



QUEER COMPASSION IN 15 COMICS

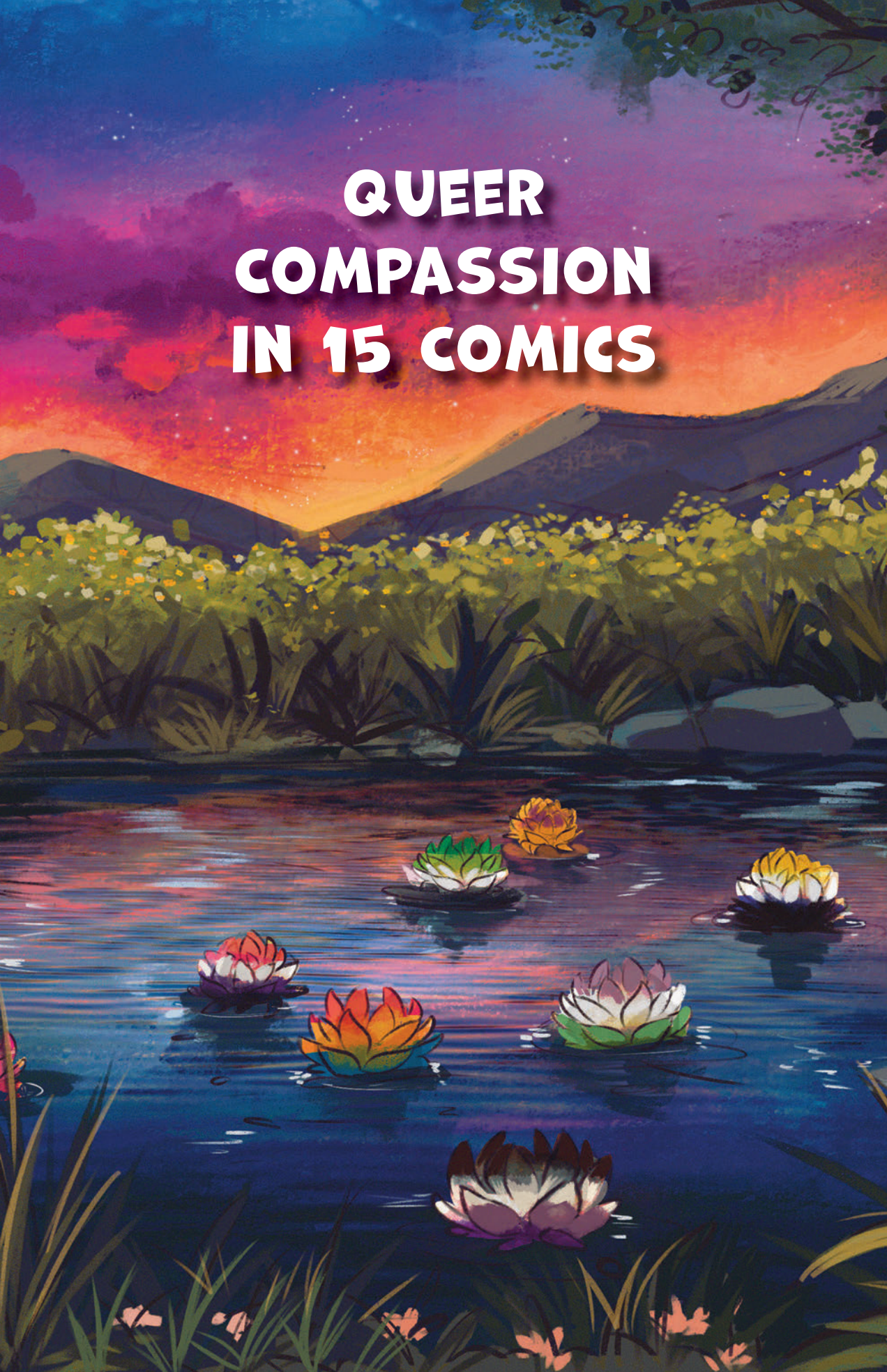
EDITED BY

PHILLIP JOY

ANDREW THOMAS

MEGAN ASTON

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND FUNDING STATEMENT

We would like to thank all the people who have shared their stories with us and all the artists who have brought those stories to life. We would also like to thank our family and friends for their support—including Wallace and Sizzle.

This comic anthology draws on research supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

INTRODUCTION

From ancient Buddhist traditions to modern psychological understandings, the concept of compassion has sparked the human imagination as a way to spiritual enlightenment and insight into the human condition, to improve health and well-being, and to create connections between us. Compassion can be all these things, but at the heart of it, it is the awareness of the suffering of others (or oneself) and the desire to move past suffering that results from illness, death, pain, hurt, and our attempts to hold on to the things we see as stable and secure. Life is change, and change often involves suffering. But compassion is not passive. There is a “doing” to being compassionate—doing actions that help beyond our suffering.

Compassionate acts can be transformative for people and society. Compassion can be witnessed in being with another, seeing people for who they are, sitting with uncomfortable feelings, and understanding the universality of human suffering. Compassion can also be witnessed in political activism and acts that disrupt social norms of gender and sexuality. Life is filled with acts of compassion.

The assumption of compassion is that we share a common humanity, that we all experience love, loss, pain, and suffering, universal threads that connect us all together in the intricacies of life. However, we must recognize that compassion is messier and much more complex. Compassion is also socially created, and our beliefs, values, and knowledge of the world shape not only the way compassion is practiced and enacted but also who is able to receive compassion. We

cannot ignore how cisheteronormativity, racism, and settler colonialism influence the way compassion is understood and practiced.

Our world feels a little bit too much right now, especially as a queer person. Despite increasing social and legal advancements in many nations, being queer can still be hard. Just the word *queer* itself reflects the complexity of our experiences. *Queer* is a word that for many of us has been used against us—to hurt and to isolate us—but it also has been reclaimed by many to show our strength and our connections to each other.

This was where Andrew, Megan, and I (Phillip) started—in a world that often seems to be lacking compassion for queer folks. Growing up gay in rural Nova Scotia, Andrew and I know all too well that queer people still face many struggles, and all three of us see it over and over again in our research. In all parts of the world, queer people experience daily acts of violence, anti-LGBTQ bills and laws, conversion therapies, families disowning us, and death simply for being who we are and loving who we love. Even within our own queer communities, many of us face discrimination, racism, colonialism, and a multitude of phobias—fatphobia, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia.

To some people it may seem trite, superficial, or even cliché to say, but we believe compassion is the answer to many of these issues. Compassion is reflected time and again in the stories of queer people who we've learned from in our capacity as researchers working with queer communities and reflecting on our own lived experiences. By cultivating compassion, we can make the world a little bit better and build stronger connections with others. Compassion and its transformative power are the reasons for this collection.

We wanted to bring stories about queer compassion to life through the art of comics and through comics' abilities to imagine in new, beautiful ways the personal experiences of queer people. In this collection, we bring together fifteen queer comic artists from Canada, the United States, Greece, India, and Scotland to help us

tell stories of queer compassion. These stories often touch upon real experiences of queer trauma, informed by our research with queer communities and our own experiences and the experiences of our artists, that cannot be ignored. Compassion and suffering are intimately intertwined, fundamental to the human experience; they unite all of us together and create understanding between people—the seed for transformative moments that, like the lotus flower, can blossom into new possibilities.

We hope you will also feel the joy of being queer in these comics—the joy of taking pride in yourself, the joy of finding community, the joy of neighbors and music, the joy of being kind to ourselves, and the joy of exploring new ways of being. We believe each comic has many meanings and that you will find your own understandings of queer compassion.

As Jewish gay activist Adam Eli said in his book, *The New Queer Conscience*, “Queer people anywhere are responsible for queer people everywhere.” This is what we hope for this collection, that it will uplift queer voices, illustrate queer strength, and capture queer resolve to make life more compassionate for ourselves and for others.


ABOUT THE COVER IMAGE

The cover image (by Kayleigh Fine) is special for us. It shows our characters, Alejo and Leif, from the comic *The First Parade*, enjoying a twilight evening together in peace. Fine has incorporated elements of Buddhism into the artwork with the use of lotus flowers in different pride colors in full bloom and floating in the pond. The Buddha holding the lotus flower symbolizes wisdom and compassion, and the lotus flower itself symbolizes transition, which we believe can be a metaphor for queer rights, trans journeys, and the transformative nature of compassion within society. As Stella Kramrisch noted in her book, *Exploring India's Sacred Art*, the lotus flower begins with its roots in the mud and journeys through the depths of the murky water to the surface, where its leaves and its flowers are opened to the heavens and the light. The mud and murky water symbolize the struggles faced by queer people in daily life. Each flower, once it reaches the surface, is beautiful and unique and transcends the difficulties faced on its journey to the surface.

THE FIRST PARADE

BY

KAYLEIGH FINE



ALEJO, YOU REALLY SHOULD HAVE WORN THE TAIL. IT'S SO MUCH FUN.

I MEAN, YOU ARE ROCKIN' THAT TAIL BUT THINK I'M FINE WITH JUST THE HORN.

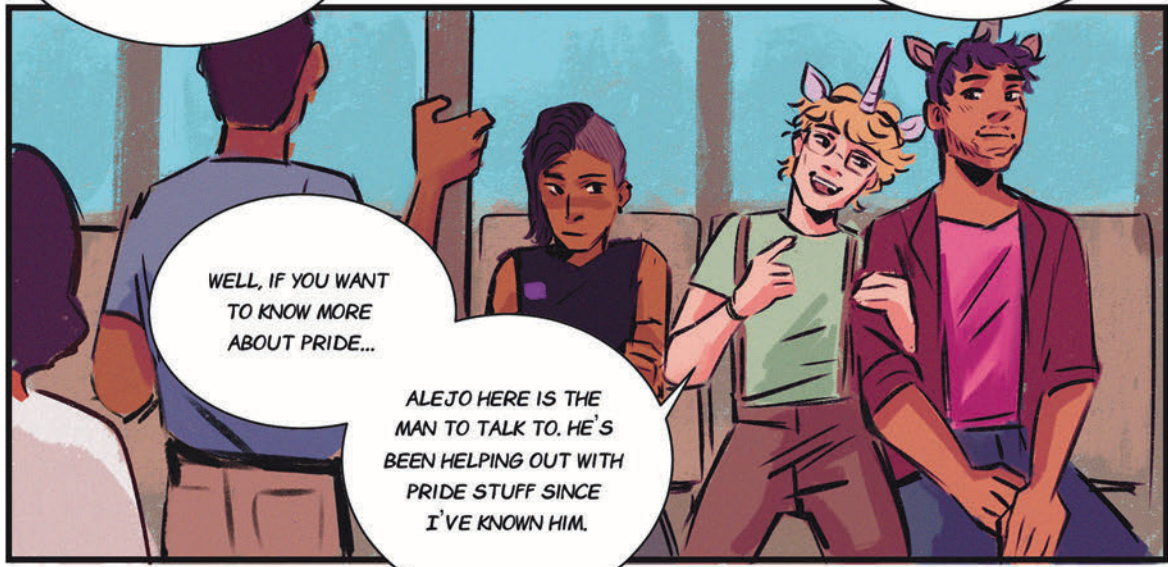




OH MY GOD!
EVERY DAY IS STRAIGHT
PRIDE MOM, EVERY DAY.

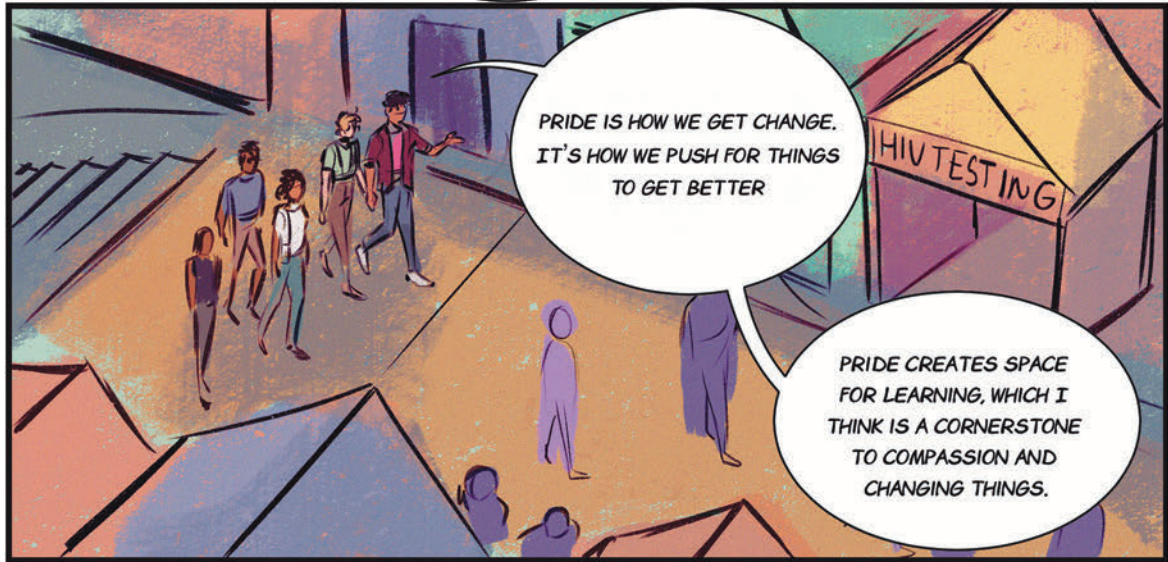


WE'RE JUST EXCITED
DARA TO BE ABLE TO
SHARE THIS DAY WITH YOU
AND YOUR FRIENDS, BUT WE
DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT
PRIDE



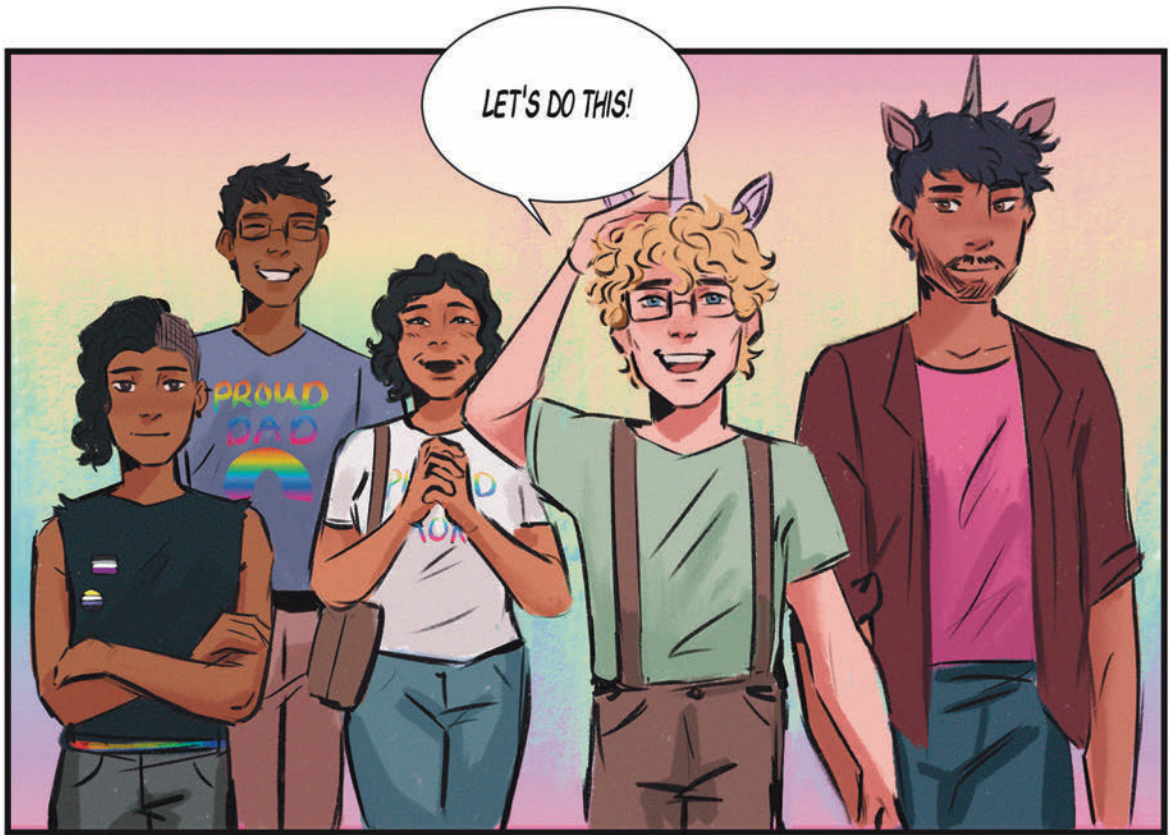
WELL, IF YOU WANT
TO KNOW MORE
ABOUT PRIDE...

ALEJO HERE IS THE
MAN TO TALK TO. HE'S
BEEN HELPING OUT WITH
PRIDE STUFF SINCE
I'VE KNOWN HIM.



PRIDE IS HOW WE GET CHANGE.
IT'S HOW WE PUSH FOR THINGS
TO GET BETTER

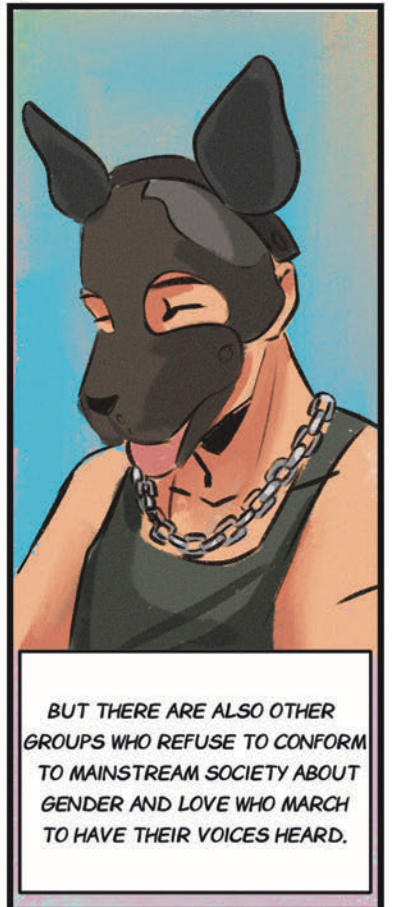
PRIDE CREATES SPACE
FOR LEARNING, WHICH I
THINK IS A CORNERSTONE
TO COMPASSION AND
CHANGING THINGS.



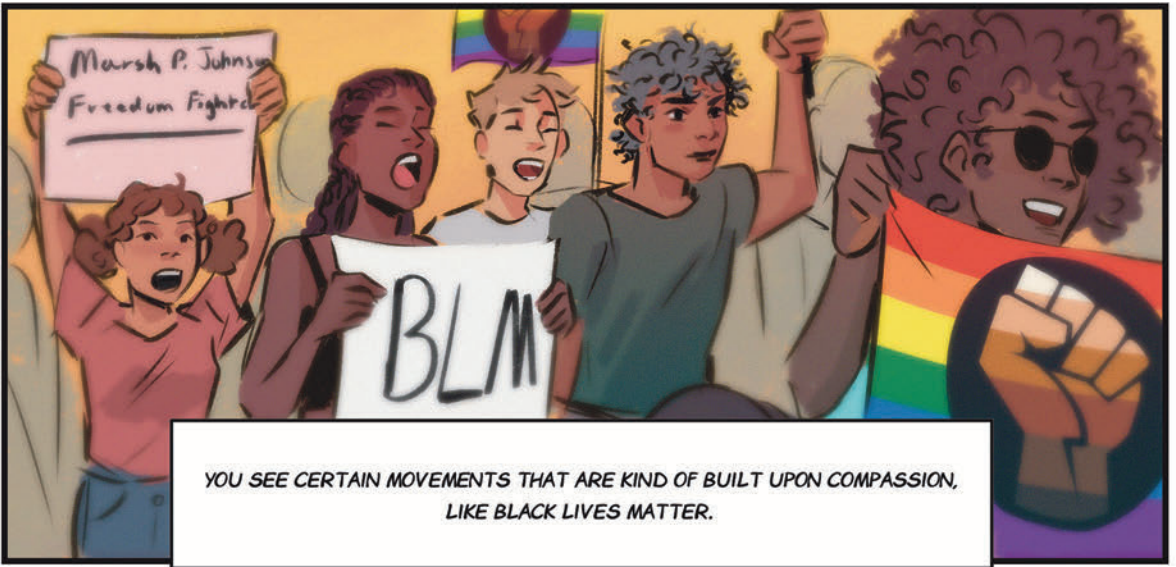
MANY OF THE GROUPS HERE
HAVE BEEN LEADING MARCHES
SINCE THE STONEWALL RIOTS.



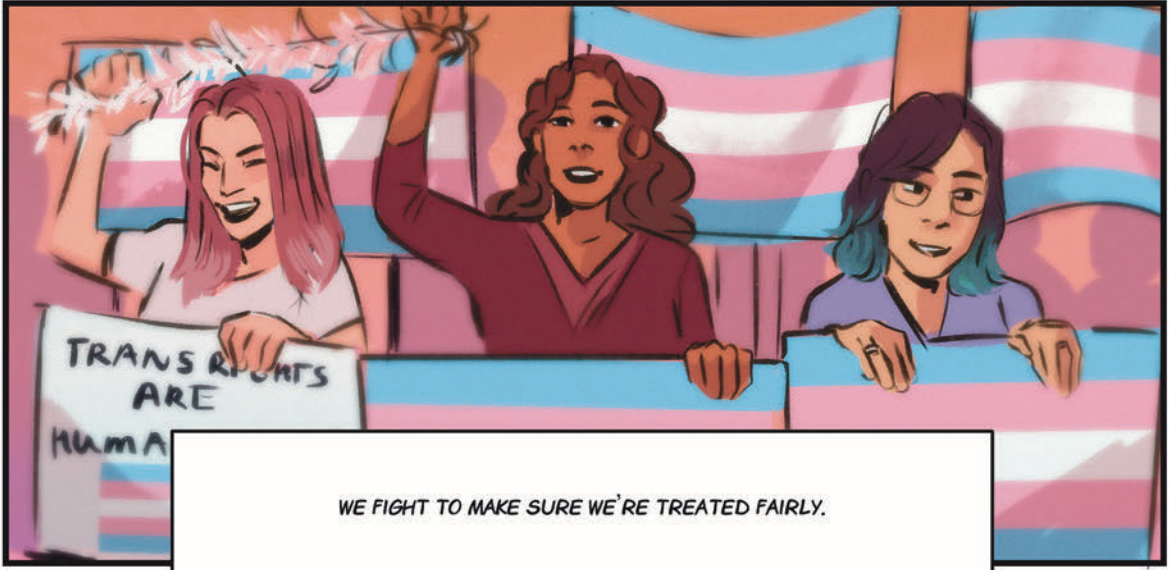
DRAG QUEENS, WITH THEIR
CHARISMA, UNIQUENESS,
NERVE AND TALENT, WERE THE
ONES TO DIG THEIR HEELS IN
AND START A REVOLUTION.
AND FOR YEARS AT PRIDE
THEY'VE CONTINUED
IT EVER SINCE.



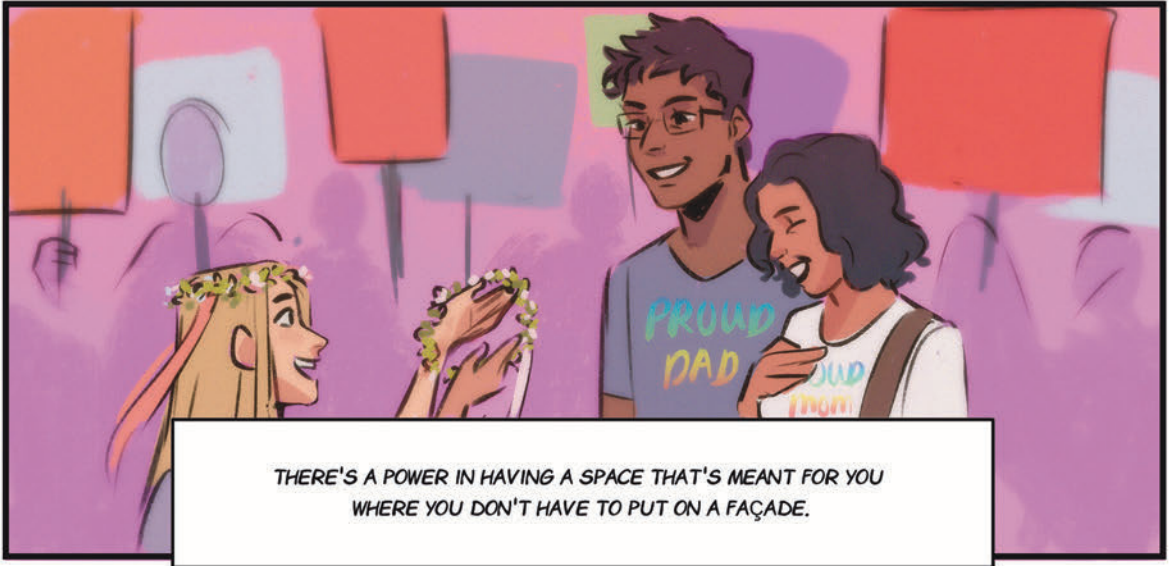
BUT THERE ARE ALSO OTHER
GROUPS WHO REFUSE TO CONFORM
TO MAINSTREAM SOCIETY ABOUT
GENDER AND LOVE WHO MARCH
TO HAVE THEIR VOICES HEARD.



YOU SEE CERTAIN MOVEMENTS THAT ARE KIND OF BUILT UPON COMPASSION,
LIKE BLACK LIVES MATTER.



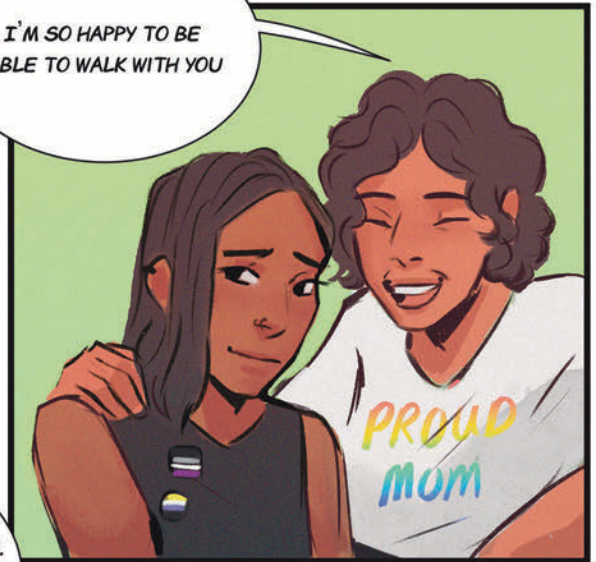
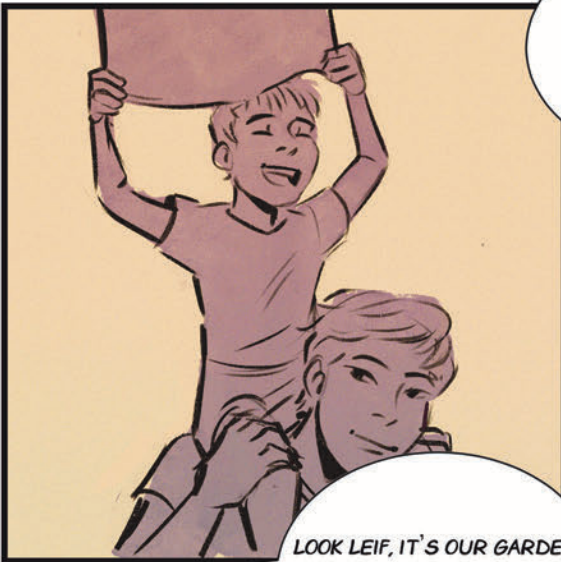
WE FIGHT TO MAKE SURE WE'RE TREATED FAIRLY.



THERE'S A POWER IN HAVING A SPACE THAT'S MEANT FOR YOU
WHERE YOU DON'T HAVE TO PUT ON A FAÇADE.



I'M SO HAPPY TO BE ABLE TO WALK WITH YOU

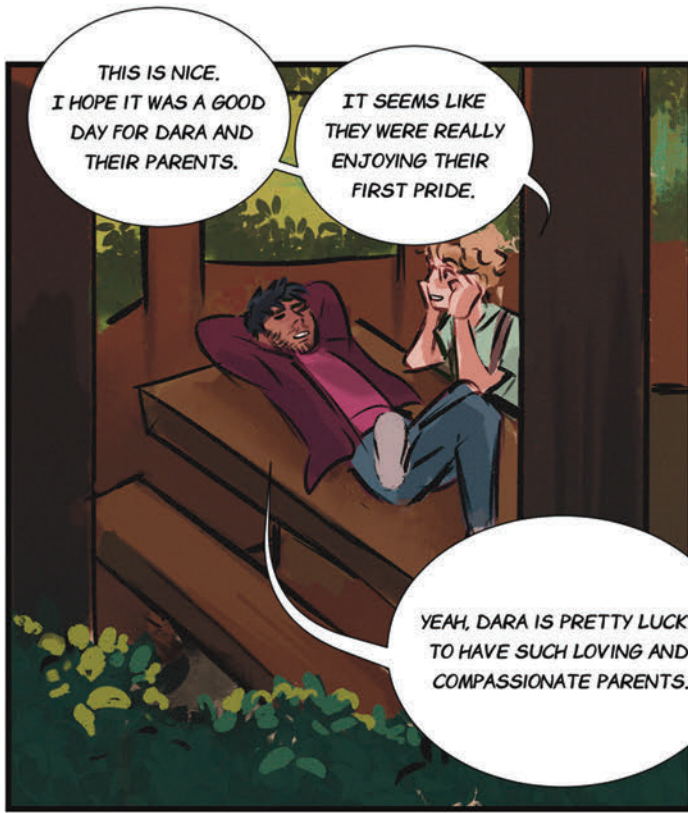


LOOK LEIF, IT'S OUR GARDEN. LET'S TAKE A BREAK. I WANNA GET YOU ALONE IN THERE.



OH, JUST THE TWO OF US? HOW NAUGHTY.





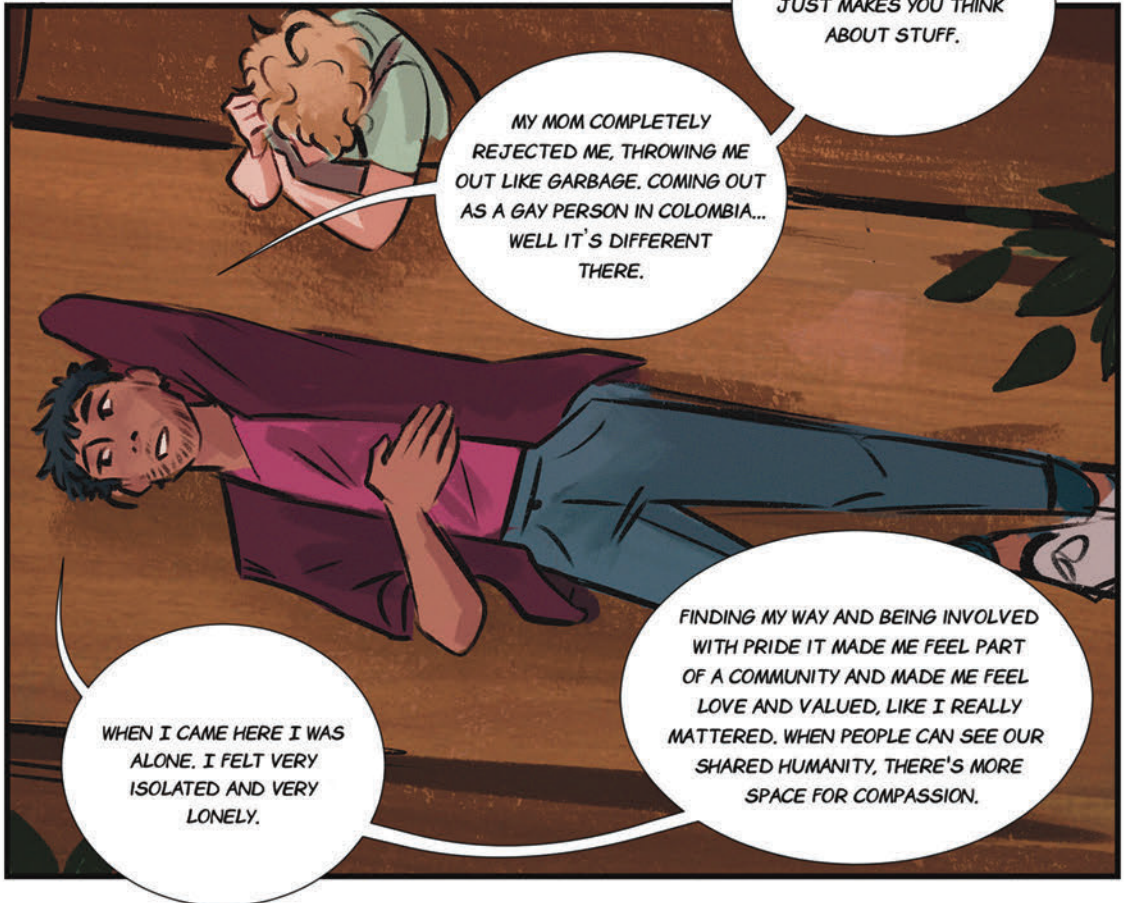
THIS IS NICE.
I HOPE IT WAS A GOOD
DAY FOR DARA AND
THEIR PARENTS.

IT SEEMS LIKE
THEY WERE REALLY
ENJOYING THEIR
FIRST PRIDE.

YEAH, DARA IS PRETTY LUCKY
TO HAVE SUCH LOVING AND
COMPASSIONATE PARENTS.



OH BABE, I NEVER
EVEN THOUGHT.
HOW ARE YOU FEELING?



I GUESS THE WHOLE DAY
JUST MAKES YOU THINK
ABOUT STUFF.

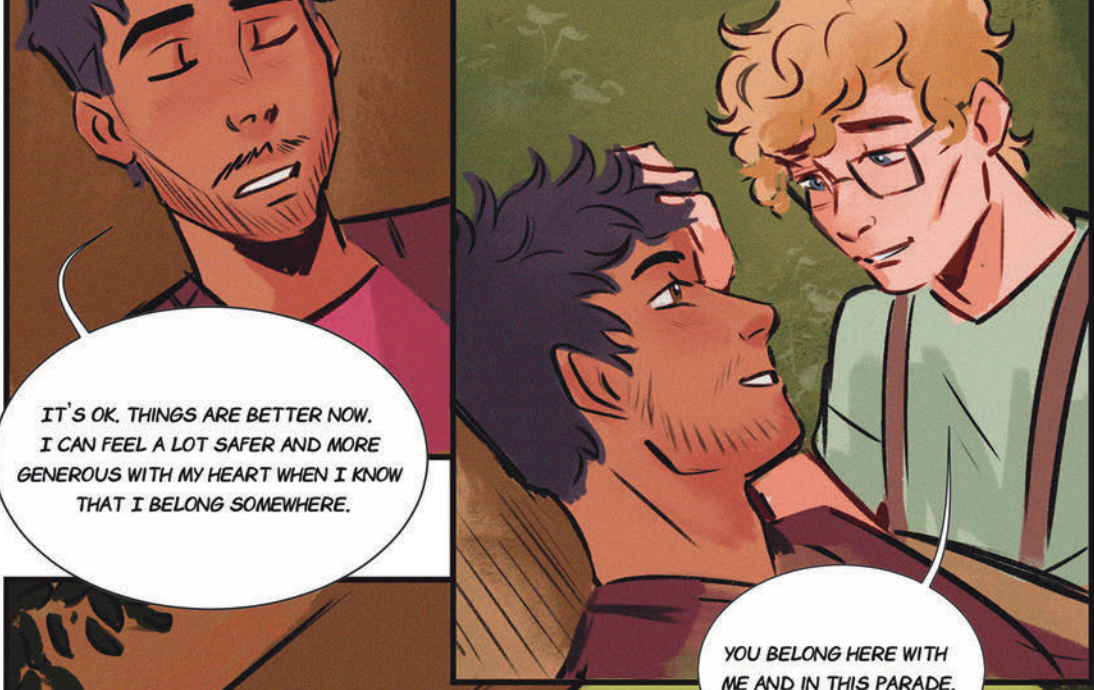
MY MOM COMPLETELY
REJECTED ME, THROWING ME
OUT LIKE GARBAGE. COMING OUT
AS A GAY PERSON IN COLOMBIA...
WELL IT'S DIFFERENT
THERE.

WHEN I CAME HERE I WAS
ALONE. I FELT VERY
ISOLATED AND VERY
LONELY.

FINDING MY WAY AND BEING INVOLVED
WITH PRIDE IT MADE ME FEEL PART
OF A COMMUNITY AND MADE ME FEEL
LOVE AND VALUED, LIKE I REALLY
MATTERED. WHEN PEOPLE CAN SEE OUR
SHARED HUMANITY, THERE'S MORE
SPACE FOR COMPASSION.



I'M SORRY YOU HAD TO GO THROUGH ALL THAT.




IT'S OK. THINGS ARE BETTER NOW. I CAN FEEL A LOT SAFER AND MORE GENEROUS WITH MY HEART WHEN I KNOW THAT I BELONG SOMEWHERE.

YOU BELONG HERE WITH ME AND IN THIS PARADE.



SHOULD WE GET BACK?

IN A BIT. LET'S JUST BE HERE A LITTLE BIT LONGER.



WHAT A WONDERFUL DAY.
I HEARD SO MANY
PEOPLE'S STORIES AND
LEARNED A LOT.

THAT'S WHAT
PRIDE IS FOR.

IT CONNECTS US.

YEAH, YOU KNOW THE WORLD CAN BE A BIT
COLD AND HARSH SOMETIMES, SO WE NEED
TO FIND WARMTH IN EACH OTHER.



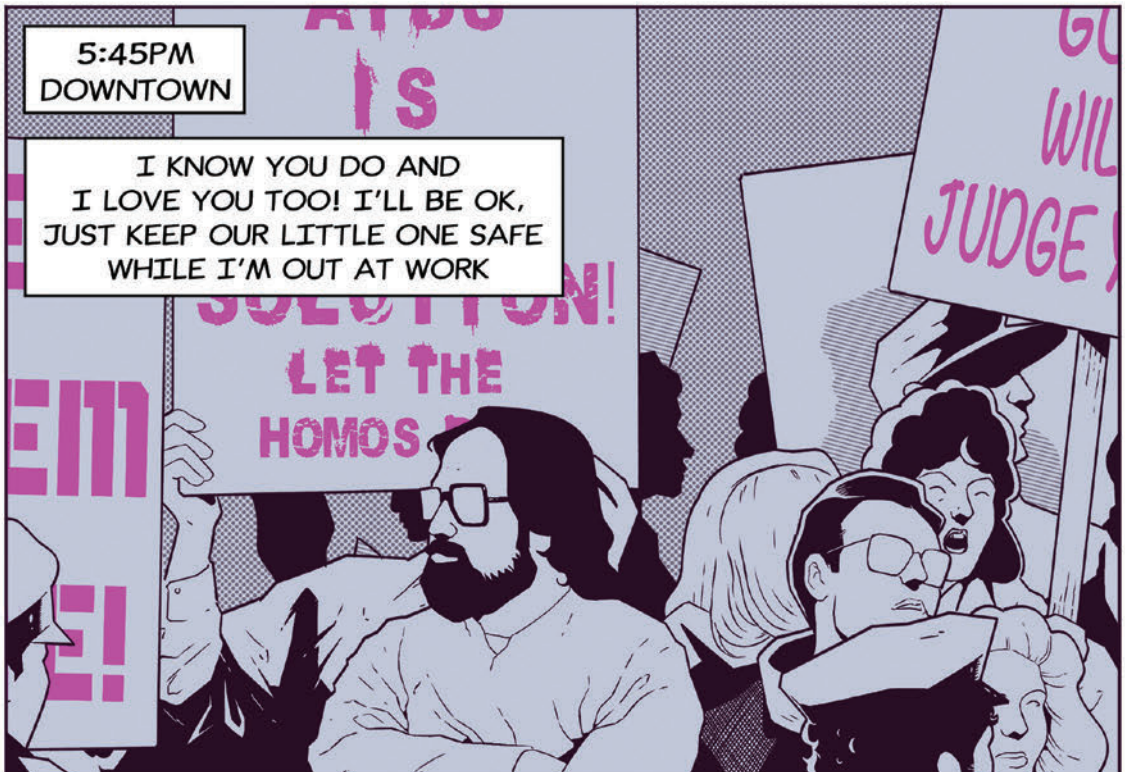
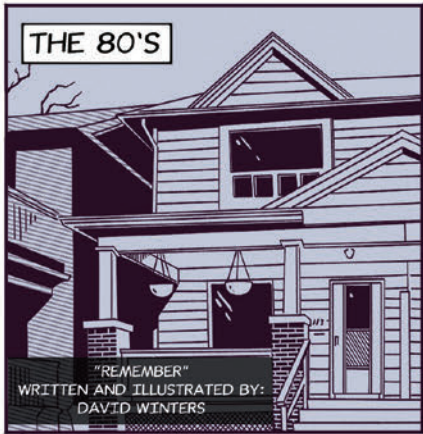
FROM THE EDITORS

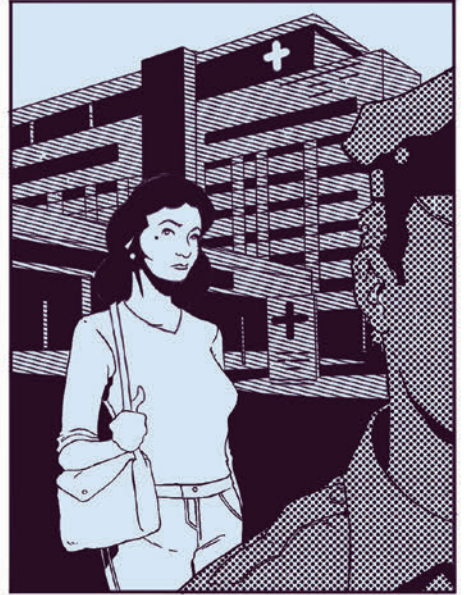
This comic was developed by us (editors Phillip, Andrew, and Megan) and the artist. We had a lot of fun first creating the script. Stories and powerful words from research participants were plentiful, and this enabled us to develop two amazing main characters who, along with other characters, brought to life the realities for many queer people. So many compassionate messages were woven throughout the parade scene through the characters' words. We could begin to visualize how the complex emotions of compassion between partners, friends, parents, and strangers would be presented in both loud public spaces and an intimate garden escape. Once the script was written, we then passed it on to our amazing comic artist Kayleigh Fine. The images that Kayleigh sent back to us were perfect, and very quickly, the story and meaning of compassion were told through beautiful images and color. We could feel the variety of emotions that were told through pictures and words and trust that readers will also connect emotionally to this comic.

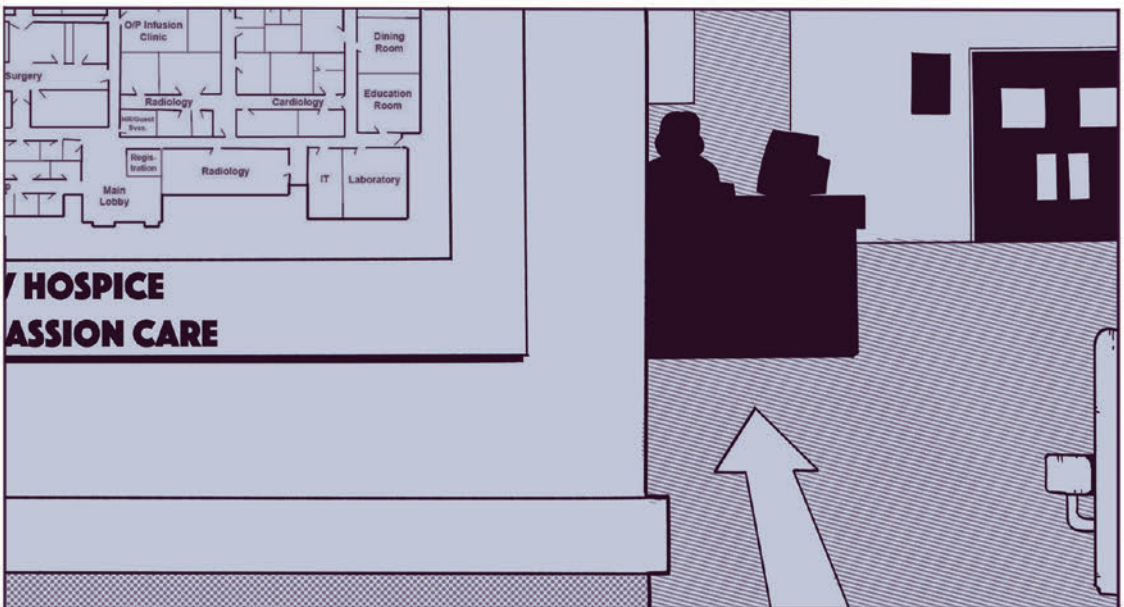
REMEMBER

BY

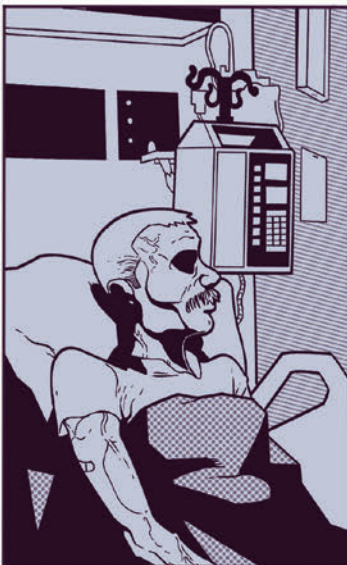
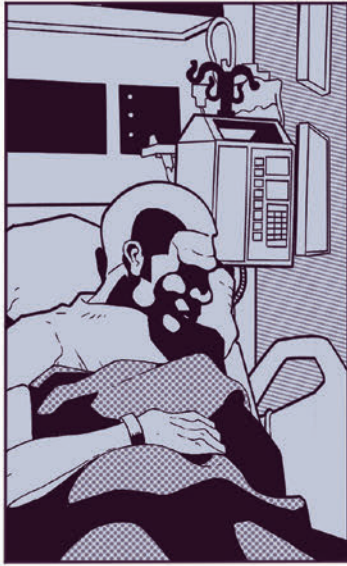
DAVID WINTERS







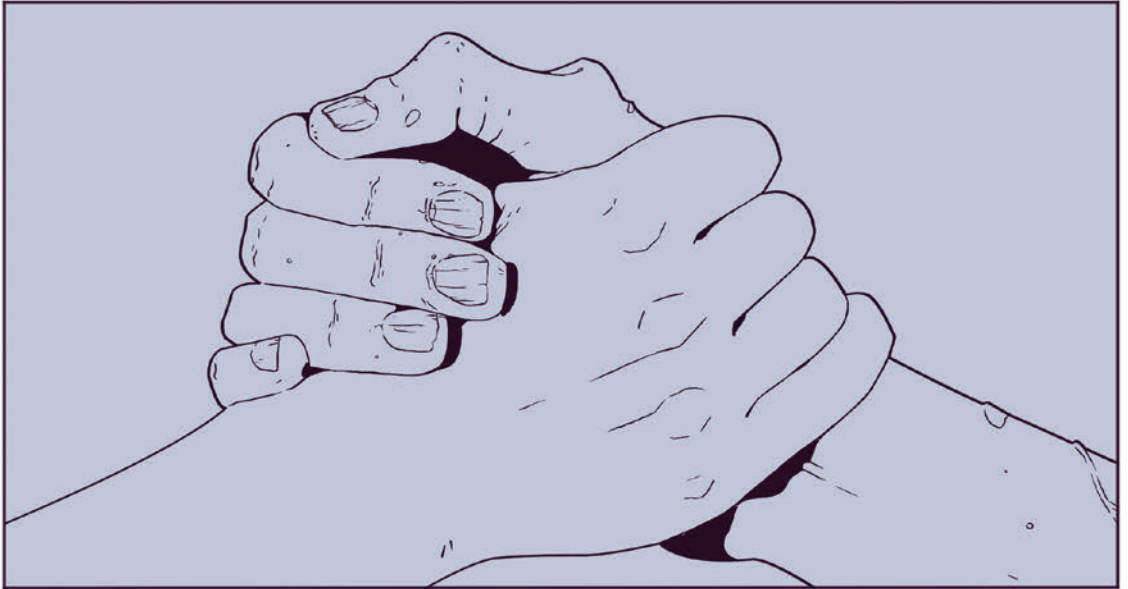












MY PARENTS LOVED ME, THEY SAID I WAS THEIR "GIFT FROM GOD", THEN AS I GOT OLDER IT WAS PRETTY OBVIOUS I WASN'T WHAT THEY EXPECTED OF THEIR SON

WHEN I CAME OUT, ACTUALLY WHEN I WAS FOUND OUT I WAS KICKED OUT, I WAS HOMELESS AND ALONE, NO ONE WOULD HELP ME. I WENT FROM A BIG HOUSE TO THE STREETS.

MY FIRST BREAK CAME WHEN A SHELTER TOOK ME IN AND I EVENTUALLY GOT A PART TIME JOB AT THE DOLLAR STORE WHERE I MET PETE

PETE WAS AMAZING, HE WAS JUST A LITTLE OLDER THAN ME BUT HAD A PLACE OF HIS OWN, AND EVEN AN ADORABLE DOG NAMED ANDREW

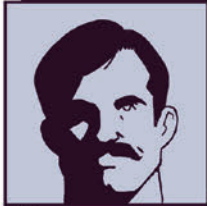
WE STARTED DATING AND WE MOVED PRETTY QUICK.

WE WERE TOGETHER FOR THREE YEARS UNTIL HE GOT SICK, THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN HE WAS GONE. IT WAS SO FAST.

HE JUST WASTED AWAY. HIS FAMILY WANTED NOTHING TO DO WITH HIM.

I BURIED HIM WITH WHAT FRIENDS WE HAD LEFT, THEN RIGHT AFTER I STARTED TO GET SICK.

I LOST OUR APARTMENT, GAVE ANDREW AWAY TO MY NEIGHBOR AND ENDED UP HERE





I CALLED MY MOM, SHE HUNG UP ON ME,
WHO HANGS UP ON THEIR SON WHEN
THEY CALL FROM THEIR DEATH BED!

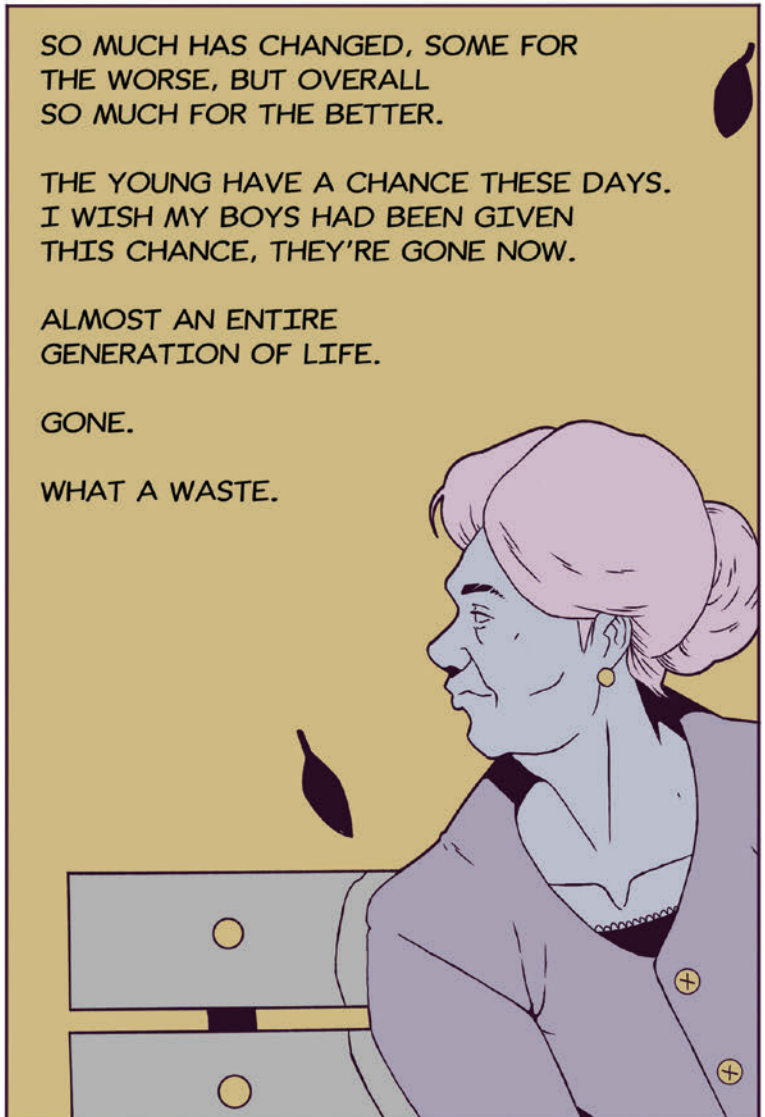


A PRETTY CRAPPY
MOM I WOULD SAY

BUT RIGHT NOW
YOU'RE NOT ALONE,
REMEMBER THAT



NOW.



SO MUCH HAS CHANGED, SOME FOR
THE WORSE, BUT OVERALL
SO MUCH FOR THE BETTER.

THE YOUNG HAVE A CHANCE THESE DAYS.
I WISH MY BOYS HAD BEEN GIVEN
THIS CHANCE, THEY'RE GONE NOW.

ALMOST AN ENTIRE
GENERATION OF LIFE.

GONE.

WHAT A WASTE.



I'M A MOTHER NOW, A GRANDMOTHER
EVEN.

LIFE HAS BEEN GOOD.

THERE'S BEEN DARK TIMES BUT WE
GOT THROUGH IT.

WELL SOME OF US DID.



LOOK
GRANDMA!!!



OH I SEE
YOU DEAR!

IN THE END I COULDN'T DO MUCH,
BUT THE PROUDEST THING I CAN SAY I DID FOR THEM WAS LISTEN.
AND I REMEMBER.



I REMEMBER ALL MY BOYS.



FIN



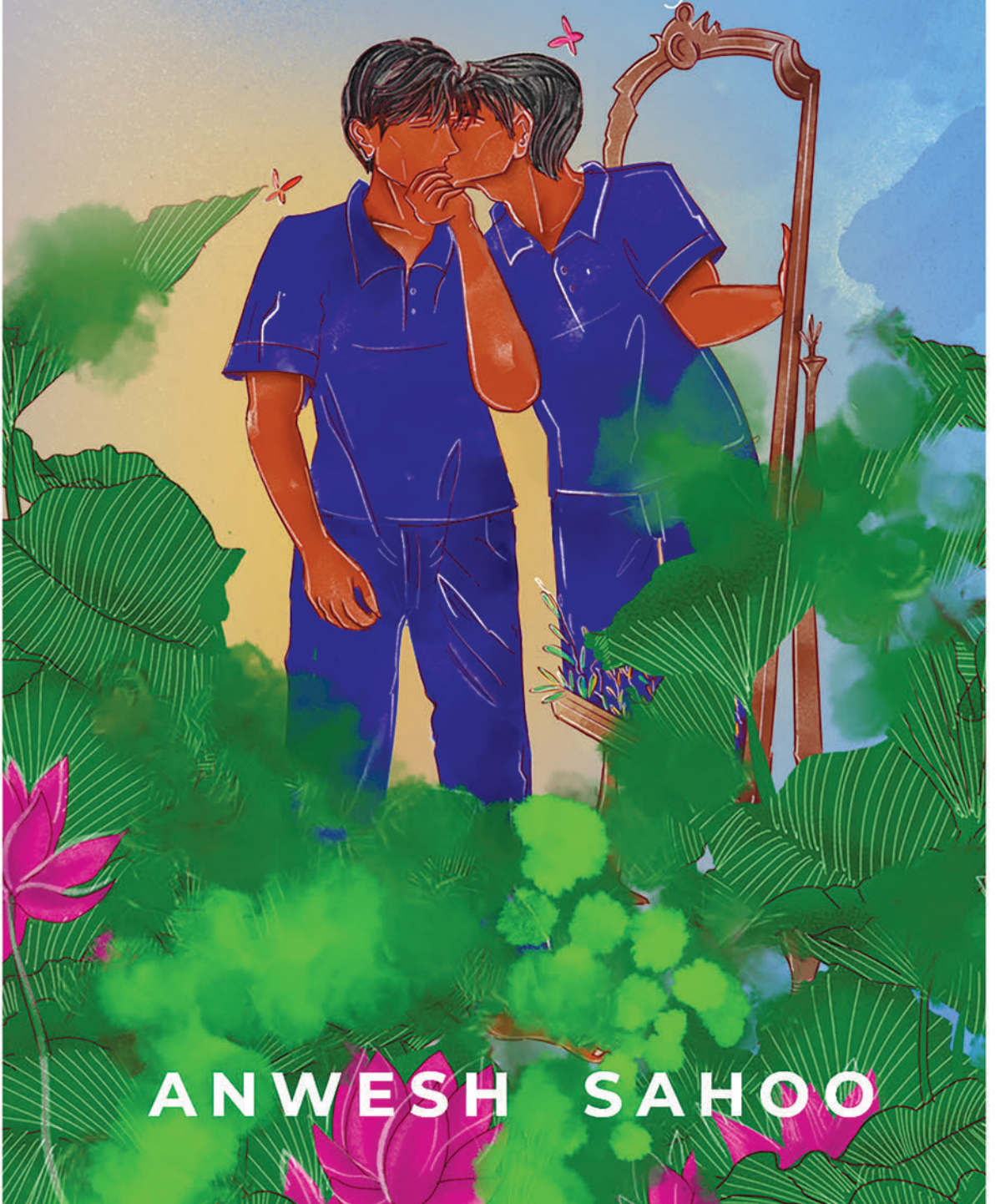
FROM THE ARTIST

The topic of HIV and caring for those struggling with it reminded me of stories I had heard about (mostly) lesbians working at hospice facilities in the '80s/'90s that took horrible abuse from people who were scared and left to die alone. These women continued to show up and be there for these people, showing empathy and compassion to them when no one else would.

***EFFEMINATED:
UNDER THE
LUCKY STAR***
BY
ANWESH SAHOO

Effeminared

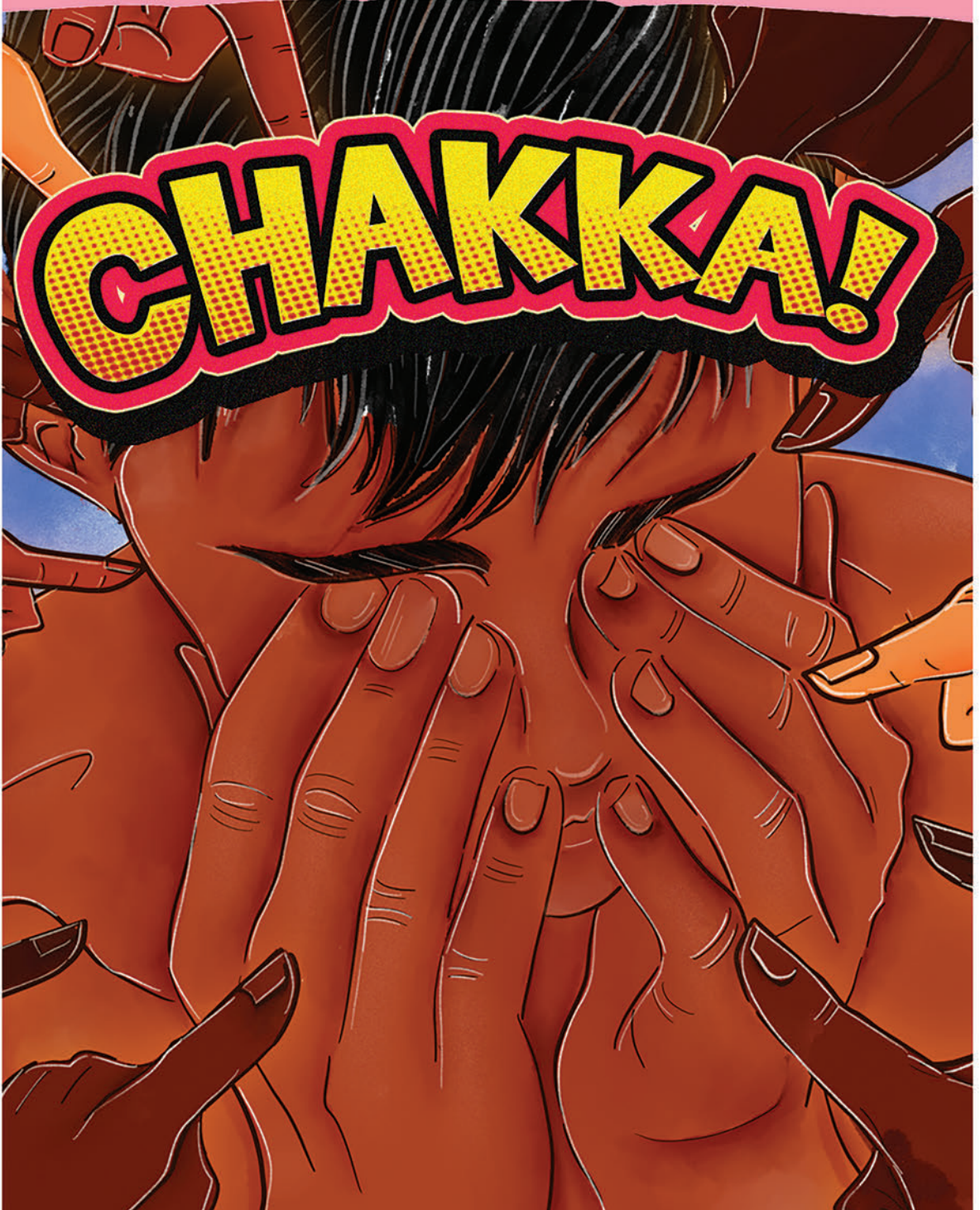
Under the lucky star!



ANWESH SAHOO

"AYE ANAY! ANURUP SAYS ANAY TOH CLASS KA SABSE BADA CHAKKA HAI! (ANURUP SAYS, ANAY IS OUR CLASSROOM'S GREATEST CHAKKA!)", SAID AALIN AND THE ENTIRE CLASS BURST OUT IN LAUGHTER.

ANAY WAS DUMBFUNDED! HE WAS MORE SO IN A STATE OF SHOCK BECAUSE HE BELIEVED AALIN WAS HIS GOOD FRIEND. THINGS HAD CHANGED SINCE ANURUP MOVED INTO THE CITY, HE WAS THE NEW BOY IN THE CLASSROOM, AND SUDDENLY THE BOYS WERE NO MORE BOYS, THEY WERE GROWING UP TO BE LITTLE MEN. TEARS ROLLED DOWN ANAY'S EYES, AND IT ALMOST SEEMED LIKE THE BEGINNING OF THE END.



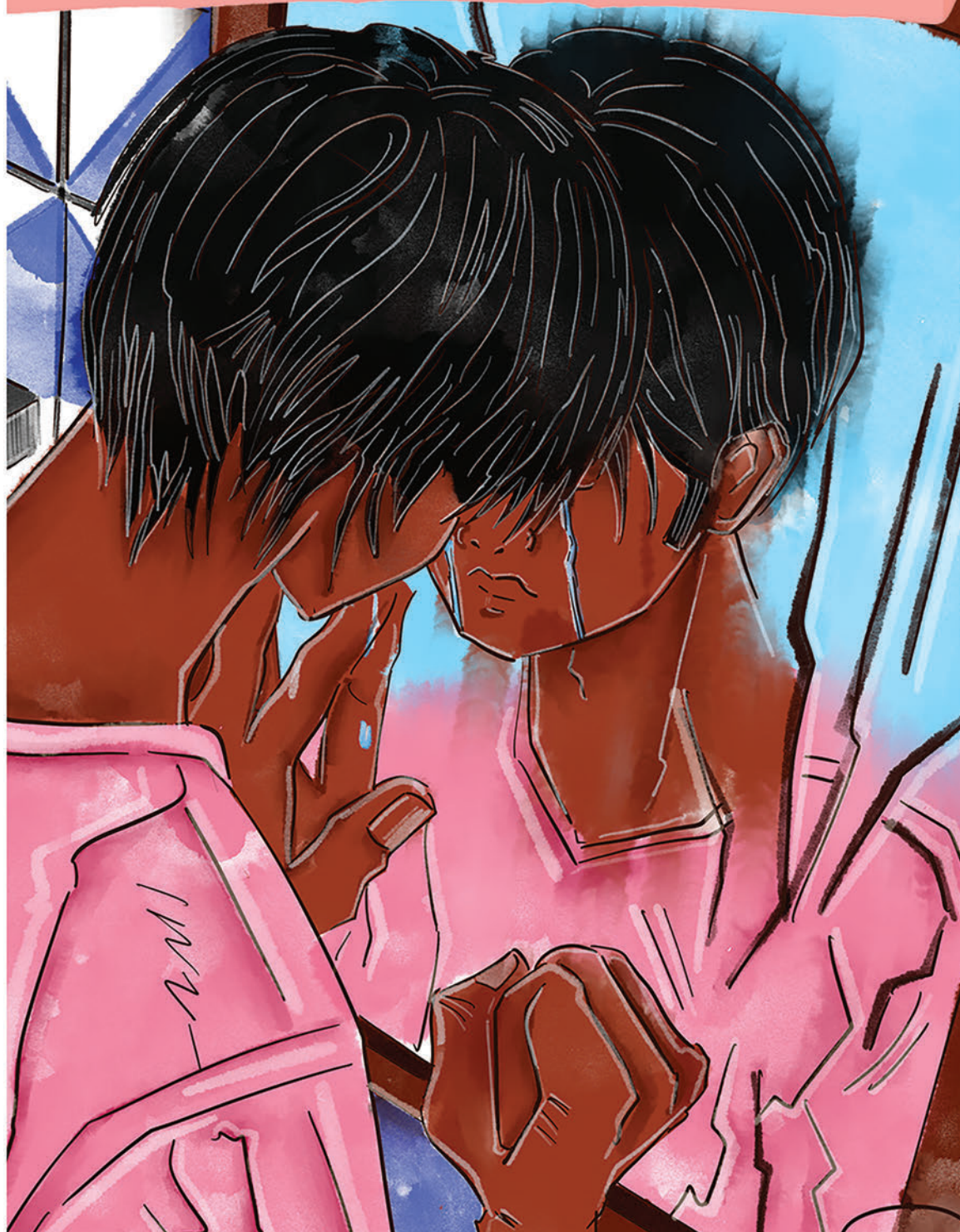
ANAY WAS REMINDED OF THE TIME WITH HIS UNCLE WHEN HE LEARNED ABOUT BEING A 'CHAKKA'- A DEROGATORY TERM USED TO REFER TO THE TRANS COMMUNITY IN INDIA. THE TERM ALSO REFERS TO THE THIRD GENDER, BEING CONSIDERED NEITHER COMPLETELY MALE NOR FEMALE. POPULAR MEDIA IN INDIA HAS FURTHER POPULARIZED THIS IDEA OF 'THE THIRD GENDER' BEING INCOMPLETE INDIVIDUALS OR BEING CONFUSED ABOUT THEIR GENDER IDENTITY.

BEING A CHAKKA IS
A CURSE, ANAY!

THE WORST THAT
COULD HAPPEN TO
SOMEONE!



EVERYTHING CHANGED THAT DAY. IT DIDN'T MATTER HOW WELL ANAY WAS DOING IN CLASS ANYMORE, OR HOW MANY AWARDS HE WAS WINNING! HE WAS NOW THE 'CHAKKA' OF THE CLASS. ANAY GREW UP IN A SIMPLE CONSERVATIVE INDIAN FAMILY, AND WAS OFTEN LOOKED DOWN UPON FOR TALKING 'LIKE A GIRL', AS SANIDHYA'S MOTHER WOULD SAY. NONE OF IT EVER MADE ANY SENSE TO ANAY. ANAY WAS TALKING LIKE ANAY. ANAY WAS RUNNING LIKE ANAY. ANAY WAS THINKING LIKE ANAY. AND WHY WAS TALKING LIKE A GIRL A BAD THING ANYWAY? ANAY WAS AN ARTSY KID. HE LOVED TO PAINT, TO DANCE, TO SING, WINNING AWARDS LEFT, RIGHT AND CENTRE. ANAY WAS HIS PARENT'S CHAMPION, BUT SOMEHOW NEVER ENOUGH FOR THE WORLD.



THE NEXT MONTH ANAY AND HIS CLASSMATES WERE TO HEAD TO NAINITAL FOR A SCHOOL TRIP. IT WAS AWKWARD FROM THE GET GO. ANAY HAD SUDDENLY BECOME A KID THAT NO ONE WANTED TO BE AROUND, EXCEPT FOR A FEW GIRLFRIENDS HE HAD. THEY WERE THE ONLY SILVER LINING, REALLY. THEIR CLASS COORDINATOR DECIDED TO TAKE CHARGE OF THE SEATING, AND REQUESTED FOR ANAY AND ANURUP TO SIT TOGETHER. ANURUP WOULDN'T STOP VERBALLY ABUSING ANAY THE ENTIRE TIME. ANAY WAS SITTING RIGHT THERE, DUMFOUNDED AGAIN, NOTHING TO SAY, NOWHERE TO GO, HE WAS DEVASTATED.



ANAY FELT LIKE A SHARD JUST PIERCED THROUGH HIM, HE WAS ALREADY DYING A LITTLE EVERYDAY. HE WAS STARTING TO FALL INTO THE RABBIT HOLE. ALL ANAY ASKED FOR WAS A LITTLE BIT OF KINDNESS, A LITTLE BIT OF COMPASSION, BECAUSE AREN'T WE ALL MISFITS IN SOME WAY? HOW IS IT THEN THAT WE CANNOT APPRECIATE OUR UNIQUENESS? PERHAPS IT WAS TOO MUCH TO ASK. IT WAS 11 PM, AND ANAY MADE A WISH!



MAYBE IT IS MY FAULT! WHY WOULD HE CALL ME GAY? JUST BECAUSE I'M FEMME? WHY IS BEING EFFEMINATE A BAD THING ANYWAY?



IF THERE WAS A FORCE ABOVE US, I HOPE I COULD GO OFF TO SLEEP, AND NEVER WAKE UP AGAIN!

HE DID WAKEUP HOWEVER. HIS EYES WIDE OPEN, HE FOUND AN ICY BLUE UNICORN RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM. THE UNICORN IN FACT STARTED TALKING TO HIM! ANAY, COMPLETELY PERPLEXED, WAS CONVINCED HE WAS INDEED IN HEAVEN. THE UNICORN HAD GORGEOUS PASTEL BLUE FEATHERS, AND HIS FACE ADORNED WITH GOLDEN JEWELS AND PEARLS, TAIL SO LONG AND LUSCIOUS, HE'D GIVE RAPUNZEL A RUN FOR HER MONEY!



HEY ANAY! I'M TUKTUKI,
PLEASED TO MEET YOU,
KID. IT'S TIME FOR A
CHANGE! HOP ON!

HOW ARE YOU TALKING?!
AND YOU'VE GOT WINGS,
AND YOU'RE BLUE!!! OKAY,
I'M CONVINCED I AM
INDEED IN HEAVEN.

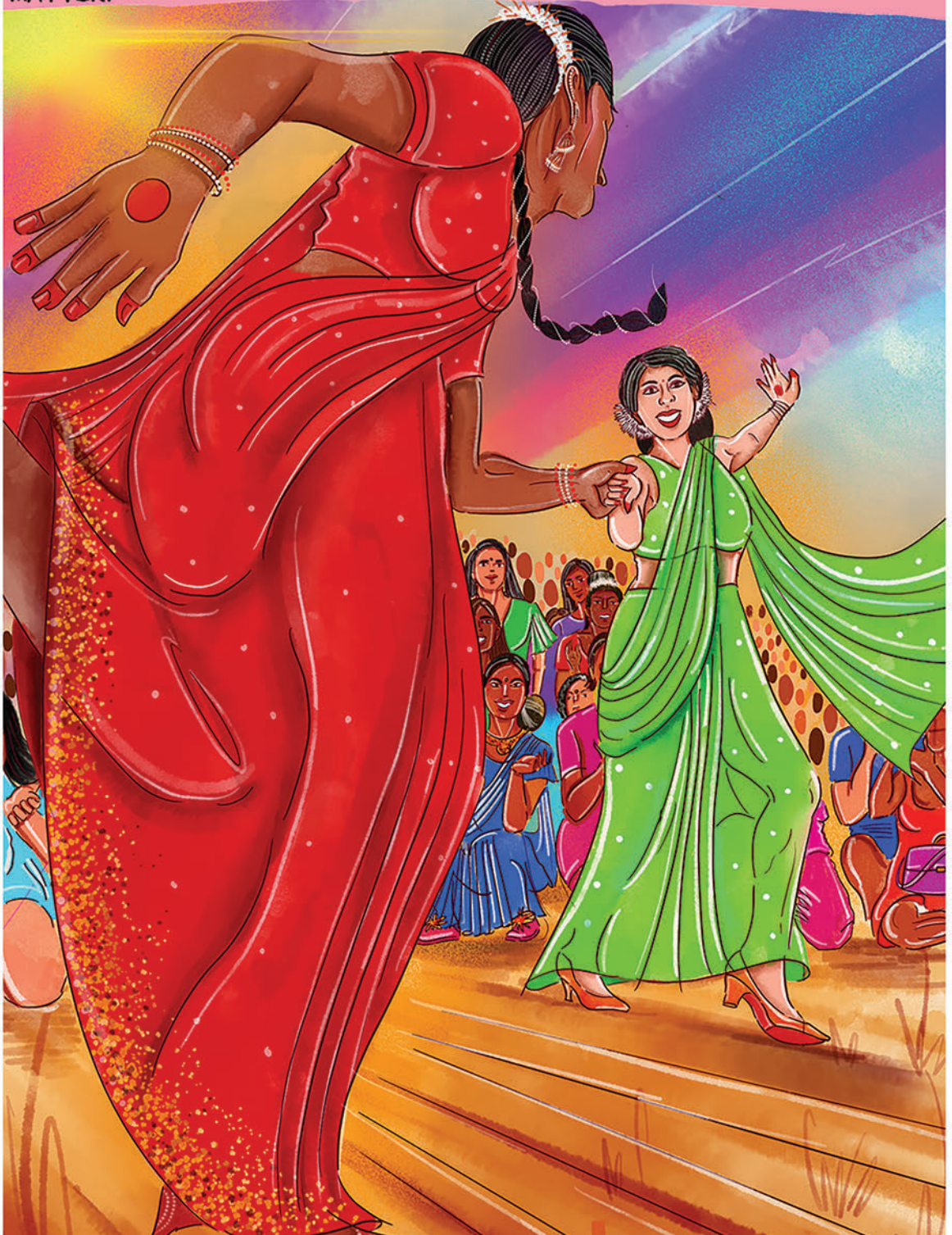
THEY FLEW ALL THE WAY TO A CANDY COLORED FANTASY LAND. THE GATES READ "HIJRA HABBA".

TUKTUKI EXPLAINED TO ANAY HOW HIJRA HABBA WAS A CELEBRATION OF LIFE. A REMINDER THAT HE BELONGED. ANAY ENTERED THE GATE WHERE HE WAS GREETED BY SARITA TAYI. ANAY RECOGNISED HER INSTANTLY, AND SHARED HOW INSPIRING SHE WAS TO HIM.

SARITA TAYI TOOK KIDS OF SEX WORKERS ALL ACROSS INDIA WHO LOST THEIR MOTHERS, UNDER HER WINGS. SHE WAS A QUEER ICON, BUSTLING WITH ENERGY!



HIJRA HABBA WAS TRULY THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WORLD EVER! TRANS WOMEN FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE CAME TOGETHER, ADORNED IN BEAUTIFUL SAREES, DANCED TOGETHER, SANG TOGETHER, SHARED STORIES TOGETHER, AND ABOVE ALL CREATED A SAFE SPACE FOR QUEER KIDS LIKE ANAY. HE WAS OVERJOYED WITH EXCITEMENT AND GRATITUDE, HE COULDN'T BELIEVE HE WAS FINALLY IN A PLACE WHERE HE FELT SAFE, WHERE HE WASN'T JUDGED. HE MET QUEER KIDS LIKE HIM FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE THERE, AND HE HAD SO MUCH TO SHARE. HE ALMOST FORGOT HOW MOMENTS AGO, HE DIDN'T WANT TO LIVE ANYMORE, IN FACT HE WASN'T EVEN SURE IF THIS WAS REAL, AND HONESTLY IT DIDN'T MATTER.



ANAY WAS SIMPLY ENAMOURSED WITH THIS WORLD, WHEN HE FOUND A MIRROR IN THE MIDDLE OF A LOTUS SWAMP. HE WALKED RIGHT THROUGH THE LOTUSES AND STOOD IN FRONT OF HIS REFLECTION, WHEN HIS REFLECTION LOOKED INTO HIS EYES AND SAID, "HEY ANAY! REMEMBER THAT ALL THAT YOU SEE HERE IS VALID. YOUR DREAMS ARE VALID, YOU ARE VALID! NEVER LET ANYONE MAKE YOU FEEL ANY LESSER. THIS LIFE IS A GIFT, VALUE IT, CHERISH IT. HIS REFLECTION PEEPED OUT OF THE MIRROR, HELD ANAY'S FACE AND GAVE HIM A KISS.

ANAY HAD TEARS OF JOY. FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, HE FELT BEAUTIFUL!



HE WAS OVERWHELMED WITH HOPE AND LOVE AND EXTENDED HIS ARMS OUT TO EMBRACE HIS REFLECTION, WHEN THE FLOOR BENEATH HIM SLID THROUGH, INTO A FREE FALL, AND A BIG THUMP!



HIS EYES WIDE OPEN, LOOKING TO HIS LEFT, TO HIS RIGHT. ANAY WAS BACK IN HIS ROOM, ON HIS BED, EYES STILL WET. HE WIPED HIS TEARS OFF, ROLLED TO HIS SIDE, EMBRACED HIS STUFFED UNICORN TOY, SHUT HIS EYES DOWN AND WENT BACK TO SLEEP.



ILLUSTRATED AND PENNED WITH WITH LOVE, LIGHT AND RAINBOW.

*When life gives you lemons,
you've got to make a lovely pink lemonade, no?*





FROM THE ARTIST

This comic is loosely inspired by some of my own experiences and shows how the queer Indian world helped me understand queerness under the local Indian context and the trans women who changed my perspective of the outer world and taught me to respect myself first. Growing up as a complete misfit, I wondered what a utopian world would look like, and my longing led me to the world of *Effeminare*, a Latin word that traditionally associates itself with femininity and effeminacy, and I had this desire to take away the stigma from the one thing that was used to pull me down. *Effeminated* is a reminder that a little bit of compassion, a little bit of love, and a little bit of acceptance are all one needs to find belonging and happiness and that sometimes that little bit of love and self-belief could begin with *you*.

OPEN WOUNDS

BY

JAY PAHRE



There's this place in the middle of a hundred miles of corn in any direction, and from up above, it looks like a blight, or a wound.

One of a series of pockmarks on the ground.

A mark in this swath of waving stalks of sweetcorn.

That place is my hometown.



It's the kind of place where you're just as likely to see an Amish horse-and-buggy clopping down the road

as you are to see a packed drag show on a Friday night.



Except

the gay bar burned down three times in the time I lived there.

Each time, the charred wood and brick left a black, sooty mark.

Another blight, another mark, of a community hurting.

Once or twice it was arson.

Another time they weren't sure.

I never heard if the investigations went anywhere, but each time the bar got rebuilt.

Each time the community gathered, mourned, and built back the space again.



Hearing about that building getting burned down and rebuilt again and again was the only connection to the queer and trans community I had for a long time.

Growing up there, realizing I was trans and queer, it took some doing.

Surrounded by guys driving big farm equipment and playing football

Seeing it in the paper, the way things are siloed in my hometown, you don't think about those things as connecting to you until it hits you in the face.

there hadn't been a masculinity I felt I could explore, that was for me.

I worked at the horse farms, sketched, and liked to hide in the hayloft with kittens on my lap in the wintertime.

It felt like a gap, a big yawning wound, between a masc-ness I was leaning towards and the masc-ness I was seeing in my peers.


But you feel this pull, in that gap within you, pulling from that wound.

that might make things easier

and each shot takes a piece of you out instead.

You shoot, again and again, in a direction that might make things right

It felt like a wound that I was opening up and trying to mend again and again.



Left like it is,
those pieces, leaving
that open wound,
it festers.

You put a bandaid
on it, or you try
something else.

The wound still festers.

It becomes poisonous,
filled with pus, infected,
rots, and that corrodes at
the healthy flesh around it
until it feels like there's
nothing un wounded left.

But, there is this thing with wounds.

It's a breaching of the skin.

Our skin is a porous membrane.

it's this organ that surrounds
our body, that mediates how we
respond to the world.

It responds to temperature, to the
weather, to other bodies.

It notices when we're
close to another person,
when we're sharing space
with someone- or
something- else.

Sometimes before our brains do.



At some point, I realized I was trans, and queer, but looking at my body, I still felt that gap.

I bundled up, wore too-big old plaid flannels, sometimes as many as six layers of shirts.

One of those days, wearing four shirts and on the verge of starting college, I mustered up the guts to go to the LGBT Center on campus for the first time.

I remember going three floors up this campus building

round corner after corner

Until I finally found this small room at the end of a long hallway.

The walls were covered in flags

the couch looked like it had been there since the dawn of time

and there was a huge library full of more books by queer and trans authors than I'd ever seen before in my life.

When she heard me arrive, the director came out, greeted me, and told me about the space.

Most of the students hadn't come back from summer yet, so the place was quieter than normal.

Usually the small room would be full of five, ten, twenty people at once.

It turns out the resource center used to be a utility closet, so there were a lot of running closet jokes about the space.

But here was another place, a corner dug out by some incredible people, for community to gather.



As the semester started, people started coming to the center more and more.

I was the only trans person there at the time, but that didn't matter.

We were all there because something had happened.

Some had been disowned, or run away.

Some weren't out yet.

Some were struggling with alcohol, or with drugs.

Some were lonely, or had learned something about themselves late in life and were feeling like they were making up for lost time.

But we were all finding those hurts, or those gaps, in ourselves, and realizing, maybe, just maybe, they weren't just wounds at all.

We'd be sitting with that raw feeling, deep in our heart, that rotten feeling settled in our gut, and somehow, something would change.

There'd be one day where someone was spilling their guts out over such-and-such that had happened, and suddenly there'd be more people in the space.

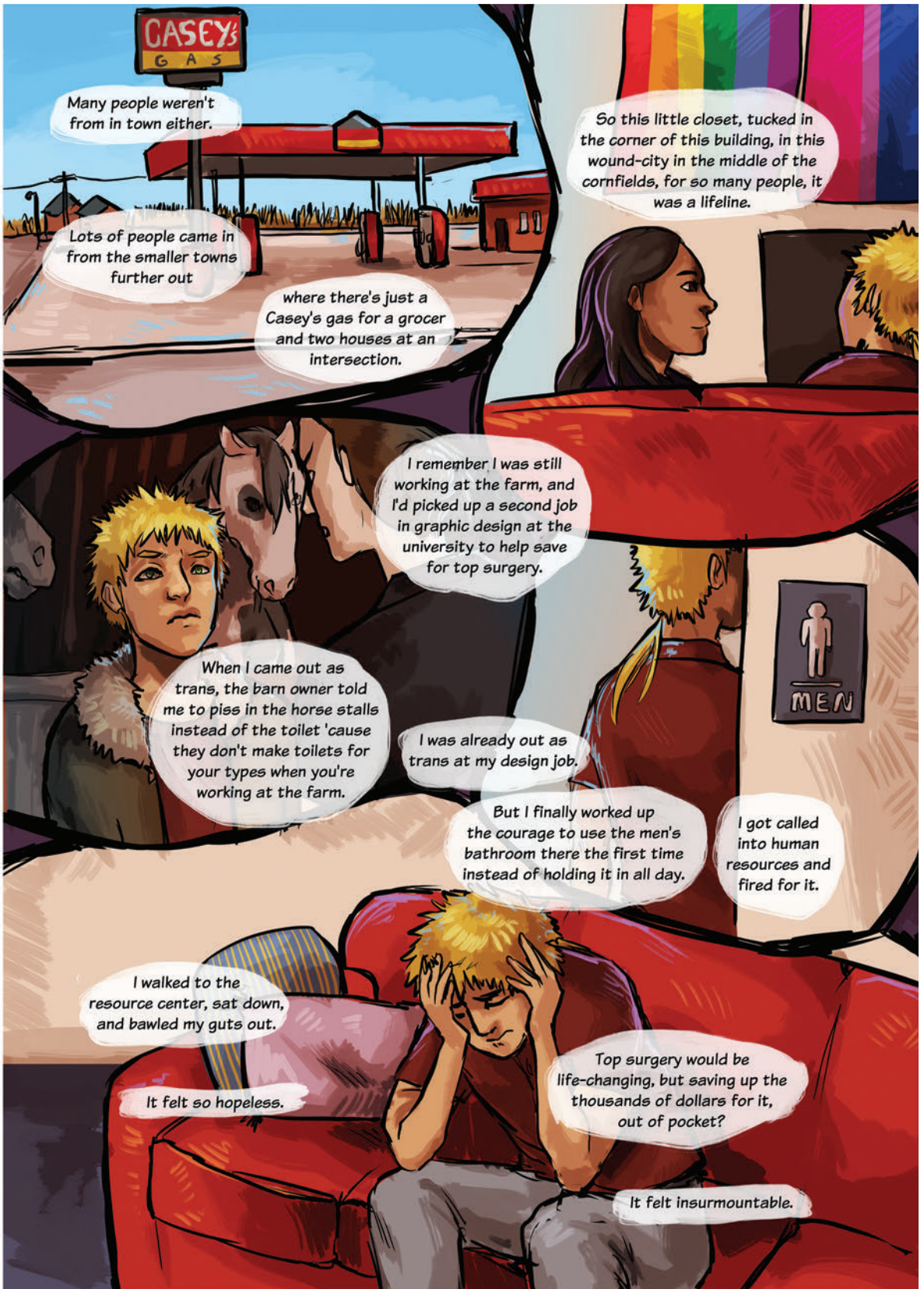
More people listening, bearing witness to that hurt.

And reaching out too.

With offerings of their own, from that same spot inside them.

It was a shared vulnerability.

An acknowledgment that though those wounds were each different, it was a place where connection could happen, too.



Many people weren't from in town either.

Lots of people came in from the smaller towns further out

where there's just a Casey's gas for a grocer and two houses at an intersection.

So this little closet, tucked in the corner of this building, in this wound-city in the middle of the cornfields, for so many people, it was a lifeline.

I remember I was still working at the farm, and I'd picked up a second job in graphic design at the university to help save for top surgery.

When I came out as trans, the barn owner told me to piss in the horse stalls instead of the toilet 'cause they don't make toilets for your types when you're working at the farm.

I was already out as trans at my design job.

But I finally worked up the courage to use the men's bathroom there the first time instead of holding it in all day.

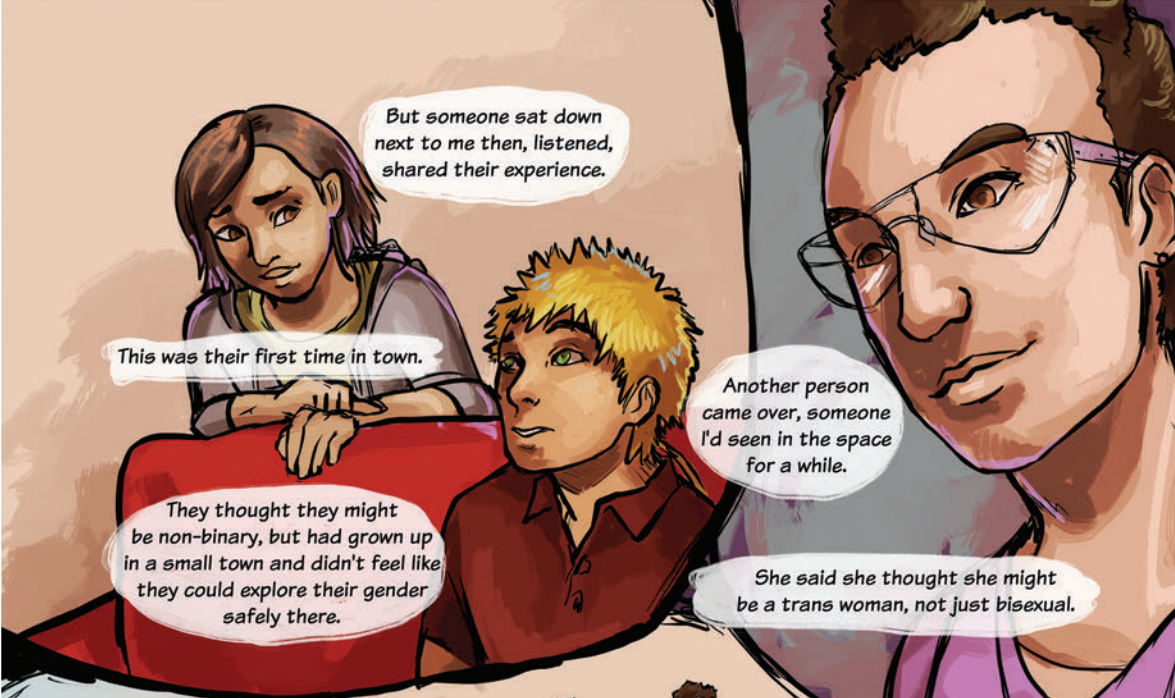
I got called into human resources and fired for it.

I walked to the resource center, sat down, and bawled my guts out.

It felt so hopeless.

Top surgery would be life-changing, but saving up the thousands of dollars for it, out of pocket?

It felt insurmountable.




But someone sat down next to me then, listened, shared their experience.

This was their first time in town.

They thought they might be non-binary, but had grown up in a small town and didn't feel like they could explore their gender safely there.

Another person came over, someone I'd seen in the space for a while.


She said she thought she might be a trans woman, not just bisexual.



We sat and chatted for hours.

We talked about how there weren't enough gender-neutral bathrooms on campus.

How frustrating it was that insurance didn't cover HRT or gender affirming surgeries.



The next semester, the first trans student organization on campus formed.



From doing a single-stall bathroom audit of the campus

to getting trans-inclusive healthcare on the student plan

and bringing in more trans speakers

the student organization's actions felt urgent, timely, and like they were for the community.

We caught a lot of friction, a lot of setbacks, but over the years, gradually, things got better.


We got medical care.

We got gender inclusive restrooms.

We could exist in public openly, as who we were.


To raise funds for the community, we worked with a few local drag queens and other organizations to do a trans community fundraiser drag show at the queer bar in town-

-but the place had burned down again.



It was this moment of realizing, that though things were changing, and spaces were feeling better, or safer- there was still work to be done.

There will always be work still to be done.



Sometimes those reminders of the work to be done are real tragedies.

Sometimes they're moments of sadness or isolation.

But each of those reminders

it strikes something inside you

hits in the ground next to what you thought you were aiming for.

It's a hurt, but it's also a connection, and a shift in perspective.

Sometimes burned down ruins are just burned down ruins.

Sometimes a closet is just a closet.

Sometimes a cut in your chest is just a cut in your chest.

And sometimes, they're something else entirely.





FROM THE ARTIST

For this project, I was given the theme of *Open Wounds*, which considers how areas of hurt, while painful, can also be areas of connection or affirmation for 2SLGBTQ+ people. I wanted to follow the idea of a wound as something both literal, such as top surgery scars, and abstract, such as the experience of losing friends, family, or a career when coming out. This comic seemed like a wonderful opportunity to recognize and honor the ways that the 2SLGBTQ+ community in my hometown lifted itself up despite ongoing resistance and how community spaces were—and continue to be—places of care, compassion, and support. These places by and for community, where you can share vulnerabilities, come together, and reimagine what it might mean to be queer or trans, are places of radical potential. In making this comic, I was interested in the way in which the panels themselves might reference wounds and pores on one's skin, areas where one body is breached and touches another, as a way of thinking about the literal points of connection these stories, places, and people could have with one another.

*MAYOR GLITTER
SAVES THE DAY*

BY

FABIEN LUTZ-BARABÉ

Mayor Glitter Saves the Day

By: Fabien Barabé

SINCE MOVING TO THIS TOWN I'VE SEEN A LOT OF HOMOPHOBIC STICKERS ON CARS SO I'M NERVOUS ABOUT PUTTING UP MY RAINBOW FLAG.



MAYBE I NEED TO BE LESS GAY HERE?



I ALSO NEED A JOB! I SHOULD GO DOWN TO CITY HALL AND SEE IF THEY HAVE ANY JOB POSTINGS AVAILABLE.

LATER THAT AFTERNOON AT CITY HALL



CRAIG, IT'S SO NICE TO MEET YOU! WELCOME TO THE TOWN, MY NAME IS GREG BUT LOTS OF FOLK JUST CALL ME MAYOR GLITTER. MY HUSBAND AND I HOST A BBQ EVERY SATURDAY. WHY DON'T YOU COME AND I CAN INTRODUCE YOU AROUND?



THANK YOU, THAT'S VERY KIND OF YOU.

THE FOLLOWING SATURDAY AT
MAYOR GLITTER'S HOME.



THERE'S NOT A HUGE QUEER REPRESENTATION HERE SO WE NEED TO LIFT EACH OTHER UP AND EMPOWER EACH OTHER WITH THE SKILLS TO TAKE ON THE WORLD.

IF YOU EVER FEEL UNSAFE, I CAN HELP. I'M NOT JUST THE MAYOR, I'M ALSO AN ADVOCATE FOR THE COMMUNITY.

CRAIG, THIS IS MY HUSBAND
KENT.

HI CRAIG, NICE TO
MEET YOU. WHAT DO
YOU DO FOR WORK?



I'M AN ARTIST.

WE'D LOVE TO SEE YOUR
WORK SOMETIME. WHY DON'T
YOU COME TO DINNER
TOMORROW EVENING AND
BRING YOUR ART PORTFOLIO?

THANK YOU, I LOOK
FORWARD TO IT.



THE NEXT EVENING AT
MAYOR GLITTER'S HOUSE

WOW, THESE
ARE INCREDIBLE
CRAIG!

AMAZING!

CRAIG, OUR TOWN IS IN NEED OF
SOME REVITALIZATION AND I'D LIKE
TO COMMISSION YOU FOR A MURAL
FOR THE TOWN HALL BUILDING.
PERHAPS SOMETHING TO SHOW OFF
OUR RAINBOW COLOURS?

THIS WOULD BE GREAT
FOR THE TOWN, IT
WOULD DEMONSTRATE
THAT WE ARE A MORE
PROGRESSIVE SMALL
TOWN. LET'S DO THIS
TOGETHER!

GEE, I DON'T
KNOW.

WELL, SINCE YOU PUT IT
THAT WAY, I AM HONOURED
AND LOOKING FORWARD TO
GETTING STARTED!

EXCELLENT!







CRAIG, THE COMMUNITY HAS RALLIED AND WE'RE HERE TO SUPPORT YOU. NOW LET'S LOVE BOMB THAT HATE SPEECH!



IT WAS OUR COMMUNITY SHOWING COMPASSION!



SO WITHIN THE QUEER COMMUNITY I THINK HAVING THOSE ROLE MODELS, HAVING ALLIES IN YOUR LIFE IS VERY HELPFUL. THE MAYOR REALLY SHOWED ME COMPASSION BY TAKING ME UNDER HIS WING AND MENTORING ME. THERE WAS RECOGNITION AND CONNECTION THROUGH THAT.

THE END



FROM THE ARTIST

When I was approached for this comic, I had to look back on myself when I was starting out as an artist. I knew full well, growing up in a small town, that acceptance of being “different” is not always looked upon favorably. Working on the brief outline for the six-page comic, I made sure that each moment of my character would show his anxiety about trying to fit in to the point of trying to conceal his “gayness.” With the help of the mayor and his husband along with the support of the community, Craig is made to feel welcome, which so many of us don’t often get.

*THE SUPPORT
GROUP*
BY
MAGNUS VAN DER MAREL

As Trans persons you can feel super isolated.

Maybe I could go.

I would have to go out...



It's close by!

But people would stare...

I think it could help!





I don't know if I can do this...

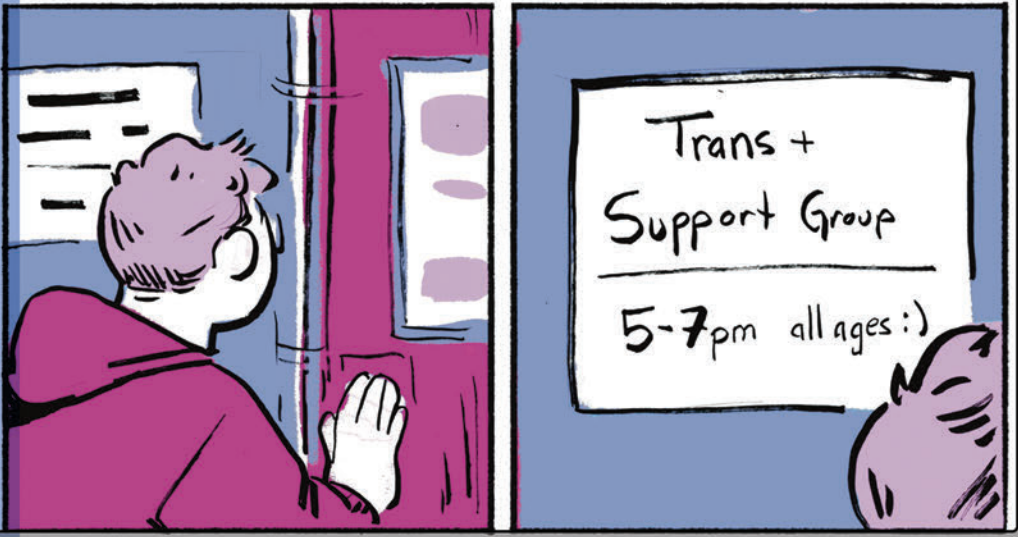
Everyone's looking at me...

Just breathe...



Almost there...

Just another block...



Trans +
Support Group
5-7pm all ages :)

...





They all seem really nice!

It's not just me!

This support group's been so helpful for me.

It's my first time at a meeting! I've just moved to this country.

They're just like me!

It was the first time I had ever been around so many other trans people,



I was so nervous and had so many questions.

You should join the online group too!



oh! I didn't know!

Everyone was so helpful and patient with all my questions.



That was so nice!



I can't wait for the next meeting!

So much of the support out there is from other trans people who're passing on what they've learned.



Handing information off to the next generation of people figuring themselves out.



ID CHANGE
SUPPORT
TODAY!

I found that immensely rewarding, to be a mentor to these young trans kiddos.



Making sure they knew they had at least one ally on their side.



Or even just being someone they could look up to.

Reach out.

It's hard.

But we
are here.





You can grow more when you have community around you.

It is important for us as humans to keep growing.



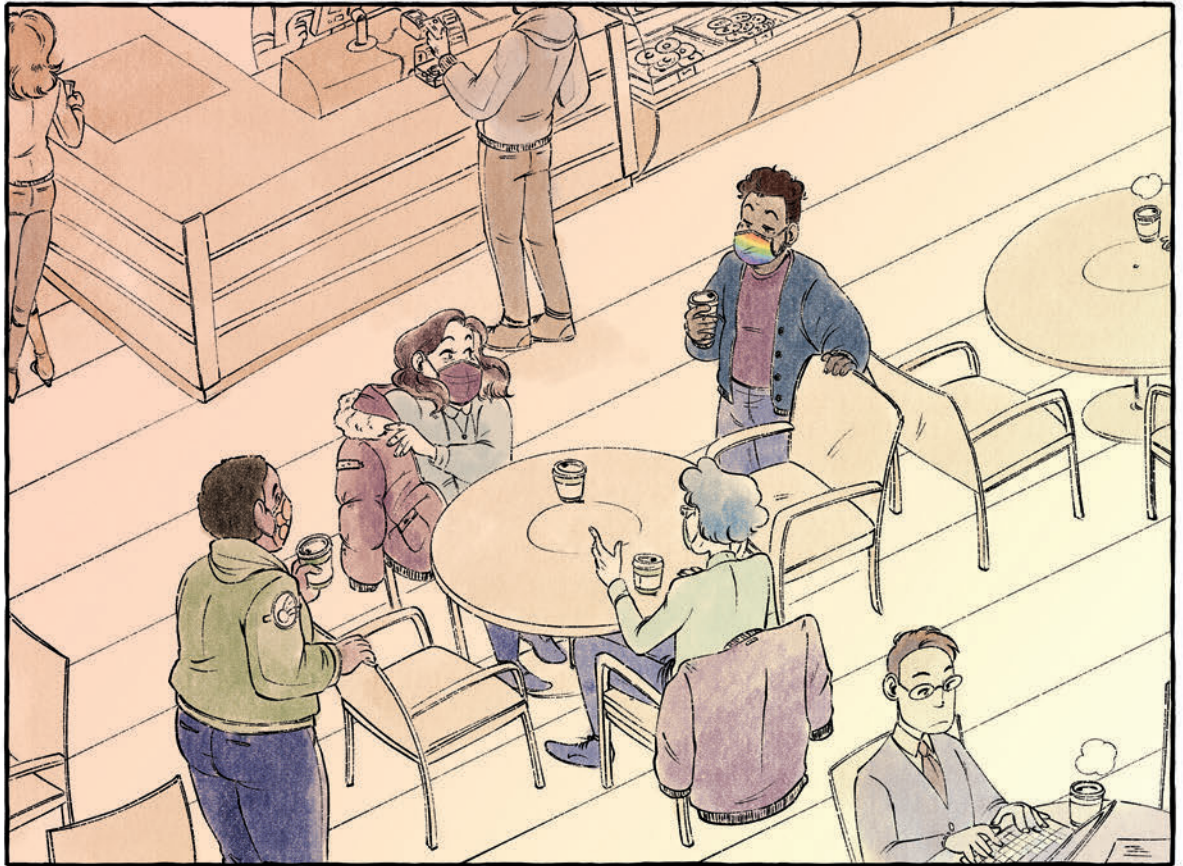
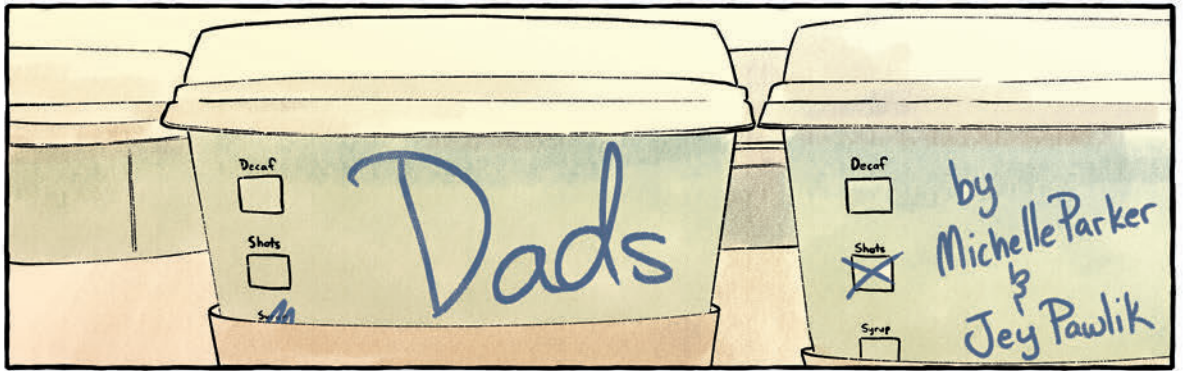
FROM THE ARTIST

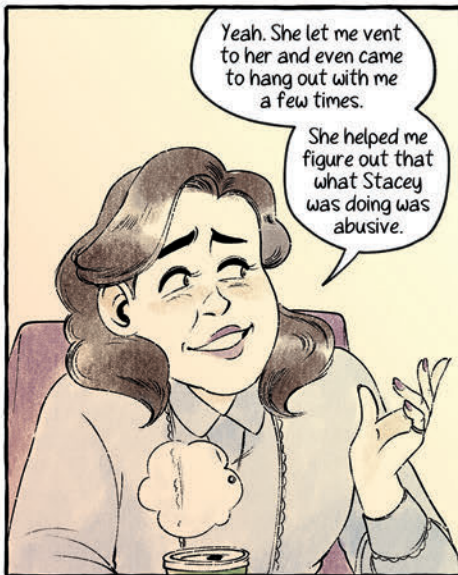
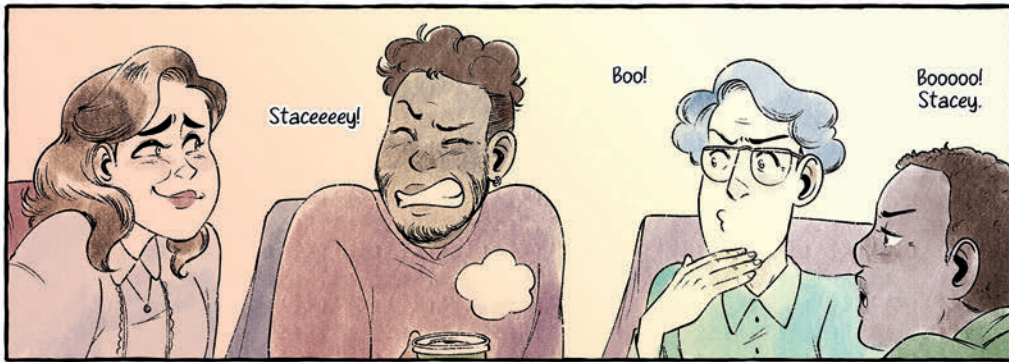
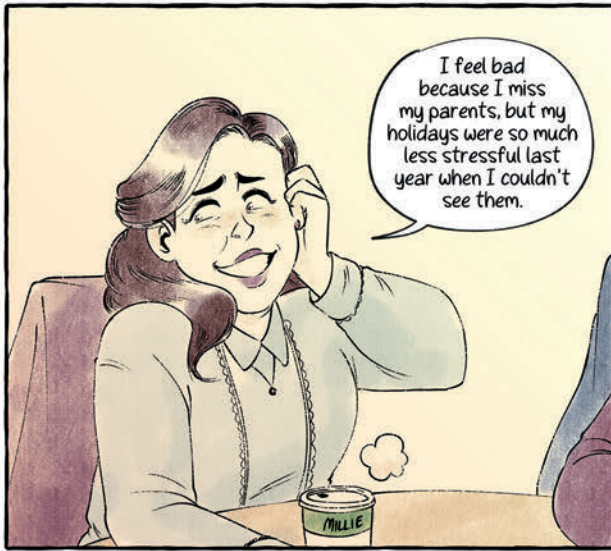
This comic is really about overcoming the feeling of isolation a lot of trans people feel and the big supportive network of people out there. The trans community is built on a lot of peer support and acts of compassion for people going through the same struggles, and I wanted to showcase that, especially as that was so important for me when I was starting out.

DADS

BY

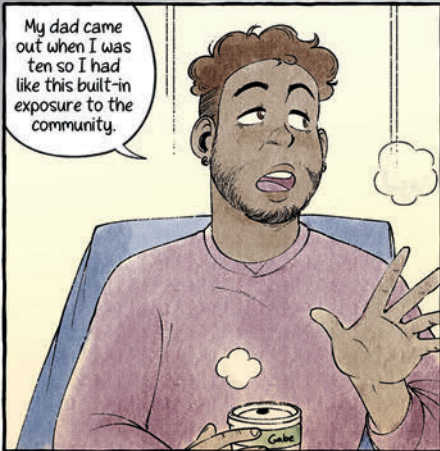
MICHELLE PARKER
AND JEY PAWLIK





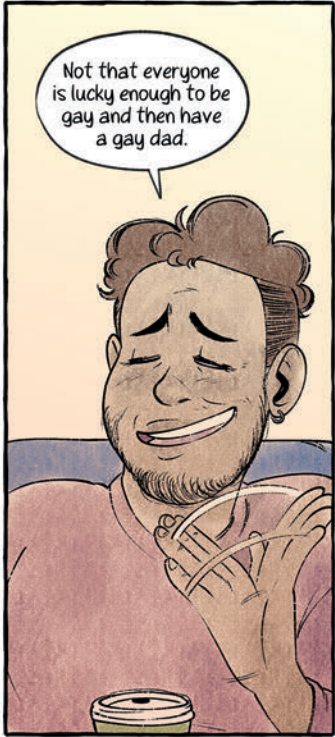
His big support was "don't tell my sisters or they'll make fun of you" when I said I was dating a woman.

Like, that was as good as it gets with him.

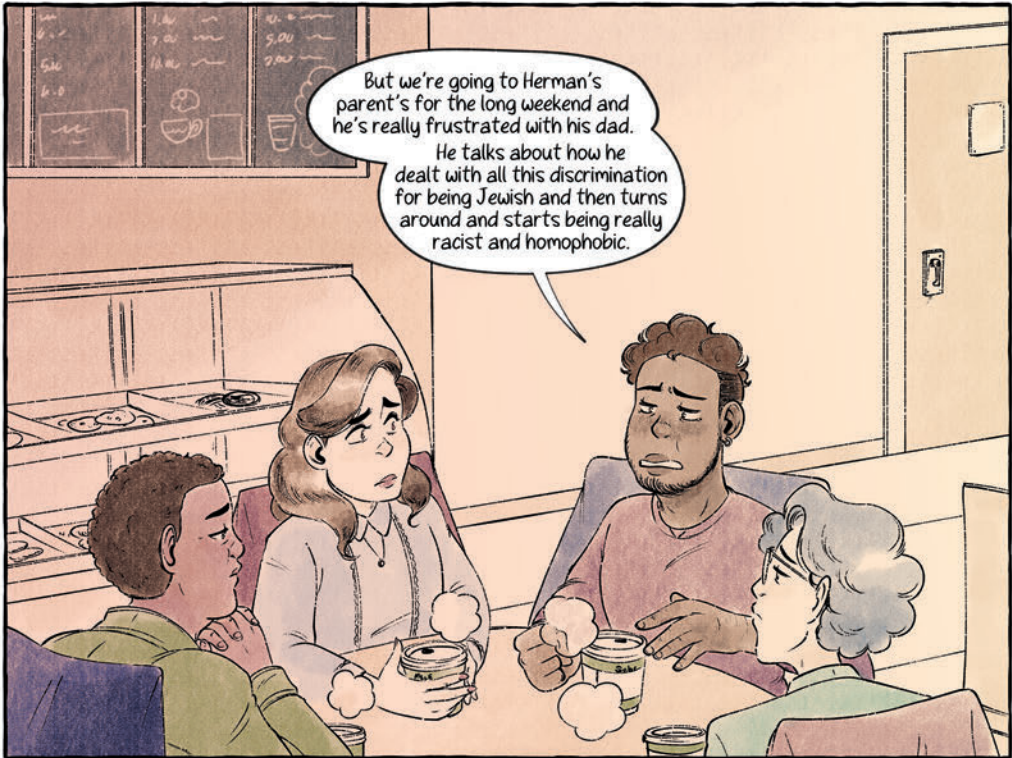




Seeing that in him, his recognition of who he was and who he wanted to love, helped me get to that space of recognition too.



Not that everyone is lucky enough to be gay and then have a gay dad.



But we're going to Herman's parent's for the long weekend and he's really frustrated with his dad. He talks about how he dealt with all this discrimination for being Jewish and then turns around and starts being really racist and homophobic.



This is the first year I've gone home since he died.

But towards the end, before he died, he had this epiphany. He opened up and realized that Danielle was someone's daughter. He apologized and was sad that he never got to know her. He even wanted to apologize to Danielle's mother!



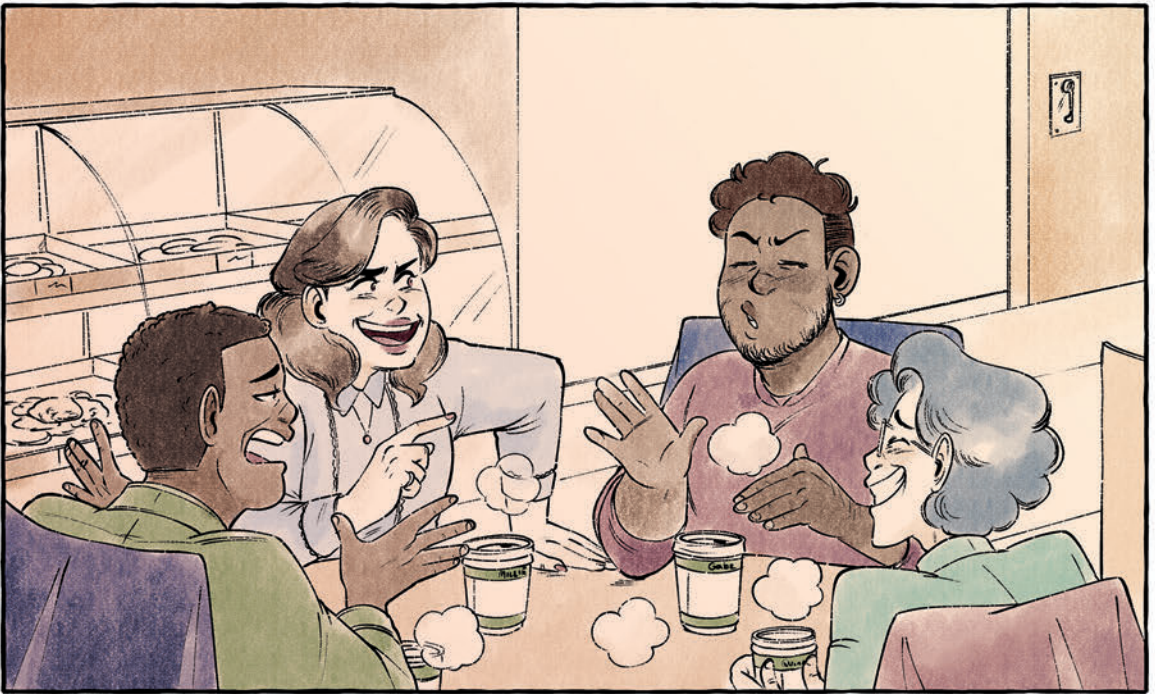
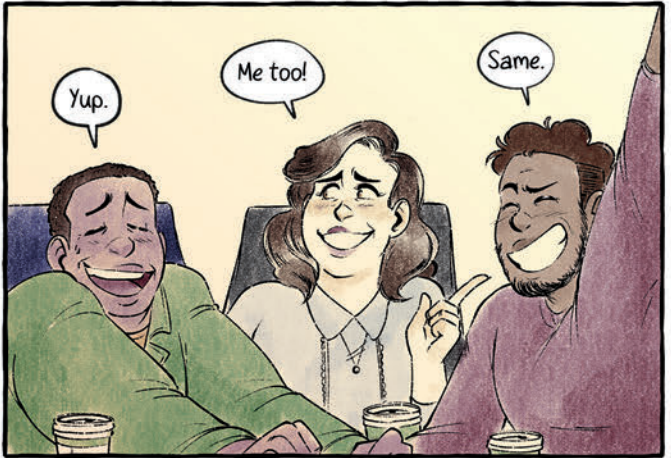


My Dad is like that - he was so caring and compassionate to people he knows, but then would say all these horrible racist and homophobic things.

It was so different from the person he was most of the time. I was like, "who is this man?"

It was difficult recognizing him as my father. But now his Alzheimers is so bad, he doesn't recognize me. I'm the only one allowed into the home right now and all I can do to look after him is to bring him chocolate fudge, and make sure he has music.

No matter what, he's still my Dad and I want to make sure he's happy. The only thing he gets any enjoyment from is chocolate fudge and music, so I'm making sure he has an unlimited supply.





FROM THE ARTISTS

Working from research interviews was a very different starting point than how we typically create comics, and we really wanted to make sure that we stayed true to the stories that were passed on to us. Having a theme of compassion and seeing the interview responses connected with something that both of us experienced as queer people were helpful. Though it is certainly and thankfully not the case for everyone, a common theme in the interviews was the way queer people try to connect with their homophobic parents. When we consider parent/child relationships, a lot of time is spent on the parent's unconditional love for their child, but a recurring theme in the stories of queer people is the continued desire to reconnect and love parents who are dismissive or antagonistic to their child's sexuality or gender. We hope that this comic expresses to the reader how much queer people love their parents and the compassion queer people have when they try to connect however they can, even when those relationships hurt.

CLOSER TO . . .
BY
KIELAMEL "KIELA" SIBAL



OUR FATHER,
WHO ART IN HEAVEN,
HALLOWED BE THY NAME,
THY KINGDOM COME, THY
WILL BE DONE ON
EARTH AS IT IS
IN HEAVEN.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR
DAILY BREAD AND FORGIVE US
OUR TRESPASSES, AS WE
FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS
AGAINST US. LEAD US NOT INTO
TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US
FROM EVIL. AMEN.

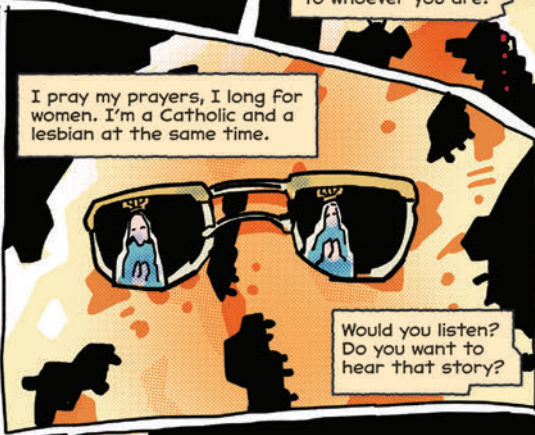


I rack my head on
how to tell this story
to whoever you are.



But maybe
it's best to
confide to you
as a friend.

Before you
turn the
pages, you
should know
what I am.



I pray my prayers, I long for
women. I'm a Catholic and a
lesbian at the same time.

Would you listen?
Do you want to
hear that story?

closer to...




HAIL, MARY, FULL
OF GRACE, THE LORD
IS WITH THEE. BLESSED
ART THOU AMONGST
WOMEN AND BLESSED IS
THE FRUIT OF THY
WOMB, JESUS.




HOLY MARY,
MOTHER OF GOD,
PRAY FOR US
SINNERS, NOW AND AT
THE HOUR OF OUR
DEATH. AMEN.

*by
kielamel sibal*



HAIL MARY, FULL OF GRACE, THE LORD IS WITH THEE, BLESSED ART THOU AMONGST WOMEN AND BLESSED IS THE FRUIT OF THY WOMB, JESUS.

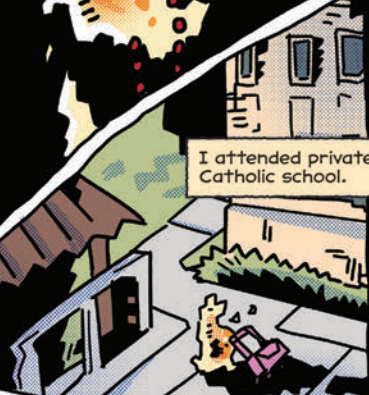
HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF GOD, PRAY FOR US SINNERS, NOW AND AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH. AMEN.





I'm as cradle Catholic as they come. Baptized in St. Dolores Church in San Fernando.




I had my first communion there, and my catechism too.



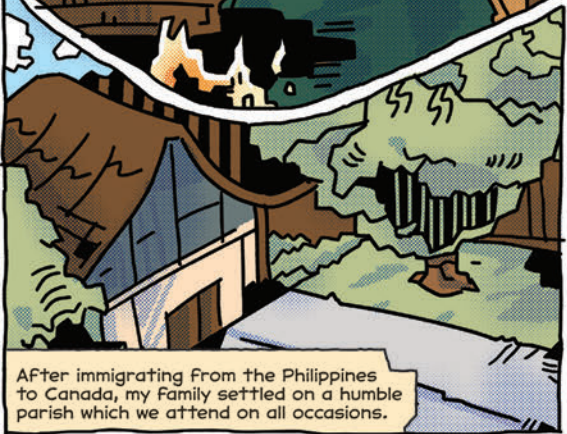
I attended private Catholic school.



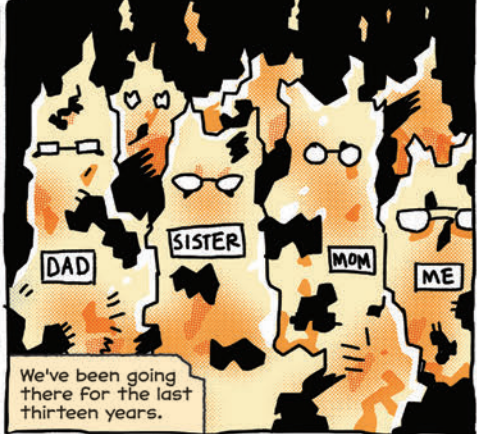
On Fridays, we had afterschool clubs and mandatory masses in the gymnasium.



Special occasions mean attendance in bigger parishes, sometimes including the extended family.



After immigrating from the Philippines to Canada, my family settled on a humble parish which we attend on all occasions.



We've been going there for the last thirteen years.

HAIL MARY, FULL OF GRACE,
THE LORD IS WITH THEE. BLESSED
ART THOU AMONGST WOMEN AND
BLESSED IS THE FRUIT OF THY
WOMB, JESUS.

HOLY MARY,
MOTHER OF GOD,
PRAY FOR US
SINNERS, NOW AND AT
THE HOUR OF OUR
DEATH. AMEN.

In these days I'm
less involved, but
I attended some
Sunday school in
this parish.

I also became
an altar server
and a lector.

So what does
this history
have anything
to do with me
being gay?

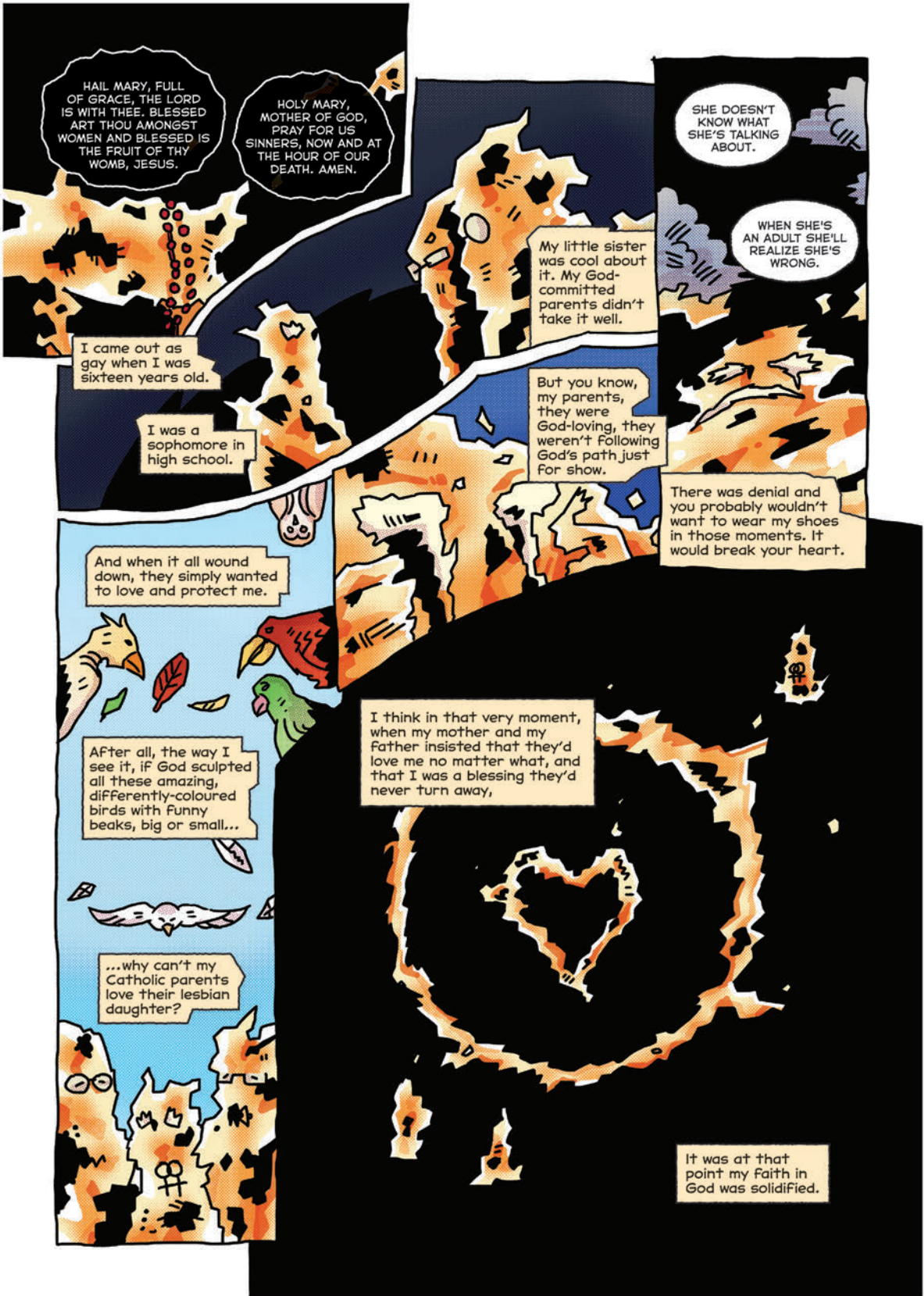
If you want to be
religious, bury your
extraordinary gender or
sexuality. If you want to
be queer, bury your
religious faith.

There seems to be
prevailing belief that
you must either be
one or the other.

The former
based on bigotry,
however ignorant,
and the latter on
theistic trauma,
which is fair.

I'm very gay, but
it helps to have
the understanding
in the background
when you're like
navigating the
church community.

Because if people insist on a
black and white presumption,
what room does that leave
for people like me?



HAIL MARY, FULL OF GRACE, THE LORD IS WITH THEE. BLESSED ART THOU AMONGST WOMEN AND BLESSED IS THE FRUIT OF THY WOMB, JESUS.

HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF GOD, PRAY FOR US SINNERS, NOW AND AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH. AMEN.

SHE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT SHE'S TALKING ABOUT.

WHEN SHE'S AN ADULT SHE'LL REALIZE SHE'S WRONG.

My little sister was cool about it. My God-committed parents didn't take it well.

I came out as gay when I was sixteen years old.

I was a sophomore in high school.

But you know, my parents, they were God-loving, they weren't following God's path just for show.

There was denial and you probably wouldn't want to wear my shoes in those moments. It would break your heart.

And when it all wound down, they simply wanted to love and protect me.

AFTER all, the way I see it, if God sculpted all these amazing, differently-coloured birds with funny beaks, big or small...

I think in that very moment, when my mother and my father insisted that they'd love me no matter what, and that I was a blessing they'd never turn away,

...why can't my Catholic parents love their lesbian daughter?

It was at that point my faith in God was solidified.

HAIL MARY,
FULL OF
GRACE, THE LORD
IS WITH THEE.
BLESSED ART THOU
AMONGST WOMEN
AND BLESSED IS
THE FRUIT OF THY
WOMB, JESUS.

HOLY MARY,
MOTHER OF GOD,
PRAY FOR US
SINNERS, NOW AND
AT THE HOUR OF
OUR DEATH.
AMEN.

Because let's be real, I certainly was not some wise, evangelic kid who understood the Church wholly. Yes, I attended weekly mass, I served the altar, and I read scripture.

But behind all that, I got cranky with having to wake up early to do these things. I struggle with not falling asleep during sermons. I disagreed (and still do) with some of the teachings and beliefs of the Church.

I can be impatient when it comes to dedicating time to my Faith. Really, I just wanted to get back to playing video games!


I guess, all I'm saying is that in some way, I didn't really get the fuss with the whole religion thing...

It really made me see how God always finds a way.

...until my parents showed their support for me on such a 'contentious' part of my identity.

Through God's actions and guidance, I understand that the conflict inside myself should not eat away at my soul. I realized I am deserving of love.

The more I contemplated, the more I saw how He works in all those little things.



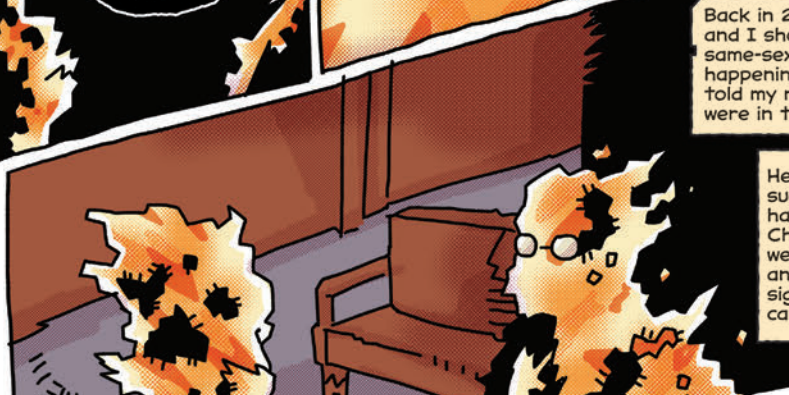
HAIL MARY, FULL OF GRACE, THE LORD IS WITH THEE. BLESSED ART THOU AMONGST WOMEN AND BLESSED IS THE FRUIT OF THY WOMB, JESUS.

HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF GOD, PRAY FOR US SINNERS, NOW AND AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH. AMEN.

OKAY, NICE.


My sister's immediate acceptance of me reflects how society is changing and becoming compassionate.

My parents had some Friends, acquaintances, and coworkers who were gay. This led them to deeper reflections about accepting me.




Back in 2015, when my sister and I showed our support for same-sex marriage legislation happening in the US, our priest told my mom that our hearts were in the right place.

He still affirmed that such marriages can't happen in the Catholic Church, but he knew we weren't being led astray and that it was simply a sign that we genuinely cared about others.

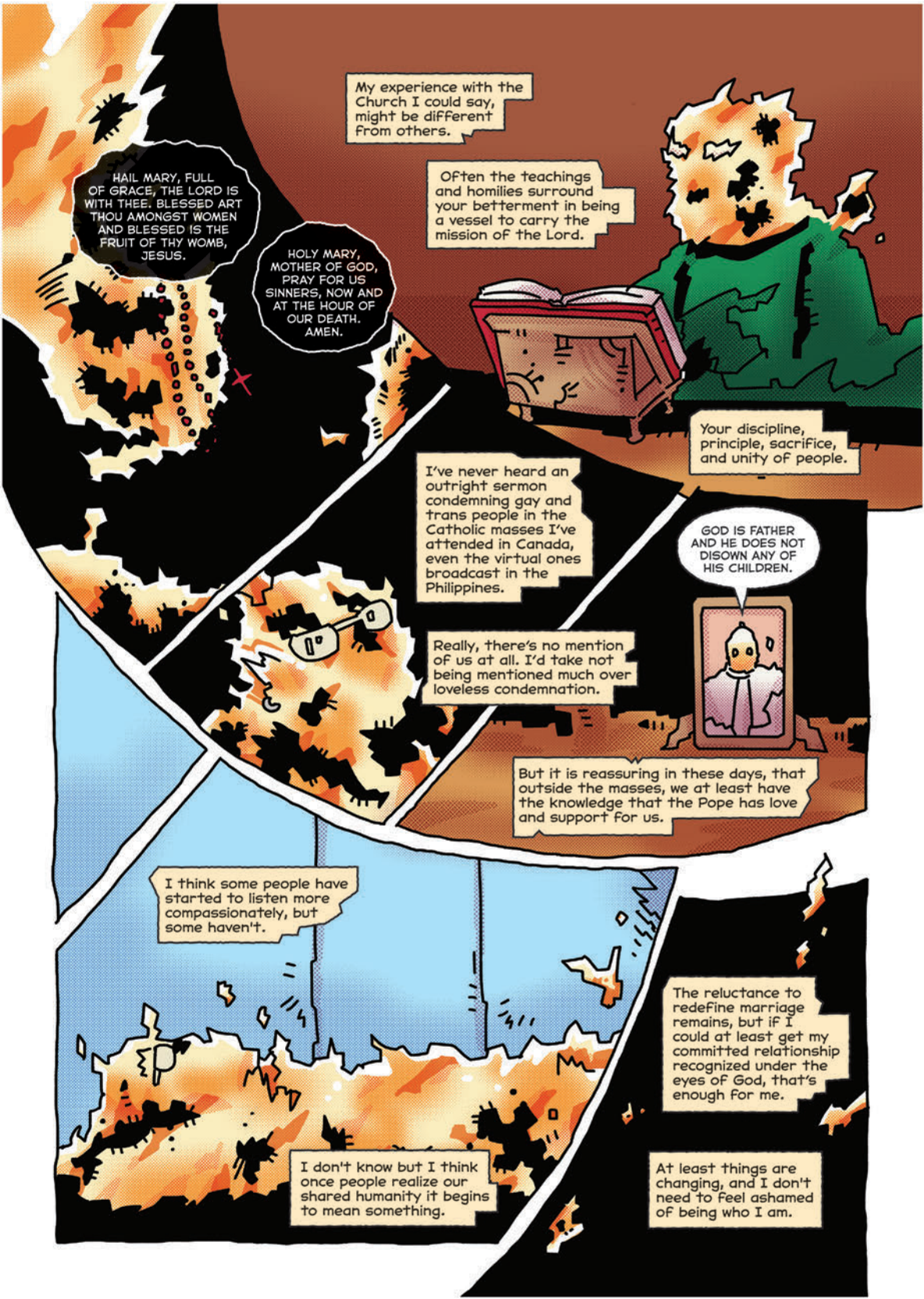


That was a year before I came out.

I was shocked when my mom told me about it.



And of course, there's Pope Francis.



My experience with the Church I could say, might be different from others.

HAIL MARY, FULL OF GRACE, THE LORD IS WITH THEE. BLESSED ART THOU AMONGST WOMEN AND BLESSED IS THE FRUIT OF THY WOMB, JESUS.

HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF GOD, PRAY FOR US SINNERS, NOW AND AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH. AMEN.

Often the teachings and homilies surround your betterment in being a vessel to carry the mission of the Lord.



Your discipline, principle, sacrifice, and unity of people.

I've never heard an outright sermon condemning gay and trans people in the Catholic masses I've attended in Canada, even the virtual ones broadcast in the Philippines.

GOD IS FATHER AND HE DOES NOT DISOWN ANY OF HIS CHILDREN.



Really, there's no mention of us at all. I'd take not being mentioned much over loveless condemnation.

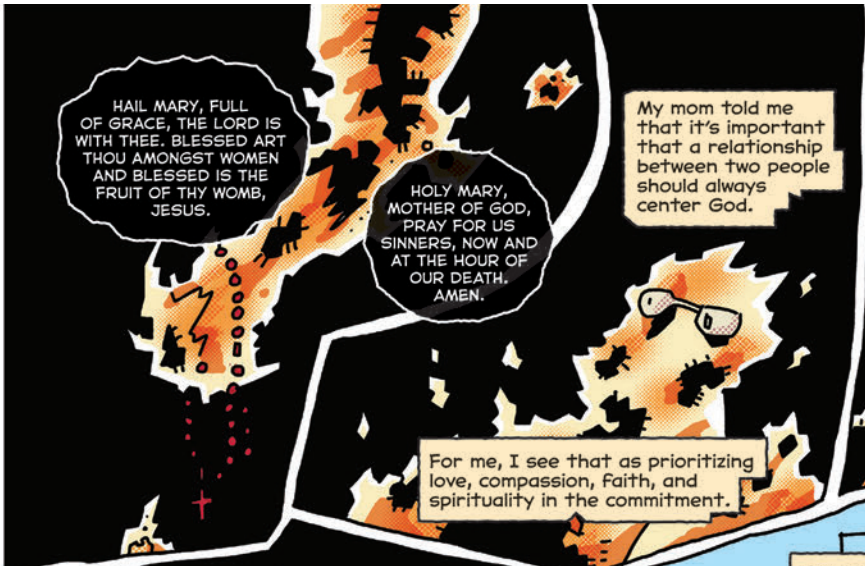
But it is reassuring in these days, that outside the masses, we at least have the knowledge that the Pope has love and support for us.

I think some people have started to listen more compassionately, but some haven't.

The reluctance to redefine marriage remains, but if I could at least get my committed relationship recognized under the eyes of God, that's enough for me.

I don't know but I think once people realize our shared humanity it begins to mean something.

At least things are changing, and I don't need to feel ashamed of being who I am.



HAIL MARY, FULL OF GRACE, THE LORD IS WITH THEE. BLESSED ART THOU AMONGST WOMEN AND BLESSED IS THE FRUIT OF THY WOMB, JESUS.

HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF GOD, PRAY FOR US SINNERS, NOW AND AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH. AMEN.

My mom told me that it's important that a relationship between two people should always center God.

I hope that when the time comes, I'll find a woman who doesn't belittle me for believing these things.

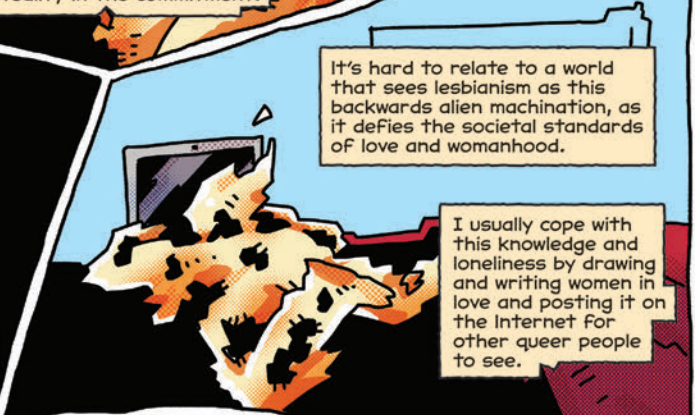
I don't think I'm wrong to want that. I know these relationships exist.

For me, I see that as prioritizing love, compassion, faith, and spirituality in the commitment.



It can be quite lonely to be a lesbian.

It is a sort of loneliness and isolation that is unique to the experience, and it can be compounded with other aspects of your identity.



It's hard to relate to a world that sees lesbianism as this backwards alien machination, as it defies the societal standards of love and womanhood.

I usually cope with this knowledge and loneliness by drawing and writing women in love and posting it on the Internet for other queer people to see.



Apart from that, I also find solace in my culture.

I don't make friends easily. From middle school onward, in place of actual peers, I simply built my foundation of my cultural identity.

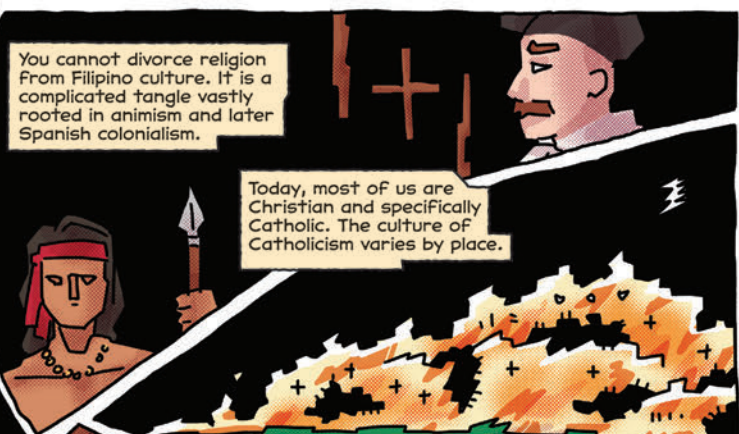


The language...

...and the stories I want to tell...



...and well wouldn't you know it: religion.



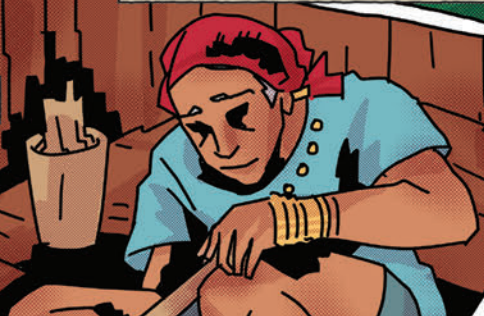
HAIL MARY, FULL OF GRACE, THE LORD IS WITH THEE, BLESSED ART THOU AMONGST WOMEN AND BLESSED IS THE FRUIT OF THY WOMB, JESUS.

You cannot divorce religion from Filipino culture. It is a complicated tangle vastly rooted in animism and later Spanish colonialism.

Today, most of us are Christian and specifically Catholic. The culture of Catholicism varies by place.

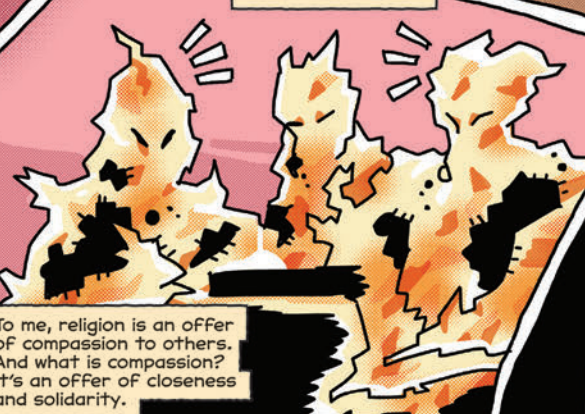
HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF GOD, PRAY FOR US SINNERS, NOW AND AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH. AMEN.

The place I'm from, in Pampanga, we are devoutly Catholic but we acknowledge the presence of spirits and work of traditional folk shamans.




Those beliefs live on and they deserve respect and reverence.

It doesn't have to be one or the other. In the Filipino Islands, our traditional spirituality is interwoven with Roman Catholicism. I see myself in the same way, weaving together who I am with my religion. I am proud to be a lesbian Catholic.



To me, religion is an offer of compassion to others. And what is compassion? It's an offer of closeness and solidarity.

Compassion is the opposite of deprivation. It makes you feel less alone, even with physical distance. It makes you strong when others try to push you down.



It is thanks to people in my life, who were devoted to both religious faith and acceptance, that I saw no point in shedding away my spiritual connections.

HAIL MARY, FULL OF GRACE, THE LORD IS WITH THEE. BLESSED ART THOU AMONGST WOMEN AND BLESSED IS THE FRUIT OF THY WOMB, JESUS.

HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF GOD, PRAY FOR US SINNERS, NOW AND AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH. AMEN.

The rituals, the songs, the traditions, novenas, and the vigils teach me to accept and to share this compassion.

When I recite and observe them, I feel peace and clarity with my understanding of the world.

GLORY BE TO THE FATHER, AND TO THE SON, AND TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING, IS NOW, AND EVER SHALL BE, WORLD WITHOUT END. AMEN.

The outcome of being confidently queer makes it seem like an inevitability to distance yourself from your religion, by choice or by the force of religious doctrines.

As the years pass and I develop greater comfort in being a lesbian, it only draws me closer to my faith, to be Catholic.

WHETHER YOU'RE A DEVOUTLY RELIGIOUS PARENT WITH A KID WHO'S LGBT. WHETHER YOU'RE NOT RELIGIOUS AT ALL AND WANT TO LEARN ABOUT OTHER KINDS OF PEOPLE.

WHETHER YOU'RE JUST LIKE ME.

I JUST WANTED YOU TO KNOW I EXIST,

THERE ARE OTHER PEOPLE LIKE ME WHO ARE IN PEACE AND WANT YOU TO BE, TOO.

AND I SIMPLY WANTED TO SHARE MY STORY TO YOU. WE HAVE TO LISTEN TO THESE STORIES AND UNDERSTAND THEM.

amen.



FROM THE ARTIST

Ever since I came out, I've been contemplating my relationship with my sexuality and Catholicism. These two things have never proved incompatible to me; they just coexisted with a fair share of disagreements and harmony. I have much to learn about my Catholic faith, but *Closer To . . .* gave me a starting point in sharing my feelings on being religious and gay. I wanted to express the compassion I felt in its truest form, free of judgment and filled with love and connection. For me, that is the ultimate ethos of God. Such values can be complicated when aligned with religion because often people of the faith have ulterior motives or are very ignorant of the marginalized. I love adopting different art styles depending on the story I want to tell. For this comic, I adopted a Mike Mignola–esque direction that embodied a fantastical, ambiguous dread and enduring kindness: a good representation of how I feel about my spirituality.

RESTLESS SPIRITS

BY

ELIJAH FORBES



Restless Spirits

Elijah Forbes



"So traditionally two spirit people were highly regarded and respected..."



"Colonization has negatively impacted indigenous communities, peoples, and families in many ways."



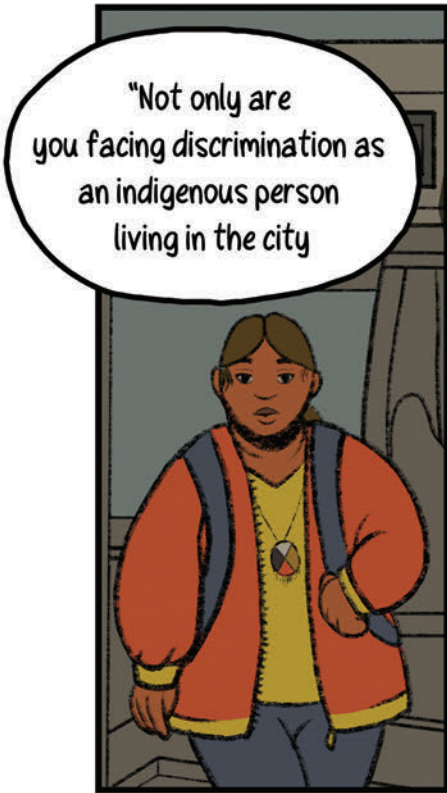
"One thing we don't really think about as much is how colonization disrupted spiritual traditions and the way of life of two spirit people."





"It's not super safe to be an outwardly two spirit, visibly indigenous person in many cities."





but now you're experiencing discrimination and safety issues because of your queer two spirit identity."





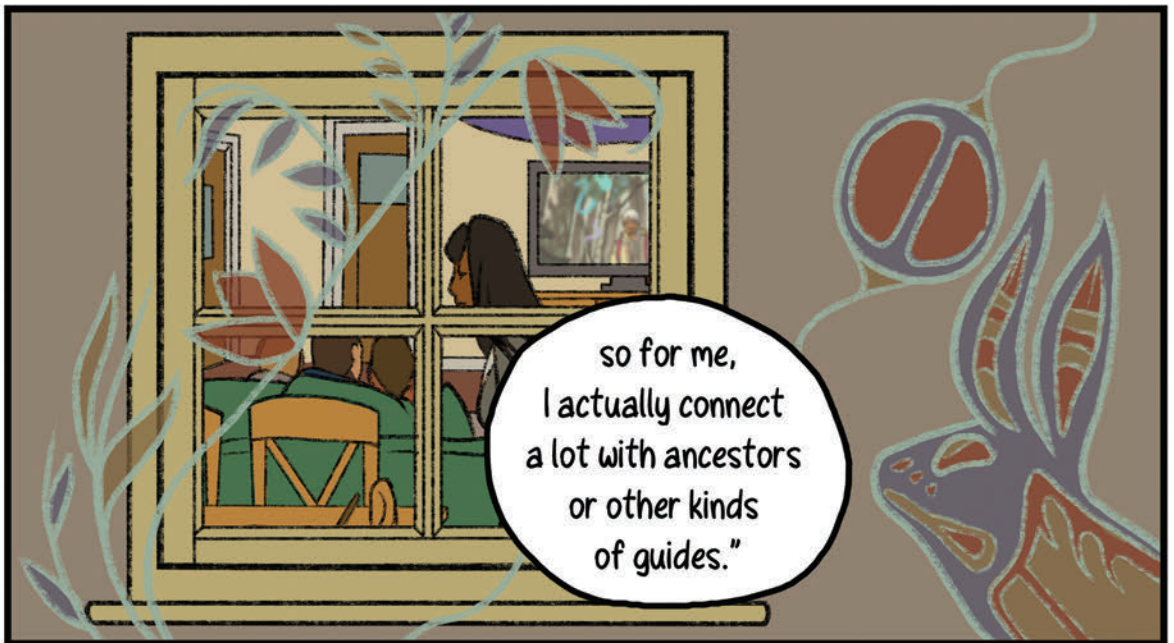
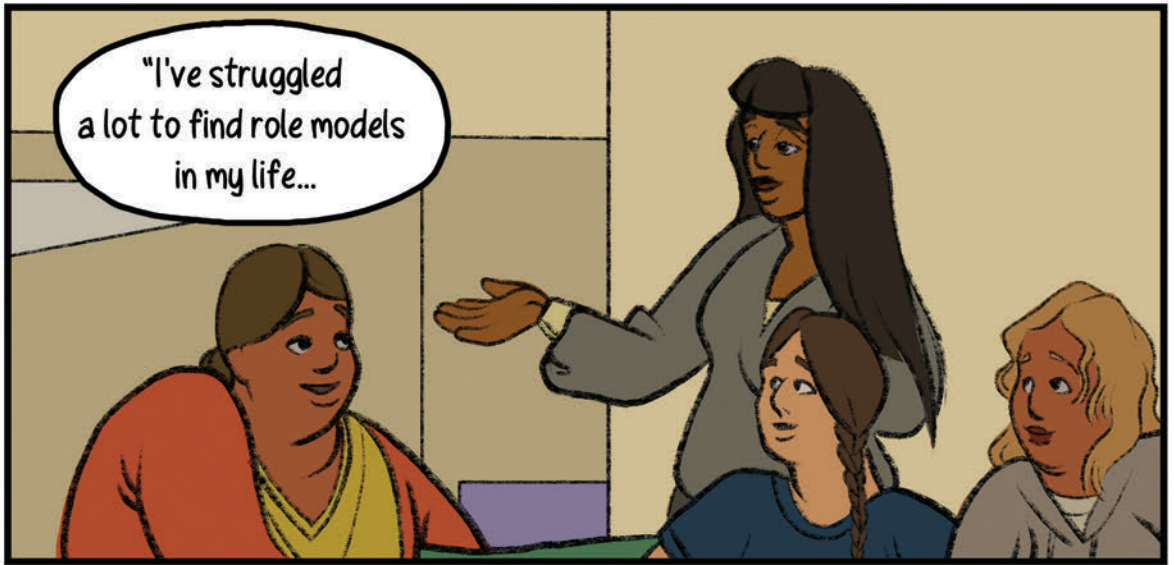
"Before we can even... have truth and reconciliation..."




before we can even begin as a society to move towards compassion...

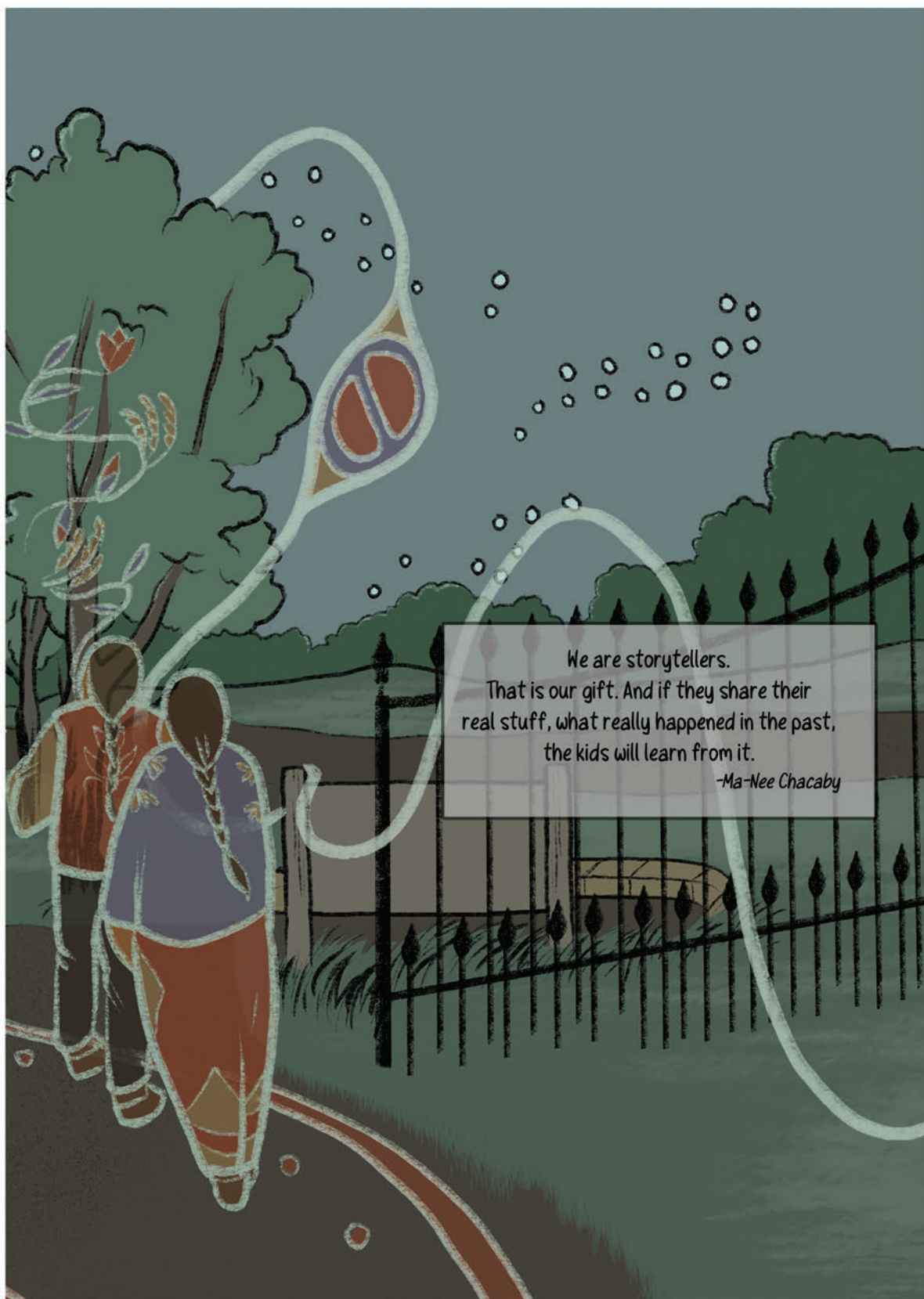


I think there's still a lot of work that needs to be done."





I want to leave something
for my kids. My great-granddaughter
and my great-grandsons. I want them
to know what I was about, what I was
made of, what I stood for.



We are storytellers.
That is our gift. And if they share their
real stuff, what really happened in the past,
the kids will learn from it.
-Ma-Nee Chacaby



FROM THE ARTIST

It sounds incredibly cheesy to say, but to me, the strongest force in the world is compassion. Our Two Spirit communities across the world know that we must care for and be there for one another. During this pandemic, that compassion has been clearer than ever. When all we have is each other, we must be ready to feed one another on the physical and spiritual levels. I hope that in this work, you can see that line from ancestors to elders to every one of our relations: the fact that if we care for one another, we have everything we need.

*NEIGHBORHOOD
RHAPSODY*

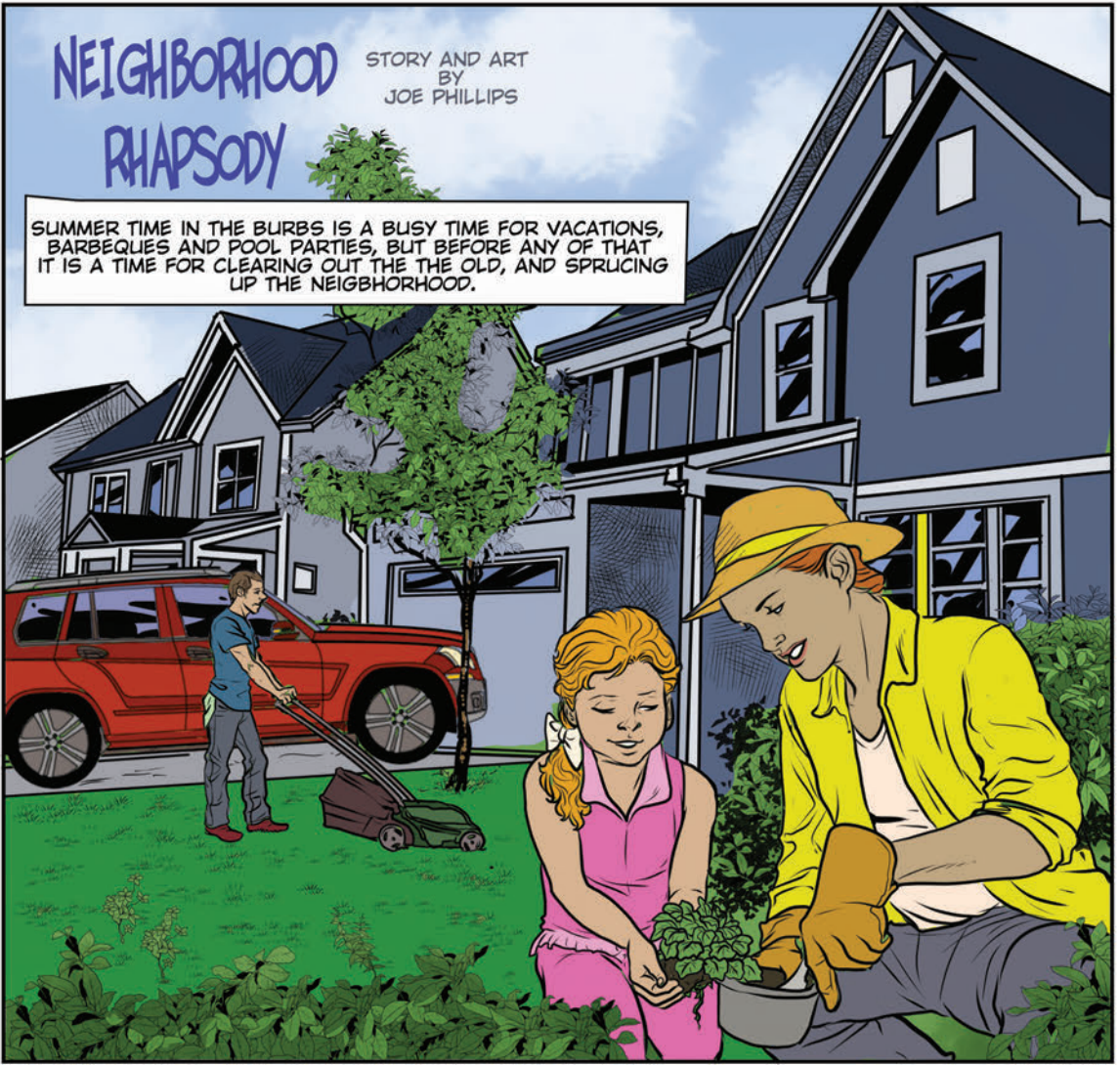
BY

JOE PHILLIPS

NEIGHBORHOOD RHAPSODY

STORY AND ART
BY
JOE PHILLIPS

SUMMER TIME IN THE BURBS IS A BUSY TIME FOR VACATIONS, BARBEQUES AND POOL PARTIES, BUT BEFORE ANY OF THAT IT IS A TIME FOR CLEARING OUT THE THE OLD, AND SPRUCING UP THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

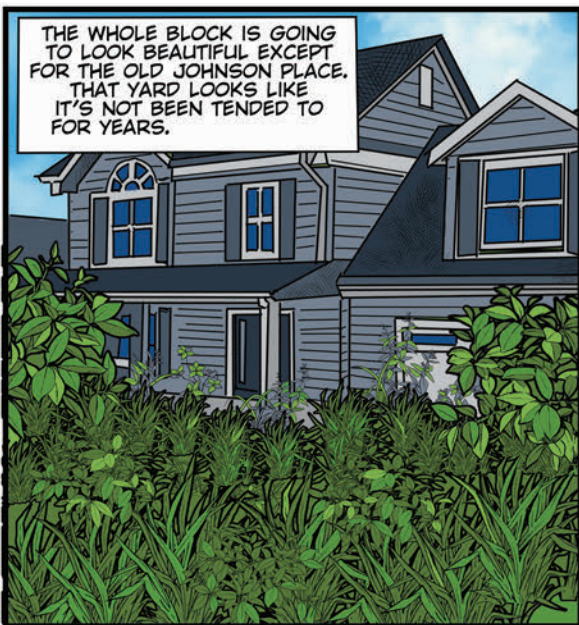


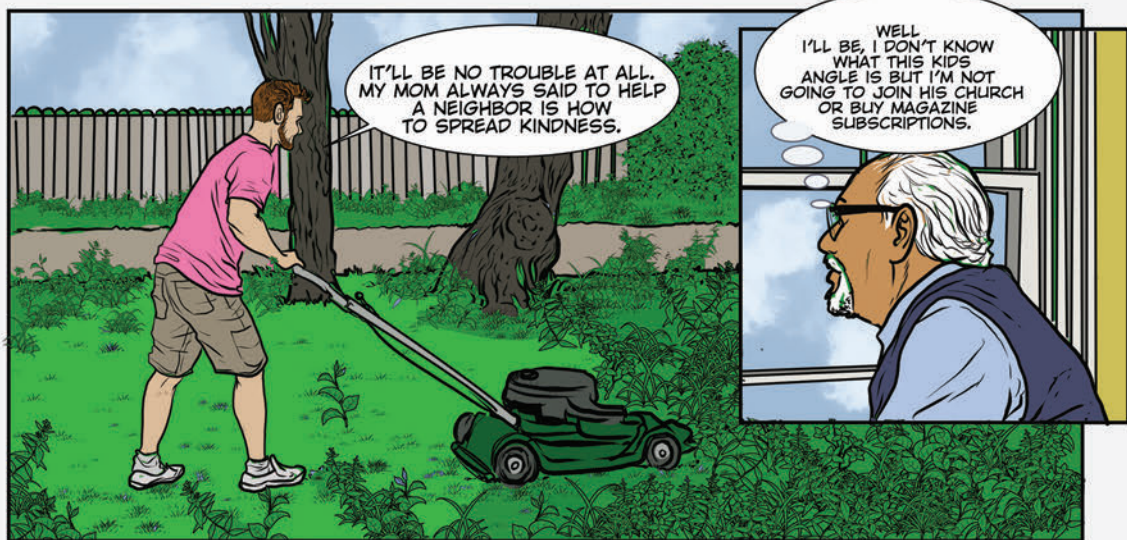
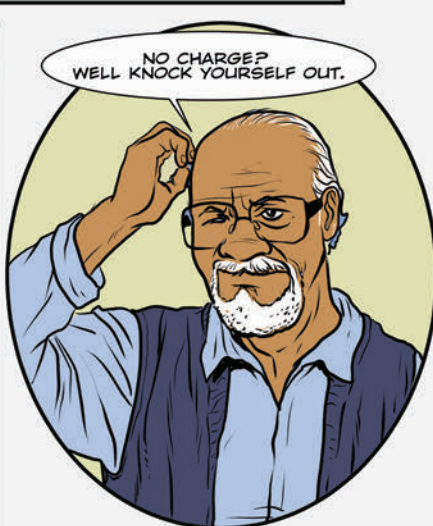
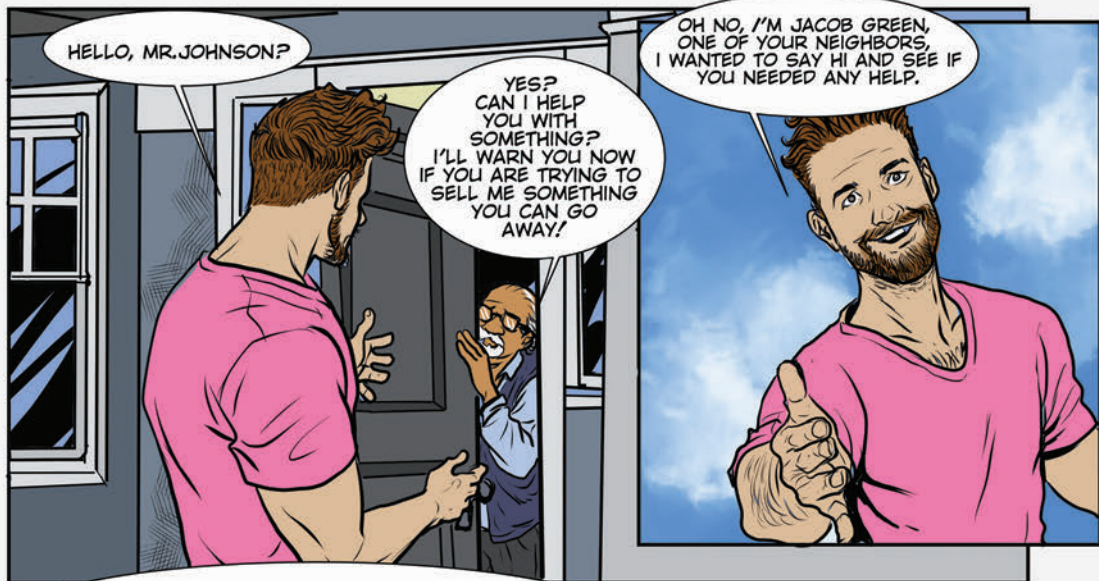
EVERYONE
TRYING TO OUT DO
THEIR NEIGHBOR WITH THEIR
GREEN THUMBS



AN UNSPOKEN
FRIENDLY RIVALRY
TO ADD A LITTLE FUN TO
OTHERWISE LABORSOME
CHORES AND
MAINTENANCE.





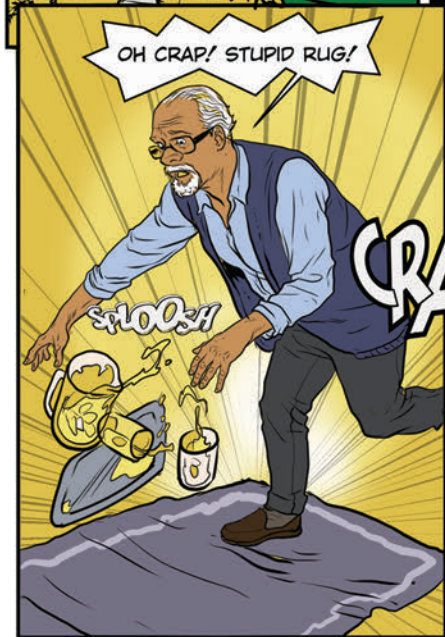




OK, THIS WAS A LOT MORE WORK THAN I IMAGINED. NO GOOD DEED GOES UNPUNISHED.



I DON'T KNOW WHY THAT BOY WANTED TO MOW MY YARD, BUT IT WOULD BE UNGRATEFUL NOT TO BE HOSPITABLE AND OFFER HIM A REFRESHMENT!



OH CRAP! STUPID RUG!



WHA-??

OUCH!



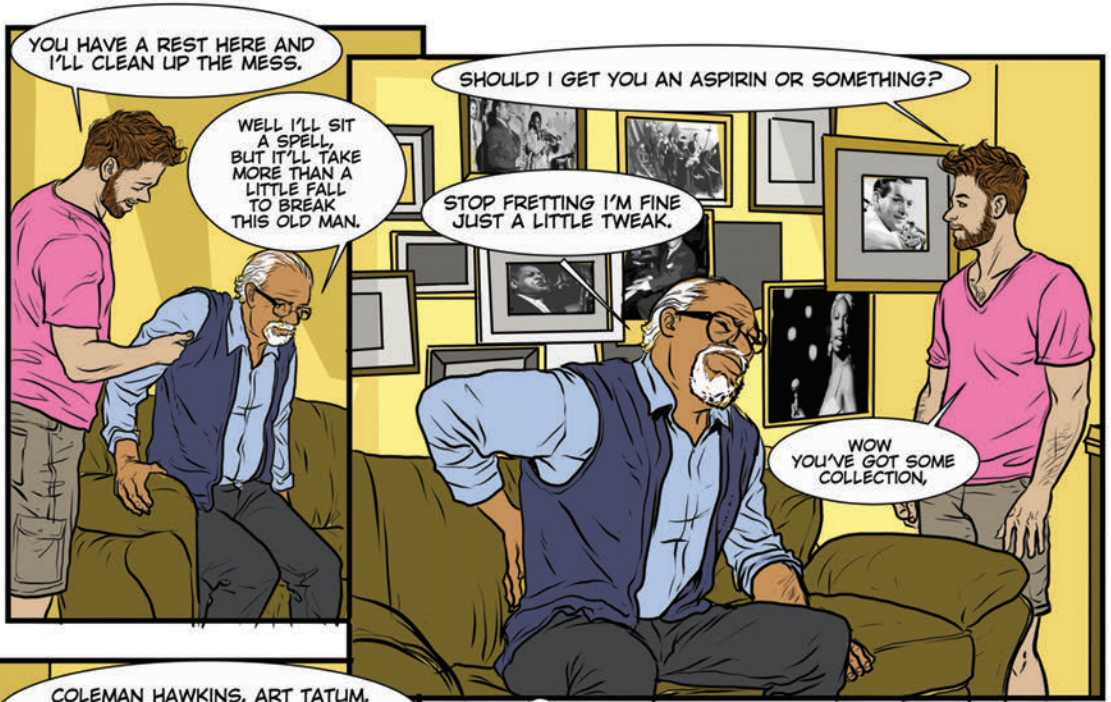
WHAT HAPPENED? ARE YOU OK MR. JOHNSON?

STUPID RUG SLIPPED AND I DROPPED THE LEMONADE.



DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT, I'M CONCERNED YOU MAY HAVE BEEN HURT.

WELL AREN'T YOU A THOUGHTFUL YOUNG MAN.



YOU HAVE A REST HERE AND I'LL CLEAN UP THE MESS.

WELL I'LL SIT A SPELL, BUT IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN A LITTLE FALL TO BREAK THIS OLD MAN.

SHOULD I GET YOU AN ASPIRIN OR SOMETHING?

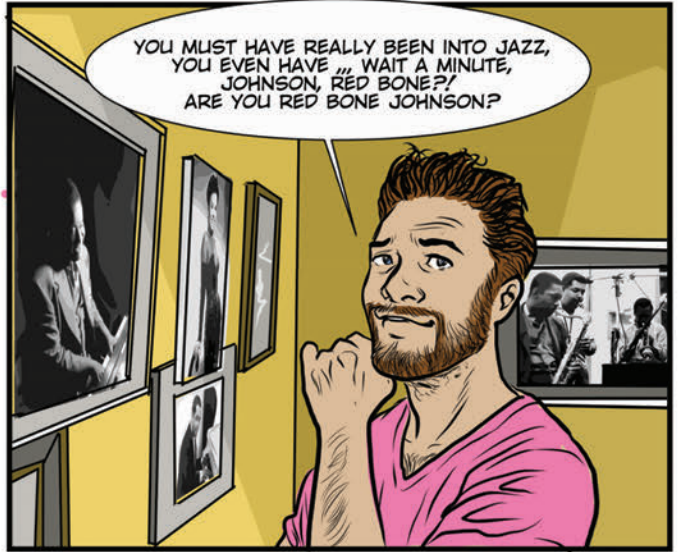
STOP FRETTING I'M FINE JUST A LITTLE TWEAK.

WOW YOU'VE GOT SOME COLLECTION,



COLEMAN HAWKINS, ART TATUM, BILLIE HOLIDAY, SARAH VAUGHAN AND LENEA HORNE!

THESE ARE SOME GREAT SHOTS, LOADS OF THEM I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE!



YOU MUST HAVE REALLY BEEN INTO JAZZ, YOU EVEN HAVE " WAIT A MINUTE, JOHNSON, RED BONE?! ARE YOU RED BONE JOHNSON?



GUILTY AS CHARGED, I'M SUPRISED YOU'VE EVEN HEARD OF ME!



ARE YOU KIDDING ME, YOU ARE ONE OF THE LINSUNG GREATS IN JAZZ! DO YOU STILL PLAY?



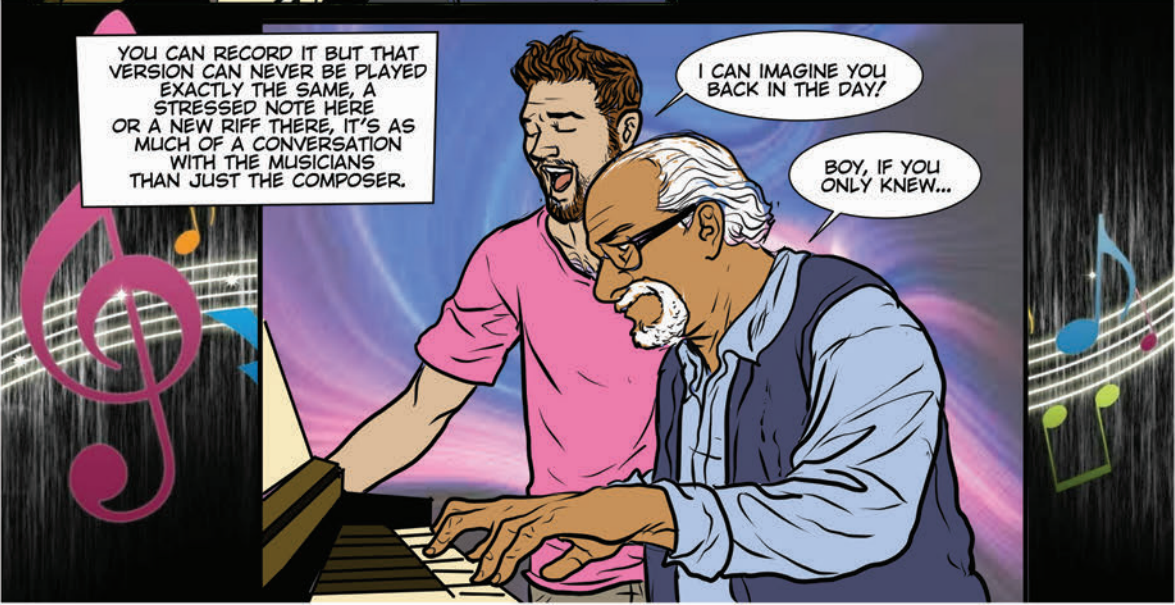
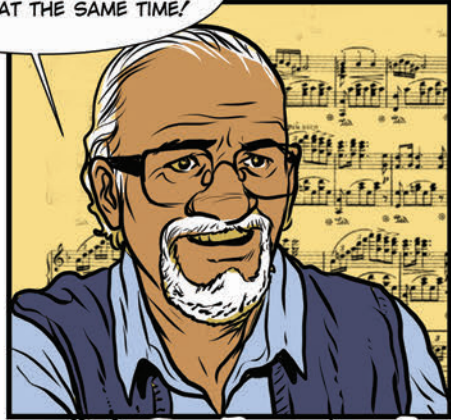
LET'S SEE IF YOU KNOW ANY OF THIS!

CLASSIC.



THIS REMINDS ME OF LISTENING TO A JAZZ STATION WHEN I WAS IN COLLEGE.

WELL LIVE JAZZ IS A LIVING THING. IT'S LIKE AN ELUSIVE LOVER AND RIVAL AND BEST FRIEND ALL SPEAKING AT THE SAME TIME!



YOU CAN RECORD IT BUT THAT VERSION CAN NEVER BE PLAYED EXACTLY THE SAME, A STRESSED NOTE HERE OR A NEW RIFF THERE, IT'S AS MUCH OF A CONVERSATION WITH THE MUSICIANS THAN JUST THE COMPOSER.

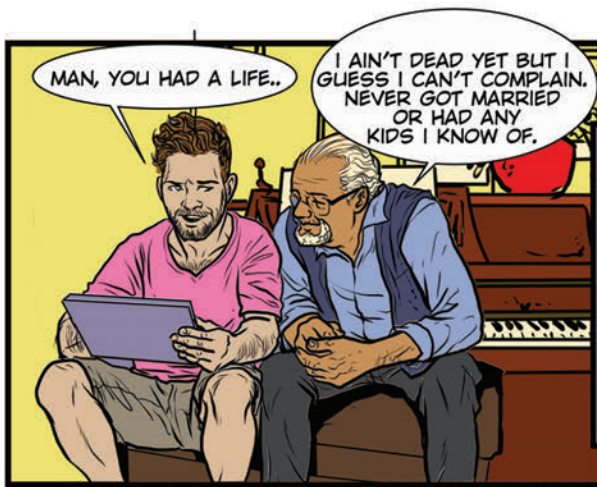
I CAN IMAGINE YOU BACK IN THE DAY!

BOY, IF YOU ONLY KNEW...

AND THERE I WAS, NOT JUST SOME
PRETENTIOUS COLLEGE FRESHMAN
TRYING TO SEEM COOL BY BEING INTO JAZZ,
BUT TRANSPORTED TO AN OUT OF THE WAY LITTLE
CLUB BY A MASTER OF THE ART,
I COULD IMAGINE SARAH VAUGHAN
SINGING HER HEART OUT
WITH ROY HARDWICK ON BASS
AND LOUIS ARMSTRONG
ON THE HORN AND NONE OTHER THAN
RED BONE JOHNSON ON THE KEYS.

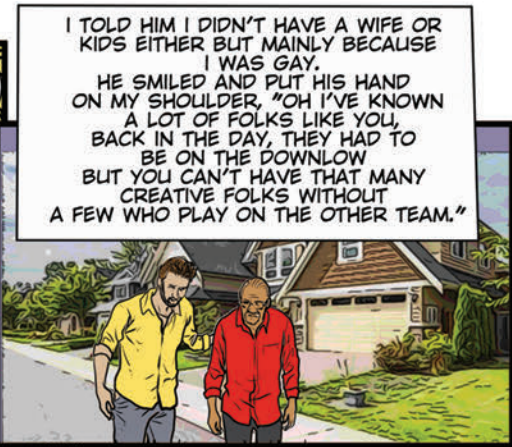
WHO COULD HAVE KNOWN A CHILDHOOD
HERO COULD BE MY NEIGHBOR AND
BE PLAYING LIVE FOR ME!





MAN, YOU HAD A LIFE..

I AIN'T DEAD YET BUT I GUESS I CAN'T COMPLAIN. NEVER GOT MARRIED OR HAD ANY KIDS I KNOW OF.



I TOLD HIM I DIDN'T HAVE A WIFE OR KIDS EITHER BUT MAINLY BECAUSE I WAS GAY. HE SMILED AND PUT HIS HAND ON MY SHOULDER, "OH I'VE KNOWN A LOT OF FOLKS LIKE YOU, BACK IN THE DAY, THEY HAD TO BE ON THE DOWNLOW BUT YOU CAN'T HAVE THAT MANY CREATIVE FOLKS WITHOUT A FEW WHO PLAY ON THE OTHER TEAM."

FROM THEN ON I WOULD DROP BY HIS HOUSE TO CHECK UP ON HIM. I'D TAKE HIM SHOPPING. WE'D GO GET LUNCH IN TOWN



OR I'D TAKE HIM TO HIS MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS.



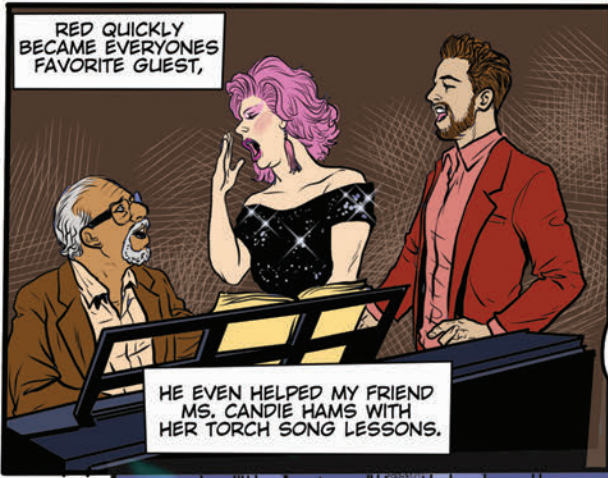
WE TALKED ABOUT HOW MUSIC CHANGED AND HIS FRIENDS DISAPPEARING OVER THE YEARS, "AFTER AWHILE YOU GET USED TO BEING ALONE CAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE A WAY TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS".

WITHOUT EVEN THINKING ABOUT IT I HAD ADDED HIM TO MY CIRCLE OF FRIENDS. AND ONCE HE OPENED UP TO IT. HE WOULD PLAY...



AND MAGIC WOULD HAPPEN.

RED QUICKLY BECAME EVERYONES FAVORITE GUEST,



HE EVEN HELPED MY FRIEND MS. CANDIE HAMS WITH HER TORCH SONG LESSONS.

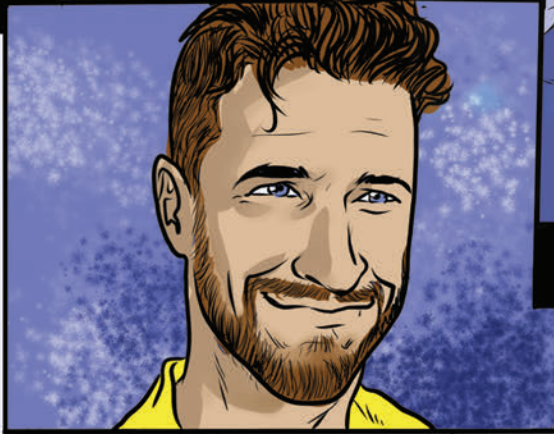
AND EVEN PLAYED LIVE ACCOMPANIST FOR HER JAZZ MAMA DRAG BRUNCH!

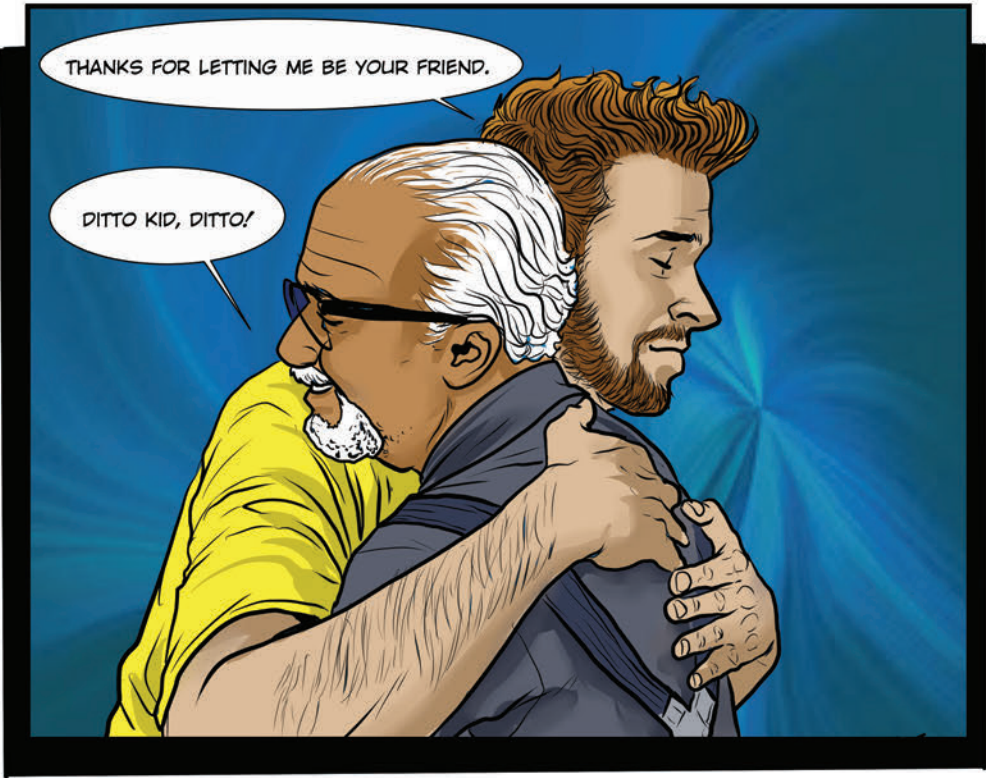
"IS YOU LG, OR IS YOU AIN'T MY BABY? OR HAS MY BABY FOUND SOMEBODY NEW?"



ONCE HE GOT IN FRONT OF THOSE 88 KEYS, ALL THE ACHES AND PAINS OF HIS YEARS SEEMED TO JUST MELT AWAY.

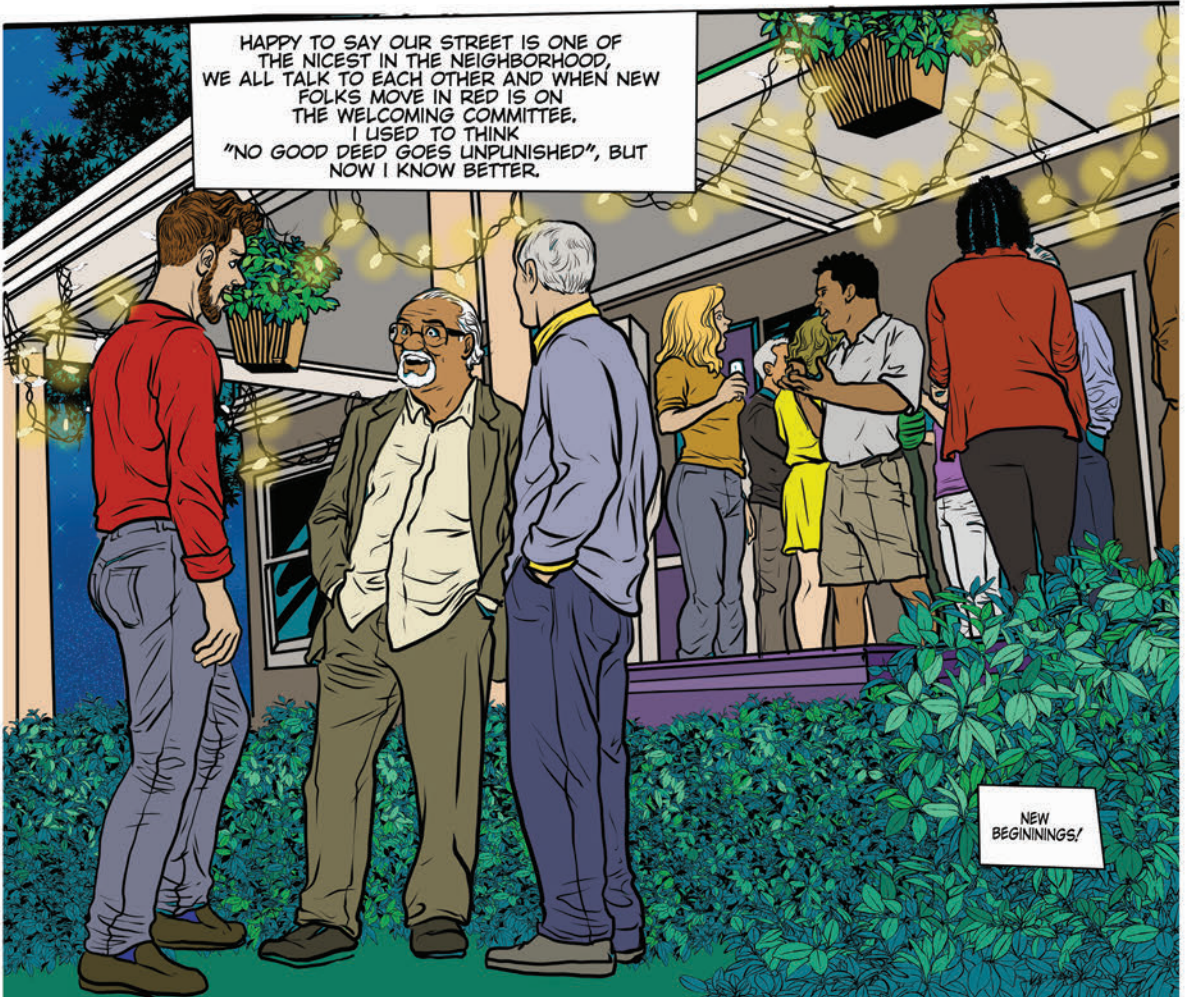
IT'S BEEN NEARLY A YEAR SINCE I OFFERED ARROGANTLY TO CLIP HIS GRASS, THINKING I WAS HELPING OUT A LONESOME OLD MAN.





THANKS FOR LETTING ME BE YOUR FRIEND.

DITTO KID, DITTO!



HAPPY TO SAY OUR STREET IS ONE OF THE NICEST IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, WE ALL TALK TO EACH OTHER AND WHEN NEW FOLKS MOVE IN RED IS ON THE WELCOMING COMMITTEE. I USED TO THINK "NO GOOD DEED GOES UNPUNISHED", BUT NOW I KNOW BETTER.

NEW BEGINNINGS!



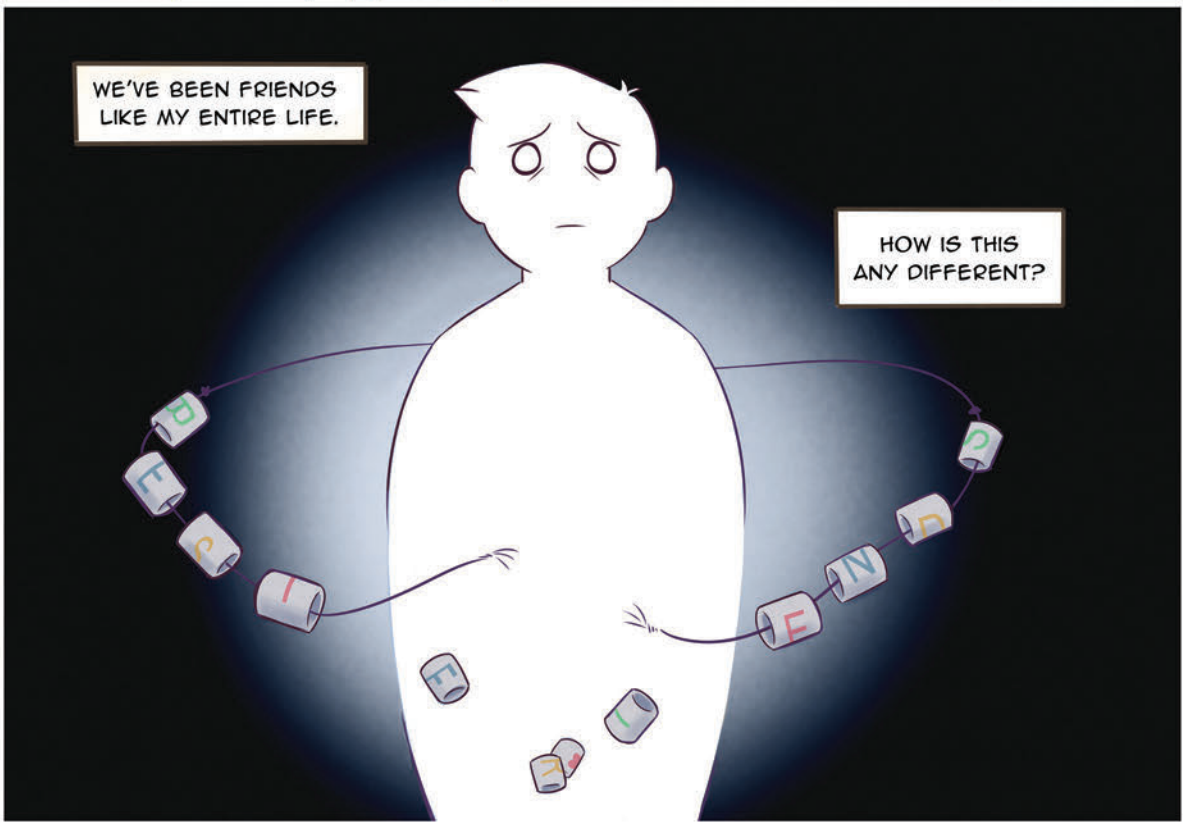
FROM THE EDITORS

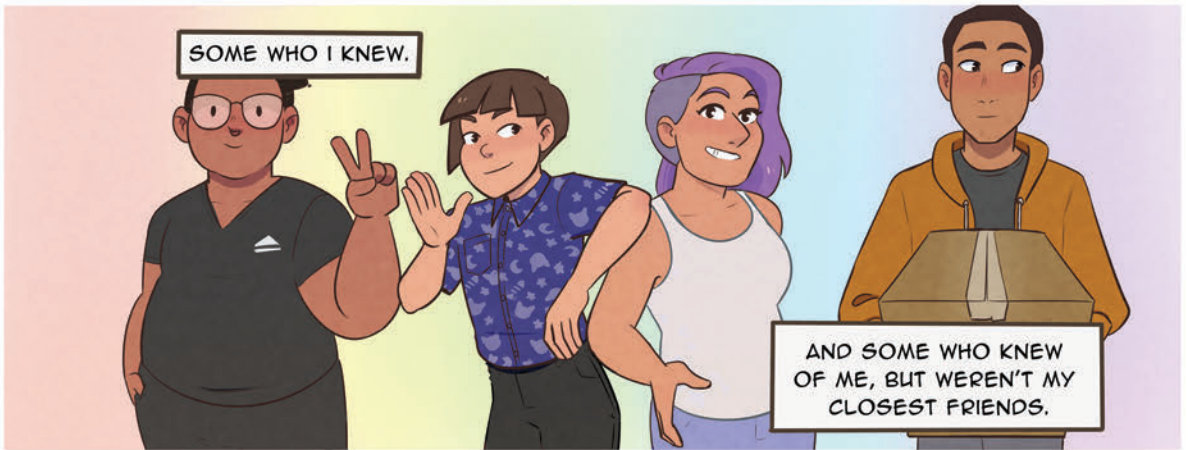
Many ideas were discussed between Joe Phillips and us when we first started creating this comic. One of the major themes from our research was that compassion was about connecting with other people in some way. I suppose you could say that the topic of connecting with others began a symphony of ideas—each one a distinct note in the music of compassion. But one of the ideas that we kept coming back to was about compassion and connection across generations, and this comic is the result.

THE ROOMMATE

BY

EMMA GALLOWAY





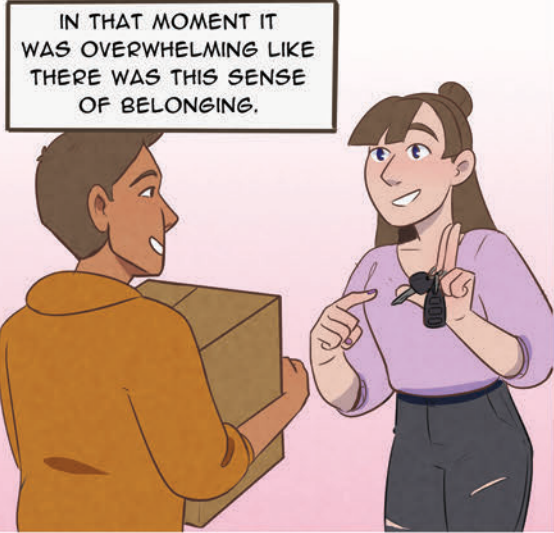


AND THEY'D RALLIED SOME OF THEIR FRIENDS.

IT WAS LIKE WE'RE COMING TOGETHER FOR QUEER FAMILY



SOME PEOPLE I HAD NEVER EVEN MET BEFORE.



IN THAT MOMENT IT WAS OVERWHELMING LIKE THERE WAS THIS SENSE OF BELONGING.



EVERYONE COMING TOGETHER TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN.



I THINK FOR SOME
THEY COULD RELATE
TO IT.

OR WISHED
SOMEONE HAD BEEN
THERE FOR THEM.

FOR OTHERS IT WAS
JUST LIKE OKAY, THE
COMMUNITY IS RALLYING
I GUESS I'M GOING.

IT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY
TO HELP YOU OUT
BECAUSE YOU ARE PART
OF MY COMMUNITY.

I DON'T KNOW YOU,
BUT HERE'S MY
CONTRIBUTION.



FROM THE ARTIST

Working on this comic was really a reminder of how, as someone who didn't have many connections with the gay community until adulthood, I'm incredibly lucky to now surround myself with people who understand and accept who I am. I've had difficult conversations like this in the past, and the small moments of kindness and support I've received from friends and fellow members of the community in the aftermath have not only kept me going but given me the strength to help others in return. I tried to impart some of the warmth and empathy that I experienced during those times into this comic. Despite many of the 2SLGBTQ+ community having either faced or feared rejection based on who they are, I think the fact that there are others who have similar lived experiences that can create understanding and empathy across generations, borders, and cultures is really something incredible.

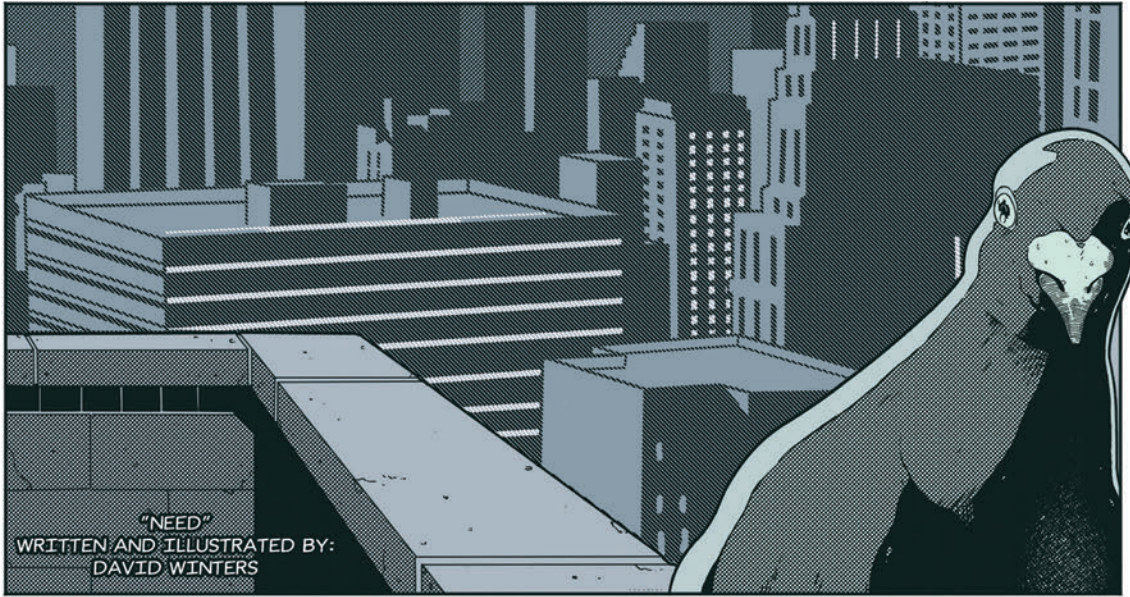
NEED
BY
DAVID WINTERS



FOOD IS NOT A PRIVILEGE OR A LUXURY.
IT IS A NECESSITY.

ONE THAT IS NOT ACCESSIBLE FOR MANY.

ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE IN MARGINALIZED
GROUPS SUCH AS QUEER YOUTH OR
THOSE FAMILIES LIVING IN POVERTY.



"NEED"
WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY:
DAVID WINTERS



HI!

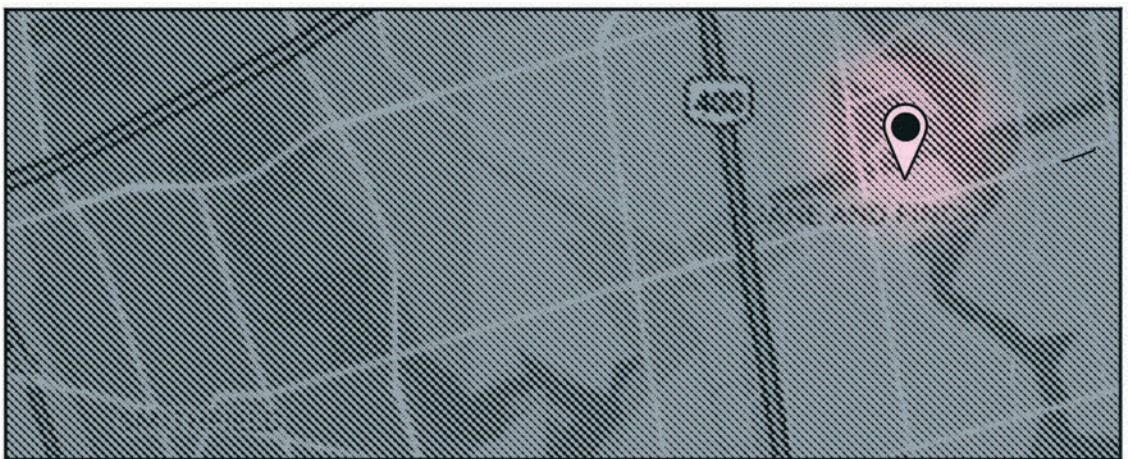


HOP ON IN!

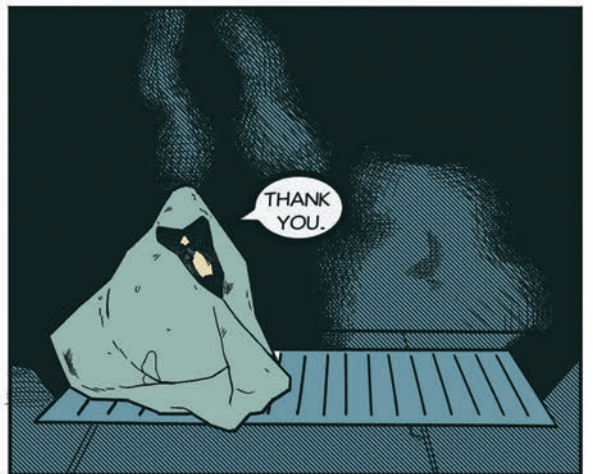
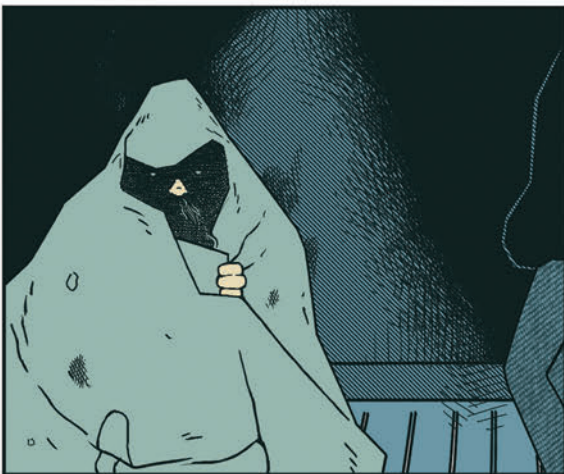
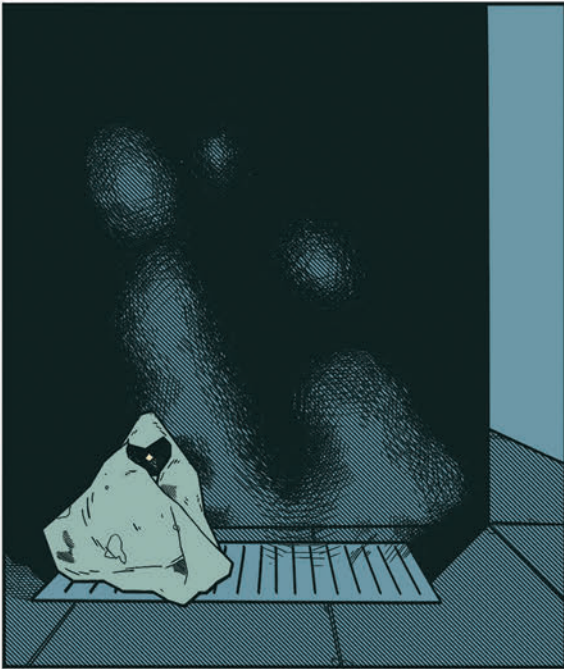
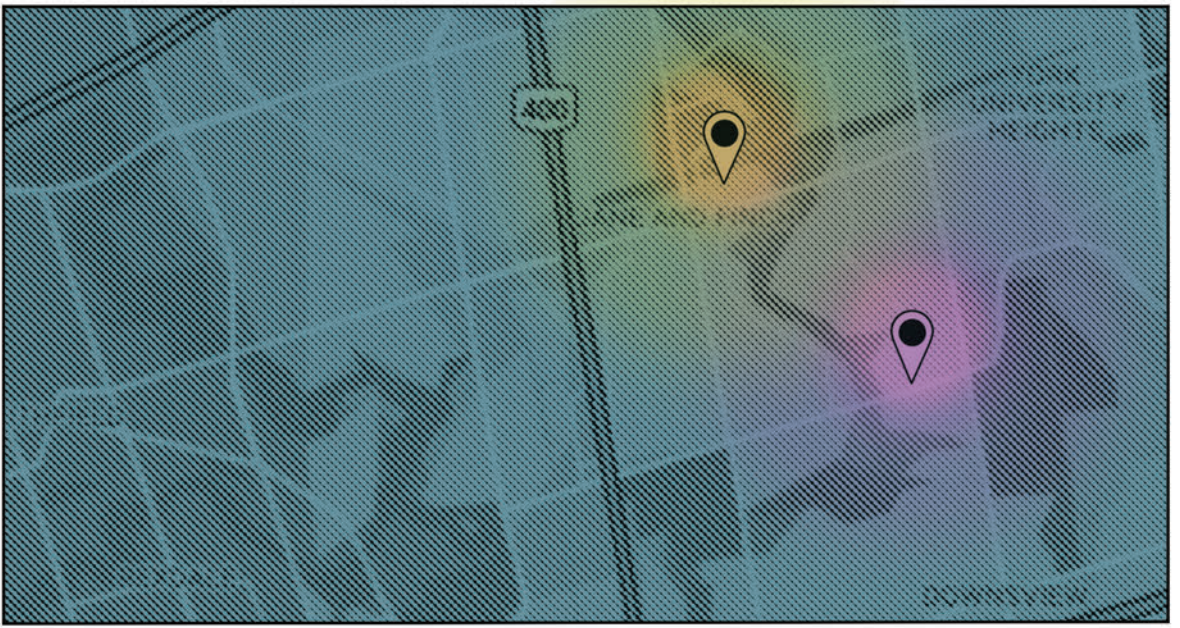


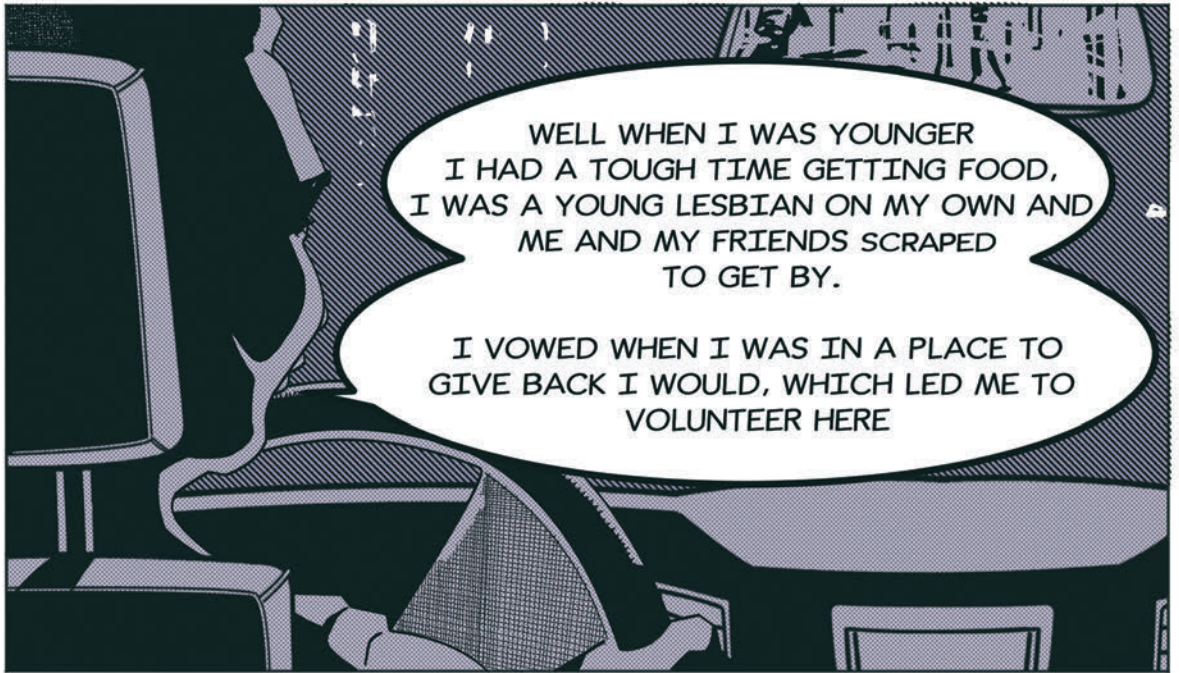
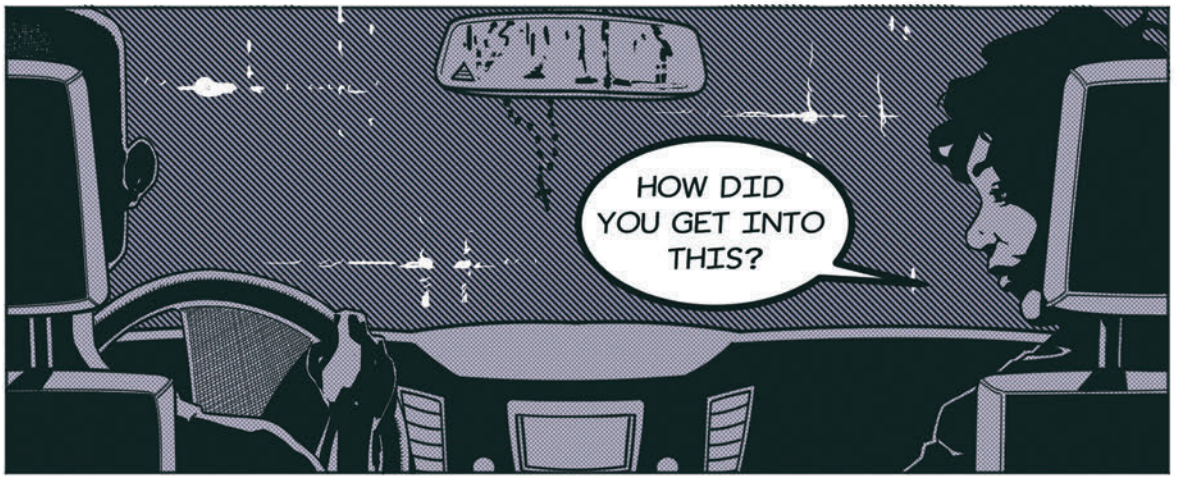
FOOD DELIVERY

BEWARE, MAKES FREQUENT STOPS

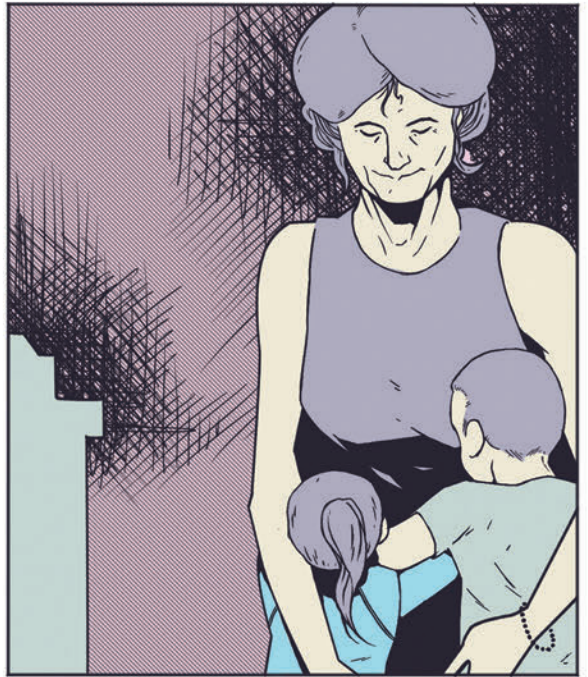


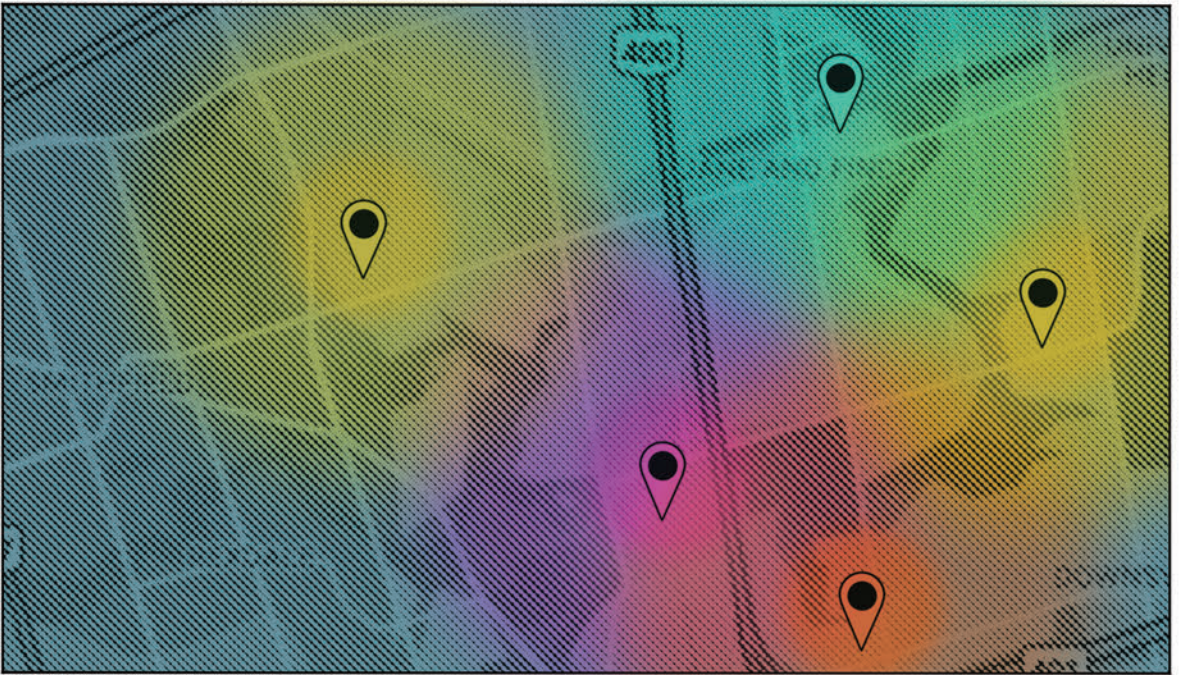


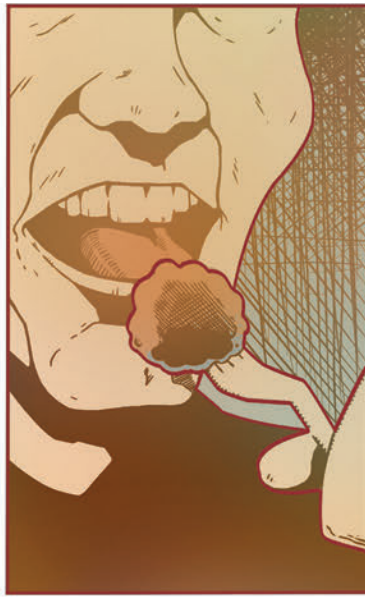
















FROM THE ARTIST

With the topic of food security and compassion, I was reminded of getting a Christmas dinner and gifts from a local charity group when I was young. While their hearts were in the right place, I was asked/made to greet the people who organized it and dropped off the items. It felt like having to put on a show for your food. With my comic, when I told the story about food and compassion, there is one part specifically that shows a mother getting a food parcel, and it's not a big deal. The kids don't have to meet the characters delivering it, and they just assume their mother got it for them. Doing something compassionate for the sake of being kind was something I wanted to show.

ENTROPY
(WILL TEAR US APART)

BY

JALEX NOEL

STAFF ONLY



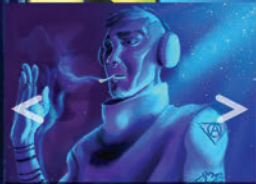
SD: 12% 128/200



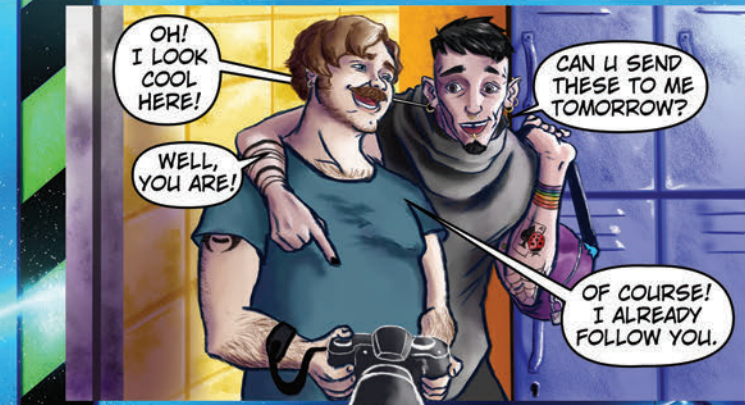
SD: 12% 129/200



SD: 12% 130/200



SD: 12% 131/200



OH! I LOOK COOL HERE!

WELL, YOU ARE!

CAN U SEND THESE TO ME TOMORROW?

OF COURSE! I ALREADY FOLLOW YOU.



ARE YOU LEAVING?

NAH, PARTY TIME NOW!



MAY I OFFER SOME GOOD SHIT?

IT SEEMS WE BOTH LIKE THE SAME SHIT!



COME!



ENTROPY IS A NECESSITY.

A LAW THAT ORDERS ALL THINGS TO RETURN TO THEIR ORIGINAL STATE.



CHAOS.

DECAY.

I WANT
WHAT
YOU'RE
HAVING!

THOUGHT
YOU'D
NEVER
ASK!

THE HIGHEST
STATE OF
DISORDER?

HOMOGENEITY.

ARE WE SEPARATING
OURSELVES FROM
UNIFORMITY?

AREN'T ALL
FEELINGS
THE SAME?



WHAT IS WRONG
WITH BELONGING
EVERYWHERE?

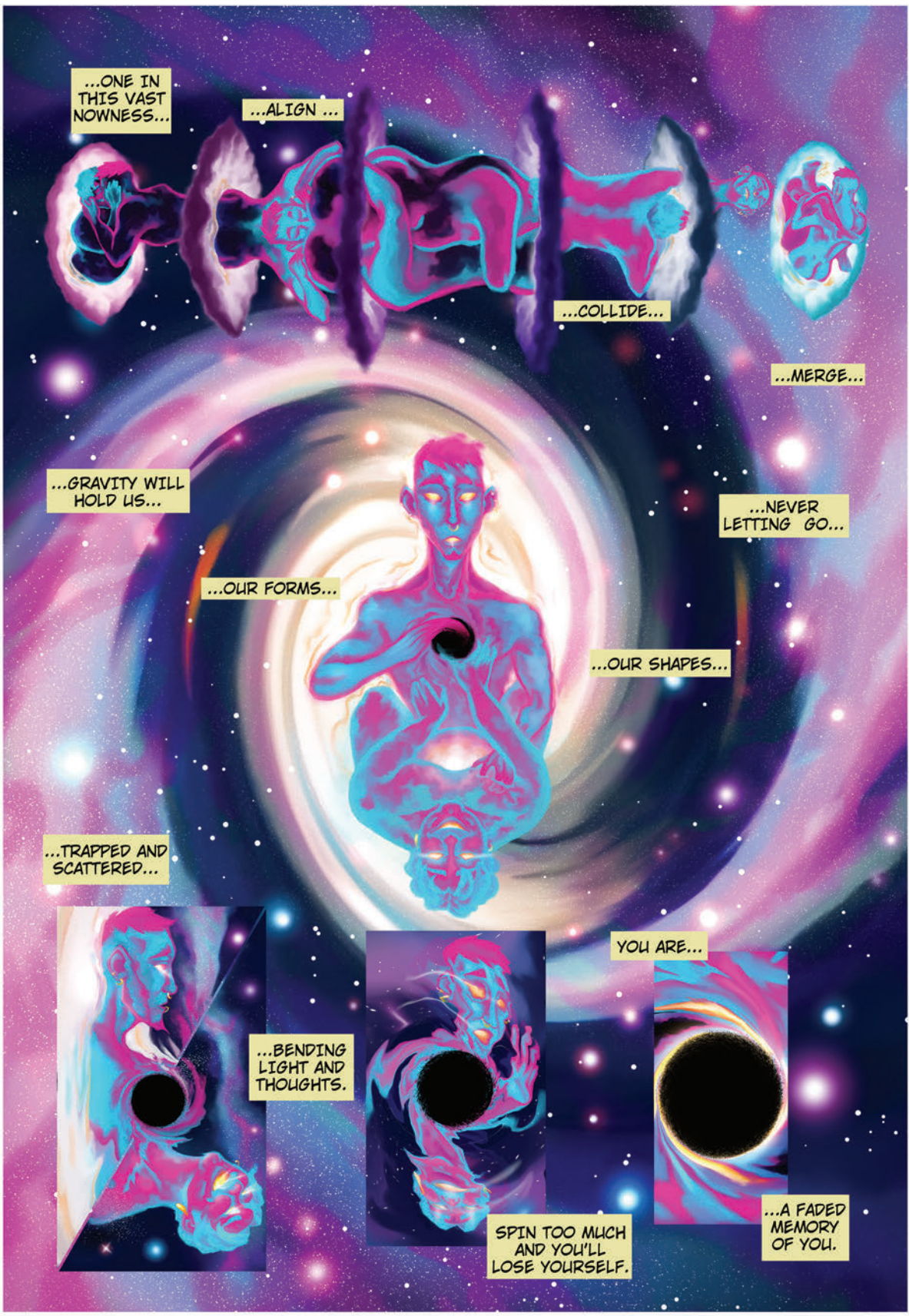
WHY CAN'T WE
EXPERIENCE
EVERYTHING?

STAFF
ONLY

...FOR MY
MORTALITY...

FOR MY SAKE...

...LET
US BE
ONE...



...ONE IN THIS VAST NOWNESS...

...ALIGN ...

...COLLIDE...

...MERGE...

...GRAVITY WILL HOLD US...

...NEVER LETTING GO...

...OUR FORMS...

...OUR SHAPES...

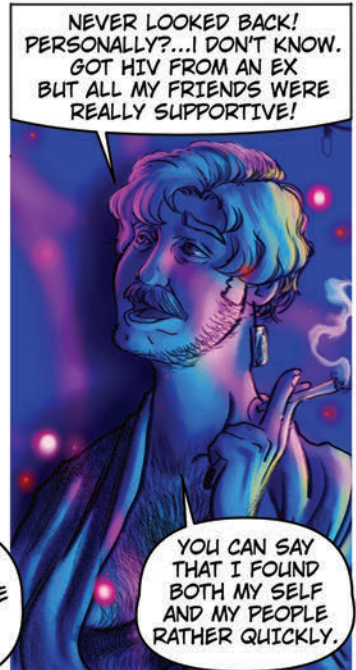
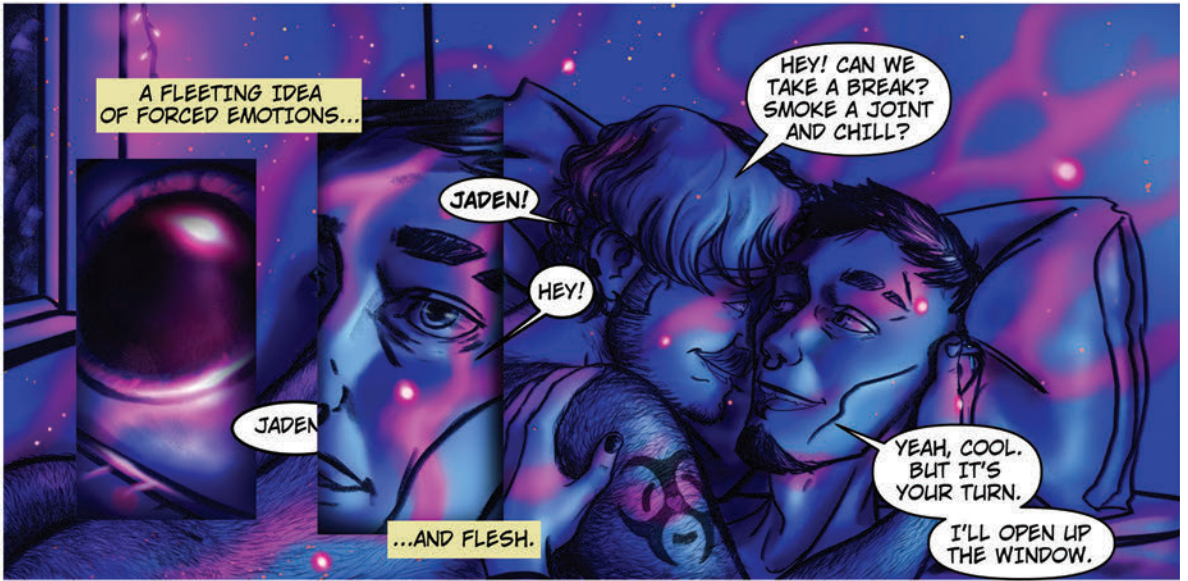
...TRAPPED AND SCATTERED...

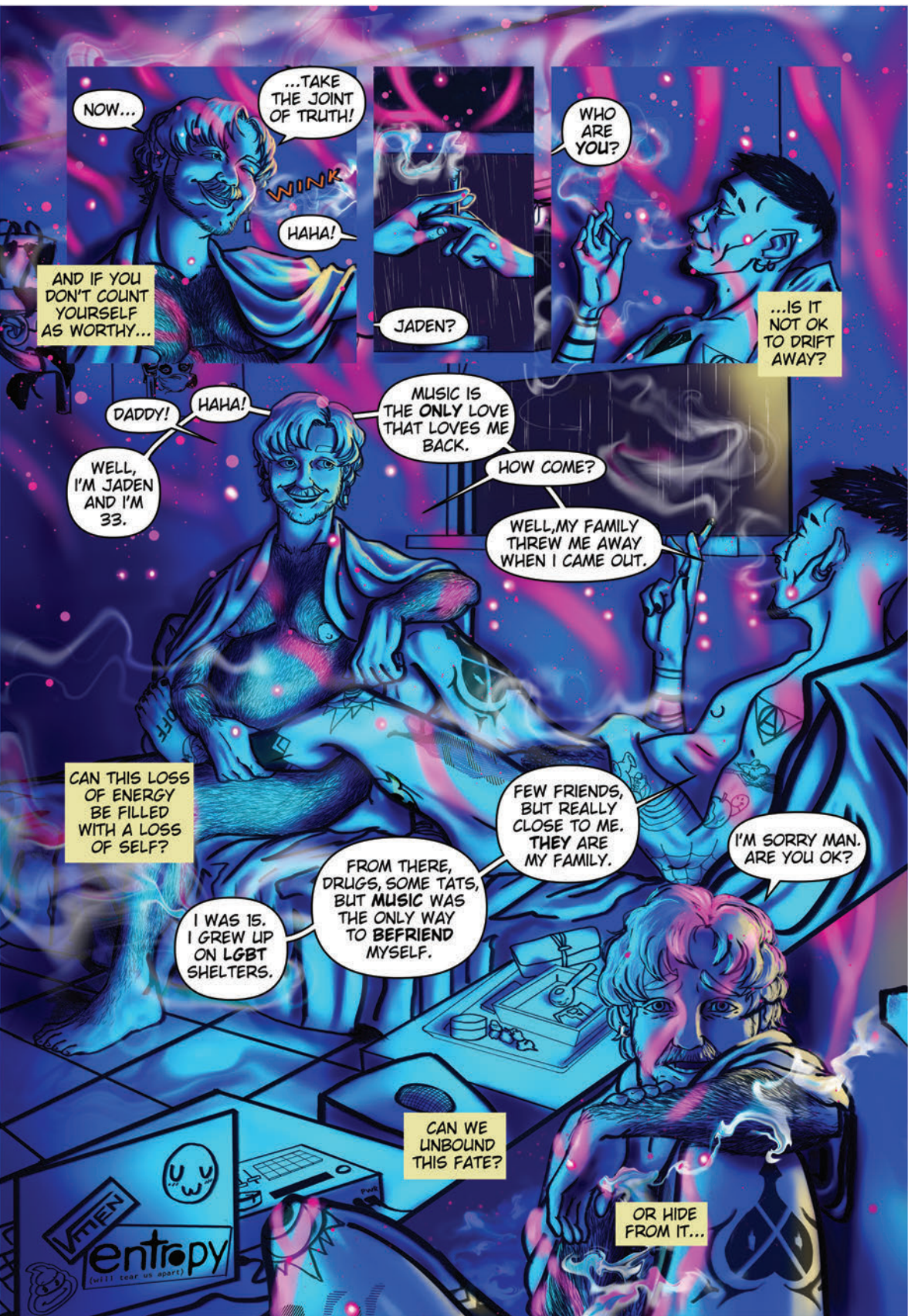
YOU ARE...

...BENDING LIGHT AND THOUGHTS.

SPIN TOO MUCH AND YOU'LL LOSE YOURSELF.

...A FADED MEMORY OF YOU.





NOW...

...TAKE THE JOINT OF TRUTH!

WINK

HAHA!

AND IF YOU DON'T COUNT YOURSELF AS WORTHY...



JADEN?



WHO ARE YOU?

...IS IT NOT OK TO DRIFT AWAY?

DADDY!

HAHA!

MUSIC IS THE ONLY LOVE THAT LOVES ME BACK.

WELL, I'M JADEN AND I'M 33.

HOW COME?

WELL, MY FAMILY THREW ME AWAY WHEN I CAME OUT.

CAN THIS LOSS OF ENERGY BE FILLED WITH A LOSS OF SELF?

FEW FRIENDS, BUT REALLY CLOSE TO ME. THEY ARE MY FAMILY.

I'M SORRY MAN. ARE YOU OK?

I WAS 15. I GREW UP ON LGBT SHELTERS.

FROM THERE, DRUGS, SOME TATS, BUT MUSIC WAS THE ONLY WAY TO BEFRIEND MYSELF.

CAN WE UNBOUND THIS FATE?

OR HIDE FROM IT...

entropY
(will tear us apart)

...WITH LIES?



YEAH...

... I'M FINE.

JADEN.



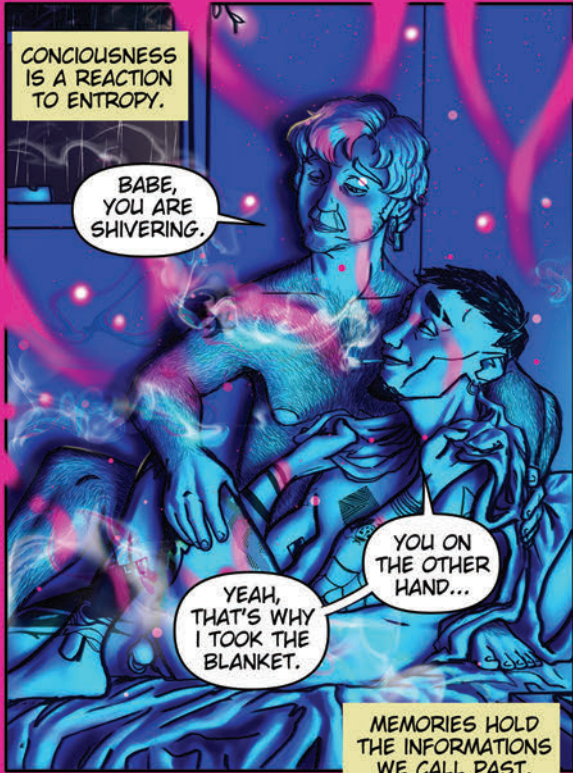
MAKE SOME ROOM FOR ME.

QUANTITY OVER QUALITY.



A CONSTANT GIVING WITH NO EXCEPTIONS.

CONCIOUSNESS IS A REACTION TO ENTROPY.



BABE, YOU ARE SHIVERING.

YEAH, THAT'S WHY I TOOK THE BLANKET.

YOU ON THE OTHER HAND...

MEMORIES HOLD THE INFORMATIONS WE CALL PAST.



YET WHY?

WELL, LET ME WARM YOU.



WHY HAVEN'T WE LEARNT YET?

OUR SKINS, DEAD CELLS
WRAPPING OUR BODIES...

...A MESSY BALL OF STRING
THAT BEGS FOR UNKNITTING.

HIS GAZE
IS LOST.



HE HAD
A BIT MORE
THAN HE CAN
HANDLE.

HE HAD
ENOUGH.



I WONDER...

TIME TO REST.

...IS OUR LIFE A MERE TRIP OF DECAY?



ARE WE GIVING UP FRACTURES OF OUR FUTURE?

WHAT IS SACRED IN HISTORY IF WE ALWAYS REPEAT IT?



HERE IS THE PLAN.



I'M TIRED AND HUNGRY! LET'S JUST CHILL, MAKE SOMETHING TO EAT, I CAN COOK. ALRIGHT?

ARE WE RESISTING ENTROPY?



I'M DOWN! BUT CAN WE STAY LIKE THIS FOR A BIT?

PRETTY PLEASE?

OR DO WE SURRENDER?



DEAL! LET ME CLOSE THE WINDOW FIRST.

IF HE GETS WORSE, I'LL CALL A TAXI AND HEAD TO THE ER.



IS THE STATE HIGHER?...

...OR LOWER?

CALLING FOR HELP MIGHT CAUSE MORE PROBLEMS.

IS OUR UNIQUENESS A REMINDER OF ORDER?

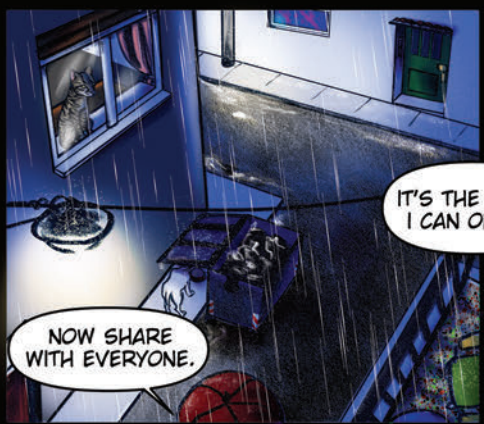
OR AN EVERCHANGING FACTOR OPPOSED TO IT?



NO NEED FOR THAT, MY BOY!

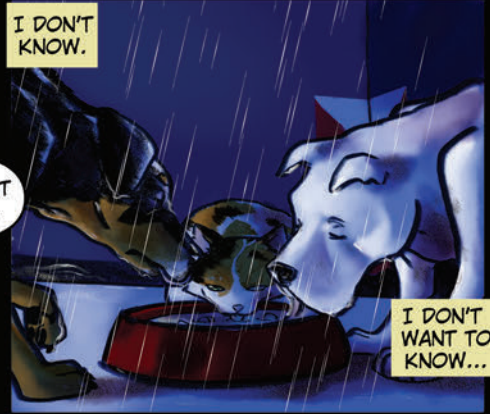
I'M NOT HERE TO HURT YOU.

SEE?



NOW SHARE WITH EVERYONE.

IT'S THE LEAST I CAN OFFER.



I DON'T KNOW.

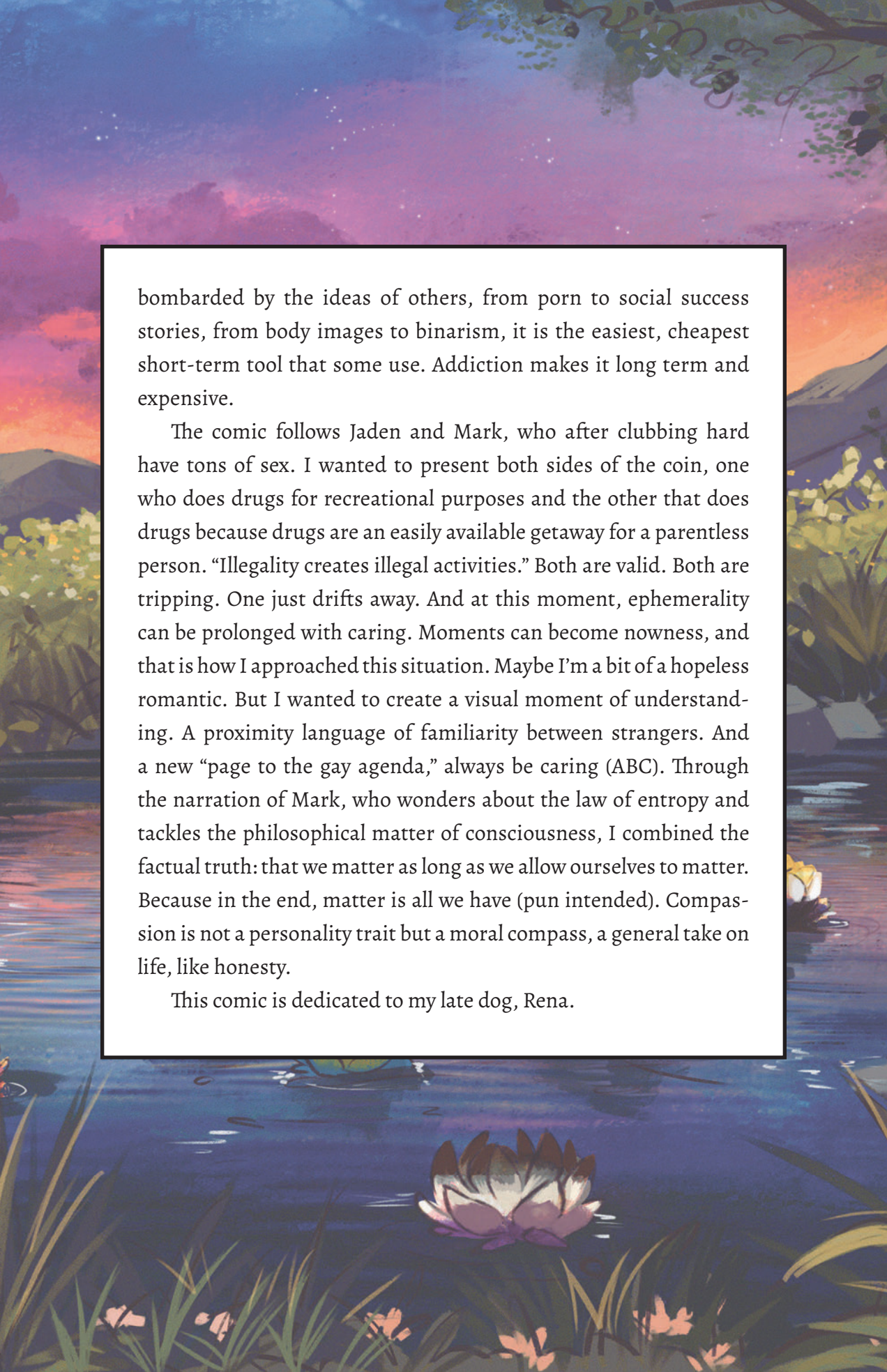
I DON'T WANT TO KNOW...



FROM THE ARTIST

I have been in and out of sobriety. Chemsex, also known as party and play (PnP), was my gateway to not think after the first year I was diagnosed with HIV. Drugs are easy, mudding perceptions of reality, relieving anxiety for some, or reducing a negative social aspect. My approach to PnP was always to trust one person only to do chemsex with. Always to have one person that you could say, “I don’t feel well,” and they will care. During my days of chemsex, I met a few good people but also lots of self-centered men. I also learned about people dying from overdose. What felt really out of touch was people saying, “We are adults doing drugs; each person is responsible for themselves only.” In my mind, the constant reminder that, at some point, a person couldn’t give any approval or *consent* before he passed out just turned me away from chems with strangers. The lack of compassion and awareness. I’m not opposed to drugs; I grew up doing puffs and lines. I’m opposed to the lack of consent.

When this volume’s coeditor Phillip came to me, I was sure that I wanted to talk about PnP. And I know, it is a very “do and do not tell” thing. Denying that such a thing isn’t happening is out of touch. Drugs are an easy getaway. As a minority that is constantly

The background is a vertical, painterly illustration. At the top, a sky transitions from a deep blue to a soft purple and pink, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. Below the sky, there are silhouettes of trees and foliage. In the middle ground, a body of water reflects the colors of the sky. In the foreground, there are several lily pads and a large, blooming white lily flower with a purple center. The overall style is soft and artistic, with visible brushstrokes and a rich color palette.

bombarded by the ideas of others, from porn to social success stories, from body images to binarism, it is the easiest, cheapest short-term tool that some use. Addiction makes it long term and expensive.

The comic follows Jaden and Mark, who after clubbing hard have tons of sex. I wanted to present both sides of the coin, one who does drugs for recreational purposes and the other that does drugs because drugs are an easily available getaway for a parentless person. “Illegality creates illegal activities.” Both are valid. Both are tripping. One just drifts away. And at this moment, ephemerality can be prolonged with caring. Moments can become nowness, and that is how I approached this situation. Maybe I’m a bit of a hopeless romantic. But I wanted to create a visual moment of understanding. A proximity language of familiarity between strangers. And a new “page to the gay agenda,” always be caring (ABC). Through the narration of Mark, who wonders about the law of entropy and tackles the philosophical matter of consciousness, I combined the factual truth: that we matter as long as we allow ourselves to matter. Because in the end, matter is all we have (pun intended). Compassion is not a personality trait but a moral compass, a general take on life, like honesty.

This comic is dedicated to my late dog, Rena.

*NIGHT PARADE OF
A HUNDRED GHOSTS*

BY
IORE



HEY

WE HAVENT TALKED
IN A WHILE BUT

I HEARD YOU QUIT?

OR JUST

STOPPED SHOWING UP
TO WORK?

DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?
I MEAN THEY DIDNT TRY TO

I DIDNT GET YOU IN TROUBLE
DID I?



NAI

THE LAST THING YOU WANT
TO DO RIGHT NOW IS TALK
TO ME

I KNOW THAT

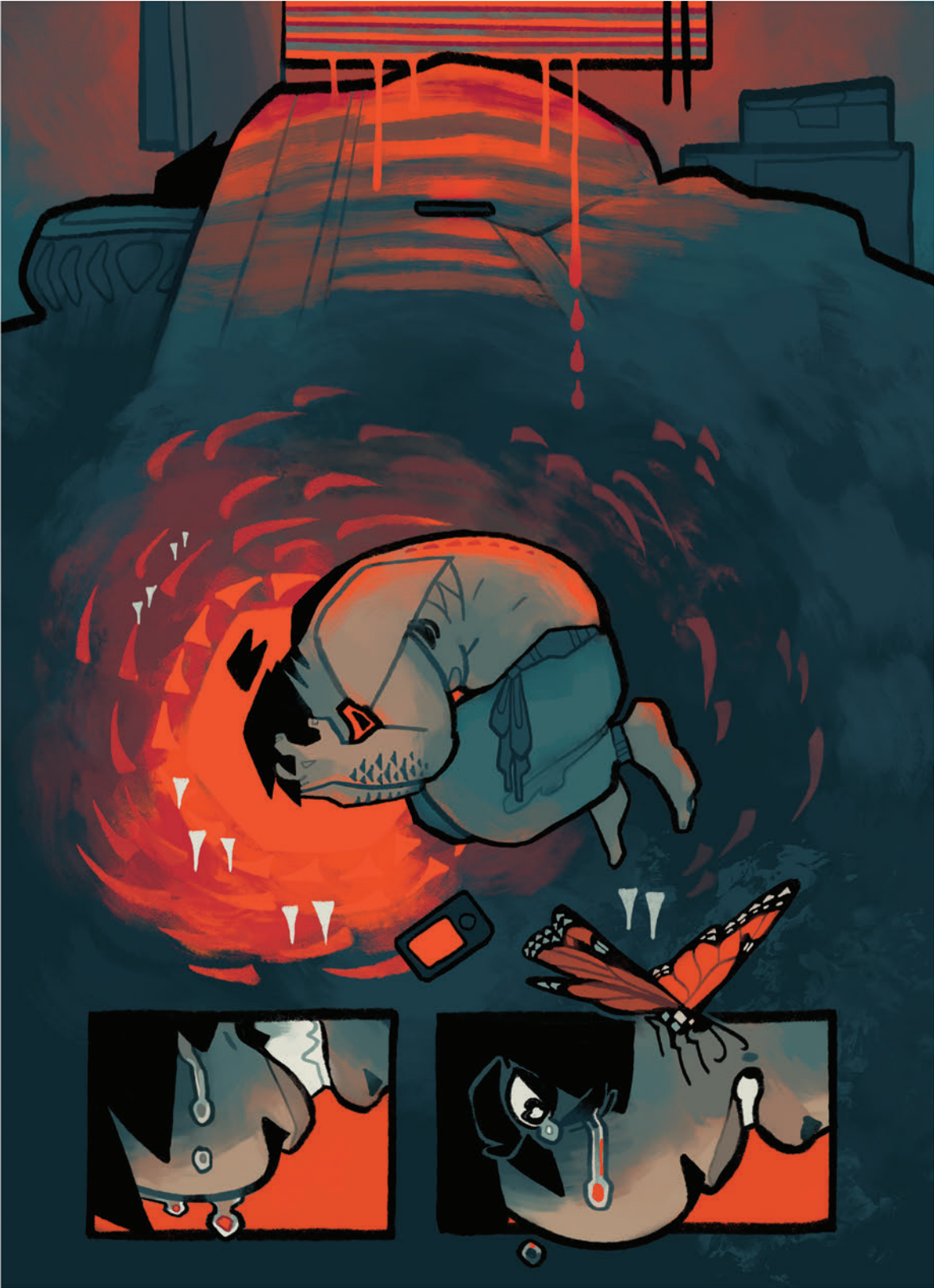
IM JUST

IM WORRIED

IM COMING OVER

OK?

>CLICK<







...AT THIS RATE, YOU'RE GOING TO BECOME ONE!

WE HAVE TO
DO SOMETHING!!









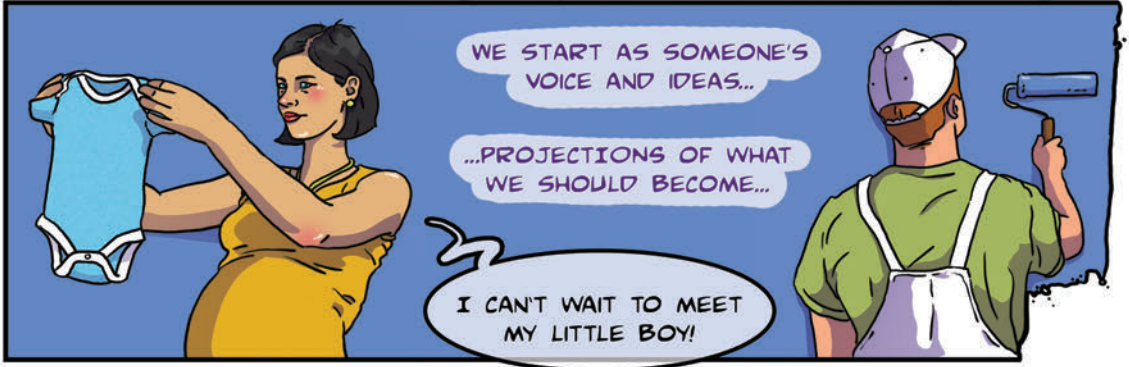


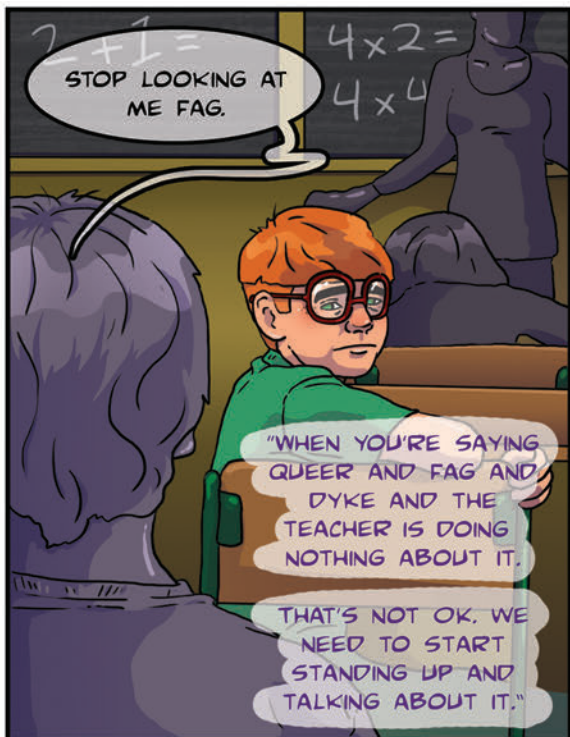
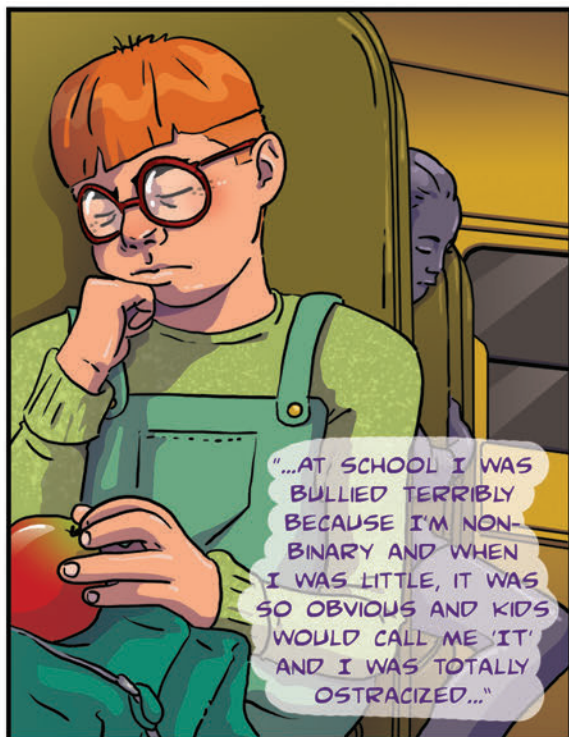


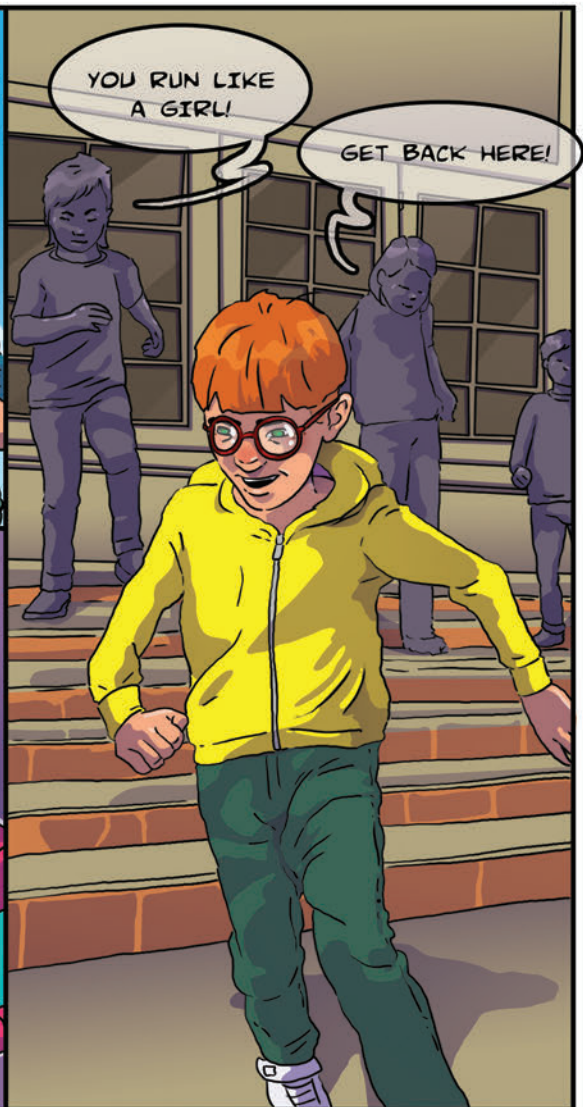
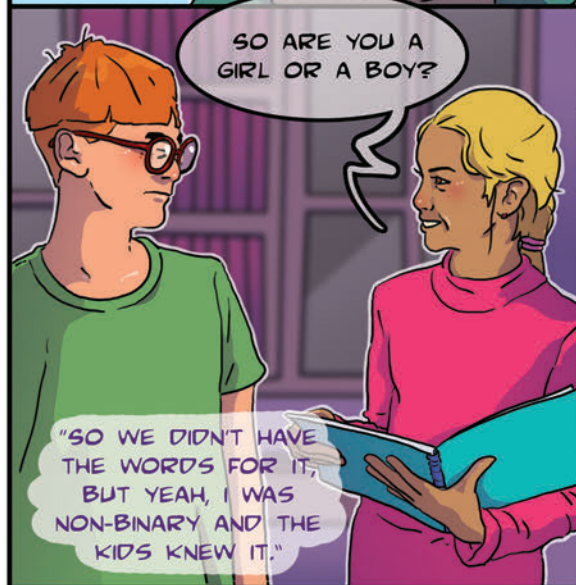
FROM THE ARTIST

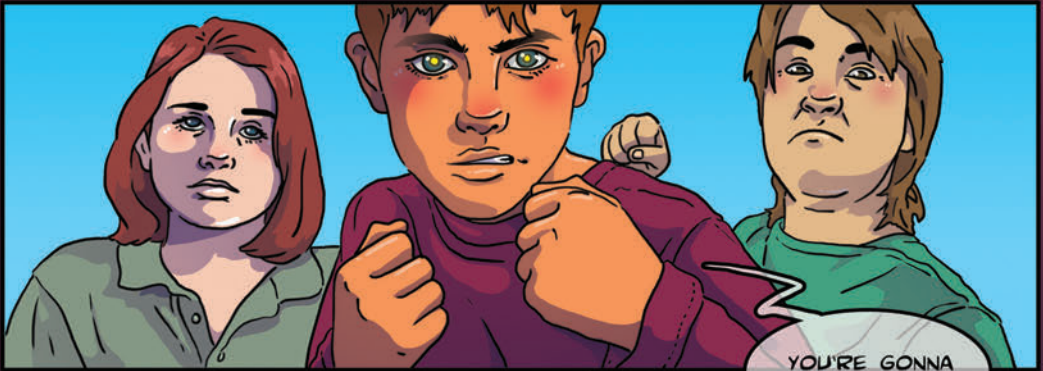
There are some difficult feelings in the comic about estrangement, belonging, and cultural longing. The story didn't quite click for me, though, until I started reading the stories of others in the community from the research. There's a lot of beauty in there, but there's also a lot of hurt. I wanted to squeeze everyone's hands and somehow find the perfect words of comfort—and isn't that all that anyone wants to do when they see family going through it? So I started thinking of it as a call-and-response between you, at your lowest point, and the ghosts of your ancestors. If they could talk to you, what would they say? "Look—you're safe and fed." "You're alive." "How magnificent!" "You can cry, but wouldn't it feel better if you did it in the shower?" "Now hold my hand and walk with me." "Take care of yourself." "Brush your teeth." "Text her back." "We love you."

THE JOURNEY
BY
DANIEL "DAPPER" MCLAREN

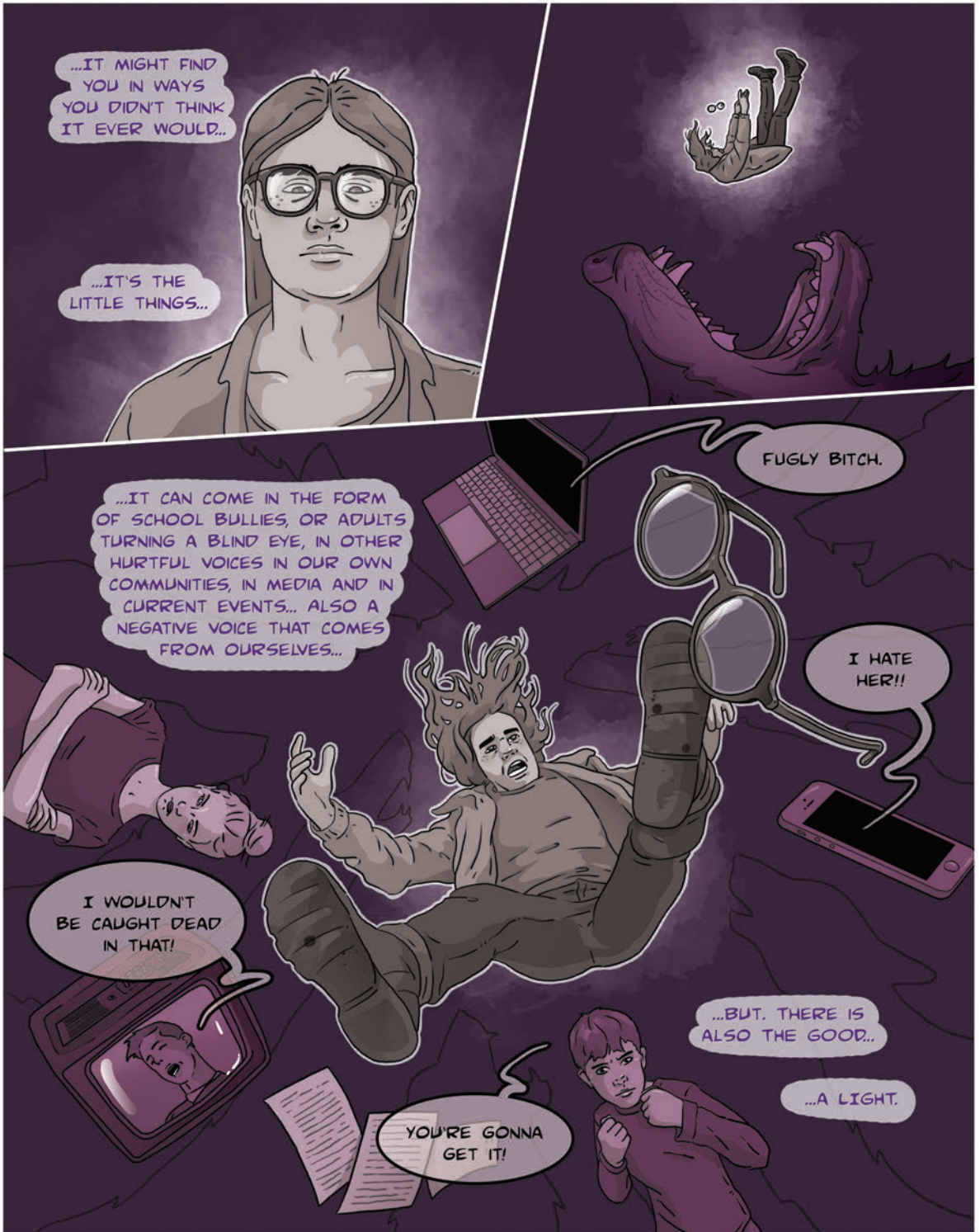






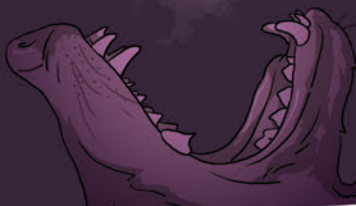






...IT MIGHT FIND YOU IN WAYS YOU DIDN'T THINK IT EVER WOULD..

...IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS...



...IT CAN COME IN THE FORM OF SCHOOL BULLIES, OR ADULTS TURNING A BLIND EYE, IN OTHER HURTFUL VOICES IN OUR OWN COMMUNITIES, IN MEDIA AND IN CURRENT EVENTS... ALSO A NEGATIVE VOICE THAT COMES FROM OURSELVES...

FUGLY BITCH.

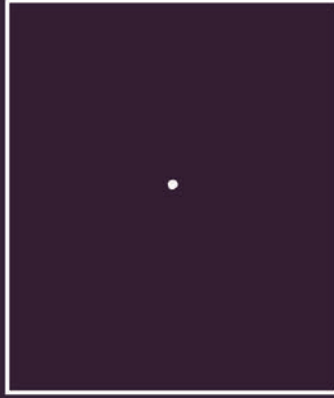
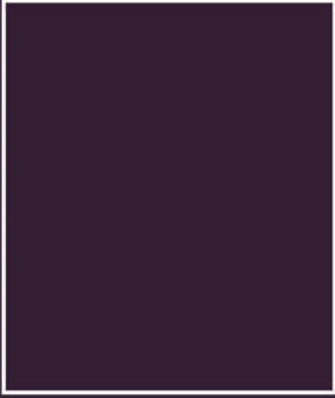
I HATE HER!!

I WOULDN'T BE CAUGHT DEAD IN THAT!

...BUT. THERE IS ALSO THE GOOD..

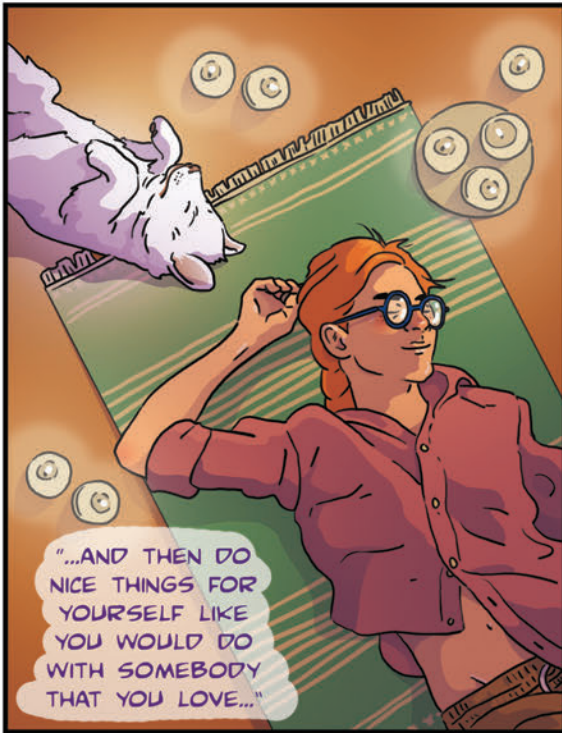
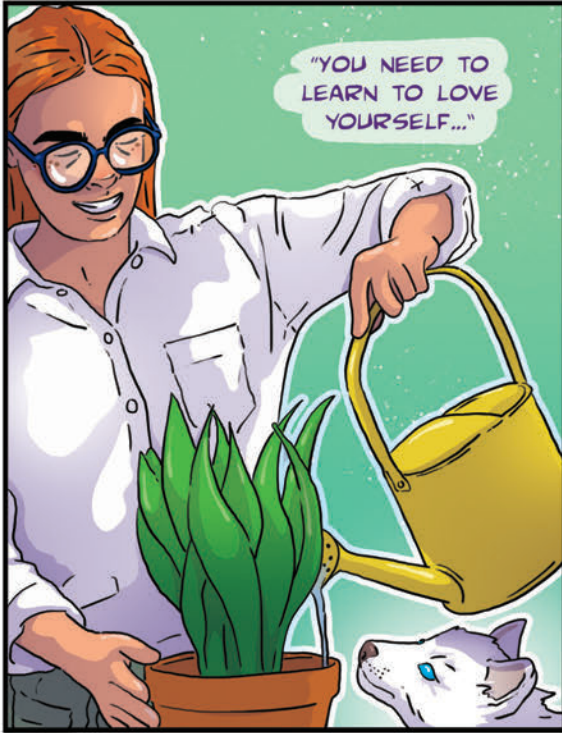
...A LIGHT.

YOU'RE GONNA GET IT!



"SELF COMPASSION IMPLIES BEING GENTLER WITH ONESELF. MANY OF US ARE HARD ON OURSELVES. WE DENIGRATE OURSELVES AND WE RIDICULE OURSELVES. SELF COMPASSION TO ME IMPLIES YOU KNOW, TRYING TO FORGIVE ONESELF."







"START WITH YOURSELF."

"IT'S ABOUT LOVING YOURSELF FIRST, TREATING YOURSELF TO GOOD THINGS BECAUSE NO ONE WILL LOVE YOU, IF YOU DON'T LOVE YOURSELF..."



HI MOM!

HI DAD!



"...BEING PROUD OF YOURSELF, CARING FOR YOURSELF, TAKING TIME FOR YOURSELF..."

THEY, THEM.



"...SO DON'T WAIT FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO DO IT FOR YOU..."



"...TREAT YOURSELF WITH KINDNESS, AND FIND TIME FOR YOURSELF. TO REFLECT, JOURNAL, BREATHE AND ABOVE ALL BE THERE FOR YOU!..."

...AND TREAT THOSE AROUND YOU THE SAME...

...IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS.



STORY AND ART BY: DANIEL 'DAPPER' MCLAREN



FROM THE ARTIST

Self-compassion for me has been a long and personal journey, and I wanted to illustrate that with my piece. *The Journey*. Finding a healing process and learning to find value in yourself. But most importantly, learning to love yourself. Finding a way to balance the good and the bad and teaching yourself how to search out the good and healthy things that can start to help you heal. People can be hurtful to each other. Whether from the fear of our differences or from our own pain, we can lash out and inflict pain on others. This idea of hurting each other struck a chord with me, and I visualized childhood trauma as a wolf. Hurtful words, name-calling, bullying, threats of violence, physical and mental abuse, or other forms of trauma can feel like sharp and aggressive teeth, eating away at you slowly. For me art was a great healer, a form of therapy, and a cathartic release of negative thoughts and memories, and the white wolf depicts that. The white wolf represents something you can grow with, something that introduces a needed levity in your life, and something that allows a healing process for yourself.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

iore

She/Her

IORE is a butch lesbian and wannabe body of water who is currently studying environmental science in the Sonoran Desert.

Her work is all about loving deserts, loving rivers, and loving people. And also, the interior worlds of greasy, calamitous women.



Kayleigh Fine

She/Her/They/Them

KAYLEIGH FINE is an illustrator from Florida who loves painting backgrounds and soft moments.

As an LGBT artist, she enjoys painting queer couples and slices of life. Kayleigh was interested in taking on this project because she felt it would be a good way to share her passion for the community and bring light to how important pride is.



Elijah Forbes

He/Him

ELIJAH FORBES is an Indigenous Two Spirit creative that focuses on bringing Odawa storytelling and transgender joy into the world through his work.

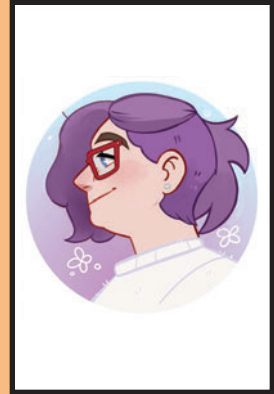
His work primarily focuses on 2SLGBT and Indigenous representation in illustration and children's literature. Elijah is represented by Nicole Geiger of Full Circle Literary, who can be contacted at nicole@fullcircleliterary.com.

Emma Galloway

She/Her/They/Them

EMMA GALLOWAY is a queer comic artist currently living in Scotland. She likes to draw comics about cute girls, family and the power of love, and connections in the face of adversity.

Emma is probably getting distracted by her dog instead of working on her sapphic magical romance webcomic right now.



Fabien Lutz-Barabé

He/Him

FABIEN BARABÉ and his husband moved to Nova Scotia in 1997, and it was then that he started to paint with watercolors and then moved on to acrylics. As a member of the Peggy's Cove Area Festival of the Arts for the last eleven years, his love of Nova Scotia and its surroundings is the source of many of his inspired works. His imagination shows no bounds when it comes to the materials he uses to create unique pieces.

He had his first published cartoon strip, *The Spice of Life*, in two Montreal papers from 1994 to 1996. He is a cancer survivor, and art became his form of therapy. He returned to his first love of cartooning with a spin-off to *The Spice of Life* entitled *The Secret Life of a Naturalist*. He currently has a comic book available on Amazon entitled *Matias*.





Daniel “Dapper” McLaren

He/Him

DANIEL “DAPPER” MCLAREN is a queer artist who is based in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. He creates weird, galactic, witchy-sexy-spooky-surreal, and cosmic comic art. His solo work consists of the indie comic *QUEST*, which follows an all-inclusive, queer, and multicultural group of sci-fi brats on a mysterious journey.

He also creates bright and colorful illustrations with a strong focus on the supernatural, the superhuman, the superstrange, and horror.

Follow @dapperdansays on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Etsy and at www.dapperdanielmclaren.com.

Jalex Noel

They/Them

JALEX is a queer enby (nonbinary) artist from Greece who really hates the sun. Jalex has studied applied mathematics, but art was always the go-to language.

Their previous works include curating and participating in art exhibitions and creating illustrations for PhD postdoc articles, children’s books, poetry books, and comic anthologies. They currently work as an illustrator for Fårö Creative Learning.

When they don’t work, they try to create replicates of the universe with glitter.

Follow @jlx_nl on Instagram or email them at jalexwave@live.com.

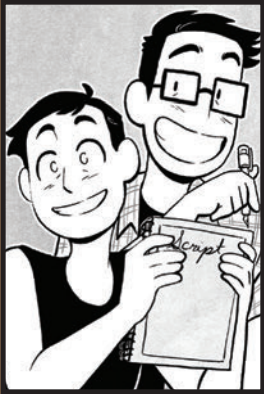


Jay Pahre

He/Him

JAY PAHRE is a queer and trans settler artist, writer, and cultural worker currently based on the unceded territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples. Weaving together drawing, sculpture, and writing, his work queries trans and queer nonhuman ecologies as they intersect with the human.

Originally from the midwestern US, Pahre has turned his work back toward the shifting ecologies of the Great Lakes and Great Plains regions. He received his BFA in painting and BA in East Asian studies in 2014 and his MA in East Asian studies from the University of Illinois in 2017. He went on to complete his MFA in visual arts at the University of British Columbia in 2020. His work has been exhibited across the US and Canada, and in 2020, he was selected for the Transgender Studies Chair Fellowship at the University of Victoria.



Michelle Parker and Jey Pawlik

Michelle Parker (xey/xem);

Jey Pawlik (they/them)

JEY and MICHELLE are a comic-creating duo who have been working together since 2013 under the name Topaz Comics.

They have several short comic and anthology stories under their belts as well as the completed webcomic *Dead City*.

Jey has also written the autobiographical webcomic *Gender Slices* and is a regular contributor for the website *Oh Joy Sex Toy*. Their work focuses on queer characters and the small moments of joy and heartbreak.

Find their work at topazcomics.com.



Joe Phillips

He/Him

JOE PHILLIPS's career spans professionally over thirty-five years as an illustrator, comic book artist, animator, and writer. He began his career drawing comics of *Speed Racer* and painting scenes from *Interview with the Vampire*. He has worked for DC, Marvel, Dark Horse, WildStorm, and IDW comics on nearly every major character. He has created hundreds of trading cards for Marvel Masterpiece and DC Comics along with game companies.

Joe Phillips has created the independent comic *The Heretic* as well as his signature *Joe Boys* for calendars and coffee-table picture books. Some of his career highlights include national campaigns for Bud Light and illustrating the third edition of *The Joy of Gay Sex*. His work has been used for product trading and advertisements as well as covers for novels and magazines both domestically and worldwide.

He has also created a new brand of pagan-inspired prints and T-shirts called the Witch Boys. Artistically, he enjoys many different styles, techniques, and genres. He enjoys the challenges of creating what different projects call for more than putting his style to them. He is equally at home with anything from realism to wild cartoon designs.

Currently, Joe Phillips has a new release of his very own tarot deck called the *Divine Diversity* deck, specializing in representing racial and sexual diversity in most typical tarot decks. His current projects include a new novel entitled *Spellbreaker* and a graphic novel called *Snow White: A Horror Tale*.

Anwesh Sahoo

He/Him

ANWESH is a visual designer, a technical and NFT artist, the first Indian recipient of the Troy Perry Medal of Pride for Compassionate Activism, the youngest winner of Mr. Gay World India, and the creator of the Effeminare.

With features in *Vogue*, *Rolling Stone*, and the *Hindu* as a breakthrough queer artist, he has taken on the stage of TEDx as a speaker asserting the need to celebrate gender as a spectrum. He blogs and draws in the Effeminare, a parallel universe where he gets to illustrate the utopian world he wants to be a part of.

He looks at life as a thrilling mystery novel written by God, and since his novel has only started, he'd go with "I am still evolving!"



Kielamel "Kiela" Sibal

She/Her

KIELAMEL "KIELA" SIBAL is a Filipino Canadian storyteller whose fields of sparkling artistic wizardry include but are not limited to being a cartoonist, a comic letterer, a writer, a graphic designer, and an illustrator.

In her free time, Kiela enjoys reading category romance novels that she shamelessly converts into her own fictional lesbian fantasies. Born in Pampanga, Philippines, Kielamel currently dwells in the honey-dill-soaked pits of Winnipeg, Manitoba, where she studied graphic design and plopped out with a diploma from Red River College Polytech.



Magnus van der Marel

He/Him/They/Them

MAGNUS is a trans illustrator and comic artist living in Vancouver with their cats.

Most of his work revolves around themes of love, vulnerability, transformation, and LGBTQ+ identity, sometimes with a side of fantasy, folk tales, and the supernatural.

David Winters

He/Him

DAVID has been working as an illustrator for over eighteen years. Located in Toronto, he enjoys working with themes and styles related to horror, pop art, and of course, queer content.

You can follow him at WintersINK.com or on Instagram at www.instagram.com/WintersINK.



ABOUT THE EDITORS

Megan Aston

She/Her

DR. ASTON teaches qualitative health research and family and community health nursing in the School of Nursing at Dalhousie University. Her program of research focuses on maternal, child, and newborn health as well as children with intellectual disabilities, their families, and the health-care professionals who care for them. She uses feminist poststructuralism informed by discourse analysis to examine how health-care professionals and clients negotiate beliefs, values, and practices regarding health care that have been socially and institutionally constructed through relations of power.





Phillip Joy

He/Him

DR. JOY teaches client care in the Applied Human Nutrition Department at Mount Saint Vincent University. He also does qualitative research that is often framed within poststructural and social constructivism frameworks. He uses arts-based methodologies, such as photo-voice, cellphilm, and comics. Such methodologies can disrupt the foundations of nutrition and health research by involving the emotions, the senses, the creativity, and the bodies of participants. Art can challenge and subvert social norms and contribute to social transformation through the expression of new perspectives. His main areas of research include LGBTQ+ nutrition; body image and health; community advocacy and social disruption; and pedagogy, curriculum, and training. He is a member of the queer community. You can learn more about his work at <https://phillipjoy.ca/index.html>.

Andrew Thomas

He/Him

ANDREW is currently pursuing a master of arts in counseling psychology and working as a research assistant at Mount Saint Vincent University and Dalhousie University. He cofacilitates a support group for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals engaged in sexualized substance use called “PNP Hangouts,” and he is an active community educator on harm reduction and sexual health. He was formerly the Peer N Peer program coordinator, a sexual health and harm reduction program run through the AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia.

