

ANGEL CATBIRD™

MARGARET ATWOOD
JOHNNIE CHRISTMAS
TAMRA BONVILLAIN











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Story by
MARGARET ATWOOD

Illustrations by
JOHNNIE CHRISTMAS

Colors by
TAMRA BONVILLAIN

Letters by
NATE PIEKOS OF BLAMBOT®



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ANGEL CATBIRD VOLUME 1

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MARGARET ATWOOD

INTRODUCTION

— Some find it strange that a person known for her novels and poetry would take to writing comic books, especially comic books called *Angel Catbird*. Why is a nice literary old lady like me—an *award-winning* nice literary old lady—a nice literary old lady who should be resting on her laurels in her rocking chair, being dignified and iconic—why is such a nice old lady messing around with flying cat-owl superheroes and nightclubs for cat people, not to mention giant rat men? Strange.

But I myself don't find it very strange. I was born in 1939, and was thus of a reading age when the war ended and colour comics made a booming comeback. Not only did I read masses of comics in magazine form, I could encounter many of the same characters in the weekend newspapers, which had big spreads of colour comics. Some of the comics were funny—*Little Lulu*, *Li'l Abner*, *Mickey Mouse*, *Blondie*, and so forth—but some were serious—*Steve Canyon*, *Rip Kirby*, and the unfathomable *Mary Worth*. And some were superheroes: Batman, Captain Marvel, Wonder Woman, Superman, Plastic Man, the Green Lantern, the Human Torch, and their ilk. Some were even aimed at improving young minds: the *Classic Comics* series had an educational bent.

And some were just weird. In this last category I'd place *Mandrake the Magician*, *Little Orphan Annie*—in which nobody had pupils—and *Dick Tracy*: surrealist masterpieces, all of them, though somewhat disturbing for children. A criminal who could assume anyone's face, behind which he looked like melting Swiss cheese? It was alarmingly close to Salvador Dalí,



and kept me awake nights—as did Salvador Dalí, when I came across him years later.

Not only did I read all of these comics, I drew comics of my own. The earliest ones featured two flying rabbit superheroes, somewhat too jolly and fond of somersaults to be considered heavyweights. My older brother had a much larger stable of characters. They had more gravitas: they went in for large-scale warfare, whereas my own superheroes just fooled around with the odd bullet.

Along with the superhero rabbits I drew winged flying cats, many with balloons attached to them. I was obsessed with balloons, as no balloons were available during the war. So I'd seen pictures of them, but never the actual thing. It was similar with the cats: I wasn't allowed to have one because we were up in the Canadian forests a lot. How would the cat travel? Once there, wouldn't it run away and be eaten by mink? Very likely. So, for the first part of my life, my cats were flying dream cats.

Time passed, and both the balloons and the cats materialized in my real life. The balloons were a disappointment, liable as they were to burst and deflate; the cats were not. For over fifty years I was a dedicated cat person, with a few gaps here and there when I was a student. My cats were a pleasure, a comfort, and an aid to composition. The only reason I don't have one now is that I'm afraid of tripping on it. That, and of leaving it an orphan, so to speak.



As the 1940s changed into the 1950s and I became a teenager, the comic that preoccupied me the most was Walt Kelly's *Pogo*, which, with its cast of swamp critters combined with its satire of the McCarthy era's excesses, set a new benchmark: how to be entertainingly serious while also being seriously entertaining. Meanwhile I was continuing to draw, and to design the odd visual object—posters, for the silk-screen poster business I was running on the Ping-Pong table in the late fifties, and book covers, for my own first books, because that was cheaper than paying a pro.

In the seventies I drew a sort-of political strip called *Kanadian Kultchur Komix* for a magazine called, puzzlingly, *This Magazine*. I then took to drawing a yearly strip called *Book Tour Comix*, which I would send to my publishers at Christmas to make them feel guilty. (That didn't succeed.) It's no great coincidence that the narrator of my 1972 novel, *Surfacing*, is an illustrator, and that the narrator of my 1988 novel, *Cat's Eye*, is a figurative painter. We all have unlived lives. (Note that none of these narrators has ever been a ballet dancer. I did try ballet, briefly, but it made me dizzy.)

And I continued to read comics, watching the emergence of a new generation of psychologically complex characters with relationship problems (Spider-Man, who begat Wolverine, et cetera). Then came the emergence of graphic novels, with such now-classics as *Maus* and *Persepolis*: great-grandchildren of *Pogo*, whether they knew it or not.

Meanwhile I had become more and more immersed in the world of bird conservation. I now had a burden of guilt from my many years of cat companionship, for my cats had gone in and out of the house, busying themselves with their cat affairs, which included the killing of small animals and birds. These would turn up as gifts, placed thoughtfully either on my pillow instead of a chocolate, or on the front doormat, where I would slip on them. Sometimes it would not even be a whole animal. One of my cats donated only the gizzards.

From this collision between my comic-reading-and-writing self and the bird blood on my hands, Angel Catbird was born. I pondered him for several years, and even did some preliminary sketches. He would be a combination



of cat, owl, and human being, and he would thus have an identity conflict—*do I save this baby robin, or do I eat it?* But he would be able to understand both sides of the question. He would be a walking, flying carnivore's dilemma.

But I realized that Angel Catbird would have to look better than the flying cats I'd drawn in my childhood—two-dimensional and wooden—and better also than my own later cartoons, which were fairly basic and lumpy. I wanted Angel Catbird to look sexy, like the superhero and noir comics I'd read in the forties. He would have to have muscles.

So I would need a coauthor. But how to find one? This wasn't a world of which I had much knowledge. Then up on my Twitter feed popped, one day, a possible answer. A person called Hope Nicholson was resurrecting one of the forgotten Canadian superheroes of the wartime 1940s and fundraising it via Kickstarter. Not only that, Hope lived in Toronto.



I put the case for *Angel Catbird* to her, we got together in a strange Russian-themed pub, and lo and behold, she came onboard and connected me not only with artist Johnnie Christmas, who could draw just the right kinds of muscles and also owl claws, but the publisher, Dark Horse Comics. The Dark Horse editor of the series is Daniel Chabon, who from his picture looks about fifteen. I have never met him, nor have I met Johnnie, nor the excellent colourist Tamra Bonvillain, but I am sure such a meeting will take place in the future.

All of these collaborators have been wonderful. What more could an illustrator manqué such as myself possibly ask for? What fun we have had! At least, I have had fun. Watching *Angel Catbird* come to life has been hugely engaging. There was, for instance, a long email debate about Angel's pants. He had to have pants of some kind. Feather pants, or what? And if feathers, what kind of feathers? And should these pants be underneath his human pants, and just sort of emerge? How should they manifest themselves? Questions would be asked, and we needed to have answers.

And what about Cate Leone, the love interest? Pictures of cat eyes flew back and forth through the ether, and at one point I found myself scanning and sending a costume sketch I had done. What would a girl who is also a cat wear while singing in a nightclub act? Boots with fur trim and claws on the toes? Blood-drop earrings?

Such questions occupy my waking hours. What sort of furniture should Count Catula—part bat, part cat, part vampire—have in his castle? Should some of it be upside down, considering the habits of bats? (Count Catula is important in his own right, for bats are in a lot of trouble worldwide.) How to make a white Egyptian vulture look seductive? (You know what they eat, right?) Should Octopuss have a cat face and tentacle hair? Should Cate Leone have a rival for Angel Catbird's attentions—a part girl, part owl called AtheneOwl? I'm thinking yes. In her human form, does she work at Hooters, or is that a pun too far?

So. Like that.



There is, of course, a science-and-conservation side to this project: it is supplied by Nature Canada, who are not only contributing the statistics that can be found here and there in the book in the banners at the bottoms of the pages, but are also running a #SafeCatSafeBird outreach campaign to urge cat owners not to let their cats range freely. The mortality figures for free-range cats are shockingly high: they get bitten, hit by cars, eaten by foxes, and that's just the beginning. So, it's good for cats and good for birds to keep the cats safe, and in conditions in which they can't contribute to the millions of annual bird deaths attributed to cats. On CatsAndBirds.ca, cat owners can take the pledge, and as the pledges mount up, we can hope that there might be an uptick in the plummeting bird counts that are being recorded in so many places. It may also result in better conditions for stressed forests, since it is the migratory songbirds that weed insect pests out of the trees. Cats aren't the only factor in the decline of birds, of course—habitat loss, pesticides, and glass windows are all playing a part—but they're a big factor.

There used to be an elephant who came around to grade schools. He was called Elmer the Safety Elephant, and he gave advice on crossing streets safely and not getting run over. If your school had managed a year without a street accident, Elmer gave you a flag.

In my wildest dreams, Angel Catbird and Cate Leone, and maybe even Count Catula, would go around and give something or other—a flag, a trophy?—to schools that had gathered a certain number of safe-cat pledges. Who knows, maybe it will happen. Before we act, we imagine and wish, and I'm wishing and imagining a result like that. If it does happen, I'll be the first to climb into my boots with claws on the toes, or maybe sprout some wings, in aid of the cause.

Meanwhile, I hope you enjoy *Angel Catbird* as much as my partners and I have enjoyed creating it. It's been a hoot!

Or a meow.

Or both.

Margaret Atwood



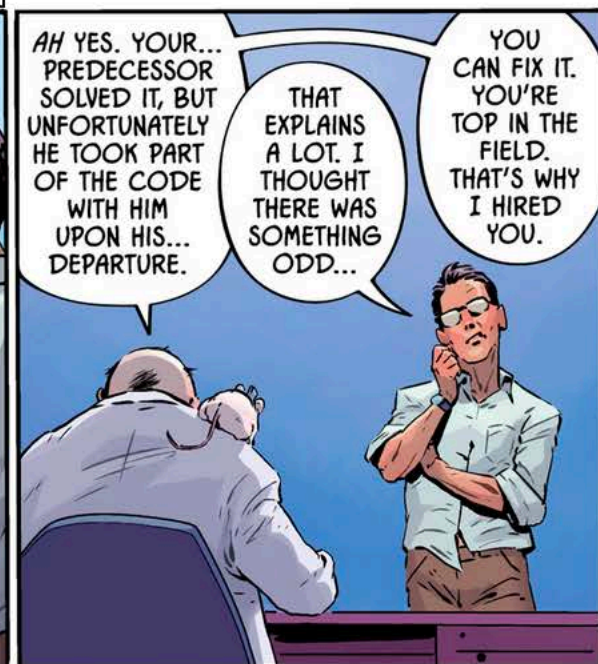






AH, FELEEDUS. HOW'S THE SPECIAL PROJECT? YOU'VE GOT RESULTS YET?

NOT YET, DR. MUROID. I'M ALMOST THERE, BUT I THINK THERE'S A SMALL PIECE OF THE ORIGINAL CODE THAT'S MISSING.



AH YES. YOUR... PREDECESSOR SOLVED IT, BUT UNFORTUNATELY HE TOOK PART OF THE CODE WITH HIM UPON HIS... DEPARTURE.

THAT EXPLAINS A LOT. I THOUGHT THERE WAS SOMETHING ODD...

YOU CAN FIX IT. YOU'RE TOP IN THE FIELD. THAT'S WHY I HIRED YOU.



LIVES HANG IN THE BALANCE! THINK OF THE GOOD THIS SUPER-SPLICER SERUM WILL DO FOR HUMANITY! SO MANY DISEASES CURED BY REPLACING DAMAGED GENES WITH HEALTHY ONES! MIRACULOUS!

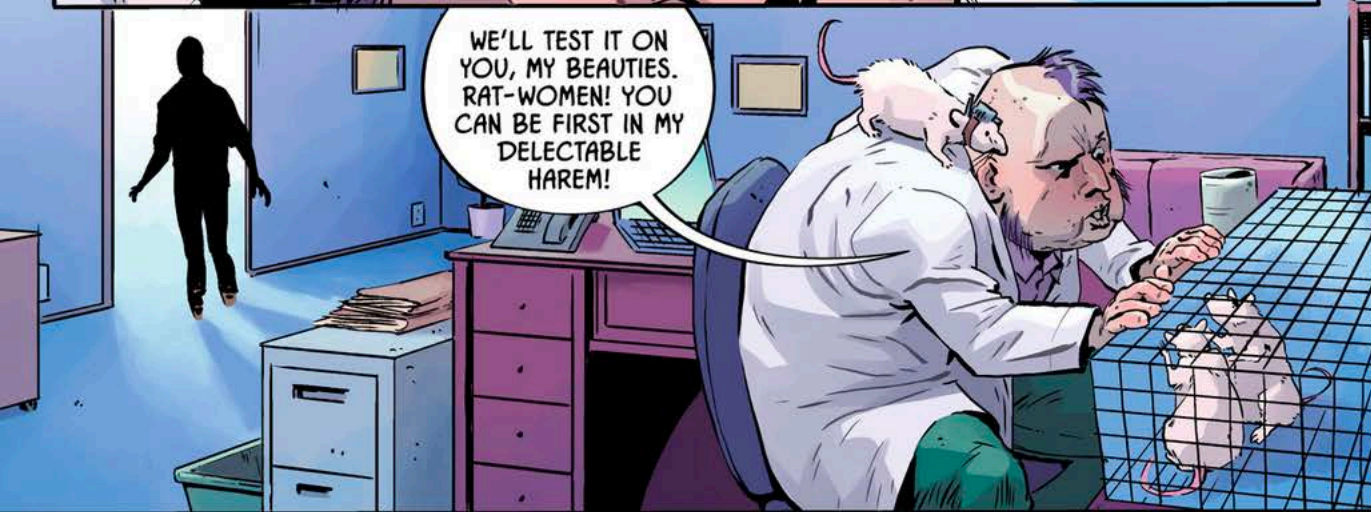
WORK OVERTIME. TAKE IT HOME WITH YOU! I'LL PAY DOUBLE. NOTIFY ME AS SOON AS YOU HAVE IT. ANY HOUR OF THE DAY OR NIGHT.

I'LL DO MY BEST, SIR.

I'M SURE YOU WILL.



USEFUL IDIOT.



WE'LL TEST IT ON YOU, MY BEAUTIES. RAT-WOMEN! YOU CAN BE FIRST IN MY DELECTABLE HAREM!



DON'T KNOW ANYONE YET. WONDER WHAT KIND OF WORK EVERYONE ELSE HERE IS DOING?



YOU'RE STRIG FELEDUS? NEW BRAIN FOR HIRE?

UM, YEAH, THAT WOULD BE ME...

MIND IF I JOIN YOU? CATE LEONE. I'M IN MARKETING. I'M A NEWBIE, TOO. YOU'RE WORKING ON THE "SPECIAL PROJECT," RIGHT?



UM, IT'S TOP--

YEAH, RIGHT. TOP SECRET. I KNEW THE GUY BEFORE YOU.

SEEMS HE STOLE SOME OF THE CODE.



HE WAS PROTECTING THE CODE AGAINST... HACKERS. HE WAS KILLED IN A HIT-AND-RUN. IT WASN'T AN ACCIDENT.

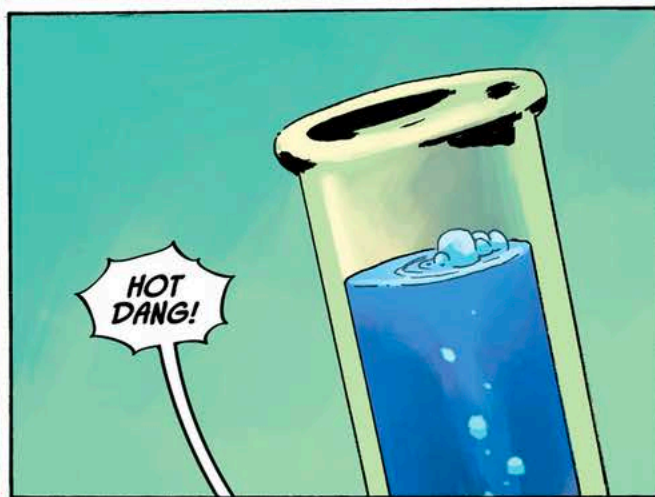
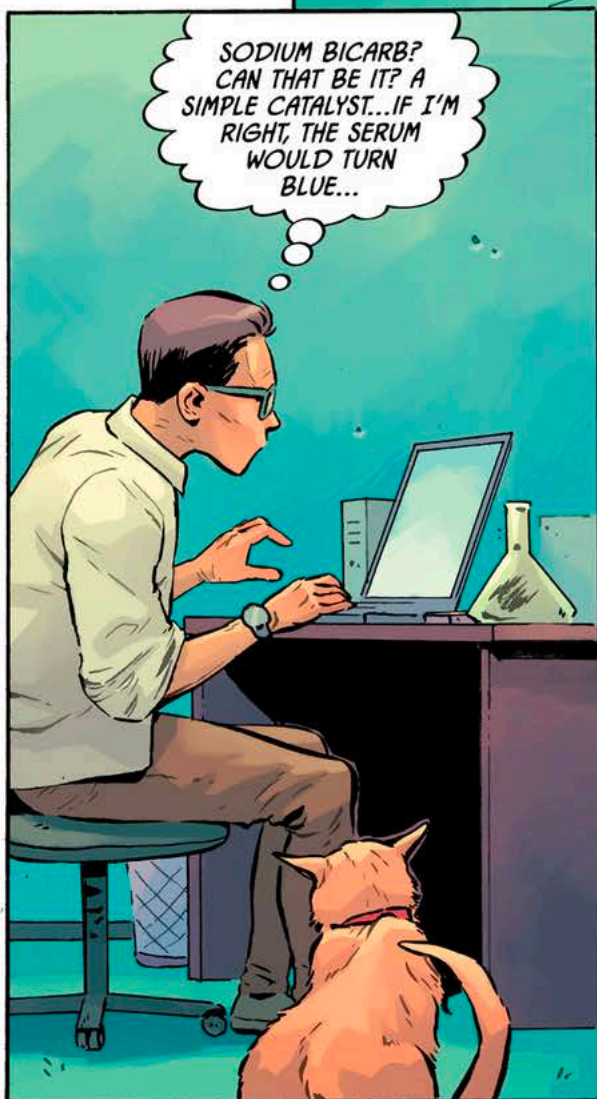
REALLY?

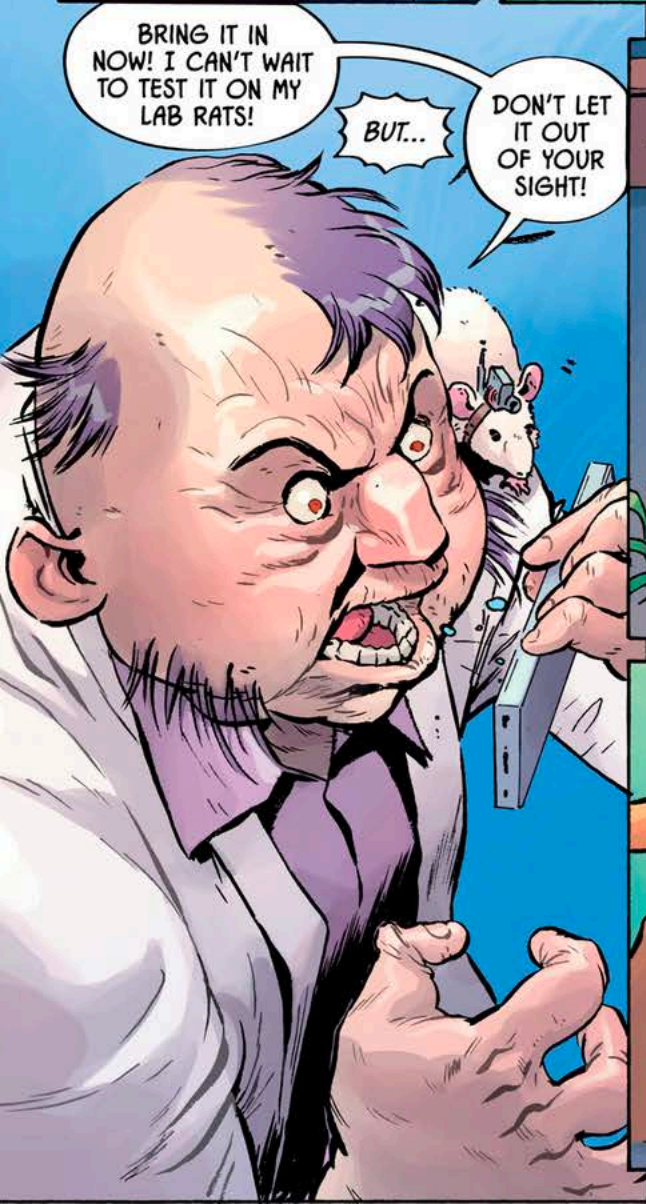


HE WAS A FRIEND OF MINE.

OH, REALLY SORRY...

SOMEONE'S SUPER INTERESTED IN THAT SUPER-SPLICER. WATCH YOUR BACK, STRIG. BE CAREFUL CROSSING THE ROAD.







THERE LIES DANGER

Outdoor cats live a fraction of the lifespan of indoor cats: as low as a third. They frequently get hit by cars and are at much higher risk of contracting diseases, getting lost, fighting with wildlife and other cats, poisoning, and parasites.

<http://catsandbirds.ca/blog/keep-cats-safe/>







OOF.



WHAT'S
THIS
THING?



WINGS...
AM I
DEAD?

WHAT
THE --?
THESE THINGS
WORK!

AND
I CAN
SEE IN THE
DARK!



WOOHOOO!

WHEE-
ROWR!

HOLY
CRAP! THIS
IS *REAL*!



AWESOME!
HOOO!

SHOOOM



squeee!

MEOWOOOO...

SKRNCH

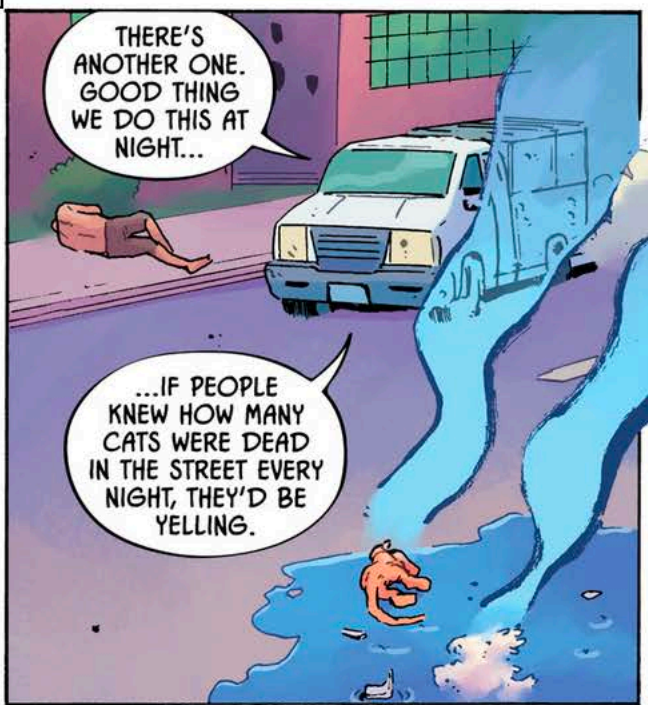
!GULP!

DID I...
JUST...EAT A...
RAT?

BLECH!

TASTY,
THOUGH.
PURROOO...

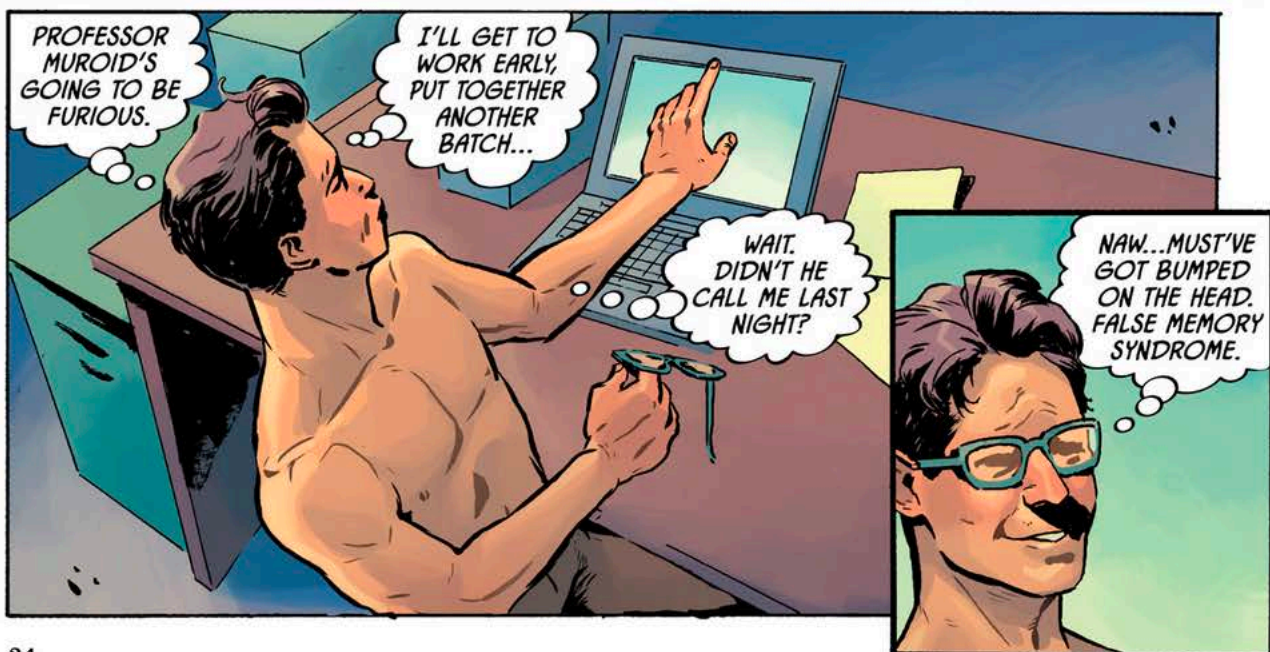




CATS AREN'T SO STREETWISE

Cars are a leading cause of sudden cat death, more so for young cats. In one study, 87% of trauma-related deaths were caused by cars. In the UK, an estimated 230,000 cats are hit each year. In the US, it's as high as 5.4 million. In Canada, about 200,000 cats die from car accidents every year.

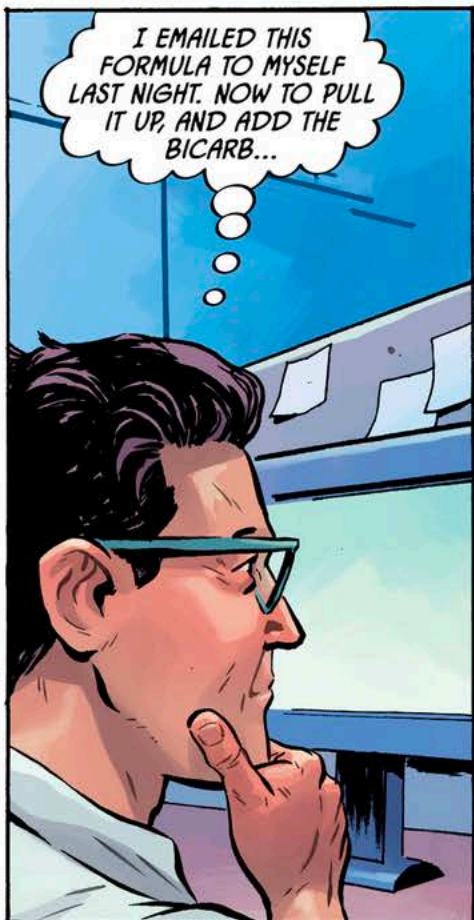
www.catsandbirds.ca/blog/healthy-alternatives-to-free-roam



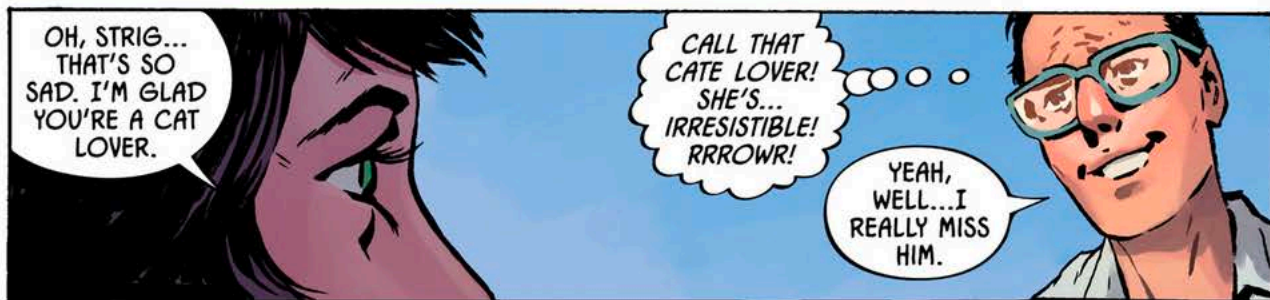


POISON, POISON, EVERYWHERE

Many human foods are toxic to cats: chocolate, coffee, onion, garlic, and tomato. Other poisons include common garden plants such as lilies, tulips, and begonias, as well as antifreeze, insecticides, and pesticides. Symptoms of poisoning include loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, and loss of coordination. If your cat has eaten something toxic, contact a vet immediately.

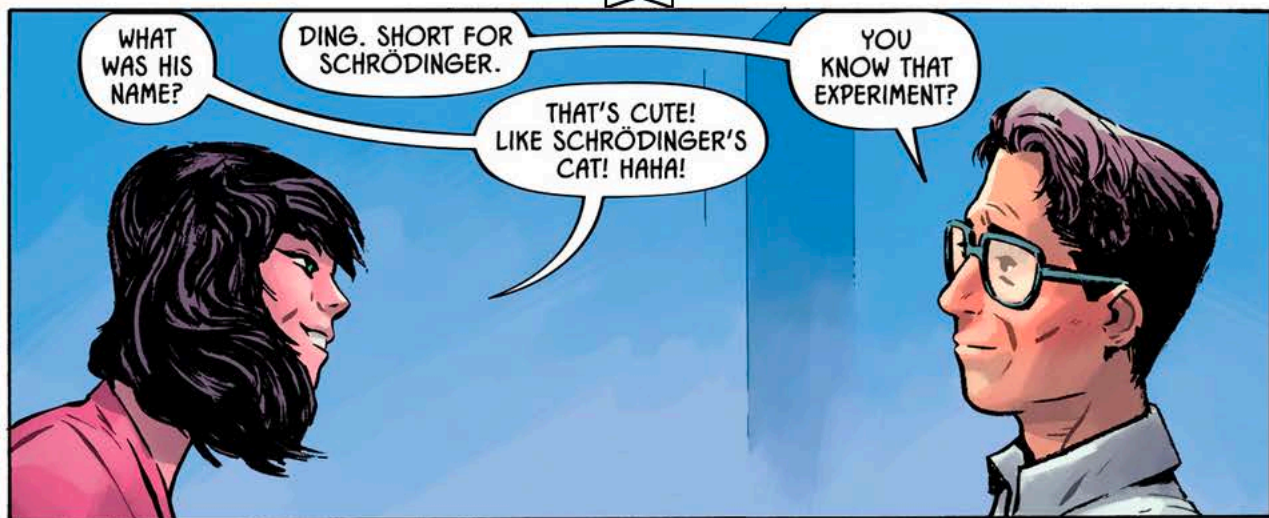






CATS SMELL WELL!

A cat's sense of smell is 14 times stronger than a human's, and it does a lot more than help them find mice—it helps them communicate with other cats. When your cat rubs up against you, she's using her glands to make a scent tattoo that says, "Mine!"

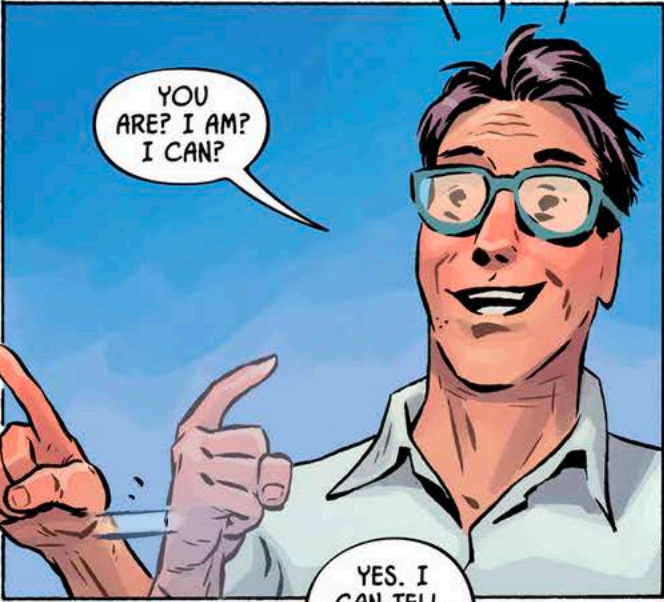


DEAD OR ALIVE?



Shelter statistics from the US, Canada, and the UK: 30% of lost dogs are returned to their owners, but only 5% of cats are. Sadly, many of those lost cats are probably dead, having been hit by a car or mauled by an animal. Identifying your cats with a microchip or tattoo increases their chances of being returned home.

www.catsandbirds.ca/about



YOU
ARE? I AM?
I CAN?



YES. I
CAN TELL.
I'M NEVER
WRONG.

BUT THERE'S
SOMETHING ELSE
ABOUT YOU. YOU'RE
NOT ALL TOMCAT,
RIGHT? THERE'S SOME
BIRD THING GOING
ON, TOO.



HOW
CAN YOU
TELL?

IT'S THE
CAT NOSE.
INFALLIBLE!



YOU MUST
BE...SENSING IT
YOURSELF. ABOUT
ME. MY...MY
CATTINESS.
RIGHT?

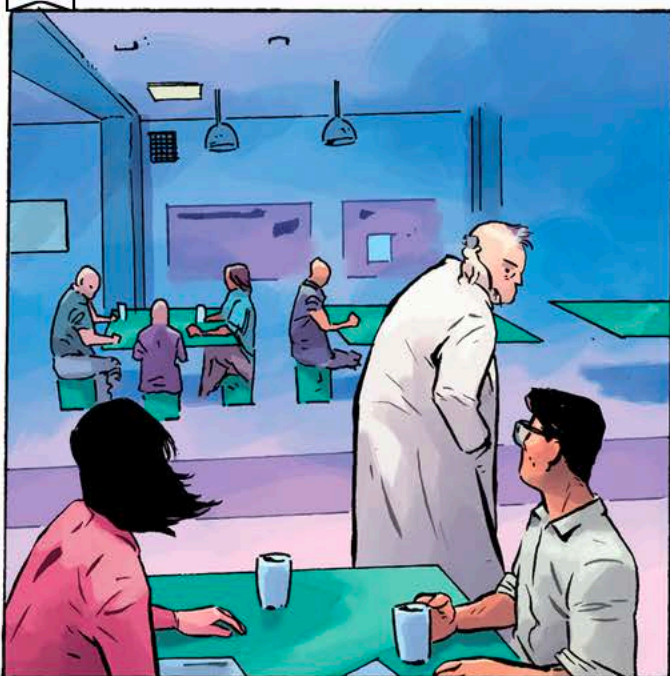
OH
YEAH.

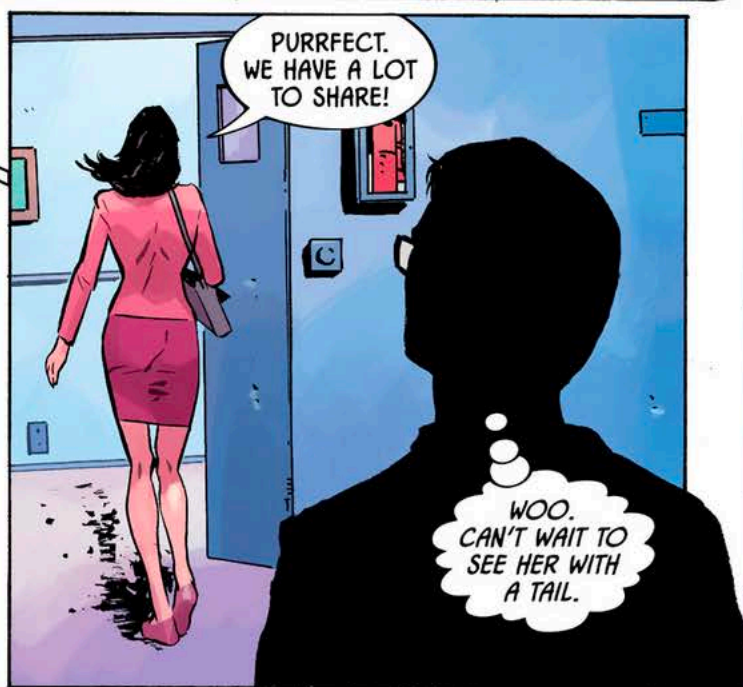
IT WAS THAT
SUPER-SPLICER YOU'RE
WORKING ON. THE SECRET
PROJECT. YOU SPILLED
SOME ON YOURSELF,
RIGHT?



YEAH, I
GUESS...BUT
WHAT ABOUT
YOU?

IN MY CASE IT'S
GENETIC. I WAS
BORN WITH IT. WE
LEONES HAVE
BEEN HALF-CATS
FROM WAY BACK...
THEY USED TO
CALL US SHAPE
CHANGERS.







CAT-BIRD MATH, Part I

Cats are estimated to kill 200 million birds a year in Canada. In the US, the figure is roughly 2.6 billion, and in the UK, about 55 million. Feral and stray cats are thought to be the cause of more than 60% of those estimated fatalities, despite the fact that their population is smaller than that of pet cats. Protect your cat—save birds!
www.catsandbirds.ca/research/estimated-number-of-birds-killed-by-house-cats/



CAT-BIRD MATH, Part II

Pet cats kill fewer birds per cat than their feral cousins, but even well-fed pet cats still hunt. Canada's 10 million pet cats cause an estimated 80 million bird deaths each year. For pet cats, hunting is entertainment, providing stimulation and exercise. But play is an excellent substitute for hunting. Help your cat play!
<http://catsandbirds.wiseworkbench.com/research/safe-happy-cat/>





MY PLAN IS
SUCCESSING!
THE TIME IS AT
HAND!



THE SUPER-
SPLICER HAS
BEEN PERFECTED!
IT IS IN MY
HANDS!



OR...IN
MY PAWS!
OR...
ALMOST.



SOON,
YOU WILL ALL
BE LEADING A
DOUBLE LIFE, LIKE
MINE! PART RAT,
PART HUMAN!

YOU WILL BE
ABLE TO CHANGE
YOUR SHAPE AT
WILL!

YOU WILL
INFILTRATE
EVERY LEVEL OF
SOCIETY!

YOU
WILL TAKE
OVER ALL
POWER!





"BANKS! ALL **WEALTH**
WILL BE UNDER YOUR
RAT-MAN CONTROL!



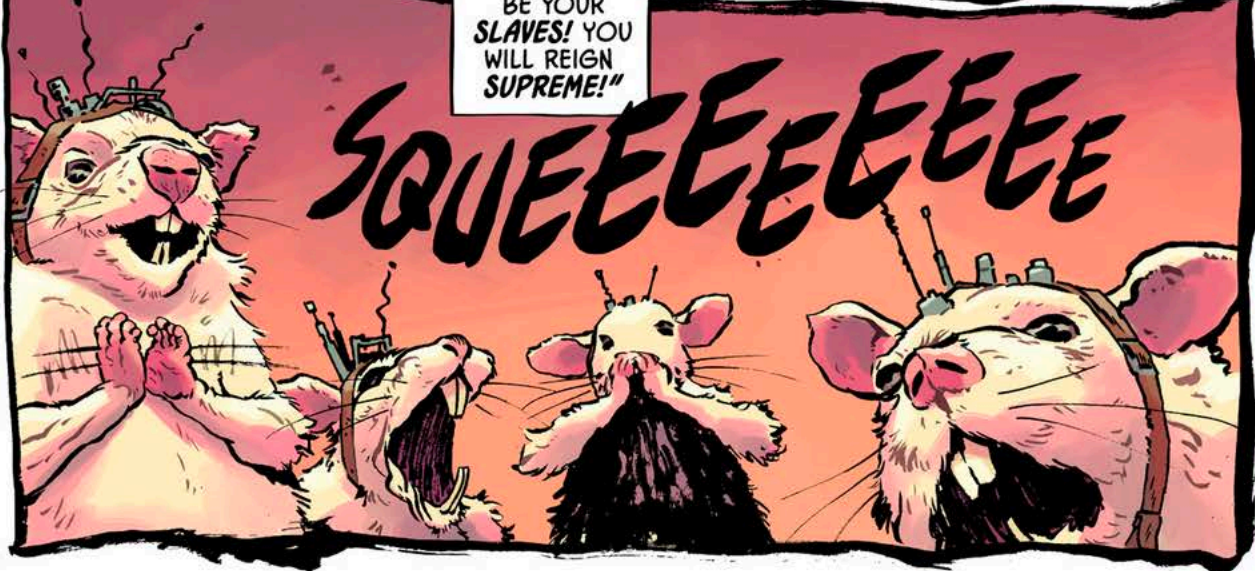
"GOVERNMENT!
HUMANS WILL
BE HELPLESS
AGAINST YOU!



"THE ARMY! OUR
ANCIENT ENEMIES,
THE CATS AND
HALF-CATS, WILL
BE **DOOMED!**



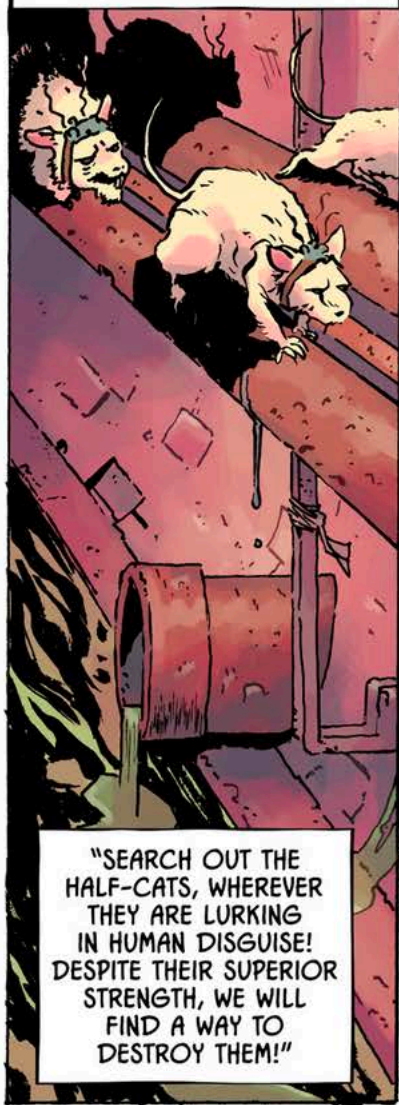
"YES, MY RATTY
CHILDREN! AND...
ALL **BIRDS'** EGGS
WILL BE AT YOUR
MERCY!



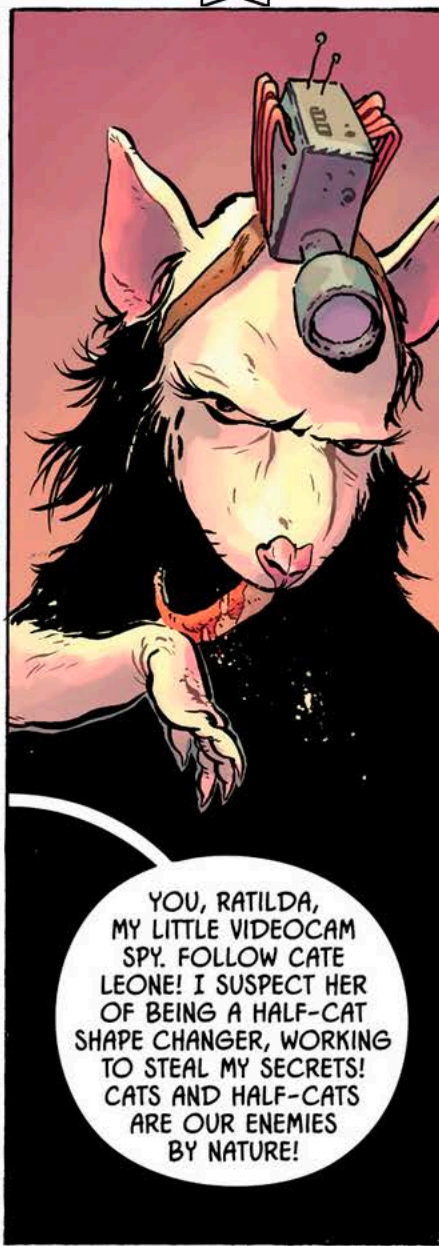
"HUMANS WILL
BE YOUR
SLAVES! YOU
WILL REIGN
SUPREME!"

SQUEEEEEEEEE

"BUT FIRST, MY BRAVE RATS,
WE HAVE WORK TO DO. RUN
THROUGH THE SEWERS! INFEST
THE SUBWAY SYSTEM!



"SEARCH OUT THE
HALF-CATS, WHEREVER
THEY ARE LURKING
IN HUMAN DISGUISE!
DESPITE THEIR SUPERIOR
STRENGTH, WE WILL
FIND A WAY TO
DESTROY THEM!"



YOU, RATILDA,
MY LITTLE VIDEOCAM
SPY. FOLLOW CATE
LEONE! I SUSPECT HER
OF BEING A HALF-CAT
SHAPE CHANGER, WORKING
TO STEAL MY SECRETS!
CATS AND HALF-CATS
ARE OUR ENEMIES
BY NATURE!



YOU, RATIFY!
YOUR MISSION IS TO
TRACK STRIG FELEDUS.
I MUST KNOW HIS EVERY
MOVE...THE BETTER TO
CAPTURE HIM, EXTRACT
THE FORMULA FROM HIM,
AND THEN ELIMINATE
HIM!



THIS
TIME, I
WILL NOT
FAIL!

MY RAT FOLK
WILL CONTROL THE
WORLD...BUT, THANKS TO
MY DIGITAL TRANSMITTER,
I WILL CONTROL THEM!



"BWEE-HEE-HEE--
squeeeee!"

squeeeee!





HE'S
GOT A
POINT.



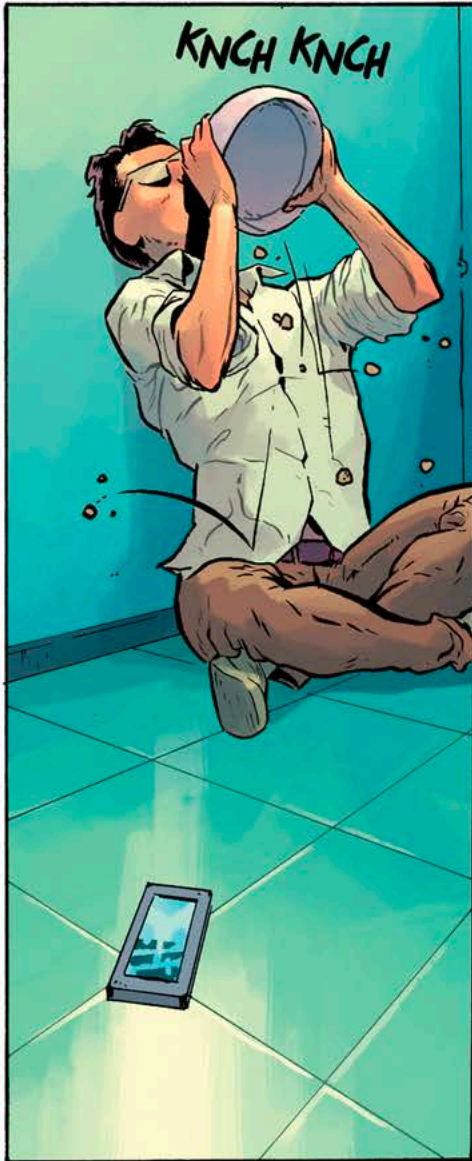
MAYBE IF I
RUB MYSELF WITH
CATNIP? MIGHT
TURN HER
ON...

GONNA BE
A LONG NIGHT.
I HOPE. GRAB
A SNACK
FIRST?

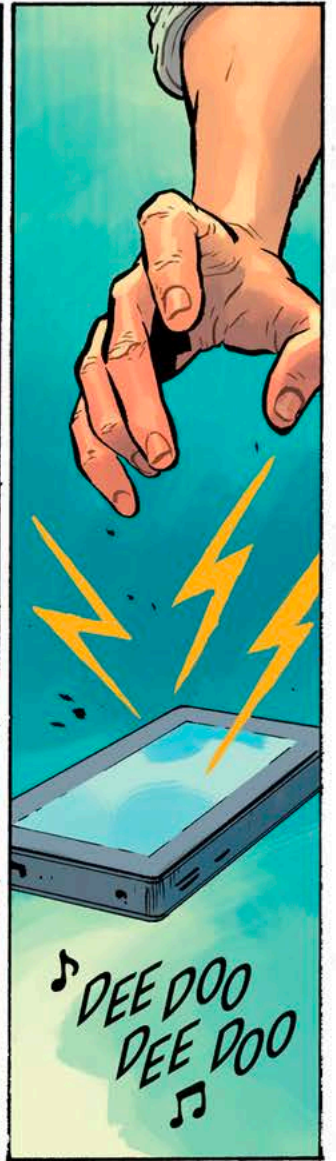


BUMMER.
NOTHING BUT
VEGETABLES.

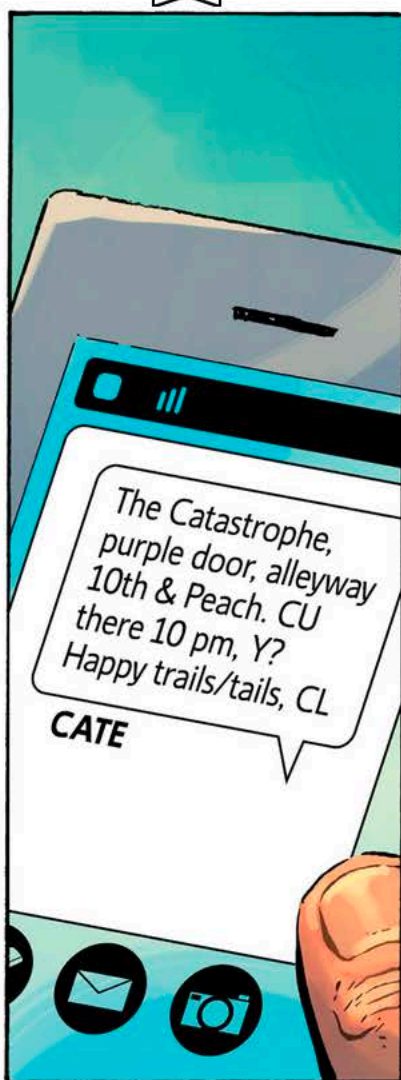
SHOULD'VE
LAID IN A NICE,
RIPE FISH
HEAD...



KNCH KNCH



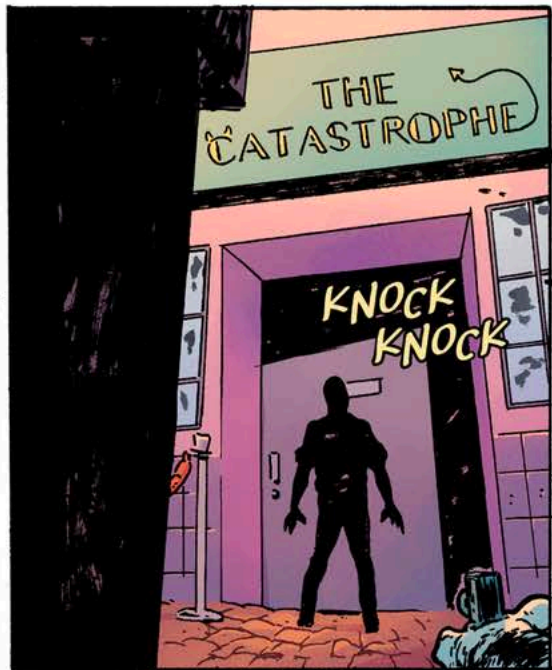
DEE DOO
DEE DOO



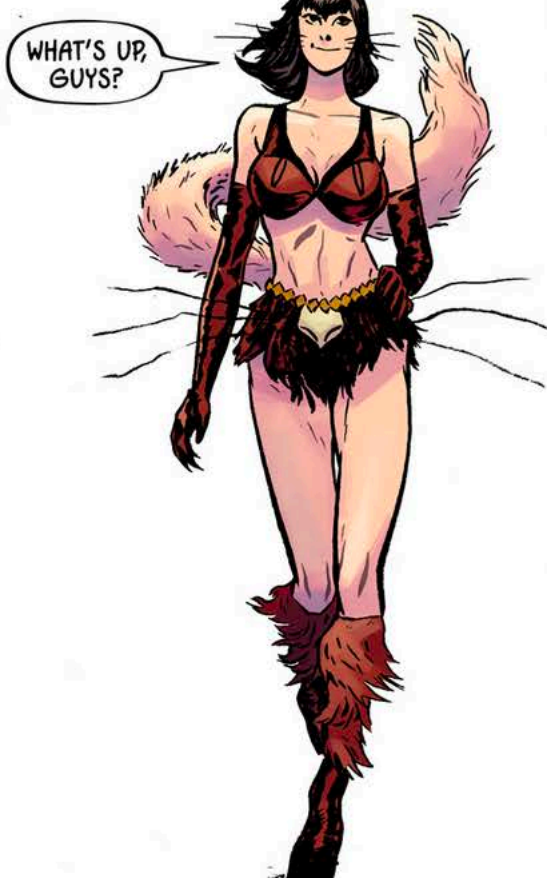


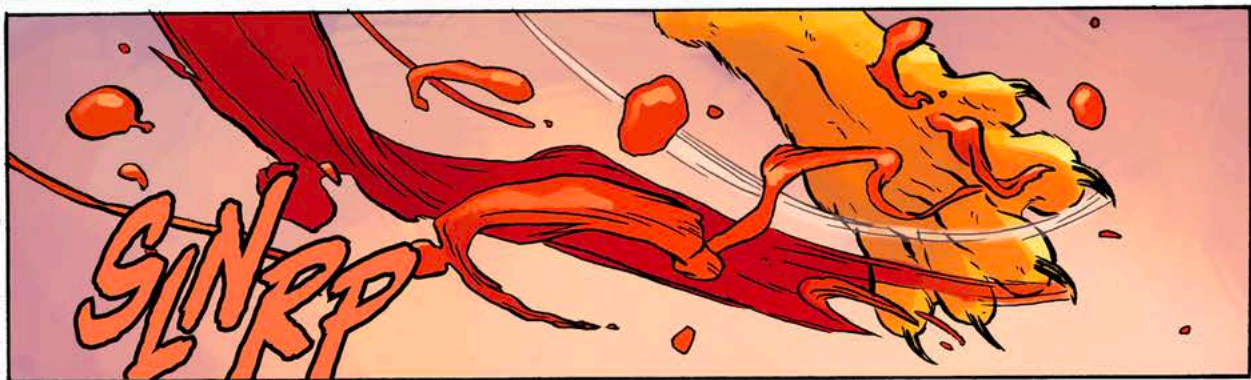
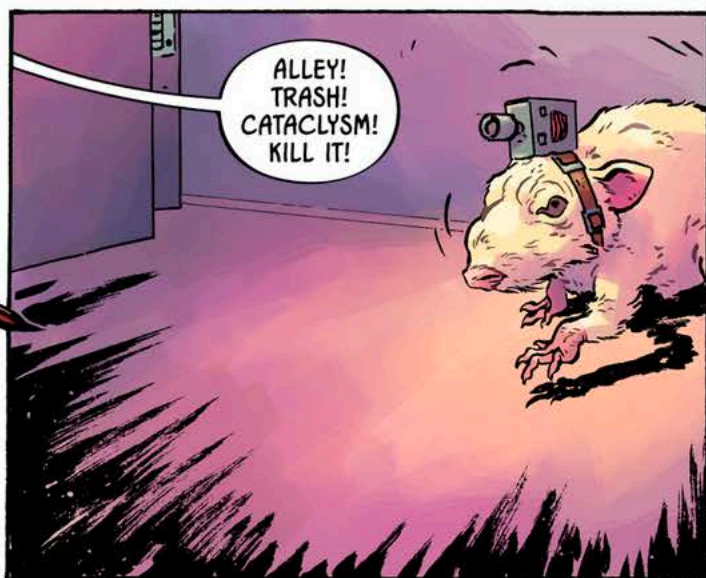
*"SEEN ANY MICE?"







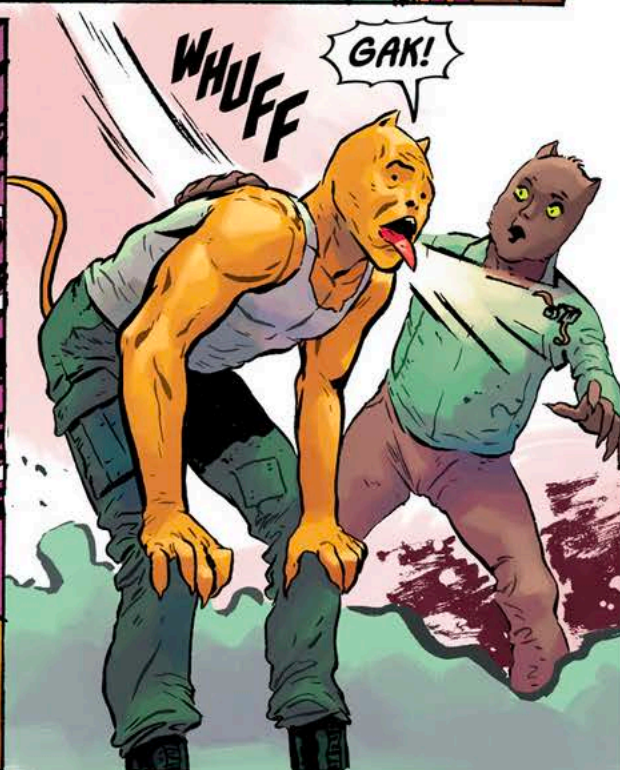




CATS ARE NATURAL HUNTERS

Hunting is a natural cat instinct. It's also "natural" for dogs to hunt cats, but we don't let them do it! Cats and dogs have been domesticated for thousands of years. They're pets, not wild animals.

www.catsandbirds.ca/blog/isnt-it-natural-for-my-cat-to-hunt/







WHAA?

HOLY
CATS!

COOL!

AWESOME!

LOOK,
FEATHERS!

THAT
IS SOOO
WILD!

!

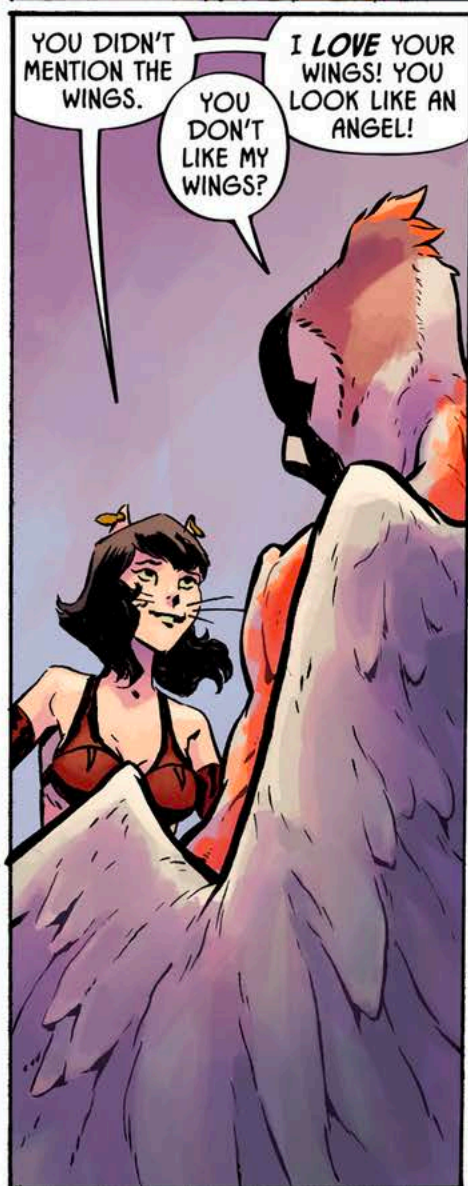


HE'S A CAT?

HE'S A BIRD?

A FLYING CAT? NO WAY!

THAT'S KINDA AWESOME!



YOU DIDN'T MENTION THE WINGS.

YOU DON'T LIKE MY WINGS?

I LOVE YOUR WINGS! YOU LOOK LIKE AN ANGEL!



ANGEL CATBIRD!

GUESS THAT'S MY NEW NAME. NOT TOO SHABBY.



HEY. WE CAN'T LET HIM IN HERE.

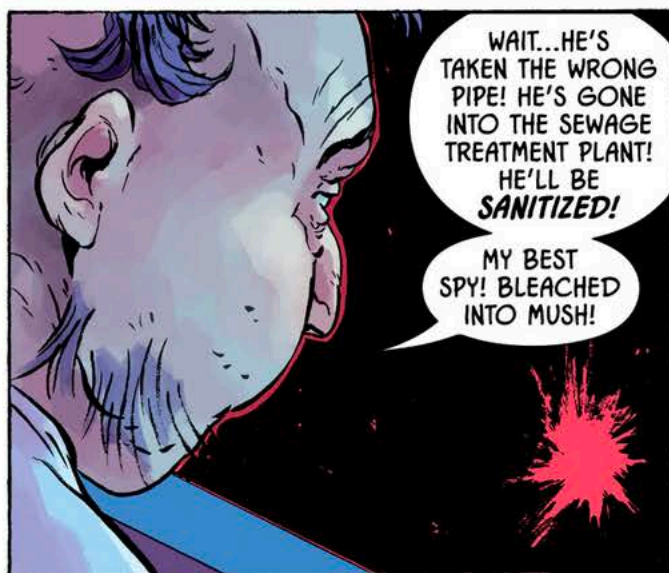
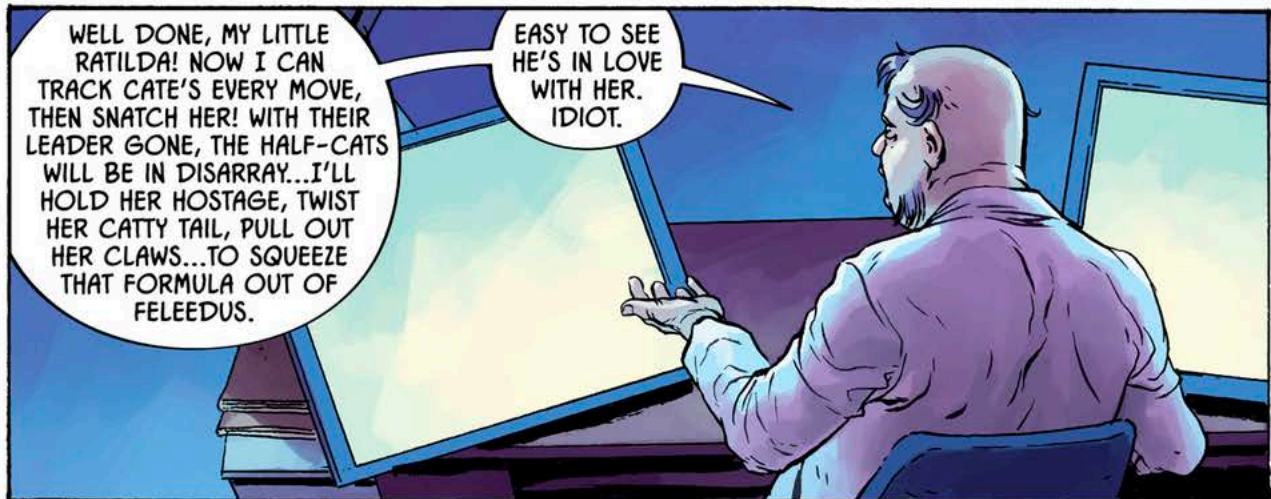
CATASTROPHE IS FOR HALF-CATS.

YEAH, HE'S A FREAK.



FACE IT, HALF-CATS-- WE'RE ALL FREAKS!









YOUR HOST
CATERWAUL HERE.
LISTEN UP, CATS AND
KITTENS! IT'S TIME FOR...
PUSSIES IN BOOTS,
WITH **CATE
LEONE!**



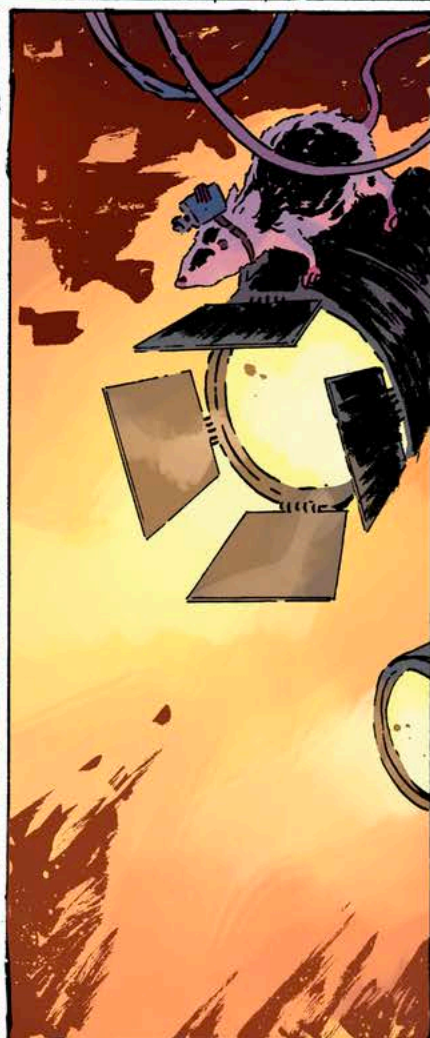
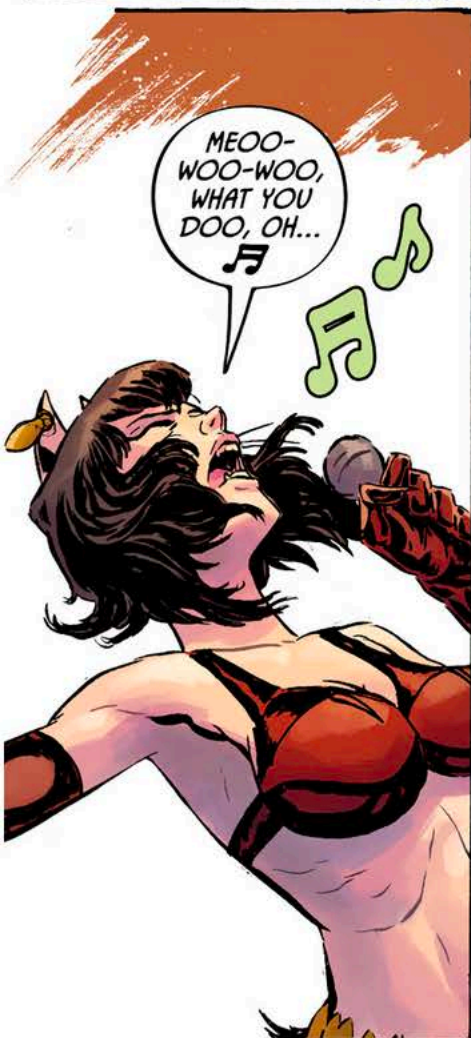
♪ YOU ARE
MY DISH OF
CREAM...YOU
ARE MY CATNIP
DREAM...



♪ YOU ARE
MY MIDNIGHT
SCREAM, IT'S
TRUE...♪



BECAUSE OF WHAT,
BECAUSE OF WHAT,
BECAUSE OF WHAT,
♪ WHAT, WHAT, ♪
YOU--







WHAT IN
RAT'S NAME
IS THAT
THING?

SKRRREEE

SWOOP



TWO OF MY
BEST RAT SPIES,
DESTROYED!

BLIP!



DON'T GRIN
TOO SOON, MY
RAT BEAUTIES! I CAN
HARDLY WAIT TO GET
THAT SERUM AND TURN
YOU INTO HALF-RAT
WOMEN! THEN YOU'LL
BE ALL MINE!

AS FOR CATE
LEONE...THERE'S
MORE THAN ONE
WAY TO SKIN A
HALF-CAT! AND
I'LL **SKIN**
THEM!



PURR-RAY!

ANGEL CATBIRD!

A FIVE-STAR PREDATION!



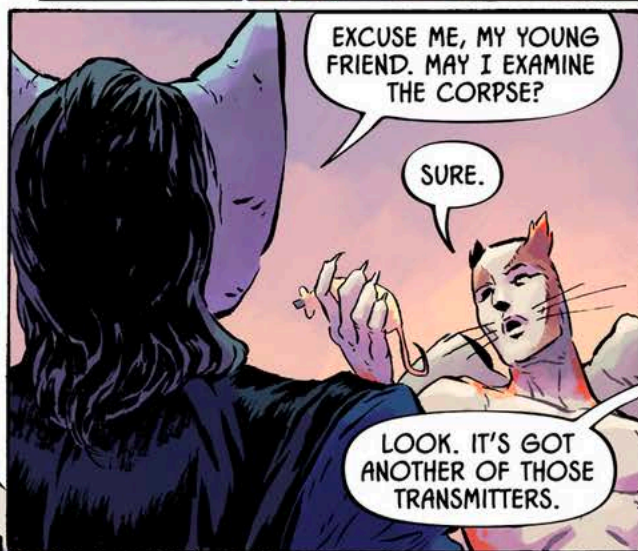
THAT WAS BRILLIANT!

WELL FLOWN!

YEAH, WELL, A REAL PREDATOR WOULD EAT IT.

WE DON'T ALWAYS.

FUN'S IN THE CHASE, RIGHT?



EXCUSE ME, MY YOUNG FRIEND. MAY I EXAMINE THE CORPSE?

SURE.

LOOK. IT'S GOT ANOTHER OF THOSE TRANSMITTERS.



SO. IT SEEMS THAT SOMEONE WISHES TO KNOW YOUR WHEREABOUTS, MY DEAR.

PROFESSOR MUROID! HAS TO BE HIM!

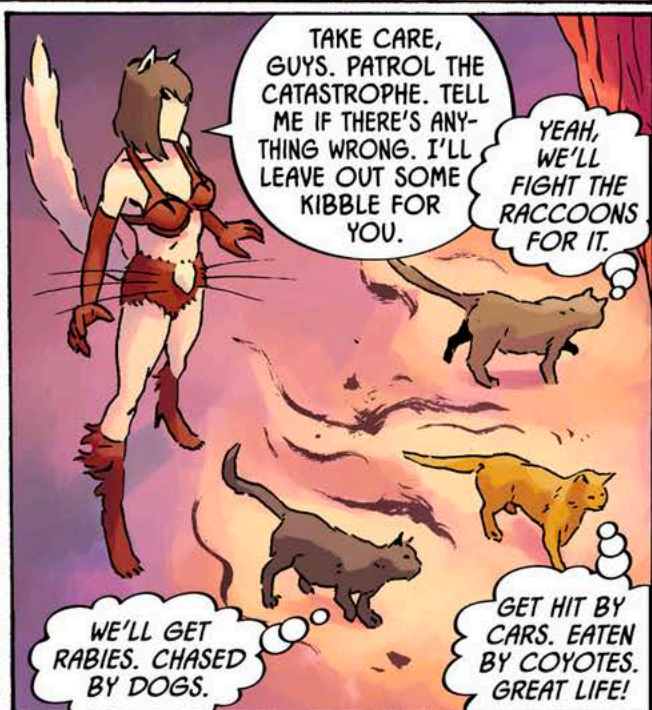
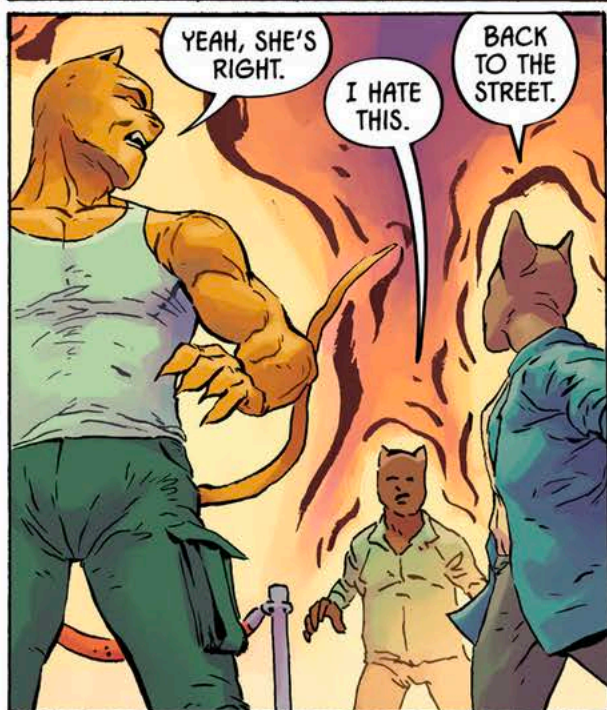


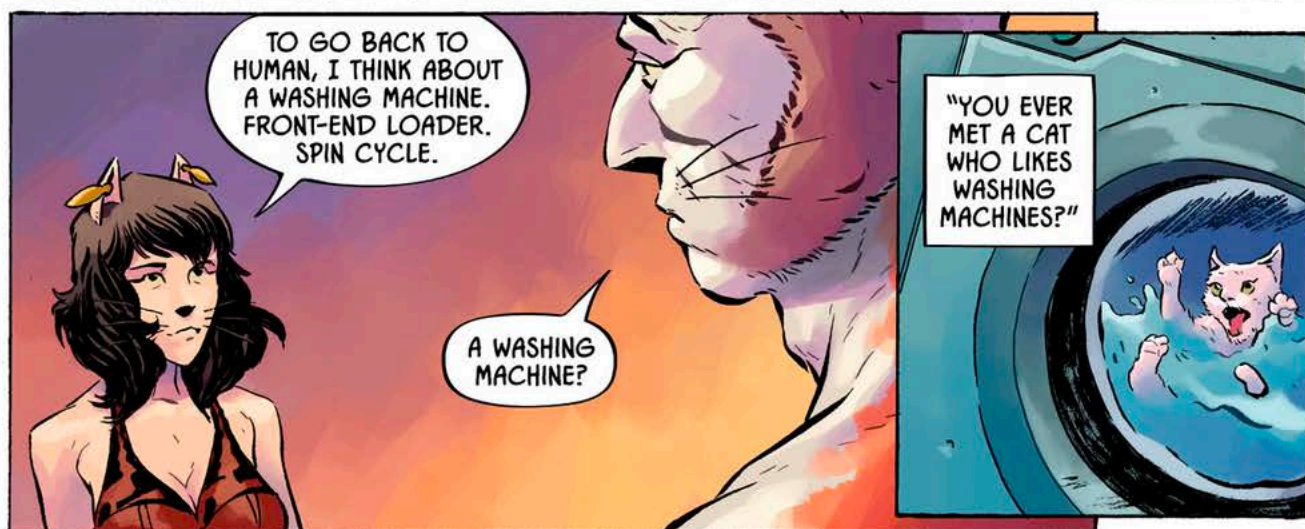
SHALL I REACTIVATE THIS APPARATUS AND USE MY BAT-CAT SENSES TO LOCATE THE SOURCE?

WOULDN'T THAT BE RISKY?

NO WORRIES, MY DEAR. I HAVE NINE **HUNDRED** LIVES.

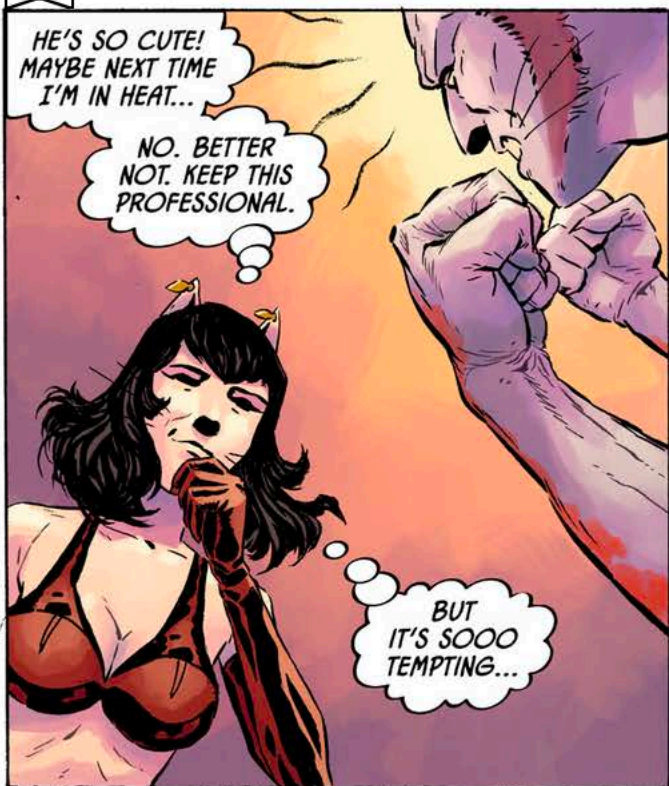








WASHING
MACHINE. WASHING
MACHINE.



HE'S SO CUTE!
MAYBE NEXT TIME
I'M IN HEAT...

NO. BETTER
NOT. KEEP THIS
PROFESSIONAL.

BUT
IT'S SOOO
TEMPTING...



IT DIDN'T
WORK.

TRY HARDER.
IMAGINE THE
SOAP...THE
WATER...THE
SPINNING...

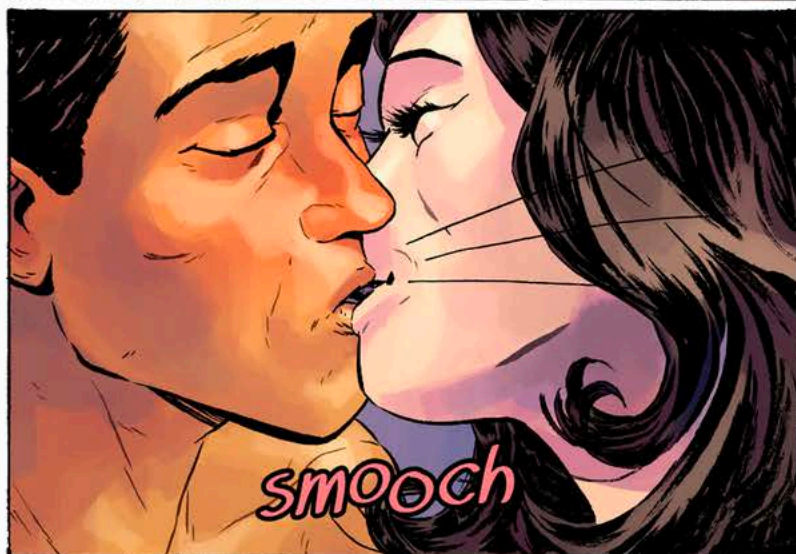


WASHING
MACHINE!
WASHING
MACHINE!

RRRROWR,
THAT'S
TERRIFYING!

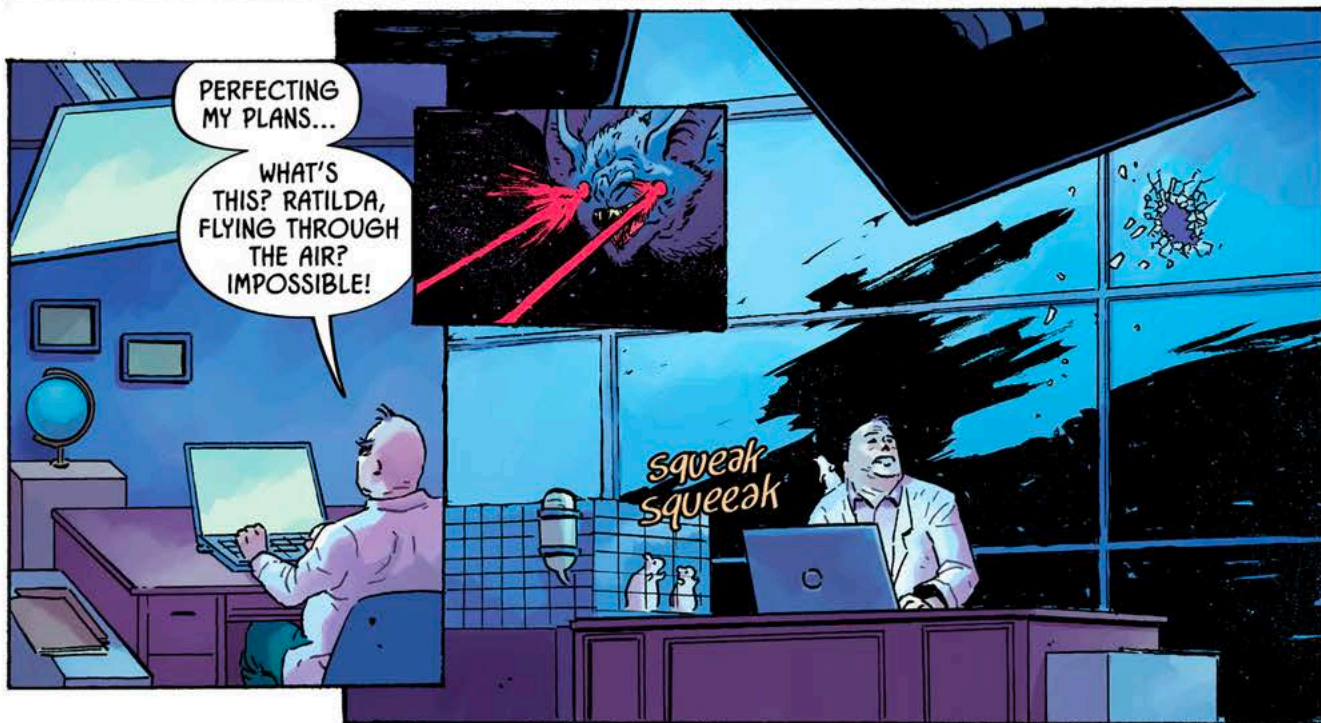


YESSS!
YOU'VE
GOT IT!

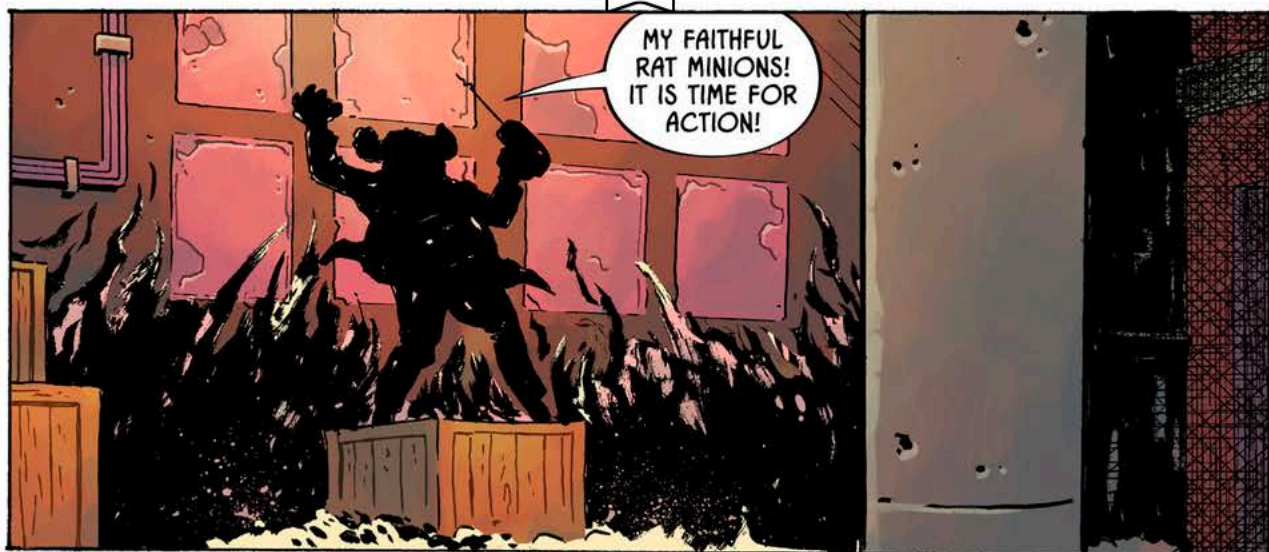


CAT-BIRD MATH, Part III

A female cat has an average of 1.4 litters per year, up to 3 in warm climates—with an average of 3 kittens per litter. At that rate, it takes only 3 1/2 years for your cat and her kittens to produce more than a thousand cats! Fix your cat!
www.catsandbirds.ca/blog/the-importance-of-fixing-your-cat/







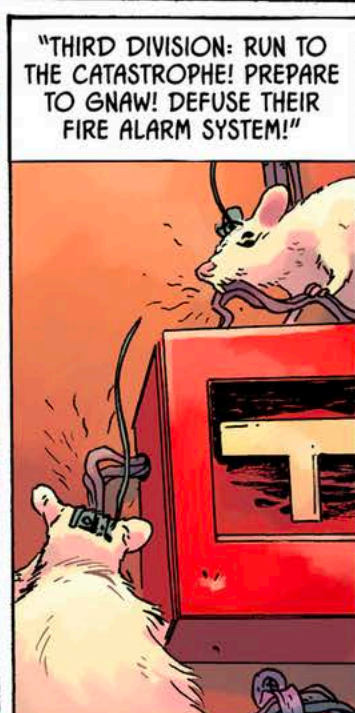
MY FAITHFUL
RAT MINIONS!
IT IS TIME FOR
ACTION!



"FIRST DIVISION:
SHOULDER YOUR
EXPLOSIVES!"



"SECOND DIVISION:
DETONATORS!"



"THIRD DIVISION: RUN TO
THE CATASTROPHE! PREPARE
TO GNAW! DEFUSE THEIR
FIRE ALARM SYSTEM!"



YOU ARE
SMALL BUT MANY!
TOGETHER, YOU ARE
INVINCIBLE!

ON YOUR
MARK...

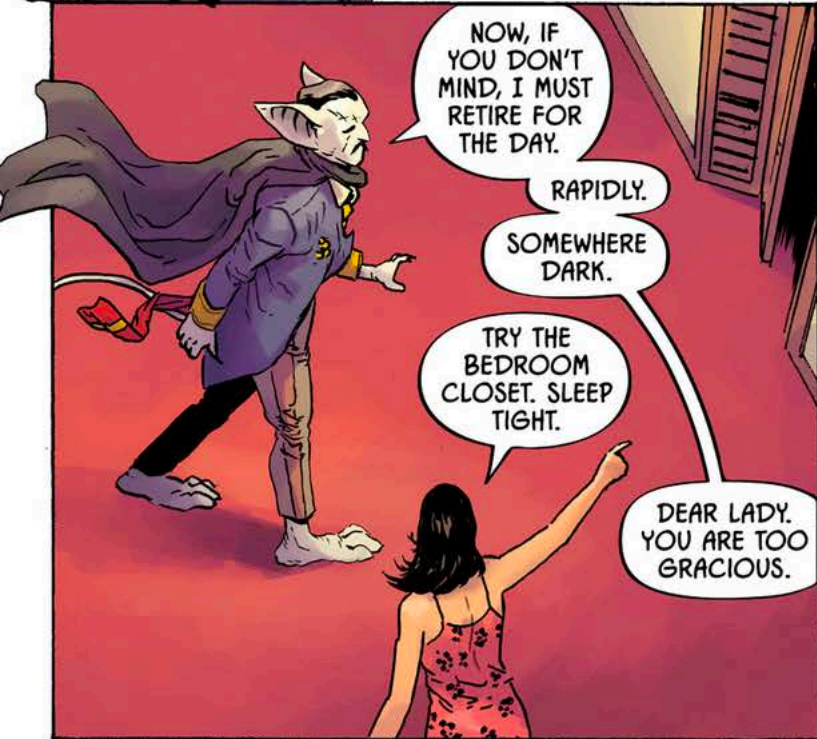


ATTAAACK!



YOU WERE RIGHT, DEAR LADY. PROFESSOR MUROID IS OUR SWORN ENEMY! HE WAS CONTROLLING THE SPY RATS, AND IS NO DOUBT A HALF-RAT HIMSELF.

SO, I HAVE A RAT FOR A BOSS. I GUESS I'M NOT ALONE ON THE PLANET.



NOW, IF YOU DON'T MIND, I MUST RETIRE FOR THE DAY.

RAPIDLY.

SOMEWHERE DARK.

TRY THE BEDROOM CLOSET. SLEEP TIGHT.

DEAR LADY. YOU ARE TOO GRACIOUS.



Later.

HERE COMES MUROID. ACT NORMAL.

GET ANY INFORMATION YOU CAN.

WHATEVER THAT IS.

MORNING, MISS LEONE.

THAT SUPER-SPLICER CODE--- IT MUST BE READY BY NOW!

JUST A FEW BUGS.

YOU SAID IT WAS FINISHED!

THAT VERSION WAS DEFECTIVE. IT HAD... UNPREDICTABLE RESULTS.

UNPREDICTABLE CAN BE ALARMING, DR. MUROID. OUR PRODUCTS NEED TO BE PERFECT BEFORE WE CAN MARKET THEM.

QUITE RIGHT, MISS LEONE.

IDIOT LOVEBIRD! HE'S HOOKED ON THE FOUL HALF-CAT! HER PAIN WILL BE THE KEY TO MY SUPREMACY.

I'LL TRAP HER. CAGE HER. CHAIN HER UP. SET MY RATS TO WORK ON HER. EYEBALLS FIRST! THEN HE'LL TELL ME EVERYTHING!

MISS LEONE, I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU IN MY OFFICE, LATER.



HE KNOWS ABOUT US.

WISH THAT MEANT WHAT IT USUALLY MEANS.



WHAT ABOUT US, EXACTLY?

THAT I HAVE A TAIL AND FLY AROUND LIKE AN OWL?

THAT I'D LOVE IT IF YOU HAD MY KITTENS? OR LAID MY EGG? WHATEVER.



HE KNOWS WE KILLED THOSE RAT SPIES OF HIS. COUNT CATULA TOLD ME. HE TRACKED US.



YOU THINK WE'LL GET FIRED?

NO WAY. HE'S KEEPING US HERE FOR A REASON. BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS.

CATE, I SAW THE WAY HE WAS LOOKING AT YOU. YOU'RE IN DANGER! DON'T GO INTO HIS OFFICE! LEAVE NOW! I'LL TELL HIM YOU FELT SICK.



OKAY. MEET ME OUTSIDE AT CLOSING TIME. TELL RAY TO JOIN US.

HERE, TAKE THIS.



WHA?

BETTER TO FLY AROUND IN! BUT HURRY. MUROID'S ON THE MOVE.





THAT'S IT, MY
FAITHFUL, STUPID
RATS! ALMOST
DONE!

SOON
YOU'LL BE
RAT PORRIDGE,
MORONS. BUT
THERE'S LOTS
MORE RATS WHERE
YOU CAME
FROM.



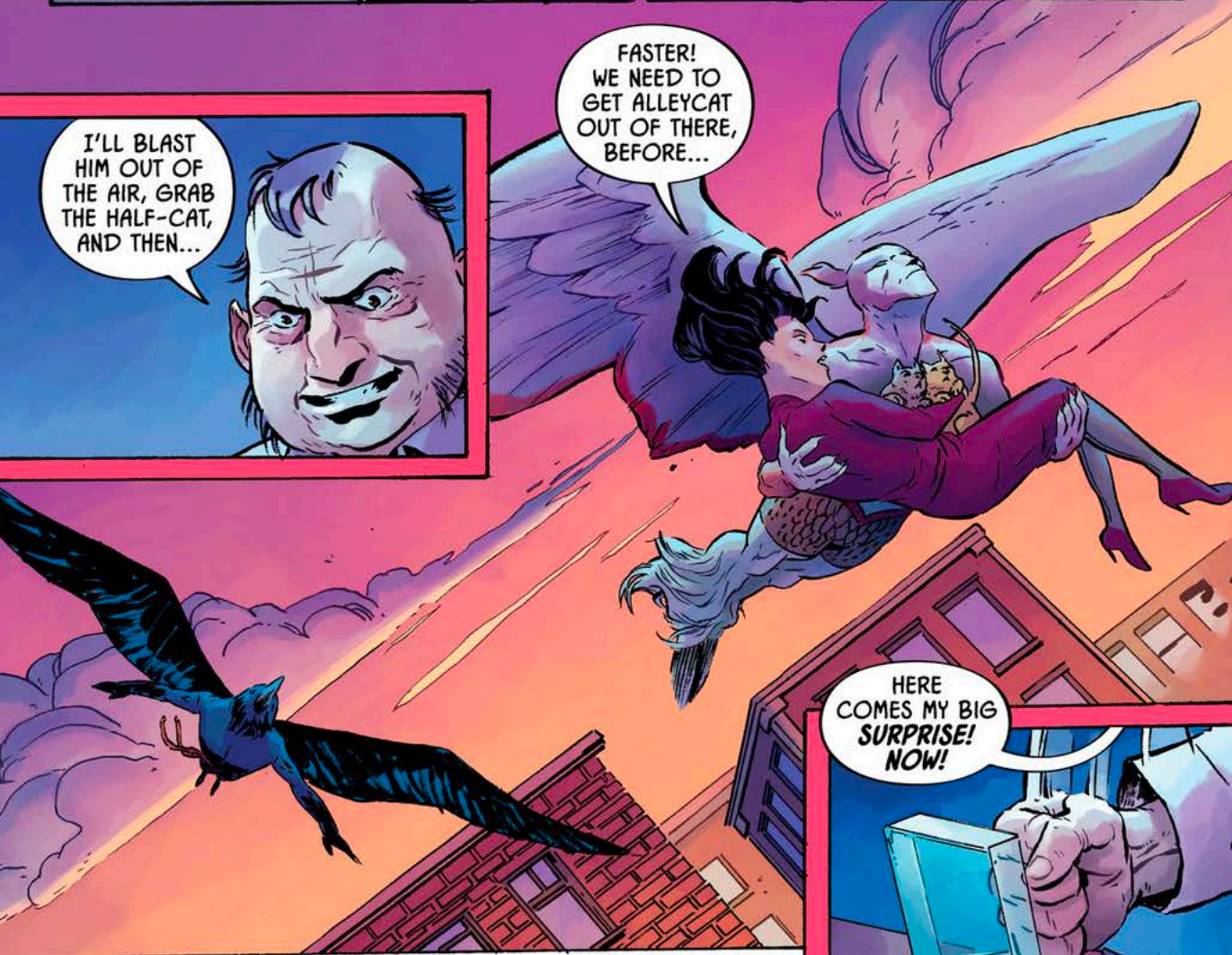
BUT WHAT
HAVE WE
HERE?

AH. THE CAT
GIRL AND...LOOKS
LIKE FELEDUS, BUT
WITH WINGS AND
FEATHERS. HE MUST'VE
BEEN DRINKING THE
SUPER-SPLICER!
TRAITOR!



I'LL BLAST
HIM OUT OF
THE AIR, GRAB
THE HALF-CAT,
AND THEN...

FASTER!
WE NEED TO
GET ALLEYCAT
OUT OF THERE,
BEFORE...

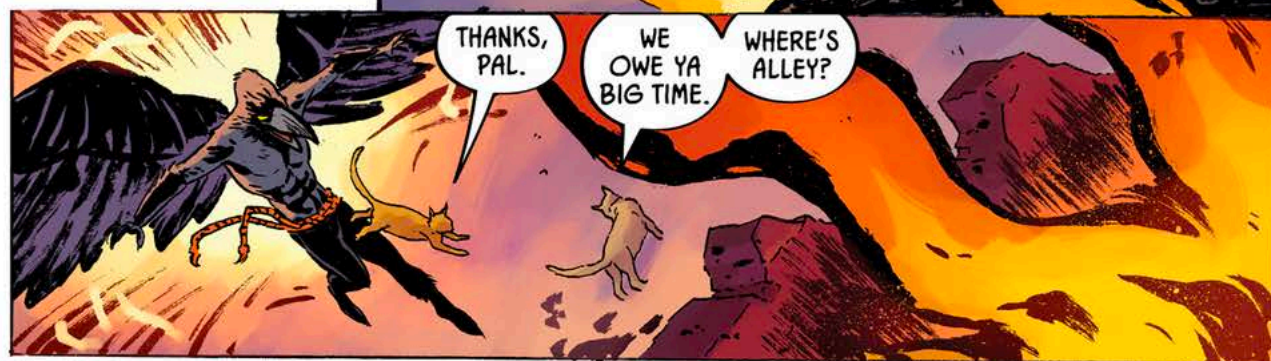


HERE
COMES MY BIG
SURPRISE!
NOW!





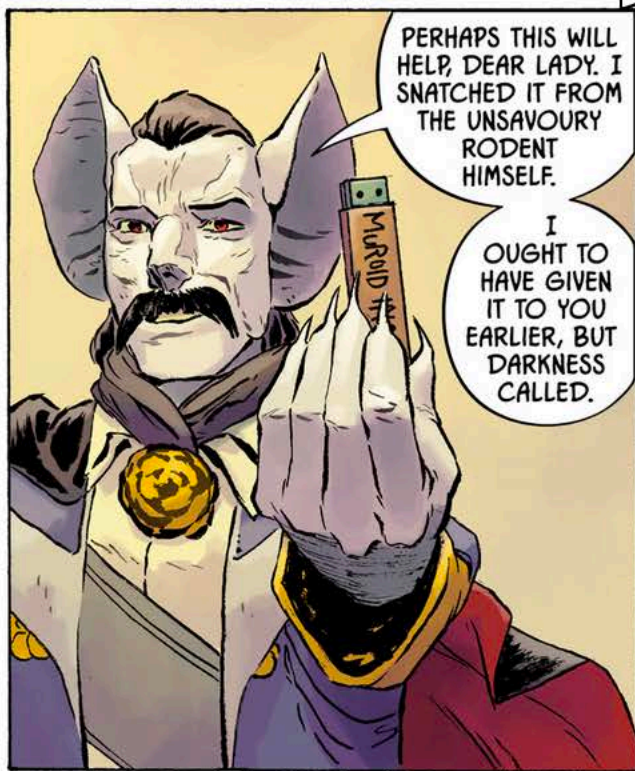












PERHAPS THIS WILL HELP, DEAR LADY. I SNATCHED IT FROM THE UNSAVOURY RODENT HIMSELF.

I OUGHT TO HAVE GIVEN IT TO YOU EARLIER, BUT DARKNESS CALLED.



LET'S SEE WHAT'S ON IT.

"STEP ONE: BLOW UP THE CATASTROPHE."

CHECK, HE'S DONE THAT.



"STEP TWO: ABDUCT THE HALF-CAT FEMALE DEMON."

GOTTA BE YOU.



"SET MY TORTURE RATS UPON HER TO EXTRACT THE FORMULA FROM THE WINGED IDIOT WHO'S BESOTTED WITH HER."

MUST BE YOU?

THERE'S TWO WINGED IDIOTS IN THIS ROOM.

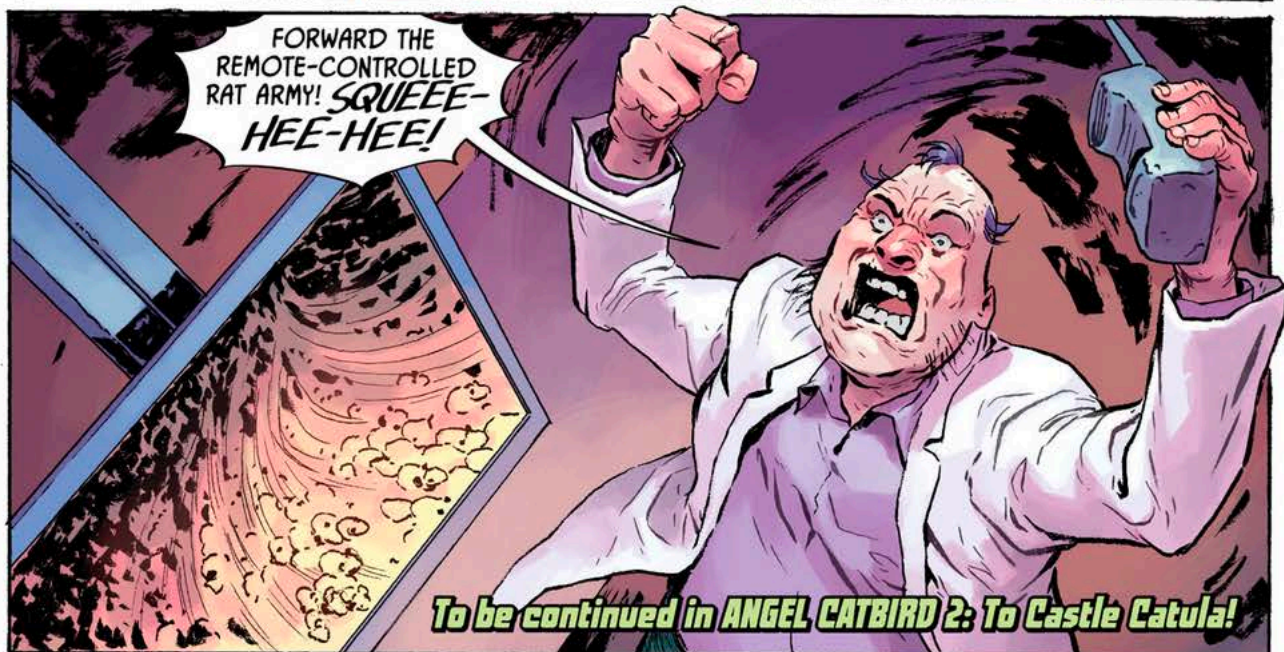
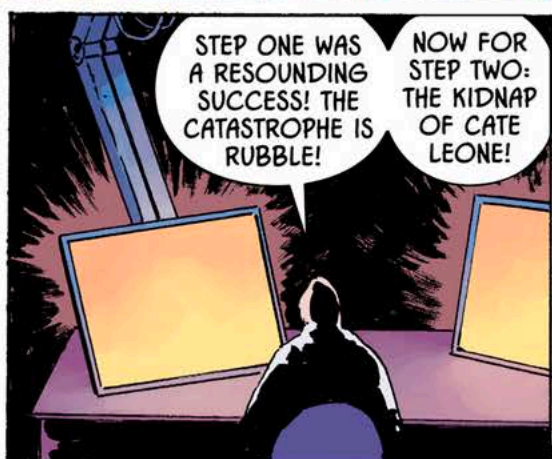
THREE, DEAR LADY. BUT ONLY ONE HAS THE FORMULA.



"STEP THREE: CHANGE ALL MY RATS TO RAT-MEN. INFEST SOCIETY WITH THEM AT EVERY LEVEL. **TAKE CONTROL!**"

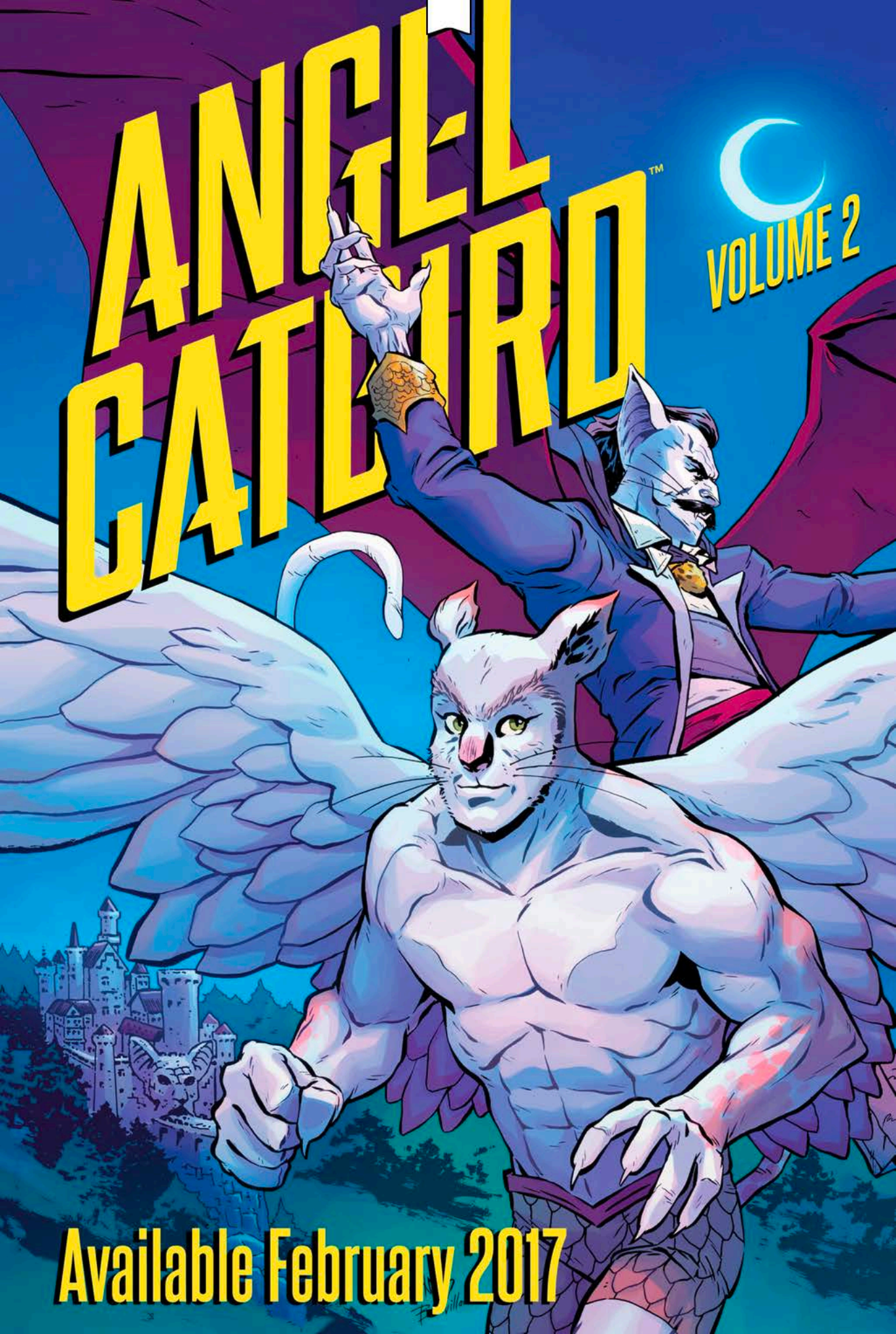
"THEN, STEP FOUR: **DESTROY ALL CATS AND HALF-CATS!**"





ANGEL CATLORD™

VOLUME 2



Available February 2017







CROOK

Art by
TYLER CROOK

BEWARE! THE CLAWS OF ANGEL...

CAT-BIRD



WHO
DARES CAGE
THE ULTIMATE
HYBRID OF
CAT AND
BIRD!?

Art by
MATT KINDT



Art by
JEN BARTEL

JEN
BARTEL



Art by
TROY NIXEY





ANGEL CATBIRD™

SKETCHBOOK

Notes by
Johnnie Christmas

STRIG
(HUMAN FORM)

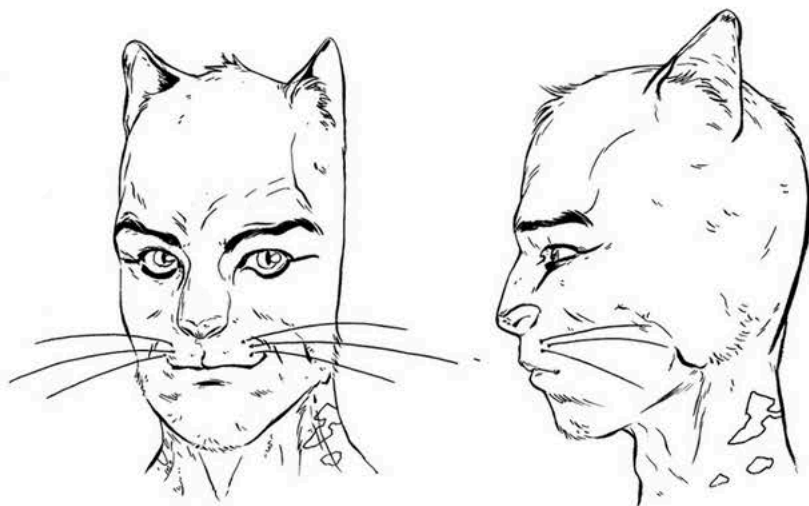


STRIG W/GLASSES



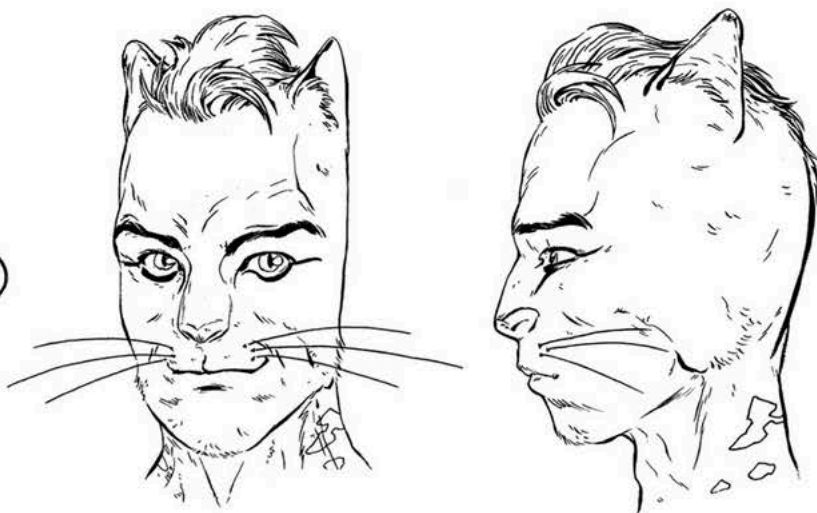


ANGEL CATBIRD



The first passes at Angel Catbird's head were too "cat" and needed a bit more "bird."

ANGEL CATBIRD
(HAIR VERSION)



I sort of like the look of Angel Catbird with a coif. But ultimately the streamlined look without human hair works best.

ANGEL CATBIRD FACIAL STUDIES (WITH & WITHOUT HAIR)



ears
perk
when
listening
intently



Here are some more very cat-like visuals of
Angel Catbird with different facial expressions.

HANDS (WITH CLAWED TIPS)



Top view



Bottom of foot



Feet in attack pose

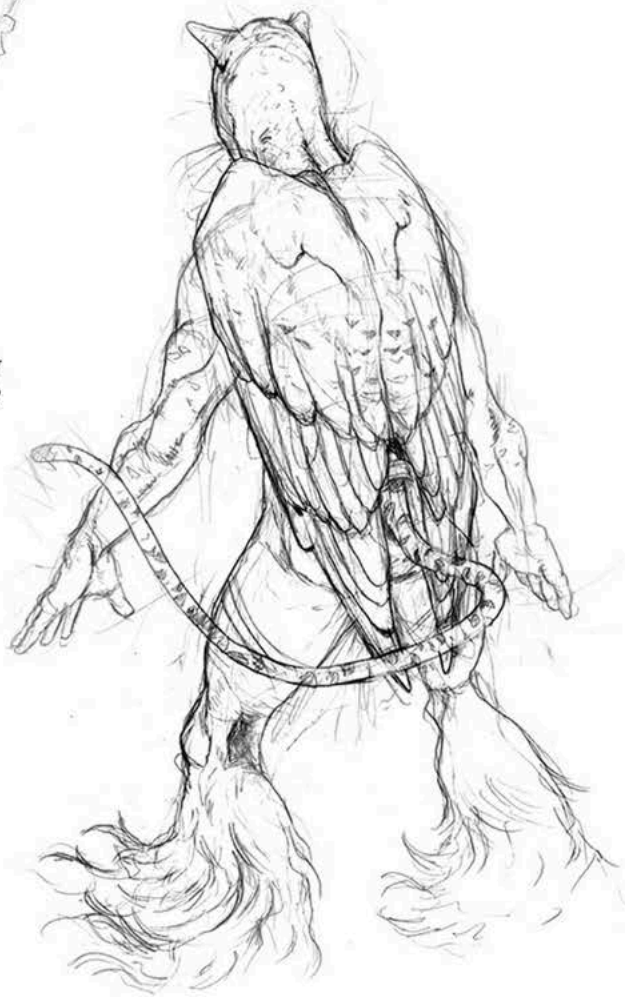
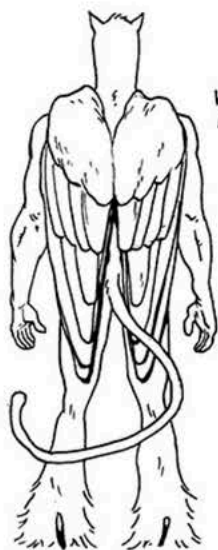


Foot view without feathers

SPUR TYPE CLAW

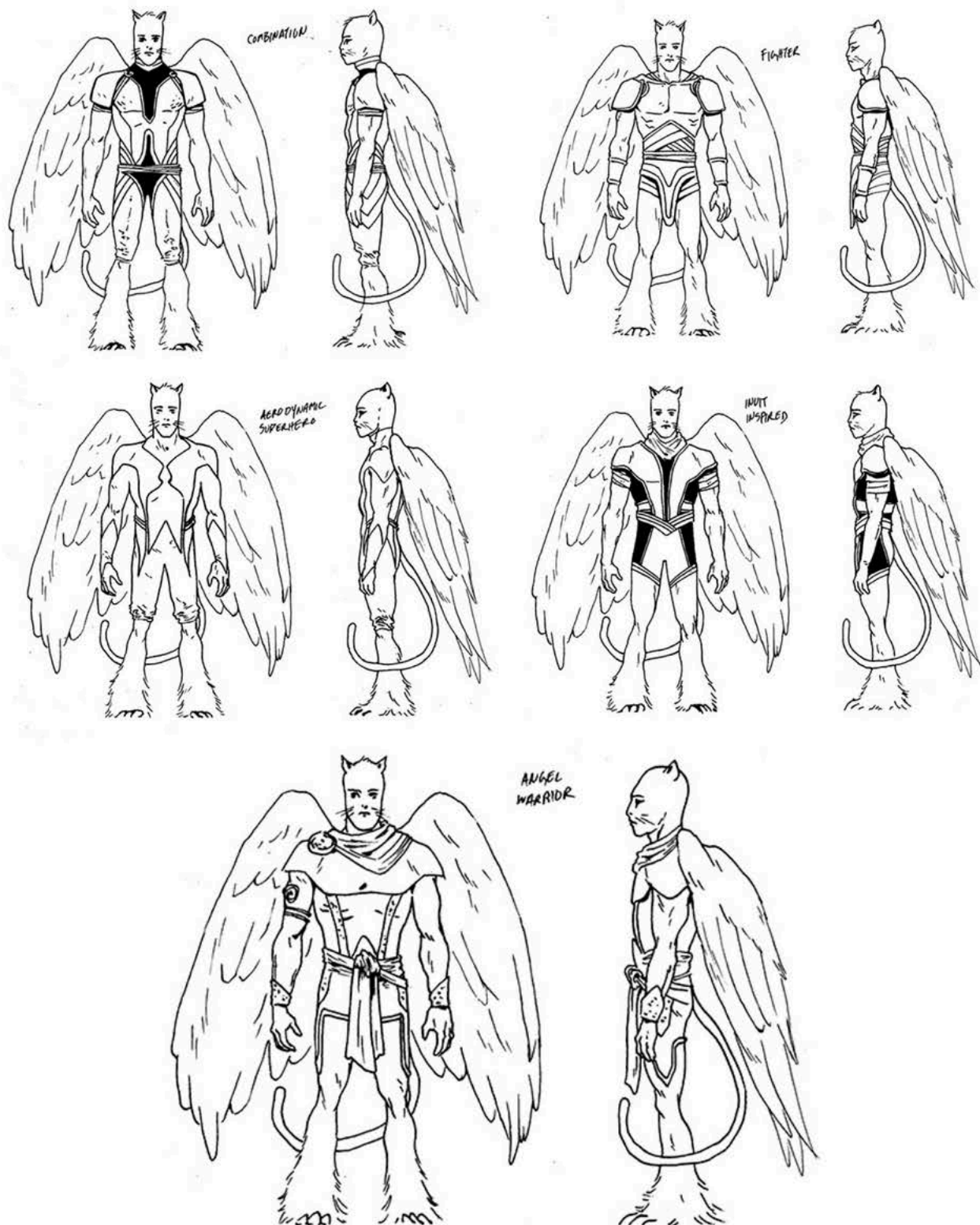
I wanted Angel Catbird's feet to have a friendlier aspect when he's strolling around. I like the contrast between that and the fierce appearance of his talons when he attacks.

WINGS

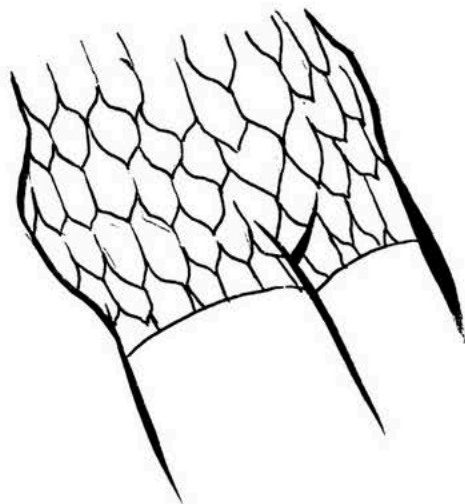
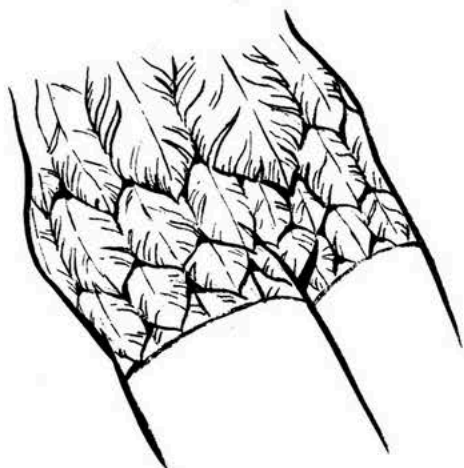


I love drawing Angel's wings.

ANGEL CATBIRD COSTUME OPTIONS



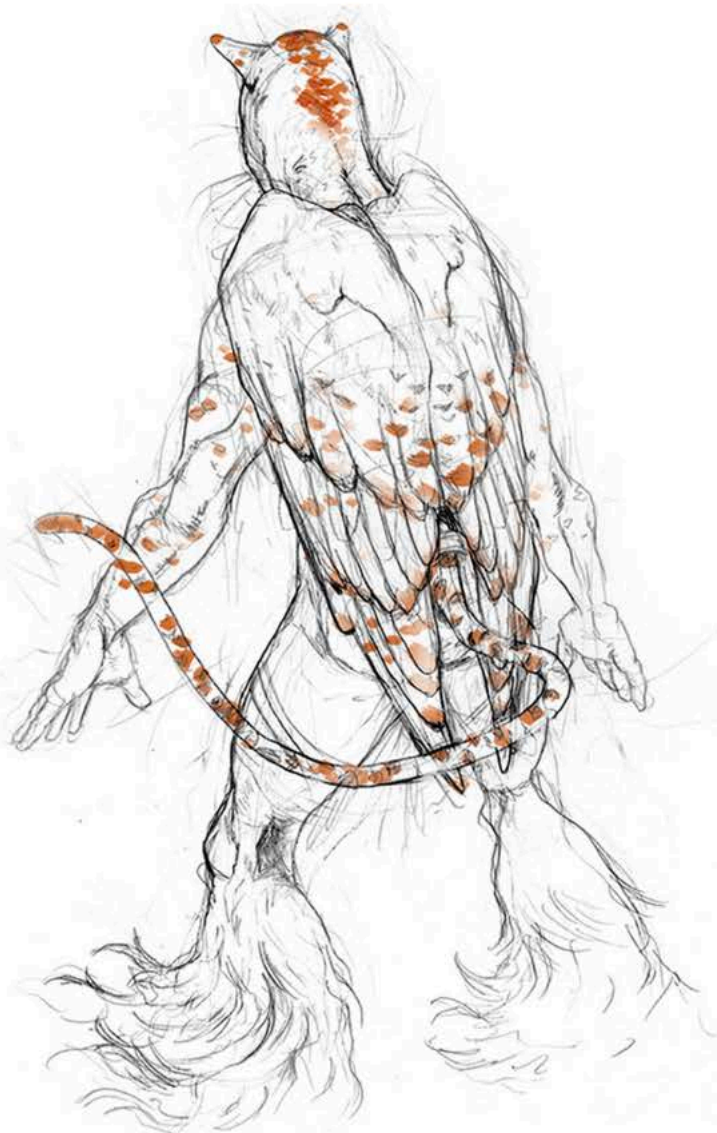
At the beginning of our talks about Angel Catbird I wasn't sure of the specific threats he might encounter. So I wanted to give Margaret lots of costume options.



After we settled on him wearing shorts, there were more options still.
The clothes make the owl-cat-man.

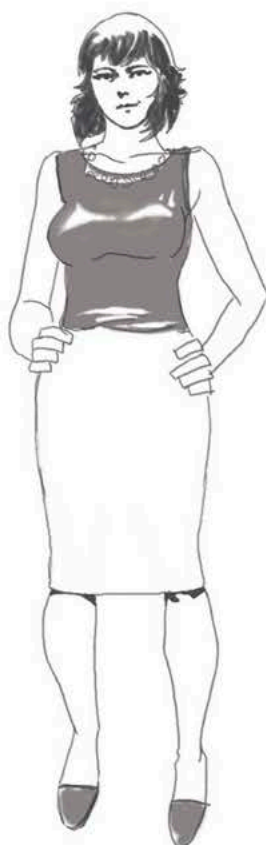
SNOWY OWL PATTERN

WITH THE COLOUR OF AN ORANGE TABBY CAT

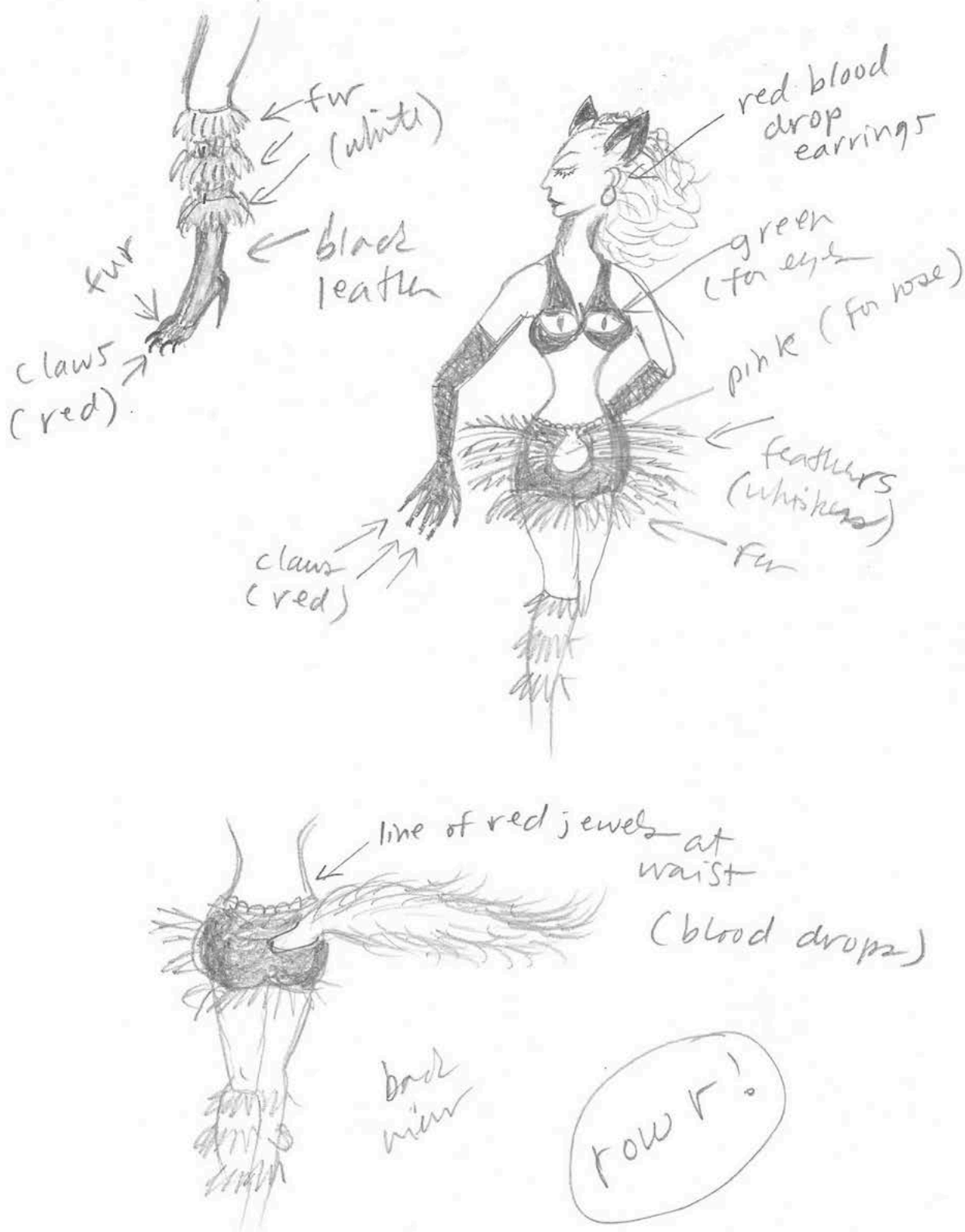


I wanted the snowy owl spots to have the coloring of Strig's cat, Ding. Another way to visually tie together Strig's mix.

CATE
(HUMAN
FORM)



There was a longer road to finding our Cate. I haven't drawn too many characters with sex appeal in my career, so Margaret kept encouraging me to go further in trying to find a visual way to depict a primal appeal. Finally Margaret sharpened her pencil and designed Cate's nightclub outfit herself. It's really cool seeing Margaret's drawings.



Margaret Atwood: I designed the nightclub outfit to go with the band name: **Pussies in Boots**. So there are boots, of course. The tops are cat eyes, the bottoms have cat noses and whiskers. And gloves with claws that are even longer than their real claws. Blood-drop earrings. I'm kinda literal minded.

CAT CAT FORM





DR MUROID



Villains are very fun to draw, and Muroid is no exception. Drawing his menacingly evil facial expressions is a highlight when I'm at the drawing board.

RAY



As a potential romantic rival for Cate's affections, Ray is quite fun too. He is Anishinaabe, the First Nations people of the area in which Margaret grew up.

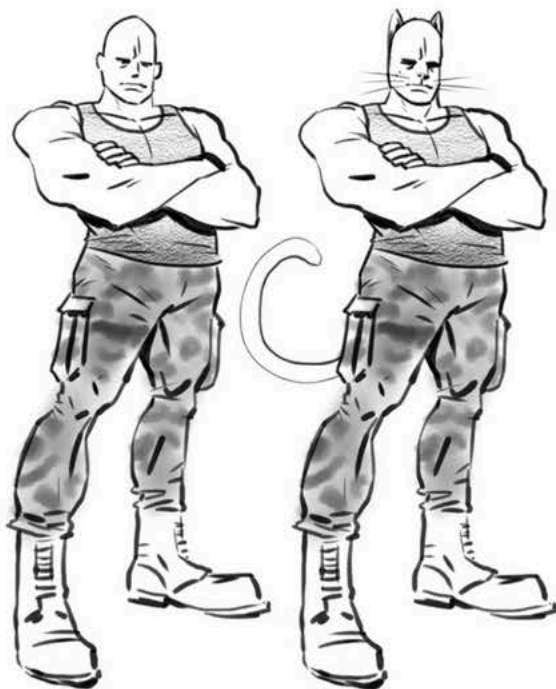
COUNT
CATULA



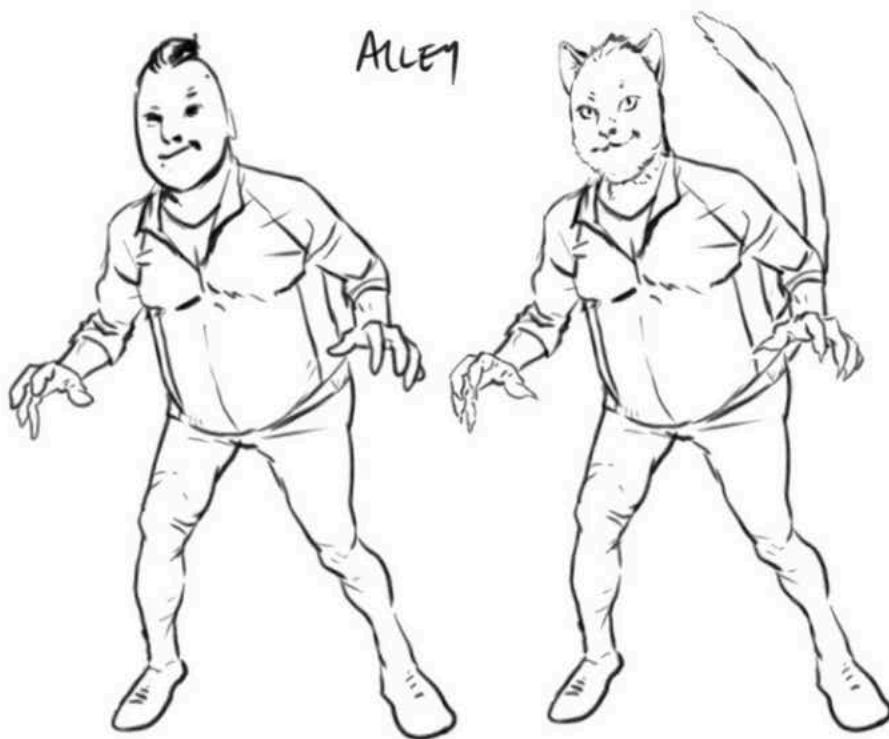
TRASH



CATAclysm



ALLEY



I gave these half-cats human versions before realizing that some half-cats don't have human versions!

CATFISH



Bubastis



HANSEL & CATTYL



CATULLUS



FISHCAT



NEKHPET



Cats and cats and cats.

BABUSHKAT



CAT O'NINE TALES



CAT O'NINE TALES



BARNBORN

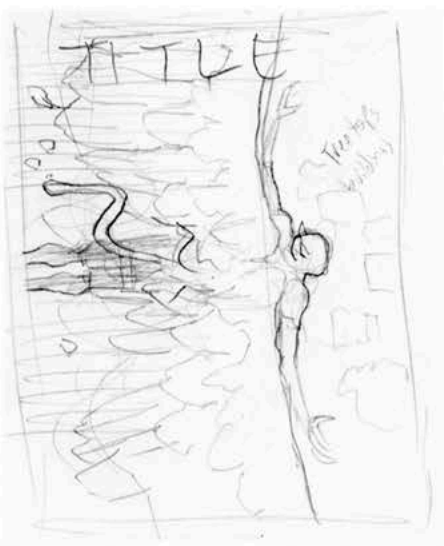


OLTOPUSS



OLTOPUSS







Cover thumbnails for the first volume of a book can be daunting. How does one encapsulate the feeling of a series that hasn't yet been drawn? By doing lots of versions!

COLOR PROCESS by TAMRA BONVILLAIN



1. First, I start with the black-and-white line art from Johnnie.
2. I send the pages off to a flatter. A flatter is an assistant that helps colorists by separating all the different parts of the page for easy selection. Final color choices are made by the colorist; the flats have no bearing on those decisions. These flats are by Fernando Argüello.



3. Using the flats, I adjust the colors to achieve the palette I'm going for. I do the original flats in local colors (the base color of an object, not affected by colored lighting), and then make some adjustments to help shift and/or unify things. The version shown here is after I made it a little warmer and more yellow overall.
4. Next comes the rendering. These next few rendering images are not necessarily shown in the order in which they were applied. In Photoshop, I make rendering layers that apply different effects, and I can jump between them as I'm working. These images show each layer applied one by one. Here, I'm using a saturated magenta shadow layer for the first shadow pass.



5. To tone down the shadow saturation and deepen the shadows to give things more form, I throw another shadow layer on top.

6. To bring focus to some of the areas, I apply a warmer, more saturated light layer.



7. At this stage I add the final highlights to the lit focal areas.

8. In the final few steps I blend the harsh edges that can't be easily defined from the flattening stage, colorize some of the line art subtly, and then make a small adjustment over everything to increase the contrast a touch.



Photograph by LIAM SHARP

MARGARET ATWOOD

Margaret Atwood was born in 1939 in Ottawa and grew up in northern Ontario, Quebec, and Toronto. She received her undergraduate degree from Victoria College at the University of Toronto and her master's degree from Radcliffe College.

Atwood is the author of more than forty volumes of poetry, children's literature, fiction, and nonfiction, but is best known for her novels, which include *The Edible Woman* (1969), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), *The Robber Bride* (1993), *Alias Grace* (1996), and *The Blind Assassin*, which won the prestigious Man Booker Prize in 2000. Her latest work is a book of short stories called *Stone Mattress: Nine Tales* (2014). Her newest novel, *MaddAddam* (2013), is the final volume in a three-book series that began with the Man Booker Prize-nominated *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and continued with *The Year of the Flood* (2009). *The Tent* (mini-fictions) and *Moral Disorder* (short fiction) both appeared in 2006. Her most recent volume of poetry, *The Door*, was published in 2007. *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*, a collection of nonfiction essays, appeared in 2011. Her nonfiction book *Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth* was adapted for the screen in 2012. Ms. Atwood's work has been published in more than forty languages, including Farsi, Japanese, Turkish, Finnish, Korean, Icelandic, and Estonian.



Photograph by AVALON MOTT

JOHNNIE CHRISTMAS

Johnnie Christmas was born in Río Piedras, Puerto Rico, and raised in Miami, Florida. He attended the Center for Media Arts magnet program at South Miami Senior High School and received a BFA from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, before going on to a career in graphic design and art direction. In 2013 he entered the world of comics as cocreator of the critically acclaimed Image Comics series *Sheltered*. He's also the creator, writer, and artist of *Firebug*, serialized in *Island*, also published by Image Comics. His work has been translated into multiple languages.

Johnnie makes Vancouver, BC, his home.



TAMRA BONVILLAIN

Tamra Bonvillain is originally from Augusta, Georgia, and took an interest in art and comics at a young age. After graduating from the local Davidson Fine Arts Magnet School in 2000, she majored in art at Augusta State University. She later attended the Joe Kubert School, and upon graduating in 2009, she began working full time as an assistant and designer for Greg Hildebrandt and Jean Scrocco's company, Spiderwebart. During this time, she also began to take on work as a comics colorist, eventually leaving the company to pursue a career in the comics industry full time. In the years since, she has worked for many major comic publishers, including Dark Horse, Dynamite, Boom, Image, and Marvel. She is currently the colorist for *Rat Queens*, *Wayward*, and several other titles.









**A NEW GRAPHIC NOVEL FROM THE BOOKER PRIZE-WINNING
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— On a dark night, young genetic engineer Strig Feleedus is accidentally mutated by his own experiment when his DNA is merged with that of a cat and an owl. What follows is a humorous, action-driven, pulp-inspired superhero adventure—with a lot of cat puns.

— Internationally best-selling and respected novelist Margaret Atwood and acclaimed artist Johnnie Christmas collaborate for one of the most highly anticipated comic book and literary events of the year!



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—Lev Grossman (*Time*)

