WAR

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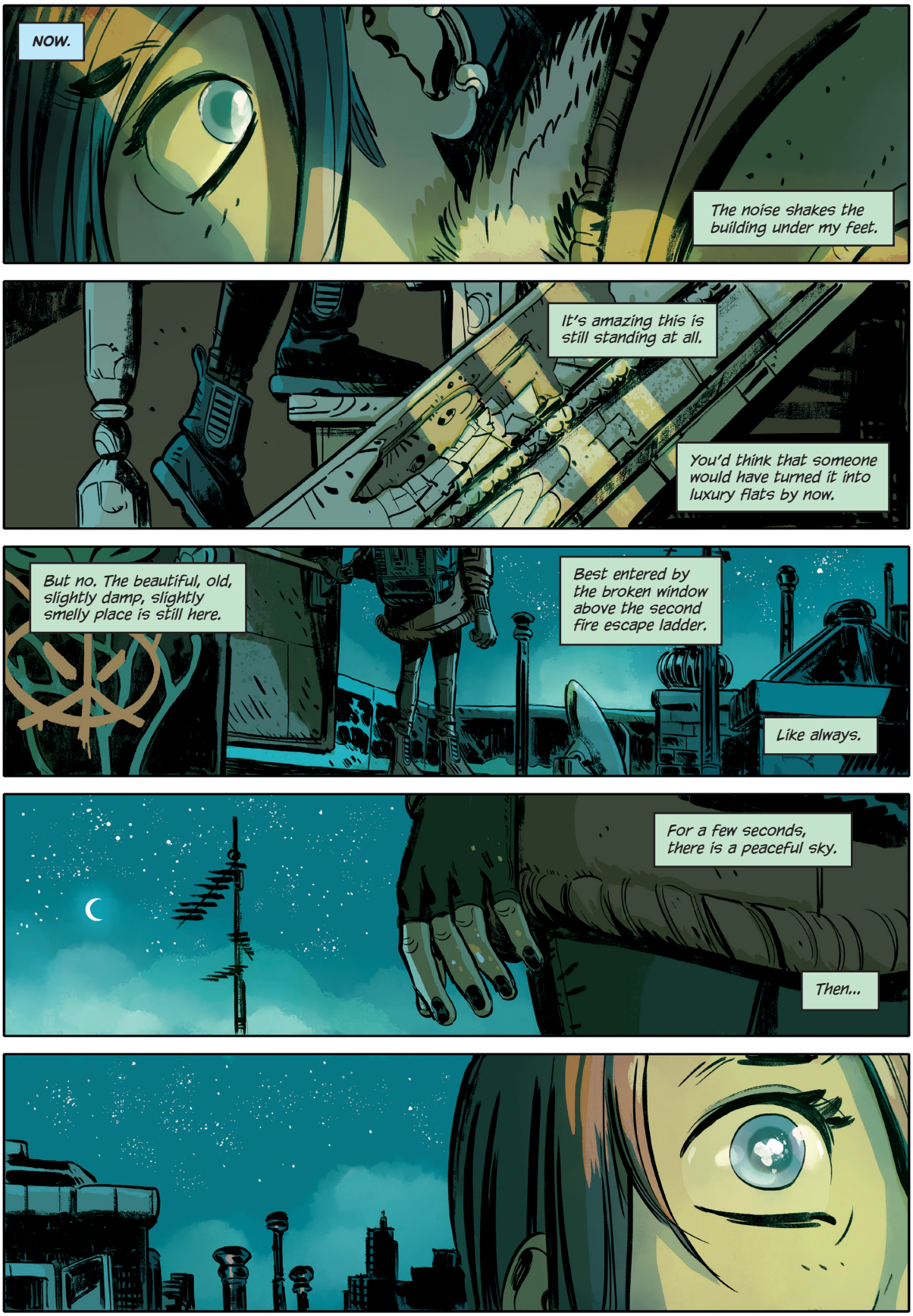
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"EVERY WAR IS A WAR AGAINST CHILDREN."

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.

FIREWORK TIME...

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

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

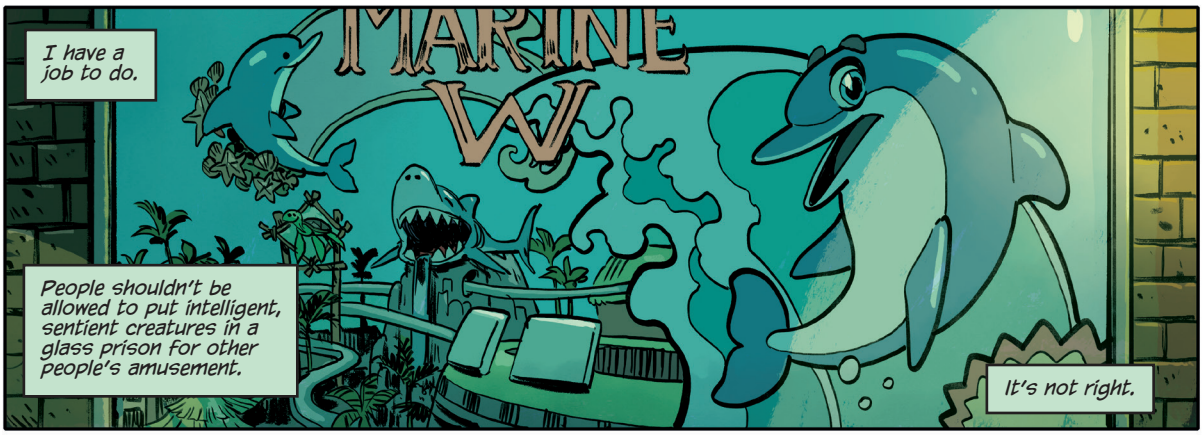
Statue. (Some big-deal general guy who won some battle, like, hundreds of years ago.)

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

Everyone is somewhere else.

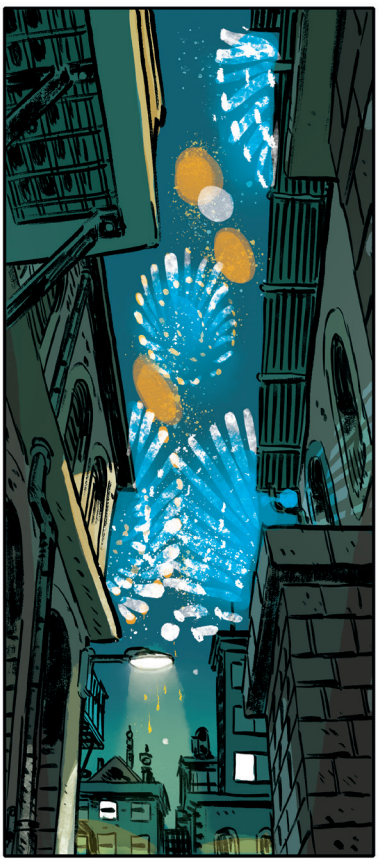
Which is good for me.

CHAPTER 1


I have a job to do.
MARINE W
People shouldn't be allowed to put intelligent, sentient creatures in a glass prison for other people's amusement.
It's not right.


Another fireworks display, for another saint's day.
The crowd is smaller than usual because of what's happening in the news.


People are home or in a bar. near a television.



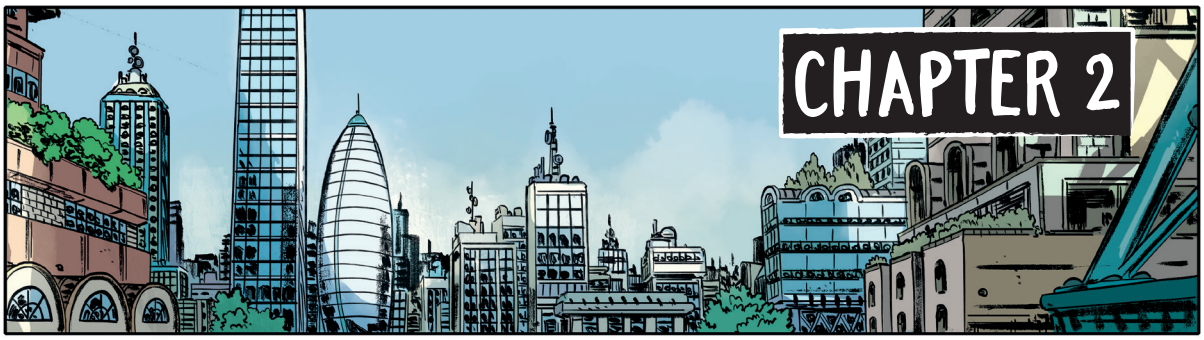

Time to go to work.

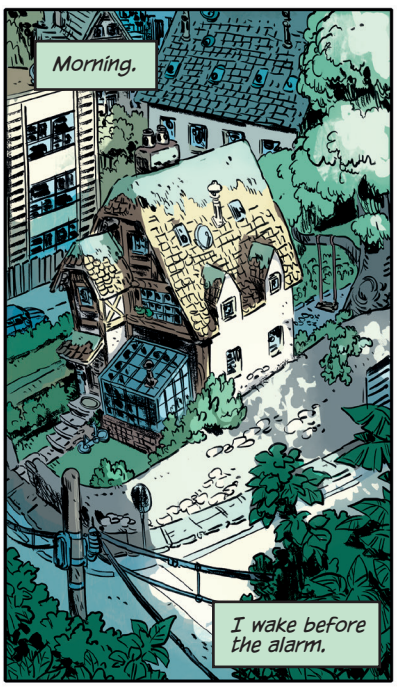

Just like Maria said.
20.55: Mr Gibstein comes outside his shop and takes in the pavement sign.
Then he goes back inside and spends ten minutes cashing up the till with the door locked.
21.05: he leaves.
We're pretty sure this is a blind spot, so I can spray the camera without being seen.
MARINE
Night night.
The hiss of the paint is beautiful.
Yes.

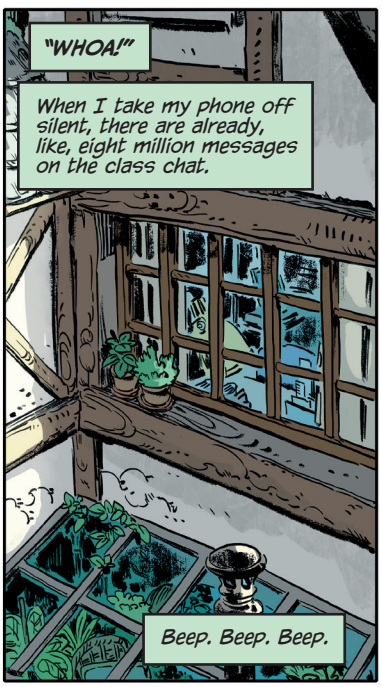

THEY WON'T.
MY SISTER IS SO WORRIED.
IT WOULD BE MAD.
COMPLETELY MAD.
I'VE ALWAYS GOT MY PASSPORT IN MY HANDBAG, THESE DAYS.
THEY WON'T ACTUALLY DO ANYTHING. YOU'LL SEE.
SABRE RATTLING.
THEY'LL NEVER STOP.
HELLO, KATRINA, YOU'RE OUT LATE.
HELLO, MR HIRSCH.
HAVE YOU BEEN DOING SOME MORE OF YOUR ART?
WELL...
YOU'RE ALWAYS SUCH A GOOD GIRL, KATRINA.
ALWAYS WORKING ON SOMETHING.
"PLEASE GIVE MY BEST TO YOUR PARENTS."

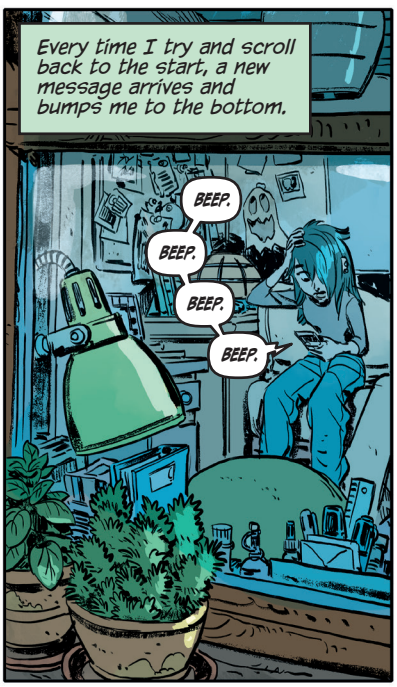

I let Maria know I'm home.
Wish me luck.
Good luck!
Getting back inside without getting caught is key.
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
Oh, no.
Deena.
SSSSSHH. QUIET.
MAMA ASKED ME WHERE YOU WERE.
I SAID YOU WERE IN YOUR ROOM STUDYING.
I DID GOOD, RIGHT?
YOU MESS ME UP ON THIS AND I WILL BURY YOU ALIVE IN THE WOODS.
I KNOW, I KNOW. DEEP, DEEP DOWN WITH THE WORMS.
GET TO BED.
YOU CAN'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO. AND I DON'T ACTUALLY MIND WORMS.
BED!


WE'LL BE TALKING TO SOMEONE FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT SHORTLY.
I'LL RING MY SISTER IN THE MORNING.
HOW DO YOU THINK THE NEXT FEW WEEKS WILL PLAY OUT?
It seems serious this time.
It always seems serious. I'm not worried.

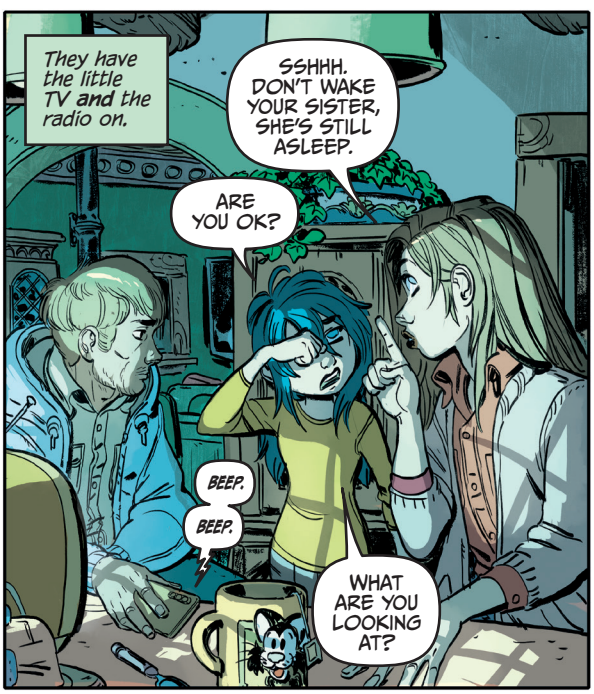

CHAPTER 2

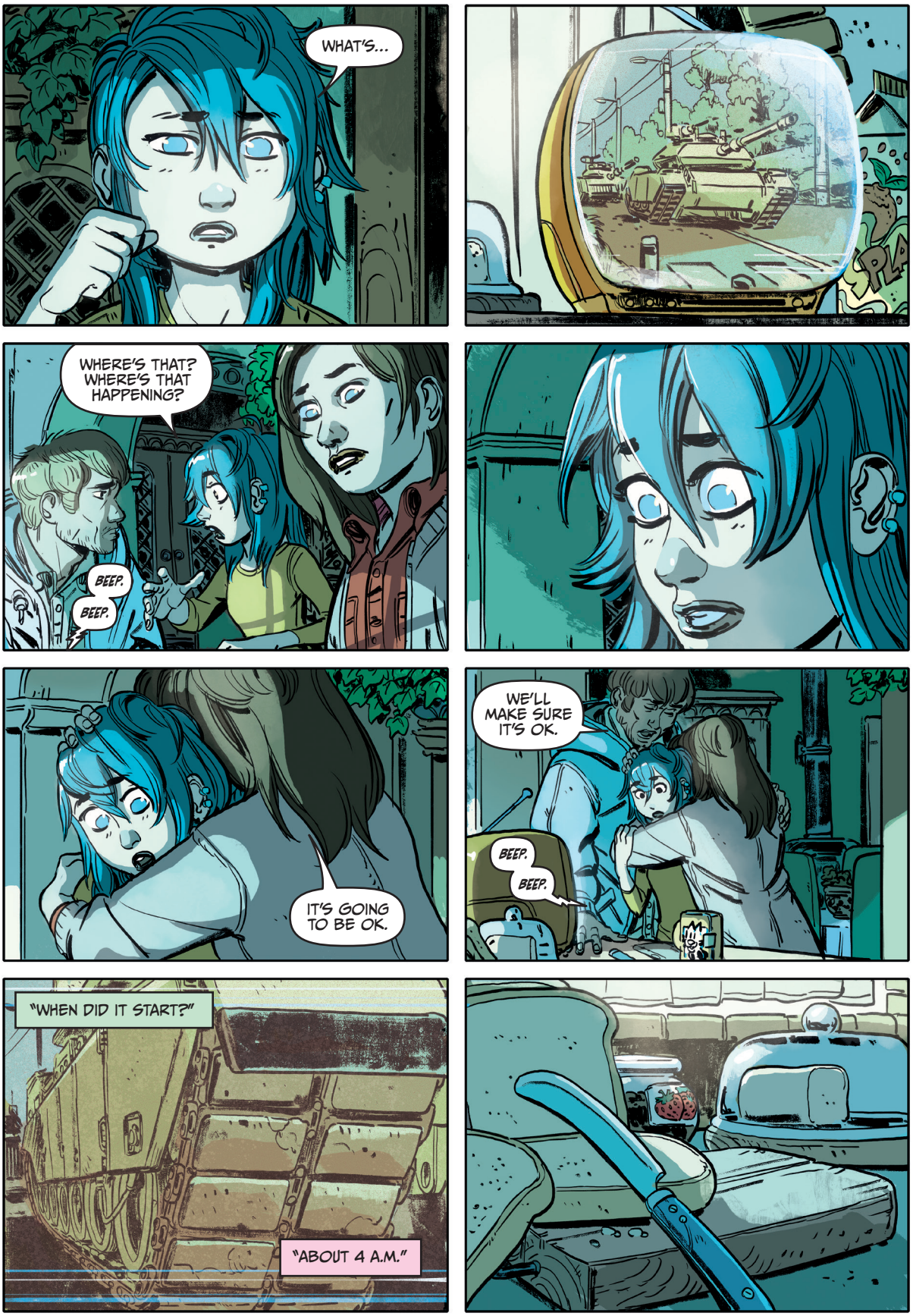

Morning.
I wake before the alarm.

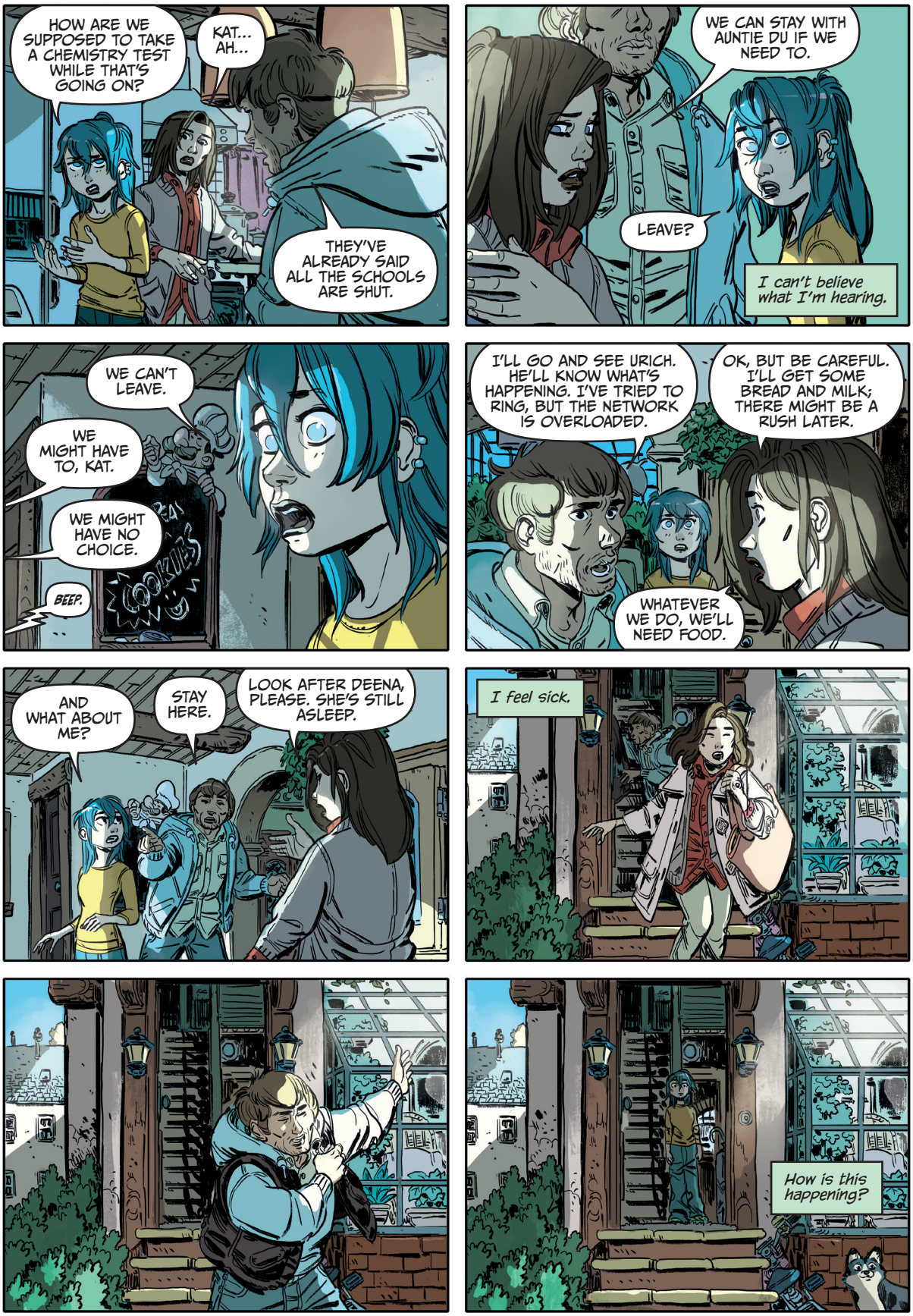

"WHOA!"
When I take my phone off silent, there are already, like, eight million messages on the class chat.
Beep. Beep. Beep.

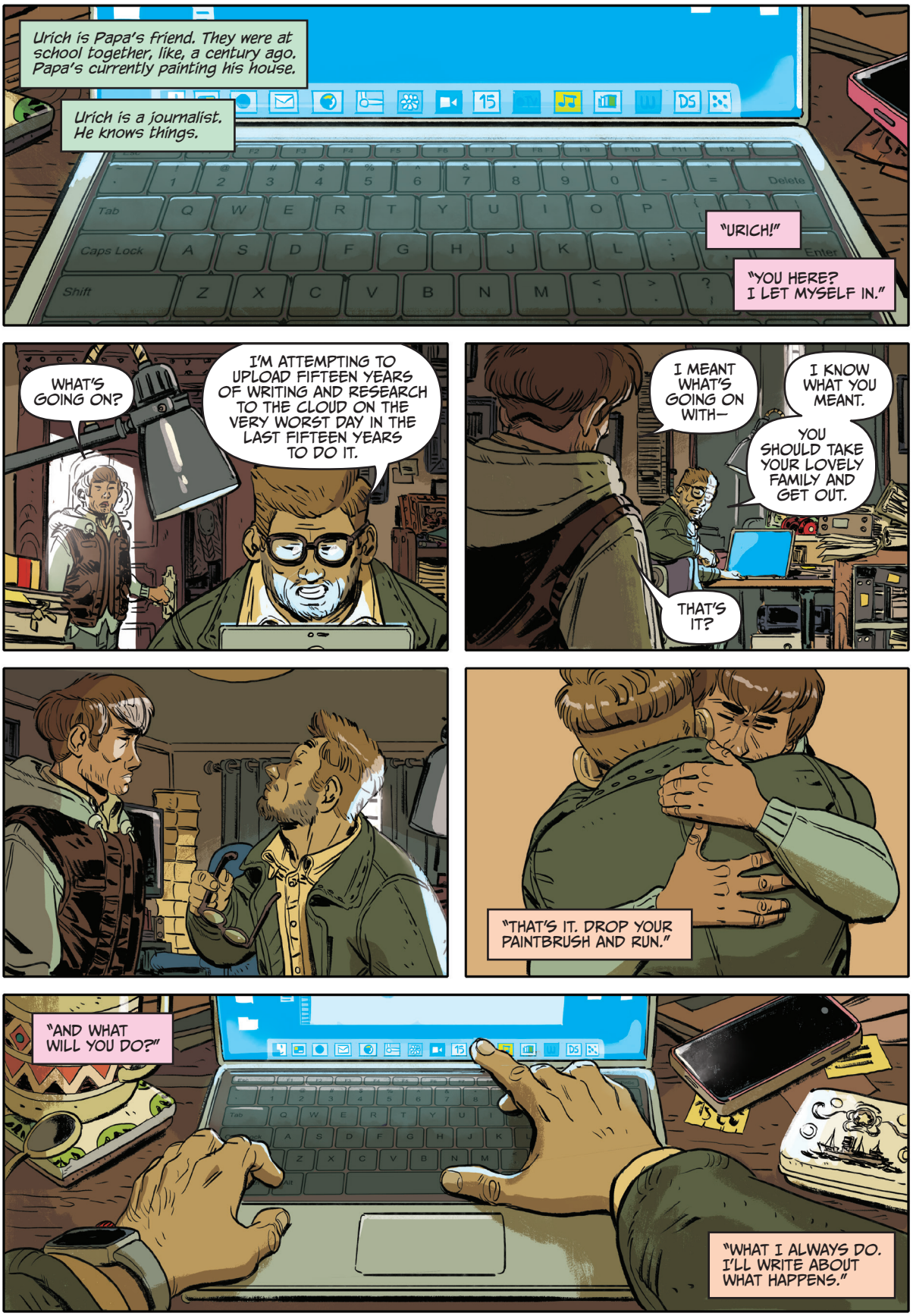

Every time I try and scroll back to the start, a new message arrives and bumps me to the bottom.
BEEP.
BEEP.
BEEP.
BEEP.


Why isn't Papa at work? Is it true what the texts are saying?
MAMA?
OH... KAT.
BEEP.

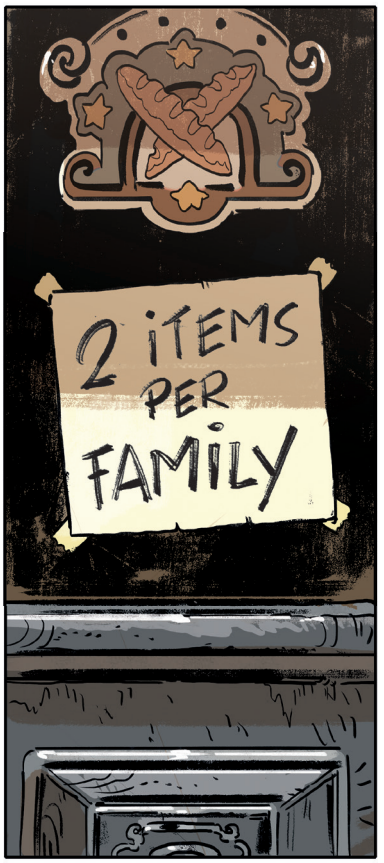

They have the little TV and the radio on.
SSHHH. DON'T WAKE YOUR SISTER, SHE'S STILL ASLEEP.
ARE YOU OK?
BEEP.
BEEP.
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?


WHAT'S...
WHERE'S THAT? WHERE'S THAT HAPPENING?
BEEP.
BEEP.
IT'S GOING TO BE OK.
WE'LL MAKE SURE IT'S OK.
BEEP.
BEEP.
"WHEN DID IT START?"
"ABOUT 4 A.M."

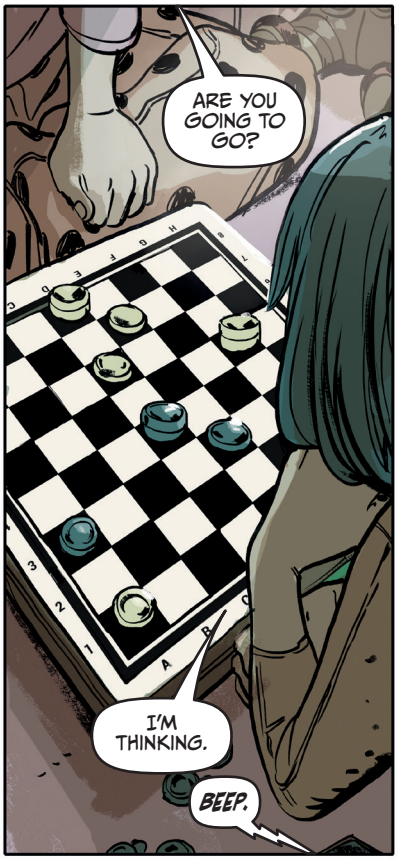

HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO TAKE A CHEMISTRY TEST WHILE THAT'S GOING ON?
KAT... AH...
THEY'VE ALREADY SAID ALL THE SCHOOLS ARE SHUT.
WE CAN STAY WITH AUNTIE DU IF WE NEED TO.
LEAVE?
I can't believe what I'm hearing.
WE CAN'T LEAVE.
WE MIGHT HAVE TO, KAT.
WE MIGHT HAVE NO CHOICE.
BEEP.
I'LL GO AND SEE URICH. HE'LL KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING. I'VE TRIED TO RING, BUT THE NETWORK IS OVERLOADED.
OK, BUT BE CAREFUL. I'LL GET SOME BREAD AND MILK; THERE MIGHT BE A RUSH LATER.
WHATEVER WE DO, WE'LL NEED FOOD.
AND WHAT ABOUT ME?
STAY HERE.
LOOK AFTER DEENA, PLEASE. SHE'S STILL ASLEEP.
I feel sick.
How is this happening?

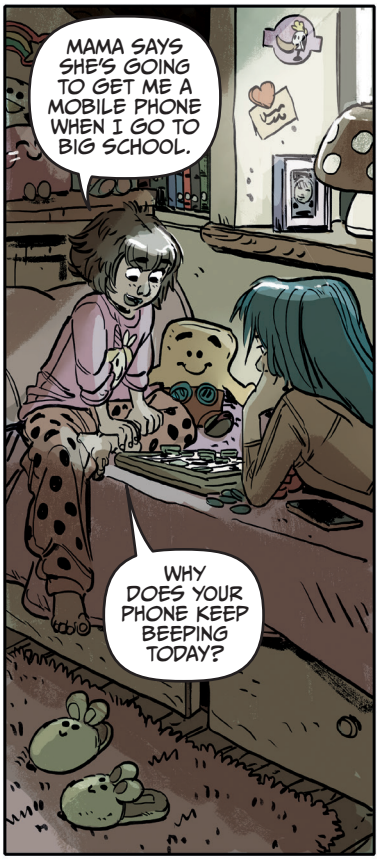

Urich is Papa's friend. They were at school together, like, a century ago. Papa's currently painting his house.
Urich is a journalist. He knows things.
"URICH!"
"YOU HERE? I LET MYSELF IN."
WHAT'S GOING ON?
I'M ATTEMPTING TO UPLOAD FIFTEEN YEARS OF WRITING AND RESEARCH TO THE CLOUD ON THE VERY WORST DAY IN THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS TO DO IT.
I MEANT WHAT'S GOING ON WITH—
I KNOW WHAT YOU MEANT.
YOU SHOULD TAKE YOUR LOVELY FAMILY AND GET OUT.
THAT'S IT?
"THAT'S IT. DROP YOUR PAINTBRUSH AND RUN."
"AND WHAT WILL YOU DO?"
"WHAT I ALWAYS DO. I'LL WRITE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS."

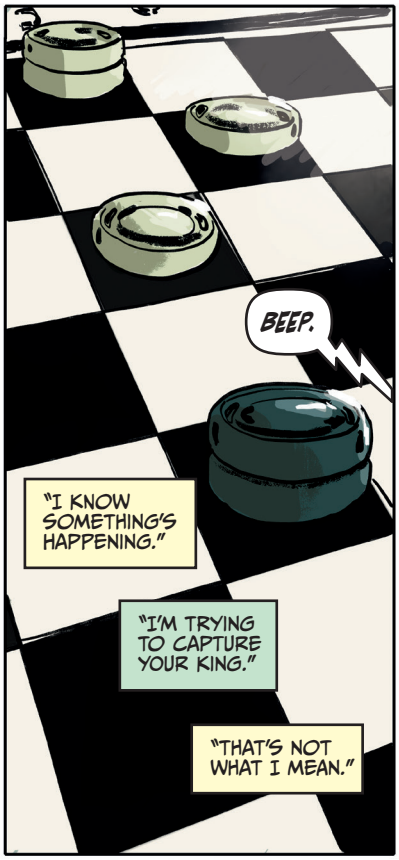


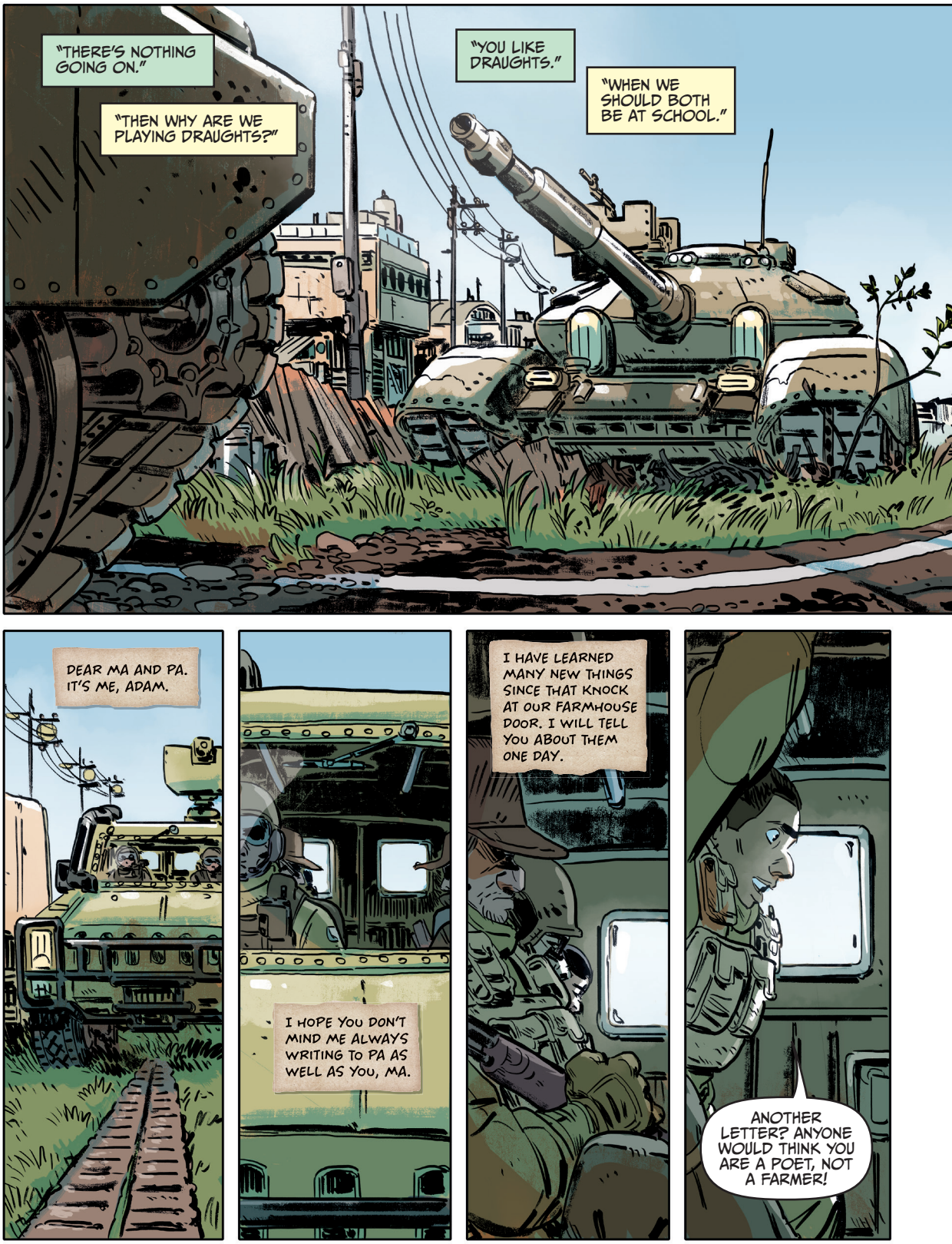

2 ITEMS PER FAMILY

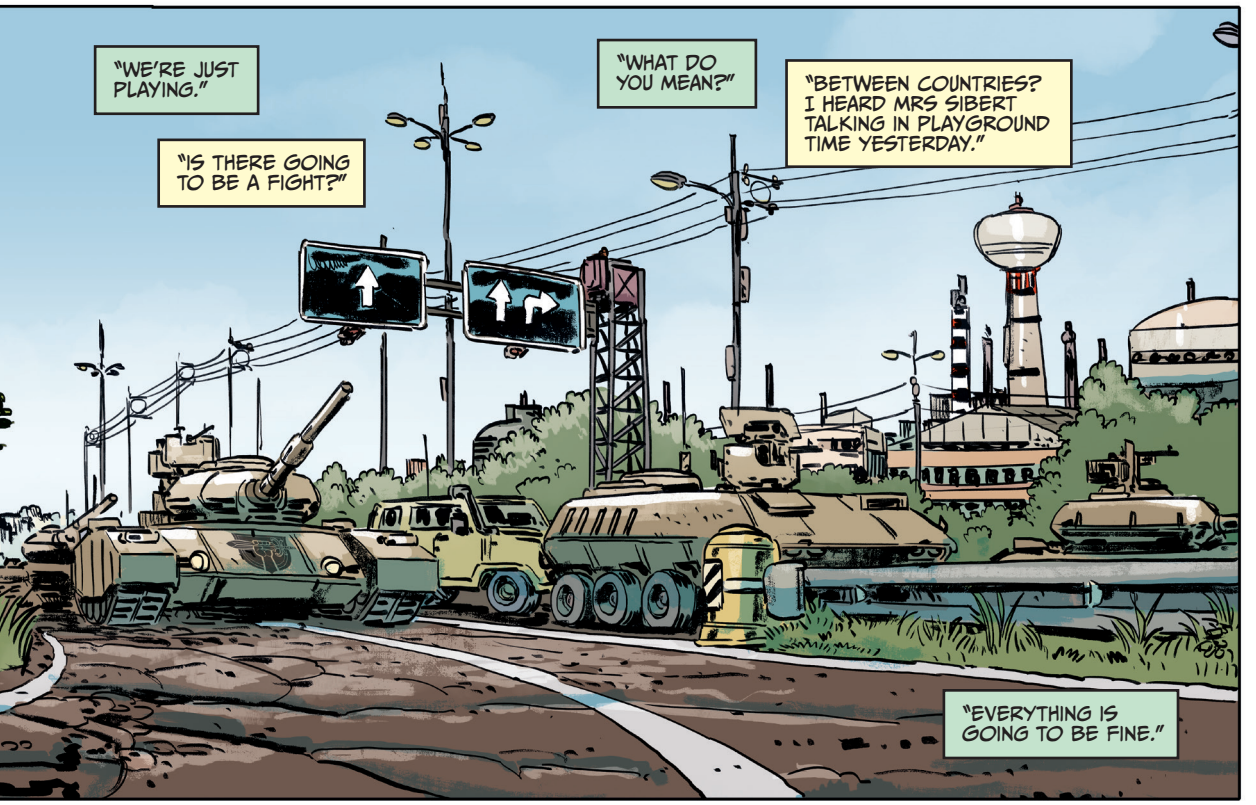



ARE YOU GOING TO GO?
I'M THINKING.
BEEP.


MAMA SAYS SHE'S GOING TO GET ME A MOBILE PHONE WHEN I GO TO BIG SCHOOL.
WHY DOES YOUR PHONE KEEP BEEPING TODAY?

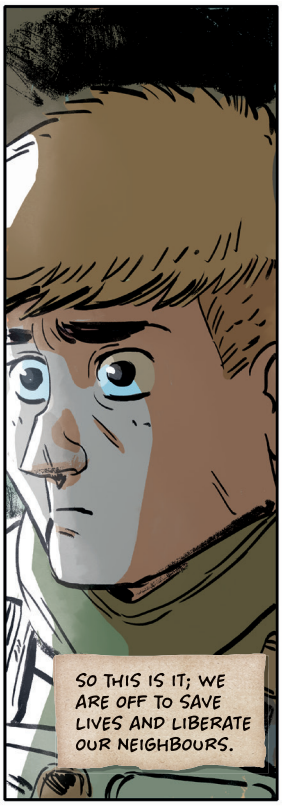

BEEP.
"I KNOW SOMETHING'S HAPPENING."
"I'M TRYING TO CAPTURE YOUR KING."
"THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN."


"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!

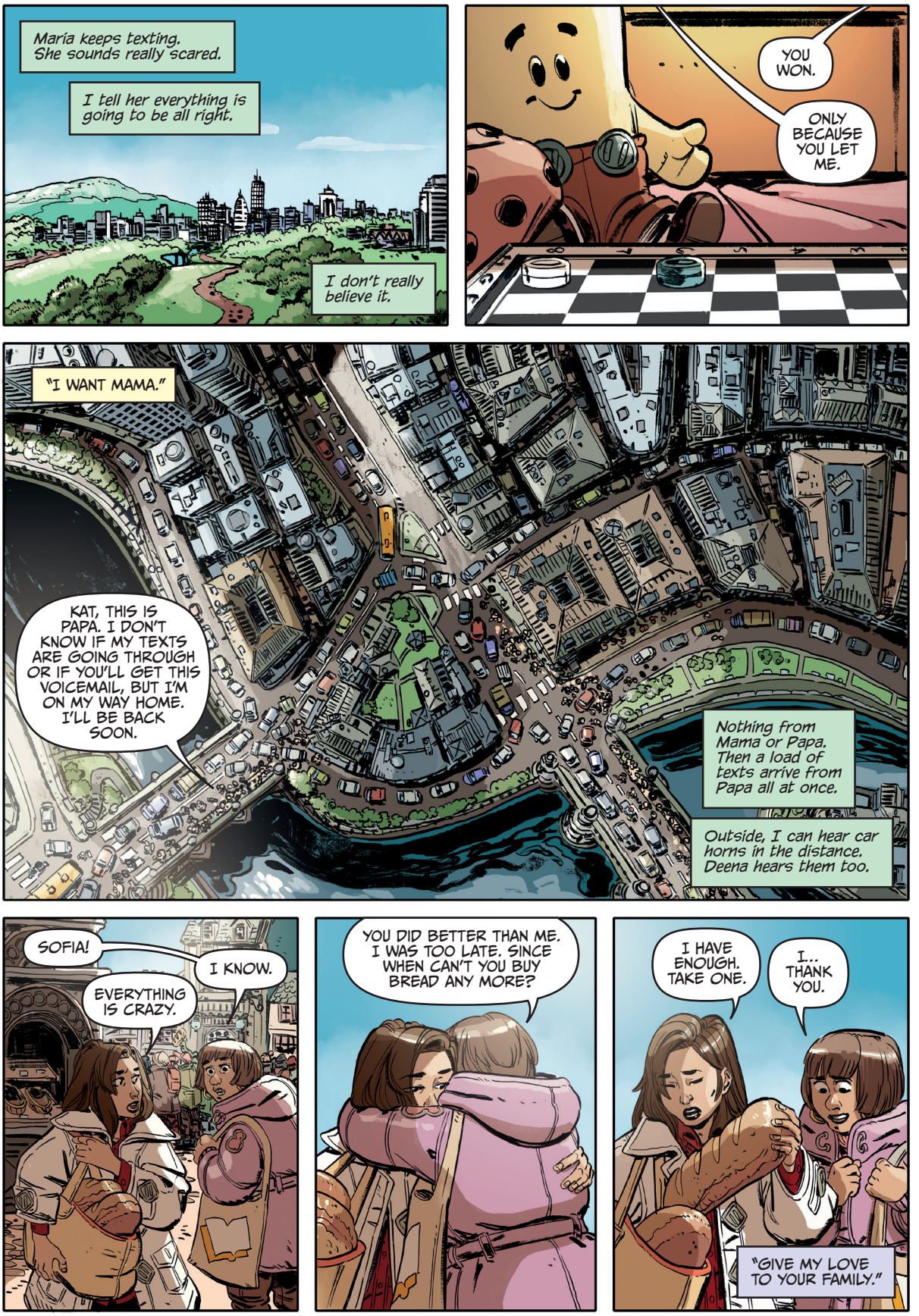

"WE'RE JUST PLAYING."
"IS THERE GOING TO BE A FIGHT?"
"WHAT DO YOU MEAN?"
"BETWEEN COUNTRIES? I HEARD MRS SIBERT TALKING IN PLAYGROUND TIME YESTERDAY."
"EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE FINE."

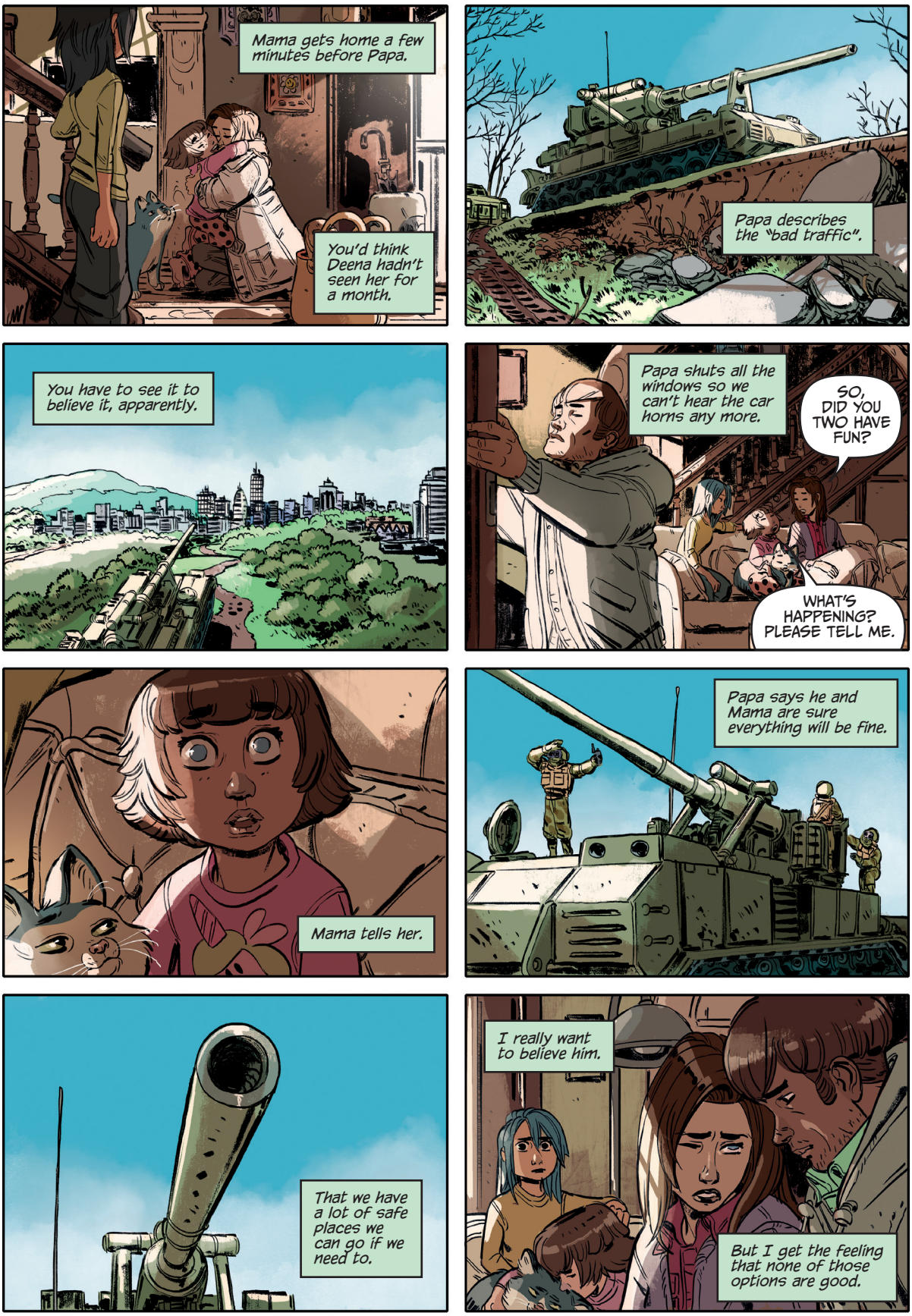

CAN'T I BE BOTH, STAV?
I'M NOT ALLOWED TO SAY TOO MUCH ABOUT WHAT IS GOING ON HERE, BUT YOU KNOW THAT ALREADY.


WHAT I CAN SAY IS THAT WE ARE SUDDENLY ON THE MOVE. ALL OF US.


SO THIS IS IT; WE ARE OFF TO SAVE LIVES AND LIBERATE OUR NEIGHBOURS.


MY FRIEND STAV SAYS THAT THE PEOPLE WILL BE SO PLEASED TO SEE US THAT WE COULD BE BACK HOME IN TIME FOR EASTER.
I HOPE WE ARE, BECAUSE I MISS YOU AND HELENA AND THE FARM SO, SO MUCH.
YOUR LOVING SON, ADAM.


Maria keeps texting. She sounds really scared.
I tell her everything is going to be all right.
I don't really believe it.
YOU WON.
ONLY BECAUSE YOU LET ME.
"I WANT MAMA."
KAT, THIS IS PAPA. I DON'T KNOW IF MY TEXTS ARE GOING THROUGH OR IF YOU'LL GET THIS VOICEMAIL, BUT I'M ON MY WAY HOME. I'LL BE BACK SOON.
Nothing from Mama or Papa. Then a load of texts arrive from Papa all at once.
Outside, I can hear car horns in the distance. Deena hears them too.
SOFIA!
I KNOW.
EVERYTHING IS CRAZY.
YOU DID BETTER THAN ME. I WAS TOO LATE. SINCE WHEN CAN'T YOU BUY BREAD ANY MORE?
I HAVE ENOUGH. TAKE ONE.
I... THANK YOU.
"GIVE MY LOVE TO YOUR FAMILY."


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.


LOADING, AND...
THREE...
OUCH!
JUNO JUST SCRATCHED ME!
THAT'S BECAUSE YOU WERE HOLDING HIM TOO TIGHT. YOU ALWAYS HOLD HIM TOO TIGHT. HE HATES THAT.
KAT, THAT'S ENOUGH.
I'M SURE HE DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT YOU, DARLING.
TWO...
ONE...
DON'T YOU WORRY; I'M SORRY SHE'S SO ROUGH WITH YOU.
YOU'RE ALL RIGHT NOW.
FIRE!