

AS THE OFFSPRING OF TWO DISTINCT SPECIES OF UNDER-WATER HUMANOIDS KNOWN AS THE BLUE AND THE BLACK, ASPEN MATTHEWS IS NO STRANGER TO THE MYSTERIES OF THE DEEP.

FROM THE COLD DEPTHS OF THE MARIANAS TRENCH TO THE MAJESTY OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF, SHE'S SEEN MORE OF THE OCEAN'S TREASURES IN HER BRIEF LIFE THAN EVEN THE MOST RENOWNED OCEANOGRAPHERS.

BUT THERE ARE MOMENTS WHEN EVEN SHE CAN'T HELP BUT BE AMAZED BY THE SIGHTS SHE BEHOLDS...

INCREDIBLE.

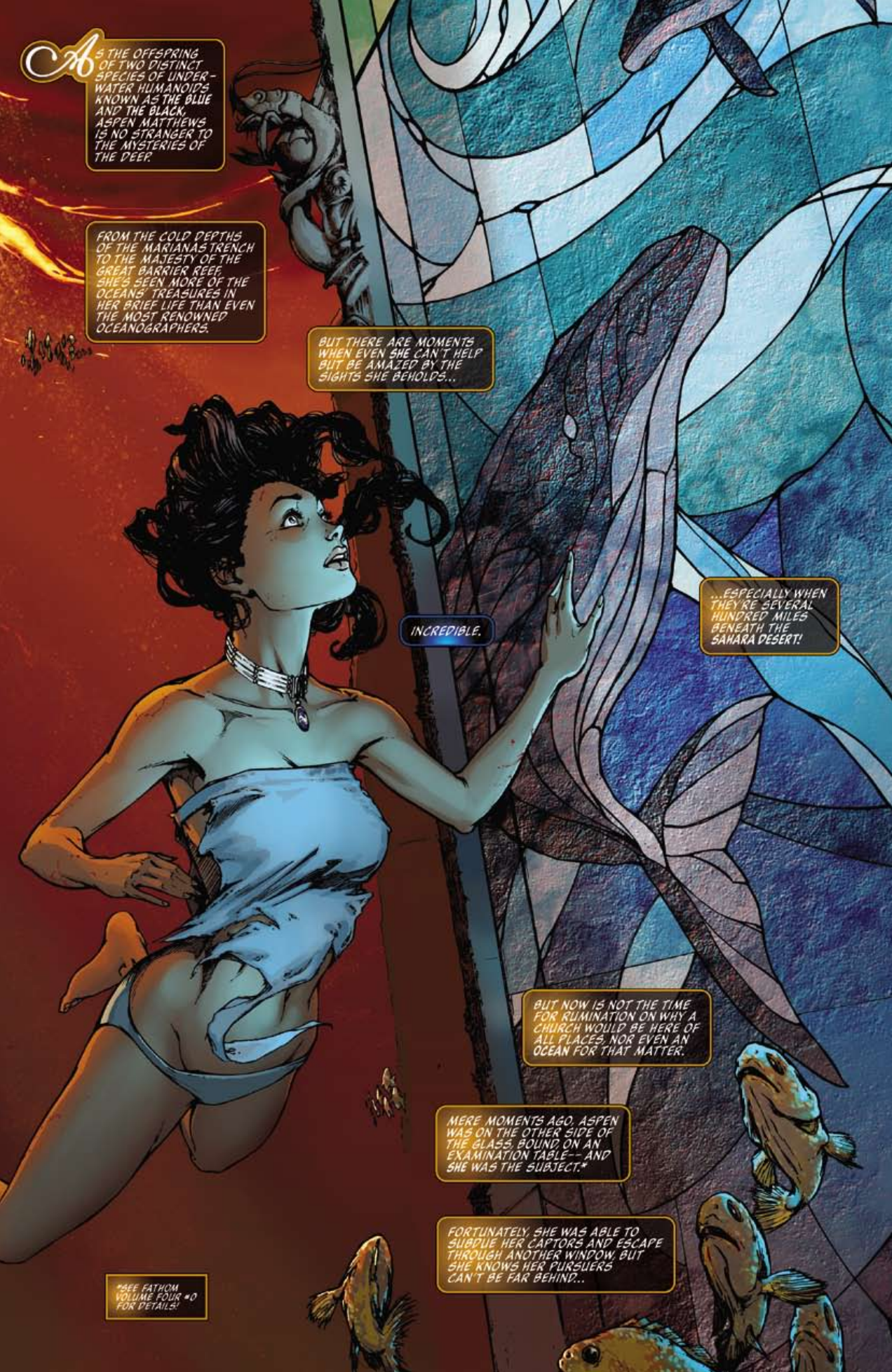
...ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY'RE SEVERAL HUNDRED MILES BENEATH THE SAHARA DESERT!

BUT NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR RUMINATION ON WHY A CHURCH WOULD BE HERE OF ALL PLACES, NOR EVEN AN OCEAN FOR THAT MATTER.

MERE MOMENTS AGO, ASPEN WAS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GLASS, BOUND ON AN EXAMINATION TABLE-- AND SHE WAS THE SUBJECT.*

FORTUNATELY, SHE WAS ABLE TO SUBDUCE HER CAPTORS AND ESCAPE THROUGH ANOTHER WINDOW, BUT SHE KNOWS HER PURSUERS CAN'T BE FAR BEHIND...

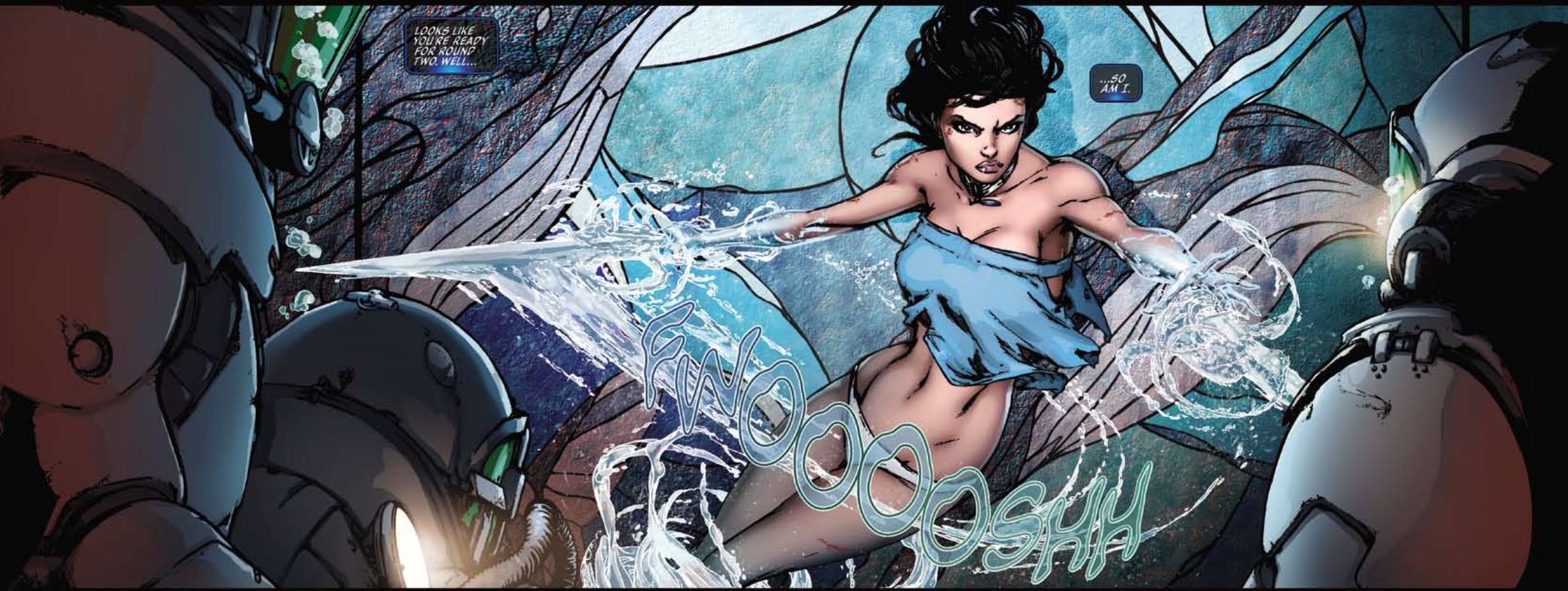
*SEE FATHOM VOLUME FOUR #0 FOR DETAILS!





AS A MATTER OF FACT...

I'VE GOT COMPANY.



LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE READY FOR ROUND TWO, WELL...

...SO AM I.

FWOOOOOSH




THE FIRST TIME AROUND THEY HAD THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE, AND I WAS AFRAID TO HURT THEM DOWN HERE, SO I HELPED BACK.

IN RETURN, THEY KNOCKED ME OUT AND KILLED MY FRIENDS.

NOT THIS TIME.

THOSE DIVING SUITS ARE HEAVILY ARMORED... WELL PROTECTED.

TOO BAD THE SAME CAN'T BE SAID FOR THEIR AIR SUPPLY!



I KNOW I SHOULD BE CONCERNED FOR THEM— THEY'RE HUMAN BEINGS AFTER ALL— BUT ALL I FEEL IS RAGE.

I WANT TO SHOW THEM WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE VICTIMS...


...LIKE MY FRIEND DR. COLIN WORETH, MY ASSISTANT JUDITH BANYANSKI, OUR HOST SHEIK RYDAL AND HIS EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT CALLED SHETHAL, WHOSE ONLY CRIME WAS THAT THEY WERE ACCOMPANYING ME ON A DEEP-SEA EXPEDITION AT THE REQUEST OF THE SHEIK.

LEAVING THEM INSIDE THE SEEMINGLY SAFE CONFINES OF THE BATHYSPHERE CRAFT THAT TOOK US DOWN HERE, I WENT OUT TO INVESTIGATE A STRANGE NEW AQUATIC LIFE FORM THAT WAS ONCE A WOMAN NAMED DR. PADMA SINGH.



THEN THEY CAME.

BEFORE I EVEN KNEW WHAT WAS HAPPENING, THEY OVERWHELMED ME AND DESTROYED THE CRAFT AS IT TRIED TO FLEE.



I AWOKE ON AN EXAMINATION TABLE, WHERE I LEARNED OF THE FATE OF MY COMPANIONS.

SUFFICE TO SAY I DIDN'T TAKE THE NEWS SO WELL.



AS SOON AS I SAW A WAY OUT, I TOOK IT.

ONLY THEN DID I REALIZE THAT I HAD BEEN CAPTIVE INSIDE SOME SORT OF UNDERWATER CATHEDRAL IN THE MIDST OF AN ALIEN-LOOKING LANDSCAPE...

...AND THAT THE MEN WHO CAPTURED ME HAD RETURNED.

WITH THEIR OXYGEN SUPPLY
DWINDLING QUICKLY, THOSE TWO
ARE NO LONGER A CONCERN AS
THEY TRY TO GET BACK INSIDE—
BUT THIS ONE IS TRYING TO DO
THE SAME TO ME...

...AND... IT'S
WORKING...

THMMPSHHH

HNH?

KRRKLL

NNNGHNNNH...!

-KOFF
KOFF-

KKSSSHHHK



EVEN THOUGH GOD KNOWS HE DESERVED IT, I CAN'T BEAR TO WATCH AS HIS SUIT SUCUMBES TO THE PRESSURE OF THE DEEP...

...AS THE PREDATOR BECOMES PREY.

I ABHOR TAKING LIVES-- EVEN THOSE WHO WOULD WANT TO DO ME HARM. I KNOW THAT'S A SENTIMENT THAT TENDS TO GET ME IN TROUBLE DOWN HERE.



WHEREVER HERE IS...



IS THIS WHERE
THE SHEIK WAS
TAKING ME?

IT'S SO HUGE--
SO BEAUTIFUL--
AND YET, IN A WAY,
SO HORRIFYING.

THIS WAS BUILT...
AND BORN, LIVING...
BUT NOT NATURAL.

THAT SUBSTANCE
LEAKING FROM
ITS U.M. ROOF..

...IS THAT OIL?



I'VE SEEN THIS SUBSTANCE BEFORE, THOUGH. MY ANCESTORS THE BLUE BUILT THEIR HOMES AND WEAPONS WITH SOMETHING VERY MUCH LIKE IT. BUT NEVER ANYTHING THIS...

...INCREDIBLE.



THIS AREA LOOKS LIKE SOLID GLASS...



...YET IT SHIMMERS LIKE LIQUID.



WHAT IS THIS?





-GASP!-

THWLLSHH



NO!



PLEASE?!



NNGGHH~

WHUMMP