#1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR

TUI T. SUTHERLAND

ART BY MIKE HOLMES

WINGS OF FIRE

THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

BOOK EIGHT

ESCAPING PERIL

SCHOLASTIC

DISCOVER
THE WORLD OF

WINGS OF FIRE

BOOK ONE
THE DRAGONET PROPHECY

BOOK TWO
THE LOST HEIR

BOOK THREE
THE HIDDEN KINGDOM

BOOK FOUR
THE DARK SECRET

BOOK FIVE
THE BRIGHTEST NIGHT

BOOK SIX
MOON RISING

BOOK SEVEN
WINTER TURNING

BOOK EIGHT
ESCAPING PERIL

BOOK NINE
TALONS OF POWER

BOOK TEN
DARKNESS OF DRAGONS

BOOK ELEVEN
THE LOST CONTINENT

BOOK TWELVE
THE HIVE QUEEN

BOOK THIRTEEN
THE POISON JUNGLE

BOOK FOURTEEN
THE DANGEROUS GIFT

BOOK FIFTEEN
THE FLAMES OF HOPE

LEGENDS
DARKSTALKER
DRAGONSLAYER

GRAPHIC NOVELS

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WINGS OF FIRE

ESCAPING PERIL

THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

For Gwynnie and Bridget, with love from all the dragons!
—T.T.S.

For Nancy, Holly's mom — every time we talked, you told me my art was going to take me somewhere special. I've never forgotten how much that meant to me.
—M.H.

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WINGS OF FIRE

ESCAPING PERIL
THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

BY TUI T. SUTHERLAND

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COLOR BY MAARTA LAIHO

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Queen Glacier's Palace
Ice Kingdom
Sky Kingdom
Queen Thorn's Stronghold
Claws of the Clouds Mountains
Kingdom of Sand
Scorpion Den
Jade Mountain

N
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E
Queen Ruby's Palace
Ruins of the Summer Palace
Kingdom of the Sea
Diamond Spray River
Bay of a Thousand Scales
Diamond Spray Delta
Mud Kingdom
Queen Moorhen's Palace
Scavenger Den
Scavenger Den
Rainforest Kingdom

Queen Glacier
Palace
Ice Kingdom
Sky Kingdom
Queen Thorn's
Stronghold
Claws of the
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Sand
Scorpion Den
Jade Mountain

ESCAPING PERIL

THE JADE MOUNTAIN PROPHECY

BEWARE THE
DARKNESS OF DRAGONS,
BEWARE THE
STALKER OF DREAMS,
BEWARE THE TALONS
OF POWER AND FIRE,
BEWARE ONE WHO IS
NOT WHAT SHE SEEMS.

SOMETHING IS COMING
TO SHAKE THE EARTH,
SOMETHING IS COMING
TO SCORCH THE GROUND.
JADE MOUNTAIN WILL FALL
BENEATH THUNDER AND ICE
UNLESS THE LOST CITY
OF NIGHT CAN BE FOUND.

PROLOGUE: SEVEN YEARS AGO...
NO DRAGON WAS SAFE IN THE SKY PALACE, BUT THOSE IN MOST DANGER WERE QUEEN SCARLET'S DAUGHTERS, TOURMALINE AND RUBY.
OR IS IT DAUGHTER NOW, SINGULAR? AM I THE ONLY ONE LEFT?
I HAVEN'T SEEN MY SISTER, TOURMALINE, IN THREE DAYS...
TOURMALINE, YOU CAN'T CHALLENGE MOTHER! YOU'RE ONLY TEN!
SHE KILLED HER MOTHER, ALL THREE OF HER SISTERS, AND ELEVEN OF OURS. NO ONE CAN DEFEAT HER.
SHE CAN'T BE QUEEN FOREVER, RUBY.
SHE HAS BEEN QUEEN FOREVER
TWENTY-FOUR YEARS IS A LONG TIME, BUT NOT THAT LONG. QUEEN OASIS WAS QUEEN FOR LONGER THAN THAT AND LOOK WHAT HAPPENED TO HER.
RUBY, WE'RE THE ONLY HEIRS LEFT– THE ONLY HOPE THE SKYWINGS HAVE FOR A DECENT QUEEN.
IF I DEFEAT MOTHER AND BECOME QUEEN, WE CAN GET OUT OF THIS WAR.

THE PROPHECY WILL TAKE CARE OF THE WAR! THE BRIGHTEST NIGHT IS IN FOUR DAYS...
RIIIGHT. I'LL JUST WAIT FOR A BUNCH OF EGGS THAT HAVEN'T EVEN HATCHED YET.
I DON'T WANT TO WAIT FOR THINGS TO HAPPEN. I WANT TO MAKE THEM HAPPEN.
I DON'T WANT TO WATCH YOU DIE.
DON'T WORRY. I WON'T DO IT YET. AFTER ANOTHER FEW MONTHS OF TRAINING, WE'LL SEE.
OH, I ALMOST FORGOT! I GOT YOU THIS.
AN EARRING? IS THIS SUPPOSED TO BE A GOOD-BYE PRESENT?
NO! BUT I WANT YOU TO WEAR IT AND THINK OF ME...
NOW TOURMALINE'S GONE, AND IT SEEMS LIKE I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO'S NOTICED.
IT'S LIKE SHE JUST VANISHED. NO PATROLS, NO SEARCH PARTIES...
IF MOTHER FOUND OUT TOURMALINE WAS PLANNING TO CHALLENGE HER—WHAT DID MOTHER DO?
AM I NEXT?
PRINCESS RUBY! THE QUEEN REQUESTS YOUR PRESENCE IN THE THRONE ROOM. IMMEDIATELY.

TOURMALINE SAID: NEVER LET THEM SEE YOU'RE TERRIFIED. ACT LIKE A QUEEN.

MAYBE THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT GOT HER **KILLED.**

QUEEN SCARLET WOULDN'T KILL ME IN FRONT OF ALL THESE DRAGONS, WOULD SHE?

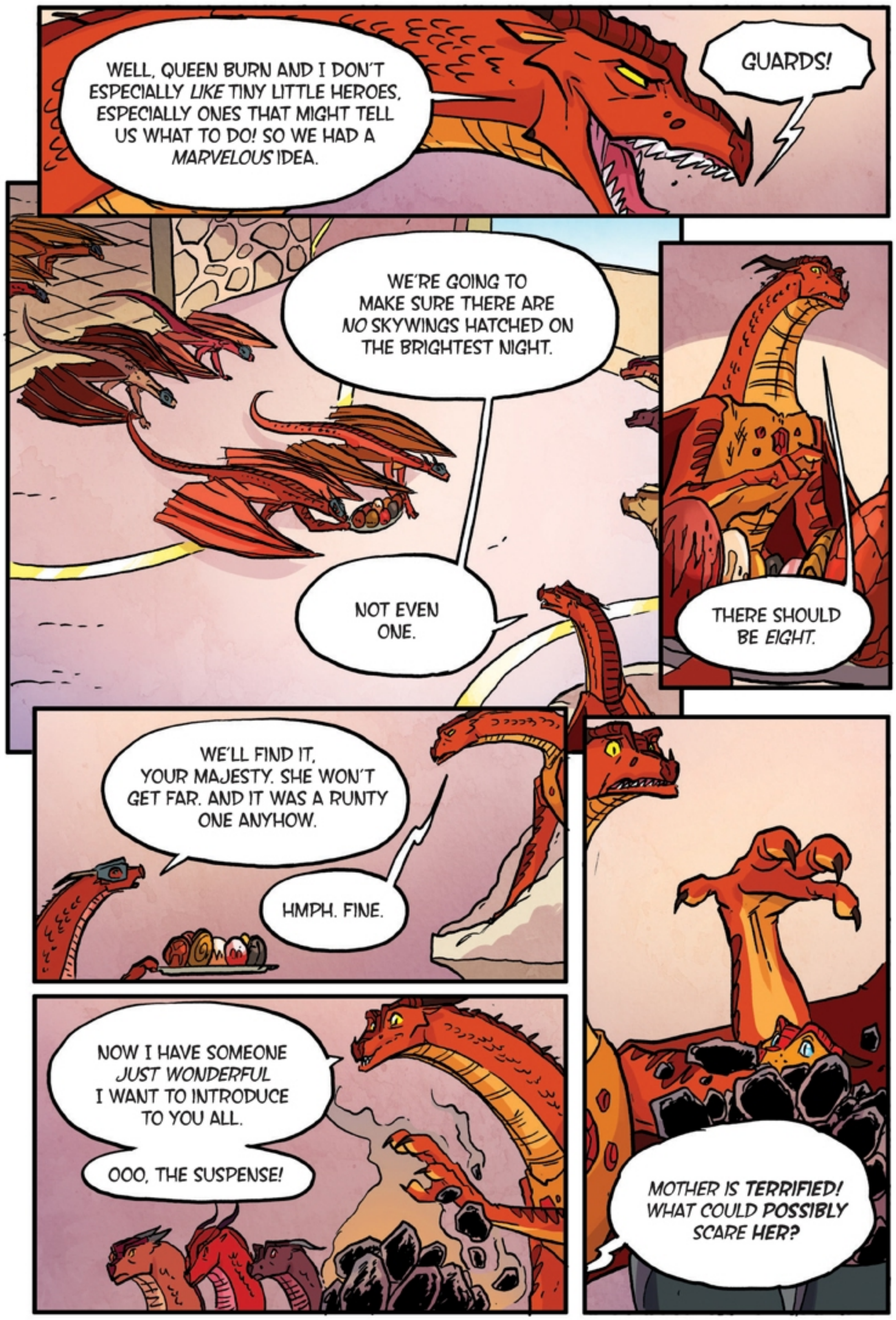
AH, RUBY. AT LAST. COURT, MANY OF YOU DON'T KNOW MY DAUGHTER, RUBY. SHE'S BEEN AWAY IN TRAINING. IF YOU EVER *HAVE* SEEN HER, SHE PROBABLY HAD HER NOSE IN A SCROLL.

STAND BY ME, RUBY. I WANT YOU *ESPECIALLY* TO SEE THIS.

WELL, NOW EVERYONE IS HERE! I HAVE *SUCH* A THRILLING ANNOUNCEMENT!

YOU MAY ALL HAVE HEARD OF A CERTAIN PROPHECY ABOUT *SPECIAL DRAGONETS.* APPARENTLY THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO HATCH ON THE BRIGHTEST NIGHT—THAT'S TONIGHT—AND *STOP THE WAR.*

ISN'T THAT EXCITING? TINY LITTLE HEROES CRAWLING OUT OF THEIR EGGS ANY MINUTE NOW!


WELL, QUEEN BURN AND I DON'T ESPECIALLY *LIKE* TINY LITTLE HEROES, ESPECIALLY ONES THAT MIGHT TELL US WHAT TO DO! SO WE HAD A *MARVELOUS* IDEA.
GUARDS!
WE'RE GOING TO MAKE SURE THERE ARE *NO* SKYWINGS HATCHED ON THE BRIGHTEST NIGHT.
NOT EVEN ONE.
THERE SHOULD BE *EIGHT*.
WE'LL FIND IT, YOUR MAJESTY. SHE WON'T GET FAR. AND IT WAS A RUNTY ONE ANYHOW.
HMPH. FINE.
NOW I HAVE SOMEONE *JUST WONDERFUL* I WANT TO INTRODUCE TO YOU ALL.
OOO, THE SUSPENSE!
MOTHER IS TERRIFIED! WHAT COULD POSSIBLY SCARE HER?

BEHOLD, MY NEW AND FUTURE CHAMPION! MY MOST FABULOUSLY WONDERFUL NEW TOY!

GASP!

HELP!

SAVE US!

AHHHHH!

WHAT IS THAT?!

IT CAN'T BE REAL.

WHY IS IT STILL ALIVE?!

KILL IT!

FIRESCALES!

DON'T QUESTION THE QUEEN!

THIS DRAGONET LOOKS LIKE SHE'S BURNING UP FROM THE INSIDE.

DOWN!
YELP!
YOUR MAJESTY... ARE YOU SURE THIS IS SAFE? KEEPING THAT... MONSTER ALIVE?
SHE'S NOT JUST ANY MONSTER. SHE'S *MY* MONSTER!
AND SHE'S SO *VERY* USEFUL.
HERE, DARLING. SHOW EVERYONE WHAT YOU CAN DO.

IMPRESSIVE. NOW GET THIS OVER WITH.
GO TOUCH THE REST OF THE EGGS, PERIL.
BUT– I BURNDED IT.
DO AS I TELL YOU.
THIS MONSTER COULD DO THAT TO **ANYONE!** SHE COULD PROBABLY KILL A FULL-GROWN DRAGON JUST BY **TOUCHING** HER. IS **THIS** WHAT HAPPENED TO TOURMALINE?
SHE'S THE DEADLIEST WEAPON MOTHER HAS EVER FOUND. NO ONE CAN CHALLENGE HER NOW.
SO I WON'T. I'LL BE OBEDIENT AND AGREEABLE AND STAY AWAY FROM THAT DRAGONET.
YOU WIN, MOTHER.

I HOPE YOU KNOW HOW TO CONTROL YOUR NEW CHAMPION, MOTHER. BECAUSE SHE'S NOT JUST A THREAT TO ME.
THAT DRAGON COULD DESTROY THE WORLD.

PART ONE: SCALES OF FIRE

CLAY'S BEEN GONE FOR **HOURS!** THREE MOONS! HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE FOR SKYWINGS TO COLLECT A BODY?

HE SAID HE'D COME GET ME AS SOON AS RUBY WAS GONE. HA! AS IF I SHOULD BE AFRAID OF RUBY.

WHY SHOULD I HAVE TO HIDE ANYWAY? CLAY SAID IT HIMSELF! "YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO BE HERE."

...IS THAT TRUE? DO I HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE **ANYWHERE** AFTER EVERYTHING I'VE DONE?

I JUST WANT TO BE WITH CLAY. THAT'S SAFE AND HARMLESS OF ME, ISN'T IT?

AND IF ANYONE TRIES TO KEEP ME AWAY FROM HIM, I WILL MELT OFF THEIR HEAD! UNLESS CLAY TELLS ME NOT TO, I GUESS.

WHEN PRINCESS RUBY TOOK OVER, I THOUGHT EVERYTHING WOULD CHANGE...

AND EVERYTHING **DID** CHANGE. FOR THE BETTER. FOR EVERYONE BUT **ME.**

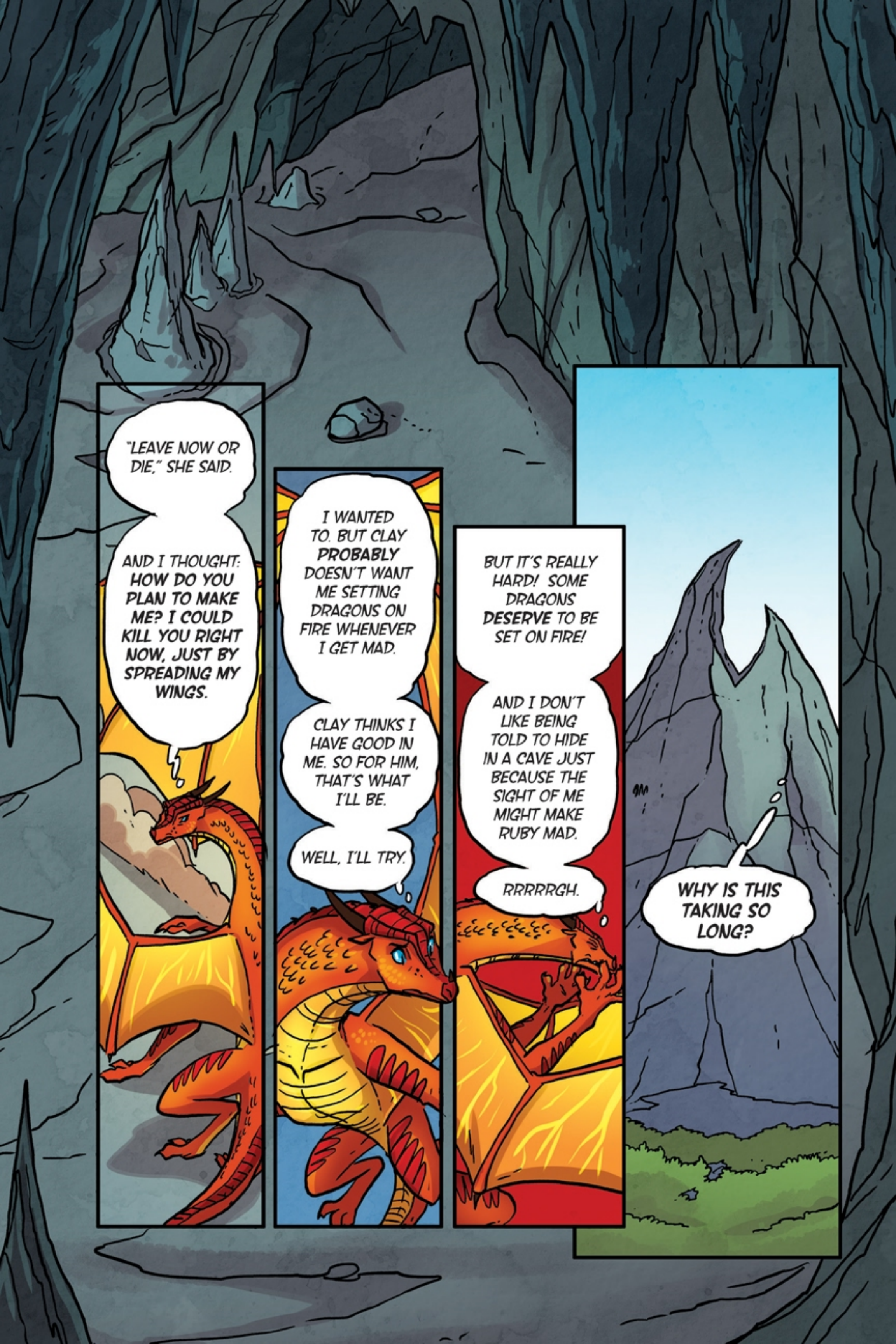
I CAN'T BELIEVE HER FIRST ACT AS QUEEN WAS **BANISHING** ME FROM THE SKY KINGDOM.

AND WHEN I ASKED WHY, RUBY SAID...

BECAUSE YOU'RE A MURDERER.

BUT AREN'T WE ALL? DIDN'T WE ALL DO TERRIBLE THINGS BECAUSE SCARLET TOLD US TO?

THEN I LOOKED INTO HER EYES AND I REALIZED... IT'S PERSONAL. RUBY **HATES** ME.


"LEAVE NOW OR DIE," SHE SAID.
AND I THOUGHT: HOW DO YOU PLAN TO MAKE ME? I COULD KILL YOU RIGHT NOW, JUST BY SPREADING MY WINGS.
I WANTED TO. BUT CLAY PROBABLY DOESN'T WANT ME SETTING DRAGONS ON FIRE WHENEVER I GET MAD.
CLAY THINKS I HAVE GOOD IN ME. SO FOR HIM, THAT'S WHAT I'LL BE.
WELL, I'LL TRY.
BUT IT'S REALLY HARD! SOME DRAGONS DESERVE TO BE SET ON FIRE!
AND I DON'T LIKE BEING TOLD TO HIDE IN A CAVE JUST BECAUSE THE SIGHT OF ME MIGHT MAKE RUBY MAD.
RRRRRGH.
WHY IS THIS TAKING SO LONG?

IT'S SO **HARD** BEING HERE IN JADE MOUNTAIN ACADEMY. IN THE SKY KINGDOM, EVERYONE KNEW TO AVOID ME. HERE, I ALWAYS HAVE TO WORRY. WHAT IF I BUMP INTO SOMEONE? WHAT IF THEY BUMP INTO ME?
WHAT WILL CLAY THINK IF I BURN ONE OF THEM?

DOES CLAY LOVE ALL THE OTHER STUDENTS MORE THAN ME? HE MUST–HE SHOULD–WHY **WOULDN'T** HE? NONE OF **THEM** HAVE MURDERED... WELL, A WHOLE LOT OF DRAGONS.

BUT NONE OF THEM SAVED HIS LIFE EITHER! **AND** HIS FRIENDS!
BUT EVEN HIS FRIENDS HATE ME.

EVERYONE EVERYWHERE HATES ME. I LEARNED THAT WHILE I WAS SEARCHING THE CONTINENT FOR SCARLET, AFTER THE WAR.

IT'S STRANGE TO REALIZE THINGS CAN HURT MORE ON THE INSIDE OF YOUR SCALES THAN THE OUTSIDE.
IT'S STRANGE THAT A DRAGON WHO **CAN'T** BE HURT ON THE OUTSIDE CAN HAVE SO MANY RAGGED HOLES INSIDE.

ACK!

THUMP
FINALLY! IS THAT CLAY?

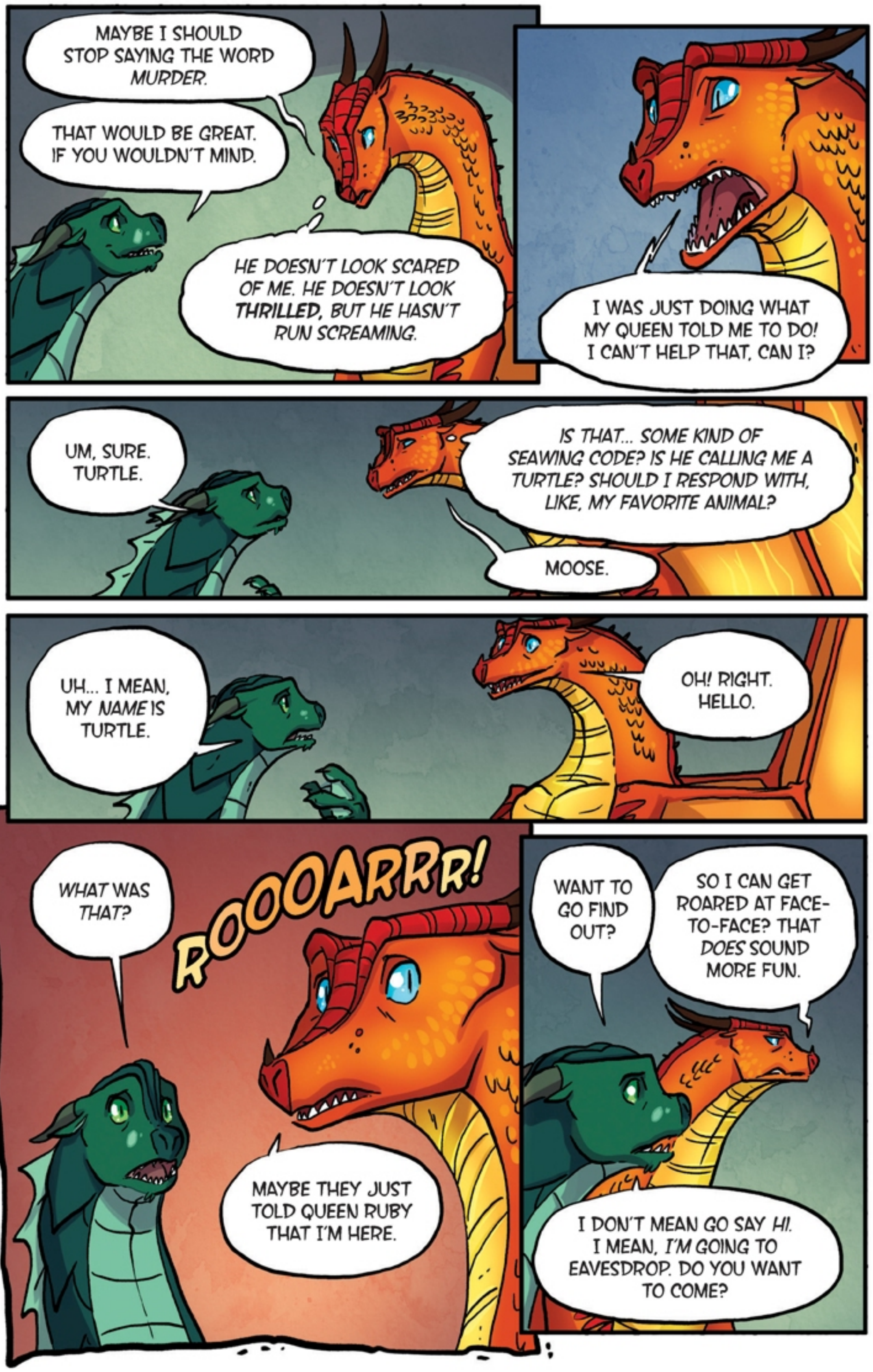
WHAT ARE YOU *DOING?*
UM. WALKING? IN THE HALLS? BACK TO MY CAVE?
WELL, THAT WAS ***VERY STUPID*** OF YOU!
OH. SORRY.

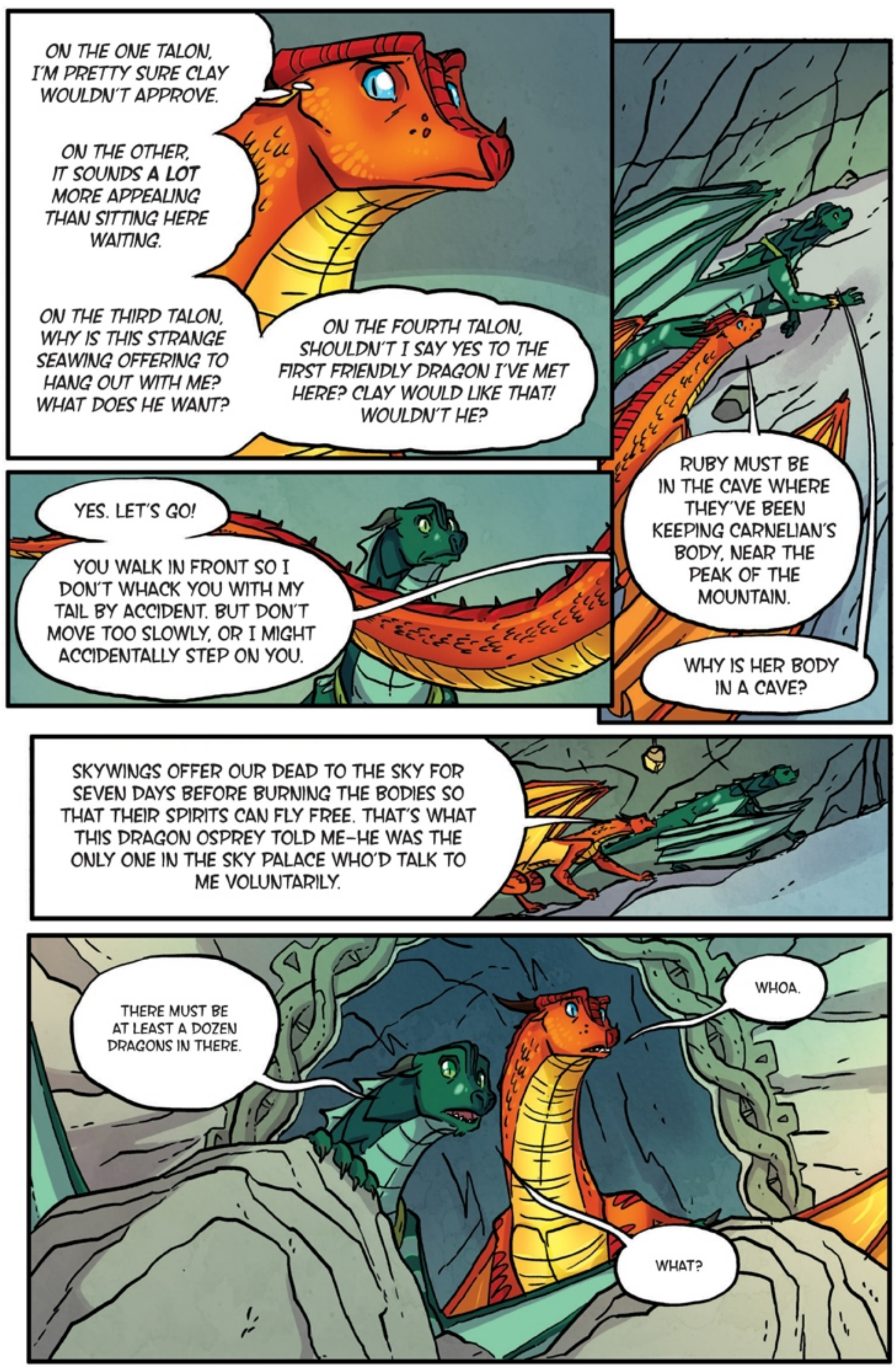
YOU'RE PERIL, AREN'T YOU? QUEEN SCARLET'S... UM...
GULP
YES. I'M QUEEN SCARLET'S NOTORIOUS DEATH MONSTER.
AH, OK. I'LL JUST... GO, THEN.

WHAT WOULD CLAY WANT ME TO DO? HE SAID I MIGHT MAKE FRIENDS HERE. BUT NO ONE ELSE IS LIKE HIM–WILLING TO SEE ANOTHER SIDE OF ME.
UH–

WHO ARE YOU?!!
THAT CAME OUT KIND OF MENACING...
i mean, WHO are YOU?
NOW I SOUND MANIC.

I'M NOT BEING CREEPY! I'M NOT, LIKE, PUTTING YOU ON A MURDER LIST.
NOT A TO-BE-MURDERED LIST, I MEAN.
WAIT, NO–TO BE CLEAR, I HAVE *NO* KIND OF MURDER LIST *AT ALL*. DEFINITELY OUT OF THE MURDERING BUSINESS, ME.


MAYBE I SHOULD STOP SAYING THE WORD *MURDER*.
THAT WOULD BE GREAT. IF YOU WOULDN'T MIND.
*HE DOESN'T LOOK SCARED OF ME. HE DOESN'T LOOK **THRILLED**, BUT HE HASN'T RUN SCREAMING.*
I WAS JUST DOING WHAT MY QUEEN TOLD ME TO DO! I CAN'T HELP THAT, CAN I?
UM, SURE. TURTLE.
IS THAT... SOME KIND OF SEAWING CODE? IS HE CALLING ME A TURTLE? SHOULD I RESPOND WITH, LIKE, MY FAVORITE ANIMAL?
MOOSE.
UH... I MEAN, MY *NAME* IS TURTLE.
OH! RIGHT. HELLO.
WHAT WAS *THAT?*
ROOOARRR!
MAYBE THEY JUST TOLD QUEEN RUBY THAT I'M HERE.
WANT TO GO FIND OUT?
SO I CAN GET ROARED AT FACE-TO-FACE? THAT *DOES* SOUND MORE FUN.
I DON'T MEAN GO SAY *HI*. I MEAN, *I'M* GOING TO EAVESDROP. DO YOU WANT TO COME?

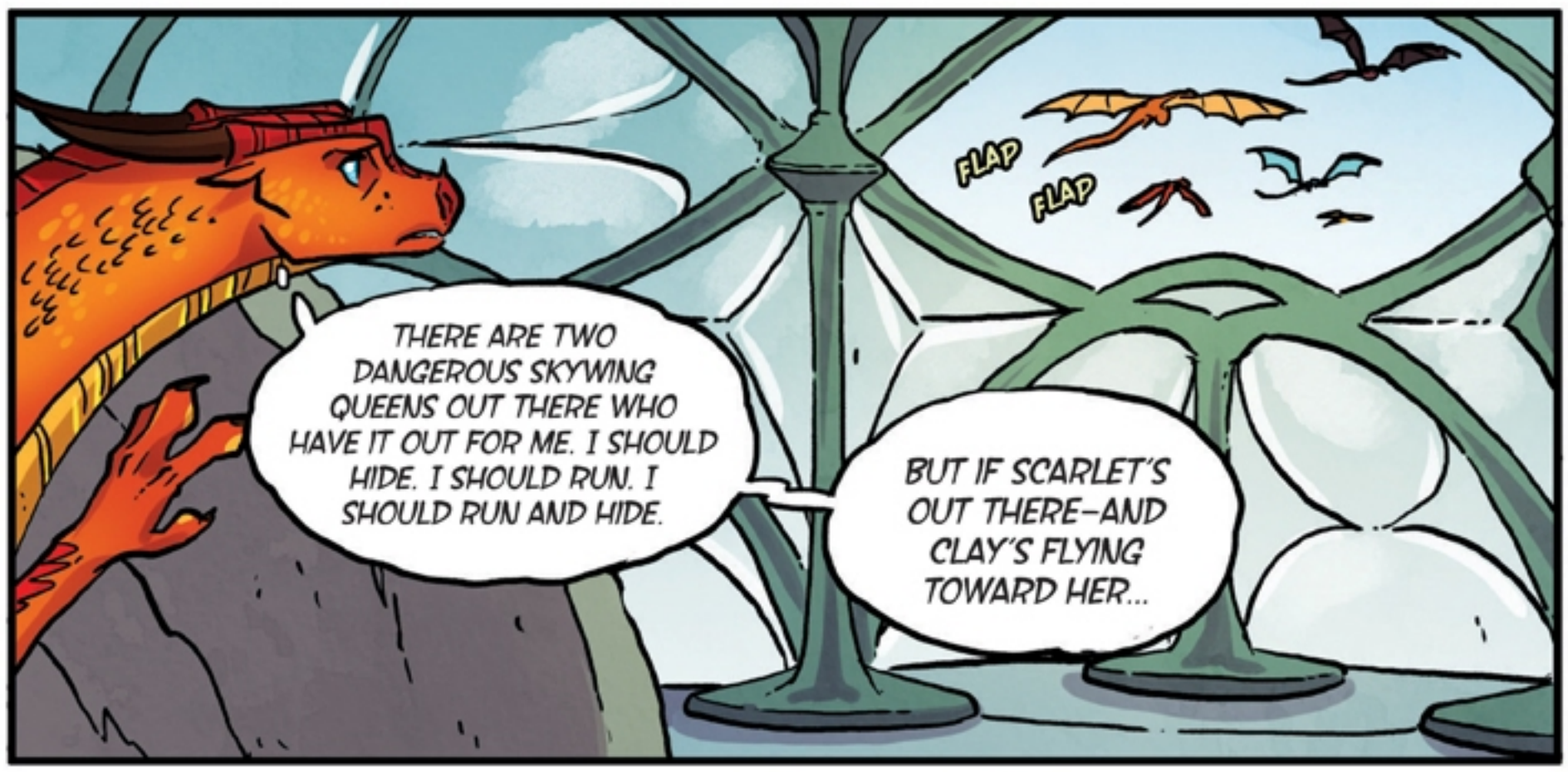

ON THE ONE TALON, I'M PRETTY SURE CLAY WOULDN'T APPROVE.
ON THE OTHER, IT SOUNDS A LOT MORE APPEALING THAN SITTING HERE WAITING.
ON THE THIRD TALON, WHY IS THIS STRANGE SEAWING OFFERING TO HANG OUT WITH ME? WHAT DOES HE WANT?
ON THE FOURTH TALON, SHOULDN'T I SAY YES TO THE FIRST FRIENDLY DRAGON I'VE MET HERE? CLAY WOULD LIKE THAT! WOULDN'T HE?
YES. LET'S GO!
YOU WALK IN FRONT SO I DON'T WHACK YOU WITH MY TAIL BY ACCIDENT. BUT DON'T MOVE TOO SLOWLY, OR I MIGHT ACCIDENTALLY STEP ON YOU.
RUBY MUST BE IN THE CAVE WHERE THEY'VE BEEN KEEPING CARNELIAN'S BODY, NEAR THE PEAK OF THE MOUNTAIN.
WHY IS HER BODY IN A CAVE?
SKYWINGS OFFER OUR DEAD TO THE SKY FOR SEVEN DAYS BEFORE BURNING THE BODIES SO THAT THEIR SPIRITS CAN FLY FREE. THAT'S WHAT THIS DRAGON OSPREY TOLD ME—HE WAS THE ONLY ONE IN THE SKY PALACE WHO'D TALK TO ME VOLUNTARILY.
THERE MUST BE AT LEAST A DOZEN DRAGONS IN THERE.
WHOA.
WHAT?

NEVER SAW THIS PLACE IN DAYLIGHT BEFORE. IT... LOOKS LIKE A PLACE WHERE A SPIRIT *COULD* BE SET FREE.
LIES! FIRST YOU TELL US YOU'RE HARBORING A VIOLENT, BLOODTHIRSTY CRIMINAL, AND THEN YOU SHOW US A DRAGONET WHO'S DIED IN *EXACTLY* THE WAY THAT *CREATURE* KILLS.
OH–THAT'S ME! I'M THE VIOLENT, BLOODTHIRSTY CRIMINAL.
UNFAIR! I DON'T THIRST FOR BLOOD! I HAVEN'T EVEN KILLED ANYONE IN MONTHS!
BLOODTHIRSTY INDEED!

YOU WANT US TO BELIEVE *THIS* WAS DONE BY A *MUDWING*?
LOOK AT CARNELIAN'S BODY! SOME OF THE BURNS ARE TALON PRINTS!
I DON'T LIKE PERIL ANY MORE THAN YOU, CINNABAR, BUT I PROMISE IT *WASN'T* HER. THERE WAS AN EXPLOSION.
PERIL PULLED HER OUT OF THE FIRE. THAT'S WHY PERIL'S PRINTS ARE THERE—BECAUSE SHE WAS TRYING TO SAVE CARNELIAN.
TELL ME WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO FIND AND PUNISH THE MUDWING WHO DID THIS. WHAT'S HER NAME?
YOU DON'T SERIOUSLY *BELIEVE* THEM!
QUEEN MOORHEN OF THE MUDWINGS HAS OFFERED TO MEET WITH YOU—SHE WANTS TO HELP FIND JUSTICE. WE ALL DO!
YOUR MAJESTY! SOMEONE IS APPROACHING FROM THE NORTH. THEY HAVE... ORANGE SCALES.
QUEEN SCARLET. SHE *IS* STILL ALIVE.

AND COMING TO KILL YOU, I BET. SINCE I WOULDN'T DO IT FOR HER.
SCARLET ASKED ME TO, THE NIGHT AFTER I RESCUED HER FROM BURN'S TOWER...
OWW...
DON'T MUMBLE! WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
IT'S JUST THAT RUBY IS QUEEN NOW. SHE'S A LOT SCARIER THAN YOU THINK SHE IS.
SHE CAN'T WIN. NOT AGAINST ME.
I GUESS YOU'LL FIND OUT.
I HAVE A BETTER IDEA. YOU RETURN TO THE SKY PALACE AND KILL HER FOR ME.
NO. YOU CAN'T MAKE ME.
I'M NOT THAT KIND OF DRAGON ANYMORE.
I KNOW YOU. YOU LIKE KILLING DRAGONS.
YOU WERE BORN TO BURN MY ENEMIES.
CLAY WOULDN'T LIKE ME IF I KILLED QUEEN RUBY.
BUT I WON'T LIKE YOU IF YOU DON'T.
NO. THAT'S MY FINAL ANSWER.
THEN YOU'RE USELESS.
WHY IS SCARLET COMING FOR RUBY NOW?

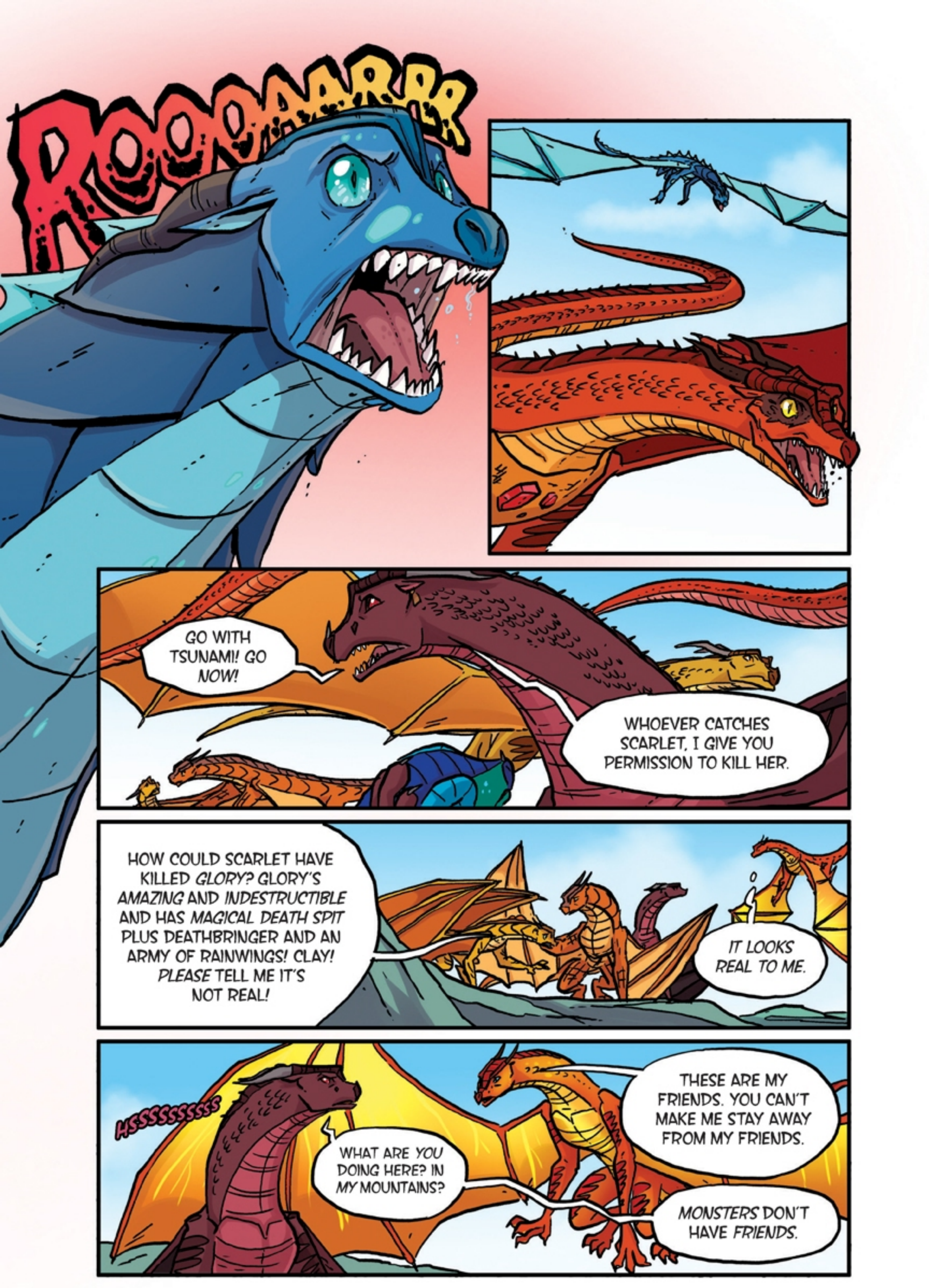
I'LL GO FACE HER.
NO! WE'LL FIGHT HER OFF! ALL OF US!
YOU'RE A *MUCH* BETTER QUEEN THAN SHE WAS. WE WANT *YOU*, NOT HER.
NOD NOD
THE THRONE IS YOURS NOW. WE'LL ALL FIGHT BESIDE YOU.
THANK YOU. IF THAT'S HOW YOU ALL FEEL, WE'LL FLY OUT TOGETHER.


FLAP
FLAP
THERE ARE TWO DANGEROUS SKYWING QUEENS OUT THERE WHO HAVE IT OUT FOR ME. I SHOULD HIDE. I SHOULD RUN. I SHOULD RUN AND HIDE.
BUT IF SCARLET'S OUT THERE—AND CLAY'S FLYING TOWARD HER...

WHERE ARE YOU GOING? WHAT HAPPENED TO STEALTH?

I HAVE TO PROTECT CLAY!

IT IS SCARLET.
TRAITORS! DISLOYAL COWARDS!
I WILL HAVE MY VENGEANCE AND I WILL GET MY THRONE BACK!
THIS IS JUST ONE OF THE DRAGONS I'LL KILL! YOU'RE ALL NEXT!
THAT'S–IT'S QUEEN GLORY!


ROOOAARRR
GO WITH TSUNAMI! GO *NOW!*
WHOEVER CATCHES SCARLET, I GIVE YOU PERMISSION TO KILL HER.
HOW COULD SCARLET HAVE KILLED *GLORY*? GLORY'S *AMAZING* AND *INDESTRUCTIBLE* AND HAS *MAGICAL DEATH SPIT* PLUS DEATHBRINGER AND AN ARMY OF RAINWINGS! CLAY! *PLEASE* TELL ME IT'S NOT REAL!
IT LOOKS REAL TO ME.
HSSSSSSSSS
WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING HERE? IN *MY* MOUNTAINS?
THESE ARE MY FRIENDS. YOU CAN'T MAKE ME STAY AWAY FROM MY FRIENDS.
MONSTERS DON'T HAVE *FRIENDS.*

AND WHO ARE *YOU*?
FLAP
FLAP
I'M TURTLE, ONE OF QUEEN CORAL'S SONS. I'M A STUDENT HERE. I FEEL LIKE... I DON'T KNOW, JUST... THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT THIS.

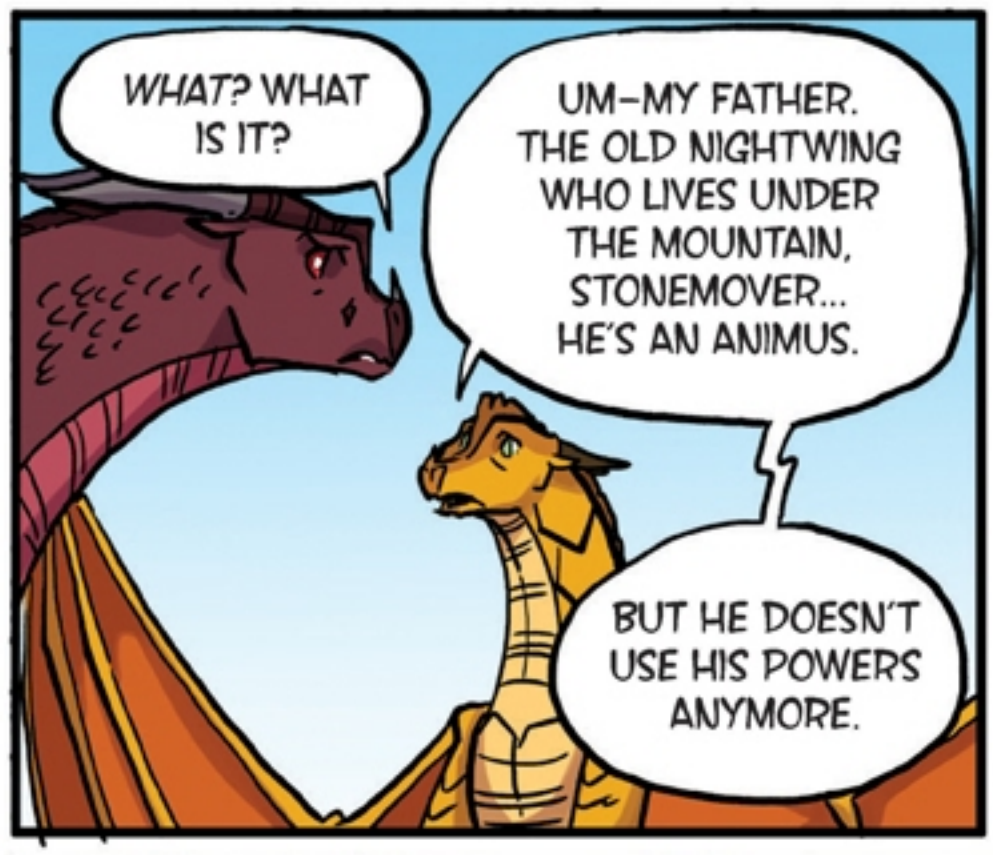
IT *IS* WEIRD. SCARLET *HATED* GLORY, BUT GOING AFTER HER FIRST MAKES NO SENSE. GLORY WAS PROBABLY THE BEST-GUARDED DRAGON IN PYRRHIA.
!
KILLING RUBY FIRST WOULD HAVE BEEN SMARTER.

THAT'S *QUEEN* RUBY TO YOU.
AND I'M NOT THAT EASY TO KILL. NO MATTER *WHO* YOU ARE OR *WHAT* YOUR CLAWS CAN DO.

QUEEN RUBY, DOES SHE HAVE SOMETHING IN HER EAR?
A MESSAGE? MORE THREATS?

WHAT IN THE NAME OF ALL THE MOONS!

ENCHANT THIS PIECE OF SCROLL SO THAT WHICHEVER DRAGON WEARS IT TUCKED INSIDE THEIR EAR SHALL LOOK EXACTLY LIKE GLORY OF THE RAINWING
CLAY! GLORY'S STILL ALIVE!
WE HAVE TO WARN HER.
WAS SCARLET TRYING TO TRICK YOU? BUT WHY? YOU'D HAVE FIGURED OUT THE TRUTH THE NEXT TIME YOU HEARD FROM GLORY.
IT WASN'T ABOUT TRICKING THEM. SCARLET WANTED TO SCARE THEM. IT'S HER FAVORITE KIND OF POWER.
BUT WAIT–AN ENCHANTMENT–?
YOU MUST KNOW. IS THERE AN ANIMUS DRAGON WORKING FOR HER?
WHY WOULD I KNOW? SHE DIDN'T TELL ME THINGS! I WAS HER–HER WEAPON, NOT HER FRIEND. YOU'RE HER DAUGHTER; WHY DON'T YOU KNOW?
I THOUGHT SKYWINGS DIDN'T HAVE ANY ANIMUS DRAGONS. NOT FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS, MAYBE NOT EVER.
NOT JUST SKYWINGS. I DON'T THINK THERE'S BEEN AN ANIMUS DRAGON FOR CENTURIES.
?
?


WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
UM–MY FATHER. THE OLD NIGHTWING WHO LIVES UNDER THE MOUNTAIN, STONEMOVER... HE'S AN ANIMUS.
BUT HE DOESN'T USE HIS POWERS ANYMORE.

HE MIGHT HAVE TO, IF THERE'S AN ANIMUS WORKING FOR SCARLET.

I'M NOT AFRAID OF ANY ANIMUS. I BET I COULD STOP IT–HIM, HER, WHATEVER.
I JUST HAVE TO SNEAK UP ON THEM AND POW! MELTED! A PILE OF CINDERS!
BUT IT MIGHT NOT BE A BAD DRAGON. MAYBE SCARLET TRICKED THEM OR FORCED THEM– WE CAN'T JUST KILL THEM.

WE ABSOLUTELY SHOULD. ANIMUS DRAGONS ARE TOO DANGEROUS. SKYWINGS USED TO KILL THEM THE MOMENT WE FIGURED OUT WHAT THEY WERE.
BUT–YOU MEAN WHEN THEY WERE STILL DRAGONETS? BEFORE THEY'D EVEN DONE ANYTHING?

THAT'S OUR POLICY WITH ALL DRAGONETS WHO ARE TOO DANGEROUS TO LIVE.

THAT'S NOT FAIR. ANIMUS DRAGONS CAN MAYBE DO GOOD THINGS, TOO.
LET'S SAVE WORRYING ABOUT IT UNTIL WE KNOW SCARLET REALLY HAS ONE. WE HAVE ENOUGH TO WORRY ABOUT ALREADY.

LIKE THE REST OF MY WINGLET! MOON, QIBLI, KINKAJOU, WINTER–THEY WERE GOING AFTER SCARLET, WEREN'T THEY? IS *THAT* WHY SHE ATTACKED THE ACADEMY?
THEY WERE GOING AFTER HER, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED... I'VE BEEN TRYING TO CONTACT THEM WITH THE DREAMVISITOR, BUT I CAN'T GET INTO THEIR DREAMS.

OH, I HOPE THEY'RE ALL RIGHT.
THEY PROBABLY ARE. OR ELSE SCARLET WOULD HAVE BEEN THROWING *THEIR* HEADS AT YOU.

OOPS. I THOUGHT THAT WOULD BE REASSURING!

FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
SOMEONE'S COMING BACK.

DON'T YOU COME *NEAR* OUR QUEEN!
I WASN'T *PLANNING* ON IT! DO YOU ACTUALLY THINK YOU COULD STOP ME IF I WAS?

PERIL...
ARRGH.
IT'S NOT FAIR. WHY CAN THEY BE RUDE AND I CAN'T SET THEM ON FIRE? OR EVEN GROWL BACK AT THEM?

THANKS.
RIGHT. BECAUSE CLAY THINKS I CAN BE GOOD.

FORGET HER. WHAT HAPPENED?
WE COULDN'T FIND SCARLET. THE OTHER GUARDS ARE STILL SEARCHING, BUT WE WANTED TO MAKE SURE YOU WERE GUARDED IN CASE IT WAS A TRAP.

IT WAS, IN A WAY. THE HEAD WAS ENCHANTED. IT WAS REALLY A MUDWING.
SOMEONE HAS TO CATCH TSUNAMI! WE HAVE TO TELL HER IT'S NOT GLORY.

SHE. SHE WAS SOMEBODY, EVEN IF SHE WASN'T GLORY.

WAIT. IF WE CAN FIGURE OUT WHO SHE IS, IT MIGHT BE A CLUE ABOUT WHERE SCARLET'S HIDING.
LET'S TAKE HER TO QUEEN MOORHEN.

CATCH TSUNAMI AND TELL HER, THEN SEND HER BACK. TELL THE OTHER SOLDIERS TO SPLIT UP. HALF KEEP LOOKING FOR SCARLET. THE OTHER HALF RETURN TO ME AT THE ACADEMY. WE'LL LEAVE FOR MOORHEN'S PALACE AT MIDNIGHT.

I'M GOING TO TRY THE DREAMVISITOR AGAIN.
THEY'RE ALL RIGHT. I'M SURE THEY ARE.

TURTLE! GO AWAY SO I CAN HAVE A MOMENT WITH CLAY!

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
I SHOULD STAY AND PROTECT THE STUDENTS, BUT–IF RUBY LEAVES ENOUGH GUARDS TO DO IT, THEN I'LL GO WITH HER TO SEE QUEEN MOORHEN.

WHAT ABOUT ME? WHAT SHOULD *I* DO?
WHATEVER YOU WANT TO DO, PERIL. THAT'S THE WHOLE POINT OF BEING FREE FROM SCARLET, ISN'T IT?

BUT WHAT DO *YOU* WANT ME TO DO?
PERIL. I'M NOT GOING TO BE A NEW SCARLET FOR YOU. YOU GET TO MAKE YOUR OWN CHOICES NOW.

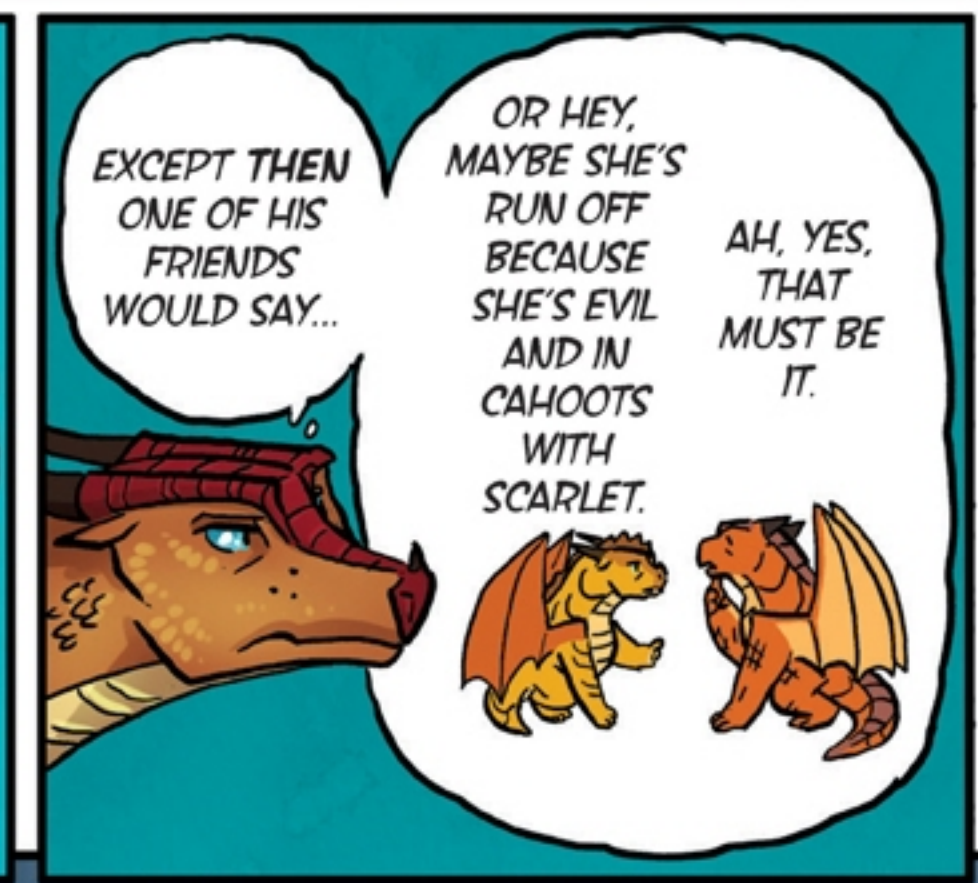
I **AM** MAKING MY OWN CHOICES. I'M **CHOOSING** TO DO WHATEVER **YOU** THINK I SHOULD DO.
SIGH

WELL, IF HE WON'T TELL ME, MAYBE I CAN FIGURE IT OUT. WHAT **DOES** CLAY WANT?
HE WANTS HIS FRIENDS AND THE SCHOOL TO BE SAFE.
THAT MEANS GETTING RID OF QUEEN SCARLET FOREVER. AND I MIGHT BE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN.

ALL RIGHT, CLAY. I'LL FIND QUEEN SCARLET. AND I'LL MAKE SURE SHE **NEVER** HURTS YOU AGAIN.

OF COURSE, THE **BEST** THING WOULD BE SNEAKING AWAY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT LIKE A HERO. ALONE, BOLDLY BUT QUIETLY FLYING INTO THE NIGHT.

IMAGINE THE SCENE IN THE MORNING.
NOOOOOO! PERIL! SHE'S GONE TO SAVE US ALL! SHE'S SO NOBLE AND SELF-SACRIFICING!


EXCEPT **THEN** ONE OF HIS FRIENDS WOULD SAY...
OR HEY, MAYBE SHE'S RUN OFF BECAUSE SHE'S EVIL AND IN CAHOOTS WITH SCARLET.
AH, YES, THAT MUST BE IT.

CLEARLY I HAVE TO SAY GOOD-BYE TO CLAY. TO STOP THAT FROM HAPPENING.
NOT JUST BECAUSE I WANT TO SEE HIM ONE MORE TIME.
OR BECAUSE I HOPE HE'LL TELL ME NOT TO GO. OR–

AAAAH!
WHY ARE YOU ALWAYS IN THE **WAY?**

AM I?
I'M NOT USUALLY.
OTHER DRAGONS GO AROUND ME OR OVER ME PRETTY WELL.
YOU WON'T BE PLEASED IF *I* GO OVER YOU.

WHY AREN'T YOU IN YOUR OWN SLEEPING CAVE?
IT FEELS WEIRD WITHOUT UMBER AND MY WINGLET. I SHOULD HAVE GONE WITH THEM.
NOT IF THEY'RE ALL DEAD NOW.

THAT WOULD BE EVEN WORSE! WHAT IF THEY *ARE* ALL DEAD AND I COULD HAVE SAVED THEM?

REALLY? YOU?
I DO NOT **APPRECIATE** YOUR SKEPTICAL TONE. JUST BECAUSE I DON'T PARTICULARLY LIKE DANGER OR UNCERTAINTY OR... OR *EXERCISE*... DOESN'T MEAN I COULDN'T BE USEFUL.

UM. OK. DON'T SOUND SKEPTICAL.
SOUND... ENTHUSIASTICALLY CURIOUS?
RRRRRRRRREEALLLY? **YOUUUUUU?**

HAHAHA!
YOU'RE SO WEIRD.
I'M NOT THE ONE SLEEPING IN THE ENTRANCE HALL, ASKING TO GET TRAMPLED AND SCORCHED.

WELL... TSUNAMI ISN'T BACK YET. I'M SORT OF WAITING FOR HER.
THAT PROBABLY DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING. ANYTHING INVOLVING DECAPITATION, I MEAN.
YOU HAVE THIS UNCANNY ABILITY TO SAY WHATEVER IS THE *OPPOSITE* OF COMFORTING.
UM... HOW ABOUT, I'M SURE SHE'S FINE BECAUSE THERE'S NO WAY SHE COULD HAVE CAUGHT UP TO A FULL-GROWN SKYWING LIKE SCARLET?
OH, UNLESS IT WAS AN AMBUSH.
OK, I HEARD IT THAT TIME.
SO WHAT DO WE *DO*? WHAT IF THAT *IS* HER PLAN, AND SHE KILLS EVERYONE WE SEND AFTER TSUNAMI?
SHE CAN'T KILL *ME*. I'D LIKE TO SEE HER TRY! *HA!*
YOU'RE RIGHT. YOU AND ME. WE SHOULD GO AFTER SCARLET.
THAT'S WHAT I–

WAIT, NO. WHAT? SHE CAN DEFINITELY KILL *YOU*.
MAYBE NOT. ANYWAY, TSUNAMI'S MY SISTER. AND MY WINGLET IS OUT THERE SOMEWHERE–

YOU HOPE.

ER. I MEAN, *YES*, THEY *ARE*.

SHHHH!
SOMEONE'S COMING. HIDE!

WHY ARE WE HIDING?
SHHHH!

*WHAT IS **WITH** THIS DRAGON AND THE EAVESDROPPING?*
I CAN'T REMEMBER EVER HIDING BEFORE I MET TURTLE. WHY HIDE WHEN YOU CAN JUST SET YOUR PROBLEM ON FIRE?

THAT SOUNDS LIKE THREE SETS OF TALONS ENTERING THE HALL.
TEN SOLDIERS SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO GUARD THIS PLACE. WITH LUCK, WE'LL BE BACK IN THREE DAYS.
THAT'S RUBY.

I DON'T WANT TO BE GONE FROM THE SKY PALACE TOO LONG. I HAVE...SOMEONE WAITING FOR ME.
THANK YOU, QUEEN RUBY
STARFLIGHT, THE NIGHTWING LIBRARIAN.

DID YOUR STUDENT TELL YOU ANYTHING ELSE WE SHOULD KNOW?
NOT MUCH.
CLAY!!

I NEED TO TALK TO CLAY!

BUT POPPING OUT OF HIDING NOW WOULD LOOK WEIRD AND SUSPICIOUS.
ARRRRGH.

MOON AND QIBLI ARE AT THE CLINIC IN POSSIBILITY, LOOKING AFTER KINKAJOU.
POOR KINKAJOU.
KINKAJOU? THAT BOUNCY LITTLE RAINWING IS HURT?
CLAY MUST BE REALLY UPSET.

ONE LAST WORD OF WARNING, ALTHOUGH I KNOW YOU WON'T LISTEN. YOU CANNOT TRUST MY MOTHER'S CREATURE. SHE KNOWS NOTHING BUT KILLING.

I CAN TRUST PERIL. SHE SAVED MY LIFE.

PLUS, SHE'S IN LOVE WITH CLAY.
THREE MOONS, STARFLIGHT.
I MEAN, TALK ABOUT ASKING TO BE SET ON FIRE! A PILE OF ASHES WOULD NEVER SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT! WITH CLAY RIGHT THERE!
ACK! STARFLIGHT! THAT'S NOT– NO, NO, NO.
I TRUST HER BECAUSE THERE'S GOOD IN HER. SHE JUST NEEDS A CHANCE.
SHE'LL NEVER BE GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU.
AND IF SHE EVER THINKS YOU DON'T LOVE HER BACK, SHE WILL SET YOUR FRIENDS ON FIRE. THAT'S THE TRUTH.
IS THAT TRUE? I WOULDN'T REALLY EVER SET CLAY'S FRIENDS ON FIRE, WOULD I?
NOT ALL OF THEM ANYWAY.
NO. NONE OF THEM. NOT EVEN IF IT'S THEIR FAULT HE DOESN'T LOVE ME.
BECAUSE HE WILL DEFINITELY NEVER LOVE ME IF THERE'S ANY FRIEND-BURNING.
LET'S NOT TALK ABOUT THIS. YOUR MAJESTY, I'LL MEET YOU BACK HERE AT MIDNIGHT.
FINE. YOU'VE BEEN WARNED.
SOUNDS LIKE RUBY'S LEAVING.
AM I GOING TO WAKE UP ON FIRE ONE DAY? HOW WORRIED SHOULD I BE?
PERIL IS NOT GOING TO SET YOU ON FIRE, STARFLIGHT.

I WONDER IF I HAVE ANY SCROLLS ABOUT SOCIOPATHS.

STOP THAT.

I'LL ASK SUNNY TO DREAMVISIT TSUNAMI AND SEE IF SHE CAN FIND HER.

QUEEN RUBY WILL NEVER BELIEVE PERIL HAS CHANGED.

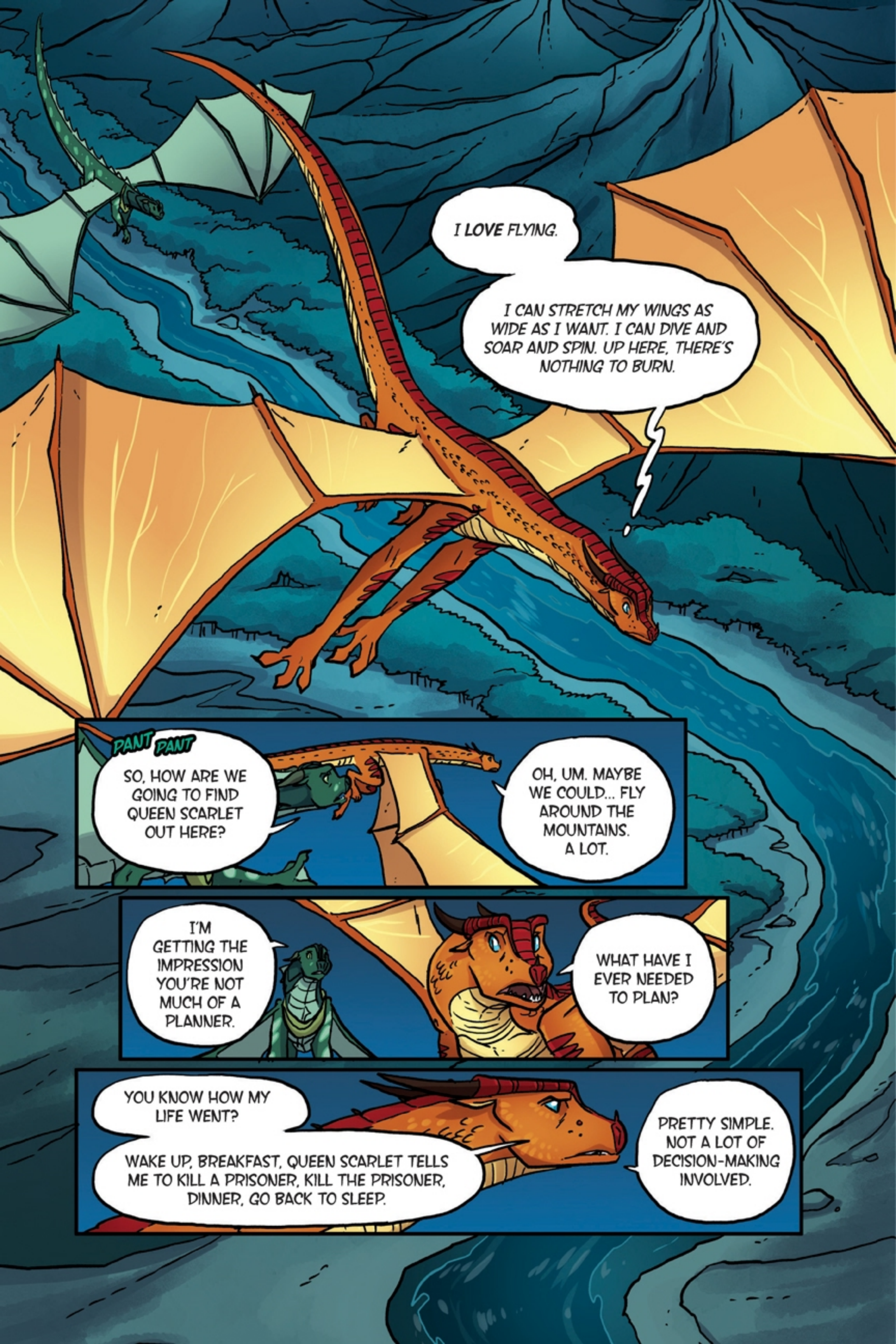
DIDN'T YOUR MOTHER EVER CHEER HERSELF UP BY HAVING SOMEONE TORCH A BUNCH OF BAD GUYS?
UM, NO. SEAWINGS– NO FIRE, REMEMBER? BESIDES, SHE USED HER PRISONERS AS BARGAINING CHIPS, NOT TOYS.

OUR PRISONERS WERE DEFINITELY SCARLET'S TOYS.
SO WERE YOU, IT SOUNDS LIKE.

NO! I WAS MORE THAN THAT! I WAS LIKE A *DAUGHTER* TO HER.

OK, OK. SORRY.
IT DOESN'T MATTER. THEY'LL NEVER TRUST ME WITH CLAY. I MEAN, IF SAVING CLAY'S LIFE WASN'T ENOUGH, WHAT ELSE *IS* THERE?

I CAN THINK OF ONE THING. I BET IT WOULD MAKE EVERYONE FORGIVE YOU, EVEN RUBY.
YOU HAVE TO KILL QUEEN SCARLET. AND I'M COMING WITH YOU.

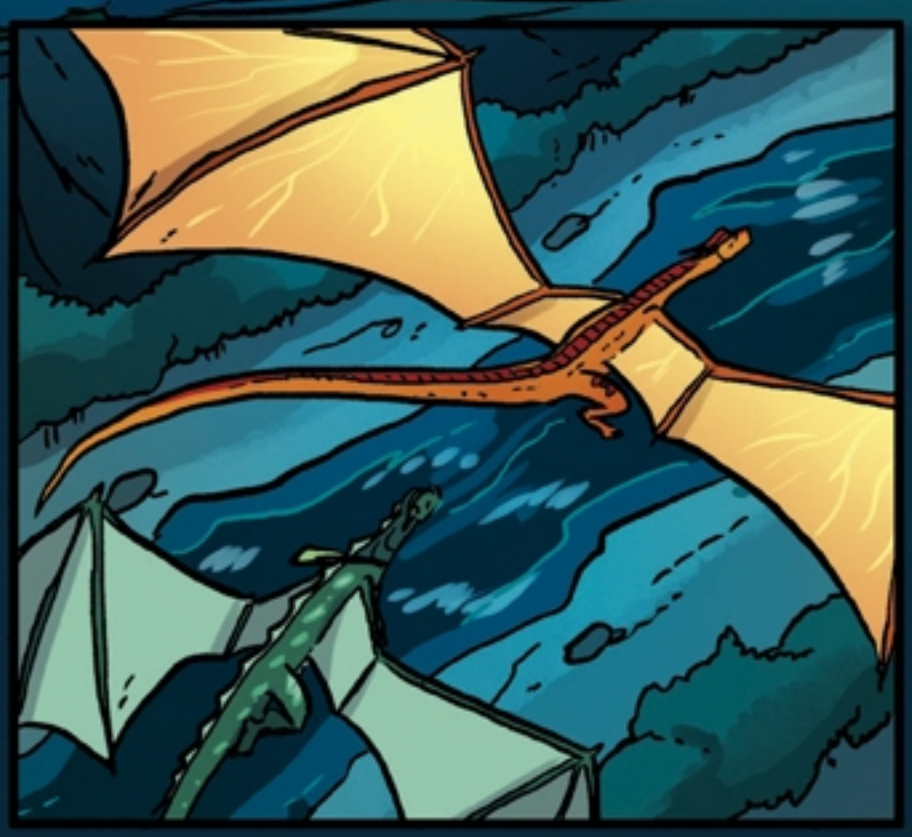

I LOVE FLYING.
I CAN STRETCH MY WINGS AS WIDE AS I WANT. I CAN DIVE AND SOAR AND SPIN. UP HERE, THERE'S NOTHING TO BURN.
PANT PANT
SO, HOW ARE WE GOING TO FIND QUEEN SCARLET OUT HERE?
OH, UM. MAYBE WE COULD... FLY AROUND THE MOUNTAINS. A LOT.
I'M GETTING THE IMPRESSION YOU'RE NOT MUCH OF A PLANNER.
WHAT HAVE I EVER NEEDED TO PLAN?
YOU KNOW HOW MY LIFE WENT?
WAKE UP, BREAKFAST, QUEEN SCARLET TELLS ME TO KILL A PRISONER, KILL THE PRISONER, DINNER, GO BACK TO SLEEP.
PRETTY SIMPLE. NOT A LOT OF DECISION-MAKING INVOLVED.

REALLY? WERE YOU HAPPY?

WAS I?
IT WAS DEFINITELY **EASIER**. I HAD A PURPOSE. I SERVED MY QUEEN.
AND SHE CARED ABOUT ME, TOO. MOST OF THE TIME. MAYBE HALF. WELL... SOME OF THE TIME.

I'M PROBABLY SUPPOSED TO SAY HOW TERRIBLE IT FELT, HAVING TO KILL ALL THOSE DRAGONS.
BUT IT **DIDN'T**. NOT WHILE IT WAS HAPPENING.
IT WAS JUST... MY LIFE.

IF TSUNAMI STOPPED SOMEWHERE, I BET SHE HEADED FOR WATER. CAN WE CHECK FOR CLUES BY THE RIVER?
YEAH, I GUESS.



MAYBE I WASN'T HAPPY.
WHAT?
BACK THEN.

BUT I ALSO WASN'T SO *WORRIED* ALL THE TIME. I ONLY HAD ONE DRAGON TO PLEASE. I DIDN'T ALWAYS MANAGE, BUT AT LEAST I UNDERSTOOD WHAT I NEEDED TO DO. NOW EVERYTHING IS CONFUSING.

I MEAN, WHICH WOULD YOU RATHER BE: LONELY OR INSECURE?
WELL, I'VE TRIED LONELY, SO MAYBE I'D PICK INSECURE.

HUNGRY?
NO, THANKS.

MAYBE WE SHOULD HEAD TO POSSIBILITY. WE CAN MEET UP WITH MY WINGLET AND CHECK ON-ON KINKAJOU.

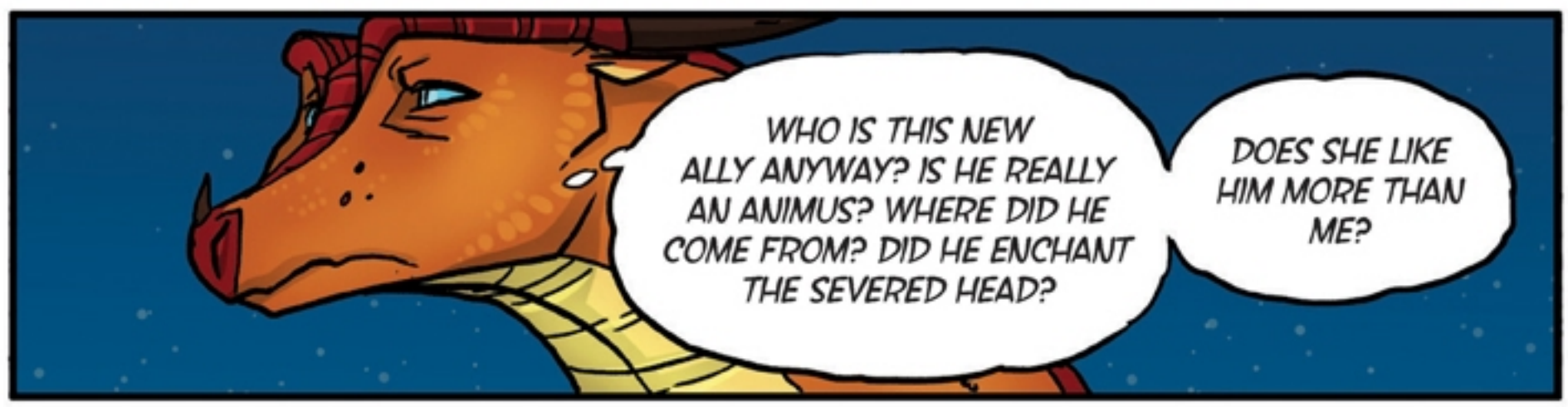
ARE YOU ABOUT TO CRY?
NO. I'M JUST WORRIED ABOUT THEM.

THEY'RE SAFER IN POSSIBILITY THAN ANYWHERE. IT'S A TOWN FULL OF DRAGONS THAT HATE SCARLET. OR AT LEAST, THEY REALLY, REALLY DON'T LIKE BEING ASKED ABOUT HER.
THEY TEND TO THROW THINGS. WHICH THEY *ALSO* DO WHEN YOU ACCIDENTALLY SET THEIR BASKETS OF SNAILS ON FIRE.
EVEN JUST A *LITTLE* BASKET!
FRANKLY, THEY SHOULD RENAME THE PLACE *UNNECESSARY VIOLENT OVERREACTION.*

ANYWAY, I'M NOT LOOKING FOR AN ENTOURAGE. TAKING MORE DRAGONS TO FACE QUEEN SCARLET JUST MEANS MORE DRAGONS FOR HER TO KILL.
IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME?

PROBABLY. I MEAN– WAIT, WHAT'S THE REASSURING THING TO SAY?
"NO." THAT ONE'S PRETTY EASY. THE CORRECT ANSWER IS "NO."
OH. OK, THAT.

BUT MOON AND QIBLI MIGHT KNOW SOMETHING. THEY TOLD SUNNY THAT SCARLET HAD A NEW ALLY, REMEMBER?
OH... RIGHT.


WHO IS THIS NEW ALLY ANYWAY? IS HE REALLY AN ANIMUS? WHERE DID HE COME FROM? DID HE ENCHANT THE SEVERED HEAD?
DOES SHE LIKE HIM MORE THAN ME?

STOP THAT! OBVIOUSLY SHE LIKES HIM MORE. HE'S STILL ON HER SIDE.
AND I DON'T CARE! I SHOULDN'T CARE.
SCARLET TAUGHT ME TO WANT HER TO LIKE ME MOST. IT MAY BE A HABIT NOW, BUT IT'S A BAD ONE.

UM... DOES IT SEEM QUIETER THAN IT SHOULD BE?

AHHH!
SPLASH
THEY'RE ATTACKING ME! I CAN SET THEM ON FIRE WITHOUT GETTING IN TROUBLE!
I'M NOT BEING BAD, CLAY! I'M JUST DEFENDING MYSELF!
DON'T TOUCH HER! IT'LL KILL YOU! HER SCALES ARE FIRE!
SPLASH
SPLASH
SPLASH

WAY TO SPOIL MY FUN, TURTLE.
ALTHOUGH, YES, FINE, WARNING THEM WAS PROBABLY THE CLAY-APPROVED THING TO DO.
HE'S RIGHT. I AM PERIL OF THE SKYWINGS. PERHAPS YOU'VE HEARD OF ME.
BUT IF YOU'D LIKE TO FIND OUT WHETHER HE'S TELLING THE TRUTH, COME A BIT CLOSER AND WE CAN DO A FUN EXPERIMENT.
IT'S TRUE. I RECOGNIZE HER NOW. STAY BACK, CIRRUS.
HM.
OOOO, PLEASE TRY IT.

SO IT'S *NOT* SCARLET?
NO. THIS IS PERIL, WHO MIGHT BE WORSE.

I *BEG* YOUR PARDON. MAYBE YOU HAVEN'T HEARD. I'M FRIENDS WITH THE DRAGONETS OF DESTINY NOW. I DON'T SET OTHER DRAGONS ON FIRE ANYMORE!
NOT UNLESS THEY PROVOKE ME.

WE ALL KNOW A DRAGON CAN'T CHANGE HER SCALES.
MAYBE NOT, BUT I CAN CHANGE MY *MIND*. UNLIKE *SOME* DRAGONS.

I'VE HEARD OF YOU, LITTLE MONSTER. I WAS ONE OF THE GUARDS SENT AFTER YOUR MOTHER WHEN SHE TRIED TO ESCAPE WITH YOU.
MY BIGGEST REGRET IS THAT WE DIDN'T KILL YOU THEN. I DON'T CARE THAT KESTREL GOT AWAY. BUT IF I'D KNOWN SCARLET WOULD KEEP YOU ALIVE–

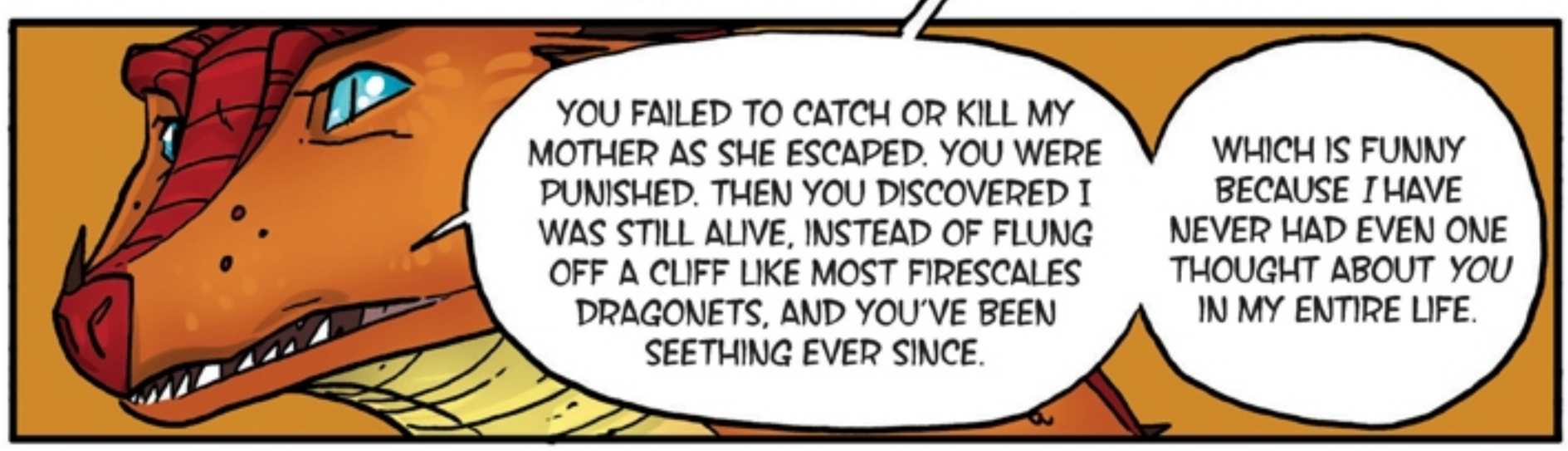
WAIT. KESTREL OF THE SKYWINGS? BIG, RED, GRUMPY-LOOKING?

YOU'VE JUST DESCRIBED FIFTY PERCENT OF ALL SKYWINGS.
THE OTHER HALF IS BIG, *ORANGE*, AND GRUMPY-LOOKING.

KESTREL WAS THIS CREATURE'S MOTHER. SHE REFUSED TO HAND HER OVER TO BE KILLED.
THAT CAN'T BE RIGHT. KESTREL NEVER HAD ANY DRAGONETS.
HA. WE ALL WISH THAT WERE TRUE.

DID YOU... KNOW HER?
THERE'S SOMETHING WEIRD IN HIS EXPRESSION... IS HE LYING?
NO. NOT-THAT IS, ONLY BY REPUTATION.

CAN I GET BACK TO MY MENACING STORY NOW?
OH, LET ME SKIP TO THE END.


YOU FAILED TO CATCH OR KILL MY MOTHER AS SHE ESCAPED. YOU WERE PUNISHED. THEN YOU DISCOVERED I WAS STILL ALIVE, INSTEAD OF FLUNG OFF A CLIFF LIKE MOST FIRESCALES DRAGONETS, AND YOU'VE BEEN SEETHING EVER SINCE.
WHICH IS FUNNY BECAUSE *I* HAVE NEVER HAD EVEN ONE THOUGHT ABOUT *YOU* IN MY ENTIRE LIFE.

OOPS.
SWISH

FWOOOSH!

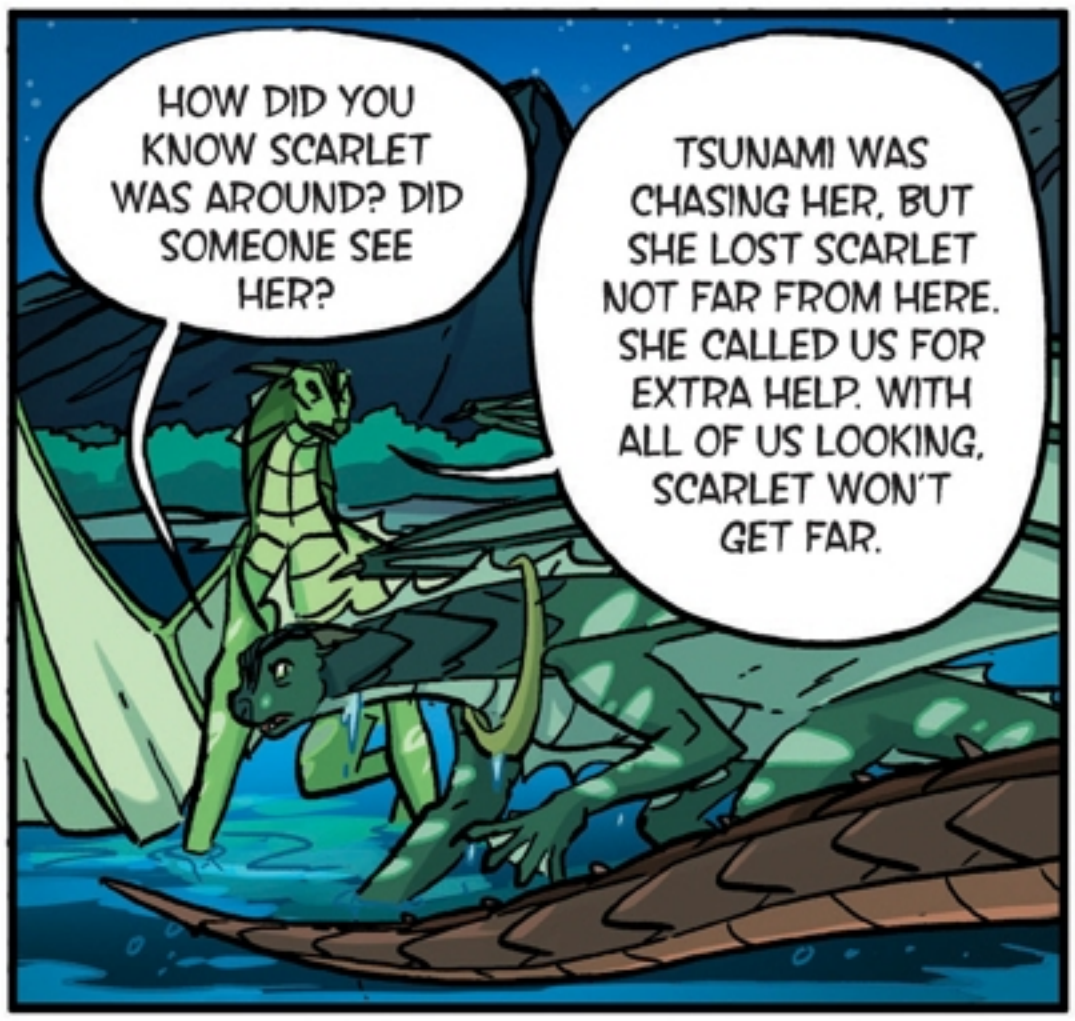
AHH! FIRE!
PUT IT OUT!

ANYWAY, WHO ARE YOU?
WE'RE FROM THE TALONS OF PEACE. MY NAME IS NAUTILUS. WE'VE BEEN TRACKING YOU FOR A WHILE. ARE YOU IN LEAGUE WITH SCARLET?
NO.
SPLASH
SPLASH

WE HAVE SEVERAL GROUPS OUT LOOKING FOR HER. WE HEARD SHE WAS NEARBY. DO YOU KNOW WHERE SHE IS?

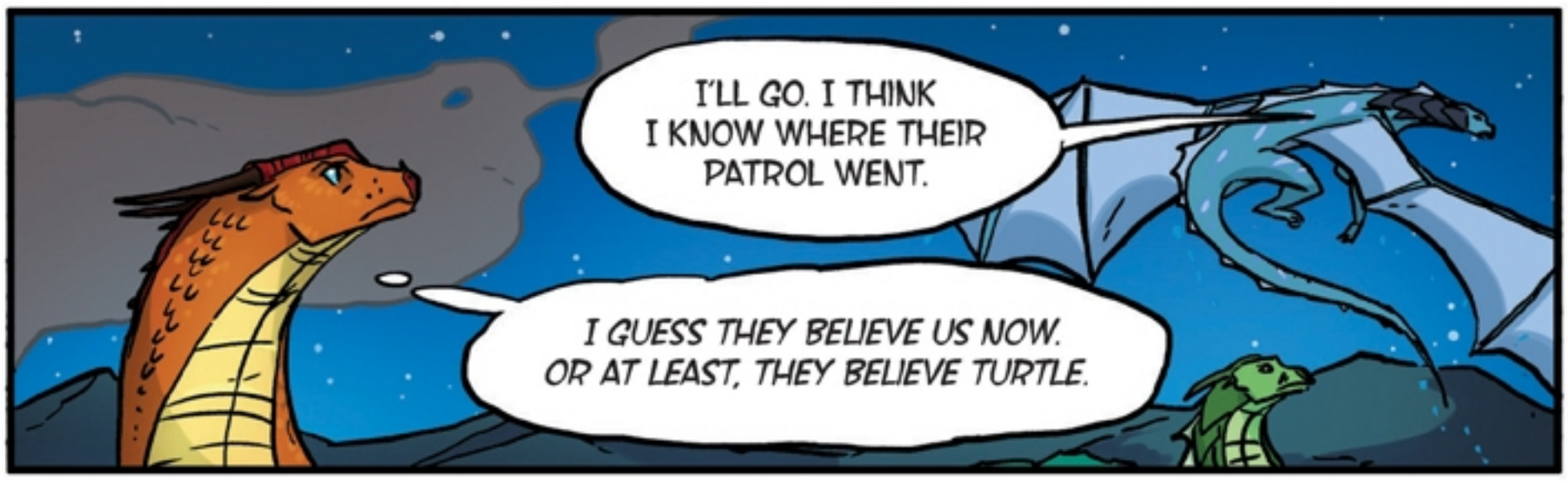
WE'RE LOOKING FOR HER, TOO. NOT TO JOIN HER! TO, UH, KILL HER AND STUFF.
SINCE I'M CLEARLY NOT SCARLET, IS THERE ANY CHANCE I COULD GET UP NOW?

OH! YES. SORRY.


HOW DID YOU KNOW SCARLET WAS AROUND? DID SOMEONE SEE HER?
TSUNAMI WAS CHASING HER, BUT SHE LOST SCARLET NOT FAR FROM HERE. SHE CALLED US FOR EXTRA HELP. WITH ALL OF US LOOKING, SCARLET WON'T GET FAR.

TSUNAMI? WHERE? CAN WE SEE HER? WE HAVE A MESSAGE FOR HER.
SHE'S WITH RIPTIDE'S SEARCH GROUP. BUT I CAN PASS ON ANYTHING YOU WANT HER TO KNOW.

ALL RIGHT... TELL HER GLORY ISN'T DEAD. IT WAS A TRICK. GLORY IS FINE. YOU HAVE TO TELL HER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.


I'LL GO. I THINK I KNOW WHERE THEIR PATROL WENT.
I GUESS THEY BELIEVE US NOW. OR AT LEAST, THEY BELIEVE TURTLE.

IF YOU'RE WONDERING WHETHER MY FIRE WORKS ON ICEWINGS, THE ANSWER IS YES. YOU SHRIVEL INTO ASH JUST LIKE ANYONE ELSE.

WE'RE NOT GOING TO RELEASE THEM INTO THE WILD, ARE WE? YOU HEARD AVALANCHE. SHE'S MORE DANGEROUS THAN SCARLET.
WE HAVE NO REASON TO HOLD THEM.
ESPECIALLY SINCE YOU *LITERALLY* CAN'T.
WE ARE NOT YOUR PRISONERS. YOU COULDN'T TAKE ME PRISONER WITH AN *ARMY* OF ICEWINGS. NOT EVEN IF THEY ALL HAD ARROGANT FOREHEADS LIKE YOURS.
HEY, WE'RE ALL ON THE SAME SIDE HERE. WE ALL WANT TO CATCH SCARLET.
AND WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO LOOK FOR HER?
WE'RE GOING TO POSSIBILITY FIRST. TO FIND OUR FRIENDS.
WE WILL.
PLEASE TELL TSUNAMI WHERE WE'RE GOING, TOO. OK?
NUDGE
DRAGONS ARE ALWAYS TOUCHING WINGS WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THEIR TRIBES. I GUESS IT MEANS, "HEY, WE'RE BOTH WHATEVERWINGS, LET'S STICK TOGETHER."
THERE'S THIS WHOLE LANGUAGE I CAN'T SPEAK– EXCEPT WITH CLAY.

BUT I NEVER **REALLY** KNOW WHAT IT MEANS WITH CLAY. WHEN HE BRUSHES MY WING WITH HIS AS WE PASS IN THE TUNNELS, IS HE SAYING, "I LOVE YOU SO MUCH, BUT WE CAN'T SPEAK IT ALOUD"?
OR "DON'T WORRY, I KNOW YOU'RE NERVOUS, BUT I'LL ALWAYS TAKE CARE OF YOU"?
MAYBE "IT'S A DARK WORLD, PERIL, BUT YOU AND I WILL STAND TOGETHER AND BE SAFE!"

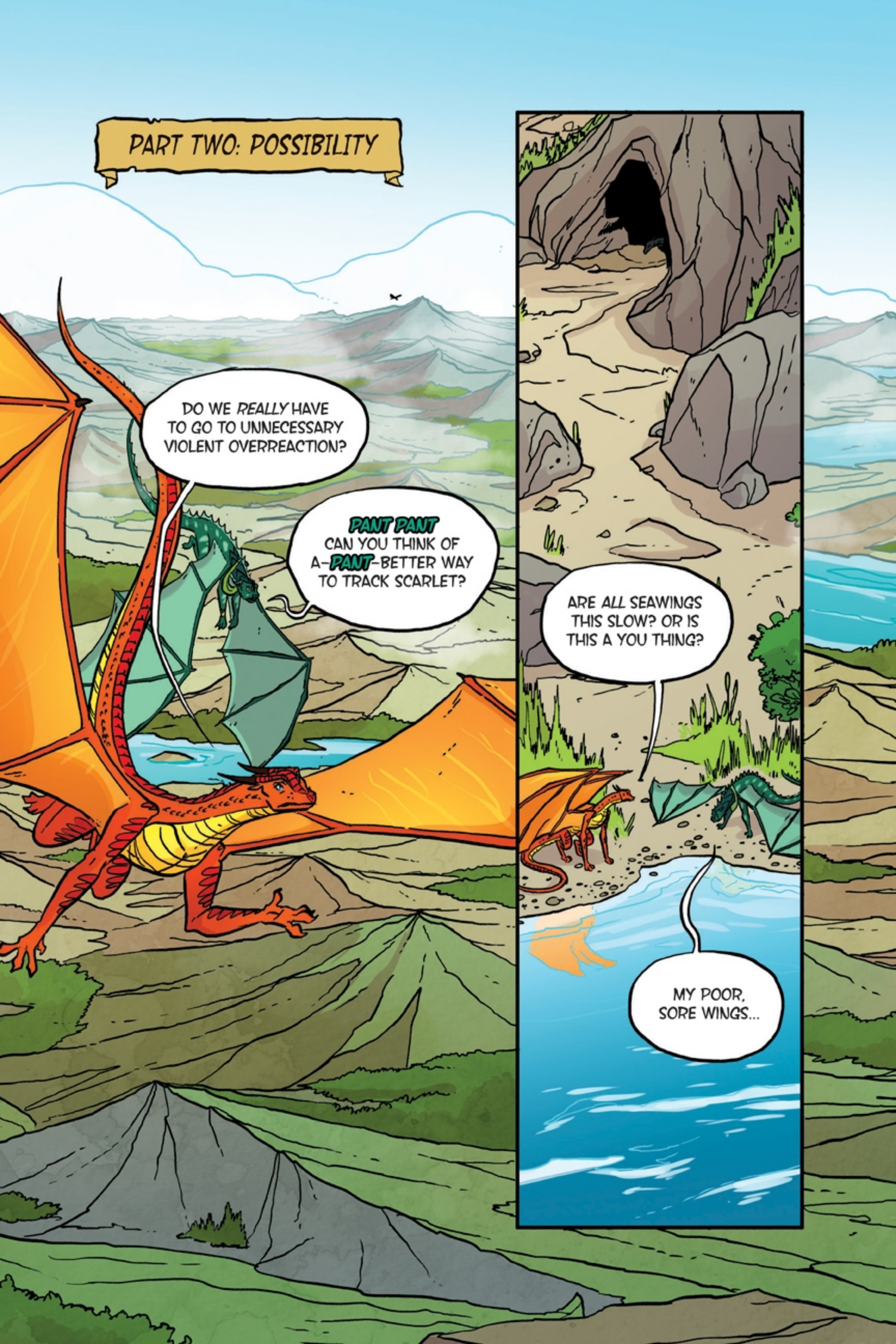
...OR IS HE JUST SAYING "HEY"?
I CAN'T ASK... THEN HE'D KNOW I'M EVEN WEIRDER AND MORE CONFUSED THAN HE THOUGHT.

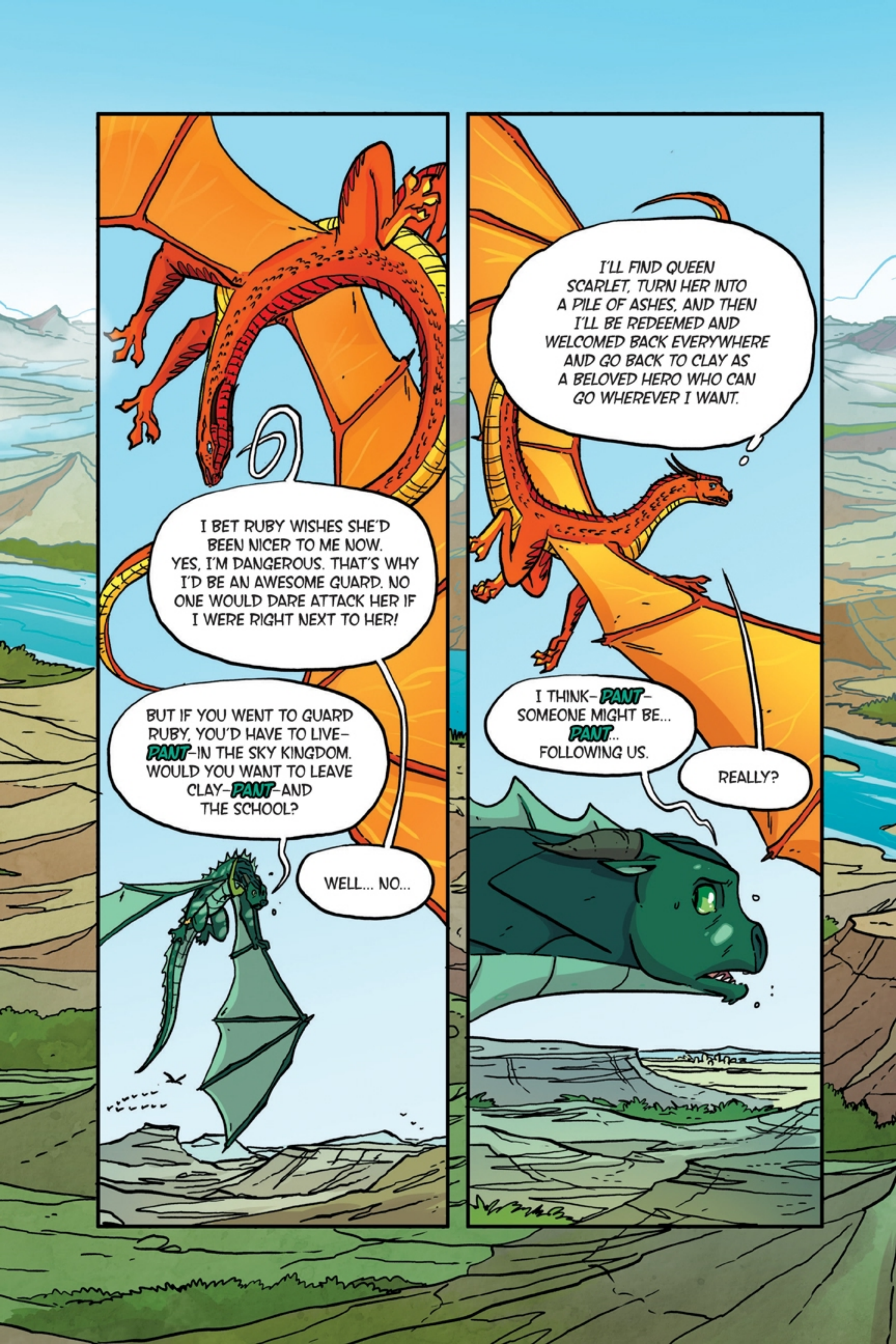
GOOD LUCK, TURTLE.
YOU TOO, NAUTILUS.

I HOPE YOU DIE.
I'D SAY IT'S MUTUAL– EXCEPT I'M GOING TO FORGET YOU EXIST IN ABOUT A MINUTE, SO I DON'T ACTUALLY CARE.

GRRRRRR
THAT'S RIGHT, YOU SELF-RIGHTEOUS FISH NOSE. I LEARNED A FEW THINGS FROM QUEEN SCARLET. SHE CAN BURN DRAGONS **WITHOUT** TOUCHING THEM.

IF ONLY I DIDN'T ACTUALLY CARE...


PART TWO: POSSIBILITY
DO WE *REALLY* HAVE TO GO TO UNNECESSARY VIOLENT OVERREACTION?
PANT PANT CAN YOU THINK OF A-PANT-BETTER WAY TO TRACK SCARLET?
ARE *ALL* SEAWINGS THIS SLOW? OR IS THIS A YOU THING?
MY POOR, SORE WINGS...

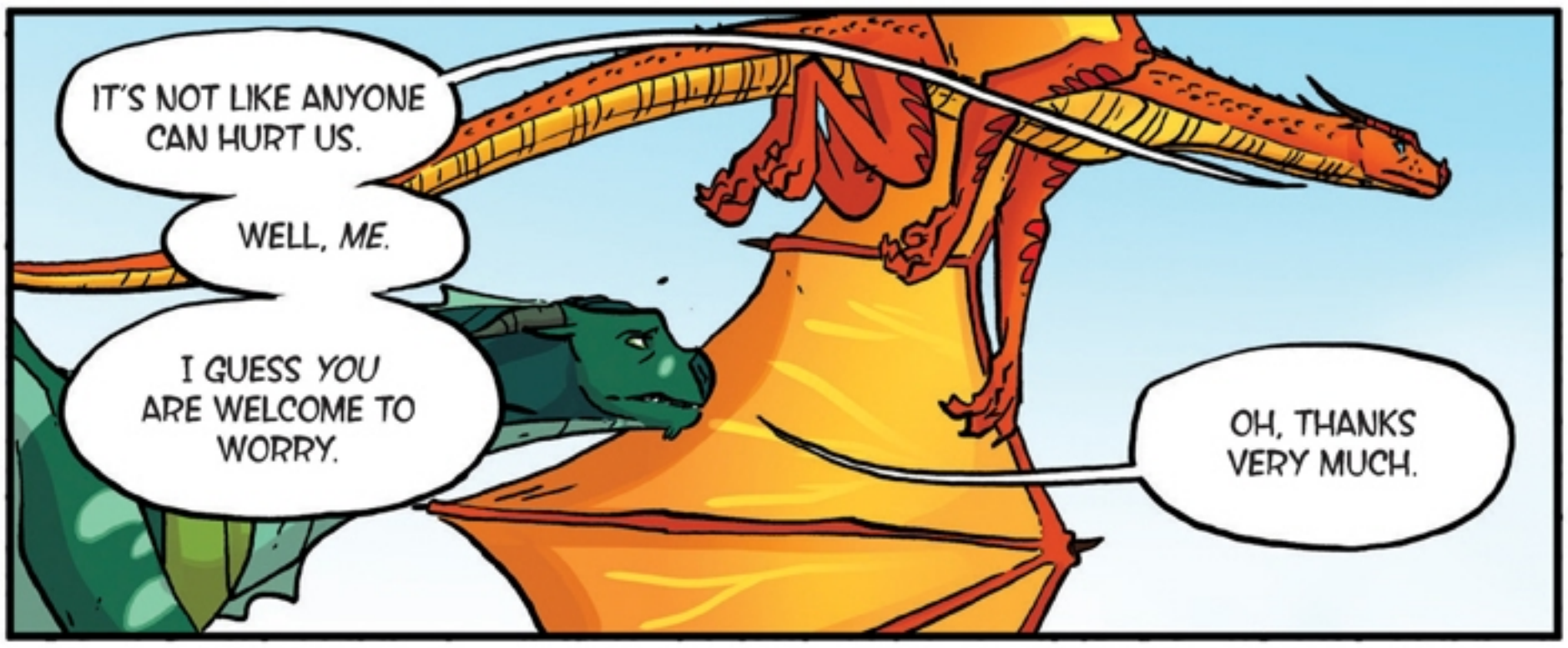

I BET RUBY WISHES SHE'D BEEN NICER TO ME NOW. YES, I'M DANGEROUS. THAT'S WHY I'D BE AN AWESOME GUARD. NO ONE WOULD DARE ATTACK HER IF I WERE RIGHT NEXT TO HER!
BUT IF YOU WENT TO GUARD RUBY, YOU'D HAVE TO LIVE– PANT–IN THE SKY KINGDOM. WOULD YOU WANT TO LEAVE CLAY–PANT–AND THE SCHOOL?
WELL... NO...
I'LL FIND QUEEN SCARLET, TURN HER INTO A PILE OF ASHES, AND THEN I'LL BE REDEEMED AND WELCOMED BACK EVERYWHERE AND GO BACK TO CLAY AS A BELOVED HERO WHO CAN GO WHEREVER I WANT.
I THINK– PANT– SOMEONE MIGHT BE... PANT... FOLLOWING US.
REALLY?

I DON'T SEE ANYTHING.
THAT GROVE OF TREES BACK THERE. I THOUGHT I SAW A DRAGON DIVE INTO THEM WHEN I TURNED AROUND.

WAS IT AN ORANGE DRAGON?
NOOOO. BLACK, I THINK.

ALL RIGHT. WHATEVER.

REALLY? WE'RE NOT WORRIED ABOUT THAT?
WHY WOULD WE BE? AS LONG AS IT'S NOT SCARLET, WHO CARES?


IT'S NOT LIKE ANYONE CAN HURT US.
WELL, *ME*.
I GUESS *YOU* ARE WELCOME TO WORRY.
OH, THANKS VERY MUCH.

AND THAT'S NOT TRUE—I'M SURE DRAGONS CAN HURT YOU.
HOW? NO, THEY CAN'T! I'M FINE AS LONG AS I DON'T LISTEN TO THEM!
THEY'RE ALL STUPID ANYWAY! WHO CARES WHAT A BUNCH OF RUBY-BUTT-NOSES SAY? *NOT ME*, THAT'S FOR SURE.
I MEAN, COME OVER HERE AND SAY THAT WITH MY TALONS UP YOUR SNOUT! HA!
ACTUALLY, I MEANT WITH A SPEAR OR FROSTBREATH OR SOMETHING.
OH.
I GUESS, MAYBE. THE DRAGONS IN THE ARENA NEVER HAD SPEARS.
AND THEIR WINGS WERE BOUND SO THEY COULDN'T FLY, RIGHT?
I DIDN'T FLY WHILE WE WERE FIGHTING EITHER. THAT WASN'T TO MAKE THEM EASIER TO KILL. THAT WAS SO THEY WOULDN'T BE BORING AND RUN AWAY.
YOU MEAN BE *SENSIBLE* AND RUN AWAY.
WHOEVER IT IS, THEY'RE STILL HIDING.
OR YOU HALLUCINATED IT.

FROSTBREATH DOESN'T DO ANYTHING TO MY SCALES, BY THE WAY. AND I BET A SPEAR WOULD BURN UP BEFORE IT COULD STAB ME.
NOT IF SOMEONE THREW IT AT YOU REALLY HARD.

THEN IT WOULD BE LIKE, *BAM*, SPEAR THROUGH THE HEART, AND EVEN IF IT DID THEN BURST INTO FLAMES, WELL, TOO LATE.

THIS CONVERSATION IS FUN.
NEXT LET'S TALK ABOUT ALL THE WAYS *YOU* COULD DIE. I HAVE A FEW IDEAS.
OR IF SCARLET HAS AN ANIMUS, SHE COULD ENCHANT SOMETHING TO KILL YOU.

BUT IF SCARLET COULD DO THAT, GLORY REALLY *WOULD* BE DEAD. AND RUBY, TOO. I'M ONLY, LIKE, SEVENTH OR EIGHTH ON HER LIST.
CLAY'S PROBABLY IN SCARLET'S TOP FIVE, THOUGH... MAYBE I SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT HIM ALONE.

HOW ARE YOU GOING TO FIND YOUR FRIENDS IN POSSIBILITY? IT'S A BIG CITY.
FULL OF IRRATIONAL, GROUCHY DRAGONS. AND TOO MANY WOODEN BUILDINGS.
FOR THE RECORD, IT'S A STUPID PLACE.
YOU MENTIONED THAT.

CAN WE REST FOR THE NIGHT AND FIGURE IT OUT IN THE MORNING WHEN WE GET THERE? MY WINGS ARE SO SORE, I SWEAR THEY'RE ABOUT TO FALL OFF.
ALL RIGHT. LET'S FIND SOMEWHERE WITH MORE ROCKS THAN TREES.

NOW IF I CAN JUST LAND ON THE ROCKS AND AVOID THE MOSS...

SPLISH

SHOOT. I MEAN... HEY, LOOK, DINNER.

YOWCH!

SZZZZZZL

I DON'T THINK I COULD EVER GET USED TO EATING HOT PREY. IT'S SUCH A WEIRD FEELING IN MY MOUTH.

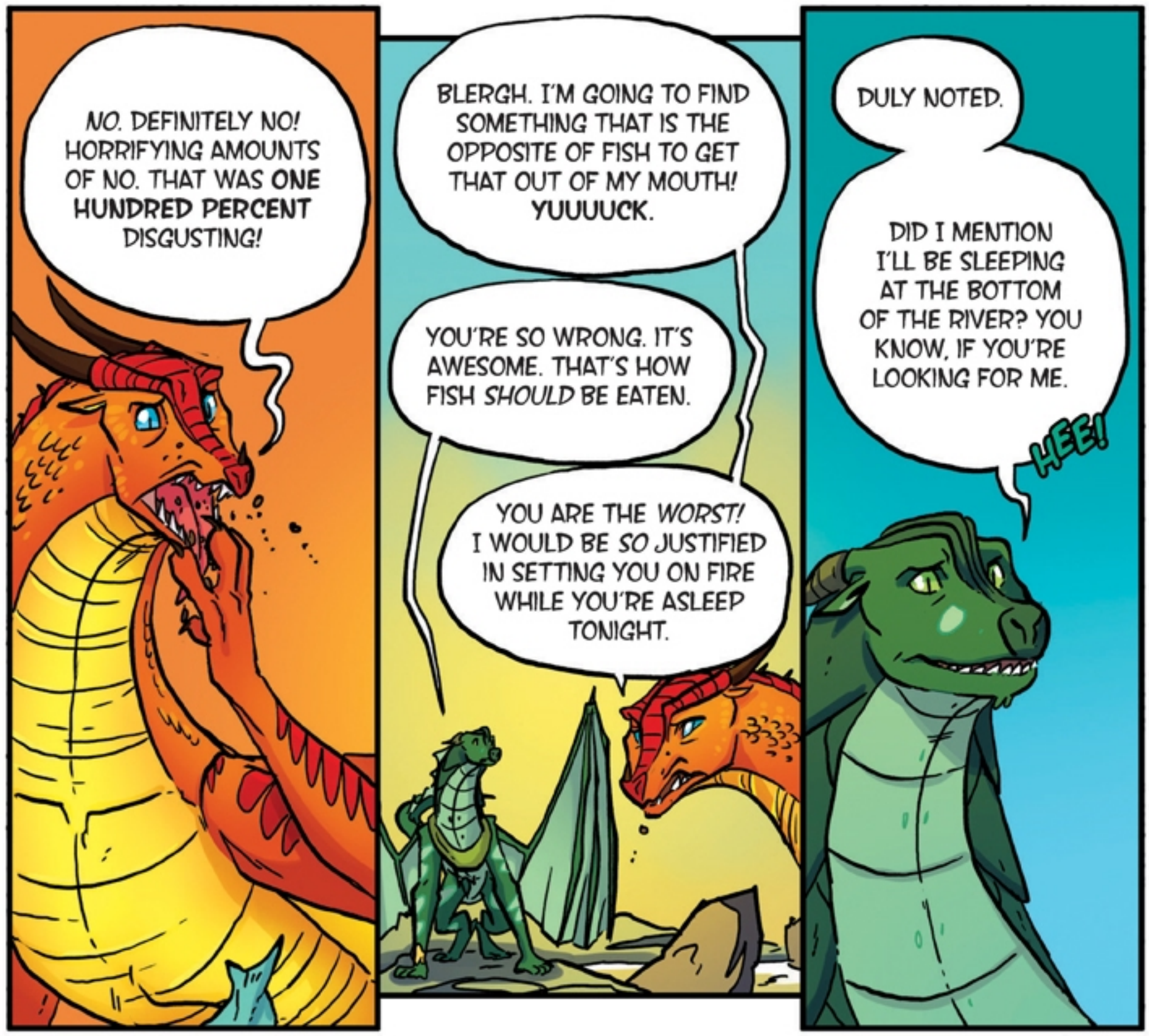
I'VE NEVER EATEN PREY ANY OTHER WAY.

WELL, THAT'S JUST SAD. YOU SHOULD TRY IT THE NORMAL WAY.

HERE. OPEN YOUR MOUTH AND I'LL THROW SOME IN.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I'LL THROW THE FISH STRAIGHT IN SO IT WON'T GET BURNED, AND YOU CAN SEE WHAT IT TASTES LIKE TO MOST DRAGONS.
YUCK!

HA!
SNORF!
SORRY, SORRY, SORRY!
DID YOU DO THAT ON PURPOSE?
NO! I SWEAR, I JUST DON'T HAVE GOOD AIM. GIVE ME ANOTHER CHANCE?

SWISH
WHOOSH
GULP!

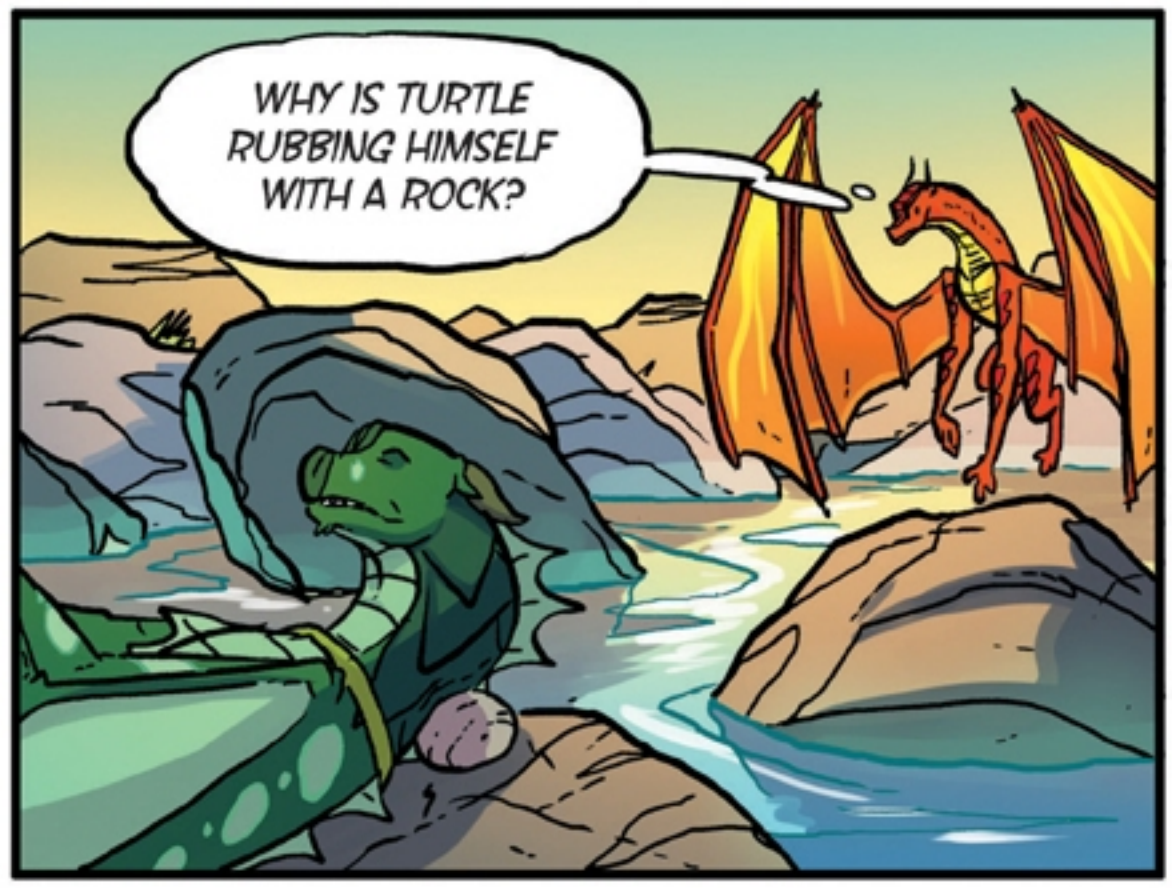

NO. DEFINITELY NO! HORRIFYING AMOUNTS OF NO. THAT WAS ONE HUNDRED PERCENT DISGUSTING!
BLERGH. I'M GOING TO FIND SOMETHING THAT IS THE OPPOSITE OF FISH TO GET THAT OUT OF MY MOUTH! YUUUUCK.
YOU'RE SO WRONG. IT'S AWESOME. THAT'S HOW FISH SHOULD BE EATEN.
YOU ARE THE WORST! I WOULD BE SO JUSTIFIED IN SETTING YOU ON FIRE WHILE YOU'RE ASLEEP TONIGHT.
DULY NOTED.
DID I MENTION I'LL BE SLEEPING AT THE BOTTOM OF THE RIVER? YOU KNOW, IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR ME.
HEE!

HUH.
I MEAN... I WAS JOKING, OF COURSE, BUT... HE REALLY COULD STOP ME, JUST BY BEING IN THE RIVER.
I'M GOING TO CATCH SOMETHING. I'LL BE BACK IN A MINUTE.
I'LL BE HERE, APOLOGIZING TO MY WOEBEGONE WINGS.

MAYBE I DID HAVE AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE AGAINST SEAWINGS IN THE ARENA...

IN THEIR OWN TERRITORY, SEAWINGS COULD GO UNDERWATER TO ESCAPE, OR–OR EVEN DRAG ME UNDERWATER WITH THEM.

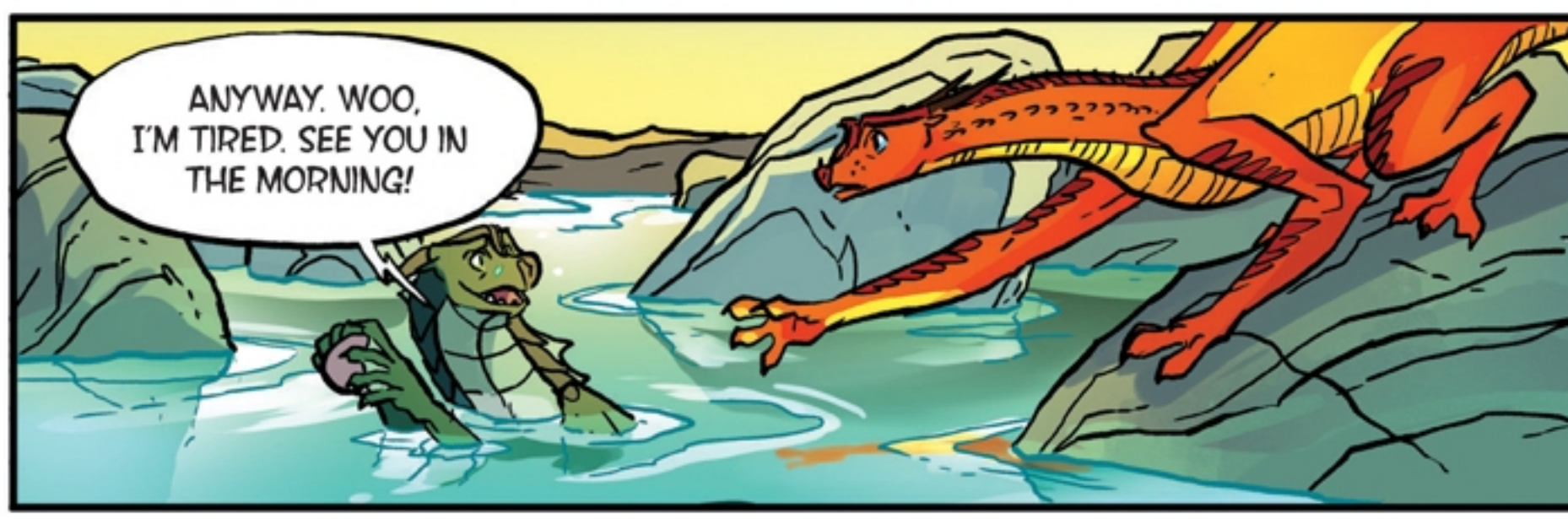
THAT'S A NEW, UNPLEASANT THOUGHT. I DO NOT LIKE IT ONE SINGLE BIT.


WHY IS TURTLE RUBBING HIMSELF WITH A ROCK?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
YEEP!

WHOA, HE LOOKS REALLY GUILTY. WHY WOULD HE BE SO GUILTY ABOUT A ROCK?
NOTHING. JUST TRYING TO WORK OUT THE KINKS IN MY BACK. WE'VE BEEN FLYING SO MUCH.
SO YOU'VE MENTIONED A FEW HUNDRED TIMES. CAN I SEE THE ROCK?

OH, THIS? JUST A ROCK I PICKED UP FROM THE RIVER.
DOES IT REALLY HELP?
UH. A LITTLE.


ANYWAY. WOO, I'M TIRED. SEE YOU IN THE MORNING!

THAT WAS WEIRD. WHAT, DOES HE THINK I'M GOING TO STEAL HIS ROCK?
SPLOOOSH

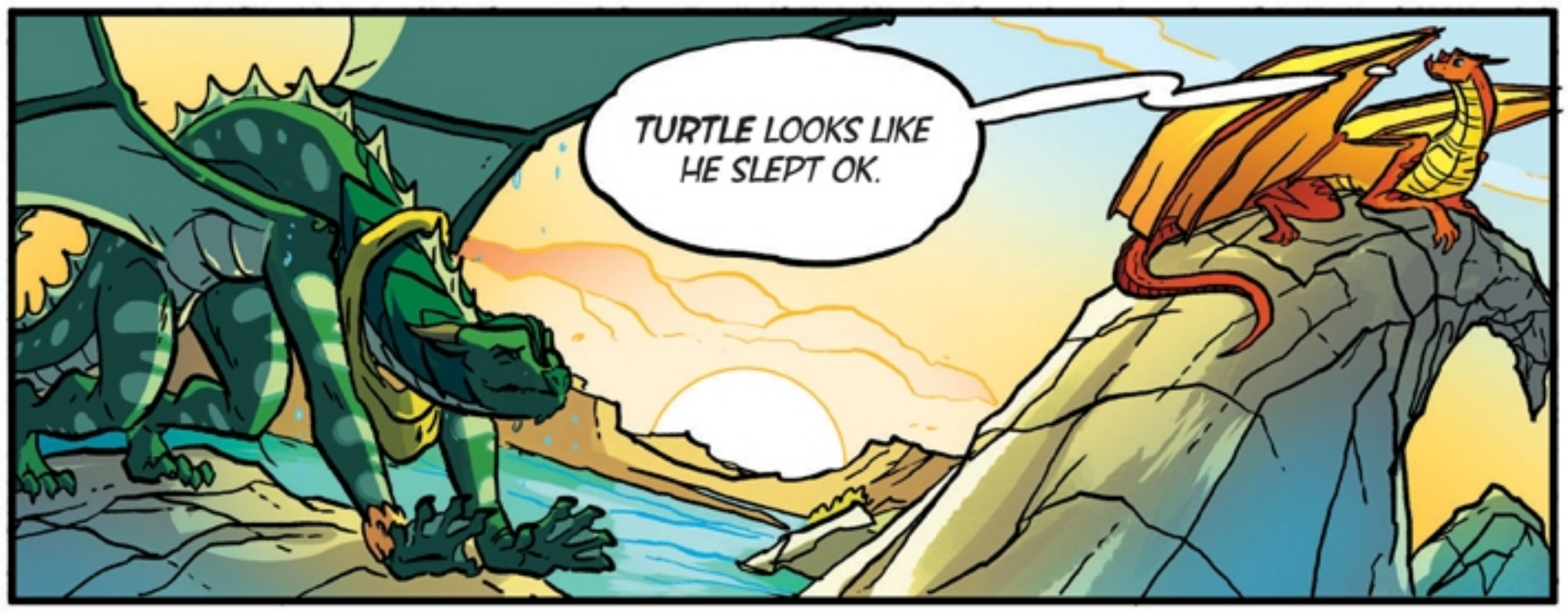
HE'S STILL USING IT. IS THIS SOME KIND OF SEAWING SECRET? RIVER ROCKS HEAL THEM OR SOMETHING?
I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT OTHER TRIBES, BUT THAT SOUNDS... PRETTY UNLIKELY.

MAYBE HE'S JUST TRYING TO GET AWAY FROM ME. HE'S PROBABLY REALIZED, LIKE EVERY OTHER DRAGON IN THE WORLD, THAT I'M A TERRIBLE DRAGON TO BE FRIENDS WITH.
BUT HE WAS LAUGHING WITH ME ONLY A FEW MINUTES AGO...

DOESN'T MATTER. THAT'S JUST FINE.
I CAN ALWAYS GO BACK TO MY **REAL** FRIEND, CLAY.
TURTLE CAN KEEP HIS SECRETS OR STOP BEING FRIENDS WITH ME OR WHATEVER HE WANTS.

YOU'RE NOT THAT IMPORTANT TO **ME** EITHER, SEAWING. **HMPH.**

AND YOU HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH WHY I CAN'T GET TO SLEEP.

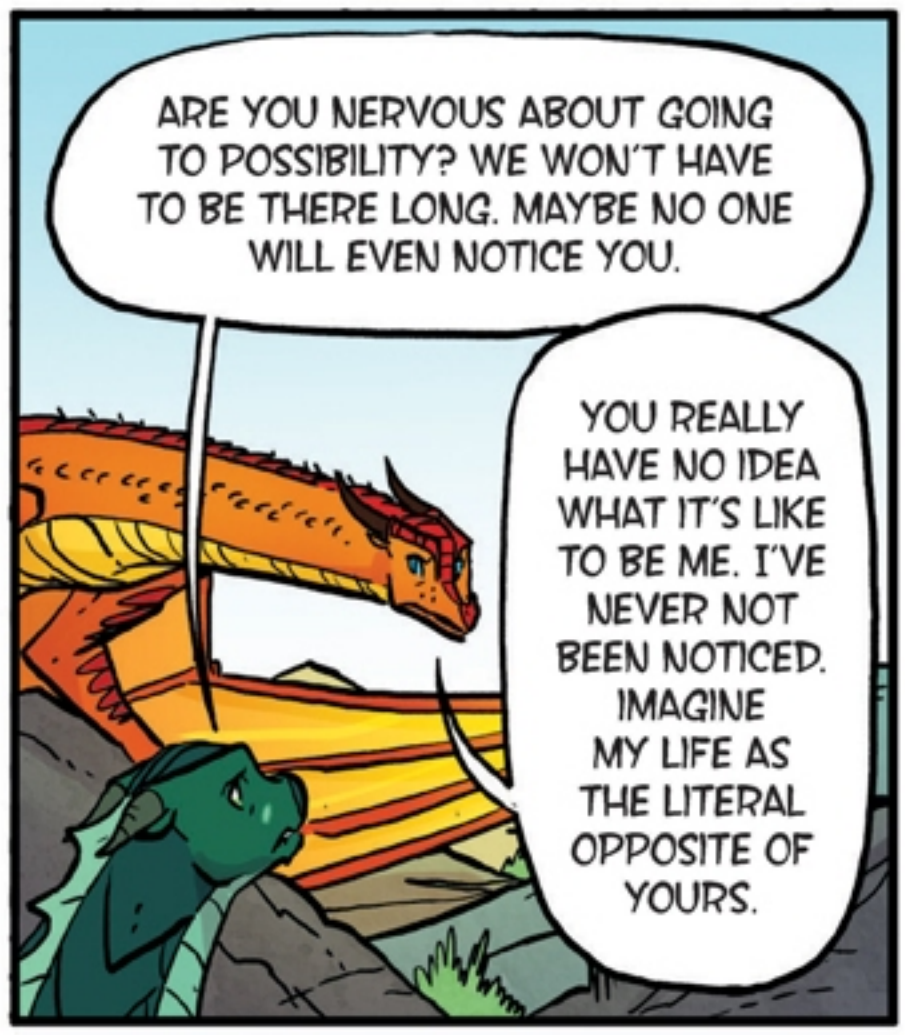

TURTLE LOOKS LIKE HE SLEPT OK.

HMM. HIS POUCH LOOKS LUMPIER. I BET HE PUT ONE OF THOSE RIVER STONES IN IT.
HE ALWAYS FIDDLES WITH HIS ARMLET WHEN HE'S NERVOUS. I WONDER WHY IT'S MISSING THREE ROCKS.

HE'LL PROBABLY DITCH ME AS SOON AS WE FIND HIS FRIENDS. I BET THEY WON'T BE THRILLED I CAME ALONG.
OH WELL. IT'S PROBABLY BETTER IF I FIND SCARLET ON MY OWN ANYWAY.

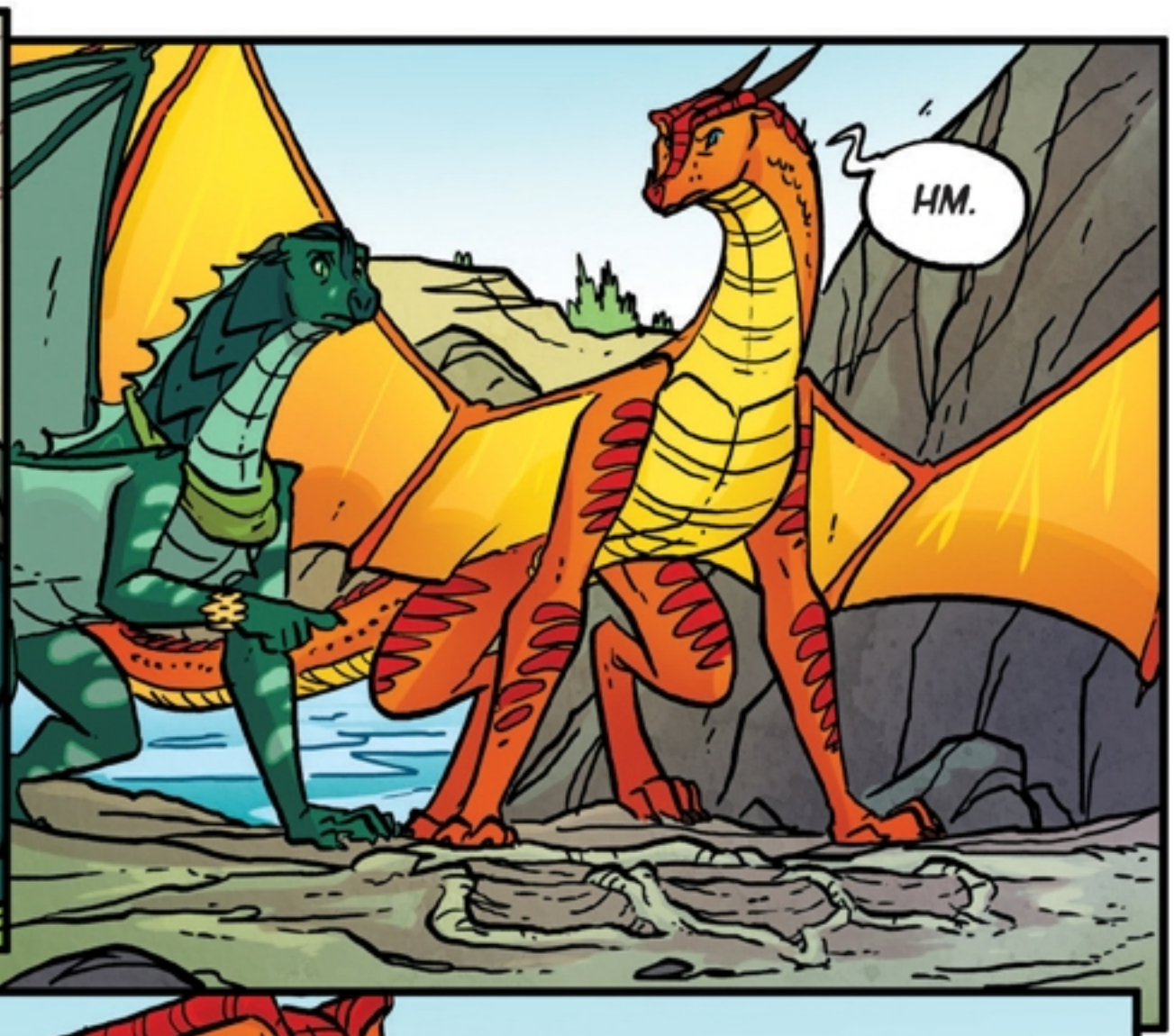
...WHY ARE YOU GLARING AT ME?
I'M NOT GLARING. THIS IS MY FACE.

YOUR FACE LOOKS LIKE IT HATES ME TODAY. CAN YOU REMIND IT THAT I'M REALLY QUITE NICE?
ALL RIGHT, NOW I'M GLARING AT YOU. CAN WE GET ON WITH THIS ANNOYING DAY ALREADY?


ARE YOU NERVOUS ABOUT GOING TO POSSIBILITY? WE WON'T HAVE TO BE THERE LONG. MAYBE NO ONE WILL EVEN NOTICE YOU.
YOU REALLY HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE ME. I'VE NEVER NOT BEEN NOTICED. IMAGINE MY LIFE AS THE LITERAL OPPOSITE OF YOURS.

WHAT? WHAT'S SO FASCINATING?

I'M GUESSING THESE TALONPRINTS AREN'T YOURS.
TALONPRINTS? WHERE?


HM.

SOMEONE WAS SITTING HERE... SOMEONE BIGGER THAN ME... FACING THE BOULDER WHERE I WAS SLEEPING...
HELLO? IF YOU'RE SPYING ON US, JUST COME OUT ALREADY!

SO STEALTH ISN'T YOUR STRONG SUIT, I SEE.
SORRY. I KNOW IT'S YOUR ONLY SUIT.
WHOEVER YOU ARE, JUST COME OUT AND SAY WHATEVER YOU HAVE TO SAY!
I GUESS THEY LEFT. MAYBE THEY JUST WANTED TO CATCH A GLIMPSE OF A FIRE MONSTER.
LET'S GO.
I HAVE A PLAN FOR POSSIBILITY.
A PLAN WOULD BE GOOD.
EASY. WE JUST DIVE INTO THE MIDDLE OF THE MARKET. ALL THOSE DRAGONS WILL START STAMPEDING AROUND, YELLING ABOUT WHAT A MENACE I AM. THEN YOU SHOUT, "MOON AND QIBLI, MEET US OUTSIDE TOWN!" AND WE FLY AWAY AGAIN. PERFECT.

I HAVE A SLIGHTLY LESS INSANE IDEA. IF YOU CAN SWIM.

I CAN DO ANYTHING. I SWAM IN A LAKE BY A WATERFALL NEAR THE SKY PALACE ONCE.
I DIDN'T LIKE IT.
FIRE SHOULDN'T BE UNDERWATER...

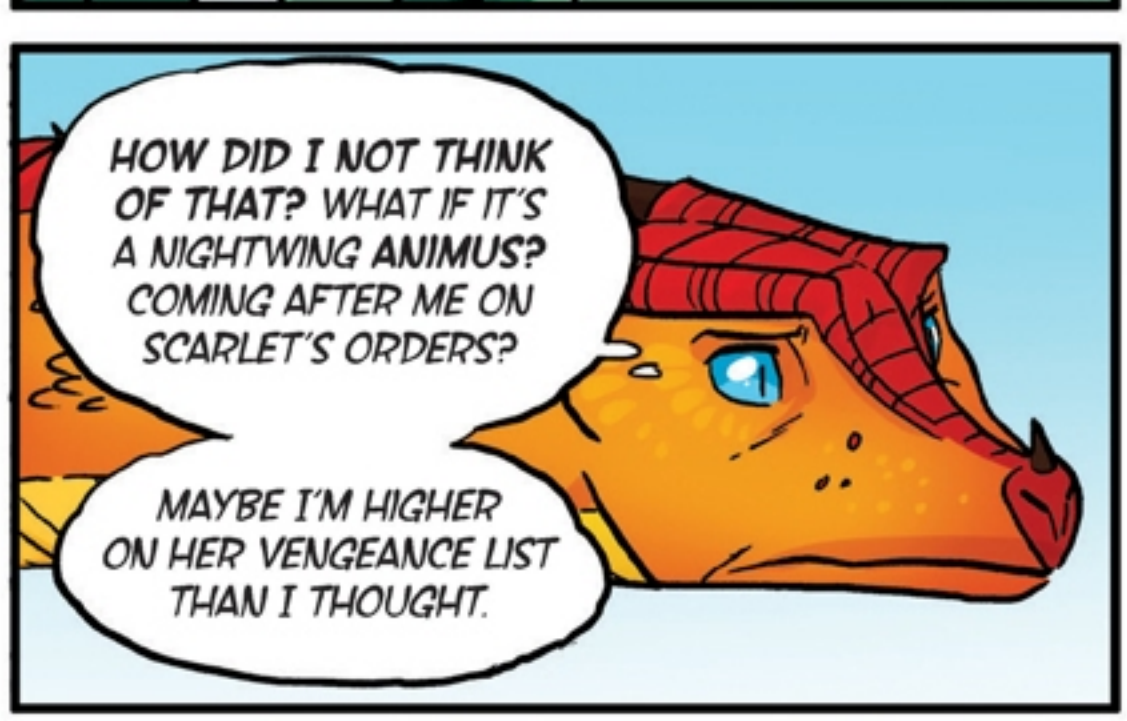
IF WE SWIM INTO THE CITY, NO ONE WILL NOTICE YOU. WE'LL BE ABLE TO SCOUT IT OUT WITHOUT ATTRACTING A LOT OF ATTENTION.

I DON'T CARE ABOUT ATTENTION. IF A DRAGON WANTS TO STARE AT ME AND HATE ME AND THINK HORRIBLE THOUGHTS ABOUT ALL THE THINGS THEY CAN'T DO TO ME, THEN THEY CAN GO RIGHT AHEAD.

...WHO IS THAT?
I WAS RIGHT! SEE? HE'S FOLLOWING US!
HE'S NOT COMING AFTER US... HE'S JUST STARING AT US.
IT'S CREEPY, BUT TO BE FAIR, IF HE TRIED TO DO THAT FROM ANY CLOSER UP, I'D HAVE TO BURN OUT HIS EYEBALLS.
THANK YOU FOR THAT VISUAL.
HE'S WAY TOO BIG TO BE ONE OF THE NIGHTWINGS FROM SCHOOL. HMM... I HEARD A RUMOR...
A RUMOR? OR DRAGONS HAVING A CONVERSATION YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO OVERHEAR?
NOBODY SAID I COULDN'T STAND IN THE TUNNEL OUTSIDE AND LISTEN! ANYWAY, SOME NIGHTWING PRISONERS ESCAPED FROM THORN'S STRONGHOLD. HE COULD BE ONE OF THEM.

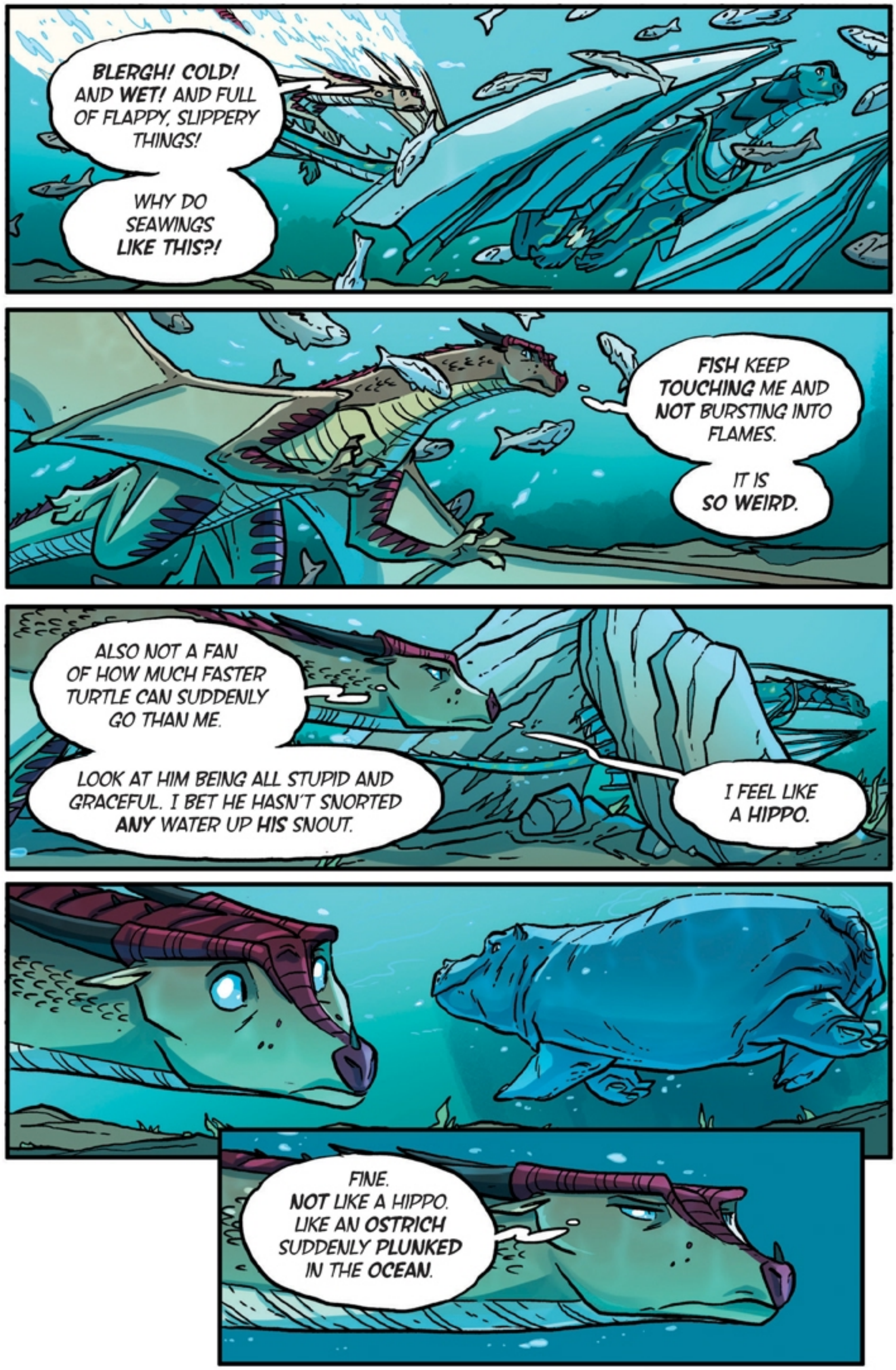
OR MAYBE HE'S SCARLET'S NEW ALLY.

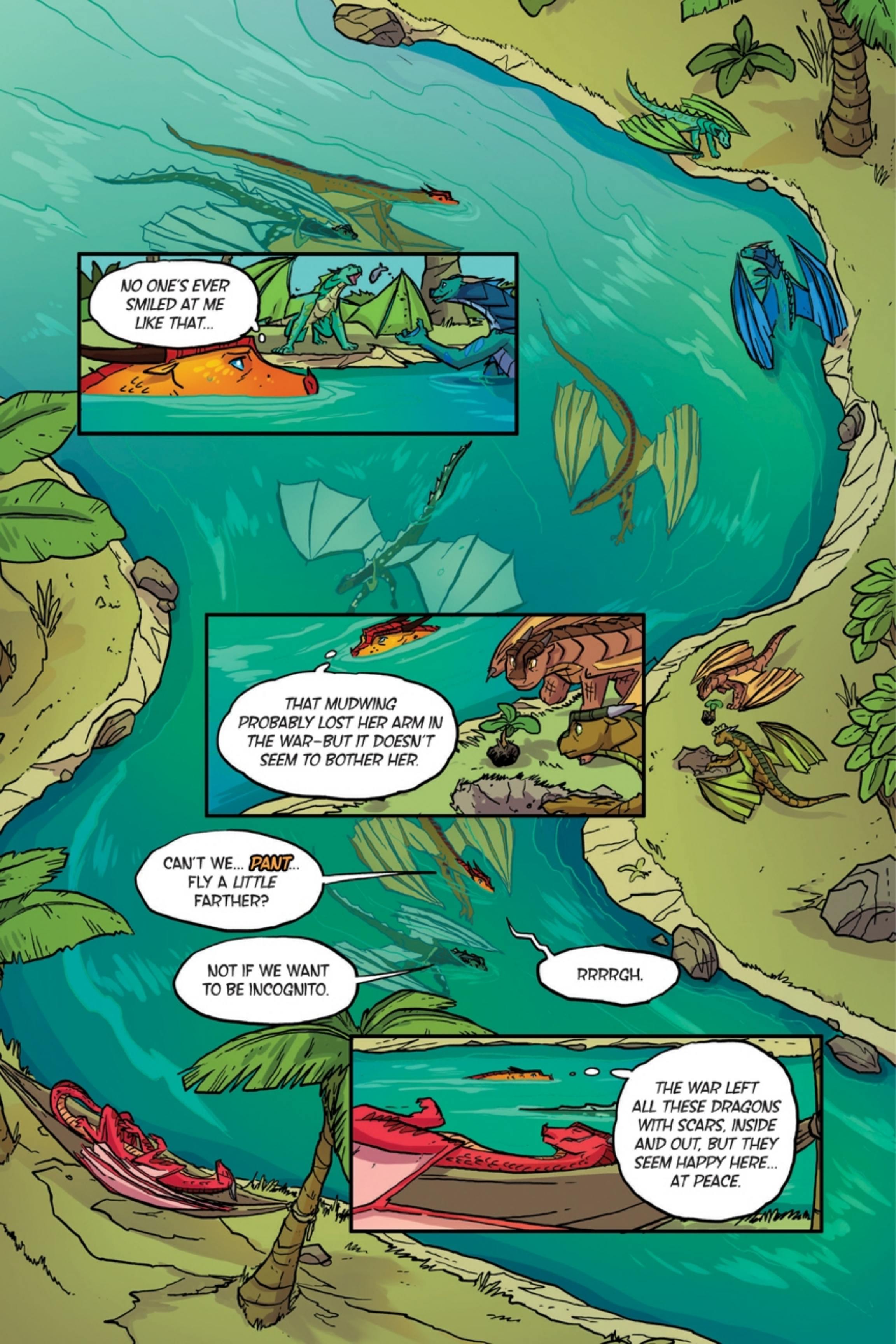
AND NOW HE'S GONE...! GREAT. NOW ALL I CAN DO IS WORRY ABOUT IT. I HATE WORRYING ABOUT THINGS.


HOW DID I NOT THINK OF THAT? WHAT IF IT'S A NIGHTWING ANIMUS? COMING AFTER ME ON SCARLET'S ORDERS?
MAYBE I'M HIGHER ON HER VENGEANCE LIST THAN I THOUGHT.

WELL, WE'RE PRETTY NEAR THE RIVER. YOU CAN WORRY ABOUT THAT INSTEAD.
HMPFF.

COME ON, PERIL. STOP THINKING ABOUT THE CREEPY NIGHTWING. THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT RIGHT NOW ANYWAY.
WHEN HE SHOWS HIS FACE A BIT CLOSER, THEN I CAN BURN IT OFF AND EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE.

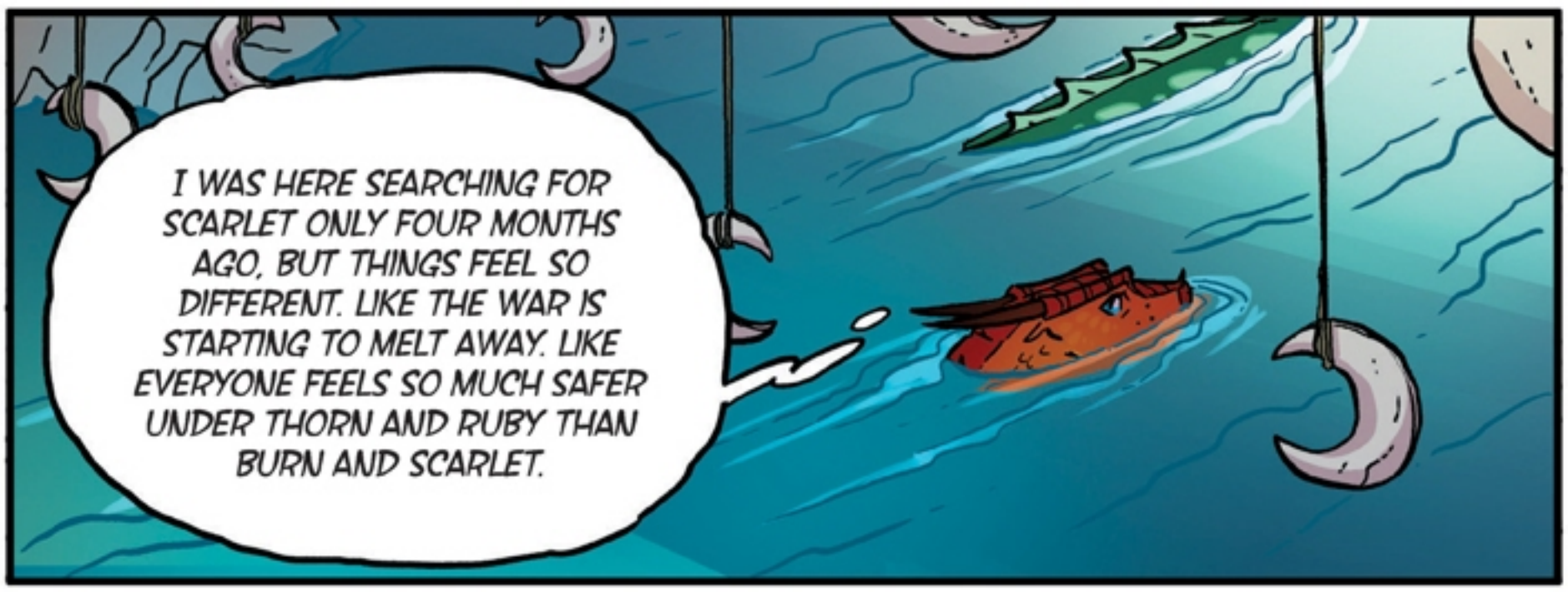

BLERGH! COLD! AND WET! AND FULL OF FLAPPY, SLIPPERY THINGS!
WHY DO SEAWINGS LIKE THIS?!
FISH KEEP TOUCHING ME AND NOT BURSTING INTO FLAMES.
IT IS SO WEIRD.
ALSO NOT A FAN OF HOW MUCH FASTER TURTLE CAN SUDDENLY GO THAN ME.
LOOK AT HIM BEING ALL STUPID AND GRACEFUL. I BET HE HASN'T SNORTED ANY WATER UP HIS SNOUT.
I FEEL LIKE A HIPPO.
FINE. NOT LIKE A HIPPO. LIKE AN OSTRICH SUDDENLY PLUNKED IN THE OCEAN.


NO ONE'S EVER SMILED AT ME LIKE THAT...
THAT MUDWING PROBABLY LOST HER ARM IN THE WAR–BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM TO BOTHER HER.
CAN'T WE... PANT... FLY A LITTLE FARTHER?
NOT IF WE WANT TO BE INCOGNITO.
RRRRGH.
THE WAR LEFT ALL THESE DRAGONS WITH SCARS, INSIDE AND OUT, BUT THEY SEEM HAPPY HERE... AT PEACE.

THE FINEST RUGS IN POSSIBILITY!
THE ACTUAL FINEST RUGS IN POSSIBILITY!
ROASTED CROCODILE ON SALE!
DON'T EAT THAT! HIS CROCODILE WAS ROTTING IN THE STREETS YESTERDAY! WE HAVE SEAGULLS CAUGHT THIS MORNING!

A FULL-MOON FESTIVAL. IT'S A SANDWING TRADITION, BUT THEY ABANDONED IT DURING THE WAR.

I'LL NEVER DO THAT. DANCE IN A CROWD... SING UNTIL MY VOICE CRACKS... PAINT CANVASES SIDE BY SIDE WITH OTHER DRAGONS...


I WAS HERE SEARCHING FOR SCARLET ONLY FOUR MONTHS AGO, BUT THINGS FEEL SO DIFFERENT. LIKE THE WAR IS STARTING TO MELT AWAY. LIKE EVERYONE FEELS SO MUCH SAFER UNDER THORN AND RUBY THAN BURN AND SCARLET.

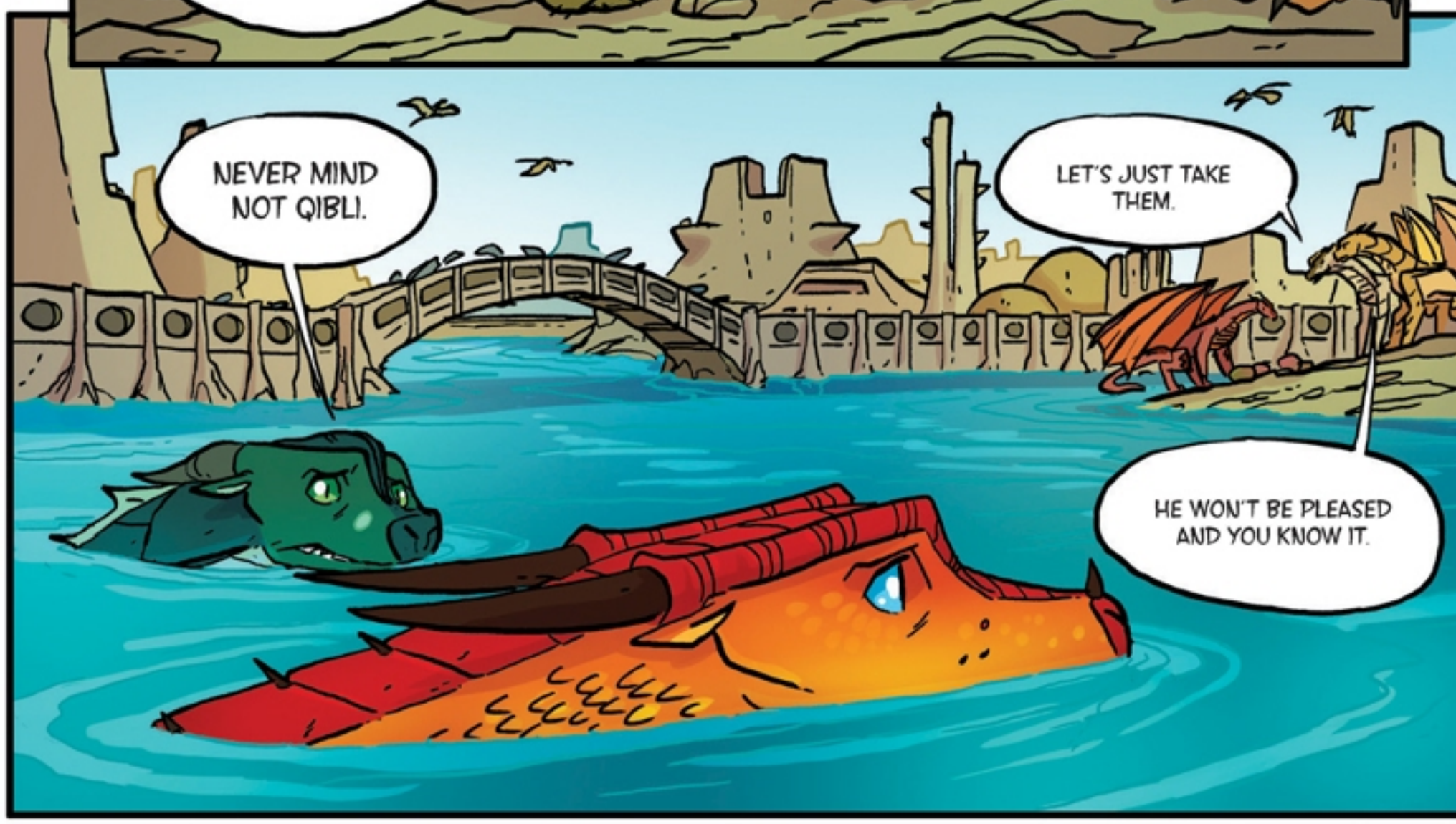
BUT IT'S NOT SAFE. NOT AS LONG AS QUEEN SCARLET IS OUT THERE, SMOLDERING WITH HATE.

WAIT.
WHAT?
THOSE SANDWINGS OVER THERE, ARGUING WITH THE SKYWING– DOESN'T THE BIG ONE LOOK LIKE QIBLI?

I DON'T HAVE THE FAINTEST IDEA WHAT QIBLI LOOKS LIKE.
HAVE I EVER MET QIBLI?
UH–SURE?
LET'S GO SEE.

YOU SAID THIRTY! THAT WAS THE AGREEMENT!

YOU ARE WELCOME TO COME TO THE MOUNTAINS AND TRY HARVESTING THESE YOURSELF.


NEVER MIND NOT QIBLI.
LET'S JUST TAKE THEM.
HE WON'T BE PLEASED AND YOU KNOW IT.

YOU'RE A CHEAT, SKYWING!

OH, IT'S A CACTUS. I'VE SEEN THOSE IN THE MOUNTAINS, I THINK.
PERIL!

BOOOOM

WHAT IS THIS? WHY?!
WHY DOES IT HURT SO MUCH?!
WHO CAN I SET ON FIRE TO MAKE IT STOP?!
ROOOOOARRR!
YOU ARE WITHOUT QUESTION THE LEAST STEALTHY DRAGON IN ALL OF PYRRHIA.
THAT WASN'T MY FAULT! EVERYTHING HURTS AND I HATE THE WORLD.
AAAAGH!
AAAHH!
LET'S FIND A SAFER PLACE BEFORE SOMEONE SEES YOU AND CONNECTS THE DOTS.
AAAUUGH!

THREE MOONS, THIS IS AGONY! IS THIS WHAT BEING ON FIRE FEELS LIKE TO OTHER DRAGONS?

WHYYYY? WHAT IS HAPPENING. AAAAAAARGH.
IT WAS A DRAGONFLAME CACTUS. LIKE THE ONE THAT EXPLODED AT SCHOOL.

I HAVE NO IDEA WHY ANYONE WOULD WANT TO BUY ONE NOW THAT THE WAR IS OVER.
THEY DIDN'T WANT TO BUY JUST ONE. THEY WANTED TO BUY THIRTY.
I BET BURNING OUT THEIR EYEBALLS WOULD MAKE ME FEEL BETTER.

THE SEEDPOD IS LIKE A LITTLE BALL OF THORNS, YOU SEE?
YOU HAVE ABOUT A HUNDRED OF THEM STUCK ALL OVER YOU SINCE IT EXPLODED AT YOUR FEET. BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO–I CAN'T PULL THEM OUT WITHOUT GETTING BURNED–BUT WE CAN'T LEAVE THEM–

OH...
WHAT?
YOUR SCALES ARE BURNING THE SEEDPODS AWAY.

THAT'S RIGHT. DIE, YOU LITTLE MONSTER PLANTS. MAY YOUR ROOTS ALWAYS BE THIRSTY AND YOUR SEEDS ALL MEET A FIERY DEATH UNTIL YOU'RE EXTINCT FOREVER!
YOWCH. YOU DON'T EVER HAVE MILD FEELINGS, DO YOU?
WHAT WOULD A "MILD" FEELING EVEN FEEL LIKE?
WAS, UM... DID YOU SEE IF THE EXPLOSION... UH...
IT LOOKED LIKE YOUR BODY BLOCKED THE WORST OF THE FIRE AND CAUGHT MOST OF THE SEEDPODS. I SAW OTHER DRAGONS INJURED, BUT NOBODY LIKE–
NOBODY LIKE CARNELIAN.
ANYWAY, WHAT KIND OF IDIOT SPREADS A BUNCH OF FLAMMABLE CACTI ALL OVER THE STREET? ANYONE COULD HAVE SET ONE OF THOSE OFF BY ACCIDENT!
NOT A SEAWING. OR AN ICEWING.
OH, HEY, NOW WE KNOW ONE MORE THING THAT CAN'T KILL YOU.

THEY SHOULDN'T BE ALLOWED TO SELL THINGS LIKE THAT TO JUST ANYONE. WOULD THEY SELL A *SWORD* TO ANY DRAGON WHO CAME ALONG?
UM... YES?

I COULD SET THAT SEEDPOD ON FIRE, BUT IT MIGHT BURN YOU. I DON'T KNOW IF THAT WOULD BE WORSE.
DO IT. I'LL JUMP STRAIGHT INTO THE RIVER AFTER.

*I CAN'T BELIEVE HE TRUSTS ME ENOUGH TO LET ME DO THIS. NOBODY **EVER** LETS ME HELP. EVEN CLAY GETS SORT OF FLAPPY AND NERVOUS.*

I HOPE HE'S GOING TO BE OK... I HOPE I DID THE RIGHT THING... I HOPE–
SPLOOSH

IS THAT HIS MYSTERIOUS RIVER ROCK?
WEIRD.

HEY, WHAT?! YOU'RE ALL HEALED! HOW DID YOU DO THAT?
IT WASN'T THAT BAD. I'M FINE. DON'T WORRY.
I'M NOT WORRIED, I'M DEEPLY SUSPICIOUS.
TURTLE?!
QIBLI!
TURTLE!
MOON! WOOO!
I GUESS WE FOUND HIS FRIENDS.
PROBABLY THANKS TO ME AND THE FIRE, BY THE WAY. YOU'RE WELCOME, TURTLE.
MAYBE I SHOULD FLY AWAY BEFORE THEY HAVE A CHANCE TO JUDGE ME.
PERIL, THIS IS MOON AND QIBLI.
TOO LATE.

THESE DRAGONS LOOK COMPLETELY ORDINARY. THEY DON'T LOOK SO MUCH MORE AWESOME TO BE FRIENDS WITH THAN ME.

THIS MUST BE MOON.

NOW THAT EVERYONE KNOWS NIGHTWINGS DON'T HAVE POWERS AFTER ALL, I'M SURE SHE'D BE EASY TO TAKE DOWN IN THE ARENA.

HYPOTHETICALLY. IF THERE WERE STILL AN ARENA.

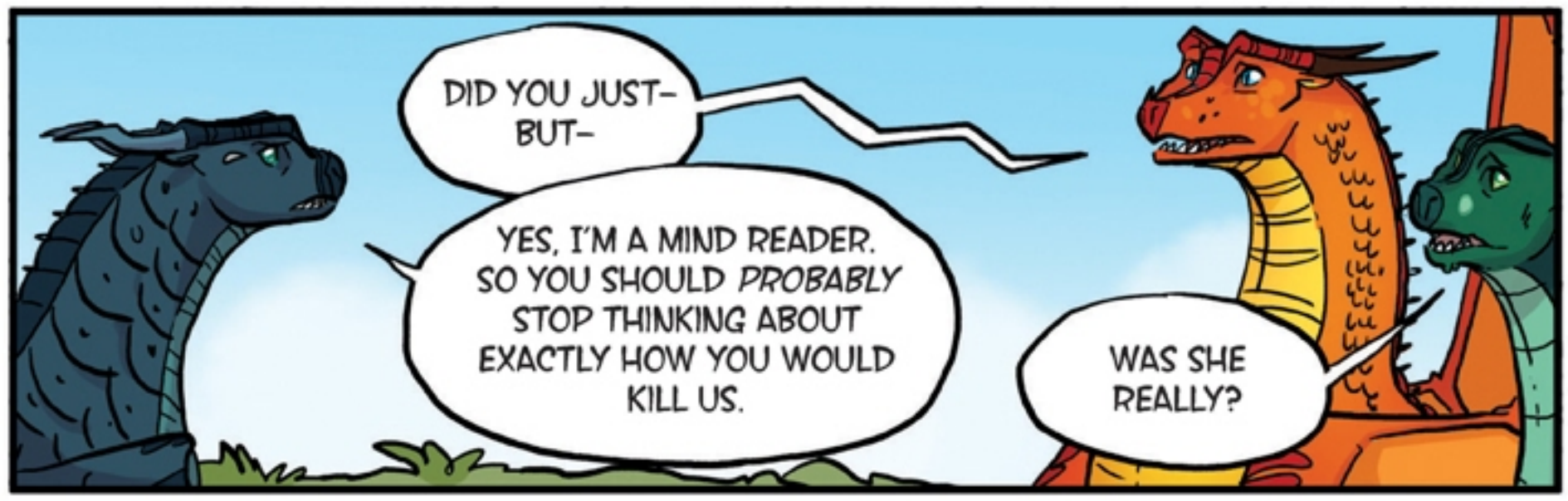
SO THIS IS QIBLI. SUSPICIOUS FACE.

WELL, I CAN DISLIKE YOU, TOO! WHO CARES WHAT YOU THINK? ARE YOU THE MOST DANGEROUS DRAGON IN PYRRHIA? **NO, I THINK NOT.**

I'VE DEFEATED PLENTY OF SANDWINGS IN THE ARENA.

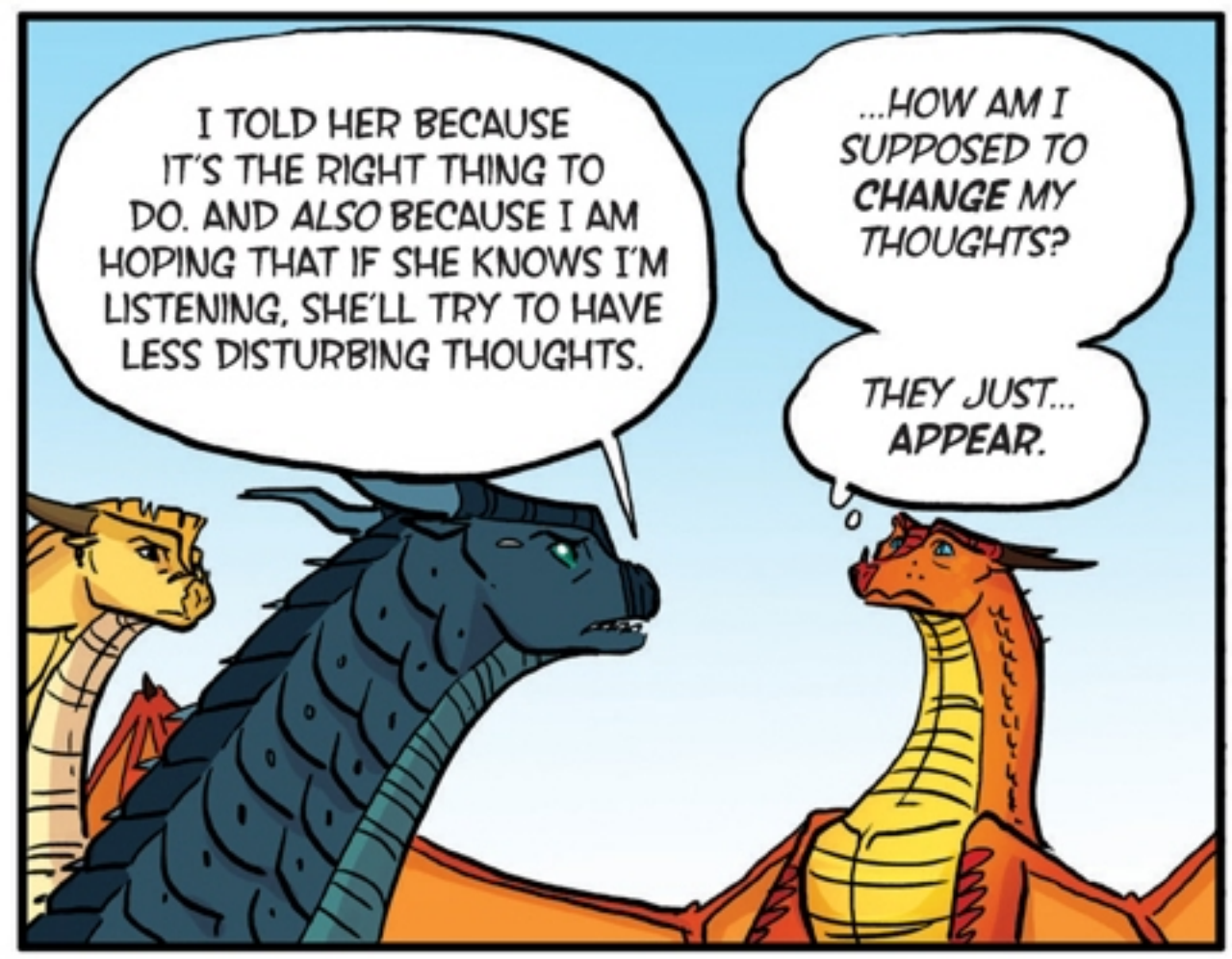
I JUST START BY BURNING OFF THAT VENOMOUS TAIL BARB. EASY.

MOST SANDWINGS GO DOWN QUICK. NO DOUBT THIS ONE IS DIM AND SLOW LIKE ALL THE REST.


DID YOU JUST– BUT–
YES, I'M A MIND READER. SO YOU SHOULD *PROBABLY* STOP THINKING ABOUT EXACTLY HOW YOU WOULD KILL US.
WAS SHE REALLY?

YOU BROUGHT ME TO MEET A *MIND READER*? YOU DIDN'T THINK THAT WOULD BE WORTH *MENTIONING* BEFORE NOW?
IT'S MOON'S SECRET. IT'S UP TO HER WHO SHE TELLS.

I'M NOT ENTIRELY SURE WHY SCARLET'S DANCING MONKEY OF FIERY DOOM GETS TO BE ON THAT LIST, FRANKLY.
AND REMIND ME, YOU'RE THORN'S DANCING MONKEY OF WHAT, EXACTLY? AT LEAST I WAS *USEFUL* TO *MY* QUEEN.


I TOLD HER BECAUSE IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO. AND *ALSO* BECAUSE I AM HOPING THAT IF SHE KNOWS I'M LISTENING, SHE'LL TRY TO HAVE LESS DISTURBING THOUGHTS.
...HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO ***CHANGE*** *MY THOUGHTS?*
THEY JUST... ***APPEAR.***

MAYBE YOU SHOULD STOP LISTENING INSTEAD.
IT DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY.

BUT DON'T WORRY TOO MUCH... YOUR THOUGHTS ARE REALLY HARD TO HEAR. MOSTLY ALL I GET FROM YOUR MIND IS HEAT AND FLAMES AND–
ANYWAY. IT'S NOT AS CLEAR AS MOST MINDS. YOU'RE MOSTLY SAFE FROM ME.
TREMENDOUSLY COMFORTING.
THINK ABOUT FLAMES...
ALTHOUGH SHE'S GOING TO HATE ME NO MATTER WHAT I THINK SO WHY SHOULD I BOTHER...
IS KINKAJOU ALL RIGHT? WHERE IS SHE?
AND YOUR HOSTILE ICE DRAGON?
WINTER WENT BACK TO THE ICE KINGDOM. QIBLI THINKS HE'S COMING BACK, BUT I'M NOT SO SURE.
KINKAJOU IS... WELL, WE THINK SHE'S RECOVERING, BUT SHE STILL HASN'T WOKEN. TURTLE, SHE'D BE SO EXCITED TO SEE YOU HERE.
WE WERE ATTACKED BY A DRAGON WHO'S WORKING FOR SCARLET. MOON, IS PERIL WORKING FOR SCARLET, TOO?
NO, I DON'T THINK SHE IS...
...BUUUUT NOW SHE'S BACK TO FANTASIZING ABOUT WAYS TO KILL YOU.
BECAUSE THAT WAS RUDE.
YOU CAN GO STUFF A MOUNTAIN GOAT UP YOUR NOSE, SANDWING! HORNS FIRST! I'VE ANSWERED THAT QUESTION OVER AND OVER. I'M LOOKING FOR SCARLET TO STOP HER, NOT HELP HER. WHY ARE THERE SO MANY STUPID DRAGONS WHO CAN'T SEE THAT?

WELL, YOU DID HELP HER ESCAPE FROM BURN'S STRONGHOLD NOT THAT LONG AGO.
BUT BURN WAS THE BAD GUY THEN! I COULDN'T LEAVE MY QUEEN TRAPPED IN THAT PLACE!
YOUR QUEEN? ISN'T RUBY YOUR QUEEN NOW?
I DON'T HAVE TO EXPLAIN MYSELF TO YOU, SAND SNORTER. WE'RE ONLY HERE TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT WHERE SCARLET IS.
IT'S TRUE. WE HAVE TO FIND SCARLET. SHE ATTACKED JADE MOUNTAIN ACADEMY!
SHE DID NOT. SHE JUST FLEW BY AND THREW A DECAPITATED HEAD AT US.
THAT WASN'T AN ATTACK. IT WAS A DECLARATION OF WAR. IF SHE EVER REALLY ATTACKS, YOU'LL KNOW.
A DECAPITATED HEAD?? SUNNY SAID SCARLET WAS THERE MAKING THREATS, BUT SHE DIDN'T MENTION A HEAD.
WAS IT OUR FAULT? DID WE ENRAGE HER INTO COMING OUT OF HIDING?
THAT SEEMS EXTREMELY LIKELY. I IMAGINE JUST MEETING YOU WOULD ENRAGE QUEEN SCARLET ENOUGH TO KILL SEVERAL DRAGONS.
HA HA!

WE CAN SHOW YOU ON A MAP WHERE WE FOUND SCARLET. SHE'LL HAVE MOVED ON BY NOW, BUT AT LEAST IT'LL GIVE YOU SOMEPLACE TO START.
BUT RIGHT NOW WE SHOULD GET BACK TO THE CLINIC.
THE CLINIC? WHERE KINKAJOU IS?
BUT PERIL CAN'T GO INTO THE CITY.
DON'T FEEL BAD. KINKAJOU WOULDN'T KNOW YOU WERE THERE ANYWAY.
TURTLE LOOKS SO SAD...
THERE'S A RIGHT THING TO SAY HERE, I THINK, BUT I'M NOT SURE WHAT? SOMETHING REASSURING ABOUT KINKAJOU?
NO... SOMETHING ELSE... OH.
YOU SHOULD GO. I'LL JUST... WAIT FOR YOU... BY MYSELF... OUT HERE SOMEWHERE.
REALLY? YOU DON'T MIND? WE'LL BE BACK SOON!
I BET. AFTER YOU'VE TALKED IN SECRET ABOUT ME AND WHETHER TO FLY OFF WITHOUT ME.
SURE.
DID THAT SOUND SARCASTIC? BETTER TRY AGAIN.
SUUURE.
OK, THAT SOUNDED WORSE.
I MEAN, YES. FINE. I WANT TO GO HUNT IN THE DESERT ANYWAY.

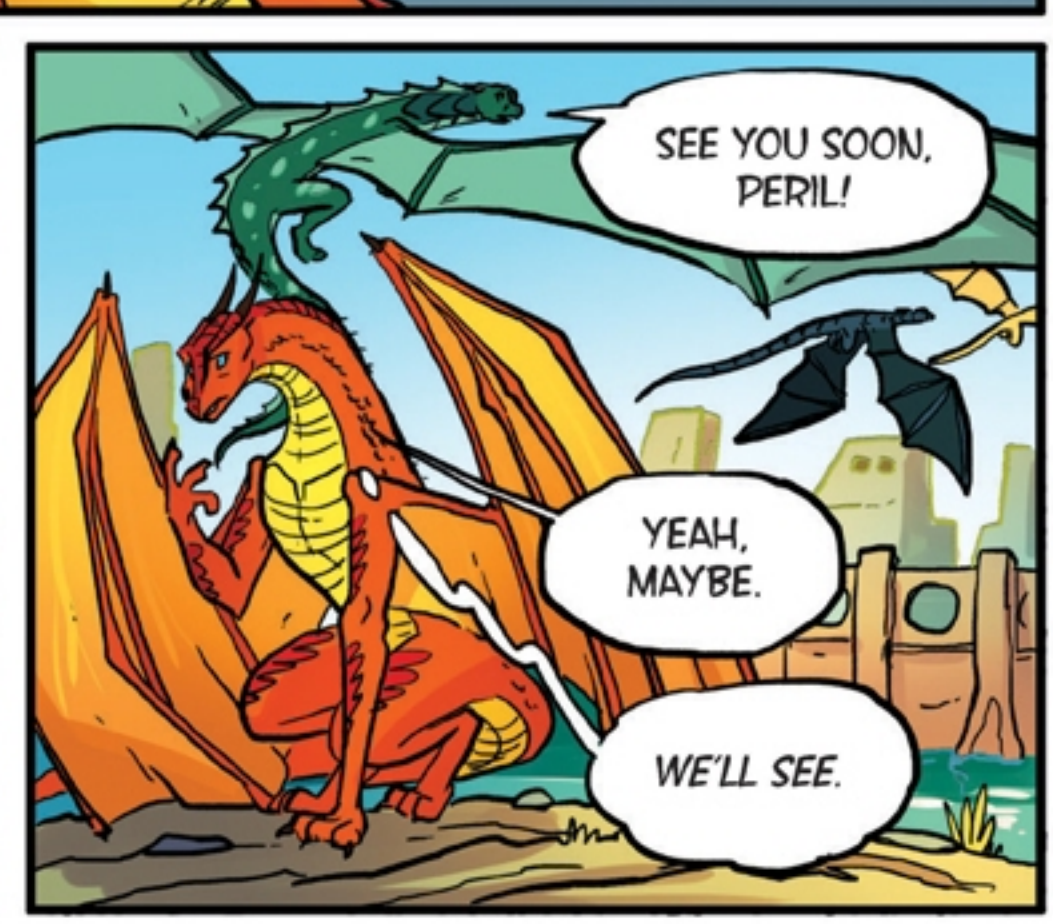
WE CAN MEET AT THE BIG SANDSTONE ARCH WEST OF THE CITY. THAT'S WHERE QIBLI AND I HAVE BEEN GOING TO WAIT FOR WINTER.
HE STILL MIGHT COME, MOON. HE HAS TWO MORE DAYS.
HE'S NOT COMING. I'VE SEEN INSIDE HIS MIND, QIBLI. HE'S SO LOYAL TO HIS FAMILY AND TRIBE... I DON'T THINK ANYTHING WILL CHANGE THAT.

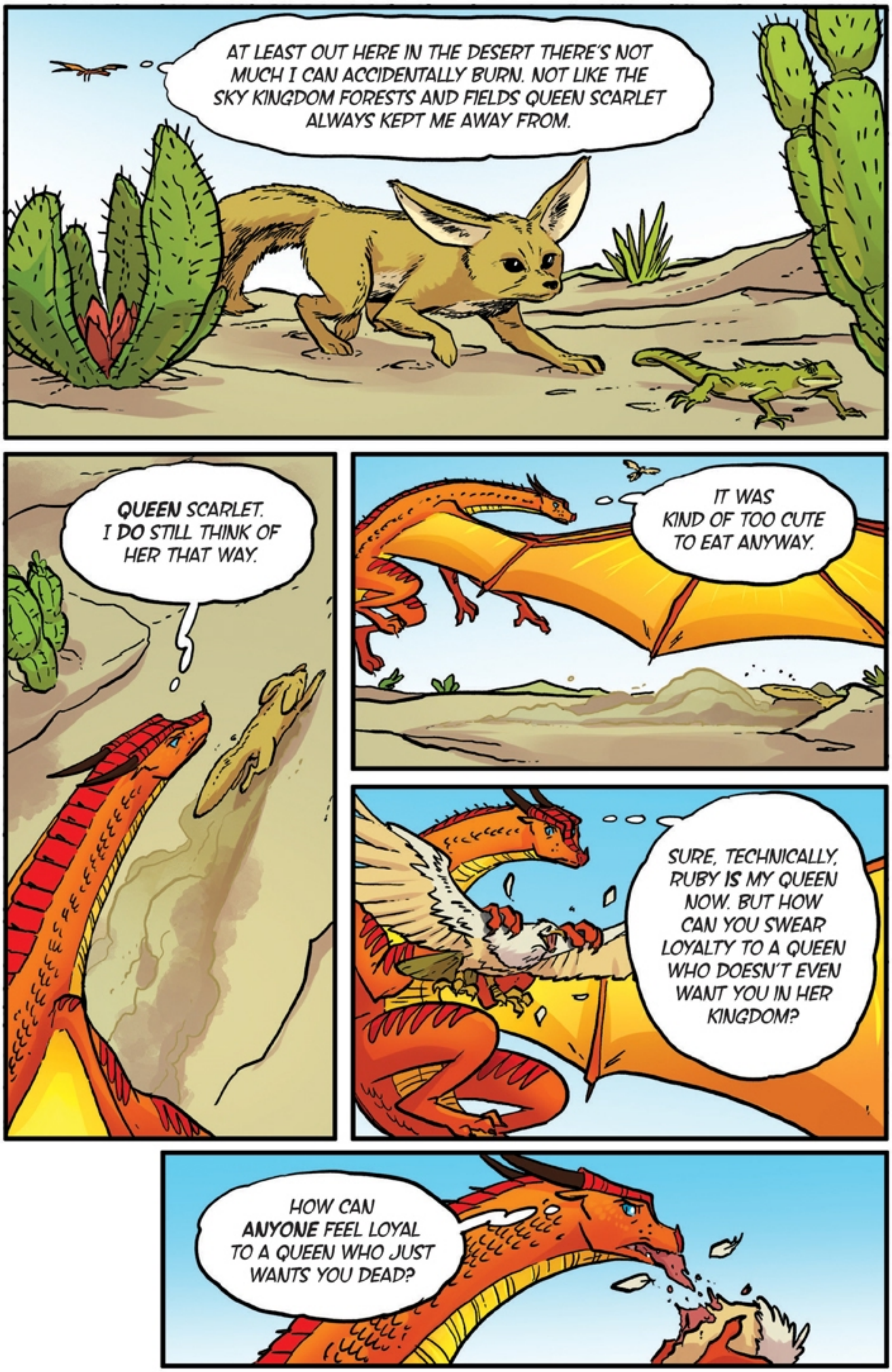
MOON, SOMETIMES YOU'RE SO BUSY LISTENING TO WHAT DRAGONS ARE *THINKING*, YOU MISS THE THINGS THEY'RE *DOING*. WHICH CAN TELL YOU A LOT MORE ABOUT WHAT THEY'RE REALLY LIKE.
THAT... MAKES NO SENSE.

SHOULD I BRING KINKAJOU SOMETHING? FLOWERS? A FISH?
NO, SHE DOESN'T LIKE FISH. UM. KUMQUATS?
YOU DON'T NEED ANYTHING, TURTLE. JUST HAVING YOU THERE WILL BE ENOUGH. MAYBE SHE'LL BE ABLE TO HEAR YOUR VOICE.

OH, I SEE. HE LIKES MOON AND QIBLI, BUT HE'S REALLY HERE FOR KINKAJOU.
WHY DID HE EVEN WANT TO TRAVEL WITH ME IN THE FIRST PLACE? DID HE THINK I'D BE USEFUL PROTECTION?
WELL, HE DIDN'T NEED TO PRETEND TO BE FRIENDS WITH ME. BORING GREEN PUDDLE DRAGON! HRMPH.

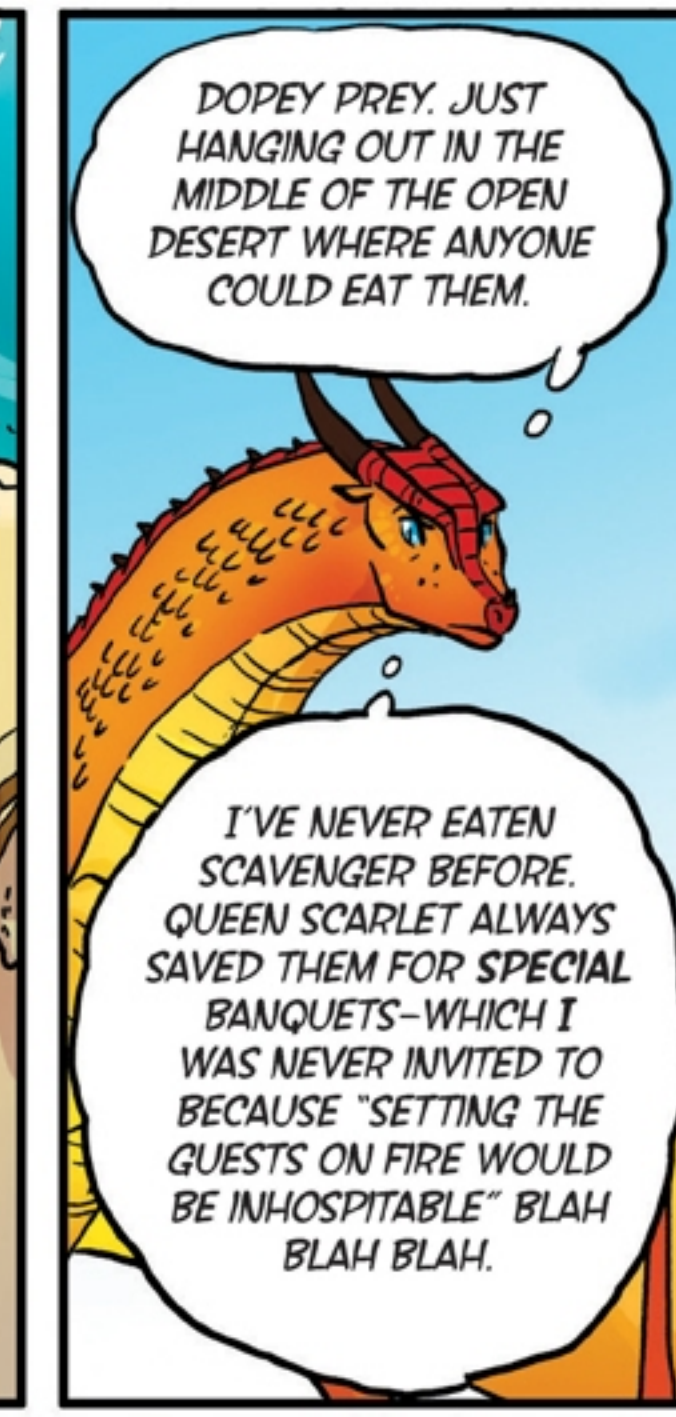
*WHAT IS **THAT** MOON FACE? IT BETTER NOT BE PITY. YOU DON'T KNOW ME, NIGHTWING!*


SEE YOU SOON, PERIL!
YEAH, MAYBE.
WE'LL SEE.


AT LEAST OUT HERE IN THE DESERT THERE'S NOT MUCH I CAN ACCIDENTALLY BURN. NOT LIKE THE SKY KINGDOM FORESTS AND FIELDS QUEEN SCARLET ALWAYS KEPT ME AWAY FROM.
QUEEN SCARLET. I DO STILL THINK OF HER THAT WAY.
IT WAS KIND OF TOO CUTE TO EAT ANYWAY.
SURE, TECHNICALLY, RUBY IS MY QUEEN NOW. BUT HOW CAN YOU SWEAR LOYALTY TO A QUEEN WHO DOESN'T EVEN WANT YOU IN HER KINGDOM?
HOW CAN ANYONE FEEL LOYAL TO A QUEEN WHO JUST WANTS YOU DEAD?

MAYBE A CAMEL WOULD MAKE ME FEEL BETTER.

OH, THEY'RE WITH A BUNCH OF SCAVENGERS.
BLAH BLAH
BABBLE BABBLE

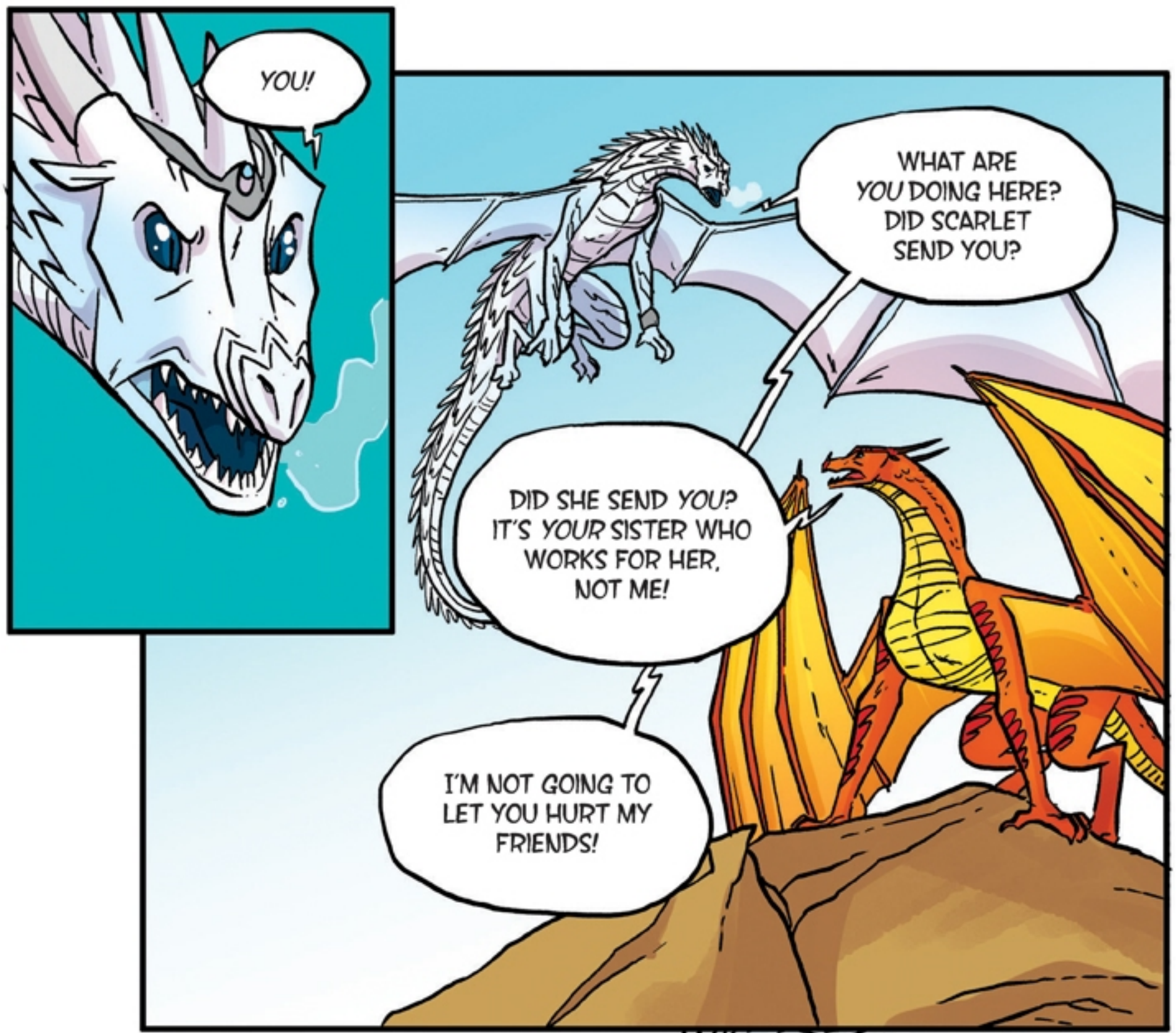

DOPEY PREY. JUST HANGING OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE OPEN DESERT WHERE ANYONE COULD EAT THEM.
I'VE NEVER EATEN SCAVENGER BEFORE. QUEEN SCARLET ALWAYS SAVED THEM FOR **SPECIAL** BANQUETS–WHICH **I** WAS NEVER INVITED TO BECAUSE "SETTING THE GUESTS ON FIRE WOULD BE INHOSPITABLE" BLAH BLAH BLAH.

THAT ONE LOOKS... SAD.
THAT'S HILARIOUS, PERIL. DO MOUNTAIN GOATS MOPE? DOES A HAWK EVER HAVE A DAY WHERE IT FEELS LIKE NONE OF THE OTHER HAWKS WANT TO BE FRIENDS WITH IT?

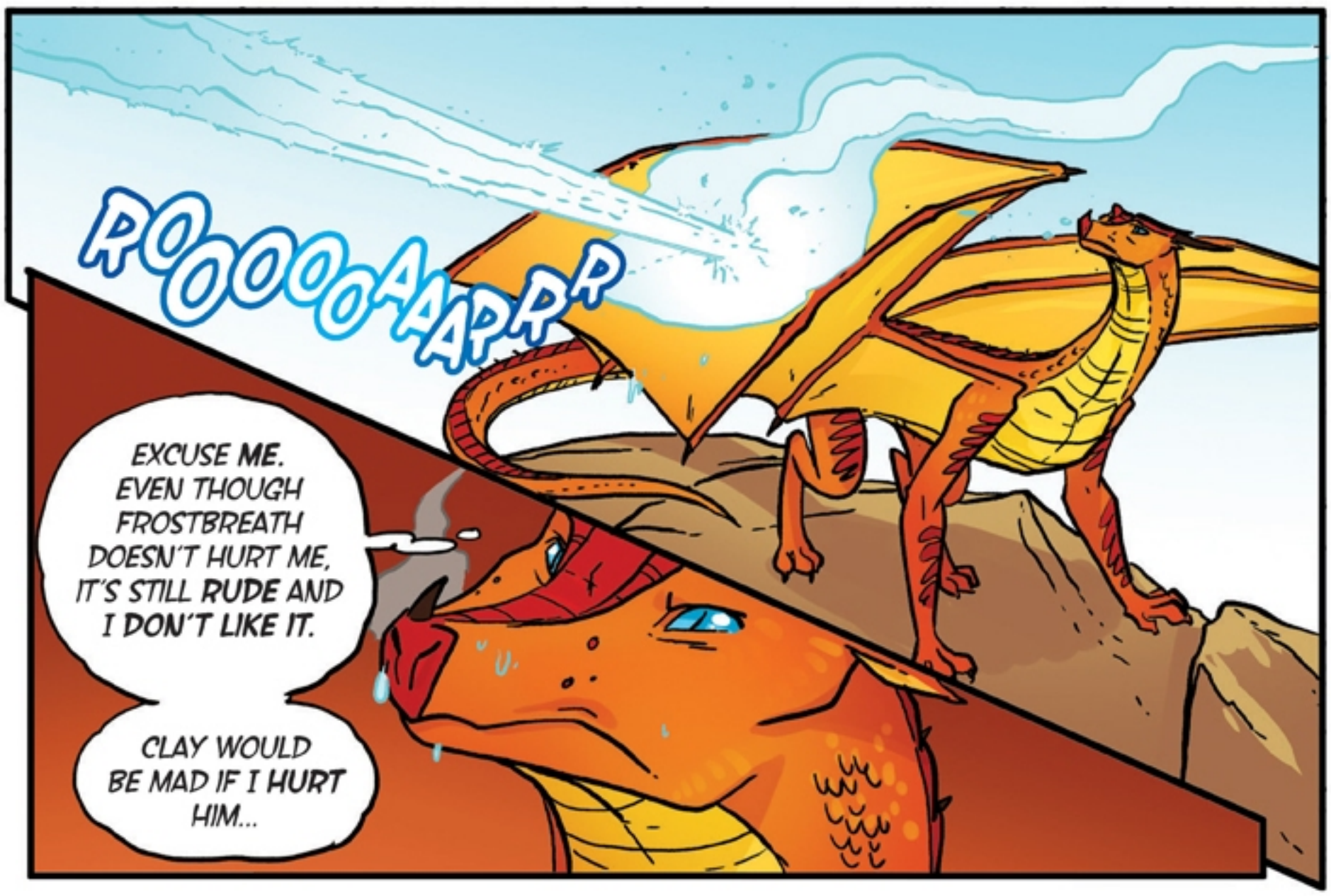
MAYBE I SHOULD BURN UP THE OTHER SCAVENGERS AND SEE IF THAT MAKES THIS ONE FEEL BETTER.

BAH, NEVER MIND. SHUT UP, BRAIN! I'M NOT IDENTIFYING WITH A SCRABBLY LITTLE SCAVENGER! I'M JUST NOT HUNGRY, THAT'S ALL!

I CAN SEE WHY MOON AND QIBLI PICKED THIS AS A MEETING PLACE. IT'S HUGE.

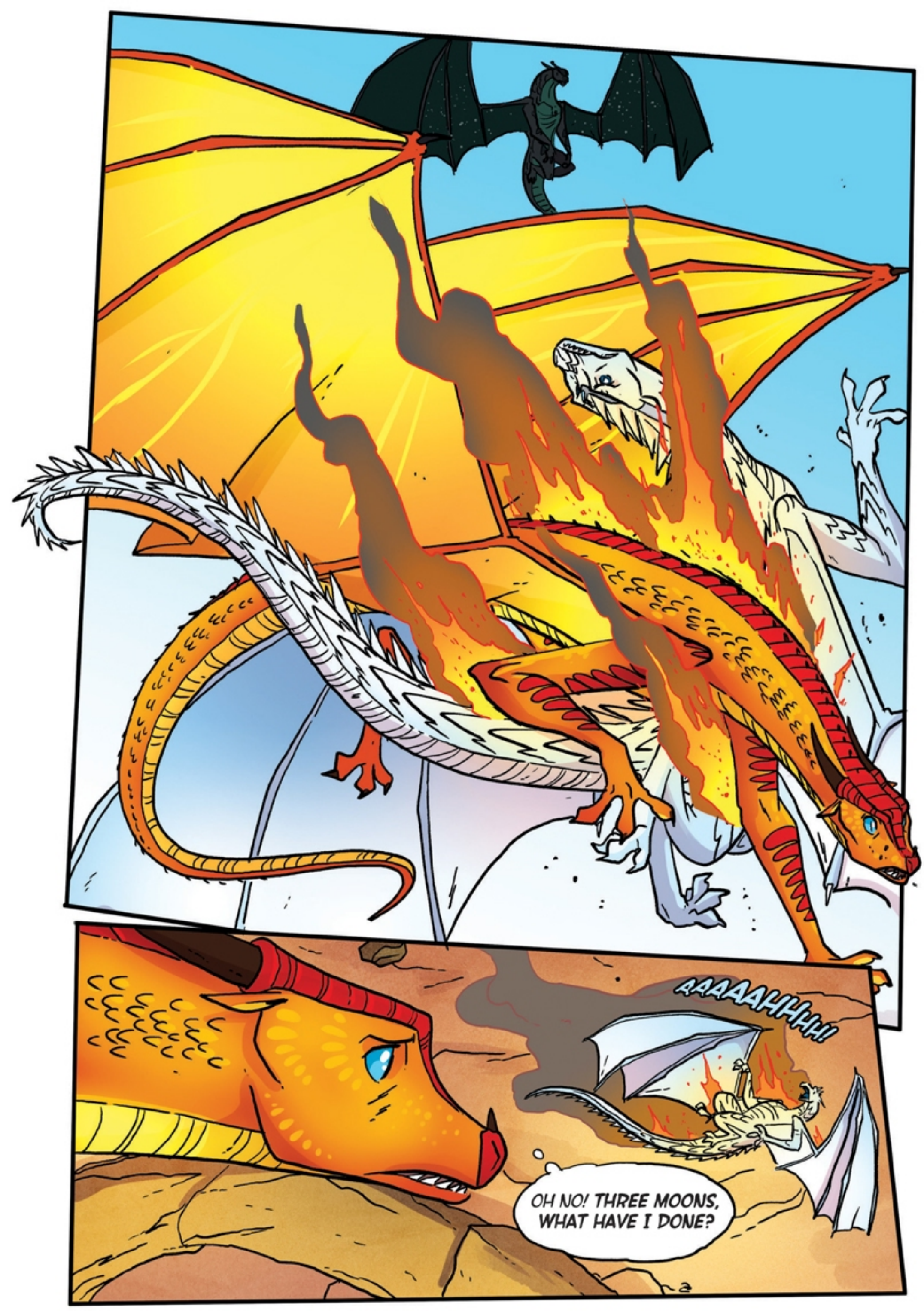

YOU!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? DID SCARLET SEND YOU?
DID SHE SEND YOU? IT'S YOUR SISTER WHO WORKS FOR HER, NOT ME!
I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU HURT MY FRIENDS!

THAT'S FUNNY. I MEAN, THE PART WHERE YOU THINK YOU COULD STOP ME.
UH-OH. THAT WAS THE WRONG THING TO SAY.
BUT I'M HAVING SUCH A BAD DAY! AND HE'S JUST BEING MEAN! WHY DO I HAVE TO BE POLITE AND SENSIBLE IF HE ISN'T?!


ROOOOAARRR
EXCUSE ME. EVEN THOUGH FROSTBREATH DOESN'T HURT ME, IT'S STILL RUDE AND I DON'T LIKE IT.
CLAY WOULD BE MAD IF I HURT HIM...

...BUT SURELY IT'S ALL RIGHT TO SCARE HIM A LITTLE BIT.
OH, LOOK AT HIM, SO SMUG. CONGRATULATING HIMSELF FOR DODGING, WHEN I DELIBERATELY AVOIDED HITTING HIM!

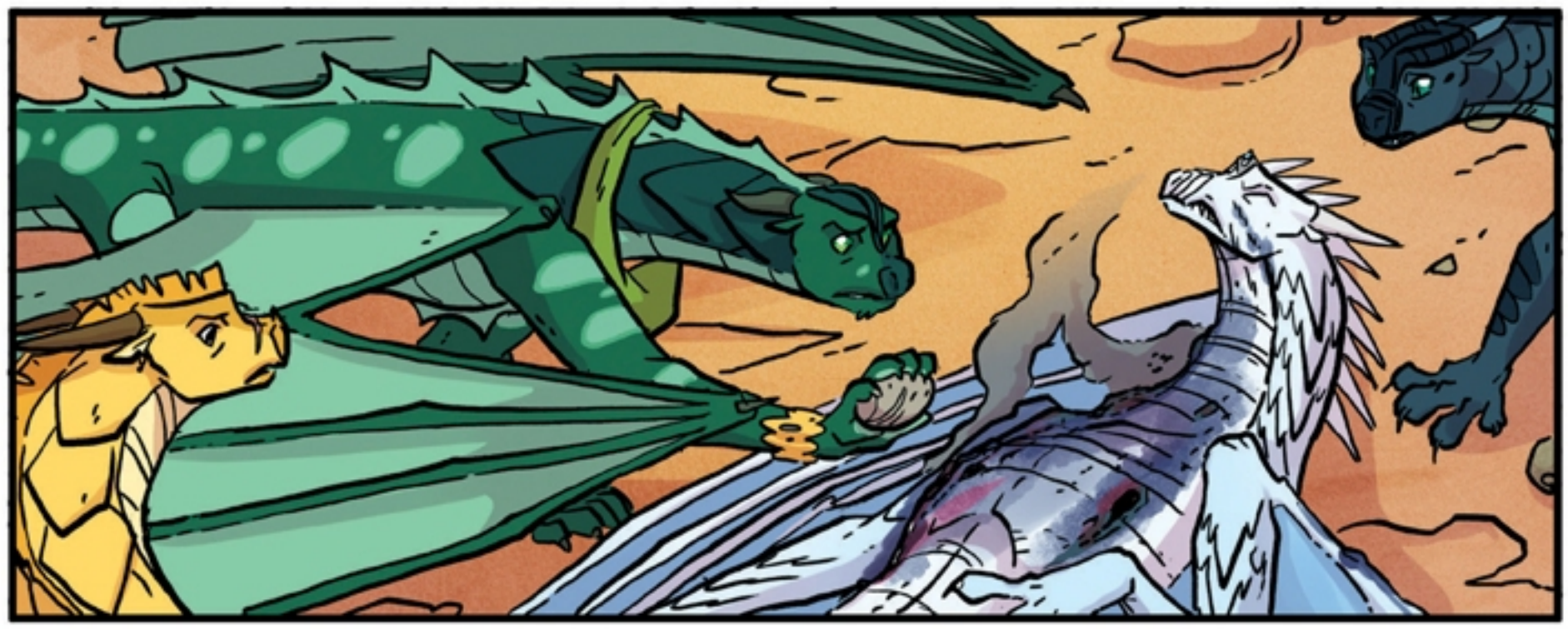
FROSTBREATH DOESN'T DO ANYTHING TO ME, YOU ONE-TRICK DRAGON!
HOW ABOUT SOME CLAW-TO-CLAW COMBAT, OR ARE YOU TOO MUCH OF A COWARD FOR THAT?
FIGHTING IN THE AIR IS HARD! HOW DO DRAGONS FOCUS ON STAYING ALOFT AND DEFENDING ALL AT THE SAME TIME?
MAYBE I'M NOT THE MOST DANGEROUS DRAGON IN PYRRHIA.
WHY DIDN'T SCARLET EVER LET ME FIGHT IN THE AIR? WHY ONLY PIT ME AGAINST OPPONENTS WITH BOUND WINGS?
BUT I AM! I AM! I JUST HAVE TO TOUCH HIM AND HE'S DEAD!
WAIT. THAT WOULD BE BAD.
THAT WOULD BE VERY, VERY BAD.
STOP! DON'T MAKE ME KILL YOU!
HE'S CLAY'S STUDENT. HE'S TURTLE'S FRIEND. EVEN THOUGH HE ATTACKED ME FIRST, I'LL BE IN SO MUCH TROUBLE IF I HURT HIM.
I'LL DIVE TO THE ARCH, PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN US.

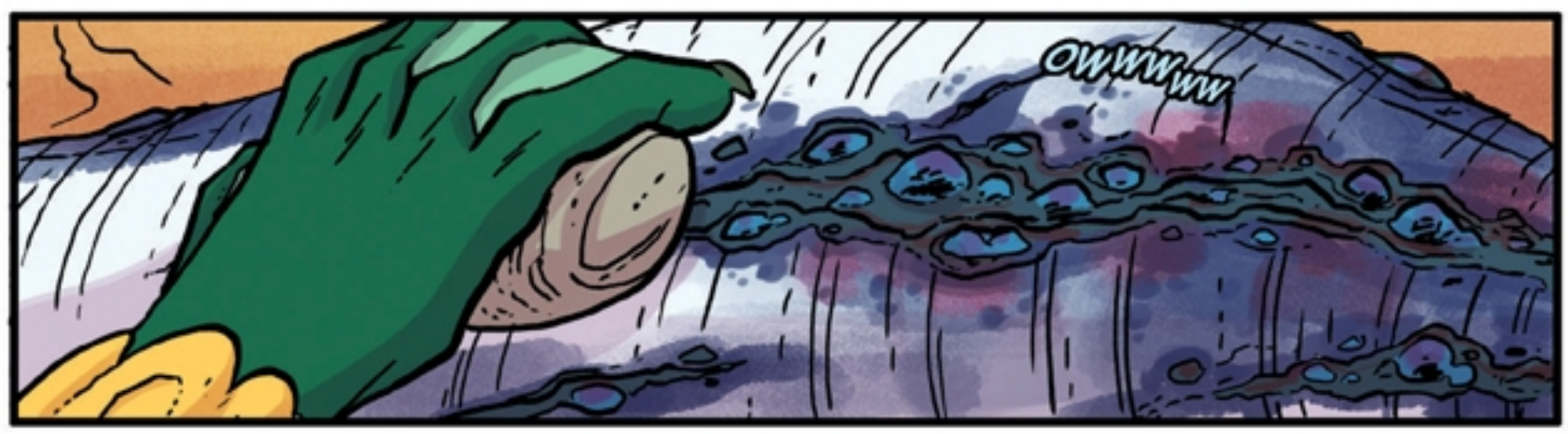

AAAAAHHHH!
OH NO! THREE MOONS, WHAT HAVE I DONE?

OH MY. FIRESCALES! I HAVEN'T SEEN THAT IN A LONG TIME.
GET HELP!
I'M SORRY, I'M SORRY! I WAS TRYING TO GET AWAY!
I DIDN'T MEAN TO BURN YOU, I REALLY DIDN'T! I'M HERE TO HELP YOUR FRIENDS STOP SCARLET!
STOP DYING AND LISTEN TO ME!

YOU ARE A MONSTER
YOU'LL NEVER SPEAK TO YOU AGAIN
CLAY WILL
YOU FAULT
WORST 'N
YOUR RR
MOON. TELL MOON–

WINTER! WINTER!
OF COURSE THEY'RE HERE NOW, JUST IN TIME TO WITNESS MY MONSTROSITY.
WINTER... OH NO, OH NO, OH NO–
IT WAS AN ACCIDENT! I DIDN'T MEAN TO BURN HIM! I DIDN'T!
WHAT CAN WE DO? WHAT CAN WE DO?
I DON'T KNOW! I'M THE PROBLEM, NOT THE SOLUTION!
I KNOW–WINTER, FROSTBREATH YOUR SCALES! ISN'T THERE A CACTUS FOR HEALING BURNS? WINTER, COME ON, DON'T PASS OUT. WE CAN FIX THIS!
USE THIS!
WHAT?




OWWWW

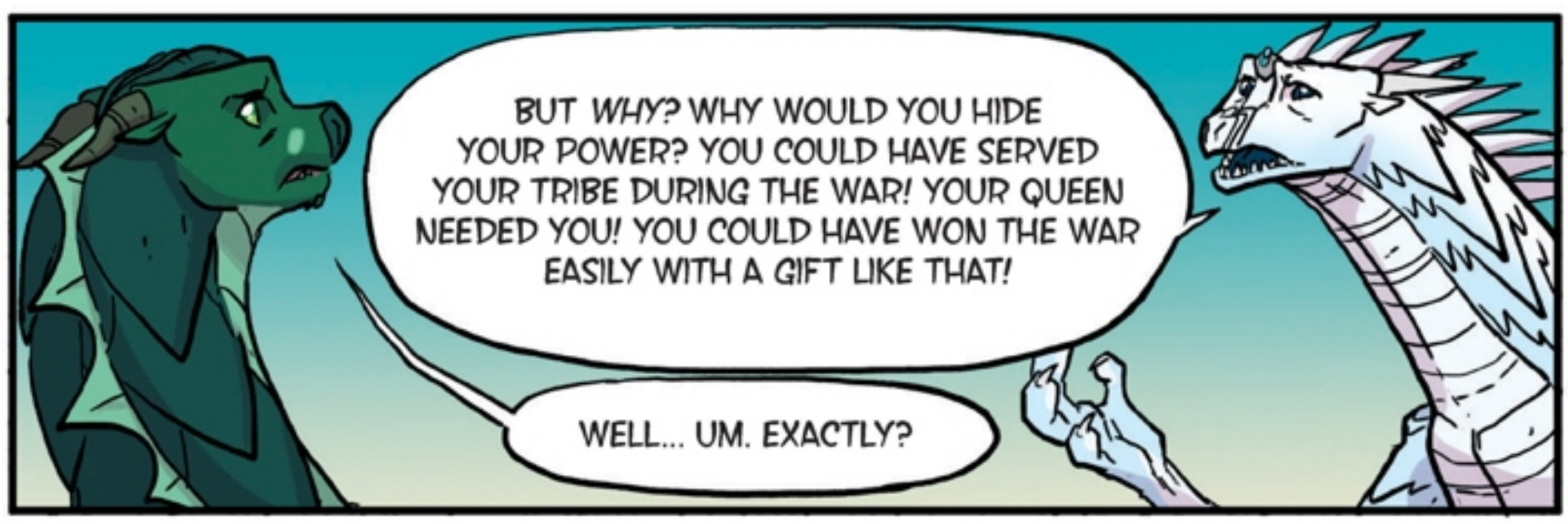
UH, DID I GET ALL OF IT?
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. IS HE REALLY OK? DID I... NOT KILL HIM AFTER ALL?
WHAT–TURTLE, WHAT...?
WHY DO YOU HAVE A MAGIC HEALING ROCK? NO, WAIT... HOW DO YOU HAVE A MAGIC HEALING ROCK?
IT'S AN ANIMUS-TOUCHED OBJECT. WHERE DID YOU GET–
OH!
YOU DIDN'T FIND IT SOMEWHERE. YOU MADE IT! YOU'RE AN ANIMUS DRAGON!
THAT'S YOUR SECRET. AN ANIMUS.

OOF. I'VE NEVER HEARD ANYONE SAY IT BEFORE. ACTUALLY, CAN WE NOT TALK ABOUT IT? IT'S REALLY NOT A BIG DEAL.

YOU COULD HAVE TOLD ME.
I WAS THINKING ABOUT IT. I MEAN, WE'RE NOT THAT DIFFERENT, YOU AND I. RIGHT?
WELL, I'VE NEVER HAD THE OPTION OF HIDING MY "GIFT." THAT'S A PRETTY BIG DIFFERENCE.

WHO ELSE IS HIDING MAGIC POWERS? WINTER, ANYTHING WE SHOULD KNOW? A SECRET ABILITY TO KILL DRAGONS WITH A SNEER?
NO. TRUST ME, I'M NOTHING SPECIAL.
SAME HERE. AT LEAST THAT MAKES TWO OF US.

WHEN DID YOU MAKE THIS ROCK? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? HOW MUCH HAVE YOU USED YOUR POWER SO FAR?
DON'T WORRY, MY SOUL IS FINE. I HAVEN'T ENCHANTED VERY MANY THINGS. I MEAN, I DIDN'T WANT ANYONE TO NOTICE I CAN DO THIS, OBVIOUSLY.


BUT WHY? WHY WOULD YOU HIDE YOUR POWER? YOU COULD HAVE SERVED YOUR TRIBE DURING THE WAR! YOUR QUEEN NEEDED YOU! YOU COULD HAVE WON THE WAR EASILY WITH A GIFT LIKE THAT!
WELL... UM. EXACTLY?

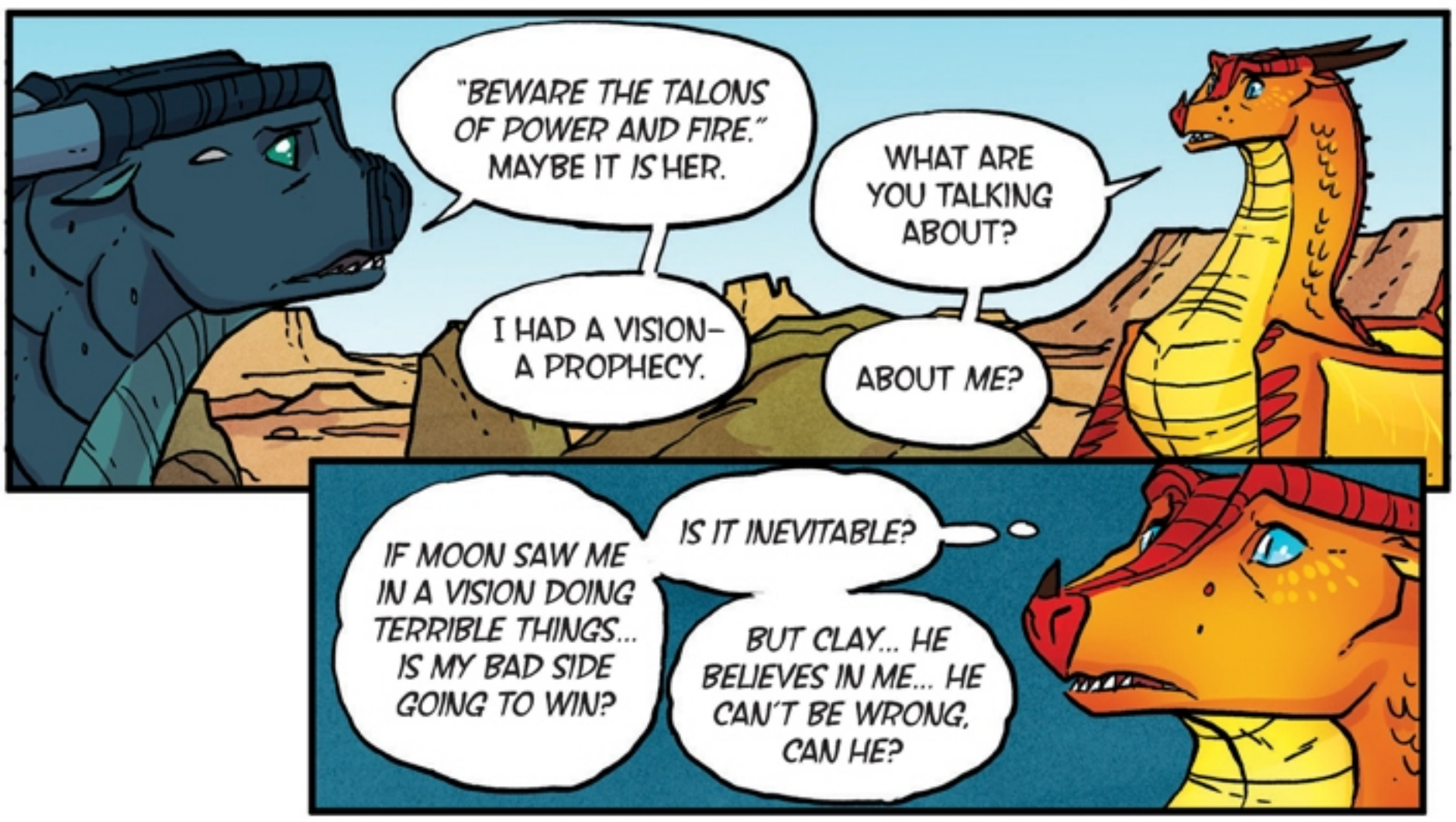
WAIT. SO IT WOULD BE ALL RIGHT FOR *HIS* QUEEN TO USE *HIM* AS A WEAPON, BUT IT WAS THE MOST UNFORGIVABLE CRIME IN HISTORY FOR *MY* QUEEN TO USE *ME* AS ONE?
THEY CAN'T MEET MY EYES. NOT EVEN TURTLE.
I GET IT. YOU SHOULD BE THE ONE WHO DECIDES WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR ABILITIES. NOT YOUR QUEEN OR ANYONE ELSE.
WHY IS SHE LOOKING AT ME? I NEVER GET TO DECIDE ANYTHING. IF I DID, I'D PROBABLY MESS UP AND KILL SOMEBODY.
WOULD THAT ROCK WORK ON KINKAJOU? COULD WE HEAL HER, TOO?
WE COULD TRY, BUT... IT'S ONLY ENCHANTED TO HEAL SCALES AND MUSCLES. IT WAS JUST SUPPOSED TO HELP ME FEEL LESS SORE AFTER FLYING ALL DAY.
I KNOW, I WAS AN IDIOT. I SHOULD HAVE MADE IT MORE USEFUL.
AND MORE OBVIOUS. WHAT A DOPEY THING TO ENCHANT. IT LOOKS LIKE EVERY OTHER ROCK IN THE WORLD.
IF YOU DROP IT WHILE YOU'RE LEANING OVER A RIVER ONE DAY, YOU'LL NEVER FIND IT AGAIN.

HEY, WHERE'S FOESLAYER? I WAS TRAVELING WITH A NIGHTWING. WHERE'D SHE GO?
UH. I MIGHT HAVE TOLD HER TO GO GET HELP.
WE NEEDED HER! SHE WAS GOING TO HELP US FIND THE LOST CITY OF NIGHT!

HEY, WINTER, MAYBE TRY TO STAY CALM UNTIL WE'RE SURE YOU'RE OK.
ALSO... I'M GLAD YOU CAME BACK, BY THE WAY.
I'M ALL RIGHT. IT'S LIKE IT NEVER HAPPENED.

EXCEPT *IT DID*. THIS MONSTER THREATENED YOU AND THEN CLAIMED SHE WAS HERE TO HELP YOU.
I DIDN'T THREATEN ANYONE! NOT... I MEAN, NOT *REALLY*.

SHE *IS* HERE TO HELP US. AT LEAST, I THINK SO.
YOU *THINK* SO?
I MEAN... I GUESS I WISH YOU HADN'T BURNED WINTER...
IT WAS AN *ACCIDENT!* I WAS TRYING TO GET AWAY FROM HIM!


"BEWARE THE TALONS OF POWER AND FIRE." MAYBE IT *IS* HER.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I HAD A VISION– A PROPHECY.
ABOUT *ME*?
IF MOON SAW ME IN A VISION DOING TERRIBLE THINGS... IS MY BAD SIDE GOING TO WIN?
IS IT INEVITABLE?
BUT CLAY... HE BELIEVES IN ME... HE CAN'T BE WRONG, CAN HE?

NOT SPECIFICALLY ABOUT YOU–
EXCUSE ME. ARE WE REALLY GOING TO TELL THE VILLAIN EVERYTHING WE KNOW ABOUT THEIR EVIL PLAN?
I DON'T *HAVE* AN EVIL PLAN! ALL MY EVIL IS SPUR-OF-THE-MOMENT!
TURTLE, TELL THEM HOW BAD I AM AT PLANNING!
MAYBE IF PERIL KNOWS ABOUT THE PROPHECY, SHE CAN DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT. WE *CAN* CHANGE THE FUTURE, YOU KNOW.
I COULDN'T SEE ANY FACES SO WE DON'T KNOW WHO IT'S ABOUT FOR SURE–BUT THERE'S ONE LINE AT THE BEGINNING–
LISTEN:
BEWARE THE DARKNESS OF DRAGONS,
BEWARE THE STALKER OF DREAMS,
BEWARE THE TALONS OF POWER AND FIRE,
BEWARE ONE WHO IS NOT WHAT SHE SEEMS.
SOMETHING IS COMING TO SHAKE THE EARTH. SOMETHING IS COMING TO SCORCH THE GROUND.
JADE MOUNTAIN WILL FALL BENEATH THUNDER AND ICE, UNLESS THE LOST CITY OF NIGHT CAN BE FOUND.

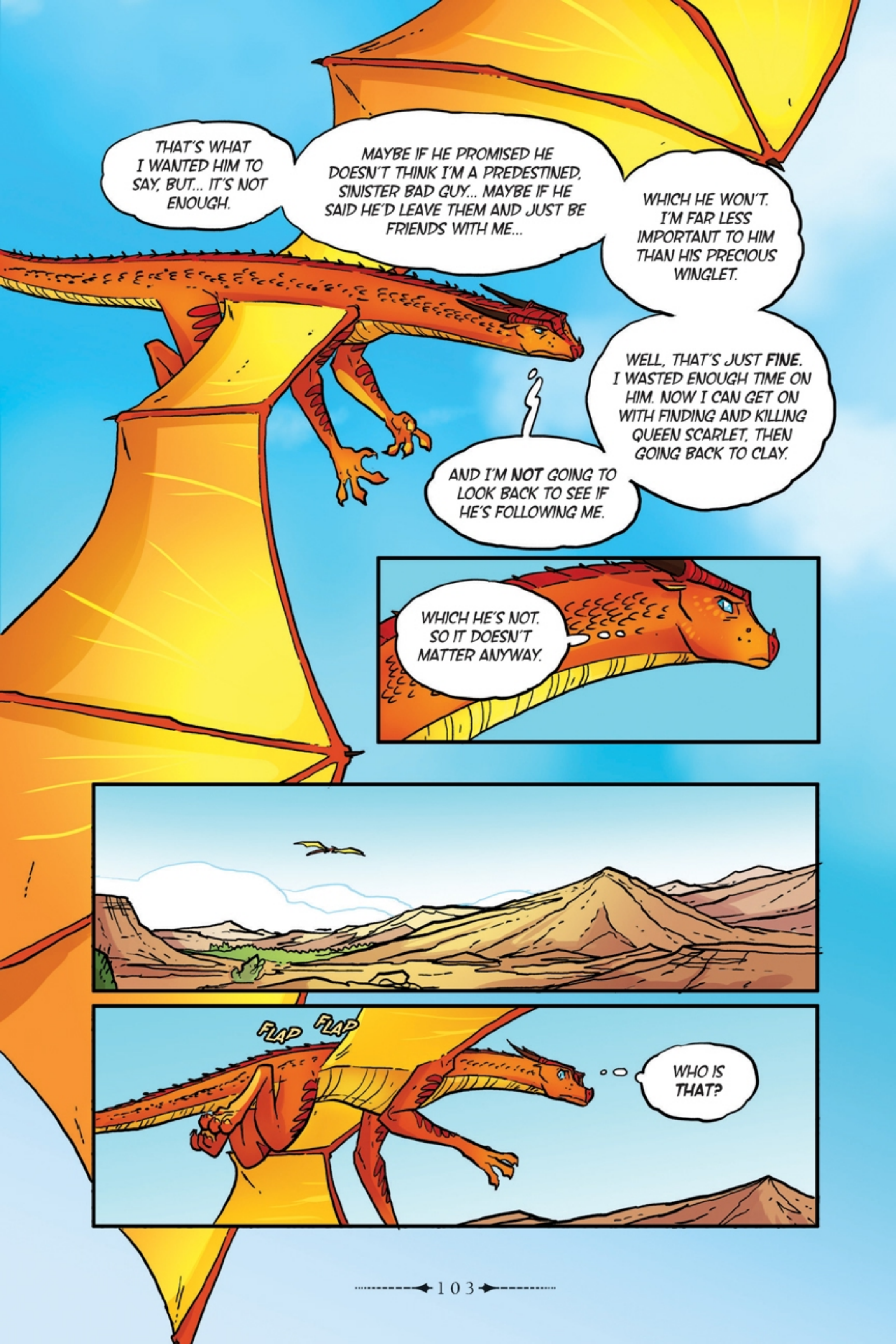
WELL? WHAT DO YOU THINK?
WOW... THAT WAS... *CREEPY.*
THAT CAN'T BE ABOUT ME. I DON'T STALK ANYONE'S DREAMS. I'M EXACTLY WHAT I SEEM LIKE ON THE OUTSIDE.
ALSO, SURE, I HAVE TALONS OF FIRE—BUT NO POWER WHATSOEVER. IF I *DID* HAVE ANY POWER, MY LIFE WOULD BE PRETTY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IT IS NOW, BELIEVE ME.

DEATH IS A POWER.
IS THIS *REALLY* YOUR NEW ALLY? I LEAVE FOR FIVE DAYS AND YOU START WORKING WITH A MASS MURDERER?

YOU SAID YOU WEREN'T COMING BACK, SO WHY SHOULD YOU GET A VOTE?
ALSO, SHE JUST SHOWED UP WITH TURTLE.
AND I CAN JUST LEAVE AGAIN, TOO!

IF THIS IS WHAT FRIENDSHIP IS LIKE, THEN IT'S ***NOT WORTH IT.***
I DON'T NEED THIS! I DON'T EVEN WANT TO WORK WITH ANY OF YOU! I CAN FIND SCARLET ON MY OWN!

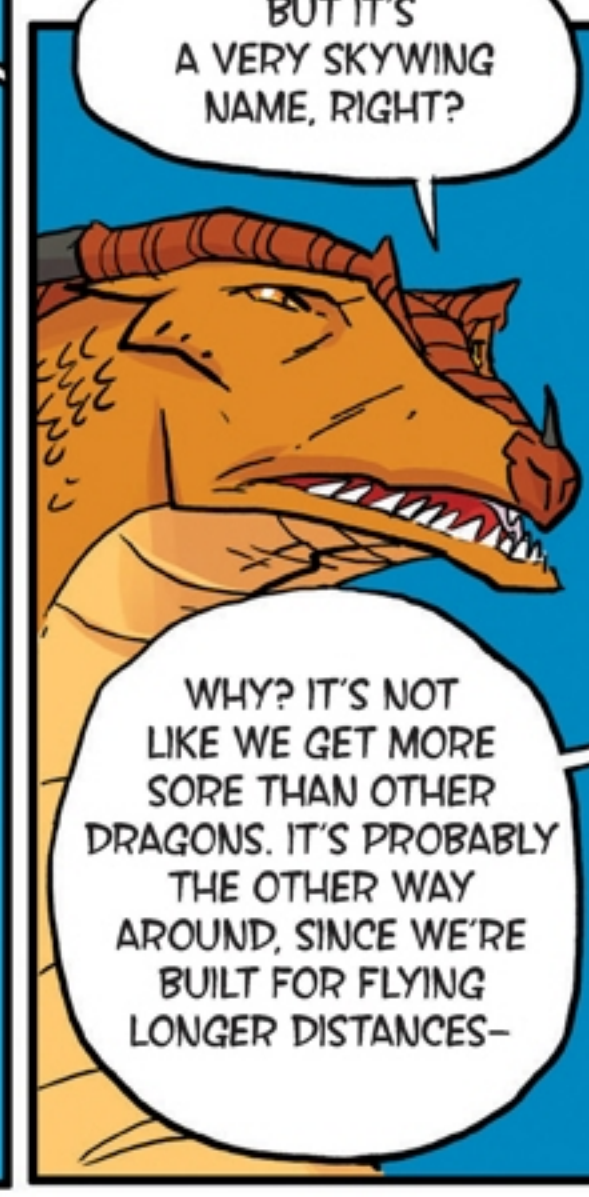
THAT'S WHAT I WANTED TO DO IN THE FIRST PLACE ANYWAY!
PERIL! WAIT!


THAT'S WHAT I WANTED HIM TO SAY, BUT... IT'S NOT ENOUGH.
MAYBE IF HE PROMISED HE DOESN'T THINK I'M A PREDESTINED, SINISTER BAD GUY... MAYBE IF HE SAID HE'D LEAVE THEM AND JUST BE FRIENDS WITH ME...
WHICH HE WON'T. I'M FAR LESS IMPORTANT TO HIM THAN HIS PRECIOUS WINGLET.
WELL, THAT'S JUST FINE. I WASTED ENOUGH TIME ON HIM. NOW I CAN GET ON WITH FINDING AND KILLING QUEEN SCARLET, THEN GOING BACK TO CLAY.
AND I'M NOT GOING TO LOOK BACK TO SEE IF HE'S FOLLOWING ME.
WHICH HE'S NOT. SO IT DOESN'T MATTER ANYWAY.
FLAP FLAP
WHO IS THAT?

IT'S THAT SKYWING I SAW AT THE ARCH. AND HE'S SMILING? THAT NEVER HAPPENS WHEN DRAGONS FIRST MEET ME.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
UH. NOTHING?
YOU'RE PERIL. RIGHT?
YOU SAY THAT LIKE THERE'S ACTUALLY A CHANCE I'M SOMEONE ELSE.
WELL, THERE'S ALWAYS A CHANCE. ISN'T THERE?
WEIRD THING TO SAY.
HE'S BIG. AND A LOT OLDER THAN ME.
NO SCARS, WHICH IS UNUSUAL FOR A GROWN SKYWING AFTER THE WAR.
WEALTHY, TOO, WITH ALL THAT JEWELRY. WHAT'S IN THE METAL THING ON HIS CHEST? MORE TREASURE?
I DON'T THINK I'VE SEEN HIM BEFORE, BUT MAYBE I JUST FORGOT... I'M NOT SO GREAT AT FACES.
I HAVE NO IDEA WHO YOU ARE.

MY NAME IS SOAR.

OH, REALLY? THAT'S... UNUSUAL.
IS IT?
WELL, YES. NOT VERY, UM-ASPIRATIONAL, I GUESS.


BUT IT'S A VERY SKYWING NAME, RIGHT?
WHY? IT'S NOT LIKE WE GET MORE SORE THAN OTHER DRAGONS. IT'S PROBABLY THE OTHER WAY AROUND, SINCE WE'RE BUILT FOR FLYING LONGER DISTANCES-

NOT *SORE*. **SOAR**. S-O-A-R, LIKE FLYING HIGH.
OH, GOOD GRIEF. HAVE OTHER DRAGONS BEEN THINKING MY NAME IS *SORE* ALL THESE YEARS?
PROBABLY.

WHY ARE *YOU* THE FIRST DRAGON TO SAY ANYTHING?
BECAUSE I'M NOT POLITE. NO ONE EVER TAUGHT ME TO BE.

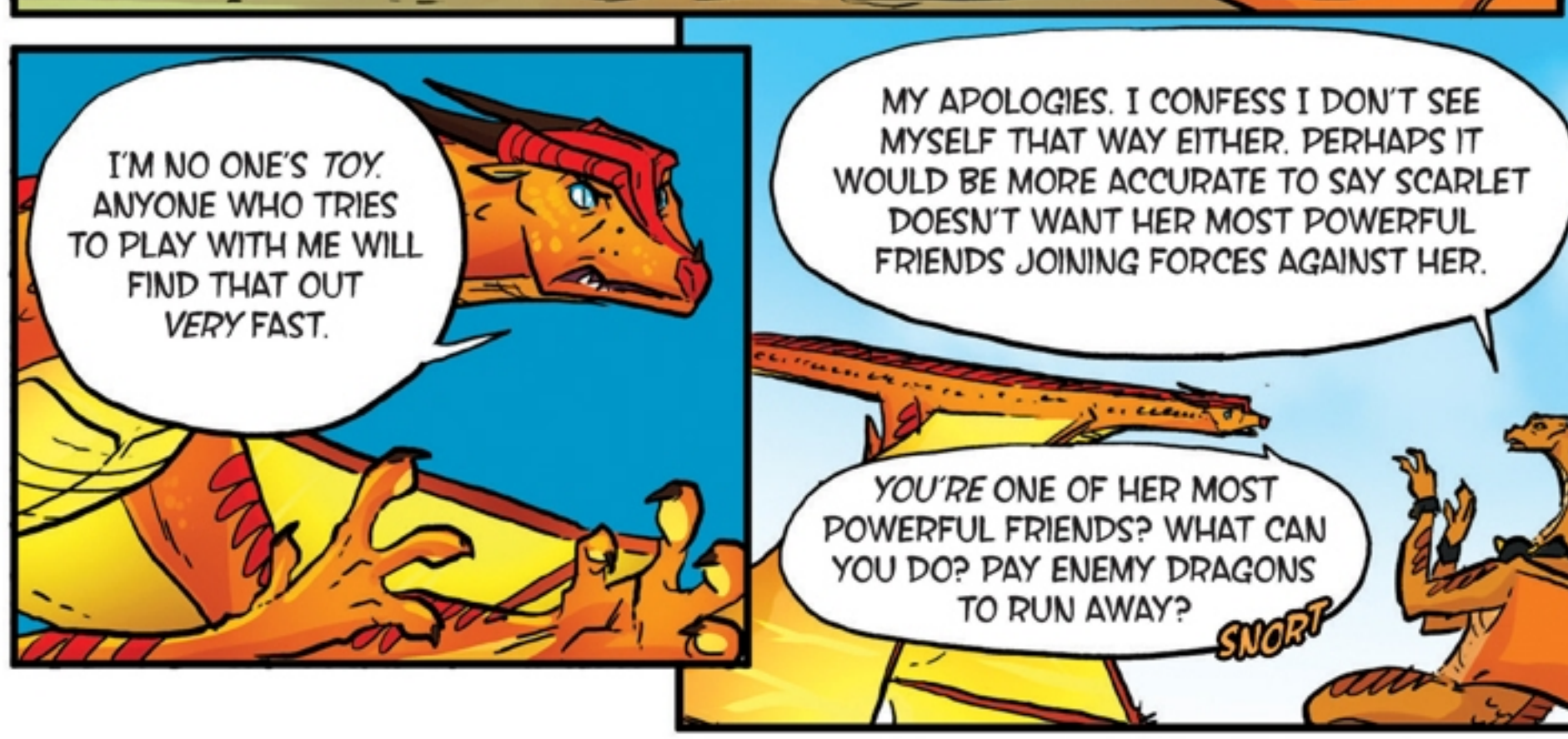
I DON'T CARE WHAT OTHER DRAGONS THINK BECAUSE THEY WON'T LIKE ME EVEN IF I SAY ALL THE RIGHT THINGS AND BOW THE RIGHT WAY AND SMILE UNTIL MY SNOUT HURTS. SO WHY SHOULD I BOTHER?
I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.

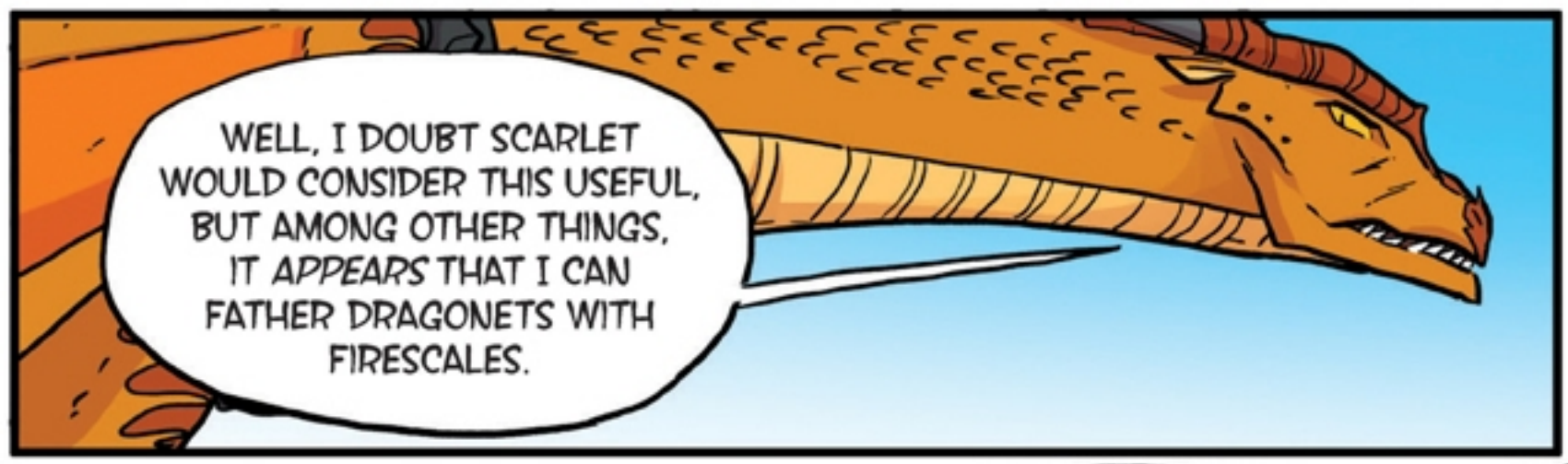
YOU CAN DO AND SAY EVERYTHING LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, BUT IF THERE'S *ONE THING* DIFFERENT ABOUT YOU, *THAT'S* ALL THEY CARE ABOUT.
THEN YOU END UP BANISHED FROM YOUR OWN HOME ANYWAY.

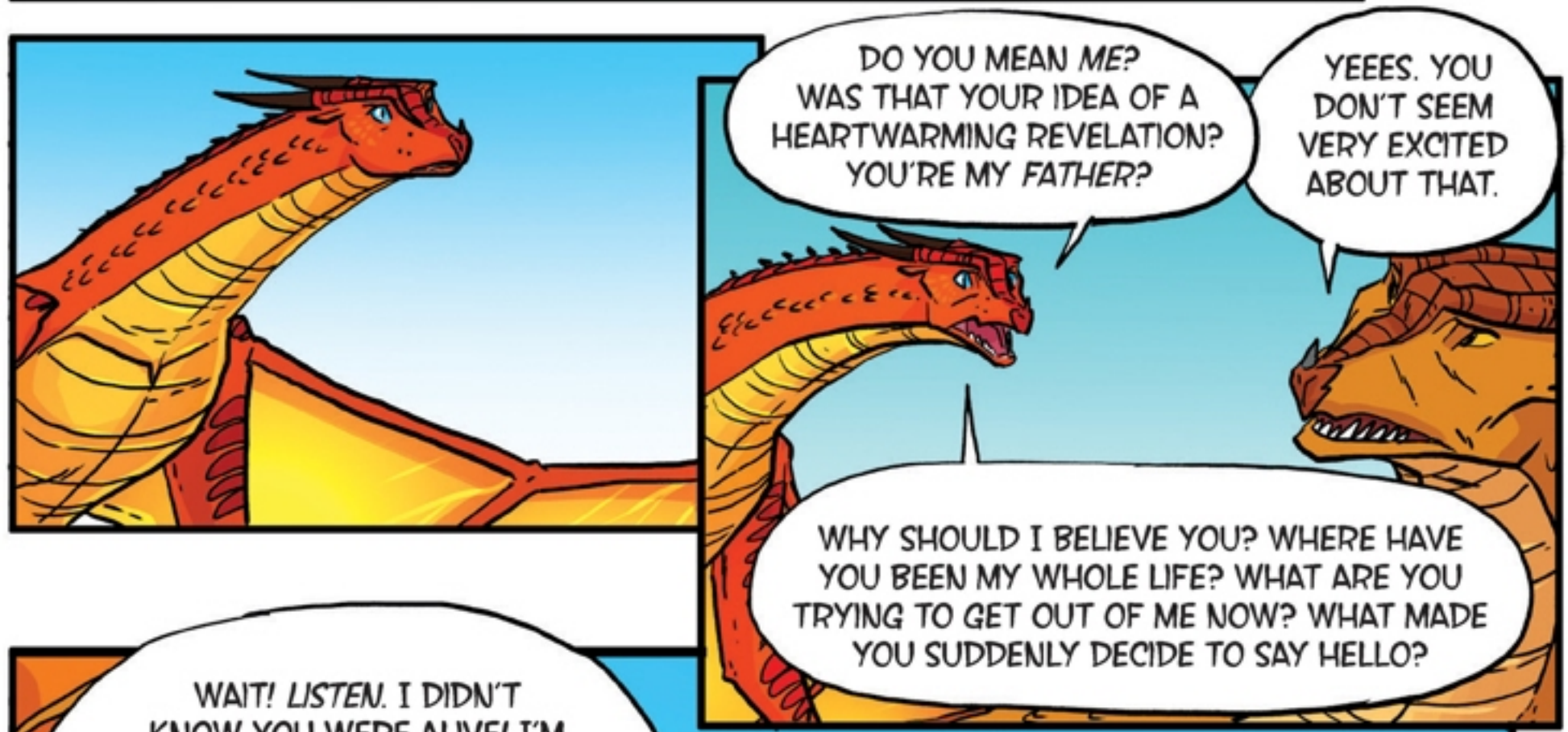
YOU WERE BANISHED FROM THE SKY KINGDOM, TOO? WHEN? BY RUBY OR BY SCARLET? WHAT FOR?
IT'S A LONG STORY. I'LL TELL YOU SOMEDAY. BUT THE SHORT ANSWER IS—FOR BEING MYSELF. I HAD NO CHOICE, BACK THEN.
YOU DON'T NEED THOSE OTHER DRAGONS. THE ONES YOU WERE JUST WITH. THEY CAN'T UNDERSTAND YOU. BUT I CAN HELP YOU FIND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.
OH, REALLY? DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT THAT IS?

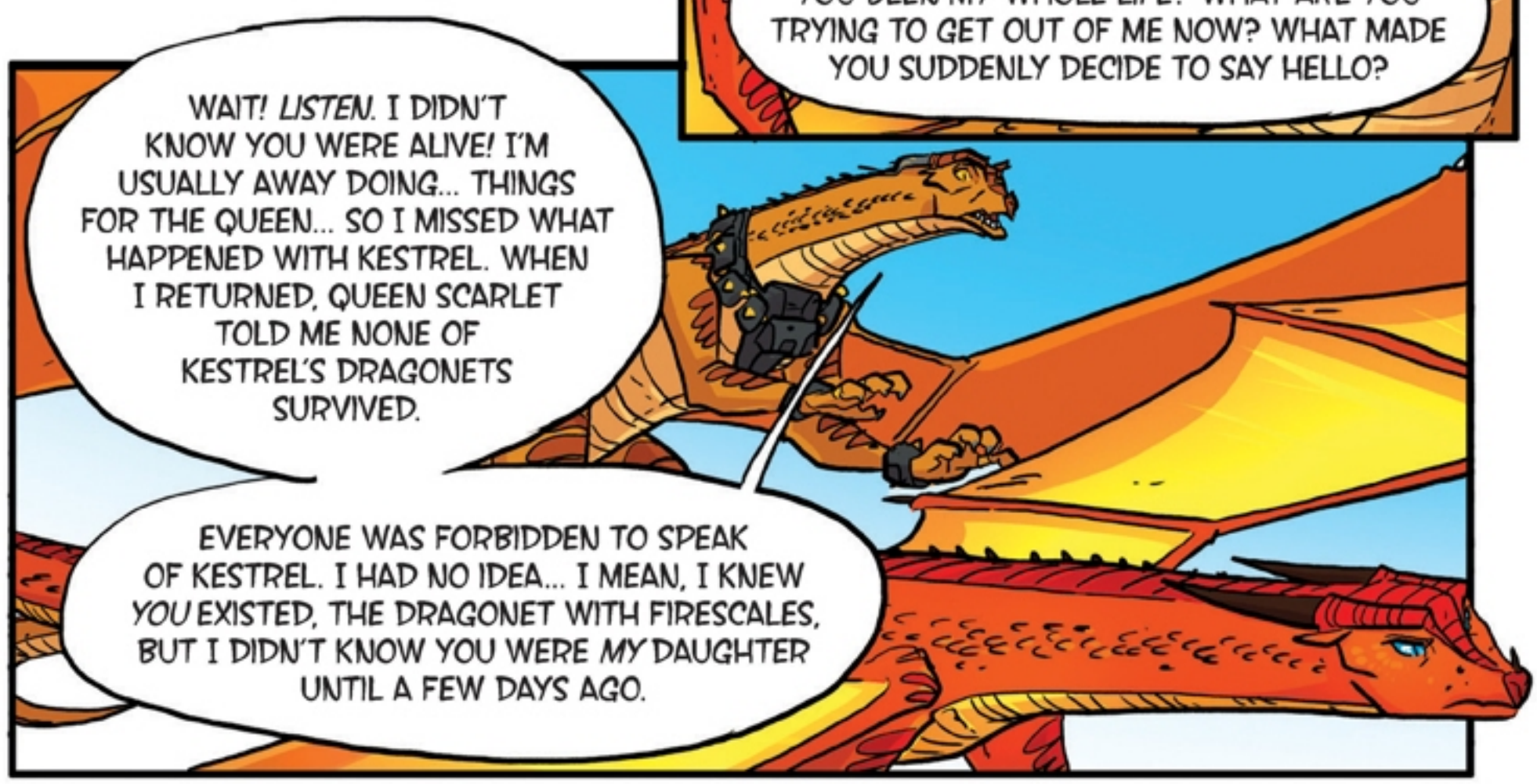
I THINK SO. *FOLLOW ME!*

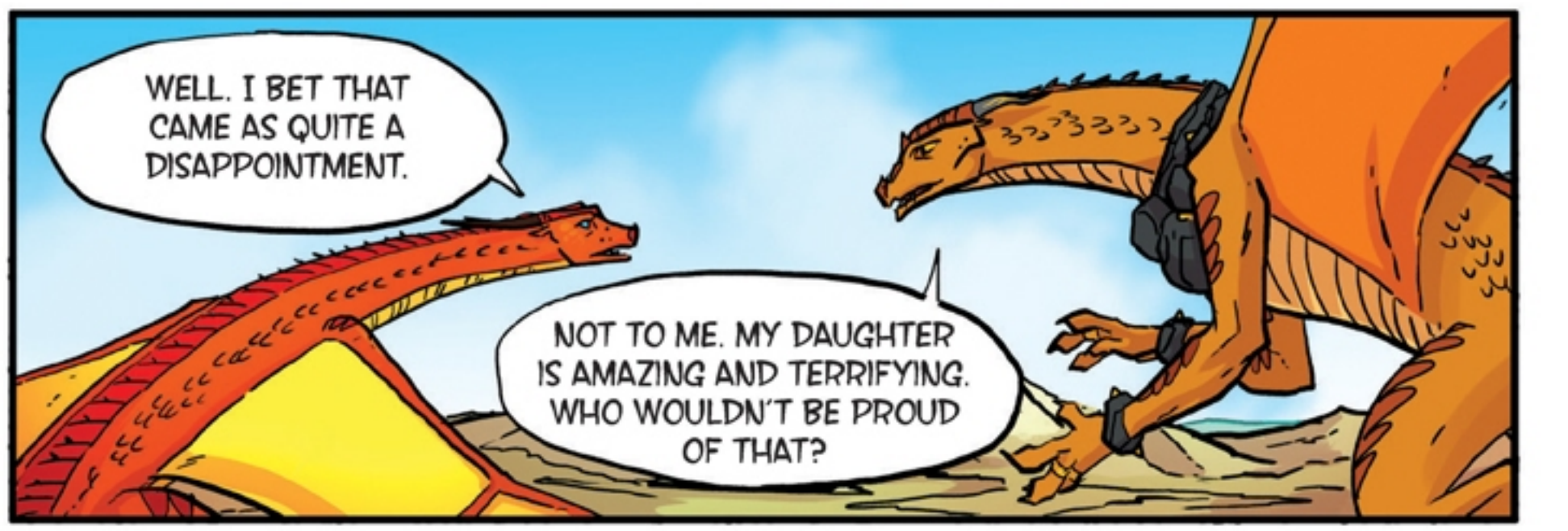
I DON'T LIKE FOLLOWING ANYONE! HEY, WHY HAVEN'T I EVER MET YOU BEFORE?
AN EXCELLENT QUESTION. THE ONLY ANSWER I'VE BEEN ABLE TO COME UP WITH IS THAT QUEEN SCARLET PREFERS TO KEEP HER TOYS SEPARATE FROM ONE ANOTHER.


I'M NO ONE'S *TOY*. ANYONE WHO TRIES TO PLAY WITH ME WILL FIND THAT OUT *VERY* FAST.
MY APOLOGIES. I CONFESS I DON'T SEE MYSELF THAT WAY EITHER. PERHAPS IT WOULD BE MORE ACCURATE TO SAY SCARLET DOESN'T WANT HER MOST POWERFUL FRIENDS JOINING FORCES AGAINST HER.
YOU'RE ONE OF HER MOST POWERFUL FRIENDS? WHAT CAN YOU DO? PAY ENEMY DRAGONS TO RUN AWAY?
SNORT


WELL, I DOUBT SCARLET WOULD CONSIDER THIS USEFUL, BUT AMONG OTHER THINGS, IT *APPEARS* THAT I CAN FATHER DRAGONETS WITH FIRESCALES.


DO YOU MEAN *ME*? WAS THAT YOUR IDEA OF A HEARTWARMING REVELATION? YOU'RE MY *FATHER*?
YEEES. YOU DON'T SEEM VERY EXCITED ABOUT THAT.
WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE YOU? WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN MY WHOLE LIFE? WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO GET OUT OF ME NOW? WHAT MADE YOU SUDDENLY DECIDE TO SAY HELLO?


WAIT! *LISTEN*. I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE ALIVE! I'M USUALLY AWAY DOING... THINGS FOR THE QUEEN... SO I MISSED WHAT HAPPENED WITH KESTREL. WHEN I RETURNED, QUEEN SCARLET TOLD ME NONE OF KESTREL'S DRAGONETS SURVIVED.
EVERYONE WAS FORBIDDEN TO SPEAK OF KESTREL. I HAD NO IDEA... I MEAN, I KNEW *YOU* EXISTED, THE DRAGONET WITH FIRESCALES, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE *MY* DAUGHTER UNTIL A FEW DAYS AGO.

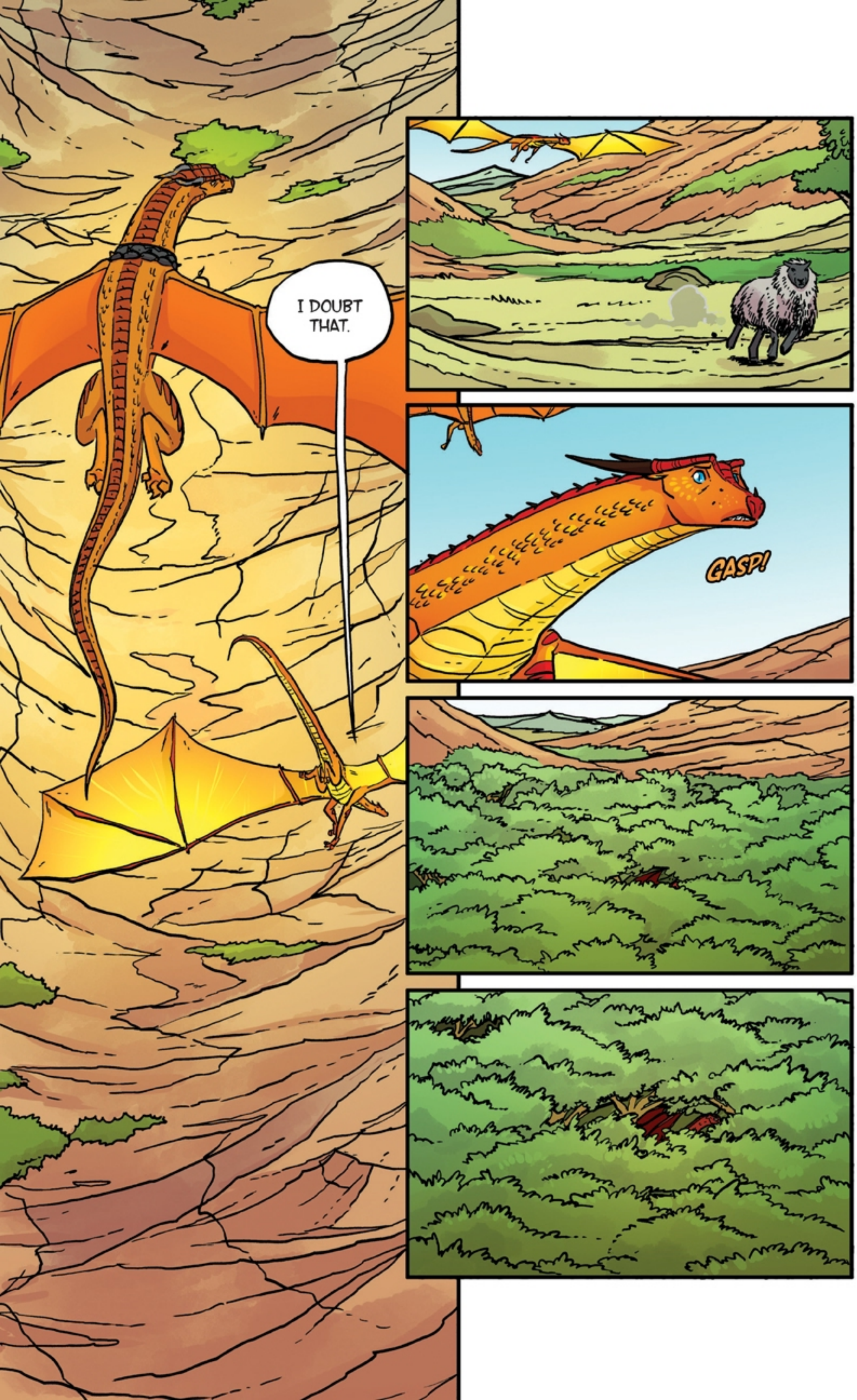

WELL. I BET THAT CAME AS QUITE A DISAPPOINTMENT.
NOT TO ME. MY DAUGHTER IS AMAZING AND TERRIFYING. WHO WOULDN'T BE PROUD OF THAT?

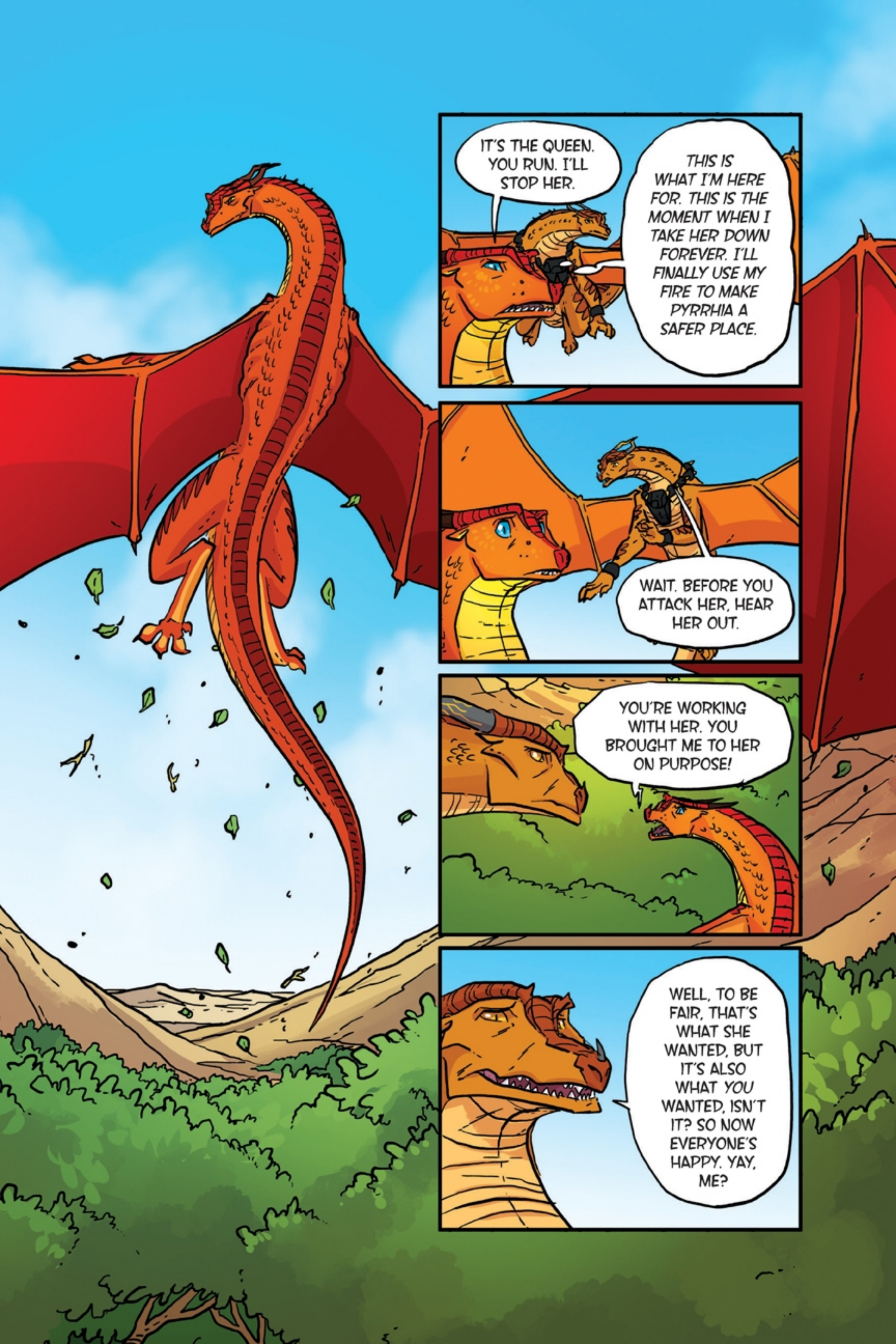
DID HE HAVE TO ADD "TERRIFYING"? BUT STILL... IT'S WEIRD TO BE IN A SENTENCE ANYWHERE NEAR THE WORD PROUD.

SO HOW DID YOU FIND OUT?
A, UH... FRIEND TOLD ME.
A FRIEND? HE CERTAINLY TOOK HIS TIME ABOUT IT.
HE DIDN'T KNOW EITHER.

HIS NAME IS CIRRUS. HE'S WITH THE TALONS OF PEACE. AND WHEN HE TOLD ME, I HAD TO– I MEAN, I IMMEDIATELY CAME LOOKING FOR YOU. IF I'D KNOWN SOONER...
YOU WOULD HAVE WHAT? SAVED ME FROM THE ARENA? STOPPED QUEEN SCARLET FROM USING ME? STOPPED RUBY FROM BANISHING ME?

COULD YOU ACTUALLY HAVE BEEN USEFUL EVER IN MY LIFE? I'M GUESSING NO.
I COULD BE USEFUL NOW. I CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING FOR YOU.


I DOUBT THAT.
GASP!

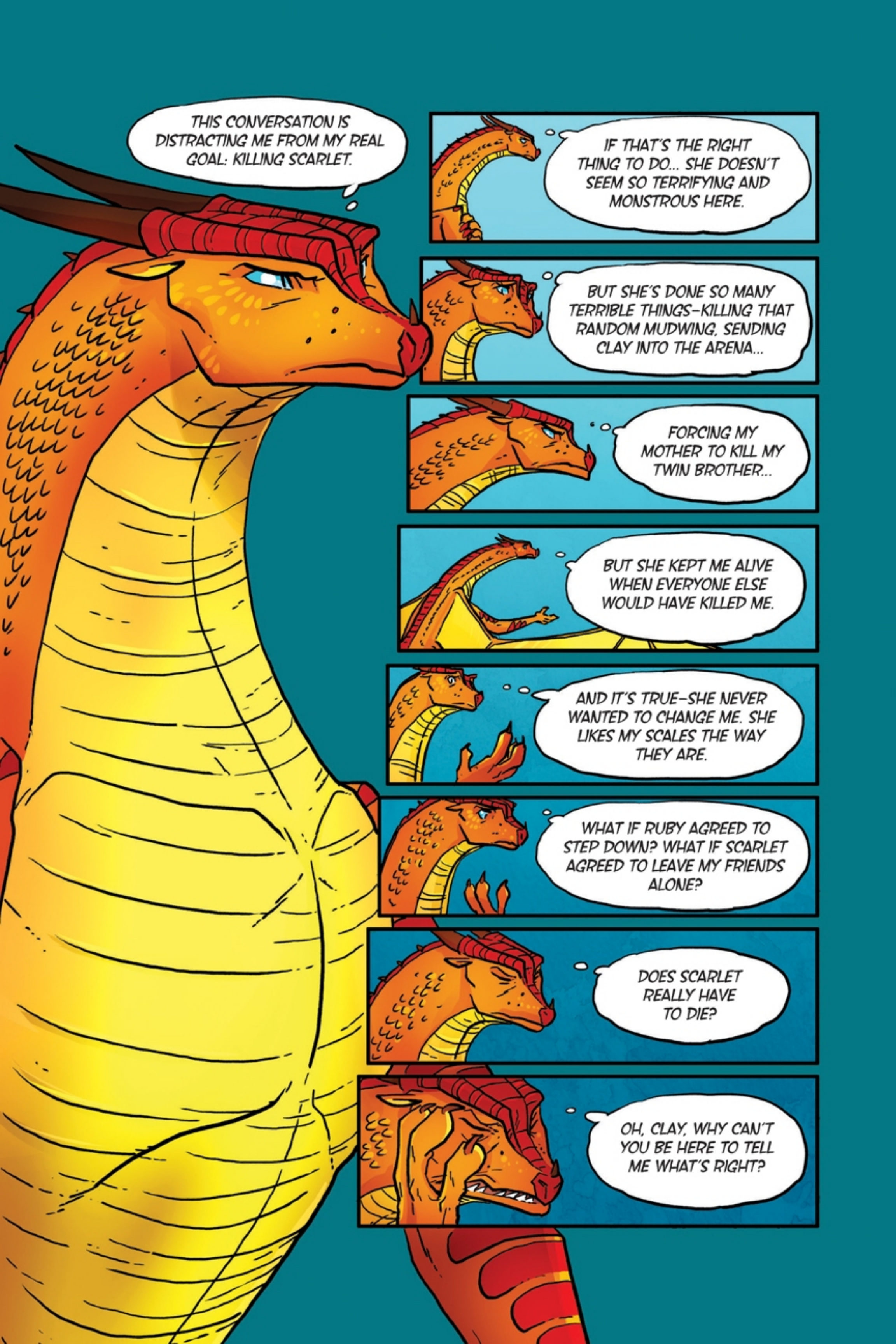

IT'S THE QUEEN. YOU RUN. I'LL STOP HER.
THIS IS WHAT I'M HERE FOR. THIS IS THE MOMENT WHEN I TAKE HER DOWN FOREVER. I'LL FINALLY USE MY FIRE TO MAKE PYRRHIA A SAFER PLACE.
WAIT. BEFORE YOU ATTACK HER, HEAR HER OUT.
YOU'RE WORKING WITH HER. YOU BROUGHT ME TO HER ON PURPOSE!
WELL, TO BE FAIR, THAT'S WHAT SHE WANTED, BUT IT'S ALSO WHAT *YOU* WANTED, ISN'T IT? SO NOW EVERYONE'S HAPPY. YAY, ME?

HA HA HAH
I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU. YOU CAN'T THREATEN MY FRIENDS AND GET AWAY WITH IT.
"FRIENDS"? IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK GLORY IS TO YOU, DARLING?
DO YOU THINK THEY'D CRY IF I DROPPED *YOUR* DECAPITATED HEAD INTO THEIR TALONS? NOBODY LOVES YOU THE WAY YOU ARE EXCEPT *ME*.
THERE ARE OTHER DRAGONS WHO LIKE ME!
BUT THEY'D CHANGE YOU IF THEY COULD. NOT ME, THOUGH. *I* THINK EVERY INCH OF YOU IS PERFECT.
AS LONG AS I DO WHAT *YOU* WANT. THE MINUTE I HAVE A THOUGHT OF MY OWN, YOU HATE ME.
OH! *THAT* SOUNDS NEW! HAVE YOU HAD ANY OF THESE "THOUGHTS OF YOUR OWN" YET?
ALL I'VE SEEN SO FAR ARE THOSE *MUDWING'S* THOUGHTS. IF YOU *DO* HAVE ONE OF YOUR VERY OWN, I CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR ABOUT IT.

CAN YOU TWO *PLEASE* STOP ARGUING?
I'M SMARTER THAN YOU THINK, YOUR MAJESTY. I FIGURED IT OUT. THIS IS KESTREL'S DAUGHTER. *MY* DAUGHTER.
YOU DIDN'T DESERVE TO KNOW. YOU HAD NO RIGHT TO DO WHAT YOU DID AND SO I DECIDED YOU'D NEVER GET TO MEET THE MONSTER THAT CAME OF IT. EVERY QUEEN IN PYRRHIA WOULD AGREE WITH ME.
WHY? WHAT DID HE DO?
SO YOU STILL HAVEN'T TOLD HER. I LOVE IT. ACTING ALL INDIGNANT AND SELF-RIGHTEOUS AND YET HERE YOU ARE, *LYING* TO YOUR OWN DAUGHTER. *TSK TSK TSK.*
I'M NOT AGREEING WITH HER—BUT I DON'T LIKE BEING LIED TO. WHAT IS SHE TALKING ABOUT?
NOW IS... NOT THE TIME. I'LL TELL HER EVERYTHING LATER.
YOU DON'T NEED TO TELL HER. I'LL JUST GO AHEAD AND *SHOW* HER.
STOP!

THIS IS IT. I SHOULD KILL HER. I'LL BE SAVING MY FATHER. THIS IS THE RIGHT MOMENT. EVEN CLAY WOULD WANT ME TO.
BUT... WHAT DOES SCARLET THINK I SHOULD KNOW?
AND... HOW CAN I KILL THE DRAGON WHO KEPT ME ALIVE WHEN EVERYONE WANTED ME DEAD?
AND WHAT IF SHE'S RIGHT? WHAT IF NO ONE ELSE WILL EVER LOVE ME?
WHAT IF I MAKE ANOTHER MISTAKE BUT SOMEONE REALLY DIES AND THEN CLAY HATES ME AND EVERYONE BANISHES ME AND I REALLY HAVE NO ONE LEFT–WON'T I NEED SCARLET THEN?
SLICE!

A RAINWING? SERIOUSLY? MY FATHER IS A *RAINWING*? IS THIS A JOKE?
HE'S NOT MUCH OF A RAINWING—CAN'T EVEN CHANGE HIS SCALES. THAT'S WHY THE RAINWINGS THREW HIM OUT. NO ONE WANTS EITHER OF YOU. EXCEPT *ME*, OF COURSE.
MAYBE I *CAN'T* CHANGE MY SCALES, BUT I CAN DO OTHER THINGS. I—I HAVE A GIFT, PERIL. LOOK.
SEE? I CAN CHANGE MY ENTIRE SELF. NOW I'M FULL SKYWING AGAIN.
THIS EXPLAINS YOUR TERRIBLE NAME. WHAT'S YOUR *REAL* NAME?
CHAMELEON. THAT'S RIGHT, THE ONLY RAINWING WHO COULDN'T CHANGE HIS SCALES IS NAMED CHAMELEON.
SOME MIGHT CALL THAT A CRUEL IRONY. OTHERS—FOR INSTANCE, AN ENTIRE TRIBE OF RAINWINGS—MIGHT *LAUGH* AND LAUGH.
WAIT, *YOU'RE* THE ONE WHO ENCHANTED THE HEAD TO LOOK LIKE GLORY! YOU'RE HELPING QUEEN SCARLET SCARE MY FRIENDS!
HEY, SHE PAYS WELL. I HAVE MORE TREASURE THAN ANY OTHER RAINWING IN PYRRHIA.


THIS CONVERSATION IS DISTRACTING ME FROM MY REAL GOAL: KILLING SCARLET.
IF THAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO... SHE DOESN'T SEEM SO TERRIFYING AND MONSTROUS HERE.
BUT SHE'S DONE SO MANY TERRIBLE THINGS—KILLING THAT RANDOM MUDWING, SENDING CLAY INTO THE ARENA...
FORCING MY MOTHER TO KILL MY TWIN BROTHER...
BUT SHE KEPT ME ALIVE WHEN EVERYONE ELSE WOULD HAVE KILLED ME.
AND IT'S TRUE—SHE NEVER WANTED TO CHANGE ME. SHE LIKES MY SCALES THE WAY THEY ARE.
WHAT IF RUBY AGREED TO STEP DOWN? WHAT IF SCARLET AGREED TO LEAVE MY FRIENDS ALONE?
DOES SCARLET REALLY HAVE TO DIE?
OH, CLAY, WHY CAN'T YOU BE HERE TO TELL ME WHAT'S RIGHT?

PERIL, I KNOW I HAVEN'T BEEN A FATHER TO YOU BEFORE, BUT I CAN CHANGE THAT. I THINK I CAN GIVE YOU A GIFT THAT'S EVERYTHING YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED.
THERE'S NOTHING I'VE ALWAYS WANTED.
OH, REALLY?
YOU'RE RIGHT. ALL MY LIFE I HAVE DESPERATELY WANTED AN UGLY NECKLACE.
ESPECIALLY ONE THAT WILL MELT THE MOMENT I PUT IT ON. THANK YOU SOOOOO MUCH! BEST DAD EVER.
HEY!
HA!
IT'S NOT JUST A NECKLACE. PERIL, DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I CAN DO?
I CAN TURN YOU INTO ANYONE YOU WANT. I COULD MAKE YOU A SEAWING OR AN ICEWING—OR EVEN A SCAVENGER, IF YOU PARTICULARLY WANTED TO GET EATEN FOR SOME REASON.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE THIS MONSTER EVERYONE FEARS ANYMORE. I CAN TAKE AWAY YOUR FIRESCALES.

CAN YOU IMAGINE? YOU'D BE A REGULAR DRAGON.
THIS NECKLACE IS ONLY ENCHANTED TO TAKE AWAY YOUR FIRESCALES.
YOU'LL STILL HAVE ALL YOUR OWN PERSONALITY AND HISTORY, BUT NORMAL SKYWING SCALES. YOU'LL BE PERIL, BUT FINALLY A PERIL DRAGONS CAN LOVE.

NO MORE PERIL. EVERYONE WOULD BE SAFE FROM ME FOREVER.
BUT WHO AM I WITHOUT MY FIRESCALES?
AND WHAT IF IT'S A TRICK? WHAT IF IT CHANGES ME COMPLETELY?
BUT–IF I COULD BE PERIL–SAFE PERIL–NO DANGER TO ANYONE... WHEN I GET BACK TO THE ACADEMY, I COULD EVEN TELL CLAY I CAN BECOME A MUDWING OR ANY OTHER DRAGON HE WANTS–THEN HE'D LOVE ME, RIGHT?
AND IF IT IS A TRICK... WOULD IT BE SUCH A GREAT LOSS FOR THE WORLD? WOULD ANYONE MISS ME?

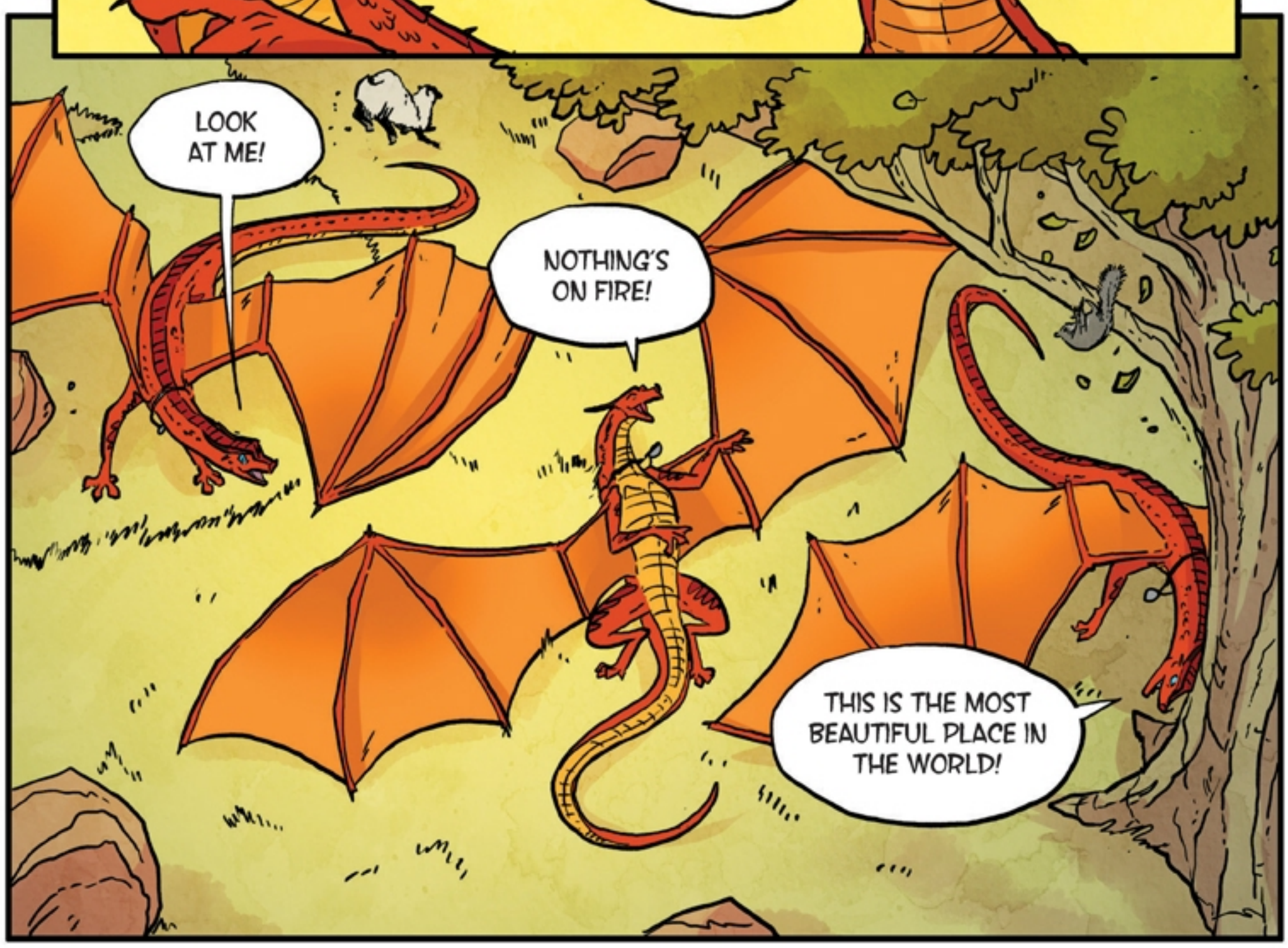
THE NECKLACE WILL MELT WHEN IT TOUCHES ME.
THE METAL'S STRONG. IT SHOULD STAY INTACT IF YOU PUT IT ON QUICKLY.
IF IT WORKS, LEAVE IT ON–YOU DON'T WANT TO RISK DESTROYING IT BY TAKING IT ON AND OFF.
IT'S WORTH A TRY, ISN'T IT?

DO I LOOK ANY DIFFERENT?
NOT MUCH.
LESS INCANDESCENT. MORE DISAPPOINTING. MORE... ORDINARY.

CAN I–? ARE MY FIRESCALES REALLY GONE?

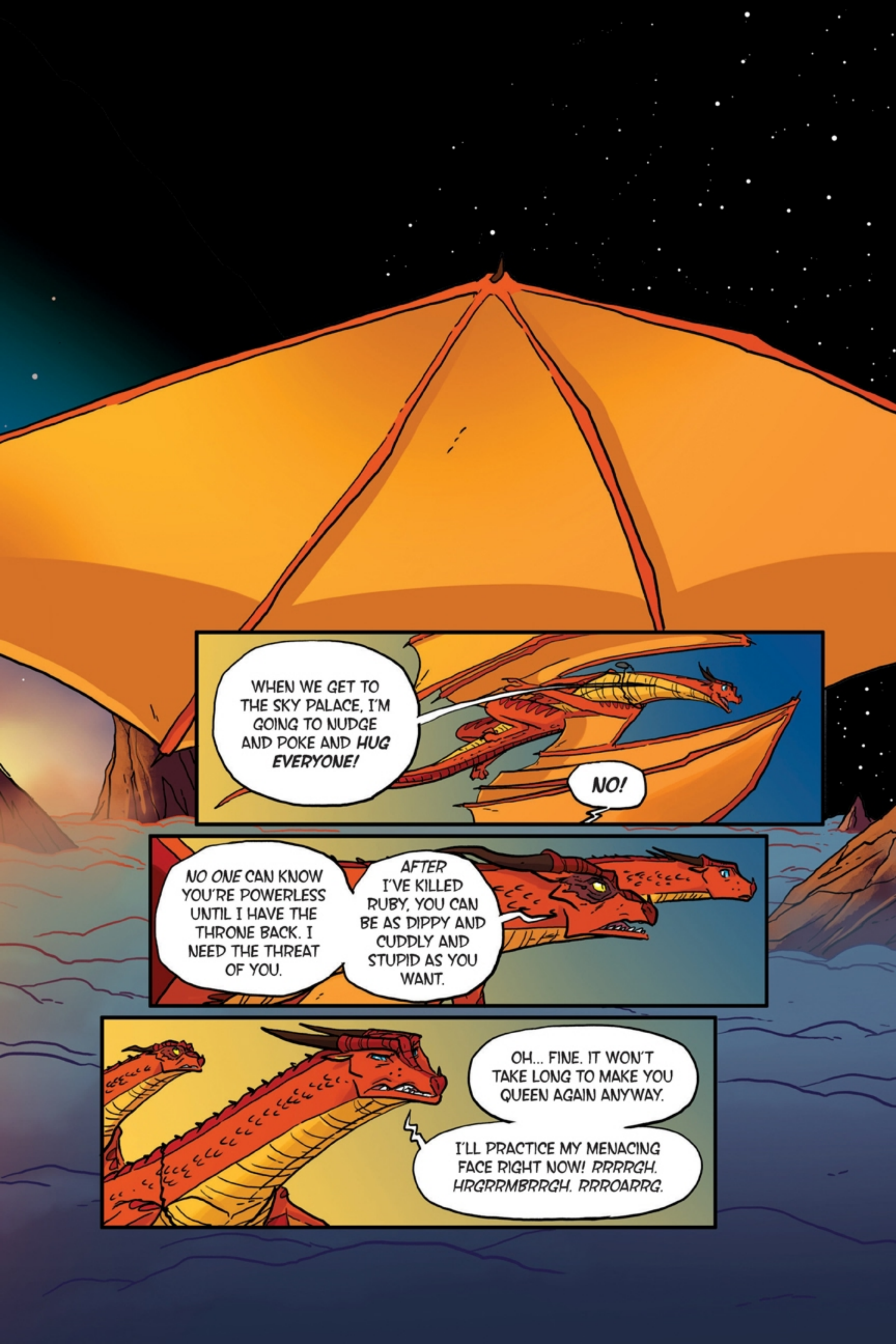
IT LIVED! THE FLOWER LIVED!

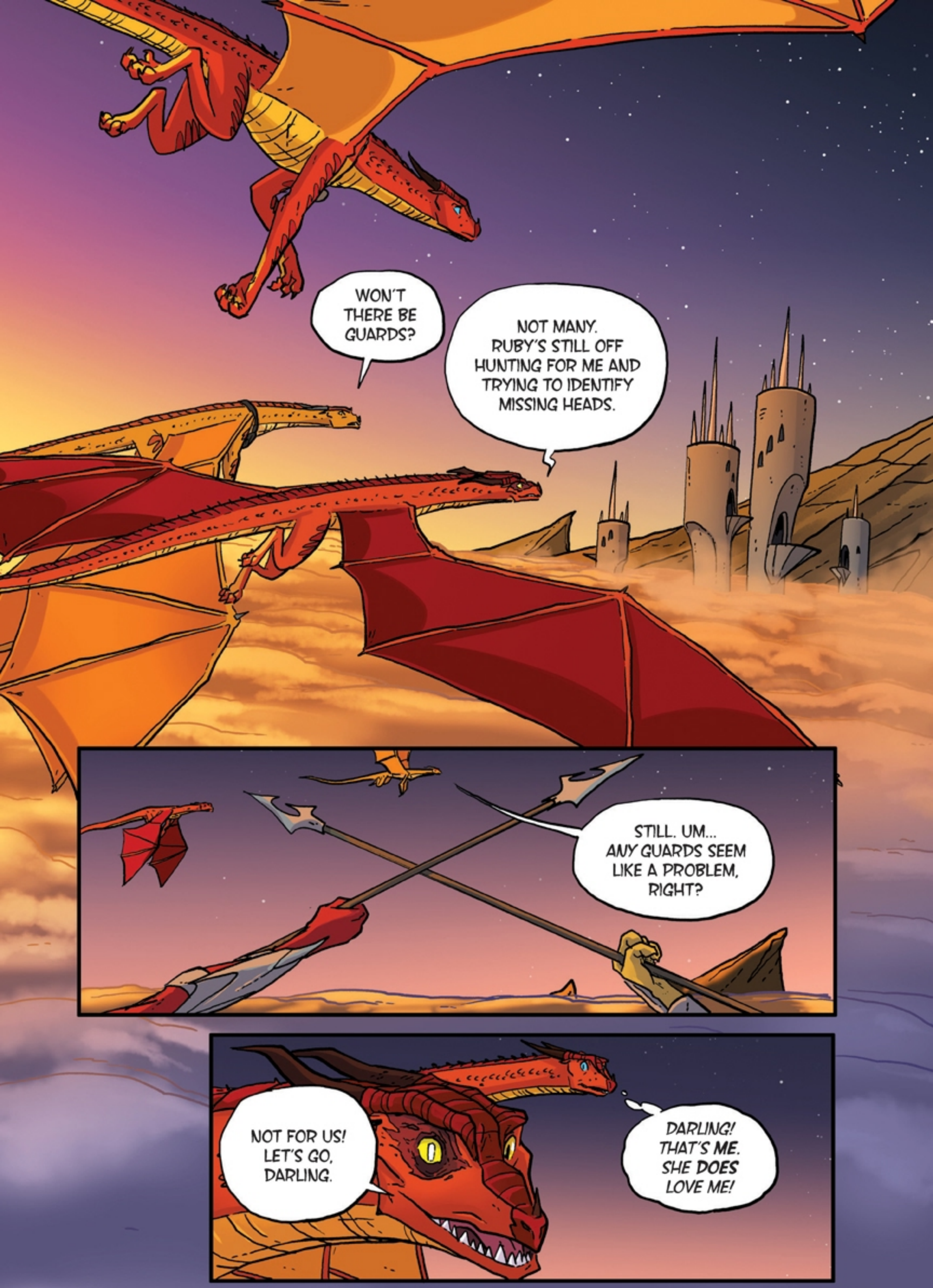
DID YOU SEE THAT?
YAWN.

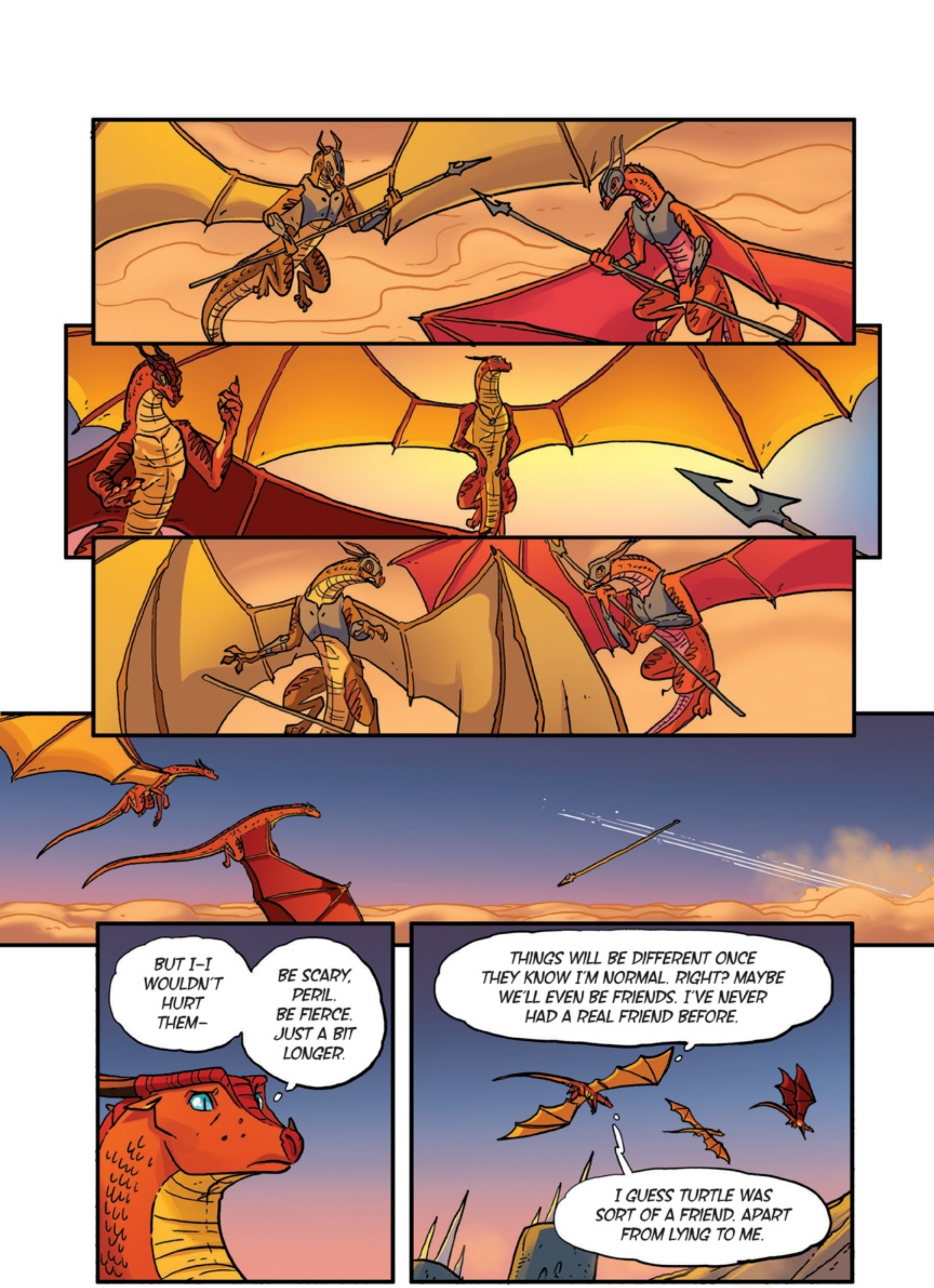

LOOK AT ME!
NOTHING'S ON FIRE!
THIS IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACE IN THE WORLD!

I CAN DO ANYTHING!
EXCEPT WREAK FIERY VENGEANCE ON MY ENEMIES.
WE CAN STILL DO THAT. THE VENGEANCE, ENEMIES, WHATEVER YOU WANT. WHERE DO YOU WANT TO START?
CHAMELEON?
AT YOUR SERVICE, YOUR MAJESTY.
I DO HAVE *ONE* GREAT IDEA.
THEN WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?
LET'S GO GET YOUR KINGDOM BACK!

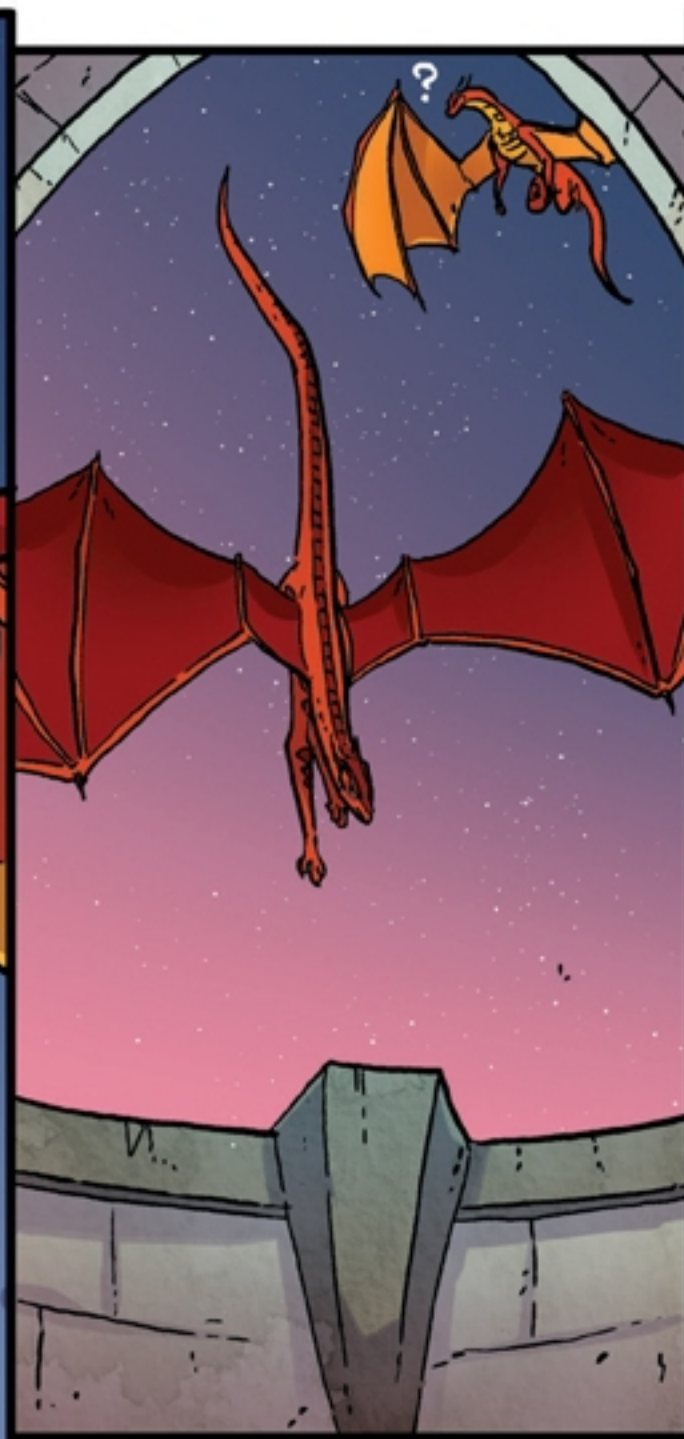
PART THREE: A NEW PERIL
I HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT ANYMORE.
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO TACKLE SOMEONE IN MIDAIR! YOU'RE THE BEST.
ACK!
THANKS, BUT– MAYBE SAVE THE AFFECTION FOR WHEN WE'RE NOT FIGHTING AN UPDRAFT?
LAST TIME, I PROMISE!


WHEN WE GET TO THE SKY PALACE, I'M GOING TO NUDGE AND POKE AND *HUG EVERYONE!*
NO!
NO ONE CAN KNOW YOU'RE POWERLESS UNTIL I HAVE THE THRONE BACK. I NEED THE THREAT OF YOU.
AFTER I'VE KILLED RUBY, YOU CAN BE AS DIPPY AND CUDDLY AND STUPID AS YOU WANT.
OH... FINE. IT WON'T TAKE LONG TO MAKE YOU QUEEN AGAIN ANYWAY.
I'LL PRACTICE MY MENACING FACE RIGHT NOW! *RRRRGH. HRGRRMBRRGH. RRROARRG.*


WON'T THERE BE GUARDS?
NOT MANY. RUBY'S STILL OFF HUNTING FOR ME AND TRYING TO IDENTIFY MISSING HEADS.
STILL. UM... ANY GUARDS SEEM LIKE A PROBLEM, RIGHT?
NOT FOR US! LET'S GO, DARLING.
DARLING! THAT'S ME. SHE DOES LOVE ME!


BUT I–I WOULDN'T HURT THEM–
BE SCARY, PERIL. BE FIERCE. JUST A BIT LONGER.
THINGS WILL BE DIFFERENT ONCE THEY KNOW I'M NORMAL. RIGHT? MAYBE WE'LL EVEN BE FRIENDS. I'VE NEVER HAD A REAL FRIEND BEFORE.
I GUESS TURTLE WAS SORT OF A FRIEND. APART FROM LYING TO ME.

I SHOULD PROBABLY TELL SCARLET THE SEAWINGS HAVE AN ANIMUS.
SCARLET–

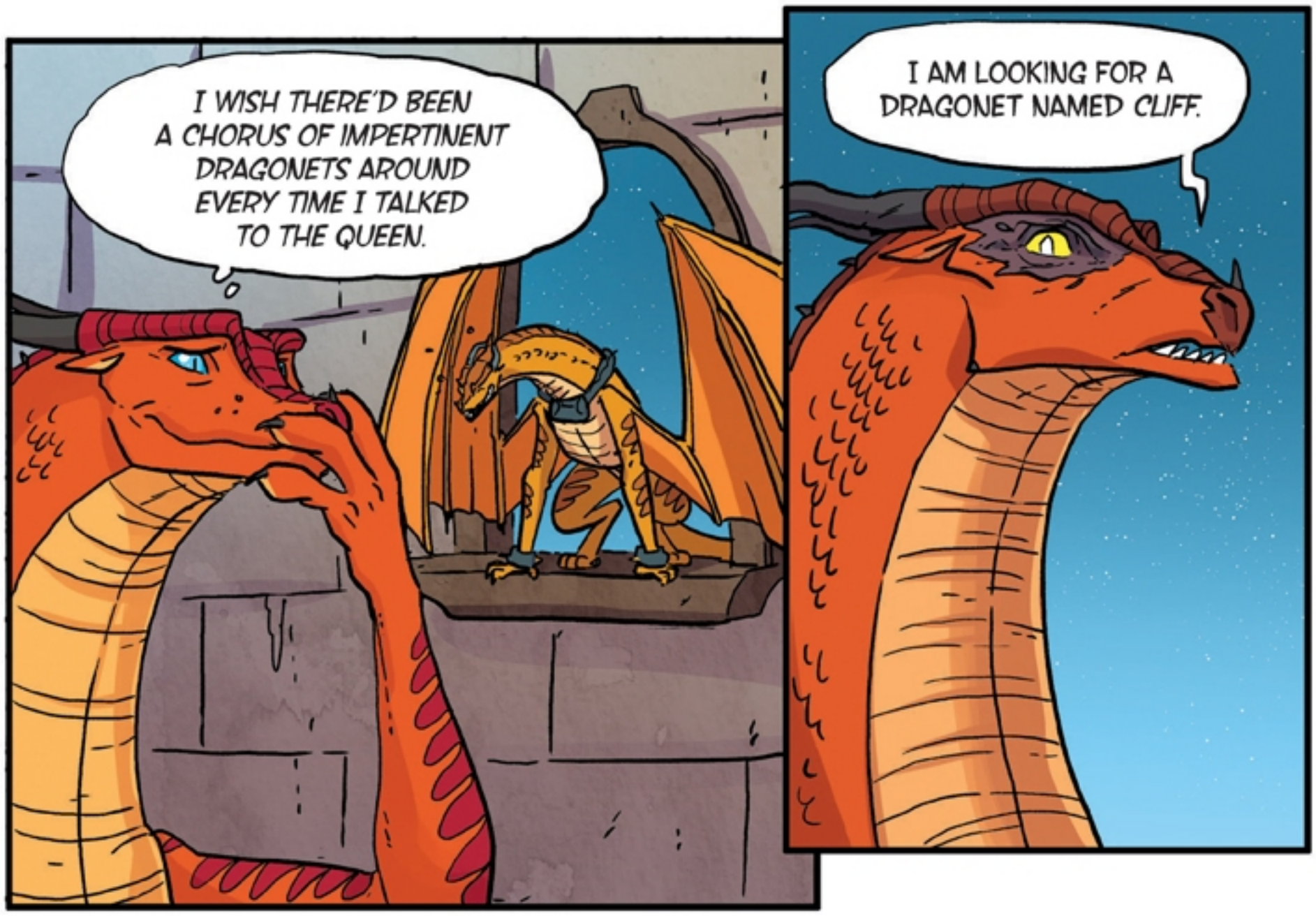

?

WHAT IS THIS TOWER? I'VE NEVER BEEN HERE BEFORE.

IT'S THE WINGERY.
OF COURSE I WAS NEVER ALLOWED IN HERE. STAYING OUT OF THE WAY OF CLUMSY, FLOPPY DRAGONETS WAS ALWAYS THE HARDEST THING ABOUT MOVING AROUND THE PALACE.

THEY ALL SEEM SO HAPPY. NOT JUST HAPPY-UNWORRIED.
WHAT WOULD I BE LIKE IF I'D GROWN UP HERE? WOULD I GIGGLE LIKE THAT? WOULD I HAVE FRIENDS?
I WONDER WHY RUBY HASN'T TAKEN DOWN THIS PORTRAIT OF QUEEN SCARLET.
LOOK HOW BEAUTIFUL SCARLET WAS BEFORE GLORY'S VENOM...
WAIT. GLORY... HOW DID SHE GET TO THE QUEEN?
WHAT WAS I DOING WHEN THAT HAPPENED? HOW DID I FAIL HER?

HELLO, DRAGONETS.
IS THAT THE OLD MISSING QUEEN?
SHE DON'T LOOK LIKE HER PICTURE.
HOW SHE GET ALL MELTEDY?
MY MOM SAYS SHE'S WAY MEAN.
SHE LOOKS WAY MEAN!
SHOULD WE BE MORE SCARED?
I AM YOUR QUEEN– QUEEN SCARLET OF THE SKYWINGS
I HAVE RETURNED TO TAKE MY THRONE, BUT I NEED SOMETHING FROM YOU. SOMEONE, ACTUALLY.
EXCUSE ME, I THINKING MAYBE YOU IN THE WRONG PALACE MAYBE? WE ALREADY HAS A QUEEN. QUEEN RUBY, SHE SUPER NICE.
SHE BRINGS US SNACKS. WE LIKE HER LOTS.
COULD YOU BE QUEEN OF SOMEONE ELSE? I HEAR THERE'S SOME NIGHTWINGS LOOKIN', MAYBE, AND THEY ALL SPOOKY LIKE YOU.
STOP TALKING THIS INSTANT!
SHEESH. JUST MAKIN' SOME HELPFUL SUGGESTIBLES, NO NEED TO BE CRANKMONSTERY.

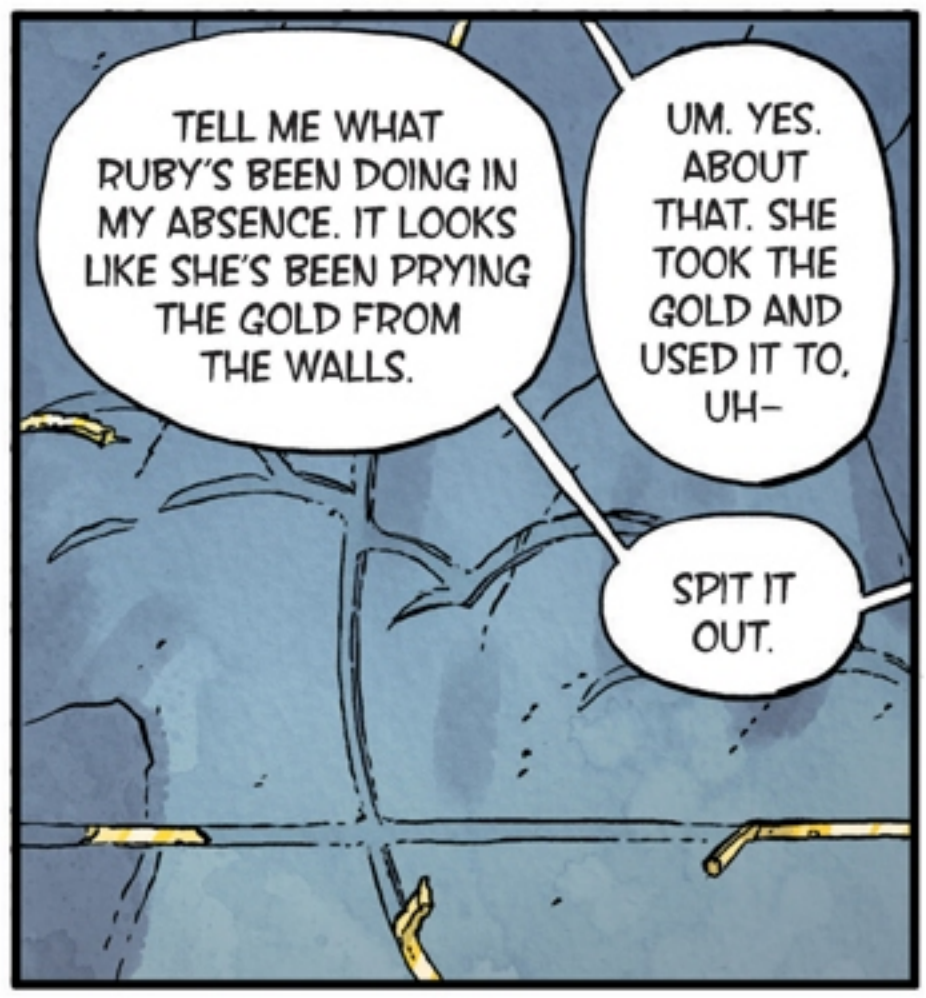

I WISH THERE'D BEEN A CHORUS OF IMPERTINENT DRAGONETS AROUND EVERY TIME I TALKED TO THE QUEEN.
I AM LOOKING FOR A DRAGONET NAMED CLIFF.

HELLO, LITTLE PRINCE. IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO MEET YOUR GRANDMOTHER.

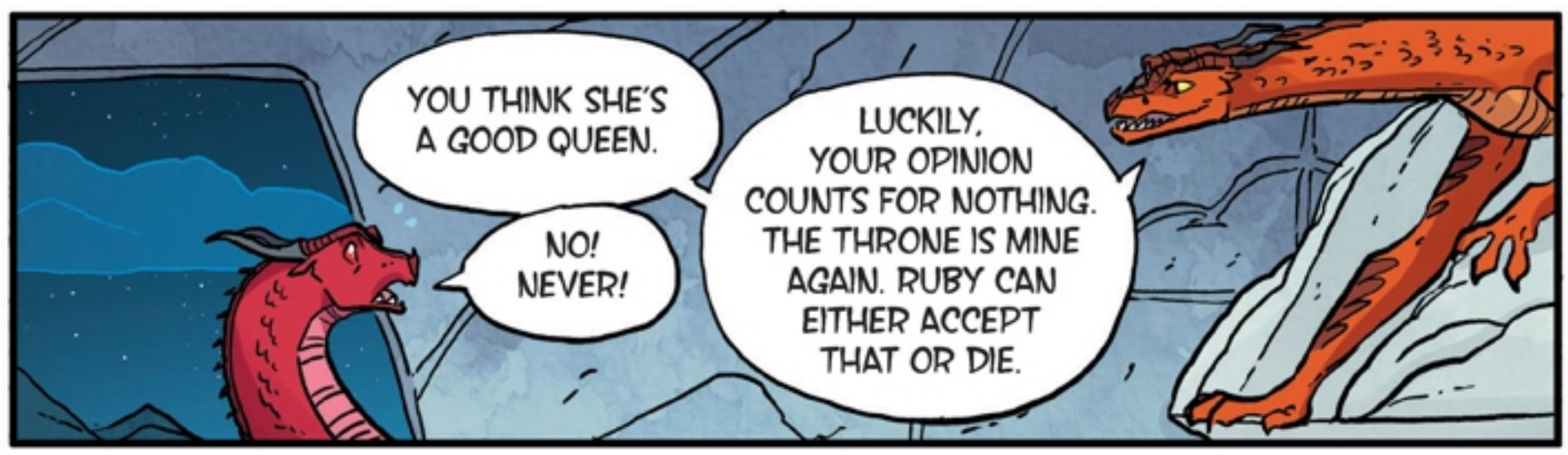
YES, YOUR TRUE QUEEN HAS RETURNED.
DON'T FIGHT BACK. JUST LET US BY.

AT LAST, MY THRONE ROOM.
PERIL, STAND NEXT TO THE PRINCE. CLOSE ENOUGH TO GRAB HIM IF ANYONE COMES IN.
WHIMPER

I REMEMBER WHEN YOU HATCHED, LITTLE PRINCE. IT WAS LIKE RUBY FINALLY WOKE UP.
I'M AFRAID YOUR MOTHER HAS ALWAYS BEEN VERY BORING. NO SPARK AT ALL. WHICH IS, OF COURSE, WHY I ALLOWED HER TO LIVE. BUT WHEN SHE SAW YOU, SUDDENLY– SPARKS.
I CAN UNDERSTAND GETTING EXCITED ABOUT TREASURE, BUT THAT EXCITED ABOUT AN ORDINARY DRAGONET? PECULIAR. YOU ARE MERELY ORDINARY, AREN'T YOU, LITTLE GRANDSON?
NO, I IS NOT!
MOTHER! ER, YOUR MAJESTY! YOU'RE ALIVE!
VERMILION.
WHAT A, UH–WHAT A GLORIOUS DAY FOR THE SKY KINGDOM! WE'RE ALL SO, SO, UH, BLESSED. AND LUCKY. AND RELIEVED! YES. THIS IS THRILLING, IT REALLY IS.
TELL ME, VERMILION, WHY EXACTLY DID YOU ALLOW YOUR SISTER TO STEAL MY THRONE? DID YOU REALLY THINK I WAS DEAD? ME?
Y-Y-YES?
NEVER MIND THE DREAMS, IS THAT IT? EVERY NIGHT FOR MONTHS, I CAME TO YOU, GIVING YOU ORDERS– SEND AN ARMY, SET ME FREE, KILL YOUR SISTER. DID YOU DO EVEN ONE OF THOSE THINGS?
BUT–I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS REAL. IT SEEMED CRAZY TO OBEY A DREAM...
I KNOW YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME. WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE ME KILL MYSELF?
NOT JUST YET.


TELL ME WHAT RUBY'S BEEN DOING IN MY ABSENCE. IT LOOKS LIKE SHE'S BEEN PRYING THE GOLD FROM THE WALLS.
UM. YES. ABOUT THAT. SHE TOOK THE GOLD AND USED IT TO, UH–
SPIT IT OUT.

SHE TURNED YOUR ARENA INTO A HOSPITAL AND BROUGHT IN HEALERS FROM OTHER TRIBES TO TEACH OURS. SHE PARDONED ALL THE PRISONERS, AND SHE'S BEEN FINDING THE WOUNDED SOLDIERS PLACES TO LIVE AND JOBS–


YOU THINK SHE'S A GOOD QUEEN.
NO! NEVER!
LUCKILY, YOUR OPINION COUNTS FOR NOTHING. THE THRONE IS MINE AGAIN. RUBY CAN EITHER ACCEPT THAT OR DIE.

WHEN IS MY HAPLESS DAUGHTER SCHEDULED TO RETURN?
TOMORROW MORNING. SHE SENT AN ADVANCE MESSENGER.
EXCELLENT. I'LL WAIT FOR HER RIGHT HERE.

VERMILION, BE USEFUL AND SEND UP FOOD FROM THE KITCHENS. PERHAPS IT'S WORTH NOTING TO ANYONE INVOLVED THAT PRINCE CLIFF WILL BE TASTING EVERYTHING BEFORE I EAT IT.
SCARLET'S AFRAID OF BEING POISONED? SHE NEVER WAS BEFORE...

YOU SLEEPY?

SORRY. I'M UNDER ORDERS TO STAY AWAKE ALL NIGHT. WHICH MEANS NOT LETTING YOU ESCAPE.

OK.

S-SNOOORRK

SNOOORRE

WE THE DRAGONS OF THE SKY

AND WE KNOW MY MOM IS BEST

BETTER QUEEN THAN ALL THE REST

SHE COME SAVE US FROM THIS MESS

WE THE DRAGONS, DRAGONS, DRAGONS OF THE SKY

I MADE THAT UP MYSELF JUST NOWISH.

YOU DON'T SEEM ALL THAT SCARED ANYMORE.

UNCLE VERMILION SAID MOMMY'S COMING IN THE MORNING, AND SHE MAKES EVERYTHING BETTER.

SHE MAKES EVERYTHING BETTER. I'VE NEVER FELT THAT WAY ABOUT **ANYONE.**

QUEEN SCARLET MAKES ALMOST EVERYTHING WORSE.

...SO WHY DO I FOLLOW HER?

WHAT **CHOICE** DO I HAVE? NO ONE ELSE WANTS ME.

GRANDMA'S KIND OF MEAN. MOMMY SAID SHE WAS BUT I THOUGHT NO ONE IS EVER MEAN TO ME, BUT SHE REALLY WAS, DID YOU SEE?

WHAT DID YOU THINK WAS SO MEAN?

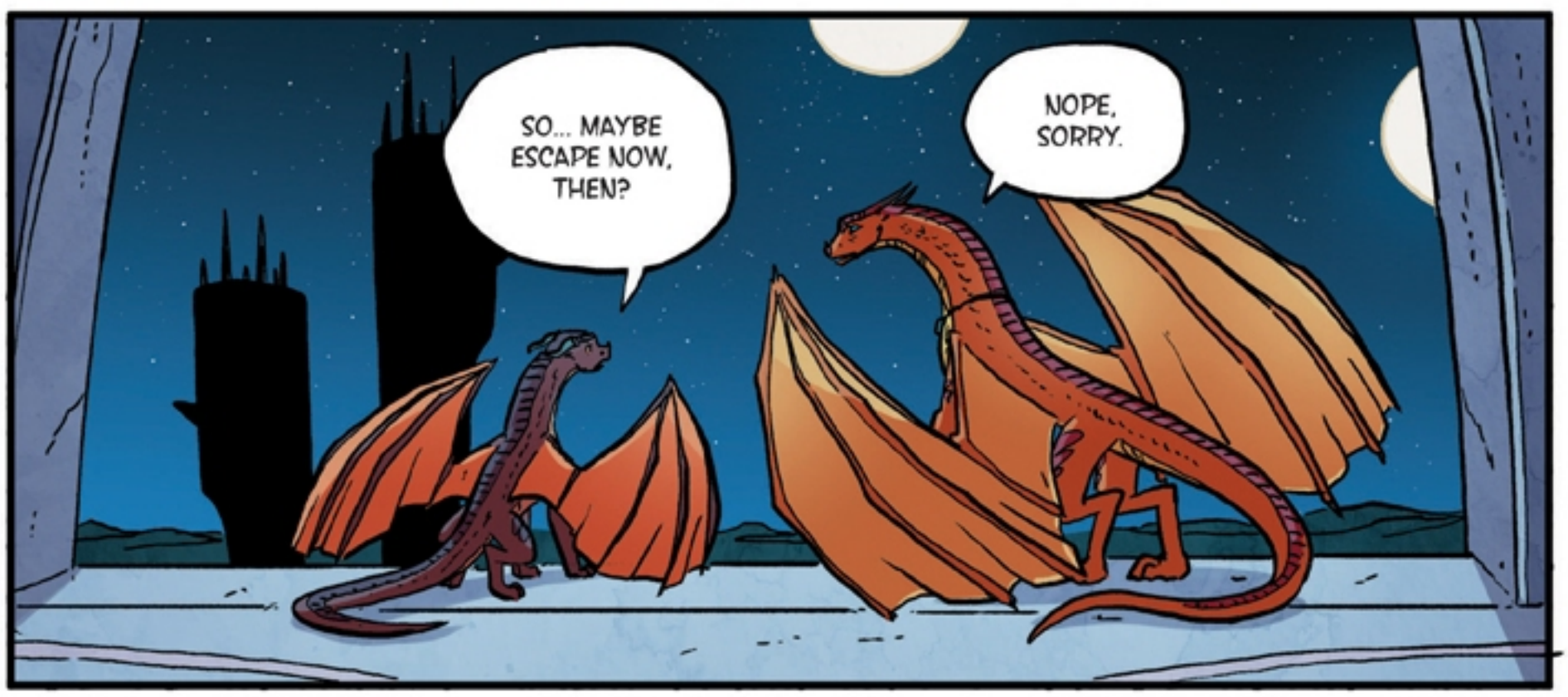
SHE SAID I'S ORDINARY! ME! SO MEAN!
WHAT'S BAD ABOUT BEING ORDINARY? SOUNDS GREAT TO ME.

WHAT?
SHHH!

MOMMY SAYS I'M SPECIAL. SHE THINKS I CAN DO ANYTHING AND ALL THE THINGS!
I BE MOST BEAUTIFUL SINGER IN PYRRHIA ONE DAY! FRIENDS WITH EVERY DRAGON IN THE WORLD!

WOW. FRIENDS WITH EVERY DRAGON?
YEP. GOTTA PRACTICE MY "NO, NO, LEAVE ME ALONE" FACE, OR EVERYONE'LL WANT TO BE WITH ME ALLLLLLS THE TIME.

DON'T WISH TO BE ALONE. ALONE IS AWFUL.
BETTER THAN ORDINARY, THOUGH.
YOU'RE A WEIRD LITTLE DRAGONET.


SO... MAYBE ESCAPE NOW, THEN?
NOPE, SORRY.

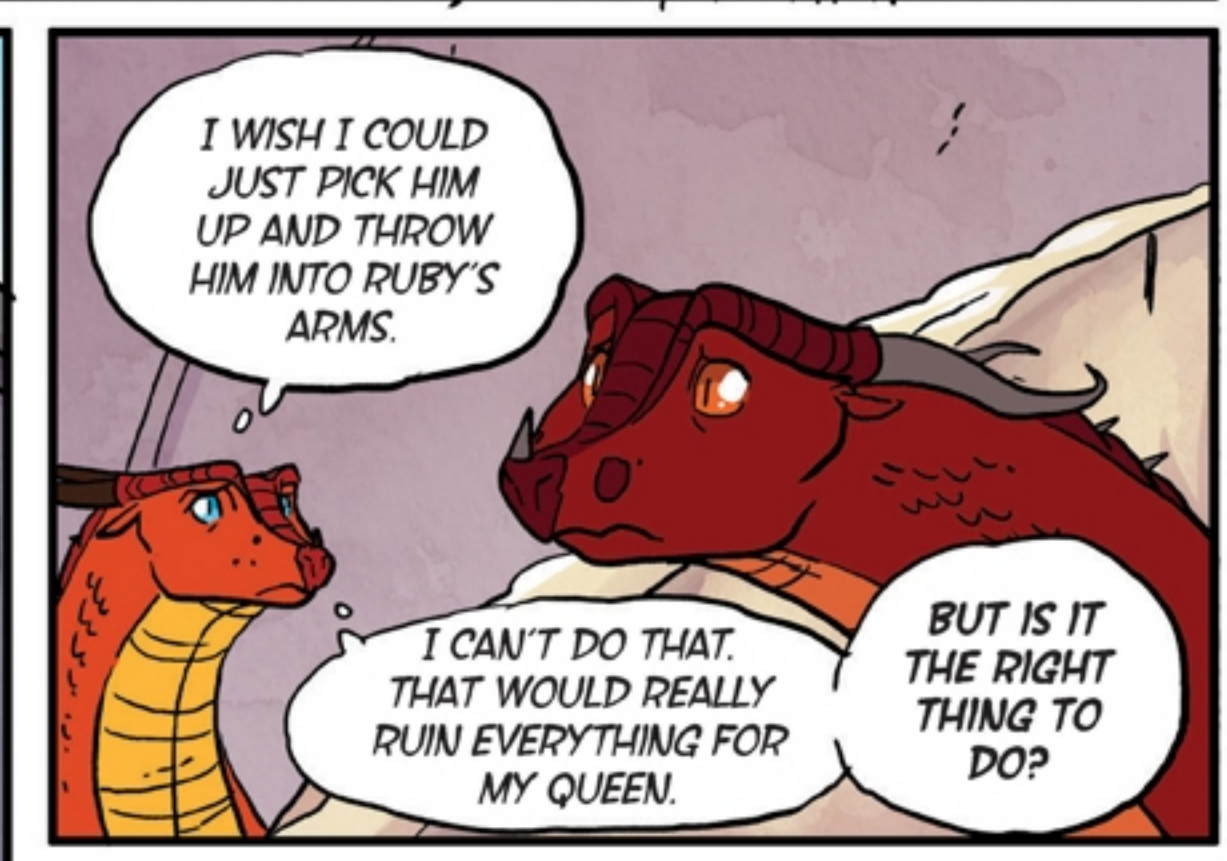
DRAGONS! THAT MUST BE RUBY AND HER GUARDS.
RUBY KNOWS WHAT'S GOING ON. SOMEONE SNUCK OUT TO WARN HER.
YOUR MAJESTY? RUBY IS COMING.
MOMMY!
NOT ANOTHER STEP, RUBY!
OR YOU KNOW *EXACTLY* WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOUR PRECIOUS DRAGONET.
IF YOU TOUCH HIM–IF YOU *DARE*–
SHE WILL, THE MOMENT I GIVE THE ORDER.
WOULD I?

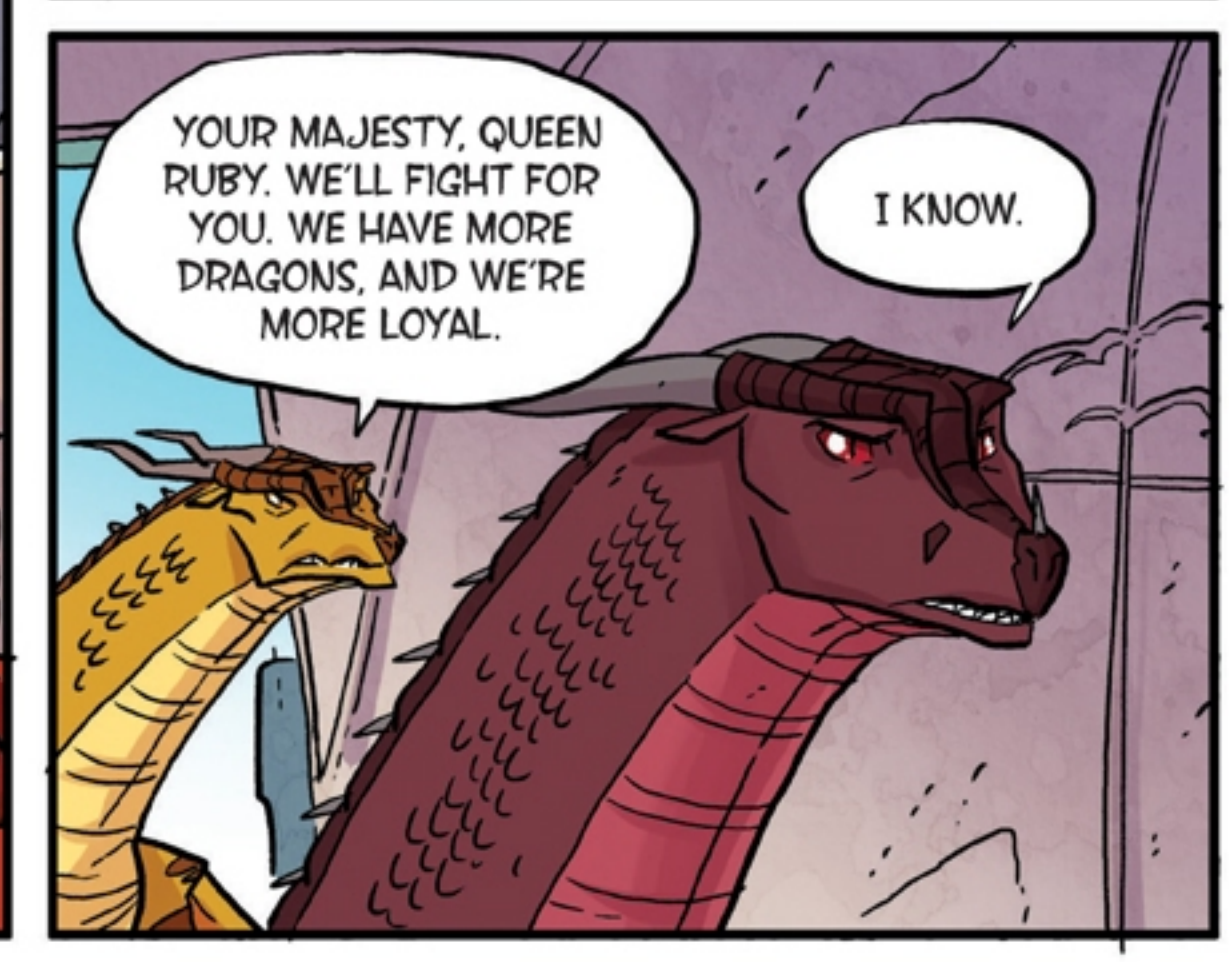
IF I STILL HAD FIRESCALES... AND SCARLET ORDERED ME TO BURN THE PRINCE... WHAT WOULD I DO?
HE'S SO LITTLE. AND I DON'T KILL DRAGONS ANYMORE.
WAIT, DON'T I? WHY NOT?
I KNEW YOU COULDN'T BE TRUSTED, YOU MONSTER.
BUT THIS—THREATENING INNOCENT DRAGONETS? THAT'S NOT EXACTLY THE PEACEFUL NEW DRAGON YOU CLAIMED TO BE, IS IT?
I KNEW YOU WERE LYING! YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN THE REASON FOR EVERYTHING THAT'S WRONG WITH THE SKY KINGDOM!
ME?! I JUST FOLLOW ORDERS, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE! WHAT DID I EVER DO TO YOU?
I FEEL WE'RE GETTING OFF TOPIC.
THOSE EGGS ON THE BRIGHTEST NIGHT. THAT'S WHAT YOU DID. AND MY SISTER.
DO YOU EVEN REMEMBER HER, AMONG THE HUNDREDS OF DRAGONS YOU'VE KILLED?
N-NO. WHO?
OH, RUBY, YOU EMPTY-HEADED PRINCESS. HAVE YOU BEEN HATING MY POOR LITTLE CHAMPION ALL THIS TIME FOR THE ONE TERRIBLE THING SHE DIDN'T DO?
HA
HA
HA
HEH
PERIL DIDN'T KILL TOURMALINE. SHE'S NOT EVEN DEAD, ACTUALLY.
SHE'S NOT? WHERE IS SHE?

LET'S TRY TO FOCUS, SHALL WE? I'M HERE FOR MY THRONE. THANK YOU FOR KEEPING IT WARM FOR ME, BUT IT'S TIME TO GIVE IT BACK.
MOMMY!

MOMMY, I HAVE TO TELL YOU SOMETHING. GRANDMA IS KIND OF MEAN.
I KNOW, SWEETHEART. DON'T WORRY.

YOU CAN'T CHALLENGE ME FOR THE THRONE. ONLY SISTERS, DAUGHTERS–
YES YES BLAH BLAH BLAH. BUT, MY DEAR, YOU CAN QUOTE RULES AT ME ALL DAY LONG AND IT WON'T CHANGE ONE IMPORTANT FACT. I HAVE YOUR SON.
SO WHICH WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE–THE THRONE OR YOUR DRAGONET?


I WISH I COULD JUST PICK HIM UP AND THROW HIM INTO RUBY'S ARMS.
I CAN'T DO THAT. THAT WOULD REALLY RUIN EVERYTHING FOR MY QUEEN.
BUT IS IT THE RIGHT THING TO DO?


YOUR MAJESTY, QUEEN RUBY. WE'LL FIGHT FOR YOU. WE HAVE MORE DRAGONS, AND WE'RE MORE LOYAL.
I KNOW.

BUT A HUNDRED THOUSAND SKYWINGS COULDN'T SAVE CLIFF FROM MY MOTHER'S CREATURE.
I'M JUST BEING WHO I AM.

ALTHOUGH I'M **NOT** A CREATURE ANYMORE. I'M ONLY **PRETENDING** TO BE DANGEROUS FOR QUEEN SCARLET. SO I'M NOT REALLY BEING MY NEW SELF AT ALL.
BUT I PROMISED TO BE LOYAL TO SCARLET.
SO WHY HAVEN'T I BEEN?

ALL RIGHT, MOTHER. YOU WIN. IF YOU PROMISE CLIFF WILL BE SAFE–I'LL GIVE UP MY KINGDOM.
NO!

PERIL, WHAT ARE YOU *DOING*? YOU DON'T WANT THIS. NOBODY WANTS THIS.
WHAT WOULD *CLAY* THINK?

CLAY...?
WHO'S THAT?

IT'S A SPELL. WHAT DID YOU DO TO HER?
I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING AT ALL! PERIL IS MY MOST LOYAL SUBJECT, AS SHE ALWAYS HAS BEEN.
PERIL WOULD NEVER JUST FORGET ABOUT CLAY. HOW DID YOU ERASE HIM FROM HER BRAIN? WHAT KIND OF HORRIBLE ANIMUS-TOUCHED OBJECT DID YOU GET YOUR CLAWS ON?
HEY, I'M NOT UNDER A SPELL. I JUST DON'T HAVE A GREAT MEMORY. NO NEED TO GET ALL SMOKY AND BOTHERED.
CLAY IS THE DRAGON WHO CHANGED YOU. HE'S ONE OF THE DRAGONETS OF DESTINY. REMEMBER? YOU MET IN THE ARENA. YOU SAVED HIS LIFE WHEN A DRAGONBITE VIPER BIT HIM. HE'S–
HE'S THE ONLY DRAGON WHO WAS WILLING TO GIVE YOU A SECOND CHANCE.

WELL, THERE'S *ME*. THE DRAGON WHO GAVE YOU YOUR *FIRST* CHANCE AND NEVER REQUIRED A SECOND. THAT'S ALL YOU NEED TO REMEMBER. *I* AM THE ONE WHO CARES ABOUT YOU.

THAT'S TRUE.
*AND **NOT** TRUE.*
WAIT. THERE'S TURTLE!

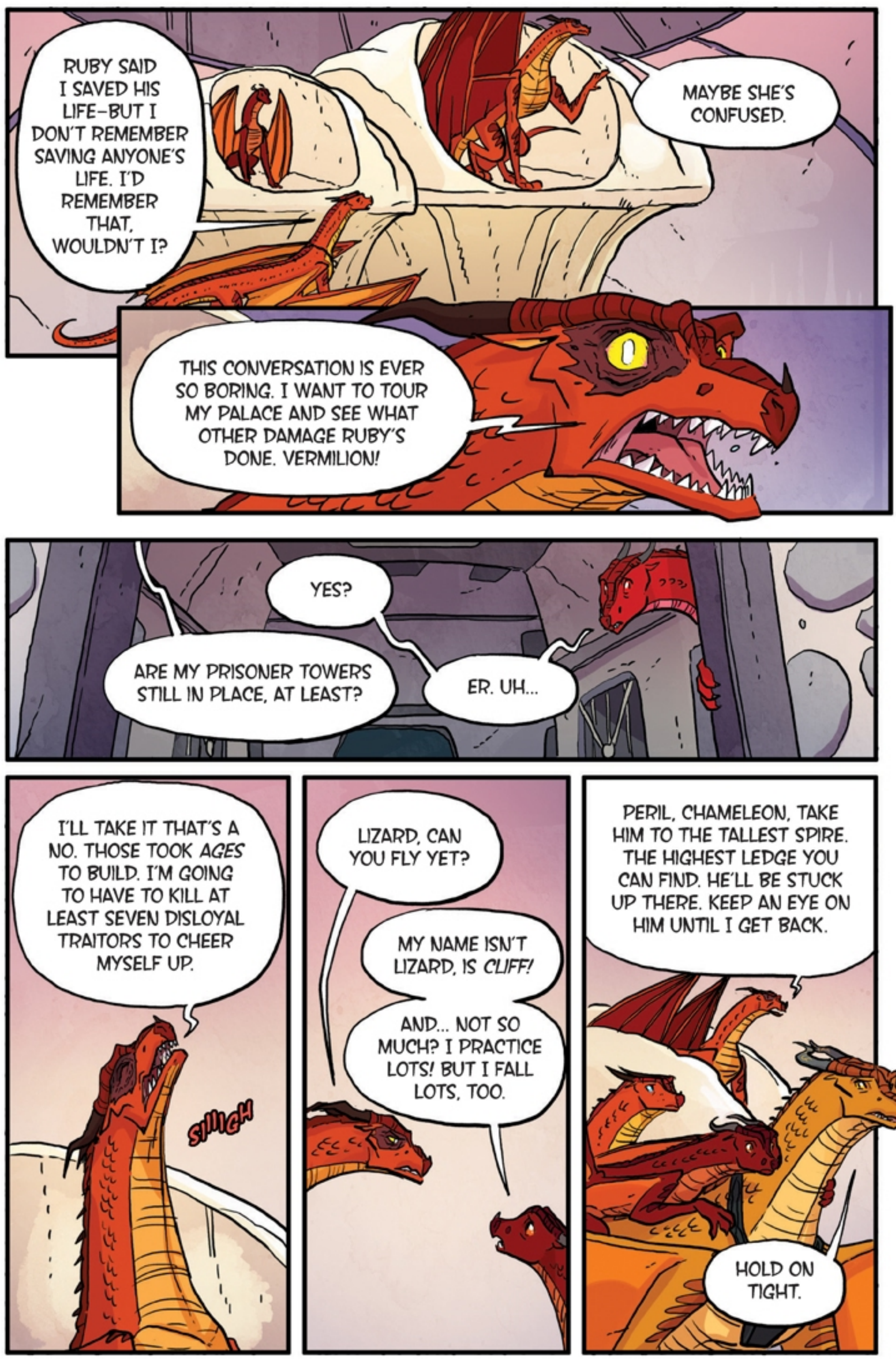
WHO'S TURTLE? YOU NEVER MENTIONED ANYONE NAMED TURTLE.

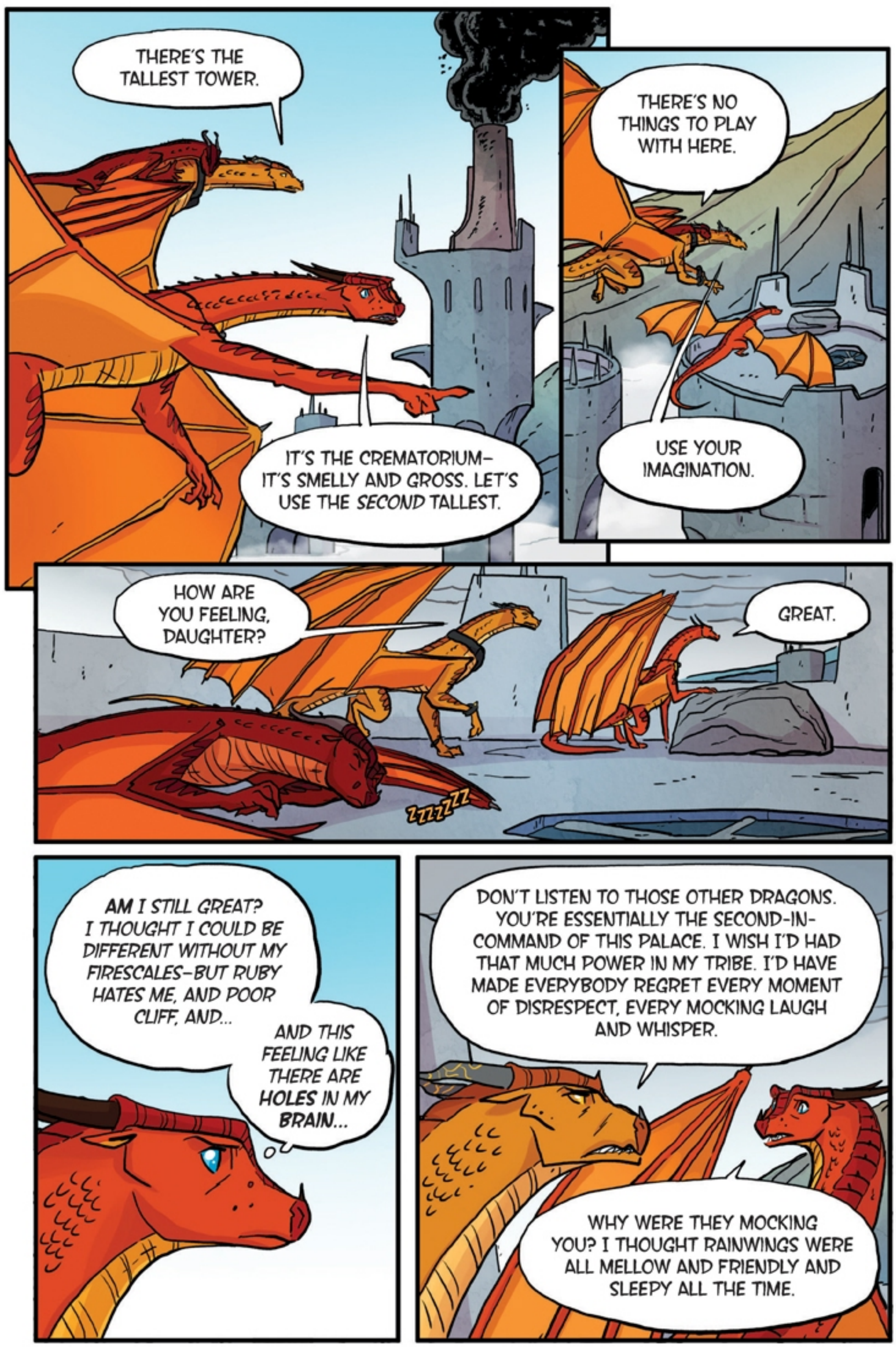
ANYWAY. WE WERE IN THE MIDDLE OF A WONDERFULLY PEACEFUL TRANSFER OF POWER. RUBY, DEAR, OBVIOUSLY I'M GOING TO HAVE TO LOCK YOU UP UNTIL I DECIDE YOUR FATE. I'M PICTURING A GRAND EXECUTION, PERHAPS TO CELEBRATE RESTORING MY ARENA.

BUT CLIFF–
HE'LL BE FINE. SAFE WITH HIS LOVING GRANDMOTHER.
GUARDS! LOCK RUBY IN THE PRISON IN THE GREAT HALL. THEN NOTIFY ALL THE COWARDS IN THIS PALACE THAT IT'S TIME TO COME OUT AND SWEAR THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO ME.

OR... WE CAN ALL WATCH THIS LITTLE PRINCE BURN TO DEATH, FOLLOWED BY EVERY DISOBEDIENT DRAGON IN THIS ROOM.

DO AS SHE SAYS. WHATEVER IT TAKES TO KEEP CLIFF SAFE.
YOU TWO–I WANT YOU TO BE THE ONES TO LOCK ME UP.
BUT, YOUR MAJESTY–
IT'S DONE. LET'S GO.
CLIFF, I LOVE YOU, LITTLE ONE. DON'T BE SCARED. YOU'RE STILL GOING TO CHANGE THE WORLD, ALL RIGHT?
CAN I GIVE MOMMY A HUG? I THINK SHE NEED A HUG.
SORRY, LITTLE FRIEND.
THE REST OF YOU, CLEAR OUT, TOO! I DON'T WANT TO LOOK AT YOU ANYMORE.
PERIL, TRY TO REMEMBER CLAY. *PLEASE.*
WHO IS CLAY? SHOULD I REMEMBER HIM? DO YOU?
BARELY. HE'S SOME NOBODY WHO THINKS HE'S A HERO. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.


RUBY SAID I SAVED HIS LIFE–BUT I DON'T REMEMBER SAVING ANYONE'S LIFE. I'D REMEMBER THAT, WOULDN'T I?
MAYBE SHE'S CONFUSED.
THIS CONVERSATION IS EVER SO BORING. I WANT TO TOUR MY PALACE AND SEE WHAT OTHER DAMAGE RUBY'S DONE. VERMILION!
YES?
ARE MY PRISONER TOWERS STILL IN PLACE, AT LEAST?
ER. UH...
I'LL TAKE IT THAT'S A NO. THOSE TOOK *AGES* TO BUILD. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO KILL AT LEAST SEVEN DISLOYAL TRAITORS TO CHEER MYSELF UP.
SIIIIGH
LIZARD, CAN YOU FLY YET?
MY NAME ISN'T LIZARD, IS *CLIFF!*
AND... NOT SO MUCH? I PRACTICE LOTS! BUT I FALL LOTS, TOO.
PERIL, CHAMELEON, TAKE HIM TO THE TALLEST SPIRE. THE HIGHEST LEDGE YOU CAN FIND. HE'LL BE STUCK UP THERE. KEEP AN EYE ON HIM UNTIL I GET BACK.
HOLD ON TIGHT.


THERE'S THE TALLEST TOWER.
IT'S THE CREMATORIUM– IT'S SMELLY AND GROSS. LET'S USE THE *SECOND* TALLEST.
THERE'S NO THINGS TO PLAY WITH HERE.
USE YOUR IMAGINATION.
HOW ARE YOU FEELING, DAUGHTER?
GREAT.
ZZZZZZ
AM I STILL GREAT? I THOUGHT I COULD BE DIFFERENT WITHOUT MY FIRESCALES–BUT RUBY HATES ME, AND POOR CLIFF, AND...
*AND THIS FEELING LIKE THERE ARE **HOLES** IN MY **BRAIN**...*
DON'T LISTEN TO THOSE OTHER DRAGONS. YOU'RE ESSENTIALLY THE SECOND-IN-COMMAND OF THIS PALACE. I WISH I'D HAD THAT MUCH POWER IN MY TRIBE. I'D HAVE MADE EVERYBODY REGRET EVERY MOMENT OF DISRESPECT, EVERY MOCKING LAUGH AND WHISPER.
WHY WERE THEY MOCKING YOU? I THOUGHT RAINWINGS WERE ALL MELLOW AND FRIENDLY AND SLEEPY ALL THE TIME.

HA. AS LONG AS YOU AREN'T *TOO* DIFFERENT, SURE.
YOU SAW MY RAINWING COLOR. WHEN I'M A RAINWING, I'M STUCK THAT WAY. NO CAMOUFLAGE, NO FLAMBOYANT EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS, NO SPECIAL EFFECTS. I COULD NEVER PLAY THEIR RAINWING GAMES.

OH. WEREN'T THERE ANY OTHER RAINWINGS LIKE YOU?
NOT IN LIVING MEMORY. THE HEALERS GUESSED IT WAS BECAUSE OF MY SLEEP PROBLEM—AS MYSELF, I CAN NEVER SLEEP FOR LONG, AN HOUR AT THE ABSOLUTE MOST. BUT KNOWING WHY DIDN'T HELP. EVERYONE STILL TEASED ME... AND THEN AVOIDED ME.

FINALLY, THE QUEEN BANISHED ME, SAYING I WAS MAKING EVERYONE UNCOMFORTABLE, AND PERHAPS THERE WAS A BETTER TRIBE FOR ME OUTSIDE THE RAINFOREST.
OUCH. THAT SEEMS... REALLY UNFAIR, TO THROW YOU OUT FOR SOMETHING YOU COULDN'T CONTROL.

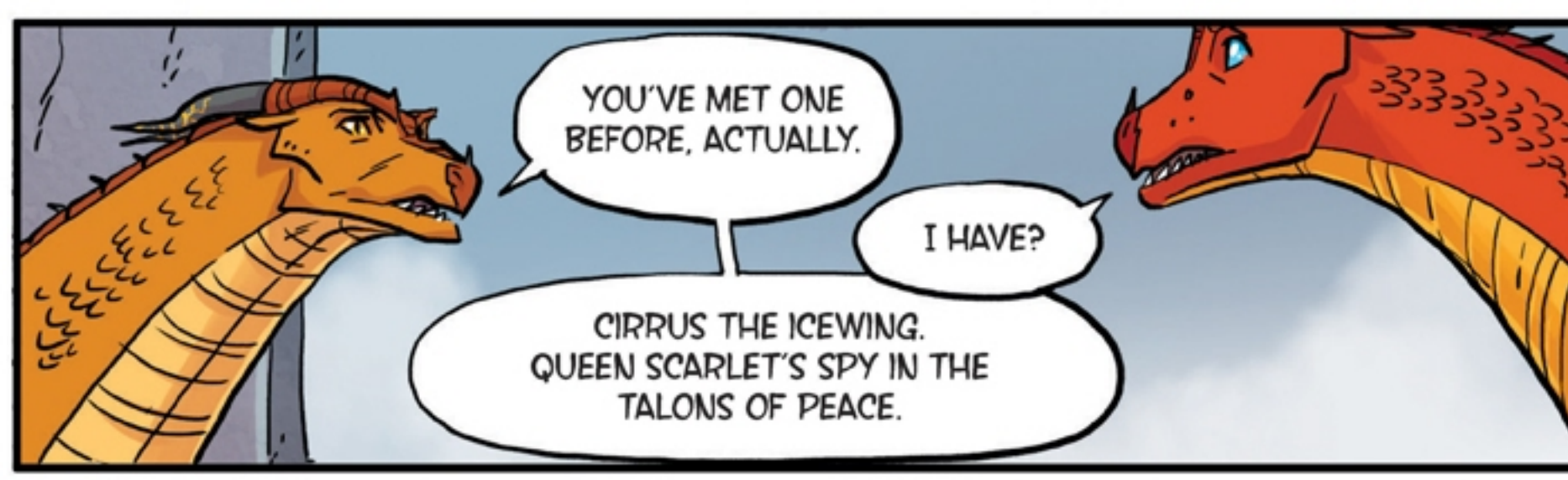
JOKE'S ON THEM, THOUGH, ISN'T IT? MY SHAPE-SHIFTING POWER IS FAR MORE MAGNIFICENT THAN ANYTHING A MERE RAINWING COULD ACCOMPLISH.
HOW DID YOU GET YOUR SHAPE-SHIFTING POWER?

HMM.
NOT EVEN SCARLET KNOWS THIS.
A SECRET! I NEVER GET TO KNOW SECRETS!
OH, I FORGOT TO TELL QUEEN SCARLET ABOUT THE SEAWING ANIMUS. I'LL TELL HER LATER.

YOU CAN TELL ME. THERE'S NO ONE I'D TELL.
NOT EVEN QUEEN SCARLET?
YOU'RE MY FATHER. I'M LOYAL TO YOU FIRST, HER SECOND.
HMM. VERY INTERESTING.

YOU HAVE A STRONGER PERSONALITY THAN MOST, UM, DRAGONS I'VE MET.
THAT'S ONE OF THE MANY THINGS MOST DRAGONS DON'T LIKE ABOUT ME.
CLICK
I LIKE IT. IT'S SOMETHING WE HAVE IN COMMON.

MY OTHER SHAPES ARE IN HERE. EACH PIECE OF SCROLL IS ENCHANTED WITH SOMEONE NEW, ALL MY BEAUTIFUL FACES I CAN TAKE ON AND OFF. I HAVE ONE FOR EACH TRIBE.


YOU'VE MET ONE BEFORE, ACTUALLY.
I HAVE?
CIRRUS THE ICEWING. QUEEN SCARLET'S SPY IN THE TALONS OF PEACE.

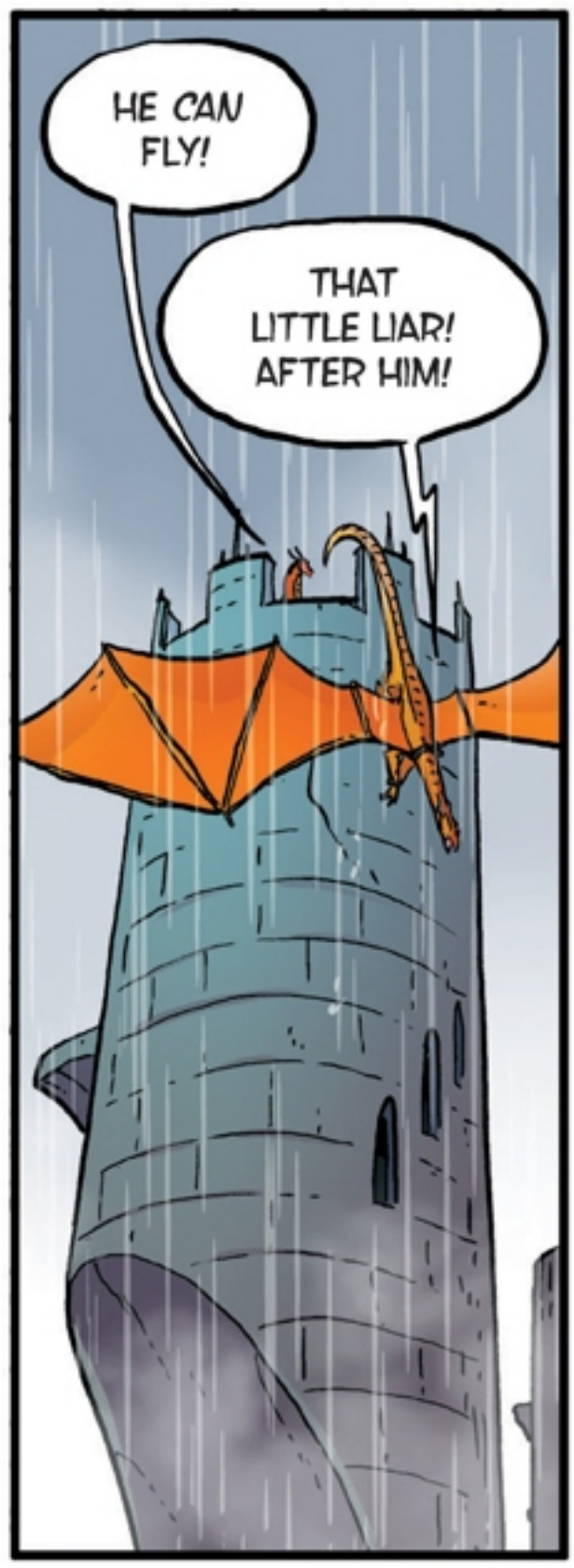
THAT'S WHEN YOU FOUND OUT ABOUT *ME*. THE CONVERSATION ABOUT KESTREL.
YES. SCARLET HAD SENT ME TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE DRAGONETS FROM THE ACADEMY WHO WENT AFTER HER. THE TALONS KNEW NOTHING, OF COURSE. THEY'VE ALWAYS BEEN USELESS. ALTHOUGH THEY DO GIVE CIRRUS EXCUSES TO PRACTICE KILLING.

PRACTICE KILLING... HE WAS LOOKING FOR MOON, QIBLI, AND WINTER. WOULD HE HAVE KILLED THEM IF HE'D FOUND THEM?
WOULD I KILL THEM IF QUEEN SCARLET TOLD ME TO?
I DON'T KILL DRAGONS ANYMORE.
BUT WHY, BUT WHY, BUT WHY?
AND THEN I FOLLOWED YOU. IN NIGHTWING FORM. THAT ONE'S MY FAVORITE. I CALL MYSELF SHAPESHIFTER.
A BIT ON THE NOSE.
EXACTLY, LIKE ALL NIGHTWING NAMES. I'M QUITE PROUD OF THAT SHAPE.
I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW YOU MADE THOSE SHAPES AT ALL.
THIS.
IT'S THE STRONGEST MAGIC IN THE WORLD.
I'VE NEVER READ THE WHOLE THING. I STILL DON'T REALLY LIKE READING. I HAD TO FIND SOMEONE TO TEACH ME SO I COULD UNDERSTAND THE SCROLL IN THE FIRST PLACE. BUT THEN I ONLY HAD TO READ THE BEGINNING TO REALIZE WHAT IT COULD DO.
AND THEN I HAD TO LEARN HOW TO WRITE. THAT WAS FRUSTRATING.
I WRITE MY ENCHANTMENT HERE. I DESCRIBE THE SHAPE I WANT TO SHIFT INTO, WRITING THE MAGIC INTO THAT PIECE OF PAPER. THEN I TEAR OFF THAT PART OF THE SCROLL AND HIDE IT IN SOMETHING—USUALLY JEWELRY, LIKE A NECKLACE OR BRACELET.

OR AN EAR.
A DISEMBODIED HEAD CHANGING SHAPE– WHERE WAS THAT?
UH, YES. ONLY THAT ONCE, THOUGH.
I DON'T USE THIS VERY OFTEN. I'VE TOLD QUEEN SCARLET THAT IT'S A LIMITED ANIMUS POWER AND IT'S DANGEROUS FOR ME TO DO MUCH. I DON'T WANT HER TO KNOW ABOUT THE SCROLL.
WHY NOT?
IF SHE KNEW, SHE'D TAKE IT FROM ME. THEN SHE'D PROBABLY KILL ME.
BESIDES, I WANT TO CONTROL WHAT THIS SCROLL DOES. IT'S *MINE*. IF SCARLET KNEW I HAD UNLIMITED POWER, SHE'D MAKE ME DO MUCH MORE TERRIBLE THINGS.
I'M NOT AN EVIL DRAGON, PERIL.
I LIKE THE SECURITY OF HAVING A QUEEN WHO WILL PAY ME HANDSOMELY FOR MY SERVICES, AND I LOVE THE LUXURY OF TREASURE.
BUT I'M MUCH TOO SMART TO GIVE ANYONE ALL THIS POWER, *ESPECIALLY* QUEEN SCARLET.
HAVE YOU DONE ANYTHING ELSE WITH THE SCROLL? I MEAN... COULDN'T YOU USE IT TO MAKE YOUR OWN TREASURE?
BLINK
BLINK
UM...
HUH. I SUPPOSE I COULD.

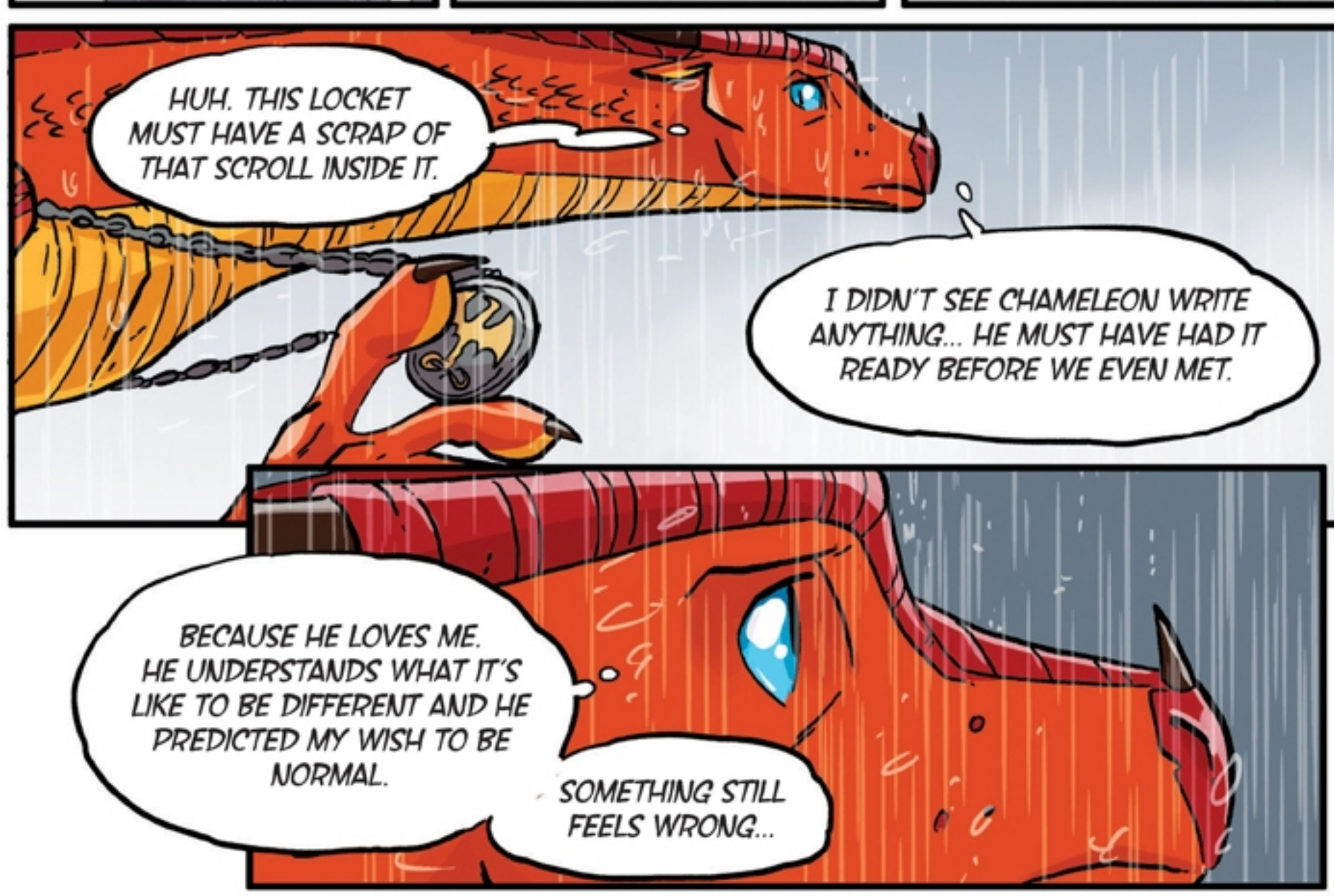
SCARLET HIRED ME BEFORE I'D GOTTEN VERY FAR WITH USING THE SCROLL–SHE CAUGHT ME TRANSFORMING AND MADE ME COME WORK FOR HER. I HAVEN'T WANTED TO DO ANYTHING RISKY THAT SHE MIGHT FIND OUT ABOUT.
I HAVE A VERY NICE LIFE, THOUGH. AND SO CAN YOU ONCE THIS KINGDOM IS ALL SORTED OUT! WE'LL BE HER RIGHT-CLAW DRAGONS–AND WE'LL BE TOGETHER. MAYBE YOU CAN HELP ME COME UP WITH CLEVER USES FOR THE SCROLL. IT'LL BE NICE TO HAVE FAMILY AT LAST.
IT WOULD BE...
WAIT... IF YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S BEEN HELPING QUEEN SCARLET... DOES THAT MEAN *YOU* PUT KINKAJOU IN THE HOSPITAL?
THE RAINWING TRAVELING WITH THE ICEWING PRINCE? SHE'S NOT DEAD?
YOU ACTUALLY *WERE* TRYING TO KILL HER? REALLY? SHE'S JUST A DRAGONET.
SHE'S A *RAINWING*. SHE'D LAUGH AT ME JUST AS MUCH AS ANY OF HER TRIBE IF SHE'D MET ME BEFORE I FOUND MY POWER.
WOW. I'VE NEVER MET ANYONE WHO HATED RAINWINGS BEFORE. THEY'RE SO INOFFENSIVE. IT'S LIKE... HATING *CATERPILLARS*.
I'M NOT TERRIBLY FOND OF CATERPILLARS EITHER. NASTY, CRAWLY THINGS.

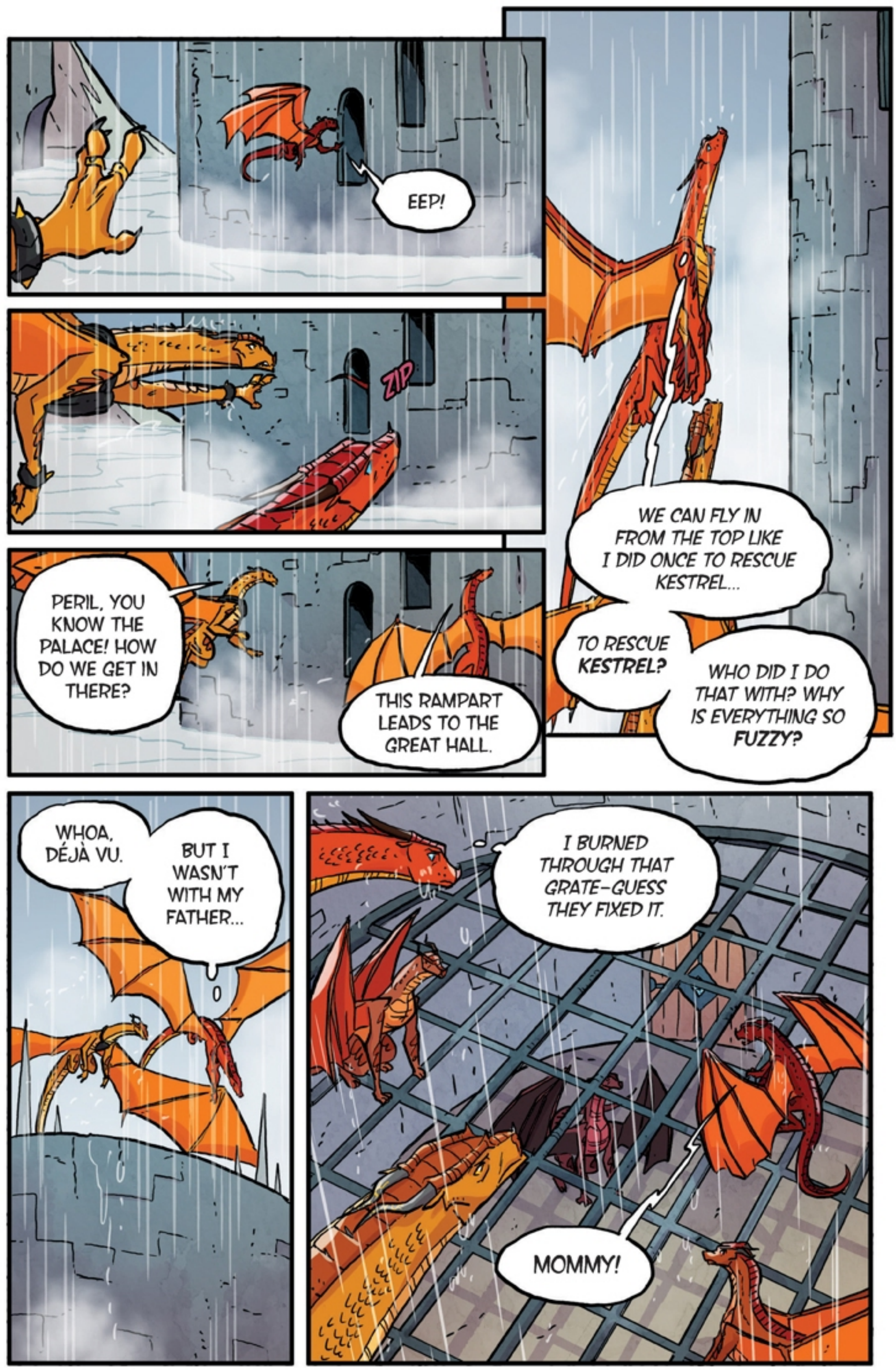
OF ALL DRAGONS, I SHOULD UNDERSTAND WANTING TO LASH OUT WHEN SOMEONE HURTS ME. HE'S MY FATHER AND SHE'S A DRAGONET I DON'T EVEN KNOW. I SHOULD BE ON HIS SIDE.
BUT... HURTING A RAINWING LIKE KINKAJOU...
IT FEELS AS BRUTAL AND UNNECESSARY AS THE IDEA OF HURTING THAT POOR LITTLE SKYWING PRINCE.
POOR CLIFF. I–
UH-OH.
WHERE'S CLIFF?
CLIFF? CLIFF!
WHERE DID HE GO?
I DON'T KNOW!


HE CAN FLY!
THAT LITTLE LIAR! AFTER HIM!

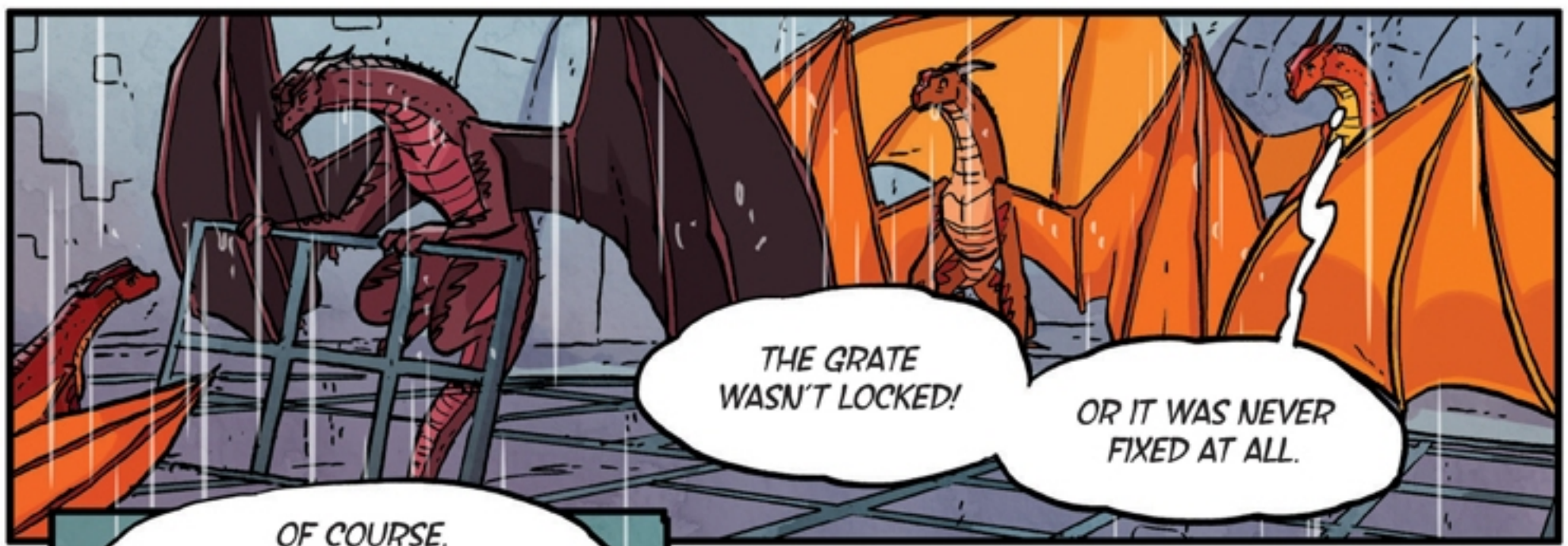
YOU KNOW, I THOUGHT SKYWING DRAGONETS COULD FLY PRETTY YOUNG. THAT'S SO FUNNY. SCARLET DIDN'T EVEN KNOW SINCE SHE AVOIDS DRAGONETS LIKE THE PLAGUE.
KRRRA-THOOM!
SHUT UP AND CATCH HIM! OR WE LOSE THE PALACE AND SCARLET KILLS US BOTH!

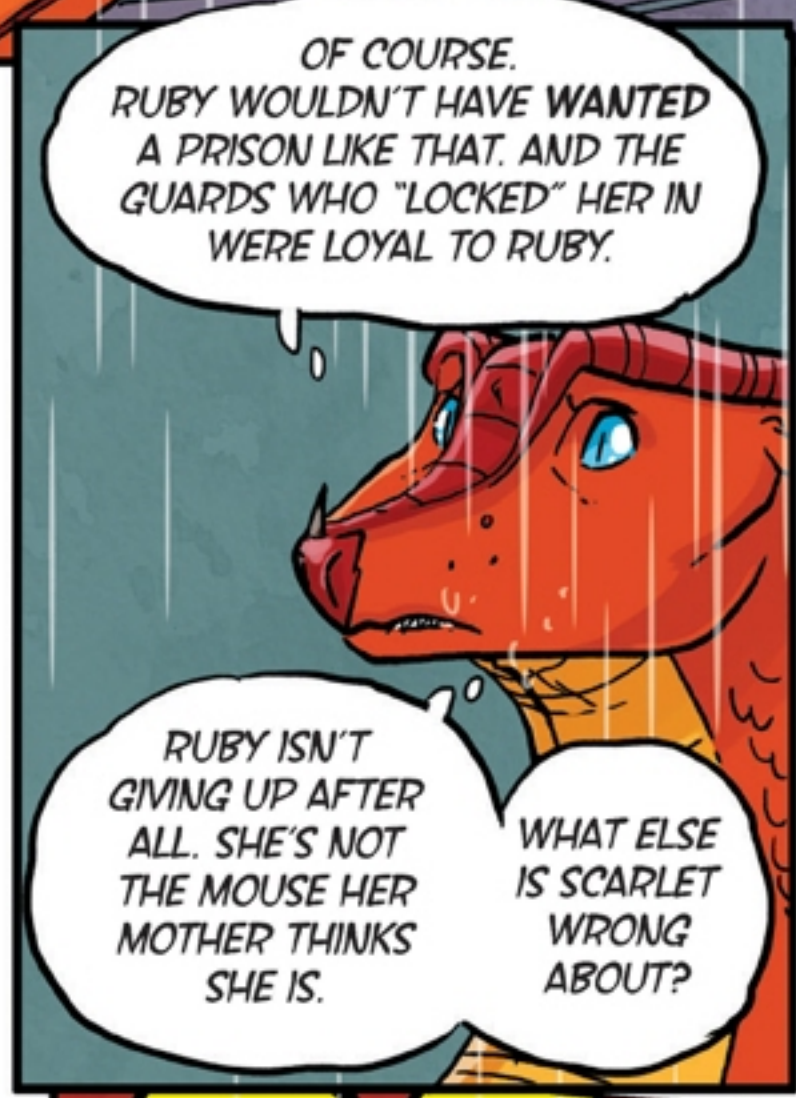
SHE WOULDN'T DARE!
WELL, ALL RIGHT. SHE MIGHT DARE.
BUT SHE CAN'T, NOT IF I TAKE OFF THIS NECKLACE AND USE MY FIRESCALES AGAIN!


HUH. THIS LOCKET MUST HAVE A SCRAP OF THAT SCROLL INSIDE IT.
I DIDN'T SEE CHAMELEON WRITE ANYTHING... HE MUST HAVE HAD IT READY BEFORE WE EVEN MET.
BECAUSE HE LOVES ME. HE UNDERSTANDS WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE DIFFERENT AND HE PREDICTED MY WISH TO BE NORMAL.
SOMETHING STILL FEELS WRONG...

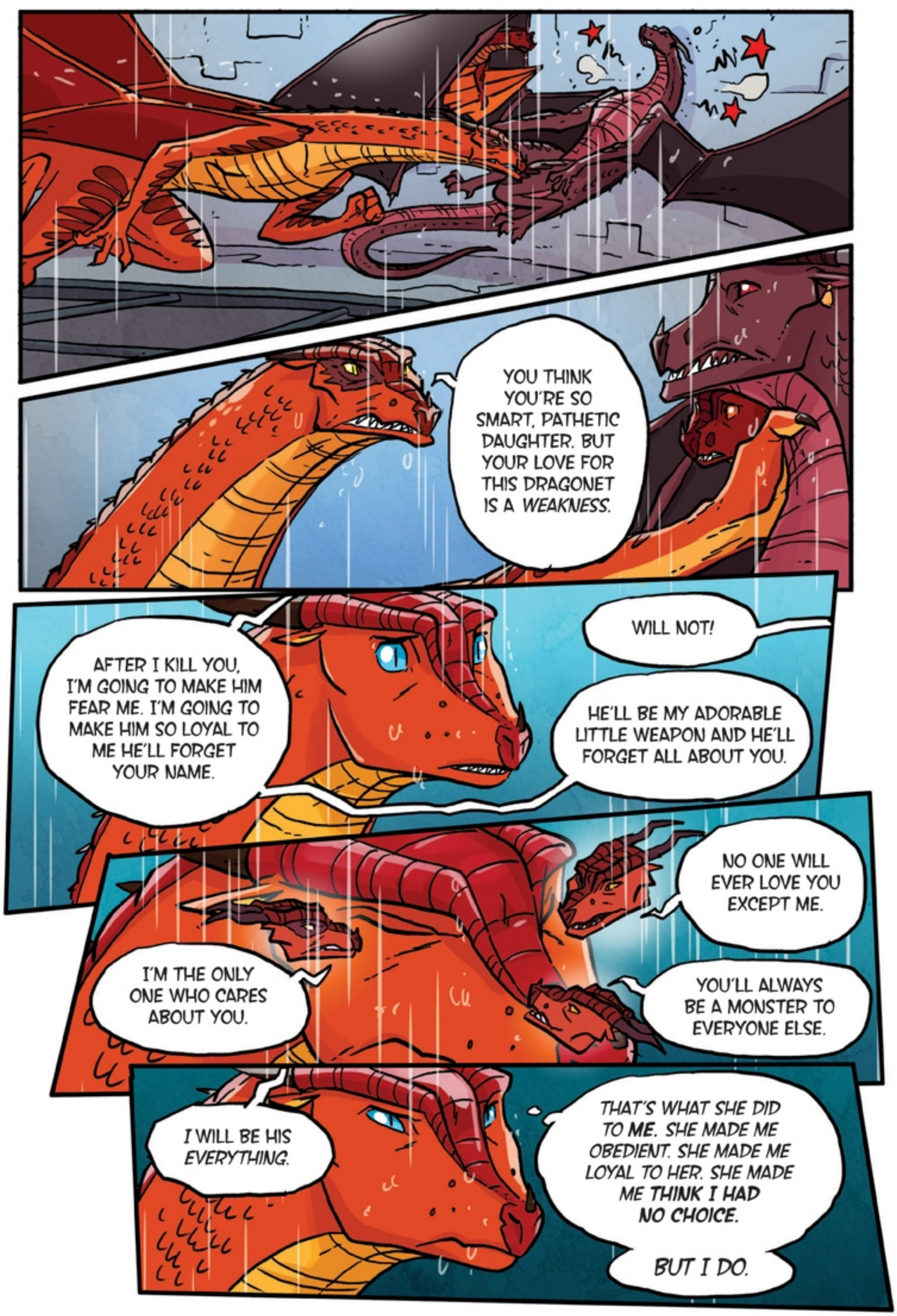

EEP!
ZIP
PERIL, YOU KNOW THE PALACE! HOW DO WE GET IN THERE?
THIS RAMPART LEADS TO THE GREAT HALL.
WE CAN FLY IN FROM THE TOP LIKE I DID ONCE TO RESCUE KESTREL...
TO RESCUE KESTREL?
WHO DID I DO THAT WITH? WHY IS EVERYTHING SO FUZZY?
WHOA, DÉJÀ VU.
BUT I WASN'T WITH MY FATHER...
I BURNED THROUGH THAT GRATE–GUESS THEY FIXED IT.
MOMMY!

CLIFF! GET BACK!


THE GRATE WASN'T LOCKED!
OR IT WAS NEVER FIXED AT ALL.


OF COURSE. RUBY WOULDN'T HAVE **WANTED** A PRISON LIKE THAT. AND THE GUARDS WHO "LOCKED" HER IN WERE LOYAL TO RUBY.
RUBY ISN'T GIVING UP AFTER ALL. SHE'S NOT THE MOUSE HER MOTHER THINKS SHE IS.
WHAT ELSE IS SCARLET WRONG ABOUT?

I KNEW YOU COULD DO IT. YOU CLEVER, CLEVER, CLEVER LITTLE MOONBEAM.
I'M NOT A MOONBEAM! TODAY I'M A SUPERSECRET STEALTH AGENT FLIER HERO OF THE WORLD!
YES, YOU ARE.


YOU THINK YOU'RE SO SMART, PATHETIC DAUGHTER. BUT YOUR LOVE FOR THIS DRAGONET IS A *WEAKNESS*.
WILL NOT!
AFTER I KILL YOU, I'M GOING TO MAKE HIM FEAR ME. I'M GOING TO MAKE HIM SO LOYAL TO ME HE'LL FORGET YOUR NAME.
HE'LL BE MY ADORABLE LITTLE WEAPON AND HE'LL FORGET ALL ABOUT YOU.
NO ONE WILL EVER LOVE YOU EXCEPT ME.
I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CARES ABOUT YOU.
YOU'LL ALWAYS BE A MONSTER TO EVERYONE ELSE.
I WILL BE HIS *EVERYTHING*.
THAT'S WHAT SHE DID TO **ME**. *SHE MADE ME OBEDIENT. SHE MADE ME LOYAL TO HER. SHE MADE ME* **THINK I HAD NO CHOICE.**
BUT I DO.

STOP!

WHAT DID YOU SAY?
I WON'T LET YOU HURT CLIFF. I WON'T LET YOU DO ANY OF THAT TO HIM.
IT'S NOT RIGHT. HE'S NOT YOUR TOY. IF YOU CAN'T EARN A DRAGON'S LOYALTY BY BEING A GOOD QUEEN, THEN YOU DON'T DESERVE IT AT ALL.
NO! DON'T TAKE THAT OFF!
THREE MOONS. RUBY WAS RIGHT. I AM UNDER A SPELL.
MY FATHER BETRAYED ME.
SZZZZZ
SZZZZZ

HOW COULD I HAVE FORGOTTEN CLAY? HOW COULD ANY SPELL DO THAT?
YOU STAY AWAY FROM ME. GET BACK!
DO YOU HEAR ME? I'M YOUR QUEEN, REMEMBER? YOU'RE MY CHAMPION. YOU DO WHAT I TELL YOU!
NOT ANYMORE.
HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHAT IT FELT LIKE? WHAT YOU MADE ME DO TO ALL THOSE DRAGONS? BECAUSE IT'S OVER NOW.
YOU ARE THE LAST DRAGON I WILL EVER KILL.
WAIT. PERIL, STOP.

STOP? NOW, WHEN I FINALLY HAVE THE COURAGE TO DO WHAT I SHOULD HAVE A LONG TIME AGO?
RUBY'S MY QUEEN NOW. IF I WANT TO PROVE I CAN BE TRUSTED–IF I CAN EVER BE TRUSTED–I HAVE TO START BY LISTENING TO HER.

YES...
YOUR MAJESTY?

DON'T KILL HER. YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO. THIS IS MY FIGHT.

QUEEN SCARLET OF THE SKYWINGS, I HEREBY CHALLENGE YOU TO A DUEL FOR THRONE AND KINGDOM.
GASP!
GASP!
GASP!
GASP!

YOUR MAJESTY, JUST ORDER ME TO DO IT.
WHEN I WIN, NO ONE WILL BE ABLE TO QUESTION MY POSITION.
I WANT TO TAKE MY THRONE THE RIGHT WAY–THE WAY I SHOULD HAVE IF I HADN'T BEEN SUCH A COWARD.

WHEN YOU *WIN*? HOW THRILLINGLY HILARIOUS. AFTER ALL THE CHALLENGERS I'VE KILLED, YOU THINK *YOU* STAND ANY CHANCE AT ALL? MY MOUSY DAUGHTER WHO CAN BARELY SPEAK IN A ROOM WITH MORE THAN TWO OTHER DRAGONS IN IT?
LET'S FIND OUT. MAYBE I'M NOT WHO YOU THINK I AM.
VERY WELL. I ACCEPT YOUR CHALLENGE.
COME AT ME, *DAUGHTER*.
I'LL PROTECT CLIFF. NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS.
THANK YOU.
TO THE ARENA, THEN.
NO. IT'S FULL OF WOUNDED SOLDIERS AND HEALING SUPPLIES. CHOOSE SOMEWHERE ELSE.
UP THERE.

I'M-A BE A WARRIOR CHAMPION AND GO ROARGH WITH MY MOUTH AND SAVE MOMMY!
MAYBE WE SHOULD STAY DOWN HERE.
NOOOOOOOOOOOOO! I WANT TO SEE IT!

THREE MOONS, CALM DOWN. I JUST DON'T WANT YOU TO GET UPSET. FIGHTS CAN BE VERY, UM... UPSETTING.
I WON'T GET UPSET!

I WANT!
TO SEE!
MOMMY KILL GRANDMA!

ALL RIGHT, YOU BLOODTHIRSTY LITTLE BARBARIAN. LET'S WAIT UNTIL THERE'S SPACE AND UP WE'LL GO.

YOU DIFFERENT NOW?
YES. I'M BETTER NOW.
NOT A BAD GUY?
WELL... I HOPE I'M NOT A BAD GUY. I WAS UNDER A SPELL BEFORE.

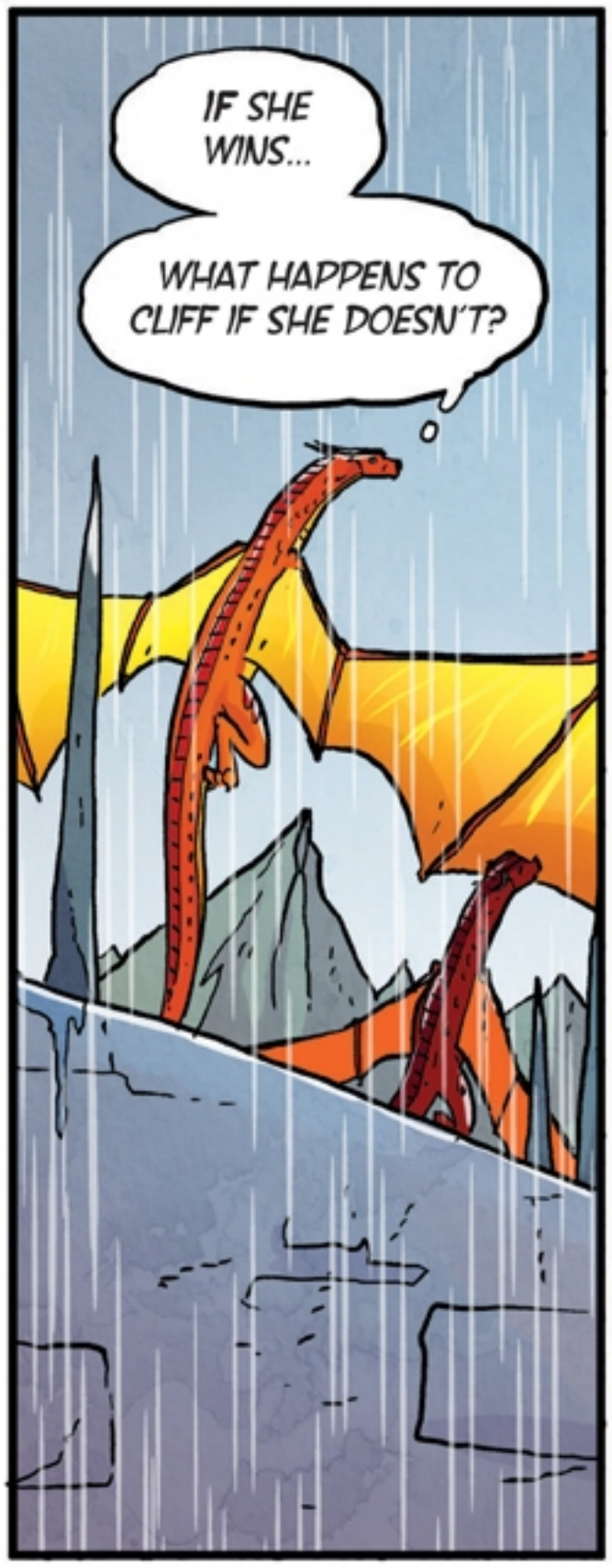
HMM. A SPELL? FROM THIS?
RIGHT.

I WASN'T THINKING FOR MYSELF. I WAS THINKING WHAT SOMEONE ELSE WANTED ME TO THINK.
SZZZZLE

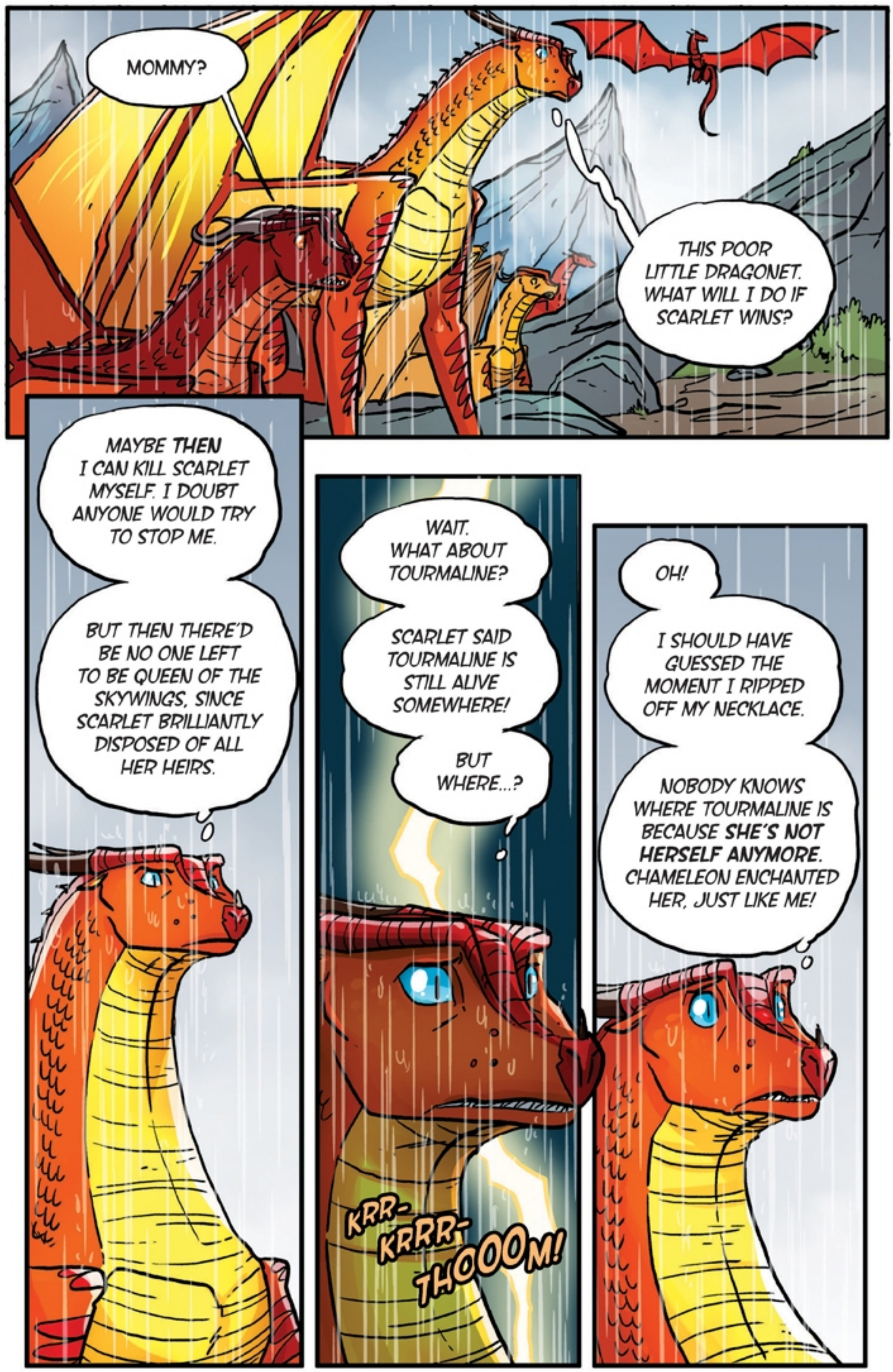
BUT I'M ALL RIGHT NOW.

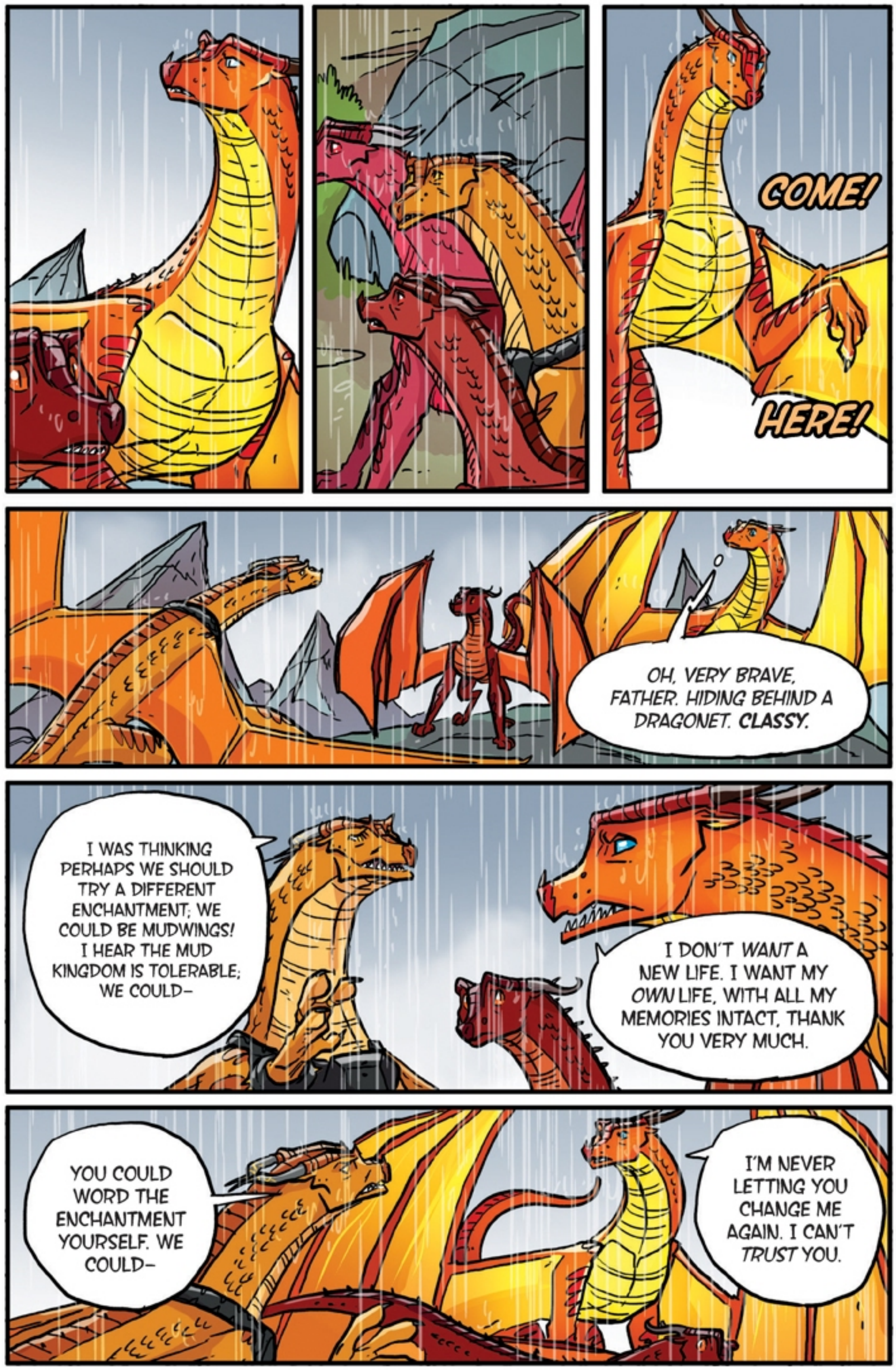
WE CAN GO UP NOW. STAY CLOSE, BUT DON'T TOUCH ME. I'M VERY HOT AND YOU'LL GET BURNED.
OH, I'M NOT AFRAID OF ME BURNED.

I AM. BE CAREFUL– AND DON'T GET CLOSE TO MOMMY EITHER. SHE'S VERY BUSY RIGHT NOW, SO LEAVE HER ALONE.
UNTIL SHE WINS!

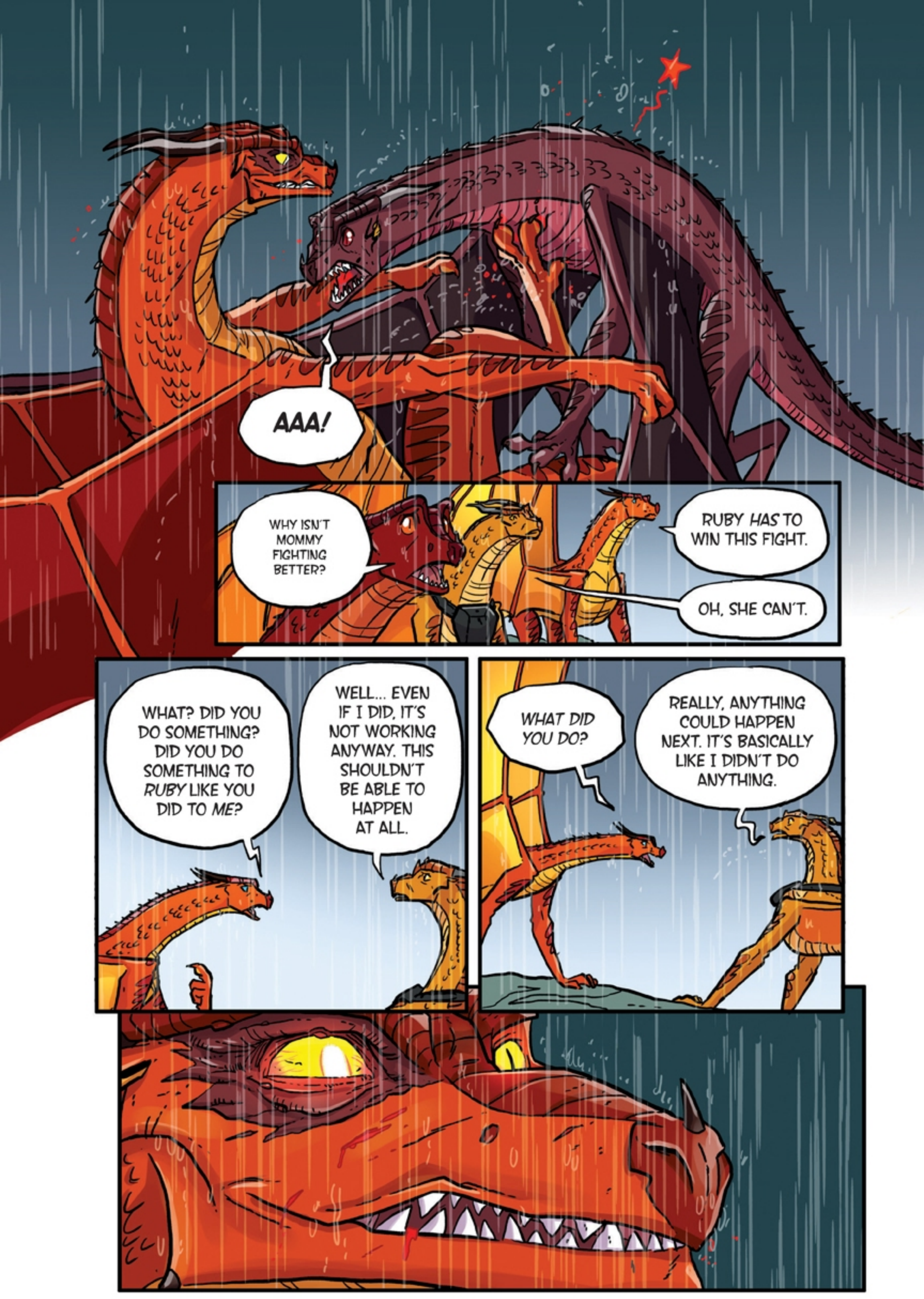

IF SHE WINS...
WHAT HAPPENS TO CLIFF IF SHE DOESN'T?

THINGS AREN'T GOING WELL FOR RUBY...
AAH!
CRACK!


MOMMY?
THIS POOR LITTLE DRAGONET. WHAT WILL I DO IF SCARLET WINS?
MAYBE THEN I CAN KILL SCARLET MYSELF. I DOUBT ANYONE WOULD TRY TO STOP ME.
BUT THEN THERE'D BE NO ONE LEFT TO BE QUEEN OF THE SKYWINGS, SINCE SCARLET BRILLIANTLY DISPOSED OF ALL HER HEIRS.
WAIT. WHAT ABOUT TOURMALINE?
SCARLET SAID TOURMALINE IS STILL ALIVE SOMEWHERE!
BUT WHERE...?
KRR-
KRRR-
THOOOM!
OH!
I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED THE MOMENT I RIPPED OFF MY NECKLACE.
NOBODY KNOWS WHERE TOURMALINE IS BECAUSE SHE'S NOT HERSELF ANYMORE. CHAMELEON ENCHANTED HER, JUST LIKE ME!

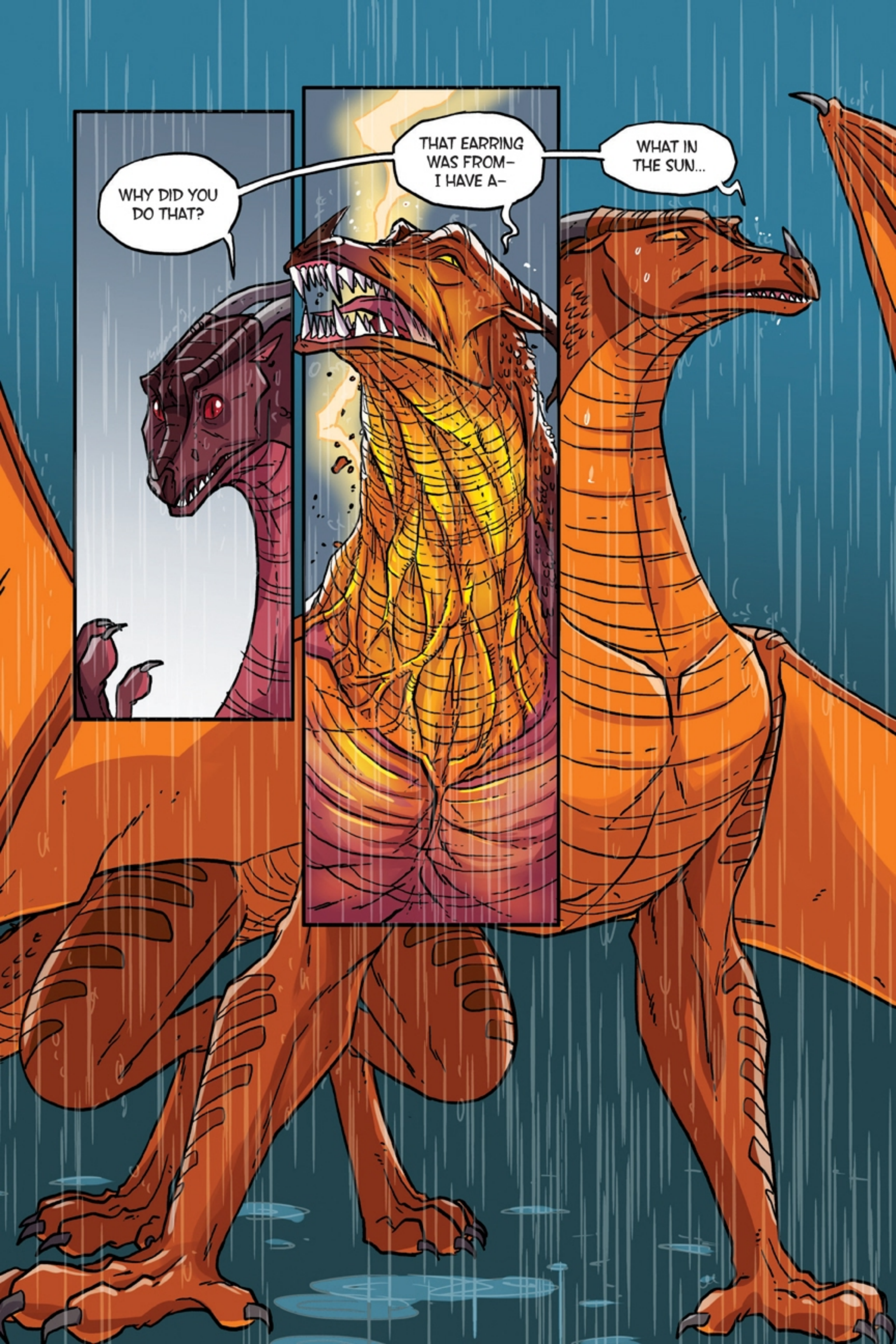

COME!
HERE!
OH, VERY BRAVE, FATHER. HIDING BEHIND A DRAGONET. CLASSY.
I WAS THINKING PERHAPS WE SHOULD TRY A DIFFERENT ENCHANTMENT; WE COULD BE MUDWINGS! I HEAR THE MUD KINGDOM IS TOLERABLE; WE COULD–
I DON'T *WANT* A NEW LIFE. I WANT MY *OWN* LIFE, WITH ALL MY MEMORIES INTACT, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
YOU COULD WORD THE ENCHANTMENT YOURSELF. WE COULD–
I'M NEVER LETTING YOU CHANGE ME AGAIN. I CAN'T *TRUST* YOU.

NOW TELL ME WHAT YOU DID TO TOURMALINE.
ME? TOURMALINE? I DON'T–I CAN'T EVEN– WAS THERE–WHO'S THAT?
VERY AMUSING. ALMOST AS AMUSING AS YOUR EARS ON FIRE WOULD BE.
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, YES, I CHANGED HER!
TOURMALINE WAS GETTING TOO AMBITIOUS. SCARLET WANTED HER OUT OF THE WAY, BUT NOT DEAD. SHE COULDN'T GET RID OF *ALL* HER HEIRS...
SO TOURMALINE IS STILL AVAILABLE IF SHE'S EVER NEEDED. SHE JUST DOESN'T KNOW IT.
YOU SHOULDN'T *DO* THAT. YOU CAN'T JUST TAKE AWAY A DRAGON'S MEMORY! TURN THEM INTO SOMEONE COMPLETELY NEW! THAT'S HORRIBLE!
I THOUGHT BECOMING SOMEONE NEW WAS EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANTED. PERSONALLY, I *LIKE* BEING DIFFERENT DRAGONS.
YOU STILL HAVE YOUR MEMORY! YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE UNDERNEATH. TOURMALINE, I ASSUME, DOES NOT.
TRUE. BUT SHE WAS SAFER THAT WAY.
SO WHERE IS TOURMALINE? IS SHE HERE NOW?
NOD
NOD

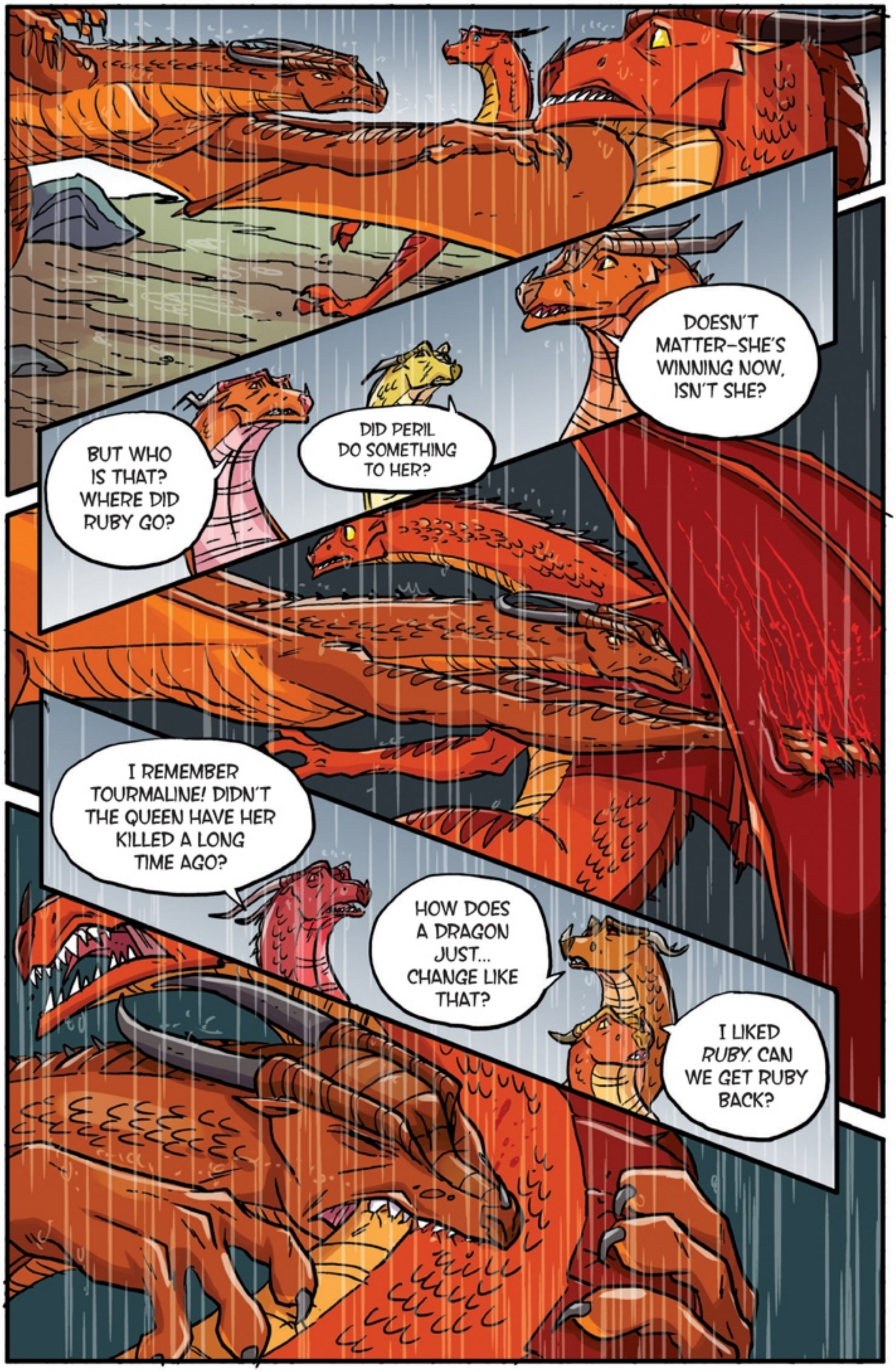

AAA!
WHY ISN'T MOMMY FIGHTING BETTER?
RUBY *HAS* TO WIN THIS FIGHT.
OH, SHE CAN'T.
WHAT? DID YOU DO SOMETHING? DID YOU DO SOMETHING TO *RUBY* LIKE YOU DID TO *ME*?
WELL... EVEN IF I DID, IT'S NOT WORKING ANYWAY. THIS SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO HAPPEN AT ALL.
WHAT DID YOU DO?
REALLY, ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN NEXT. IT'S BASICALLY LIKE I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING.

CHAMELEON COULD HAVE DONE ANYTHING TO RUBY WITH THAT SCROLL. HE COULD HAVE ENCHANTED HER TO LOSE ANY CHALLENGE AGAINST SCARLET. BUT–
HE'D NEED A THING TO ENCHANT– THAT'S HOW ANIMUS MAGIC WORKS.
SOMETHING WITH ROOM FOR A PIECE OF SCROLL...
THERE! I'VE NEVER SEEN HER WITHOUT THAT EARRING. AND THAT PENDANT COULD FIT A PIECE OF PAPER INSIDE!

WAIT HERE.
BUT–BUT YOU *SAID* NOT TO INTERRUPT MOMMY–!
KAA-THOOOOM!
PERIL, DON'T INTERFERE! I HAVE TO WIN THIS MYSELF!
I KNOW–BUT IT'S NOT A FAIR FIGHT RIGHT NOW. DON'T MOVE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? THAT'S A PRESENT FROM MY SIST–
SZZZZZ


WHY DID YOU DO THAT?
THAT EARRING WAS FROM– I HAVE A–
WHAT IN THE SUN...

I'M S-SORRY. YOU WERE UNDER A SPELL TO STOP YOU FROM WINNING THIS BATTLE AND I-I THOUGHT THAT WASN'T FAIR.
TOURMALINE? BUT-AREN'T YOU *DEAD*?
NOT YET. BUT SHE WILL BE SOON.
THIS IS *TOURMALINE*?
BUT IF I'M TOURMALINE... THEN WHERE-OR WHO-IS RUBY?
THERE IS NO RUBY!
IT TURNS OUT WHEN YOU'RE THE QUEEN, NO ONE QUESTIONS WHICH DRAGONS YOU CLAIM AS DAUGHTERS.
I INVENTED RUBY COMPLETELY, EXACTLY THE WAY I WANTED HER. AFTER ALL, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN DISAPPOINTED IN THE DAUGHTERS I ACTUALLY HAD.
QUEEN RUBY, MY ADVICE IS TO FINISH KILLING QUEEN SCARLET, *THEN* FIGURE THIS OUT. I HAVE SOMEONE WHO CAN ANSWER ALL YOUR QUESTIONS.
GOOD IDEA.


DOESN'T MATTER–SHE'S WINNING NOW, ISN'T SHE?
DID PERIL DO SOMETHING TO HER?
BUT WHO IS THAT? WHERE DID RUBY GO?
I REMEMBER TOURMALINE! DIDN'T THE QUEEN HAVE HER KILLED A LONG TIME AGO?
HOW DOES A DRAGON JUST... CHANGE LIKE THAT?
I LIKED *RUBY*. CAN WE GET RUBY BACK?

I WISH YOU HADN'T DONE THAT. IT'LL RAISE QUESTIONS, AND IT'LL BE REALLY AWKWARD FOR ME IF YOU START POINTING TALONS.
YOU'RE RIGHT, I SHOULD HAVE LET RUBY DIE SO YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TO FEEL AWKWARD.
WHERE'S MOMMY? WHERE DID YOU PUT HER?
I WANT MOMMY BACK!
I WISH I COULD HUG YOU, CLIFF.
OR HOLD YOUR TALON, LIKE CLAY DOES WHEN HE'S COMFORTING SOMEONE.
IT'S ALL RIGHT, LITTLE PRINCE.
SHE HAS TO LOOK LIKE THAT TO WIN THIS FIGHT, BUT SHE'S STILL YOUR MOTHER. SHE STILL LOVES YOU THE SAME.
WELL, SHE MIGHT NOT. THAT WAS A WHOLE OTHER PERSONALITY I BUILT FOR HER WITH A LOT OF FALSE MEMORIES IN IT. SHE MAY FEEL DIFFERENTLY ABOUT EVERYONE NOW, EVEN HIM.

FOR THE SKYWINGS!
CRACK!

LONG LIVE QUEEN RUBY!

QUEEN RUBY!

QUEEN RUBY!

I GATHER MOST OF THESE DRAGONS MISSED THE MESSAGE ABOUT WHO SHE REALLY IS.

SHOWS HOW SMART *YOU* ARE. SHE REALLY *IS* RUBY TO THEM.

QUEEN RUBY!

QUEEN RUBY!

QUEEN RUBY!

AND IF SHE HAS ALL HER MEMORIES, ISN'T SHE REALLY RUBY? WHAT ELSE MAKES A DRAGON WHO SHE IS?

MORAL FIBER? A COHERENT PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE?

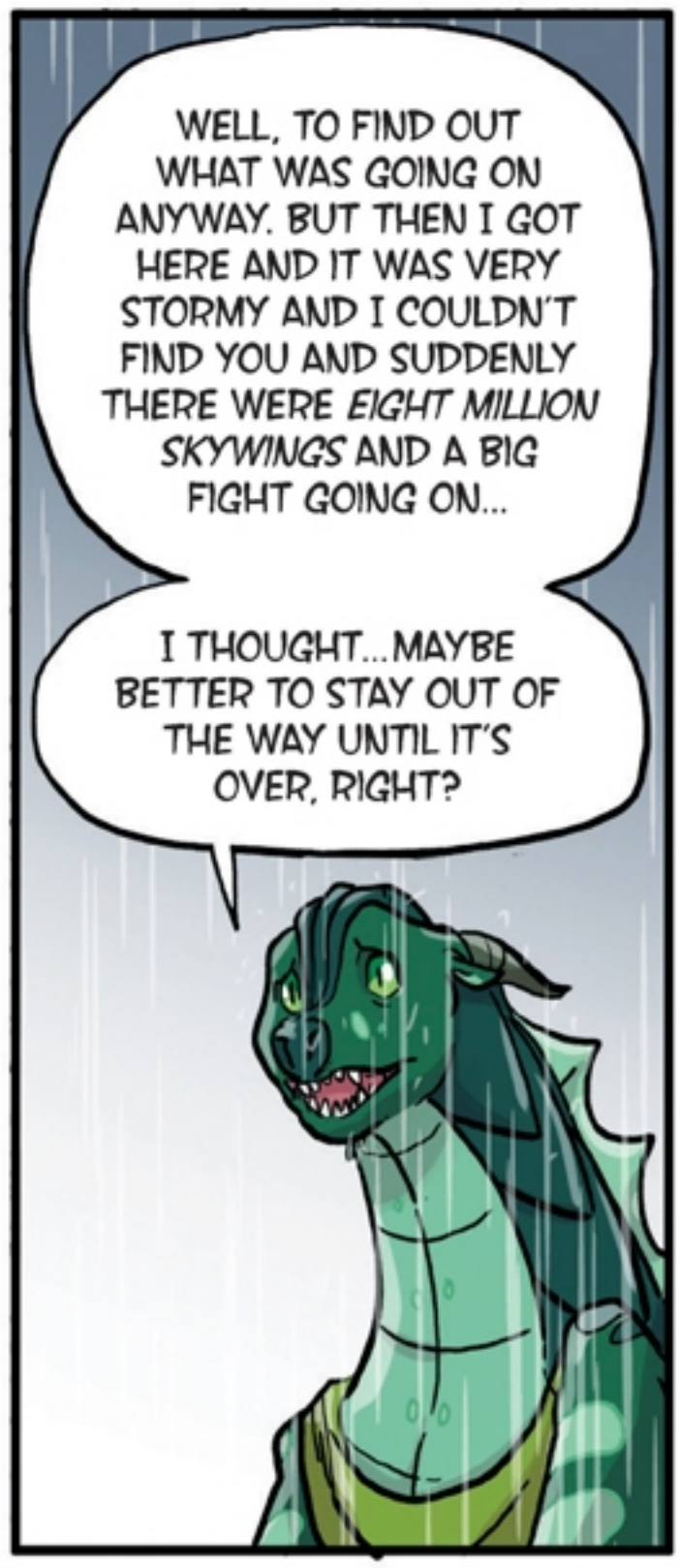
QUEEN RUBY!

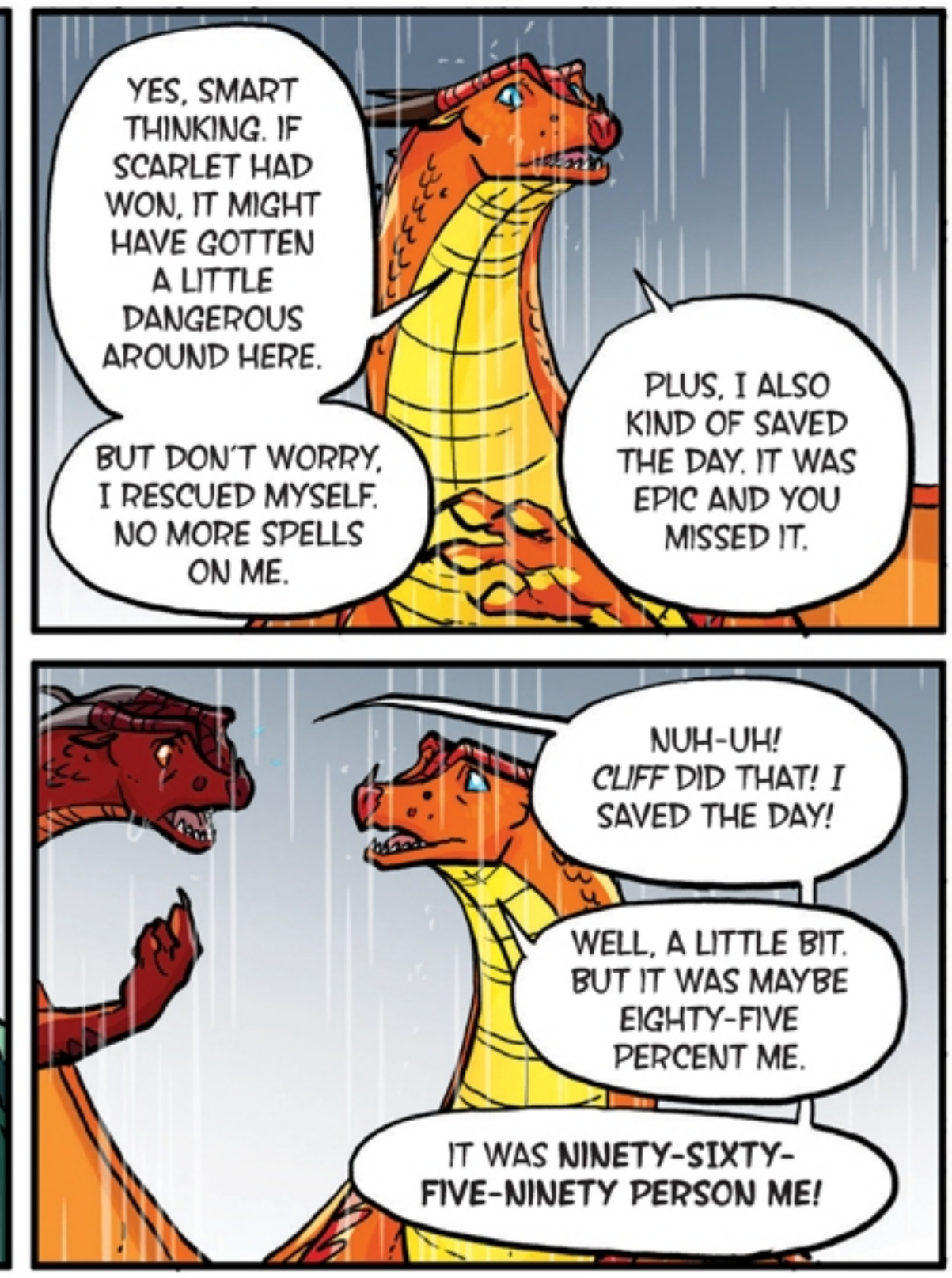
TURTLE!

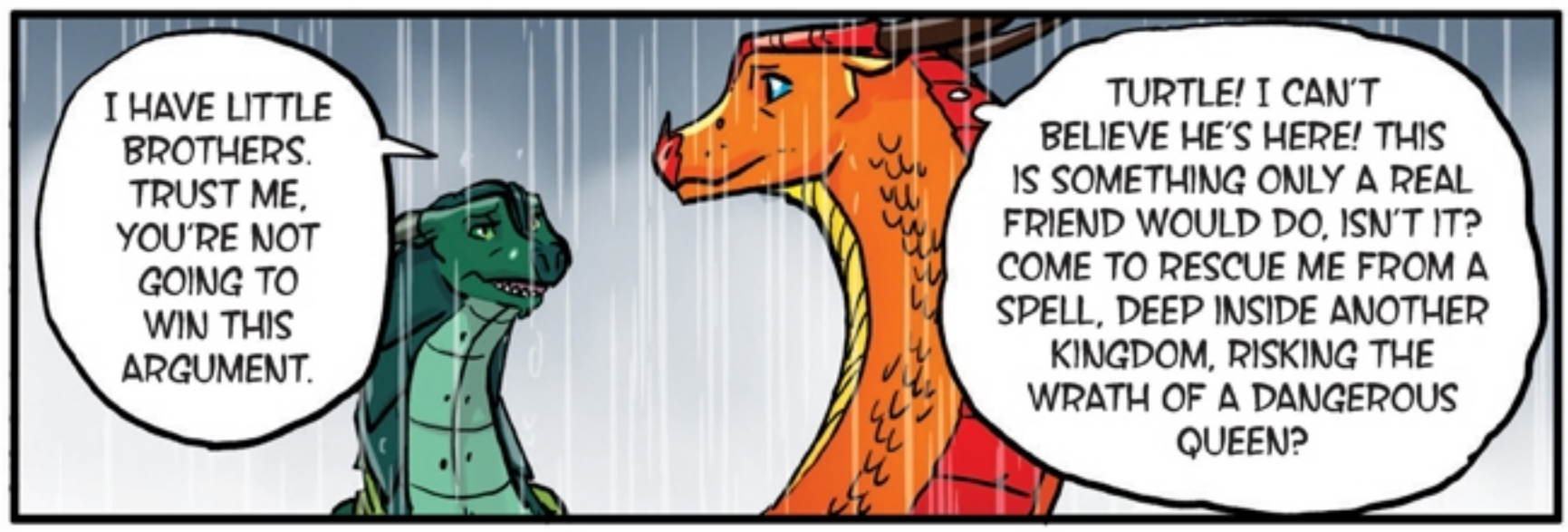
HI. I, UH... CAME TO RESCUE YOU?

QUEEN RUBY!

QUEEN RUBY!

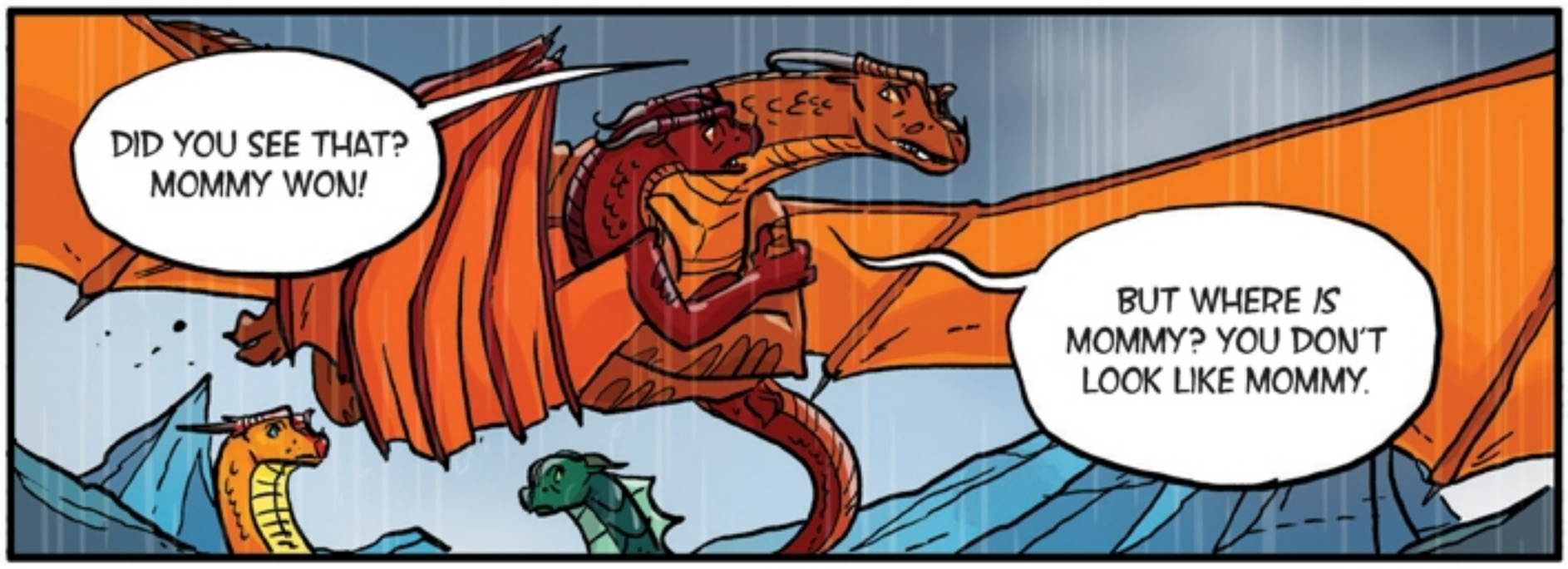

WELL, TO FIND OUT WHAT WAS GOING ON ANYWAY. BUT THEN I GOT HERE AND IT WAS VERY STORMY AND I COULDN'T FIND YOU AND SUDDENLY THERE WERE *EIGHT MILLION SKYWINGS* AND A BIG FIGHT GOING ON...
I THOUGHT...MAYBE BETTER TO STAY OUT OF THE WAY UNTIL IT'S OVER, RIGHT?

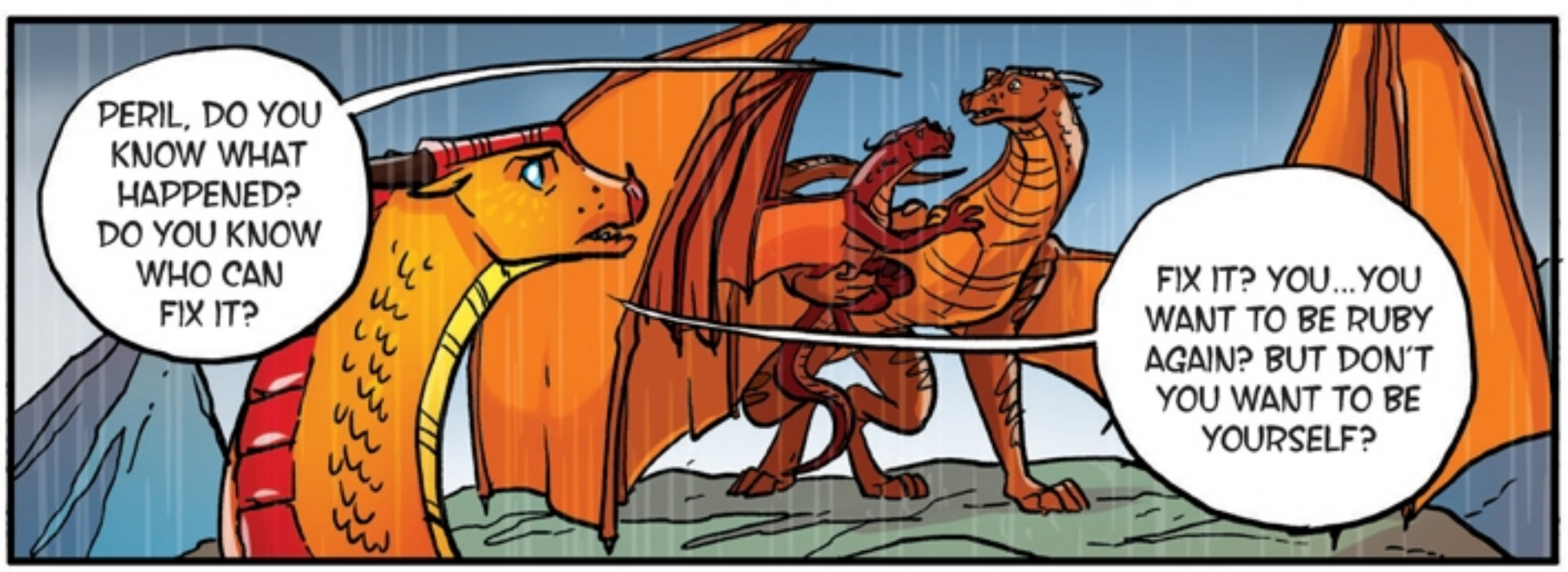

YES, SMART THINKING. IF SCARLET HAD WON, IT MIGHT HAVE GOTTEN A LITTLE DANGEROUS AROUND HERE.
BUT DON'T WORRY, I RESCUED MYSELF. NO MORE SPELLS ON ME.
PLUS, I ALSO KIND OF SAVED THE DAY. IT WAS EPIC AND YOU MISSED IT.
NUH-UH! *CLIFF* DID THAT! I SAVED THE DAY!
WELL, A LITTLE BIT. BUT IT WAS MAYBE EIGHTY-FIVE PERCENT ME.
IT WAS **NINETY-SIXTY-FIVE-NINETY PERSON ME!**


I HAVE LITTLE BROTHERS. TRUST ME, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO WIN THIS ARGUMENT.
TURTLE! I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S HERE! THIS IS SOMETHING ONLY A REAL FRIEND WOULD DO, ISN'T IT? COME TO RESCUE ME FROM A SPELL, DEEP INSIDE ANOTHER KINGDOM, RISKING THE WRATH OF A DANGEROUS QUEEN?

MAYBE YOU DO LIKE ME AFTER ALL.
YOU'RE A LOON. OF *COURSE* I DO, EVEN WHEN YOU'RE SCARY. WHICH, LET'S BE FAIR, IS MOST OF THE TIME.

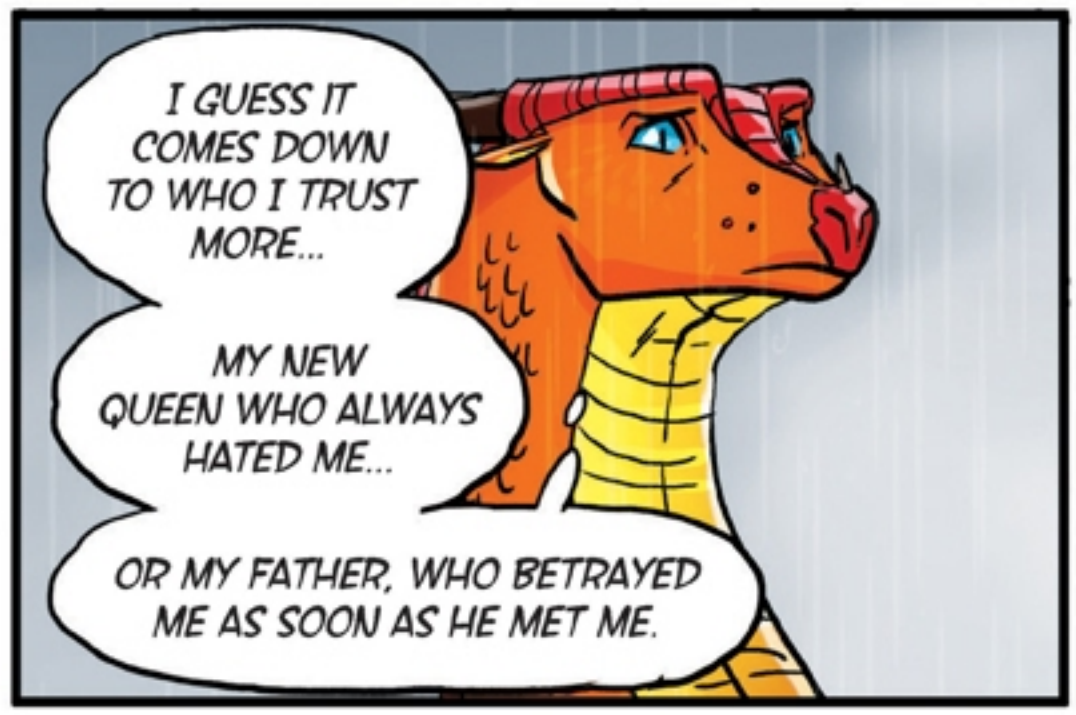
BUT WHAT IF I'M THE "TALONS OF POWER AND FIRE"? SHOULDN'T YOU "BEWARE" ME INSTEAD OF BEING FRIENDS WITH ME?
I CAN BEWARE YOU AND LIKE YOU AT THE SAME TIME.
BESIDES, IF I HAVE A CHOICE, I THINK I'D RATHER BE ON THE SIDE *WITH* TALONS OF POWER AND FIRE, FRANKLY.
CLIFF! CLIFF!


DID YOU SEE THAT? MOMMY WON!
BUT WHERE *IS* MOMMY? YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE MOMMY.


PERIL, DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED? DO YOU KNOW WHO CAN FIX IT?
FIX IT? YOU...YOU WANT TO BE RUBY AGAIN? BUT DON'T YOU WANT TO BE YOURSELF?

I WILL BE MYSELF! I *AM* RUBY. I REMEMBER EVERYTHING ABOUT BEING HER. ALL I NEED IS TO LOOK LIKE HER AGAIN.
RUBY IS THE SKYWING QUEEN AND CLIFF'S MOTHER. NOW THAT I KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT MY SISTER– ABOUT ME–I CAN BE EVEN BETTER AT BOTH THOSE THINGS.

CHAMELEON WANTS TO KEEP HIS POWER SECRET... AND WHO KNOWS WHAT RUBY MIGHT DO WITH IT
BUT IF I LET HIM GO, WHAT WILL HE DO WITH IT?


I GUESS IT COMES DOWN TO WHO I TRUST MORE...
MY NEW QUEEN WHO ALWAYS HATED ME...
OR MY FATHER, WHO BETRAYED ME AS SOON AS HE MET ME.

CLAY WOULD TELL ME TO TRUST MYSELF.
WHAT MAKES THE WORLD SAFER FOR EVERYONE?

THIS IS THE DRAGON YOU NEED, YOUR MAJESTY.

THANK YOU, PERIL.
LET'S CONTINUE THIS DISCUSSION IN THE PALACE.

SHOW THE QUEEN.
DO I HAVE TO?
YES.
LET'S ASK MY TALONS.
OH, GUESS WHAT, THEY SAY YES, TOO.
HEE HEE
SNORF

SIGHHH
THIS IS WHAT I USE. IT'S ANIMUS-TOUCHED.
WHERE DID IT COME FROM?
I...FOUND IT.

HE'S NOT SHOWING HER THE POUCH WHERE HE KEEPS HIS DIFFERENT SHAPES. I CAN LEAVE HIM ONE SECRET, SINCE HE LOVES HIS SHAPES SO MUCH.
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS WRITE AN ENCHANTMENT, TEAR IT OFF, AND GIVE IT TO YOU. AS LONG AS YOU WEAR IT, YOU'LL BE WHATEVER THE ENCHANTMENT SAYS YOU ARE.

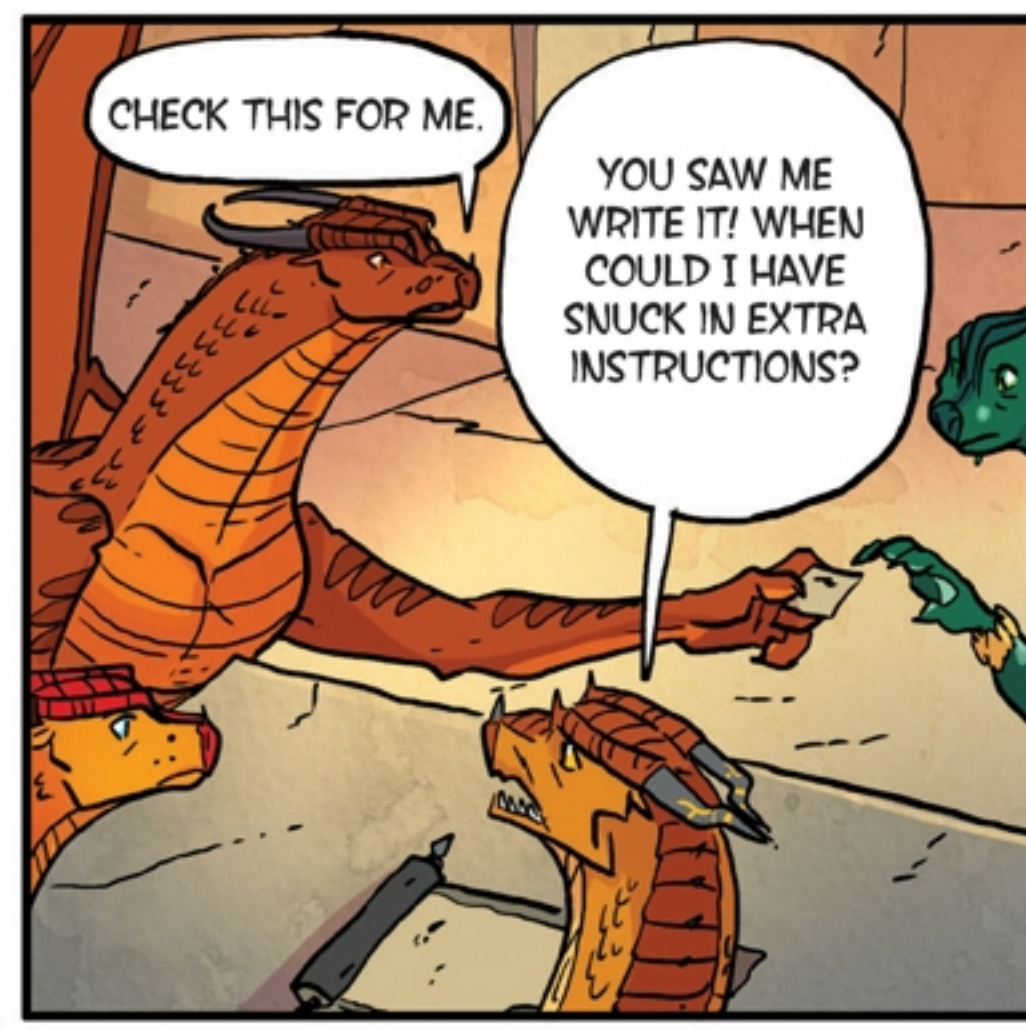
IN FACT, I COULD MAKE YOU ANYTHING. FOR THE RIGHT PRICE, I CAN MAKE YOU INVINCIBLE. I CAN MAKE YOU AS STRONG AS TEN DRAGONS. IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES! WHAT HAVE YOU ALWAYS DREAMED OF BEING?

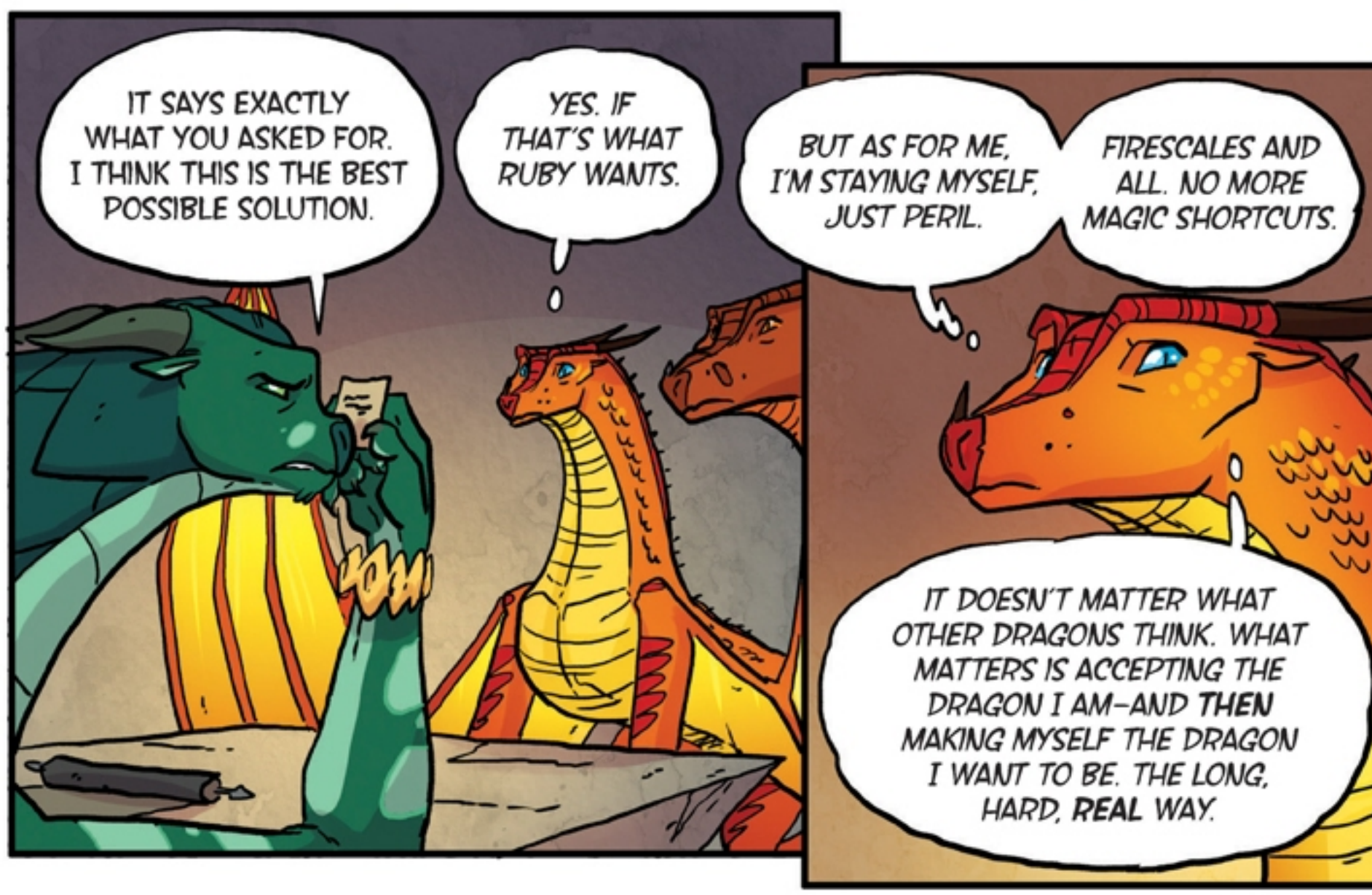
QUEEN.
AS BOTH TOURMALINE AND RUBY, THAT'S WHAT I WANTED. AND I DID IT, WITHOUT ANY STRANGE MAGIC.

I WANT IT TO SAY: "TURN THIS DRAGON BACK INTO RUBY, QUEEN OF THE SKYWINGS, WITH ALL HER MEMORIES INTACT."
TAP
TAP
TAP

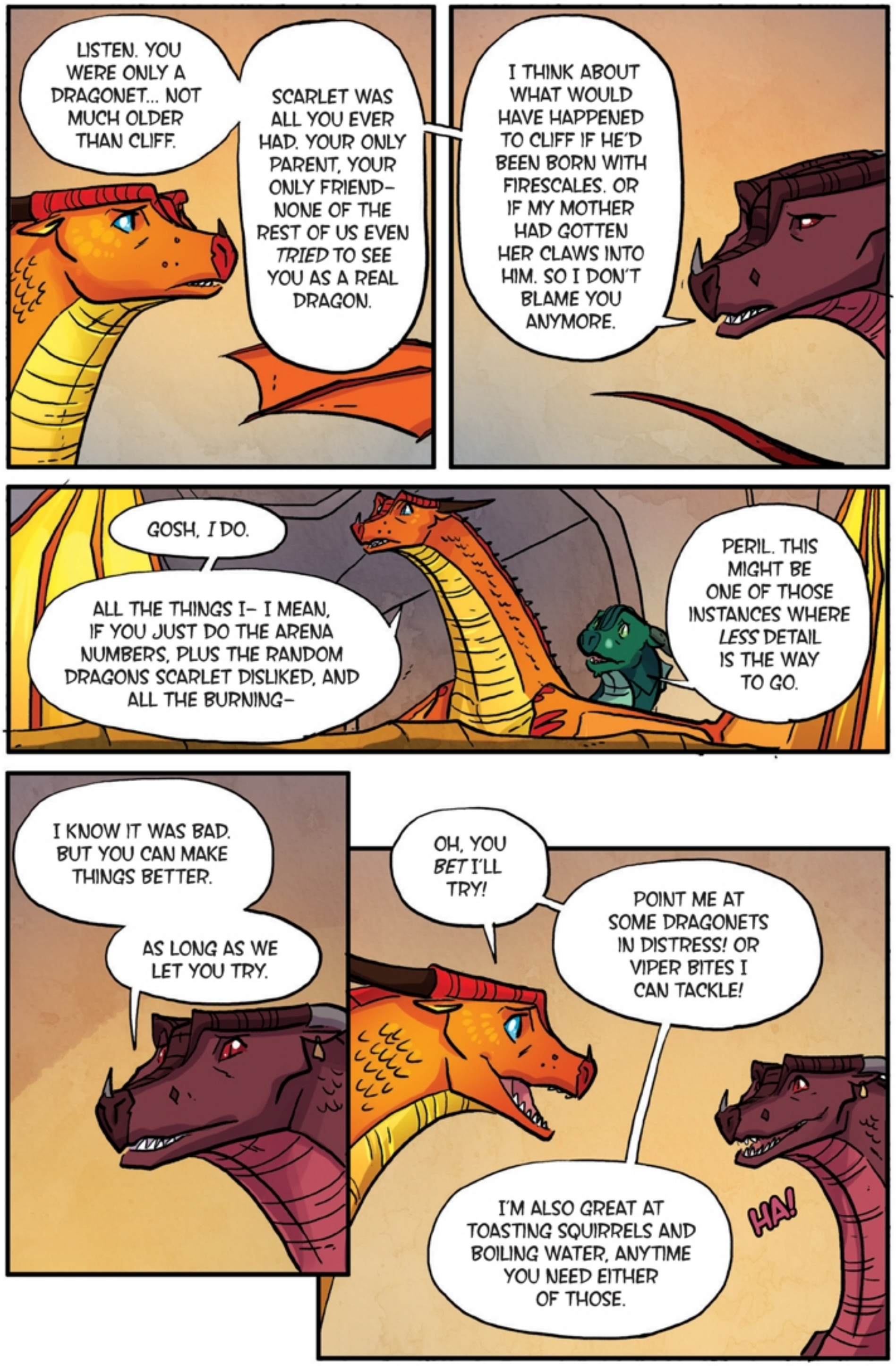
THAT'S IT? NO SUPER-POWERS?
THAT'S IT. I WANT TO WATCH YOU WRITE IT. DO IT NOW.

SCRITCH
SCRITCH


CHECK THIS FOR ME.
YOU SAW ME WRITE IT! WHEN COULD I HAVE SNUCK IN EXTRA INSTRUCTIONS?


IT SAYS EXACTLY WHAT YOU ASKED FOR. I THINK THIS IS THE BEST POSSIBLE SOLUTION.
YES. IF THAT'S WHAT RUBY WANTS.
BUT AS FOR ME, I'M STAYING MYSELF, JUST PERIL.
FIRESCALES AND ALL. NO MORE MAGIC SHORTCUTS.
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT OTHER DRAGONS THINK. WHAT MATTERS IS ACCEPTING THE DRAGON I AM—AND THEN MAKING MYSELF THE DRAGON I WANT TO BE. THE LONG, HARD, REAL WAY.

THIS DOESN'T FEEL LIKE A NORMAL SKYWING PARTY, SOMEHOW.
THAT'S BECAUSE IT'S MISSING ALL THE FUN BRUTAL MURDER PARTS.
YOUR MAJESTY, I–
I'M SORRY ABOUT THE EGGS ON THE BRIGHTEST NIGHT.
STOP.

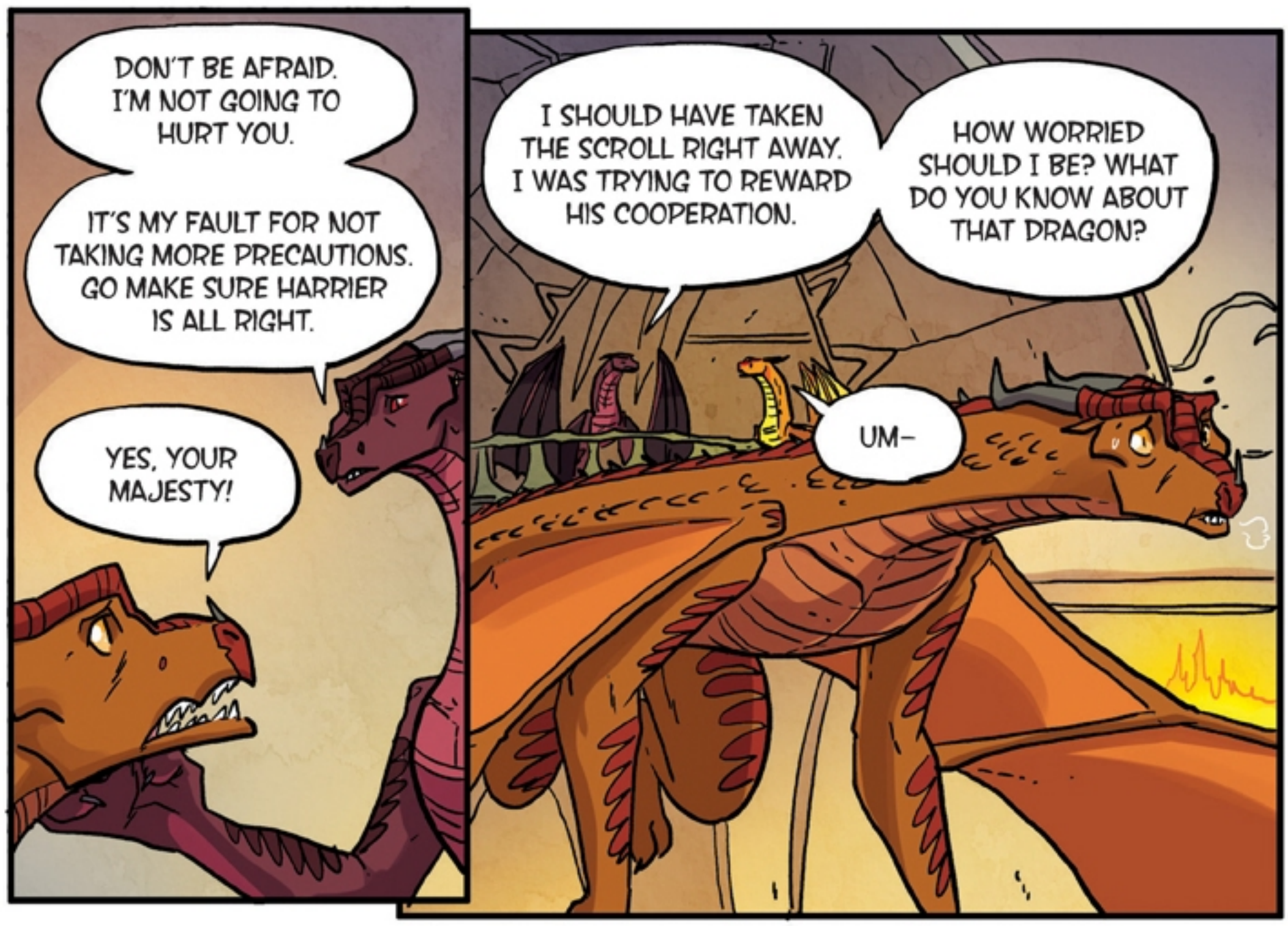

LISTEN. YOU WERE ONLY A DRAGONET... NOT MUCH OLDER THAN CLIFF.
SCARLET WAS ALL YOU EVER HAD. YOUR ONLY PARENT, YOUR ONLY FRIEND– NONE OF THE REST OF US EVEN *TRIED* TO SEE YOU AS A REAL DRAGON.
I THINK ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED TO CLIFF IF HE'D BEEN BORN WITH FIRESCALES. OR IF MY MOTHER HAD GOTTEN HER CLAWS INTO HIM. SO I DON'T BLAME YOU ANYMORE.
GOSH, *I* DO.
ALL THE THINGS I– I MEAN, IF YOU JUST DO THE ARENA NUMBERS, PLUS THE RANDOM DRAGONS SCARLET DISLIKED, AND ALL THE BURNING–
PERIL. THIS MIGHT BE ONE OF THOSE INSTANCES WHERE *LESS* DETAIL IS THE WAY TO GO.
I KNOW IT WAS BAD. BUT YOU CAN MAKE THINGS BETTER.
AS LONG AS WE LET YOU TRY.
OH, YOU *BET* I'LL TRY!
POINT ME AT SOME DRAGONETS IN DISTRESS! OR VIPER BITES I CAN TACKLE!
I'M ALSO GREAT AT TOASTING SQUIRRELS AND BOILING WATER, ANYTIME YOU NEED EITHER OF THOSE.
HA!

PERIL, THIS SHOULD BE OBVIOUS TO EVERYONE WHO SAW YOU SAVE CLIFF–BUT JUST TO MAKE IT OFFICIAL. YOU ARE NO LONGER BANISHED. IF YOU WANT TO MOVE BACK INTO THE PALACE, YOU CAN.
OH... THANKS. I'LL THINK ABOUT IT.
IS THIS WHAT BEING A HERO FEELS LIKE?
I THOUGHT I'D BE MORE... DIFFERENT. LIKE BEING GOOD WOULD SUDDENLY BE EASY.
LET ME THROUGH!

YOUR MAJESTY, ISN'T THAT ONE OF THE GUARDS WHO WAS *SUPPOSED* TO KEEP AN EYE ON CHAM–ER, SOAR?

YOUR MAJESTY, I'M *SORRY!* I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED!

SUDDENLY THERE WAS A NIGHTWING–A *REALLY BIG* ONE! HE CAME FROM *INSIDE* THE ROOM– I DON'T KNOW HOW HE GOT IN THERE! HE KNOCKED OUT HARRIER WITH ONE BLOW AND THEN FLEW OFF AND THE SKYWING WAS GONE!
I'M SO *SO* SORRY.


DON'T BE AFRAID. I'M NOT GOING TO HURT YOU.
IT'S MY FAULT FOR NOT TAKING MORE PRECAUTIONS. GO MAKE SURE HARRIER IS ALL RIGHT.
YES, YOUR MAJESTY!
I SHOULD HAVE TAKEN THE SCROLL RIGHT AWAY. I WAS TRYING TO REWARD HIS COOPERATION.
HOW WORRIED SHOULD I BE? WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT DRAGON?
UM–

HE'S REALLY A RAINWING. HE COULD USE THE SCROLL FOR ALMOST ANYTHING, BUT HE MOSTLY JUST SHAPE-SHIFTS. I THINK IT'S BECAUSE HE CAN'T NATURALLY CHANGE HIS SCALES.
I DON'T *THINK* HE'D DO EVIL THINGS WITH IT WITHOUT SCARLET–BUT ACTUALLY, I DON'T KNOW HIM THAT WELL.

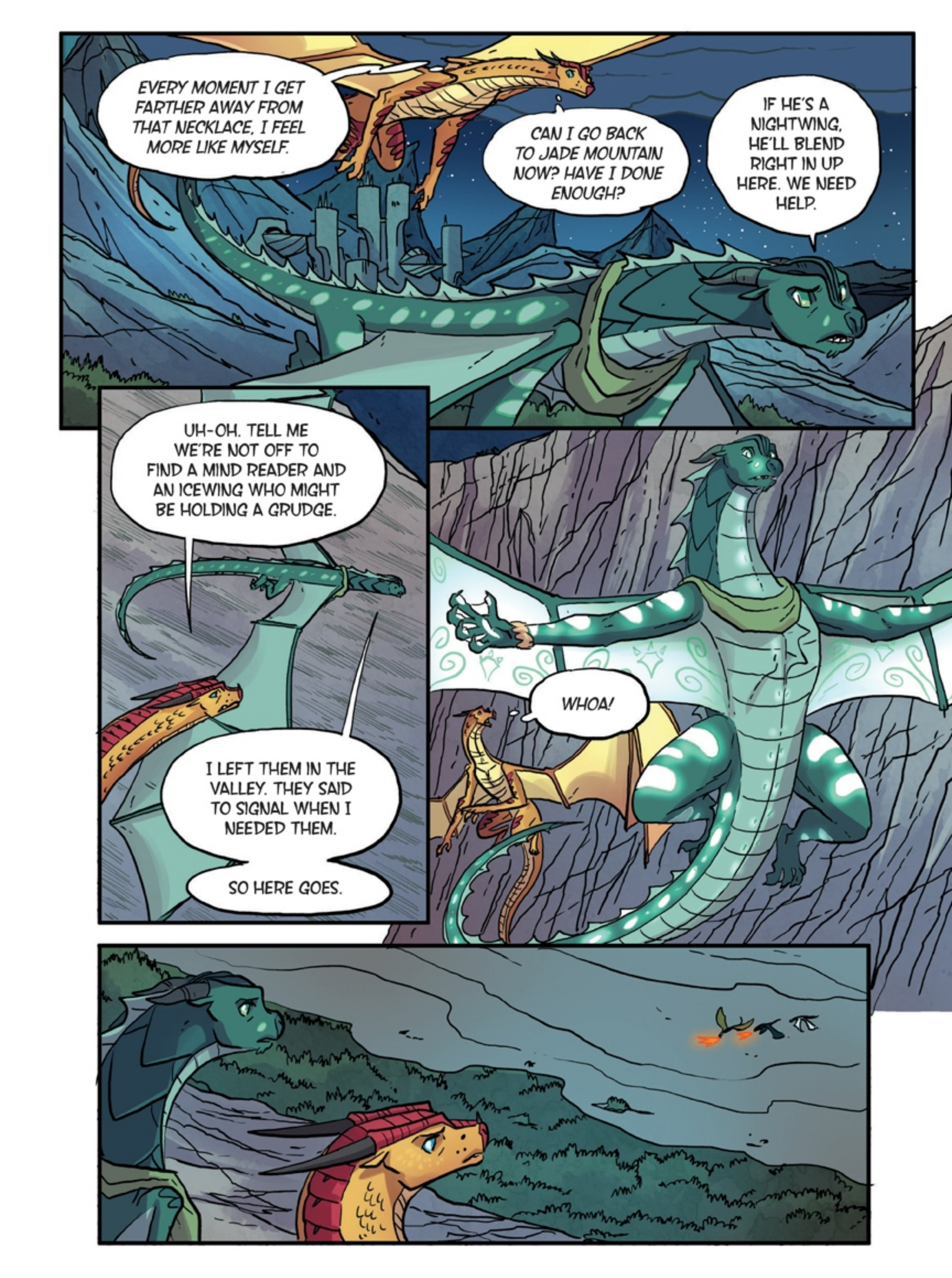
FOR INSTANCE, I DIDN'T THINK HE'D RUN OFF THE FIRST CHANCE HE GOT.
WITHOUT EVEN SAYING GOOD-BYE.

WAIT, HE HAS A NIGHTWING SHAPE? AND HE WAS WORKING FOR SCARLET?
IS HE THE ONE WHO HURT KINKAJOU? WE CAN'T LET HIM WANDER AROUND WITH A WEAPON LIKE THAT!

OH, THREE MOONS. WHY DID I LET MYSELF FORGET ABOUT THAT?
YES, IT WAS HIM. HE HATES RAINWINGS.

ALL RIGHT. I'LL SEND OUT A SEARCH PARTY.
A SEARCH PARTY?
OR SIX. SIX SEARCH PARTIES.
DON'T WORRY. WE'LL FIND HIM.

WE HAVE TO GO LOOK FOR HIM, TOO. RIGHT NOW.
ABSOLUTELY, BUT–THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE YOU SHOULD KNOW. HE'S MY FATHER.
WOW, YOU HAVE BAD LUCK WITH PARENTS.
YES, BUT GOOD LUCK WITH FRIENDS.
YOU BIG SAP. AND I CAN'T EVEN THWACK YOU TO SHUT YOU UP.
YOU COULD. IT WOULD BE PRETTY FUNNY FOR ME.


EVERY MOMENT I GET FARTHER AWAY FROM THAT NECKLACE, I FEEL MORE LIKE MYSELF.
CAN I GO BACK TO JADE MOUNTAIN NOW? HAVE I DONE ENOUGH?
IF HE'S A NIGHTWING, HE'LL BLEND RIGHT IN UP HERE. WE NEED HELP.
UH-OH. TELL ME WE'RE NOT OFF TO FIND A MIND READER AND AN ICEWING WHO MIGHT BE HOLDING A GRUDGE.
I LEFT THEM IN THE VALLEY. THEY SAID TO SIGNAL WHEN I NEEDED THEM.
SO HERE GOES.
WHOA!

YOU DID IT? YOU ACTUALLY... RESCUED HER?

NOT EXACTLY.

BUT THANKS VERY MUCH FOR THE SKEPTICAL TONE!

IS SHE SAFE TO BE AROUND? WHAT DO YOU THINK, MOON?

I AM!

MUSHROOMS AND MONGOOSES!

HEE HEE!

THAT SEEMS LIKE A GOOD SIGN.

GUYS! WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR A PRICKLY REUNION.

SCARLET'S ALLY HAS ESCAPED AND IT'S WORSE THAN WE THOUGHT. HE'S A SHAPE-SHIFTER SO HE CAN LOOK LIKE A DRAGON FROM ANY TRIBE.
HE'S ALSO GOT THIS ANIMUS-TOUCHED SCROLL THAT CAN ENCHANT ANYTHING, AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL.

WHAT!

A SCROLL? REALLY? YOU'RE SURE?
UH, YES. WE SAW IT.
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS SCROLL?
NOTHING!

WAS IT WRAPPED IN A BLACK LEATHER CASING?
YEESS.
MAYBE YOU SHOULD TELL US ALL THE "NOTHING" YOU KNOW.

I JUST... I HEARD A STORY ONCE. ABOUT A NIGHTWING SCROLL FROM LONG AGO THAT WAS ANIMUS-TOUCHED.
IT SOUNDS LIKE THIS COULD BE THE SAME SCROLL. THAT WOULD BE BAD. IF IT IS, WE REALLY, REALLY NEED TO GET IT BACK.

MOON, I WAS HOPING YOU COULD TRY LISTENING FOR HIM. IT HASN'T BEEN LONG–HE CAN'T HAVE GONE FAR.
HE'S IN HIS NIGHTWING FORM. THE ONE HE CALLS SHAPESHIFTER.
VERY SUBTLE.
SHH.

I DON'T THINK I COULD PICK UP ANYTHING FROM WAY UP HERE.
LET'S FLY ALONG THE RIVER. I HAVE A FEELING HE'S GONE THAT WAY. HE SAID SOMETHING TO ME ABOUT BECOMING A MUDWING.

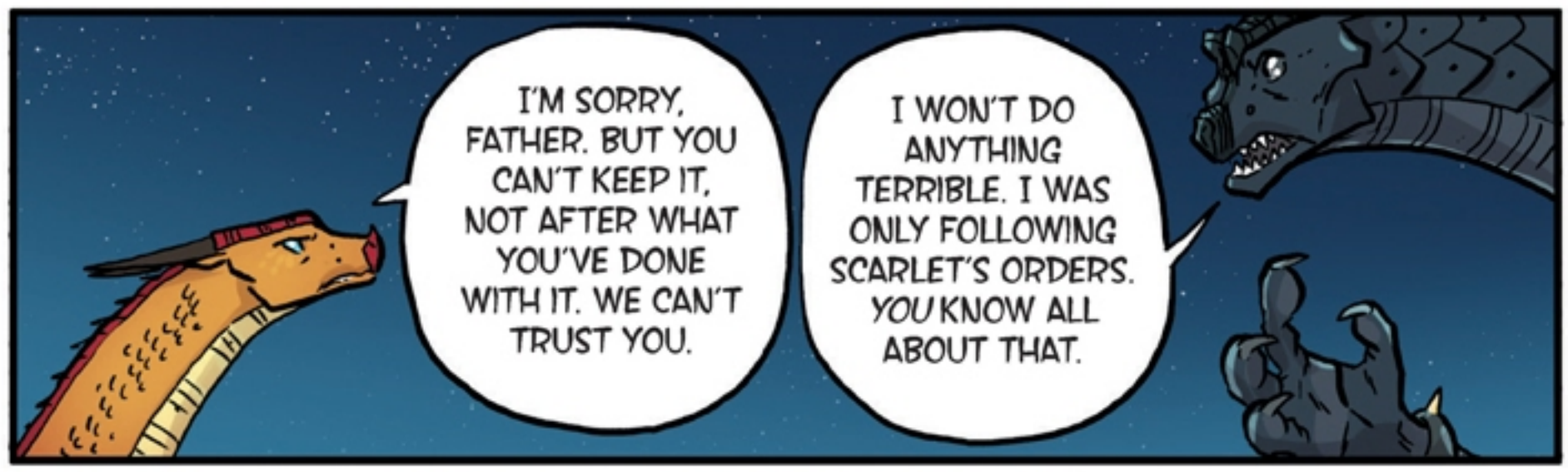
I REMEMBER CLAY SWIMMING AWAY FROM ME ALONG THIS RIVER. I REMEMBER HOW MUCH THAT HURT.

BUT AT LEAST I HAVE THAT MEMORY.

I THINK HE'S OVER THERE.

FATHER MADE HIMSELF ENORMOUS. THE KIND OF SCARY NIGHTWING EVERYONE HAS ALWAYS WHISPERED ABOUT.
FATHER! STOP! I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU, BUT I WILL!
THAT'S HIM. THAT'S THE DRAGON WHO ATTACKED US AND WOUNDED KINKAJOU.
LISTEN. WE JUST WANT THE SCROLL.
NO.

ACTUALLY, I WANT THE SCROLL AND JUSTICE. I THINK HE SHOULD PAY FOR WHAT HE DID TO KINKAJOU.
ME TOO.
TAKING THE SCROLL FROM HIM WILL BE PUNISHMENT ENOUGH.


I'M SORRY, FATHER. BUT YOU CAN'T KEEP IT, NOT AFTER WHAT YOU'VE DONE WITH IT. WE CAN'T TRUST YOU.
I WON'T DO ANYTHING TERRIBLE. I WAS ONLY FOLLOWING SCARLET'S ORDERS. YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT THAT.

YOU WEREN'T FOLLOWING HER ORDERS WHEN YOU PUT KINKAJOU IN THE HOSPITAL. THAT WAS ALL YOU.
AND YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO BETRAY ME– YOUR OWN DAUGHTER– EITHER. YOU'VE HAD CHOICES, AND WE HAVEN'T SEEN YOU MAKE ANY GOOD ONES YET.
BUT THIS IS AN EASY ONE. GIVE US THE SCROLL, AND WE'LL LET YOU GO.

OR DON'T GIVE US THE SCROLL, AND GET ANOTHER FACE FULL OF FLAMES AND FROSTBREATH.
WOW, TRY SAYING THAT FIVE TIMES FAST.

YOU'LL STILL HAVE YOUR TREASURE. YOU'LL KEEP HAVING YOUR GREAT LIFE WHEREVER YOU GO. YOU JUST WON'T BE ABLE TO HURT ANYONE ELSE.
PERIL, IT'S *MINE*. *I* FOUND IT. WHY SHOULD YOU HAVE IT? WHAT MAKES YOU ALL BETTER THAN ME?

I, UM... DON'T KNOW. ARE WE? BUT I CAN'T LEAVE IT WITH HIM.
GIVE IT TO US. PLEASE DON'T MAKE US FIGHT YOU FOR IT.
OR DO. I'M READY.
YOU THINK YOU CAN HURT ME. BUT I'VE MADE SOME MODIFICATIONS TO THIS SHAPE SINCE WE LAST MET, ICEWING. SHAPESHIFTER ALREADY HAD STRENGTH BEYOND ANY DRAGON—BUT NOW I ALSO HAVE SCALES THAT CANNOT BE HARMED AND FLAMES AS HOT AS MY DAUGHTER'S SCALES.
CLICK
I FORESEE A PRETTY HORRIBLE DEATH AHEAD FOR MOST OF YOU.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?
HOW ARE YOU *DOING* THAT?

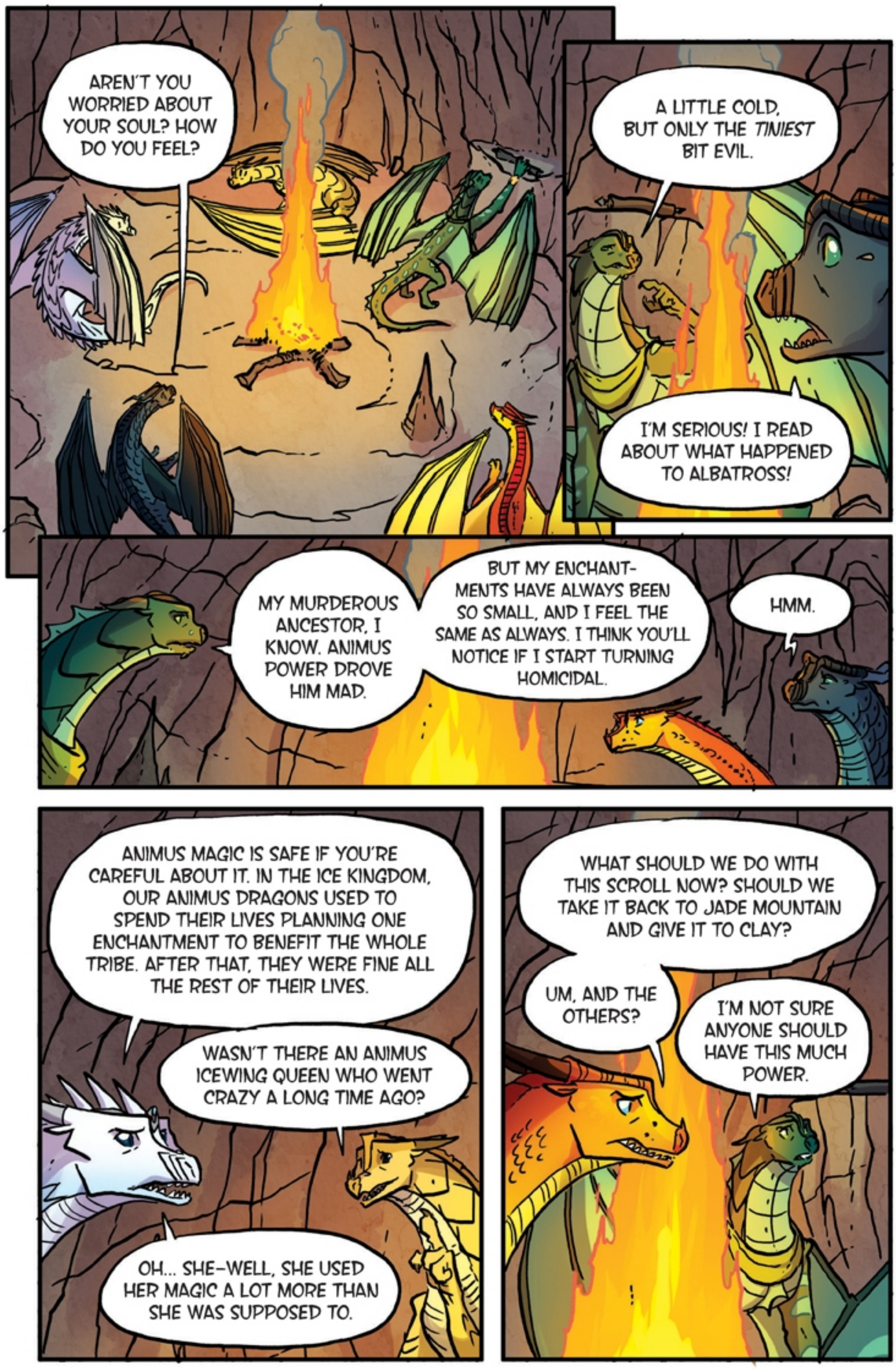
STOP! *NO!* YOU CAN'T TAKE IT!

WHAMMM
CRACK!
THAT'S ENOUGH!
AAAAAIIEE!
LET'S GO.
THE SCROLL IS MINE!
I'LL FIND YOU! YOU'LL BE SORRY!

WELL, NOW WE HAVE THE MOST DANGEROUS SCROLL IN PYRRHIA.
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH IT?

I KEEP EXPECTING TO HEAR HIS WINGBEATS BEHIND US...

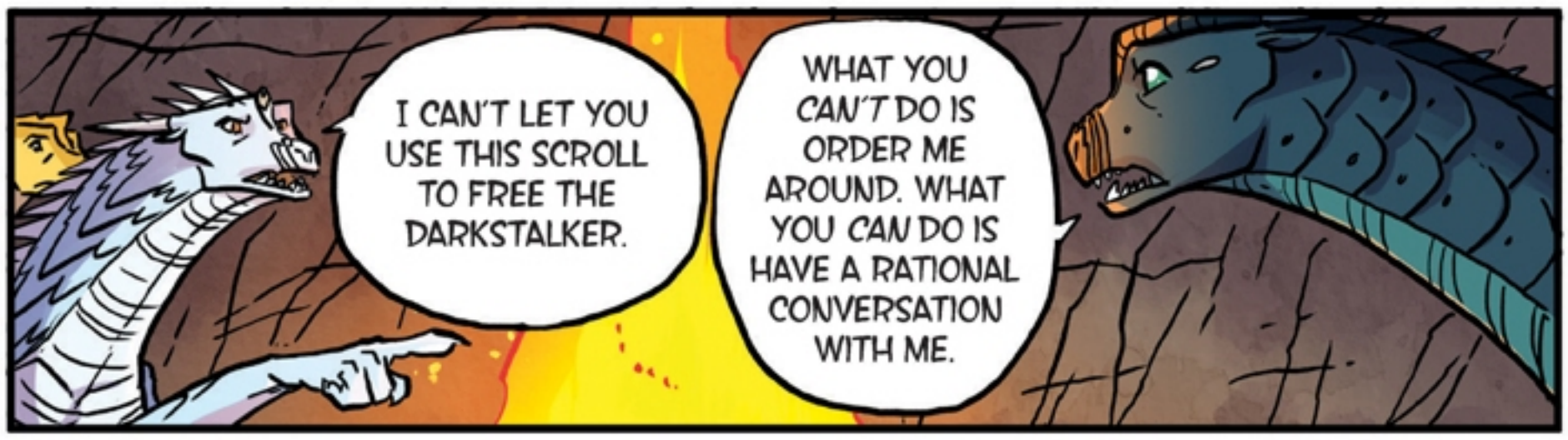
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO DO THAT, TURTLE.
YOU SHOULDN'T USE YOUR ANIMUS POWER IF YOU CAN HELP IT. MAYBE NOT EVER.


AREN'T YOU WORRIED ABOUT YOUR SOUL? HOW DO YOU FEEL?
A LITTLE COLD, BUT ONLY THE *TINIEST* BIT EVIL.
I'M SERIOUS! I READ ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO ALBATROSS!
MY MURDEROUS ANCESTOR, I KNOW. ANIMUS POWER DROVE HIM MAD.
BUT MY ENCHANT-MENTS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN SO SMALL, AND I FEEL THE SAME AS ALWAYS. I THINK YOU'LL NOTICE IF I START TURNING HOMICIDAL.
HMM.
ANIMUS MAGIC IS SAFE IF YOU'RE CAREFUL ABOUT IT. IN THE ICE KINGDOM, OUR ANIMUS DRAGONS USED TO SPEND THEIR LIVES PLANNING ONE ENCHANTMENT TO BENEFIT THE WHOLE TRIBE. AFTER THAT, THEY WERE FINE ALL THE REST OF THEIR LIVES.
WASN'T THERE AN ANIMUS ICEWING QUEEN WHO WENT CRAZY A LONG TIME AGO?
OH... SHE-WELL, SHE USED HER MAGIC A LOT MORE THAN SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO.
WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH THIS SCROLL NOW? SHOULD WE TAKE IT BACK TO JADE MOUNTAIN AND GIVE IT TO CLAY?
UM, AND THE OTHERS?
I'M NOT SURE ANYONE SHOULD HAVE THIS MUCH POWER.

A VERY WISE AND GOOD DRAGON WOULD KNOW HOW TO USE IT THE RIGHT WAY. I THINK WE SHOULD GIVE IT TO QUEEN THORN.
MAYBE WE SHOULD GIVE IT TO QUEEN GLACIER!
WE SHOULDN'T GIVE IT TO ANYONE. IT... ALREADY BELONGS TO SOMEONE.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WHO?
THE ANIMUS WHO MADE IT. HE PUT ALL HIS POWER INTO THAT SCROLL SO HE COULD USE HIS MAGIC WITHOUT DAMAGING HIS SOUL.
ISN'T THAT A GOOD IDEA? IF HIS MAGIC DOESN'T TURN HIM EVIL, HE'LL ONLY DO GOOD THINGS WITH IT, RIGHT?
MOON... IF THIS IS SOME ANCIENT LEGEND, WHY ARE YOU USING THE PRESENT TENSE?
BECAUSE–

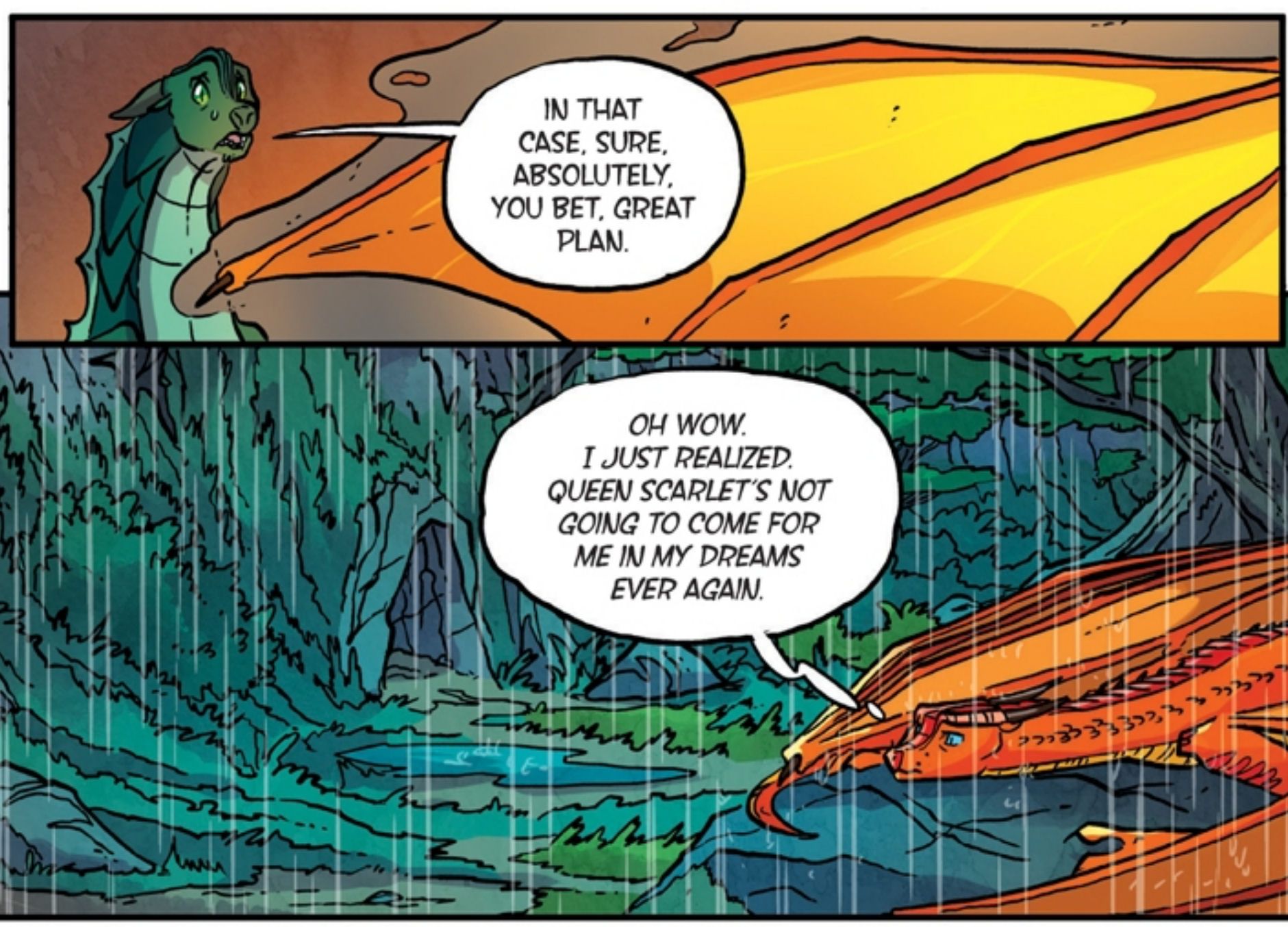
BECAUSE HE'S STILL ALIVE.
WHO?
AND HE'S TRAPPED.
I STARTED HEARING HIS VOICE IN MY HEAD WHEN I GOT TO JADE MOUNTAIN. HE'S STUCK UNDERGROUND AND HE'S STARVING AND ALONE AND THIS SCROLL IS THE ONE THING THAT COULD HELP HIM GET OUT.
SO I SAID–I SAID I'D LOOK FOR IT.
MOON. WHO IS HE?
WELL, FIRST I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER THAT EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT HIM IS TWO THOUSAND YEARS OLD AND COMES FROM STORIES TOLD BY THE DRAGONS WHO DEFEATED HIM. YOU DON'T REALLY KNOW HIM, EVEN IF YOU THINK YOU DO.
DARKSTALKER?
ARE YOU SERIOUS?

HEY, NO NEED TO YELL.
IF THE DARKSTALKER IS TRAPPED, STARVING, AND ALONE, THAT IS *EXACTLY* WHAT HE DESERVES.
OH, REALLY? WHAT ABOUT THE LEGENDARY ENEMY OF THE ICEWINGS *YOU* SET FREE?
FOESLAYER DIDN'T HAVE HORRIBLE POWERS.
HORRIBLE POWERS? YOU MEAN MIND READING AND VISIONS OF THE FUTURE? YOU MEAN *MY* HORRIBLE POWERS?
AND–UH...
AND ALSO MY HORRIBLE POWER.
WELL, AT LEAST HE DOESN'T HAVE MINE.
HE KILLED HIS OWN FATHER. OUR ICEWING PRINCE. ISN'T YOUR WHOLE TRIBE TERRIFIED OF HIM?
YES, BUT THEY DON'T KNOW HIM EITHER.
AND YOU DO?
MAYBE. I DON'T KNOW.


I CAN'T LET YOU USE THIS SCROLL TO FREE THE DARKSTALKER.
WHAT YOU CAN'T DO IS ORDER ME AROUND. WHAT YOU CAN DO IS HAVE A RATIONAL CONVERSATION WITH ME.

BUT NOT RIGHT NOW. RIGHT NOW WE ALL NEED TO SLEEP. WE CAN TALK IN THE MORNING.
I AGREE.
FINE.
FINE.
UM, SURE. FINE.
HAVING FRIENDS SEEMS LIKE A LOT OF TROUBLE SOMETIMES.

I'LL SLEEP OUTSIDE.
IN THE RAIN?
IT WON'T BOTHER ME. AND I'VE BEEN TOLD I'M A RESTLESS SLEEPER.


IN THAT CASE, SURE, ABSOLUTELY, YOU BET, GREAT PLAN.
OH WOW. I JUST REALIZED. QUEEN SCARLET'S NOT GOING TO COME FOR ME IN MY DREAMS EVER AGAIN.

POKE

POKE

POKE

PERIL?
PERIL?

MUHH?

AAAH!

WELL, WHAT DID YOU *THINK* WAS GOING TO HAPPEN?

UH-OH. WHY ARE YOU *ALL* UP?

MOON'S GONE.

AND SHE'S TAKEN THE SCROLL WITH HER.

SHE WOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN IT TO–SHE *WOULDN'T.*

I THOUGHT WE WERE ALL GOING TO *TALK* ABOUT IT!

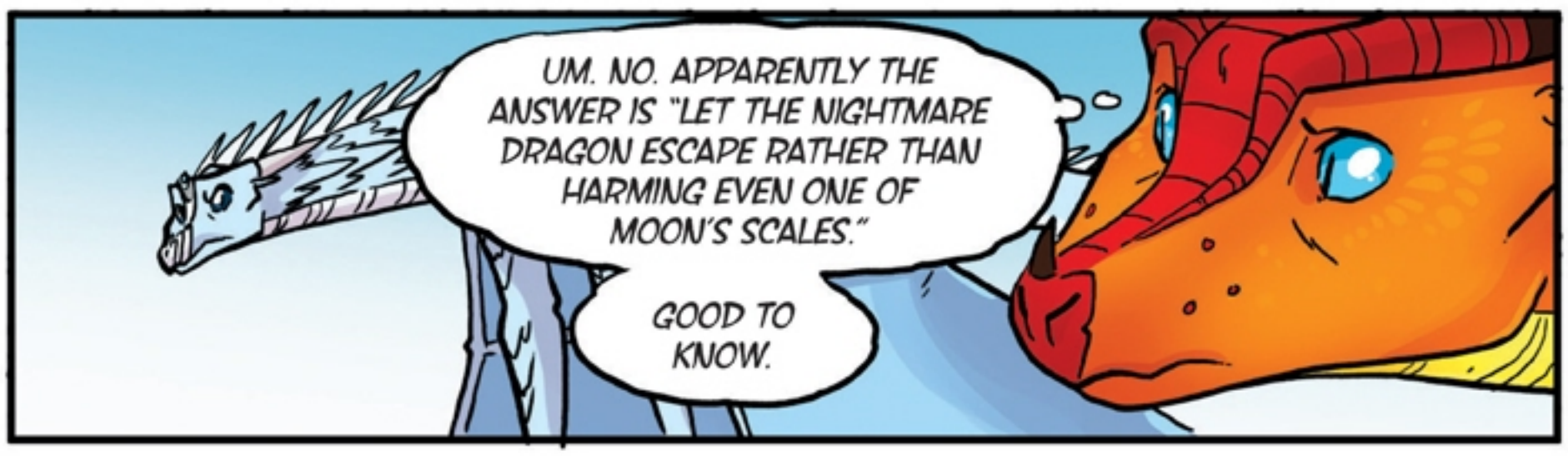
MAYBE SHE DIDN'T THINK YOU'D BE A GOOD LISTENER.

I MEAN, I HAVEN'T KNOWN YOU VERY LONG AND EVEN I CAN ALREADY SEE THAT.

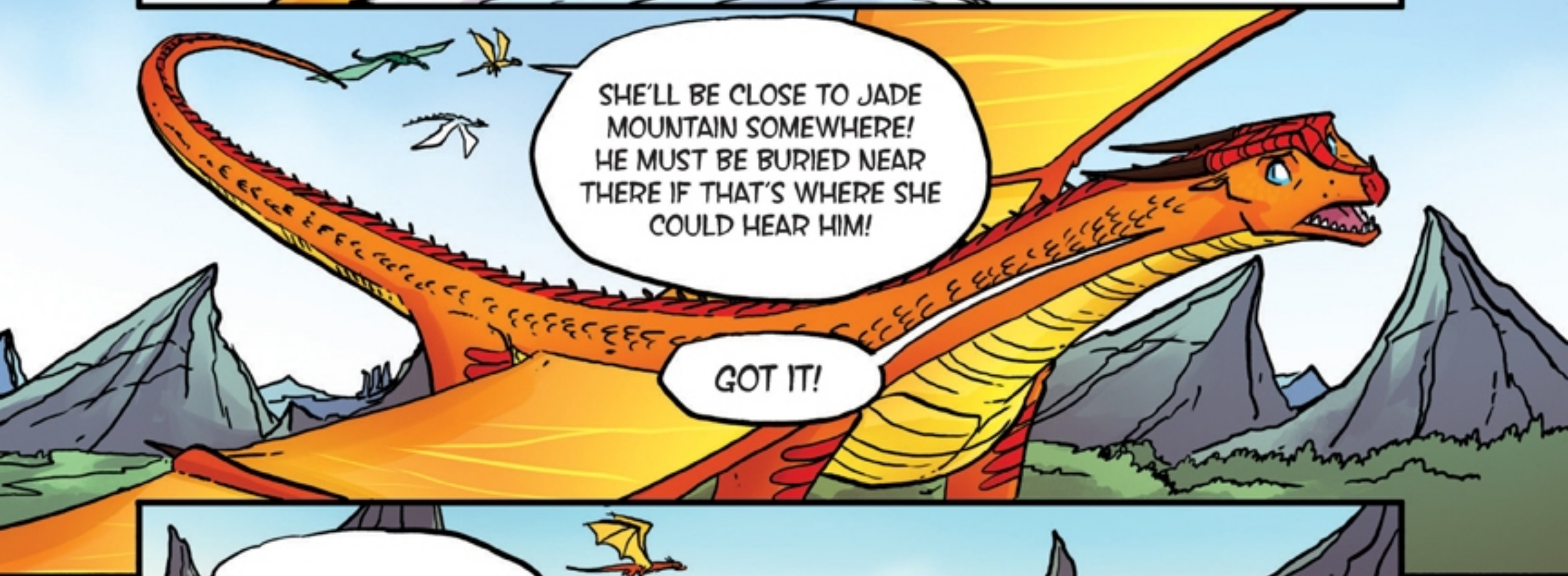
I *LISTEN.* WHEN THERE'S SOMETHING *WORTH HEARING.*

YEAH, I DON'T THINK THAT'S THE SAME THING.

PERIL, YOU CAN FLY FASTER THAN ANY OF US, INCLUDING MOON. MAYBE YOU CAN CATCH HER.
OH, YES, PROBABLY. YOU GUYS ARE SLOWPOKES. IT'S LIKE FLYING WITH A TRIO OF BANANA SLUGS.
SO GO! FLY AS FAST AS YOU CAN! STOP HER BEFORE SHE SETS HIM FREE!
UM... ALL RIGHT. EXCEPT... HOW DO I DO THAT?
JUST TELL HER WHAT A BAD IDEA IT IS!
AH. OK. SO, STOP HER WITH... WORDS?
WELL, DON'T SET HER ON FIRE. LET'S BE CLEAR ABOUT THAT.
ARE YOU SURE? IT WOULD BE VERY EFFICIENT. JUST A TINY BIT OF HER TAIL...
I'M KIDDING, I'M KIDDING!
WELL, SORT OF KIDDING.
I DON'T WANT TO BURN MOON, BUT IF THE ALTERNATIVE IS A BIG ANCIENT NIGHTMARE DRAGON RISING FROM THE EARTH, SHOULDN'T ALL OPTIONS BE OPEN?

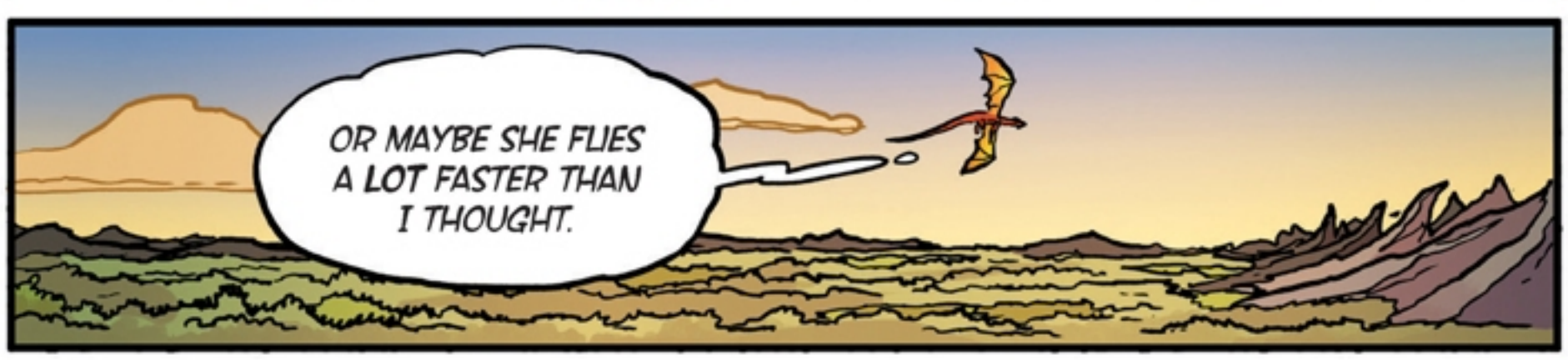

UM. NO. APPARENTLY THE ANSWER IS "LET THE NIGHTMARE DRAGON ESCAPE RATHER THAN HARMING EVEN ONE OF MOON'S SCALES."
GOOD TO KNOW.

IF SHE INSISTS ON DOING IT, TELL HER TO AT LEAST WAIT FOR US. TELL HER SHE SHOULDN'T RELEASE HIM ALONE.
ALL RIGHT. I'LL TRY.
BUT I SUSPECT I MIGHT BE EXACTLY THE WRONG DRAGON FOR THIS PARTICULAR MISSION.


SHE'LL BE CLOSE TO JADE MOUNTAIN SOMEWHERE! HE MUST BE BURIED NEAR THERE IF THAT'S WHERE SHE COULD HEAR HIM!
GOT IT!

I SHOULD BE ABLE TO CATCH HER BY MIDDAY.

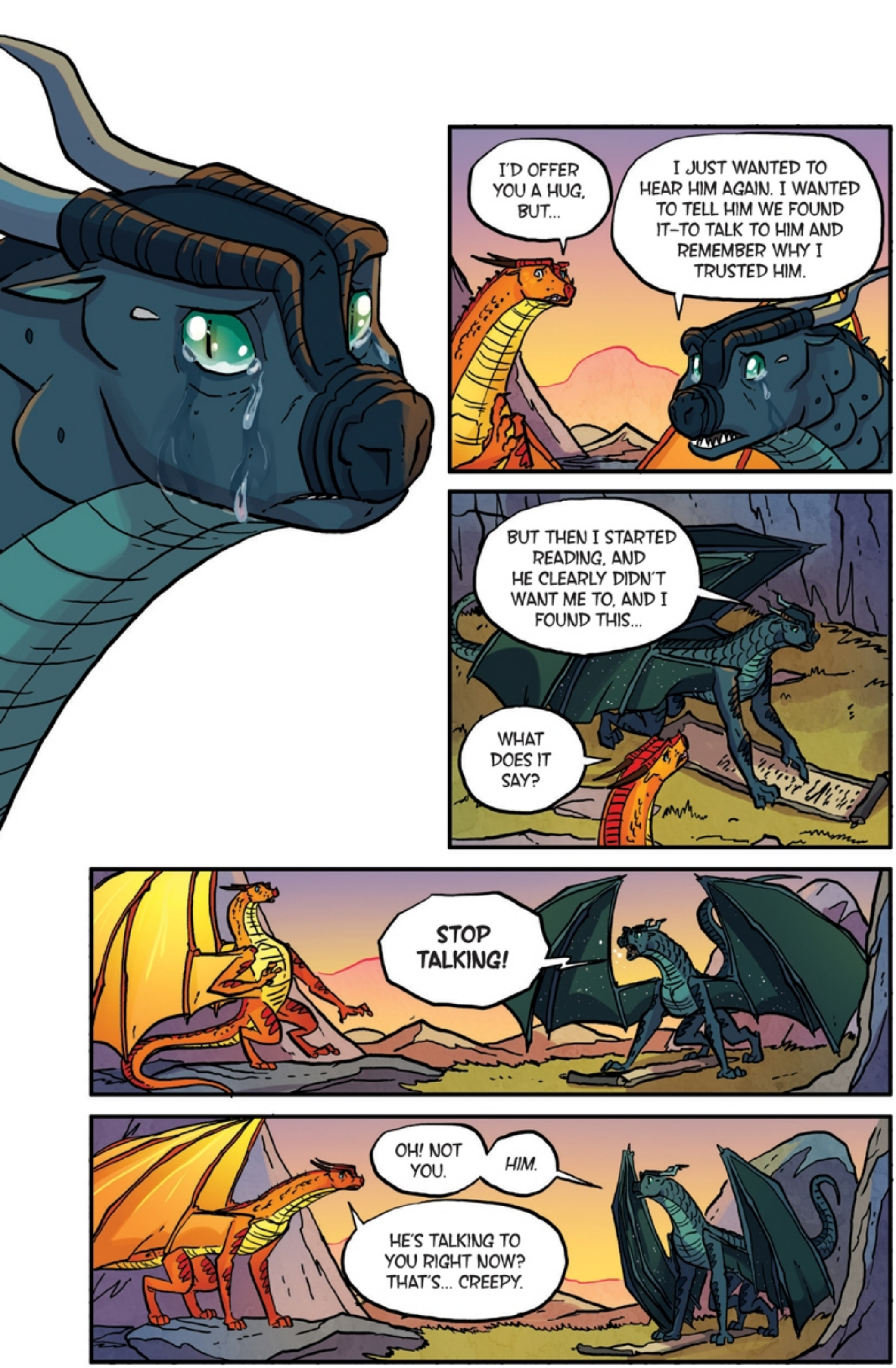
OR... NOT. MAYBE SHE HAD A BIGGER HEAD START THAN I THOUGHT?


OR MAYBE SHE FLIES A LOT FASTER THAN I THOUGHT.

JADE MOUNTAIN! **CLAY'S** IN THERE.

BUT FIRST I HAVE TO STOP MOON.

I'LL JUST CHECK OUT ANYTHING I SEE MOVING.


I'D OFFER YOU A HUG, BUT...
I JUST WANTED TO HEAR HIM AGAIN. I WANTED TO TELL HIM WE FOUND IT–TO TALK TO HIM AND REMEMBER WHY I TRUSTED HIM.
BUT THEN I STARTED READING, AND HE CLEARLY DIDN'T WANT ME TO, AND I FOUND THIS...
WHAT DOES IT SAY?
STOP TALKING!
OH! NOT YOU.
HIM.
HE'S TALKING TO YOU RIGHT NOW? THAT'S... CREEPY.

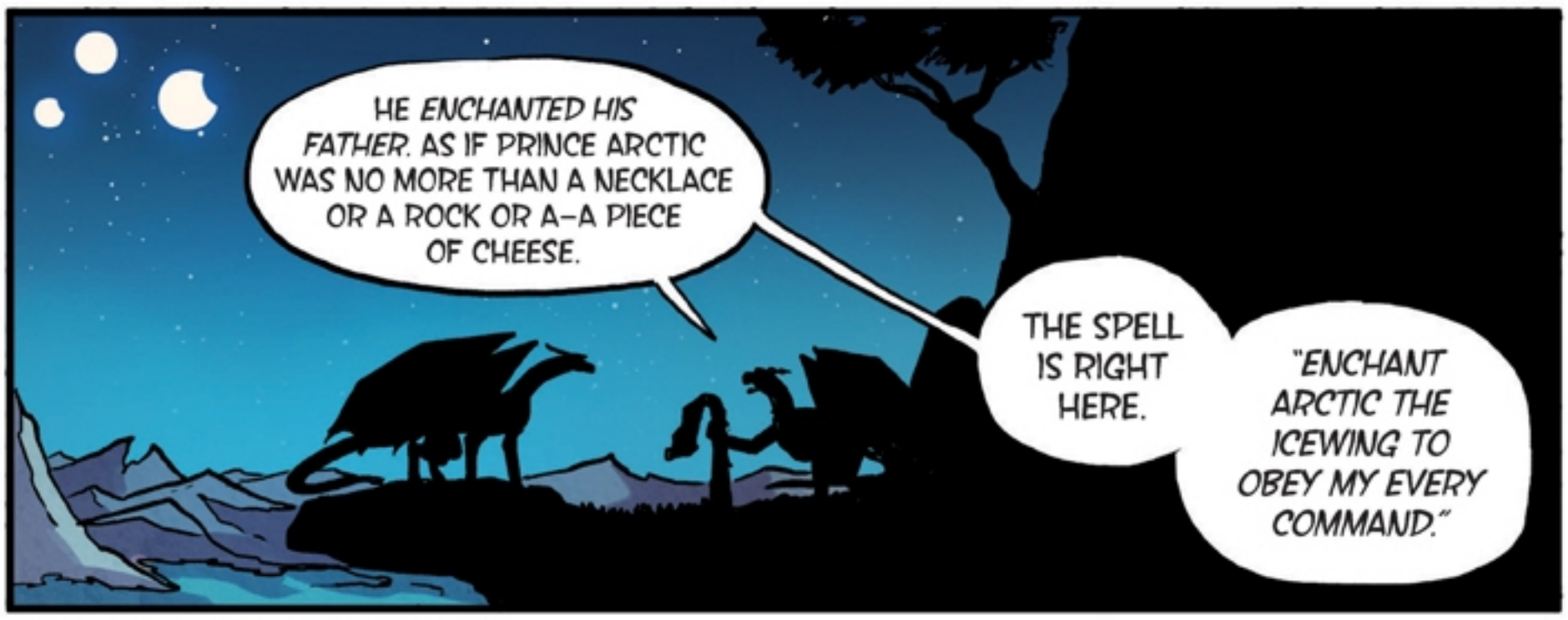
A DRAGON'S NOT A *THING!* YOU SHOULDN'T ENCHANT SOMEONE LIKE THAT!
DON'T YOU–
STOP! IT DOESN'T *MATTER* HOW BAD HE WAS.
THIS. *THIS* IS THE CRUELEST THING I'VE EVER READ.

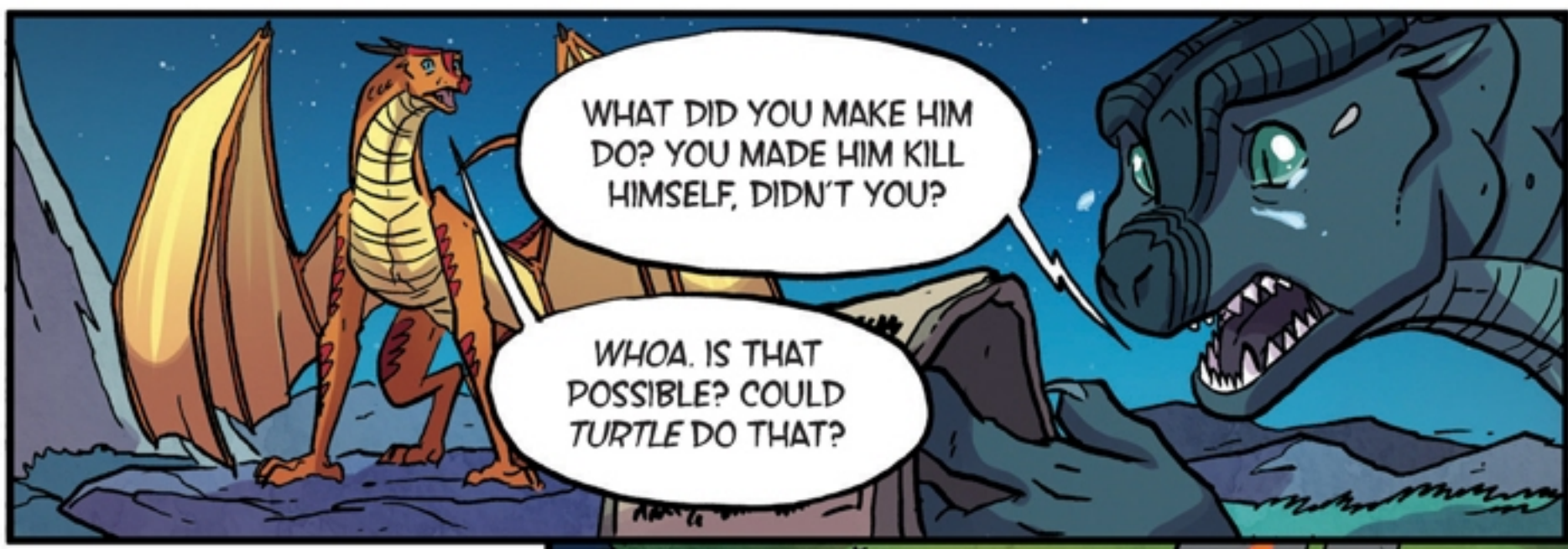
OK, YOU *REALLY* HAVE TO TELL ME NOW.
I *AM*. I *AM* GOING TO TELL HER. WHEN YOU DO SOMETHING THIS TERRIBLE, YOU CANCEL OUT YOUR PRIVACY RIGHTS.

REMEMBER HOW WINTER SAID THAT DARKSTALKER KILLED HIS OWN FATHER, PRINCE ARCTIC?
YEAH. WHY WAS HIS DAD AN ICEWING?
LONG STORY, NOT IMPORTANT NOW.

WELL, THE OTHER RUMOR I'D HEARD WAS THAT DARKSTALKER DID SOMETHING SO AWFUL THAT IT TERRIFIED THE ENTIRE NIGHTWING TRIBE INTO ABANDONING THEIR CITY.
THEY THOUGHT HE WAS GONE, MAYBE DEAD, BUT THEY STILL UPROOTED THE ENTIRE TRIBE TO HIDE FROM HIM, JUST IN CASE.
YEESH. AND I THOUGHT *MY* TRIBE HATED ME.

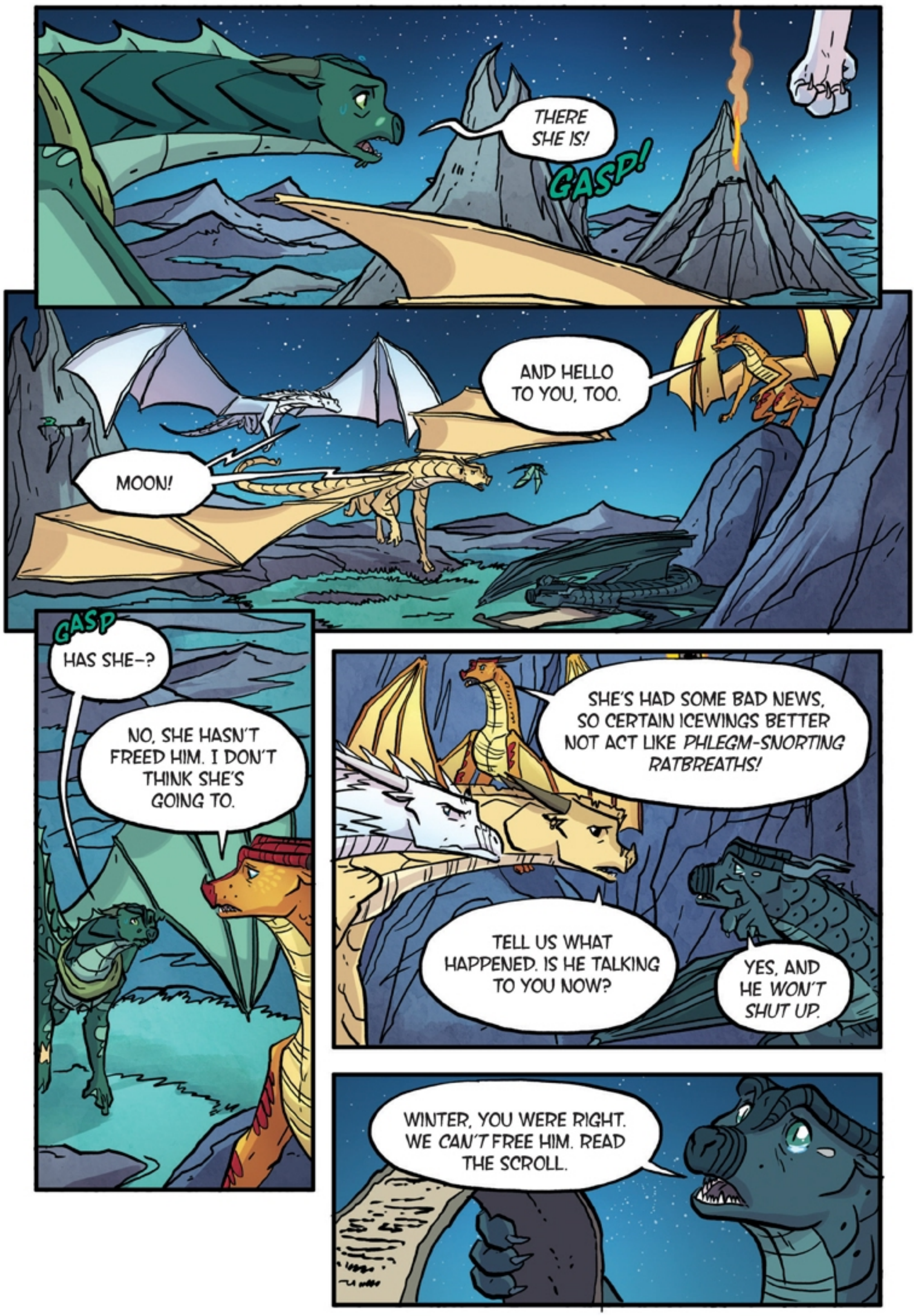
AND THIS MENACING DRAGON IS BURIED ALIVE SOMEWHERE RIGHT BELOW OUR TALONS?
YES, I **DO**. I'M SURE. IF I SAW A DRAGON DO THIS, *I'D* GO INTO HIDING, TOO.


HE *ENCHANTED HIS FATHER*. AS IF PRINCE ARCTIC WAS NO MORE THAN A NECKLACE OR A ROCK OR A–A PIECE OF CHEESE.
THE SPELL IS RIGHT HERE.
"*ENCHANT ARCTIC THE ICEWING TO OBEY MY EVERY COMMAND.*"


WHAT DID YOU MAKE HIM DO? YOU MADE HIM KILL HIMSELF, DIDN'T YOU?
WHOA. IS THAT POSSIBLE? COULD *TURTLE* DO THAT?

I SHOULD GET HER AWAY FROM DARKSTALKER'S VOICE...
BUT HOW? I CAN'T **TOUCH** *HER.*

THIS SHOULD HELP THE OTHERS FIND US.


THERE SHE IS!
GASP!
AND HELLO TO YOU, TOO.
MOON!
GASP
HAS SHE–?
NO, SHE HASN'T FREED HIM. I DON'T THINK SHE'S GOING TO.
SHE'S HAD SOME BAD NEWS, SO CERTAIN ICEWINGS BETTER NOT ACT LIKE *PHLEGM-SNORTING RATBREATHS!*
TELL US WHAT HAPPENED. IS HE TALKING TO YOU NOW?
YES, AND HE *WON'T SHUT UP.*
WINTER, YOU WERE RIGHT. WE *CAN'T* FREE HIM. READ THE SCROLL.

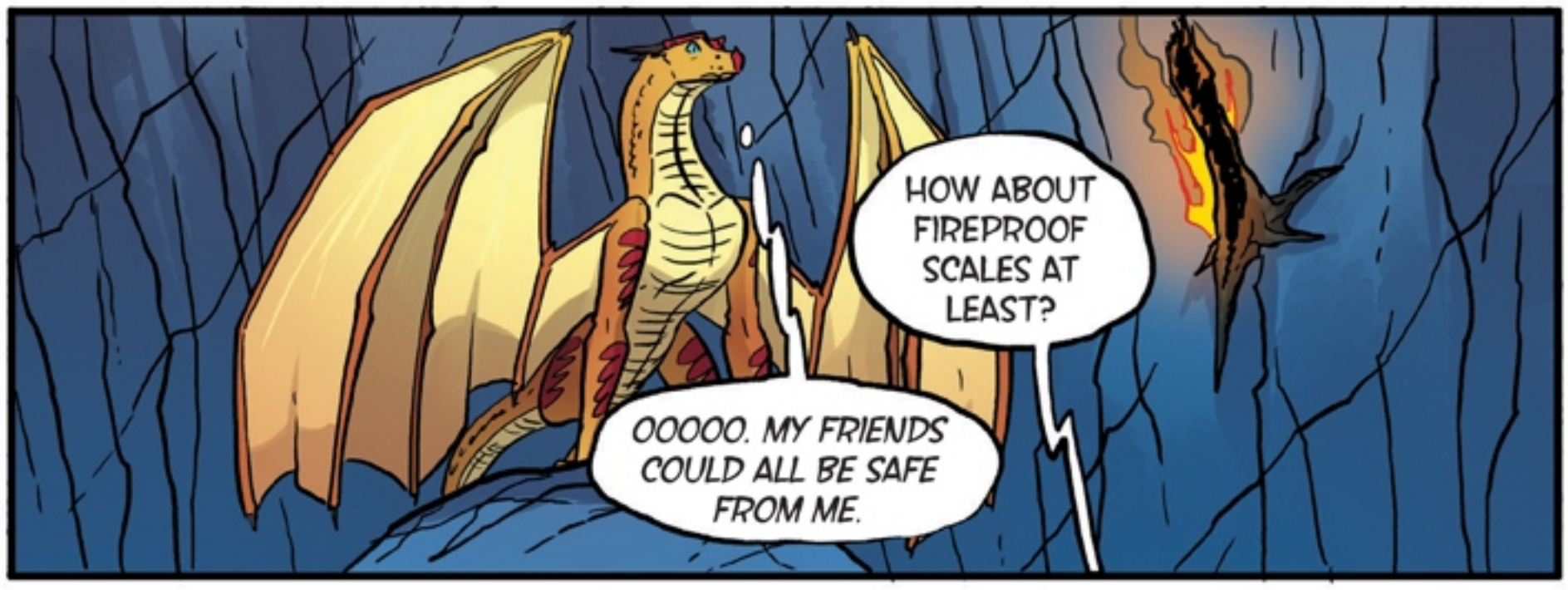
WHOA.

WE ABSOLUTELY CAN'T FREE HIM IF HE CAN CONTROL OTHER DRAGONS THAT EASILY.
AND WE CAN'T FREE HIM BECAUSE HE'S THE KIND OF DRAGON WHO THOUGHT OF DOING IT IN THE FIRST PLACE.

HE SAYS HE PROMISES HE WON'T EVER DO THAT AGAIN.
DARKSTALKER, HOW CAN WE TRUST YOU? NO ONE COULD EVER STOP YOU WITH A POWER LIKE THAT.
NO, STOP. I DON'T WANT TO SEE ANOTHER FAIRY-TALE VISION. I'LL HAVE MY OWN VISIONS, THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

WE COULD DO A LOT OF GOOD WITH THIS. WE COULD USE IT TO PROTECT OUR QUEENS.
I COULD ENCHANT SOMETHING SO THAT THORN WOULD NEVER DIE, OR MAKE HER PALACE IMMUNE TO ATTACK.

MOON, THINK ABOUT IT—WE COULD ENCHANT SOMETHING TO MAKE ALL THE NIGHTWINGS LOVE GLORY. SHE COULD RULE WITHOUT THE THREAT OF ASSASSINATION!
SHE WOULDN'T WANT ENCHANTED OBEDIENCE OR FAKE LOVE.


HOW ABOUT FIREPROOF SCALES AT LEAST?
OOOOO. MY FRIENDS COULD ALL BE SAFE FROM ME.

DARKSTALKER *REALLY* DOESN'T LIKE THIS CONVERSATION.
IF WE'RE PROTECTING QUEENS WITH MAGIC, WE SHOULD INCLUDE QUEEN GLACIER. SHE'S A GOOD QUEEN, TOO.
AND WHAT ABOUT MY MOM? OR QUEEN RUBY FOR PERIL?

BUT IF WE ENCHANT ALL THE QUEENS TO NEVER DIE OR BE MAGICALLY PROTECTED OR WHATEVER, THEN... WON'T WE END UP STUCK WITH THE SAME QUEENS FOREVER? WOULDN'T THAT BE BAD, TOO?
NOT IN THE CASE OF QUEEN THORN.

LOOK, THE THREE OF YOU HAVE THESE CRAZY GIFTS, AND YOU'RE TRYING TO USE THEM SAFELY, AREN'T YOU?
SHUSH! I'VE BEEN *FINE* WITHOUT YOU!

?
NOT YOU. THE CRAZY DRAGON IN HER HEAD.
OH... ANYWAY, IF I CAN TRUST *YOU* WITH *YOUR* POWERS, COULDN'T YOU TRUST ME TO TAKE CARE OF THIS ONE? TO THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES AND ONLY USE IT FOR GOOD?
YOU? BY YOURSELF? WHY SHOULD WE JUST LET YOU SAUNTER OFF WITH THE MOST POWERFUL TALISMAN IN THE WORLD? MAYBE *I* SHOULD TAKE CARE OF IT.
OR MAYBE ALL OF US TOGETHER?
AT LEAST I'M A PRINCE AND HAVE *EXPERIENCE* MAKING DECISIONS TO HELP MY TRIBE!
OH, AWESOME LOGIC, WINTER! YOU'RE ROYALTY, SO YOU'VE ALWAYS HAD POWER, SO YOU SHOULD KEEP ANY NEW POWER THAT COMES ALONG?
STOP FIGHTING! *ALL* OF YOU!
DARKSTALKER, STOP YELLING AT ME!

FIGHTING OVER POWER. LIKE EVERY DRAGON EVER.
BUT IT'S NOT THEIR POWER, IT'S DARKSTALKER'S, AND THEY WANT TO USE IT, THE SAME WAY SCARLET USED MINE.
THAT SCROLL IS TOO DANGEROUS TO BE IN THIS WORLD. EVEN IF A GOOD DRAGON CONTROLLED IT... EVEN IF IT DIDN'T CHANGE THAT GOOD DRAGON TO HAVE THAT MUCH POWER... EVEN IF WE COULD SOMEHOW GUARANTEE THAT IT WOULD NEVER FALL INTO EVIL TALONS...
IT SHOULDN'T EXIST. LOOK HOW GOOD DRAGONS ARE FIGHTING OVER IT ALREADY.
NOBODY SHOULD BE THE BOSS OF SOMEONE ELSE'S MAGIC.
AND NOBODY ELSE SHOULD EVER BE HURT BY THAT SCROLL.

NO...

THERE. THAT SOLVES THAT PROBLEM.
SKFF
SKFF

NOW NOTHING CAN SET THE DARKSTALKER FREE AND NO ONE CAN ABUSE HIS POWER.
I DID IT. I SAVED THE WORLD. AND CLAY WASN'T EVEN WATCHING.
EVEN IF HE NEVER KNOWS ABOUT IT, I'LL STILL KNOW I DID THE RIGHT THING.
RRRRRRRRRRRRRR RR RRR RR RR

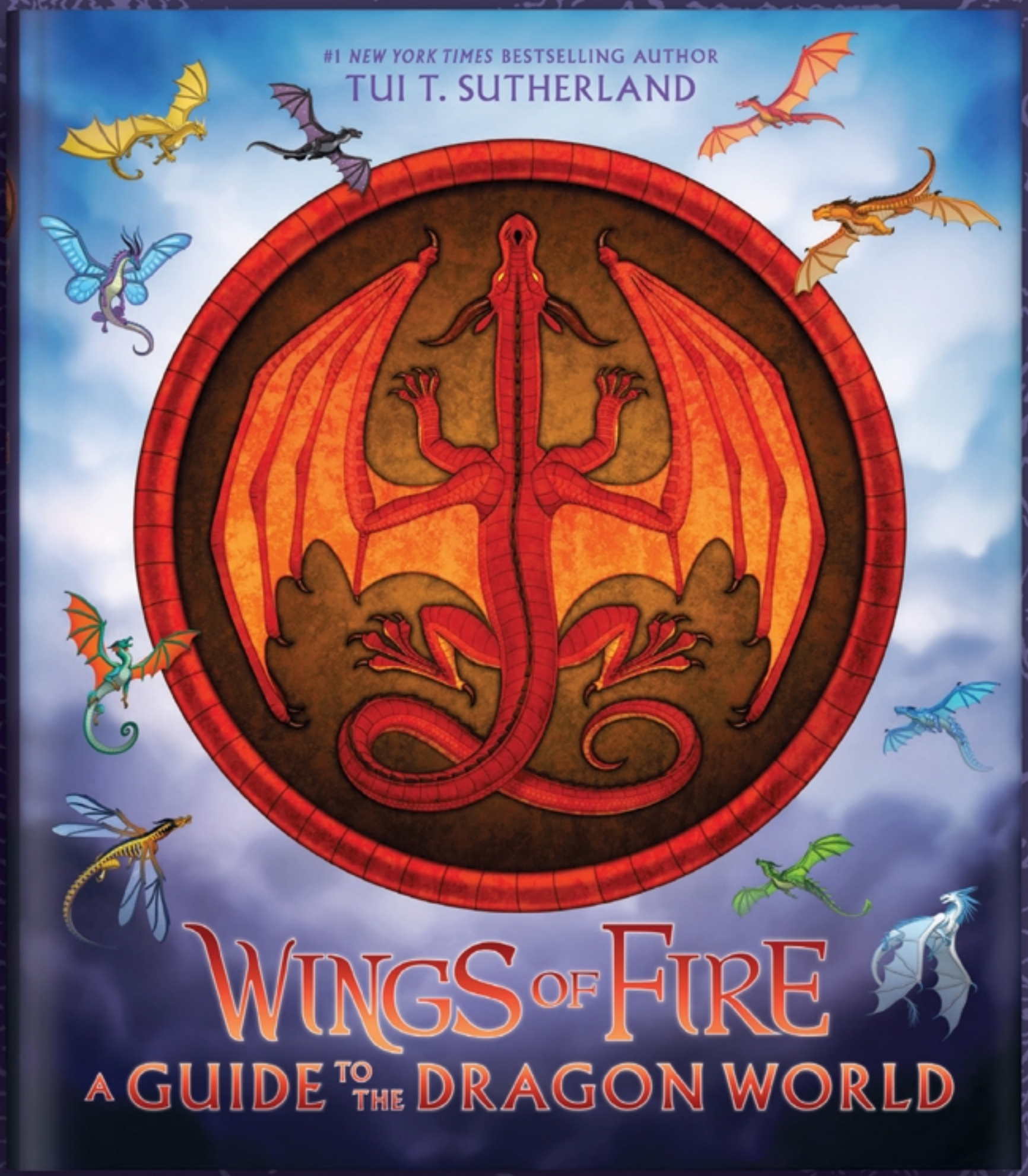
IS JADE MOUNTAIN FALLING? IS THIS THE PROPHECY?!
RRRRR RR RUUMMBLE
IT'S NOT JADE MOUNTAIN. IT'S *THIS* ONE!
RRRRUUMMBB CRACK!

AH. THAT'S INFINITELY BETTER.

NICE TO FINALLY MEET YOU, PERIL. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR HELP.

EPILOGUE
HELLO? IS THAT ANEMONE?
YES, STARFLIGHT, IT'S ME.
IT'S SO EARLY. WHAT ARE YOU DOING AWAKE?
I HAD A NIGHTMARE, AND THEN SOMETHING WOKE ME. DIDN'T YOU FEEL IT?
FEEL WHAT?
SOMETHING THAT SHOOK THE EARTH.
I DIDN'T NOTICE ANYTHING.
IT FELT... LIKE SOMEONE SLITHERING OVER MY GRAVE.

TEN TRIBES.
TWO CONTINENTS.
THREE MOONS.



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BARRY DEUTSCH is an award-winning cartoonist and the creator of the Hereville series of graphic novels, about yet another troll-fighting 11-year-old Orthodox Jewish girl. He lives in Portland, Oregon, with a variable number of cats and fish.

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MAARTA LAIHO spends her days and nights as a comic colorist, where her work includes the comics series Lumberjanes, Adventure Time, and the Mighty Zodiac. When she's not doing that, she can be found hoarding houseplants and talking to her cat. She lives in the woods of Maine.