

# Sunstone

Volume 2



Stjepan Sejic









Top Cow Productions Presents...

# Sunstone™

*Created by Stjepan Sejic*



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Top Cow Productions Presents...

# Sunstone™

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YOU KNOW  
THOSE TRUST  
EXERCISES?



THE ONES WHERE  
YOU ARE SUPPOSED  
TO FALL BACKWARDS  
AND TRUST THE  
PERSON BEHIND YOU  
TO CATCH YOU?

HOWEVER, THE METAPHOR IS  
TAKEN TO THE NEXT LEVEL BY  
INTRODUCING A GAG.

SEE, A SUBMISSIVE CAN STOP  
THE SESSION BY SAYING THE  
SAFWORD...

BUT WHEN YOU INTRODUCE A  
GAG INTO THAT EQUATION,  
YOU RAISE THE STAKES...

GAGS ARE EXCITING. IN A WAY,  
THEY ARE TOOLS OF BOTH COMPLETE  
SURRENDER AND UTMOST TRUST...

YOU SURRENDER YOUR VOICE. YOU  
TRUST YOUR PARTNER TO READ YOUR  
BODY LANGUAGE.

SO YOU...UM...SPELL SUNSTONE  
WITH YOUR BUTTCHEEKS.





I ALWAYS FOUND THAT  
TO BE A NICE LITTLE METAPHOR  
FOR BDSM. YOU FALL, YOU  
RELINQUISH CONTROL, AND TRUST  
YOUR PARTNER TO CATCH YOU.



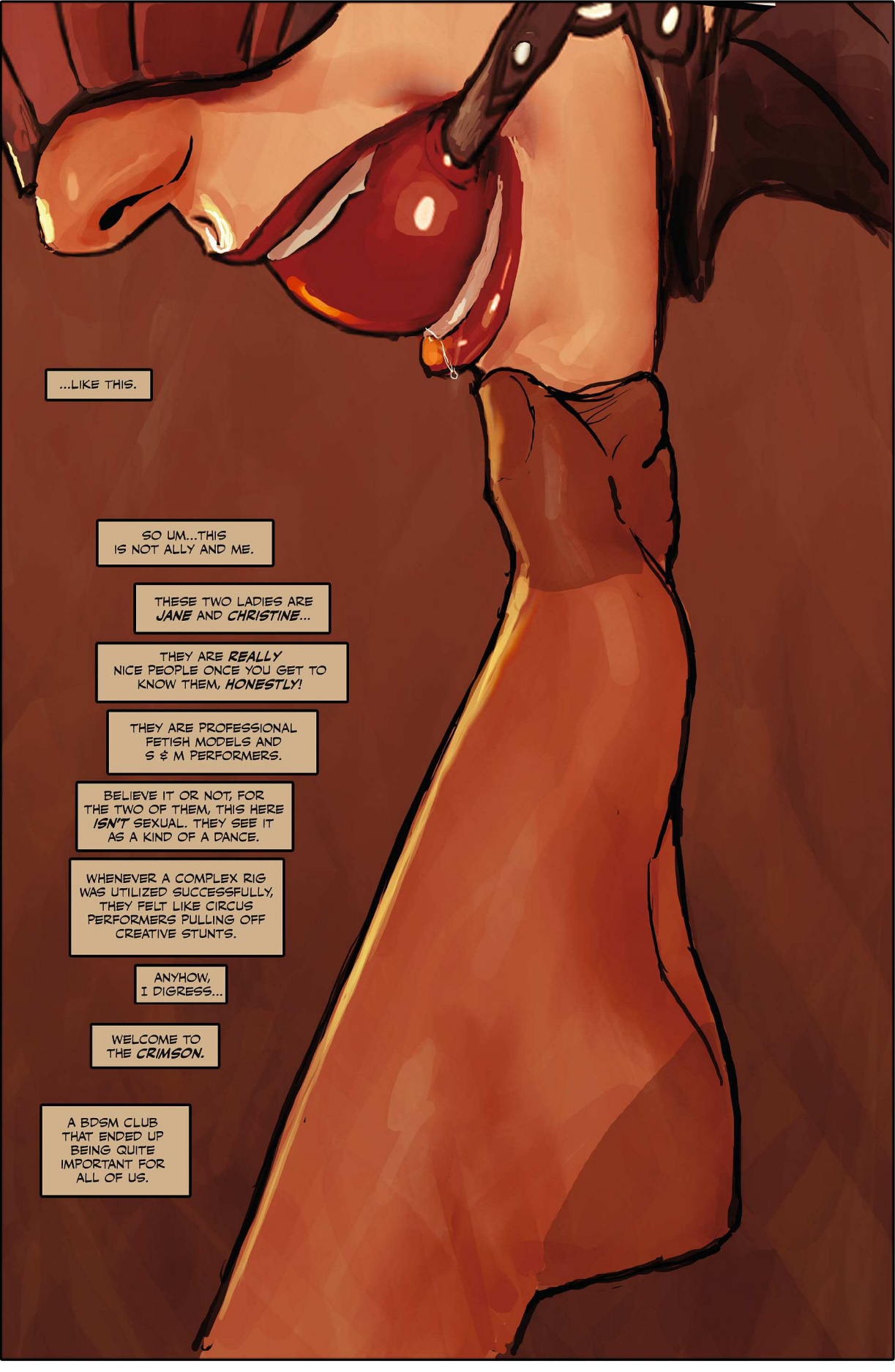
ANYHOO...BACK TO THE  
POINT! WHY AM I STARTING  
THE CHAPTER LIKE THIS?

TWO REASONS, REALLY!

ONE: I WANTED TO STATE MY  
OPINION THAT GAGS ARE  
FRIGGIN' HOT!

AND TWO: UM...WELL...IT'S  
CERTAINLY MORE SUBTLE  
THAN MY INITIAL PLAN  
OF STARTING US OFF...





...LIKE THIS.

SO UM...THIS  
IS NOT ALLY AND ME.

THESE TWO LADIES ARE  
*JANE AND CHRISTINE...*

THEY ARE *REALLY*  
NICE PEOPLE ONCE YOU GET TO  
KNOW THEM, *HONESTLY!*

THEY ARE PROFESSIONAL  
FETISH MODELS AND  
S & M PERFORMERS.

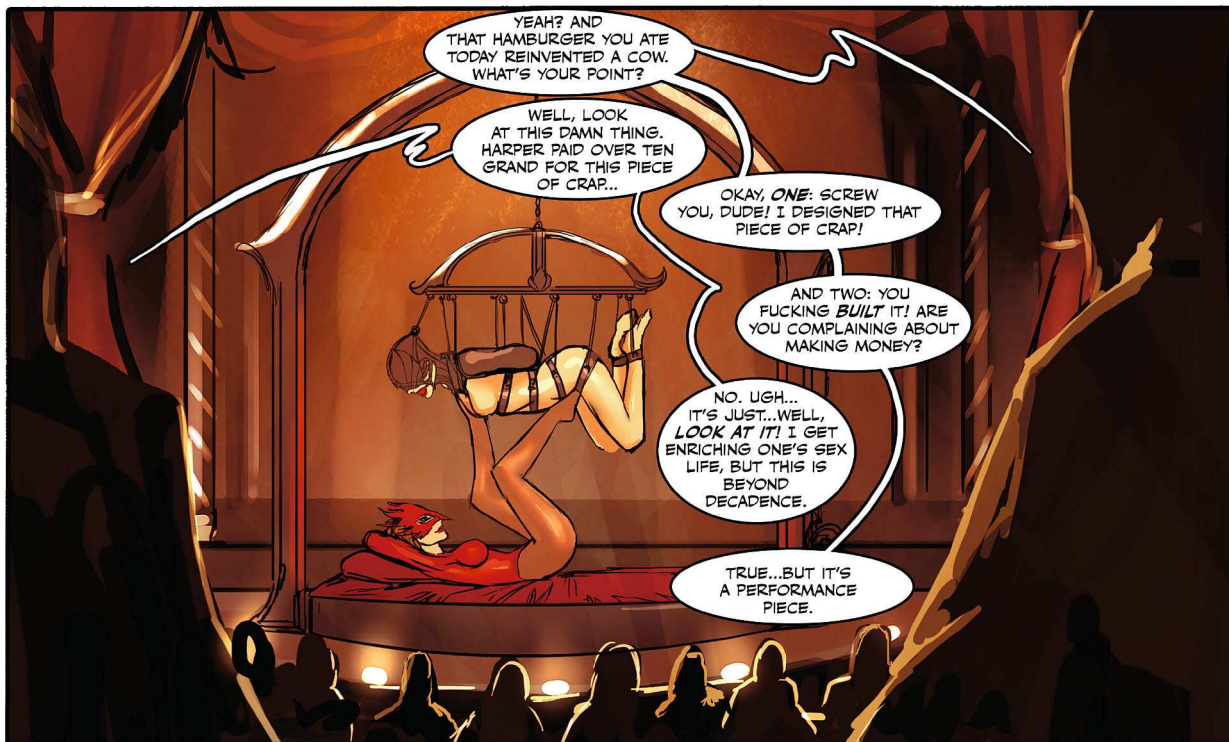
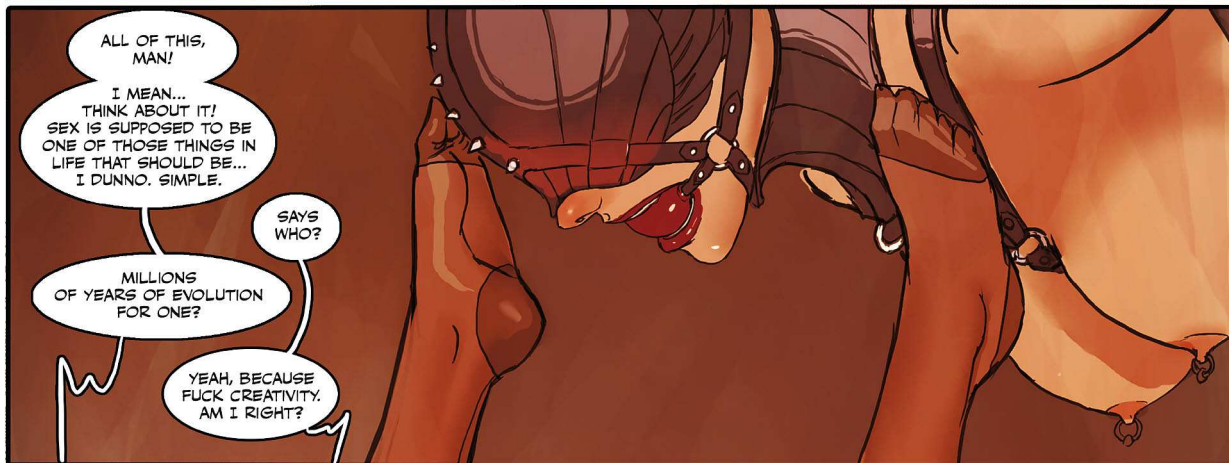
BELIEVE IT OR NOT, FOR  
THE TWO OF THEM, THIS HERE  
*ISN'T* SEXUAL. THEY SEE IT  
AS A KIND OF A DANCE.

WHENEVER A COMPLEX RIG  
WAS UTILIZED SUCCESSFULLY,  
THEY FELT LIKE CIRCUS  
PERFORMERS PULLING OFF  
CREATIVE STUNTS.

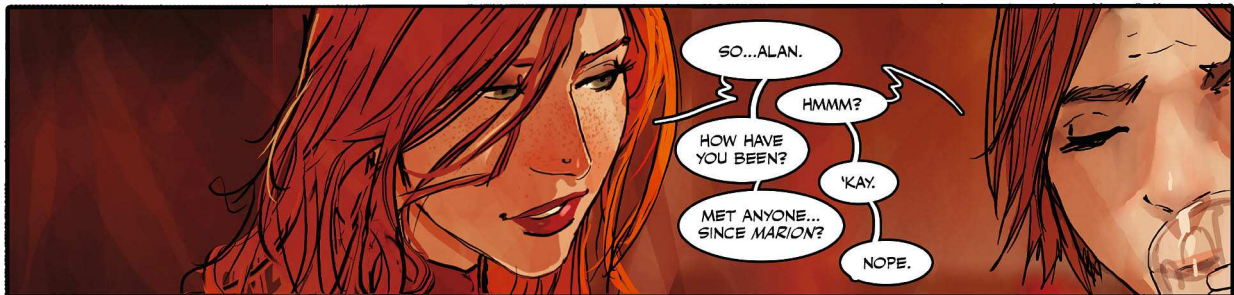
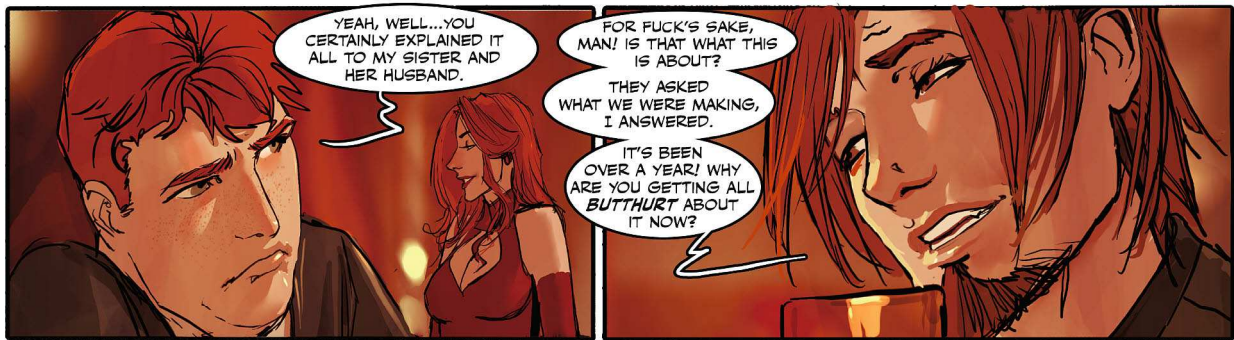
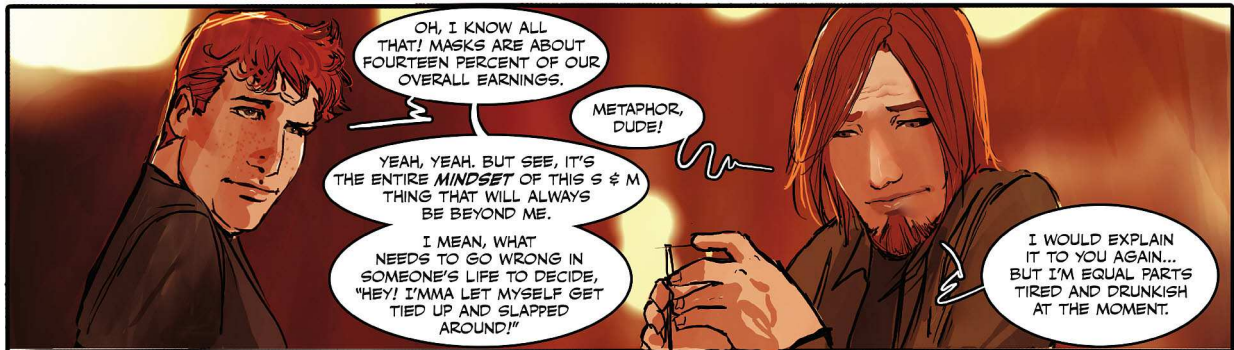
ANYHOW,  
I DIGRESS...

WELCOME TO  
THE *CRIMSON*.

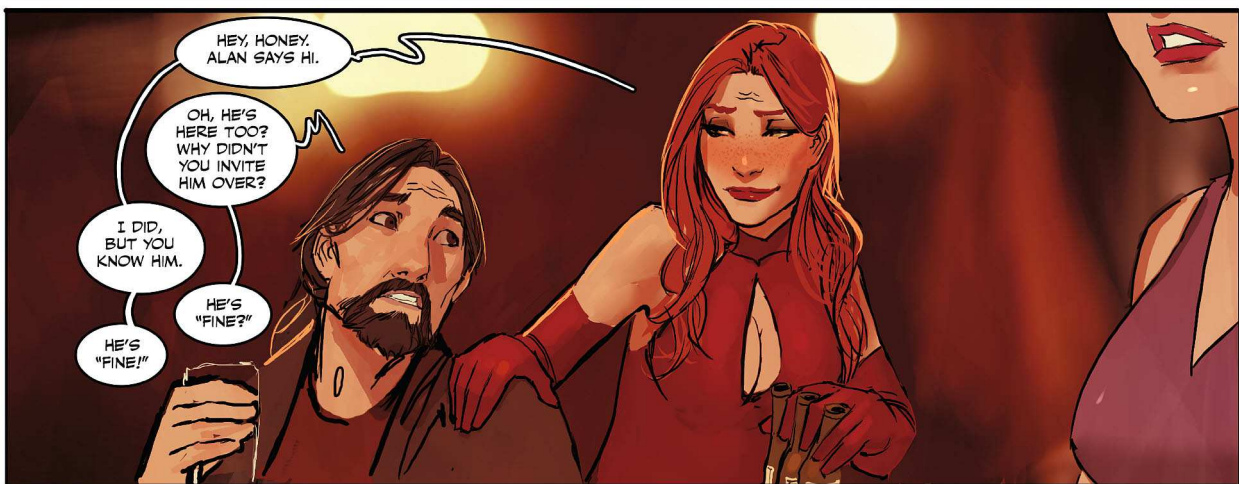
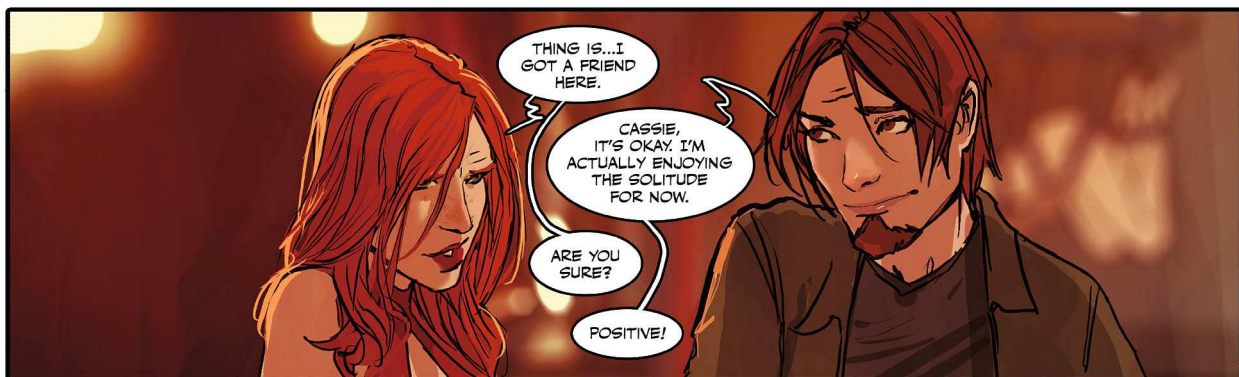
A BDSM CLUB  
THAT ENDED UP  
BEING QUITE  
IMPORTANT FOR  
ALL OF US.



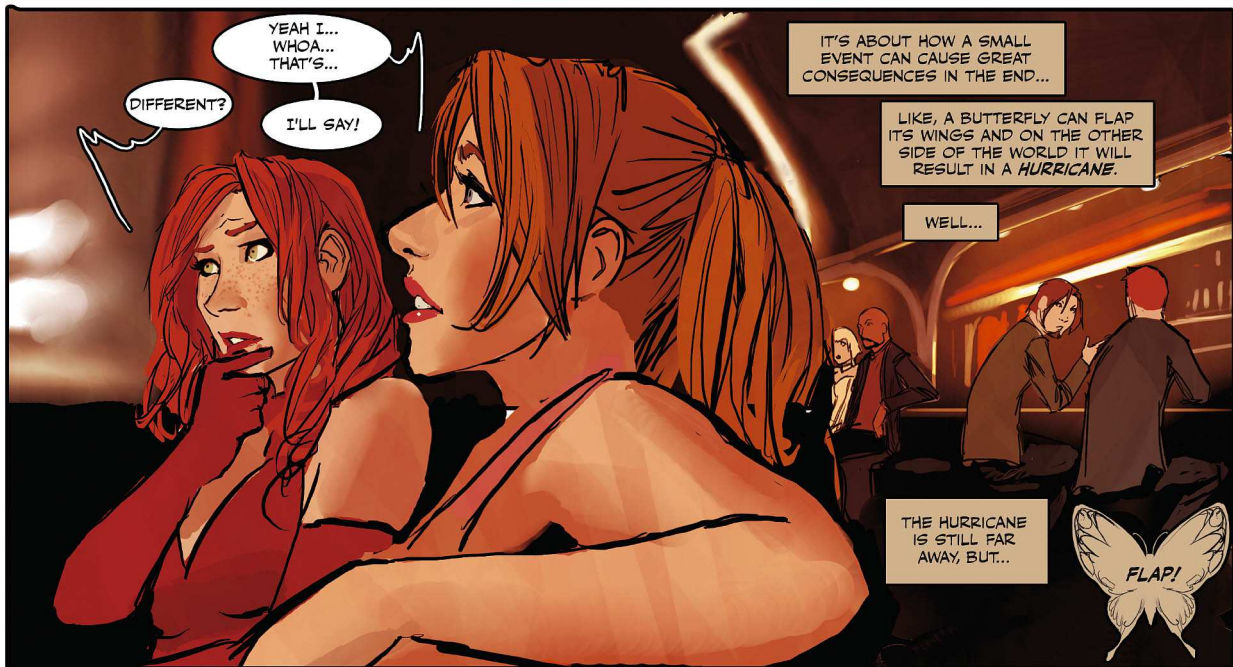
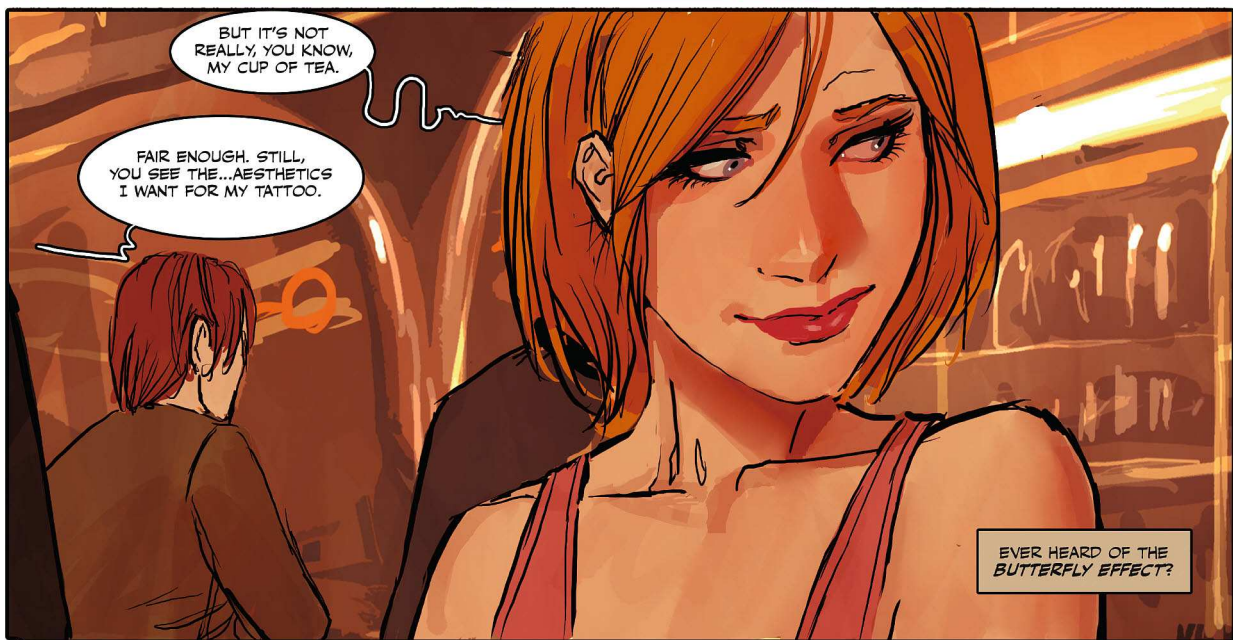
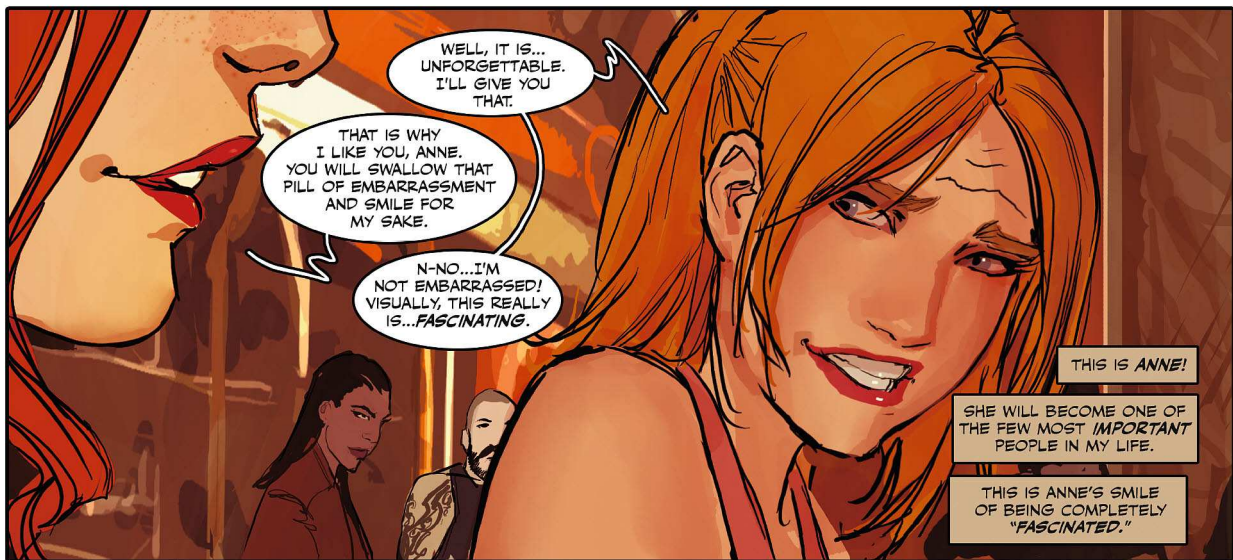
















HEY, I'M NOT JUDGING, BUT THREE YEARS OF WORKING WITH YOU AND I **STILL** THINK THAT SEX DOESN'T NEED **FIXING**!

UGH...IT'S NOT **FIXING** IT... IT'S A MATTER OF **TASTES**!

HOW ARE WE STILL HAVING THIS **FUCKING** DISCUSSION?! IT'S THE **SEXUAL** EQUIVALENT OF LIKING GOURMET CUISINE!



YOU ARE SEXY WHEN YOU'RE MAD!

BITE ME, "WEASLEY!"

YOU KNOW I'M JUST **FUCKING** WITH YOU. IT'S FUN TO SEE YOU GETTING ALL DEFENSIVE. WORKS EVERY TIME! ANYWAY...

YOU CAN KEEP YOUR **SEXUAL** EQUIVALENT OF FROGS' LEGS FILLED WITH GOOSE LIVER. AS FOR ME, I'LL GO HOME TONIGHT AND GET A NICE JUICY STEAK WITH CLARICE.



HEH! REAL STEAK OR METHAPHORICAL?

FIRST REAL, THEN METHAPHORICAL.

NICE!



OH, SEEMS THE GIRLS ARE DONE.

YUP. TIME FOR SOME QUALITY CONTROL.

YOU DO LOVE YOUR JOB, HUH?

CAN'T COMPLAIN.



HONESTLY, WHEREVER THE HELL I GO, THERE IS ALWAYS A LINE IN FRONT OF THE BATHROOM! I MEAN...I NEVER HAD ANY PENIS ENVY ISSUES, BUT YOU GOTTA ADMIT, IN THESE SITUATIONS...

IRINA MENTIONED THEY MIGHT NEED SOME DECORATIVE ELEMENTS DONE FOR THEIR V.I.P. SECTION. I TOLD HER TO TALK TO YOU.

SURE. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THAT.



HEY, IRINA. ARE THE GIRLS DECENT? CHRIS AND ALAN ARE HERE.

SEND THEM IN, BOB!



HEY, IRINA!

HI, CHRIS. SO, HARPER CALLED...

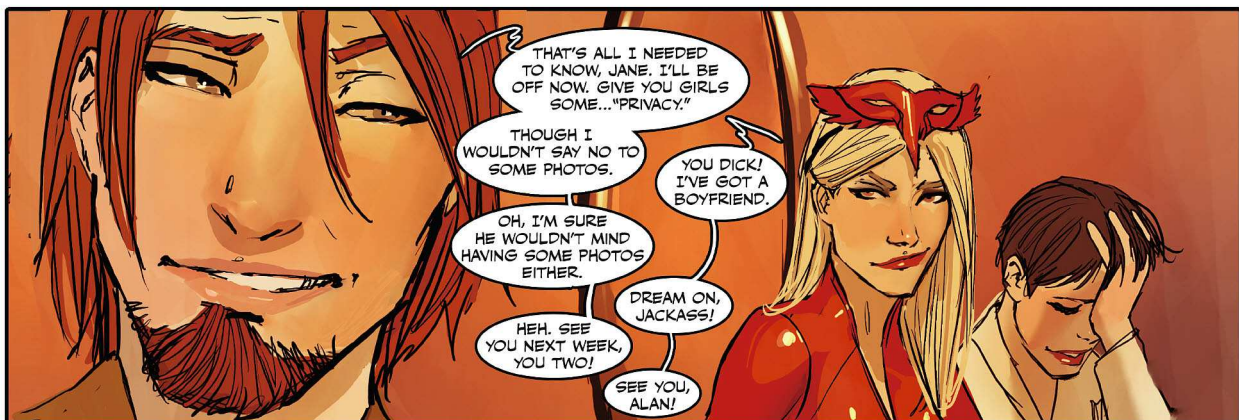
SO...FIRST TIME SUSPENSION. WAS EVERYTHING OKAY? ANY NUMBNESS ANYWHERE?

AW, LOOK AT HIM ALL WORRIED, CHRISTINE! THAT'S SO ADORABLE!

THAT I AM! BUT STILL, JUST IN CASE, YOU MIGHT WANT TO TAKE AN ASPIRIN.

ALREADY DID, BUT NO NEED REALLY. YOU GUYS DID A GREAT JOB WITH THE WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION.







EARLIER  
THAT DAY.

NOTE TO SELF:  
AFTER THIS WEEKEND,  
INSIST ON SEEING HER  
SOONER. BECAUSE  
AFTER ALL THAT...

WAITING FOR FIVE  
DAYS IS FRIGGIN' CRUEL!  
AND BATTERIES AIN'T  
THAT DAMN CHEAP.

A FUNNY THING I REMEMBER  
ABOUT THAT DAY WAS MY  
OWN SMIRK...

IT WAS THE SMIRK OF  
SOMEONE THINKING,  
"I'MMA HAVE ALL THE  
CRAZY SEX TONIGHT!"

BUT...THE WAIT  
IS FINALLY OVER.

UGH...

YEAH...  
ABOUT THAT.

OH NO...  
PLEASE BE THE  
CHICKEN!

WAIT!

NONONONONONONONONONONO!

AHEM...  
WELL.

EXCITEMENT HAS A  
WAY OF MAKING YOU  
**FORGET** THE MUNDANE  
REALITIES OF LIFE  
AT TIMES...

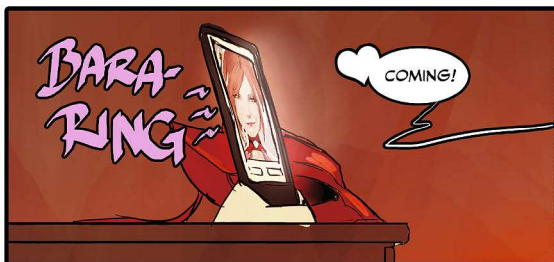
IT **DOESN'T**  
STOP THEM FROM  
HAPPENING.

SON OF  
A BITCH!

SUFFICE  
TO SAY...

IT **WASN'T**  
THE CHICKEN.





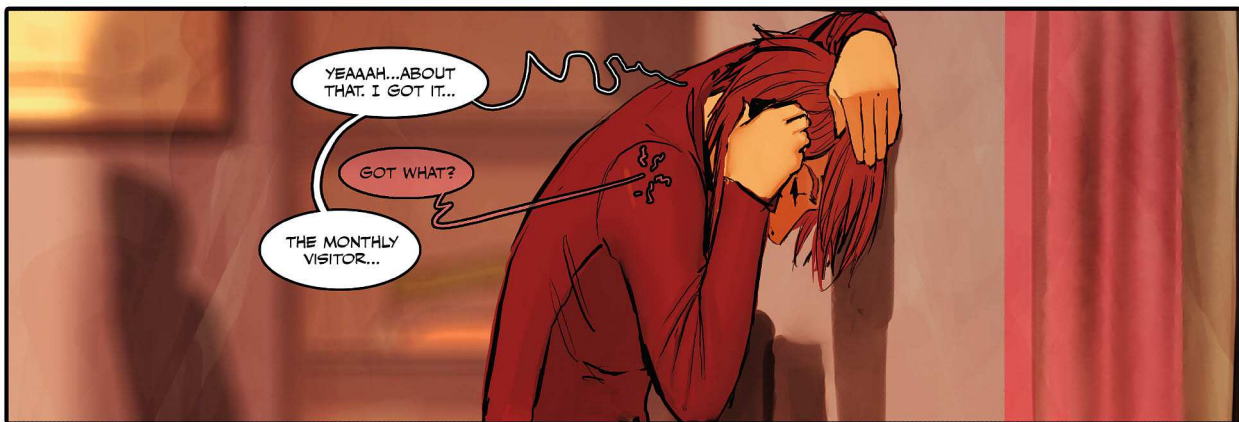
COMING!



GOOD EVENING! YOU HAVE REACHED THE PERSON WHO WILL OWN YOUR ASS TONIGHT! HOW MAY I HELP YOU?

HEY, ALLY.

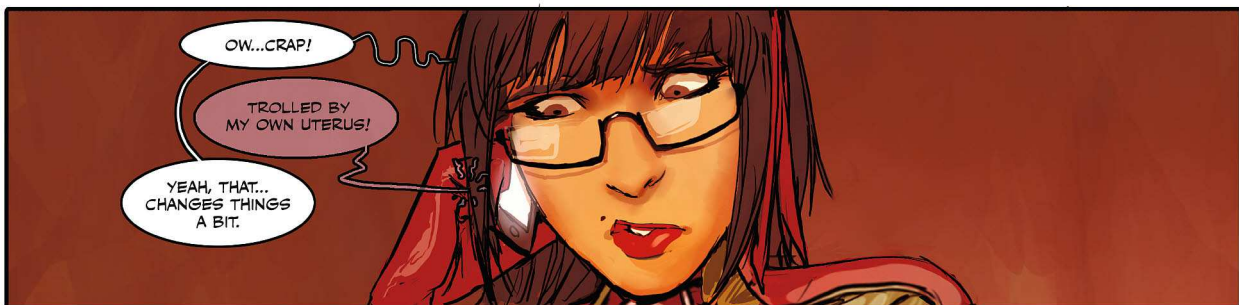
'SCUSE ME, I DO BELIEVE TONIGHT I'LL BE GOING UNDER A DIFFERENT NAME!



YEAH...ABOUT THAT. I GOT IT...

GOT WHAT?

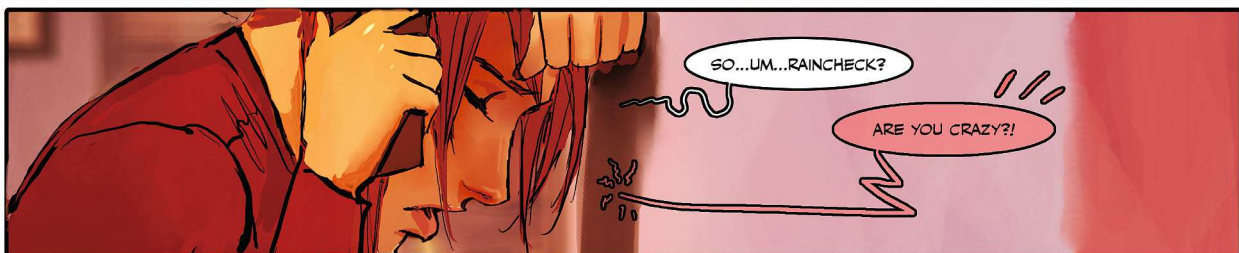
THE MONTHLY VISITOR...



OW...CRAP!

TROLLED BY MY OWN UTERUS!

YEAH, THAT... CHANGES THINGS A BIT.



SO...UM...RAINCHECK?

ARE YOU CRAZY?!



I'VE BEEN FIDGETY ALL WEEK HERE, REGRETTING THAT I SUGGESTED WE WAIT FOR THE WEEKEND. NO, NO, NO! YOU'RE GETTING YOUR CUTE BUTT OVER HERE. I'M NOT SPENDING THIS WEEKEND ALONE, AND NEITHER ARE YOU!

IS THAT AN ORDER?

BET YOUR ASS IT'S AN ORDER! COINCIDENTALLY, IT WOULD BE SO MUCH MORE EFFICIENT IF YOU COULD SEE ME NOW. HEH!




SORRY...

FOR WHAT?

Y'KNOW...RUINING WHAT WAS MOST LIKELY A METICULOUSLY PLANNED WEEKEND.

DON'T BE AN IDIOT!





I MEAN, YEAH, I DID HAVE A "BATTLE PLAN" PREPARED, BUT THAT'S ONLY PARTIALLY WHY I WANT YOU TO COME OVER...

OKAY, OKAY. I'LL BE THERE IN THIRTY! WANT ME TO BRING A PIZZA?

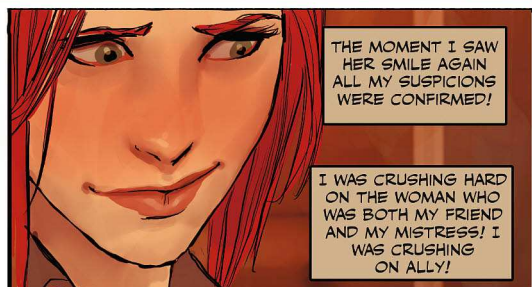
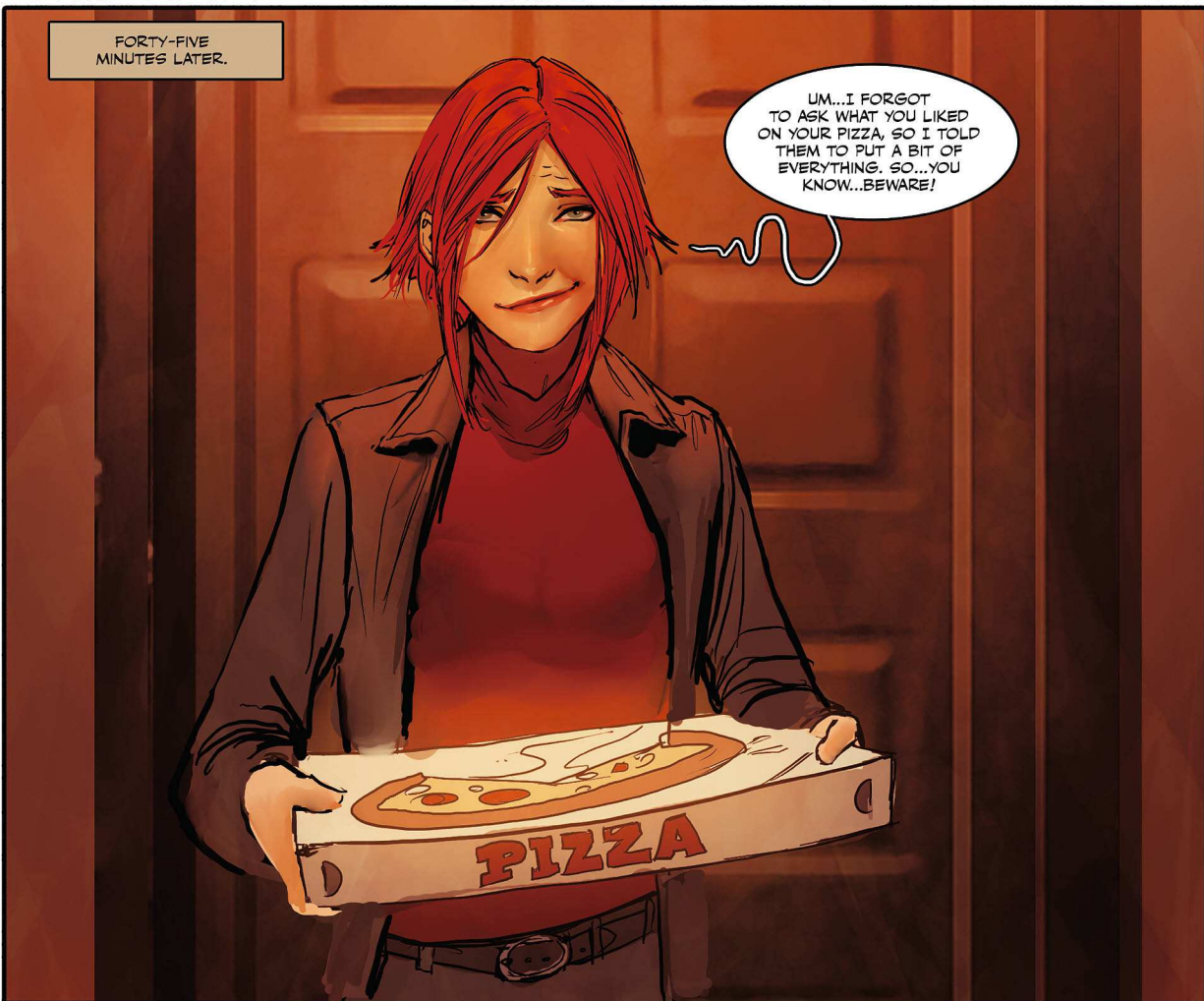
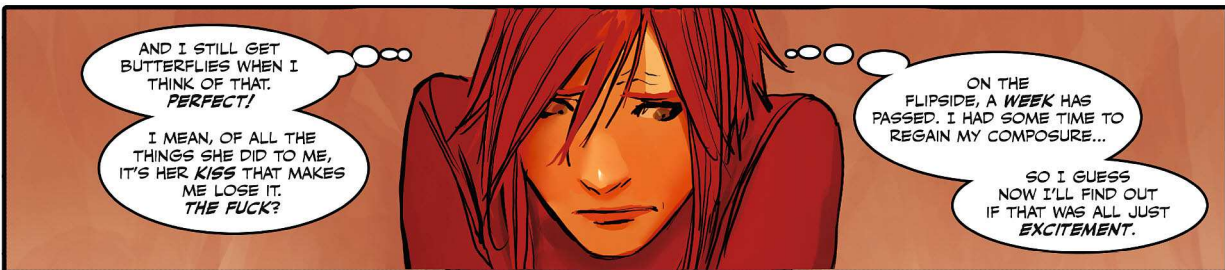
SURE, AND I'LL FIND US A FINE, MIND-ROTTINGLY STUPID MOVIE!

IT'S A DATE!

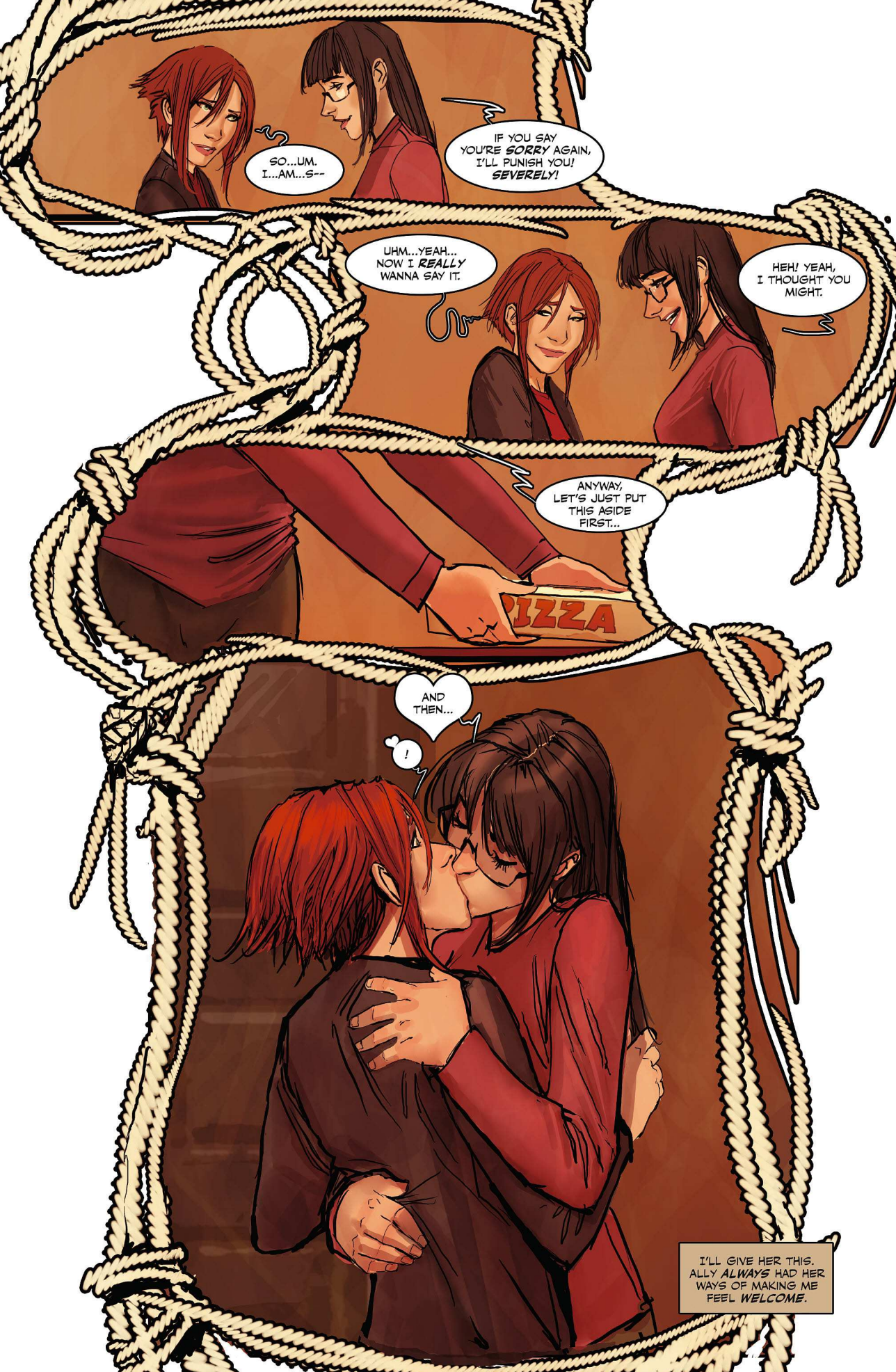
UM...I MEAN...

SEE YOU, LISA!









SO...UM.  
I...AM...S--

IF YOU SAY  
YOU'RE *SORRY* AGAIN,  
I'LL PUNISH YOU!  
*SEVERELY!*

UHM...YEAH...  
NOW I *REALLY*  
WANNA SAY IT.

HEH! YEAH,  
I THOUGHT YOU  
MIGHT.

ANYWAY,  
LET'S JUST PUT  
THIS ASIDE  
FIRST...

AND  
THEN...

I'LL GIVE HER THIS.  
ALLY *ALWAYS* HAD HER  
WAYS OF MAKING ME  
FEEL *WELCOME*.



FORTY-FIVE STEAMING,  
HOT, MIND-NUMBINGLY FRUSTRATING  
MINUTES OF MAKING OUT LATER...

OKAY, THAT WAS  
JUST...EVIL! YOU DON'T  
JUST GO AND MAKE SOMEONE  
HORNY ON THEIR PERIOD! THAT'S  
JUST...WELL...THAT'S JUST  
CHEATING! DELICIOUS  
CHEATING, BUT CHEATING  
NONETHELESS!

AWWWW! YOU  
KNOW, YOU ARE SO  
ADORABLE WHEN YOU GET  
ALL FRUSTRATED AND  
SQUIRMY!

SO...THAT REALLY  
DOES IT FOR YOU?

YOU SOUND  
SURPRISED?

IT'S MORE, I  
DON'T KNOW. CALL IT  
WRITER'S CURIOSITY. I WROTE  
STORIES ABOUT DOMS BUT,  
WELL, WHAT MADE YOU  
BECOME ONE?

TRANSLATION:  
I MAY BE DEVELOPING  
A MASSIVE CRUSH ON YOU  
AND WANT TO KNOW  
MORE ABOUT YOU!  
AND GO!



SO...YOU WANNA  
KNOW WHAT MAKES A  
DOMME TICK, HUH?  
WELL, I CAN'T SPEAK  
FOR *OTHER* DOMS. EVERYONE HAS  
THEIR OWN METHOD AND  
REASONS. AS FOR ME...  
HONESTLY, THE  
FETISH KIND OF *DEVELOPED*  
OVER TIME.

I WAS ABOUT  
SIXTEEN, I THINK,  
WHEN I SAW THIS  
S & M MOVIE.

AT FIRST I WAS  
*SHOCKED*. FREAKED THE  
HELL OUT. THE WEIRD THING IS,  
THE IMAGES KINDA BURROWED  
INTO MY MIND.

SURE, IT WAS ALL  
YOUR STANDARD BUNCH OF  
PORNY EXAGGERATION...

BUT THE *OUTFITS*!  
THEY WERE WHAT GOT  
ME CURIOUS INITIALLY.  
THE COSTUMEY VISUAL  
SIDE OF IT ALL,  
YOU KNOW.

M-HMM!

SO,  
BACK THEN  
MY...*EXPLORATION*  
WAS HAMPERED BY  
THE LACK OF  
PRIVACY.

MY DAD WAS  
STILL ALIVE AND  
MY MOM WASN'T  
AS *INTRUSIVE* AS  
SHE WOULD LATER  
BECOME...

BUT MY  
OLDER SISTER  
FILLED THAT NOSY  
ROLE NICELY.





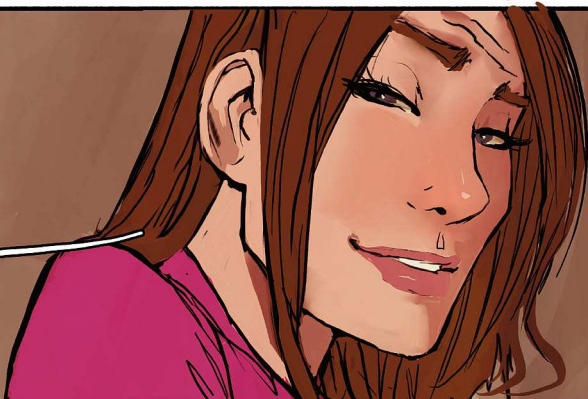
UM...MARY? WERE YOU USING MY COMPUTER?

YEAH. HAD TO SEND SOME EMAILS!

SHARING THE ROOM WITH MARY TAUGHT ME A LOT ABOUT HIDING STUFF, I GUESS. SHE WAS NEVER COMPUTER SAVVY, BUT A PERSONAL PORN STASH JUST SEEMS TO BE THAT THING *MURPHY'S LAW* APPLIES TO THE MOST.

DON'T WORRY THOUGH. I DIDN'T POKE AROUND YOUR "SPECIAL" FOLDERS... MUCH.

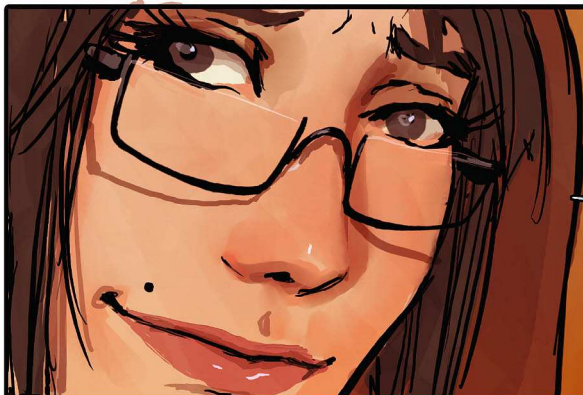
I REMEMBER THINKING, IT'S TEXT FILES, STORIES. NOBODY WOULD BOTHER TO READ THEM. BUT WITH TITLES LIKE, "WHISPERS FROM MY MISTRESS", AND "SHACKLED IN HER SERVICE"...WELL, LET'S JUST SAY MARY GAVE THEM MORE THAN A PASSING GLANCE.



A FEW WEEKS OF ENDLESS TEASING AND INNUENDOS TAUGHT ME A LESSON.

UNSURPRISINGLY, I BECAME VERY SECRETIVE ABOUT MY FETISHES...

AND I DREAMED OF HAVING MY OWN ROOM. A PLACE WHERE I COULD... EXPLORE THINGS.



NOW, AS YOU CAN SEE, I MAY HAVE OVERCOMPENSATED A BIT WITH THIS HOUSE.

JUST A SMIDGEN!





STILL, COULD BE WORSE...TRY LIVING WITH AN OLDER AND YOUNGER BROTHER...

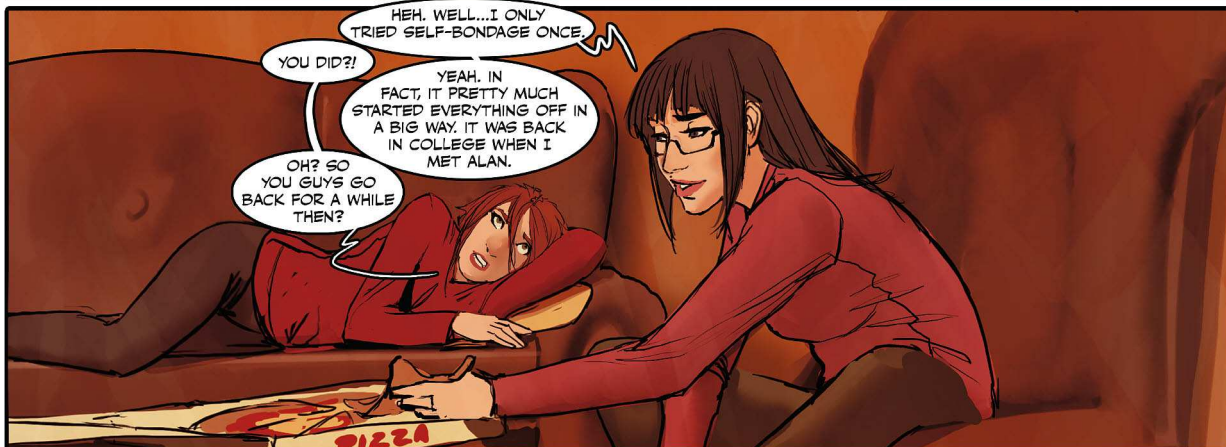


JIMMY, I SWEAR TO GOD. IF YOU PULL ONE MORE HAIR OFF MY HEAD, I WILL PLUCK YOU LIKE A CHICKEN.

AT ANY GIVEN POINT SOMEONE WAS ANNOYING ME. I MEAN, SURE, NOW WE'RE GREAT...BUT BACK THEN...



NOW, COMBINE THAT WITH MY EXPERIMENTATION WITH SELF-BONDAGE AND TRY IMAGINING HOW MANY CLOSE CALLS I HAD...



HEH. WELL...I ONLY TRIED SELF-BONDAGE ONCE.

YOU DID?!


OH? SO YOU GUYS GO BACK FOR A WHILE THEN?

YEAH. IN FACT, IT PRETTY MUCH STARTED EVERYTHING OFF IN A BIG WAY. IT WAS BACK IN COLLEGE WHEN I MET ALAN.





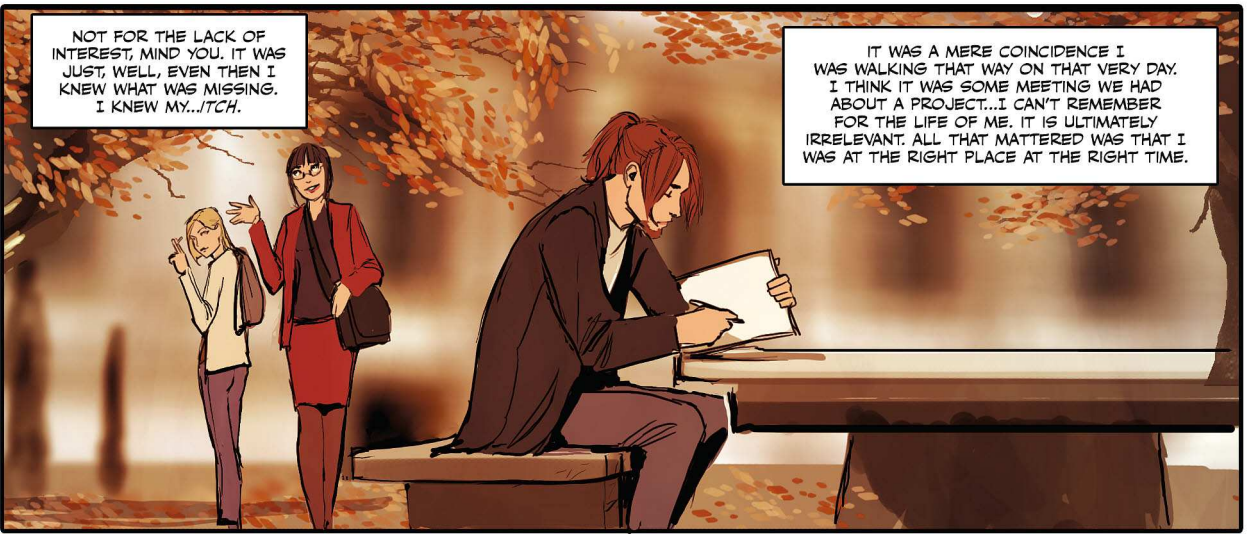
OH YEAH. HIM AND I...  
HM...PINEAPPLE...NEVER  
TRIED THAT.



HEH, THIS SHOULDN'T  
WORK, BUT SOMEHOW IT'S  
*PERFECT*. ANYWAY, YEAH, IT WAS  
MY SECOND YEAR. BY THAT TIME I  
KINDA WENT...NORMAL. I ADAPTED  
TO THE PRETENTIOUS  
SURROUNDINGS.


AND YOU KNOW, I  
WAS DOING FINE! I HAD MY  
FIRST SEXUAL EXPERIENCE  
DURING MY FIRST YEAR  
IN COLLEGE...

WENT OUT WITH  
THE GUY FOR A FEW  
MONTHS, BROKE UP,  
AND WAS SINGLE  
EVER SINCE.



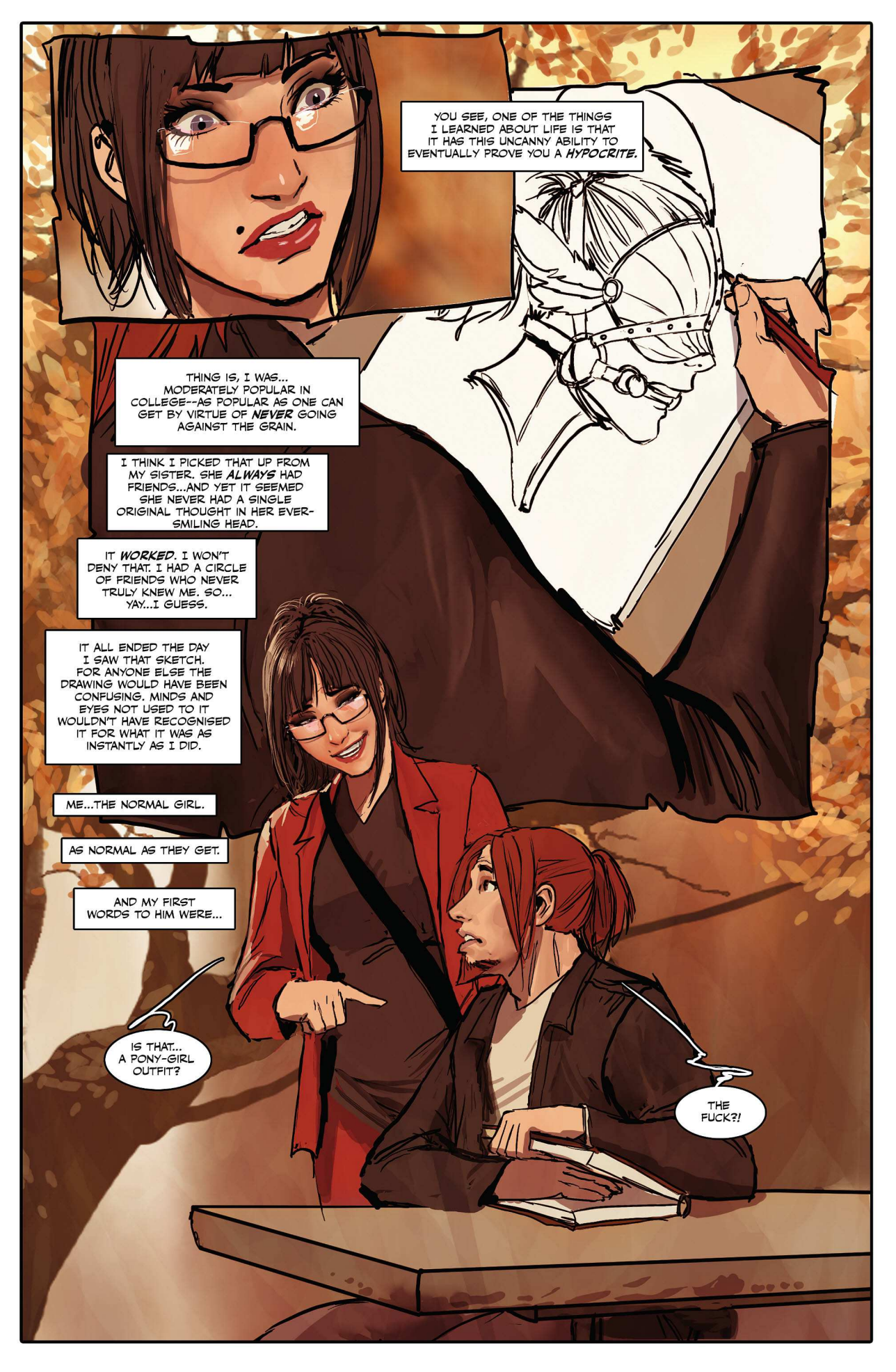
NOT FOR THE LACK OF  
INTEREST, MIND YOU. IT WAS  
JUST, WELL, EVEN THEN I  
KNEW WHAT WAS MISSING.  
I KNEW MY...*ITCH*.

IT WAS A MERE COINCIDENCE I  
WAS WALKING THAT WAY ON THAT VERY DAY.  
I THINK IT WAS SOME MEETING WE HAD  
ABOUT A PROJECT...I CAN'T REMEMBER  
FOR THE LIFE OF ME. IT IS ULTIMATELY  
IRRELEVANT. ALL THAT MATTERED WAS THAT I  
WAS AT THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME.



I'M NOT GENERALLY INTRUSIVE.  
AT LEAST, I DON'T CONSIDER  
MYSELF TO BE. BUT THAT DAY, FOR  
NO REAL REASON, I LOOKED AT  
WHAT THIS STRANGER WAS SKETCHING.





YOU SEE, ONE OF THE THINGS  
I LEARNED ABOUT LIFE IS THAT  
IT HAS THIS UNCANNY ABILITY TO  
EVENTUALLY PROVE YOU A *HYPOCRITE*.

THING IS, I WAS...  
MODERATELY POPULAR IN  
COLLEGE--AS POPULAR AS ONE CAN  
GET BY VIRTUE OF *NEVER* GOING  
AGAINST THE GRAIN.

I THINK I PICKED THAT UP FROM  
MY SISTER. SHE *ALWAYS* HAD  
FRIENDS...AND YET IT SEEMED  
SHE NEVER HAD A SINGLE  
ORIGINAL THOUGHT IN HER EVER-  
SMILING HEAD.

IT *WORKED*. I WON'T  
DENY THAT. I HAD A CIRCLE  
OF FRIENDS WHO NEVER  
TRULY KNEW ME. SO...  
YAY...I GUESS.

IT ALL ENDED THE DAY  
I SAW THAT SKETCH.  
FOR ANYONE ELSE THE  
DRAWING WOULD HAVE BEEN  
CONFUSING. MINDS AND  
EYES NOT USED TO IT  
WOULDN'T HAVE RECOGNISED  
IT FOR WHAT IT WAS AS  
INSTANTLY AS I DID.

ME...THE NORMAL GIRL.

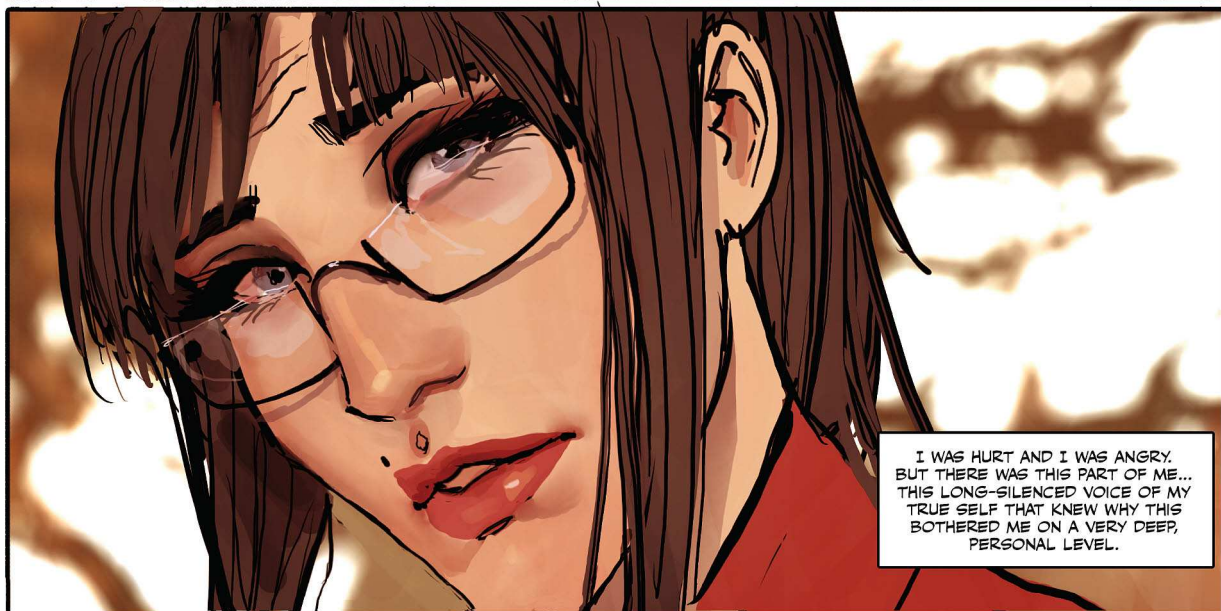
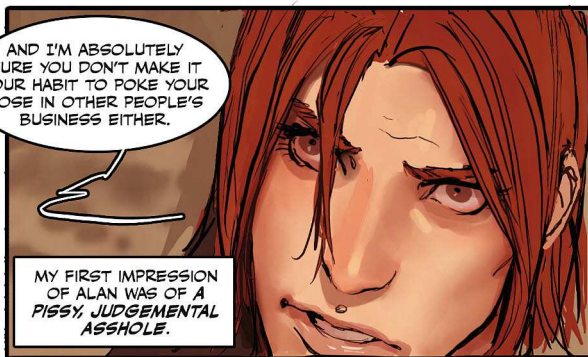
AS NORMAL AS THEY GET.

AND MY FIRST  
WORDS TO HIM WERE...

IS THAT...  
A PONY-GIRL  
OUTFIT?

THE  
FUCK?!







WHEN MY DAD DIED, MY MOM CHANGED...HELL, WE ALL CHANGED. FOR ME, THIS INCLUDED SETTING ASIDE MY LITTLE HIDDEN DESIRES AND INTERESTS.

I HAD TO BE RESPONSIBLE. I...ADAPTED. CONFORMED.

I BECAME A PART OF A CROWD. I FELT EMPTY, LAUGHING AT HOLLOW JOKES AND FEIGNING GETTING INVESTED IN CONVERSATIONS I CARED NOTHING ABOUT.

PEOPLE I CALLED FRIENDS KNEW NOTHING ABOUT ME...

I OFTEN WONDERED WHAT THESE FRIENDS WOULD SAY IF I SHARED MY INTERESTS WITH THEM. HEY, I LIKE VIDEOGAMES, I AM NO STRANGER TO READING A COMIC BOOK. OH...AND I AM A BDSM FETISHIST!

WHAT WOULD THEY HAVE SAID IF I WAS TO TELL THEM, "TODAY I SAW A GUY DRAWING AN AWESOME PONY-GIRL HEADGEAR."

I CAN ONLY IMAGINE THE LOOKS IF I SAID JOKINGLY, "I WOULDN'T MIND SEEING SOME OF YOU WEARING THAT."

NOT EVEN A SEXUAL THOUGHT BACK THEN, BUT JUST A MATTER OF VISUAL CURIOSITY.

I SPENT THAT DAY THINKING OF HIS SKETCH. THE IMAGE CARVED IN MY MEMORY. ITS POSSIBILITIES. ITS PLAUSABILITY.

WHOEVER HE WAS, HE KNEW DAMN WELL WHAT HE WAS DRAWING.

AND A PESKY SEED OF AN IDEA TOOK ROOT IN MY MIND.

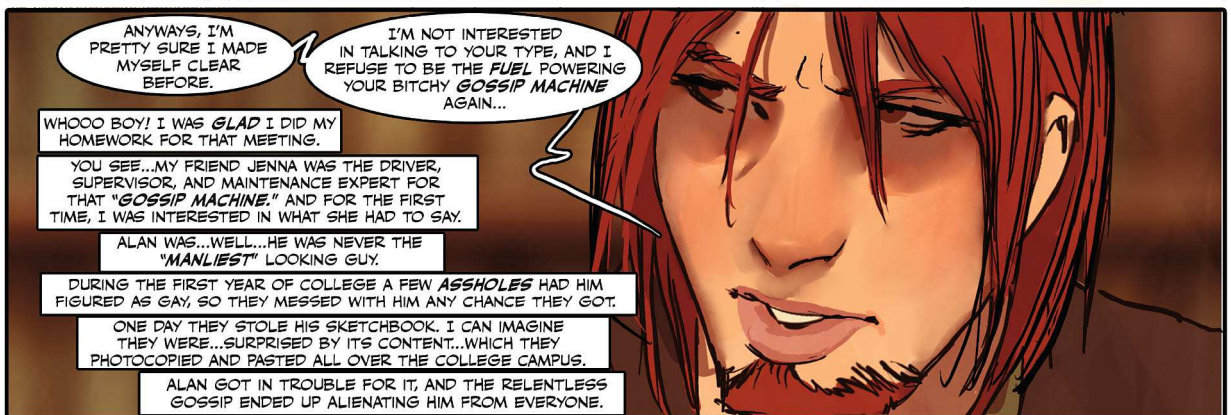
IF I SHARED MY DESIRES AND MY IDEAS WITH THAT GUY...

WOULD *HE* JUDGE ME?

AND THEN I MADE MY LIFE-CHANGING DECISION. I WOULD HUNT THAT ASSHOLE DOWN AND GET HIM TO LISTEN. I NEEDED *SOMEONE* TO LISTEN.

IT WOULDN'T BE TOO HARD. IT WASN'T A HUGE COLLEGE CAMPUS, AND SOONER OR LATER ALL PATHS LEAD INTO THE LIBRARY.









NO...YOU DON'T SEEM TO GET IT. GO LOOK FOR ENTERTAINMENT SOMEWHERE ELSE, I'M *FRESH OUT*!



I HONESTLY CAN'T REMEMBER IF I EVER...WELL...BEFORE MEETING YOU THAT IS, DID ANYTHING SO FOOLHARDY AS WHAT I DID THAT DAY.



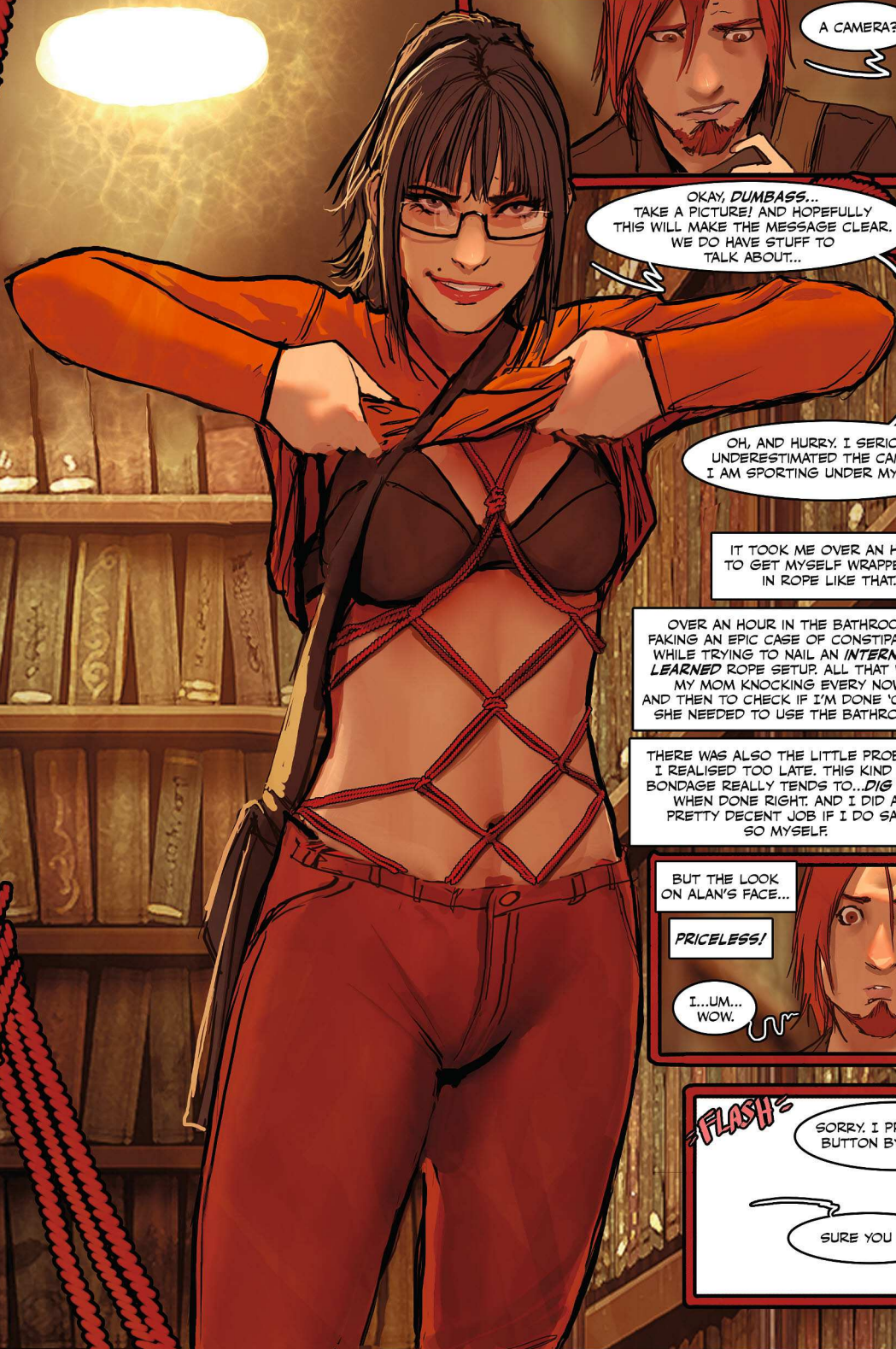
OH FOR FUCK'S SAKE! WHAT'S YOUR MALFUNCTION? THIS SERIOUSLY CONSTITUTES HARASSMENT AT THIS POINT!



JUST GIVE ME ONE MINUTE OF YOUR TIME, AND IF YOU STILL WANT ME TO LEAVE BY THEN, I WILL DO SO. *OKAY?*

IF I STILL WANT YOU TO LEAVE?





OKAY, *DUMBASS*... TAKE A PICTURE! AND HOPEFULLY THIS WILL MAKE THE MESSAGE CLEAR. WE DO HAVE STUFF TO TALK ABOUT...

OH, AND HURRY. I SERIOUSLY UNDERESTIMATED THE CAMELTOE I AM SPORTING UNDER MY JEANS.

IT TOOK ME OVER AN HOUR TO GET MYSELF WRAPPED UP IN ROPE LIKE THAT.

OVER AN HOUR IN THE BATHROOM FAKING AN EPIC CASE OF CONSTIPATION WHILE TRYING TO NAIL AN *INTERNET-LEARNED* ROPE SETUP. ALL THAT WITH MY MOM KNOCKING EVERY NOW AND THEN TO CHECK IF I'M DONE 'CAUSE SHE NEEDED TO USE THE BATHROOM.

THERE WAS ALSO THE LITTLE PROBLEM I REALISED TOO LATE. THIS KIND OF BONDAGE REALLY TENDS TO...*DIG IN*... WHEN DONE RIGHT. AND I DID A PRETTY DECENT JOB IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF.

BUT THE LOOK ON ALAN'S FACE...

*PRICELESS!*

I...UM... WOW.



*FLASH!*

SORRY. I PRESSED THE BUTTON BY ACCIDENT.

SURE YOU DID.

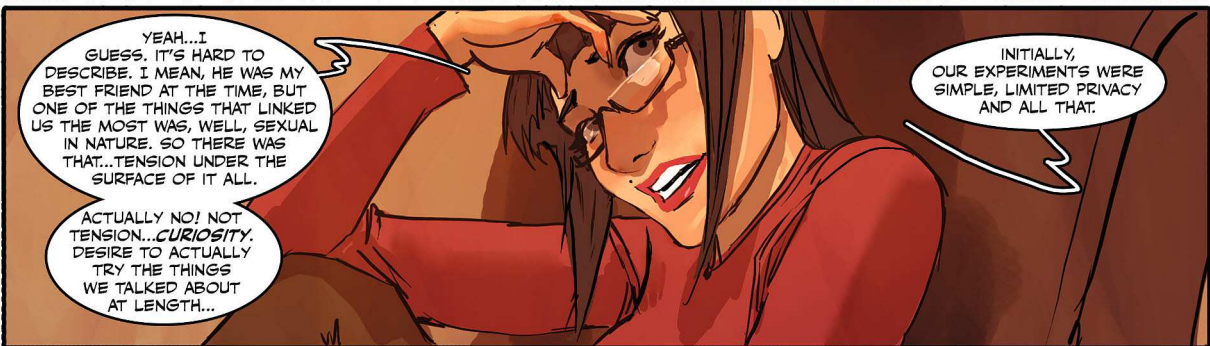




AND SO WE BECAME FRIENDS. THEN, ABOUT TWO MONTHS LATER...WELL... WE SHARED THIS VERY UNIQUE INTEREST. SO YEAH...WE ENDED UP TAKING THINGS TO THE NEXT LEVEL.



WAIT! HOLD THE PHONE! YOU AND ALAN WERE A COUPLE?!



YEAH...I GUESS. IT'S HARD TO DESCRIBE. I MEAN, HE WAS MY BEST FRIEND AT THE TIME, BUT ONE OF THE THINGS THAT LINKED US THE MOST WAS, WELL, SEXUAL IN NATURE. SO THERE WAS THAT...TENSION UNDER THE SURFACE OF IT ALL.

INITIALLY, OUR EXPERIMENTS WERE SIMPLE, LIMITED PRIVACY AND ALL THAT.

ACTUALLY NO! NOT TENSION...*CURIOSITY*. DESIRE TO ACTUALLY TRY THE THINGS WE TALKED ABOUT AT LENGTH...



THREE WORDS THAT HOLD TRUE FOR BOTH REALITY AND BDSM: LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION.

YOU TWO WANT MORE COFFEE?

NO, MOM. WE'RE FINE!



AND THEN, ONE GLORIOUS, EXCITING DAY, OUR PRIVACY PROBLEMS WERE SOLVED. WE FOUND OUT ABOUT THE ATTIC IN ONE OF THE COLLEGE BUILDINGS...

TURNED OUT THAT NO ONE HAD THE KEY TO IT. IT WAS LOST OR SOMETHING, AND NOBODY EVEN TRIED TO OPEN IT. THAT IS, 'TIL WE GOT THERE. NEED RESULTED IN RESOURCEFULNESS THAT DAY.

ALAN PICKED THE LOCK WHILE I KEPT WATCH. EVEN BACK THEN HE WAS HANDY. HEH! THE BRILLIANT PART WAS THAT ONCE HE OPENED IT, WE REPLACED THE LOCK AND HAD THE ONLY KEY.

THAT WAS ONE DAY I'LL NEVER FORGET. THE WHOLE ORDEAL ALTOGETHER TOOK ABOUT TWO HOURS...BUT IT SURE AS HELL FELT LIKE FOREVER. STILL...IT WAS WORTH IT!





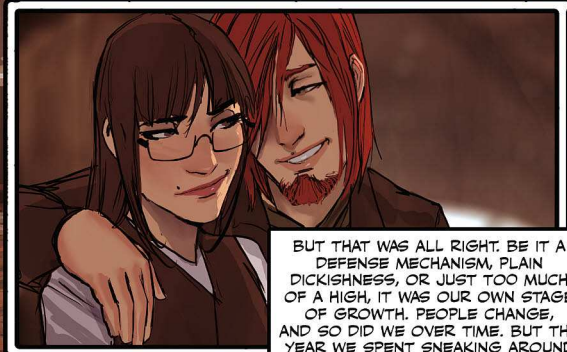
THERE WE WERE. OUR LITTLE  
SECRET SLICE OF HEAVEN...  
Y'KNOW...IF HEAVEN WAS VERY  
DUSTY...AND A BIT MOLDY...AND...  
*NEVERMIND! IT WAS OURS!*

THERE MUST BE SOMETHING IN THE BODY  
CHEMISTRY WHEN YOU ARE YOUNG THAT  
JUST *OVERWRITES* COMMON SENSE.  
I WAS ALMOST TWENTY YEARS OLD AT  
THE TIME, AND YET THERE WAS NO TRACE  
OF MENTAL MATURITY. HONESTLY, I  
WAS LIKE A FRIGGIN' CAT WITH A LASER  
POINTER.

NOW, BEST CASE SCENARIO, THE EARLY SEXUAL  
STAGE OF ANY RELATIONSHIP IS HOT AND  
STEAMY. IT'S THAT PERIOD AFTER YOU DID IT  
A FEW TIMES AND YOU ARE JUST STARTING TO BE  
KIND OF GOOD AT IT...BUT THE DIFFERENCE WAS  
THAT IN THE EARLY STAGES, TRUST IS STILL  
FAR FROM UNCONDITIONAL. HELL, MANY COUPLES  
NEVER EVEN REACH THAT POINT WHERE THEY FEEL  
COMFORTABLE ENOUGH TO TRULY SHARE THEIR  
DEEPEST, MOST SECRET SEXUAL DESIRES. THIS,  
HOWEVER, WAS NOT THE CASE WITH ALAN AND ME.

WE KNEW EACH OTHER'S DEEPEST SECRETS  
AND IT WAS...WELL...INTOXICATING. WE REVELED  
IN THE EGO-STROKING FEELING OF SUPERIORITY  
OVER THOSE OTHER PUNY VANILLA NOOBS!

OH YES...AT THE TIME WE DEVELOPED QUITE  
AN ASTOUNDING SENSE OF SUPERIORITY...AND A  
CONDESCENDING ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE  
VANILLA PEOPLE. I SHIT YOU NOT! WE  
FUCKING *SMIRKED* AT PEOPLE! WE BECAME THE  
PERFECT PAIR OF COLLEGE DOUCHEBAGS.



BUT THAT WAS ALL RIGHT. BE IT A  
DEFENSE MECHANISM, PLAIN  
DICKISHNESS, OR JUST TOO MUCH  
OF A HIGH, IT WAS OUR OWN STAGE  
OF GROWTH. PEOPLE CHANGE,  
AND SO DID WE OVER TIME. BUT THE  
YEAR WE SPENT SNEAKING AROUND  
THAT ATTIC WAS UNFORGETTABLE.



YEEES?  
*DETAILS?! I NEED  
DETAILS!*

OH COME ON. I'M  
SURE YOU HAVE YOUR OWN  
STORIES...HOW'S ABOUT  
YOU SHARE  
A BIT?



FINE, "DOCTOR LECTER!"  
I PRACTICED SELF-BONDAGE.  
ALMOST GOT CAUGHT FOUR  
TIMES...THEN I MET YOU!  
YOUR TURN!



OKAY, OKAY!  
POINT TAKEN.  
SO...WHERE  
WAS I?



AH YES...THAT FIRST WEEK WAS ALL WORK AND NO PLAY FOR US. BETWEEN SMUGGLING CLEANING SUPPLIES, AND USING FREE TIME BETWEEN LESSONS TO ACTUALLY CLEAN THE ATTIC, WE WERE GENERALLY TOO EXHAUSTED TO GET OUR LITTLE GAMES GOING.



BUT IN THE END, THE CLEANING WAS FOR THE MOST PART DONE, AND THE FUN TIMES HAD BEGUN. AT FIRST WE WERE PRETTY RECKLESS, NEITHER ONE OF US WAS A TRULY COMPETENT DOM. OUR PREDICAMENT PLANNING WAS FLAWED, FULL OF HOLES, BUT WE DIDN'T CARE. WELL, THAT IS 'TIL THE DAY OF THE BAD BURRITO...

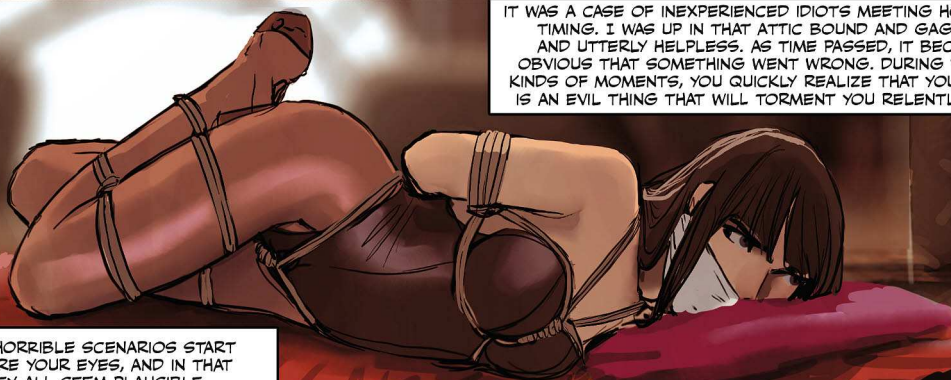


THAT DAY IT WAS MY TURN TO PLAY THE SUB, AND ALAN TRIED OUT A NEW ROPE RIG ON ME. BUT; WELL, APPARENTLY EARLIER THAT DAY HE HAD A BURRITO THAT DECIDED TO KICK HIS ASS.

IT WAS A COMPLICATED RIG FOR US AT THE TIME, SO WE DECIDED NOT TO BREAK THE GAME BY UNDOING IT. ALAN WAS SUPPOSED TO COME RIGHT BACK, BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, WHEN HE RETURNED HE FOUND THE JANITOR BUSY REPLACING A FUSE BOX.



IT WAS A CASE OF INEXPERIENCED IDIOTS MEETING HORRIBLE TIMING. I WAS UP IN THAT ATTIC BOUND AND GAGGED AND UTTERLY HELPLESS. AS TIME PASSED, IT BECAME OBVIOUS THAT SOMETHING WENT WRONG. DURING THOSE KINDS OF MOMENTS, YOU QUICKLY REALIZE THAT YOUR MIND IS AN EVIL THING THAT WILL TORMENT YOU RELENTLESSLY.



ALL SORTS OF HORRIBLE SCENARIOS START FLASHING BEFORE YOUR EYES, AND IN THAT SITUATION, THEY ALL SEEM PLAUSIBLE...



IT TOOK THE JANITOR ABOUT FORTY MINUTES TO SWITCH THE FUSEBOX, AND DURING THAT TIME, ALAN TOO WAS LOSING HIS MIND. HIS ROPEWORK WAS WELL DONE. AT NO POINT WAS IT OUTRIGHT CUTTING OFF MY CIRCULATION, AND WITH SOME SQUIRMING, PRESSURE COULD BE SWITCHED AND RELIEVED. BUT, HE DIDN'T KNOW THAT.

AND I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM. IT WAS A SMALL EVENT, BUT IT WAS A WAKE UP CALL FOR BOTH OF US. IT MADE US AWARE OF JUST HOW WRONG THINGS COULD GO.





THAT WAS THE MOMENT WE BOTH REALIZED WE HAD TO CHANGE THE GAME, RETHINK OUR APPROACH. WE WERE HARSHLY MADE AWARE OF THE POTENTIAL DANGERS OF IT ALL. UNTIL THAT MOMENT, OUR BIGGEST CONCERN HAD BEEN THAT SOMEONE MIGHT DISCOVER OUR HIDING PLACE.



HOWEVER, FROM THAT MOMENT ON, **SAFETY** BECAME OUR GREATEST PRIORITY...SO WE RESEARCHED, WE TOOK ANY AND ALL PRECAUTIONS WE COULD. THE FUN PART WAS THE CHALLENGE OF HIDING THE SAFETY MEASURES SO THE ILLUSION WAS PROPERLY MAINTAINED...

OKAY, FULL DISCLOSURE! THAT SITUATION YOU WERE IN... IT'S ONE OF MY FAVORITE FANTASIES.

SUBTLE.

JUST SAYING!

OKAY, FANTASY NOTED! ANYWAY, WITH TIME, WE IMPROVED.



THE NEXT FEW WEEKS WERE AN UTTER CLUSTERFUCK OF TRIAL AND ERROR. WE LEARNED THE UPS AND DOWNS OF MANY THINGS...AN **ASPIRIN** MAY BE **GOOD** FOR CIRCULATION, BUT TURNS OUT NOT SO GOOD FOR AVOIDING **BRUISING**...

AND THEN, INEVITABLY AFTER WE FIGURED OUT THE TECHNIQUES, WE STARTED EXPLORING, PUSHING EACH OTHER'S LIMITS.

Y'KNOW...I WAS ALWAYS CURIOUS... THESE EGGS WERE MADE FOR GIRLS... BUT TECHNICALLY... THIS SHOULD WORK.

UM... ALLY...

AH-AH-AH! I BELIEVE YOU MEAN...MISTRESS. SO, BOMBS AWAY!

WAIT, I'M NOT...

W-WOAH! THAT'S... INTERESTING.

WHAT DO YOU SAY WE MAKE IT MORE INTERESTING?

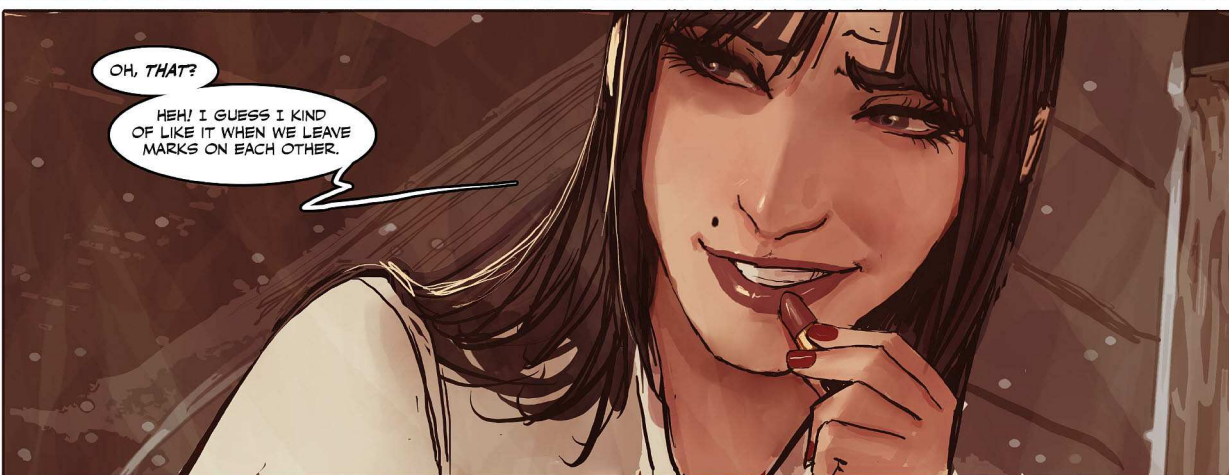
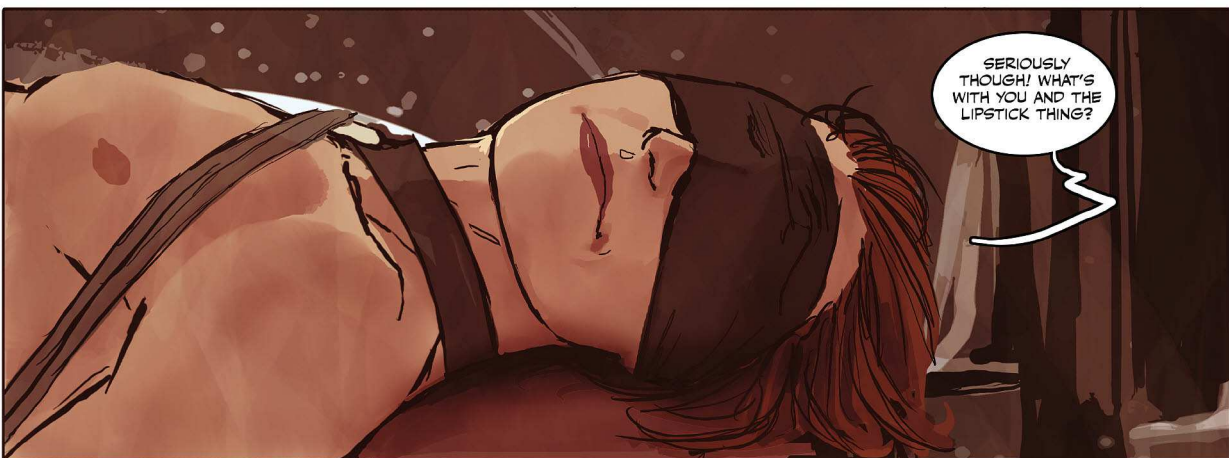
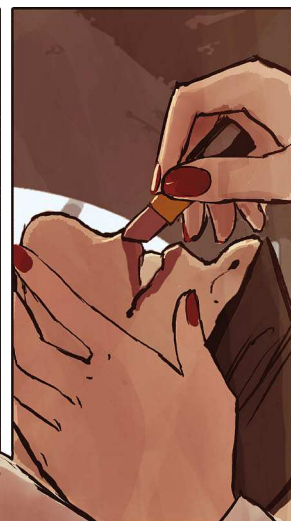


WE SWITCHED ROLES ALL THE TIME, BUT THERE WERE NO DOUBTS IN MY MIND. I WAS A **DOMME**! I LOVED IT! IT WENT BEYOND JUST SEX. IT WAS ABOUT THIS SENSE OF **ACCOMPLISHMENT**.

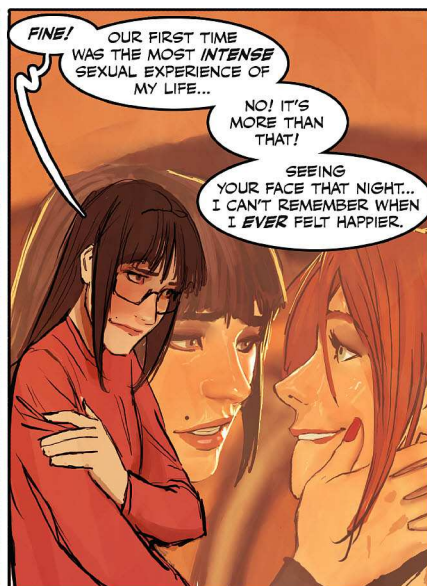
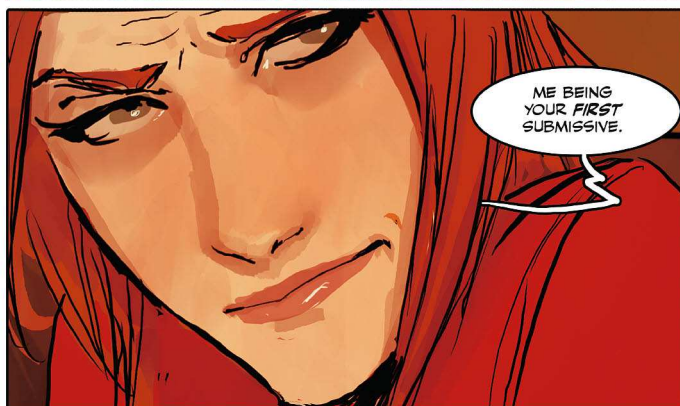
I FOUND MYSELF BEING PROGRESSIVELY MORE BORED BY SUBBING. IT WAS JUST... TOO PASSIVE, TOO REACTIVE... NOW **DOMINATING**, THAT FELT CREATIVE, ENGAGING... **FUN!**
















IT WAS EVERYTHING I EVER WANTED.  
THE INTENSITY AND PLEASURE OF  
THE GAME, AND THE TENDERNESS  
OF AFTERCARE...YOU MADE IT  
REAL FOR ME!

AH, IF EGOS  
COULD ORGASM...

WHAT? I LIKED  
HER, AND SHE  
WAS SAYING NICE  
THINGS ABOUT ME!

YOU *ARE* MY FIRST  
SUB, LISA. I *WASN'T*  
LYING.

WHAT I HAD WITH  
ALAN...IT WAS...I DON'T  
KNOW...A SERIES OF  
*EXPERIMENTS*.

HELL, OUR *AFTERCARE*  
CONSISTED OF CRITICIZING  
EACH OTHER'S IDEAS, THINKING  
UP HOW EACH OF US WOULD  
DO IT BETTER.

WITH YOU IT  
WAS LIKE...I DON'T  
KNOW...LIKE FINALLY  
SCRATCHING THIS ITCH OF  
MINE JUST RIGHT. WITH  
HIM...IT WAS LIKE  
SCRATCHING IT 'TIL  
IT BLEEDS.

PLEASE TELL  
ME THAT WAS JUST  
YOU BEING  
METAPHORICAL!

WELL...UM...I  
HAD NAILS BACK  
THEN.

ANYHOO.





ALAN WAS NO SUB...  
HE WAS A SPARRING  
PARTNER!

WITH HIM, IT  
WAS DIFFERENT.  
IT WAS A RIVALRY.

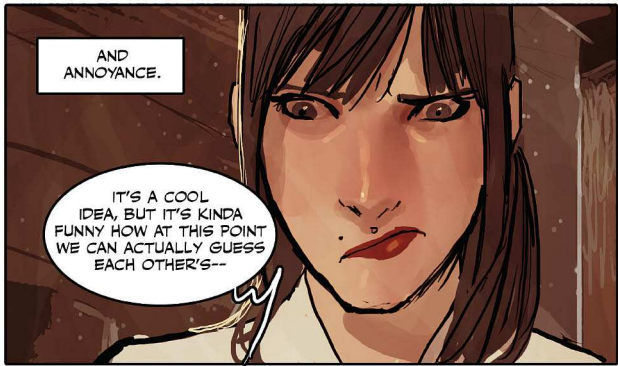
TWO DOMS  
CONTANTLY TRYING TO  
OUT-DO EACH OTHER.

AND NOW FOR  
YOUR SURPRISE.

YOU TOTALLY  
PERFUMED YOUR  
THIGHS!

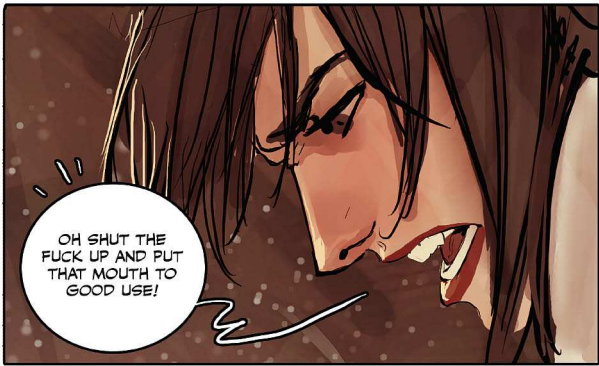
I'M RIGHT,  
AREN'T I?

I WON'T LIE,  
IT WAS A STRANGE  
MIX OF FUN...




AND  
ANNOYANCE.

IT'S A COOL  
IDEA, BUT IT'S KINDA  
FUNNY HOW AT THIS POINT  
WE CAN ACTUALLY GUESS  
EACH OTHER'S--



OH SHUT THE  
FUCK UP AND PUT  
THAT MOUTH TO  
GOOD USE!





SO, I MEAN,  
YOU SAY IT WAS FUN...  
SO WHAT *ENDED* IT?

EGO.  
A FUCK-TON  
OF EGO!

WHERE WAS I?

OH, RIGHT! *TWO  
DOMS!*

WHEN YOU AND I WERE DONE  
WITH OUR FIRST SESSION,  
YOU HAD THIS *GLOW* ABOUT  
YOU, AND I *KNEW* I DID WELL.

IT WAS AN AMAZING FEELING,  
DEEP SATISFACTION...  
*FUCK, LISA! I GIGGLED LIKE A  
MORON THIS ENTIRE WEEK.*

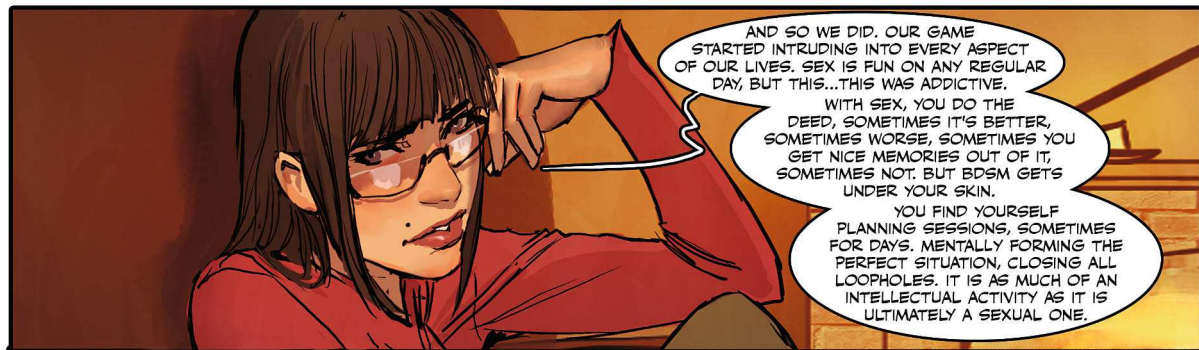
ALAN AND I WEREN'T GETTING  
THAT FEELING FROM EACH  
OTHER, AND IT WAS  
*MADDENINGLY FRUSTRATING.*

AS I SAID...IT WAS AN ITCH  
THAT WOULDN'T GO AWAY.

NOT FOR THE  
LACK OF TRYING.

DUMBASSES THAT  
WE WERE BACK THEN,  
OUR ANSWER TO THE  
ITCHY PROBLEM WAS...  
*KEEP SCRATCHING!*





AND SO WE DID. OUR GAME STARTED INTRUDING INTO EVERY ASPECT OF OUR LIVES. SEX IS FUN ON ANY REGULAR DAY, BUT THIS...THIS WAS ADDICTIVE.

WITH SEX, YOU DO THE DEED. SOMETIMES IT'S BETTER, SOMETIMES WORSE, SOMETIMES YOU GET NICE MEMORIES OUT OF IT, SOMETIMES NOT. BUT BDSM GETS UNDER YOUR SKIN.

YOU FIND YOURSELF PLANNING SESSIONS, SOMETIMES FOR DAYS. MENTALLY FORMING THE PERFECT SITUATION, CLOSING ALL LOOPHOLES. IT IS AS MUCH OF AN INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY AS IT IS ULTIMATELY A SEXUAL ONE.



AND THEREIN WAS OUR **BIGGEST** PROBLEM. AS WE PROGRESSED, WE FOUND OURSELVES TRYING TO IMPRESS EACH OTHER MORE AND MORE.

WE SPENT A LOT OF TIME PLANNING, PREPARING OUR SESSIONS, AND WITH TIME, IT SHOWED IN OUR SOCIAL AND COLLEGE LIVES.

WE MADE **NUMEROUS** COMPROMISES, CONSTANTLY PROCRASTINATING, OR FLAT-OUT IGNORING OUR COLLEGE OBLIGATIONS.

THIS REFLECTED MORE AND MORE IN MY CLASSES. I WOULD OFTEN SPACE OUT, PLANNING COMPLEX RIGGINGS, PASSING MESSAGES TO ALAN.

WE BARELY ATE ANYTHING BECAUSE WE SPENT MOST OF OUR MONEY ON **MATERIALS** AND **GEAR** AT THE TIME. THAT PROBABLY CONTRIBUTED SOMEWHAT TO MY LACK OF FOCUS THOSE DAYS.



A LACK OF FOCUS THAT WAS NOT **UNNOTICED**.

**MISS CARTER**, YOU WERE WARNED THREE TIMES NOW. PLEASE, LEAVE MY CLASSROOM!



YOU'D THINK THAT GETTING KICKED OUT OF A CLASS WOULD HAVE SERVED AS A BIT OF A WAKE UP CALL...BUT...WELL, Y'KNOW. I WAS NINETEEN...I BLAME **HORMONES**!

MEH...I CALL BULLSHIT! HONESTLY, AT THAT POINT, I WAS LIKE AN **ADDICT**. I HAD ALLOWED THIS ONE ASPECT OF MY LIFE TO INTRUDE, **NO**, NOT **INTRUDE**, COMPLETELY **OVERRUN** MY LIFE.



AND TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST...I DIDN'T CARE.

BY THAT TIME, I ALIENATED MOST OF THE CROWD I USED TO HANG OUT WITH. MY WORLD PRETTY MUCH REVOLVED AROUND THIS EXCITING DYNAMIC OF OUR RELATIONSHIP.





BOTH OF OUR LIVES WERE ENTANGLED IN OUR LITTLE *GAME*...

OUR *STUBBORN* LITTLE COMPETITION.

TIME PASSED.

OUR SESSIONS KEPT GETTING *BETTER*...

BUT AT THE SAME TIME, OUR LIVES GOT *MESSIER*.

I'M PRETTY SURE BY THAT TIME MY MOM SUSPECTED THAT I WAS DOING *DRUGS*. TRUTH WAS...I WAS *SORT OF* AN ADDICT.

EVEN AS FRUSTRATINGLY IMPERFECT AS OUR GAME WAS...I LOVED IT.

BUT EVENTUALLY, AS USUALLY ENDS UP BEING THE CASE, LIFE CAME AT ME LIKE A FREIGHT TRAIN.

I MESSED UP BAD.

MY GRADES WERE STEADILY DROPPING, AND ALL OF A SUDDEN, I FOUND MYSELF FACING THE REAL POSSIBILITY OF *LOSING* MY SCHOLARSHIP.

I HAD TO SNAP OUT OF IT.

IT WAS TIME FOR THE CONVERSATION WE BOTH AVOIDED FOR THE PREVIOUS THREE MONTHS. ALAN'S GRADES WERE PLUMMETING AS WELL, BUT HE KEPT QUIET ABOUT IT.

I OUTLINED MY PLAN TO HIM. I WANTED TO FOCUS ON FINISHING COLLEGE AND GETTING SOME WORK. THE ATTIC THING WAS FUN, BUT I HAD MY SITUATION AT HOME THAT REALLY MOTIVATED ME TO MOVE OUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. HONESTLY... I FELT I COMPLETELY *LOST CONTROL* OVER MY LIFE...AND I WANTED IT BACK.

THAT DAY, WE RELUCTANTLY AGREED TO CUT DOWN ON OUR SESSIONS... *SIGNIFICANTLY*.





HONESTLY, I WISH I HAD THE STRENGTH TO JUST, Y'KNOW, TONE IT ALL DOWN. BUT IT DIDN'T WORK LIKE THAT FOR ME.

TODAY, I GUESS I COULD MAKE IT WORK, Y'KNOW, LESS OF A HORMONE SHIT-STORM FLOODING THE BRAIN, MORE *SELF-CONTROL* AND ALL THAT.

AHAHAHAHAHA! AHM...SORRY. THIS WILL GET *FUNNY* AT SOME POINT.

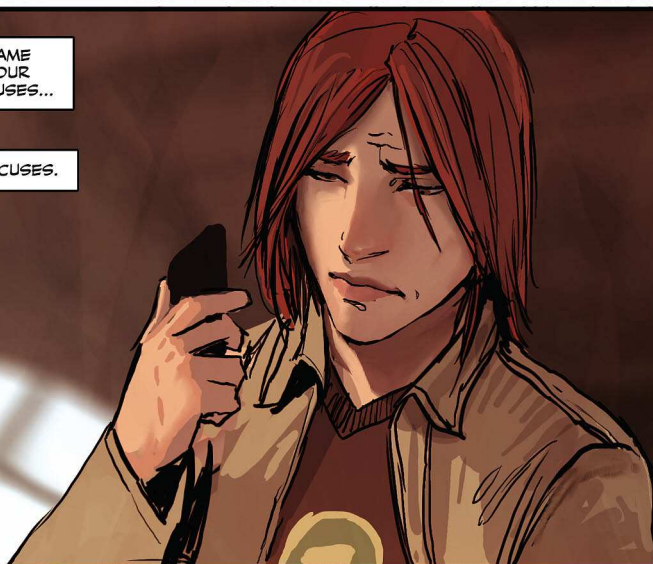
...BUT BACK THEN, I JUST BURIED MYSELF IN WORK AND STUDIES. I FREELANCED AS A WEB DESIGNER, DID SYSTEMS MAINTENANCE, TOOK ON ANY GIG I COULD, REALLY. AND SADLY, I PUSHED ALAN FURTHER AND FURTHER AWAY.



IT WAS A PAINFUL TIME... I LOVED HIM. HE WAS MY BEST FRIEND AND MY LOVER, AND FOR THE SAKE OF MY FUTURE I HAD TO LET OUR RELATIONSHIP SUFFER.

OUR SESSIONS BECAME SPARSE...I MISSED OUR MEETINGS...MADE EXCUSES...

MANY, MANY EXCUSES.



HONESTLY, I FEARED RELAPSING INTO MY ADDICTION...

AND THEN, AS THE SESSIONS BECAME FEWER IN NUMBER, OUR INCREASINGLY OBVIOUS PROBLEM BECAME IMPOSSIBLE TO SIMPLY IGNORE.





TWO DOMS DIDN'T  
WORK! NOT IN OUR  
CASE AT LEAST.

WITH OUR SESSIONS BECOMING  
RARE, DECIDING THE ROLE OF  
THE DOM BECAME THIS  
PAINFUL BATTLE OF EGOS.

ARGUMENTS ERUPTED EVERY  
TIME. STUPID ARGUMENTS...  
I DISTINCTLY REMEMBER ONCE  
USING THE FACT THAT I WAS  
MAKING MORE *MONEY* AND  
BUYING MORE GEAR AS  
A *JUSTIFICATION* FOR WHY I  
SHOULD BE THE DOMME.



THINGS WENT  
DOWNHILL FROM THERE ON...

NEEDLESS TO SAY...  
WE *ENDED* IT...ALL  
OF IT.

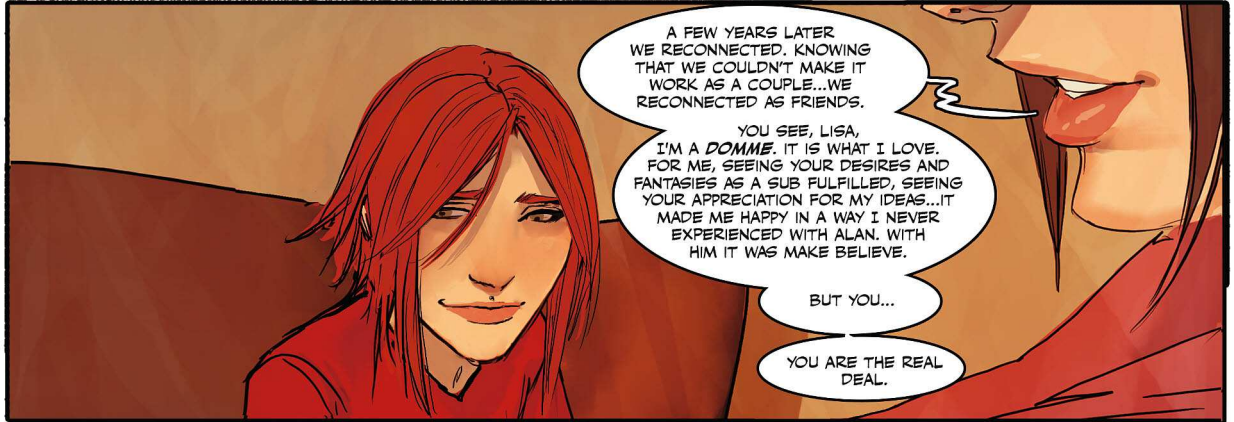


AND...WELL, I GOT MY WISH.  
I HAD ALL THE FREE TIME TO  
FOCUS ON STUDIES AND  
WORK. BY THEN, I COMPLETELY  
ALIENATED MY OLD FRIENDS AS  
WELL...NOT THAT I REALLY  
REGRET THAT. I GUESS IT WAS  
MORE THAT I OUTGREW  
THEM. I STARTED MAKING SOME  
NEW ONES. MOSTLY WORK  
RELATED, SOME GAME RELATED,  
AS ALL THAT FREE TIME  
RESULTED IN A REKINDLED LOVE  
AFFAIR WITH VIDEO GAMES.

*BRING  
IT  
ON!*



OVERALL, I WAS OKAY. BUT THERE  
WERE TIMES WHEN MEMORIES  
CREPT UP ON ME...MEMORIES  
OF A GUY THAT WAS MORE THAN  
JUST MY LOVER. HE WAS THE  
BEST FRIEND I EVER HAD.



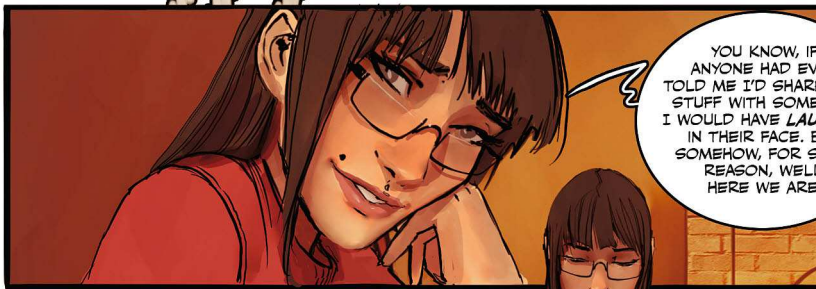
A FEW YEARS LATER  
WE RECONNECTED. KNOWING  
THAT WE COULDN'T MAKE IT  
WORK AS A COUPLE...WE  
RECONNECTED AS FRIENDS.

YOU SEE, LISA,  
I'M A *DOMME*. IT IS WHAT I LOVE.  
FOR ME, SEEING YOUR DESIRES AND  
FANTASIES AS A SUB FULFILLED, SEEING  
YOUR APPRECIATION FOR MY IDEAS...IT  
MADE ME HAPPY IN A WAY I NEVER  
EXPERIENCED WITH ALAN. WITH  
HIM IT WAS MAKE BELIEVE.

BUT YOU...

YOU ARE THE REAL  
DEAL.





YOU KNOW, IF ANYONE HAD EVER TOLD ME I'D SHARE THIS STUFF WITH SOMEONE, I WOULD HAVE **LAUGHED** IN THEIR FACE. BUT SOMEHOW, FOR SOME REASON, WELL, HERE WE ARE.



YOU **TRUST** ME.

YES, I...I GUESS I DO.

AND THERE IT WAS...THE BOND BEHIND THE BONDAGE... PARDON MY PUN.

THE ONE THING THAT MAKES IT ALL POSSIBLE. THE FOUNDATION OF S & M. TRUST. ABSOLUTE UNWAVERING TRUST.

AND I HAD IT.



AN ODD THING I REMEMBER FROM THAT DAY WAS MY OWN STRANGE, RUSHING HEARTBEAT. I COULD ACTUALLY HEAR IT...A WHOOSHING SOUND IN MY EARS.



AND IT MADE ME CRY...



**WHAT?**  
SCREW YOU!  
I WAS HORMONAL AT THE MOMENT.

IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH MY LITTLE CRUSH!







I MEAN...SHE SEPARATED THE MISTRESS FROM ALLYCAT WITH APPARENT EASE. BUT FOR ME, IN HER EVERY MOVE, EVERY SMILE, IN THE SUBTLE VARIATIONS OF HER VOICE, I SAW AND HEARD BOTH SIDES OF HER.

SO...WHAT'CHA READIN'?

A MANGA.

OH, I NEVER READ THOSE.

BEING NEXT TO HER... IT MADE THE AIR FEEL CHARGED WITH POTENTIAL.

THERE'S A FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING. HERE, GIVE THIS ONE A TRY.

UM, 'KAY.

THE FUCK? COULDN'T THEY HAVE *FLIPPED* THIS IN PRINTING? THIS IS...WEIRD!

YOU'LL GET USED TO IT.

SO YEAH...WITH MY CURRENT INCAPACITATED STATE, I WAS GLAD FOR THE DISTRACTION.

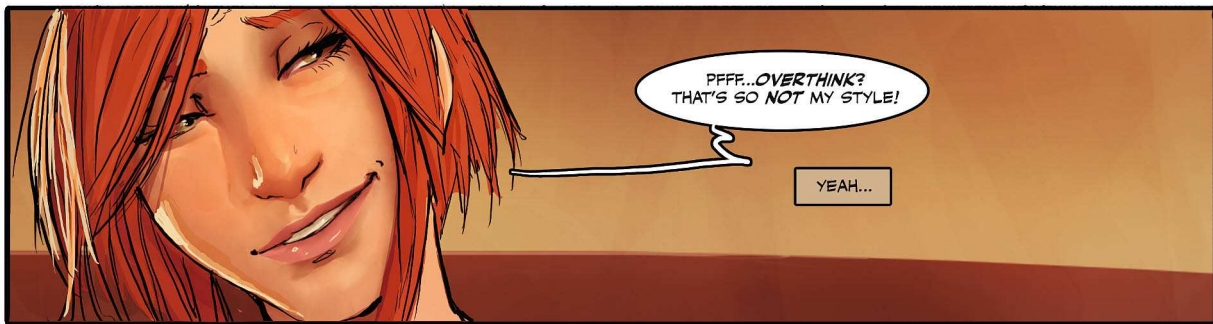
BWAHAHAHA! YOU KNOW... HAH! THIS KIND OF EXAGGERATION SHOULDN'T WORK, BUT FOR SOME REASON IT'S *HILARIOUS!*

YOU DON'T SAY?

HEH...YOU KNOW... I WAS KINDA FEELING BUMMED OUT FOR MESSING UP OUR WEEKEND, BUT TODAY WAS... IT WAS *REALLY* NICE. I MEAN, I KNOW THAT--

SSSSSH! DON'T OVERTHINK IT.





PPFF...*OVERTHINK?*  
THAT'S SO *NOT* MY STYLE!

YEAH...



SOOOO...TWO MORE  
DAYS WITH HER. TODAY *SHE*  
KEPT THE CONVERSATION  
GOING...

BUT I CAN'T JUST  
EXPECT HER TO TALK THE  
WHOLE WEEKEND...

THAT'S THE  
PROBLEM, REALLY. I MEAN,  
MY LIFE WAS *BORING*  
IN COMPARISON.

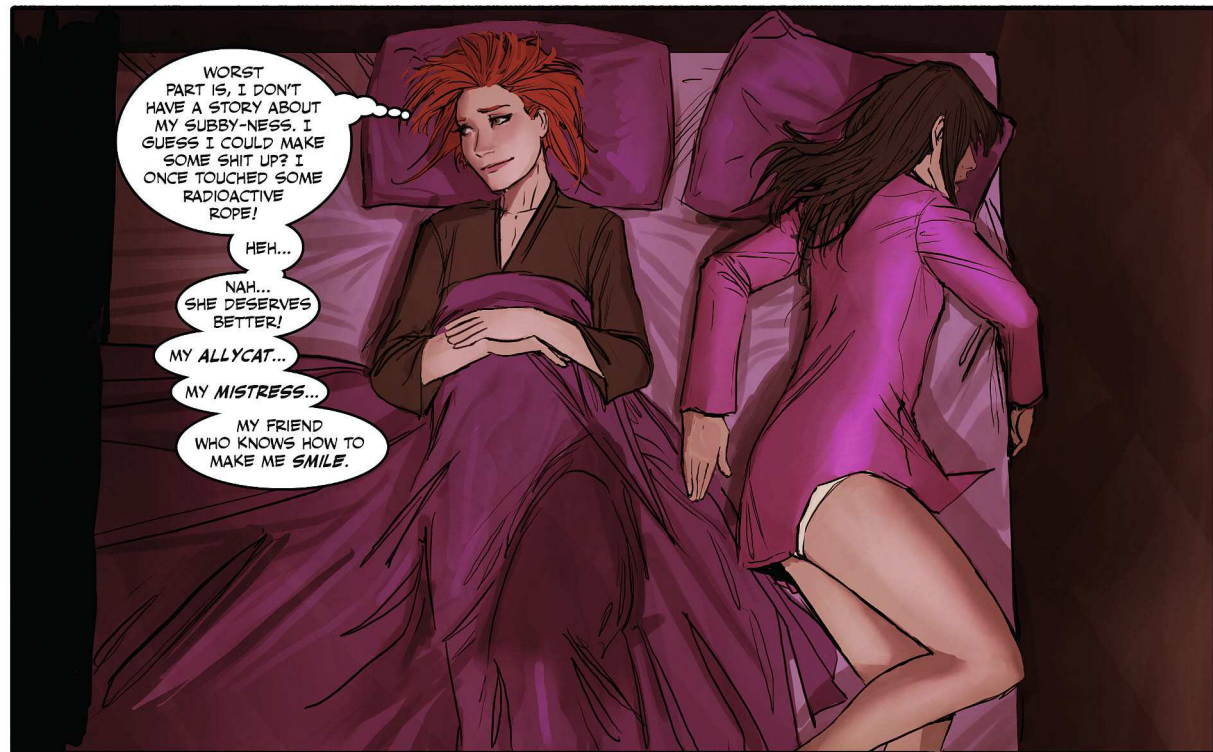


HEY, ALLY!  
WANNA HEAR MY  
BORING STORY?!

WELL?

**SNORE**

HEH!  
EVERYONE'S  
A CRITIC!



WORST  
PART IS, I DON'T  
HAVE A STORY ABOUT  
MY SUBBY-NESS. I  
GUESS I COULD MAKE  
SOME SHIT UP? I  
ONCE TOUCHED SOME  
RADIOACTIVE  
ROPE!

HEH...

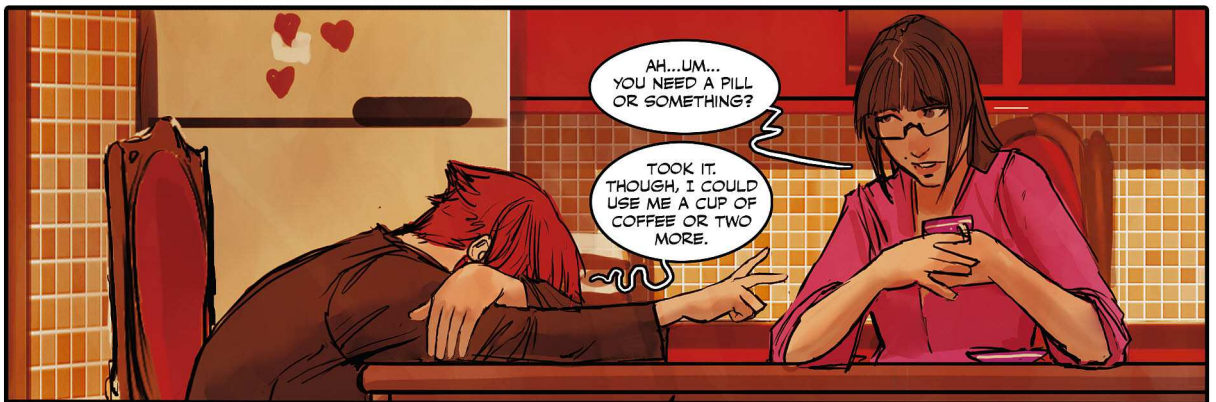
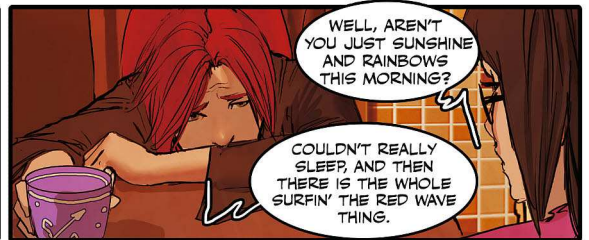
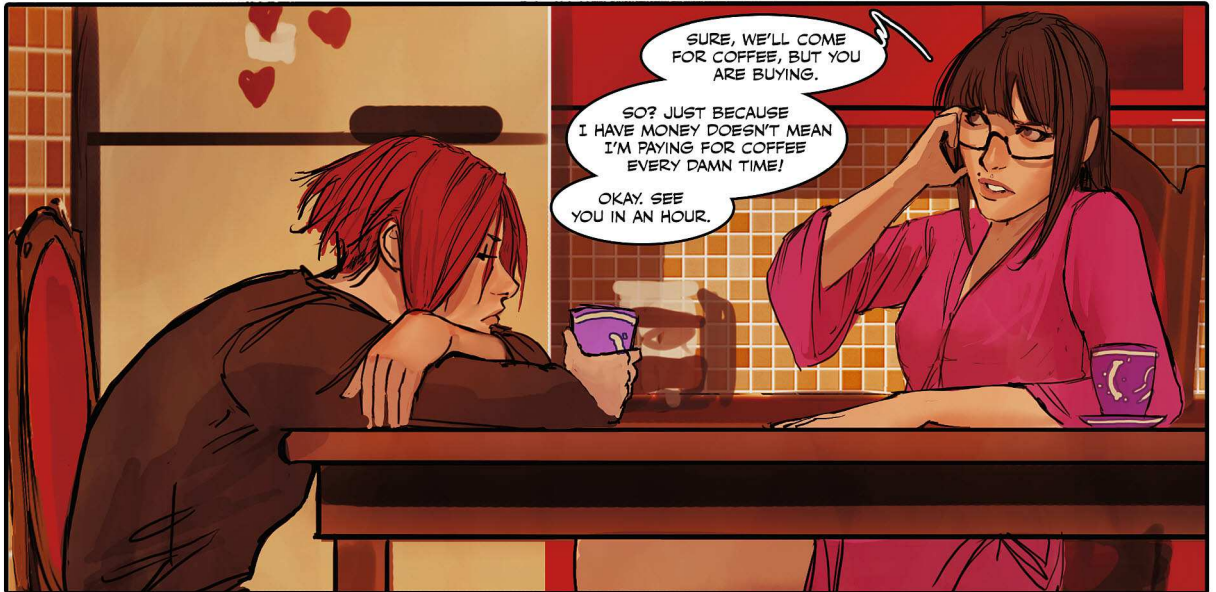
NAH...  
SHE DESERVES  
BETTER!

MY ALLYCAT...

MY MISTRESS...

MY FRIEND  
WHO KNOWS HOW TO  
MAKE ME *SMILE*.









WE ARE GOING TO A COFFEE PLACE, WE CAN HAVE OUR BREAKFAST THERE TOO IF YOU ARE UP FOR IT.

SIGH. YOU MEAN WE GOTTA WALK AROUND? I DONT WANNA!



AW, COME ON. I RARELY LEAVE THE HOUSE MYSELF. AT LEAST WITH YOU I HAVE AN EXCUSE TO DO SO.

MMMMMMN, OKAY. SIGH.



SEE, A WONDERFUL MORNING!



I'M NOT IMPRESSED!

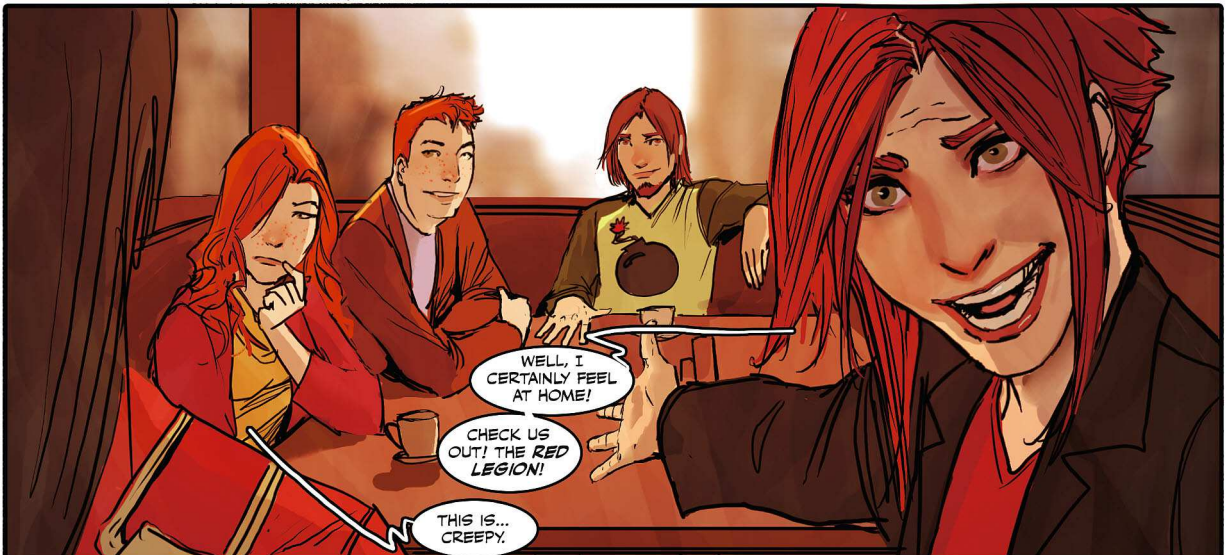
YEEESH! WHAT KEPT YOU UP ALL NIGHT?

AH, YOU KNOW... BUSY MIND AND LOUD NOISES.

HUH?

NEVERMIND!







THAT WAS THE DAY WE MET  
CASSIE, CHRIS, AND TOM...  
THE DAY OUR LITTLE CROWD  
STARTED GATHERING.

SO, GIRLS, MEET  
CHRIS AND CASSANDRA. CHRIS, CASSIE,  
MEET LISA AND ALLISON.

CHRIS,  
I KNOW!

HI THERE!  
NICE TO MEET  
YOU!

LIKEWISE!

HM. THERE  
IS SOMETHING SO  
FAMILIAR ABOUT YOU,  
ALLISON.

OH, WAIT!  
ARE YOU ONE  
OF ALAN'S PERFORMER  
FRIENDS FROM  
THE CLUB?

WHA-WHAT?

NO! I HAVEN'T  
BEEN TO THE *CRIMSON*  
IN YEARS.

SO...ALLY DIDN'T LIKE  
CASSIE ALL THAT MUCH  
AT FIRST.

SHE SAID CASSIE  
REMINDS HER OF  
HER OLDER SISTER.

I'VE MET ALLY'S SISTER  
SINCE THEN, AND YEAH,  
THERE IS SOMETHING  
TO THAT.

OH, DON'T GET ME WRONG,  
I'M NOT JUDGING OR ANYTHING. HELL,  
GIVEN THE FACT THAT I FREQUENTLY  
VISIT THE PLACE, THAT WOULD MAKE  
ME AN EPIC HYPOCRITE.

IT'S JUST THAT MANY  
OF THE PERFORMERS THERE  
ARE MASKED AND, I DON'T KNOW,  
THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT YOU.  
I CAN'T PUT MY FINGER ON IT,  
BUT YOU'RE SO FAMILIAR.

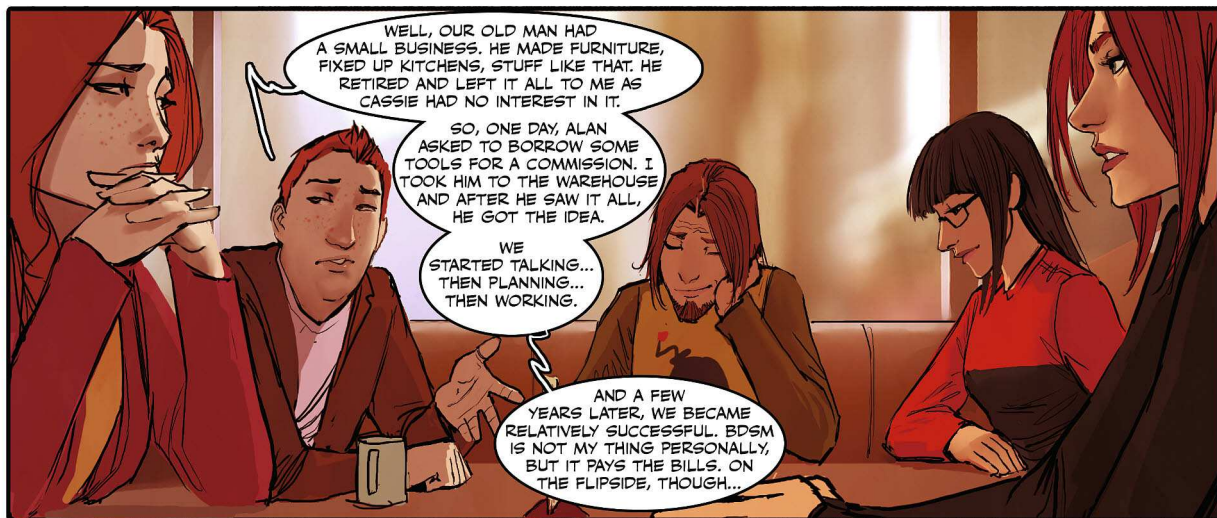




ANYWAYS, CHRIS  
HERE IS MY PARTNER IN CRIME  
IN THE *CUSTOM GEAR* AND  
*FURNITURE* BUSINESS.

CALLING ME  
A PERFORMER...  
I'LL PERFORM  
A...

OKAY...I  
GOTTA KNOW!  
HOW DO YOU  
EVEN GET THE *IDEA*  
FOR A JOB LIKE  
THAT?

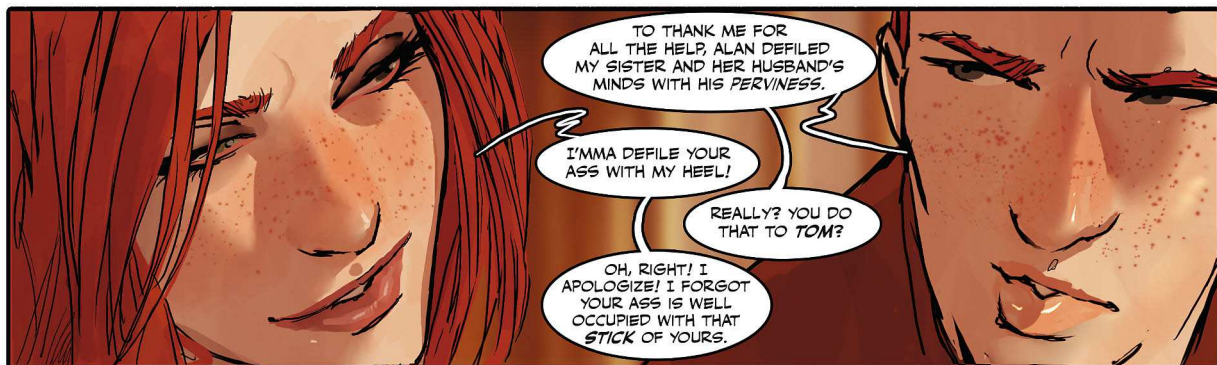


WELL, OUR OLD MAN HAD  
A SMALL BUSINESS. HE MADE FURNITURE,  
FIXED UP KITCHENS, STUFF LIKE THAT. HE  
RETIRED AND LEFT IT ALL TO ME AS  
CASSIE HAD NO INTEREST IN IT.

SO, ONE DAY, ALAN  
ASKED TO BORROW SOME  
TOOLS FOR A COMMISSION. I  
TOOK HIM TO THE WAREHOUSE  
AND AFTER HE SAW IT ALL,  
HE GOT THE IDEA.

WE  
STARTED TALKING...  
THEN PLANNING...  
THEN WORKING.

AND A FEW  
YEARS LATER, WE BECAME  
RELATIVELY SUCCESSFUL. BDSM  
IS NOT MY THING PERSONALLY,  
BUT IT PAYS THE BILLS. ON  
THE FLIPSIDE, THOUGH...



TO THANK ME FOR  
ALL THE HELP, ALAN DEFILED  
MY SISTER AND HER HUSBAND'S  
MINDS WITH HIS *PERVERSITY*.

I'MMA DEFILE YOUR  
ASS WITH MY HEEL!

REALLY? YOU DO  
THAT TO TOM?

OH, RIGHT! I  
APOLOGIZE! I FORGOT  
YOUR ASS IS WELL  
OCCUPIED WITH THAT  
*STICK* OF YOURS.



I LIKED CASSIE AND CHRIS.  
THEY WERE SO OPPOSITE, BUT  
STILL GOT ALONG. I COULD  
DEFINITELY *RELATE*.

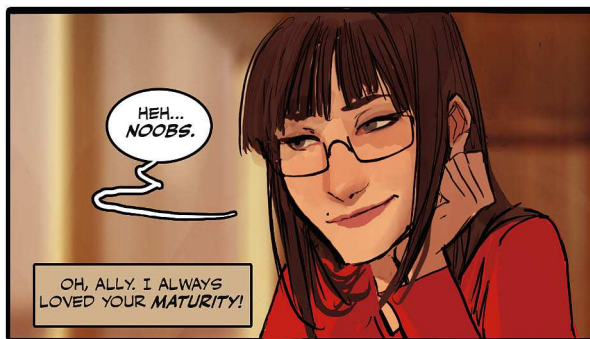
EVEN THOUGH *MIKE*, MY  
OLDER BROTHER, WAS  
OBVIOUS TO MY OWN...  
TASTES...WE HAD THE  
VERY SAME DYNAMIC.

SO, YOU'RE INTO  
BDSM TOO?



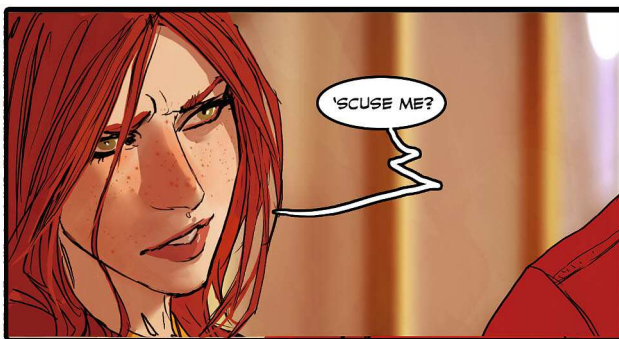
WELL...MY HUSBAND AND I  
ARE IN NO WAY AT THE LEVEL YOU  
SEE IN THE CLUB, BUT WE  
ARE LEARNING.





HEH...  
NOOBS.

OH, ALLY. I ALWAYS  
LOVED YOUR MATURITY!



'SCUSE ME?



OH, DON'T  
MIND ME. I ALWAYS  
FOUND NOOBIES  
ADORABLE.

US HIGH  
LEVEL PLAYERS  
ARE USUALLY  
LIKE THAT.

I DID SAY CASSIE  
REMINDS ALLY  
OF HER SISTER...



AH, WELL. THE  
WAY I SEE IT IS: I'M A  
HAPPILY MARRIED WOMAN  
WITH A RICH SEX LIFE, SO  
THE OPINION OF A PALE,  
INDOORSY WALLFLOWER  
MEANS LITTLE TO  
NOTHING TO ME.

YOU'RE  
PALE TOO.

I'M GINGER.  
WHAT'S YOUR  
EXCUSE?



HEH.



HEY, TOM.  
OVER HERE!

WELL  
PLAYED!

THANK YOU!

IN HINDSIGHT, THIS  
SITUATION COULD  
HAVE GONE  
HORRIBLY BAD...

BUT TO MY PLEASANT  
SURPRISE, ALLY WAS  
BETTER THAN THAT.

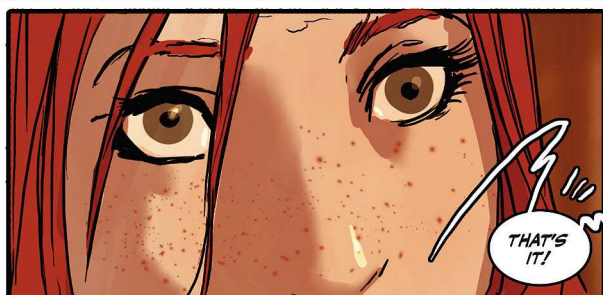


SO, GUESS WHO  
USED HIS INCREDIBLE  
POWERS OF PERSUASION  
TO CUT IN LINE AND GET  
THE TICKETS?!

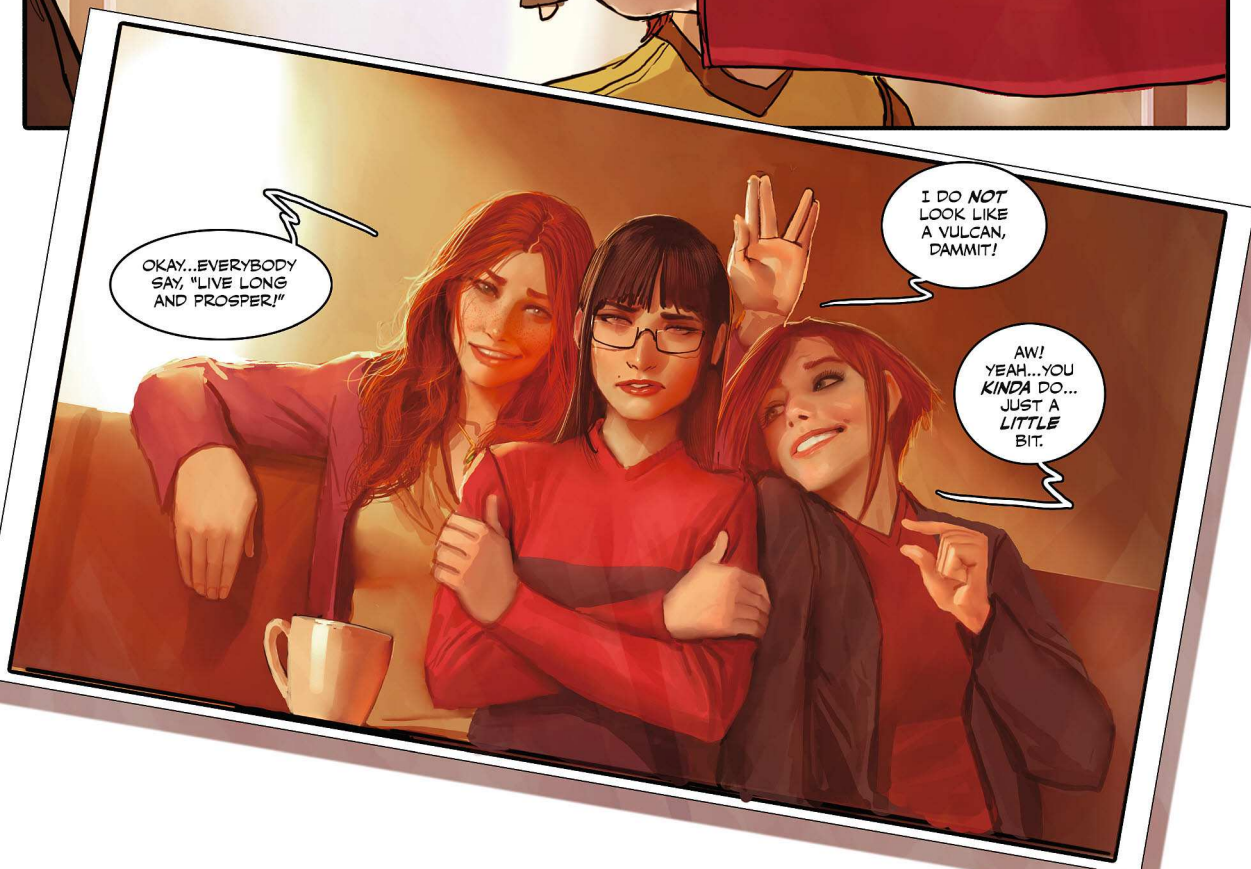
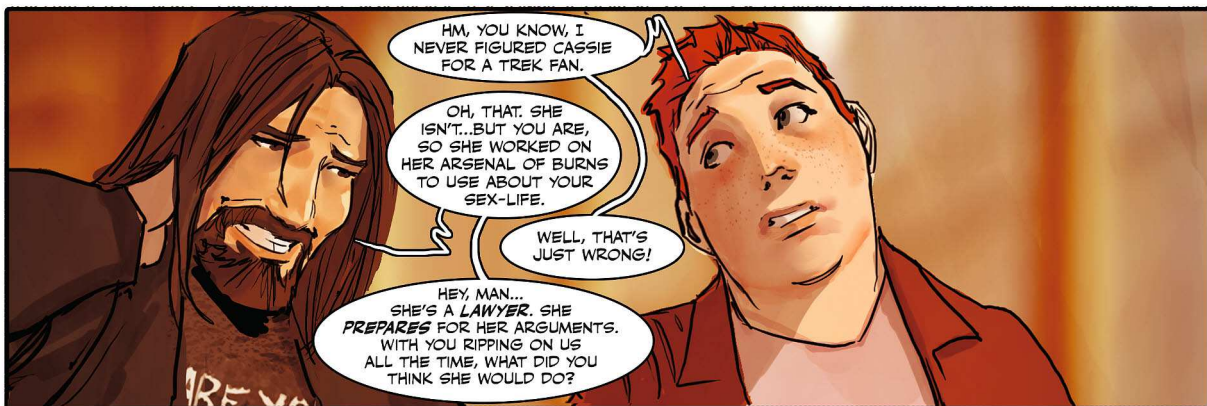
AW...  
MY HERO!

ALSO, WHAT  
POWERS OF  
PERSUASION?

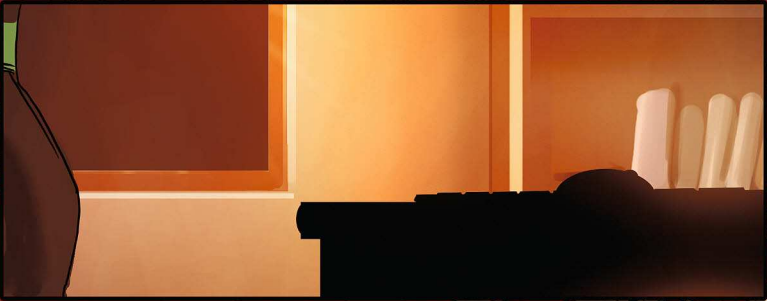
















PHEW.



ALRIGHTY.  
WHERE WAS I?



LET'S  
SEE NOW...



OH, WHAT  
THE FUCK?

ALLY MAY HAVE PLAYED  
HARD TO GET, BUT...  
  
SHE WAS WORTH ALL MY  
EFFORTS!  
  
SHE HAD COMPLETELY RUINED  
ME FOR ANYONE ELSE. SHE  
WAS THE SEXIEST WOMAN  
I EVER LAID MY EYES ON,  
AND HER PROWESS MADE  
ME WRITE IN...



ALLY, WHAT  
THE HELL!

TRUE STORY,  
HONEY!

FOR CRYING OUT  
LOUD! DID YOU EVEN READ  
WHERE WE WERE?

NOPE, BUT I FIGURED  
IT WAS SO *UNIVERSALLY*  
TRUE THAT THE PARAGRAPH  
WOULD FIT JUST ABOUT  
ANYWHERE!



REALLY?

YOU KNOW IT!

ANYWHERE?

I STAND BY IT!

I'M JUST WRITING  
ABOUT OUR FIRST NIGHT  
IN THE CLUB.

ALL THE  
SAME--  
OH!



HEH, YEAH...  
THAT!



ALLY MAY HAVE PLAYED  
HARD TO GET, BUT SHE LIKED  
CASSIE. SHE LIKED ALL OF THEM.

IT'S FUNNY...

IT WAS ONE OF THOSE SPECIAL  
WEEKENDS FOR ME. YOU KNOW,  
ONE OF THOSE WHEN YOU ARE  
KINDA EXPECTING EVERYTHING TO  
SUCK, BUT WEIRDLY ENOUGH,  
LIFE DECIDES TO TREAT YOU  
WITH SOME PLEASANT SURPRISES.

AND TOM, CASSIE, AND  
CHRIS WERE THE FIRST  
OF THOSE SURPRISES.

SECOND WAS MY FIRST VISIT TO  
*CRIMSON*, A BDSM CLUB. THERE WAS  
ONLY ONE OBSTACLE: ALLY DIDN'T  
FEEL LIKE GOING. WE HAD TO EMPLOY  
*ADVANCED TACTICS* TO PERSUADE HER.

COME ON!

NO!

COME OOOON!

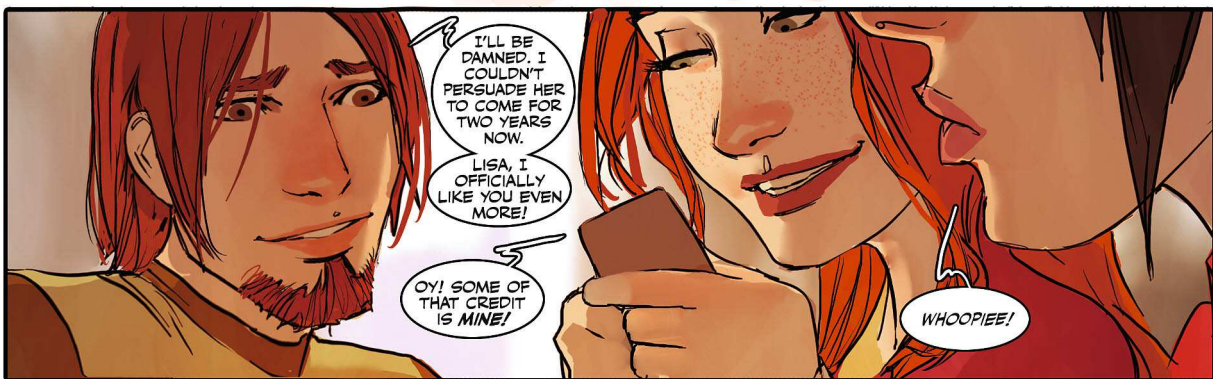
NO!

COME OOOOON!

NO!

COME OOOOON!

FINE!



I'LL BE  
DAMNED. I  
COULDN'T  
PERSUADE HER  
TO COME FOR  
TWO YEARS  
NOW.

LISA, I  
OFFICIALLY  
LIKE YOU EVEN  
MORE!

OY! SOME OF  
THAT CREDIT  
IS MINE!

WHOOPIEE!



OH! I'LL ASK  
ANNE IF SHE'D  
LIKE TO JOIN US.

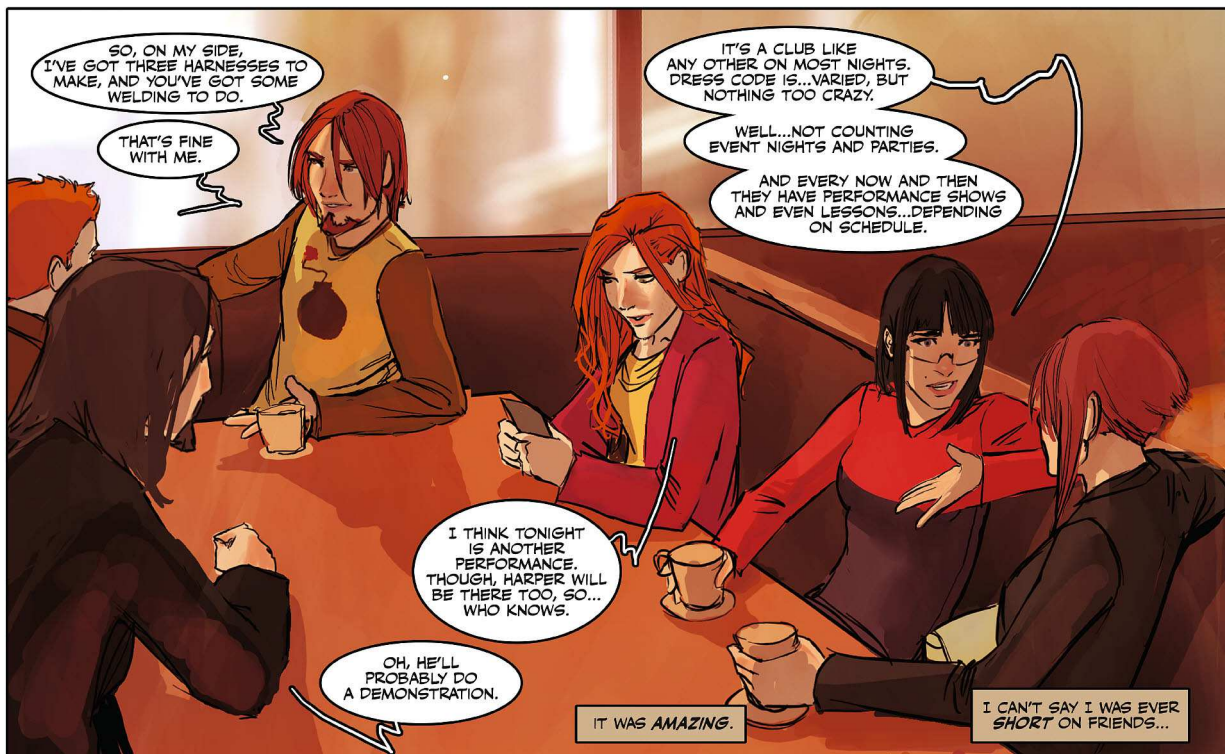
I THINK  
SHE MENTIONED  
SOME JOB SHE  
HAD TO DO.

DOESN'T  
HURT TO  
TRY.

SO, WHAT'S THIS  
CLUB LIKE?

WELL,  
IT WAS  
OKAY THE  
LAST TIME I  
WAS THERE  
TWO YEARS  
AGO.





SO, ON MY SIDE, I'VE GOT THREE HARNESSSES TO MAKE, AND YOU'VE GOT SOME WELDING TO DO.

THAT'S FINE WITH ME.

IT'S A CLUB LIKE ANY OTHER ON MOST NIGHTS. DRESS CODE IS...VARIED, BUT NOTHING TOO CRAZY.

WELL...NOT COUNTING EVENT NIGHTS AND PARTIES.

AND EVERY NOW AND THEN THEY HAVE PERFORMANCE SHOWS AND EVEN LESSONS...DEPENDING ON SCHEDULE.

I THINK TONIGHT IS ANOTHER PERFORMANCE. THOUGH, HARPER WILL BE THERE TOO, SO... WHO KNOWS.

OH, HE'LL PROBABLY DO A DEMONSTRATION.

IT WAS AMAZING.

I CAN'T SAY I WAS EVER SHORT ON FRIENDS...

BUT EVEN MY FRIENDS AT THE TIME KNEW NOTHING OF MY *TRUE* INTERESTS.

BUT *THAT DAY*, I MET A GROUP OF FRIENDS THAT WOULD BE THE FIRST TO *TRULY* KNOW ME.

I DIDN'T HAVE TO HIDE.

EVERY TIME THAT REALIZATION STRUCK ME, I COULD LITERALLY FEEL THE HORMONAL WILDFIRE OF PURE JOY. A TINGLING HAPPY WARMTH.

THERE WAS CHRIS. HE WASN'T INTO BDSM, MADE JOKES ABOUT IT, BUT NEVER MALICIOUSLY.

AS HE LIKED TO STATE... YOU DON'T BITE THE HAND THAT FEEDS YOU...

BUT YOU CAN LAUGH AT THE SILLY GLOVE IT WEARS.

THEN THERE WAS ALAN. A BIT OF AN ASS, SURE. HE HAD HIS *REASONS*.

I REMEMBER *GLANCING* AT HIM EVERY NOW AND THEN THAT MORNING...

HE WAS HER EX, BUT AT THE SAME TIME, MY *CRUSH* WAS JUST THAT...A *CRUSH*. SO I DIDN'T RESENT THEIR PAST THAT MUCH...

I *WAS* TRYING TO IMAGINE HIM WEARING *LIPSTICK* THOUGH.

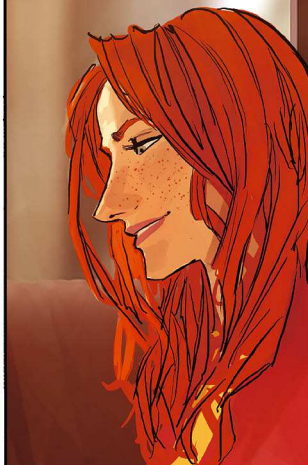
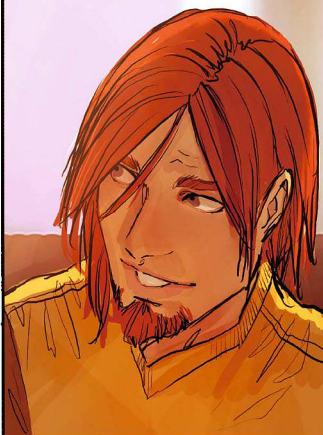
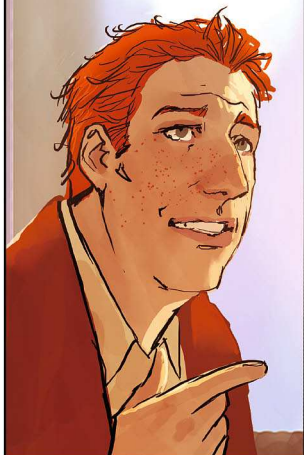
WHAT DO I SAY ABOUT TOM AND CASSIE?

I KNEW SOME *OBNOXIOUS* COUPLES IN MY LIFE, BUT THESE TWO *SURPASSED* THEM ALL.

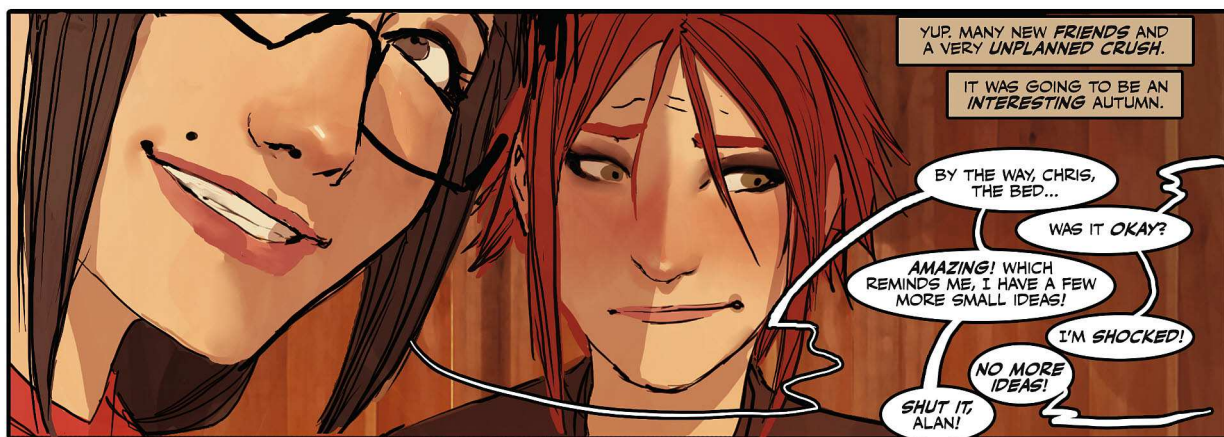
AND I WOULDN'T HAVE THEM ANY OTHER WAY.

AND THEN, THERE WAS MY BEST FRIEND...

*ALLYCAT.*







YUP. MANY NEW *FRIENDS* AND A VERY *UNPLANNED CRUSH*.

IT WAS GOING TO BE AN *INTERESTING* AUTUMN.

BY THE WAY, CHRIS, THE BED...

WAS IT *OKAY*?

*AMAZING!* WHICH REMINDS ME, I HAVE A FEW MORE SMALL IDEAS!

I'M *SHOCKED!*

*NO MORE IDEAS!*

SHUT IT, ALAN!



IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A MORNING CUP OF COFFEE, YET WE WENT BACK TO ALLY'S HOUSE AROUND TWO P.M.

TIME FLIES.

SEE YOU TWO TONIGHT!

YOU BET!



I REMEMBER BEING POSITIVELY GIDDY... WHILE ALLY GOT THOUGHTFUL. SILENT.

IT WAS DURING THE RIDE HOME THAT I STARTED NOTICING HER MOOD SHIFT.

FOR A SHORT WHILE, I TREATED IT AS JUST YOUR AVERAGE, LOST-IN-TOUGHT SILENCE.

BUT IT KEPT GOING ON.

FOR UNCOMFORTABLY TOO LONG.

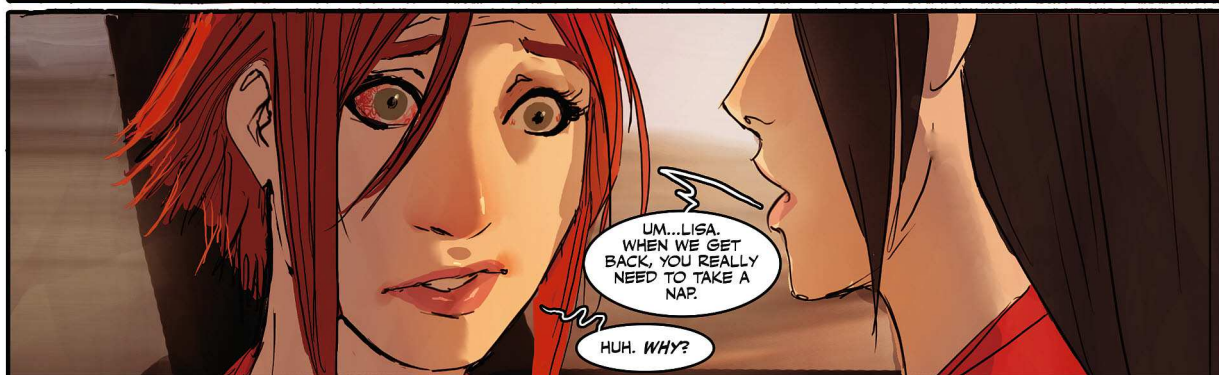
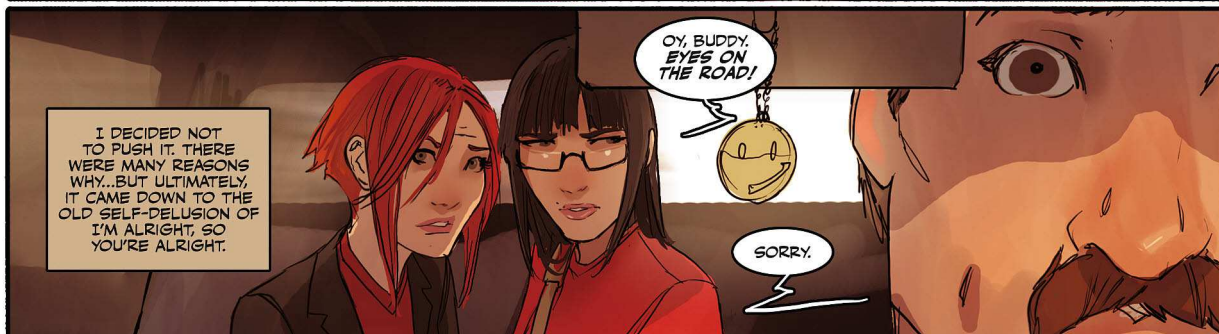


UM...ALLY? ARE YOU *ANGRY* ABOUT SOMETHING?

HUH. *ANGRY*? NO, NO. JUST GOT A LOT ON MY MIND.

YOU SURE?







BUT THEN AGAIN,  
MAYBE NOT.

ALLY...YOU  
OKAY?

UM...NO, YEAH...  
IT'S **NOTHING!**  
I JUST HAVE SOME  
WORK I WANT TO  
GET DONE.

THE TONE OF HER VOICE WAS UNMISTAKABLE.  
IT WAS THE TONE ONE USES TO CHASE AWAY A  
PECKY **DISTRACTION** RUINING THE  
CONCENTRATION NEEDED TO KEEP THEIR SMILE ON.

AND OF COURSE, THERE WAS  
THE EVER-SO-POPULAR, "**NOTHING.**"

"NOTHING" IS A CROOKED, POORLY FITTED  
DISGUISE THAT HIDES OUR PROBLEMS.

A BULGE IN THE CARPET UNDER  
WHICH WE SWEEPED OUR TROUBLES.

I *WOULD* KNOW. I USED MY  
FAIR SHARE OF "**NOTHING'S**" OVER  
TIME. ADMITTING YOUR  
VULNERABILITY IS A TEST OF TRUST.

IRONIC, AIN'T IT?

I GUESS, IN A WAY, IT WAS  
EVEN WORSE FOR HER.

SHE WAS A DOMME.

IN FRONT OF ME SHE WANTED TO SEEM  
STRONG...ALWAYS IN CONTROL.

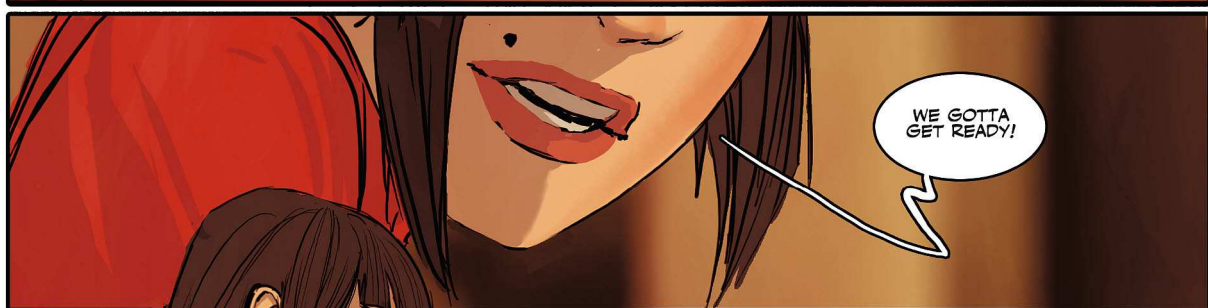
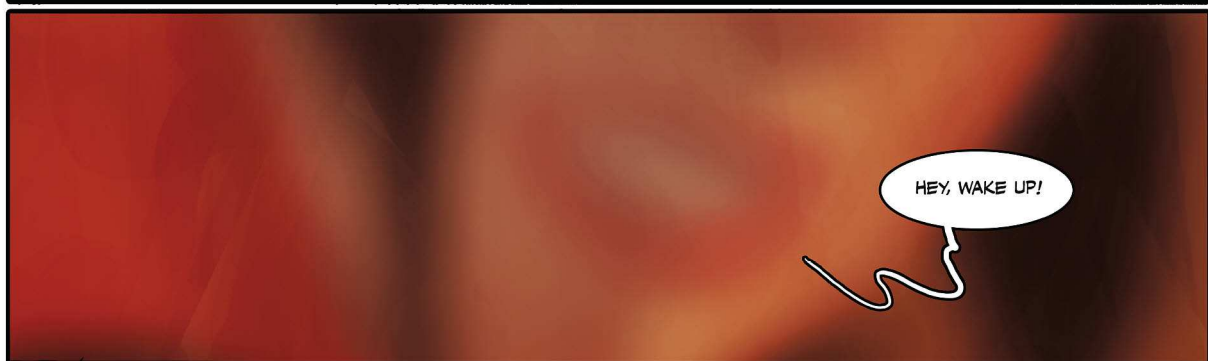
"**TIS BUT A SCRATCH!**" SAID THE BLACK  
KNIGHT, WHILE BLEEDING TO DEATH.

IT WAS A MASK. A BIT OF  
ROLEPLAYING TAKEN TOO FAR.

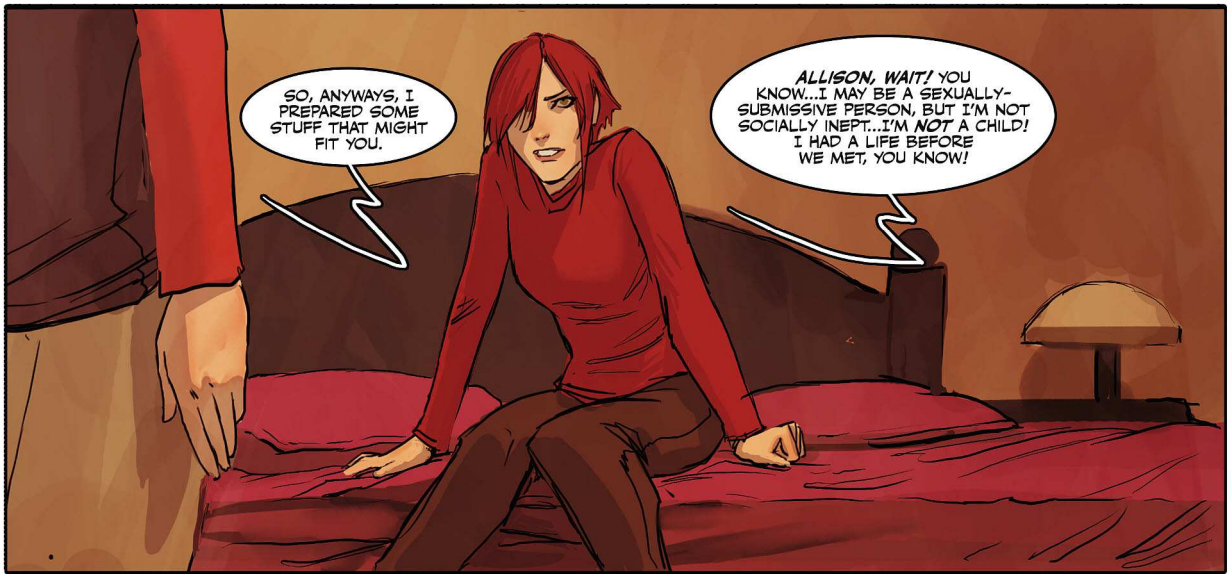
BUT THEN AGAIN, I WORE ONE MYSELF.  
A MASK OF SOMEONE WHO WAS **TOTALLY**  
**NOT** CRUSHING ON HER.

FUNNY THING IS...ONE OF THOSE  
TWO MASKS WAS GOING TO  
CRACK A LITTLE THAT VERY EVENING.

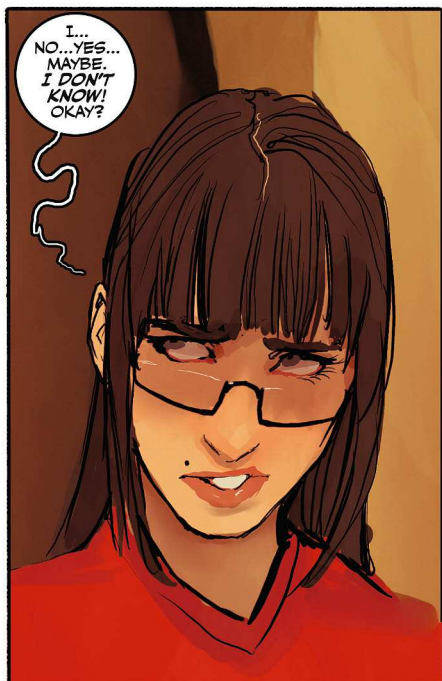
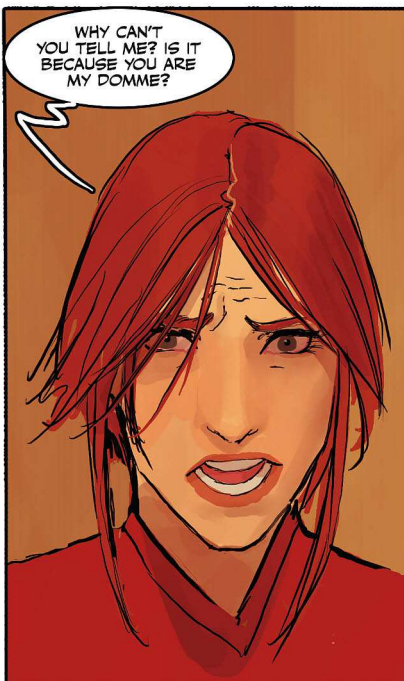
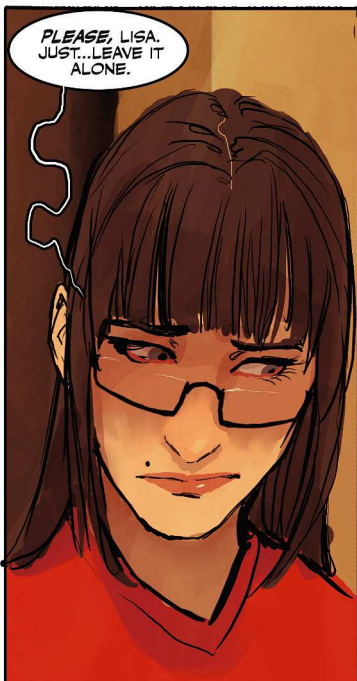




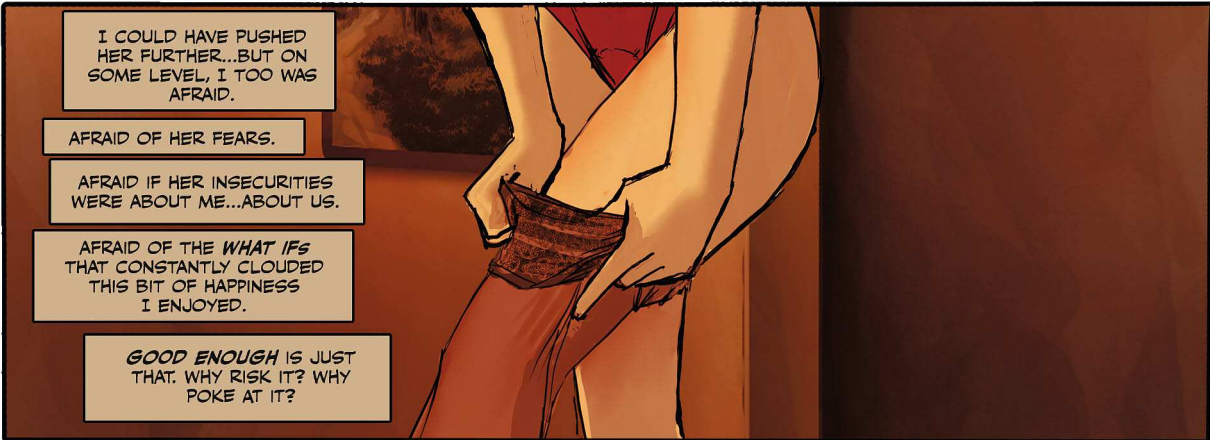












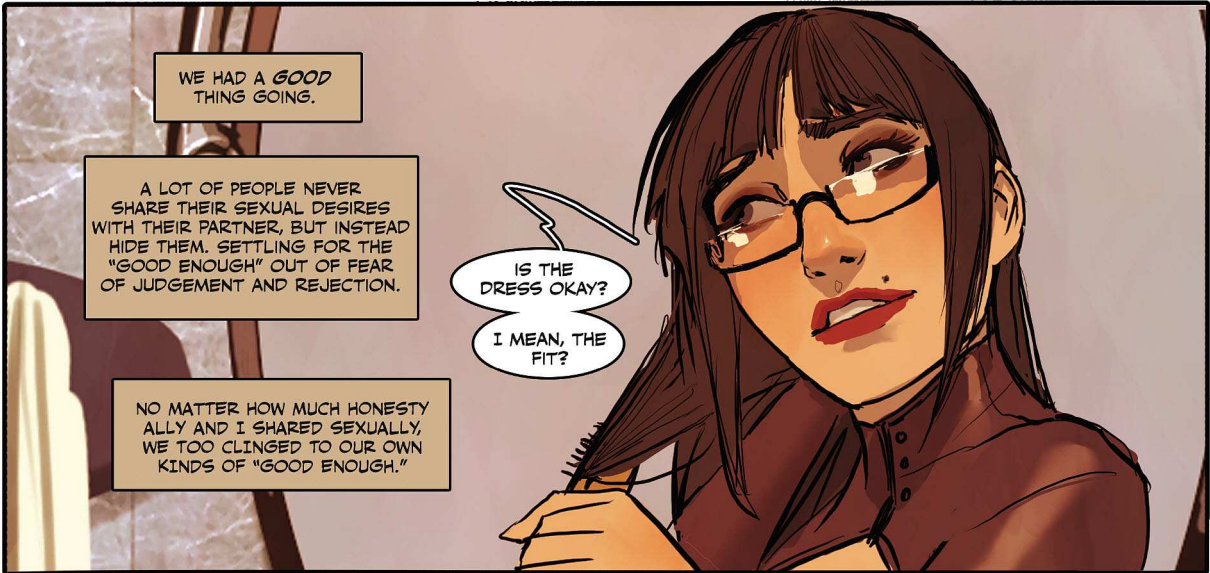
I COULD HAVE PUSHED HER FURTHER...BUT ON SOME LEVEL, I TOO WAS AFRAID.

AFRAID OF HER FEARS.

AFRAID IF HER INSECURITIES WERE ABOUT ME...ABOUT US.

AFRAID OF THE *WHAT IF*s THAT CONSTANTLY CLOUDED THIS BIT OF HAPPINESS I ENJOYED.

*GOOD ENOUGH* IS JUST THAT. WHY RISK IT? WHY POKE AT IT?

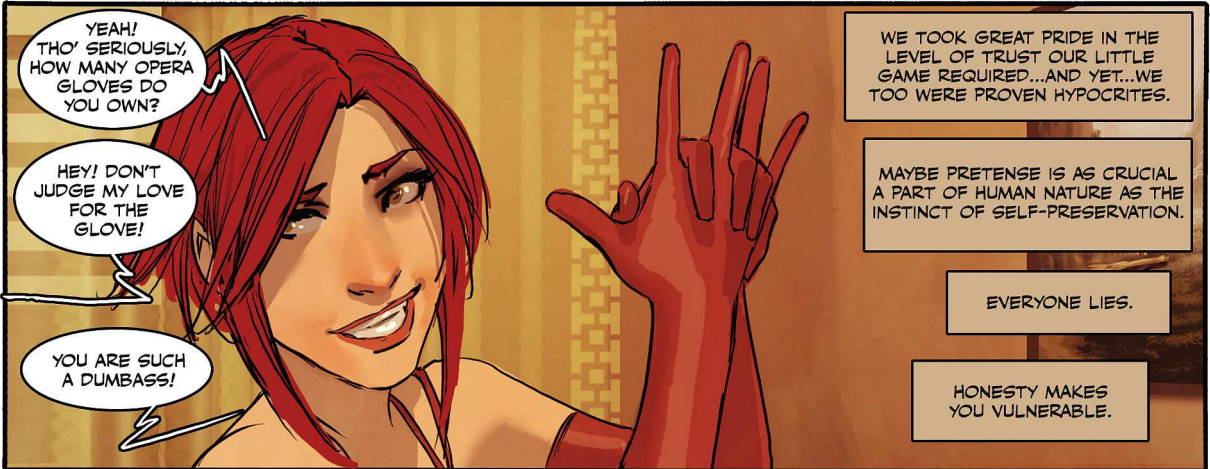


WE HAD A *GOOD* THING GOING.

A LOT OF PEOPLE NEVER SHARE THEIR SEXUAL DESIRES WITH THEIR PARTNER, BUT INSTEAD HIDE THEM. SETTling FOR THE "GOOD ENOUGH" OUT OF FEAR OF JUDGEMENT AND REJECTION.

IS THE DRESS OKAY?  
I MEAN, THE FIT?

NO MATTER HOW MUCH HONESTY ALLY AND I SHARED SEXUALLY, WE TOO CLINGED TO OUR OWN KINDS OF "GOOD ENOUGH."



YEAH! THO' SERIOUSLY, HOW MANY OPERA GLOVES DO YOU OWN?

HEY! DON'T JUDGE MY LOVE FOR THE GLOVE!

YOU ARE SUCH A DUMBASS!

WE TOOK GREAT PRIDE IN THE LEVEL OF TRUST OUR LITTLE GAME REQUIRED...AND YET...WE TOO WERE PROVEN HYPOCRITES.

MAYBE PRETENSE IS AS CRUCIAL A PART OF HUMAN NATURE AS THE INSTINCT OF SELF-PRESERVATION.

EVERYONE LIES.

HONESTY MAKES YOU VULNERABLE.



YOU SURE TALK TOUGH WHEN I HAVE NO NIPPLE CLAMPS AROUND!

HEH!

IT SHATTERS THE *ILLUSION* WE ACHIEVE BY CAREFULLY APPLYING OUR MASKS.





AND I WON'T LIE.  
AN ILLUSION CAN  
BE IMPRESSIVE.

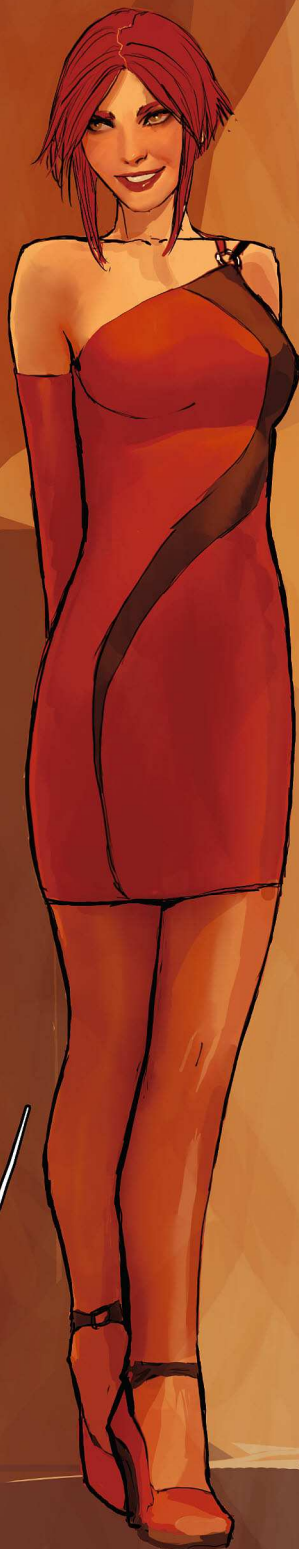
A SIMPLE CHANGE OF CLOTHES  
AND ALLY WAS ONCE AGAIN  
SHIELDED BY HER DOMINATRIX  
AURA OF AWESOMENESS...

WELL, MOSTLY  
SHIELDED.

YEAH..I TAKE IT ALL  
BACK. YOU **ARE** STICKING  
NEAR ME.. BUT FOR  
**BRAGGING RIGHTS!**

**BRAGGING  
RIGHTS, HUH?**

I'M OKAY  
WITH **THAT!**





SO...MY FIRST  
NIGHT AT THE CRIMSON...

IT WAS...ENLIGHTENING  
IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.







TO SOME DEGREE I WAS AWARE THAT NO MATTER HOW WELL I PREPARED MENTALLY, I WAS PROBABLY GONNA BE...HMMM...IMPRESSED?

STUNNED?

IT'S HARD TO PICK A PROPER WORD WHEN YOU ARE STARING ENTRANCED... BARELY BELIEVING YOUR OWN EYES.

OTHERS IN OUR GANG WERE USED TO THIS. EVEN ALLY HAS SEEN A FAIR SHARE OF THESE PERFORMANCES, BUT TO ME THIS WAS NEW.

IT WAS JUST NOT THE SAME THING WATCHING THIS STUFF ON MOVIES AND PICTURES...

AS WATCHING IT LIVE.

AT NO MOMENT DID IT BECOME EXPLICIT. IT WAS LIKE A DANCE THAT HAPPENED TO INVOLVE BINDING...

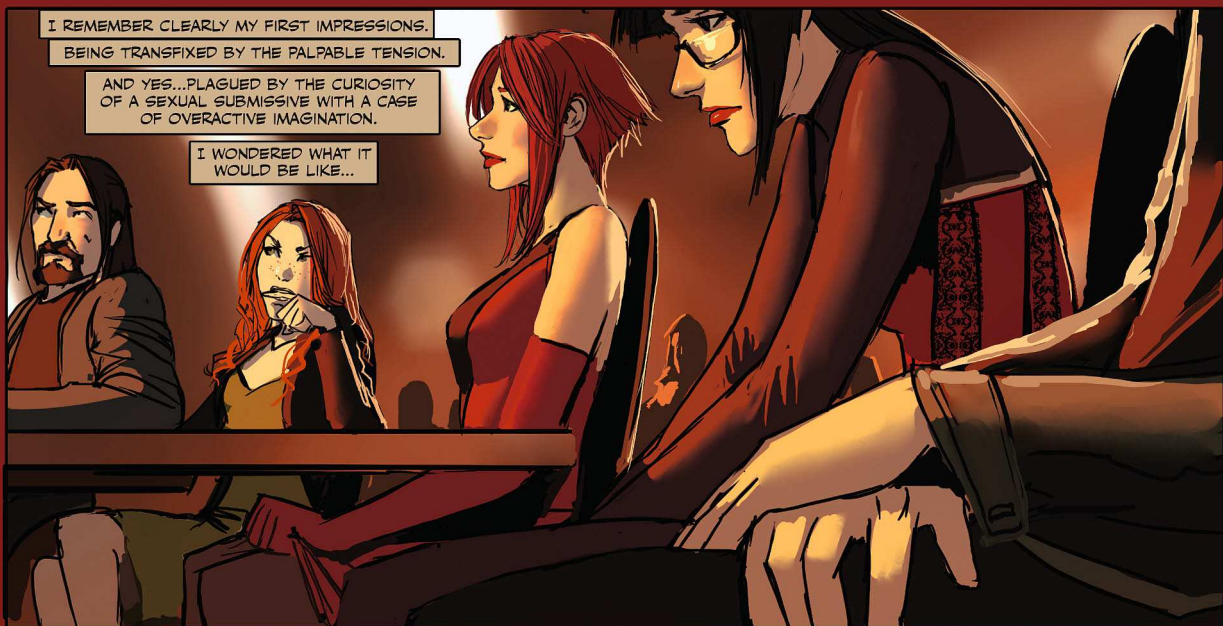
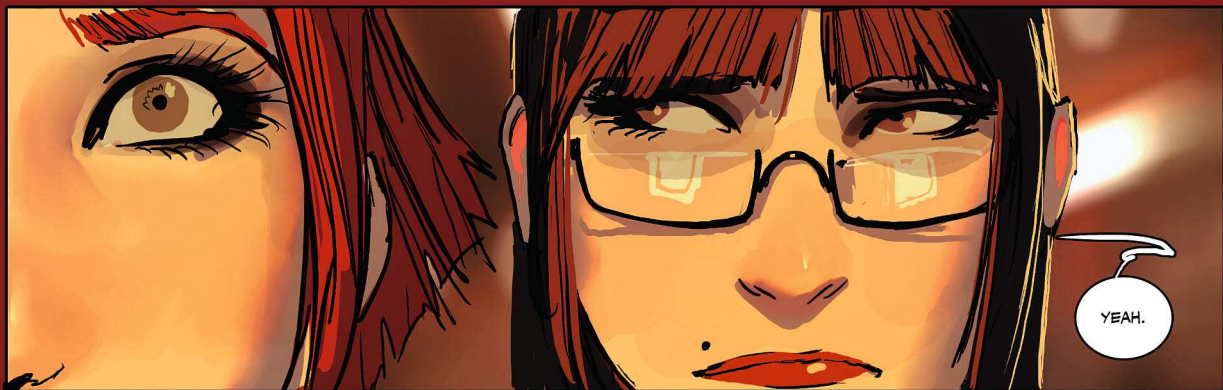
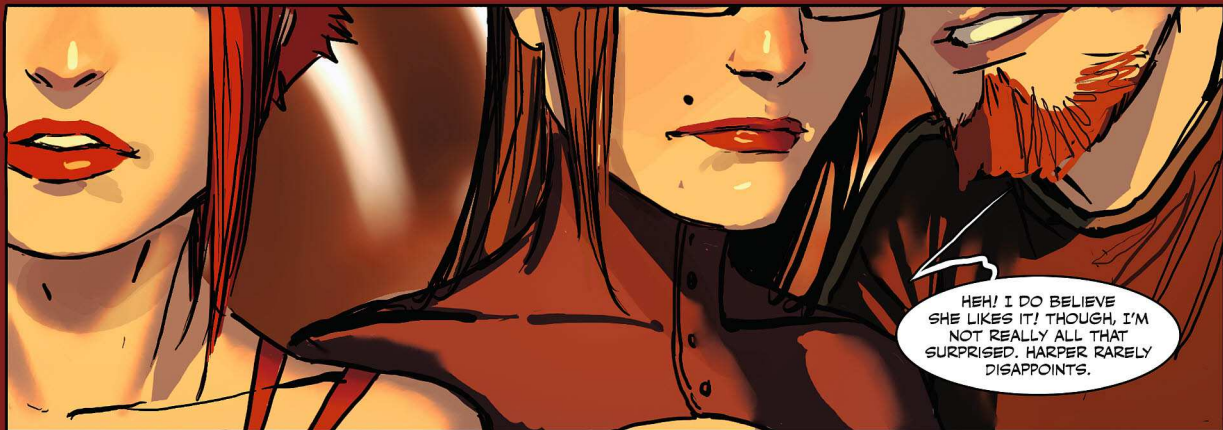


AND YET, THE SENSUAL SIDE OF WHAT I WAS SEEING WAS...



INTOXICATING.









SO, LISA.  
IMPRESSIONS?

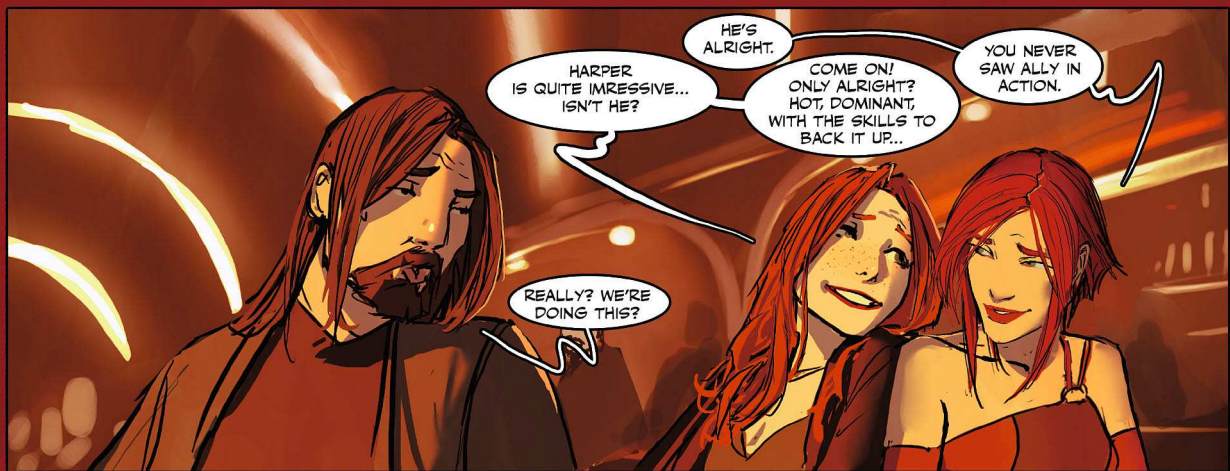
IT'S...  
LOVELY.

HEH, NO  
WORRIES. EVERYONE  
IS A BIT STUNNED  
THE FIRST TIME.

TRUST ME...  
I WAS TOO, AND  
I MADE MOST  
OF THEIR  
GEAR.

HEH!

I MEAN IT!  
THE FIRST TIME I  
SAW MY CREATIONS  
USED SO WELL, I  
TEARED UP!



HARPER  
IS QUITE IMRESSIVE...  
ISN'T HE?

HE'S  
ALRIGHT.

COME ON!  
ONLY ALRIGHT?  
HOT, DOMINANT,  
WITH THE SKILLS TO  
BACK IT UP...

YOU NEVER  
SAW ALLY IN  
ACTION.

REALLY? WE'RE  
DOING THIS?



AH, CASSIE AND TOM.

OH YEAH,  
WE'RE DOING THIS!  
WHAT'CHA GONNA  
DO ABOUT IT?

THEY WERE ONE OF *THOSE* FUCKING  
COUPLES...THOSE WHO ARE SO DEEPLY  
CONNECTED THAT THEY ARE *BROKEN*  
TO THE WORLD AROUND THEM.

THOSE THAT CAN'T GO HANGING  
OUT WITH OTHER COUPLES BECAUSE  
THEY WOULD JUST END UP PISSING  
THE OTHER COUPLES OFF.

WELL...



HOW ABOUT...

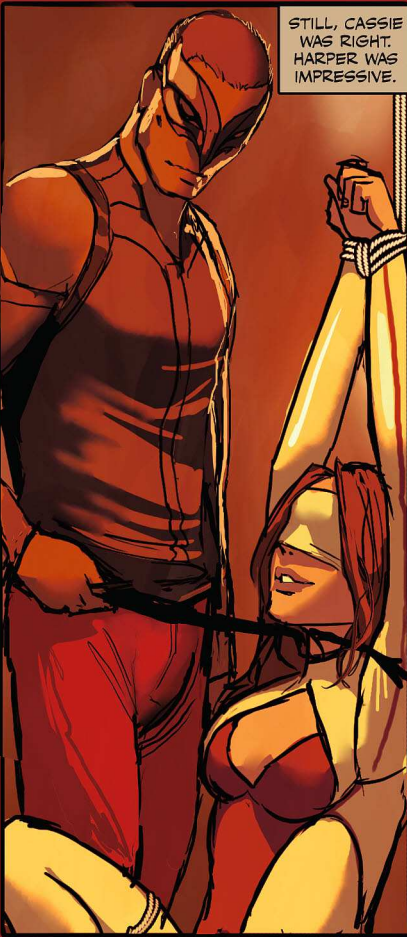
SO DEEPLY LINKED THAT JEALOUSY  
WAS A MERE MEMORY FOR THEM.

OH. *THAT*  
WILL DO IT!

YUP! ON A BAD DAY, YOU WOULD DO  
NOTHING LESS THAN *BLUDGEON* THEM  
WITH THEIR OWN *LOVEY-DOVEYNESS*!  
AND YES, DEAR READER, THEY ARE WELL  
AWARE OF THIS OPINION. I HAVE SHARED  
IT WITH THEM ON *MANY* OCCASIONS.

THEY ALSO KNOW I WOULD  
HAVE THEM *NO OTHER*  
WAY.

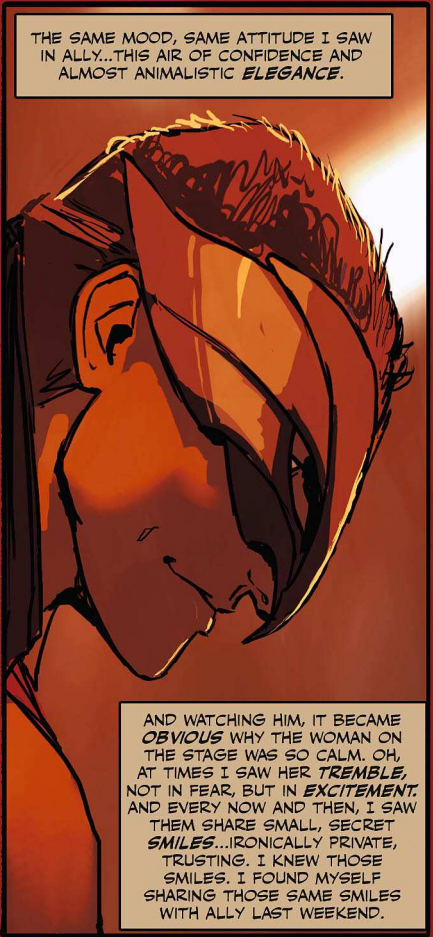




STILL, CASSIE WAS RIGHT. HARPER WAS IMPRESSIVE.



I SAW IT IN HIM...IN HIS BODY LANGUAGE.



THE SAME MOOD, SAME ATTITUDE I SAW IN ALLY...THIS AIR OF CONFIDENCE AND ALMOST ANIMALISTIC *ELEGANCE*.

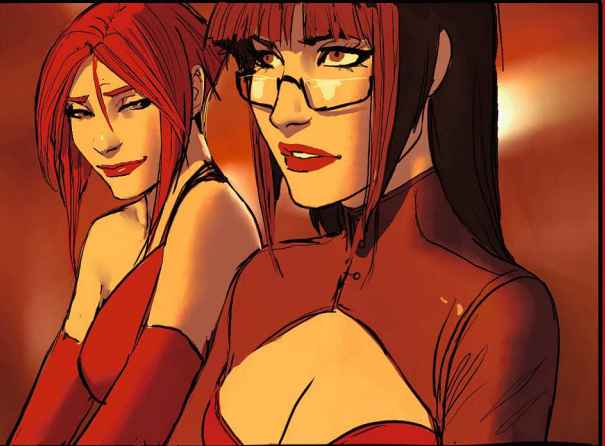
AND WATCHING HIM, IT BECAME *OBVIOUS* WHY THE WOMAN ON THE STAGE WAS SO CALM. OH, AT TIMES I SAW HER *TREMBLE*, NOT IN FEAR, BUT IN *EXCITEMENT*. AND EVERY NOW AND THEN, I SAW THEM SHARE SMALL, SECRET *SMILES*...IRONICALLY PRIVATE, TRUSTING. I KNEW THOSE SMILES. I FOUND MYSELF SHARING THOSE SAME SMILES WITH ALLY LAST WEEKEND.



IT'S FUNNY. THERE WAS A TIME I WOULD HAVE EASILY FALLEN FOR A GUY LIKE HARPER...AND YET...ALL MY THOUGHTS WERE ON ALLY.

YUP! IT WAS TOO LATE FOR ME.

HOW ABOUT I...



UM, YEAH...SO... I GOTTA GO TO THE BATHROOM.

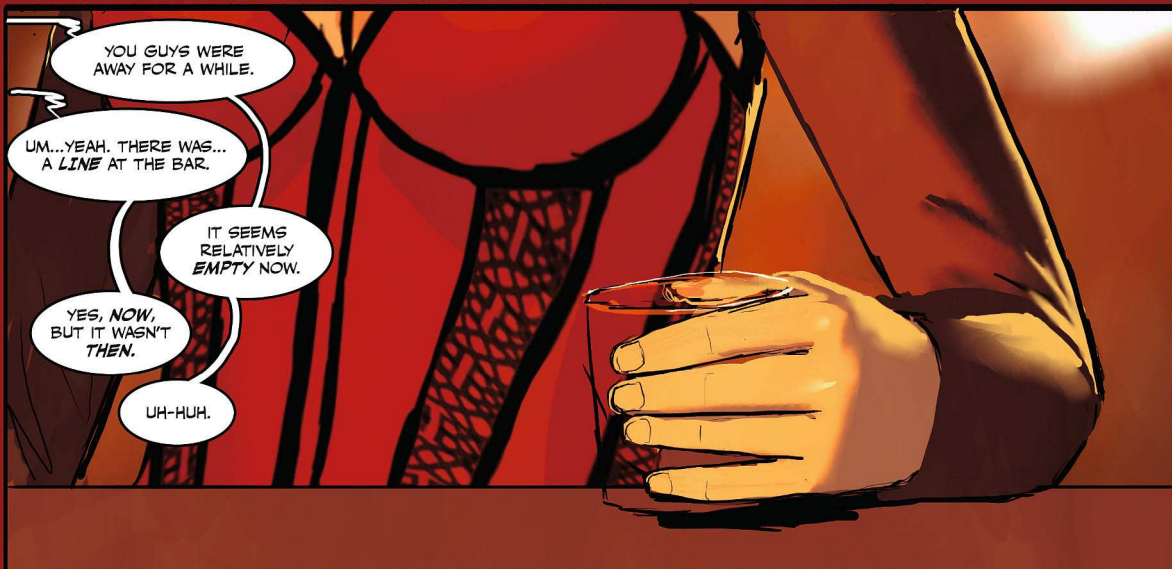
AND...UM... I'M TAKING TOM SO WE CAN GET SOME DRINKS. YOU GUYS WANT SOMETHING?

RUM AND COKE FOR ME.

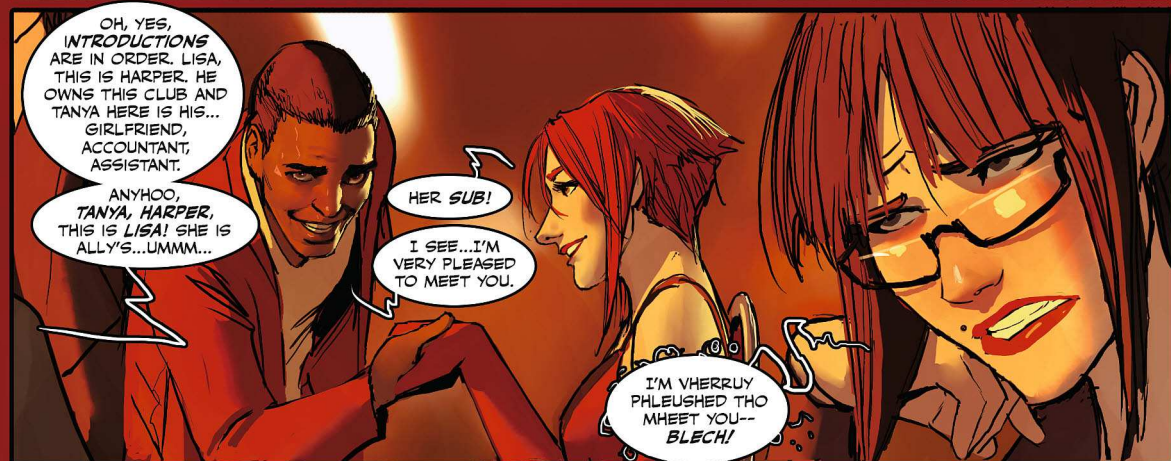
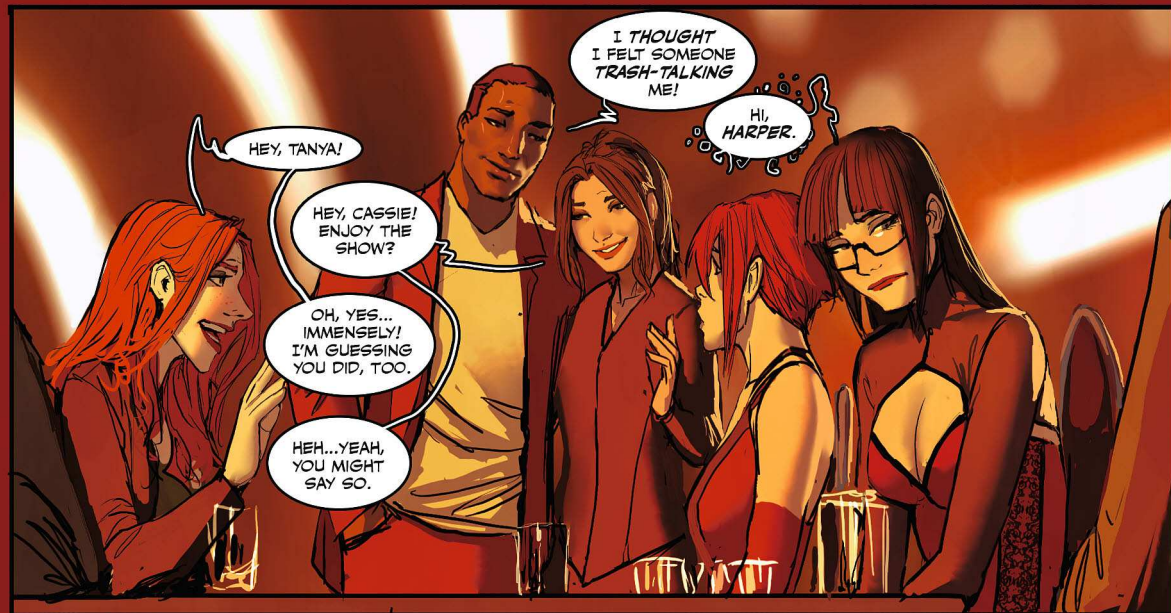
I'LL HAVE A VODKA CRANBERRY.

TOTALLY NOT OFF FOR A QUINCE!











HARPER THOMAS WAS THE OWNER OF THE CRIMSON, AND THAT, OF COURSE, CAME WITH SOME PERKS. WE MOVED TO THE VIP LOUNGE.

ALAS, EVEN THIS PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT DID NOTHING FOR ALLY'S ATTITUDE. I KNEW SOMETHING WAS EATING HER UP, BUT IT WAS JUST AS OBVIOUS THAT SHE WASN'T IN THE SHARING MOOD.

SO, INSTEAD OF POKING AT THE BEEHIVE, I DECIDED TO SPEND MY TIME MORE PRODUCTIVELY. I WAS ADAMANT TO TALK TO HARPER'S SUB.

SO, WELCOME TO OUR NEWLY REMODELED VIP LOUNGE!

AS YOU CAN SEE, IT'S NOT QUITE FINISHED YET, BUT I'M EXPECTING THE DECORATIONS TO BE DONE REALLY SOON. RIGHT, ALAN?

TOTALLY ON IT!

BITE ME, ALLY!

LOOKS LIKE A CHRISTMAS TREE BLEW CHUNKS ALL OVER THIS PLACE!

WHAT WAS HER NAME? TAMMY?

TALLY?

TILLY?



SO...UM... TANYA, WAS IT?

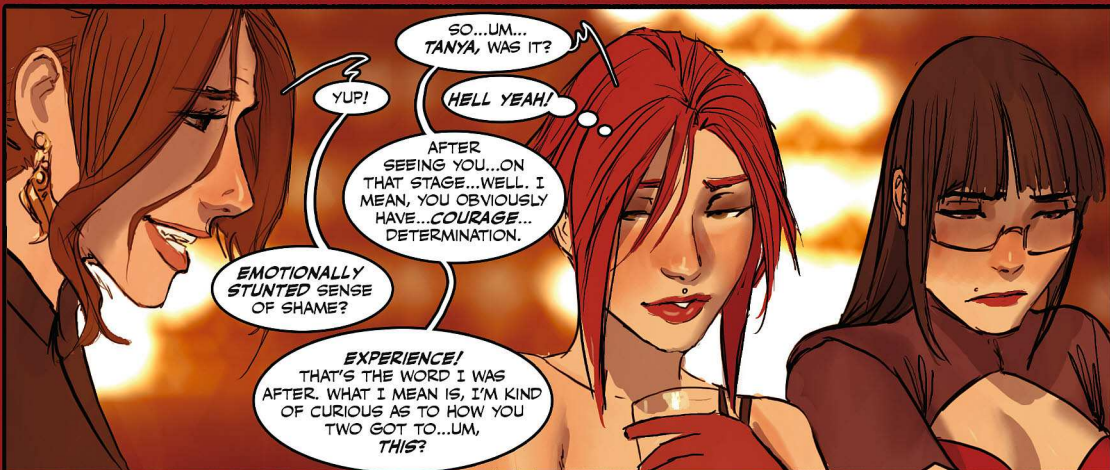
YUP!

HELL YEAH!

AFTER SEEING YOU...ON THAT STAGE...WELL, I MEAN, YOU OBVIOUSLY HAVE...*COURAGE*... DETERMINATION.

EMOTIONALLY STUNTED SENSE OF SHAME?

*EXPERIENCE!* THAT'S THE WORD I WAS AFTER. WHAT I MEAN IS, I'M KIND OF CURIOUS AS TO HOW YOU TWO GOT TO...UM, *THIS*?



OH...OUR'S WAS A CLASSIC TALE. BOY MEETS GIRL...

...BECAUSE BOY NEEDS AN ACCOUNTANT FOR HIS *BDSM CLUB*...

HILARITY ENSUES.

OKAY, THAT WAS SO *TOUCHING*, I'M A LITTLE BIT *TEARY-EYED* RIGHT NOW!

HEH!







WELL...THERE WAS FRIENDSHIP AND ROMANCE, MOST IMPORTANTLY, TRUST. WE DIDN'T JUST START OFF LIKE THIS. SOMETIMES TAKING THINGS SLOW GETS YOU FAR.

SO WHAT ABOUT YOU?

OH, MINE IS A TALE THAT STRAIGHT UP RIVALS *SHAKESPEARE*! STOCKPILED SEXUAL FRUSTRATION MADE ME TAKE A RISKY *LEAP OF FAITH*. LUCKILY, I LANDED ON *ALLY*! AND *UNDER* *ALLY*!

SHURE DID!



I HOPE YOU DON'T TAKE MY CURIOSITY AS *PRYING* INTO YOUR PERSONAL LIFE.

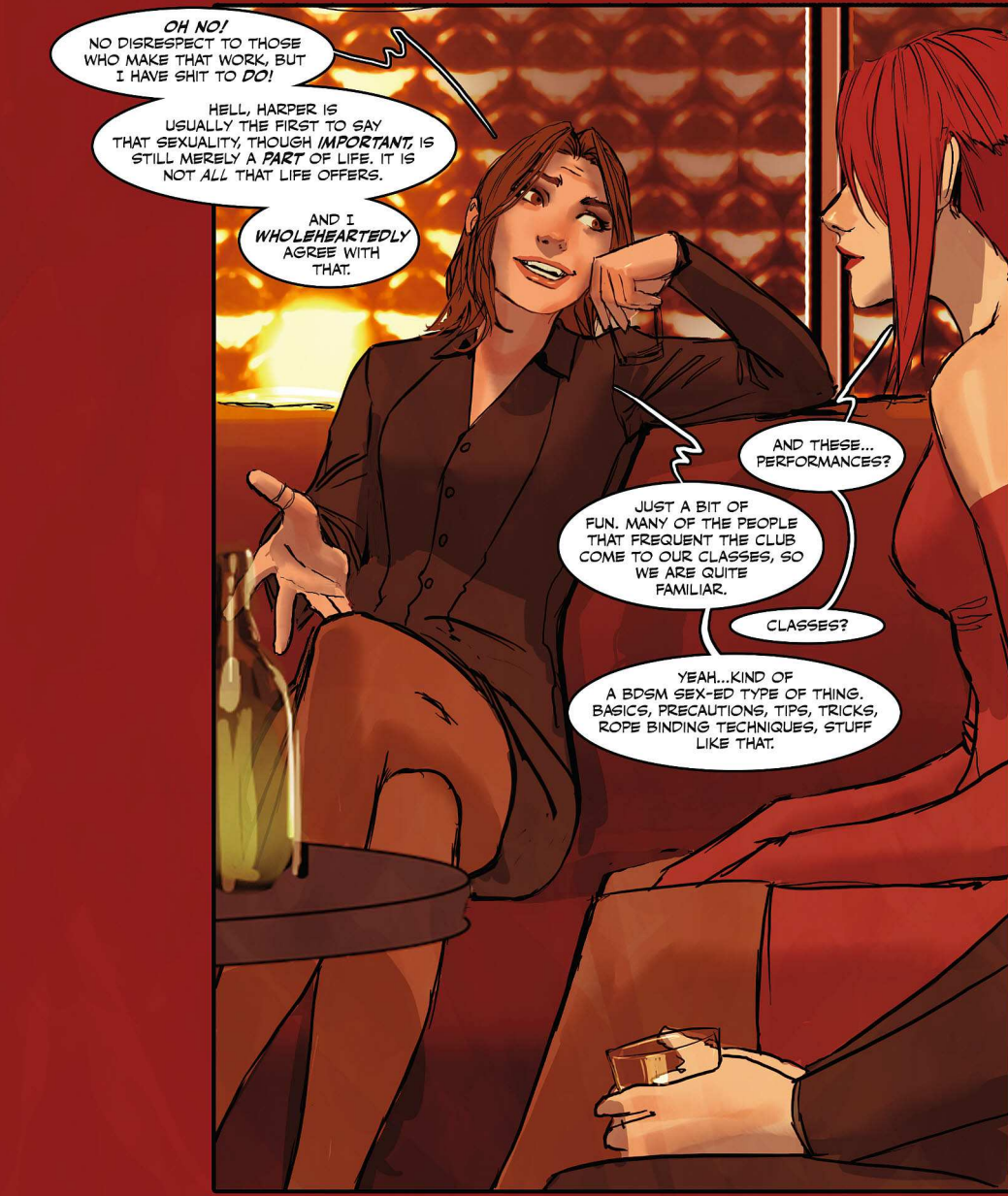


NO WORRIES. YOU JUST HAD A GOOD *HOUR'S WORTH* OF A LOOK AT MY PERSONAL LIFE BACK THERE, SO I THINK WE'RE *FINE*.

HEH. THING IS, I NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO ACTUALLY *TALK* TO ANOTHER SUB. I MEAN THE *INTERNET* IS NICE AND ALL BUT...

OH, DROP BY HERE MORE OFTEN AND YOU'LL MEET ALL KINDS OF SUBS. FROM RELUCTANT NEW ONES, TO FULLY DEDICATED 24/7.

ARE YOU...



*OH NO!* NO DISRESPECT TO THOSE WHO MAKE THAT WORK, BUT I HAVE SHIT TO *DO*!

HELL, HARPER IS USUALLY THE FIRST TO SAY THAT SEXUALITY, THOUGH *IMPORTANT*, IS STILL MERELY A *PART* OF LIFE. IT IS NOT *ALL* THAT LIFE OFFERS.

AND I *WHOLEHEARTEDLY* AGREE WITH THAT.

AND THESE... *PERFORMANCES*?

JUST A BIT OF FUN. MANY OF THE PEOPLE THAT FREQUENT THE CLUB COME TO OUR *CLASSES*, SO WE ARE QUITE FAMILIAR.

*CLASSES*?

YEAH...KIND OF A BDSM SEX-ED TYPE OF THING. BASICS, PRECAUTIONS, TIPS, TRICKS, ROPE BINDING TECHNIQUES, STUFF LIKE THAT.





OH YEAH. I SAW THAT STUFF ONLINE. IT'S IMPRESSIVE...AND COMPLEX!



IT DOES TAKE PRACTICE, BUT LUCKILY, YOUR MISTRESS THERE IS QUITE SKILLED HERSELF.

SHE IS?



UM...WELL, IF SHE EVER WANTS--

I DON'T!

I TOLD YOU, I'M NOT BIG ON ROPES.

I JUST... DON'T LIKE THEM.



BECAUSE OF MARION?

HARPER.

WELL?

HARPER, STOP IT!

ALLY...



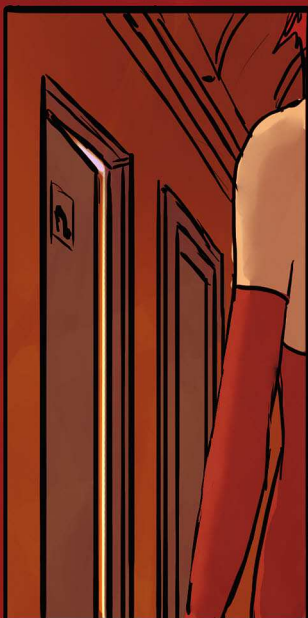
FUCK YOU, HARPER!

YOU DON'T KNOW SHIT!

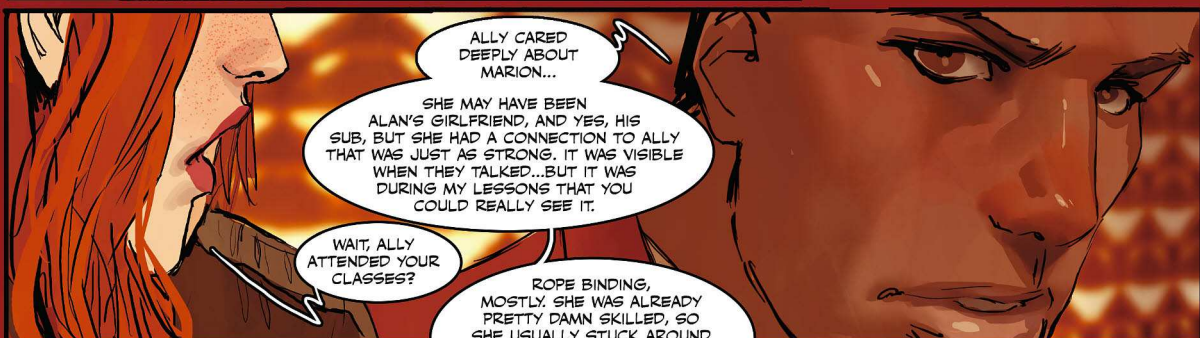
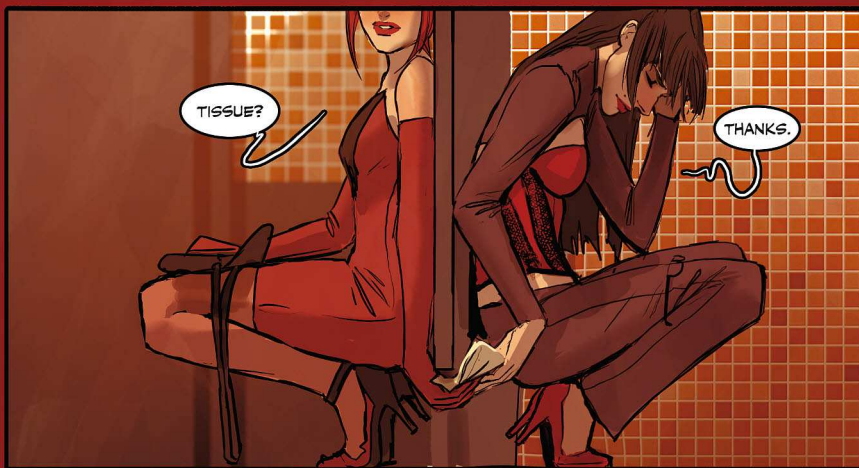
ALLY, WAIT!

WHAT HAPPENED TO MARION WAS HER OWN FAULT, AND HER'S ALONE.













IT IS TRUE THAT I HAVE ONLY KNOWN ALLY IN PERSON FOR TWO WEEKS...BUT NOT EVEN SINCE OUR FIRST TIME HAVE I SEEN HER THIS NERVOUS...

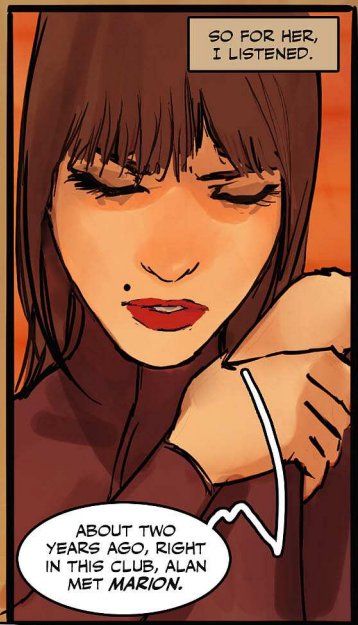
AND THEN I REALIZED: WHATEVER WAS EATING HER WAS EFFECTIVE ENOUGH TO COMPLETELY SOBER HER UP...

AND I WAS MADE AWARE OF SOMETHING ELSE. RIGHT THEN AND THERE, I WAS AFRAID... I SUDDENLY DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW.



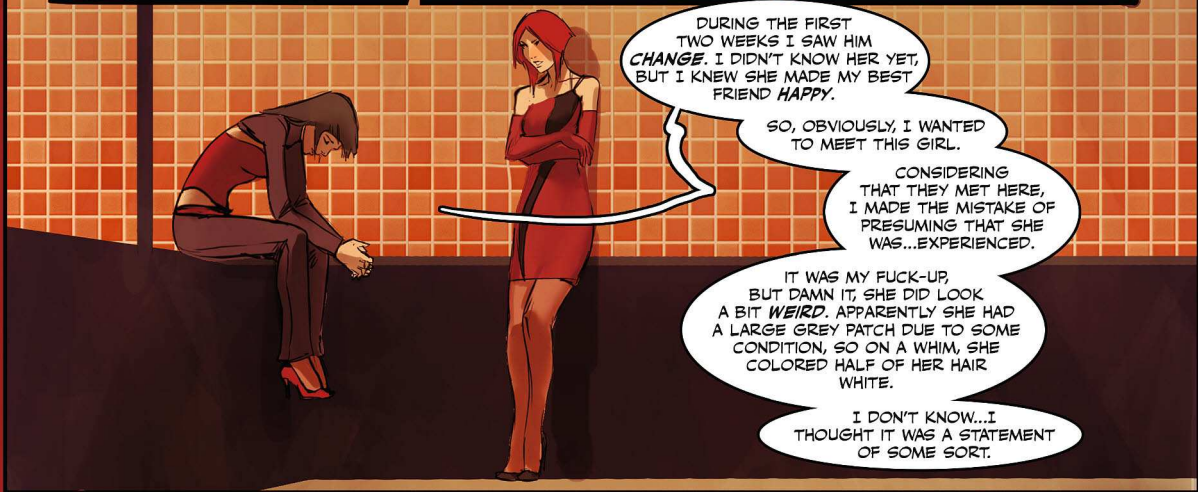
BUT ALLY...SHE NEEDED TO TELL ME.

SO...I GUESS I SHOULD START FROM THE BEGINNING.



SO FOR HER, I LISTENED.

ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO, RIGHT IN THIS CLUB, ALAN MET MARION.



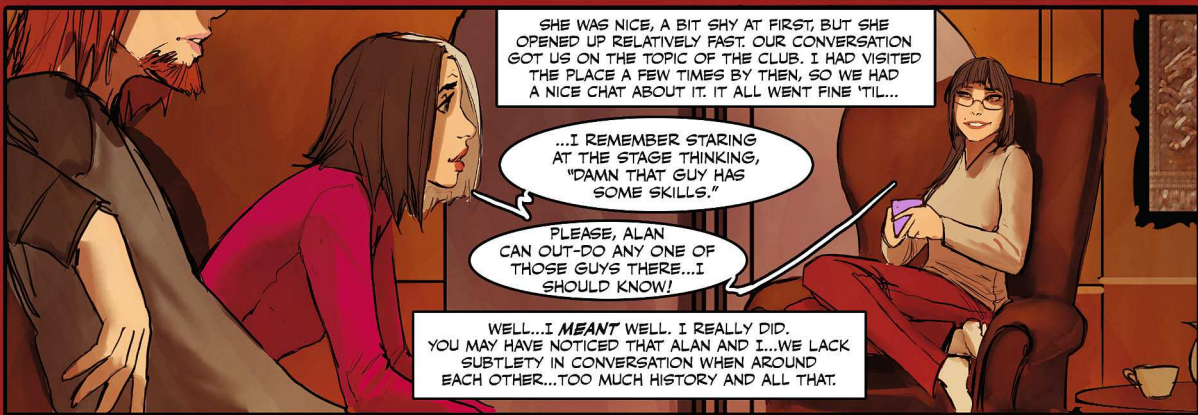
DURING THE FIRST TWO WEEKS I SAW HIM *CHANGE*. I DIDN'T KNOW HER YET, BUT I KNEW SHE MADE MY BEST FRIEND *HAPPY*.

SO, OBVIOUSLY, I WANTED TO MEET THIS GIRL.

CONSIDERING THAT THEY MET HERE, I MADE THE MISTAKE OF PRESUMING THAT SHE WAS...EXPERIENCED.

IT WAS MY FUCK-UP, BUT DAMN IT, SHE DID LOOK A BIT *WEIRD*. APPARENTLY SHE HAD A LARGE GREY PATCH DUE TO SOME CONDITION, SO ON A WHIM, SHE COLORED HALF OF HER HAIR WHITE.

I DON'T KNOW...I THOUGHT IT WAS A STATEMENT OF SOME SORT.



SHE WAS NICE, A BIT SHY AT FIRST, BUT SHE OPENED UP RELATIVELY FAST. OUR CONVERSATION GOT US ON THE TOPIC OF THE CLUB. I HAD VISITED THE PLACE A FEW TIMES BY THEN, SO WE HAD A NICE CHAT ABOUT IT. IT ALL WENT FINE 'TIL...

...I REMEMBER STARING AT THE STAGE THINKING, "DAMN THAT GUY HAS SOME SKILLS."

PLEASE, ALAN CAN OUT-DO ANY ONE OF THOSE GUYS THERE...I SHOULD KNOW!

WELL...I *MEANT* WELL. I REALLY DID. YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED THAT ALAN AND I...WE LACK SUBTLETY IN CONVERSATION WHEN AROUND EACH OTHER...TOO MUCH HISTORY AND ALL THAT.





ANYHOO, I  
FUCKED UP!

WAAAAAIT  
A MINUTE!



LISTEN, BUDDY! JUST BECAUSE  
I'M A *SUB* DOESN'T MEAN I'LL  
JUST ROLL OVER FOR A FUCKING  
*THREESOME* HERE!

COME TO THINK OF  
IT...YOU REMIND  
ME OF HER A BIT.



THE *HELL*  
ARE YOU  
TALKING  
ABOUT?



SO, YEAH.

OUR FIRST ENCOUNTER  
COULD HAVE GONE *BETTER*.




ALAN WAS A MESS  
THAT WEEK. YOU SEE, MY PRESUMPTION  
OF HER EXPERIENCE WAS WAY OFF-BASE.  
MARION WAS JUST LIKE YOU, A TRUE  
SUB, BUT A NEWBIE.



I'M GUESSING  
YOU *FIXED* IT?

OH YEAH. I GOT HER  
TO MEET ME. WE TALKED  
FOR *HOURS*.





AND ONCE SHE OPENED UP,  
I SAW WHY ALAN LIKED HER.  
BEYOND THE MERE  
COMPATIBILITY OF SEXUAL  
TASTE, MARION WAS FUNNY,  
CLEVER, AND QUICK TO SMILE.

BACK THEN I KNEW SOME  
PEOPLE FROM THE CLUB,  
BUT I WOULDN'T GO SO FAR  
AS CALLING THEM FRIENDS.  
THEY WERE *ACQUAINTANCES*  
AT BEST...

MARION WAS A *FRIEND*. FOR  
THE FIRST TIME, I HAD A GIRL  
TO TALK TO, IN FRONT OF  
WHOM I COULD BE MYSELF.

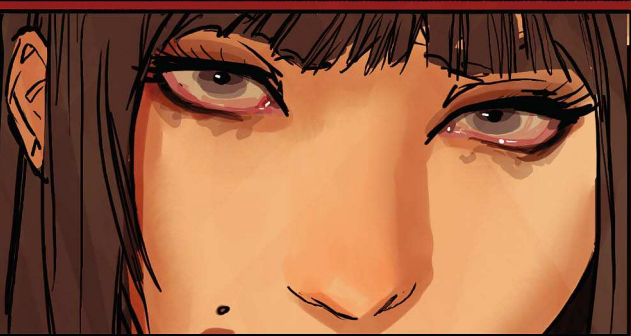
SHE WAS *DIFFERENT*  
FROM ALAN. SHE  
LACKED HIS SPECIFIC  
BRAND OF TEASING  
DICKISHNESS.

BUT SHE REPLACED  
IT WITH *WARMTH*.

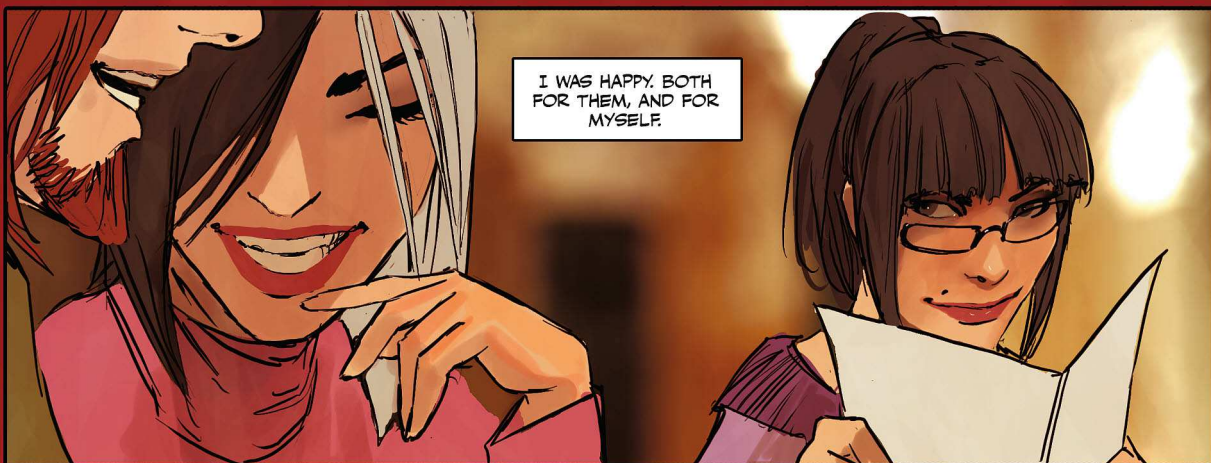
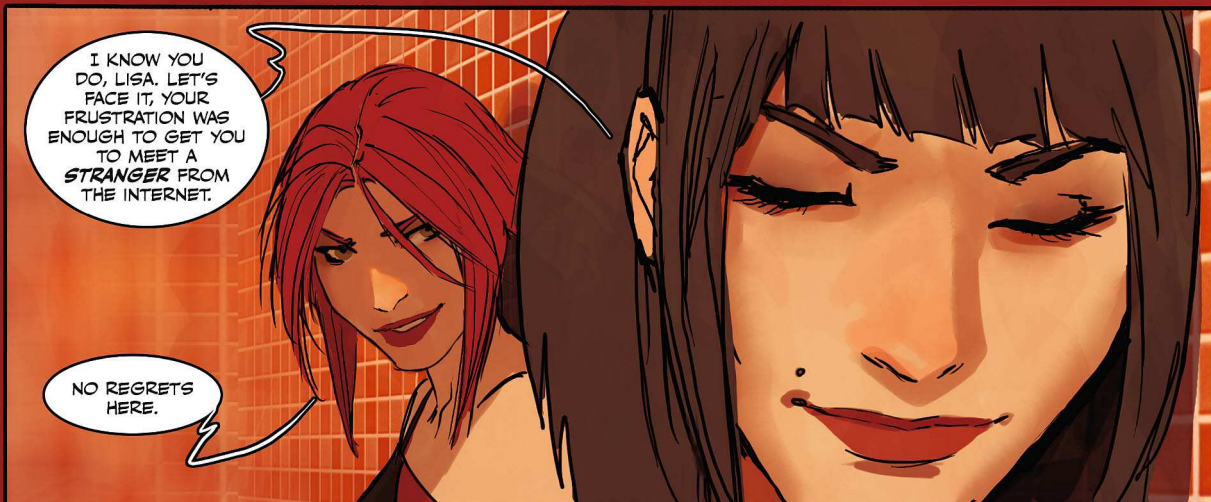


I KNOW HOW  
THAT FEELS...

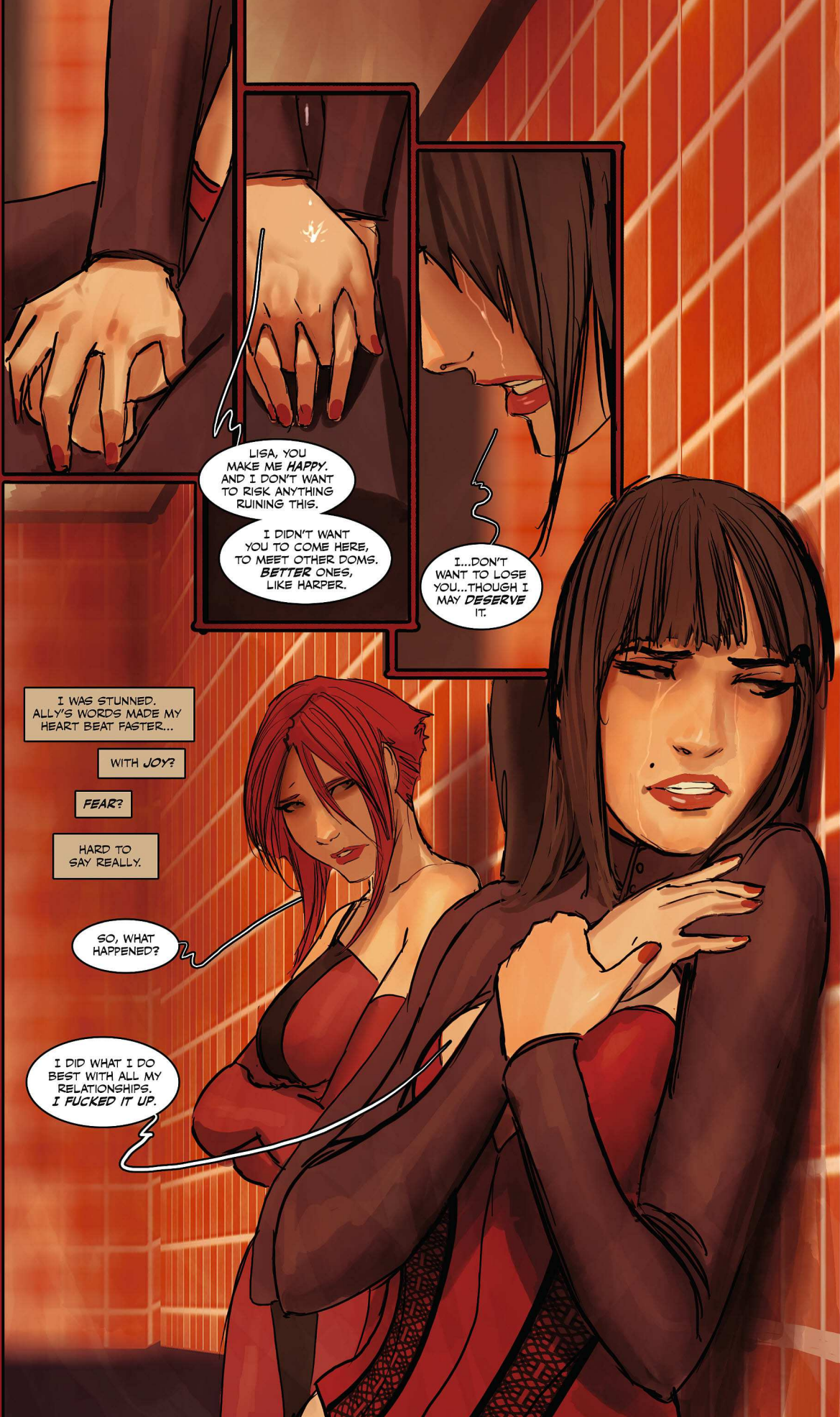
NOT HAVING  
ANYONE WITH WHOM  
YOU CAN TRULY  
BE *YOURSELF*.











LISA, YOU  
MAKE ME **HAPPY**.  
AND I DON'T WANT  
TO RISK ANYTHING  
RUINING THIS.

I DIDN'T WANT  
YOU TO COME HERE,  
TO MEET OTHER DOMS.  
**BETTER** ONES,  
LIKE HARPER.

I...DON'T  
WANT TO LOSE  
YOU...THOUGH I  
MAY **DESERVE**  
IT.

I WAS STUNNED.  
ALLY'S WORDS MADE MY  
HEART BEAT FASTER...

WITH JOY?

**FEAR?**

HARD TO  
SAY REALLY.

SO, WHAT  
HAPPENED?

I DID WHAT I DO  
BEST WITH ALL MY  
RELATIONSHIPS.  
**I FUCKED IT UP.**





HARPER?

WHY DID YOU STOP?

YOU SAID THERE WAS THIS ONE TIME?



I DON'T KNOW... MAYBE I BLABBED *ENOUGH* FOR TONIGHT.

JUST *TELL* THEM! THEY KNOW MOST, IF NOT EVERYTHING, ALREADY.



IT WAS ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO...EARLY DAYS OF THE CLUB *BEFORE* TOM AND YOU STARTED VISITING...

ALLY, ALAN, AND MARION WERE *INSEPARABLE* IN THOSE DAYS.

AS I SAID, SHE WOULD EVEN JOIN THEM DURING MY LESSONS, MOSTLY TO MESS WITH THEM, BUT IT WAS ALL IN GOOD SPIRIT.



A CLASS CLOWN, HUH?



USUALLY, YES. BUT THEN I GOT TO SEE HER IN ACTION...



SO MANY TIMES IN THE LAST TWO YEARS I CONSIDERED COMPLETELY *GIVING UP* ON ALL OF THIS.

ON BDSM?

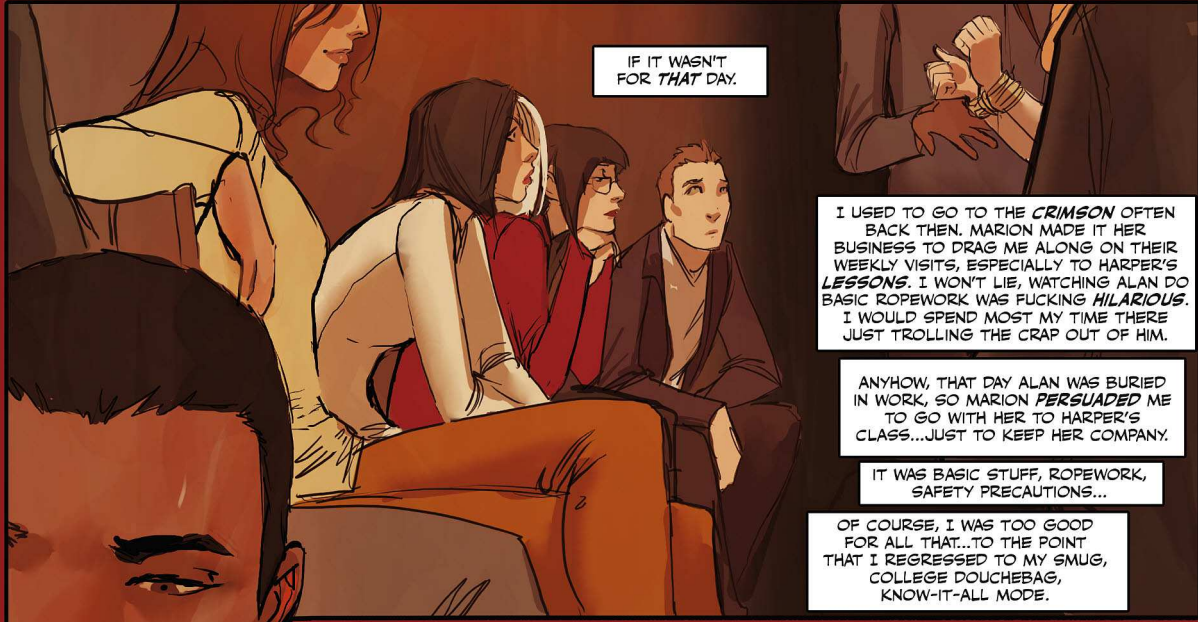
YES.

SEE, MARION AND ALAN...

I STILL THINK THEY COULD HAVE WORKED OUT *FINE*...

IF IT WASN'T FOR *ME*.





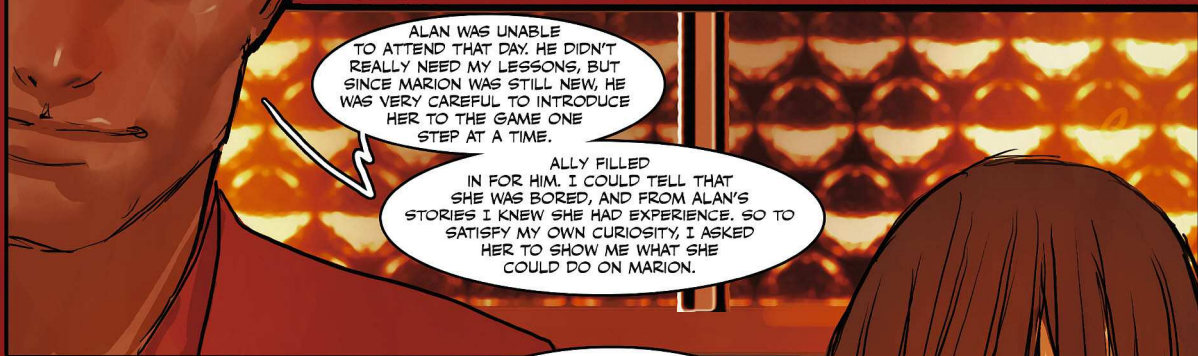
IF IT WASN'T  
FOR *THAT* DAY.

I USED TO GO TO THE *CRIMSON* OFTEN BACK THEN. MARION MADE IT HER BUSINESS TO DRAG ME ALONG ON THEIR WEEKLY VISITS, ESPECIALLY TO HARPER'S *LESSONS*. I WON'T LIE, WATCHING ALAN DO BASIC ROPEWORK WAS *FUCKING HILARIOUS*. I WOULD SPEND MOST MY TIME THERE JUST TROLLING THE CRAP OUT OF HIM.

ANYHOW, THAT DAY ALAN WAS BURIED IN WORK, SO MARION *PERSUADED* ME TO GO WITH HER TO HARPER'S CLASS....JUST TO KEEP HER COMPANY.

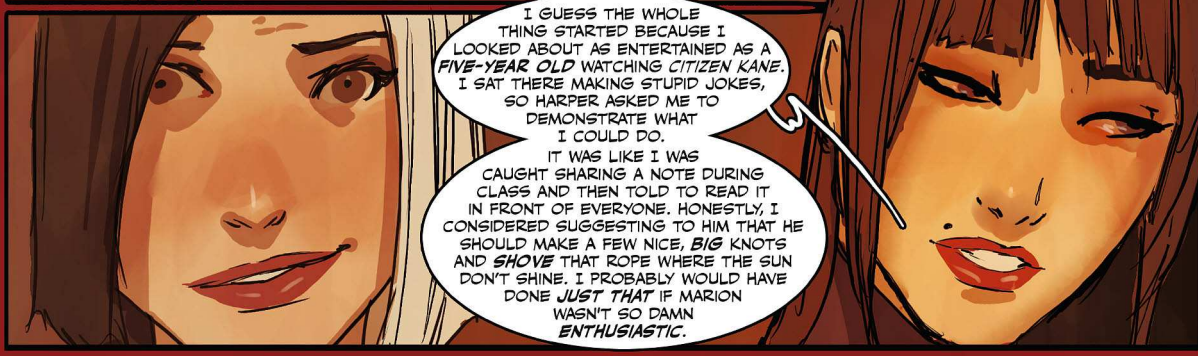
IT WAS BASIC STUFF, ROPEWORK, SAFETY PRECAUTIONS...

OF COURSE, I WAS TOO GOOD FOR ALL THAT...TO THE POINT THAT I REGRESSED TO MY SMUG, COLLEGE DOUCHEBAG, KNOW-IT-ALL MODE.



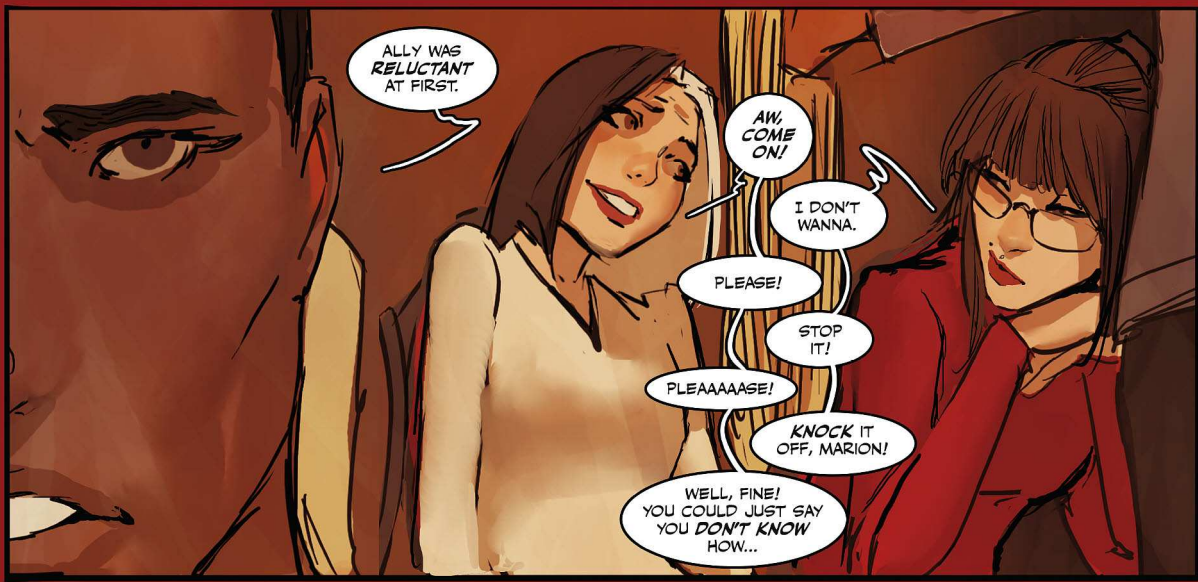
ALAN WAS UNABLE TO ATTEND THAT DAY. HE DIDN'T REALLY NEED MY LESSONS, BUT SINCE MARION WAS STILL NEW, HE WAS VERY CAREFUL TO INTRODUCE HER TO THE GAME ONE STEP AT A TIME.

ALLY FILLED IN FOR HIM. I COULD TELL THAT SHE WAS BORED, AND FROM ALAN'S STORIES I KNEW SHE HAD EXPERIENCE. SO TO SATISFY MY OWN CURIOSITY, I ASKED HER TO SHOW ME WHAT SHE COULD DO ON MARION.



I GUESS THE WHOLE THING STARTED BECAUSE I LOOKED ABOUT AS ENTERTAINED AS A *FIVE-YEAR OLD* WATCHING *CITIZEN KANE*. I SAT THERE MAKING STUPID JOKES, SO HARPER ASKED ME TO DEMONSTRATE WHAT I COULD DO.

IT WAS LIKE I WAS CAUGHT SHARING A NOTE DURING CLASS AND THEN TOLD TO READ IT IN FRONT OF EVERYONE. HONESTLY, I CONSIDERED SUGGESTING TO HIM THAT HE SHOULD MAKE A FEW NICE, *BIG KNOTS* AND *SHOVE* THAT ROPE WHERE THE SUN DON'T SHINE. I PROBABLY WOULD HAVE DONE *JUST THAT* IF MARION WASN'T SO DAMN *ENTHUSIASTIC*.



ALLY WAS *RELUCTANT* AT FIRST.

AW, COME ON!

I DON'T WANNA.

PLEASE!

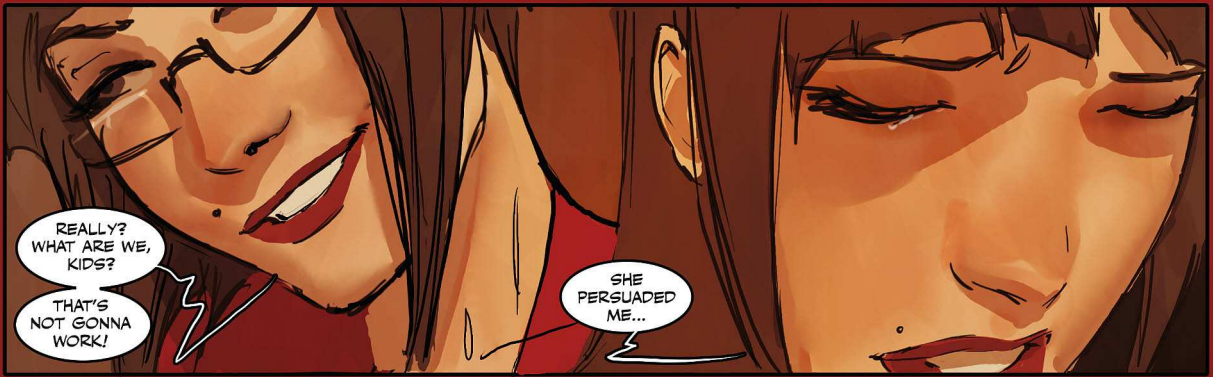
STOP IT!

PLEAAAAASE!

*KNOCK IT OFF, MARION!*

WELL, FINE! YOU COULD JUST SAY YOU *DON'T KNOW* HOW...





REALLY?  
WHAT ARE WE,  
KIDS?  
THAT'S  
NOT GONNA  
WORK!

SHE  
PERSUADED  
ME...



WASN'T MUCH OF AN ACCOMPLISHMENT.  
MY EGO HAS BEEN CHALLENGED.

AND I ANSWERED.



HEH...WHAT  
SEEMS TO BE THE PROBLEM,  
OFFICER?

IN HINDSIGHT...

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN.

BY THE STUPID NERVOUS JOKES.



BY HER SHAKING HANDS.

AT THE TIME, I INTERPRETED IT  
AS A BIT OF STAGE FRIGHT.

SHE WAS, AFTER ALL, STANDING  
IN FRONT OF THE CLASS...  
AND YOUR AVERAGE *ORAL*  
*PRESENTATION* HAD NOTHING  
ON WHAT WE WERE DOING.

SEE, ALAN *TOLD* ME THEY  
WERE TAKING IT SLOW.

THEY WERE TAKING SMALL,  
*CAREFUL* STEPS DOWN  
THAT *SLIPPERY* SLOPE.

AND THERE I WAS GOING--  
GUESS WHO BROUGHT THE  
FUCKING *SLED*?!





IT WAS *SO* EASY.

EVERYONE WAS *PERFECTLY SILENT*. I LISTENED TO HER BREATHING GROWING FASTER.

AND I WAS *LOVING* IT.

I WAS REVELLING IN MY EGO...I WAS *SO*, *SO GOOD!*

IF YOU WANT ME TO *STOP*, JUST SAY *SUNSTONE*... AND I *WIN* THE GAME!

SHE WAS *AMAZING!* HER BINDING WAS WHAT IT SHOULD BE, A *RITUAL*...

A *DANCE*...

AS SHE TOOK AWAY MARION'S FREEDOM, I COULD SEE HER SINKING INTO *SUBSPACE*...THAT POWERFUL, ALMOST HYPNOTIC STATE OF DEEP SUBMISSIVE RECEPTIVENESS.

I WAS ENJOYING EVERY SECOND OF IT. *SHOWING OFF* TO MARION...

I *NEVER* FOUND HER SEXUALLY ATTRACTIVE, *NOT* BECAUSE SHE WAS A WOMAN. AS YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED, I HAVE NO PROBLEMS WITH THAT. HOWEVER, IN THAT MOMENT...I COULD SEE MYSELF TAKING THE GAME TO ITS END.

I WAS *SO DRUNK* WITH EGO.





I NEVER SAW A SUBMISSIVE SINKING INTO SUBSPACE BEFORE...I WANTED TO SEE IT.

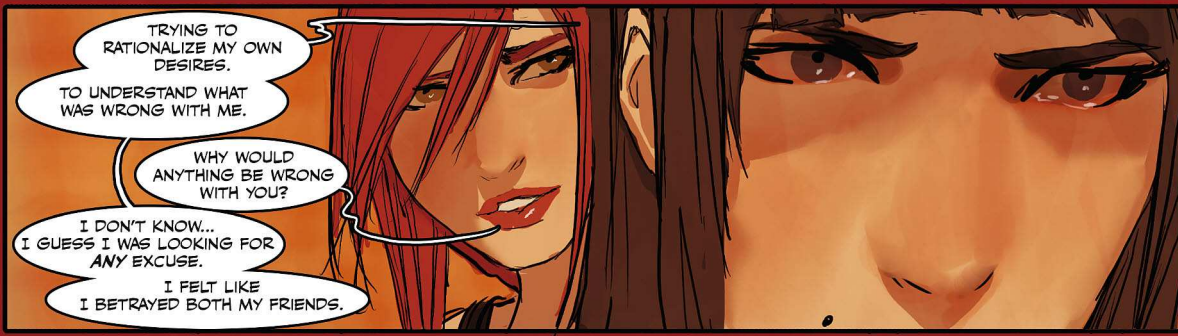
WITH ALAN, IT WAS *IMPOSSIBLE*.

I COULD TELL SHE WAS SINKING, AND I WANTED TO DRAG HER DEEPER.

I SPENT SO MUCH TIME DWELLING ON THAT DAY...

KNEEL FOR ME, MARION!

YE--YES!



TRYING TO RATIONALIZE MY OWN DESIRES.

TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS WRONG WITH ME.

WHY WOULD ANYTHING BE WRONG WITH YOU?

I DON'T KNOW... I GUESS I WAS LOOKING FOR ANY EXCUSE.

I FELT LIKE I BETRAYED BOTH MY FRIENDS.



I'VE SEEN PEOPLE TRY TO RATIONALIZE THIS FETISH IN SOME WEIRD FUCKED UP WAYS.

A DOM RELEASES HIS FRUSTRATION AND RAGE OF BEING ABUSED AS A CHILD... WHO KNOWS WHAT DARK MEMORIES TORMENT THESE STRANGE PEOPLE.

A SUB MUST BE PROJECTING HIS OR HER GUILT FELT FOR LONG GONE EVENTS OF ONE'S PAST. MAYBE THE SUB FEELS UNWORTHY...THUS MANIFESTING THE DESIRE TO BE DEHUMANIZED BECAUSE MOMMY OR DADDY NEVER LOVED THEM.

IN THE END...ALL OF IT IS BULLSHIT. THERE ARE DAMAGED PEOPLE IN BDSM LIKE THERE ARE IN ANYTHING ELSE. LIFE IS FUCKED UP LIKE THAT. HOWEVER, THAT'S NOT WHY MOST OF US LIKE IT. IT'S NOT WHY I LIKE IT.

I'M A DOMME. IT'S WHAT I KNOW AND LOVE. I'M NOT A DOMME BECAUSE I'M COMPENSATING FOR SOME TRAUMA. FOR ME, THE GREATEST PLEASURE IS TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE GAME AND FULFILL MY SUBMISSIVE'S DEEPEST DESIRES.

TO CLAIM MY SUB, PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY, AND FOR THAT SHORT WHILE, TO BE THEIR GUIDE IN THE DARK. ALL THEIR TRUST PLACED IN ME...IT IS AN INTENSE HIGH.

AND SO THERE I WAS. A WILLING SUBMISSIVE IN MY GRASP.

IN A WAY, I WISH I HAD SOME DARK EXCUSE, BUT I DID IT BECAUSE I WANTED TO DO IT.

I PUSHED HER INTO THE WONDERFUL, DEEP WATERS OF SUBSPACE.

SHE SUNK DEEP AND SUNK FAST.



I WAS THE ONE WHO HAD SHOWN  
HER *TOO MUCH*...TOO FAST.

MY EGO *RUINED* ALAN'S AND  
MARION'S BALANCE.

YOU SEE...THAT'S WHAT  
HURTS THE MOST. ON ANY GIVEN  
DAY, I CAN TELL MYSELF THAT WHAT  
ULTIMATELY HAPPENED, HAPPENED  
BECAUSE OF MARION'S OWN  
*RECKLESSNESS*.

ON ANY GIVEN DAY, I CAN TELL  
THIS TO MYSELF AND BELIEVE IT...  
BUT THEN...ON LONELY NIGHTS...I  
START THINKING.

AND *REGRETTING*.

I HAVEN'T BEEN  
AT THE CRIMSON SINCE THAT  
DAY. IT WASN'T LIKE ANYTHING WAS  
*STOPPING* ME. I *COULD'VE* FOUND A  
*SUB* HERE...THERE WAS INTEREST. I  
COULD HAVE FULFILLED MY OWN  
DESIRES...AND YET...AFTER  
EVERYTHING.

WHAT?  
YOU FELT YOU DIDN'T  
*DESERVE* IT?

*YES!* AND WHEN YOU  
ASKED ME TO COME HERE...  
I...I PANICKED! IT FELT AS IF SOME  
*KARMIC* JUSTICE WAS LURKING  
BEHIND THE CORNER, WAITING  
FOR THE MOMENT TO...

*SIGH.* I KNOW  
IT'S STUPID...  
I DO.

WHAT  
*HAPPENED*  
TO HER,  
ALLY?

THAT DAY...  
IT *EATS* ME ALIVE.

THE WORST THING IS  
THE *WHAT IF*, YOU KNOW?  
I MEAN...AS A DOMME MY...

THIS WENT ON  
FOR A *WHILE*,  
DEAR READER.

HER STORY STOPPED, AND I WATCHED ALLY DROWN IN  
THIS MENTAL *QUICKSAND*. FOR AT LEAST FIFTEEN  
MORE MINUTES, I STOOD THERE LISTENING TO HER  
SPINNING IN CIRCLES.

NOW...I OFTEN HAVE THESE MIND ARGUMENTS WITH  
MYSELF IN THEM. I TAKE MANY STANDPOINTS AT THE SAME  
TIME, AND HAVE MY INNER LISAS FIGHT IT OUT.

I HEARD IT SAID THAT TALKING TO YOURSELF IS  
THE FIRST SIGN OF MADNESS. THEN AGAIN,  
THEY TELL GUYS THEY WILL GO BLIND IF  
THEY MASTURBATE...

MAYBE WE ALL HAVE A BIT OF THAT *NECESSARY*  
MADNESS WITHIN US. THAT *SPECIAL* KIND OF  
MADNESS THAT HELPS US COPE WITH TOUGH  
SHIT IN OUR LIVES. IT'S JUST THAT IT'S NOT  
ALWAYS SO...*OUT* IN THE OPEN.

ANYWAYS...LIKE THAT *BATTERY*  
*COMMERCIAL* BUNNY, ALLY KEPT GOING,  
AND GOING, AND GETTING NOWHERE.

SHE WAS LIKE A STUCK JUKEBOX,  
AND I WAS THE *ONLY* ONE AROUND  
WHO COULD *FONZIE* HER.

THE *POINT* I'M  
TRYING TO--





YEAH...*SCOOT* OVER, ALLY. THIS RANT SEEMS TO BE GOING *NOWHERE*, AND THESE HEELS ARE STARTING TO HURT.

I--WAIT, *WHAT?*



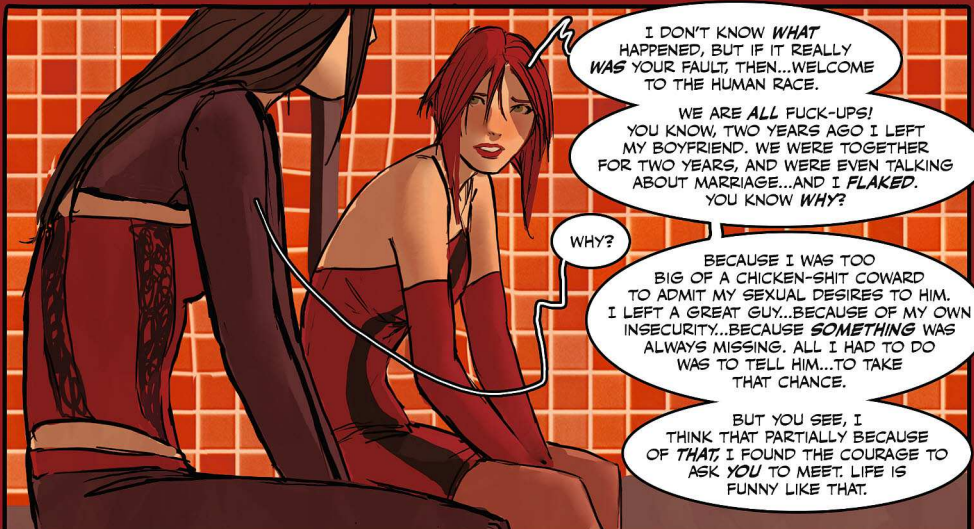
ALLY...YOU JUST EXPLAINED ABOUT *FOUR* TIMES IN A ROW WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A *DOMME*, AND ABOUT *EIGHT* TIMES YOU COVERED WHY EVERYTHING BOTH *WAS* AND *WASN'T* YOUR FAULT.



REALLY?

OH YEAH! NOW, *LISTEN*. I GET THAT WHATEVER ACTUALLY *HAPPENED* IS REALLY EATING AT YOU, BUT YOU *DO* REALIZE THAT WE ARE IN A VIP BATHROOM?

SURE, CLUB PATRONS WON'T BE VISITING, BUT SOONER OR LATER SOMEONE IN OUR GROUP WILL INEVITABLY CHECK IN ON US.



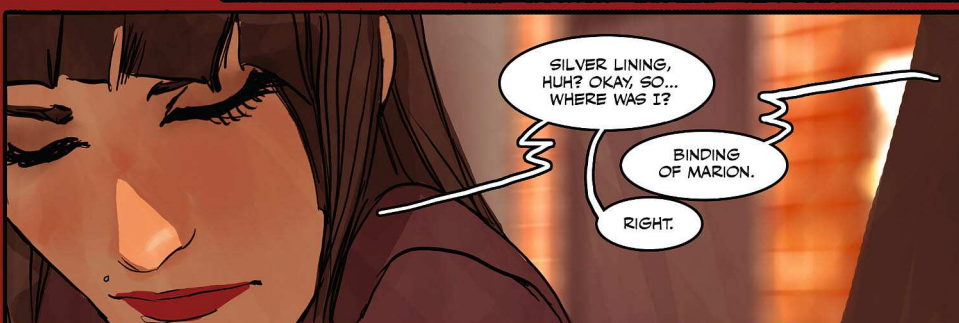
I DON'T KNOW *WHAT* HAPPENED, BUT IF IT REALLY *WAS* YOUR FAULT, THEN...WELCOME TO THE HUMAN RACE.

WE ARE *ALL* FUCK-UPS! YOU KNOW, TWO YEARS AGO I LEFT MY BOYFRIEND. WE WERE TOGETHER FOR TWO YEARS, AND WERE EVEN TALKING ABOUT MARRIAGE...AND I *FLAKED*. YOU KNOW *WHY?*

WHY?

BECAUSE I WAS TOO BIG OF A CHICKEN-SHIT COWARD TO ADMIT MY SEXUAL DESIRES TO HIM. I LEFT A GREAT GUY...BECAUSE OF MY OWN INSECURITY...BECAUSE *SOMETHING* WAS ALWAYS MISSING. ALL I HAD TO DO WAS TO TELL HIM...TO TAKE THAT CHANCE.

BUT YOU SEE, I THINK THAT PARTIALLY BECAUSE OF *THAT*, I FOUND THE COURAGE TO ASK *YOU* TO MEET. LIFE IS FUNNY LIKE THAT.

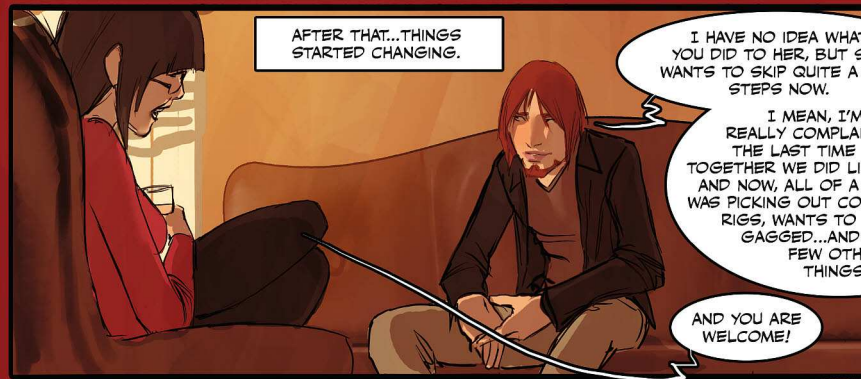


SILVER LINING, HUH? OKAY, SO... WHERE WAS I?

BINDING OF MARION.

RIGHT.





AFTER THAT...THINGS  
STARTED CHANGING.

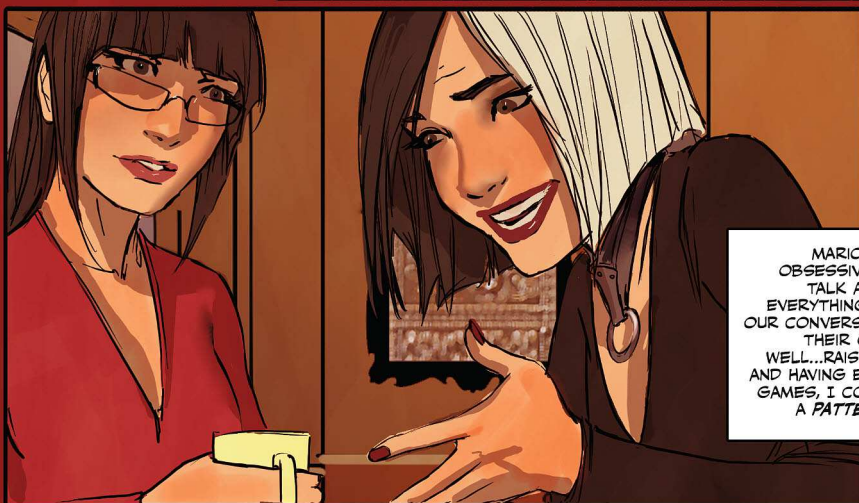
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT  
YOU DID TO HER, BUT SHE  
WANTS TO SKIP QUITE A FEW  
STEPS NOW.

I MEAN, I'M NOT  
REALLY COMPLAINING. BUT  
THE LAST TIME WE WERE  
TOGETHER WE DID LIGHT BONDAGE,  
AND NOW, ALL OF A SUDDEN, SHE  
WAS PICKING OUT COMPLEX SHIBARI  
RIGS, WANTS TO TRY BEING  
GAGGED...AND QUITE A  
FEW OTHER  
THINGS.

AND YOU ARE  
WELCOME!



AT FIRST IT ALL  
WORKED GREAT. THEY  
WERE OBVIOUSLY HAVING  
LOADS OF FUN...BUT LITTLE  
BY LITTLE, I SAW THEM  
CHANGE.

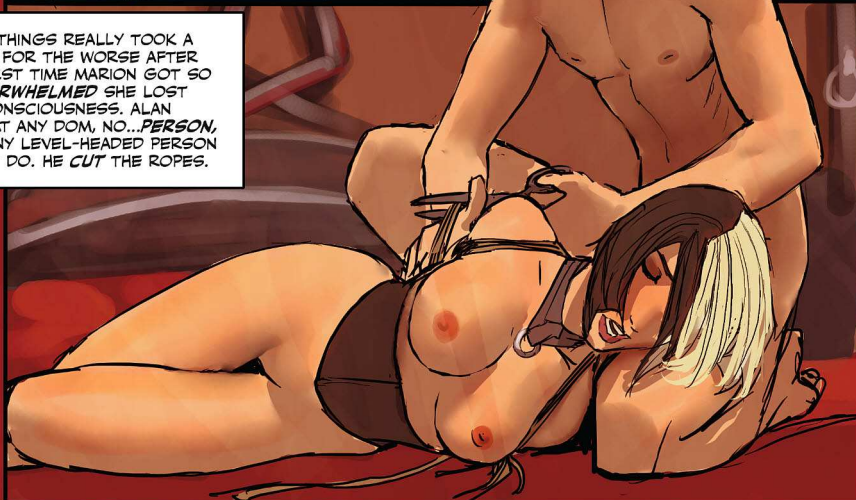


MARION WAS BECOMING...  
OBSESSIVE...*MANIC*. WE USED TO  
TALK ABOUT PRETTY MUCH  
EVERYTHING, BUT ALL OF A SUDDEN,  
OUR CONVERSATIONS BECAME ALL ABOUT  
THEIR GAME AND HOW TO...  
WELL...RAISE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL.  
AND HAVING EXPERIENCE IN ONLINE MMO  
GAMES, I COULDN'T HELP NOT SEEING  
A *PATTERN* IN HER BEHAVIOR.

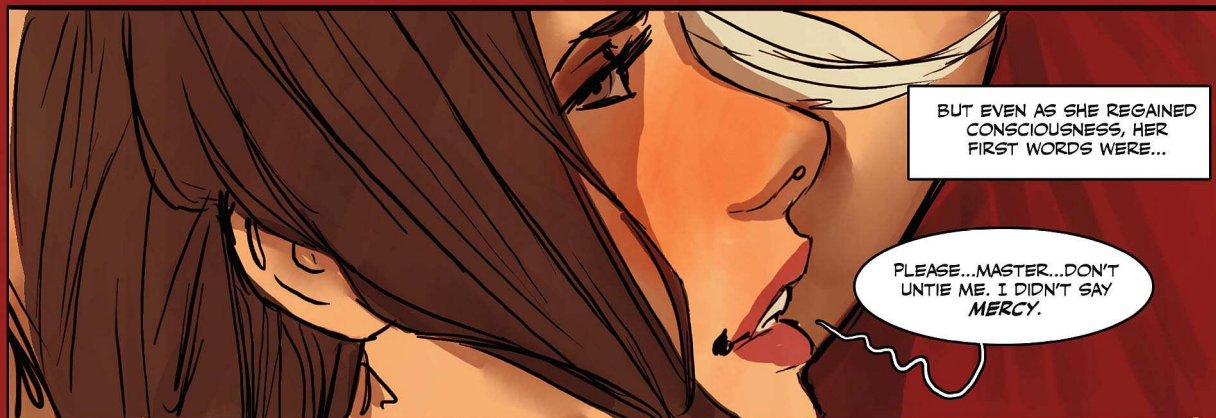


AT THE SAME TIME,  
ALAN STARTED LOOKING  
MORE AND MORE EXHAUSTED.

BUT THINGS REALLY TOOK A  
TURN FOR THE WORSE AFTER  
THE FIRST TIME MARION GOT SO  
*OVERWHELMED* SHE LOST  
CONSCIOUSNESS. ALAN  
DID WHAT ANY DOM, NO...*PERSON*,  
WHAT ANY LEVEL-HEADED PERSON  
WOULD DO. HE *CUT* THE ROPES.

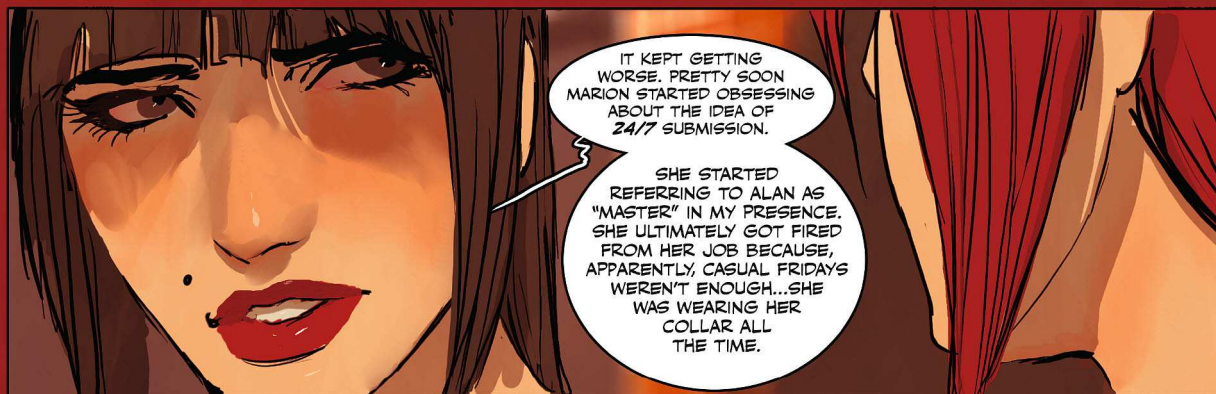






BUT EVEN AS SHE REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS, HER FIRST WORDS WERE...

PLEASE...MASTER...DON'T UNTIE ME. I DIDN'T SAY *MERCY*.

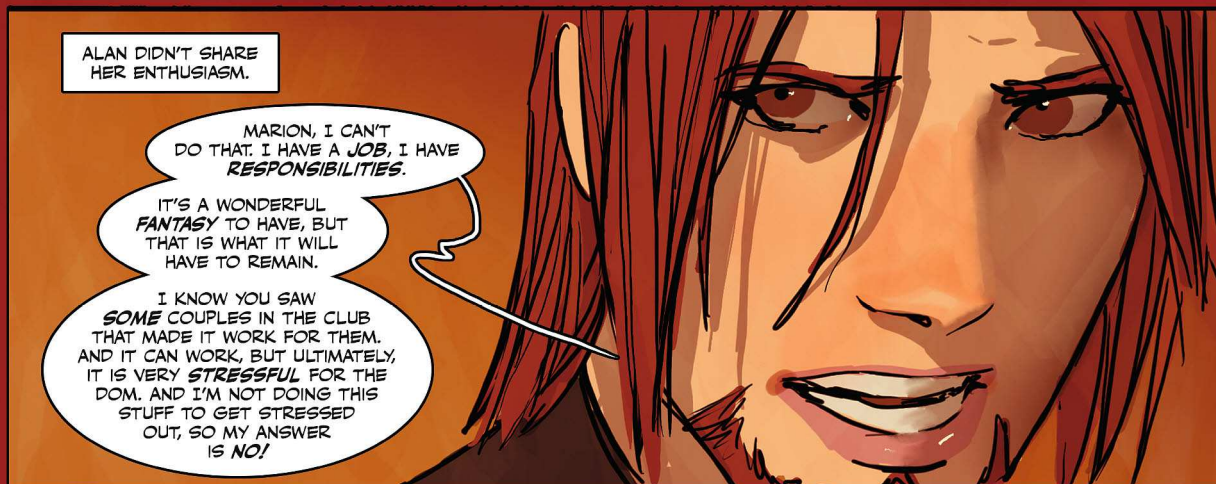


IT KEPT GETTING WORSE. PRETTY SOON MARION STARTED OBSESSING ABOUT THE IDEA OF 24/7 SUBMISSION.

SHE STARTED REFERRING TO ALAN AS "MASTER" IN MY PRESENCE. SHE ULTIMATELY GOT FIRED FROM HER JOB BECAUSE, APPARENTLY, CASUAL FRIDAYS WEREN'T ENOUGH...SHE WAS WEARING HER COLLAR ALL THE TIME.



AT THE TIME SHE WAS LIVING WITH ALAN. AND AFTER LOSING HER JOB, SHE STARTED PUSHING HER 24/7 IDEA EVEN MORE.



ALAN DIDN'T SHARE HER ENTHUSIASM.

MARION, I CAN'T DO THAT. I HAVE A *JOB*, I HAVE *RESPONSIBILITIES*.

IT'S A WONDERFUL *FANTASY* TO HAVE, BUT THAT IS WHAT IT WILL HAVE TO REMAIN.

I KNOW YOU SAW *SOME* COUPLES IN THE CLUB THAT MADE IT WORK FOR THEM. AND IT CAN WORK, BUT ULTIMATELY, IT IS VERY *STRESSFUL* FOR THE DOM. AND I'M NOT DOING THIS STUFF TO GET STRESSED OUT, SO MY ANSWER IS *NO!*





UNFORTUNATELY,  
*OBSESSION* OFTEN  
TRUMPS COMMON  
SENSE.

MARION  
BECAME *ADAMANT*  
TO PROVE ALAN  
WRONG.

AND THAT  
WAS WHEN IT  
ALL WENT  
WRONG.





IT WAS A FRIDAY.  
ALAN WAS AWAY WITH CHRIS  
SETTING UP SOME PRIVATE ORDER,  
AND DUE TO SOME WALL ISSUE...  
I DONT REALLY REMEMBER WHAT  
IT WAS, BUT...IT DOESN'T  
REALLY MATTER. WHAT  
MATTERS IS...



HE DIDN'T  
COME BACK WHEN MARION  
EXPECTED HIM.



AS I SAID, SHE  
WAS ADAMANT  
TO PROVE ALAN  
**WRONG.**

SO THAT DAY, SHE DECIDED  
TO PUT ON A SHOW FOR HIM.

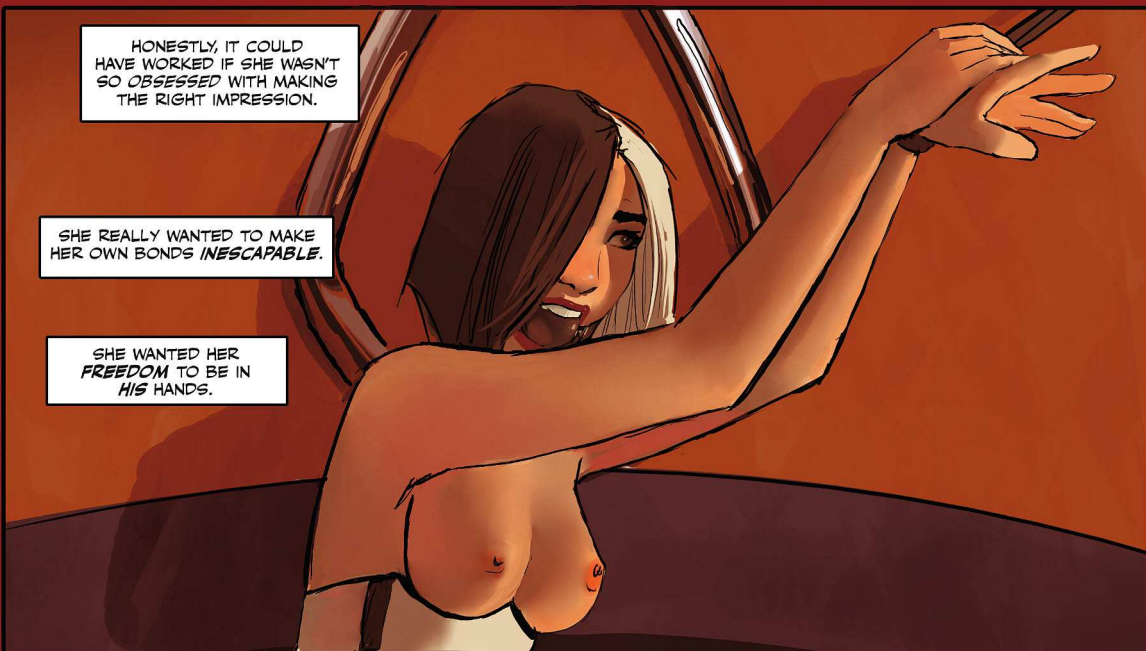
SHE PLANNED EVERYTHING.  
SHE WAS GOING TO WAIT  
FOR HIM BOUND, GAGGED  
HELPLESS...AT HER  
MASTER'S MERCY.



HONESTLY, IT COULD  
HAVE WORKED IF SHE WASN'T  
SO OBSESSED WITH MAKING  
THE RIGHT IMPRESSION.

SHE REALLY WANTED TO MAKE  
HER OWN BONDS *INESCAPABLE*.

SHE WANTED HER  
*FREEDOM* TO BE IN  
*HIS* HANDS.



SO SHE USED SLIDING  
NOOSE BINDING.




A SIMPLE *TUG*...AND HER  
BONDS WERE IN PLACE.



AT THE HOSPITAL SHE TOLD ME...IT WAS A  
MERE MINUTE LATER THAT SHE BECAME  
AWARE OF THE *STUPIDITY* OF HER IDEA.








ALL SHE NEEDED TO DO TO MAKE IT ALL WORK WAS TO TIE THE ROPES LOW ON THE SIDES OF THE BED...BUT *NO*. SHE WANTED TO BE SEEN BY HIM. WANTED TO *DISPLAY* HERSELF FOR HIM. SHE HOOKED THE ROPES ONTO THE *HIGH* LOOPS, AND THEN...

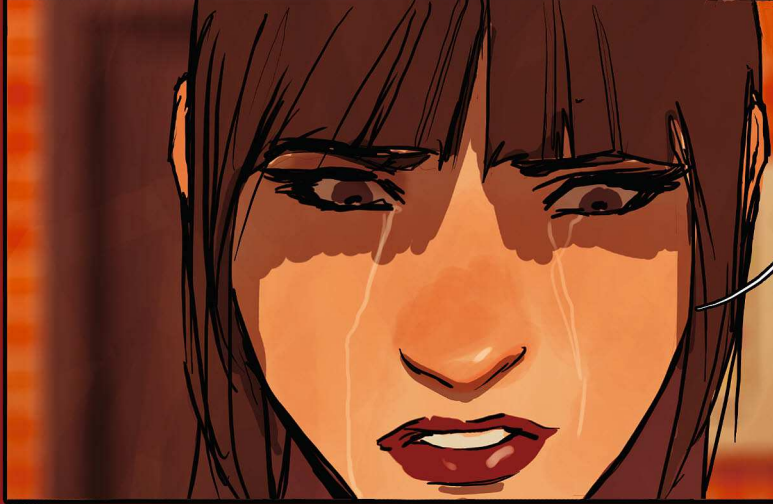
GRAVITY STARTED DOING ITS THING. SHE TRIED *STRUGGLING*... PANICKED...AND OF COURSE MADE THINGS *WORSE*.



EVERY BIT OF STRUGGLE FURTHER TIGHTENED THE NOOSE. SOON SHE STARTED FEELING *COLD* IN HER HANDS.



THE SITUATION WAS GETTING WORSE BY THE MINUTE. AFTER SOME TIME, SHE REALIZED SHE COULD BARELY MOVE HER FINGERS.




ALAN CALLED ME TO PICK HER UP AS SHE WASN'T ANSWERING THE PHONE. WE WERE ALL SUPPOSED TO MEET FOR A LATE LUNCH. I ENTERED THE APARTMENT THINKING SHE MAY HAVE BEEN ASLEEP.

I FOUND HER LIKE THAT...CRYING, *SHIVERING*. FEAR AND PANIC IN HER EYES.

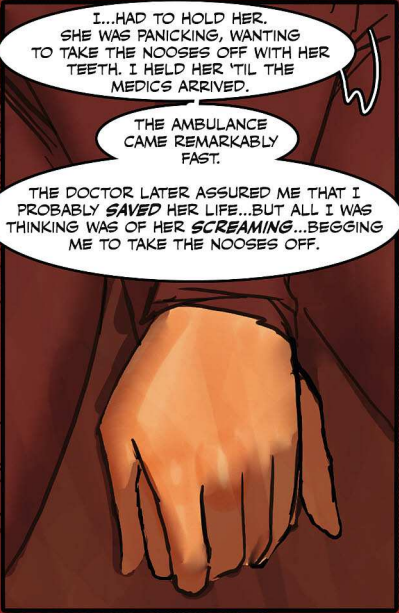
I REMOVED HER GAG FIRST. SHE BEGGED ME TO UNTIE HER. I *CUT* THE ROPES.

SHE DIDN'T KNOW HOW LONG SHE WAS THERE LIKE THAT. SHE COULDN'T MOVE HER FINGERS.



I FREED HER FROM THE BEDPOST, WRAPPED HER IN A BLANKET, AND WE WAITED FOR THE AMBULANCE TO ARRIVE.


ALL THE WHILE SHE *BEGGED* ME TO REMOVE THE NOOSES FROM HER HANDS, BUT I *COULDN'T*...I HAD TO KEEP THEM ON. I WAS *AFRAID*. HER HANDS LOOKED... DEAD. SHE COULDN'T MOVE THEM. I WAS SCARED OF BLOOD CLOTS.



I...HAD TO HOLD HER. SHE WAS PANICKING, WANTING TO TAKE THE NOOSES OFF WITH HER TEETH. I HELD HER 'TIL THE MEDICS ARRIVED.

THE AMBULANCE CAME REMARKABLY FAST.

THE DOCTOR LATER ASSURED ME THAT I PROBABLY *SAVED* HER LIFE...BUT ALL I WAS THINKING WAS OF HER *SCREAMING*...BEGGING ME TO TAKE THE NOOSES OFF.



IT WAS *AWFUL*.. ALAN RUSHED TO THE HOSPITAL...EVEN HAD TO GO THROUGH *POLICE INTERROGATION*, BUT IT ALL ENDED WELL. THE SURGEON SAVED HER HANDS, REMOVED THE LARGER CLOTS, AND SHE WAS KEPT FOR OBSERVATION.





AFTER SHE WAS RELEASED, ALAN BROKE UP WITH HER. HE HAD TO...FOR HER OWN GOOD. FOR A WHILE, I WAS AFRAID FOR HER, BUT SHE STARTED EMAILING ME. WE CAUGHT UP. SHE GOT BETTER, GOT A NEW JOB, MOVED ON.

NEITHER SHE NOR ALAN PLACED ANY BLAME ON ME. AND YET HERE I AM...*SNIVELING* IN A BATHROOM, AFRAID.

AFRAID THAT I MIGHT... I DON'T KNOW...*CHANGE* YOUR MIND ABOUT ME, THAT I MIGHT *LOSE* YOU.

I...DON'T KNOW.



YOU KNOW, AT THIS POINT, YOU HAVE PROBABLY HEARD MANY REASONS WHY THAT WAS IN NO WAY YOUR FAULT.

HELL, YOU PROBABLY THOUGHT OF MOST OF THEM *YOURSELF*. SO, ALL I CAN REALLY OFFER IS AN IMPARTIAL OPINION FROM AN EXPERIENCED *SELF-BONDAGE* PRACTITIONER.



SEE, EVEN THOUGH I DON'T ACTUALLY KNOW THIS MARION, I CAN TELL YOU SOMETHING ABOUT HER. SHE IS, OR WAS...WHO KNOWS, PEOPLE CHANGE...BUT, YES, SHE WAS A *MORON!*

SHE--WAIT, WHAT?



I CAN HONESTLY SAY THIS. YOU KNOW THAT SEXUALLY I AM A COMPLETE *SUBMISSIVE*, AND MOST OF US SUBS AT SOME POINT OR ANOTHER INDULGE IN THESE COMPLETE *SURRENDER FANTASIES*.

BUT THAT'S WHAT THEY ULTIMATELY *REMAIN* FOR MOST OF US. A FUN BIT OF *BRAIN VODOO*. SELF-INDULGENT, HORNY, MENTAL ADVENTURES. ULTIMATELY, WE KNOW WE HAVE LIVES, FAMILIES, RESPONSIBILITIES, JOBS.





THIS BIT OF COMMON SENSE IS WHAT GETS US SELF-BONDAGE ENTHUSIASTS THROUGH THE DAY! WE ALWAYS KEEP THE GOLDEN RULE IN MIND: **ALWAYS** HAVE A PLAN B!

SEE, IN THE END, IT ALL COMES DOWN TO **PERSONALITY**.

SOME PEOPLE WILL TAKE THINGS TOO FAR... AND THEN...THINGS **BACKFIRE**.



YOU KNOW, EVER SINCE THAT DAY, I...I DON'T KNOW. ROPES JUST KIND OF SKEEVE ME OUT. IT'S THE WAY THEY **BITE** INTO THE SKIN. IT JUST REMINDS ME...

I MEAN...

I...I CAN STILL USE ROPES, BUT--



WHY DID YOU USE THEM OUR FIRST NIGHT THEN?



I DON'T KNOW.



BECAUSE YOU LIKED TO USE ROPES IN YOUR STORIES.



BECAUSE I WANTED TO TEST MYSELF.



BECAUSE I WANTED TO--

**PUNISH** YOURSELF?

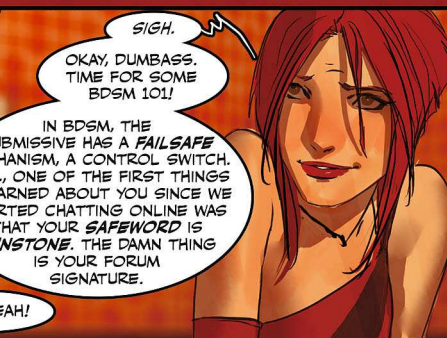


SIGH.

OKAY, DUMBASS. TIME FOR SOME BDSM 101!

IN BDSM, THE SUBMISSIVE HAS A **FAILSAFE** MECHANISM, A CONTROL SWITCH. HELL, ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS I LEARNED ABOUT YOU SINCE WE STARTED CHATTING ONLINE WAS THAT YOUR **SAFWORD** IS **SUNSTONE**. THE DAMN THING IS YOUR FORUM SIGNATURE.

HEH...YEAH!



AND THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF IT.

**SUNSTONE** IS OUR BOND OF TRUST.

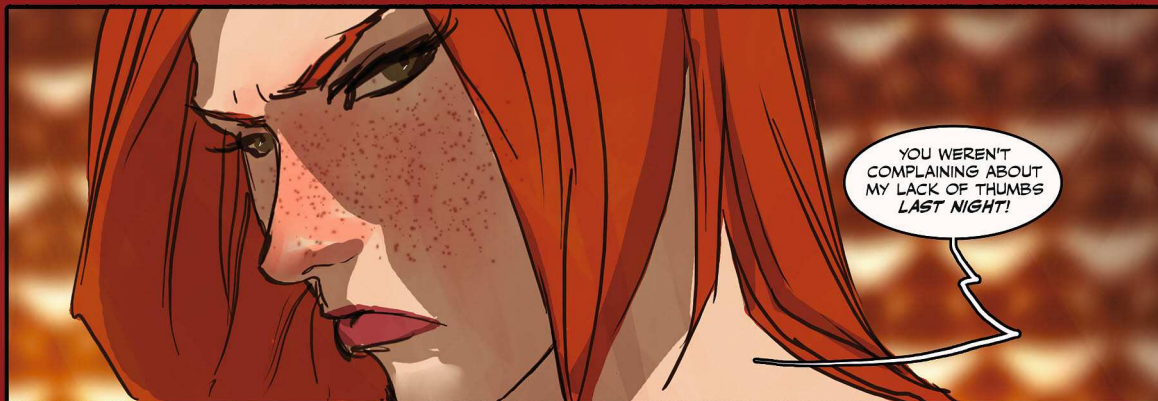
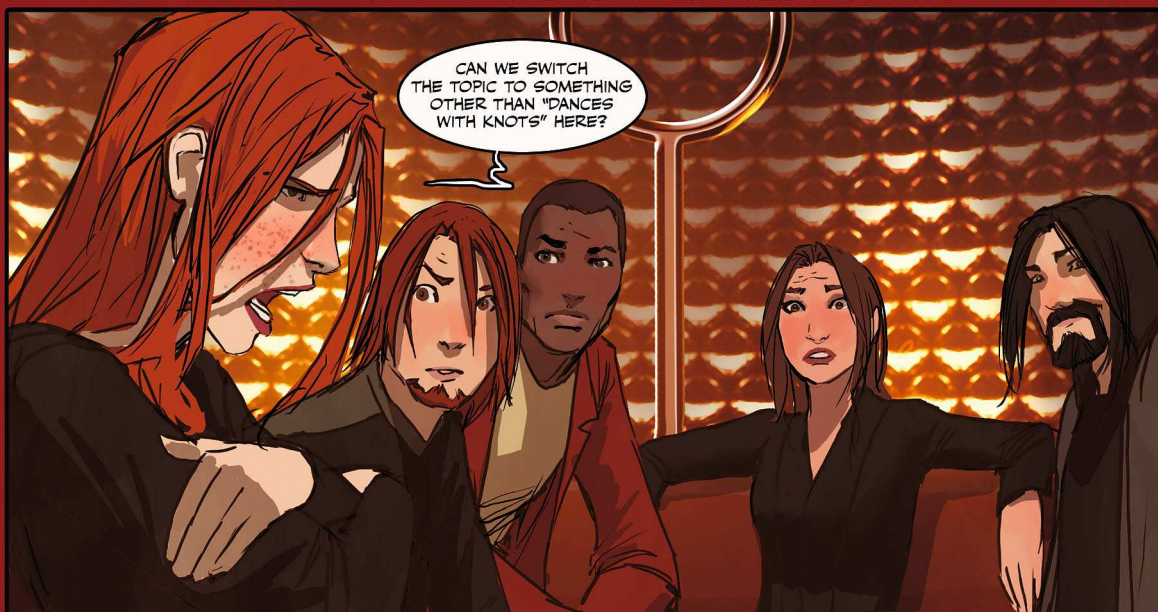
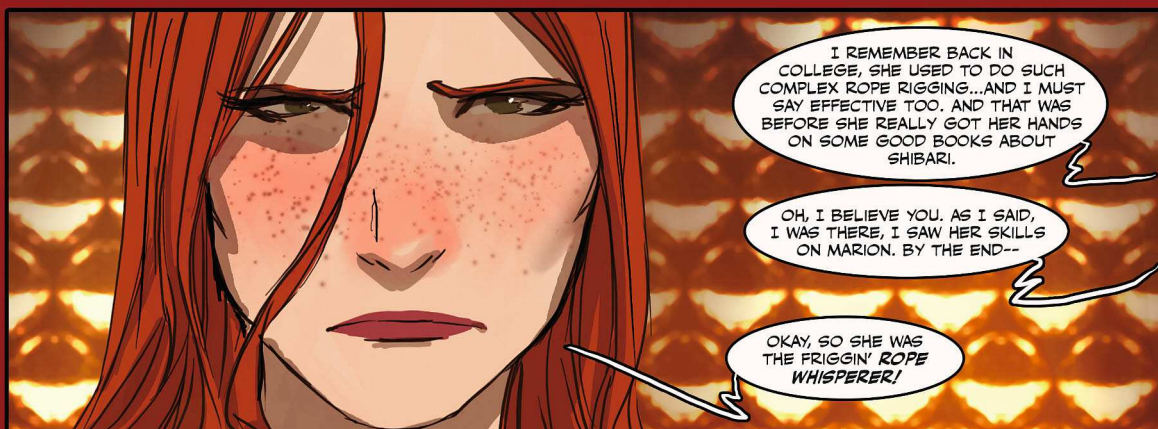
THAT WORD SYMBOLIZES ALL MY TRUST IN YOU. WITH IT, I CAN CONTROL, SLOW DOWN, OR **STOP** THE GAME IF I WANT TO.

THAT IS MY MECHANISM OF CONTROL. MARION LET GO OF THAT CONTROL. SHE PAID THE PRICE FOR IT. BUT **NEVER FORGET**, ALLY...

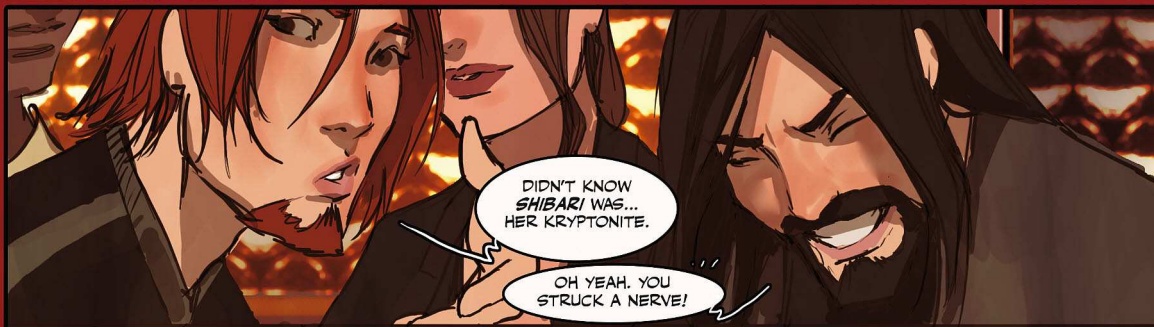
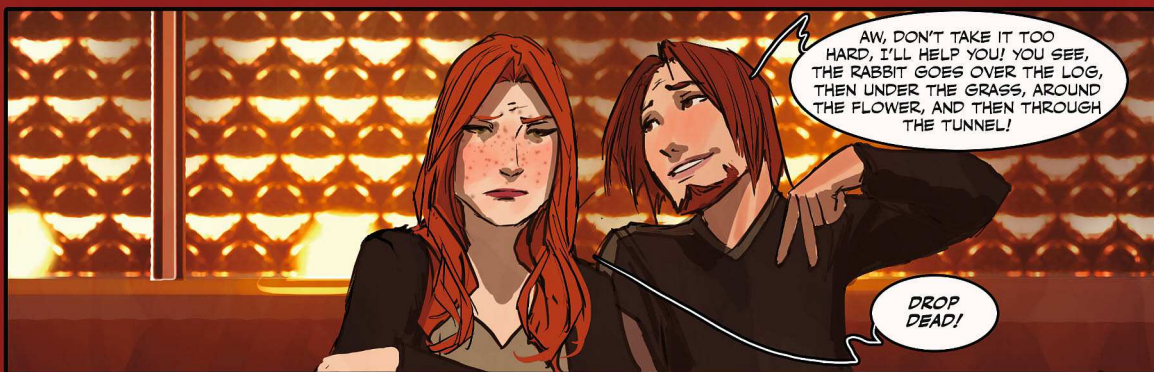
















IT WAS THE LOOK IN HER EYES THAT WORRIED ME. IT WAS PARTIALLY HER DOMME LOOK...BUT THERE WAS MORE TO IT. THERE WAS SOMETHING *DESPERATE...UNSETTLING.*

AND I STARTED DELUDING MYSELF.

SHE TURNED ME AROUND...  
BROKE THE EYE CONTACT.

MAYBE I WAS  
IMAGINING THINGS.

BEING TURNED ON DURING  
THOSE DAYS OF THE MONTH  
IS A *FRUSTRATING* EXPERIENCE.

MADDENINGLY SO  
WHEN YOU HAVE AN OBJECT  
BETWEEN YOUR LEGS THAT...  
WELL...MOVES AROUND *JUST*  
ENOUGH TO BE HARD  
TO IGNORE.

SO...YEAH.

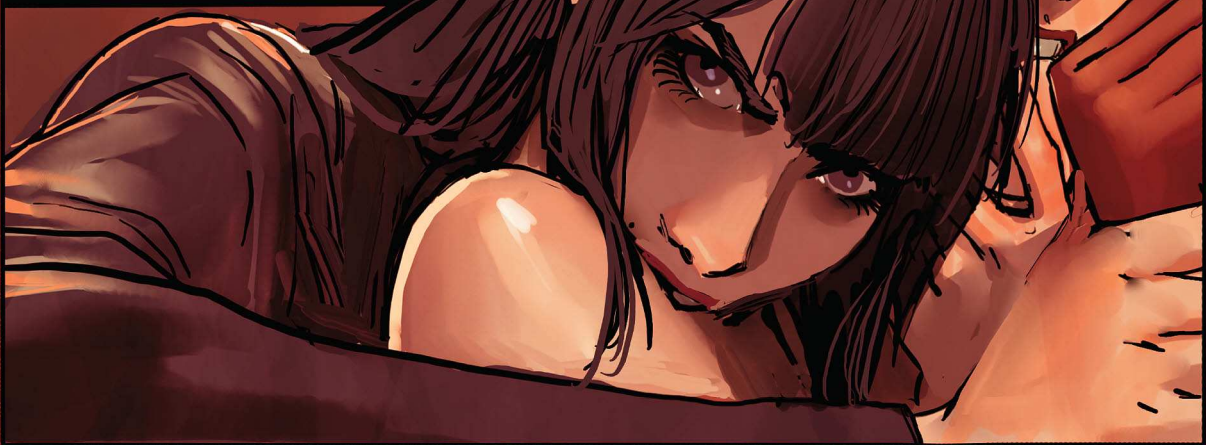
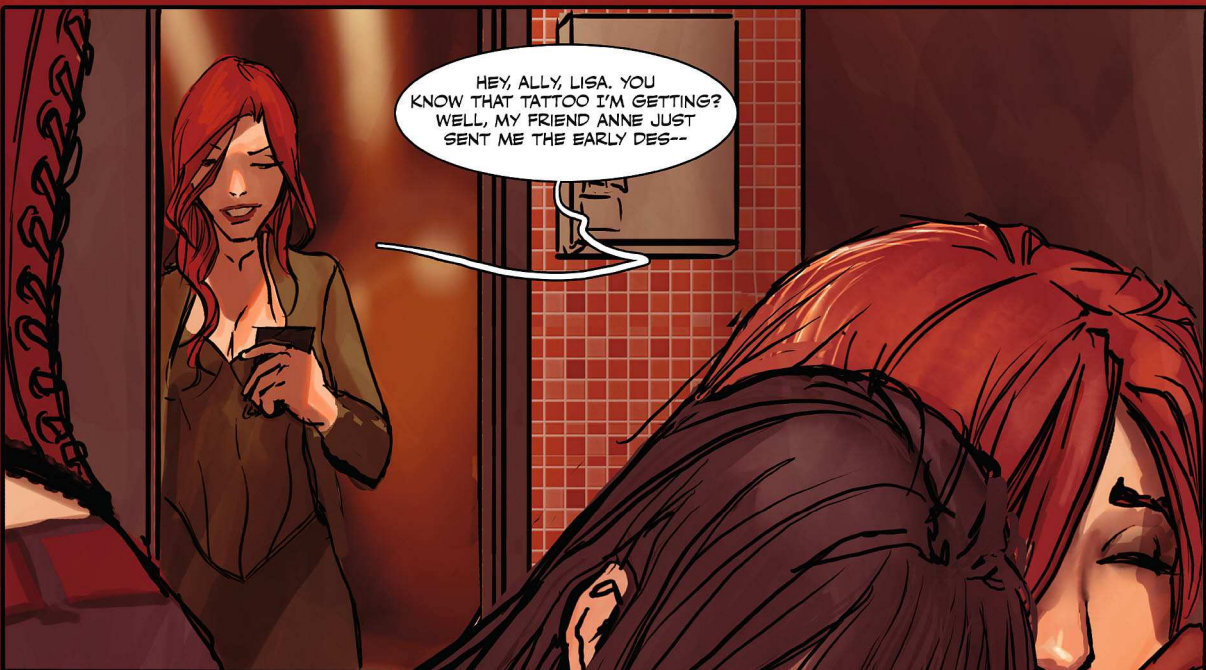
THIS WAS A BAD  
SITUATION.

AND I KNEW IT.

OKAY, SO I MAY NOT HAVE  
ACTUALLY DONE ANYTHING  
TO STOP IT. UM, BUT I  
KNEW IT WAS BAD.

DO I GET POINTS FOR...  
*NOT TRYING?*







MY MIND WAS A BATTLEGROUND  
BETWEEN HORMONES AND  
RATIONAL THOUGHTS.

YES...THE CONVERSATION  
HELPED HER. THAT'S IT!

SHE WAS...JUST DRUNK. THOUGH  
SHE SEEMED QUITE SOBER  
WHEN...OH...DAMN KISSES.

SHE WAS CHEATING  
HER WAY THROUGH THE GAME.  
AND...THE NECK THING. UGH.  
SHE KNEW HOW TO PUSH MY  
BUTTONS.



BUT I CAN STILL  
MAKE HER STOP!

I CAN *ALWAYS*  
MAKE HER STOP!

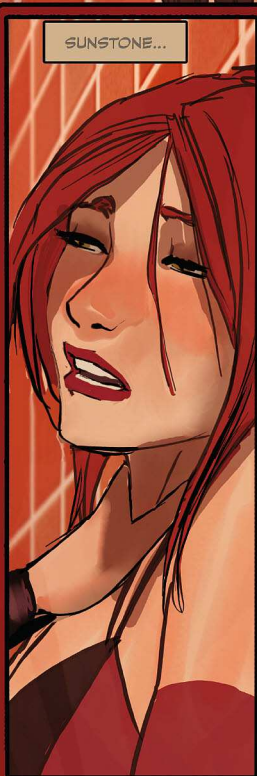
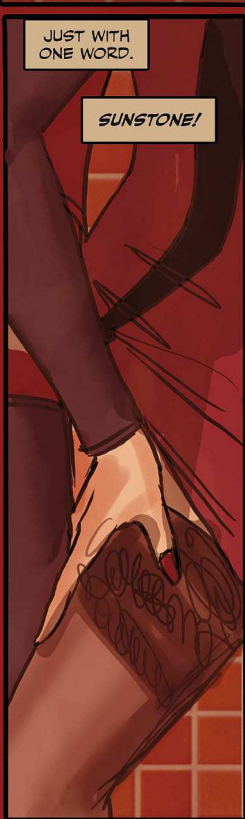
JUST WITH  
ONE WORD.

**SUNSTONE!**

SUNSTONE...

SUNSTONE...

SUNSTONE...





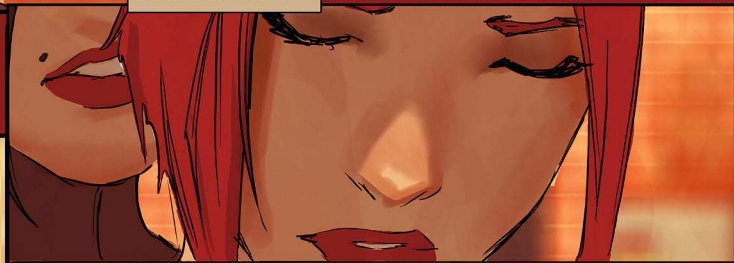


SO IT TURNS OUT THAT STOPPING  
SOMETHING YOU REALLY, REAAALLY WANT  
MIGHT BE A BIT MORE DIFFICULT THAN YOU  
WOULD THINK.

WHO KNEW?

HOW BAD WAS IT?

WELL...THIS MIGHT REQUIRE MORE  
IMAGINATION FOR SOME OF YOU  
THAN OTHERS. TRY TO IMAGINE  
YOUR DEEPEST DESIRE IS TO FULLY  
SURRENDER AND BE TAKEN BY  
YOUR PARTNER...AND YOUR PARTNER  
KNOWS IT!



KNOWS YOUR EVERY WEAK  
POINT...AND MASTERFULLY USES  
THAT KNOWLEDGE. EVERY  
ATOM OF YOUR BEING WANTS  
TO GIVE IN, TO SURRENDER,  
TO SUBMIT.

TO JUST BE YOUR PARTNER'S  
LOVELY PLAYTHING.

YEAH...THAT.

NOTHING?

OKAY. IT'S YOUR  
FAVORITE CAKE, AND  
YOUR SELF-CONTROL  
IS BEING CHALLENGED!

ANYWAYS...FOR  
BETTER OR WORSE,  
I WAS REMINDED  
THAT THE PAD WAS  
STILL THERE.







I WONDERED LATER IF  
I WOULD HAVE FOUND THE  
WILLPOWER IF IT WASN'T  
FOR THE DAMN PERIOD.




AND IF I WAS TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST...  
IT WASN'T FOR THE PURELY *SEXUAL* REASON.

I WANTED TO GIVE IN...BECAUSE...



SUNSTONE!

I SAID SUNSTONE.  
I MEANT *SON OF A BITCH!*



BUT IT WORKED.



LIKE A...

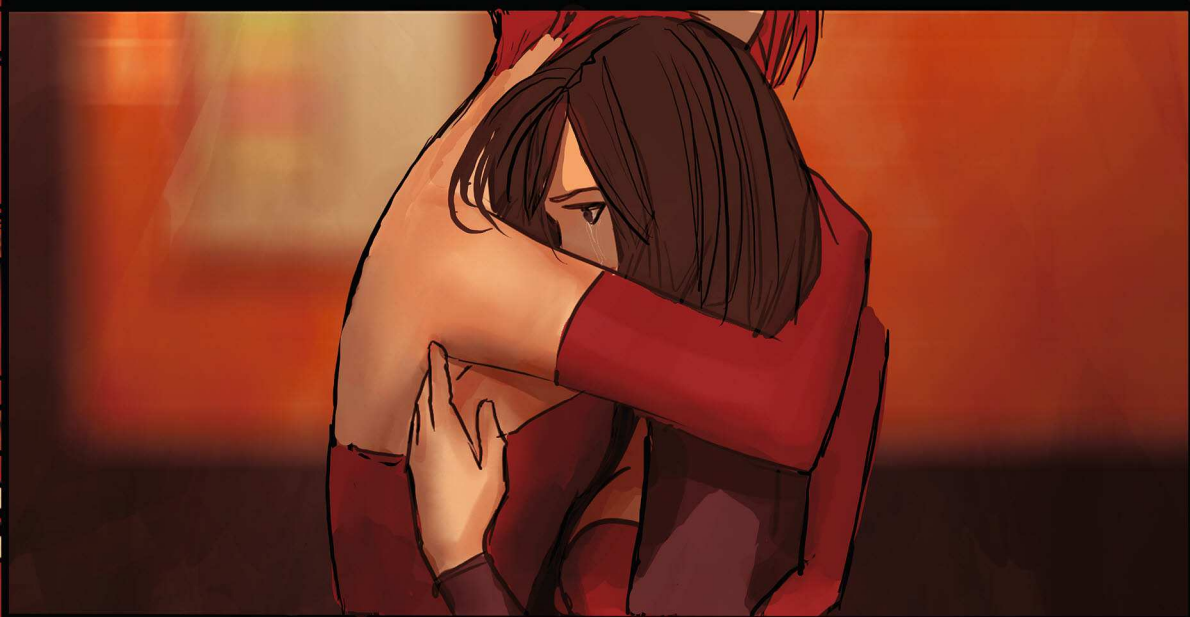
CHARM.



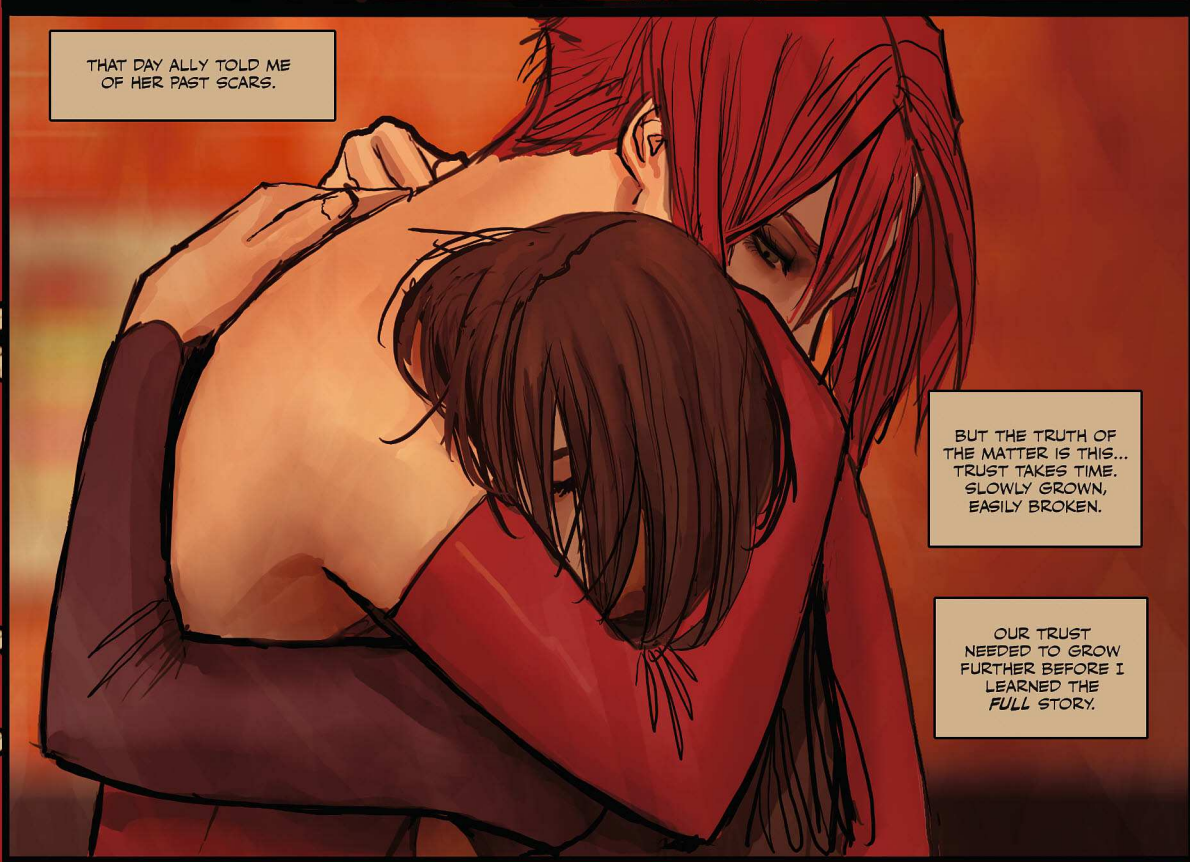
ALLY?

GHK!





THAT DAY ALLY TOLD ME  
OF HER PAST SCARS.



BUT THE TRUTH OF  
THE MATTER IS THIS...  
TRUST TAKES TIME.  
SLOWLY GROWN,  
EASILY BROKEN.

OUR TRUST  
NEEDED TO GROW  
FURTHER BEFORE I  
LEARNED THE  
FULL STORY.





I DIDN'T KNOW  
BACK THEN.

IF YOU WANT  
ME TO **STOP**, JUST  
SAY **SUNSTONE**...  
AND I WIN THE  
GAME!

I HAD NO IDEA OF JUST  
HOW DEEP HER WOUND WAS.

MARION, CALM  
DOWN! AN AMBULANCE  
IS ON ITS WAY!

PLEASE, ALLY!  
TAKE THEM OFF!  
**PLEASE!** OH  
GOD!

I...I CAN'T  
THE--

I...HAD TO HOLD HER.  
SHE WAS PANICKING, WANTED  
TO TAKE THE NOOSES OFF WITH  
HER TEETH. I HELD HER 'TIL  
THE MEDICS ARRIVED.

THE AMBULANCE  
CAME REMARKABLY  
FAST.

THE DOCTOR LATER  
ASSURED ME THAT I PROBABLY  
**SAVED** HER LIFE. BUT ALL I WAS  
THINKING WAS OF HER **SCREAMING**...  
BEGGING ME TO TAKE  
THE NOOSES OFF.

OR HOW MUCH  
IT HURT.

PUH-PLEASE! ALLY,  
SUNSTONE...OKAY?  
SU-SUNSTONE!

YOU WIN!

JU-JUST TAKE  
THEM OFF!





ALL I KNEW WAS...  
MY DEAREST FRIEND  
NEEDED ME.

AND I WAS  
THERE FOR HER.

MY ALLYCAT.

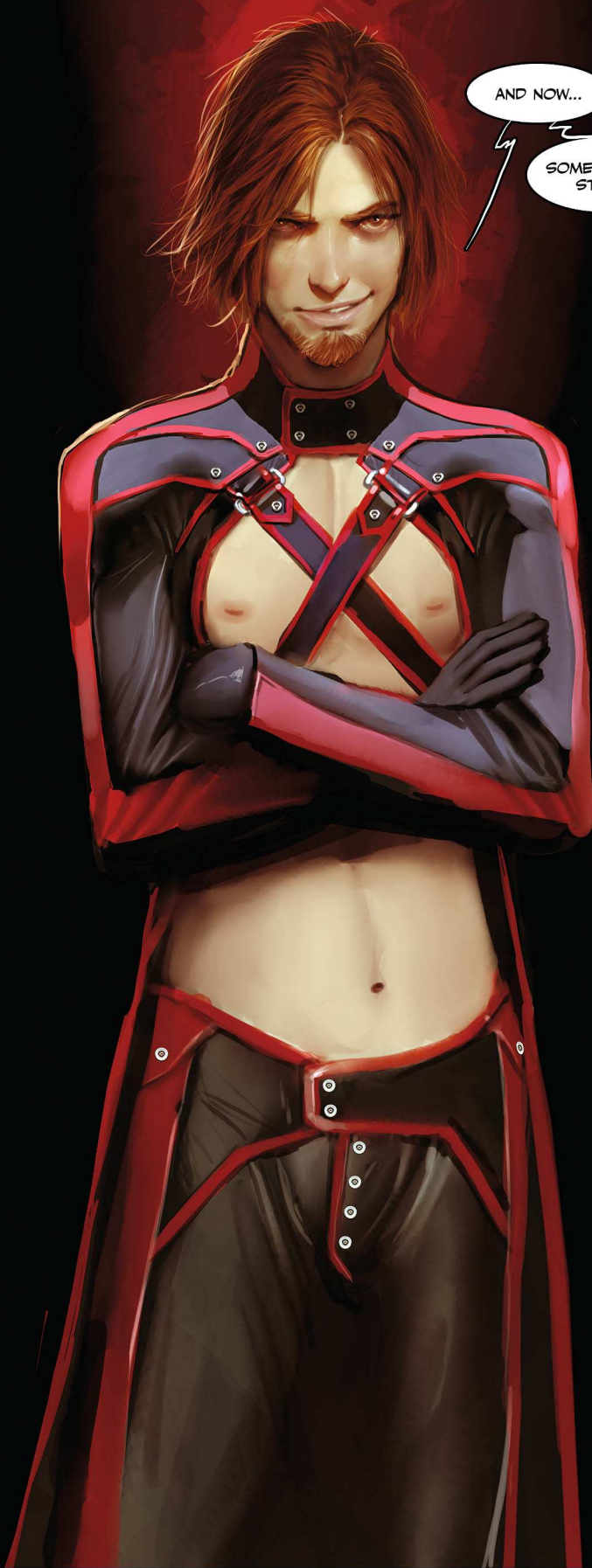












AND NOW...

SOME **BONUS**  
STUFF!





# Sunstone

## DECEMBER 24. 2014

YOU'RE KIDDING,  
RIGHT?

NOPE! THAT'S  
WHEN THE BOOK COMES  
OUT.

BUT...THAT'S  
LIKE...THE DAY BEFORE  
CHRISTMAS?!

WELL...YOU KNOW...  
NAUGHTY LIST? THERE  
IS SOMETHING  
THERE!

NO...NO  
THERE ISN'T!



I WAS ENDLESSLY  
AMUSED WHEN I LEARNED  
THE PUBLISHING DATE  
OF *SUNSTONE* VOLUME 1.





WHILE THIS PICTURE IS MORE CLOSELY  
RELATED TO CHAPTER/BOOK FIVE,  
I'M CONCERNED THAT WITH PROGRESSIVE  
GROWTH IN EACH CHAPTER, I WOULD  
FLAT OUT RUN OUT OF ROOM.

SO...I PLACED  
IT HERE.









AT A CERTAIN POINT  
I PLANNED ON ALAN  
MAKING A CATALOGUE  
OF HIS DESIGNS. WHETHER  
OR NOT THAT WILL HAPPEN  
IS STILL UNCERTAIN...

BUT HERE ARE A  
FEW DESIGNS.















IT'S SHOWTIME!!!

I DON'T  
GET IT...

YOU WILL IF  
YOU SAY MY NAME!

HEISENBERG?

FUCK YOU,  
ALAN!







I DON'T USUALLY  
LIKE STOCKING STUFFERS,  
BUT YOU'RE A WONDERFUL  
EXCEPTION!

HEH!



# Sunstone



COVER FOR  
SUNSTONE VOLUME 3.



BOOK TWO

I GUESS I SHOULD SAY A FEW WORDS. LET'S KEEP THINGS INTERESTING AND TALK A BIT ABOUT THE CREATIVE PROCESS.

IN BOOK ONE, I SAID *SUNSTONE* WAS AN UNPLANNED LIGHTNING IN THE BOTTLE. TRUTH IS, THE CREATIVE PROCESS ON THIS ENTIRE WEBCOMIC WAS EVEN MORE CHAOTIC THAN YOU MIGHT IMAGINE.

I WOULD TAKE FREE TIME BETWEEN PAID GIGS TO CREATE STRIPS OF *SUNSTONE*. THIS PROCESS WAS SO ERRATIC THAT I NEVER EVEN REREAD THE PREVIOUSLY MADE PAGES. I HONESTLY DIDN'T CARE. TYPO-RIDDEN CHAOS WORKED.

ITS UNPLANNED BEGINNING WAS SPARKED BY A DESIRE TO DO SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT I WAS ARTISTICALLY DOING. THE RESULT WAS THIS RATHER CARTOONY NEW APPROACH.

IT WAS THE RAW FOUNDATION OF WHAT WOULD, THROUGH CHAPTERS, CRYSTALLIZE INTO MY NEW, RECOGNIZABLE STYLE. IT WAS ROUGH AROUND THE EDGES, PROPORTIONS WERE WONKY, AND AT TIMES, IT DIPPED STRAIGHT INTO *LOONEY TUNES* TERRITORY WITH EXAGGERATED EXPRESSIONS.

STILL, IT WAS SUFFICIENT FOR WHAT I PLANNED AT FIRST...WHICH WAS NOTHING. AS THE STORY PROGRESSED, MY STYLE MATURED. IT TOOK ROOT IN MORE REALISTIC PROPORTIONS. I FOCUSED ON MASTERING A MORE SUBTLE, NUANCED LANGUAGE OF GESTURES AND EXPRESSIONS.

OH, AT TIMES I WOULD STILL DABBLE IN EXAGGERATIONS. I DON'T THINK THAT WILL EVER CHANGE, BUT THE STYLE HAS EVOLVED.

IT WAS WHEN I WAS OFFERED THE CHANCE TO PUBLISH *SUNSTONE* IN PRINT THAT I FACED A DILEMMA.

I REREAD THE STORY, AND WHILE IT WAS GOOD, BLATANT MISTAKES RIDDLED ITS SOLID FOUNDATION. THESE MISTAKES WERE THE RESULT OF THE PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED ERRATIC CREATIVE METHOD.

I NOTICED MANY MISTAKES.

MULTIPLE REPEATING OF SAME EXPOSITIONAL DIALOGUES BETWEEN CHARACTERS ON THE NATURE OF BDSM.



SO, BDSM IS ACTUALLY ABOUT BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH.

BDSM. OH, IT'S REALLY ABOUT BLAH BLAH BLAH.

O-M-G! YOU GUYS WANNA KNOW WHAT BDSM IS ALL ABOUT?

POINTS I WAS TRYING TO MAKE THAT, IN THE END, I NEVER MADE.



WHAT I MEAN TO SAY IS--

OH! IS THAT A COOKIE?

PLANNED ONGOING JOKES THAT JUST KIND OF EVAPORATED.



KNOCK, KNOCK!

WHO'S THERE?

...



AT THE SAME TIME, I REALIZED MANY OPPORTUNITIES.

IN THE EARLY CREATIVE STAGES, I DITCHED MANY SCENES AND PAGES SIMPLY DUE TO MY LACK OF TIME. FOR INSTANCE, THE ENTIRE EXPANDED PREPARATION SCENES OF ALLY AND LISA IN BOOK ONE. ALLY DOMINATING ALAN IN BOOK TWO, AND MANY MORE.

AND HERE I WAS. MY CHANCE TO TAKE THAT EXTRA EFFORT, GO THAT EXTRA MILE, AND DO IT RIGHT. THIS, HERE, IS THE FINAL CUT. IN THE META OF THE BOOK, YOU MAY CONSIDER THE WEBCOMIC TO BE LISA'S FIRST DRAFT AND THIS THE FINAL VERSION.

BUT THEN...WITH THAT OPPORTUNITY TO DO THINGS RIGHT CAME A HARD CHOICE. I KNEW MY STYLE HAD SIGNIFICANTLY CHANGED SINCE CHAPTER ONE. AND I KNEW I HAD TO DRAW ADDITIONAL PAGES.

I WOULD EITHER HAVE TO LEAVE ARTWORK IN ITS ORIGINAL STATE AND HAVE THE NEW PAGES CLASH...OR FLAT OUT REWORK EVERYTHING. *SUNSTONE* MEANT TOO MUCH TO ME. THIS BOOK SAVED MY CREATIVITY. IT DESERVED MY BEST EFFORT. MAKE NO MISTAKE, IT WAS NOT AN EASY TASK TO DO.

AND IT WOULD NOT PLEASE EVERYONE. I KNEW FROM THE GET-GO THAT REDUCING SOME EXPRESSIONS TO A MORE NUANCED VERSION TO MATCH THE SITUATION BETTER WOULD STRIKE SOME PEOPLE AS LESS EXPRESSIVE.

WHICH IT IS.

BUT THE REASONING I TOOK WHEN I CHOSE TO SUBDUCE THE EXPRESSIONS WAS...WELL...THEY LOOKED TOO DAFFY FOR THE SITUATIONS!



THE WAY I SEE IT, THERE IS A SLIDING SCALE FROM CARTOONISH TO REALISTIC. IN ORDER FOR THE STORY TO READ COHESIVELY, I HAD TO CHOOSE THE STYLISTIC BALANCE THAT COULD PULL OFF BOTH WITHOUT BEING TOO MUCH OF EITHER. YOU SEE THE RESULTS HERE.

NOTABLE STYLISTIC CHANGES WERE:

MORE REALISTIC BODY VOLUMES.

A MORE REALISTIC NOSE SIZE.

A LESS EXAGGERATED AND MORE NUANCED APPROACH TO GESTURES AND EXPRESSIONS TO MATCH THE WIDE ARRAY OF SITUATIONS, RANGING FROM SERIOUS, TO SAD, TO HAPPY, TO SLAPSTICKY.

HOPEFULLY, IF LUCK WILL HAVE IT AND THIS SERIES WORKS OUT, I FULLY PLAN TO DO A SPECIAL COMMENTARY AND COMPARISON BONUS SOME DAY. GIVE YOU ALL AN INSIGHT INTO THE MESS THAT IS MY MIND AND SHOW YOU WHAT MAKES IT TICK.

HINT: IT'S COFFEE--LOTS AND LOTS OF COFFEE!

ANYHOW, SEE YOU ALL IN BOOK THREE...WHERE I REVEAL THE HILARIOUS PATHS THIS STORY COULD HAVE TAKEN.





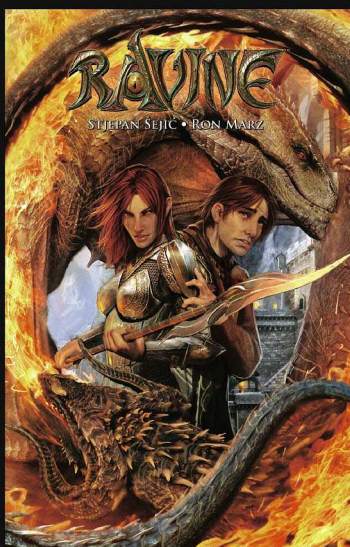
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## RAVINE VOL. 1

*Writers: Stjepan Sejic & Ron Marz  
Artist: Stjepan Sejic*

*In a fantastic world far from our own, an ancient magic spell almost split the world in two and left an endless ravine in the north. One man, Nebezial Asheri, driven by the deaths of his wife and daughters will attempt to reclaim that magic and bring his loved ones back to life. The forces of an entire city, Palladia, will rise to oppose him, but his greatest foes will be a ragtag band of an outcast wizard, a dragonrider, and their allies.*



## RAVINE VOL. 2

*Writers: Stjepan Sejic & Ron Marz  
Artist: Stjepan Sejic*

*The balance of power in the kingdom of Palladia is threatened, as schemers plot to overthrow the rightful king. Amid this turmoil, a sorcerer named Stein Phais and a dragon rider named Lynn de Luctes are Wanderers, blessed with great power and destinies that can shape the fate of nations. How long will it be before they are drawn into the conflict?*



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## **DEATH VIGIL**

*Writer: Stjepan Sejic  
Artist: Stjepan Sejic*

*Gifted? Join the Death Vigil in their ongoing war against the ever-growing power of the Primordial Enemy! The only catch is you have to die first. Become a corporeal immortal Death Knight and obtain reality-altering weaponry in the never-ending battle between good and evil.*



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## APHRODITE IX: REBIRTH VOL. 1

Writer: Matt Hawkins  
Artist: Stjepan Sejic

*Hundreds of years after a cataclysmic event scorched the surface, Earth and its inhabitants have been forever altered and a new landscape and political struggle has taken hold between two distinct factions fighting for control. Aphrodite IX is both anachronism and advanced technology in a world that she no longer recognizes. To survive in this future, she must choose sides in a war that she wants no part in.*



## APHRODITE IX: REBIRTH VOL. 2

Writer: Matt Hawkins  
Artist: Stjepan Sejic

*Determined to never be controlled by outside forces again, Aphrodite IX seeks revenge against those who manipulated her. Plus the secrets behind the generational models revealed by Aphrodite XV and Artemis IX.*



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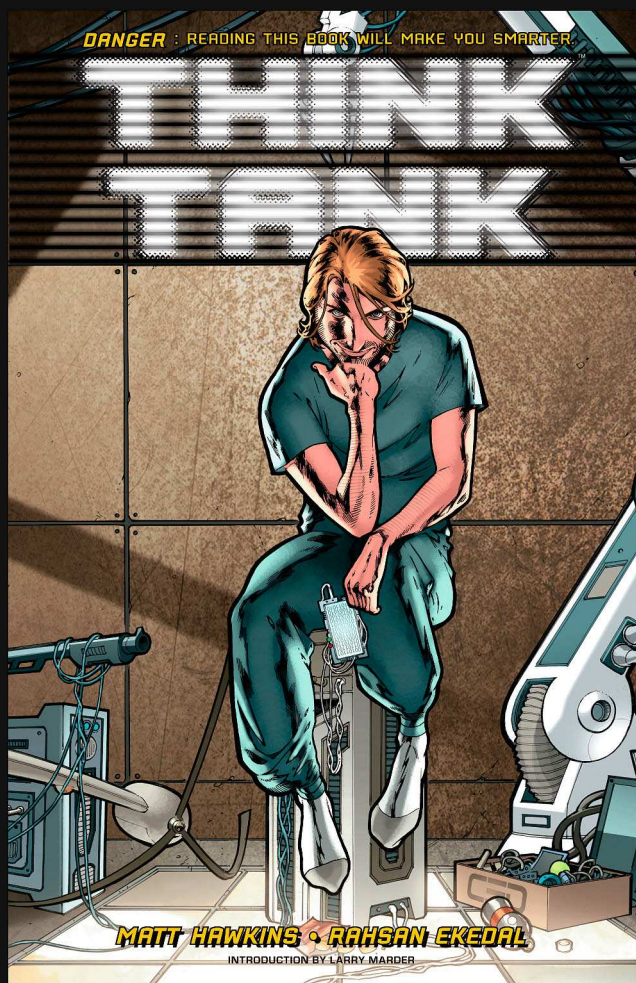
## IX<sup>TH</sup> GENERATION

Writer: Matt Hawkins  
Artist: Stjepan Sejic

*In the future there is no more natural death, no needs unfilled and everything you could ever want is yours...as long as you're one of the chosen ones to live in this new Utopia and you're willing to subjugate yourself to these new self-proclaimed gods with IX's emblazoned on them. Do the ends truly justify the means? Is a utopia built on genocide worth the price? Aphrodite, Velocity, Hades and the other Nines establish fiefdoms in this new world and attempt to rule. Their internal clashes have escalated, but they are forced to put that aside as they face off against the relentless hordes of the Darkness. The sins of the past have come to claim those who would pretend to be Gods. The cybernetic future established in Aphrodite IX and Cyber Force finally comes face to face with the supernatural Artifact side of the Top Cow universe!*



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## **THINK TANK**

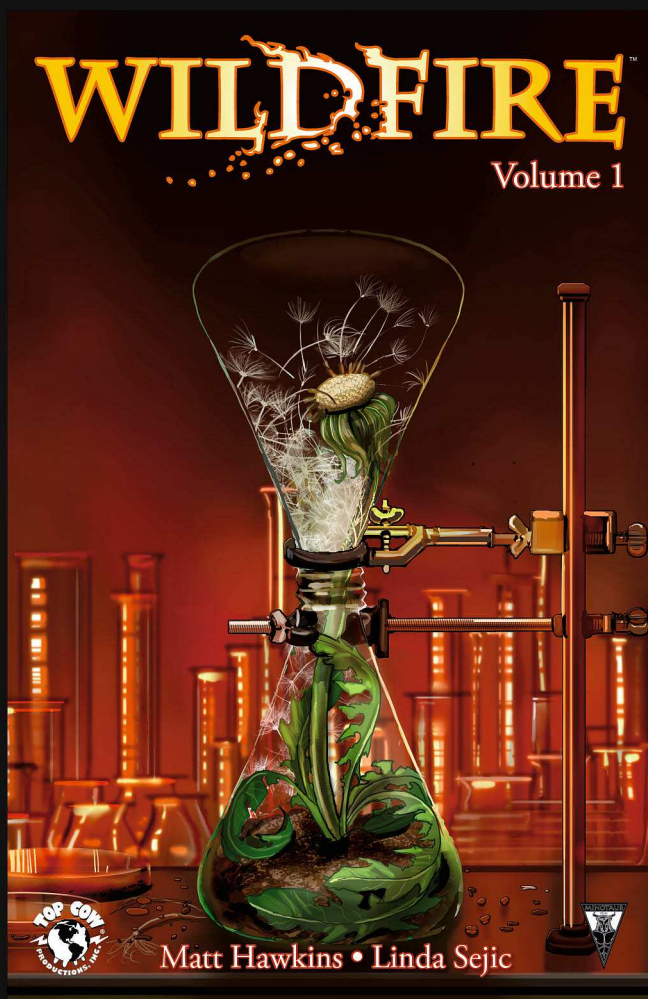
*Writer: Matt Hawkins  
Artist: Rahsan Ekedal  
Cover: Rahsan Ekedal & Brian Reber*

*Dr. David Loren is many things: child prodigy, inventor, genius, slacker... mass murderer. When a military think tank's smartest scientist decides he can no longer stomach creating weapons of destruction, will he be able to think his way out of his dilemma or find himself subject to the machinations of smaller men?*

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## **WILDFIRE**

*Writer: Matt Hawkins  
Artist: Linda Sejic*

*Is genetically modified food an end to world hunger or a first class ticket to the apocalypse? Dan Miller is a plant biologist working with a small team perfecting an accelerated plant growth process. When things go wrong, Los Angeles pays the price in a disaster story unlike any before.*





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