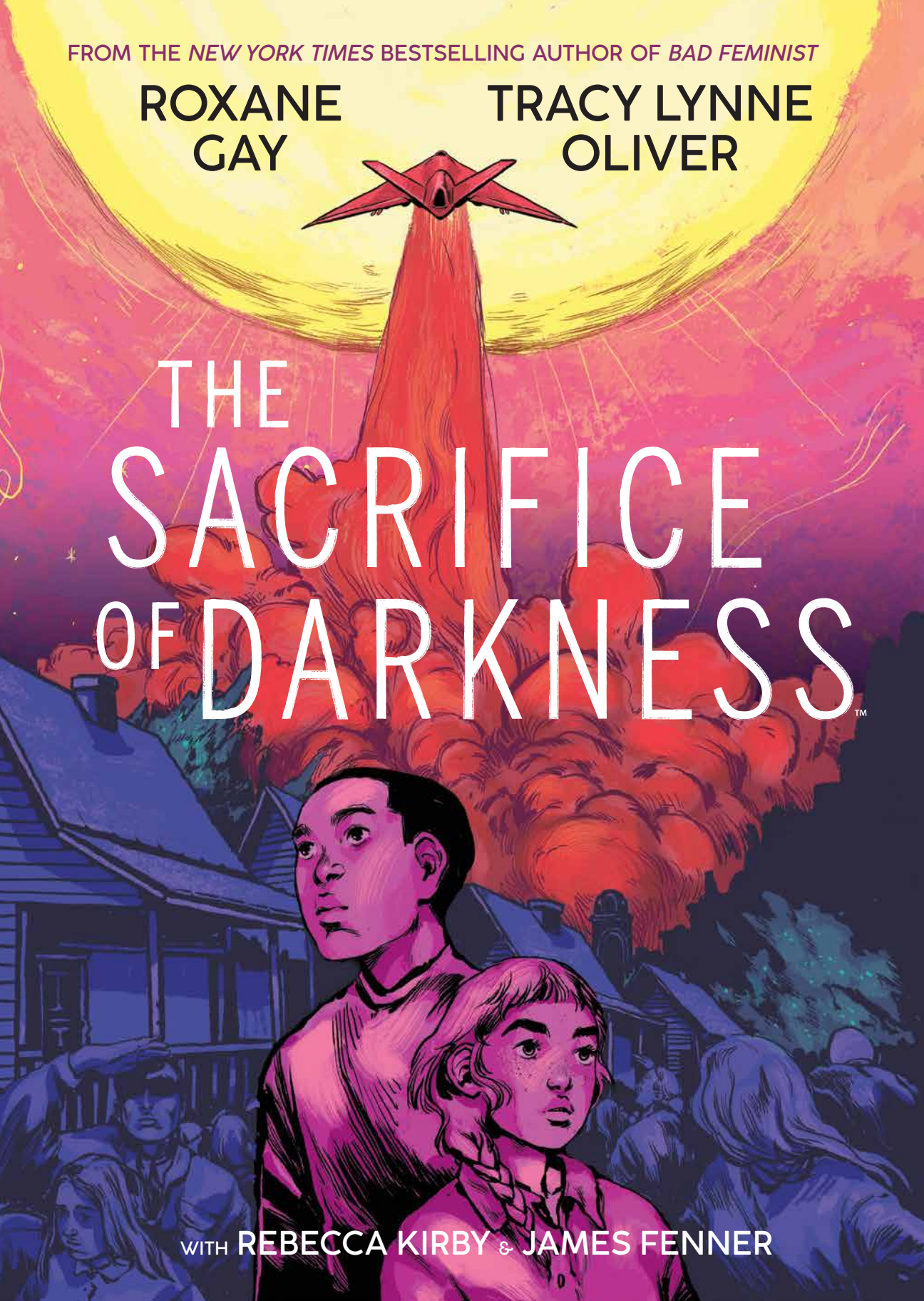


FROM THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *BAD FEMINIST*

ROXANE
GAY

TRACY LYNNE
OLIVER



THE SACRIFICE OF DARKNESS

WITH REBECCA KIRBY & JAMES FENNER

THE SACRIFICE OF DARKNESS™

Based on the short story *We Are The Sacrifice of Darkness* by
ROXANE GAY



Published by
ARCHAIA™

THE SACR OF DAR



RIFICE RKNESS

TM

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Lettered by

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THE TOWNSFOLK WOULD TELL
OF THE THUNDEROUS STREAK OF
HIRAM HIGHTOWER'S AIR MACHINE
AS IT HEADED LIKE A SPEAR
TOWARDS THE SUN THAT DAY.



RR
ARRRRRRRRRR

THE MINERS
WOULD TELL OF
THE SOUND OF
TRIUMPH IN
THAT ROAR.





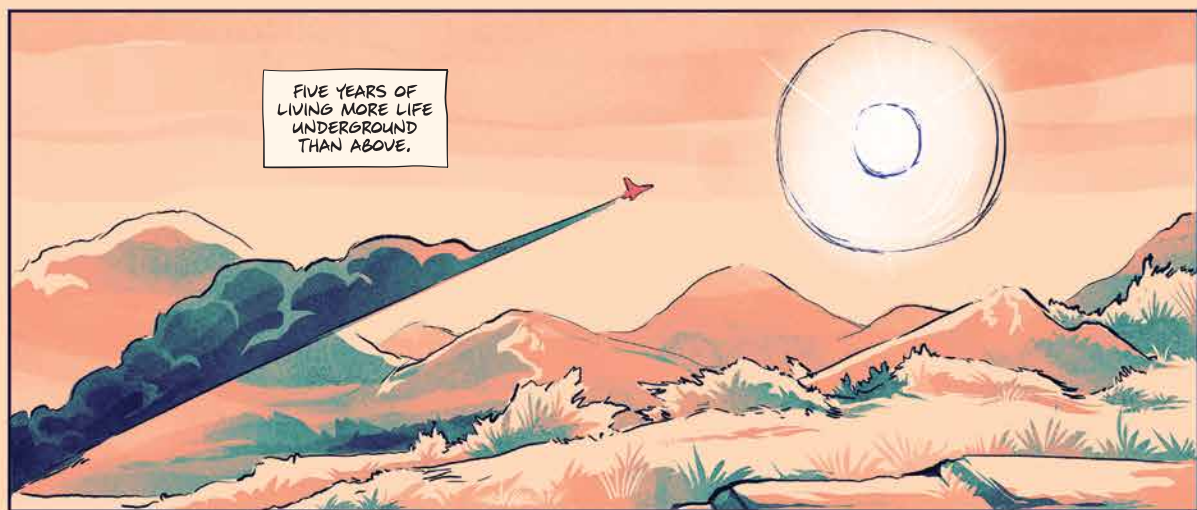
A MAN WITH RESOLUTE
STRENGTH, IT TOOK
FIVE YEARS FOR THE
MINES TO FINALLY
BREAK HIRAM DOWN.



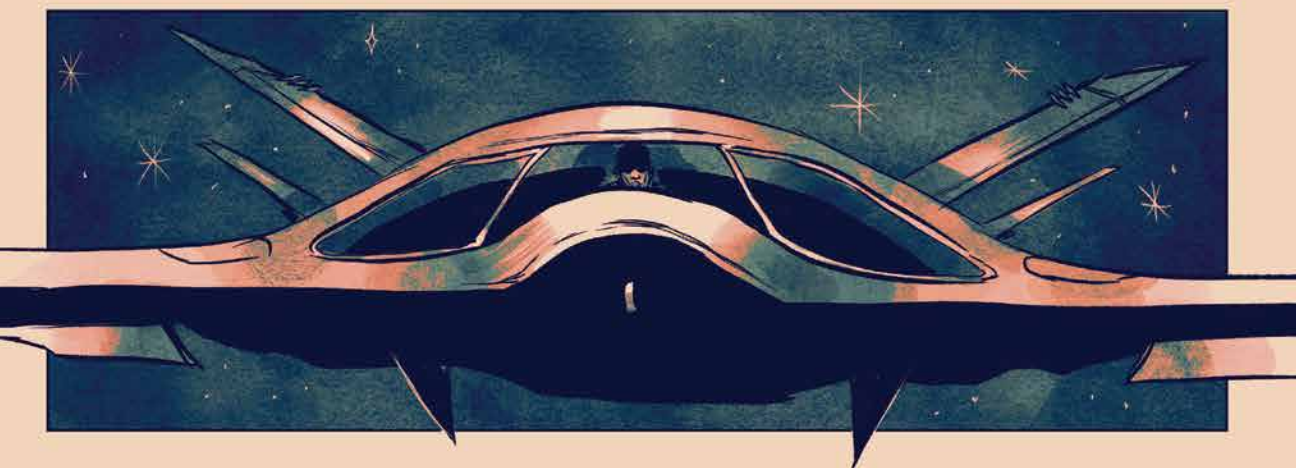
FIVE YEARS OF
DARKNESS INSTEAD
OF FAMILY.



FIVE YEARS OF
KNOWING MORE COLD
THAN WARMTH.



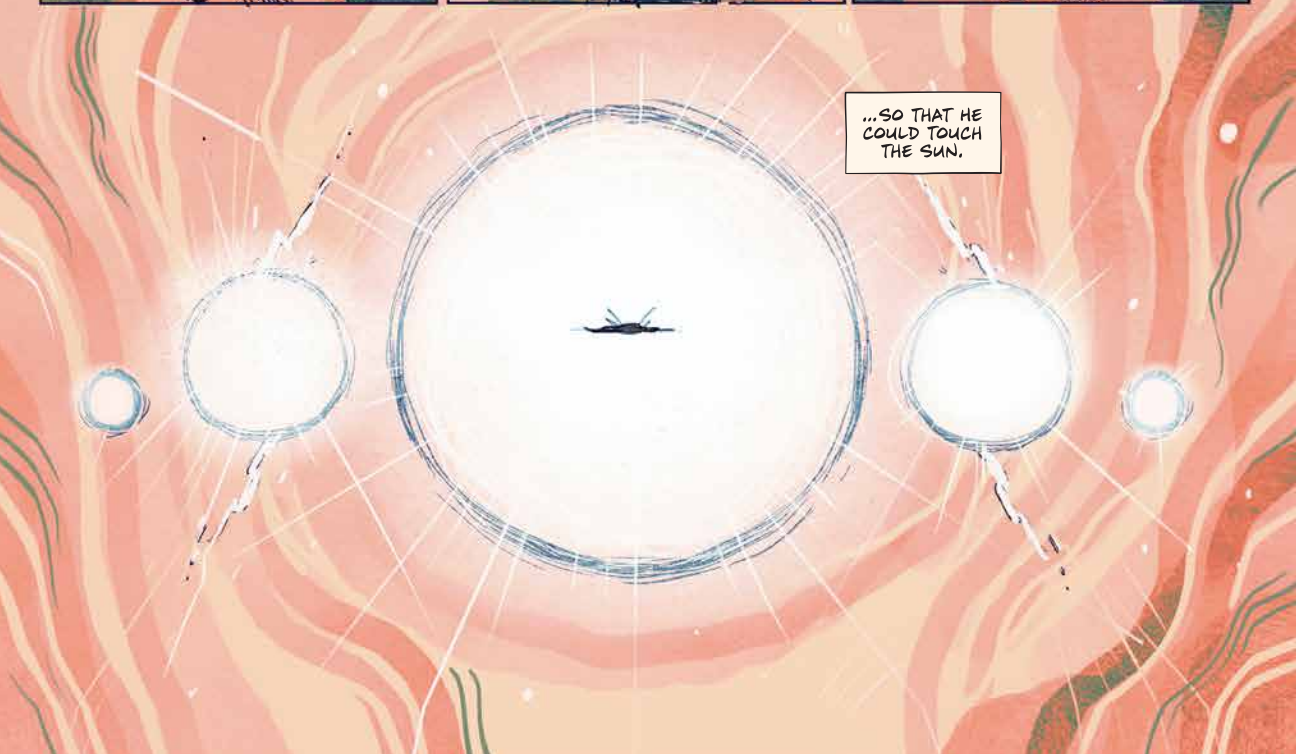
FIVE YEARS OF
LIVING MORE LIFE
UNDERGROUND
THAN ABOVE.



FIVE YEARS TO
RIP THE MINER'S
HEART FROM HIS
CHEST...



...AND SEND
HIM AWAY FROM
EVERYTHING HE
LOVED...



...SO THAT HE
COULD TOUCH
THE SUN.



ALL WOULD TELL OF HOW THE SUN GREW BRIGHTER, THEN BLINDING, THEN SMALLER AND SMALLER, AS IT FILLED HIRAM HIGHTOWER UP WITH THE LIGHT HE'D CRAVED FOR SO MANY YEARS, WORKING IN THE COLD, LONELY MINES.



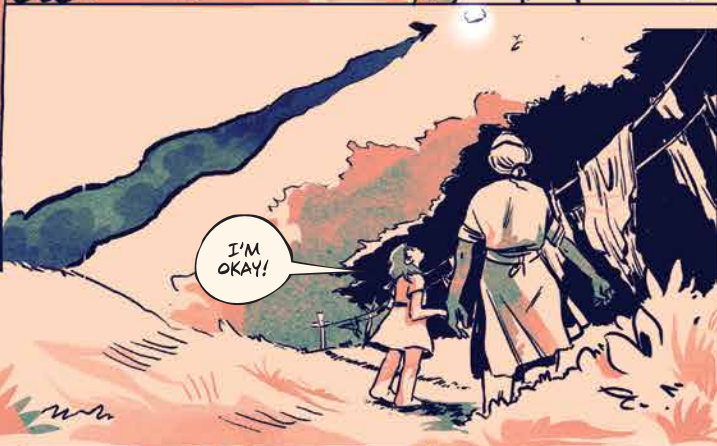
THE MINERS WOULD TELL HOW, ON THAT FATEFUL DAY, THEY BELIEVED HIRAM HAD FINALLY FOUND PEACE.

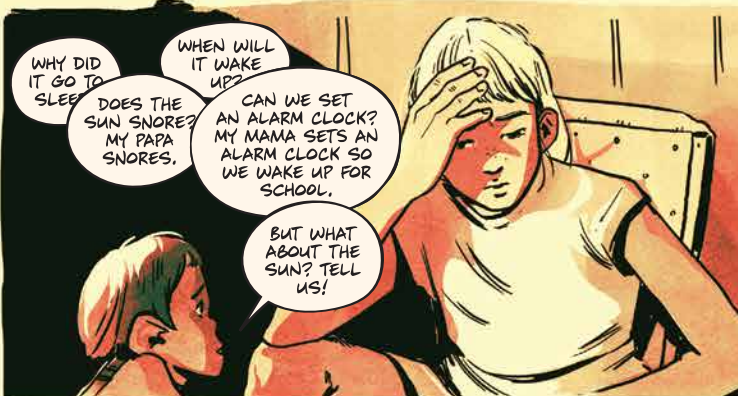


THEY WOULD TELL OF THE BRIGHT RED CREASE APPEARING IN THE SKY AFTER THE SUN DISAPPEARED.



HOW THE AIR CHILLED AND THE WORLD GREW COLD.





HOW CONFUSION
AND CHAOS REIGNED
IN THOSE EARLY DAYS
OF NEW DARK.

RED CREASE CONTINUES TO DECREASE IN SIZE

"In the seventeen days since the event, we can now confirm the red crease has lessened by approximately 33%," Professor Winters announced on Tuesday. "We predict the darkness will be fully realized by the end of the month." Disheartening news for the world trying to adjust to this catastrophe.

I CAN TRADE
THESE BATTERIES
FOR SOME
GASOLINE.

HOW MUCH
FIREWOOD CAN I
GET FOR THESE
CANDLES?

WE NEED
FLASHLIGHTS.
WHO CAN TRADE ME
FLASHLIGHTS?

WILL THEY
BE OPEN
TODAY?

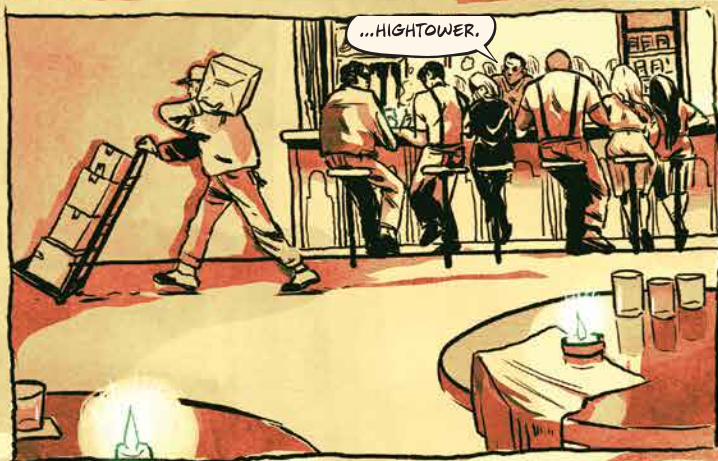
THEY SAID THEY'D TRY. LIKE
EVERYONE ELSE, THEY JUST
WANT TO GET THINGS
BACK TO NORMAL.

I PRAY FOR
NORMAL.

WE CAN'T
KEEP PLOWING
IN THE DARK!
THIS IS
MADNESS!

HOW
LONG WILL
IT BE LIKE
THIS?

IF THIS
GOES ON ANY
LONGER, WE'LL
HAVE TO ARRANGE FOR
PHOTON REPLICAS.
YOU KNOW HOW
EXPENSIVE THAT
WILL BE!









HOW THE CORONA COUNCIL
CONVENED ONCE MORE, THE
FEAR, FOR ONCE, SOMETHING
GREATER THAN THEIR GREED,

WE MUST
CEASE THE
HUNT FOR
FLAREON. WE
MUST CLOSE
THE MINES!

CORONA
COUNCIL
CHAMBERS

IN SESSION.
DO NOT
ENTER

BUT HOW
WILL WE REPLACE
THE ENORMOUS
PROFITS FLAREON
BRINGS US?

IT NO LONGER
MATTERS! THEY MUST
BE CLOSED. WE DON'T
KNOW WHAT ANOTHER
MINER MIGHT DO.

IT IS
DECIDED.
THE MINES
WILL BE
CLOSED.

INSTRUCT THE MAYOR
TO ENLIST ALL MINERS IN
GAS LAMP INSTALLATION.
OUR STREETS MUST NO
LONGER REMAIN DARK.



NOW THAT THE
MINES ARE CLOSED
WE NEED YOU TO
LIGHT OUR CITY.



BUT, I'M
A MINER...
NOT A LAMP
MAKER.



GAS LAMPS
WILL NEED TO
BE BUILT.



INSTALLED AND
MAINTAINED.



THERE WILL
BE TEAMS TO LIGHT
THEM EACH MORNING
AND EXTINGUISH
THEM EACH NIGHT.



SCRAPPERS
BROKE INTO
THE MINES
AGAIN.

IF THEY'RE
SMART THEY'LL
SELL ANY GAINS FOUR
TOWNS OVER. NOBODY
HERE WANTS ANYTHING
TO DO WITH THOSE
MINES.



I
KNOW YOU
LOVED
THEM.

THE CORONA
COUNCIL TOOK
THAT LOVE FROM
ME. TOOK IT FROM
US ALL.



OUR CITIZENS
NEED TO HAVE A
SEMBLANCE OF
DAYS AND
NIGHTS.

HOW MINERS
BECAME WORKERS
ABOVE GROUND
INSTEAD OF BELOW.



A HALF-DOZEN
FAMILIES HAVE
LEFT. MINERS WERE
MEANT TO MINE, I
TELL YOU.

I AGREE,
BUT THE NEAREST
MINES ARE SEVEN
REGIONS AWAY. MY
HOME IS HERE,
MINES OR
NOT.



HEY YOU TWO,
LESS TALKING,
MORE CARRYING!
MAYOR WANTS
THE LAMPS LIT
BY THE END OF
THE MONTH!



AND THE
MAYOR ALWAYS
GETS WHAT HE
WANTS.



I MISS
MINING.

GOD
BLESS HIRAM
HIGHTOWER.





WITH GAS LAMPS
INSTALLED IN 90% OF THE
CITY'S STREETS AND
GATHERING SPACES...

... THE MAYOR
PREDICTS THE GRAND
LIGHTING CEREMONY
WILL TAKE PLACE AS
SCHEDULED.



IT'S BEEN THREE MONTHS OF
HARD WORK. I CAN'T WAIT FOR
OUR CITIZENS TO HAVE THEIR
STREETS LIT DURING WHAT WE
ONCE KNEW AS DAYTIME.

THE
GOOD PEOPLE
OF THIS TOWN
HAVE SUFFERED
ENOUGH.



'BOUT
TIME.

IF THE LIGHTS
COME ON, I'LL BE
ABLE TO SEE YOUR
HANDSOME FACE
BETTER.



YOU BETTER
HOPE THEY
BURN OUT... FOR
YOUR WIFE'S
SAKE!





FOR MANY MONTHS OUR DAYS AND NIGHTS HAVE MERGED INTO ONE.



MAY THE LIGHT FROM THESE LAMPS RETURN OUR DAYS AND NIGHTS TO US.



MAMA, WHEN IS THE LIGHT COMING?

ANY MINUTE NOW, BABY.



MAY THEIR GLOW PROVIDE US WITH THE MEMORY OF THE SUN'S WARMTH.



...SO, WITH NO FURTHER ADO, LIGHT THE LAMPS!

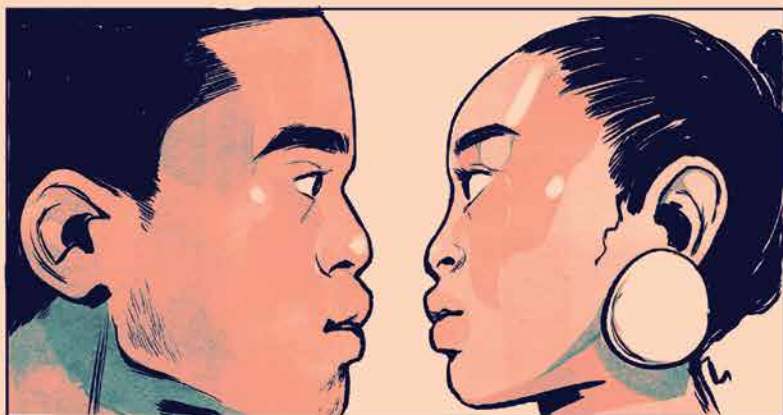
KRANK

THAT MOMENT MARKED A NEW RARITY. PURE JOY BECAME SOMETHING SOUGHT AFTER, WORKED HARD FOR. ITS SPONTANEITY GONE, ALONG WITH THE LIGHT OF THE SUN.



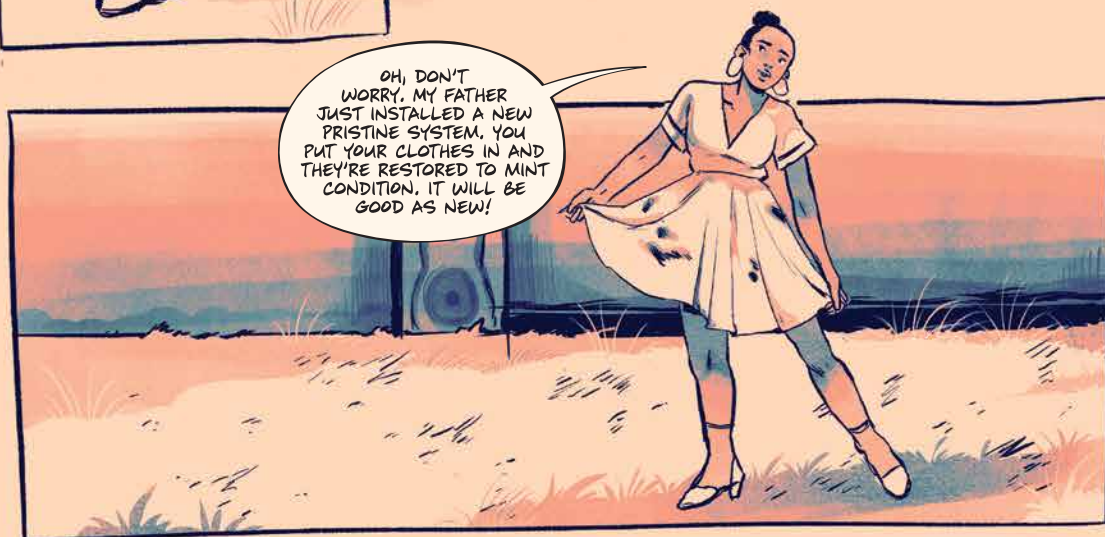










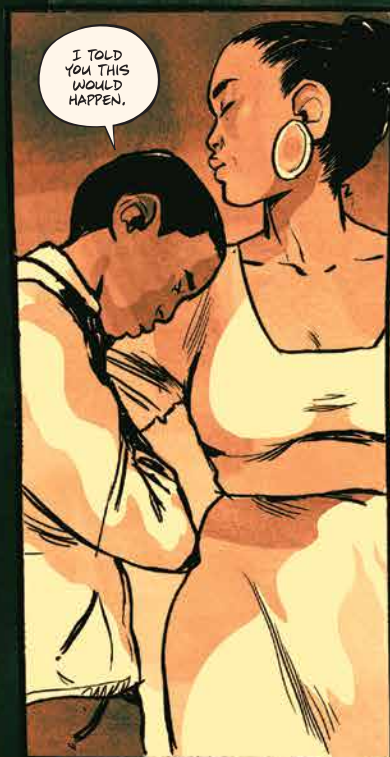


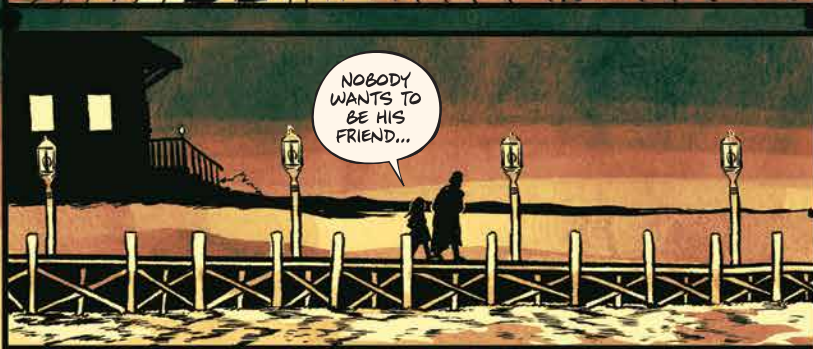




AFTER...





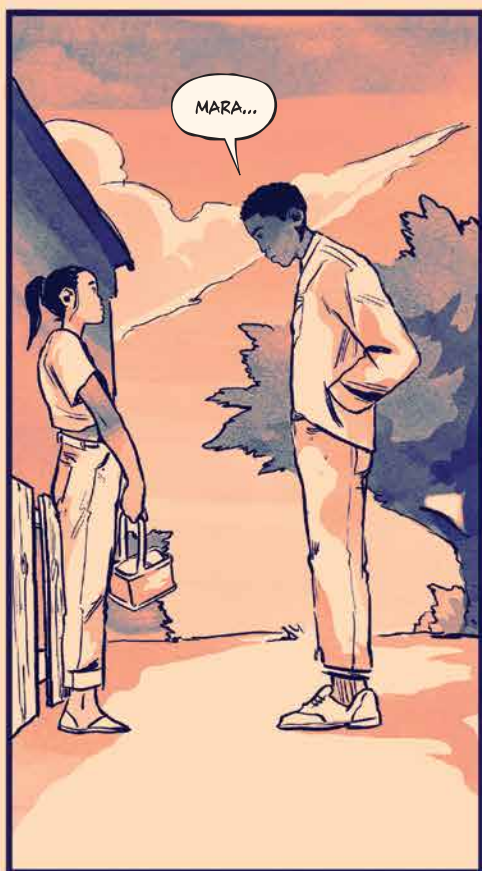


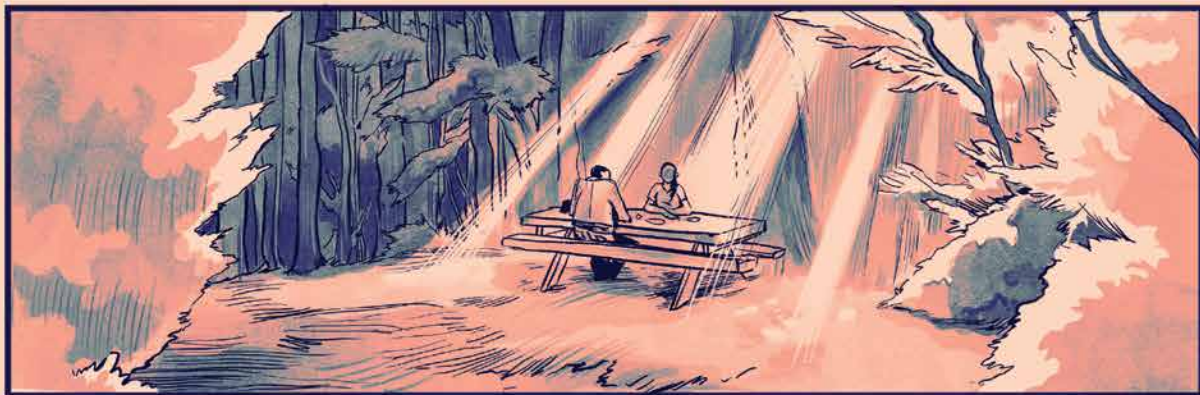








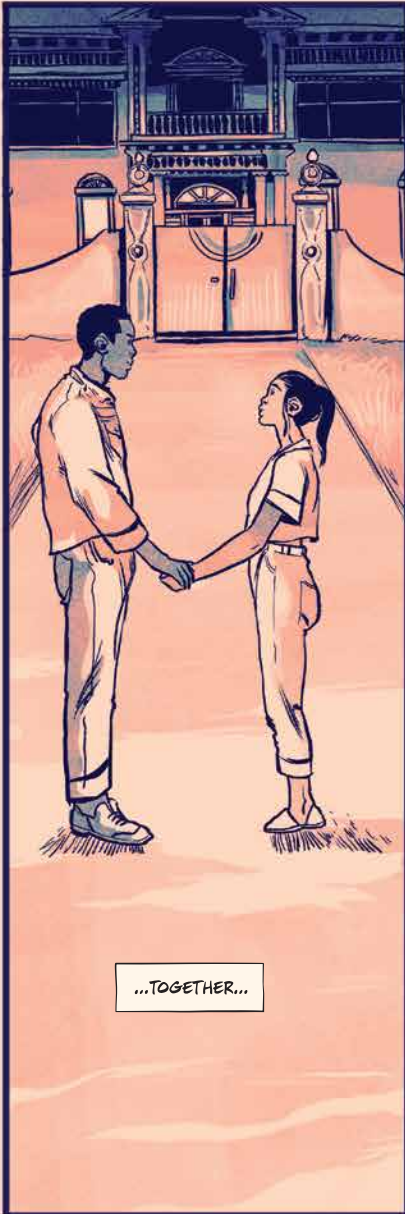


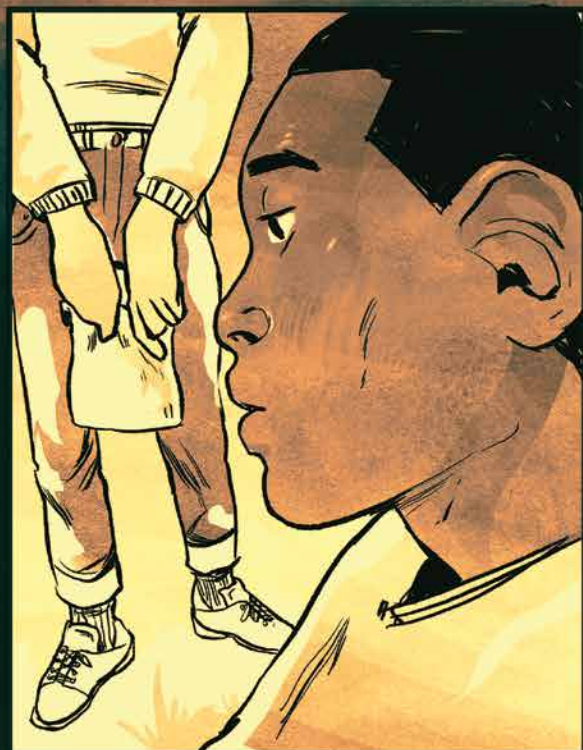


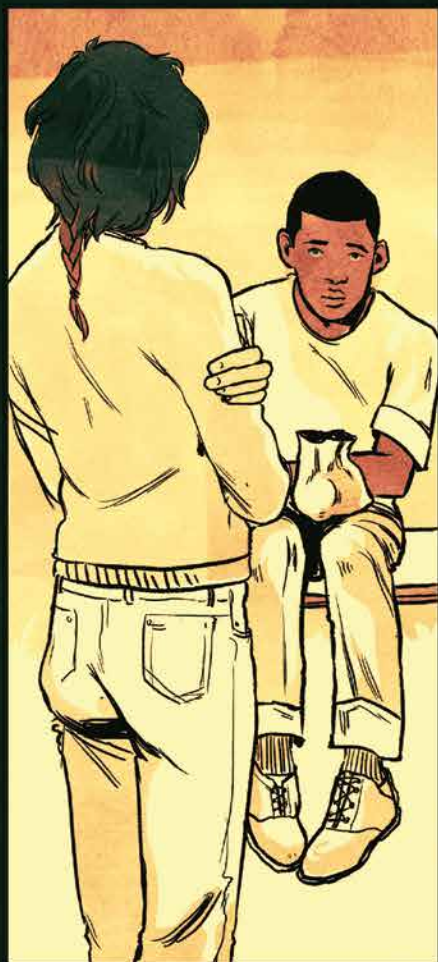






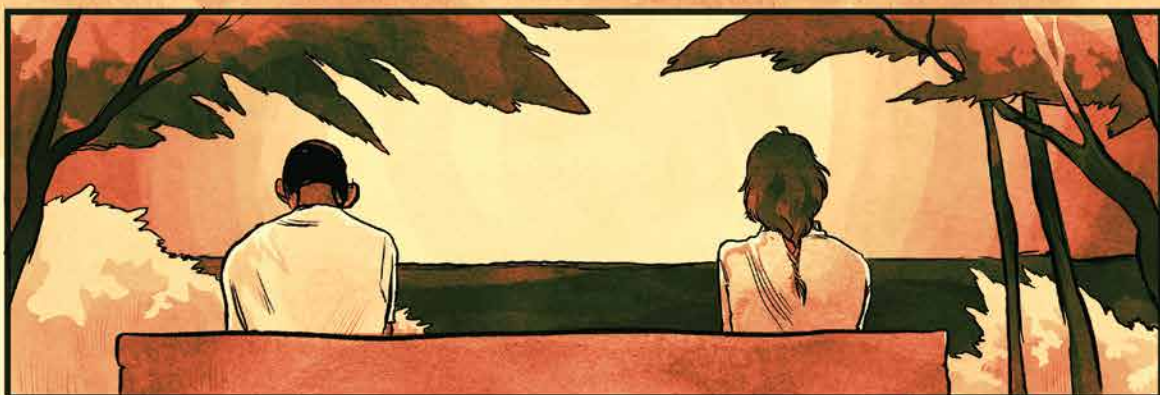
















BEFORE...



REALLY,
MARA...

...SHOULDN'T YOU
BE STUDYING AND NOT
WASTING TIME IN THIS
FILTH? YOU NEED TO
BE PREPARING FOR
LAW SCHOOL.

FATHER, I'M
NOT EVEN DONE
WITH COLLEGE.
LAW SCHOOL IS
STILL YEARS
AWAY.



PLUS, I'M
NOT EVEN
SURE I...



AFTER...

CLAIRE AND JOSHUA AVOIDED EACH OTHER FOR THE NEXT TWO DAYS.



WHEN ONE WOULD MAKE EYE CONTACT, THE OTHER WOULD QUICKLY LOOK AWAY.



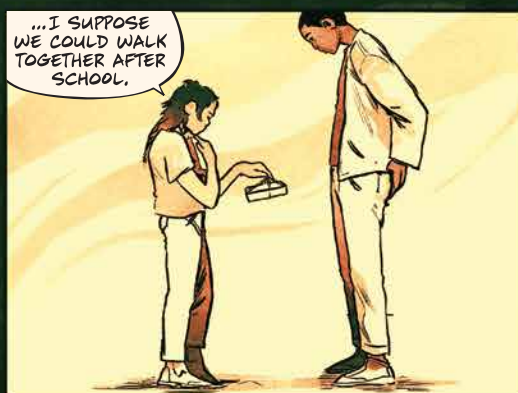
EACH OF THEM VERY MUCH AWARE OF THE OTHER PRETENDING NOT TO BE AWARE.



I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT IT.



I... I WOULD LIKE TO VISIT YOUR HOME.



DOING THEIR
BEST TO AVOID
THE STARES...



...CLAIRE AND
JOSHUA MADE
THEIR FIRST OF
MANY...



...WALKS HOME
TOGETHER.







WHY IS YOUR
HOUSE CAGED
IN LIKE THAT?



MY MA WANTED
TO MAKE IT HARDER
FOR PEOPLE TO GET
IN OUR YARD, THROW
THINGS AT THE HOUSE.
MY DAD MADE A
LOT OF FOLKS
ANGRY.



IT DOESN'T
SEEM FAIR THAT
YOU SHOULD HAVE
TO LIVE IN A CAGE.
IT DOES NOT SEEM
FAIR AT ALL.

IT'S
NOT FAIR.
I HATE
IT!



LET'S GO.
THERE'S NO
CAGE AT MY
HOUSE.



THESE
ARE FOR
YOU.





LET'S
SEE IF YOU CAN
BEAT YESTERDAY'S
RECORD!

TAP
tap
STOMP

CLACK

tap
STOMP

OKAY, YOUR
TURN! THERE'S
NO WAY YOU
CAN MATCH
THAT!

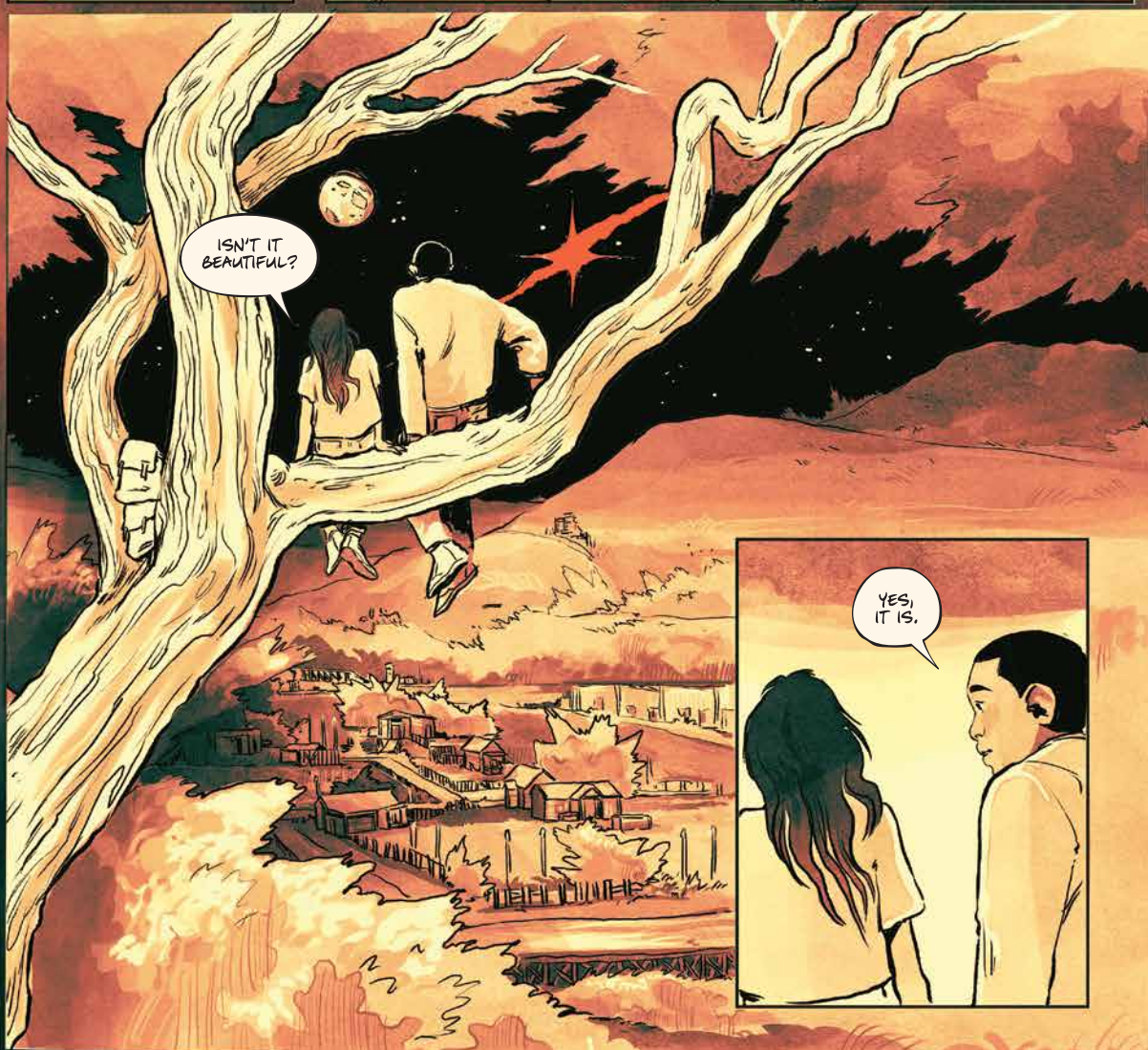
WE'LL
SEE ABOUT
THAT!

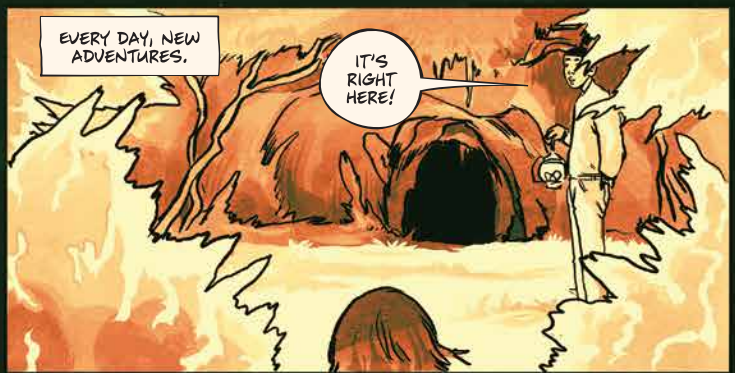
TAP
tap
STOMP

Tappity
Clack

CLACK

tap
STOMP





BEFORE...

I CAN'T
EAT ANOTHER
BITE!

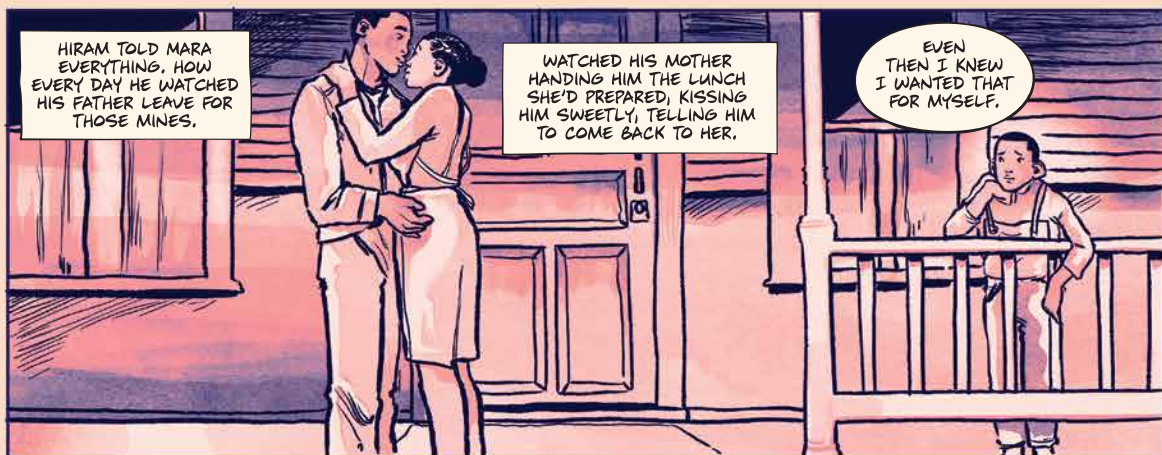
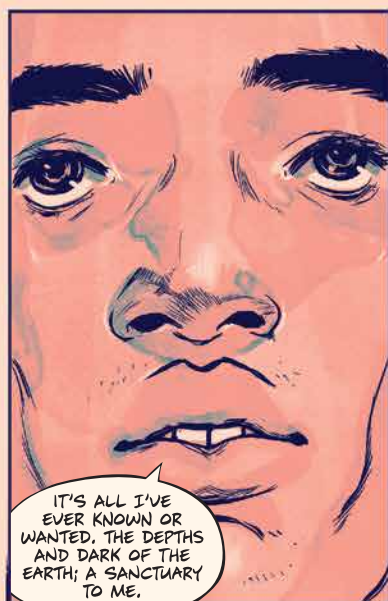
THAT'S
WHAT YOU SAID
TEN BITES
AGO!

WELL, IF
YOU WOULDN'T
KEEP MAKING SUCH
DELICIOUS MEALS
MISS BLESSINGS, I
WOULDN'T BE SO
TEMPTED.

WELL, I'M GOING
TO KEEP MAKING
YOU
DELICIOUS MEALS,
MR.
HIGHTOWER, SO YOU'D
BETTER LEARN HOW TO
EAT SOME AND SAVE
SOME FOR LATER.

THE GUYS TELL ME
I'VE PUT ON AT LEAST
TWENTY POUNDS IN THE
LAST SIX MONTHS. MAYBE
I'D BETTER DO WHAT
YOU SUGGEST.

YOU'VE
NEVER LOOKED
BETTER, MR.
HIGHTOWER.



HIRAM TOLD MARA HOW EVERY DAY HE WATCHED HIS FATHER RETURN FROM THOSE MINES, DIRTY, SMELLY, TIRED AND HUNGRY, BUT SO VERY HAPPY.

HOW, OVER DINNER, HE WOULD TELL HIS FAMILY ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY; ALL THE THINGS THEY'D UNCOVERED, HOW DEEP THEY DUG, ANY FUNNY STORIES ABOUT HIS WORK MATES.

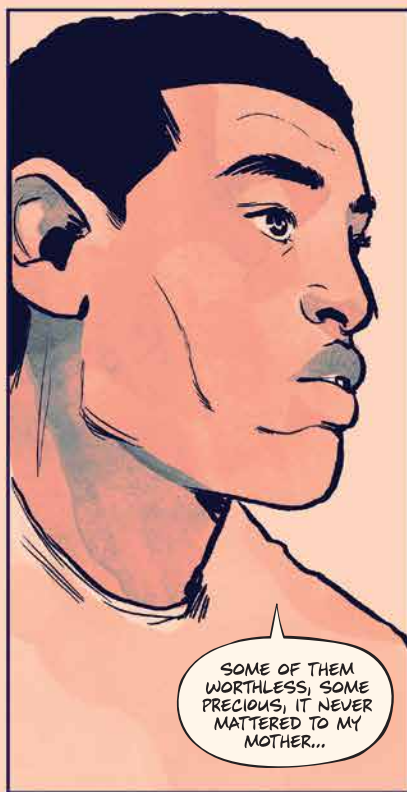


WE LOVED HIS STORIES. WE LOOKED FORWARD TO IT EVERY DAY.



AND NOW I AM MAKING MY OWN STORIES! EVERY DAY I GO INTO THOSE MINES IT'S AN ADVENTURE.

EVERY SO OFTEN, MY FATHER WOULD BRING HOME SMALL TREASURES TO MY MOTHER. THINGS HE'D UNEARTHED, POCKETED AND POLISHED TO A SHINE.



SOME OF THEM WORTHLESS, SOME PRECIOUS, IT NEVER MATTERED TO MY MOTHER...



...TO MY MOTHER, THEY MEANT EVERYTHING.



I BURIED HER WITH THOSE TREASURES. AND WHEN MY FATHER PASSED, HE WAS BURIED ALONGSIDE HER.



AND NOW?



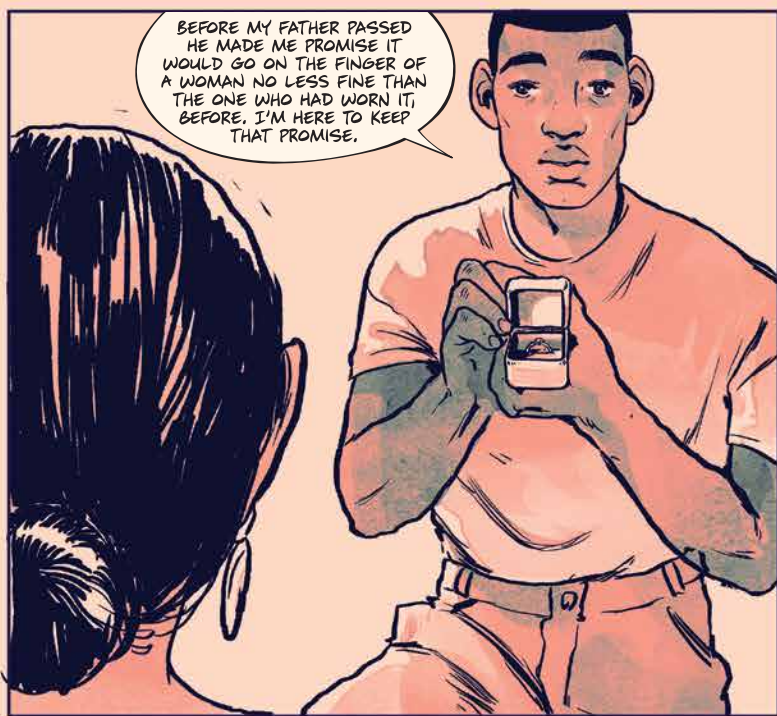
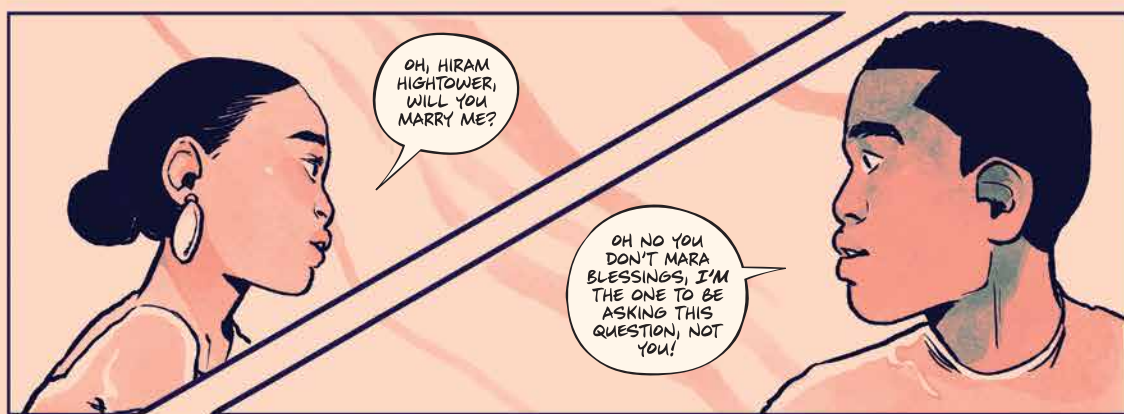
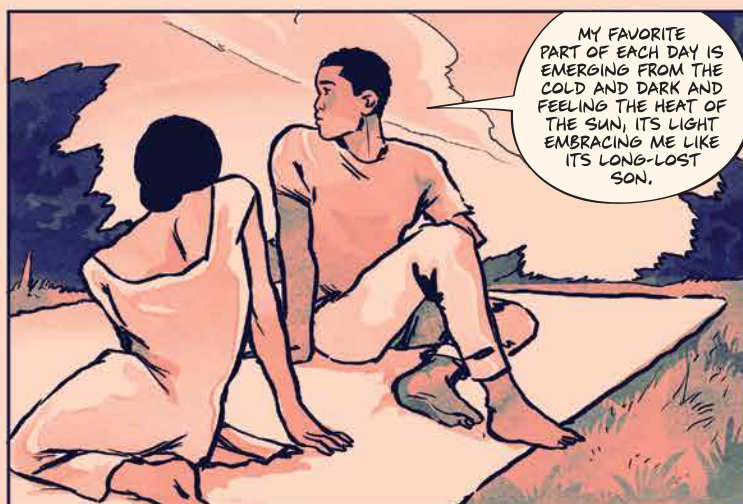
THERE'S A BEAUTY TO MINING THAT MANY WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND. THE MAGIC OF UNEARTHING ANCIENT THINGS. PARTS AND PIECES OF BIGGER THINGS.

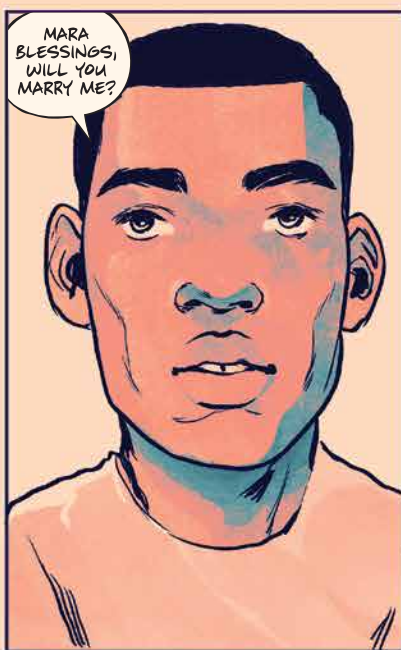


NOW? NOW I WAKE UP EVERY DAY EXCITED TO DO WHAT I LOVE.



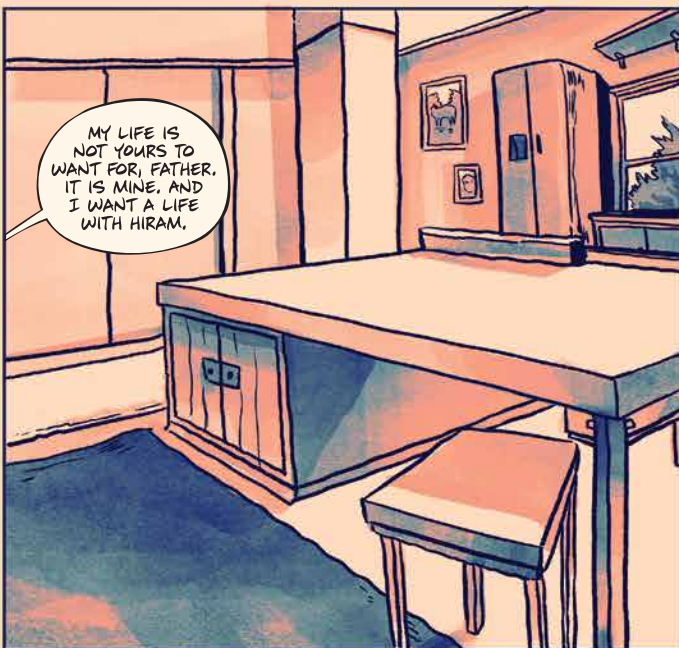
MINING IS THE DESIRE TO UNCOVER. TO SEARCH. TO DIG FOR PRECIOUS THINGS. TO BE CONTENT IN THE FINDING AS WELL AS THE NOT FINDING. TO MINE IS TO HAVE FAITH IN THE UNSEEN.







YOU CANNOT MARRY HIM! YOU WILL NOT BE A MINER'S WIFE! THAT IS NOT THE LIFE WE WANT FOR YOU!



MY LIFE IS NOT YOURS TO WANT FOR, FATHER. IT IS MINE. AND I WANT A LIFE WITH HIRAM.



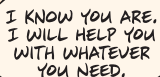
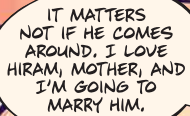
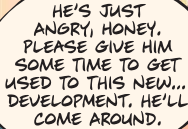
JUST THE FLEETING CRUSH OF A YOUNG GIRL, INDEED.



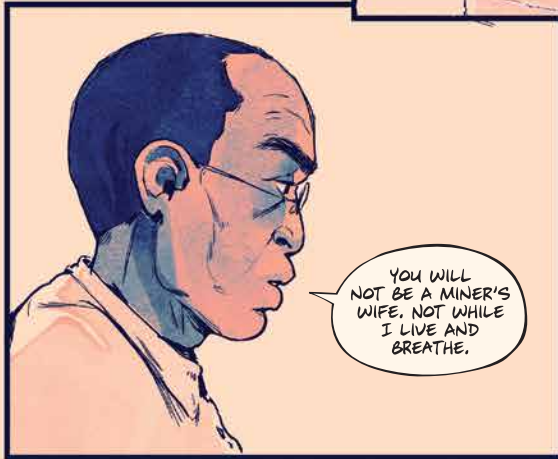
I MAY BE A YOUNG GIRL, FATHER, BUT HIRAM IS MUCH MORE THAN A CRUSH AND MY LOVE FOR HIM IS THE OPPOSITE OF FLEETING.



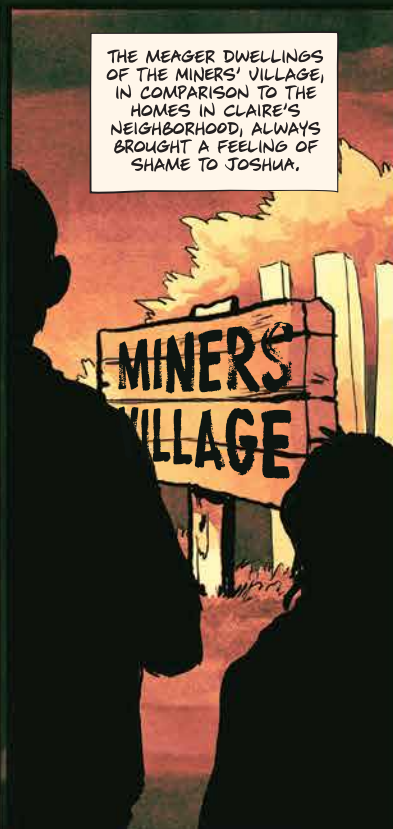
IF THIS IS YOUR CHOICE, YOU MUST LEAVE OUR HOME. IMMEDIATELY.

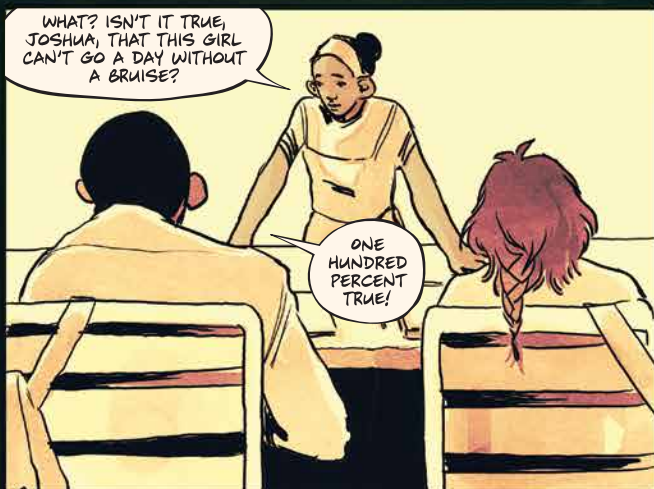


DISAPPOINTED,
MARA EXPECTED
MORE FROM HER
MOTHER.



AFTER...











WHEN I WAS LITTLE WE'D ALL SIT ON THIS BENCH AND MY FATHER WOULD TELL ME I WAS BORN IN THIS GARDEN.



HOW THEY PLANTED ME RIGHT ALONGSIDE THE PEAS AND BEANS UNTIL I WAS RIPE AND READY.

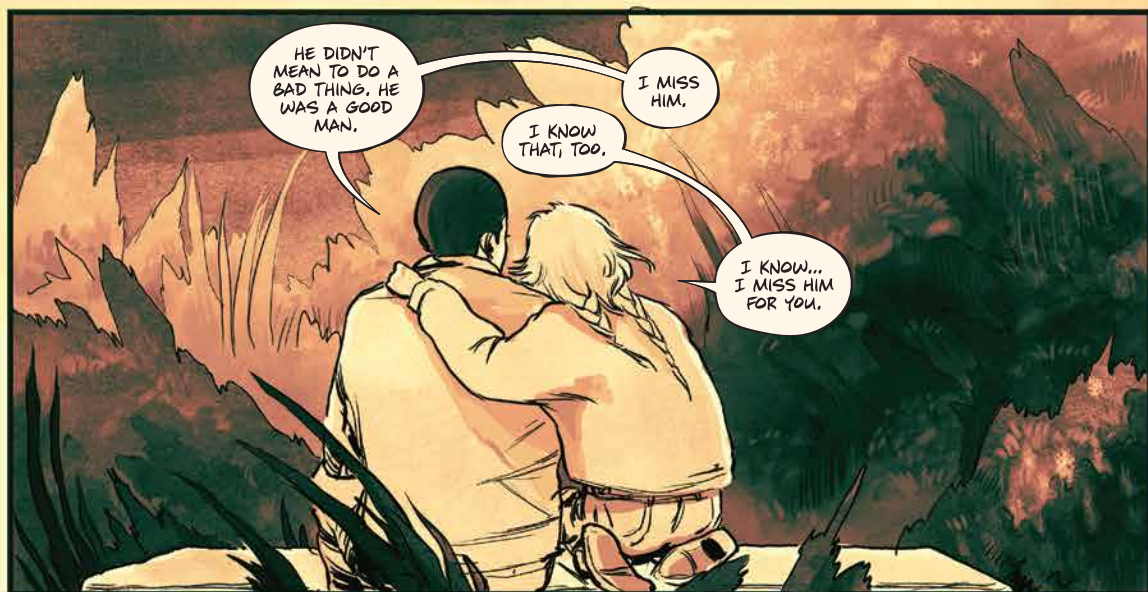


PRETTY SILLY, HUH?



MY FATHER IS UP THERE SOMEWHERE.

I KNOW.



HE DIDN'T MEAN TO DO A BAD THING. HE WAS A GOOD MAN.

I MISS HIM.

I KNOW THAT, TOO.

I KNOW... I MISS HIM FOR YOU.

BEFORE...

TODAY
WE BRING
TWO LIVES
TOGETHER.

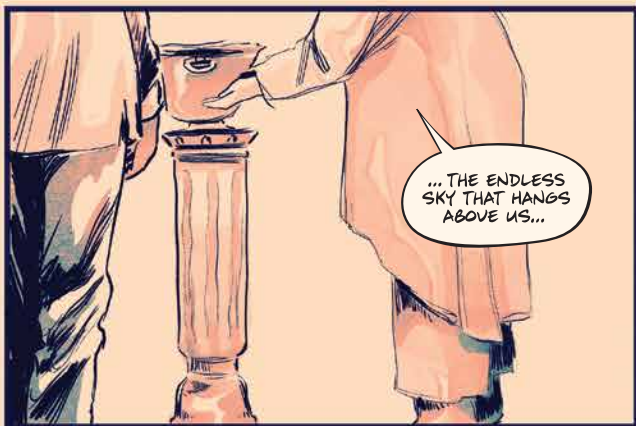
MAN WAS
NEVER MADE TO WALK
THIS WORLD ALONE, YOU
EACH HAVE FOUND YOUR
OTHER AND WILL NOW
WALK TOGETHER UNTIL
ETERNITY.

HIRAM
HIGHTOWER AND
MARA BLESSINGS,
ARE YOU READY TO
TAKE THIS WALK
TODAY AND EVERY
DAY?

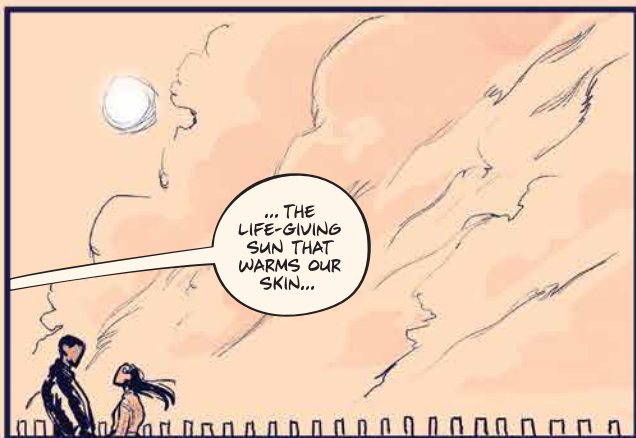
YES, WE
ARE.



WE STAND HERE
TOGETHER WITH THE
MOST IMPORTANT OF
WITNESSES...



... THE ENDLESS
SKY THAT HANGS
ABOVE US...

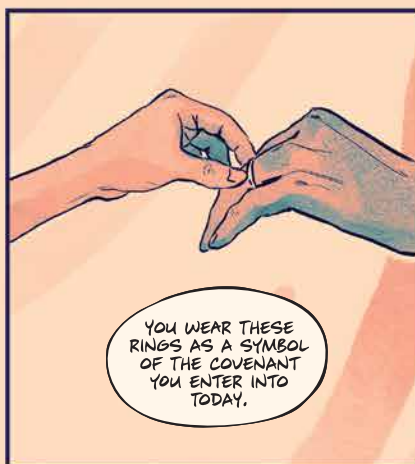
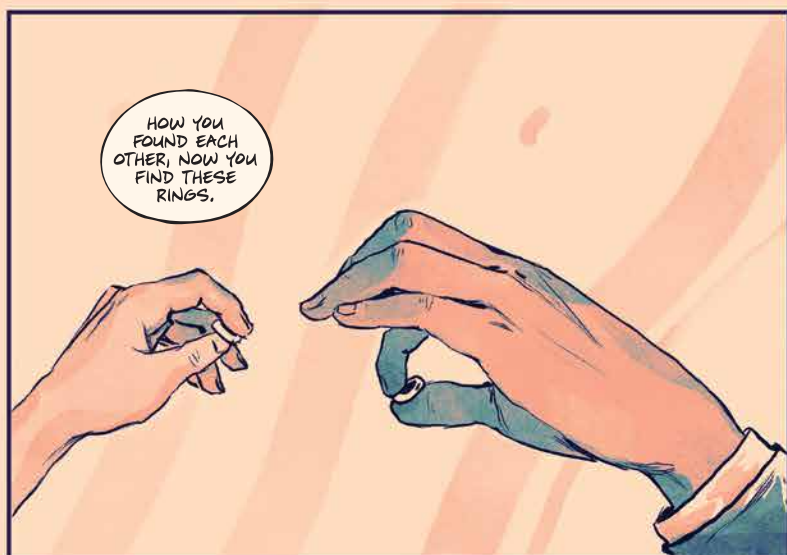


... THE
LIFE-GIVING
SUN THAT
WARMS OUR
SKIN...



... A GRAND TREE,
OLD WITH WISDOM
AND THICK WITH
STRENGTH...







I NOW
PRONOUNCE
YOU MAN
AND WIFE.

AFTER...

THEIR FRIENDSHIP
DEEPEDED THAT
DAY...



...AND
CONTINUED...



...TO GROW.



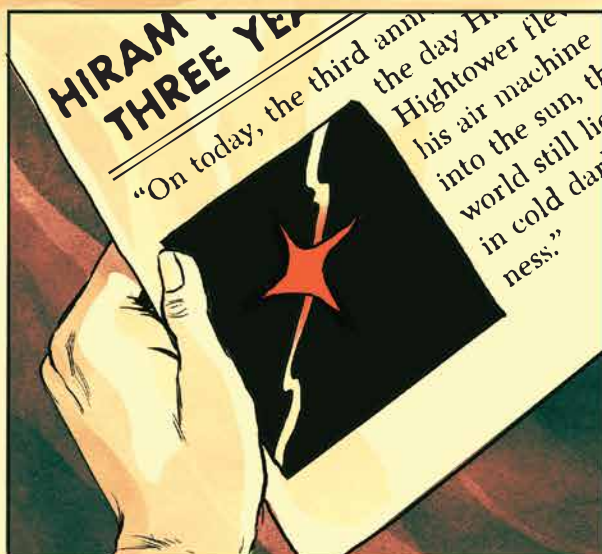
BUT AS LONG AS
THE DARKNESS
PERSISTED...



...THE WORLD
COULD NOT
FORGIVE...



...WHO HAD
BROUGHT THAT
DARKNESS...





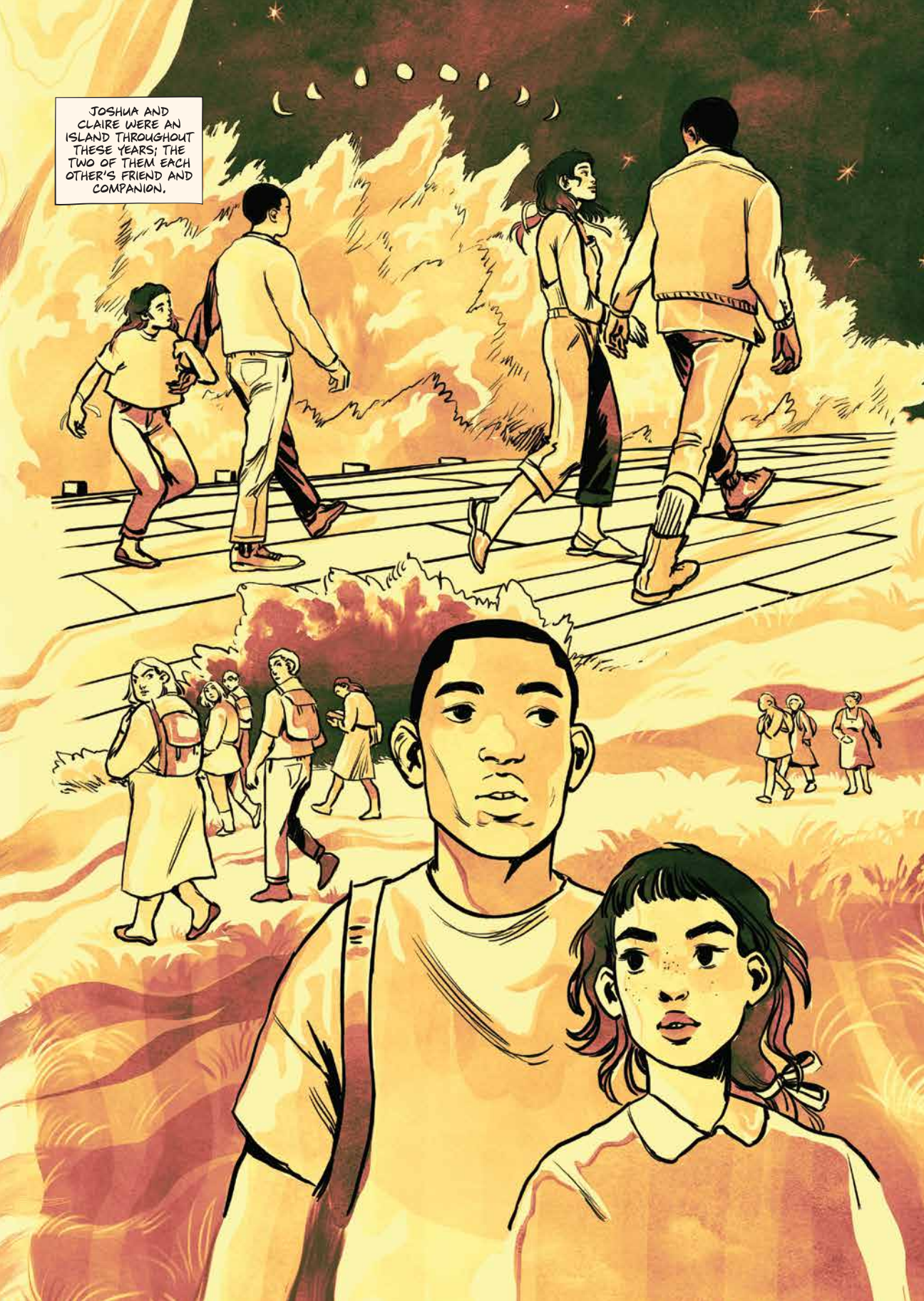
SON
OF A SUN
STEALER!

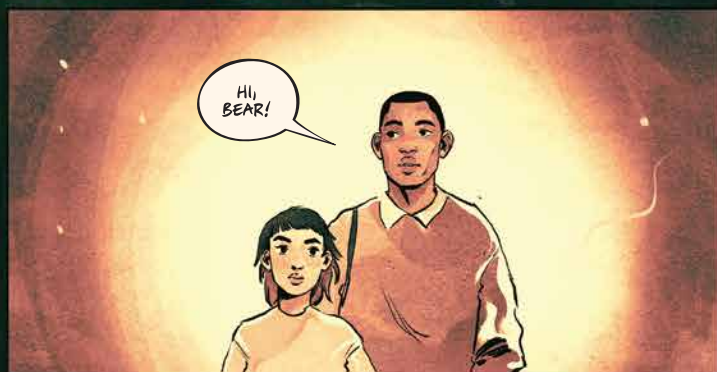
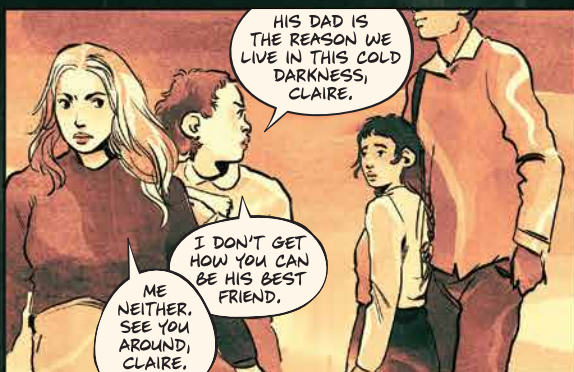
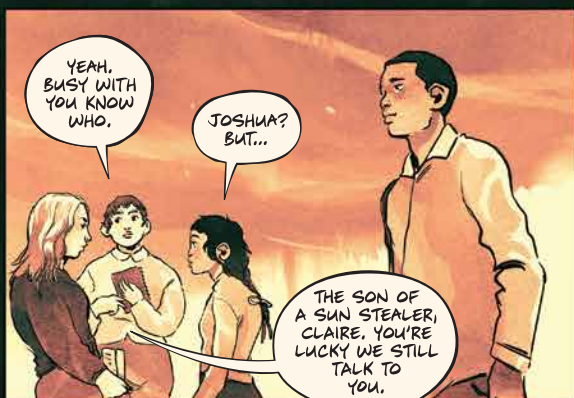
AS THE MONTHS
OF DARKNESS BECAME
YEARS, THE HATRED
TOWARD THE FAMILY OF
THE MAN WHO TOOK THEIR
SUN AWAY GREW.

HIGHTOWERS
MUST DIE!

YOUR DAD
SHOULD'VE HAD
YOU AND YOUR
MOTHER ALONG
WITH HIM.

JOSHUA AND
CLAIRE WERE AN
ISLAND THROUGHOUT
THESE YEARS; THE
TWO OF THEM EACH
OTHER'S FRIEND AND
COMPANION.







JOSHUA HIGHTOWER
BORE THE MISERY OF
HIS FATHER'S LEGACY
EVERY DAY.



NO MATTER
THE BACKLASH,
CLAIRE STOOD
BY HIS SIDE.



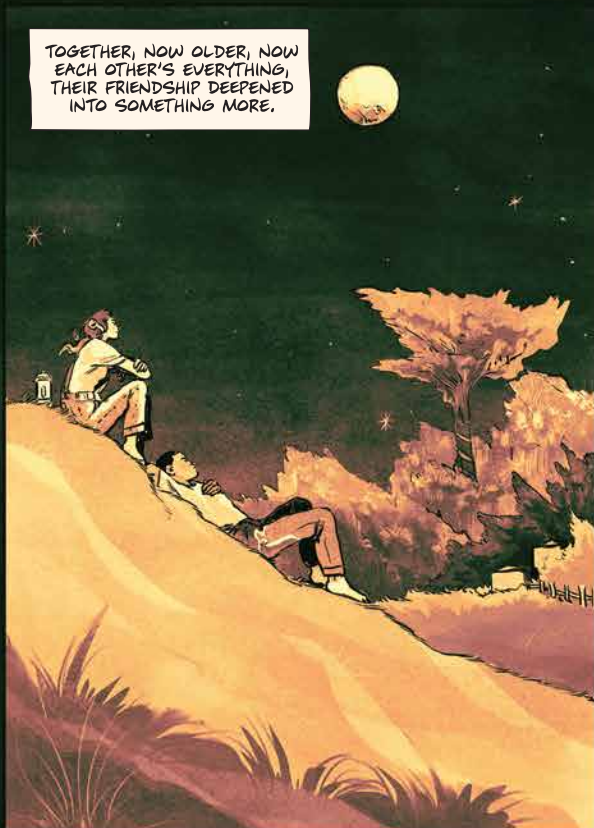
THE FRIENDSHIP
DEEPENING TO
SOMETHING NEITHER
OF THEM HAD PUT
WORDS TO.

YET.



CLAIRE WAS
ALWAYS THERE,
HIS SOFT PLACE
TO FALL.

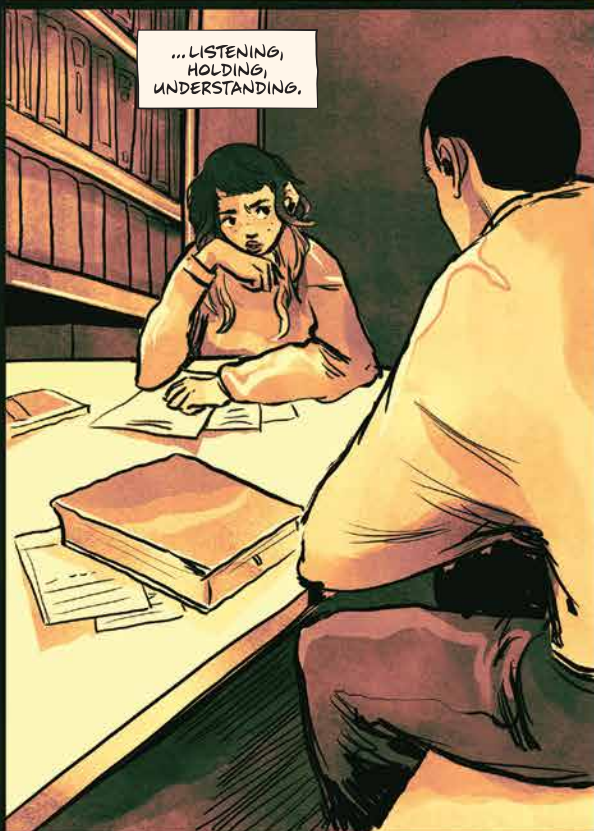
TOGETHER, NOW OLDER, NOW
EACH OTHER'S EVERYTHING,
THEIR FRIENDSHIP DEEPENED
INTO SOMETHING MORE.



THEIR CHILDHOOD
PLAY CHANGED INTO
TALKING, WALKING...



...LISTENING,
HOLDING,
UNDERSTANDING.



THEY'D SIT ON THE LAKE'S
SHORE, BLANKETS WRAPPED
AROUND THEM IN FRONT
OF A FIRE, AND TELL THEIR
STORIES ABOUT THE SUN
AND WHAT THEY'D DO IF
IT EVER CAME BACK.





NO MATTER
THE DARK AND
NO MATTER
THE COLD...

...JOSHUA AND CLAIRE
WERE EACH OTHER'S
LIGHT AND HEAT.

WHILE LIVING IN
CONSTANT DARKNESS HAD
BECOME A HEARTBREAKING
NEW NORMAL...



...AND EVERYONE HAD
REBUILT THEIR LIVES INTO
SOME SEMBLANCE OF
HAPPINESS...



...THE WORLD
STILL WASN'T
SATISFIED.



THE WORLD...



...STILL WANTED
ANSWERS.



**CORONA COUNCIL
ASSEMBLY**

**Five Year Review of
Darkness**

**HIGHTOWERS
MUST BE IN
ATTENDANCE
OR RISK
PROSECUTION**

Noon, tomorrow

**Council Building
Chambers**





WHAT MORE
COULD THEY
WANT FROM
US?



HOW MUCH
MORE ARE WE
TO ENDURE?



I DO NOT KNOW,
MOTHER, BUT I
KNOW FATHER WILL
BE WITH US WHEN
WE STAND BEFORE
THEM.



HE WILL
GIVE US
STRENGTH.



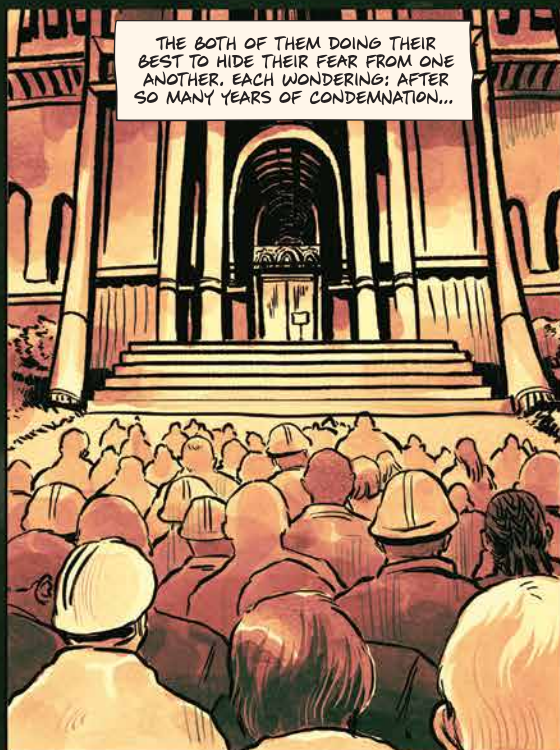
AT THE NEWS THAT THE HIGHTOWERS WERE TO BE A PART OF THE COUNCIL'S MEETING...



...THE MINERS AND THEIR FAMILIES TURNED OUT IN DROVES TO SUPPORT THEM.



MARA AND JOSHUA, RESIGNED BUT STEADFAST, MADE THEIR WAY TO THE COUNCIL BUILDING.



THE BOTH OF THEM DOING THEIR BEST TO HIDE THEIR FEAR FROM ONE ANOTHER, EACH WONDERING: AFTER SO MANY YEARS OF CONDEMNATION...



...WHAT ELSE COULD THE CORONA COUNCIL POSSIBLY WANT FROM THEM?



... AND WE FEEL THAT THIS LAST PROPOSAL HOLDS THE STRONGEST PROMISE. THANK YOU.

YOU HAVE NOW HEARD A FULL OUTLINE OF THE MULTIPLE NEW PLANS WE HAVE TO RETURN THE SUN.



MOTHER, I'M SCARED.



YES, THESE PLANS ARE LARGE AND GRAND IN SCALE, BUT WITH THE NEW LEARNINGS OUR TOP SCIENTISTS HAVE GATHERED IN THESE PAST FIVE YEARS, WE ARE HOPEFUL.

I HOPE THEY GET WHAT THEY DESERVE.



AT THIS TIME, WE'D LIKE TO ASK THE HIGHTOWER FAMILY TO PLEASE STEP FORWARD.





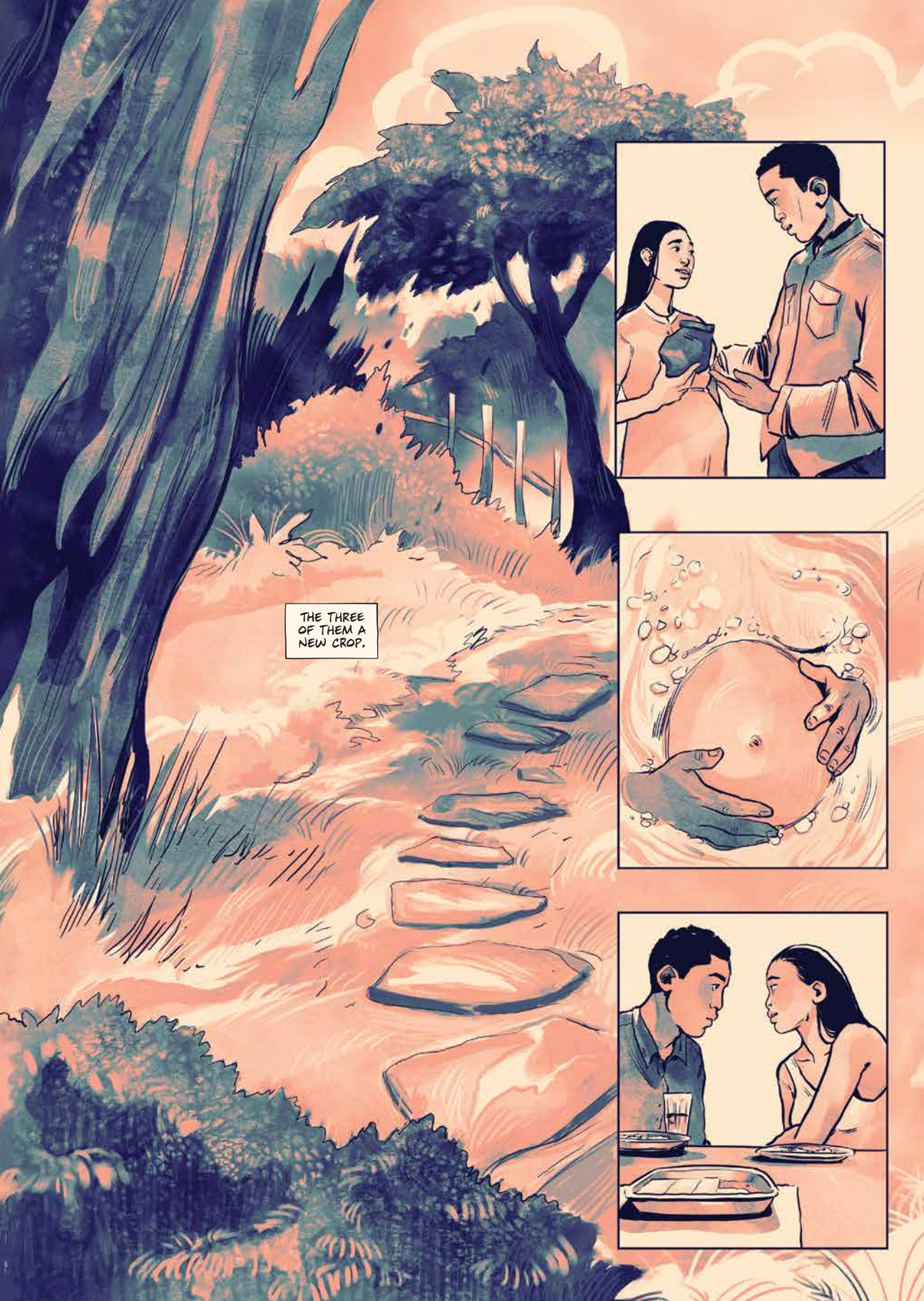


BEFORE...

IN THE HOURS AND DAYS AFTER HIRAM CARRIED MARA OVER THE THRESHOLD, THEY BEGAN CULTIVATING THEIR NEW LIFE TOGETHER.

CONSUMMATING THEIR MARRIAGE OVER AND OVER AGAIN UNTIL NEW LIFE BLOSSOMED IN MARA'S BELLY.





THE THREE
OF THEM A
NEW CROP.



AFTER...

MARA, BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE BY THEIR THREAT OF SACRIFICE, RESURRECTED HER GARDEN, IGNITING A JOY IN JOSHUA TO SEE HIS MOTHER LIVING AGAIN.



BLESS YOU, MRS. HIGHTOWER, FOR ALL THAT YOU'RE DOING FOR THOSE WHO CAN NO LONGER WORK THE MINES.



WE WILL BE WITH YOU IN BODY AND SPIRIT, WHEN YOU FACE THE COUNCIL TOMORROW.



AFTER EACH FAILED ATTEMPT TO BRING BACK THE SUN, THE HIGHTOWERS WERE SUMMONED.



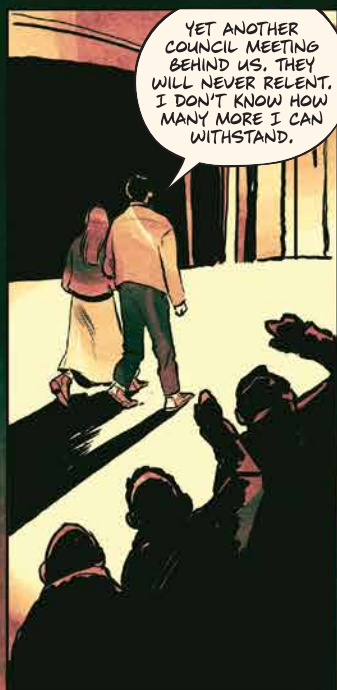
AND IN LIGHT OF THIS MOST RECENT DEFEAT, YOU ARE ONCE AGAIN REMINDED THAT THE PROMISE OF SACRIFICE STILL HOLDS. ANY ATTEMPT TO--

COUNCILMEMBERS! HEAR ME NOW, AS IT APPEARS YOU HAVE YET TO HEAR ME DESPITE THESE REPEATED SUMMONINGS.



NO HIGHTOWER BLOOD WILL BE SPILLED FOR YOUR FAILED UNDERTAKINGS!





YET ANOTHER COUNCIL MEETING BEHIND US. THEY WILL NEVER RELENT. I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY MORE I CAN WITHSTAND.



WHY DO THEY CONTINUE TO SUMMON YOU AFTER EACH OF THEIR FAILURES?

TO REMIND US OF THE BLOOD THEY WANT TO DRAW FROM US.



AS LONG AS I'M LIVING, THAT WILL NEVER HAPPEN.

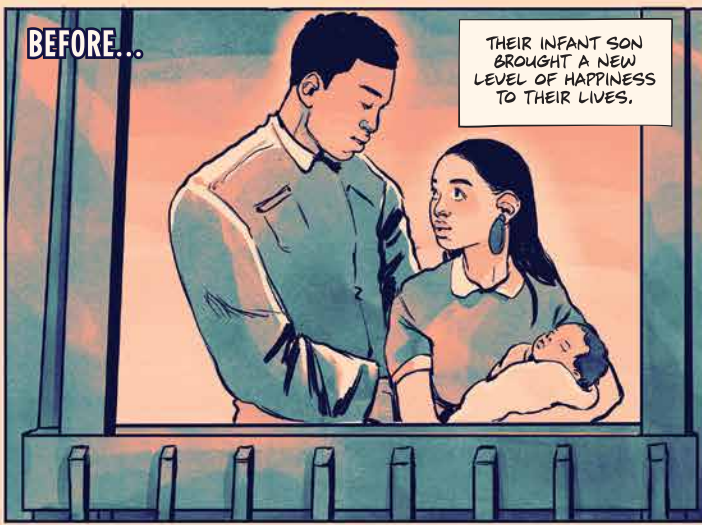


ESPECIALLY BECAUSE...



...WHO ELSE WILL BAKE THESE BISCUITS FOR YOU?

MOM!





YOU CANNOT
TELL ANYONE
OF THIS PLACE,
JOSHUA.



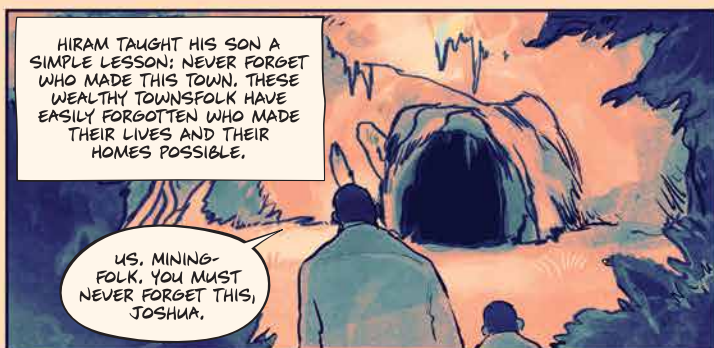
IT IS
OURS.



C'MON.



IT IS A PLACE WHERE
I WILL TEACH YOU
HOW TO UNCOVER
TREASURES.

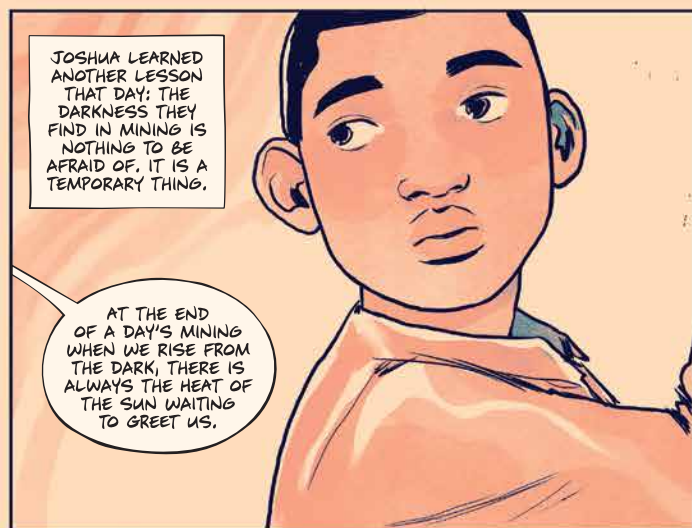


HIRAM TAUGHT HIS SON A
SIMPLE LESSON: NEVER FORGET
WHO MADE THIS TOWN. THESE
WEALTHY TOWNSFOLK HAVE
EASILY FORGOTTEN WHO MADE
THEIR LIVES AND THEIR
HOMES POSSIBLE.

US, MINING-
FOLK. YOU MUST
NEVER FORGET THIS,
JOSHUA.



MY HANDS, MY
FATHER'S HANDS AND
HIS FATHER'S HANDS
BEFORE HIM HAVE ALL
BEEN MINER'S HANDS
AND YOURS TOO, SON,
WILL BE THE HANDS
OF A MINER.



JOSHUA LEARNED
ANOTHER LESSON
THAT DAY: THE
DARKNESS THEY
FIND IN MINING IS
NOTHING TO BE
AFRAID OF. IT IS A
TEMPORARY THING.

AT THE END
OF A DAY'S MINING
WHEN WE RISE FROM
THE DARK, THERE IS
ALWAYS THE HEAT OF
THE SUN WAITING
TO GREET US.



REMEMBER
SON, MINING IS
DISCOVERY. IT IS
FINDING WHAT IS
WAITING TO BE FOUND.
WE ARE SEARCHERS.
WE ARE FINDERS. WE
BRING FORTH FRUIT
FROM THE
EARTH.

AFTER...

ANOTHER BRUTAL
SUMMONING FINALLY
TAKES ITS TOLL ON
JOSHUA.

JOSHUA!
WAIT!



GO TO
HIM.

SHE KNEW THE
SPECIAL PLACE
HE'D SHARED WITH
ONLY HER...



...AND HEADED
STRAIGHT FOR IT.



THERE HE WAS, IN THE
HIDDEN CAVE WHERE HE
MOST FELT HIS FATHER'S
PRESENCE.

JOSHUA?



CLAIRE HELD
HIM AS HE
BROKE ALL THE
WAY DOWN...



...RELEASING HIS
SADNESS FROM THE
MANY YEARS OF BEARING
THE BRUNT OF HIS
FATHER'S ACT.



ONE YEAR LATER THE CORONA COUNCIL SUMMONED THE HIGHTOWERS AGAIN.





DON'T YOU DO THIS, JOSHUA HIGHTOWER!

NOBODY SPEAKS UNLESS CALLED UPON! I DEMAND SILENCE! YOU'VE ALL BEEN WARNED!



STOP THIS, NOW. THE SPILLING OF HIGHTOWER BLOOD WILL NOT BRING BACK THE SUN AND IT IS ABSURD THAT ANYONE IN THIS TOWN THINKS IT MIGHT.

CLAIRE'S VOICE RANG OUT IN THE CHAMBER FOR THE TWO PEOPLE WHO HAD BECOME A SECOND FAMILY TO HER.



ENOUGH. LEAVE THESE CHAMBERS. NOW.



NEVER CALL US BACK HERE AGAIN.





AFTER...

WITH AN EMBEDDED NEED TO BRING BACK THE SUN, JOSHUA AND CLAIRE FOUND THEMSELVES ON THE PATH OF SCIENCE.

...THERE WERE SO MANY OFFSHOOTS, I ALMOST LOST TRACK.

AS SOON AS YOU DREW BLOOD AND THE CORONA COUNCIL HALTED IT, IT WAS AS IF OTHERS HAD TO PICK UP THE TORCH.

I THINK THE NUMBER OF OFFSHOOTS HIT FOURTEEN IN THE FOUR YEARS SINCE THAT LAST CONVENING.

DID YOU HEAR THE AURORA COUNCIL SHUT DOWN?

THAT LEAVES JUST SEVEN COUNCILS. I HEAR THE CELESTIAL WILL BE THE NEXT TO FOLD.

AS TIME WENT ON, THE STUDY OF ASTRONOMY BECAME A WAY FOR JOSHUA TO FIND HIS FATHER, AND CLAIRE NURTURED THAT UNSPOKEN NEED.

WHEN WILL THEY BEGIN TO EMBRACE THIS NEW WORLD AS WE HAVE? ONLY AN ANGRY FEW ARE UNWILLING TO LIVE IN THIS NEW WORLD, AS IF THEIR ANGER MIGHT MAKE THIS WORLD WHAT IT ONCE WAS.

IT'S THE ELDERS, THE ONES THAT LIVED THE LONGEST UNDER ITS LIGHT. THE REST OF US HAVE ADAPTED. WHAT OTHER CHOICE IS THERE?

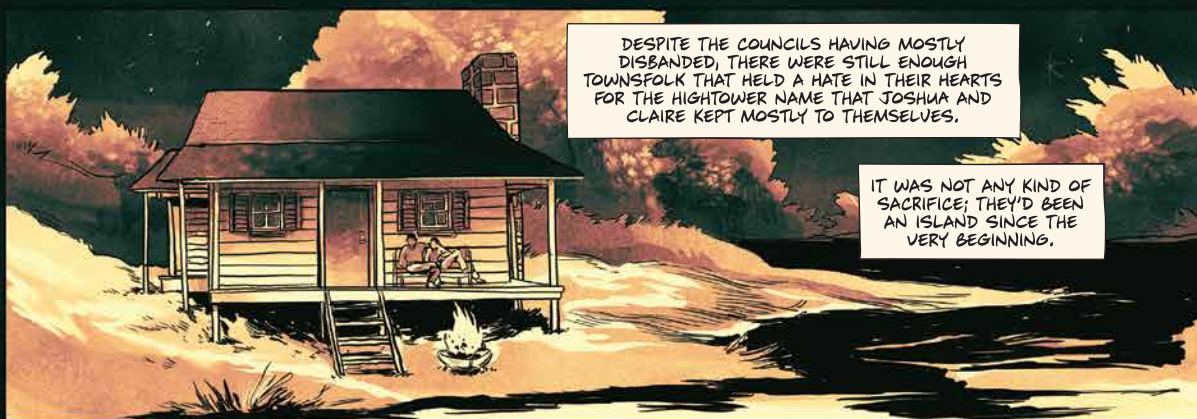
WE WILL FIND A WAY TO THE STARS. TO OTHER PLANETS. WE WILL BECOME FOUNDERS OF NEW LIGHT... NEW WARMTH.







JOSHUA AND CLAIRE MARRIED
ON THE LAWN OUTSIDE OF THE
OBSERVATORY, EXCHANGING
PROMISES MADE LONG AGO
YET NEVER SPOKEN ALOUD.

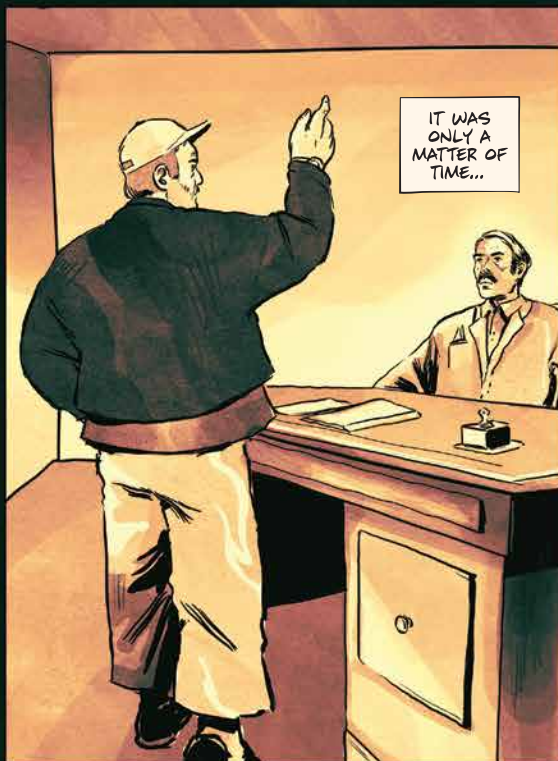


DESPITE THE COUNCILS HAVING MOSTLY DISBANDED, THERE WERE STILL ENOUGH TOWNSFOLK THAT HELD A HATE IN THEIR HEARTS FOR THE HIGHTOWER NAME THAT JOSHUA AND CLAIRE KEPT MOSTLY TO THEMSELVES.

IT WAS NOT ANY KIND OF SACRIFICE; THEY'D BEEN AN ISLAND SINCE THE VERY BEGINNING.



WHEN JOSHUA BEGAN THE TEST FLIGHTS OF HIS ENHANCED AIR MACHINE, HE TRIED TO KEEP IT SECRET, KNOWING THE UPROAR IF WORD GOT OUT THAT ANOTHER HIGHTOWER WAS MAKING HIS WAY INTO THE SKY.



IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME...

... AND THE COUNCIL CONVENED ONCE MORE.

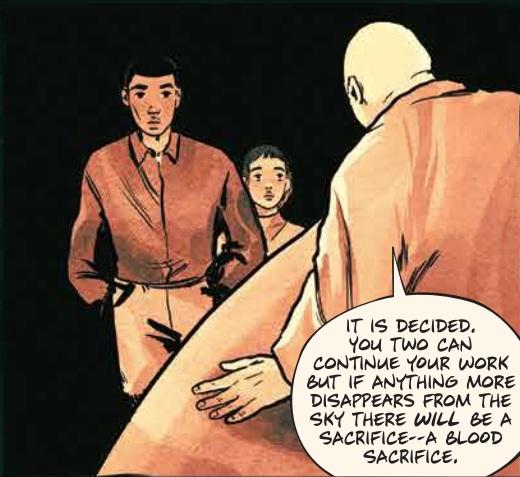


BUT WHAT HARM CAN COME? THE SUN IS ALREADY GONE. MY AIM IS TO FIND US A NEW LIGHT. WITH THE WORK MY WIFE AND I HAVE DONE, WE STRONGLY BELIEVE THERE IS A WAY!

THERE IS NO FAITH IN THE HIGHTOWER NAME. FOR ALL WE KNOW, WE COULD LOSE THE MOON IF YET ANOTHER HIGHTOWER TAKES TO THE SKY!

SENIOR COUNCIL MEMBER, ALL THE BRIGHTEST MINDS HAVE TRIED AND FAILED IN THIS ATTEMPT. WHAT HARM COULD COME TO LET THIS YOUNG MAN RUN A FOOL'S ERRAND?

IT IS TRUE WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HARM COULD COME, BUT WITH A HIGHTOWER AT THE REINS, IT COULD BE RUINATION!



IT IS DECIDED, YOU TWO CAN CONTINUE YOUR WORK BUT IF ANYTHING MORE DISAPPEARS FROM THE SKY THERE WILL BE A SACRIFICE--A BLOOD SACRIFICE.



BEAR, PLEASE DON'T WORRY. THE COUNCIL GAVE US PERMISSION TO CONTINUE OUR WORK. THIS SHOULD BE CELEBRATED.



CELEBRATED? THEY SAID THERE WILL BE A BLOOD SACRIFICE IF ANYTHING MORE DISAPPEARS FROM THE SKY!



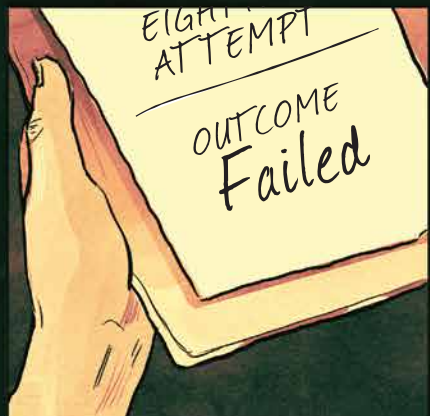
ALL THIS TIME WE'VE BEEN TRYING AND FAILING TO HAVE A FAMILY. WHAT IF WE FINALLY HAVE A BABY AND THEY...



NOBODY WILL TAKE OUR CHILD FROM US. OUR AIR MACHINE WILL NOT TAKE ANYTHING FROM THE SKY. THERE WILL BE NO REASON THEY WILL EVER JUSTIFY SUCH A THING.



NOW, ABOUT THAT BABY-MAKING. HOW ABOUT WE GIVE IT ANOTHER TRY RIGHT NOW?



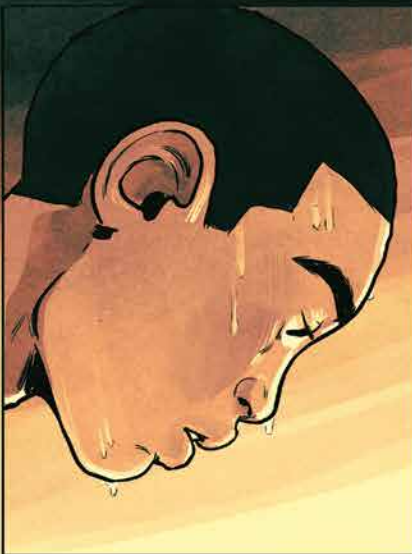




...AT HIS
FATHER'S
CAVE.

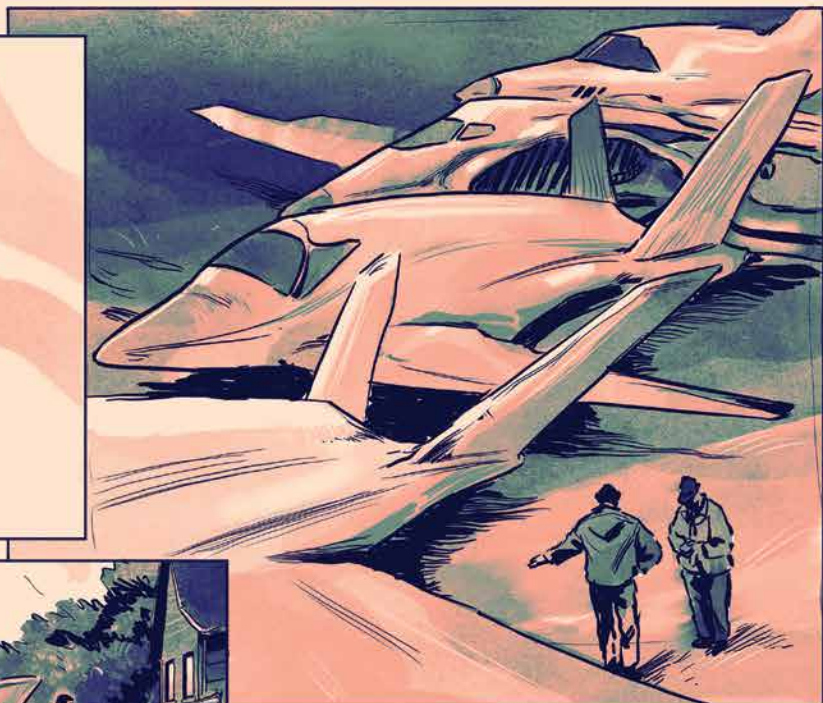


"MINERS BRING FORTH
FRUIT FROM THE EARTH,"
JOSHUA HEARD HIS
FATHER'S WORDS ECHO
IN HIS HEAD AND HIS
FEELING OF FAILURE
EXPLODED.



FLAREON?!

BEFORE...



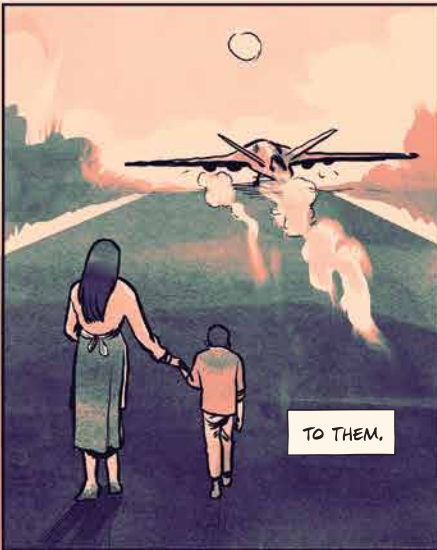


SHE THOUGHT THAT
MAYBE IF HE GOT
ALL THE WAY TO THE
SUN AND IT GAVE
HIM ITS HEAT, HIS
MINER'S HEART
WOULD BE REBORN.



SHE HOPED THAT IF
HE TOUCHED THE SUN
THE HIRAM SHE FELL
IN LOVE WITH...

... THE HIRAM WHOSE
MONSTROUS HANDS WERE
ROUGH AND GENTLE WITH
HER; WHOSE LAUGHTER ONCE
RANG THROUGH THEIR HOUSE,
WOULD COME BACK TO HER.



TO THEM.



RUMBLE



KROOOM



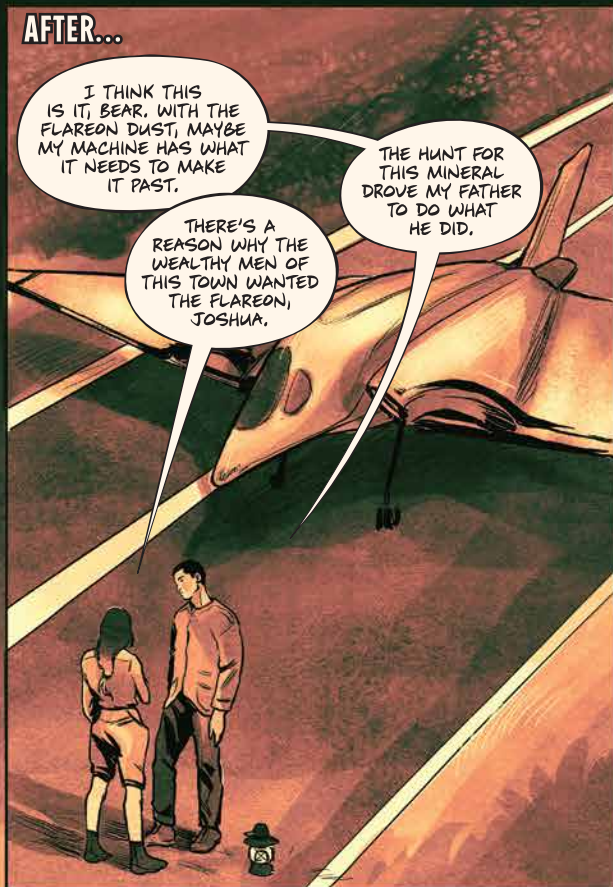
HE WOULD
NEVER COME
BACK.

AFTER...

I THINK THIS IS IT, BEAR. WITH THE FLAREON DUST, MAYBE MY MACHINE HAS WHAT IT NEEDS TO MAKE IT PAST.

THERE'S A REASON WHY THE WEALTHY MEN OF THIS TOWN WANTED THE FLAREON, JOSHUA.

THE HUNT FOR THIS MINERAL DROVE MY FATHER TO DO WHAT HE DID.



TODAY I USE IT TO UNDO THAT THING.



SHE WATCHED UNTIL NOTHING WAS LEFT.



IT WAS THEN SHE BEGAN TO WAIT AND PRAY...



...THAT WHAT HAPPENED IN THE PAST DOES NOT REPEAT.

RUMBLE





JOSHUA WASN'T ALONE IN USING FLAREON'S SIFT TO HELP SOLVE A PROBLEM.



BETWEEN THEIR WORK AND THEIR DAY-TO-DAY LIVING, THEY DID THEIR BEST TO CONTAIN THEIR JOY.



DAMN, BEAR! THIS WATER IS HOT!

I LIKE IT THAT WAY. IT HELPS ME REMEMBER THE SUN.



OKAY, NOW WHAT MAGICAL THING DO YOU NEED TO TELL ME THAT CAN ONLY BE DONE IN A BATHTUB?

WE HAVE A CHILD BETWEEN US.





WE MUST KEEP
THIS BETWEEN US FOR AS
LONG AS WE CAN. THERE ARE
MANY WHO WOULD BE FAST
TO TAKE THIS JOY FROM US.
I WANT IT TO BE JUST OURS
FOR AS LONG AS WE
ARE ABLE.



THEY KEPT TO THEMSELVES MORE
THAN THEY EVER HAD BEFORE,
ONLY VENTURING INTO TOWN WHEN
ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.



JOSHUA FOUND HIMSELF
DEVELOPING THE PROTECTIVE
GROWL OF A FATHER; BARING HIS
TEETH SHOULD ANYONE EVEN
LOOK AT HIS WIFE UNKINDLY.



JOSHUA HIRAM
HIGHTOWER! I'M
PREGNANT, NOT
PORCELAIN!



MARRYING A
HIGHTOWER WAS A BOLD
CHOICE AND WHAT YOU'VE
HAD TO ENDURE HAS NOT
BEEN EASY. I JUST WANT
THIS ONE THING FOR
YOU...FOR US...TO
BE EASY.

YOU'RE THE
EASIEST DECISION
I'VE EVER MADE
IN MY LIFE,
JOSHUA.



SHALL I
TAP OUT A TUNE
ON THE BOARDS
LIKE WHEN WE
WERE LITTLE?

DON'T
YOU DARE,
BEAR!



THE HIGHTOWER HATE
STILL SIMMERED, RIPE
WITH NEW RUMORS...

TIME TO
LET ME GO,
MR. HIGHTOWER.
THE AISLES IN THIS
SHOP ARE TOO
NARROW FOR US
TO BE WALKING
AS ONE.



...THAT REOPENED
DEEP WOUNDS.

WIFE
OF A SON
OF A SUN-
STEALER!



SHE'S
PREGNANT!
HOW DARE YOU!
HAVE WE NOT
SUFFERED
ENOUGH?!



JOSHUA,
LEAVE HIM
BE! I NEED
YOU!

YOU'RE OKAY,
BEAR. YOU AND
OUR CHILD ARE
GOING TO BE
FINE.



I'M SO
COLD.



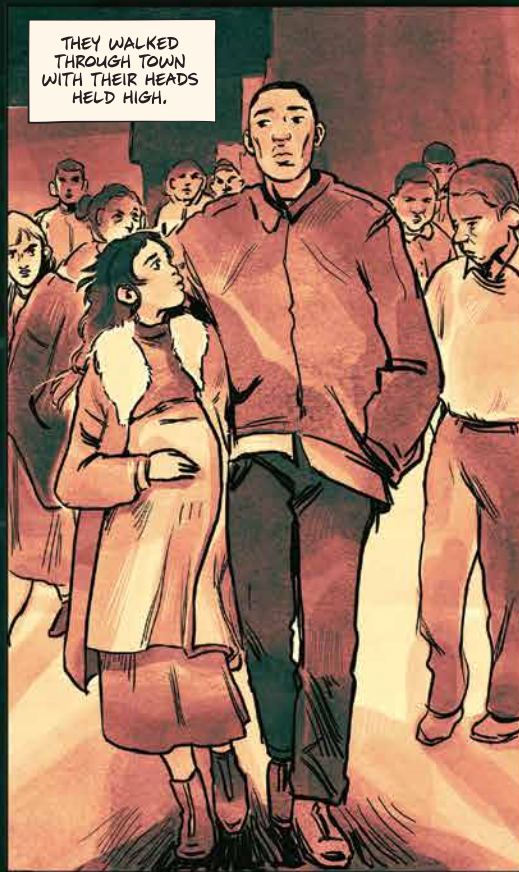
HELP HER,
DOCTOR.
PLEASE!



SEVERAL DAYS
LATER, CLAIRE WAS
WELL ENOUGH TO
GO HOME.



THEY WALKED
THROUGH TOWN
WITH THEIR HEADS
HELD HIGH.



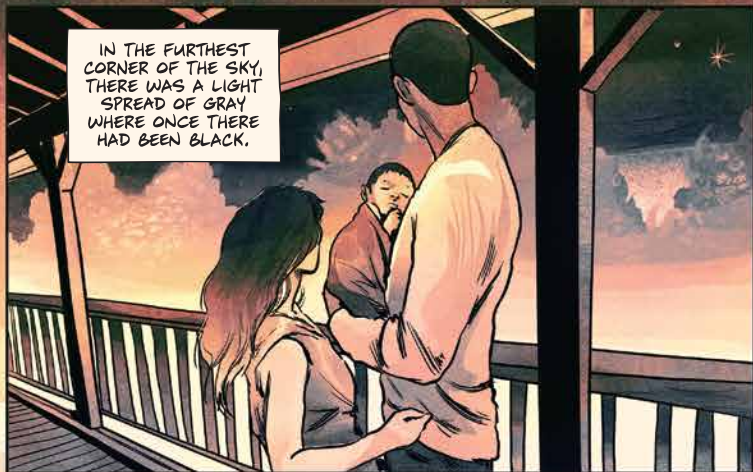


DESPITE EVERYTHING,
JOSHUA AND CLAIRE'S
DAUGHTER WAS BORN IN
THE BRIGHTEST SPACE
OF THE NIGHT...

...EARLY IN THE NEW
YEAR, IN THE VERY BED
SHE WAS CONCEIVED IN.



WELCOME,
DAWN EMMA
HIGHTOWER, MAY
SHE BRING A
WARM LIGHT.

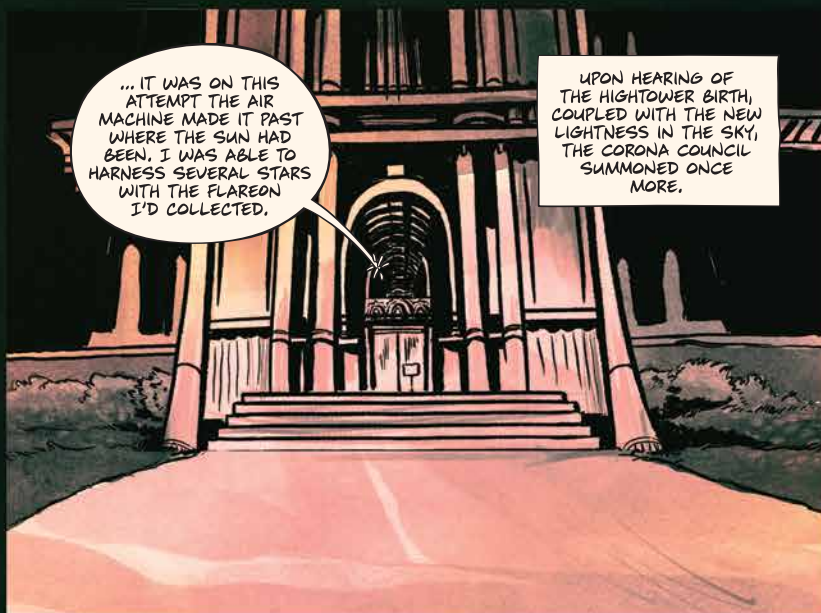


IN THE FURTHEST
CORNER OF THE SKY,
THERE WAS A LIGHT
SPREAD OF GRAY
WHERE ONCE THERE
HAD BEEN BLACK.



DO YOU SEE
THAT? ISN'T IT
STRANGE?

DOES IT
FEEL WARMER TO
YOU? I FEEL...
WARMER.



... IT WAS ON THIS ATTEMPT THE AIR MACHINE MADE IT PAST WHERE THE SUN HAD BEEN. I WAS ABLE TO HARNESS SEVERAL STARS WITH THE FLAREON I'D COLLECTED.

UPON HEARING OF THE HIGHTOWER BIRTH, COUPLED WITH THE NEW LIGHTNESS IN THE SKY, THE CORONA COUNCIL SUMMONED ONCE MORE.



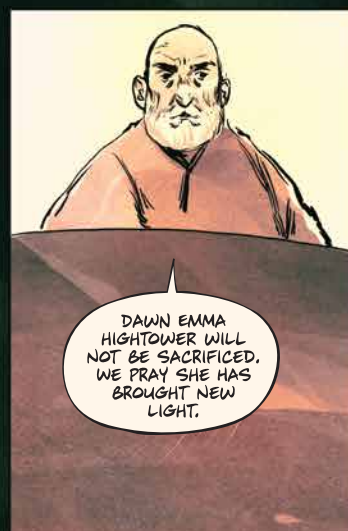
WE BELIEVE THAT ONCE THE FLAREON FUSES WITH THE STARS, THEIR GLOW WILL INTENSIFY WITH NOT JUST LIGHT, BUT HEAT.



IT IS NO COINCIDENCE THAT ON THE DAY MY DAUGHTER WAS BORN, A GRAY HAD APPEARED IN THE SKY'S BLACK.



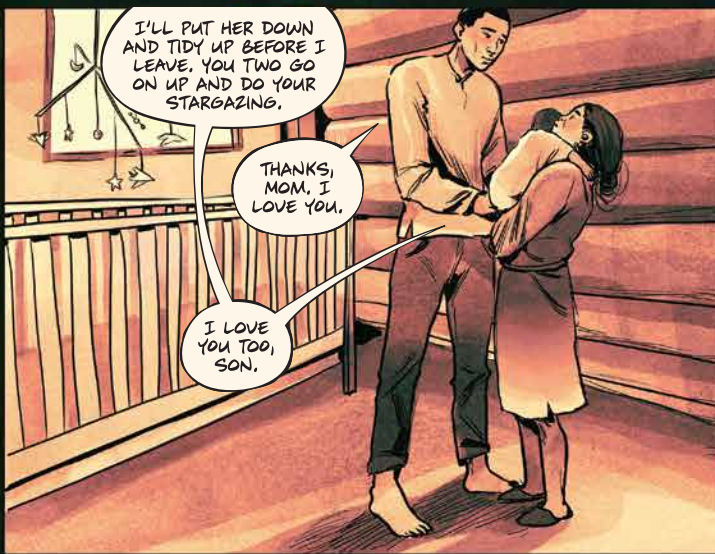
MY DAUGHTER IS THE NEW LIGHT. TO SACRIFICE HER WOULD CONDEMN ALL THE HOPE WE HAVE.



DAWN EAMMA HIGHTOWER WILL NOT BE SACRIFICED. WE PRAY SHE HAS BROUGHT NEW LIGHT.



WE COMMEND THE WORK HER FATHER HAS DONE AND MOVE TO HONOR THE HIGHTOWER NAME.



ONE YEAR LATER, THE SKY IS NO LONGER BLACK. DAYS WERE NO LONGER A CONSTANT COLD, NOR WERE THEY WARM.

UROOM!
UROOMOOM!

WHAT'S THAT,
DAWN? IS THAT
DADDY?

THE GAS LAMPS THAT HAD BURNED BOTH DAY AND NIGHT, NOW ONLY BURNED AT NIGHT. THE MINERS THAT HAD ONCE MANNED THEM, WENT BACK TO MINING FOR FLAREON; THIS TIME ON THEIR OWN TERMS.

MINERS NOW BARTERED THE FLAREON AND OTHER MINERALS AND STONES FOR THEIR PROFIT, NOT JUST THE WEALTHY MINE OWNERS.

MOST OF THE FLAREON WAS USED FOR JOSHUA'S FLEET OF ENHANCED AIR MACHINES, TAKING IT INTO SPACE, HARNESSING IT TO THE STARS.



BRINGING A NEW
LIGHT BACK INTO
THE WORLD.



THE END

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Roxane Gay's writing appears in *Best American Nonrequired Reading 2018*, *Best American Mystery Stories 2014*, *Best American Short Stories 2012*, *Best Sex Writing 2012*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *A Public Space*, *McSweeney's*, *Tin House*, *Oxford American*, *American Short Fiction*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, and many others. She is a contributing opinion writer for *The New York Times*. She is the author of the books *Ayiti*, *An Untamed State*, the *New York Times* best-selling *Bad Feminist*, the nationally best-selling *Difficult Women* and *New York Times* bestselling *Hunger: A Memoir of My Body*. She is also the author of *World of Wakanda* for Marvel and the editor of *Best American Short Stories 2018*. She is currently at work on film and television projects, a book of writing advice, an essay collection about television and culture, and a YA novel entitled *The Year I Learned Everything*. In 2018, she won a Guggenheim fellowship.

Tracy Lynne Oliver is a writer based in Los Angeles. She has been published online at a variety of places such as Medium, Fanzine and Occulum. Her story, "This Weekend" was chosen to be in *Best Microfiction 2019*. This is her first graphic novel adaptation.

Rebecca Kirby is a comic artist and illustrator based out of Philadelphia best known for her original comics, *Biopsy* and *Cramps*, which have been featured on Vice, and *Waves*, featured in *Fantagraphics' Now: The New Comics Anthology #4*.

*“When I was a young girl,
my husband’s father flew an
air machine into the sun. Since then,
the days have been dark, the nights bright.”*

Follow the journey of two young adults, Joshua and Claire, each individually shaped by the day the sky went dark, but drawn to each other because of it. Coming of age in this new landscape, they will be forced to confront and challenge notions of identity, guilt, and survival as the darkness grows around them. When fear threatens to envelop all hope they have left, the two discover that love, family, and finding the true light in a world seemingly robbed of any, will guide their way forward.

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