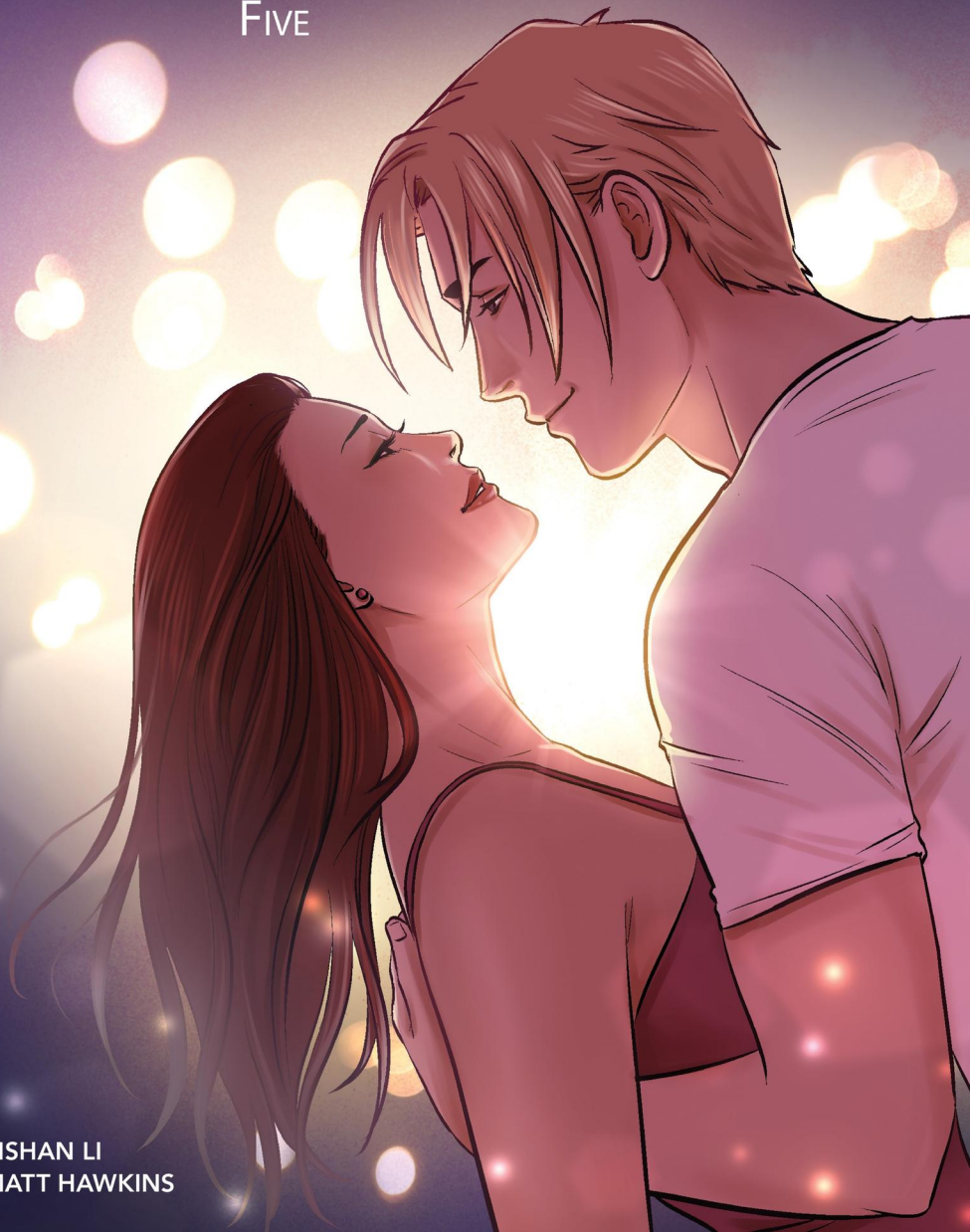


Swing™

VOLUME
FIVE



YISHAN LI
MATT HAWKINS

TOP COW PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

Swing™

The word "Swing" is written in a large, white, cursive font. The letter 'S' is on the left, followed by 'w', 'i', 'n', 'g'. The 'w' and 'i' are connected. The 'n' is a simple vertical line. The 'g' has a long, sweeping tail that loops around. Behind the letters are three interlocking rings: a pink ring on the left, a gold ring in the middle, and a blue ring on the right. The pink ring has a female symbol (a circle with a cross) at its bottom. The blue ring has a male symbol (a circle with an arrow) at its right. The gold ring has the text "©2003 Top Cow Productions" written on its inner surface.

Created by

LINDA SEJIC, MATT HAWKINS & JENNI CHEUNG



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Top Cow Productions Presents...

Swing

CREATED BY
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WRITTEN BY
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ART BY
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LETTERING BY
Troy Peteri

**BASED ON A STORY
AND CHARACTERS DEVELOPED BY**
Linda Sejic
Stjepan Sejic
Matt Hawkins
Jenni Cheung



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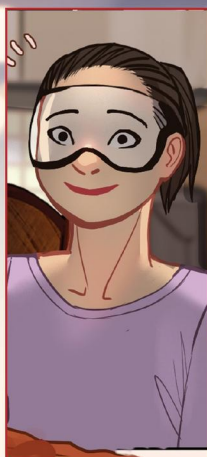
Cathy Chang



Dan Lincoln



**Blake
Lincoln**



**Ashley
Lincoln**



Mom

In the last four volumes of

Swing



DAN LINCOLN WAS A BRIGHT YOUNG GRAD STUDENT AND A GIFTED WRITER...

DETERMINED TO CRAFT THE NEXT GREAT AMERICAN NOVEL.

WHEN THEY FIRST MET, SPARKS FLEW.

IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE THEIR "TUTORING SESSIONS" TURNED INTO SOMETHING ELSE...



AND WHEN THEIR FLING TURNED INTO SOMETHING DEEPER...



PREGNANT
NOT PREGNANT

THEY FOUND THEMSELVES FACING A NEW CHALLENGE - TOGETHER.



BUT FOR ALL THE FEAR THAT COMES WITH A **SHOT-GUN WEDDING**, DAN AND CATHY WERE HAPPY.



THEY BELIEVED IN EACH OTHER. WHATEVER CAME NEXT...

THEY COULD FACE IT TOGETHER.

BUT 8 YEARS AND TWO KIDS LATER,
THE MAGIC STARTED TO FADE.

ROUTINE REPLACED ROMANCE.

RESPONSIBILITY

DAN STARTED TEACHING HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH --

AND SPENT MORE TIME GRINDING AWAY AT 905 THAN WRITING HIS NOVEL.

CATHY ENDED UP IN THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY --

COURTING CLIENTS AND MANAGING A TEAM OF WEB DESIGNERS AND ENGINEERS.

THE MORE THEY DRIFTED, THE MORE TEMPTATION LOOMED.

BUT THEY LOVED EACH OTHER.

THEY DIDN'T WANT TO FEEL THIS RESENTMENT

THEY BOTH WANTED TO FEEL CLOSER...

THEY WOULD BECOME SWINGERS.

THEY WANTED TO FEEL THE HEAT AGAIN.

AND CATHY HAD A PLAN TO PUT THE SPICE BACK INTO THEIR MARRIAGE.

I THINK I'D LIKE TO TRY THAT.



THEY MADE RULES, THEY RESPECTED EACH OTHER'S BOUNDARIES, AND AT FIRST, MERELY ENTERTAINING THE IDEA SEEMED TO BRING BACK THE OLD EXCITEMENT.

BUT DAN WAS SKEPTICAL AND INSECURE.

CATHY WAS PATIENT...

WHAT THE FUCK?



BUT SHE WORRIED THEIR MARRIAGE WAS ENDING BEFORE THEY COULD EVEN TRY OPENING IT UP.

SHE CONFIDED IN AN OLD FRIEND...



SO WITH DEBBIE'S HELP, CATHY HATCHED A PLAN.

NO STRANGERS, NO SPECIAL CLUBS --

JUST GOOD OLD-FASHIONED SEDUCTION.



IT WAS FAR FROM TRADITIONAL, BUT IT WORKED.

HERE WAS SOMETHING NEW, AND DAN AND CATHY LOVED IT.

AND LOVED EACH OTHER MORE FOR IT.



AFTER CATHY GOT DAN A SERIES OF THREESOMES WITH HER FRIENDS, HE WAS WILLING TO TRY A FOURSOME WITH ANOTHER COUPLE.



HI, GUYS. I'M MARY AND THIS IS MY HUSBAND CLINT. WE USE CHERI AND JACK UNTIL WE SEE THE COUPLE'S LEGIT.

FIGHTING THROUGH A SERIES OF FAKES AND FLAKES VIA THE SWINGERS' ONLINE DATING GLITES, THEY FINALLY MET CLINT AND MARY, A COUPLE THEY BOTH LIKED, AND THEY HAD THEIR FIRST SUCCESSFUL COUPLES SWING.



DAN AND CATHY GOT MORE EXPERIENCE AND DAN LEARNED THAT HE MIGHT NEED VIAGRA FROM TIME TO TIME TO MAINTAIN HIS ERECTION BECAUSE OF THE ANXIETY IN THESE SITUATIONS.

ARE YOU CLARY YOURS BABE?



NOT AT ALL. IT'S JUST A REGULAR FRIDAY, BUT I WANTED TO TREAT YOU TO A SPECIAL NIGHT OUT.

WANTING TO MAKE SURE THEIR RELATIONSHIP STAYED ROCK SOLID, THEY INSTITUTED REGULAR DATE NIGHTS FOR JUST THE TWO OF THEM.



THEIR COMMUNICATION, HONESTY AND SHARED EXPERIENCE RESULTED IN A RENAISSANCE IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP LIFE WAS GOOD.



WITH HIS RELATIONSHIP IN A GREAT PLACE AND INSPIRED BY THEIR NEW LIFESTYLE, DAN FOCUSED MORE ON TRYING TO RESTART HIS WRITING CAREER.



I'M CATHY CHANG. MANY OF YOU KNOW ME ALREADY. FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS WE'VE DONE A SERIES OF TRAILERS FOR YOUR FILMS.

SINCE YOU'RE IN THE FILM BUSINESS, I THOUGHT IT APPROPRIATE MY TEAM PUT TOGETHER A SHORT FILM TO SHOW WHAT I'M PITCHING, RATHER THAN JUST TALKING AT YOU.

CATHY WAS ALSO ADVANCING WELL IN HER CAREER AND PITCHED AN OVERALL DEAL TO A MAJOR STUDIO.



I NEED TO TELL DAN I RAN INTO JOHN. WE AGREED TO THAT AND IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

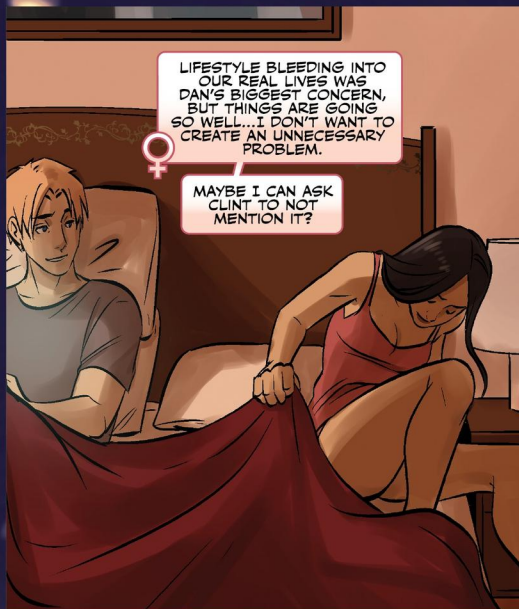


ONE OF DAN'S PRIMARY CONCERNS ABOUT THIS LIFESTYLE WAS IT CROSSING OVER INTO THEIR REAL LIVES. HE WANTED TO KEEP THIS PART OF THEM COMPARTMENTALIZED AND SEPARATE FROM EVERYTHING ELSE SO IT CREATED A PROBLEM FOR CATHY WHEN SHE RAN INTO CLINT DURING ONE OF HER STUDIO MEETINGS.



ONE OF THEIR MAIN RULES WAS TO IMMEDIATELY TELL THE OTHER IF THIS HAPPENED.

HEY, BABE. HOW WAS YOUR PRESENTATION?

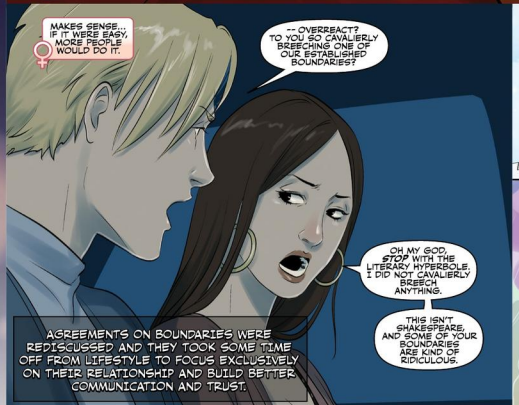


LIFESTYLE BLEEDING INTO OUR REAL LIVES WAS DAN'S BIGGEST CONCERN, BUT THINGS ARE GOING SO WELL...I DON'T WANT TO CREATE AN UNNECESSARY PROBLEM.

MAYBE I CAN ASK CLINT TO NOT MENTION IT?



CONCEALING IT ENDED UP BEING A HORRIBLE IDEA, BECAUSE WHEN IT DID COME OUT, IT SEEMED WAY WORSE THAN IT WAS.



MAKES SENSE, IF IT WERE EASY, MORE PEOPLE WOULD DO IT.

--OVERREACT? TO YOU SO CAVALIERLY BREACHING ONE OF OUR ESTABLISHED BOUNDARIES?

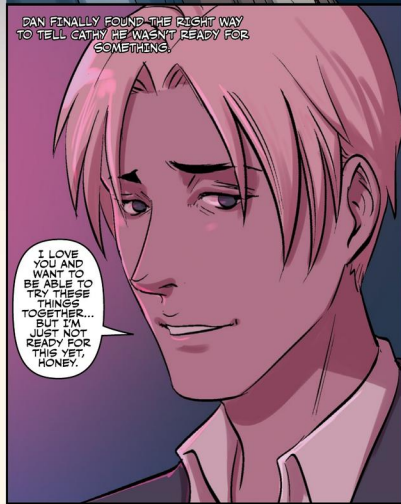
ON MY GOD STOP WITH THE LITERARY, MYSTERIOUS I DID NOT CAVALIERLY BREACH ANYTHING.

THIS ISN'T SHAKESPEARE AND SOME OF YOUR BOUNDARIES ARE KIND OF RIDICULOUS.

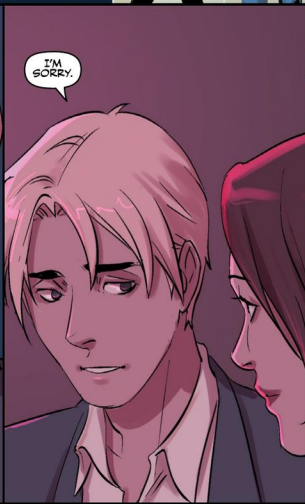
AGREEMENTS ON BOUNDARIES WERE REVISITED AND THEY TOOK SOME TIME OFF FROM LIFESTYLE TO FOCUS EXCLUSIVELY ON THEIR RELATIONSHIP AND BUILD BETTER COMMUNICATION AND TRUST.



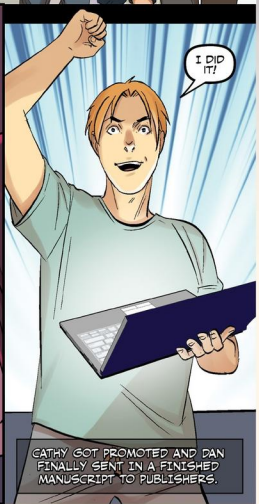
ON A FAMILY VACATION, THEY DECIDED TO HIT A SWINGER CLUB OUT OF STATE, JUST THE TWO OF THEM, AND IT REKINDLED THEIR JOINT DESIRE FOR LIFESTYLE.



I LOVE YOU AND BE ABLE TO TRY THESE THINGS TOGETHER... BUT I'M JUST NOT READY FOR THIS YET, HONEY.



I'M SORRY.



I DID IT!

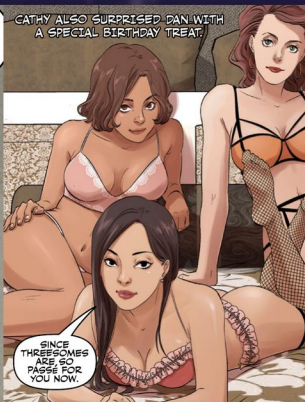
GATHY GOT PROMOTED AND DAN FINALLY SENT IN A FINISHED MANUSCRIPT TO PUBLISHERS.



DAN AND CATHY ALSO MET HIS DAD'S NEW GIRLFRIEND, WHO'S BARELY OLDER THAN CATHY.

HEY DAN, CATHY YOU GUYS LOOK FANTASTIC! THIS IS MY GIRLFRIEND ELIZABETH.

CALL ME LIZ.

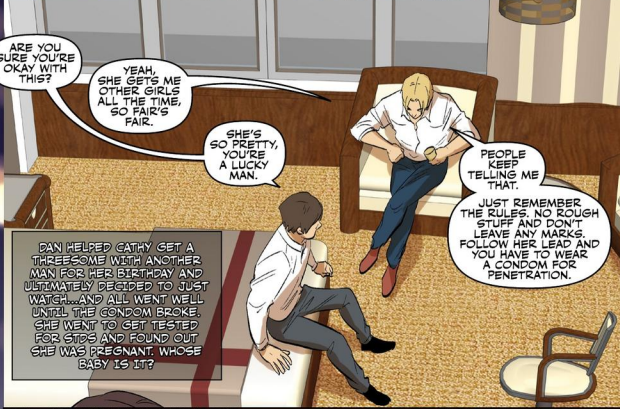


CATHY (ALSO) SURPRISED DAN WITH A SPECIAL BIRTHDAY TREAT.

SINCE THREESOMES ARE SO PASSE FOR YOU NOW.



I SOLD MY BOOK.



ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE OKAY WITH THIS?

YEAH, SHE GETS ME OTHER GIRLS ALL THE TIME, SO FAIR.

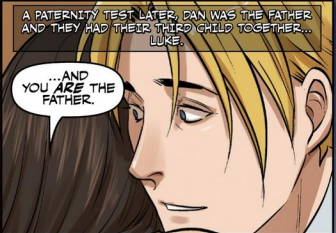
SHE'S SO PRETTY, YOU'RE A LUCKY MAN.

PEOPLE KEEP TELLING ME THAT. JUST REMEMBER THE RULES, NO ROUGH STUFF AND DON'T LEAVE ANY MARKS. FOLLOW HER LEAD AND YOU HAVE TO WEAR A CONDOM FOR PENETRATION.

DAN HELPED CATHY GET A THREESOME WITH ANOTHER MAN FOR HER BIRTHDAY AND ULTIMATELY DECIDED TO JUST WATCH...AND ALL WENT WELL UNTIL THE CONDOM BROKE. SHE WENT TO GET TESTED FOR STD'S AND FOUND OUT SHE WAS PREGNANT, WHOSE BABY IS IT?



OH MY GOD, I'M PREGNANT.

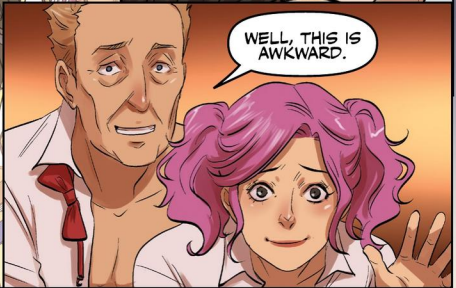


A PATERNITY TEST LATER, DAN WAS THE FATHER AND THEY HAD THEIR THIRD CHILD TOGETHER... LUKE.

...AND YOU ARE THE FATHER.



DAN'S CAREER FLOURISHED.

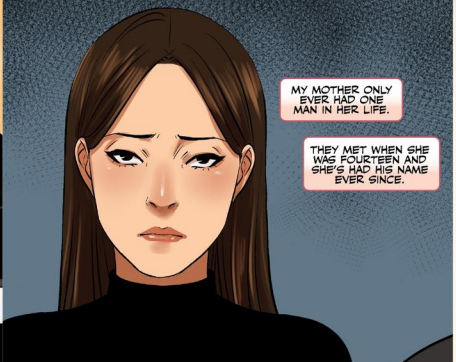


WELL, THIS IS AWKWARD.



CATHY'S FATHER DIED.

(GOBAI CHANG LIVED A BLESSED LIFE AND HAD TWO CHILDREN. HIS BELIEVED SON LU CHANG AND HIS DAUGHTER CATHY CHANG. BOTH ARE WITH US HERE TODAY.)



MY MOTHER ONLY EVER HAD ONE MAN IN HER LIFE.

THEY MET WHEN SHE WAS FOURTEEN AND SHE'S HAD HIS NAME EVER SINCE.

♀ THE CITY OF SIN.

GIVEN MY HEDONISTIC WAYS OF LATE, I'M NOT SURE I BELIEVE THAT ETHICAL NON-MONO GAMY IS A SIN.



DO YOU EVER FEEL GUILTY ABOUT SWINGING?

YEAH... I KNOW I SHOULDN'T... BUT I DO.

I WAS RAISED BUDDHIST AND NONE OF THOSE TEXTS DISCUSS MONO GAMY LIKE WESTERN RELIGIONS DO.

I HAVEN'T BEEN IN A CHURCH SINCE WE GOT MARRIED, BUT THAT EARLY SOUTHERN BAPTIST INDOCTRINATION IS HARD TO SHAKE.

I'M NOT KNOCKING RELIGION, IT'S GOOD FOR SOME... BUT MY DAD WAS AN AWFUL ROLE MODEL.

HE'D BE SINGING IN THE PEWS ON SUNDAY MORNING AND CHEATING ON MY MOM BY MID-AFTERNOON.

OUR WAY IS BETTER.

DELET DELET DELET





IT'S ALMOST 11, WE SHOULD HEAD TO THE PARTY.



LET'S GET A DRINK FOR THE WALK.



I LOVE IT THAT YOU CAN DRINK OUTSIDE HERE ON THE STRIP...THE USUAL?

YEAH.

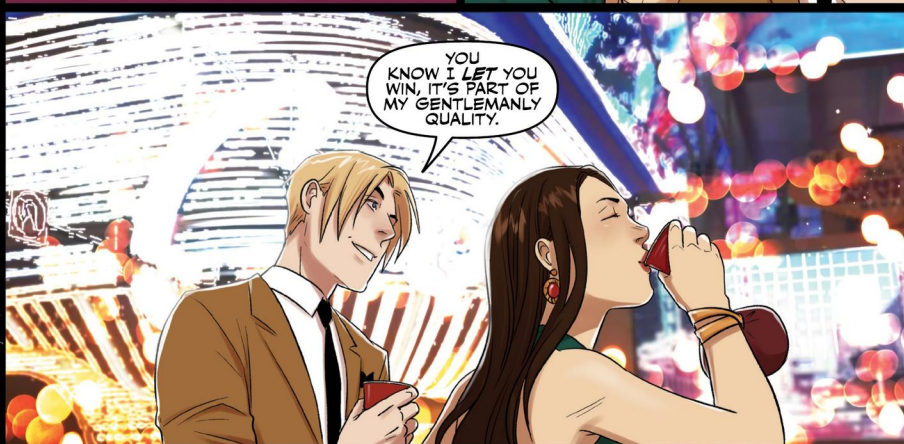


TWO JACK AND DIETS PLEASE, TO GO.

YOU KNOW WHAT WOULD BE FUN?



BEER PONG AT O'GHEAS AFTER THE PARTY!



HOTEL TAKEOVER PARTIES ARE A BIG PART OF LIFESTYLE.

LARGE GROUPS OF SWINGERS FROM ALL OVER CONVERGING IN ONE PLACE FOR A NIGHT OR A WEEKEND.

MOST PEOPLE CONSIDER SWINGING TO BE A FRINGE THING...BUT IT'S NOT...THERE ARE MORE SWINGERS THAN BDSM PARTICIPANTS...BY FAR.

I'M FINE WITH A NO, BUT IF THERE'S A PUPPY PILE...CAN WE JOIN?

YEAH, I THINK I AM FINALLY DOWN TO TRY THE ORG; THANK YOU FOR BEING PATIENT WITH ME ON THAT.

I KNOW IT'S BEEN A FANTASY FOR YOU FOR A LONG TIME, JUST MAKE SURE ALL THE GUYS ARE WEARING CONDOMS AND STAY NEAR ME, PLEASE.

OF COURSE.

DO YOU HAVE YOUR INVITATION?

**SPECIAL
EVENT**
**INVITATION
ONLY**

THANK YOU.

RIGHT THROUGH HERE. WE WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF YOU KEPT THE PLAY AND ANY NUDITY IN THE DESIGNATED AREAS.




THE PUPPY PILE, A.K.A. AN ORGY, HAS BEEN MY FANTASY FOR A WHILE NOW.



WE'VE WATCHED SEVERAL AND I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO JUMP IN, BUT DAN'S BEEN HESITANT, AND I DON'T WANT TO PUSH HIM TOO HARD.



THAT HE'S OPEN TO TRYING IT NOW MAKES ME SO HAPPY.



IT HASN'T BEEN EASY, BUT NO ONE EVER SAID EVOLVING TOGETHER AS A COUPLE WOULD BE.

SEE ANYONE THAT CATCHES YOUR EYE?

A FEW, YOU?



I ALMOST FEEL LIKE A PREDATOR STALKING PREY.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING? ANY ANXIETY?

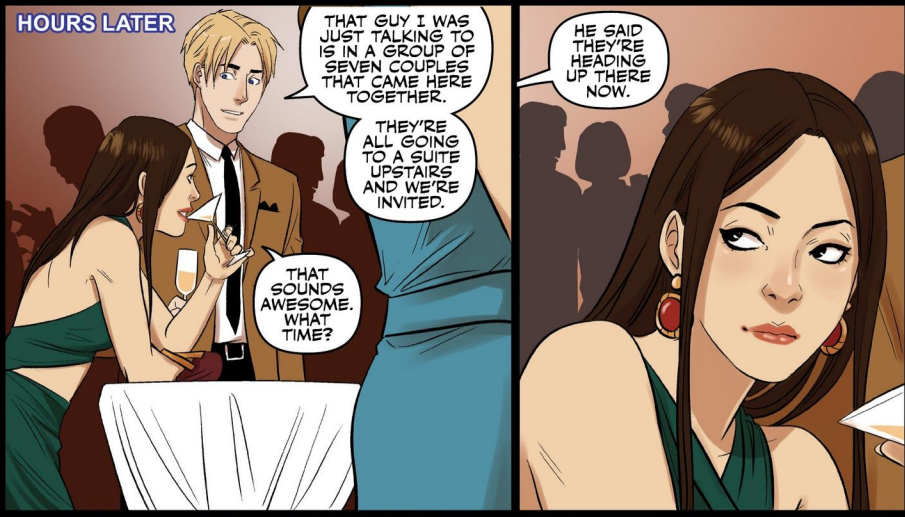
SURPRISINGLY NOT.



SHALL WE MINGLE?



GOOD WORD.



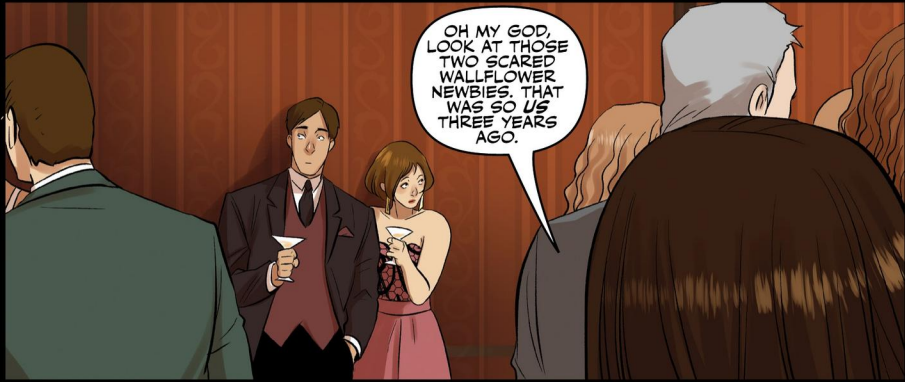
HOURS LATER

THAT GUY I WAS JUST TALKING TO IS IN A GROUP OF SEVEN COUPLES THAT CAME HERE TOGETHER.

THEY'RE ALL GOING TO A SUITE UPSTAIRS AND WE'RE INVITED.

THAT SOUNDS AWESOME. WHAT TIME?

HE SAID THEY'RE HEADING UP THERE NOW.

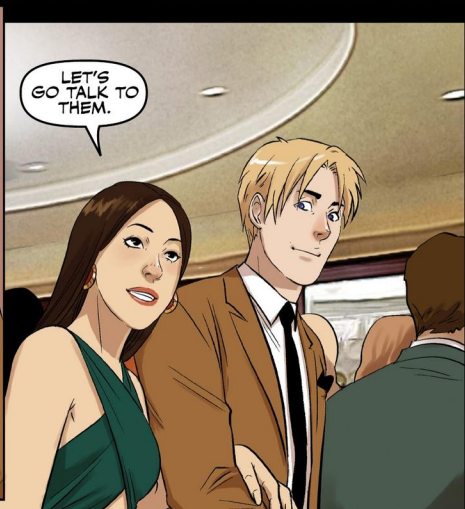


OH MY GOD, LOOK AT THOSE TWO SCARED WALLFLOWER NEWBIES. THAT WAS SO *US* THREE YEARS AGO.



HAS IT REALLY BEEN THREE YEARS?

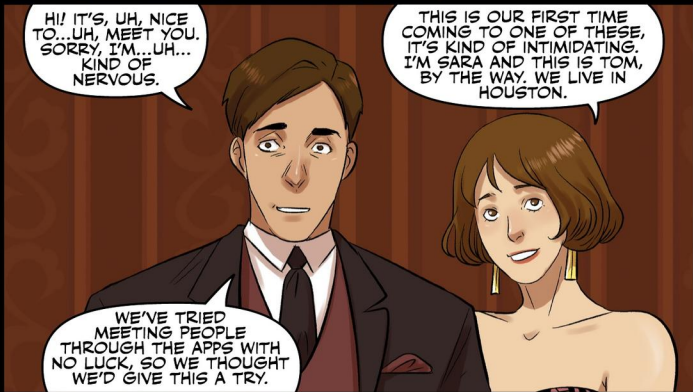
YEAH, IF YOU INCLUDE THE BABY TIME OFF.



LET'S GO TALK TO THEM.



HI, I'M CATHY, AND THIS IS MY HUSBAND DAN. WE'RE FROM L.A.



HI! IT'S, UH, NICE TO... UH, MEET YOU. SORRY, I'M... UH... KIND OF NERVOUS.

THIS IS OUR FIRST TIME COMING TO ONE OF THESE, IT'S KIND OF INTIMIDATING. I'M SARA AND THIS IS TOM, BY THE WAY. WE LIVE IN HOUSTON.

WE'VE TRIED MEETING PEOPLE THROUGH THE APPS WITH NO LUCK, SO WE THOUGHT WE'D GIVE THIS A TRY.

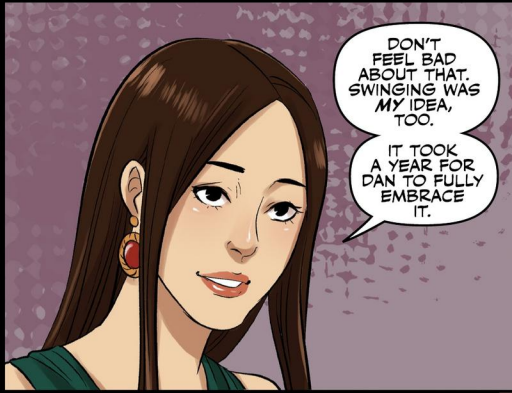


MEETING PEOPLE YOU CLICK WITH IS THE HARDEST THING ABOUT IT. IT'S LIKE DATING, BUT WITH FOUR PEOPLE INSTEAD OF TWO.

WHICH OF YOU WANTED TO TRY SWINGING FIRST?

WELL... UH--

THAT WOULD BE ME.

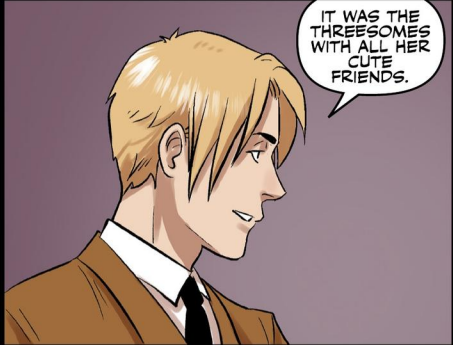


DON'T FEEL BAD ABOUT THAT. SWINGING WAS MY IDEA, TOO.

IT TOOK A YEAR FOR DAN TO FULLY EMBRACE IT.



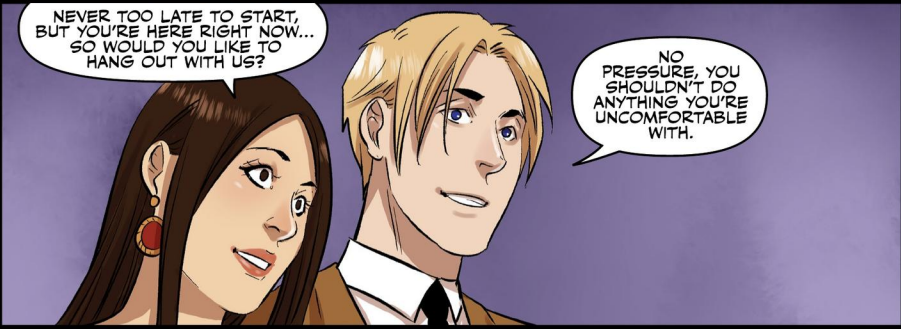
HOW'D YOU GET HIM COMFORTABLE WITH THE IDEA?



IT WAS THE THREESOMES WITH ALL HER CUTE FRIENDS.



THAT PROBABLY WOULD HAVE WORKED ON ME, TOO.



NEVER TOO LATE TO START, BUT YOU'RE HERE RIGHT NOW... SO WOULD YOU LIKE TO HANG OUT WITH US?

NO PRESSURE, YOU SHOULDN'T DO ANYTHING YOU'RE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH.



WHAT DO YOU THINK, HON?

YEAH! DEFINITELY. IF WE DO, BUT DON'T END UP HOOKING UP, WILL YOU BE UPSET? WE'VE HAD THAT HAPPEN.



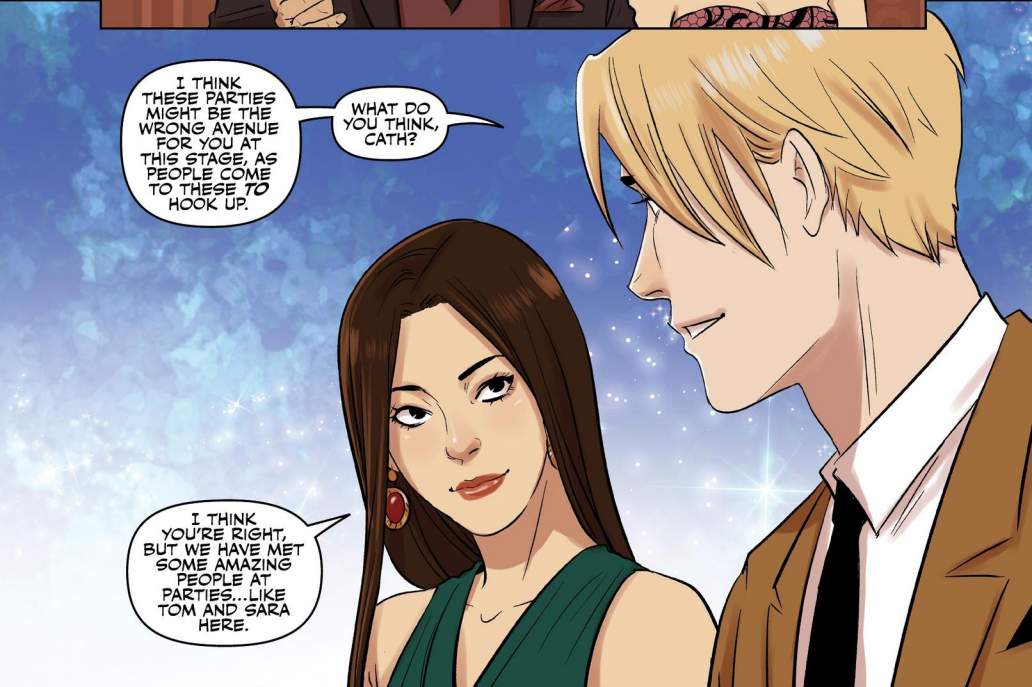
WE WOULD NOT BE UPSET.



A BIG PART OF THIS FOR US IS MAKING NEW FRIENDS. THE PEOPLE WE REGULARLY SWING WITH NOW ARE SOME OF OUR BEST FRIENDS. WE HANG OUT WITH THEM SOCIALLY ALL THE TIME.



WOW, I REALLY APPRECIATE HOW COOL Y'ALL ARE BEING. WE'VE HAD A FEW RUN-INS WITH PEOPLE WHO WERE LESS, HOW DO I SAY IT...UH...UNDERSTANDING ABOUT TAKING IT SLOW WITH US.



I THINK THESE PARTIES MIGHT BE THE WRONG AVENUE FOR YOU AT THIS STAGE, AS PEOPLE COME TO THESE TO HOOK UP.

WHAT DO YOU THINK, CATH?

I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT, BUT WE HAVE MET SOME AMAZING PEOPLE AT PARTIES...LIKE TOM AND SARA HERE.

♂
THREE YEARS SHE'S BEEN WAITING AND WANTING TO PARTICIPATE IN AN ACTUAL ORGY AND I'M FINALLY WILLING AND WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TONIGHT...AND SHE'D RATHER HELP THIS COUPLE.



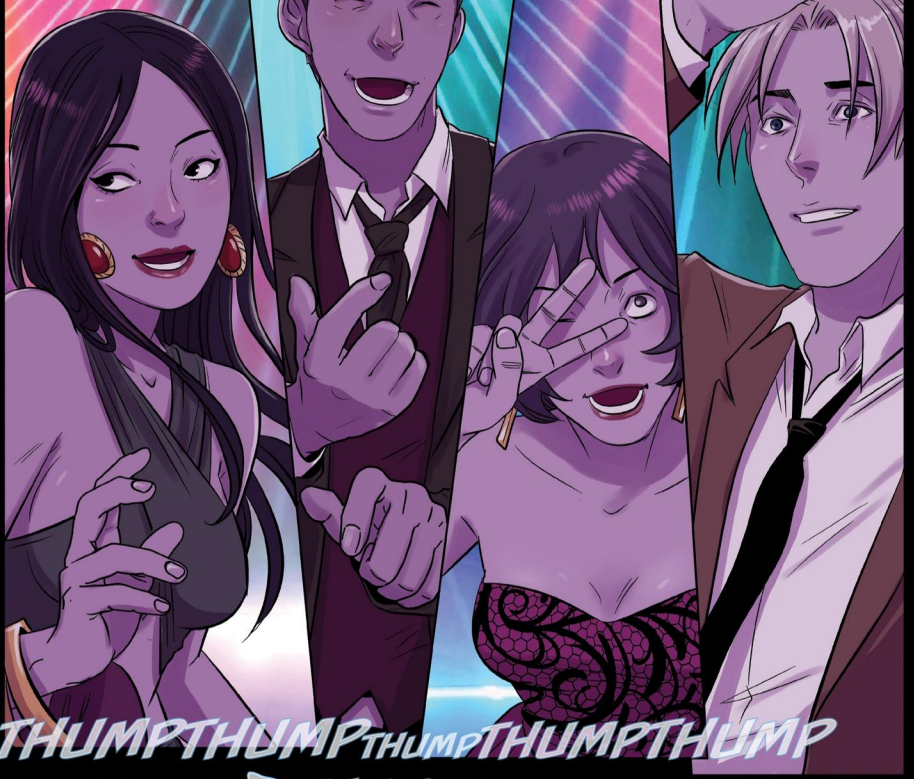
IT'S HER GIVING NATURE LIKE THIS THAT REMINDS ME HOW LUCKY I AM TO HAVE HER.



HOW ABOUT WE START BY SWAPPING PARTNERS ON THE DANCE FLOOR?



THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP



THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP

THESE SHOES ARE KILLING ME, I DON'T THINK I CAN DANCE ANYMORE.

YOU WANT TO CALL IT A NIGHT?



THUMPTHUMPTHUMPTHUMPTHUMP



THAT'S AN OPTION. OR WE GO TO THE PLAYROOMS, AND I'LL DO NAUGHTY THINGS TO YOU.



UH...



HE'D LIKE THAT.



YOU'RE OKAY WITH ME BEING WITH DAN?

OF COURSE, THAT'S HOW IT WORKS. WE ALWAYS DO IT TOGETHER; WE NEVER PLAY APART.

TOM, IF YOU'RE NOT READY FOR THIS, MAN, TAKE A RAINCHECK. DON'T DO ANYTHING YOU'RE NOT READY FOR.



I WANT TO, I'M JUST A BIT...UH...SCARED.



A SMART LITTLE GREEN GUY ONCE SAID FEAR LEADS TO ANGER, HATE AND SUFFERING. NONE OF THOSE ARE GOOD THINGS.

JUST RELAX AND HAVE SOME FUN.







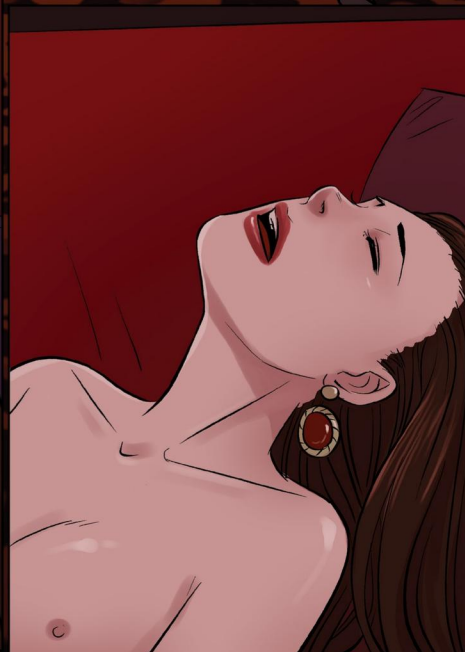
WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO DO?

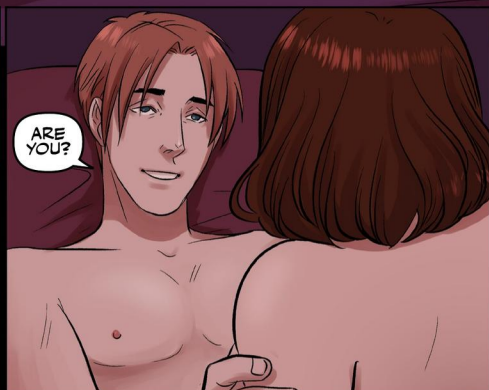
I...UH... DUNNO... SORRY.

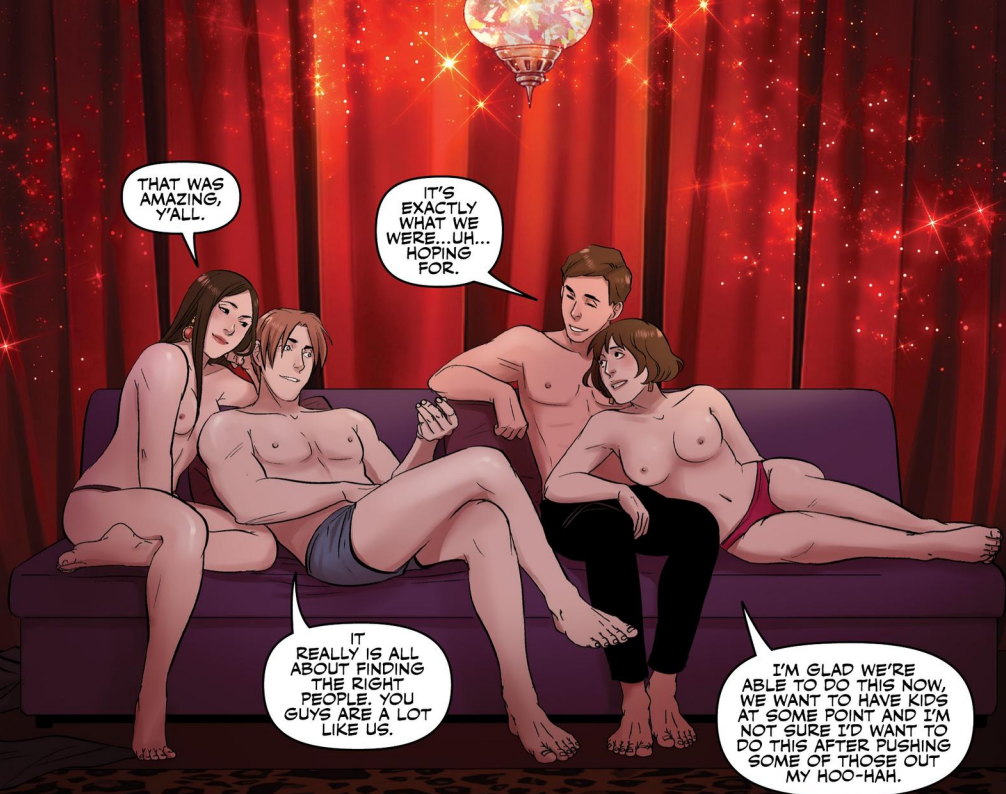
YOU TAKE THE LEAD, DO WHAT FEELS NATURAL.



LIE ON YOUR BACK.







THAT WAS AMAZING, Y'ALL.

IT'S EXACTLY WHAT WE WERE...UH... HOPING FOR.

IT REALLY IS ALL ABOUT FINDING THE RIGHT PEOPLE. YOU GUYS ARE A LOT LIKE US.

I'M GLAD WE'RE ABLE TO DO THIS NOW. WE WANT TO HAVE KIDS AT SOME POINT AND I'M NOT SURE I'D WANT TO DO THIS AFTER PUSHING SOME OF THOSE OUT MY HOO-HAH.

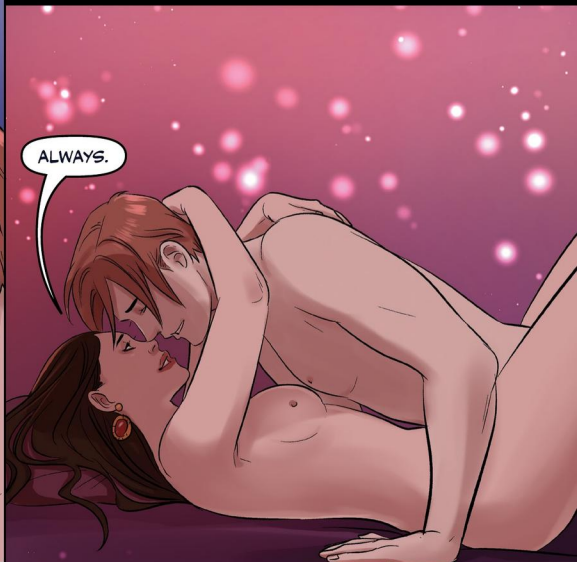
I'VE HAD THREE.

WHAT? REALLY? WOW, YOU LOOK AMAZING. YOU DON'T HAVE STRETCH MARKS OR ANYTHING.

NOT GOING TO LIE, IT'S HARD TO LOSE THE BABY FAT BUT IT'S DOABLE.

I TRACK MY CALORIES WITH AN APP AND RIDE MY PELOTON ABOUT AN HOUR A DAY.

CAN WE JOIN?





LET'S SKIP THE BEER PONG AND GET SOME FOOD, I'M FAMISHED.

WORKS FOR ME, HOURS OF SEX BUILDS UP AN APPETITE...WHEN DID WE BECOME CLINT AND MARY, BY THE WAY?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

WE'RE NOT PADAWANS ANYMORE, WE'RE LIKE FULL-ON JEDI SWINGERS... TEACHING THE NEXT GENERATION.

YOU ARE SUCH A NERD.

IT WAS TOM'S FIRST SWINGING EXPERIENCE, AND HE GOT A FULL TRIPECTA.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

HE HAD SEX WITH THREE GIRLS OF DIFFERENT ETHNICITIES. THAT'S A TRIPECTA! LIKE AN ACHIEVEMENT IN A VIDEO GAME...ON HIS FIRST TIME!

OH MY GOD YOU ARE SUCH AN IDIOT. WHO THINKS LIKE THAT?

MOST GUYS.



REALLY? HOW ABOUT WE THINK ABOUT IT A LITTLE MORE RESPECTFULLY?

I WISH PEOPLE BETTER UNDERSTOOD THE POSITIVES ABOUT SWINGING. EVERYONE KNOWS THE DOWNSIDE AND IT'S NOT FOR MOST PEOPLE...BUT IT'S CHANGED OUR LIVES...FOR THE BETTER.

YOU'RE MR. BIGSHOT AUTHOR NOW, WRITING BOOKS ABOUT ETHICAL NON-MONOGRAMY. DO YOU THINK YOU'D HAVE WRITTEN THOSE IF WE HADN'T STARTED SWINGING?

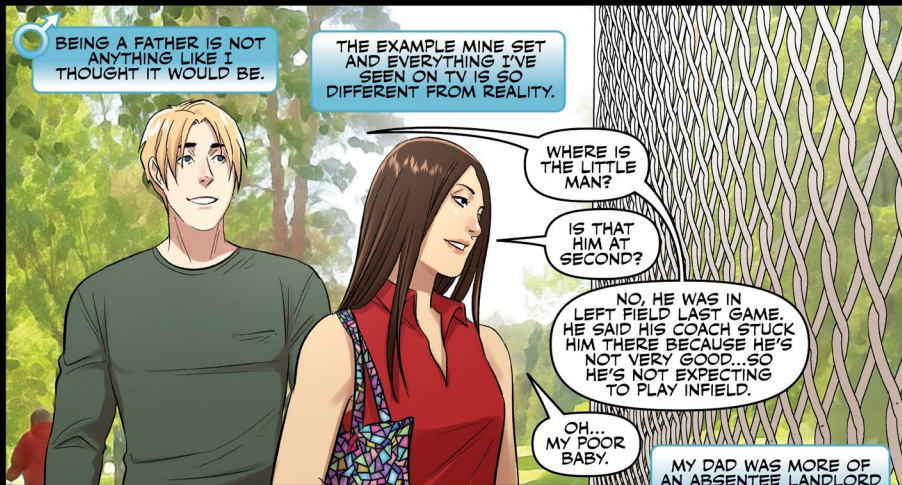
PROBABLY NOT...AND WHAT ABOUT YOU, MRS. C.E.O.-AT-THIRTY?

WE GOT IT GOING ON, BABE. I KNOW YOU'RE HESITANT ABOUT BEING OUTED...BUT CLEARLY YOU DON'T NEED TO KEEP IT A SECRET FROM YOUR DAD.

I JUST WISH WE COULD BE MORE PUBLIC ABOUT OUR SWINGING EXPERIENCES. I THINK IT WOULD HELP OTHERS LIKE TOM AND SARA.



WEEKS LATER



BEING A FATHER IS NOT ANYTHING LIKE I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE.

THE EXAMPLE MINE SET AND EVERYTHING I'VE SEEN ON TV IS SO DIFFERENT FROM REALITY.

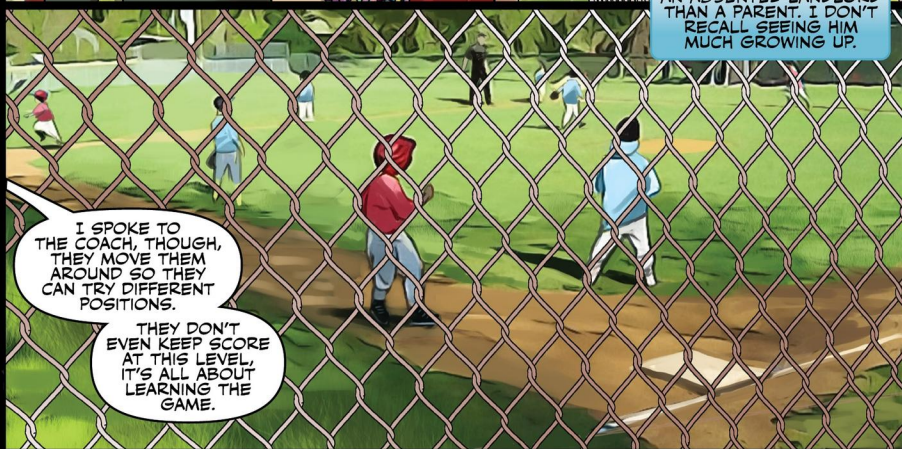
WHERE IS THE LITTLE MAN?

IS THAT HIM AT SECOND?

NO, HE WAS IN LEFT FIELD LAST GAME. HE SAID HIS COACH STUCK HIM THERE BECAUSE HE'S NOT VERY GOOD...SO HE'S NOT EXPECTING TO PLAY INFIELD.

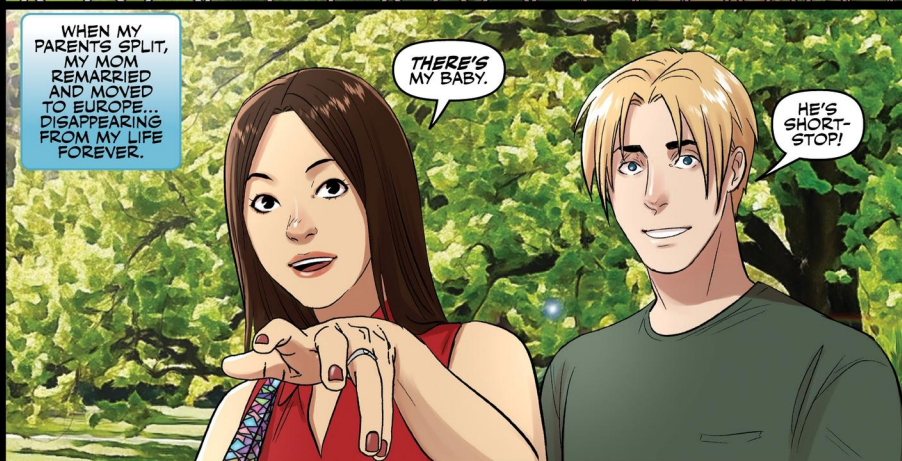
OH... MY POOR BABY.

MY DAD WAS MORE OF AN ABSENTEE LANDLORD THAN A PARENT. I DON'T RECALL SEEING HIM MUCH GROWING UP.



I SPOKE TO THE COACH, THOUGH, THEY MOVE THEM AROUND SO THEY CAN TRY DIFFERENT POSITIONS.

THEY DON'T EVEN KEEP SCORE AT THIS LEVEL, IT'S ALL ABOUT LEARNING THE GAME.



WHEN MY PARENTS SPLIT, MY MOM REMARRIED AND MOVED TO EUROPE... DISAPPEARING FROM MY LIFE FOREVER.

THERE'S MY BABY.

HE'S SHORT-STOP!

I LOVE MY DAD. HE DID SOME SHITTY STUFF TO MY MOM, BUT HE NEVER COMPLETELY ABANDONED ME LIKE SHE DID.

I'VE BEEN TO EVERY ONE OF BLAKE AND ASHLEY'S GAMES, SCHOOL EVENTS, RECITALS, WHAT-HAVE-YOU... AND I'LL BE AT ALL OF LUKE'S.

THIS WILL BOOST HIS CONFIDENCE, PLAYING INFIELD.

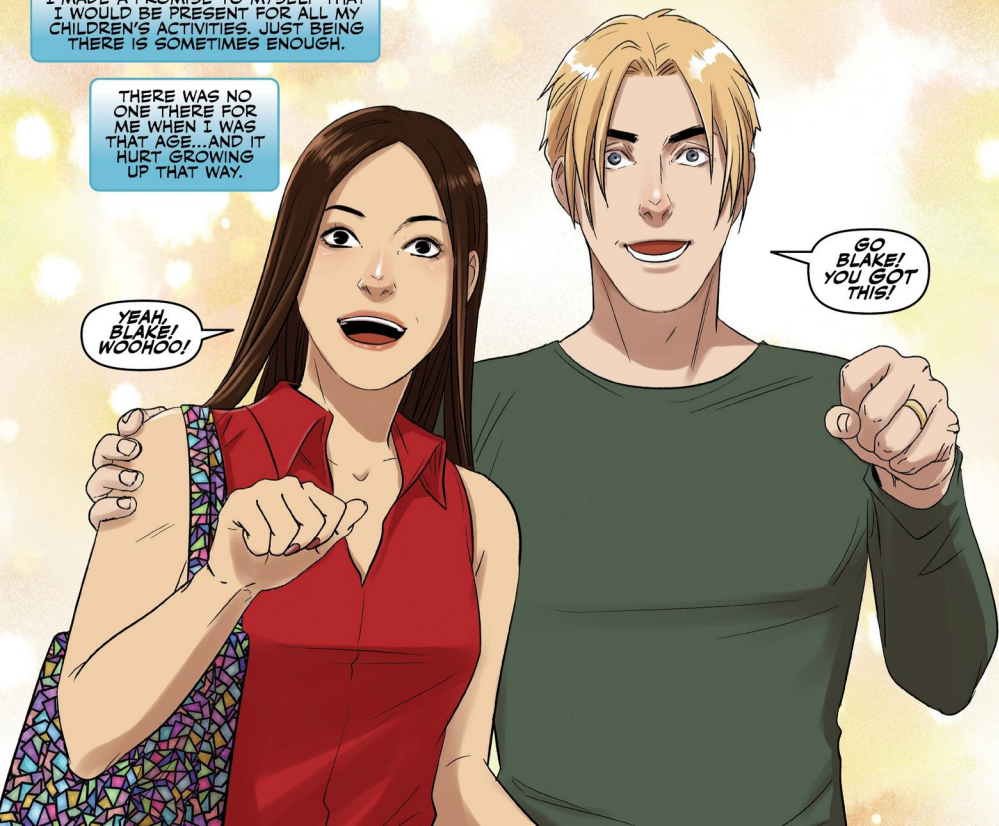


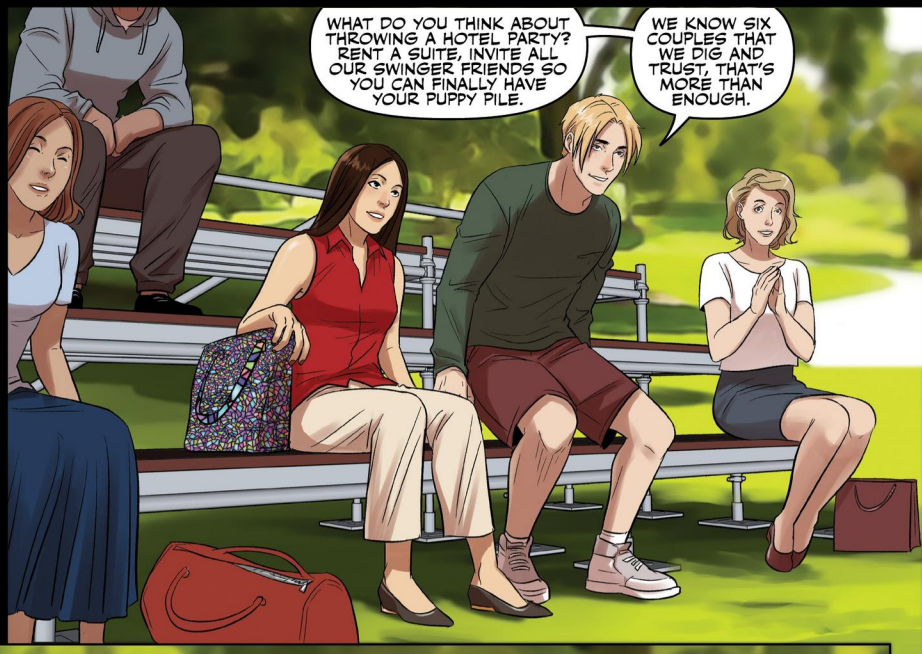
I MADE A PROMISE TO MYSELF THAT I WOULD BE PRESENT FOR ALL MY CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES. JUST BEING THERE IS SOMETIMES ENOUGH.

THERE WAS NO ONE THERE FOR ME WHEN I WAS THAT AGE...AND IT HURT GROWING UP THAT WAY.

YEAH, BLAKE! WOOHOO!

GO BLAKE! YOU GOT THIS!





WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THROWING A HOTEL PARTY? RENT A SUITE, INVITE ALL OUR SWINGER FRIENDS SO YOU CAN FINALLY HAVE YOUR PUPPY PILE.

WE KNOW SIX COUPLES THAT WE DIG AND TRUST, THAT'S MORE THAN ENOUGH.

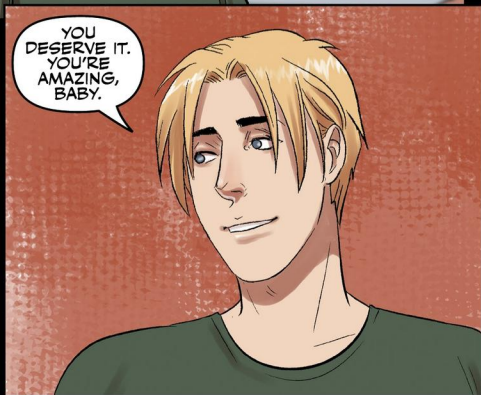


ARE YOU SERIOUS?

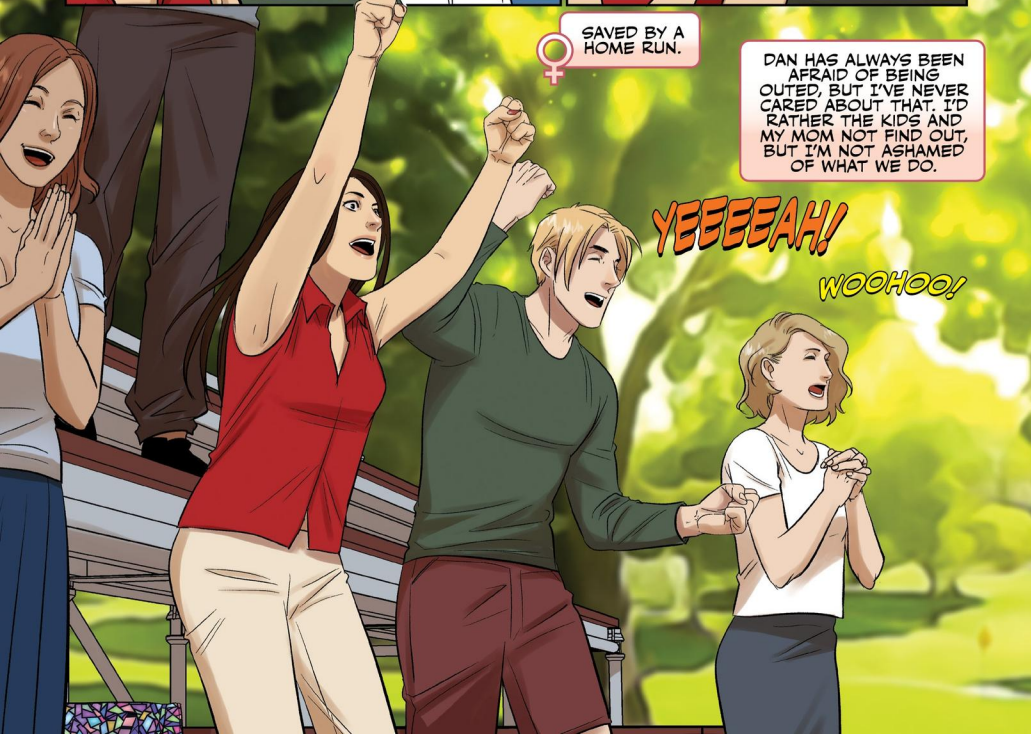
YEAH. WHAT YOU DID FOR THAT COUPLE IN VEGAS WAS COOL OF YOU. I'D LIKE TO DO THIS...FOR YOU. IT WILL BE A CELEBRATION OF YOU.

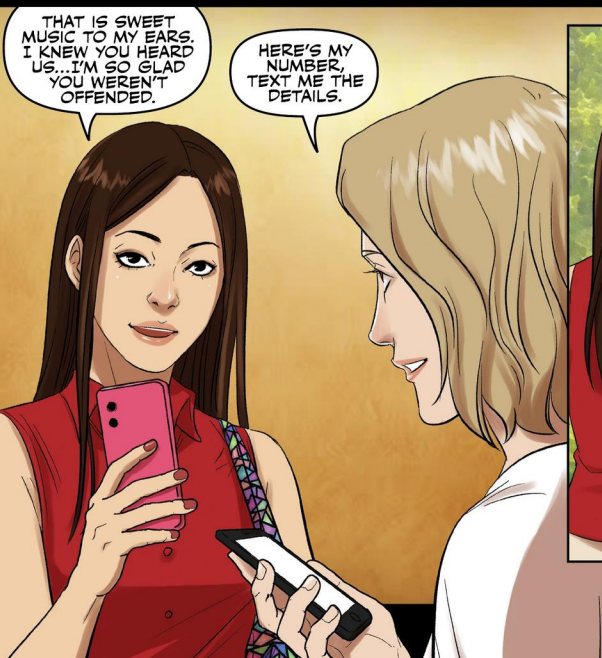
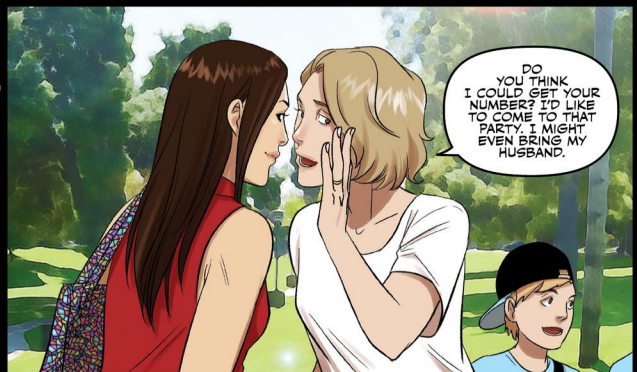
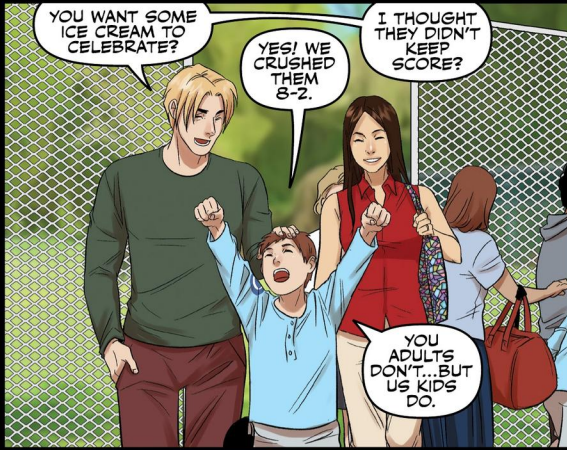


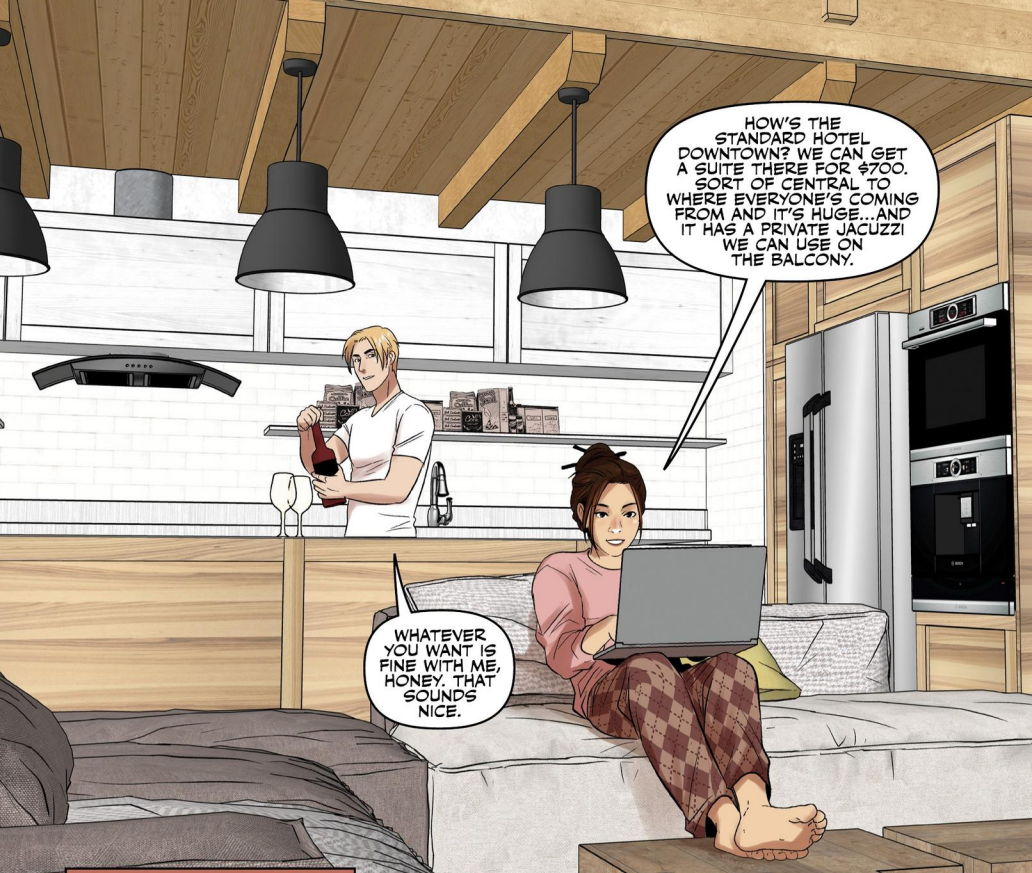
IT'S NOT EVEN MY BIRTHDAY.



YOU DESERVE IT. YOU'RE AMAZING, BABY.





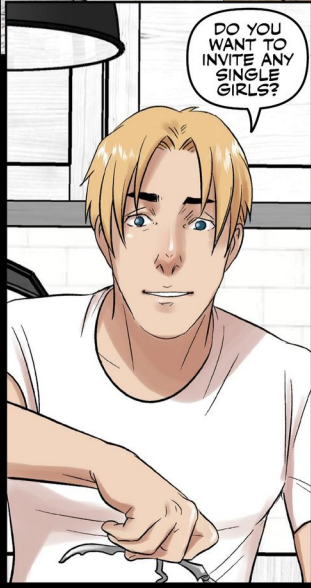


HOW'S THE STANDARD HOTEL DOWNTOWN? WE CAN GET A SUITE THERE FOR \$700. SORT OF CENTRAL TO WHERE EVERYONE'S COMING FROM AND IT'S HUGE...AND IT HAS A PRIVATE JACUZZI WE CAN USE ON THE BALCONY.

WHATEVER YOU WANT IS FINE WITH ME, HONEY. THAT SOUNDS NICE.



WHAT DO WE NEED? CONDOMS, LUBE, ALCOHOL--

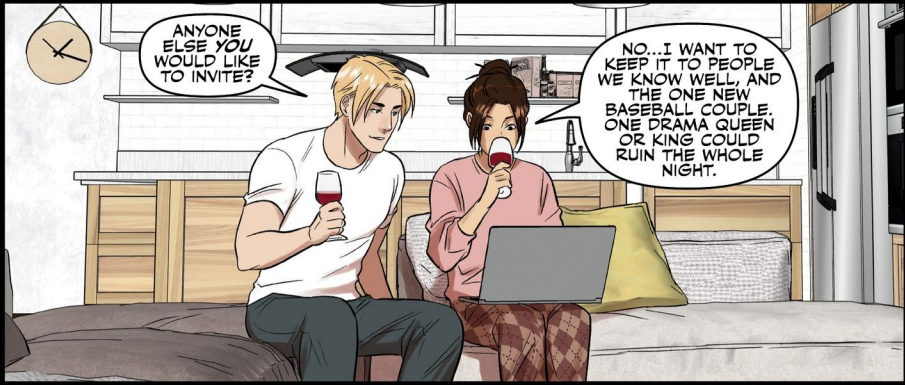


DO YOU WANT TO INVITE ANY SINGLE GIRLS?



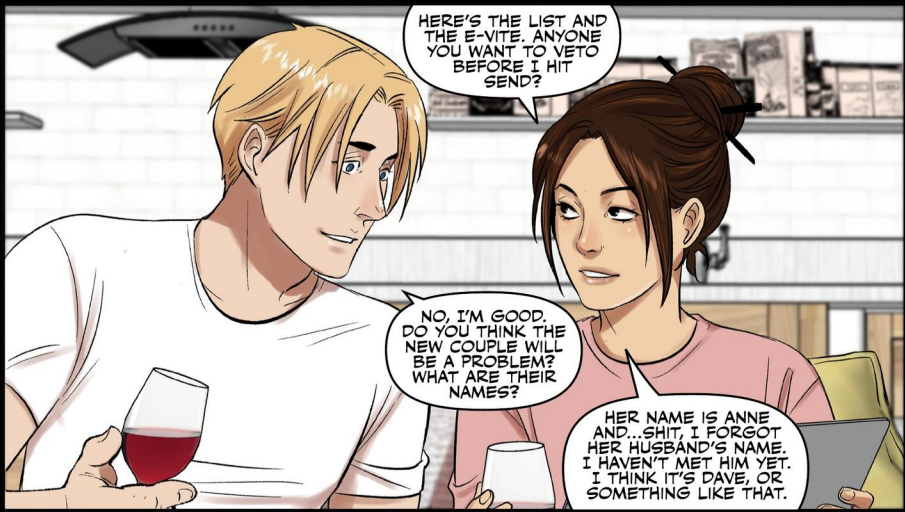
I THOUGHT THIS WAS A CELEBRATION OF ME?

NEVER HURTS TO ASK, BUT OKAY...NO UNICORNS.



ANYONE ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO INVITE?

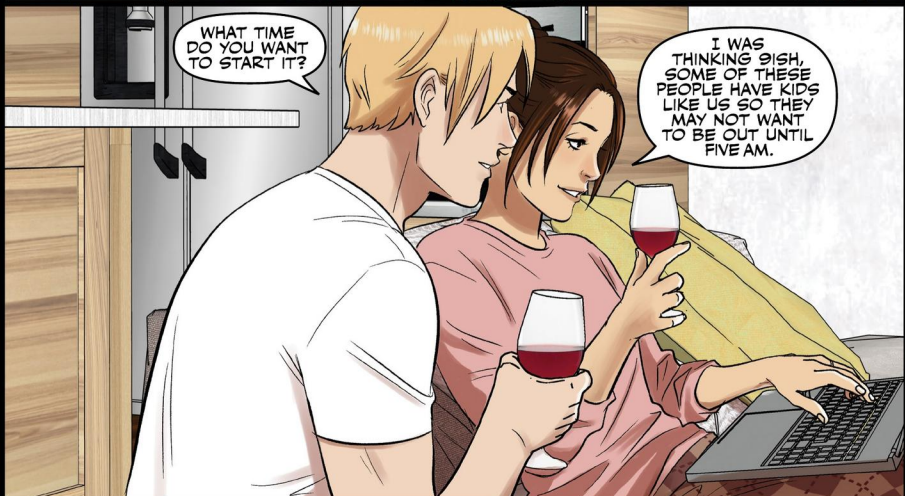
NO... I WANT TO KEEP IT TO PEOPLE WE KNOW WELL, AND THE ONE NEW BASEBALL COUPLE ONE DRAMA QUEEN OR KING COULD RUIN THE WHOLE NIGHT.



HERE'S THE LIST AND THE E-VITE. ANYONE YOU WANT TO VETO BEFORE I HIT SEND?

NO, I'M GOOD. DO YOU THINK THE NEW COUPLE WILL BE A PROBLEM? WHAT ARE THEIR NAMES?

HER NAME IS ANNE AND... SHIT, I FORGOT HER HUSBAND'S NAME. I HAVEN'T MET HIM YET. I THINK IT'S DAVE, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.



WHAT TIME DO YOU WANT TO START IT?

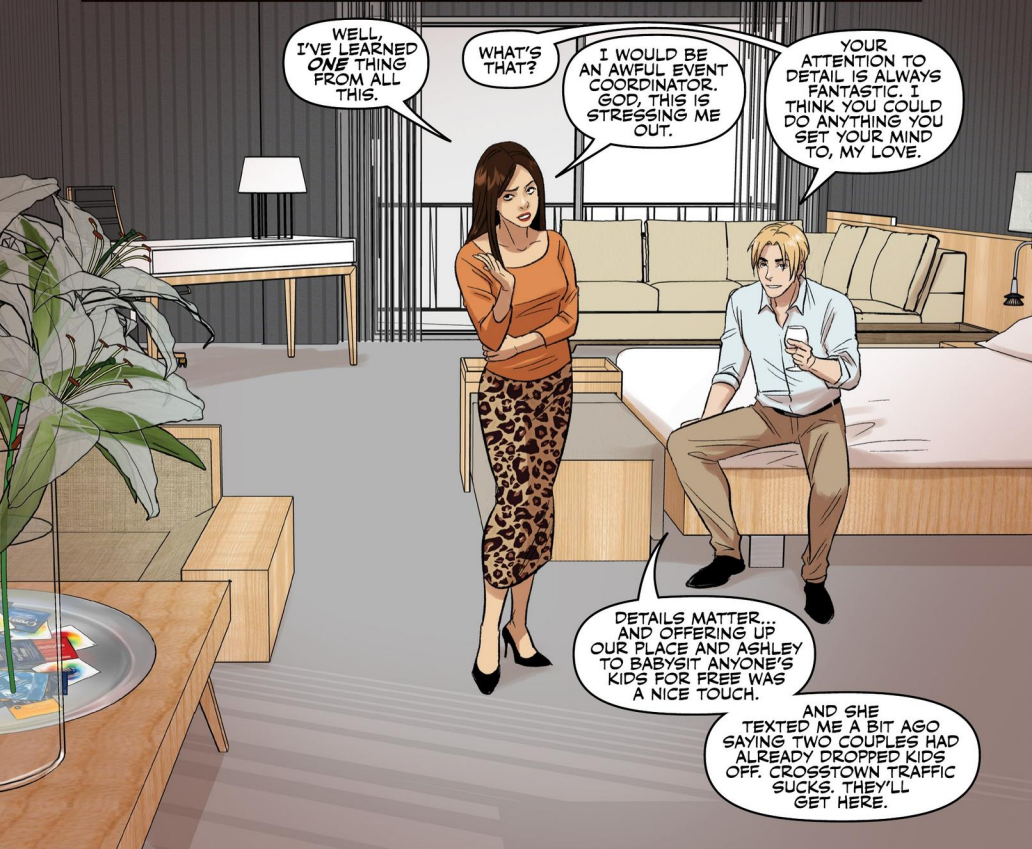
I WAS THINKING 9ISH, SOME OF THESE PEOPLE HAVE KIDS LIKE US SO THEY MAY NOT WANT TO BE OUT UNTIL FIVE AM.

SATURDAY 9PM



WHAT IF NO ONE SHOWS UP?

EVERYONE RSVP'D. RELAX.



WELL, I'VE LEARNED ONE THING FROM ALL THIS.

WHAT'S THAT?

I WOULD BE AN AWFUL EVENT COORDINATOR. GOD, THIS IS STRESSING ME OUT.

YOUR ATTENTION TO DETAIL IS ALWAYS FANTASTIC. I THINK YOU COULD DO ANYTHING YOU SET YOUR MIND TO, MY LOVE.

DETAILS MATTER... AND OFFERING UP OUR PLACE AND ASHLEY TO BABYSIT ANYONE'S KIDS FOR FREE WAS A NICE TOUCH.

AND SHE TEXTED ME A BIT AGO SAYING TWO COUPLES HAD ALREADY DROPPED KIDS OFF. CROSSTOWN TRAFFIC SUCKS. THEY'LL GET HERE.

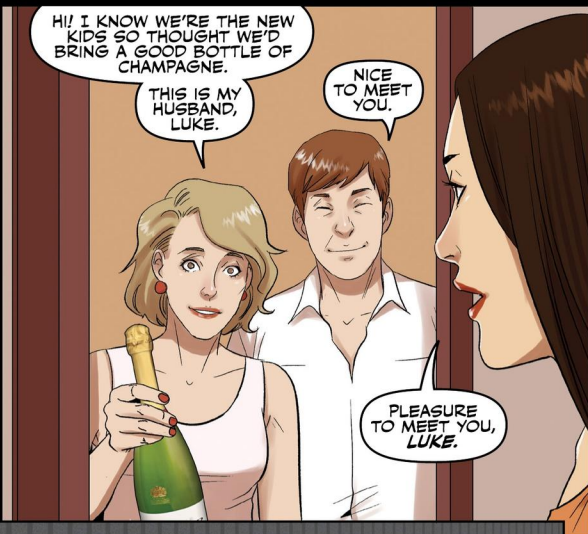


**KNOCK
KNOCK**

SEE.

IT
COULD BE
SOMEONE
FROM THE
HOTEL.

JUST
OPEN THE
DOOR.



HI! I KNOW WE'RE THE NEW
KIDS SO THOUGHT WE'D
BRING A GOOD BOTTLE OF
CHAMPAGNE.

THIS IS MY
HUSBAND,
LUKE.

NICE
TO MEET
YOU.

PLEASURE
TO MEET YOU,
LUKE.



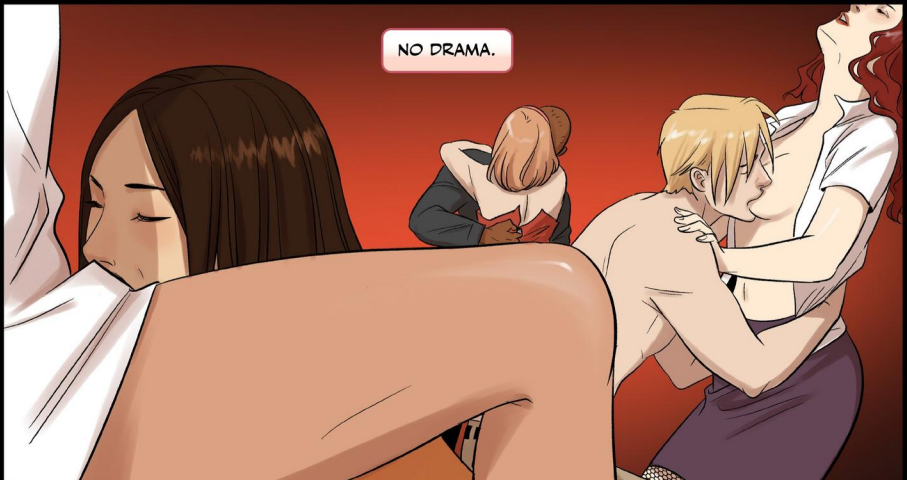
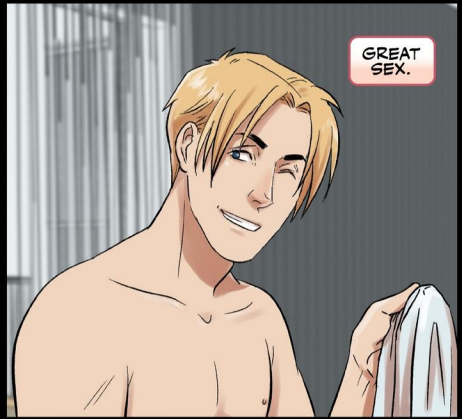
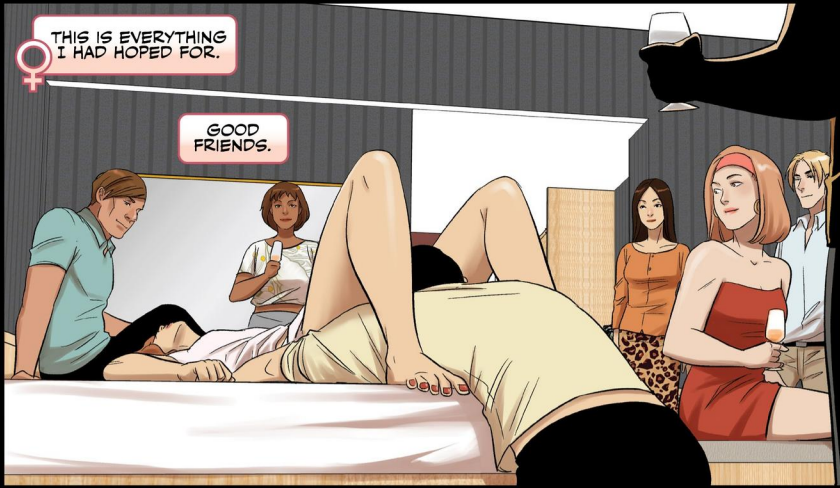
THIS
IS MY
HUSBAND,
DAN.

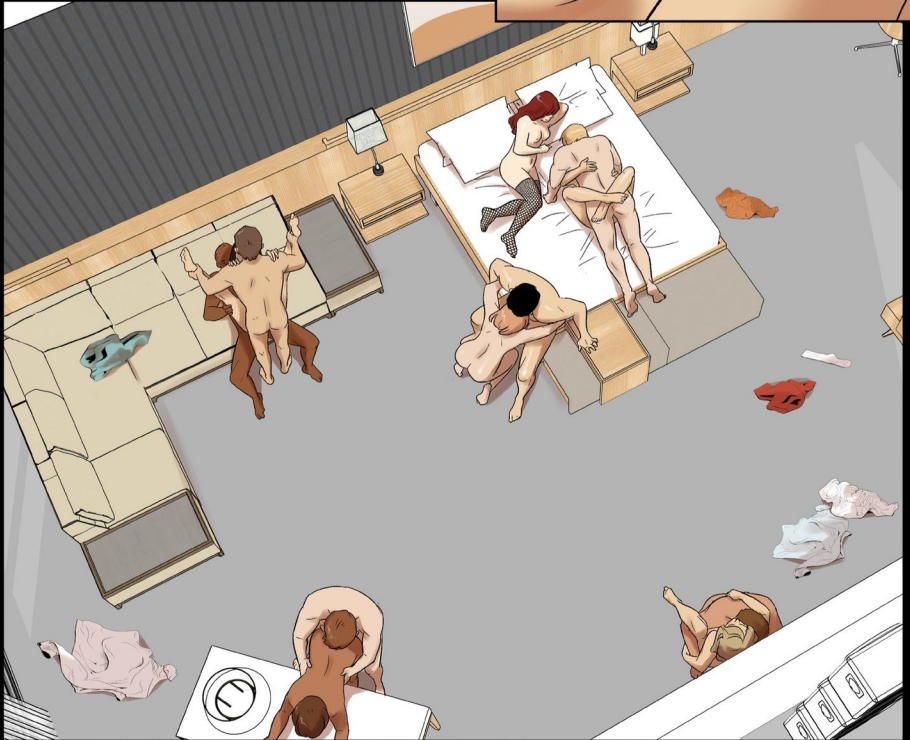
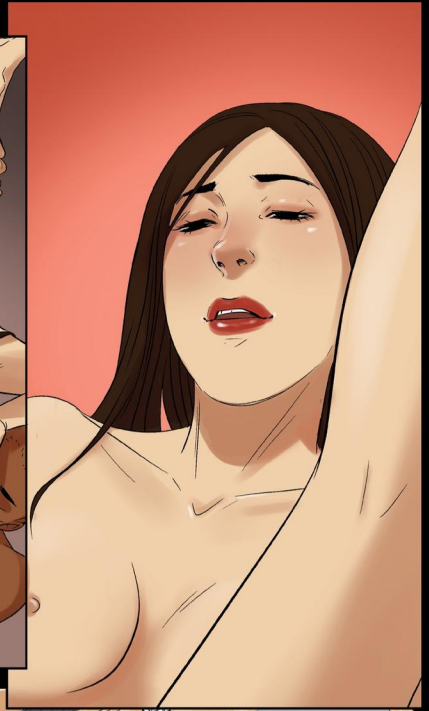
YOU'RE
THE FIRST
TO ARRIVE,
SO LET'S
HAVE A
DRINK.

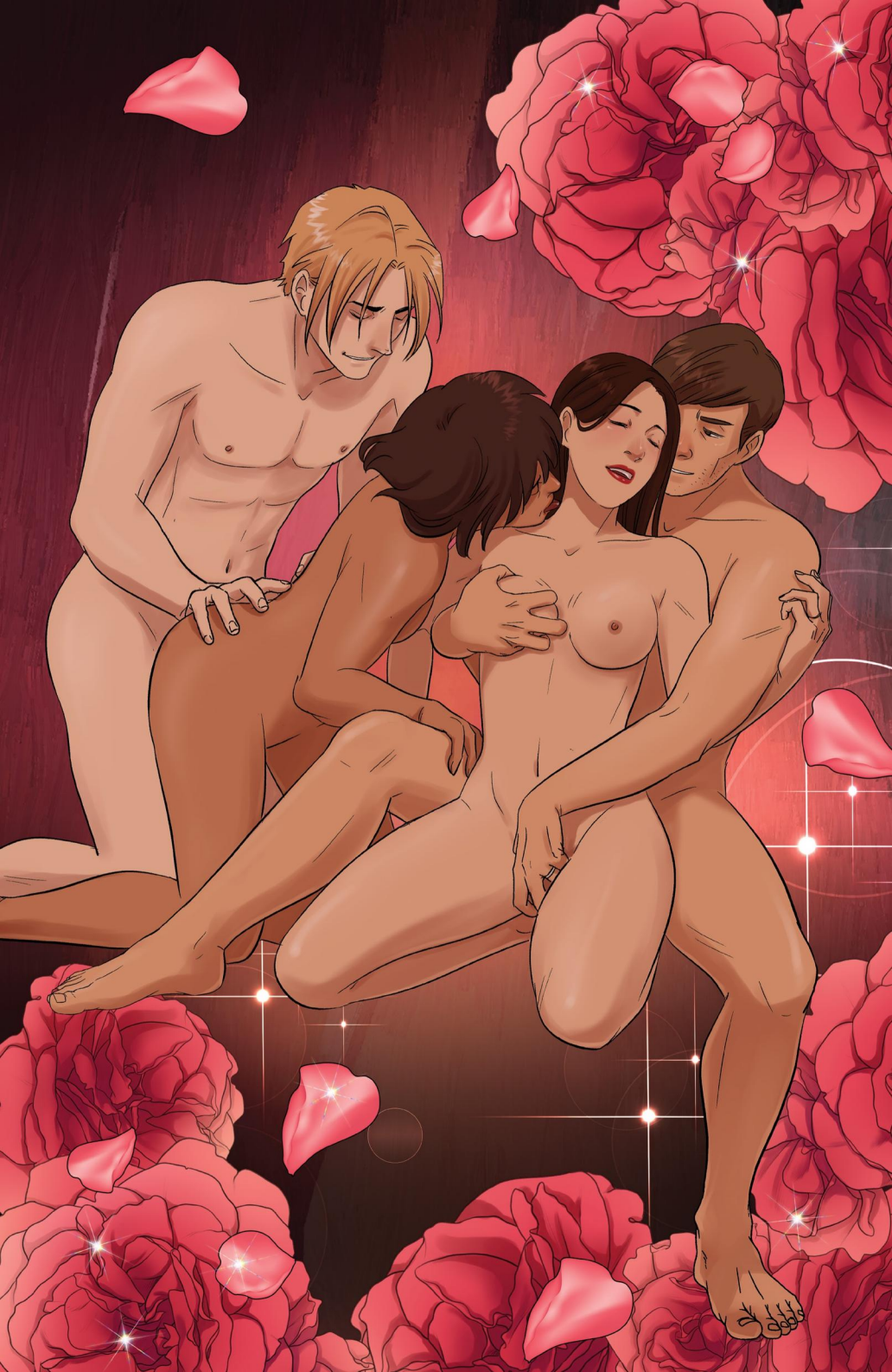
YOU
COULDN'T
REMEMBER
LUKE??
YOUR SON'S
NAME?

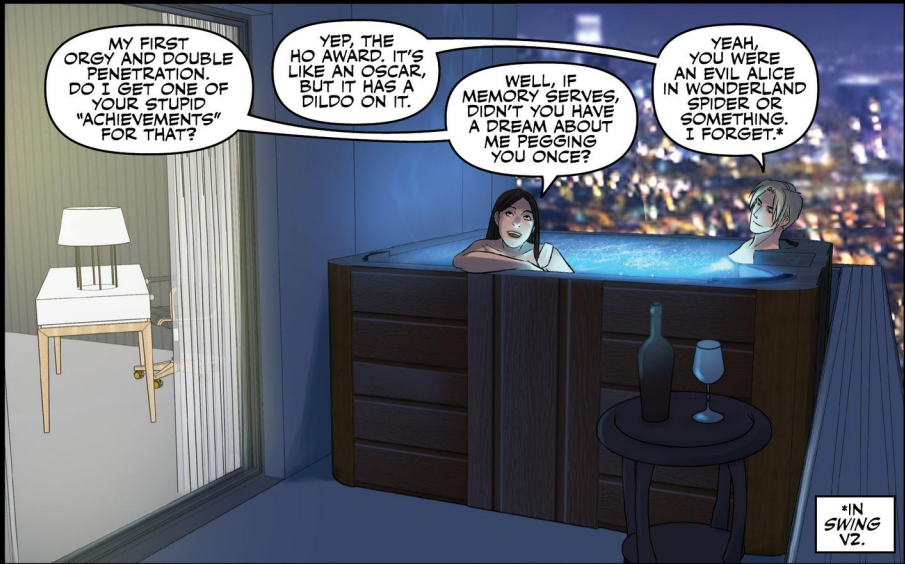
SHUT
IT.











MY FIRST ORGY AND DOUBLE PENETRATION. DO I GET ONE OF YOUR STUPID "ACHIEVEMENTS" FOR THAT?

YEP, THE HO AWARD. IT'S LIKE AN OSCAR, BUT IT HAS A DILDO ON IT.

WELL, IF MEMORY SERVES, DIDN'T YOU HAVE A DREAM ABOUT ME PEGGING YOU ONCE?

YEAH, YOU WERE AN EVIL ALICE IN WONDERLAND SPIDER OR SOMETHING. I FORGET.*

*IN SWING VZ.



YOU GIVE ME AN AWARD LIKE THAT, I'LL FIGURE A WAY TO STRAP IT ON AND MAKE YOU MY BITCH.



YOU NEVER KNOW, I MIGHT LIKE THAT.

YOU FREAK OUT WHEN I SLIP A FINGER, COME ON.

YEAH... YOU'RE RIGHT.



DID YOU EVER IN A MILLION YEARS THINK WE'D DO STUFF LIKE THIS?

NO.

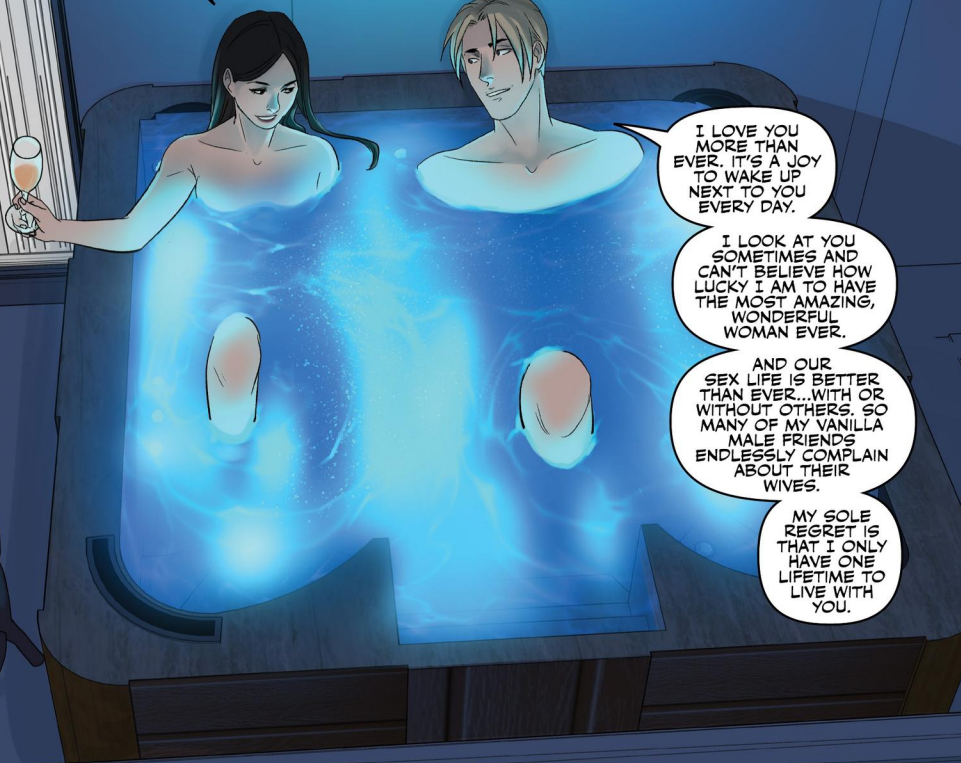
I CAN'T IMAGINE MY LIFE WITHOUT THIS ANYMORE.

I WAS WORRIED THIS WOULD EVENTUALLY AFFECT HOW I FEEL FOR YOU.

HAS IT?

YES.

WHAT?



I LOVE YOU MORE THAN EVER. IT'S A JOY TO WAKE UP NEXT TO YOU EVERY DAY.

I LOOK AT YOU SOMETIMES AND CAN'T BELIEVE HOW LUCKY I AM TO HAVE THE MOST AMAZING, WONDERFUL WOMAN EVER.

AND OUR SEX LIFE IS BETTER THAN EVER...WITH OR WITHOUT OTHERS. SO MANY OF MY VANILLA MALE FRIENDS ENDLESSLY COMPLAIN ABOUT THEIR WIVES.

MY SOLE REGRET IS THAT I ONLY HAVE ONE LIFETIME TO LIVE WITH YOU.



TWO YEARS LATER

I'VE STOPPED
PRETENDING
TO BE
CATHY WHILE
CHATTING ONLINE.

SHE AND I BOTH TALK WITH
POTENTIAL PLAYMATES IN A
GROUP CHAT. IT'S EASIER AND
BETTER FOR TRANSPARENCY
AND COMMUNICATION ANYWAY.

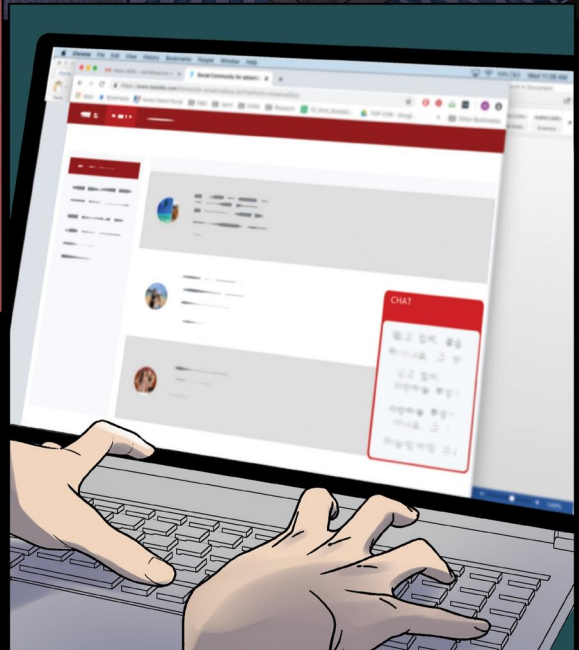
IT WAS FUN
POSING AS CATHY
ONLINE AT TIMES.

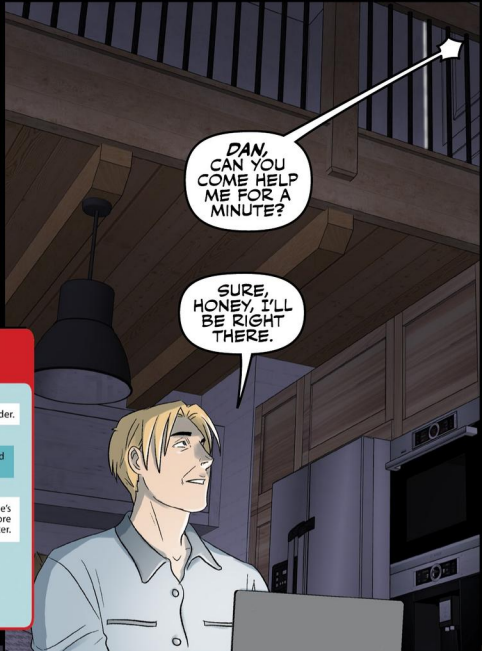
WEEDING OUT THE
DOUCHEY GUYS AND
TELLING THEM OFF HAD
ITS ENTERTAINING
MOMENTS.

I MAY HAVE BEEN A
TAD OVERZEALOUS
IN THE BEGINNING,
BUT I THINK I
NEEDED TO BE
AT THE TIME.

IT AMAZES ME THAT THINGS
WE DO ROUTINELY NOW
WOULD HAVE FREAKED ME
OUT FIVE YEARS AGO.

LIFE IS
GOOD.





DAN,
CAN YOU
COME HELP
ME FOR A
MINUTE?

SURE,
HONEY, I'LL
BE RIGHT
THERE.

CHAT

FRANKANDBEANS

Are you bisexual?

No

That's too bad, we've wanted to find a couple where all four play with all four.

Sadly, that's not us but I do know a few couples that do that, and you seem cool so I'm going to give them your screen name if that's okay?

Yes, please do and thanks.

RUFFRIDER

Is your name supposed to be Muffrider.

No, it's ruff because I like doggie style and I like it rough.

I'll have to let my wife chime in if she's going to be into that or not. Talk more later.

Thanks.



CHAT

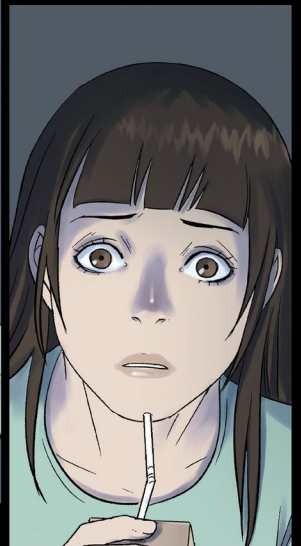
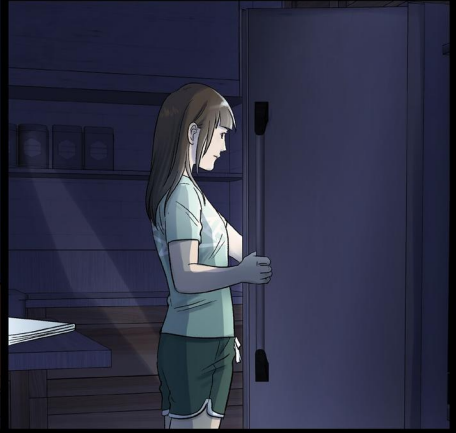
SPARKLYUNICORN

Hey! Fancy seeing you on here, Dan. It's been a year since we last hooked up.

I'd love to see you again.

It's been a while for me so I could really use a good f*ck. Plus I've gotten wicked better at B!s! Looking forward to giving you a good one. =)

It says you're online you must be a.f.k. Hit me up later.



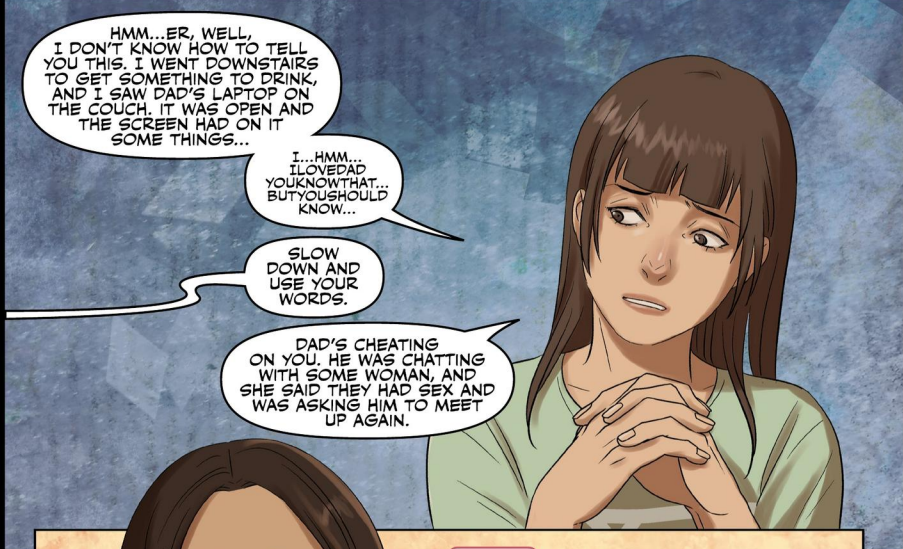




MOM,
CAN I TALK
TO YOU FOR A
MINUTE?



OF
COURSE.
WHAT'S
WRONG,
HONEY,
SHOULDN'T
YOU BE
GETTING
TO BED?

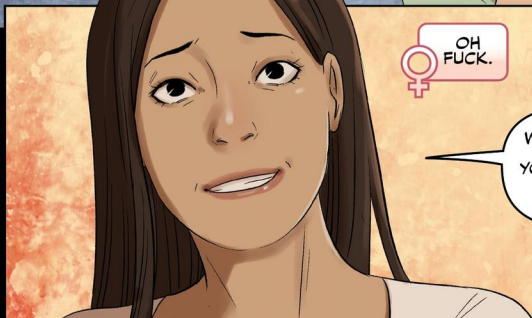


HMM...ER, WELL,
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO TELL
YOU THIS. I WENT DOWNSTAIRS
TO GET SOMETHING TO DRINK,
AND I SAW DAD'S LAPTOP ON
THE COUCH. IT WAS OPEN AND
THE SCREEN HAD ON IT
SOME THINGS...

I...HMM...
I LOVEDAD
YOUKNOWTHAT...
BUTYOU SHOULD
KNOW...

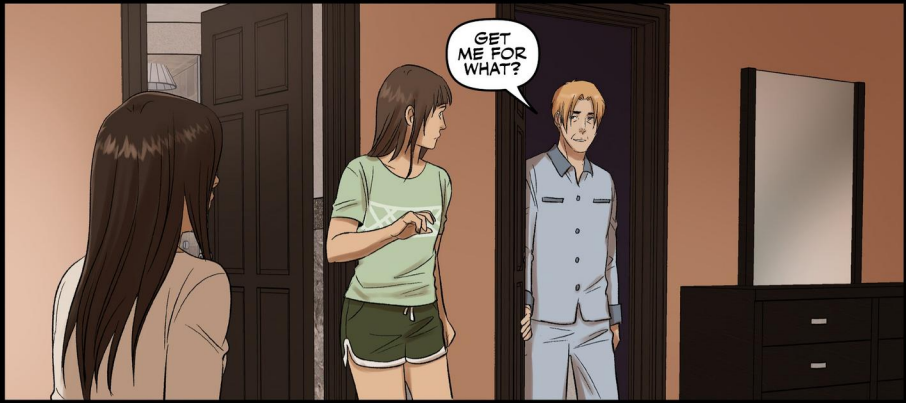
SLOW
DOWN AND
USE YOUR
WORDS.

DAD'S CHEATING
ON YOU. HE WAS CHATTING
WITH SOME WOMAN, AND
SHE SAID THEY HAD SEX AND
WAS ASKING HIM TO MEET
UP AGAIN.

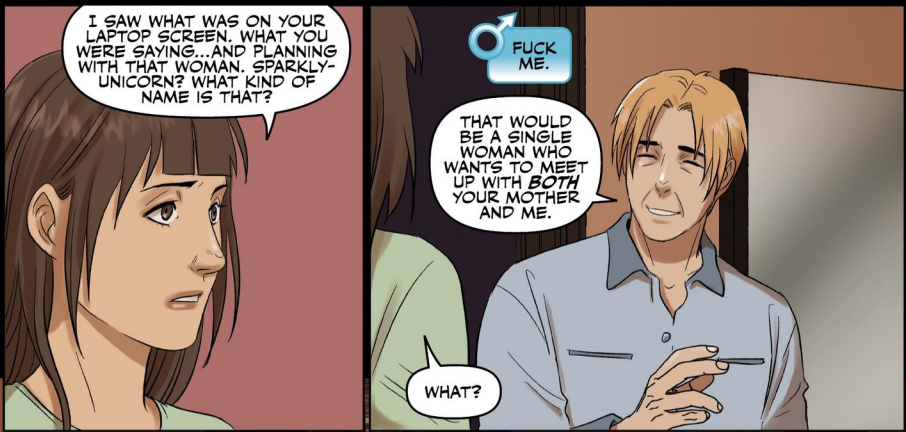


♀ OH
FUCK.

IT'S NOT
WHAT YOU THINK.
LET ME GET
YOUR FATHER AND
WE CAN TALK
ABOUT
THIS.



GET ME FOR WHAT?

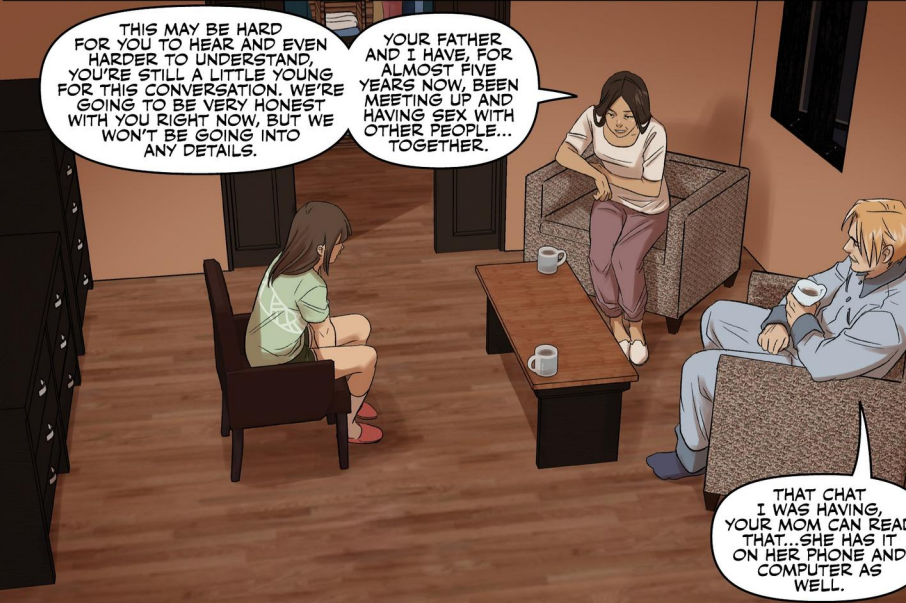


I SAW WHAT WAS ON YOUR LAPTOP SCREEN. WHAT YOU WERE SAYING...AND PLANNING WITH THAT WOMAN. SPARKLY-UNICORN? WHAT KIND OF NAME IS THAT?

 FUCK ME.

THAT WOULD BE A SINGLE WOMAN WHO WANTS TO MEET UP WITH **BOTH** YOUR MOTHER AND ME.

WHAT?



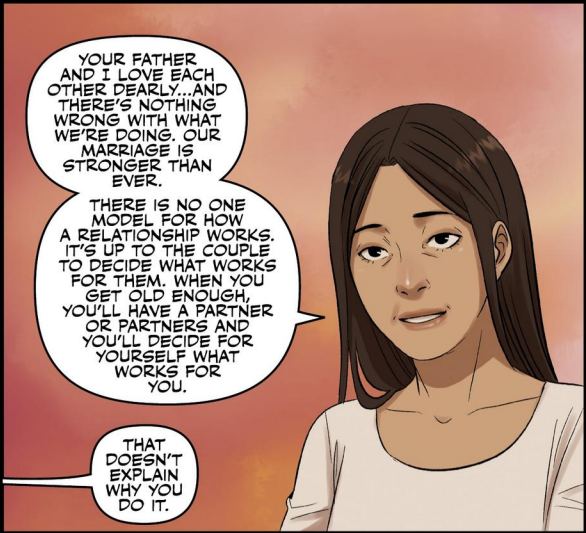
THIS MAY BE HARD FOR YOU TO HEAR AND EVEN HARDER TO UNDERSTAND, YOU'RE STILL A LITTLE YOUNG FOR THIS CONVERSATION. WE'RE GOING TO BE VERY HONEST WITH YOU RIGHT NOW, BUT WE WON'T BE GOING INTO ANY DETAILS.

YOUR FATHER AND I HAVE, FOR ALMOST FIVE YEARS NOW, BEEN MEETING UP AND HAVING SEX WITH OTHER PEOPLE... TOGETHER.

THAT CHAT I WAS HAVING, YOUR MOM CAN READ THAT...SHE HAS IT ON HER PHONE AND COMPUTER AS WELL.



WHY?
DO YOU NOT
LOVE EACH
OTHER
ANYMORE?



YOUR FATHER
AND I LOVE EACH
OTHER DEARLY...AND
THERE'S NOTHING
WRONG WITH WHAT
WE'RE DOING. OUR
MARRIAGE IS
STRONGER THAN
EVER.

THERE IS NO ONE
MODEL FOR HOW
A RELATIONSHIP WORKS.
IT'S UP TO THE COUPLE
TO DECIDE WHAT WORKS
FOR THEM. WHEN YOU
GET OLD ENOUGH,
YOU'LL HAVE A PARTNER
OR PARTNERS AND
YOU'LL DECIDE FOR
YOURSELF WHAT
WORKS FOR
YOU.

THAT
DOESN'T
EXPLAIN
WHY YOU
DO IT.

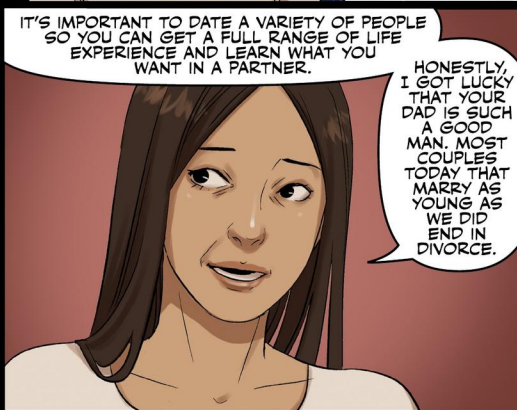


THE *WHY* IS
COMPLICATED
BUT...HMM...
HOW DO I
EXPLAIN
THIS?



YOUR MOM AND I MARRIED
VERY YOUNG WHEN WE
GOT PREGNANT WITH YOU.
I HAVE NO REGRETS
ABOUT THAT. I LOVE YOU
THREE KIDS SO MUCH AND
WOULDN'T CHANGE
ANYTHING ABOUT
OUR FAMILY...

...BUT WHEN PEOPLE
MARRY THAT EARLY,
ESPECIALLY NOWADAYS,
THEY CAN MISS OUT ON
SOME LIFE EXPERIENCES
THAT ARE IMPORTANT.



IT'S IMPORTANT TO DATE A VARIETY OF PEOPLE
SO YOU CAN GET A FULL RANGE OF LIFE
EXPERIENCE AND LEARN WHAT YOU
WANT IN A PARTNER.

HONESTLY,
I GOT LUCKY
THAT YOUR
DAD IS SUCH
A GOOD
MAN. MOST
COUPLES
TODAY THAT
MARRY AS
YOUNG AS
WE DID
END IN
DIVORCE.



THIS IS
A LOT TO
TAKE IN...I
MEAN...ER...
WOW. I DON'T
KNOW WHAT
TO SAY.



THERE IS NOTHING TO SAY. EVERYTHING IS FINE.

THE DEEP TRUST, COMMUNICATION AND RESPECT YOUR MOTHER AND I HAVE FOR EACH OTHER THAT ALLOWS US TO DO THIS IS WHY WE LOVE EACH OTHER SO MUCH.

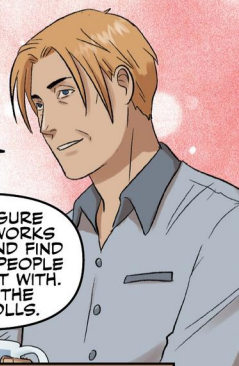
THIS ISN'T SOMETHING NEW FOR US, WE'VE BEEN DOING IT FOR A LONG TIME NOW. HAVE WE EVER SEEMED UNHAPPY?



NO... YOU GUYS ALWAYS SEEM HAPPY TOGETHER.

OUR RELATIONSHIP NOW IS BETTER THAN IT'S EVER BEEN.

ARE YOU, LIKE, IN LOVE WITH OTHER PEOPLE TOO?



NO. WE ONLY LOVE EACH OTHER. WE HAVE PHYSICAL INTIMACY WITH OTHERS, BUT THAT'S IT. I'M NOT SURE I COULD HANDLE SEEING YOUR MOM TELL ANOTHER MAN SHE LOVES HIM.

THERE ARE COUPLES AND PEOPLE THAT DO THAT, IT'S CALLED POLYAMORY BUT THAT'S VERY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT WE DO. NOTHING WRONG WITH IT, IT'S JUST NOT FOR US.

PEOPLE FIGURE OUT WHAT WORKS FOR THEM AND FIND LIKEMINDED PEOPLE TO HANG OUT WITH. IT'S HOW THE WORLD ROLLS.



I... THINK I UNDERSTAND. THANK YOU FOR TELLING ME THE TRUTH ABOUT IT.

YOU'RE MATURE ENOUGH TO KNOW THIS AND WE TRUST YOU, BUT PLEASE DON'T SAY ANYTHING TO ANYONE ABOUT IT AS THERE ARE JUDGMENTAL PEOPLE OUT THERE WHO DON'T AGREE WITH WHAT WE DO.

...AND PLEASE DON'T TELL BLAKE AT THIS POINT, HE'S STILL TOO YOUNG TO UNDERSTAND.

MY WRITING CAREER TOOK A SLIGHT PAUSE OVER THE LAST COUPLE YEARS FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS, BUT I FINALLY FINISHED MY THIRD BOOK AND IT'S DUE OUT TUESDAY.

I THOUGHT QUITTING TEACHING AFTER THE SECOND BOOK WOULD GIVE ME MORE TIME TO WRITE...BUT...DISTRACTIONS. HAVING A COUPLE HOURS A DAY TO WRITE IN THE CLASSROOM WAS EASIER THAN TRYING TO DO IT AT HOME. I MISS TEACHING, BUT IT BECAME TOO DIFFICULT WHEN SOME OF THE STUDENTS BECAME FANS.



OUR FRIENDS CARL AND SHEILA WHO OWN THE LIFESTYLE CLUB IN DOWNTOWN L.A. INVITED US OVER FOR A PRIVATE CELEBRATION.

HERE'S TO ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL BOOK LAUNCH!

I LOVED IT, DAN, THANKS FOR LETTING ME READ IT EARLY.



DAN GETS A HUNDRED GOOD REVIEWS BUT FOCUSES ON THE ONE BAD ONE.

YOU'RE VERY WELCOME! I NEEDED THE AFFIRMATION OF PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY...I'VE BEEN GETTING A SMALL NUMBER OF REALLY NEGATIVE REVIEWS...

USUALLY FOLKS OBJECTING TO THE CONTENT IT SEEMS AND NOT JUDGING THE QUALITY OF THE STORY ITSELF.



IT'S HARD NOT TO.



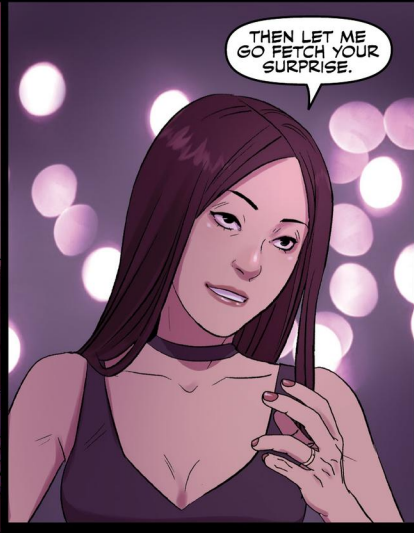
I KNOW, BABE, BUT YOU KNOW HOW CLOSE-MINDED SOME PEOPLE ARE. YOU JUST HAVE TO LET IT GO.

EASIER SAID THAN DONE.

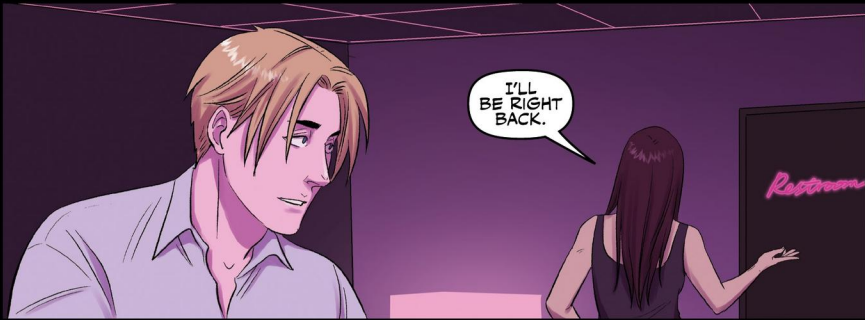


CATHY, THAT SURPRISE WE COOKED UP IS IN THE WOMEN'S RESTROOM.

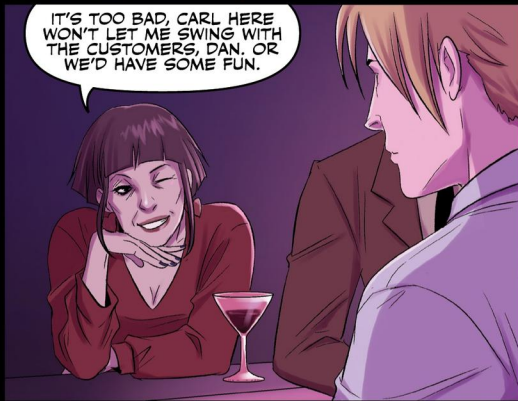
WE DIDN'T WANT DAN TO STUMBLE ACROSS IT EARLY.



THEN LET ME GO FETCH YOUR SURPRISE.



I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.



IT'S TOO BAD, CARL HERE WON'T LET ME SWING WITH THE CUSTOMERS, DAN. OR WE'D HAVE SOME FUN.



WHAT?

OH, SHUT UP, YOU KNOW I'M KIDDING.

NO, YOU'RE NOT.



I'M GLAD WE'VE GOTTEN TO BE FRIENDS OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS.

THE PLEASURE IS ALL OURS, WE LOVE YOU GUYS.

HAVING YOU COME TO THE CLUB IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS. YOU'RE SOMEWHAT FAMOUS IN OUR COMMUNITY NOW.



PLEASE... I'M A Z-LIST CELEBRITY AT BEST.

I THINK I'VE BEEN RECOGNIZED OUTSIDE OF A BOOK SIGNING ONCE.



OH, DAAAAANNNN.



DO YOU
RECOGNIZE
THESE TWO
LADIES?

THEY'RE THE
MODELS YOUR
COVER ARTIST
USED FOR ALL
YOUR BOOK
COVERS.

I TRACKED
THEM DOWN AND TURNS OUT
THEY'RE A LIFESTYLE COUPLE.
WE HAD A COUPLE CONVOS AND
THEY AGREED TO FLY OUT AND
CELEBRATE THE RELEASE
OF YOUR NEW BOOK
WITH US.



I WANT
TO PLAY.



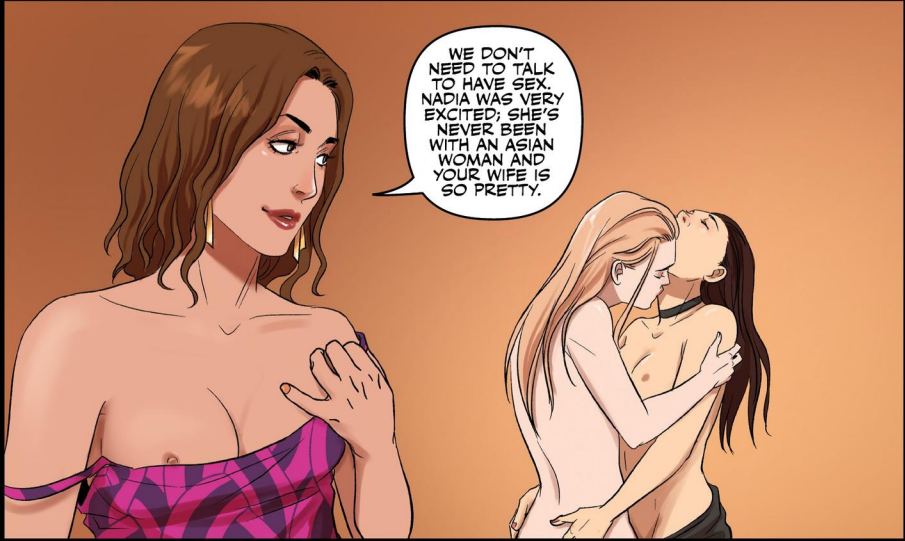
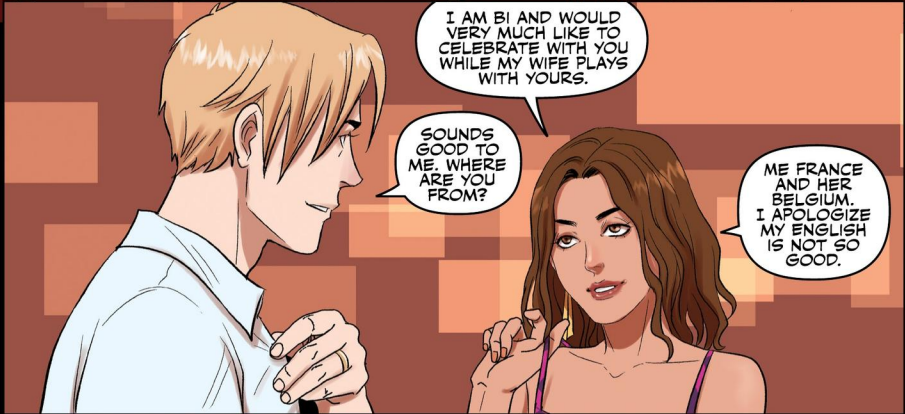
I AM GISELLE AND MY WIFE THERE IS NADIA. SHE DOESN'T SPEAK ENGLISH AND SHE'S NOT BI, SO YOU MAY NOT TOUCH HER. OKAY?

OF COURSE.

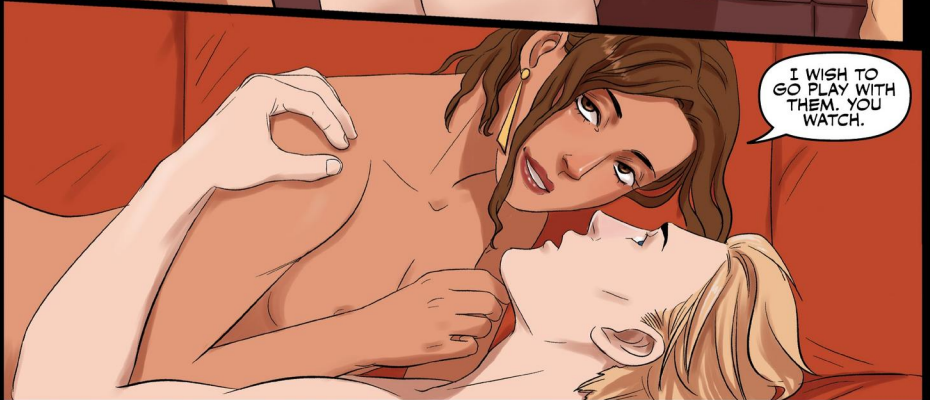
I AM BI AND WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO CELEBRATE WITH YOU WHILE MY WIFE PLAYS WITH YOURS.

SOUNDS GOOD TO ME. WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

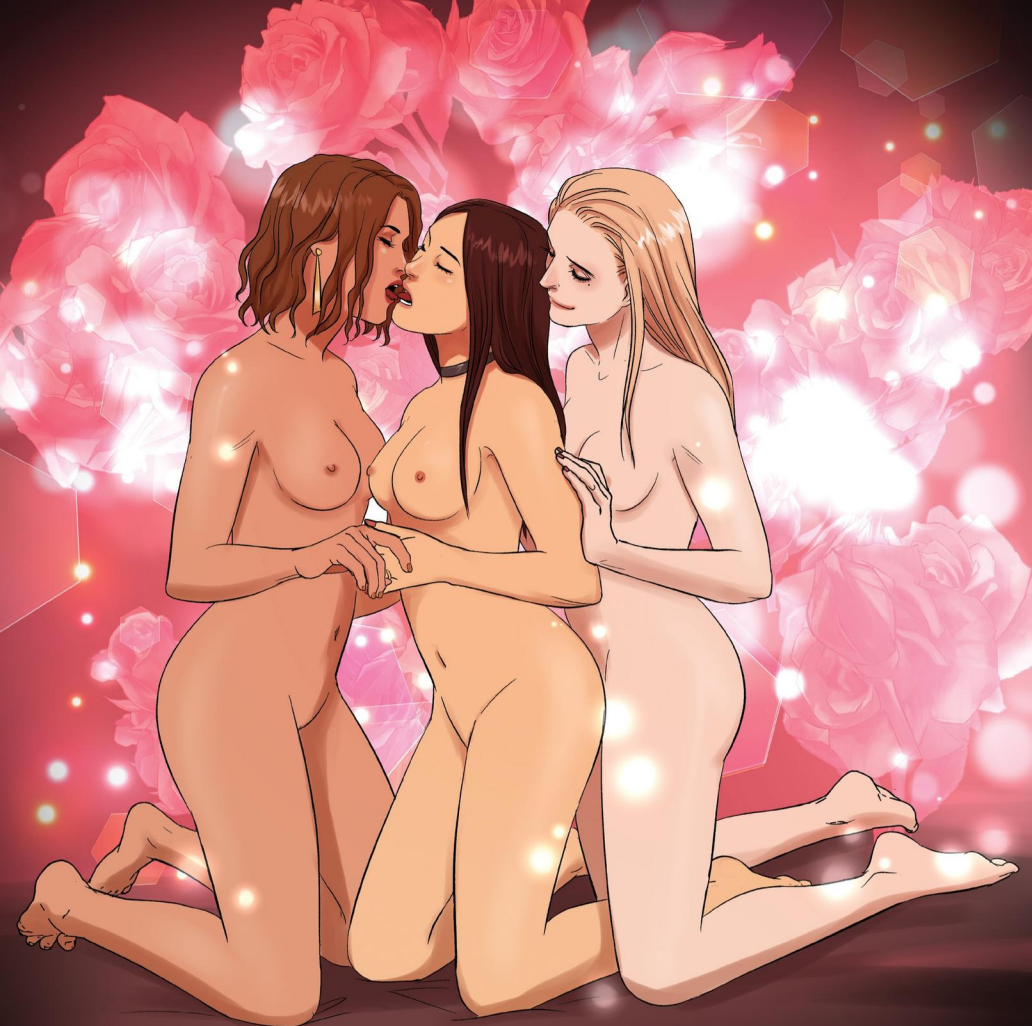
ME FRANCE AND HER BELGIUM. I APOLOGIZE MY ENGLISH IS NOT SO GOOD.



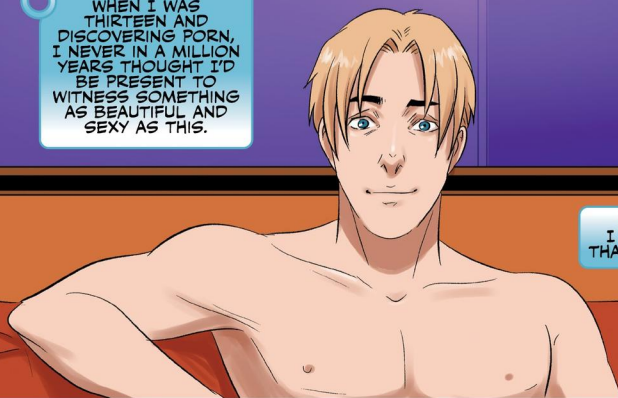
WE DON'T NEED TO TALK TO HAVE SEX. NADIA WAS VERY EXCITED; SHE'S NEVER BEEN WITH AN ASIAN WOMAN AND YOUR WIFE IS SO PRETTY.



I WISH TO GO PLAY WITH THEM. YOU WATCH.



WHEN I WAS THIRTEEN AND DISCOVERING PORN, I NEVER IN A MILLION YEARS THOUGHT I'D BE PRESENT TO WITNESS SOMETHING AS BEAUTIFUL AND SEXY AS THIS.



LIFE IS GOOD. I KEEP THINKING THAT, BUT IT'S TRUE.



FIVE YEARS LATER



THE THIRD BOOK WAS A SUCCESS, AND IT SPAWNED A MOVIE ADAPTATION OF THE SERIES. DISAPPOINTINGLY THE FILM DIED IN DEVELOPMENT...SHOULD HAVE GONE WITH NETFLIX, OH WELL.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT AND ANTICIPATION SPIKED SALES THOUGH, AND THEY RERELEASED NEW EDITIONS.

I'M ON A SIXTEEN-CITY BOOK TOUR, CATHY ALWAYS COMES WITH ME TO NEW YORK.

BOOKS

SHE LOVES IT HERE.

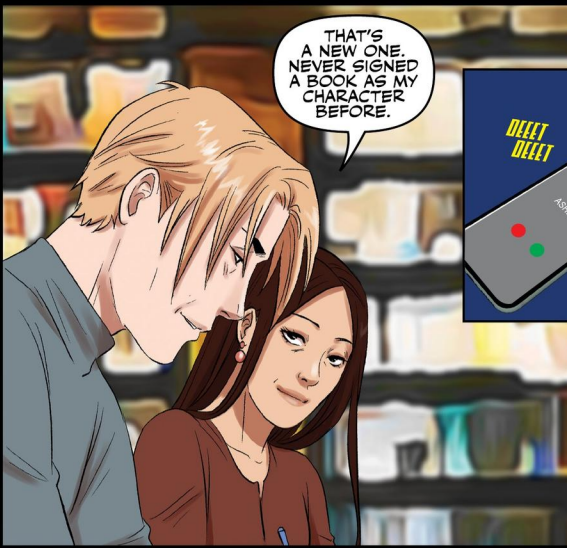
Victorian Fire

WILL YOU SIGN IT TO DEBBIE, I LOVE YOU WITH ALL MY HEART, ALEXANDER?

YOU WANT ME TO SIGN IT AS THE CHARACTER IN MY BOOK?

YES, PLEASE.



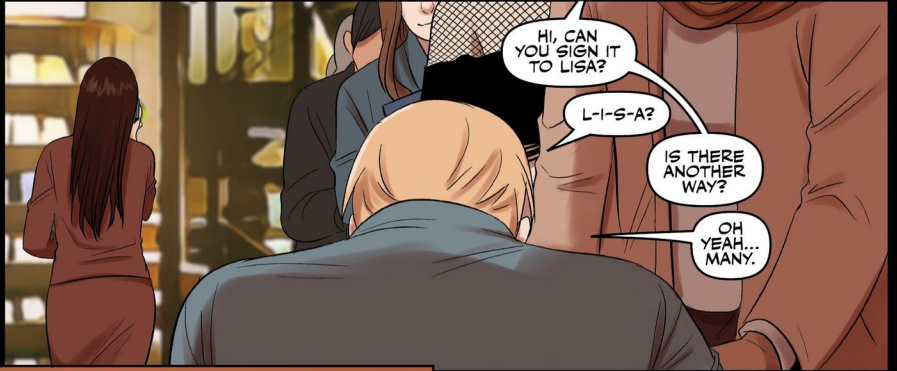


THAT'S A NEW ONE. NEVER SIGNED A BOOK AS MY CHARACTER BEFORE.



THAT'S ASH, SHE'S GOT A CRUSH ON ONE OF HER COLLEGE PROFESSORS, SOUND FAMILIAR?

OH MAN, PLEASE TALK TO HER. I'M NOT READY TO BE A GRAND-PARENT.



HI, CAN YOU SIGN IT TO LISA?

L-I-S-A?

IS THERE ANOTHER WAY?

OH YEAH... MANY.



HI DAN, DO YOU REMEMBER ME?

YOU LOOK FAMILIAR, HAVE WE MET BEFORE?



I'M SLAVE-GIRL4ZO.



REMEMBER ME NOW?



I DO, YES, AND I'D REALLY LIKE IT IF YOU DON'T MAKE A SCENE HERE, I BLOCKED YOU ONLINE FOR A REASON.



YOU AND I HAVE BEEN LOVERS IN PAST LIVES. I'VE SEEN THIS. WE ARE DESTINED TO BE TOGETHER.

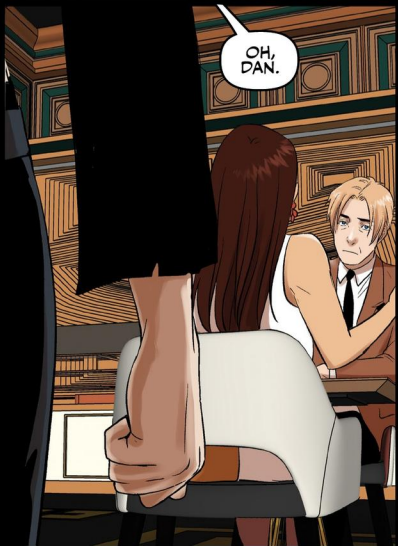
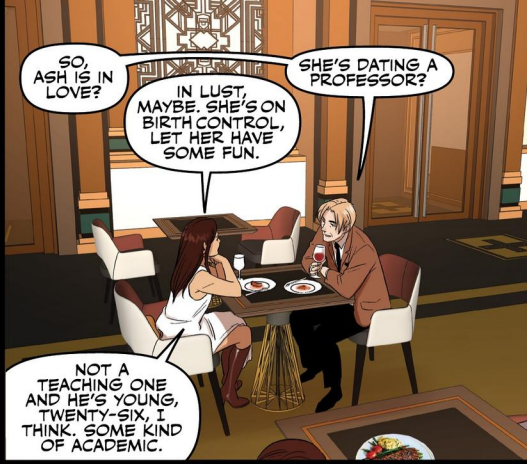


I AM HAPPILY MARRIED TO THE WOMAN OF MY DREAMS.

YOU NEED TO LEAVE BEFORE I CALL SECURITY.



YOUR WIFE IS A STAND-IN FOR THE LOVE YOU'VE SHARED WITH ME FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. YOU CAN'T ESCAPE FATE.





WE'RE LOVERS. HE'S BEEN CHEATING ON YOU WITH ME FOR YEARS. WE'VE EVEN DRANK EACH OTHER'S BLOOD.



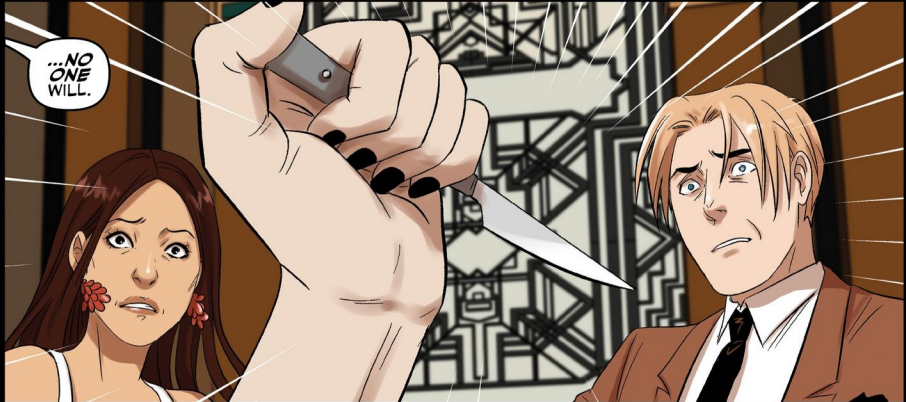
EW.



IF YOU AND DAN WERE HAVING SEX, I'D BE OKAY WITH THAT, BUT I KNOW HE'S NOT, SO HOW ABOUT YOU LET US FINISH OUR MEAL IN PEACE?

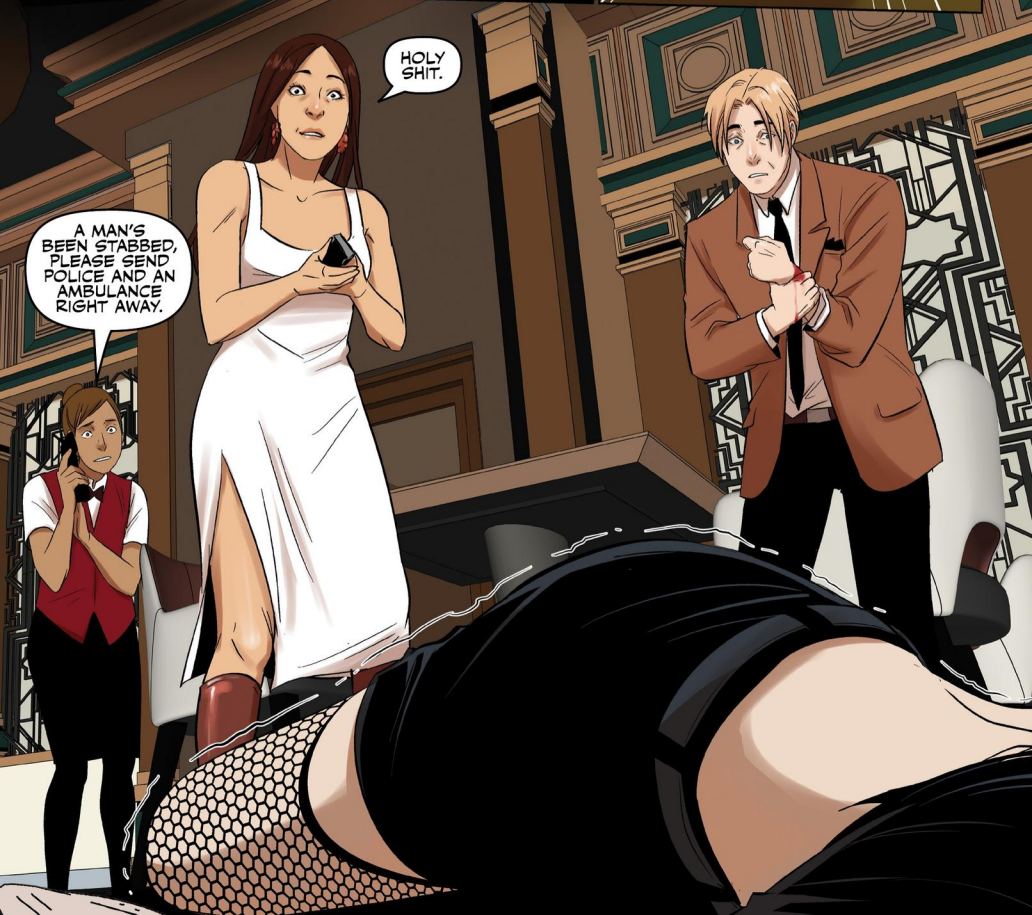


IF I CAN'T HAVE YOU...



...NO ONE WILL.

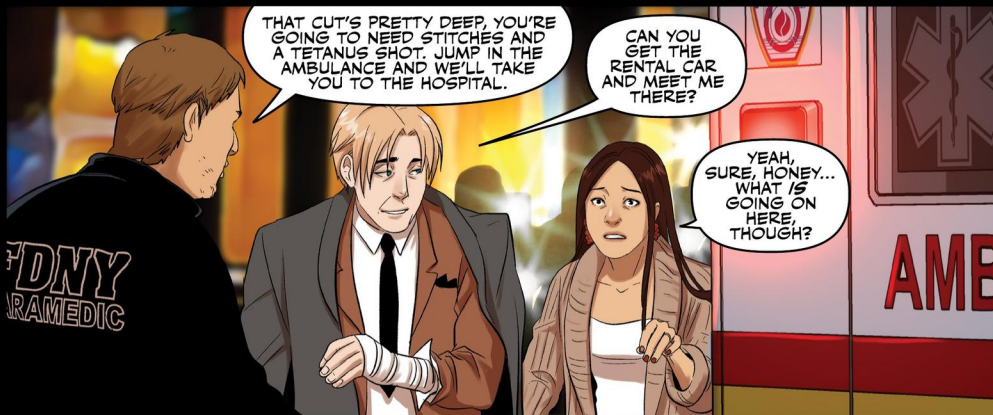






WHY'D YOU DO IT?

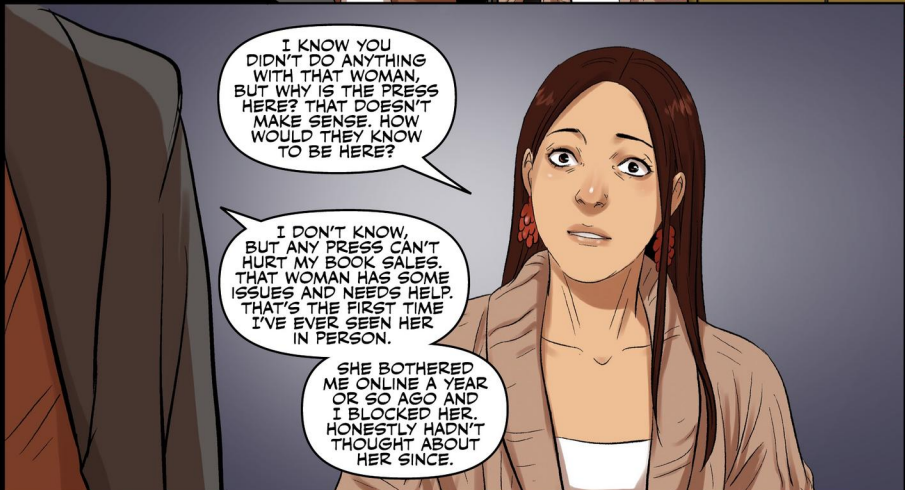
I LOVE HIM AND HE'S DENYING HIS LOVE FOR ME. I'M CARRYING HIS CHILD INSIDE ME RIGHT NOW.



THAT CUT'S PRETTY DEEP, YOU'RE GOING TO NEED STITCHES AND A TETANUS SHOT. JUMP IN THE AMBULANCE AND WE'LL TAKE YOU TO THE HOSPITAL.

CAN YOU GET THE RENTAL CAR AND MEET ME THERE?

YEAH, SURE, HONEY... WHAT IS GOING ON HERE, THOUGH?



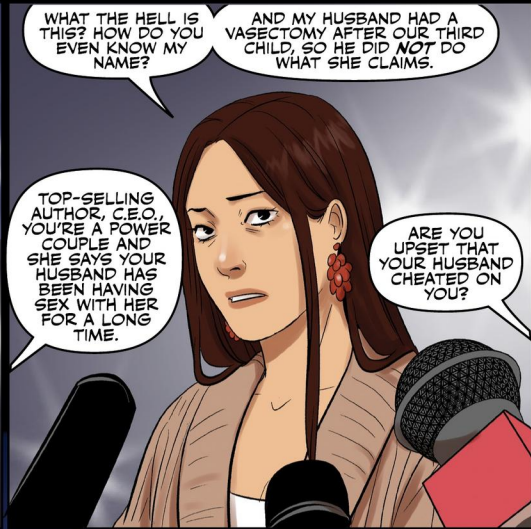
I KNOW YOU DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WITH THAT WOMAN, BUT WHY IS THE PRESS HERE? THAT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE. HOW WOULD THEY KNOW TO BE HERE?

I DON'T KNOW, BUT ANY PRESS CAN'T HURT MY BOOK SALES. THAT WOMAN HAS SOME ISSUES AND NEEDS HELP. THAT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER SEEN HER IN PERSON.

SHE BOTHERED ME ONLINE A YEAR OR SO AGO AND I BLOCKED HER. HONESTLY HADN'T THOUGHT ABOUT HER SINCE.



MRS. CHANG, THAT WOMAN CLAIMS YOUR HUSBAND IMPREGNATED HER.

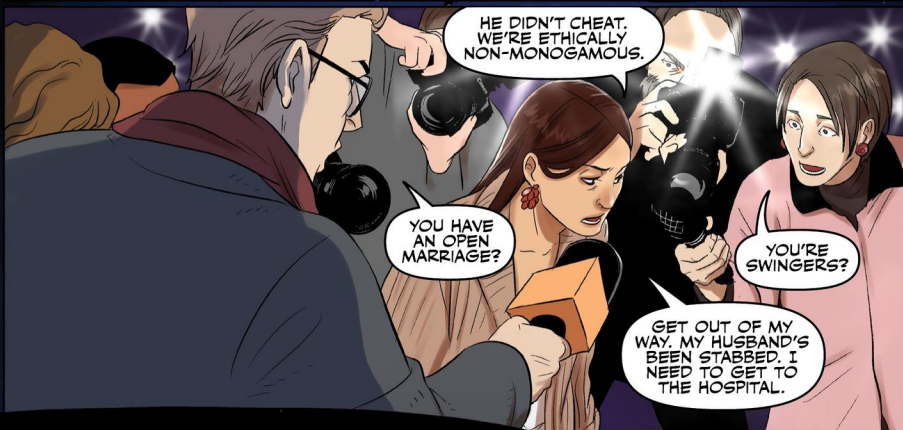


WHAT THE HELL IS THIS? HOW DO YOU EVEN KNOW MY NAME?

AND MY HUSBAND HAD A VASECTOMY AFTER OUR THIRD CHILD, SO HE DID NOT DO WHAT SHE CLAIMS.

TOP-SELLING AUTHOR, C.E.O., YOU'RE A POWER COUPLE AND SHE SAYS YOUR HUSBAND HAS BEEN HAVING SEX WITH HER FOR A LONG TIME.

ARE YOU UPSET THAT YOUR HUSBAND CHEATED ON YOU?



HE DIDN'T CHEAT. WE'RE ETHICALLY NON-MONOGAMOUS.

YOU HAVE AN OPEN MARRIAGE?

YOU'RE SWINGERS?

GET OUT OF MY WAY. MY HUSBAND'S BEEN STABBED. I NEED TO GET TO THE HOSPITAL.



LOS ANGELES
TWO DAYS LATER

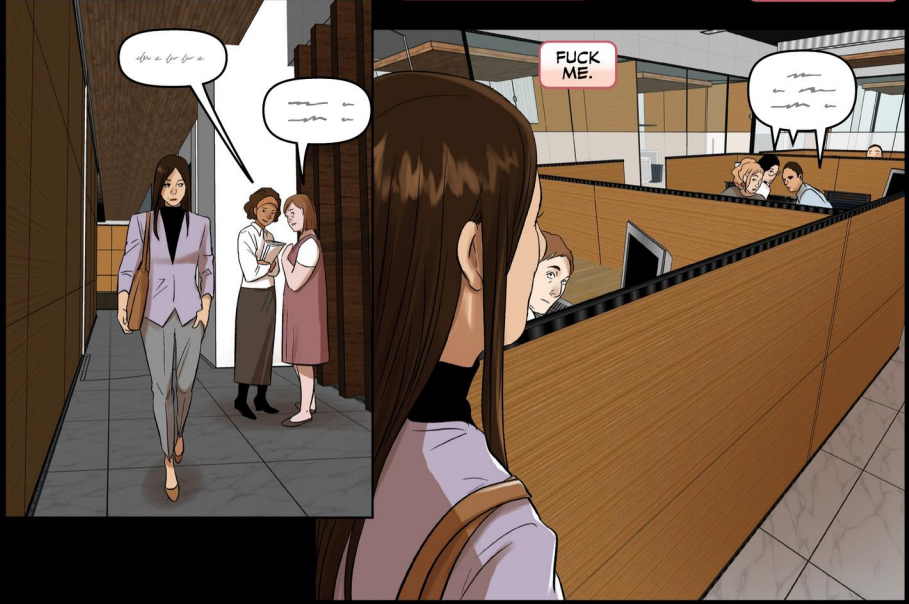
THE PRESS WENT WILD WITH THE STORY,
AND IT GOT A LOT OF COVERAGE. THE
HEADLINES WERE GROSS AND HUMILIATING.

"FAMOUS AUTHOR,
C.E.O. POWER
COUPLE HAVE WILD
SEX PARTIES."

"LOS ANGELES POWER
COUPLE'S SECRET SEX
ORGY LIFE REVEALED."

"HOLLYWOOD C.E.O.
IN SEX SCANDAL."

"AUTHOR'S
SALACIOUS
NOVELS BASED
ON HIS
OWN LIFE."



After a few days...

— — —
— — —

FUCK
ME.

— — —
— — —



HOPEFULLY THIS
WILL BLOW OVER
QUICKLY, WHY'D
THIS HAVE TO BE A
SLOW NEWS WEEK?



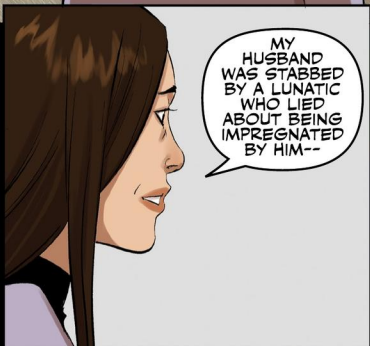
THE BOARD HAS
CONVENED A SPECIAL
MEETING IN THE MAIN
CONFERENCE ROOM,
AND THEY NEED
YOU NOW.

WHAT?
THE WHOLE
BOARD
IS HERE?
WHY?

I'M
SORRY,
I DON'T
KNOW.



THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS HAS CALLED A SPECIAL MEETING TO REVIEW THE EVENTS OF THE PAST FEW DAYS AND THE RESULTANT NEWS STORM.



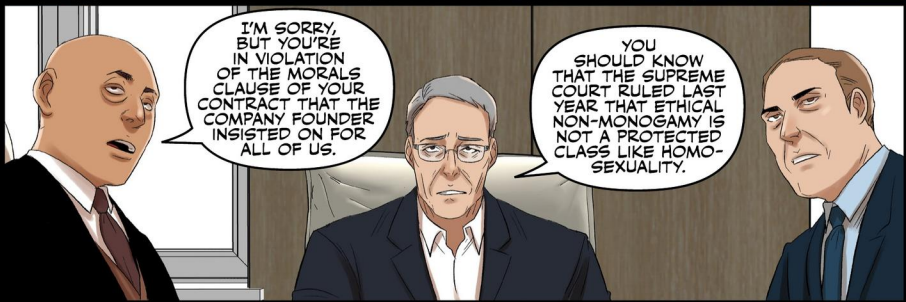
MY HUSBAND WAS STABBED BY A LUNATIC WHO LIED ABOUT BEING IMPREGNATED BY HIM--



I'M SORRY THAT HAPPENED TO YOUR HUSBAND, BUT I'M AFRAID WE'LL BE TERMINATING YOUR EMPLOYMENT. EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY.



WHAT?!

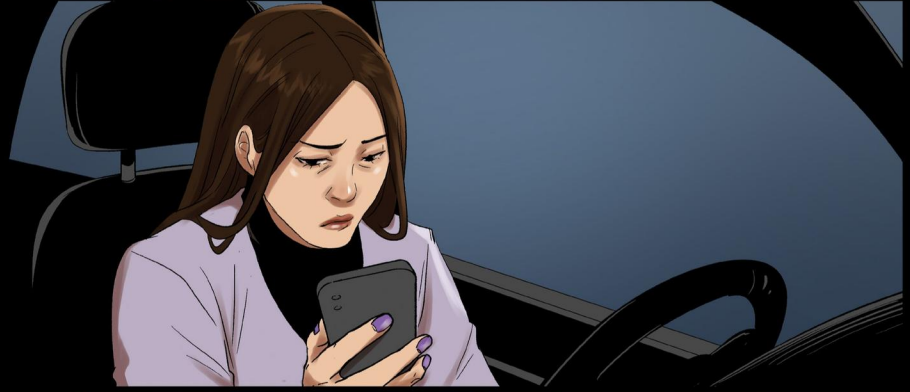


I'M SORRY, BUT YOU'RE IN VIOLATION OF THE MORALS CLAUSE OF YOUR CONTRACT THAT THE COMPANY FOUNDER INSISTED ON FOR ALL OF US.

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT THE SUPREME COURT RULED LAST YEAR THAT ETHICAL NON-MONO GAMY IS NOT A PROTECTED CLASS LIKE HOMOSEXUALITY.



YOU CAN SUE IF YOU WANT, BUT YOU'LL LOSE, AND WE'LL DRAG IT OUT TO DRIVE UP YOUR LEGAL FEES... AND YOU'LL STILL LOSE.



FOR WHAT?

THE NEWS SHITSTORM ABOUT US AND SWINGING... THEY DON'T WANT A SLUT AS THEIR C.E.O.

WHAT THE FUCK?! THEY CAN'T DO THAT!

THEY CAN'T FIRE SOMEONE BECAUSE OF THEIR SEXUAL PREFERENCES.

ACTUALLY, THEY CAN. I'VE ALREADY ENGAGED AN ATTORNEY WHO WILL HELP ME WITH THE SEVERANCE...

BUT HE SAYS IT'S PERFECTLY LEGAL TO FIRE SOMEONE FOR BEING A SWINGER, IN AN OPEN RELATIONSHIP, POLYAMOROUS... FOR ANY OF THOSE REASONS.

I'M SO SORRY, HONEY. WE'RE FINE FOR MONEY, SO THAT'S NOT A CONCERN.

I KNOW THAT, BUT I LOVED MY JOB.

IF WE CAN'T BEAT THEM IN COURT THEN LET'S HIT THEM IN THE COURT OF PUBLIC OPINION. THIS IS BS.

IF WE DO THAT, I'LL LOSE MY SEVERANCE AND THEY'LL LIKELY SUE US FOR DAMAGES.

WE CAN'T JUST ROLL OVER ON THIS. LET ME TALK TO MY PUBLISHER. I HAVE AN IDEA.

"WELCOME BACK FROM THE BREAK. FOR THIS SEGMENT WE HAVE CATHY CHANG, FORMER C.E.O. OF DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT SOLUTIONS, WHICH WE'LL CALL DES FOR SHORT. DES DESIGNS MOVIE TRAILERS AND MANAGES SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS FOR ENTERTAINMENT COMPANIES.

"SHE JOINS US TODAY HAVING WRITTEN A NEW BOOK CALLED *OUR JOURNEY*, ABOUT HER AND HER HUSBAND, AUTHOR DAN LINCOLN'S UNUSUAL RELATIONSHIP AND HER SUBSEQUENT TERMINATION FROM THE COMPANY AND DES'S LAWSUIT AGAINST THE COUPLE."

God HATES Swingers!!

SEX IS FOR MARRIAGE ONLY

Hedonists Go To HELL!!

WELCOME TO THE TOPIC, CATHY.

THANKS FOR HAVING ME. I'M A BIG FAN OF THE SHOW AND TOLD MY PUBLICIST I HAD TO COME HERE FIRST. I WANTED TO TALK WITH OTHER WOMEN ABOUT THIS.

I REMEMBER THE NEWS FROM A YEAR OR SO AGO WHEN YOU WERE TERMINATED...FOR BEING A SWINGER. IS IT OKAY TO CALL YOU THAT?

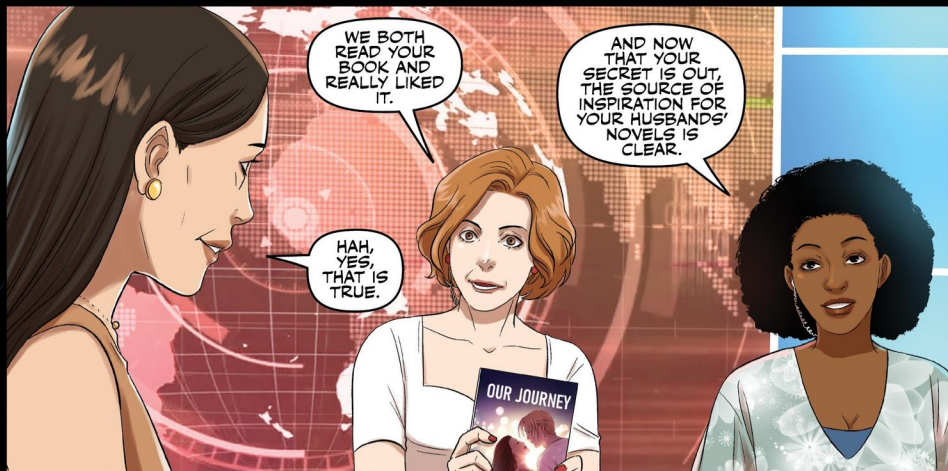
I PREFER ETHICALLY NON-MONOGRAMOUS, BUT IT'S A MOUTHFUL SO I'M FINE WITH SWINGER...BUT IT DOES SEEM TO CARRY THE WRONG IMPRESSION FROM THE WORD ALONE.

YEAH, TO BE HONEST, WHEN I THINK OF SWINGERS, I THINK OF A HAIRY HIPPIE-TYPE MAN WITH A BIG GOLD CHAIN AROUND HIS NECK.

THE TOPIC

AND YOU CERTAINLY LOOK NOTHING LIKE THAT, NOR YOUR VERY HANDSOME HUSBAND, AUTHOR DAN LINCOLN.

YES, THE STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICES AGAINST THOSE OF US WHO PRACTICE ETHICAL NON-MONOGRAMMY... SWINGING, IN OUR CASE...ARE VILE, OUTDATED, SEXIST, AND HORRIBLY PREJUDICIAL.



WE BOTH READ YOUR BOOK AND REALLY LIKED IT.

AND NOW THAT YOUR SECRET IS OUT, THE SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR YOUR HUSBANDS' NOVELS IS CLEAR.

HAH, YES, THAT IS TRUE.

OUR JOURNEY



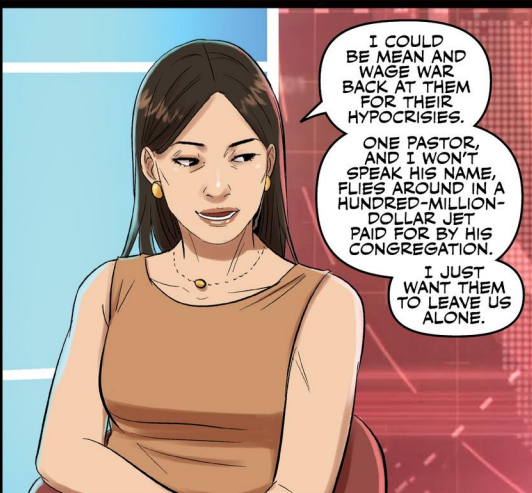
DO YOU REALLY NOT GET JEALOUS? IF I SAW MY HUSBAND WITH ANOTHER WOMAN... I DON'T THINK I COULD HANDLE IT.

IT'S NOT FOR EVERYONE BUT WHAT IS? PEOPLE MAKE CHOICES EVERY DAY ABOUT HOW THEY LIVE THEIR LIVES. OUR TWENTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY IS IN A FEW MONTHS.

WE'VE BEEN IN THIS LIFESTYLE FOR ALMOST TWELVE YEARS NOW. WE HAVE EXCELLENT COMMUNICATION AND WE BOTH APPROVE WHAT THE OTHER DOES IN ADVANCE.



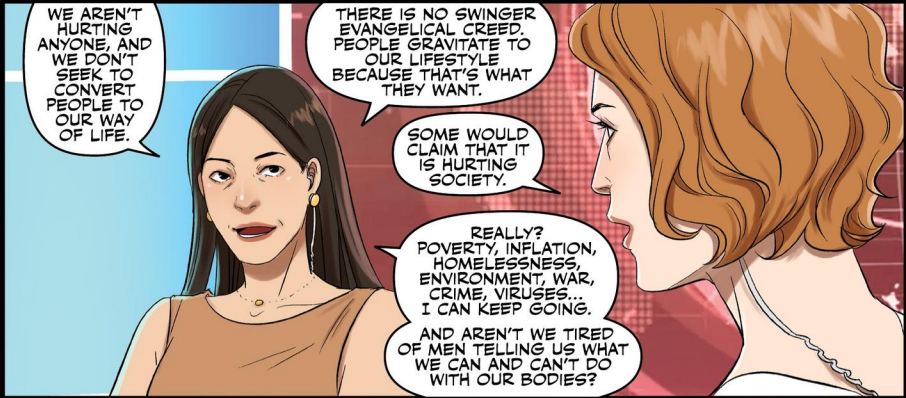
WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY TO THE CRITICS? THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT THAT HAS COME OUT SO AGGRESSIVELY AGAINST YOU.



I COULD BE MEAN AND WAGE WAR BACK AT THEM FOR THEIR HYPOCRISIES.

ONE PASTOR, AND I WON'T SPEAK HIS NAME, FLIES AROUND IN A HUNDRED-MILLION-DOLLAR JET PAID FOR BY HIS CONGREGATION.

I JUST WANT THEM TO LEAVE US ALONE.



WE AREN'T HURTING ANYONE, AND WE DON'T SEEK TO CONVERT PEOPLE TO OUR WAY OF LIFE.

THERE IS NO SWINGER EVANGELICAL CREED. PEOPLE GRAVITATE TO OUR LIFESTYLE BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT THEY WANT.

SOME WOULD CLAIM THAT IT IS HURTING SOCIETY.

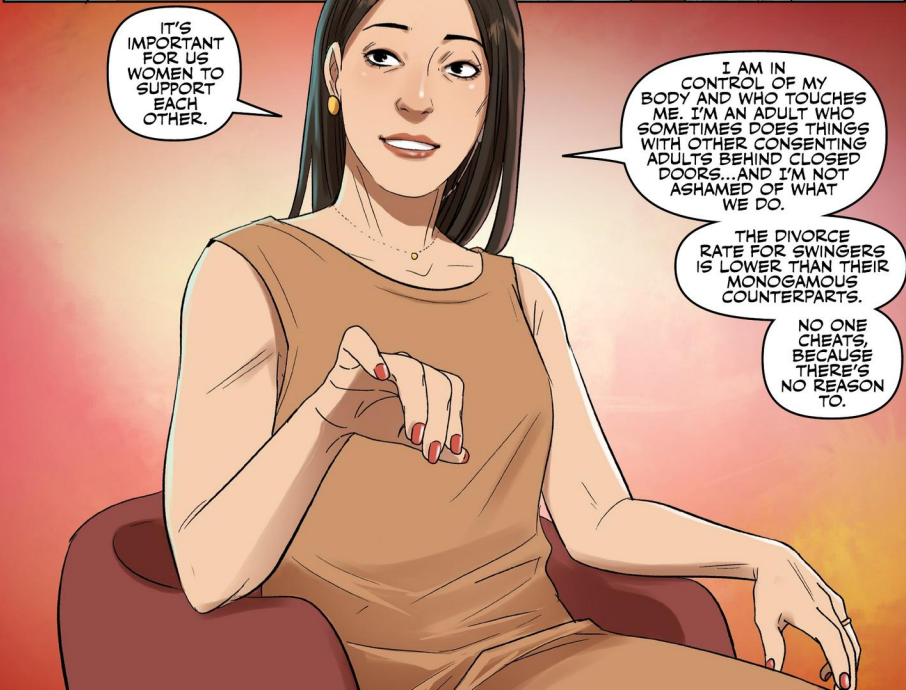
REALLY? POVERTY, INFLATION, HOMELESSNESS, ENVIRONMENT, WAR, CRIME, VIRUSES... I CAN KEEP GOING.

AND AREN'T WE TIRED OF MEN TELLING US WHAT WE CAN AND CAN'T DO WITH OUR BODIES?



BOTTOM LINE IS... DON'T WE HAVE BETTER THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT THAN WHO I HAVE SEX WITH?

YOU'RE NOT WHAT I EXPECTED, CATHY. YOUR LIFESTYLE IS NOT FOR ME, BUT I AGREE WITH WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.



IT'S IMPORTANT FOR US WOMEN TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER.

I AM IN CONTROL OF MY BODY AND WHO TOUCHES ME. I'M AN ADULT WHO SOMETIMES DOES THINGS WITH OTHER CONSENTING ADULTS BEHIND CLOSED DOORS...AND I'M NOT ASHAMED OF WHAT WE DO.

THE DIVORCE RATE FOR SWINGERS IS LOWER THAN THEIR MONOGAMOUS COUNTERPARTS.

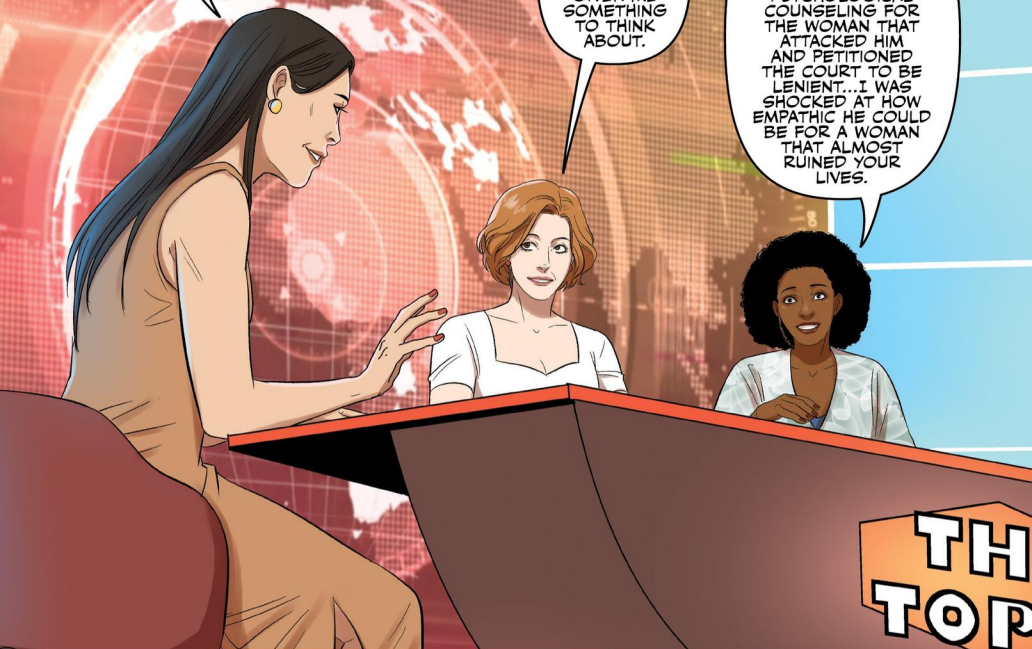
NO ONE CHEATS, BECAUSE THERE'S NO REASON TO.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRUST YOUR PARTNER SO COMPLETELY THAT YOU CAN TELL HIM OR HER THE SEXUAL FANTASIES AND THOUGHTS THAT CREEP UP IN YOUR MIND...

...AND RATHER THAN GETTING UPSET ABOUT IT AND INTO MARITAL COUNSELING... THEY HELP MAKE IT HAPPEN FOR YOU... WITHIN REASON, OF COURSE.

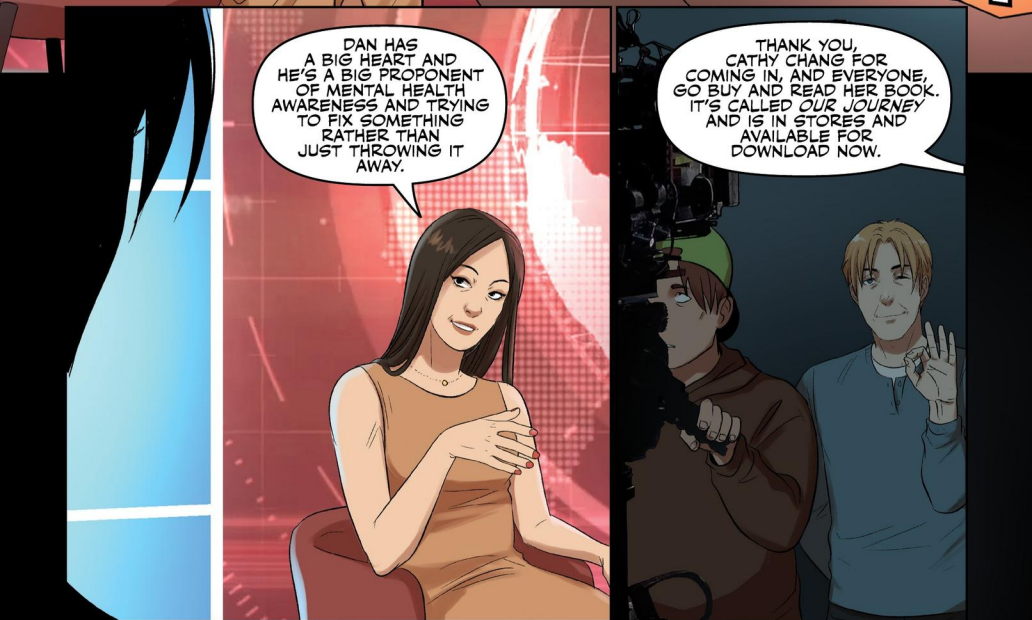
I THINK THAT'S AWESOME YOUR BOOK AND HEARING YOU HERE HAS GIVEN ME SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT.

WE ARE ALMOST OUT OF TIME, BUT MY FINAL COMMENT IS THAT I READ THAT YOUR HUSBAND PAID FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING FOR THE WOMAN THAT ATTACKED HIM AND PETITIONED THE COURT TO BE LENIENT...I WAS SHOCKED AT HOW EMPATHIC HE COULD BE FOR A WOMAN THAT ALMOST RUINED YOUR LIVES.



DAN HAS A BIG HEART AND HE'S A BIG PROONENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND TRYING TO FIX SOMETHING RATHER THAN JUST THROWING IT AWAY.

THANK YOU, CATHY CHANG FOR COMING IN, AND EVERYONE, GO BUY AND READ HER BOOK. IT'S CALLED *OUR JOURNEY* AND IS IN STORES AND AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD NOW.





DIE
FILTHY
VERMIN!

SLIICE



A LITTLE
HELP,
PLEASE.

AWW,
YOU CAN'T
HANDLE
A LITTLE
RAT?



I GOT
IT.

SLIICE

YOU'RE
IN THE
CLEAR,
ELLY.



AHH!

FZZZZT

ELLY'S DOWN, IF WE WIFE, WE'LL HAVE TO START OVER ALL THE WAY AT THE BEGINNING.

GRAAAA AHNK



THEN LET'S KILL IT. YOU GUYS DISTRACT IT.

I'LL CAST DETECT WEAKNESS.



FIVE SECOND CAST TIME...COVER ME.



YOU READY, DAN?



LET'S DO IT.





PROTON



YEAH!

YOU GUYS ARE SO LUCKY TO HAVE ME ON THE TEAM.

I'VE GOT TO GO. DINNER'S ALMOST READY I CAN SMELL IT. HAPPY THANKSGIVING, YOU GUYS.



HAVE A GOOD ONE DAN. GO EASY ON THE WINE... YOU'RE NOT A YOUNG MAN ANYMORE.



SAY HI TO CATHY FOR ME.





TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER

I'VE PLAYED VIDEO GAMES MY WHOLE LIFE.



NONE OF MY KIDS DO...WHICH IS WEIRD TO ME.

I NEED AN HOUR, HERE AND THERE TO CLEAR MY HEAD, AND GAMING ALWAYS WORKS AND CATHY ENCOURAGES IT.



GETTING LOST TO A FANTASY WORLD...

...WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE?

DAN, DINNER'S ALMOST READY AND EVERYONE BUT BLAKE'S HERE.

OKAY, HONEY. I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.



I WAS TERRIFIED OF GETTING OLD, BUT NOW THAT I AM...IT'S NOT THAT BAD.

I LOVE THE GRANDKIDS. IT'S LIKE HAVING THE BEST OF A CHILD AND THEN HANDING THEM BACK TO THEIR PARENTS WHEN THEY ANNOY YOU.

I'M HUNGRY. I'M GOING TO GRAB A PIECE OF THIS HAM.

WILL YOU DISTRACT MOM SO SHE DOESN'T SEE?

SURE.

HAVING FAMILY AND FINANCIAL MEANS FOR COMFORT AND TRAVEL MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

MOM, MIKEY IS EATING HAM.

WHAT DID I TELL YOU ABOUT EATING BEFORE WE ALL SIT DOWN?

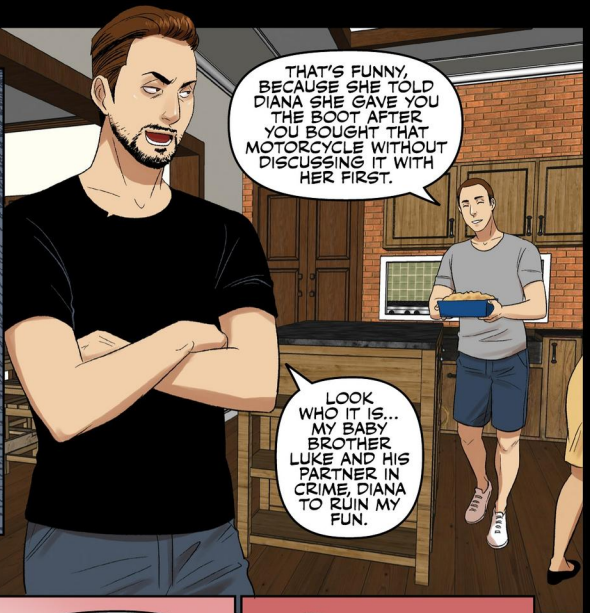
DID YOU EVEN WASH YOUR HANDS?

HEY, CHAMP, DO WHAT YOUR MOM SAYS.

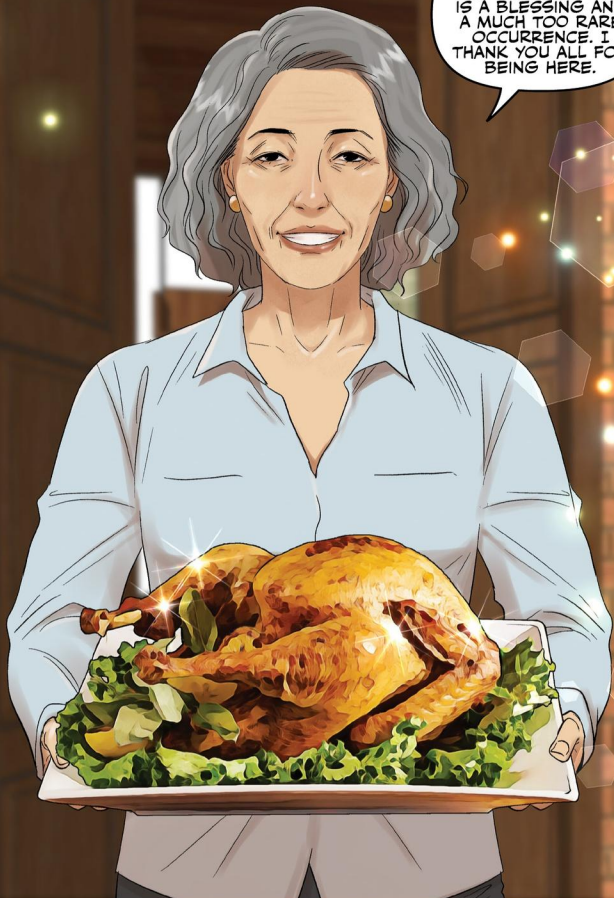
I CAN SEE YOU'VE TAUGHT LIZZY TO NARC ON HER LITTLE BROTHER, LIKE YOU USED TO DO TO ME.

HEY, IT'S SHIT-FOR-BRAINS. WHERE'S MONICA?

OOO, MOMMY SAID SHIT.

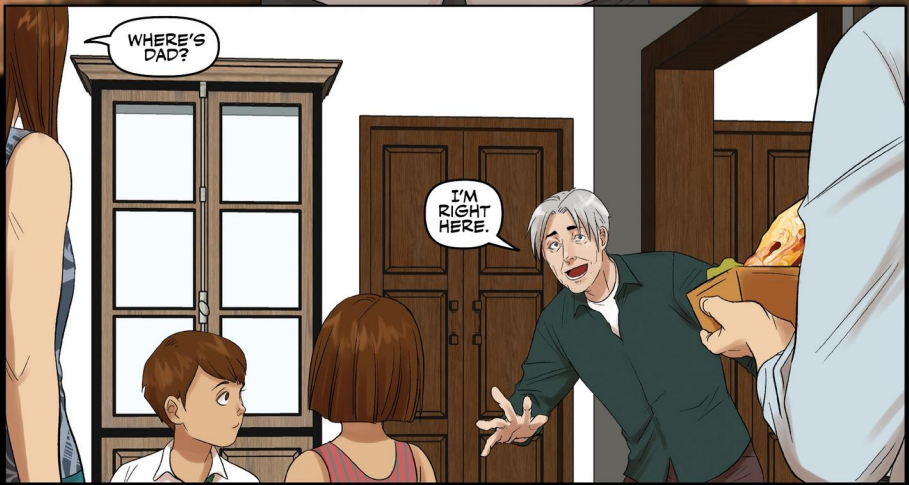


HAVING US ALL TOGETHER UNDER ONE ROOF IS A BLESSING AND A MUCH TOO RARE OCCURRENCE. I THANK YOU ALL FOR BEING HERE.



WHERE'S DAD?

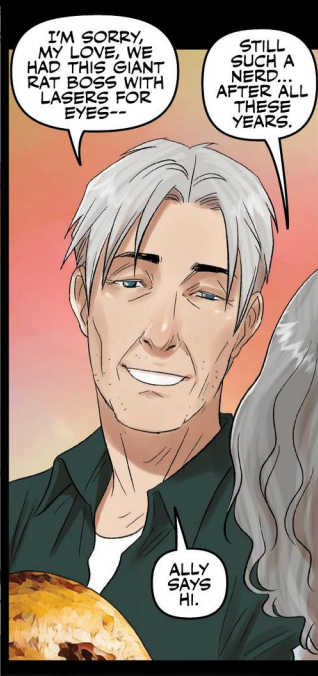
I'M RIGHT HERE.





LET ME CARRY THAT FOR YOU, DEAR.

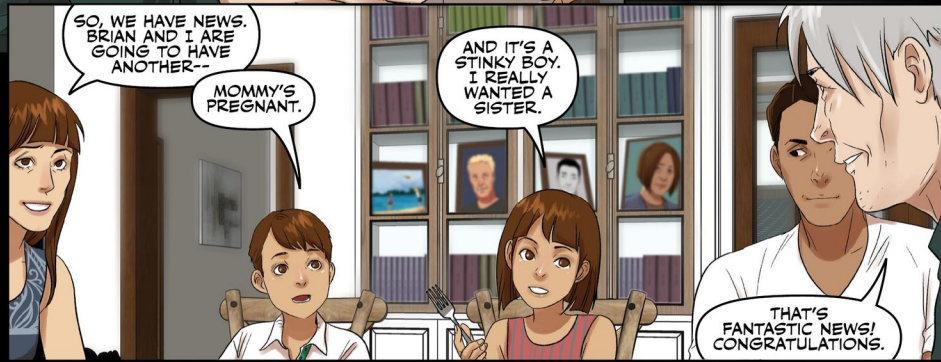
GEE, THANKS.



I'M SORRY, MY LOVE, WE HAD THIS GIANT RAT BOSS WITH LASERS FOR EYES--

STILL SUCH A NERD. AFTER ALL THESE YEARS.

ALLY SAYS HI.



SO, WE HAVE NEWS. BRIAN AND I ARE GOING TO HAVE ANOTHER--

MOMMY'S PREGNANT.

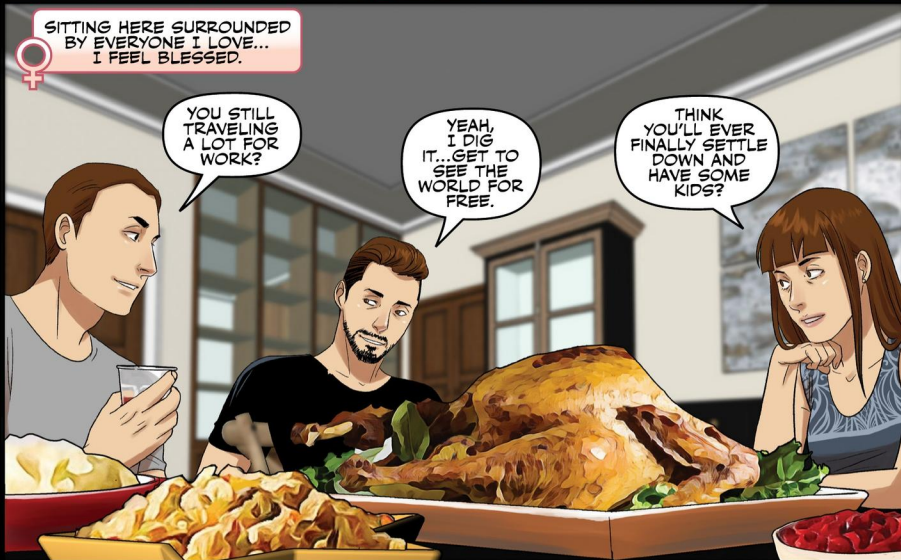
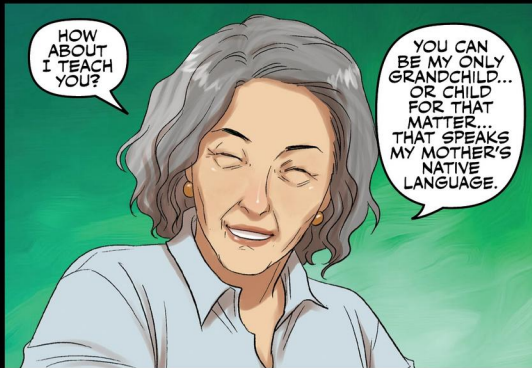
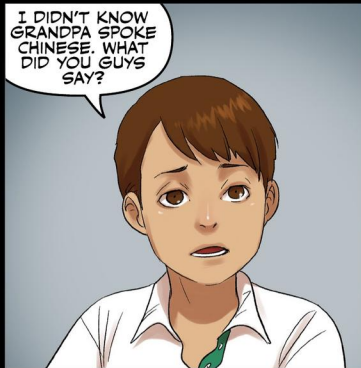
AND IT'S A STINKY BOY. I REALLY WANTED A SISTER.

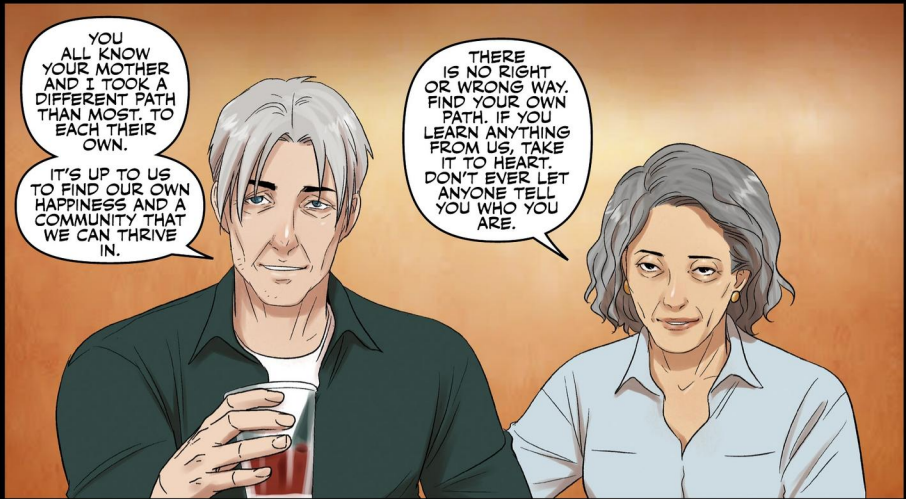
THAT'S FANTASTIC NEWS! CONGRATULATIONS.



他们太像我们了。

你越来越好了。





YOU ALL KNOW YOUR MOTHER AND I TOOK A DIFFERENT PATH THAN MOST. TO EACH THEIR OWN.

IT'S UP TO US TO FIND OUR OWN HAPPINESS AND A COMMUNITY THAT WE CAN THRIVE IN.

THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG WAY. FIND YOUR OWN PATH. IF YOU LEARN ANYTHING FROM US, TAKE IT TO HEART. DON'T EVER LET ANYONE TELL YOU WHO YOU ARE.



♀ WE CELEBRATE THOSE THAT COME AFTER US.



TO FAMILY!







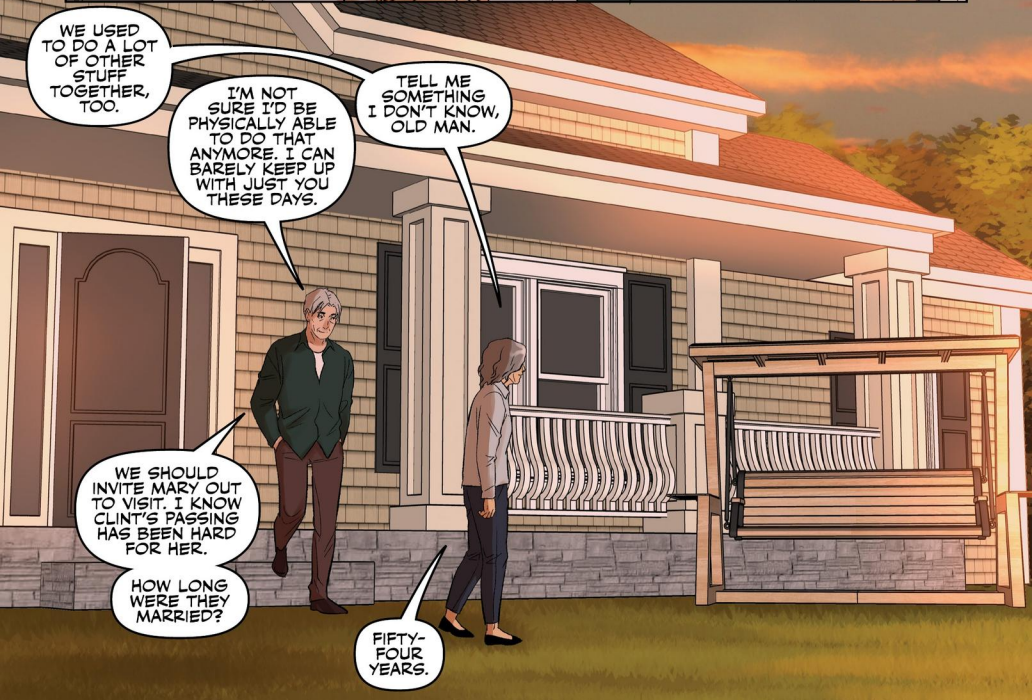
I HATE GOOD-BYES.

WE'LL SEE THEM AGAIN SOON. WE HAVE LIZZY AND MIKE FOR TWO WEEKS IN JUNE.



YOU DID A GOOD JOB RAISING OUR CHILDREN. I KNOW I WAS GONE A LOT FOR WORK.

NONSENSE, WE DID IT TOGETHER.



WE USED TO DO A LOT OF OTHER STUFF TOGETHER, TOO.

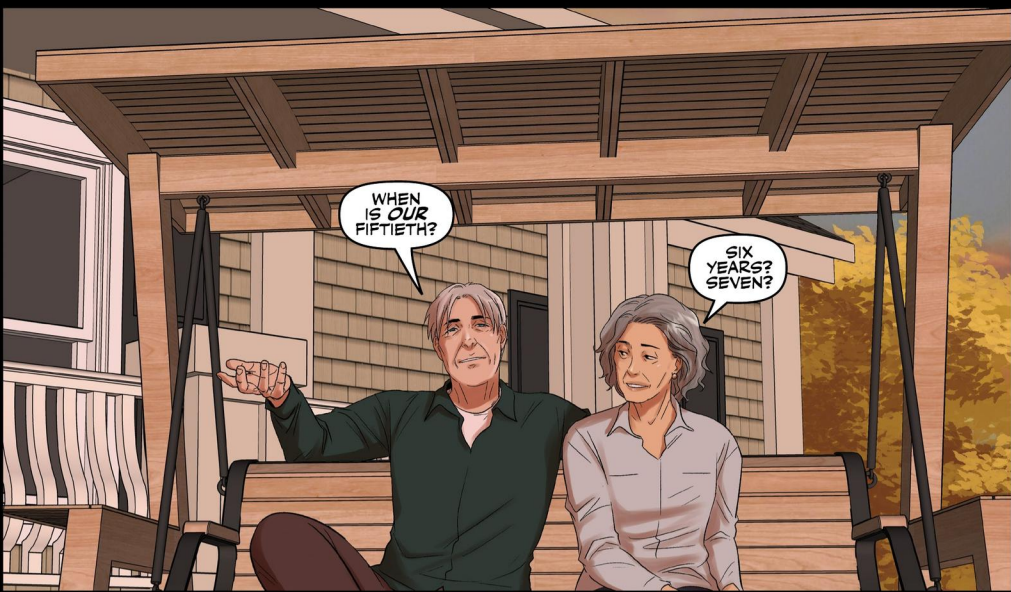
I'M NOT SURE I'D BE PHYSICALLY ABLE TO DO THAT ANYMORE. I CAN BARELY KEEP UP WITH JUST YOU THESE DAYS.

TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW, OLD MAN.

WE SHOULD INVITE MARY OUT TO VISIT. I KNOW CLINT'S PASSING HAS BEEN HARD FOR HER.

HOW LONG WERE THEY MARRIED?

FIFTY-FOUR YEARS.

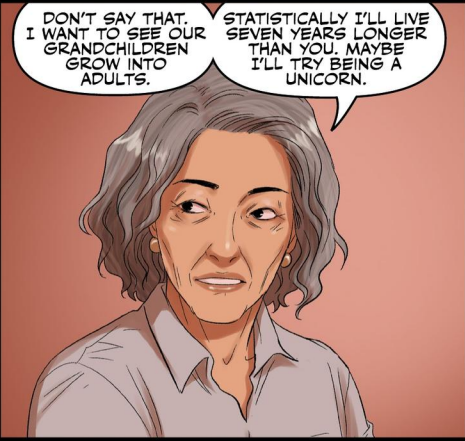


WHEN IS OUR FIFTIETH?

SIX YEARS? SEVEN?

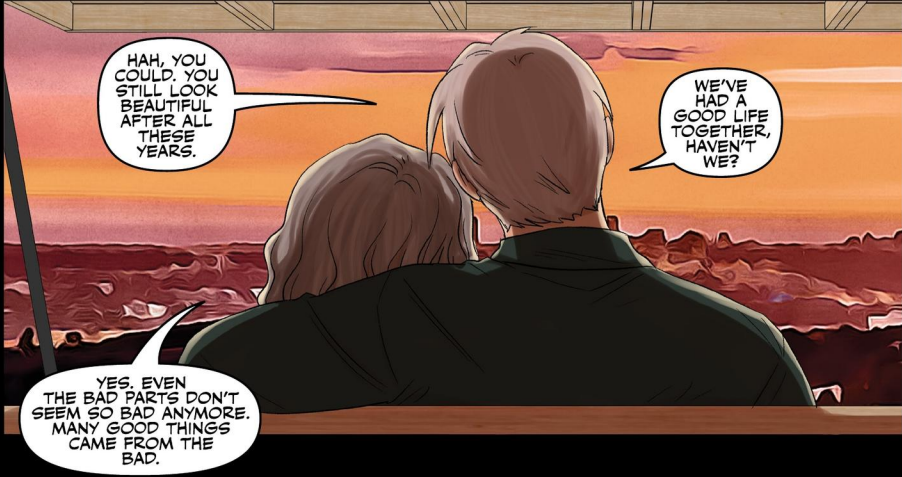


WHAT SHOULD WE DO FOR IT IF WE'RE STILL ALIVE?



DON'T SAY THAT. I WANT TO SEE OUR GRANDCHILDREN GROW INTO ADULTS.

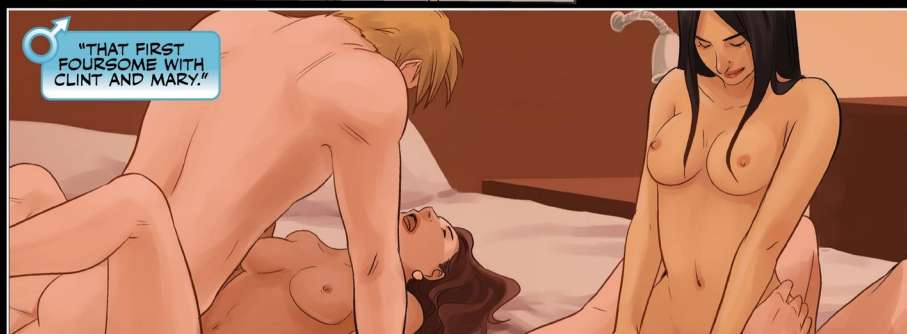
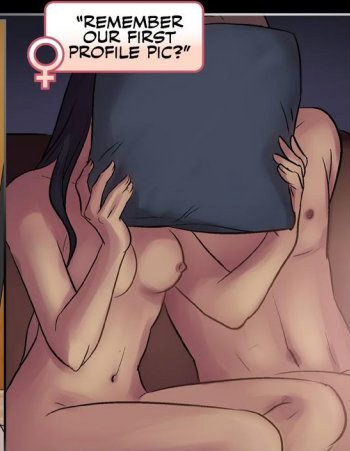
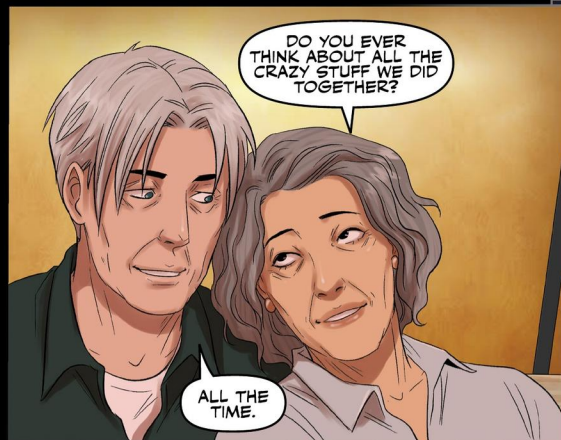
STATISTICALLY I'LL LIVE SEVEN YEARS LONGER THAN YOU. MAYBE I'LL TRY BEING A UNICORN.



HAA, YOU COULD. YOU STILL LOOK BEAUTIFUL AFTER ALL THESE YEARS.

WE'VE HAD A GOOD LIFE TOGETHER, HAVEN'T WE?

YES, EVEN THE BAD PARTS DON'T SEEM SO BAD ANYMORE. MANY GOOD THINGS CAME FROM THE BAD.



I'LL NEVER FORGET THAT SURPRISE BIRTHDAY PARTY.



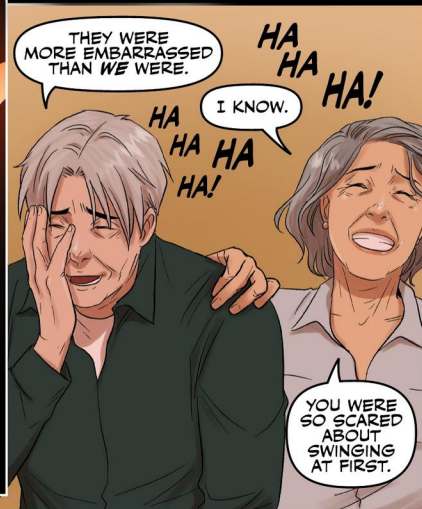
THAT WAS FUN.



♀
"OH GOD, REMEMBER YOUR DAD AND THAT GIRL HE ALMOST MARRIED AT THAT HALLOWEEN PARTY."



THEY WERE MORE EMBARRASSED THAN WE WERE.

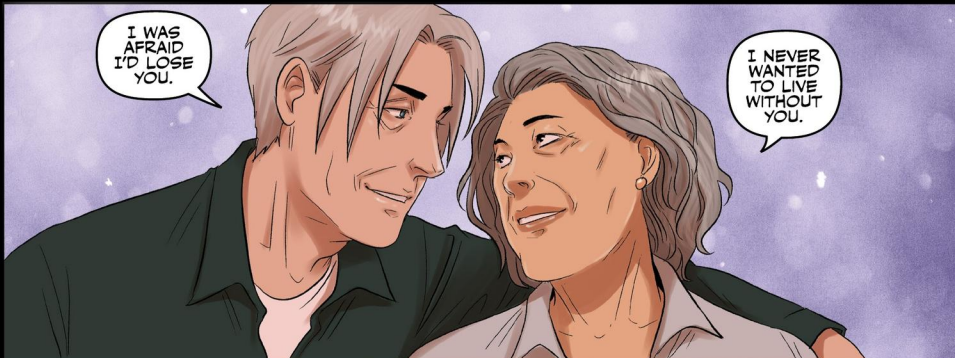


HA HA HA!

I KNOW.
HA HA HA HA!

YOU WERE SO SCARED ABOUT SWINGING AT FIRST.

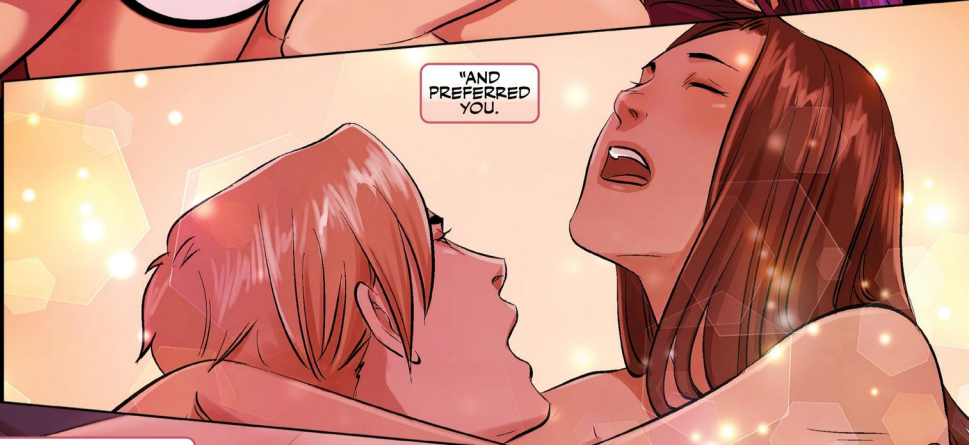
I WAS AFRAID I'D LOSE YOU.



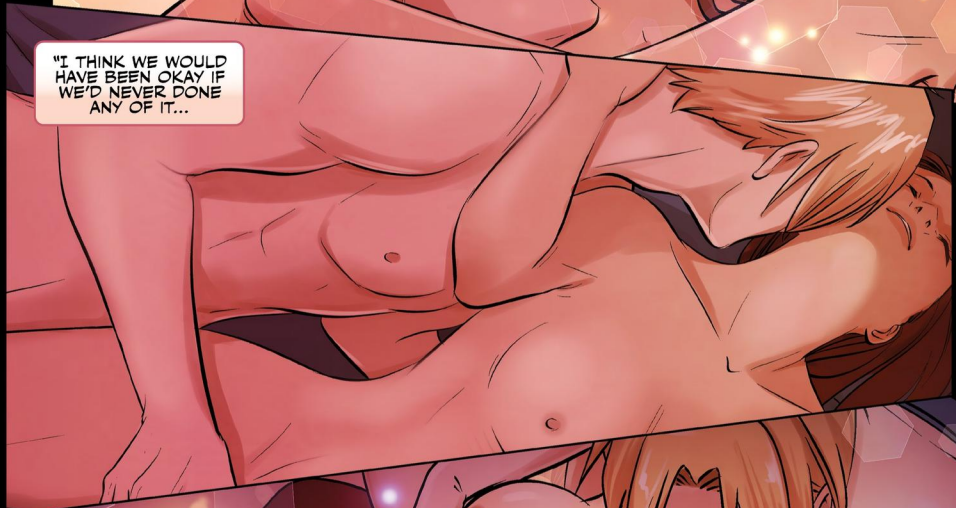
I NEVER WANTED TO LIVE WITHOUT YOU.



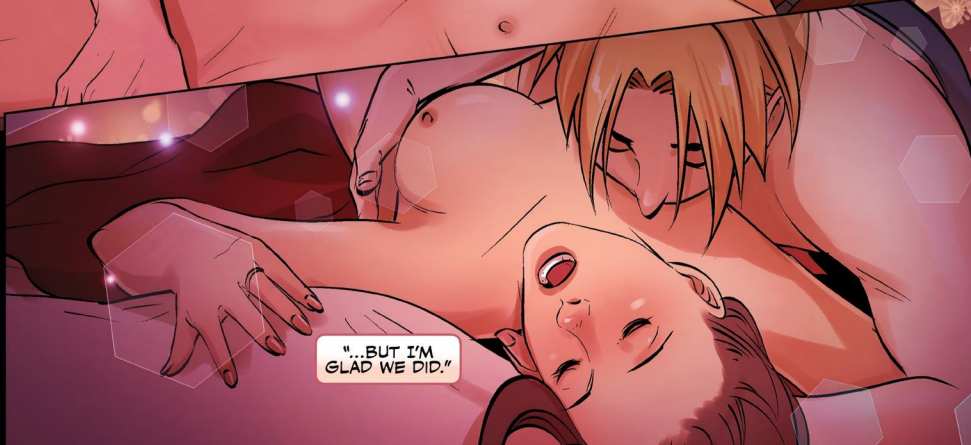
♀ "I HAVE ALWAYS LOVED YOU."



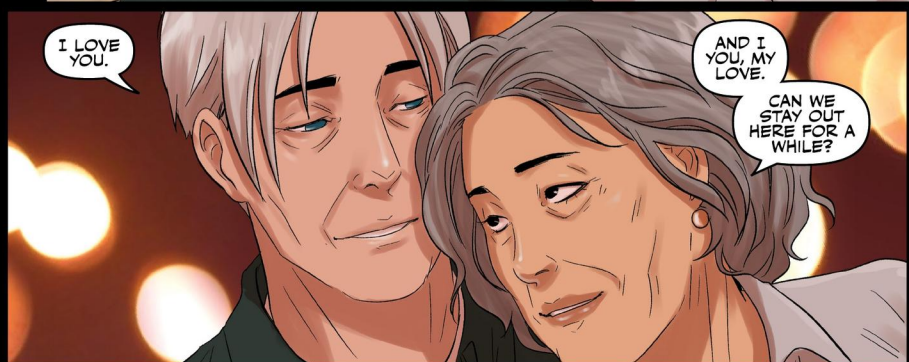
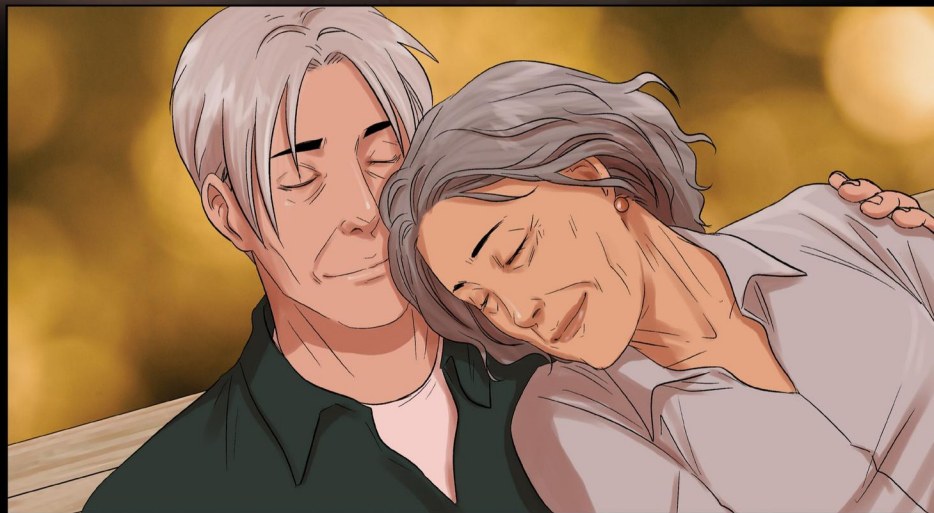
"AND PREFERRED YOU."



"I THINK WE WOULD HAVE BEEN OKAY IF WE'D NEVER DONE ANY OF IT..."



"...BUT I'M GLAD WE DID."





Fin



SWI

UNICORN

VOLUME

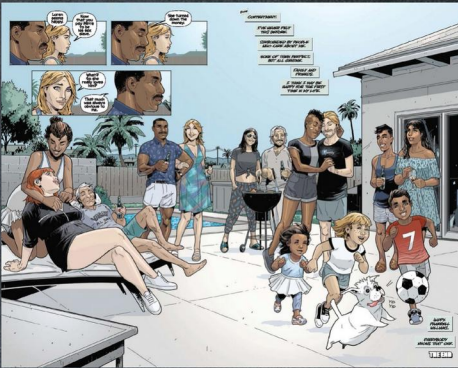
ONE

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2023

SEX ED

Welcome to the final volume of the first arc of SWING! Thank you for joining us on Cathy and Dan's journey. It's only happened twice in my career, but I got quite emotional when I wrote that last scene of those two together. I like happily ever after; we have the real world for reality. The other time was when I wrote that last scene of THINK TANK V5...which was also about David Loren finding family and community for himself. Similar themes in two very different books. If you do like this book, please recommend it to your friends. Word of mouth seems to be the best way to get new readers and we greatly appreciate it!



BEING OUTED AS A SWINGER

This was a HUGE part of this final story, how Cathy and Dan were outed, what happens, etc. I'll talk about the lack of legal protection below (from the story), but I have seen couples and individuals outed against their will and the resultant fallout...including one couple that the aftermath was so bad they eventually split up. I am all for anyone outing themselves, but it's messed up to do it to someone who prefers anonymity. Most people I talk to about swinging have zero regrets and truly believe that this is a better way to live...but they don't want to be outed because people can be mean and prejudicial.

FIRED FOR BEING ETHICALLY NON-MONOGRAMOUS

"In many states, employment is considered at-will, which means an employee can be fired for any reason, at any time, and for no reason at all. 'An employer does not have to like the employee or his or her lifestyle and can fire the person if they dislike the person or the lifestyle,' says Albert Rizzo, an attorney in NYC. While Rizzo makes it clear that this issue can vary from state to state, 'It can generally be said that it is not illegal to fire someone solely for having an open relationship.'

And if it's legal to give someone the boot because of their lifestyle, then there is no legal option to contest the termination. You can always try to fight back, citing discrimination, but that is unlikely to get you very far. 'Illegal discrimination means an employer has treated an employee who is in a 'protected class' differently from other employees,' says Rizzo. 'The relevant question is whether persons in an open relationship are considered a 'protected class'—and they are not. The law protects employees against discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, national origin, etc.' That list does not include people who choose to have open relationships."

That is the opening paragraph from the first link:

<https://stories.avvo.com/relationships/can-open-relationship-cost-job.html>

<https://anncheryl93.medium.com/will-swingers-become-a-protected-class-417d4280eb35>

<https://www.mkfmlaw.com/faq-videos/what-is-a-protected-class-as-it-relates-to-employment-discrimination>

WHY ETHICAL NON-MONOGRAMY?

I really enjoyed this woman's blog post about why she's a swinger. It's a long piece, but here's a couple paragraphs to tantalize you to go read it:

"Being in intimate relationships with different people who have their own unique experiences allowed me to become skilled in asserting myself, enjoying sex, managing conflict, and negotiating the needs and desires of multiple people."

Ethical non-monogamy is not about having more or kinkier sex, which is often the stereotype associated with it. For me, it is about profoundly seeing and valuing all kinds of people without attachment to a particular connection or outcome. It allows me, after a stunted childhood and adolescence, to exist in the fluid state that I believe is natural."

<https://www.womenspress.com/why-i-practice-ethical-non-monogamy-marie-lapage/#:~:text=Ethical%20non%2Dmonogamy%20is%20not,a%20particular%20connection%20or%20outcome>

SIN

I was raised Southern Baptist, baptized at 13 and a part of that church, choir and tithed 10% of my income (pre-tax) until I was twenty-seven and lost my faith. It took decades to shake the conditioning, but eventually I started to realize that my opposition to things was based on a moral code I no longer subscribed to. Swingers are adults engaging in consensual sex, I don't see this as being anything other than choice. Dictionary says: Our current form of the word comes from the Middle English sinne, which is itself from the Old English syn. The original meanings of sin were largely concerned with religious matters ("a transgression of religious law," "an offense against God"). The concept of original sin was first alluded to in the 2nd century by Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon in his controversy with certain dualist Gnostics.

What does the word sin mean in Hebrew?

To go astray

The word most commonly translated simply as "sin", hata, literally means "to go astray." Just as Jewish law, halakha, provides the proper "way" (or path) to live, sin involves straying from that path.

Hedonism comes from the Greek hēdonē ("pleasure"), which also provides the root of the word anhedonia ("a psychological condition characterized by inability to experience pleasure in normally pleasurable acts").

Guilty is an old word. It is believed to have been in use since before the year 1000. It is based on the noun guilt, which ultimately comes from the Old English gylt, meaning "offense." The suffix -y is used to turn the noun into an adjective. If you're guilty, it means you did it.

The point to all this is "sin" is relative and words evolve and change their meaning over time also. That we murder people for words people wrote thousands of years ago is, IMHO, silly.

And that's it for this final volume of SWING. That's the end of Dan and Cathy's story, thanks for reading.

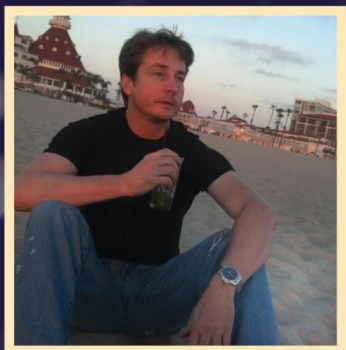
Carpe Noctum,

Matt Hawkins

April 2022

Los Angeles

Twitter: @topcowmatt | <http://www.facebook.com/selffloatingnarcissist>

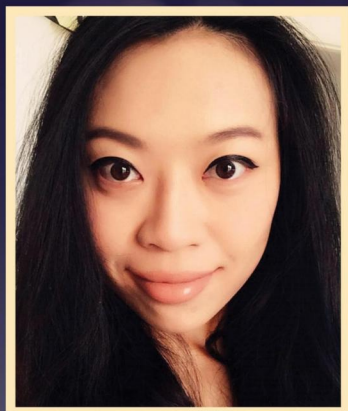


MATT HAWKINS

is a veteran of the initial Image Comics launch. Matt started his career in comic book publishing in 1993 and has been working with Image as a creator, writer, and executive for over twenty years. President/COO of Top Cow since 1998, Matt has created and written over thirty new franchises for Top Cow and Image including *THINK TANK*, *THE TITHE*, *STAIRWAY*, *GOLGOTHA*, and *APHRODITE IX* as well as handling the company's business affairs.

YISHAN LI

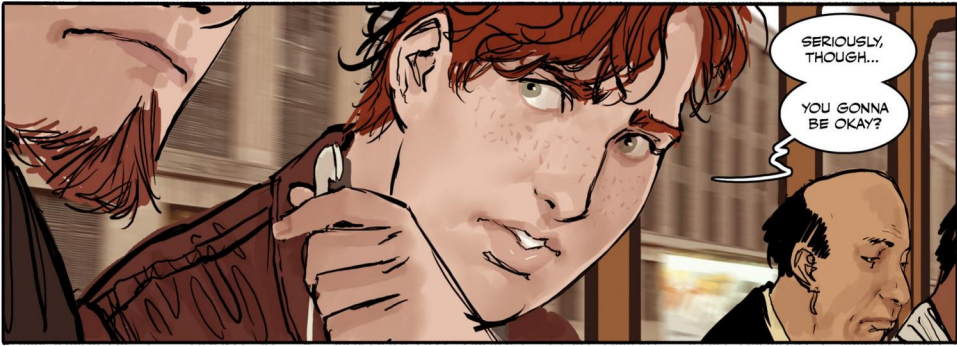
is a British/Chinese comic artist currently living in Shanghai. You can see a list of her projects at www.liyishan.com. Yishan Li has been drawing since 1998 and has been published internationally, including USA, France, Germany, Italy, and the UK. She has worked for publishers such as DC and Darkhorse and her last project was the *Buffy: The High School Years* graphic novels.



LINDA SEJIC

is a digital comics artist specializing in an expressive, dynamic art style. Her first major project with Top Cow was *WILDFIRE*, written by Matt Hawkins, which showcased her unconventional, character-focused technique and established her as an up-and-coming talent. Her critically acclaimed webcomic *BLOODSTAIN* is currently published in print from Top Cow, and is on its third volume. Linda lives in Croatia with her husband, illustrator Stjepan Sejic.

Sunstone
Merry Part One





CHRIS CONNELLY WAS THE FIRST ON A VERY SHORT LIST OF FRIENDS I MADE DURING COLLEGE.



IT BEGAN AS A CHANCE ENCOUNTER. I WAS MOVING INTO THE CHEAP STUDENT HOUSING BUILDING WHERE HE LIVED. HE SAW ME AND DID THE MOST "CHRIS" THING POSSIBLE... HE OFFERED A HAND.

HEY, BUDDY. YOU NEED SOME HELP?



HUH?

HELP? YOU NEED SOME? THAT IS, IF YOU'RE MOVING IN...AND NOT, LIKE, ROBBING THE PLACE?

HEH. YEAH, I COULD USE A HAND, THANKS!



I'M CHRIS!

ALAN!

THAT A STAR TREK SHIRT?

YEAH, YOU WATCH IT?

HERE AND THERE.

FOR HOW IMPORTANT, AND AT TIMES, UNEXPECTEDLY ODD OUR FRIENDSHIP WAS, IT HAD A VERY MUNDANE BEGINNING...



BUT THERE WAS NOTHING WRONG WITH MUNDANE.

UH, ALAN... I REALLY HAVE TO GO NOW.

HUH? OH, YEAH, DUDE! HAVE A GOOD ONE!



I WOULD HAVE GLADLY GONE FOR SOME OF THAT BORING, UNEVENTFUL STUFF BACK THEN...

WILL DO!
AND, UH...
HANG IN THERE,
OKAY?
YEAH.



THAT'S THE GUY...

BUT, UNFORTUNATELY,
I WAS A BIT OF A
CONVERSATION
STARTER
IN THOSE DAYS.

THOSE
WEIRD, *PERVY* DRAWINGS
THAT KEEP POPPING
UP EVERYWHERE,
THAT'S HIM.

NAH, MAN!
IT WAS SOME
OTHER DUDES.
I SAW THEM.

NO... I MEAN,
YEAH, THEY'RE
PASTING THEM, BUT
THAT GUY MADE
THEM.



YOU KNOW
SARAH BENES?
PHIL BOWLER'S
CHICK?

NOT
RINGING ANY
BELLS...

WELL, ANYWAY!
THE WAY I HEAR IT, HE
LIKE, DREW SOME SKETCH OF HER...
AND GIVEN HIS *OTHER* SKETCHES, I
CAN GUESS WHY BOWLER
GOT BACK AT HIM.

I HEARD
A DIFFERENT
VERSION.

BRO, I'M
TELLING YOU --
GUY'S A FAG. HE
HIT ON ONE OF
BOWLER'S FRIENDS
AND THEY GOT
HIM BACK FOR
IT.

JUST SAYIN',
DUDE DRAWS TOO MANY
CHICKS FOR SOMEONE
WHO EATS DICK.



YOU DIDN'T
SEE THE
DRAWINGS?

SIGH...

WHAT
DRAWINGS?

AHWW,
YOU MISSED
IT!

GIVE IT A
DAY -- THEY KEEP
POPPING
BACK UP.

SO THESE GUYS
COPIED THE SKETCHES AND
STAPLED THEM ON WALLS
ALL OVER CAMPUS.

HAH! I WAS
WONDERING WHAT THOSE
THINGS WERE.

FUCKED UP
STUFF, RIGHT?

OH, YOU
POOR, INNOCENT
SOUL! I REALLY
NEED TO INTRODUCE
YOU TO THE WONDERS
OF MENTAL!



DUDE,
HURRY
UP!

'SOKAY!
I'M DONE!

SO YEAH...
COLLEGE.

MY FIRST MONTH ON
THAT SMALL CAMPUS I
WAS HARSHLY REMINDED
OF AN IMPORTANT
LIFE LESSON...



THERE ARE TWO SUREFIRE WAYS TO FIND YOURSELF THE CENTER OF ATTENTION --

EITHER YOU DO SOMETHING AMAZING...

OR YOU EMBARRASS THE SHIT OUT OF YOURSELF!



I WENT WITH THE *SECOND* OPTION...

NOT BY CHOICE, BELIEVE YOU ME.



NOW, PEOPLE IN THE HALLWAYS ALL HAD DIFFERENT NAMES FOR IT...BUT YEAH --

I CALLED IT THE SKETCHBOOK INCIDENT.

ALL THE RUMORS ASIDE, THE WHOLE THING WAS PRETTY SIMPLE. I WAS DOODLING IN THE CAMPUS CAFETERIA, WHEN SARAH BURNS, A CHARMING GIRL I VAGUELY KNEW, APPROACHED ME AND ASKED IF SHE COULD SEE MY DRAWINGS...

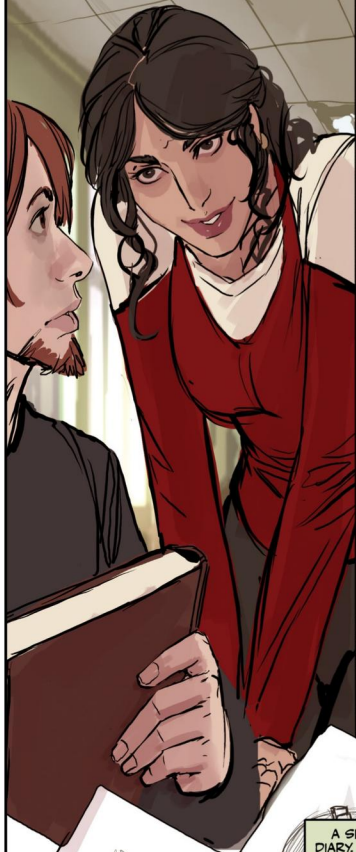
I DODGED HER REQUEST BY CLUMSILY OFFERING TO DRAW HER INSTEAD. SHE SAID YES. HONESTLY, THE WHOLE THING COULD HAVE JUST ENDED THEN AND THERE, BUT I HAD NO SUCH LUCK.

AS IT TURNED OUT, SARAH HAD A BOYFRIEND. A THIRD-YEAR STUDENT WITH A CHIP ON HIS SHOULDER AND A WIDE CIRCLE OF FRIENDS...

POINT IS, WORD GOT AROUND THAT SOME DUDE WAS COZING UP TO HIS GIRLFRIEND.

HE AND HIS FRIENDS STOLE MY SKETCHBOOK, PROBABLY INTENDING TO BURN IT OR SOMETHING. BUT AFTER LOOKING THROUGH IT, THEY FOUND ANOTHER USE FOR ITS CONTENTS.

HENCE, THE SHITSTORM I WAS ABOUT TO FACE.



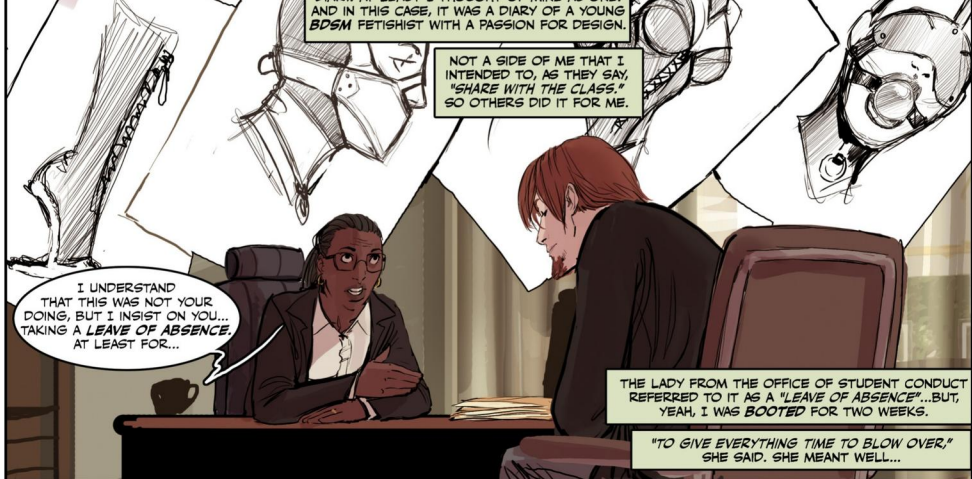
A SKETCHBOOK IS SORT OF AN ARTISTIC DIARY. AT LEAST I THOUGHT OF MINE AS ONE. AND IN THIS CASE, IT WAS A DIARY OF A YOUNG **BDSM** FETISHIST WITH A PASSION FOR DESIGN.

NOT A SIDE OF ME THAT I INTENDED TO, AS THEY SAY, "SHARE WITH THE CLASS," SO OTHERS DID IT FOR ME.

I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS WAS NOT YOUR DOING, BUT I INSIST ON YOU... TAKING A LEAVE OF ABSENCE. AT LEAST FOR...

THE LADY FROM THE OFFICE OF STUDENT CONDUCT REFERRED TO IT AS A "LEAVE OF ABSENCE"...BUT, YEAH, I WAS BOOTED FOR TWO WEEKS.

"TO GIVE EVERYTHING TIME TO BLOW OVER," SHE SAID. SHE MEANT WELL...





IT DIDN'T WORK.

AS IT TURNED OUT, JUST LIKE IN HIGH SCHOOL, **EMBARRASSMENT** HAD STAYING POWER.



TO MAKE THINGS WORSE, WHERE SIMPLE INFORMATION MIGHT FADE, DRAWINGS WERE MORE PERMANENT, AND COPY INK BOUNTIFUL...

SO IT ALL TURNED INTO A JOKE WITH A SEEMINGLY ENDLESS SERIES OF PUNCHLINES. EMPHASIS ON THE "PUNCH!"



I BECAME A **MEME**. AN EASY AND EFFECTIVE WAY FOR OTHERS TO DISTRACT THEMSELVES FROM THEIR OWN INSECURITIES AND FUCKUPS...

TO POINT AT AND SAY: "YEAH, I MESS^{ED} UP, BUT I'M NO **S/M BENSON!**"

I GUESS, IN THAT WAY I MADE A LOT OF LIVES EASIER...

THIS SHIT WENT ON FOR OVER **TWO MONTHS**.

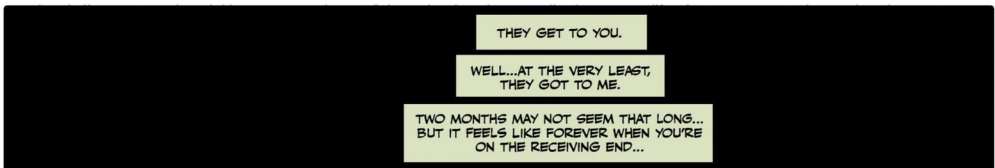


NOW, I'D LOVE TO TELL YOU THAT I SIMPLY EMBRACED THE LONER LIFESTYLE.

BUT THE ROMANTICIZED NOTION OF A LONE WOLF WITH A **FUCK-'EM-ALL** ATTITUDE IS OFTEN JUST PRETENSE.

TRUTH IS, EXCLUSION, DERISION, LONELINESS...

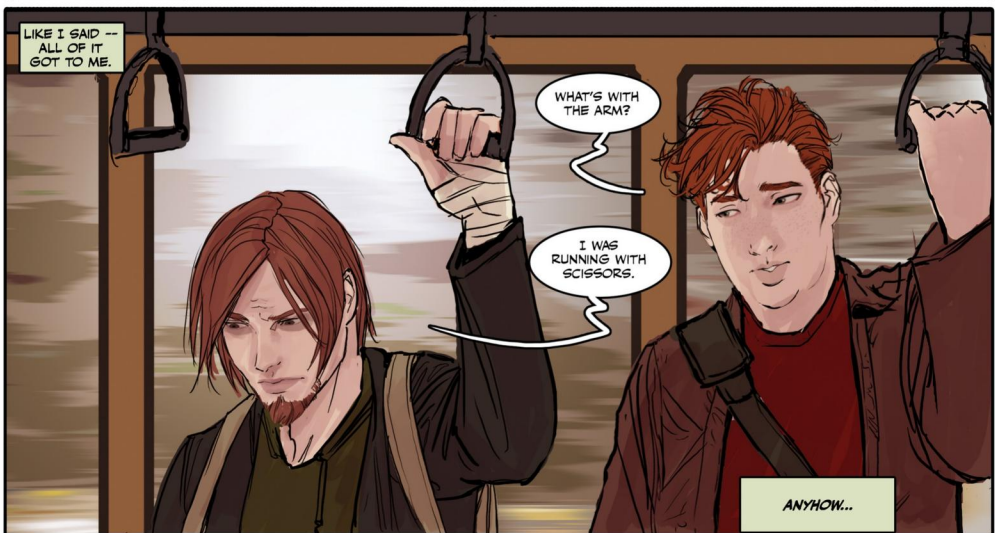
CONSTANT MOCKERY...



THEY GET TO YOU.

WELL...AT THE VERY LEAST, THEY GOT TO ME.

TWO MONTHS MAY NOT SEEM THAT LONG... BUT IT FEELS LIKE FOREVER WHEN YOU'RE ON THE RECEIVING END...



LIKE I SAID -- ALL OF IT GOT TO ME.

WHAT'S WITH THE ARM?

I WAS RUNNING WITH SCISSORS.

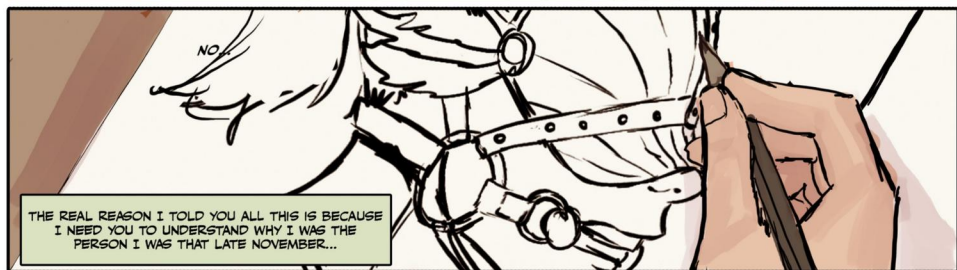
ANYHOW...



WHY AM I TELLING YOU ALL THIS?

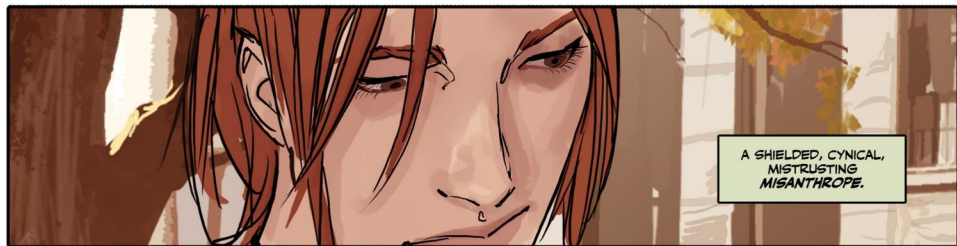
CERTAINLY NOT FOR
PITY'S SAKE...

NOR AM I TRYING TO SET
UP SOME *ANTAGONIST* FOR MY COLLEGE
YEARS. HELL, THE ORIGINAL CREW DROPPED THE
JOKE SOON AFTER -- LIKE ANY MEME, IT WAS
OTHERS WHO PICKED UP ON IT AND SPREAD IT.



NO.

THE REAL REASON I TOLD YOU ALL THIS IS BECAUSE
I NEED YOU TO UNDERSTAND WHY I WAS THE
PERSON I WAS THAT LATE NOVEMBER...



A SHIELDED, CYNICAL,
MISTRUSTING
MISANTHROPE.



IN HINDSIGHT,
IT SEEMED IT
WOULD TAKE A
MIRACLE TO SNAP
ME OUT OF MY
GLOOM...

AS IT TURNED OUT,
I DIDN'T NEED A MIRACLE...
JUST A *KINDRED SPIRIT* --
SOMEONE WHO
SPOKE MY LANGUAGE.

IS THAT A
PONY-GIRL
OUTFIT?





SO NATURALLY,
WHEN SUCH
A PERSON
APPROACHED ME...

UM... SORRY.
I DIDN'T MEAN
TO STARE. I...

I WAS JUST
PASSING BY, AND IT
SORT OF CAUGHT
MY EYE.

SU-U-URE
IT DID...



I TOTALLY BLEW HER OFF.

AND I'M ABSOLUTELY
SURE YOU DON'T MAKE IT
YOUR HABIT TO POKE YOUR
NOSE IN OTHER PEOPLE'S
BUSINESS, EITHER.

N-NO...
I MEAN...
I DON'T...

UH-
HUH...



WELL...
I'LL BE ON
MY WAY.

I'M SURE YOU
HAVE ALL THE
MATERIAL YOU NEED
FOR A NICE *GOSSIP*
SESSION WITH YOUR
CHEERLEADER
FRIENDS.



NOW... I KNOW THAT SEEMED HARSH,
BUT I HAD MY REASONS.

IN THOSE DAYS AFTER THE SKETCHBOOK INCIDENT, PRETTY MUCH THE ONLY GIRLS THAT WOULD GO NEAR ME WERE TRYING TO MESS WITH ME. USUALLY PRETENDING THEY WERE INTO THIS "BONDAGE STUFF."

THEIR APPROACH WAS VERY PREDICTABLE.

YOU COULD SEE THEM COMING FROM A MILE AWAY.

FUCK, WITH THEIR BARELY SUPPRESSED LAUGHTER, YOU DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO *SEE* THEM.

IN THE END, MY PATIENCE FOR THEIR BULLSHIT GREW THIN, AND MY SKIN THICK AND COVERED IN SPIKES.



YOU'RE THAT GUY THAT'S INTO LIKE, *ROPES* AND *LEATHER* AND STUFF, RIGHT?



S/M BENSON, RIGHT? LISTEN, MY FRIEND'S SHOELACE BROKE. YOU GOT SOME SPARE ROPE?

KHM...



PPFF... KHM...HEY!



SO, WHERE MIGHT A GIRL FIND A STURDY PAIR OF HANDCUFFS?

HAS THE GIRL TRIED HER PARENTS' SOCK DRAWER? SHOULD BE RIGHT NEXT TO THE *ANAL BEADS*.

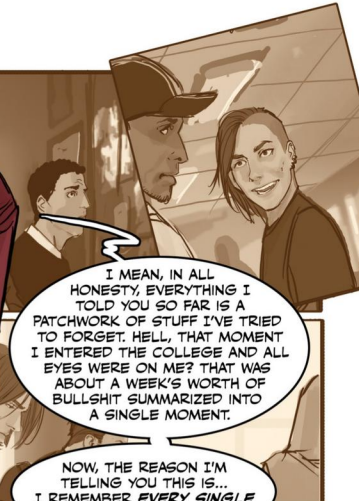
I ULTIMATELY STOPPED GIVING A SHIT, AND AFTER A WHILE, THEY ALL KINDA STARTED BLENDING TOGETHER TO ME.



GUESS THAT'S WHY I'M HERE TODAY STRUGGLING TO REMEMBER HALF OF THEIR FACES.

THEN AGAIN, I *WANTED* THOSE PEOPLE WIPED FROM MY MEMORY.

FADE THOSE DAYS AWAY ALTOGETHER...



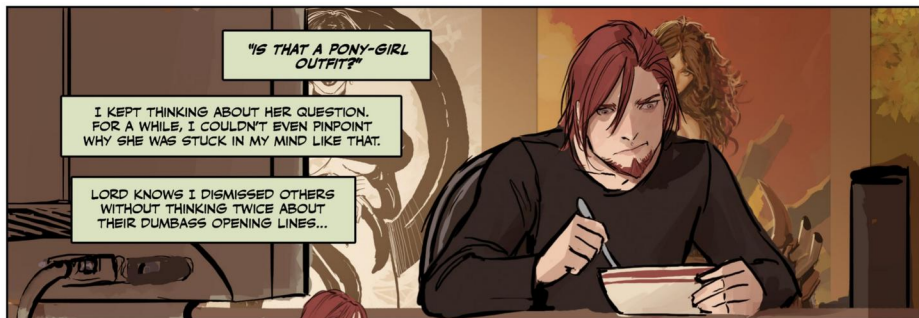
I MEAN, IN ALL HONESTY, EVERYTHING I TOLD YOU SO FAR IS A PATCHWORK OF STUFF I'VE TRIED TO FORGET. HELL, THAT MOMENT I ENTERED THE COLLEGE AND ALL EYES WERE ON ME? THAT WAS ABOUT A WEEK'S WORTH OF BULLSHIT SUMMARIZED INTO A SINGLE MOMENT.

NOW, THE REASON I'M TELLING YOU THIS IS... I REMEMBER *EVERY SINGLE MOMENT* WITH ALLY.

BUT THAT'S ALLY FOR YOU. SHE MADE LIFE *WORTH* REMEMBERING.

AND THE FIRST THING I REMEMBERED ABOUT HER... THE FIRST THING THAT STUCK WITH ME...





"IS THAT A PONY-GIRL
OUTFIT?"

I KEPT THINKING ABOUT HER QUESTION.
FOR A WHILE, I COULDN'T EVEN PINPOINT
WHY SHE WAS STUCK IN MY MIND LIKE THAT.

LORD KNOWS I DISMISSED OTHERS
WITHOUT THINKING TWICE ABOUT
THEIR DUMBASS OPENING LINES...



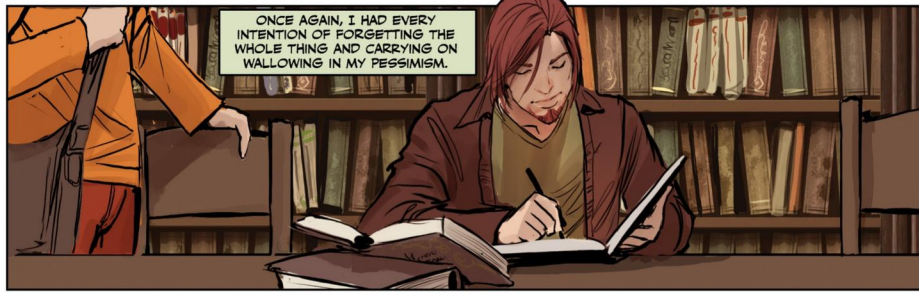
SO WHY NOT THIS ONE?



IT WASN'T UNTIL THE NEXT DAY
THAT I REALIZED WHAT IT WAS.
OTHERS USUALLY APPROACHED ME WITH
VAGUE REFERENCES TO SHIT THEY HEARD
IN ANKWARD JOKES ABOUT BDSM.
WHIPS, CHAINS, ROPES...

BUT SHE DID NO SUCH THING. SHE SAW
A SKETCH AND IMMEDIATELY CALLED IT
FOR WHAT IT WAS -- A PONY-GIRL OUTFIT.

THIS REALIZATION DID NOTHING TO CHANGE MY MIND.
THE WAY I SAW IT, SOONER OR LATER ONE OF THEM
WAS BOUND TO DO SOME RESEARCH TO FUCK WITH ME.



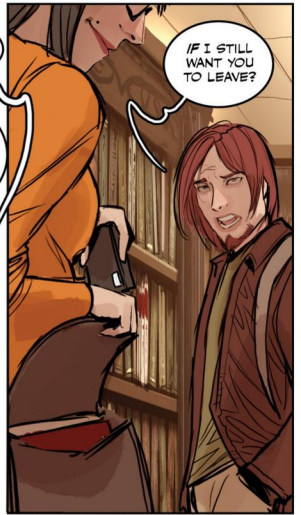
ONCE AGAIN, I HAD EVERY
INTENTION OF FORGETTING THE
WHOLE THING AND CARRYING ON
WALLOWING IN MY PESSIMISM.



HI THERE!
I THINK WE GOT
OFF ON THE WRONG
FOOT LAST TIME, SO TO
PROPERLY INTRODUCE
MYSELF I'M ALLISON
CARTER -- ALLY TO
MY FRIENDS!

ALLY, HOWEVER, HAD
DIFFERENT PLANS.

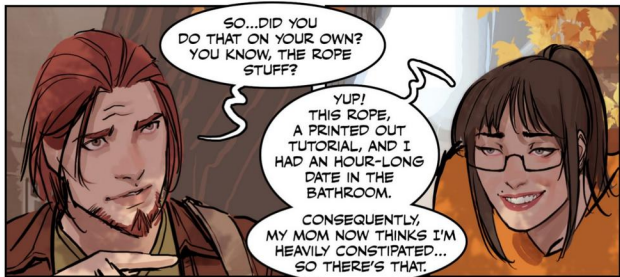




FLASH







NOW, THOSE SHIELDS I MENTIONED RAISING...THEY WERE A TRUSTY BARRICADE MADE OF 100% PURE, COLD CYNICISM. FOR MONTHS, THAT WAS MY LAST LINE OF DEFENSE -- IT KEPT THE ASSHOLES AT BAY. THEY ONLY HAD THEIR FUN IF YOU LET THEM GET TO YOU.

OH, DON'T GET ME WRONG -- THEIR VERBAL BLOWS STILL STUNG ME, BUT MY SHIELD MADE IT SEEM LIKE I HAD NO FUCKS LEFT TO GIVE, SO THEY LOST THEIR INTEREST MUCH SOONER.

THIS BARRICADE OF MISANTHROPY HELD STRONG FOR A LONG TIME AND THEN...THERE SHE WAS.

KNOCKING ON THE PREVIOUSLY IMPENETRABLE WALL, TURNING IT TO GLASS.

I COULD FEEL THE CRACKS SPREADING.

I FELT...VULNERABLE.

DESPERATELY, I HELD UP MY SHIELD ONE LAST TIME.

I CAN'T IMAGINE YOU HAVE PROBLEMS FINDING FRIENDS...

I DON'T... I MEAN... "FRIENDS" IS A STRONG WORD...

NONE OF THEM REALLY KNOW ME. THEY KNOW "COLLEGE ALLY!"

COLLEGE ALLY LISTENS TO THEIR PROBLEMS, LAUGHS AT THEIR JOKEs AND SHIES AWAY FROM SEX TALK BECAUSE SHE MIGHT SPILL OUT A LITTLE TOO MUCH, AND FREAK EVERYONE OUT.

I GUESS I REALLY WANTED SOMEONE IN MY LIFE WHO I COULD TALK TO ABOUT THE OTHER STUFF.

STUFF THAT COLLEGE ALLY KEEPS HIDDEN.

I DON'T KNOW...A FRIEND WHO I COULD BE MYSELF WITH, IN A WAY I CAN'T BE AROUND EVERYONE ELSE.

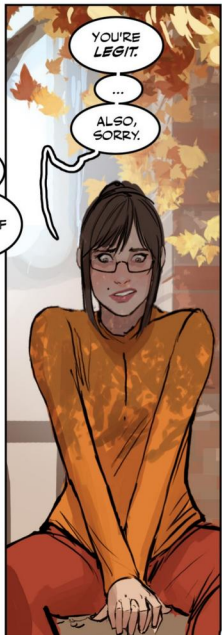




AND YOU DECIDED I WAS THAT PERSON FROM SEEING JUST ONE DRAWING...



YEAH...I MEAN, THAT GOT ME STARTED...
UH, ALL CARDS ON THE TABLE...I MADE SOME EFFORTS TO FIND COPIES OF SOME OF THE PIECES THEY KEEP POSTING...
A BUNCH OF THE PIECES...
LIKE... MOST OF THEM.



YOU'RE LEGIT.
...
ALSO, SORRY.



SHAME!
BURNING!!



AND THERE IT WAS.
WITH THE CREAK OF A ROPE AND SOME HOWLING LAUGHTER, THE LAST OF MY DEFENSES LAY BROKEN.
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A WHILE, I REALIZED... HERE WAS SOMEONE I COULD TRUST.
AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MONTHS, I FELT LIKE MYSELF ONCE AGAIN.

PPFFFT!!!
BWAHA HAHAHAH!



OH, GOD... HEH! THIS IS AWKWARD AS FUCK. ALLY, YOU WANNA GET SOME COFFEE OR SOMETHING?
OH HELL YES!
PREFERABLY SOMEPLACE WITH A DECENT BATHROOM...I REALLY GOTTA GET RID OF THIS ROPE ASAP... IT'S, UM...I DID A GOOD JOB...
A REAL GOOD JOB!



WAIT...YOU DIDN'T LIKE, MAKE THOSE, YOU KNOW, KNOTS?

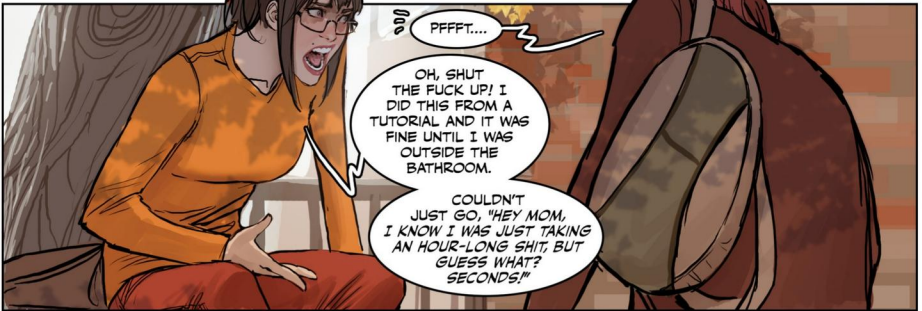
THE...UM...*STIMULATING* ONES?



...NOPE...

UH-HUH...SO, DOES HUNCHING LIKE THAT MAKE IT BETTER?

UH... A LITTLE?



OOO PFFFT...

OH, SHUT THE FUCK UP! I DID THIS FROM A TUTORIAL AND IT WAS FINE UNTIL I WAS OUTSIDE THE BATHROOM.

COULDN'T JUST GO, "HEY MOM, I KNOW I WAS JUST TAKING AN HOUR-LONG SHIT, BUT GUESS WHAT? SECONDS!"



FINE, FINE! LET'S GO FIND YOU A DECENT BATHROOM...

OH! ALSO, YOU GOT LIKE, A PAIR OF SCISSORS OR SOMETHING? I KINDA RUSHED OUT AND FORGOT MINE.



NO. I DO HAVE A BOX CUTTER?

THAT'LL DO!



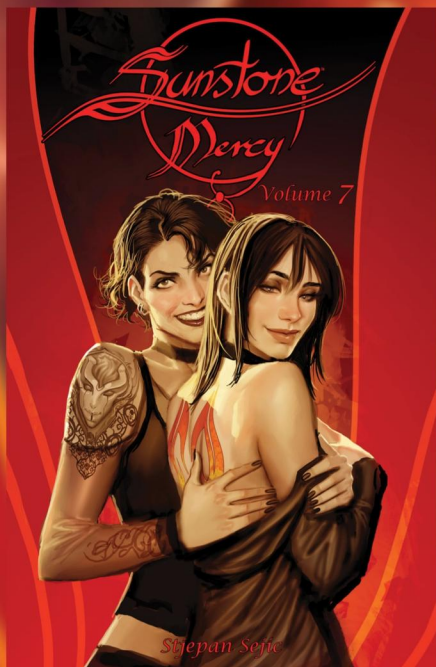
OH, ALSO, HERE'S YOUR CAMERA BACK!



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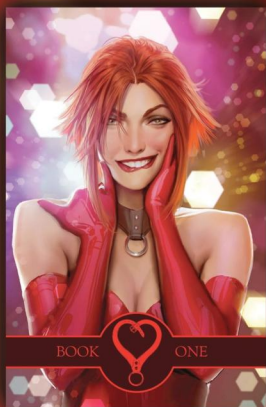
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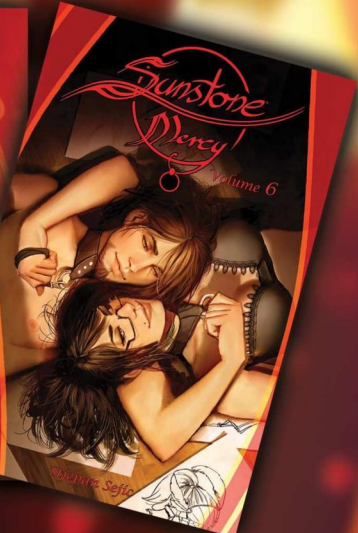


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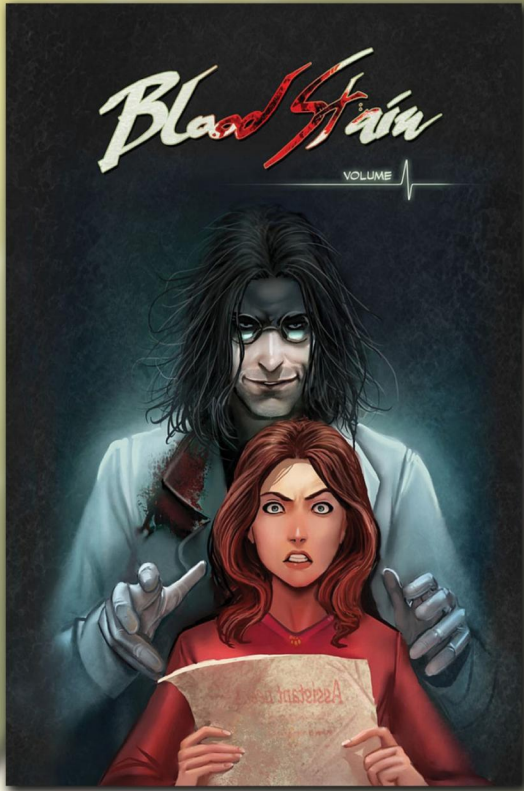
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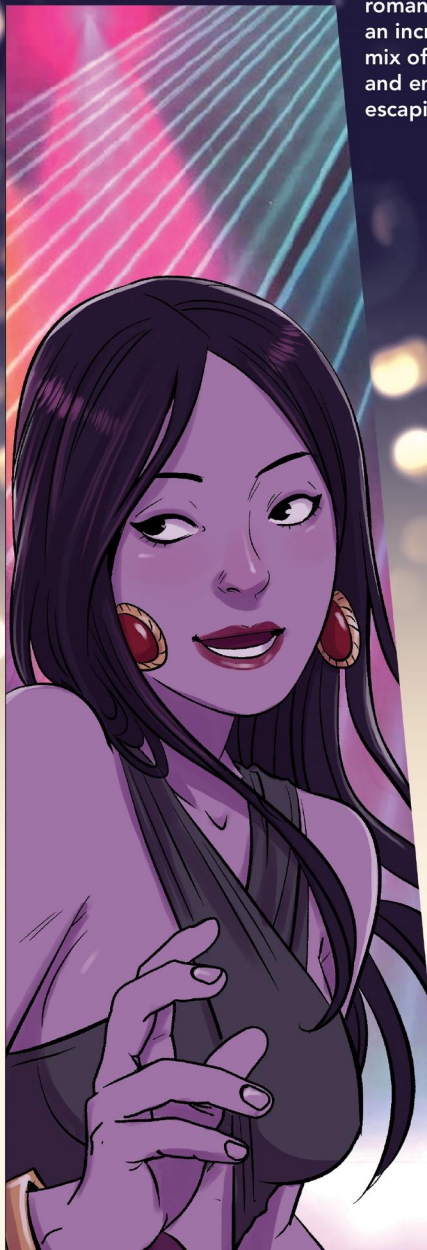
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