

# STRANGewood

THE ANTHOLOGY



MOORADIAN





THIS IS AN ANTHOLOGY OF COMICS.

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO:

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Can you hear me? I know I'm quiet.

I'm glad you're here, reading my book. What kind of tea do you have, or is it coffee? I always think having a nice warm drink makes reading feel so cozy. And sitting in a big chair, with a blanket. Do you like where you are right now? Is it comfortable? Do you feel safe? Do you need to shift position? Go ahead. Make yourself comfortable. We have lots of time.

Sometimes, when I'm reading, I think I see something out of the corner of my eye. I think when you read this book, you will feel the same way. At least, I hope you do. Maybe you feel something on the back of your leg. That's good. That's correct. Go on, turn around and check behind you. I'm sure there's at least a small chance something is watching you. Does that make you feel strange, unsettled? That's good. Like when a close friend gives you a knowing look, like they've caught you doing something you said you didn't do.

Go ahead and check under the furniture. Even if you see nothing, something might have been there. Exhale a nice big breath. Get comfortable. Get some coffee, or some tea. Could you make me a cup too? Since we'll be here together for some time. I hope you like my book. I hope you feel something strange.

Alright. Now it's time to turn the page.



# HE MIGHT BE HEMLOCK



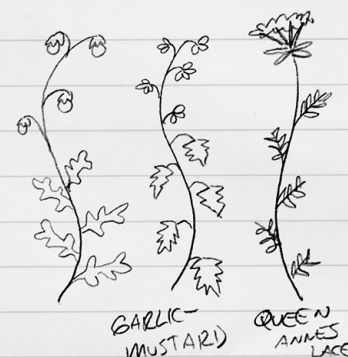
I've always been fascinated by the similarities between hemlock and Queen Anne's lace. Hemlock is a poisonous weed, and Queen Anne's lace is an edible form of carrot. The plants look very similar to each other, and are both native to the East Coast. Always check for purple blotching if you are trying to decide which plant is which—Queen Anne's lace is never purple.

Garlic mustard plants also grow in the areas where you might find hemlock and Queen Anne's lace, but it's easier to tell apart. Using the image of garlic mustard in "He Might Be Hemlock" wouldn't have fit the metaphor as nicely as the Queen Anne's lace.

The person looking through the window is Frances Quinlan, a musician from Philadelphia. Much of Quinlan's music is personal, natural, and strange. I think they like the same things about art that I do. I wonder how they feel about witchcraft. Well, Frances, if you ever find yourself face to face with a strange goat, think: "is this good or evil?"



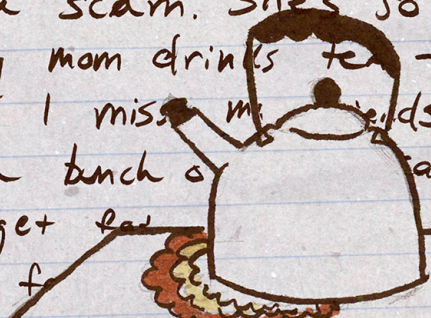
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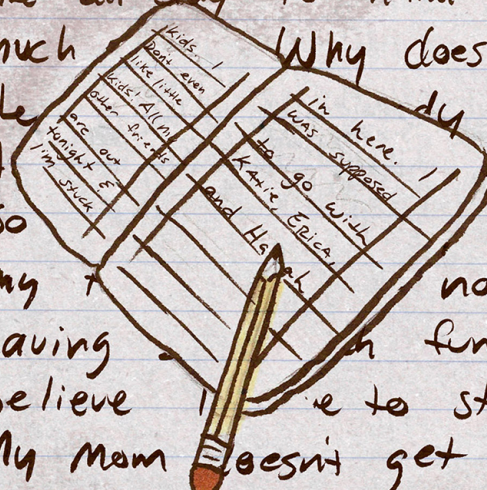


"WEDNESDAY, 9:05"

I honestly can't believe my mom won't let me  
trick-or-treat. I have to sit in my car  
to kids. I Don't see any other friends  
in here. I wish Erica, and Hannah  
devil, Erica's as a wizard as Bob Ross  
because she's can be so House. Its Mom still thinks its 19  
Anyway I still can't believe schools are st.  
open on HALLOWEEN. Its like, a national  
holiday, right? Whatever, Erica says the  
government is a scam. She's so weird.  
I can't believe my mom drinks tea - GROSS!  
Its so stupid. I miss my friends. Maybe  
I can get a bunch of candy. I heard  
brother was for Halloween. May I weigh myself, I can

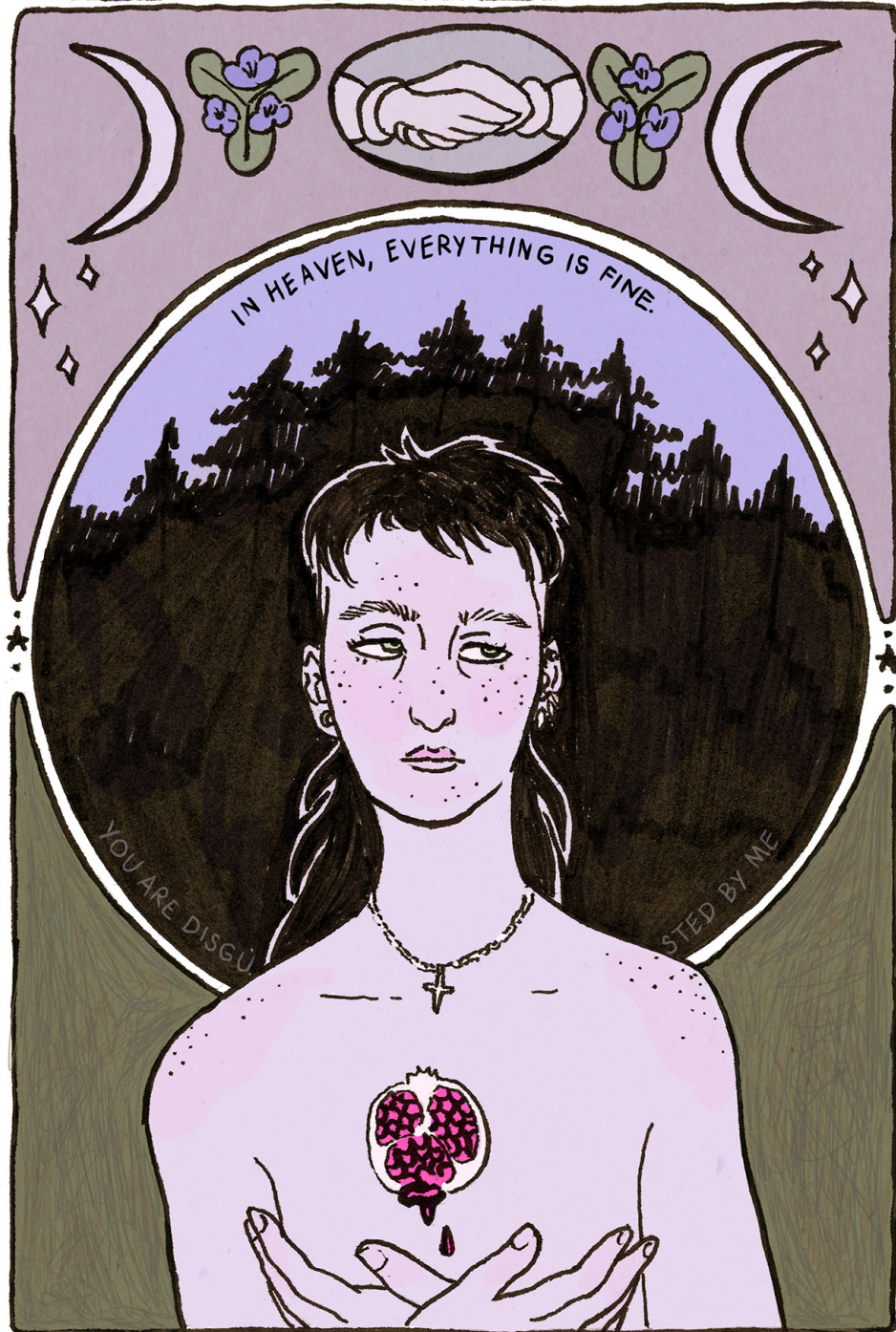


have all day to hand out to little kids!  
much. Why does my mom buy like  
the kids. I wish we had a clock,  
Halloween. I wish we had a clock,  
So my mom doesn't get it. I wish  
having fun with me! I believe  
My mom doesn't get it. I wish  
costume planned out and everything! I wish  
going to go as Snow White. I got a  
cute costume from Hot Topic. WASTED  
MONEY!! Thanks, Mom. I can hear so  
people having fun out there and I'm  
in my room. She's so weird. I wish  
me. I wish we had a clock,  
Yes the car is UN-  
I wish I could  
Read





# sweet odium



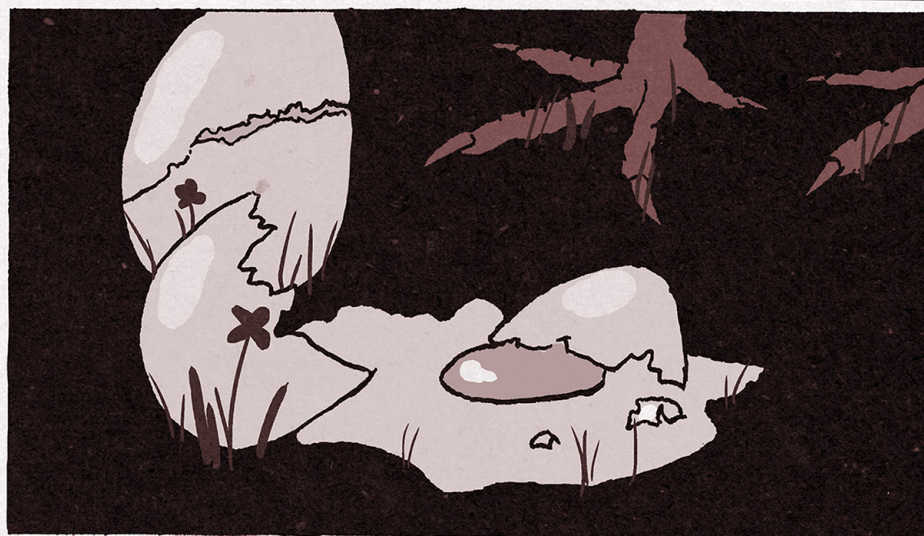
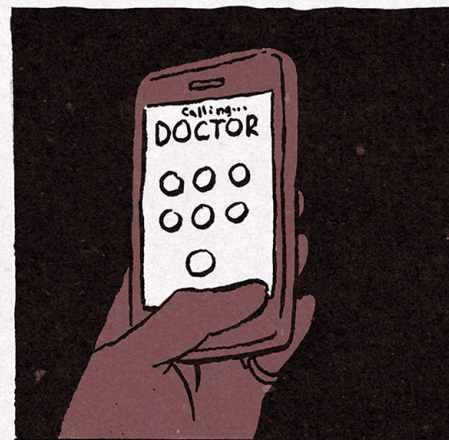
LETTING OTHERS SEE MY WORK IS REALLY SCARY. ARTWORK IS INTIMATE & PERSONAL. I'VE HAD TO BUILD MYSELF UP OVER THE YEARS BECAUSE I'VE HAD SO MANY EXPERIENCES WHERE PEOPLE LOOK AT MY ART w/ A CONFUSED OR UPSET EXPRESSION. IT'S HARD TO WANT TO SHOW IT WHEN THAT'S HOW PEOPLE LOOK.

THERE WERE HIGH SCHOOL KIDS WHO WOULD CALL MY WORK "INTERESTING", AND BY THAT, THEY MEANT THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT ME THEY FOUND UNPALATABLE. COLLEGE KIDS WOULD ROLL THEIR EYES AT ME & ASK ME IF I EVEN ENJOYED DRAWING, & BY THAT THEY MEANT THERE WAS NOTHING IN MY ART THAT THEY CARED TO UNDERSTAND. A LOT OF TEACHERS HAVE BEEN REALLY HELPFUL, AND SOME OF THEM HAVE ASKED "AND WHY IS THIS SO SAD?", "AND WHY IS THIS SO STRANGE?" AND BY THAT THEY MEAN THAT MAYBE, FOR A FLEETING MOMENT, THEY UNDERSTOOD WHAT I MEANT, & THEN THE UNDERSTANDING DISAPPEARED.

I THINK I CAN ONLY MOVE FORWARD IF I RELINQUISH THE NEED FOR OTHERS TO UNDERSTAND MY ARTWORK. IT'S OKAY IF YOU LOOK AT IT & STRUGGLE TO UNDERSTAND, IF YOU TURN YOUR FACE AWAY. THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU AREN'T ENJOYING IT CORRECTLY. AND IF YOU DO BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND SOMETHING, YOU DO NOT NEED TO WORRY IF YOU'RE THINKING WHAT I INTENDED YOU TO THINK. ALTHOUGH I WISH I COULD, I CANNOT PLAN OUT EVERY STEP. ONCE THE ART HAS LEFT ME, ONCE IT IS ON PAPER, IT IS NO LONGER MINE. IT IS YOURS, & YOU MAY DO w/ IT WHAT YOU WISH. YOU AND I MEET IN THE MIDDLE, LOOKING THROUGH A FOGGY WINDOW AT EACH OTHER.



GOD... I WANT  
AN OMELETTE ☾





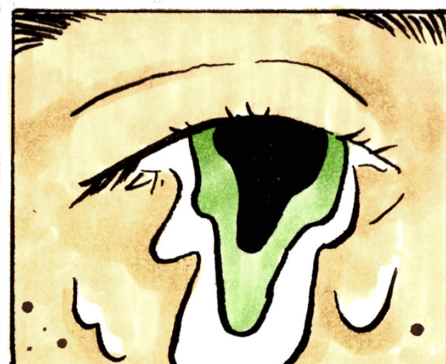
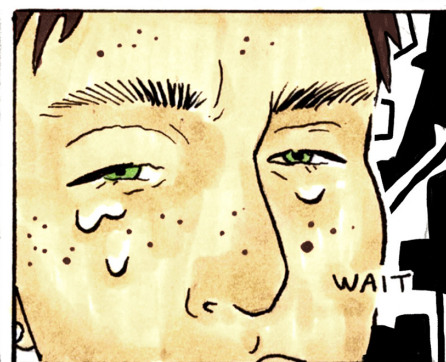
# THE WOODS



I WENT TO THE WOODS AND GOT IT.  
I SAT ME DOWN AND LOOKED AT IT.  
THE MORE I LOOKED AT IT, THE LESS  
I LIKED IT, AND I BROUGHT IT HOME  
BECAUSE I COULDN'T HELP IT.



MOORADIAN  
MOURADIAN  
MOURADJIAN  
MOURADJAN

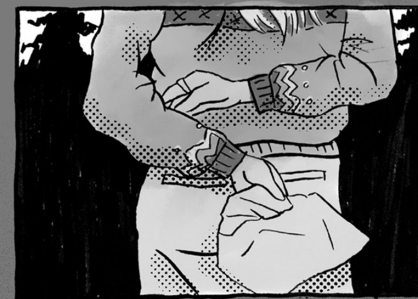




A  
TASTE  
of  
CARMILLA



WHAT'S THAT SMELL...?

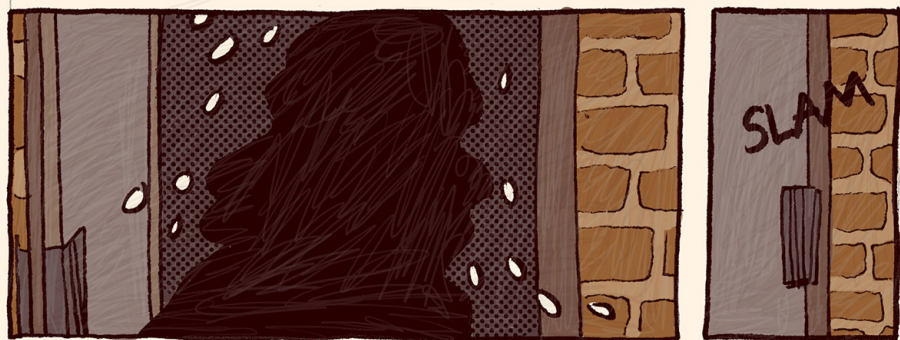
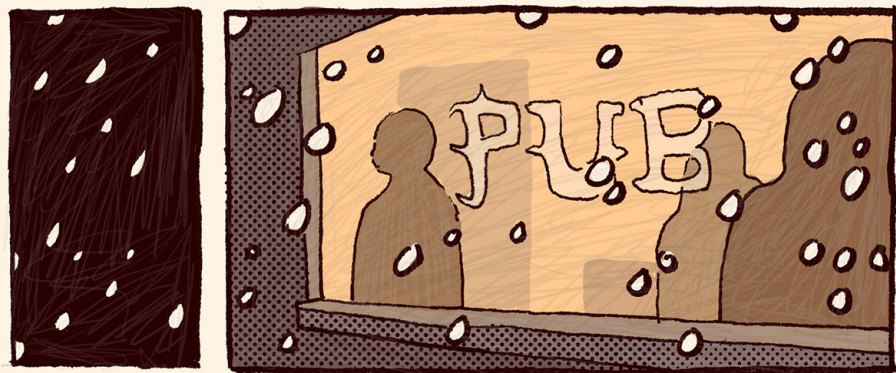


Oh, it's

SHAME



# »»»»» DOLLFACE »»»»»



I'M USUALLY OBSESSED WITH A COUPLE THINGS AT A TIME.

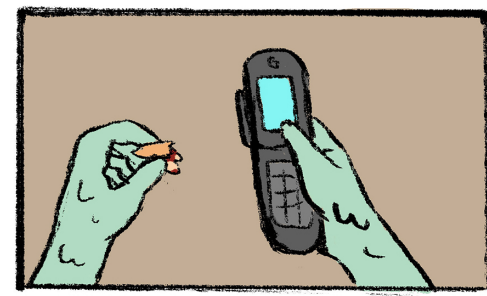
WHEN I MADE "DOLLFACE", I COULDN'T GET OUT OF MY HEAD THE WAY THAT BRYAN LEE O'MALLEY DRAWS SNOW. READING "SCOTT PILGRIM" AS A KID MADE ME FALL IN LOVE WITH BIG, FLUFFY SNOWFLAKES. I WAS ALSO OBSESSING OVER A COUPLE OTHER THINGS WHILE MAKING "DOLLFACE", BUT THEY PROBABLY AREN'T CLEAR BY LOOKING AT THE ART, AND FRANKLY IT DOESN'T MATTER.

YOU DON'T NEED TO SEE THE MINUTE REFERENCES TO WHATEVER MEDIA I'M CONSUMING. IT DOESN'T REALLY IMPROVE THE ART. IN FACT, I THINK EXPLAINING ALL OF IT WOULD KINDA MAKE ME LOOK WEIRD.

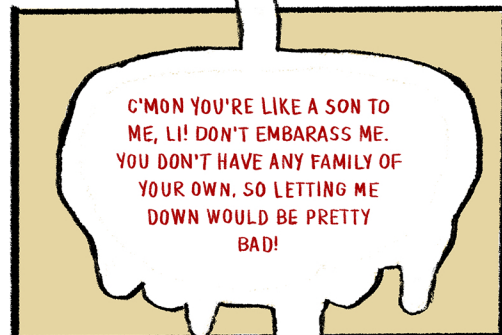


# BELIEL

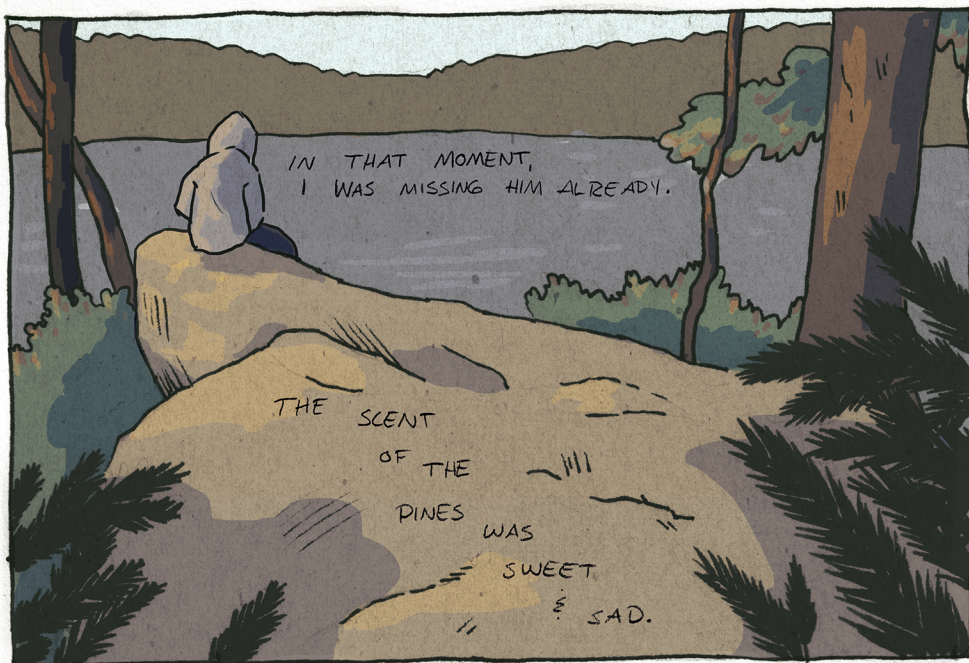
A SLIMY GREEN DEMON







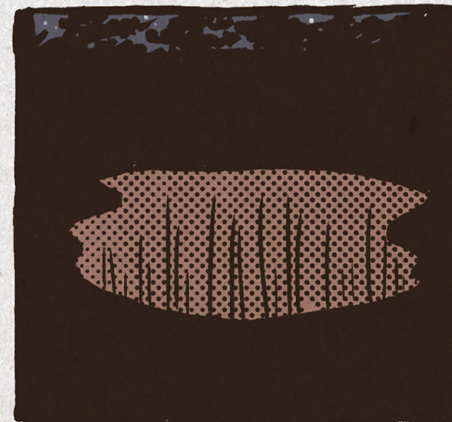




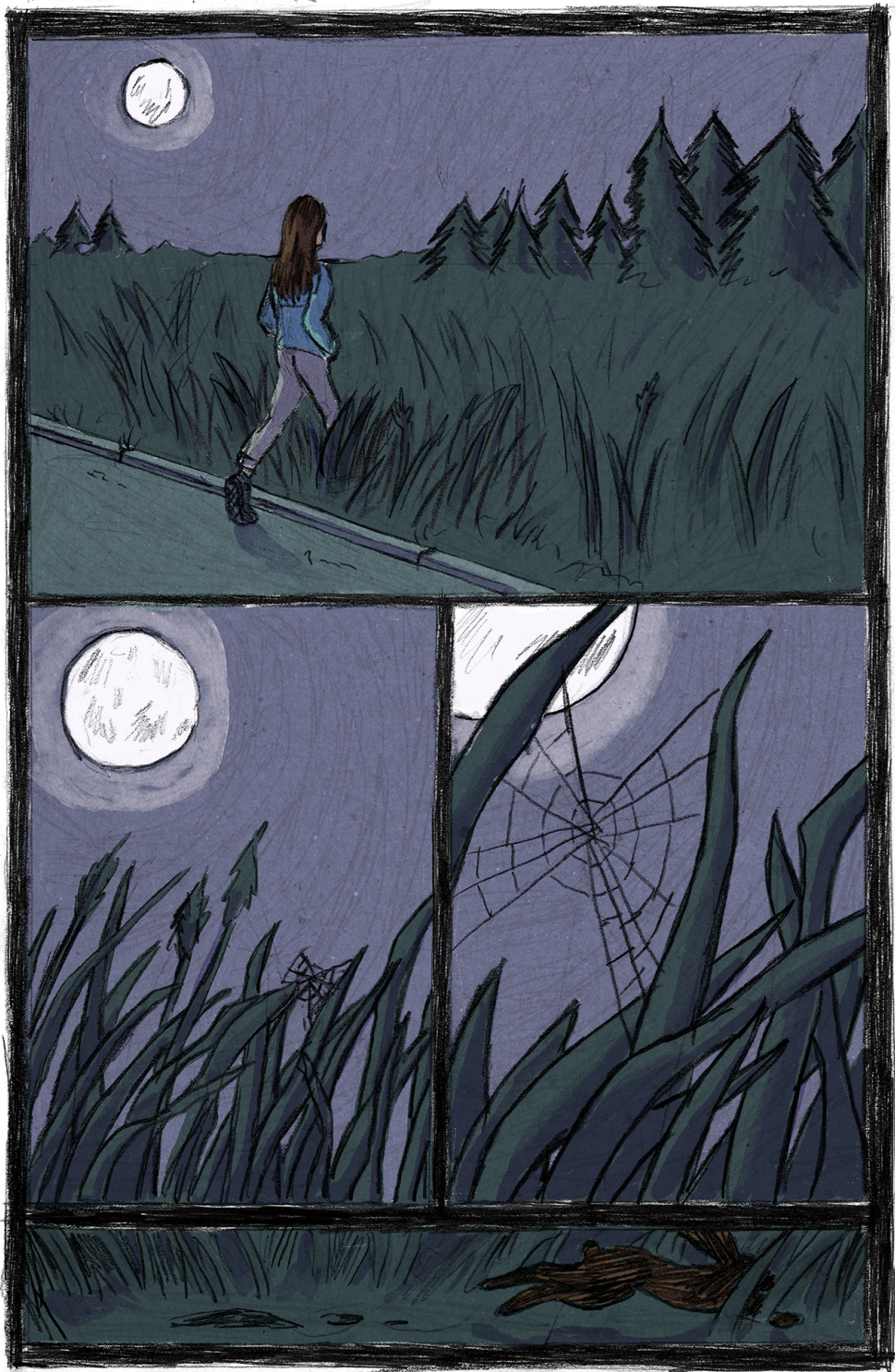
I KNEW IF I SAW HIM AGAIN, HE WOULD BE MUCH OLDER.  
I DID NOT WANT TO MISS OUT ON BEING THERE.



# AN ASTRONOMER









## THE SMELL OF FIRE

TELL ME THE NAME OF GOD.

*You cannot kill me  
the way you want to.*

HOW? HOW CAN HE HAVE A NAME?

*You've met a terrible  
fate, haven't you?*

*I'm so sorry.*

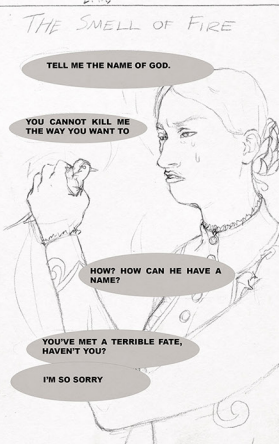
There's a dress haunting me at night. I think it started following me in the darkness after I watched the movie "Portrait of a Lady on Fire". Or maybe it was "Pride and Prejudice". Or wait, what's that one about the women who collect rocks by the ocean?

The buttons are always fabric-covered. There's a sort of stitching on the fabric, but most of the time the dress visits me when I am sleeping, so I don't get a good look at it. It's a mourning dress, which isn't surpsing. These are always the types of things that follow me at night.

Have you met this woman before? I think, at least, you've seen her, but you didn't ask what happened. It's okay, I don't think she expected you to ask. She's kind of strange, isn't she? Does she visit you at night?

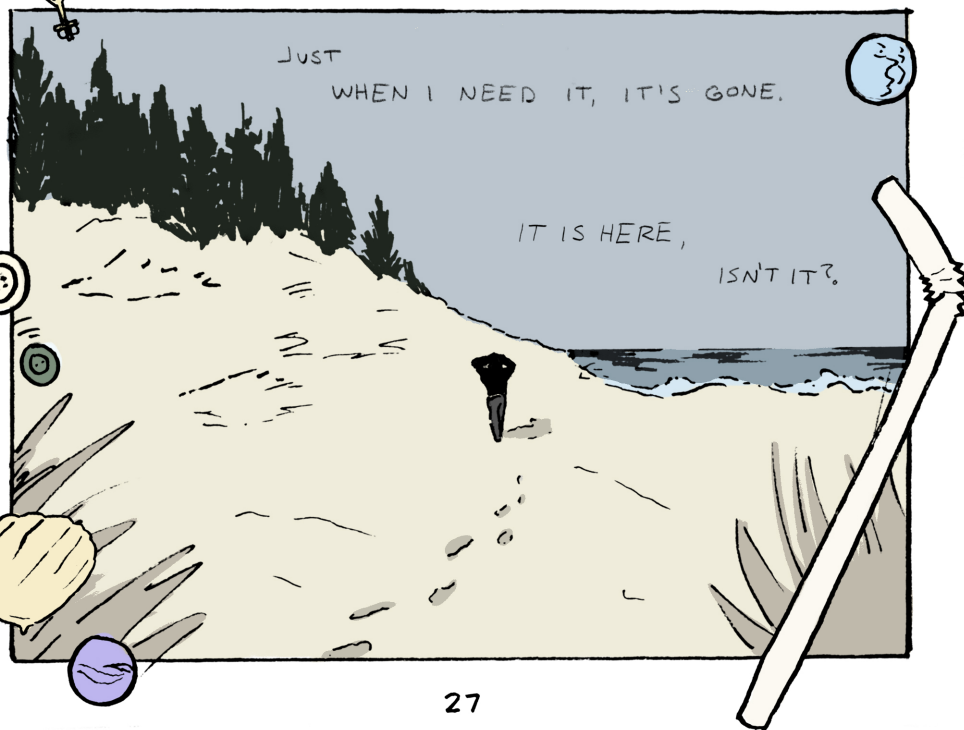
She grew angrier as I continued drawing her. At first, she looked kind of sad. Then her brow furrowed, and then furrowed some more, and now she seems quite angry. I am so sorry that I did this to her. I wish I could tell her what she needs to know. I wish I knew who she was, or was meant to be. Am I the bird?

I didn't know where we were at first. There were no landmarks. Trees began to become clear, and then the light, and the shadow. When the darkness closed in I recognized the dress. I admit I was afraid. I do not know how I escaped, but I am here now with you. Thank you for watching, and for listening. I do not think I could have done this without you.





# CHINCOTEAGUE ISLAND



I hope you've gotten used to the sound of my voice.

Did you ever find that creature, the one that was watching you from just outside your peripheral vision? It looks a bit different now. I think while you've been reading, it's grown up a little. I think that's good. And how about you? How do you feel, now that you've been through it all?

I'm not too familiar with how people like you work—I mean, we might be very much the same, but I don't want to assume. Where you are now, is it close to Halloween time? Is it nighttime? Maybe it's winter, and it's snowing. Do the crickets chirp at you from under the pines? I hope they do in some way, if you know what I mean. I hope you hear the hum of insects close to the dirt. Or maybe you are the insect that lives close to the dirt. That would be nice.

Stretch out an arm and a leg. Stretch out your spine. **Do you feel comfortable?**

Thank you so much for spending this time with me. I hope we've learned a little about each other. I definitely feel like I know you better, or at least, how you look when you're reading.



## SPECIAL THANKS

THANK YOU TO ELLIE JUSKA FOR EDITING MUCH OF THE WRITING IN THIS BOOK. THANK YOU TO PATCH, CHRISTINE LARSEN, AND KEVIN MERCER FOR TEACHING ME HOW TO MAKE COMICS. THANK YOU TO TARA JACOBY FOR GUIDING ME THROUGH THE PROCESS OF CREATING AN ANTHOLOGY.

YOU ALL HAVE HAD AN IMMENSE IMPACT ON MY ART AND MY PERSONHOOD.

## OTHER TITLES:

GAY COWBOY

MY BOY MITTENS

RIDE THE TOILET

MILK

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A collection of short comics about lonely women, good and evil (and in-between), the scent of pine trees, and the artist's personal journey through the fields of art and comics. Mooradian uses fleeting moments and irregular story telling to guide the reader through forgotten but familiar places and the overall mundanity of life. Fans of Simon Hanselmann or Tin Can Forest will find home in this small book.

Please remember to shut the door behind you.



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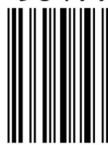
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