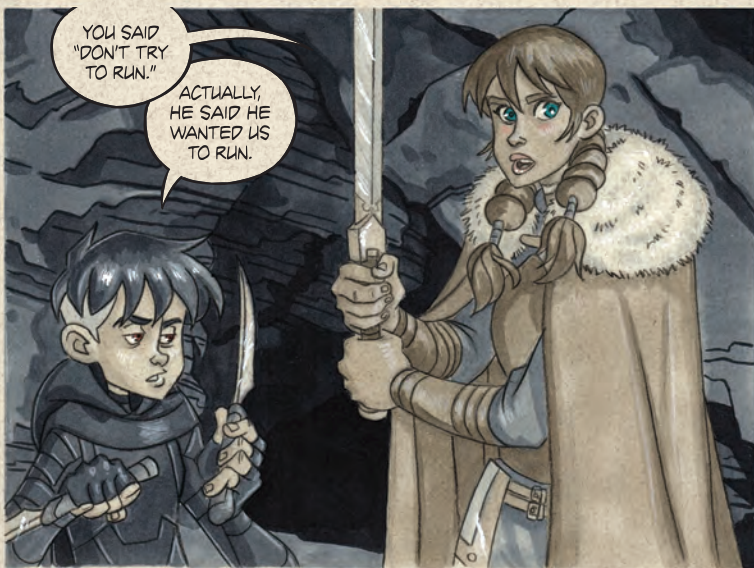


Prologue

In Which We Recount an Incident Taking Place Long After the Main Events of Our Forthcoming Tale.







YES!
A VERY
CLOSE
FRIEND!

AND MUCH
TOO SMALL
TO EAT!

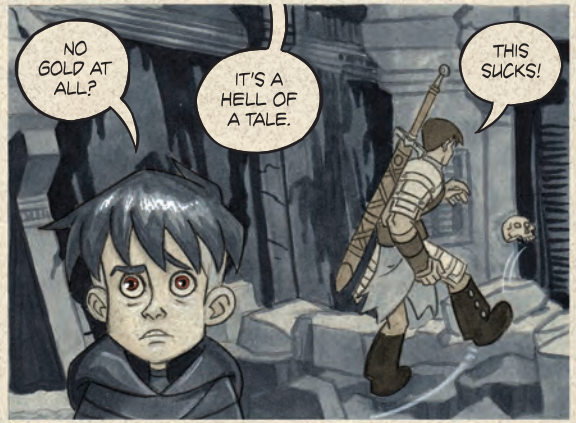
SO THERE IT
IS, KIDS. YOU'VE MET
EVERY CRITERION AND
WON THE PRIVILEGE
OF HEARING
MY STORY.



WHAT?

THE ONLY
TREASURE IS
A STORY?

EXACTLY
SO.



NO
GOLD AT
ALL?

IT'S A
HELL OF
A TALE.

THIS
SUCKS!



THIS SUCKS MIGHTY
WANGS OF POXED
MANTICORES!

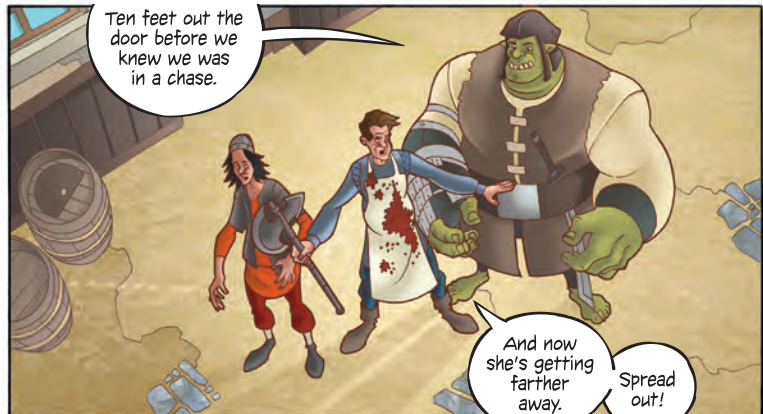
YOU THINK
SO NOW, BUT
YOU WON'T
LATER.

TRUST
ME.

CLEAR
YOURSELVES A
PLACE TO SIT. GET
COMFORTABLE. HEAR
MY STORY, YOUNG
ROGUES.

WELL, WE
CAME THIS
FAR...

I
PROMISE
YOU, IT'S A
PISSER.



She'd been raised in a quiet, suburban neighborhood...



...and later lived rough on the streets of a city so alien to anything in our world as to make comparisons impossible.

Oh no.

She had no involvement with raw, untamed nature. Not even the bits of nature that survive within a city.



No body of experience to call upon. No learned wisdom.

Can't go back though.

No choice, right? Never any choice.

More to the point, no one had ever told her attempting to scale a cliff in the dark was a suicidal notion.

Can't go back now.

Can't go back now.







What's that? What's a dollar?

Let me have a look at it.

It's money!



No it's not. It's paper!



What sort of a goat do you take me for? Money isn't paper! Money is gold, or silver!

Or even copper, or tin, if you have enough of it.



And even if paper was good trade, this one's already all used up.

Every bit is already written on.

Both sides.



Y'know, I've heard of that.

Sometimes the really big amounts of gold--too much to carry--are written down on paper, from rich men and banks.



It's already a matter of steel!



Wgkk!



Anyone else likely to come through that door wanting to kill you?

Uh... No... just them.

I think.



This dollar of yours better be worth it.