

Taproot

A STORY ABOUT A GARDENER AND A GHOST

Keezy Young



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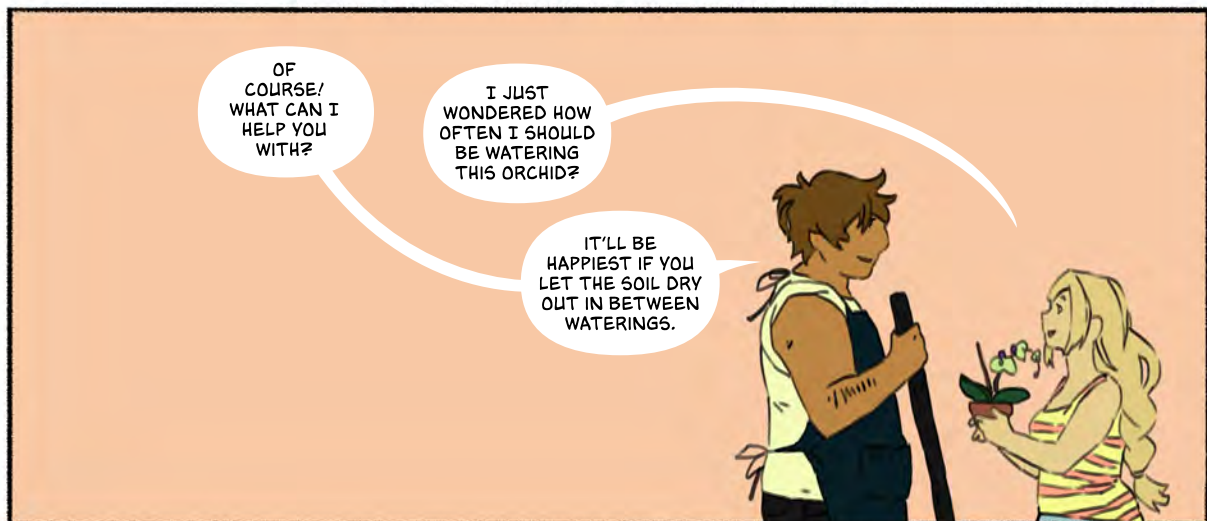
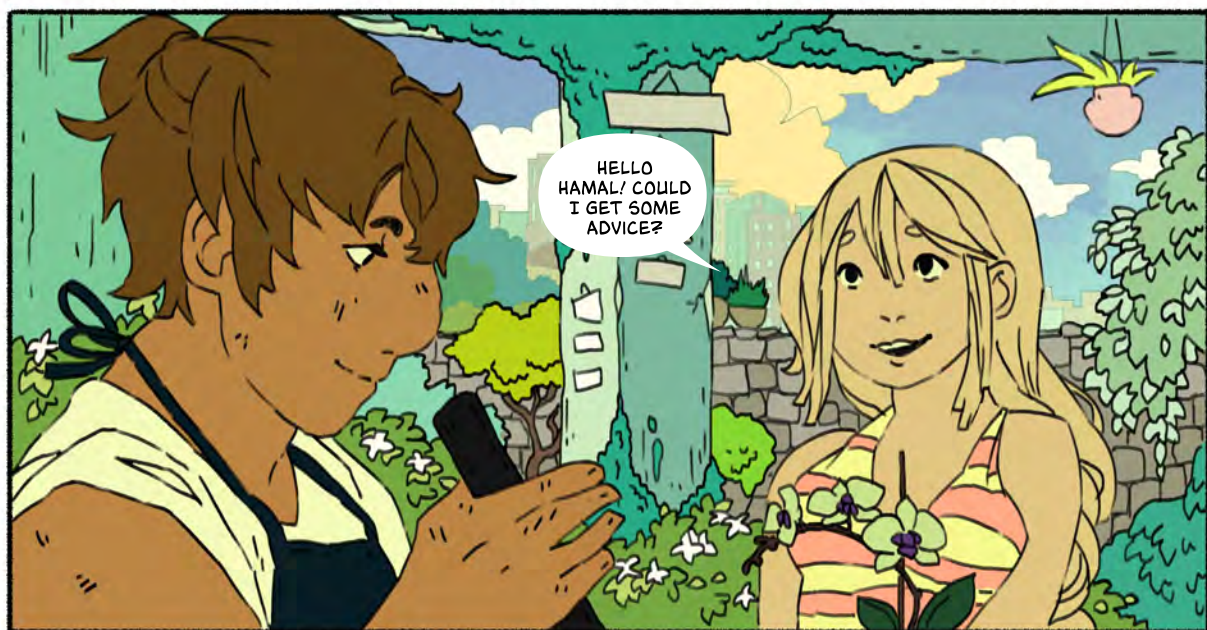




A STORY ABOUT A GARDENER AND A GHOST

Keezy Young







NORMALLY
THEY GROW ON
TREES, SO EVEN THOUGH
THEY LIKE HUMIDITY,
TOO MUCH WATER
ISN'T GOOD FOR
THEM.



OH,
REALLY?
THANK YOU
SO MUCH!

ANY
TIME, MA'AM!
IF YOU HAVE ANY
PROBLEMS, BE SURE
TO COME BACK
AND LET US
KNOW.



heh
heh
heh

Hee
hee





SHE'S
BEEN COMING
IN A LOT
LATELY.

SHE
THINKS YOU'RE
CUTE!



HEY YOU,
DON'T MESS UP
MR. TAKASHI'S FLOWER
ARRANGEMENTS
AGAIN!

I WON'T.

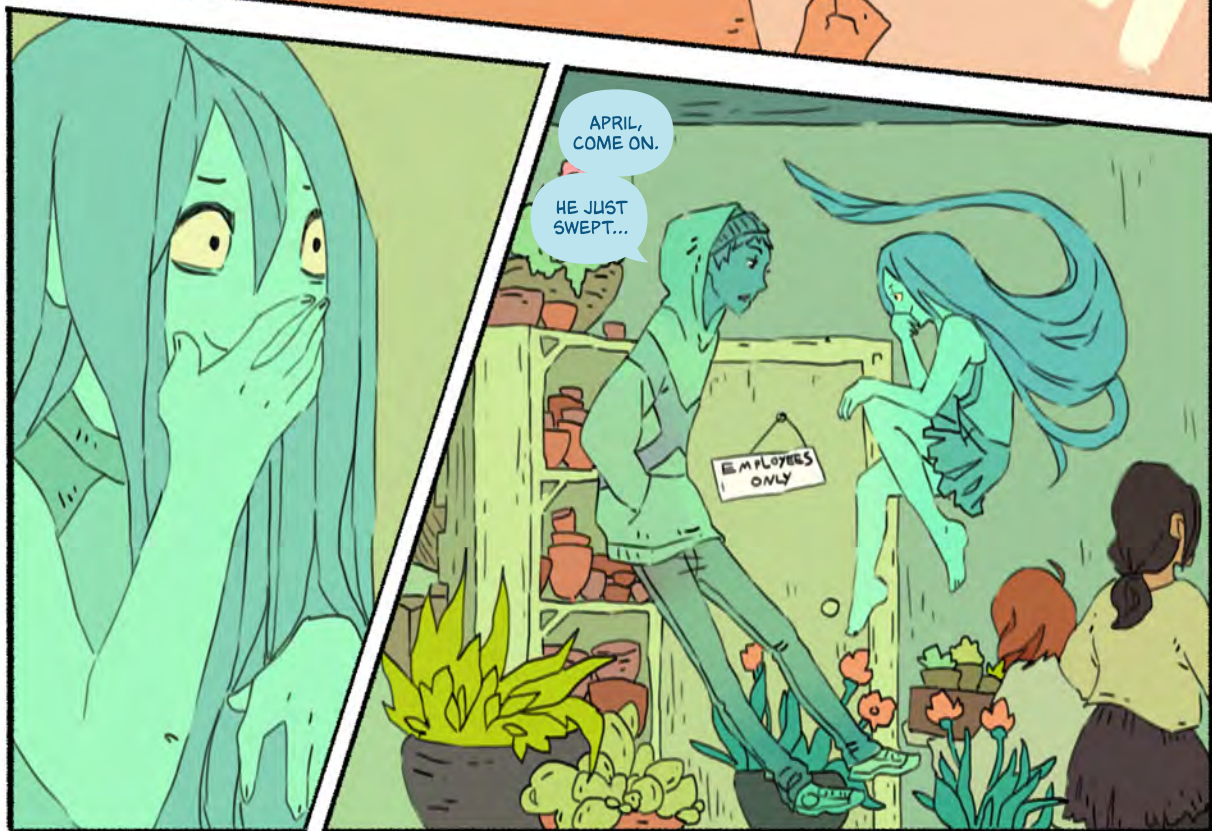
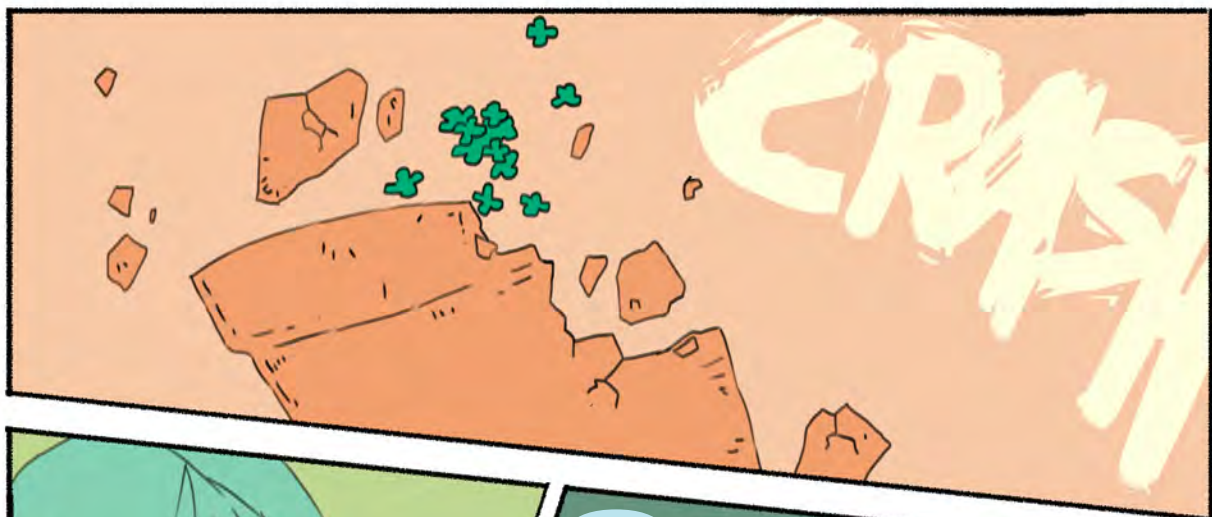


SHE
DOES THINK
YOU'RE CUTE,
YOU KNOW?

YEAH.

YOU
DON'T HAVE
TO SOUND
SO FORLORN
ABOUT IT.









DOES
SHE *ALWAYS*
HAVE TO MAKE
MY LIFE
HARDER?



SHE'S
AN INVISIBLE
TEENAGER.

TRUST ME,
I WOULD'VE
BEEN WAY
WORSE.

THAT
WOULD
EXPLAIN WHY
YOU GET ALONG
WITH HER SO
WELL.

JUST THANK
WHOEVER'S IN
CHARGE THAT I
DIDN'T DIE WHEN
I WAS 15.

I'M
COUNTING MY
BLESSINGS
NOW.



YOU WERE
PROBABLY AN
ANGEL WHEN
YOU WERE
A KID.



NO
WAY.

ON A
NORMAL DAY
I'D BE CRYING ON
THE KITCHEN FLOOR,
EATING MY WAY
THROUGH THREE
BOXES OF
CEREAL.



THAT'S
CUTE.

NOT
REALLY,
NO.



HM...

WHAT?



I
FEEL A
LITTLE...



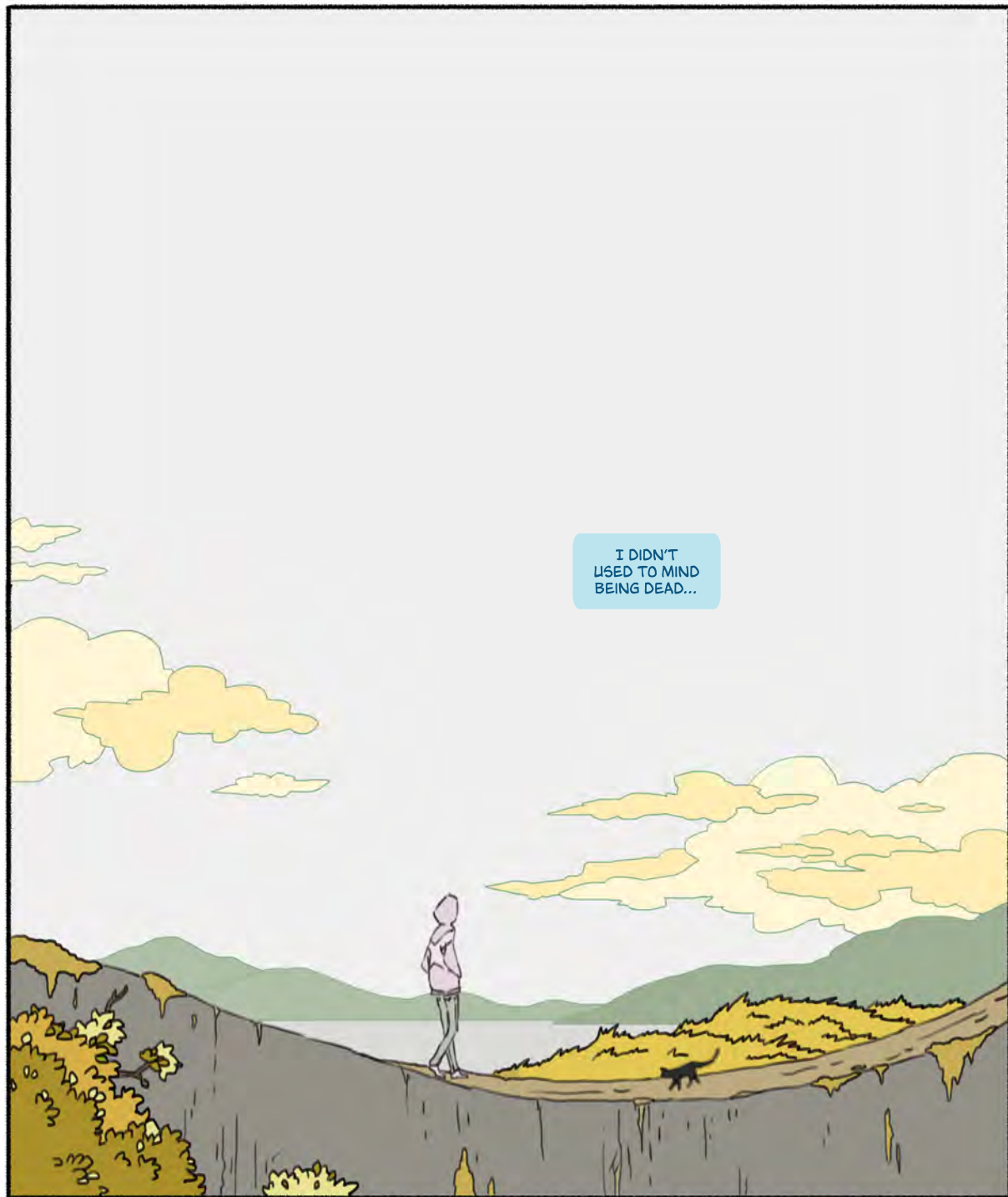




STRANGE...

ONE YEAR EARLIER.





I DIDN'T
USED TO MIND
BEING DEAD...



IT WAS A
LITTLE LONELY,
SURE.



YOU WATCH
THE WORLD
PASS BY...



...BUT YOU'RE NOT
A PART OF IT.





BUT THEN I
MET HAMAL.

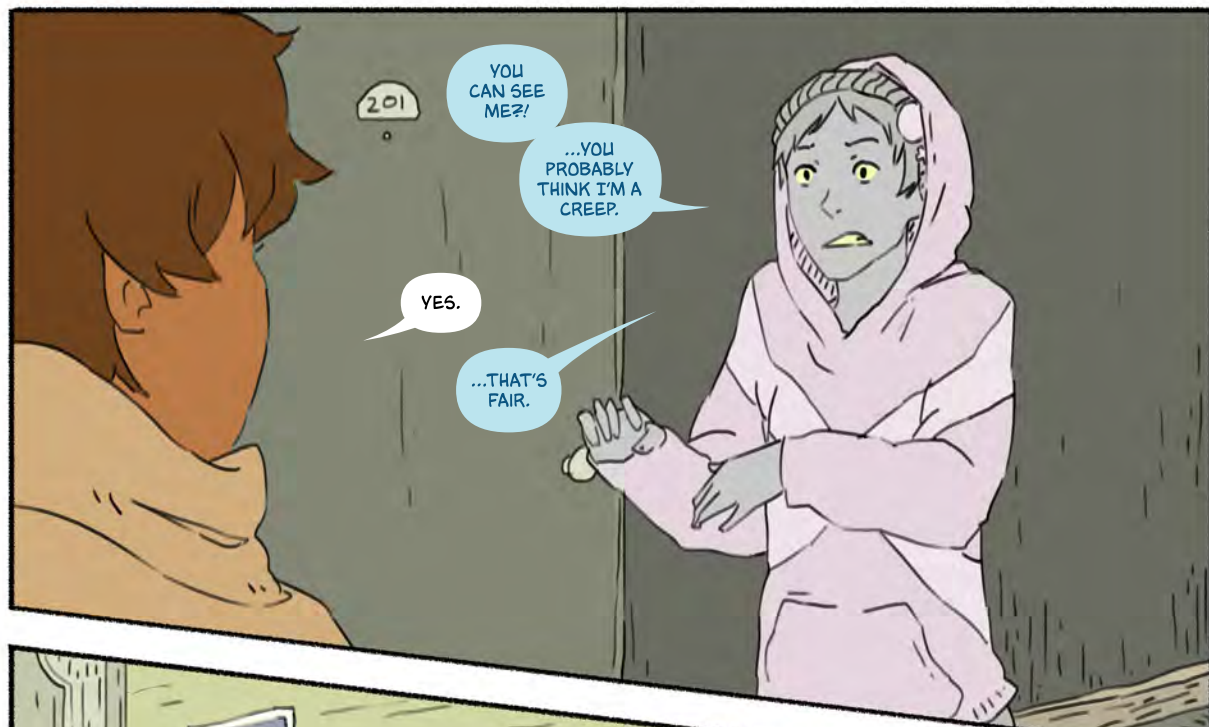
1-2 bedrooms

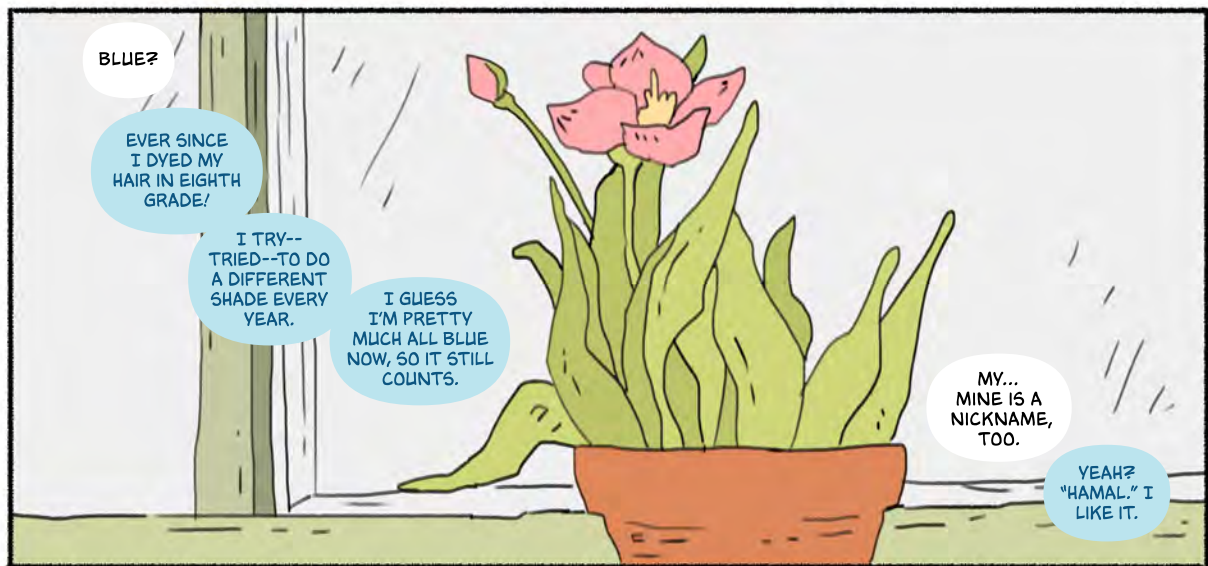
cheap!!

29
MRS.













HEY
HAMAL,
WAIT
UP.

BLUE,
SHE'S...SHE'S
DEAD.

EXACTLY!
WE SHOULD
HELP.

IT'S
PRETTY SCARY
AT FIRST, YOU
KNOW?



WHAT
CAN WE DO,
THOUGH?



HEY, IT'LL
BE OKAY,
KIDDO.

EVERYBODY
JUST IGNORES
ME, EVEN
MOMMY.

I KNOW
IT'S LONELY BUT
YOU CAN HANG OUT
WITH US! YOU'RE
NOT ALONE
ANYMORE.





BUT REALLY ALL
MOST OF US WANT
IS SOMEBODY
TO LISTEN.



IT HELPS
US...LET GO, IN
THE END.



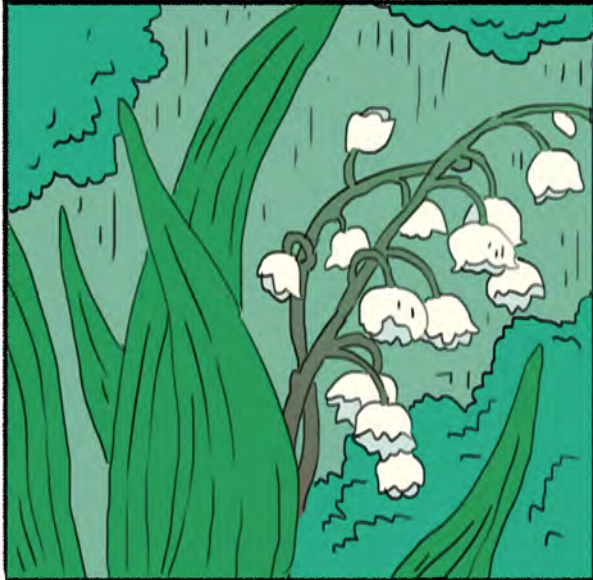
THE
CLEMATIS IS
COMING ALONG
NICELY, GOOD
JOB, HAMAL.

YOU'RE A
WEIRD KID, BUT
IF YOU KEEP THIS UP
I MIGHT BE ABLE
TO FINALLY
RETIRE.



I'VE
BEEN SINGING
TO IT AFTER
HOURS.

THE THING
IS...





NOW.













MAYBE
WE'RE JUST
BEING PUNISHED
FOR STICKING
AROUND TOO
LONG.

MAYBE
IT'S LIKE A
REMINDER.



MAYBE,
BUT ALL
OF YOU AT
ONCE?

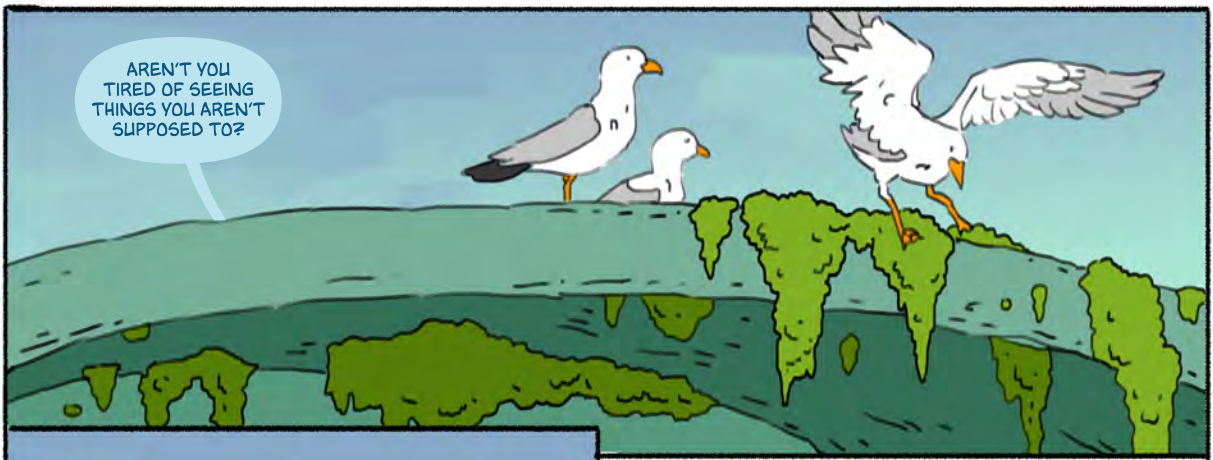
IT IS
PRETTY
WEIRD.

AND EVEN
THE ONES WHO
HAVE BEEN AROUND
THE LONGEST
DON'T REMEMBER
ANYTHING ABOUT
A FOREST.



I WISH
I COULD
SEE IT.

I'M AFRAID
YOU'LL ALL
DISAPPEAR.



AREN'T YOU
TIRED OF SEEING
THINGS YOU AREN'T
SUPPOSED TO?



IT'S
NOT THAT
BAD.

NOW THAT
I'M USED TO IT,
I CAN'T IMAGINE
LIFE WITHOUT
YOU...



cough
cough

I
MEAN
ALL OF
YOU...

...GHOSTS...

...THAT
IS.





BLUE, FOR
THE LAST TIME,
STOP TRYING
TO PAIR ME OFF
WITH CHLOE!



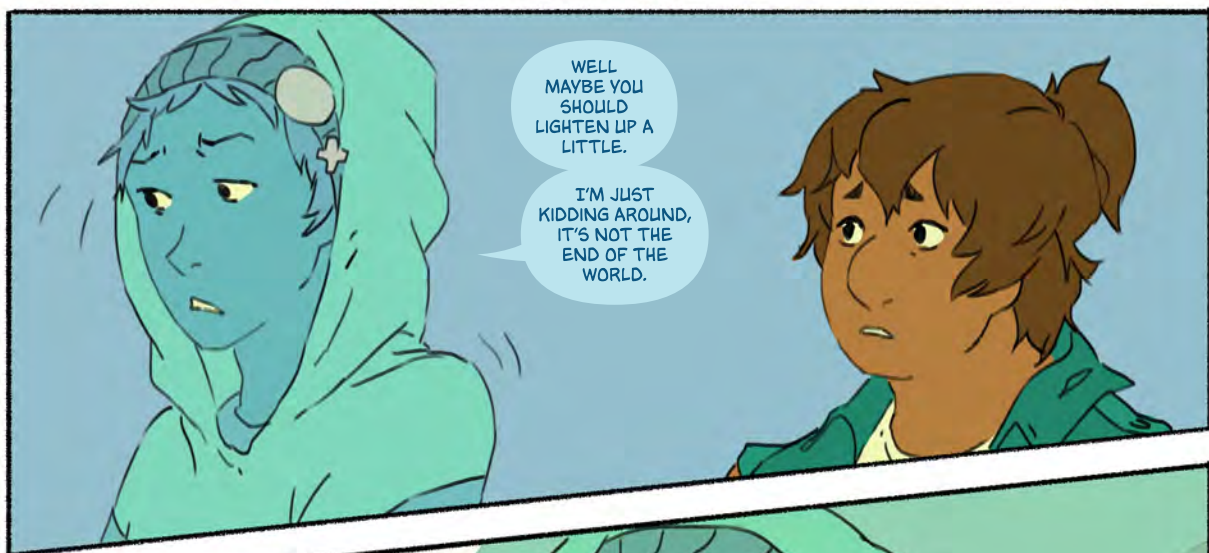
AND
STOP--STOP
TALKING ABOUT
HER BOOBS,
IT'S REALLY
RUDE.

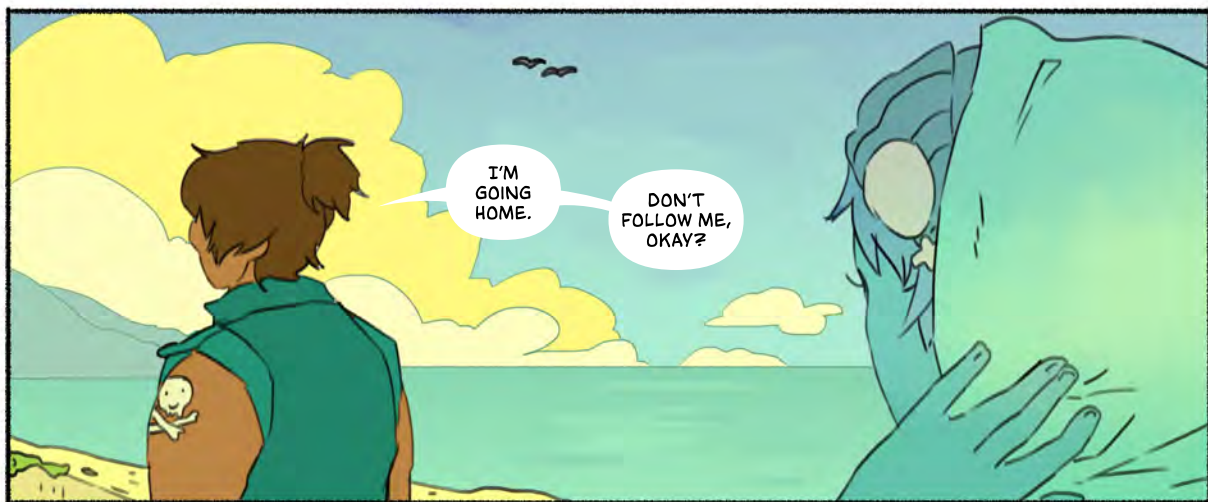
JEEZ,
CHILL.

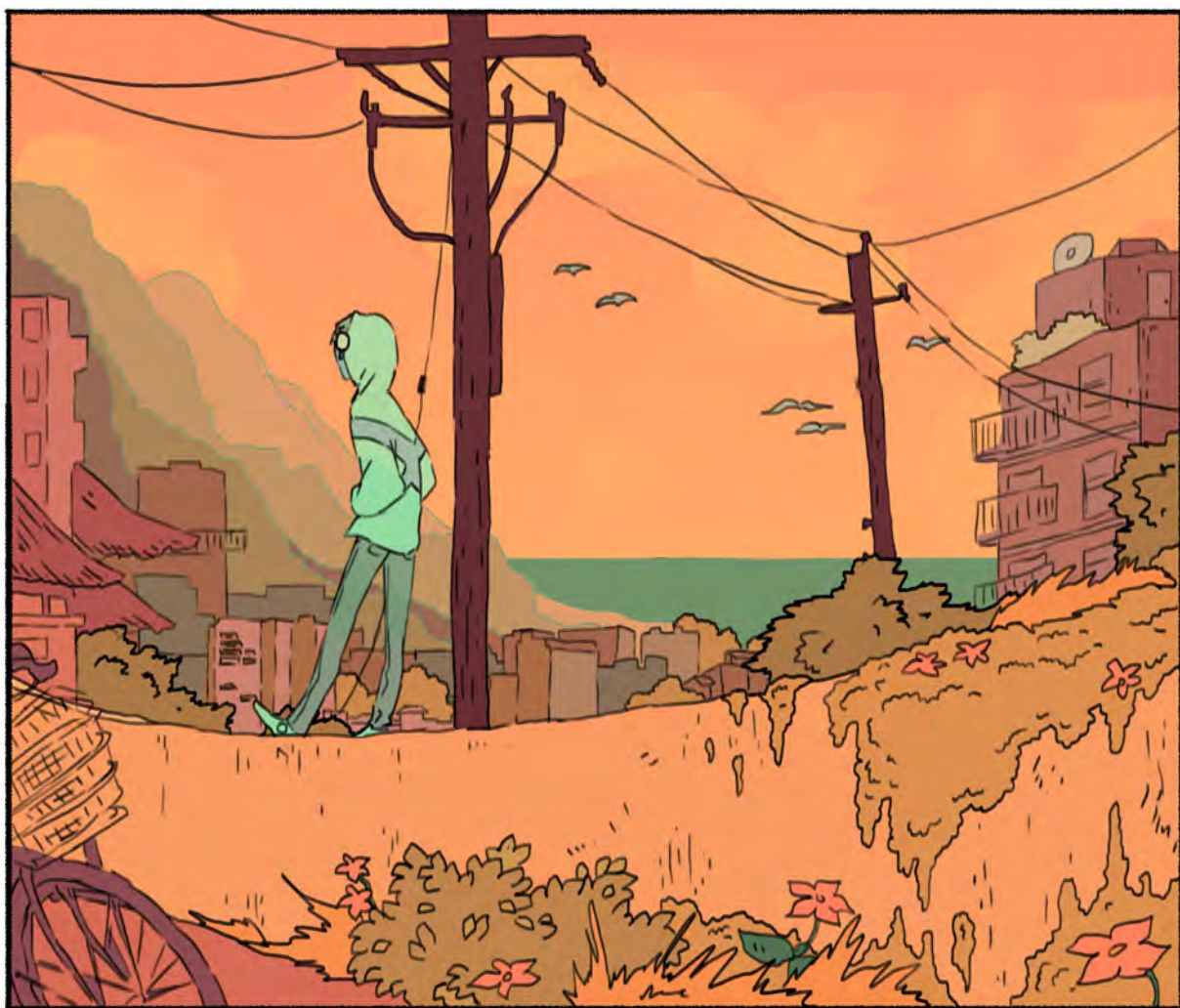
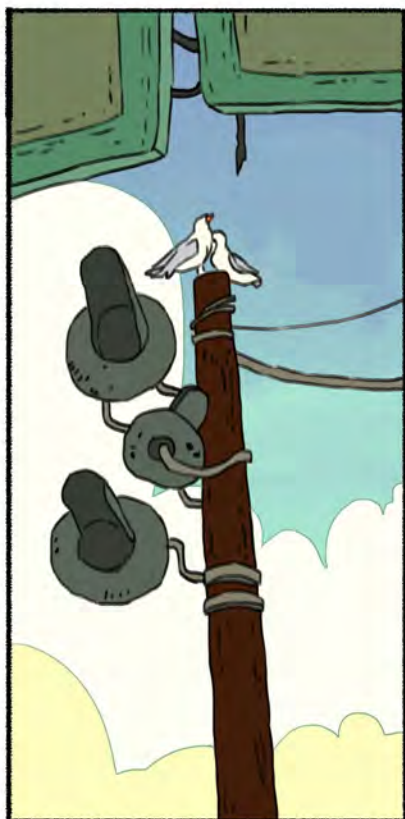
I
THOUGHT
YOU LIKED
BOOBS.

I DO!

THAT'S
NOT THE
POINT!













CREEPY.





!!!



NO
HELLO?

THAT'S
PRETTY
RUDE,
GHOSTIE.

TRY "HI, I
SEEM TO BE LOST.
YOU'RE A POWERFUL
OTHERWORLDLY BEING,
CAN I GET SOME
DIRECTIONS?"



YOU'RE
A REAPER...



GOOD
CALL.



ARE YOU THE
REASON WE KEEP
GETTING PULLED
IN HERE?

IF
ONLY.

I HAVE
NO USE FOR
IN-BETWEENERS,
YOU KNOW
THAT.



NO,
I'M ONLY
INTERESTED IN
YOU BECAUSE
YOU HAVE
SOMETHING
I NEED.

WELL,
ALL OF YOU
GHOSTIES IN
THE AREA, BUT
ESPECIALLY
YOU.

THERE'S
ILLEGAL
NECROMANCY
IN THE AIR, AND
YOU'RE AT THE
EPICENTER.

ILLEGAL
NECROMANCY...?



UNLICENSED,
UNDOCUMENTED.

SOMEBODY
LIVING.

SOMEBODY
WHO CAN SEE
YOU.

I DON'T
SUPPOSE YOU
COULD HELP
A REAPER
OUT?











I REALLY
REALLY HATE
THIS PLACE.



I'LL
FIND THE
NECROMANCER
WITH OR
WITHOUT YOU,
GHOSTIE.

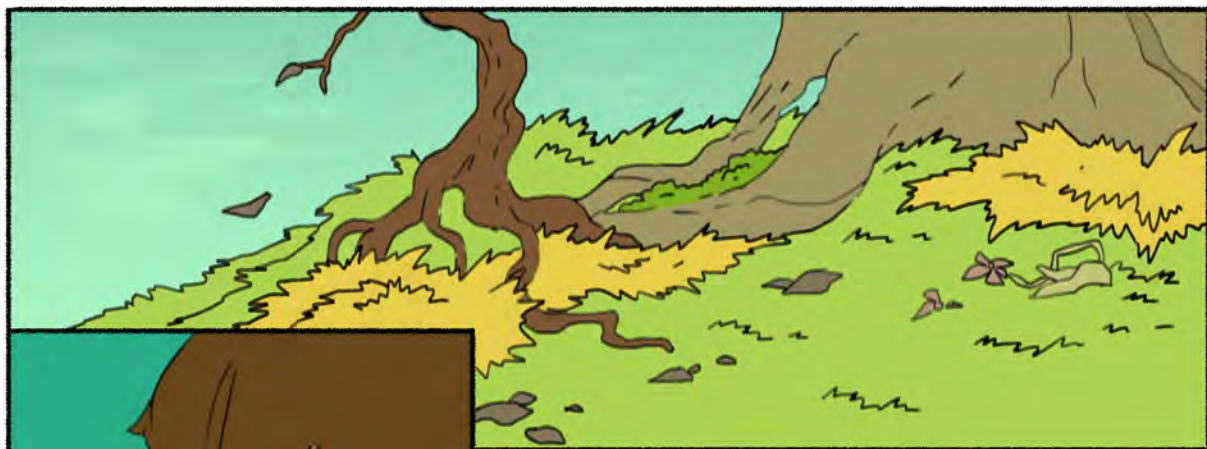
BUT I
THINK YOU
MIGHT STILL BE
USEFUL TO ME,
SO I'LL LET
YOU GO.

















I WAS
SCARED THE
FOREST GOT
YOU.

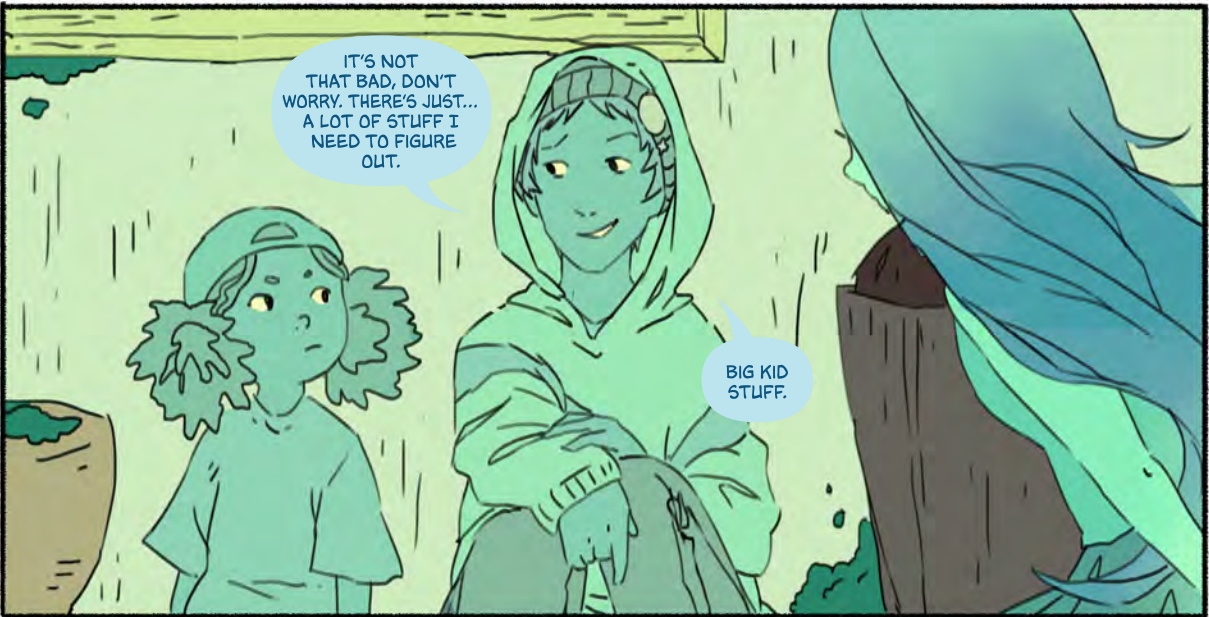
NAH, JUST
MY STUBBORN
PERSONALITY.



WHAT'S
THAT FACE
FOR?

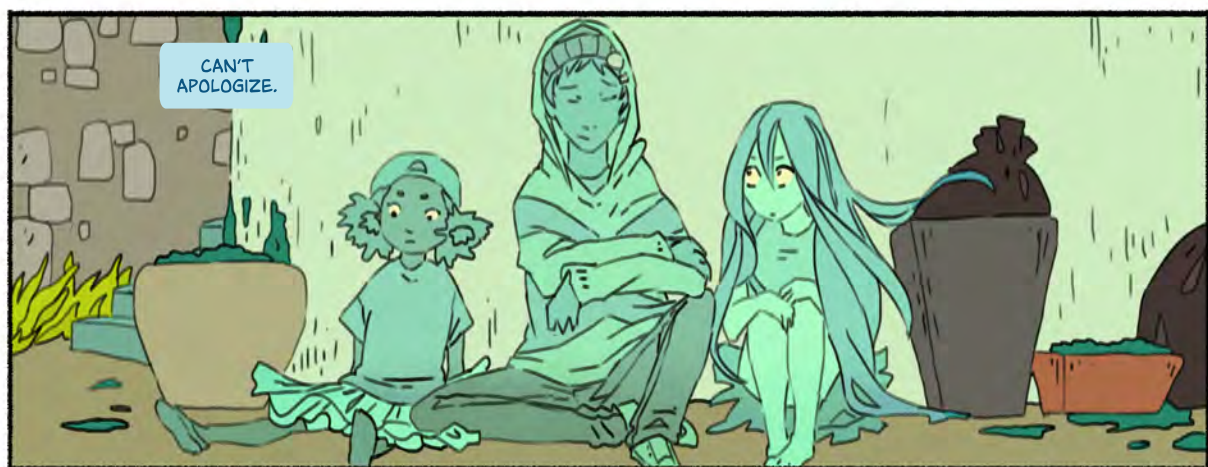


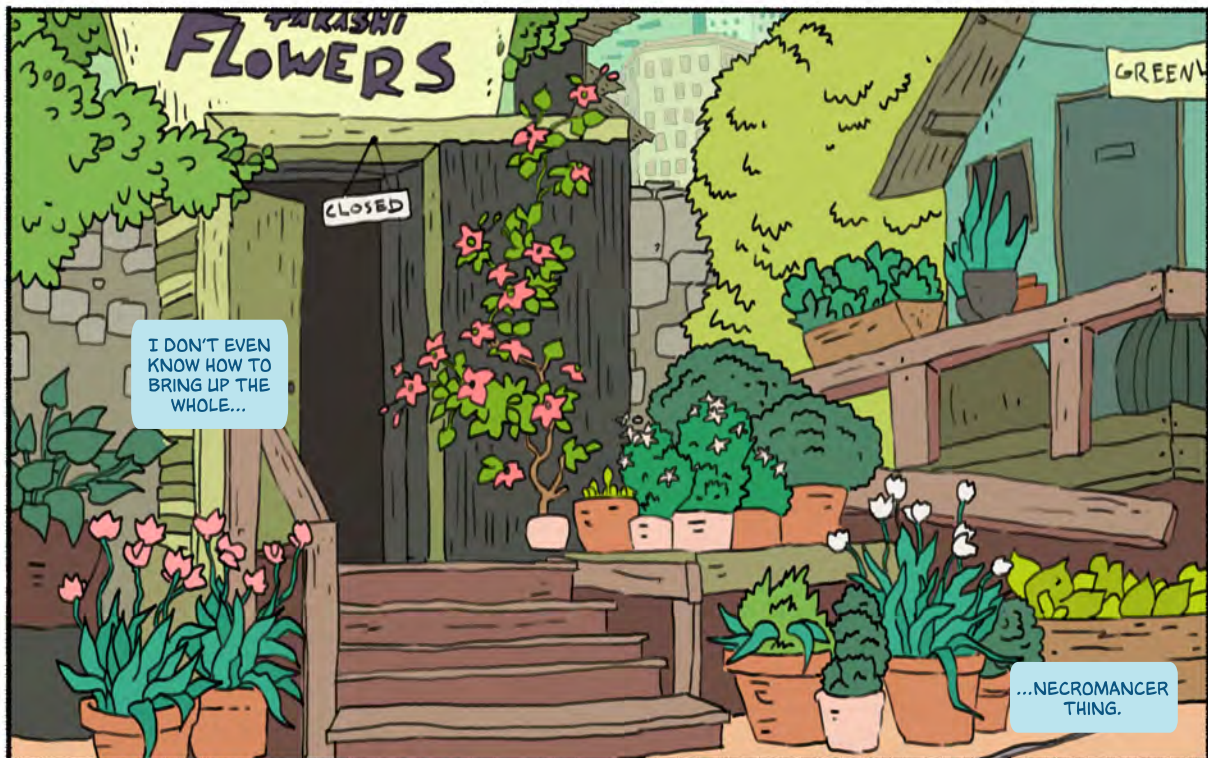
EVERYBODY
SAYS YOU AND
HAMAL ARE
FIGHTING.



IT'S NOT
THAT BAD, DON'T
WORRY. THERE'S JUST...
A LOT OF STUFF I
NEED TO FIGURE
OUT.

BIG KID
STUFF.





I DON'T EVEN
KNOW HOW TO
BRING UP THE
WHOLE...

...NECROMANCER
THING.



TINY
GRASS!

CUTE.

BLUE!

WHERE
HAVE YOU
BEEN?!



I'VE
BEEN
BUSY.

YOU
KNOW, GHOST
STUFF.

HAUNTING,
SAYING BOO,
ALL THAT.



I
UM...KIND
OF MISSED
YOU HAUNTING
AROUND
ME.

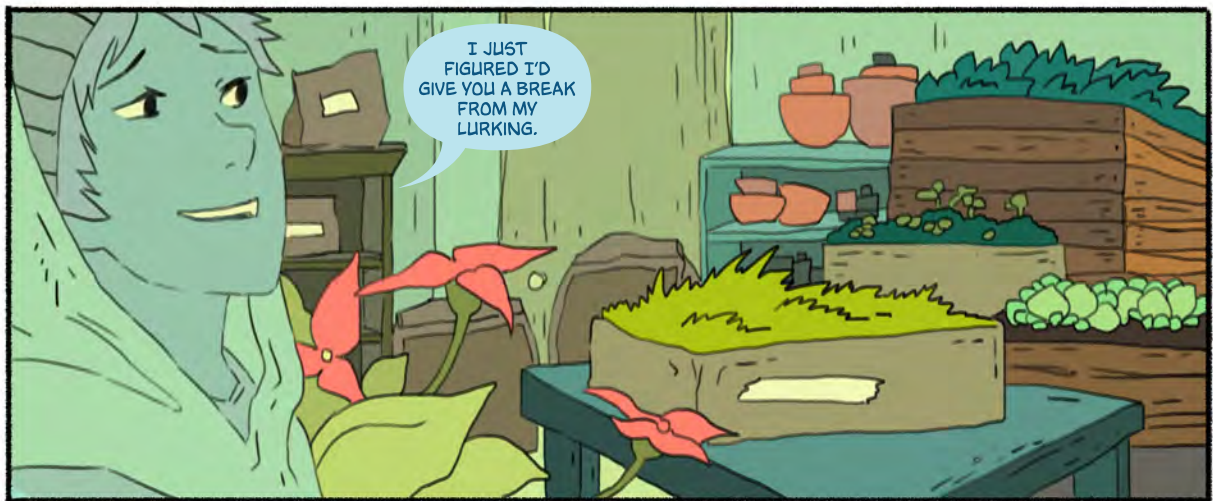
NO
WAY, YOUR
COWORKERS ARE
PROBABLY JUST
BEGINNING TO
THINK YOU'RE
NORMAL.



IT'D BE FALSE
ADVERTISING.

ANYWAY,
I'M GLAD
YOU'RE
BACK.

ME
TOO.





NAH,
I'M THE ONE
WHO SHOULD
APOLOGIZE.

AS PER
USUAL.

I SAID
SOME AWFUL
THINGS.

I'M JUST
NOT GOOD AT
THE SERIOUS
STUFF, YOU
KNOW?



YEAH,
I KNOW.



ACTUALLY,
THERE'S SOMETHING
I'VE BEEN MEANING
TO TALK TO YOU
ABOUT.

IT'S KIND
OF A BIG
SOMETHING.

LIKE...
REALLY
BIG.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT REAPERS?



THEY'RE THE ONES WHO TRACK YOU GUYS DOWN IF YOU'RE CAUSING TROUBLE, RIGHT?

YEAH, THAT'S THEM.



YOU DIDN'T DO ANYTHING BAD, DID YOU BLUE?

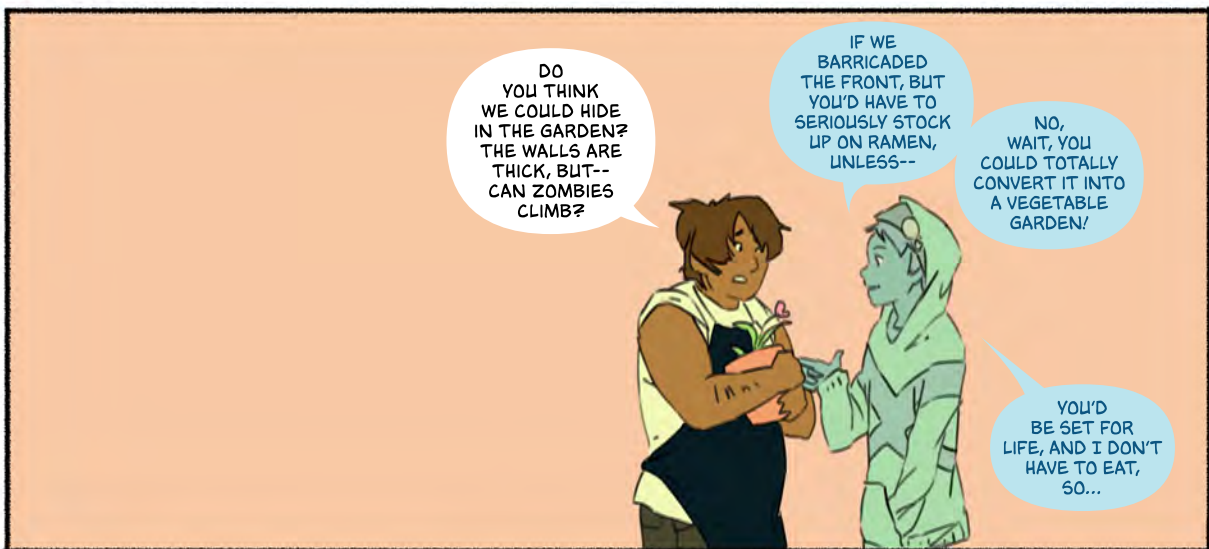


WHAT? NO, NOT ME.

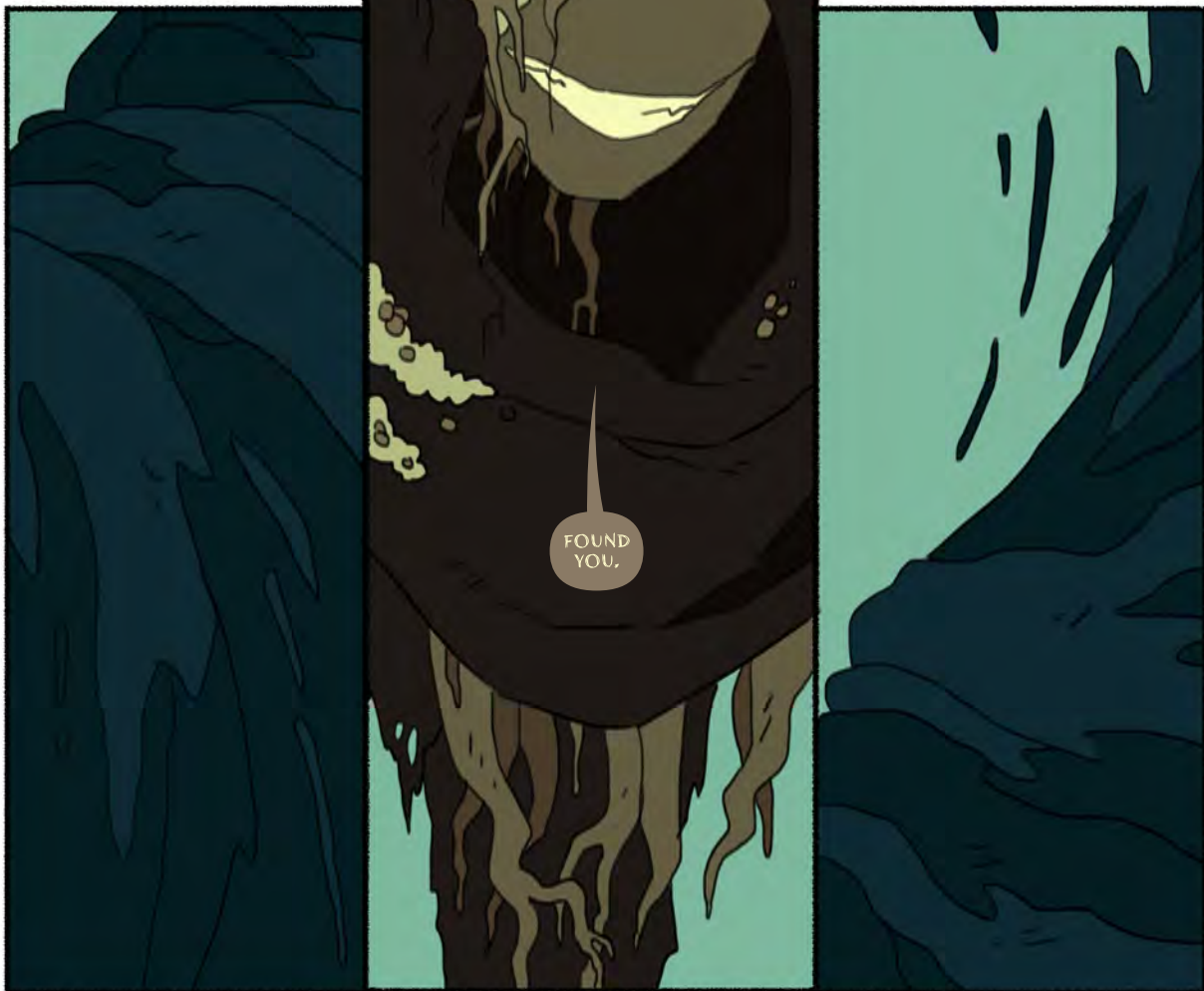
ARE YOU SURE?

I'M *SURE* I HAVE A LITTLE FAITH IN ME, WHY DON'T YOU.

SORRY.











WHO
YOU ARE IS WAY
MORE INTERESTING,
NECROMANCER.



NECRO...?

NO,
I'M JUST A
GARDENER!

LOOK!



IT'S NOT
GRAVE DIRT,
I SWEAR.

JUST
DIRT DIRT...



NICE TRY,
BUT YOU WERE
LITERALLY JUST
TALKING TO A
DEAD GUY.



OH...

...YEAH.



YOU
HAVE A
PROBLEM,
KID.









YOU
AND ONLY YOU,
NECROMANCER.

NO...THAT'S
IMPOSSIBLE.



NO
WAY!

IT'S
OBVIOUSLY
EVIL, AND HAMAL
ISN'T--

THERE'S
NOTHING
EVIL ABOUT
DEATH,
GHOSTIE.

BUT IT'S A
BALANCE.

YOU CAN'T
FORCE LIFE
WITHOUT TAKING
IT FROM
SOMEWHERE.







PLEASE,
HELP ME
FIX IT.

I
DON'T WANT
TO HURT
ANYONE.

SEE, THIS
IS WHY I HATE
NECROMANCERS.

YOU
INTERFERE
IN MY
BUSINESS.

THEN
YOU TELL ME
SOME SOB STORY
ABOUT HOW YOU
"DIDN'T MEAN
TO."

OR "I
LOVED HIM
TOO MUCH
TO LET HIM
GO."

OR
"BUT I REALLY
NEEDED AN
UNDEAD ARMY
THIS TIME."

AND THEN
YOU WANT **ME**
TO SOLVE YOUR
PROBLEMS.





I CAN'T
FIX THIS
FOR YOU,
KID.

YOU
HAVE THREE
DAYS.

IF YOU
CAN'T RESTORE
THE BALANCE ON
YOUR OWN, YOUR
LIFE IS THE
PRICE.



BUT
HOW?



I
TEXTED YOU A
GRIMOIRE.

JUST PLAY
TO YOUR
STRENGTHS.



I'M JUST A
GARDENER.

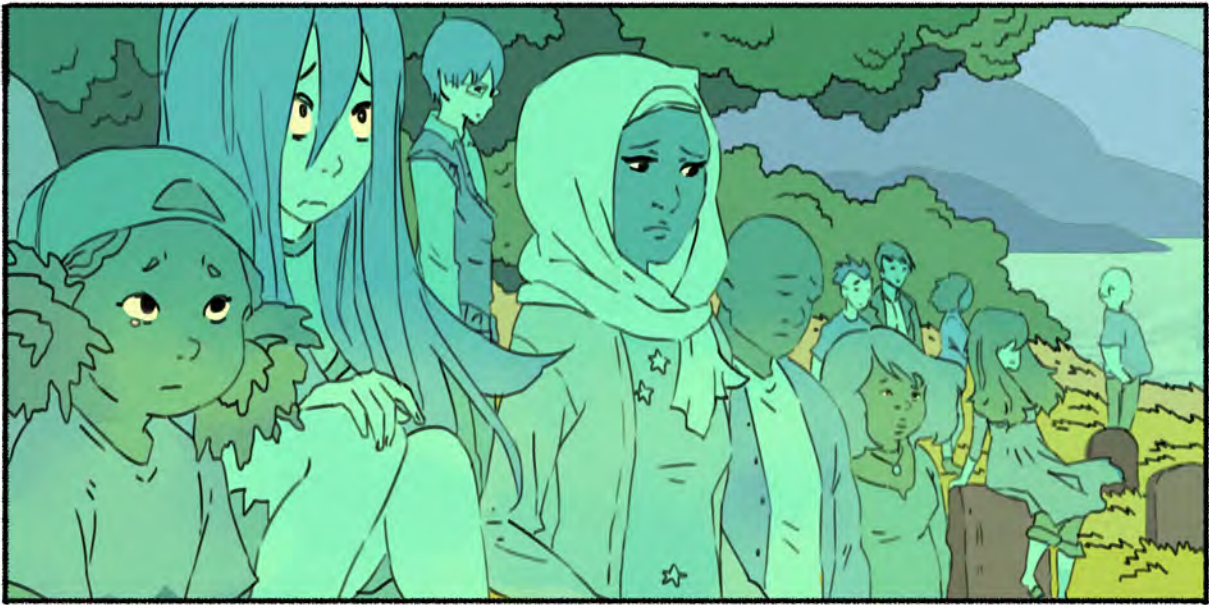
A man in a light blue hoodie and a woman in a white tank top and dark overalls are in a garden. The man is standing and looking at the woman, who is sitting and holding a small red object. There are various potted plants and flowers around them.

HEY.

WE'LL
FIGURE IT
OUT.









I CAN'T HANG
AROUND HIM
FOREVER.



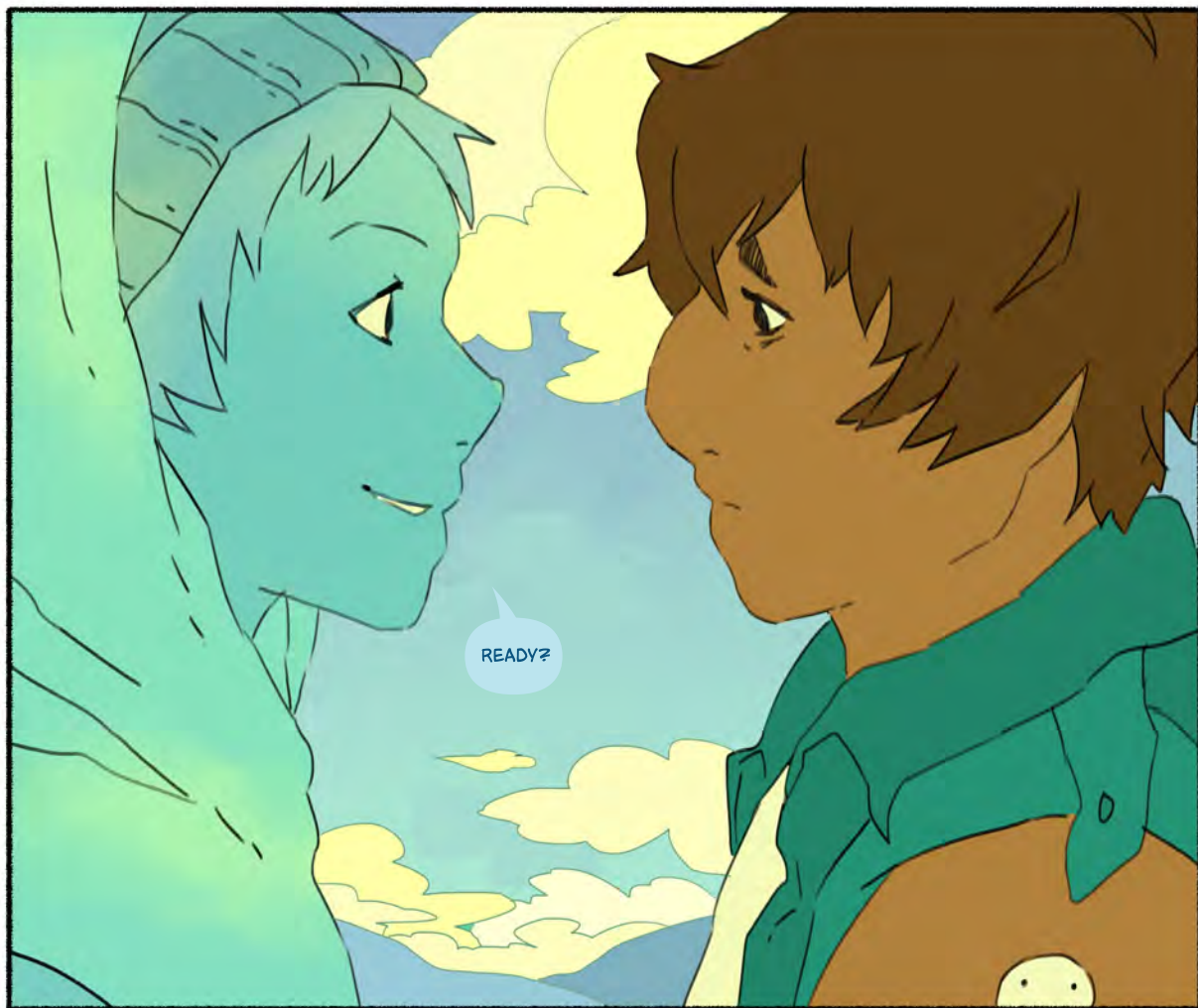
WE CAN'T
EVEN TOUCH.



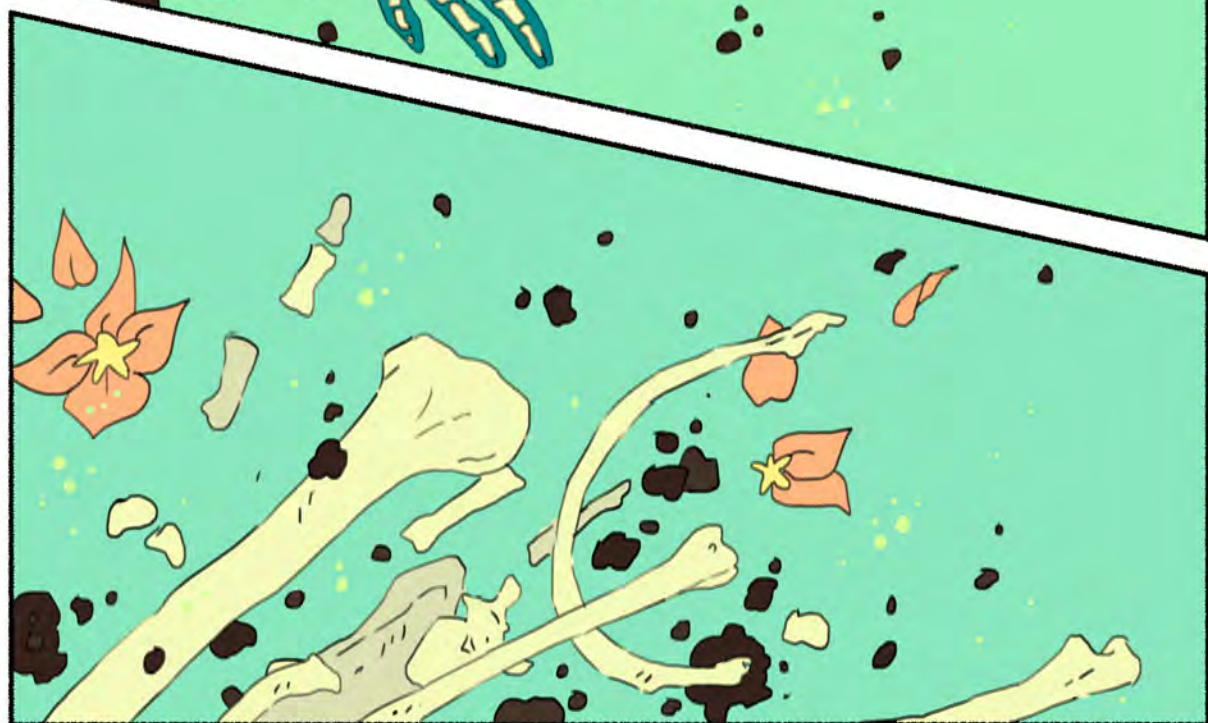
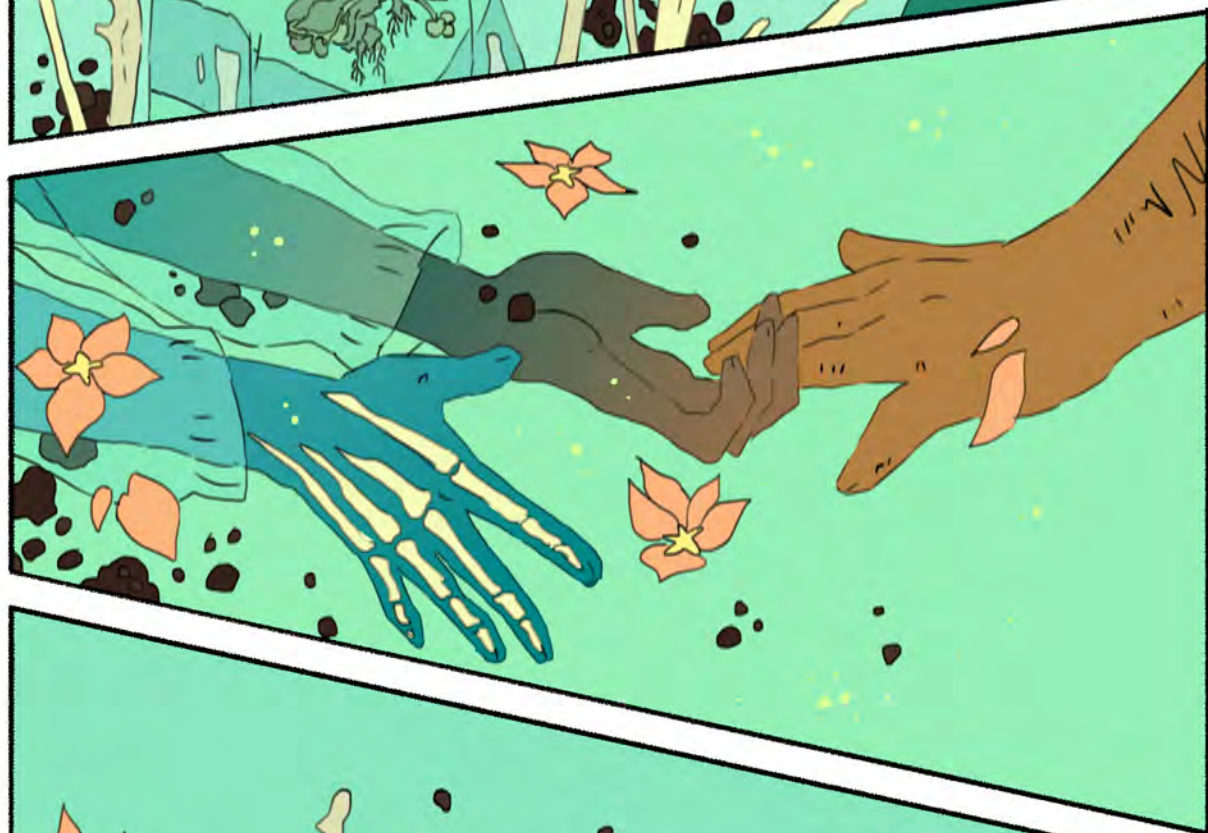
LOOK, IT'S
SPROUTING!

I'VE MADE MY
PEACE WITH IT.

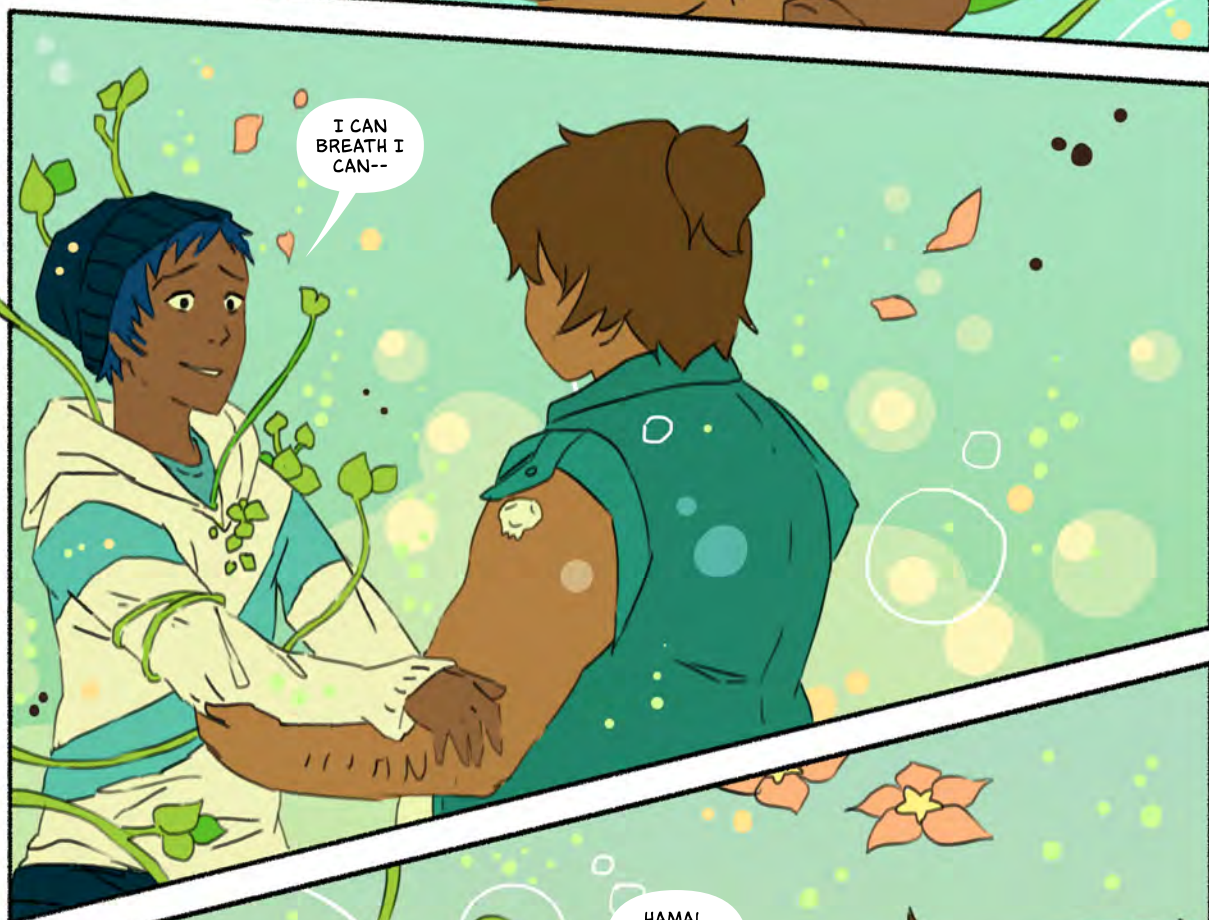


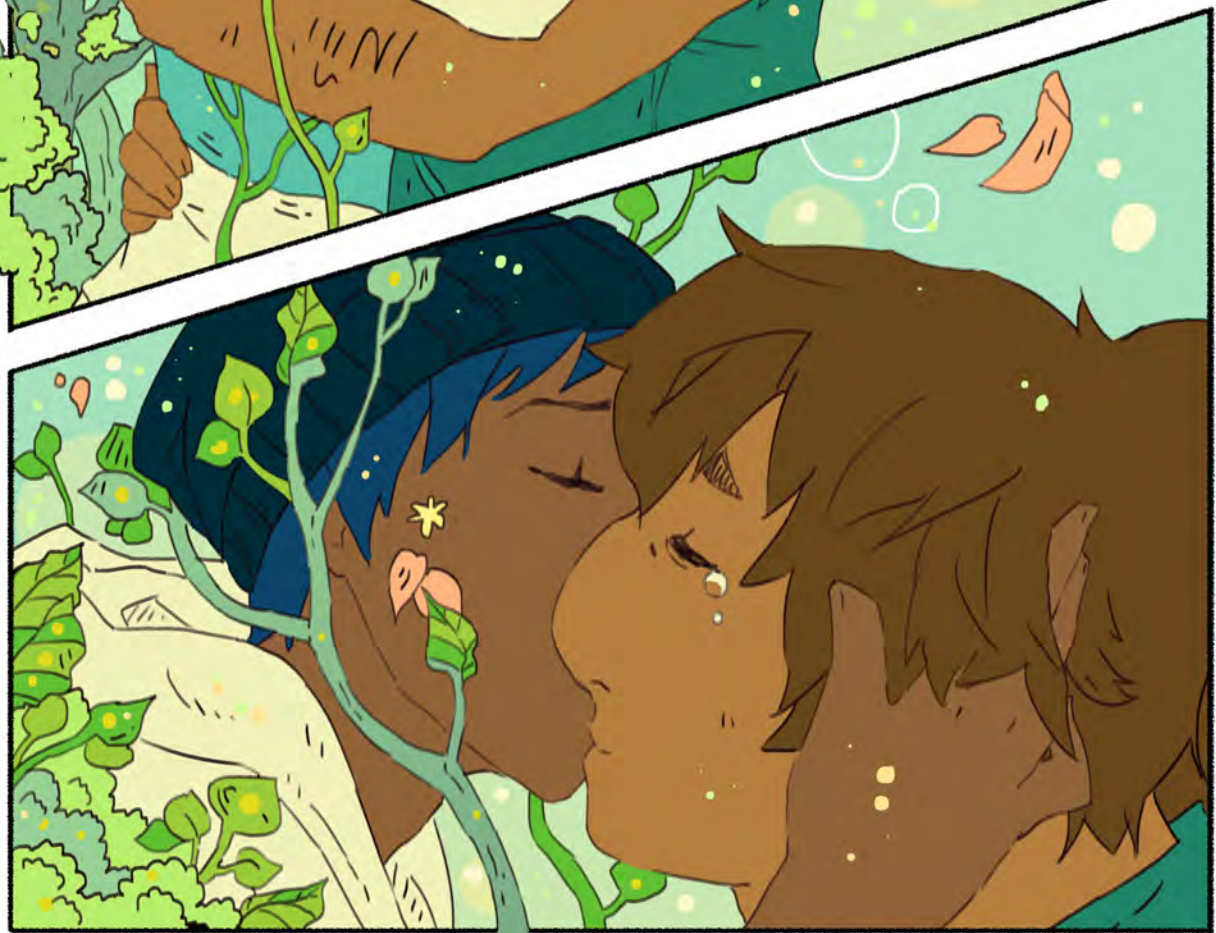


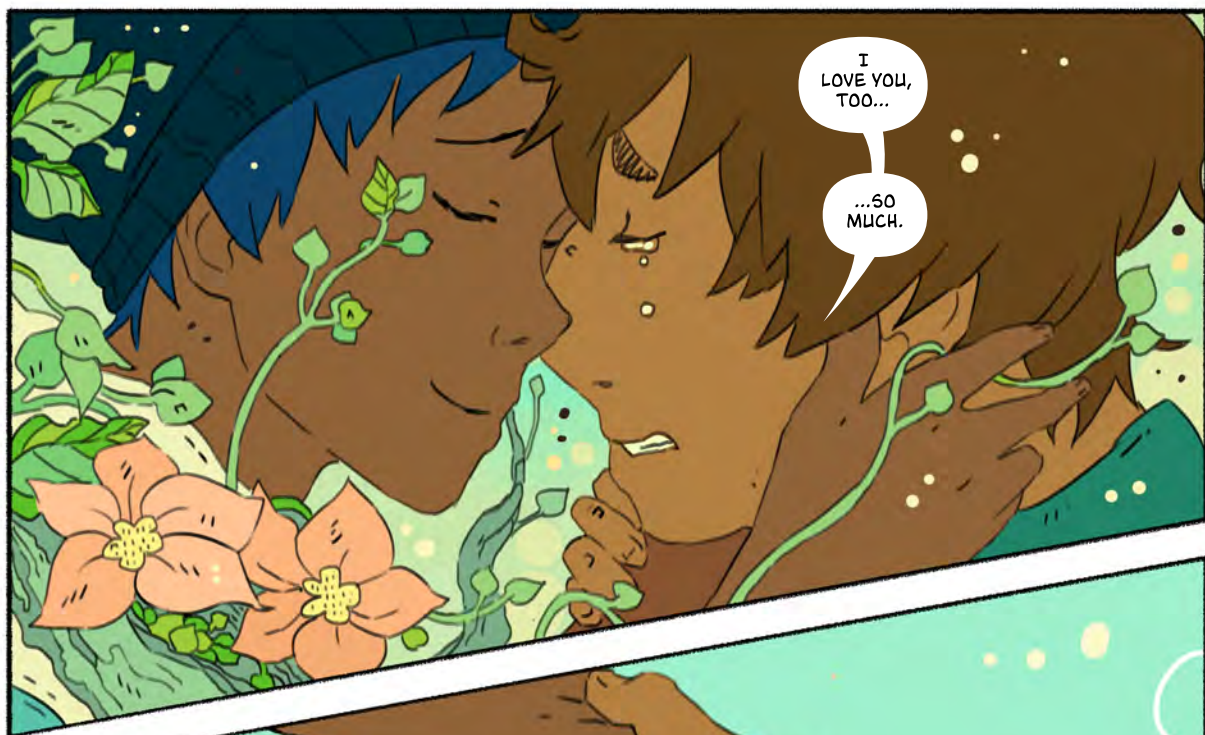






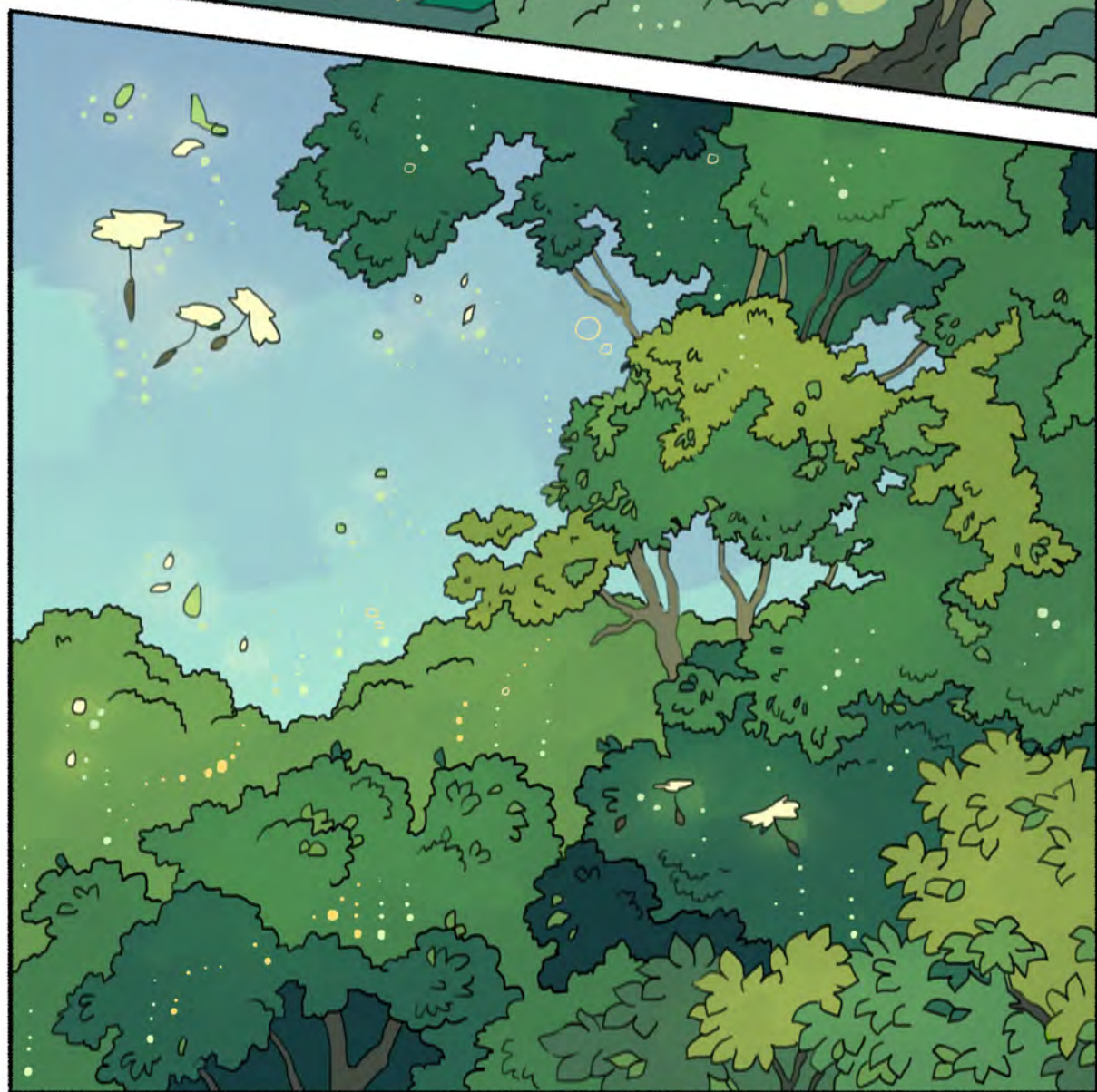
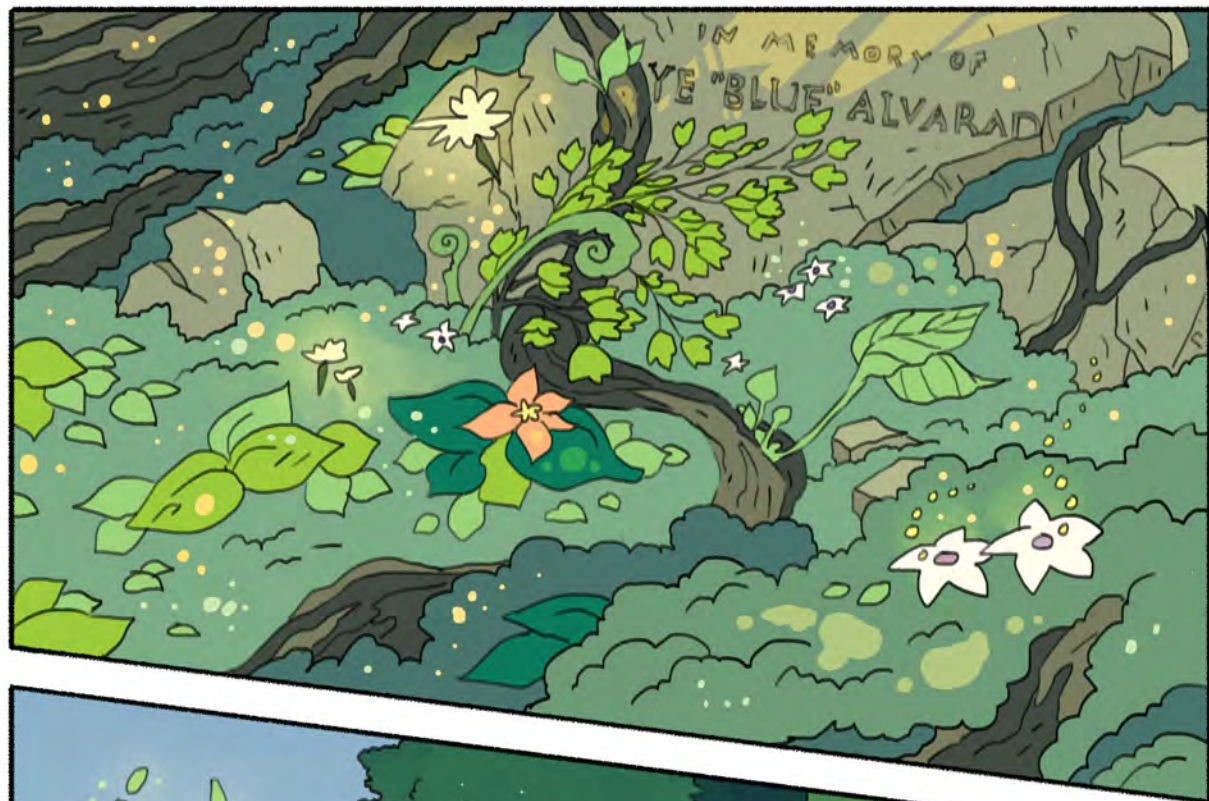








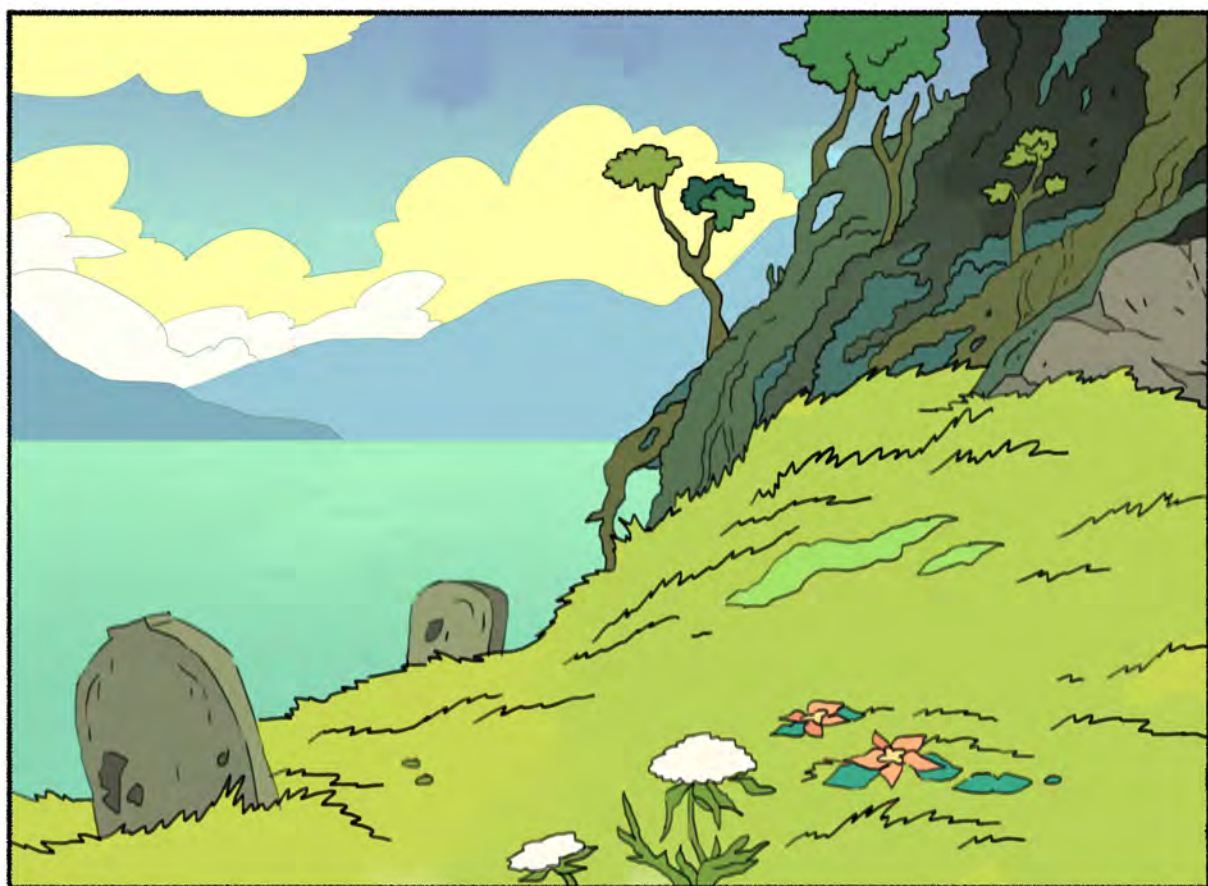
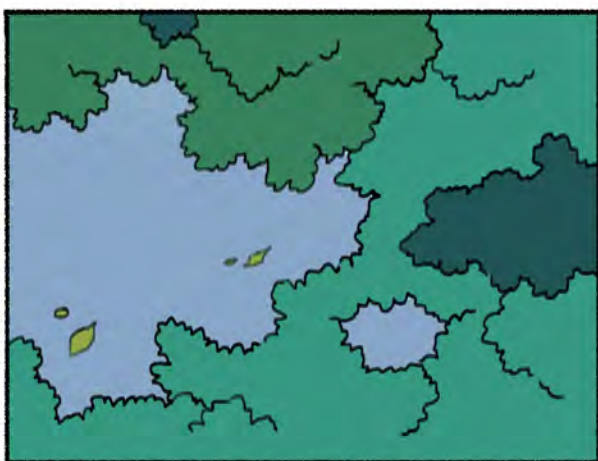


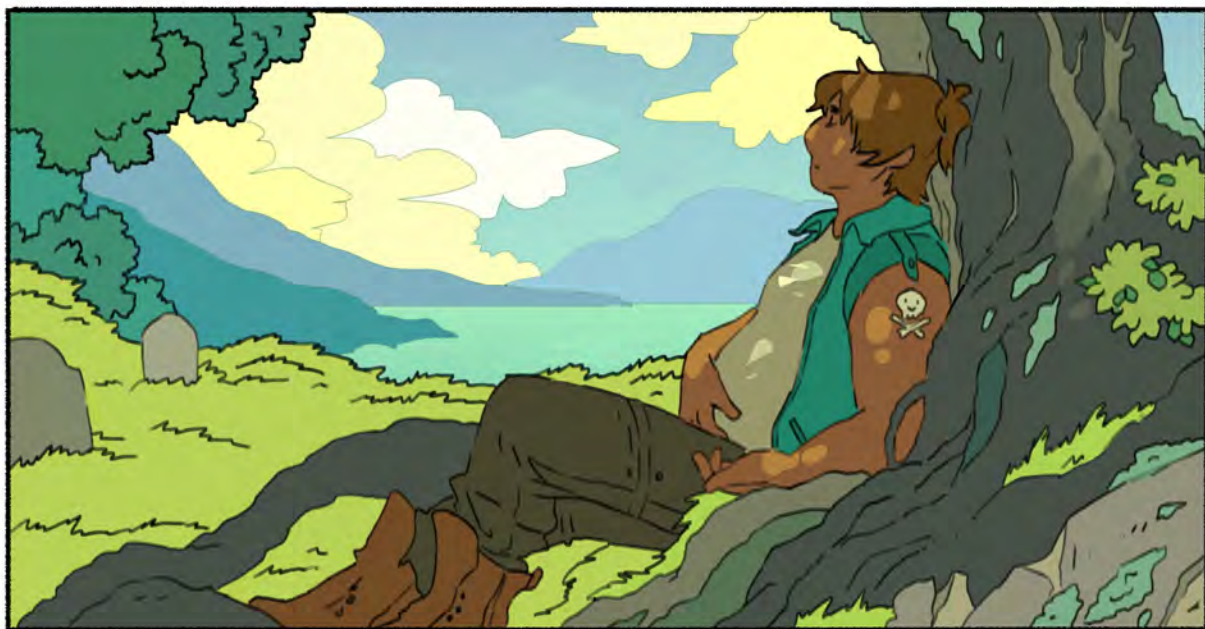




















LIKE I
SAID, I DON'T LIKE
NECROMANCERS.

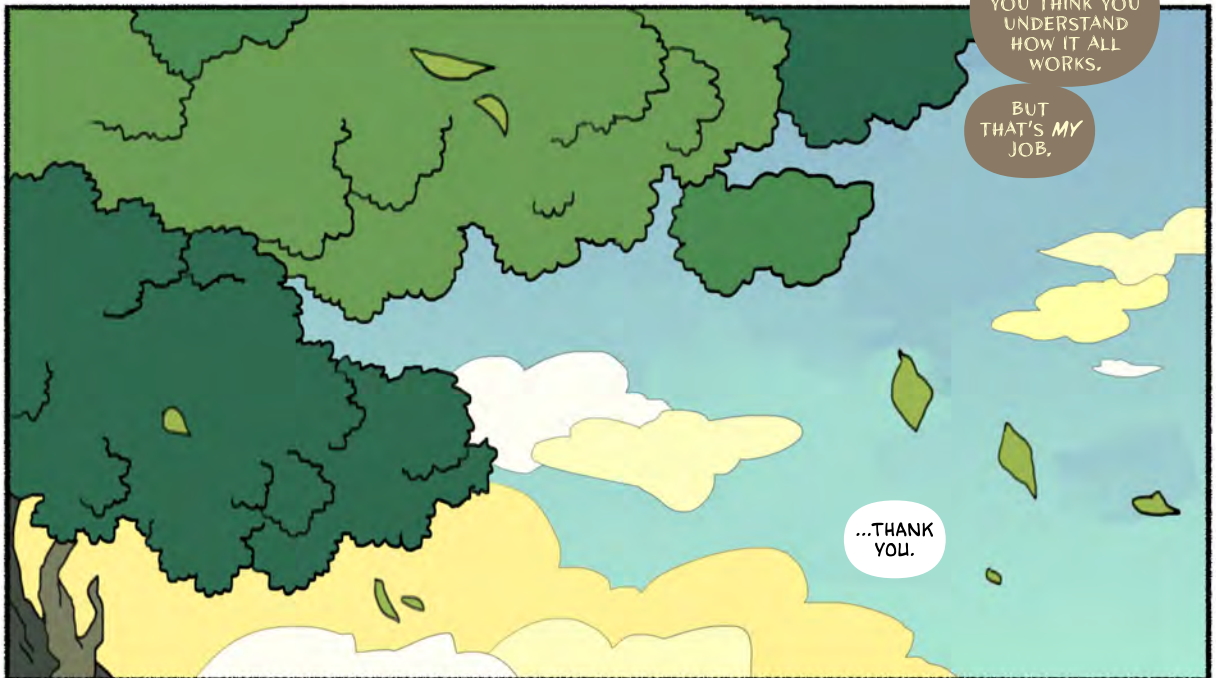
ALWAYS
INTERRUPTING
THE NATURAL
FLOW OF LIFE
AND DEATH.



YOU--
YOU DID
THIS?

THINK
OF IT AS A
FAVOR YOU
OWE ME,

I'M A
SUCKER FOR
CHEESY ROMANCE
NOVELS, AND
YOU TWO ARE
TERRIBLE.





DON'T
THANK ME
YET.

I'LL BE
COLLECTING
THAT FAVOR
ONE OF THESE
DAYS.



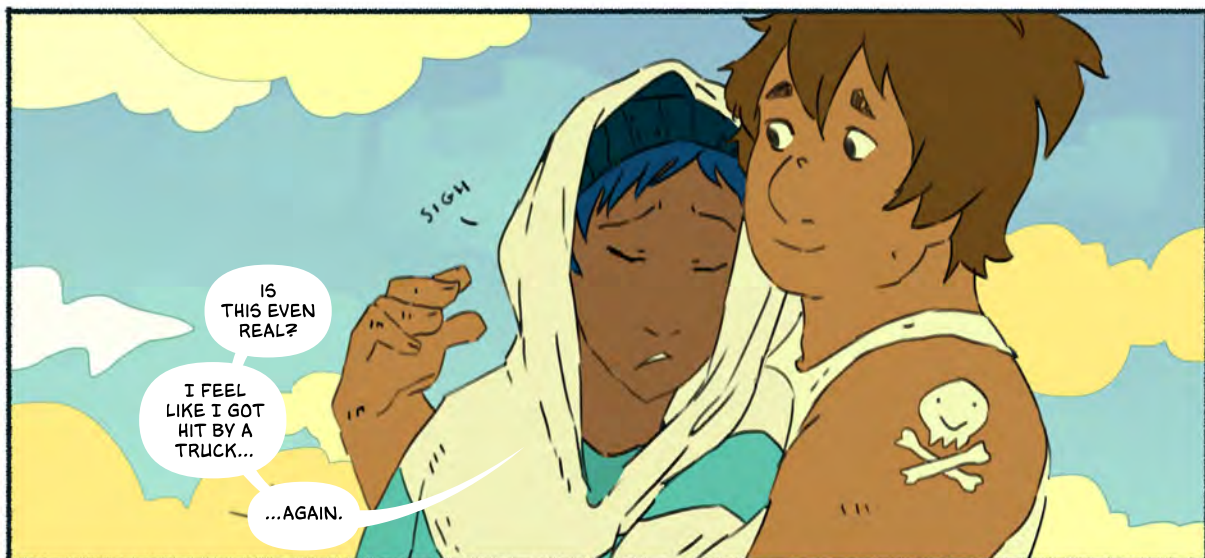
ENJOY
YOUR SECOND
CHANCE,
KID.

WE DON'T
GRANT THOSE
OFTEN.

I TRUST
YOU WON'T
WASTE IT.



I'LL
BE SEEIN'
YOU.





LET'S
GO HOME.



ONE YEAR LATER.





MM--



OW!



TOLD YOU.

I'LL GET YOU A BAND-AID.

I'M A CASUALTY OF GARDENING.



IT'S EARLY. HOW COME YOU'RE NOT AT THE SCHOOL?

THERE WAS AN ASSEMBLY.

PRINCIPAL CHOI LET ALL THE SUPPORT STAFF OFF EARLY.

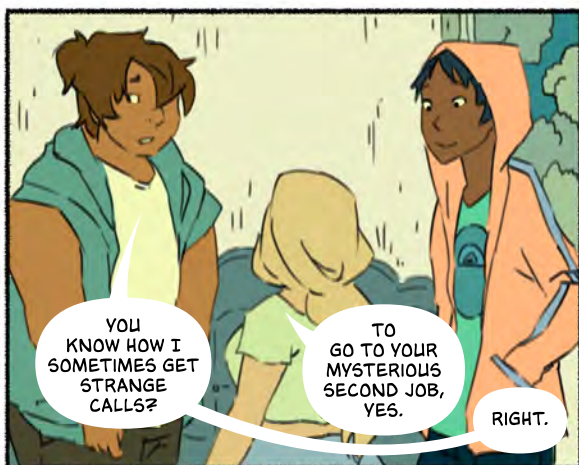
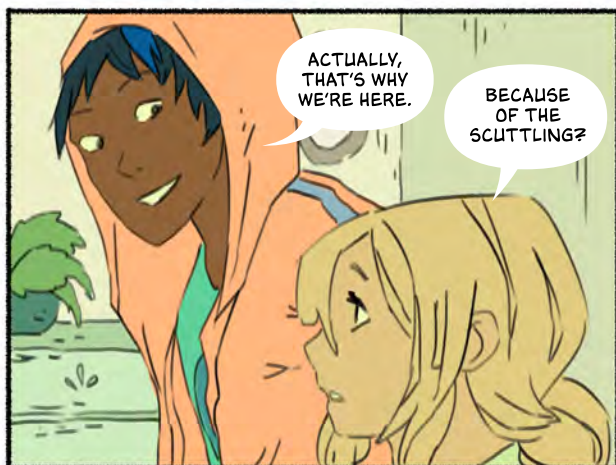
THERE ARE DEFINITELY BENEFITS TO STILL JUST BEING A TEACHER'S AID.

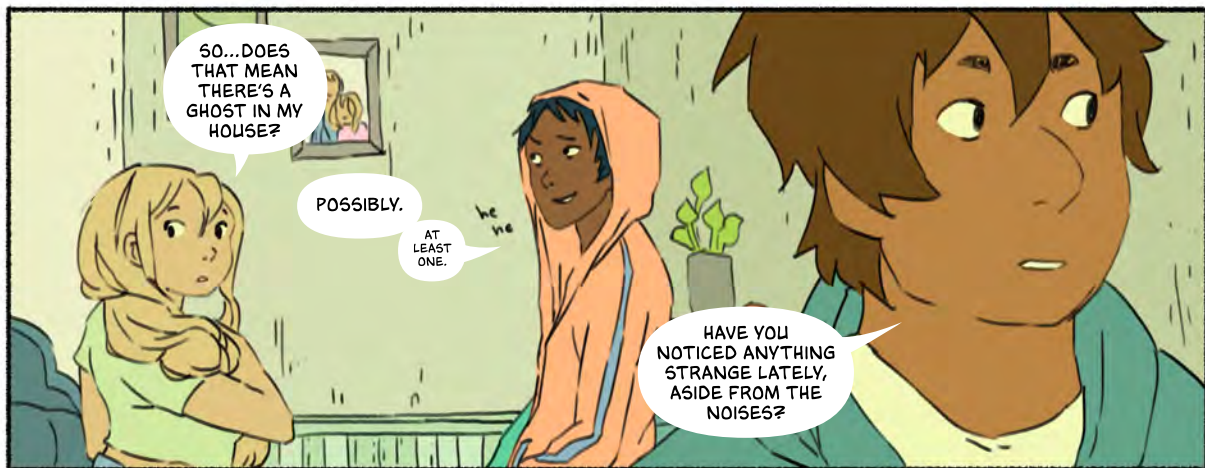










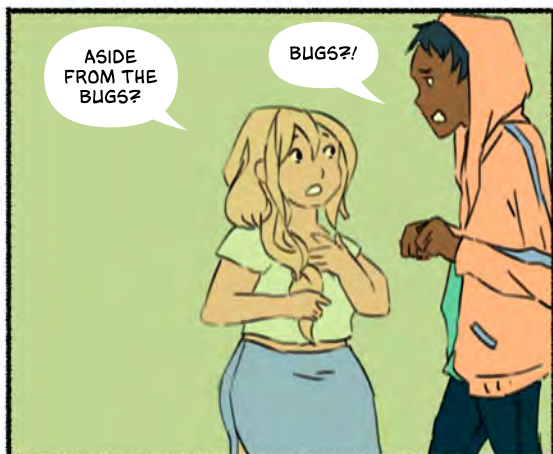


SO...DOES THAT MEAN THERE'S A GHOST IN MY HOUSE?

POSSIBLY.

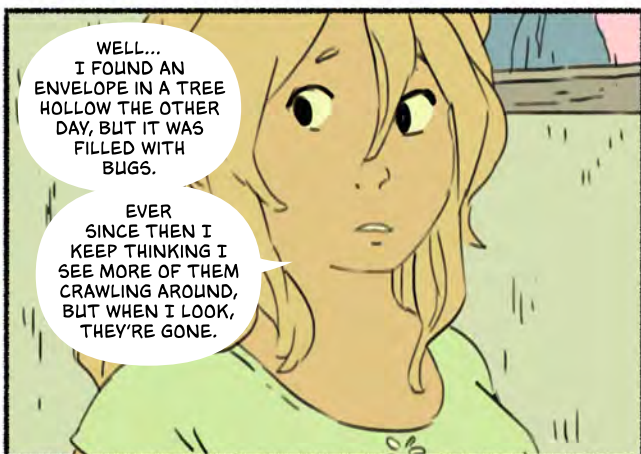
AT LEAST ONE.

HAVE YOU NOTICED ANYTHING STRANGE LATELY, ASIDE FROM THE NOISES?



ASIDE FROM THE BUGS?

BUGS?!



WELL... I FOUND AN ENVELOPE IN A TREE HOLLOW THE OTHER DAY, BUT IT WAS FILLED WITH BUGS.

EVER SINCE THEN I KEEP THINKING I SEE MORE OF THEM CRAWLING AROUND, BUT WHEN I LOOK, THEY'RE GONE.



I JUST THOUGHT I WAS BEING JUMPY!

I DON'T LIKE BUGS.

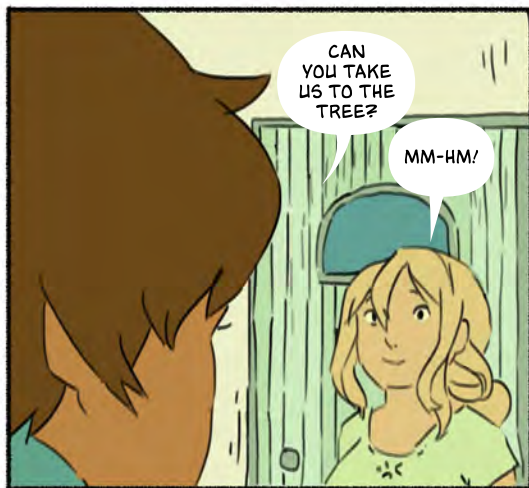
ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY TOUCH YOU.

THERE ARE SO MANY PLACES THEY COULD BE, WHY DO THEY HAVE TO BE ON ME.



WELL THAT'S JUST NARROW-MINDED, INSECTS ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE--

HAMAL CAN TOUCH ALL THE BUGS.







IT'S WORKING!

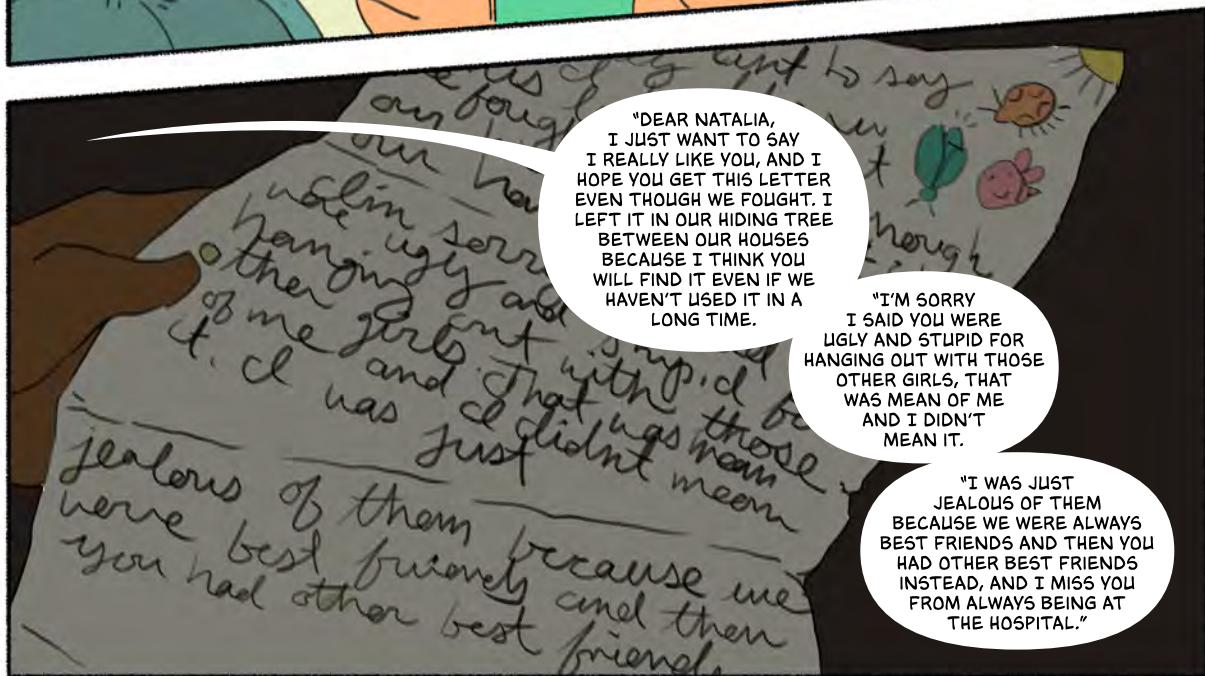
AS LONG AS I CAN KEEP THEM UNDER CONTROL.



WE NEED TO FIND OUT WHAT'S IN THAT LETTER. SOMEONE WANTED IT PROTECTED.

"DEAR NATALIA"-- THIS LOOKS LIKE IT WAS WRITTEN BY A CHILD.

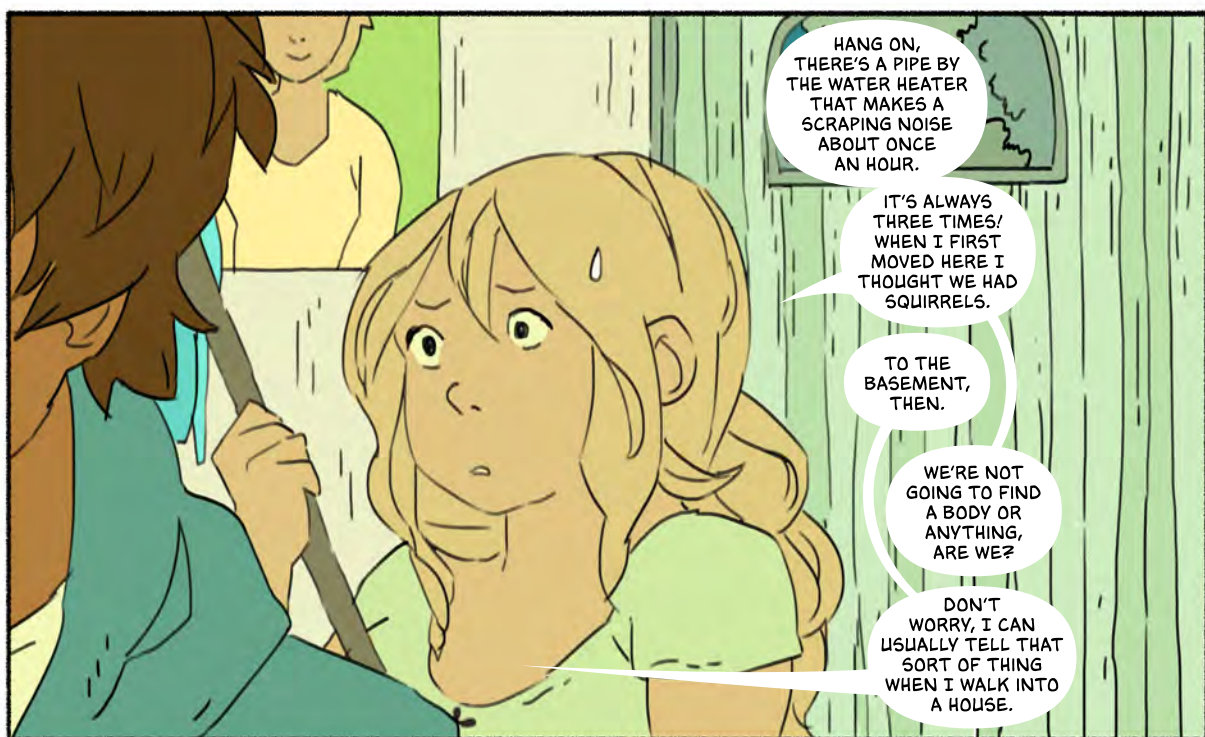
I THINK THERE WAS A LITTLE GIRL WHO LIVED HERE BEFORE ME AND NAN MOVED IN.



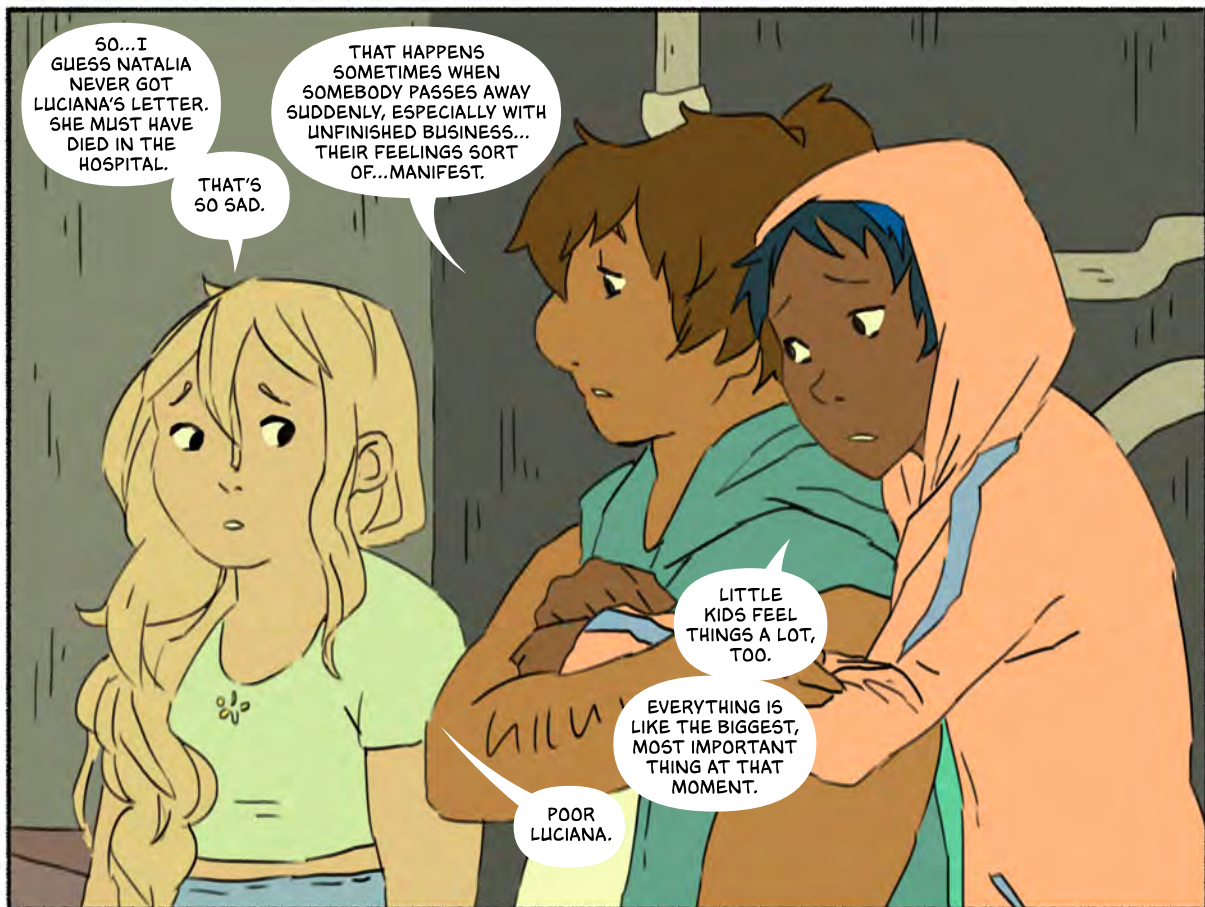
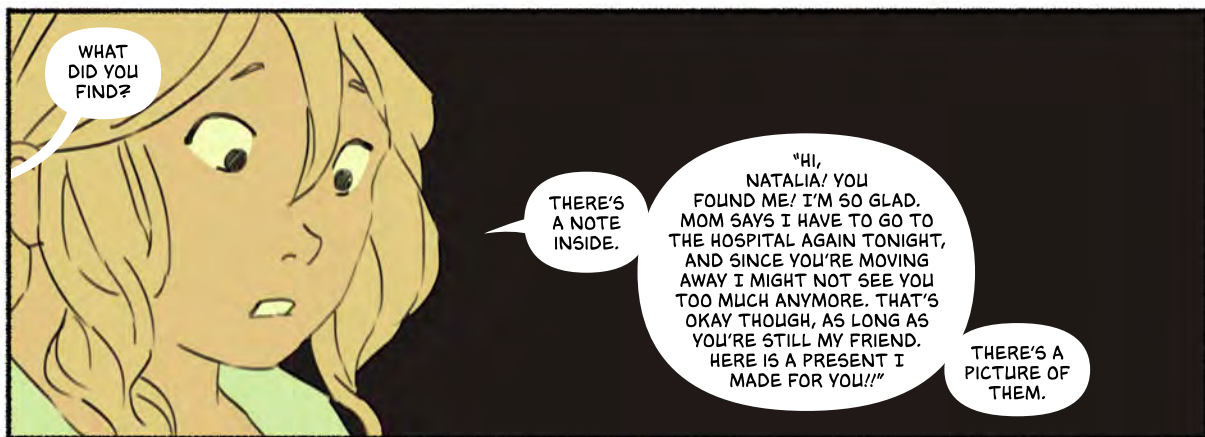
"DEAR NATALIA, I JUST WANT TO SAY I REALLY LIKE YOU, AND I HOPE YOU GET THIS LETTER EVEN THOUGH WE FOUGHT. I LEFT IT IN OUR HIDING TREE BETWEEN OUR HOUSES BECAUSE I THINK YOU WILL FIND IT EVEN IF WE HAVEN'T USED IT IN A LONG TIME.

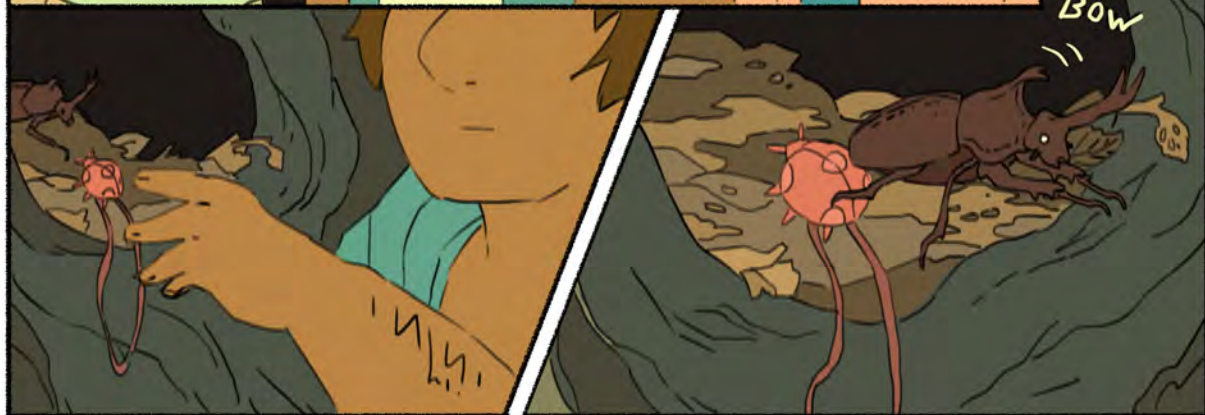
"I'M SORRY I SAID YOU WERE UGLY AND STUPID FOR HANGING OUT WITH THOSE OTHER GIRLS, THAT WAS MEAN OF ME AND I DIDN'T MEAN IT.

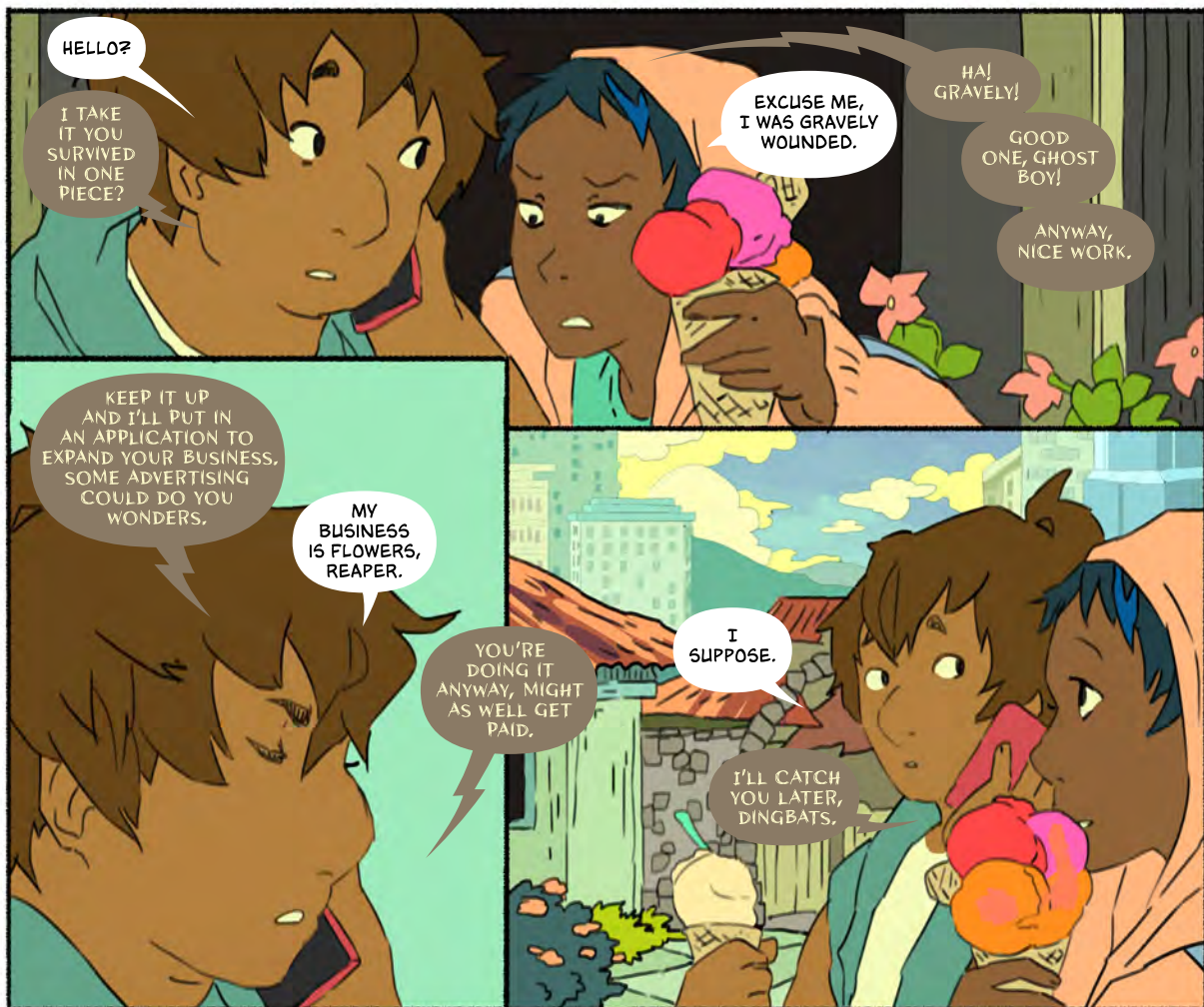
"I WAS JUST JEALOUS OF THEM BECAUSE WE WERE ALWAYS BEST FRIENDS AND THEN YOU HAD OTHER BEST FRIENDS INSTEAD, AND I MISS YOU FROM ALWAYS BEING AT THE HOSPITAL."

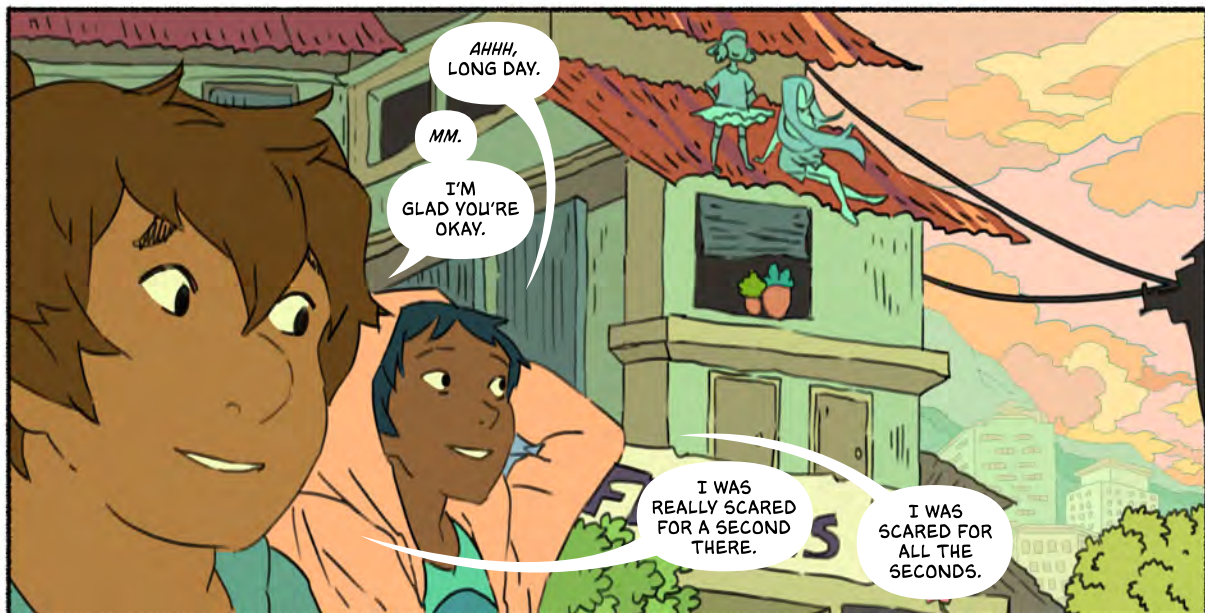
















KEEZY YOUNG IS A COMIC

ARTIST BASED IN SEATTLE, WASHINGTON. SHE DRAWS AND WRITES THE STORIES SHE WANTED TO SEE MORE OF GROWING UP—STORIES STARRING QUEER CHARACTERS, BRIGHTNESS, A LITTLE CREEPINESS, AND A LOT OF HEART. SHE NEVER FELT LIKE SHE BELONGED IN HER FAVORITE COMICS, AND SHE WANTS TO CHANGE THAT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO FEEL ALONE NOW BY BRINGING SOME COLOR TO THEIR LIVES. HER WORK USES THAT COLOR TO CREATE WORLDS THAT ARE FAMILIAR WHILE EMBRACING THE SUPERNATURAL.

STORY AND ART BY
KEEZY YOUNG

LETTERER: **AW'S TOM NAPOLITANO**
ASSISTANT EDITOR: **HAZEL NEWLEVANT**
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PUBLISHER'S CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

(PREPARED BY THE DONOHUE GROUP, INC.)

NAMES: YOUNG, KEEZY, AUTHOR, ILLUSTRATOR. | NAPOLITANO, TOM, LETTERER. | COLVIN, ANDREA, EDITOR. |
NEWLEVANT, HAZEL, EDITOR.

TITLE: TAPROOT : A STORY ABOUT A GARDENER AND A GHOST / STORY AND ART BY KEEZY YOUNG ;
LETTERER: AW'S TOM NAPOLITANO ; ASSISTANT EDITOR: HAZEL NEWLEVANT ; EDITOR: ANDREA COLVIN.

DESCRIPTION: [ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI] : THE LION FORGE, LLC, 2017. | "BASED ON THE WEB COMIC CREATED BY
KEEZY YOUNG."

IDENTIFIERS: ISBN 978-1-941302-46-0

SUBJECTS: LCSH: GARDENERS--COMIC BOOKS, STRIPS, ETC. | GHOSTS--COMIC BOOKS, STRIPS, ETC. |
EXTRASENSORY PERCEPTION--COMIC BOOKS, STRIPS, ETC. | LCGFT: GRAPHIC NOVELS.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC PN6728.T37 Y68 2017 | DDC 741.5973--DC23



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