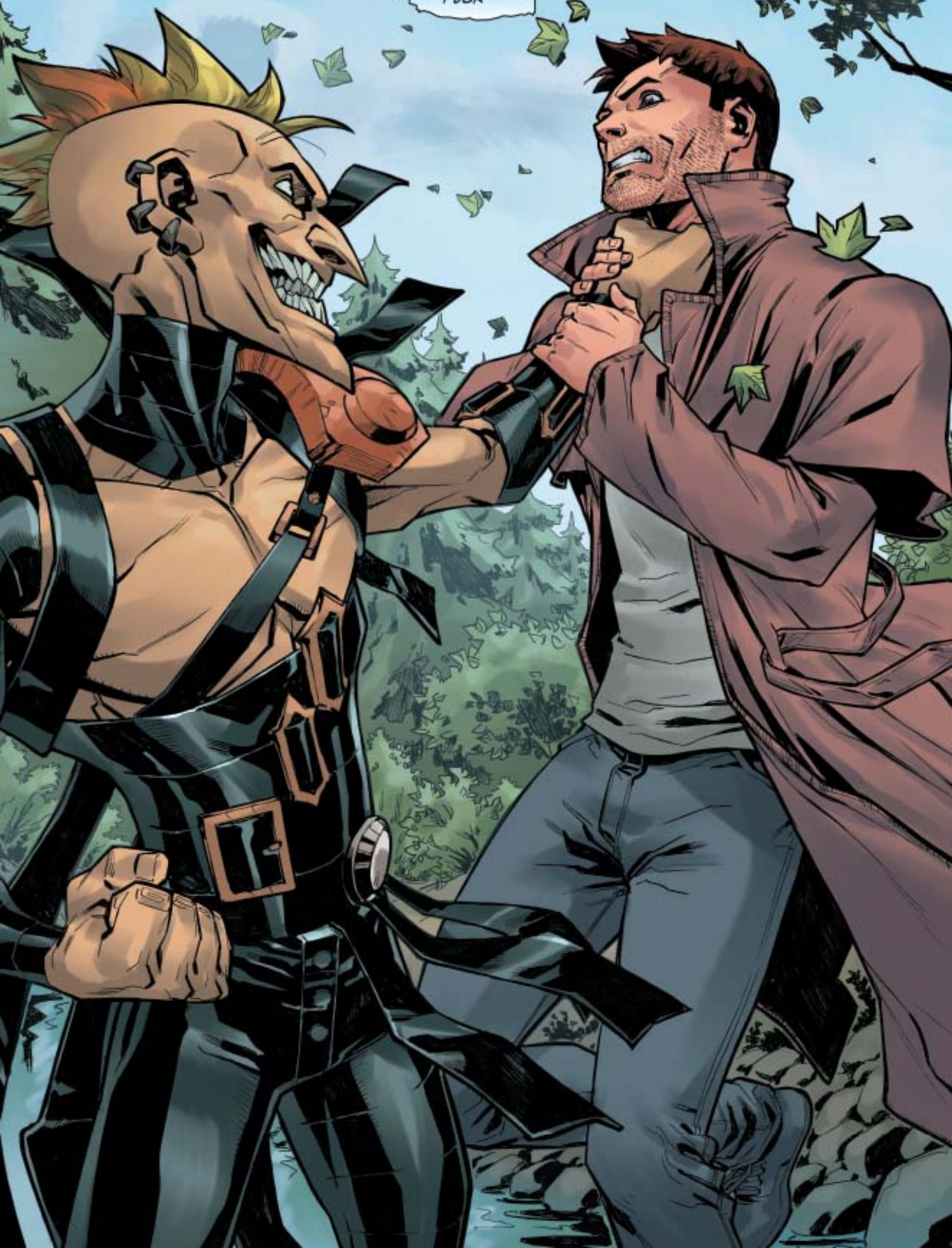


I'D COME HERE IN DESPERATION, HOPING MY FAIRY GODMOTHER COULD TELL ME WHO'D SET CHICAGO'S MOST POWERFUL FACTIONS AGAINST ONE ANOTHER.

LET'S JUST SAY I HAD MY ANSWER.

HIS NAME IS PUCK--





--AND I DIDN'T HAVE A DAMN CLUE HOW I'D SURVIVE BEYOND THE NEXT SIXTY SECONDS, NEVER MIND ACTUALLY DEFEAT HIM.

FRANKLY, I THINK I'M OWED A LITTLE APPRECIATION FOR HOW WELL ORCHESTRATED MY PLAN IS.

I MEAN, WE'RE TALKING A FREAKIN' SYMPHONY OF SUBTERFUGE HERE.



WHAT DO I GET INSTEAD?

SOME HUMORLESS WIZARD BUMBLING FROM HERE TO THERE, INTRUDING ON MY FUN.

SPLASH



-:hff:-

IF HE WASN'T SO IN LOVE WITH THE SOUND OF HIS OWN VOICE, I'D HAVE BEEN DEAD ALREADY.

OF COURSE, TREADING WATER WHILE FULLY CLOTHED WAS NOT THE IDEAL SITUATION TO BE IN WHEN NEEDING TO CAST A SPELL...



...BUT ONE MAKES DO WITH THE TOOLS AT HAND.

GRAVITAS!



GRAVITY IS ONE OF THE ELEMENTAL FORCES OF THE UNIVERSE, GENERATED BY THE PLANET ITSELF.

I DREW UPON THAT ENERGY AND FOCUSED IT ON PUCK...

YOU THINK YOU CAN BEAT ME WITH YOUR PETTY INCANTATIONS?



...MOMENTARILY INCREASING HIS DENSITY BY A THOUSANDFOLD.



I SWAM LIKE A MADMAN FOR THE RIVERBANK, KNOWING I'D PROBABLY BOUGHT MYSELF A MINUTE OR TWO AT BEST.

AND LEA WAS STILL NOWHERE TO BE SEEN, WHICH FREAKED ME THE HELL OUT.

COULD HE HAVE ACTUALLY KILLED HER...?



I PUSHED THAT THOUGHT OUT OF MY MIND. I NEEDED A WEAPON—A LARGE ONE.



THIS WOULD HAVE TO DO; I DIDN'T HAVE TIME FOR ANYTHING COMPLEX.

LUCKY FOR ME, THE "MAKE THINGS GO BOOM" STRAIN OF MAGIC IS WHAT COMES EASIEST TO ME.



IGNIS...
ADOLEBITUS...
IGNIS...



IGNIS...
ADOLEBITUS...
IGNIS...



LEVITUS...
LEVITUS...



NICE TRY,
MORTAL!

YOU'RE
A QUICK THINKER,
I'LL GIVE YOU
THAT!

BUT IF
THAT'S THE BEST
YOU'VE GOT, I HAVE
TO TELL YOU—YER
COP PAL WAS A
MUCH BETTER
CHALLENGE.



OH, I'M
JUST GETTING
STARTED.



LEVITUS!