



NATIONAL MALL.
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Now.



MADDY.
TWENTY MINUTES
LATE, PUNCTUAL
AS EVER.

GET UNDER
THIS UMBRELLA,
WOMAN. YOU'LL
CATCH YOUR
DEATH.

I'VE CAUGHT
DEATH AND RELEASED
IT SO MANY TIMES THAT
WE'RE **BOTH** BORED
WITH THE CHASE,
FEATHERTOP.



FINE, THEN. I'LL
STOP PRETENDING
TO **WORRY** ABOUT
YOU.

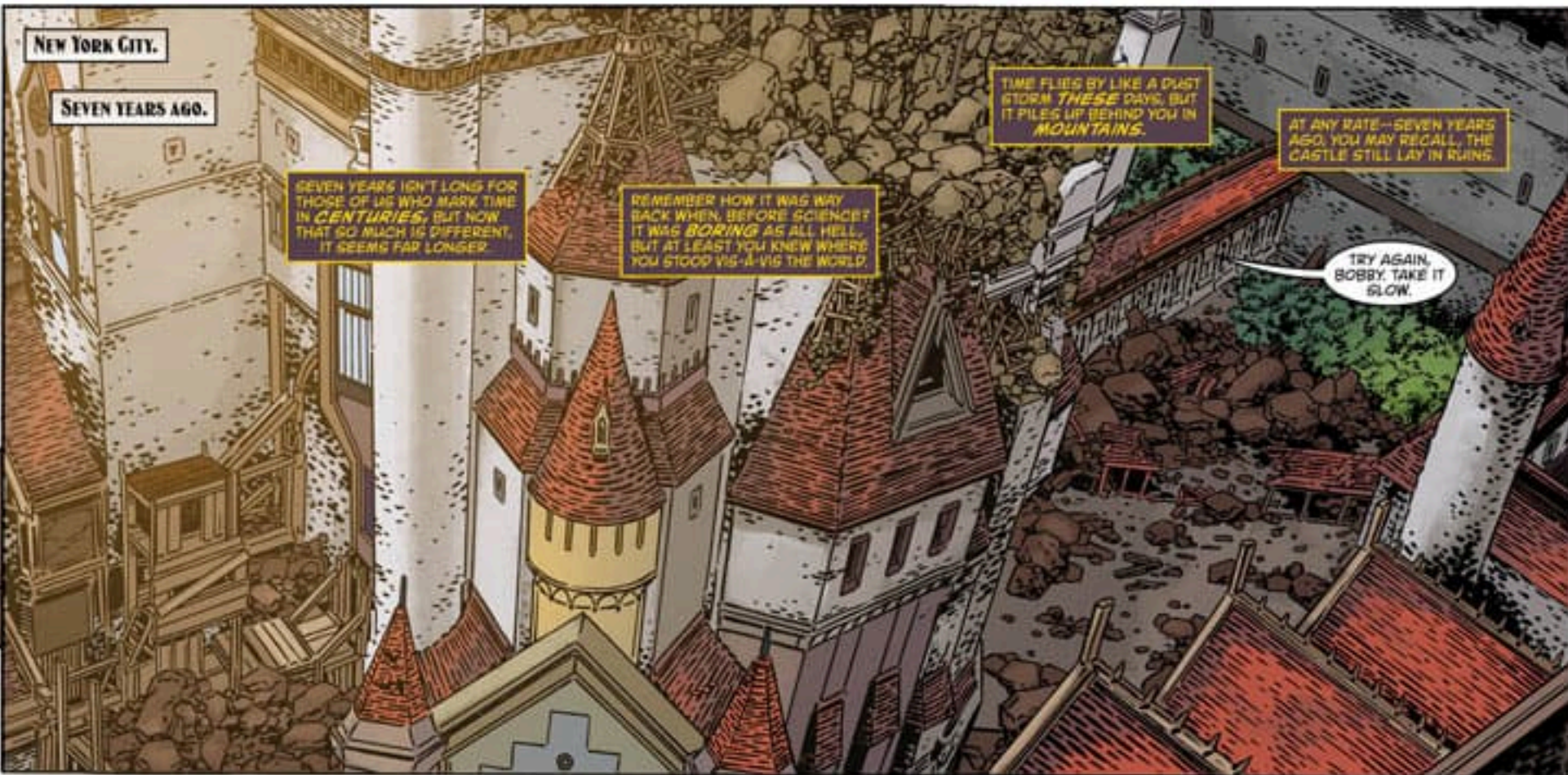
YOU
BROUGHT THE
WARLOCK? HE'S
READY FOR
ME?

HONESTLY?
HE'S NO MORE
READY THAN THE
DAY I FIRST
MET HIM.

YOU HAD
SEVEN YEARS,
MADDY. YOU WERE
SUPPOSED TO BE
TEACHING HIM.



BEFORE YOU GO
CASTING **ASPERSIONS**
ON MY METHODS, MAYBE YOU'LL
INDULGE ME IN A LITTLE
REMINISCENCE.



NEW YORK CITY.

SEVEN YEARS AGO.

SEVEN YEARS ISN'T LONG FOR THOSE OF US WHO MARK TIME IN CENTURIES, BUT NOW THAT SO MUCH IS DIFFERENT, IT SEEMS FAR LONGER.

REMEMBER HOW IT WAS WAY BACK WHEN, BEFORE SCIENCE? IT WAS BORING AS ALL HELL, BUT AT LEAST YOU KNEW WHERE YOU STOOD VIS-A-VIS THE WORLD!

TIME FLIES BY LIKE A DUST STORM THESE DAYS, BUT IT PILES UP BEHIND YOU IN MOUNTAINS.

AT ANY RATE—SEVEN YEARS AGO, YOU MAY RECALL, THE CASTLE STILL LAY IN RUINS.

TRY AGAIN, BOBBY. TAKE IT SLOW.



THE TOTENKINDER MEMORIAL SCHOOL OF MAGIC WAS OPEN FOR ENROLLMENT...

MOOP!

HERDIE HALL

Here We Go Gathering Huts In May

Prologue to The Unsentimental Education

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...BUT WITH THAT BROKEDOWN PALACE AS OUR ONLY CAMPUS, WE WEREN'T EXACTLY OVERWHELMED WITH STUDENTS.

MUCH TO OUR DISAPPOINTMENT, THE CASTLE HAD AS OF YET FAILED TO REBUILD ITSELF, AND NONE OF US COULD FIGURE OUT WHY.

JUST REMEMBER THAT THE MAGIC IS *INSIDE* YOU ALREADY, BOBBY. EAGER TO BE LET OUT.

IF YOU ALLOW IT TO FLOW THROUGH YOU, THE TARGET OF THE SPELL WILL ACCELERATE SO SMOOTHLY YOU'LL BARELY EVEN FEEL IT.

IF YOU TRY TO FORCE IT OUT, YOU'LL EITHER WIND UP GOING NOWHERE, OR YOU'LL END UP ON THE MOON, WHICH HAS HAPPENED--

MOO MOOOO MOO!

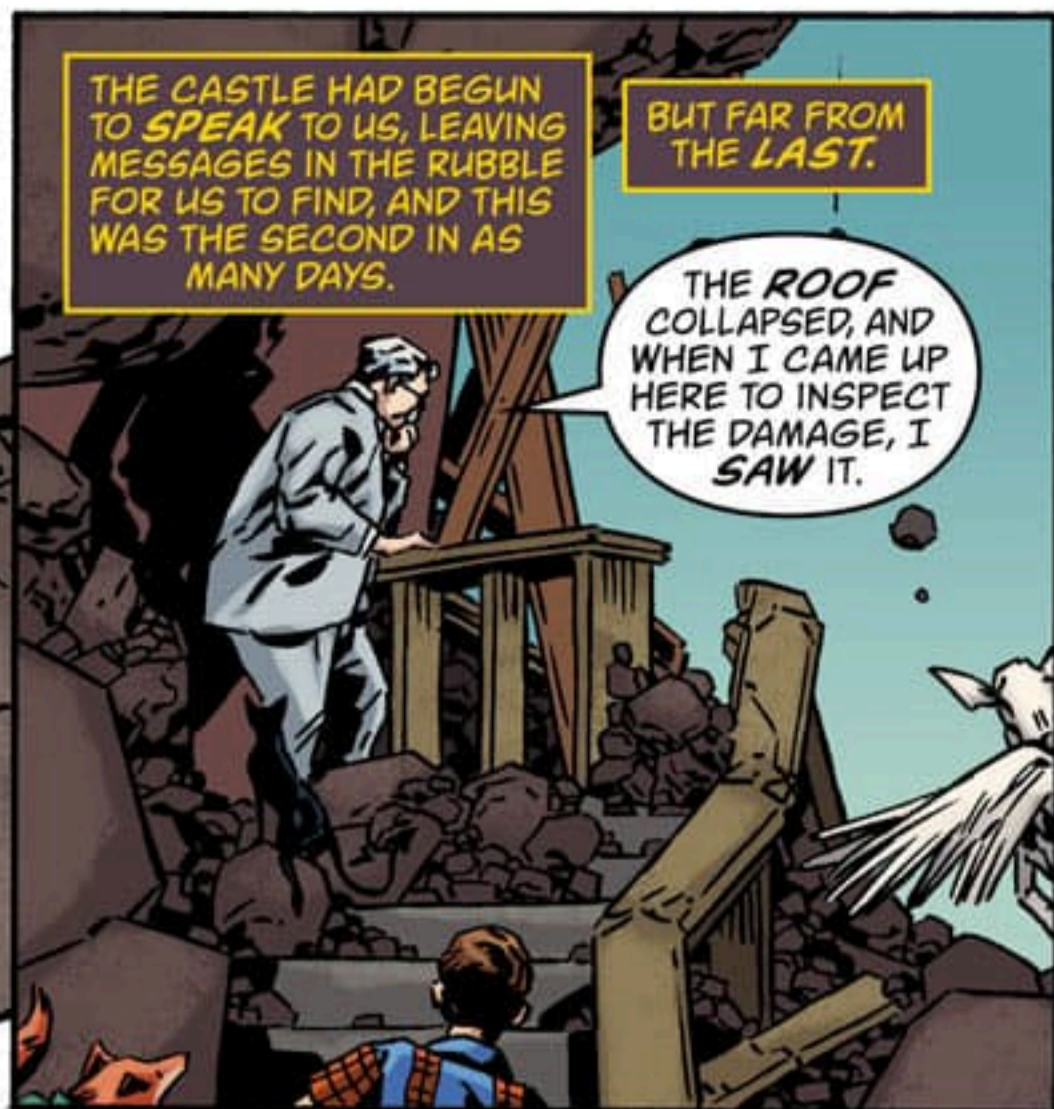
MOTHER BIRDIE HALL



ANOTHER MESSAGE? WHAT DOES IT SAY?

MOOOO!

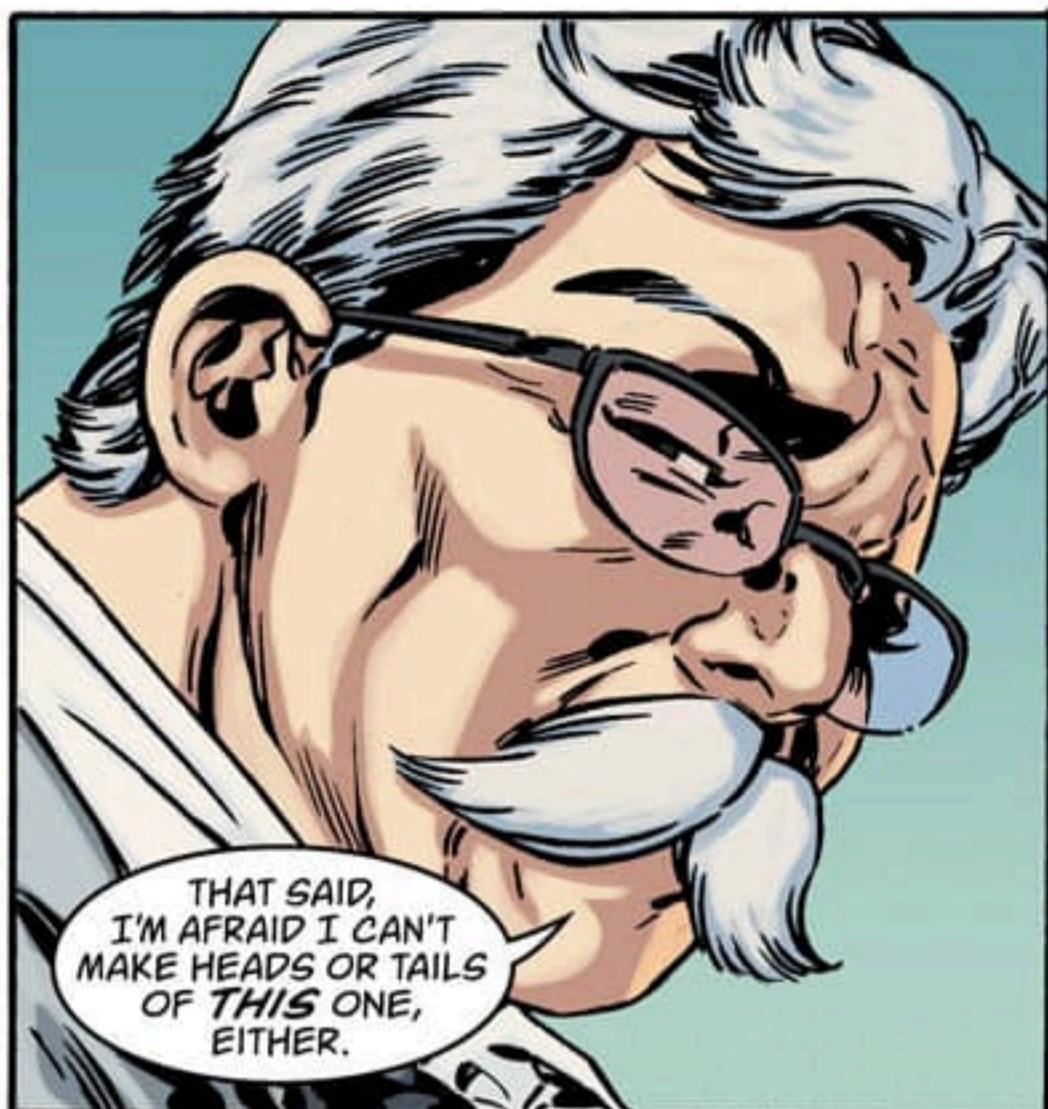
YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO LEARN PERSON LANGUAGE, LITTLE WING. TO WORDS, "COW TONGUE" IS A SANDWICH.



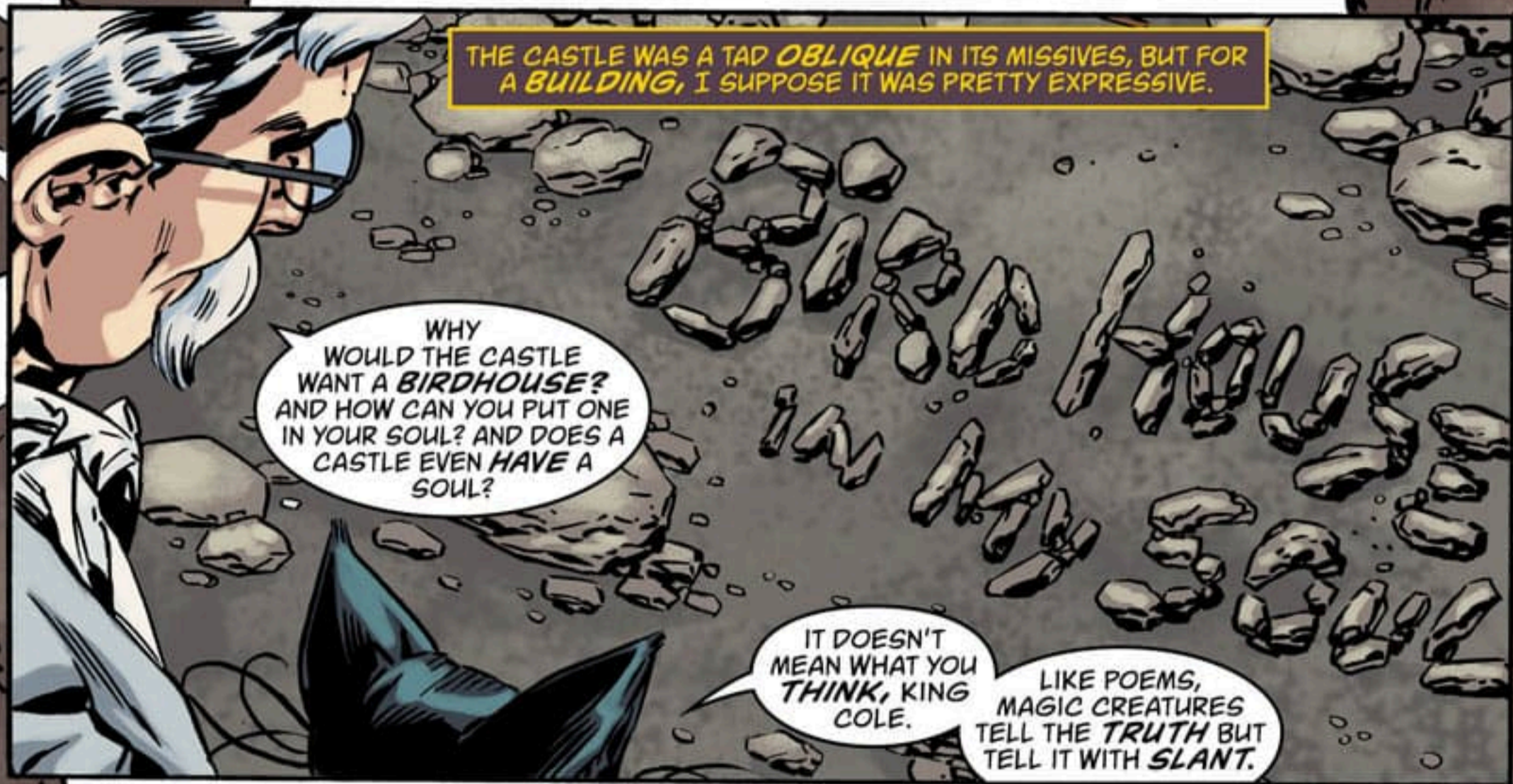
THE CASTLE HAD BEGUN TO *SPEAK* TO US, LEAVING MESSAGES IN THE RUBBLE FOR US TO FIND, AND THIS WAS THE SECOND IN AS MANY DAYS.

BUT FAR FROM THE *LAST*.

THE *ROOF* COLLAPSED, AND WHEN I CAME UP HERE TO INSPECT THE DAMAGE, I *SAW* IT.



THAT SAID, I'M AFRAID I CAN'T MAKE HEADS OR TAILS OF *THIS ONE*, EITHER.



THE CASTLE WAS A TAD *OBLIQUE* IN ITS MISSIVES, BUT FOR A *BUILDING*, I SUPPOSE IT WAS PRETTY EXPRESSIVE.

WHY WOULD THE CASTLE WANT A *BIRDHOUSE*? AND HOW CAN YOU PUT ONE IN YOUR SOUL? AND DOES A CASTLE EVEN *HAVE* A SOUL?

IT DOESN'T MEAN WHAT YOU *THINK*, KING COLE.

LIKE POEMS, MAGIC CREATURES TELL THE *TRUTH* BUT TELL IT WITH *SLANT*.



WE'D SENT *LAKE* AS AN AMBASSADOR TO HANDLE THE CASTLE'S *PREVIOUS* DEMAND, BUT I THOUGHT *THIS ONE* WOULD MAKE FOR A GOOD TEACHABLE MOMENT.

BOBBY, SAMANTHA, LITTLE WING, GO PACK A LUNCH.



IT WAS THE FIRST OF *MANY* MISTAKES I MADE AS A TEACHER, AND BY FAR THE MOST DANGEROUS.

WE'RE GOING ON A *FIELD TRIP*.

YES!

YES!

MOO!

OF COURSE I BROUGHT **BOBBY** WITH ME, SINCE HE WAS THE VERY FIRST HUMAN FABLE THIS WORLD TURNED OUT, AND THE FURTHEST ALONG IN HIS STUDIES.

WHICH SPELLS DO YOU THINK WE'LL NEED FOR THIS JOB? FIRE SPELLS? LIGHTNING SPELLS?

TURNING-PEOPLE-INTO-STUFF SPELLS?

AND THE VIXEN **SAMANTHA**, FOR ALTHOUGH SHE WAS THE **SECOND** FABLE OF THE EVERAFTERING, SHE WAS AT THE BOTTOM OF HER CLASS, AND I THOUGHT THE TASK MIGHT INSPIRE HER.

IF BOBBY TURNS ONE OF OUR ENEMIES INTO A **VOLE**, I VOLUNTEER TO BE THE ONE TO **EAT** IT.

THE COW... I DON'T RECALL WHY I BROUGHT HER. SHE WAS AND REMAINS A TIRELESS NUISANCE.

THOUGH I WAS **MORE** THAN THANKFUL TO HAVE HER ALONG, AS IT HAPPENED.

CHEW
CHEW
CHEW

WE'RE NOT SETTING ANYONE ON FIRE, AND NOBODY'S GETTING EATEN.

WE'RE GOING TO SNARE OUR QUARRY WITH A MINIMUM OF FUSS AND BRING IT BACK **SAFELY**.

I JUST HAVE TO... **FIND** IT FIRST.

DID YOU LOOK ON THE INTERNET?

YOU CAN'T FIND WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR ON THE **INTERNET**, BOBBY.