

# OUR OWN

LAURA BELLMONT   MICHAEL FALOTICO

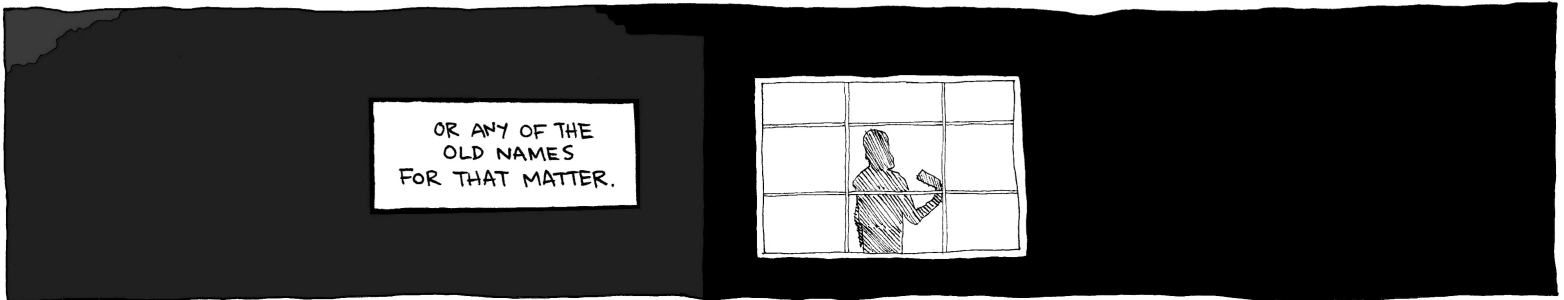


# HOME AND HEARTH

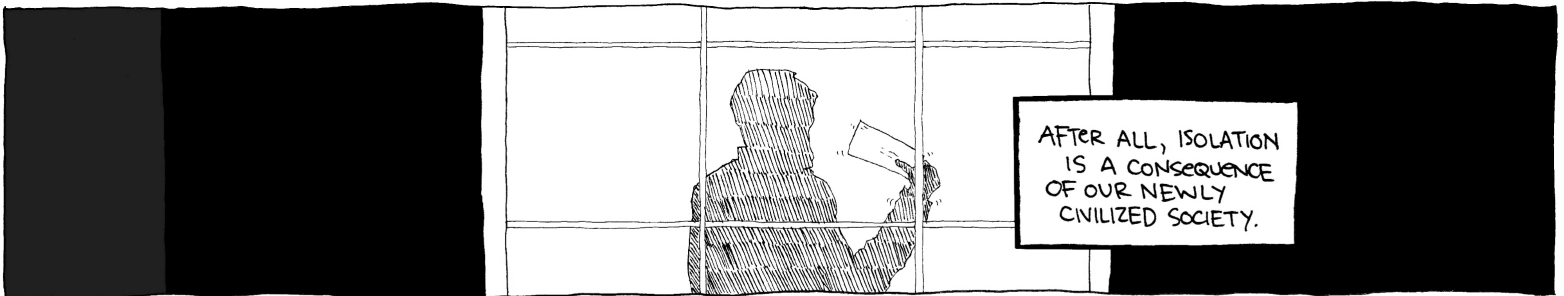
STORY BY:  
LAURA BELLMONT  
ART BY:  
MICHAEL FALOTICO



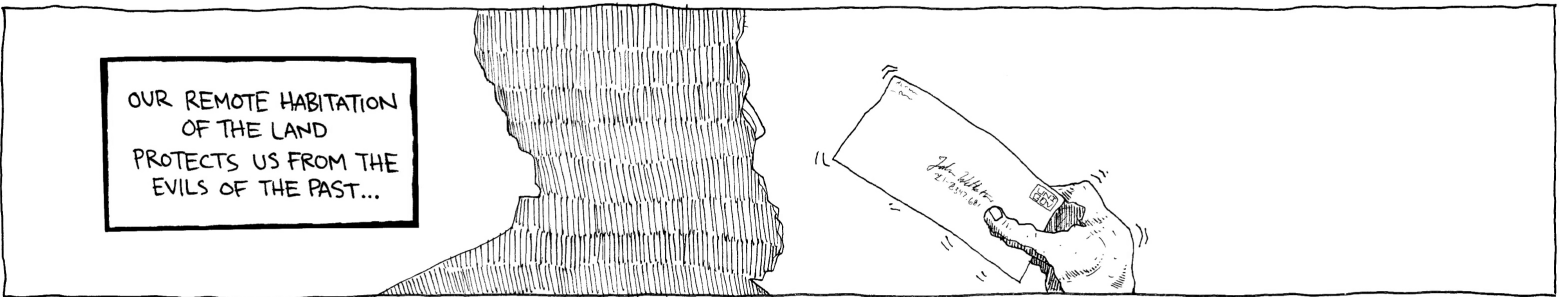
IT HAS BEEN YEARS  
SINCE LAST  
I READ THIS NAME...



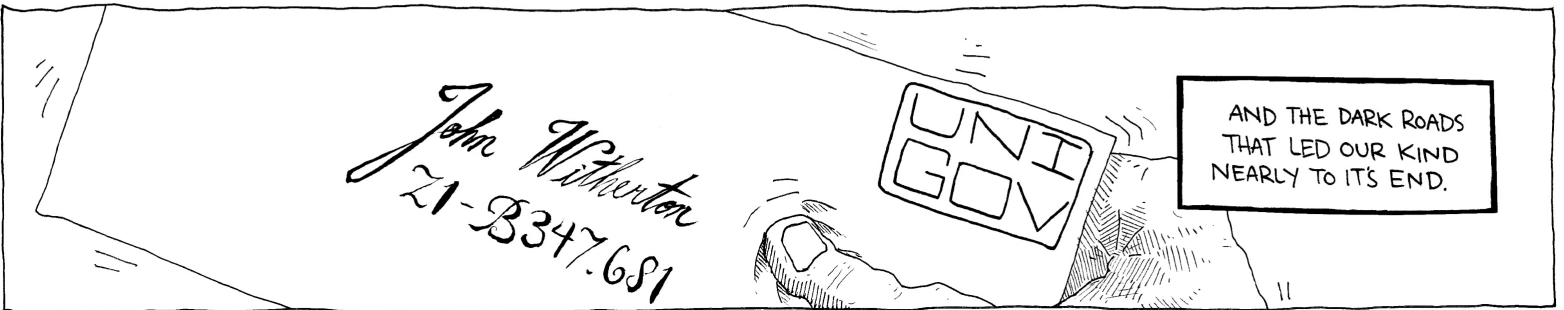
OR ANY OF THE  
OLD NAMES  
FOR THAT MATTER.



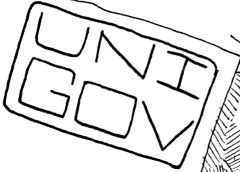
AFTER ALL, ISOLATION  
IS A CONSEQUENCE  
OF OUR NEWLY  
CIVILIZED SOCIETY.



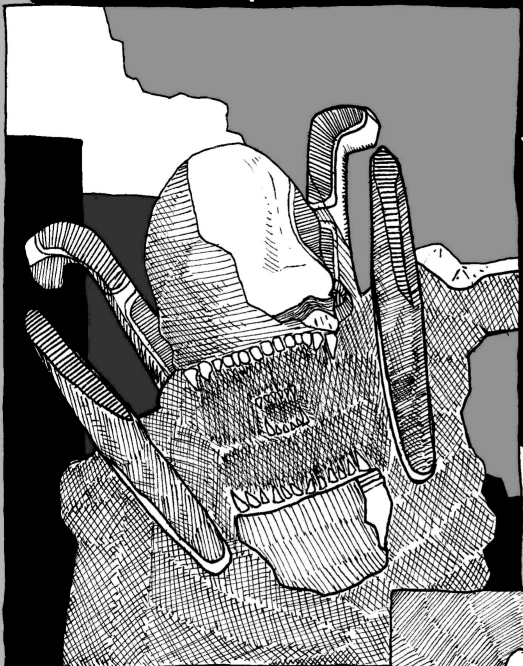
OUR REMOTE HABITATION  
OF THE LAND  
PROTECTS US FROM THE  
EVILS OF THE PAST...



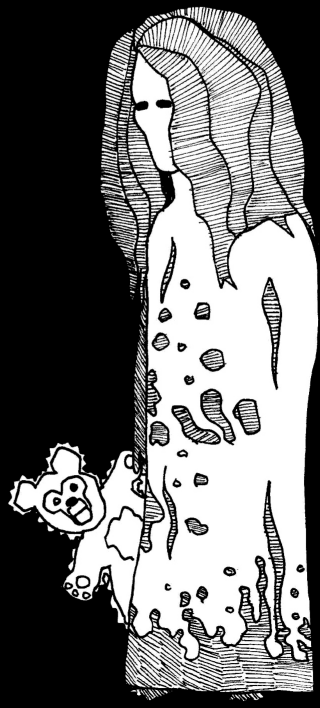
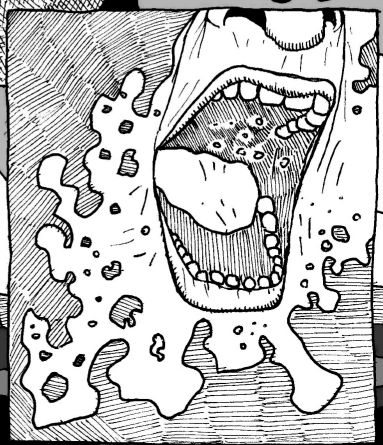
John Witherston  
21-5347.681



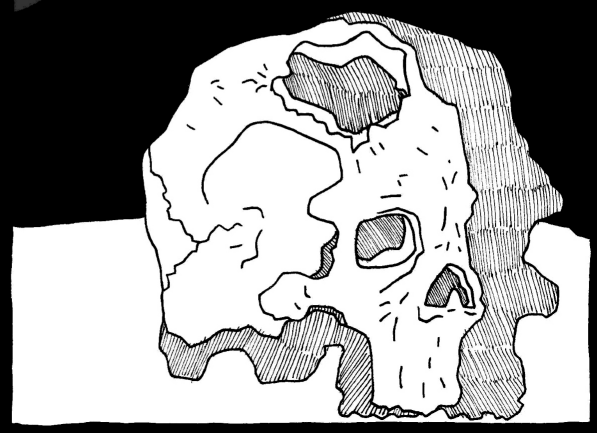
AND THE DARK ROADS  
THAT LED OUR KIND  
NEARLY TO ITS END.



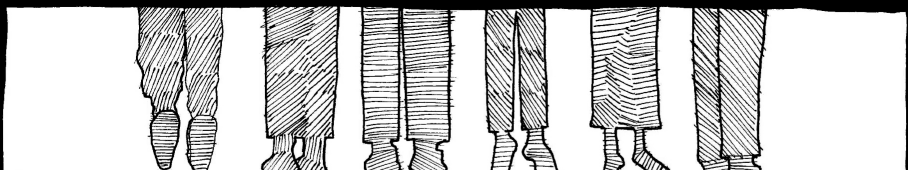
AFTER THE STALKING TERROR  
THAT CAUSED FEARFUL RETREAT  
AND THE RESULTING  
TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF  
HUMAN EXILE IN ORBIT...



THE MONSTERS LOST THEIR  
FOOD SOURCES  
AND THE HOST BODIES LEFT BEHIND  
WERE EXHAUSTED.



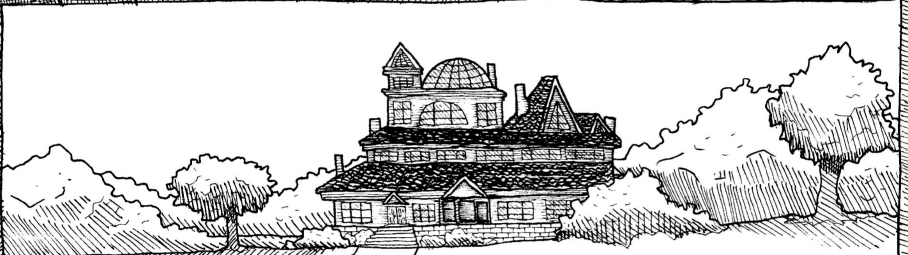
THEN, ON THE SHIPS,  
FOR THE FIRST TIME  
SURVIVORS COULD SEE  
THE WEYLAND BRUTALITY  
AND ITS GREEDY TRUTH.



THE COMPANY WAS EXPOSED  
AND ITS MEMBERS  
BROUGHT TO TRIAL BY  
THE UNIFIED GOVERNMENT.

THE EARTH'S SURFACE  
WAS SCOURGED AND RENEWED.

HUMANS CAUTIOUSLY RE-ENTERED  
THEIR HOME ATMOSPHERE  
AND THE SLOW REBIRTH OF  
THE SPECIES ON NEWLY  
ESTABLISHED SANCTUARY ESTATES  
BEGAN...



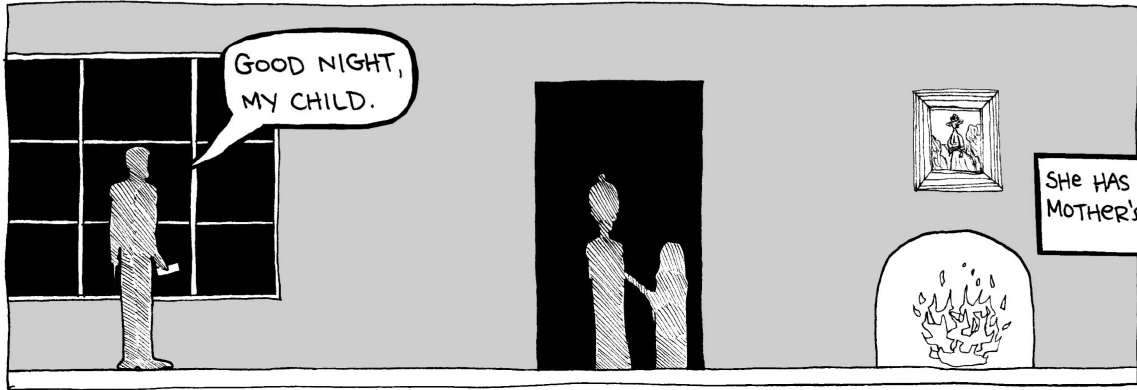
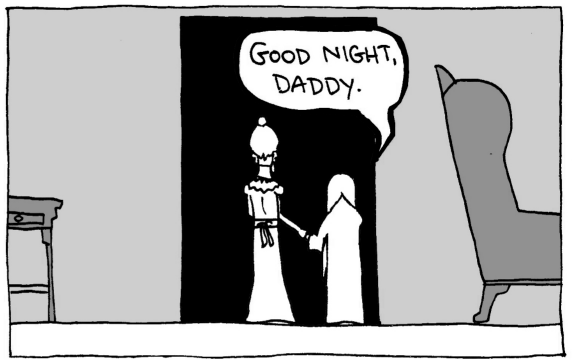
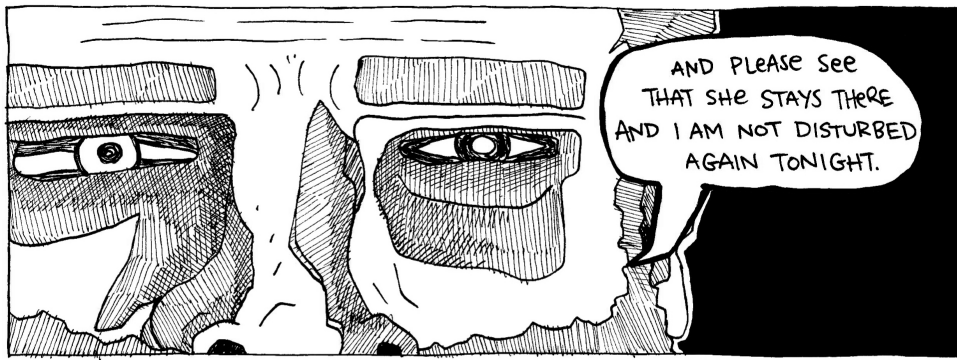
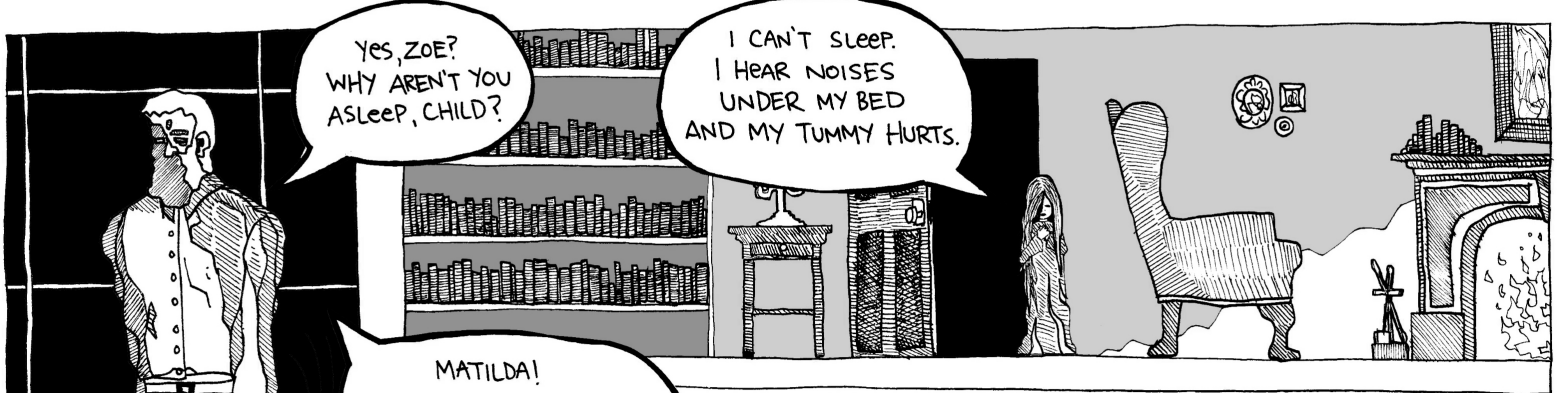
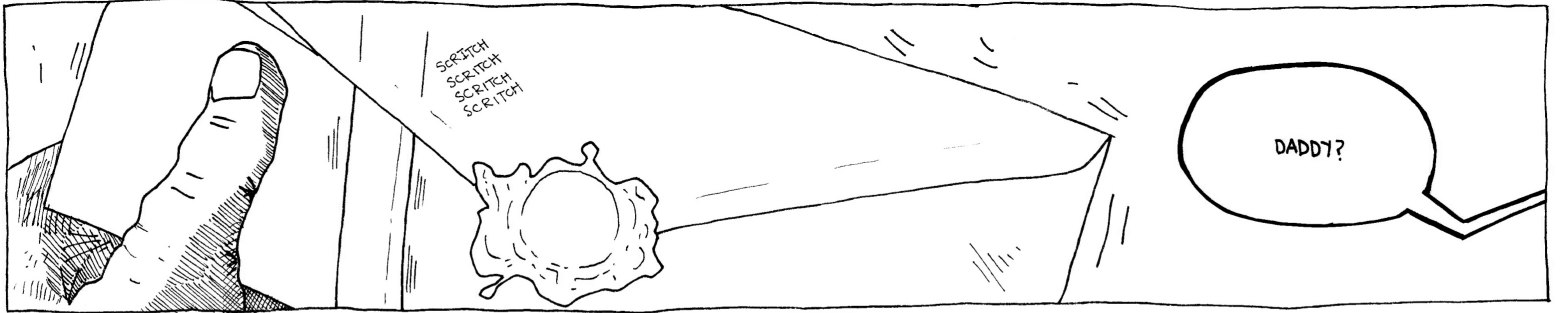
WE HAD ALL BEEN GIVEN  
OUR OWN SMALL SPACES  
IN WHICH TO THRIVE  
IN PEACEFUL SOLITUDE.

WE HAD ENJOYED  
SEVEN YEARS OF  
CIVILITY AND ORDER.

MONSTERS RETURNED TO  
THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE  
IN NIGHTMARES AND  
UNDER CHILDREN'S BEDS.

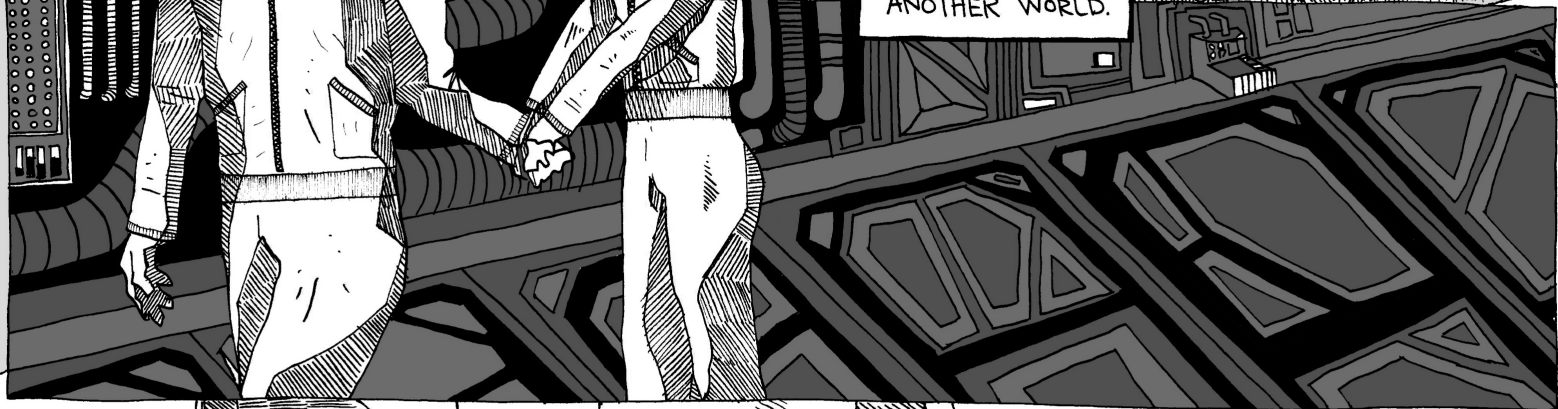


*John Witherton*  
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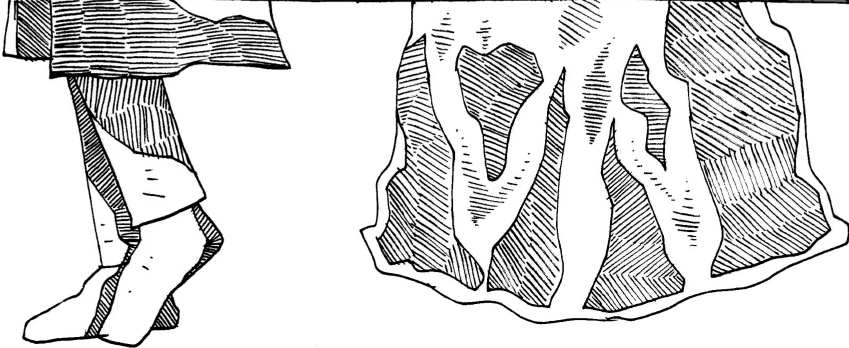




ALL OF THE STRANGENESS AND ELEGANCE  
OF ANOTHER TIME...

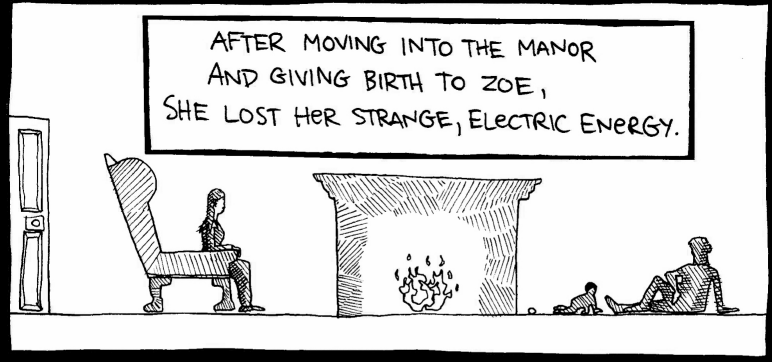


ANOTHER WORLD.

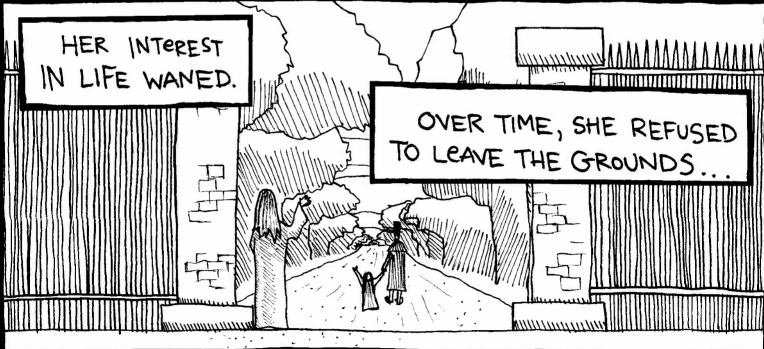




HER MOTHER WAS NOT ALIVE LONG AFTER THE MOVE FROM THE COLONY FREIGHTER AND THE RESETTLEMENT OF EARTH.

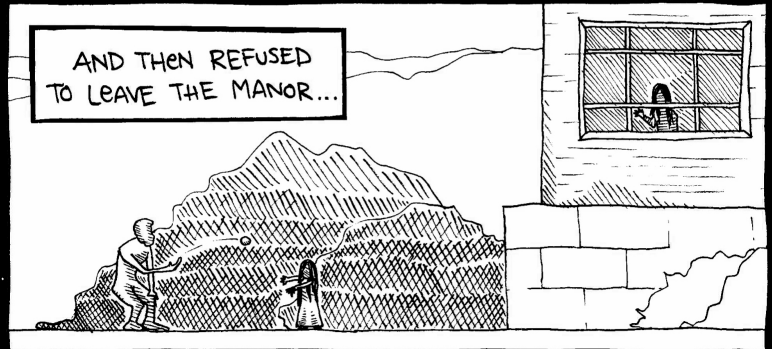


AFTER MOVING INTO THE MANOR AND GIVING BIRTH TO ZOE, SHE LOST HER STRANGE, ELECTRIC ENERGY.



HER INTEREST IN LIFE WANED.

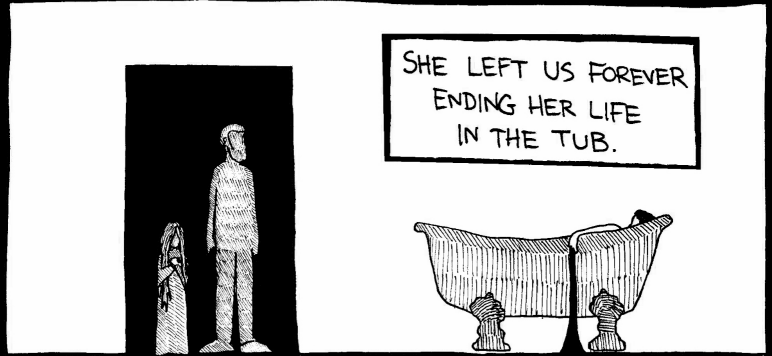
OVER TIME, SHE REFUSED TO LEAVE THE GROUNDS...



AND THEN REFUSED TO LEAVE THE MANOR...



AND THEN REFUSED TO LEAVE HER ROOM UNTIL FINALLY...



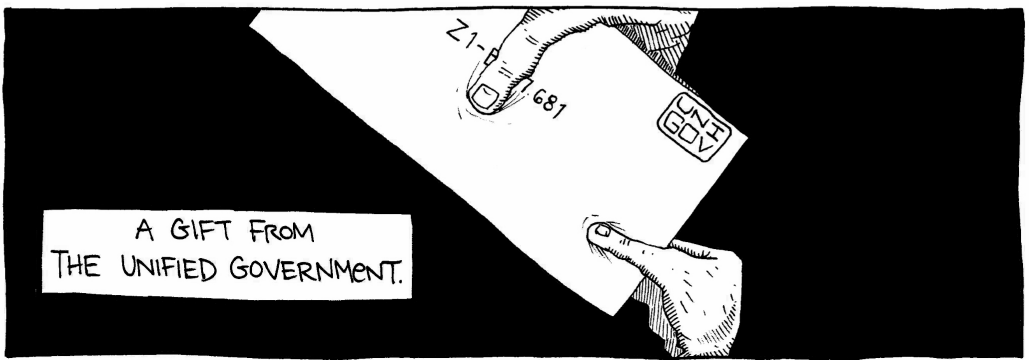
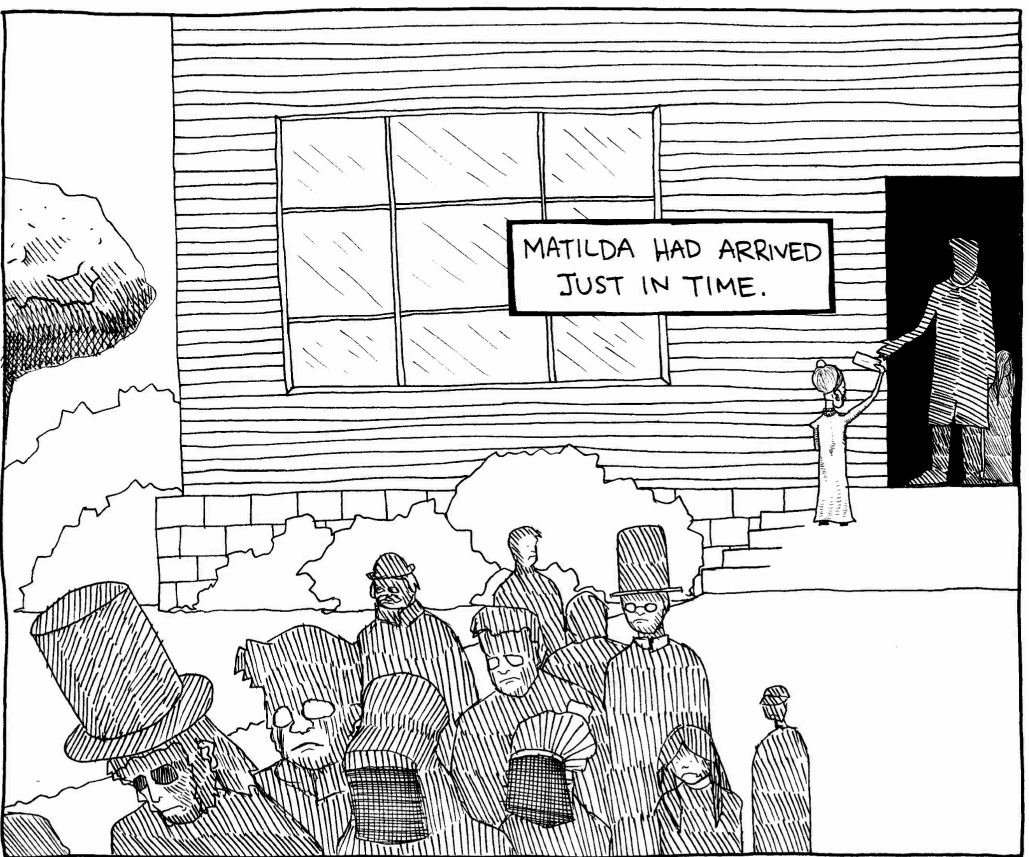
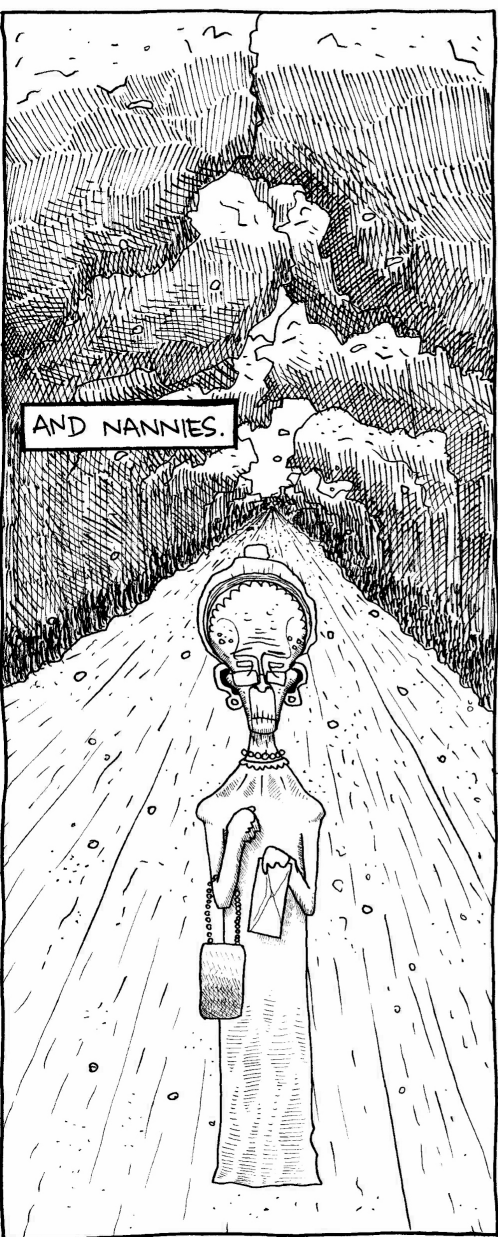
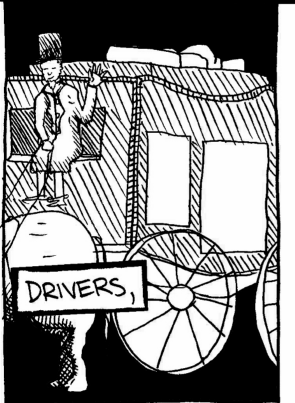
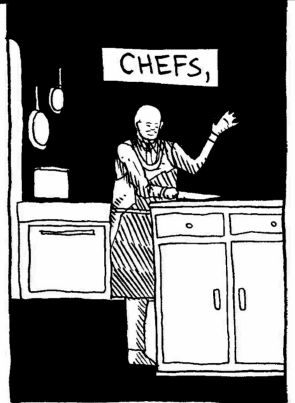
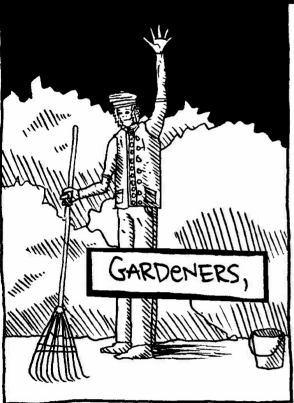
SHE LEFT US FOREVER ENDING HER LIFE IN THE TUB.

THE THOUGHT OF THOSE SAD TIMES WRAPS AROUND ME LIKE A HEAVY VOID;

THE KIND I USED TO GAZE AT IN SPACE WHILE WE WERE IN STATIC TRANSIT.



IT SEEMED THERE HAD BEEN A RASH OF TRAGIC SUICIDES JUST LIKE OUR FAMILY HAD EXPERIENCED AFTER THE SETTLEMENT BACK ON EARTH. Highborn Mothers Arriving Home to their Estates, Giving Birth, and then Losing Interest in Life. Fortunately, for we widowed land owners, the Unified Government had already launched the "Gentry Project," placing hired help in manors across the countryside. These welcome additions to each household had arrived perfectly trained and eager to serve.



CURIOUS THAT DOCTOR FIELDWELL WOULD WRITE TO ME AFTER THESE SEVERAL YEARS. WHY, I HAVEN'T HEARD WORD FROM HIM OR THE OTHER FOREFATHERS FOR A LONG TIME.



AFTER THE UNIFIED GOVERNMENT ASSIGNED ESTATES, GRANTED PRIVILEGE AND ESTABLISHED A HIERARCHY TO RESTORE ORDER, THOSE OF US REINHABITING EARTH LOST TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER.



NOT ONLY WERE WE ENCOURAGED TO REMAIN ON OUR GROUNDS FOR SAFETY REASONS..

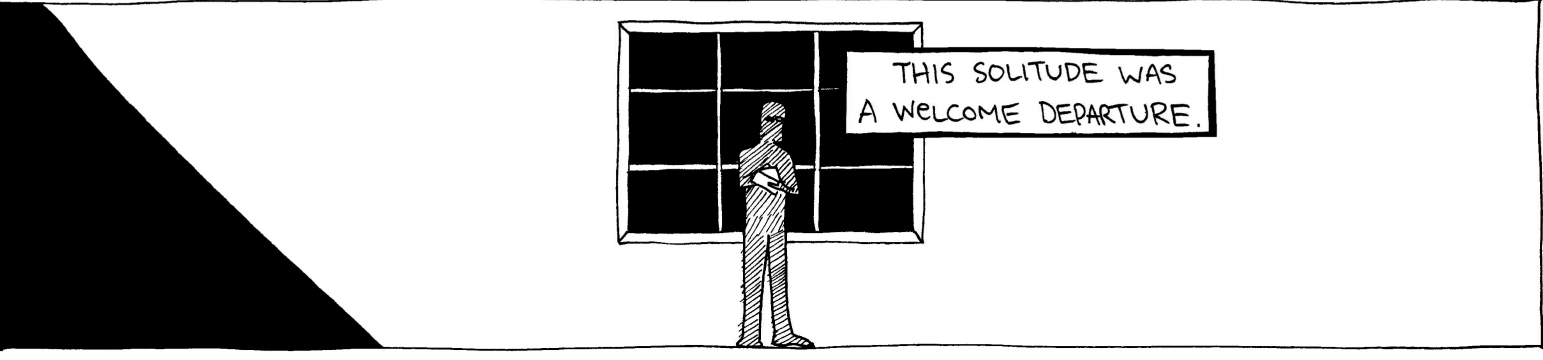
IT WAS EASY FOR THE UPPERCLASS TO AMUSE OURSELVES WITH PRIVATE WALKS ON EXPANSIVE GROUNDS AND SOLITARY DINNERS IN LARGE DINING HALLS.



AFTER SO MANY COLD, OVER CROWDED YEARS IN SPACE, FIGHTING FOR A PLACE IN THE MESS HALL AND SLEEPING IN PODS AMONG THE THRONGS OF SNORING REFUGEES...



THIS SOLITUDE WAS A WELCOME DEPARTURE.



"It is with shocking fear and grave concern that I write these words; risking everything that we have gained to warn you and what may be left of your family

"Even as I write these words, my quivering hand holds the match with which I will burn down the whole of my estate. Cleansing the ground of this nightmare.

"I have locked myself in a small room near a side door so I may deliver this letter post haste when I have penned this truth.

"I can only pray that you do not take me for a madman and this note reaches you in time. If there is still time.

"Last night on my routine walk upon the path of my north garden, I witnessed a horror that could have only existed in the days before the isolation.

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"I saw my boy Henry, now thirteen years of age, kneeling in the grass....

"His head extended upwards in a grotesque and silent howl....

"...wolf-like but without a whisper.

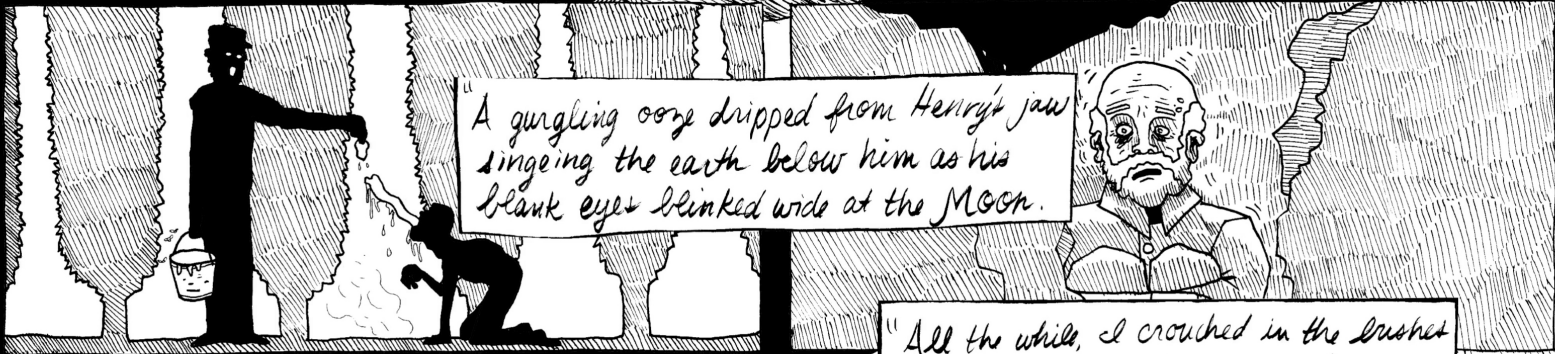
"His mouth dropped agape and was filled with a reaching jaw;

"A footed beast extending from his head like a hungry skeleton, not human, violent and twisted.

The gardening man Otto stood beside my boy and his hosted creature feeding the thing strips of raw, rancid meat.



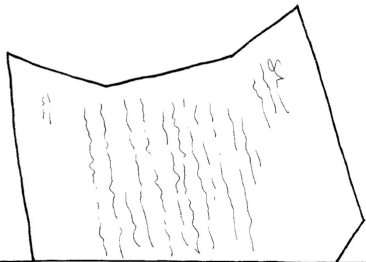
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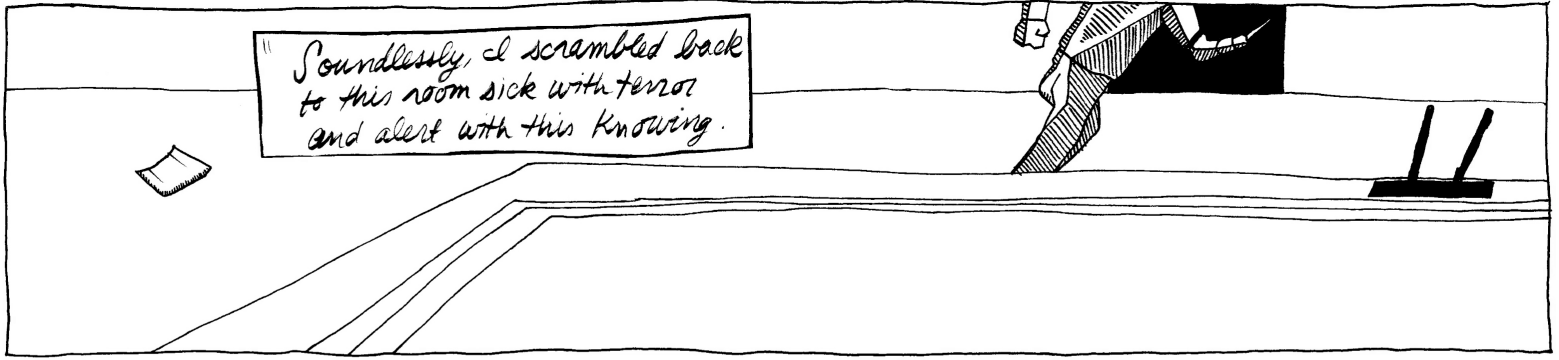


A gurgling ooze dripped from Henry's jaw singeing the earth below him as his blank eyes blinked wide at the Moon.

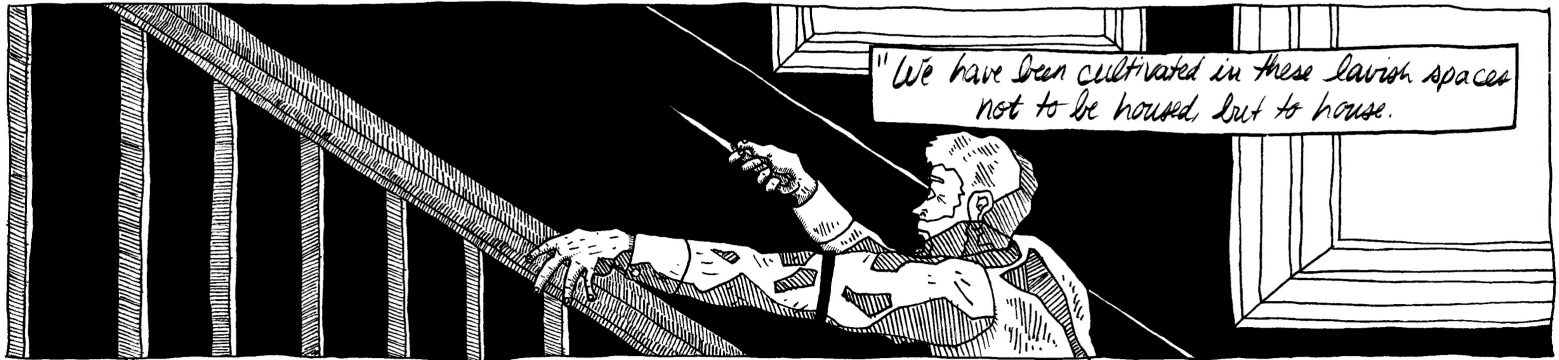


"All the while, I crouched in the bushes too aghast to move and frozen in absolute devastation.





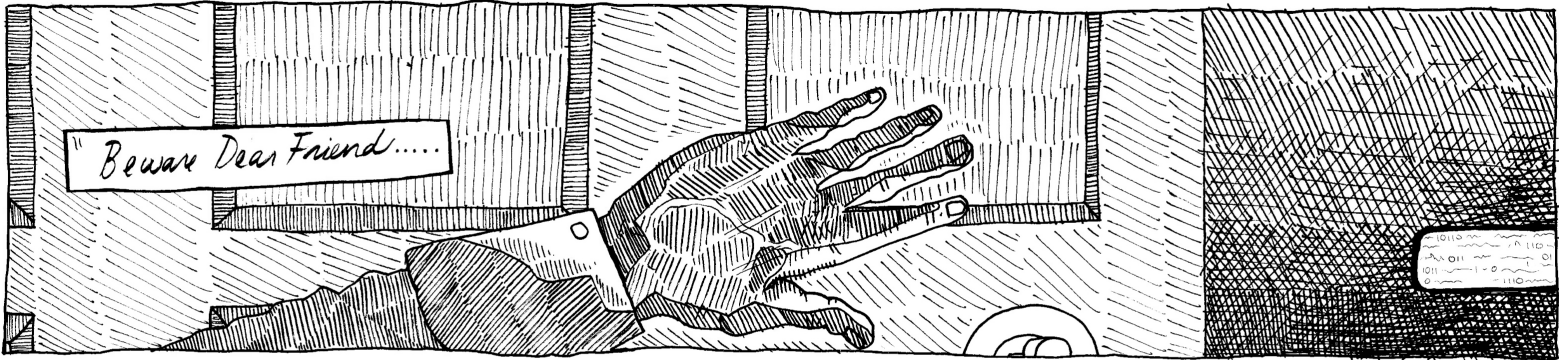
*Soundlessly, I scrambled back to this room sick with terror and alert with this knowing.*



*"We have been cultivated in these lavish spaces not to be housed, but to house."*



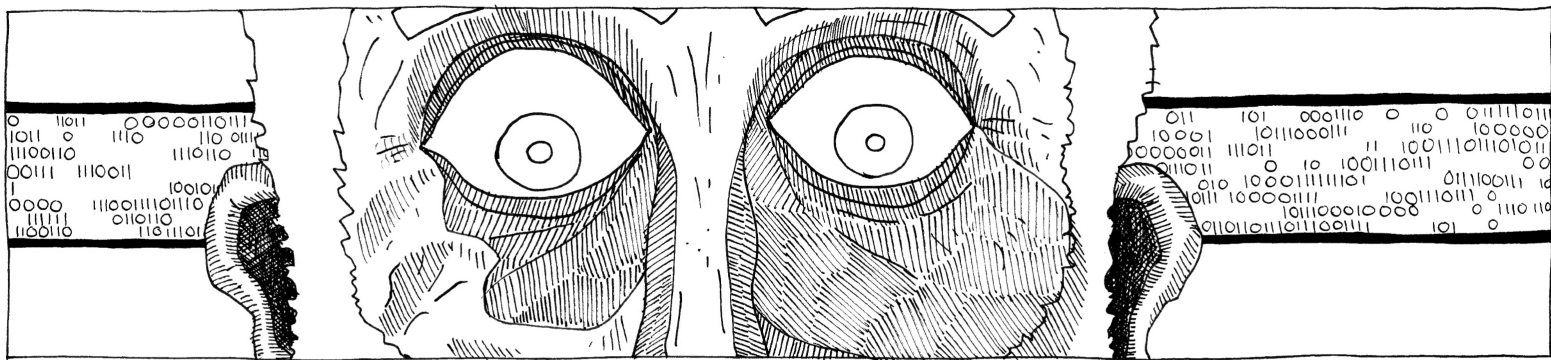
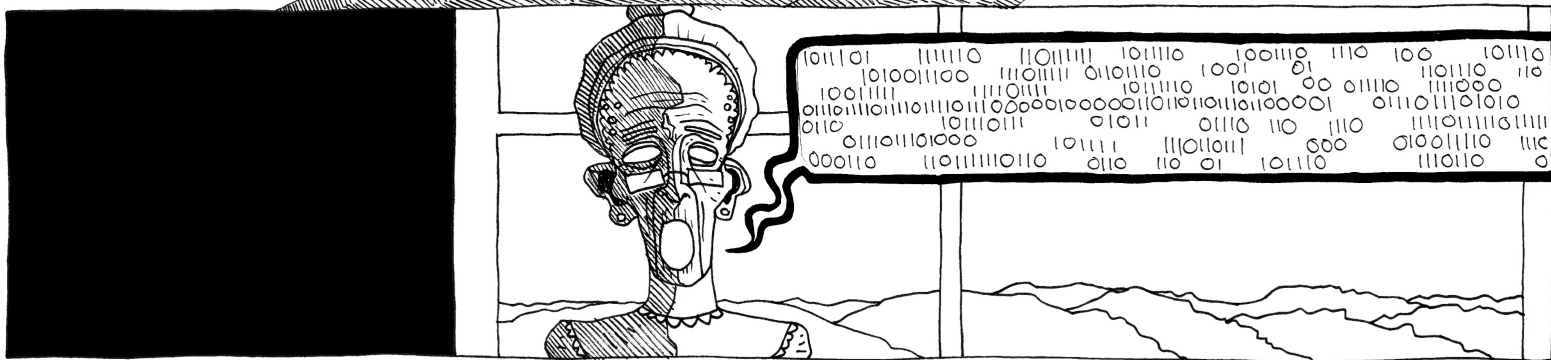
*"The Company lives on."*

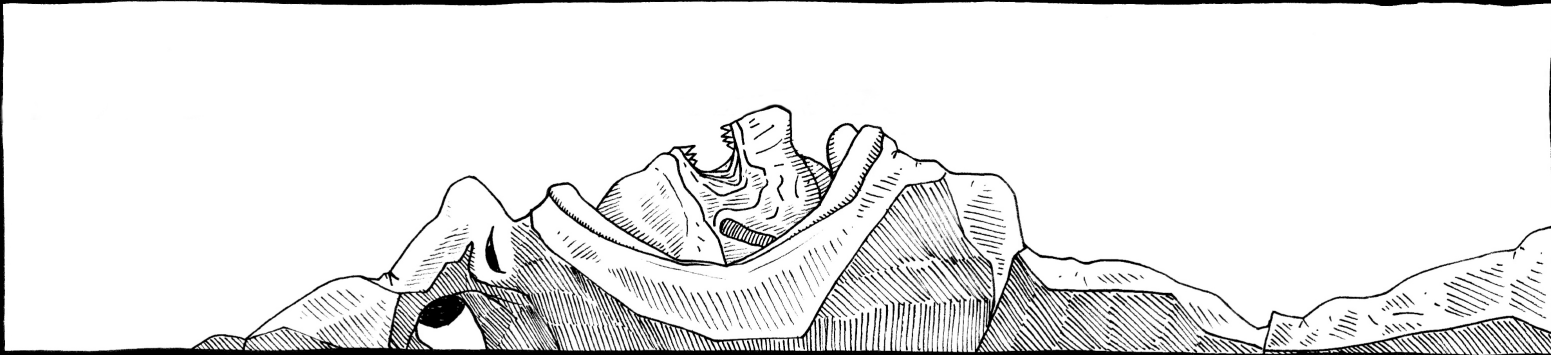


*"Beware Dear Friend....."*

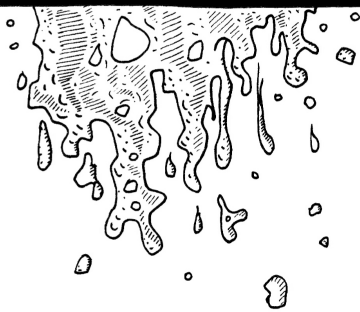


*"Our own are no longer our own."*

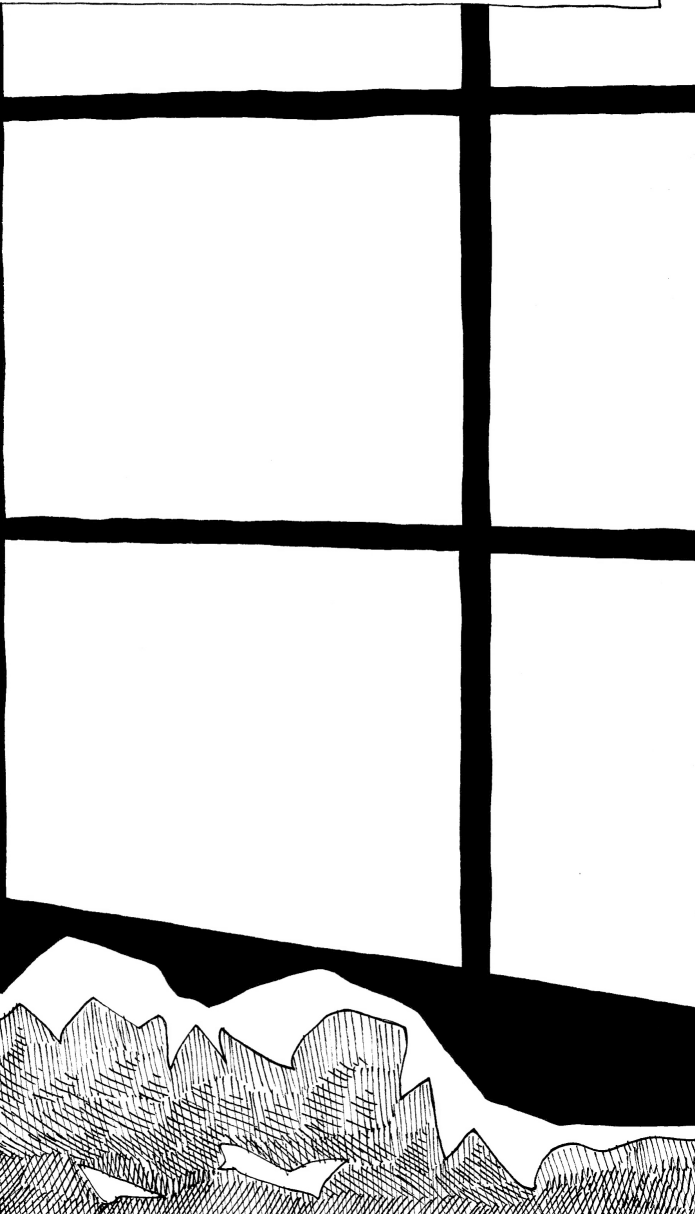
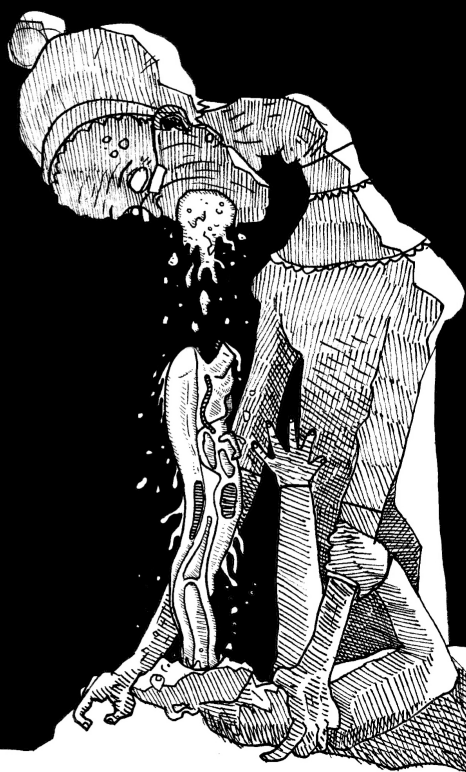




A BIRD  
FEEDING ITS YOUNG CHARGE.



A MECHANICAL BEAST  
FEEDING A MONSTER.




# GREENHOUSE

STORY BY:  
MICHAEL FALOTICO  
ART BY:  
LAURA BELLMONT



I DON'T REMEMBER HOW MANY DAYS  
HAVE PASSED.  
IT DOESN'T EVEN COME NEAR ME ANYMORE.  
IT ALMOST SEEMS NURTURING.  
LIKE IT'S STANDING GUARD.  
I WONDER; IS IT HUNGRY?




YOU GROW UP HEARING THE RUMORS.

EVIL SYNTHETICS.  
GREEDY MEN.  
THE SERPENT.  
THE DRAGON.

THE MONSTER.

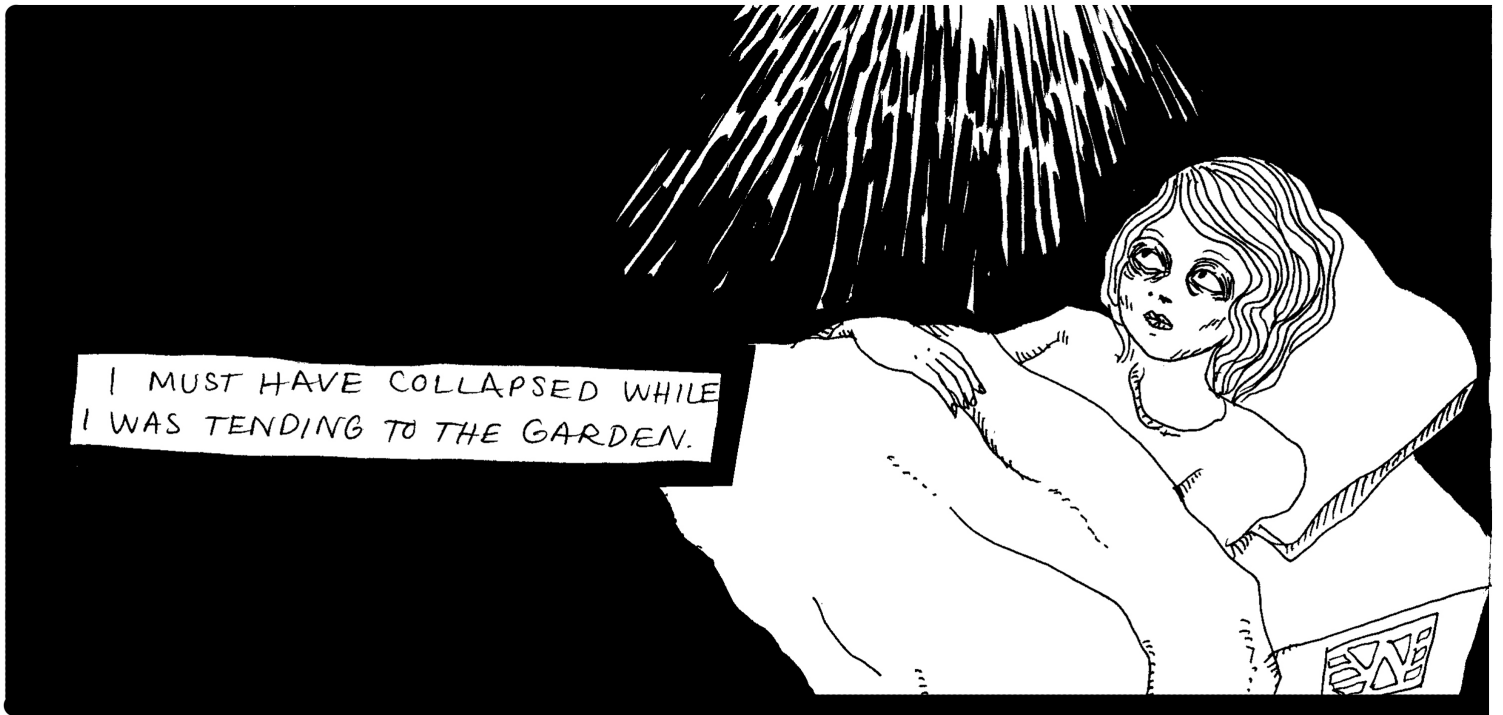
THE TOUGHEST MEN  
PISSING THEIR PANTS  
RUNNING.

MOTHERS LEAVING THEIR  
CHILDREN BEHIND.

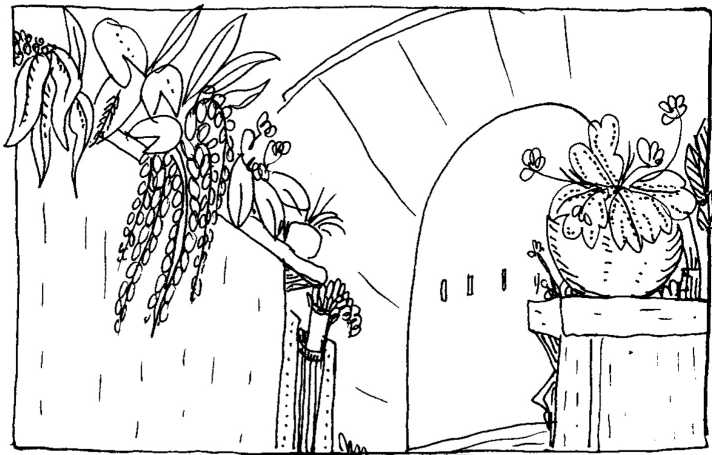


THAT PART, I FIND HARD TO BELIEVE.  
ESPECIALLY NOW. THOUGH FROM WHERE I'M LAYING,  
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO BELIEVE ANYMORE.

LAST TIME I WAS  
HERE FOR A VERY  
DIFFERENT REASON.



I MUST HAVE COLLAPSED WHILE I WAS TENDING TO THE GARDEN.



JUST TRY AND RELAX. BREATHE...

SHE'S AWAKE.

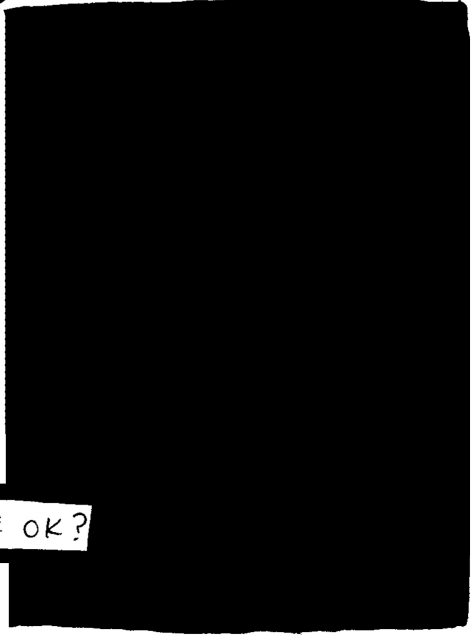
WHEN I CAME TO, THEY ASKED ME WHAT I COULD REMEMBER. IT ALL SEEMED LIKE CHAOS.



PEOPLE WERE YELLING. POKING AND PRODDING ME, AND THERE WERE SOLDIERS.

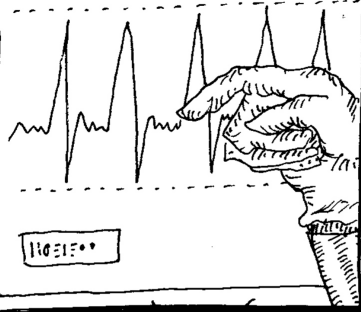


I JUST WANTED TO FALL BACK ASLEEP. THEN I REMEMBERED HER.

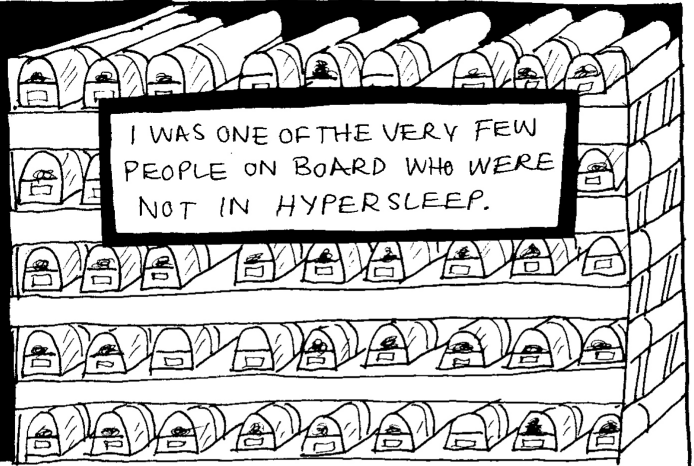


WAS SHE OK?

SHE'S STILL ALIVE.  
THEY WOULDN'T TELL ME  
ANYTHING ELSE.



I WAS ONE OF THE VERY FEW  
PEOPLE ON BOARD WHO WERE  
NOT IN HYPER SLEEP.



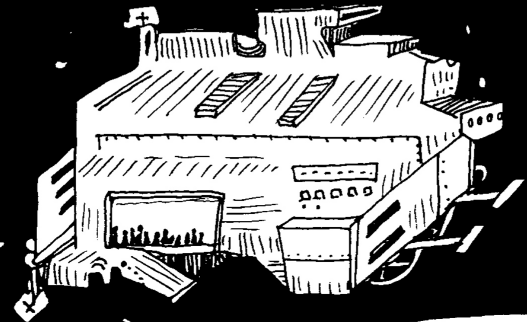
I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED  
TO ME BUT SHE IS ALIVE. NOTHING ELSE  
MATTERS BESIDES HER. SHE'S WHY  
I'M ON THIS SHIP.



FOR MOST OF US, COLD  
DARK SPACE SEEMED  
BETTER THAN EARTH;  
OVERCROWDED AND HOT.  
I THINK A LOT OF US DIDN'T  
EVEN REALLY KNOW WHY  
WE WERE THERE.



WE WERE OFFERED A  
SPOT, SO WE TOOK IT.



FREE MEAL TICKET?

MORE LIKE ELECTIVE PRISON.

HERE, ON FREIGHTER 14, POPPA WEYLAND  
HAD ME FOR TWO HOTS AND A COT.



I COULDN'T CLAIM AS MUCH  
BACK ON MY HOME PLANET.

NEITHER COULD MY HUSBAND.  
EVENTUALLY, IT GOT TO BE  
TOO MUCH FOR HIM AND HE  
PUNCHED HIS CARD EARLY.



LEAVING US BEHIND.



I FOLLOWED HIM SOON AFTER  
BUT IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION,

AND FOR MUCH DIFFERENT REASONS.



THERE WERE TEN  
MEN AWAKE. THEY  
WERE ALL SOLDIERS.  
I WAS THEIR MAID.  
I STILL DON'T KNOW  
WHAT THE HELL I  
WAS REALLY DOING  
THERE.



THEY LEFT ME  
OUT OF PRETTY  
MUCH EVERY  
CONVERSATION  
BUT WE ATE  
MEALS TOGETHER.



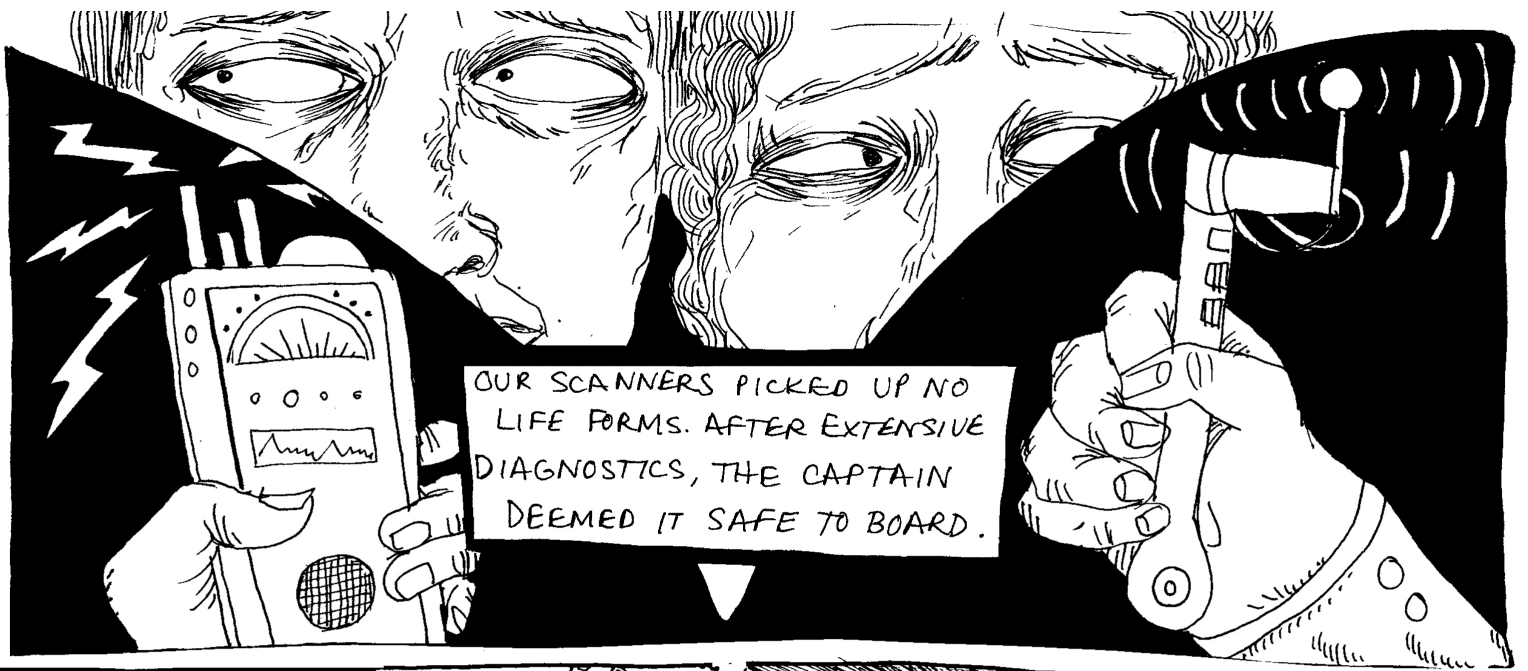
THEY SPOKE  
PRETTY CRYPTICALLY  
AROUND ME BUT,  
IF I PAID CLOSE  
ATTENTION, I  
COULD PIECE IT  
ALL TOGETHER.

WE HAD COME ACROSS A SHIP.  
A GHOST SHIP FLOATING THROUGH  
THE INFINITE OCEAN OF SPACE.

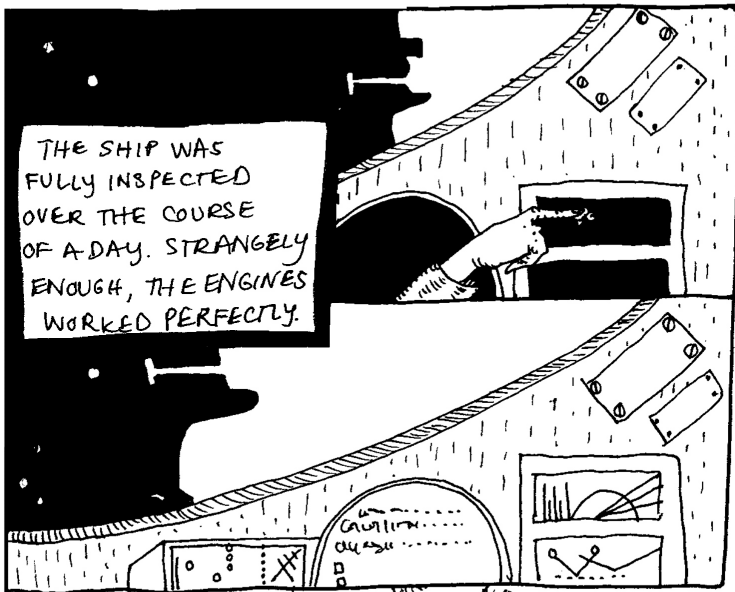


NO DISTRESS BEACON.  
NO EMERGENCY RADIO BROADCAST.

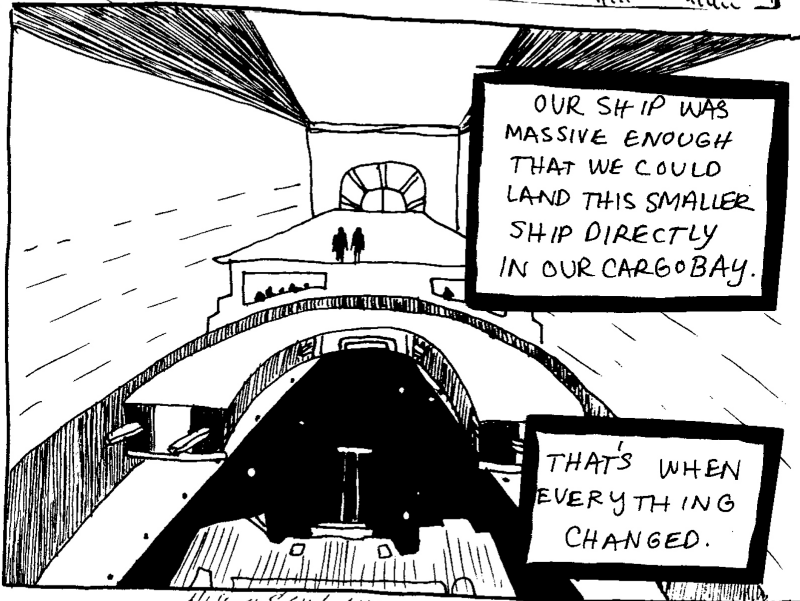
IT JUST HAPPENED TO CROSS PATHS  
WITH US... WAY OUT HERE IN SPACE.



OUR SCANNERS PICKED UP NO LIFE FORMS. AFTER EXTENSIVE DIAGNOSTICS, THE CAPTAIN DEEMED IT SAFE TO BOARD.

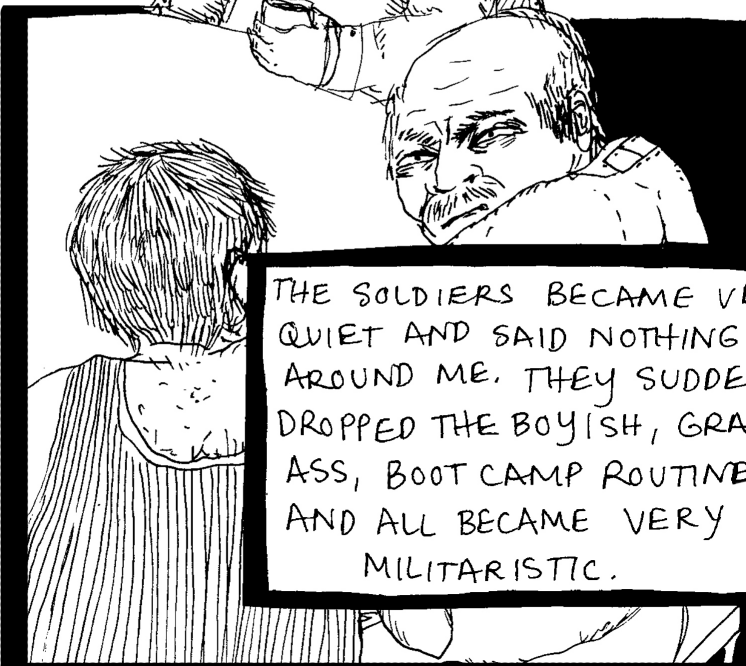


THE SHIP WAS FULLY INSPECTED OVER THE COURSE OF A DAY. STRANGELY ENOUGH, THE ENGINES WORKED PERFECTLY.

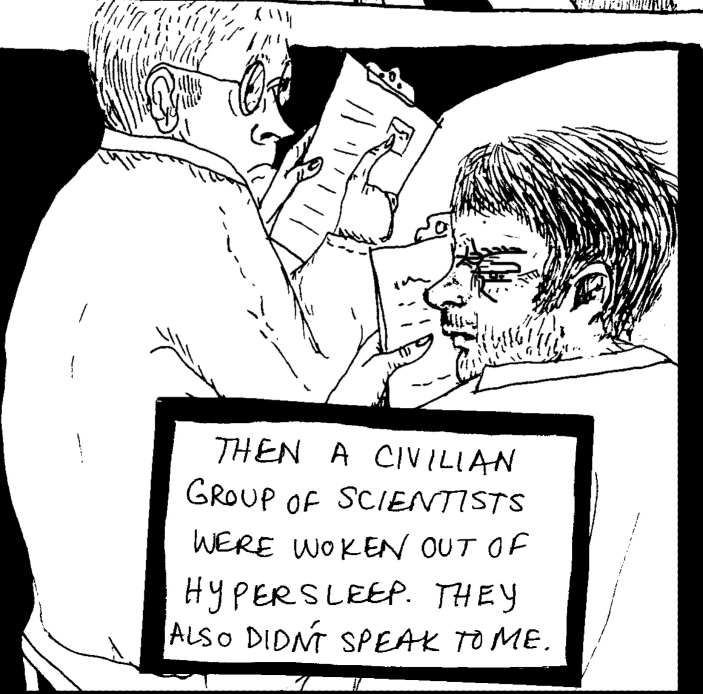


OUR SHIP WAS MASSIVE ENOUGH THAT WE COULD LAND THIS SMALLER SHIP DIRECTLY IN OUR CARGO BAY.

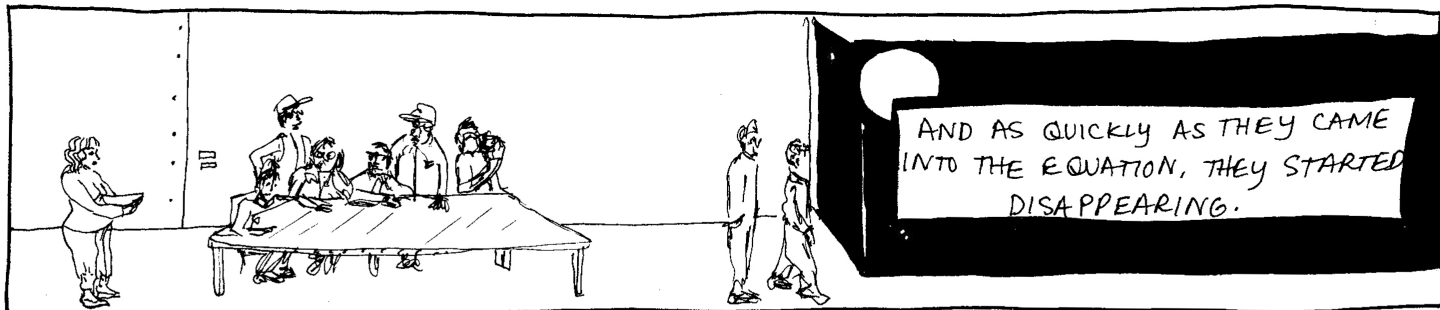
THAT'S WHEN EVERYTHING CHANGED.



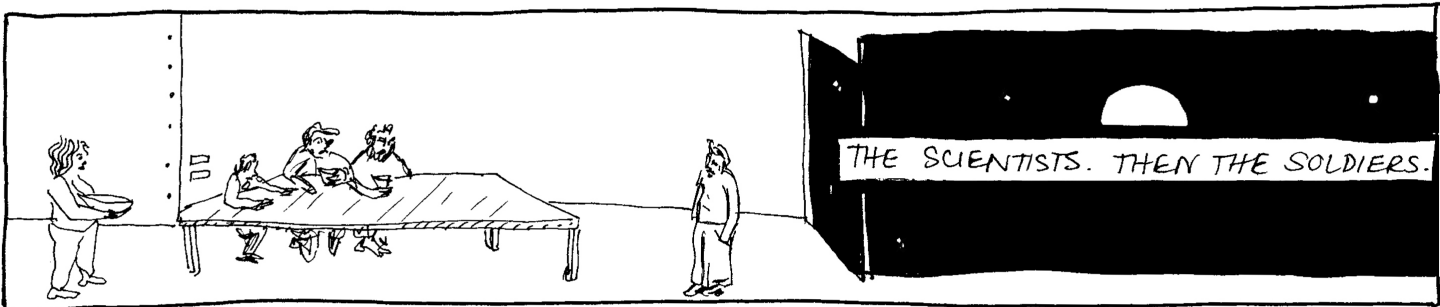
THE SOLDIERS BECAME VERY QUIET AND SAID NOTHING AROUND ME. THEY SUDDENLY DROPPED THE BOYISH, GRAB-ASS, BOOT CAMP ROUTINE AND ALL BECAME VERY MILITARISTIC.



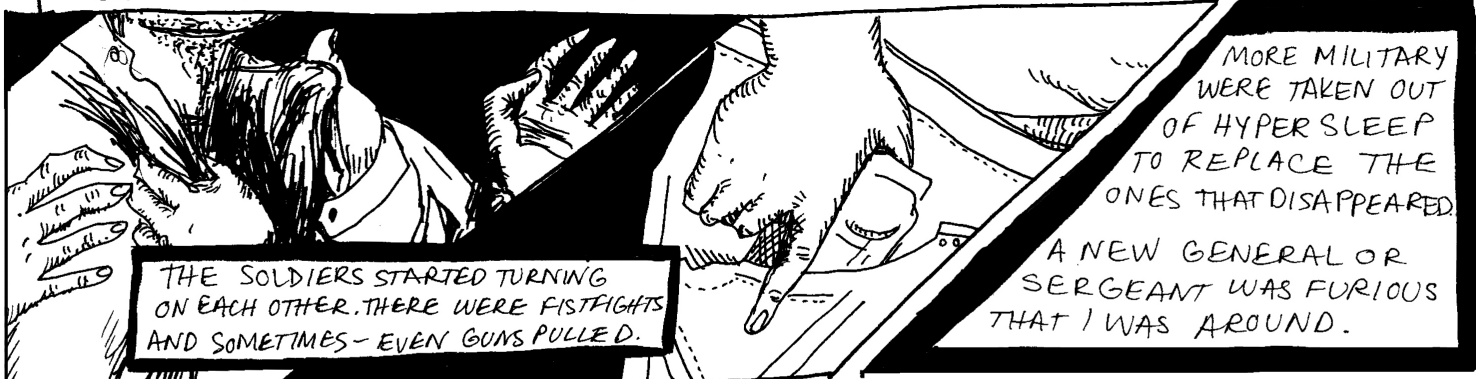
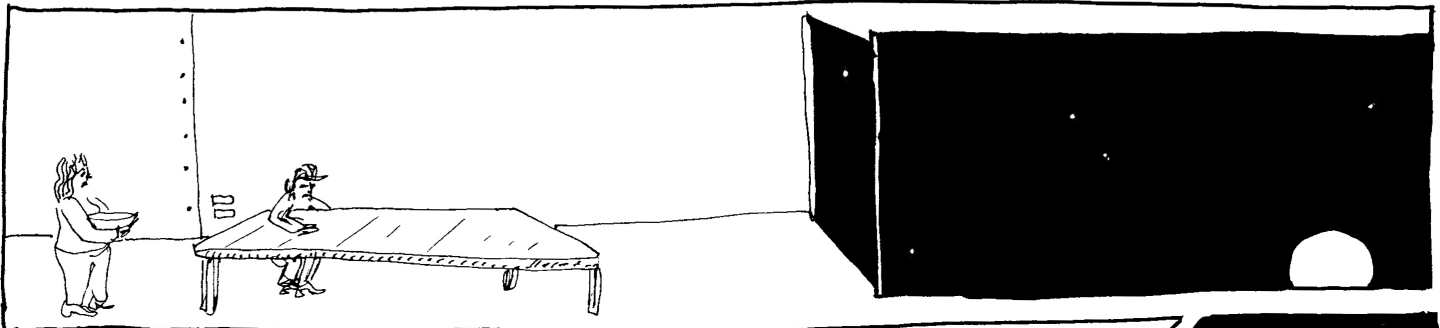
THEN A CIVILIAN GROUP OF SCIENTISTS WERE WOKEN OUT OF HYPERSLEEP. THEY ALSO DIDN'T SPEAK TO ME.



AND AS QUICKLY AS THEY CAME INTO THE EQUATION, THEY STARTED DISAPPEARING.

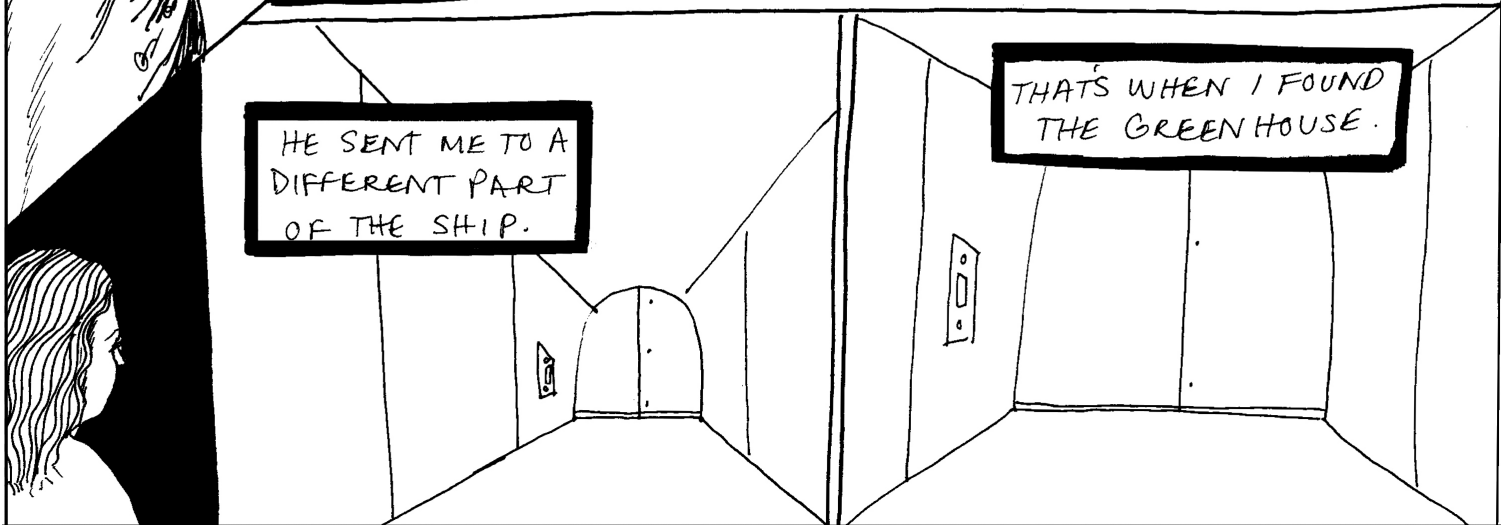


THE SCIENTISTS. THEN THE SOLDIERS.



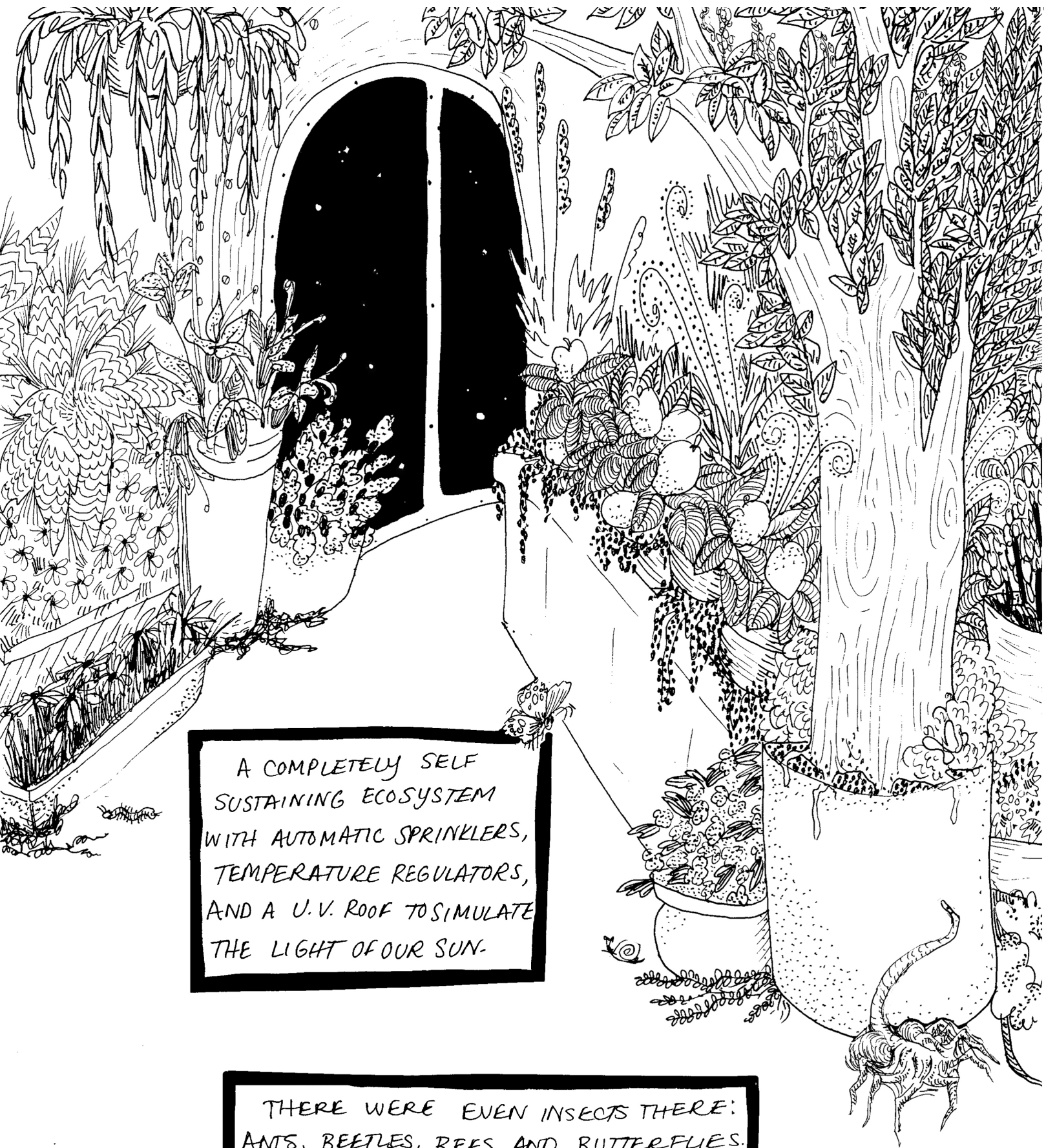
THE SOLDIERS STARTED TURNING ON EACH OTHER. THERE WERE FISTFIGHTS AND SOMETIMES - EVEN GUNS PULLED.

MORE MILITARY WERE TAKEN OUT OF HYPER SLEEP TO REPLACE THE ONES THAT DISAPPEARED. A NEW GENERAL OR SERGEANT WAS FURIOUS THAT I WAS AROUND.



HE SENT ME TO A DIFFERENT PART OF THE SHIP.

THAT'S WHEN I FOUND THE GREEN HOUSE.

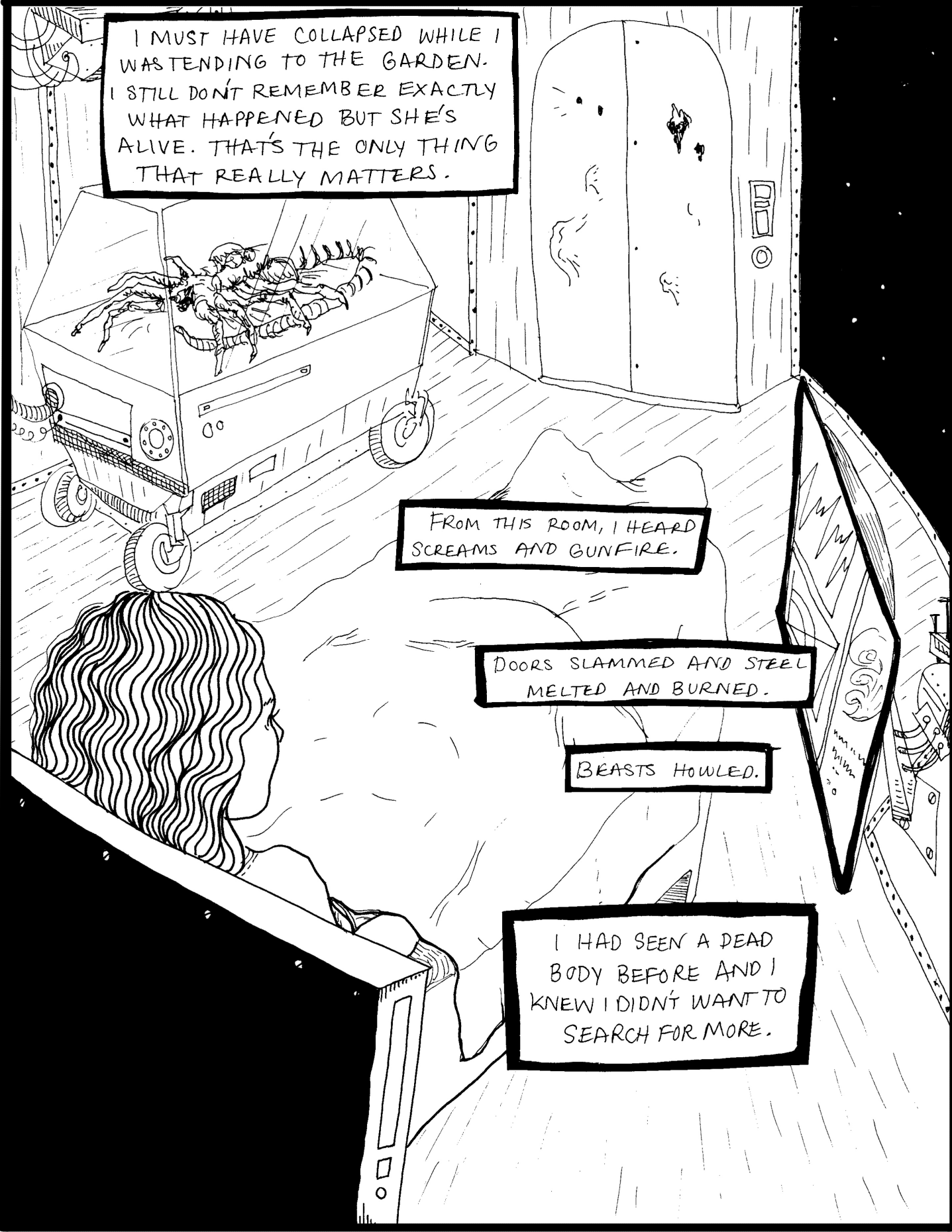


A COMPLETELY SELF  
SUSTAINING ECOSYSTEM  
WITH AUTOMATIC SPRINKLERS,  
TEMPERATURE REGULATORS,  
AND A U.V. ROOF TO SIMULATE  
THE LIGHT OF OUR SUN.

THERE WERE EVEN INSECTS THERE:  
ANTS, BEETLES, BEES AND BUTTERFLIES.  
I HAD NEVER EVEN SEEN A BUTTERFLY  
BACK ON EARTH.







I MUST HAVE COLLAPSED WHILE I WAS TENDING TO THE GARDEN. I STILL DON'T REMEMBER EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED BUT SHE'S ALIVE. THAT'S THE ONLY THING THAT REALLY MATTERS.

FROM THIS ROOM, I HEARD SCREAMS AND GUNFIRE.

DOORS SLAMMED AND STEEL MELTED AND BURNED.

BEASTS HOWLED.

I HAD SEEN A DEAD BODY BEFORE AND I KNEW I DIDN'T WANT TO SEARCH FOR MORE.

I CAME BACK TO THE GREENHOUSE  
AND JUST STAYED. I ATE THE FRUIT AND  
COLLECTED WATER FROM THE IRRIGATION  
SYSTEMS. EVENTUALLY, I FELT SAFE  
AND FORGOT ABOUT EVERYTHING.

THE NEXT DAY I SAW IT.

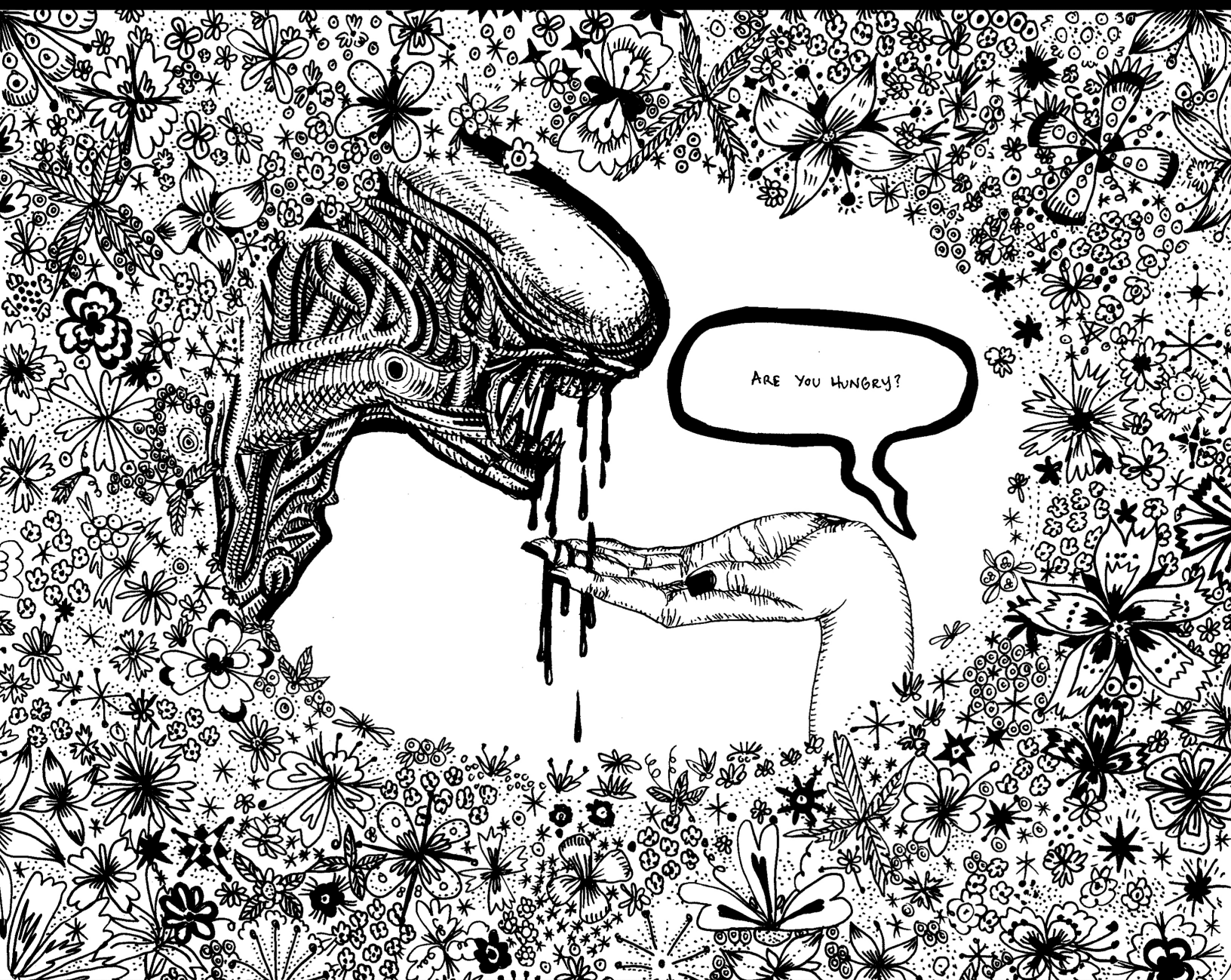
RIGHT HERE AMONGST THE FLOWERS.




EVERY SO OFTEN, IT WOULD VISIT ME.  
EACH TIME IT WOULD GET CLOSER AND CLOSER.



DESPITE ITS APPEARANCE, I NEVER FELT  
THREATENED. I WONDERED . . . .



ARE YOU HUNGRY?




EVERYONE ELSE IS DEAD,  
HIDING, OR ASLEEP.

IT HAS BEEN DAYS  
SINCE I HEARD OR SAW  
A HUMAN. WITHOUT THE  
CREW, I CAN'T TELL HOW  
FAR WE ARE FROM OUR  
DESTINATION.



WAS THERE EVEN A DESTINATION?

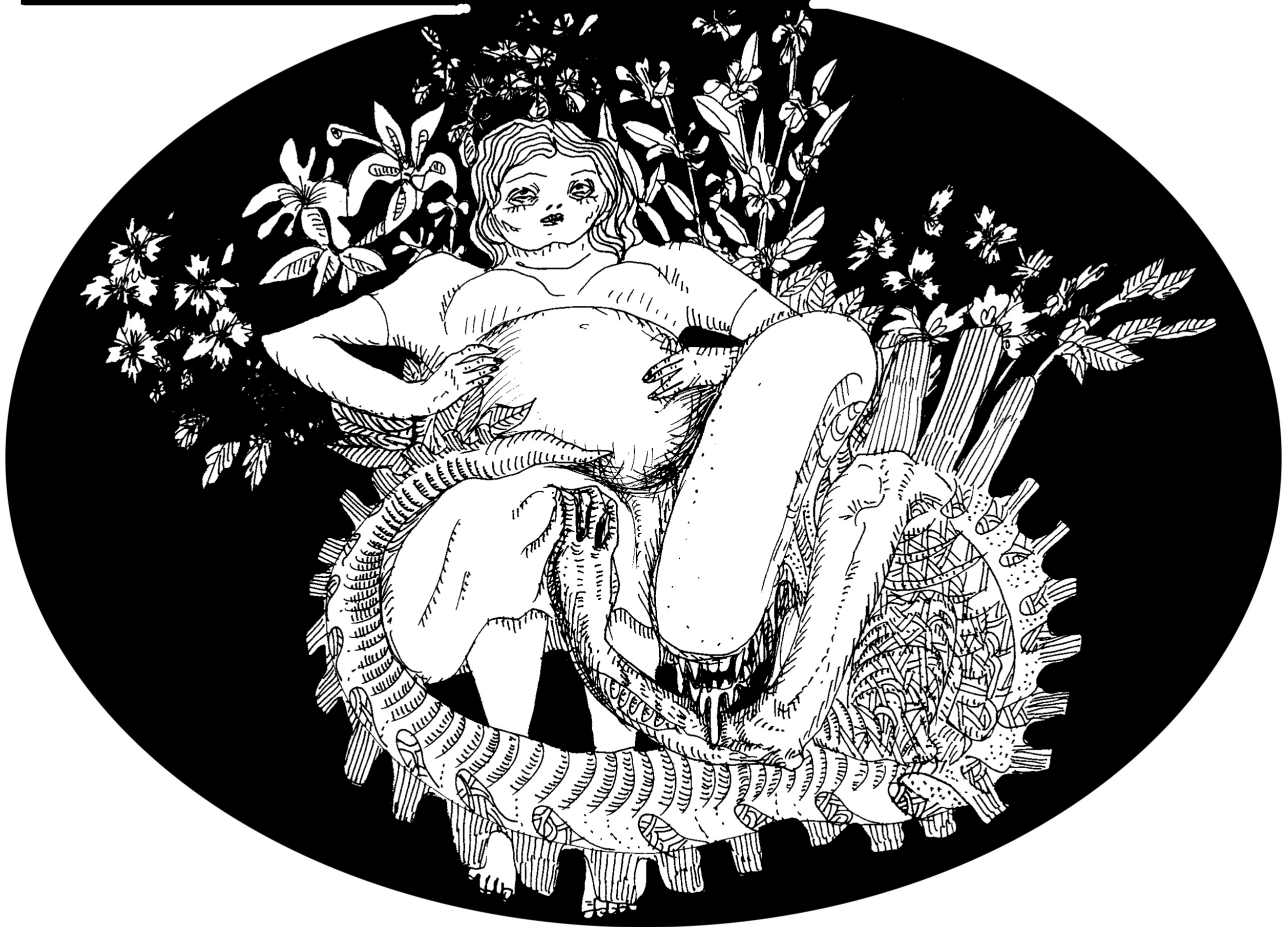
MY BABY IS DUE ANY MINUTE NOW.  
I'VE MOVED BACK FROM THE GREENHOUSE  
TO THE MEDICAL BAY.



I'VE FILLED EVERY  
GLASS OR BOWL THAT  
I COULD FIND WITH  
FLOWERS.

I WANT HER  
TO BE BORN  
AMONGST BEAUTY.

AGAIN, IT JUST SITS AMONGST THE FLOWERS AND WATCHES ME.  
I WONDER IF IT GREW TO LOVE THE GREENHOUSE AS MUCH  
AS I DID. NOW, IT'S JUST MY BABY, THE FLOWERS, THE DRAGON  
AND ME. WE MET ONLY A FEW DAYS AGO BUT I FEEL LIKE  
WE'RE SOME SORT OF STRANGE FAMILY.



I KNOW I'M IN LABOR BUT SOMETHING FEELS OFF.

SOMETHING INSIDE ME.

MAYBE IT'S JUST MY BABY GIRL READY TO COME OUT.

MY LITTLE PRINCESS.  
NO --  
MY LITTLE QUEEN.

# OUR OWN

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