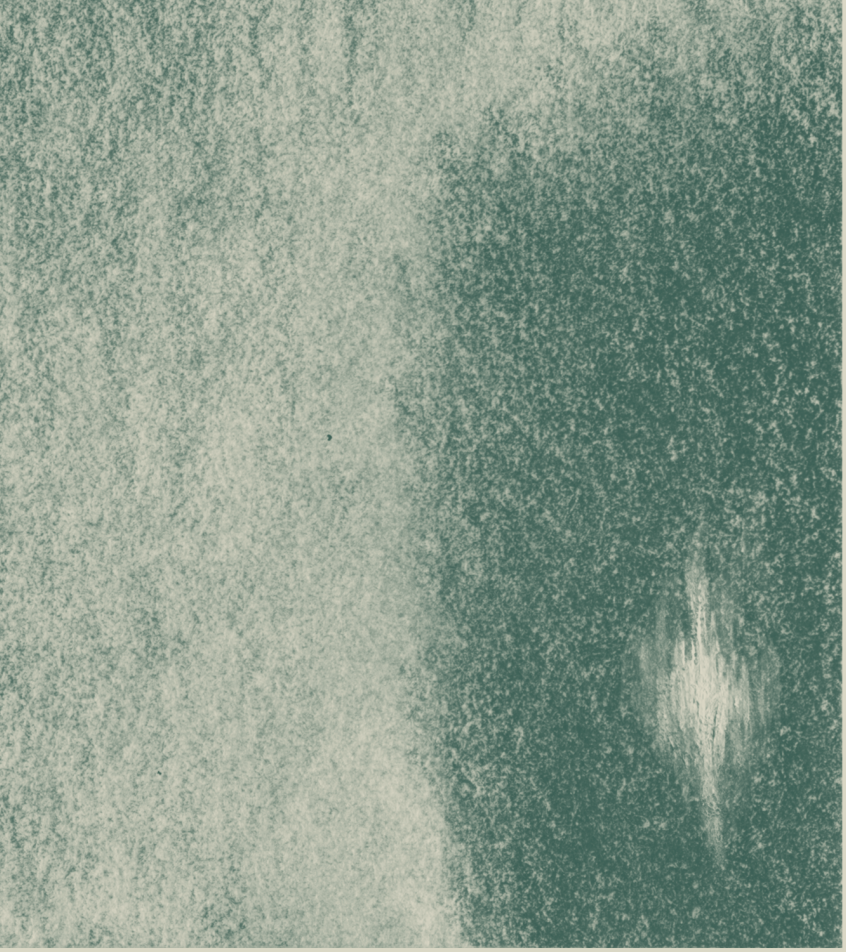

STATION
GRAND
CRAIG HURD-MCKENNEY • NOAH BAILEY • SAIDA TEMOFONTE



AN ONI PRESS PUBLICATION







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Illustrated by
Noah Bailey

Lettered by
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Original edition edited by Shonell Bacon

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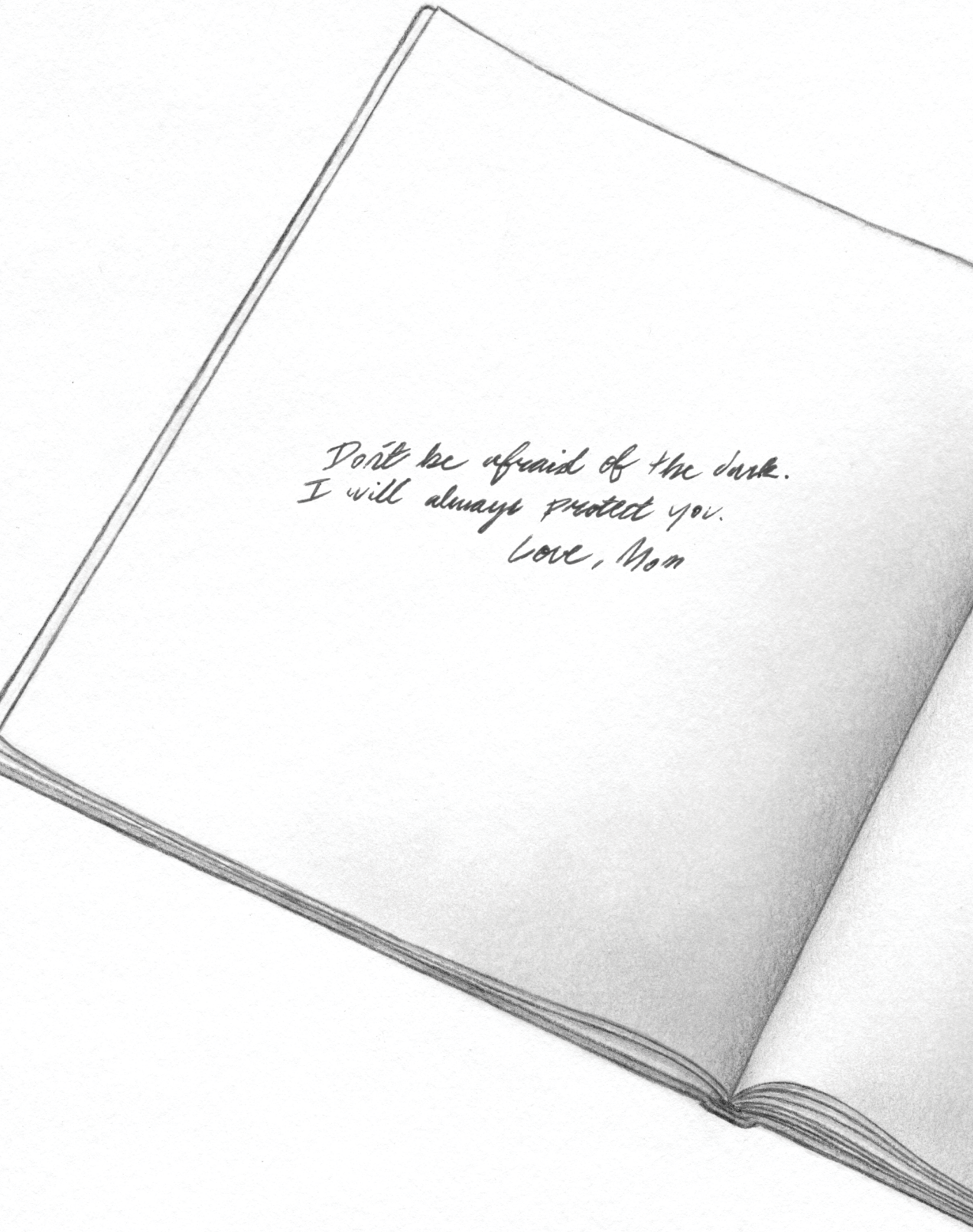
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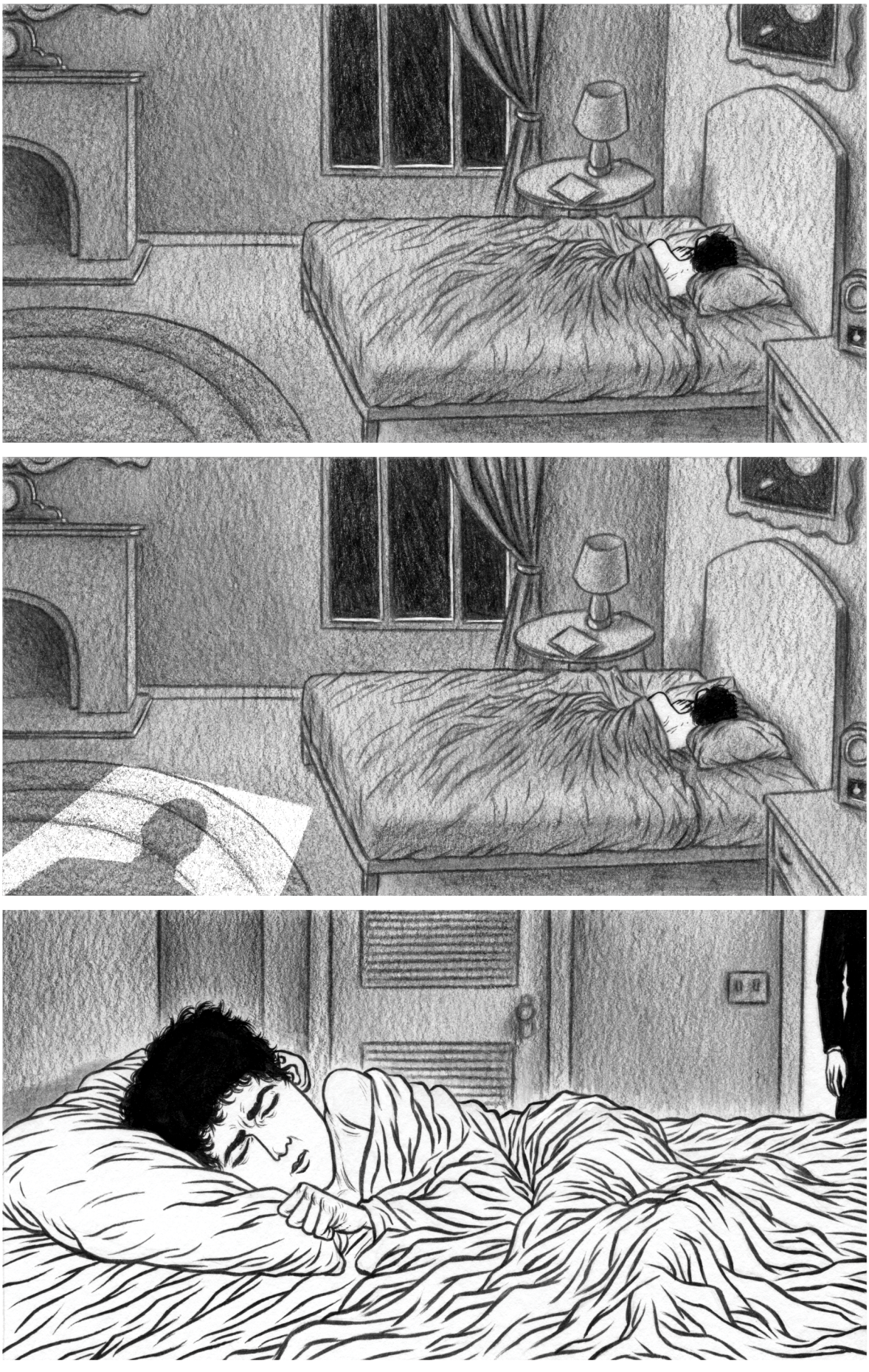
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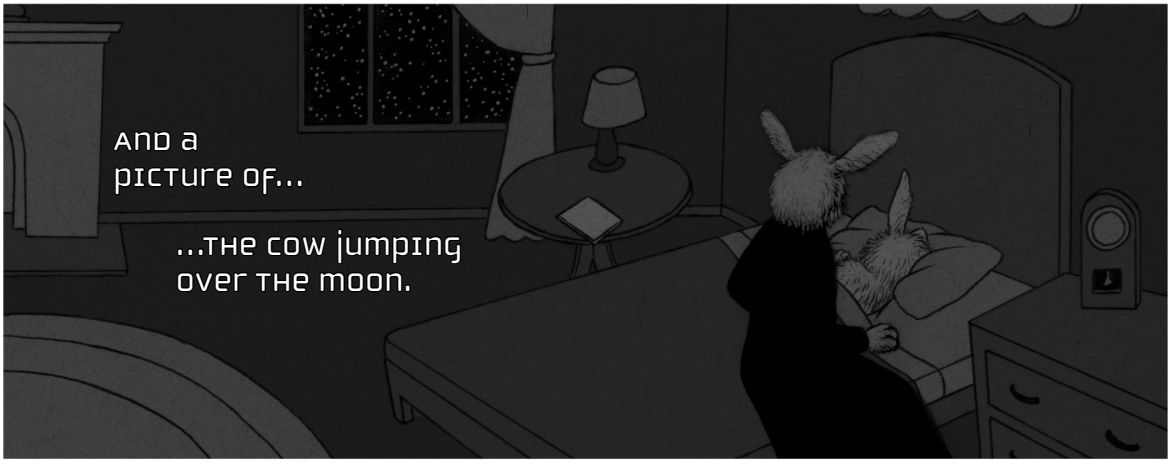

Don't be afraid of the dark.
I will always protect you.
Love, Mom




LULLABY
PLANET


In the great
green room...

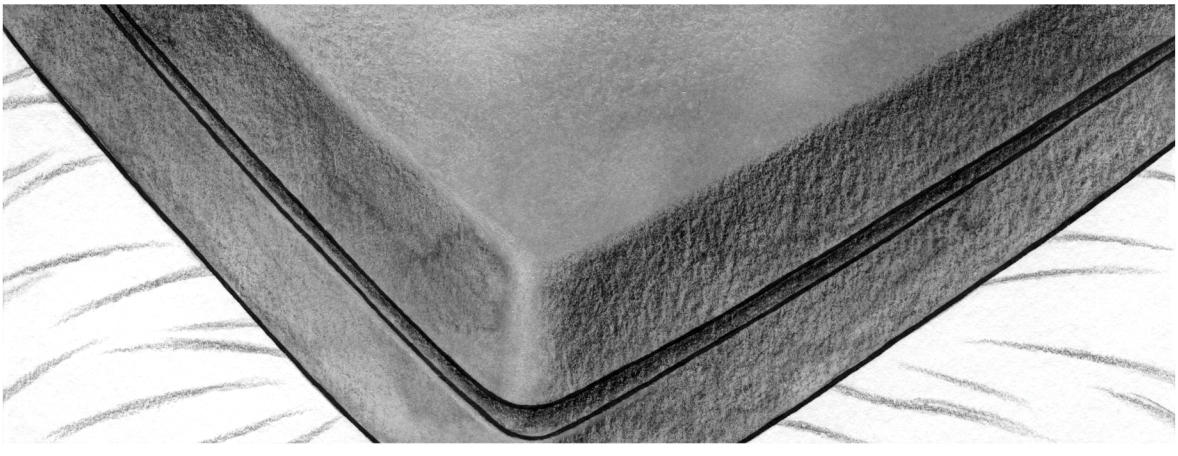

...there was
a telephone.
And a red
balloon.


And a
picture of...
...the cow jumping
over the moon.


LULLABY
PLANET

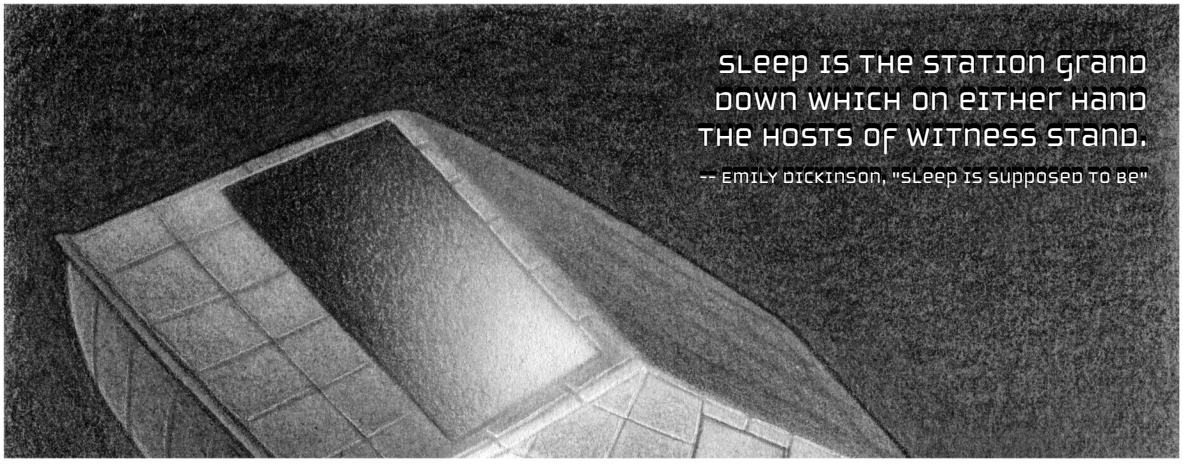

LULLABY
PLANET

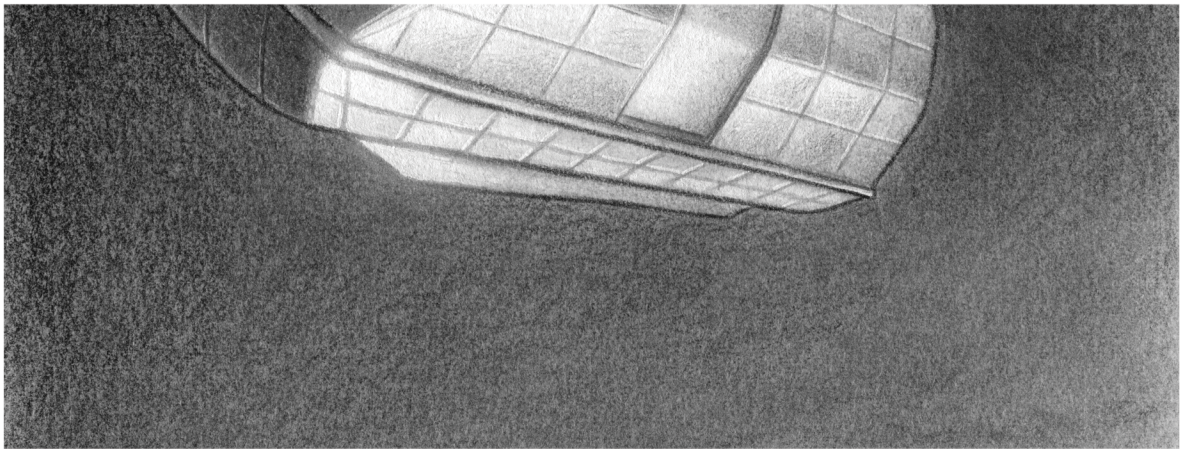


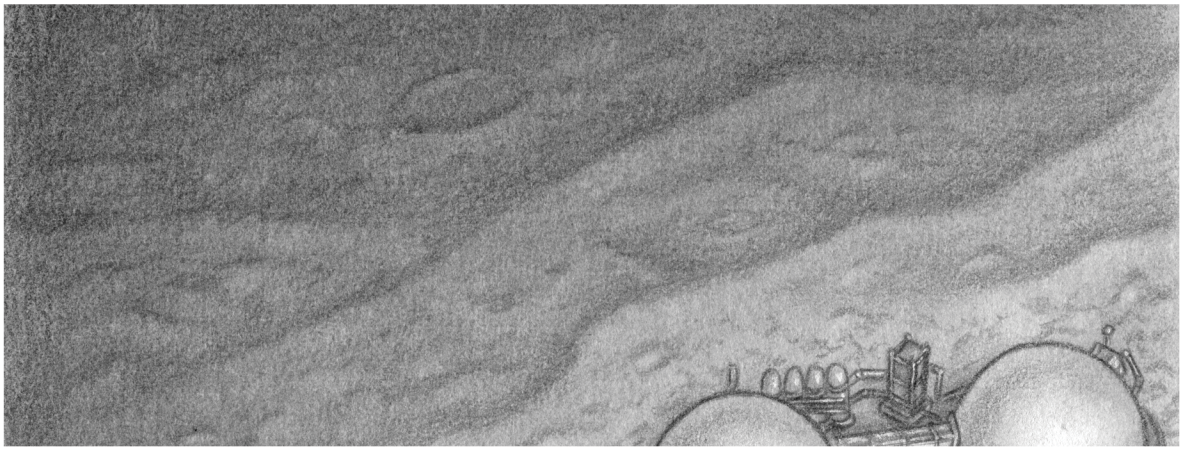


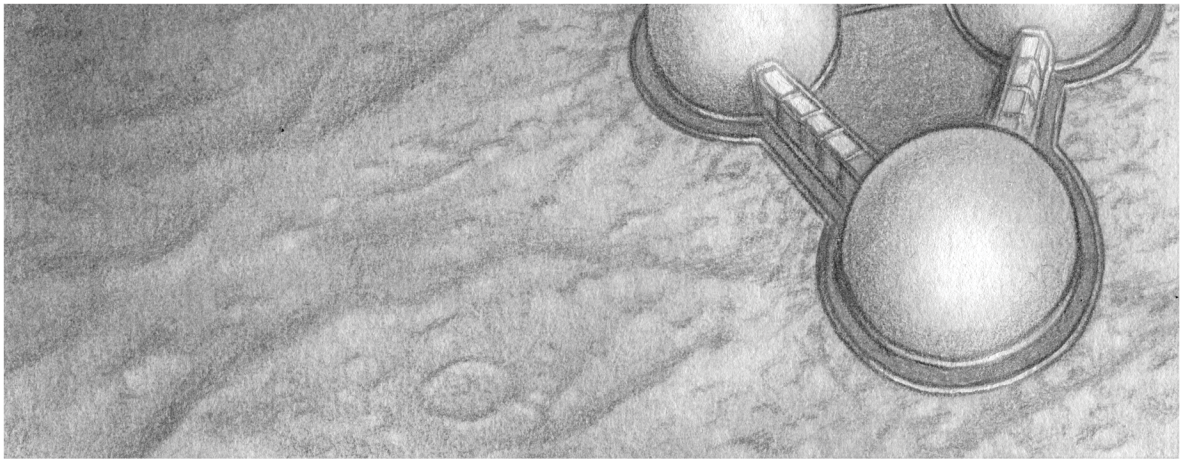


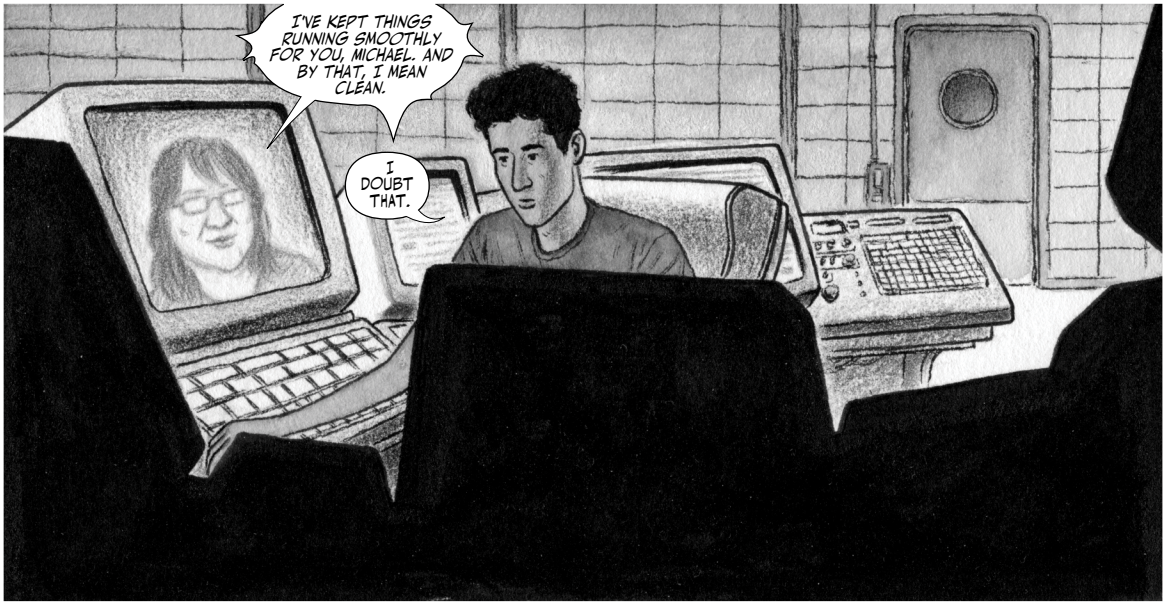

COMPUTER, INITIATE MESSAGE DUMP AND BLOCK.
MESSAGES DUMPED AND BLOCKED, CAPTAIN KINNEY.
READY TO GET BACK OUT THERE, CAPTAIN?


Sleep is the station grand
Down which on either hand
The hosts of witness stand.
-- Emily Dickinson, "Sleep is supposed to be"

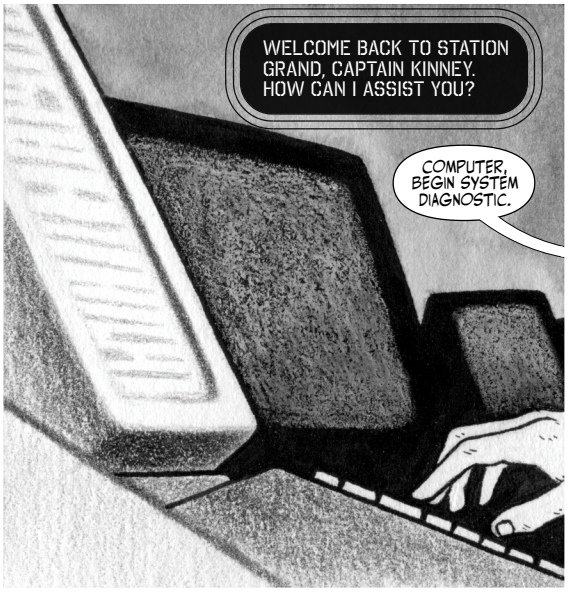


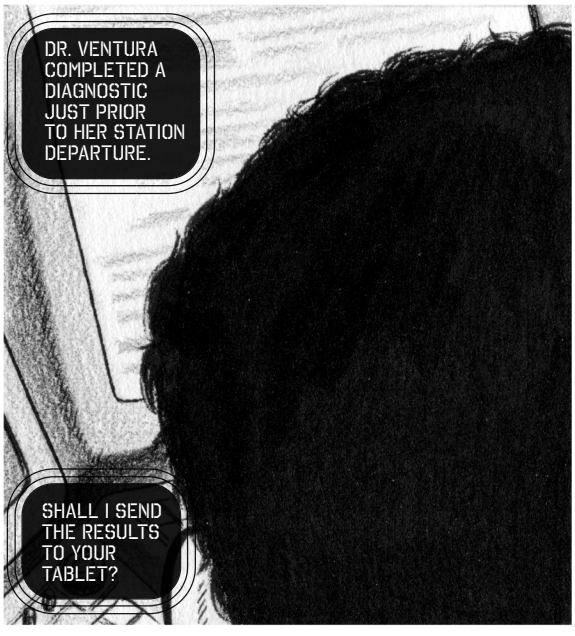


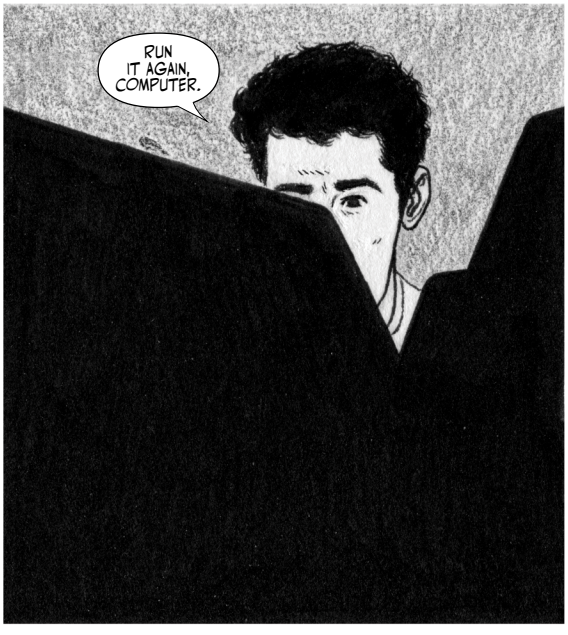



I'VE KEPT THINGS RUNNING SMOOTHLY FOR YOU, MICHAEL. AND BY THAT, I MEAN CLEAN.
I DOUBT THAT.


I'VE BEEN RUNNING THE DIAGN--
COMPUTER?
THIS NEVER GETS OLD.


WELCOME BACK TO STATION GRAND, CAPTAIN KINNEY. HOW CAN I ASSIST YOU?
COMPUTER, BEGIN SYSTEM DIAGNOSTIC.

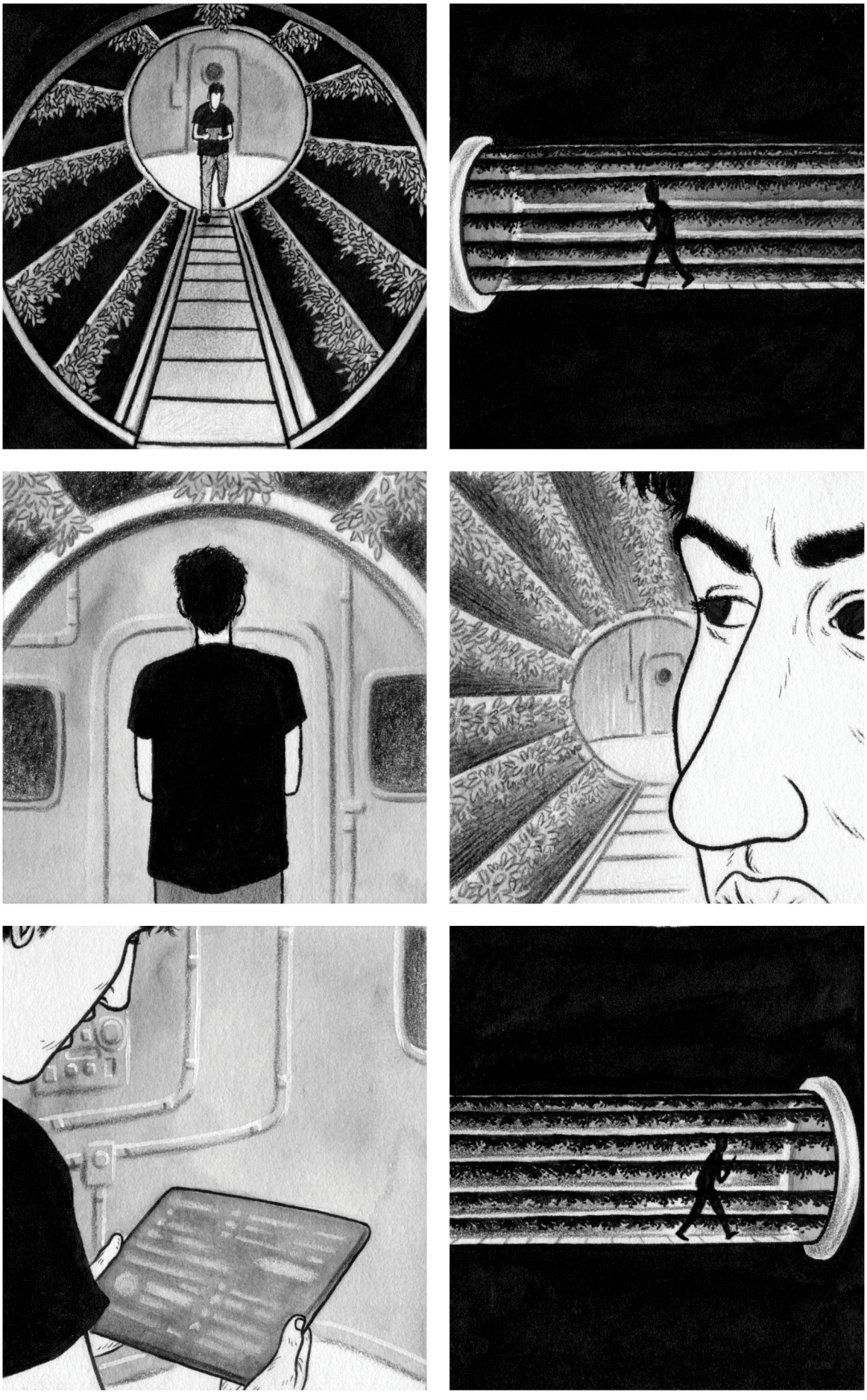

DR. VENTURA COMPLETED A DIAGNOSTIC JUST PRIOR TO HER STATION DEPARTURE.
SHALL I SEND THE RESULTS TO YOUR TABLET?

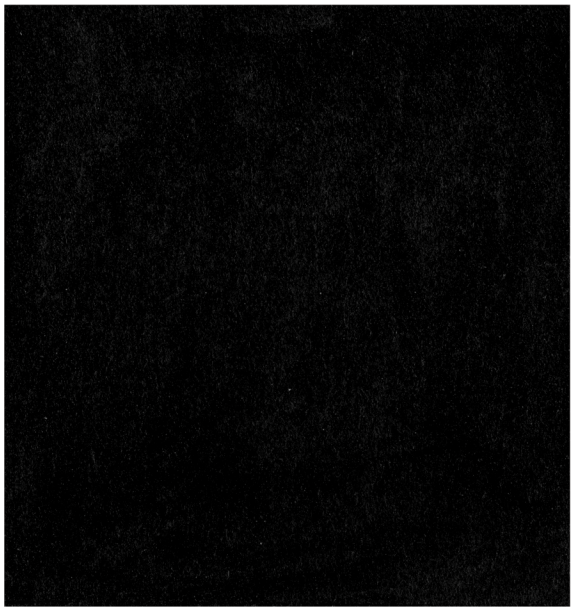

RUN IT AGAIN, COMPUTER.

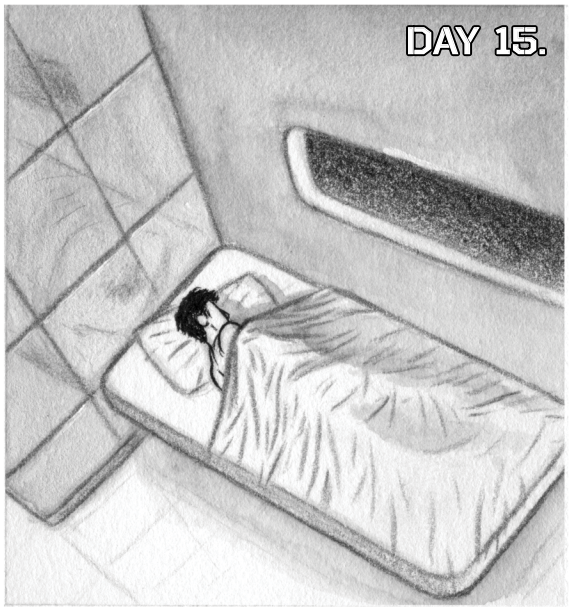

I'VE GOT 225 DAYS TO SORT OUT WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO THE STATION WHILE I'VE BEEN AWAY.
I'LL LEAVE YOU TO YOUR MANSPREADING.
BYE. LOVE YOU. I'LL SEE YOU ON THE OTHER SIDE.
BYE, STUPID. BE SAFE.
WHEN AM I NOT?
I HAVE COMMENCED YOUR PRELIMINARY BLOOD SCAN TO DETERMINE BASELINE HEALTH METRICS.
YOUR ANXIETY MEDICATION LEVELS ARE WITHIN PARAMETERS.
BEGINNING SYSTEM DIAGNOSTIC. SYSTEM DIAGNOSTIC AT...1%.


DAY 2.
COMPUTER, HOW LONG DID I SLEEP?
3 HOURS, 42 MINUTES, 13 SECONDS.

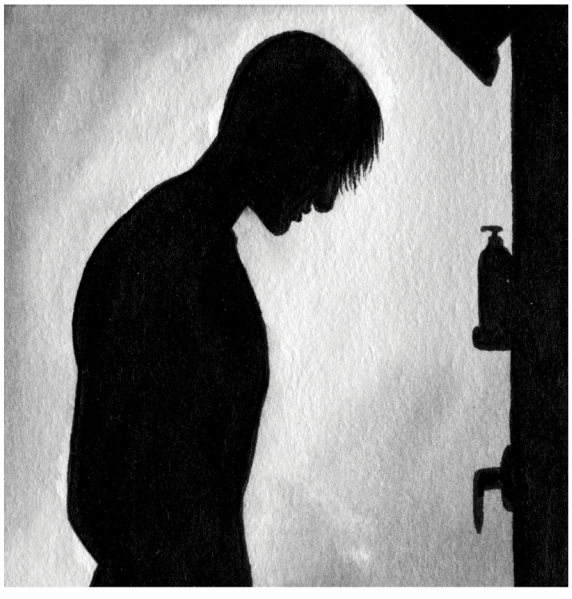

HOW ABOUT THE SYSTEM DIAGNOSTIC?
SYSTEM DIAGNOSTIC COMPLETED AT 0600 HOURS. SYSTEM FUNCTION IS WELL WITHIN DESIGNATED MISSION PARAMETERS.
TRACK MY SLEEP DURING THE NEXT DUTY CYCLE. I'D LIKE MORNING UPDATES, WITH DATABASE SUGGESTIONS FOR SLEEP BALANCE, SHOULD MY SLEEP DURATION DROP BELOW THE TWO-HOUR MARK.
CRACK!
REQUEST CONFIRMED.
ALSO SEND STATION DIAGNOSTIC DATA TO MY TABLET.
BEEP!
HYDROPONICS NUMBERS ARE STILL OFF...WHAT DID SHE DO?

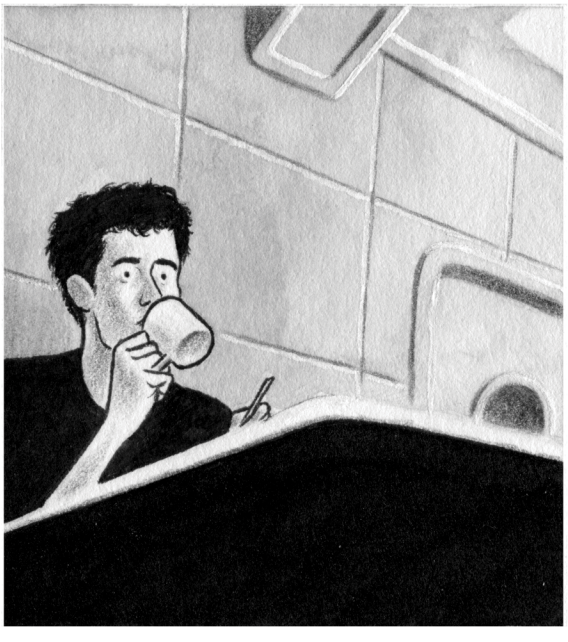




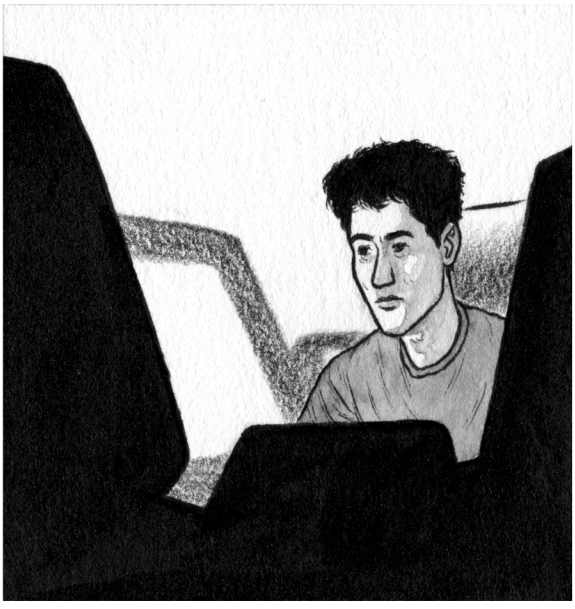

DAY 15.





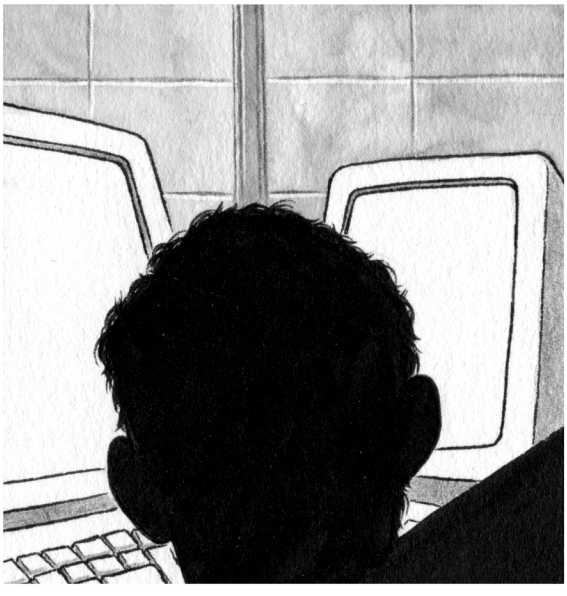


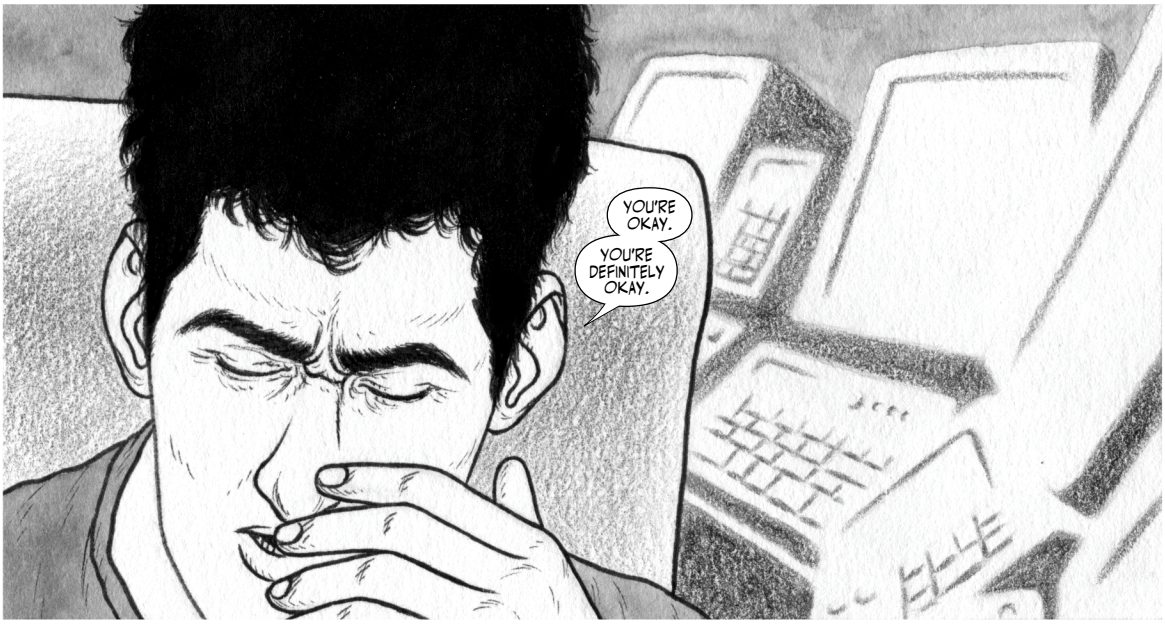

2 HOURS, 16 MINUTES, 48 SECONDS.



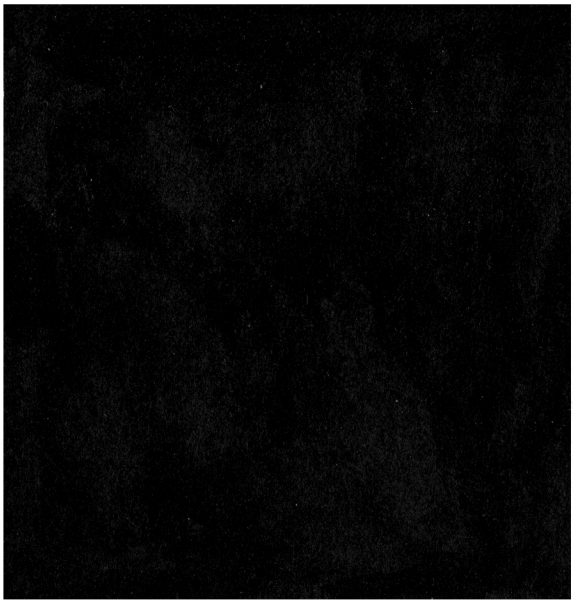


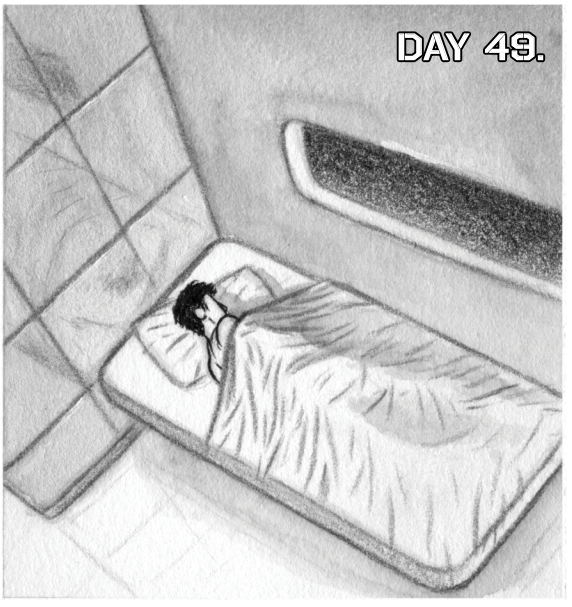

WHO'S THERE?!




YOU'RE OKAY.
YOU'RE DEFINITELY OKAY.

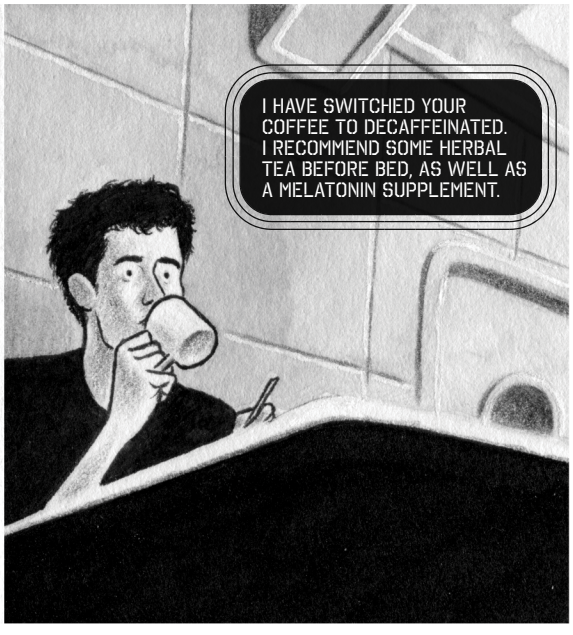

LIGHTS.

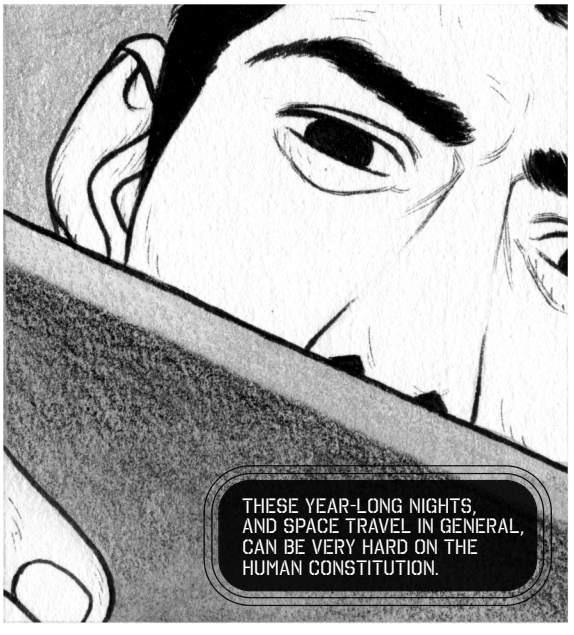



DAY 49.


57 MINUTES, 3 SECONDS, CAPTAIN KINNEY.

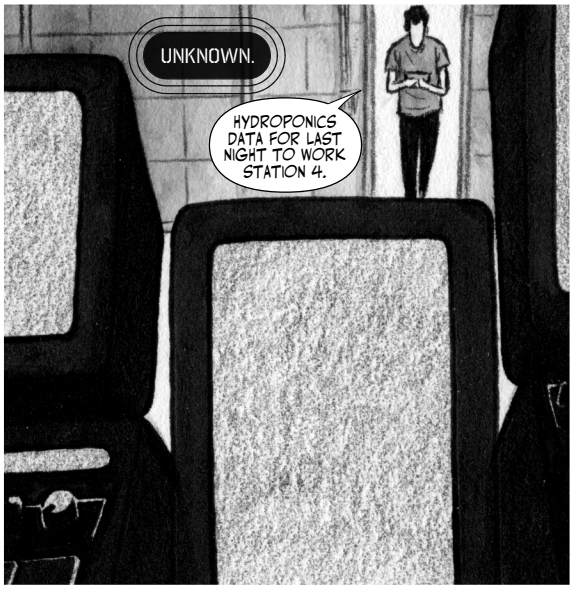

I'VE UPLOADED RELEVANT DATA TO YOUR TABLET. I FOUND DR. METZGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE PARTICULARLY SALIENT.


I HAVE SWITCHED YOUR COFFEE TO DECAFFEINATED. I RECOMMEND SOME HERBAL TEA BEFORE BED, AS WELL AS A MELATONIN SUPPLEMENT.


THESE YEAR-LONG NIGHTS, AND SPACE TRAVEL IN GENERAL, CAN BE VERY HARD ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION.


WHAT TH--


COMPUTER, WHY DID THE HYDROPONIC BAY'S OXYGEN LEVELS DROP DURING THE NIGHT?


UNKNOWN.
HYDROPONICS DATA FOR LAST NIGHT TO WORK STATION 4.

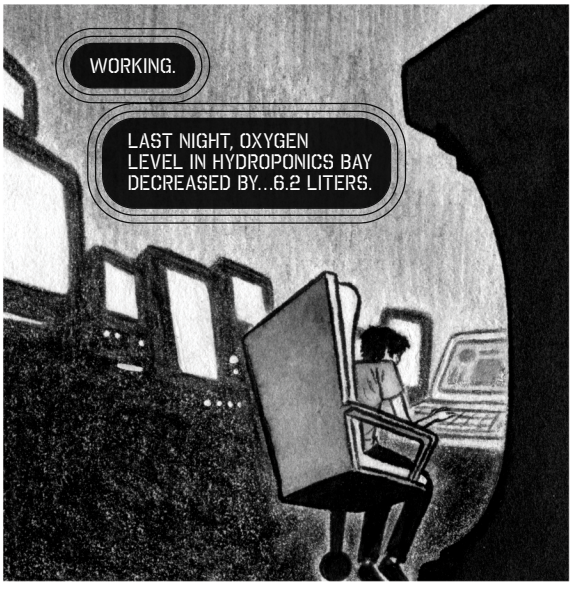

THE DIAGNOSTIC REPORT INDICATED YOUR SENSORS ARE WORKING JUST FINE. ARE YOU STILL FUNCTIONING AT PEAK EFFICIENCY?


AFFIRMATIVE.

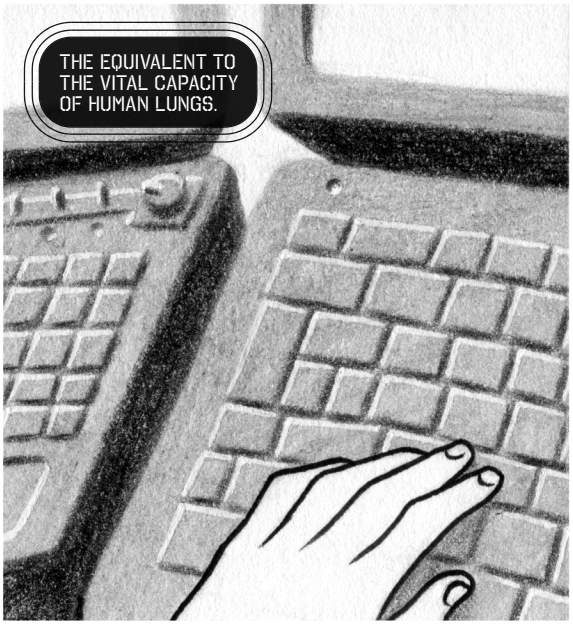

THEN WHY CAN'T YOU TELL ME WHY THE OXYGEN LEVELS DROPPED?
THERE IS NO REASON FOR THE OXYGEN LEVELS TO HAVE DROPPED.


THEN WHY ARE THEY DOWN?
THEY JUST... ARE.


NOT GOOD ENOUGH.
COMPUTER, CALCULATE THE EXACT AMOUNT OF OXYGEN DECREASE, PLEASE.


WORKING.
LAST NIGHT, OXYGEN LEVEL IN HYDROPONICS BAY DECREASED BY...6.2 LITERS.


THAT'S--

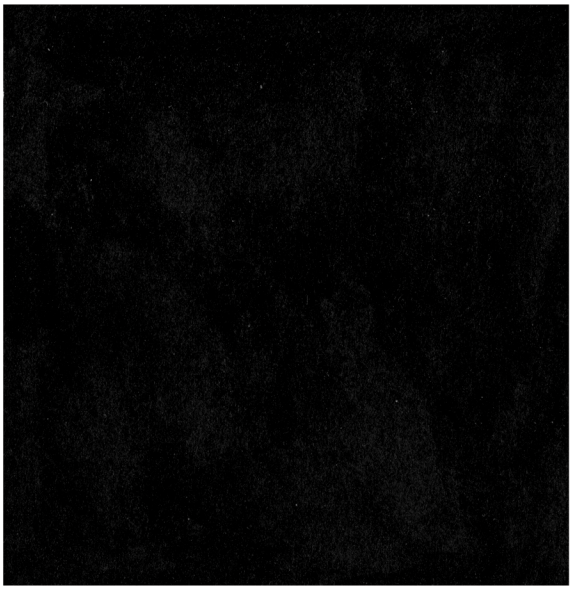

THE EQUIVALENT TO THE VITAL CAPACITY OF HUMAN LUNGS.


YES. IT IS.


COMPUTER...
...COMPUTER, DID I LEAVE MY QUARTERS LAST NIGHT?
NEGATIVE.
COMPUTER, WHEN ARE WE IN RADIO RANGE AGAIN?
176 DAYS, CAPTAIN KINNEY.

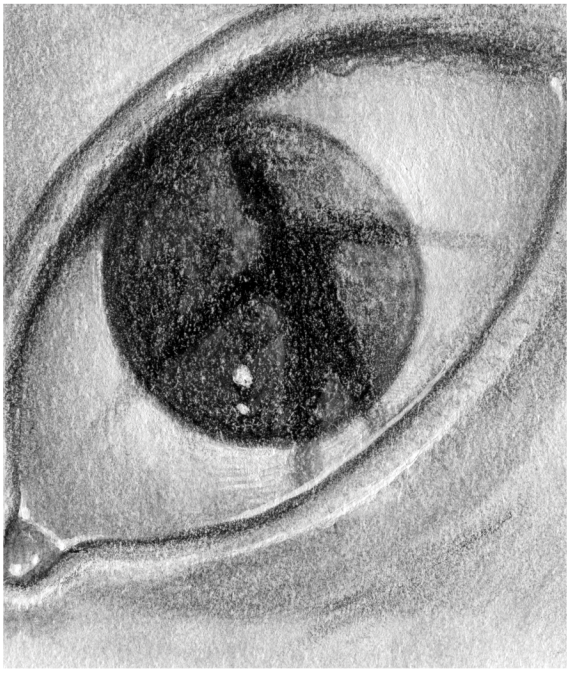


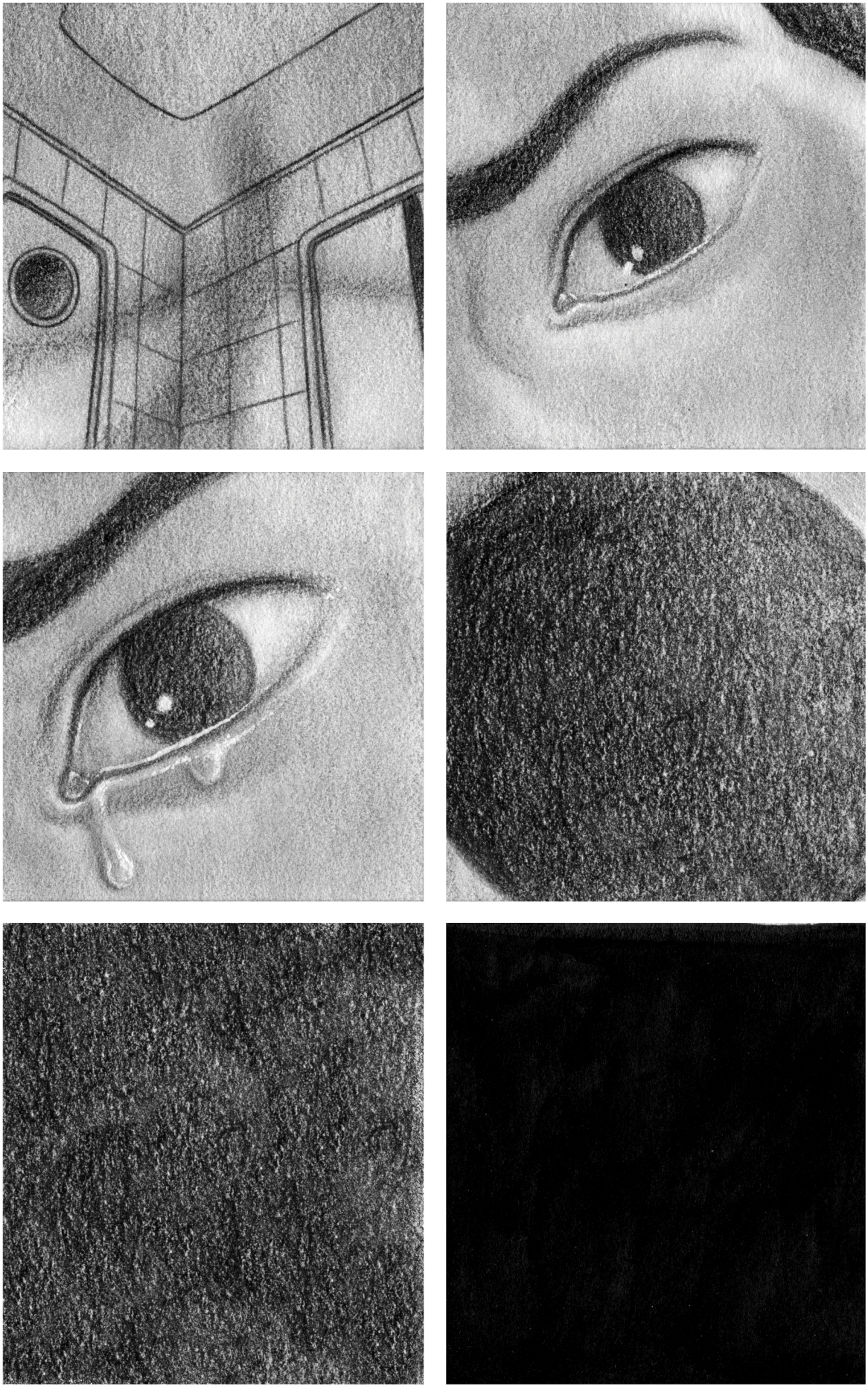

LIGHTS.



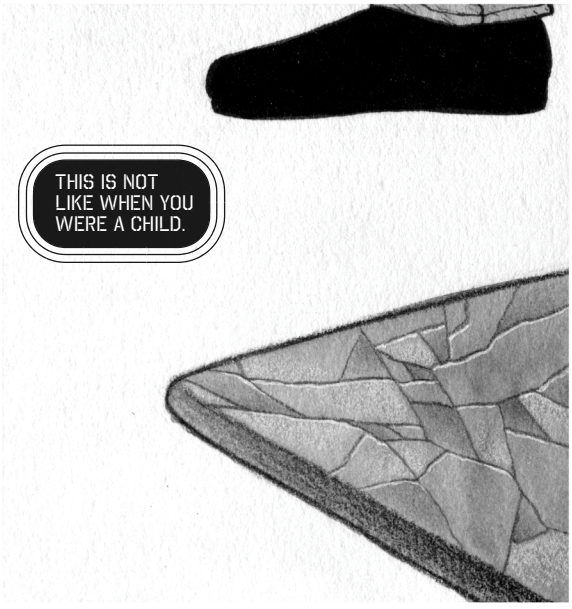


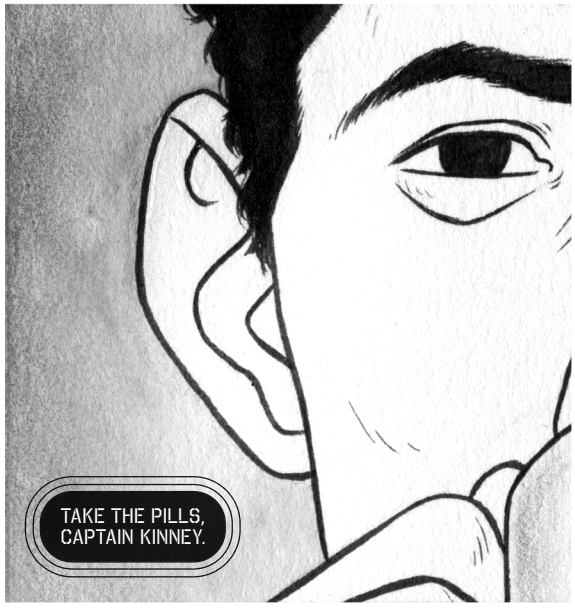




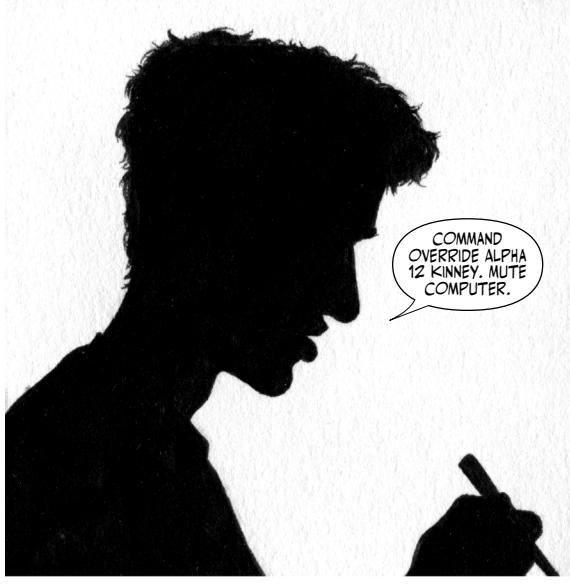



DAY 167.
13 MINUTES, 57 SECONDS.
CAPTAIN KINNEY, I THINK IT'S TIME YOU RECONSIDER MY SUGGESTION OF MEDI--
NO!

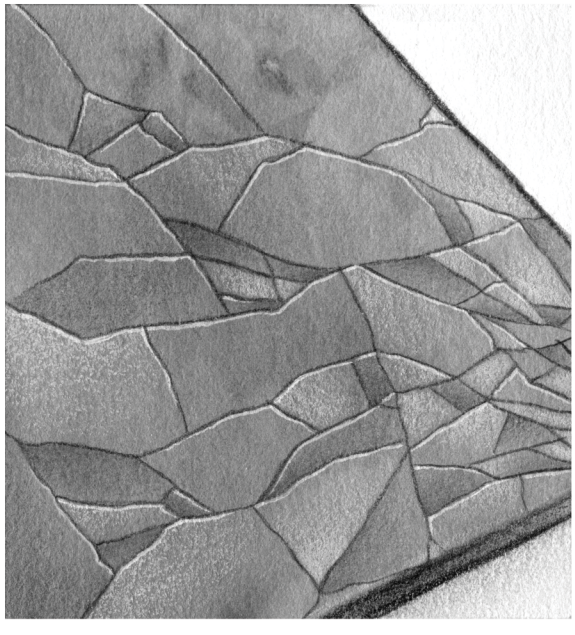

THIS IS NOT LIKE WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD.


TAKE THE PILLS, CAPTAIN KINNEY.


THERE IS NO SHAME IN IT. AND YOU NEED TO SLEEP.
I NEEDN'T REMIND YOU THAT THE EFFECTS OF SLEEP DEPRIVATION INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO, MOODINESS, DEPRESSED MOOD, DIFFICULTY LEARNING NEW C—

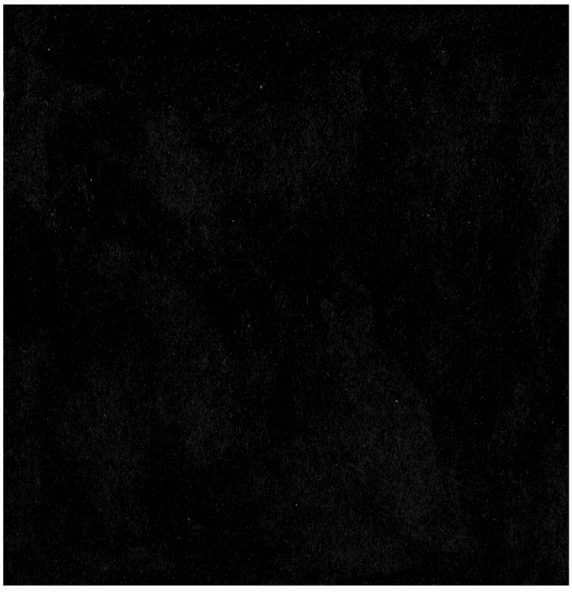

COMMAND OVERRIDE ALPHA 12 KINNEY. MUTE COMPUTER.





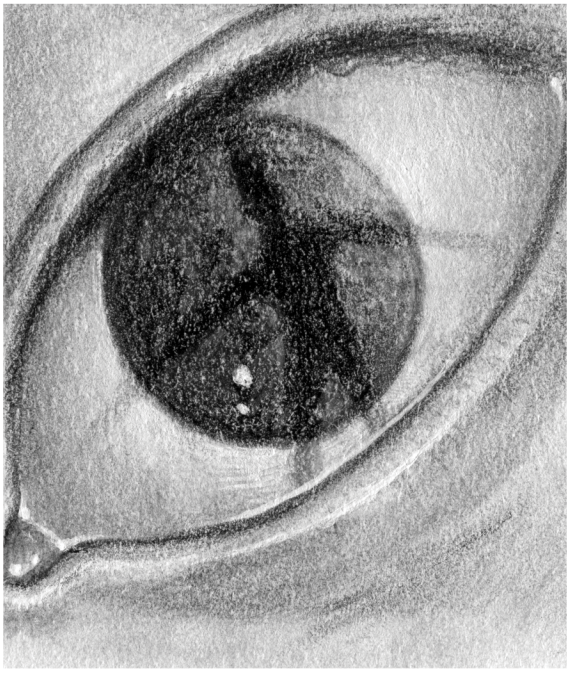


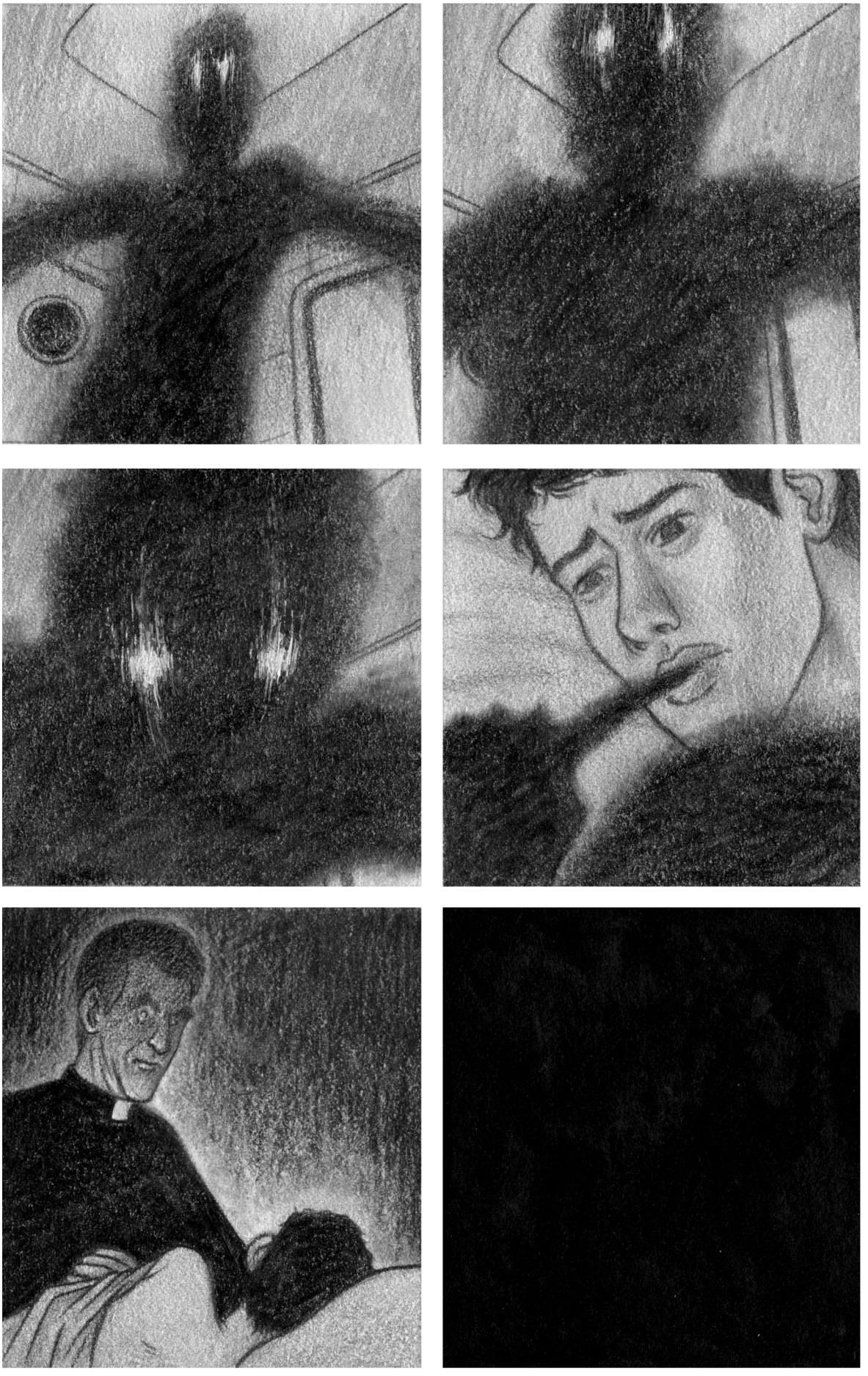

LIGHTS.

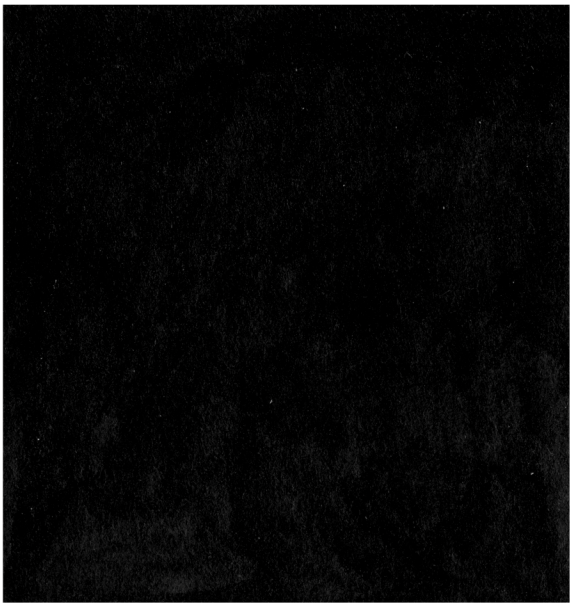


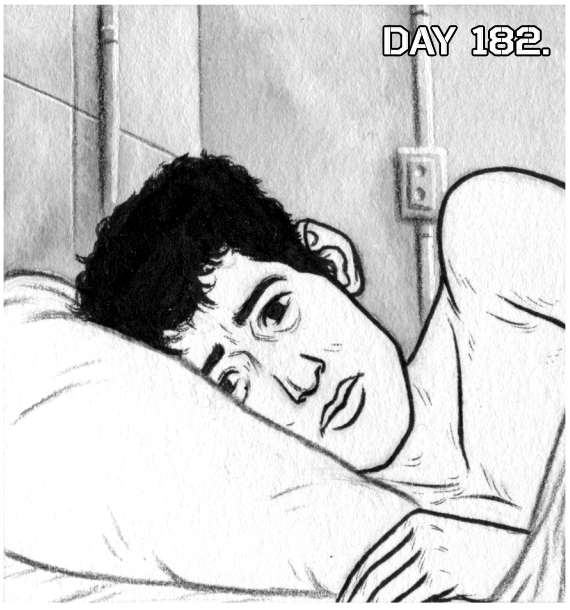


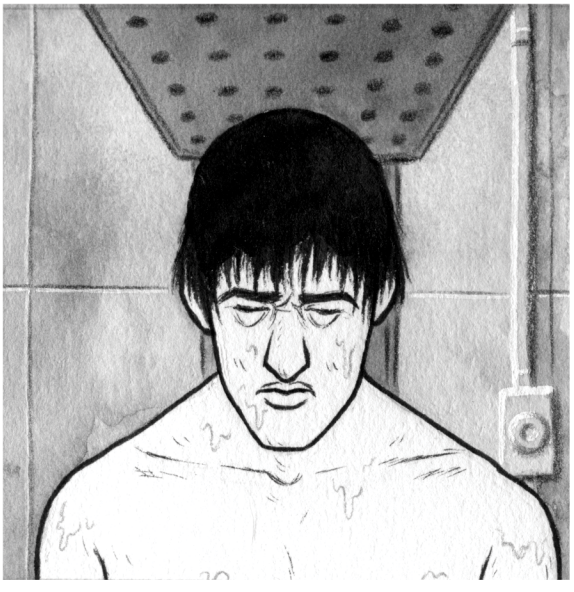




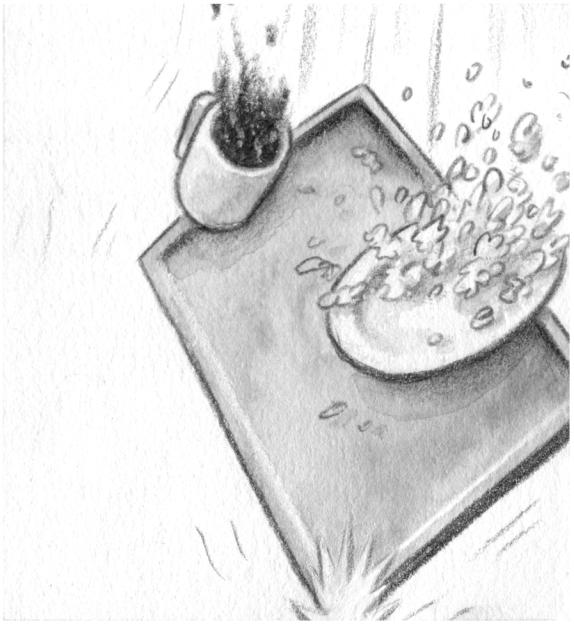


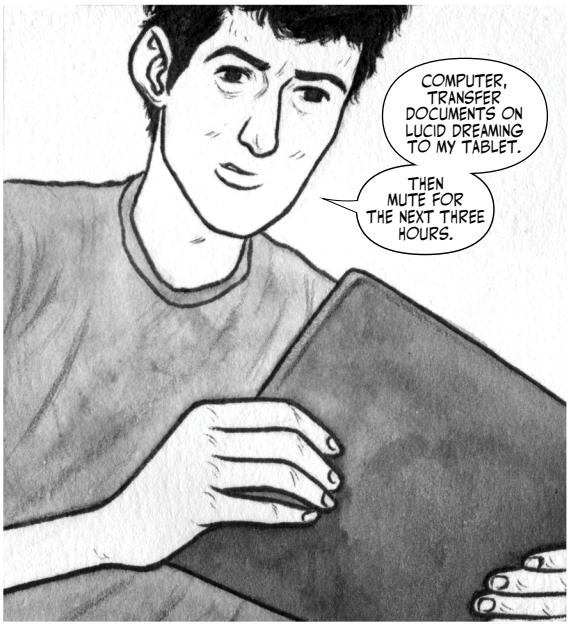



DAY 182.




UNMUTE COMPUTER BETA & KINNEY.
13 MINUTES, 13 SECONDS.




COMPUTER, TRANSFER DOCUMENTS ON LUCID DREAMING TO MY TABLET.
THEN MUTE FOR THE NEXT THREE HOURS.


I'LL FIGURE ALL OF THIS OUT.
BUT I NEED TO STAY AWAKE.
"LUCID DREAMING"
60-
SO LET'S DO THIS...

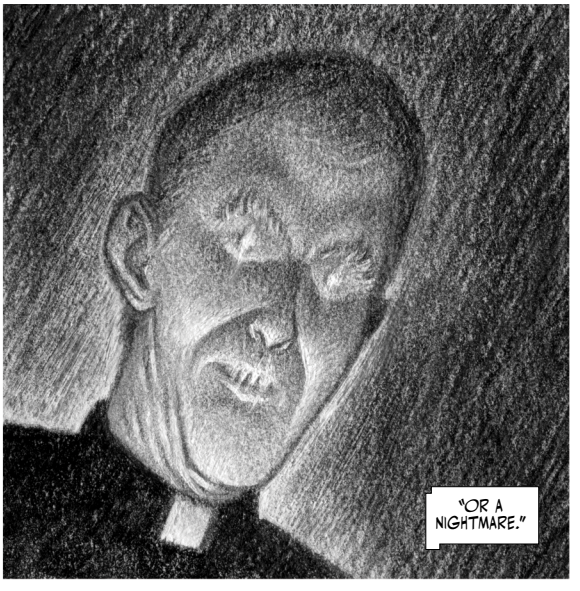

4 HOURS LATER.
POSSIBLE CAUSES... NARCOLEPSY.
BUT I DIDN'T LEAVE MY ROOM.
AFFIRMATIVE.
WHAT ELSE?
HYPNAGOGIC HALLUCINATION.
BUT I'M OUTSIDE THE AGE RANGE.
BUT YOU DO HAVE A HISTORY OF BIPOL--
WHAT ELSE?
CAPTAIN KINNEY, DO NOT OVERLOOK THE POTENTIAL FOR PSYCHOSIS IN THI--
COMMAND OVERRIDE ALPHA 12 KINNEY. MUTE COMPUTER.


LUCID DREAMING.
"AM I DREAMING?"
K-HUHHH!
NOT DREAMING.

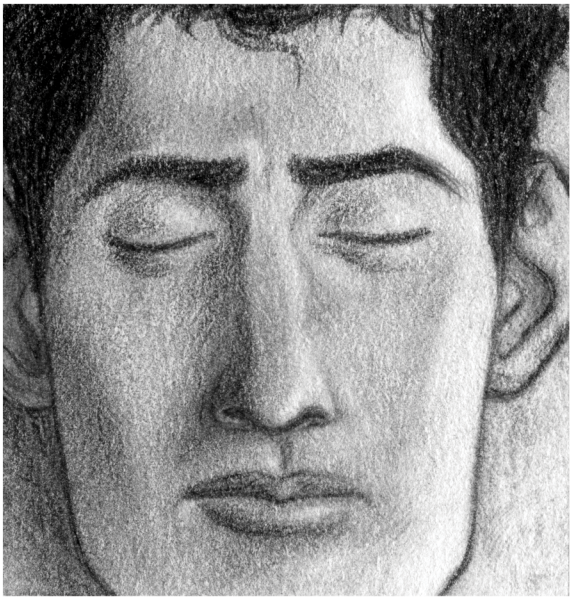

THE NEXT TIME I DREAM, I WANT TO REMEMBER THAT I'M DREAMING.

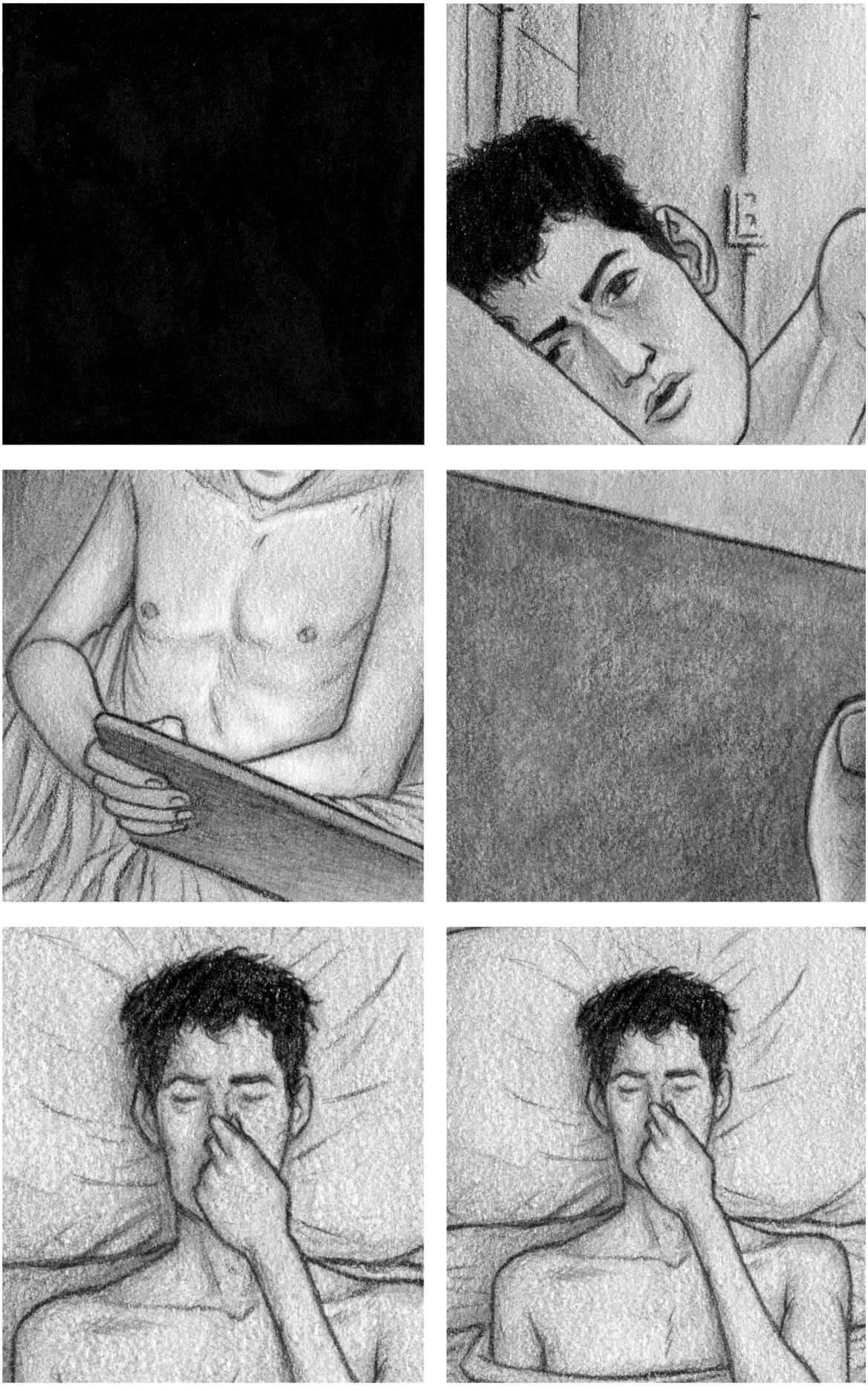

LIGHTS.

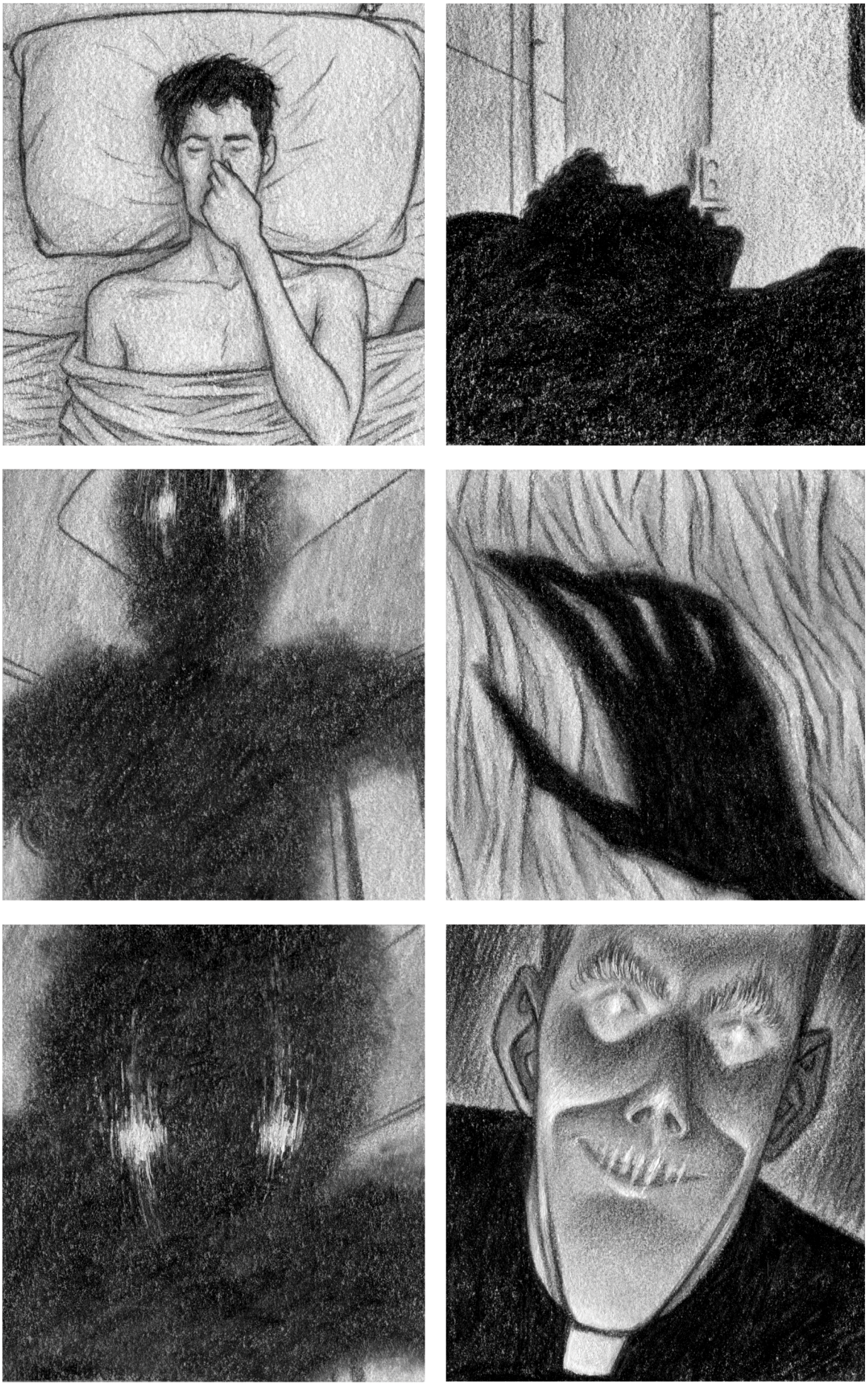

REMEMBER THE PRIEST. IT'S A DREAM.

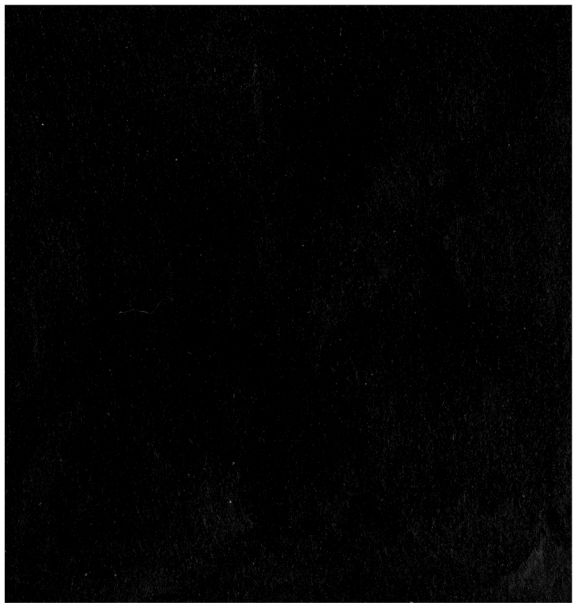

"OR A NIGHTMARE."

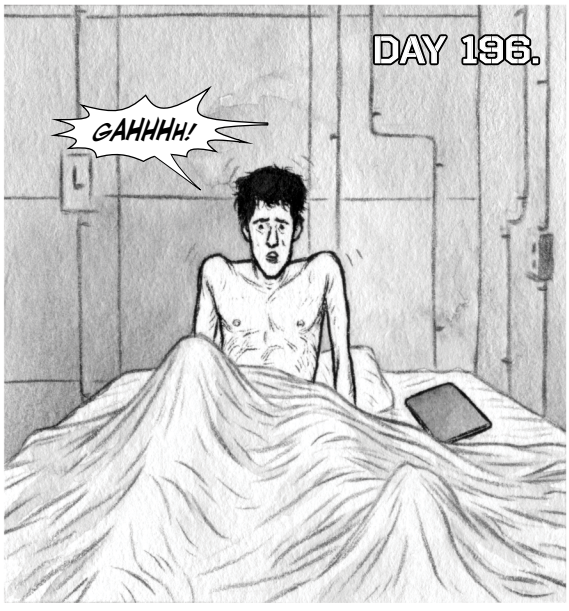

AND IT'S OVER. THERE'S NO ONE HERE.
COMPUTER, SET ALARM. FIVE HOURS FROM NOW.
CONFIRMED.





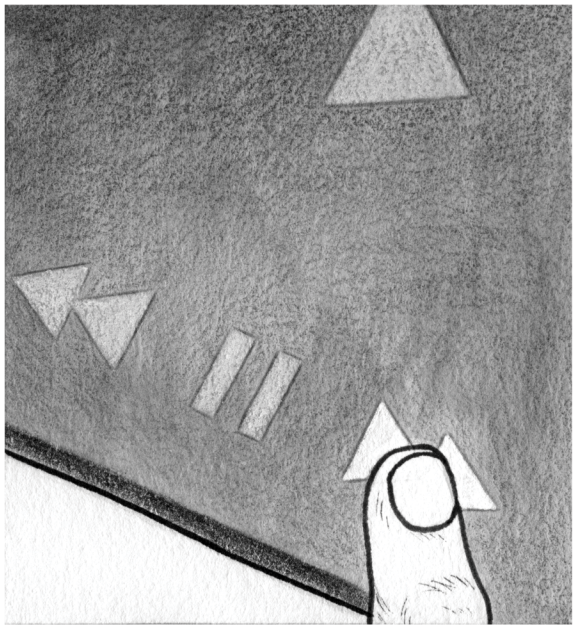





DAY 196.
GAHHHH!


COMPUTER, I WANT VIDEO FOOTAGE OF MY ROOM. LAST NIGHT.
ON SCREEN.


THE NEXT TIME I DREAM, I WANT TO REMEMBER THAT I'M DREAMING.

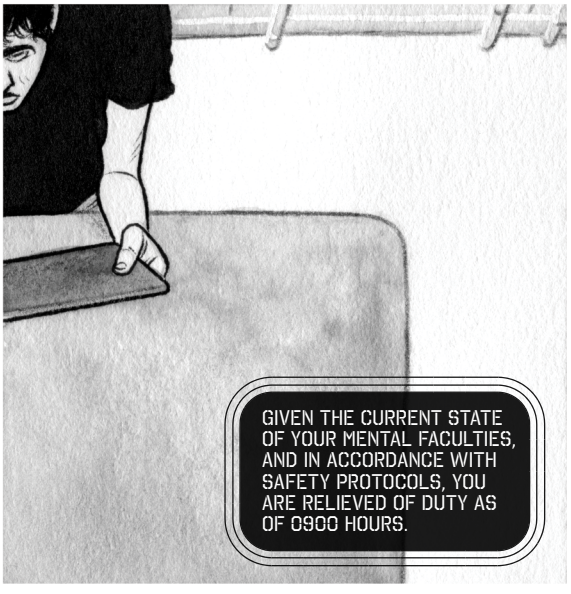


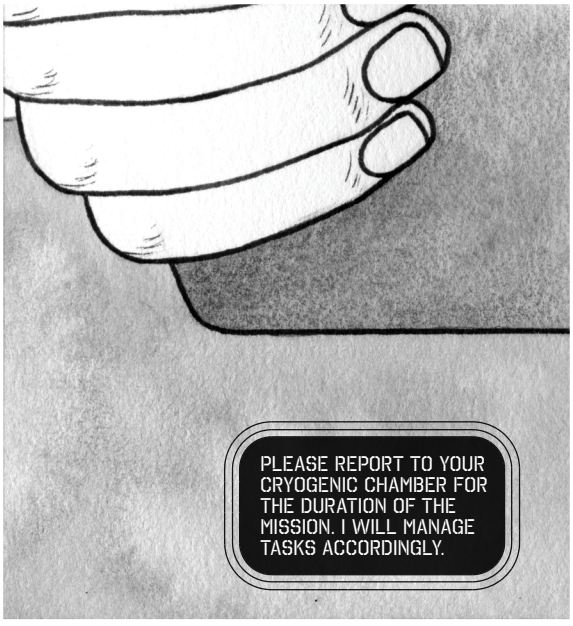

WHA--?!


UNMUTE COMPUTER BETA 6 KINNEY.

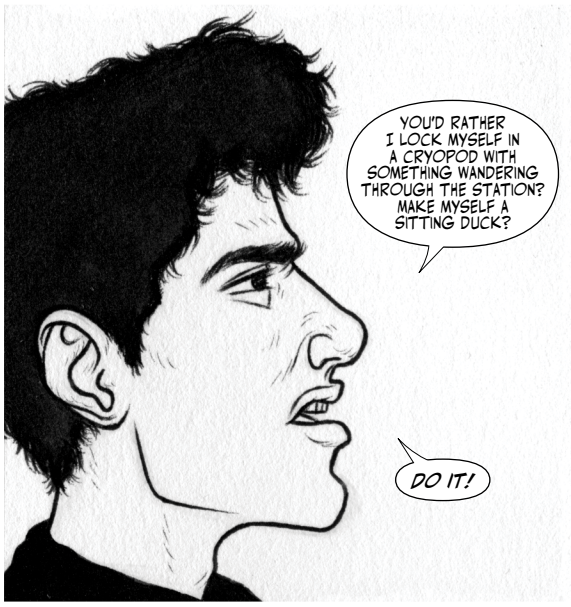

WHAT HAPPENED?!


YOU WERE REVIEWING FOOTAGE AND PASSED OUT. TO WAKE YOU UP, I PROVIDED A STEROID BOOST.

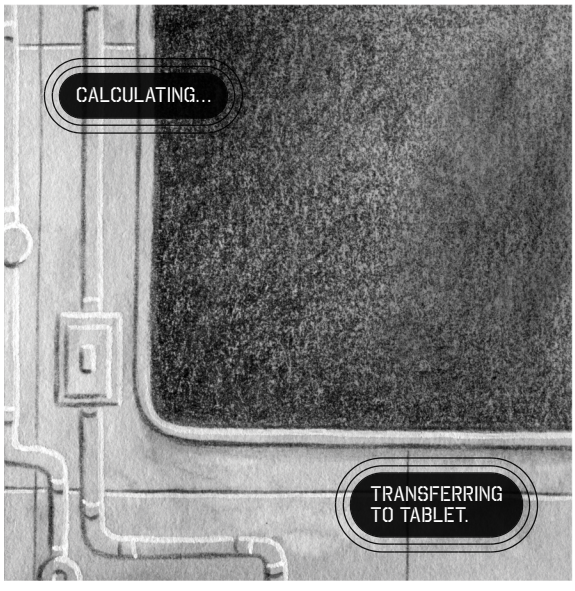

GIVEN THE CURRENT STATE OF YOUR MENTAL FACULTIES, AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH SAFETY PROTOCOLS, YOU ARE RELIEVED OF DUTY AS OF 0900 HOURS.

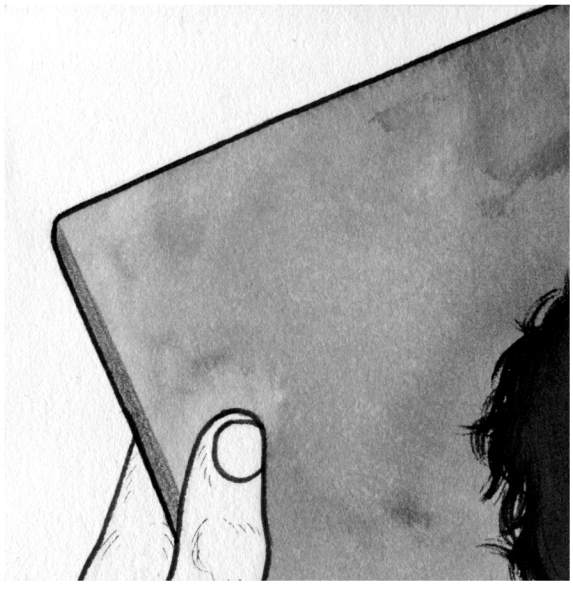

PLEASE REPORT TO YOUR CRYOGENIC CHAMBER FOR THE DURATION OF THE MISSION. I WILL MANAGE TASKS ACCORDINGLY.


NO. SOMETHING IS GOING ON HERE. GIVE ME THE HYDROPONICS OXYGEN UPDATE.


YOU'D RATHER I LOCK MYSELF IN A CRYOPOD WITH SOMETHING WANDERING THROUGH THE STATION? MAKE MYSELF A SITTING DUCK?
DO IT!

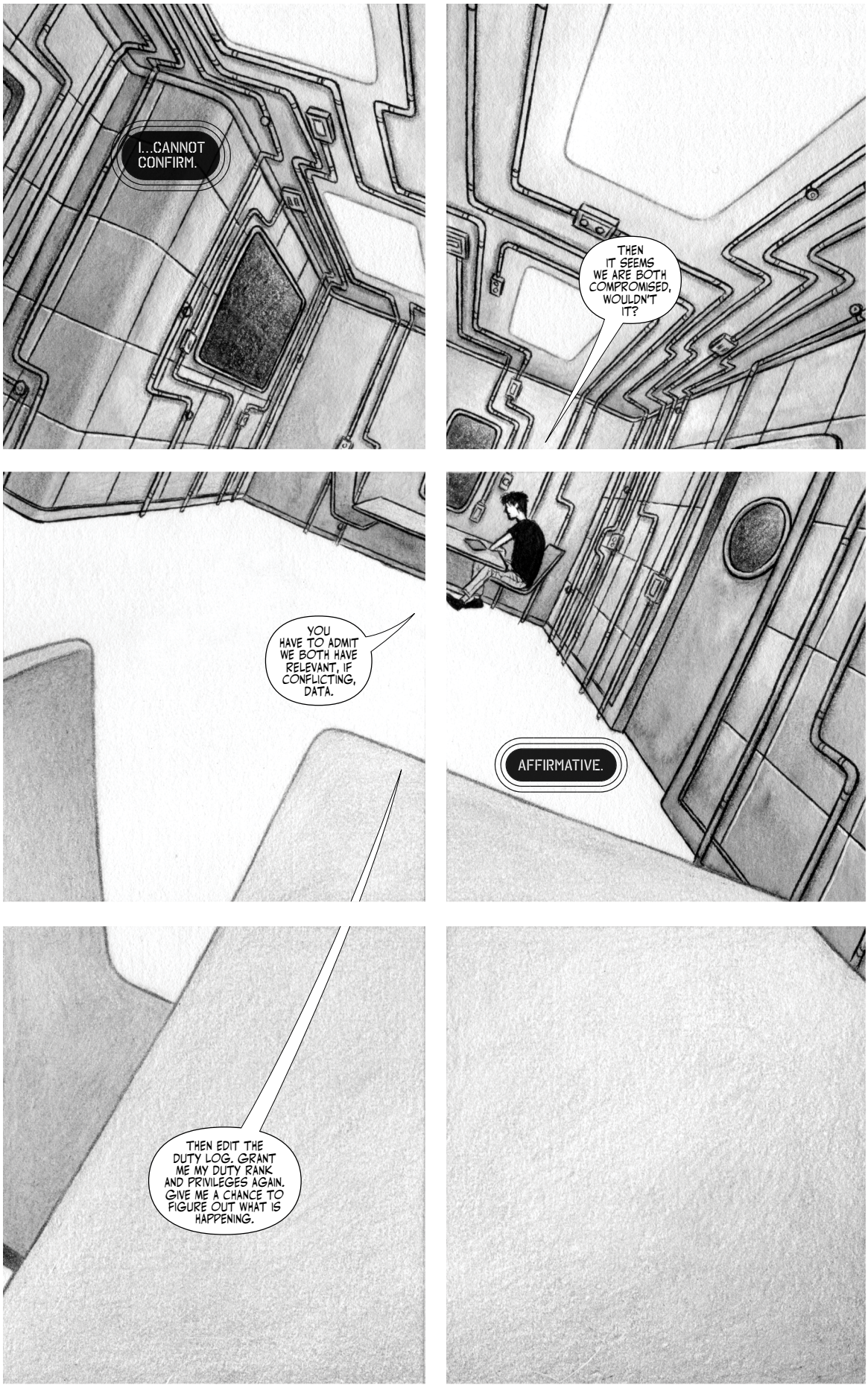


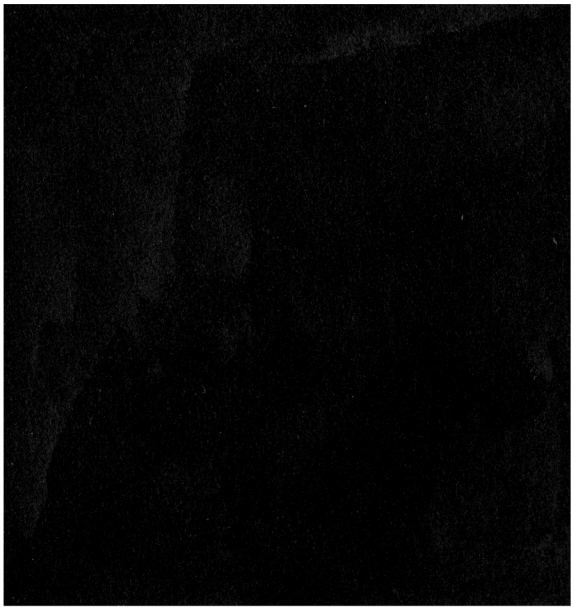

CALCULATING...
TRANSFERRING TO TABLET.

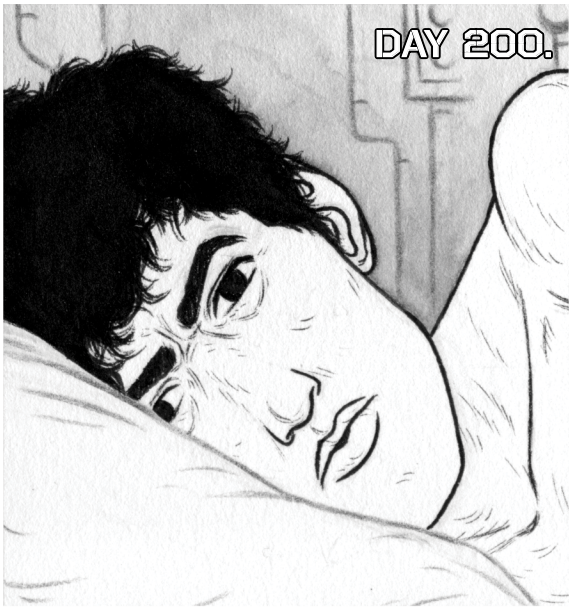



EXPLAIN.

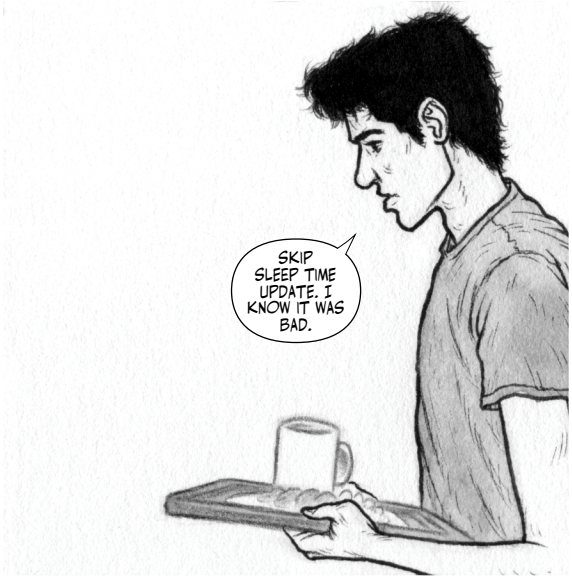

IF I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE HERE, WHY IS THE OXYGEN LEVEL OFF?


I...CANNOT CONFIRM.
THEN IT SEEMS WE ARE BOTH COMPROMISED, WOULDN'T IT?
YOU HAVE TO ADMIT WE BOTH HAVE RELEVANT, IF CONFLICTING, DATA.
AFFIRMATIVE.
THEN EDIT THE DUTY LOG. GRANT ME MY DUTY RANK AND PRIVILEGES AGAIN. GIVE ME A CHANCE TO FIGURE OUT WHAT IS HAPPENING.




DAY 200.




SKIP SLEEP TIME UPDATE. I KNOW IT WAS BAD.

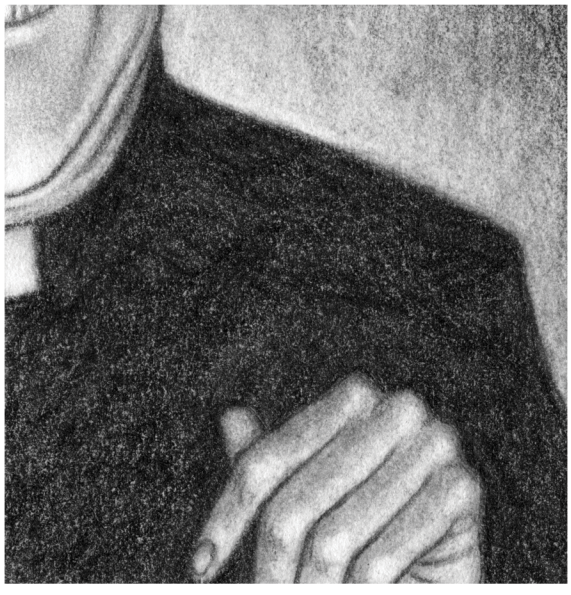

YOUR DREAM JOURNAL. WHAT DID YOU WRITE?


I AM IN BED. I OPEN MY EYES WHEN I SENSE A LIGHT ACROSS MY FACE. IT... IS THERE.


IT?
A CREATURE IN SHADOWS. GREEN EYES. BUT THEN IT IS NOT A CREATURE...

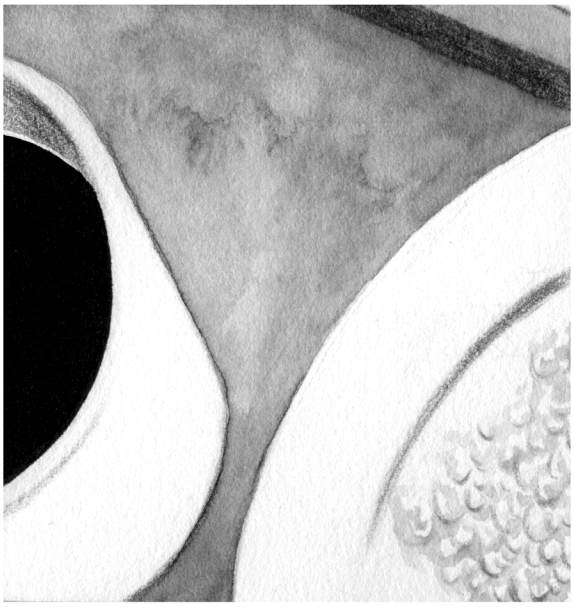



IF NOT A CREATURE, WHAT IS I--
IT IS A CREATURE.

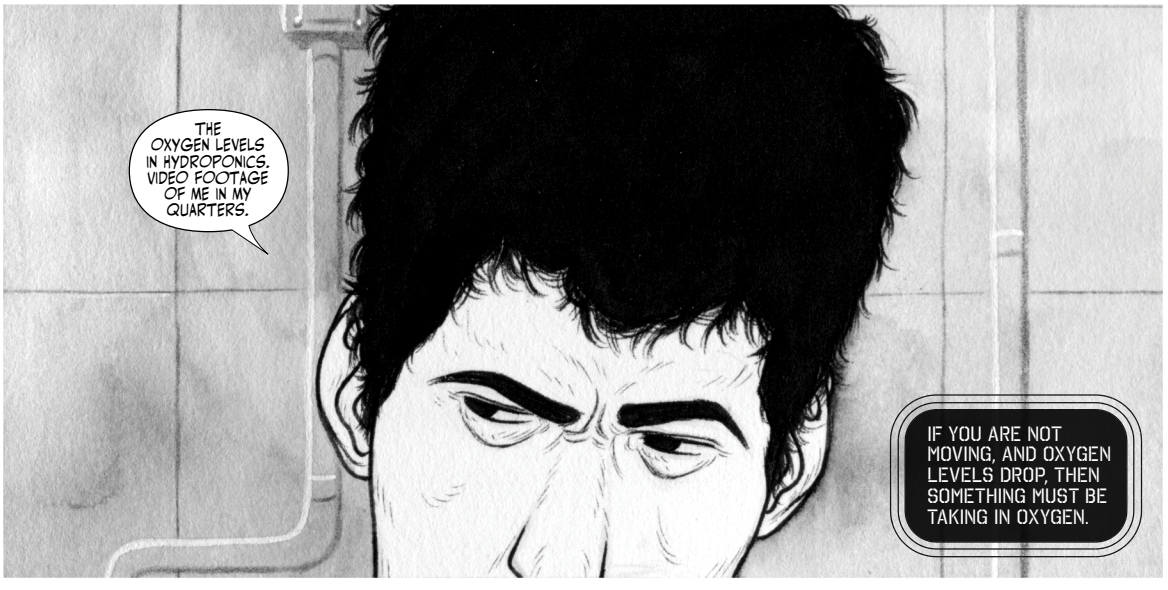



BUT IN A DIFFERENT FORM.


A PRIEST.
BUT THERE IS NO ONE ELSE ON THE STA--
"YOU HAVE ACCESS TO MY FILE.
"AS YOU CONSTANTLY REMIND ME, YOU KNOW MY HISTORY."




GIVEN THE STRESS OF THIS MISSION, IT IS LOGICAL THAT DREAMS WOU--
MAINTAIN MULTIPLE DATA SETS.

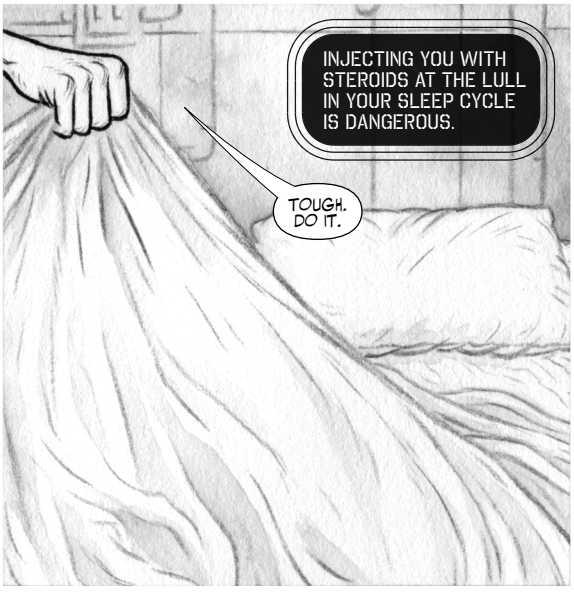

THE OXYGEN LEVELS IN HYDROPONICS. VIDEO FOOTAGE OF ME IN MY QUARTERS.
IF YOU ARE NOT MOVING, AND OXYGEN LEVELS DROP, THEN SOMETHING MUST BE TAKING IN OXYGEN.


AND IT ISN'T YOU.


SO WHAT THE FUCK IS IT, AND HOW IS IT IN MY BRAIN?

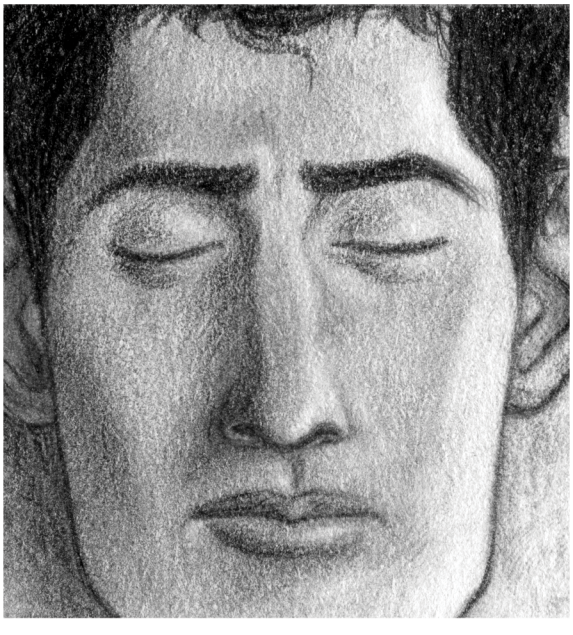

MY SLEEP IS ALMOST NON-EXISTENT NOW.
MY SKILLS ARE DEGRADING AT AN EXPONENTIAL RATE.
SHOULD WE NOT REVISIT RELIEVING YOU?
NO.
"THERE'S ANOTHER WAY."

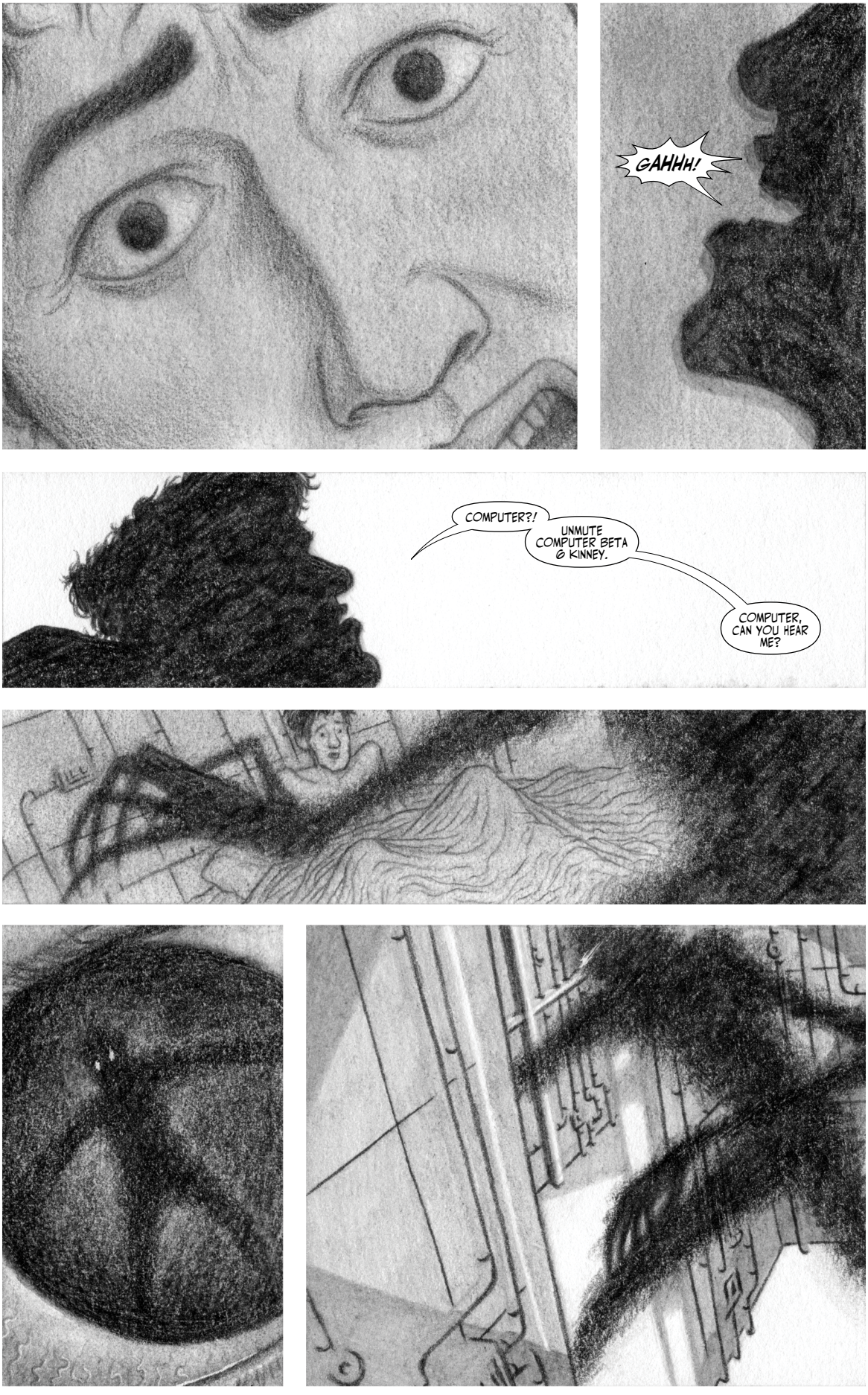

THE NEXT TIME I DREAM, I WANT TO REMEMBER THAT I'M DREAMING.
I DO NOT LIKE THIS, CAPTAIN KINNEY.

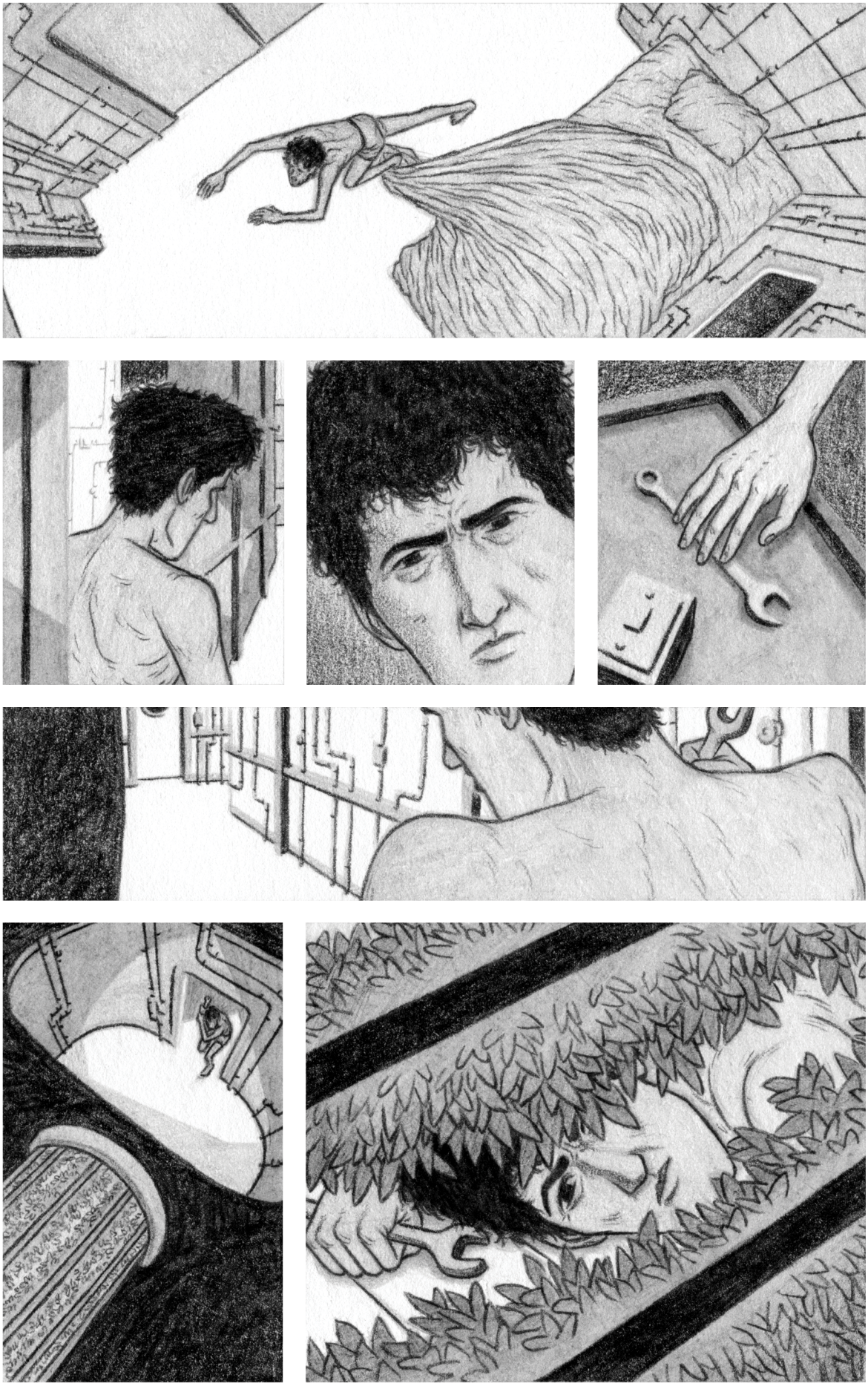

INJECTING YOU WITH STEROIDS AT THE LULL IN YOUR SLEEP CYCLE IS DANGEROUS.
TOUGH. DO IT.

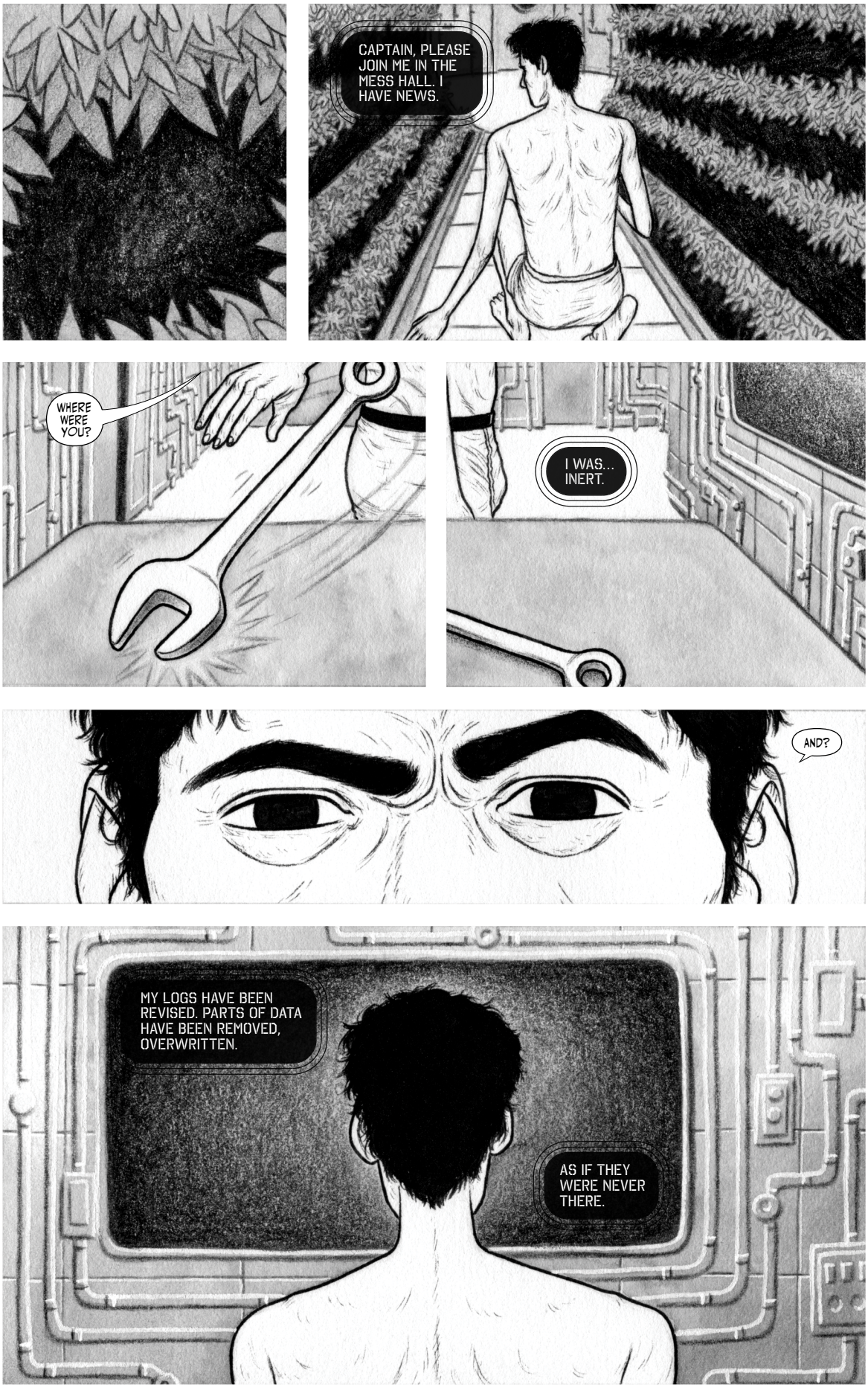

YOU DID IT BEFORE, AND YOU KNOW IT WORKS. IT'S NO MORE DANGEROUS THAN EXPOSURE TO AN UNKNOWN ENTITY.
IF THAT IS WHAT IS HAPPENING.

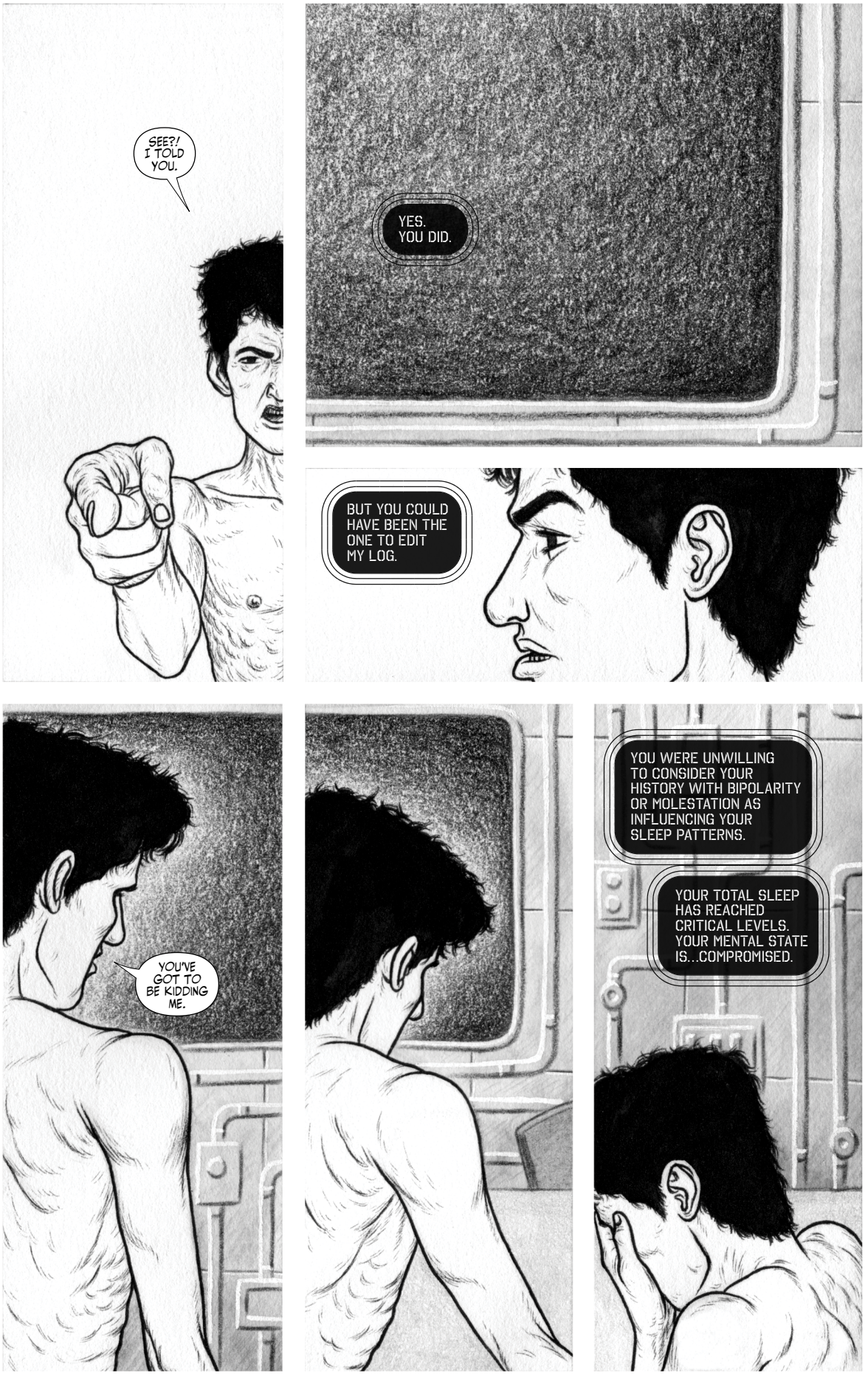

MAINTAIN MULTIPLE DATA SETS.
AFFIRMATIVE.



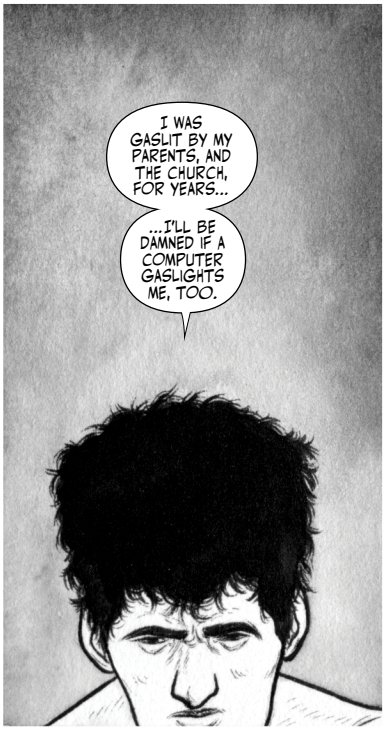

GAHHH!
COMPUTER?!
UNMUTE COMPUTER BETA 6 KINNEY.
COMPUTER, CAN YOU HEAR ME?

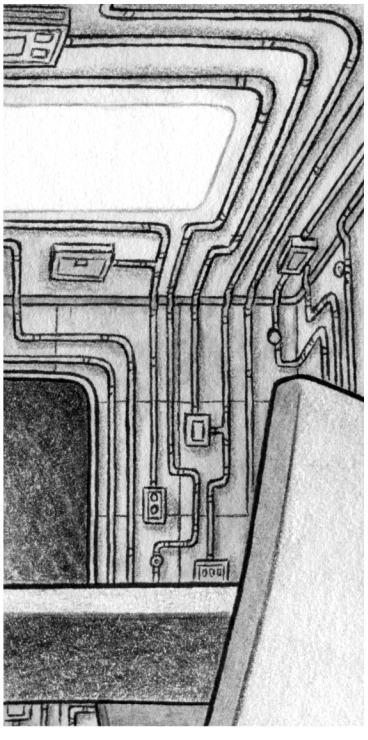


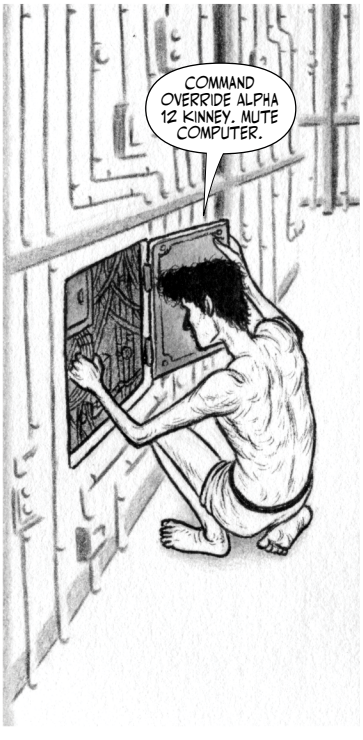

CAPTAIN, PLEASE JOIN ME IN THE MESS HALL. I HAVE NEWS.
WHERE WERE YOU?
I WAS... INERT.
AND?
MY LOGS HAVE BEEN REVISED. PARTS OF DATA HAVE BEEN REMOVED, OVERWRITTEN.
AS IF THEY WERE NEVER THERE.

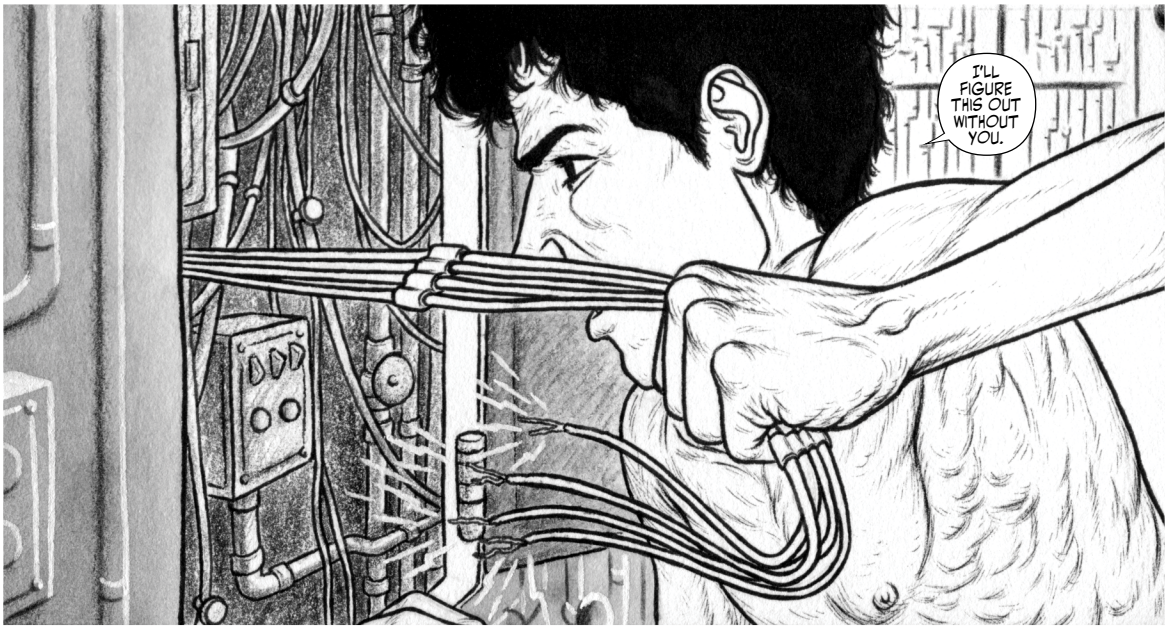

SEE?! I TOLD YOU.
YES. YOU DID.
BUT YOU COULD HAVE BEEN THE ONE TO EDIT MY LOG.
YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME.
YOU WERE UNWILLING TO CONSIDER YOUR HISTORY WITH BIPOLARITY OR MOLESTATION AS INFLUENCING YOUR SLEEP PATTERNS.
YOUR TOTAL SLEEP HAS REACHED CRITICAL LEVELS. YOUR MENTAL STATE IS...COMPROMISED.



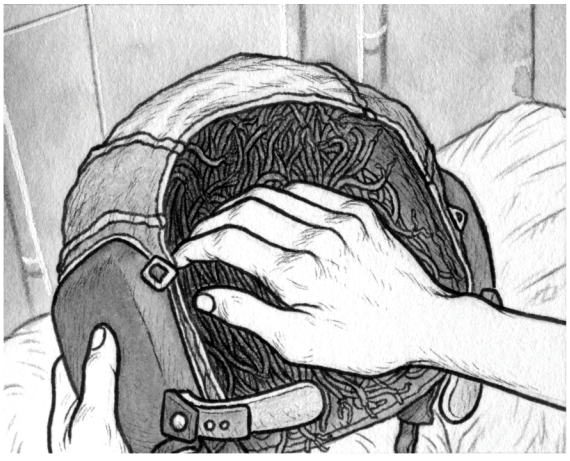

I WAS GASLIT BY MY PARENTS, AND THE CHURCH, FOR YEARS...
...I'LL BE DAMNED IF A COMPUTER GASLIGHTS ME, TOO.

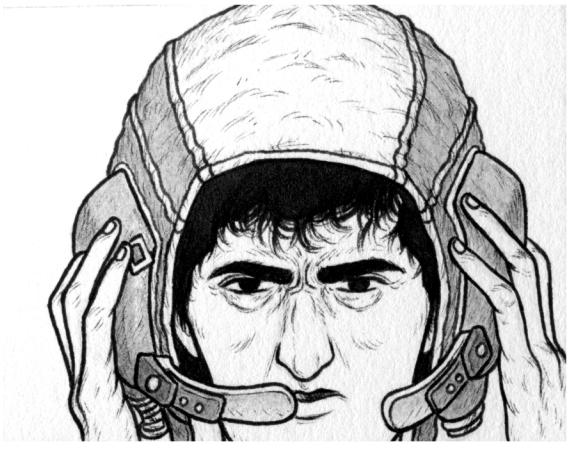



COMMAND OVERRIDE ALPHA 12 KINNEY. MUTE COMPUTER.


I'LL FIGURE THIS OUT WITHOUT YOU.

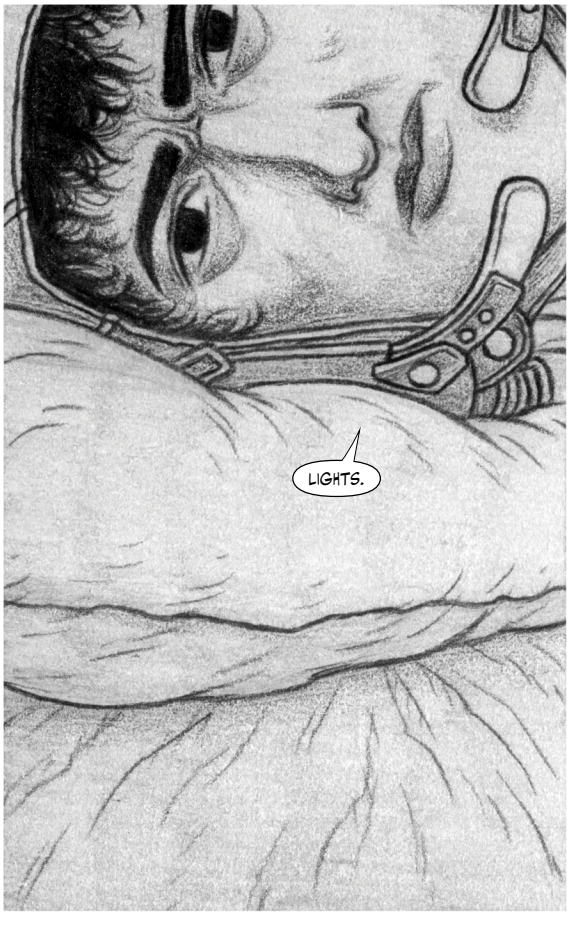


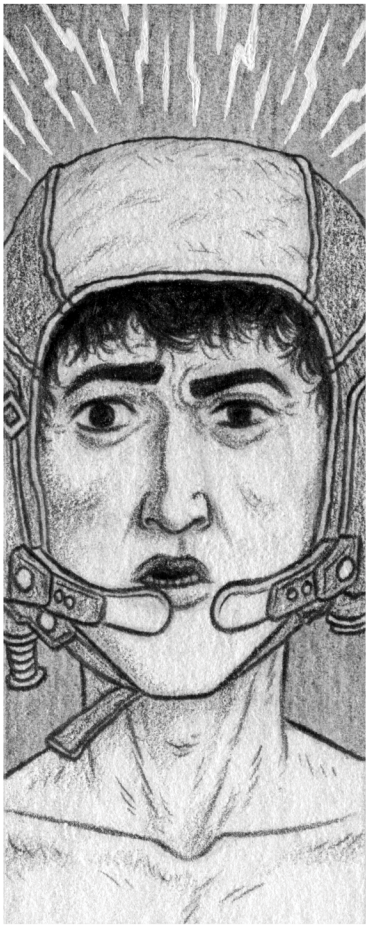


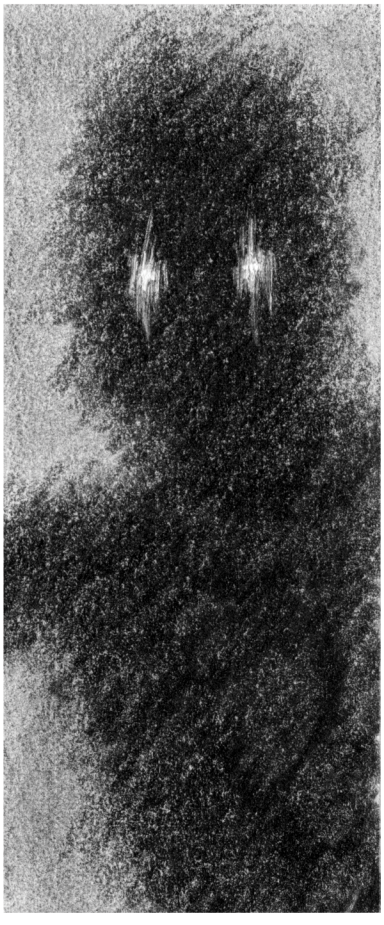



TONIGHT I'LL GET A TDCS JOLT TO THE CRANIUM AND A BOOST OF STEROIDS WHEN I HIT REM. THAT SHOULD BE MORE THAN ENOUGH TO WAKE ME UP.

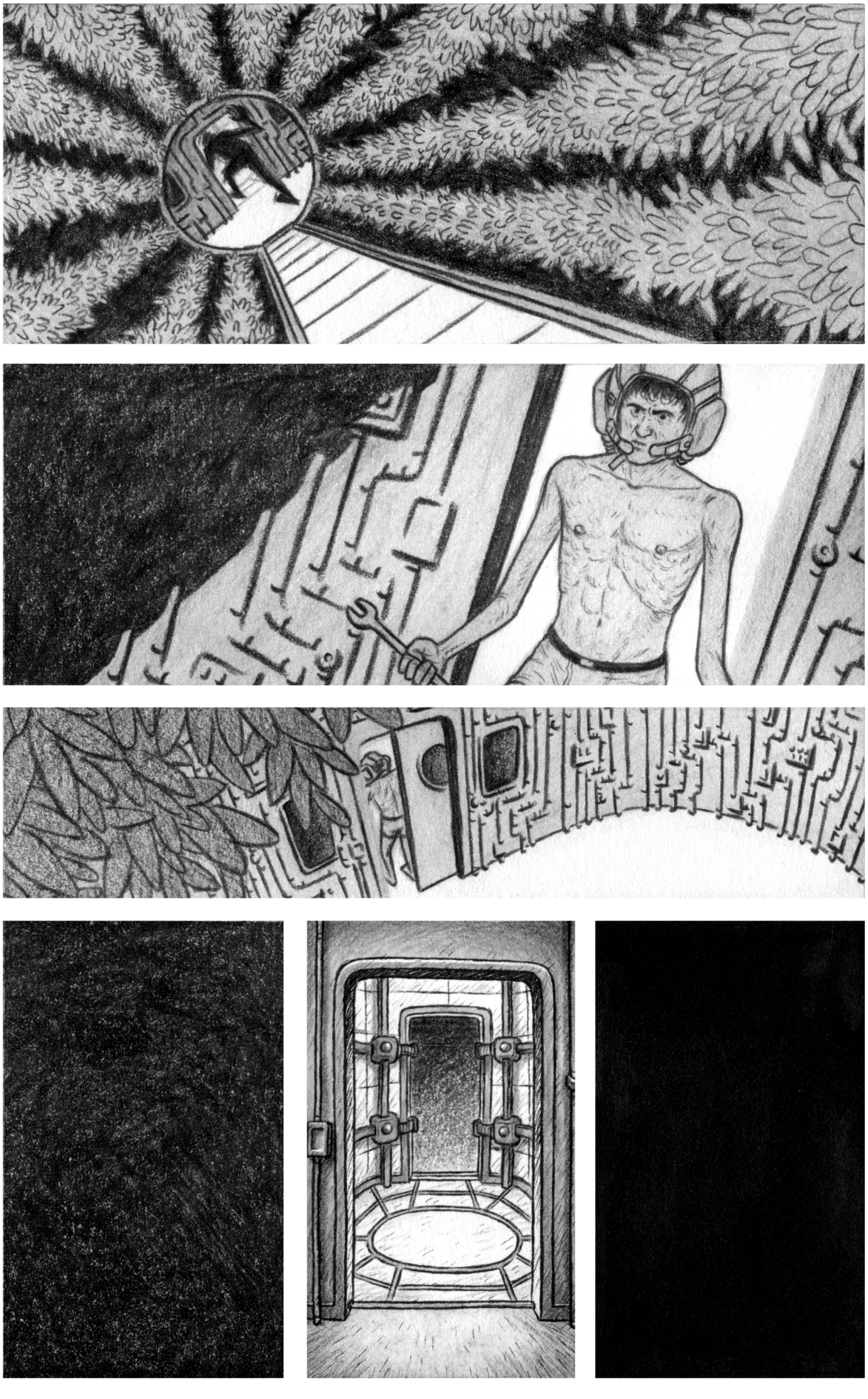


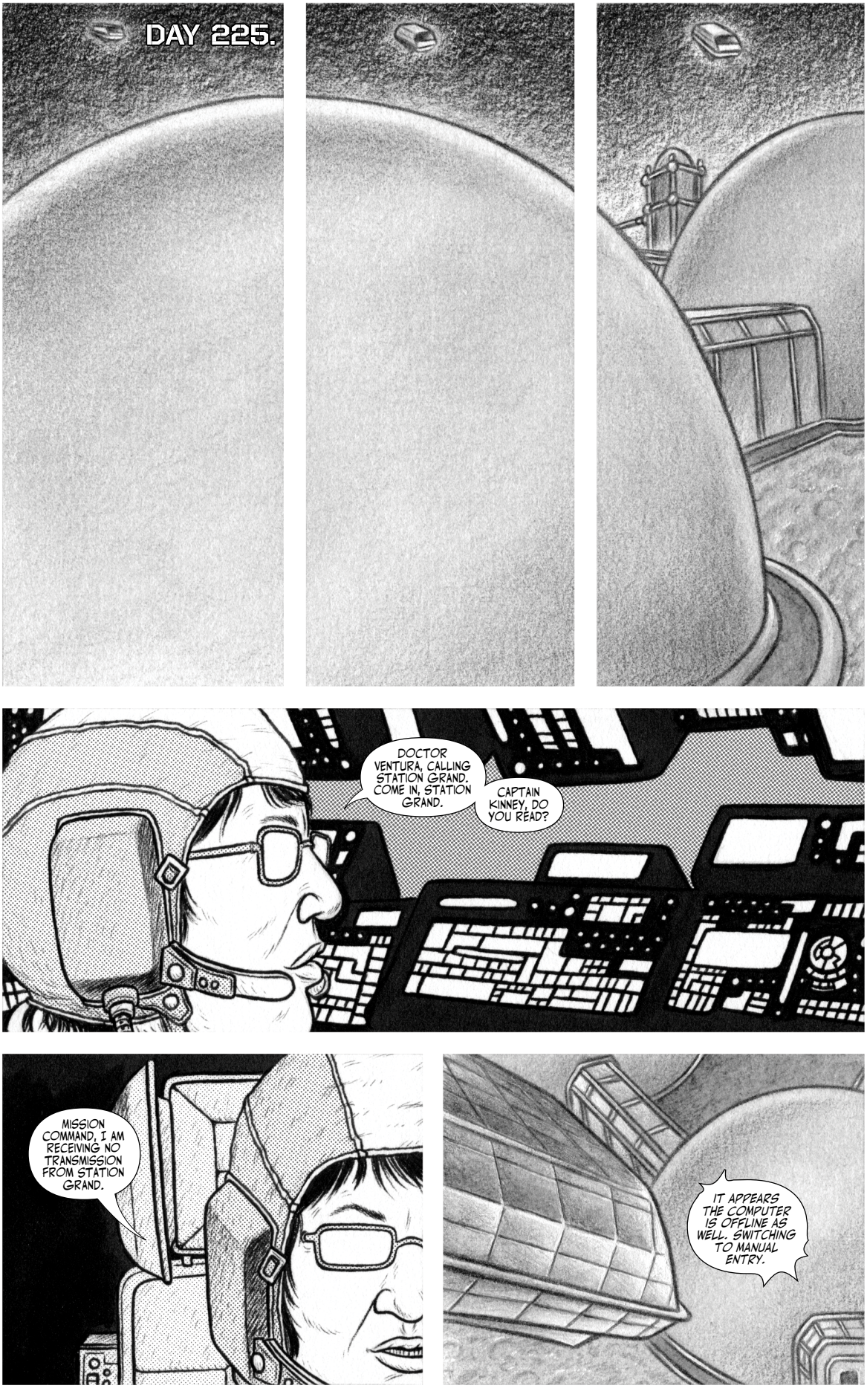

LIGHTS.

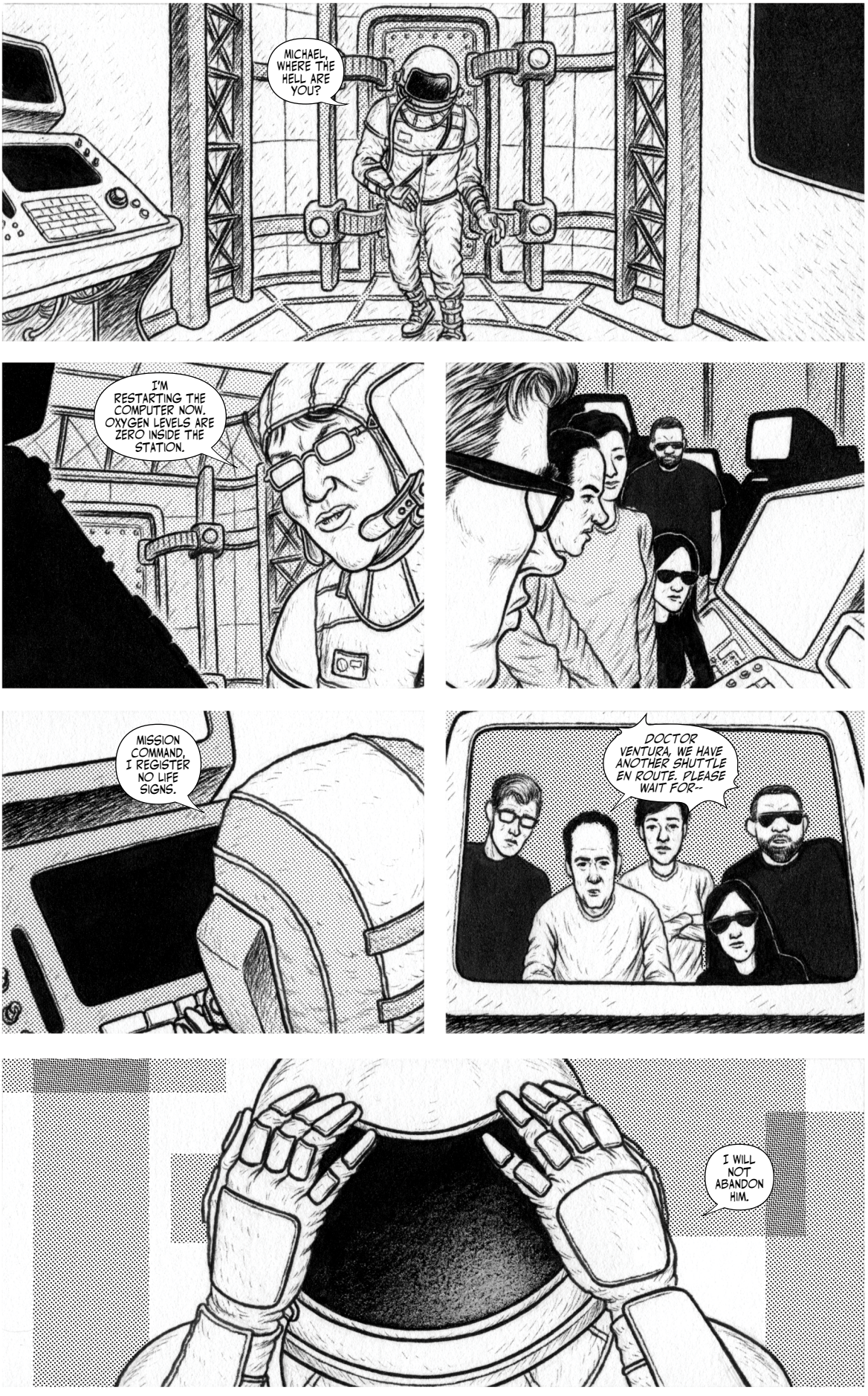



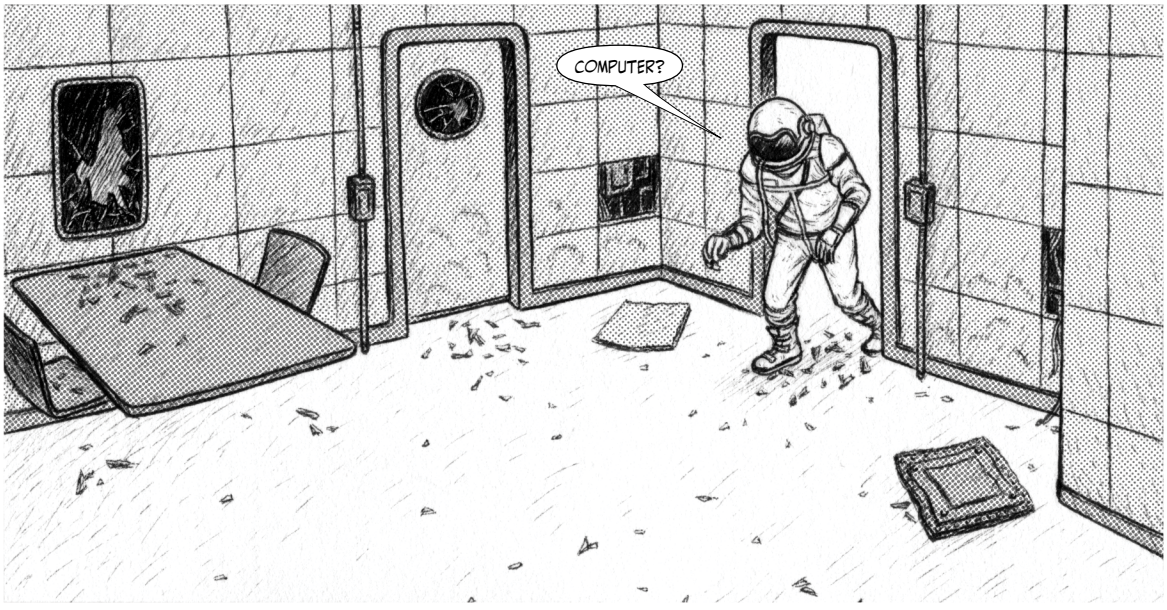


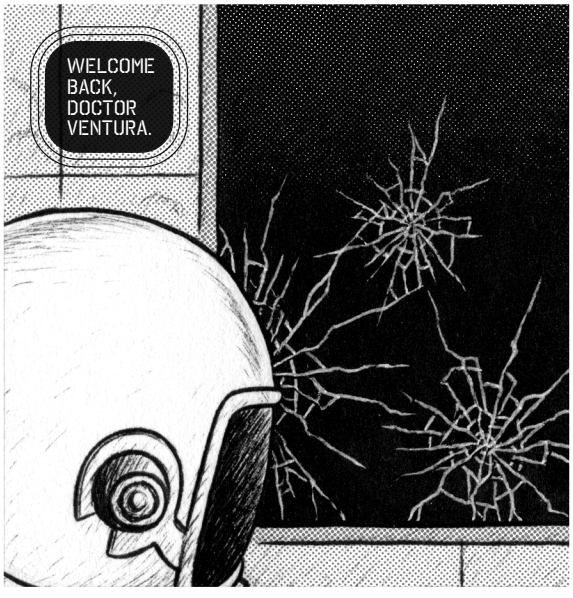


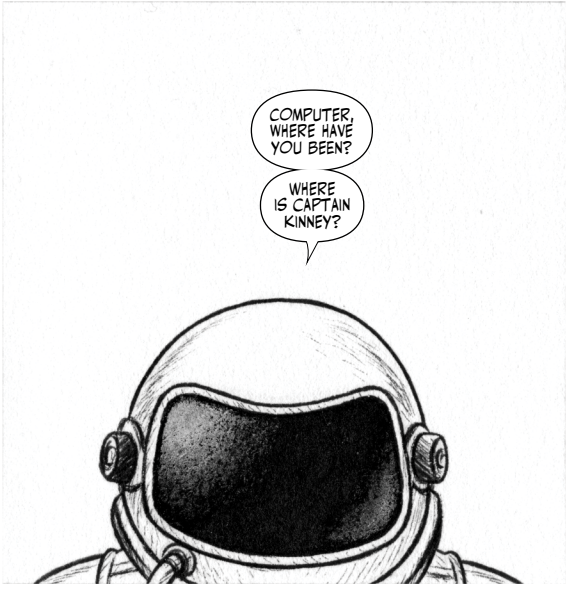


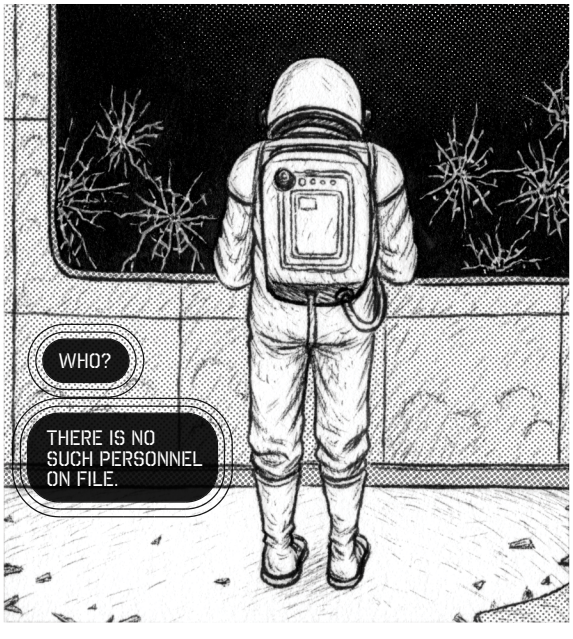

DAY 225.
DOCTOR VENTURA, CALLING STATION GRAND. COME IN, STATION GRAND.
CAPTAIN KINNEY, DO YOU READ?
MISSION COMMAND, I AM RECEIVING NO TRANSMISSION FROM STATION GRAND.
IT APPEARS THE COMPUTER IS OFFLINE AS WELL. SWITCHING TO MANUAL ENTRY.

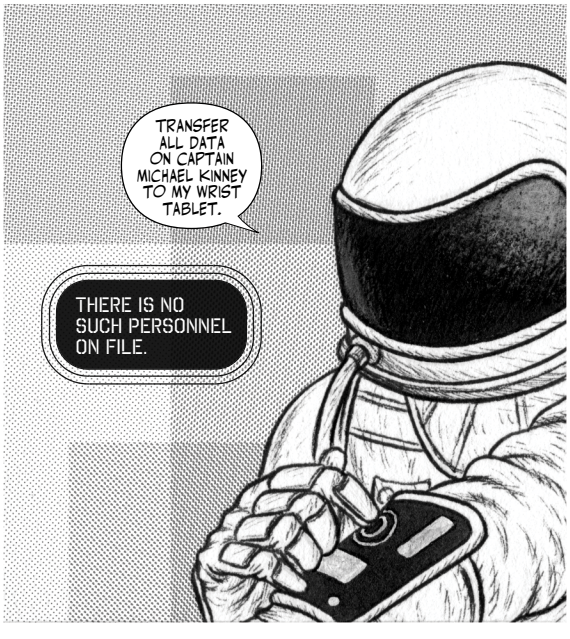

MICHAEL, WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU?
I'M RESTARTING THE COMPUTER NOW. OXYGEN LEVELS ARE ZERO INSIDE THE STATION.
MISSION COMMAND, I REGISTER NO LIFE SIGNS.
DOCTOR VENTURA, WE HAVE ANOTHER SHUTTLE EN ROUTE. PLEASE WAIT FOR--
I WILL NOT ABANDON HIM.

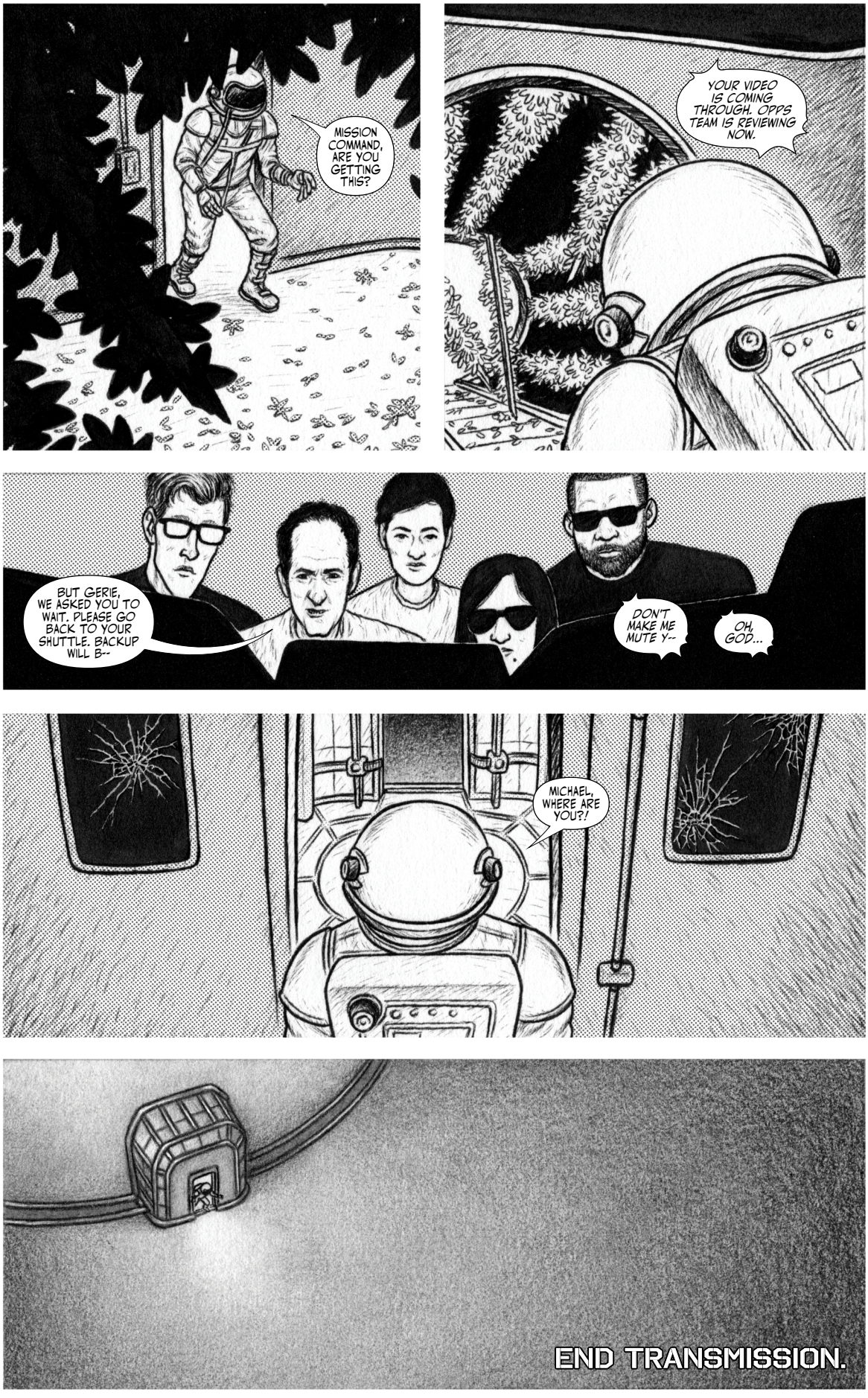

COMPUTER?

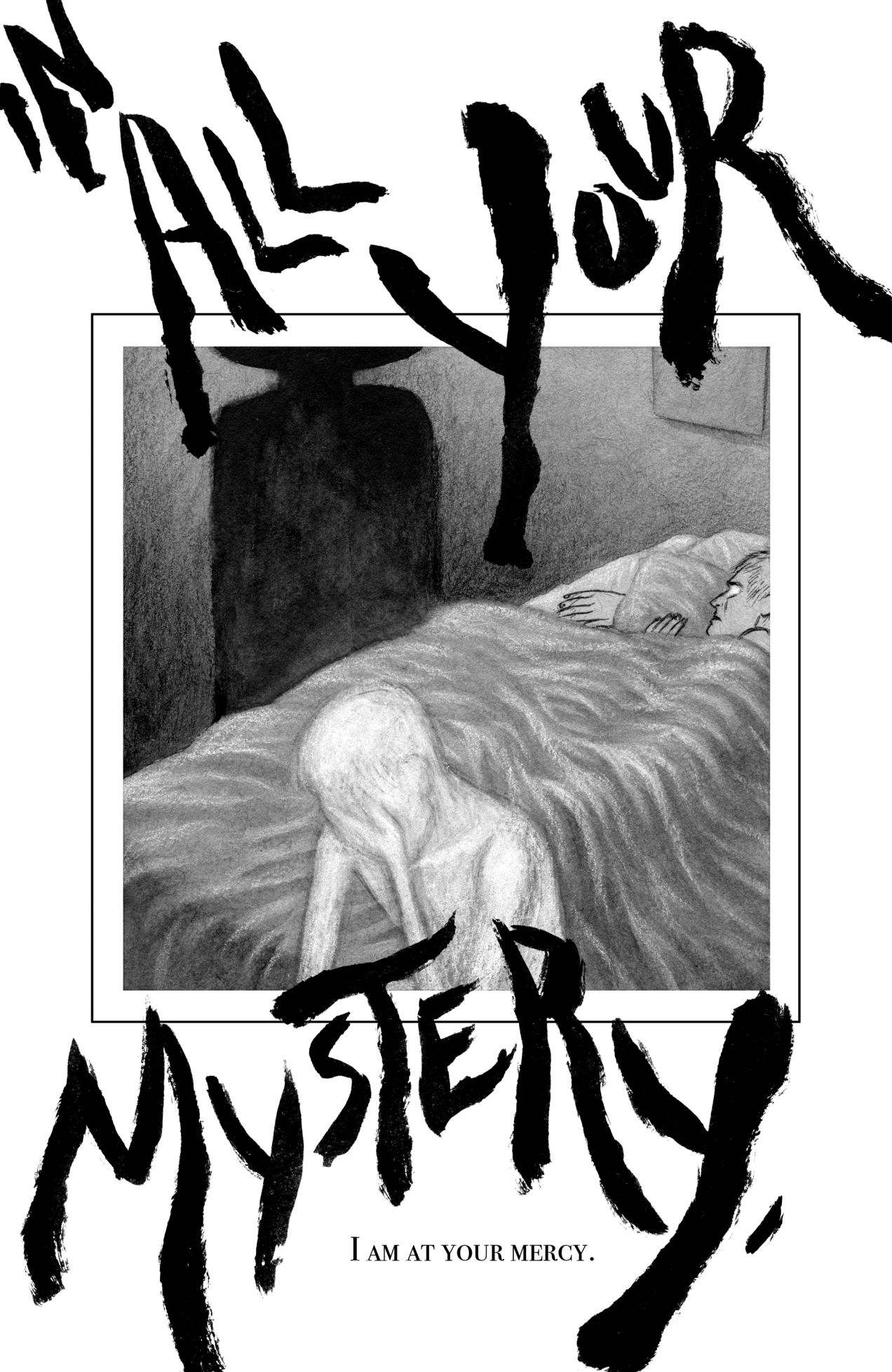

WELCOME BACK, DOCTOR VENTURA.


COMPUTER, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
WHERE IS CAPTAIN KINNEY?


WHO?
THERE IS NO SUCH PERSONNEL ON FILE.


TRANSFER ALL DATA ON CAPTAIN MICHAEL KINNEY TO MY WRIST TABLET.
THERE IS NO SUCH PERSONNEL ON FILE.


MISSION COMMAND, ARE YOU GETTING THIS?
YOUR VIDEO IS COMING THROUGH. OPPS TEAM IS REVIEWING NOW.
BUT GERIE, WE ASKED YOU TO WAIT. PLEASE GO BACK TO YOUR SHUTTLE. BACKUP WILL B--
DON'T MAKE ME MUTE Y--
OH, GOD...
MICHAEL, WHERE ARE YOU?!
END TRANSMISSION.


IN ALL YOUR
MYSTERY,
I AM AT YOUR MERCY.

I was very young the first time it happened.



Troubled sleeping seems to run in my family.



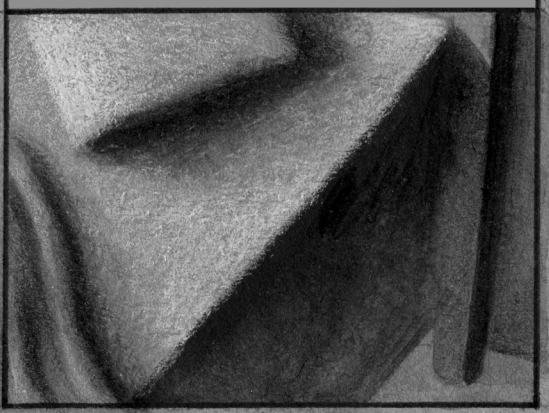
I'm in chicago with my girlfriend. In the hotel lobby I find a brochure for an art gallery.



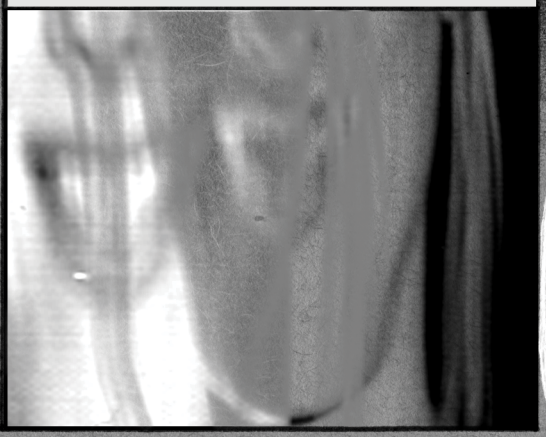
We had just moved into our new house.

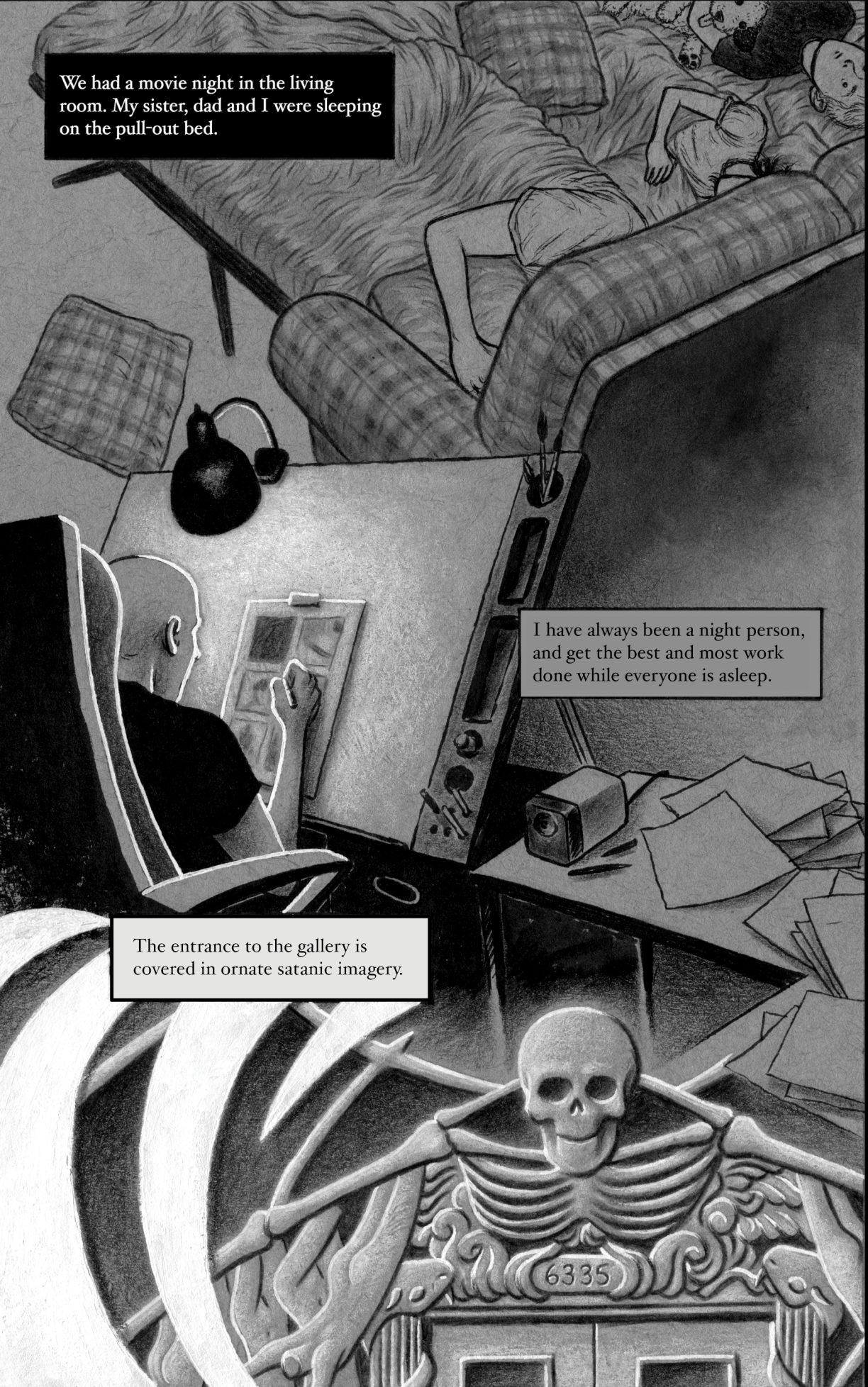


I don't feel comfortable divulging others' personal experiences, but I will say that for some of my relatives the situation has been life-threatening.



The actress, Judy Greer's latest immersive work is the main exhibit. For some reason this makes total sense to me.




We had a movie night in the living room. My sister, dad and I were sleeping on the pull-out bed.
I have always been a night person, and get the best and most work done while everyone is asleep.
The entrance to the gallery is covered in ornate satanic imagery.
6335

While I was trying to fall asleep, two figures appeared across the room.



One was tall and wore a tall hat.

The excitement of creating things in utter solitude carries me, and hours go by in a moment.



Inside the door, we look down a dark stairway that reminds me of the stairs at the Christian school I attended for 7th and 8th grade. We are the only people there.



I was so afraid, I couldn't move.

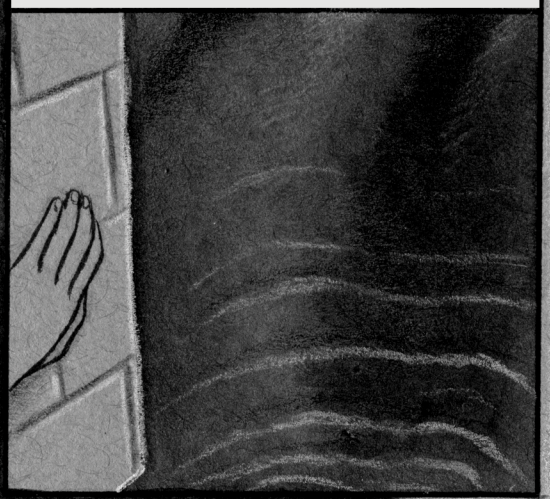


The other was short and stout.

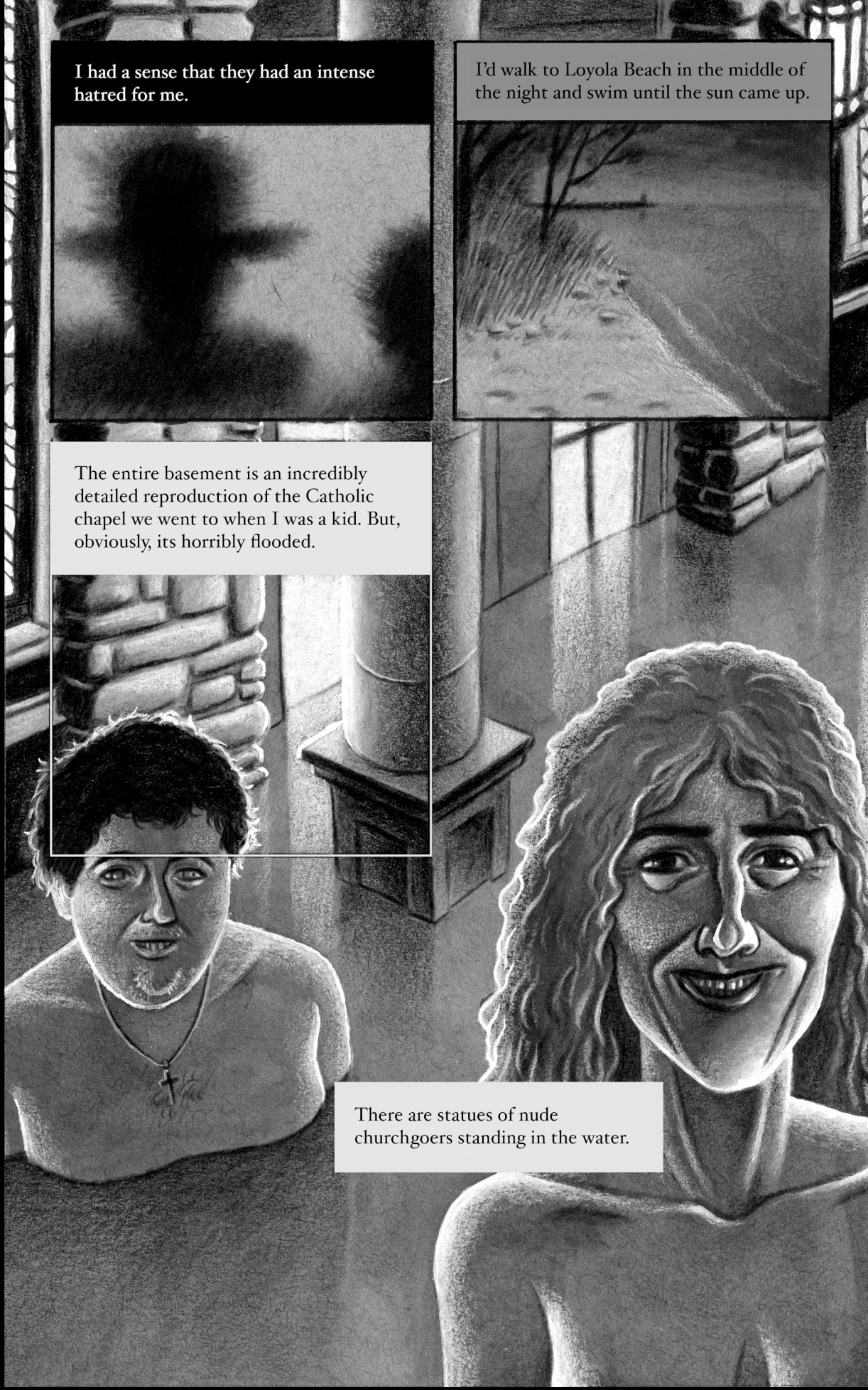
When I lived in Chicago as a fresh adult, sleep seemed increasingly inconvenient and I avoided it at all costs.

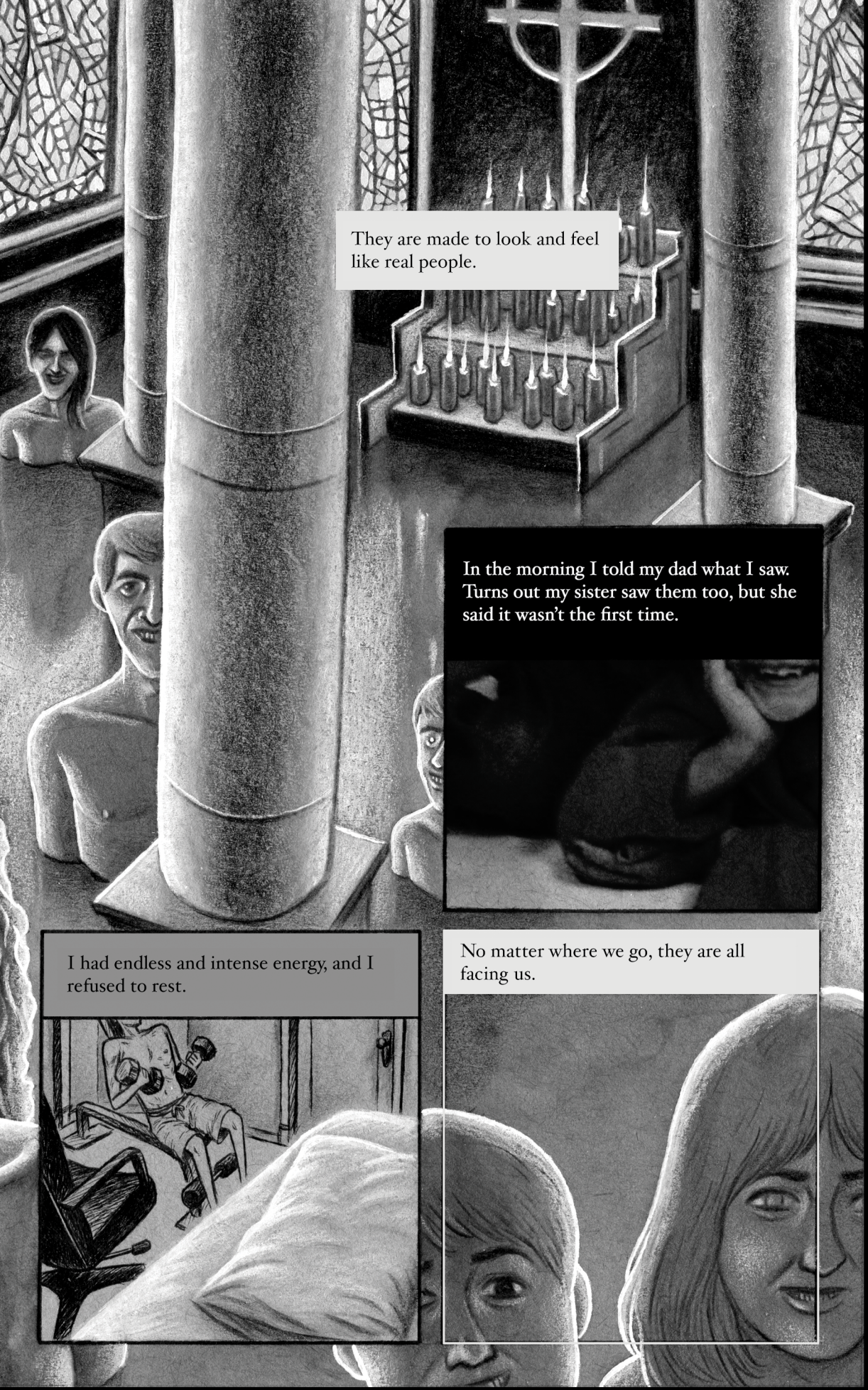


At the bottom of the stairs we enter deep water.



Both of them were all black.

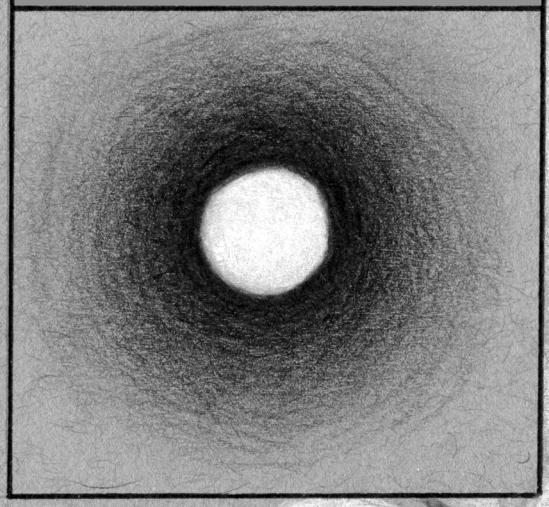

I had a sense that they had an intense hatred for me.
I'd walk to Loyola Beach in the middle of the night and swim until the sun came up.
The entire basement is an incredibly detailed reproduction of the Catholic chapel we went to when I was a kid. But, obviously, its horribly flooded.
There are statues of nude churchgoers standing in the water.


They are made to look and feel like real people.
In the morning I told my dad what I saw. Turns out my sister saw them too, but she said it wasn't the first time.
I had endless and intense energy, and I refused to rest.
No matter where we go, they are all facing us.

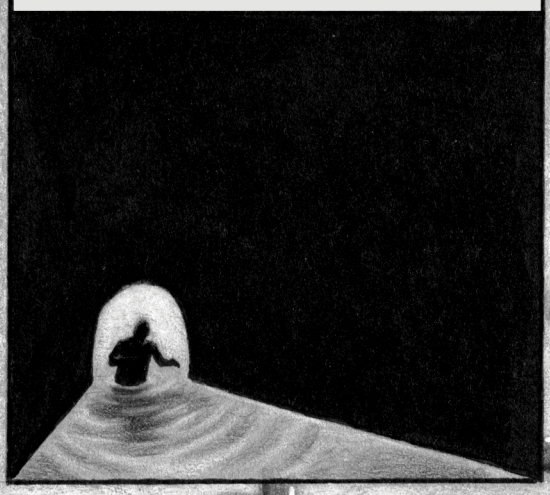
My dad told us that his sister saw spirits all the time as a kid, and claimed to have a spirit best friend.



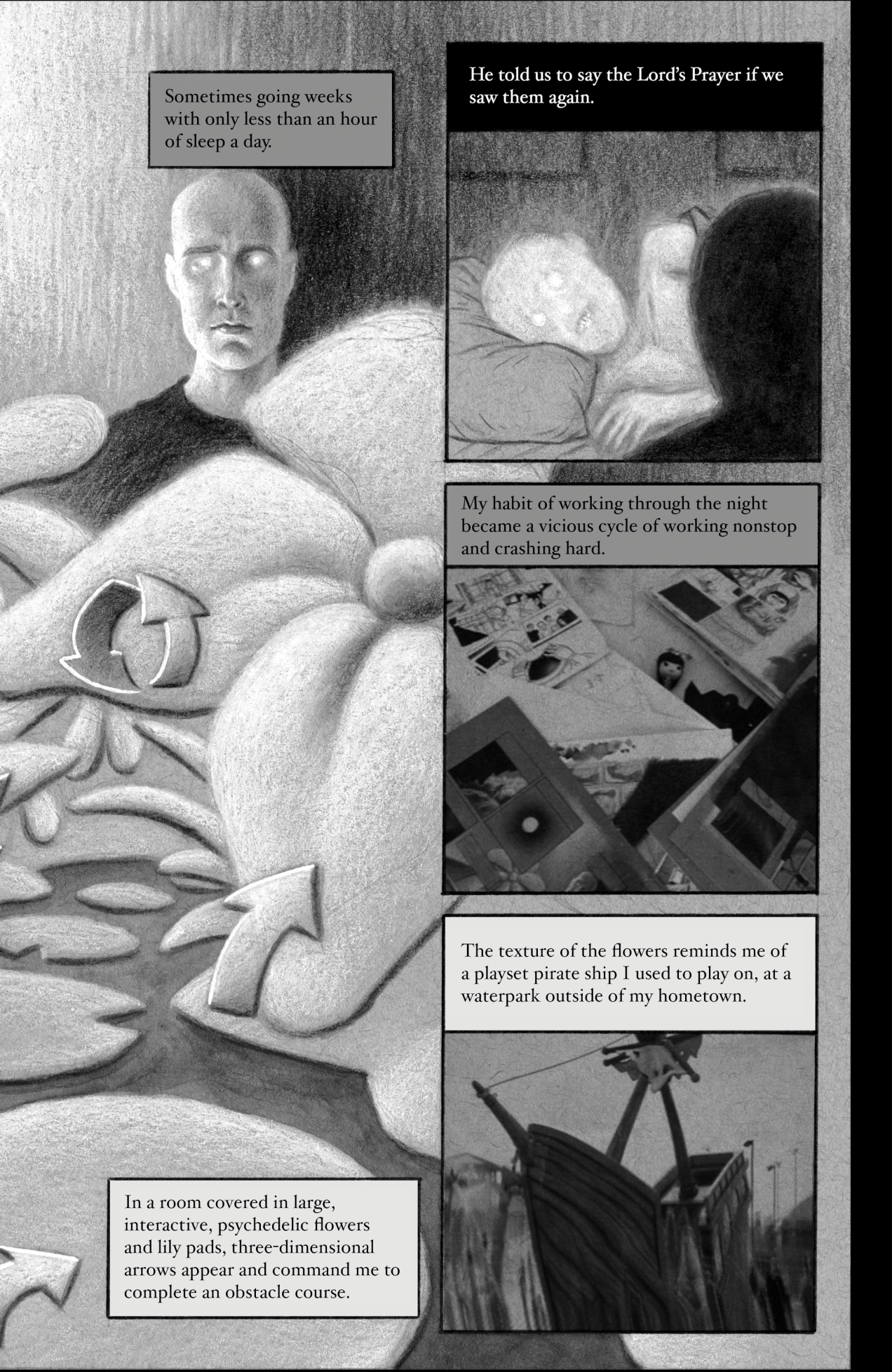
It wasn't until years later that the lack of sleep started to catch up to me.



Somewhere in the corridors, I lose my girlfriend, but I continue on.



He said that my great aunt told him that our family is followed by demons.


Sometimes going weeks with only less than an hour of sleep a day.
He told us to say the Lord's Prayer if we saw them again.
My habit of working through the night became a vicious cycle of working nonstop and crashing hard.
The texture of the flowers reminds me of a playset pirate ship I used to play on, at a waterpark outside of my hometown.
In a room covered in large, interactive, psychedelic flowers and lily pads, three-dimensional arrows appear and command me to complete an obstacle course.

Much later I discovered the concept of sleep paralysis, and I felt a little less alone in my experiences.



When I was able to fall asleep, it would be twenty minutes at a time. Waking up in a panic, periodically, throughout the night.



I walk back to the chapel, and it is much darker now.



It still happens to me several times a year, but I haven't seen those particular figures since I was a kid.

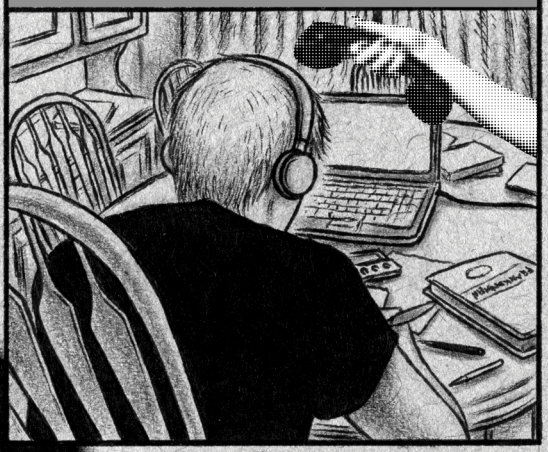


I've had visual and auditory hallucinations. Sometimes seeing a figure looming next to my desk out of the corner of my eye.



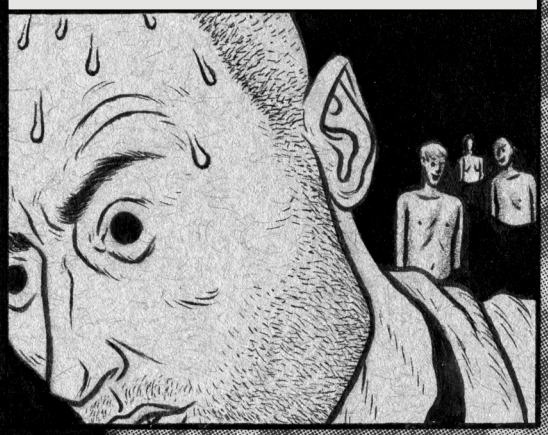

I am overcome with the desire to masturbate and I frantically pace through the pews, looking for the right place.

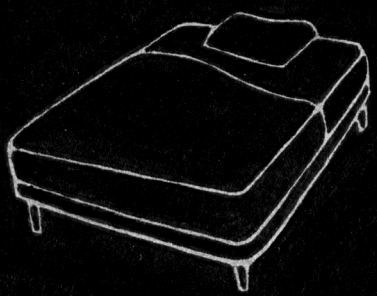
Once I heard the ringing of an old telephone for hours, until I was finally able to fall asleep for a short nap.



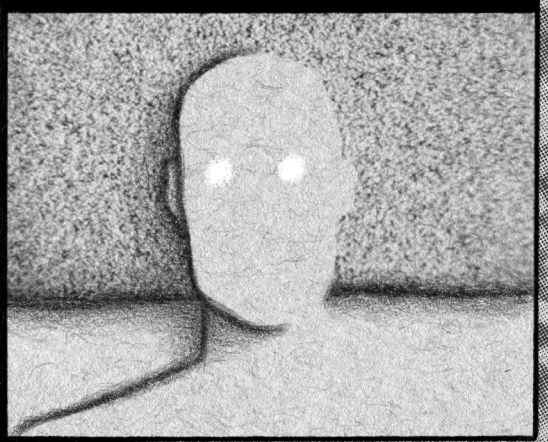
I'm not so frightened by these little visits anymore.

Finally, to the left of the altar, I turn away from the churchgoers and start to masturbate.

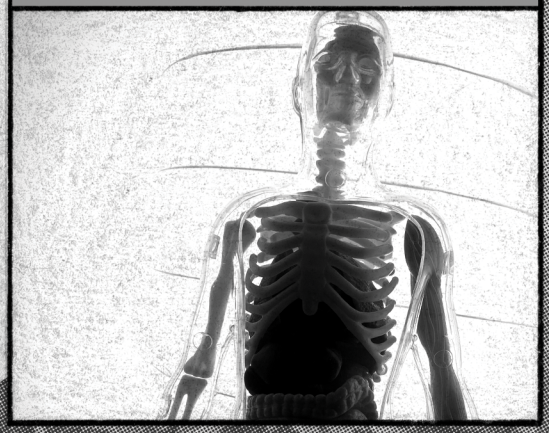




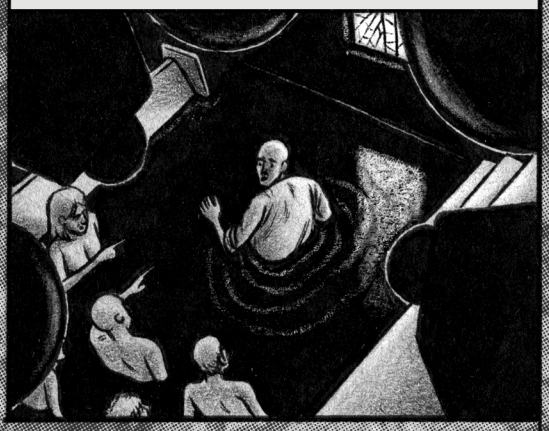
Now, they usually go something like this: My eyes open, and my pillow turns to static under my head.



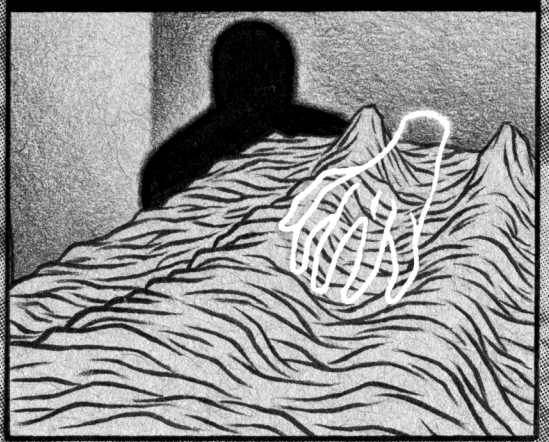
Sometimes it scares me to think of the damage I've done to my body and brain with exreme sleep deprivation.



Suddenly the ceiling is covered in surveillence cameras and the churchgoers come to life and begin to chastise me.



A shadow figure sits at the foot of my bed, staring. Sometimes I can feel invisible hands clawing at my legs.

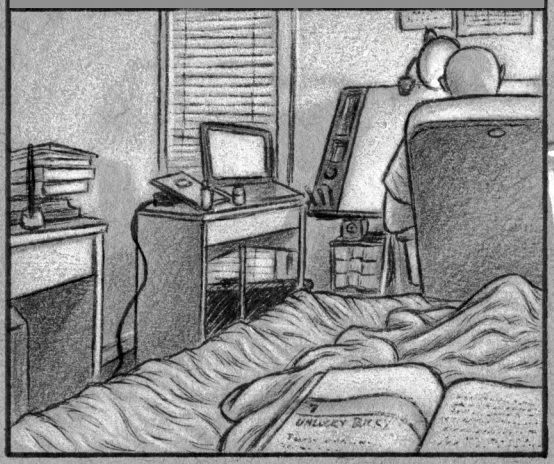


At times I've spontaneously burst into tears after not being able to sleep for days.

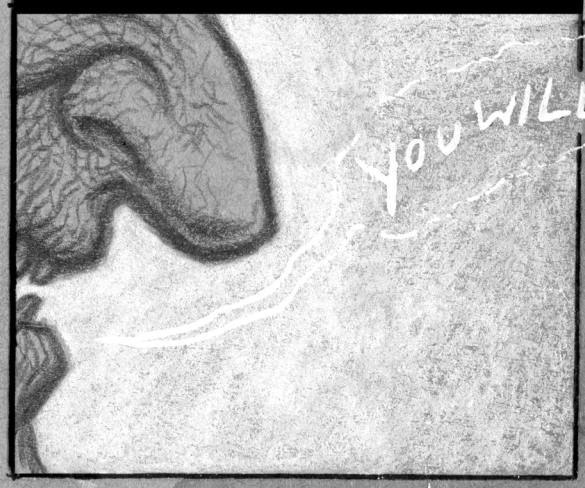
I am now with Kyle at his apartment.



I've, more or less, come to terms with the way that I sleep.



I feel the hot breath of an old witch on my ear. Her voice is wicked and filled with disdain.



I can hear the disembodied voice of a loved one, comforting me from the hallway.

AWWW, ITS OKAY, NOAH. IT'LL BE OKAY.

I recommend Judy Greer's art show to him and his girlfriend. He says they're not interested.

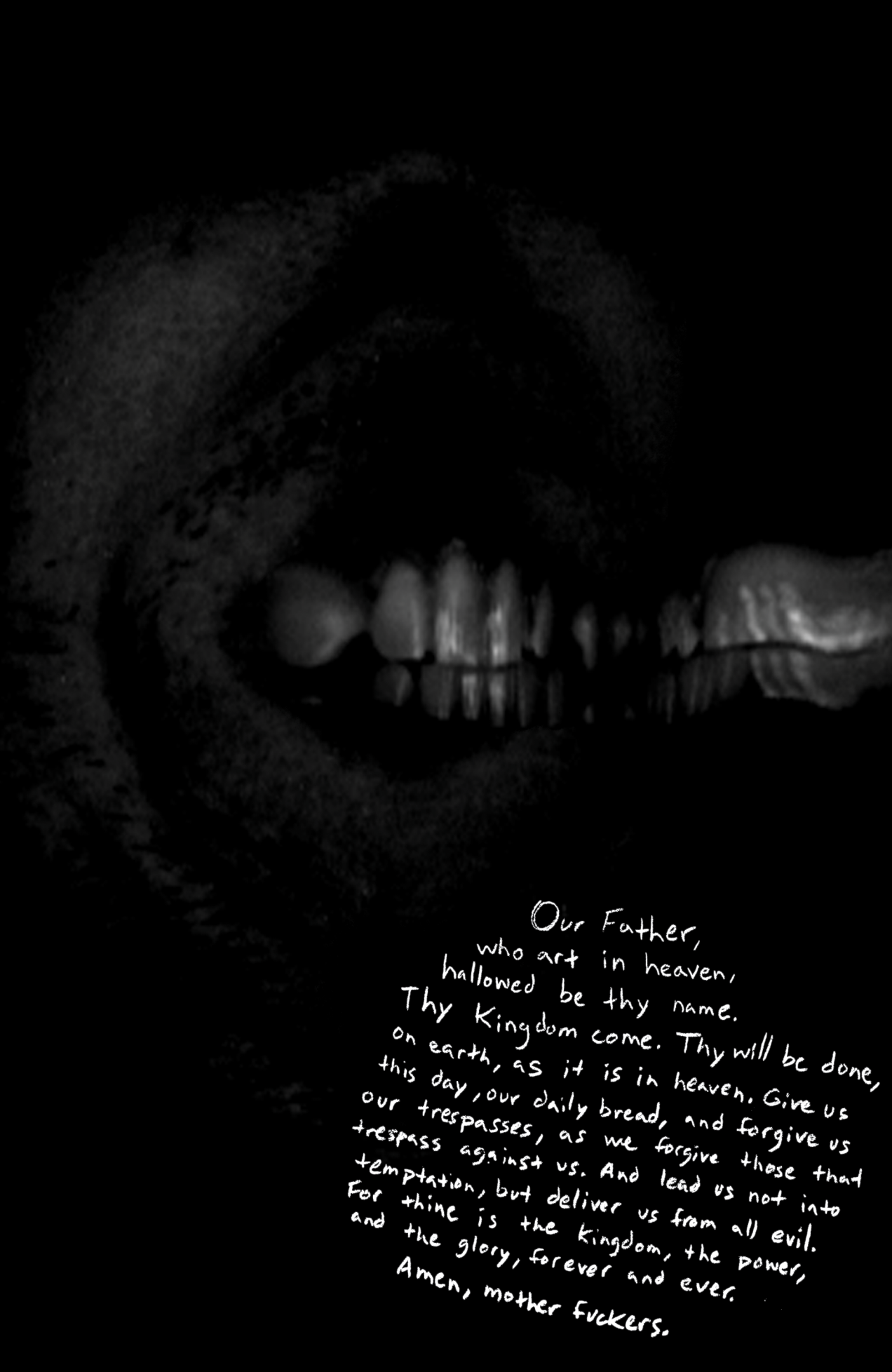


I sleep when I can.



I fight to fix my lips into a hateful smile. Every muscle in my face trembles.

ITHING. YOU WILL NEVER KNOW HAP


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 that
trespass against us. And lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from all evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power,
and the glory, forever and ever.
Amen, mother fuckers.

AFTERWORD

by Craig Hurd-McKenney

When I was a child, Satan visited me at night. It happened several times until it didn't. I remember waking up to my name, a whisper in the wind, calling from the hallway. I pulled the blanket over my head. I hid in the closet. I cried out. I got out of bed and followed the voice.

Which was it? Or did I do any of it? Memories, nightmares, dreams. They're all entangled. Trauma can churn them all up, set them loose on the conscious mind. If you throw in a dose of insomnia (and its concurrent hallucinations), it can get wonky. Enter: *Station Grand*. In this case, narrative is the saving grace to make sense of it all.

This narrative had its origins in my lifelong obsession with NASA. And when I was in the depths of a sleep-deprived writing jag, I started reading about how astronauts experience sleep problems due to the disruption of their circadian rhythms during space travel. And for extended stays in space, astronauts experience genetic (mal) adaptation. Little did I know the trip this research was about to send me on.

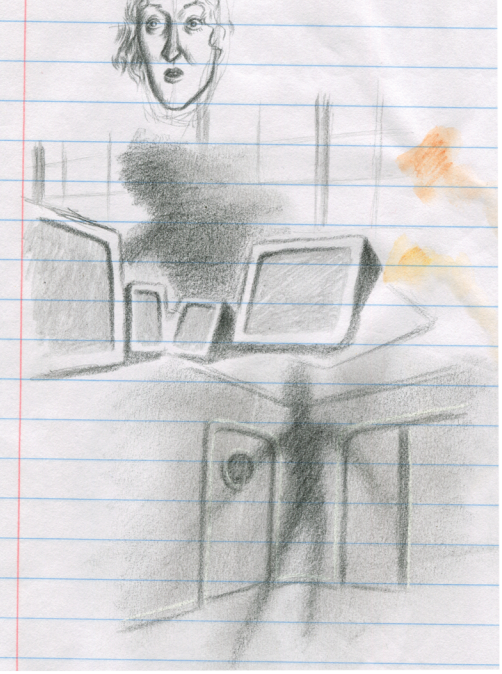
Thankfully, I had an excellent sense-making partner on the journey to *Station Grand*. Noah is one of the few people I know who has similar experiences with sleep trauma. While mine is insomnia-induced visions, his is sleep paralysis, as you've just read. Noah and I bonded over old movies, cried over dogs, and descended to the depths of our sleepless minds. While *Station Grand* presents one narrative on a shared theme, I am so thrilled that Noah allowed us a dive into his sleep journals with "In All Your Mystery, I Am at Your Mercy." There was a slight fear from both of us, to be as vulnerable as this book required. And this story is terrifyingly beautiful. Innovative in its tri-narrative, Noah is simply expanding the comics artform. And in our vulnerability lies that ability to create. I am so grateful to have shared this experience with him.

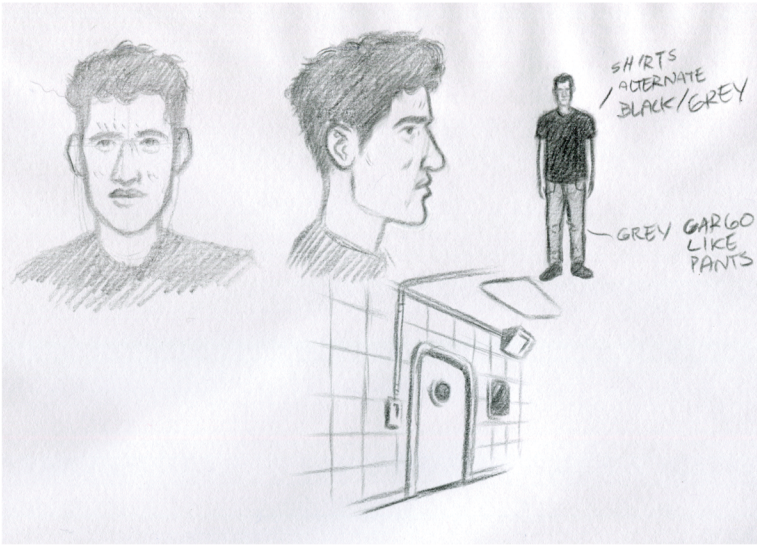
Currently, my sleep has been regular. But make no mistake—the night is the time of monsters. Those who don't sleep do battle against said monsters 24-7 so that you can enjoy your sleep. Be kind to them, for the battles are rolling (and tolling) indeed.

Nighty night,

Craig

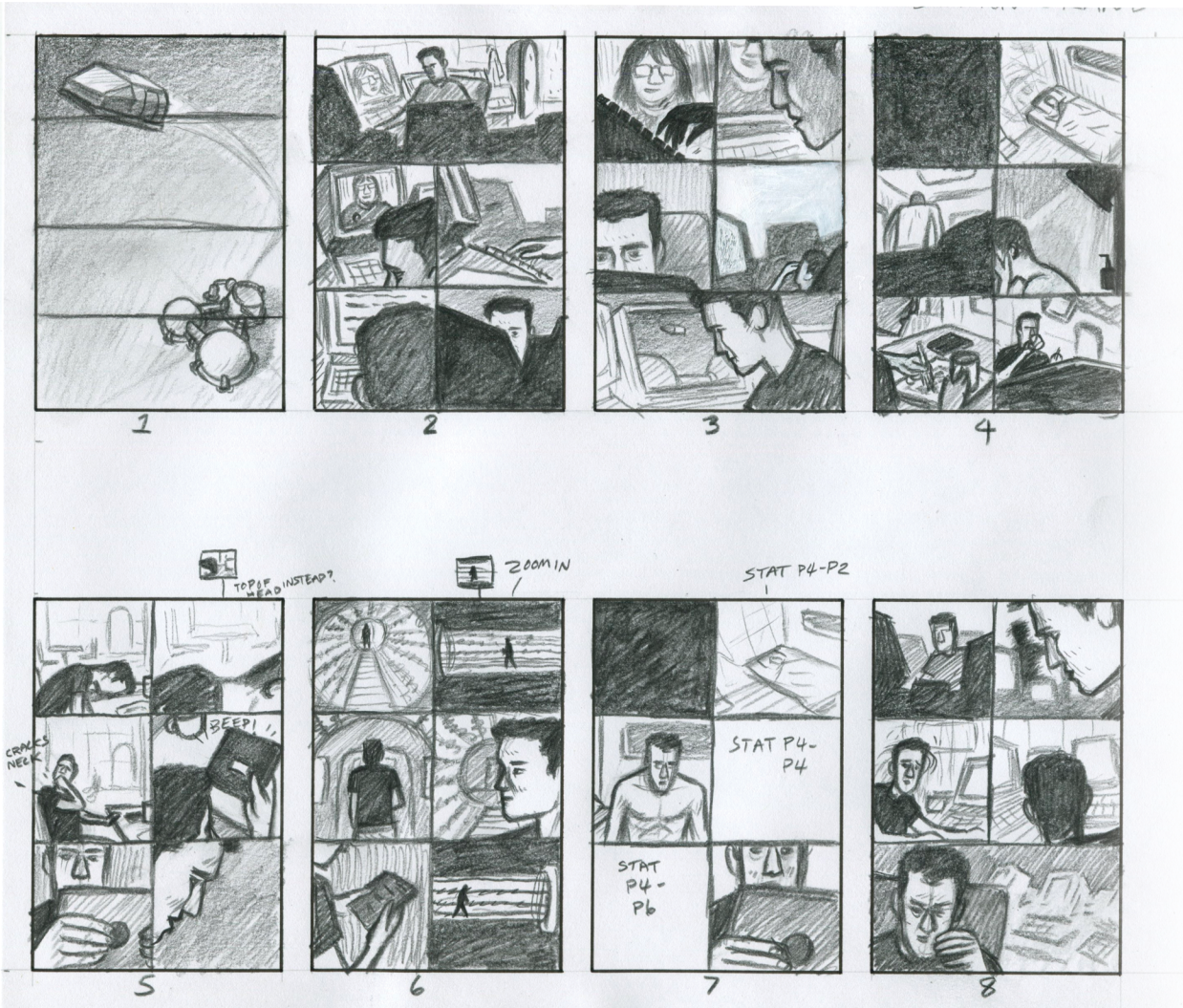
Seattle, June 2024

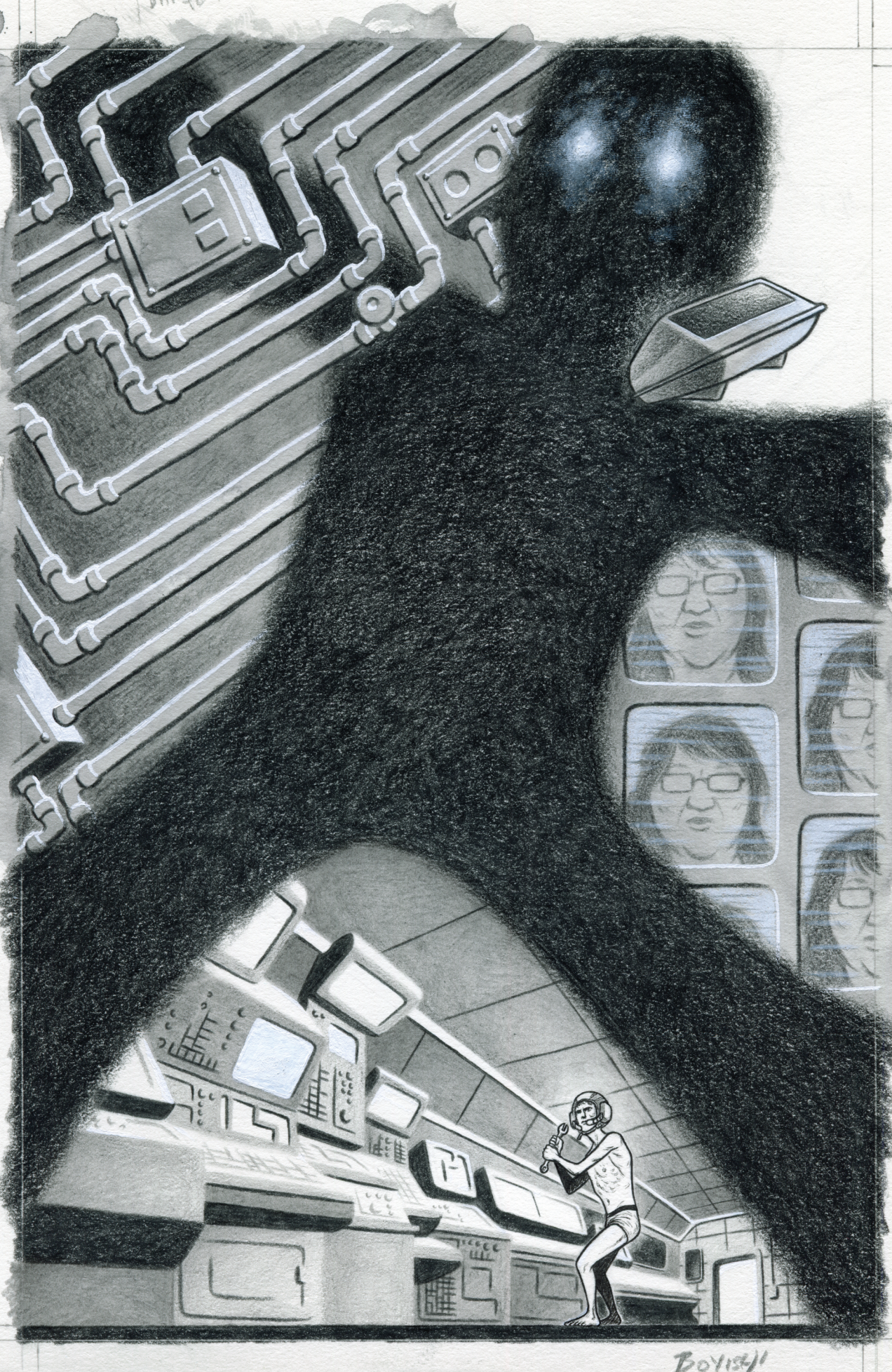




Top left: Early Shadow Entity concept sketches
Top Right: Early Michael character studies and cafeteria door sketch
Below: Thumbnail sketches
Following Page: Raw scan of original cover artwork

"My approach to the artwork in the book was heavily influenced by German Expressionism and Gothic horror. I wanted the environments and the mood to build from soft and sterile in the beginning moments of "business-as-usual" space-station life to chaotic and oppressive in the final moments of conflict. I played a lot with style and medium in an attempt to convey the internal feelings and perceptions of the characters from moment to moment—hopefully creating a visual language that presents a view of both the objective and subjective version of events and surroundings." —Noah





Craig Hurd-McKenney

is a Xeric Grant–awarded and Ignatz Award–nominated writer. He lives in Seattle with his husband and four rescue dogs. Online, he lives at hspcomix.com.

Noah Bailey

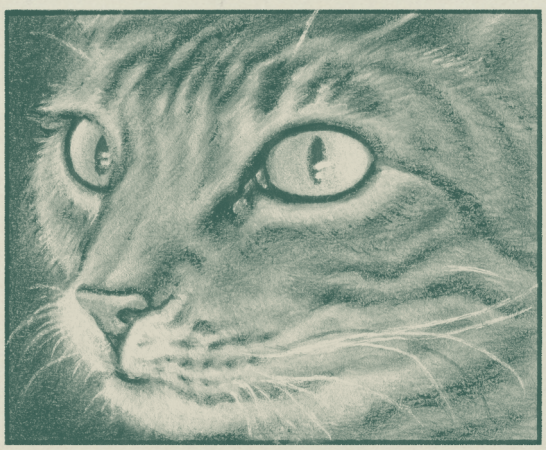
is an illustrator and cartoonist from the Midwest best known for the Dark Horse Comics/Comixology Originals graphic novels *Tremor Dose* and *Double Walker* (written by Michael W. Conrad), *Wonder Woman: Black and Gold*, and *Diabolical!*, his comix anthology magazine with Strangers Publishing.

Saida Temofonte

is a comic book letterer and production and logo designer hailing from Los Angeles, California, and now living in Mississippi. She started in 1997 with Comicraft and now designs for the comic book industry and beyond. Her longtime passion is figure drawing from the live model, landscape painting, fishing, and hiking.





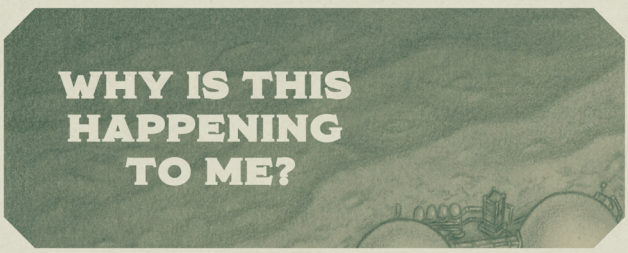


Dr. Michael Kinney is light-years from Earth, overseeing the terraformation of Venus. Michael is all alone, save for the computer who keeps him company during the 272-day-long orbit from night to day around the sun. And during this time, there is no contact with Mission Control.

With his circadian rhythms disrupted by his extended stay in deep space, his insomnia peaks. Reality as he knows it comes into question. As Michael struggles to finish his mission, what he thinks he knows will collide with the existential mysteries of the universe:









From Xeric Grant-awarded and Ignatz Award-nominated writer **Craig Hurd-McKenney** (*Boris Karloff Gold Key Mysteries #1*, *The Lodger*) and acclaimed illustrator **Noah Bailey** (*Double Walker*, *Wonder Woman: Black and Gold*) comes a gripping sci-fi novella.

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