

JOSHUA LUNA

WHISPERS



1



STOP HESITATING.
STOP BEING WEIRD.

PEOPLE WILL NOTICE.
JUDGE ME.
LAUGH AT ME.

GEEZ, I'M A *PUSSY*.
THIS SHOULDN'T BE DIFFICULT.

ALL I HAVE TO DO IS GO THROUGH THE DOOR.



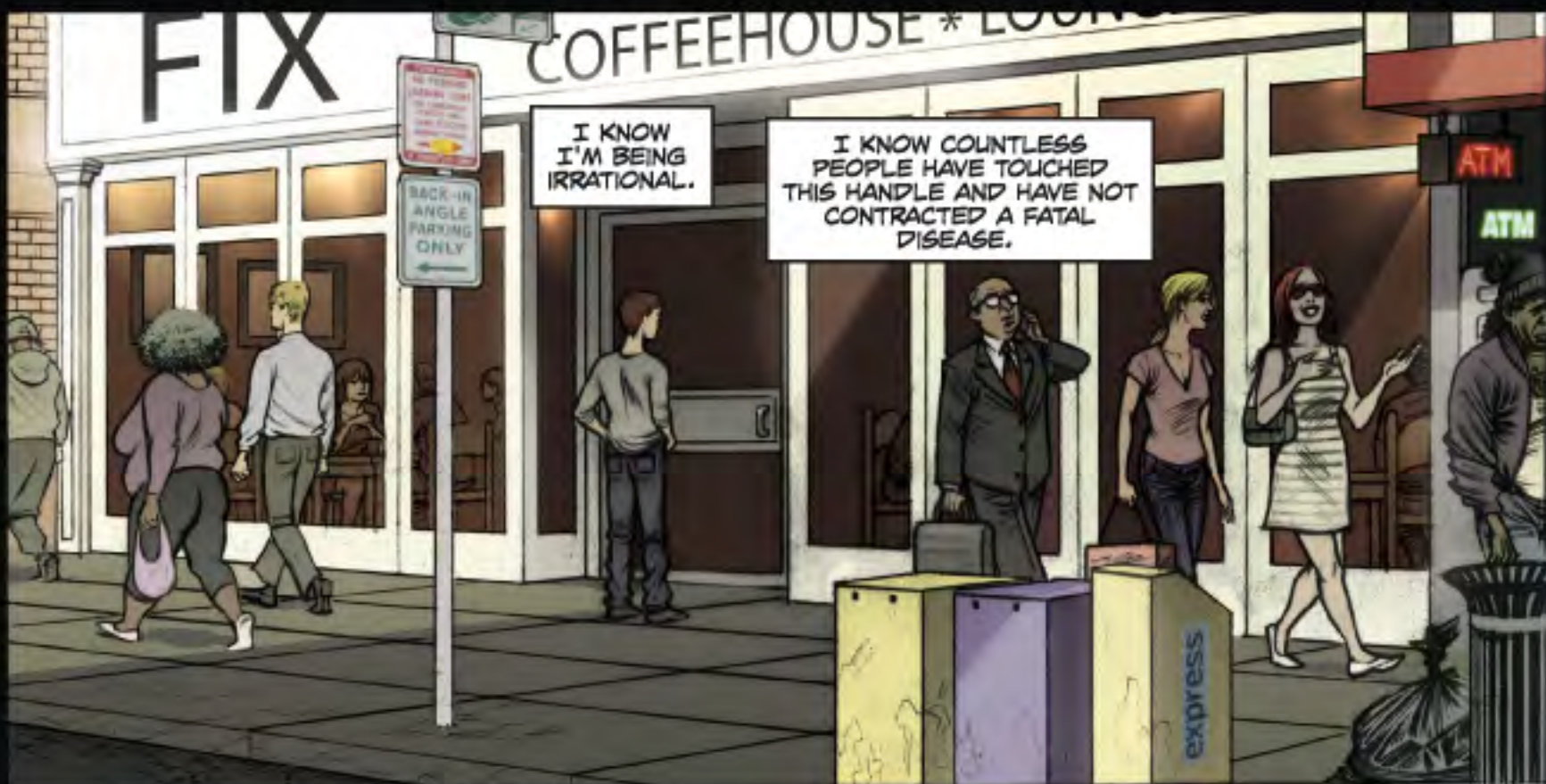
NO-- IT'S *NOT* THAT SIMPLE.

I HAVE TO MAKE SURE THE DOOR HANDLE IS SAFE BEFORE I CAN TOUCH IT.



PLEASE DON'T LET THERE BE A SPOT, A STAIN, A BLEMISH--

SHIT!
I SEE SOMETHING.



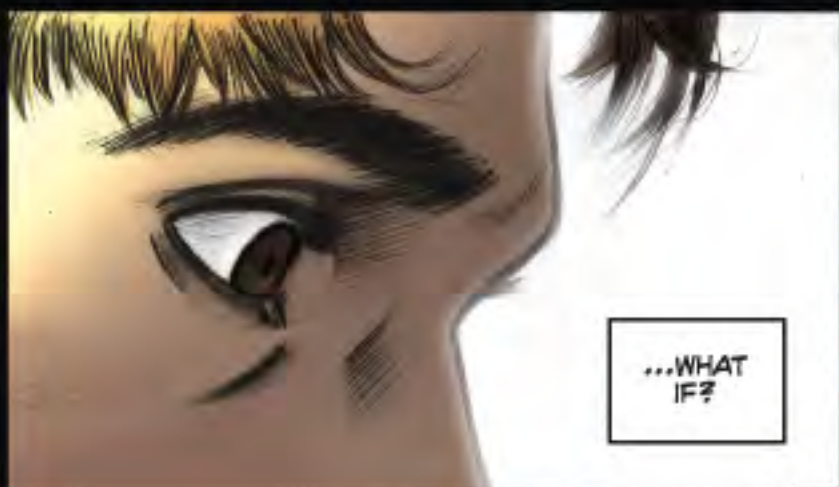
I KNOW I'M BEING IRRATIONAL.

I KNOW COUNTLESS PEOPLE HAVE TOUCHED THIS HANDLE AND HAVE NOT CONTRACTED A FATAL DISEASE.



BUT DEEP DOWN...

I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK...



...WHAT IF?



WHAT IF I HAVE A TINY PAPER CUT ON MY FINGER?



WHAT IF THE STAIN IS ACTUALLY A HIGHLY INFECTIOUS CONTAMINANT...



...AND IT MAKES CONTACT WITH MY CUT.



ALLOWING MONSTERS TO ENTER ME...



DEVOUR ME.



KILL ME.



UM, EXCUSE US.

SO EMBARRASSING.

BUT AT LEAST THEY HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S GOING THROUGH MY HEAD.

HOW COULD THEY? LOOK AT THEM.

SEEMS LIKE MOST PEOPLE DON'T HAVE A CARE IN THE WORLD.





I WAS IN YOUR DREAM? WHAT WAS I DOING?

TRUST ME. YOU DO NOT WANT ME TO GET INTO DETAILS, RICO.



WELL, I SAW ALMOST EVERYONE I KNOW--INCLUDING YOU, BLAKE--AND YOU WERE ALL ASLEEP. LIKE IT WAS HAPPENING IN REAL TIME. I JUMPED FROM ONE PERSON TO THE NEXT, JUST BY SIMPLY THINKING OF THEM.

HMM, THAT DREAM DOESN'T SOUND TOO CRAZY. WHY WOULD THAT RUIN YOUR SLEEP?



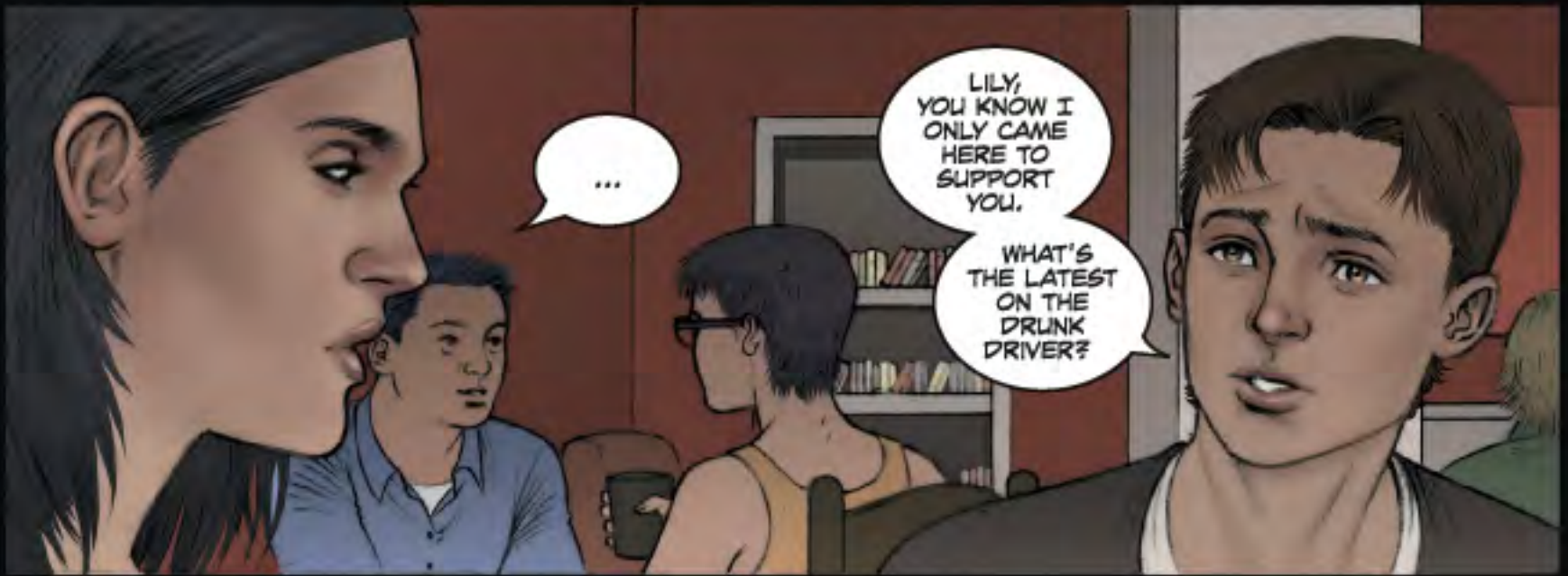
WELL... IT'S BECAUSE...

I'M NOT SO SURE IT WAS A DREAM.



JESUS, BLAKE, NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THIS GUY'S ABILITY TO BRING THE CRAZY.

LOOK, SAM, AS MUCH AS WE'D LOVE TO DISCUSS YOUR MENTAL ISSUES, I'D SAY LILY IS HAVING A ROUGHER MONTH. WE'RE ALL HERE FOR HER RIGHT NOW.



...

LILY, YOU KNOW I ONLY CAME HERE TO SUPPORT YOU.

WHAT'S THE LATEST ON THE DRUNK DRIVER?



WELL... THE BASTARD GETS ZERO PRISON TIME, JUST FIVE YEARS PROBATION. HIS EVIL, HIGH-PRICED LAWYER COULD GET THE DEVIL OFF THE HOOK...

BUT THAT'S THE LEAST OF MY WORRIES.

MY MOM WAS THE SOLE EARNER OF THE HOUSEHOLD, SO I DON'T KNOW HOW MY DAD WILL AFFORD THE INSANE MEDICAL BILLS, NOT TO MENTION THE HOUSE AND HIS DAY-TO-DAY NEEDS. HE'S ALWAYS BEEN HELPLESS, BUT NOW HE'S EVEN MORE SO...

OF COURSE, I'M GOING TO HELP HIM OUT AS MUCH AS I CAN, BECAUSE NO ONE ELSE WILL. BUT IT'S SO... OVERWHELMING.



AS FAR AS HELPLESS PARENTS GO, I CAN DEFINITELY RELATE.



SO CAN I JUMP BACK TO MY DREAM REAL QUICK?



SERIOUSLY?



WAIT, NO--! LILY, WHAT I MEANT IS--I SAW YOUR FATHER SLEEPING LAST NIGHT, TOO! AND HE ALMOST LOOKED AT PEACE... LIKE, EVERYTHING WOULD WORK OUT.

I JUST THOUGHT YOU'D FIND COMFORT IN THAT.

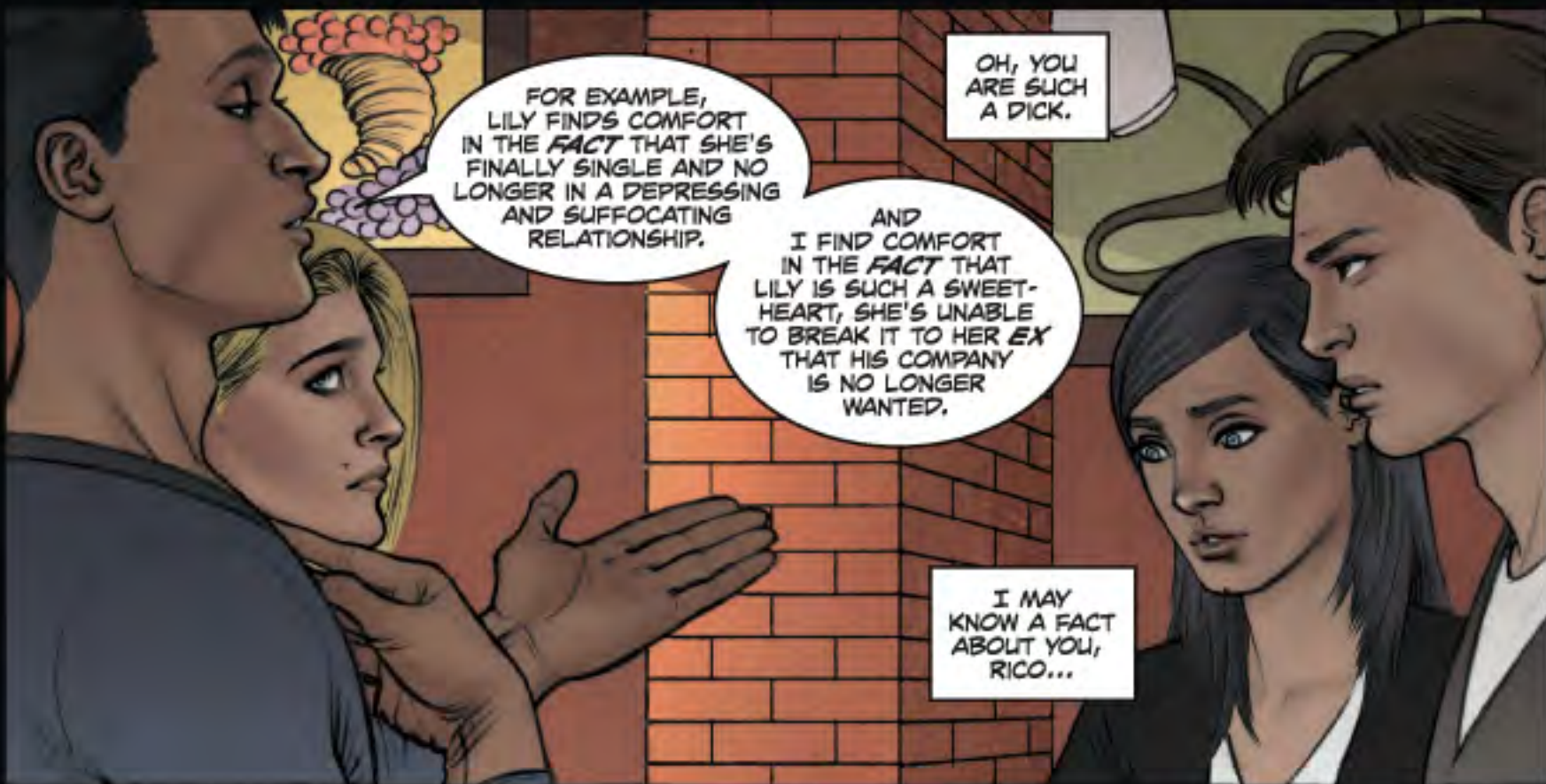
YOU THINK LILY WILL FIND COMFORT IN A DREAM?



LIKE I SAID, I KINDA THINK MY "DREAM" WAS REAL.

KEEP UP, DOUCHE.

RIIIIGHT. WELL... THAT'S GREAT THAT YOU'VE EMBRACED YOUR PRECARIOUS GRIP ON SANITY. BUT FOR THE REST OF US, WE PREFER FACTS.



FOR EXAMPLE, LILY FINDS COMFORT IN THE FACT THAT SHE'S FINALLY SINGLE AND NO LONGER IN A DEPRESSING AND SUFFOCATING RELATIONSHIP.

AND I FIND COMFORT IN THE FACT THAT LILY IS SUCH A SWEET-HEART, SHE'S UNABLE TO BREAK IT TO HER EX THAT HIS COMPANY IS NO LONGER WANTED.

OH, YOU ARE SUCH A DICK.

I MAY KNOW A FACT ABOUT YOU, RICO...



RICO, STOP. I KNOW YOU'RE JUST LOOKING OUT FOR ME, BUT PLEASE DON'T SPEAK FOR ME.

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT I THINK OF SAM.



UM... NEITHER DO I.





1,2,3,4,5--

SHIT! CAN'T FOCUS.

CAN'T BELIEVE I TOUCHED IT. CAN'T BELIEVE I LET THAT PRICK DISTRACT ME.

I HAVE TO DO THIS RIGHT TO BE CLEAN. FOCUS.

1,2,3,4, 5,6,7,8, 9,10.

NO. DIDN'T FEEL RIGHT.

1,2,3,4, 5,6,7,8, 9,10.

BETTER.

BUT WOULD IT HURT TO PLAY IT SAFE?



1!

2!

3!

4!

5!

6!

7!

8!

9!

10!



OFF.

SURE IT'S OFF?

CHECK TO MAKE SURE.

CHECK AGAIN.



SIGH

CLEAN.

NOW STAY THAT WAY AND TRY NOT TO TOUCH ANYTHING.

OR ELSE I'LL HAVE TO START ALL OVER AGAIN.



I LOOK AND FEEL LIKE A COMPLETE IDIOT.

I HATE THIS.

YET I WON'T STOP.

BECAUSE I KNOW THAT I'LL HATE THE PAINFUL CONSEQUENCES OF TAKING A RISK SO MUCH MORE.



RICO WAS AN ASSHOLE,
BUT DAMN...SO WAS I.

LILY'S GOING THROUGH
HELL, AND I DID *THAT*
TODAY? TOTAL DICK
MOVE.

I SHOULD CALL
HER AND
APOLOGIZE.



NO, SHE MIGHT'VE WENT
TO BED EARLY. SHOULD TRY
CALLING IN THE MORNING
INSTEAD. PLUS, SHE MAY BE
IN A BETTER MOOD BY THEN.

BUT A PHONE CALL
MIGHT NOT BE ENOUGH.
MAYBE I NEED TO VISIT
HER, MAKE SOME KIND
OF GRAND GESTURE
OR SOMETHING...

PFF...LISTEN TO ME--
STRATEGIZING ON WINNING
HER BACK LIKE IT'S SOME
MATH EQUATION.



MAYBE RICO'S RIGHT.
WHAT IF LILY *IS*
RELIEVED THAT
WE'RE OVER?

THAT
ISN'T SO
UNLIKELY.

SHE CAN
GET ANY GUY
SHE WANTS.



AND I'M
A FREAK.

I JUST NEED TO
KNOW IF I HAVE A
CHANCE, BEFORE I
CAN GET OVER HER.



I WISH I COULD
JUST FIND A WAY
TO GET IN HER
HEAD...

...OR
GET HER
OUT OF
MINE.





OKAY...I THINK IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN.

BUT THIS FEELS DIFFERENT.

I FEEL WIDE AWAKE.

JESUS, IS THIS REALLY HAPPENING?

OR HAVE I COMPLETELY LOST MY MIND?



WHU-?!

WHOA, WHOA!

I-I'M SINKING!



UP!
UP!



MY GOD! THIS FEELS WAY TOO REAL TO BE A DREAM!

I CAN SEE, HEAR, AND SMELL, BETTER THAN I CAN WHEN I'M AWAKE EVEN.

BUT I CAN'T TOUCH ANYTHING?



NOT EVEN MYSELF?

TRIPPY.





NICE! PEOPLE ARE ACTUALLY AWAKE THIS TIME. GOOD THING I SLEPT EARLY.



HELLO.
CAN YOU HEAR ME?
CAN YOU SEE ME--?



WHOA.
GUESS NOT.



AMAZING. I CAN GO ANYWHERE I WANT, COMPLETELY UNDETECTED?
NO REPERCUSSIONS?
NO RISK?



FLYING IS FUN, BUT TAKES TOO LONG. MAYBE I SHOULD TRY THAT TELEPORTATION THING I DID LAST NIGHT.
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS THINK OF A PERSON OR A PLACE, BUT I WANT TO SEE SOMETHING NEW THIS TIME...
HAWAII!!



HMM.
NOTHING'S
HAPPENING.

MAYBE
I'LL HAVE
BETTER LUCK
WITH PEOPLE.



THE
PRESIDENT!

...

UM...
THE POPE!
OR THE DALAI
LAMA!

STILL NOTHING?

GEEZ,
I DON'T KNOW...
BRANGELINA!

C'MON, GIVE
ME SOMETHING!

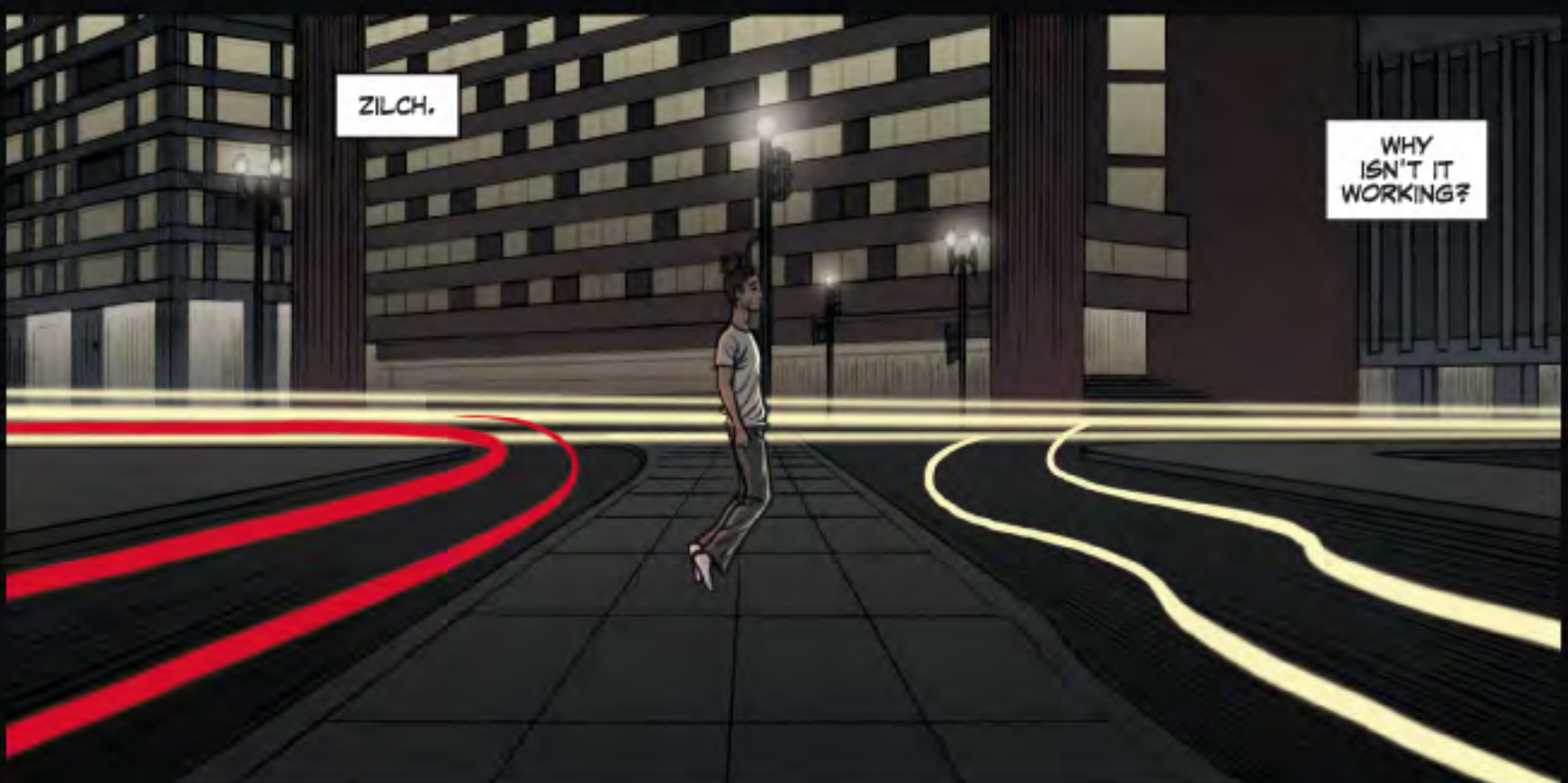
ER...
GOD.

...JESUS?

UM,
SATAN?

DO THEY HAVE
TO BE ALIVE...?

...OR REAL?



ZILCH.

WHY
ISN'T IT
WORKING?

WAIT.

OH MY
GOD.

EVERYONE I SAW
LAST TIME ARE
PEOPLE THAT I
ACTUALLY *KNOW*.

BUT I STILL
WANT TO VISIT
SOMEONE
DIFFERENT
THIS TIME.

SOMEONE I
HAVEN'T SEEN
IN A WHILE.

BUT
WHO...

SO, MAYBE I
CAN ONLY JUMP
TO THEM.



NO.

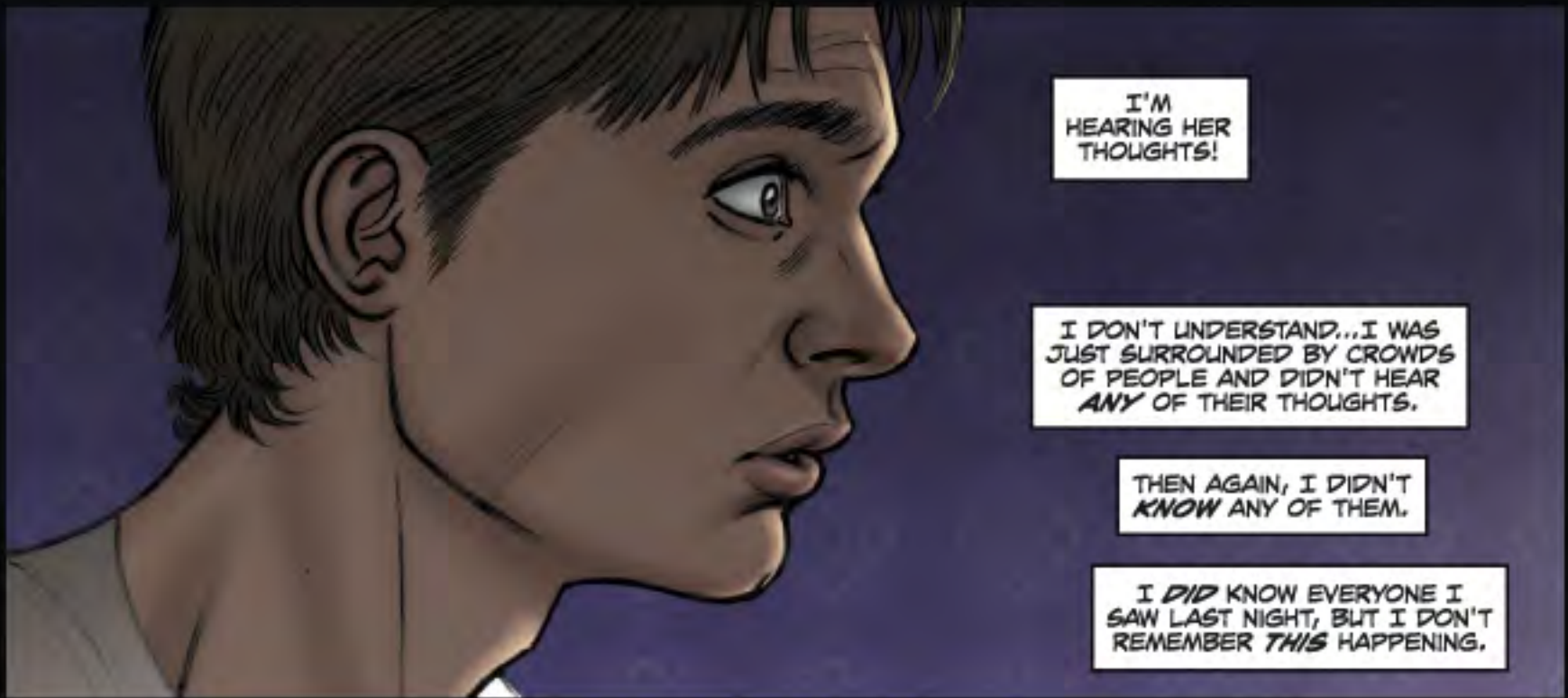
NOT
HER.



OH NO,
IT'S HAPPENING!
ST-STOP! I DON'T
WANT TO GO--







I'M HEARING HER THOUGHTS!

I DON'T UNDERSTAND...I WAS JUST SURROUNDED BY CROWDS OF PEOPLE AND DIDN'T HEAR *ANY* OF THEIR THOUGHTS.

THEN AGAIN, I DIDN'T *KNOW* ANY OF THEM.

I *DID* KNOW EVERYONE I SAW LAST NIGHT, BUT I DON'T REMEMBER *THIS* HAPPENING.



EVERYONE HAS ABANDONED ME.

I'M SO ALONE.

BUT HAVING FRIENDS ISN'T WORTH EXPOSING MYSELF TO THE *EVILS AND DISEASES* OF THE WORLD!

THEY ALL SAY I'M CRAZY FOR LIVING THIS WAY, BUT *THEY'RE* CRAZY FOR TAKING THOSE RISKS!

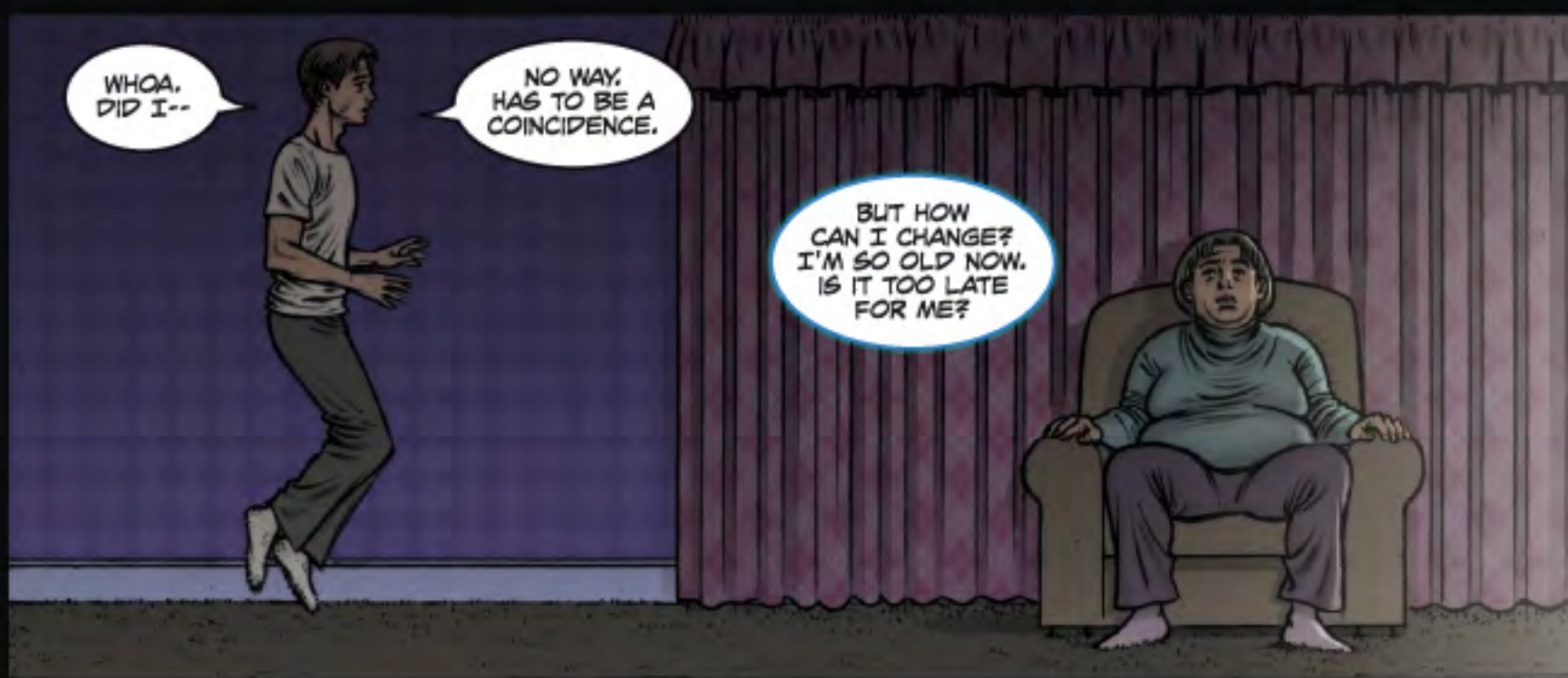
THEY'RE CRAZY! NOT ME! NOT ME!

RIGHT?



UM. I VOTE "WRONG."







THIS IS INSANE.

CAN I MAKE HER DO ANYTHING?

TOUCH YOUR NOSE!
RECITE THE ALPHABET!
TWIRL!



HMM... DIDN'T WORK.

MAYBE I CAN ONLY MAKE HER DO SOMETHING WHEN SHE FIRST CONSIDERS IT ON HER OWN.



I FEEL SO MOTIVATED! I WANT TO CHANGE MY LIFE, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN. MAYBE I SHOULD SWALLOW MY PRIDE AND START RECONNECTING WITH PEOPLE.

SAM.

HE WAS SUCH A GOOD, BOY.

A GOOD, CLEAN BOY.



BUT NOT ANYMORE.



THE DEVIL
TOOK HOLD
OF HIM.

I KNEW I
LOST HIM ONCE
HE STARTED DATING
THAT TROUBLEMAKING
WHORE IN ART SCHOOL.
THAT CHEAP, UNCLEAN,
DRUGGIE, LOSER OF
A WOMAN!

I WARNED
HIM NOT TO HAVE
RELATIONS WITH GIRLS
BEFORE MARRIAGE,
ESPECIALLY WITH
ONES AS VILE
AS HER.



I TOLD HIM--
YOU CAN'T TRUST
PEOPLE. IF YOU GIVE
ANYONE AN OPENING...
THEY'LL *INVADE* YOUR
ENTIRE WORLD, *DEVOUR*
YOUR SOUL AND
DESTROY YOU.

I WONDER
IF HE'S STILL WITH
HER, RUINING HIS LIFE.
STUPID BOY. HAD SO MUCH
PROMISE, BUT ENDED
UP A DISAPPOINTMENT.
JUST LIKE HIS
FATHER.



VANESSA
AND I BROKE UP
YEARS AGO. I DON'T
EVEN KNOW WHAT
HAPPENED TO
HER SINCE.

MAYBE
I WOULD'VE
TOLD YOU THAT
IF YOU TREATED
ME LIKE A
PERSON, NOT
A PUPPET.

I CAN'T
CHANGE HIM BACK
TO MY SWEET, LITTLE
ANGEL. WHAT COULD
I EVER SAY TO
HIM NOW?



DON'T
SAY
ANYTHING.

YOU
SAID
ENOUGH,
MOM.



TH- THEY PUT A *GUN* IN MY FACE AND TOOK IT!

I-I'M SORRY, TAY. IT'S ALL... GONE.

WHO TOOK IT?

WELL... IT--IT WAS DARK AND WAS OVER IN SECONDS--

BUT I SWEAR, I'LL BE MORE CAREFUL WITH THE NEXT BATCH.



LOOK ME IN THE EYES.

AND TELL ME THAT STORY AGAIN.

JESUS, VANESSA... WHAT HAVE YOU GOTTEN YOURSELF INTO?

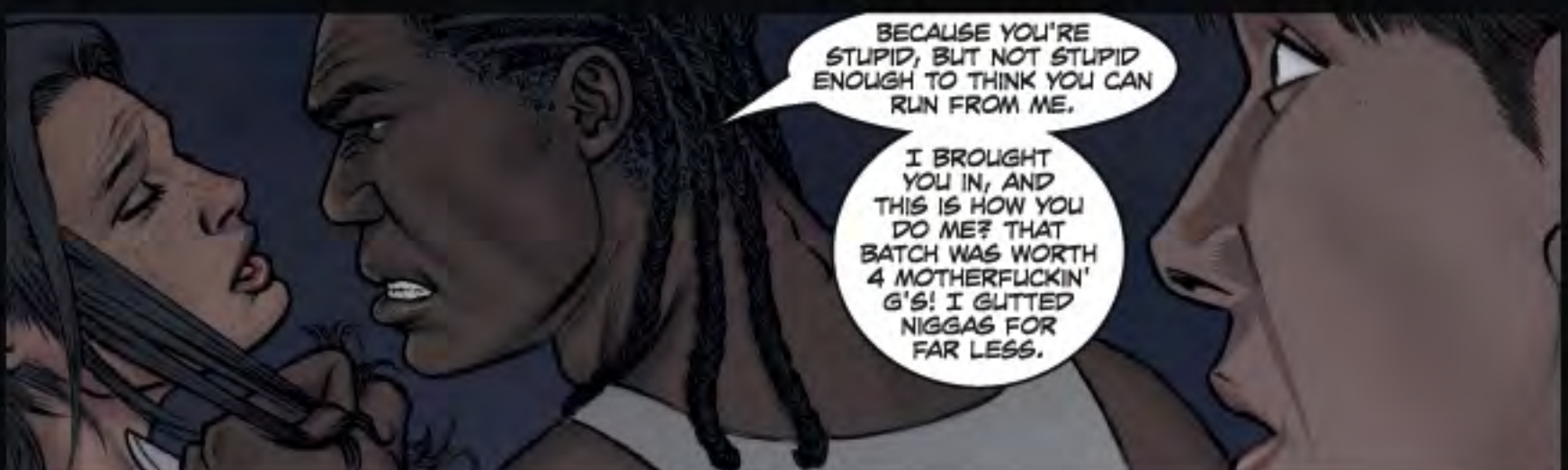
TAY... C'MON. YOU THINK I'D LIE TO YOU?



LOOK AT YOU-- YOU'RE ALL FUCKED UP!

BITCH, YOU'VE BEEN DIPPING INTO YOUR STASH!

N-NO! YOU KNOW I STOPPED USING! WHY WOULD I COME STRAIGHT TO YOU IF I STOLE FROM YOU?



BECAUSE YOU'RE STUPID, BUT NOT STUPID ENOUGH TO THINK YOU CAN RUN FROM ME.

I BROUGHT YOU IN, AND THIS IS HOW YOU DO ME? THAT BATCH WAS WORTH 4 MOTHERFUCKIN' G'S! I GLUTTED NIGGAS FOR FAR LESS.



OH GOD!
THIS IS HOW IT
ENDS? I'M SUCH
A FUCK-UP! HOW
COULD I LET
MY LIFE GET
TO THIS--?!

VANESSA,
HE'S SERIOUSLY
GOING TO KILL YOU!
CALL OUT FOR HELP!
FIGHT HIM OFF! **DO
SOMETHING!
QUICK!**



NO ONE WILL
HELP ME, HE OWNS
THIS STREET. I CAN'T
FIGHT HIM. HE'S
TOO STRONG.

HE SAW RIGHT
THROUGH MY SHITTY
PLAN, BUT...LYING AGAIN
MIGHT BE MY ONLY
CHANCE...

THEN
DO IT!

BUT
I DON'T
THINK--

**DO
IT
NOW!**



**I'LL
PAY YOU
BACK!**

KILLING
ME WILL GET YOU
ZERO, BUT I CAN
GET YOU **ALL** OF IT,
I SWEAR. JUST GIVE
ME SOME TIME...
PLEASE!

...
THREE
DAYS.



IF I DON'T
HAVE IT ALL BY
THEN, YOU'RE GONNA
WISH THIS KNIFE
FINISHED YOU OFF
TONIGHT.

BECAUSE
NEXT TIME, MY
BOYS ARE JUMPIN'
IN AND WE WON'T BE
STABBIN' YOU WITH
BLADES.

AND DON'T
FORGET, BITCH--
I CAN ALWAYS
FIND YOUR
ASS!



IT'S OVER.

I'M DEAD.

WHY DID I LIE? THERE'S NO WAY I CAN PAY HIM BACK IN TIME.

I NEED... I...I NEED MY FIX.

NEED IT NOW...

NEED IT...



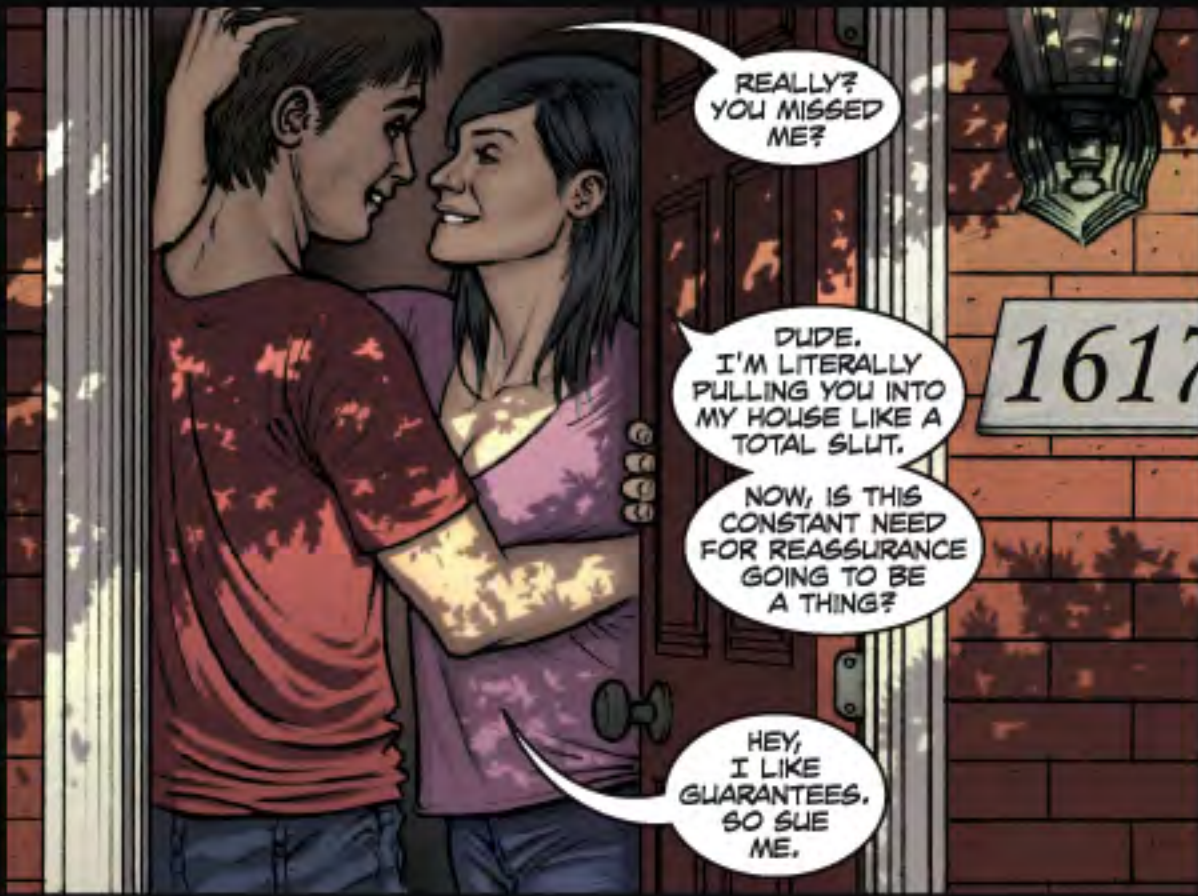
SHIT. DID I JUST MAKE THINGS WORSE? I CAN'T LET THEM HURT HER. I NEED TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO HELP HER. WITHIN THREE DAYS.

GOD, YOU WERE ALWAYS TROUBLE, VANESSA.

I CAN'T TELL IF YOU WERE BEAUTIFUL IN SPITE OF THAT OR *BECAUSE* OF THAT. EITHER WAY, WE COULD *NEVER* WORK.



IF ONLY I HAD THAT SAME CLOSURE WITH *LILY*.



REALLY? YOU MISSED ME?

DUDE. I'M LITERALLY PULLING YOU INTO MY HOUSE LIKE A TOTAL SLUT.

NOW, IS THIS CONSTANT NEED FOR REASSURANCE GOING TO BE A THING?

HEY, I LIKE GUARANTEES. SO SUE ME.



SILLY.

NO ONE GETS GUARANTEES.



YOU'RE WRONG, *LILY*.



RIGHT NOW, I'M GUARANTEED EVERYTHING.



I JUST
HAVE TO GO
THROUGH
THE DOOR.

To be continued....