

WAR

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HODDER CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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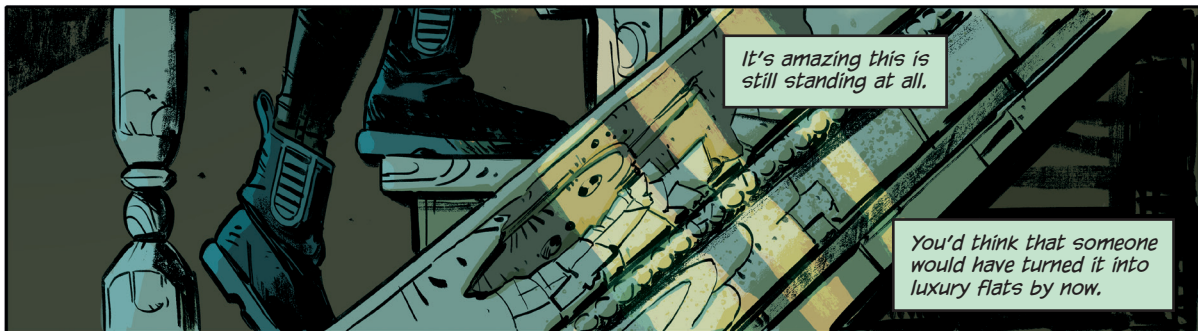
**"EVERY WAR IS A WAR
AGAINST CHILDREN."**

EGLANTYNE JEBB, SAVE THE CHILDREN



NOW.

The noise shakes the building under my feet.



It's amazing this is still standing at all.

You'd think that someone would have turned it into luxury flats by now.



But no. The beautiful, old, slightly damp, slightly smelly place is still here.

Best entered by the broken window above the second fire escape ladder.

Like always.



For a few seconds, there is a peaceful sky.

Then...





Home.

I've lived here
all my life.

Feels like
forever.

I know every brick.

Church. (Grandma used
to make me go every
week when I was little.)

Nursery. (Where I met
Maria, when we were three.)

Mrs Jakevays' house
where Guss the dog
barks at you for no
reason, even if he
knows you.

Bakery. (Best bread
in walking distance.)

My best friend
Maria's house.
(Love Maria.)

Hardware store. (Nails, screws,
brooms, dustbins and, at the
back, an exceptionally fine
selection of high-quality spray
paints with UV-resistant shades
and quick-drying times. Trust me.)

My house.

Shop where Papa
gets his newspapers,
which Mama says
he never reads.

Park gate where
Mama and Papa first
met. (They always tell
the story.)

FIREWORK
TIME...

Tree. (The council
wanted to cut this
down. We stopped
them.)

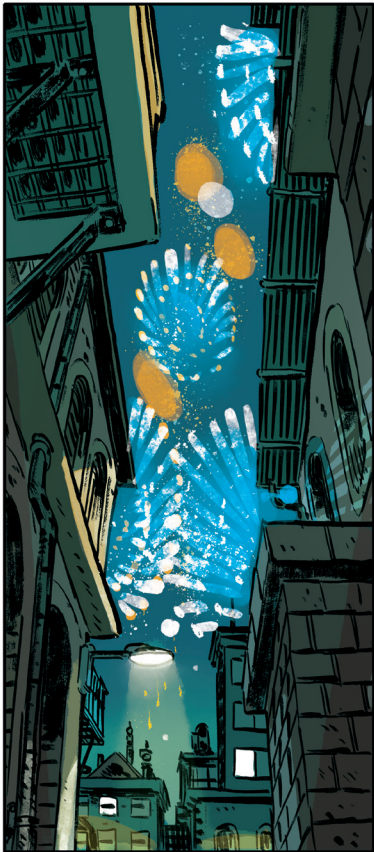
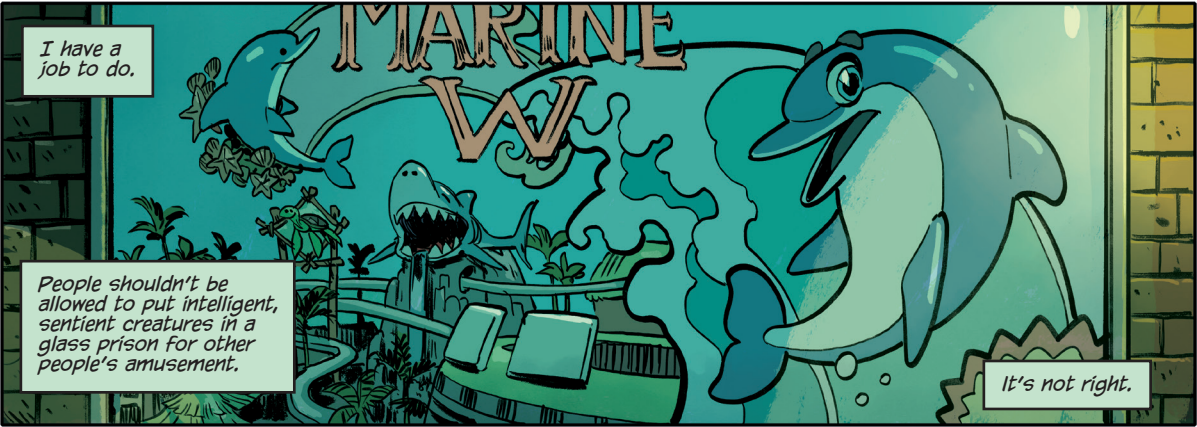
Statue. (Some big-
deal general guy who
won some battle, like,
hundreds of years ago.)

Bus stop for school.
(I usually walk, unless
it's raining really hard
or very, very cold.)

Everyone is
somewhere else.

Which
is good
for me.

CHAPTER I





Just like
Maria said.

20.55: Mr Gibstein comes outside his
shop and takes in the pavement sign.

Then he goes back inside
and spends ten minutes
cashing up the till with
the door locked.

21.05: he leaves.



We're pretty sure this
is a blind spot, so I
can spray the camera
without being seen.



Night night.

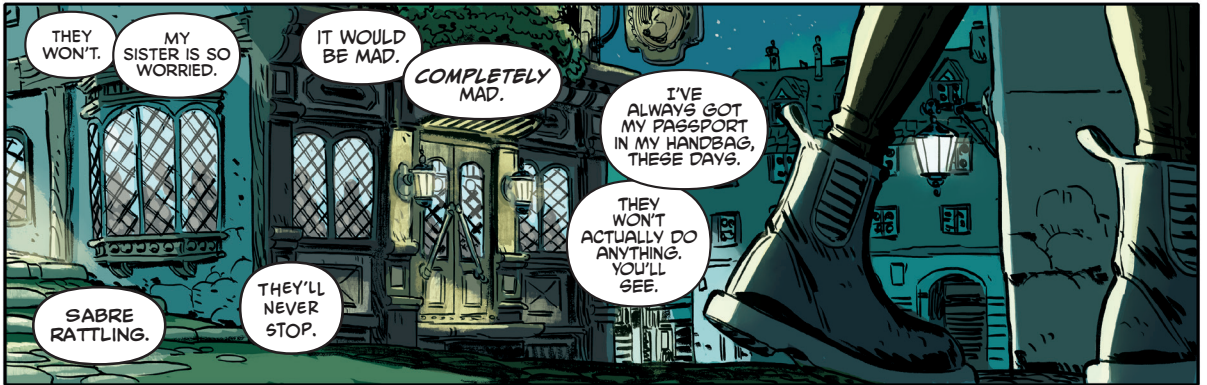


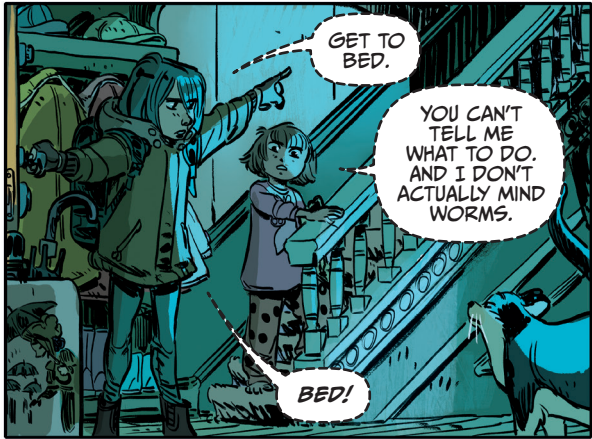
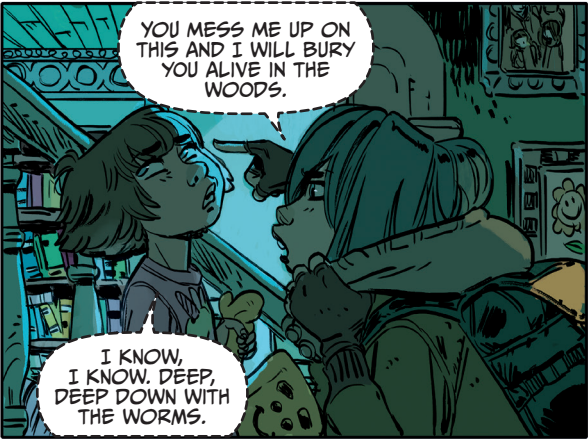
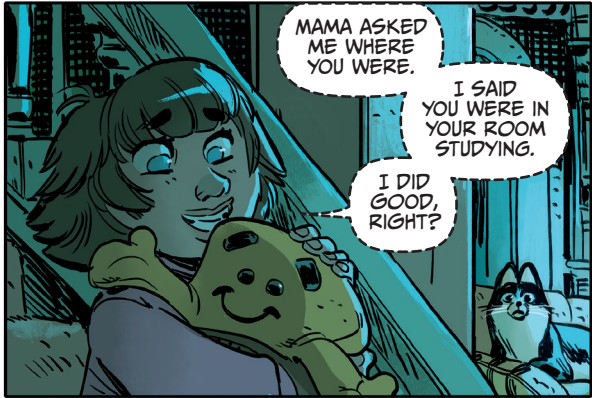
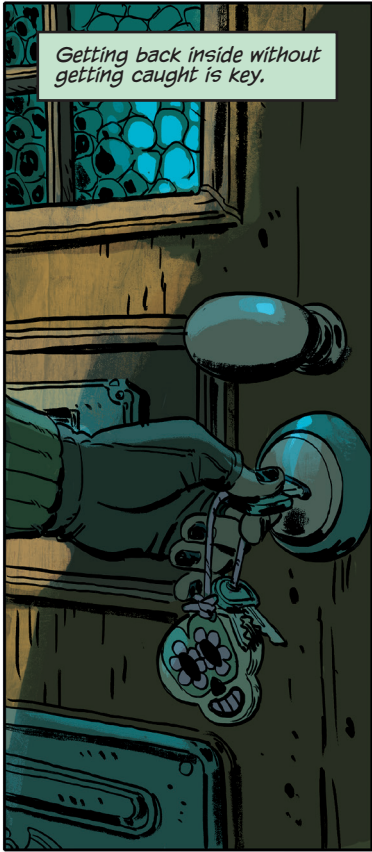
The hiss of the
paint is beautiful.



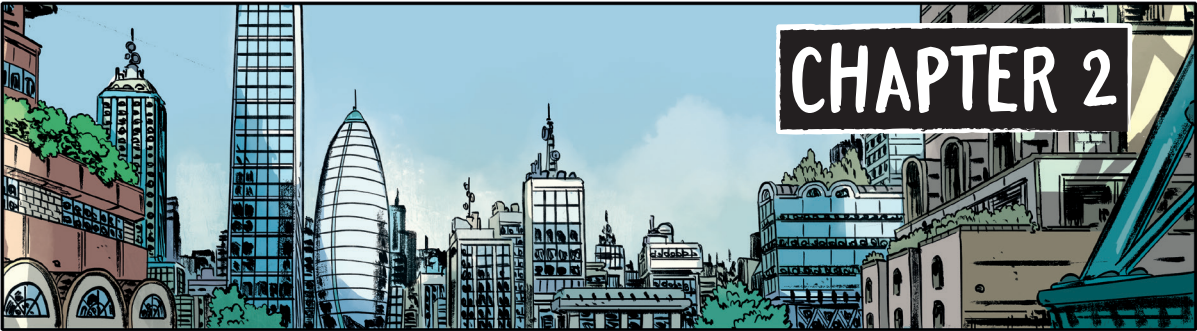
Yes.



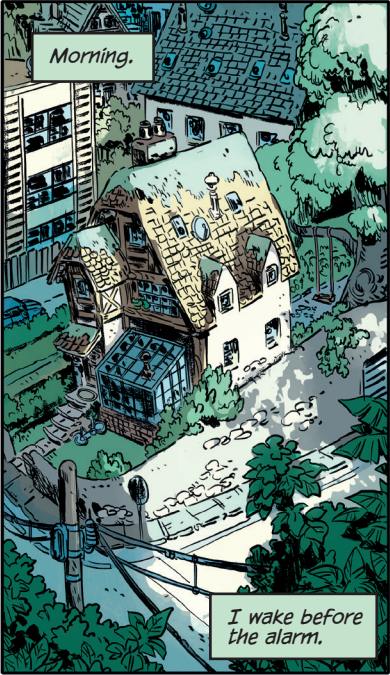






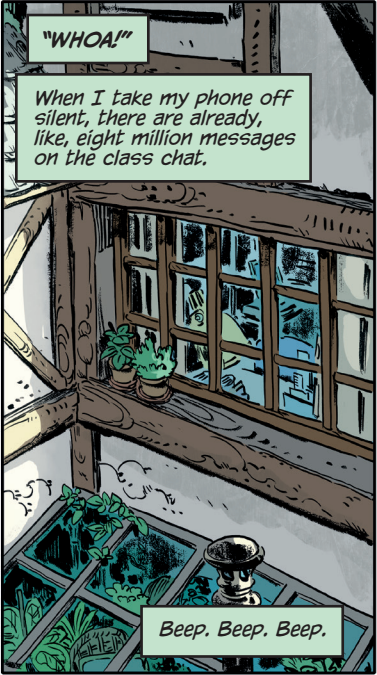


CHAPTER 2



Morning.

I wake before the alarm.



"WHOA!"

When I take my phone off silent, there are already, like, eight million messages on the class chat.

Beep. Beep. Beep.



Every time I try and scroll back to the start, a new message arrives and bumps me to the bottom.

BEEP.

BEEP.

BEEP.

BEEP.

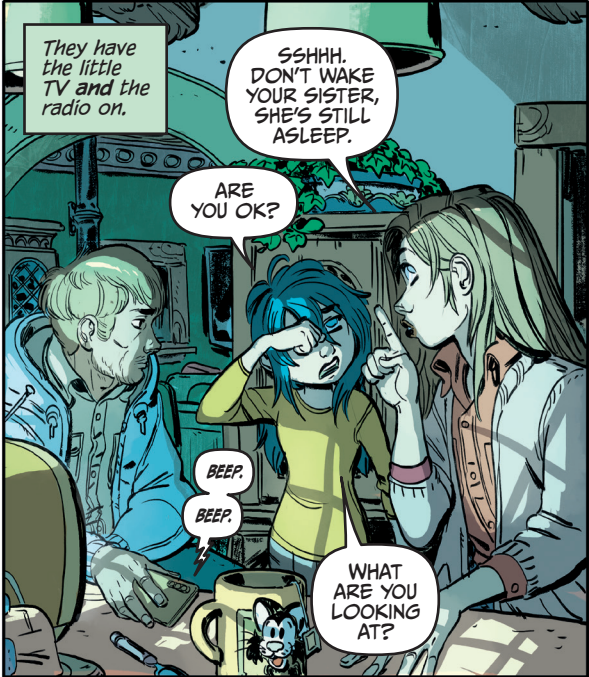


Why isn't Papa at work? Is it true what the texts are saying?

MAMA?

OH... KAT.

BEEP.



They have the little TV and the radio on.

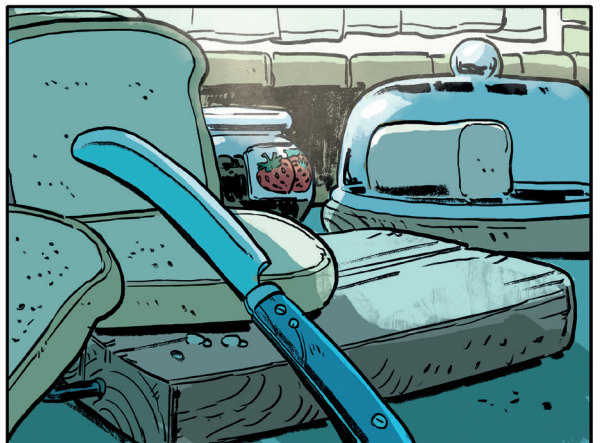
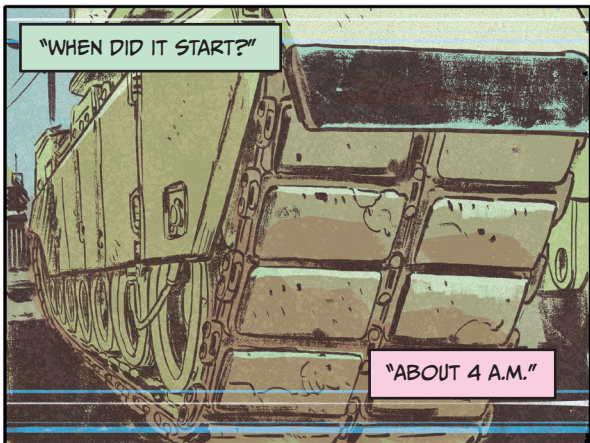
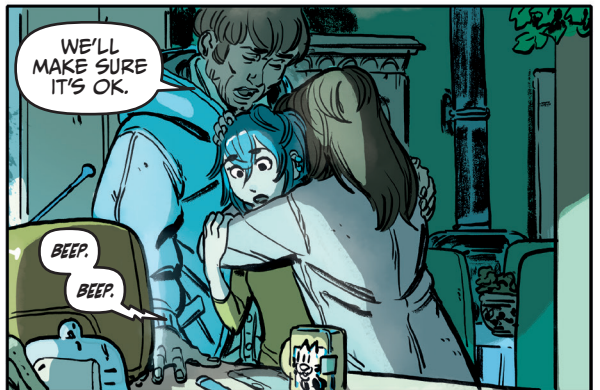
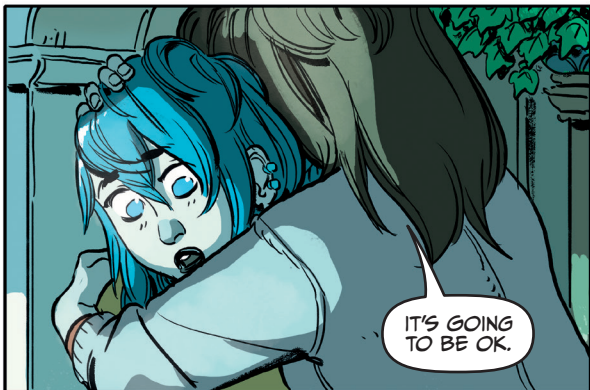
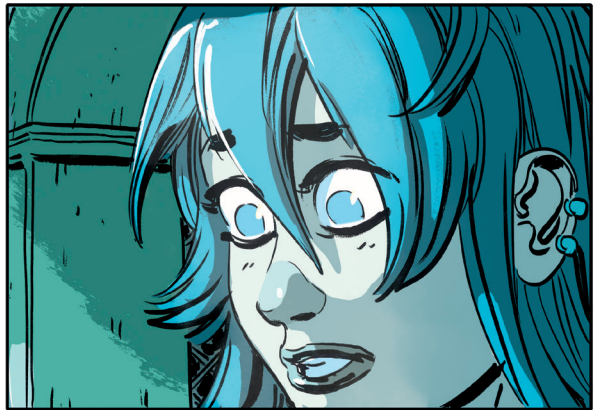
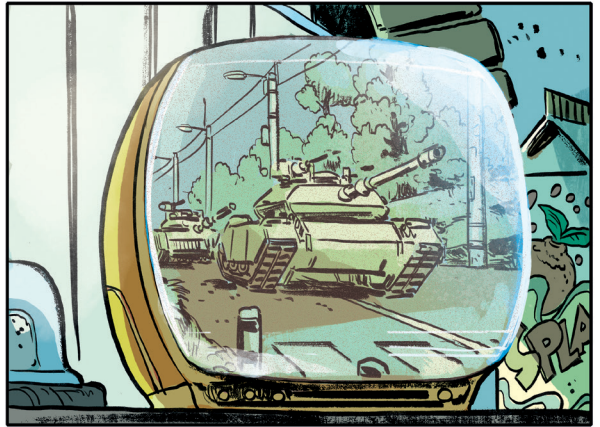
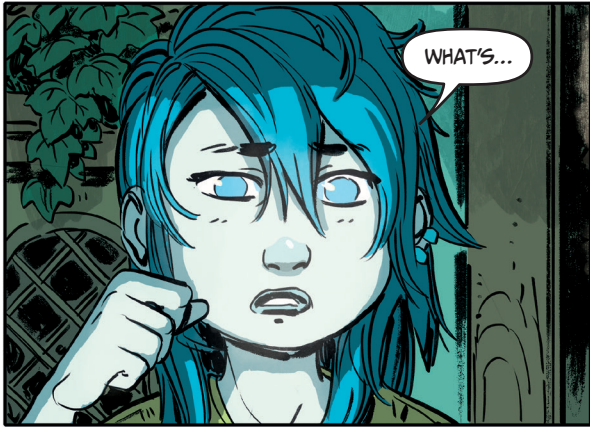
SSHH. DON'T WAKE YOUR SISTER, SHE'S STILL ASLEEP.

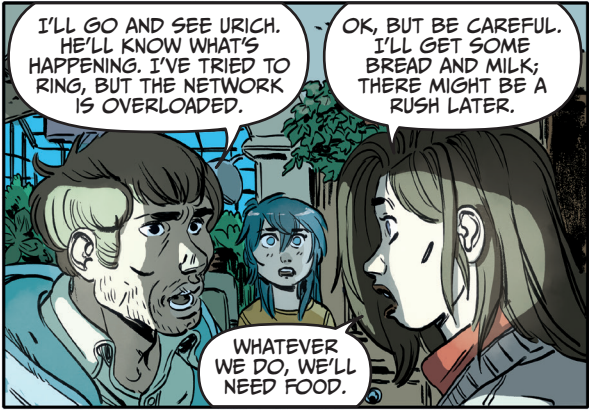
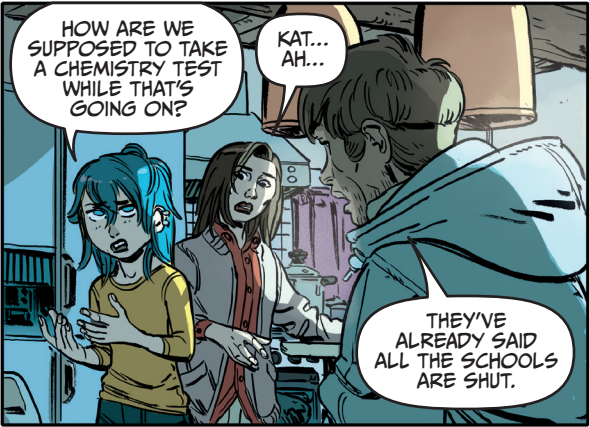
ARE YOU OK?

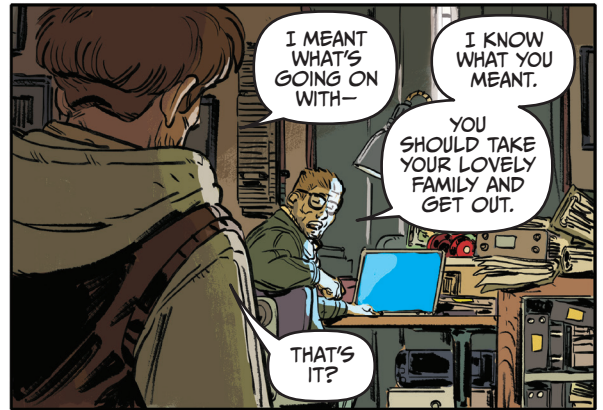
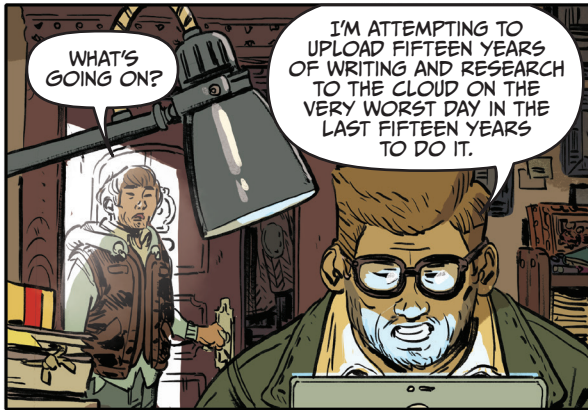
BEEP.

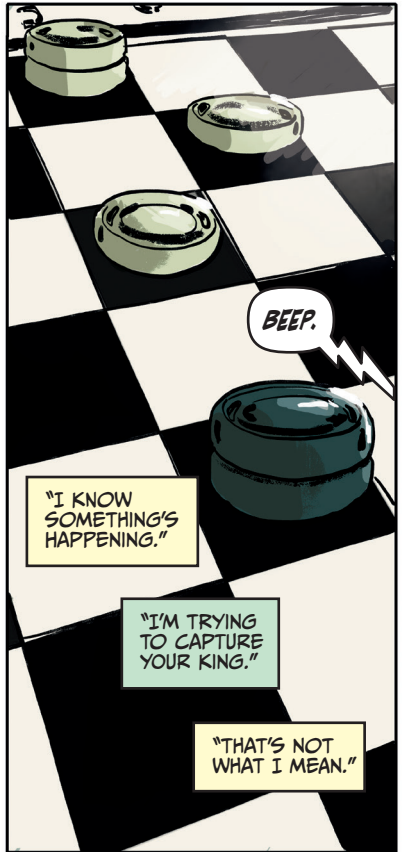
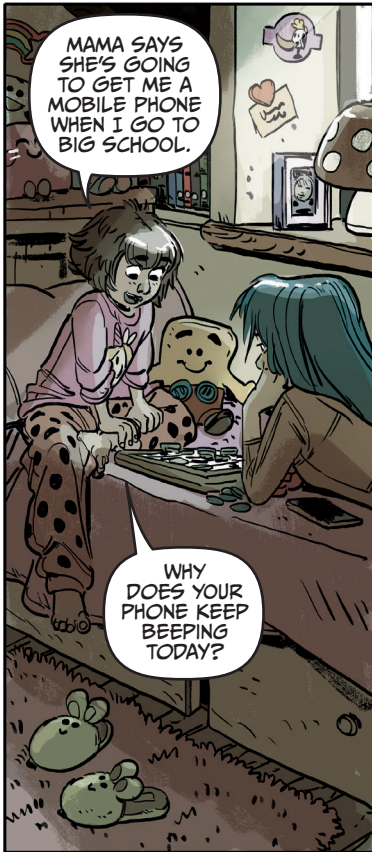
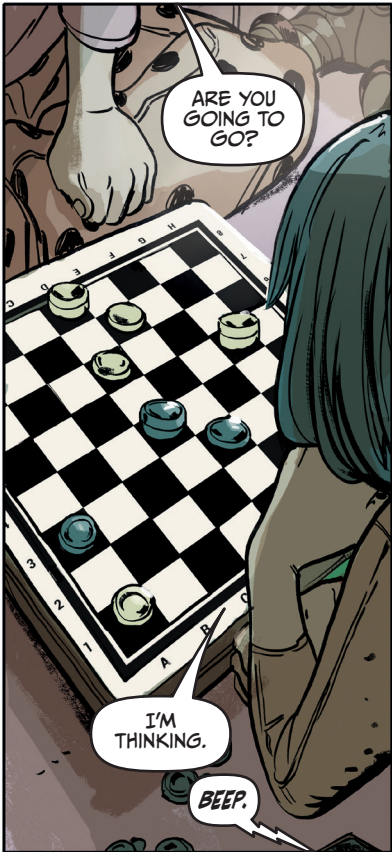
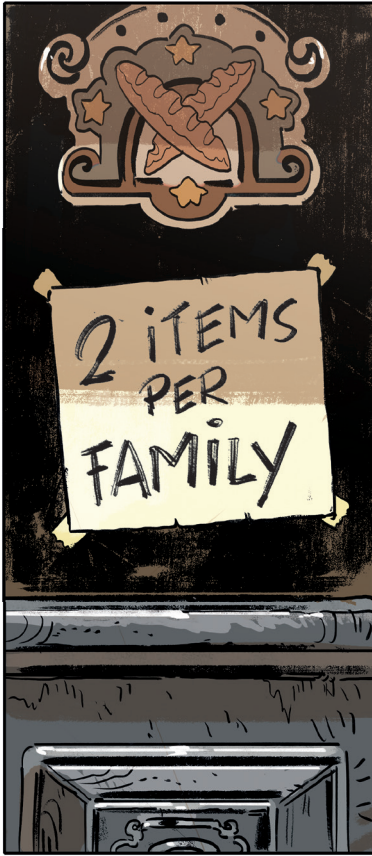
BEEP.

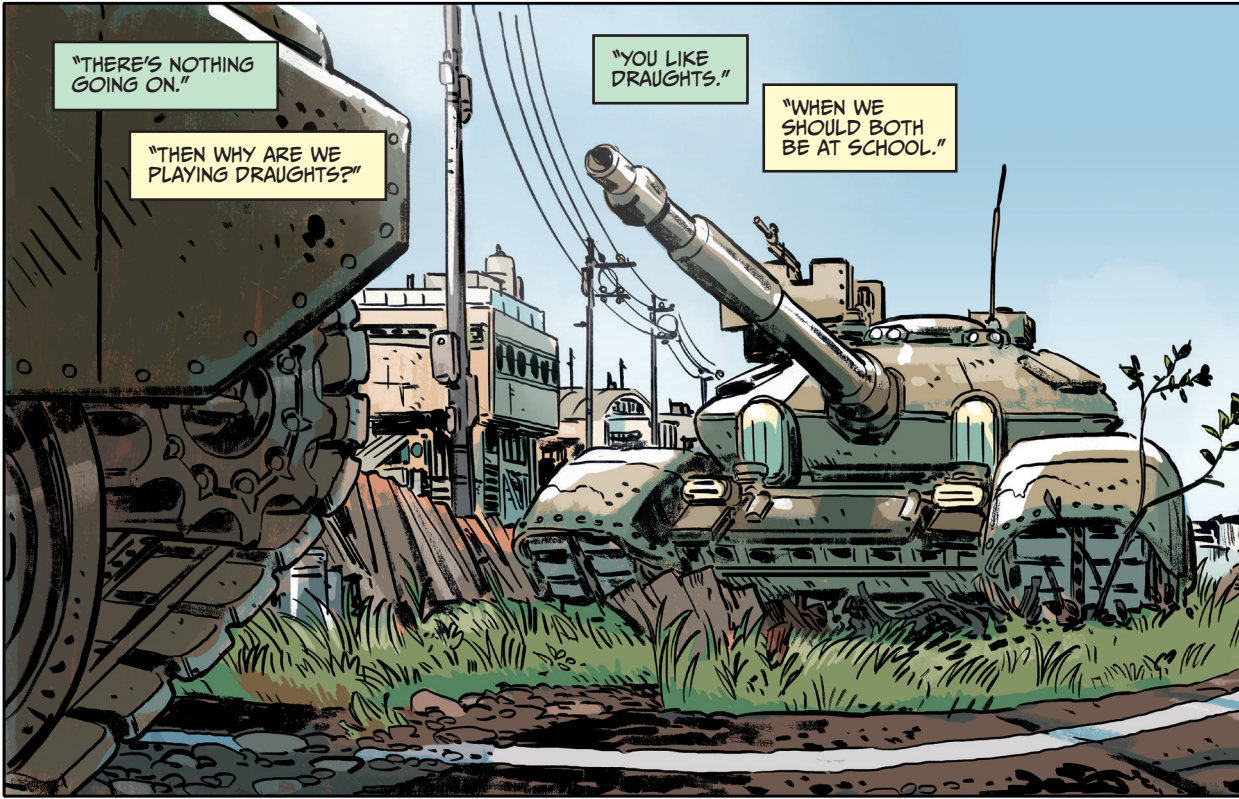
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?









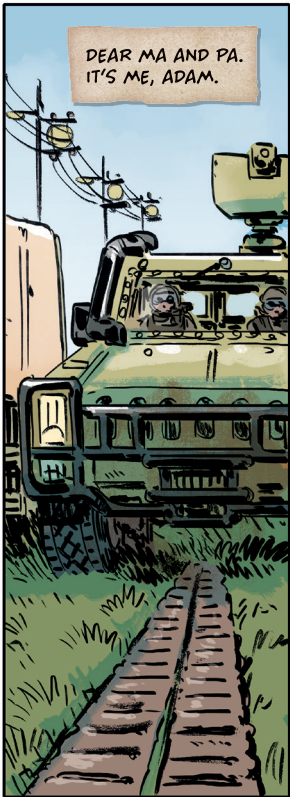


"THERE'S NOTHING GOING ON."

"THEN WHY ARE WE PLAYING DRAUGHTS?"

"YOU LIKE DRAUGHTS."

"WHEN WE SHOULD BOTH BE AT SCHOOL."



DEAR MA AND PA.
IT'S ME, ADAM.



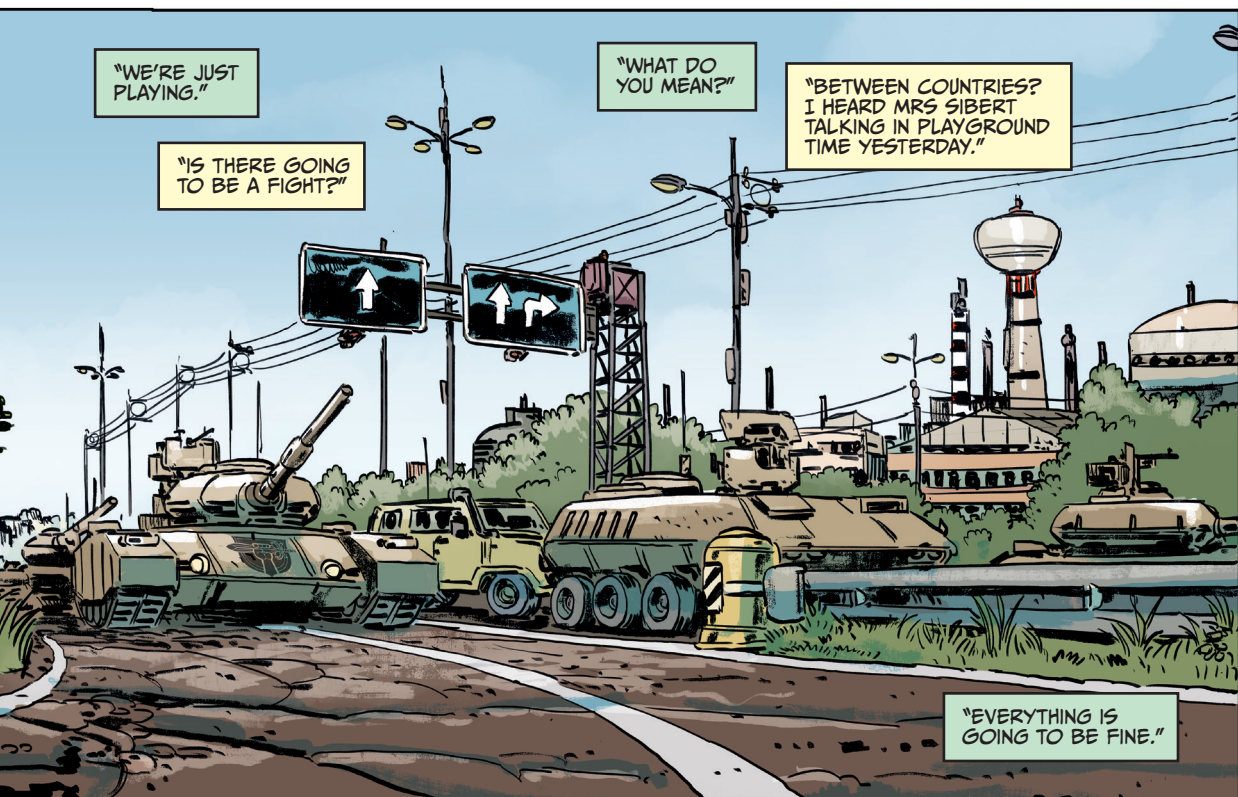
I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND ME ALWAYS WRITING TO PA AS WELL AS YOU, MA.

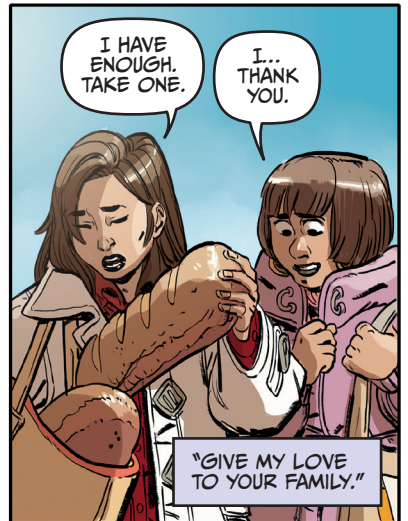
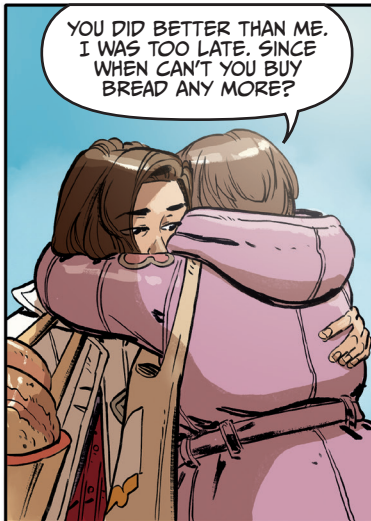
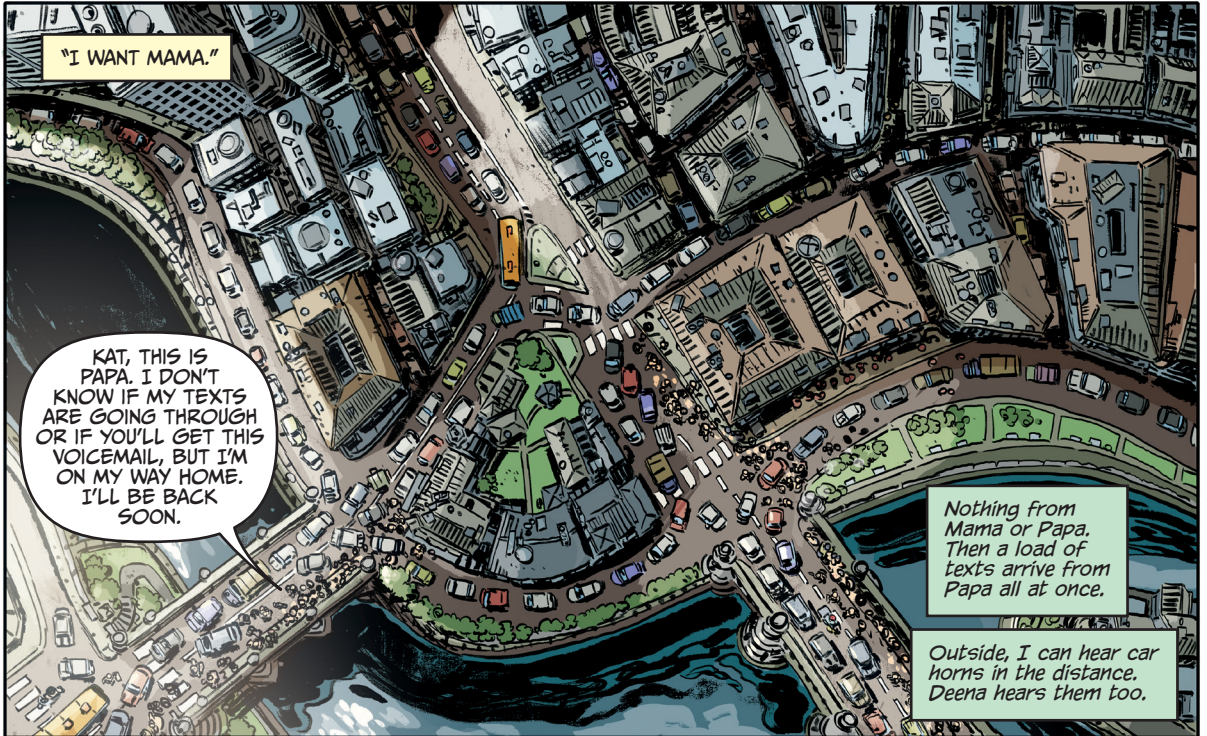
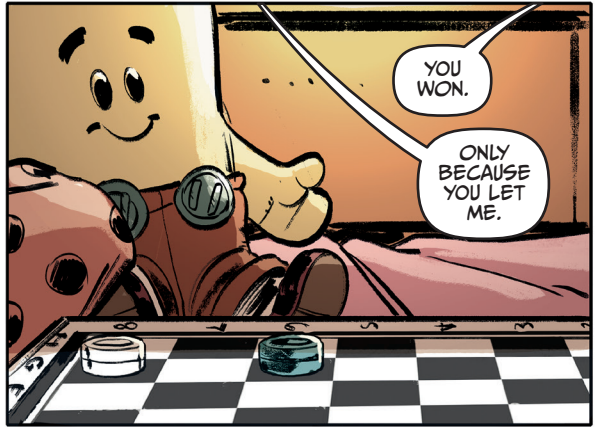


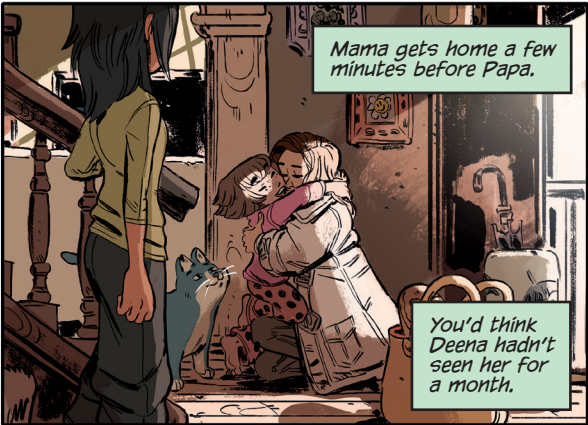
I HAVE LEARNED MANY NEW THINGS SINCE THAT KNOCK AT OUR FARMHOUSE DOOR. I WILL TELL YOU ABOUT THEM ONE DAY.



ANOTHER LETTER? ANYONE WOULD THINK YOU ARE A POET, NOT A FARMER!

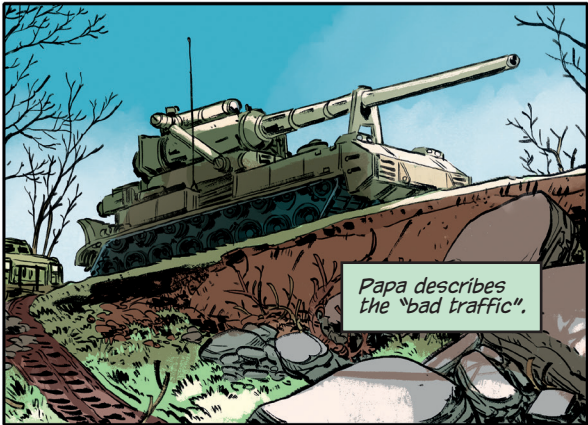






Mama gets home a few minutes before Papa.

You'd think Deena hadn't seen her for a month.



Papa describes the "bad traffic".



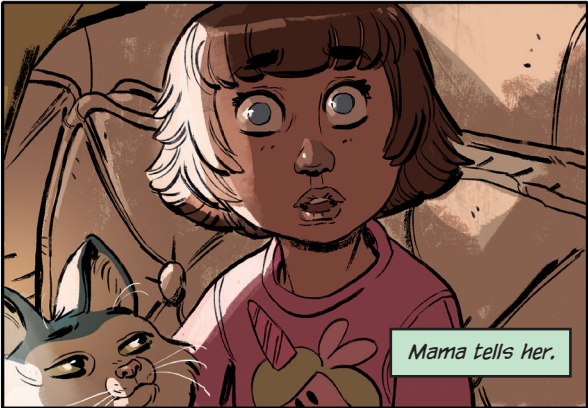
You have to see it to believe it, apparently.



Papa shuts all the windows so we can't hear the car horns any more.

SO, DID YOU TWO HAVE FUN?

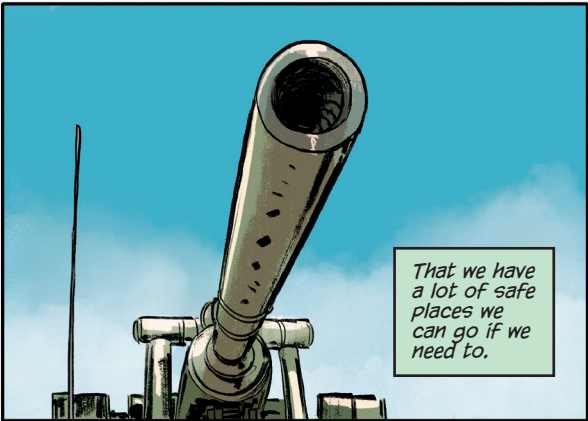
WHAT'S HAPPENING? PLEASE TELL ME.



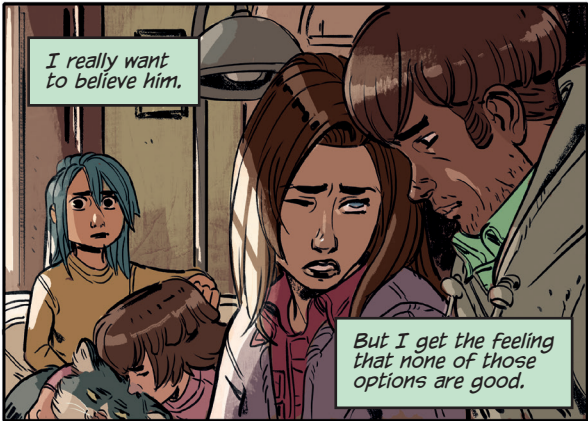
Mama tells her.



Papa says he and Mama are sure everything will be fine.



That we have a lot of safe places we can go if we need to.



I really want to believe him.

But I get the feeling that none of those options are good.

