

CHAPTER III

I CAN EXPLAIN





MISS LAU!



GAH-UH!
W-WHA?!



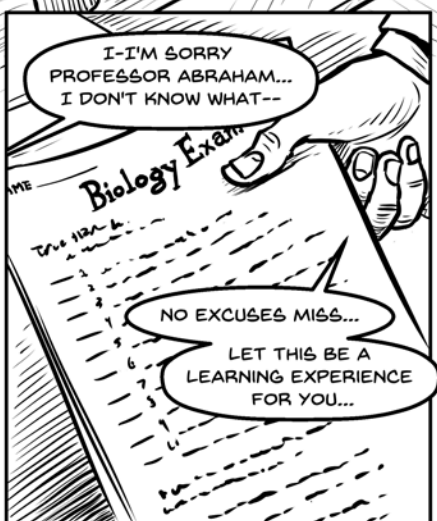
I SAID CLASS IS DISMISSED!

I-I DON'T KNOW...WHAT...

IT SEEMS YOU MIGHT BENEFIT FROM LEARNING HOW TO SPEND YOUR TIME WISELY MISS LAU.

THAT INCLUDES A GOOD NIGHT'S REST.

I DO NOT TOLERATE THIS KIND OF BEHAVIOR IN MY CLASS. PERHAPS LESS TIME AT SOCIAL GATHERINGS AND MORE TIME PREPARING FOR DAYS SUCH AS THIS WOULD DO YOU WELL.



I-I'M SORRY PROFESSOR ABRAHAM... I DON'T KNOW WHAT--

NO EXCUSES MISS... LET THIS BE A LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR YOU...



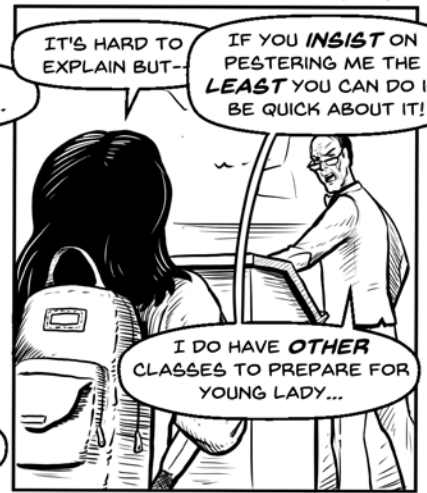
LIFE IS WROUGHT WITH CHALLENGES.

TESTS BIG AND SMALL.



THE LEAST WE CAN DO IS KEEP OUR EYES OPEN TO FACE THEM.

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!



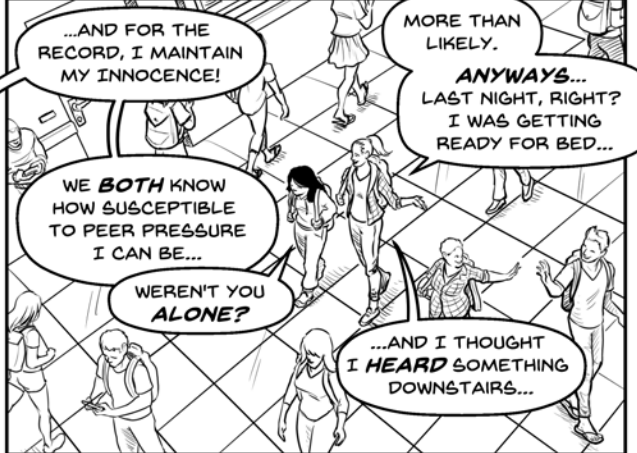




SO GET...THIS. YOU KNOW THE CHIMNEY IN MY PARENT'S HOUSE?

YEEEAH... THAT ONE...

THE ONE YOU GOT CAUGHT SMOKING POT UNDER TRYING TO HIDE THE SMELL?



...AND FOR THE RECORD, I MAINTAIN MY INNOCENCE!

MORE THAN LIKELY.

ANYWAYS... LAST NIGHT, RIGHT? I WAS GETTING READY FOR BED...

WE BOTH KNOW HOW SUSCEPTIBLE TO PEER PRESSURE I CAN BE...

WEREN'T YOU ALONE?

...AND I THOUGHT I HEARD SOMETHING DOWNSTAIRS...



...I WAKE UP IN THE MORNING TO FIND THE HOUSE A MESS...

BOOKS, DVDs, MOM'S FIGURINES, MY DAD'S GUN ZINES... EVERYWHERE...

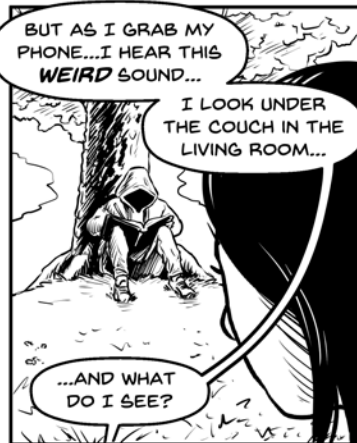
I'M THINKIN' "IT MUST HAVE BEEN A BREAK-IN! WHAT IF THE GUY'S STILL HERE?!"

YIKES, THAT'S SCARY...



I KNOW!

SO I WAS JUST ABOUT TO CALL 911...



BUT AS I GRAB MY PHONE...I HEAR THIS WEIRD SOUND...

I LOOK UNDER THE COUCH IN THE LIVING ROOM...

...AND WHAT DO I SEE?



THERE...IN THE DARK... ROWS OF HUNGRY...

...YELLOW...



...TEETH...

IT WAS A RACCOON DID YOU HEAR

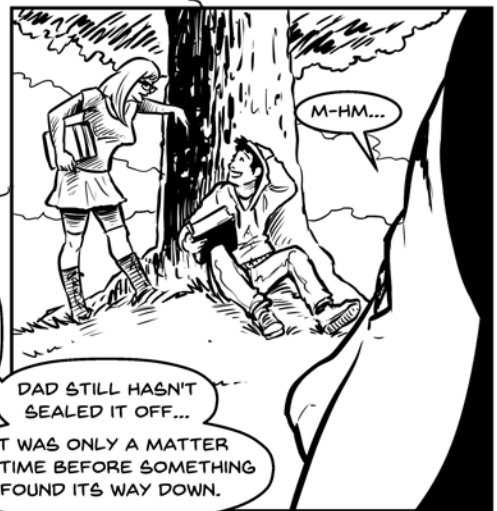


A RACCOON!

W-WHAT?

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?! A SMELLY OLD RACCOON, GROWLING BACK AT ME!

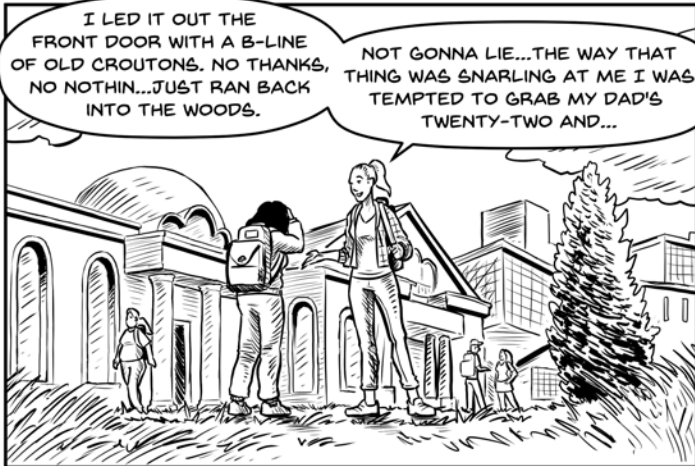
MY GUESS IS THE LITTLE SHIT CAME DOWN THE CHIMNEY IN THE BASEMENT...



M-HM...

DAD STILL HASN'T SEALED IT OFF...

IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SOMETHING FOUND ITS WAY DOWN.



I LED IT OUT THE FRONT DOOR WITH A B-LINE OF OLD CROUTONS. NO THANKS, NO NOTHIN...JUST RAN BACK INTO THE WOODS.

NOT GONNA LIE...THE WAY THAT THING WAS SNARLING AT ME I WAS TEMPTED TO GRAB MY DAD'S TWENTY-TWO AND...



UUH...ELLO? IS SUE HOME?

IT'S ME, ASHLEY. YOUR BEST FRIEND WHO HAD A REALLY HARROWING STORY TO TELL...

OH. SORRY...I'M... NOT FEELING ALL THAT WELL...



WHAT'S GOIN' ON?

I'M STILL TRYING TO FIGURE THAT OUT ACTUALLY...

YOU GOT A FEVER?

NO, IT'S NOT--



COME HERE, LEMME FEEL YA!

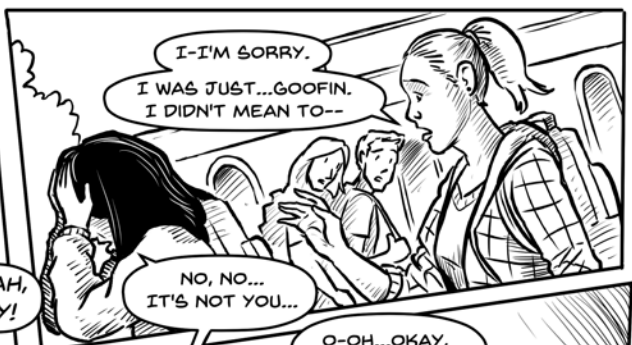
ASH, STOP, I DON'T HAVE--

HMM, KINDA CLAMMY. HAVE YOU EATEN ANY SHELLFISH LATELY?



I SAID STOP! IT'S NOT LIKE THAT!

WOAH, HEY!



I-I'M SORRY.

I WAS JUST...GOOFIN. I DIDN'T MEAN TO--

NO, NO... IT'S NOT YOU...

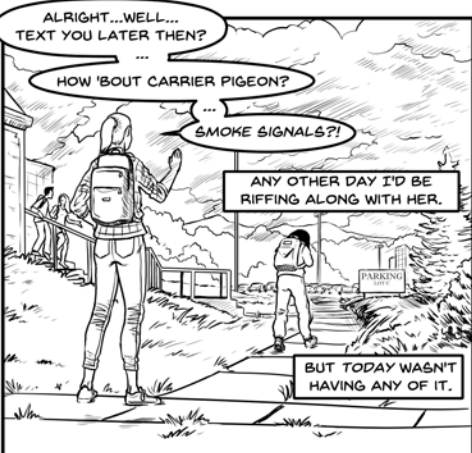
O-OH...OKAY, I UNDERSTAND.

I'M JUST... NOT FEELING MYSELF TODAY. THAT'S ALL...

IS THERE SOMETHING I CAN--

NO.

I THINK I'M JUST GONNA GO HOME... GET SOME REST.



ALRIGHT...WELL...
TEXT YOU LATER THEN?

HOW 'BOUT CARRIER PIGEON?

...
SMOKE SIGNALS?!

ANY OTHER DAY I'D BE
RIFLING ALONG WITH HER.

BUT TODAY WASN'T
HAVING ANY OF IT.



THOUGHTS OF MONSTERS AND
DEMONS RACKED MY BRAIN.

I'VE NEVER FELT ANYTHING LIKE THIS...IT'S AS THOUGH I'M...



GOD...IS THIS...

IS THIS WHAT IT FEELS
LIKE TO...GO INSANE?

NO...

STOP THIS.

AT THIS RATE YOU'LL GO
NUTS JUST THINKING
ABOUT WHETHER OR
NOT YOU'RE NUTS!

TAKE A DEEP BREATH...

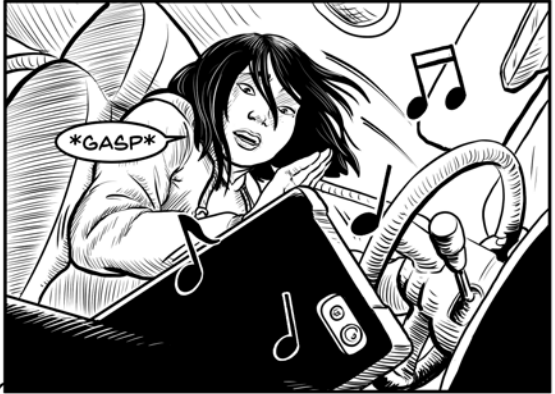
CHU-KUH



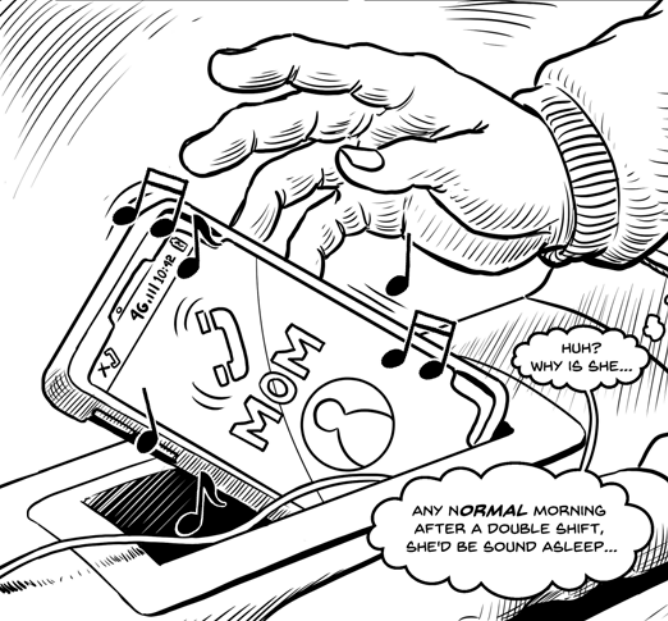
AND CALM...DOWN...



THUMP



GASP



HUH?
WHY IS SHE...

ANY NORMAL MORNING
AFTER A DOUBLE SHIFT,
SHE'D BE SOUND ASLEEP...



HEY MOM WHAT'S--WHOA WHOA!

I...I LEFT IT IN MY CAR!
IT NEEDED TO CH--

WHAT?!

NO! I...I'VE BEEN IN CLASS!

...
ALRIGHT--

ALRIGHT, YEAH!
I WAS ON MY WAY
HOME ANYWAYS!

AS VAGUE AS SHE
WAS, THE SOUND
IN MOM'S VOICE
TOLD ME ENOUGH.

THIS HORRIFYING DAY WAS
JUST GETTING STARTED...

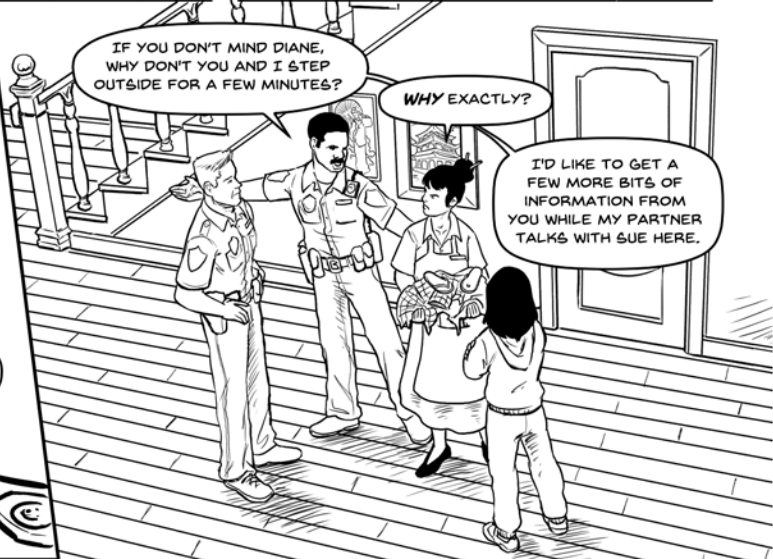
...AND GOING HOME WAS NOT
GOING TO MAKE IT ANY EASIER...

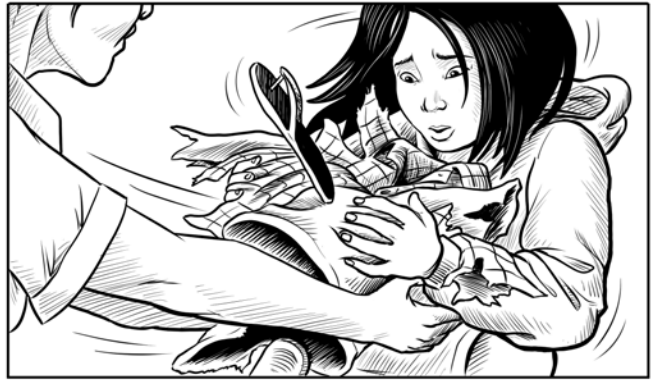












WE'LL DISCUSS THINGS IN HERE...



THERE'S NO NEED TO BE SCARED.

I'M NOT...



THAT'S GOOD TO KNOW.

NOW, DO YOU REMEMBER SEEING ANY SHADY CHARACTERS AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

NO.



HAVE YOU HAD ANY RECENT ALTERCATIONS WITH ANYONE WHO WOULD WANT TO HURT YOU OR OTHERS AROUND HERE?

NO. I-I DON'T REALLY TALK WITH MANY PEOPLE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD ANYM--



DID YOU SAY 'OTHERS'?!

YES. YOUR HOUSE WAS NOT THE ONLY ONE TO BE... DISTURBED LAST NIGHT.

MRS. ABERNATHY...

WAIT...



ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH HER?



RISE AND SHINE BABY!
IT'S BREAKFAST TIME!



PICKLES?



WHAT ARE YOU
DOING BACK THERE
YOU SILLY PUP?!

COME OUT
FROM THERE!



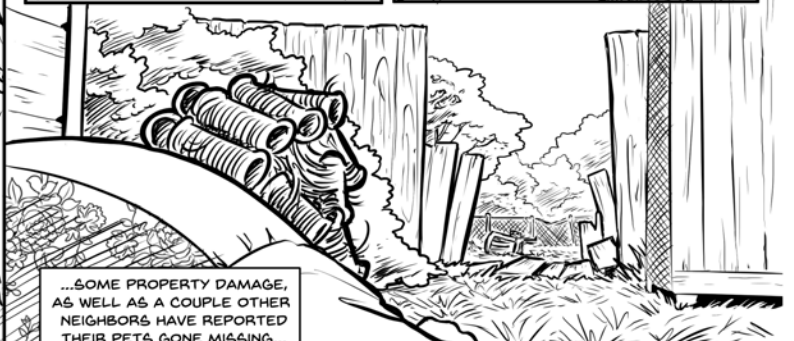
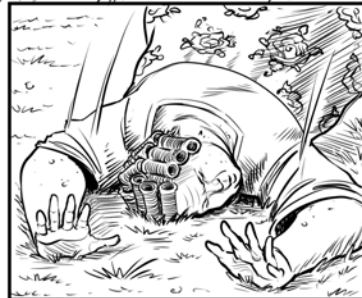
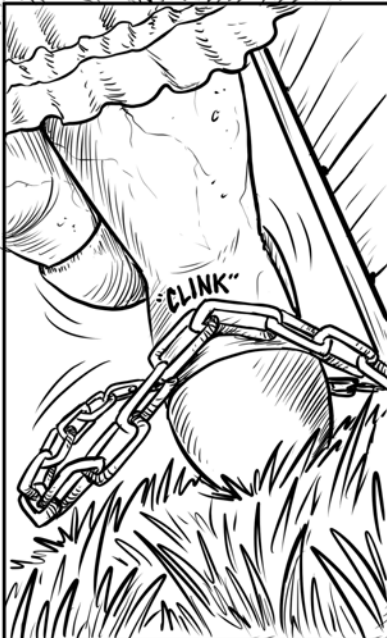
I GOT YOU
LEFT OVER BEEF
AND CHICKEN--



GASP

DONK





...SOME PROPERTY DAMAGE, AS WELL AS A COUPLE OTHER NEIGHBORS HAVE REPORTED THEIR PETS GONE MISSING...



OH, THANK GOD...



I-I MEAN THAT...

NOBODY WAS HURT...

...RIGHT?



I WANNA SHOW YOU SOMETHING SUE...



WILL YOU FOLLOW ME PLEASE?

WHERE, TO THE GALLOWES?



WHAT DO YOU SEE HERE?

UM...GLASS?

GLASS ONLY ON ONE SIDE OF THE DOOR.



I'VE BEEN TO THREE OTHER HOUSES TODAY... YOURS HOWEVER WAS THE ONLY ONE BURGLARIZED...

STRANGER STILL...

THERE'S A CLEAR EXIT POINT. ...BUT NO ENTRY.



THEN...HOW DID THEY COME IN YOU THINK?



THAT'S THE MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION...

...ISN'T IT?



WELL, I THINK WE'RE DONE HERE...

FOR THE TIME BEING.

UM... OFFICER?



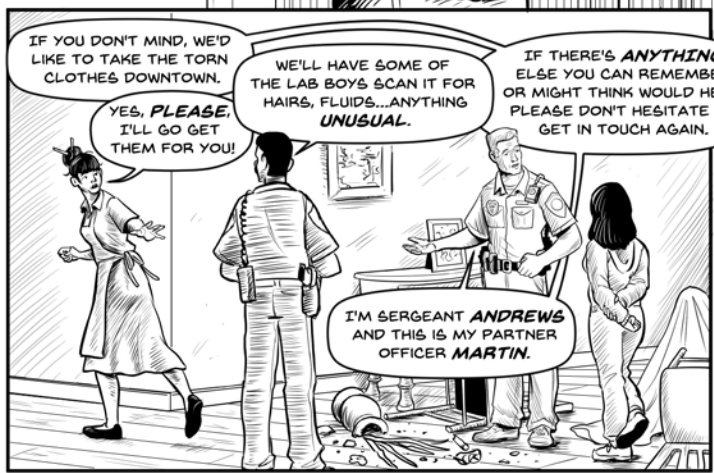
WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

WELL, WE'RE GOING TO TRY AND GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS. EITHER WE HAVE A WILD ANIMAL TERRORIZING THE NEIGHBORHOOD OR A SICK INDIVIDUAL HIGH ON BATH SALTS BREAKING THROUGH GLASS WINDOWS AND EATING DOGS. ALBEIT I'M HOPING FOR THE FORMER.

WHY'S THAT?

EASIER TO TRACK DOWN. EASIER TO PUT DOWN.



IF YOU DON'T MIND, WE'D LIKE TO TAKE THE TORN CLOTHES DOWNTOWN.

YES, PLEASE. I'LL GO GET THEM FOR YOU!

WE'LL HAVE SOME OF THE LAB BOYS SCAN IT FOR HAIRS, FLUIDS...ANYTHING UNUSUAL.

IF THERE'S ANYTHING ELSE YOU CAN REMEMBER OR MIGHT THINK WOULD HELP, PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO GET IN TOUCH AGAIN.

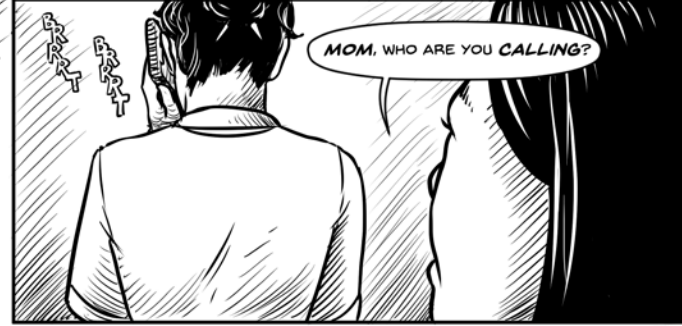
I'M SERGEANT ANDREWS AND THIS IS MY PARTNER OFFICER MARTIN.



THANK YOU AGAIN OFFICERS. WE REALLY APPRECIATE YOUR HELP.

YOU SHOULD GET A TARP OR SOMETHING TO COVER THAT HOLE UP. AT LEAST UNTIL YOU GET A NEW DOOR.

OH YES, WE WILL! THANK YOU VERY MUCH!







IF YOU THINK THAT AFTER ALL THESE YEARS YOU CAN STILL PULL THE LID OVER MY EYES, YOU'VE STILL GOT A LOT TO LEARN.



I'M NOT GOING TO LISTEN TO THIS...

I'M GOING TO MY ROOM..

OH, I DON'T THINK SO!



MOM...I'M REALLY NOT IN THE MOOD TO FIGHT...



SUSAN ERIN. 不要离开我! WHILE YOU'RE STILL UNDER THIS ROOF YOU'LL DAMN WELL LISTEN TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY!

STOP!

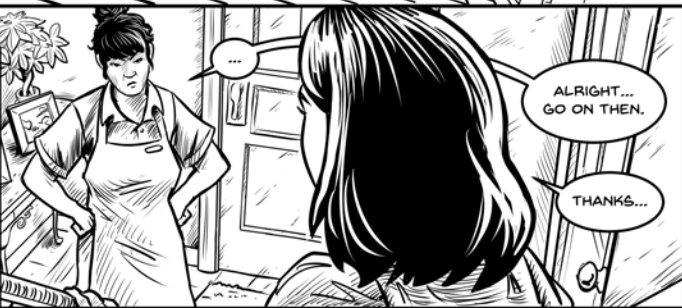
HUUUH

THUMP
THUMP
THUMP



CAN WE MAYBE TALK ABOUT THIS LATER?

I'VE HAD AN INCREBLY SHITTY MORNING AND RIGHT NOW I JUST WANT TO GET A SHOWER AND SOME SLEEP.



ALRIGHT... GO ON THEN.

THANKS...



SUE?

