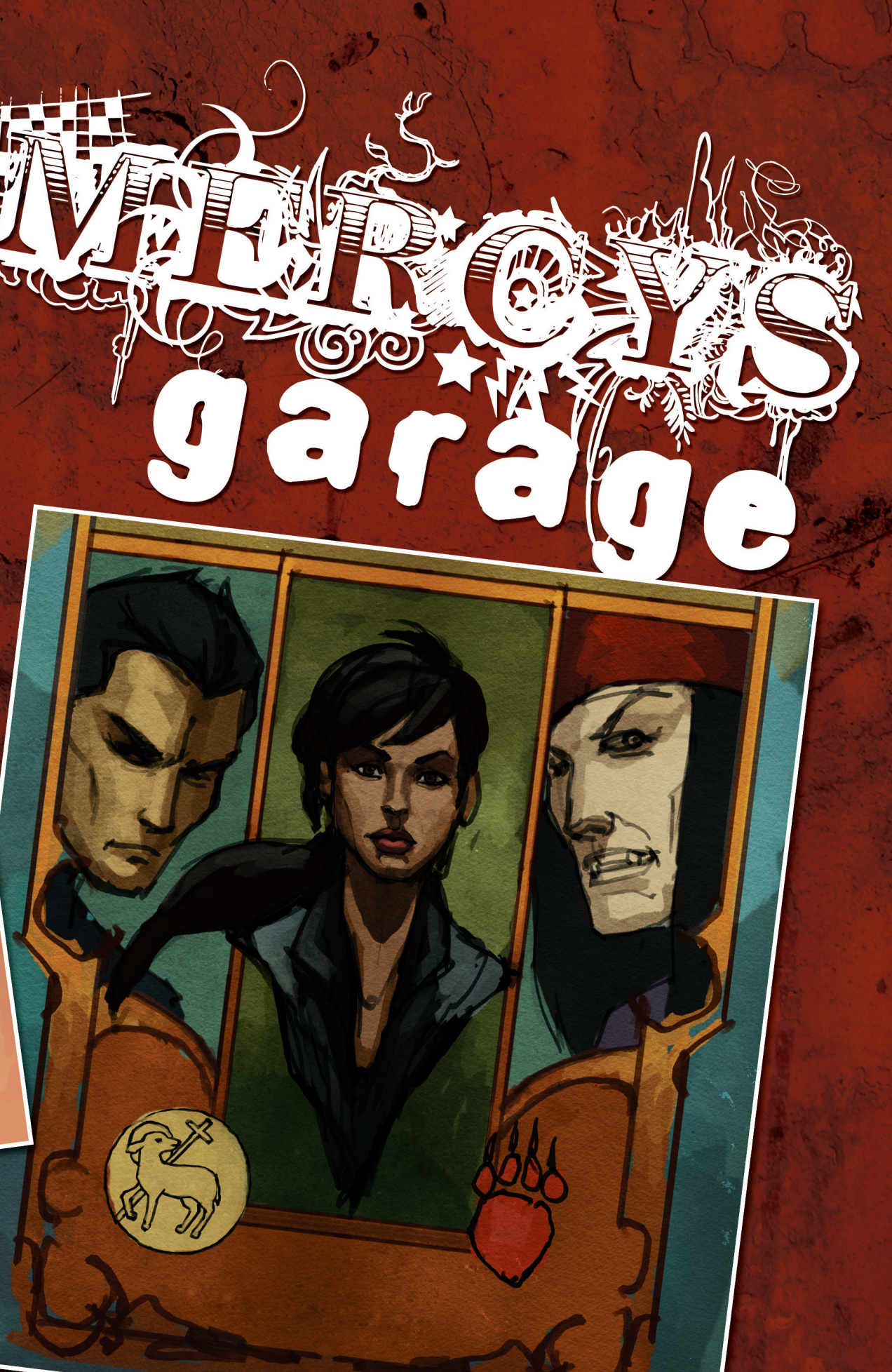

A FEW DAYS LATER...
MR. HAUPTMAN, YOU JUST CAN'T STAY AWAY, CAN YOU?
THE MARROK SENT ME.
JUST THIS.
GREAT. WHAT'S HIS LATEST MESSAGE?
YOU LEFT IT BEHIND WHEN YOU MOVED AWAY.
HE HOPED YOU'D WANT IT BACK.
HE GAVE IT TO ME WHEN I TURNED THIRTEEN.
THE MARROK WANTS YOU TO KNOW--


HE NEVER MEANT YOU TO FEEL YOU WERE REJECTED. HE JUST WANTED YOU TO BE SAFE.
YEAH, SURE.
OH, I'VE GOT SOMETHING ELSE FOR YOU.
DON'T KNOW HOW SHE AVOIDED BECOMING AN HORS D'OEUVRE FOR ORSON'S PACK BUT WE FOUND HER WHEN WE CHECKED THE FARMHOUSE FOR STRAGGLERS.
THOUGHT SOMETHING TO LOOK AFTER MIGHT KEEP YOU OUT OF TROUBLE.
USUALLY CATS HATE ME.
THIS ONE SEEMS TO LIKE EVERYONE, EVEN MOST WEREWOLVES.
JUST KEEP HER OUT OF MY YARD OR I'LL EAT HER.
YOUR YARD?
THE OTHER SIDE OF YOUR BACK FENCE. THE MARROK WANTS MY PACK TO STICK AROUND HERE FOR A WHILE.
WE'RE NEIGHBORS?
YES.
GOD HELP ME...


HOME SWEET HOME--
AT LAST.
THE END.

art gallery




MERCY'S
garage


TSAI 100408


MERCY
TAD
ADAM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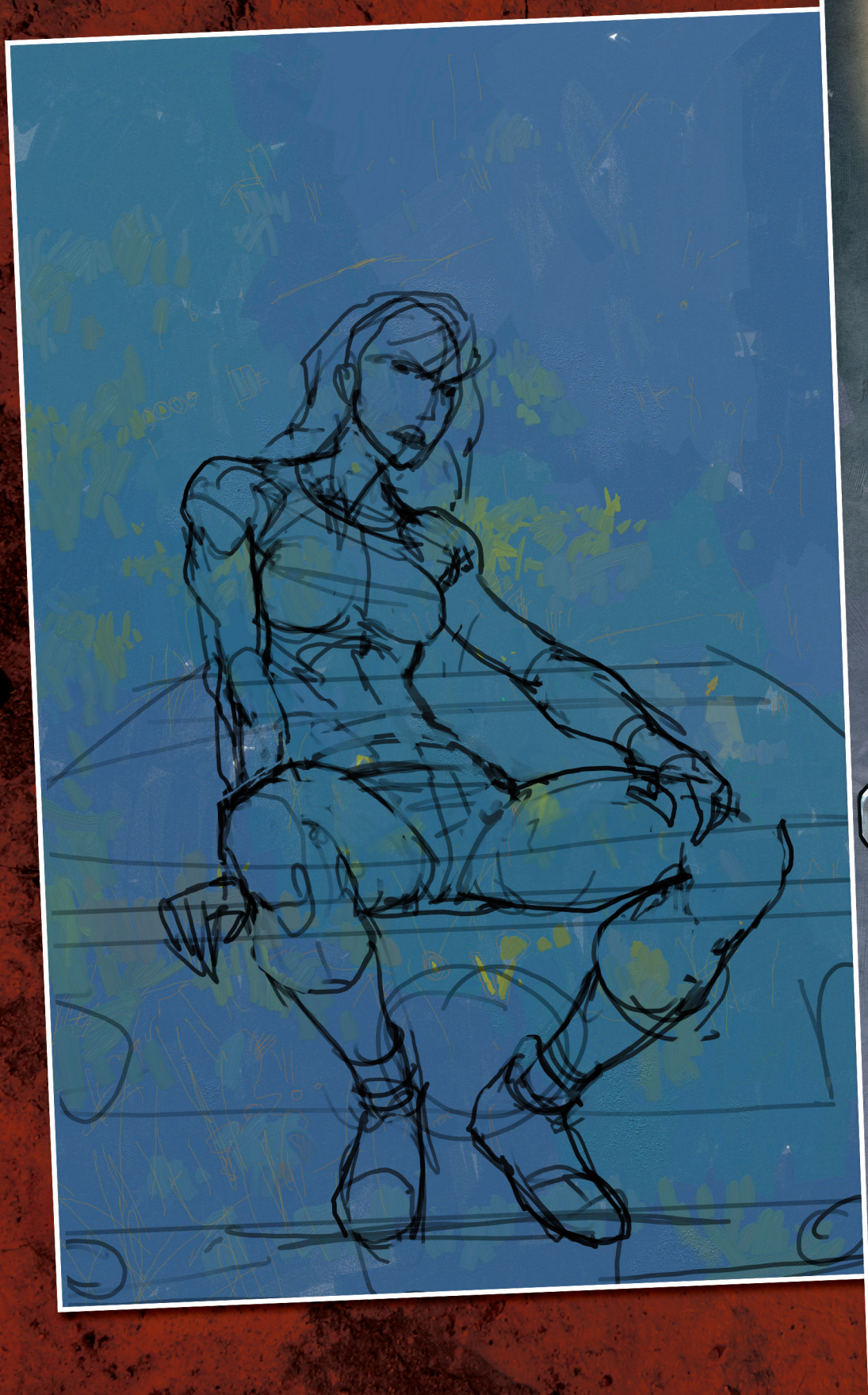
DARRYL
BRAN
STEFAN
RUSH
TSAI 071908









an interview with patricia briggs

by david lawrence

Owing to the vagaries of comic book scheduling, a mid-stream switch of artists and other events too sundry to mention it's been just about a year since Patty and I began our collaboration on this project.

We've exchanged probably hundreds of e-mails, written and revised dozens and dozens of pages, talked on the phone once or twice, and in my case at least added considerably to my growing collection of grey hair.

But honestly, it's been a blast. From the very opening sequence of the very first issue to the last scene of the last I've grown very fond of Mercy and her friends. Particularly Zee, which I suspect owes something to our mutual devotion to the Pittsburgh Steelers.

As we wind up, it seemed like the perfect time to sit back and reflect on what we've done, and what the future might hold in comics for Mercy Thompson.

How did MERCY THOMPSON: HOMECOMING come to be? Did the idea of a graphic novel originate with you, or your publisher, or did the Dabels initiate it?

The Dabel Brothers originally asked if I had a short story, or wanted to tell a shorter story to start off the comic editions of the MERCY THOMPSON books. As it happens, I had a whole bunch of material I'd written before I wrote IRON KISSED -- about how Mercy and her mentor, Zee had met. It struck me that, combined with the story of how Adam Hauptman and his band of Merry Wolves had ended up in the Tri Cities, it might make a dandy Origin Story -- the kind of story that comics do so well.

Were you familiar at all with Dabel Brothers publishing previously? If you were, what projects had you seen or heard about?

I knew who the Dabel Brother's were, having seen the work they were doing with LAURELL K. HAMILTON'S ANITA BLAKE books. I was then, and still am, incredibly impressed with their work. Not only the quality but the ability to put just the right artist with the right works of fiction, so that fans of the novels also love the artwork.

Was the story itself something you'd had in mind as Mercy's back story for a while, or something cooked up entirely from scratch as you began work on the series.

I had bits and scraps of stories that I shook up and put together for the comics.

Some of the writers I've worked with, like Jim Butcher for example, are pretty well versed in comics. Did you have any background in the medium? Did you read any comics as a kid, have any favorite characters? Any writers or artists in the medium you were familiar with?

I read comics a lot as a child, from, say the early seventies up through about 1980 or so. I liked the X-MEN and SPIDER-MAN, but most of the ones I really loved were the lesser known series. Stuff like CLAWS OF THE CAT, SHANNA THE SHE-DEVIL, KA-ZAR, the INHUMANS and the sadly anonymous BLACK ORCHID, who is remembered by precious few. And of course, WEREWOLF BY NIGHT.

Jack Kirby I knew. Who could not? My favorite of his works was a DC comic, THE DEMON. But for the most part I hadn't gotten to the point of recognizing authors and artists by the time I set comics aside for books.

What did you think the first time you sat down and tried to write a comic book script?

The initial layout isn't hard. And really, although the kinds of stories that work best visually and the kinds that work best in a book are different, storytelling works the same either way. Some things are easier; setting, for instance. Some things are tougher; plotting without words and putting my hands up and saying "the artist can convey this better than I can."

The most miserable thing is the revisions. Add another panel for clarity or effect, and you throw the visual rhythm completely off. It took me a long time and I was very happy to turn it over to you, who can work your magic much faster and more skillfully than I could!

It's a pretty big change for a novelist, I'd think, suddenly having a bunch of collaborators to work with. You're used to being pretty solitary in your work. What was it like to suddenly have all these other people involved? Was there anything in particular you liked and disliked about it?

First of all, I can't tell you how incredibly cool it is to see your fictional characters appear visually. I've seen it before of course, with the book covers, but only with the primary characters. Seeing some of these people for the first time was . . . wow! I thought, "So that's what Darryl looks like. That's perfect!"

It is also great to share responsibility. If something doesn't quite work well I have a number of other people who can catch it. If it does work, I have people to celebrate with. Happily, because it is in a medium I'm no expert in, I found that my control-freak issues weren't as prevalent as I feared.

What was the biggest surprise for you?

I think it is how active a role I've gotten to take in bringing Mercy and her world into the realm of comic books.

Are there any sequences you particularly liked in the series or anything that didn't work that you'd like to have back and try again?

I particularly like the way Zee comes out in Homecoming. The artists caught him just right. I also like the flow of the story in the second comic, all your idea, I might add.

One sequence I have to ask you about. I noticed on your message board the long sequence at the beginning of the first chapter, with naked Mercy fighting the wolf pack, seemed to create quite a stir. And I know that I really kind of took your original sequence there and put it on steroids. What was your reaction when you saw it?

I liked it quite a bit. One of the decisions I made, to keep the stories feeling real, was to keep clothes as an obstacle for changing shape. The comic sequence makes it quite clear just how big of an obstacle it is!

As things turned out, we had two different artists for the series, Francis Tsai and Amelia Woo. Both did great work. I'm wondering how they compare in your mind. What things did you like better about Francis' work and what did you like better about Amelia's?

Francis has a clear style that reminds me a bit of Jack Kirby's work, not so much in execution, but in distinctiveness. Amelia has a softer style and her women are a little less sexualized. Both of them are terrific.

It's got to be a tough experience on some level for you, allowing another writer to work with your characters. And you've admitted you're a control freak. How hard was it for you to let me into your sandbox?

It helps that you are terrific. Makes it less of a struggle. It also helps that writing a comic book is a freaking lot of work and you are a lot faster at it than I would be. It was incredibly helpful to be able to send you part of a short story and have you return with a script.

What do you see now as the biggest differences between telling a story in prose and telling it with pictures?

In a primarily visual media, we had to cut down the internal dialogue and keep the conversation short and to the point. A book allows a lot more internal dialogue. Of course, physical descriptions are a lot easier in comics.

With Homecoming behind us, Dabel Brothers will be adapting some of your novels. Are you planning on doing any more original for comics stories with your characters, or just adaptations for the time being?

For right now, I'm still behind the eight ball with my books. I'm not opposed to doing some direct to comic stories, but I imagine that will be a year or more down the line.

Now you've been wonderful to work with, and very gracious, but I've got to ask: was there ever a time when you just wanted to kill me?

Kiss you, when you took ten pages of rough draft and turned it into a pretty terrific story, but never kill you. Especially after you listened to me about the scene where Mercy and Stefan are dropping off Zee and noticed you missed the perfect response -- and you fixed it. No, you are very easy to work with.

Do you have any words of advice for another novelist who might be out there considering following in your footsteps and trying their hand at comics?

Find someone who knows what they're doing and listen to them!

PATRICIA BRIGGS'

MERCY THOMPSON

homecoming