

LOGLINE

Shelly always dreamed of escaping the family trawling business for a life of adventure. Her dreams come true when the day's trawl recovers the magical Sword of Gloria. But the Gloria legacy comes with a cost: a history rife with lies, sacrifice, and unimaginable danger.

FORMAT

I. Don't. Know.

I keep waffling between smaller episodic installments, larger trade volumes, or panel-by-panel storytelling a la WebToons. I can't settle on one course since I haven't nailed down the overall pacing. But the overall pacing can't be informed without a structure in mind. *Argh.*

PRINCIPLE CAST

MICHELLE / "SHELLY"

Sporty, vivacious, and a daydreamer. She longs for adventure and relishes perilous surprises. Her impetuosity puts her at odds with Donna, and she can lose her patience with Danni, but she loves them both dearly. Families squabble, and she is not the type to take the high road for the sake of peace.

DANIELLE / "DANNI"

Gangly, agreeable and Shelly's sister. She's not nearly as energetic and witty as Shelly, but her slower thoughtfulness often reaches a satisfying conclusion. She idolizes Shelly and envies her on every level, but not to a toxic degree. She tries to play peacemaker between Shelly and Donna, but often gets drowned out.

DONNA

Captain of the *William's Legacy*, a trawler that pulls junk from the river. She is Shelly and Danni's adoptive aunt, although she lords over them as her crew more often than she treats them as kin. There is a reason she remains emotionally distant. She is a woman of extremes: either pleasant as a sunny day or terrifying as a storm. She is a stocky, weather-worn woman of the sea who takes no guff.

TULIP

An absolute unit of a dog. He resembles a labrador, but you could ride him into battle. He is a sweet, lazy lump of an animal and adores the girls. When something threatens them and he does show some initiative, he can be a fearsome presence.

STORY BEATS

How it Starts

William's Legacy trawls the river as it always does. Shelly longs for adventure while Danni is content with their lot in life. They draw up refuse to clean it, sort it, and sell it as scrap. Among the junk is the Sword of Gloria. It reacts to Shelly's touch (perhaps be ambiguous over whether it reacts to Shelly or Shelly *and* Danni).

The reaction gains a lot of attention: Olivia's Gem of Gloria pulses, Patchwork Pat sees it from her ship, and Vysion stirs. Everyone starts moving.

The crew is confronted by Patchwork Pat and her crew. She is a mountain of a woman, and the most feared pirate on the river. Her name comes from the multiple scars and grafts, giving her a sewn-together look. She's a ferocious foe, even for Donna. Shelly takes up the Sword of Gloria and transforms into her Glorious Form, giving her the power to drive off Pat.

- *William's Legacy* is sunk?
- How are pirates driven away?
 - Sunk?
 - Beached?

The Next Step

Donna knows what the sword is and what's really going on and desperately wants to bury the truth. But it's clearly a magic sword and Shelly isn't letting go of the one thing she's wanted most in her life. So...?

The Shield of Gloria

- It was entrusted to Horace and Clara, royal attendants to Princess Danielle. They went into hiding and started a new life together. And...?
- It was entrusted to Count Elmyra, Donna's aunt. Elmyra's region was one of the least devastated in the Fall of Gloria due to her miserly, strict rule. The people aren't *happy* under her, but things are stable. She rules from an especially robust fortress stockpiled with riches and provisions, which she doles out on a *tight* ration schedule. She won't just hand over the shield...?
- It was recovered from the ruins by a wizard and used as the catalyst in his experiments. He resides in a glittering, floating glass sphere. Inside is larger than the outside, full of wonders and dangers. The trio find him and...?

Olivia

She's confronted by Vysion's dark minions and brokers a deal through them: she will help track down the Gloria Relics in exchange for safety for herself and her mother. She has no lover for her estranged cousins and sees them as at fault by association.

She is ultimately plotting to take the Gloria Relics for herself to revitalize her ailing mother and get them completely out of town; off the continent, even.

- She's crucial to unearthing the truth of Vysion's summoning and the Gloria descendants
- Despite having a bitter rivalry with Shelly, Shelly grows enough to extend the olive branch
- Olivia doesn't take it at first, but ultimately comes around to believe in her cousins

The Broken Kingdom

With the collapse of Gloria City, the kingdom fractured and the territories withdrew. Part of the journey is bringing everyone back together. But how to do that without it becoming an epic/a slog?

- Prince Michael, named so by his sketchy and enterprising Uncle Mortimer, is a good person at heart. He doubts some random trawler is royalty, putting him at odds with Shelly initially, but comes around when he sees her true power.
 - Juxtapose with the Common Queen? Queen of Dreams?
- The dwarves of the northern mountains are a faction. Explore the Gloria Relics origins here?
 - Linked to Winter Queen
- The sea kingdom would be a good place to deal with Pat in the end.
 - Linked to Queen of the Sea
- What are the beastmen up to?
 - Linked to Scholar Queen
- Count Elmyra keeps things stable, but sorta miserable.
 - Juxtapose with the Common Queen? Queen of Dreams?
- Northern invaders try again? Summoned by Vysion?
 - Juxtapose with Warrior Queen? Scholar Queen? Both?

Finale

- Danni learns she's the heir to the throne and has trouble accepting she can live up to such a legacy.
- Shelly learns Danni is the legendarily important one, not her, and has to accept she's not *the* hero.
- Donna and Shelly acknowledge their incredibly messed up relationship
- The various factions come together to back Danni
- Shelly takes the relics and goes to solo Vysion, wanting to spare Danni the hardship?
 - Vysion sees right through this/does the ultimate bad faith read on her actions
 - And...?
- Or that's all a "what if" conjured by the Gloria Relics?
 - Too much of a copout?
- Or the cousins come together, as their foremothers should have, to finish things?
- Vysion is...
 - Slain?
 - Purified?
 - Sealed?
- Danni is crowned and Gloria begins to rebuild
- Families are restored, reconciled, happy ending

THE REAL BACKSTORY

Donna was born as one of the Summer Sisters - triplets to the reigning Queen Gloria. She was third born, technically speaking, and so was not groomed for the throne. She instead took command of a ship in the royal navy, met her husband Cpt. William, and together they sired Shelly.

Hilda was the first born of the three and prepared for the throne. She strained under the expectations of the Gloria legacy. She was a perfectly adequate ruler, but in a time of peace and prosperity, never achieved anything of note. When Princess Danielle was born, Hilda's concerns grew manic. She was running out of time and would one day be replaced.

Louise, the middle Summer Sister, wanted the throne. She had the drive, the ambition, and resented Hilda being handed authority. She also didn't appreciate Donna freely going abroad. This dissatisfaction wasn't malevolent, but it wasn't healthy either. She threw herself into magical studies to keep her mind busy.

Hilda came to her, desperate to conjure something for her to conquer; to create something to be remembered by. Louise saw an opportunity to humble her sister, scare her off the throne, and take the power she deserved. Donna, out at sea, wasn't there to run interference on either of them.

Louise used the Gloria Relics on-hand to summon Vysion, a dragon of horrible power. It was the embodiment of resentment, greed and self-doubt. This nightmare-given-form ravaged the Kingdom of Gloria, and there wasn't a damn thing anyone could do about it.

Hilda did her best to manage the disaster, but her drive to create a legacy and fix her mistake saw her recklessly challenge Vysion. She died in battle, wielding the Sword of Gloria.

Louise was devastated her plan went so far off the rails and fled into the wilderness with her daughter, Oliva, and the Gem of Gloria. Over time, living in isolation and hounded by her actions, Louise's memory of events warped. It was *Hilda's* fault for ordering the conjuring. It was *Donna's* fault for being away. Their kingdom, their heritage, was lost because of *them*, not *her*.

Donna returned home too late to stop any of it. Carrying the Shield of Gloria, she managed to rescue baby Shelly and escape the capital. The kingdom was in ruins, and Donna pieced together it was her family's fault. She hid the mirror-like shield to trusted friends, then took her daughter and her niece to the edges of the realm. There she started life anew on *William's Legacy* as their "aunt."

The plan was they'd live out their days in safety and obscurity. The girls would lead mundane, safe lives far from the corrupted capital where Vysion roosted. The Sword of Gloria was lost, never to be seen again. Until one day, when Shelly found something remarkable amid the trawled refuse...

THE GLORIA QUEENS

A long line of legendary queens revered by the people. What's misleading is that there have been many kings and queens in the Gloria line, but there are six whom the people obsess over. They are the gold standard everyone aspires to and expects the reigning Gloria Queen to match. While the six Gloria Queens were indeed remarkable women, they've been lionized in their legends.

1. The Winter Queen
 - a. Theme: Red.
 - b. She was too young to take the throne when her mother passed, and her father remarried. The new queen, wishing to establish her own dynasty, tried to have the princess slain. Instead she was spirited away to the mountains. There she forged an alliance with the dwarves, who crafted the Gloria Relics. She retook the capital, expanding the kingdom's borders in the process.
2. The Queen of the Sea
 - a. Theme: Orange.
 - b. Her efforts to make peace with the merpeople of the sea had mixed results. She was cursed by a sea-witch to live as one of their people. The goal was to rob her of her throne and power. Instead, it enabled her to more boldly negotiate and find new allies. When the opportunity arose to lift the curse, she opted instead to transform at will so she could continue living in both worlds.
 - i. Or just nerf the curse so she had six months at sea, six on land?
3. The Scholar Queen
 - a. Theme: Yellow

- b. While unpopular at the time, her legacy outlived her. She made a point of learning the ways of the regions annexed into the kingdom to better acclimatize them to the multispecies population. She went so far as to live abroad among the beastmen for an extended period of time. While she was seen as reckless and inattentive at the time, the resulting annexation and influx of trade brought the kingdom even greater boons.
- 4. The Returning Queen
 - a. Theme: Green
 - b. Danni's ultimate fate is to realize her lineage and reclaim the Throne of Gloria as its patient and loving queen.
- 5. The Queen of Dreams
 - a. Theme: Blue
 - b. She was at odds with Queen Maab of the Faye, giving sanctuary to fairies who escaped her dire rule. In retaliation, Queen Maab trapped the Gloria Queen's keep in a wall of briars and cursed her to die alone. The fairies in the capital did their best to blunt the curse, instead putting the queen into an endless slumber. As she dreamed, she appeared before the people as a ghost, and ended up being even more effective than when awake. Maab was eventually dealt with, and the Gloria Queen served from her dreams until her body finally succumbed to age.
- 6. The Warrior Queen
 - a. Theme: Purple
 - b. When invaders arrived from beyond the mountains, she rallied the army to march northward. Instead of staying in the safety of the capital, or leading from afar, she joined the normal rank and file soldiers. The Gloria Relics gave her a distinct edge, but she made a point of fighting and bleeding alongside her people.
- 7. The Common Queen
 - a. Theme: Indigo
 - b. The normally matriarchal line of succession was set to end on a male heir. The Gloria Prince wanted to maintain his mother's legacy and find a worthy successor to the title. Famously, while visiting one of the many noble residences, he met with the servant girl. Despite the cruelty of her conditions, she was kind and dignified. It was quite the scandal when she was made queen. However, her efforts to improve the quality of life for the common folk while maintaining a diplomatic balance with the nobility won her much favor.
 - i. She was further legitimized when the Gloria Relics responded to her touch.