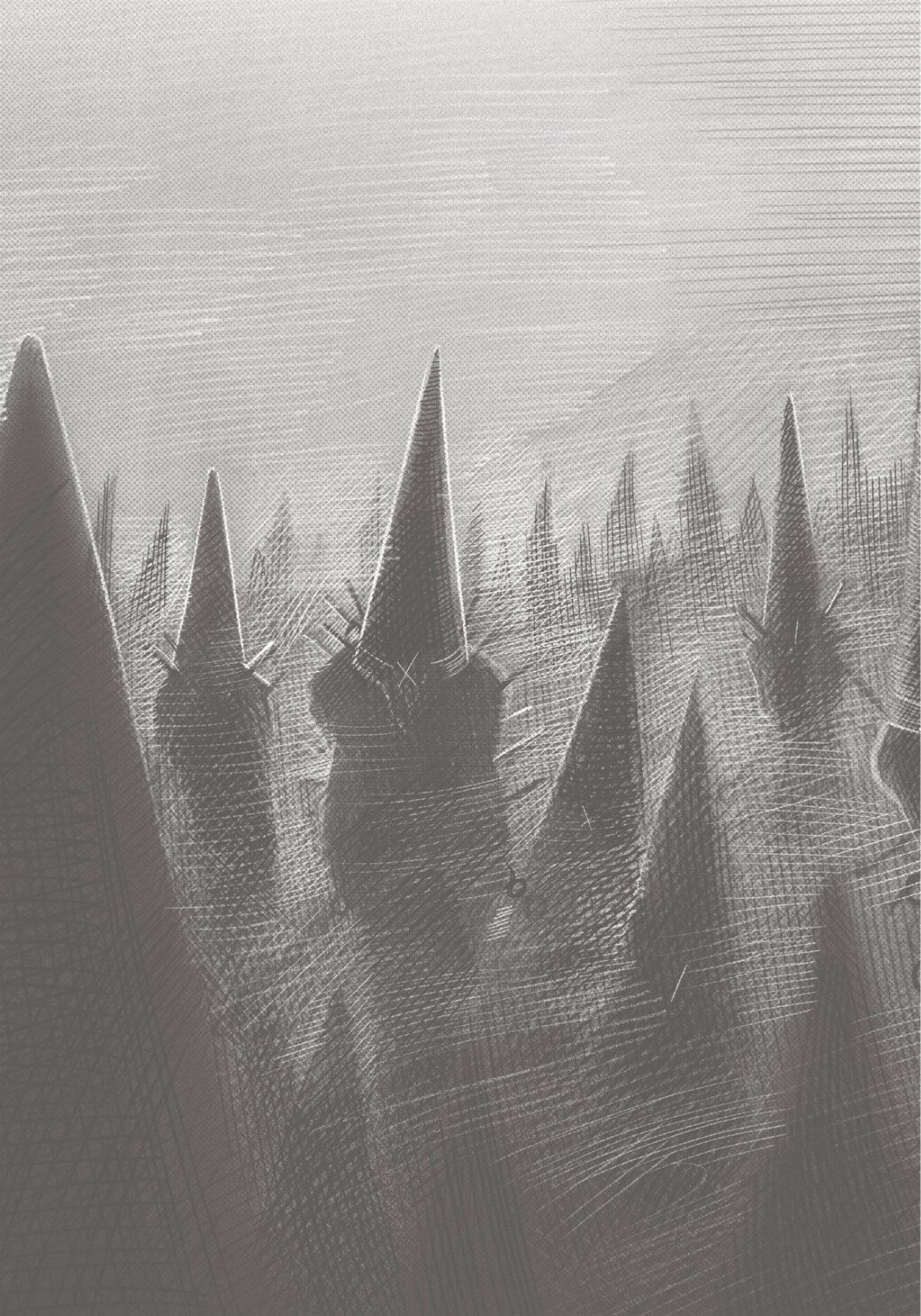
SHADOWPLAY

MIDNIGHT SCHOOL



SAM FONSECA



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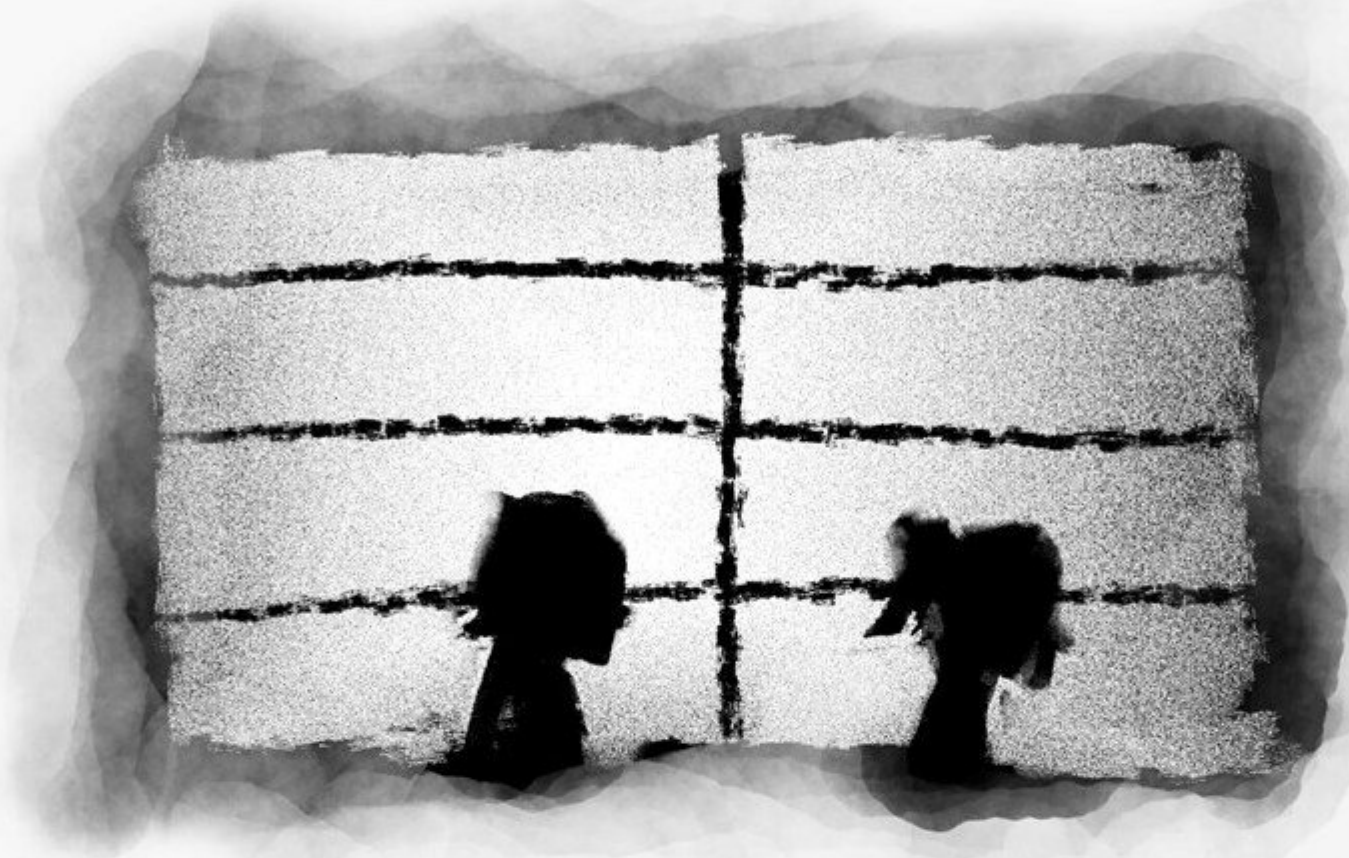
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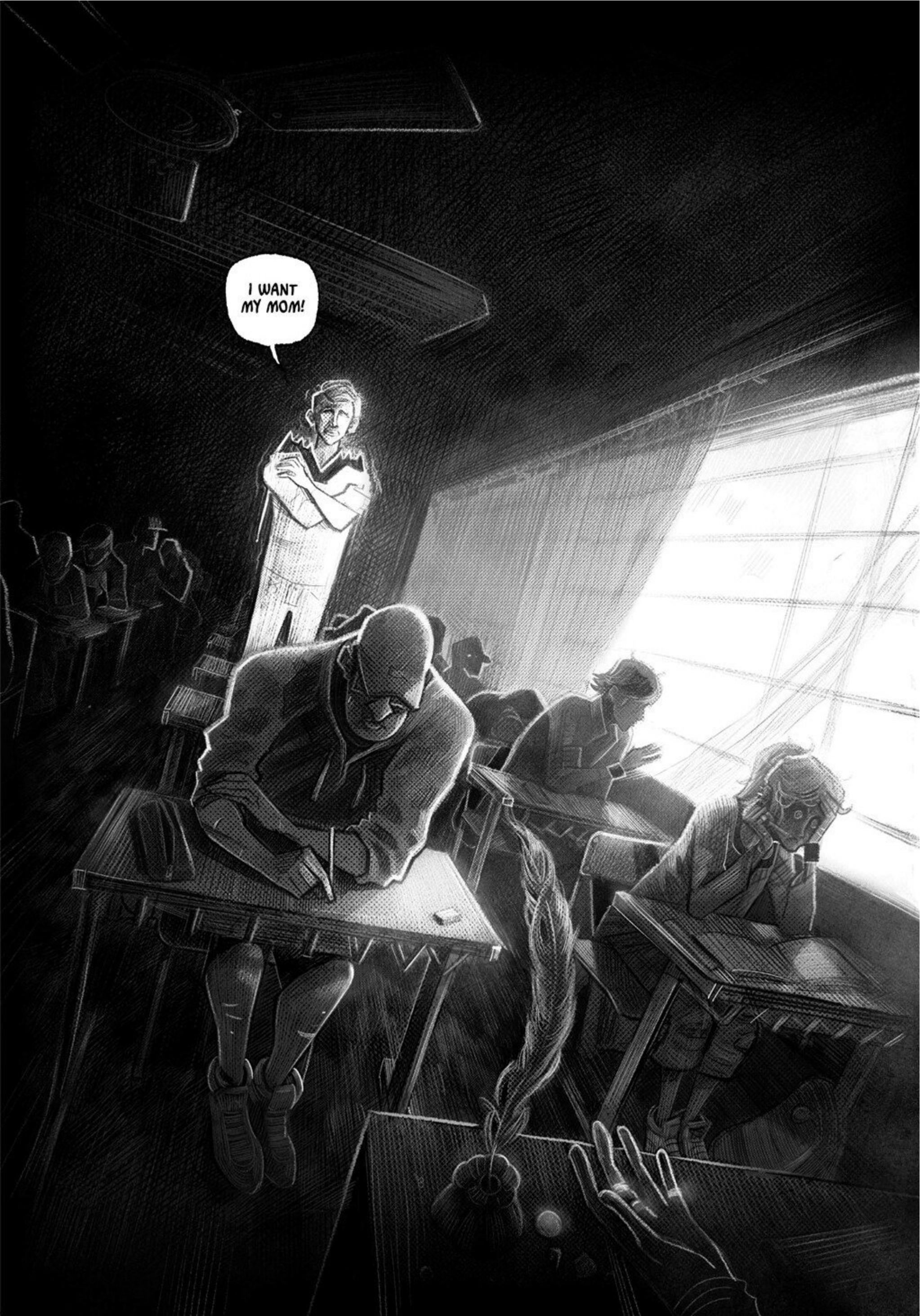


I



The light came from the street. It looked like there was no light on in the entire school, even though it was the evening classes.

You are getting left behind...


I WANT MY MOM!

SIR...

Get down from that chair.

I WANT MY MOM TO BANDAGE MY HANDS.

Attitudes like this show how weak an individual truly is.

BUT THIS THING IS HURTING ME... CAN'T YOU SEE THAT, SIR?

Get off that chair! Now!

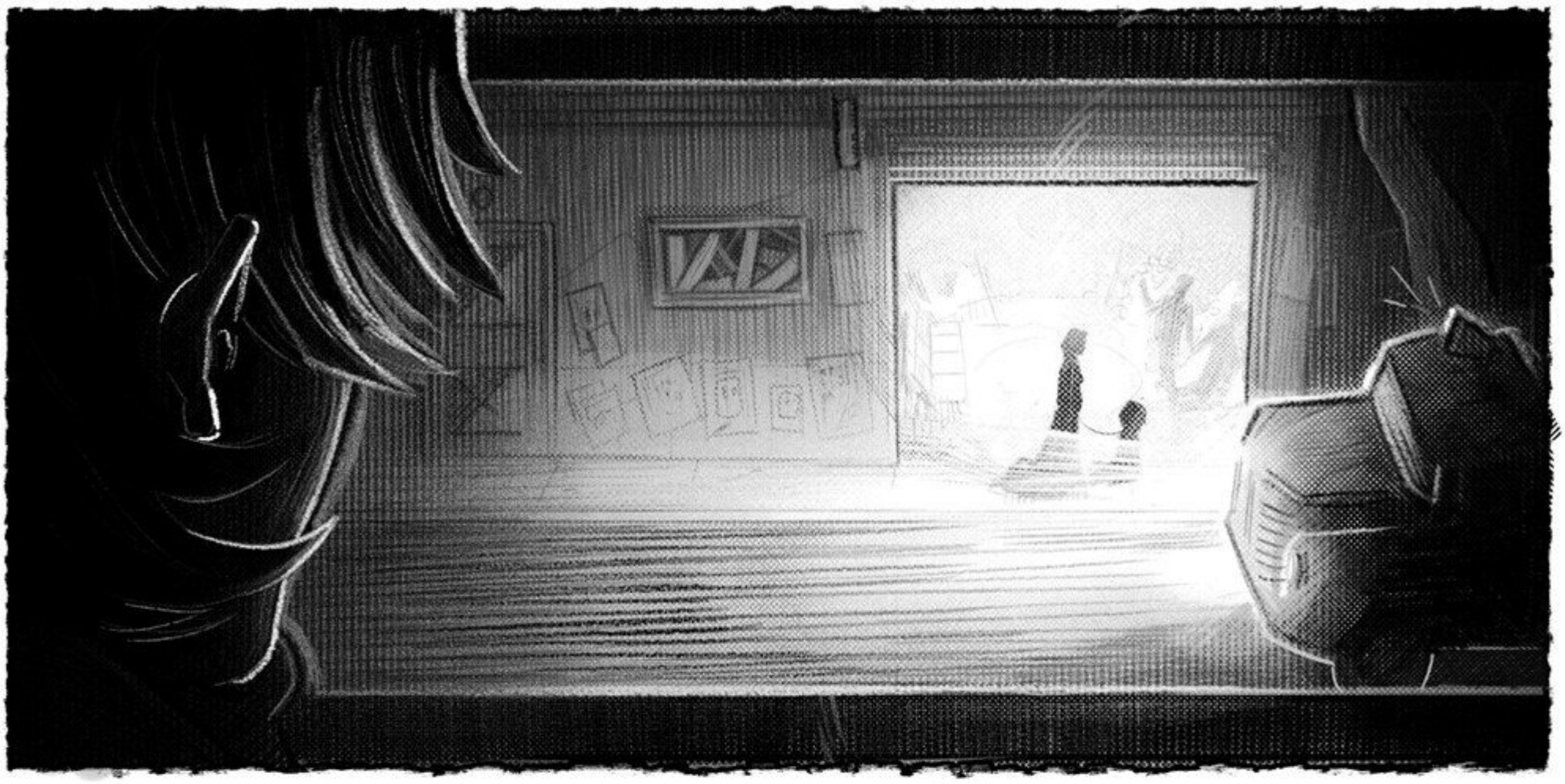
ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME, SIR? CAN'T YOU SEE THAT I'M BLEEDING?

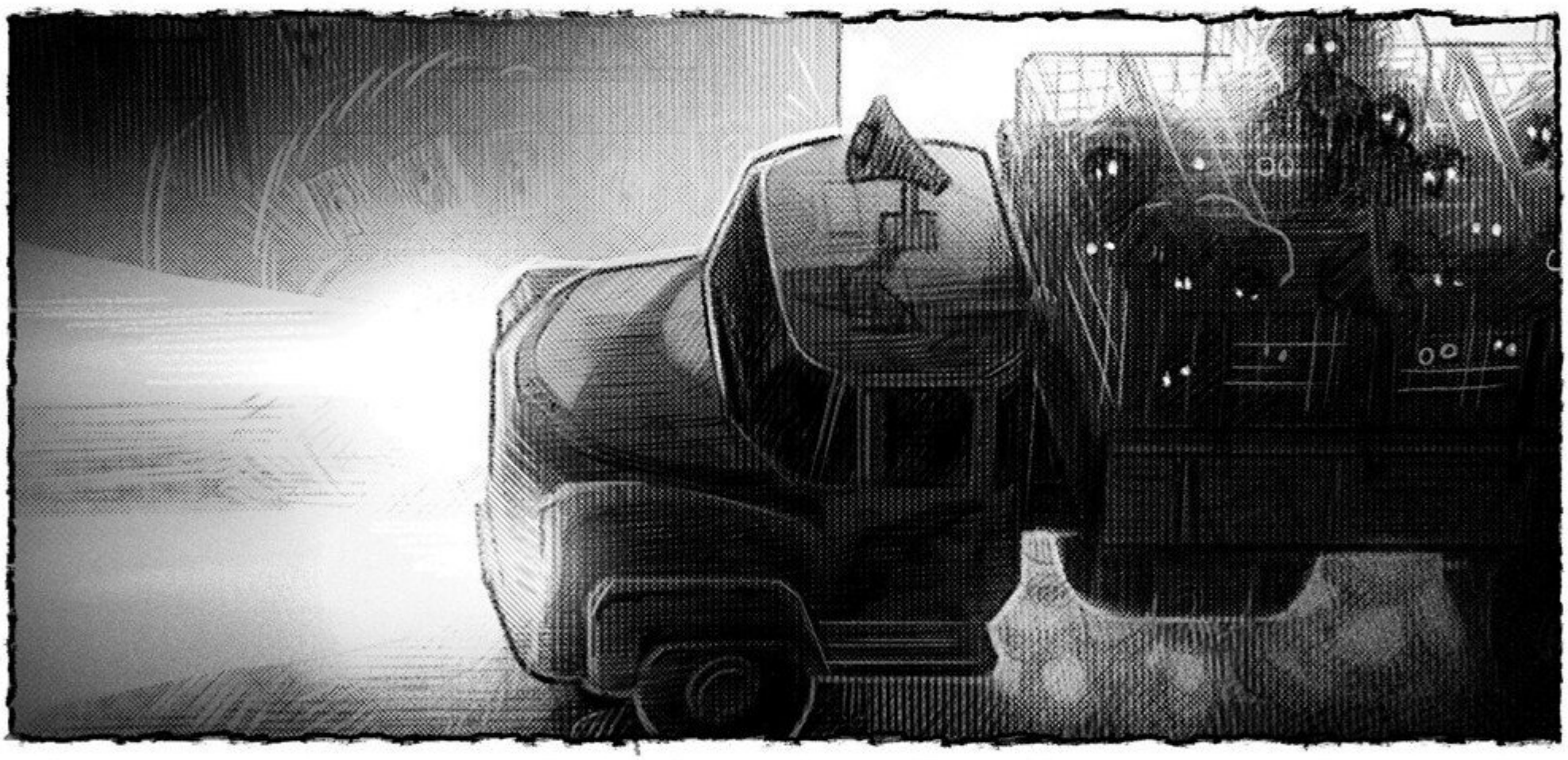
What do you think will happen to you if you keep this up?

SIR, TAKE THIS OFF ME. IT'S HEAVY... IT'S NOT RIGHT.

Oh, you're getting left behind, young man...

You're getting left behind fast!

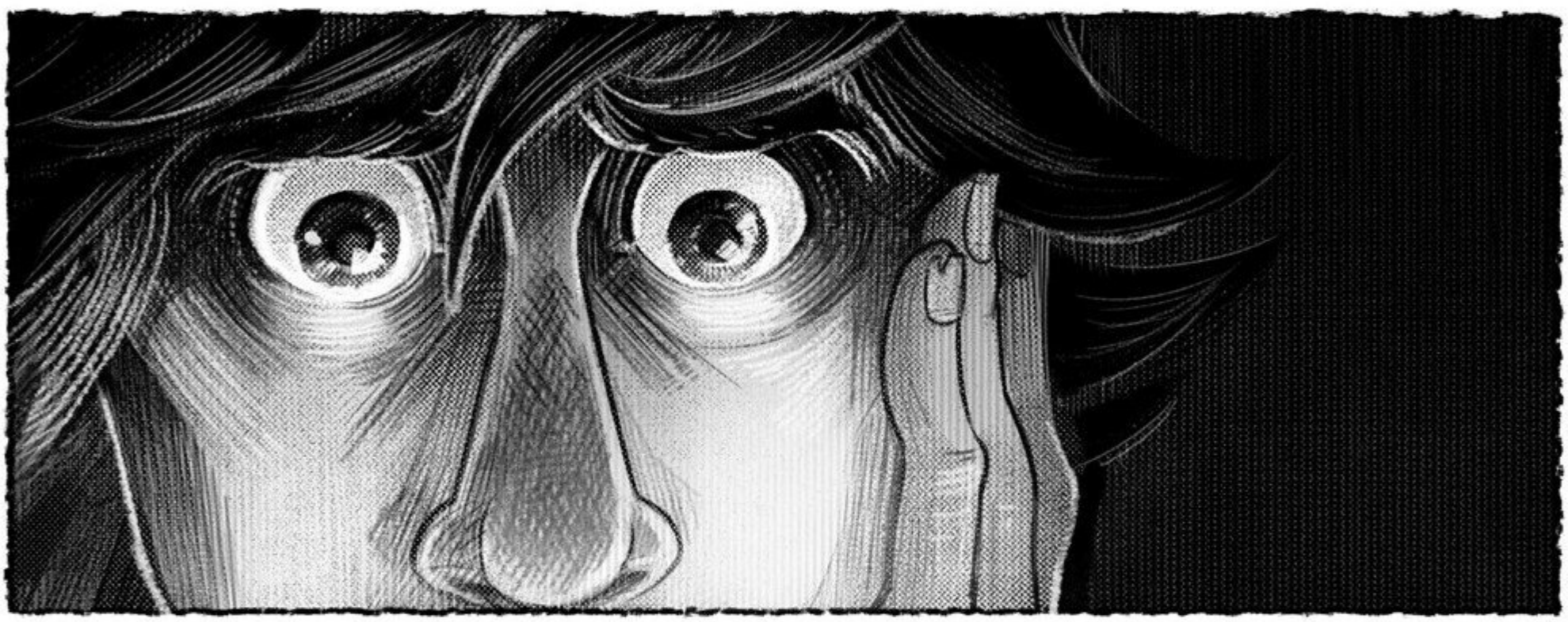







SOMEONE...
HELP ME...
SHADOWPLAY
MIDNIGHT SCHOOL

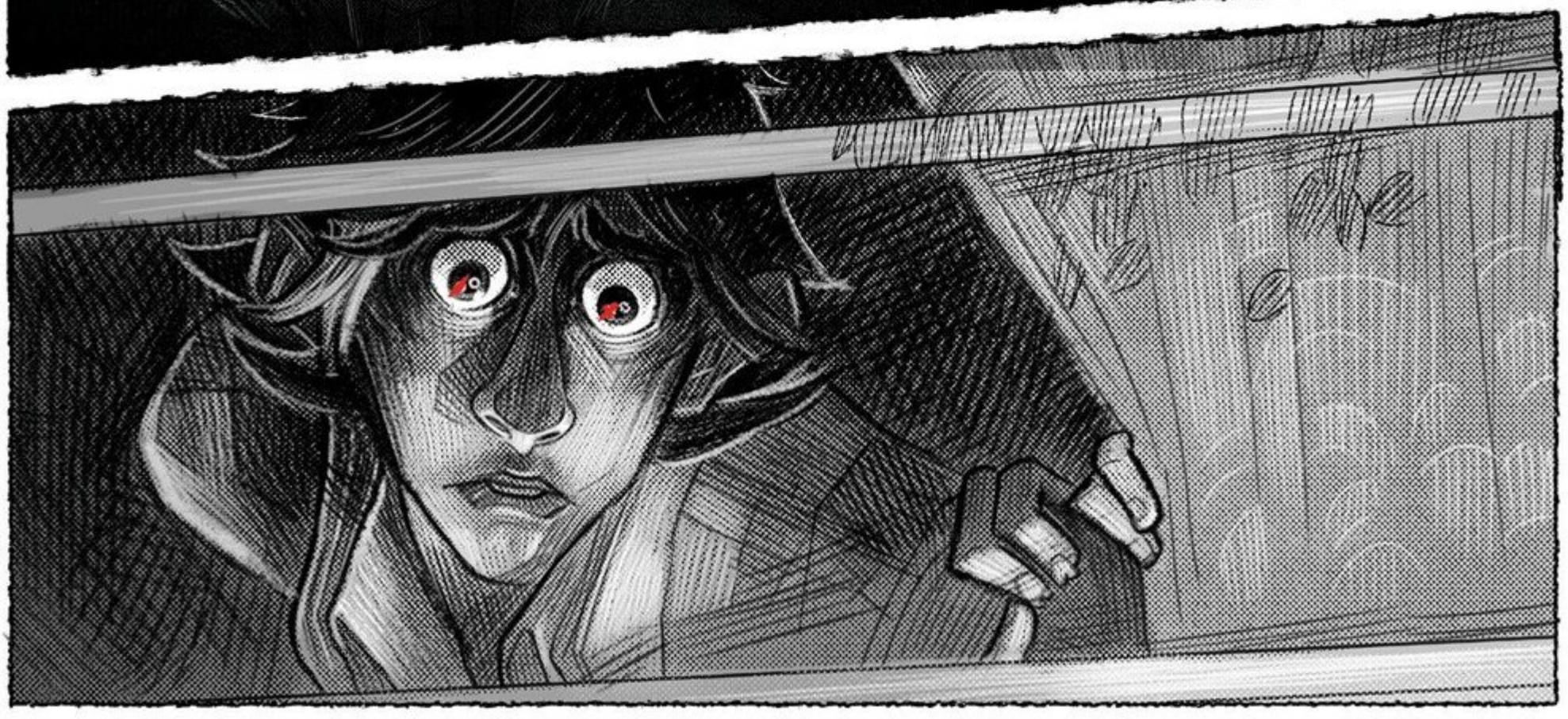




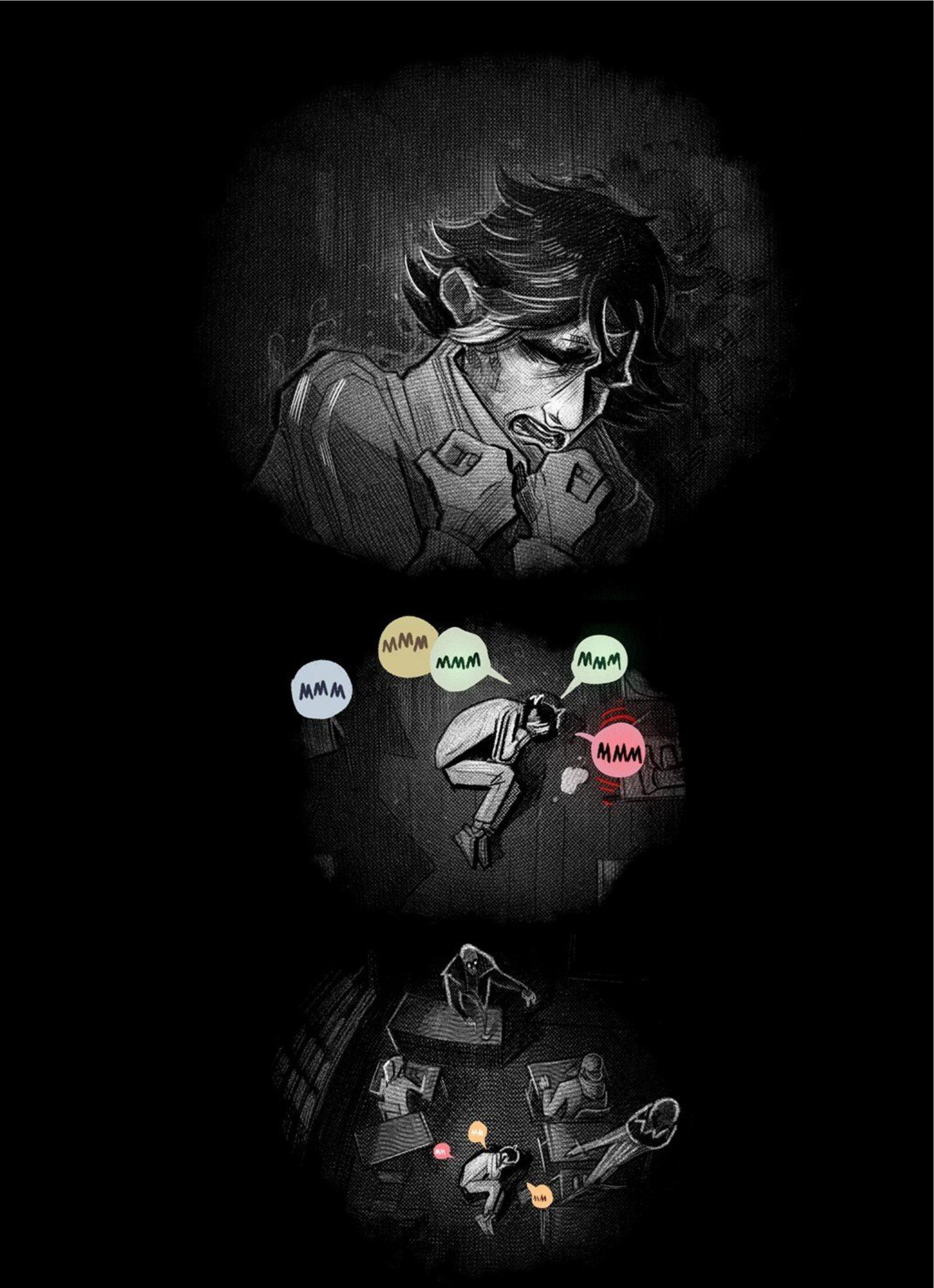










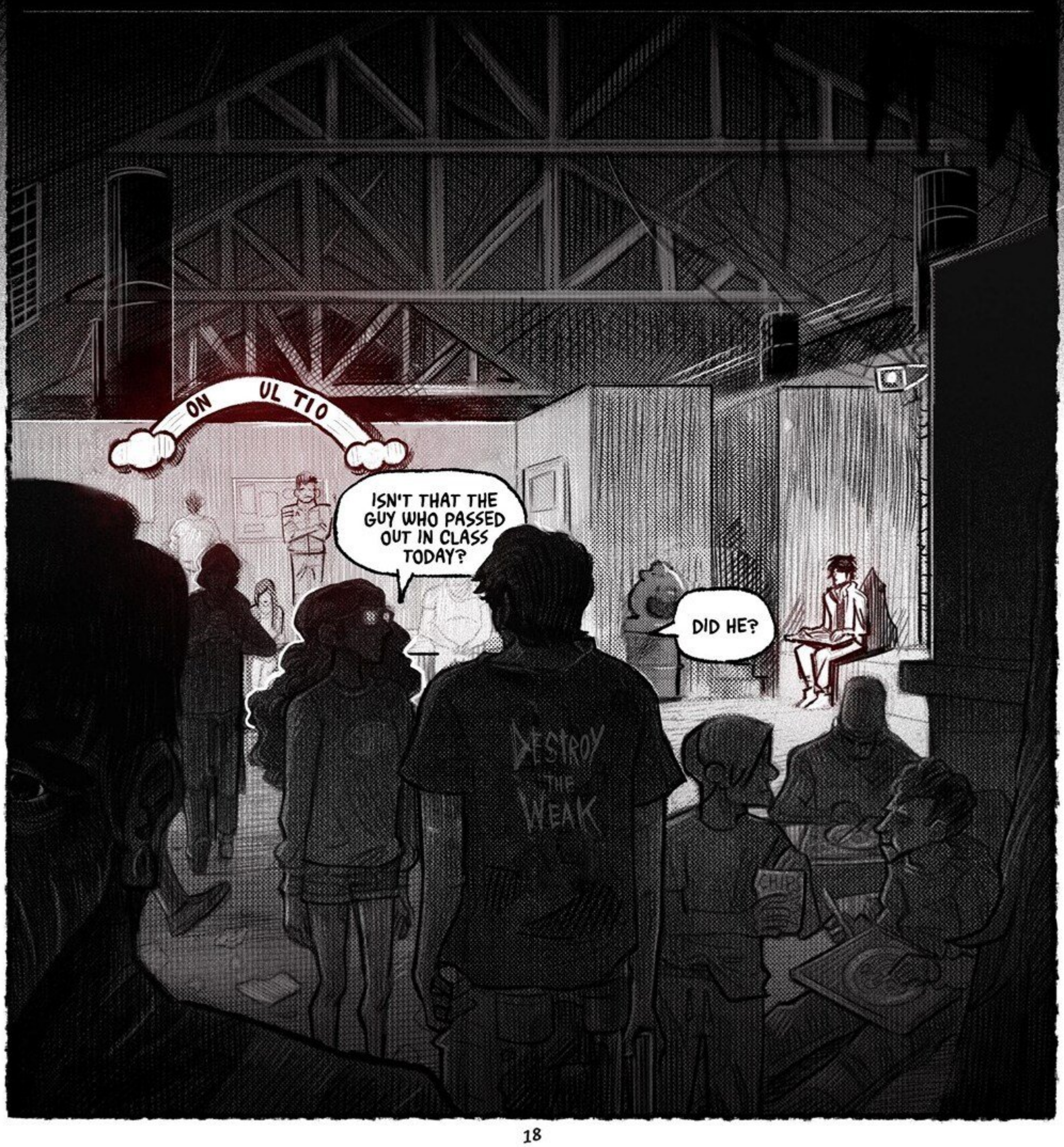

MMM
MMM
MMM
MMM
MMM

ON UL TIO

THE GEOMETRY TEST. HAVE WE HAD IT YET?

I DON'T KNOW. BUT I CAN'T FIND MY COMPASS. HAVE YOU SEEN IT?

NO, I HAVEN'T.


ON ULTIO
ISN'T THAT THE GUY WHO PASSED OUT IN CLASS TODAY?
DID HE?
DESTROY THE WEAK


Attention!
If you came back to school today, raise your right hand.
TRASH


TRASH



The new student can't tell left from right, but at least he raised his hand instead of his foot.

A round of applause for him!

DUMBASS

SHEESH...

DUDE'S A MORON

DON'T LAUGH. HE MIGHT HAVE PROBLEMS.

HEY!

POOR THING.

YOU! HEY! EXCUSE ME...

...ARE YOU REPEATING THE GRADE, TOO? DO YOU REMEMBER ME?

Y-Y-YOU?

I USED TO SIT AT THE BACK OF THE CLASSROOM AND YOU WERE ALWAYS BY THE WINDOW. NOW I'M NEXT TO THE TEACHER.

I--I--I STILL S-SIT BY THE W-WINDOW.

I WAS ALWAYS SLEEPING IN CLASS. I DON'T DO THAT ANYMORE. BUT WHY DID YOU REPEAT THE GRADE?

WH-WHY AM I R-REPEATING?

AT THAT TIME, I WAS HANGING AROUND THE ARCADE ALL DAY LONG, DIDN'T EVEN SHOW UP AT SCHOOL. MAYBE THAT'S WHY YOU DON'T REMEMBER M--

STAY AWAY FROM ME!

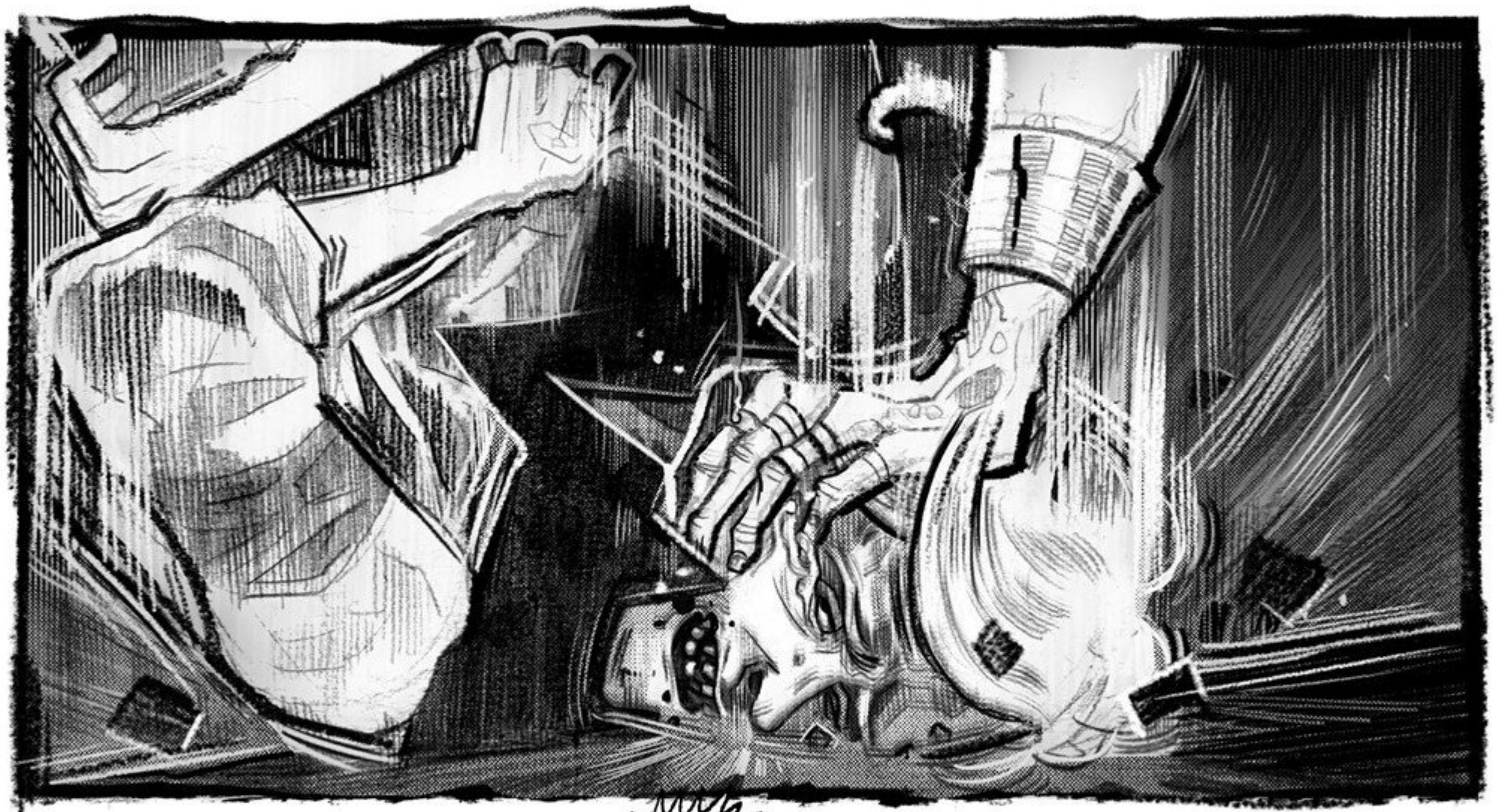
GO AWAY, PLEASE!

FRAUD!

PLEASE...

FRAUD!






NO!

You pick on the weak...but you are weak yourself. And useless!

LET'S GO BACK. RECESS IS ALMOST OVER.









MM MMMM M MM MM...

What makes someone successful? Effort. If you don't work hard enough, you won't succeed.

So I wonder what you think you'll achieve with grades like yours.

M MMMMMM...

MMM...

Stop humming!

You are lazy and lack ambition. A disappointment!

Not only to me but also to your parents. They will never tell you that, but I will.

If you don't change and don't do what I tell you to, you will never amount to anything in life.

Anyway...

...New student!

Do you think you can erase the blackboard for me?

Is such a simple task within your capabilities?

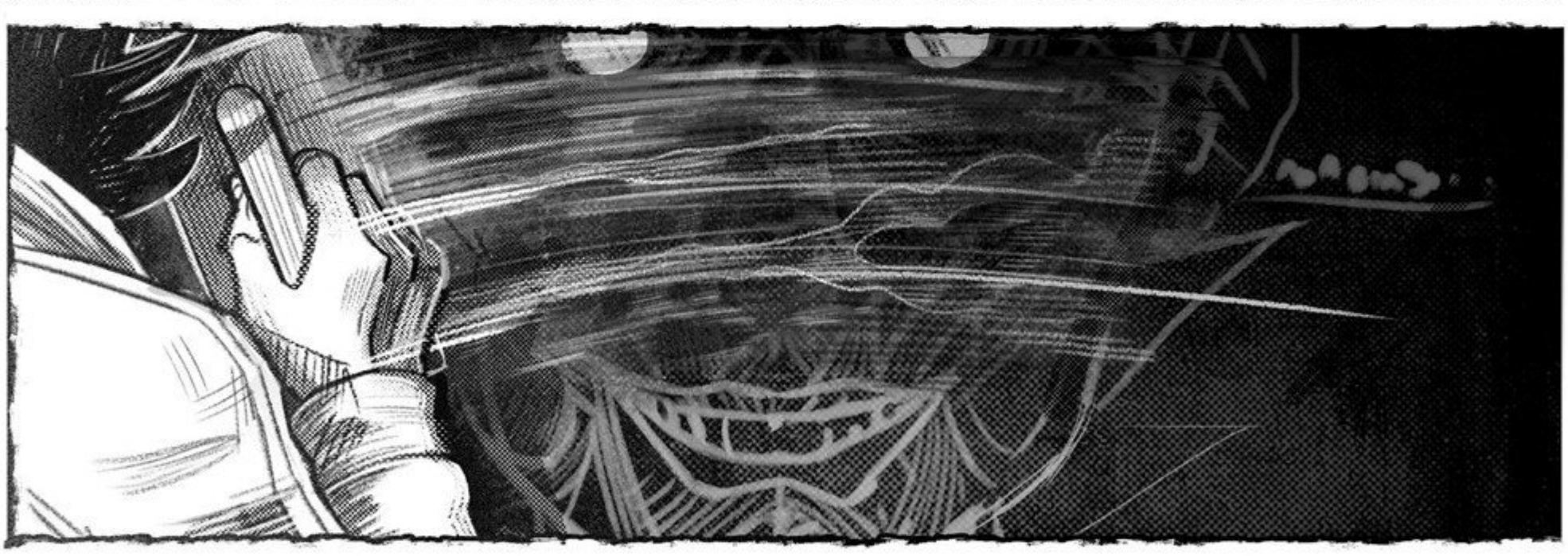
Y-Y-YES, S-SIR.

C-CAN I ERASE IT? HAS EVERYBODY F-FINISHED IT?

COOL!









U R not gud enuff

U R not gud enuff

U R not gud enuff

U R not gud enuff

...?!

U R not gud enuf

I-I'M...

...N-NOT...

...G-GOOD...

...EN-ENOUGH?

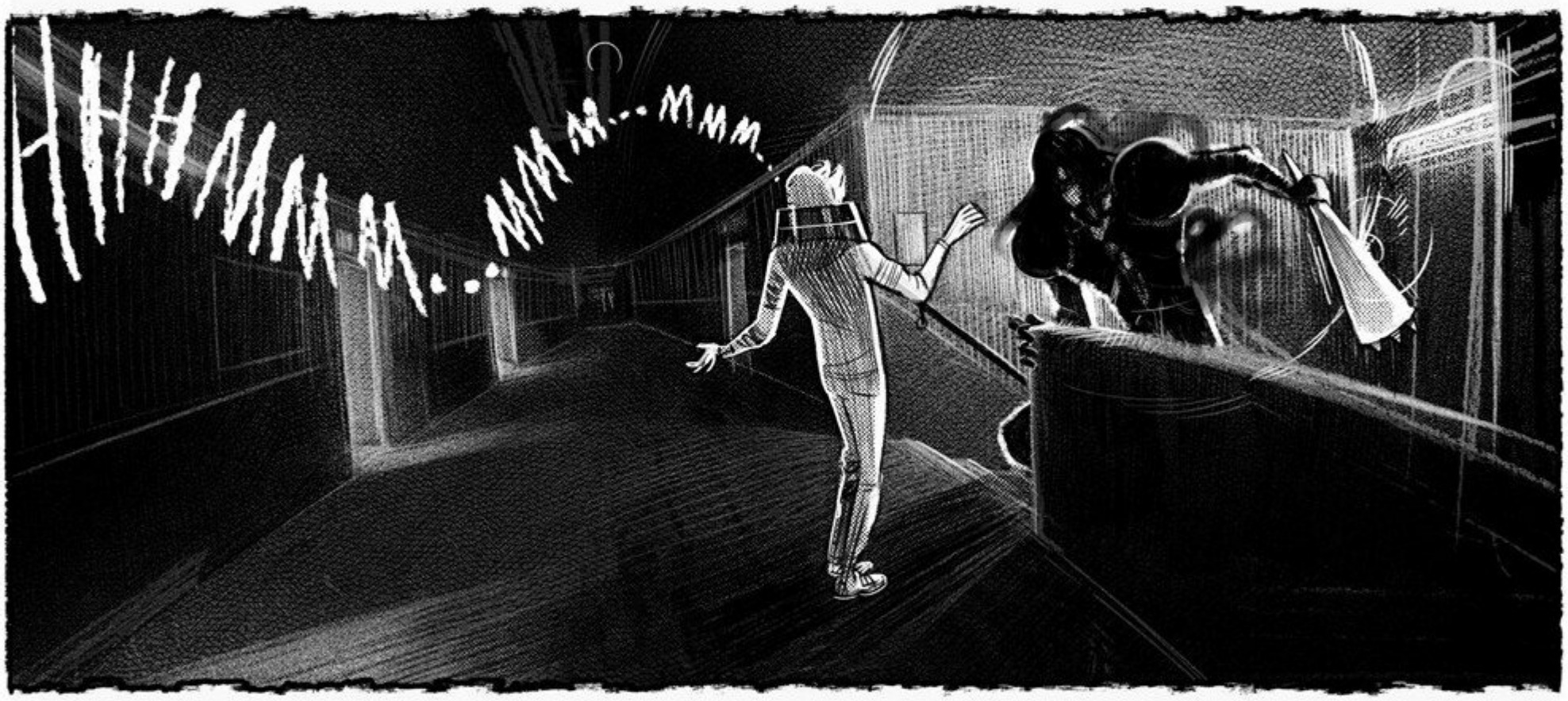
U R not gud enuff

MMMMHHHHH

HHHHHHRRRHHH

HHHHHHHHHRRRGHMMMMM


HHMMMMMMMMM


HHMMM...MMM...MMM


MMM

WH-WHAT'S H-HAPPENING? WH-WHO IS THAT?

IT'S THE PRINCIPAL.

HE C-CAN'T BEAT HIM UP! WHY D-D-DID HE DO THAT?

HE'S ALREADY RECEIVED TWO WARNINGS. NOW...



...HE'S BEING SUSPENDED.

MMMMMMMMMMMMMMM


B-BUT WHY WAS HE B-BEATEN UP LIKE TH-THAT?
BECAUSE HE'S A VERY DISOBEDIENT STUDENT, YOU KNOW?
B-BUT ...
WHILE YOU AND I MAKE AN EFFORT TO STUDY HARD IN ORDER TO BE SOMEONE IN LIFE, OUR CLASSMATE IS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR TROUBLE.


WH-WHAT DID HE DO?
MANY THINGS?

BUT WHAT EX-EXAC... EXACTLY?

I...

...I CAN'T REMEMBER NOW. BUT WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT IS THAT...

WELL, IF WE DON'T GET OURSELVES IN TROUBLE, WE DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THAT.

I MEAN, HOW DIFFICULT IS IT TO STAY IN LINE? JUST DON'T FOOL AROUND AND DON'T BE STUPID, RIGHT?

EVERYONE IN THIS SCHOOL IS POOR. IF LIFE IS A GAME, WE PLAY IT IN THE "VERY HARD" MODE! DO YOU WANT TO BE POOR FOREVER? I DON'T. WE CAN'T AFFORD TO FOOL AROUND.

EYES ON THE PRIZE! WE CAN ALL BE WHATEVER WE WANT TO BE! THERE'S NO REASON TO REBEL, THAT'S WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY.

GOD HELPS THOSE WHO HELP THEMSELVES, YOU KNOW?

RIGHT.

SEE YOU TOMORROW!

TOMORROW IS SATURDAY! SEE YOU ON MONDAY!

OH, THAT'S RIGHT! BYE!

ARE YOU TAKING THE BUS, TOO? WE WAIT FOR IT HERE AT THE FRONT.

MY B-BROTHER IS COMING TO G-GET ME. HE IS GETTING OUT OF W-WORK.

COOL. HEY! WEREN'T YOU IN A BAND LAST YEAR? YOU PLAYED THE KEYBOARDS, RIGHT? ARE YOU STILL PLAYING?

B-BAND?

I NEED TO GET A FULL SCHOLARSHIP THIS YEAR. I DON'T HAVE TIME TO DO ANYTHING ELSE.

OH.

YOU SEE, IT'S A GOVERNMENT PROJECT. IF I GET IN THE TOP 5 PERCENT OF THE GRADES IN EVERY SUBJECT THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE YEAR, I CAN GET A SCHOLARSHIP TO THE BEST UNIVERSITY IN THE COUNTRY!

W-WOW.

THEN I'LL GRADUATE, GET A GOOD JOB, AND MAKE ENOUGH MONEY SO, ONE DAY, MY FAMILY AND I WILL BE ABLE TO MOVE OUT OF HERE.

WE'LL GET OUT OF THIS HELL.

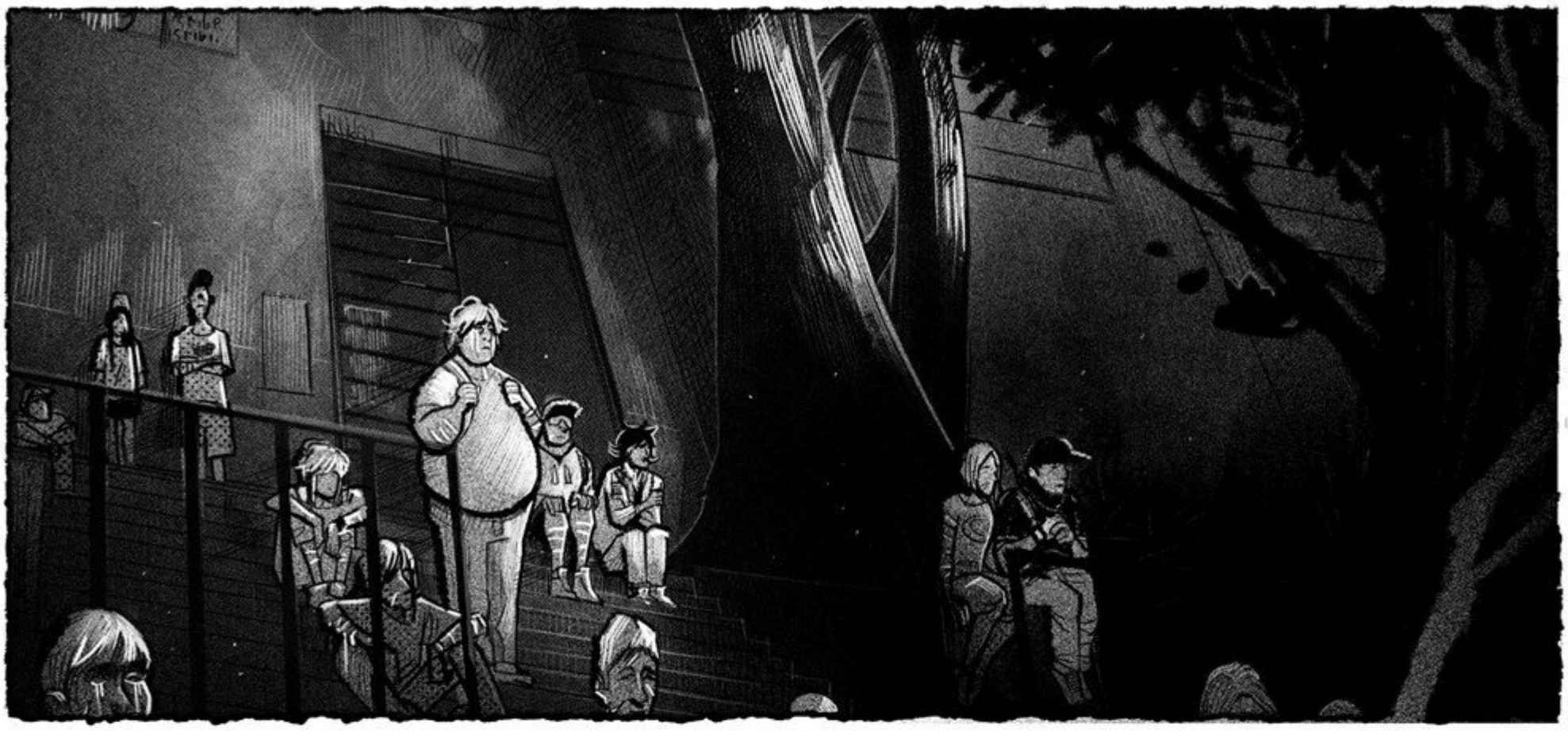
HAHA. BUT, TODAY...I JUST WANNA REST. IT WAS A FULL DAY.

IT R-REALLY WAS.


EEEEEE
EEEEE

EEEE


EEEEEEEE






GOOD MORNING.
GOOD MORNING.

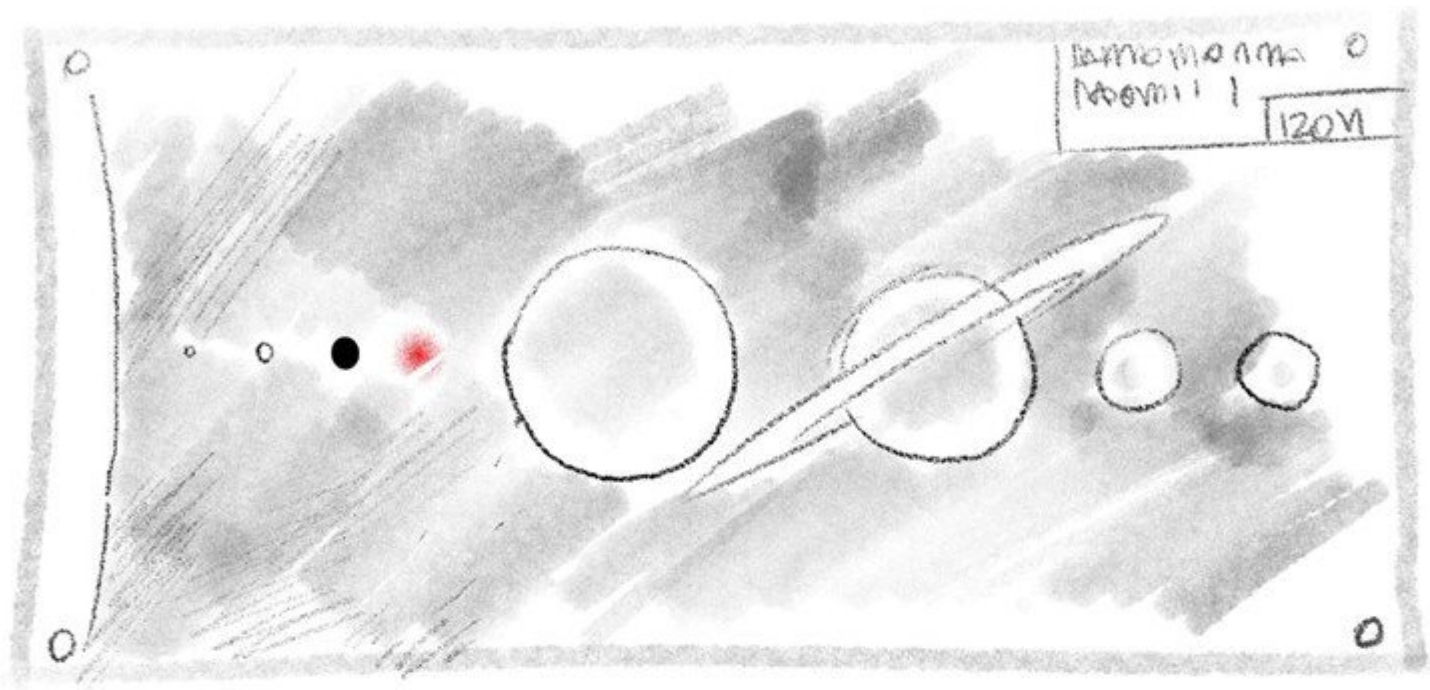




The sensation of lying down on the bed after a full day is like nothing else. But nobody in this school would feel that tonight. Or at any other night after that.

II

Back at the classroom, some things seemed to be the same: the old wooden floor that creaked at every step, the poster of the solar system behind the teacher.



But the boy felt that something was odd. Someone was sitting next to him yesterday. Yesterday? Or another day? But today, there were only footprints on the empty chair.



You don't remember basic math.

You have forgotten everything! How is that possible?

Terrible students.

Do you want to stay here forever?

Because if you don't get your act together, you will!

How many hours of sunlight do we get here in this city in September?

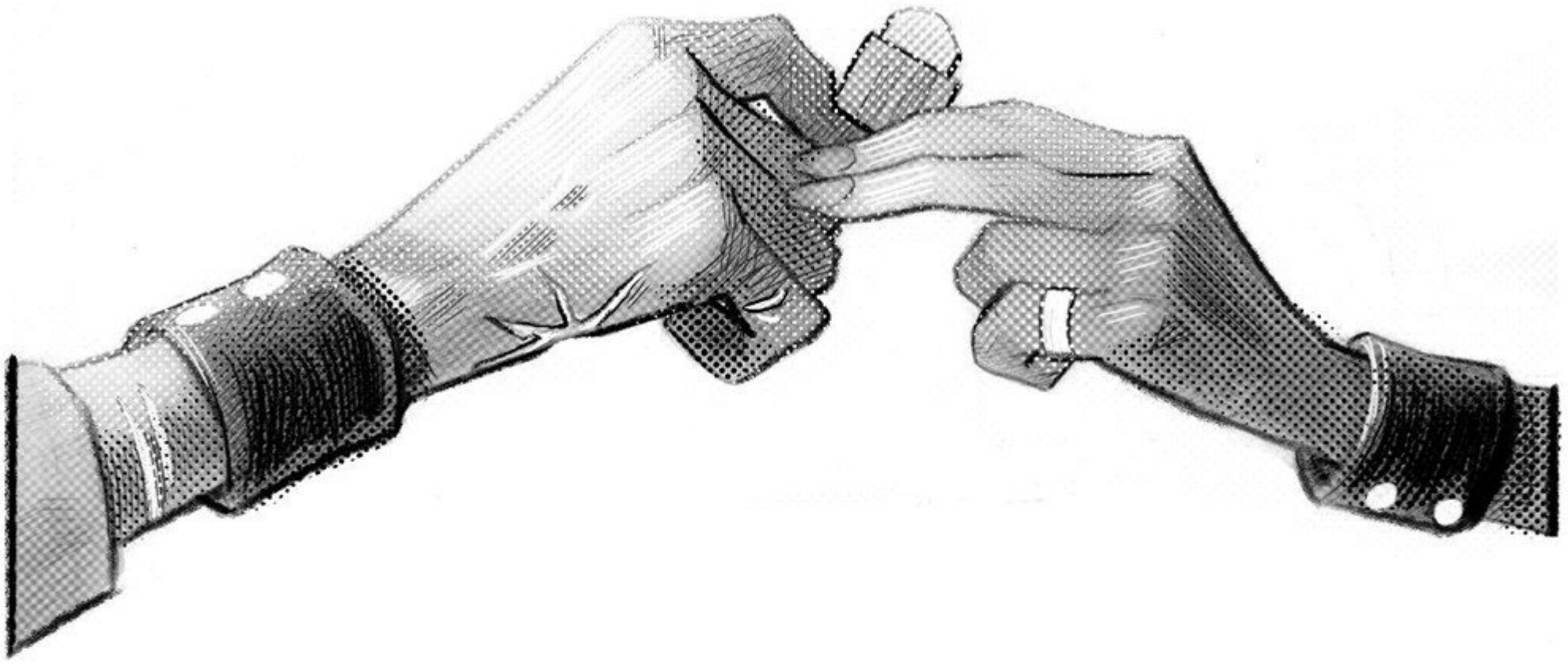
You do not know.

You have forgotten about trigonometric functions.

And have also forgotten about matrices.

How could you?

CAN I BORROW YOUR ERASER?



Y-YOU...

THANKS.

WOOF!
WOOF!
WOOF!

HUH?

WOOF!
WOOF!
WOOF!


WOOF
WOOF
WOOF
WOOF
WOOF
WOOF
WOOF
WOOF


NOOF
OOF
OOF
Lupo!

OOF

SIR! MY D-DOG!

WOOF

WOOF

I TH-THINK THAT H-HE RAN AWAY FROM H-HOME!

H-HE'S CALLING FOR M-ME!

WOOF WOOF WOOF

WOOF WOOF WOOF WOOF WOOF

Get back to your seat.


BUT LOOK! THAT'S L-LUPO! I N-NEED TO--TO GET HIM HOME. I THINK THAT S-SOMETHING...
...HAPPENED.



WOOF WOOF

THERE'S S-SOMEONE BEHIND LUPO!

Get back to your seat right now.

S-SIR! PLEASE, I N-NEED TO GO DOWN THERE RIGHT N-NOW!

A less-than-mediocre student like you should be more focused on your studies.

I THINK...I THINK THAT S-SOMETHING H-HAPPENED...

Stop shaking and crying like a baby! Go back to your seat!

AT H-HOME!

HE NEEDS HELP, CAN'T YOU SEE?!

If you do not return to your seat immediately, you will be punished.

He's afraid of everything, so you need to make sure he feels safe.

WOOF

NO! COME BACK!

IT'S MY DOG, DAMMIT!

WOOF

THINK OF THE CONSEQUENCES!

WOOF WOOF WOOF

GET AWAY FROM HIM!

RUN, LUPO!

STOP!

Is this the pervert everyone talks about?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! LET ME GO!

The guy himself.

IT'S MY DOG! ARGH!

Is he stalking dogs instead of girls now?!

WHY IS N-N-NOBODY HELPING M-M-ME?

He makes me sick!

TH-THERE WAS SOMEONE BEHIND MY DOG. DID N-NOBODY SEE TH-THAT?

You were!

DID N-NOBODY SEE?!




MHRGH...




AM I ON TIME-OUT?

WHEN C-CAN I G-GET OUT OF TH-THIS ROOM?

?!

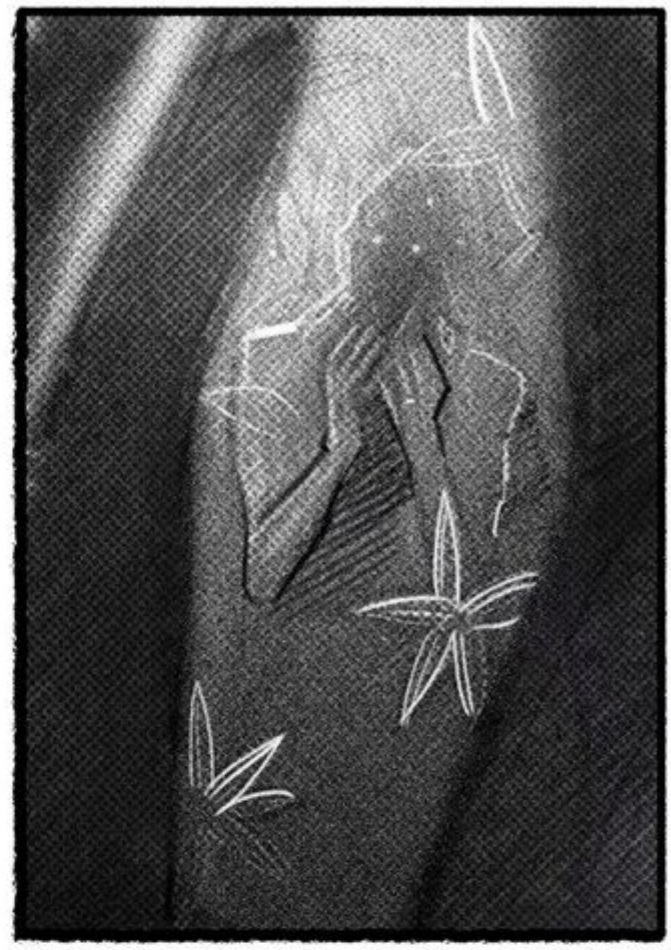
IS...IS THERE AN-ANYBODY ELSE IN HERE...?



N-NO!







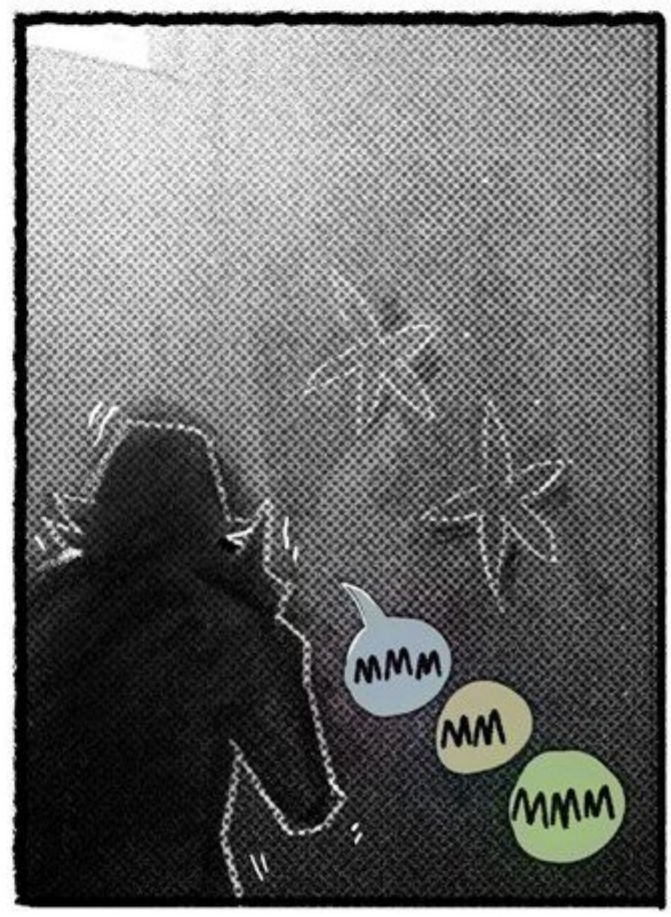

MM
MM
MM




DUM
DUM
DUM


MM
MMM


MM
RRRR


MMM
MM
MMM

MMM

MMM

You can get out now.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND. WE TALKED ABOUT THIS. I'M SORRY, BUT YOU DESERVE THAT WARNING AROUND YOUR NECK, BUDDY. NOBODY WHO DISRESPECTS AN ORDER FROM A TEACHER SHOULD GO UNPUNISHED.

I J-JUST WANTED TO S-SAVE MY DOG...

LAST YEAR, YOU WERE SUCH A GOOD STUDENT. WELL, NOT GOOD EXACTLY. OR YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TO REPEAT THE GRADE. WHAT I MEAN IS THAT, EVEN IF YOU WERE NOT THE BEST STUDENT, AT LEAST YOU WERE A QUIET ONE.

SO...WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

PASS THE BALL, DAMMIT!

SON OF A BITCH!

I'VE T-TOLD YOU! TH-THERE WAS S-SOMEONE BEHIND MY DOG, D-DAMMIT!

YELLING AND DISOBEYING A TEACHER WILL NOT HELP. WE MUST OBEY THEM, EVEN IF WE DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY MEAN AT THE TIME. BECAUSE THEY ARE WISE AND OUR MINDS CANNOT--

THERE WAS A M-MAN WITH A S-S-SPEAR BEHIND MY D-DOG!

I... LOOK...I'VE GOT TO GO NOW. I DON'T REALLY LIKE TO PLAY SOCCER, BUT TO GET THAT SCHOLARSHIP, I NEED TO BE AMONG THE BEST PLAYERS.

REMEMBER TO FOLLOW THE RULES AND NOTHING BAD WILL HAPPEN TO YOU!

ARGH!

OW...

ARE YOU O-OKAY?!

RELAX! SOCCER IS A CONTACT SPORT. THIS KIND OF THING HAPPENS...

...IT IS EVEN EXPECTED...



TH-THAT'S NOT N-NORMAL!

IT'S NORMAL. THAT'S CALLED... CLASHING OVER THE BALL.

FIGHT!

ARE YOU OKAY?

NOT REALLY.

SORRY, DID I KICK YOUR HEAD?

YOU DID.

Why is nobody playing? One, two, thre--

HE GOT HURT, SIR.

IT WAS A FOUL.

Keep playing. Nine, ten, eleven, twelve...

I...DON'T THINK I CAN WALK, SIR.

Yes, you can. Believe in yourself. Eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one...

I'LL TRY...

Somebody is missing.













EEEEE

EEEE

I'M AT THE BACK...

...AND THAT'S THE ENTRANCE OF THE SCHOOL?

EEEEEEE

EEEEE

?!

EEEEEEEEEEEE

WHAT ARE THEY DOING THERE?!

THEY ALL WENT BACK INSIDE.

BUT...

WAIT...

C-CLASSES ARE OVER F-FOR THE DAY. WH-WHY DID TH-THEY GO BACK INSIDE?!

WE...

MMMMMMMM...

...ARE...

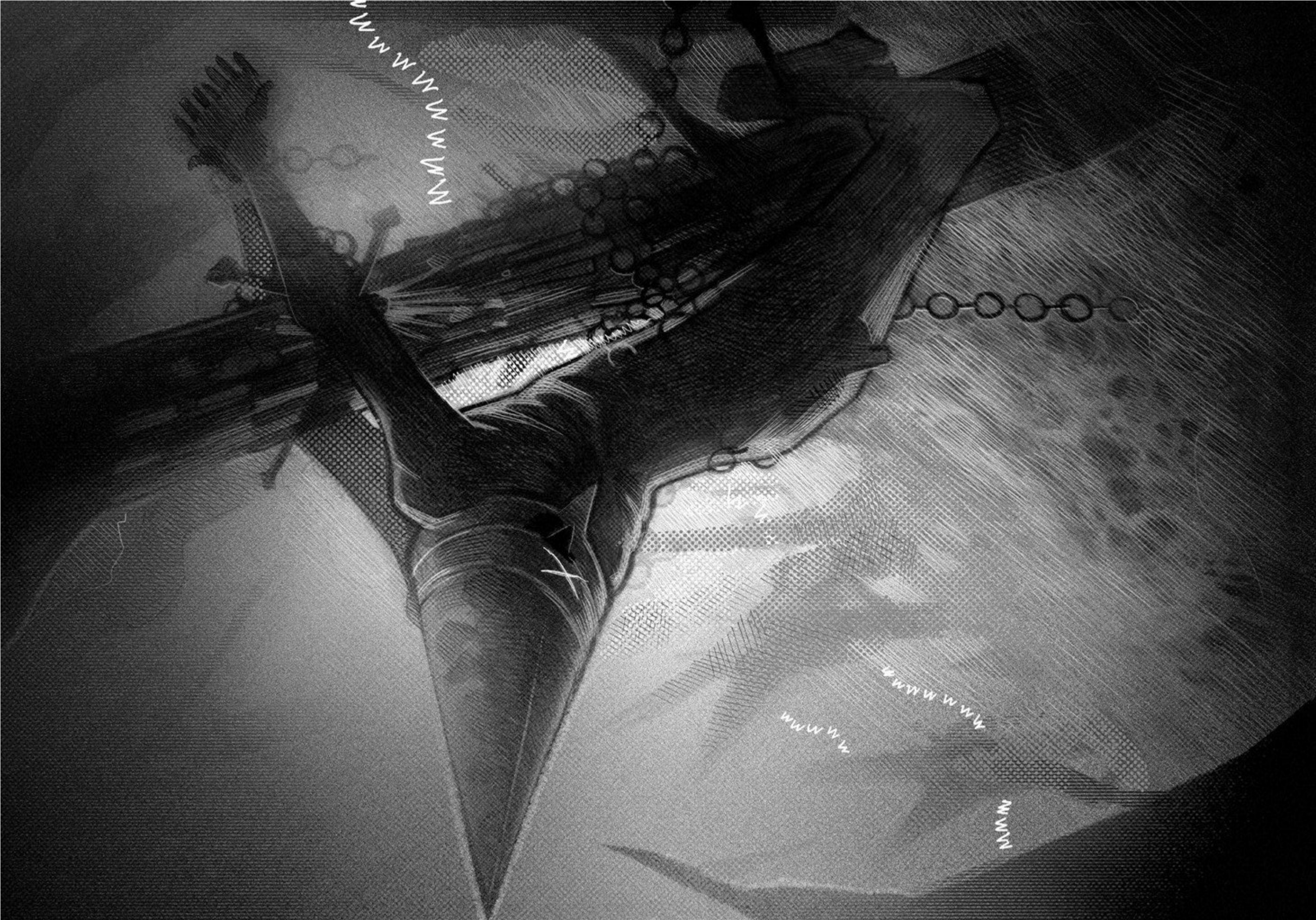
MMMMMMMM...

...TRAPPED?

...MMMMMMMMM

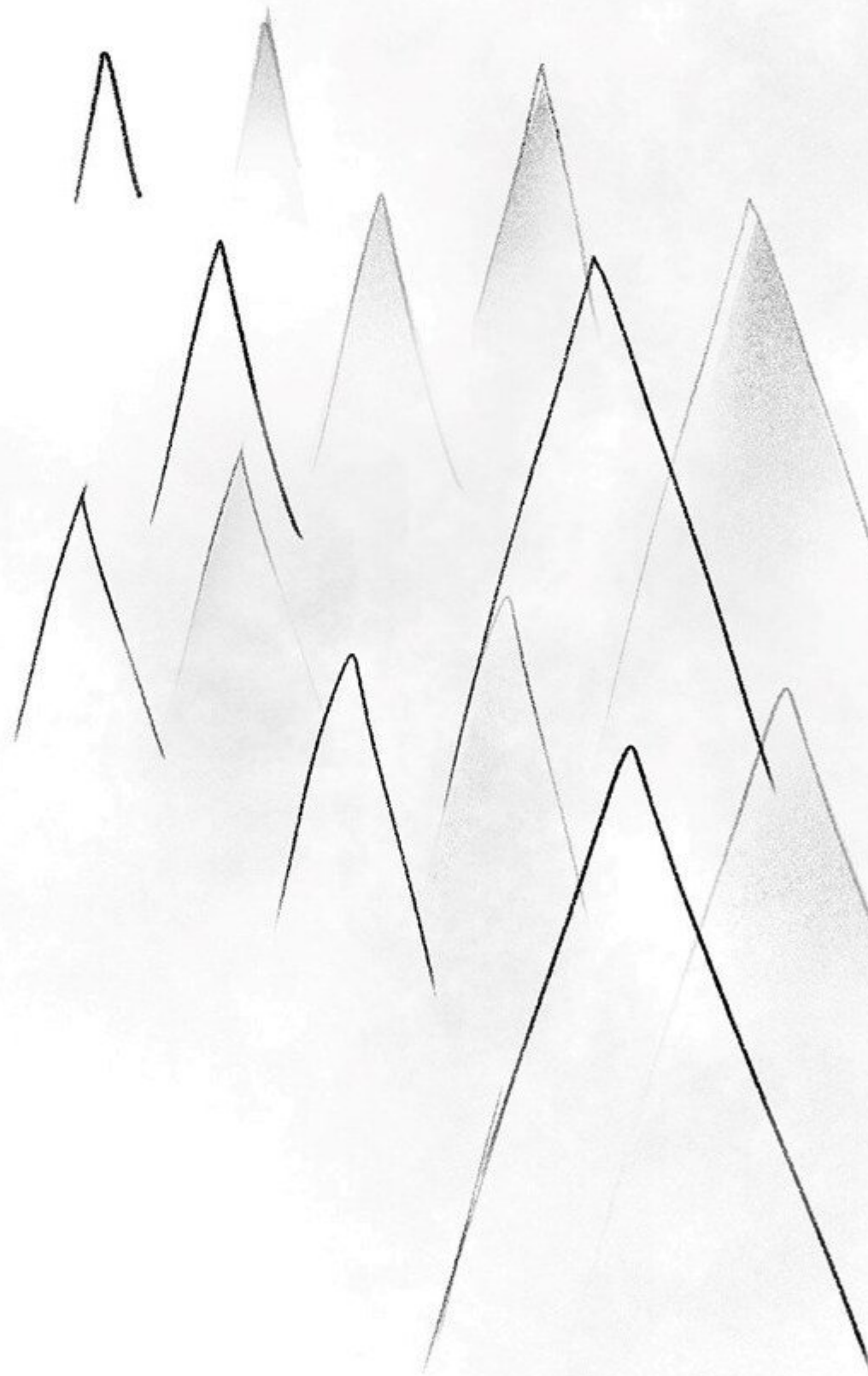


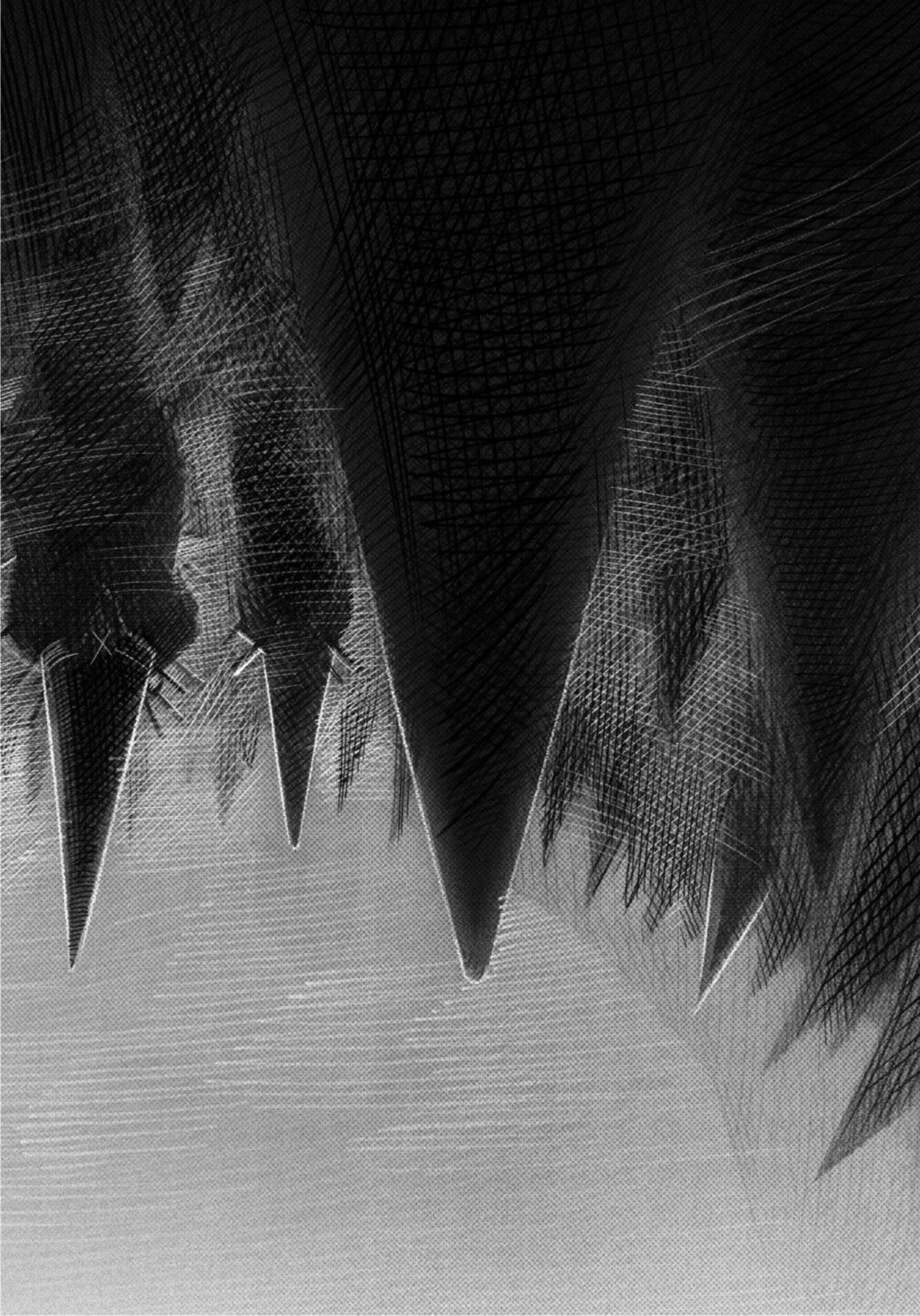

MMMMM
MM
MMMMMMM
M...
MMMMMMM
MMM
MMMMMMM...
MMMMM...
MMMMMMMMMM



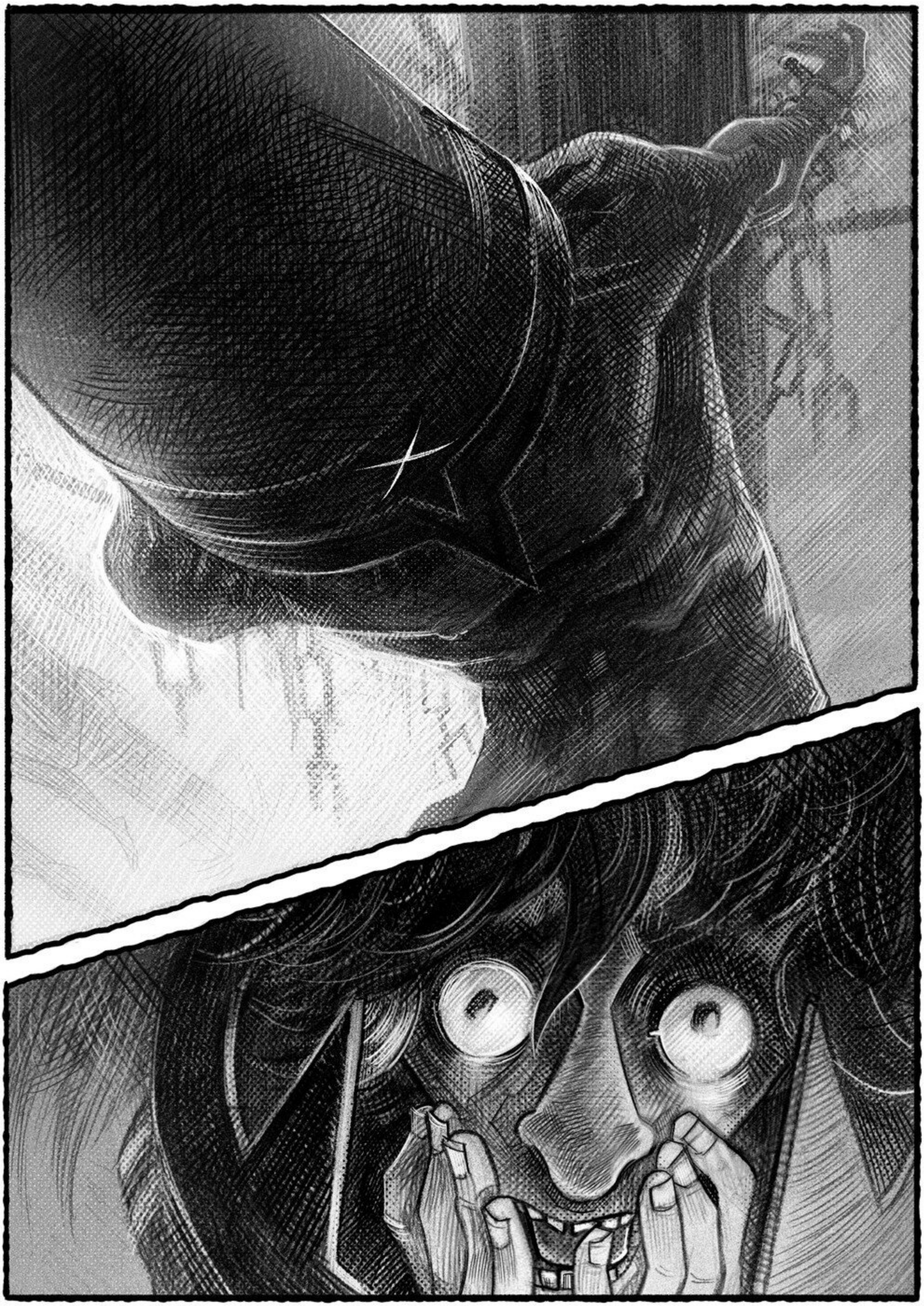
III

At first glance, they looked like pine trees.










SUS-SUSPENDED?
LI-LITERALLY?!


I'M GONNA HELP!
TH-THIS IS N-NOT RIGHT!
!

D-DAMMIT!

THEY WANT TO...

...

...KILL US?

NO...

NO.

NO...

BLARGH!

THIS IS...

...ME?!

WHAT ARE THESE THINGS DOING HERE?

ARE THEY MINE?

I KIND OF REMEMBER THEM...

...BUT I DON'T REMEMBER THIS CD.

MY FACE ON THE BACK...

DID I TAKE THIS PICTURE?

HEH!

WITOUT

HIS RE

HEHE...

RECORDS OF

I REMEMBER THESE GUYS...

FROM COMICS TO TV!

HOW CAN SOMEONE BE SO SURE...

...OF THE "SUNNY DAYS THAT WILL COME AGAIN" WHEN SHADOWS ENDURE?

RECORDS OF 9 ARCADIA

BRO! IT'S STARTING!



IF I STILL BELIEVE IN LOVE

IT'S 'CAUSE I'VE GOT FRIENDS

THAT PULL ME FROM THE DARK

AND TOGETHER WE STAND.

DA DA!

I WONDER IF I CAN PLAY THIS SONG...

AHH...

I THINK THAT'S IT!

INTERESTING...

BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM TO BE A PARTICULARLY CHALLENGING PIECE. DID YOU COMPOSE IT YOURSELF?

NO, IT'S THE OPENING THEME OF *ARCADIA*! I'M HERE TO LEARN HOW TO COMPOSE AMAZING SONGS LIKE THIS.

DID I PASS THE TEST?

ARCADIA? IS THAT AN OPERA?

HAHAHA! NO, IT'S A CARTOON. HAVE YOU NEVER SEEN IT?

YOUNG MAN, THE NEXT STEPS OF THIS EVALUATION REQUIRE KNOWLEDGE OF MUSICAL THEORY.

HAVE YOU NOT PREPARED FOR THAT?

N-NOT REALLY... CA-CAN WE SKIP THAT P-PART?

WELL...

WE CERTAINLY CAN.

PLEASE REMOVE THE STICKERS YOU PUT ON THE PIANO KEYS WITHOUT PERMISSION...

WE'LL BE CONTACTING YOU. THANK YOU.



Your reqeust to attedn the Natinoal Shcool of Music has been rejectd becaus

YOU ARE NOT GOOD ENOUGH.

Plaese, do not send adidtional reqeusts. Do not watse your time or ours.

Bets regrads,
The Comimttteee

NOT EVEN THIS. NOT EVEN THIS.

THIS PLACE STINKS!

HEY, BE QUIET.

IS THERE ANYONE IN THERE?

I DON'T THINK SO.

IS THIS HIS ROOM? BUT IT'S A BABY'S ROOM! LOOK AT ALL THAT KIDS' STUFF!

BUT HE IS A DUMBASS BABY. HAVEN'T YOU SEEN HIM AT SCHOOL? HE CAN'T EVEN WRITE.

HE CAN'T SPEAK THAT WELL EITHER!

BUT HE'S AN EXPERT AT STALKING THE GIRLS' RESTROOM!

HE'S A PERVERT.

ALWAYS HUMMING LIKE A FREAK.

LOOK AT THAT POSTER! SERIOUSLY, HOW OLD IS HE? SIX?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY ROOM?!

THERE'S SOMEONE COMING!

RUN!

BRO! SLEEPING AT THIS HOUR?!

WHAT'S UP?

BRO! WHY DID YOU VANISH LIKE THAT? WE WERE WORRIED!

DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY FLOORS THERE ARE IN HERE? SIXTY THREE!

WHY DON'T YOU COME BACK? I... WE...

RELAX, BREATHE!

YOU'RE SAD BECAUSE I WENT AWAY, RIGHT?

MMM

MMM

MMM


YOU ARE MY ONLY FRIEND.
OF C-COURSE I'M SAD.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S REALLY SAD?

THE FACT THAT YOU'VE FORGOTTEN ABOUT THIS LITTLE GUY HERE!

HUH?

I GOT HIM FROM A SHELTER, AND HE CRIES IF HE DOESN'T WEAR SWEATERS! CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?

HE'S AFRAID OF EVERYTHING, SO YOU NEED TO MAKE SURE HE FEELS SAFE.

LUPO!

I'M SORRY. OF COURSE YOU ARE MY FRIEND, TOO.

I WAS TALKING ABOUT HUMAN FRIENDS, OKAY?

DID YOU KNOW THAT LUPO ALSO LIKES TO WATCH CARTOONS?

HEY! WAIT FOR ME!

MAKES SENSE, HE'S JUST LIKE YOU.

HEY, HOW LONG SINCE YOU PLAYED THE KEYBOARD?

I DON'T REMEMBER. BRO, COME AND WATCH *ARCADIA* WITH US!

I WANT TO FIGHT BY YOUR SIDE!

I CAN'T. THINGS ARE CRAZY HERE IN THE OFFICE. IN FACT, I NEED TO GO BEFORE THEY COME LOOKING FOR ME.

WOOF!

WOOF!

LUPO BARKS EVERY TIME THE BAD GUYS SHOW UP.

WE SHOULDN'T FIGHT WITHOUT A NOBLE REASON!

MAN, I'D LOVE TO HEAR YOU PLAY AGAIN!

I'M NOT IN THE MOOD RIGHT NOW. HEY, WHY DON'T YOU COME AND VISIT US? WE MISS YOU A LOT.

I'M AWARE OF THAT.

I'LL COME VISIT YOU IF YOU DON'T GIVE UP ON MUSIC, HOW ABOUT THAT?

REALLY?

OF COURSE!

COME ON, THEN.

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I STILL PLAY THE OPENING SONG OF *ARCADIA* FOR MOM WHEN SHE ASKS ME TO.

OH, I LOVE THE WAY YOU PLAY THAT ONE.

SHE STILL CALLS IT THE "HAPPY SONG." BECAUSE THE MOOD IN THE HOUSE GETS BETTER WHEN I PLAY IT, SHE SAYS.

OF COURSE, IT DOES! LISTENING TO IT IS LIKE HAVING FRIENDS CALLING YOU TO GO ON AN ADVENTURE IN THE WORLD OF *ARCADIA*.

BOY, IT REALLY IS A HAPPY SONG, RIGHT?

SPEAKERS

FROM THE DARK

IT'S LIKE I HEAR

THAT PULL ME FROM THE

AND TOGETHE

IF I STI

IS IT? BECAUSE TO ME, IT SOUNDS LIKE A REMINDER THAT YOU LIVE...

...IN A WORLD OF BLOOD AND PAIN.

We interrupt this children's show to talk about issues that are actually important.


HE UNTHINKABLE
WH-WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, BROTHER?
A FORGOTTEN PERFORMANCE SOON TO BE REMEMBERED.

FUCK IT!

I DON'T CARE ABOUT WHAT YOU THINK ANYMORE! YOU ARE BOTH LOST! TWO IDIOTS!

YOU CAN'T TALK ABOUT US LIKE THAT!

A MAN MUST TREAD HIS OWN PATH TO BECOME A KING. AND YOU ARE BOTH DISTRACTING ME FROM THE CALLING.

MY FAVORITE SON UNDERSTOOD THE MISSION. HE HEARD THE CALLING AND GOT OUT OF THIS MISERABLE HOUSE.

WHY ARE YOU TALKING LIKE THAT?!

A CROWN OF GOLD AND RUBIES FOR THE KING WHO CAME FROM THE TRASH!

AND I WILL ALSO BE A KING. I CAN ALSO HEAR THE CALLING--LOUD AND CLEAR. THERE IS STILL TIME FOR ME.

MY GOD... MY GOD...

DAD?


SHHH!
SHUT UP AND TELL ME: CAN YOU HEAR IT?

CAN YOU HEAR THE CALLING?

I...I CAN'T HEAR ANYTHING, DAD...

HMM.

YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING RIGHT. HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?

YOU ALWAYS WERE MY BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT.

Book



DON'T PAY ATTENTION TO THAT, SON.

LET'S CHEER UP THE HOUSE, OKAY?

MOM, WHAT HAPPENED?

LET'S CHEER UP THIS HOUSE. WHY DON'T YOU PLAY THE HAPPY SONG?

MOM, ARE YOU...

LET'S CHEER... PLAY THE SONG... HAPPY...

MOM?!

HMM...




AHHE
EEEE
EEEEEEEEEEEE

EEEE

DAMMIT! IF ONLY I COULD CATCH HER ATTENTION...

!

Chalk

OW!



EEEEEEEEEEEE

EE

EEEEEE

E

EE

EEEEEEEEEEEEEE

OH NO!

EE EE E E E E E

DID I THROW THE CHALK TOO STRONGLY?!

NO, IT WAS THE BELL.

EVERYONE GOES BACK INSIDE AFTER THE BELL RANG AGAIN. BUT WHY?

D-DAMMIT!

WHAT THE H-HELL IS GOING ON H-HERE?!

OW!

WH-WHAT WAS THAT?





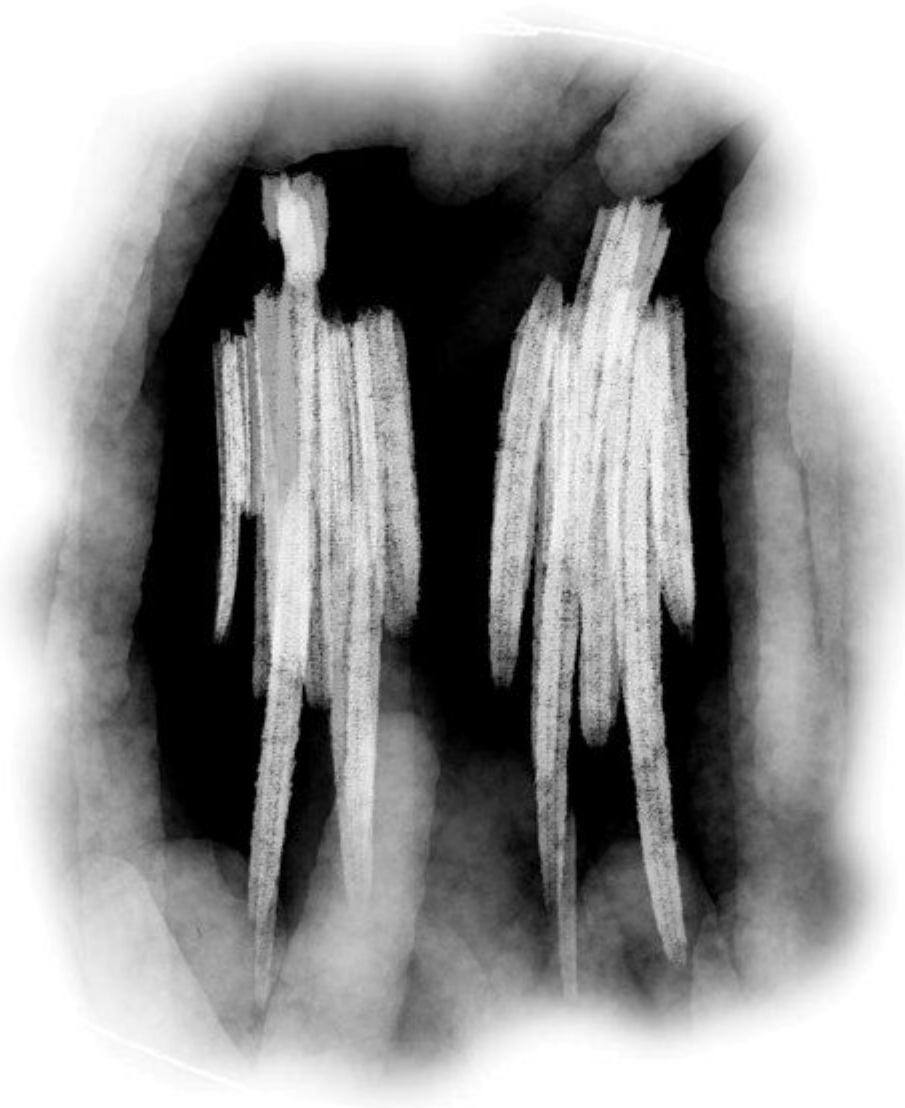






IV

If only we could erase all the bad things from our lives. Just like using an eraser on a drawing that we are not satisfied with, erasing all the mistakes. But for some reason, she could not remember what those mistakes were.





This is your favorite time of the day, isn't it, you lazy bastards? The bell has rung, time to go home...

...Well, see you tomorrow. Haha!

TOMORROW IS SATURDAY, SIR.

Of course... See you Monday, then.

Young man, wait a second!

I saw you talking to the new student. Are you friends?

WELL, HE IS NOT--

Don't lie to me.

WHAT I WAS SAYING IS THAT HE IS NOT A NEW STUDENT. WE WERE HERE LAST YEAR IN THE SAME CLASS, BUT WE WERE NOT THAT CLO--

Are you aware that a warning could end your chances of obtaining a scholarship?

SIR...

I want you to find that boy and to bring him to the principal.

SIR, I DON'T THINK HE IS A TROUBLEMAKER. HE WAS PROBABLY JUST UPSET BECAUSE HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT HIS DOG AND--

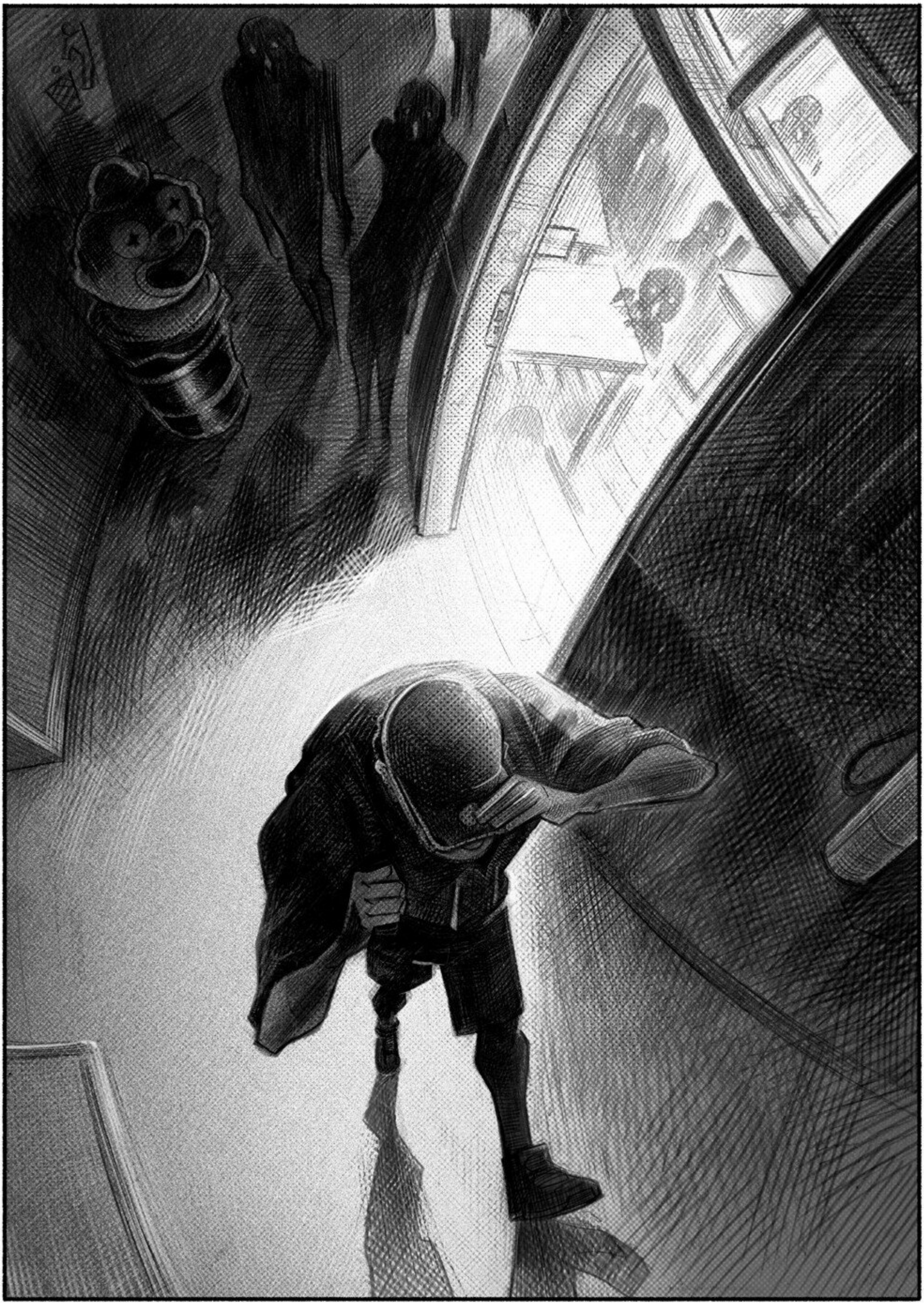
You should be worried about yourself. Can you understand that a student like you has a very small chance of getting into a university in this country?

A STUDENT LIKE ME? BUT I'M DOING MY BEST TO--

Dismissed.

Find that boy and bring him to the principal. Otherwise, you will be considered an accomplice!

I AM NOT THAT, SIR.



GOSH DARN IT. I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THAT.

BESIDES, HE MUST ALREADY BE FAR AWAY FROM--

ARGH!!!

D-DUDE! F-FOLLOW ME! WE D-DON'T HAVE T-TIME!

BUDDY! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE? WHAT'S HAPPENING?

YOU M-MUST F-FOLLOW ME! BEFORE THE S-SECOND BELL!

STOP PULLING MY BACKPACK. YOU'RE HURTING ME.

IT'S N-NO USE. YOU M-MUST HAVE BEEN HYP... HYPNOTIZED.

HEY, LET'S TALK TO THE TEACHER. HE CAN HELP...

T-TAKE THIS NOTE! P-PUT IT INSIDE YOUR N-NOTEBOOK!

YOU'LL F-FIND IT AS S-SOON AS YOU GO BACK TO THE C-CLASSROOM!

Meet me in the Soceer cort at reces

WHAT IS...

...THIS?

WH-WHERE DID I C-COME FROM?!

I CAN'T BUMP INTO AN INSPECTOR! OH NO, THE BELL IS ABOUT TO RING!

AND IF I HEAR IT NOW, I MIGHT FORGET ABOUT EVERYTHING!

DAMMIT, I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING...

MMM

DUM

DUM

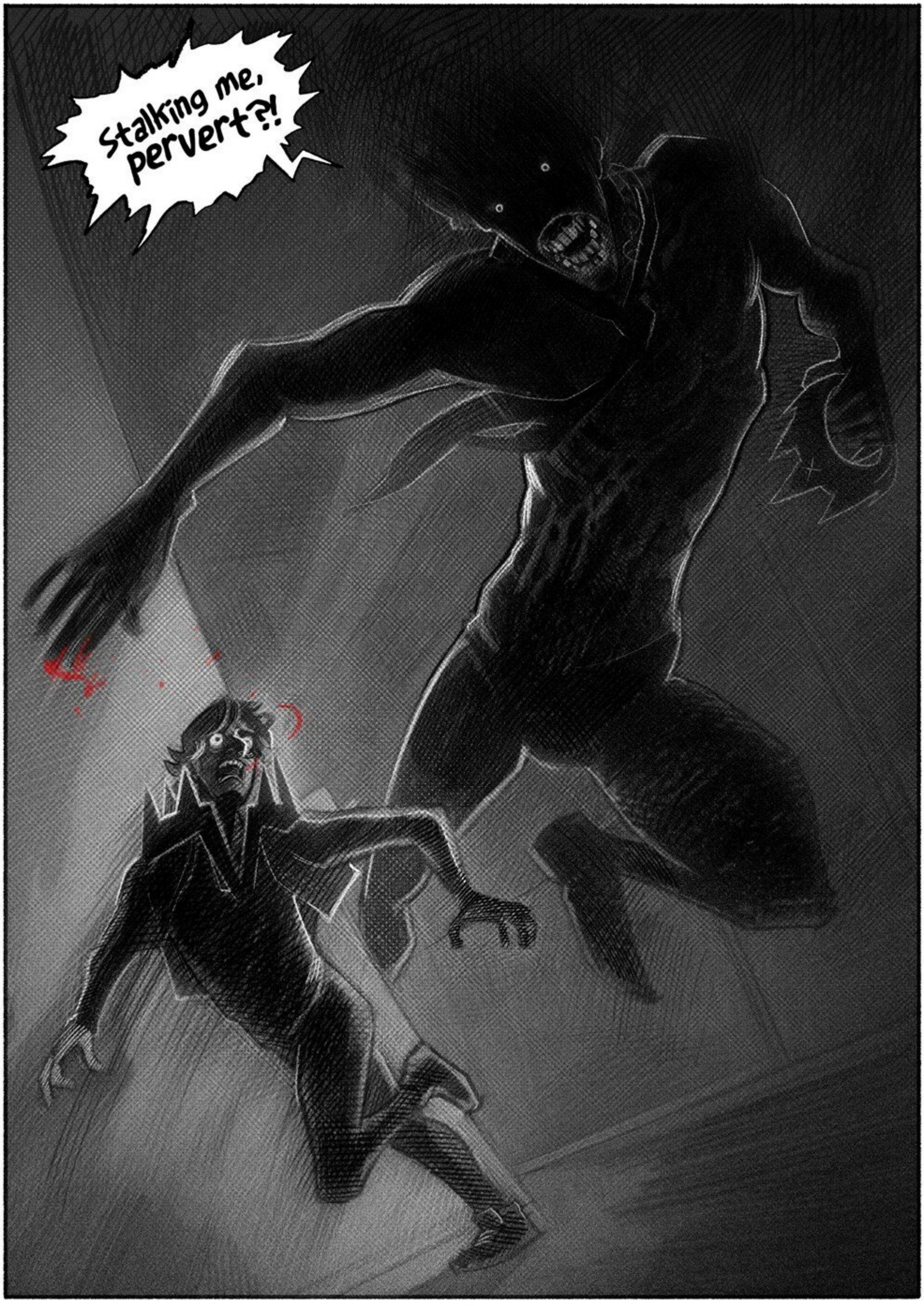
DUM

GO, GO!

WOOF!
WOOF!
WOOF!

WHAT?
LUPO?!

ARGH!


Stalking me, pervert?!

ARGH!
N-NO!

Pervert!

NO!

UGH!

RRRRRR

RRRRRR

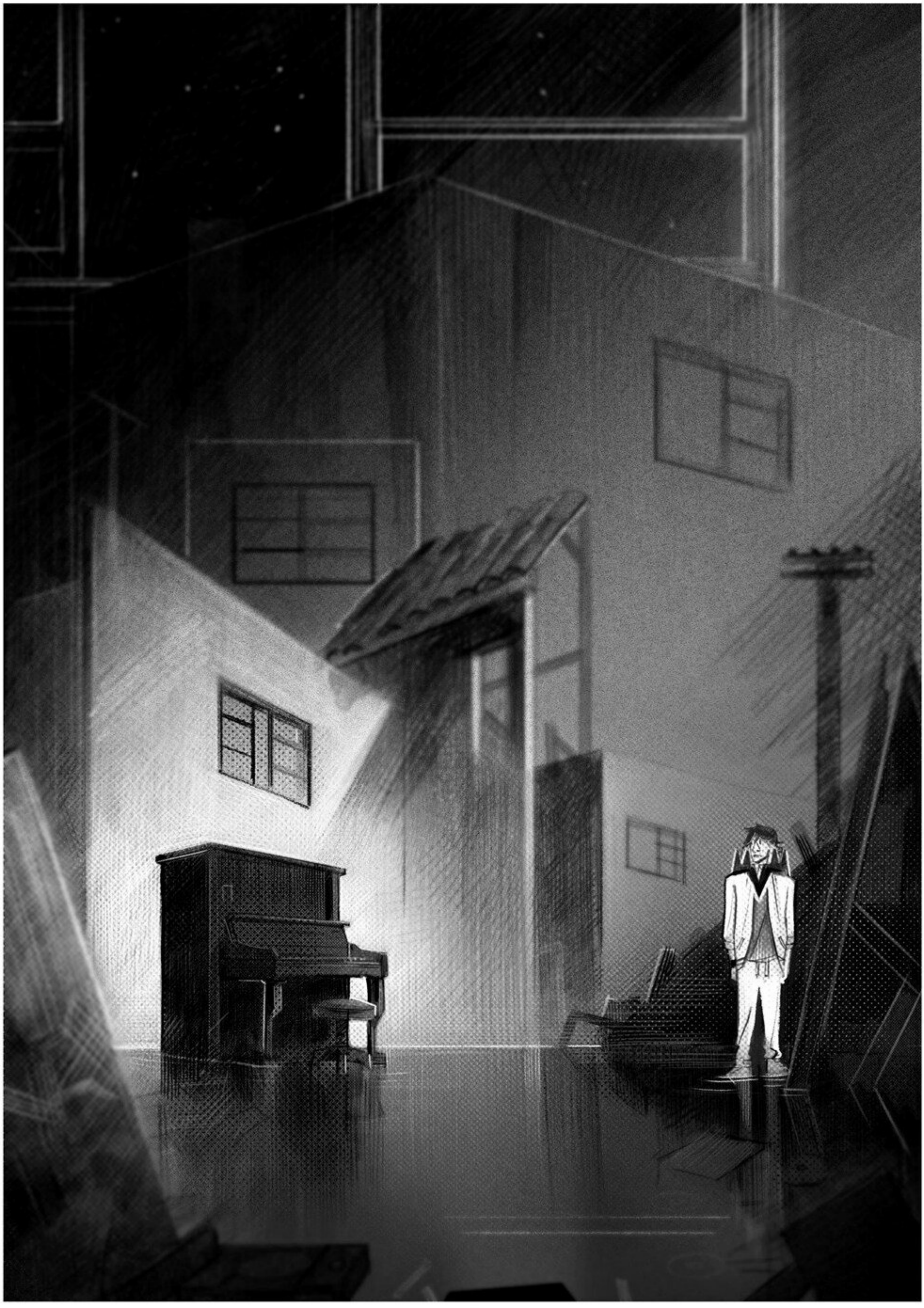
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N-NO, NO, N-NO!

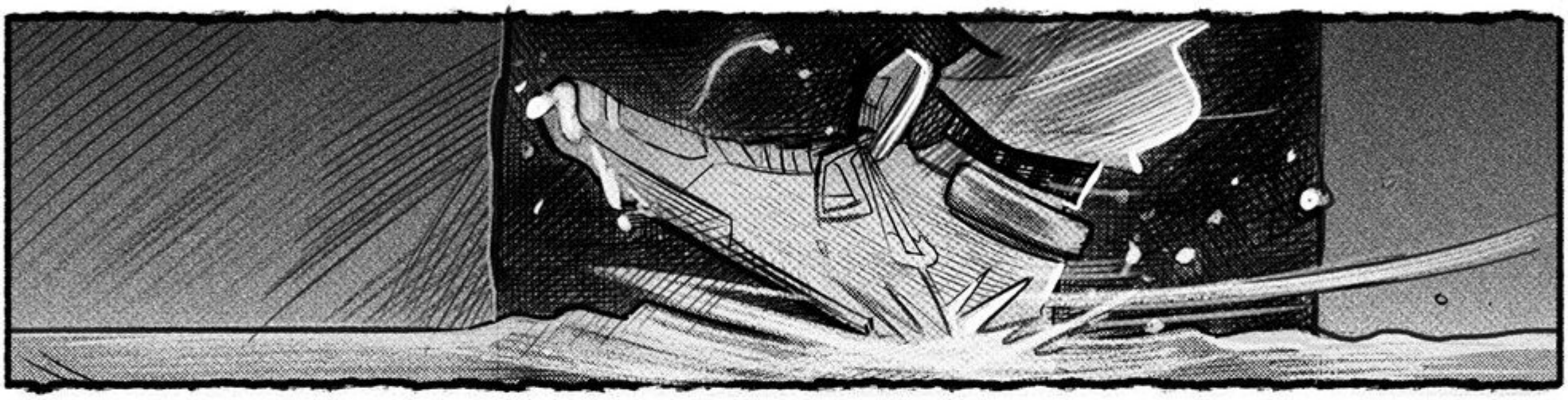
≥HUFF≤ ≥HUFF≤

WHAT?

WH-WHERE AM I?







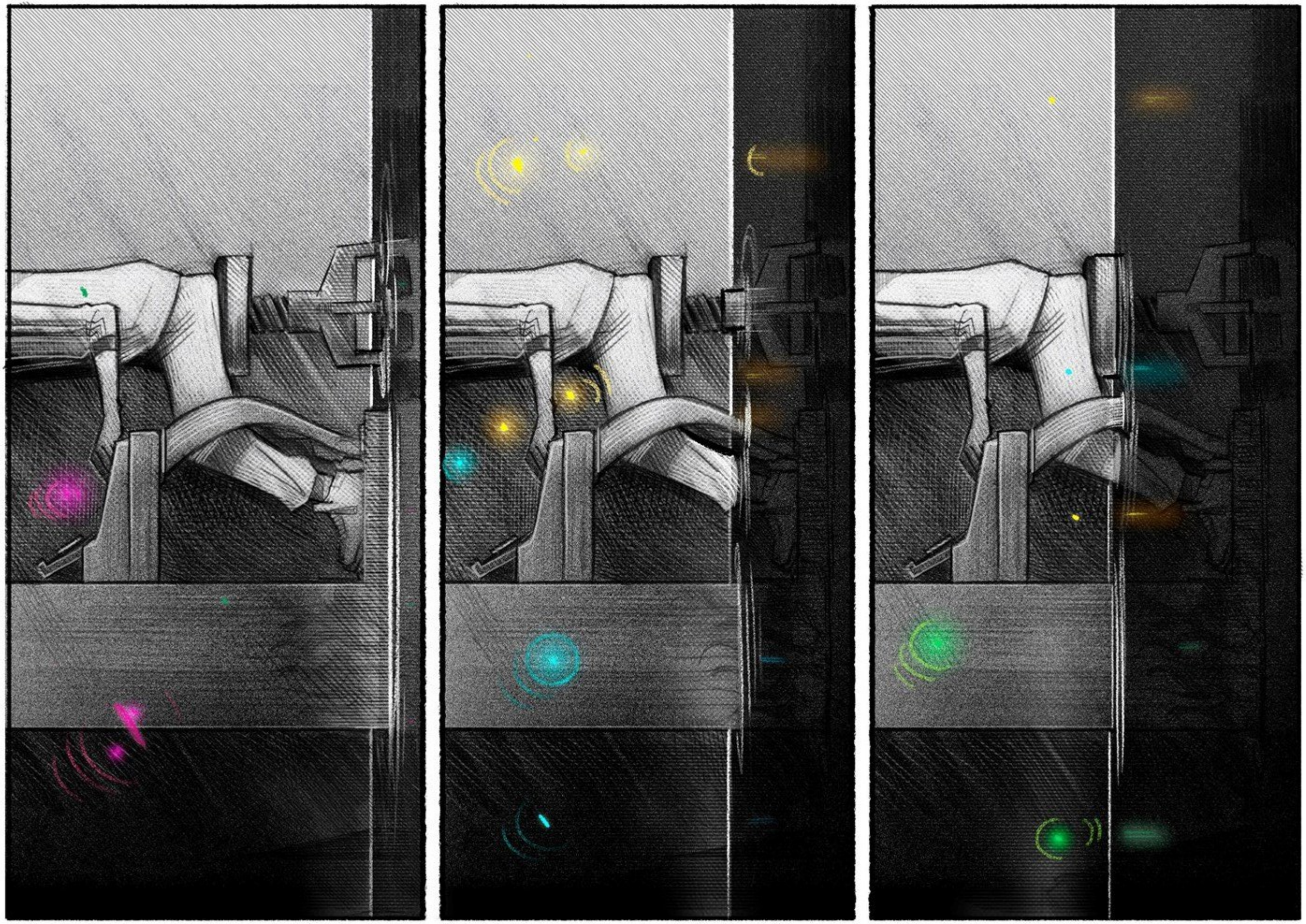


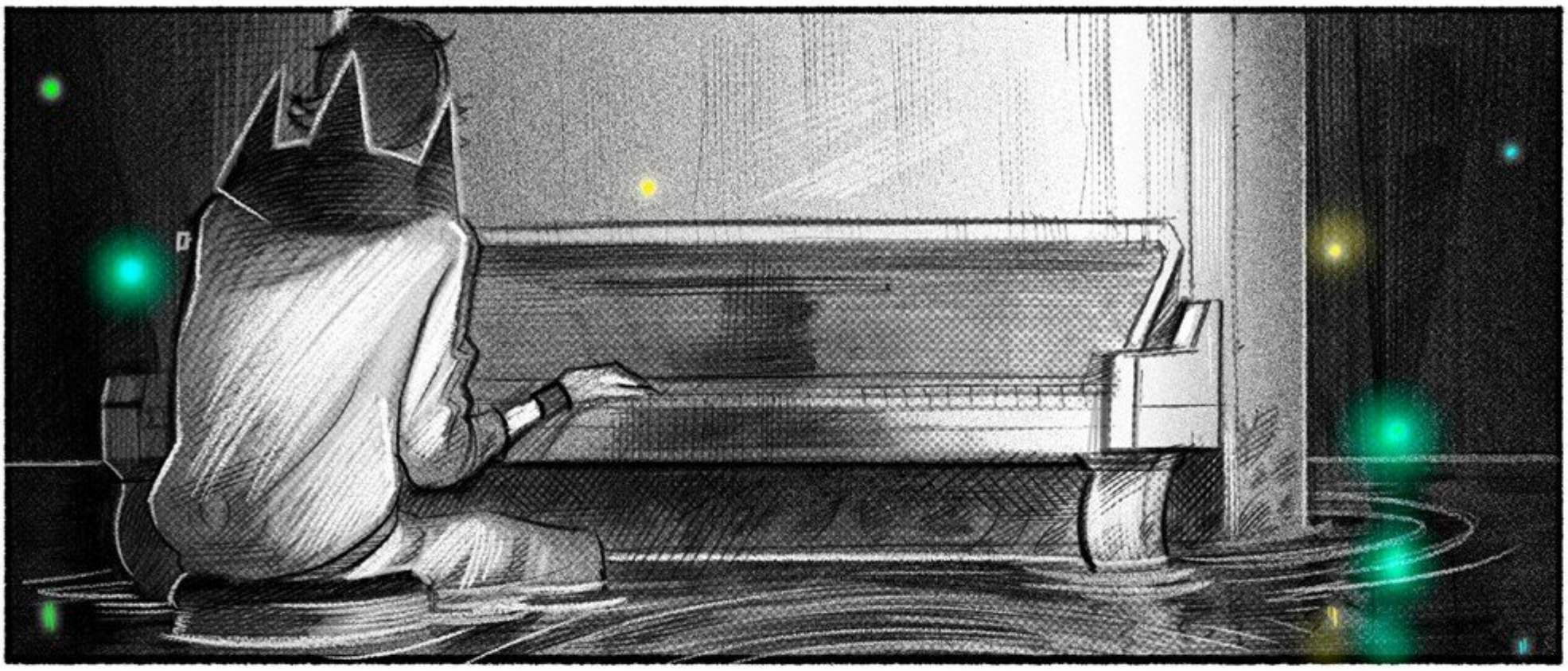


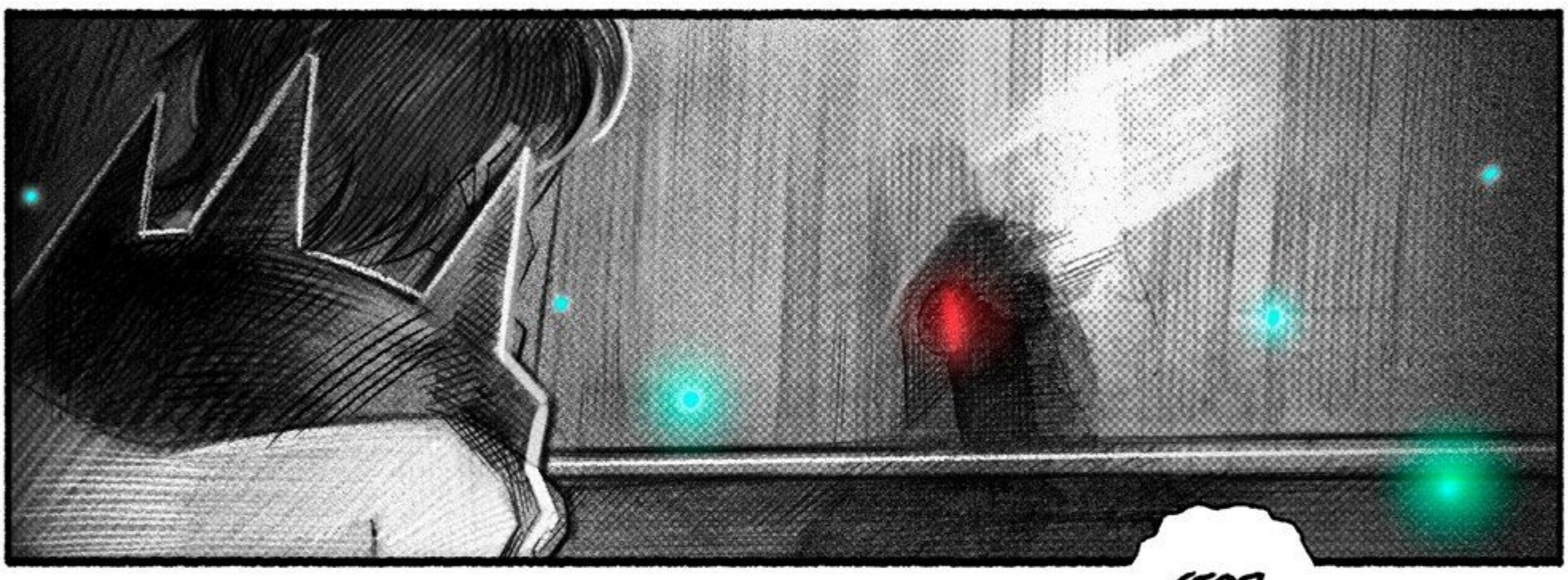


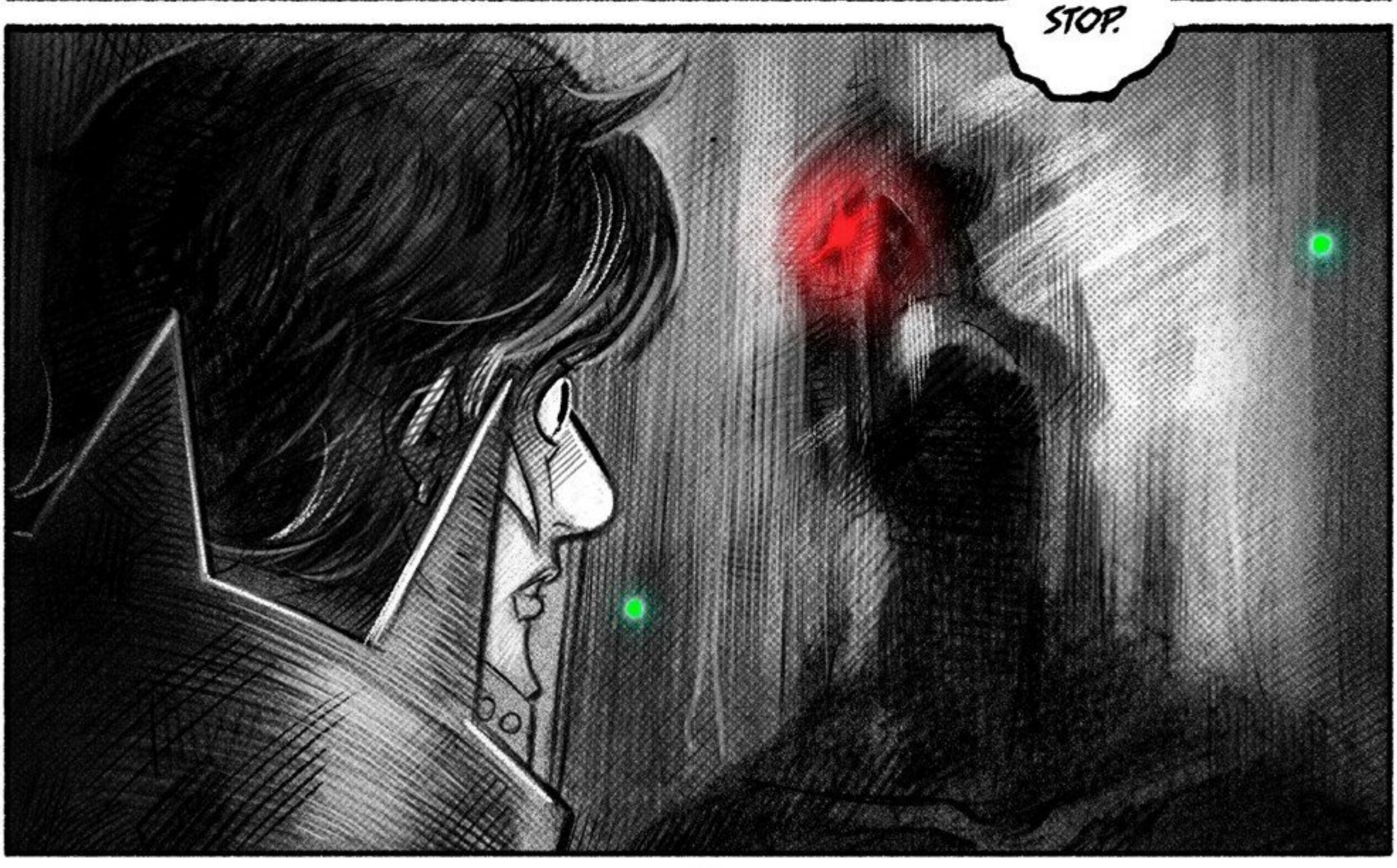











STOP.

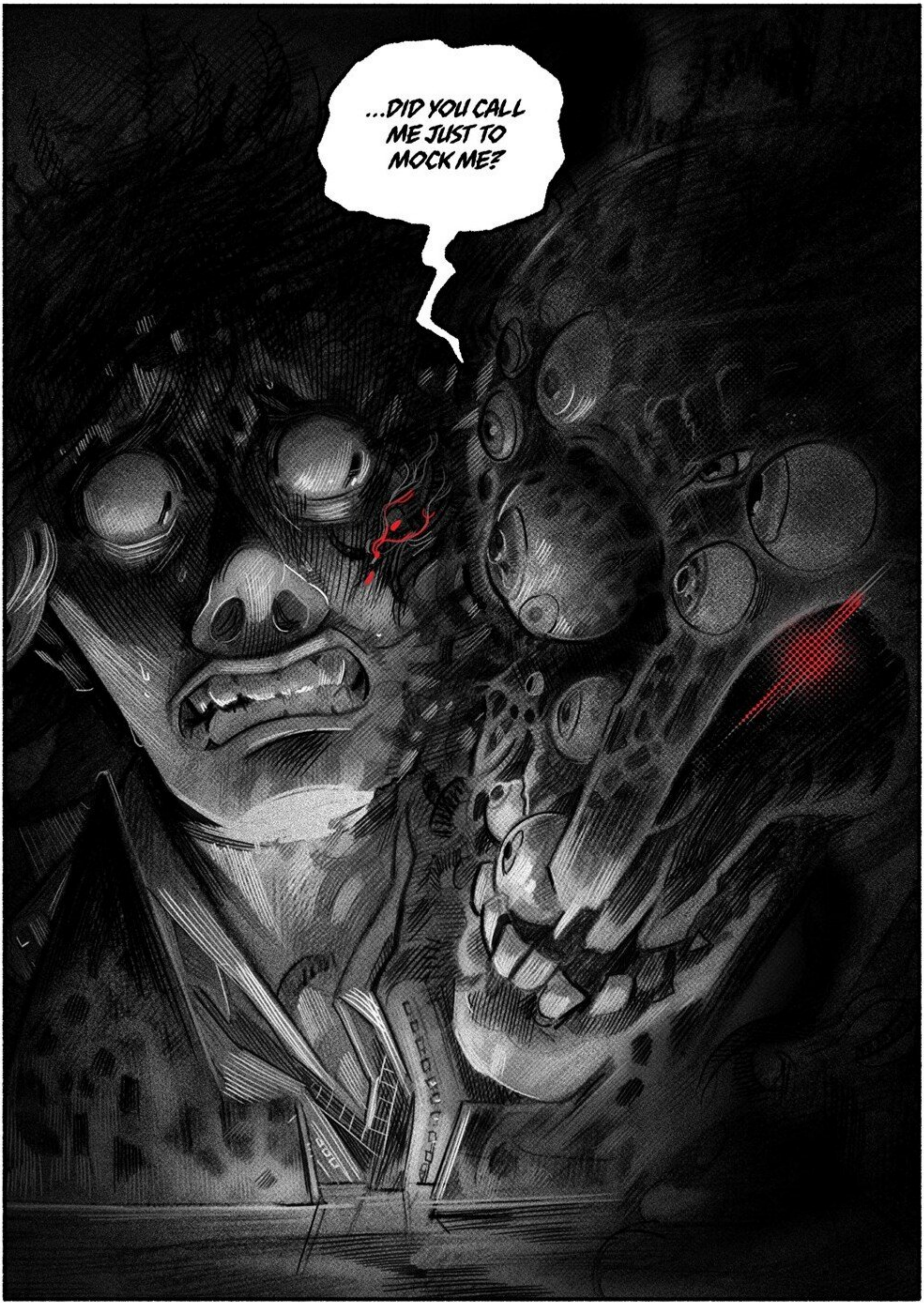

A PRAYER WITHOUT SACRIFICE IS NOT WORTH ANYTHING.


LAST TIME, BLOOD AND SCARLET MELODIES WERE INTERMINGLED.
WORTHY OF ATTENTION.

NOW... APATHETIC SOUND AND BLOOD WITHOUT FURY.

AM I WASTING MY TIME?

I ASK MYSELF...

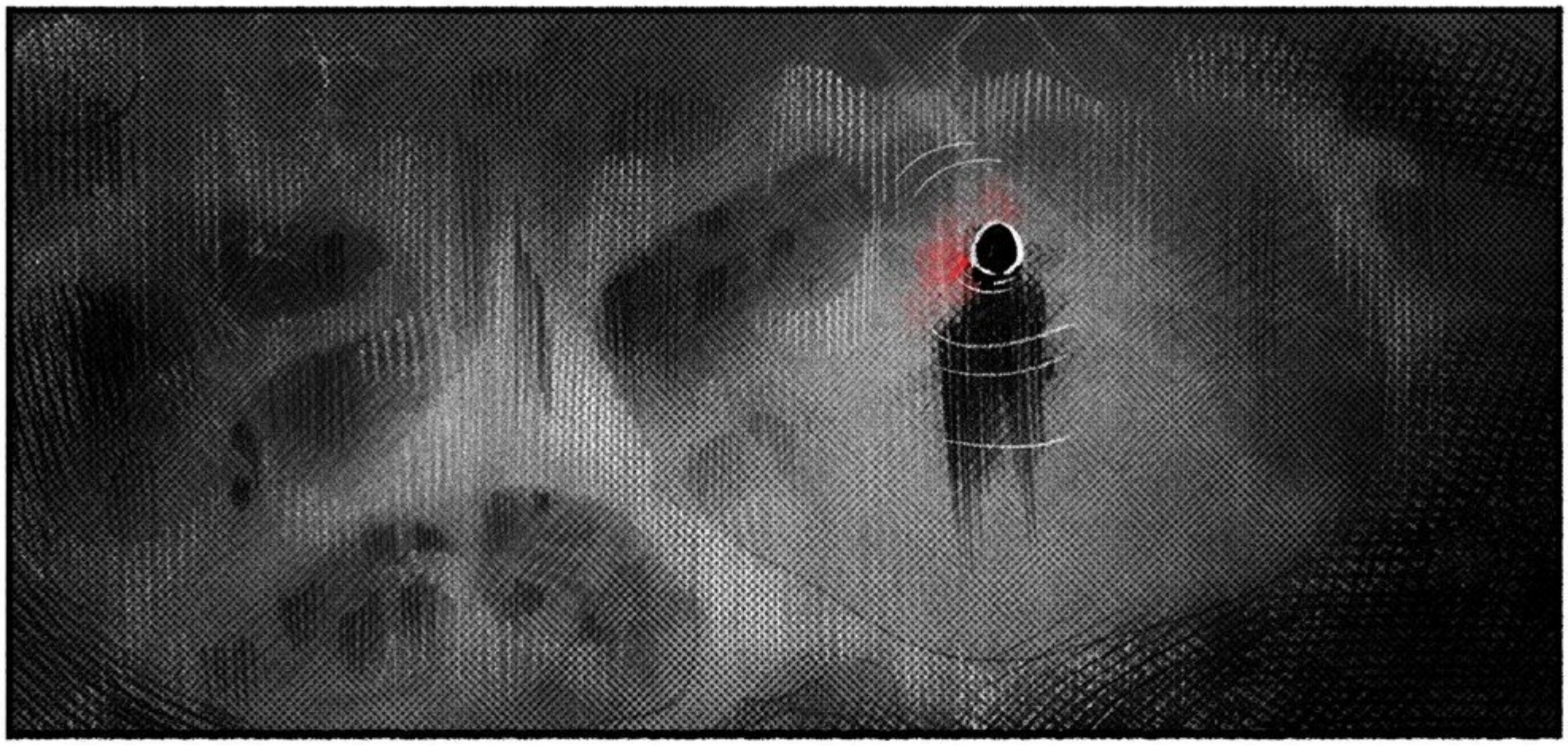

...DID YOU CALL ME JUST TO MOCK ME?

ARGH!!!
WH-WHAT?!
...

WH-
WH-WH-
WHAT?!

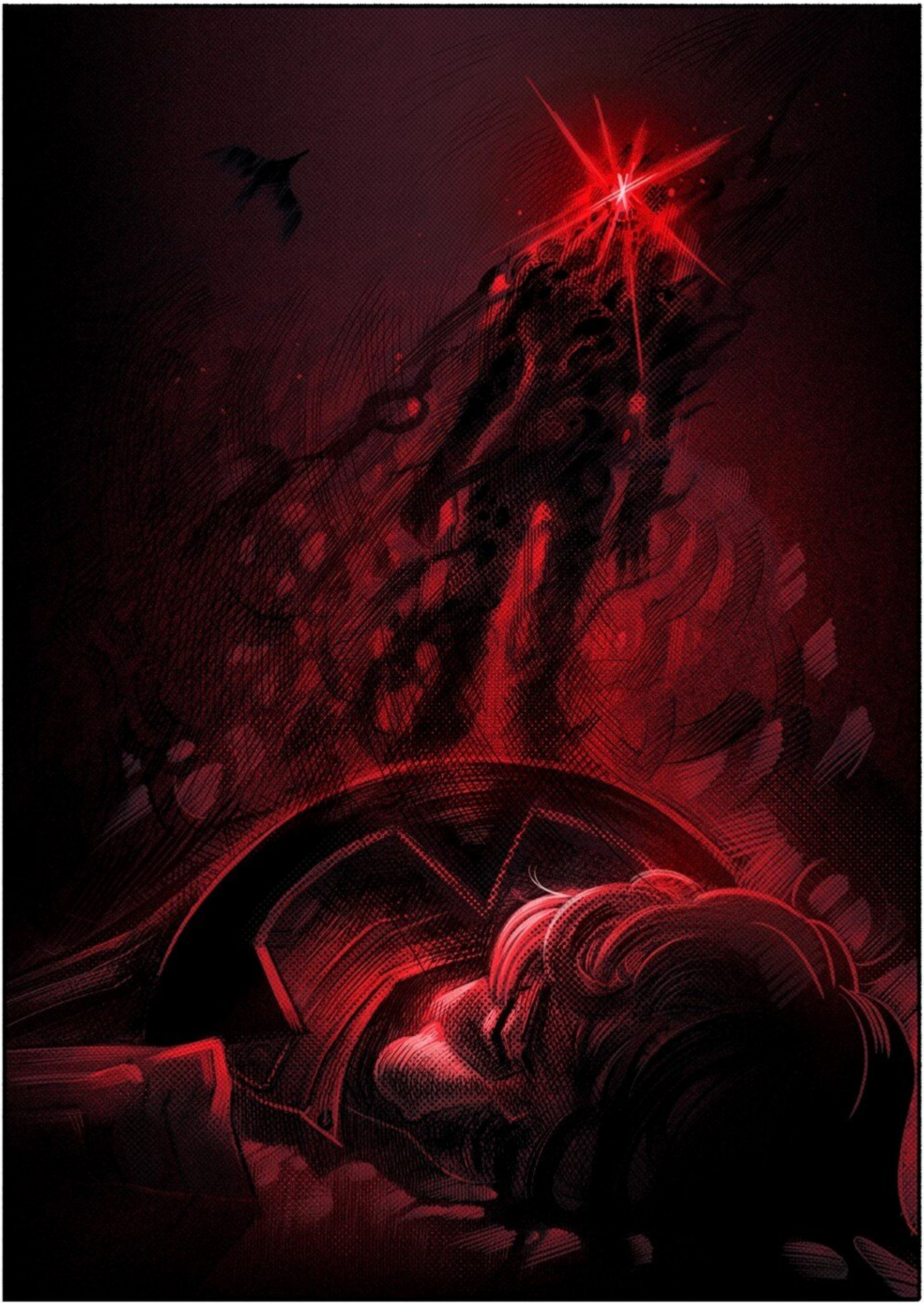
STOP!
P-PLEASE,
S-STOP!

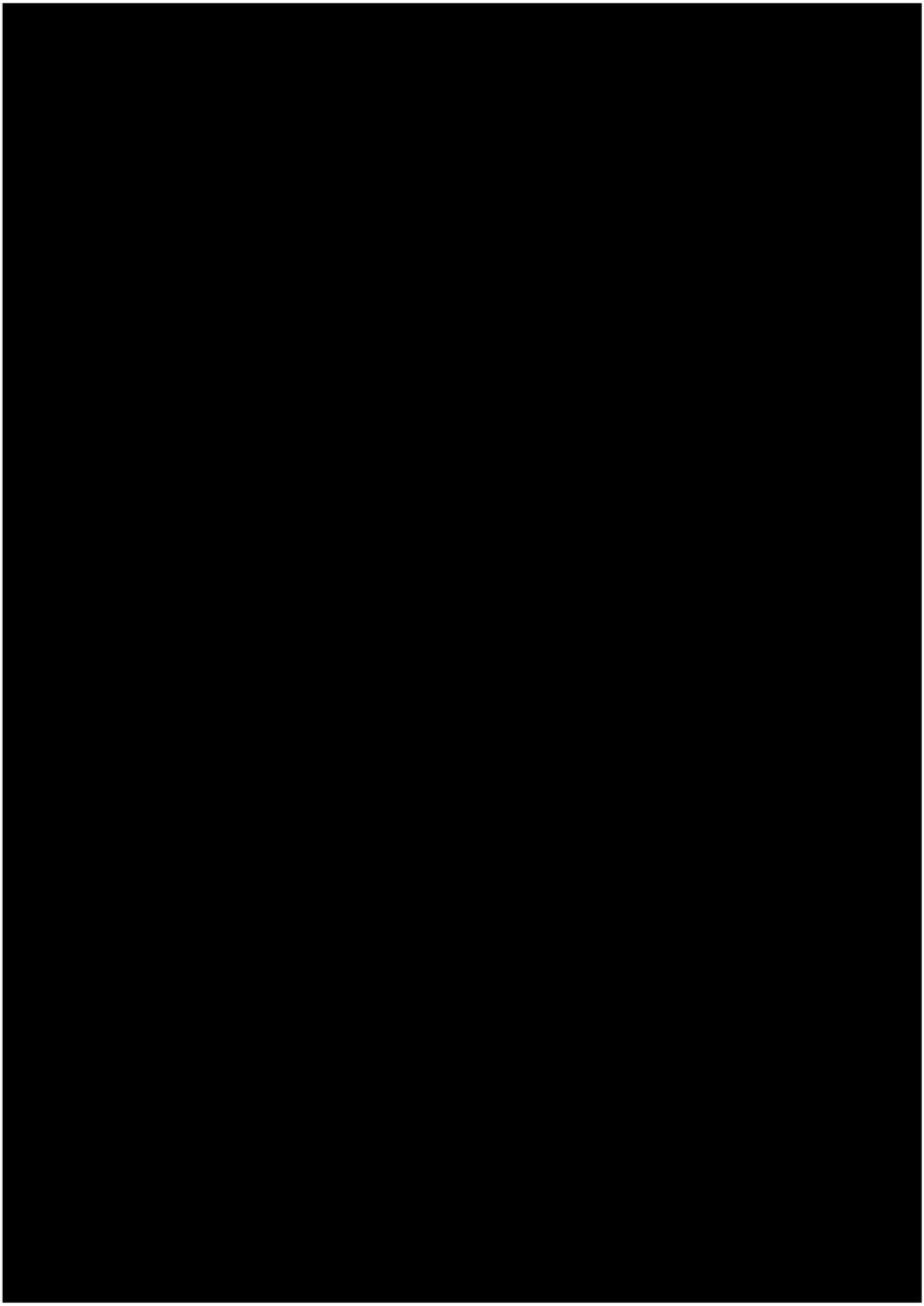

P-PLEA--
=GASP=

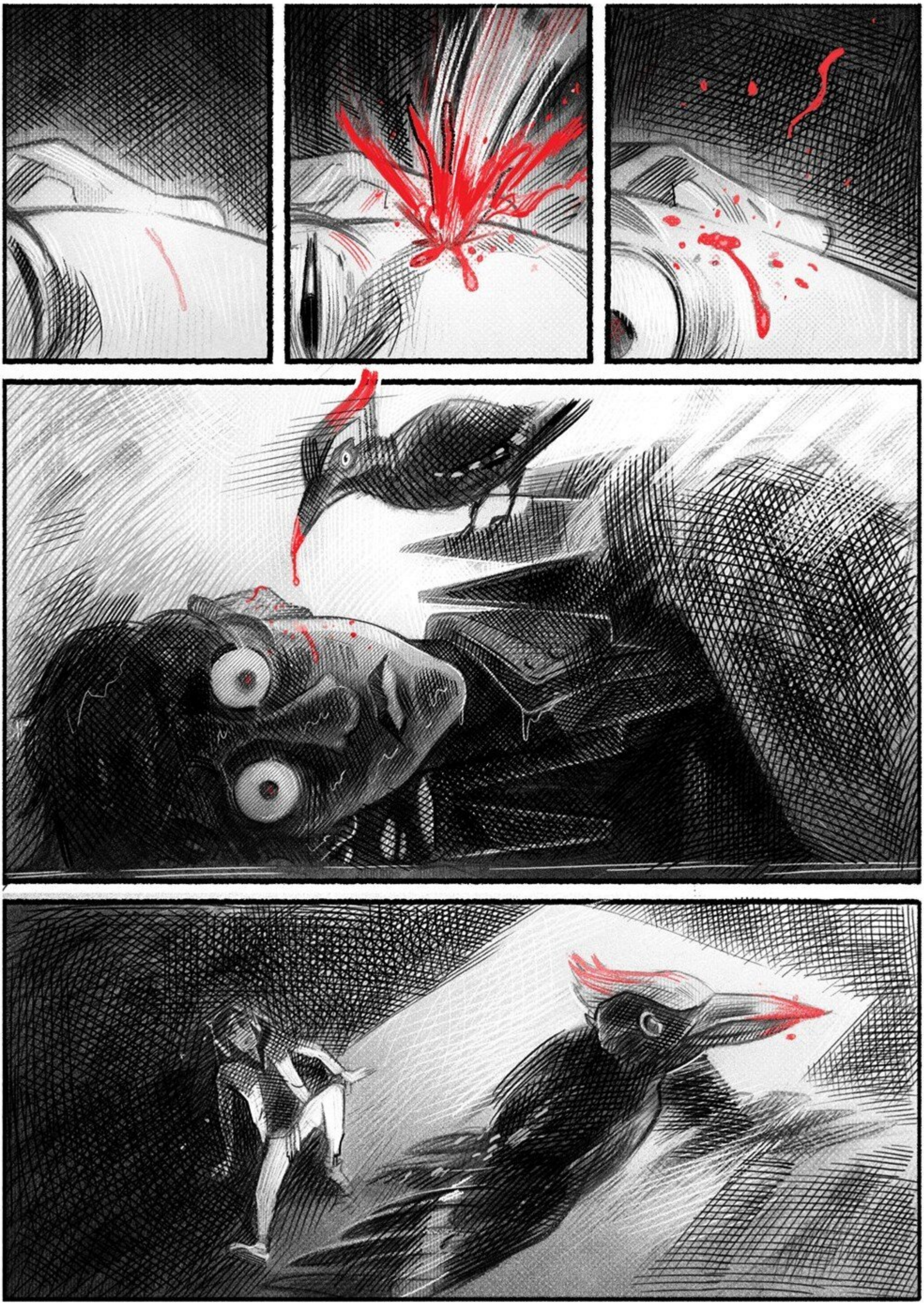












I DON'T WANNA PLAY TODAY... I DON'T FEEL SO WELL...

SISSY.

SOMEONE STOLE MY COMPASS.

IS THE GEOMETRY TEST TODAY? AFTER RECESS?

WE'RE ON RECESS!

WHAT HAPPENED HERE?

I HOPE HE HAS REMEMBERED ABOUT THE NOTE...

PASS THE BALL, DAMMIT!

SORRY!

FUCKING MORON!

O-OKAY, R-RIGHT...

...S-SO, I JUST N-NEED TO T-TALK TO HIM WITHOUT D-DRAWING ATTENTION TO M-MYSELF. E-EASY.

TRASH

TRASH

MMM

I'M OPEN!

UGH!

MMM

MMM

GO, GO!

MOVE, DAMMIT!

MMM

HELLO.

I'M G-GLAD YOU C-CAME.

WE J-JUST NEED TO W-WAIT UNTIL THE C-COURT IS EMPTIER AND TH-THEN--

SORRY, BUT...

...DO WE KNOW EACH OTHER?

YOU SEEM TO BE A FUN GUY, BUT RIGHT NOW, I'M WAITING FOR SOMEONE.

IF YOU EXCUSE ME, WE CAN MAYBE TALK ANOTHER TIME.

D-DUDE! IT'S M-ME!

WHOA!

TH-THIS IS JUST A T-TRASH CAN L-LID!

HERE! HE'S HERE!

WH-WHAT?!

WH-WHY D-DID YOU D-DO THIS?

IT'S FOR YOUR OWN GOOD.

CALM DOWN. THE PRINCIPAL IS ONLY TRYING TO HELP YOU.

N-NO! L-LISTEN TO ME! TH-THERE IS S-SOMETHING WRONG AT THIS S-SCHOOL, MAN!

ONE DAY, WE'RE GONNA REMEMBER THIS AND HAVE A GOOD LAUGH. A CLOWN'S HEAD! YOU REALLY ARE HILARIOUS!

N-NO! W-WAIT! D-DON'T T-TOUCH!

IF YOU COOPERATE, YOUR PUNISHMENT WILL BE LESS SEVERE, I'M SURE OF IT.

D-DON'T T-TOUCH ME, PLEA--


Gotcha!

Why are you at the court if you play like a girl?

STAY CALM! JUST DO WHAT THEY SAY AND EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE OKAY. THEY MIGHT EVEN REMOVE THOSE WARNINGS SOONER THAN YOU THINK.

URGH...

RARR!!!

?!

AHHHH!

WH-
WHAT...

...WHAT'S H-HAPPENING AT THIS S-SCHOOL? WHY ARE YOU B-BEATING THE S-STUDENTS?!

THIS IS ABSURD!

WH-WHENEVER W-WE HAVE A P-PROBLEM, YOU ARE S-SUPPOSED TO HELP US, NOT P-PUNISH US!

YOU'VE MADE SUCH A MESS, BUDDY...

YOU'RE N-NOT EVEN T-TRYING TO UNDERSTAND OUR P-PROBLEMS, DAMMIT!

YOU KNOW?

AND BESIDES...

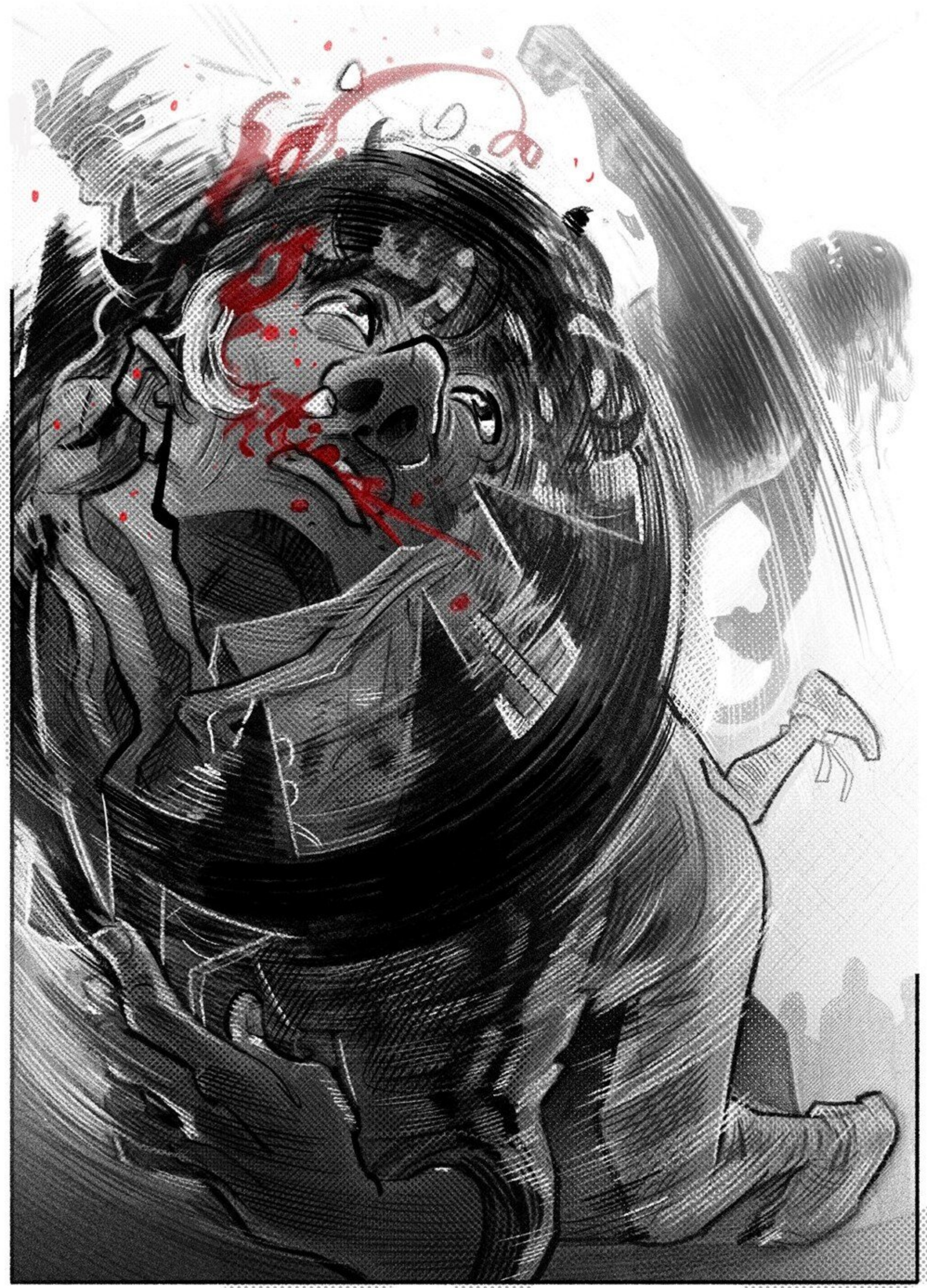
WH-WHY ARE W-WE LOCKED UP IN HERE?!

WH-WHY D-DOES EVERYONE GO B-BACK TO THEIR CLASSROOMS AFTER THE S-SECOND BELL?

TH-THESE QUESTIONS...

...TH-THEY ARE... Q-QUITE REASONABLE, I TH-THINK.

D-DON'T YOU AGREE?



L-LISTEN...

...L-LISTEN, EV-EVERYONE...

W-WE ARE L-LOCKED UP HERE.

W-WE ARE--



This is an intervention!

You might not believe me, but I'm actually worried about you. That's why I created this support group.

Thank you for the suggestion.

Now, I'd like everyone to approach our friend, one by one, to say some words of encouragement for him.

Good.

He really needs it. You may start.

LISTEN...

...I'M GONNA SHOVE THIS NAIL UP YOUR ASS WHEN NOBODY'S LOOKING.

=HACK=

PTUI!

I CAN'T STAND LOOKING AT YOUR STUPID FACE ANY LONGER!

HAVE YOU BEEN STALKING ME IN THE BATHROOM AGAIN, YOU PERVERT?!

FREAK!

HEY! OUT OF THE WAY!

GOAL KICK!

ARE YOU GONNA CRY AGAIN, SISSY? ARE YOU GONNA CRY EVERY TIME THE BALL TOUCHES YOU, PRINCESS?!

IF OUR FRIEND HAD NOT BEEN SUSPENDED, HE WOULD MESS UP YOUR FACE AGAIN, YOU IDIOT!


SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE. ONCE A PERVERT, ALWAYS A PERVERT!
KICK HIS STOMACH!
MMM
MMM
I THINK HE PISSED HIS PANTS AGAIN!
PTUI!
MMM
MMM

I WAS NOT GONNA BEAT HIM UP, BUT HIS STUPID FACE IS JUST ASKING FOR IT!

MMM

MMM

MMM

MMM

IS HE SINGING?!

THE FREAK IS ENJOYING THE BEATING!

Kids...

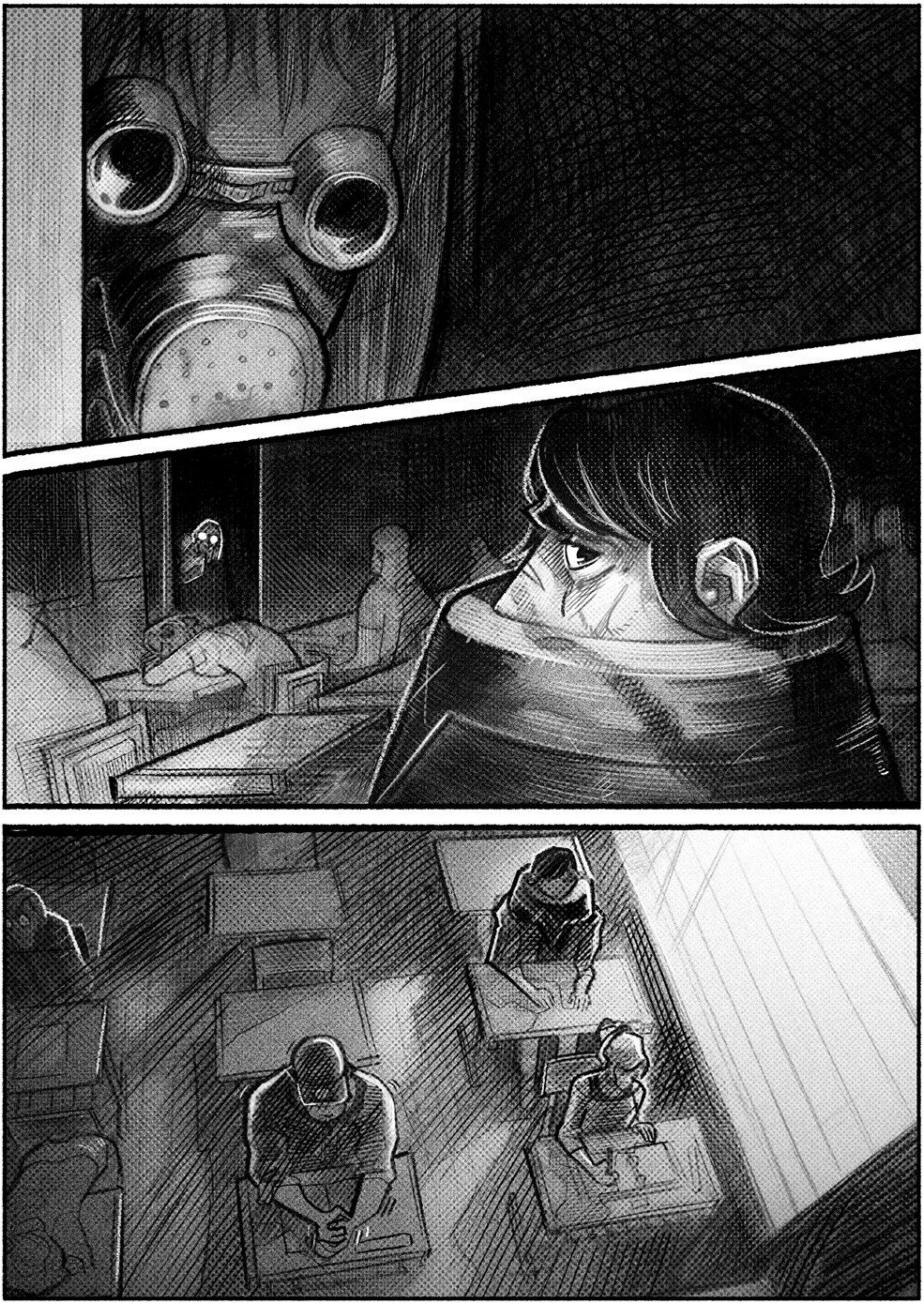
Let them hit him a little longer.

...I just need him to be able to go back to class by himself!

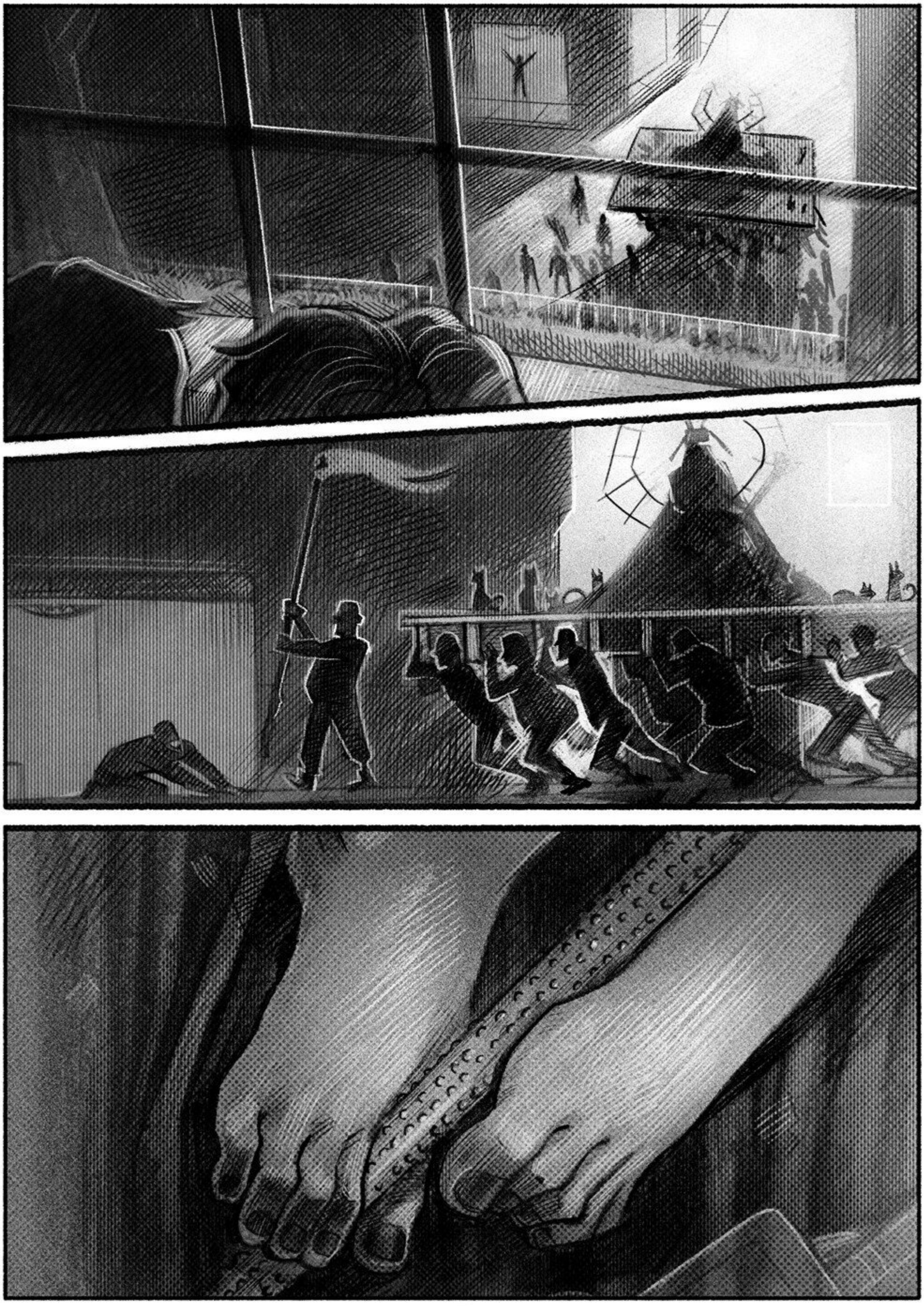
Their fears made them frustrated; their frustration became an urge for violence. An urge that they were not able to control.

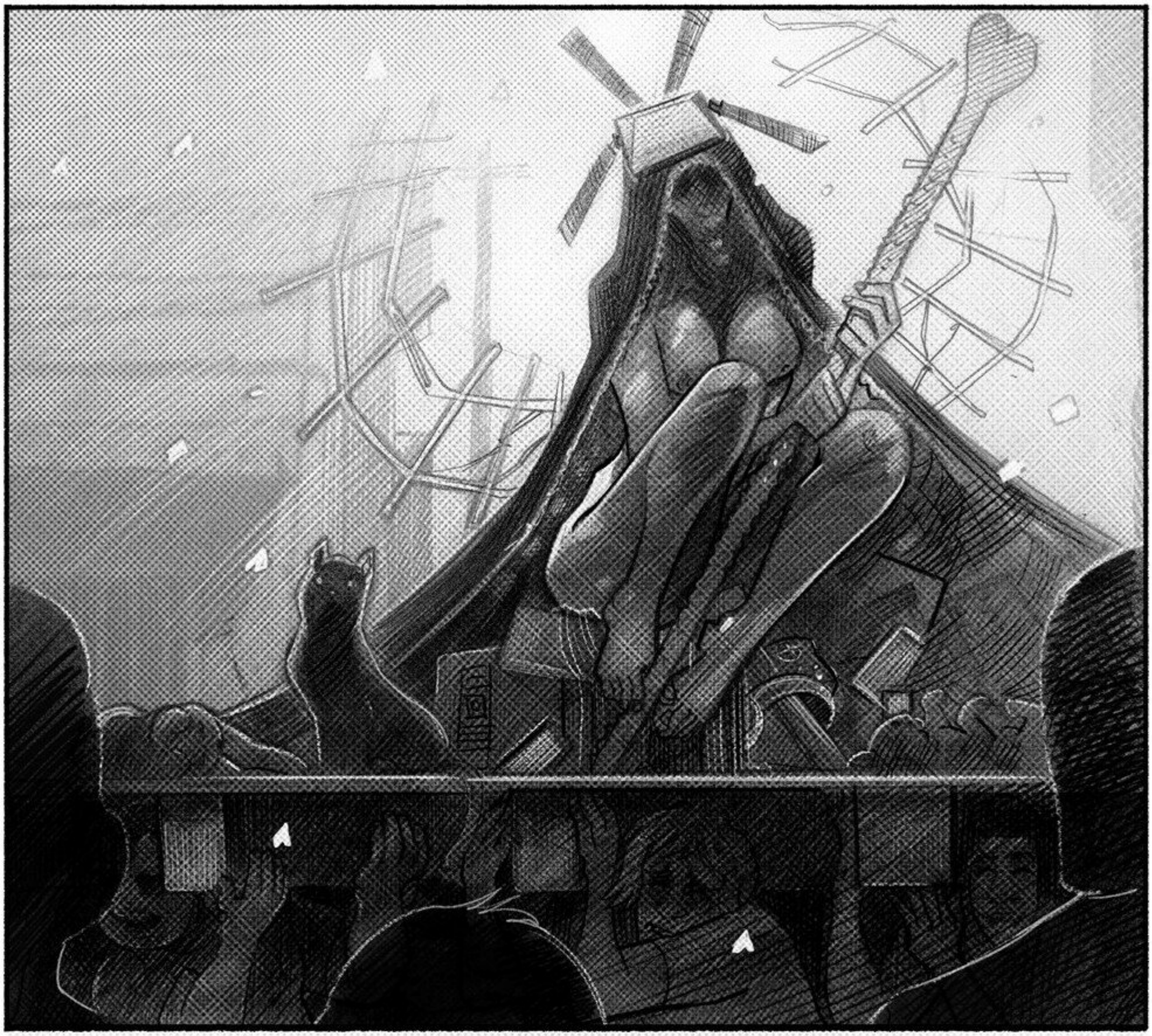
V













THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG HERE, RIGHT?

Yes, there is: your essay!

It looks like it was written by an 8-year-old child.

It's quite embarrassing. Especially considering the fact that you want to be a writer.

IT WAS NOT MY BEST WORK YET. BUT THE NEXT ONE...

Maybe you should find out what your real talent is before... exposing yourself.

And you, Mr. Troublemaker... You, more than anyone else, should be paying attention in class since you struggle to learn even the most basic things.

I wonder how you'd fare in the world outside! "Things only get worse," remember?

I'm watching you...

YOU BETTER START LISTENING TO THE TEACHER.

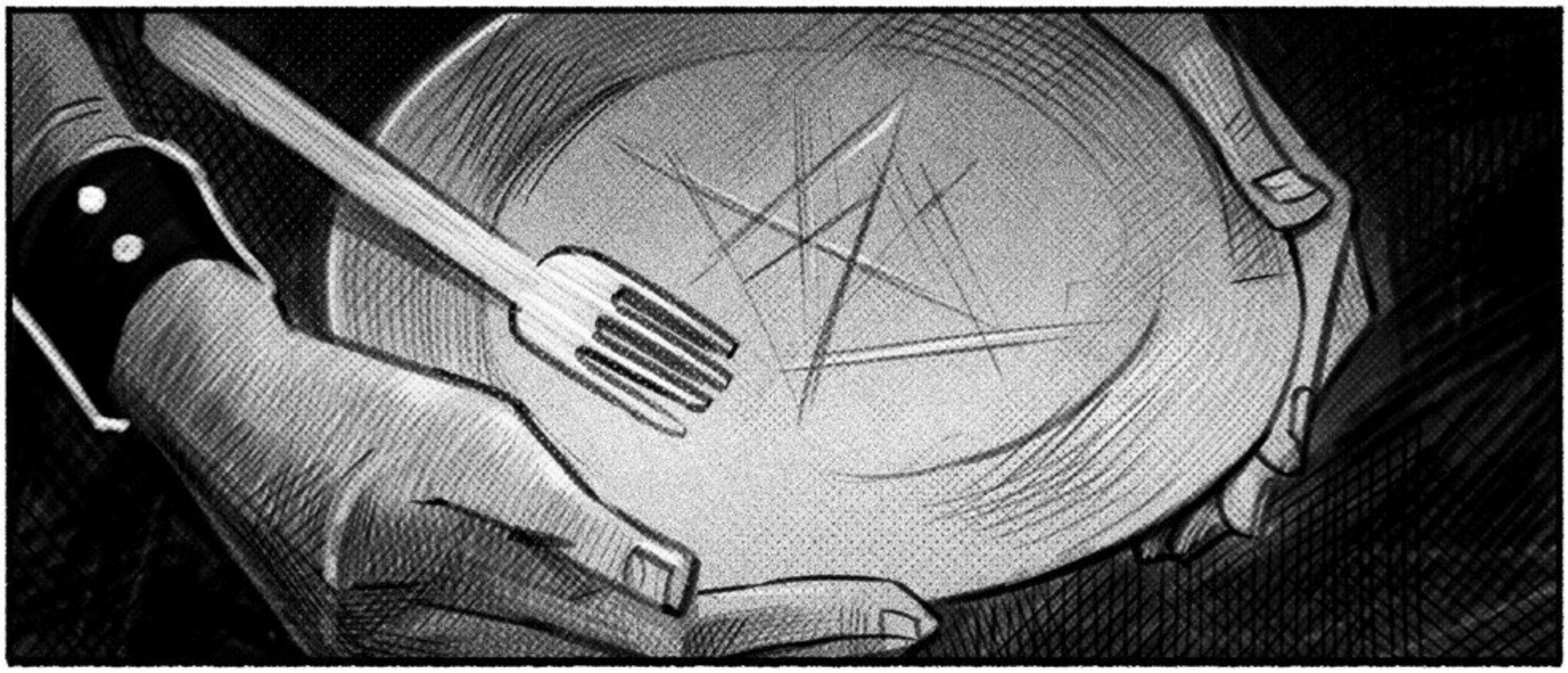
THE WORLD OUTSIDE REALLY IS HARD AND UNFORGIVING. WE CAN'T AFFORD TO MAKE ANY MISTAKES.

OUR FAMILIES ARE COUNTING ON US. AND WE CAN'T LET THEM DOWN.

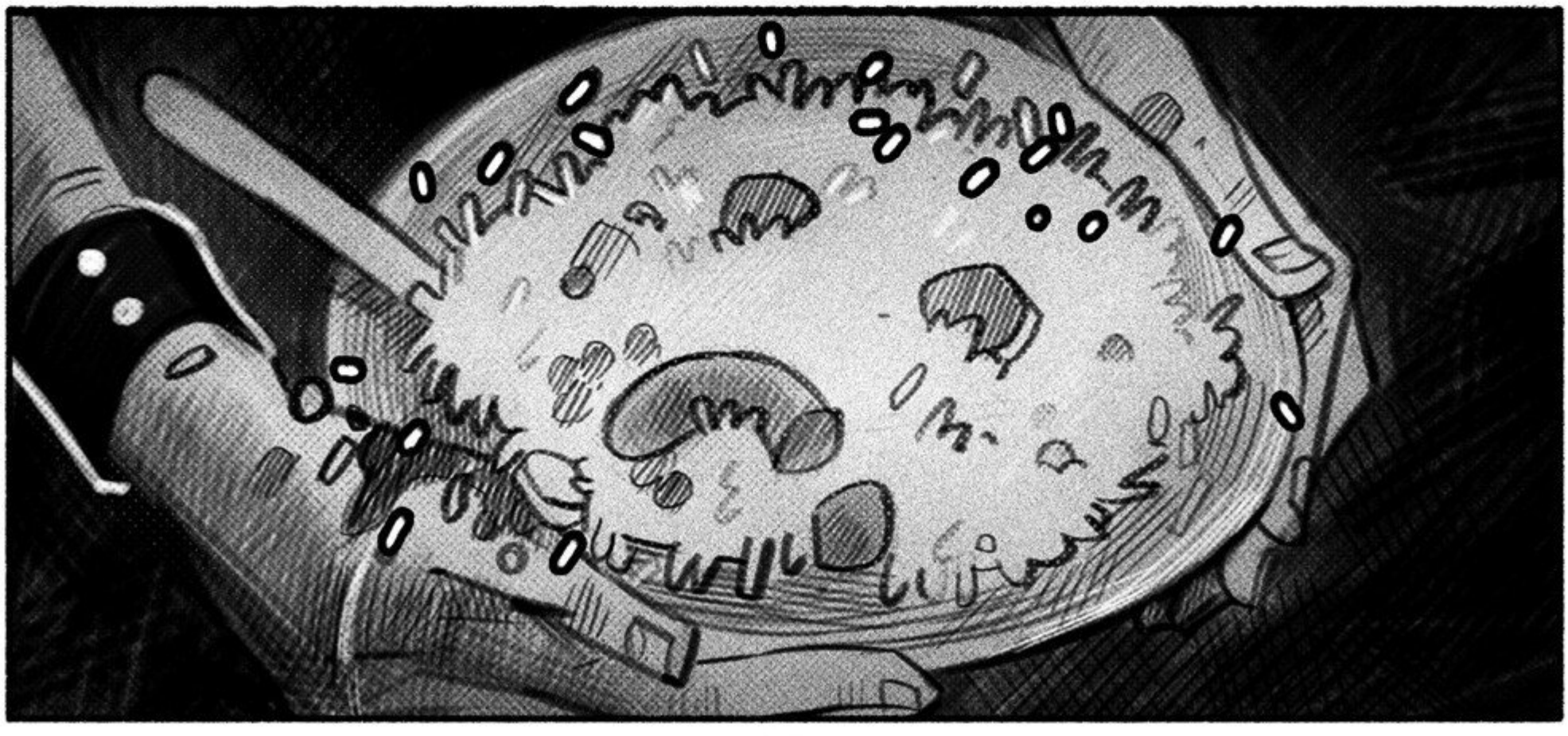
IF I HADN'T SNITCHED ON YOU, I COULD LOSE MY CHANCE OF GETTING A SCHOLARSHIP AND CHANGING MY LIFE. MY FAMILY'S LIFE.

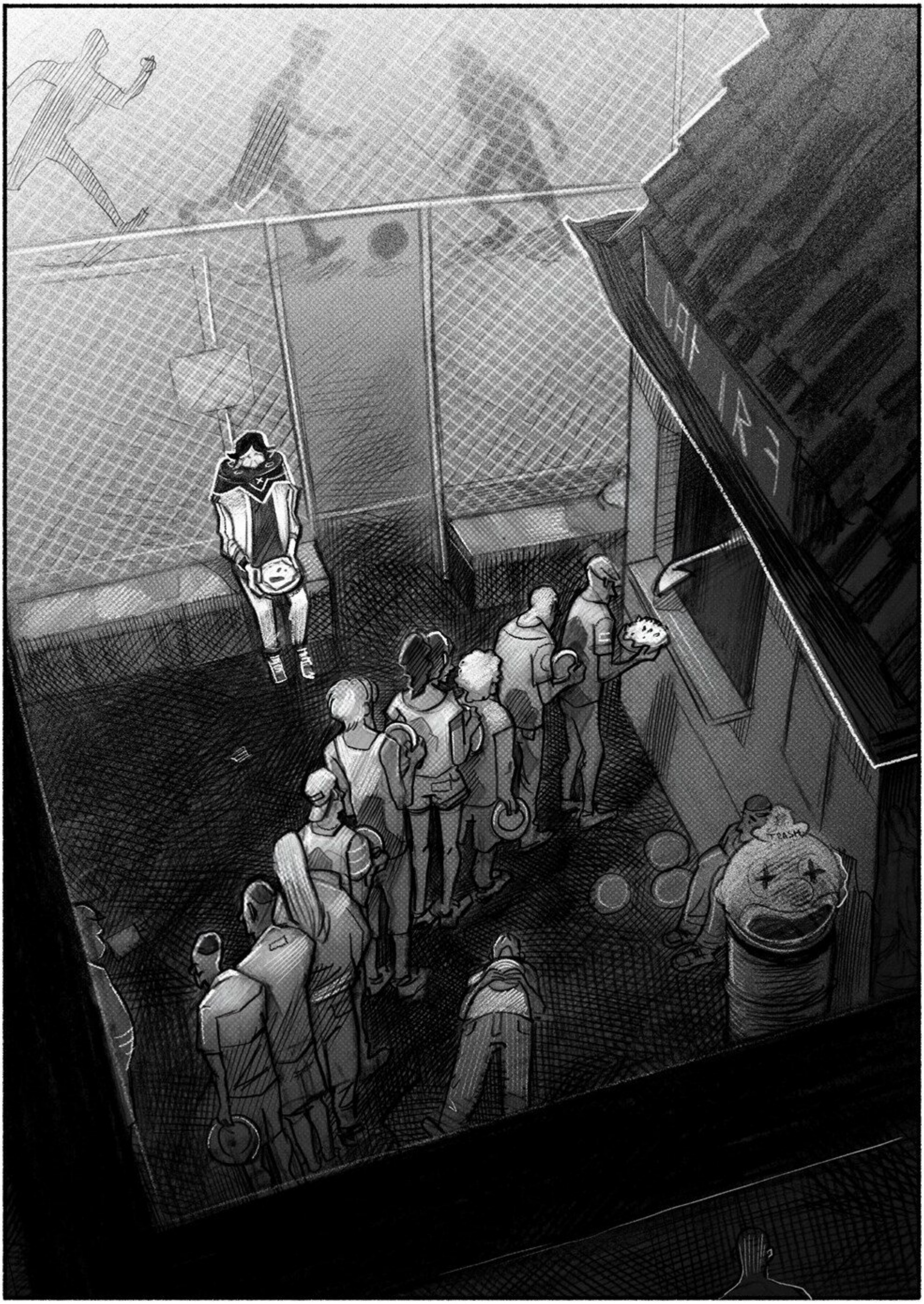
PLEASE, STOP GETTING YOURSELF AND OTHERS INTO TROUBLE.

Silence!







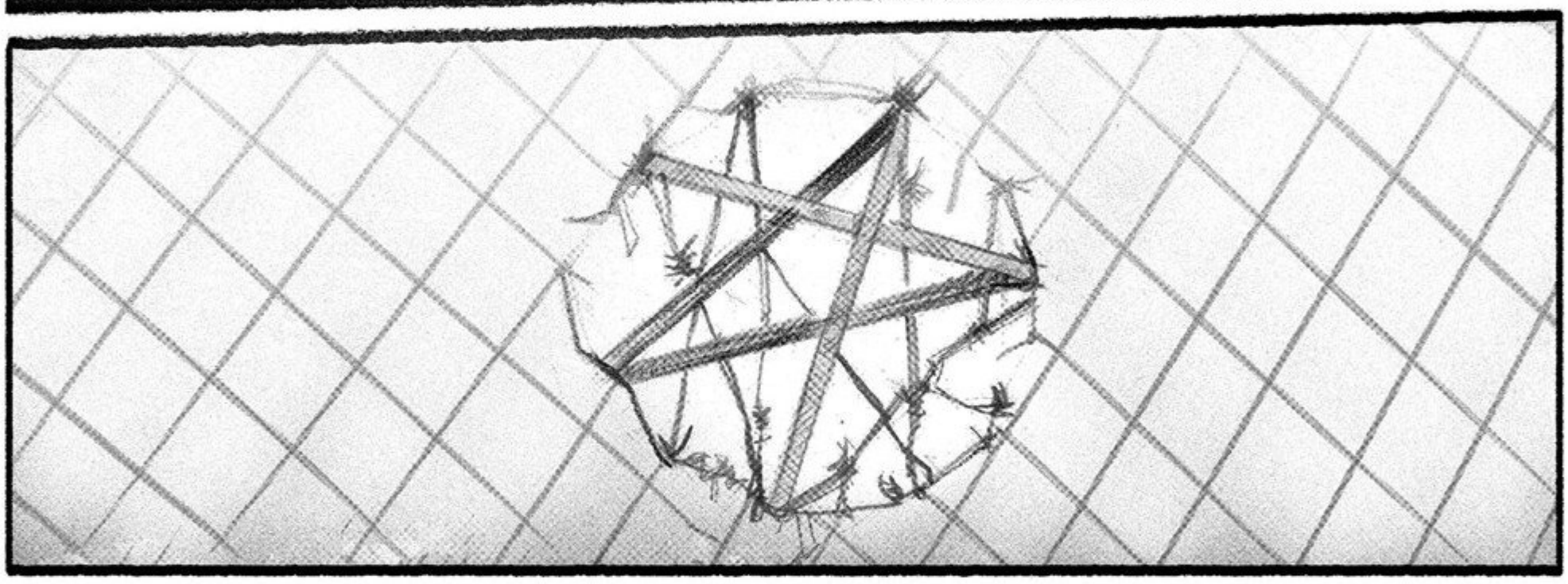

TRASH

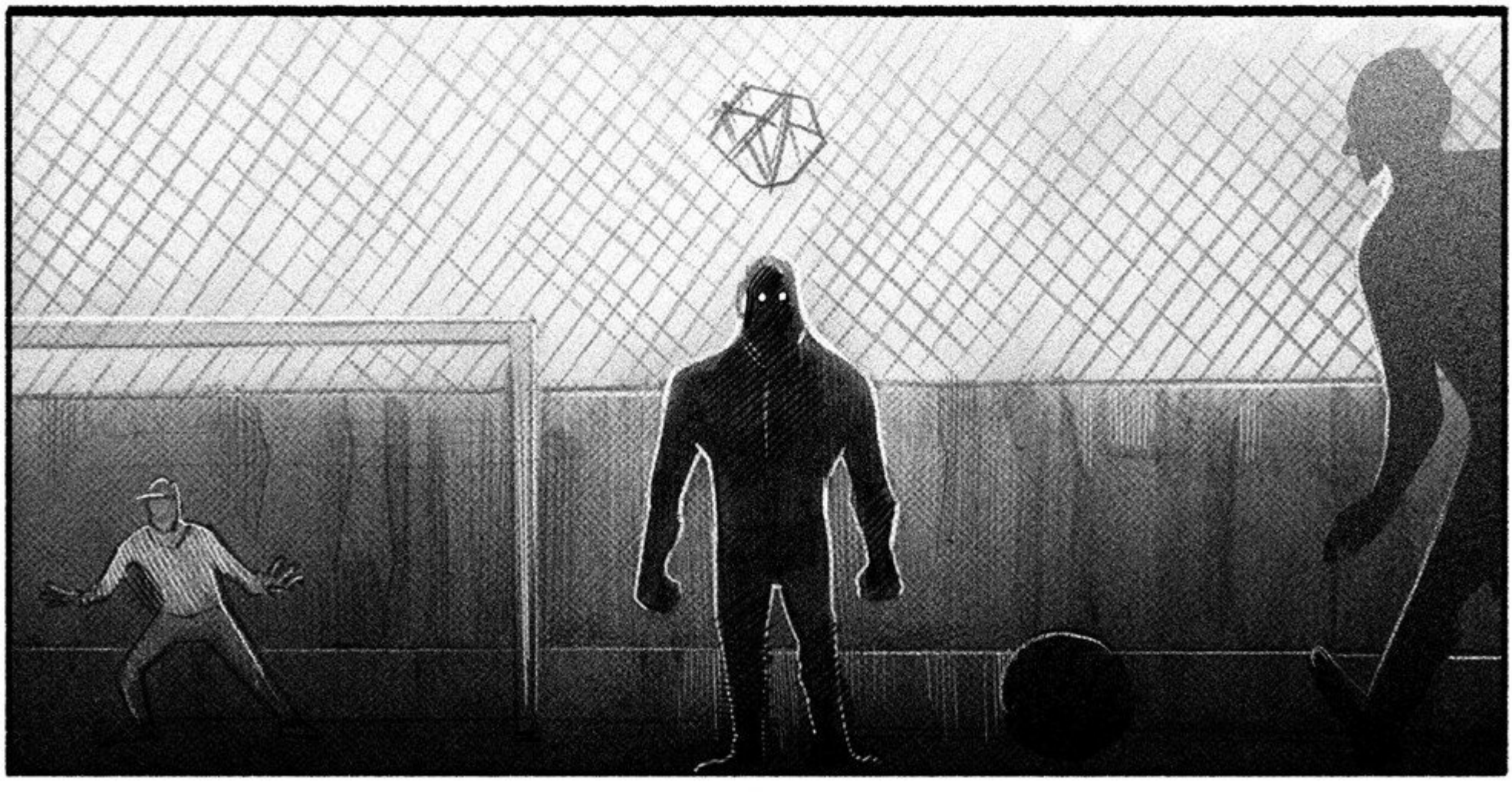
STOP! I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY!

GET THAT NAKED GUY!

HE'S FAST!








HEY!

YOU DROPPED YOUR FOOD...

...WOULD YOU EVEN BE ABLE TO EAT SINCE YOU HAVE THAT THING ON YOUR SHOULDERS?

OH! YOU CAN'T SPEAK NOW. I FORGOT. SORRY.

UNGH!

OHHH SHIT!

WHY ARE YOU NAKED? YOU FREAK!

OW...

YEAH! SHUT UP, FREAK!

HAHAHA!

GAH! THEY'VE FALLEN OFF!

MY TEETH... MY CLOTHES... THEY'VE ROTTED OFF...

I CAN'T AFFORD NEW CLOTHES BUT...BUT...

...I CAN PUT MY TEETH BACK, RIGHT?!

DO YOU THINK IT'S A VITAMIN D DEFICIENCY?

HOLD HIM DOWN!

I'LL TELL THE TEACHER THAT YOU'VE STOLEN MY COMPASS!

NOBODY STOLE ANYTHING, YOU LIAR!

I WON'T BE ABLE TO DO THE GEOMETRY TEST BECAUSE OF YOU!

IF I FIND THIS FUCKING COMPASS...

...I'LL SHOVE IT UP YOUR ASS, YOU SISSY!

PUNCH HIM IN THE FACE!

MISS--

THEY ARE--

OW! OW!

YOU'LL NEVER ACCUSE ME OF ANYTHING ELSE, FANCY BOY!

HOLD HIM!

PEE ON THIS SON OF A BITCH'S FACE!

NO! HELP!

HA, HA, HA!

HA, HA, HA!

HELP ME!

I'M NOT OKAY.

HELP ME, PLEASE!

THEY'RE HURTING ME!

ARGH....

I CAN'T...

SHUT UP!

I'M NOT WELL...

SHUT THE FUCK UP!

I'LL TAKE A SHIT ON YOUR FUCKING MOUTH!

MMM

MMM

MMMM

MMM

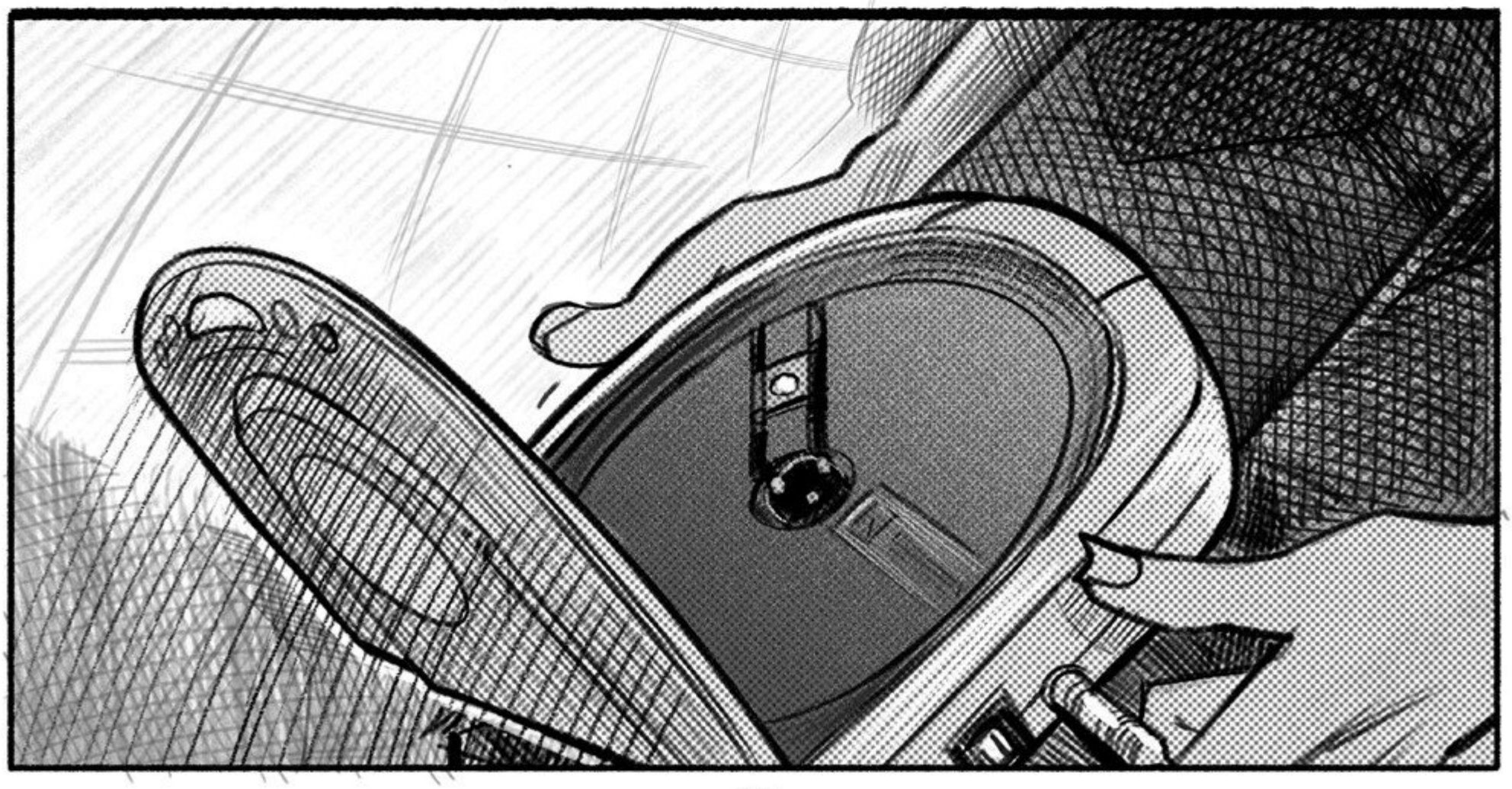
HEY, DO YOU LIKE MUSIC?

I'D GO CRAZY WITHOUT MUSIC ALL THE TIME!

HERE, HAVE A LISTEN. IT'LL MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER.


I'LL HELP YOU.
THERE YOU GO.


OH NO...



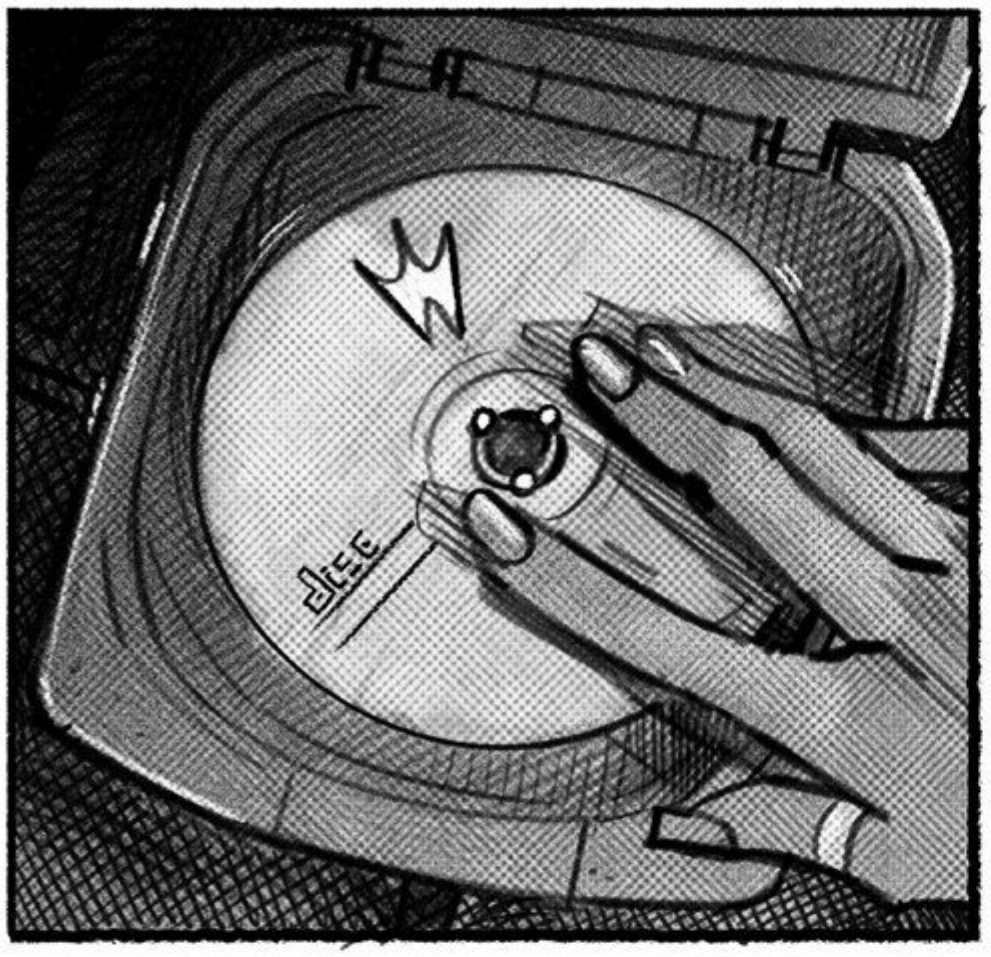
I DIDN'T BRING ANY CDS...

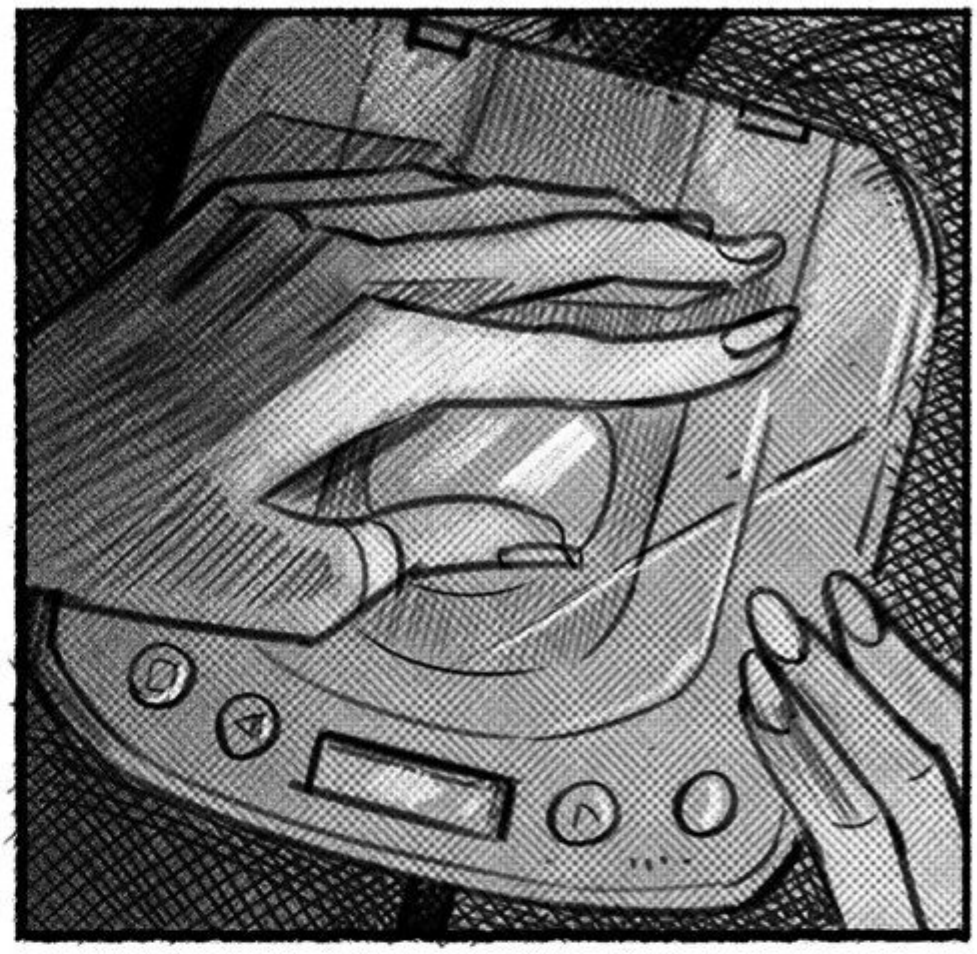
HUH?

DO YOU HAVE ONE THERE?

OH COOL! IS THAT, LIKE, AN INDIE BAND? IS IT GOOD?

OH, SORRY. I FORGOT YOU CAN'T ANSWER.


click

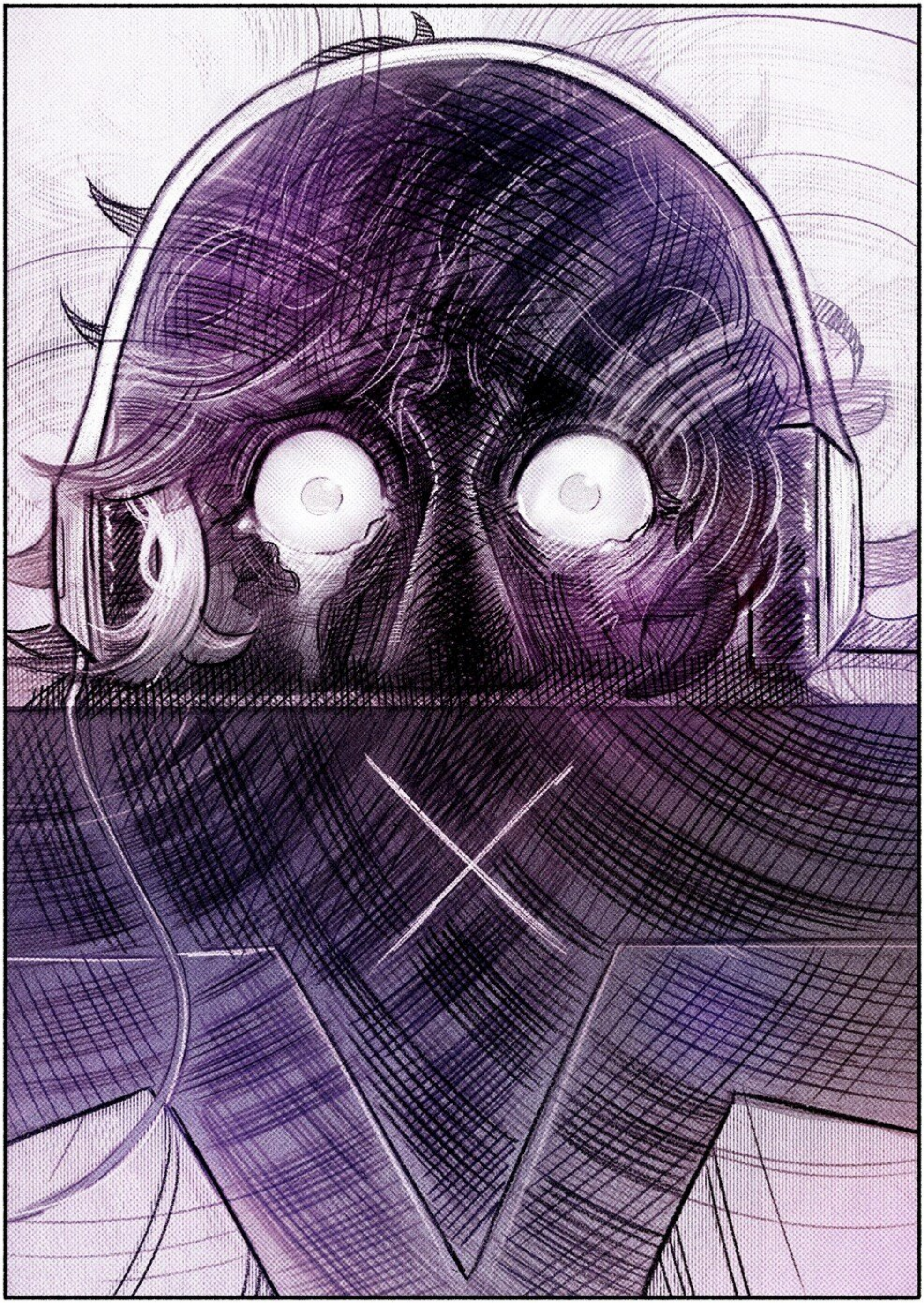



COOL!


I CAN'T WAIT TO LISTEN!
TO BE HONEST, IT FEELS LIKE I HAVEN'T LISTENED TO MUSIC IN A WHILE.


I HOPE IT'S GOT SOME HEAVY SHIT IN THERE!


?!



I just crapped myself again

Why. Is Nobody helping?

Let me stay here Please

Why. Why does everybody hate me

I want to bleed Till I die

I suck at everything

I need to find a job to help my mom

I'm a burden There's no one who cares

let me stay

I Jus ant to rest a little more

Where's my sister?

I must Feed my little sister

I'm TRASH

IS IT HEAVY?

I'm Useless

HEY, ARE YOU OKAY?

I'm so POOR

I can't find my TeetH

please someone help me

I WANT TO go Home

I'M NOT OKAY


IS IT TOO LOUD?
YEAH!

"Heavy metal is the perfect music genre for those who want to subdue the negative thoughts that linger in their minds," she once posted on the internet.

The post got two likes.

VI

supesion meens deaTn

sicrit exit / blockD

inuisbel monsTres

HUH...

...EXCUSE ME, BUT...THAT ROUND THING WITH GIGANTIC LIPS...

...IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE ME?

MY HEAD LOOKS LIKE A PUFFERFISH.

WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THAT?

HE DIDN'T MEAN ANY HARM. LOOK THERE IN THE MIDDLE...

...I LOOK LIKE I'VE GOT TWO MELONS. BUT I GUESS THAT'S JUST HIS STYLE.

HM...

SO YOU'RE SAYING THAT THIS IS HOW HE SEES US? IS THAT IT?

I MEAN... MAYBE HE'S A CUBIST?

ARE YOU A FREAKIN' CUBIST, BUDDY?

WE'VE ALREADY TOLD YOU: ALL WE HEARD WERE STATIC NOISES.

AND WE DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING.

AND WE'VE GOT SOME OF WHAT YOU SAID. WE'RE TRAPPED INSIDE THE SCHOOL AND...

...THAT SOMETHING'S WEIRD WITH THE BELL. I DIDN'T GET THAT PART.

AND INVISIBLE MONSTERS, LOOKS LIKE.

supesion meens deaTh

SUSPENSION MEANS DEATH...

AND THERE'S A SECRET EXIT AT THE SOCCER COURT.

WE JUST DON'T GET WHAT KIND OF GAME THIS IS, MAN.

I'D LIKE TO REMIND YOU THAT WE ARE STILL IN THE MIDDLE OF FINALS. ALSO, AFTER RECESS, CLASSES ARE GOING TO BE OUTSIDE.

THE SUBJECT IS VERY IMPORTANT, SO WE CANNOT BE LATE!

ARE YOU GONNA LISTEN TO SOMETHING RIGHT NOW?

PLEASE, WE'VE ALREADY WASTED HALF OUR RECESS BECAUSE OF YOU. WE BETTER JUST GO TO CLASS RIGHT NOW.

NOTHING WRONG WITH STAYING IN THE CLASSROOM DURING RECESS. BUT IF WE ARE LATE TO CLASS... IT MIGHT LOOK SUSPICIOUS.

She is right I have no TALENT FOR THIS

I'm trying Scholarship

WHY do THINGS go WRONG

HEY!

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

sorry

sorry

WHAT'S THE MATTER NOW?

I love you mom, but I don't know if I can get us out of here

sorry

LOOKS LIKE HE DREW YOU AGAIN BUT...FANCIER.

MY GOODNESS, BUDDY. WHAT DO YOU...

...WANT?

CONGRATULATIONS

I'VE ALWAYS SAID THAT IT DOESN'T MATTER WHERE YOU COME FROM OR WHAT YOUR SOCIAL STANDING IS, EVERYONE CAN BE SUCCESSFUL IF GIVEN A CHANCE!

WITH THAT IN MIND, I'VE CREATED THIS PROJECT SO THAT OUTSTANDING STUDENTS FROM PUBLIC SCHOOLS WOULD HAVE THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES AS THOSE FROM PRIVATE ONES.

THIS YOUNG MAN USED TO HAVE THE WORST GRADES IN THE SCHOOL. BUT MY PROJECT HELPED HIM IMPROVE AND DEVELOP HIS POTENTIAL.

CONGRATULATIONS

TODAY, HE IS THE BEST STUDENT. NOT ONLY IN THIS SCHOOL BUT AMONG EVERY SCHOOL IN THE REGION, INCLUDING THE PRIVATE ONES!

A round of applause for him!

THANK YOU, PRESIDENT OF THE CITY SCHOOL BOARD. I'M SURE YOUR PROJECT WILL CONTINUE TO HELP MANY STUDENTS, JUST AS IT HELPED ME.

BUT IN ORDER TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT, SOMEONE HERE HAD TO OPEN MY EYES FIRST. OTHERWISE, I'D PROBABLY BE BEATING EVERYONE IN THE ARCADE DOWN THE STREET RIGHT NOW.

CONGRATULATIONS

HA HA HA

HA HA

HA

I'M NOT KIDDING! I'M STILL VERY GOOD, IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF.

HA HA HA

BUT IN ALL SERIOUSNESS, THIS PERSON IS MY DEAR MOTHER. AND I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU TO GET UP HERE WITH ME, MOM.

MOM! HE'S ASKING YOU TO GO UP THERE!

OH MY!

ONCE, I GOT HOME LATE AT NIGHT AFTER BEING IN THE ARCADE ALL DAY AND MY MOTHER WAS WAITING FOR ME...

...IN THE KITCHEN, WITH MY DINNER READY AND TEARS IN HER EYES.

SHE TOLD ME THAT LIFE USUALLY DOESN'T GIVE US MANY OPPORTUNITIES, BUT IF WE REALLY MAKE AN EFFORT, THEN WE CAN CREATE OUR OWN PATH TO IMPROVEMENT. WE JUST NEED TO TAKE THAT FIRST STEP.

REMEMBER THAT, MOM?

OH, SON... I'M NOT EVEN DRESSED PROPERLY TO BE UP HERE. LOOK WHAT YOU DID TO YOUR MOTHER.

YOU ARE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN HERE, MOM.

AND THIS PRIZE IS AS MUCH YOURS AS IT IS MINE.

WHAT A BEAUTIFUL SPEECH! THE KID IS A NATURAL SPEAKER!

CONGRATULATION

KEEP IT UP, KID, AND YOU'LL BECOME AS SUCCESSFUL AS ME!

HA HA HA HA..

BUT...WE ARE STILL IN THE MIDDLE OF FINALS...

WHAT HAPPENED? YOU WERE PARALYZED FOR A SECOND THERE.

WE'VE STILL GOTTA STUDY BECAUSE... BECAUSE THE SUBJECTS FOR THE FINALS ARE VERY...

...COMPLEX.

NO...

HUH!

NO, NO, NO...

IT'S ALL BULLSHIT!

WHAT?

we alerady Finshed school

we alerady Finshed school



WE... ALREADY FINISHED SCHOOL?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WE ARE STILL IN SCHOOL. LIKE...WE ARE AT SCHOOL RIGHT NOW! HOW CAN WE... HOW WOULD THAT BE POSSIBLE?!

I DON'T KNOW. BUT HE'S RIGHT.

I'VE GOT NO IDEA WHY OR HOW I FORGOT THE MOST IMPORTANT DAY OF MY LIFE BUT...SOMEHOW, I KNOW HE'S RIGHT.

BUT LET ME TELL YOU...

...IF MY MOM SAW HOW YOU DREW HER, SHE WOULD MAKE YOU SWALLOW THAT CHALK, BUDDY!

HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN SITTING ON THIS CHAIR?

FUCK!

WHAT AM I DOING HERE?! THIS SHIT SHOULD BE OVER!

SOMEBODY'S GOT SOME EXPLAINING TO DO.

HEY, WAIT!

WHAT'S GOING ON? WHAT IS HE TALKING ABOUT?

I'M STARTING TO REMEMBER EVERYTHING...

THAT RAINBOW DECORATION HAS BEEN THERE FOREVER, AND I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY.

THEN I LEARNED THAT THIS SCHOOL USED TO HAVE DRAMA CLASSES. THE RAINBOW MUST HAVE BEEN PART OF THE BACKGROUND OF SOME PLAY.

EVEN SO, I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY THEY NEVER TOOK IT DOWN.

N UL L

DRAMA CLASSES? I NEVER KNEW ABOUT THAT.

DRAMA, MUSIC, PROGRAMMING CLASSES... ALL TERMINATED DUE TO LACK OF FUNDS.

I USED TO THINK "HOW CAN I BECOME SUCCESSFUL STUDYING AT A BROKE-ASS SCHOOL LIKE THIS ONE?"

WHERE THERE'S NO MONEY EVEN FOR...NEW BOOKS...

EXACTLY. BUT BECAUSE OF MY MOTHER, I CHANGED MY ATTITUDE.

SO MUCH SO THAT I WON A SCHOLARSHIP, REMEMBER?

THERE WERE NO SPECIAL DECORATIONS AT MY SCHOLARSHIP CEREMONY, BUT SOMEONE HAD THE IDEA OF WRITING "CONGRATULATIONS" ON TOP OF THIS OLD RAINBOW.

"OH, NOW IT MAKES SENSE," I THOUGHT THAT DAY.

"THIS IS MY RAINBOW AFTER THE STORM." ALL MY EFFORTS HAD PAID OFF.

YOU WERE THERE, TOO, RIGHT, BUDDY?

THANKS FOR COMING. YOU DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE SCHOLARSHIP WAS CANCELED AFTER A YEAR OR SO.

SOME SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT OF THE SCHOOL BOARD HIMSELF WAS STEALING MONEY FROM THE PROJECT, BUT THAT DIDN'T EVEN MAKE IT TO THE NEWS.

I WASN'T ABLE TO PAY MY TUITION EVEN WHILE WORKING TWO JOBS.

NOTICE OF DELINQUENCY

DEAR STUDENT,
THE PAYMENT OF YOUR MONTHLY TUITION IS PENDING FOR MORE THAN 90 DAYS AT THE PRESENT MOMENT. IF YOU DO NOT CLEAR THE ENTIRE FEE UNTIL THE END OF THE CURRENT MONTH, YOU WILL BE EXPELLED. THIS IS YOUR FINAL WARNING.

THERE WERE NO REWARDS.

THERE WERE NO RAINBOWS...

...JUST A NEVER-ENDING STORM.

BUT...I DON'T GET IT. IN ABOUT TWO HOURS WE CAN GO HOME.

I THINK OUR BUDDY HERE IS RIGHT... WE ARE MOST LIKELY TRAPPED HERE.

TRAPPED...

BUDDY, YOU SAID THAT THERE IS A SECRET PASSAGE AT THE SOCCER COURT BUT IT IS BLOCKED, RIGHT?

SEEMS LIKE HE'S CONFIRMING IT.

LET'S OPEN THAT SHIT UP!

I know that you are all nervous about finals...

...And that's why I felt like today would be the perfect day to have class outside.

Try to relax a little.

HMMM! HMM!

OH... CLASS IS AT THE SOCCER COURT.

HMM!

HE'S POINTING AT THAT HOLE IN THE FENCE!

IS THAT THE SECRET PASSAGE?

LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE RIGHT.

Well, well... Have you three forgotten about the outdoor classes?

Doesn't matter. I'm in a good mood today. Just sit down already if you don't want to get a warning...

And you better take note of everything because it will all be on the test.

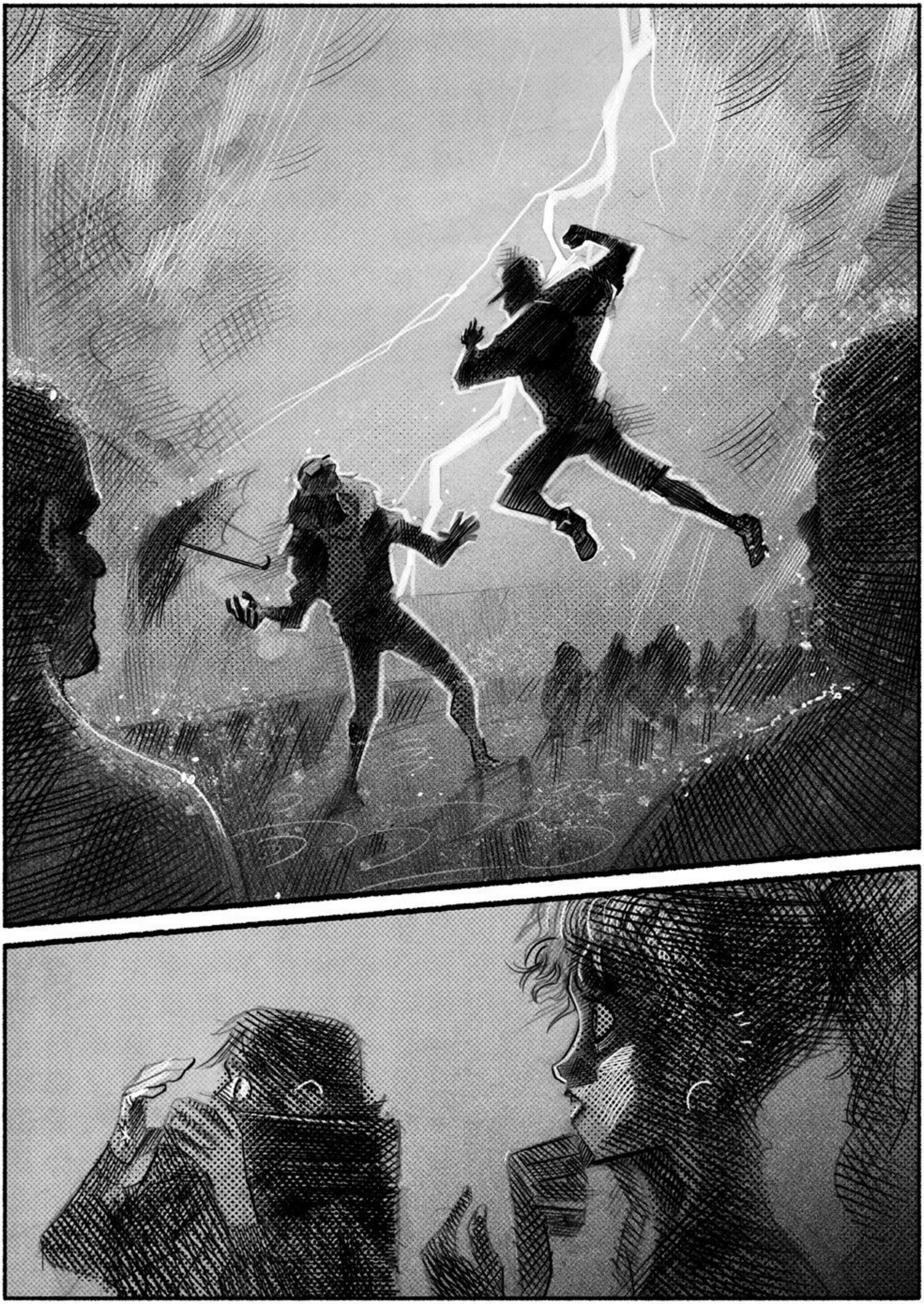
OUR NOTEBOOKS ARE DRENCHED.

That's not my prob...

You! Sit down! Now!

I told you to sit down!

What's the meaning of this?!










THE PRINCIPAL!


UGH!

We are willing to forget about all this if you beg for forgiveness right now.

Otherwise, we will not recommend you for the scholarship...

I'VE ALREADY HAD THE SCHOLARSHIP!

And a student like you will never have another chance to get into the best university in the country.

A STUDENT LIKE...

...ME?!

I AM THE BEST STUDENT IN THE REGION!

INCLUDING THE PRIVATE SCHOOLS, YOU SON OF A BITCH!

AHHH!

Ugh, ha, ha, ha!

Ha, ha, ha, ha!

You talk too much. The world is much darker than your limited human mind can comprehend.

You think you are so smart, you think you know everything...

I'm about to show you that the only thing you will ever truly know...


...is the nature of desperation.

WELL, YOU ARE NOT MAKING SENSE ANYMORE!

THEN TAKE THIS!

MMM
MMM
MMM
STOP, BUDDY! NO.
GO GET SOME HELP!

WHAT WAS THAT? WHAT... WHY...

...WHY DID HE DO THAT?!

I CAN'T...



CRUCIFYING PEOPLE IS ILLEGAL! NO, IT'S... MONSTROUS!

AND WHY DOES EVERYONE GO BACK TO SCHOOL AFTER THE BELL?

ARE WE...

We are safe heer

RIGHT, BUT...

...SHIT, I HOPE OUR CLASSMATE IS OKAY. I CAN'T BELIEVE HE FOUGHT THE PRINCIPAL...


THESE COMICS...ARE YOURS?


I THINK I USED TO HAVE SOME OF THEM...
...BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER. I'M EXHAUSTED...LIKE I HAVEN'T SLEPT IN DAYS...

...DO YOU THINK THAT WE CAN GET SOME REST HERE? I CAN'T KEEP MY EYES OPEN...

...DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT...

...WE ARE... SAFE HERE?


We are safe here

VII

"While Lovely Millie is at the mall gossiping with her friends and spending her husband's money, Leena, Queen of the Elves, is saving the magical world. Can you see the difference between those two?" This is what her father said to persuade her to get a comic book called *Arcadia - Introducing Leena, Queen of the Elves* as a birthday present instead of the Lovely Millie doll.

He had no idea what Arcadia was or who Leena was (besides being the Queen of the Elves, like the cover stated). The important thing was that the comic book was much cheaper than the doll, and he didn't have much money to spare.

But it's funny how that apparently trivial decision would have huge repercussions throughout the girl's life.



HOW LONG DO YOU PLAN TO KEEP LIVING HERE FOR FREE? GET A REAL JOB! YOU CAN'T CALL YOURSELF A "WRITER" IF YOU DON'T EARN A PENNY FROM IT. IF THAT'S THE CASE, I'M A WRITER, TOO! I CAN ALSO WRITE NONSENSE THAT NOBODY READS. YOUR COUSIN GOT MARRIED, YOU KNOW? TO A DENTIST. A RICH ONE. CALL HER TO FIND OUT IF HE HAS SOME CRAZY FRIEND INTERESTED IN MARRYING YOU!

SHUT UP, MOM!

I WON'T STAY HERE WITH YOU MUCH LONGER! YOU'LL SEE!

YEAH, SURE!

I'M NOT LISTENING TO YOU ANYMORE!

LOOK WHO IT IS! COME HERE, GIRL!

HEY! I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT YOU!

OH MY GOSH, I'VE READ YOUR NEW SHORT STORY! ON YOUR BLOG! IT'S, LIKE, SO AWESOME!

THANK YOU! I'M GLAD YOU LIKED IT!

IT WAS A-M-A-Z-I-N-G! SO PERFECT!

HEY, YOU SHOULD TOTALLY COME WITH ME. MY BOYFRIEND'S BAND IS REHEARSING! IT'S IN THAT STUDIO OVER THERE!

THAT CASTLE IS A STUDIO? I HAD NO IDEA!

OH YEAH! TOTALLY! LET'S GO INSIDE!

GIRL, I'VE ALWAYS LOVED YOUR STORIES. REMEMBER THAT ONE? ABOUT THE WOMAN? WHO COULDN'T BREATHE?

HEHE, I DON'T THINK IT'S ONE OF MY BEST ONES...

ON AIR

I CAN NEVER FORGET IT! IT, LIKE, JUST LIVES RENT FREE IN MY HEAD!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE, GIRL?

JUST CHECKING THE RESULTS OF A LITERARY CONTEST THAT I ENTERED. THE WINNER WILL GET THEIR BOOK PUBLISHED.

OH! MY! GOSH! YOU'VE GOT IT, GIRL! ABSOLUTELY! LIKE, FOR REAL!

SO?

WINNER OF THE 4TH CONTEST OF LITERARY FICTION:

IT IS NOT ME

OH...

RESULTS ARE NOT OUT YET...

LOOK! THAT'S MY BOYFRIEND'S BAND!

I HOPE THIS NIGHT NEVER ENDS!

YEAH!

OKAY, THEN THIS IS GONNA BE THE LAST SONG IN THE SET LIST. WE NEED ONE FOR THE ENCORE. SUGGESTIONS?

W-WELL... D-DO YOU G-GUYS KNOW THE OPENING S-SONG OF *ARCADIA*?

IT T-TALKS ABOUT FRIENDSHIP. IF WE END THE C-CONCERT WITH THAT ONE, EVERYONE IS G-GONNA GO HOME H-HAPPY AND--

ARCADIA? ISN'T THAT A CARTOON?

THE KEYBOARD PLAYER? YEAH, SO...

...WE'VE GOT A FRIEND WHO ASKED IF HIS BROTHER COULD PLAY THE KEYBOARD IN THE BAND. AND MY BOYFRIEND OWED HIM A FAVOR.

THAT'S WHY THE BOY IS HERE. HE DOESN'T HAVE FRIENDS AND WAS, LIKE, SAD BECAUSE HE COULDN'T GET INTO A MUSIC SCHOOL OR SOMETHING. HE'S GOOD BUT, YOU KNOW, KINDA DORKY.

THE LAST SONG SHOULD BE ABOUT FUCKING!

THEN OUR GROUPIES ARE GONNA BE HORNY AS FUCK AND WE CAN BRING THEM BACKSTAGE TO HAVE AN ORGY!

HA, HA, HA, HA!

WOULDN'T THAT BE BETTER?

I D-D-DON'T KNOW ABOUT TH-THAT...

BET YOU DON'T!

HA, HA, HA!

THERE THEY ARE!

HEY, BABE! DID YOU GUYS LIKE THE REHEARSAL?

WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT AN ORGY WITH GROUPIES?

HA, HA!

WE WERE JUST MESSING WITH THE KID. HE GETS EMBARRASSED WHEN WE TALK ABOUT THAT STUFF. IT'S HILARIOUS.

AND YOU TALK A LOT ABOUT THAT STUFF?

COME ON! HEY, LET'S GRAB A PIZZA. I'M STARVING!

WHAT ABOUT THE BOY?

OH... HE SAID HE ISN'T HUNGRY.

OKAY, THEN. COME ON, GIRL!

THANKS, BUT... I'VE GOT SOME THINGS TO DO...

BUMMER... WELL, CALL YOU LATER, THEN!

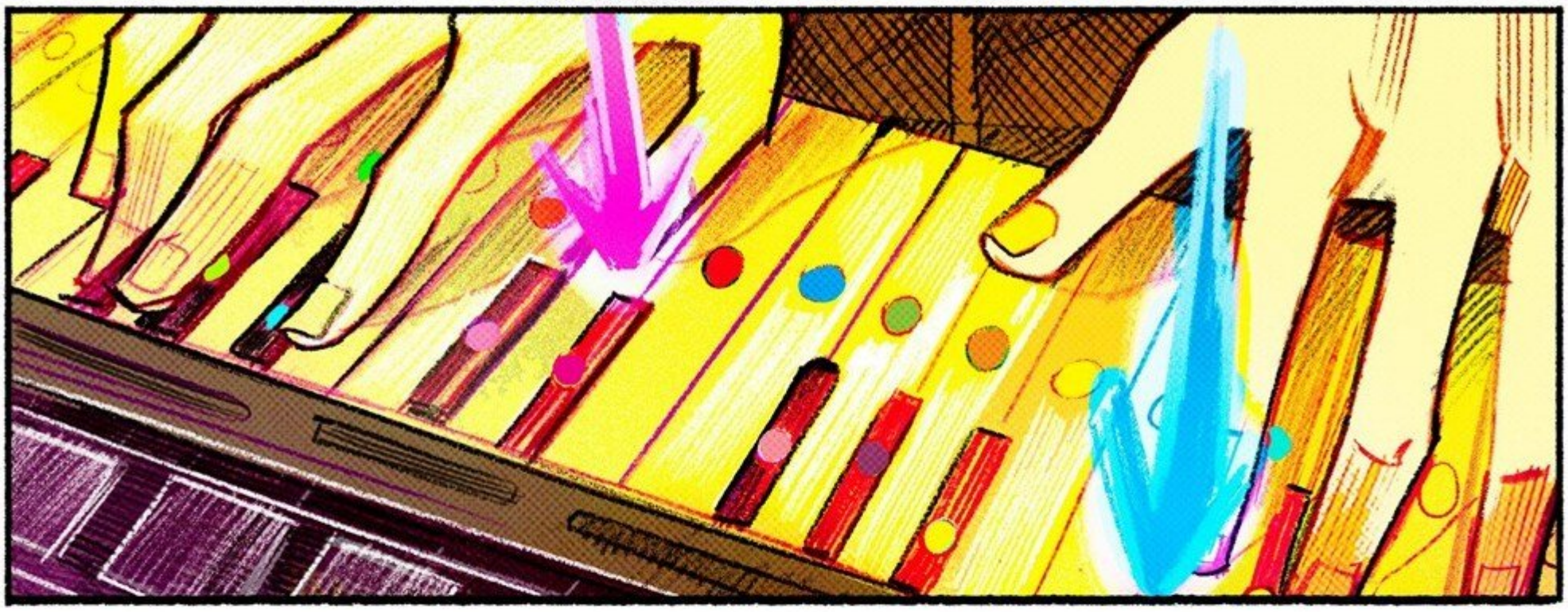
BYE!

PLEASE, DON'T FORGET TO REMOVE THOSE STICKERS FROM THE KEYBOARD AND CLEAN UP THE KEYS BEFORE YOU GO.

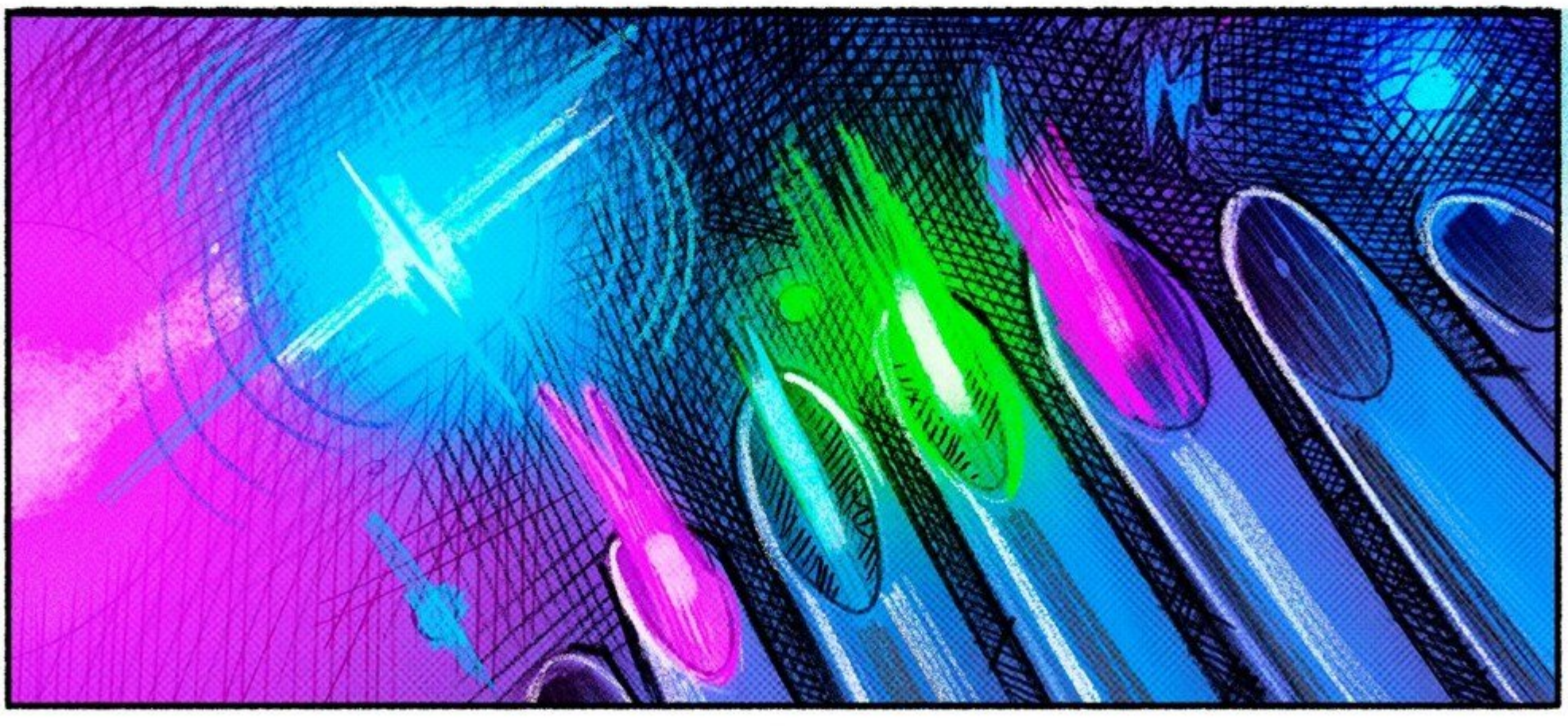
C-CAN I P-PLAY A LITTLE MORE? THIS K-KEYBOARD IS MUCH B-BETTER THAN THE ONE I'VE GOT.

SURE. YOU'VE STILL GOT NINE MINUTES LEFT.

OH!







HE, HE!

HEY! ISN'T THAT LEENA'S THEME FROM *ARCADIA*?

BUT I'VE NEVER HEARD IT LIKE THAT! VERY COOL!

OH.

TH-THANKS. I LIKE TO C-COME UP WITH V-VARIATIONS FOR S-SONGS I LIKE.

I LOVE LEENA!

HEY, WHY DOES YOUR KEYBOARD HAVE THOSE COLORFUL DOTS?

I-IT WAS M-MY BROTHER'S IDEA. SO I CAN IDENTIFY THE K-KEYS.

HE'D P-PRESS A KEY, AND I'D SAY THE COLOR OF THE S-SOUND. THEN WE'D PUT A S-STICKER OF THAT COLOR ON THAT KEY. I WROTE THE ORDER DOWN, SO I...

SO YOU SEE NOTES AS COLORS?

YES.

AWESOME!

D-DO YOU P-PLAY ANY INSTRUMENTS?

NO, MINE IS A DIFFERENT KIND OF ART.

I AM A WRITER. I WRITE FICTION.

R-REALLY?!

I'VE N-NEVER MET A WRITER B-BEFORE! THAT'S S-SO COOL!


S-SORRY. I M-MIGHT BE A LITTLE HUNGRY. I DIDN'T HAVE LUNCH T-TODAY.
THOSE ASSHOLES...

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN READING *ARCADIA*?

YOU MEAN THE C-COMICS?

YEAH.

I DON'T READ THE C-COMICS. I JUST WATCH THE C-CARTOON.

YOU'VE NEVER READ *ARCADIA*?!

WELL, I BUY F-FANZINES AND SUCH. MOSTLY BECAUSE THEY COME WITH POSTERS AND ART FROM THE FANS. I DECORATE MY ROOM WITH THOSE.

DESTROY THE WEAK

THE COMICS ARE MUCH BETTER THAN THE CARTOON! I'VE STILL GOT MY COLLECTION. I CAN LEND IT TO YOU IF YOU WANT.

THANKS! BUT IF I READ FOR T-TOO LONG, I GET HEADACHES.

AND BESIDES, I THINK *ARCADIA* LOSES HALF ITS FUN WITHOUT THE MUSIC.

THE OPENING SONG, FOR EXAMPLE... IT'S THE REASON I PLAY MUSIC TODAY.

WHEN I HEARD IT, IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I REALIZED THAT MUSIC CAN MAKE YOU FEEL THINGS.

AND HOW DID YOU FEEL?

FIRED UP! I WANTED TO GO TO THAT WORLD RIGHT AWAY.

THAT'D BE SWEET.

OUR WORLD SUCKS, DOESN'T IT?

HUH?

SO MUCH AGONY, EVERYTHING IS A MESS. DON'T YOU THINK?

SOMETIMES.

AND IF YOU SAY IT OUT LOUD, PEOPLE WILL CALL YOU WEAK.

AT SCHOOL, THEY CALL ME *MORON, BABY,* AND *PERVERT.*

WHAT?! WHY?

WELL...

...MORON IS BECAUSE I MISSPELL WORDS. BABY IS BECAUSE I STILL WATCH CARTOONS.

PERVERT IS BECAUSE... I ONCE WENT INTO THE GIRLS' BATHROOM BY MISTAKE. AND WHEN I OPENED A STALL, THERE WAS A GIRL IN THERE.

AFTER THAT, EVERYONE IN MY CLASSROOM BEAT ME UP AND CALLED ME A PERVERT. THEY NEVER STOPPED CALLING ME THAT. I HATE IT THE MOST!

DID YOU TRY TO EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED?

I DID. I TOLD 'EM I JUST GOT THE DOORS MIXED UP, AS I DO WITH KEYBOARD KEYS WITHOUT THE COLORS.

NOBODY BELIEVED ME.

WELL, FUCK 'EM.

WHAT?

THAT'S WHAT I THINK.

UH..

RIGHT?

FUCK THEM!

YEAH!

THE WORLD IS FULL OF STUPID PEOPLE WHO SAY STUPID THINGS.

BUT WHEN WE BECOME FAMOUS, ALL THAT SHIT, ALL THOSE PEOPLE, WILL BE IRRELEVANT!

FAMOUS?

I WANNA BE A FAMOUS AUTHOR! DON'T YOU WANNA BE A ROCK STAR?

OH, NO! I WANNA BE A COMPOSER!

A COMPOSER, HUH?

I WANT TO MAKE MUSIC THAT INSPIRES PEOPLE TO KEEP GOING, EVEN WHEN THINGS ARE TOUGH.

JUST LIKE IT DOES FOR ME.

HM...

"TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE WITH OUR ART," HUH?

THE PHRASE IS A BIT CLICHÉ, BUT THE SENTIMENT IS NOBLE.

BUT I'M AFRAID OF NOT BEING GOOD ENOUGH TO WRITE GOOD SONGS.

MY FIRST STORIES WERE CRAP.

REALLY?

GARBAGE. IN FACT, THEY WERE *ARCADIA* FANFICS!

OH. JUST LIKE ME PLAYING *ARCADIA* SONGS.

BUT YOUR COVERS ARE MUCH BETTER FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD, HAHA.

PLAYING COVER SONGS AND MAKING FANFICS IS COOL, BUT CREATING YOUR OWN WORLDS HAS A DIFFERENT FLAVOR.

SO, WHAT ARE YOU TELLING ME?

THAT IF YOU WANT TO BE A COMPOSER, YOU SHOULDN'T BE AFRAID TO OPEN YOUR HEART TO THE PUBLIC.

OH.

HERE'S AN IDEA TO GIVE YOU CONFIDENCE:

RECORD A SHORT ALBUM OF SONGS THAT MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU DID WHEN YOU WERE A KID WATCHING *ARCADIA*!

I STILL WATCH IT. IT'S IN ITS THIRTIETH SEASON.

ANYWAY! IF YOU GET FIRED UP WHILE YOU'RE DOING IT, PEOPLE ALSO WILL WHEN THEY HEAR IT, I'M SURE.

AH... SONG NUMBER ONE COULD BE LIKE A CARTOON OPENING SONG!

THAT'S A GOOD IDEA!

IT JUST WOULDN'T HAVE THE CARTOON, RIGHT?

IT WOULD MAYBE BE LIKE A ROCK OPERA – A STORY WITH JUST SONGS.

BUT I COULD DRAW A PICTURE ON THE COVER. DO I HAVE TO SING?

NOT IF YOU DON'T WANT TO.

I'D LIKE TO SING ON ONE, BUT I'D RATHER PLAY.

YOU CAN DO ANYTHING YOU WANT!

IT CAN BE ABOUT A HERO. NOT THE SAME ONE FROM *ARCADIA*... A SIMILAR ONE...

LOOKS LIKE YOU REALLY LIKED THIS IDEA, HUH?

I LIKED A LOT.

THANK YOU.

GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

HUH?!

YOU WILL ONLY REMOVE THIS BRACELET WHEN YOU REACH YOUR GOAL.

I'LL DO THE SAME.

BUT...D-DO YOU TH-THINK WE CAN MAKE IT?

OF COURSE! DO YOU KNOW WHY?

WHY?


"IT'S 'CAUSE I'VE GOT FRIENDS. AND TOGETHER WE STAND!"


ARCADIA
DIRECTOR
WRITER
WRITER
COMING SOON



Instrumental and sung too

I'm excited about the solo album it was a great idea
Thank you

Glad to have helped!

Listen...

I've gotta go away for a while.

what happened?

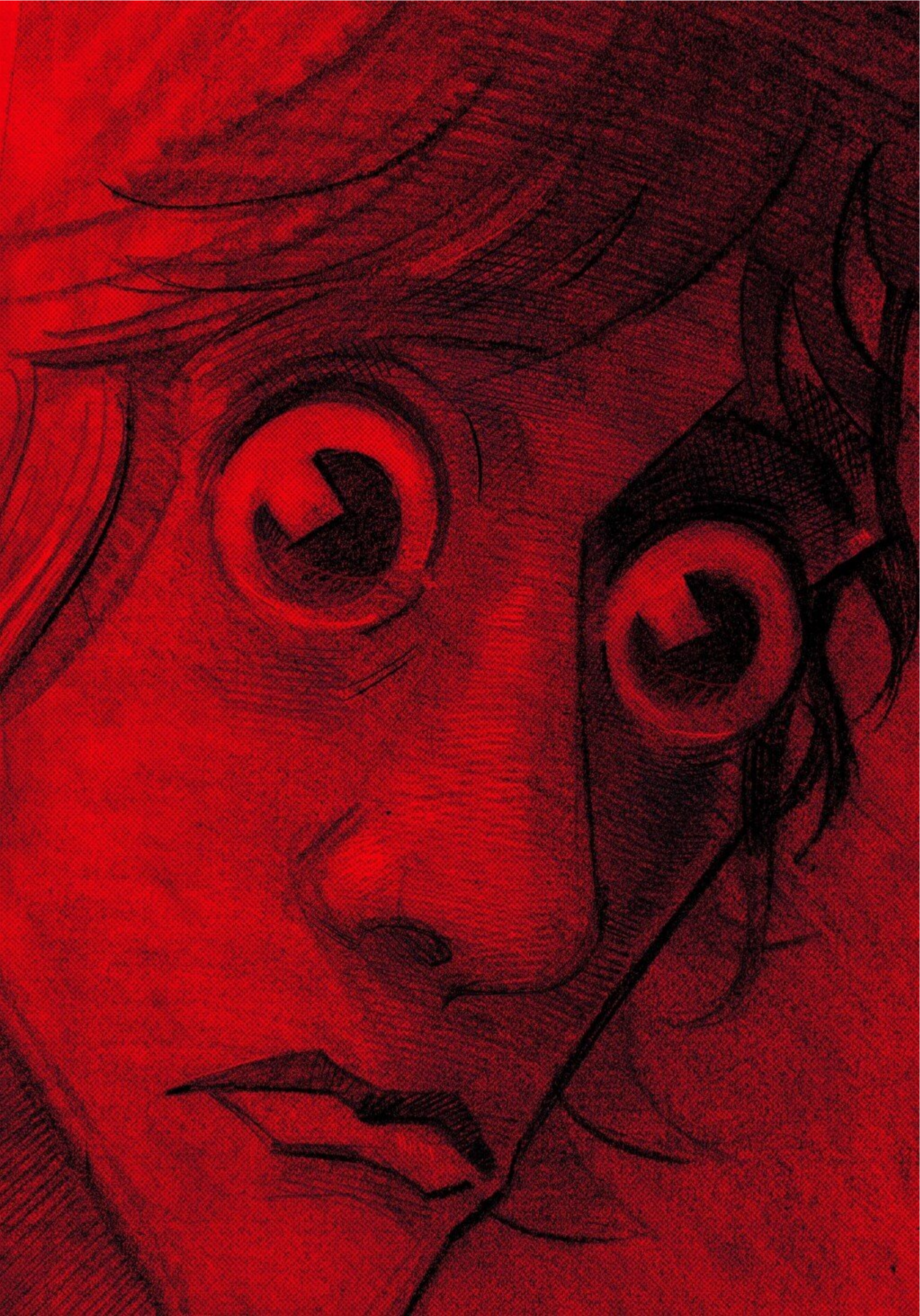
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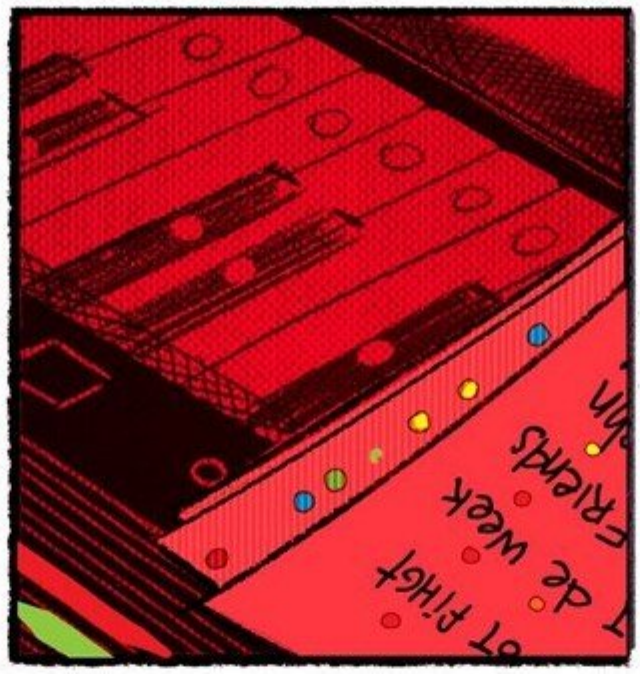
YOU TOO?




ARCADIA
THE STEEL FUTURE
Next week
Be Friends
But Util Then
Evil Beware !





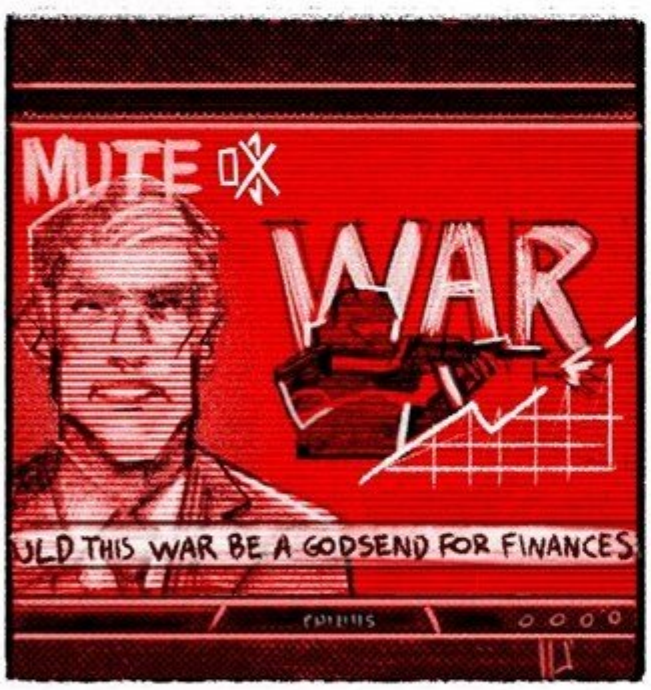


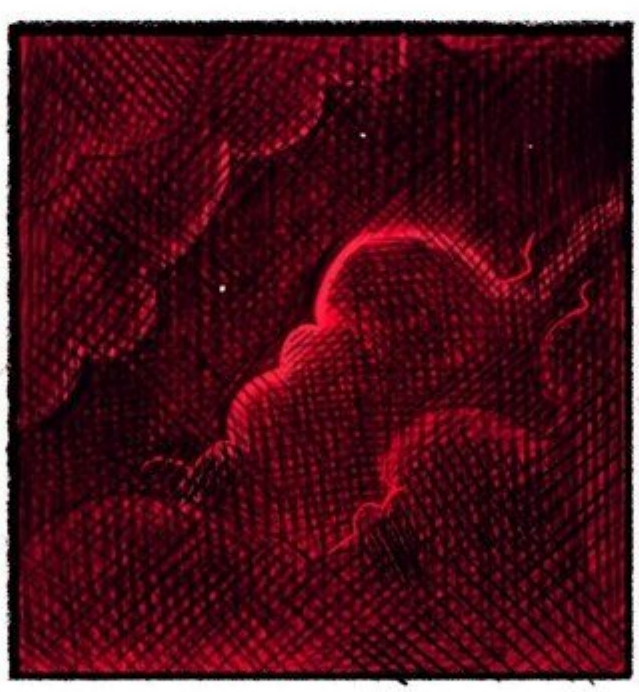

MUTE








MUTE
WAR
ULD THIS WAR BE A GODSEND FOR FINANCES




MUTE
THEY KEEP THROWING BOMBS AT US! WE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING TO THEM, I DON'T UNDERSTAND!






SON?

SON, HAS YOUR FATHER RESPONDED?

NO, MOM.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR BROTHER?

NO, MOM.

I'M SURE THEY'RE FINE. PROBABLY JUST BUSY...

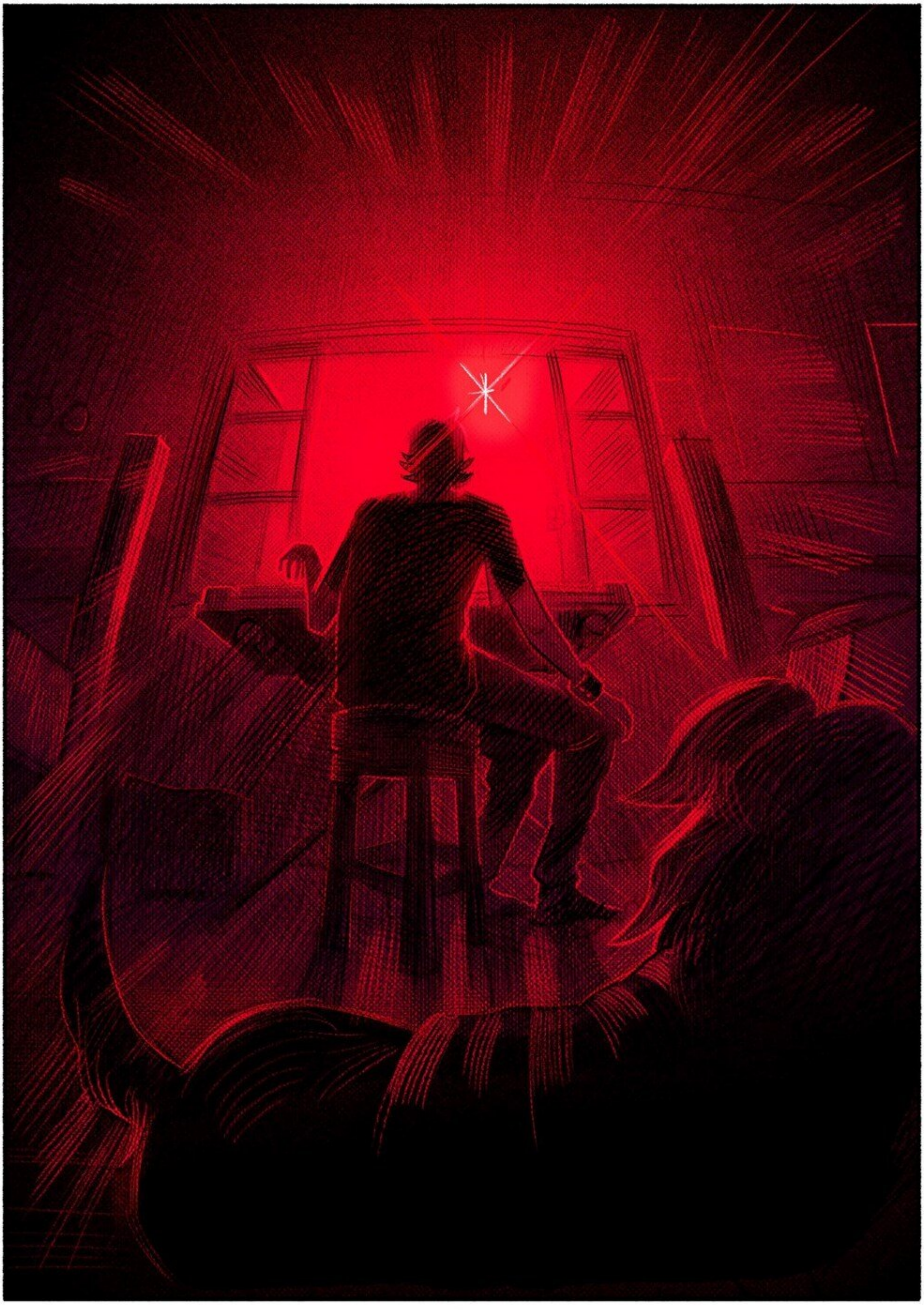
HAVE YOU ASKED ANY FRIENDS IF THEY KNOW ABOUT ANY JOB FOR YOU?

WHAT FRIENDS?

SON...LET'S CHEER UP THIS HOUSE.

WHY DON'T YOU PLAY THE HAPPY SONG?

SURE.



SO THAT WAS YOUR CD.

YOU REALLY RECORDED YOUR ALBUM.

I wRote a few songs but I nevr Recodred That CD I don't Know Wahts hapenming

REALLY? WELL...

...WE'LL FIND OUT!

AND ABOUT ME GOING AWAY... WHAT HAPPENED WAS--

HUH?



MIDNIGHT SCHOOL

THIS IS NOT...

...POSSIBLE!



The light came from the street. It looked like there was no light on in the entire school, even though it was the evening classes.





"Get down from that chair," the teacher said. The boy was standing on his seat with what looked like an enormous metal collar around his neck and shoulders.

Blood was dripping down his hands while kept shaking and crying. "Are you listening to me, sir? I want my mom to bandage my hands."



...He climbed the fence and went through the hole while nobody was watching. He dropped down and landed on something solid but wobbly. It was an old school desk and, looking closely, he realized that it was at the top of what looked like a mountain of old school desks.







ARE YOU SEEING... SOMETHING COMING OUT OF THAT WINDOW?!




WHAT THE HELL DO WE DO NOW?

"The new student can't tell left from right but at least he raised his hand instead of his foot," the voice said with sarcasm. "A round of applause for him!"





Alarmed, the boy pointed to the dog barking outside. "Sir! My d-dog! I th-think that h-he ran away from h-home! H-he's calling for m-me!"



The girl skipped a few chapters ahead but soon realized that the boy was still distressed about the memory of his lost dog. All because of what she had read a moment earlier.



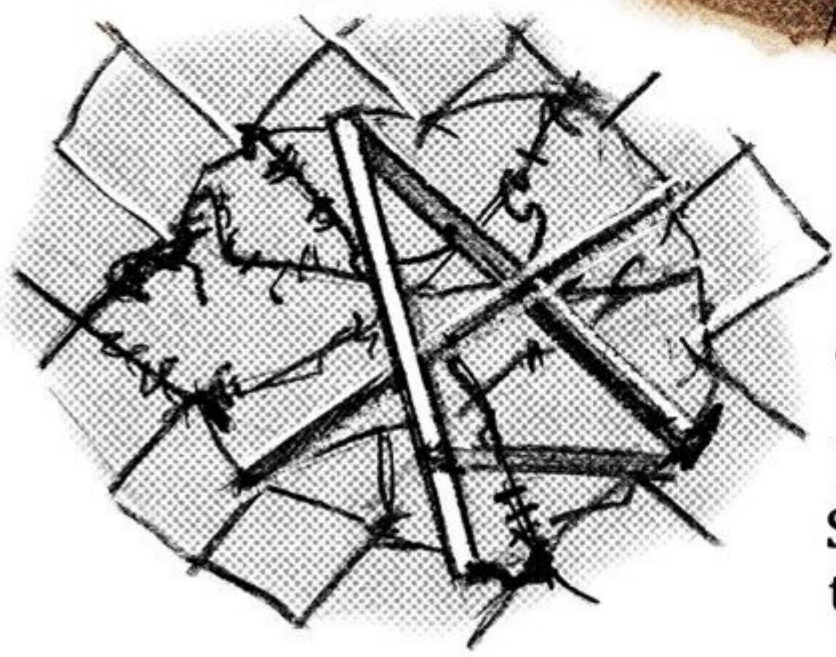


She soon realized they had no other option: They had to go back inside the school. "If there is an answer to our questions, it must be there," she thought.

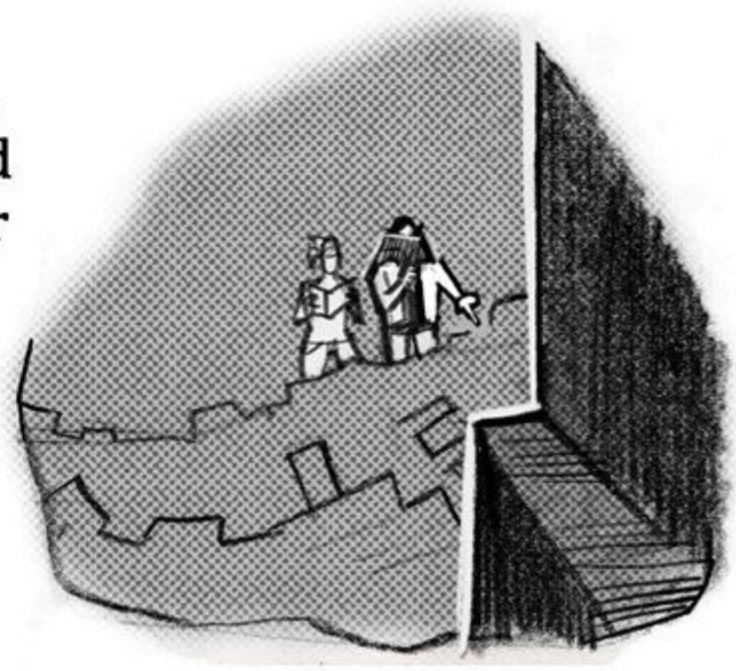




They tried to go back the way they came from...



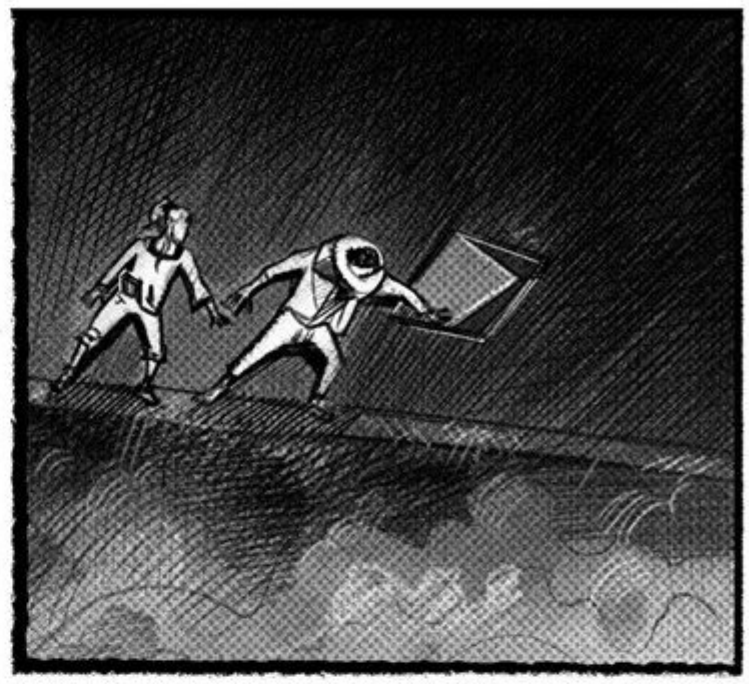
...But the fence had already been mended. So they needed to find another way to sneak inside.



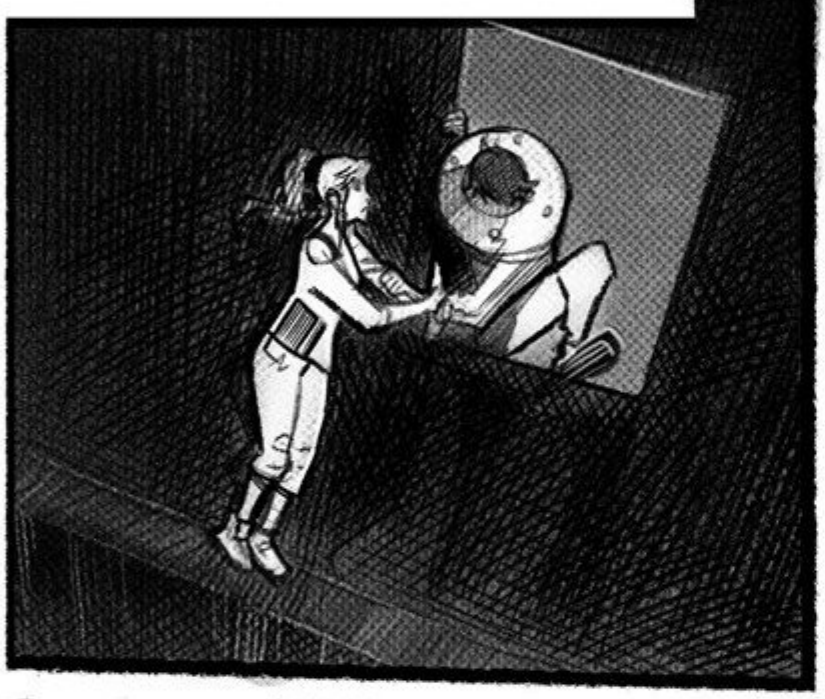
The way the school was built, it had a narrow ledge outside around its perimeter. It was dangerous, but they managed to walk around that path until they found a secret entrance on a wall.



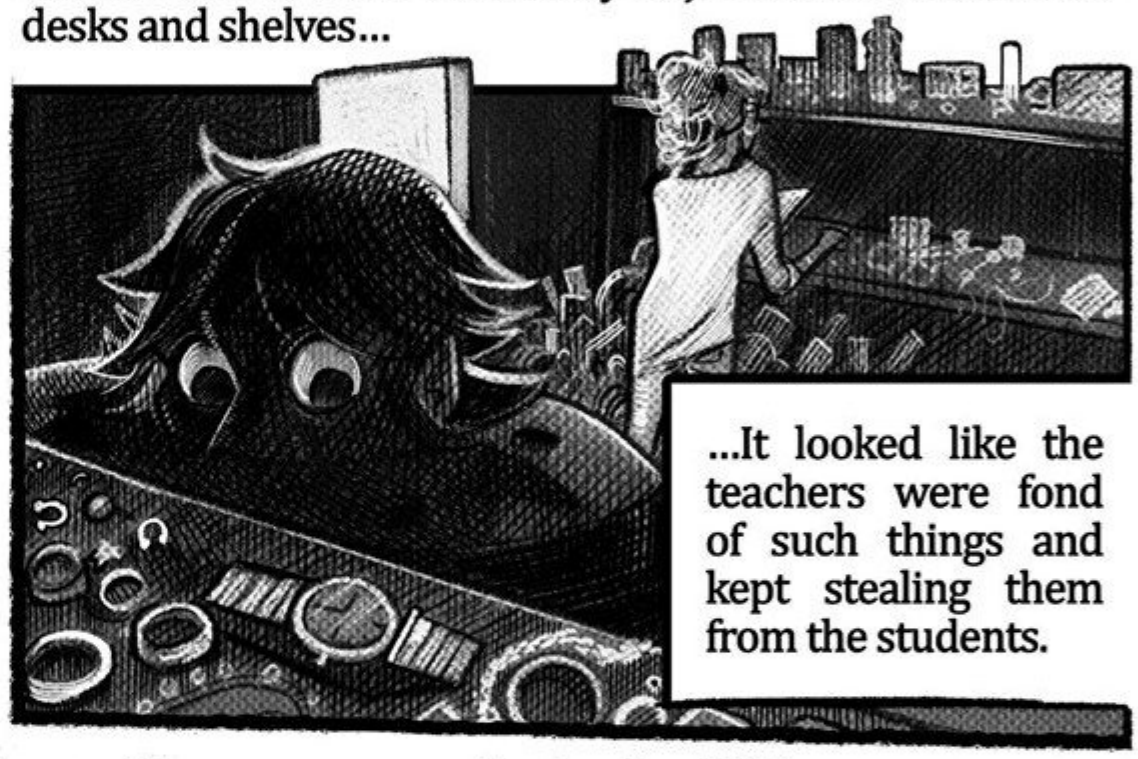




He went in first then helped her.

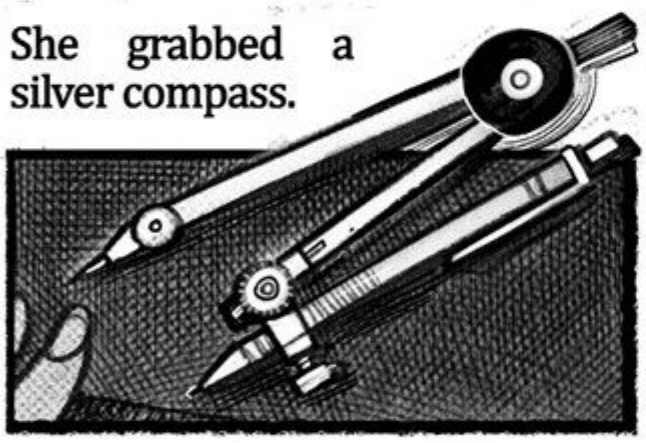


The room was filled with shiny objects scattered around desks and shelves...



...It looked like the teachers were fond of such things and kept stealing them from the students.

She grabbed a silver compass.



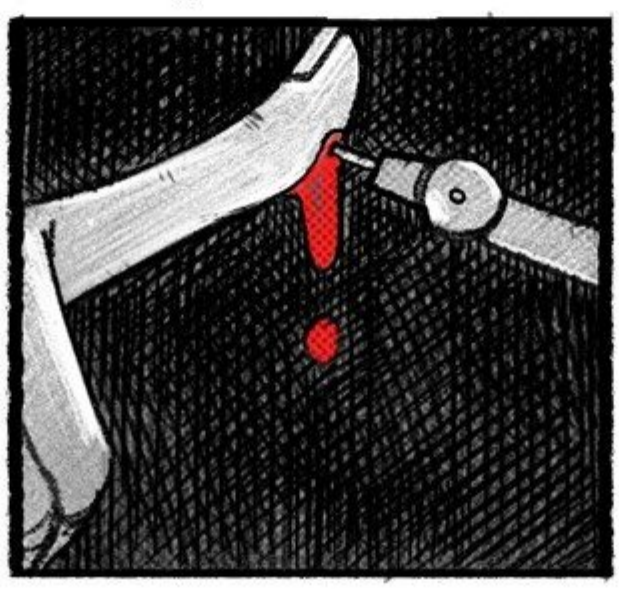
The bell rang. Classes were over for the day. While everyone went right toward the exit, the two of them went left until the end of the corridor.



She told him to show her his index finger...



...And then she pricked it with the compass.





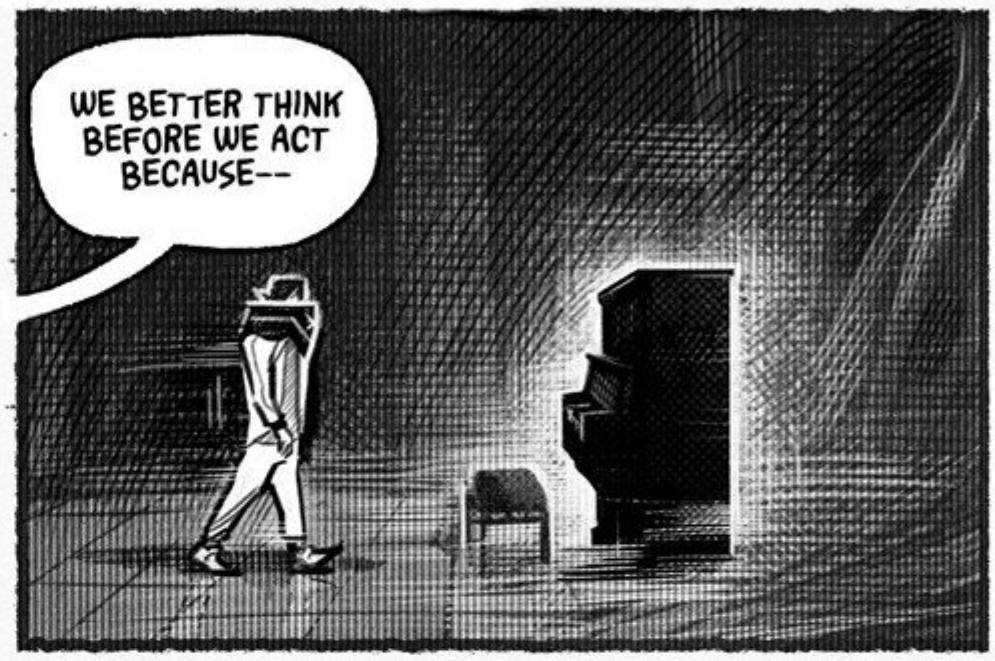
A drop of blood dripped to the floor...


...and immediately, a secret room appeared before them.


UH-OH...


LOOKS LIKE WE'VE GOT A PROBLEM.

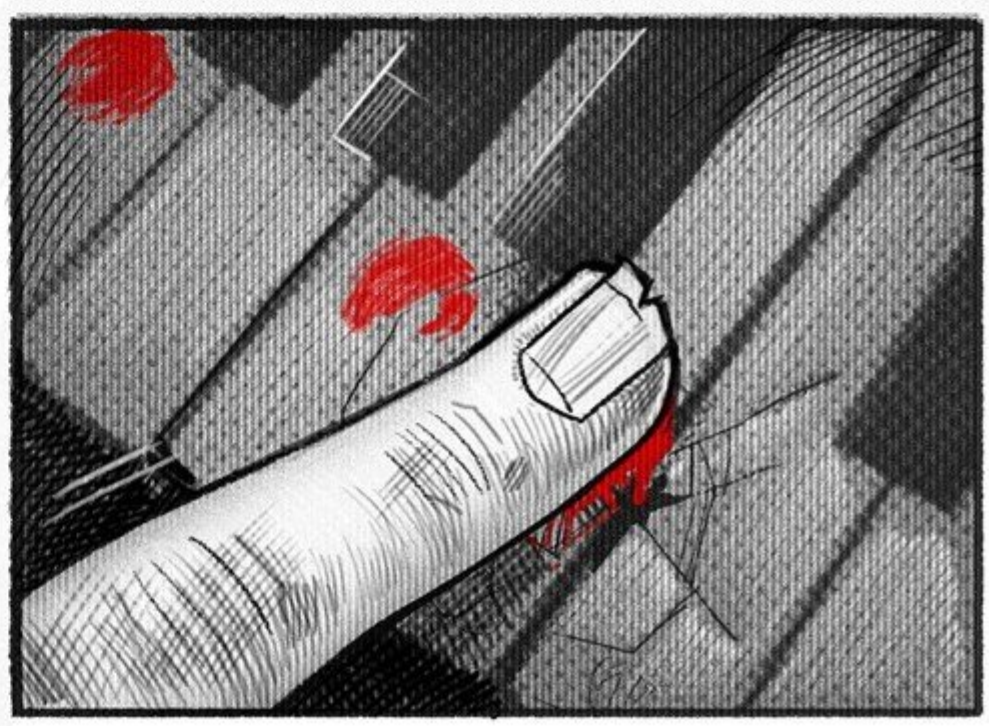

HEY! WAIT!


WE BETTER THINK BEFORE WE ACT BECAUSE--

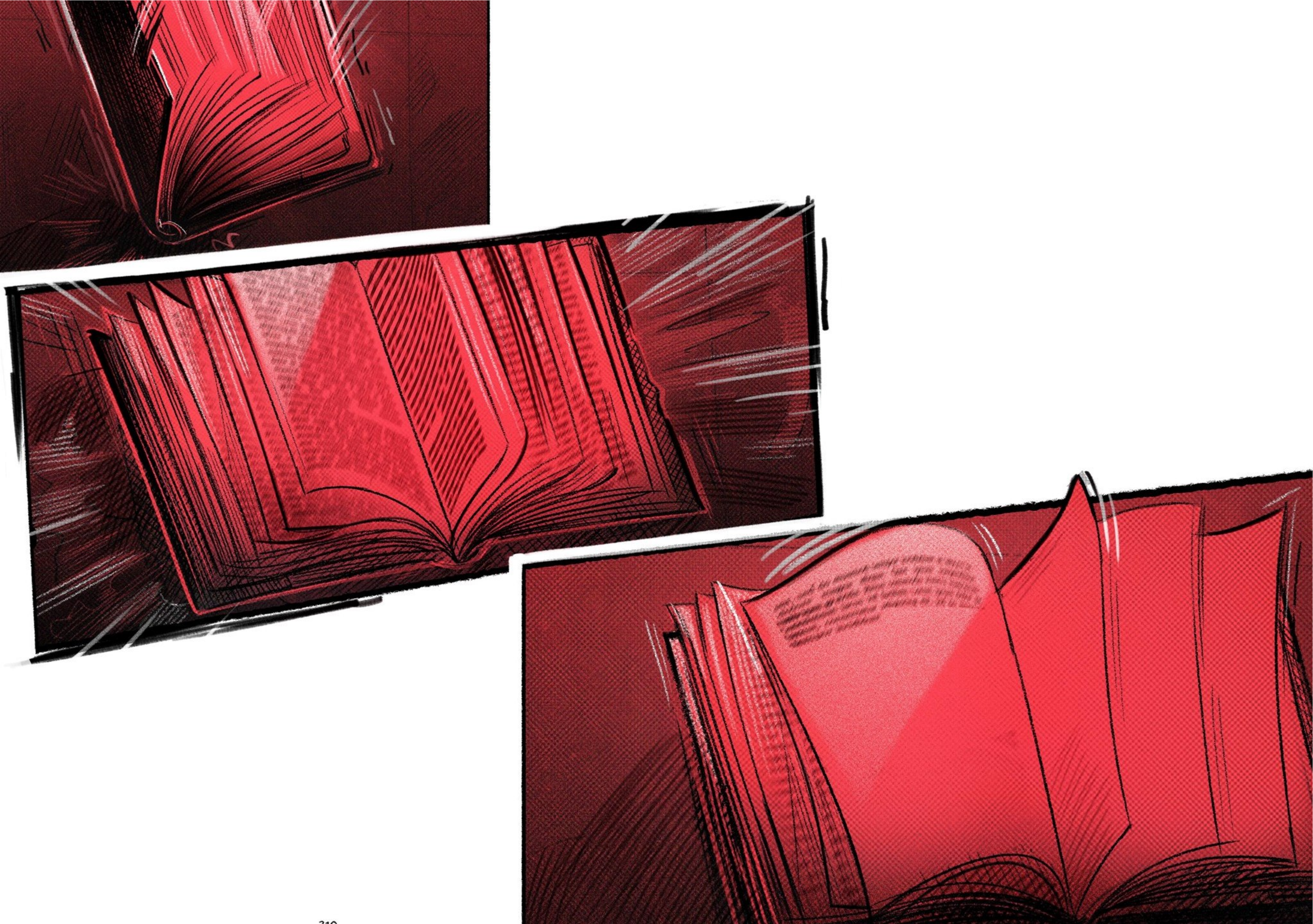

HEY!




ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?







He imprinted a few drops of his own blood in some of the keys of the piano. Seemingly in response to that, a Shadowy Figure materialized in front of them.

The Girl checked the book to see what they should do next, but the remaining pages were all blank.

VIII


ENCORE!

PLEASE...

...ANYONE...
HELP ME...

OH, I LOVE THIS ONE! IT'S FROM THAT CARTOON, RIGHT? SO CHEERFUL!

HE STILL WATCHES CARTOONS? WHAT A BABY!

THINGS WILL GET BETTER, SON.

WE'LL PROMOTE YOUR SON TO THE NEXT GRADE, BUT HE MUST IMPROVE HIS SCORES. MAYBE YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR A SPECIAL SCHOOL THAT WOULD BE BETTER SUITED TO HIS NEEDS.

NO WAY. WE AIN'T GOT NO MONEY FOR THAT!

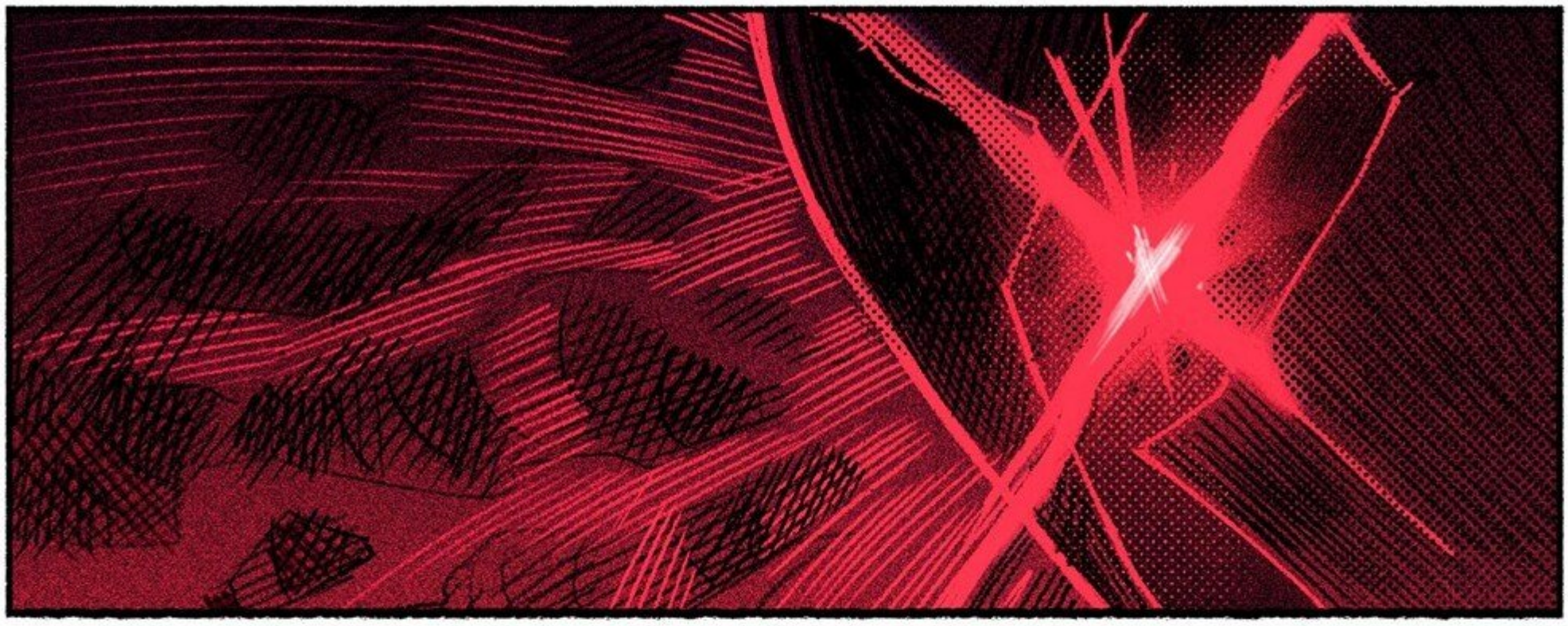
HE'S GONNA STUDY AT THE SAME SCHOOL THAT I DID.

IF IT WAS GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME AND HIS BROTHER, IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR HIM, TOO!

I KNOW THIS SONG...

IT'S THE OPENING THEME OF *ARCADIA!*

BUT IT'S DIFFERENT... IT'S MORE... AGGRESSIVE!




YOU CAN'T DO
ANYTHING RIGHT.
HOW IS THAT
POSSIBLE?


UR not
good
enuff

WHEN THINGS GET BETTER, WE CAN FINALLY MOVE TO THE COUNTRYSIDE LIKE WE ALWAYS WANTED TO.

THE WHOLE FAMILY. TOGETHER AGAIN... WOULDN'T THAT BE NICE?

WE CAN LEAVE AS SOON AS YOUR FATHER AND BROTHER COME BACK.

EVERYTHING IS GONNA BE OKAY.

NO, MOM. THINGS ONLY GET WORSE.

WE INTERRUPT THIS CARTOON...

KILL THOSE MOTHERF

INCOMIN

YOU ALWAYS MISTAKE DISAPPOINTMENT

MORON!

HOW CAN SOMEONE BE SO SURE

OF THE "SUNNY DAYS THAT WILL COME AGAIN"

BABY!

WHEN SHADOWS ENDURE?

PERVERT!

IF I STILL BELIEVE IN LOVE

IT'S 'CAUSE I'VE GOT FRIENDS

THAT PULL ME FROM THE DARK

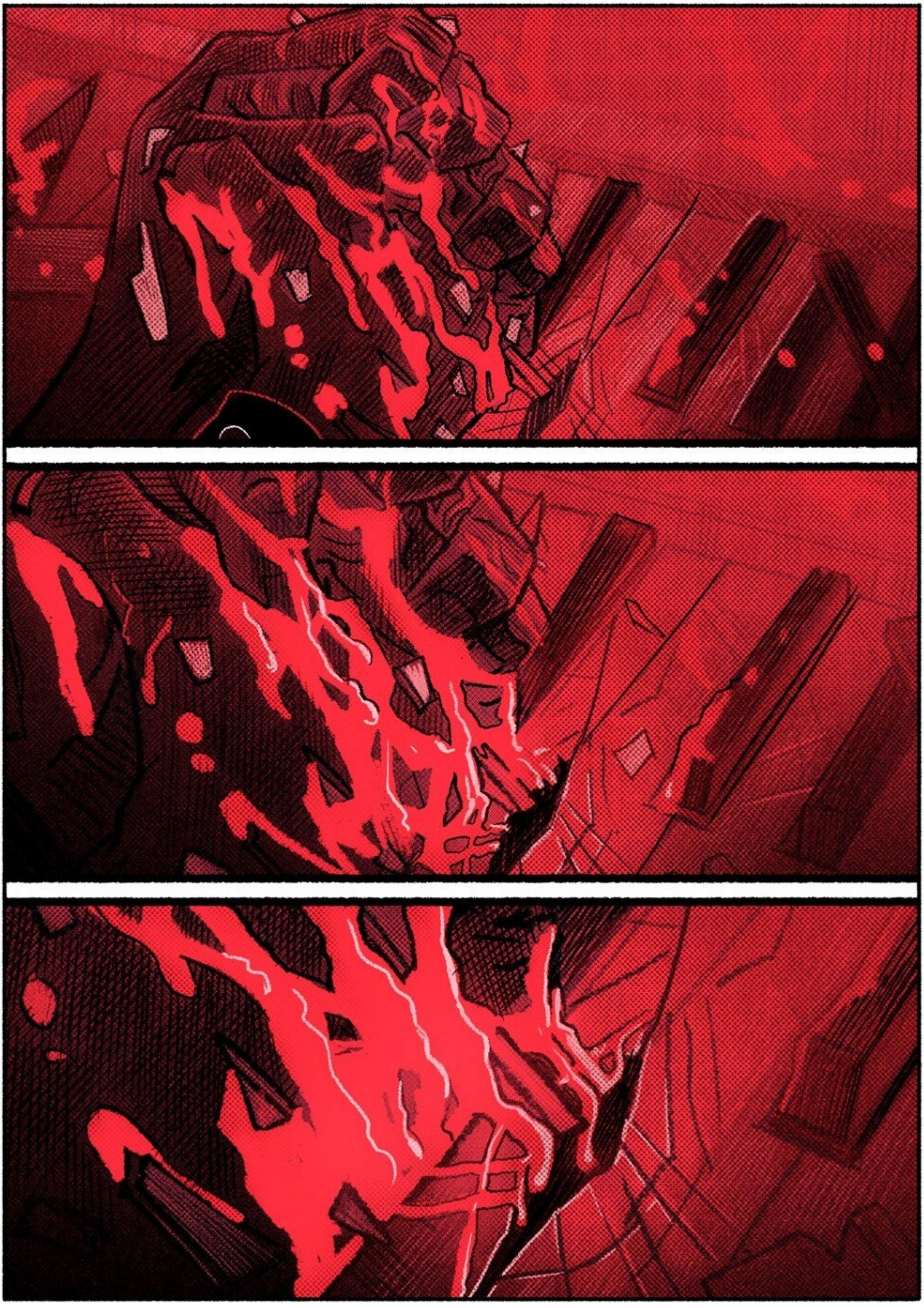
SUSPENSION NOTICE

AND TOGETHER WE STAND.

THIS IS THE WORLD YOU LIVE IN.

THIS IS A WORLD OF BLOOD AND PAIN!

AHAHAHA!!







ARE YOU OKAY?

I AM.

DO YOU KNOW WHO THAT THING IS?

I GUESS I DO.

I HEARD YOUR PLEA YEARS AGO.

I HAD DOUBTS ABOUT YOUR WORTHINESS ON A SECOND OCCASION.

BUT I HAVE CONVINCED MYSELF NOW, ON YOUR THIRD PERFORMANCE.

YOU WISH FOR POWER, AND POWER I CAN GIVE YOU...

AGH!

...BUT EVERYTHING HAS A PRICE.

I'LL PAY ANY PRICE.

NO!

EXCELLENT.

DON'T DO IT...

HEY. HEY!

GET AWAY FROM HIM!

NO!
NO!

YOU'RE...

...BURNING UP!

ARGHHHHH!

OH MY GOD! WHAT HAS HE DONE TO YOU?!

I GAVE HIM A GIFT.

YOU CAN NOW PROCEED WITHOUT FEAR.

HE'S GONE.

LET'S GO.

HOW ARE YOU STANDING UP AFTER... THAT?!

I DON'T KNOW. AND I DON'T CARE. AS LONG AS HE HAS KEPT HIS PROMISE AND HAS GIVEN ME POWER.

WHAT POWER? TO DO WHAT?!

RESIST THIS WORLD.

WE HAVE NO VOICE HERE...

...BUT I WAS ALSO AFRAID TO SPEAK UP.

I'M NOT AFRAID ANYMORE.

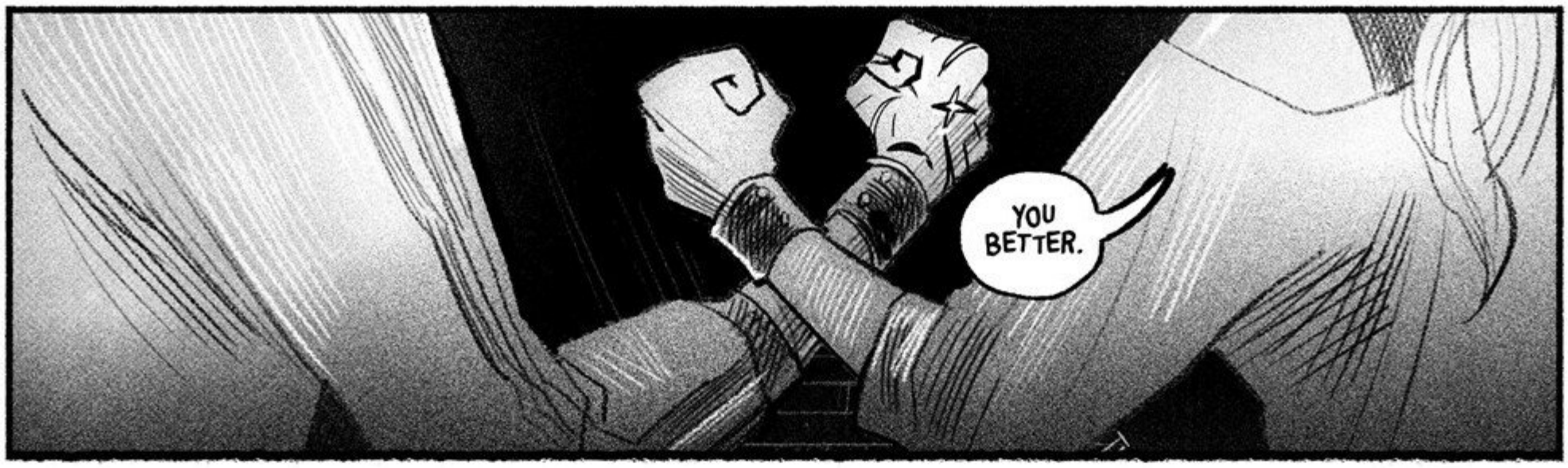
RESIST THIS WORLD, YOU SAY.

HUH?

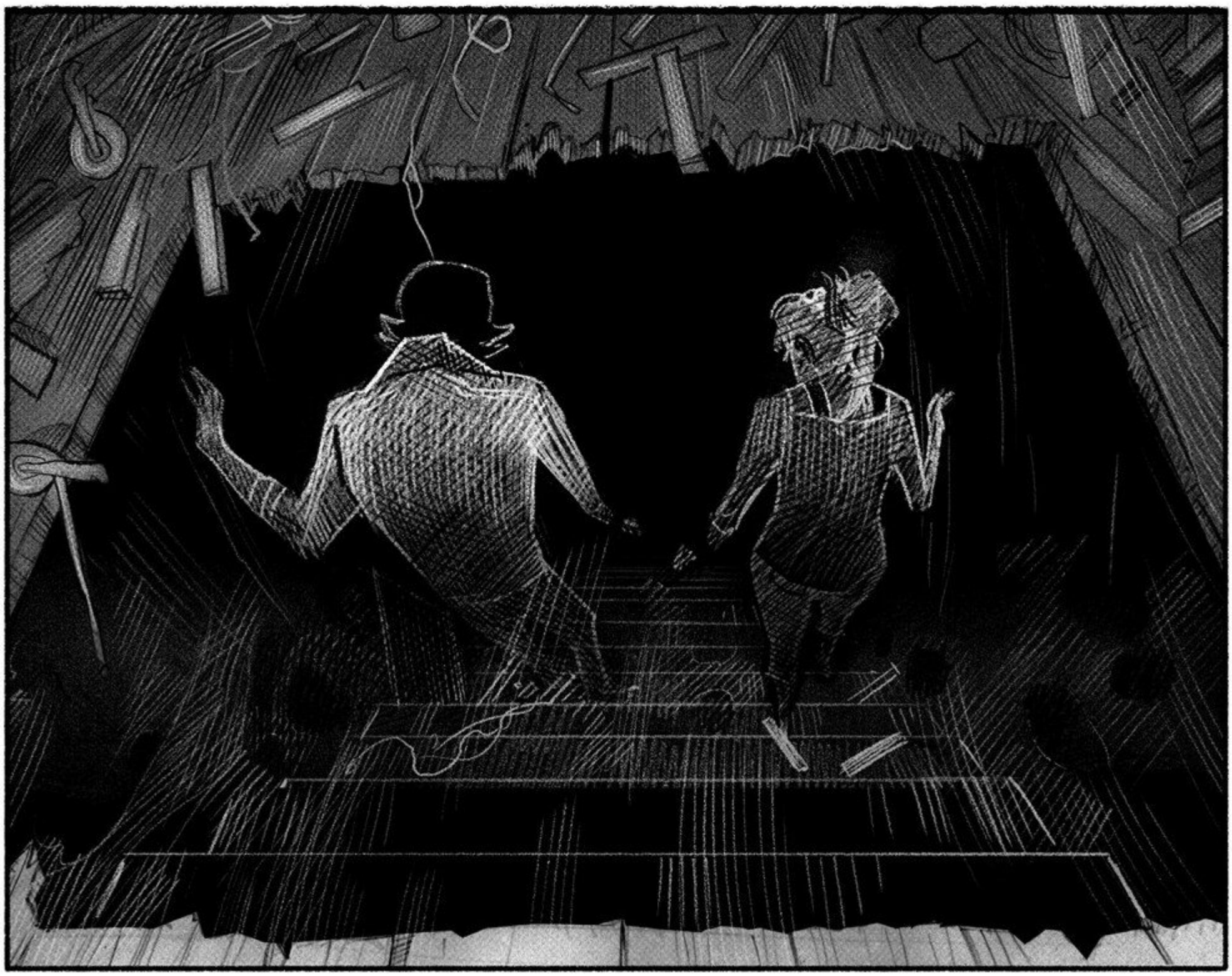
I THOUGHT WE ALREADY HAD AN AGREEMENT REGARDING THE WORLD.

WE WOULD MAKE IT A BETTER PLACE WITH OUR ART, REMEMBER?

OH. I REMEMBER THAT.


YOU BETTER.


LET'S GO, THEN.



IX

I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING.

ME NEITHER...

ARE YOU HEARING OTHER VOICES? LIKE AN ECHO?

IT'S LIKE IT'S COMING FROM BEHIND US.

AND FROM AHEAD.

I'M HAPPY YOU ARE OKAY.

HUH? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! THAT SPEAR... I'M THE ONE WHO'S HAPPY YOU'RE OKAY!

NO, I MEAN, WHEN YOU WENT AWAY... I'M JUST G-GLAD YOU ARE...FINE.

OH...

THERE SEEMS TO BE SOME LIGHT UP AHEAD.

OH MY...

BETTER NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT. WE'LL SOON WAKE UP FROM THIS DREAM.

DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT WE'RE DREAMING?

THOSE KINDS OF ENDINGS ARE THE WORST, BUT I WOULDN'T MIND IN THIS CASE.

WHAT DOES YOUR BOOK SAY?

IT'S USELESS. THE LAST PAGES ARE ALL BLANK AND--


OH!
WHAT... IS THAT?!

THIS TIME, YOU STAY BEHIND ME!

I DON'T WANT YOU TO GET IMPALED AGAIN OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT!

Ha, That would hardly matter. Boy, your life is worth nothing because...

...you are not good enough!

AND AT THIS RATE, YOU NEVER WILL BE!

The truth is that you should stay in a classroom for the rest of your life.

It is probably the only way you could finally learn something.

Otherwise, you will be forever lost among illusions and fantasies, never amounting to anything in life.

You failed. Badly.

But my school is famous for giving new chances, even to cases like yours.

We help everyone, but you also have to do your bit.

So...

...IT'S TIME TO GET SERIOUS!

GO BACK TO YOUR CLASSROOM AND START OVER!

TH-THIS...

NOW!

THIS...

HEY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

IF YOU WANT TO SUCCEED IN LIFE...

...STAY IN MY SCHOOL!

S-SADLY, THIS ISN'T A REAL SCHOOL!

?

A REAL SCHOOL SHOULD INSPIRE AND HELP S-STUDENTS TO BECOME THE ONES WHO WILL SAVE THIS WORLD.

INSTEAD, THIS PLACE BECAME A STAGE FOR NIGHTMARES.

IF THIS IS REALLY YOUR S-SCHOOL, YOU SHOULD HAVE HELPED MAKE IT A-AWESOME...

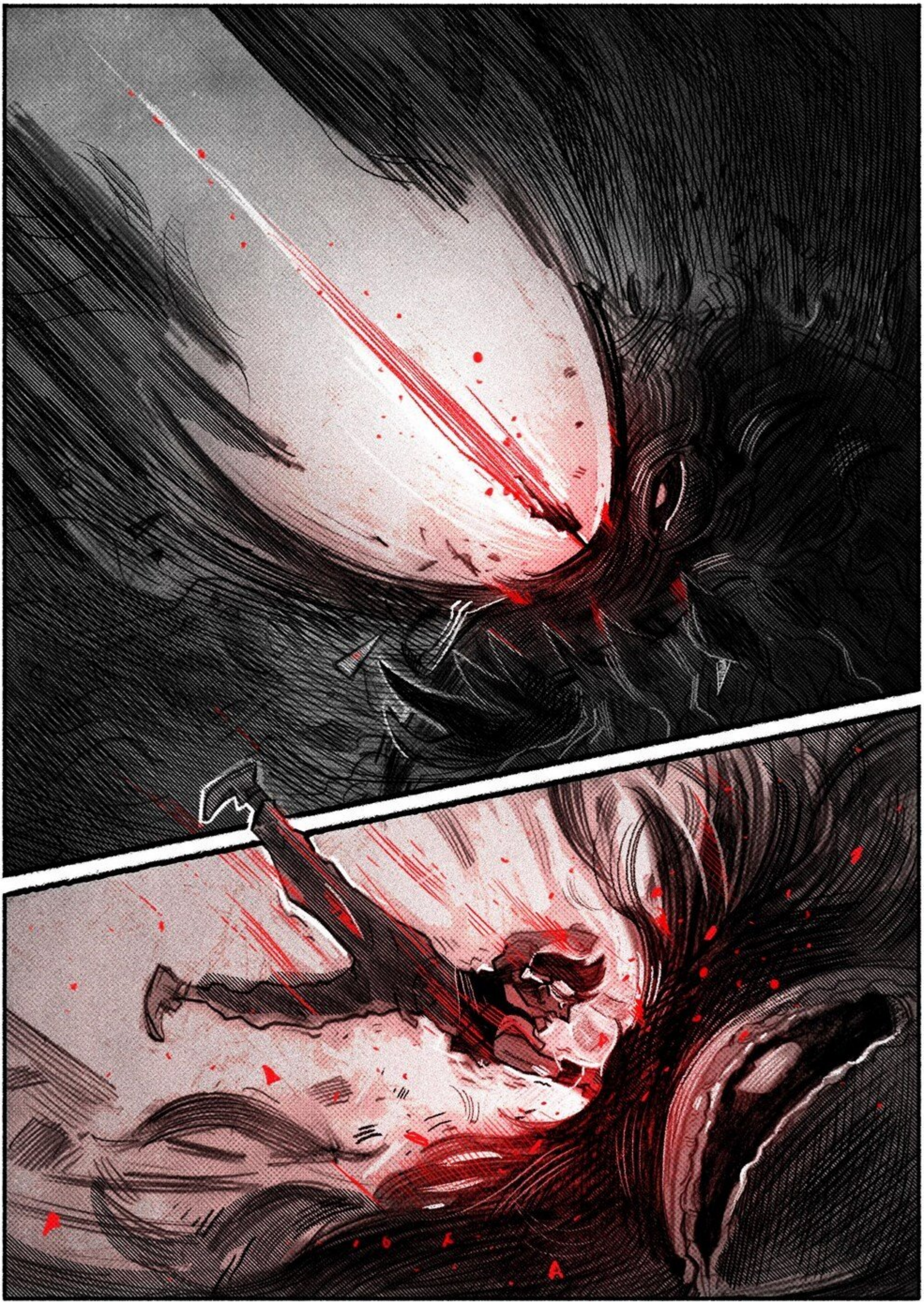
...BUT I THINK YOU JUST WANT TO HELP YOURSELF. USING US TO SUCCEED.

HAVE YOU SUCCEEDED?

BECAUSE IF THAT'S WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE...

...I'D RATHER REMAIN "NOT GOOD ENOUGH" UNTIL I DIE!

DA
DA
DA
WHAT'S THAT?!
IT'S A SONG I WROTE THAT FITS THE OCCASION.
I'M TRYING TO GET FIRED UP!
AHHHH!
DA
DA
DA
DA
DA!




WHAT THE FUCK?!

HIS MAS-TER SAID HE SHOULD NOT FIGHT

ARE YOU SINGING NOW? NONSENSE!

WITH OUT A NO-BLE REA SON

MUSIC IS NO LONGER PART OF THIS SCHOOL'S PROGRAM!

WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU ARE GOING WITH THIS?

His...

...REASON IS...

TO PROTECT ALL THE WEAK

THAT'S EMBARRASSING!

YOU MUST LISTEN TO YOUR ELDERS!

SUBMIT!

HE WISHED THAT...

SUBMIT!

...EVERYBODY COULD BE FRIENDS

SUBMIT!

BUT UNTIL THEN...


BEWARE!


I don't understand...
ARGH!!!

RELEASE US!

What is the meaning of...

...this?!

IT'S OUR CLASSROOM!

THEY ARE NOT RUNNING AWAY!

SHIT! I GOTTA GET UP THERE!

HEY! CAN YOU HANDLE THIS MONSTER BY YOURSELF?

I... THINK SO...

ROOOAarR!

ARGH!

WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE?

A SONG THAT "FITS THE OCCASION?" DOES IT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH HIS POWERS?!

NO, THAT DOESN'T MATTER RIGHT NOW.

I MUST GO UP THERE AND GET EVERYONE OUT BEFORE THE SCHOOL COLLAPSES!

HEY! HEY, GUYS!

LISTEN!

WE GOTTA GET OUT OF THE SCHOOL RIGHT NOW!

THE BUILDING IS CRUMBLING! CAN'T YOU SEE IT?!

FINALS ARE TODAY. WE CAN'T GET OUT.

GIRL, CAN'T YOU SEE THIS HOLE RIGHT HERE? EVERYTHING IS FALLING DOWN!

HOLE?

FOR FUCK'S SAKE, WAKE UP!

URGH!

Your "music" was the most embarrassing thing I have ever witnessed.

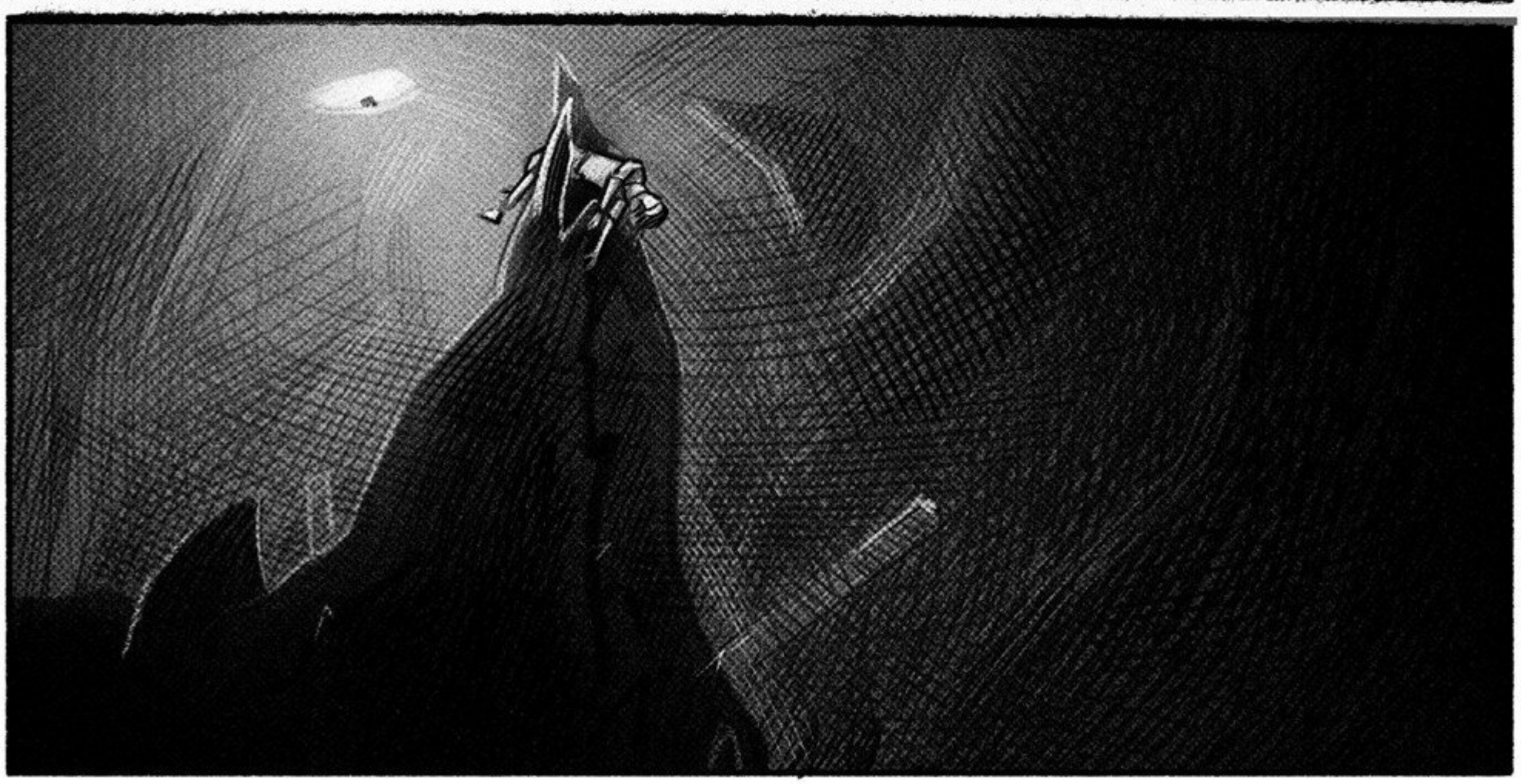
Now, let go of your daydreams and rebellious thoughts once and for all.

Accept your limitations and stop wasting everyone's time. Get back to the program.

Be a good student and go back to your classroom.







LISTEN, YOU DIMWITS!

THIS SCHOOL IS A DECEPTION!

IF WE STAY HERE, WE ARE GONNA D--

ARGH!

You should stop writing. Without talent, you are only exposing yourself to ridicule.

But exposing yourself is not something new to you, right, DirtyElf19?

I AM GOING TO THROW YOU DOWN THERE.

I am going to throw you down there.

I am going to throw you down there.

I am going to throw you down there.

I am going to throw you down there.

!



HUH?!

WHAT?

THE FLOOR IS SHAKING!

EVERYBODY, OUT! THE SCHOOL IS GONNA COLLAPSE!

QUICK!

MY GOD!

CAREFUL AROUND THAT HOLE!

HEY! IS EVERYTHING OKAY DOWN THERE?

WE NEED TO GET OUT! I'M TAKING THESE IDIOTS OUT OF HERE!

DEFEAT THAT MONSTER AND MEET ME OUTSIDE!

DO YOU HEAR ME?

YOU CAN DO IT!

You can't.

You can't do anything right.

I can't do anything right.

Everybody else can. You can't.

Why can't I do anything right?

Nobody wants to be around you. Nobody cares about your infantile songs.

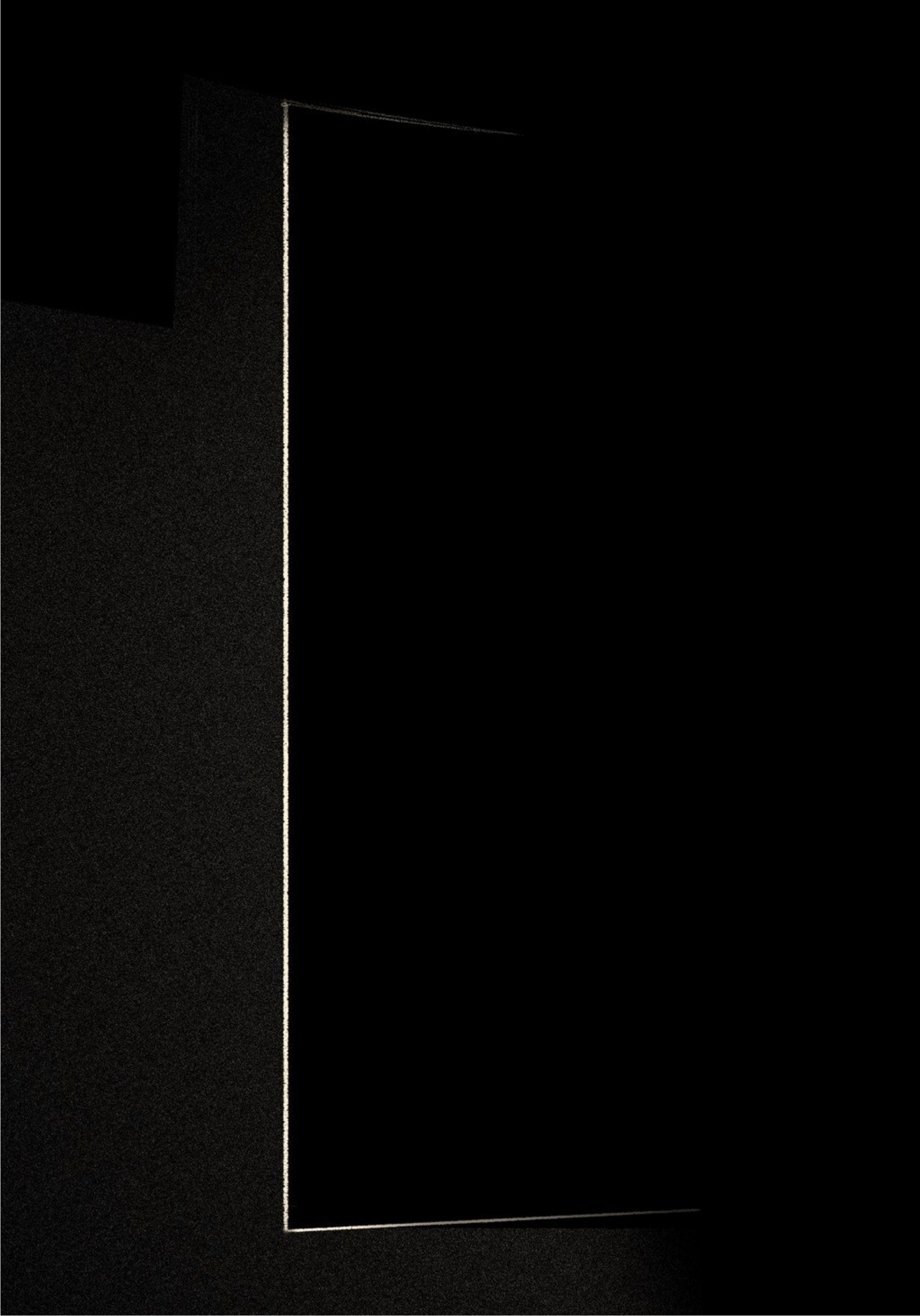
She's gone. Again.

Because I can't do anything right.

Everybody always leaves you.

Becas I can't do anything right.

Everybody left.



BRO! SLEEPING AT THIS HOUR?

YOU REALLY CAME BACK!

I SAID I'D COME IF YOU DIDN'T GIVE UP ON MUSIC. I LIKED THAT SONG YOU WROTE. DO YOU HAVE MORE?

NO, BRO. YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I WAS EMBARRASSING MYSELF.

I CAN'T DO ANYTHING RIGHT.

AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE TO...

...I SHOULDN'T BE MAKING ANY MUSIC.

IT SEEMS THE GIRL IS RIGHT. THE PRODUCT OF YOUR OWN CREATION REALLY DOES HAVE A DIFFERENT FLAVOR, AFTER ALL.

SO, TELL ME...

WHEN YOU FEEL OVERWHELMED, YOU CREATE MELODIES. MELODIES THAT YOU HUM TO YOURSELF.

WHY?

MMM

MMM

MMM

MMM

I...

MMM

MM

WELL... DO YOU REMEMBER THAT WHEN THE HERO OF *ARCADIA* HAS A TOUGH FIGHT, A SONG STARTS PLAYING?

THAT INSTRUMENTAL SONG THAT PUSHES HIM TO OVERCOME HIS CHALLENGES.

A SONG OF PERSEVERANCE

YES... IT SEEMS THAT THE MUSIC GIVES HIM THE STRENGTH HE NEEDS TO FIGHT BACK.

I WAS JUST TRYING TO CREATE A SONG LIKE THAT FOR MYSELF.

MM

MMM

MMM

MM

MMM

MMM

I SEE.

IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO FINISH THIS SONG.

BROTHER, I CAN'T...

DO NOT FALTER. LET THE PIERCING FLAME CONSUME YOU.


STOP BEING CONDUCTED AND BECOME A CONDUCTOR!

HOW DOES THE SONG OF YOUR PERSEVERANCE SOUND?

M-MY...

WHAT'S IT LIKE?

MMM

MMM

IT...

MMM

MMM

MMM

...IT IS...

...AN INSTRUMENTAL SONG.

IT STARTS WITH STRINGS. LONG AND SHORT.

MMM...

MMM

MMM

MMM

MMM

MMM



DUM

DUM

HERE, THE PERCUSSION.

ON THE RHYTHM OF MY HEART.

DUMM

DUMM

DUM

DUM

DUM



I DON'T REPEAT THE THEME AGAIN HERE. INSTEAD, A PIERCING AND SURPRISING NEW BRASS MELODY!

RRR

RRR

RRR


THIS IS IT.

I CAN HEAR IT CLEARLY.

MMM

MMM

MMM

MMM

IT IS A SONG FOR A HERO!

MMM

AND A HERO NEEDS A WEAPON.

MMM

AHH...

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

A SWORD. MY SONG...IS FORMING INTO A SWORD...

USE IT!

The funding for this school's music program was cut long ago! Why do I hear a symphony?

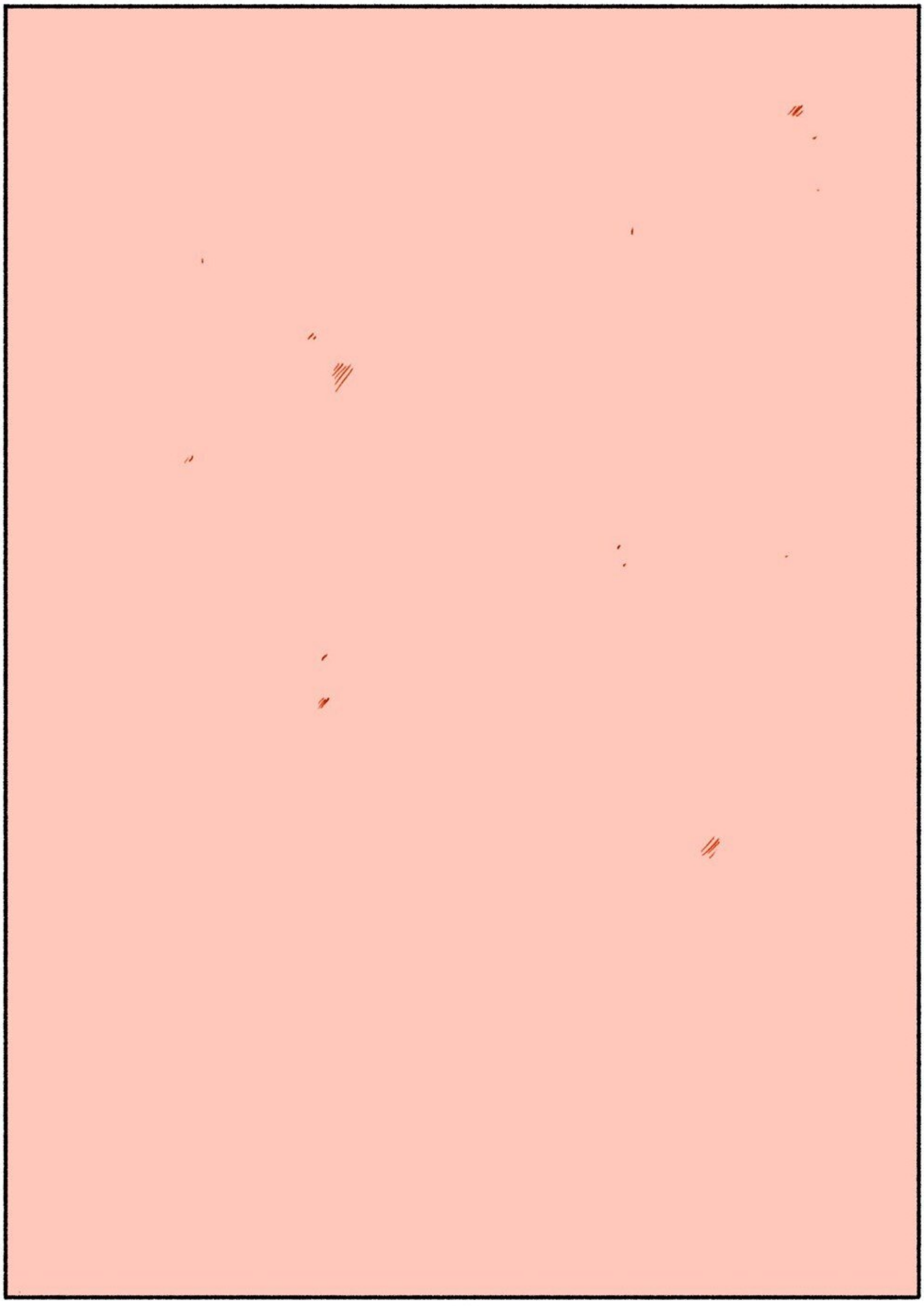
What song is this?!

IT'S MY BATTLE SONG! I COMPOSED IT MYSELF, AND IT'S CALLED...

...RISING FLAMES!




EXCELLENT.

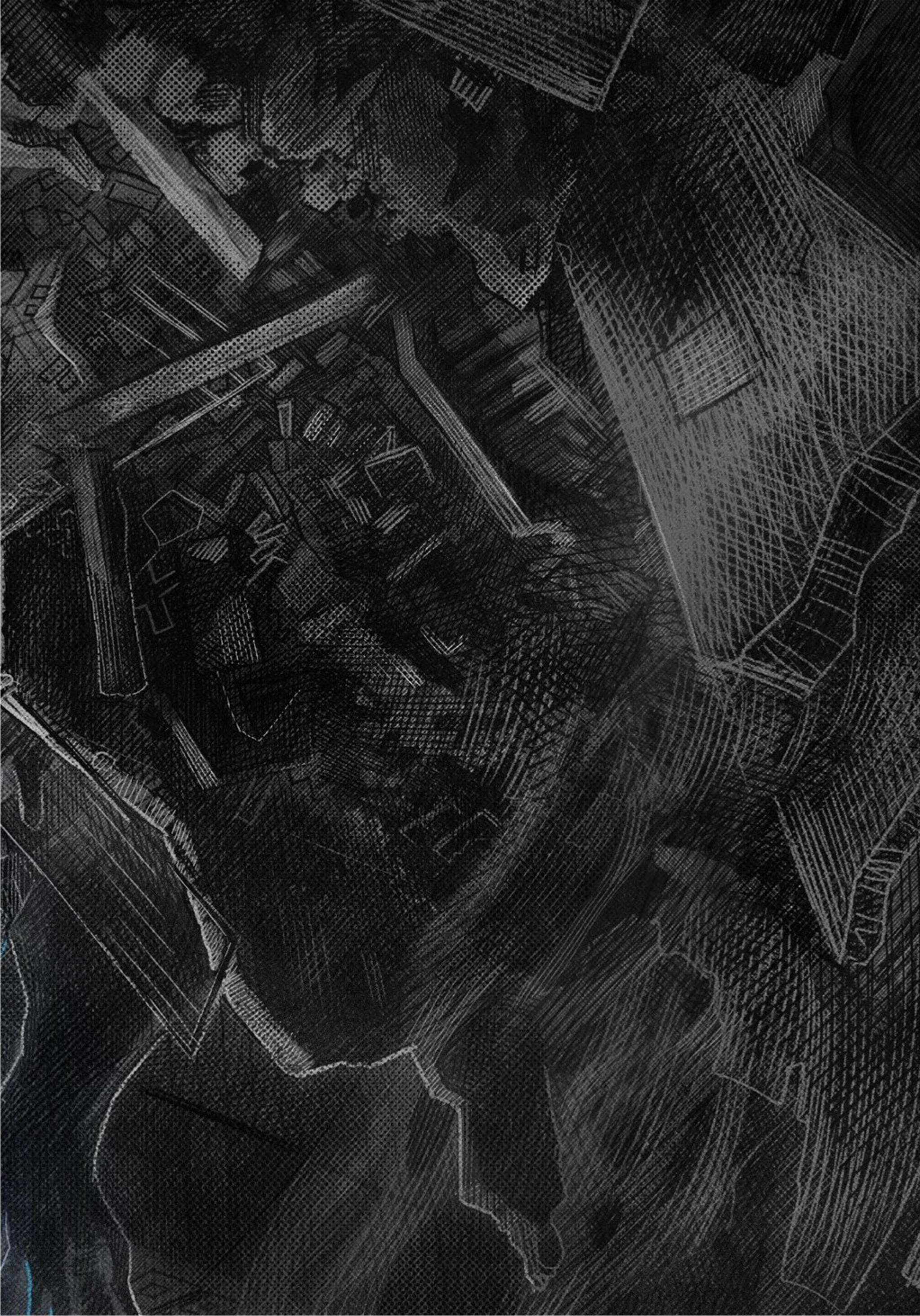


The monsters were destroyed by the fire.

Nobody could remember or understand exactly what happened. But the terrible sensation of being trapped inside that infernal place would stay forever with all the students... from the Midnight School.

The monsters were destroyed by the fire.

Nobody could remember or understand exactly what happened. But the terrible sensation of being trapped inside that infernal place would stay forever with all the students... from the Midnight School.



MY FRIEND IS STILL INSIDE THERE! THEY PUT A CONE ON HIS HEAD AND TOOK HIM AWAY!

IT'S TRUE. I SAW IT, TOO!

SLOW DOWN. ONE AT A TIME, PLEASE.

SHIT...

WAS IT REAL?

I MEAN... I'M NOT SURE WHAT HAPPENED. THE POLICE OFFICERS FOUND ME UNCONSCIOUS IN FRONT OF THE SCHOOL.

THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE OKAY!

HE LOOKED FOR YOU FOR HOURS.

THEY WERE KILLING STUDENTS THERE! I'M SERIOUS!

WHAT HAPPENED? WAS THAT ALL REAL?

I CAN REMEMBER SOME THINGS...BUT NOT EVERYTHING. IT IS LIKE TRYING TO REMEMBER A DREAM.

YEAH! I THOUGHT THAT MAYBE I WAS HALLUCINATING EVERYTHING!

IF YOU WERE, WE ALL WERE. BECAUSE EVERYBODY IS REPORTING SIMILAR STORIES TO THE POLICE.

I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS, BUDDY...

ME TOO...

WOOF! WOOF!

WOOF! WOOF!

OH...

...LUPO!

COME HERE, BOY!

YOU TRIED TO WARN ME, DIDN'T YOU? I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE OKAY!

I LOVE YOU, LUPO!

EXCUSE ME, SIR. DO YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED AT THE SCHOOL?

HOW LONG HAVE WE BEEN LOCKED UP IN THERE?

NOBODY WAS LOCKED UP, YOUNG MAN! IT WAS ALL A MISUNDERSTANDING. YOU CAN ALL GO HOME NOW.

WHAT? HOW?

FALSE ALARM! EVERYTHING IS FINE! HAVE A NICE DAY!

LOOKS LIKE THE POLICE OFFICERS HAVE NO IDEA WHAT HAPPENED HERE.

I HAVE A HUNCH.

MONSTERS LURED US HERE AND WERE FEEDING OF OUR DESPAIR.

I STARTED SEEING THEM AFTER I LISTENED TO THAT CD.

I THINK THAT THEY KEPT US INSIDE SOME SORT OF M-MASS HALLUCINATION.

SOME KIND OF NEVER ENDING SCHOOL DAY, SO THEY COULD... FEED OF OUR S-SUFFERING.

I DON'T KNOW HOW WE GOT HERE OR HOW LONG WE WERE IN THAT PLACE, BUT...

PROBABLY YEARS! LOOK...

...LUPO LOOKS OLDER...

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, WE ALL LOOK SLIGHTLY OLDER!

SO...WE REALLY SPENT YEARS INSIDE THAT AWFUL PLACE?


I THINK SO.

SOMETHING IN THERE REALLY MADE ME FORGET ABOUT WHAT IS MOST PRECIOUS TO ME:

MY MEMORIES, MY ASPIRATIONS...

...IT'S LIKE WE WERE TRAPPED INSIDE A ROOM...UNAWARE OF EVERYTHING, INCLUDING OURSELVES.

AND THEN...

HEY...

...YOU PULLED US FROM THE DARK, BUDDY!

WE NEED TO STICK TOGETHER, OKAY?

OF COURSE! WE'LL STICK TOGETHER! BUT...IF WE SPENT YEARS IN THERE... WHAT HAPPENED OUT HERE?

GOOD QUESTION... DO YOU THINK THE SCHOOL IS THE ONLY PLACE DOMINATED BY THESE MONSTERS?

NO...

...THEY ARE EVERYWHERE.

OH NO... M-MY MOM! MY BROTHER! D-DO YOU THINK THEY ARE SAFE?!

HEY! DON'T WORRY! WE'LL SEARCH FOR THEM...

WE? ARE YOU... GOING TO HELP ME?

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? OF COURSE I WILL! WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER.

DOESN'T MATTER WHAT'S HAPPENING, WE'LL DEAL WITH IT, OKAY?

REALLY? I THOUGHT...

RELAX, MY FRIEND!

FROM NOW ON, I WON'T TAKE MY EYES OFF YOU TWO! WE WILL REMAIN TOGETHER, OKAY?

?

LET'S GO!

I'VE GOT FRIENDS.

AND
TOGETHER
WE STAND.

I THINK HE'S HAPPY TO HAVE COMPANY!

ME TOO.

WE'RE JUST MARRIED!

WE'RE JUST MARRIED!

JUST MARRIED TO THE BEAST! HAHAHAHA!

HAHAHAHA!

I can't lose this job

My job is horrible

I don't have money for the rent

I'm tired I NEED TO WORK MORE

When was the last time I saw my daughter?

That's hard

I'm so tired I need some sleep

I wish I was smarter

I can't lose

I'm still a junior

My mom thinks I'm a failure

Things are so expensive

I WISH I WAS A FOOTBALL PLAYER

I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE!

I'm sad

I need money help me

Is the war already over?

I don't know what I'm going to do

I'm totally lost...

What is HAPPENING?

WHAT should I do now?

help me, please

I can't see the answer

I'm not okay I need h

WHAT I'm DOING HERE

THAT'S SCARY

MAYBE I should kill myself

I don't WANT TO go TO WAR!

I'm GRIDING, but I'm getting anywhere

I NEED A THIRD

God, help me

I can't understand it,

I wish I had a job. Any job.

I don't WANT TO go TO WAR!

I wish I had a boyFriend

Can I be happy, too?

I'm Tired

Oh God

I should Give up

I will sleep on The streets again today

I don't know if it's safe To leave

I still live IN MY MOTHER'S HOUSE...

I don't want To catch This new stuff

Can this be Cancer?

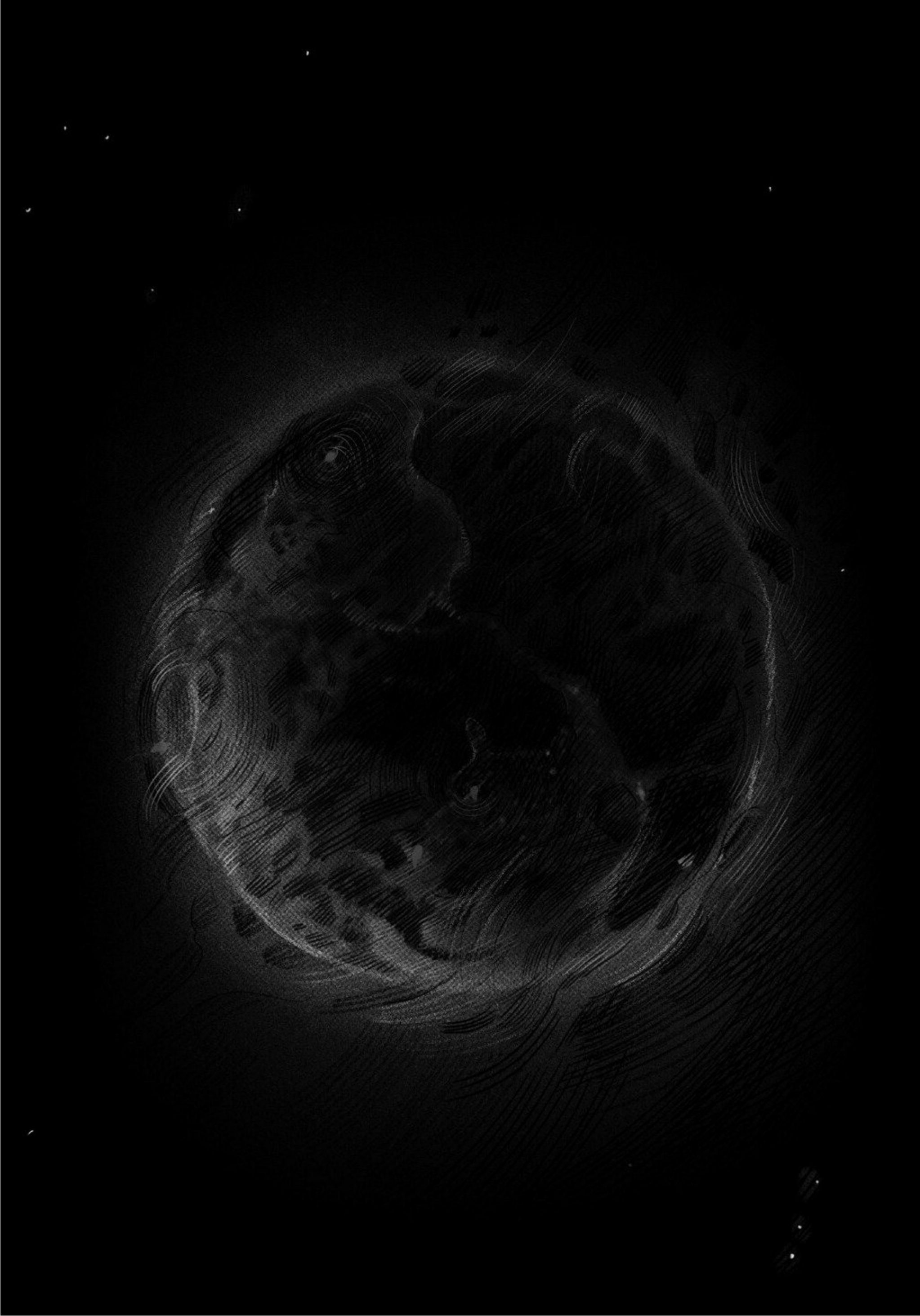
RACIST PIGS! Every FUCKING Time!

I Thought I would succeed.

WHAT HAPPEN

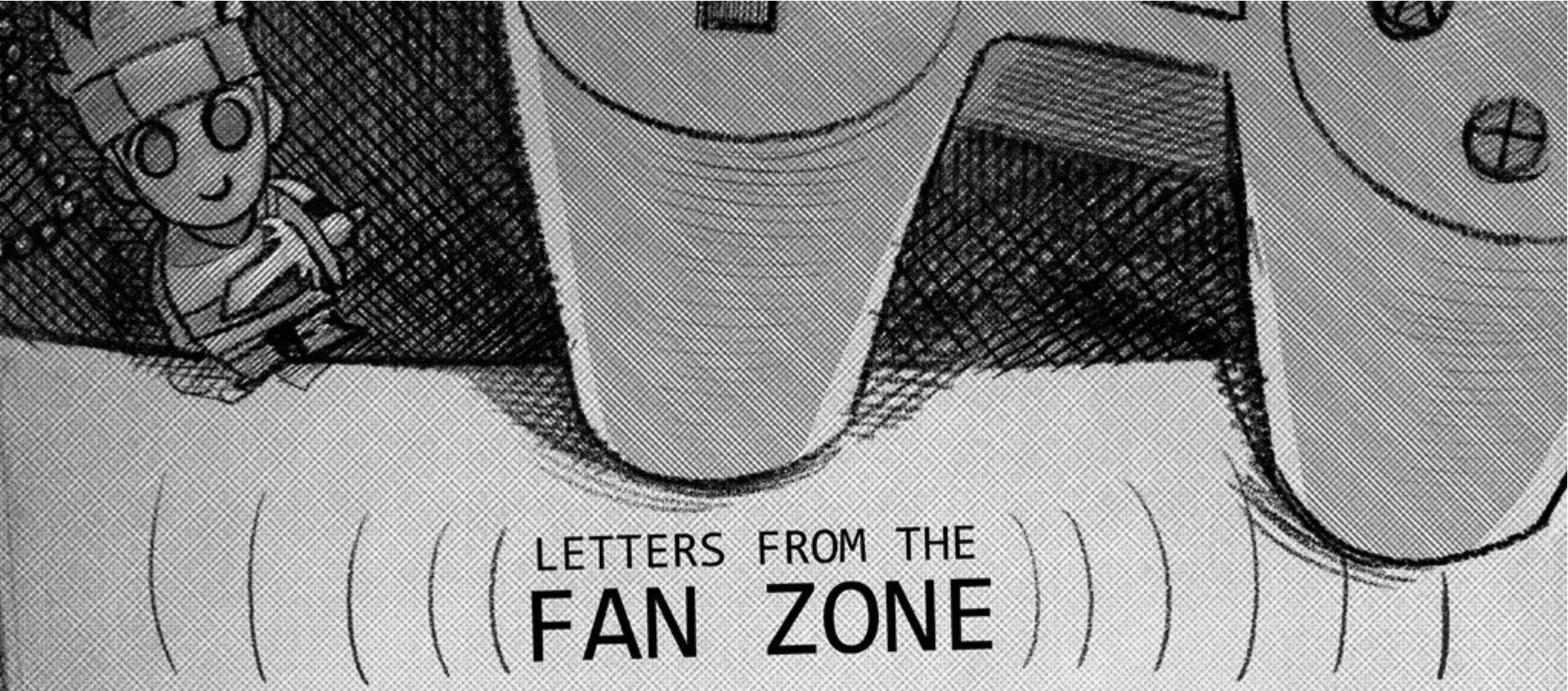
I don't WANNA go To WAR


I'm giving up
I'm giving up
childish dreams
Maybe I should kill myself. maybe
OKAY



The sensation of lying down on the bed after a full day is like nothing else. But nobody in this WORLD would feel that tonight. Or on any other night after that.

SAM FONSECA
2021 -2023



LETTERS FROM THE FAN ZONE

On this issue, we've had a record number of letters sent to us. We've only got one thing to say about that: Thank you! It's because of you that we work so hard to bring the hottest news about comics, animation, and games. And just like you, we are, first and foremost, fans!

Now, let's go to the letters:

I'M NOT A CHILD!
Dear editor,
I'd like to congratulate the entire team of the fanzine for such incredible articles. I'm glad to hear that Dynamite & Laser Beam is gonna be officially released in our country next year. They are so cute! But I disagree with the reader who said that Dynamite & Laser Beam is only for children. There are many references in it for teenagers and adults, so I think it's for the whole family.
Keep up with the good work!

Estevan S., CA

Thank you for the letter, Estevan! And I agree with you: *Dynamite & Laser Beam* is fun for the whole family!

LOOKING FOR FRIENDS
It's my first time writing to the fanzine, and I'd like to say that I've loved Arcadia ever since I was a kid. I'm not a kid anymore, but I still follow the adventures of those heroes with the same enthusiasm.

What I love the most about the series, believe it or not, is the music. I know that everyone says that the comics are much better than the cartoon, but the music makes all the difference for me.
I'd like to meet new friends who also like Arcadia so we can discuss the story and theories about the ending. I don't know anyone else who follows Arcadia (my brother used to, but now he's too busy). Thank you!

Lucas L., SP
My email is:
luc[illegible]ail.com

Geez, Lucas! You almost gave our proofreader a heart attack! Gotta pay more attention to grammar and spelling when writing your letter! But I agree: the music from Arcadia is amazing! I've got all the imported CDs. I play them at maximum volume, which my neighbors don't seem to enjoy all that much. If you, reader, also enjoy *Arcadia* and want to discuss it with a friend, write to Lucas!

RUDE
Last month's fanzine was a piece of s!***
Anonymous, via email

Thank you for the eloquent and constructive criticism, Anonymous! I hope that, one day, our humble fanzine can be as good as yours. What? You don't publish one? What a pity! I'm sure that it'd be as well-written as your letter.

BEGINNER WRITER
Greetings to the staff and readers of the fanzine! My name is Amanda, and I want to share the blo[illegible]re I post my shor[illegible] There's a[illegible] dedicated [illegible] among other[illegible] anyone is [illegible] address is [illegible]
www.amand[illegible]
Thank yo[illegible] being awe[illegible]

Amanda A[illegible]

CERTIFICATE

This document certifies that

Raphael Rodriguez

granted a full scholarship at the national university
to major in **Video Game Design**.

64 REVIEWS

ARCADIA FIGHTERS

Arcadia Fighters: From the cartoon to the consoles.

by Dan Souza

Arcadia Fighters, the cartoon that has been gaining fans all over the world, will become a video game that is sure to thrill everyone with epic battles.

You will not only watch but also be able to control your favorite characters in their journey to liberate the land of Arcadia from the grasps of the terrifying Lord Aquila and his

Fighters will have four modes: Survival, Survival, practice, and Survival. Survival mode where you need to life bar that does

"Death from



Thank you so much for choosing this book from many others on the shelf. Perhaps it was by chance - perhaps, external forces guided you. Either way, I appreciate it.

I dedicate this story to **Daniel**, **Ana**, all my **Family**, and all my **Friends**.

A more than special thank you goes to **Alexandre Maki**, who, besides being a friend and first-reader, was also a kind of consultant for this book, with his accurate opinions and suggestions.

My last thanks goes to **Chris Staros** for believing in the project and giving me a chance for something I have been fighting for all my life. Thank you, Chris.

∞

I hope to see you next time.

SAM FONSECA
2025

SAMFONSECA.com

next:




SAMFONSECA





This class is a nightmare.

Violent teachers,
barbed wire fences,
torture devices, and
gruesome suspensions...

How did these students get trapped here?
Why can't they remember?

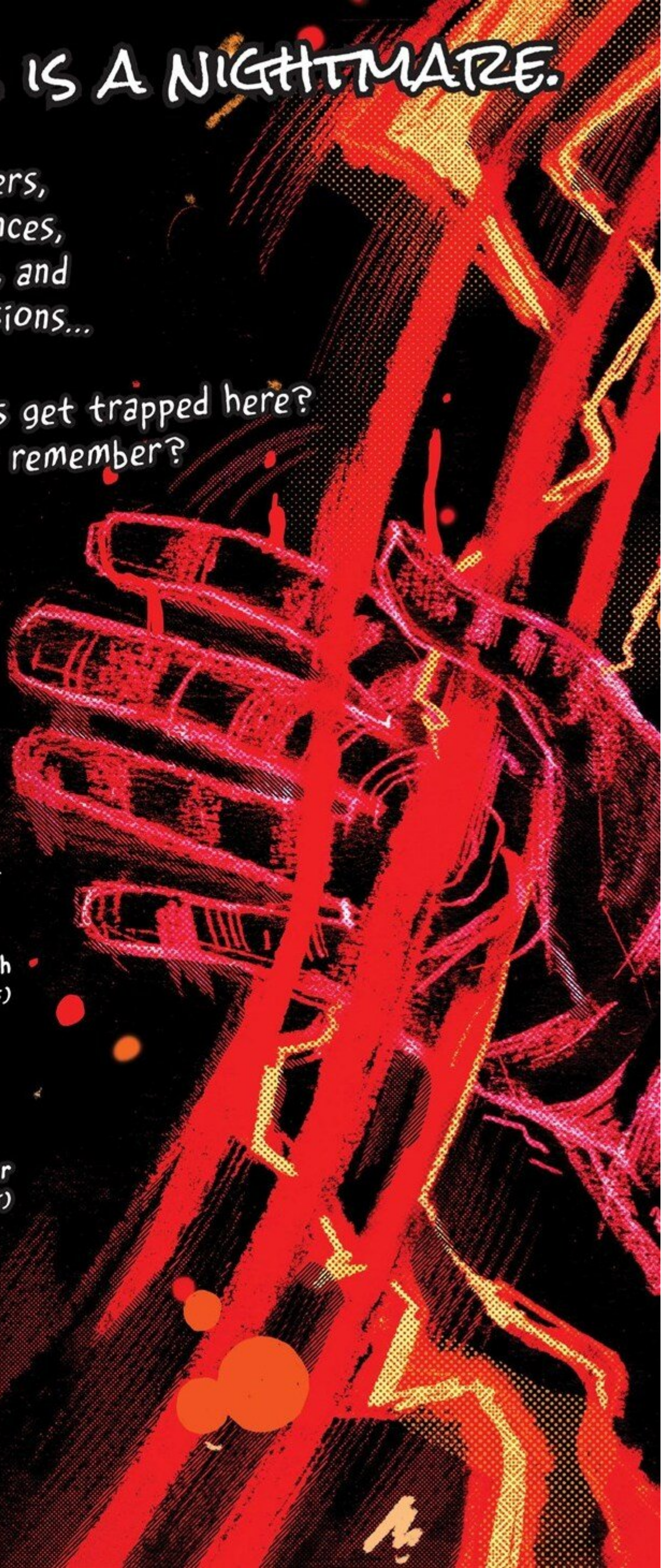
And once they
realize the truth,
are they strong enough
together to escape?

"**Shadowplay** is a raging fever dream that burrows down into the fears that haunt all of us. Sam Fonseca hits the ground running and never lets up."

—**Patrick Horvath**
(Beneath the Trees Where Nobody Sees)

"As surreal as it is nightmarish. A definite must-read for fans of things that go bump in the night."

—**Dave Baker**
(Mary Tyler MooreHawk)



Top Shelf® Productions