



I'M BOREDDDD.



I DONT UNDERSTAND WHY DO WE HAVE TO TAKE THE BUS ANYWAYS? IT SLICKS.

BECAUSE—CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT THE WORLD WOULD BE LIKE IF WE ALL DID WHAT WE WANTED ALL THE TIME? IF WE ALL DROVE AROUND IN CARS SPEWING POLLUTION INTO THE ATMOSPHERE? IT'S ABOUT COMMUNITY—IT'S ABOUT DOING WHAT'S RIGHT—IT'S ABOUT THINKING ABOUT THE FUT—

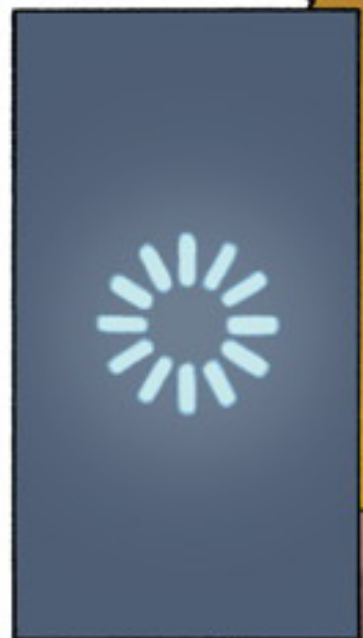


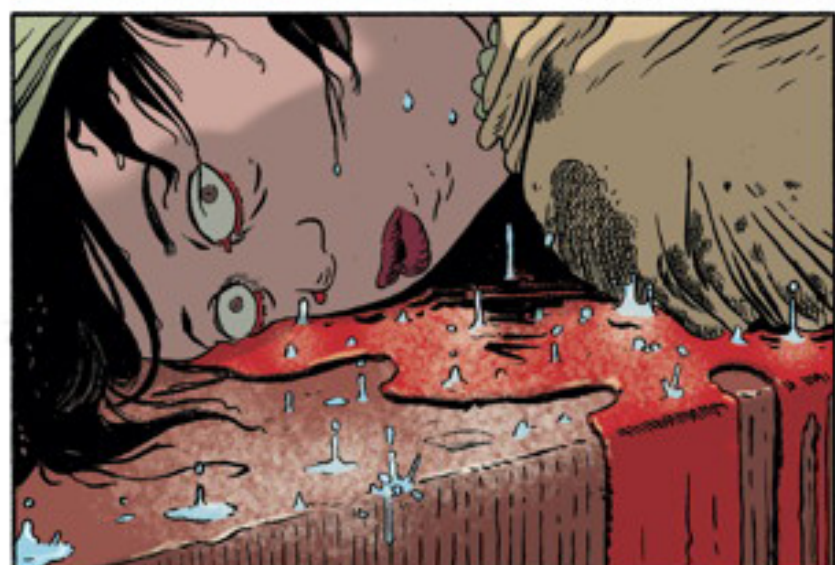
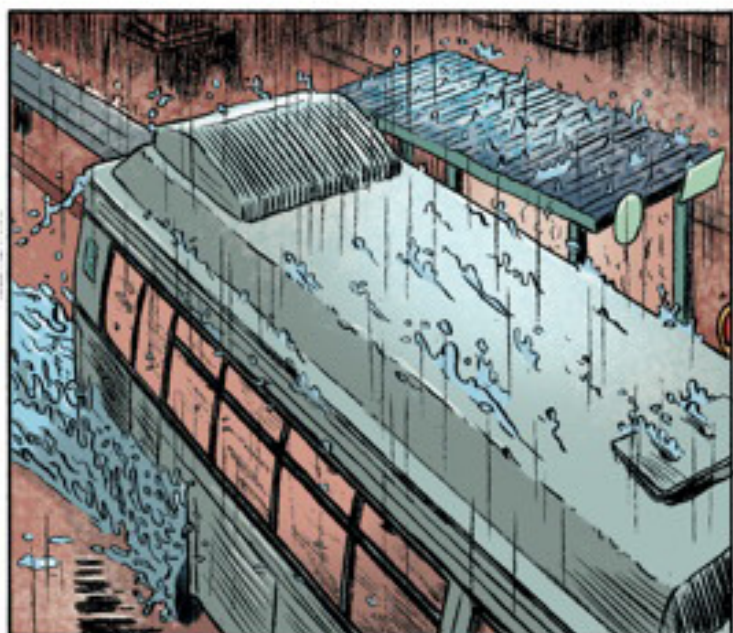
AH, SWEETIE—SOMEDAY YOU'LL UNDERSTAND.

CAN I GO ON YOUR PHONE WHILE WE WAIT? CAN I? PLEASSSE.



JUST WHILE WE'RE WAITING.











WELL, LOOK WHAT THE CAT DRAGGED IN...



GOOD TO SEE YOU, MAKO.

YOU TOO, CLAUDIUS. BEEN TOO LONG.

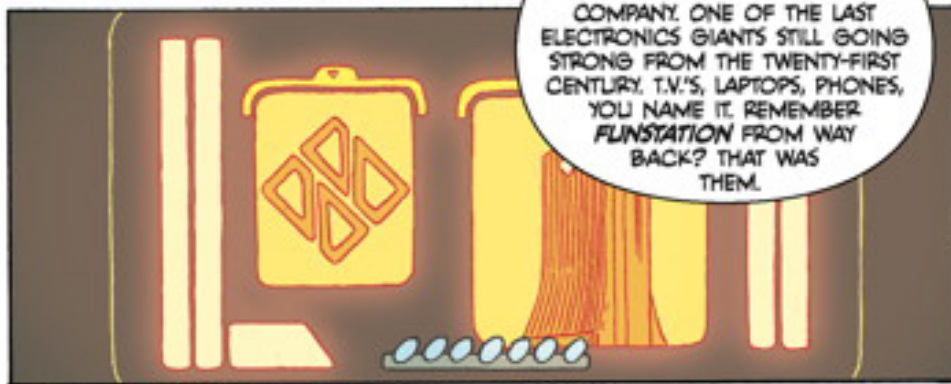


SO WHY'D YOU DRAG MY ASS OUT TO TOKYO? WHAT'S UP?



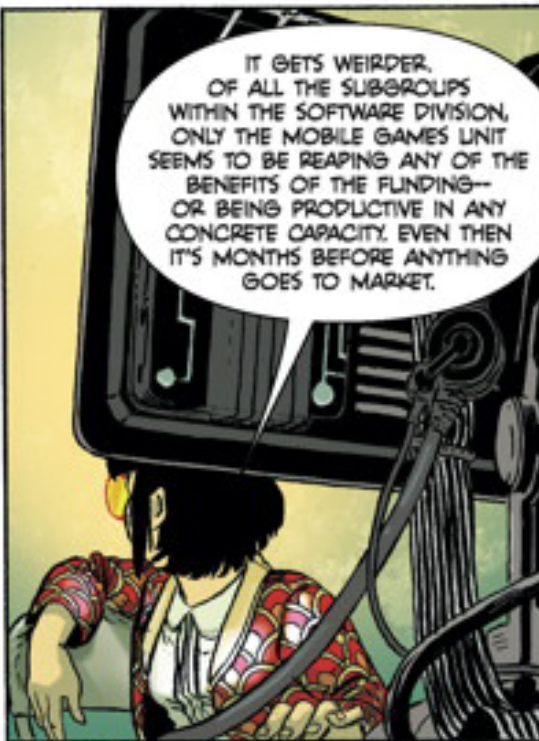
IT'S COMPLICATED—GIMME—GIMME A SEC HERE.

NAGAHASHI INDUSTRIES. RIGHT. THEY'RE A JAPANESE STAPLE. HUGE MULTINATIONAL COMPANY. ONE OF THE LAST ELECTRONICS GIANTS STILL GOING STRONG FROM THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY. T.V.'S, LAPTOPS, PHONES, YOU NAME IT. REMEMBER FUNSTATION FROM WAY BACK? THAT WAS THEM.



SIX MONTHS AGO ATLAS BUYS THEM. AND EVERYTHING—EVERYTHING SEEMS FINE, FOR A WHILE. IT'S ALL CLEAR, THE SAME. SEEMS LIKE ATLAS JUST WANTED ANOTHER LICENSE TO PRINT MONEY, WHICH IS NOTHING NEW.

EVERYTHING IS NORMAL UNTIL ABOUT THREE MONTHS AGO.



IT GETS WEIRDER. OF ALL THE SUBGROUPS WITHIN THE SOFTWARE DIVISION, ONLY THE MOBILE GAMES UNIT SEEMS TO BE REAPING ANY OF THE BENEFITS OF THE FUNDING—OR BEING PRODUCTIVE IN ANY CONCRETE CAPACITY. EVEN THEN IT'S MONTHS BEFORE ANYTHING GOES TO MARKET.



ALL OF A SUDDEN THEY REROUTE A HUGE CHUNK OF FUNDING AND PROJECT ALLOCATION TO THEIR SOFTWARE DIVISION. NOW, FOR A NORMAL COMPANY THIS IS NOTHING. BUT NAGAHASHI'S SOFTWARE DIVISION HAS BEEN A GHOST TOWN FOR YEARS. WE'RE TALKING MAYBE ONE PERCENT OF THE COMPANY'S INCOME.



AND THEN IT JUST KEEPS COMING.

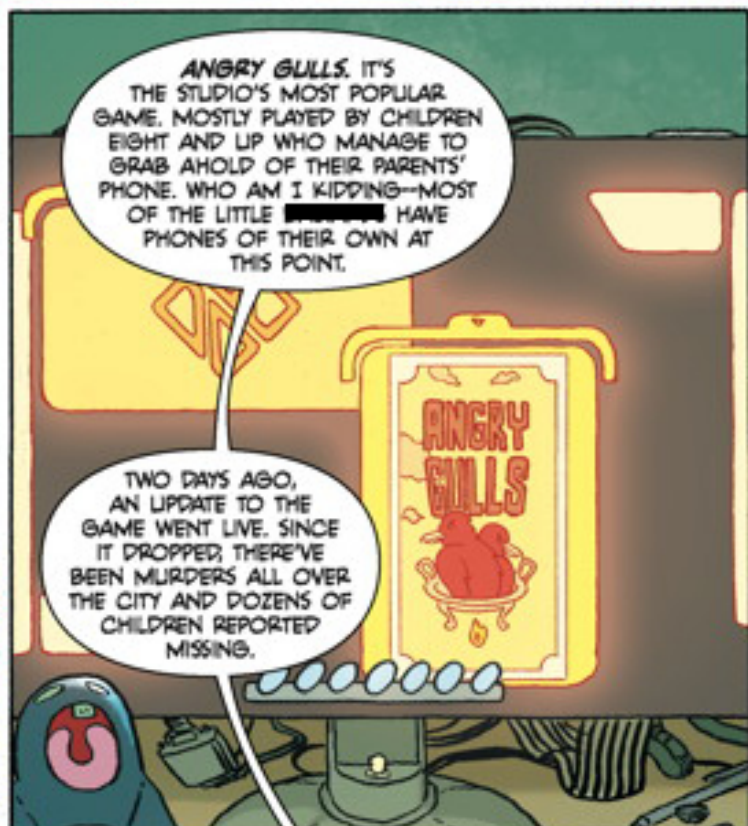


OVERNIGHT THEY DROP UPDATES TO OVER TWO DOZEN OF THEIR CURRENT RELEASES, AND A HALF DOZEN NEW GAMES AND APPS.



EVERYTHING IS LOADED WITH SUBLIMINALS—MEMETICS TO INFLUENCE SPENDING HABITS, TO EXTRACT MONEY FROM THE CONSUMER. NOTHING NEW, I KNOW, BUT STILL—INSIDIOUS.

BUT THAT'S NOT WHY YOU'RE HERE.



ANGRY GULLS. IT'S THE STUDIO'S MOST POPULAR GAME, MOSTLY PLAYED BY CHILDREN EIGHT AND UP WHO MANAGE TO GRAB AHOLD OF THEIR PARENTS' PHONE. WHO AM I KIDDING—MOST OF THE LITTLE [REDACTED] HAVE PHONES OF THEIR OWN AT THIS POINT.

TWO DAYS AGO, AN UPDATE TO THE GAME WENT LIVE. SINCE IT DROPPED, THERE'VE BEEN MURDERS ALL OVER THE CITY AND DOZENS OF CHILDREN REPORTED MISSING.



WE HAVEN'T EVEN COME CLOSE TO UNPACKING EVERYTHING THEY STORED INSIDE IT, BUT WHAT WE HAVE—WELL...



IT ISN'T GOOD.