

# RISE UP SWEARING

A GIRL AND HER FED - VOL. 1

K.B. SPANGLER

# **A GIRL AND HER FED: RISE UP SWEARING**

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**First printing**



**For Brown**



# FOREWORD



In the end, it was the eyes; the eyes and the possibility of a significant felony. Let me back up.

Sometime back in the heady days of Aught-Six, I followed a link at Jennie Breeden's <sup>①</sup> *The Devil's Panties*<sup>1</sup> (which deals with neither satanism nor porn, and somehow manages to be at least as fun as either of those things individually) towards a new-ish webcomic called *A Girl And Her Fed* by one Ms. K. Brooke "Otter" Spangler. There were a few dozen strips in the archive, and as unlikely as a story about transgressive technologies, the War on Terror, and civil rights would seem to be for the laugh-chuckles (and there are plenty of laugh-chuckles ahead for you), the unique take of the story wasn't the first thing that struck me. The first thing that struck me was the lack of eyes.

Hopefully, Otter (in person and in correspondence I call her "Brooke," but when writing about her, I always use some variation of her nom du internet, as fursonified in the mustelids, subfamily lutrinae; any mental image you may have of Tim Matheson or jug band Muppets is sadly misplaced) has included a strip or two as they originally ran, as you'll have an immense appreciation for how far her art has come – I liked her black-and-white, minimal-background, somewhat sketchy style, but it did have its shortcomings. The lack of eyes, though, wasn't one of them.

ACTUALLY.  
THIS IS PRECISELY  
WHERE...  
FORGET IT,  
HE'S TALKING.

See, in those old strips, all of the governmental agents wore dark glasses (as befits In Black types), and all the non-agents had some extraordinarily expressive eyebrows,<sup>2</sup> even the dog (he got replaced in the art redo, but the earwigs are much, much funnier), yet not an ocular organ was to be seen. Only Bitty Bush (to whom you will shortly be introduced, and about whom The Girl and The Fed have much to learn) had visible eyes, and those merely empty Orphan Annie style circles. Actual eyes appeared (to great effect) only when the characters opened themselves deliberately to stimuli and perceptions beyond that of our ordinary world.

This artistic choice (along with the bold decision to not reveal names for the main characters for well over 500 strips) served the story remarkably well. One could be tempted to take the lack of eyes as allegorical, an indication that all the characters were operating most of the time with blinders on (again, except for Bitty Bush, wide-eyed with optimistic certainty about the rightness of his path), even while establishing each character as a mass of compromises and denying any of them the comfort of being Always Right And Admirable. But in truth I think that Otter just didn't like drawing eyes. \*COUGH\*

I publicly commented on this, repeatedly, for the next sixteen months or so; this prompted Otter to write the following on the Internet, where I would remind her there are plenty of witnesses:

*Hmmm, I think I might need to take revenge upon a certain Gary Tyrrell. The good sir is on about the lack of eyes again... I see no other course of action than to visit the craft store and break into his home armed with brown pipe cleaners, a bag full of googly-eyes, and Crazy Glue. Gary, when the contents of your fridge stare back at you over their fine handlebar mustaches, you'll know.<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>①</sup> FOR READERS WHO HAVE NOT HAD THE PLEASURE OF MEETING GARY TYRRELL, BE AWARE OF THREE THINGS: ① HE POSSESSES EXCEPTIONAL CULINARY SKILLS, AS WELL AS THE ABILITY TO RESUSCITATE YOU FROM THE EDGE OF DEATH IF THE MILK HAS GONE OVER; ② HIS MOUSTACHE IS A DIVINITY OF SORTS AND CAN BEND TIME AND SPACE (ALBET WHEN AND WHERE REMAIN A TOPIC OF GREAT CONCERN FOR PHYSICISTS); AND ③ HE IS SO PASSIONATE ABOUT THOSE WEBCOMICS HE LOVES THAT HE WILL PIMP THEM EVEN IN THE INTRODUCTION OF SOMEONE ELSE'S BOOK.





I get introduced to a lot of new webcomics, a lot a lot, at least a dozen a week. The number that keep my attention beyond that first investigation is a pretty small fraction, and the portion that would keep me reading and occasionally making snarky comments regarding visual organs even smaller. The number of creators that would take it upon themselves to threaten me so originally (and effectively!) while bothering to spell my name correctly is exactly one, and that's the day that *A Girl And Her Fed* catapulted from the "enjoyable read" list to "top priority morning read before work, get depressed if it didn't update" list. There are loads of creative people in the world, but the ability to smack-talk to that degree with online acquaintances (for the delightful Otter and I had not yet met in person at that time) is a rare gift, and one worthy of recognition.

You'll have to take my word on the sharpness of Otter's tongue – the best cursing and dick jokes will come in future volumes, particularly once the character of Mr. Speedy is introduced (although you will get a tantalizingly brief drive-by of him), but there are hints of future invective here. And in losing those eyebrows, we have gotten a few things in exchange, not the least being a sense of physicality in the characters; how they now move and stand and hold themselves at rest that makes you believe that The Girl could intimidate a cannibal rapist or that The Fed is in the "kill you with his pinky" category of badassery.

Yet I still long for those simpler days, and so I find myself on occasion looking through the still-available original versions of these strips. You may do so for yourself,<sup>4</sup> and come to appreciate those eyebrows as I do. And with any luck, Otter will forgive me for that "fursona" gag back at the beginning of these rambles and hold her wrath in check... but, as always, if anything should befall me, avenge my blood.

Gary Tyrrell

Gary Tyrrell  
Chief Editor of Fleen  
www.fleen.com

1. Which may be found online at <http://thedevelopspanties.com/>
2. Is it any coincidence that Frank Zappa referred to adding full personality to a piece of art as "putting the eyebrows on it"?
3. The photo she sent me, of a Complete Nutritious Breakfast with every element covered in googly eyes, is truly horrifying.
4. Point your browser to <http://agirlandherfed.com/1.1.html> and work your way forward, but for God's sake don't tell Otter I gave you this URL. I upgraded the locks on my house after the googly eyes photo, but she is a woman with both Determination and Skills when she wants to be.

① WE HAVE SINCE MET. I THINK I REMEMBER AN ELEGANT BISTRO IN NEW BRUNSWICK, A MOUSTACHE AND A LOVELY WOMAN WHO INTRODUCED HERSELF AS GARY'S WIFE. BUT I WAS COMING DOWN FROM THE STRESS OF 10 HOURS IN BUMPER-TO-BUMPER TRAFFIC FROM THE SOUTHERN BORDER OF CONNECTICUT TO THE TOP OF THE GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE, I HAD CONSUMED NOTHING THAT DAY BUT A BAKER'S DOZEN OF RED BULL AND THE LION'S SHARE OF A PAN OF BROWNIES, MY THROAT WAS RAW FROM CURSING I-95, AND I SMELLED (AND LOOKED) LIKE GASOLINE AND STUPID. THE REGULAR PATRONS WATCHED IN HORROR AS I GUZZLED FRESH LIME SELTZER AND ATE DELICATELY-SEASONED CALAMARI WITH BOTH FISTS; ONE OF THEM COMPLIMENTED GARY AND HELEN ON THEIR NEW PET HOWLER MONKEY. AND I'M FAIRLY SURE I RAN OUT ON THE CHECK. SO WHAT I'M SAYING IS I HAVE NO IDEA WHY GARY AGREED TO INTRODUCE THIS BOOK, AND HE IS EITHER A PRINCE, OR I STILL OWE HIM BROWNIES, OR BOTH.



# INTRODUCTION

They've said I can't swear in this introduction. What a [REDACTED] contrived limitation. Seriously, the name of the book evokes profanity but you [REDACTED] have decided that first impressions mean *so much!* to new readers that you can't even be true to the tone of the work.

Fine. It's not like it's a challenge. A challenge is getting those [REDACTED] who work at that [REDACTED] of a coffee shop over on Sunderland and Main to get my order right. Those [REDACTED] are so [REDACTED] that the very idea of coffee is too much to complete. Roasted beans in water, [REDACTED] quite possibly the exact opposite of rocket science. Those [REDACTED] are so incompetent they can't put whipped cream on a latte without making it look like a horde of [REDACTED] frat boys doped up on [REDACTED] covered the counter in their frothy [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] this [REDACTED] the way [REDACTED]

Where was I? Right.

Look to your forests.

Not your modern forests, quartered down by time and highways. Not those poor, half-dead weeds staggering between strip malls and subdivisions. They have no memory of what they used to be. They don't remember that once, not too long ago, they were hated and feared and slaughtered with metal and fire.

Like honor and justice and so many other things, the truth of the forest still lives in fairy tales. Those forests still have their teeth. In fairy tales, the forest was the fiend; your starveling babes flee the forest to hide with the wolves in their dens, the bears in their houses, the huts perched atop knobby chicken legs.

Children will run to the warmth of the witch's oven to escape the forest. Witches can be outsmarted.

There are two paths out of those forests. You never see the end of the first; that's where they keep the bodies that have been weathered down to their bones, or, perhaps, a fat and happy lion.

The second leads to a savior.

What separates the corpse from the hero is the encounter. If you want to escape the forest, you have to put aside the delusion that he can survive on his own. He will never, *ever*, leave without help... even the knight in shining armor has taken up someone else's sword, or tricked the magic ring from the Fay.

Best among these are those stories where the hero and the fair maiden meet and the heat of their madly-in-love burns their path through the trees. They come across each other at the edges of forests, where the trees part and the abandoned tower stands, where the lady is caught by moonlight in the stream.

Love is never found in a forest - love is found in spite of the forest.

Here we have their first meeting. He has forgotten he's a hero, she's anything but fair, and there's nary a scrap of madly-in-love between them. It will take time to work up enough heat to burn their way, and the woods are thick around them.

But you hold the story of how their feet first found their path.

With the heartfelt desire you should [REDACTED]

**SPEEDY**

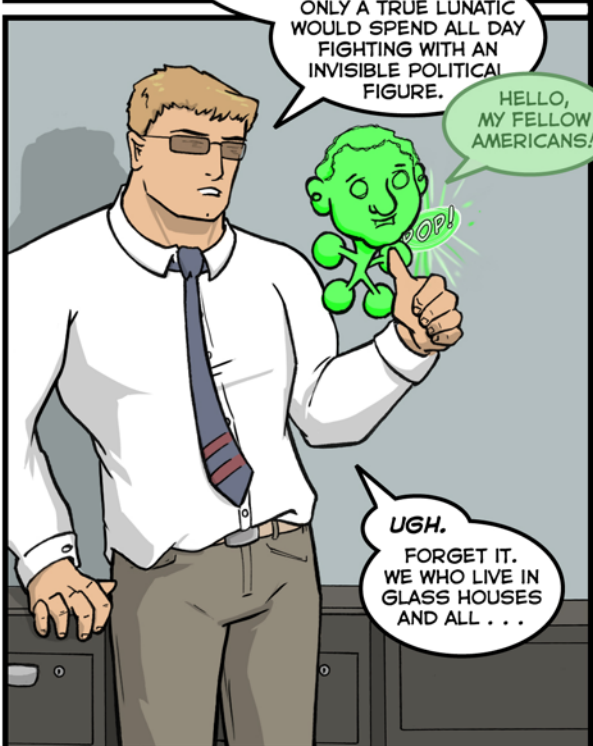
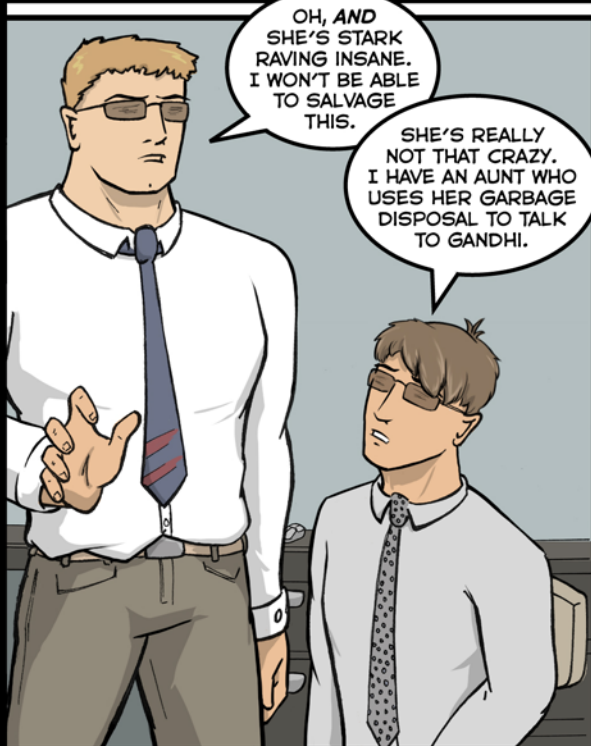
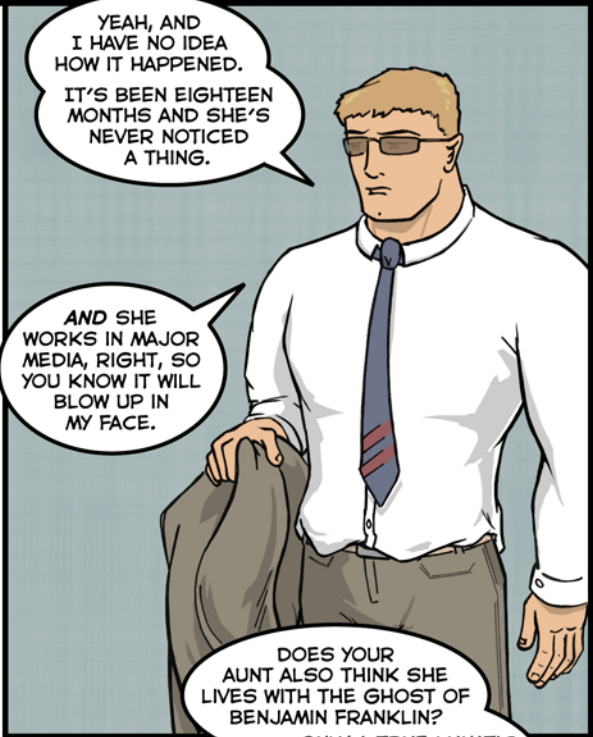
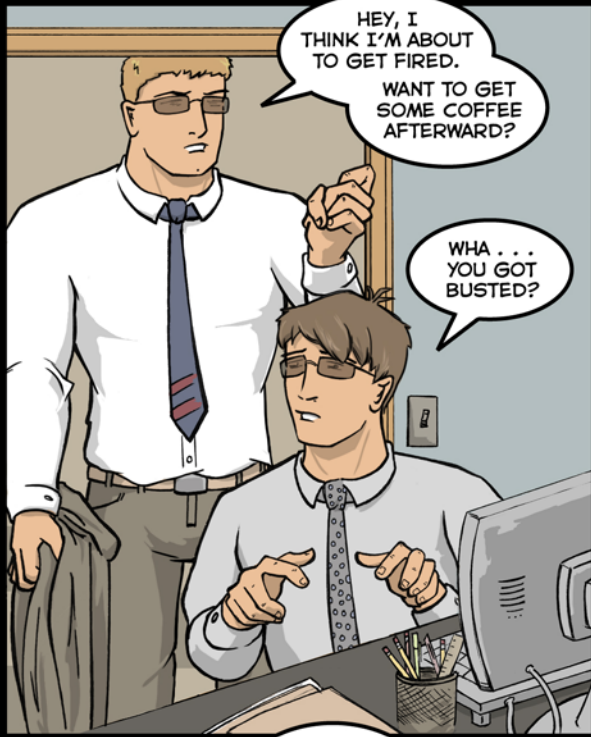


NO, BEN, I WON'T DISCUSS CONSPIRACY THEORIES WITH AN OLD LSD FLASHBACK. IF TWO CRAZIES MADE A SANE, I'D STILL HAVE THE TWENTY GRAND I BLEW ON THERAPY.









THE GOVERNMENT HAS A LONG HISTORY OF USING ITS EMPLOYEES AS EXPERIMENTAL TEST SUBJECTS. TYPICALLY, THESE EXPERIMENTS ARE COMPLETELY BENIGN AND ARE INSPIRED OUT OF BOREDOM.



BUT SOMETIMES - VERY RARELY, ACTUALLY - THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRY OUT A NEW FORM OF TECHNOLOGY IS IRRESISTIBLE.



WHEN THIS OCCURS, THE CAPABLE AND VETTED MEMBERS OF THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITIES MAKE IDEAL TEST SUBJECTS.

THE MOST SECRETEIVE OF THESE EXPERIMENTS IS THE POCKET PRESIDENT PROGRAM.

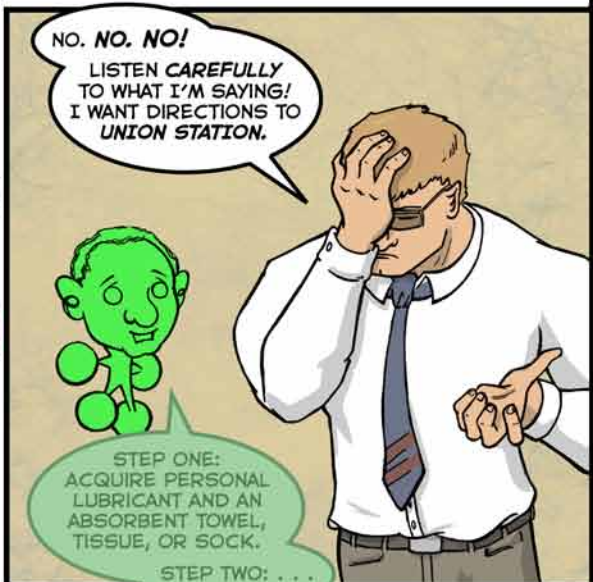
FIVE HUNDRED AGENTS RECEIVED A CYBERNETIC IMPLANT THAT ACCESSED A REVOLUTIONARY PERSONAL DIGITAL ASSISTANT.

THE IMPLANT, A MICROSCOPIC COMPUTER CHIP INSTALLED IN THE USER'S FRONTAL LOBE, AUTOMATICALLY ACTIVATED WHEN IT SENSED CERTAIN EMOTIONAL STATES IN ITS HOST, OR WAS CALLED UPON TO ACCESS ANY ONE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S MANY DATABASES.

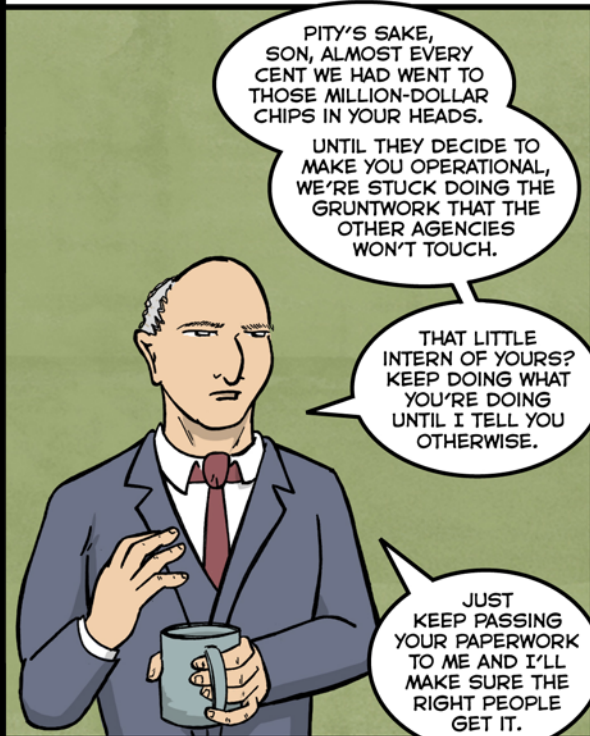


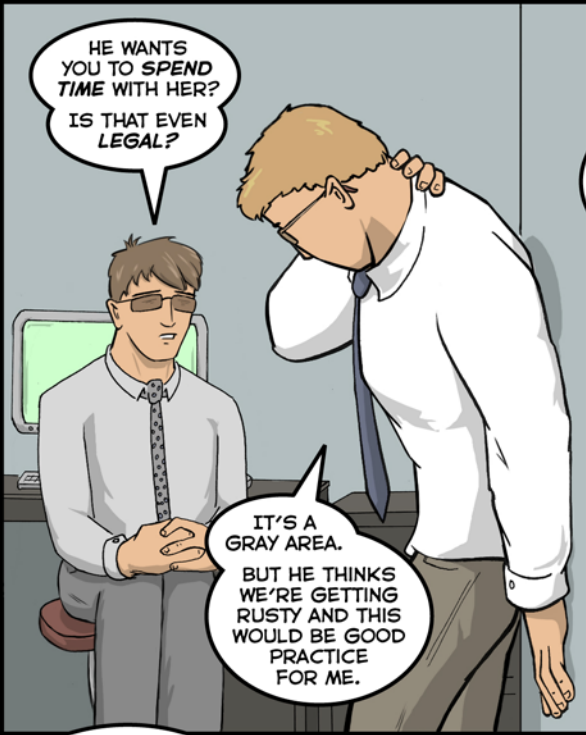
WHILE ITS INTERFACE AVATAR WAS VISIBLE ONLY TO ITS HOST AND TO OTHERS WITH THE CHIP, ITS USERS UNANIMOUSLY AGREED THAT THE AVATAR TOOK THE FORM OF A DYNAMIC AND TALKATIVE CARICATURE OF GEORGE W. BUSH.

THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POCKET PRESIDENT (WHICH RECEIVED THE NICKNAME "BITTY BUSH") INSISTED THAT THE AVATAR WAS MERELY FOR THE USER'S CONVENIENCE AND WAS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM THE MAN HIMSELF . . .



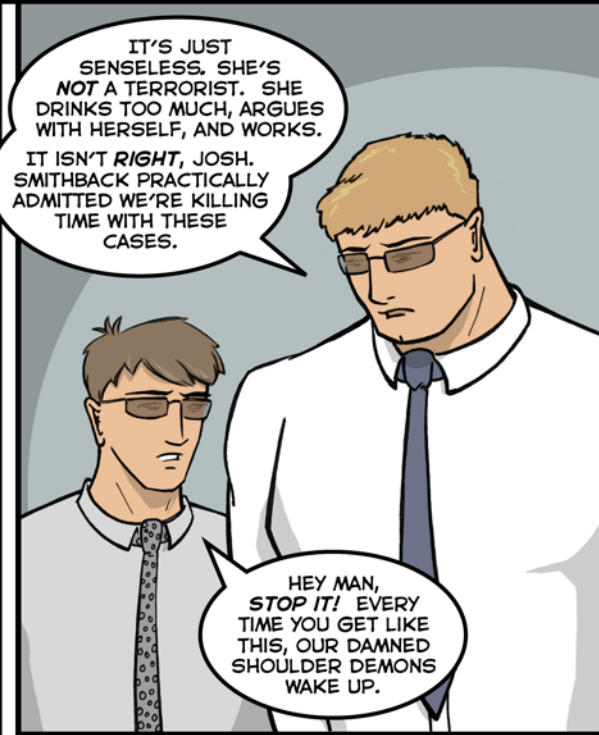
. . . AN OPINION THAT NEVER FAILED TO CAUSE BACKLASH FROM AGENTS WHO KNEW THAT THE DEVICE HAD NEVER PERFORMED AS INTENDED AND WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO GET RID OF.





HE WANTS YOU TO **SPEND TIME** WITH HER? IS THAT EVEN **LEGAL**?

IT'S A **GRAY AREA**. BUT HE THINKS WE'RE GETTING **RUSTY** AND THIS WOULD BE GOOD **PRACTICE** FOR ME.



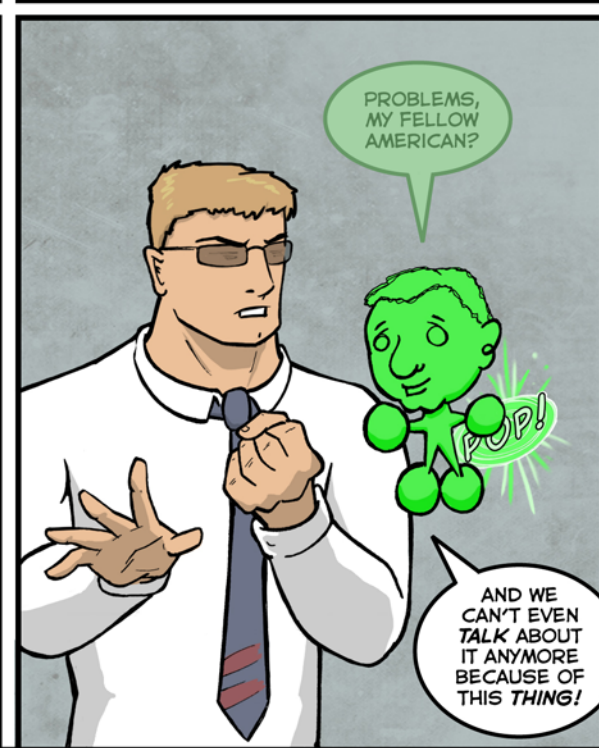
IT'S JUST **SENSELESS**. SHE'S **NOT** A **TERRORIST**. SHE **DRINKS TOO MUCH**, **ARGUES WITH HERSELF**, AND **WORKS**. IT ISN'T **RIGHT**, **JOSH**. **SMITHBACK** PRACTICALLY ADMITTED WE'RE **KILLING TIME** WITH THESE **CASES**.

HEY **MAN**, **STOP IT!** EVERY **TIME** YOU GET LIKE THIS, OUR **DAMNED** **SHOULDER DEMONS** **WAKE UP**.



**COME ON!** YOU **HAVE** TO ADMIT IT'S **RIDICULOUS!** IS THIS REALLY WHAT YOU WANTED TO DO WITH YOUR **LIFE**? I USED TO LOVE MY **JOB** -- IT USED TO HAVE **MEANING!** I KNEW WHAT I DID HAD **VALUE** FOR OTHER **PEOPLE!** NOW? WE'RE IN A **WAR** WE DON'T KNOW HOW TO **FIGHT!**

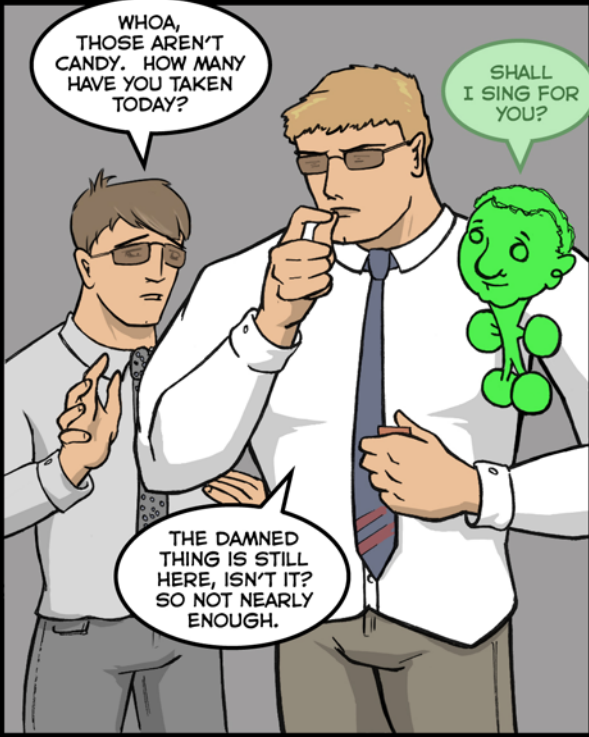
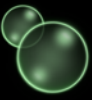
YOU AND ME AND EVERYONE ELSE GOT **STUCK** IN A **BUREAUCRACY** STEERED BY A **THOUSAND DIFFERENT** **POLITICIANS** WHO CAN'T **FIGURE OUT** WHAT TO **DO!**



PROBLEMS, MY **FELLOW AMERICAN?**



AND WE CAN'T EVEN **TALK** ABOUT IT ANYMORE BECAUSE OF THIS **THING!**





YOU'VE SEEN HER FILE. I CAN'T JUST SCARE SOMEONE LIKE HER AWAY.

THAT'S NOT TRUE. ALL YOU NEED IS A DEAD BABY.

COME ON, BE SERIOUS AND GET ME OUT OF THIS.



THAT'S EASY. MAKE SURE SHE SEES YOU ENOUGH TO KNOW YOU'RE THE GUY WHO'S WATCHING HER.

AND THAT HELPS ME HOW?

THEN YOU TELL SMITHBACK YOU TRIED BUT AWWWWW, TOO BAD. YOU'RE BURNED. YOU NEED TO BE REASSIGNED.



THEN HE THINKS I'M INCOMPETENT AND IT GOES ON MY RECORD. TRY AGAIN.

I'M ONLY WORKING WITHIN THE LIMITS YOU SET ON THE PROBLEM. NOW, ADD A DEAD BA--

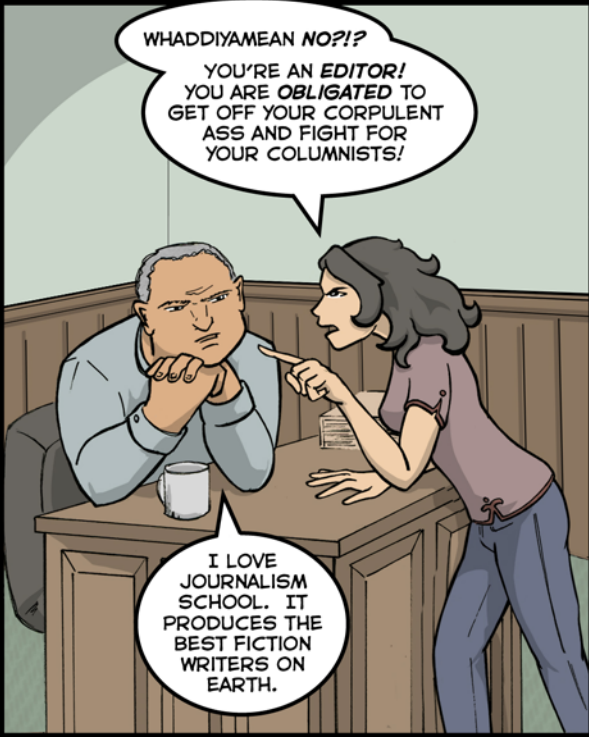
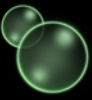
SPEEDY!



SORRY, BUT I'M NOT GOOD WITH THIS ETHICAL CRAP. YOU KNOW MY MOTTO.

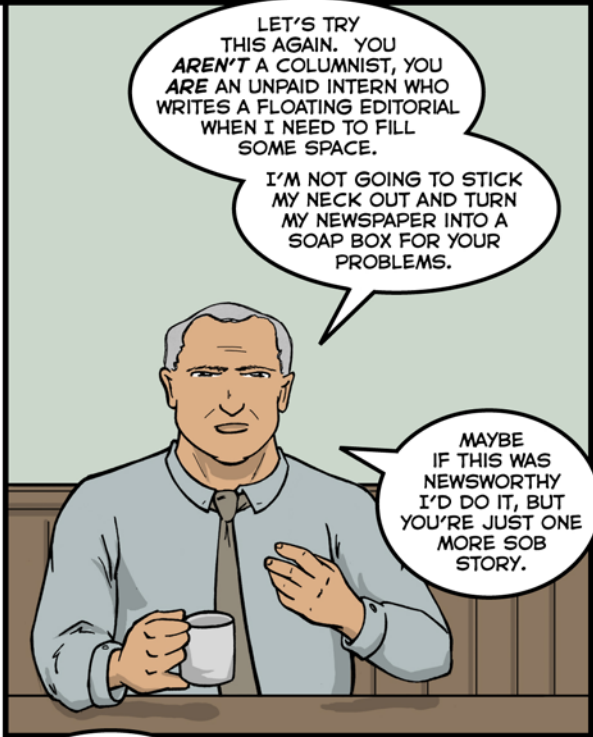
"SCREW THEM ALL AND LET CHLAMYDIA SORT THEM OUT."

HEY! I SAY "FUCK." DON'T MISQUOTE ME.



WHADDIYAMEAN NO?!?  
YOU'RE AN **EDITOR!**  
YOU ARE **OBLIGATED** TO  
GET OFF YOUR **CORPULENT**  
ASS AND FIGHT FOR  
YOUR **COLUMNISTS!**

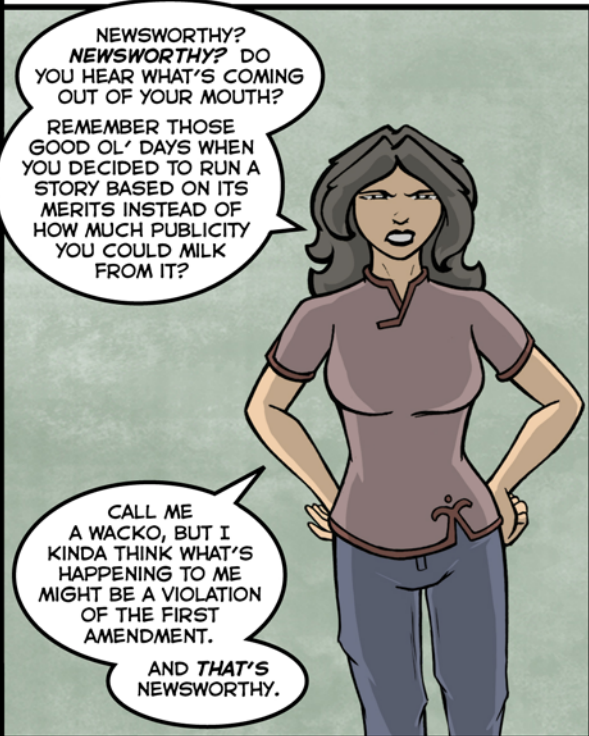
I LOVE  
JOURNALISM  
SCHOOL. IT  
PRODUCES THE  
BEST FICTION  
WRITERS ON  
EARTH.



LET'S TRY  
THIS AGAIN. YOU  
**AREN'T** A COLUMNIST, YOU  
**ARE** AN UNPAID INTERN WHO  
WRITES A FLOATING EDITORIAL  
WHEN I NEED TO FILL  
SOME SPACE.

I'M NOT GOING TO STICK  
MY NECK OUT AND TURN  
MY NEWSPAPER INTO A  
SOAP BOX FOR YOUR  
PROBLEMS.

MAYBE  
IF THIS WAS  
NEWSWORTHY  
I'D DO IT, BUT  
YOU'RE JUST ONE  
MORE SOB  
STORY.

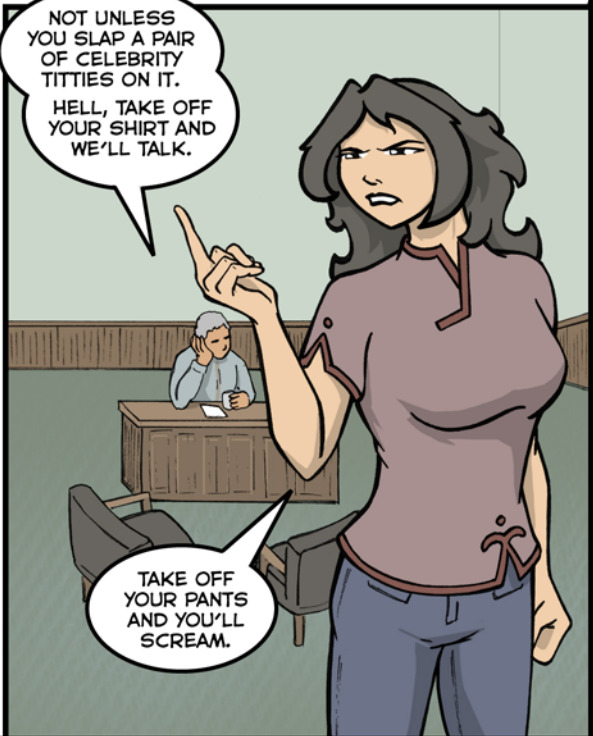


NEWSWORTHY?  
**NEWSWORTHY?** DO  
YOU HEAR WHAT'S COMING  
OUT OF YOUR MOUTH?

REMEMBER THOSE  
GOOD OL' DAYS WHEN  
YOU DECIDED TO RUN A  
STORY BASED ON ITS  
MERITS INSTEAD OF  
HOW MUCH PUBLICITY  
YOU COULD MILK  
FROM IT?

CALL ME  
A WACKO, BUT I  
KINDA THINK WHAT'S  
HAPPENING TO ME  
MIGHT BE A VIOLATION  
OF THE FIRST  
AMENDMENT.

AND **THAT'S**  
NEWSWORTHY.



NOT UNLESS  
YOU SLAP A PAIR  
OF CELEBRITY  
TITTIES ON IT.  
HELL, TAKE OFF  
YOUR SHIRT AND  
WE'LL TALK.

TAKE OFF  
YOUR PANTS  
AND YOU'LL  
SCREAM.

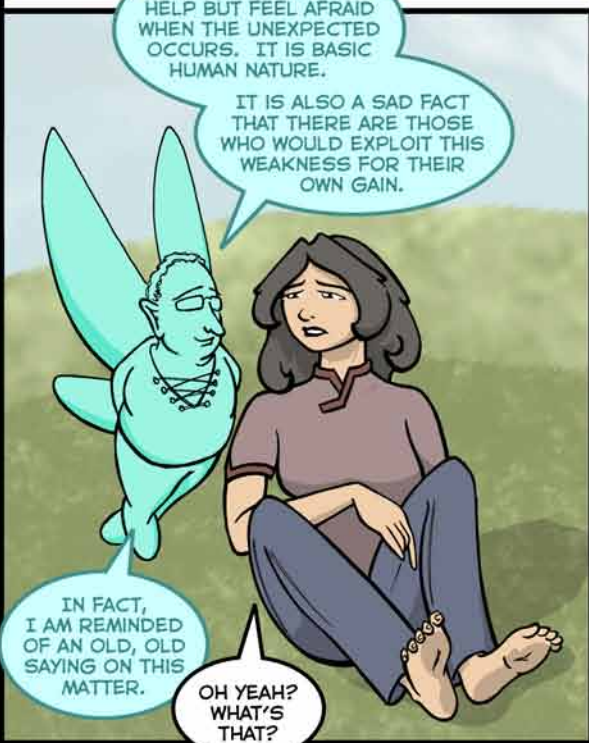


... THEN IT TURNED INTO A "YOU CAN'T FIRE ME, I QUIT!" THING, BUT HE DOESN'T PAY ME ANYHOW AND HE THOUGHT IT WAS A BIG JOKE.

AH.

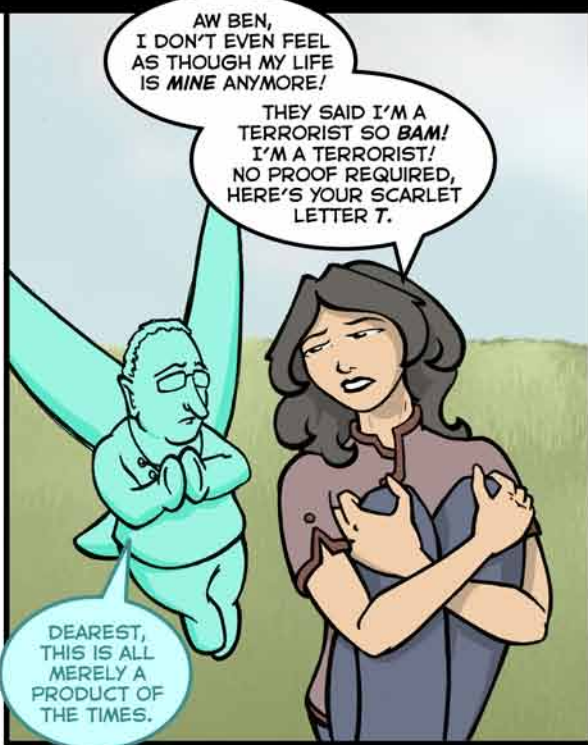
PEOPLE CANNOT HELP BUT FEEL AFRAID WHEN THE UNEXPECTED OCCURS. IT IS BASIC HUMAN NATURE.

IT IS ALSO A SAD FACT THAT THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD EXPLOIT THIS WEAKNESS FOR THEIR OWN GAIN.



IN FACT, I AM REMINDED OF AN OLD, OLD SAYING ON THIS MATTER.

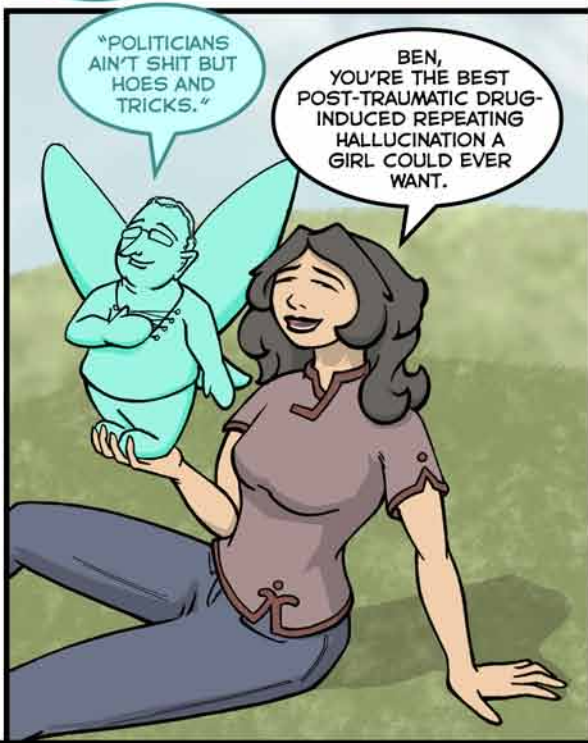
OH YEAH? WHAT'S THAT?



AW BEN, I DON'T EVEN FEEL AS THOUGH MY LIFE IS MINE ANYMORE!

THEY SAID I'M A TERRORIST SO BAM! I'M A TERRORIST! NO PROOF REQUIRED, HERE'S YOUR SCARLET LETTER 7.

DEAREST, THIS IS ALL MERELY A PRODUCT OF THE TIMES.



"POLITICIANS AIN'T SHIT BUT HOES AND TRICKS."


BEN, YOU'RE THE BEST POST-TRAUMATIC DRUG-INDUCED REPEATING HALLUCINATION A GIRL COULD EVER WANT.



YA KNOW,  
IT'S NOT SO BAD.  
I CAN STAR IN MY OWN  
LIFETIME ORIGINAL  
DRAMA.

STALKER II: THE  
STALKENING.

DON'T YOU THINK  
YOU ARE TAKING THIS  
TOO LIGHTLY?  
TRIVIALIZING YOUR  
PROBLEMS WILL NOT  
MAKE THEM GO  
AWAY.



I EITHER LAUGH  
AT THIS OR GO CRAZY.  
CRAZIER, WHATEVER.

IT'S NOT LIKE BACK  
IN YOUR TIME. WE BARELY  
HAVE ANY CONTROL OVER  
OUR GOVERNMENT.

PERHAPS  
THAT IS PART OF  
THE PROBLEM.  
IN MY TIME, WE  
HAD NO CONTROL  
WHATSOEVER OVER  
THE GOVERNMENT.  
IT TOOK SUBSTANTIAL  
EFFORT TO MAKE  
CHANGE.




YOU, ON  
THE OTHER HAND,  
ENJOY A POLITICAL  
CLIMATE WHERE EACH  
INDIVIDUAL HAS AT  
LEAST SOME SMALL  
MERIT.

YOU CAN GO  
TO THE POLICE,  
OR HIRE A LAWYER  
TO ADVOCATE ON  
YOUR BEHALF.

THE POINT IS,  
DEAREST, THEY CAN  
LABEL YOU A THREAT  
BUT THEY CANNOT  
MAKE YOU GO AWAY.

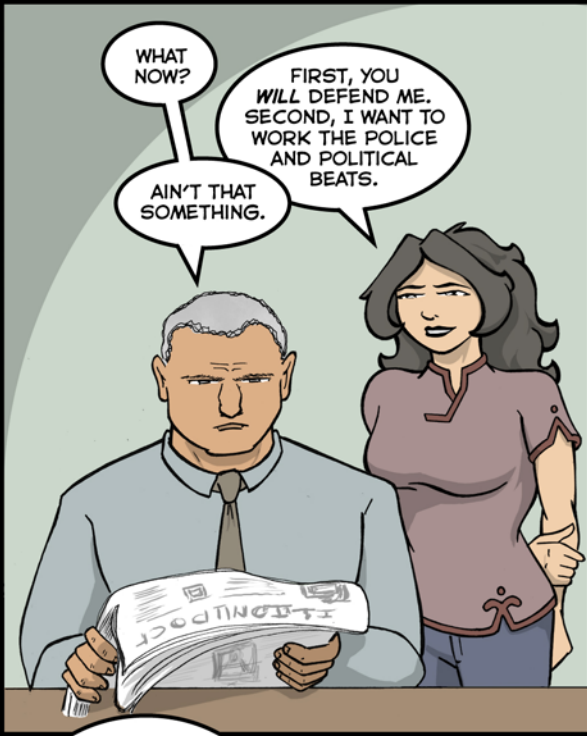
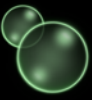
AND YOU ARE NOT  
THE TYPE OF PERSON  
TO TAKE THIS  
LYING DOWN.



GOD, I HATE  
IT WHEN YOU'RE  
RIGHT. IT ALWAYS  
QUADRUPLES MY  
WORKLOAD.

I HAVE NO  
SYMPATHY.

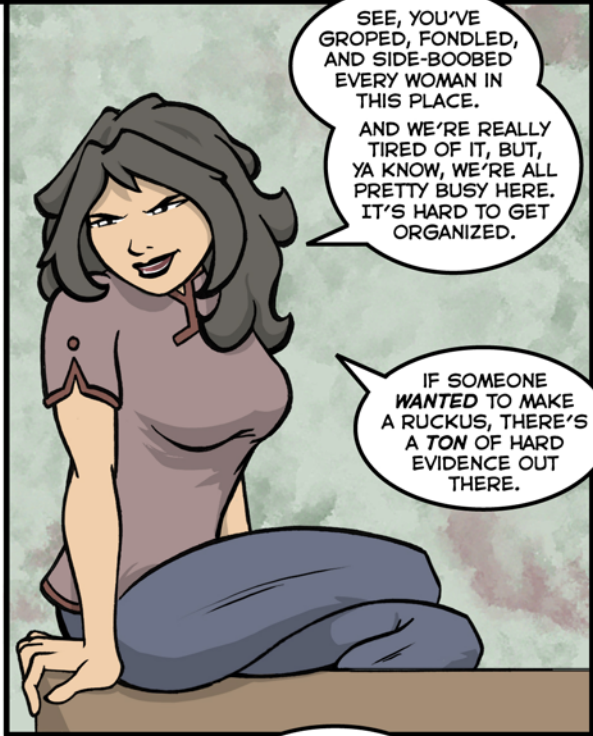
WHEN YOUR  
CHOICES ARE  
"LIVE FREE OR DIE"  
OR "NO THANKS,  
IT CUTS INTO MY  
FREE TIME," IT'S  
NOT WORTH  
DISCUSSING.



WHAT NOW?

FIRST, YOU WILL DEFEND ME. SECOND, I WANT TO WORK THE POLICE AND POLITICAL BEATS.

AIN'T THAT SOMETHING.



SEE, YOU'VE GROPPED, FONDLED, AND SIDE-BOOBED EVERY WOMAN IN THIS PLACE. AND WE'RE REALLY TIRED OF IT, BUT, YA KNOW, WE'RE ALL PRETTY BUSY HERE. IT'S HARD TO GET ORGANIZED.

IF SOMEONE WANTED TO MAKE A RUCKUS, THERE'S A TON OF HARD EVIDENCE OUT THERE.



BUT YOU HELP ME AND PROMISE TO STOP PAWING THE LADIES, I'M PRETTY SURE IT'LL NEVER COME UP AGAIN.

YOU CAN HAVE THE POLICE BEAT, BUT NOT POLITICS.

AND I WON'T HELP YOU OR CHANGE MY WICKED, WICKED WAYS.



BLACKMAIL ISN'T AN OPT-IN PROCESS.

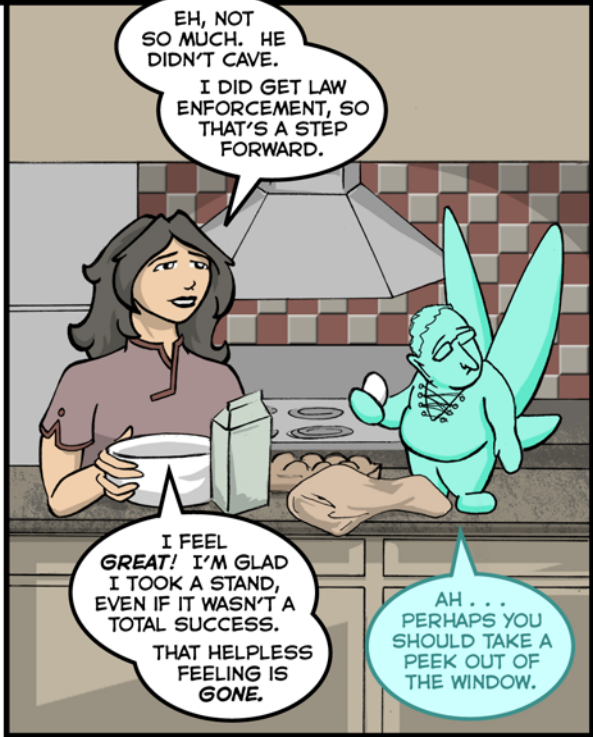
IT'S ALSO INEFFECTIVE SINCE I CAN HAVE YOU ARRESTED WHEN YOU ENTER THE BUILDING.

SERIOUSLY, READ THE MANUAL BEFORE YOU TRY TO PLAY THE GAME.



WHO WANTS FRESH BROWNIES?

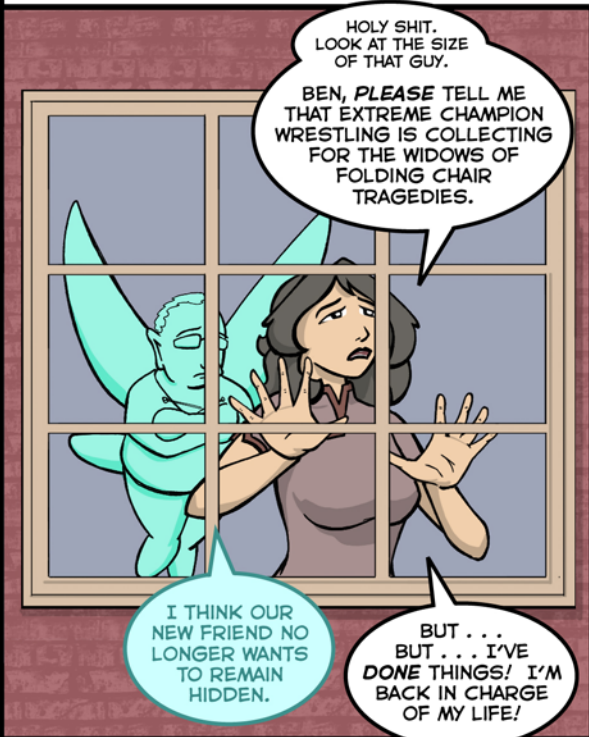
I DO!  
I DO!  
DOES THIS MEAN YOUR MEETING WENT WELL?



EH, NOT SO MUCH. HE DIDN'T CAVE.  
I DID GET LAW ENFORCEMENT, SO THAT'S A STEP FORWARD.

I FEEL GREAT! I'M GLAD I TOOK A STAND, EVEN IF IT WASN'T A TOTAL SUCCESS.  
THAT HELPLESS FEELING IS GONE.

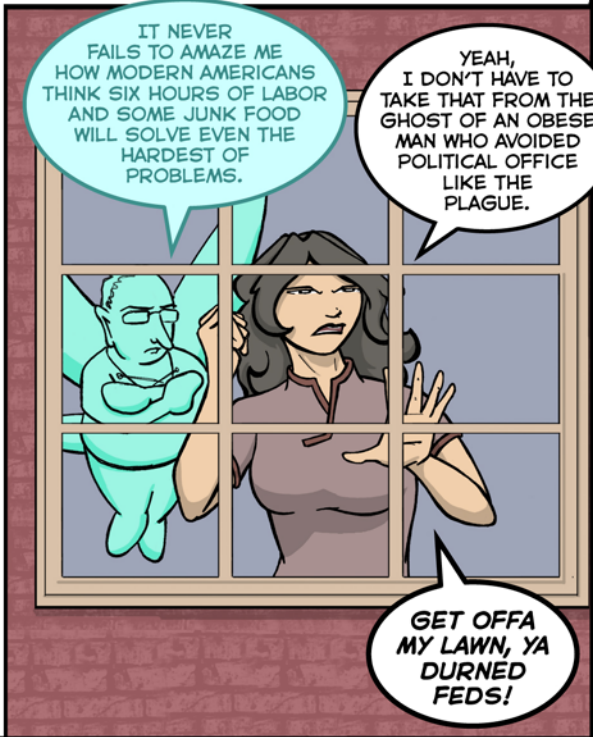
AH . . . PERHAPS YOU SHOULD TAKE A PEEK OUT OF THE WINDOW.



HOLY SHIT. LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THAT GUY.  
BEN, PLEASE TELL ME THAT EXTREME CHAMPION WRESTLING IS COLLECTING FOR THE WIDOWS OF FOLDING CHAIR TRAGEDIES.

I THINK OUR NEW FRIEND NO LONGER WANTS TO REMAIN HIDDEN.

BUT . . . BUT . . . I'VE DONE THINGS! I'M BACK IN CHARGE OF MY LIFE!



IT NEVER FAILS TO AMAZE ME HOW MODERN AMERICANS THINK SIX HOURS OF LABOR AND SOME JUNK FOOD WILL SOLVE EVEN THE HARDEST OF PROBLEMS.

YEAH, I DON'T HAVE TO TAKE THAT FROM THE GHOST OF AN OBESE MAN WHO AVOIDED POLITICAL OFFICE LIKE THE PLAGUE.

GET OFFA MY LAWN, YA DURNED FEDS!







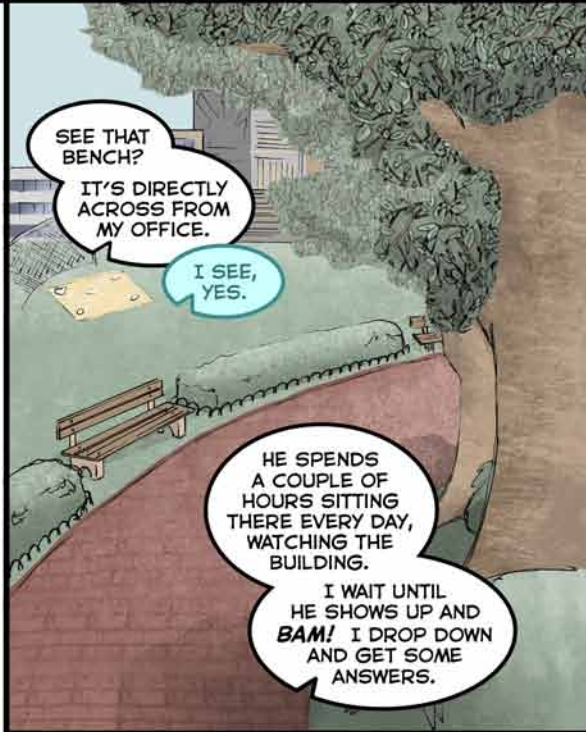
BEN!

YOU SAID YOU DIDN'T WANT TO HELP ME WITH THIS.

POP!

I DON'T, BUT I ALSO DO NOT WANT YOU TO GO THIRSTY.

WHAT IS YOUR STRATEGY?



SEE THAT BENCH?

IT'S DIRECTLY ACROSS FROM MY OFFICE.

I SEE, YES.

HE SPENDS A COUPLE OF HOURS SITTING THERE EVERY DAY, WATCHING THE BUILDING.

I WAIT UNTIL HE SHOWS UP AND **BAM!** I DROP DOWN AND GET SOME ANSWERS.



YES, WELL... DEAREST? THAT MIGHT NOT WORK.

HEY, IT'S A PLAN WHERE NOBODY GETS HURT. I THOUGHT YOU'D APPROVE.

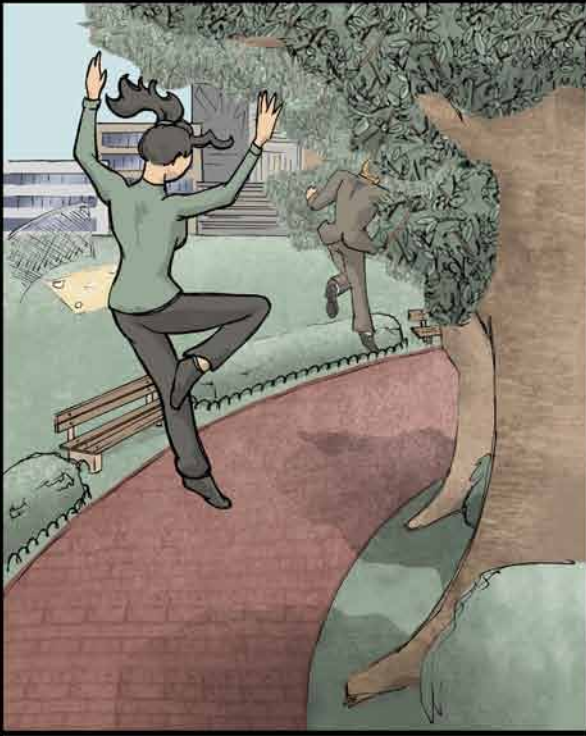
NO, IT IS GREATLY APPRECIATED, BUT...



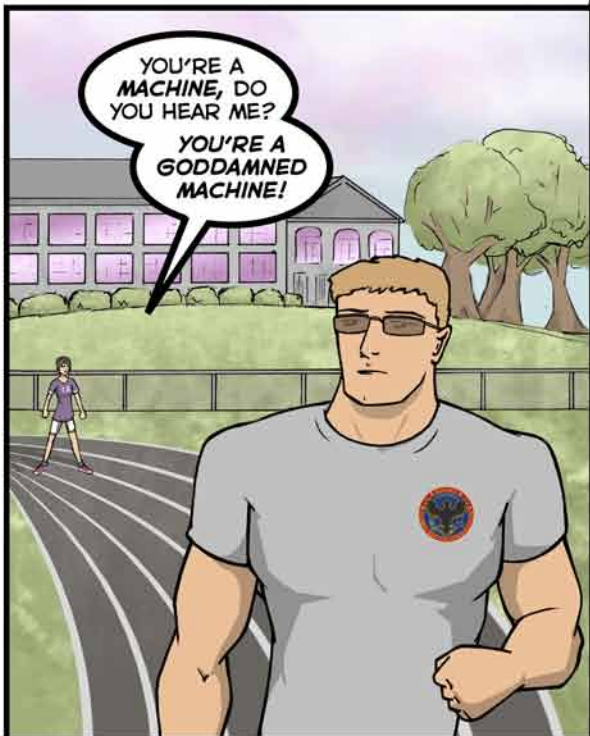
HAVE YOU LOOKED UP RECENTLY?

PERHAPS EXAMINED THE TREE IN FRONT OF US?

HE SEEMS TO HAVE FOUND A BETTER PLACE TO WATCH YOU THAN FROM A BENCH.









OW!  
WATCH  
WHERE YOU'RE  
GOING!

OH,  
I'M SO  
SORRY.



I GUESS  
I'M TOO USED  
TO YOU DOING  
THAT FOR  
ME.

HOWDY,  
SPARKY.  
LET'S HAVE  
OURSELVES A  
CHIT-CHAT.



OH GOD!  
LISTEN, I CAN'T  
TALK TO YOU!  
I DON'T MIND  
THE GAMES -- THOSE  
ARE KIND OF FUN --  
BUT WE CAN'T  
TALK!

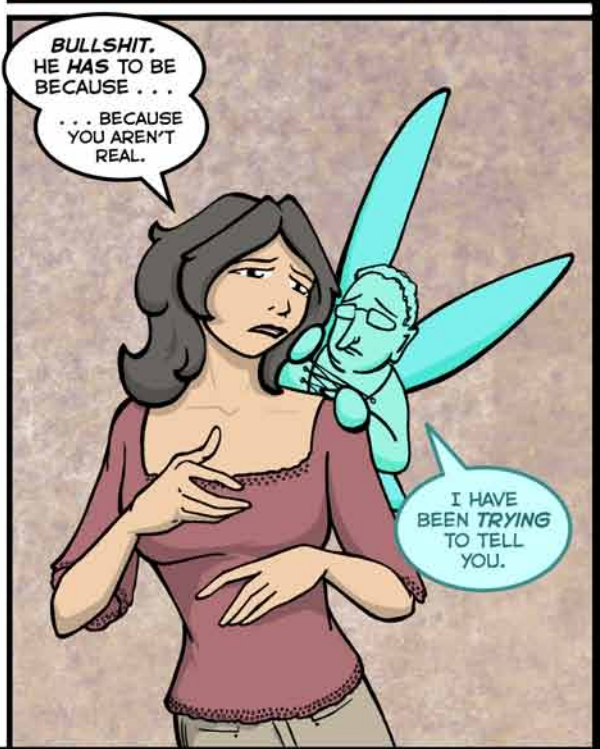
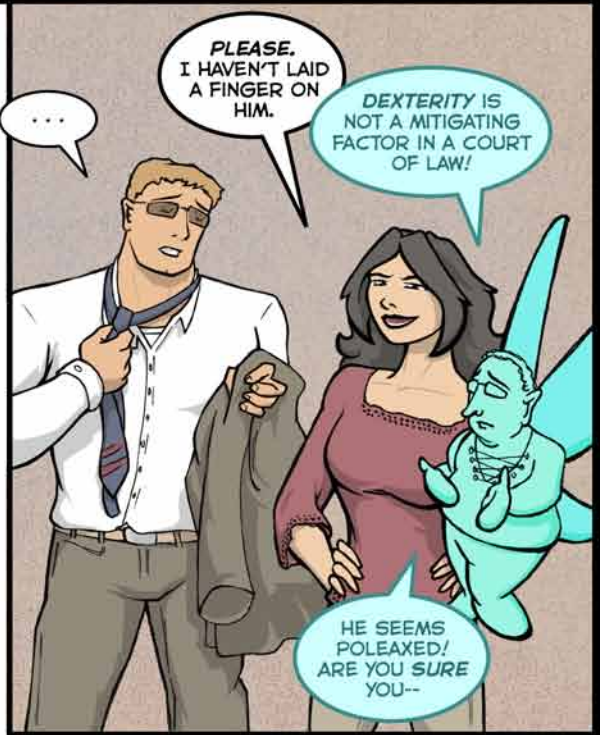
EXCUSE ME?  
GAMES?



OKAY,  
OKAY! NOT  
GAMES! BAD  
CHOICE OF  
WORDS!

OH NO,  
I ADORE  
GAMES.

ONE OF  
MY FAVORITES IS  
HIDE THE BROKEN  
WINE BOTTLE.  
I GET TO  
GO FIRST.





I CAN SENSE THE ABILITY TO SEE GHOSTS IN OTHERS, AND HE DOES NOT HAVE IT.

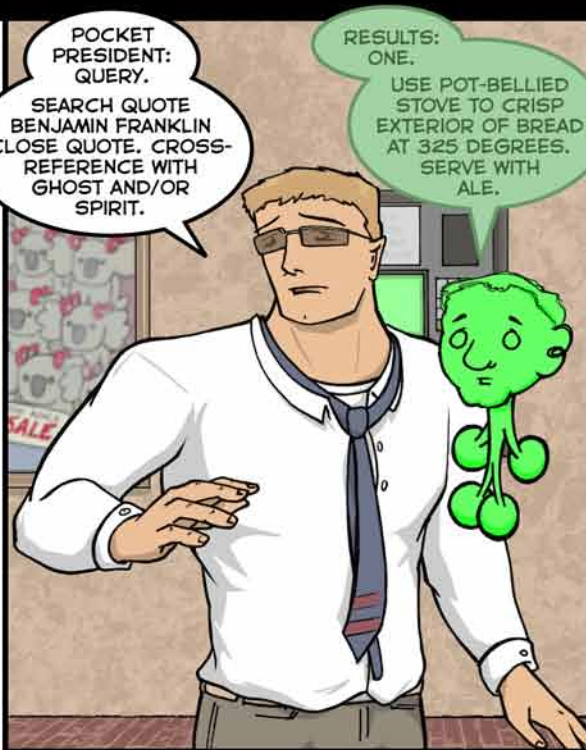
YEAH, WELL, I'M SHITTY AT MULTITASKING MY FREAKOUTS SO LET'S COME BACK TO THAT LATER.  
WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

WE SHOULD INTRODUCE OURSELVES.  
IT NEVER HURTS TO BE POLITE.

STAY AWAY UNTIL I DETERMINE IF IT IS SAFE. IF IT IS NOT, RUN FOR HOME.  
I WILL TAKE CARE OF THE DETAILS.

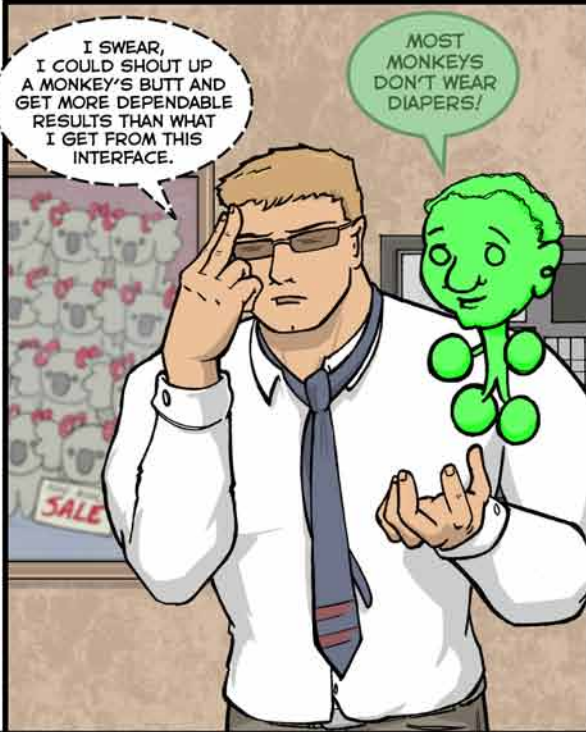
UM...  
THAT GREEN THING GIVES ME THE WILLIES. CAN IT...  
... CAN YOU EVEN GET HURT?

NO, I WILL BE PERFECTLY FINE.  
BUT PLEASE LET ME HANDLE THIS.



POCKET PRESIDENT: QUERY.  
SEARCH QUOTE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN CLOSE QUOTE. CROSS-REFERENCE WITH GHOST AND/OR SPIRIT.

RESULTS: ONE.  
USE POT-BELLIED STOVE TO CRISP EXTERIOR OF BREAD AT 325 DEGREES. SERVE WITH ALE.



I SWEAR, I COULD SHOUT UP A MONKEY'S BUTT AND GET MORE DEPENDABLE RESULTS THAN WHAT I GET FROM THIS INTERFACE.

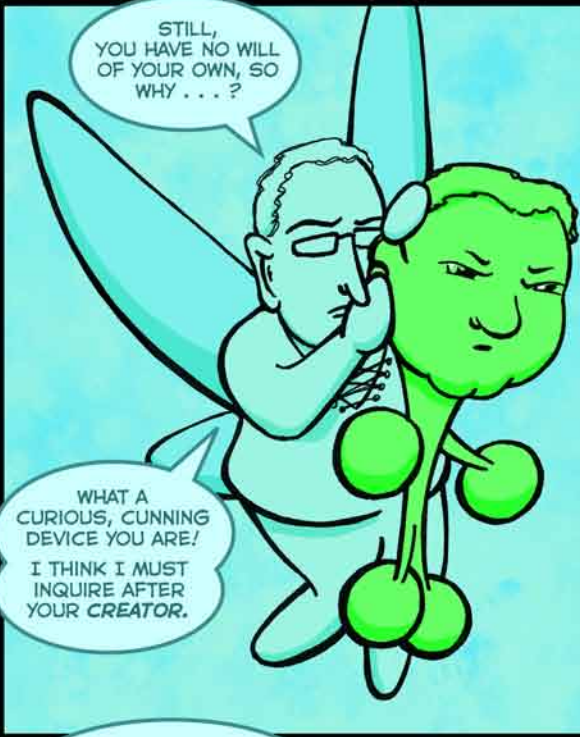
MOST MONKEYS DON'T WEAR DIAPERS!





WHY ATTACK ME?  
THERE WAS NO . . .  
WELL, I'LL BE  
JIGGERED!

YOU ARE  
NOTHING BUT  
A HOLLOW,  
LIFELESS  
APPARATUS!



STILL,  
YOU HAVE NO WILL  
OF YOUR OWN, SO  
WHY . . . ?

WHAT A  
CURIOUS, CUNNING  
DEVICE YOU ARE!  
I THINK I MUST  
INQUIRE AFTER  
YOUR CREATOR.



MEANWHILE,  
LET'S GIVE YOU A  
NEW PROGRAM.

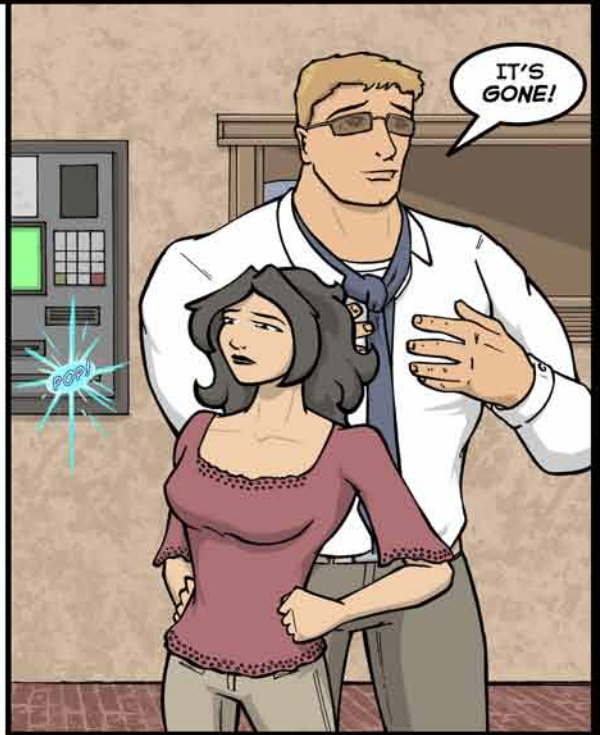
SNAP!

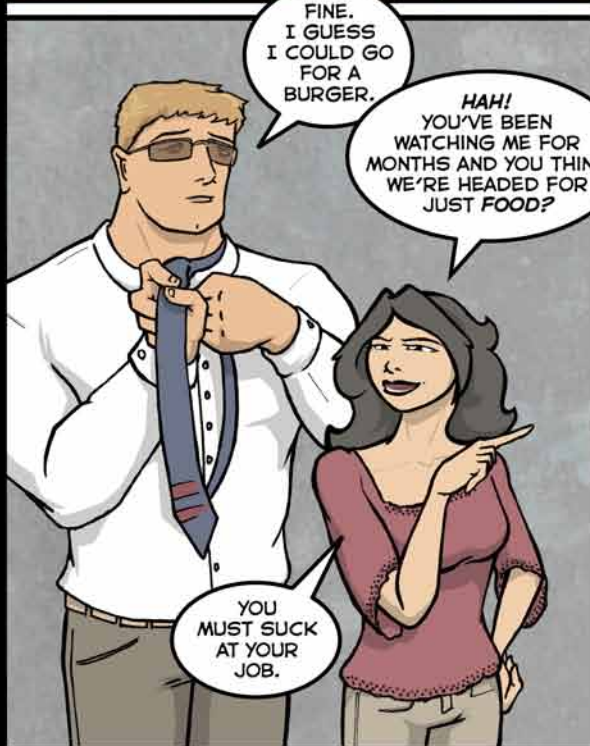
LISTEN  
CLOSELY -- I TAKE  
GREAT PRIDE IN  
MY ROLE AS A  
PROTECTOR.



I CANNOT HELP  
BUT SEE YOUR ASSAULT  
ON ME AS A THREAT.  
ACCORDINGLY, YOU WILL  
NEVER COME ANYWHERE  
NEAR THE YOUNG LADY  
EVER. AGAIN.

I AM  
BENJAMIN  
FRANKLIN.  
I CAN EASILY  
CONTRIVE OF AN  
EXPERIMENT TO  
LEARN WHETHER  
A MECHANICAL  
PUPPET CAN  
BLEED.







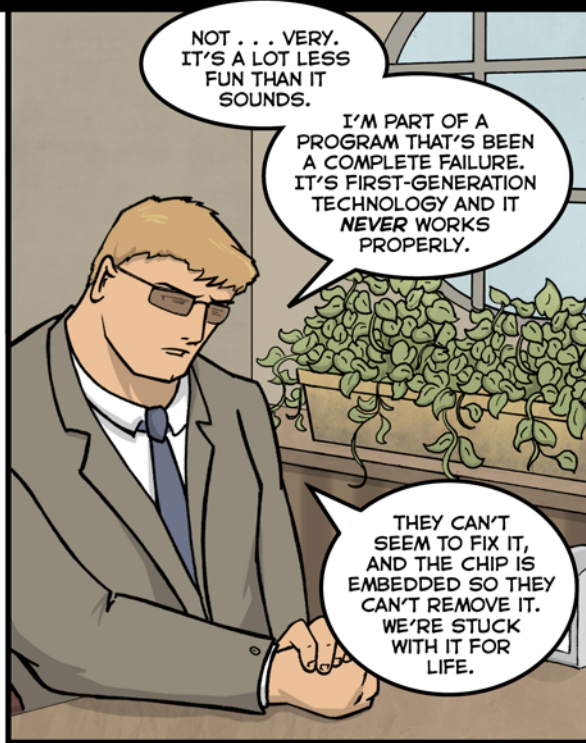
WHAT?!?  
THEY INSTALLED  
THAT THING IN  
YOUR *BRAIN*?

I'D GO AFTER  
IT WITH A *FORK*  
THROUGH  
MY *EYE*!

YEAH.  
THAT'S . . .  
THAT PROBLEM'S  
COME UP.

BUT THIS  
MEANS YOU'RE A  
*CYBORG*, RIGHT?

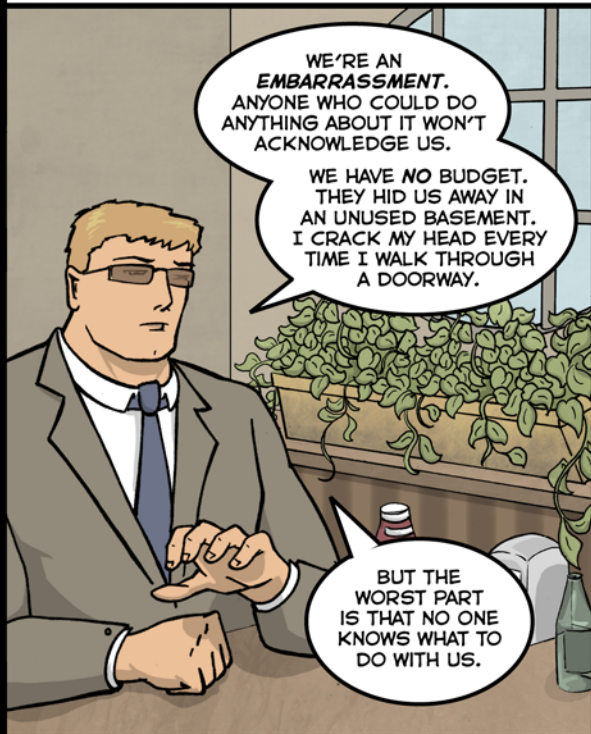
HEY! YOU'RE A  
REAL *CYBORG*!  
HOW COOL IS  
THAT!



NOT . . . VERY.  
IT'S A LOT LESS  
FUN THAN IT  
SOUNDS.

I'M PART OF A  
PROGRAM THAT'S BEEN  
A COMPLETE FAILURE.  
IT'S FIRST-GENERATION  
TECHNOLOGY AND IT  
*NEVER* WORKS  
PROPERLY.

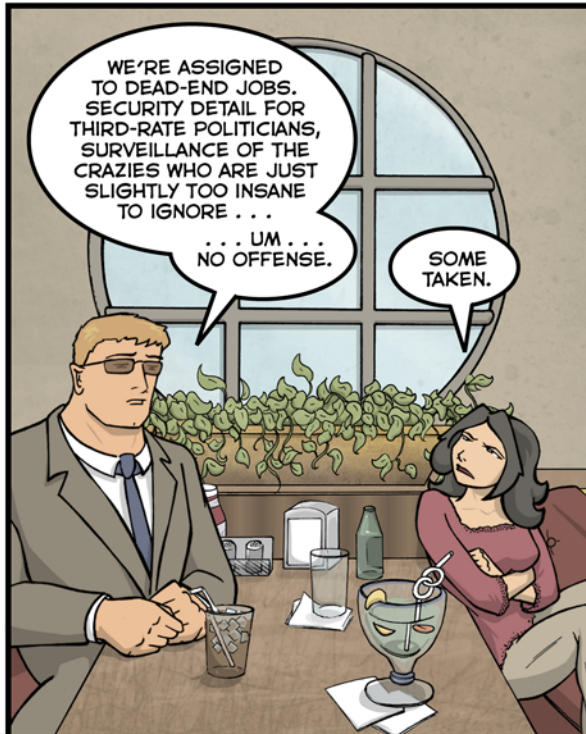
THEY CAN'T  
SEEM TO FIX IT,  
AND THE CHIP IS  
EMBEDDED SO THEY  
CAN'T REMOVE IT.  
WE'RE STUCK  
WITH IT FOR  
LIFE.



WE'RE AN  
*EMBARRASSMENT*.  
ANYONE WHO COULD DO  
ANYTHING ABOUT IT WON'T  
ACKNOWLEDGE US.

WE HAVE *NO* BUDGET.  
THEY HID US AWAY IN  
AN UNUSED BASEMENT.  
I CRACK MY HEAD EVERY  
TIME I WALK THROUGH  
A DOORWAY.

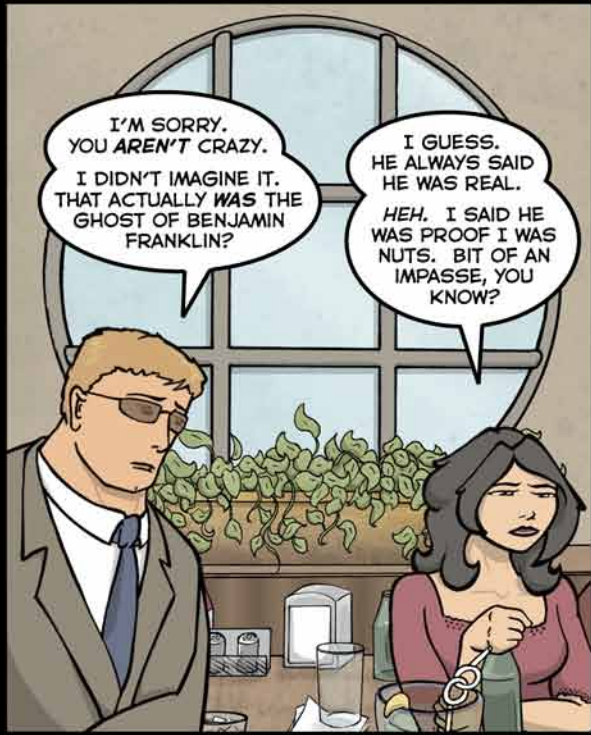
BUT THE  
WORST PART  
IS THAT NO ONE  
KNOWS WHAT TO  
DO WITH US.



WE'RE ASSIGNED  
TO DEAD-END JOBS.  
SECURITY DETAIL FOR  
THIRD-RATE POLITICIANS,  
SURVEILLANCE OF THE  
CRAZIES WHO ARE JUST  
SLIGHTLY TOO INSANE  
TO IGNORE . . .

. . . UM . . .  
NO OFFENSE.

SOME  
TAKEN.



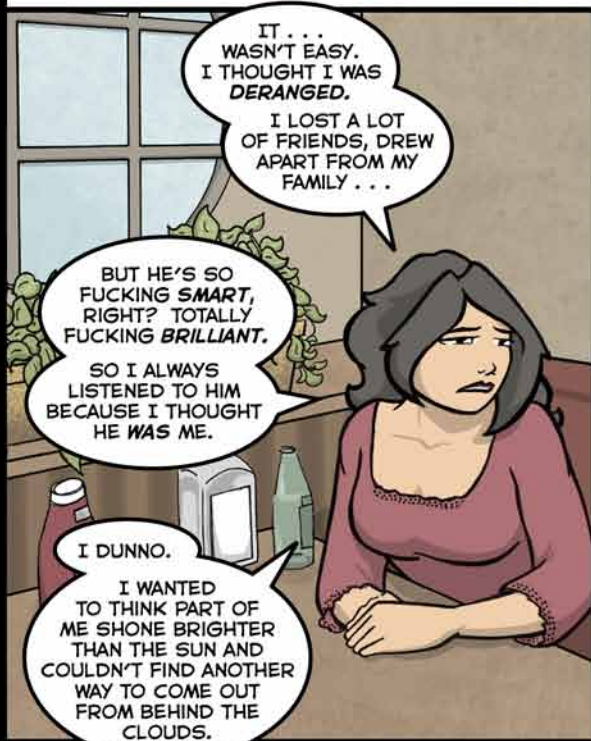
I'M SORRY.  
YOU **AREN'T** CRAZY.  
I DIDN'T IMAGINE IT.  
THAT ACTUALLY WAS THE  
GHOST OF BENJAMIN  
FRANKLIN?

I GUESS.  
HE ALWAYS SAID  
HE WAS REAL.  
HEH. I SAID HE  
WAS PROOF I WAS  
NUTS. BIT OF AN  
IMPASSE, YOU  
KNOW?



SOME JERK  
DOSED ME BACK  
IN COLLEGE. I HAD  
THIS **VICIOUSLY VIVID**  
TRIP WHERE I TRAVELED  
TO A WEIRD CITY FILLED  
WITH FAMOUS DEAD  
POLITICIANS.  
WHEN I CAME  
DOWN, BEN WAS  
THERE.

THIS WAS  
MAYBE SEVEN  
YEARS AGO, AND  
HE'S BEEN WITH  
ME EVER  
SINCE.



IT . . .  
WASN'T EASY.  
I THOUGHT I WAS  
**DERANGED**.  
I LOST A LOT  
OF FRIENDS, DREW  
APART FROM MY  
FAMILY . . .

BUT HE'S SO  
FUCKING **SMART**,  
RIGHT? TOTALLY  
FUCKING **BRILLIANT**.  
SO I ALWAYS  
LISTENED TO HIM  
BECAUSE I THOUGHT  
HE WAS ME.

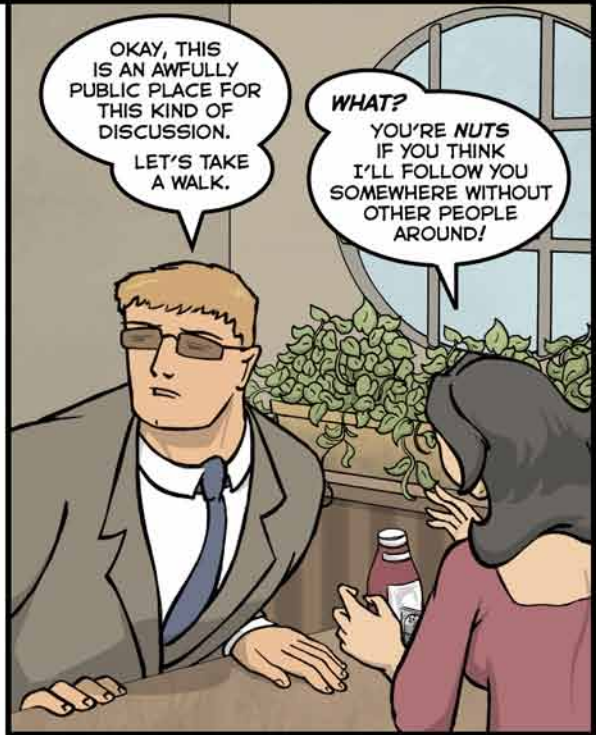
I DUNNO.  
I WANTED  
TO THINK PART OF  
ME SHONE BRIGHTER  
THAN THE SUN AND  
COULDN'T FIND ANOTHER  
WAY TO COME OUT  
FROM BEHIND THE  
CLOUDS.



IF HE'S  
**REAL**, THO' . . .  
THEN . . .

OH MY GOD.  
I'VE SPENT  
THE LAST SEVEN  
YEARS LIVING WITH  
A DEAD MAN.

HOO BOY.





HONESTLY, I'M NOT BEING POLITE. I DON'T GET COLD.

THAT'S GOOD. I'M NOT SURE IF AKBAR THE TENTMAKER CAN HANDLE PARKAS.

COME ON. I'M NOT BIG, I'M JUST TALL.



SUUUUURE. FLAPPY-FLAPPY!  
ARE ALL THE GUYS IN YOUR PROGRAM BUILT LIKE YOU?

THE SUNGLASSES? ACTUALLY. YES.

WE'VE GOT AN IMPLANT ON AN OPTIC NERVE TO INTERACT WITH THE VISUAL INTERFACE OF THE CHIP.



IT MAKES US SLIGHTLY PHOTOPHOBIC. I GET MIGRAINES WITHOUT THE GLASSES.

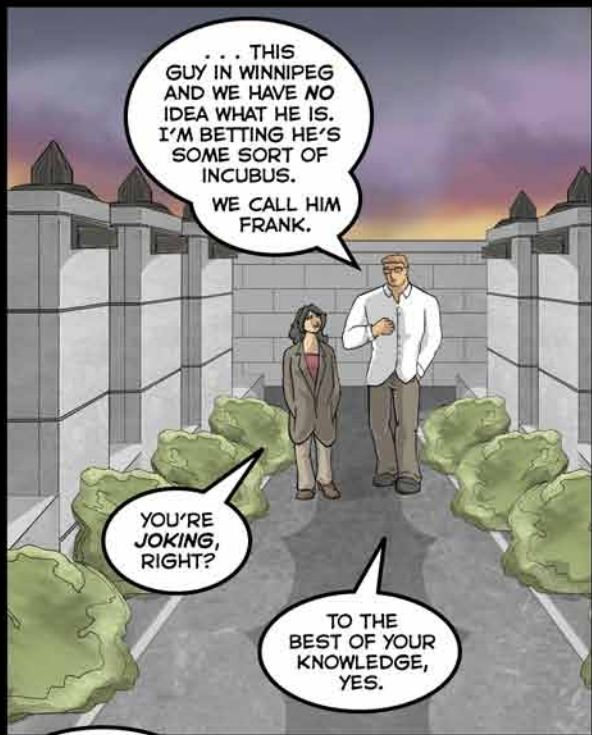
CAN YOU SEE IN THE DARK?

HEH, NO. IT'S MORE OF A MINOR DISABILITY THAN A TALENT.



AW! THAT SUCKS. YOU COULDA BEEN A SUPERHERO!  
YOU COULDA BEEN A CYBORG BATMAN!

BATMAN PROBABLY WALKS INTO FEWER WALLS.



... THIS GUY IN WINNIPEG AND WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT HE IS. I'M BETTING HE'S SOME SORT OF INCUBUS. WE CALL HIM FRANK.

YOU'RE JOKING, RIGHT?

TO THE BEST OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE, YES.



HAH! I GOTTA ADMIT, I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO BE FUNNY.

WELL, I AM TRYING TO CHEER YOU UP.

HOW AM I DOING? STILL UPSET?



SORT OF. NOW I'M PISSED AT MYSELF. THERE WAS A TON OF EVIDENCE THAT BEN WAS A REAL GHOST, BUT I'VE BEEN TOO STUPID TO ACCEPT IT.

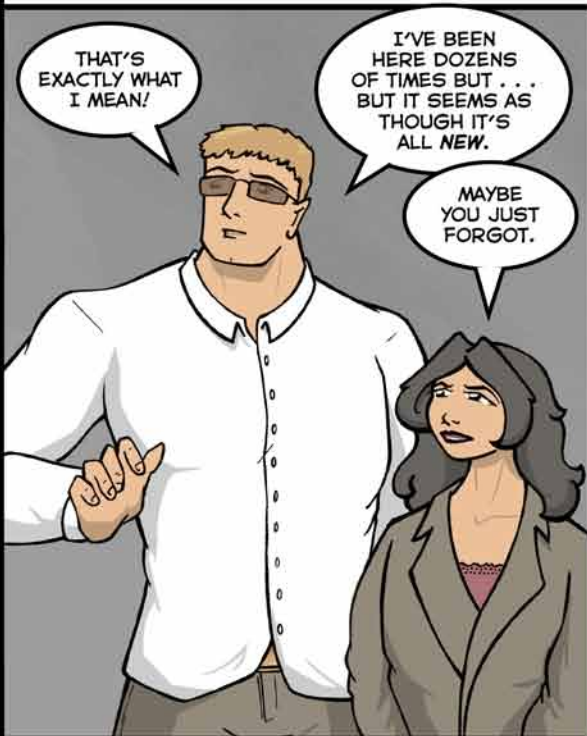
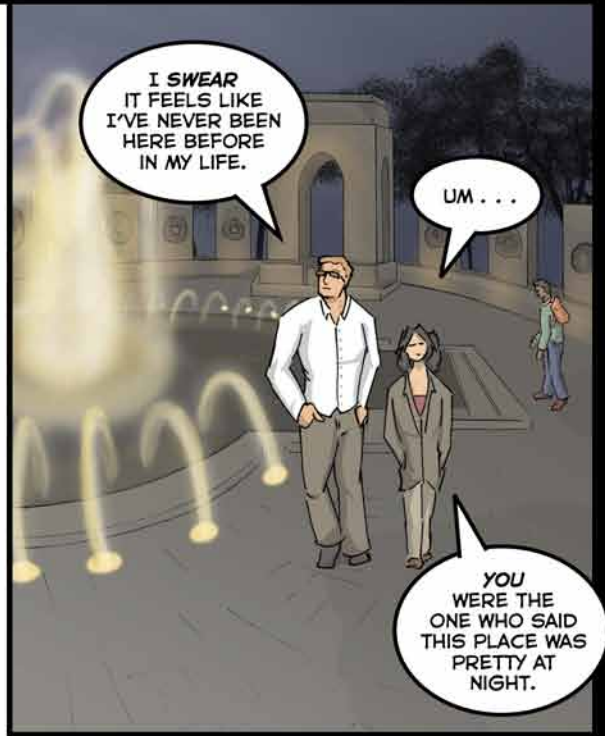
BEN'S ALWAYS BRINGING ME THIS CRAZY STUFF, OR SAYING THINGS I'VE NEVER EVEN IMAGINED ... I MEAN, HE'S THE ONLY REASON I'M A MULTI-MILLIONAIRE.

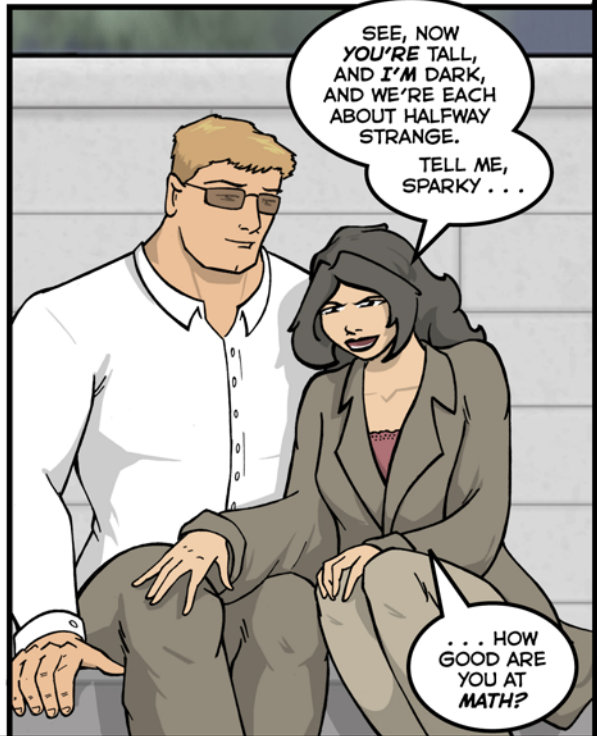
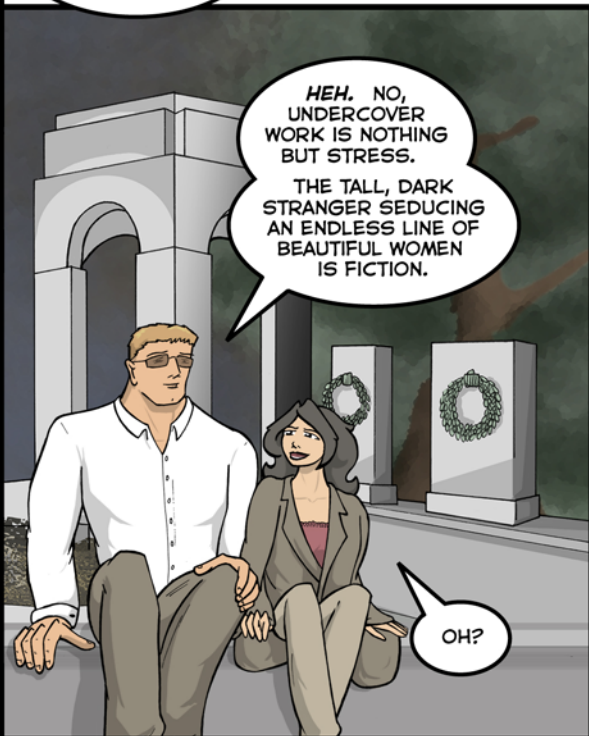
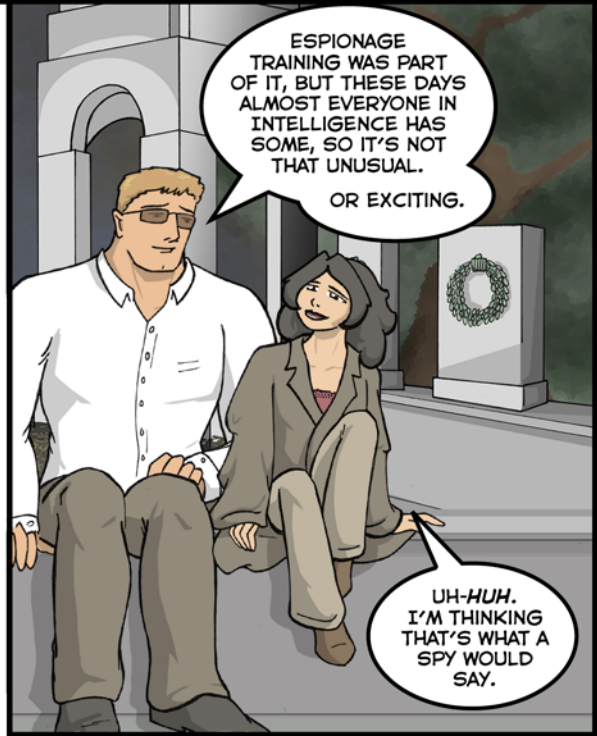
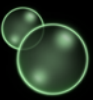
UM ... YOU KNOW I'M FILTHY RICH, YEAH?

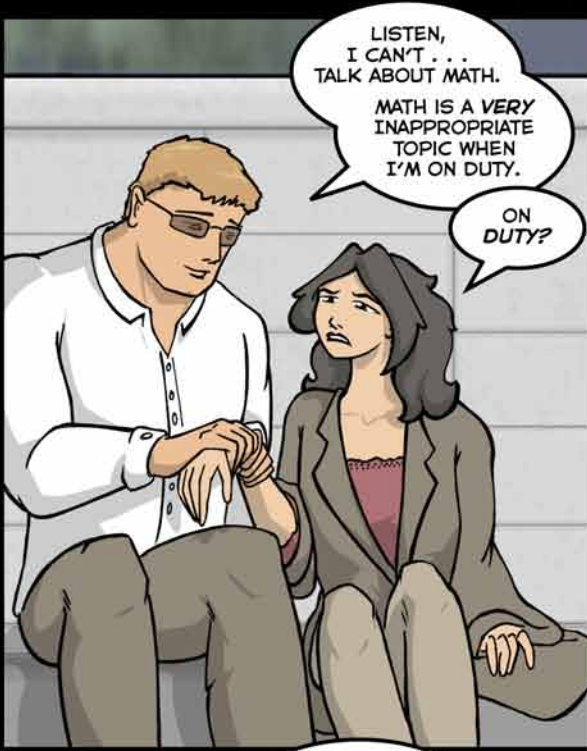


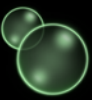
YEAH. I LOVE YOUR CAR. TELL ME IF YOU EVER WANT A KEPT MAN.

OH, I NEVER BUY THEM. BUT SOMETIMES I TEST-DRIVE THE HELL OUT OF ONE.





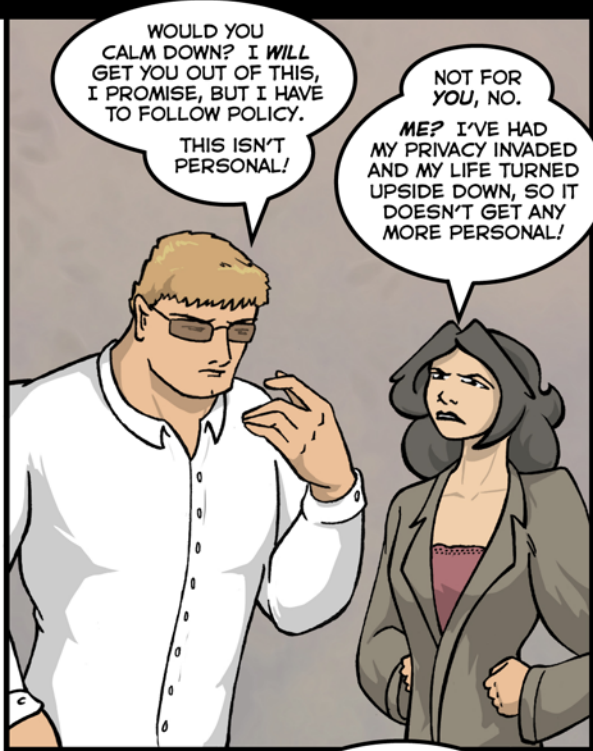




SERIOUSLY, WHAT'S WRONG YOU? ISN'T IT *BLINDLY* OBVIOUS THAT I'M NOT A TERRORIST?

IS THAT A TRICK QUESTION?

DON'T YOU DARE MAKE JOKES!



WOULD YOU CALM DOWN? I *WILL* GET YOU OUT OF THIS, I PROMISE, BUT I HAVE TO FOLLOW POLICY.

THIS ISN'T PERSONAL!

NOT FOR YOU, NO. *ME?* I'VE HAD MY PRIVACY INVADED AND MY LIFE TURNED UPSIDE DOWN, SO IT DOESN'T GET ANY MORE PERSONAL!



AND IF YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND THAT . . . HELL, IF THE PEOPLE WHO *MAKE* YOUR PRECIOUS POLICY CAN'T UNDERSTAND . . .

. . . THEN WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS NOT ONLY UNETHICAL BUT *ANTI-AMERICAN*, BECAUSE I HAVE *RIGHTS!*

YEAH, YOU HEARD ME! YOU'RE WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS COUNTRY TODAY!



GO AHEAD! TRY TO INTIMIDATE EVERYBODY ON EARTH WITH YOUR *SIZE* AND YOUR *AUTHORITY* AND YOUR *TECHNOLOGY*.

BUT GUESS WHAT, BUCKO?

IT'S ALL FUN AND GAMES UNTIL SOMEONE PISSES OFF *CHINA!*



ARE YOU FINISHED?

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HEAR WHAT I THINK IS WRONG WITH THIS COUNTRY?

IT COULD BE INTERESTING, RIGHT? SEEING AS I ACTUALLY *WORK* FOR IT INSTEAD OF JUST JUDGING THOSE WHO DO?

YES, WE SCREW UP SOMETIMES, BUT WE NEVER FORGET HOW WE'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE.

WE HAVE *RULES*, WE HAVE *POLICY*, BECAUSE THOSE PEOPLE AGREED ON A MIDDLE GROUND.

YES, WE'RE FLAWED. YES, THERE ARE PROBLEMS, BUT WE STILL DO OUR BEST *IN SPITE* OF THESE!

AND YES, ONCE IN A WHILE WE LOSE DIRECTION, BUT WE USUALLY FIND IT.

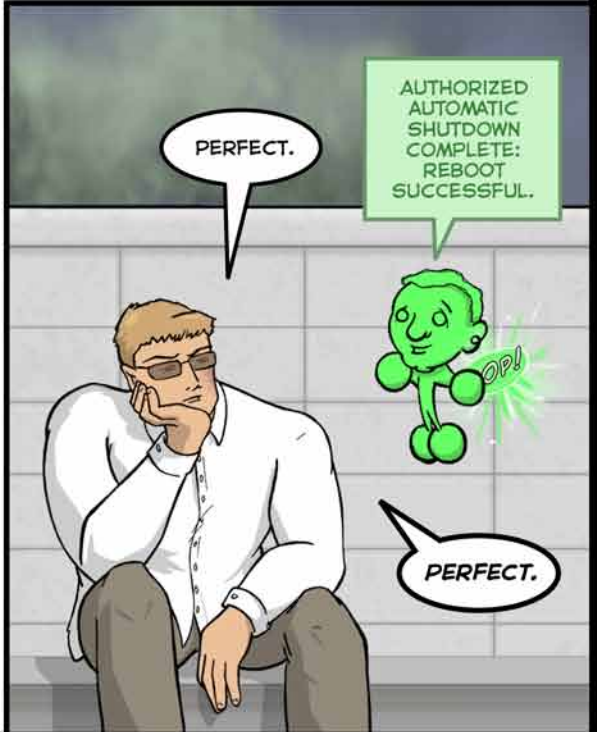
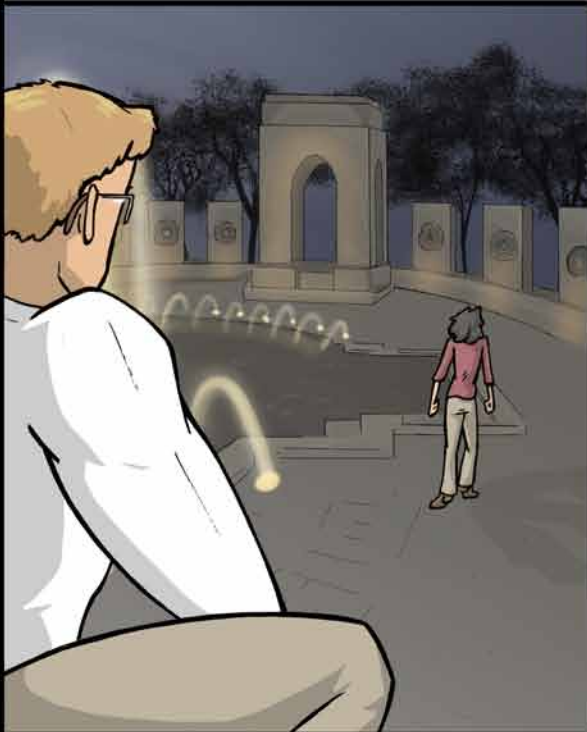
WE TAKE OUR MISTAKES AND WE WRITE *NEW POLICY* TO KEEP THEM FROM HAPPENING AGAIN.

LONG STORY SHORT, PRINCESS?

I'M GLAD I LIVE IN A COUNTRY WHERE WE CAN STRUGGLE AND FALL AND PICK OURSELVES UP OVER AND OVER AGAIN.

BUT I'M *ASHAMED* HOW SO MANY OF US ARE SPOILED, GREEDY *CHILDREN* WHO ARE SO SELF-ABSORBED, THEY THINK EVERY SINGLE PROBLEM WE'RE *ALL* TRYING TO SOLVE IS ONLY ABOUT *THEM*.

YOU WANT TO MAKE AMERICA A BETTER PLACE?  
**GROW UP.**



TWO MONTHS LATER



GOOD MORNING, TITS.

HEY CEASAR!

I WAS JUST ABOUT TO CALL YOU AND TELL YOU TO PUT SOMETHING SHARP IN YOUR EYE.



CUTE. GOT YOUR NEW ASSIGNMENT HERE. THOUGHT I'D BRING IT DOWN TO YOU IN PERSON.

YIPPIE. YET ANOTHER STORY ON YET ANOTHER FLOWER SHOW. FUN. NEVER STOPS.



THE POLICE ARE HOLDING A SENATOR'S AIDE.

IT'S SAFE TO SEND YOU TO CHECK IT OUT, RIGHT? EVEN YOU AREN'T STUPID ENOUGH TO SLUG A COP.

UM... PROBABLY. I'M PRETTY SURE HE WAS FEDERAL INSTEAD OF LOCAL.



CAN'T HEAR YOU, CAN'T HEAR YOU, CAN'T HEAR YOU, AND WON'T TESTIFY ON YOUR BEHALF.

DON'T WORRY, YOU'RE OFF THE HOOK. MY LAWYER SAYS SPINELESS AMMORAL LIZARD MEN GO OVER BADLY WITH JURIES.



YOUR FIRST REAL STORY!

I KNOW! ISN'T THIS AWESOME?

YOU WERE RIGHT, BEN! PUT IN THE HOURS AND HE'D FINALLY TRUST ME WITH AN ACTUAL JOB.



HAPPY?

DEFINITELY!  
I'M SO TIRED OF WASTING MY TIME ON CRAP!



AW BEN, EVER HAVE ONE OF THOSE DAYS WHEN IT FEELS YOUR LIFE IS JUST BEGINNING?

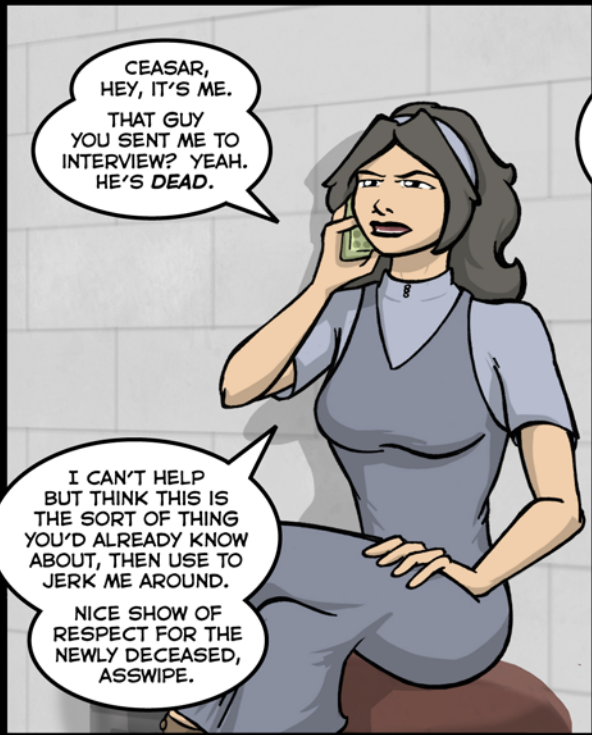
NOT FOR A LONG TIME, DEAREST.



THE AIDE IS DEAD?

YOU DON'T MEAN DEAD-DEAD, RIGHT? HE'S, LIKE, MOSTLY DEAD, OR SORTA DEAD, OR "I'M GETTING BETTER" DEAD?

I'M NOT SURE, DEAR.  
WHICH ONE OF THOSE DESCRIBES WHEN THE BODY IS IN ONE BAG AND THE BRAIN IS IN ANOTHER?



CEASAR,  
HEY, IT'S ME.  
THAT GUY  
YOU SENT ME TO  
INTERVIEW? YEAH.  
HE'S DEAD.

I CAN'T HELP  
BUT THINK THIS IS  
THE SORT OF THING  
YOU'D ALREADY KNOW  
ABOUT, THEN USE TO  
JERK ME AROUND.  
  
NICE SHOW OF  
RESPECT FOR THE  
NEWLY DECEASED,  
ASSWIPE.



YOUR  
OWN FAULT, TITS.  
I USED TO PUT UP  
WITH YOUR SHIT BECAUSE  
YOU WERE GOOD FOR  
A LAUGH.  
  
LAST FEW MONTHS?  
YOU'VE BEEN CLOSE  
TO BORING.

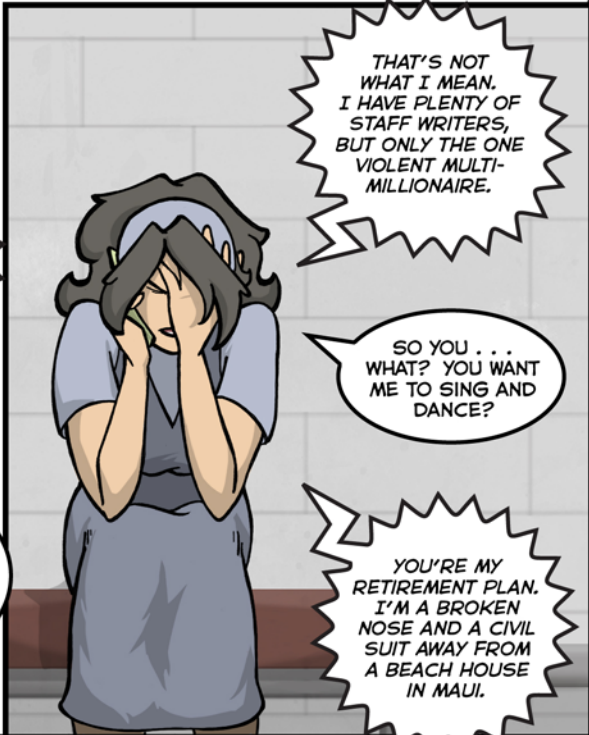
SO I  
ASKED MYSELF,  
WHY SHOULD I LET  
YOU STAY IF I GET  
NOTHING OUT  
OF IT?



YOU'RE  
PUNISHING ME  
BECAUSE I'VE BEEN  
TRYING TO  
IMPROVE?

NO,  
I'VE REALIZED  
I NEED A LITTLE  
SOMETHING EXTRA  
TO KEEP ME GOING  
IN MY GOLDEN  
YEARS.

YOUR MOMMY  
AND DADDY MUST  
HAVE TOLD YOU  
THAT'S WHAT  
PROSTITUTES  
ARE FOR.



THAT'S NOT  
WHAT I MEAN.  
I HAVE PLENTY OF  
STAFF WRITERS,  
BUT ONLY THE ONE  
VIOLENT MULTI-  
MILLIONAIRE.

SO YOU . . .  
WHAT? YOU WANT  
ME TO SING AND  
DANCE?

YOU'RE MY  
RETIREMENT PLAN.  
I'M A BROKEN  
NOSE AND A CIVIL  
SUIT AWAY FROM  
A BEACH HOUSE  
IN MAUI.



"BEN, MAYBE THERE'S A STORY BEHIND WHY THIS GUY DIED. CAN YOU GO DOWN TO THE MORGUE . . ."

OH, DEAREST. NO! THAT WOULD BE IMPROPER.

THE POLICE HAVE THE RIGHT TO INVESTIGATE WITHOUT US PEERING OVER THEIR SHOULDERS.



"BULLSHIT, YOU WERE THE GUY WHO FOUGHT FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS."

WELL, YES, BUT YOU DO NOT WANT TO RIGHT A WRONG. YOU WANT TO FURTHER YOUR CAREER.

I'D HOPE YOU COULD DO THAT WITHOUT PRYING INTO OTHERS' AFFAIRS.



"I'M ASKING YOU NICELY. NOW FLY YOUR ZOMBIE FAIRY SELF DOWN . . ."

MY GOODNESS, LOOK AT ALL THE PROFANITY.

AND ASKING ME NICELY SEEMS TO REQUIRE A LARGE NUMBER OF KNIVES.

BUT THE ANSWER IS STILL NO.



I MUST SAY, THIS IS A DELIGHTFUL CONVERSATION!

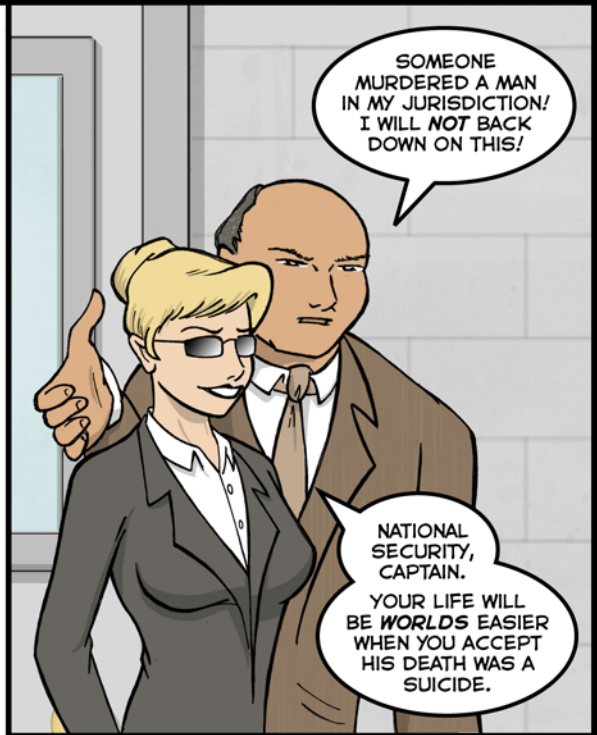
CAN WE COME HERE AGAIN?



IT'S NOT SUICIDE IF HE WAS SHOT MULTIPLE TIMES IN THE HEAD!

SIX SHOTS, EACH POTENTIALLY FATAL!

ROB DIXON'S DEATH IS NO LONGER YOUR CONCERN.



SOMEONE MURDERED A MAN IN MY JURISDICTION! I WILL NOT BACK DOWN ON THIS!

NATIONAL SECURITY, CAPTAIN.

YOUR LIFE WILL BE *WORLDS* EASIER WHEN YOU ACCEPT HIS DEATH WAS A SUICIDE.



**BULL!** MY DEPARTMENT WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN SOME SHADY GOVERNMENT COVER-UP!

DIXON'S DEATH WAS A SUICIDE. WE'VE GIVEN YOU ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO PROVE IT.

YOUR HANDS ARE CLEAN. WALK AWAY.



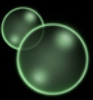
THANKS FOR THE TIP, LADY LOWER BACK PAIN!

**HMMMMM . . .** WONDER WHAT'S WORSE . . . LEARNING I HAVE TO BREAK INTO A MORGUE . . .

. . . OR FINDING OUT MY PERSONAL *DEUS EX MACHINA* IS MY DAILY BRAN MUFFIN.

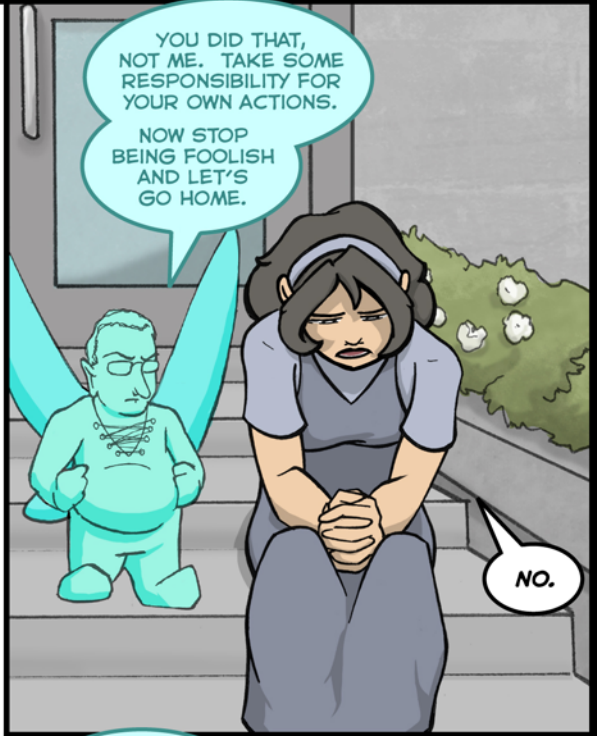






ARE WE SULKING?

MMMPPH.  
WHY DID JA GET ME THROWN OUT, BEN?



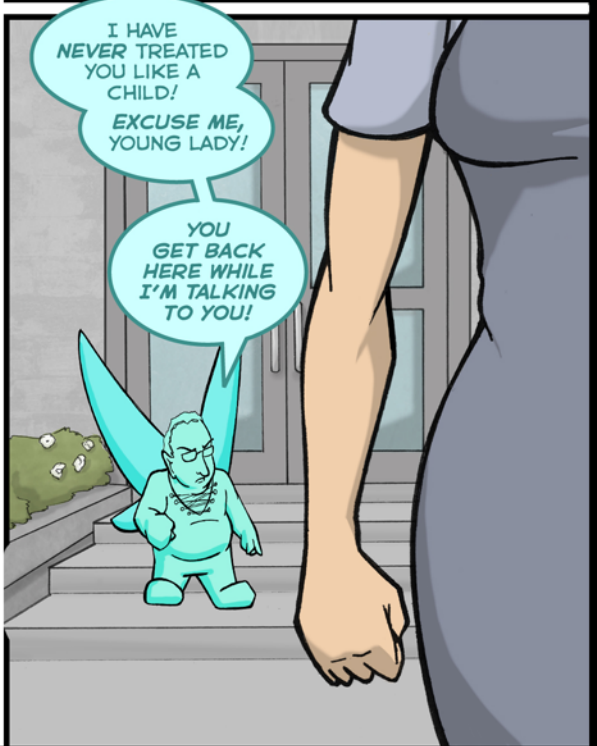
YOU DID THAT, NOT ME. TAKE SOME RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN ACTIONS.  
NOW STOP BEING FOOLISH AND LET'S GO HOME.

NO.



STOP TRYING TO CONTROL ME!  
YOU AREN'T MY FATHER, BEN! AND IF YOU LECTURE ME EVERY TIME YOU THINK I'VE FUCKED UP, ARE YOU EVEN MY FRIEND?

YOU WANT ME TO BE MORE RESPONSIBLE? THEN STOP TREATING ME LIKE A CHILD!



I HAVE NEVER TREATED YOU LIKE A CHILD!  
EXCUSE ME, YOUNG LADY!  
YOU GET BACK HERE WHILE I'M TALKING TO YOU!



DEAREST,  
STOP.  
YOU ARE  
BEING IRRATIONAL.  
WE HAVE TO TALK  
THIS OVER.

I'M NOT IN  
THE MOOD FOR  
THE PRE-FREUDIAN  
PSYCHOBABBLE,  
'KAY?



DON'T YOU  
REALIZE YOU'VE  
BEEN WITH ME ALL  
OF MY ADULT LIFE?  
  
TWO WEEKS INTO  
COLLEGE AND **BAM**.  
BENJAMIN FLIPPIN'  
FRANKLIN.

I WAS  
SUPPOSED  
TO . . . I DUNNO . . .  
*DISCOVER MYSELF*, BUT  
SUDDENLY THERE'S  
THIS IMMENSELY  
INTELLIGENT *THING*  
GUIDING ME.  
  
AND I *LET* YOU  
BECAUSE I THOUGHT  
YOU *WERE* ME.



YOU'VE  
MADE ALL OF MY  
MAJOR DECISIONS  
FOR THE LAST  
SEVEN YEARS!

YOU'VE BEEN  
DRIVING ME  
LIKE A CAR!

AND I WAS  
FINE WITH THAT  
WHEN I DIDN'T KNOW  
WHERE YOU ENDED AND  
I BEGAN, BUT NOW  
THAT I DO . . .

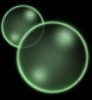


DEAREST,  
I HAVE NEVER  
LIED TO YOU ABOUT  
WHO I AM!

BEN, YOU  
DON'T GET IT.  
IT'S NOT WHAT YOU  
SAID, IT'S WHAT  
I BELIEVED.  
  
*I'M NOBODY.*  
I THOUGHT I WAS  
YOU . . .

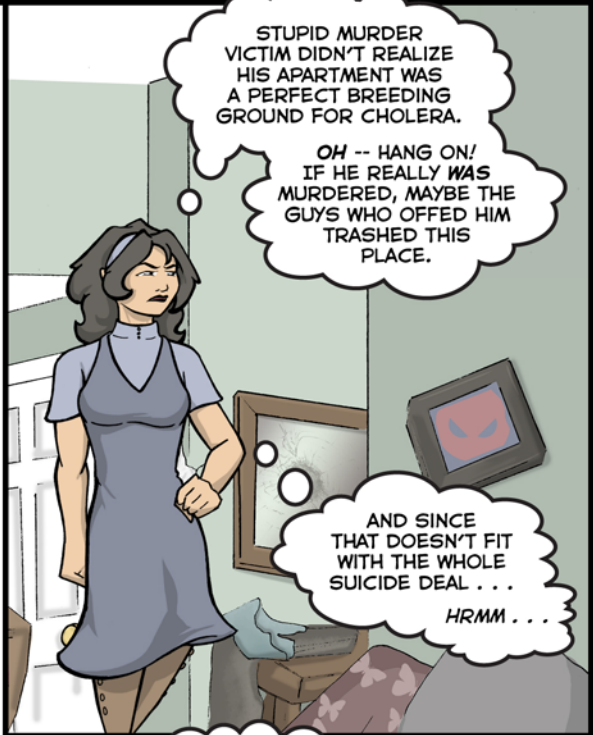
. . . BUT  
I'M NOBODY.





STUPID GHOST!

STUPID ME FOR BELIEVING IN ...  
... YIKES!



STUPID MURDER VICTIM DIDN'T REALIZE HIS APARTMENT WAS A PERFECT BREEDING GROUND FOR CHOLERA.

OH -- HANG ON! IF HE REALLY WAS MURDERED, MAYBE THE GUYS WHO OFFED HIM TRASHED THIS PLACE.

AND SINCE THAT DOESN'T FIT WITH THE WHOLE SUICIDE DEAL ...  
HRMM ...



OKAY. SO ... DEFINITELY NOT SUICIDE. BUT WHY KILL THE DUDE AND NOT TORCH HIS HOME TO HIDE THE CRIME?

TRASHING IT DEFEATS THE PURPOSE OF A COVER STORY, RIGHT?

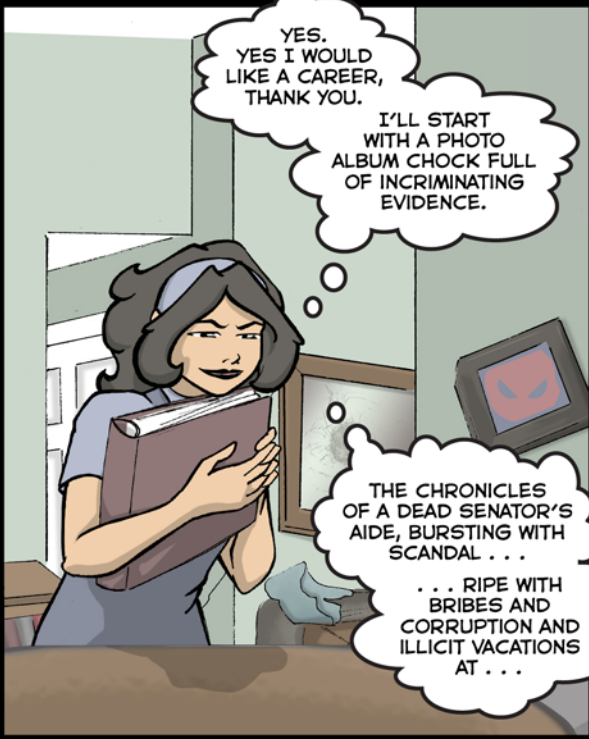
UNLESS ...

THEY WERE LOOKING FOR SOMETHING.  
SOMETHING THEY STILL NEED TO FIND.



BLESS YOU, NANCY REAGAN, FOR FORCE-FEEDING MY GENERATION A STEADY DIET OF PARANOIA.

THIS IS MY BRAIN ON A PULITZER PRIZE!



YES.  
YES I WOULD  
LIKE A CAREER,  
THANK YOU.

I'LL START  
WITH A PHOTO  
ALBUM CHOCK FULL  
OF INCRIMINATING  
EVIDENCE.

THE CHRONICLES  
OF A DEAD SENATOR'S  
AIDE, BURSTING WITH  
SCANDAL . . .  
. . . RIPE WITH  
BRIBES AND  
CORRUPTION AND  
ILLICIT VACATIONS  
AT . . .



DISNEYLAND.



PICTURES OF  
ROOSTERS? A CHIMP  
ON A BICYCLE?

A . . . BAG OF  
COTTON BALLS?

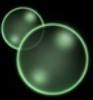
THIS IS A  
COLLECTION OF  
RANDOM CRAP.



MAN,  
I HOPE THERE'RE  
BLUEPRINTS FOR A  
NUKE IN THIS  
MESS.

IT'S BE A REAL  
SHAME IF THE POOR  
GUY WAS BLOWN AWAY  
FOR SWIPING THE  
POSTCARD RACK AT  
A STUCKEY'S.







SHIT!  
SOME COPS  
JUST SHOWED  
UP!

I KNEW THAT  
CAPTAIN WOULDN'T  
BACK DOWN.  
TAKE THE ALBUM  
I'LL MEET UP WITH  
YOU LATER.



OFFICERS.  
YOU SHOULDN'T BE  
HERE. I THOUGHT  
I HAD MADE THAT  
VERY CLEAR.

OH, YOU  
DID!  
CAPTAIN PEREZ  
TOLD US TO  
APOLOGIZE IN  
PERSON.



HE FEELS  
TERRIBLE ABOUT  
YELLING AT YOU.  
THE VICTIM DIED  
FROM A PERFECTLY  
TYPICAL SUICIDE,  
HE SAID.

GOOD TO  
HEAR. PLEASE  
LEAVE.



WAIT.  
YOU WANT US  
TO LEAVE?  
DIDN'T YOU HEAR  
ME, BLONDIE?  
THERE'S NO CRIME,  
WHICH MEANS YOU'RE  
TRESPASSING.

CLEAR OUT,  
BLONDIE.  
IF YOU RESIST,  
PEREZ ALSO SAID  
HE CAN APOLOGIZE TO  
YOU JUST AS EASILY  
THROUGH A SET  
OF BARS.



THAT WAS TOO EASY. I EXPECTED HER TO HAMMER US WITH NATIONAL SECURITY, YOUR BEST INTERESTS, AND BLAH BLAH BLAH.

MMMM . . . YOU GET THE FEELING SHE'S DONE HERE?

DAMN. YEAH, MAYBE.

WELL, LET'S POKE AROUND. IF WE DON'T GET LUCKY, THE LANDLORD CAN GO AHEAD AND FUMIGATE.

FUMIGATE? WHAT ABOUT HIS STUFF?

IT'S GOING TO GOODWILL. THE GUY WAS ESTRANGED FROM HIS FAMILY. HE HAD NO FRIENDS, AND NO ONE AT HIS JOB SEEMS TO CARE, EITHER.

SAD. WHAT ARE THEY SPRAYING FOR? ANTS?

EARWIGS.

NOW WHAT THE HECK IS THAT?

FAMILIAR.

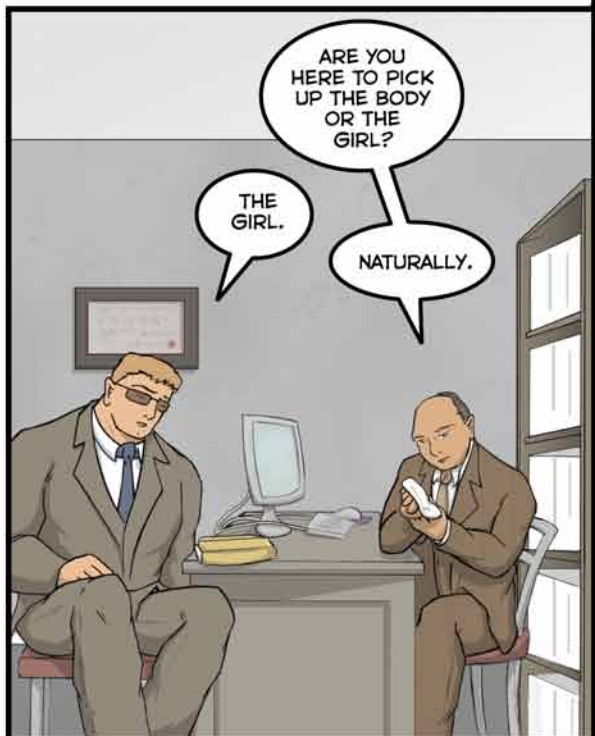
WAAARGH!













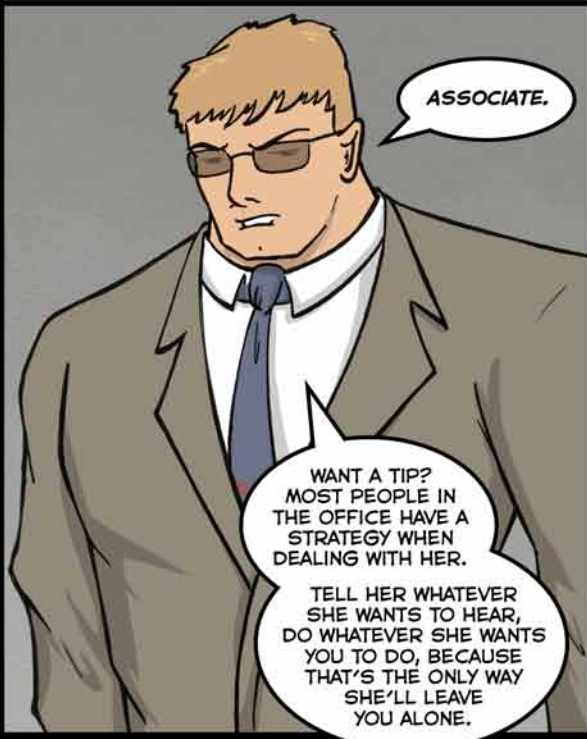
WAIT.  
DIXON'S BODY  
IS STILL HERE?  
I WAS TOLD WE SENT  
SOMEONE OVER  
TO IDENTIFY  
HIM.

IDENTIFY?  
YES. CLAIM? NO.  
A SPOOK POPPED  
UP, BARKED A BUNCH  
OF ORDERS, AND LEFT  
FASTER THAN SHE  
ARRIVED.



PETITE BLOND,  
INTRODUCED  
HERSELF BY A  
NUMBER INSTEAD  
OF A NAME?

AGENT 146,  
YEAH.  
FRIEND OF  
YOURS, I TAKE  
IT?



ASSOCIATE.

WANT A TIP?  
MOST PEOPLE IN  
THE OFFICE HAVE A  
STRATEGY WHEN  
DEALING WITH HER.  
TELL HER WHATEVER  
SHE WANTS TO HEAR,  
DO WHATEVER SHE WANTS  
YOU TO DO, BECAUSE  
THAT'S THE ONLY WAY  
SHE'LL LEAVE  
YOU ALONE.

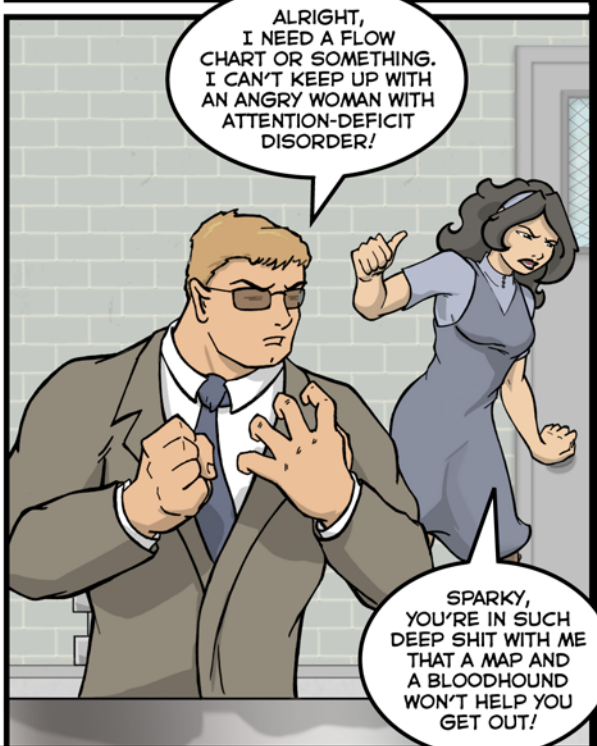


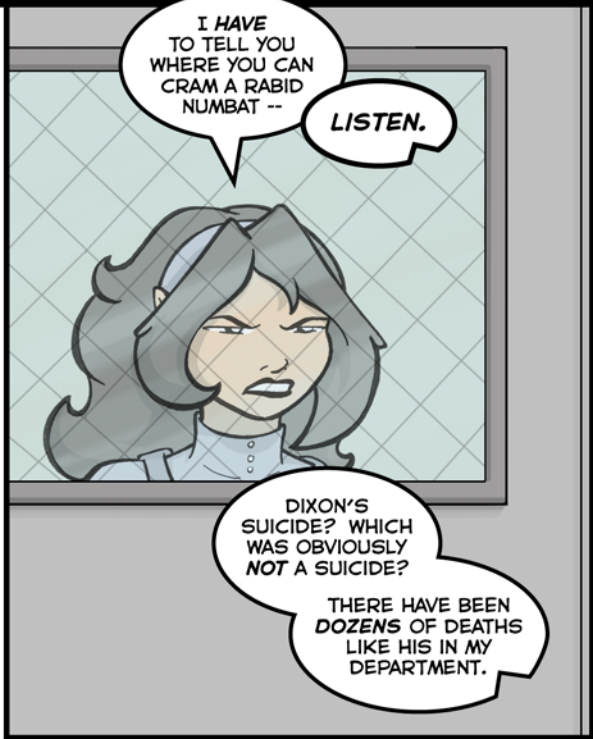
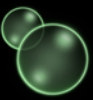
HEH HEH  
HEH!

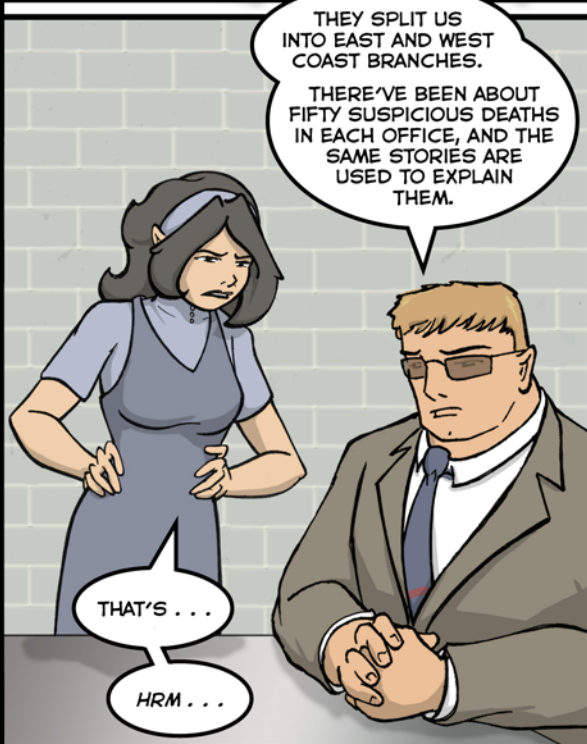
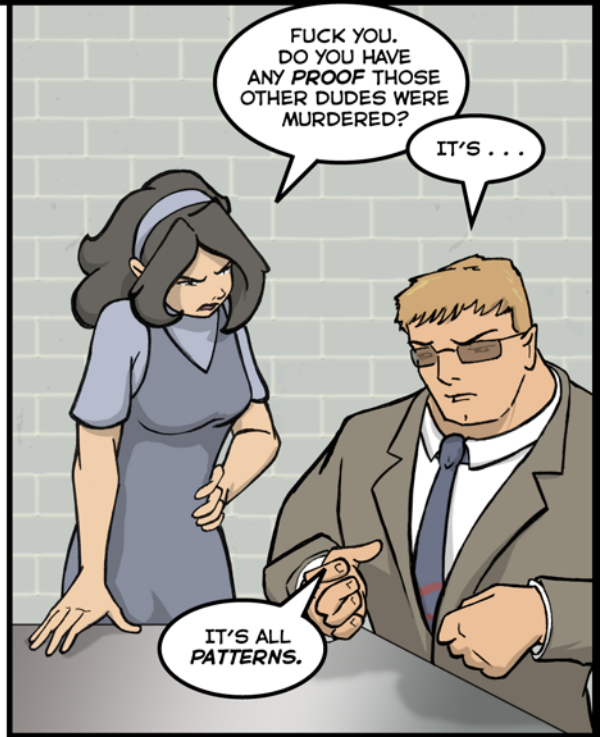
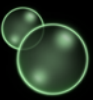
WAY AHEAD  
OF YOU, BIG GUY.  
WAY AHEAD.

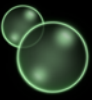












ALRIGHT. SAY I DECIDE TO HELP YOU. WHAT DO I DO?

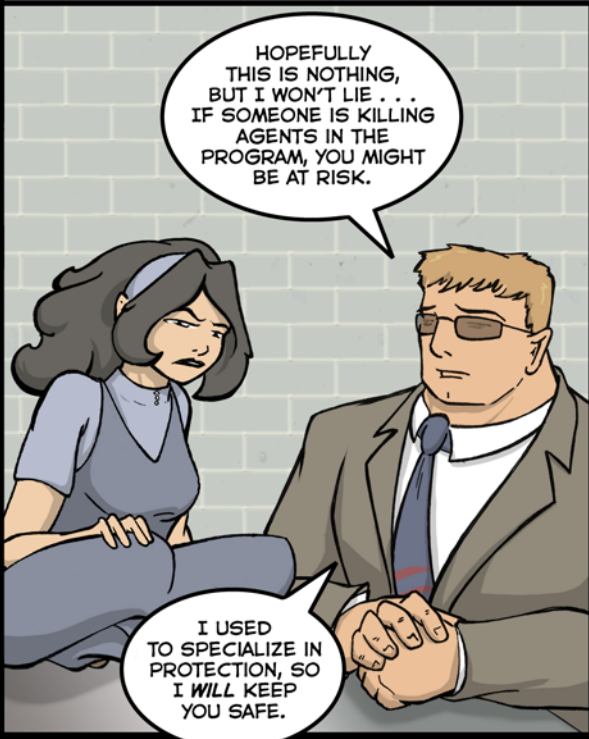
NOTHING, REALLY.

I DON'T HAVE A LOT OF RESOURCES. I JUST NEED YOU TO STAY IN SIGHT SO I CAN USE THE ONES I DO.



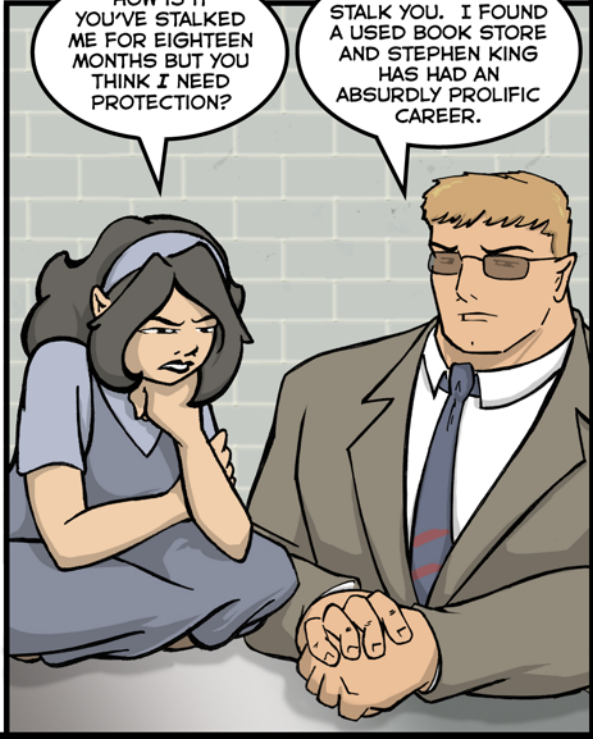
WOW. THAT SOUNDS SO COMPLETELY AWESOME. NOT A WASTE OF MY TIME AT ALL.

YOU'RE A REPORTER, RIGHT? AND IF YOU CAN'T GO ON THE RECORD WITH THE STORY, I'LL PAY YOU BACK SOMEHOW.



HOPEFULLY THIS IS NOTHING, BUT I WON'T LIE . . . IF SOMEONE IS KILLING AGENTS IN THE PROGRAM, YOU MIGHT BE AT RISK.


I USED TO SPECIALIZE IN PROTECTION, SO I WILL KEEP YOU SAFE.



HOW IS IT YOU'VE STALKED ME FOR EIGHTEEN MONTHS BUT YOU THINK I NEED PROTECTION?

I DIDN'T STALK YOU. I FOUND A USED BOOK STORE AND STEPHEN KING HAS HAD AN ABSURDLY PROLIFIC CAREER.





URGH, NO.  
DO YOU KNOW  
ANYTHING ABOUT  
SECURITY?

SECURITY IS  
INVERSELY--

--PROPORTIONAL  
TO CONVENIENCE.

MAYHAPS  
YOU HAVE HEARD  
OF THIS THING THE  
KIDS CALL THE  
**INTERNET.**

ALRIGHT, GOOD.

WE USE CRYPTOGRAPHY  
-- BY WE, I MEAN **EVERYBODY** --  
BECAUSE IT'S A FAST AND  
EASY WAY TO SECURE OUR  
COMMUNICATIONS.

BUT GIVEN  
ENOUGH TIME,  
ANYTHING ENCODED  
USING CRYPTOGRAPHY  
CAN BE DECODED.

THIS ISN'T TRUE OF  
STEGANOGRAPHY.  
IT'S A CODE HIDDEN  
IN PLAIN SIGHT.

IF YOU DON'T  
KNOW THE CODE,  
YOU **CAN'T** KNOW  
THE MESSAGE.

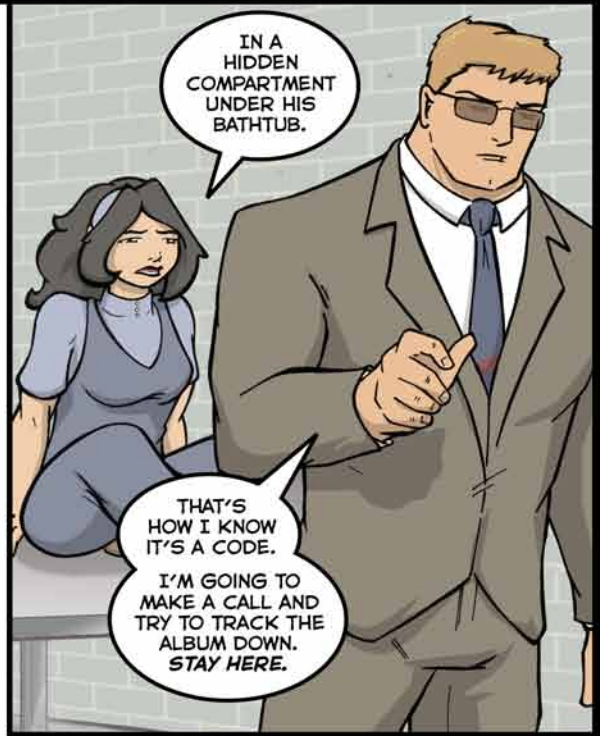
YEAH, LIKE,  
A DIGITAL CODE  
CAN BE HIDDEN IN  
A PICTURE, OR THE  
PICTURE ITSELF **IS**  
THE CODE.

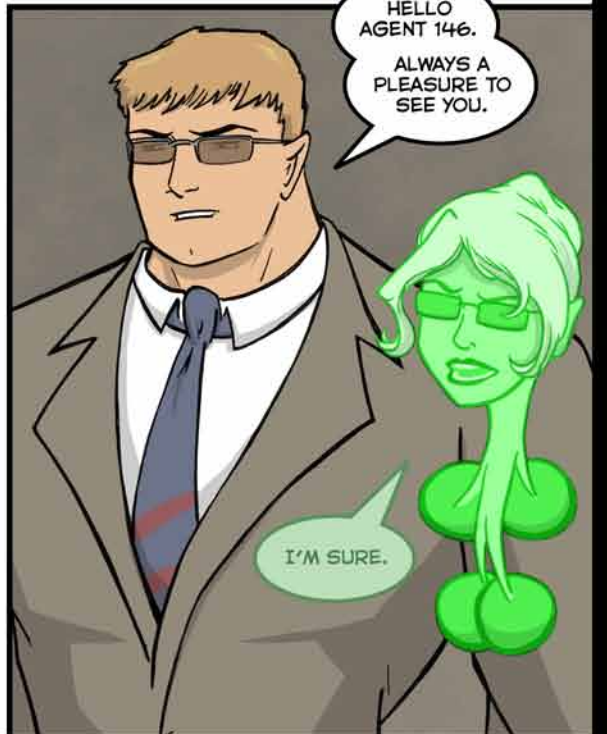
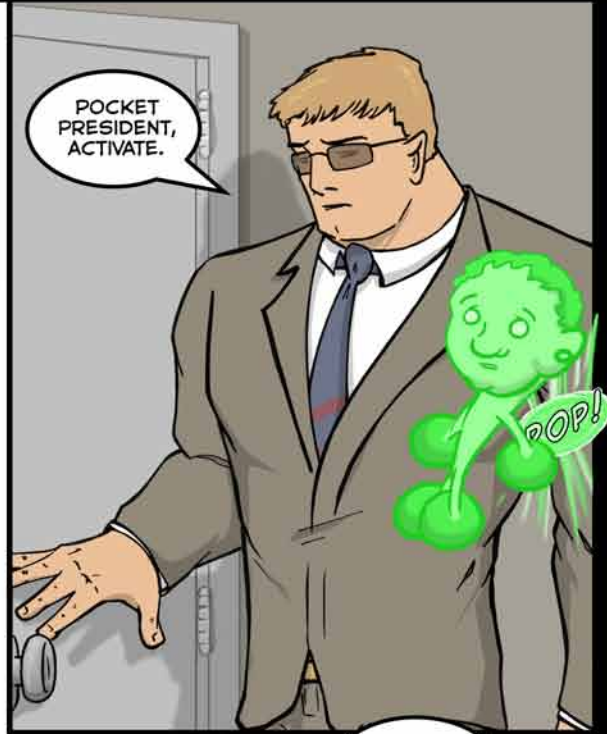
LIKE, SAY, A  
DRAGON MEANS  
THE MONTH OF  
JUNE.

OR . . .  
YES.  
EXACTLY.

NICE.  
YOU'RE A LOT  
SMARTER THAN  
YOU LOOK.

OH GOD,  
I GET THAT  
ALL THE TIME!  
I'M REALLY  
STARTING TO WORRY  
THAT I LOOK LIKE  
OWEN WILSON.







IF YOU'RE JUST GOING TO GROWL AND LOOM --

CHECK MY GPS.  
NOTICE ANYTHING?



... THE POLICE STATION.

WHERE THEY BROUGHT MY TARGET AFTER SHE WAS ARRESTED IN ROB DIXON'S HOME.  
SHE HAD SOME VERY INTERESTING THINGS TO SAY ABOUT A WOMAN WHO FITS YOUR DESCRIPTION.



WHERE'S THE PHOTO ALBUM, AGENT FINCH?

I TURNED IT OVER TO SMITHBACK.  
HE SAYS DIXON WAS WORKING ON SOMETHING FOR HIM. LET IT GO.



MY TARGET WON'T LET IT GO.  
SHE'S WITH THE PRESS, AND SHE SMELLS A COVERUP.

THE PRESS?  
OH, THAT'S A GOOD ONE.  
THE PATRIOT ACT MEANS NEVER HAVING TO SAY YOU'RE SORRY.





MOVE!  
SHE'LL BE  
CALLING BACK  
ANY SECOND!

LIKE  
I CARE!  
YOU LIED  
TO ME!

I DIDN'T--  
LOOK, YOU WERE  
ARRESTED IN  
DIXON'S APARTMENT!  
THERE'S A PAPER  
TRAIL.



WHAT YOU  
OVERHEARD?  
THAT WAS THE ONLY  
WAY TO FIND THE ALBUM  
AND KEEP HER FROM  
HUNTING YOU DOWN TO  
LEARN WHY YOU  
WERE THERE.

NOW GO WAIT  
FOR ME!



OH SHIT  
I WISH THAT  
DIDN'T MAKE  
SENSE --

OH SHIT,  
I THINK I JUST  
MESSED UP, BAD.  
BEN WOULD . . .

BEN WOULD TELL  
ME TO GO HOME,  
PLAY IT SAFE.

RUN.





ALRIGHT,  
COME ON.  
WE'RE  
LEAVING.



AT THIS  
RATE, WE'RE  
GOING TO KILL  
EACH OTHER.

YOU'RE  
EXACTLY HALF  
RIGHT.



AH YEAH.  
YEAH, I'M SORRY.  
I SHOULDN'T HAVE  
GRABBED YOU.  
MY HEAD . . .

THERE'S NO  
EXCUSE. I'M  
SORRY.

MMM,  
YEAH. I . . .  
I DON'T THINK  
I GET THE  
SPY STUFF.  
M'SORRY,  
TOO.



SO,  
TRUCE?

MMM . . .

I . . .  
WITH ALL THE  
STUFF 'N . . .  
WHATEVER.

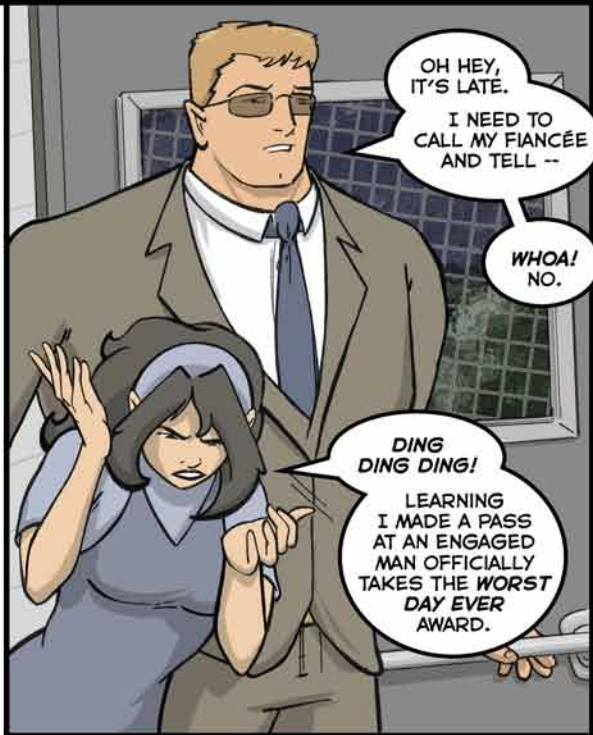
WELL  
SAID.



WHAT HAPPENS IF BLONDIE DELIVERS ON HER PROMISE?

SHE WON'T. I SHOULD HAVE BEEN TAKEN OFF OF YOUR CASE THE MINUTE WE MET. SOMEONE'S KEEPING US TOGETHER.

AND IF SHE DOES MANAGE IT, WE'LL FIND ANOTHER EXCUSE TO MEET UP.



OH HEY, IT'S LATE. I NEED TO CALL MY FIANCÉE AND TELL --

WHOA! NO.

DING DING DING! LEARNING I MADE A PASS AT AN ENGAGED MAN OFFICIALLY TAKES THE WORST DAY EVER AWARD.



NO, IT'S...

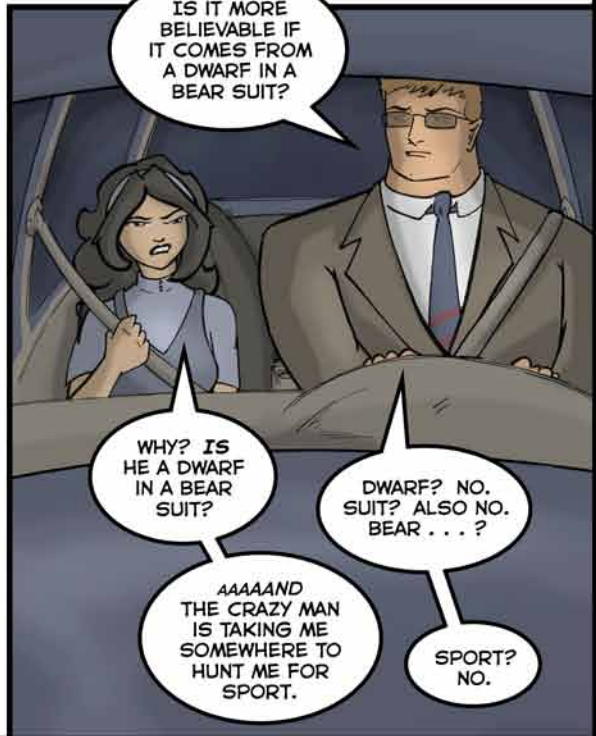
WE BROKE UP YEARS AGO! I HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT HER IN MONTHS. I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE THAT CAME FROM.



DUDE, EITHER YOU'RE STARK NUTS OR YOUR FIANCÉE WHIPPED YOU HARD ENOUGH TO LEAVE MARKS.

I'M STARTING TO HOPE IT'S THE LATTER.











I'VE HAD  
A REALLY,  
REALLY BAD  
DAY!

SO IF  
YOU'RE GONNA  
TRY AND KILL ME,  
DON'T BE SUCH A  
PUSSY ABOUT  
IT!











I HAVE TO GET BACK. ARE YOU OKAY WITH MEETING HER?  
SHE TALKS TO GHOSTS, SO SHE'S PROBABLY GOT AN OPEN MIND.

GHOSTS.  
I KNEW YOU'D GO INSANE EVENTUALLY. I JUST EXPECTED IT TO BE MORE SHOWY.



RIFLES AND ROOFTOPS, THAT SORT OF THING.

I'M NOT INSA--  
ARGH!

I CAN'T EVEN OPEN A BOX ANYMORE!



YOU'RE A FREAK OF NATURE NOW. EMBRACE IT.  
MEETINGS ARE ON FRIDAYS.

EMPTY.  
GREAT.

A LITTLE EXTRA MASS DOESN'T MAKE ME A FREAK.



YEAH, IT'S NOT AS THOUGH YOU'VE EVER WIELDED ANOTHER HUMAN BEING LIKE A CLUB.  
OH WAIT . . .

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH BEING RESOURCEFUL!





AW COME ON! YOU GUYS ARE TERRIBLE!

NOOOOO...  
THREE... FOUR?  
FOUR STORIES?

WHERE ARE YOUR KNEES? ARE YOUR ANKLES YOUR NEW KNEES?

AND YOU? ARE YOU HURT?

NO. NOTHING'S BROKEN.

SAME.



GNYAH!

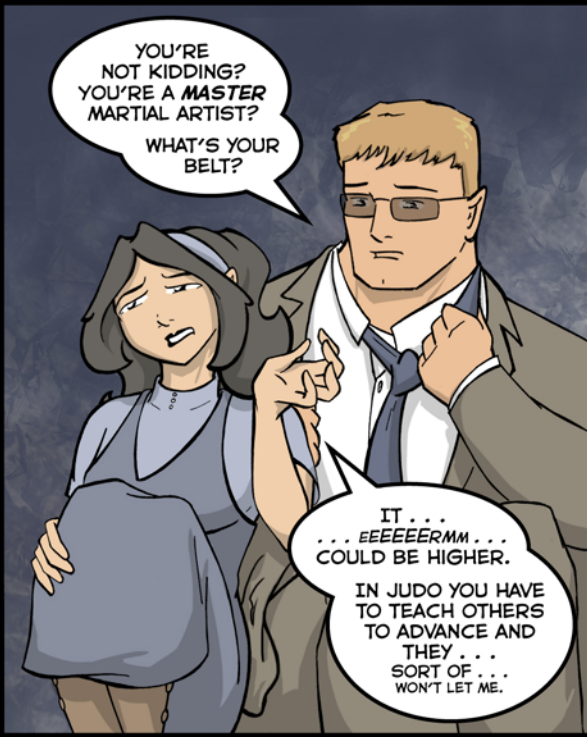
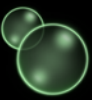
ARE YOU HURT?



THEN WHY ARE YOU STILL HERE?







YOU'RE NOT KIDDING? YOU'RE A **MASTER** MARTIAL ARTIST? WHAT'S YOUR BELT?

IT . . .  
... EEEEEERM . . .  
COULD BE HIGHER.  
IN JUDO YOU HAVE TO TEACH OTHERS TO ADVANCE AND THEY . . . SORT OF . . . WON'T LET ME.



OKAY, AH . . . LET ME--  
**HEY!** ARE THOSE YOUR SPY NOTES?

**NO.** YOU CANNOT KEEP THEM. YOU HAVE LOST ALL CREEPY PRIVILEGES.



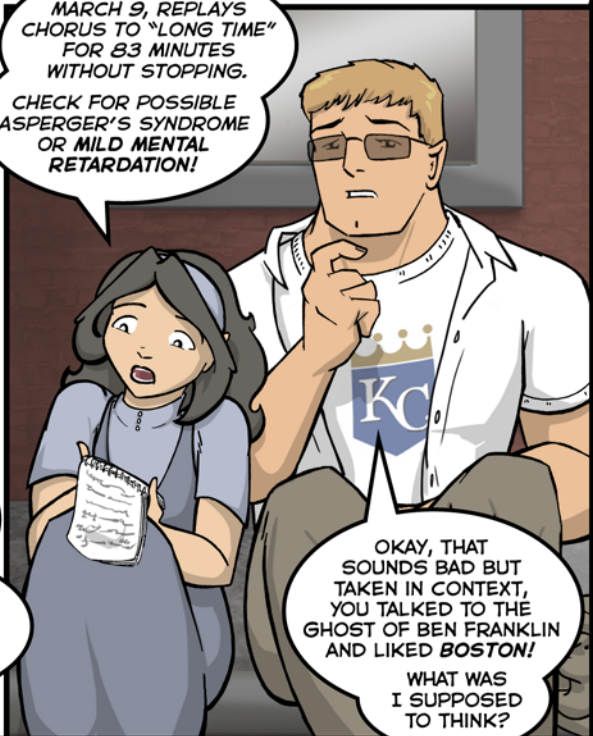
OH HEY, SPARKY, YOU ASK SOME GOOD QUESTIONS!

JUNE 13, BEN FRANKLIN? HOW? WHY IS HE . . .

MEH. IRRELEVANT. LET'S TRY THE OLDER ENTRIES.

MAY 8, HER LIFESTYLE? STOCK MARKET, YES, BUT NO FINANCIAL TRAINING?

AGGRESSIVE DRUNKEN DAY TRADING, TECHNICALLY.



MARCH 9, REPLAYS CHORUS TO "LONG TIME" FOR 83 MINUTES WITHOUT STOPPING.  
CHECK FOR POSSIBLE ASPERGER'S SYNDROME OR MILD MENTAL RETARDATION!

OKAY, THAT SOUNDS BAD BUT TAKEN IN CONTEXT, YOU TALKED TO THE GHOST OF BEN FRANKLIN AND LIKED BOSTON!

WHAT WAS I SUPPOSED TO THINK?





HEY . . .

YOU SAID BEN IS IRRELEVANT. CAN I ASK WHY?

YEAH, I KINDA . . . DROVE HIM AWAY.



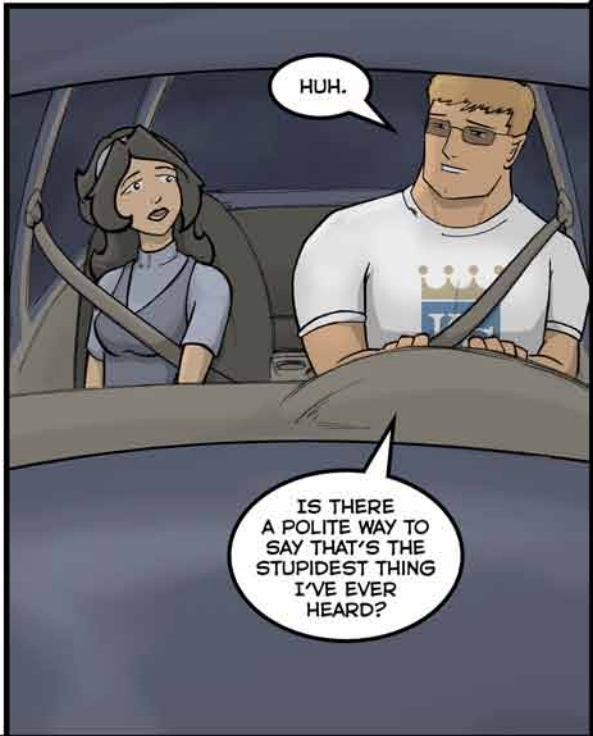
BEN WAS ALWAYS THERE. I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING WITHOUT HIM!

HE TOLD ME WHAT TO SAY, HOW TO ACT . . . HE GUIDED EVERY PART OF MY LIFE AND . . .



WELL . . . I COULDN'T LET HIM DO THAT, RIGHT?

I NEED TO BE MORE THAN A BODY CONTROLLED BY A DEAD MAN.



HUH.

IS THERE A POLITE WAY TO SAY THAT'S THE STUPIDEST THING I'VE EVER HEARD?



I SAW BEN WHEN HE PROTECTED YOU FROM THE POCKET PRESIDENT.

HE WAS WILLING TO TAKE A BEATING FOR YOU.  
HE CARES ABOUT YOU. THAT'S LOVE.



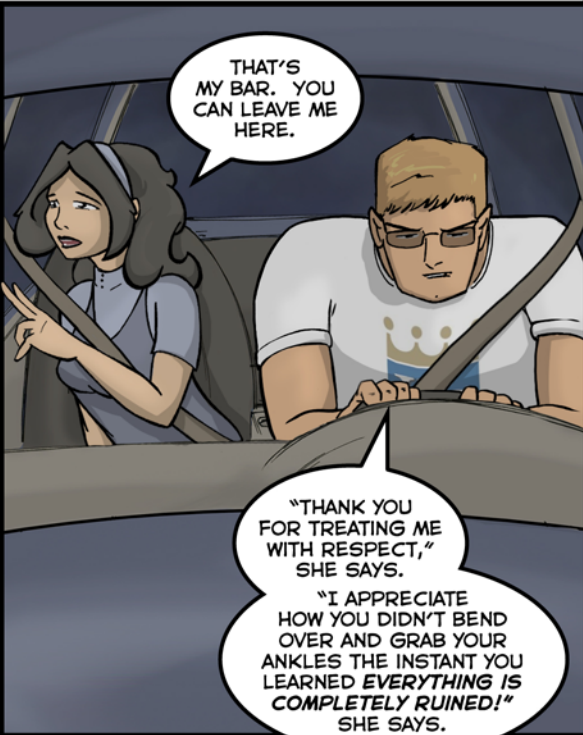
AND, YEAH, MAYBE HE'S A LITTLE CONTROLLING, BUT HE'S **BENJAMIN FRANKLIN!** THE GUY'S BEEN AROUND. HE'S PROBABLY DONE EVERYTHING AT LEAST TWICE.

SO WHAT IF HE'S OPINIONATED? HE'S EARNED IT.



IT SOUNDS LIKE A BOUNDARY PROBLEM, REALLY.

HE'S BEEN DEAD A LONG TIME. TWO HUNDRED YEARS IS LONG ENOUGH TO FORGET THAT LIFE IS HARD AND MESSY.



THAT'S MY BAR. YOU CAN LEAVE ME HERE.

"THANK YOU FOR TREATING ME WITH RESPECT," SHE SAYS.  
"I APPRECIATE HOW YOU DIDN'T BEND OVER AND GRAB YOUR ANKLES THE INSTANT YOU LEARNED **EVERYTHING IS COMPLETELY RUINED!**" SHE SAYS.



THE PROCESS OF MAKING COMICS CAN BE *WEIRD*. FOR EXAMPLE, I DID MOSTLY-NEKKED CLARICE HERE AS A DESIGN TEST FOR THE UPGRADED VERSIONS OF HER ARM AND HER BACK.

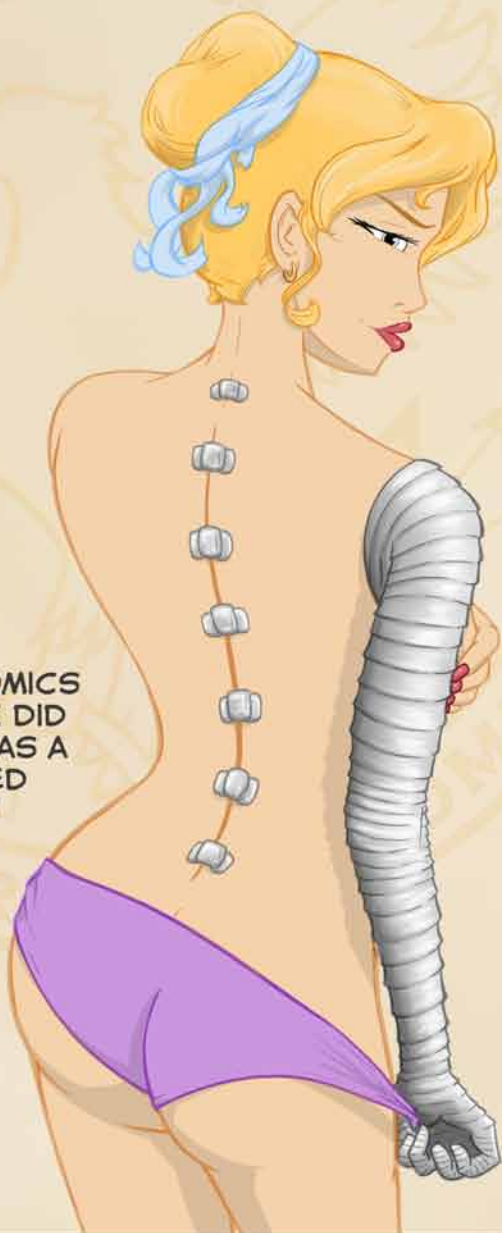
THIS POSE?

THIS *RIDICULOUS* POSE?

PAGE 32 OF A WOMEN'S UNDERWEAR CATALOG.

THIS TEST TOOK MORE THAN TWO HOURS FROM SKETCH TO FINAL SHADING, AND THE ARM ENDED UP LOOKING BLAND AND BORING.

SUCH ARE COMICS.



# BEGINNINGS



UNLIKE TRADITIONAL MODES OF PUBLISHING, SELF-PUBLISHING TOLERATES A LEARNING CURVE.

THIS IS THE NICE WAY TO SAY THAT ANY YAHOO WITH AN INTERNET CONNECTION CAN MAKE A WEBCOMIC.

OH MY GOD . . .

IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE US? WHAT'S WRONG WITH US?

SPEEDY'S AN ALBINO AND I'VE GOT SOME WEIRD NECK THING GOING ON AND . . .

DON'T LOOK! JUST DON'T LOOK!

FILLER FOR THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMIC. I WAS SO PROUD OF THIS!

2011 →

THE COMIC BEGAN IN APRIL OF 2006. I HADN'T TAKEN AN ART CLASS SINCE HIGH SCHOOL, AND EVEN BACK THEN I WASN'T ANY SORT OF PRODIGY.

IT SHOWED.



# REDOING COMICS

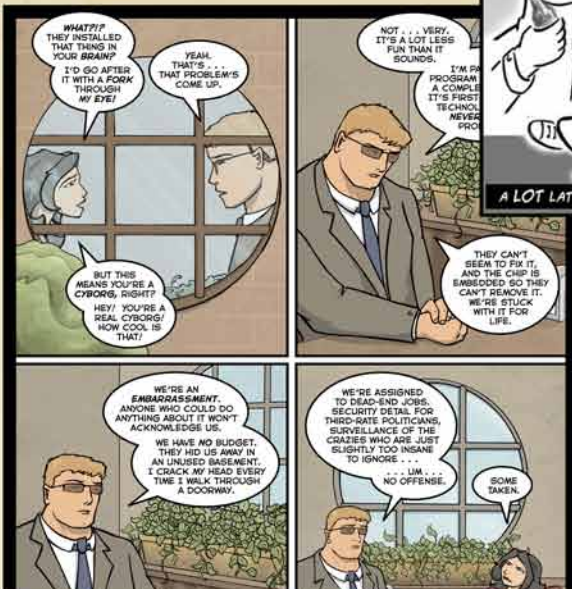
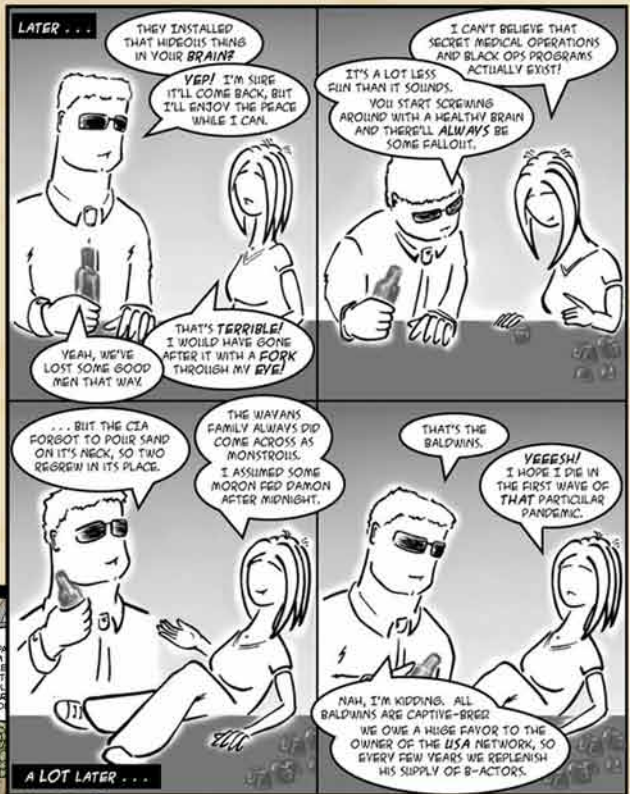
THIS COLLECTION IS THE THIRD ATTEMPT OF THE FIRST TWO CHAPTERS. I HAD NO IDEA HOW TO TELL A STORY USING PICTURES. OR HOW TO DRAW. OR HOW TO USE ANY OF THE TOOLS NEEDED TO PUT A COMIC ONLINE AND SAVE IT FOR PRINT.

SAVED FOREVER AT 72 DPI... OKAY FOR THE WEB, TOTALLY WRONG FOR PRINT.



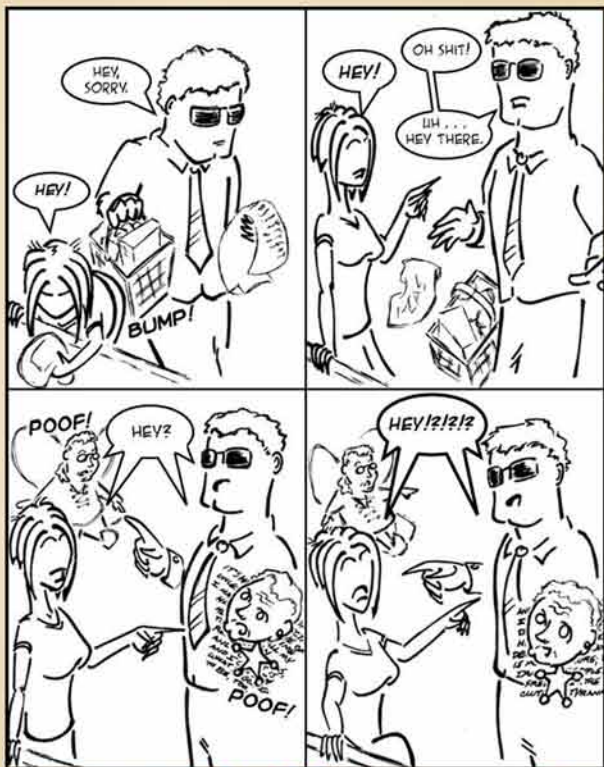
← 2006

↘ 2007

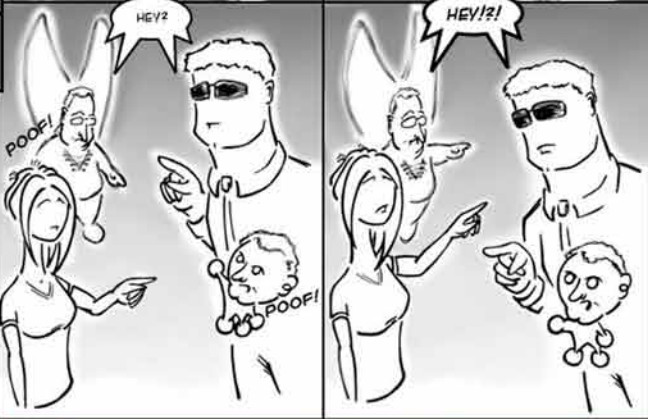


IT'S BEEN A REAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE.

← 300 DPI, PLUS CHANGES TO DIALOGUE FOR 100% FEWER BALDWIN'S. LATE 2009



EARLY VERSIONS OF THEIR FIRST MEETING.  
 ← 2006 THE FED SWEARS!  
 ← 2007



TRUE STORY: WHEN I WAS LIVING IN NEW YORK, I MET UP WITH A FEW ONLINE BUDDIES. I HAD ARRIVED EARLY AND HAD NO IDEA WHAT THEY LOOKED LIKE. I GOT A DRINK AND BEGAN DOING THE WHOLE FLIRTY-EYE THING WITH THIS ABSURDLY HANDSOME MAN IN A SUIT. WHO, OF COURSE, TURNED OUT TO BE ONE OF THE GAMERS I WAS THERE TO MEET. RANDOM COINCIDENCE, MAN. YOU CAN'T BEAT IT FOR IDEAS.

# THE GIRL

ANYONE WHO HAS HEARD MY SISTER TALK KNOWS WHERE HOPE BLACKWELL GOT HER VOICE. WHEN SHE GETS GOING, MY SISTER IS A FORCE OF NATURE WHO INVENTS NEW WORDS ON THE FLY.

AS A CHARACTER, HOPE IS HARD CANDY WITH A SOFT, CHEWY CENTER. HER PERSONALITY IS A TOUGHER VERSION OF THE "LAST GIRL" ARCHETYPE FROM HORROR MOVIES. SHE'S THE FINAL SURVIVOR, THE ONE WHO HAS WALKED AWAY FROM THE CARNAGE AND LEFT THE CORPSE OF THE SERIAL KILLER BURNING BEHIND HER. THERE'S SOME TRAUMA, BUT NOT MUCH: HE SHOULDN'T HAVE GONE AFTER HER WITH THAT FLAMETHROWER IF HE DIDN'T WANT TO PLAY FOR KEEPS.

BUT DEEP DOWN, HER IDEAL EVENING IS A NIGHT ON THE COUCH WITH A BIG BOWL OF POPCORN AND A JOHN HUGHES MOVIE.

(AND MAYBE A FLUFFY KITTEN OR TWO)

BILL, BILL,  
POTTERY BARN,  
BILL...



THE FIRST  
"GIRL" COMIC.

← 2006

SPIKEY!  
LOTS OF  
FOINTY  
BITS.

SHE SPENDS  
TONS OF MONEY  
ON CLOTHES.



DEAR WOMAN  
I AM SO SORRY  
FOR THE POOR  
JOB I DID ON  
YOUR HEAD.

HAIR ANTENNA!  
SHE GETS  
HBO.



(AND YOUR  
HANDS)

2008



2006

2011

# THE FED

LARGER THAN A BREADBOX BUT SLIGHTLY SMALLER THAN A HOUSE, PATRICK MULCAHY WILL NEVER OPENLY ADMIT THE FIVE YEARS HE SPENT IN HELL WERE WORTH IT.

PAT'S CHARACTER GETS PRETTY CLOSE TO HOW I FEEL ABOUT POLITICS: HE'S GENERALLY DISGUSTED WITH THE ENTIRE PROCESS, BUT HE BELIEVES MOST PEOPLE ARE DECENT HUMAN BEINGS WHO WANT TO BE HAPPY. HE GETS BY ON HIS FAITH THAT WE WILL EVENTUALLY REALIZE THAT SHOOTING OURSELVES IN THE FEET IS A BAD THING, AND THAT TAKING POTSHOTS AT OUR NEIGHBORS IS EVEN WORSE.

AN EARLY FED, 2006

OH MY GOD! DOES IT COUNT AS TREASON IF I SHOOT MYSELF TO GET RID OF THIS THING?



POOF!

AWAKENED TO A MIND BLOWING EMPACTED AND EXPLODED WITH A GREAT NO WE HAVE TO GO WITH US TO GO TO THE GREAT AMERICA IS A GREAT NO

WHY HELLO LADIES! DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVENTURE IN YOU? WOULD YOU LIKE SOME?

2011

DANCE, PRISONER! DANCE!

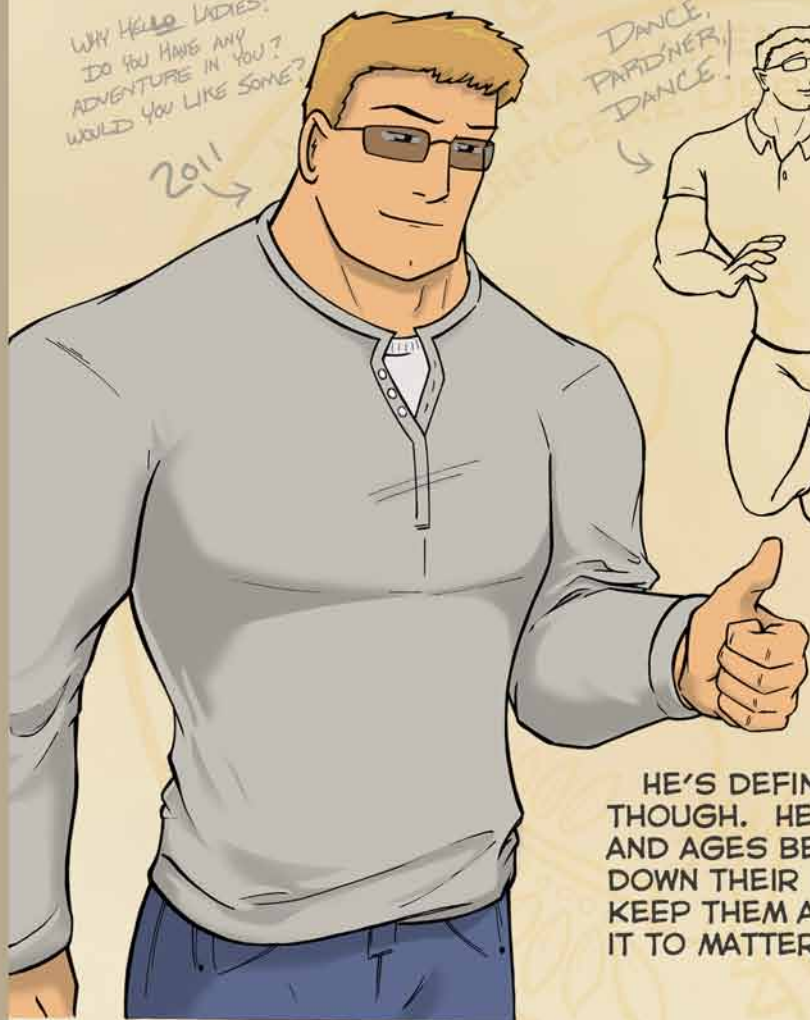


THERE WAS A LONG PHASE WHEN I DREW HIS CHIN BIG ENOUGH TO DOCK A BOAT.

TOOT TOOT!

THE FED, PRE-EPIPHANY, 2007

2008



HE'S DEFINITELY NOT AN OPTIMIST, THOUGH. HE KNOWS IT'LL BE AGES AND AGES BEFORE EVERYBODY PUTS DOWN THEIR GUNS. THE TRICK IS TO KEEP THEM ALIVE LONG ENOUGH FOR IT TO MATTER.

# BEN

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I TRIPPED OVER THE BLOG OF AN AVID WEBCOMICS READER WHO HAD JUST CALLED IT QUITS WITH HIS FAVORITE COMIC. HE SAID IT WAS BECAUSE THE WEBCOMIC CREATOR HAD ANNOUNCED HE WAS TAKING HIS WIFE OUT FOR SUSHI ON VALENTINE'S DAY, AND SINCE MOST SUSHI-GRADE FISH WERE HARVESTED BY THE MOONIES, THIS CREATOR WAS INDIRECTLY SUPPORTING AN ORGANIZATION WHICH OFFENDED THE READER.

I THOUGHT, "IF THAT'S ALL IT TAKES TO LOSE MY AUDIENCE, I'M COMPLETELY BONED."

AT ONE POINT, I THOUGHT BEN GETTING KICKED IN THE JUNK WAS FUNNY.



BEN USED TO DO LIMERICKS. EACH DAY, HE'D RECITE ONE AS A VOYAGING INCENTIVE. I ABRANDONED THIS PROJECT AS I AM QUITE TERRIBLE AT WRITING LIMERICKS.



HISTORICAL FIGURES HAVE MEANING TO US. THEY ARE EMBEDDED IN OUR CULTURE AND OUR NATIONAL IDENTITY. IF THE WAY THEY ARE PRESENTED IN FICTION DOESN'T MESH WITH HOW WE THINK THEY WERE IN LIFE, THAT PARTICULAR WORK OF FICTION *FAILS*. THIS HAS BEEN A CHALLENGE FOR ME, AS WE TEND TO ROMANTICIZE THEIR GOOD POINTS AND IGNORE THEIR BAD ONES. IT IS WHY THE GHOSTS WERE INTRODUCED AS

PIXIES, SINCE A CARTOONISH VERSION OF A HISTORICAL FIGURE CREATES MORE DISTANCE BETWEEN THE READER AND THE NOTION I WAS REPRESENTING A "REAL" PERSON THAN IF THE GHOSTS WERE PORTRAYED REALISTICALLY.

FOR BEN (AND ALL OF THE GHOSTS), I TRY TO READ AS MUCH OF THEIR AUTOBIOGRAPHIES, SPEECHES, AND PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE AS I CAN FIND BEFORE I WRITE THEIR CHARACTER. FRANKLIN WAS A GENIUS, NO QUESTION. FRANKLIN UNDERSTOOD THE CORE OF HOW THINGS WORKED. PERSONS, OBJECTS, AND EVENTS WERE USUALLY AS CLEAR TO HIM AS TEXT ON PAPER. FOR ME, BEN'S ONLY FLAW WAS HOW HE THOUGHT HE WAS A GENIUS **ALL OF THE TIME**. WHEN BEN MADE MISTAKES, OTHERS SUFFERED FOR IT. THAT'S A HELL OF A FLAW.



# SPEEDY



THE FIRST SPEEDY

2006

SPEEDY'S CHARACTER STARTED WITH A DARK SENSE OF HUMOR AND WENT STRAIGHT DOWNHILL FROM THERE. READERS ALWAYS WANT TO GUESS WHO SHOULD PLAY SPEEDY IN THE (HYPOTHETICAL) MOVIE, BUT IN MY HEAD, HE SOUNDS EXACTLY LIKE MY HUSBAND. BROWN IS THE SOURCE OF MANY OF THE BEST DICK JOKES IN THE COMIC, AND WHEN I HAVE A SPEEDY RANT PLANNED, I GIVE BROWN A NOTEBOOK AND TELL HIM TO JUST GO NUTS.

BROWN SOUNDS LIKE JAMES EARL JONES IN THE EARLY MORNING, SO LET'S SIGN HIM FOR THE MOVIE. ... LUKE, I AM YOUR SCROTUM ...

HAAH HAAH

THE ONLY THING YOU'LL EVER NEED TO REMEMBER ABOUT SPEEDY IS THAT HE'S WRITTEN AS AN ANIMAL. HE IS A PERSON, AS HE HAS A PERSONALITY, BUT HE IS LACKING MORALS, ETHICS, AND OBJECTIVITY. HE DOES FORM EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS, WHICH IS WHAT'S KEPT HIM FROM BEING A FLUFFY SOCIOPATH. HE EARNESTLY LOVES PATRICK, AND LATER HE COMES TO LOVE HOPE. HIS VERSION OF LOVE DOES, HOWEVER, INVOLVES PLENTY

OF MIND GAMES... THE GAMES MAKE HIM HAPPY, SO THEY MUST MAKE EVERYONE HAPPY, RIGHT?



2008



2011  
DEVIL'S POINTS ON HIS EARS, AND NO DOUBLE THUMBS. SPEEDY ISN'T TRUE FORM FOR KOALAS.

2008



HE'S ALSO WRITTEN AS HYPER-INTELLIGENT BECAUSE BEN NEEDED A FOIL. SOME OF MY FAVORITE SCENES ARE WHEN THEY PULL OUT THEIR BRAINS AND USE THEM TO SMACK EACH OTHER AROUND.

# THE POCKET PRESIDENT

I WAS REALLY, REALLY ANGRY WHEN I STARTED THE COMIC. I WAS DOING CONTRACT WORK FOR A COMPANY IN CANADA, AND THE PACKAGES THEY SENT TO ME HAD BEEN OPENED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY.



(LATER, A FRIEND IN THE F.B.I. CHECKED THE CODE ON THE PACKAGES AND SAID THAT THE DRUG DOGS HAD HIT ON THEM, SO IT WASN'T ABOUT ME, IT WAS THE COMPANY.)

IT WAS ONE OF THOSE DAYS IN LATE WINTER WHEN IT WAS JUST WARM ENOUGH TO START DIGGING IN THE DIRT. I WAS ELBOW-DEEP IN THE GARDEN AND, SUDDENLY, WAS OBSESSED WITH THE IDEA THAT IF I WERE THIS ANGRY, THE FOUNDING FATHERS WOULD BE FURIOUS. I RAN INSIDE AND STARTED DRAFTING OUT THE ROUGH STORY. AND THEN I CLEANED UP THE MUD.



ALL OF THE EARLIEST POCKET PRESIDENT COMICS WERE SHRILL.



DELETE. DELETE. DELETE.

SAVED AT 72DPI



# AGENT 146 - CLARICE

OKAY, YES, THIS ONE. OY.

FOR HALLOWEEN OF 2008, I RAN A LITTLE CONTEST WHERE READERS COULD VOTE TO PUT CLARICE IN A COSTUME. I CAN'T REMEMBER ALL OF THE OPTIONS BUT "CATGIRL" AND "SCHOOLGIRL" WERE TIED, SO I COMBINED THEM.

IT WAS ALSO BEFORE THE BIG REVEAL FOR CLARICE'S ARM, AND I WAS TIRED OF PUTTING HER IN GLOVES. THE POSE SEEMED A CLEVER WAY OF DISGUISEING HER HAND. AT THE TIME.

IF IT ISN'T THE WORST ILLUSTRATION IN EXISTENCE, IT'S DEFINITELY IN THE RUNNING. LEG WARMERS, EVEN! OY.



THE FIRST  
FULL-COLOR  
CLARICE

CLARICE HAS BEEN THE HARDEST CHARACTER TO UNDERSTAND.

MOST ANTAGONISTS HAVE SOME SYMPATHETIC TRAITS, BUT SHE IS SUPPOSED TO BE NOTHING BUT PURE, UNCOMPLICATED GREED.

I CAN ONLY WRITE HER AFTER VERY BAD DAYS.



# GIGGLES

THE FIRST FEW YEARS OF THE COMIC COST ABOUT FIFTY BUCKS A MONTH IN EXPENSES, SO I DID SOME DONATION DRIVES TO HELP OFFSET COSTS, WITH GIFTS TO THANK THE DONORS.

ONCE - *ONCE* - COMMISSIONS WERE OFFERED AS A GIFT, AND THIS IS WHY:

ONE DONOR ASKED TO BE DRAWN AS THE DEVIL IN JENNIE BREEDEN'S WEBCOMIC, "THE DEVIL'S PANTIES." I USED HIS REFERENCE SHOTS AND PUT HIM IN A TIGHT LITTLE CORSET AND HOT PANTS.

HE THEN SENT ME A VERY NICE EMAIL TO REMIND ME THAT JENNIE'S DEVIL WEARS A POSH TUXEDO WITH TAILS, AND I HAD MISTAKENLY DRAWN HIM DRESSED AS HER DEVIL GIRL CHARACTER INSTEAD.

THERE WERE APOLOGIES, THEN CHUCKLES ALL AROUND. HE WAS VERY UNDERSTANDING.

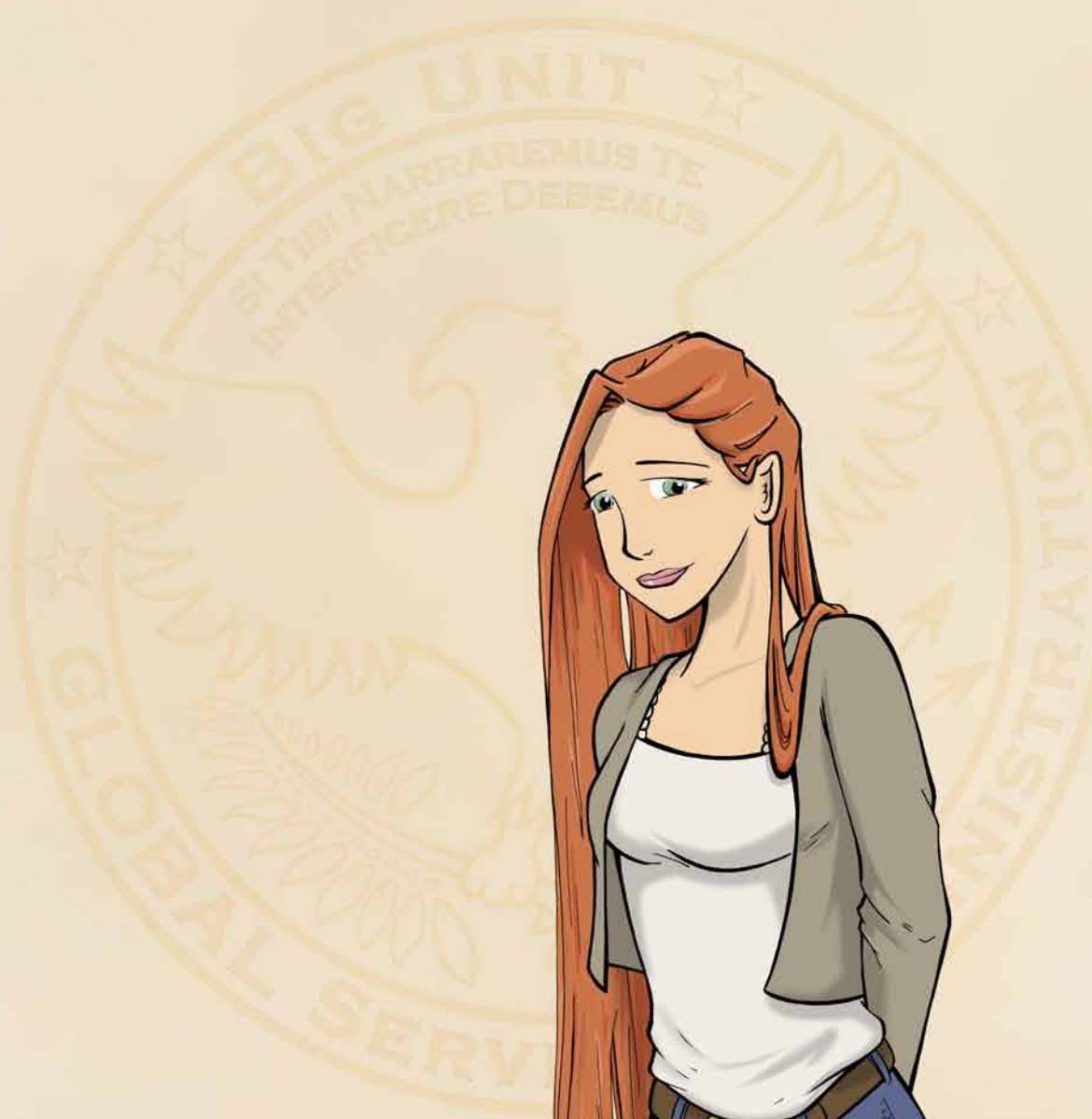


THE FIRST  
FULL-COLOR  
SPEEDY!



THE FIRST FILLER!  
GIRL AND FED, AS  
PIRATE AND NINJA.  
-2006-







**K.B. Spangler lives with her husband Brown, and as many Rottweilers as she can sneak into the house without him noticing. She holds baby tigers infrequently and is completely weirded out by their tiny vestigial thumb-nubs.**

Rise Up Swearing is the first collection from  
A Girl and Her Fed, an ongoing comic series  
available at [www.agirlandherfed.com](http://www.agirlandherfed.com)

K.B. Spangler can be found there,  
or at [www.kbspangler.com](http://www.kbspangler.com)