

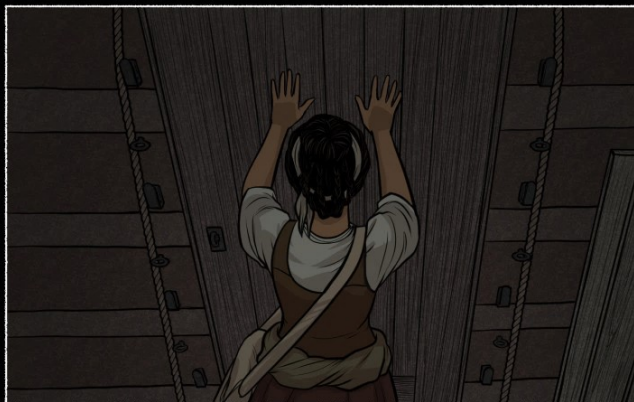
MONSTER SOUP

The central figure is a blue-skinned, nude woman with long, flowing black hair that cascades down and around her. She stands with her arms outstretched to the sides. The background is a vibrant cosmic scene with galaxies, stars, and glowing blue and purple magical circles or constellations. The overall color palette is dominated by blues, purples, and oranges.

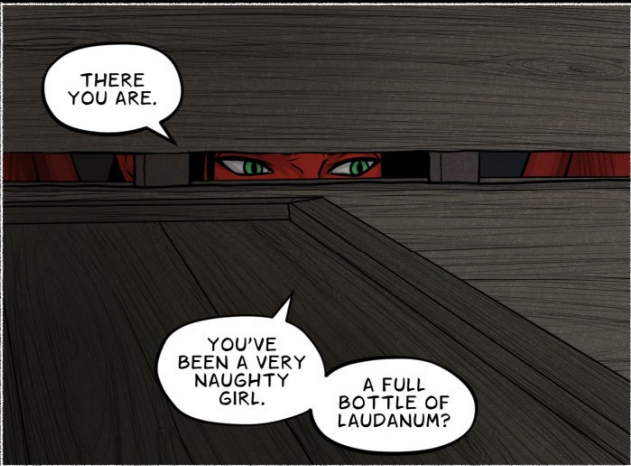
CHAPTER 7 THE WICKED ONE

BLUE RIDGE
MOUNTAINS,
VIRGINIA, 1897











I WOULD LIKE MY TAIL BACK, PLEASE.



IT'S OVER, PEST. YOU'LL NO LONGER BE ABLE TO HARM MY LINEAGE.



YOU CANNOT BREAK THE BOND.

I DON'T WANT TO BREAK THE BOND. YOU'LL JUST FIND ANOTHER BLOODLINE TO LATCH ONTO.



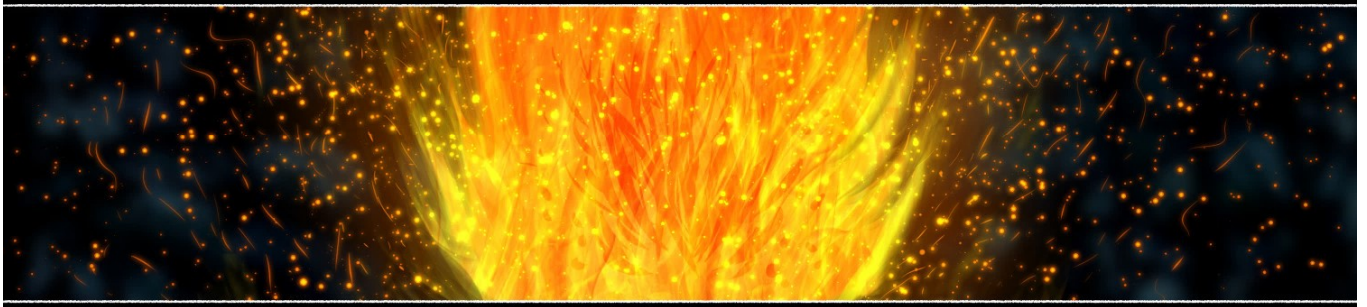
IF YOU TRULY WANT ME GONE, I'LL RELEASE YOU.

YOU HAVE MY WORD.



THE WORD OF A DEVIL CAN NEVER BE TRUSTED.











I SAW THE SHADOW AGAIN LAST NIGHT.

WERE YOU SCARED?

NOT REALLY. IT WAS STRANGE. I FELT CALM.



WHY DOES ALL THE COOL STUFF HAPPEN TO YOU?
ALL I GET ARE WEIRD DREAMS, LIKE THE LADY WITH GREEN EYES.

AT LEAST YOU HAVE DREAMS. I CAN'T REMEMBER THE LAST DREAM I HAD.

I STILL THINK YOU WERE DREAMING.



WE HAD THE HOUSE AND LAND CLEANSED BEFORE MOVING IN. THERE ARE NO SPIRITS HERE.

WHO WANTS AN EXTRA EGG?



I'LL TAKE IT.

SPEAKING OF EGGS...

I FOUND A NEST IN THE TREES BEHIND THE SCHOOL.

BEN AND I CHECK ON THEM EVERY DAY.



I HOPE YOU'RE NOT TOUCHING THEM.

WE'RE NOT. THE MOM IS THERE MOST OF THE TIME. SHE DOESN'T LIKE US GETTING TOO CLOSE.



I WAS WONDERING, DO YOU THINK IT WOULD BE ALRIGHT IF I VISIT THE HOUSE THIS WEEKEND?



NOT RIGHT NOW. WE HAVE TOO MUCH GOING ON.



IT'S JUST... I HAVEN'T BEEN THERE IN A WHILE, AND THIS WEEKEND...



OH, NITA. I ALMOST FORGOT.

YOU DID FORGET.



SHE WAS MY SISTER, OR DID YOU FORGET?

I LOVED YOUR MOTHER VERY MUCH, BUT YOU CAN'T GET ANGRY AT OTHERS WHEN THEY TRY TO MOVE ON.

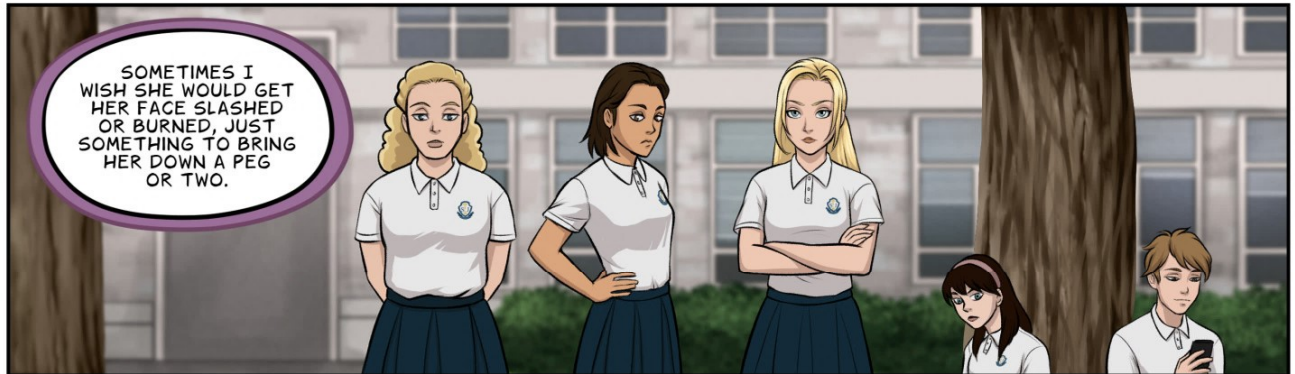
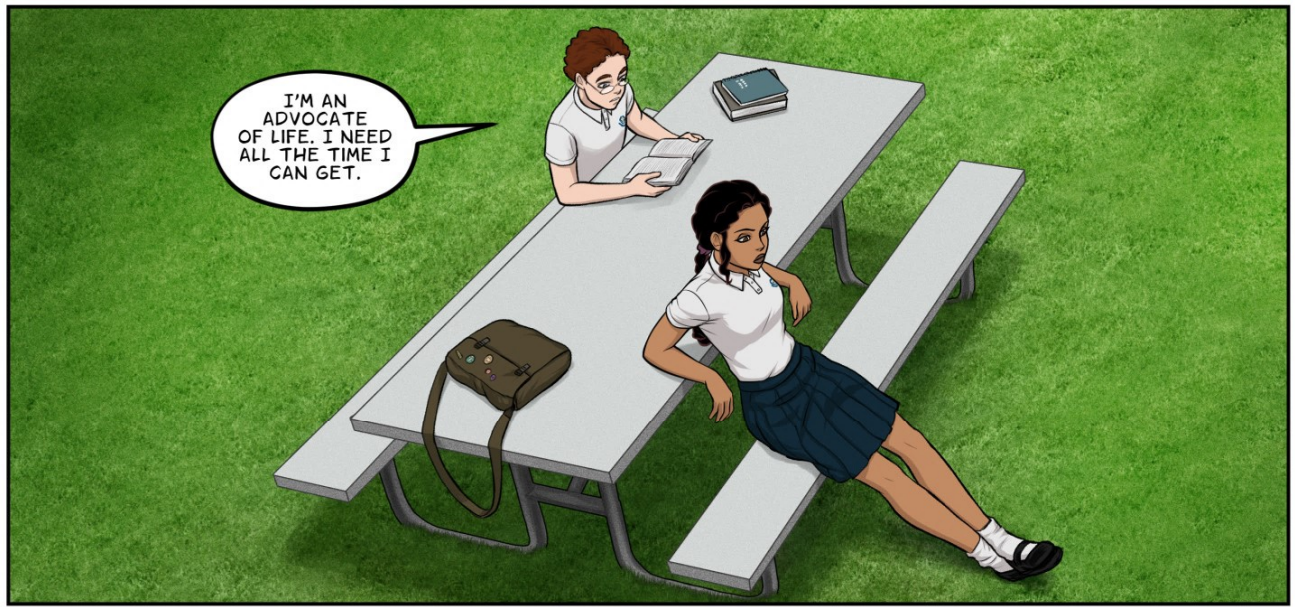
YOUR MOM AND I LOST OUR MOTHER WHEN WE WERE YOUNG. I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH.

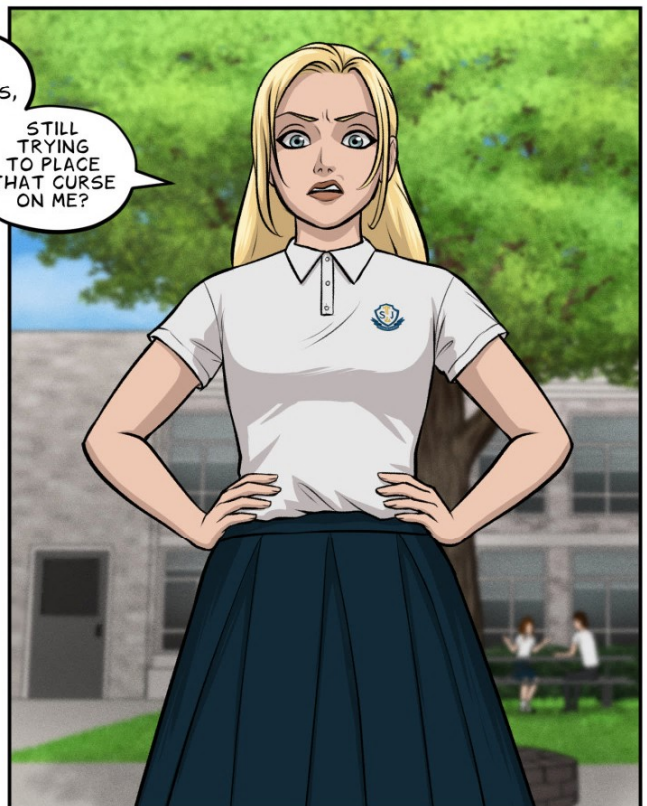
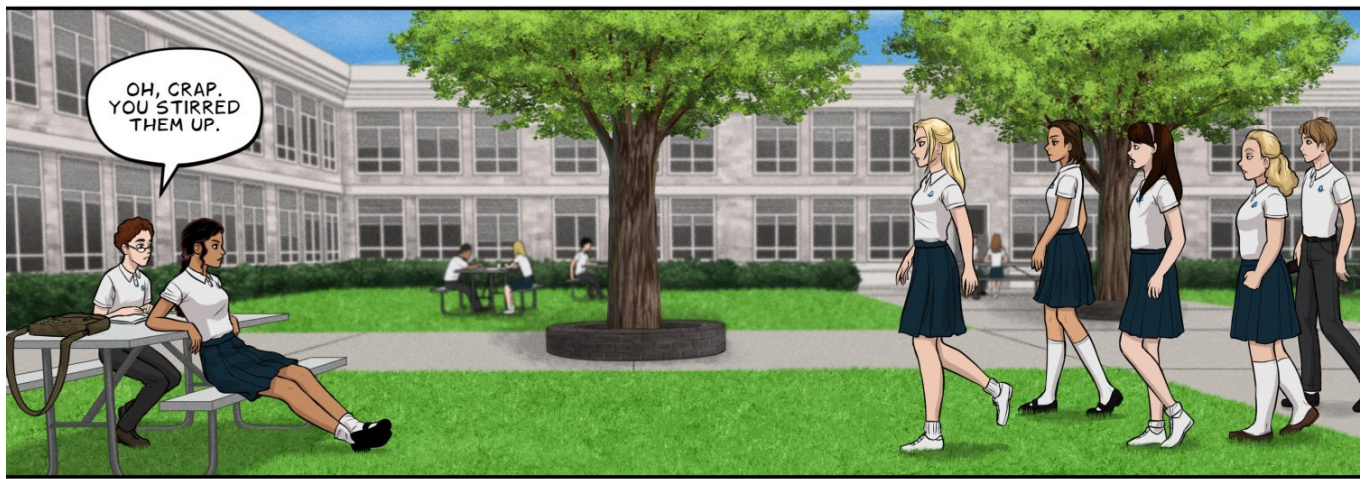
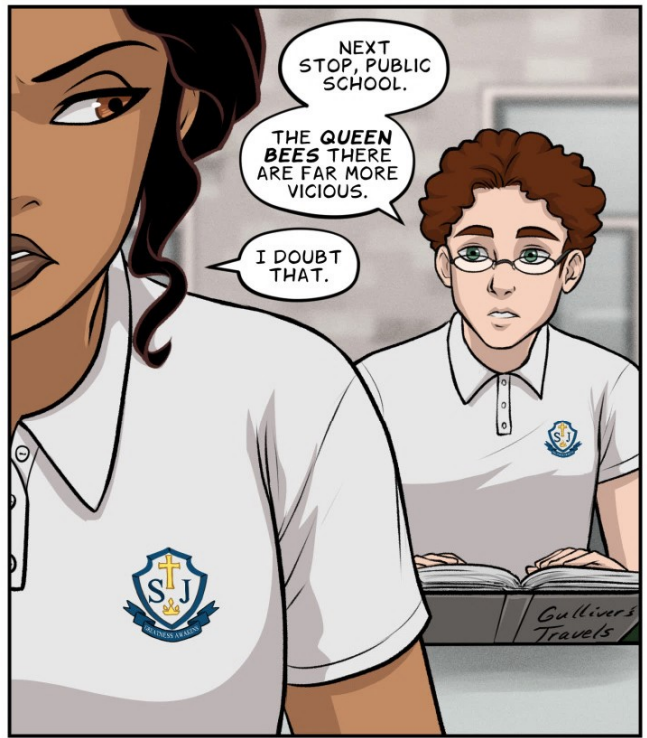
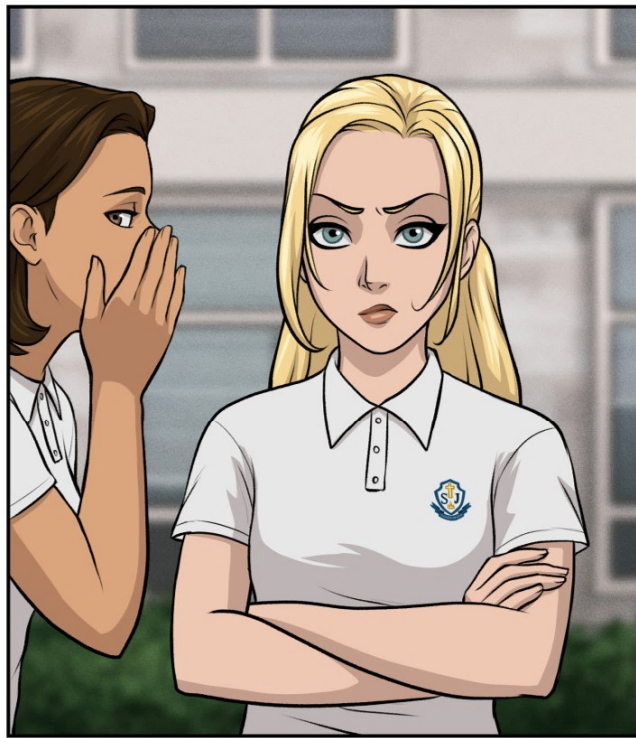


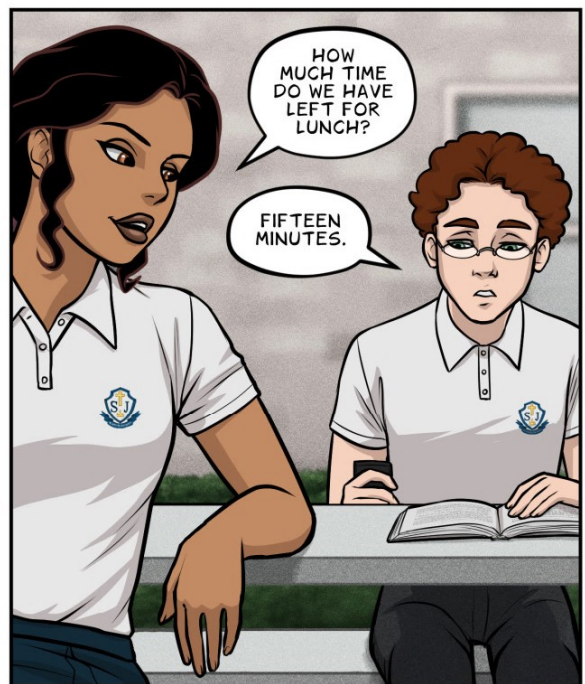
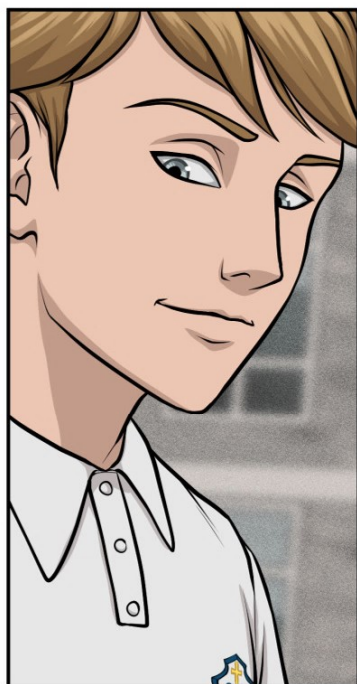
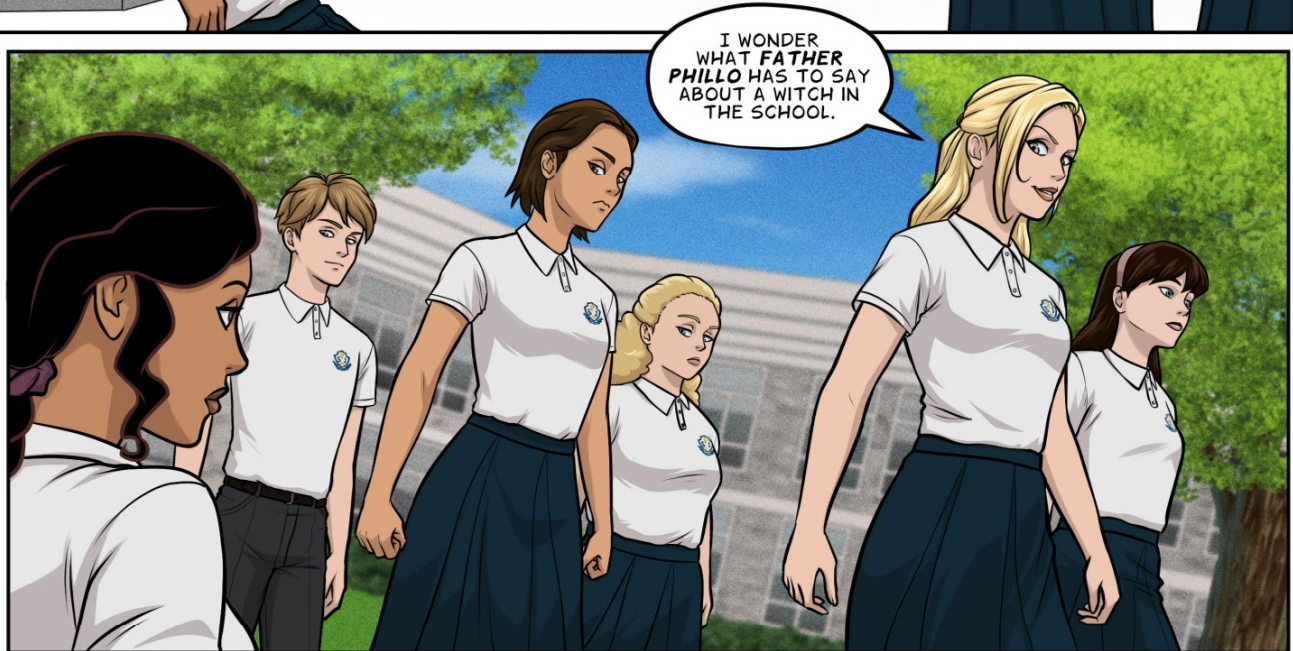
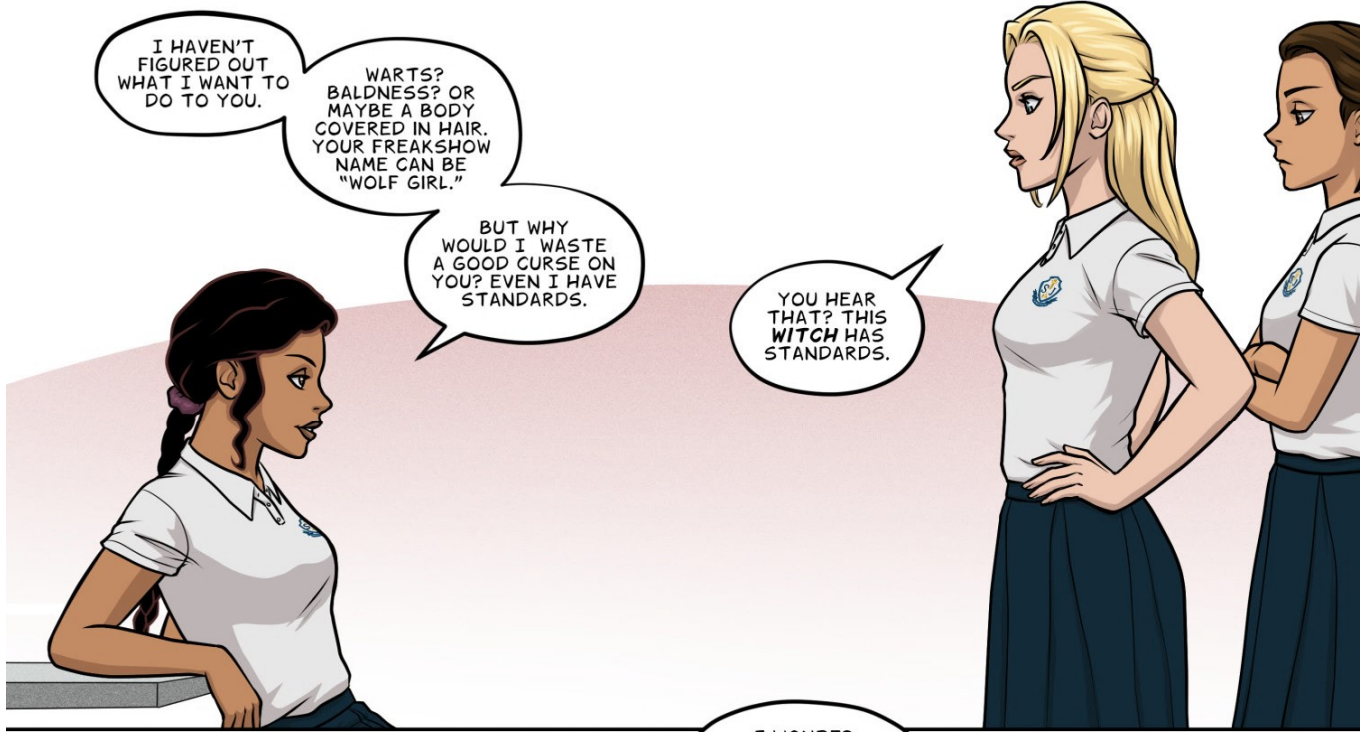
I'M GLAD I STILL HAVE YOU AND DAD. I WOULDN'T WANT TO LIVE WITH OLIVER.

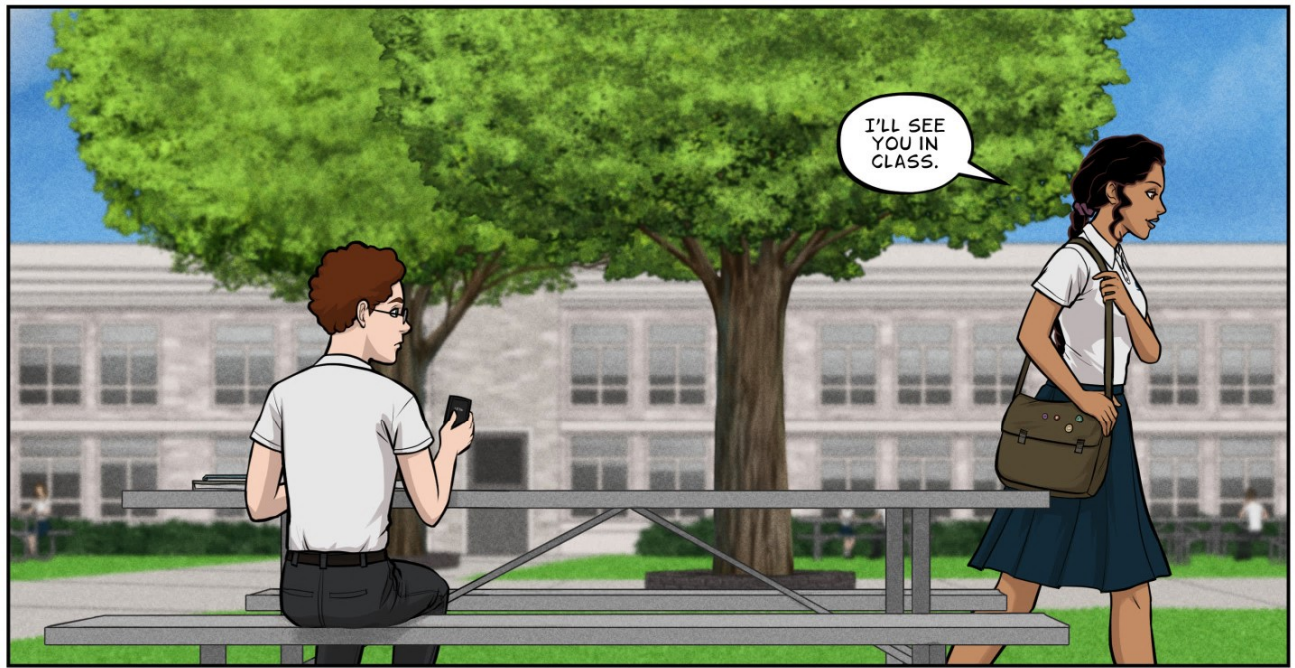
NEITHER WOULD I.

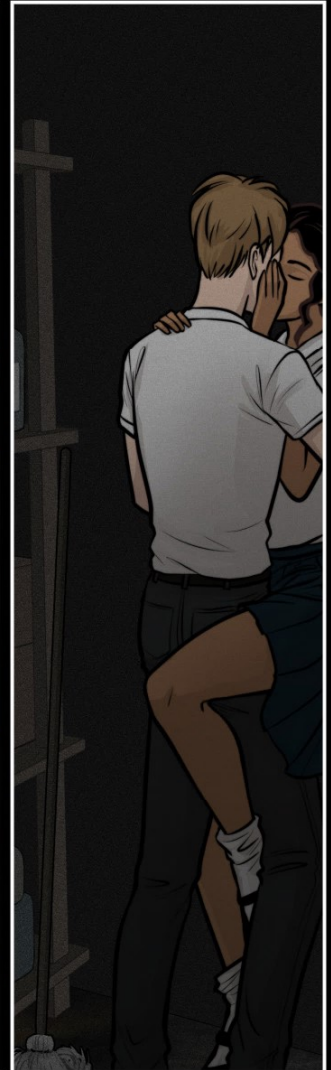


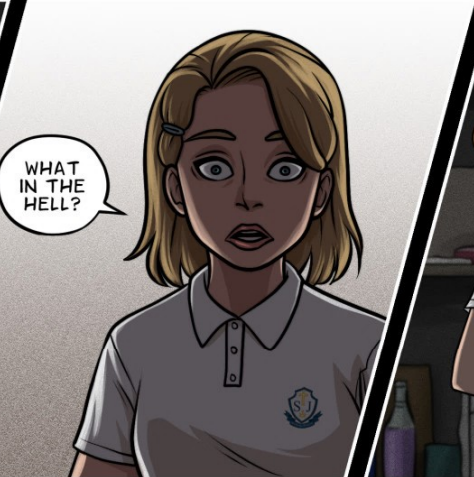
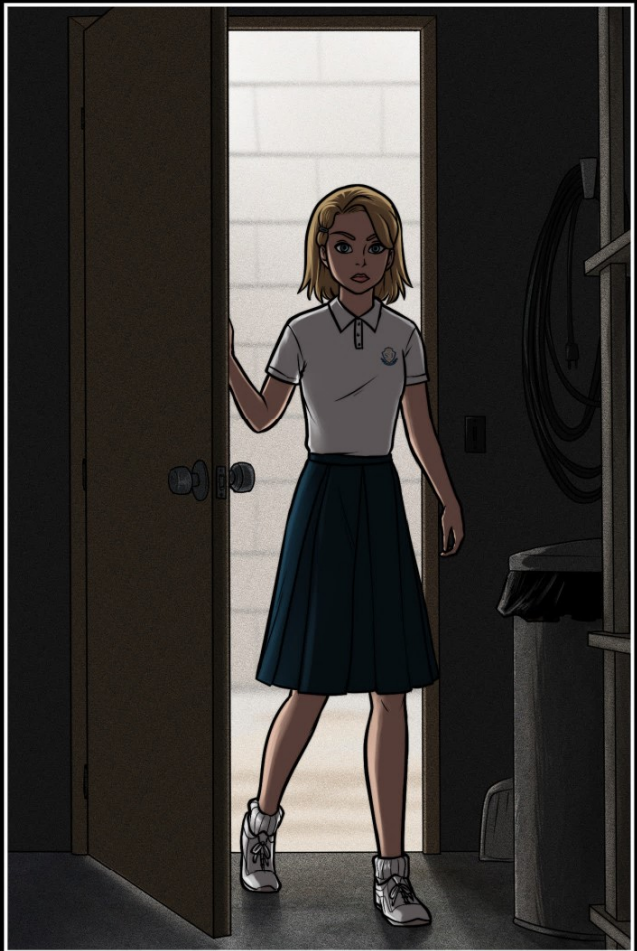


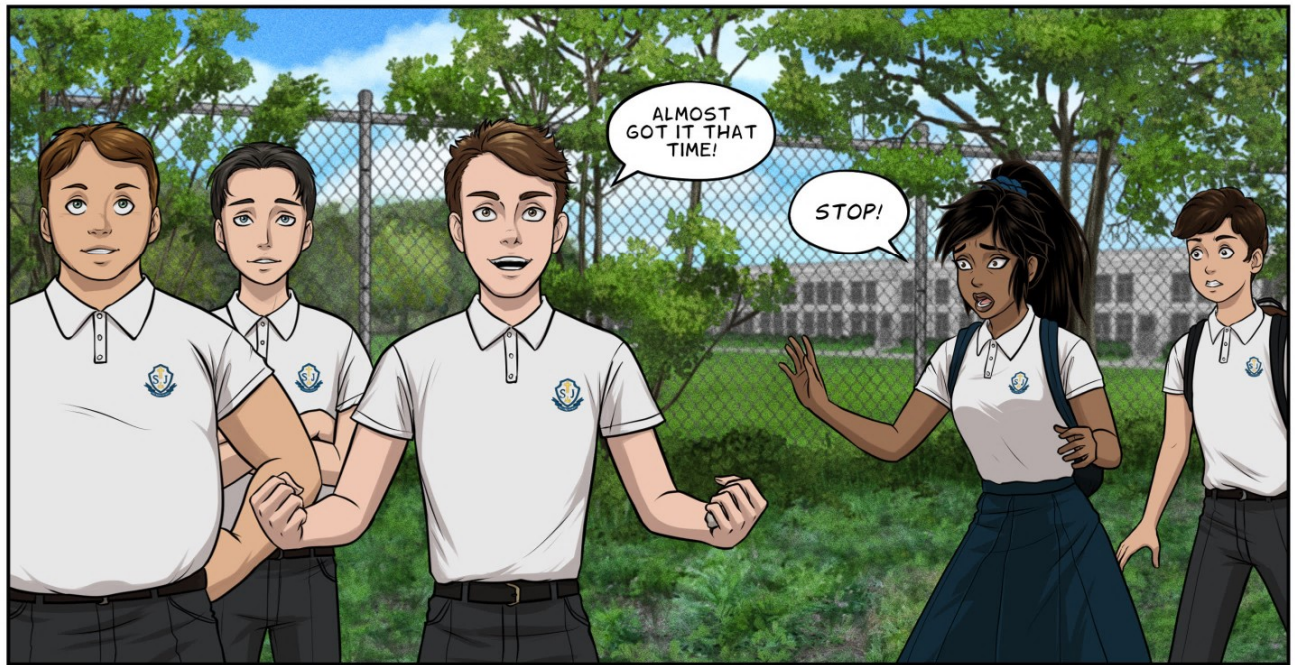


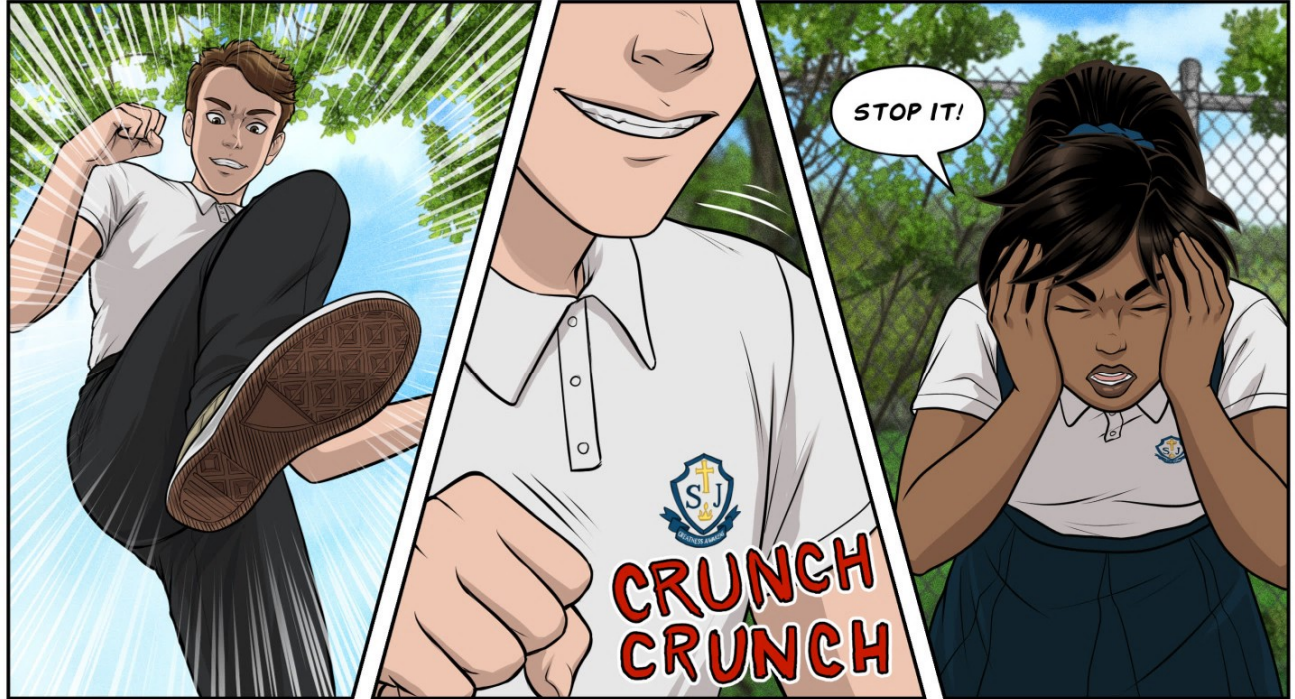


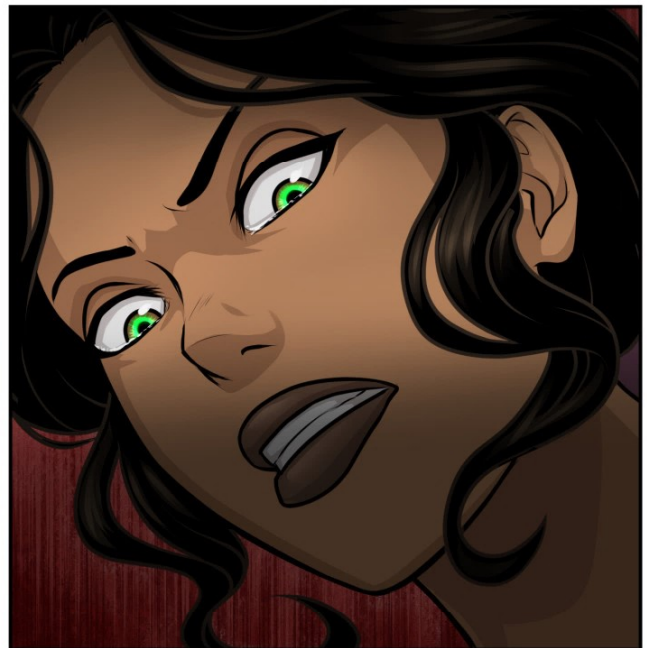














WE NEED TO GET OUTTA HERE!



COME ON!

ARE YOU OKAY?



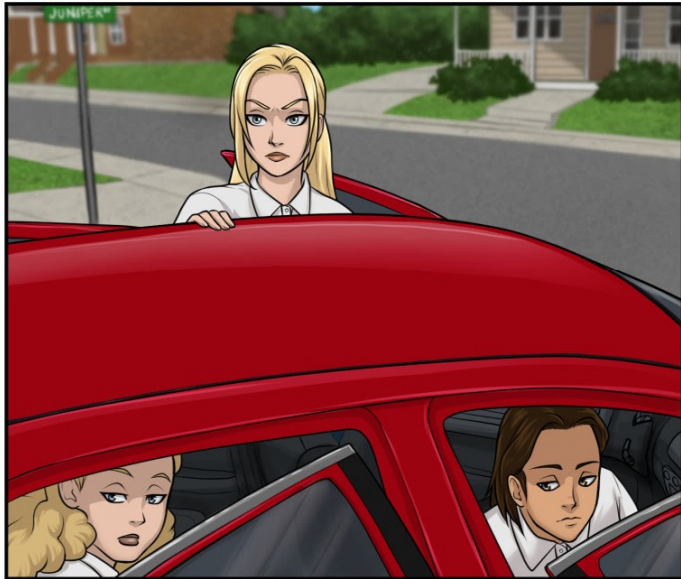
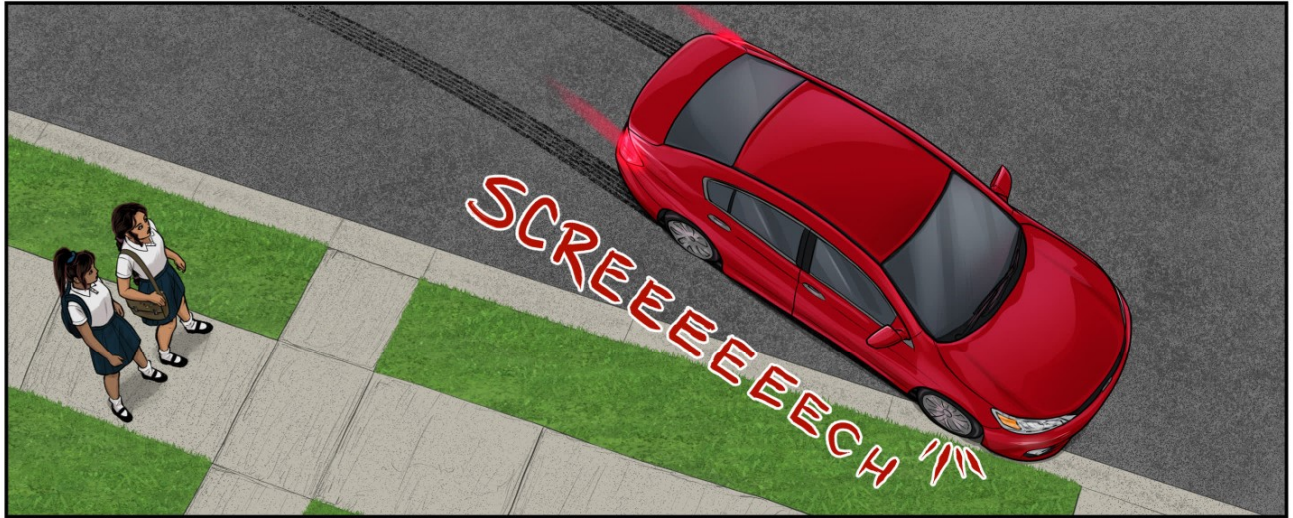
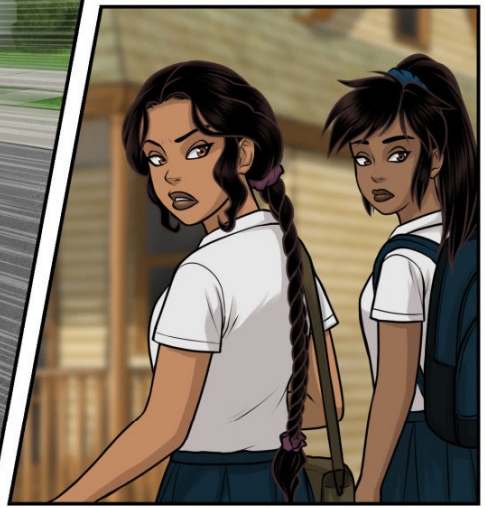
YOU'RE DEFINITELY GETTING EXPELLED NOW.

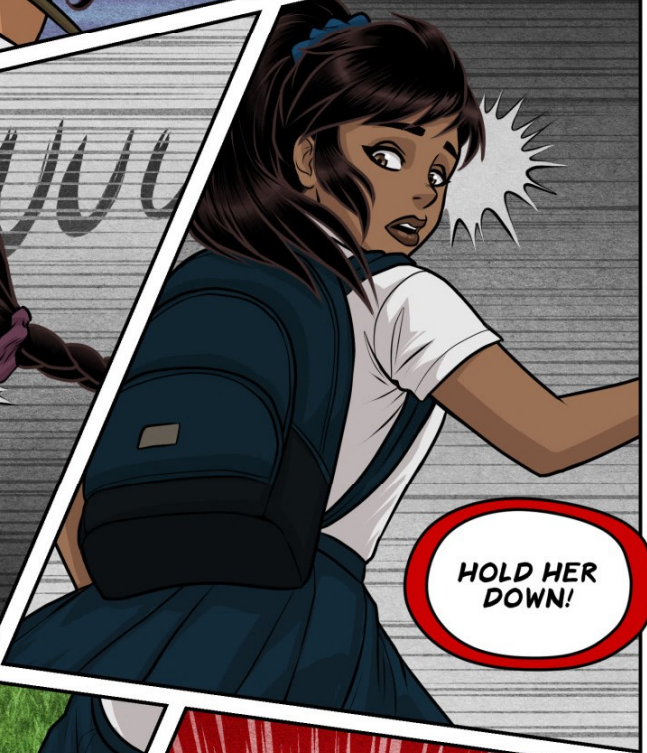
DON'T WORRY, I WON'T.

HE'LL NEVER TELL ANYONE THAT A GIRL KICKED HIS ASS.

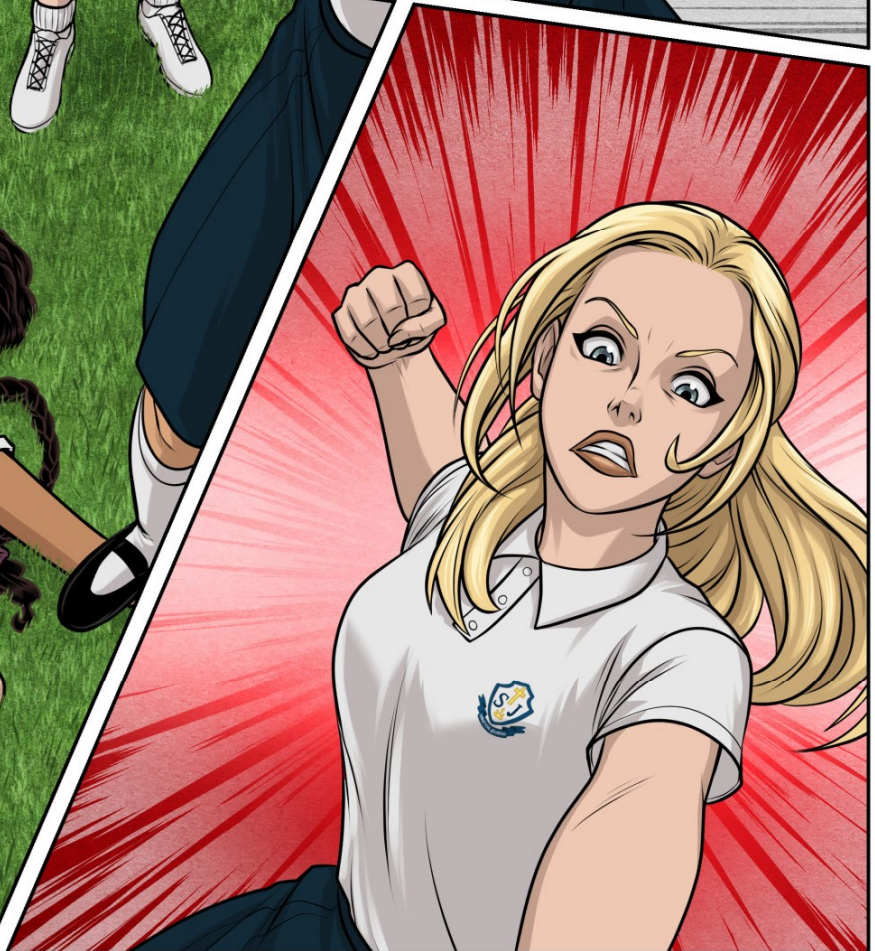
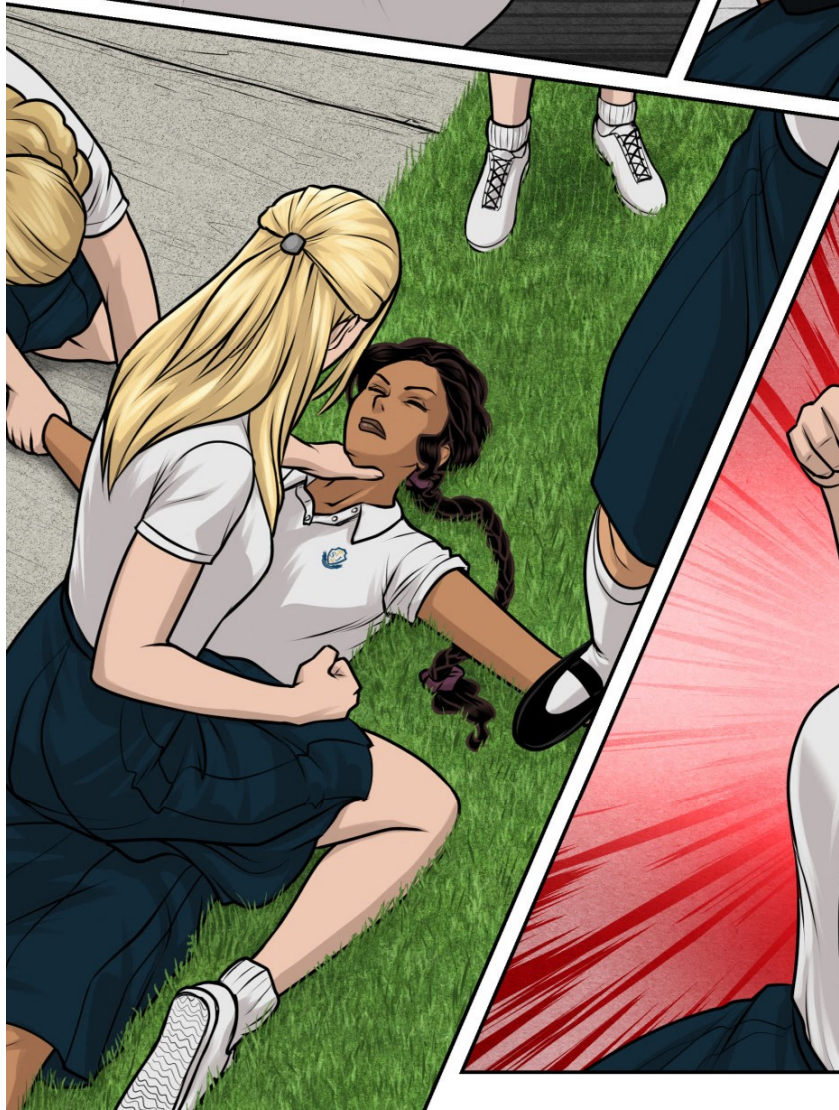
YOU NEED TO LET YOUR MOM KNOW ABOUT WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON.

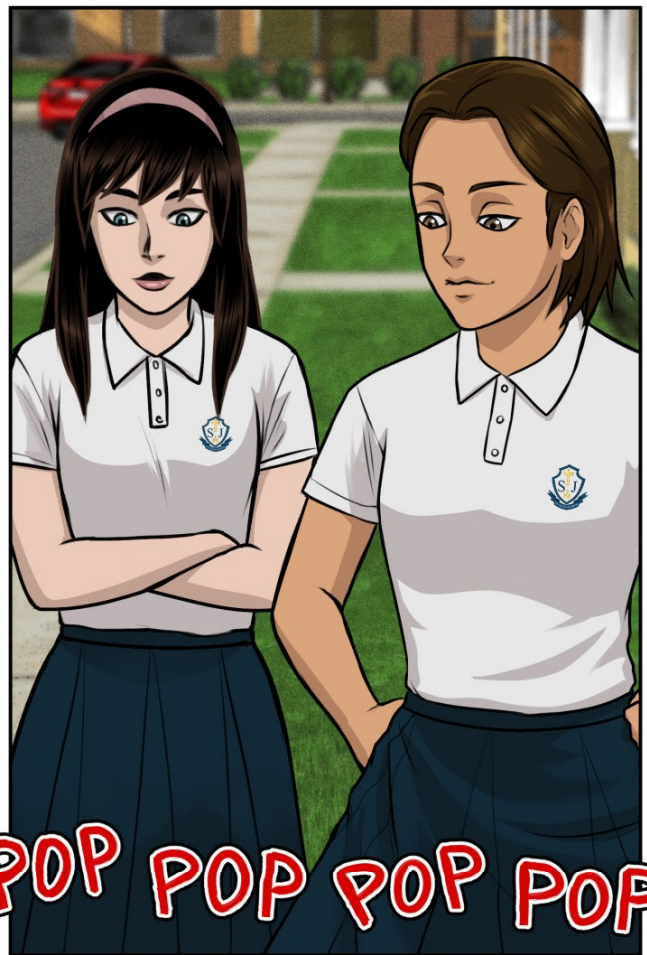
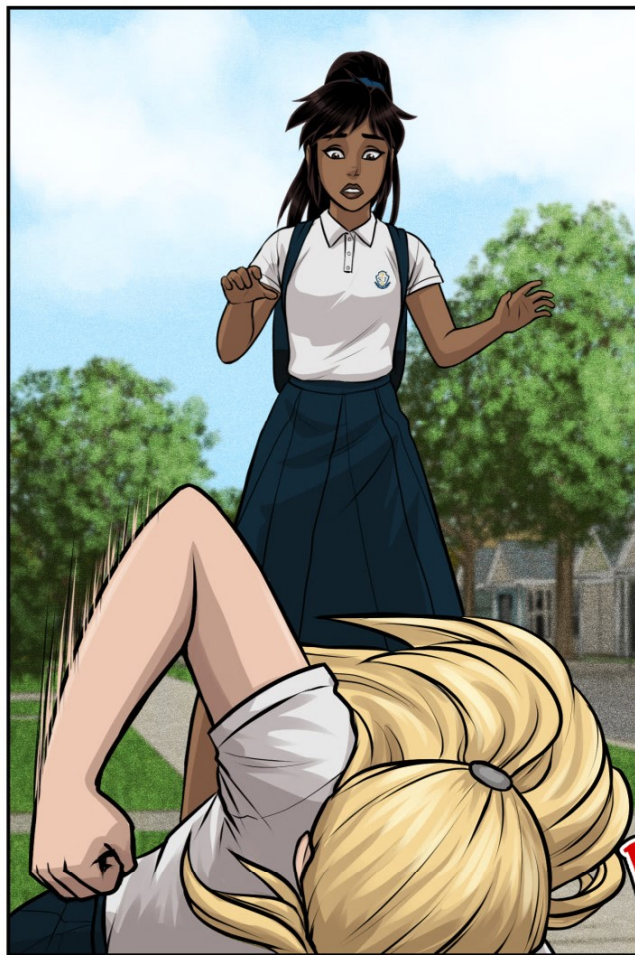
I WON'T BE AROUND ALL THE TIME TO STOP HIM.





HOLD HER DOWN!





POP POP POP POP

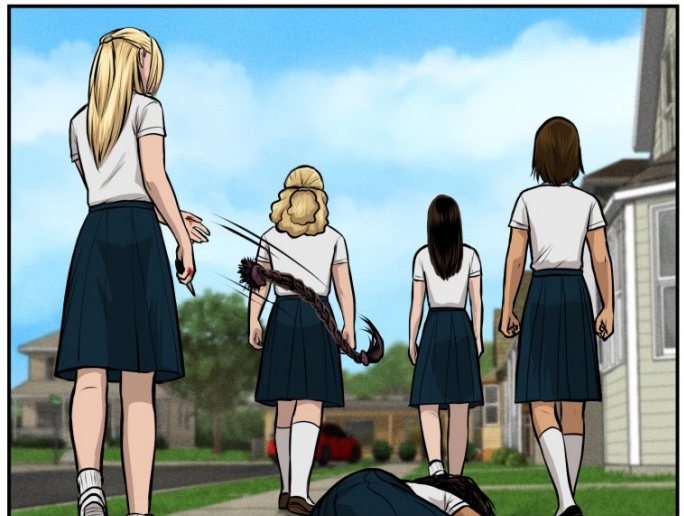


YOU THINK YOU COULD MESS AROUND WITH MY BOYFRIEND AND I WOULDN'T FIND OUT?!

SHE WANTS YOU TO FIGHT BACK.



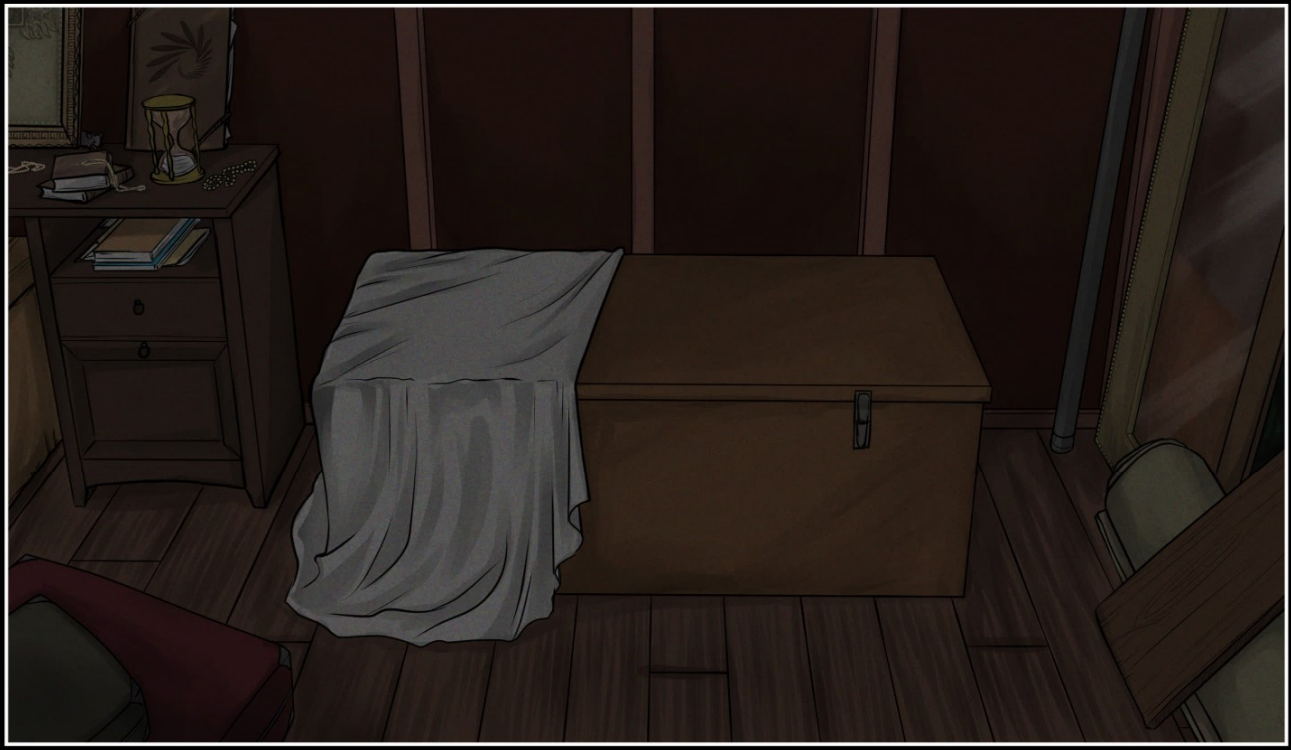
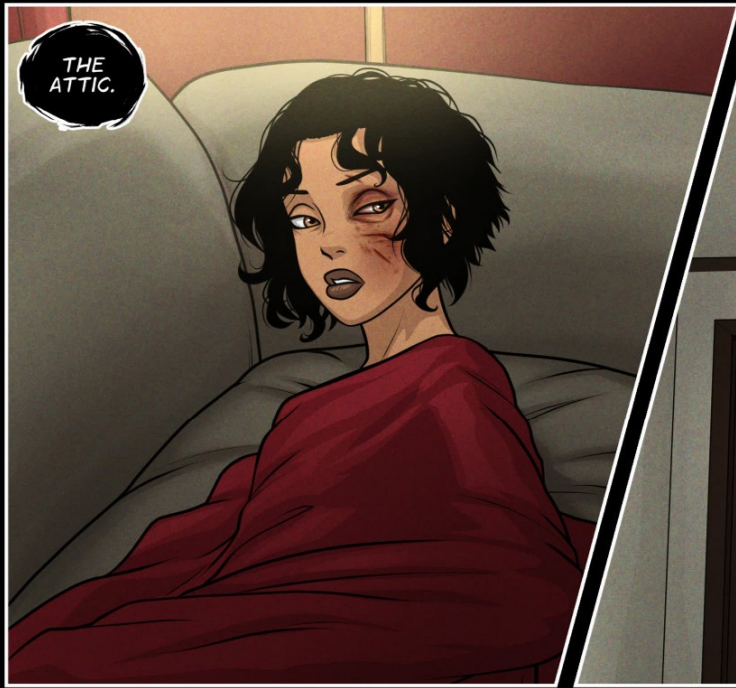
DO NOT FIGHT BACK.

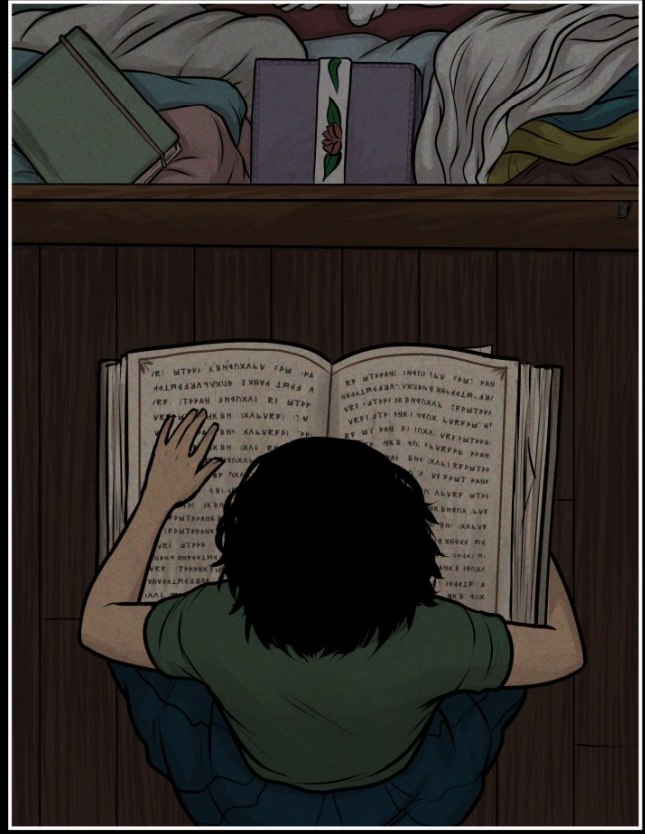
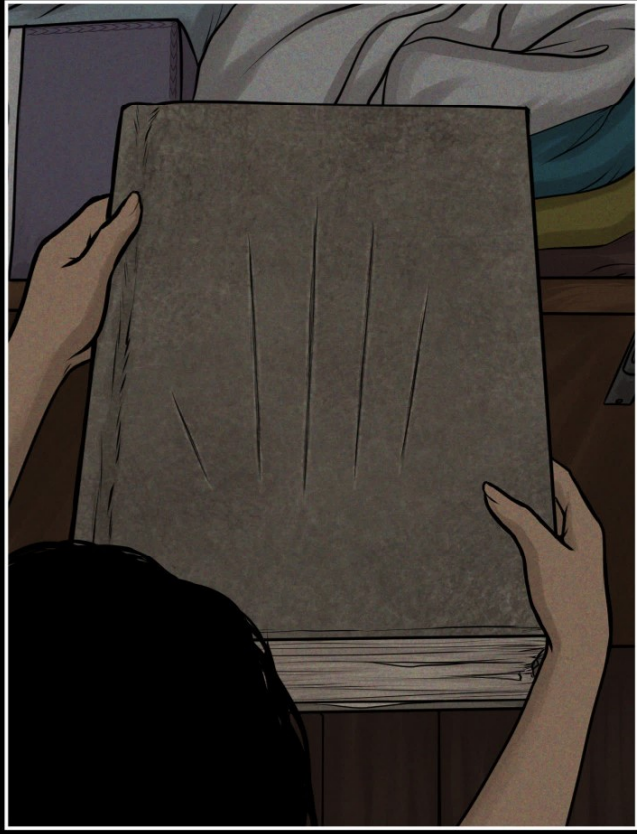
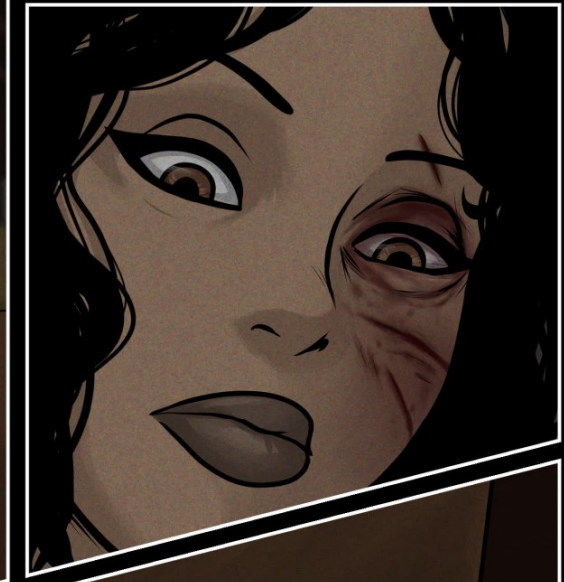






THE ATTIC.







I WAS KIND OF HOPING SHE WENT THERE LIKE LAST TIME.

ANYWAY, LET ME KNOW IF SHE STOPS BY, ALRIGHT?

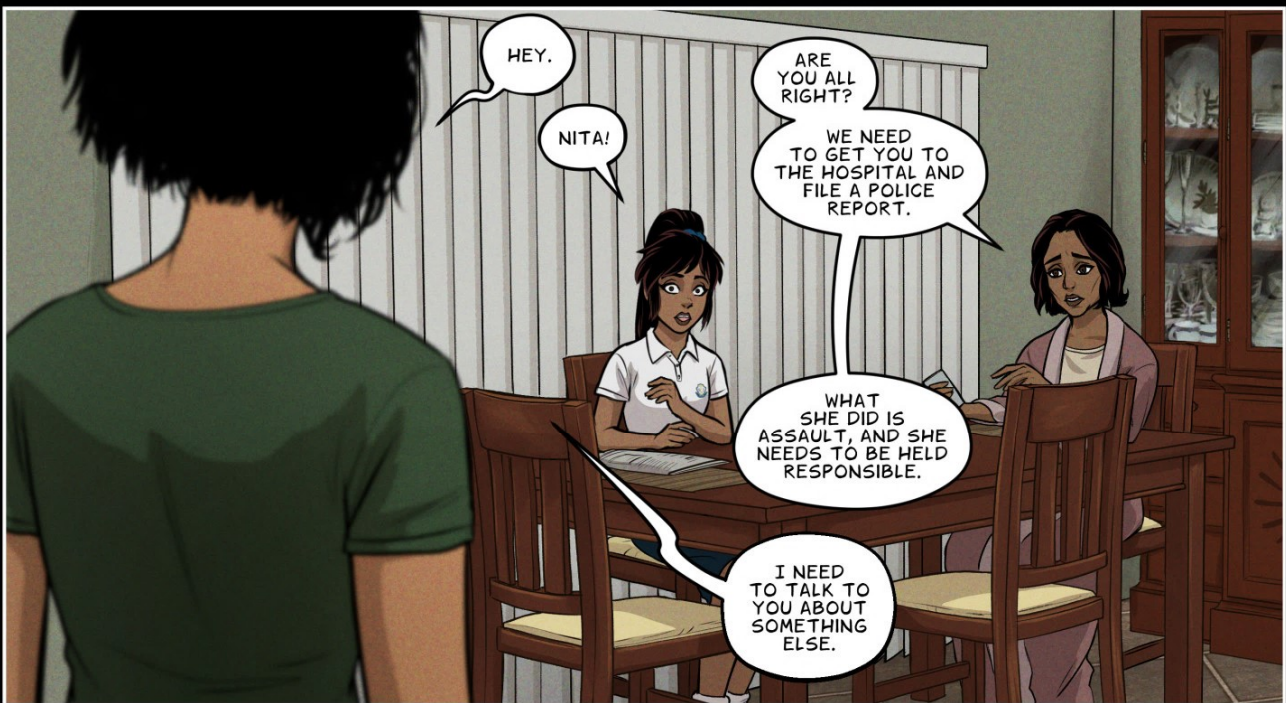
THANK YOU.

YOU ALL HAVE A GOOD NIGHT.



I STILL HAVE THIS FEELING THAT SHE WENT TO HER PARENTS' HOUSE.

I'LL HAVE YOUR DAD STOP BY AFTER WORK TO SEE IF SHE'S THERE.



HEY.

NITA!

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
WE NEED TO GET YOU TO THE HOSPITAL AND FILE A POLICE REPORT.

WHAT SHE DID IS ASSAULT, AND SHE NEEDS TO BE HELD RESPONSIBLE.

I NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE.



I DO APPRECIATE YOU ALL FOR TAKING ME IN, BUT I STILL DON'T FEEL AT HOME HERE.

I'LL BE EIGHTEEN SOON, AND IN TWO MONTHS, I'LL BE FINISHED WITH SCHOOL...

I REALLY WANT TO MOVE BACK INTO MY PARENT'S HOUSE.

I THOUGHT WE AGREED TO SELL IT AND PUT THAT MONEY TOWARDS COLLEGE.



I'VE CHANGED MY MIND.

MOST OF MY THINGS ARE STILL THERE ANYWAY, AND I HAVE THAT SMALL INHERITANCE TO LIVE OFF OF UNTIL I FIGURE THINGS OUT.



YOUR INHERITANCE IS FOR COLLEGE.



I WANT TO TRAVEL WITH THE KERN BROTHERS AGAIN, AND PICK UP WHERE MY MOM LEFT OFF.

THEY SAID BEFORE THAT I WOULD ALWAYS HAVE A PLACE WITH THEM.

THEY'RE LIKE FAMILY TO ME, AS WELL.



THERE'S NO WAY I CAN CHANGE YOUR MIND?

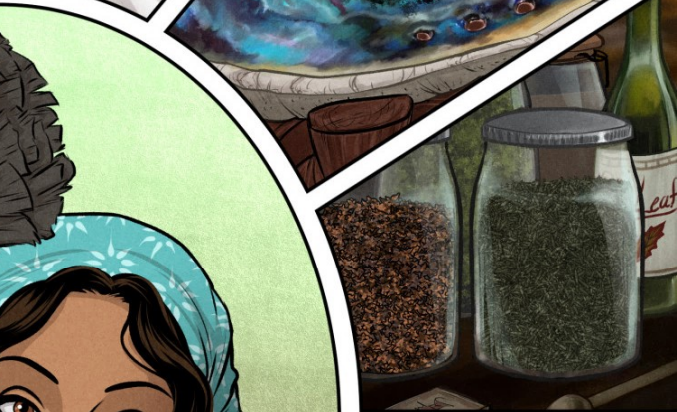
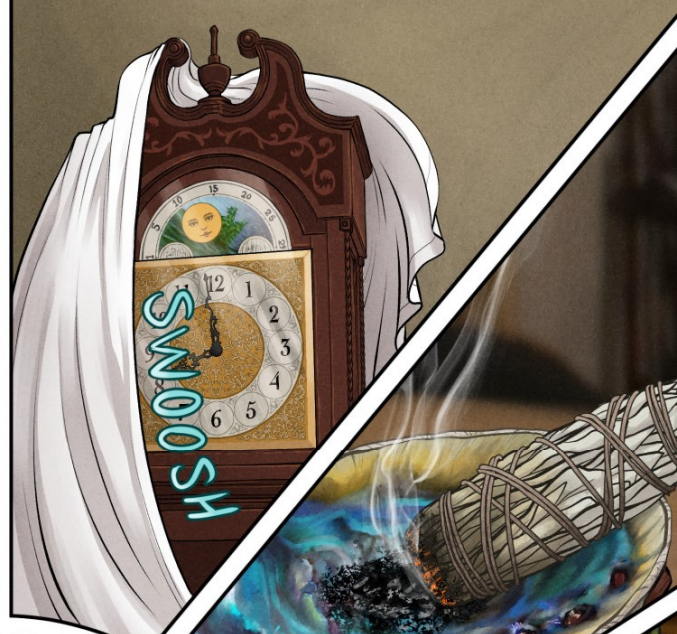
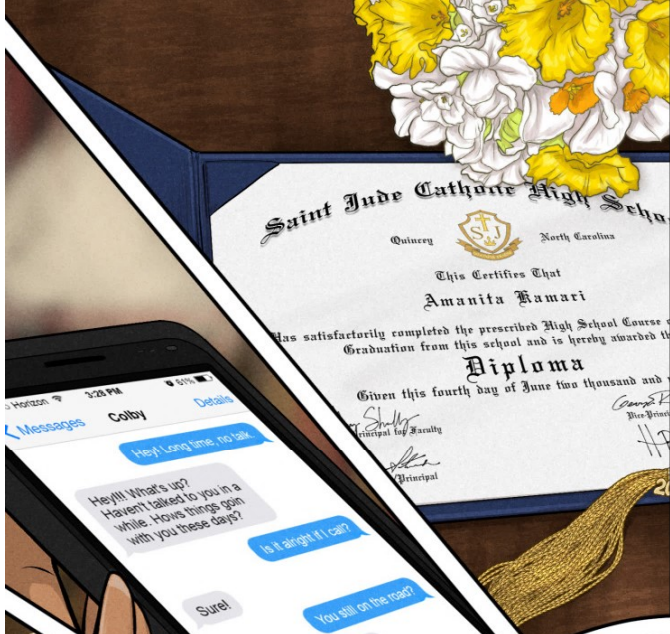
I HAVE TO DO THIS.

≡SIGH≡

ALRIGHT, BUT YOU HAVE TO PROMISE ME THAT IN A YEAR, YOU'LL HAVE TO GIVE COLLEGE A TRY.

I WILL.

YOU WON'T.







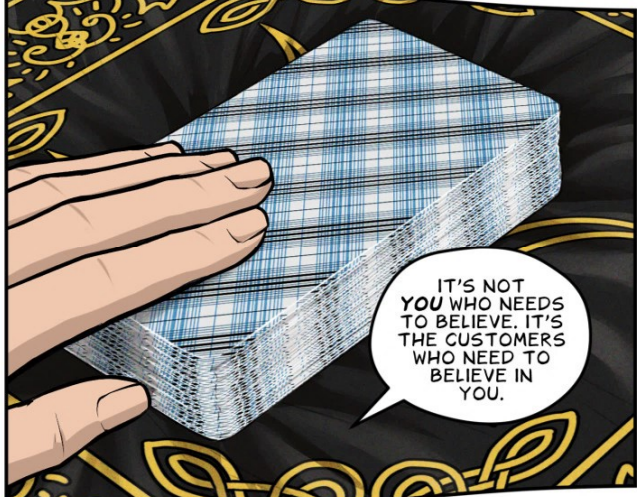
DID YOUR MOM TEACH YOU ANY OF THIS?

CRYSTALS? CARDS? GOLD READINGS?

WHAT ABOUT CANDLES?

SHE SHOWED ME A FEW THINGS.

I'M NOT SURE IF I BELIEVE ANY OF IT, THOUGH.



IT'S NOT YOU WHO NEEDS TO BELIEVE. IT'S THE CUSTOMERS WHO NEED TO BELIEVE IN YOU.



BELIEF IS A VERY POWERFUL THING.

HIS MOTHER IS DYING.



IS THERE SOMETHING GOING ON WITH YOUR MOM?



....
HOW DO YOU KNOW?

I'M SORRY.

IT WAS JUST A RANDOM THOUGHT.



GLIOBLASTOMA.

SUCH A FUNNY SOUNDING WORD.

THEY'RE SAYING SHE HAS A YEAR LEFT.



I HEARD STORIES ABOUT YOUR MOM AND HOW SHE KNEW THINGS NO ONE TOLD HER.

I WONDER IF YOU HAVE THAT SAME GIFT.



NOT MUCH OF A GIFT IF IT COULDN'T SAVE THEM.



LET'S JUST WORRY ABOUT THE HERE AND NOW.



WE NEED TO GET YOU READY FOR THE SUMMER.

ALSO, I WANT TO CHECK OUT THE OL' FAMILY RV AND SEE IF WE CAN GET IT RUNNING AGAIN.

I THINK SOMETHING DIED IN IT.



Where are you all now?

Missouri. Here for two more days, then it's out west we go!

He's helping me get used to driving the RV. It's a beast!

Is Colby keeping you company? :)

Aren't you supposed to have a certain license to drive an RV?

He's just a friend.

I don't know. Colby said it's fine as long as I don't get pulled over, but I think he was messing with me.

With benefits lol

FORTUNE TELLER

PALM • TAROT • CRYSTAL BALL

\$5 \$10 \$15

I was going to ask, where did you get that wig?

One of the performers here gave it to me. I really like it. I wonder if I can get my hair to do the same when it grows out.

I'll be out of college by then! You have more patience than me

Hair grows. That's what it does.

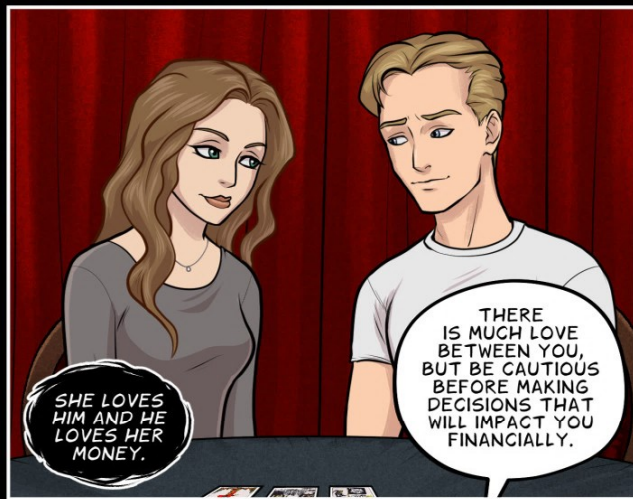
That will take forever!!!

About 10 years. I did the math.



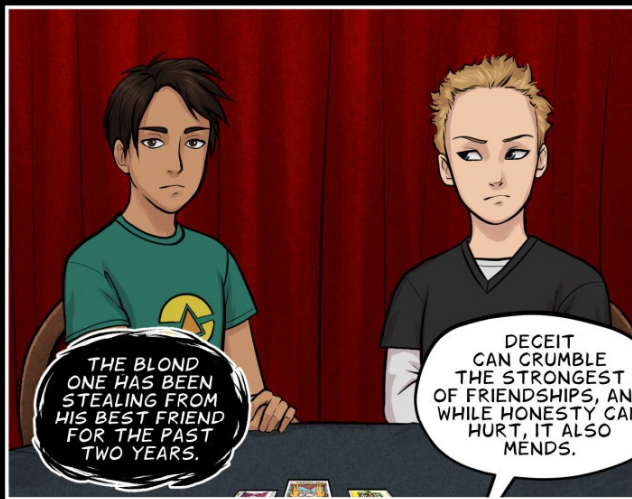
Hey, I gotta go. Talk to you later!

Take care and drive safe! Give Colby a big kiss for me ;)



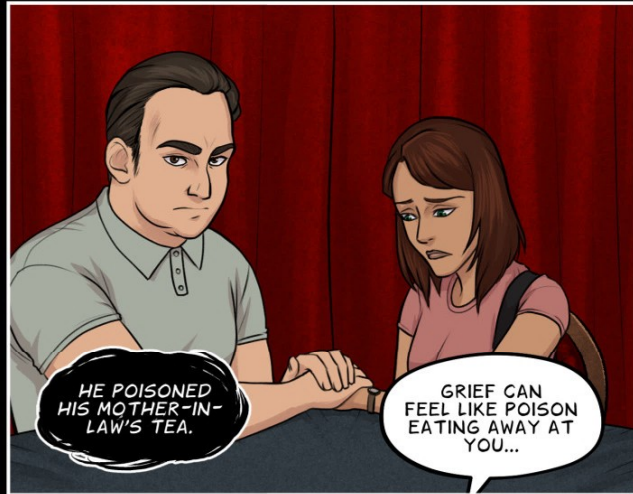
SHE LOVES HIM AND HE LOVES HER MONEY.

THERE IS MUCH LOVE BETWEEN YOU, BUT BE CAUTIOUS BEFORE MAKING DECISIONS THAT WILL IMPACT YOU FINANCIALLY.



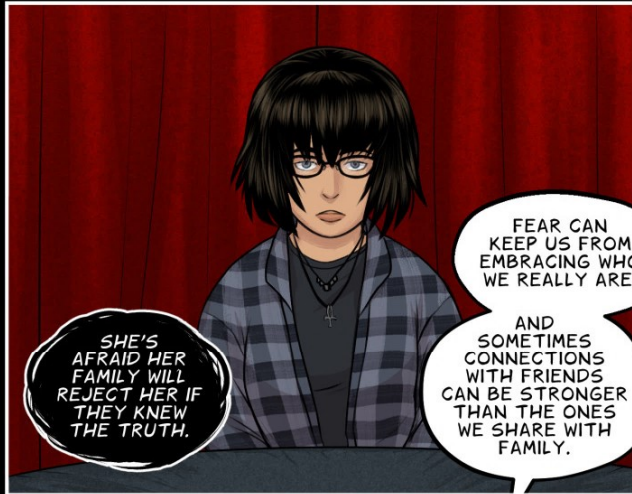
THE BLOND ONE HAS BEEN STEALING FROM HIS BEST FRIEND FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS.

DECEIT CAN CRUMBLE THE STRONGEST OF FRIENDSHIPS, AND WHILE HONESTY CAN HURT, IT ALSO MENDS.



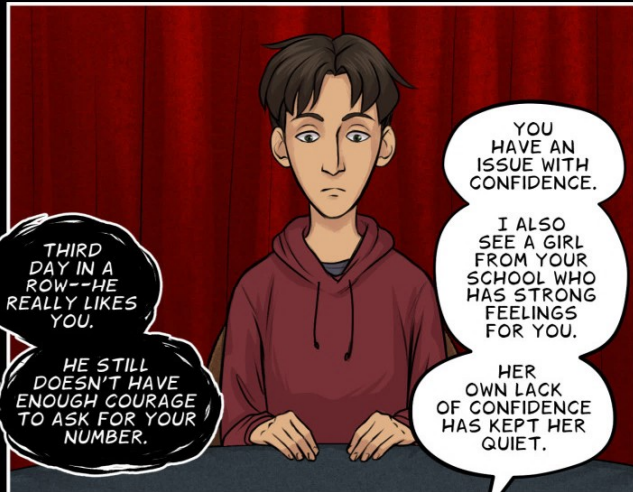
HE POISONED HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW'S TEA.

GRIEF CAN FEEL LIKE POISON EATING AWAY AT YOU...



SHE'S AFRAID HER FAMILY WILL REJECT HER IF THEY KNEW THE TRUTH.

FEAR CAN KEEP US FROM EMBRACING WHO WE REALLY ARE. AND SOMETIMES CONNECTIONS WITH FRIENDS CAN BE STRONGER THAN THE ONES WE SHARE WITH FAMILY.



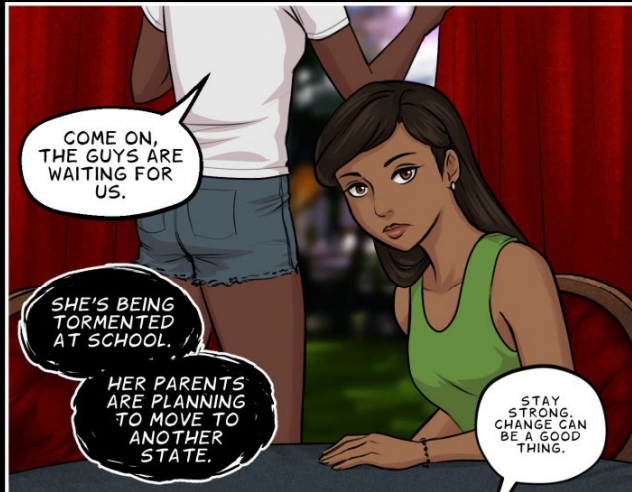
THIRD DAY IN A ROW--HE REALLY LIKES YOU.

HE STILL DOESN'T HAVE ENOUGH COURAGE TO ASK FOR YOUR NUMBER.

YOU HAVE AN ISSUE WITH CONFIDENCE.

I ALSO SEE A GIRL FROM YOUR SCHOOL WHO HAS STRONG FEELINGS FOR YOU.

HER OWN LACK OF CONFIDENCE HAS KEPT HER QUIET.

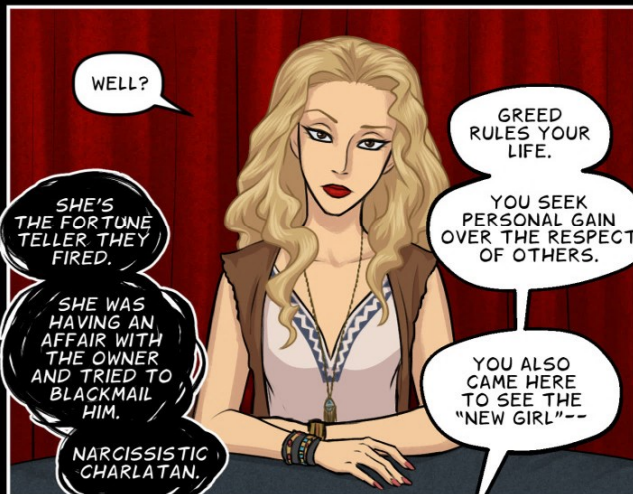


COME ON, THE GUYS ARE WAITING FOR US.

SHE'S BEING TORMENTED AT SCHOOL.

HER PARENTS ARE PLANNING TO MOVE TO ANOTHER STATE.

STAY STRONG. CHANGE CAN BE A GOOD THING.



WELL?

SHE'S THE FORTUNE TELLER THEY FIRED.

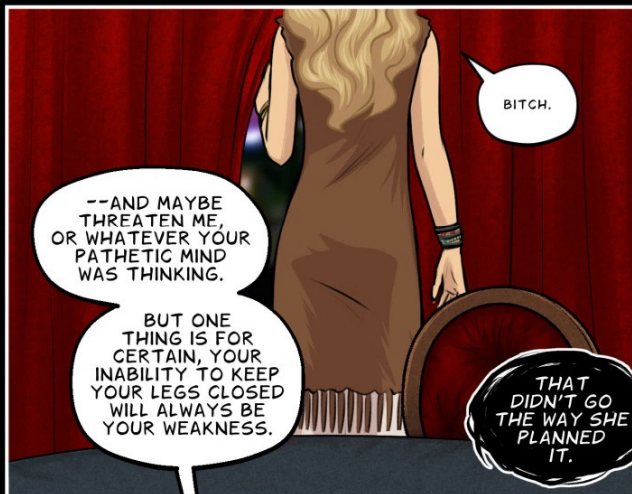
SHE WAS HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH THE OWNER AND TRIED TO BLACKMAIL HIM.

NARCISSISTIC CHARLATAN.

GREED RULES YOUR LIFE.

YOU SEEK PERSONAL GAIN OVER THE RESPECT OF OTHERS.

YOU ALSO CAME HERE TO SEE THE "NEW GIRL"--



BITCH.

--AND MAYBE THREATEN ME, OR WHATEVER YOUR PATHETIC MIND WAS THINKING.

BUT ONE THING IS FOR CERTAIN, YOUR INABILITY TO KEEP YOUR LEGS CLOSED WILL ALWAYS BE YOUR WEAKNESS.

THAT DIDN'T GO THE WAY SHE PLANNED IT.



Hey, my mom was wanting to know if you'll be in for July 4th. We're planning a large cookout with dad's family

We'll be in California by then.



Well shit. Mom was really looking forward to having you back for a while

How many colleges has she picked out for me?



...5



She says you can't make a career out of this psychic stuff

My mom did. Why can't I?



She mentioned that your dad worked as a mechanic and was able to be the main breadwinner. I tried sticking up for you but she made it clear that I'm definitely going to college. She already has me looking at schools

You can do whatever you want. Don't let others decide your life for you.



I wish you were here

I'll be in after Labor Day. I have lots of crazy stories to tell you.



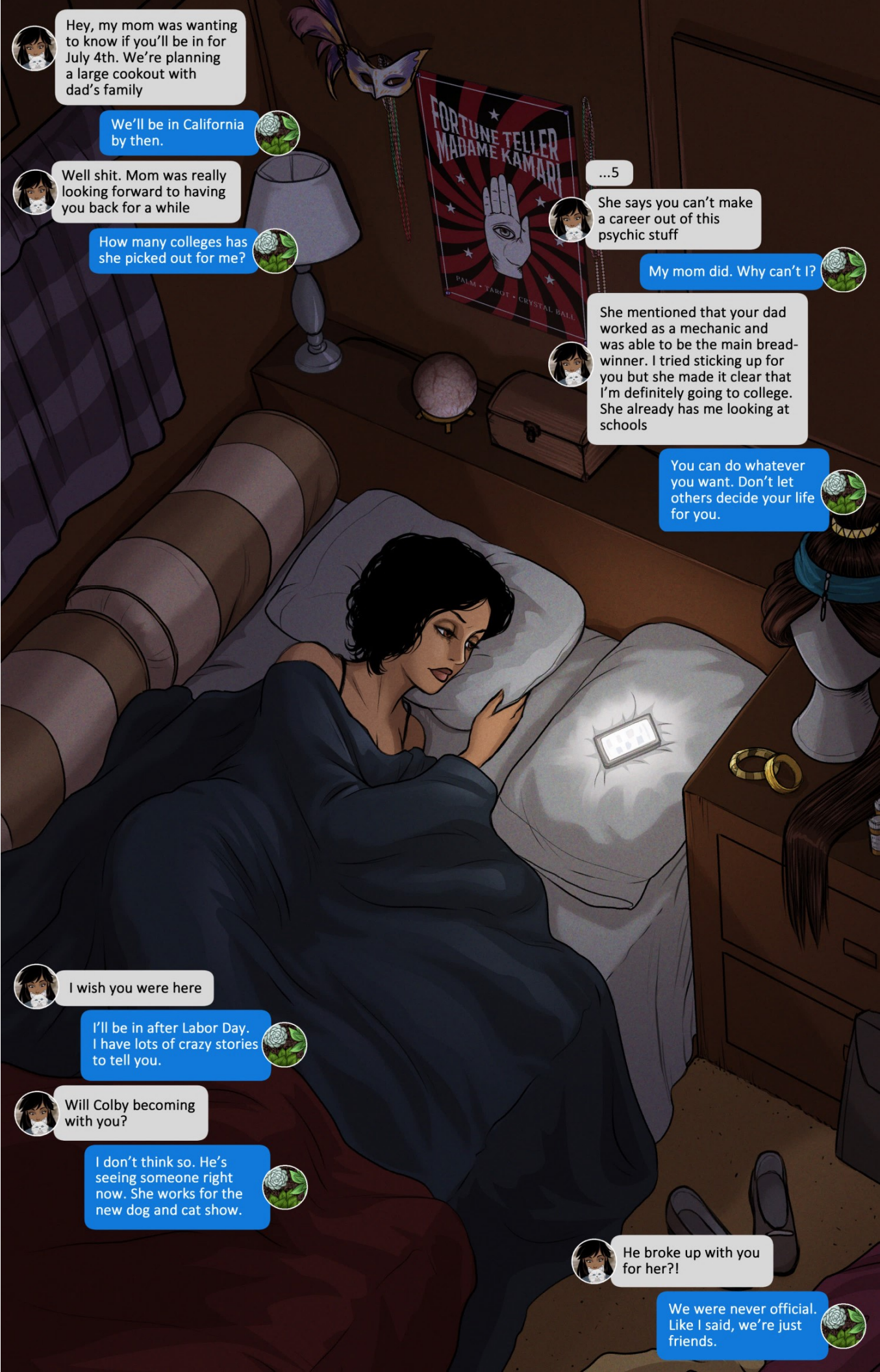
Will Colby becoming with you?

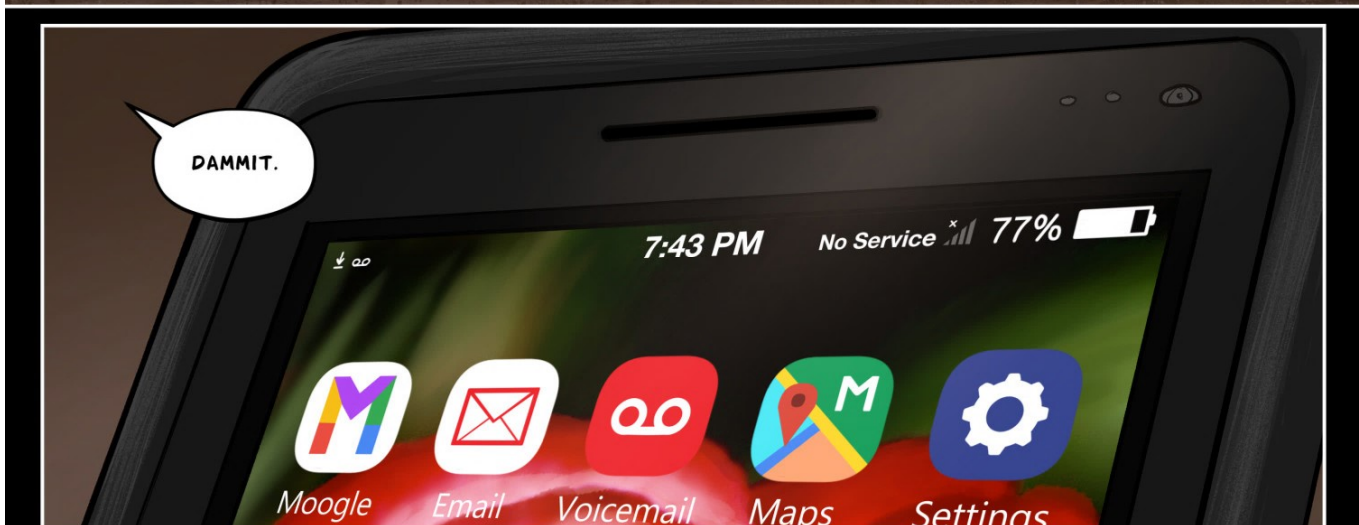
I don't think so. He's seeing someone right now. She works for the new dog and cat show.

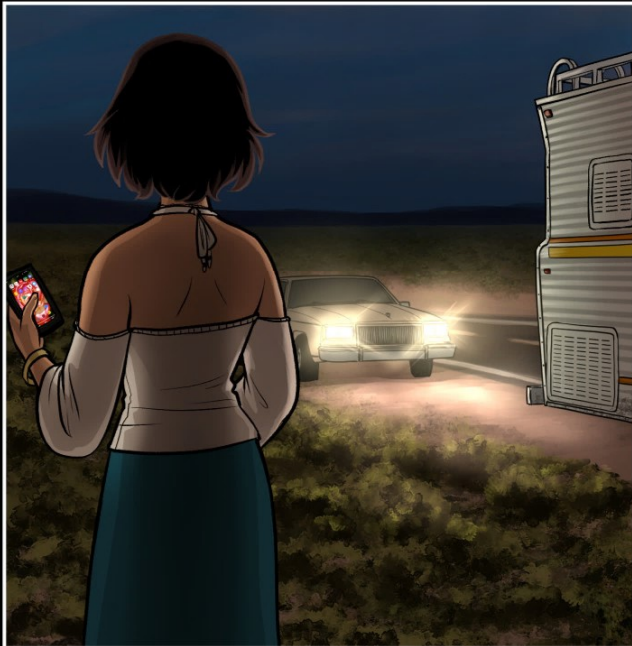
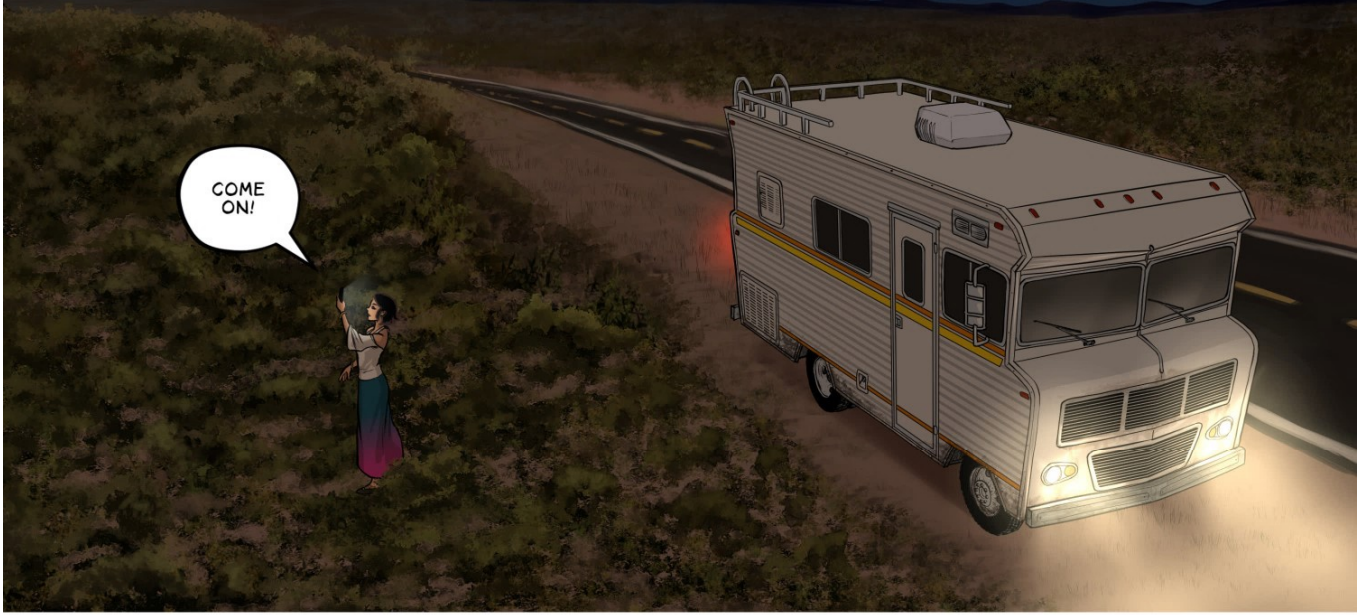


He broke up with you for her?!

We were never official. Like I said, we're just friends.





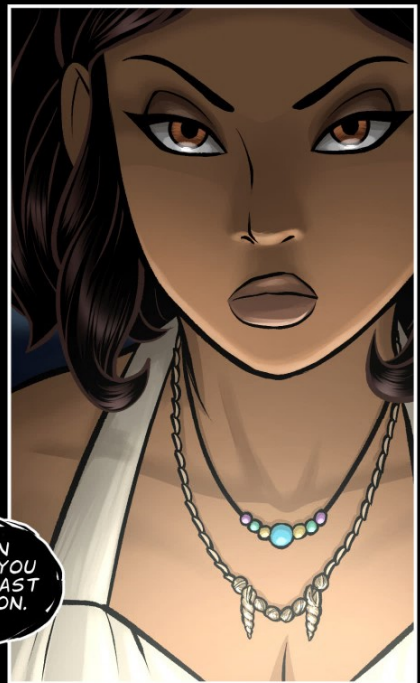




I'M FINE. JUST TRYING TO GET A SIGNAL HERE.

OH, THIS AREA IS A DEAD ZONE.

HE'S BEEN FOLLOWING YOU SINCE THE LAST GAS STATION.



WELL, IT'S NOT ENTIRELY A DEAD ZONE.



HEY! I HAVE A FLAT.

I'M ABOUT TEN MINUTES BEHIND YOU. CAN YA SWING BACK AROUND AND GIVE ME A HAND?

HE DOESN'T BELIEVE YOU.

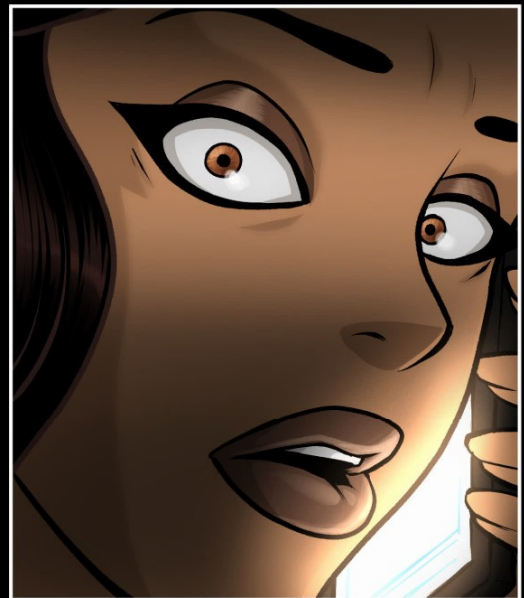


I CAN HELP YOU WITH THE FLAT.

HE DAMAGED THE TIRE AT THE GAS STATION.



I'M FINE. SERIOUSLY. THANK YOU ANYWAY.



HE'S KILLED OTHERS AND HE'S PLANNING TO KILL YOU.

YOU CAN'T KEEP RUNNING AWAY.

THEY ALWAYS CATCH YOU.

HE'S GOING TO KILL YOU!

WHAT DO I DO?!

YOU NEED TO TRUST ME.

OKAY.

WILL YOU DO AS I SAY?

YES!

STOP!

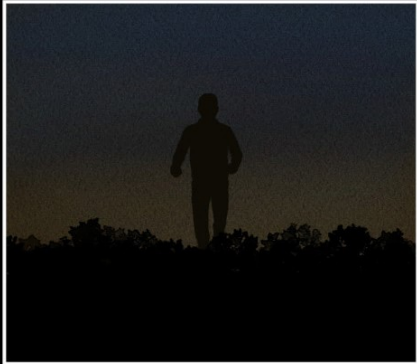
FACE HIM.



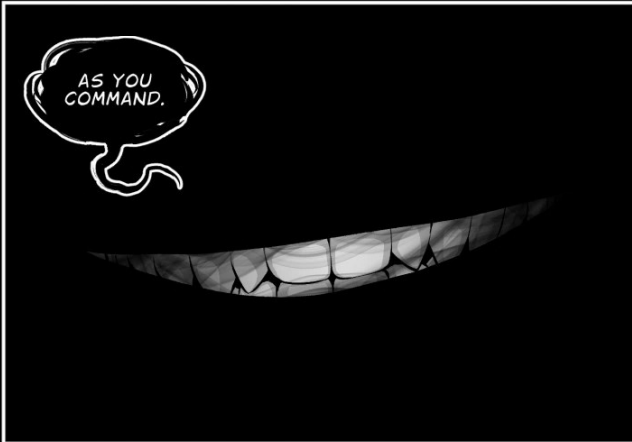


EITHER HE DIES OR YOU DIE.

TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT ME TO DO.



KILL HIM.

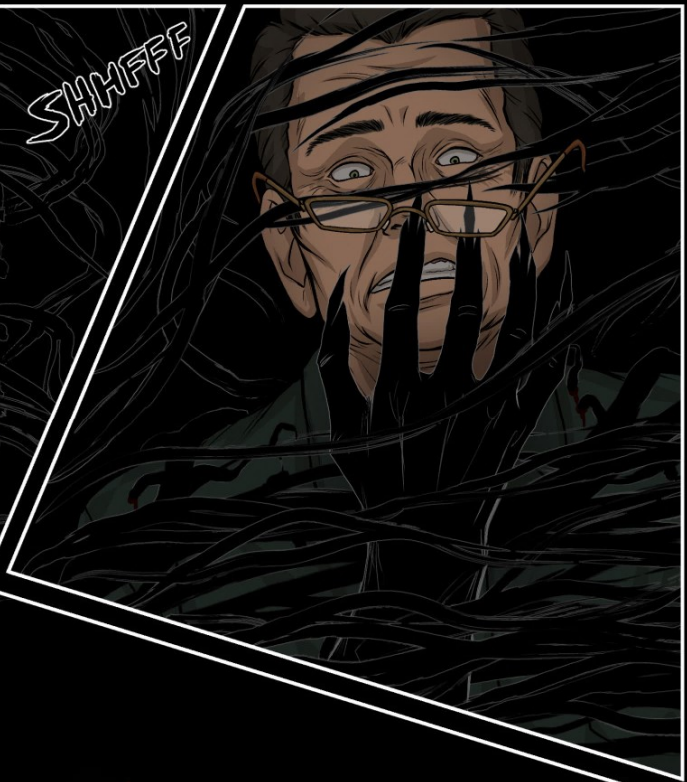


AS YOU COMMAND.



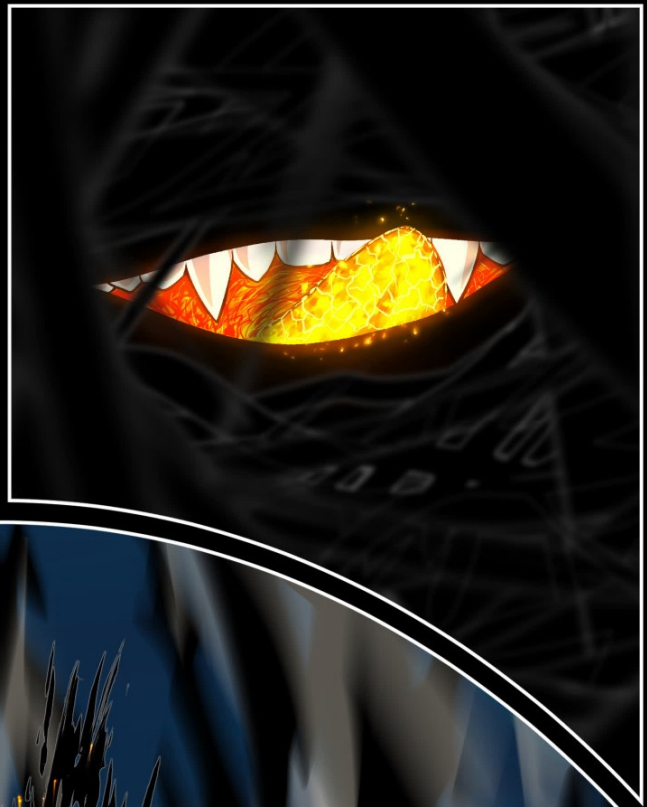
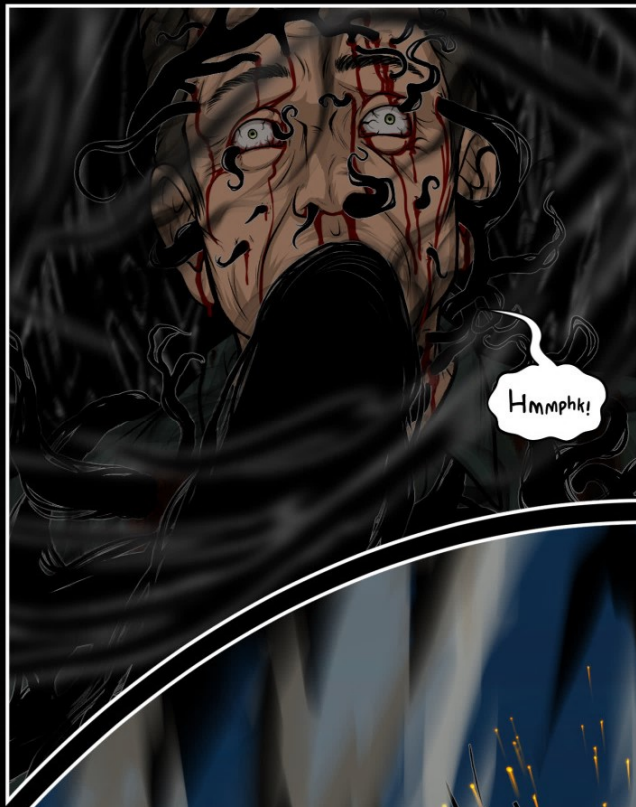
YOU'RE GIVING UP ALREADY?

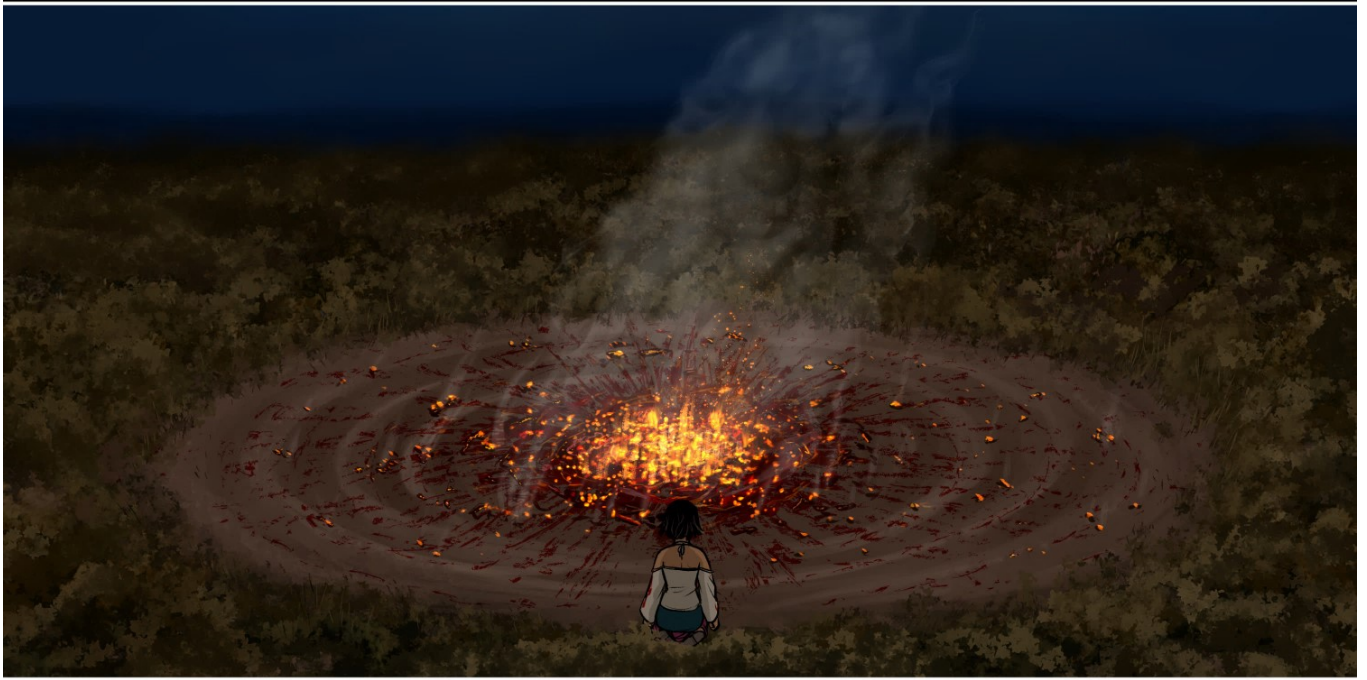
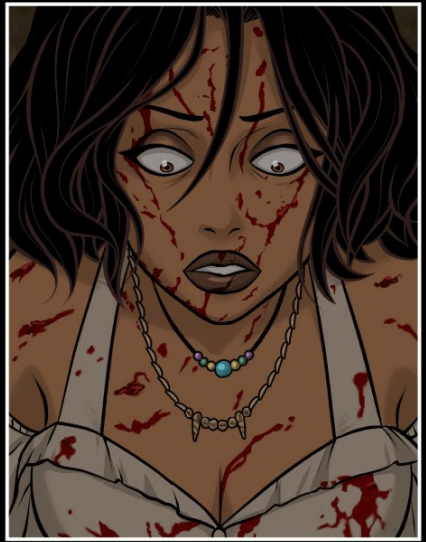
I'M BARELY OUT OF BREATH!

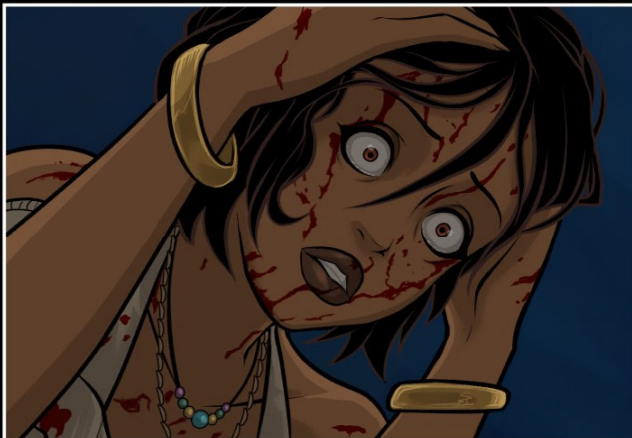
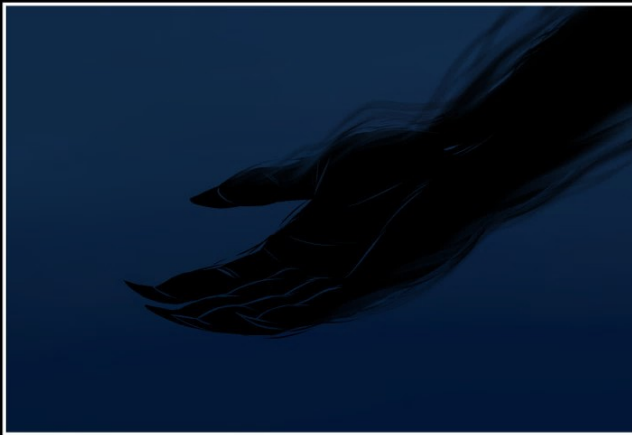


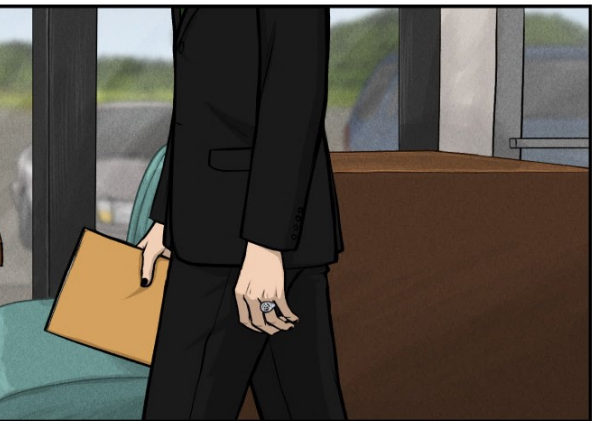
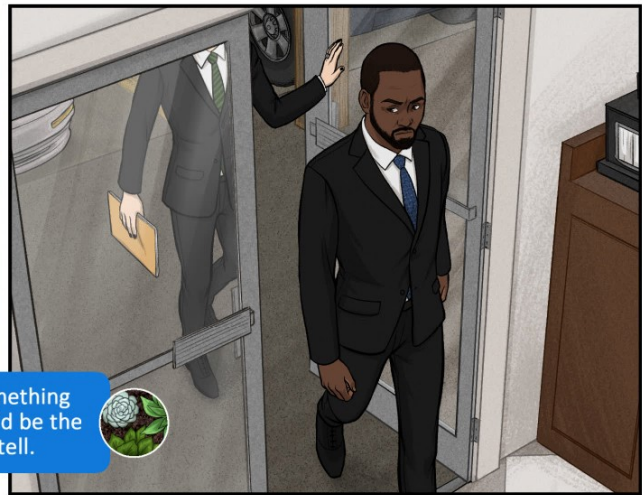
OH, HOW
I WOULD
LOVE TO DO
TO YOU WHAT
YOU HAVE DONE
TO OTHERS.

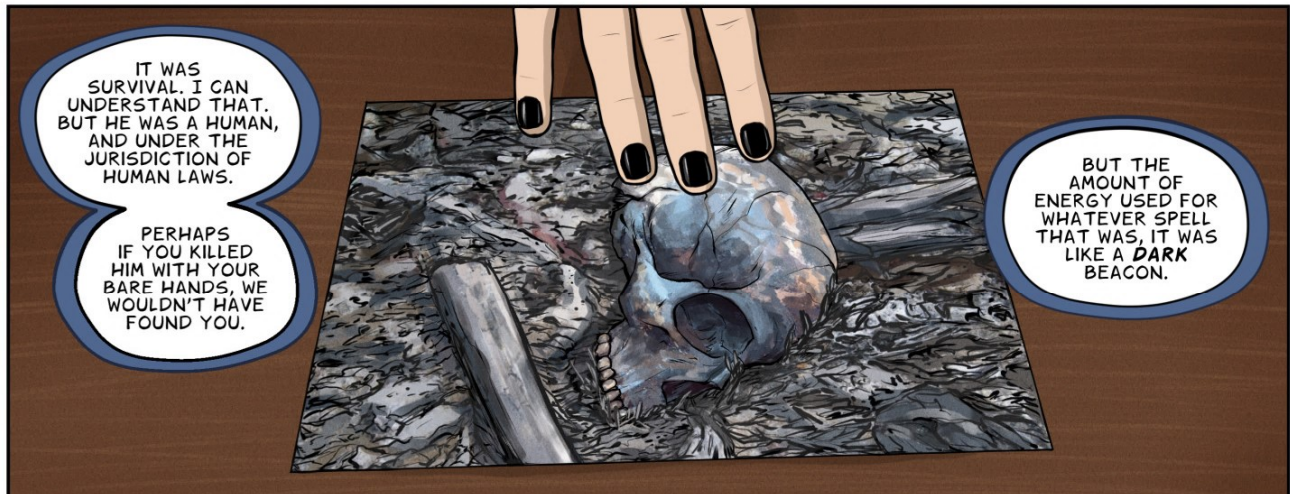
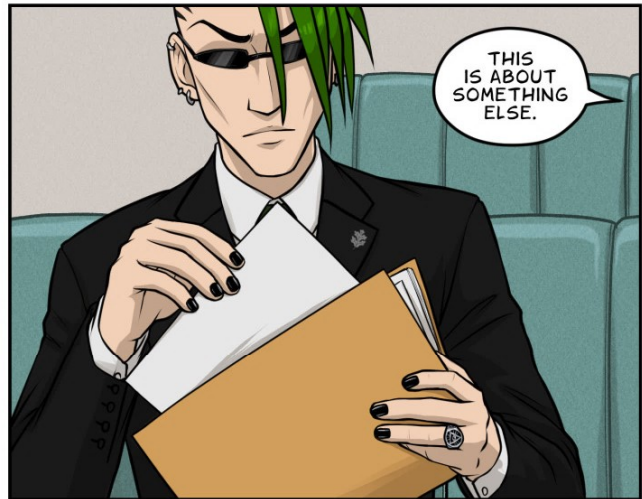
BUT
MY TIME IS
LIMITED.













SIGN BY THE X, PLEASE.





IT MENTIONS RULES. WHAT RULES?

YOU WILL HAVE A COPY OF THEM AFTER YOU SIGN.

A FRIENDLY REMINDER, IF YOU BREAK ANY OF THE RULES, YOU COULD FACE FINES AND POSSIBLE INCARCERATION.



SERIOUSLY? FOR MAGIC?



ESPECIALLY FOR MAGIC.

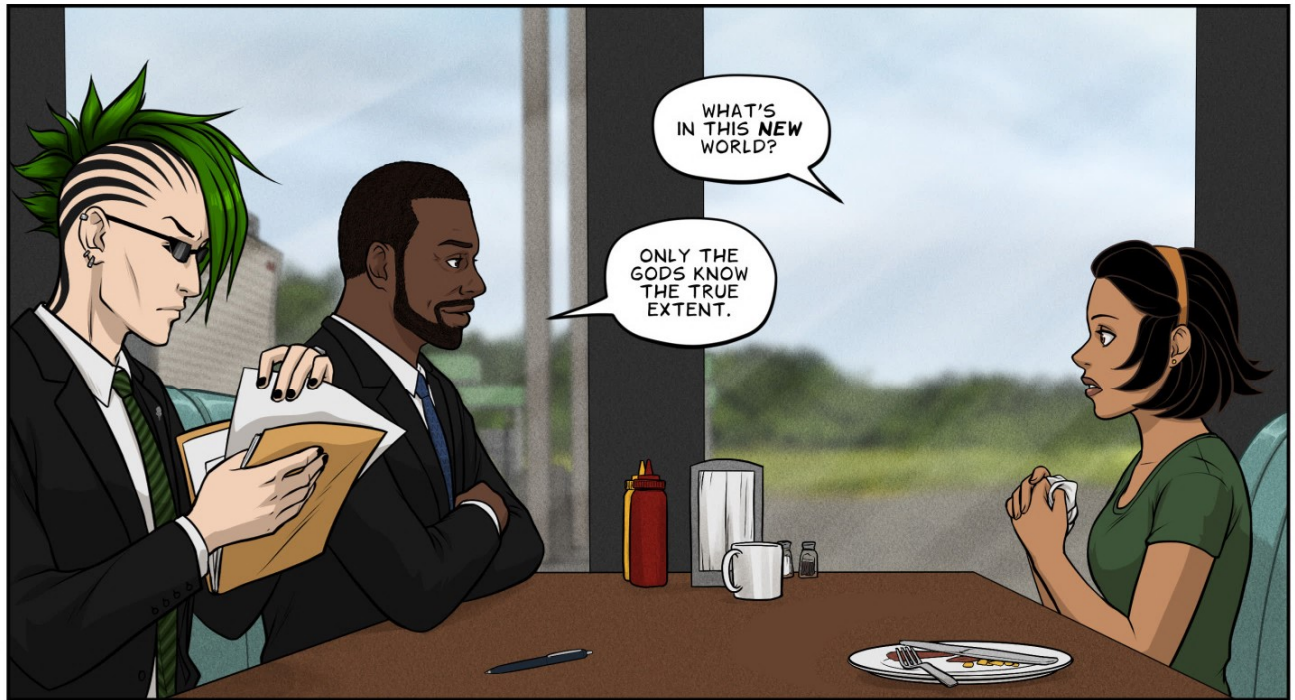
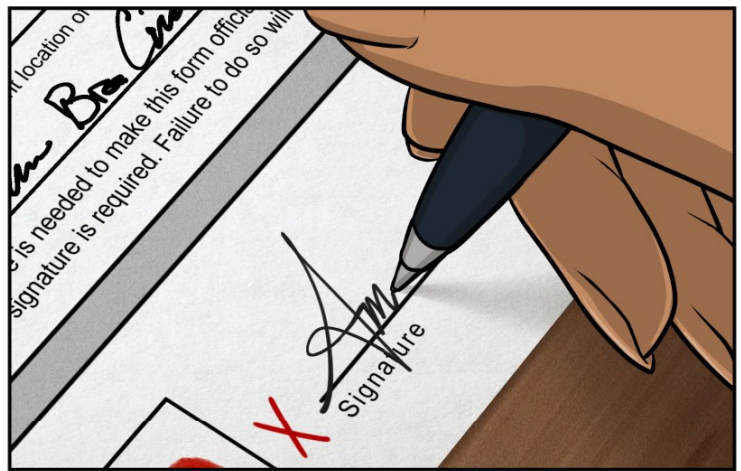
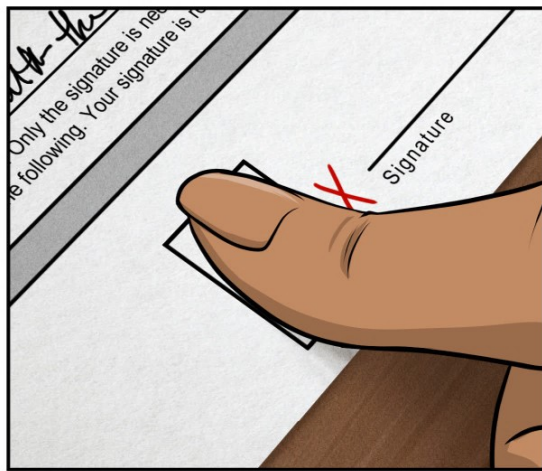
YOU ARE ENTERING A WHOLE NEW WORLD, MS. KAMARI. BEST TO KEEP A LOW PROFILE.

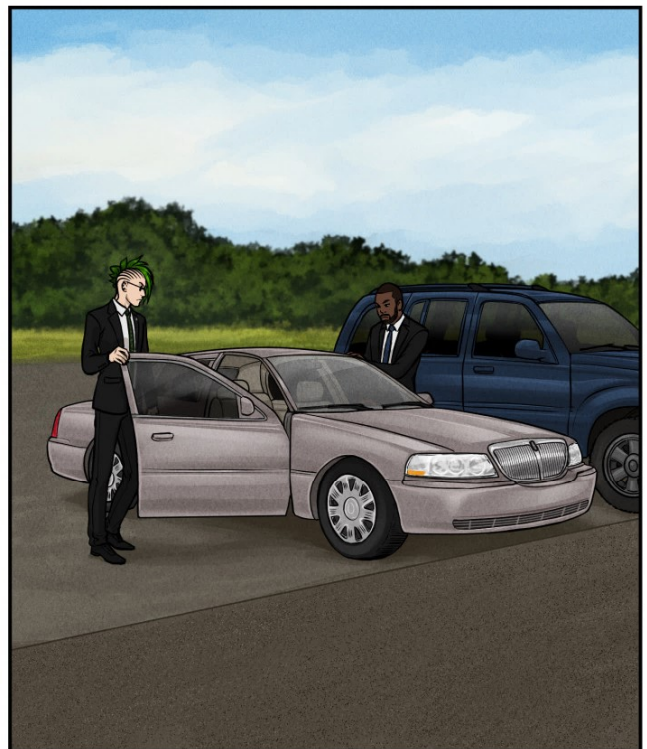


CLICK



JUST PLACE YOUR THUMB IN THE BOX BESIDE YOUR SIGNATURE.







ARE YOU SURE SHE'S THE ONE RESPONSIBLE?

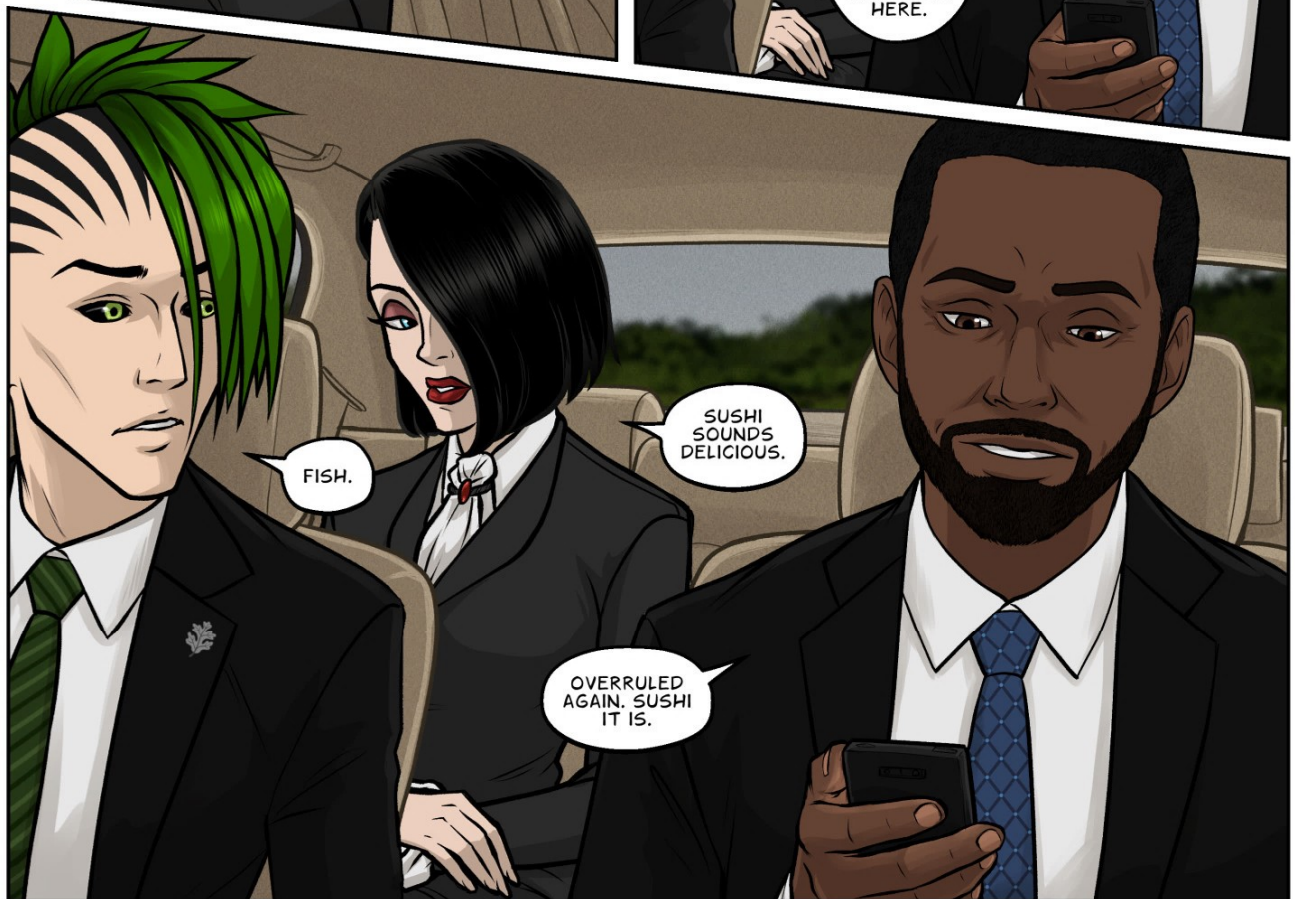


IT'S HER.
I CAN STILL FEEL THE SAME RESIDUAL ENERGY.



SHE MAY NOT KNOW WHAT SHE'S CAPABLE OF, BUT THAT'S NOT OUR JOB.

HOW ABOUT MEXICAN? THERE'S A PLACE NOT FAR FROM HERE.



FISH.

SUSHI SOUNDS DELICIOUS.

OVERRULED AGAIN. SUSHI IT IS.



You're not coming home, are you?

I have something I need to do first.



I feel like something bad is going to happen. It's not like my typical anxiety



It's the same feeling I had before your parents died. I can't ignore it

You've always had this doom-n-gloom outlook. Nothing bad is going to happen.



I'll be home next month. I promise.



AMANITA.

I WAS WONDERING IF YOU'D EVER SHOW UP ON MY DOORSTEP.

IF YOU HAVE THE BOOK, GET IT AND COME ON INSIDE.

I'LL MAKE US SOME TEA.



THE LAST TIME I SAW YOU WAS AT YOUR PARENTS' FUNERAL.

THAT WAS ABOUT FOUR YEARS AGO, WASN'T IT?

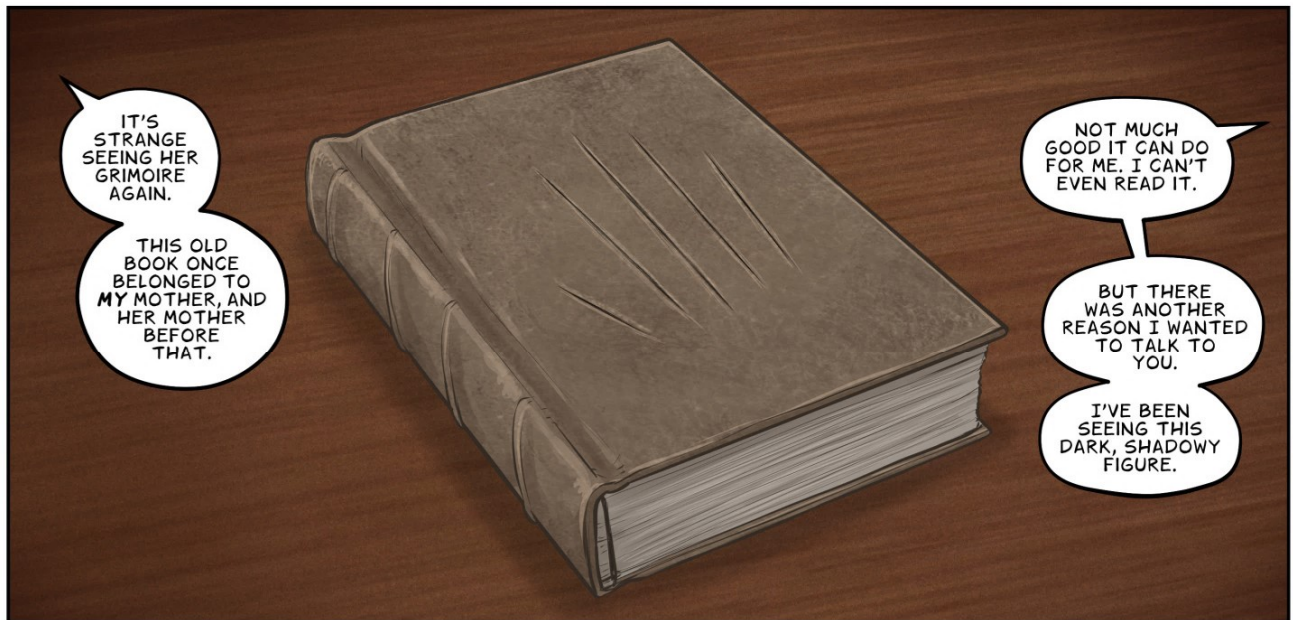
FIVE.



WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO LATELY?

I'VE BEEN TRAVELING WITH THE KERN BROTHERS CIRCUS THIS SUMMER.

SO YOU'VE BEEN FOLLOWING IN YOUR MOTHER'S FOOTSTEPS.



IT'S STRANGE SEEING HER GRIMOIRE AGAIN.

THIS OLD BOOK ONCE BELONGED TO MY MOTHER, AND HER MOTHER BEFORE THAT.

NOT MUCH GOOD IT CAN DO FOR ME. I CAN'T EVEN READ IT.

BUT THERE WAS ANOTHER REASON I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU.

I'VE BEEN SEEING THIS DARK, SHADOWY FIGURE.



HAVE YOU HAD NIGHTMARES, OR EVEN HEARD A VOICE?

SOMETIMES.

MY SISTER HAD THIS **GIFT**, AND WHEN SHE DIED, IT WAS PASSED ON TO HER FIRST CHILD--YOUR MOTHER.

AND LIKE THE BOOK, IT NOW BELONGS TO YOU.



WAIT, MY MOM WASN'T YOUR SISTER?



I WAS HER AUNT. I'M YOUR **GREAT** AUNT.

IT'S A SMALL FAMILY SECRET.



HOW OLD ARE YOU?!



LET ME GET MY BOOK.





THESE MEN IN SUITS TRACKED ME DOWN AND MADE ME SIGN THIS PAPER.

HE SAID I NEEDED TO REGISTER.



DID YOU USE YOUR BLOOD?

YES.



≡SIGH≡

YOU'RE BOUND TO THE VEIL NOW.

BUT WHY WOULD THEY GO AFTER YOU? YOU'RE NOT A PRACTICING WITCH.

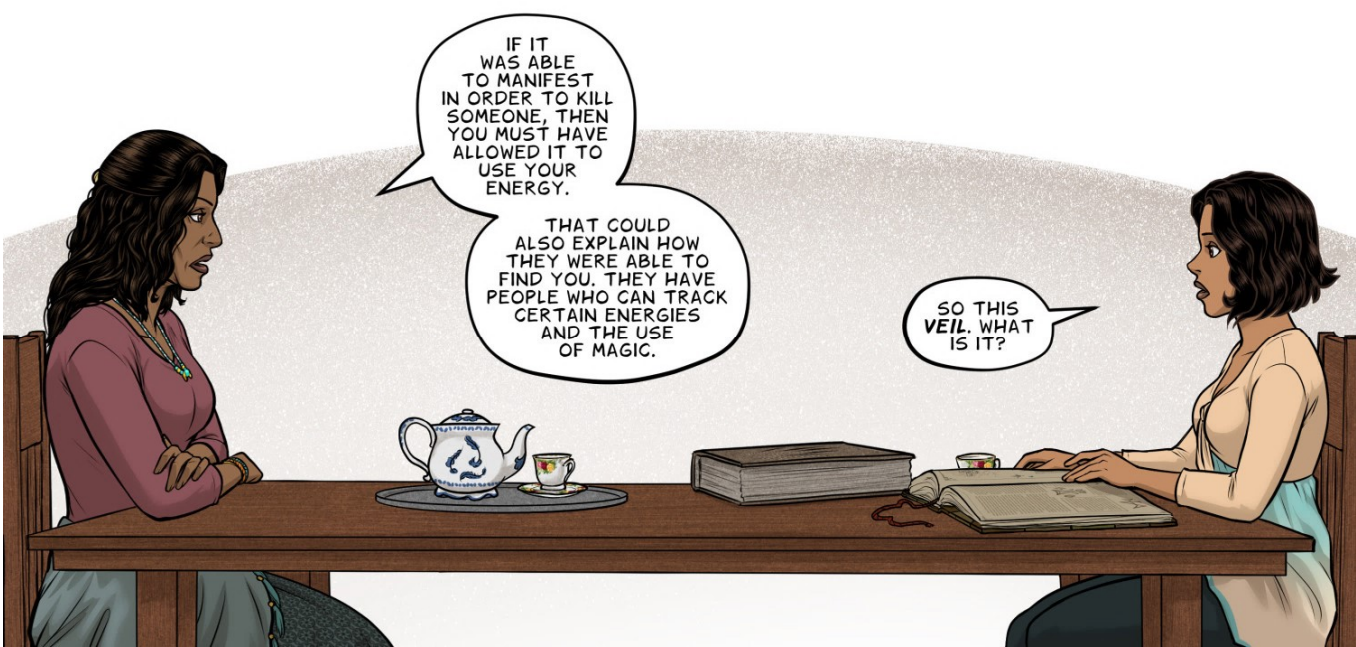
SCREECH



THEY THINK I KILLED A GUY WITH MAGIC.

THAT SHADOWY FIGURE I MENTIONED, IT APPEARED BEFORE ME AND KILLED THIS MAN.

WHATEVER IT WAS, IT PROTECTED ME.



IF IT WAS ABLE TO MANIFEST IN ORDER TO KILL SOMEONE, THEN YOU MUST HAVE ALLOWED IT TO USE YOUR ENERGY.

THAT COULD ALSO EXPLAIN HOW THEY WERE ABLE TO FIND YOU. THEY HAVE PEOPLE WHO CAN TRACK CERTAIN ENERGIES AND THE USE OF MAGIC.

SO THIS VEIL. WHAT IS IT?



THE VEIL IS A COLLECTION OF RULES ESTABLISHED TO KEEP HUMANS UNAWARE OF ANYTHING DEEMED SUPERNATURAL.

THE SYSTEM WAS CREATED CENTURIES AGO, BUT WITH THE RISE OF THE INTERNET, AND CAMERAS IN EVERYONE'S HANDS, THE ARCANUM HAVE BEEN EXTRA BUSY KEEPING THINGS HIDDEN THESE DAYS.

I THINK IT GOES BACK BEFORE THE VEIL WAS EVEN CREATED. BACK WHEN THE GODS' HOLD OVER THE WORLD WAS WANING.

MYTH TALKS ABOUT ZEUS DESTROYING MOUNT OLYMPUS, AND ORDERING THE GODS TO LIVE AMONG THE HUMANS.

PERHAPS THAT PUSH TO SEPARATE FROM HUMANS WAS EVENTUALLY TAKEN TO THE EXTREME.

ANYTHING NOT HUMAN WAS CONSIDERED SUPERNATURAL, AND THEREFORE CONCEALED WITHIN THE VEIL.



THE GODS ARE REAL?!



I'VE NEVER SEEN A GOD, BUT IF THEY DO EXIST, THE ARCANUM WOULD KNOW.

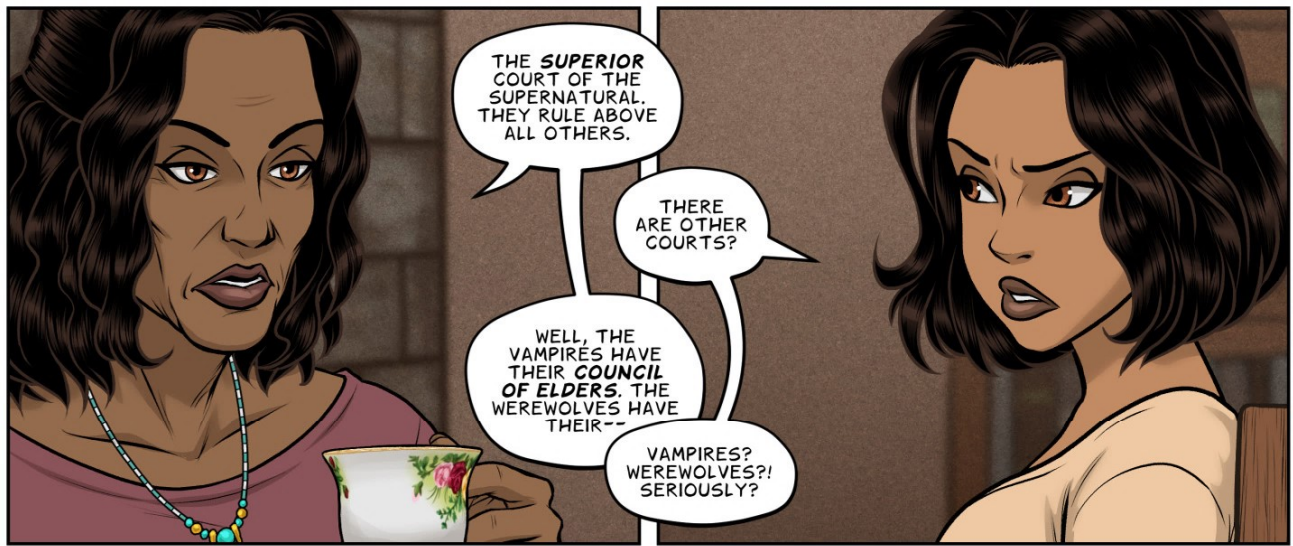


THEY'RE THE MEN IN BLACK, AREN'T THEY?



THINK OF THEM AS LAW ENFORCEMENT FOR THE COURT.

YOU MEAN THE SUPERNATURAL COURT, RIGHT?



THE **SUPERIOR** COURT OF THE SUPERNATURAL. THEY RULE ABOVE ALL OTHERS.

THERE ARE OTHER COURTS?

WELL, THE VAMPIRES HAVE THEIR **COUNCIL OF ELDERS**. THE WEREWOLVES HAVE THEIR--

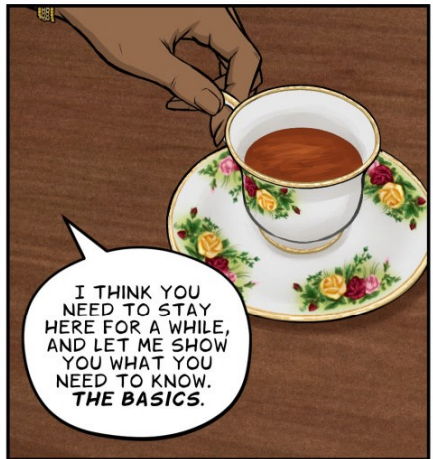
VAMPIRES? WEREWOLVES?! SERIOUSLY?



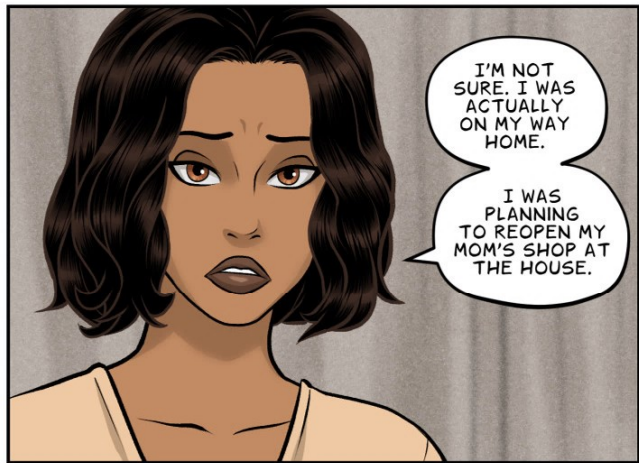
DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS?



WHY?



I THINK YOU NEED TO STAY HERE FOR A WHILE, AND LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW. **THE BASICS.**



I'M NOT SURE. I WAS ACTUALLY ON MY WAY HOME.

I WAS PLANNING TO REOPEN MY MOM'S SHOP AT THE HOUSE.



IT'S YOUR CALL.

I CAN'T DECIDE THIS FOR YOU.



"THE BASICS"... IT'S MORE THAN YOUR MOTHER KNEW.



WHEN CAN I START?

NINE YEARS
LATER.



250 MILES WEST,
IN THE ADIRONDACK
MOUNTAINS.



I don't know when you'll see this. It seems like you've been ignoring everyone these past few years and I don't blame you



I wanted to give you an update with everything that's going on. I ended up selling my parents house. It was too painful to stay there

College was a nice distraction but I can't shake the feeling that my parents death wasn't an accident. And I'm starting to think it's related to your parents death too



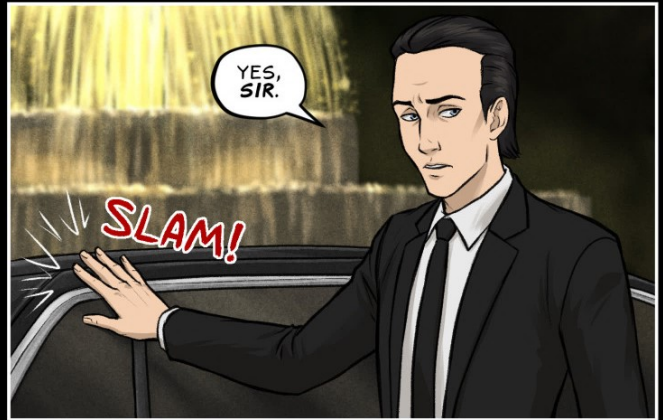
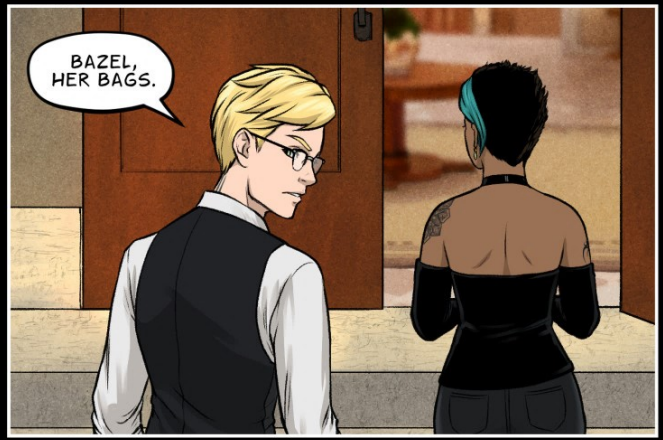
I had been staying with some friends from college, but I'm starting to think the whole college-thing isn't for me. I know my mom would be disappointed but I need to do this for her



I need answers, and I think I found some people who can help me. They know more about this world and its secrets and they want to help. I'm not supposed to be talking to you about this, but felt you needed to know







END.