



EL PASO TALES

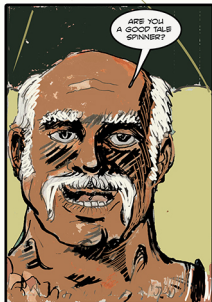
STORY AND ART BY SAM RILEY

STORY AND ART BY JIM RIEL

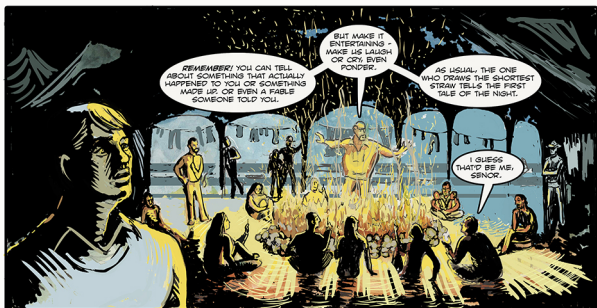
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THE COOK'S TALE



SAN TOMAS NESTLES CLOSE TO GAGXANUL. VOLCANO HOTSPRINGS PROVIDE HOT WATER WHEN INDOOR PLUMBING FAILS, WHICH HAPPENS REGULARLY.



MANY STREAMS FROM THE VOLCANO NOURISH CROPS PARTICULARLY OUR COFFEE TREES



ON THE DAY BEFORE ITS ERUPTION GAGXANUL WAS SHOWING ITS DARK SIDE, GRUMBLED DEEP INTO THE NIGHT, SHAKING BUILDINGS.



MOST VILLAGERS WERE DEEP IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT DAY'S MARCH OF EL PRESIDENTE AND HIS FIESTAS MINERVALIAS.



BUT ONE VILLAGE ELDER FELT THE VILLAGERS NEEDED TO PREPARE FOR A DIFFERENT EVENT.



HORADO CASTRANO HAD LIVED THROUGH PREVIOUS ERUPTIONS AND KNEW HOW UNPREDICTABLE AND DEADLY THEY COULD BE.



MORADO SCANNED THE TREES
UNTIL HE SAW HIS SPIRIT ANIMAL.



THE EAGLE, HIS LIFE-LONG
PARTNER



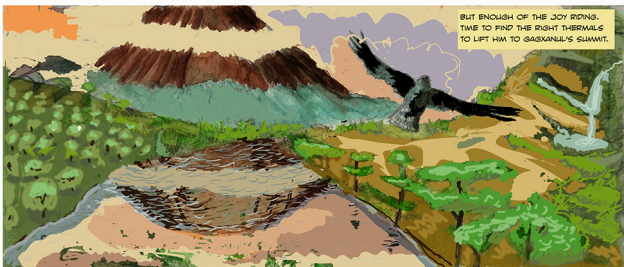
HIS PRAYERS AND INCANTATION
TOOK AWHILE BUT EVENTUALLY
THEY MERGED

TO THIS DAY, NO ONE
KNOWS HOW THEY
TRANSITION, AND THE
NAGUALS WON'T TELL.

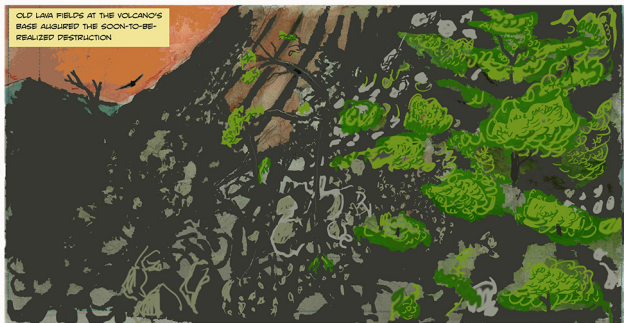




IT HAD BEEN AWHILE SINCE HORADO
HAD MERGED WITH WITH HIS EAGLE
SPIRIT-MATE AND HE'D FORGOTTEN
HOW WONDERFUL FLOATING
ON THE THERMALS FELT.



BUT ENOUGH OF THE JOY RIDING.
TIME TO FIND THE RIGHT THERMALS
TO LIFT HIM TO GASKANUL'S SUMMIT.



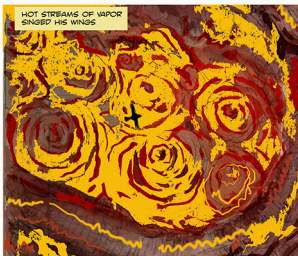
OLD LAVA FIELDS AT THE VOLCANO'S
BASE ALASSED THE SOON-TO-BE-
REALIZED DESTRUCTION



WHAT HORADO SAW
CONFIRMED HIS SENSE OF
URGENCY. ANIMALS LARGE
AND SMALL SCRAMLED FOR
SAFETY OFF THE MOUNTAIN.



LAVA STREAMS BOILED,
SWIRLED, AND EXPLODED
LIKE A CAULDRON OF
SWIMMING CORN SOUP.



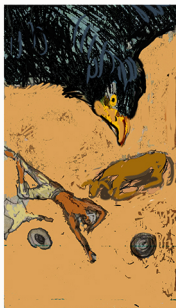
HOT STREAMS OF VAPOR
SINGED HIS WINGS



TOO QUICKLY A DEEP
FATIGUE DRAINED HIM



A WING TANGLED IN
TREE BRANCHES AS
GRAVITY PULLED HIM
DOWN FROM THE
VOLCANO'S SUMMIT

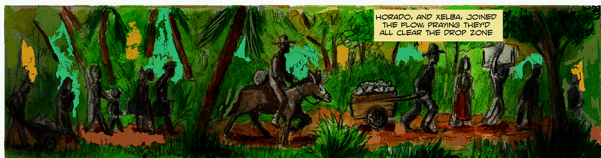












A FEW MONTHS LATER, XELBA RETURNED TO HORADO'S PROPERTY ALONE. HORADO NEVER RETURNED.



SOME SAY HORADO SHAPE-SHIFTED ONE LAST TIME. OTHERS THINK HE WASN'T ABLE TO SURVIVE THE ERUPTION OR THE DEBRIS SHOWER THAT DESTROYED FARMS AND VILLAGES FOR KILOS AROUND.



SAN TOMAS WAS PARTIALLY DESTROYED BUT ENOUGH OF THE ROADS AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS REMAINED TO MAKE IT WORTH REBUILDING. ONLY A FEW DIED THANKS TO HORADO'S WARNINGS.

A MASSIVE LAVA ROCK STILL SITS IN THE SQUARE TO THIS DAY AS A REMINDER OF GASKANUL'S POWER AND FURY IN 1902.

SUCH A SPLENDID TALE, JAMIE, AND AN EXCELLENT WAY TO KICK OFF OUR STORY HOUR.

GRATIAS, SENOR. SAN TOMAS IS MY HOME AND I ALREADY MISS IT. HOPEFULLY I'LL MAKE ENOUGH MONEY AS A CHEF TO RETURN THERE SOON.



NOW! WHO ELSE HAS A TALE AS ENTERTAINING TO TELL US?

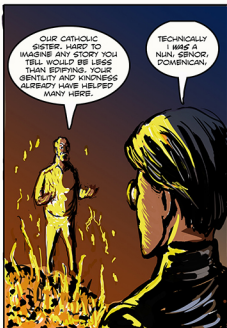
COME NOW! DON'T BE SHY. COME FORWARD AND BE HEARD



IT WOULD BE SUCH A SHAME TO WASTE SUCH A WARNING FIRE -

I WILL DO IT, SENOR, ALTHOUGH MY TALE MIGHT NOT BE AS ENTERTAINING AS OUR YOUNG COOK'S.





OUR CATHOLIC SISTER. HARD TO IMAGINE ANY STORY YOU TELL WOULD BE LESS THAN EPIPHANY. YOUR GENTILITY AND KINDNESS ALREADY HAVE HELPED MANY HERE.

TECHNICALLY I WAS A NUN. SENOR, DOMINICAN.



THE EX-NUN'S PROLOGUE

WHEN I WAS A CHILD I WANTED TO BE A PRIEST. I DROVE MY PARENTS CRAZY.



WE ALL KNOW HOW THE WORLD WORKS THOUGH. THE CLOSEST I COULD COME TO THAT ROLE WAS AS A NUN.

I WORKED VERY HARD, HOPING AGAINST HOPE THAT THE OLD BOYS NETWORK WOULD RELENT AND REALIZE HOW WOMEN COULD BE AS EFFECTIVE AS THEY WERE IN THE PRIESTHOOD.



I WORKED MY WAY UP TO BECOMING MOTHER SUPERIOR FOR A CONVENT IN THE BARRIO BUT FOUND MYSELF ENBROILED IN CONFLICTS WITH THE BISHOP AND OTHER CLERICS OVER OUR OUTREACH TO THE POOR AND GANG VICTIMS.

UNTIL MY ACTIVISM BECAME DANGEROUS. MY LIFE HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT OTHERS



LONG STORY SHORT I GOT IN TROUBLE WITH THE LOCAL POLICE, WHO WERE VERY CHUMMY WITH THE BISHOP AND THE REST OF THE CHURCH HIERARCHY

THEY WANTED TO CAST ME AS A REBEL AND FORCED ME TO RESIGN MY POSITION.

UHM... ERR... MAYBE NOW IS NOT



BUT RESIGNING AS SUPERIOR AND LEAVING THE CONVENT WAS NOT ENOUGH FOR THESE HORRIBLE, DIABOLICAL MEN.



SO - SOMEONE TRIED TO KILL ME.

NOW HERE I AM FLEEING THE COUNTRY OF MY BIRTH, COLUMBIA, AND THE PEOPLE I LOVE AND ONLY WANT TO SERVE IN HOPE OF ASYLUM.

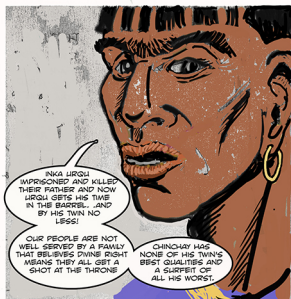


IN COLLEGE I STUDIED THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAS, SPECIALIZING IN ERAS BEFORE THE SPANISH CONQUEST IN THE 1500S.

MY TALE IS OF INTRIGUE AND BETRAYAL OF DREAMS THAT TELL THE TRUTH BUT MISLEAD THE DREAMERS. THIS TALE CONTINUES TO HAUNT ME.



INKA CHUGLI-CHINCHAY RETURNS TO THE CITY OF CHUSCO TRIUMPHANT. HIS OPPONENT, INKA URQU, HAS BEEN OVERCOME BY THE SHEER ALDACITY OF HIS AMBUSH. ALTHOUGH CHINCHAY'S BATTALIONS HAVE SUFFERED GRIEVOUS LOSSES AND HE KNOWS HE'LL HAVE TO OFFER RECOMPENSE TO HIS ALLIES.







AND SO BEGAN A REGIMEN OF TORTURE NOT UNIQUE IN HUMAN HISTORY. IF YOU THINK IT BARBARIC, ONLY TURN TO THE PAGES OF RECORDED WESTERN CIVILIZATION WHERE THE INQUISITION SAW FIT TO HANG OR BURN WITCHES OR INFIDELS TO DEATH. BUT ONLY AFTER TORTURING THEM TO GET A FORCED CONFESSION OR CONVERSION.

STEP UP THE PACE



WHEN YOU'RE DONE, BRING HIM TO THE RACK



THE TRAMPLING WAS BAD ENOUGH

I DON'T HAVE THE STOMACH FOR THIS



OUR ILLUSTRIOUS LEADER DON'T SEE FIT TO SAY WHY SHOULD WE?

MORE TO DISMISS IN PRIVATE, FRIEND



I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY, BUT I'M NOT THERE YET

OUR PEOPLE HAVE BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH UPSET AND TROUBLE. EVEN IF CHANCERY HAS NO BUSINESS BEING KIDS, AND I AGREE HE DOES NOT, WHAT COST TO THE CALMNESS AND WELLBEING TO OUR PEOPLE?



THE COST OF A VAIN, INSOLENT, AND INCOMPETENT MAN WHO TAKES NO COUNSEL FROM WISER MEN, WHO ACTS ON IMPULSE, AMBITION, AND CALLOUSNESS. DO YOU THINK HE CARES ABOUT THE WARRIORS HE LOST IN THE BATTLE TO OVERCOME HIS BROTHER? OR FOR THAT MATTER THEIR FAMILIES?

ALL THAT YOU SAY IS TRUE, AMARU. BUT HE'S ONLY DIFFERENT IN DEGREE FROM HIS TWIN OR EVEN HIS FATHER. LIKE I SAID, THAT FAMILY BELIEVES THE GODS TAILOR THE WORLD AND NATURE TO MEET THEIR WANTS AND NEEDS.

I'VE GOT TO GO. SO MUCH TO DIGEST. MY WIFE EXPECTS ME FOR DINNER.



ALL THE MORE REASON TO NIP IT IN THE BUD, KUNTUR

I'M MEETING WITH SOME LIKE-MINDED FRIENDS' SUNSET TONIGHT. PERHAPS YOU'LL JOIN?

I'LL SEND A MESSENGER TO LET YOU KNOW WHETHER OR NOT I'LL ATTEND





I WOULDN'T BE
HERE IN THIS CURSED
MONSOON IF I DON'T
BELIEVE YOUR PLAN IS
RIGHTEOUS AND WILL WORK,
AND IT DOES MAKE
SENSE THAT THE DEED
IS DONE OUT IN
THE OPEN

AND THAT
IT IS DONE BY
THIS RIGHT
PEOPLE!



BUT I AM
SURPRISED
THAT THOSE PEOPLE
ARE TUPAC AND OLGA.
TUPAC! I THOUGHT YOU
WERE CLOSE TO
CHUNCHAY AN ADE,
AND OLGA AREN'T
YOU A MAN
SERVANT?

ALL THE BETTER TO SEE
HOW BAD CHUNCHAY WILL BE FOR
US AND WHAT ACTUALLY MOTIVATES
HIM. GENERAL KUNTURI. HIS TERROR
WON'T STOP WITH HIS BROTHER - HE
WANTS ALL THE CITIES NEAR US
TO PAY TRIBUTE TO HIM.

WE ARE
CLOSE AND KNOW
ALL HIS PRIVATE
ACTIONS AND
THOUGHTS

AND OFTEN
EVEN HIS
DREAMS



KUNTURI! TUPAC
AND OLGA ARE GOOD
AND HONORABLE
MEN

THEY WILL
NOT SHIRK
OR EVADE
THEIR OATH



IT'S NOT
THEIR COMMITMENT
THAT WORRIES ME,
AMARU.

THEY ARE
NOT EXPERIENCED
WARRIORS. WHOEVER
STRIKES THE FIRST BLOW
MUST MAKE IT COUNT.
IF IT DOESN'T HURT HIM
ENOUGH, HE COULD
ESCAPE

I WILL STRIKE
FIRST SR.
WITH PLEASURE
AND TO THE
HILT.



SO BE IT,
HONORED
FRIEND

WE MUST
EACH STRIKE A BLOW
AND BEFORE THE
PRIESTS INVEST HIM.
THIS CONSPIRACY CAN
HAVE NO BACK
SEATERS.



THE BEST TIME
TO STRIKE IS WHEN
CHUNCHAY REACHES THE
TOP OF THE CEREMONIAL
PYRAMID. IT'S REQUIRED
THAT HE BE ALONE. HIS
GUARD MUST WAIT
BELOW

CHUNCHAY
WILL BE FOCUSED
ON THE RITUAL AND
WON'T BE AWARE
OF US.

WE SHOULD
EACH LEAVE
SEPARATELY
NOW



EVEN IF WE
SUCCEED,
THERE WILL BE
TARGETS ON OUR
BACKS. CHUNCHAY'S
COUSIN WIRANA
WORRIES ME.

MAY HUARI
GUIDE OUR BLADES
TOMORROW. SLEEP
WELL COMRADE



INKA CHUNCHO-HY!
CHUNCHO-HY, INKA!
WAKE UP! IT'S
IMPORTANT

I'VE HAD A
BAD DREAM, A
NIGHTMARE, A WARNING
ABOUT YOU

HMMMM



IN MY DREAM,
A PANTHER SWALLOWED
A BABY WHOLE. THE GRAVES
OF ANCESTORS SPRUNG OPEN
AND SURRY STALKED THEM
BREATHING FOUL VAPORS
FROM HER MOUTH

THEN LLAPE
ROARED ACROSS THE
SKY BURNING TREES
AND VILLAGES. IT CAN
ONLY BE ABOUT YOU,
MY LOVE.



STOP!
YOU MIGHT BE
MY FAVORITE BROTHER
BUT THERE ARE PLENTY
OF OTHERS WHO'D
BE HAPPY TO TAKE
YOUR PLACE!



I'M ALSO
THE LONGEST
SERVING AND I'VE
ALWAYS LOOKED
OUT FOR YOU

THE GODS HAVE
SENT A WARNING
AND YOU ARE IN
DANGER



I COULD
USE MORE
SLEEP BUT NOW
SINCE YOU WOKE
ME UP...

LISTEN TO ME.
THE DREAM WAS VERY
CLEAR. YOU WON'T
SURVIVE THE DAY IF
YOU GO TO YOUR
CORONATION



THAT'S
RIDICULOUS.
YOUR DREAM
MEANS THE
OPPOSITE

I'M NOT
STUPID. I KNOW
I HAVE MANY
ENEMIES

BUT I'VE
ALWAYS HAD
THEM. I'M USED
TO IT.



I THINK SURRY
AND LLAPE ARE
SAYING THAT THE
OLD WORLD IS
DYING AND I WILL
BE BUILDING A
NEW ONE

I WOULDN'T
HAVE SUCCEEDED
IN KILLING MY
BROTHER IF THEY
DIDN'T WANT
IT TO BE SO.

SIGH





DREAMS FOLLOW THEIR OWN
LOGIC, PROVOKED BY THEIR
MYSTERIOUS SOURCES



LIKE OUR MAMMALIAN BROTHERS,
WE ARE ALL SUBJECT TO THEM,
NO MATTER THEIR ENDS.



SOMETIMES THEY
COALESCE AROUND
THE SAME DREAM



CHING-HAY
BRINGS QUITE
AN ENCOURAGE
IN SUPPORT.
AWAY!

HAI! HIS
CEREMONIAL
GUARD WILL
SCATTER LIKE
RABBITS AT THE
FIRST FLASH
OF A
BLADE



I RECOGNIZE
THE COLORS OF
WANA'S GUARD
BRINGING UP
THE REAR

WANA CAN BE
DANGEROUS, BUT
THE PRIESTS REQUIRE
CHING-HAY ASCENDS THE
STAIRS ALONE

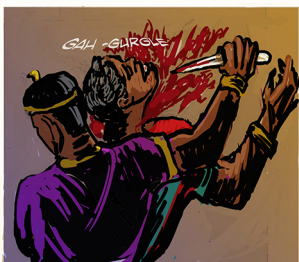
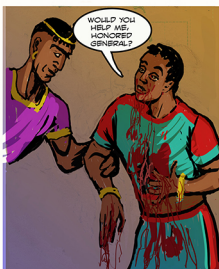


WITH OR
WITHOUT A
GUARD WE
MUST MOVE
FAST, WITHOUT
HESTATION













I PRAY
YOU HEAR
ME OUT,
WAYNA

MANY TIMES
YOU AND I HAVE
SHARED BLOOD AND
THE SWEET TASTE
OF VICTORY

BEFORE YOU
D'ESECRATE THIS
SACRED PLACE
ANY MORE THAN
IT ALREADY HAS
BEEN BY US -



USE YOUR
BLADE ONLY ON
ME NOW IF YOU
TRUST YOU ARE
INFORMED ENOUGH
TO KNOW OUR
MOVES



BUT IF
YOU HAVE
DOUBTS LISTEN
TO ME, HONORED
WARRIOR

AND YOU WILL
HEAR THE TRUTH
AS MY FRIENDS
AND I SAW IT



DO YOU THINK
GENERAL KUNTUR
COULD BECOME
OUR NEXT KING?

ONLY IF THE GODS
AND LORD WAYNA
WANT HIM TO



SO TELL
PUKA TO BRING
HIS BATTALION TO
THE LITTLE
MOUNTAIN WHERE
THE SUN FIRST
RISES AS SOON
AS HE CAN.

RUN LIKE
THE WIND!

I WILL, UNCLE,
BUT LORD
WAYNA

A HOT HUMID NIGHT AND PIERCE MOSQUITOS TOOK THEIR TOLL ON KUNTUR'S SLEEP AS IF THE GHOST OF INKA CHUQUI-CHINWAY WANTED TO EVEN THE SCORE.



KUNTUR STARTLED AWAKE TO A CHIRPING PURRING SOUND. WAS HE DREAMING? THE SOUNDS OF RUFFLING FEATHERS AND A CACKLE SAID OTHERWISE.



SURELY YOU KNOW WHY YOUR NAMESAKE KUNTUR-CONDOR IS HERE



AFTER ALL, WE SHARE THE SAME DARK NATURE

THIS A DREAM. I'VE DREAMT YOU BEFORE BUT ALWAYS IN ADVANCE OF A BATTLE



AND THAT'S WHERE YOU'LL MEET ME AGAIN. SOONER THAN YOU MIGHT THINK.

THE COUNCIL WENT WELL. WAYNA HAS ACCEPTED THE RESULTS



THE COUNCIL WILL SELECT OUR NEW LEADER - A FIRST!

OH RIGHT! NONSENSE



SO YOU SAY, BROTHER.

I MUST BE DREAMING



EVEN OVER 500 YEARS AGO BEFORE THE SPANISH CONQUEST, MEN WERE MISUNDERSTANDING THEIR DREAMS AND ACTING ONLY TO SATISFY THEIR EGOS. AS POWERFUL MEN TEND TO DO AFTER EVENTS SPIN OUT OF CONTROL, AND DISASTER ENSUES. AMARU WAS KILLED SOON AFTER HIS HEART-TO-HEART WITH KUNTUR, IN A SURPRISE ATTACK BY HIS OWN TROOPS.



KUNTUR, PROBABLY THE MOST UPRISING, INTELLIGENT, AND YES EVEN NOBLEST OF THE CONSPIRATORS, STILL RESOLVED HIS GUILT IN THE ONLY WAY HE KNEW - THROUGH A VIOLENT ACT.

ON HEARING OF AMARU'S DEATH, KUNTUR PERSUADED A TRUSTED SLAVE, ON THE PROMISE OF HIS FREEDOM, TO RUN HIM THROUGH WITH HIS OWN SPEAR.



OVER THE THREE PLUS YEARS OF WAYNA'S REIGN AND HIS CONSTANT WARRING, THE WARI PEOPLE GREW TIRED OF HIS STEADY DEMANDS FOR TRIBUTE INCREASES.

THEY FOUND OCCASION TO DEPRIVE WAYNA OF HIS EXALTED POSITION AND LIFE ON A TRIBUTE VISIT TO ONE OF HIS HOLDINGS AND QUICKLY DISPATCHED HIM.

MEN! WAYNA COMBINED THE WORST QUALITIES OF HIS TWO UNCLE'S WITH A STREET URGHIN'S GREED FOR MORE, WHICH IS WHAT HE BASICALLY WAS ANYHOW.

NONE OF THE PEOPLE IN MY STORY HAD A CLUE TO THEIR PERVERTED VIEW OF LIFE BECAUSE THEIR ENTITLEMENT BLINDED THEM.

THE CONQUISTADORS WHO OVERCAME THE INKANS WERE AS BAD IF NOT WORSE. THE MALE DEFECT IS NOT BOUND BY ANY CREED OR IDEOLOGY.

MEN ARE STILL IN CONTROL OF MOST FACETS OF LIFE TODAY. THEIR TENDENCY TO EXERT POWER IS A CONSTANT FOR US ALL. THAT IS MY TALE. MAKE OF IT WHAT YOU WILL.



THE END



IN 1956, TERCO MENENDEZ, A VERY RICH SMUGGLER, LIVED ON A COMPOUND NEAR THE CITY OF LA CEBIA, HONDURAS



I OWED CARLOS GUERCO A BIG FAVOR. HE STAKED ME TO GET THIS ALL STARTED. REALLY TREATED ME LIKE A SON



AT HIS DEATH, BEG I PROMISED TO TAKE ON HIS TWO NEPHEWS. CARLOS WANTED THEM TO GET SOME EXPERIENCE OUTSIDE OF THE FAMILY



YOU KNOW, PAGO, WITH GUERCO DEAD, THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS GOING TO BE A BIT UNSETTLED FOR AWHILE

WE'RE IN FOR SOME DANGEROUS TIMES THE NEXT COUPLE OF MONTHS



SO DOUBLE SECURITY ON ANY OF MY FAMILY LEAVING THE COMPOUND

OUR TWO NEW RECRUITS CAN HELP WITH THAT

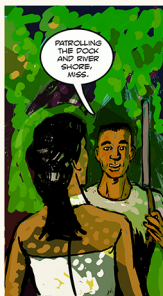
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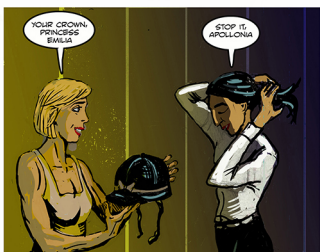
NO SPECIAL TREATMENT, RIGHT? LET THEM TRY WORKING THEIR WAY UP - IF THEY CAN

THEY BOTH DID SOME ARMY TIME, RIGHT? SO THEY SHOULD BE FAMILIAR WITH GUNS



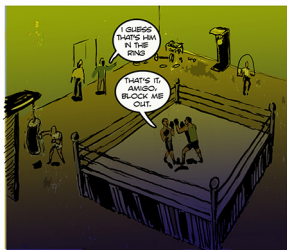




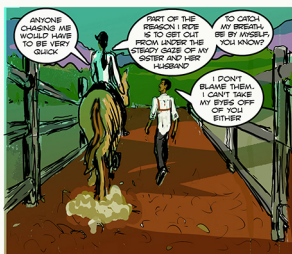












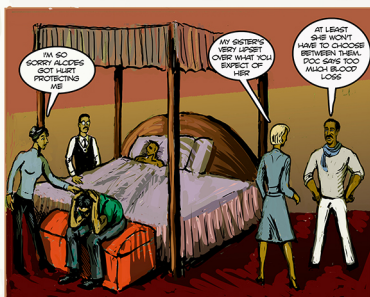














THE TWO SPIRIT'S TALE

CHARLEY HAD ITS DAY AND MAKES FOR A TIDY ENDING, BUT IT'S CAUSED AS MUCH HARM AS IT'S RESCUED DAMSELS IN DISTRESS

OH COME NOW SENORITA ER SENOR UMM I DON'T WISH TO OFFEND BUT I'M NOT SURE WHICH YOU ...

IF YOU PREFER THAT I DIDN'T, SENOR ...

NO NO, GO AHEAD PLEASE, IT'S LATE AND I'M A BIT CRANKY

AS YOU WISH

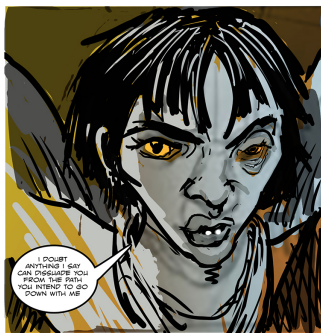
MY TALE IS ABOUT A YOUNG WOMAN LEADING A DOUBLE LIFE

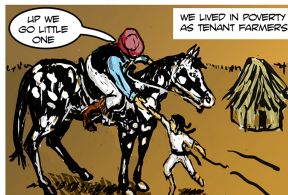
ONE IS A LIFE SHE'S BEEN FORCED INTO AND JUST MUDDLES ALONG IN.

THE OTHER IS A LIFE WHERE SHE EXCELLS

IT STARTS IN THE MEXICO CITY OF THE 1650S WHEN MEXICO WAS STILL PART OF THE DOMINION OF SPAIN

YOLOTTLI CALDERON, YOU MUST FOREWITH CONFESS TO YOUR WITCHERY AND COLLABORATION WITH SINISTER AND OTHERWORDLY FORCES.

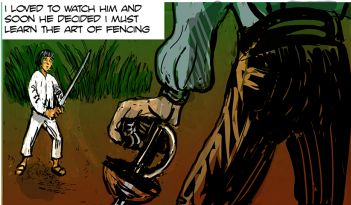




PAPA HAD BEEN A CAPTAIN DURING THE PEASANTS REBELLION AND STILL PRACTICED HIS FENCING



I LOVED TO WATCH HIM AND SOON HE DECIDED I MUST LEARN THE ART OF FENCING



I LEARNED QUICKLY AND GOT BETTER, BUT HE WAS A DEMANDING TASK MASTER



BY THE TIME I TURNED 13, I WAS BESTING HIM REGULARLY BUT THAT ONLY GAVE HIM PLEASURE



HE OFTEN TOOK ME WITH HIM ON COLLECTION RIDES TO HIS TENANTS. IT WAS HARD TO SEE HOW POOR THEY WERE, KNOWING THAT I HAD COME FROM THE SAME LIFE.



THE DROUGHT SENOR. I'LL HAVE IT ALL NEXT MONTH

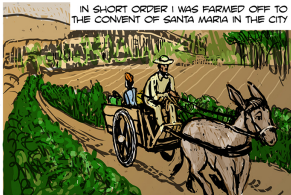




WHEN I WAS 15, MY FATHER DIED OF THE POX, PROBABLY CONTRACTED ON HIS RENT COLLECTION VISITS



I, OF COURSE, HAD NO SAY IN THE MATTER



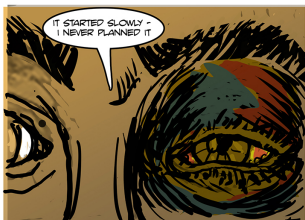
IN SHORT ORDER I WAS FARMED OFF TO THE CONVENT OF SANTA MARIA IN THE CITY



THE SISTERS SEEMED TO KNOW LITTLE OF WHAT TO MAKE OF ME, AS I DID OF THEM.



QUICKLY MY LIFE SETTLED INTO A SLOW, STEADY STREAM OF MASS AND PRAYER



THEY QUEUED UP AT A MUNICIPAL
BUILDINGS TO PAY THEIR TAXES



