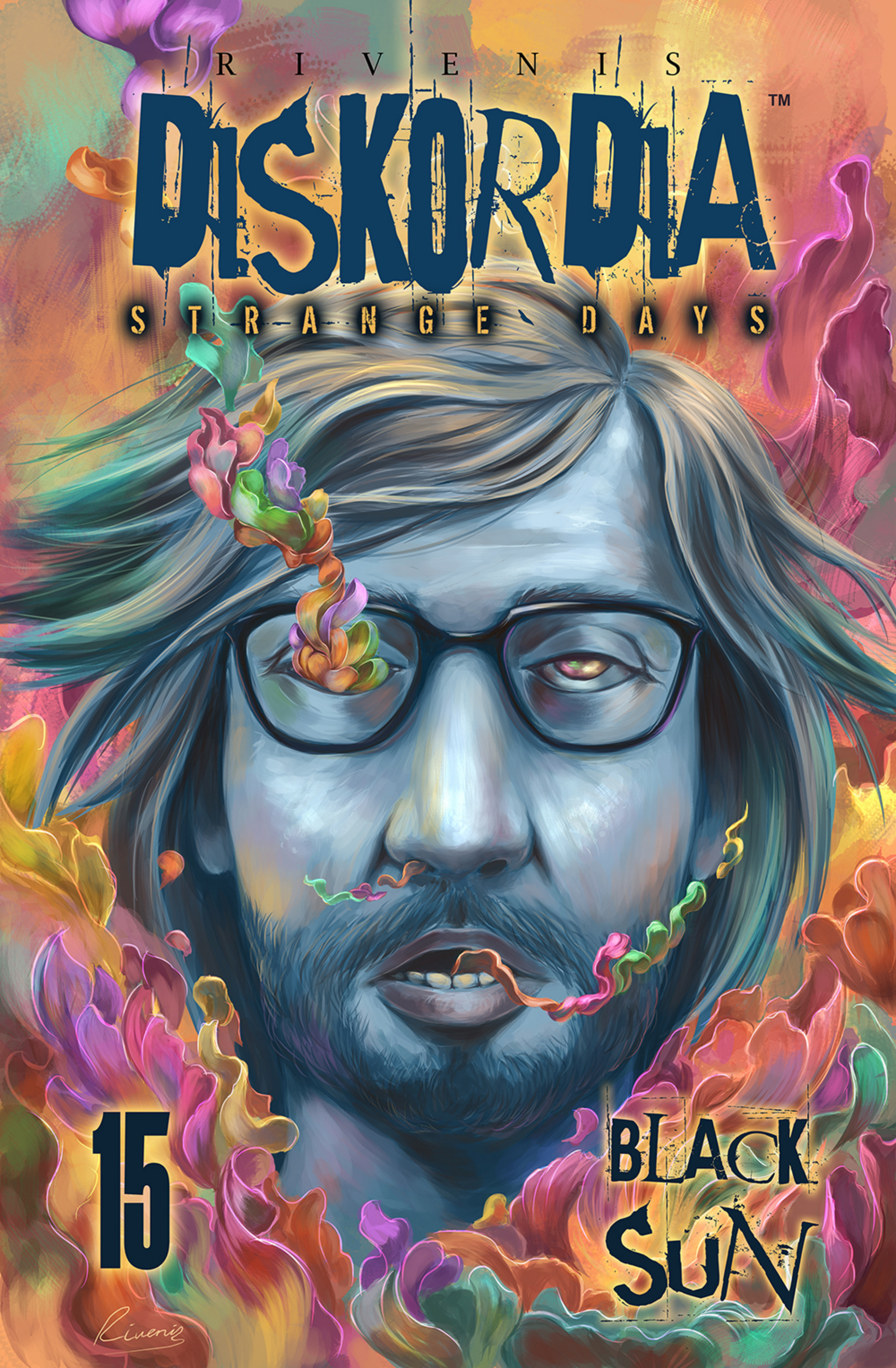


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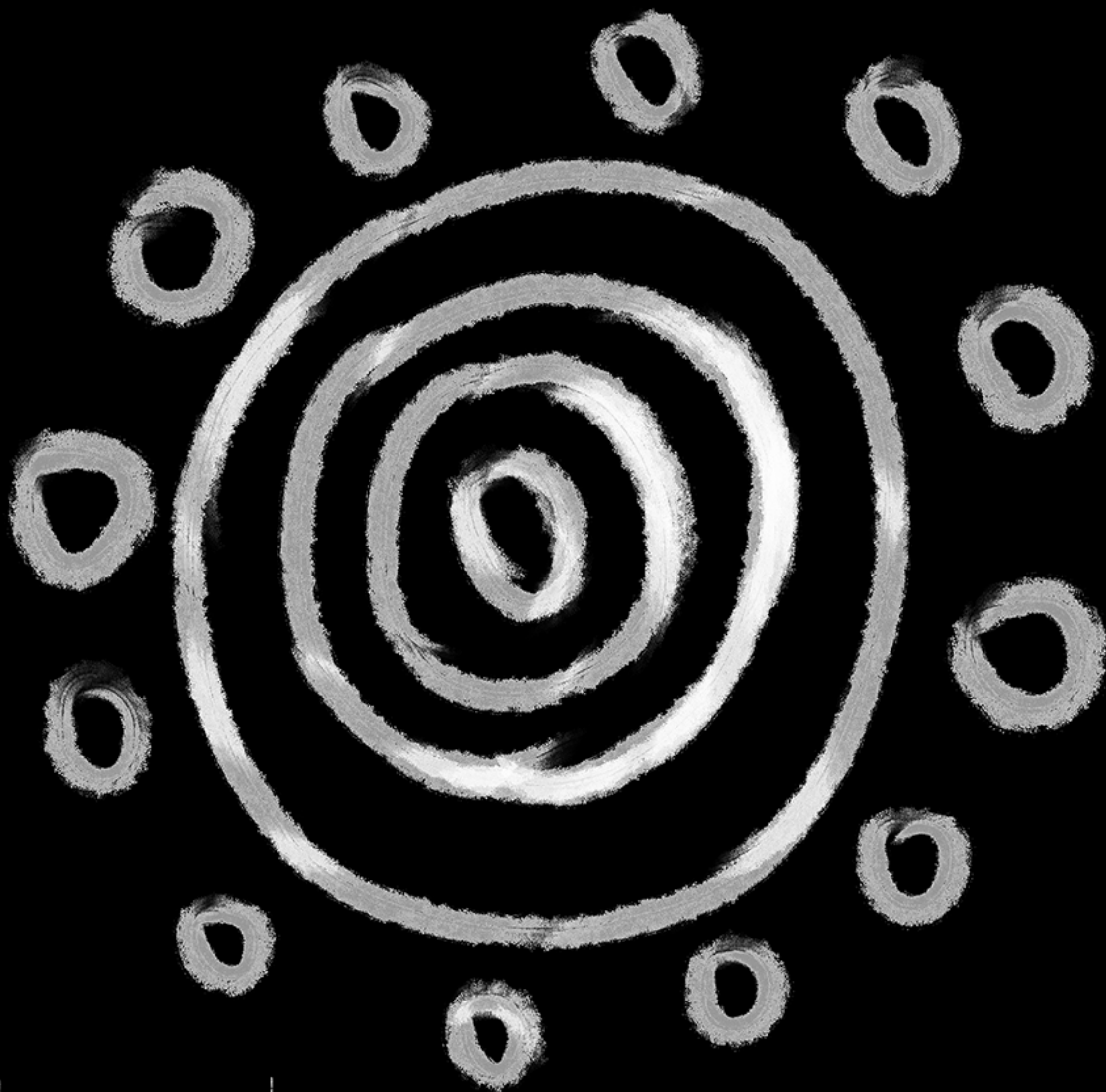
15

Rivenis

**BLACK
SUN**

STRANGE DAYS

Recollection V:



BLACK
SUN

Created by
Rivenis

Dedicated to
Junji Ito

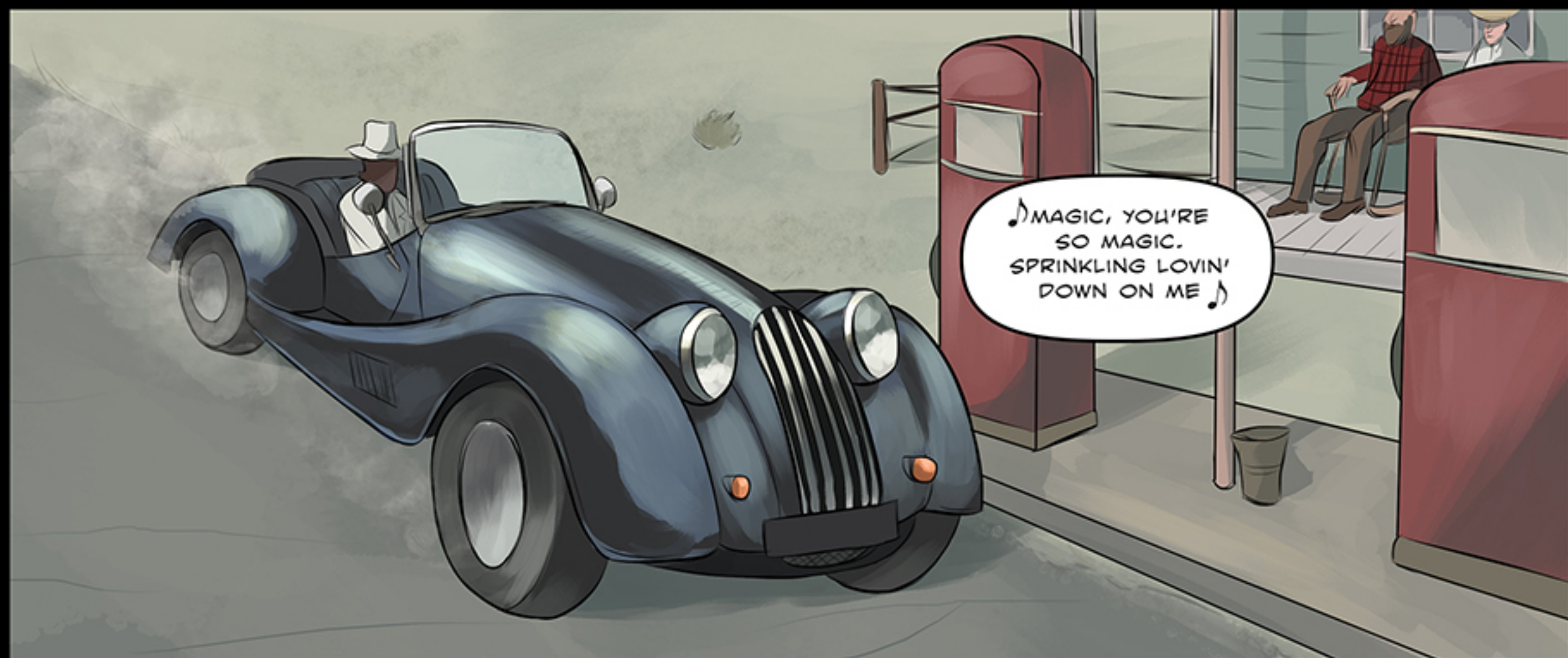
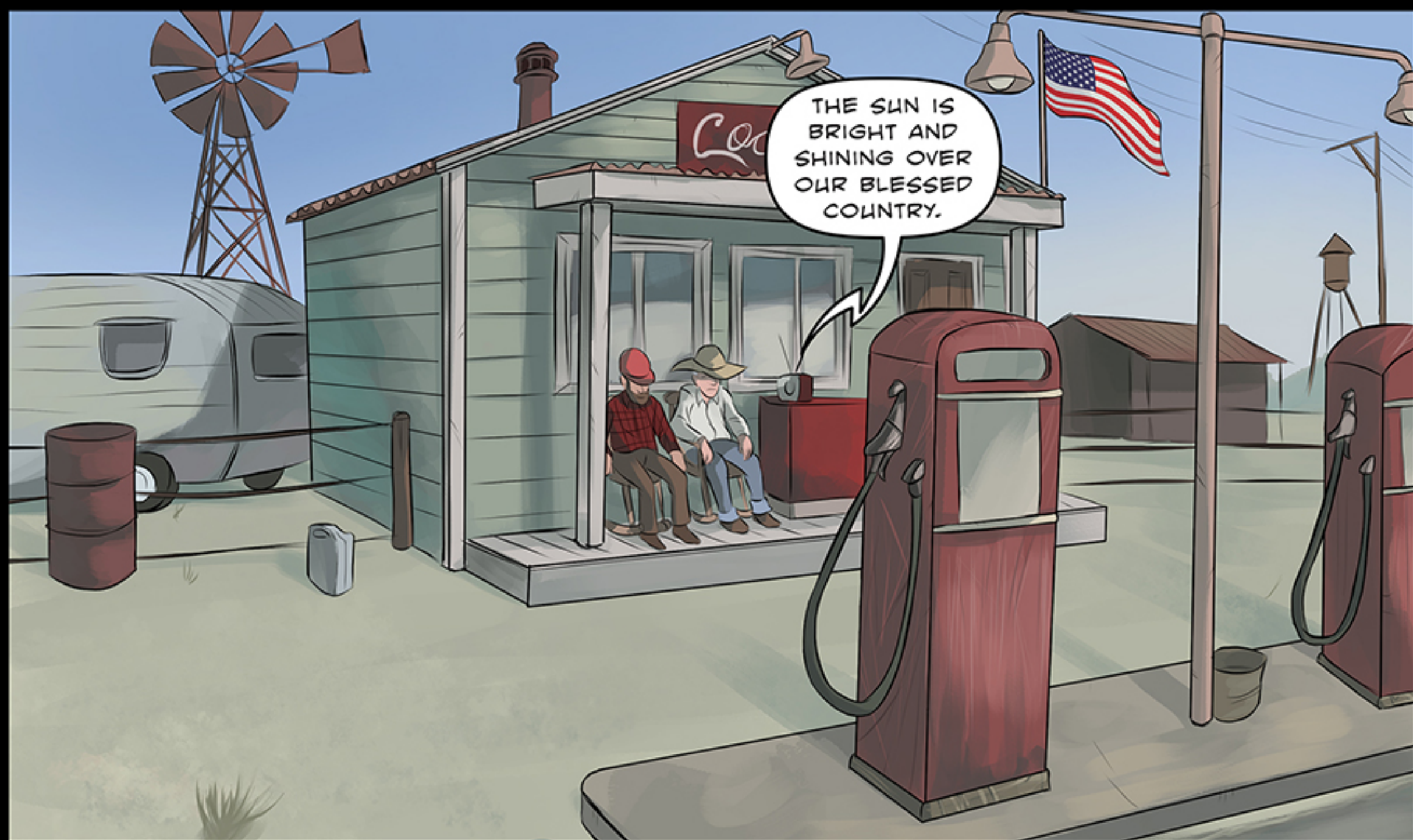
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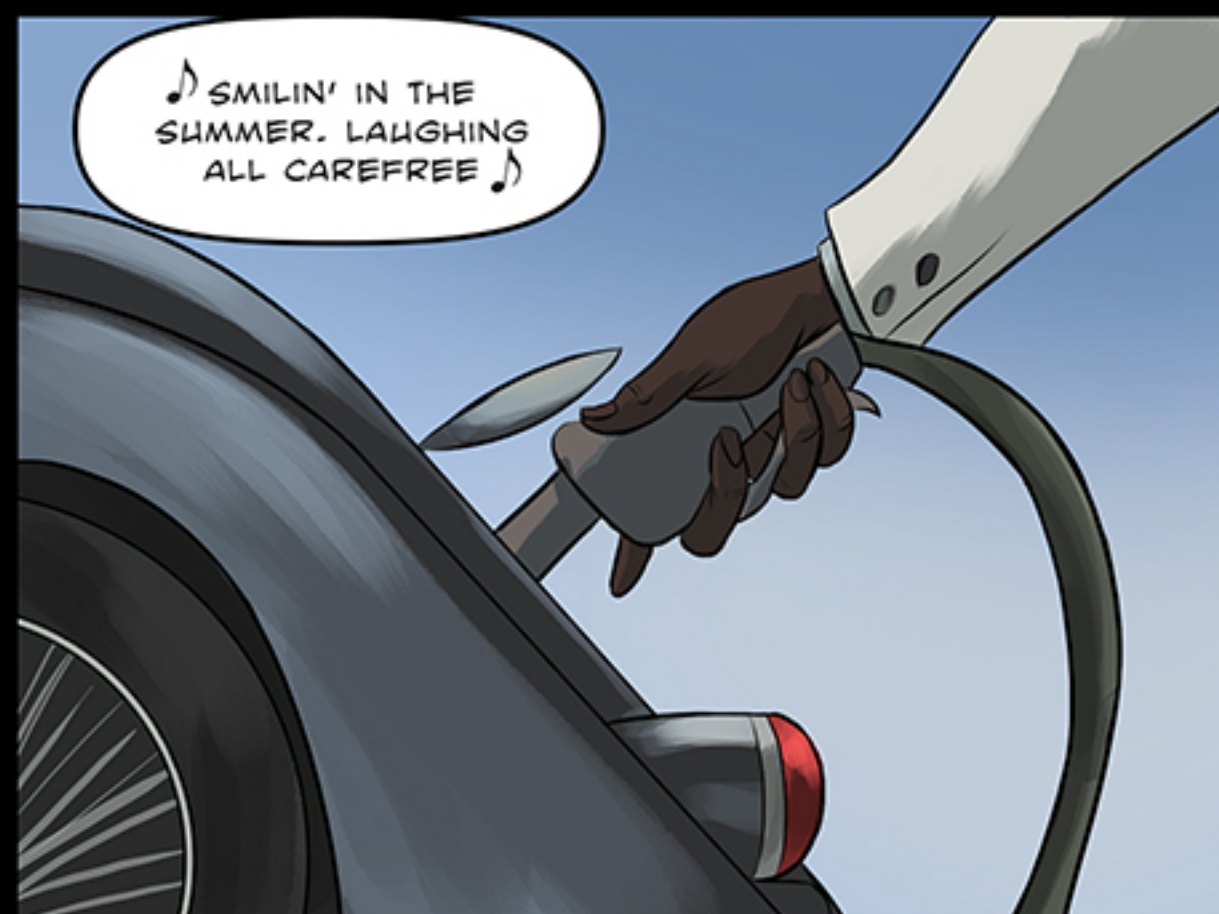
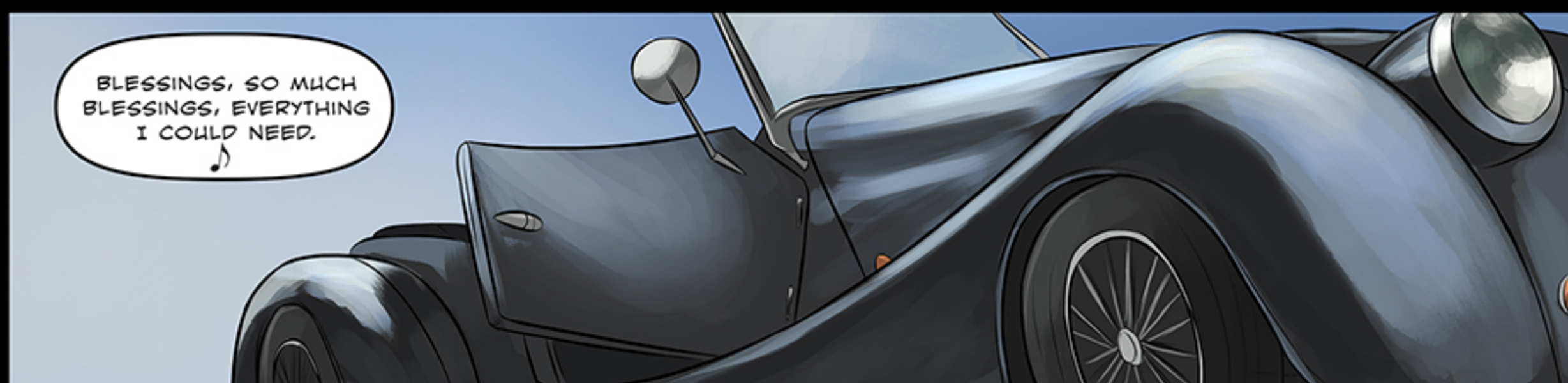


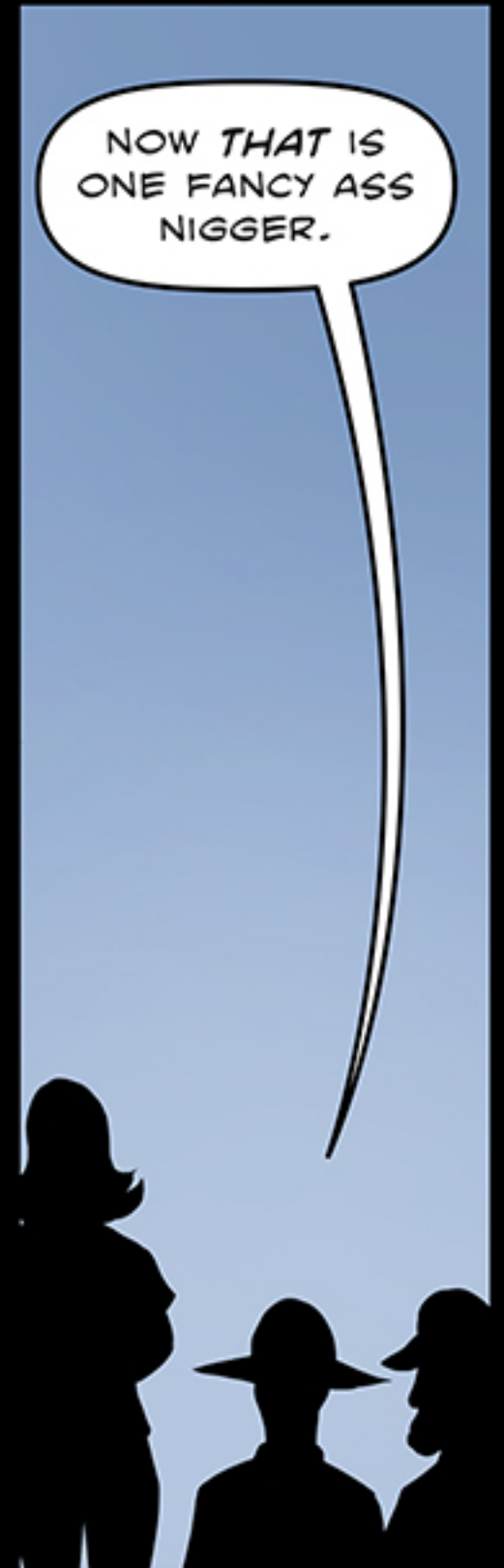
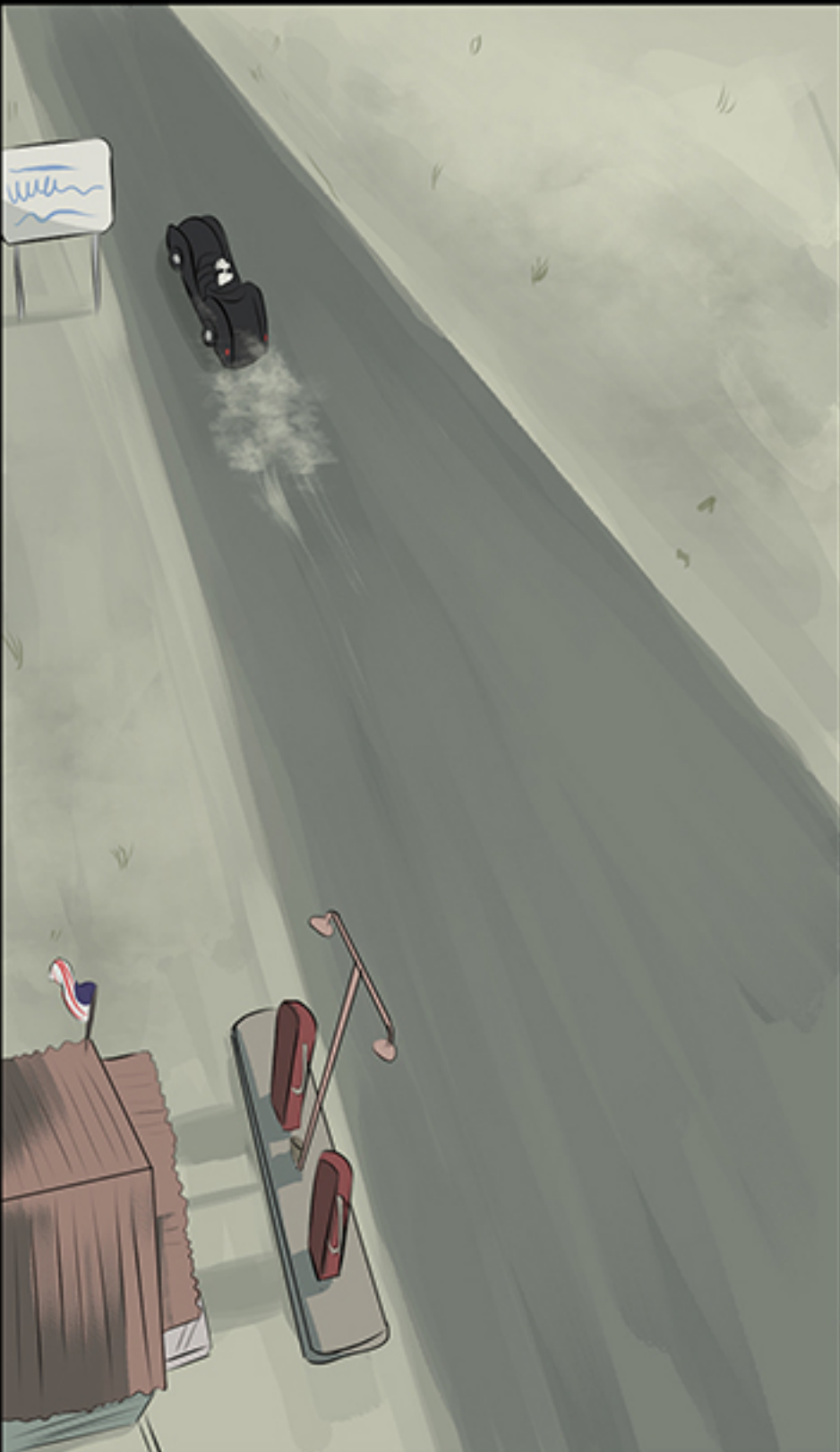
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MY NAME IS
LUCAS DAVIES.

THIS IS ME LOOKING
AT MYSELF IN THE
MIRROR.

I'M TRYING TO WORK
UP THE NERVE TO SLICE
MY THROAT OPEN.

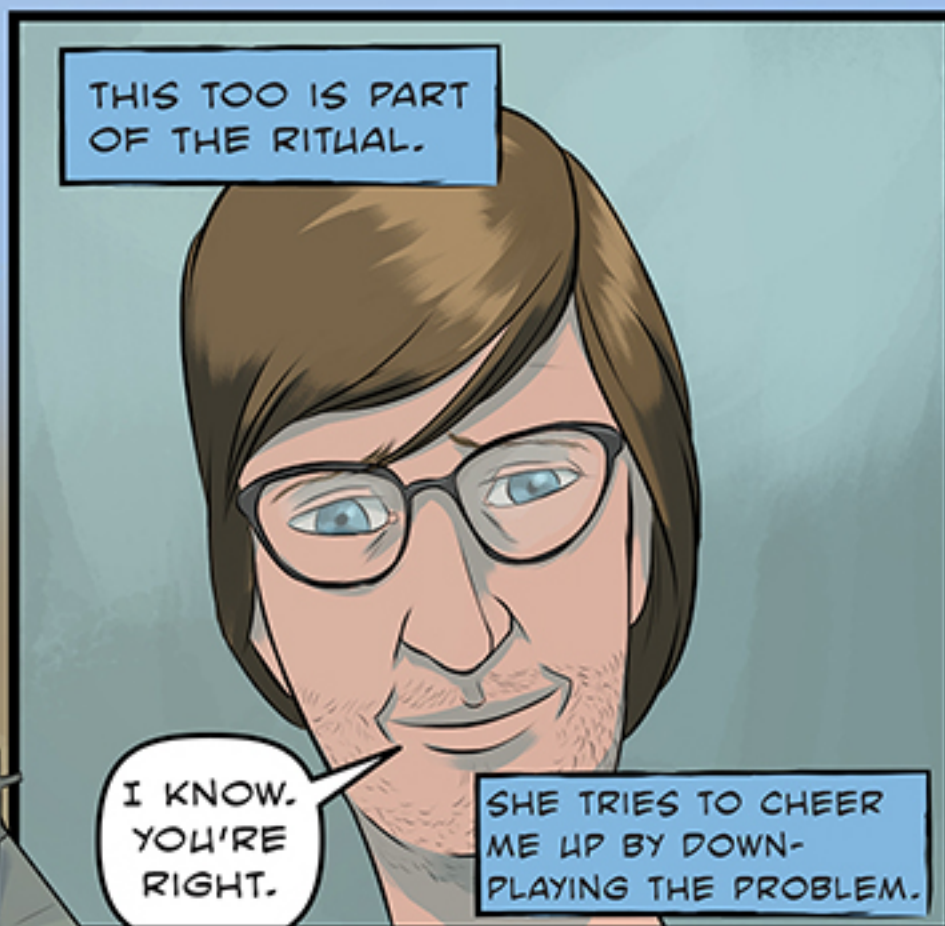
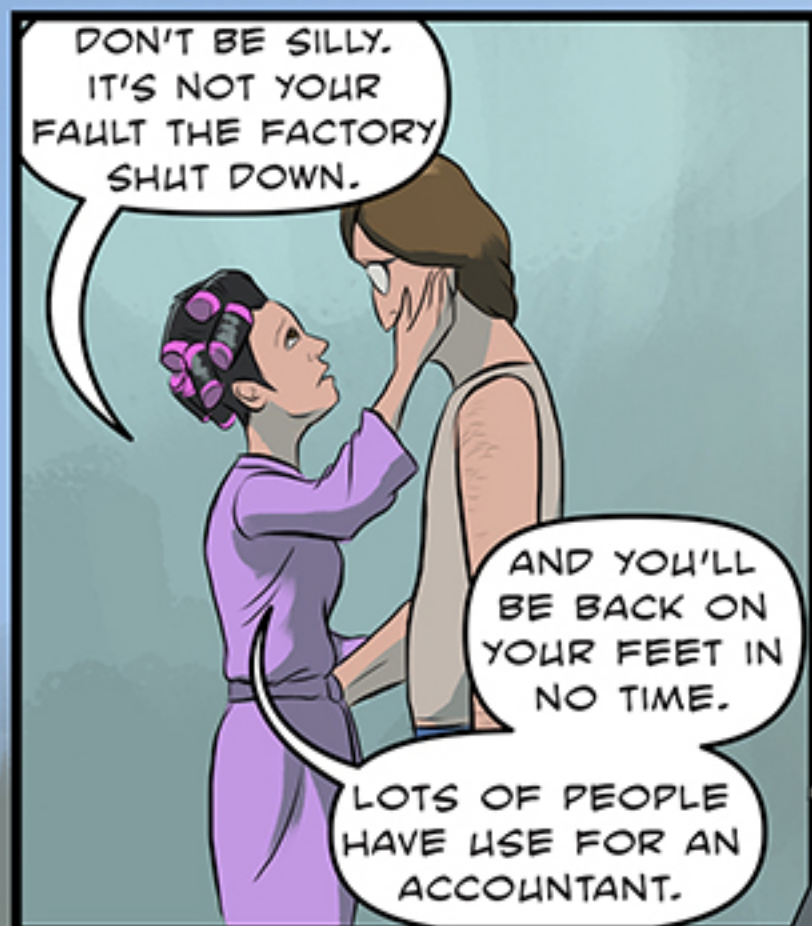
THIS HAS BEEN MY
MORNING RITUAL FOR
SOME TIME NOW.



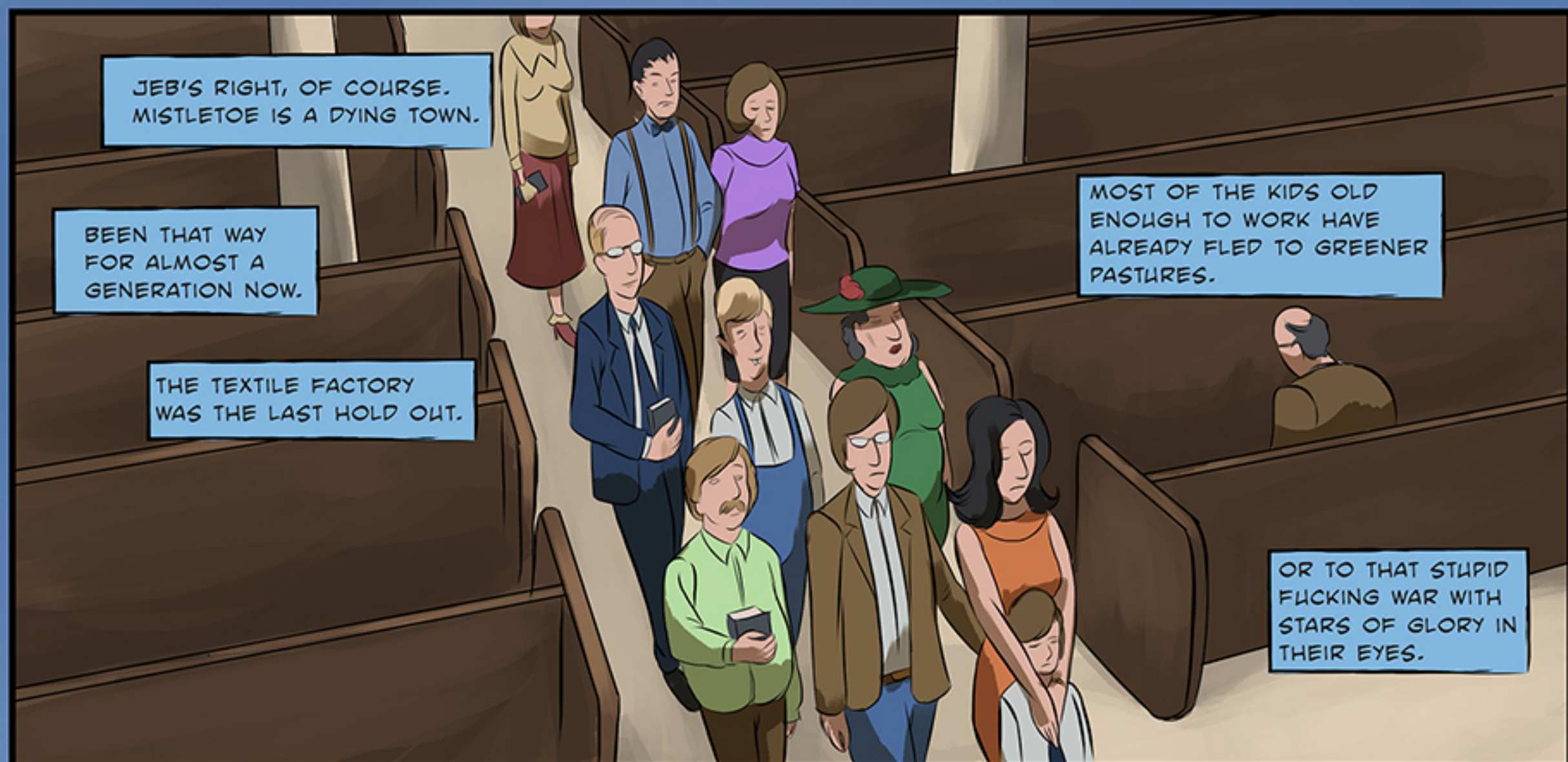
LUCAS!

I NEED TO
GET READY TOO
YA KNOW!

TODAY ISN'T THE DAY
I GUESS.







JEB'S RIGHT, OF COURSE.
MISTLETOE IS A DYING TOWN.

BEEN THAT WAY
FOR ALMOST A
GENERATION NOW.

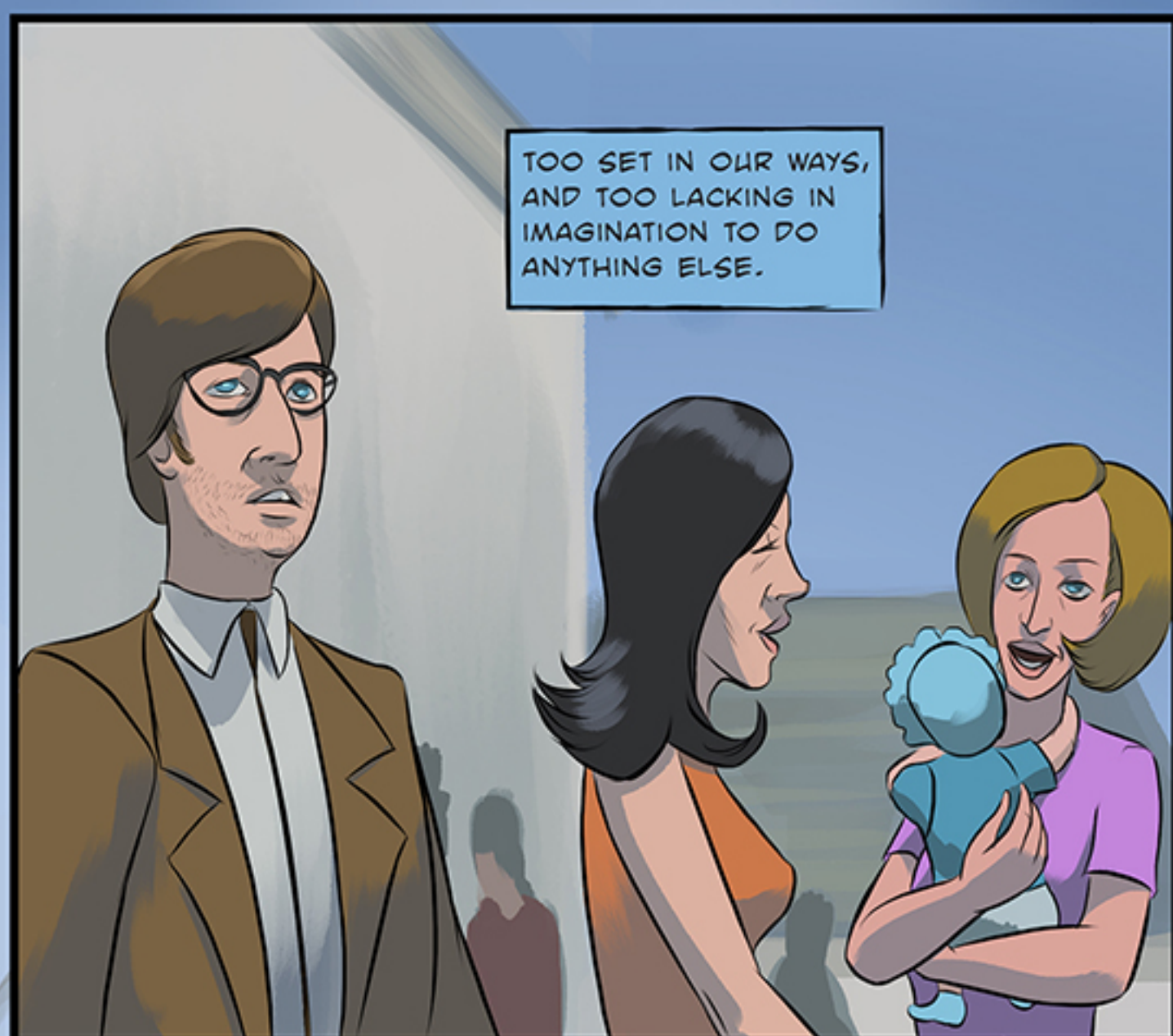
THE TEXTILE FACTORY
WAS THE LAST HOLD OUT.

MOST OF THE KIDS OLD
ENOUGH TO WORK HAVE
ALREADY FLED TO GREENER
PASTURES.

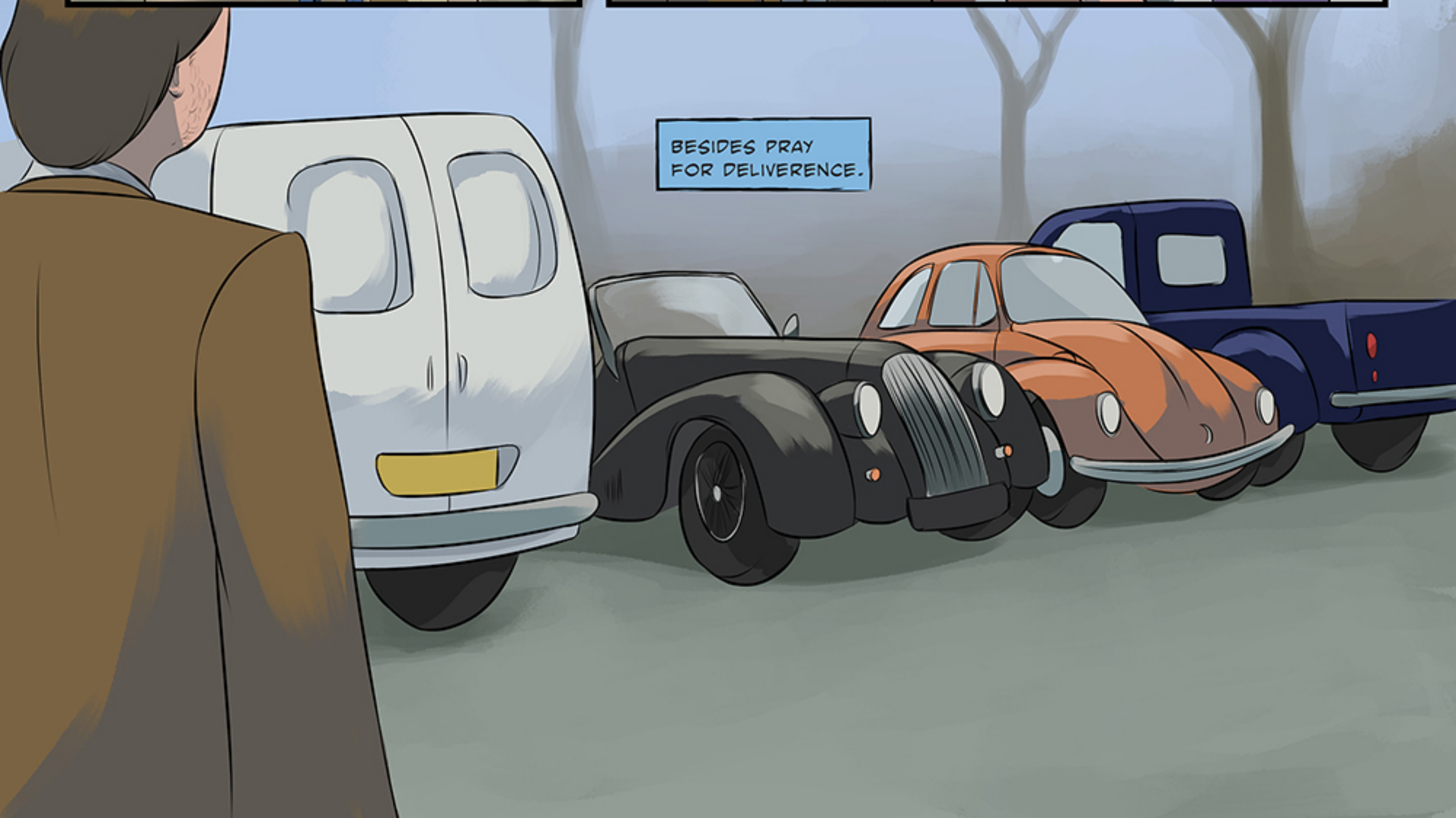
OR TO THAT STUPID
FUCKING WAR WITH
STARS OF GLORY IN
THEIR EYES.



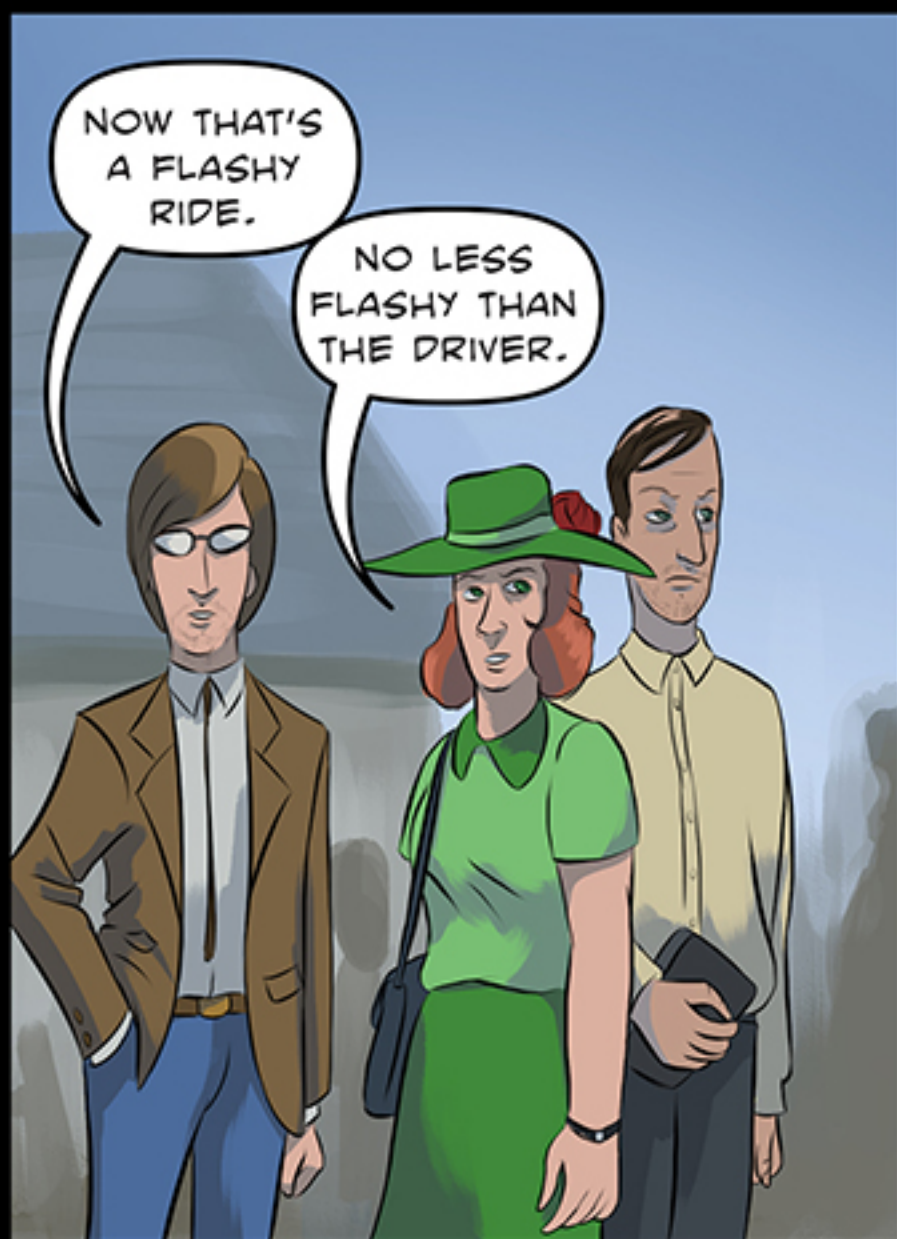
THE REST OF US
LINGER LIKE FROGS
IN BOILING WATER
WHO'VE GOTTEN TOO
USED TO THE GRADUAL
RISE IN HEAT.



TOO SET IN OUR WAYS,
AND TOO LACKING IN
IMAGINATION TO DO
ANYTHING ELSE.



BESIDES PRAY
FOR DELIVERANCE.





I'VE BEEN IN THIS TOWN FOR MY WHOLE LIFE ALMOST.

WHEN I WAS YOUNG I THOUGHT I COULD HELP MAKE SOMETHING OUT OF THIS PLACE.



BUILD SOMETHING I COULD LEAVE FOR THOSE WHO CAME AFTER.



BUT ALL THE SMALL, OLD PLACES ARE DYING, DRAINED OF THEIR LIFE BY THE GROWTH OF THE BIG CITIES.

SUCKED DRY AND LEFT TO ROT IN THE SUN.



AMERICA WAS BUILT FROM TOWNS LIKE THESE.

BUT AMERICA EXISTS SOMEWHERE ELSE NOW. SHE'S ABANDONED US.

IT WAS ONLY A FEW WEEKS LATER WHEN WE FOUND OUT WHY THE COLOURED MAN HAD COME TO OUR TOWN.

THANK YOU FOLKS FOR MAKING IT HERE TONIGHT.

I HAVE SOME PROMISING NEWS TO SHARE WITH Y'ALL.

WE HAVE SOME VISITORS FROM OUT OF TOWN WITH A RATHER INTERESTING OFFER.

I'LL LET THEM EXPLAIN IT FOR YOU THEMSELVES.

I ONLY ASK THAT YOU ALL TAKE THE TIME TO HEAR THEM OUT.

AND CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE HUGE POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITY THIS COULD BE FOR US ALL.

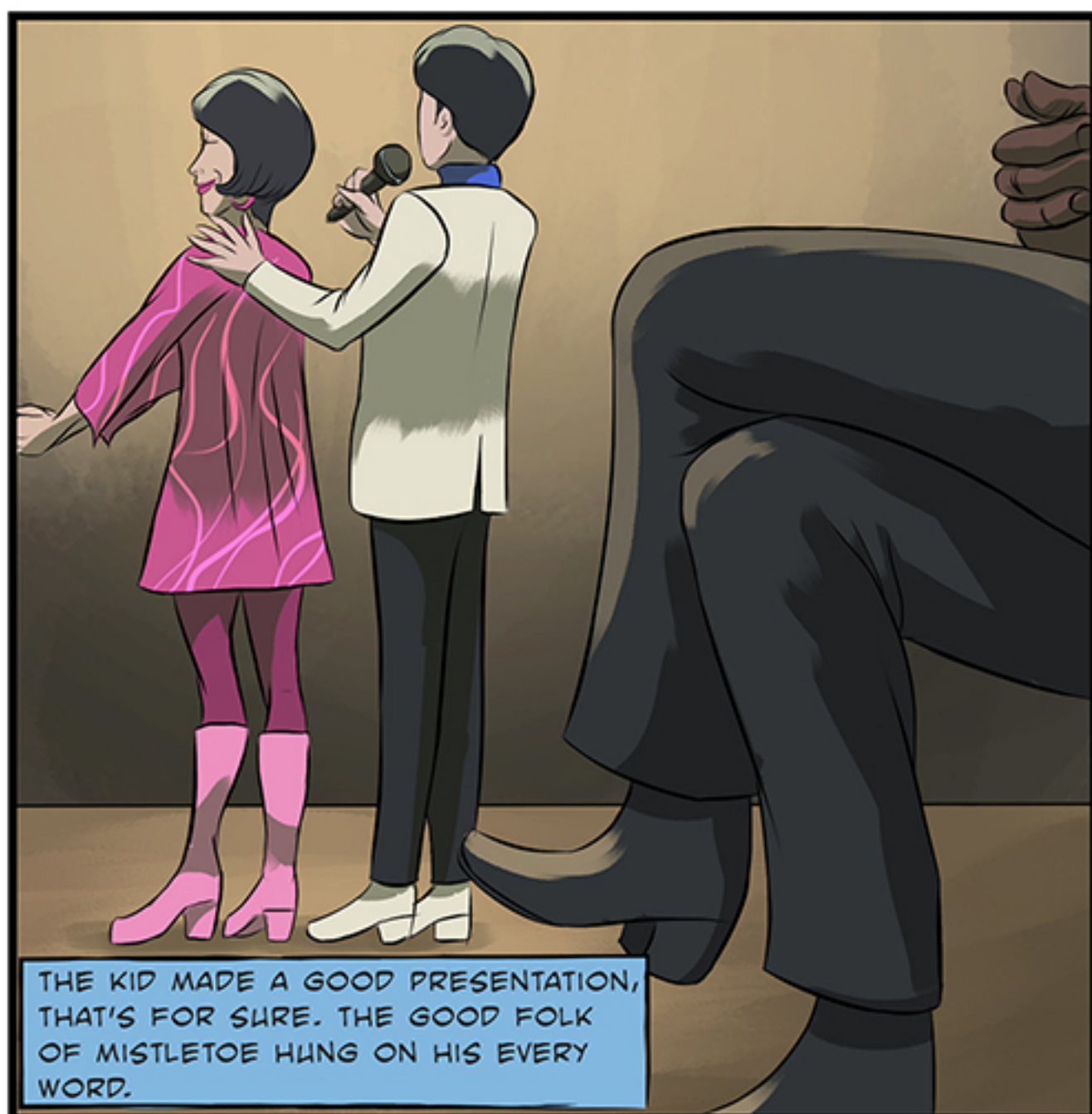
APPARENTLY HE CAME TO SAVE US.

MAYOR WHITEY LURED US HERE WITH LOFTY PROMISES OF SALVATION AND PROSPERITY INCARNATED IN THESE BIG CITY STRANGERS.

NOW I'LL BE HANDING THE FLOOR TO MR. ALEX REEFS OF THE LOGIS CORPORATION.

YOU COULD HEAR A PIN DROP AS THAT IVY LEAGUE-LOOKING KID STEPPED IN FRONT OF THE MIC.





THE KID MADE A GOOD PRESENTATION, THAT'S FOR SURE. THE GOOD FOLK OF MISTLETOE HUNG ON HIS EVERY WORD.



I WAS MORE INTERESTED IN THE OTHER FELLOW.

PERHAPS IT'S BECAUSE I HAD A CITY EDUCATION.

OR JUST THE PROXIMITY TO THE PULSE OF THE MODERN WORLD IN GENERAL GAVE ME A CERTAIN INSIGHT.

BUT I KNEW WITHOUT A SHADOW OF DOUBT WHO WAS TRULY RUNNING THIS SHOW.



HE WAS SMART ENOUGH TO KNOW HIS AUDIENCE WERE SIMPLE FOLK WITH SIMPLE PREJUDICES.

LET THE PRETTY, WHITE KID BE THE FACE OF THE FUTURE HE WAS TRYING TO SELL US.

THE LDD; A HEADSET PROMISING US THE ABILITY TO CONTROL VIRTUAL REALITY LIKE A WAKING DREAM.



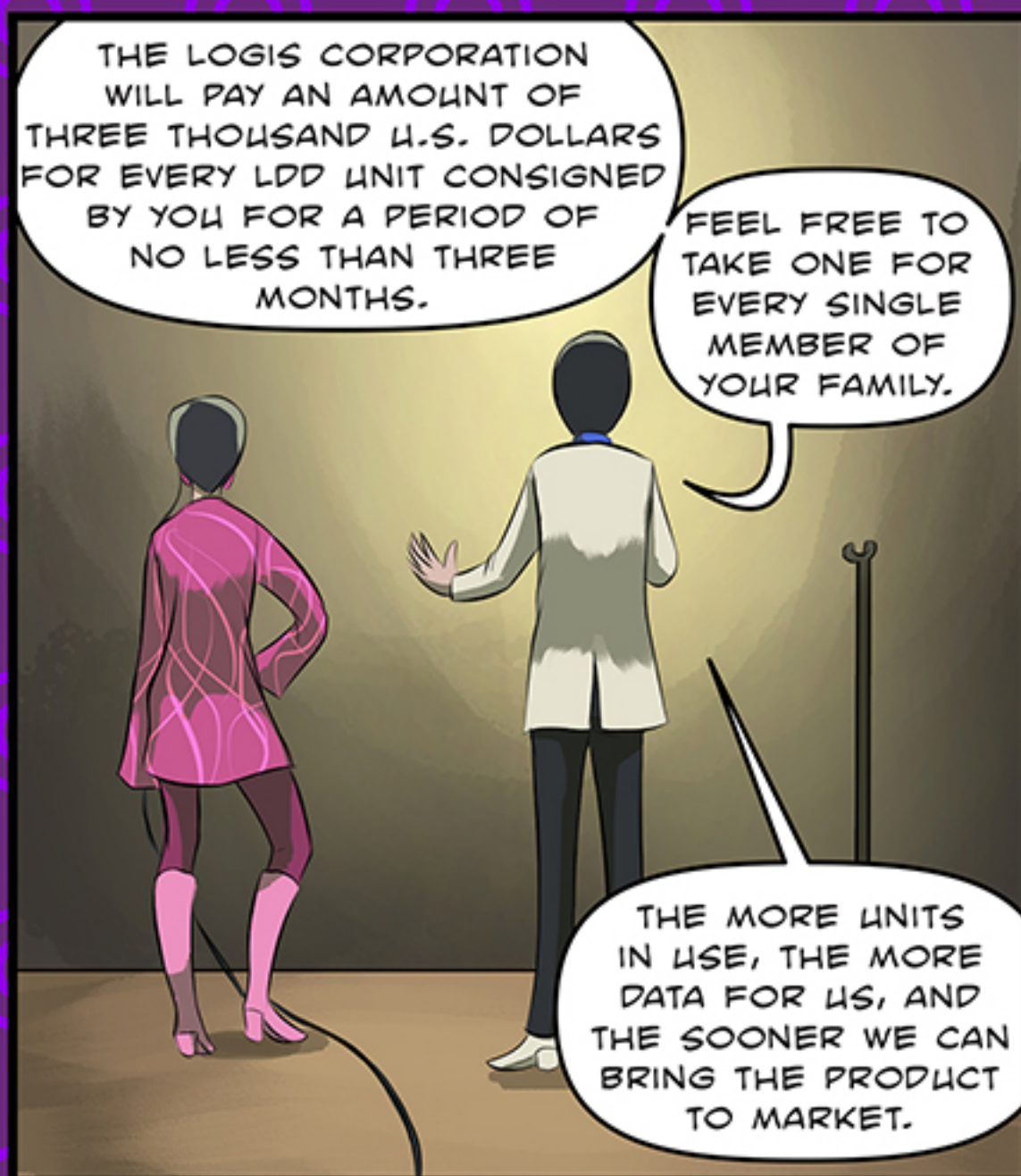
SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING KUBRICK WOULD DREAM UP.

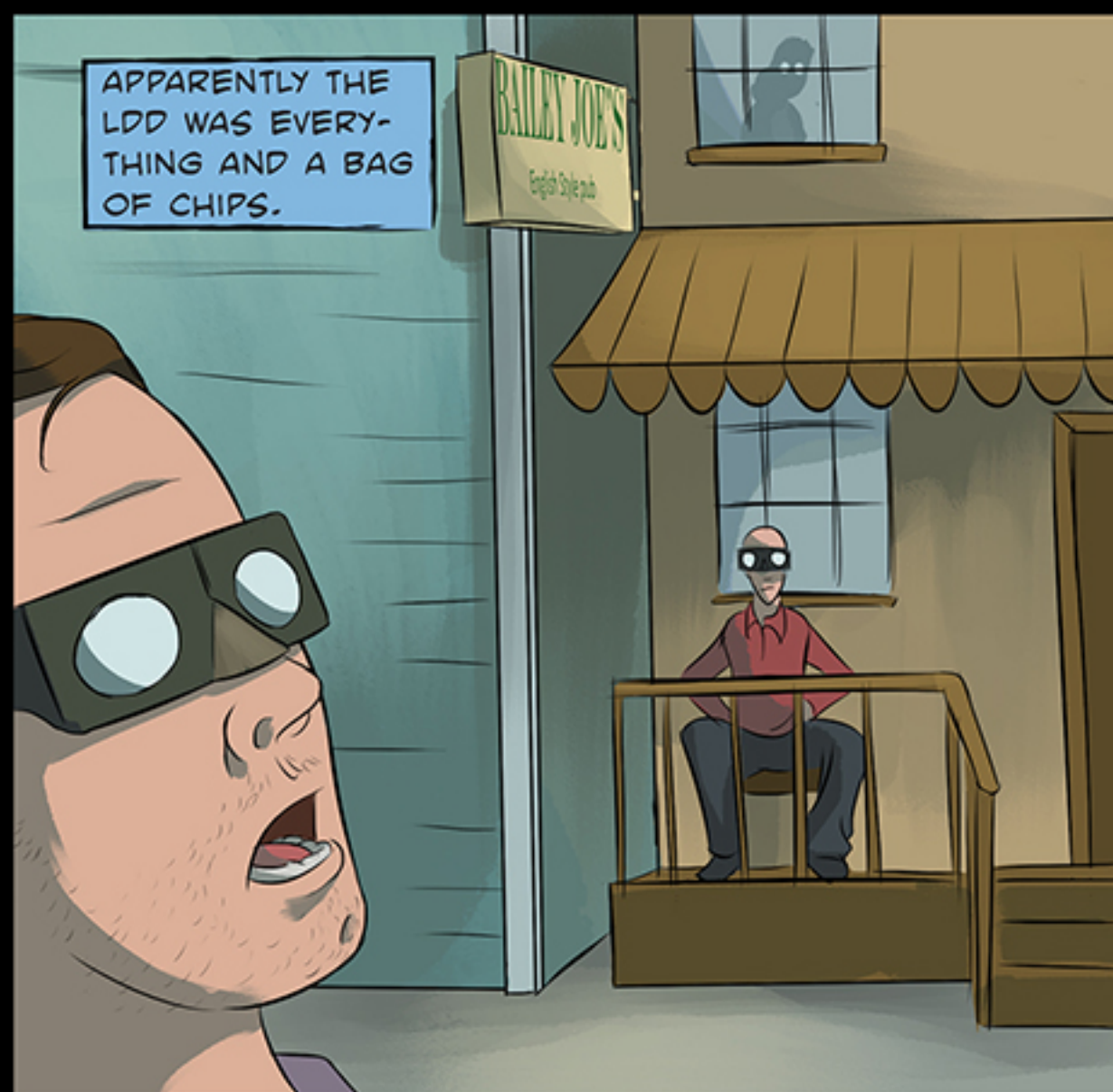
SCIENCE FICTION.

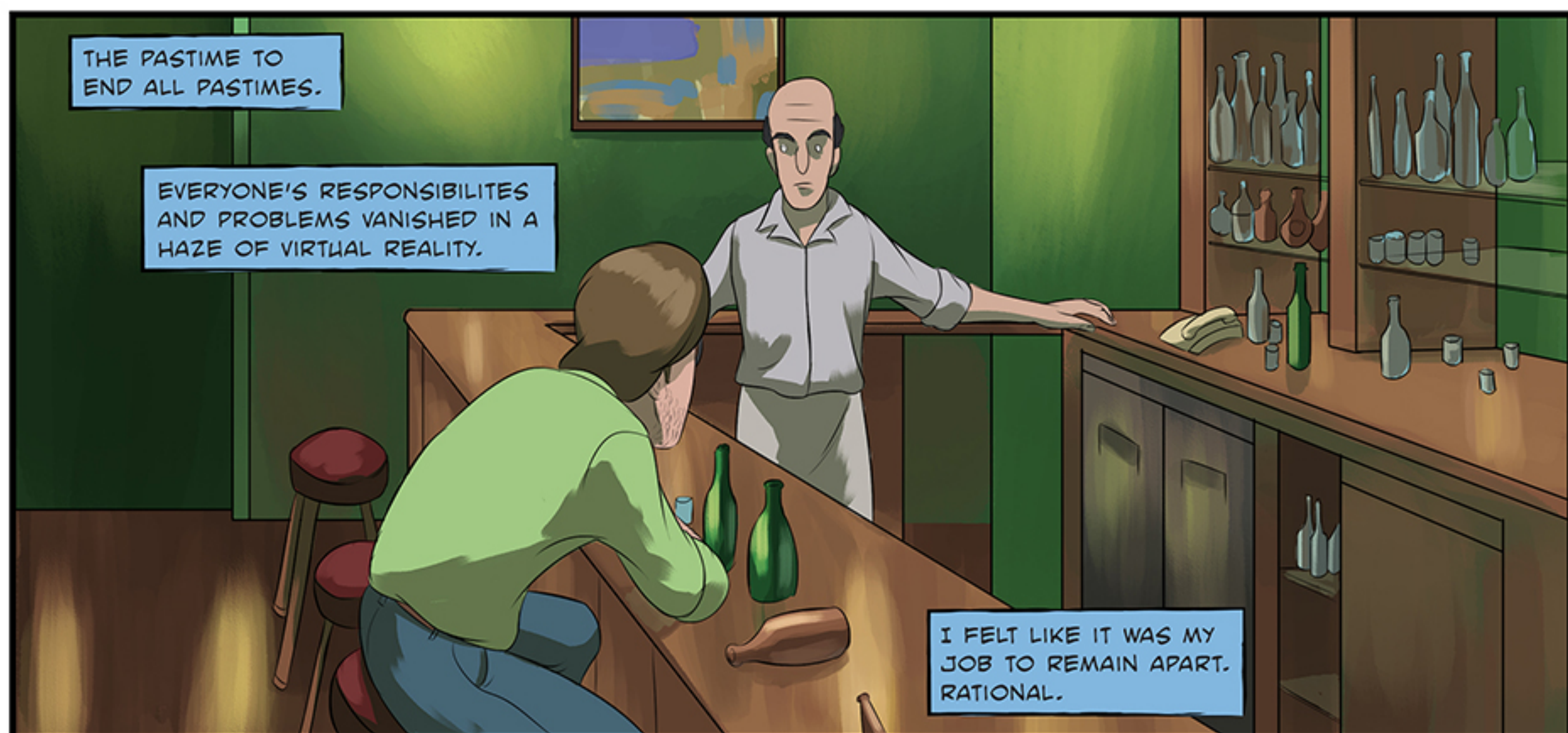


BUT IF IT WERE TRUE...

WHO WOULDN'T WANT TO ESCAPE REALITY?



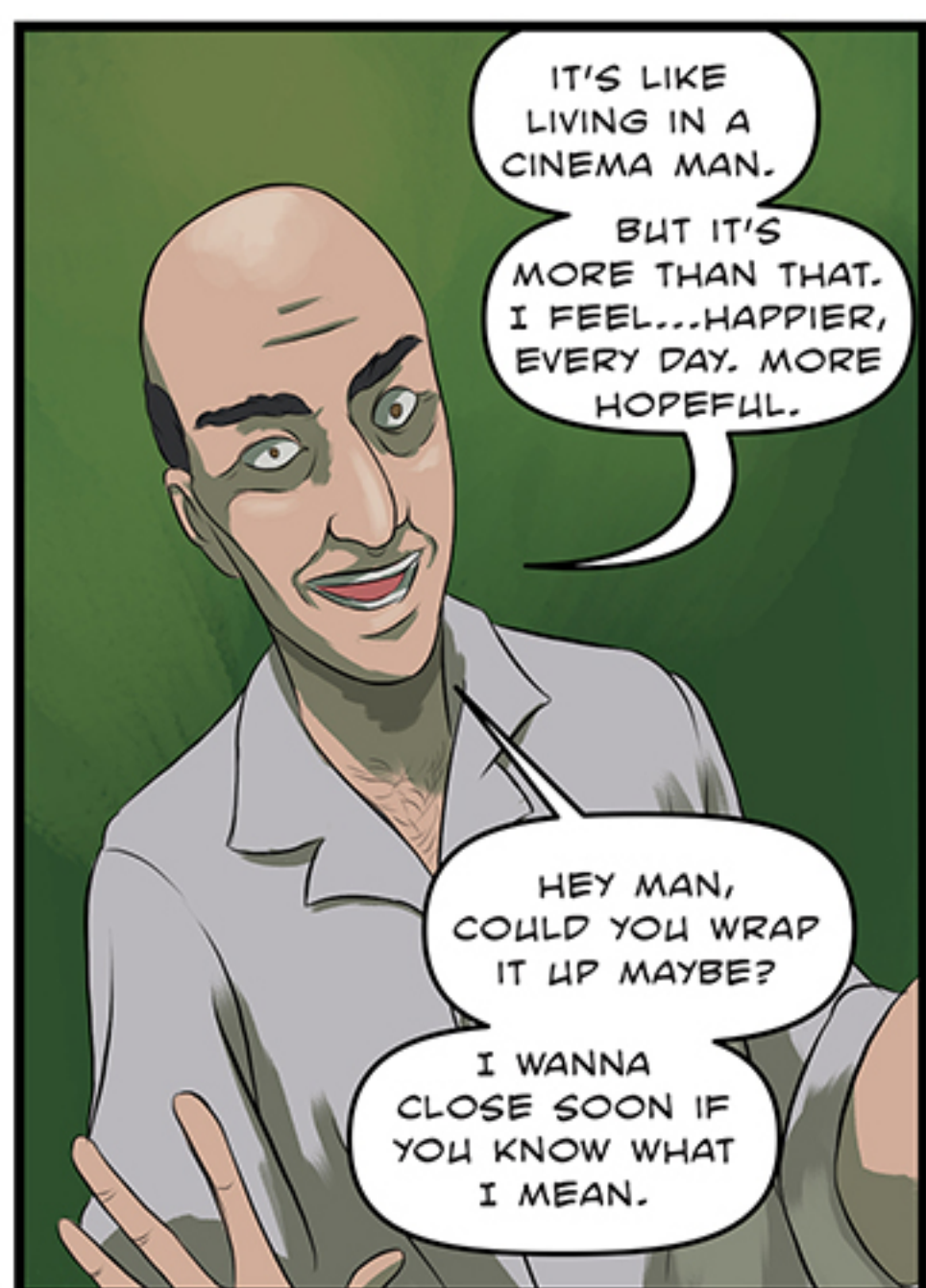




THE PASTIME TO
END ALL PASTIMES.

EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITIES
AND PROBLEMS VANISHED IN A
HAZE OF VIRTUAL REALITY.

I FELT LIKE IT WAS MY
JOB TO REMAIN APART.
RATIONAL.



IT'S LIKE
LIVING IN A
CINEMA MAN.
BUT IT'S
MORE THAN THAT.
I FEEL...HAPPIER,
EVERY DAY. MORE
HOPEFUL.

HEY MAN,
COULD YOU WRAP
IT UP MAYBE?

I WANNA
CLOSE SOON IF
YOU KNOW WHAT
I MEAN.

I TOLD MYSELF THAT THESE
PEOPLE, THE LOGIS COULD
NOT BE TRUSTED.

THAT I HAD TO BE THERE
TO PICK UP THE PIECES
FOR MY TOWN.

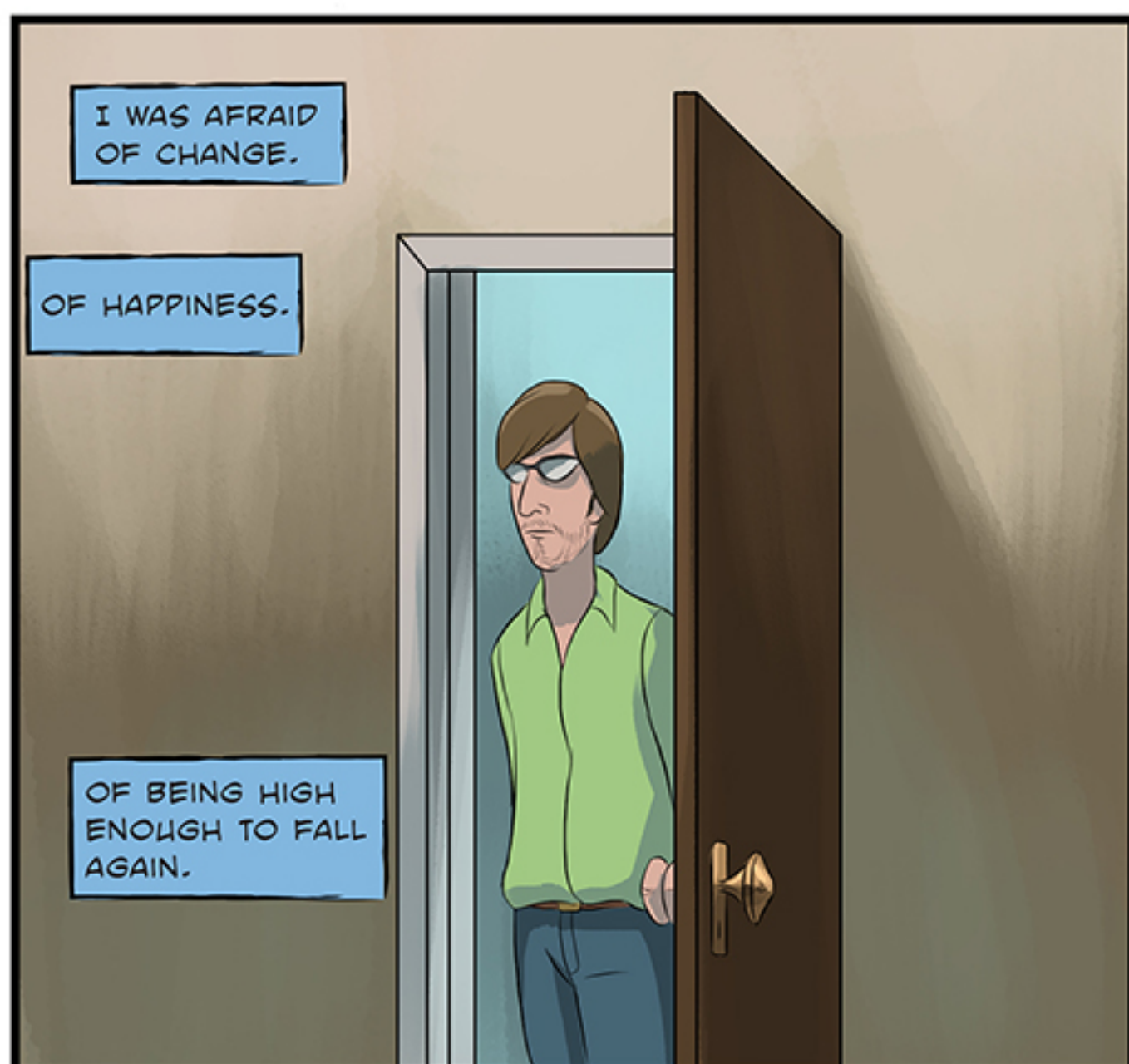


I CAN FREELY ADMIT
NOW THAT THERE WAS
ONLY ONE REAL REASON
WHY I DIDN'T IMMEDIATELY
HOP ONBOARD THE LDD
TRAIN TO HAPPINESS.



MISERY AND DESPAIR HAD
BECOME A COMFORTABLE
BLANKET FOR ME.

IT HAD BECOME
HOME.



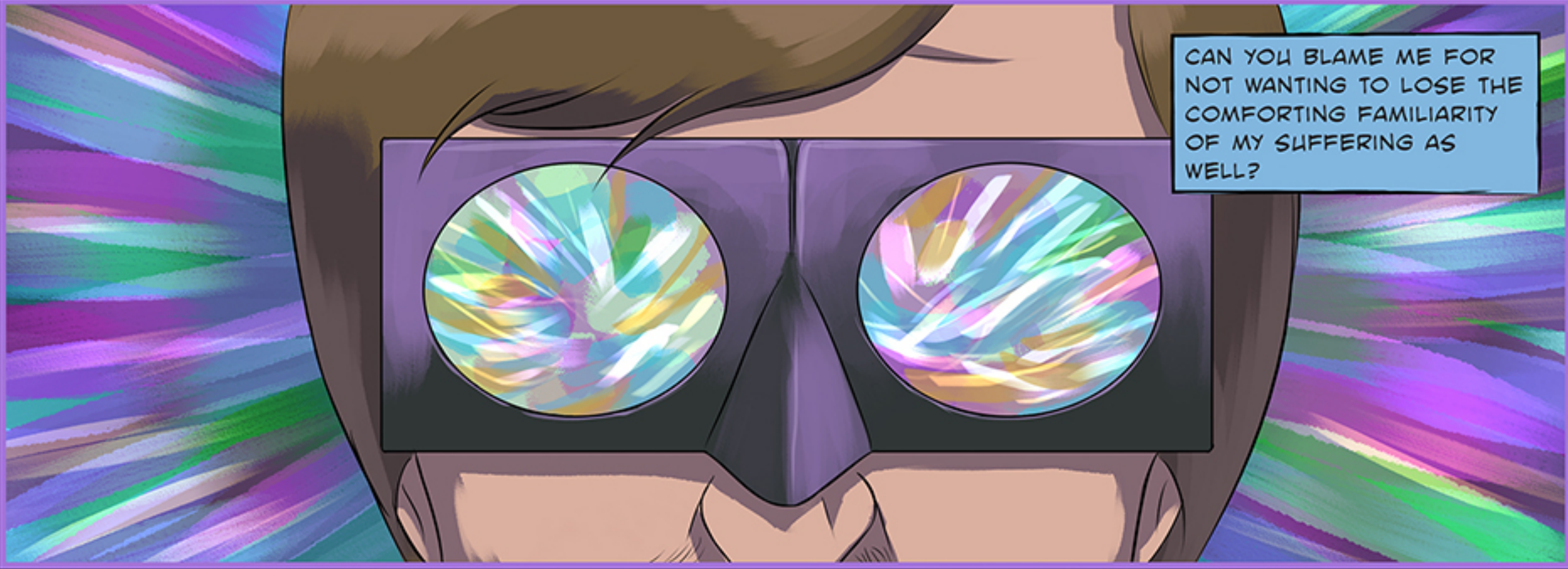
I WAS AFRAID
OF CHANGE.

OF HAPPINESS.

OF BEING HIGH
ENOUGH TO FALL
AGAIN.

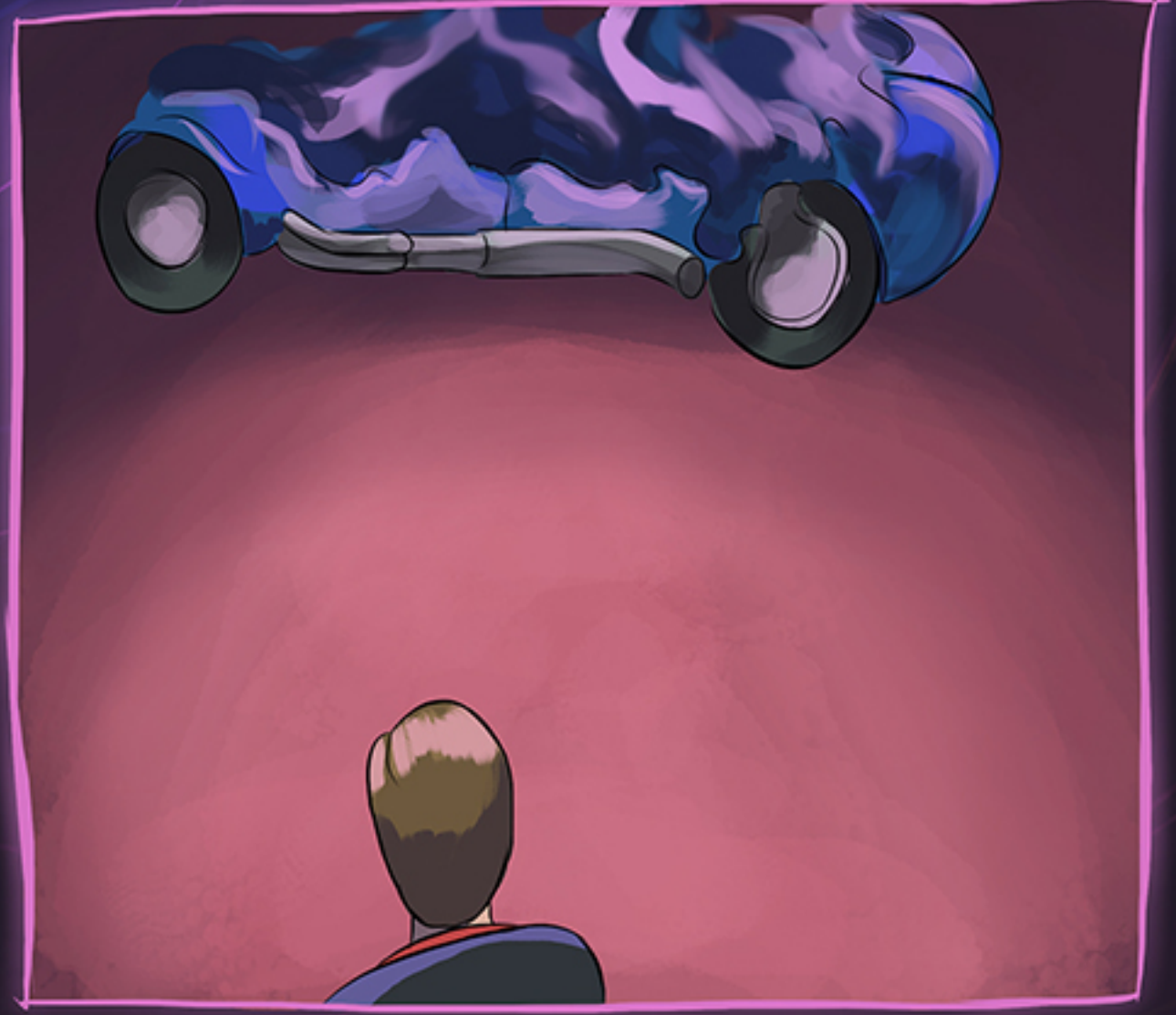


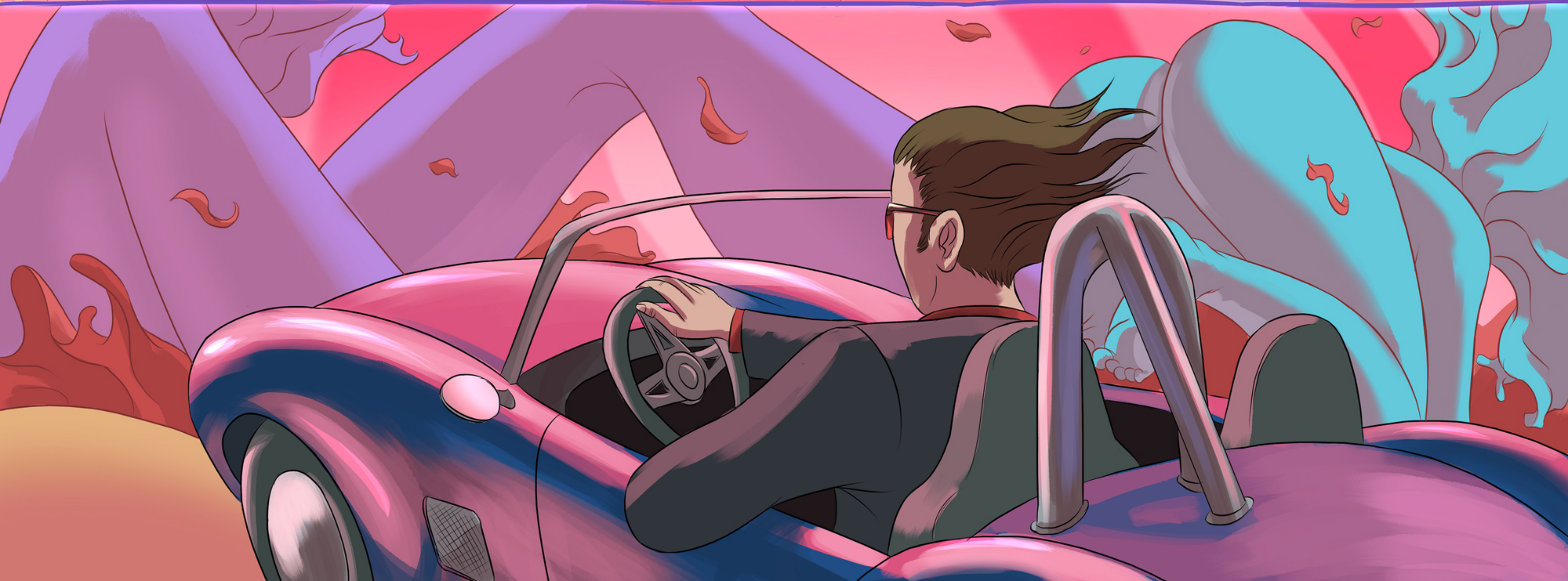
I'D LOST CONTROL
OF EVERYTHING ELSE
IN MY LIFE.



CAN YOU BLAME ME FOR
NOT WANTING TO LOSE THE
COMFORTING FAMILIARITY
OF MY SUFFERING AS
WELL?





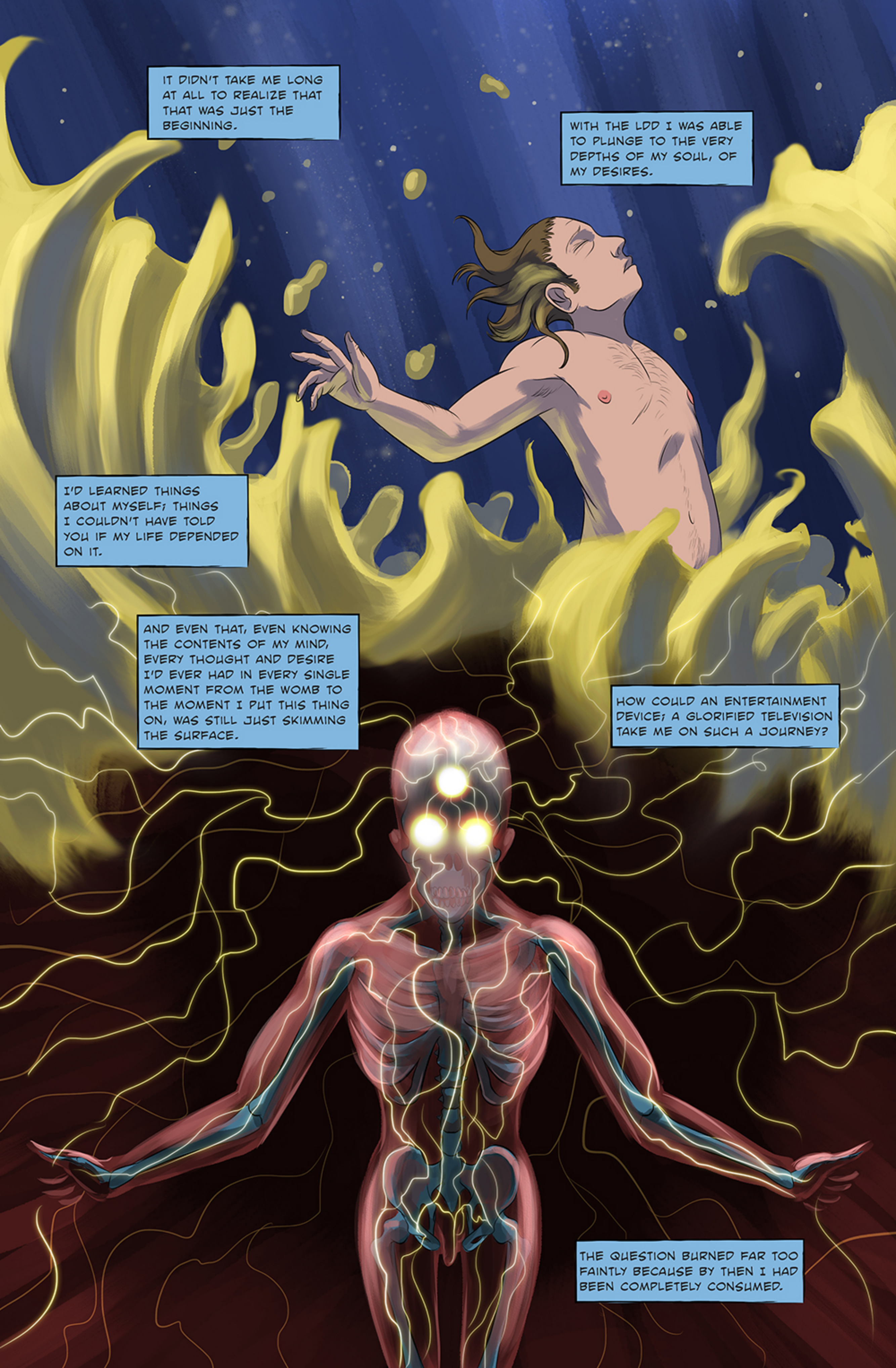




WAS THIS
MY MIND?

WAS THIS WHAT
I WAS LOOKING
FOR?



A man with long brown hair, shirtless, is floating in a dark blue space. He has his eyes closed and a serene expression, with his arms outstretched. Large, billowing waves of yellow energy or light surround him. The background is dark blue with some small yellow particles.

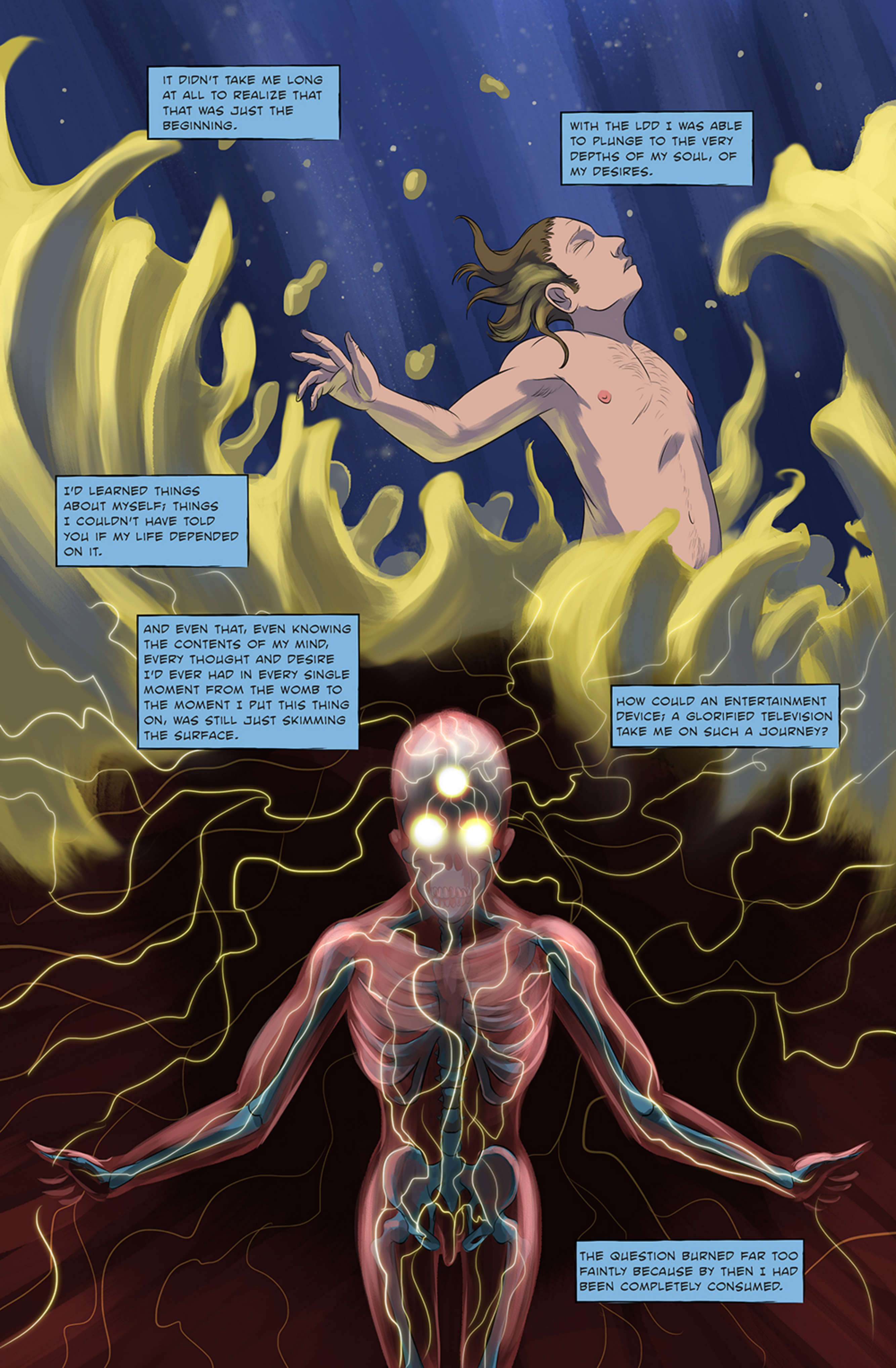
IT DIDN'T TAKE ME LONG
AT ALL TO REALIZE THAT
THAT WAS JUST THE
BEGINNING.

WITH THE LDD I WAS ABLE
TO PLUNGE TO THE VERY
DEPTHS OF MY SOUL, OF
MY DESIRES.

I'D LEARNED THINGS
ABOUT MYSELF; THINGS
I COULDN'T HAVE TOLD
YOU IF MY LIFE DEPENDED
ON IT.

AND EVEN THAT, EVEN KNOWING
THE CONTENTS OF MY MIND,
EVERY THOUGHT AND DESIRE
I'D EVER HAD IN EVERY SINGLE
MOMENT FROM THE WOMB TO
THE MOMENT I PUT THIS THING
ON, WAS STILL JUST SKIMMING
THE SURFACE.

HOW COULD AN ENTERTAINMENT
DEVICE; A GLORIFIED TELEVISION
TAKE ME ON SUCH A JOURNEY?

A man's body is shown from the waist up, with his arms outstretched. His skin is a reddish-pink color, and his internal organs and skeleton are visible. He is surrounded by a complex network of glowing yellow energy lines that flow through his body and the surrounding space. The background is dark red with some yellow energy waves.

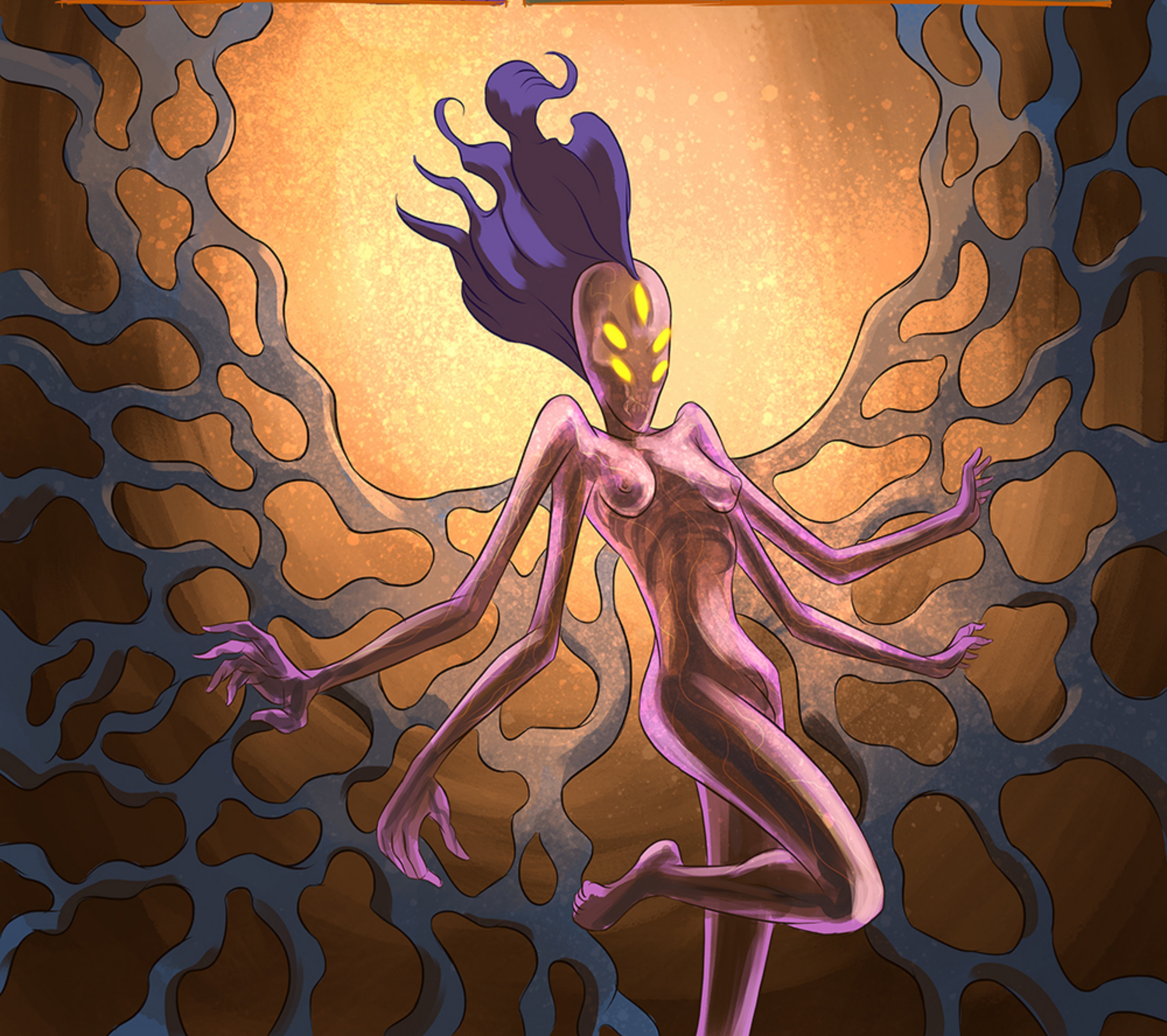
THE QUESTION BURNED FAR TOO
FAINTLY BECAUSE BY THEN I HAD
BEEN COMPLETELY CONSUMED.



THE NEXT STEP IS CONNECTION.
THE WALLS SEPARATING OUR
CONSCIOUSNESS ARE LIKE
PAPER...



...SCARCELY THERE
AT ALL..

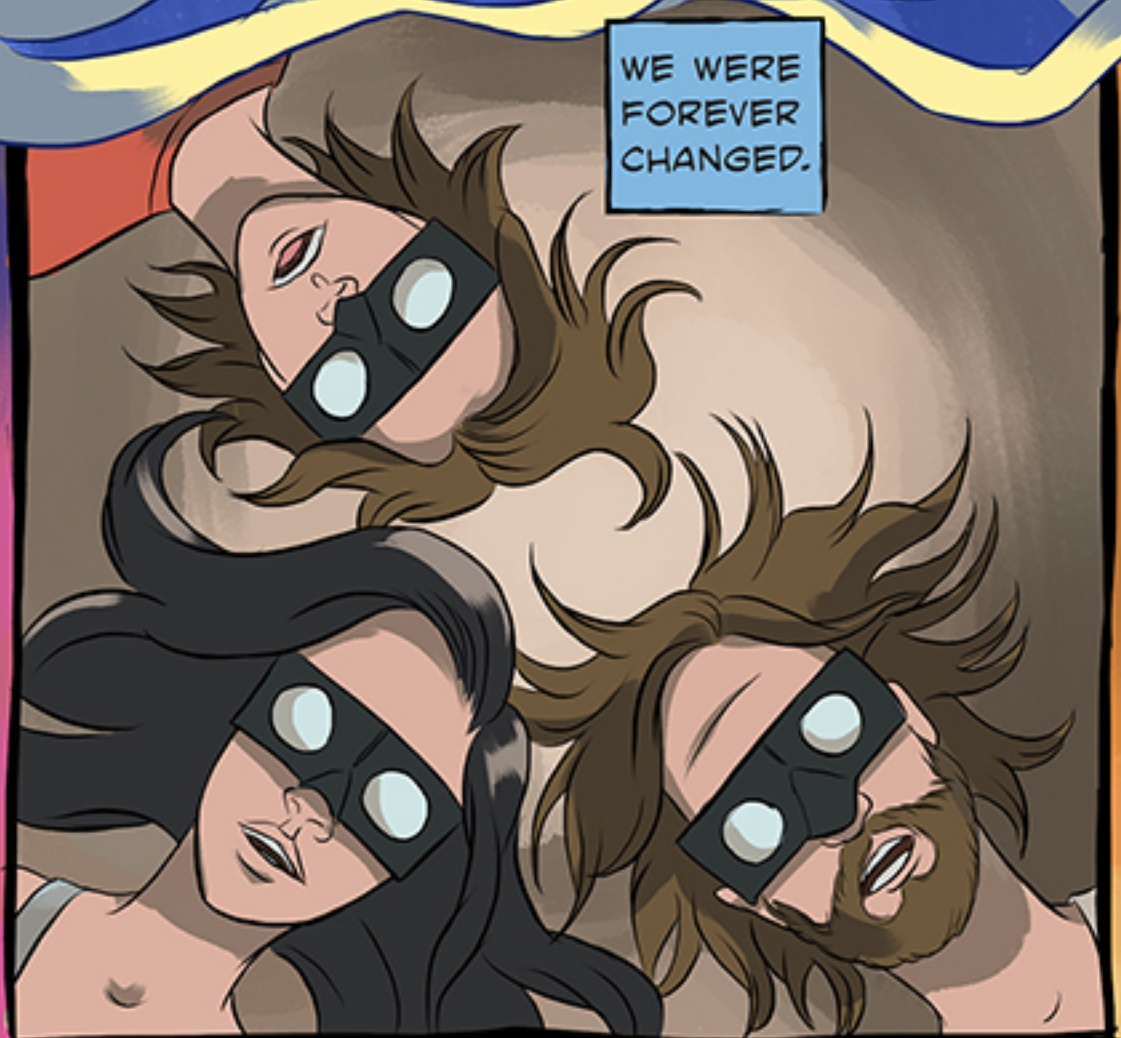




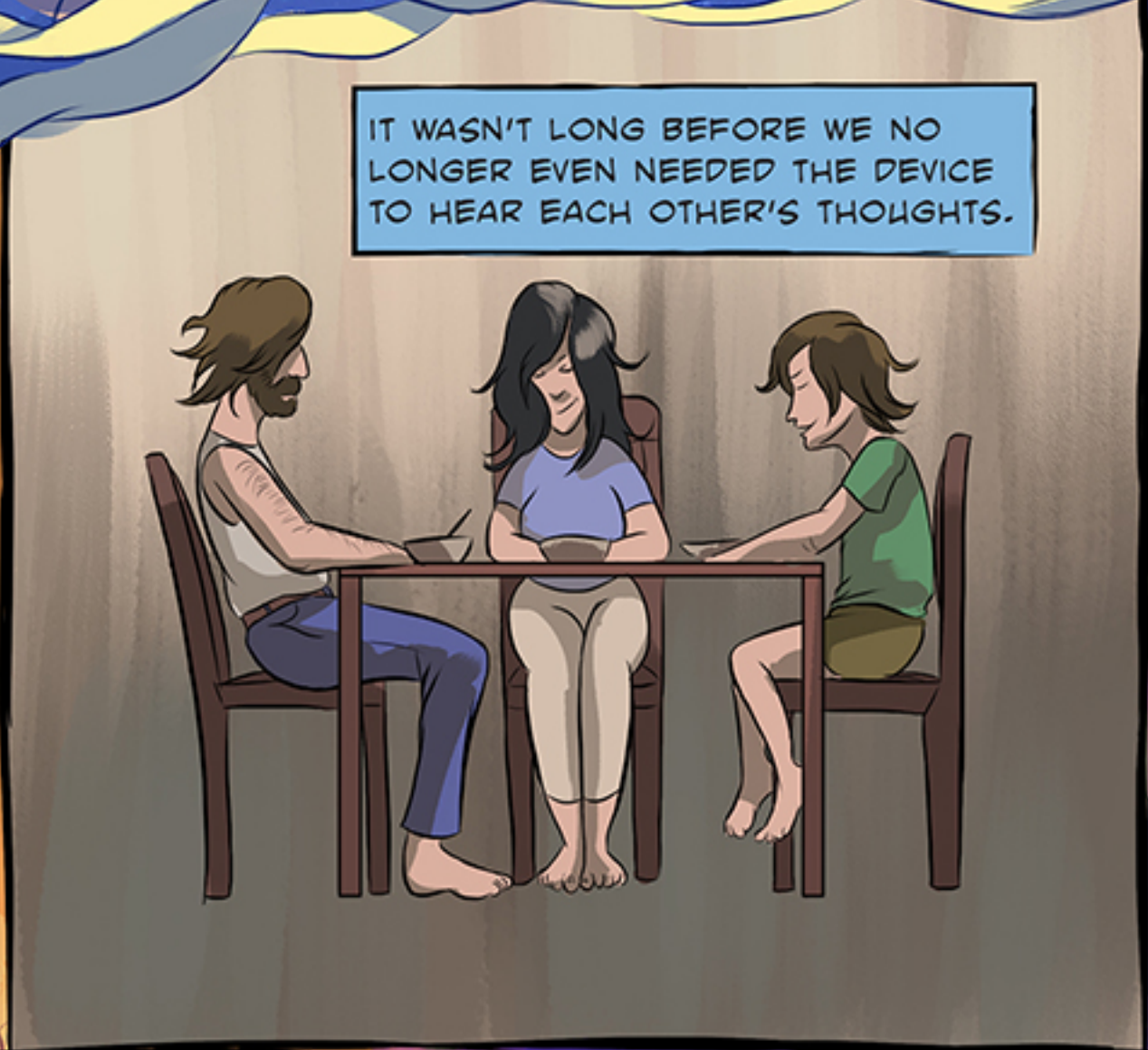
CARLA AND I, WE HAD
A SEX LIFE AGAIN.

A LOVE LIFE.

THE LDD AND ITS ABILITY
TO ALLOW US TO TRULY
SEE OURSELVES GAVE
US THAT.



WE WERE
FOREVER
CHANGED.



IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE WE NO
LONGER EVEN NEEDED THE DEVICE
TO HEAR EACH OTHER'S THOUGHTS.



EGO? IDENTITY? THESE
ARE JUST DISTRACTIONS;
CHEAP ILLUSIONS TO KEEP
US FROM REMEMBERING
THE OLDEST TRUTH.

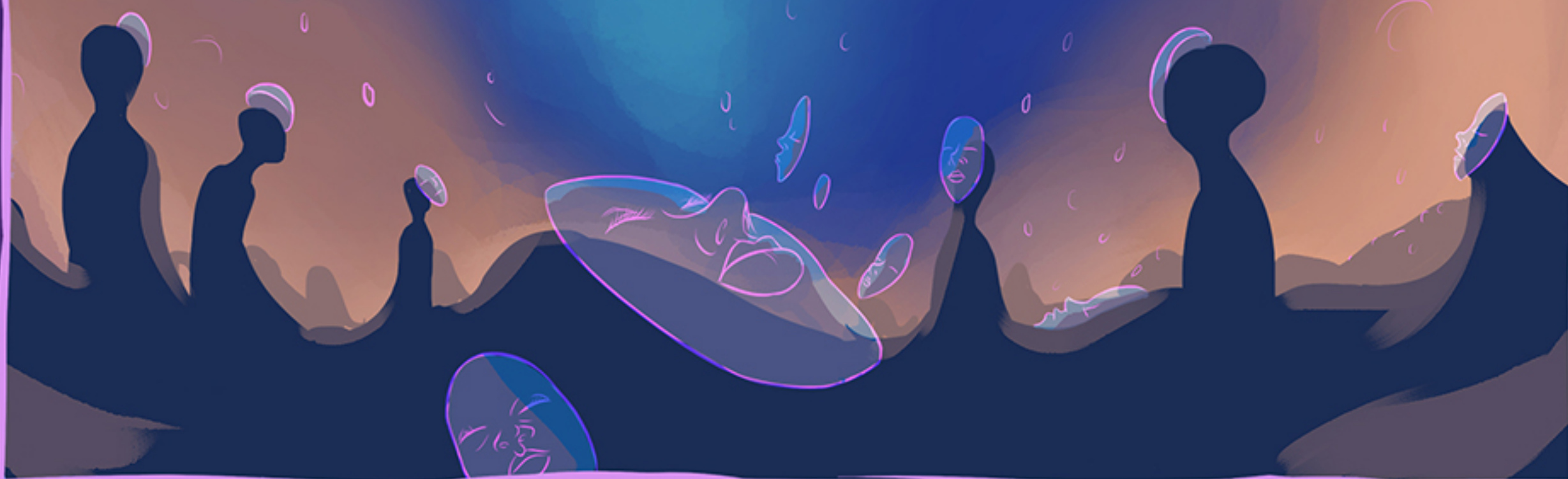


WE ARE
ALL ONE.

THIS IS THE
GREAT SECRET.



THE BOUNDARIES HAD
BEEN BREACHED. WE
WERE ABLE TO SEE
INTO THE HEARTS AND
MINDS OF ALL OUR
FELLOW TOWNSPEOPLE.

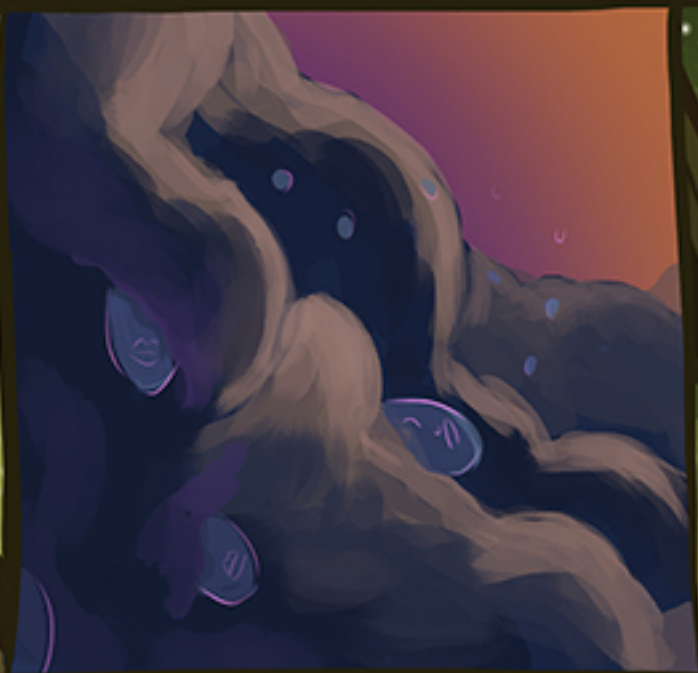


AND THEY
COULD SEE
US.





WE HAD TRANSCENDED
OUR THOUGHTS, OUR
DREAMS, OUR HUMANITY
ITSELF.



AND DISCOVERED THAT
WE WERE GOD.

IT WAS A TUESDAY I
THINK. I CAN'T REALLY
SAY HOW MUCH TIME
HAD PASSED.





THAT WAS THE DAY WE
DISCOVERED THERE WAS
A PRICE FOR ULTIMATE
KNOWLEDGE.

ED ROGAN'S LOWER
JAW VANISHED WITHOUT
A TRACE.

NO ONE COULD BEAR THE
THOUGHT OF GOING BACK
TO THE EXISTENCES WE
HAD BEFORE.

OUR FIRST REACTION
WAS, OF COURSE, DENIAL.

NO ONE WANTED TO
THINK THAT OUR
WONDERFUL NEW
LIVES CARRIED CON-
SEQUENCES

THE EXCUSES AND
FACILE ARGUMENTS
POURED IN LIKE
WATER.

COULD YOU BLAME US?
ED WAS JUST ONE
INCIDENT.

UNTIL IT WASN'T...

OVER THE WEEKS
MORE THINGS
WENT 'MISSING'.

IRREPLACEABLE
THINGS.

LOGIS NEVER RETURNED
OUR CALLS. THEY HAD
ABANDONED US.

LIMBS, ORGANS, PIECES
OF OURSELVES BEYOND
THE PHYSICAL.

WHATEVER THE LDD HAD
EXPOSED US TO WAS
TAKING ITS TOLL IN THE
STRANGEST WAY POSSIBLE.

IT TOOK LONGER THAN IT
SHOULD HAVE BUT OUR
BUBBLE OF DENIAL EVEN-
TUALLY BURST.

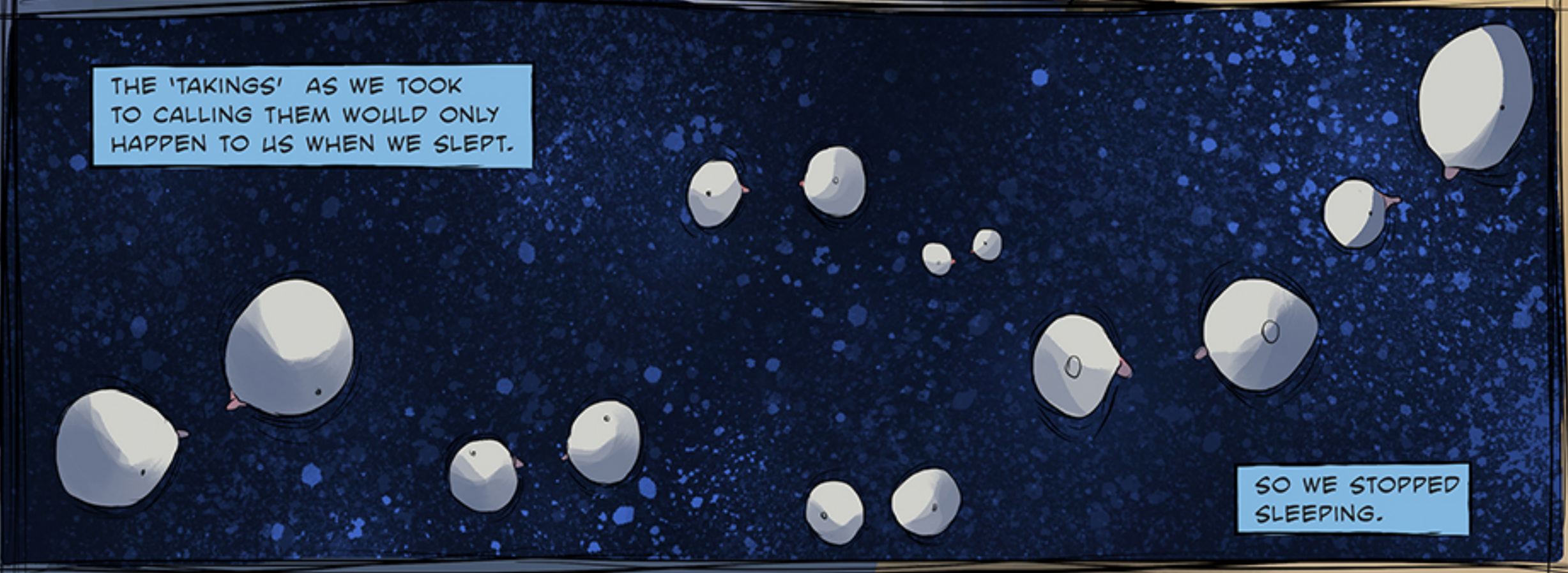




BUT IT DIDN'T
MATTER.

I GUESS YOU CAN'T
UN-EAT THE FORBIDDEN
FRUIT.

IN RETROSPECT I
THINK CARLA WAS
ONE OF THE
LUCKY ONES.



THE 'TAKINGS' AS WE TOOK
TO CALLING THEM WOULD ONLY
HAPPEN TO US WHEN WE SLEPT.

SO WE STOPPED
SLEEPING.

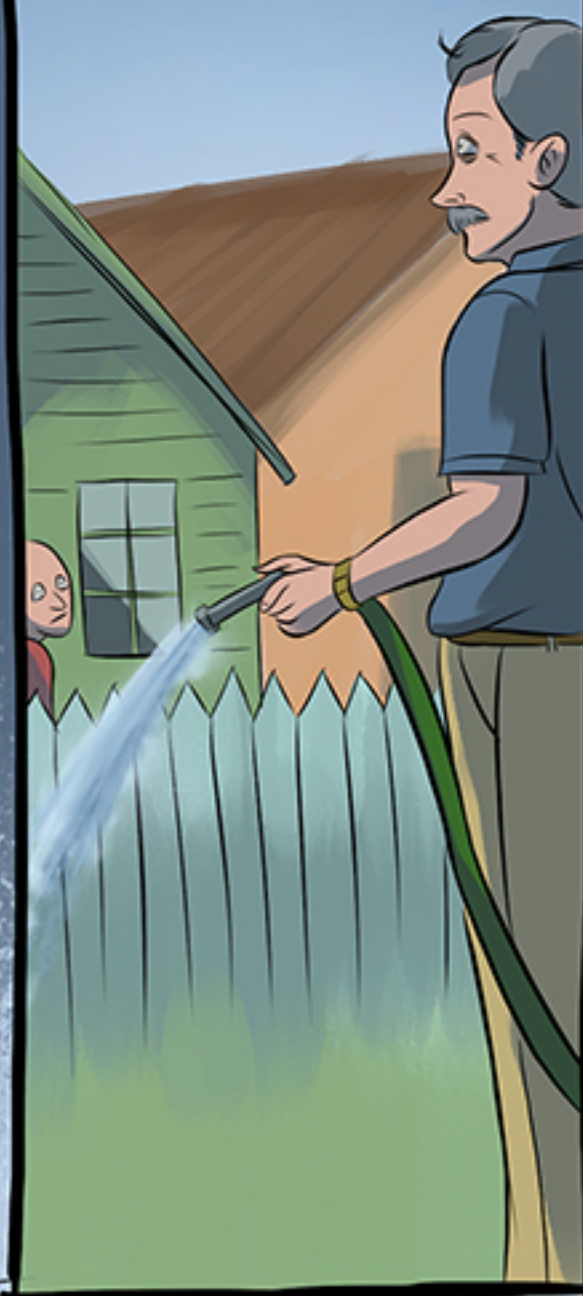
WE FLOODED OUR
SYSTEMS WITH ALL
THE STIMULANTS
THE PHARMACY
COULD MUSTER.



WE DID EVERYTHING
WE COULD THINK OF
IN OUR MANIC TERROR
TO STAY AWAKE,



TO FEND OFF OUR
NEW MORTAL ENEMY.

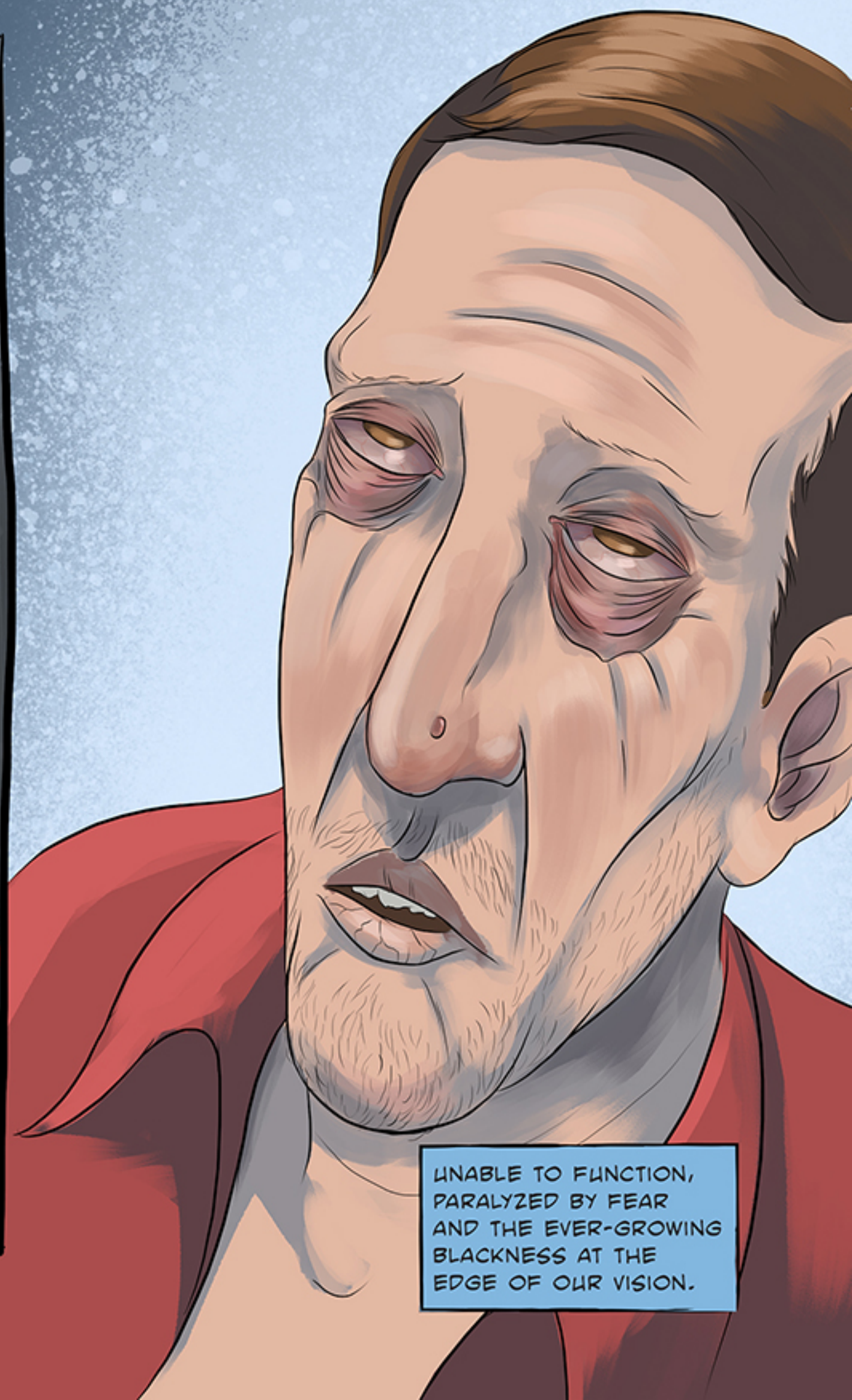


THE EVENTUAL RESULT
WAS, OF COURSE,
PREDICTABLE.

WE BECAME A
TOWN OF ZOMBIES.



UNABLE TO FUNCTION,
PARALYZED BY FEAR
AND THE EVER-GROWING
BLACKNESS AT THE
EDGE OF OUR VISION.





THIS SLOW, SLOW
TORMENT I THINK
WAS FAR WORSE
THAN IF WE'D JUST
SURRENDERED.

MANY SIMPLY LOST
THE WILL TO STRUG-
GLE AND WERE
TAKEN SWIFTLY.

FOR THOSE OF US
LEFT BEHIND THE
BLACKNESS ATE AT
OUR MINDS, SLOWLY
ERODING OUR
CONSCIOUSNESS.

OUR TORMENTOR
WOULD NOT BE
DENIED.



BY THE TIME MY
SON LEFT I NO
LONGER HAD THE
EMOTIONAL CAPACITY
TO FEEL ANYTHING
BUT DREAD;



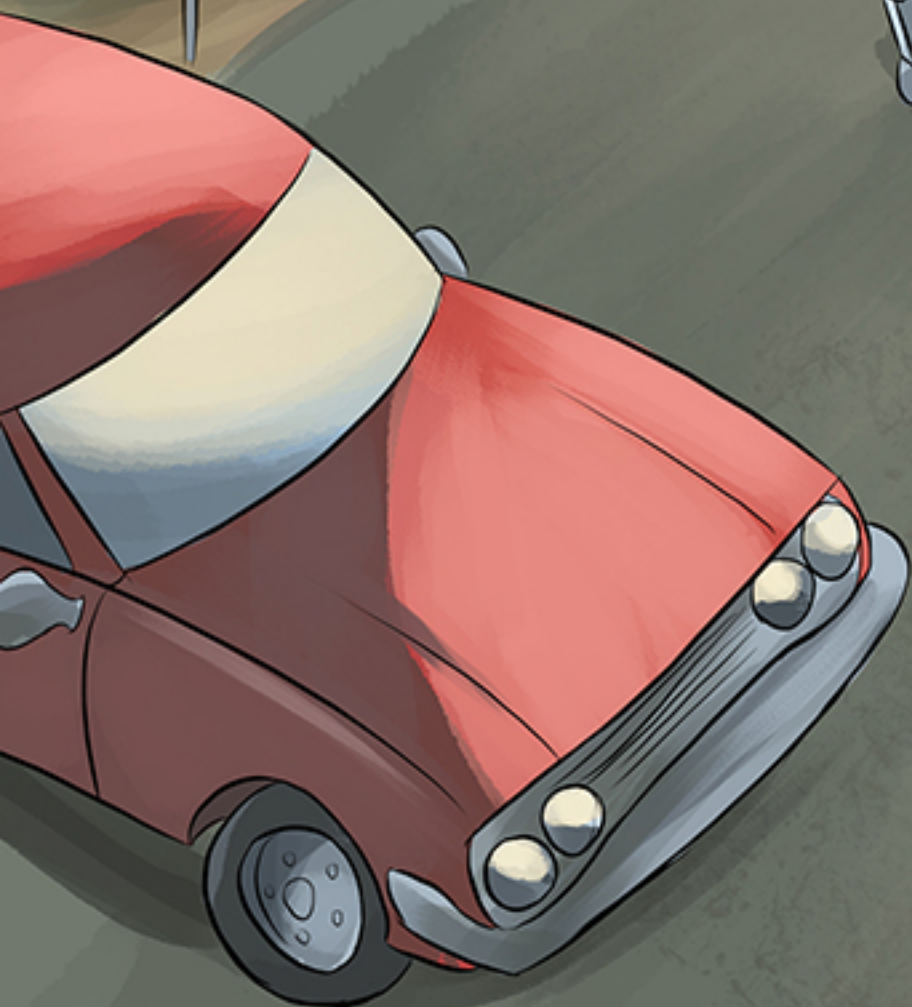
A PERVASIVE ALL-
ENCOMPASSING
DREAD THAT BUBBLED
LIKE BILE IN MY BOWELS.



MANY TRIED FLEEING THE TOWN
LIMITS OUT OF SOME DESPERATE
BELIEF THAT THE CURSE HAD
INFESTED MISTLETOE AND NOT ITS
PEOPLE.

IF ANYTHING SUCH ACTIONS WERE
SEEN AS A DIRECT CHALLENGE BY
WHATEVER IT WAS THAT HAD COME
TO OCCUPY US;

A CHALLENGE IT WOULD
NEVER FAIL TO MEET.



I ASKED MYSELF TIME
AND TIME AGAIN, BULLYING
MY EXHAUSTED MIND FOR
ANSWERS.

THE DARK MAN IN
THE FANCY CLOTHES
HAD SOLD US OUT
TO THE DEVIL.

TIME AND THE SENSE OF IT
HAD LONG SINCE FLED WHEN
I REALIZED THAT I WAS THE
ONLY ONE LEFT WITH ENOUGH
INTACT TO BE CONSIDERED
CONSCIOUS EVEN BY THE
LOOSEST MEASURE.

WHY HAD THEY
DONE THIS TO
US?

OR PERHAPS HE
WAS THE DEVIL
HIMSELF.

THE 'COLLECTOR' WAS
ALMOST FINISHED WITH
HIS JOB.

I CAN SEE IT NOW IN
ALL OF ITS HORRIBLE,
HORRIBLE GLORY.

PLAIN AS DEATH AND
NOWHERE NEAR AS
MERCIFUL.

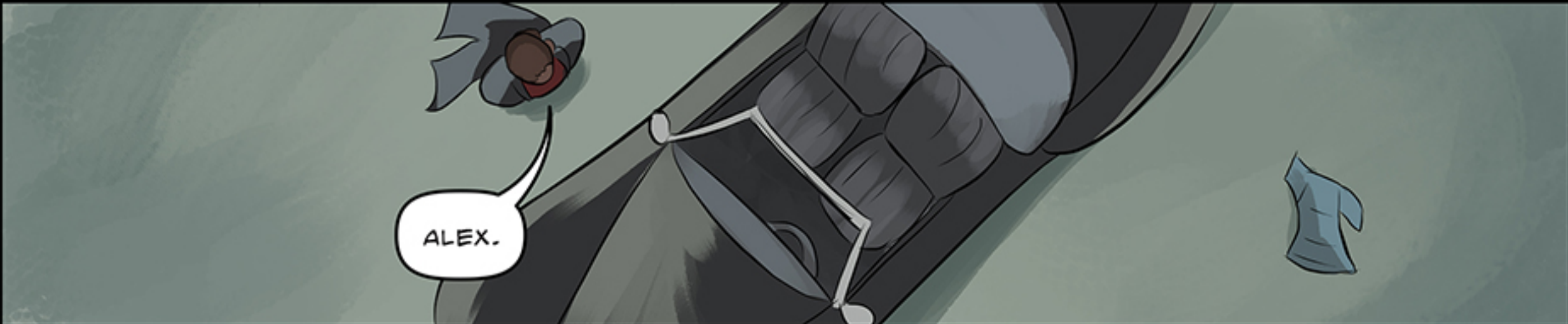
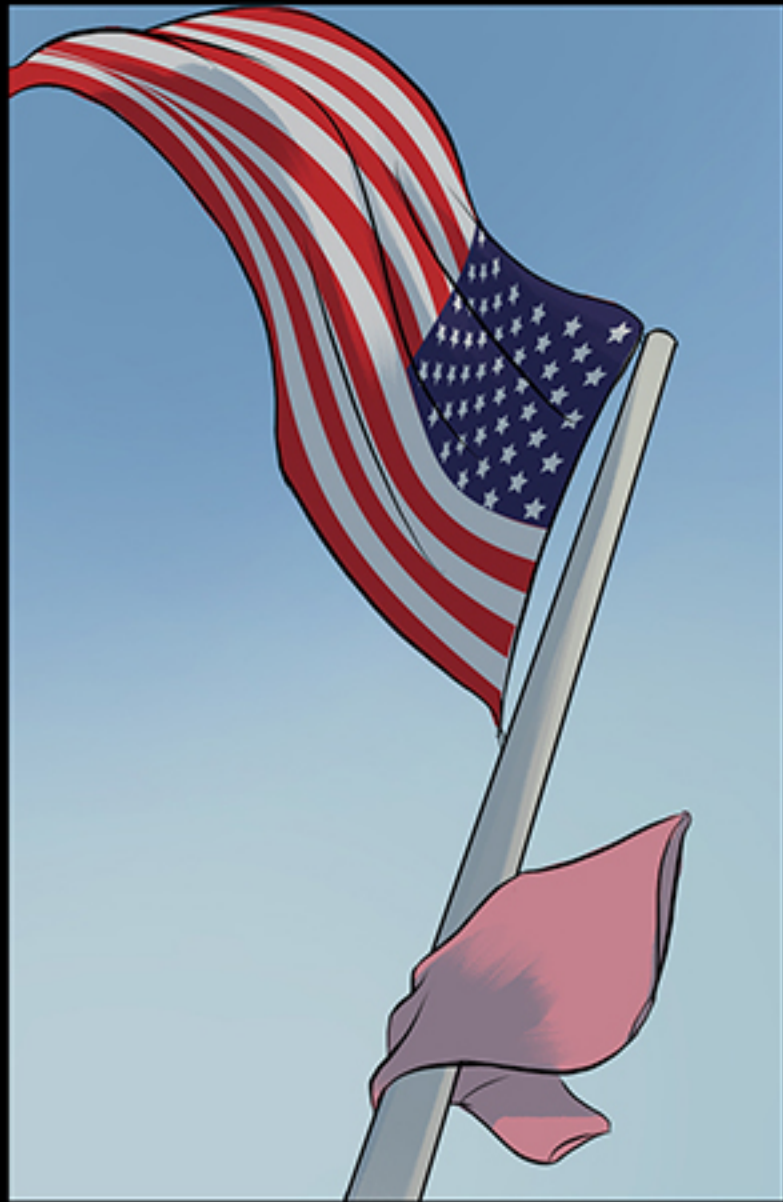
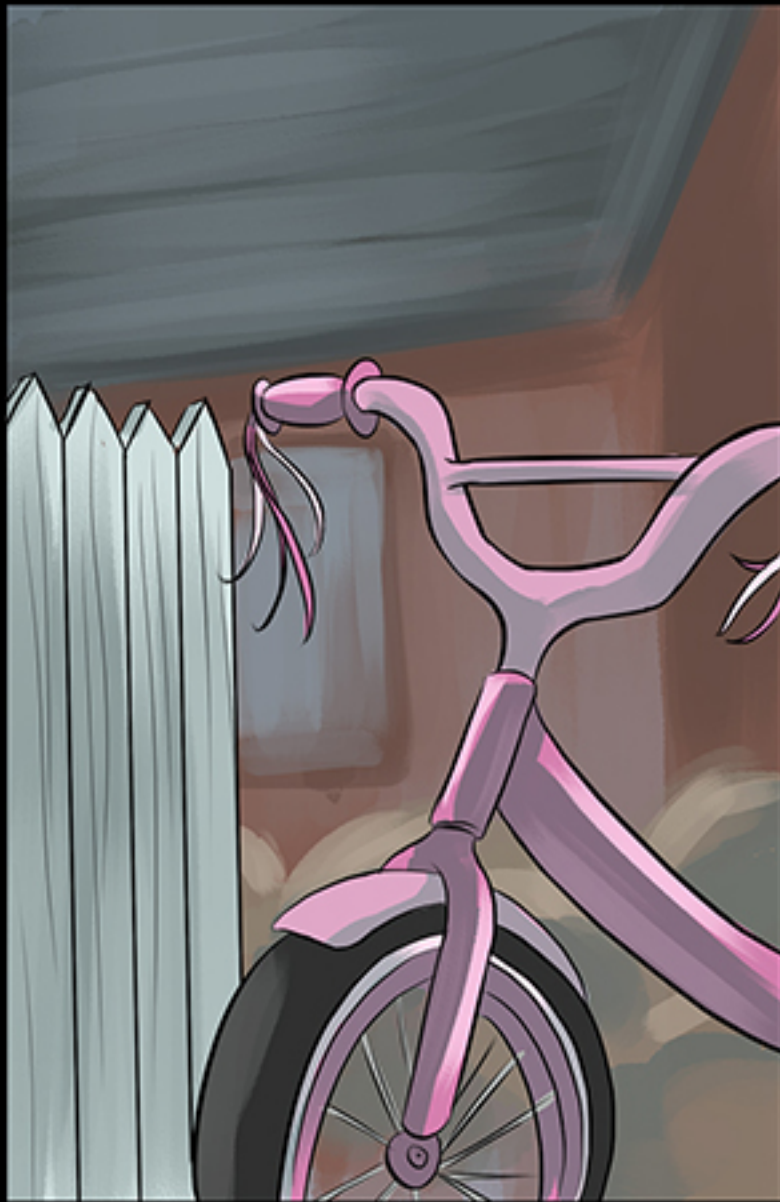
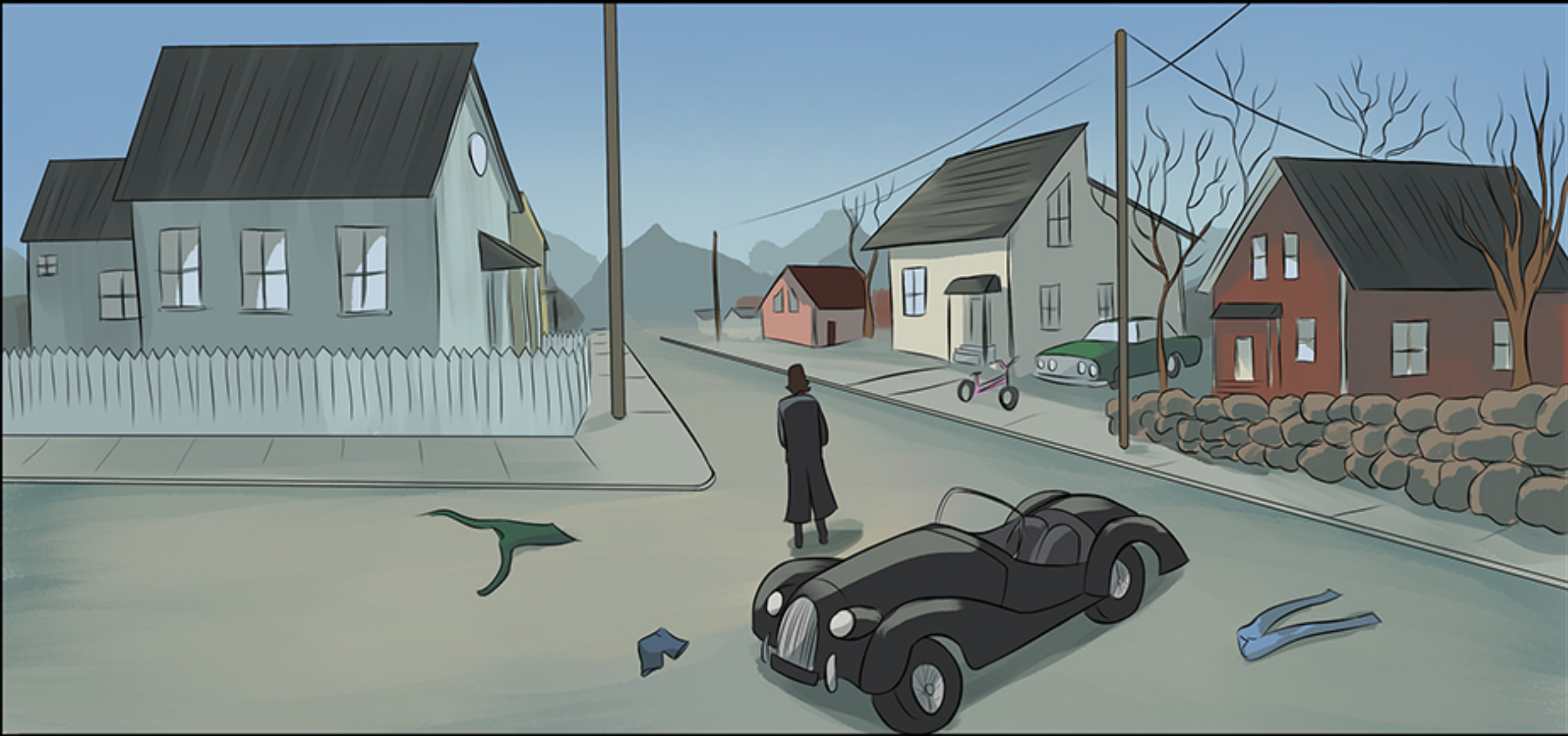


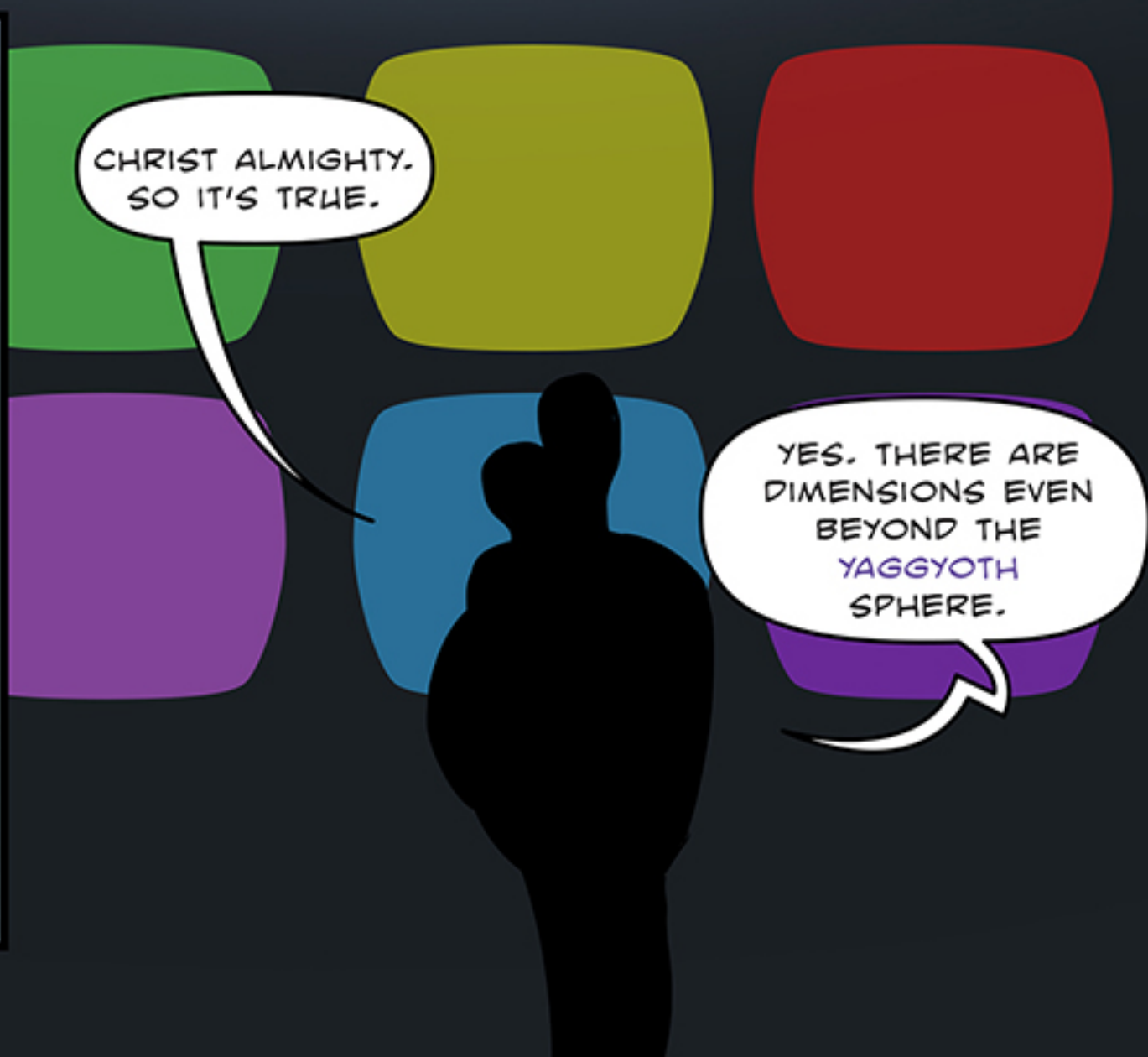
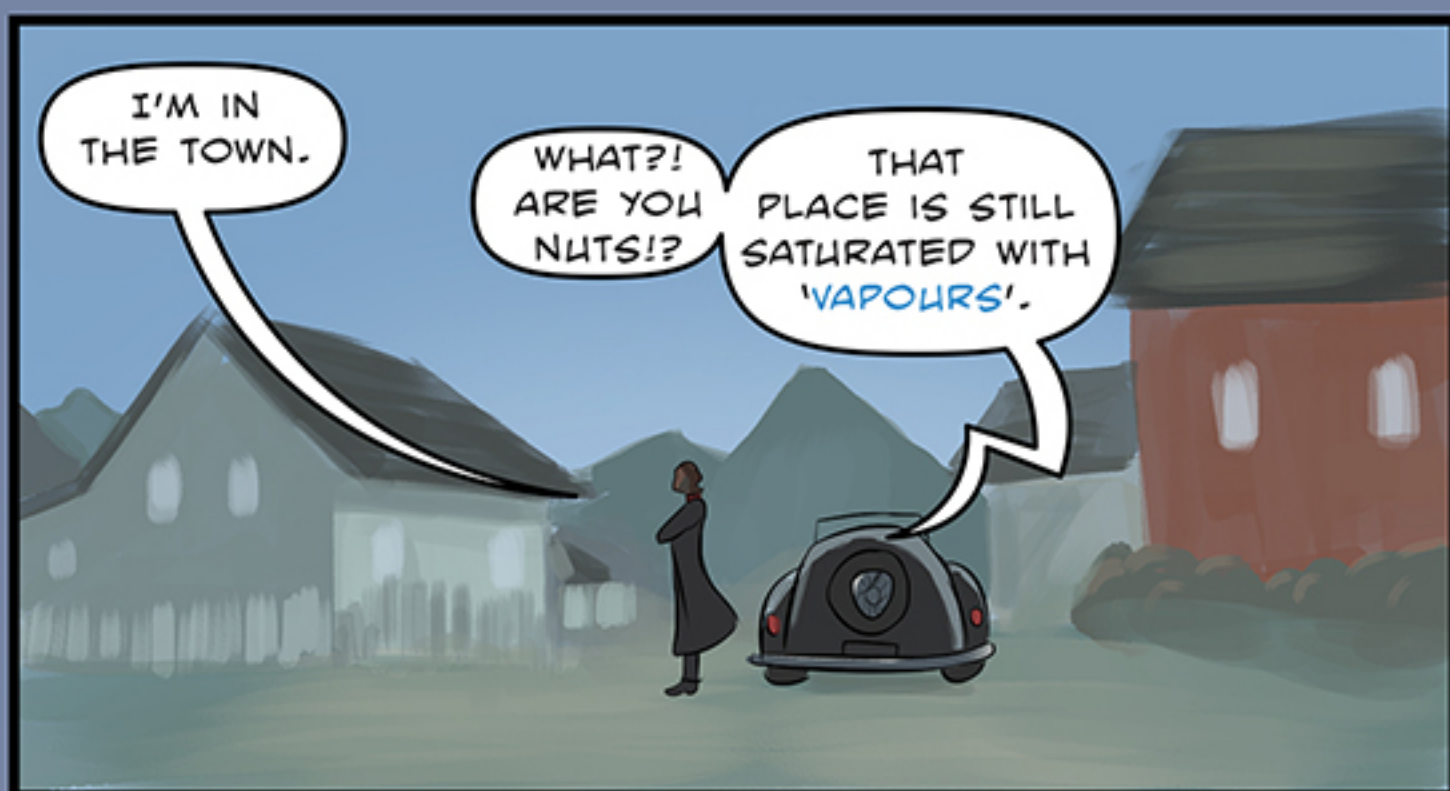
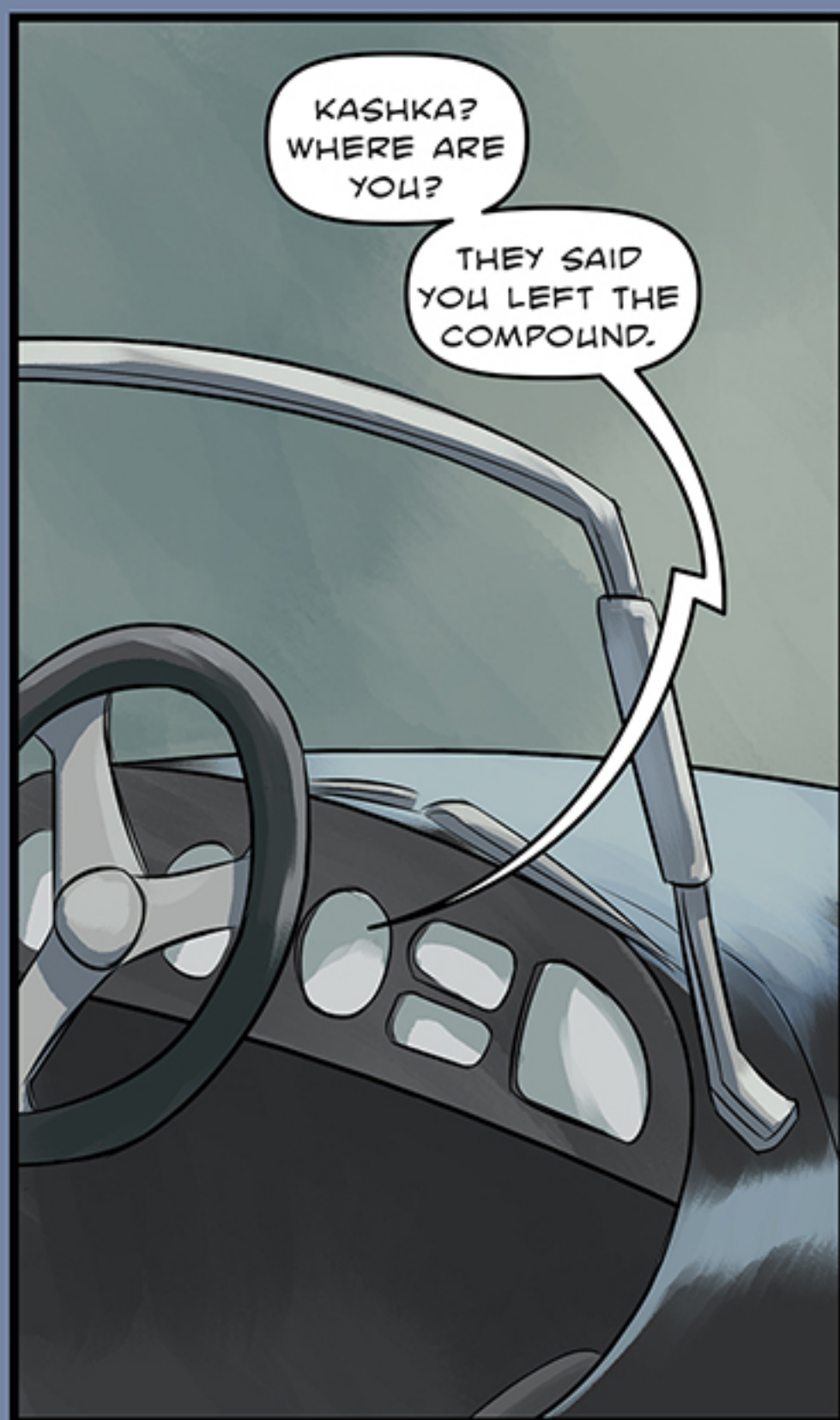
THE BLACK SUN.

THE FINAL PUZZLE
PIECE. THE LAST
SECRET.

WE HUMANS HAVE
BEEN SO BLESSED
FOR OUR IGNORANCE;
SO LUCKY TO LIVE
WITHOUT KNOWING
THE REAL TRUTH.

MY ONLY COMFORT,
THE ONLY COMFORT
I COULD HOPE FOR
IS THAT IT ENDS.







AND WE
CAN GO THERE,
WITH ENOUGH
ASSISTANCE.



NOT WITHOUT
PAYING A
PRICE THOUGH.

JUST AS
MR. MAKER
SAID.

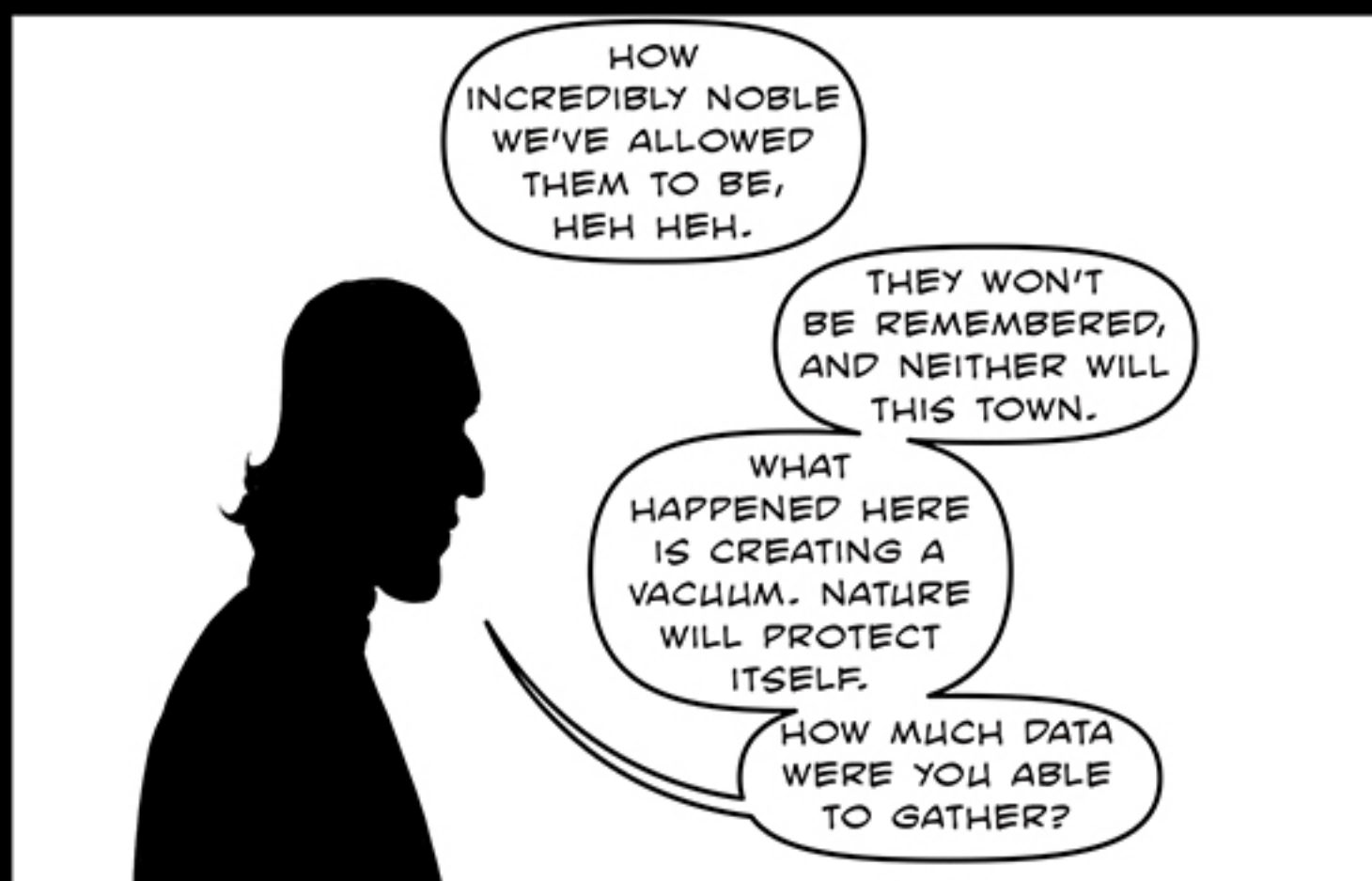
AND THESE
POOR FOOLS
PAID IT.

I THINK
THEY'RE
FORTUNATE.



THEY'VE SEEN
AND EXPERIENCED
WHAT NO OTHER
HUMANS HAVE.

AND MADE
A GREAT SACRIFICE
FOR OUR RACE.

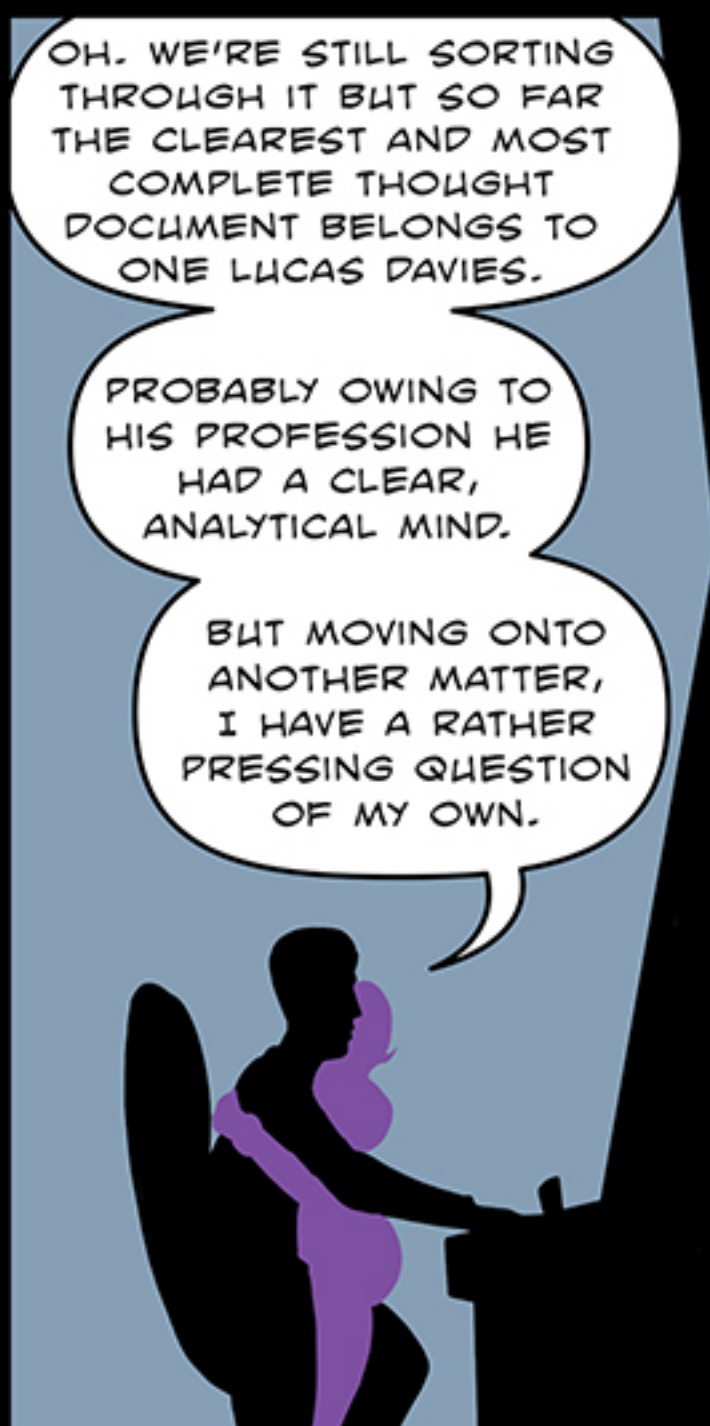


HOW
INCREDIBLY NOBLE
WE'VE ALLOWED
THEM TO BE,
HEH HEH.

THEY WON'T
BE REMEMBERED,
AND NEITHER WILL
THIS TOWN.

WHAT
HAPPENED HERE
IS CREATING A
VACUUM. NATURE
WILL PROTECT
ITSELF.

HOW MUCH DATA
WERE YOU ABLE
TO GATHER?



OH. WE'RE STILL SORTING
THROUGH IT BUT SO FAR
THE CLEAREST AND MOST
COMPLETE THOUGHT
DOCUMENT BELONGS TO
ONE LUCAS DAVIES.

PROBABLY OWING TO
HIS PROFESSION HE
HAD A CLEAR,
ANALYTICAL MIND.

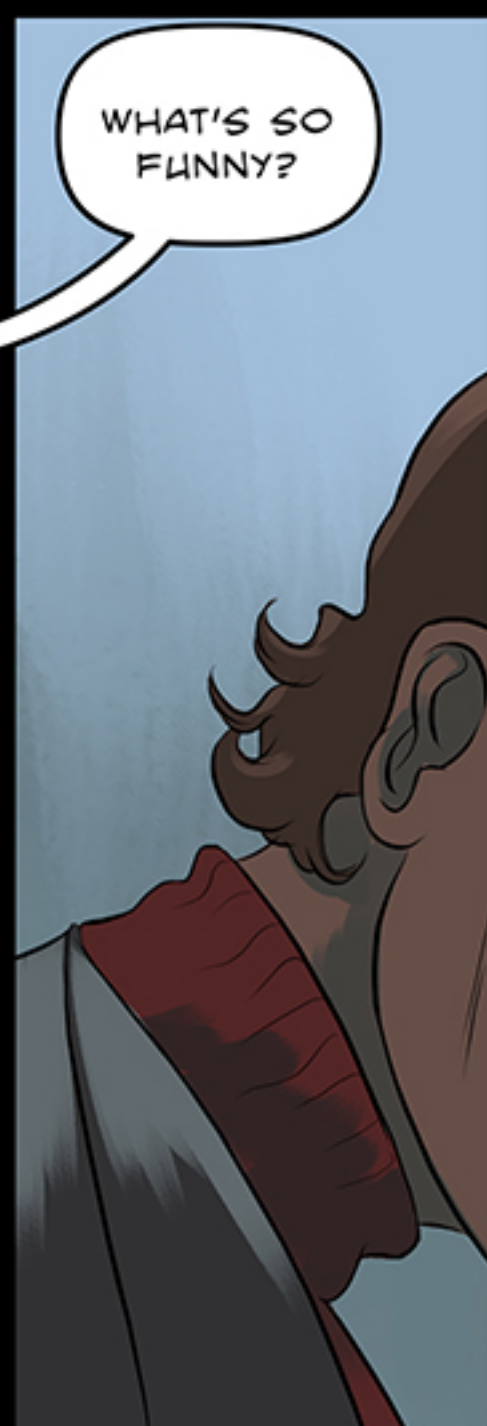
BUT MOVING ONTO
ANOTHER MATTER,
I HAVE A RATHER
PRESSING QUESTION
OF MY OWN.



WHERE'S THAT
HOT BROAD OF
YOURS? YOU LEFT
HER UPSTATE?

I WAS SO
LOOKING FORWARD
TO SEEING HER
AGAIN.

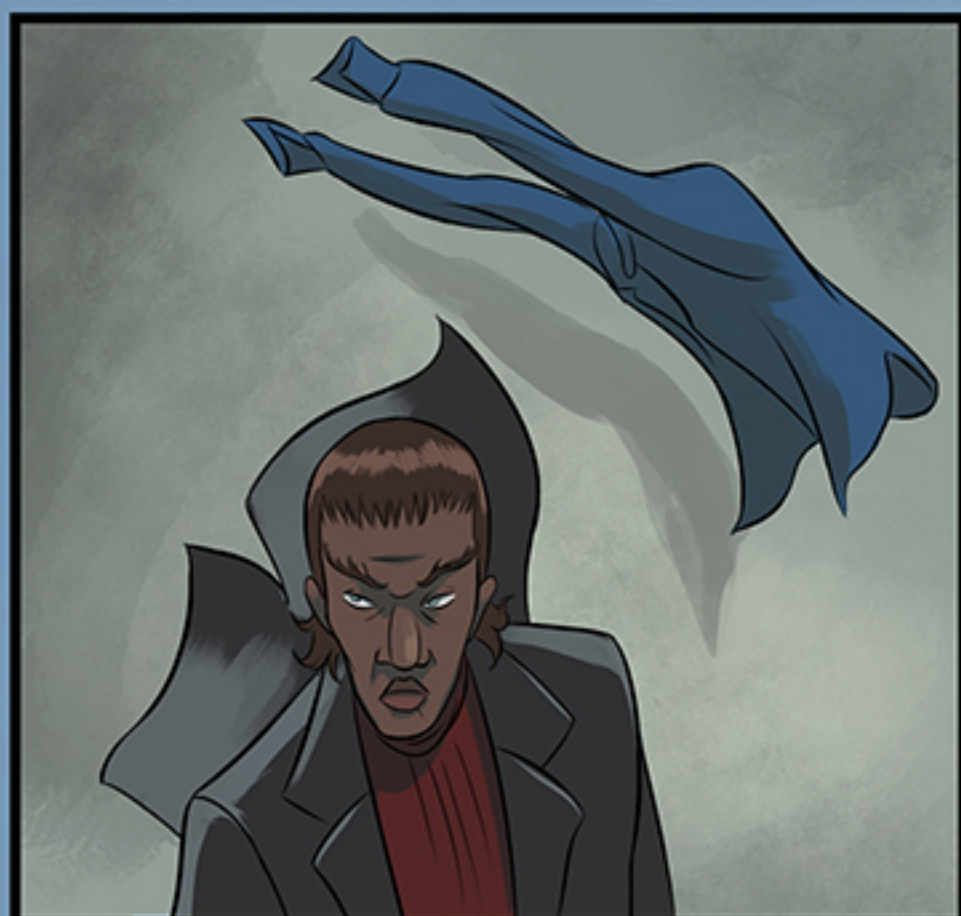
HEH
HEH
HEH



WHAT'S SO
FUNNY?



WHAT'S FUNNY IS
WHAT IVERNA WOULD
DO TO YOU IF SHE
EVER HEARD YOU
REFER TO HER AS A
'BROAD'.



Special Thanks:

This issue was proudly supported by the generous Patreon pledges of these fine folks:

Zachary Jones
William Tener
Nicholas Hurley
Erica Mounsey
Paul Hyson
Solar Storm Studio
Alexandra Engellmann
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Rivenis



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