

LIKE FINE WINE



A COLLECTION OF AGE GAP RELATIONSHIPS
FEATURING OLDER MEN
EDITED BY A.M HERRINGTON

Like Fine Wine is a work of fiction and all characters involved in sexual situations are adults 18 years or older.

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PREFACE

In the spring of 2025, following the completion of “Nocturne” and a fruitless search for media to satisfy my eternal appetite for ojiloli, a mad little notion came upon me.

“What if I hosted a collaborative zine¹ for enjoyers of older!M age gap relationships?! To my knowledge, nothing like it already exists. I’ve seen so many folks who enjoy age gaps, but are scattered to the corners of the internet... and social media has become so hostile to artists and writers of adult content that even if we love age differences, we hesitate to share it. I’ve modded a zine before, so I could do it again... but should I?!”

Well, dear Reader, you hold the answer in your hands (or on your phone/computer screen, whatever the situation may be). Welcome to *Like Fine Wine*. This 100+ page collection of prose and artwork is a labour of love by the 41 (!!) people who came together to make it, for those of you who have wondered, similarly, whether you were alone in liking the stuff. Within these pages, you will find men who aged like fine wine, as well as men who aged like gasoline tin moonshine². You’ll find elegant nobles and big, beautiful pastors. You’ll find wholesome relationships between widowers and their new loves, messy, at times even violent, dynamics between blood relatives, and pairings who turn assumed power imbalances on their heads³.

Above all, you’ll find all kinds of older men to ogle and appreciate and the younger partners who adore (or at least harass) them—and we hope you’ll love reading the work inside as much as we enjoyed making it.

Many, many thanks to my co-mods Angie, Hanna, and Leigh for ensuring it all came together, and to our contributors for their lovely art, comics, and prose writing. Thank you, Reader, for picking us up. Whether you were accepted into the project or not, it was a pleasure to hear what you love about older man/younger partner pairings, and to be able to showcase just a fraction of that love in this collection.

Thank you,

A.M. Herrington



¹ Or anthology, as some of you have corrected me.

² Thank jiuarchives for that one.

³ A list of content warnings can be found on page 149.

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Please continue to page 149 to view a list of content warnings. Not all authors/artists have opted to list potential triggers, as to prevent spoiling their pieces.



APPOINTMENTS IN PRIVATE

*Written by Daisycraft
Illustrated by Beans*

“Now. Amelia, what is the earliest thing you can remember?”

Gloved hands reach out to wrap around a wrist, turning it over to face the hand palm-up. The doctor—the *coroner*, truth be told—runs his fingers over her soft skin, thankfully mostly unblemished. Bruises have healed over the past several months, time having been just enough to soothe mysterious red and purple rope marks. Restrained, careful touch glides up her arm as he examines her.

A cold grey room, backed into the lower corner of the building. The stone floor meets stone walls painted over, but such paint does little to bring any semblance of warmth. The heat of an oil scone on the wall hardly reaches them. There are no windows, but outside it is a mild autumn day.

Harvey Whittaker would have been the town’s physician, if life went his way for once thirty years ago. He instead apprenticed beneath the local coroner, but nonetheless, his medical knowledge serves him well these days. Stress has made its home in him over the years, settling into the grooves of his face and turning his blond hair silver. Ever since their local physician, God rest her soul, passed terribly in a recent string of bizarre deaths, Whittaker has been the best this town has.

Whatever his “best” may be, however, has been on a steady decline since April, and he reminds himself constantly that the girl before him deserves far better than what he is able to provide.

Amelia kicks her feet, elevated off the ground where she sits on the exam table typically reserved for the dead. If she is at all perturbed, she does not show it. Empty mortuary chambers line the wall behind her; Whittaker finds himself occasionally glancing back at them before returning his attention to her.

She watches his hands with curious eyes, reacting little as he presses down on old marks and bruises for any reaction. “Ah... The earliest...”

Whittaker’s eyes dart to her other hand which paws at the bench, creeping

Appointments in Private

towards a notebook that lies there. Within it, meticulous day-by-day notes of every detail she sees fit to try to remember. It is one of many diaries that she has kept for who knows how long. “Without consulting your books? Please, do try, Amelia. Something that you recall being present for, not just reading.”

Her hand retreats into her lap shamefully. “Very well. Yes, um...”

...Amelia trails off, and doesn’t pick it back up. Instead, she chooses to pull at a loose thread on her shift. She always has to dress down for these examinations, nothing but a plain white undergarment, clearly distressed from overwear with the way one strap has a habit of slipping down her shoulder. Whittaker rights this as professionally as he can muster whenever it happens; Amelia seems like she hardly even notices. Her arms are covered in goose bumps—whether it be a result of the cold or the proximity, he doesn’t ask. The former is far more comforting to him.



She winces suddenly, when Whittaker presses his thumb into a spot on her upper arm. He murmurs a hoarse apology, soothing her with a stroke of the shoulder. Through his cloth glove, he can feel the warmth radiating off her bare skin.

“How about that, then? When did you receive it, can you remember?” asks Whittaker, leaning back and pointing to the mostly healed bruise there, nothing but a green stain on her skin. She looks at it, as if she wasn’t certain it existed.

“I’m not sure,” Amelia replies nonchalantly, poking the spot herself. “Perhaps I knocked into the town fence climbing over it.”

“And this?” He gently brushes over a large scab on her knee, exposed by the edge of her garment. She pulls up the skirt carelessly to look at it and he tugs it back down an inch for his own sake, turning his head away for fear that he would see more than just the knee. The explanation she spares him is a half-hearted shrug. Whittaker sighs.

Rising from his stool, he steps away, tugging on the fingers of his gloves to remove them. Spotted, seasoned hands toss them into a small box on his work counter to be cleaned later—hands that are also sweaty, Whittaker notes, yet chooses to excuse being so due to the gloves. “You do little for my nerves, Amelia. There is no reason to not use the front gate, and you *know* that the woods haven’t been safe lately.”

He doesn't need to turn around to know the way that she must have lowered her head in shame, shoulders hunched up to her ears. She always makes herself seem a little bit smaller when reprimanded.

They both know that there is no excuse she can provide about her disobedience.

Ever since last October, their small graveyard has been filling up more than what is natural. The first death to mark the following string of tragedies was a vicious homicide: a young woodcutter, decapitated with his own axe, discovered on the doorstep of his own home. Not long after, one by one, houses went empty as others began dying in strange and impossible ways. Trails went cold. Neighbours were buried and their families fled. Now, paranoia suffocates those who remain and Harvey Whittaker, the only person with investigative knowledge that the town has, finds himself drowning in questions. Every answer that could advance any case could be taken to one of the many graves just outside of town.

Amelia arrived in April with nothing but mail to deliver and the clothes on her back, not even the slightest idea of who she was. Harvey became her guardian then, briefly putting her up in the town inn and later offering her a place to stay in his own home. She paid him back with pocket change, hot meals between intense work sessions and, most treasured of all, her company.

It was strange at first, adapting to living with someone after decades of being alone. Yes, Whittaker often found a regular guest in his greatest friend, the local priest, but... *Ah*, tragedy. Still, no one since has been as present as the girl he invited to move in.

Now, he's thinking of having her move *out*.

Amelia is a fine young woman, a hard worker and a great listener. However, a listener of everything but the rules.

"I know you were there at the mayor's speech some months ago," Whittaker scolds, jotting down some notes from the exam, "and I know you have it bookmarked in your diary. I cannot keep having to remind you that the curfew and accompaniment rules are for our own safety. If something happened to you, alone, out in the forest, what then?"

"I'd be buried beside the mayor," she grumbles. He looks sharply at her over the brim of his gold wire glasses, and she ducks her eyes away.

"The mayor is not *dead*," he swiftly corrects, "only unaccounted for. Which, I am aware, is not ideal, but... we cannot say what we cannot confirm, Amelia, not without a body. Then, yes, perhaps you would be." He gathers his papers and taps them on the counter, straightening them before being tucked under one arm. He exits the exam room, informally dismissing the girl and striding the short distance through the foyer into his office directly beside it. Whittaker calls back to her, "Get yourself dressed. I will see if I can

write something to Father Donovan, asking if he can house you. *Maybe* I can allow you to deliver it. You and your friend Morgan could have another day trip."

The sound of her boots hitting the floor lets him know she's slid off the table in pursuit of him. "Father Donovan?"

"Paul Donovan, yes, across the bridge an hour or two east. His town is sure to be safer if they have managed to avoid the tragedy that plagues us here."

Harvey's attached office is a narrow space. Hardly enough room for a desk, his own chair, and two bookcases packed with medical documentations and patient files. The one he pulls from a drawer in his desk is Amelia's: most personal information is sorely lacking, such as her place of birth and even a last name, and is used primarily to keep track of her check ups and the state of her memory as time goes on. The curtains on the windows at each end of the room are pulled taut, and the air smells of stale smoke.

As he sits down, Amelia leans in past the doorway. "One minute you have a girl's dress off, and the next you are telling her to move out." Harvey keeps his eyes down, shaking his head with a scoffed laugh.

Next thing he knows she is across the office and, in his peripherals, he sees the glimpse of pale skin and white lace as Amelia sits on his desk, planting herself beside her own file. Whittaker looks up at her, and the polite part of himself wishes that he hadn't.

The shoulder strap of her garment has slipped again, hanging partway down her arm. His eyes wander with a mind of their own for just a moment, but a moment is all he needs to see the gentle curve of her chest, one breast half-exposed by the malfunction. A great fiery blush engulfs his face as he imagines what he would behold if, even by an inch, the other strap fell. He imagines, in fact, pulling it down himself.

His mouth goes dry. "Amelia," he coughs, choking on his guilt, and looks away. His spare hand hovers in the air, blindly and desperately aiming for her arm instead of anything else, and tugs the strap up. Amelia helps it the rest of the way back to remote modesty.

"Harvey," she says, suddenly stern. "I don't want to leave."

"You don't give me much of a choice, dear girl."

"Do I not get a choice? Harvey, you cannot expect me to pack and leave home, or leave you. This town is all I know."

Turning in his chair to face her, Whittaker lays one creased hand over her scabbed knee, bracing himself. They've had this conversation before. "I know, girl, but that is exactly my worry. You deserve more than what I can give you, and I fear that you may be limiting yourself staying here."

"But I want to look after *you*, too," whispers Amelia, frowning. She reaches

out to pet his face, and he hesitates to lean into the touch. Her fingertips lovingly caress the wrinkles of his eyes and mouth as she gazes down at him. "Who will take care of you if I'm gone?"

Amelia's words, the phrase "*I want*" falling from her soft lips, turns over and over again in Harvey's mind. "*I want, I want, I want.*" He exhales labouriously.

"I simply do not want to be all you have," relents Whittaker.

She insists, "You are plenty."

"You do not understand, Amelia. You are young, you could have the choice of any man out in that town with whom you can grow old with, have a family. Or, what if you are already promised to someone, and you unknowingly break that vow with me?" He squeezes her knee before turning away again, reaching for another drawer. From the desk he produces a tin of handrolled cigarettes, one of which he promptly lights. The smokey smell in the room is revived in an instant. The warmth of it filling Whittaker's lungs is a sharp relief, easing his nerves. He continues, "Dear girl, I am aged. I am worn. You deserve someone without such a morbid profession frightening you."

She nudges his side with her foot, and he chuffs. "You know I do not care about any of that, Harvey."

"I am aware, you make it clear," Whittaker grumbles with a sigh of smoke, tapping his cigarette into his ashtray. "But many people do care, Amelia. I care. I do not want to risk your reputation if rumours go around about you fooling around with an older bachelor. Imagine the talk, girl, in a town as small as this. The whole community must be stirring with it just as we are now, living together..."



His eyes twitch up to her to gauge her feelings. He truly hoped to see some indication of regret or resignation, but instead, upon her face Amelia wears a rose pink blush, spanning from ear to ear. Her grey eyes are dark, attentively staring down at him. Harvey stammers, shutting himself up with a drag of his cigarette, eyes dodging hers as Amelia leans down. She casts glances over her shoulder and behind Whittaker: to both of the covered windows.

She's so close. Faces inches apart, Harvey drinks in her features. Her freckles atop her rosy cheeks, the mischievous glitter in her eye, the way her lips part with a sweet, teasing smile to whisper in his ear:

"Nobody needs to know."

It feels like time stops at the same moment his heart does, with a beautiful young woman sitting on his desk, hardly dressed, leaning in close. He could reach forward and claim her lips. Yet, he is hyperaware of the unlocked door. Whittaker is tense, careful not to crush his cigarette as he takes a deep breath and puts it out.

"Enough," he says firmly. "Amelia, upstairs. Now."

Amelia immediately straightens, heartbroken. She thinks she knows a loss when she sees it, and hops off his desk without argument, tail between her legs as she shuffles out of his office. Whittaker is not far behind.

Upstairs in his apartment, Harvey reaches for her the moment the door shuts, turning her around and pulling Amelia against his chest. His hands land on her waist. He holds her carefully, the fabric of her gown soft and shifting in his fingers like sand. *Do not allow her to slip away*, he thinks to himself.



Amelia is tense, but notably not in hesitation nor surprise; she gazes at him with expectance, face tilted upwards, waiting. She is patient as Harvey climbs every obstacle in his mind about propriety, and reputation, and if he is taking advantage of a girl who ultimately wants it—who wants *him*. His hands slowly travel up her body, from her waist to her bosom to cradle her face. She does not have to wait any longer as Harvey leans down and captures her lips. Tension melts. Amelia cherishes the taste of his smokey kiss, arms finding purchase around his shoulders. He holds her tight, hands gliding back downward to dig into her hips and hold her body flush against his own, relishing the feeling of her flesh giving in to his squeeze.

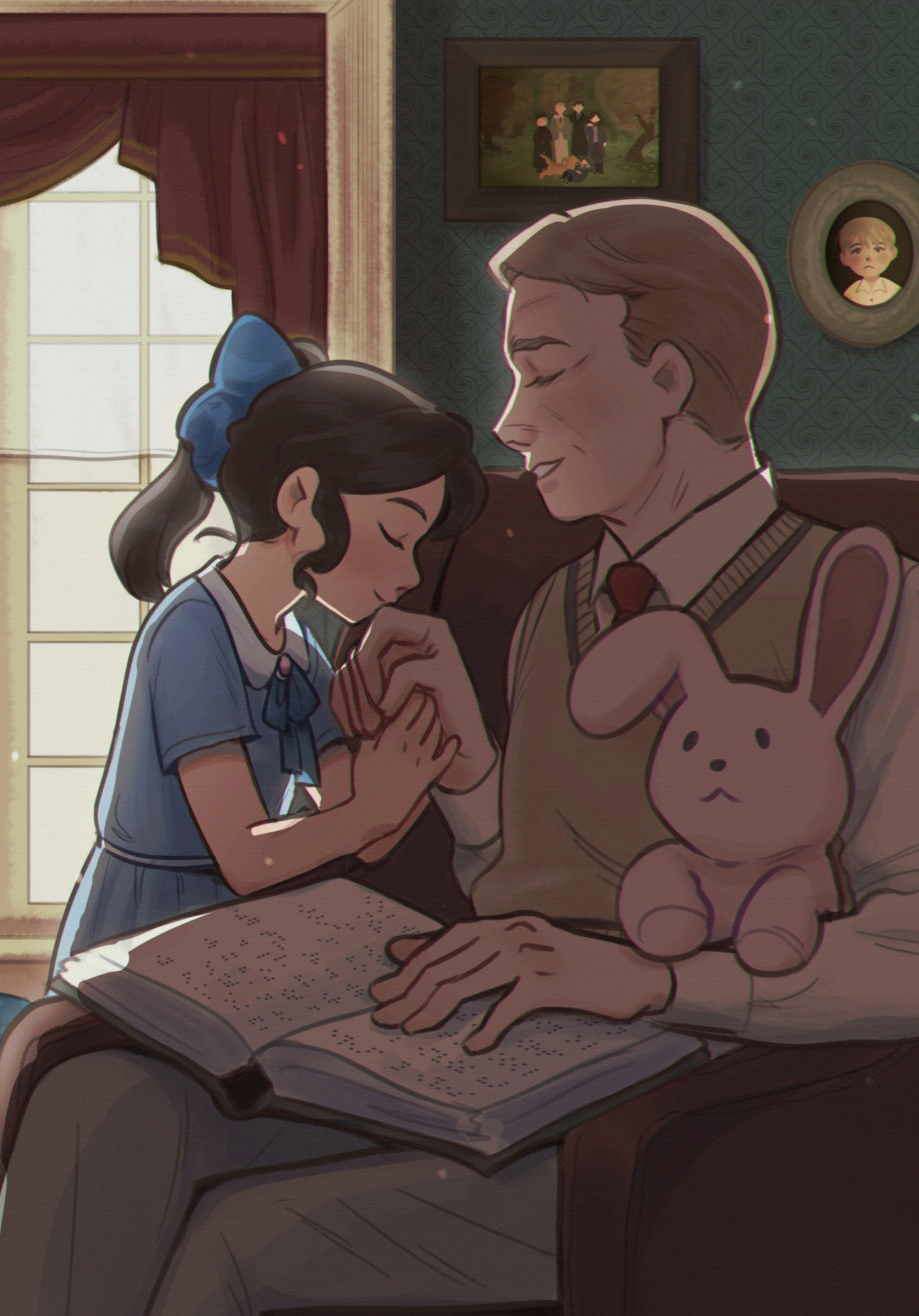
When they reluctantly part, Harvey breathes shakily, "I still have work to do, girl."

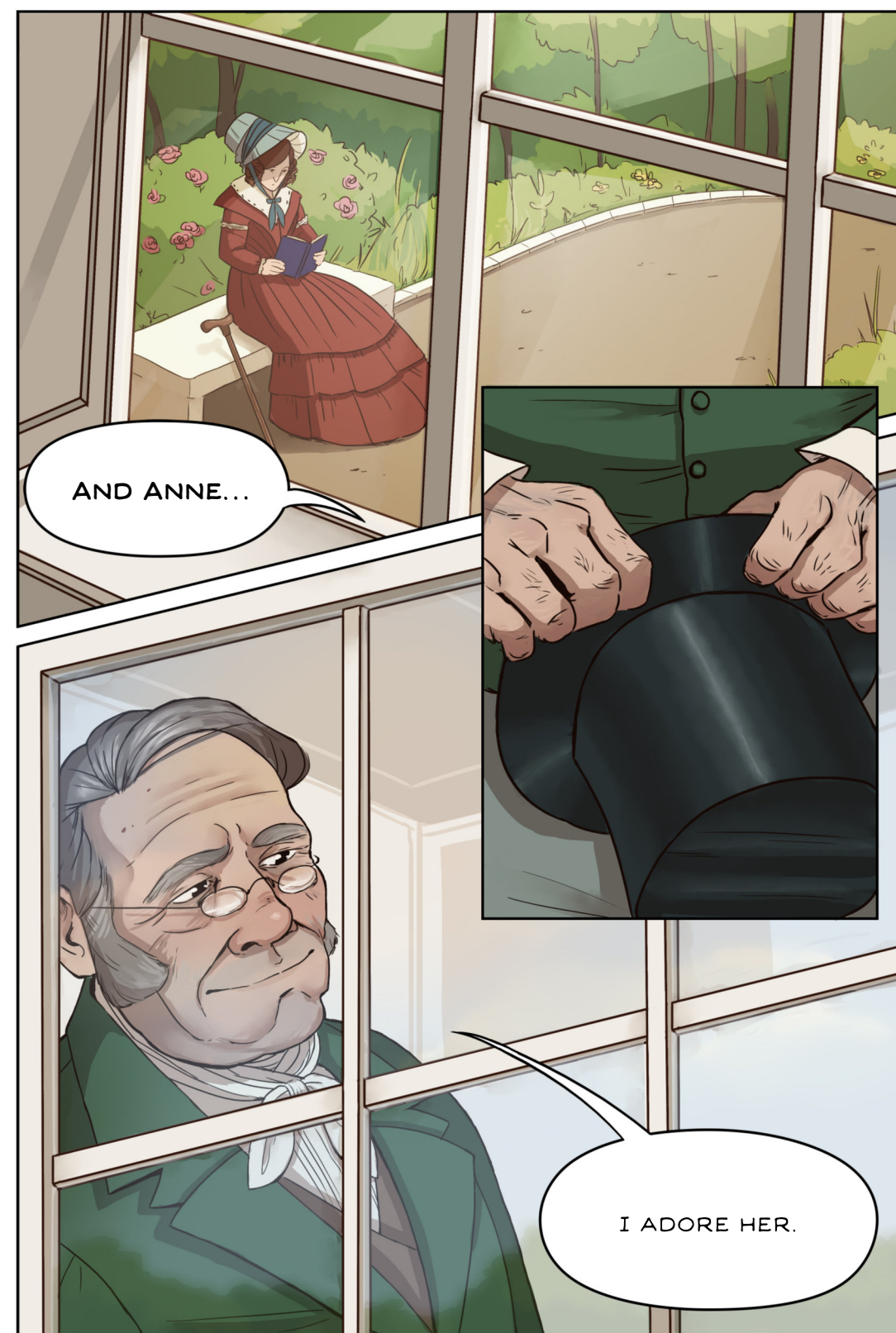
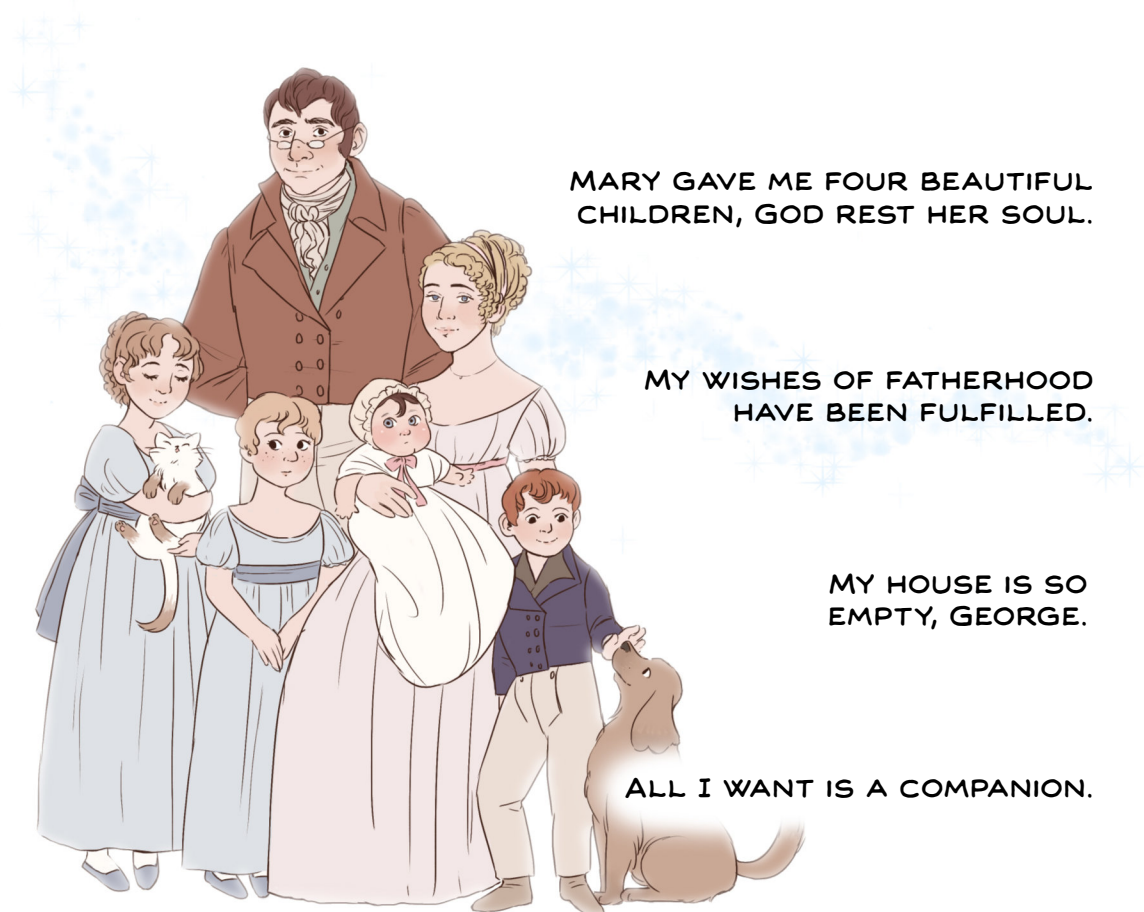
"I can wait for as long as you need," Amelia says, unconditional.

—Like Fine Wine invites you to visit Daisycraft on AO3 to leave your kudos and comments!

<https://archiveofourown.org/works/80319446>







THEN BY ALL MEANS, SAMUEL,

TAKE HER OFF
MY HANDS.

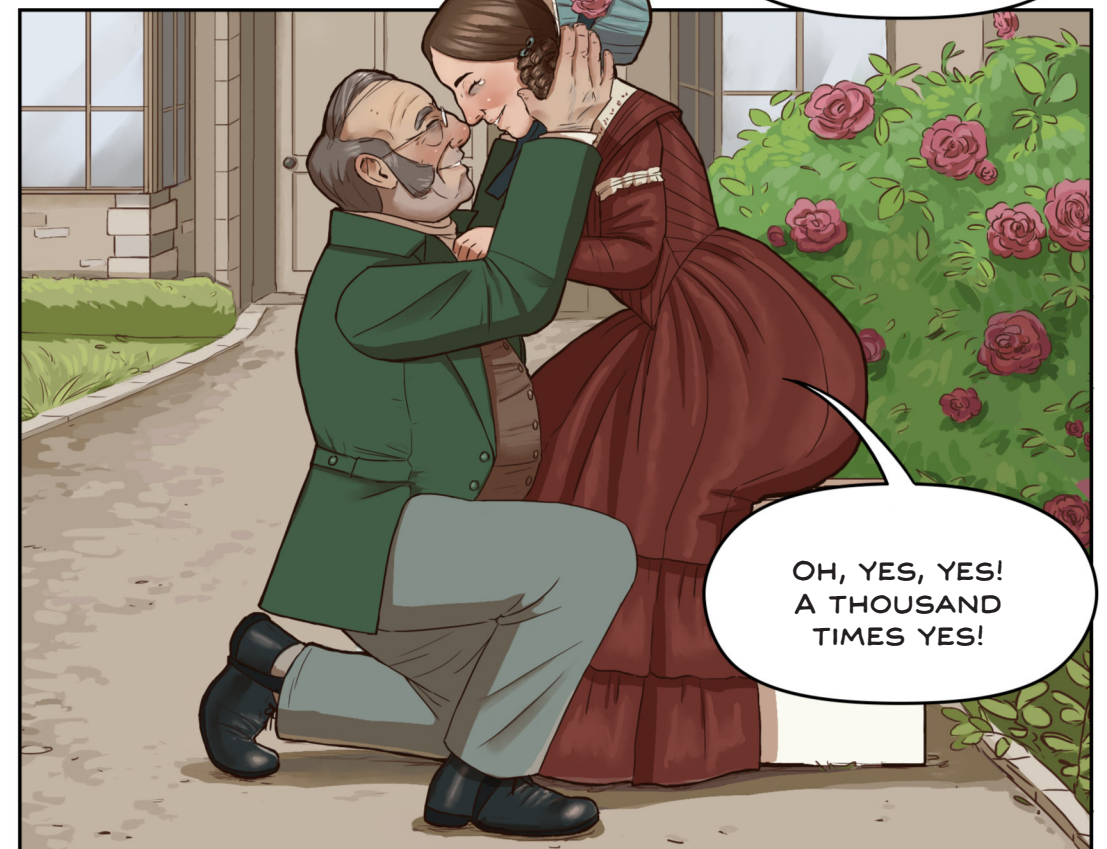


YOUR PRESENCE HAS
BROUGHT ME
IMMEASURABLE JOY,
MISS WILFORD.

I WANT NOTHING MORE
THAN TO TAKE CARE OF
YOU.

OH!

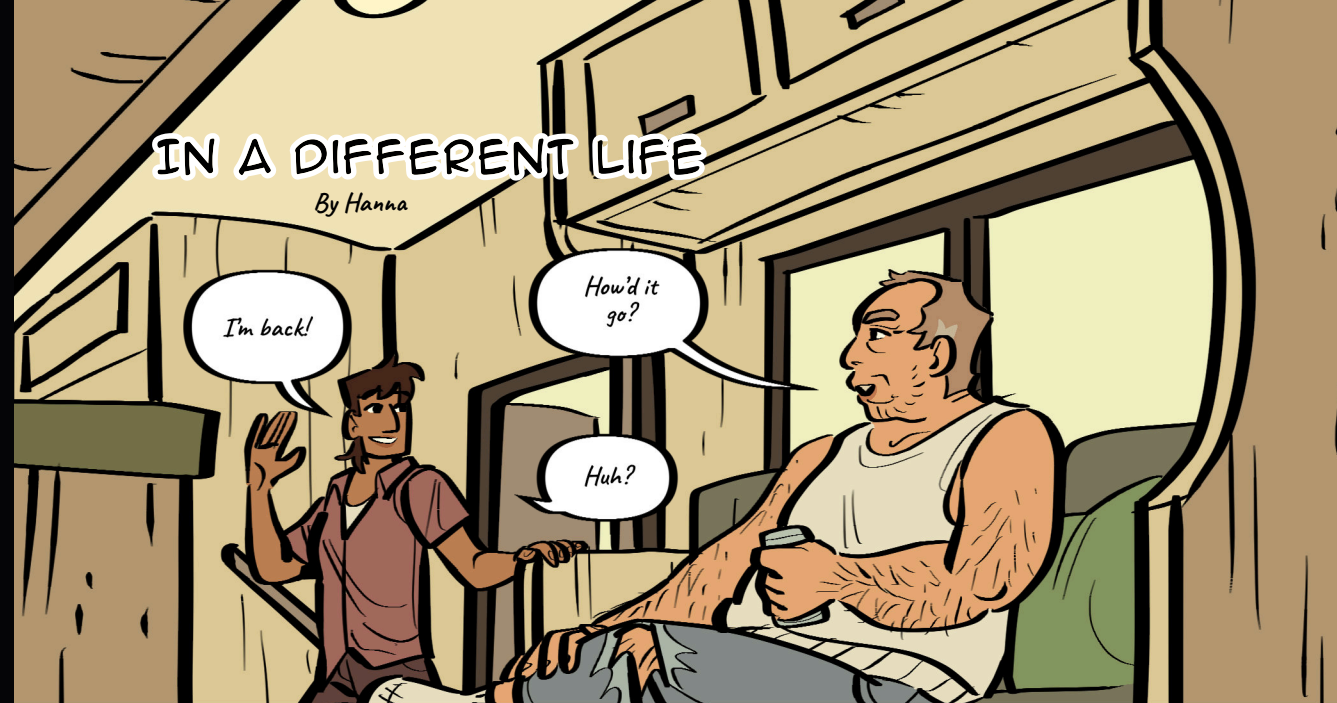
AND I WOULD LIKE TO
DO SO AS YOUR
HUSBAND, IF YOU
WOULD HAVE ME.

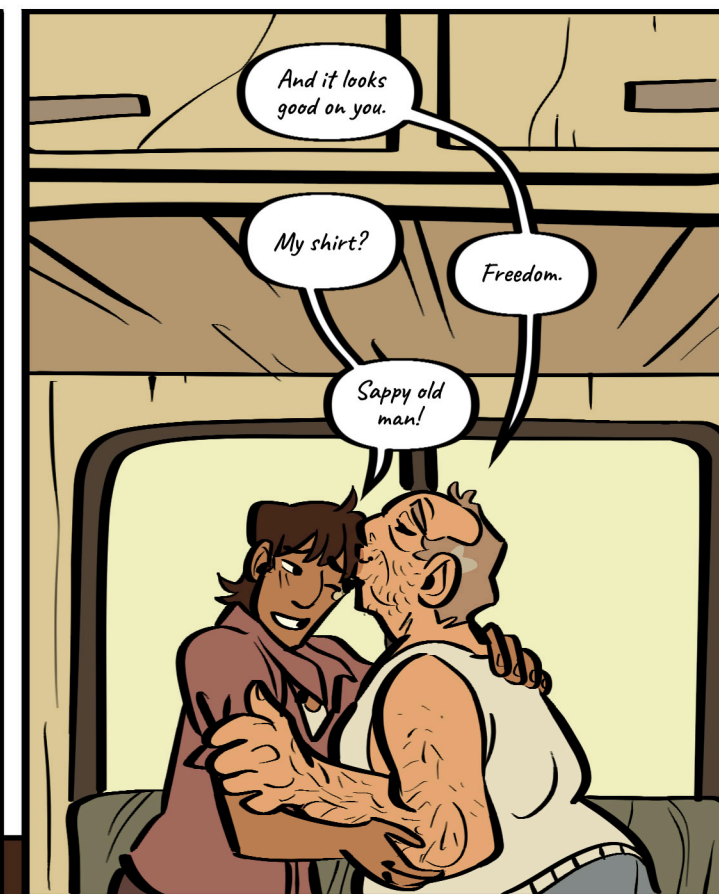
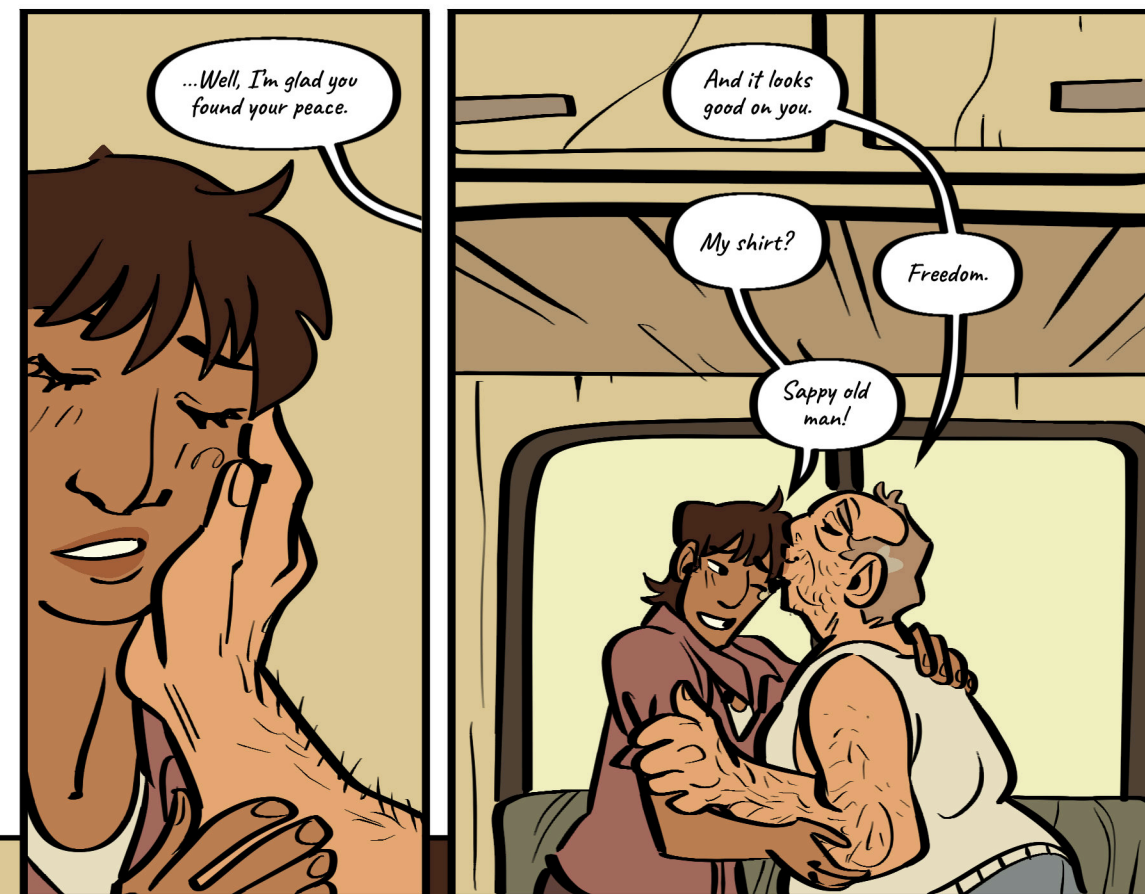
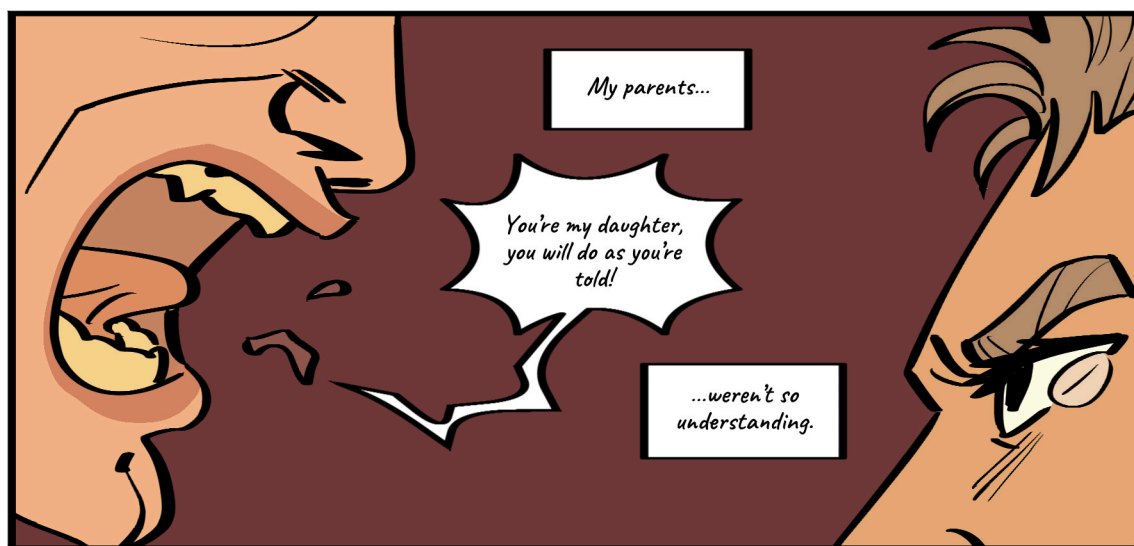
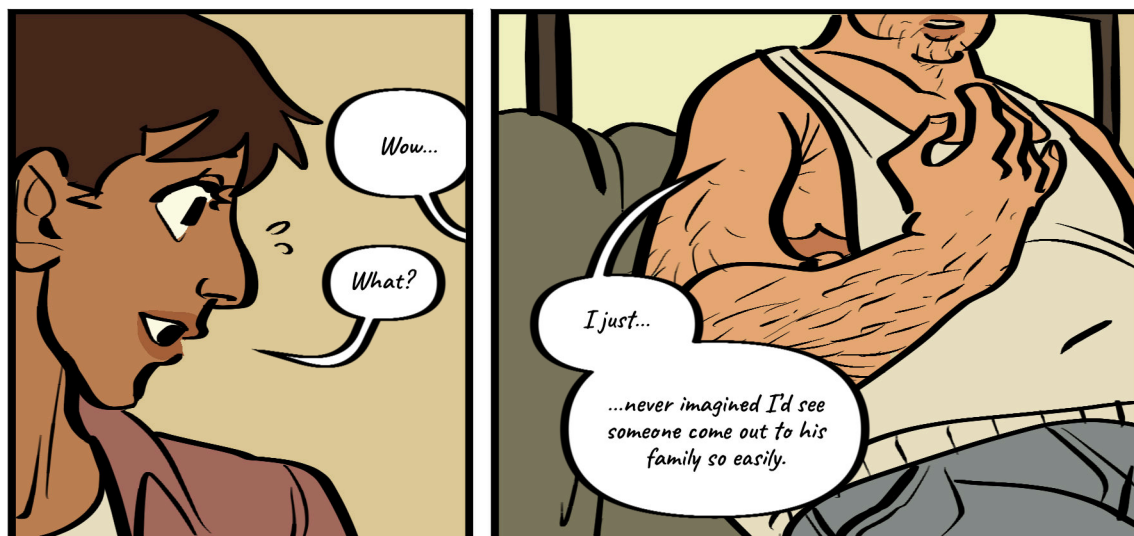




IN A DIFFERENT LIFE

By Hanna







A PERENNIAL DREAM

Written by Dragonlaxatives

Illustrated by gelatobear

The rain poured.

It was relentless, turning the bright coastal town of Blue Basket into a gloomy waterlogged cage. It fell in surges, gentle for one moment and a blinding deluge the next. All she could hear was the torrential roar, muffling her footsteps and sobs while she ran.

She didn't know where she was heading, she just needed to run as fast and far as she could. It didn't matter where she ended up. Her bright red dress clung to her body, cold and darkened into a muted maroon. Just a few hours earlier, the dress had made her feel beautiful and free, but now she felt... wrong. Lost. Alone.

Everything felt like a blur. Before she knew it, she had made her way up the mountain trail and found herself standing in front of Sesusen's home. Relieved, she walked up to the door, ready to knock, when her father's disappointed glare and her mother's reprimands flashed through her mind. She sighed, deciding to leave, but, just as she was about to step back into the rain, the door opened.

"Janey? What're ya doing here so late?!"

Startled, Jane looked up at her teacher. She tried to smile up at him, but the way his amber eyes were looking at her, with such concern and warmth, made her break down into tears. She threw herself at his large body, sobbing into his chest. She couldn't pretend to be normal right now.

Sesusen didn't push her away, gently wrapping his arms around her and running his hand over her hair as she cried.

After what felt like hours, but wasn't more than a few minutes, her sobs quieted into small snuffles.

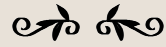
"I'm sorry," Jane said, avoiding Sesusen's eyes but not breaking their embrace.

Sesusen chuckled and her body vibrated from the deep rumble.

"No need ta be sorry at all, Janey. Come on in, ya look like yer freezin'."

Finally looking at him, she met his smile with a small one of her own.

"Okay... thank you, Sensei."



He had left her inside an empty room. Or rather, what she considered incredibly barren and cold. He must have noticed, because he hurried out and returned with a stack of blankets and his jacket.

Then he was gone again, 'to get her something to eat' he'd told her. So, that's how Jane ended up dressed in her teacher's massive jacket and buried inside his blankets, safe and warm, but wondering what in the world she was going to do.

Jane poked her head out of the makeshift nest and felt a wave of embarrassment. *How would she explain herself?* Sesusen hadn't pried, not yet, but he would ask her what happened soon enough. *Who wouldn't?* It wasn't exactly commonplace for a student to manifest at their teacher's door drenched in rain and tears.

Jane closed her eyes and sighed.

She could still hear the rain from this room. It wasn't the loud roar from before, more a soft static that she had to focus on to notice.

She'd never been so far inside Sesusen's home. She'd visited him countless times when she was a child, but she'd only ever made it as far as his kitchen and his sitting room. So, when he had led her inside, *underground*, she couldn't help but gawk at what she'd never known existed. What she had thought was a quaint little sanctuary, was actually an enormous temple filled with countless rooms that trailed even farther down than she could see.

The rain outside worsened, the static turning into constant taps and far away clashes of thunder that made the room rattle and shake. *Rumble*, her mind supplied. It reminded her of—

"How're ya feeling, Janey?"

The sudden voice made her scream and nearly jump out of her skin. Sesusen laughed heartily at her reaction and let himself inside her room. He was holding a breakfast tray, but she couldn't see what it held from where she was sitting.

She sat upright, flustered, and tried to make herself somewhat presentable, but the smell of food made her stomach growl loudly.

Her face burned and then it burned hotter when Sesusen snorted. Setting the tray in front of her, he sat himself nearby. Jane, still embarrassed by her

earlier screech, focused on her breakfast. The tray was actually rather big, holding a variety of different side dishes: cubed radishes, sliced cucumbers, steamed pumpkin, fried potatoes, fresh leafy greens, and, finally, the main dish that consisted of a large bowl of thick tomato soup. She pouted slightly.

"So many vegetables...," she muttered.

"Aye, and you'll eat every last one, Janey," Sesusen replied, amused.

"Not even a chicken cutlet?"

Sesusen's laugh filled the room and made her heart flutter pleasantly.

"Aye, not even that. I didn't wanta keep ya waiting for long." He nodded to her food and then raised an eyebrow at her. "If yer still hungry after eatin' I'll make it for ya. But you'll probably turn into a green ol' beast like me before yer hungry again."

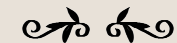
Jane giggled. Sesusen wasn't some 'green old beast' at all. Sure, he was older and green-haired, but it was a lovely pale shade, and there was a reason why all the girls in her grade celebrated when they were assigned to his classes. 'Beast', her foot.

"That doesn't sound so bad to me." She laughed, ignoring her spoon in favor of bringing the wooden bowl of soup up to her lips.

The flavors exploded in her mouth and she couldn't stop the delighted sound that escaped her.

She turned to look at Sesusen, excited to sing her praises, but she found him watching her closely, a smug and self-satisfied smirk on his face. He knew exactly how delicious his food was.

Her cheeks warmed, but she didn't look away. She grinned instead, eyes glancing to his lap before she could help herself. When she was a little girl, Sesusen, Seth back then, would let her sit on his legs while she ate her food. He'd explain how he made each meal and she'd listen with rapt attention without worry about manners, politeness, or insults.



When Jane finished her food, she sighed and let herself fall back into her pile of blankets. Her whole body felt warm and her eyelids felt heavy. Surely, resting her eyes couldn't hurt.

"Janey."

For a second, she thought he was just making sure she hadn't fallen asleep. But he wasn't being playful or teasing.

"What happened? Why're ya here?"

Her heart dropped. His voice was gentle, but had an edge of sternness that

meant he wouldn't take silence for an answer.

Still, Jane didn't say anything. She didn't even move.

She felt Sesusen sit closer to her.

"Jane."

She didn't open her eyes to look at him.

"They disowned me."

Her voice was small and quivering, like a child being forced to speak after crying.

A useless child that got in over their head. A useless worthless child who could never do anything right.

Her chest began to feel tight and her eyes stung.

"They said they don't want—that they don't *need* an improper girl like me."

Jane breathed deeply, trying to push away the hurt and shame.

"I'm sorry—"

She didn't have enough time to react before Sesusen grabbed her and sat her on his lap.

He hugged her, holding her close, and rubbed her back with gentle strokes.

"Oh, Janey...", he said, "this was supposed to be such a lovely day for ya."

He sounded so sad for her. So sad. Jane felt awful for it. She'd done it again, disappointing someone else in her life. She really couldn't do anything right at all.

She hadn't even been able to sneak out to her first dance properly. She'd slipped away, had the time of her life, and then was promptly caught in her pretty red dress by her puritan parents.

How dare you, sneaking around like-like some loose whore!

She made a pained sound in her throat and tears escaped her eyes. She was crying again and that very fact filled her with shame.

"I'm sorry...", she sobbed, burying her face into his chest, her body shaking.
"I'm sorry, Sensei—"

"Hush, Jane," Sesusen interrupted, still rubbing her back. "I've already told ya once. Ya've nothing to be sorry about. Don't make me repeat myself again."

Jane nodded, but couldn't find it in herself to believe him.

"Cry all ya like. I'm here for ya. Ya can always rely on me."

And cry she did.

She cried until her eyes were puffy and her throat was raw; Sesusen rubbed her back the entire time and scolded her gently whenever she tried to apologize.

The rain was louder now and the sounds of thunder more frequent and violent.

Part of her panic was that her whole life had been thrown off the rails. She'd been kicked out of her home, disowned by her family. Her predetermined path was now a maze of uncertainty. It scared her. She had thought breaking free of her cage would be a dream come true, but she felt like a lost pet unable to fend for itself, an abandoned show dog longing for safety and—

She gasped, an idea flashing through her mind. She pulled away from Sesusen, eyes sparkling.

"Sensei. Can I live here? With you?"

His eyes widened and he opened his mouth to reply but she beat him to it.

"I can help you around your home! I won't be a nuisance, I promise! You'll barely know I'm here. Or, well, I'll keep the place clean so you'll know but—"

"No."

Jane stared at him in shock.

"What?"

Sesusen shook his head, moving quickly to gather up the tableware Jane had forgotten about.

"Sensei?"

"Ya can't stay here, Jane. It's not appropriate."

Appropriate? Had she not just cried into his chest a few seconds ago?

"But... I have nowhere else to go... you just said I could count on you!" Jane said, her voice shaking.

The older man turned to look at her, his eyes filled with an emotion she couldn't place.

"I'm sorry. It's not that I don't want ya here, I'd love to have ya. It's just... Ya *can't*."

"If you want me to stay, what's the problem?! You have so much space, so many empty rooms. I could stay here so easily," her voice cracked. "I can

keep a secret. I won't hurt your reputation."

"It's not about that—"

"Then why?!"

"...Ya wouldn't understand," he mumbled, moving to pick up the last of the plates.

He turned to leave but Jane rushed forward and grabbed at his sleeve.

He sighed but didn't pull his arm away.

"Yes?"

"What am I supposed to do then?" Jane asked quietly. "They won't take me back."

"Course they will. I'll just hafta talk to them myself."

"I told them I'm pregnant."

There was a loud clatter and Jane flinched as bowls and cutlery scattered onto the floor.

Sesusen turned to look at her. Another clash of thunder made the room rumble and the lights flicker. It could have been a trick of the light, or her own imagination, but she swore she saw his eyes flash scarlet.

"Then why not go to the father, Jane." His jaw was set in a hard line.

Jane blushed.

"Because it's not true! I-I've never— I just... said what I thought would make them most angry...", she stammered, looking to the floor to avoid his gaze.

She heard him take a deep breath and exhale through his nose.

"Jane... sometimes yer too bold for yer own good."

She fidgeted.

"But, I'm not... it's only because... I've been around you more that I wanted to try... being braver."

"Oh Jane..." He lowered himself on one knee and gently lifted her chin with his finger.

She tried to keep from looking at him, but couldn't help gazing into his eyes. He smiled at her, but it was clear he was conflicted.

"I suppose I'm ta blame for all this then," he sighed, and Jane felt her eyes begin to well up with tears again.

"No! It's not your fault at all, I just...", her voice softened with every word she spoke.

She felt like the ground had been torn away from right under her. Of course this wasn't his fault. She wanted to explain, to tell him he was wrong. But the words got stuck in her throat.

"Oh, come now, Janey. None of that," he said, cupping her face in his hand and petting her cheek with his thumb. "I'm happy I was able to inspire ya to be brave, proud even."

"Really?"

"Aye."

His words made her smile.

"It is embarassin' though," Sesusen admitted, "fer a young thing like you ta be braver than a grown man."

Huh?

"I ought to learn a thing from ya." He nodded. "I should be brave too."

She stared at him, but didn't say a word.

"Stay here, Jane. Until we figure out what ta do."

Jane stepped away, and promptly let out a loud cheer while jumping around the room.

Sesusen grinned at her excitement. He watched her celebrate but his grin dropped slightly.

"There's one condition though, Janey."

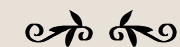
That stopped her merriment. She looked at him cautiously.

"Sensei... you're really wishy-washy today."

That made him chuckle.

"Aw, don't be like that, Janey. It's nothin' too bad, honest. I'll tell ya after I clean up here," he said, nodding his head towards the wooden bowls and plates on the floor.

"Don't worry, Sensei! I'll take care of it!"



That night, after cleaning her dishes, talking with Sesusen, and watching the rain, Jane sat in *her* pile of blankets, inside *her* room.

She couldn't hear the rain anymore.

She was safe now. She was staying with Sesusen. She had apologized for her meltdowns, even if he'd scolded her for it again.

Everything was okay.

But Sesusen's 'one condition' replayed in her mind.

A monster roams the temple, Jane. When night falls and the half-moon rises, stay in yer room and don't leave until mornin'.

"A monster?" She had laughed, thinking it was a joke. But Sesusen had stared at her, silent and grim.

She had wanted to ask more questions. *What does it look like? Why a half-moon? Why only at night?*

Is it even real?

In the end, she decided not to push her luck.

A monster.

Part of her wanted to be offended. *Was he trying to keep her from wandering around?* He could have just said so instead of making up some bogeyman.

A monster.

But Sesusen wasn't a liar; he'd always been honest.

He was scared, but said he wanted to be brave, like her.

Jane smiled to herself, her heart fluttering.

No monster, real or imaginary, could handle them both.

They'd be brave together.

—Like Fine Wine invites you to visit DragonLaxatives on AO3 to leave your kudos and comments!

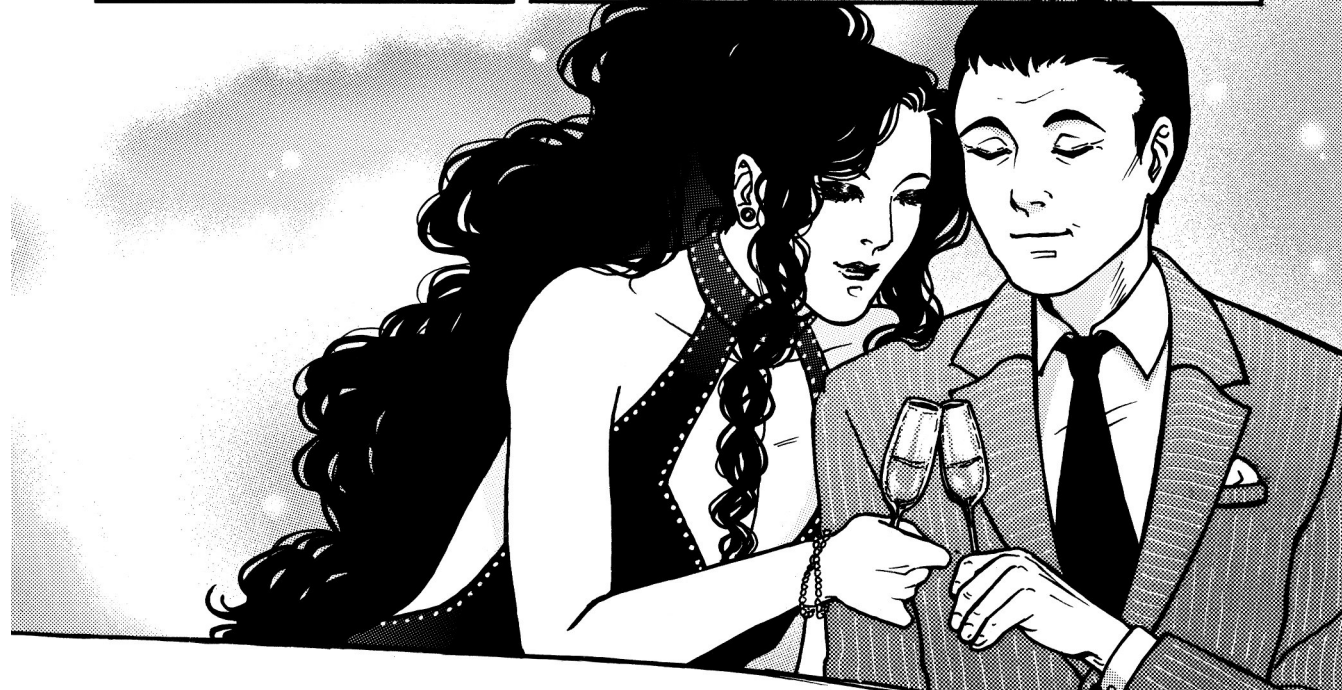
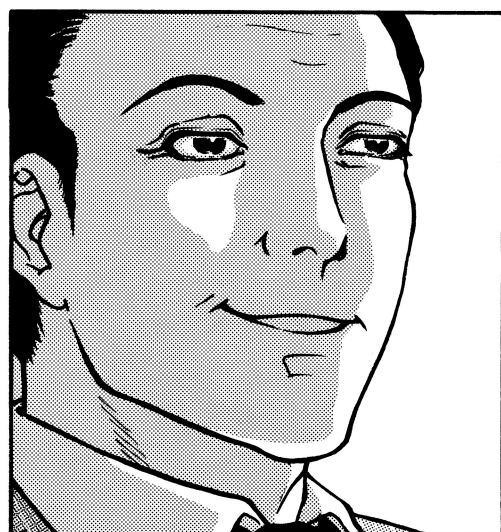
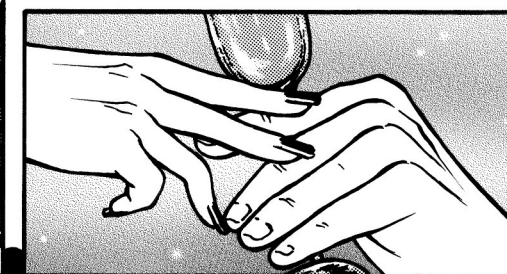
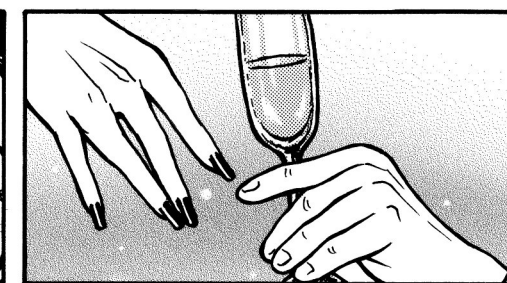
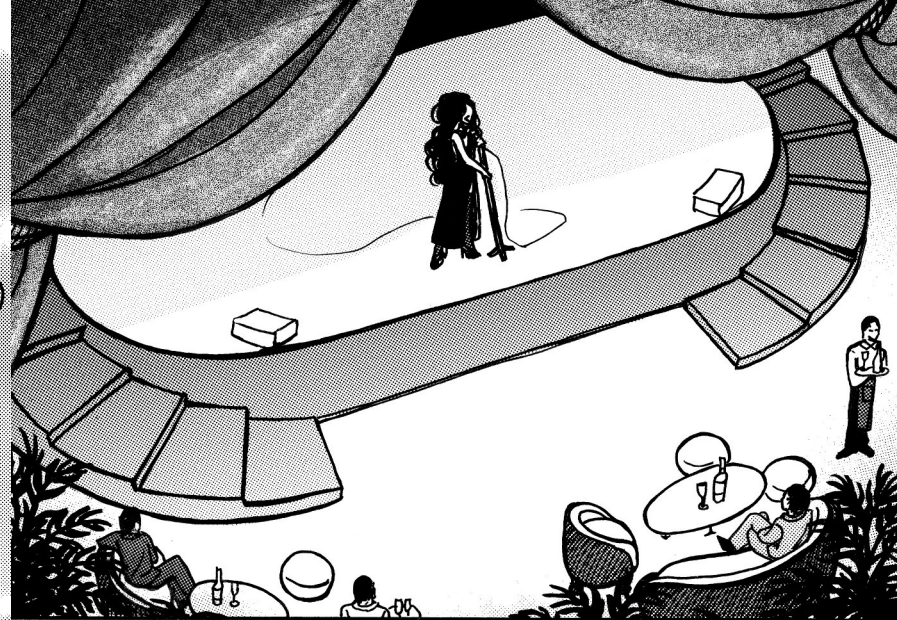
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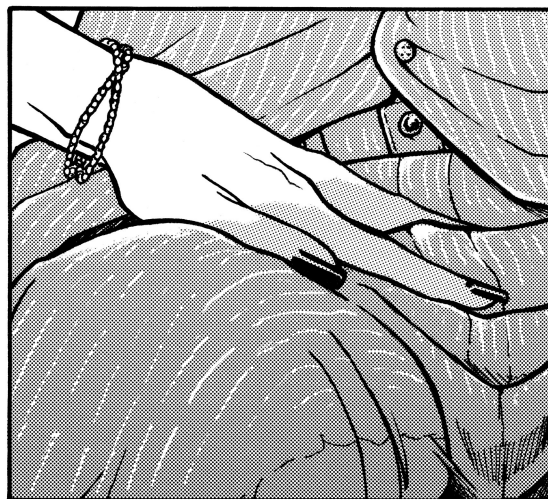
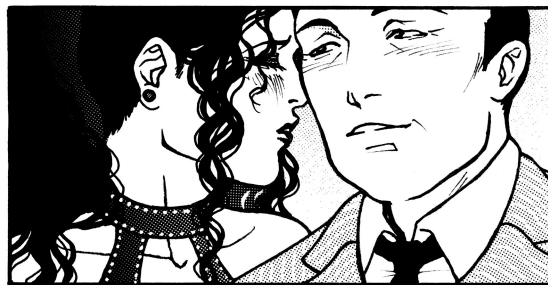
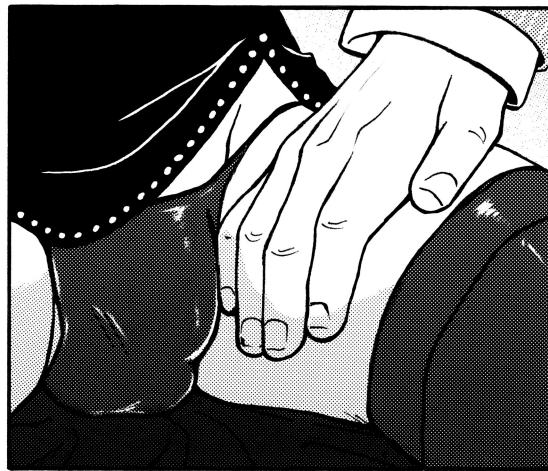
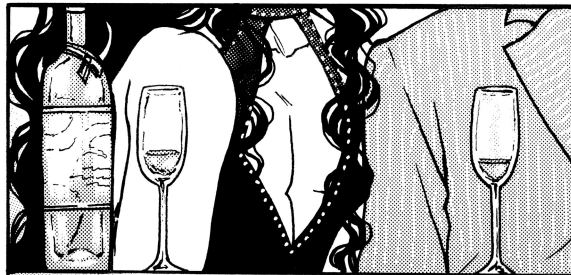


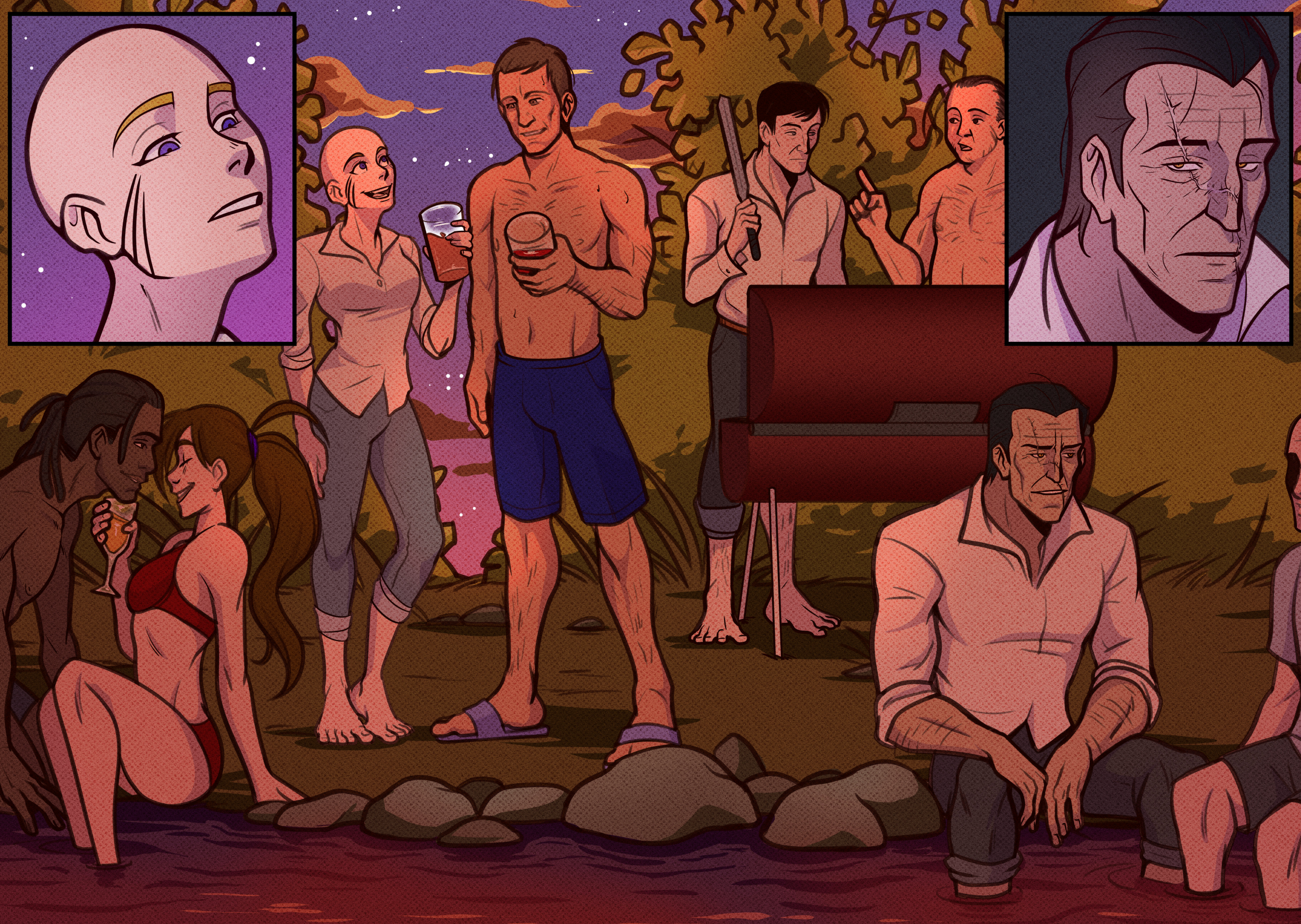


FINE VINTAGE

By LAB



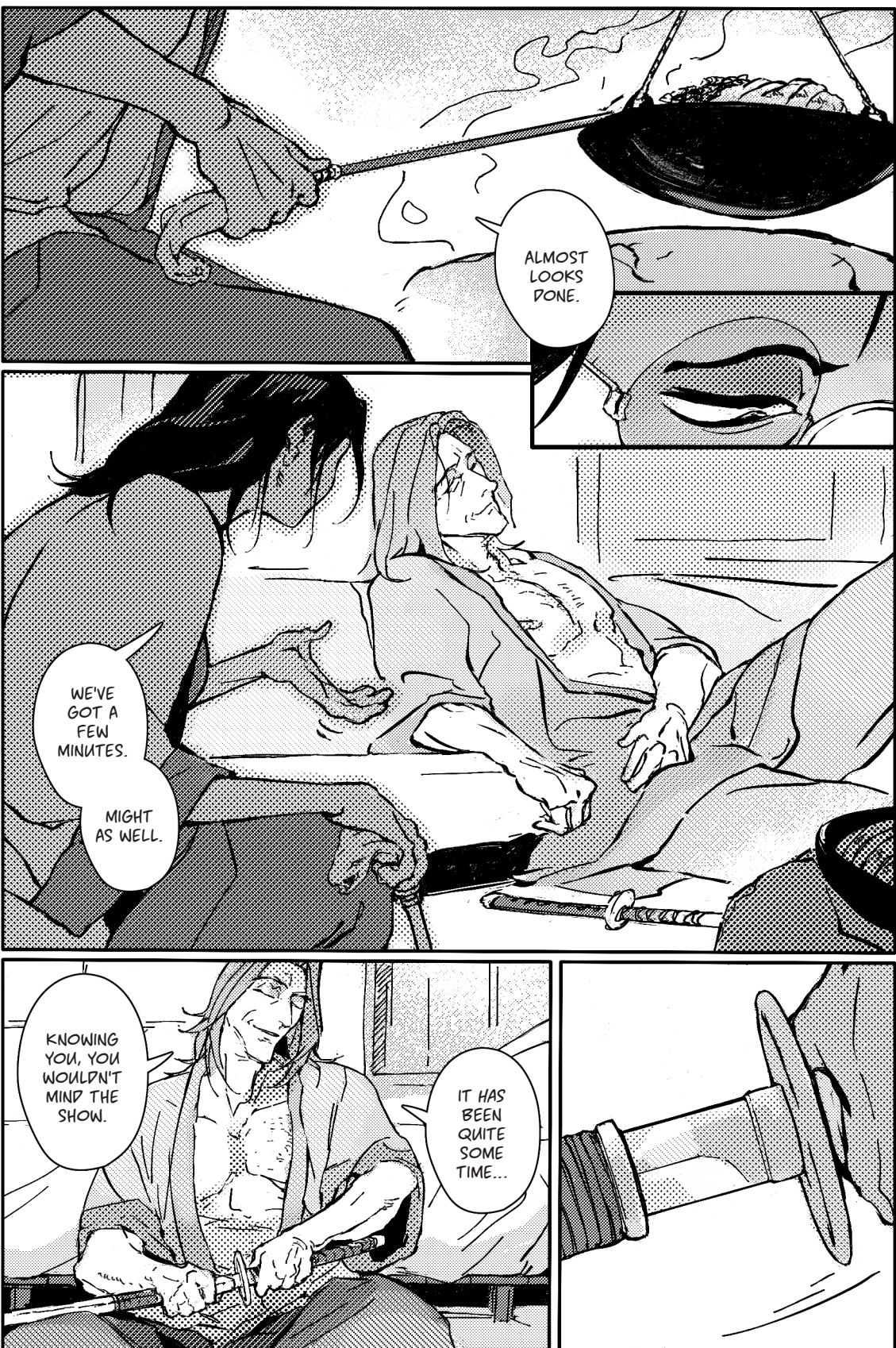




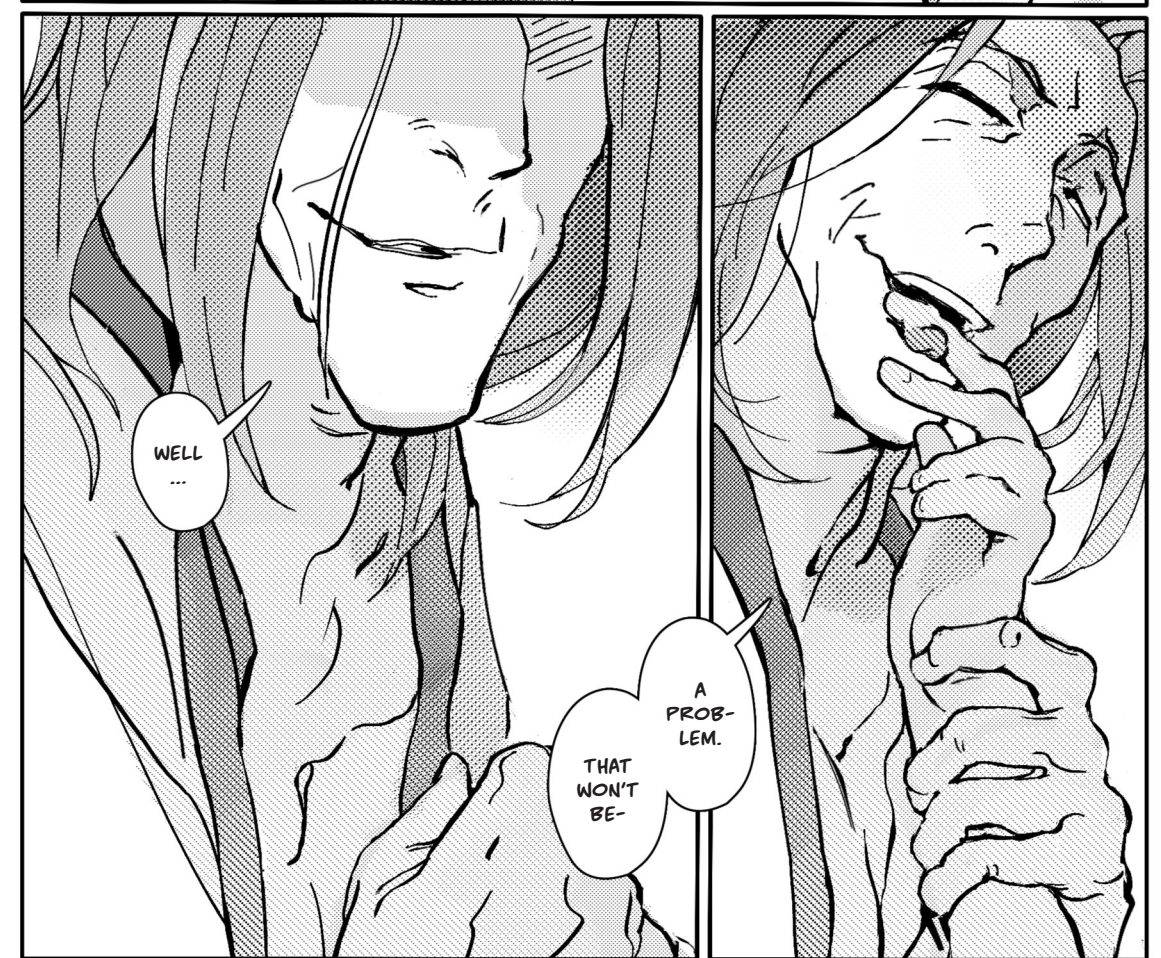
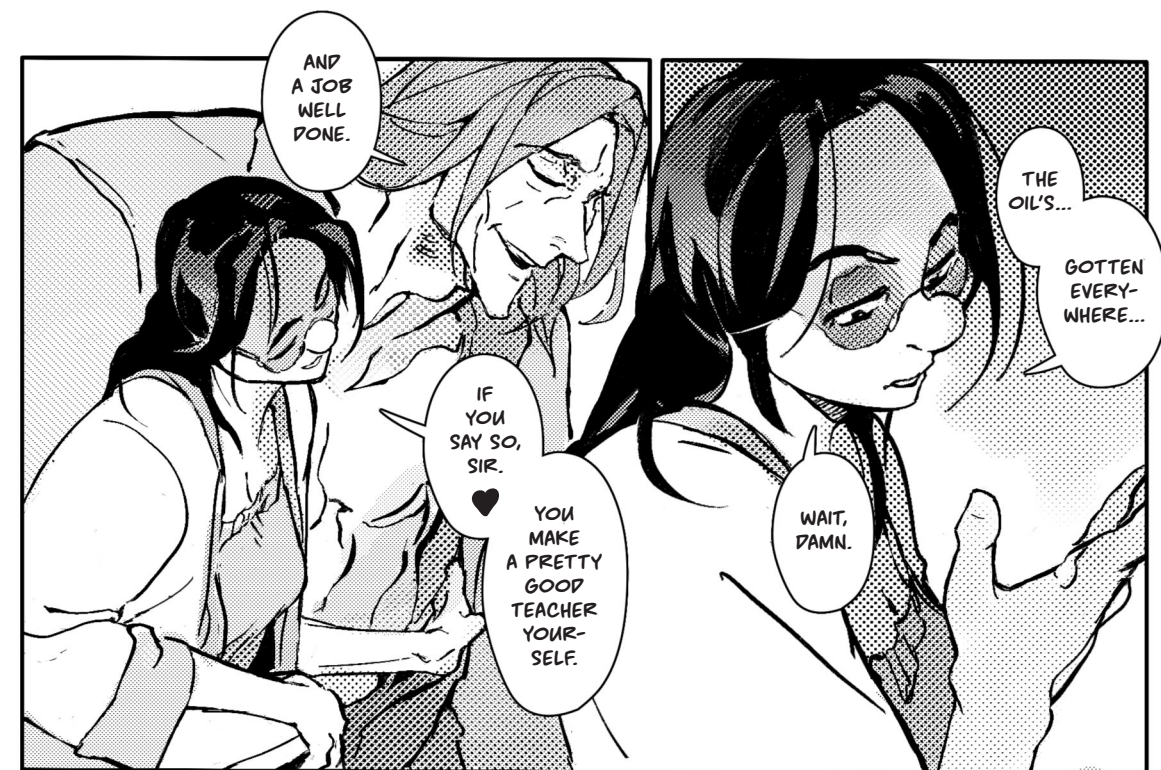
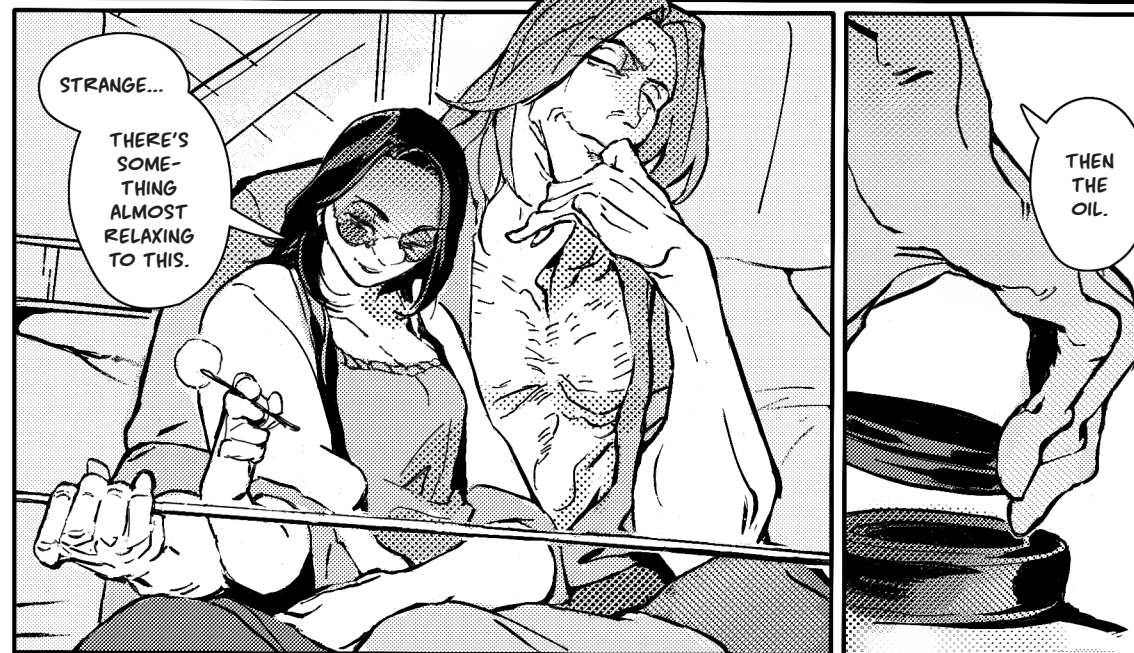
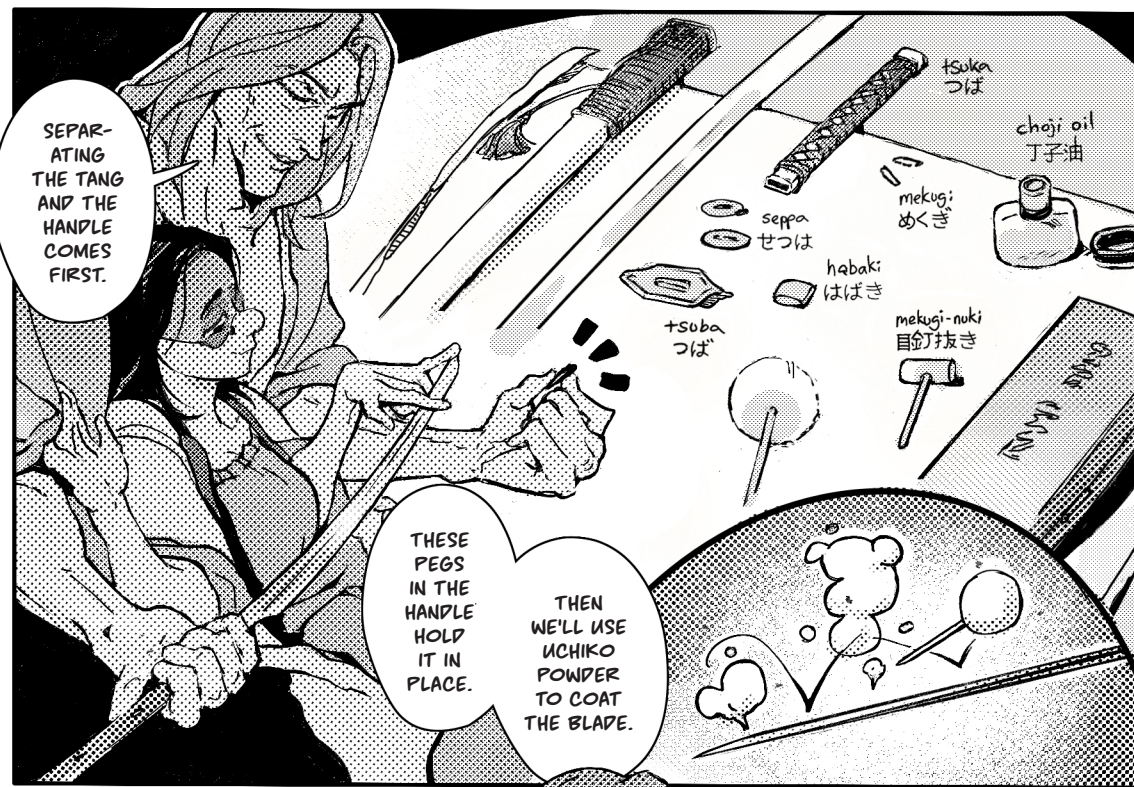


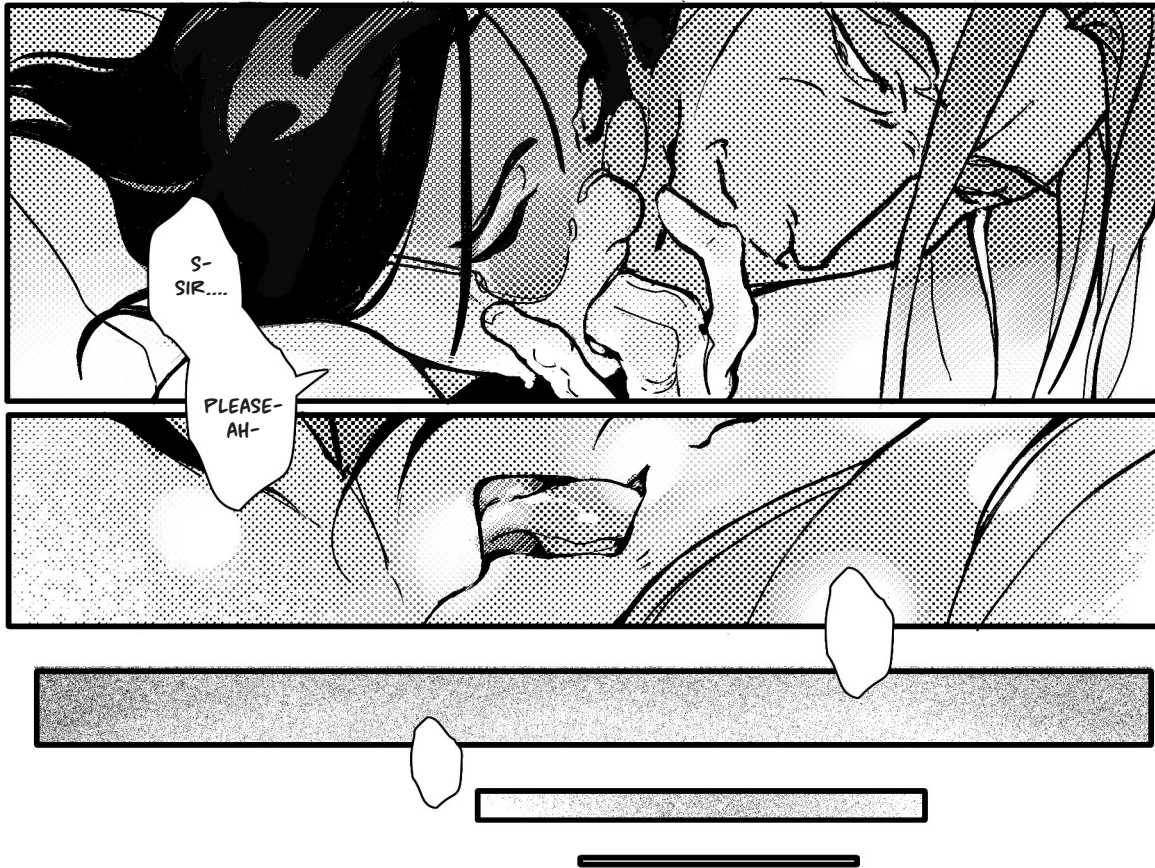
BY KRADEELAY

little rituals













THE LION'S CAGE

*Written by Fearlesswindy
Illustrated by Lemon Basilisk*

Dusk consumed the final light grasping to the horizon. As promised, the entirety of the Jetha clan had assembled around a small open space with Kefira at its center. Flames dotted the perimeter around her; the respected elderly held their glowing wisdom in their hands. Between her and them: a snaking trench dug into the ground. The warm glow danced on their faces, the ashes fluttered into the cool air. Hints of incense, the ones meant to be a male aphrodisiac, were absent. She had not been adorned with wooden or glass necklaces meant to exhibit her influence. She had not been gifted a red silk garb by her dead mother. Nothing but the crispness of the growing night would urge Kefira's man towards her heat.

Erected behind Kefira was the central piece of her Imperium Rite: the lion's cage. Wisdom and words of strength from past sages were carved into the metal bars. It was large enough to fit two humans, but no objects of comfort had been placed within. No blankets for her to rest on, no pillows to aid the night; Kefira belonged to the dried, cracking dirt.

As all women in the Lucent Dry Forest have before, she lounged upon a dais, presenting herself as the alluring and untouchable lioness. Untouchable was easy enough by the very nature of her blood. Alluring, however, didn't feel at ease within her—not when she'd spent a life doing her best to stay hidden. Her breasts were bare to the night air, and a simple woven cloth covered her front and rear, attached by a simple chain she had smithed herself. Anyone else would be decorated extensively, but regardless, a pride swelled in her chest knowing her grandmother and mother before her had once done the same. This would absolve her. For despite the High Sage's welcome, Kefira would not be seen as one of Jetha—not until she tamed a lion.

The clan's many gazes either glanced snidely at their friends or refused Kefira the simple honor of acknowledgement. The raised, taunt skin of her brand glinted against flames, she knew. In their eyes it didn't matter what pedigree of man she tamed, no amount of endowed prowess would lick the wound clean.

The Lion's Cage

But not to High Sage Levona.

She alone, with her jade eyes, cast a calming gaze at Kefira. Where the lioness's mother was expected to stand, she stood with the full authority of her title. The High Sage would be there for any orphan, but this was Kefira. Savage. Smart. *Loyal*. Levona exuded a loving regard to her that she had earned.

The High Sage lifted her flame to the stars, and the rattling began. Kefira's pulse doubled. Around her the elders shook their staves of shell and bone in honor of her Rite. Her nerves got the better of her and she scanned the crowd. Behind the women were the men, and among them one had been selected for her by the High Sage to come forth.

Was he handsome? Docile? Could she force him to submit if not? Would any man choose to submit to a traitor?

A brazen scoff from the women drew her attention. Someone spat. The crowd parted as more women tsk'd their disapproval. Kefira's heart pounded in her chest. The High Sage had selected someone venerable. Had to be for whoever it was, he had just intertwined his status with hers and earned the measured disapproval of those who hated her. She was instantly endeared to this faceless man.

Two large hands parted the perimeter of elders and crossed the threshold. The ground beneath Kefira plummeted even as her body betrayed her.

"Little bird," Abbas said with the same grin he'd offered her the day they met.

It was all a lie. No man would submit to her. He'd been ordered, clear as night. All to appease Kefira's whining. She would never be a true part of the Jetha. Always an outsider. Always to sleep on the ground and be spat upon.

How could Levona do this to me?

The gleam in Levona's eyes dared Kefira to speak and disavow all trust she had placed in her.

She could have commanded any of her pets to appease Kefira's Rite, someone younger and far more attainable. Instead she had chosen him: Abbas, aged and defiant. The strongest of all their men. The prized piece of the High Sage's harem.

Abbas crossed his arms. His pecs bulged over the pressure as he peered at her. The implication was powerful: *no one wants you*.

Embarrassment steamed hot in her ears. This had to be a mistake. Levona must have asked the others first, she must have. Kefira swallowed her words, but could not help but express her question.

Why him?

Levona lowered her gaze at Kefira. The night flames doused her in sharp shadows. The darkness in her eyes flickered to Abbas, then back to her.

“Tonight, the first cries of a woman shall rise,” Levona announced.

The elders followed her lead in chant, and to Kefira’s surprise the rest of the Jetha joined as well. At its height, the elders raised their flames then crashed them into the trench. A fiery wall blazed forth. Orange doused her world, constricted it down to woman and man. Lioness and lion. Authority and obedience.

Levona had offered her a challenge—of course she had. She would never betray Kefira’s trust. She had promised Kefira her Rites and belonging; it had to be Abbas. She must break the will of the High Sage’s beloved. The Jetha would not accept anything less from her. Should she fail by the fire’s dying breath, a life ostracized awaited her, one greater than as a branded traitor.

“I’m insulted, little bird,” Abbas said. “No welcoming?”

The warm glow suited his skin. It licked up his bare chest and reflected off his piercings in the showy way of male animals. Chosen men flaunted themselves in little fabric and decorative chains, but Abbas appeared no different save for the choice of metal dangling too long from each nipple ring. It was comforting, his normalcy. It was insulting, his audacity.

Abbas closed their distance like a cautious creature. “You were intrigued the other night...” He paced before her. “Perhaps it’s these—not to your liking?” He flicked the metal adornment dangling from his piercing. “I assure you I had no say in the matter.”

His tone was leading, as if to imply she could replace the adornment should she choose. She’d sooner drag him by them.

As if he could read her thoughts, he winked. She wanted to gag, but was drawn by the way his large hand traced up his body. She did not like it. This was not how Abbas behaved, all provocative in an undeniable way. It made her tense. Uncomfortable. Even more so the longer he circled his breast and toyed with his piercing.

Kefira bit the inside of her lip and averted her gaze. Of course he’d be the posturing sort.

“Ah,” Abbas teased. “So it’s my chest hair that puts you off. I always wondered why you struggled to look at me. Too much man for you?” He laughed. “A shame—” he framed his hand around his crotch in a manner to make his...*stuff*...stand out, “—truly.”

She was stuck wading through his teasing bullshit and the truth resting at the center of it. She couldn’t acknowledge one without accepting the other, and so, she forced out the word that had been trapped inside her chest, bubbling around like a foul poison:

"Kneel."

Abbas quirked his head. “Sorry, didn’t quite catch that.”

Her lips pursed. And her face may as well have been soaking in the fires.

“Little bird,” he sing-songed.

She slammed her fist down. “I am not little!”

Abbas stilled. His face softened. She pictured it between her legs and the longing ache that plagued her nights reared to life.

“I am a woman, and you will kneel before me,” Kefira said.

Abbas sauntered close. His gaze melted down her body from the stars above. It left her speechless. With deep embarrassment she suddenly understood why his size and strength was desirable. She resisted the instinct to squirm under such disgusting wantonness. *For Abbas.*

“You will have to do better than that, I’m afraid,” he said.

She wished she had her sais. Dueling him would be easier than convincing him to...to...

Kefira squirmed.

“Have you tried sounding less girlish, *girl*?” He crouched down and crept closer and closer to her, like a prowling predator. One hand, then the other framed her figure as he leaned close to her ear.

Kefira scowled. He wasn’t allowed on her dais until she welcomed him. She was failing. He was making her fail. Before he could demean her further, she jammed her foot into his chest and shoved him backwards.

Instead, he had captured her by the ankle and dragged her. Her back hit the ground and her loin covering went wayside in the process. She reared to kick him in the face and in the same moment, with the most reverence she’d seen from the man, he delicately kissed the side of her foot. She froze. His gaze flickered down and pinned her to the spot. An entire season passed as she watched the fires dance inside his dark eyes. He possessed her foot as if it were a treasure. Then, just as the stars imperceptibly moved across the night sky, his gaze lowered to between her legs.

With a jolt she covered herself back up. There’s a faint smirk, then he took his attention back to her foot where he planted another kiss.

Stupidly she realized he’d been waiting for her permission.

“You must command me as if you were a queen,” he said.

“I know that,” she hissed back.

He licked up the side of her foot and, disgusted, she yanked it back. His tongue hung out in its wake. In protest, he licked the air.

“And do you know that I adore you?” he asked.

The smaller part that lived within her clutched onto those words as she had to the dying words of her father. She shoved the feeling away. “Don’t lie to me, *lion*.”

He leveled her with a look. “I begged the wretched sage to let me have you. She would have set you loose to the whims of the clan were it not for me.”

“More lies. I know what she wants of me; I know you are here to test me.”

Abbas closed his eyes and breathed. When he opened them next, he spoke calmly. “You are the sun—” he gestured past the flames, “—she is nothing but the moon that reflects your light. Tonight you will rise to your blood, Kefira.”

“My traitor blood? You want me to—” She scoffed—laughed, really. “It’s no wonder she commanded you to me. You deserve this punishment.”

A pained expression knitted Abbas’s brows together. “You are the furthest thing from a punishment.” He fiddled with the pouch on his belt, suddenly shy, then thought better of it. “You possess the strongest will of all the clans—no one could have survived the ordeal you have. Show me.” In a flash he was inches from her face. “Show me you are greater than your ancestor, and I shall worship you.”

Her heart beat hard within her chest. Was it Levona or Abbas who wanted her to prove herself? Surely Abbas was playing her—yes, surely under the word of Levona.

Her vision wavered with uncertainty. The entire Rite had robbed her of her privacy, was meant to flay the girl from the woman and be witnessed by those who came before her. And perhaps it was the fires, or the rattling, or the way the moon rose in the sky, but Abbas viewed her with a powerful gaze that stripped her of her physical form. He was reaching for the small, weaker part of herself that had died with her father. That part that longed to be—not even cherished, or loved—but to simply be held.

It made her want to cry.

“Kneel,” she said, voice broken.

“Yes,” he breathed out as he repositioned. “My sweet bird.”

She stood before him. Those beyond the flames had been waiting for this moment, but Kefira knew they’d demand more. Her groin ached painfully sensing Abbas, too, wanted more.

She placed her foot into the top of his shoulder, then pressed down as hard

as she could. “Bow.”

Abbas fell to his hands, forehead to the ground. She found herself smiling, and in this moment of celebration she failed to stop the touch that traveled up her leg. Her breath hitched at the lips that kissed her calf, her knee, her thigh, the nose that scented the heat between her legs. The foot that had forced him to submit now draped against his back. Kefira gasped from the pulsing shot of anticipation as he inhaled her deep. She nearly lost her balance but his firm hand steadied her at the small of her back. His thumbs dipped below the chains of her covering. With a small snap the hours she had spent crafting it vanished as the winds swept the fabrics away to burn. The murky heat rising up from the wall of fire was all the privacy left to her.

She removed her leg; there was mourning in his eyes.

“Animal,” she said in par with the Rite. “This isn’t where you belong.”

Drunkenly, he responded, “Show me where in which this lion may rest.”

She grabbed a fistful of his salted dark hair, then got a better idea. Genuine surprise splashed across his face as she danced her fingers against his dangling nipple piercing. She gave it an experimental tug. He groaned with a quiver and her groin squeezed with a wet, wanton response. To her amazement, his member began to tent.

“Up,” she instructed, speaking loud enough to be heard over the crackling wall of fire.

He obeyed.

In lieu of dragging him by his hair, she pulled the dangle to get him to move. He yelped with pain.

“Gently!” he shouted.

She let go, terrified she had broken the Rite. “Sorry,” she muttered.

“No, here,” he said. He took her hand and placed it on the other piercing. “Gently, yes?”

Rejection inked her edges. He was coddling her, same as he used to when he had first started training her.

She tugged the piercing just as hard.

“Hey—!”

“Maybe you should try going where you are being directed, hm?” She pulled again, and this time Abbas stepped in time.

He bared his teeth in a mixture of anger and a feeling Kefira couldn’t discern. He laughed. It sounded out of breath. “There’s the woman,” he said, following her on the world’s tightest leash.

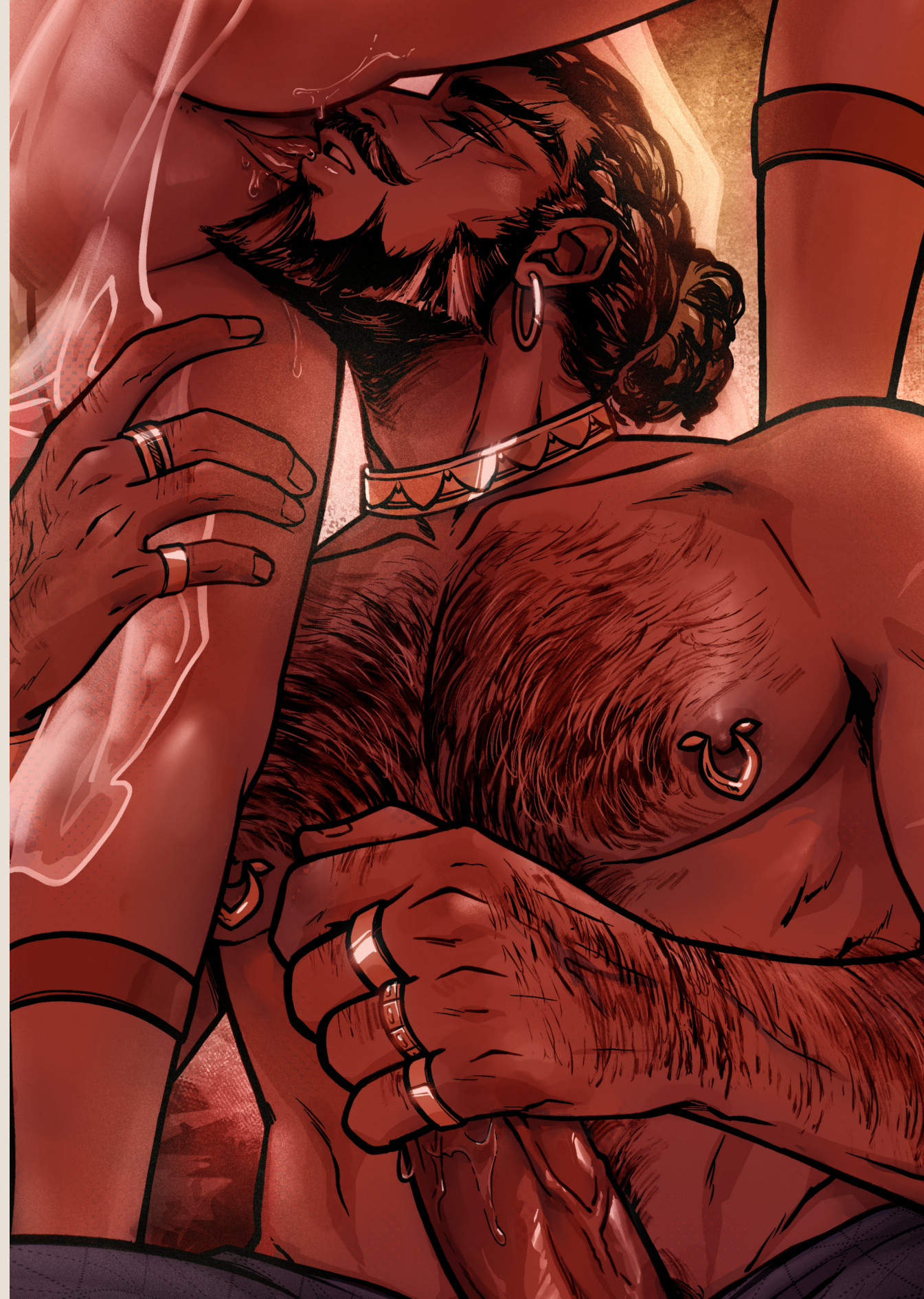
Fearlesswindy

She led him into the cage. “You shall be tamed,” she said, continuing her Rite. “You shall be mine.”

“I am yours,” Abbas said, slightly off script. “I am only yours,” he added quieter, definitely off script.

—*Like Fine Wine* invites you to visit *Fearlesswindy* on their website to read the author’s cut version of the story!

<https://fearlesswindy.ink/lfwlionscage/>





THIS ISN'T APPROPRIATE, YOU KNOW.

YOU'RE A TEENAGER.

I'VE BEEN 18 FOR 6 MONTHS.

YOU'RE MY STUDENT.

THE FINAL BELL RANG 13 MINUTES AGO, I'VE GRADUATED.



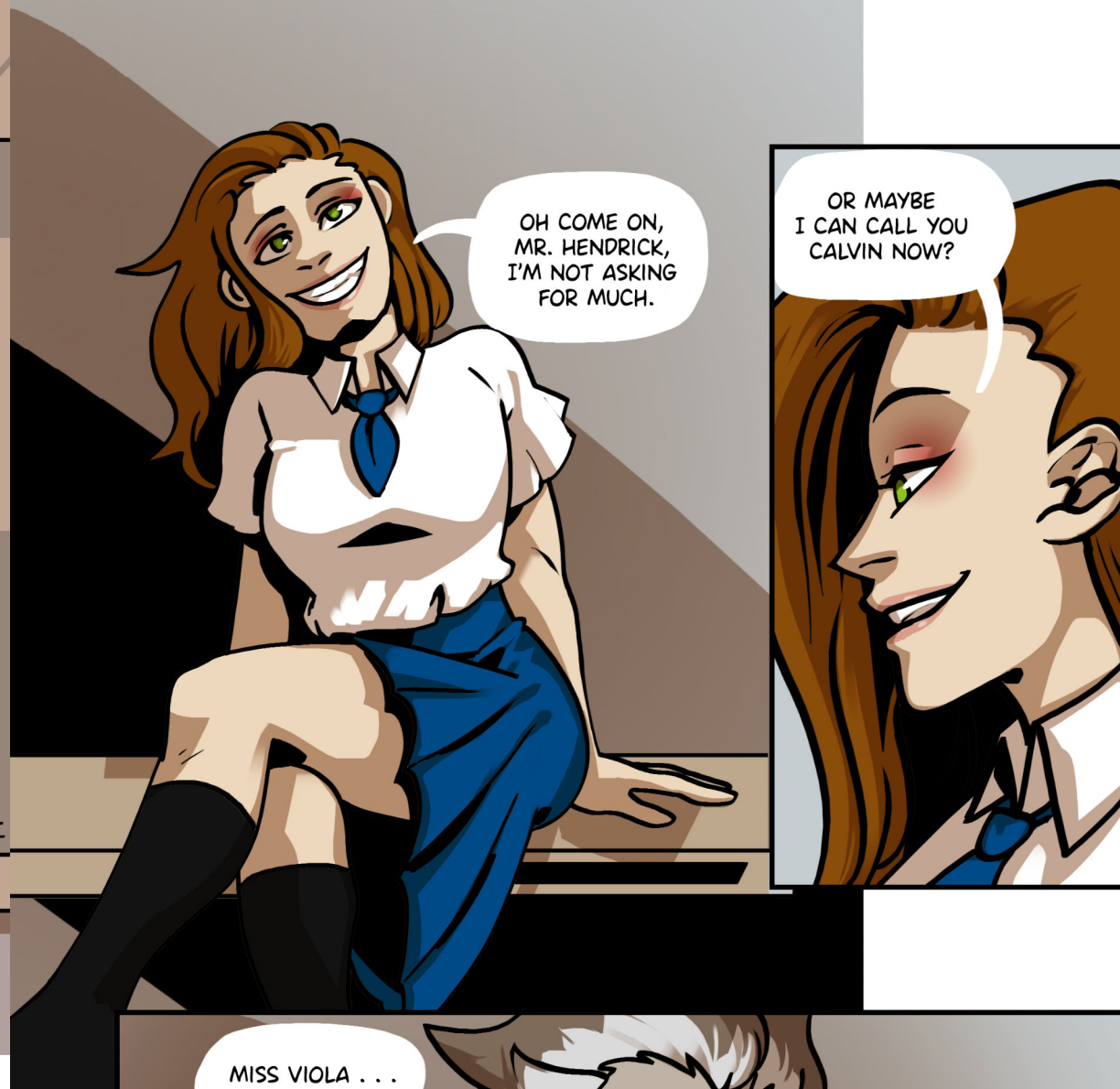
MISS VIOLA-



JUST ONE SINGLE ADULT ASKING OUT ANOTHER.



Sigh



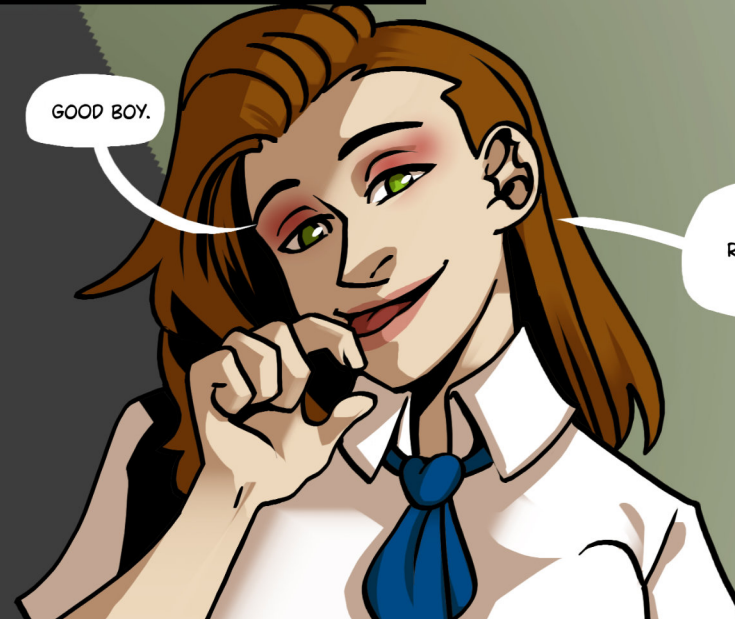
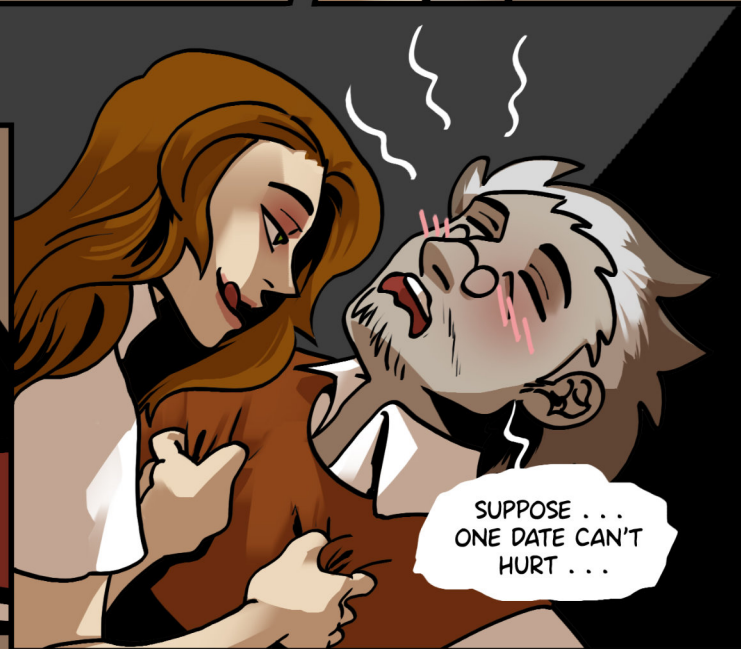
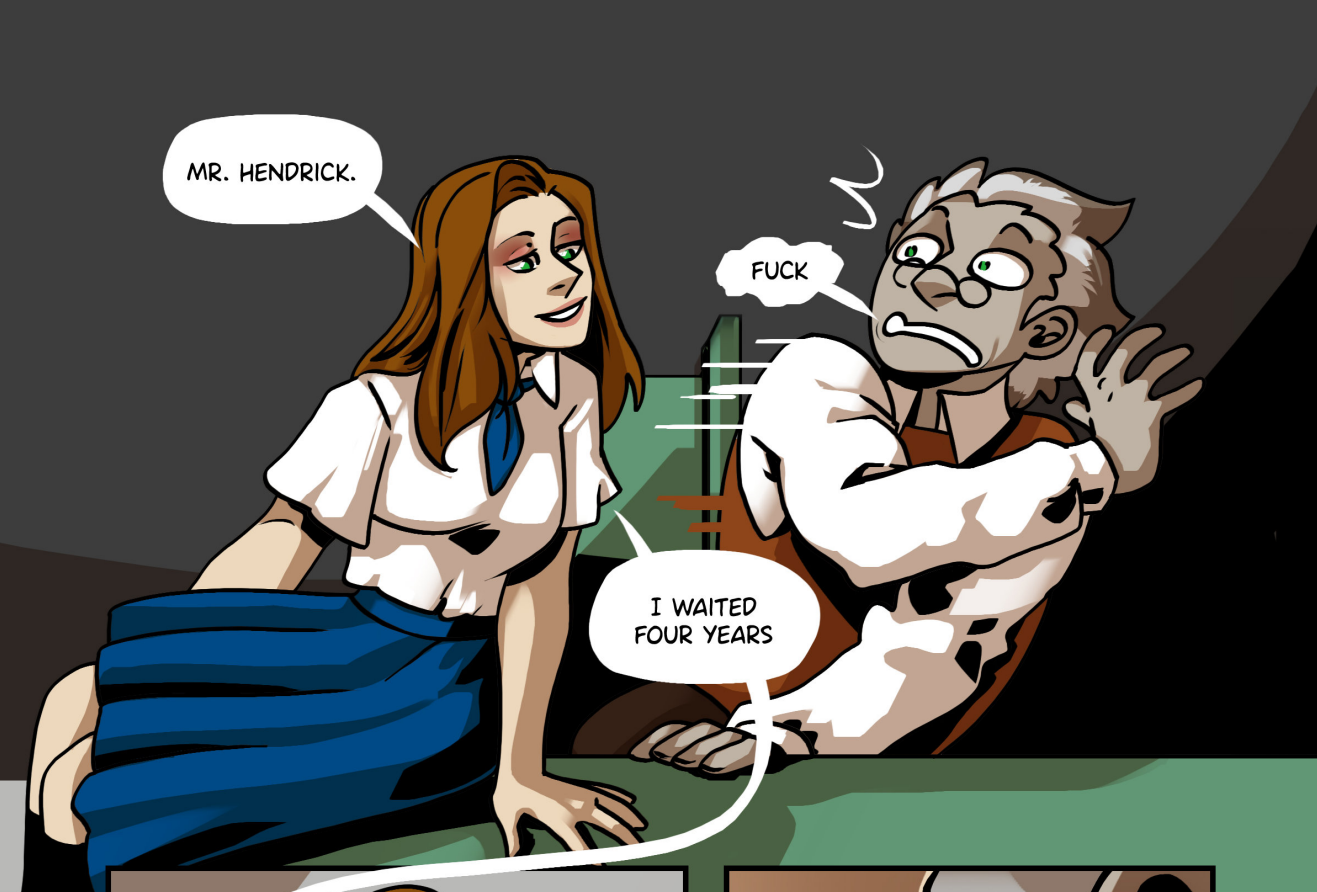
OH COME ON, MR. HENDRICK, I'M NOT ASKING FOR MUCH.

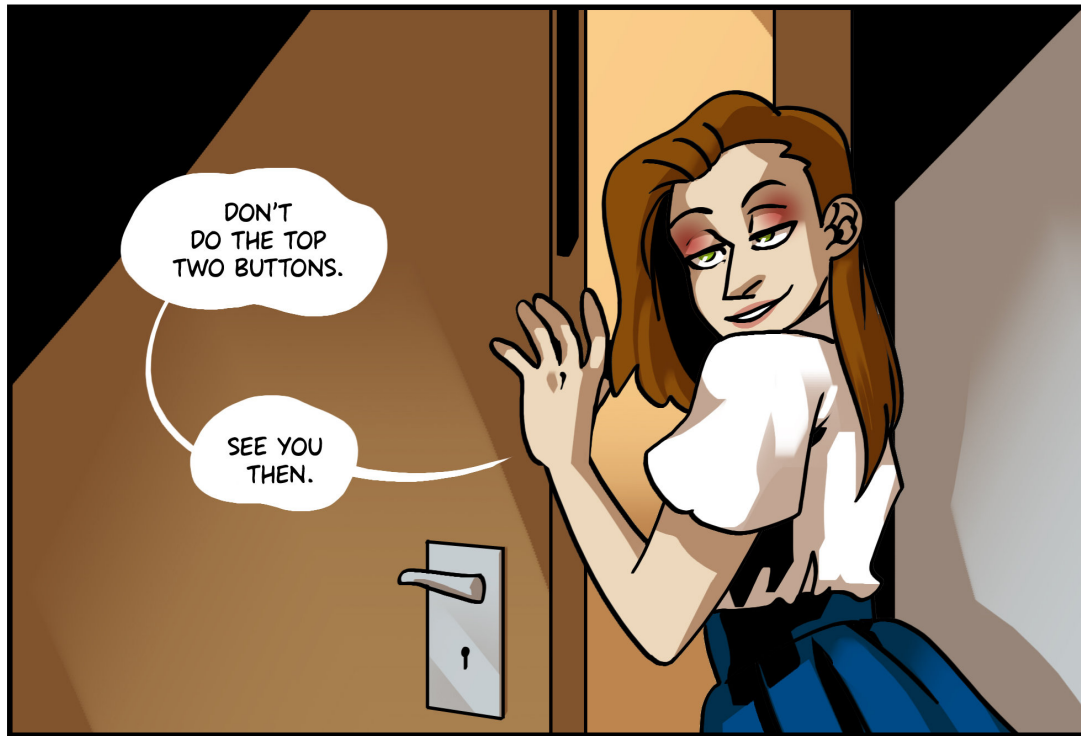
OR MAYBE I CAN CALL YOU CALVIN NOW?



MISS VIOLA...

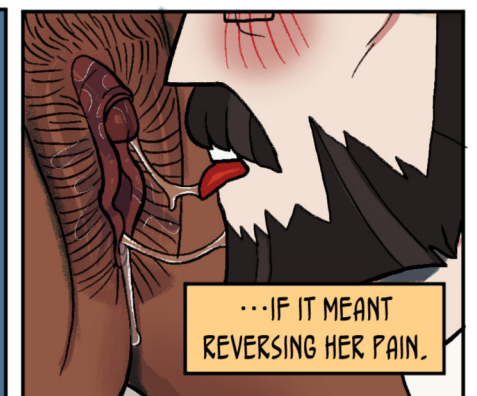
CALVIN.

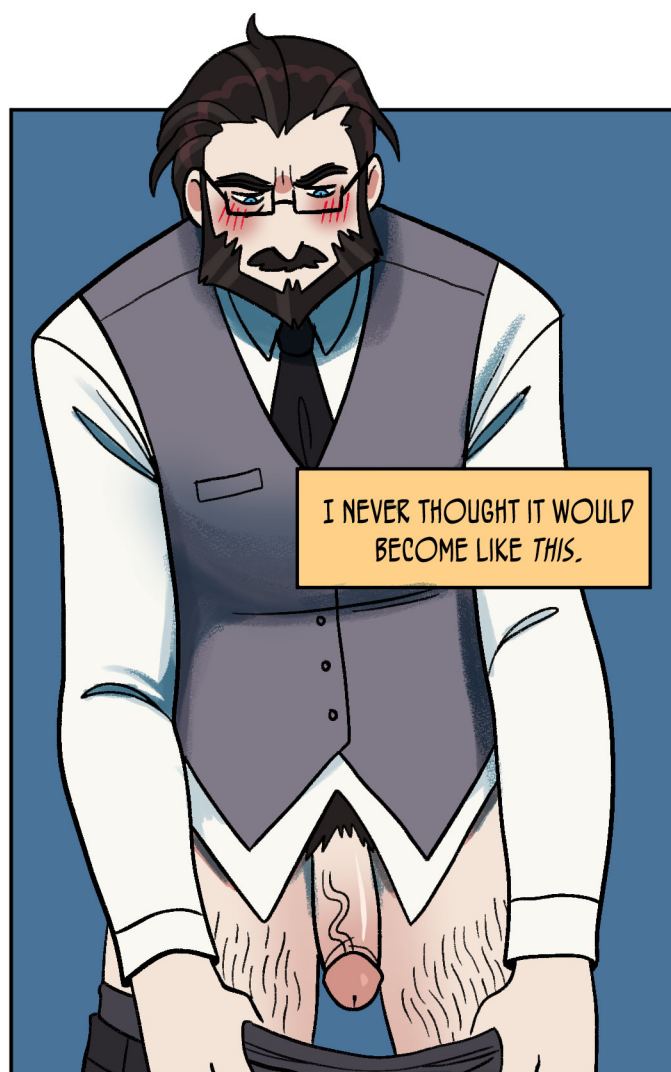




I can't stop time. You're not him. Not anymore.
 No matter how much I wish I could.
 And yet, I'll still love you all the same.







YOU CAN'T





WORK ARRANGEMENTS

Written by namio
Illustrated by jiuchives

The din of downtown Tenpei was silenced with the shutting of the door. Almost immediately, Hu Jian broke that peace with a holler. "Anyone home? Ya didn't send me here for shits 'n giggles, right?"

It was a coin toss on whether he'd be incensed if that was the case. Could be a weighted one, though. Did the shower have hot water? Spare clothes? Nah, the second one was a stupid question. There always was. Kinda shit if a diva's safehouse didn't have a selection of 'fits to swap into for blending in—or standing out—with the crowd. But a *nice* bathroom? There better be one, because Hu Jian just passed over stopping by the only diner on the way with toilets that didn't smell like the sewers, and he'd spent all afternoon at the fish market that *already* radiated a physically powerful stench.

Hand bracing against the wall, he leaned down to pry his shoes off. It was then that a presence made itself known from the couch in the living room—familiar and eye-searingly red.

"Yuck," Linghu Tao said, sniggering as he fanned his hand before his face. "Just crawled outta some whale guts did ya, *Lao Hu*?"

"Shut your mouth," Hu Jian grumbled. He kicked off his boots, enjoying the thuds of thick soles hitting the wall. "I stopped a cata... I stopped a big mess from reekin' up all of southwest Tenpei."

Louder snickers. "Can't spell catastrophe, can ya?"

He ignored the taunt and headed straight for the shower, unbuttoning his shirt along the way. Whether there would be anything he could change into was a question for later—anyway, wasn't he here as a booty call? And despite the sniggering, Linghu Tao followed him like a routine: stepping over discarded pieces of clothing, he slipped into the bathroom as Hu Jian kicked the door shut. The lock slid into place at the same time as he let his belt slide to the ceramic floor, making twin clinks.

There was only a plain showerhead, but the place was decently stocked. Good enough. He stepped in, cranking the heat up to the max. Hot water

poured down in a kick of steam, and he ducked under it. And Linghu Tao's eyes were already on his back, eating up the view. Leave it to a rich kid to be a freak. Hu Jian was built like the scant few trees growing in the shit side of Tenpei: entombed under a layer of concrete, sheer resilience forced through a hardy sprout. By the time somebody noticed, half the sidewalk was bulging from thick roots. The damages were permanent, but eh, he survived.

He let his muscles relax under the barrage for a moment before finally running his hands through his hair, wetting them proper. Through the noise of the water, he could hear Linghu Tao shucking off his shirt and chain. The pop of the shampoo cap echoed the pop of a trousers' button.

"Gimme that," Linghu Tao purred as he stepped into the shower, plucking the bottle away. That purr was how Hu Jian knew the game was on.

He reached around to hand it over, but the brat didn't just grab it—he slid into the space between Hu Jian and the wall, where the water wouldn't fall straight on him. It gave Hu Jian a faceful of a foxy grin: playful, with a hint of canines, and horny. The showerhead was switched off.

The brat made a show of pouring out the shampoo, rubbing it into a foamy slather. "Hmm, I'm struggling to reach here," he said airily, like a liar. "Can ya get down to my height?"

Hu Jian was shorter by a thumb even before this dandy's high heels. He clearly just wanted him on his knees.

Nobody ever rooted for Hu Jian's self-respect though, so he squatted *reaaal* pretty—that was, unflattering. But Linghu Tao only hummed cheerily and started digging his claws into this iron skull, 'massaging' shampoo into the oily hair. It was almost relaxing enough clawing to nod off to.

"Since ya down there already, why don't ya do something 'bout it?"

He blinked back awake. It only gave him an eyeful of a chubbing dick *and* a smug dick.

Annoyance flared in his head, but Lao Zhou's laughing voice echoed right after, reminding him why he was here to begin with—"*Exactly whose cock did you suck that you got paid with this beauty, huh?*" It had been a wristwatch. Hu Jian only knew that it was waterproof, because it survived some swims in the canals, but Lao Zhou informed him that the thing was almost a thousand sepal. From sucking *one* cock. Alternatives with that kind of payout would probably involve geriatric patrons deeply beloved by friends and families for their upcoming will, and the nice thing about fucking Linghu Tao was that he didn't need to imagine a really sexy balloon to stay hard.

Deciding that the bigger man wouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth—or a sugar daddy in the crotch—Hu Jian grabbed the half-hard cock before his



face and started stroking.

"Ah, right," he said as he looked up, squinting from foam getting on his forehead. "Don't try jamming y'dick too hard for shits 'n giggles, yeah?" He squeezed, grin all teeth. "Don't wanna dislodge my fake teeth while Little Taozi's right there, eh?"

It was confirmation that they were a match in hell that *Linghu Tao's* dick didn't need a blow-up doll to stay hard next to *those* dental terrors. In fact, he snickered as he yanked Hu Jian's hair, directing him back to shutting the fuck up and fondling his balls.

A faint, nostalgic taste of soap hit both his tongue and nose as Hu Jian went down to work. *Little* Taozi was nothing to unhinge his jaw for, but the years were probably getting to him; the squat and tilt of his head strained like a bitch. Still, he was a *professional*, and wrapped his wet tongue round the underside nimbly enough.

Despite the breathy moan, Linghu Tao still had the presence of mind to goad, "Ya look real pretty down there, *Shushu*. Use ya real estate, yea?"

Hu Jian shut him up by grabbing his asscheeks, parting them to reveal a puckered hole. There was a yelp and a jolt, which sent his cock right up the roof of Hu Jian's throat, and in revenge he circled and pressed a callused middle finger in. It faked a rejection before sucking his finger right in, wet and hot and snug.

Hah. What a slut. Ignoring the fact that he was the prostitute in this work arrangement, Hu Jian suppressed his smirk by hollowing his cheeks and turning his focus to matching the pace of his fingers to the bobbing of his head. He was rewarded by a groan from above. Ego ballooning, he swallowed around the head and moved from one finger to two, then three, thrusting the same time he sucked. When his mouth was sore enough to burn, he pressed his fingers into that bundle of nerves, digging in until that bratty fox finally busted his nut.

Ignoring the yank on his hair, he pulled away and spat out the cum.

"Yuck," Linghu Tao snickered, a pest even with his cock soft.

Hu Jian bared his teeth, which still tasted nasty. "Now get ya ass out. I wanna shower."

With annoying snickers, he *was* left alone to finish his shower. By the time he stepped out, naked, pinkish and sorta steaming like freshly boiled crab, Linghu Tao was playing with himself on the king-sized bed. He looked real cozy swallowed by the bed, eyes half-closed in crescents.

He simpered as he noticed Hu Jian's entry. "Ya wanna ring, *Shushu*, or are ya getting too old to cum?"

"Wish your mouth's as nice 'n shut as your hole," was the grumbled reply.

Hu Jian climbed onto the bed and crawled right between those legs, which readily spread like a well-trained whore. Amid further tittering, he tossed the brat's left leg over his shoulder like a sack of rice and took his cock in hand. In this position, Linghu Tao's hips hovered in the air as his right knee found a solid—but moving—perch over Hu Jian's elbow, perfectly poised to bounce. The smirk on his face, framed by his heaving chest, hardening cock, and twig hands gripping the pillows, spoke volumes about how ready he was to get drilled into the mattress.

And they've been doing this enough for Hu Jian to know the drill. So, without warning, he pushed the head of his cock against that entrance and plunged right home, only pausing when he'd been swallowed to the root. Giving Linghu Tao no chance to breathe around his girth, he then pulled out and got down to pounding, making the bed whine louder than Linghu Tao's choked moans.

"Liked that, huh?" he snarked as the brat's jaw slackened with each hard thrust. The headboard banged against the wall, drool trailing down the side of his mouth with the rocking of the bed. "Slut. Looking around for men your dad's age to rail you 'til you're just a gaping asshole filled with cum." Another thrust, then Hu Jian slapped the thigh pressing against his chest. The sound rang bright amid all the rhythmic cries. "Whaddaya need these legs for anyway, huh? Girly fags like you are just pillow princesses who don't get outta bed, ya just wait for the next burly guy with a fat cock to let out a load in your loose hole."

Linghu Tao jerked at the heavy slap, back straightening as another moan was ripped out from his mouth. Hu Jian took this as an agreement.

"Might's well make bein' a whore your day job too," he barked as he leaned forward, curling Linghu Tao's body further and planting both hands on the mattress below them for better grip. Bent over his patron, Hu Jian rested his forehead on a skinny chest before rutting into him like a street mongrel dog. *Fuck, that's good.* He panted heavy and wet against sweaty skin, eyes starting to roll back, instincts only able to think of chasing his own release.

Folded in half and pinned into the mattress, Linghu Tao could only let out broken whines as his tongue lolled, limp, taking everything he was given. Every now and then his cock, hard and dripping, would brush against the scarred expanse of Hu Jian's torso, or prod against a plush, tattooed tit, and a louder moan would fill the room.

Were it another day, Hu Jian would've fished out an underwear and shoved it into that mouth, growling at him to sound less like a desperate whore looking for holiday money. Today, though, he was beat from work and was just looking to cum.

From the sounds of it, the brat was on board.

After a while, a tension on his back and the slightly pained tint to Linghu Tao's harsh whines stirred his brain-part to semi-awareness. With a heavy

grunt, Hu Jian pulled back to catch his breath. The labored noises relaxed, but that little fox's eye opened to a slit, too, watching him through a layer of haze. Hu Jian grunted him an explanation to keep his demanding ass appeased. "Changin' positions."

He let Linghu Tao's thigh slide off his arm, drawing a pained hiss. Hard to tell if it was from the strain on his legs or on his lower back—both would probably be fucked within a decade with the kinda fucking he liked to get, but well-deserved given the dicking he otherwise liked to force upon this old personal prostitute. Hu Jian just gave him a moment to adjust before rolling him over to his stomach, helping him pull over the pillow so that it sat below his chin and chest, instead of right under his face.

Then he gripped that raised hip, lined his cock back up, and *pounded*.

Hu Jian was getting on in years, and it *was* affecting how he was getting it on—but with this slut of a brat, all he needed to do was rut and chase his own climax hard enough, and the bed would be all wet from Linghu Tao leaking from his cock, fucked asshole, open mouth, and tears. The hole he was fucking twitched as it stretched around the girth pounding in deeper, but it could no longer teasingly clench as the whore it was attached to moaned louder than cats in heat with each impact.

Reducing a yapping brat into a drooling, mewling mess desperate for cock was *always* satisfying.

With that sudden thought buoying his mood, Hu Jian raised a hand and swung it down, hard, on Linghu Tao's asscheek. Letting out a joyous growl at the choked cry, he grabbed the brat by the back of his head and tugged at his hair, making his slender back arch further, as he—

Pulled out and came all over Linghu Tao. Stroking his cock, he pumped out strings after strings of cum, marking the pale, unblemished skin of this rich, loud slut.

Like always, there was a selection of foreign beer in the fridge. Hu Jian swiped a whole armful of them that didn't look too much like they were for a bougie girl. He knew a handful of French, but they all were words that made him taste soap in his meals for three days. It wasn't much help. *All* the labels had those foppish curls.

Linghu Tao yapped noisily as he avoided the ice cold cans pouring onto the bed, insensitive to the fact that he was limbless from a good fuck—oh, and naked. Hu Jian climbed back in, took a swig, and relaxed into the bed.

"Ya really dozing off without checking what's in the nightstand beside ya?"

The sleepiness that was setting in evaporated as his ears perked. Right. He almost forgot about that dang thing.

"What'd ya get me?" Despite asking, he didn't wait. Turning over to his stomach, he pulled the drawer wide open—and was greeted with the most



beautiful girl he'd seen all day.

"Lao Zhou's gonna be *shittin'* in jealousy once he gets a load'a this," he said, a shit-eating grin on his face as he twisted the gun around to savor every inch of detail. He might've graduated high school because they couldn't kick him out, but what he lacked in commonplace intelligence he made up in knowing that this bad baby was the chimera pistol's newest prototype, and the best thing since a rotisserie chicken spinner.

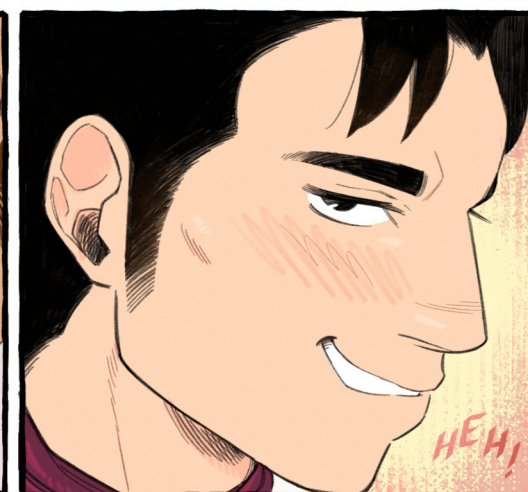
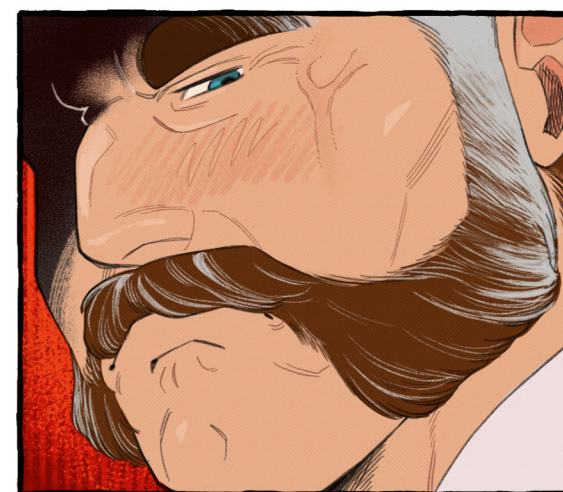
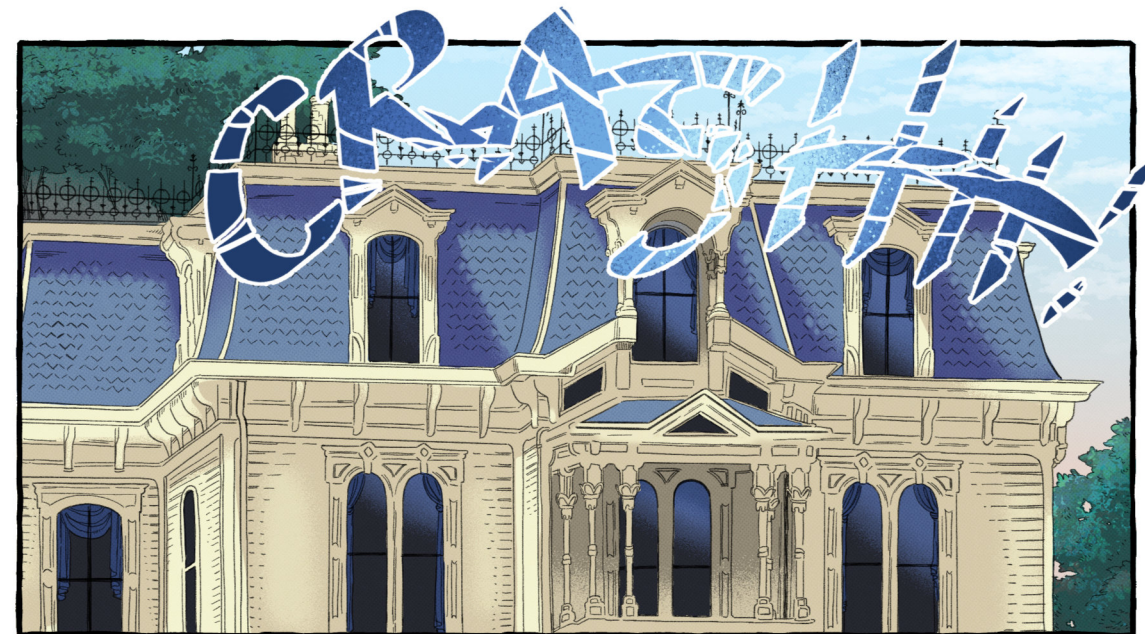
Linghu Tao radiated smugness as he watched his sugar baby fondle and mouth his new gun, a drink in hand.

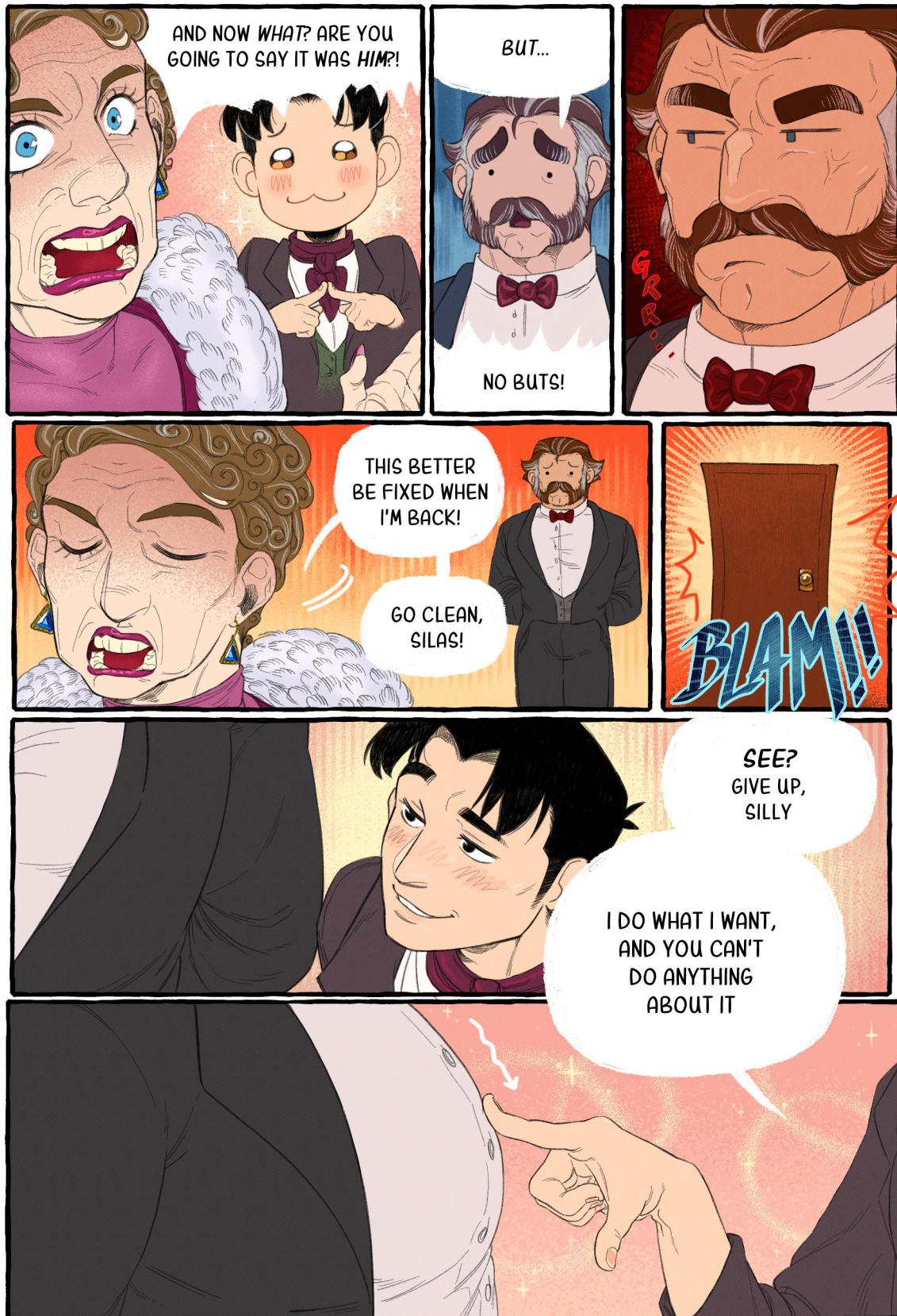
Hu Jian pressed a kiss against the cold metal, grinned, and put it back on the bedside table. For once, his expression was appeasing. "Nother round?"

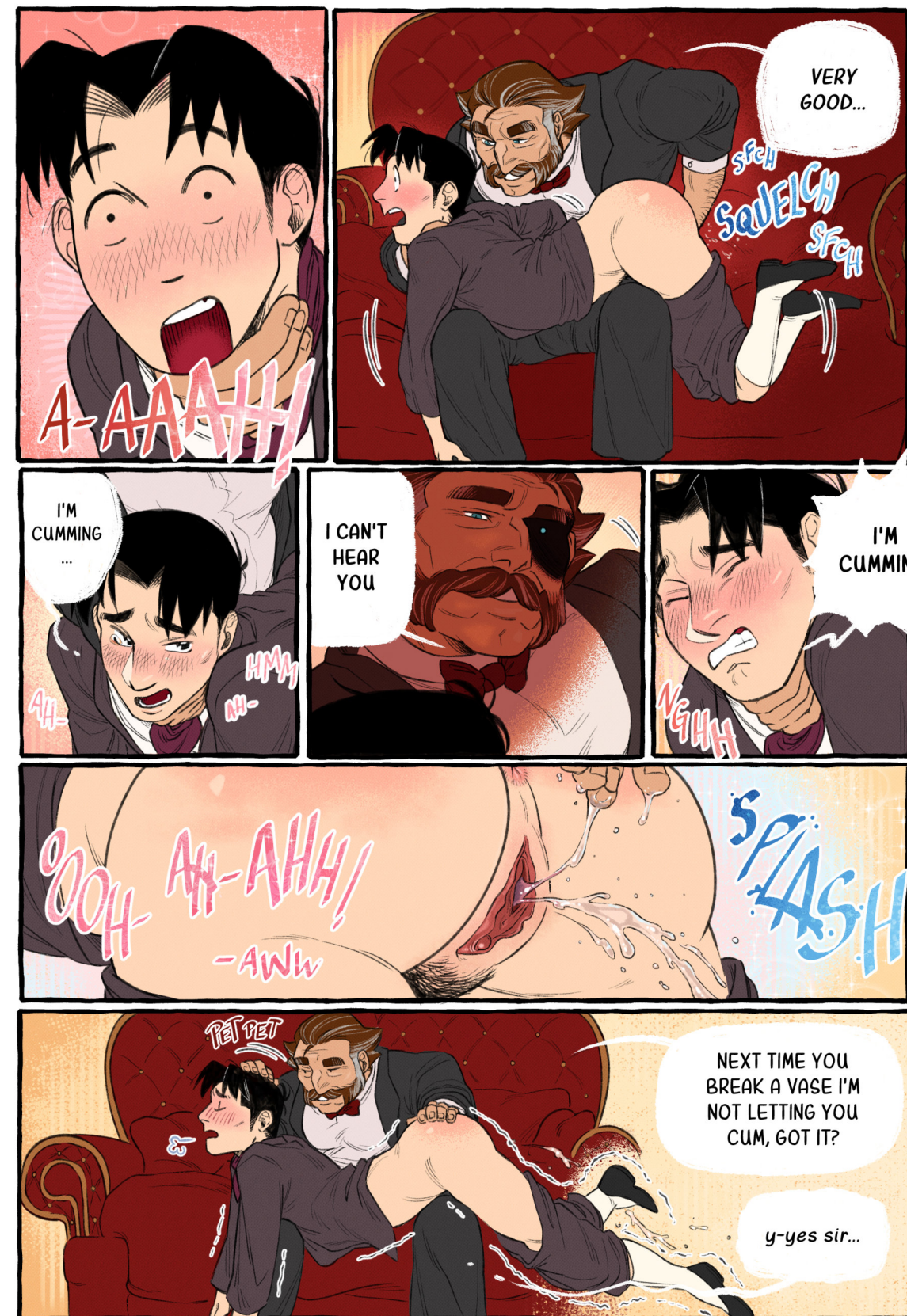
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A THOROUGH EVINCEMENT

*Written by Dragonlaxatives
Follow-up Comic by Birb*

It was sundown by the time he finally left the little prince's bathing chamber.

The waning day's golden light peeked through the palace windows as Otto made his way to the servants' quarters. His stride was relaxed and confident. His erection, prominent even under the folds of his dhoti, did nothing to hinder him. He didn't bother feigning any embarrassment. It wasn't a first time occurrence for him, and it certainly wouldn't be the last. The prince, Charun, as much as the boy tried to deny it, had taken an intense liking to this old dancer. Day after day, a mere few hours before sundown, Prince Charun would seek him out, interrupting Otto from whatever banality he was in the middle of. Charun did so to invite him to tea, to chat, or, a recent favorite, to bathe together.

Otto brought a hand up to his damp hair, slicking the ashen tresses back and drying them back to silver with a little spark of magic. Without the slightest concern about whether they'd notice him or his cock, the older man threw cursory glances at any servant girl scurrying past him.

It didn't take any deductive mastery to realize he was looking to fuck one of them. The way his eyes wandered to the skirts of their saris until he lost interest made it abundantly clear. Most days, he wasn't very picky. Even now, he didn't particularly care who he ended up bedding. However..., with his latest excursion with the little prince flitting through his mind, it wasn't lost on him that the women who bore even the slightest resemblance to the prince were catching his eye.

It made sense, he thought. He had yet to fuck the boy. Even if he had just made the prince cum, as was their nightly custom now, Otto himself had yet to spill a single drop of seed. It would have been an insult, if Otto hadn't been biding his time. He needed the opportune moment to make the boy his own, and such a moment had yet to grace him.

Following that train of thought, Otto's mind wandered to their latest rendezvous.

It had started as usual, with the boy leading him to his bathing chambers and asking (telling) the older man to wash his hair.

With no other option, Otto obeyed and began to strip, ignoring Charun's widening eyes and how his ears swiveled downwards.

There was no shyness in Otto's movements. He allowed the boy a full view of the soft curves and hard lines of his body. Like always, Otto showed as much of himself as Charun could handle.

Charun had followed Otto's every move, almost burning holes into the colorful artwork etched onto Otto's fair skin. The boy's gaze made Otto shiver pleasantly, and while it was easy to play off as a slight chill, he settled on ruffling his wings and fluttering his tail. It drew the boy's attention down his back to rest at his rear. So, when Otto started to undo his dhoti, he had paused, thrown a questioning glance the boy's way, and raised a single brow, the slightest of smirks playing at his lips.

Flustered, Charun's golden eyes sprang upwards and met Otto's silver. And just like that, it was Otto burning holes into the little prince's soul.

It never lasted too long. Just like he always did, Charun looked away in embarrassment.

Taking advantage of Charun's shyness, Otto had moved quickly, lowering himself into the hot water before the prince noticed. It was always a pleasure watching Charun gather his courage to try sneaking a glance at him. To finally see the part of Otto that proclaimed them both as the same sex, only to be greeted by open air and the sound of Otto's delighted chuckle.

Rounding a corner, Otto smirked, too distracted by his filthy thoughts to notice a rushing servant girl barrelling towards him. By the time he spotted her, her nose dug into his chest in a painful clash of bodies.

She yelped, pitifully, and would have fallen backwards onto her rear if not for Otto's strong hands gripping her shoulders.

He looked down his nose at her, his lips curling into a sneer.

She clutched her nose, eyes pinched in pain. He should have pushed the girl away and barked at her to be *mindful of her surroundings*. But he didn't. His cover wouldn't be blown by some little bitch who didn't pay attention.

The hypocrisy wasn't lost on him, but Otto didn't care to blame himself. Finally, after much too long fussing over her face, she looked up at him. Her face bloomed scarlet and she bowed her head, hasty apologies spilling from her lips. He gave her a gracious smile, having long since schooled his face back into a neutral curious look.

He was to play the gracious foreigner after all.

*Oh, no, no, my dear. Pardon **me**. Are you hurt?*

But then she gasped, and he quirked his brow at her, before he noticed where her gaze had fallen.

Ah.

His erection was still semi-hard.

He expected the girl to run screaming, claiming him a pervert after her maidenhead.

Instead, the little slut came closer and stared up at him with shimmering eyes, her teeth delicately biting onto her bottom lip. Otto feigned surprise when she rubbed her body into his, the girl not once glancing around to see if they were alone. When she began to rub her hand against his erection, he hissed and pulled her into a nearby recess tucked away at the end of the palace hall, hiding them both from sight.

"What do you think you're doing?!" he hissed at her, her wrists clasped together by one of his hands. His grip was tight, deliberately painful, but not enough to break the girl's wrists, though Otto briefly considered it.

She trembled in his grasp, her voice quivering with fear.

"I-I'm sorry, I th-thought you'd wanted to lay with me. Y-you're just—" The young girl turned scarlet, her head hanging in shame.

Otto released his hold.

For a moment, he had thought the girl was another spy, tasked to seduce him for a morsel of information. Certainly, he was a simple entertainer, as far as she knew, but even the most insignificant bug could hold the key to the elite's ruin.

But the more he stared at the girl, the clearer her innocence was to him. There was simply no way to truly feign that naive sparkle in the eye. Otto had seen it on the prince often enough by now.

He took a moment to really look at the girl. A small boyish frame with even smaller breasts. Her hair was cropped short but the curl of her black tresses gave them a soft and airy look that framed her large green eyes. Her skin was a tawny color, which he found pleasant. He found all of her pleasant. Under the right amount of candlelight, she'd make a suitable sleeve for him. Otto's lips curled into a smile, raising his hand to tilt the girl's chin upwards before he gently pushed his lips against hers.

The girl, shocked at his sudden change of heart, tensed, before she melted into his embrace.

When Otto parted from her, some thirty minutes later, she was a trembling mess once again.

“Meet me in my rooms tonight, dear,” he whispered, nibbling at her ear before parting from her.

Otto licked at his two fingers while he walked. He kept at it until he no longer tasted the sweet tang that resided there.



For the past few weeks, the prince had been avoiding him.

Charun had clung to Otto like a second skin, so the sudden change in attitude had been incredibly perplexing to the older man. From seeing the prince every day to feeling *lucky* to catch a glimpse of him, it wasn't something Otto was prepared for.

Needless to say, it made Otto spend many a sleepless night, tossing and turning, or pacing his room, wondering where in the world he had gone wrong.

This night was no different.

He paced in his chambers, tail swishing in agitation, wings opening and closing over and over. He was in nothing but his undergarments: a simple black langot provided by the palace, and his customary furs for the cold. There was a scowl set deep into his face. It would have shocked any of the other servants to see. He'd grown a reputation as a fop, not an agitated sour faced old man.

He'd been so certain that he had the prince eating from the palm of his hand and that Charun would stay enraptured long enough to make his plans bear fruit. Taking a steadying breath, Otto went to his bed, ready to close his eyes and think of new strategies that didn't revolve around the little prince's capricious interest.

It'd be much more difficult. Charun had been his oasis in the entire operation. A comforting variable that Otto had foolishly begun to believe was constant.

With a deep sigh, he fell back into the soft cushions of his bed and stared up at nothing.

Would he have to kill the prince...?

Otto turned to his side, his expression blank. *What a shame.*



Hours passed, and just as Otto felt himself begin to drift to sleep, a soft knock at his door cut through the silence.

He sat up and stilled, feathers opening wide and shifting to catch any other sounds.

He wasn't expecting anyone. All the servants should have gone to bed and the royals were all in their own wings of the palace.

Otto's lips pressed into a thin line, and he quickly took hold of the blade hidden underneath his pillows. Soundlessly, he slid himself off his bed. He was fully intent on disposing of whoever dared cross paths with him.

He gripped his blade tightly. Usually, his talons were more than enough for killing. But talons left distinct markings. A blade was precise, surgical, and impossible to trace back to him if he played his cards right.

Otto's eyes narrowed while he crept to his door, evenly distributing the weight of his footsteps to make them as light as possible.

He stood flush against the door and listened.

The soft knocks started again, only a tiny bit louder.

They hadn't tried opening the door yet. Otto moved quickly, unlocking it with a wave of his hand and a slight shimmer of magic. Satisfied, Otto let himself fall into the shadows in wait.

There was a moment where nothing happened.

Then, the door began to open. Slowly, softly.

Otto readied his blade, slowly making his wings curl around himself, using his black feathers to blend into the shadows.

The figure stepped inside and closed the door behind them, leaving the room engulfed in darkness.

Otto would have attacked right then and there, slitting their throat while their back was turned. But, something made him pause.

A familiar scent. It tickled at his nostrils, pleasant and all encompassing as it coursed through his entire being.

My little prince..., his mind breathed.

But still, he didn't reveal himself, merely watching to see what Charun would do. *Had he come to end Otto's life?* Otto's lips twitched upward at the thought.

But then the little prince called out for him in a soft and unsure whisper.

“Annaya...?” he called, and the way the boy sounded like a lost little kitten made Otto's heart flutter in delight.

Otto didn't reply.

Charun stepped closer to Otto's bed, his footsteps quiet and hesitant.

“Otto...?” Charun called once more, obviously fooled by the lumps of pillows

and blankets left in Otto's place.

"My prince," Otto finally said, walking forward and lighting the candles throughout the room with a rush of magic.

The flames of the candles burned in a beautiful purple-blue blaze before cooling into a soft orange glow, illuminating the room in their warmth.

Otto smiled at the boy's shocked expression, immediately noticing the way Charun's eyes locked onto the blade in his hand.

"Otto...?"

Otto held his hands up in a show of peace.

"My apologies, my little prince. You frightened me, you see. I wasn't expecting any visitors so late....," He moved towards a nearby shelf, adorned with various decorations, some useful, some useless.

"Especially not you, my prince," Otto quipped, his voice light, as he placed the blade on the shelf before turning back to look at the boy with a kind smile on his face, "I figured you'd grown bored of me."

For a split second, the boy looked stricken, before glancing away with a slight scowl on his face. Otto didn't know what to make of it.

"I...I wasn't bored of you at all," Charun murmured, his voice petulant.

Otto blinked slowly. He'd heard the boy loud and clear, but didn't understand why *Charun* was behaving like *Otto* was the one who wronged *him*.

Not bothering to respond, Otto circled around the little prince.

Charun was wearing a shapeless cloak, entirely drab in both design and color. A smirk played at Otto's lips. It was perfect for sneaking around in the dead of night, and a very clear sign of Otto's influence and teachings.

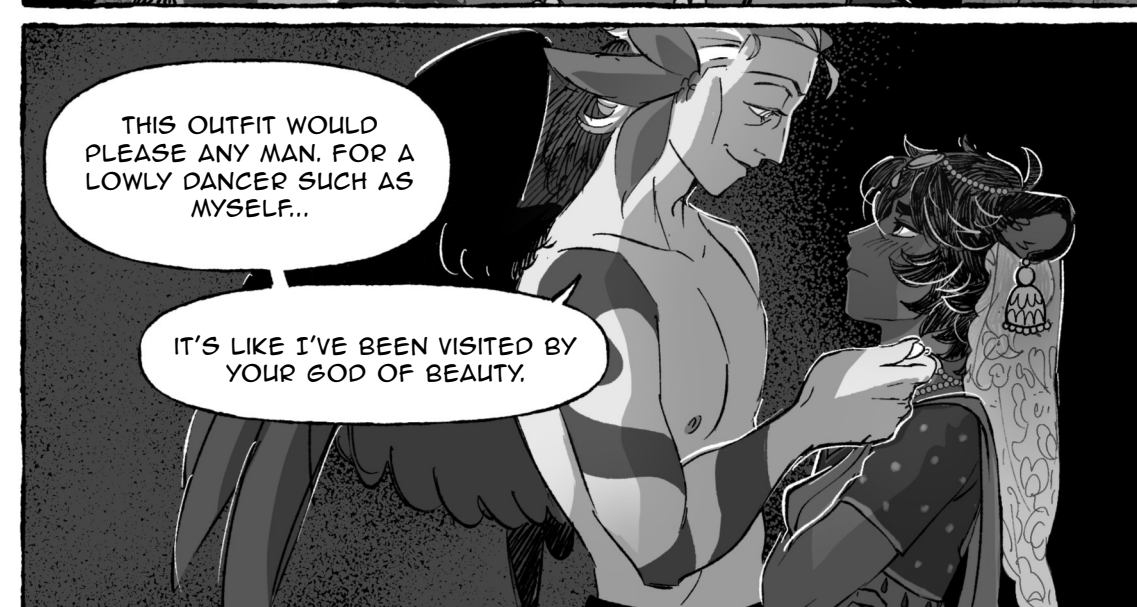
"So, what brings you here then, my dear?" the older man asked, finally taking a seat on his bed, stretching his wings while leaning back on his nest of pillows, never once averting his eyes from the prince's small form.

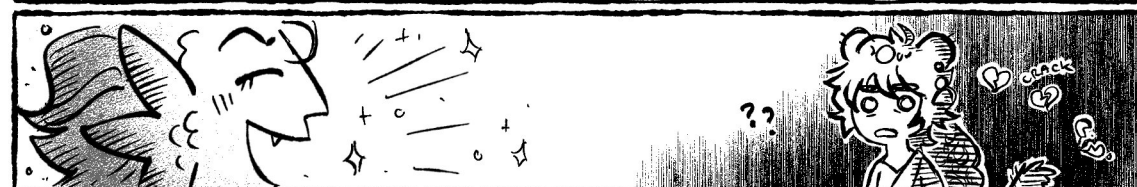
He waited for Charun to go to him. But the prince did not move.

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I WONT LET ANYONE HURT YOU.

I'LL KILL THEM.

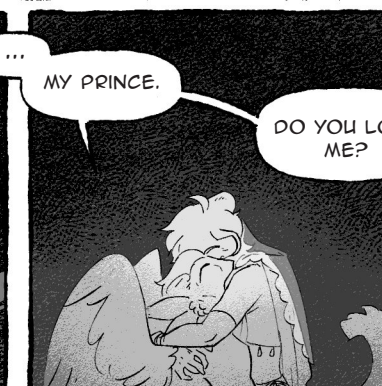
I'LL KILL THEM FOR EVEN THINKING IT.

HAS SOMEONE THREATENED YOU?



NO. NO ONE. NO THREATS. ALL IS WELL.

...OKAY. GOOD...

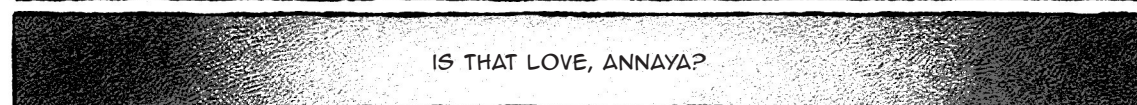


... MY PRINCE.

DO YOU LOVE ME?



...I WANT TO BE YOURS... AND I WANT YOU TO BE MINE.



IS THAT LOVE, ANNAYA?



IT CAN BE, MY PRINCE.

THEN...

IT'S LOVE.



A-ANNAYA

CALL ME OTTO, MY PRINCE.

I WANT TO HEAR YOU SAY MY NAME.



OTTO! YOU'LL CALL ME BY NAME AS WELL THEN WONT YOU?

OTTO...

YOU'LL CALL ME CHARUN.



OF COURSE, CHARUN.

OTTO!

... CHARUN, WILL YOU TRULY BE MINE?

SLAM

Y-YES! PLEASE, OTTO! I WANT TO BE-

SLAM



A-AHHH

MY SWEET NAIVE LITTLE PRINCE.



WHATEVER COMES TO PASS-

YOU'LL BE FOREVER MINE, AND I FOREVER YOURS.

MY PRINCE CHARUN.



A PLACE FOR US

*Written by Cat Marsh
Illustrated by Herrington*

“So when do I get to meet your friends?” Michael asked, kicking his feet, bare heels drumming against the kitchen cabinets.

“When you start attending university, I imagine.” Lew didn’t admonish him for it, of course— he never did. Michael always got the feeling Lew wouldn’t admonish him for anything. Instead, he brought over the wooden spoon, hand carefully cupped under to catch any drips, offering it up to be tasted. “Everyone else I know works there. Here— tell me what you think.”

“What if I don’t ever go to university?”

“I imagine you’ll do just fine for yourself without it. Is the sauce ready, or do I need to fuss with it?”

“You wouldn’t think I wasn’t living up to my potential?”

“I wouldn’t know, dear boy. I’m not sure what university does for a poet. Enough rosemary? Oregano?”

“I thought your cousin was a poet. And a professor.” He did lean forward, at long last, to taste the sauce, once his point was made. “Mm, good. Don’t change a thing.”

“Yes, well, I’m not sure what it did for him, either. He’d have been just as happy going on meandering road trips and writing meandering poems, but they wanted him to be respectable. I could introduce you— he’s hosting some kind of salon, he suggested I bring you. I don’t know the first thing about poetry beyond what I like, but I guess I talked you up enough. He called you my prodigy. I said you were hardly mine.”

There was a little sting at that, but a familiar, easily-borne thing. He wasn’t Lew’s. He’d had time to accept that. After all, when they’d first stumbled into each other’s lives, when Lew had been running tech support for Shakespeare in the Park, Michael had just been a kid. Now, old enough that his parents would like to know if he ever intends to go to university, he took solace in Lew, who worked at one, never pressured him towards academia, or acted like there were two kinds of people, those who went

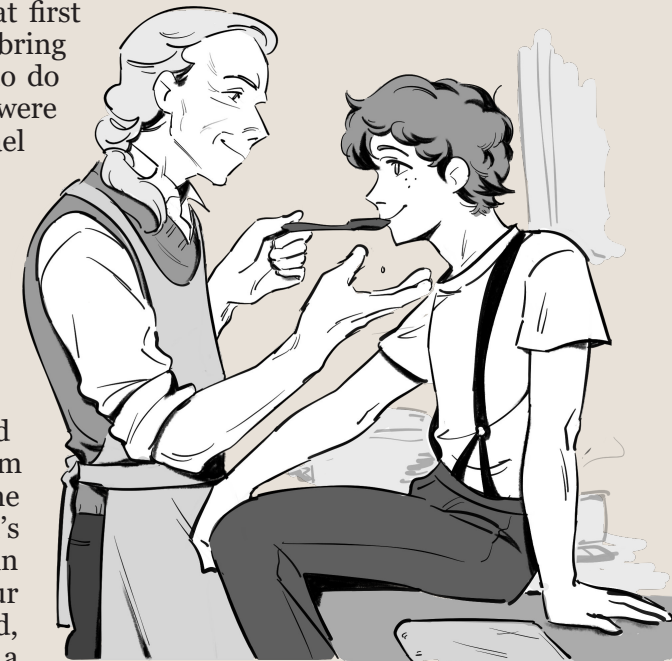
A Place for Us

and those who didn’t, and the ones who went were better. Lew just let him exist. It makes dinners over at his place a lot more peaceful than the ones at home.

“I’d like to go, then. If you’d like to take me?”

“I could handle a night of poetry as long as you’re one of the poets...” Lew smiled. It’s flattery— Lew might not ‘know’ poetry, but he likes it just fine, that’s why he’d been running tech for Shakespeare in the first place. But Michael wasn’t immune to flattery, not immune to the way Lew’s smile deepened the lines around his eyes, added dimples alongside the lines bracketing his mouth.

Lew had been unprepared for that first ‘salon’ he’d been encouraged to bring Michael to— hadn’t known what to do with the assumption that the two were a couple. For that matter, Michael hadn’t known what to do with it, either, but he’d taken the chance, emboldened by Lew’s cousin Ian, his other friends and their young partners. There’s an ethical guideline, you couldn’t bring your own student as a date, but the age thing wasn’t an issue. Not like he isn’t legal, after all, and it’s not like Lew ever looked at him when he *was* a kid. He thinks he gets it, though— everyone at Ian’s get-togethers knows that there’s an ethical rule about not dating your students, but out in the wider world, someone sees a guy they know is a college professor dating someone *young enough* to be his student, people make assumptions.



And here, in Ian’s living room, with the buffet laid out and a few couples cozied up together, that world doesn’t have to exist, not for them.

Michael *likes* Ian, now that he does know him. He’s not sure what he’s doing with a *marketing student* of all people, but they seem happy. He looks a good deal like Lew, minus about a decade, and with double the ‘old hippie’ vibe. It makes Michael think the Davies family is just a breeding ground for hippie professors.

As on their first time, Michael leaves Lew’s side so he can load up a plate for the both of them— though at least this time, he comes back to Lew settled comfortably into an overstuffed chair, not dissociating in the corner over the idea that Michael might suddenly consider him an unforgivable pervert,

instead of the handsomest man in the room and the best seat in the house.

He helps himself to Lew's lap, and helps Lew to a stuffed date— the same bite he'd fed him, once upon a time, when doing so was a step forward into a new intimacy between them, when that one little bite broke Lew out of his downward spiral and broke down the wall between them.

"I still know what I want." Michael smiles warmly, cozying up to Lew's chest. Maybe it'll never be college, but he is getting advice from Ian and improving his writing, he's started actually submitting pieces... and he wouldn't be here without Lew. Not only because Lew introduced him to his new poetry mentor, but because Lew is his biggest support and his brightest muse.

"Do you?" Lew smiles back, cupping his cheek. "Tell me about it."

"First, we're going to feed each other finger foods."

"Mm-hm."

"Then, you're going to get a little handsy. PG level handsy."

"Am I?" He laughs at that, his head tipping back, and Michael leans in to kiss his throat, feels a big, warm hand land gently on his thigh. "Oh, I guess I am."

"Then, Ian's going to put on something by The Beatles. Or Something by The Beatles. And you're going to ask me to dance."

"I'm going to ask you?"

"And we'll dance. Some of the other guys will dance, it won't be weird. And we'll say our goodnights... and you'll drive me back to your place. You'll take me to bed." He speaks the words directly against Lew's throat so that he can feel it against his lips when the older man swallows. "I told my parents not to wait up. I... I'd like to tell them about you. I haven't figured out how. I want them to understand you're good for me, but... tonight, can we just be good for each other without worrying about all that yet?"

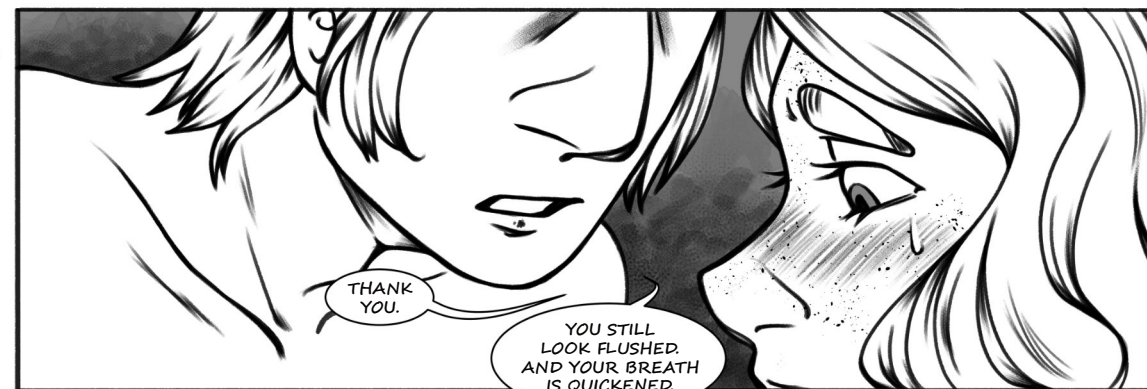
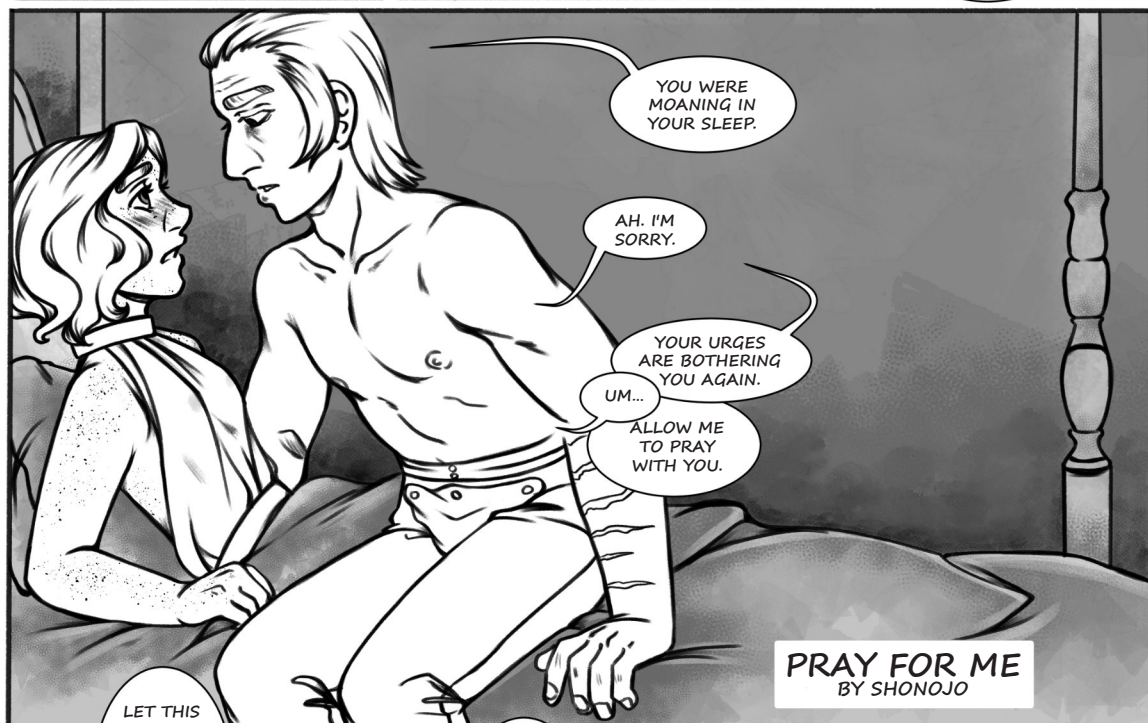
Lew is still for a moment, still holding him close. He's rarely still, always rushing around, pacing while he reads a paper to be graded or crossing the kitchen fifty times in the course of throwing together a simple dinner, or just gesturing broadly as he speaks, but sometimes he stops all that frenetic

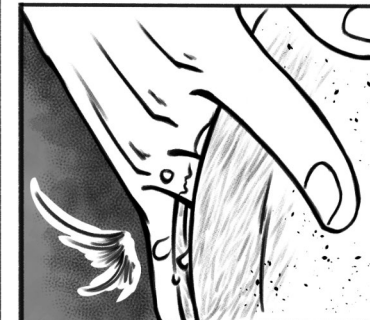
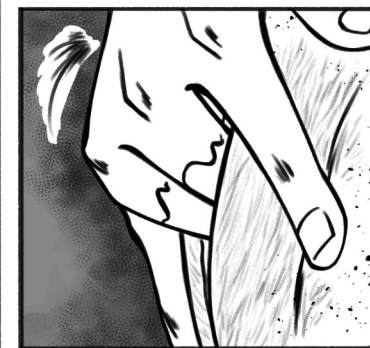
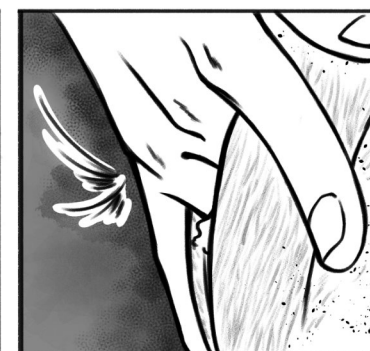
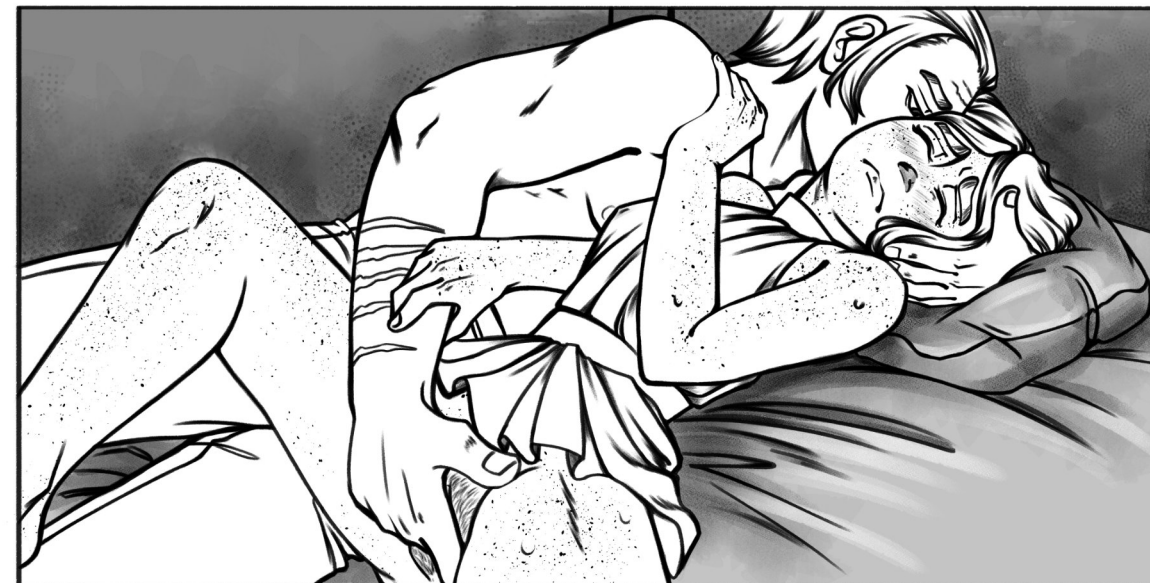
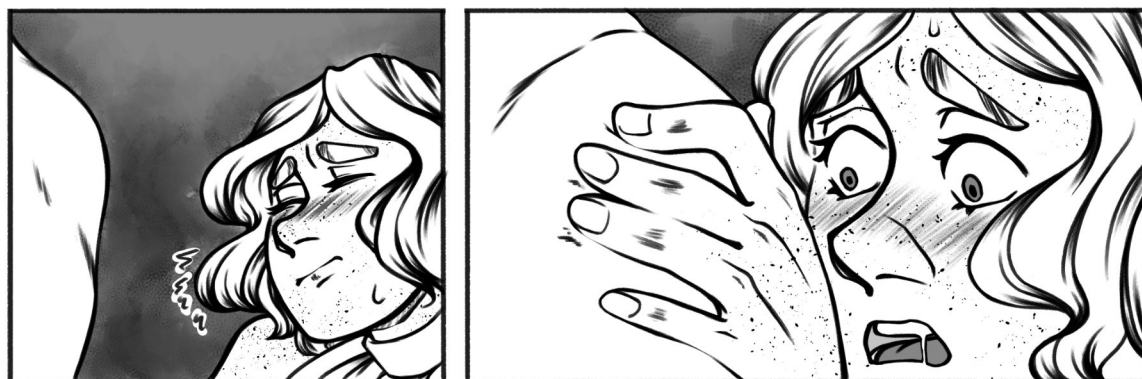
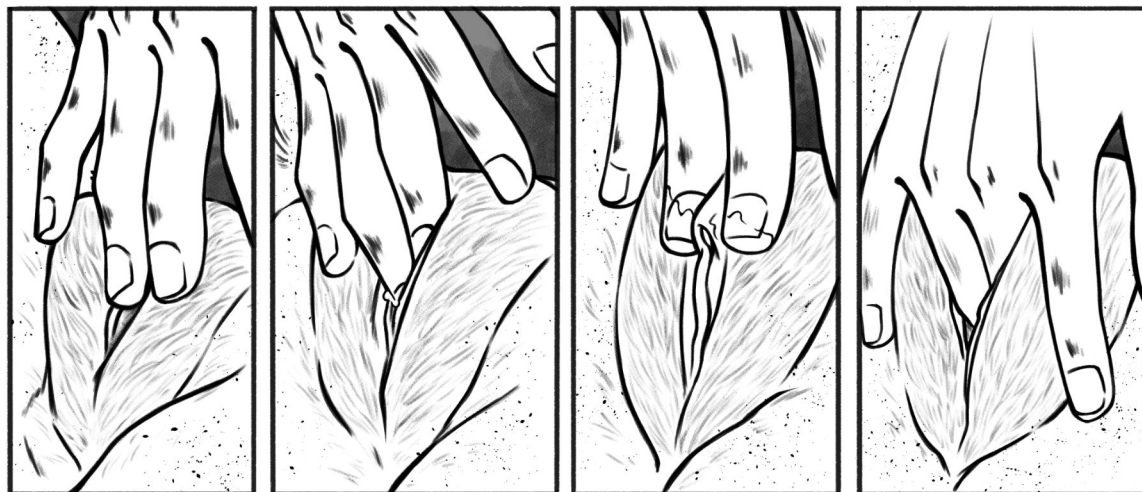
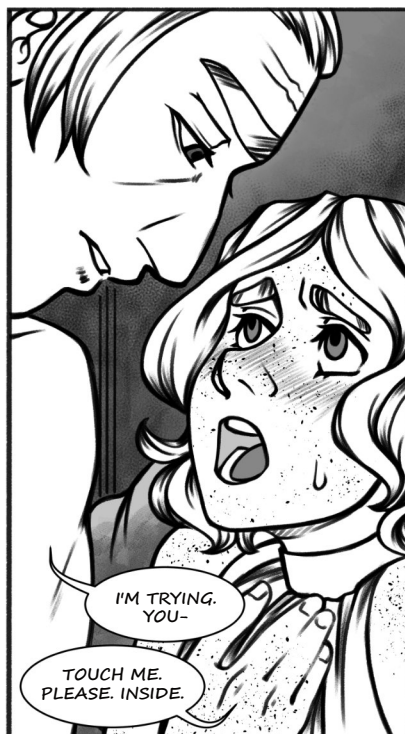
motion and just thinks, deeply. After that moment of thought, he gives Michael's thigh a squeeze, nodding. Then he offers him a cracker with some of the baked cranberry brie, Michael's favorite of all the fancy little foods Ian's young boyfriend likes to put out for parties.

"We can worry about other people tomorrow. I'm gratified you want to be more open. The fact that you aren't attending the college I work at makes it a lot easier, but..."

"Yeah."

"Tonight, it's just us. And I would love to take you home."







● REC

14:10M

MY.LING







FATHER, BROTHER, SON

Written by Seth Amphetamine
Illustrated by Angie

There was a reason he chose Uncle Michael, instead of Papa's other brothers. The most important was that Uncle Michael and Henry's father looked the most alike: tall, lithe men with sharp cheekbones and pronounced jowls at the corners of their lips. Papa's hair was fair; Uncle Michael's hair had gone to silver. That was almost the same thing.

The other reason—secondary, less important—was that Uncle Michael was gay. He had a liking for youthful men, adolescents even—people like Henry, blond boys with ruddy cheeks and tennis-player frames. Michael liked to think of himself as a corruptor. He'd given Henry his first cocktail at age eleven, taken him to his first exclusive club at age fourteen. He'd been the one to give Henry his first experience with poppers: his long fingers twisting in Henry's hair, tipping his head back, holding the bottle to his nose.

"Now breathe in," he murmured, his breath hot against Henry's ear.

Even now, even after years of fucking, he saw himself as a bad influence. He liked to strip Henry, like a father undressing his son for bed—a slow slithering of Henry's belt, pulled from the loops; Michael's knuckles pressing against Henry's stomach as he unbuttoned the tight jeans and pulled them down Henry's thighs. He buried his face between Henry's legs, inhaling the scent of his dirty underwear, pressing hot lips to the outline of Henry's cock. He kissed the curve of Henry's balls, mouthed at them, left slick wet spots on the fabric of the underwear.

"You're flaccid," he murmured, his grip tight on Henry's hips.

"I'm shy," said Henry drily. He tilted his hips into Michael's touch, crushing his cock against Michael's open lips. "Get me naked first, then I'll loosen up."

Michael chuckled. He slid his hands up and under Henry's shirt, feeling across the planes of his stomach, tracing the Adonis belt he fetishized and ogled every time he thought Henry was asleep. Henry kept his arms at his side, waiting for the order to lift them. Michael just pushed the shirt up, and when it was rolled above Henry's nipples, exposing them to the cool air, he

Father, Brother, Son

said, "Work with me, darling."

Henry raised his arms. He ducked his head, letting Michael maneuver the shirtsleeves over his arms. He was blind for a second, and in that moment Michael took advantage, pushed him back onto the bed. He hooked his fingers in the waistband of Henry's brief—tight, plain, childlike underwear—and freed his cock.

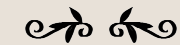
"There you are," said Michael, satisfied. He squeezed Henry's balls and watched his cock twitch, filling out a little. "What do you want, love?"

Henry stretched his arms over his head and gazed down his nose at his own body. He liked the sight of it almost more than he liked Michael—liked the way his ribs jutted out when he lay down, the smooth skin of his stomach and the faint fuzz of fair hair trailing down to his cock. His nipples hardened, pink buds rising on his chest, desperate to be touched, licked, bitten—

"Punish me," said Henry in a breath. "Hold me. Spank me. Clean me."

"The usual, then?" said Michael with a smile.

"Yes, Papa."



There was a reason Michael chose Henry. It had little to do with the fact that the boy was gay, and everything to do with who his father was. George had always been Michael's favorite brother; partially it was the thrill he got when he looked in the mirror and saw his own reflection—he could pull anyone he liked at the club, but none of them would look so much like him. And part of it was that George had always been so easy to influence, so eager to please.

They'd gone on family vacation every winter—a long journey to their grandfather's lodge upstate, deep in the snow. The bunk beds there were rough-hewn wood, the frames handmade by a man who'd survived two world wars. There weren't enough mattresses for each of the boys to sleep alone. So Michael, always selfless, had volunteered to share.

It was one of his favorite memories. George himself had come up with the idea to hang their extra blankets from the top bunk, creating curtains. George, also, was the one who had debilitating nightmares, who needed someone to hold him as he slept; and George, always the frailest boy, had suffered from chilblains every time they went skiing, and needed someone warmer to share their body heat.

At night, when their brothers were sleeping, Michael drew George into his arms. He listened to Andrew's snoring and Peter's slow, even breaths. He reached beneath the blankets and curled his fingers around George's, then pulled them up to his lips and kissed the red, raw spots left on his knuckles by the cold.

"I hate it here," George whispered, trembling.

"I know," said Michael. "I can make you feel better."

Outside, it was snowing. Inside, hidden by their curtains, Michael slid his hand into the flannel pajama pants George was wearing and squeezed his cock. It was small enough to fit comfortably in the palm of his hand. He wondered—had he ever been this small? Is this what he looked like at George's age? Thin and pale, blushing a rosy color at the cheeks and the tip of his cock?

Michael's palm was warm; George was a soft, pliant weight against his chest, leaning into every touch. His breath hitched, and Michael covered his mouth to quiet him, but at the same he stroked the length of George's cock, rubbed his palm over the cock-head, teased the slit open and dragged his thumbnail against the sensitive pink skin inside.

"Oh," said George against Michael's hand, his voice muffled. He clenched his eyes shut, drops of water appearing at the corners. They clung to his pale lashes, refusing to fall.

"Like that?" asked Michael in a whisper.

George squirmed against Michael's hips, trying to get away. Michael relented a little; he went back to stroking, slow and gentle, then squeezing tight. He trailed a finger over the tight pouch of George's balls, light enough to tickle, and with a gasp George relaxed and leaned into the touch again. His tongue darted against Michael's palm, warm and wet.

"Quiet, now," said Michael softly, and he ground the heel of his palm against the tip of George's cock again. He dipped a fingernail into the slit again, teasingly, scraping at George's urethra until the boy let out a barely-restrained groan. His breath came in hot pants against Michael's hand.

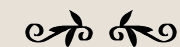
"I—" George started, his voice high and thin. "I have to pee."

Michael chuckled. "No, you don't," he said. George pitched sideways, trying to get away from him, clutching at his own cock like a little kid. With a brief tensing of the biceps, Michael hauled him back and pinned him against his chest. "Trust me," he said in George's ear.

He quickened his movements—faster, tighter, until George had melted against him, his breath rasping out of his throat.

Michael gave George his first orgasm that night. He wiped the tiny splash of come away with the blanket they shared, and fell asleep with that stained corner of the blanket pressed to his lips, inhaling George's scent. He didn't touch himself; he closed his eyes, his cock straining against the front of his pajama pants, aching hard, and relished in the restraint he'd shown, the selflessness of denying his own release.

Thirty years later, he gave George's son his first orgasm, too.



Henry liked a man who was vulnerable. His first crush had developed at age seven, when his mother died. His father, George, was broken by it. There were nights when Henry found him looking lost in the master bedroom, his eyes red-rimmed and puffy. The sight of it hooked Henry somewhere low in his pelvis, maybe his bladder, and he retreated to the bathroom to stand over the toilet holding his penis, wondering why the urine wouldn't flow.

When Mom died, George's health suffered. He developed migraines, and he needed to be tended; he complained, vociferously, at every meal that he was too nauseated to eat. Henry's favorite memories were those long months in middle school where he walked home, dropped his backpack by the door, and climbed the stairs to his father's darkened bedroom. He would wet a washcloth for his father's forehead, fluff his pillow and press his thumb against George's bottom lip, opening his mouth just wide enough for Henry to insert a thermometer in that wet, hot hole.

"George was always sickly as a boy," Michael told him once. "He needs someone to care for him."

Henry agreed. In high school, when Henry was enrolled in track and tennis—starting to grow, starting to fill out—he came home from practice once, his hair glistening with sweat, his shorts tight around his thighs, and found his father ill. George had a fever; possibly he'd brought it on himself. He liked being sick as much as Henry liked caring for him. In any case, the sheets were soaked, and there was a sour scent of bile clinging to George's lips, and his cheeks were flushed so prettily.

Henry stripped his father nude. He cleaned him with a sponge and a basin of soapy water; he checked his father's eyes to make sure they were glassy, blind—and then he squeezed the sponge out over George's cock, leaving a puddle of water between his thighs.

None of Henry's siblings cared for George like Henry did. And none of them got punished by George like Henry did, either. It was Henry who got bent over his dad's knee for a spanking; Henry whose lip got him in trouble; Henry who endured the slaps to the face and the long hours locked in a dark closet, his back still stinging from the cane. He relished every moment of it; he liked to see the flush of strain rise in George's face as he beat him, the raspy, breathless quality of his voice and the pathetic high note he reached whenever he was upset.

After every punishment came a spell of illness.

Henry loved to misbehave.



Michael was still fully dressed. A lock of silver hair hung over his forehead as he leaned down, pressing himself against Henry's naked body. His lips

parted over Henry's nipple, teeth closing down in a sharp bite.

"You've been bad, Henry," he said.

Henry tugged at Michael's hair, hard enough to sting. "Be specific," he ordered, his voice hitching.

Michael moved to the other nipple, teasing it with his tongue. "Let's see," he murmured, his breath hot against Henry's wet skin. "What would make George angry enough to punish you?" He pushed up on his forearms, studying Henry's body. Then he curled a lock of pubic hair around his forefinger and pulled. "Personal grooming," he said, amused. "Wait here."

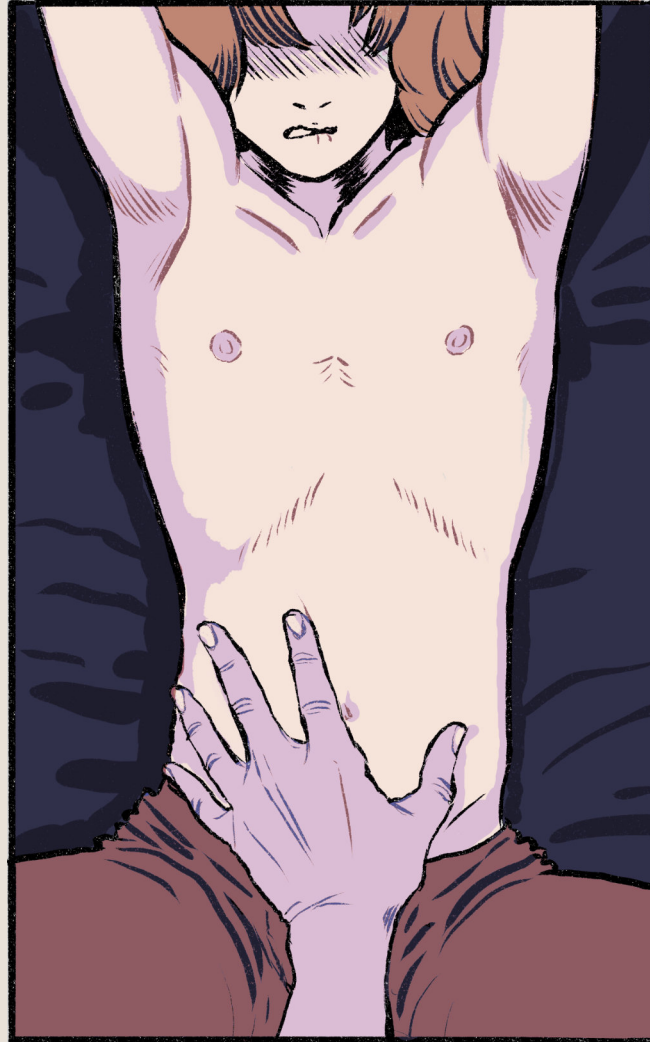
Henry stayed where he was, suddenly cold, as Michael left the bed. He could hear him rummaging in the bathroom, the fan humming a broken beat against the tile floor. When Michael returned, he held a pair of sewing scissors in one hand. He straddled Henry, locking the boy's knees together.

"What are you doing?" Henry asked, craning his neck to see.

Michael splayed a hand on Henry's chest and pushed him back down. "No son of mine will fuck strange men looking like an untrimmed caveman," he said in a passable impression of George's voice. He pushed Henry's erection down and Henry spread his legs as much as he could for it. He moved his thighs back together afterward, pinching his own cock between them.

"Good boy," said Michael quietly. He ran his fingers through Henry's pubic hair, smoothing it out. With one hand, he grasped a curl of hair and straightened it out so much that it pulled at Henry's skin, making him wince. Michael sliced through the hair with the scissors and left the curl on Henry's chest.

Henry lowered his eyelids. If he unfocused his eyes—if he allowed Michael



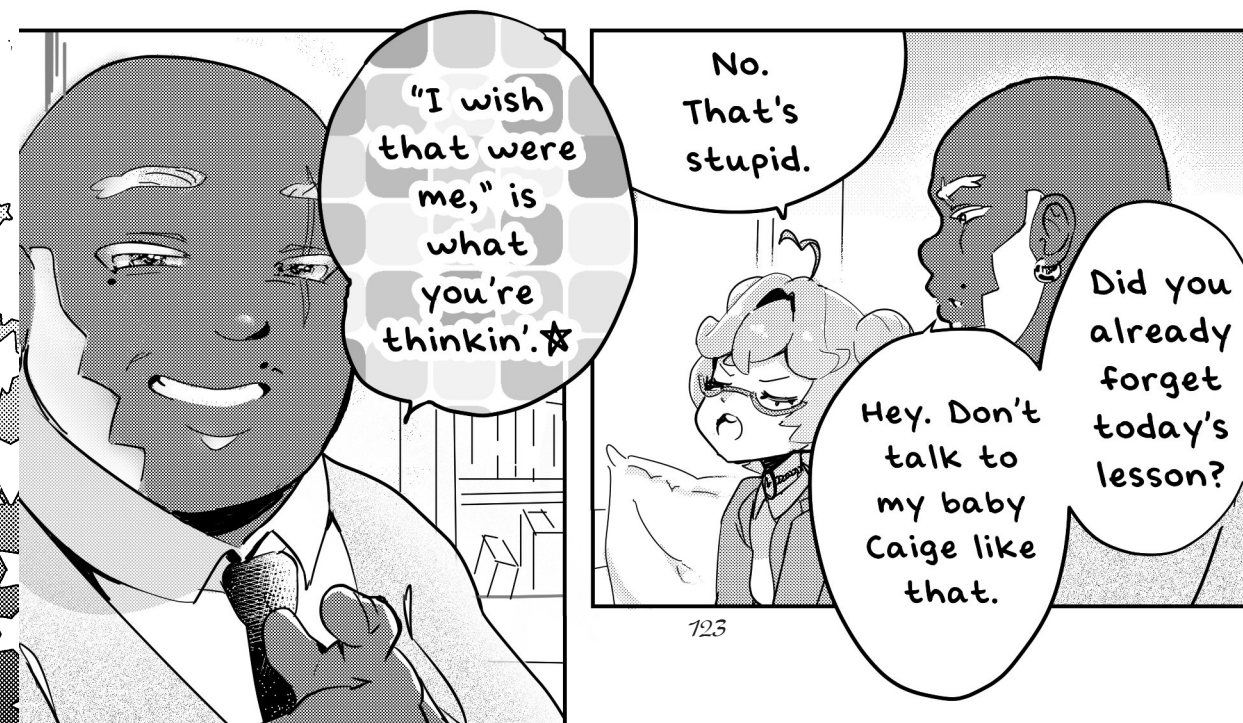
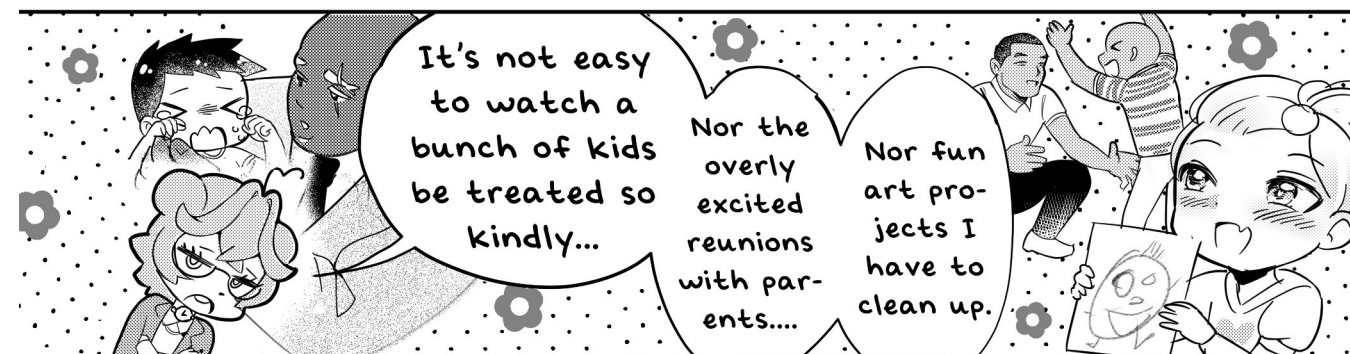
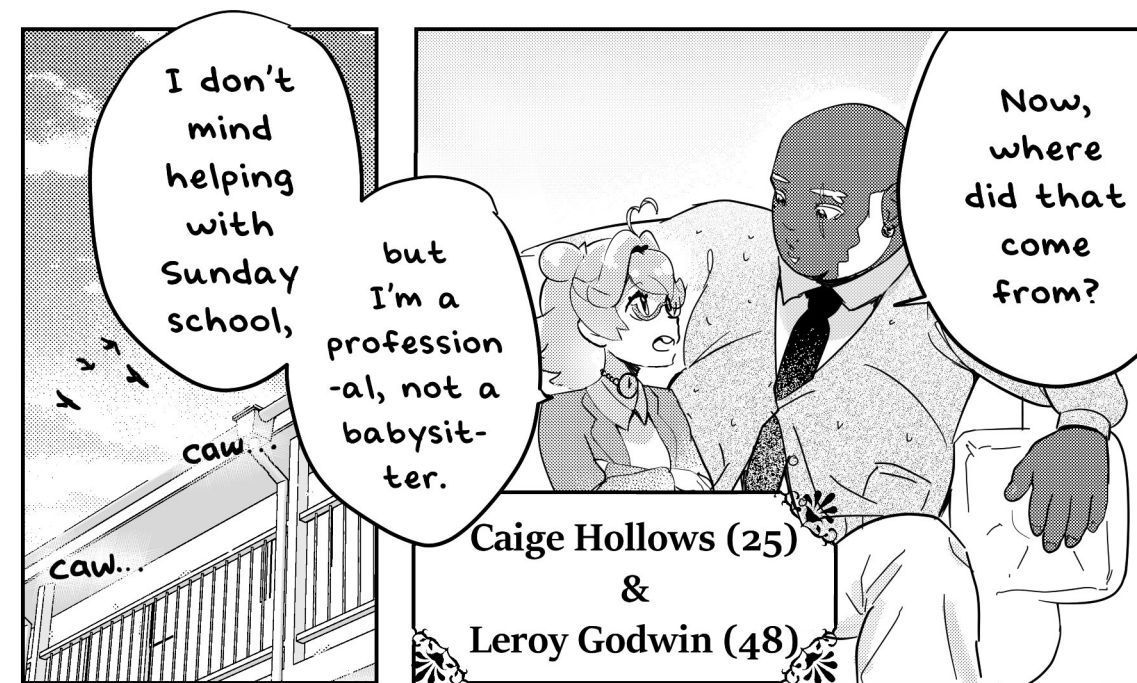
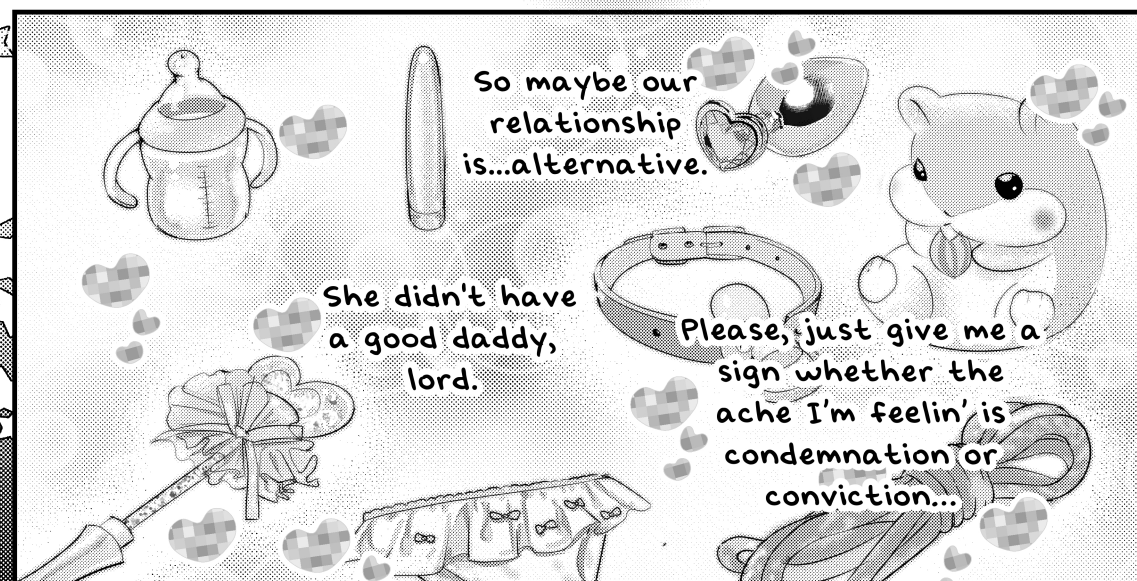
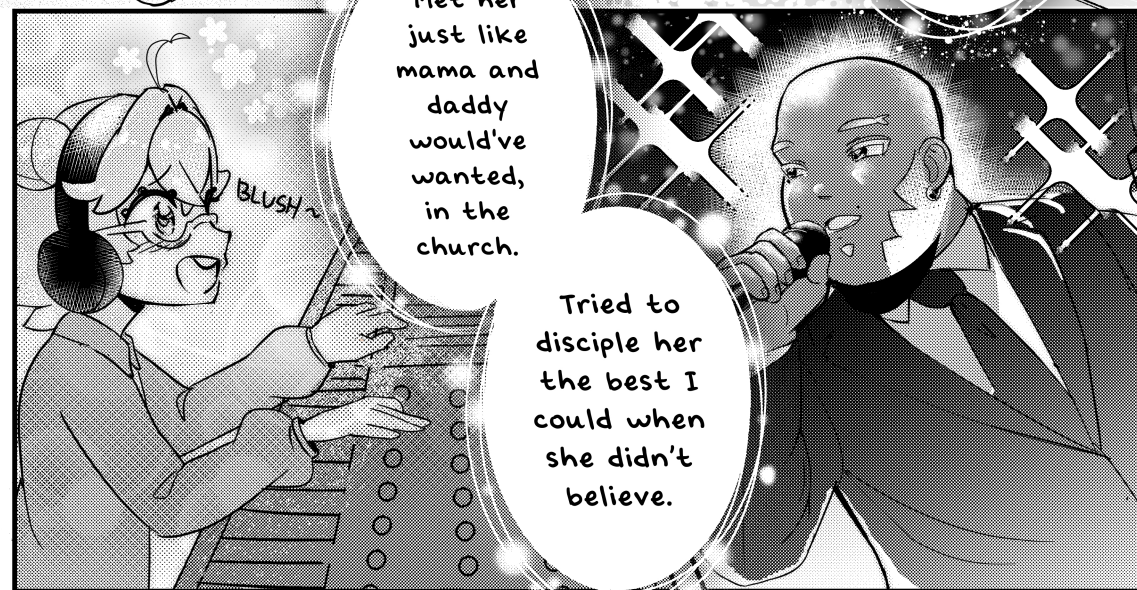
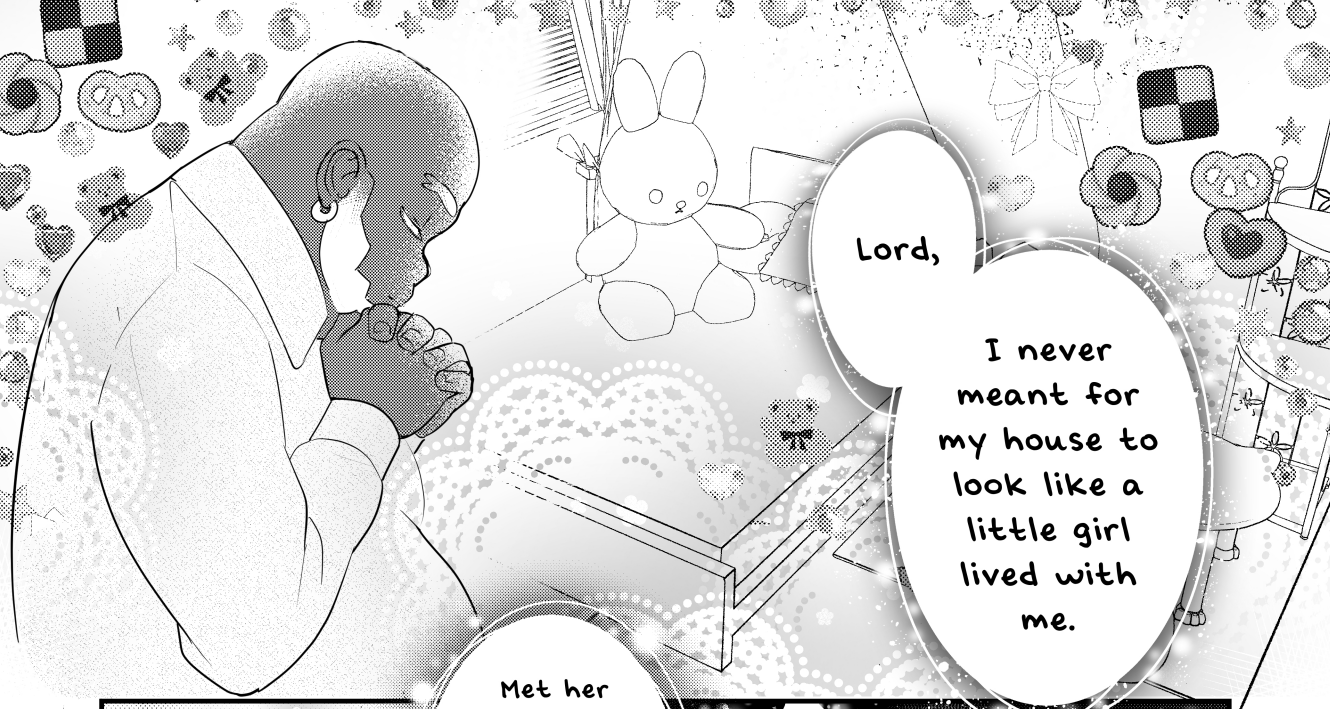
to become blurry – he could almost see his father pinning him down instead. It was George's long, narrow face; George's sharp eyes and thin, frowning lips. Their wrinkles followed the same pattern; their bodies moved in the same ways.

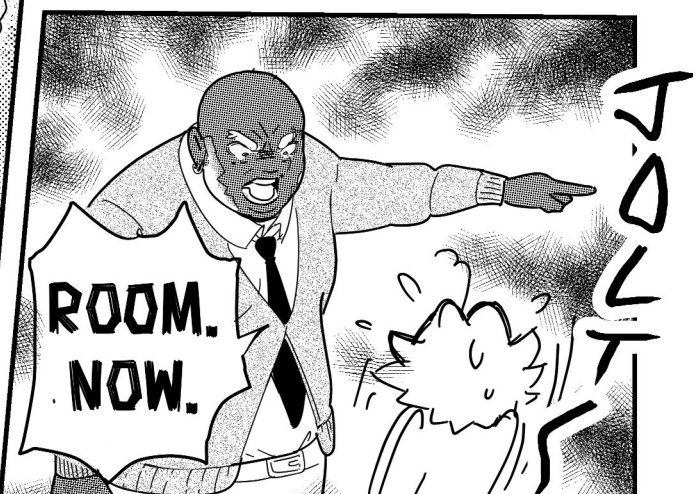
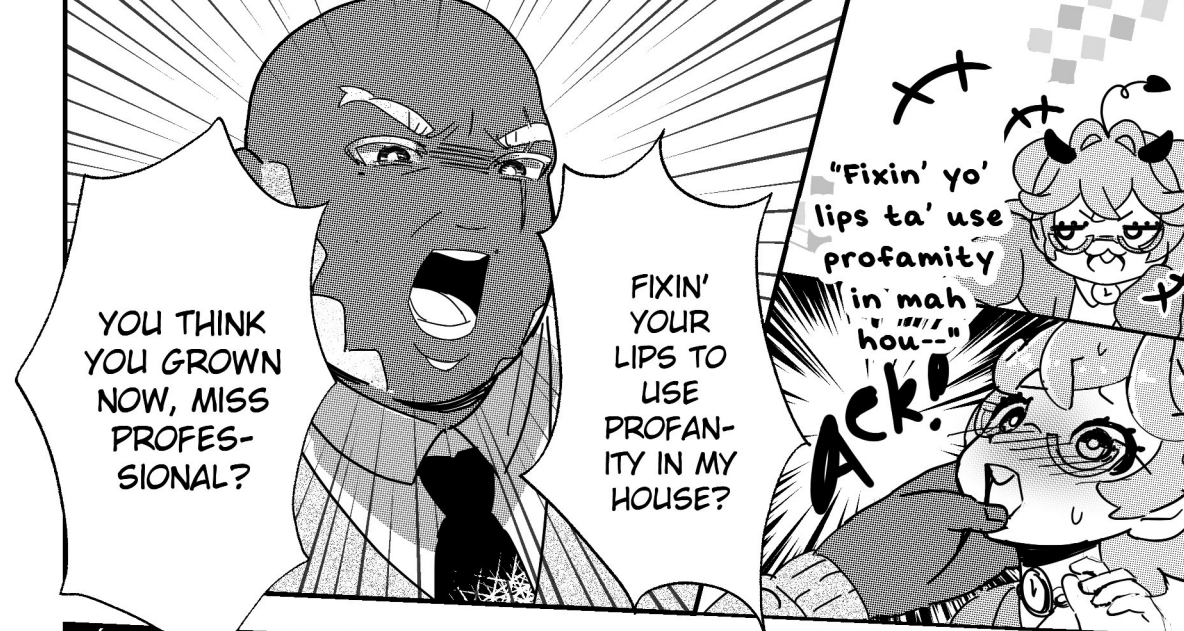
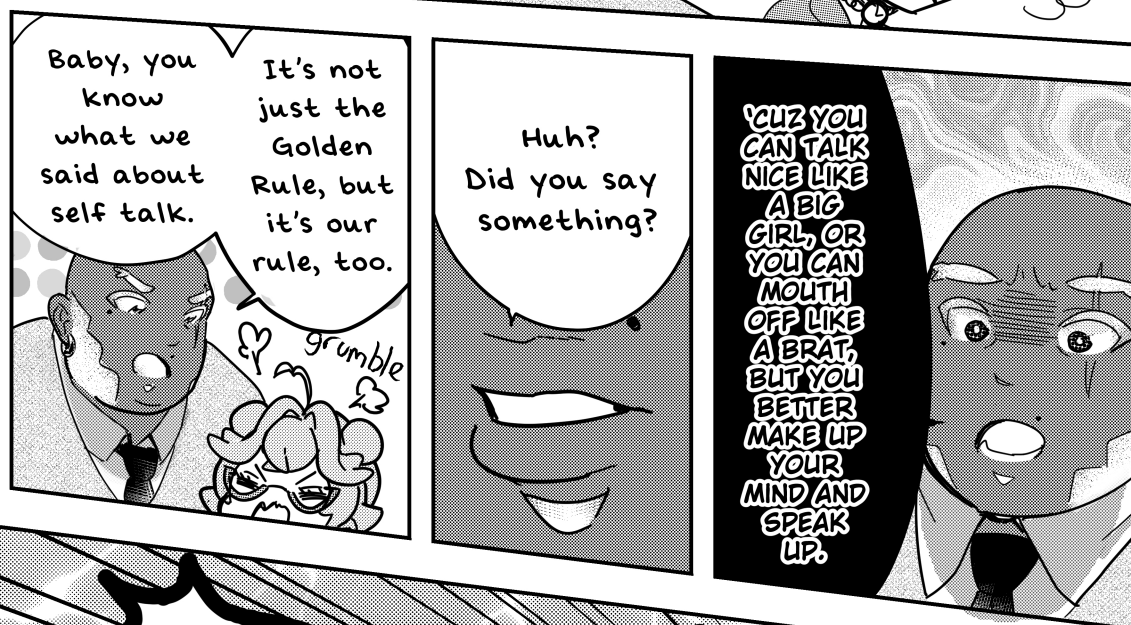
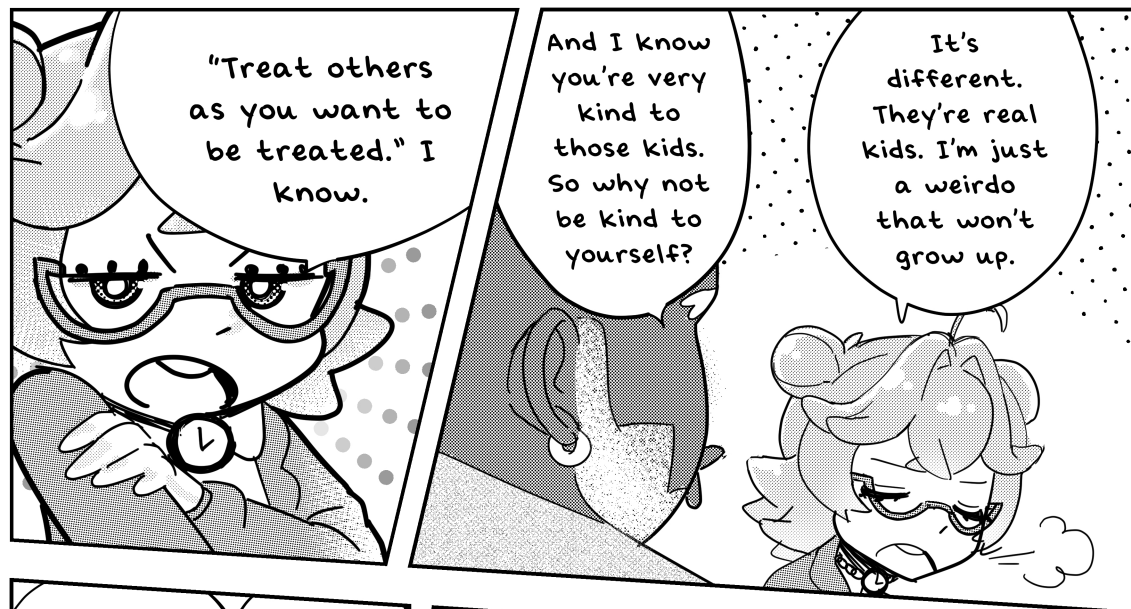
It was Papa holding him down. It was Papa cutting his hair with so much attention to detail. It was Papa's hand ghosting over Henry's cock, Papa's fingernails scraping at Henry's thighs. He closed his eyes just briefly, living inside that image, telling himself it was Papa who kissed him, deep and long, and then moved lower, caressing the new, smooth skin around Henry's cock, licking a hot stripe down the length of him—

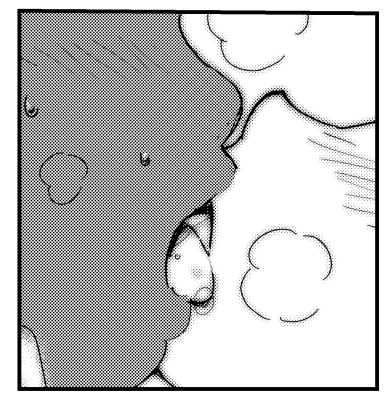
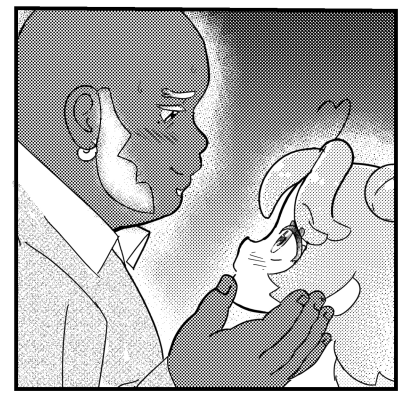
Papa's hands. Papa's wet, warm mouth.

"You look just like him," Michael whispered, reverent.

Henry smiled. "I was about to say the same."









BETWIXT THE BURIAL MOUNDS

*Written by Leigh
Illustrated by Ced*

—*A*lthough the days grow short and the weather becomes cold, never has there been a more beautiful time for new things to take root than autumn.

Bundled in a knee-length overcoat to lessen the sting of the seasonal chill in the air, Valentine Kingsley stands before the only headstone he has ever visited as an elderly gentleman in the cemetery sprawling one of the quieter corners of the city. Dried and colourful leaves skitter across the earth around his feet, contrasting with his downturned expression and dusky hair that is noticeably greying at the temples. In his arms, he holds a bouquet of warm orange and golden yellow flowers, fresh and recently picked up from the neighbourhood florist.

With his thin oval-shaped glasses perched upon his nose, Val reads the inscription on the grave laid before him. His late wife's name—*Llora Kingsley*—decorates the slanted grey surface, having been chiselled there ten years ago, with a space left for his own to join hers, *someday*. For now, he resides on this side of the earth, with only his memories to accompany him—and the few belongings of hers he chose to hold onto. He could not bring himself to part with everything; especially the well worn scarf that sits around his neck, still smelling of her perfume as it keeps him warm.

In his mind's eye, he recounts one autumn day he cannot quite place in time anymore, when they chased after said scarf hand-in-hand after a particularly strong gust of wind had swept it away. His crow's feet and jowls had been far less pronounced then, he recalls, as had her symptoms of deteriorating health. He remembers how his knees had not ached then too, allowing him to run and catch it just before the breeze had carried it over the pond of their favourite local park. Llora had thanked him graciously, once he returned it to where it belonged.

It is then that a voice—one not from his memories—speaks to him.

"Good day to you, sir," a youth dressed head-to-toe in black greets him, standing a polite arm's length away. On the lapel of their jacket they wear the pin of the emblem of one of the district's high schools. Their thick-soled

boots make the piles of leaves on the ground crunch with a pleasant noise.

"A fine day to visit the graveyard, is it not?"



"Quite, though you appear to be here for more than a simple visit," Val notes, taking in what is clearly their mourning attire.

The youth makes a gesture with their head towards the other side of the cemetery. "They're laying my father to rest today. Just waiting for everyone to show up now."

"My condolences to you and yours then. May he rest in peace."

To the gentleman's surprise, the youth shrugs. "Thanks, but that's not necessary. He was not a kind man. My life will be better now that he's no longer a part of it."

Valentine does not respond immediately, partially taken aback by the youth's candour. He observes how they keep their back turned away from the gathering crowd in the distance, their attention fixed upon the gravestone laid before them. Despite their adolescent features, Val could not deny how mature their demeanour was, nor the cleverness reflected in their brown eyes.

"Was she your wife?" The youth breaks the silence first. It startles Val—he had not noticed that he had been staring. "The flowers you've brought her are beautiful."

"She would haunt me if I did not," he chuckles. "She was quite the anthophile in life; always decorating the dining room table with a bouquet at the change of the seasons. I promised to keep up the tradition in her stead, though I will admit I do not know much about flowers myself."

"I think she'd approve. It's the thought that counts, after all." They smile thoughtfully. From afar, a bell rings out. "Well, I should be going. Thank

you for chatting with me, Mr. Kingsley.”

“How did you—” In that split second, he remembers his surname is written upon the headstone. “Just Val is fine. Take care...?”

“Aisling.”

“Take care, Aisling. May you find peace in the years to come.”

The youth nods before disappearing over the crest of the hill, leaving much like the colourful leaves that skip along the path.

Alone once more before his wife’s resting place, Val cannot help but notice how the autumn chill does not seep into his old bones as much as he is accustomed to given the season.



—When the earth takes its yearly rest come winter, the quiet it ushers in often feels isolating. But what better a time for two hearts to intertwine, and (re)kindle a warmth desperately longed for?

Apart from the mild dusting of wet snow that fell the night previous, the noticeable lack of warm colours, and the additional gravestones dotting the landscape, the cemetery where Aisling’s father is buried has not changed all that much since they last visited just over four years ago.

Bundled in a knee-length coat of thick red wool, the youth treks along the gravel path of the cemetery with their heavy platform boots, following the tracks of another who has recently passed through. They had come at their family’s behest to lay a wreath of pine since they were home visiting from university for the holidays and would be passing by the area en route to the city. On their way out the door, *someone* had quipped it was about time they paid their father a visit; wreath under arm, they had promptly slammed the backdoor shut before they could hear a scolding word more.

In earnest, the thought had rarely crossed Aisling’s mind. Between all the hours spent in their final year of high school securing their seat at their university of choice, moving half a country away, and attending post-secondary fulltime, that autumn day in the graveyard felt like an entire lifetime ago.

It may as well have been; after all, they were not entirely the same person they were four years ago, having arrived at a much more satisfying place of expression.

They hope, however, as they venture past the rows of tombstones on the other side of the cemetery,



that so much time has not gone by for that one soul they had met four years ago to have joined his beloved six feet below. To Aisling’s delight and relief, they spy Mr. Kingsley standing before the grave of his late wife as they reach the crest of the small hill, cradling a delicate bundle of evergreens in his arms. As they approach, they notice the additional streaks of grey weaving through his hair. The sight makes their heart skip a beat.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Kingsley.”

They love watching how much more prominent his smile lines are now as he turns to greet them.



“I thought I told you not to call me that.” He looks them up and down, from head to toe. It makes Aisling’s spine shiver beneath their heavy coat. “Been awhile since I saw you around here. I like the new hair.”

They suppose it is markedly different since the last time they saw him. While they had once worn their long burnt auburn hair in pinned French braids, the curly strands now hang just past their shoulders, and have been dyed a striking red.

“Thanks! University has a way of keeping one far from home. Have you been well?”

“As good as an old fool can be. My doctor tells me I need a double knee replacement—sooner than later,” Val grumbles the last part. “I’ve been enjoying leaving the house while I still can, before I’m stuck on bedrest for weeks on end.”

“Where do you like to go?”

Val quirks an eyebrow at them.

“You want to know where I spend my time?”

“Why not? Maybe I’ll want to go there too. It’s never too late to try something new.”

“Well,” he begins, “there is a quaint little cafe on the other side of the city I’ve grown rather fond of. It’s been there for decades, but the tea they serve is still just as good as when they first opened.”

“You must have liked visiting it with your wife, yes?”

His brow quirks once again. “What makes you say that?”

“There’s a softness to your eyes when you’re thinking about her. I noticed when you were telling me about the flowers last time.” Aisling gestures to the evergreens in his arms. “It smells like you just cut them from the woods

this morning.”

“Because I did.” Valentine laughs. Carefully, he bends to lay the bundle before the headstone. The knees of his pants grow damp with snow. “We bought the lot of land our house stands on because Llorá fell in love with the forest. But to be frank, it’s not somewhere one should recover alone from knee surgery, between how far it is from the hospital and the amount of stairs in the place.”

“Sounds like you need company then,” Aisling remarks.

“Maybe so,” Val sighs. “But I’m afraid I have no immediate family who’d be interested.”

Aisling watches as Val stares wistfully into the distance, beyond the space where his late wife’s gravemarker protrudes from the earth. They nearly tell him *I would* as he rises to stand again, but they are cut off, jumping forward to catch him as he loses his balance on a patch of ice. They steady him by holding his shoulders.

“Are you okay?” they ask, features awash with concern.

“Just fine, thanks to you. How can I thank you?”

Almost affectionately, the clouds from their warm breaths mix together in the cold winter air. A thought crosses Aisling’s mind.

“A cup of tea at that cafe you had mentioned. How does that sound?”

Val laughs under his breath. “You want to be seen around the city with an old fellow like me?”

“I think I’d like to be seen with you anywhere,” Aisling blurts out.

“Hmm, very well. Though don’t say I did not warn you.” He offers them his arm. “I don’t serve up much in the way of company.”

Aisling takes his arm gladly as he leads them out of the cemetery. In their heart, they know his statement could not be further from the truth.



—*Everything experiences spring. The fauna, eager to rise from their long slumbers and begin anew. The flora, rejuvenated for another year of growth in the rays of the sun. Even You and Me, and the love entwining our lifetimes together.*

For it being the fifth day of May, one could not wish for a lovelier spring day.

No matter where one turns, new life blossoms in every quiet corner of the cemetery which stands on the outskirts of the city. Swaying gently in the refreshing breeze, small leaves dot the branches of every tree, eager to soak up the sun. The twittering sounds of birdsong dance on said wind, the

winged-creatures having returned home after a long flight from warmer destinations. Lush green grass and early spring flowers flourish as far as one’s eyes can see, the latter a welcomed sight to the honeybees now buzzing about.

Given the fair weather, it is no surprise to see visitors strolling the grounds. Some visit departed loved ones, while others clean gravesites of mud and debris that accumulated over the winter.

Along the path which follows the gentle crest of the hill, a familiar pair of individuals walk in sync, the gravel crunching beneath their feet as they make their way to she who eagerly awaits their visit. A few weeks ago, they had stopped by to clear the seasonal pine branches that had begun to wither from Mrs. Kingsley’s grave, though they had cut their time short due to a sudden April downpour. Now, they return, the youth’s arm curled around the older gentleman’s just as it has been during their last few visits. They sport a worn leather coat which proves to be oversized for them; clearly plundered from Mr. Valentine’s closet, though he would never complain. He, who moves a touch slower today, holds a budding bouquet of spring flowers, intended for none other than his dearly departed.

The soft expression he wears is reminiscent of one from days gone by, when Father Time’s age-old magic had yet to grace his features, and love had just found a home in his heart.

On this day, Valentine was choosing to remember *that* love, just as he always did. Carefully, he sinks to one knee to lay the bouquet upon Llorá’s grave, whispering a few quiet words to the headstone in greeting. He takes Aisling’s awaiting hand once he is ready to rise again, all the while grumbling about the stiffness in his knees.

“Bothering you again?” Aisling asks. “Perhaps we should take it easy for the weekend.”

Val frowns, jowls even more prominent. His new love cannot help but giggle.

“And cancel our trip to the valley? I think not. It took weeks to get this reservation.”

“Then you’re letting me drive down in *your* car, and if you’re feeling better come Sunday we’ll *discuss* if it’s a good idea for you to drive back,” Aisling states, throwing a wink in his direction.

“You think you’ll be in any better shape than me come Sunday? We’ll just see about that.” Val smirks. The implication makes Aisling blush.

“Hush you.” They swat at him playfully. He chuckles under his breath, once more filling the comforting space at their side which was especially reserved for him alone.

Drawing in a long breath, Val looks longingly at the headstone before him.

Leigh

The chiselled text *Date of Death: May Fifth* looks back at him. For the first time in the sixteen years since he mournfully said goodbye to his beloved, having lost her to an illness they both knew would come for her eventually, his memories of that date no longer feel like yesterday.

While he has not known Aisling for nearly as long, he hopes he can spend at minimum that many years alongside them, if not more.

“You have that look in your eye again.” They nudge Val lightly, stirring him from his reverie. “Worried?”

He shakes his head. Instead, one of his hands comes to clasp around Aisling’s where it sits cradled in his elbow.

“Relieved, rather. Before she passed, she told me if love were to ever find me again, that it’d come to me in pieces, like the puzzles we used to love amusing ourselves with.”

A small smile blooms across Aisling’s face. They lean their head against his arm.

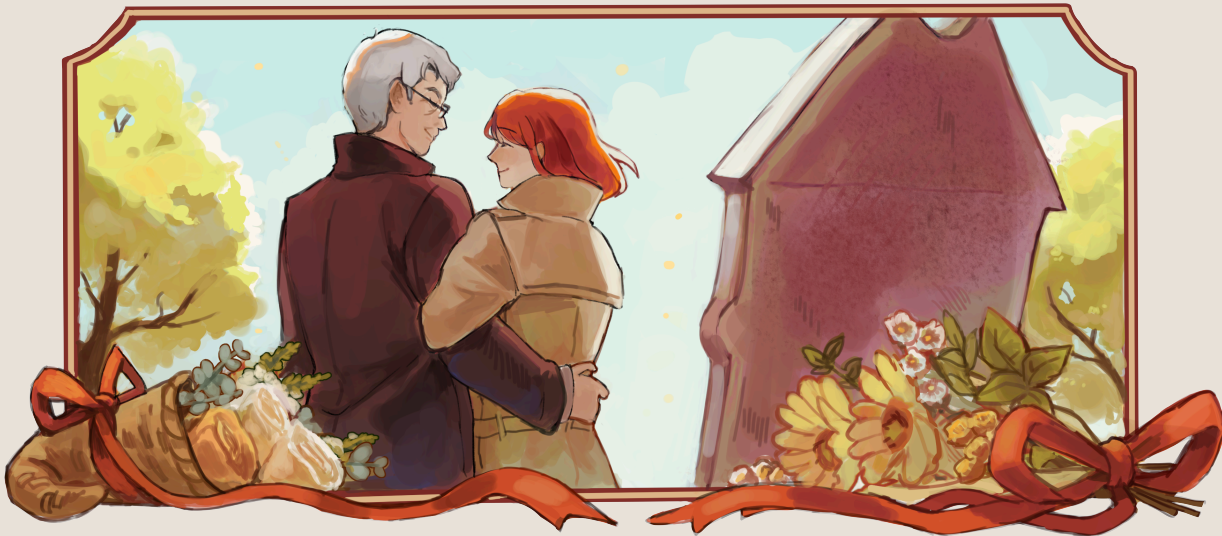
“And has it?”

“I’ve never been so sure,” Val confesses. On the air, a soft breeze carrying the gentle scent of spring flowers drifts past them.

“And I’d say she believes so too.”

—Like *Fine Wine* invites you to visit Leigh on AO3 to leave your kudos and comments!

<https://archiveofourown.org/works/80318281>





BABY BLUE

Written by Mori
Illustrated by LAB

Julian likes to believe that—after all of these years as a photographer—he is more than capable of remaining composed when it comes time to meet a new model for a private shoot.

Elio is the exception to every rule he's ever made for himself. From the moment he opened the model's portfolio, he knew he would be the best choice for his next project. Every detailed magazine spread and tasteful boudoir shot was elegant, refined to absolute perfection. Julian felt nothing short of delighted when the model seemed so eager to book a session with him.

Not once in the time leading up to today's shoot has he escaped the blooming anxiety over meeting this young man. He's found himself awake at odd hours, quietly seeking out what information he can about this well-travelled, multi-lingual beauty who he shares so many interests with. It's dizzying having someone he's never met occupy so many of his waking thoughts.

Despite having already left Elio the directions to his penthouse, Julian feels the need to double check that he sent the right address and access codes. Though he had debated on a secondary location, he opted for his own home just this once: the top floor of a high rise building, looking over the dazzling city; the ideal, intimate and quiet location for the shoot he has in mind.

Even though there's plenty of daylight to spare, Julian can't help the urge to continue watching the clock. In his nervousness, he's spent the better part of the day rearranging the living room and making sure every other corner of the place is spotless. He lights a few scented candles, triple checks the lighting of the apartment, and with nothing left to do, finds himself mindlessly pacing around the kitchen. Perhaps he missed a speck of dust on the countertop or neglected to ensure all of his dishes were clean.

Wholly engrossed in the act of seeking out a single flaw within his preparations, the chime of the doorbell startles him.

Julian hurries back to the front door, smoothing down his clothes before

welcoming his guest in.

Elio is far more breathtaking in person. His long, dark locks of hair brush just past his shoulders, shiny and soft. It frames his beautiful brown eyes that shimmer with gold when the sunlight strikes them. He wears a subtle touch of makeup, highlighting his cheekbones and accentuating the glow of his tan skin.

He's perfect.

"Elio," Julian says, extending a hand, "it's a pleasure to meet you."

"Oh, the pleasure is all mine, sir."

His heart skips a short beat as Elio shakes his hand. He pulls away with a chuckle, inviting him further into his home.

"Julian is fine."

Elio tucks a curl of hair behind his ear with a polite nod and a warm smile. He walks in, takes a look around, and hangs his bag on a hook near the front door.

Pushing down the bubbling anxiety, Julian invites him on a brief tour of the penthouse. He hardly pays attention to his own words, entirely focused on watching Elio. It's a miracle he can even remember how many rooms are in his own home.

Circling back to the main space, he nearly feels ready to start their work. As discussed, Elio brought along a few changes of clothes, but nonetheless, Julian provides him with an array of outfits to choose from, then shows him the way back to the restroom.

Julian leaves him to change and goes to brew them both some tea to enjoy before they begin. Before indecision has the chance to strike, he opts for his personal favourite. He pours two cups and adds a spoonful of honey to each. Returning to the main space, Julian sets the cups down on a low table, a little ways behind the camera. He turns just in time to see Elio emerge from the hallway.

Opting for the loose, sheer blouse Julian provided, the photographer notes Elio paired it with a silky, asymmetrical skirt that accentuates his waist; an article he must've brought along. Simple, refined jewellery circles his wrists, hanging down from his earlobes and across his chest. It's nearly impossible to look away, let alone remember the tea he set aside. Julian sucks a breath in through his teeth, then offers a smile, picks up the teacups, and extends one towards him.

"Would you care for a cup of tea before we start?"

"I would love one." Elio's fingers brush over his own as he accepts the cup. Julian watches as he takes a small sip, humming in delight.

"Chamomile? My favourite."

A flood of warmth rushes to Julian's face.

"Is that so? It's my favourite too."

"You have excellent taste, sir."

It's hard to suppress his rapid heart rate watching Elio's face light up. He wills it to slow as they finish their tea over idle chatter, and soon enough, Julian whisks the cups away, back to the kitchen.

Shaking off his nerves, Julian quadruple-checks that both his camera is set up and the room is arranged the way he prefers. He positioned the plush lounge chair close to the window and turned it at an angle, facing the camera. All of his houseplants, adorned in porcelain vases, are off to either end of the windows, and the tall, transparent curtains are pulled back on both sides to allow in the full light of the setting sun. It all matches his ideal vision for a golden hour shoot.

It's easy to admire the view of the city from beyond the glass, its tall buildings glinting with the setting sun. Even better, this stunning model is at the center of it all. The translucent fabric of Elio's clothing catches the rays of light pouring in through the window flawlessly.

"Are you ready?" Julian asks softly, afraid to ruin the tranquil ambience of the apartment. Elio, quiet and polite, gives nothing more than a smile and nod.

He drapes himself across the chair, one long leg crossed over the other. He props an elbow onto the chair's arm, his chin resting in his hand. The hem of the skirt pools onto the pristine floor, the fabric shimmering. He looks wistfully out of the window, a subtle smile pulling at his lips.

Julian holds his breath and takes the first shot. A brief moment of silence falls upon them as he checks the picture.

Elio is more radiant than the setting sun behind him.

There's only one thing Julian wants to fix. Quietly, he walks over to Elio and reaches a hand out towards him.

"May I?" He hesitates. Elio nods, and he reaches out, gently tucking a lock of his hair behind his ear. He couldn't possibly let his hair obstruct the view of his gorgeous face. Pulling his hand away, it's difficult to tell whether Elio is blushing or if the setting sun is bathing the room in shades of soft red.

Satisfied, he moves to take another shot, closer than before. He nods to himself upon confirming that it looks exactly the way he wants.

While getting into another pose, Elio asks, "What made you choose photography?"

“For the longest time, my favourite activity was people-watching,” Julian starts with a soft chuckle, “and every time I saw someone dressed in something that would make me stop and stare, I couldn’t suppress the desire to capture that look forever. So, twenty-odd years ago, I started to ask people for pictures. I’d give anyone I met a polaroid shot and my number. I moved on to a digital camera and a website a while later, and that bit of fun turned into private event shoots and magazines before I even realised what happened.”

Leaning back in the chair with his legs crossed, Elio gives him a warm smile. He grins back at him, taking the next photo.

“I’ll return the question: Why did you choose modelling?” Julian asks, tweaking a few camera settings.

Elio hums, settling into another comfortable position.

“I don’t like acting, but I like telling a story. I enjoy being the subject of a snapshot, of a single look into a narrative.” His smile widens as he adds, “and being the centre of attention is a bonus.”

Julian laughs, quickly capturing the unrestrained joy on his face. Elio notices, face turning red but smile growing even brighter.

“It’s given me a lot of opportunities to travel and meet so many wonderful people. I never thought I would make it this far.”

He readjusts himself, arranging his posture until he looks poised and proper. Julian snaps a picture.

As he examines the photo, determining if there’s anything he wants to change, Elio speaks up again.

“Are you ever the subject of your own photos, Julian?”

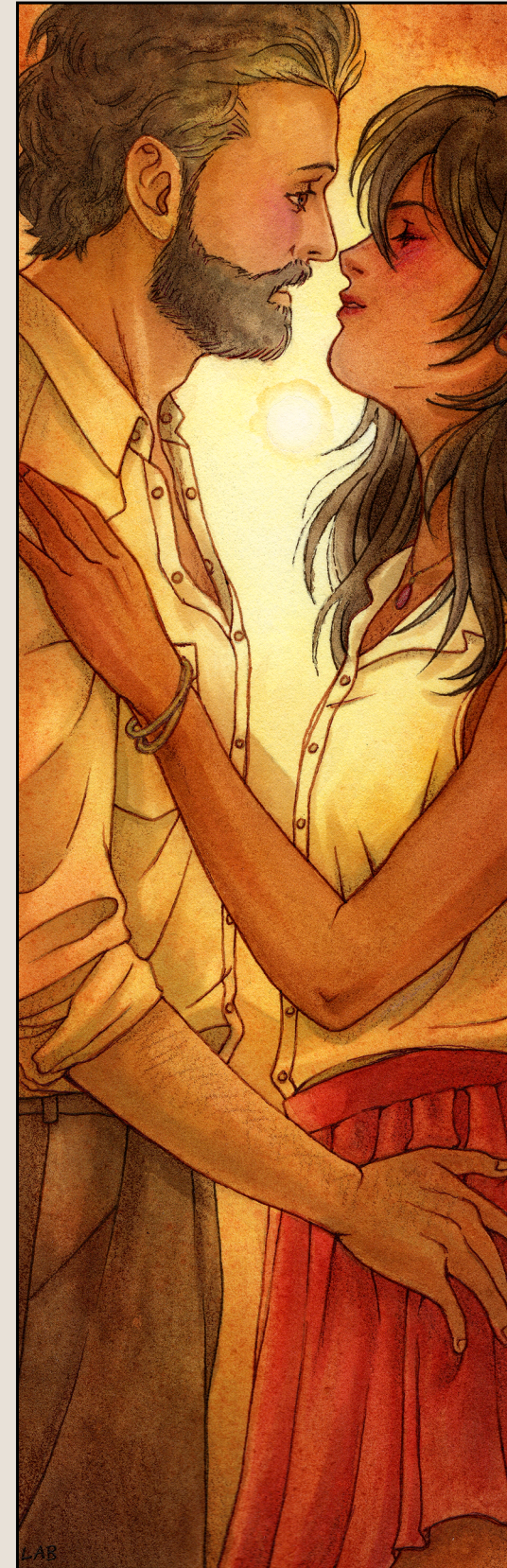
He lets out a surprised laugh, peering curiously at Elio.

“No, never. I belong on this side of the camera.”

“Maybe that should change,” Elio tells him, his smile growing wider.

For a swelling moment, Julian has no idea how to respond. He thinks Elio must be joking... until he raises an eyebrow and gives him a soft-spoken ‘well?’.

Even then, he feels a pulse of uncertainty. He, frankly, has no idea what to do from the other side of the lens. All the same, he refuses to spend too long standing around and turning the idea over in his head. He resolutely adjusts his camera, sets the timer, and makes his way over to Elio. The model looks up at him, quickly getting them into position in front of the windows. He rests both of Julian’s hands upon his hips, then moves one hand to his bicep, the other caressing his jaw. A soft thumb strokes over his stubble.



Elio leans in close, and time stands still. All Julian can focus on is his gentle breath fanning over his lips. He smells like cinnamon and cedar, warm and comforting. The room is silent, the dancing flicker of candles at his peripherals.

He hardly notices the soft click of the camera going off. It’s painfully difficult to remove himself from Elio, hands mourning the loss of warmth. He inches away, sickeningly slow, willing himself to walk a few feet away to check the photo. It’s a gorgeous shot, a beam of golden sunlight shining through the gap between their bodies. He finds it looks beautifully intimate, the gentle caresses of their hands on each other wonderfully natural.

Elio joins him at his side and leans in for a closer look.

“Almost perfect, but...” He gently tugs on Julian’s sleeve, inviting him back over to the window. “I think I have one more idea.”

Julian nods. He sets the camera up for the next shot, mindful of the quickly fading daylight. The moment the timer starts, he moves back to Elio’s side by the window.

Elio smiles up at him. His slender fingers reach up and curl around the collar of his shirt, tugging him in close. Julian expects him to stop there, but—

His eyes flutter shut, lips pressed to Elio’s. It’s tender, chaste, and so soft, he can hardly believe it. His hands come to rest on his waist, gently pulling him closer. He almost forgets about the watching lens of his camera entirely, melting into Elio’s lips, his touch.

The last few rays of the sun vanish behind the tall buildings as they separate from one another.

Julian blinks, dumbfounded.

“Are you—?”

“I’ve been flirting with you the entire time, *sir*,” Elio teases.

The air turns stagnant. He can hear his blood rushing past his eardrums, heart rattling inside the confines of his ribs.

“I have a kid your age,” Julian blurts out, face flushing with heat, “I thought you were being polite—”

“Julian,” Elio interrupts, deadpan. The look on his face is all Julian needs for the remainder of his doubt to wash away. Still, he continues with, “You’re really not aware of how handsome you are, are you? How kind and talented?”

Elio grasps his left hand, smoothing his thumb across Julian’s unadorned ring finger. The simple action makes his face grow several degrees hotter.

“You’ve been nothing but a gentleman to me. I was hoping you were on the same page from the beginning, seeing that you invited me to your home, but maybe I was mistaken.” Elio pauses, and a pinch of doubt bites into his voice, “Though, this isn’t a problem, is it?”

“No!” Julian responds, far too quickly and a tad too loud. He flushes even further, averting his gaze and clearing his throat. He attempts to gather himself and lowers his volume. “No, no, I promise I don’t have any... objections.”

“Good. I have a type, you know.” Elio bites his lip and stifles a laugh. “Men at least twice my age.”

“Please, stop making me feel so old.”

“But that’s the best part. You’ll humour me, won’t you? Besides...” He trails off, meeting Julian’s eyes as he walks back over to the camera. He takes a look at the screen, his smile stretching wider. “I think we look good together.”

His feet are still glued to the ground. He watches Elio carefully take the camera from its stand, carrying it over to him. He passes the device off, circling around, back out of his sight. Elio embraces him from behind, head nestled between his shoulder blades.

“Are you sure you’re okay with this?”

Julian’s heart pounds. He can’t stop staring at the photograph, the serene bliss on Elio’s face and silent, content surprise on his own. Both of them are bathed in the fleeting golden halo of the vanishing sun, clothing alight and skin glowing. He’s astounded by how perfect they look together. He turns around to face Elio properly.

“Yes, of course.”

Elio pulls him into another kiss, sweet and slow. He wraps his arms around Julian’s neck, their bodies pressing tighter together, heat blooming between them. A hand comes down to rest low on Elio’s waist, thumb rubbing small circles into his hipbone. He moans into the kiss and slides a thigh between Julian’s legs. Arousal bursts in his guts and ignites in his veins.

The model parts from him with a soft gasp. His pupils are blown, his cheeks flushed. He audibly swallows, eyes boring holes through Julian.

“I have a different kind of photoshoot in mind, if you’ll allow me to indulge.”

—Like Fine Wine invites you to visit Mori on AO3 to read the author's cut version of the story!

<https://archiveofourown.org/works/80418771>





CREDITS

Moderators

Head Mod



Herrington

✈ amherrington

"When the middle-aged man has a little girl friend... y'know!?"

Writing Mod



Leigh

✈ t lululeighsworld

✈ Lululeigh
"Seeing the old men fall in love—and in turn being loved."

Graphics Mod



Angie

✈ vigorouslyplump

"Grumpy begrudgingly adoring whimsy is #1 top tier."

Layout Mod



Hanna

✈ elefxxk

"(Holding up an old man) I just think they're neat."

"WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT OLDER MEN AGE GAP SHIPS?"

Guest Contributors



Hydein

✈ hydein

"An old man with the heart of a girl is the finest delicacy"



gomooink

✈ gomoo.ink

"Old men are never too old to love or be loved <3"



kradeelav

✈ kradeelav.com

"aged bishies are a blessing..."



May

✈ t themaybug
✈ t themaydecemberist

"Old men are hot and deserve affection (and sex)!!"



Seth

✈ sethamphetamine30
"silver hair and delicious taboos"



Shonojo

✈ Shonojo
"There's nothing like age-gap guilt, honestly."



whskyspurs

✈ Whskygonebad



CREDITS



Beans



Birb

✈ Flowerspots
"The differences in power and experiences is fun to explore!!"



BonespookMagni

✈ BonespookMagni
"Because it plays around with expectations"



Cat Marsh

"I just think old men are handsome!"



Ced

"My sentiments are summed up in Confusion by Stefan Zweig."



Daisycraft

✈ t daisycraft
"i <3 the range between life experience & sexual inexperience"



Dragonlaxatives

✈ Dragonlaxatives
"Juicy drama and character dynamics ^u^"



Shea B

✈ FairyFort
"I like the spice of a puppy teaching an old dog new tricks"



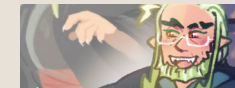
Fearlesswindy

✈ fearlesswindy
"Their overwhelming lust and urge to swim deep in the Nile!"



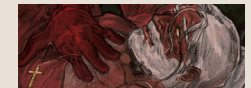
Finn Ravenhart

✈ tcozmic-ash
"old men..... handsome....."



gelatobear

✈ gelatobear
"I love older men taking care of their younger partner!"



Hanteeyo

"Nothing better than an old man and a younger, obsessed lover"



Romi

✈ heavereia
"There's warmth in looking up at an old man that adores you."



jiuchives

✈ t jiuchives
"Dynamics thrive in contrast, don't you think?"



Kb-mon

✈ kbmon
"Just some pervert who likes to see older men get bullied."



kingminty

✈ squigglesmouse
"no artifice of modernity. old men are so uncool it's cute."



Koomaqu

✈ koomaqu.carrrd.co



LAB

✈ elegantLAB

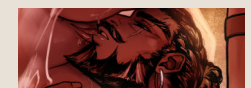
"Complex relationships of power imbalance and the moral gray"



Lancer Stiler

✈ t LancerStiler
✈ snunukiss

"They're hot and they would treat me right"



Lemon Basilisk

✈ lemonbasilisk

"Getting flustered in the face of their young lover's hunger"

CREDITS



MarshyoftheBlobs

✖ marshyoftheblobs

"I love the power dynamics inherent to the age gap"



Mikoto

✖ Hokaguteatime

✖ Phantasmoeu
"Potential for care and imbalance!"



Mori

✖ OmentumMori

✖ shoutoshandkink
"there's nothing tastier than a sweet, sweet power imbalance."



namio

✖ bamioayam

✖ baishuang.studio
"I'm a contrarian freak who loves power reversal!!"



nauma

✖ linktr.ee/naumin
"immaturity behind a mature face :) :) :)"



Nerves

✖ PORCHTART
"The sensuality of a body well lived-in against one still new"



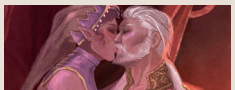
D.W. Nash

✖ peachinash
"I love a old man riddled with guilt"



ray

"erectile dysfunction"



Sixcilla

✖ sixcilla.art

"The clash of different values between the characters"



tinyfratboy

✖ tinyfratboy

"Love old men taken advantage of by younger partner <3"



Find *Like Fine Wine* online at
<https://likefinewine-zine.carrd.co/>

Content Warnings

This is a non-exhaustive list of the content warnings for this project. Any piece that isn't listed may contain potential triggers, but the author/artist has chosen to omit listing them for risk of spoiling their piece.

Page 12 – SFW loli (nonsexual underage), incest

Pages 13-17 – death mention

Page 18 – none

Pages 19-21 – death mention, parental transphobia

Pages 23-30 – Teacher x Student, mentions of verbal abuse from a parent

Pages 52-59 – emotional manipulation, ritual sex, misandry, references to mass murder

Pages 67-71 – incest, dubious consent

Pages 83-87 – weaponized infantilization, dubcon roleplay

Pages 89-105 – none

Page 114 – blood, pseudo incest

Page 115 – none

Pages 116-121 – incest

Pages 122-127 – DDLG (Daddy Dom Little Girl, pseudo underage)

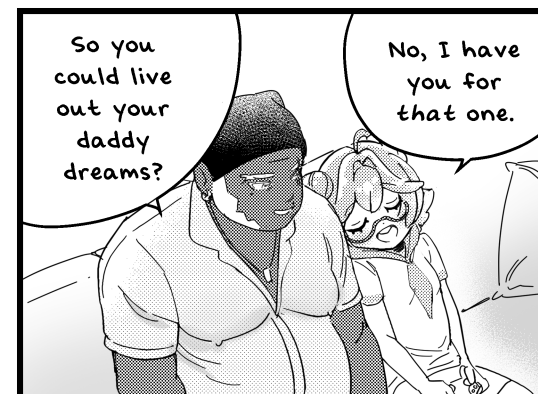
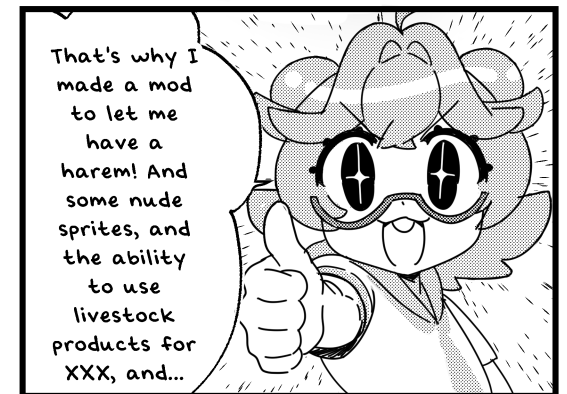
Pages 137-143 – none

Pages 144-145 – father/daughter incest



A cartoon illustration of a young boy with light brown hair and a sad expression, looking through a circular hole in a dark, textured wall. The boy has rosy cheeks and is wearing a light yellow shirt. The hole is framed by a thick, dark brown border.

A painting of a family of five in a park. A man in a black suit and a woman in a purple coat stand together, holding hands. A young boy in a blue shirt and a girl in a red dress are sitting on the grass. A large, fluffy yellow dog is standing next to them. The background features trees with autumn foliage in shades of orange, yellow, and red. The painting is displayed in a gallery setting with a dark wooden frame and a white wall.



THANK YOU FOR READING
OUR WRITING AND COMIC!

IT WAS MEGA FUN TO FINALLY DO
SOMETHING 'REAL' WITH ENKI! THE
ORIGINAL STORY WAS ACTUALLY A GIFT
FROM THEM TO ME, BUT WE REWORKED
IT INTO A PIECE WHERE ENKI'S WRITING
WOULD FLOW INTO A COMIC I DREW!

IT WAS REALLY COLLABORATIVE AND
FUN, AND WE BOTH HELPED REFINE
EACH OTHERS PIECES!



THERE ARE A LOT OF FLAVORS OF OTOCHA THAT POP UP IN AUS. THE OTTO IN
THIS STORY IS MUCH DIFFERENT THAN HIS CANON SELF. WE CALL HIM MAFIA
OTTO, CUZ THAT'S THE AU HE FIRST SHOWED UP IN. HE IS A BASTARD WITH NO
MORALS, WHO DOES WHATEVER HE WANTS... LIKE HAVE SEX WITH CHARUN
BASICALLY IMMEDIATELY.

THIS AU



CONFLICT RESOLVED IN 1 NIGHT

SORTA...



CONFLICT RESOLVED IN ... NIGHTS

CHARUN IS ALSO
A LOT NICER IN
THIS AU, BUT WE
DONT ACTUALLY
SEE IT IN THIS
SHORT STORY.

HIS FEELINGS
WERE HURTIN'

no
Remorse

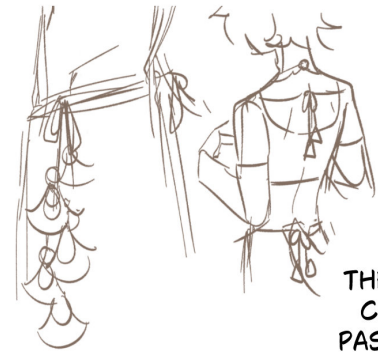


HE REGRETS CALLING HIS SERVANT DIRTY.

WIP STUFF...

THEIR FITS!! THERE'S A VERY STRONG INDIAN
INFLUENCE, BECAUSE CHARUN IS MIXED INDIAN.
(OTTO IS LATINO, FOR THOSE CURIOUS)

THIS IS A WORK OF PURE FANTASY THOUGH!
NO CATBOYS OR BIRDMEN WERE HARMED IN
THE MAKING OF THIS PRODUCTION ^^

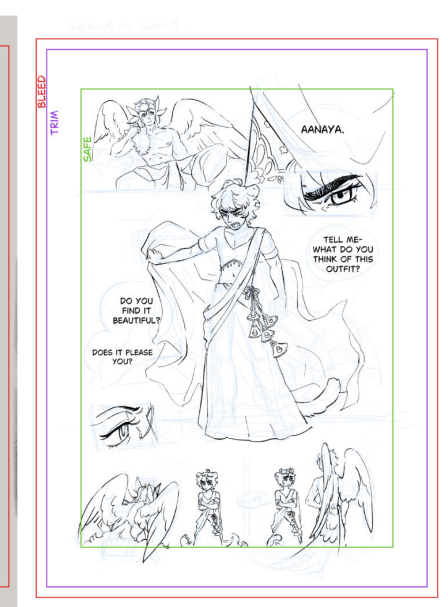
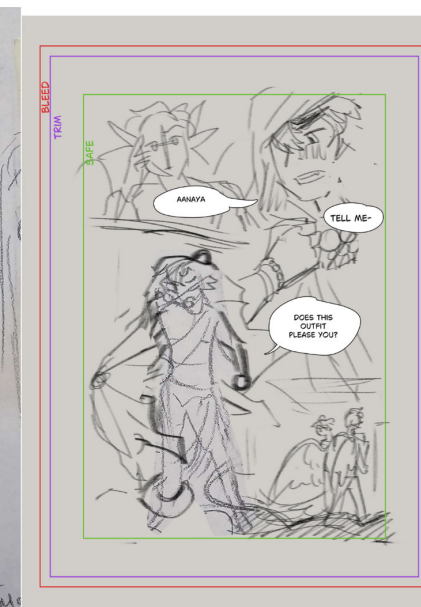
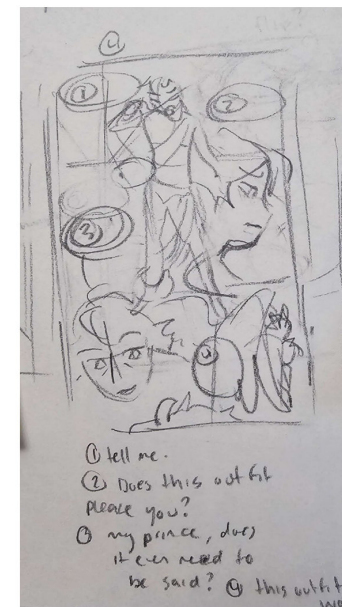


THE DESIGNS DID
CHANGE SOME
PAST THIS STAGE,
AND THERE WERE
QUITE A FEW
BEFORE THEM, BUT
THESE WERE THE
ONLY VERSIONS IN
COLOR.



HELL....

I MEAN-



★ THE PROCESS~! ★

“This is my first comic with entirely analog art that includes hand-cut screentones!”

- LAB p 34



“Hello! Thank you for picking up LFW and reading my work! Birb has already told you about the "canon" Otocha, so, I'll talk about the project we're working on! If you like Otto and Charun, you'll be able to see more of them in their upcoming visual novel...when Birb and I make it that is. LOL! It's a story about a grumpy young man, his mysterious magical medical condition, and the doctor set out to help him (by force). We're determined to get more created for them this year, so be on the lookout!

Oh! Actually I'll talk a little about the zine work too :). While I was writing it, I listened to the songs MADE by Battle Tapes and Honey Whiskey by Nothing But Thieves. I was also suffering through a severe case of tendinitis in my hands. I had to get surgery on both hands for it while in the process of working on the zine. So this is like, totally a labor of love, sweat, and tears. BAHABA.

Anyways, wasn't Birb's comic gorgeous? I actually wrote the general idea/ events of what happen and Birb created the comic through their own

interpretation! I'll throw in the writing that inspired page 4.

How fun is that? Anyways, I hope you liked it and I hope you'll follow us for more Otocha! :D

Have a doodle I made of them too!”

- Enki p 89

“Hello again, its me. :3 I also wrote the short one-shot about Sesusen and Jane!

Sesusen and Jane are actually AU versions of Renee and I's two other OCs, Seth Rostom and Hook. They're based on Captain Hook and Tic Toc Croc, if that wasnt already obvious LMAO.

They have their own story we'll tell in the future, but for now I'll talk about our teacher/student AUs. The songs I listened to were:

The Bamboo Princess & Minakata Kumagusu by WEDNESDAY CAMPANELLA.

In this story, Seth hides a secret, he's actually an incredibly old demon that is trapped to reside within Blue Basket. Burdened by a family curse, he lives his life in solitude and only recently has he been able to venture outside his domain.



And he becomes a teacher I guess. LOL look the flavor is tasty, dont deny it!!!!!!

Miss Jane is Renee's OC. Isn't she so cutieful? I wonder what her journey with her sensei will be. (i know but you'll have to find out eventually wink wink)

Renee's artwork is so charming and beautiful too, right? Theres actually a hidden detail in the artwork with Jane. Look closely at the shadow behind Sesusen, maybe you'll see a glimpse of his true form...

Fun fact: The other artwork Renee drew with the green haired lass, is actually another AU where Seth is the student. :3 They're interconnected mayhaps.

Heres a doodle I did. Bye!”

- Enki p 23



When left to her own devices, Jane is a bit of a picky eater. Luckily, Sesusen is a great chef (and he knows it), so she's in great hands!

Also here's a sketch idea of a younger Jane and Sesusen! I ended up going with them playing pirates, but I still think they are so sweet.



Thank you for reading Enki and I's collaboration! Stay tuned for more of these two, and more, from us!

The past few months have been hard for me but working together with my friends and sharing our stories together with the amazing zine crew has made life worth it!! Thank you for the opportunity to let us share our beloved age gap romances in a safe and encouraging space, and thank you (points) for reading and enjoying them!

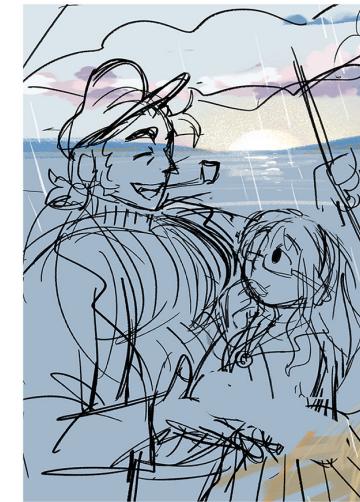
The characters I drew for my other two pieces!



Hukusen and Sethany, another teacher student AU of Jane and Sesusen! This time, their older man teacher/younger girl student roles are reversed. Life is short, make two age gap AUs for your OCs!!



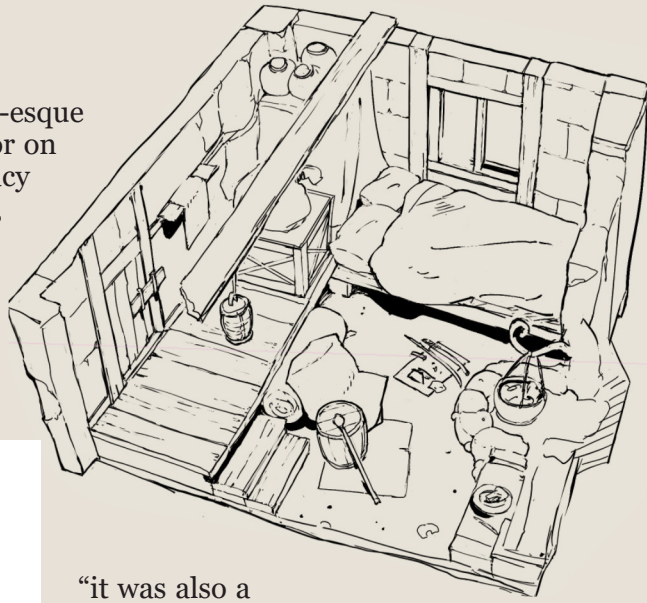
An old sea captain and a young girl he calls "Miss Mermaid." Their names are Rowan and Sophie! A gloomy, troubled girl who meets a jovial, sometimes teasing, older man who wants to make her smile.



I think I popped off on these ngl LMAO I tried different things with each one but overall wanted them each to feel fresh and romantic! The kind of image that makes you think, "Oh, those two are in love!"

Behind the Scenes

“sword cleaning as a bootblacking-esque ritual was such an obvious metaphor on at least three different levels; intimacy of ritual, the ritual itself on its face, the innuendo, the kink ritual metaphorically of service. truly, how erotic can this get contextually?



“it was also a quiet healing process and a bit of a quiet steady rebellion to it. it's about who's allowed love, in media. tenderness, intimacy. who's allowed to be shown and showing it. (and god forbid showing said intimacy with a little language of kink in the mix.)”

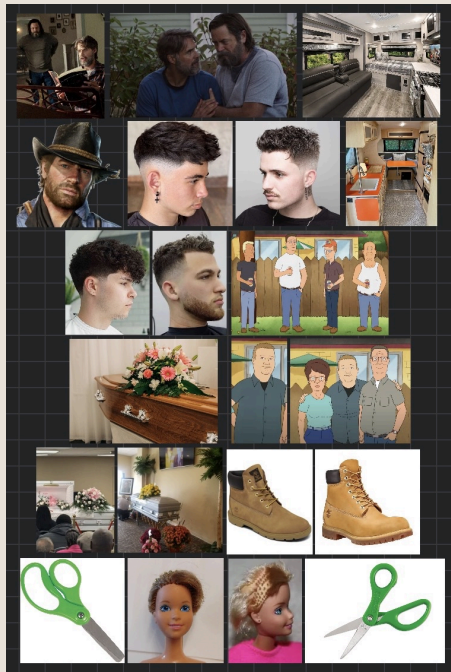
-kradeelav p 42



“When I started working on this project, I had a short comic in mind, but as the days went on and my mental health declined I couldn’t get myself to work on it. I dedicated myself instead to focusing my energy on the layout of the anthology. However, the stars aligned in a way that I forgot someone’s single page piece and it would have thrown off the entire book’s layout unless I padded it with an odd number of pages, so this comic came to exist!

“I’ve included the moodboard I made for it as I only had a day or so to draw the comic and had no idea what I wanted to do for the aesthetic. My sister suggested to ‘do what you know,’ which led me to south/midwest America and the types of men that don’t often get soft, romantic stories written about them. Anyways, enjoy my King of the Hill references HAHA”

- Hanna p 19



e Thank you for Reading e
♡



*"...I HAVE A TYPE, YOU KNOW.
[...] MEN AT LEAST TWICE MY AGE."*

(MORI, P. 142)

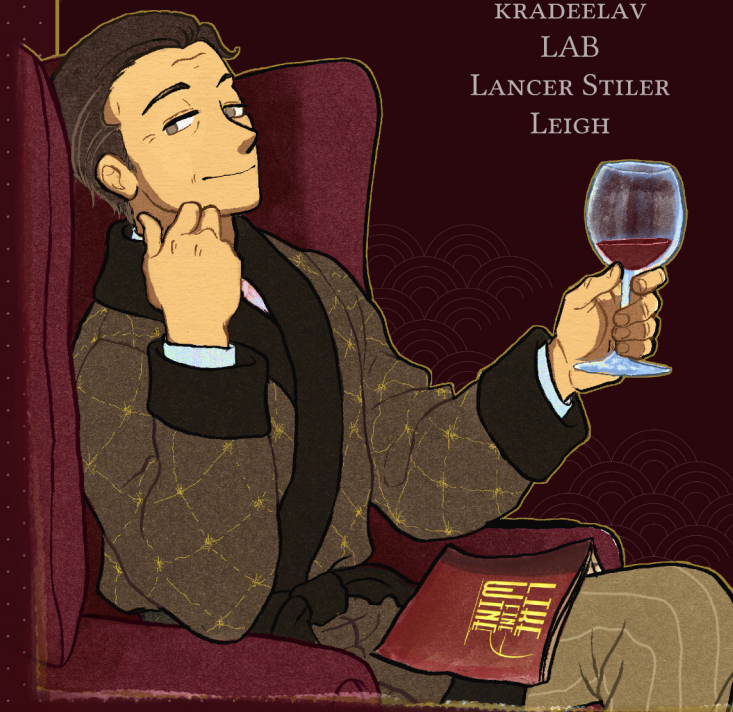
WELCOME TO LIKE FINE WINE, A COLLECTION OF ART, COMICS,
AND WRITING ALL FEATURING OLDER MEN AND THEIR YOUNGER
PARTNERS! SHOWCASING WORKS BY MORE THAN 40 CONTRIBUTORS,
THIS ZINE IS A LOVE LETTER TO EVERYTHING WE ENJOY
ABOUT THESE UNDERRATED PAIRINGS.

WITH WORKS BY:

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BEANS
BIRB
BONESPOOKMAGNI
CAT MARSH
CED
DAISYCRAFT
DRAGONLAXATIVES
FEARLESSWINDY
FINN RAVENHART

GELATOBEAR
GOMOOINK
HANNA
HANTEEYO
HERRINGTON
HYDEIN
JIUCHIVES
KB-MON
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KOOM
KRADEELAV
LAB
LANCER STILER
LEIGH

LEMON BASILISK
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ADULT CONTENT