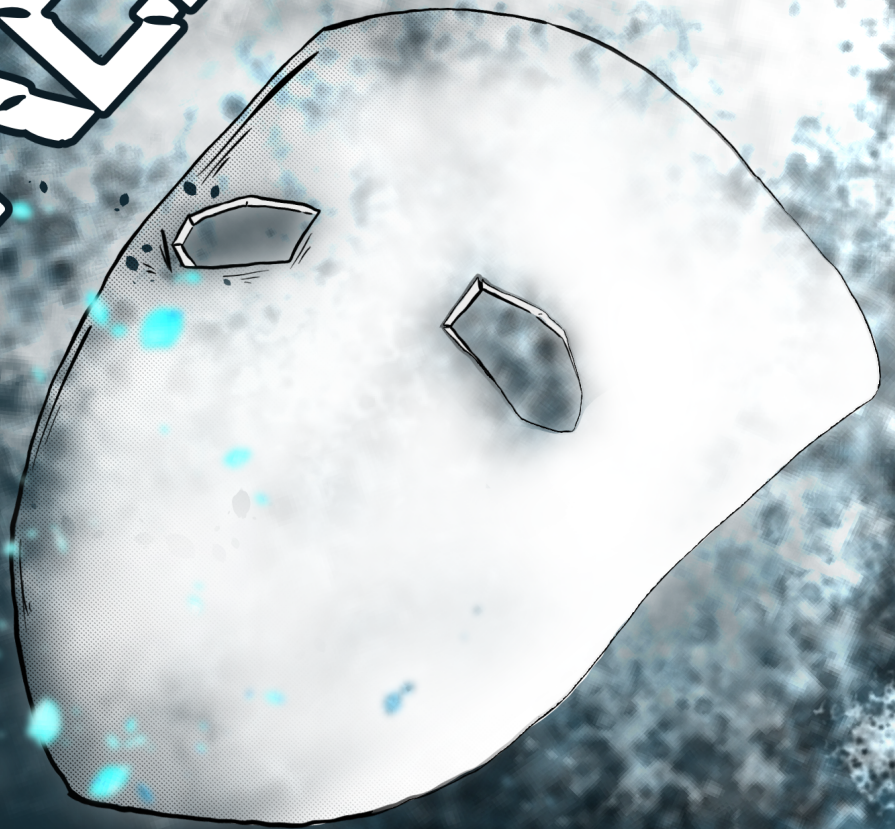


MASKED



FRANK MARTIN
TYLER CARPENTER

A stylized illustration of a hand holding a glowing orb. The hand is rendered in white with black outlines, set against a dark, textured background. The orb is a bright, glowing white circle with a textured, grainy surface, resembling a planet or a celestial body. The overall composition is centered and evokes a sense of mystery and discovery.

MASKED

WRITTEN BY:
FRANK MARTIN

ILLUSTRATED BY:
TYLER CARPENTER

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BUT I'M CONSUMED BY IT NONETHELESS.

WE ALL ARE.



WANDERING THROUGH THE ABYSS, HOPING THERE'S SOMETHING ON THE OTHER SIDE.



SOME MEANING.

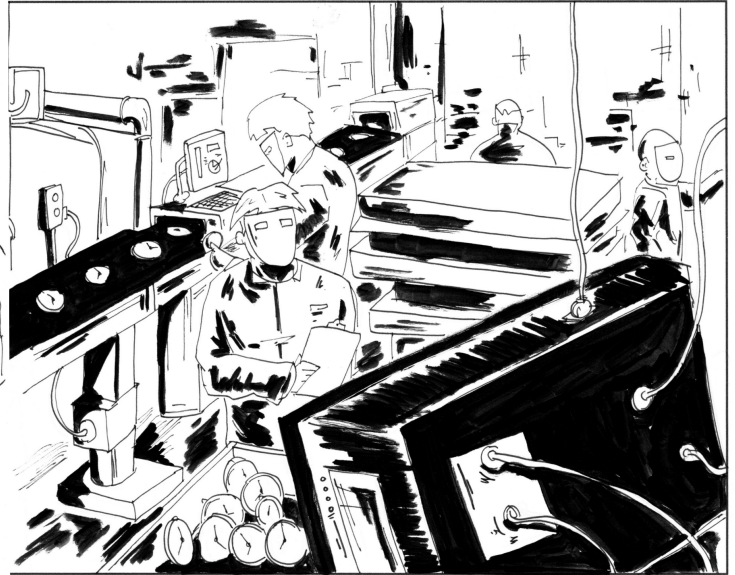


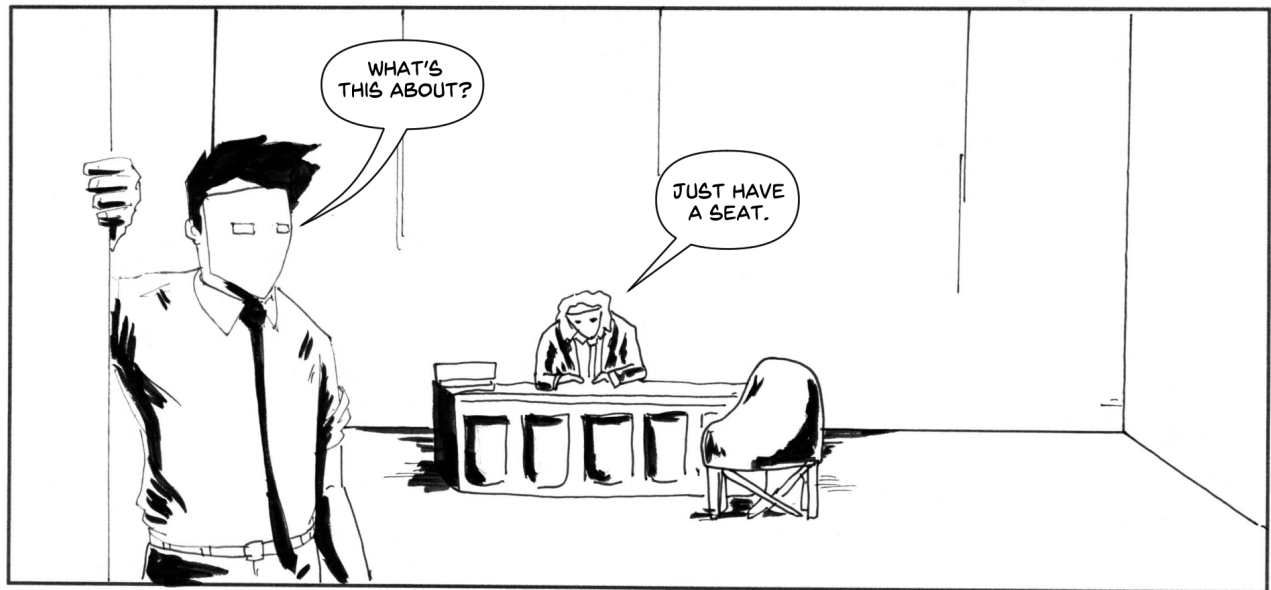
SOME DIRECTION.

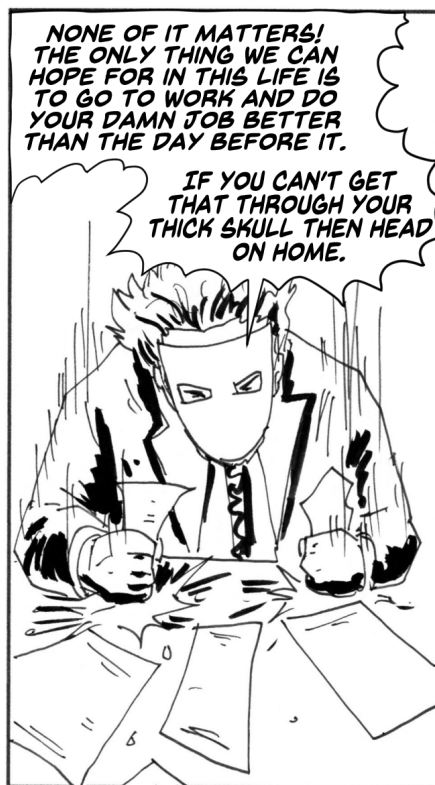
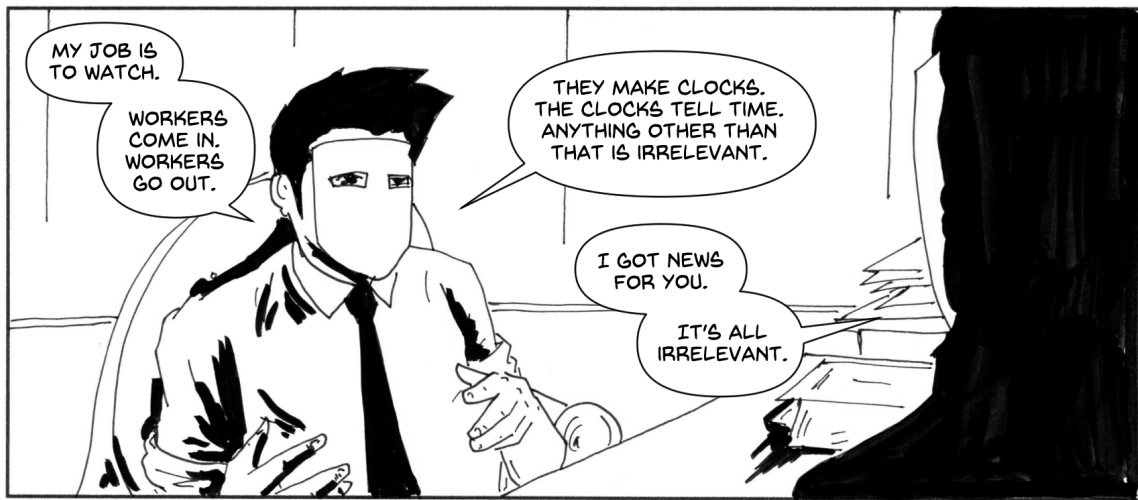
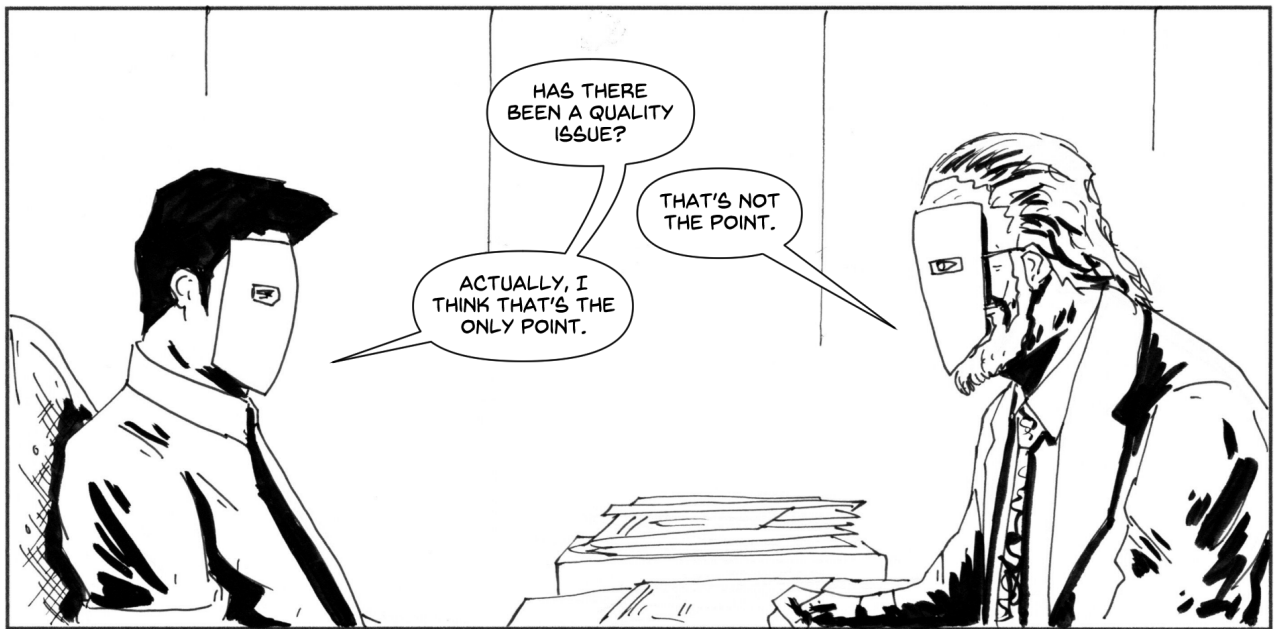
SOME VOICE WHISPERING IN OUR EAR TELLING US IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT.



THAT EVERYTHING WILL BE OKAY.







I SHOULD BE MAD ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED.

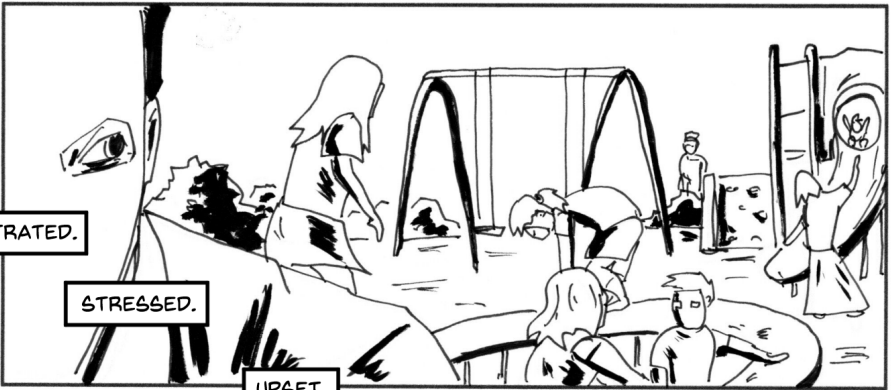
AT LEAST...I'M SUPPOSED TO BE MAD.



FRUSTRATED.

STRESSED.

UPSET.

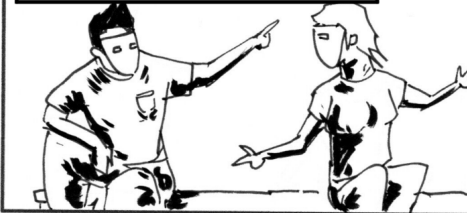


BUT...

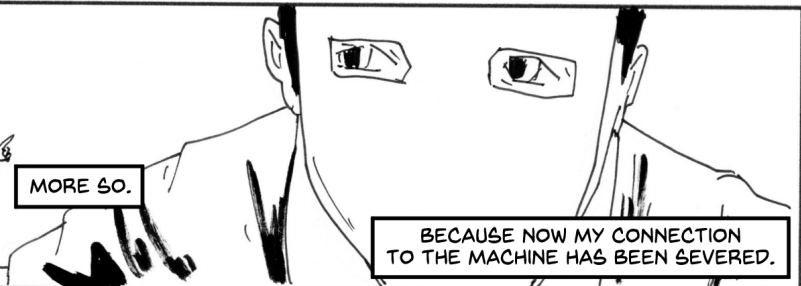
I'M NOT.



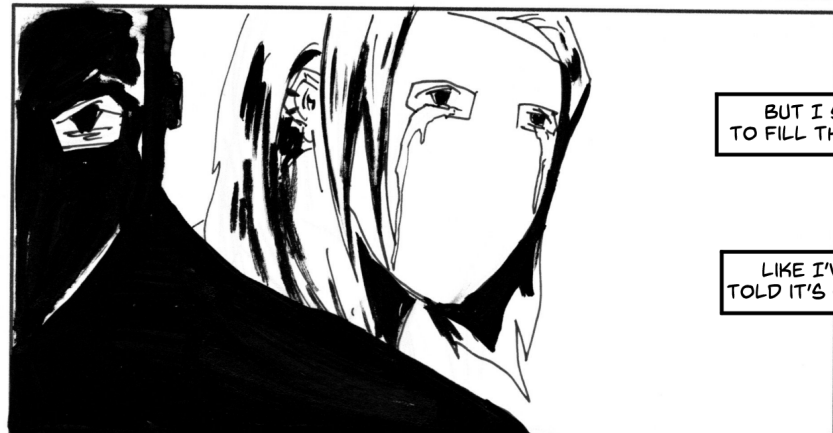
I FEEL JUST AS DEVOID AS WHEN I WALKED INTO THAT FACTORY.



MORE SO.



BECAUSE NOW MY CONNECTION TO THE MACHINE HAS BEEN SEVERED.



BUT I SENSE NO URGE TO FILL THE HOLE INSIDE ME.

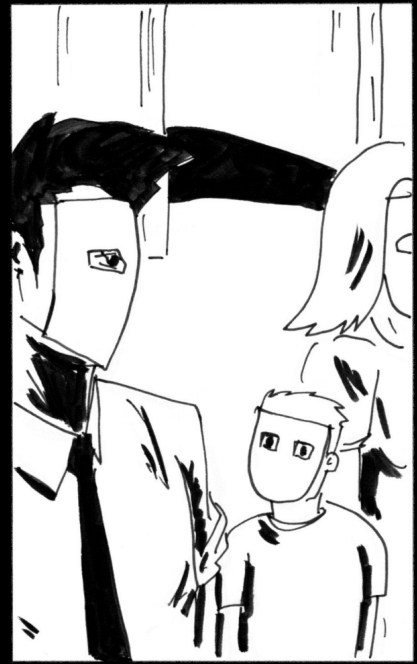
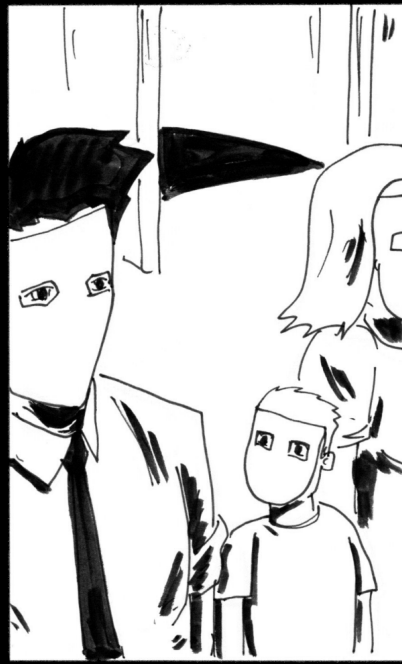
LIKE I'VE FINALLY BEEN TOLD IT'S OKAY TO BE EMPTY.

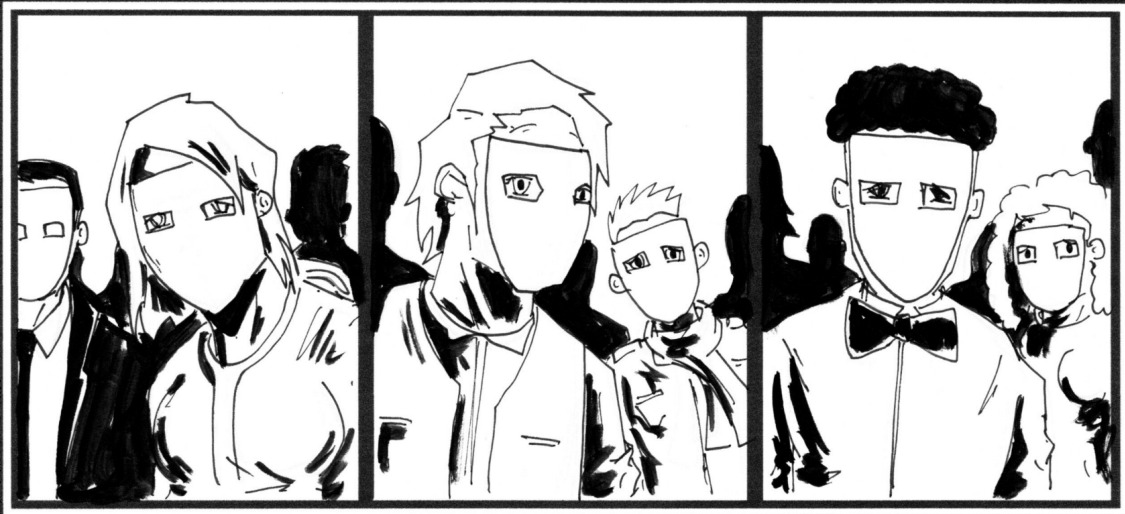
IT'S PAIN WITHOUT SENSATION.

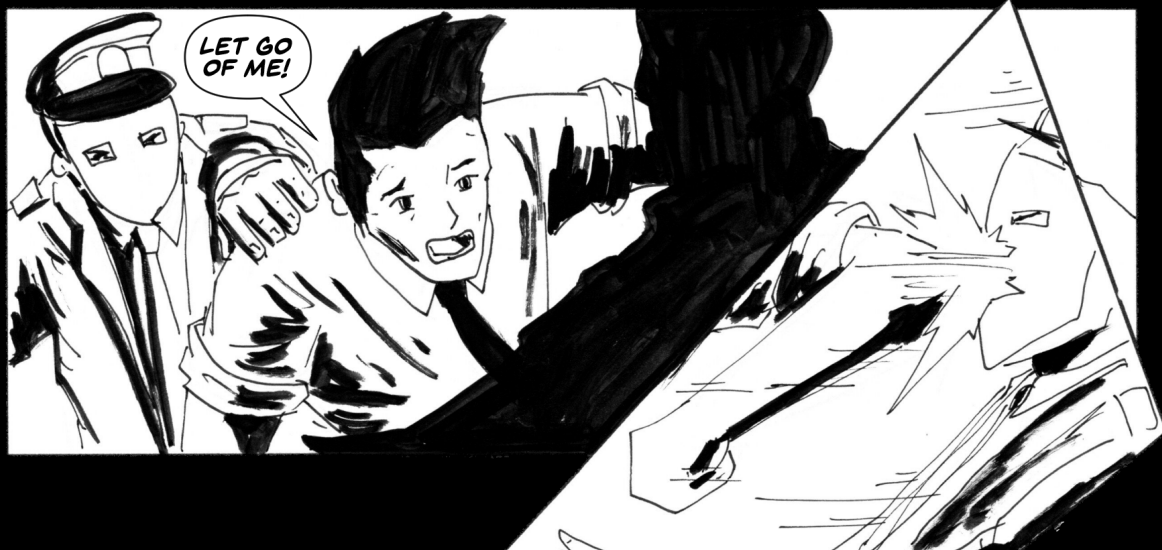
ANGER WITHOUT INTENSITY.

IT JUST...









AM I RUNNING AWAY?



OR RUNNING TO?

MAYBE IT'S
ALL THE SAME.

AN ETERNAL CYCLE OF
SHAME AND DESPAIR THAT'S
TRAPPED US IN A LOOP.



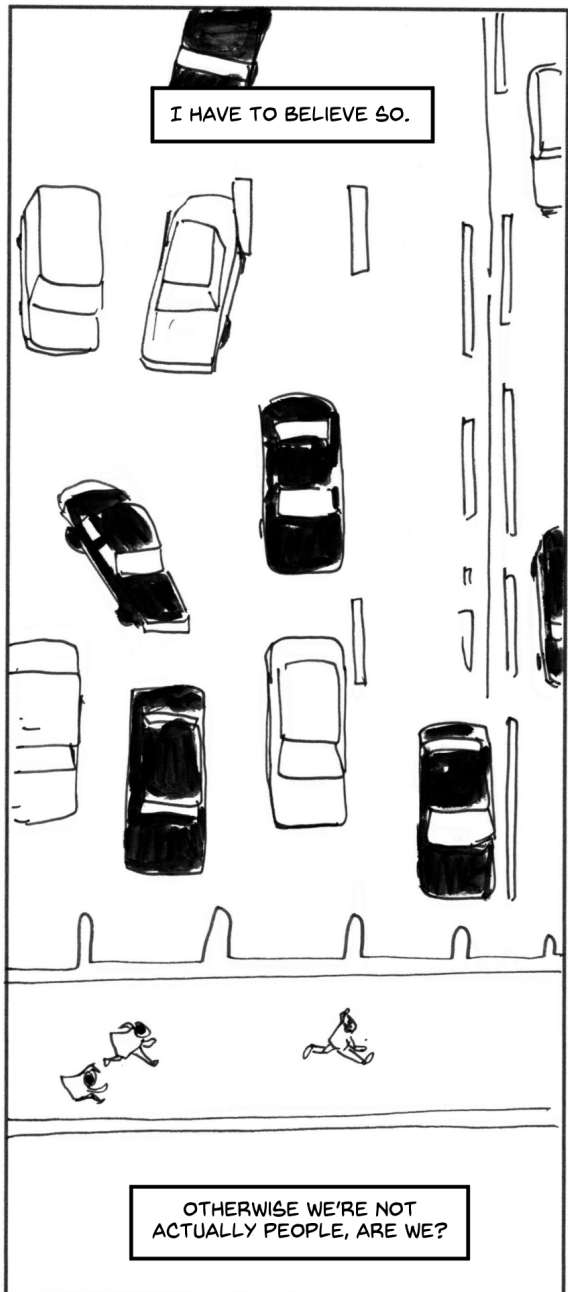
FREEDOM.

TRUTH.





IS ANY OF IT REALLY BETTER THAN SERVITUDE AND LIES?

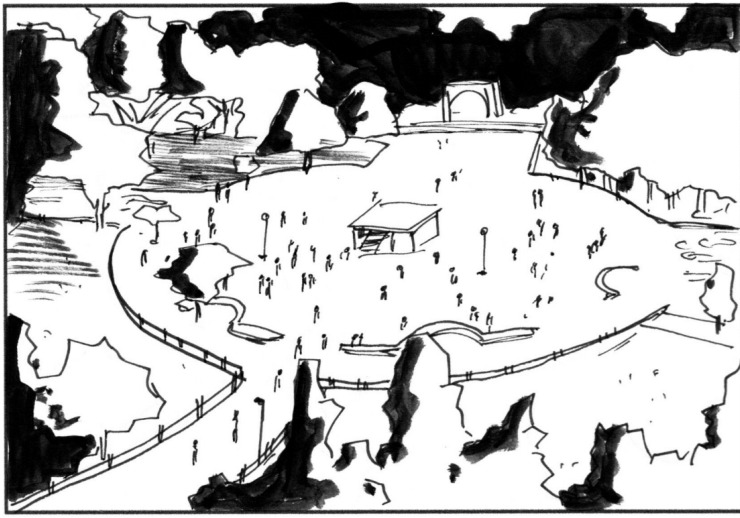


I HAVE TO BELIEVE SO.

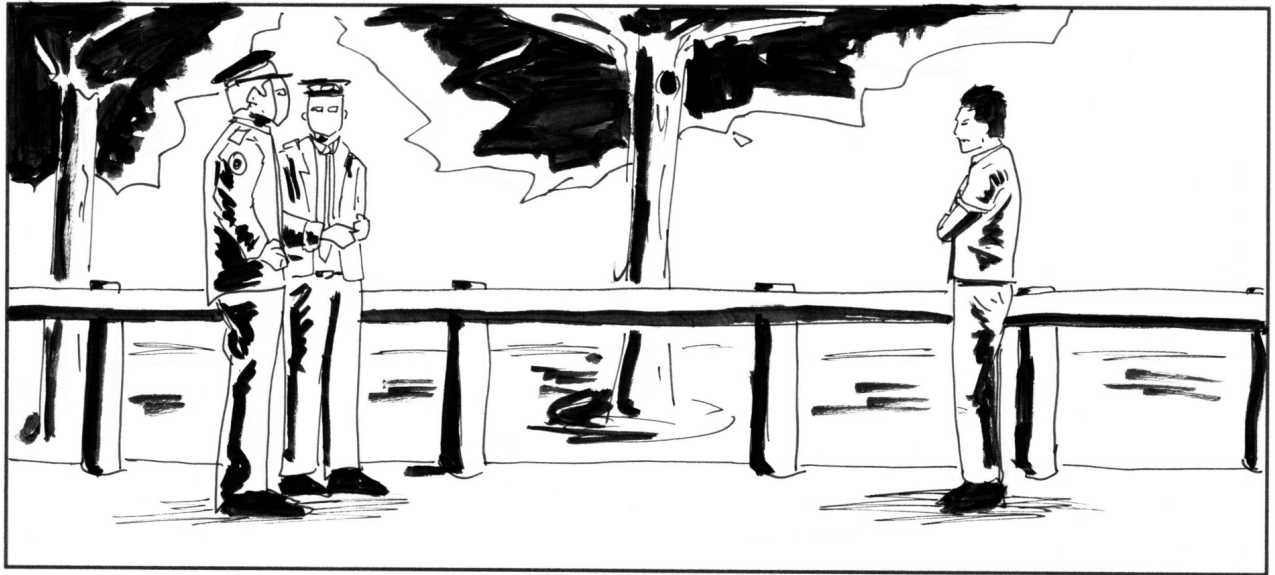
OTHERWISE WE'RE NOT ACTUALLY PEOPLE, ARE WE?



WE REALLY ARE JUST THE MASKS WE HIDE BEHIND.









I KNOW YOU'RE SCARED.

I KNOW BECAUSE I WAS THERE TOO.

MASK OR NO MASK -

YOU LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND SEE A FACE YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE.



BUT WE DON'T HAVE TO HIDE WHO WE ARE TO BE A PART OF SOMETHING GREATER.

OUR DIFFERENCES AREN'T A WEAKNESS. THEY DON'T MAKE US VULNERABLE. THEY'RE OUR GREATEST ASSETS.

THEY'RE WHAT MAKE US STRONG.

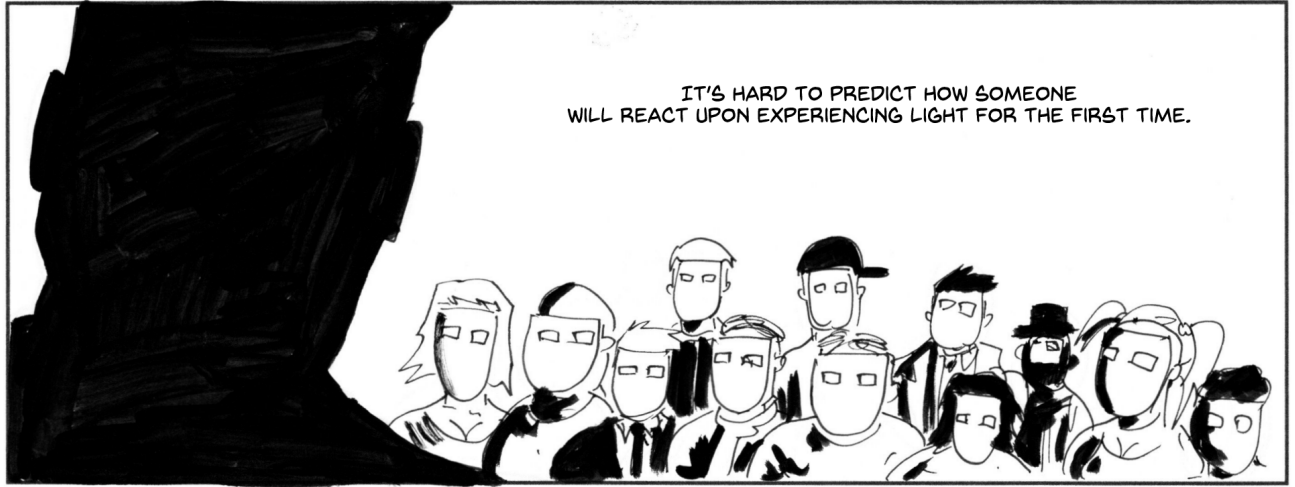
DENYING THAT IS LIKE HOLDING YOUR BREATH. SUFFOCATING IN A ROOM FULL OF AIR.



SO BREATHE. STEP OUTSIDE. LET GO.

AND BE WHO YOU'RE MEANT TO BE!

IT'S HARD TO PREDICT HOW SOMEONE
WILL REACT UPON EXPERIENCING LIGHT FOR THE FIRST TIME.



PERHAPS THEY'LL BE
COMFORTED BY ITS GLOW
AND BASK IN ITS WARMTH.



IT COULD FEEL FAMILIAR
TO THEM, A LONG LOST FRIEND
FINALLY COMING HOME.



LIKE A PART OF THEMSELVES
THEY NEVER KNEW WAS MISSING.



PERHAPS THEY'LL BE GLARED
BY ITS BRIGHTNESS AND
CONFUSED BY ITS SHIMMER.



RADIANCE CAN BE ALIEN TO
THOSE THAT HAVE BEEN HIDDEN
FROM ITS SHINE.



LOST IN ITS GLARE AND
WONDERING WHAT IT IS THEY
ARE EVEN LOOKING AT.



OR MAYBE AFTER BEING
IN THE DARKNESS FOR SO LONG
THE LIGHT IS NOTHING MORE
THAN A THREAT.



AN INVADER.



A BLASPHEMER.



A CORRUPTION THAT
NEEDS TO BE SQUASHED
FROM EXISTENCE.



IT'S THE DARKNESS
THAT'S RIGHT.

THE DARKNESS
THAT'S NOBLE.

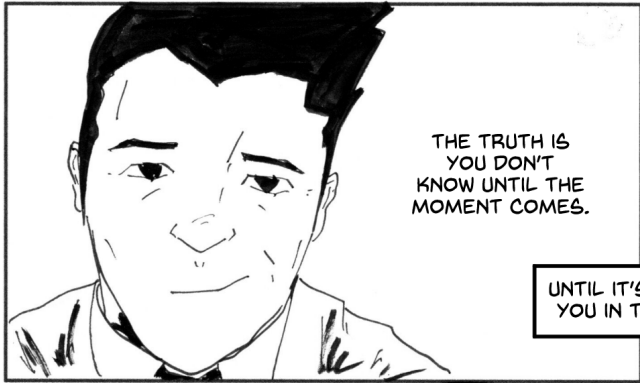
THE DARKNESS
THAT'S PURE.



BE HONEST...

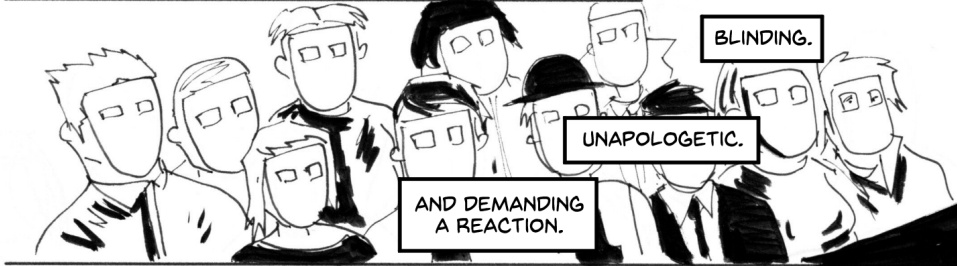
WOULD YOU BE
ANY DIFFERENT?





THE TRUTH IS
YOU DON'T
KNOW UNTIL THE
MOMENT COMES.

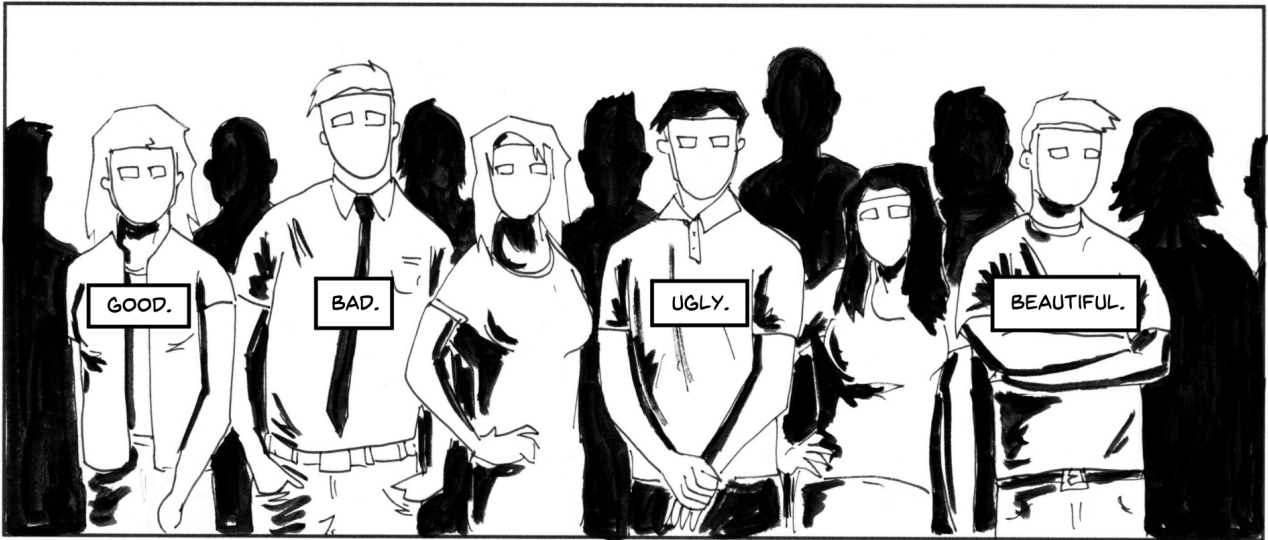
UNTIL IT'S STARING
YOU IN THE FACE.



BLINDING.

UNAPOLOGETIC.

AND DEMANDING
A REACTION.



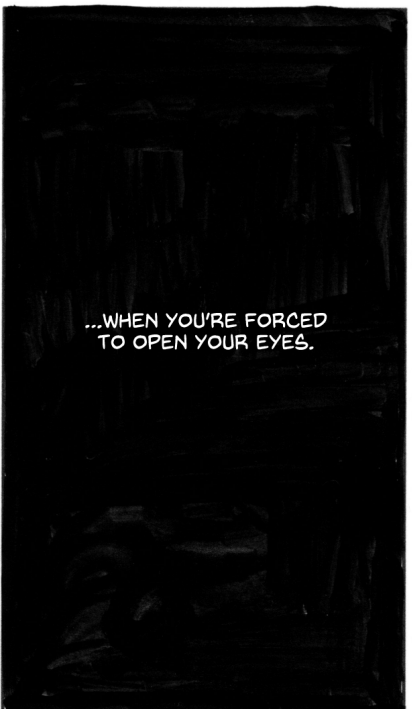
EVERYONE IS
SOMEBODY.

THE QUESTION ISN'T
WHY YOU'RE HIDING.

BECAUSE
NOBODY CARES.



THE QUESTION IS
WHETHER OR NOT YOU'LL
BE THAT PERSON...



...WHEN YOU'RE FORCED
TO OPEN YOUR EYES.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

FRANK MARTIN



FRANK IS A COMIC WRITER AND AUTHOR WHO IS NOT AS CRAZY AS HIS WORK MAKES HIM OUT TO BE...SERIOUSLY. SINCE HIS WRITING CAREER BEGAN HE'S HAD MULTIPLE SHORT STORIES PUBLISHED IN HORROR ANTHOLOGIES BY NUMEROUS INDIE PUBLICATIONS. FRANK ALSO WROTE AND PRODUCED THE COMIC ANTHOLOGY SERIES MODERN TESTAMENT, WHICH FEATURED A WIDE ENSEMBLE OF ARTISTS THROUGHOUT ITS FOUR VOLUMES. FRANK'S NOVELS INCLUDE THE YA SCI-FI THRILLER PREDESTINY PUBLISHED BY CROSSROADS PRESS, THE ZOMBIE HORROR MOUNTAIN SICKNESS PUBLISHED BY SEVERED PRESS, AMONG OTHERS. HE CURRENTLY LIVES IN NEW YORK WITH HIS WIFE AND THREE KIDS.

TYLER CARPENTER

TYLER IS A COMIC WRITER AND ARTIST AS WELL AS AN AWARD WINNING EDITORIAL CARTOONIST. WHILE ALWAYS TRYING TO HAVE A SILLY GOOSE TIME, TYLER HAS PUBLISHED MANY COMICS INCLUDING HIS SERIES "DEMONS" AND GRAPHIC NOVEL "ENTITY." HE IS CURRENTLY WORKING ON HIS NEXT BIG PROJECT: C.H.E.F.S (CULINARY HEROES EARTH FORCE) WHICH IS A SUPERHERO SERIES AIMED AT YOUNG ADULTS. HE IS ALSO THE HOST AND CREATOR OF THE YOUTUBE SHOW "DRAW AND TALK" WHICH COVERS MAINSTREAM COMIC BOOK TOPICS, HOW-TOS ON MAKING COMICS, AND DOPE INTERVIEWS WITH VARIOUS CREATORS IN THE INDUSTRY. HE CURRENTLY RESIDES IN UTAH WITH HIS FAMILY.

