

VOLUME I
AWAKENINGS

SANCTUARY OF
GUARDIANS

N.D. LELAND

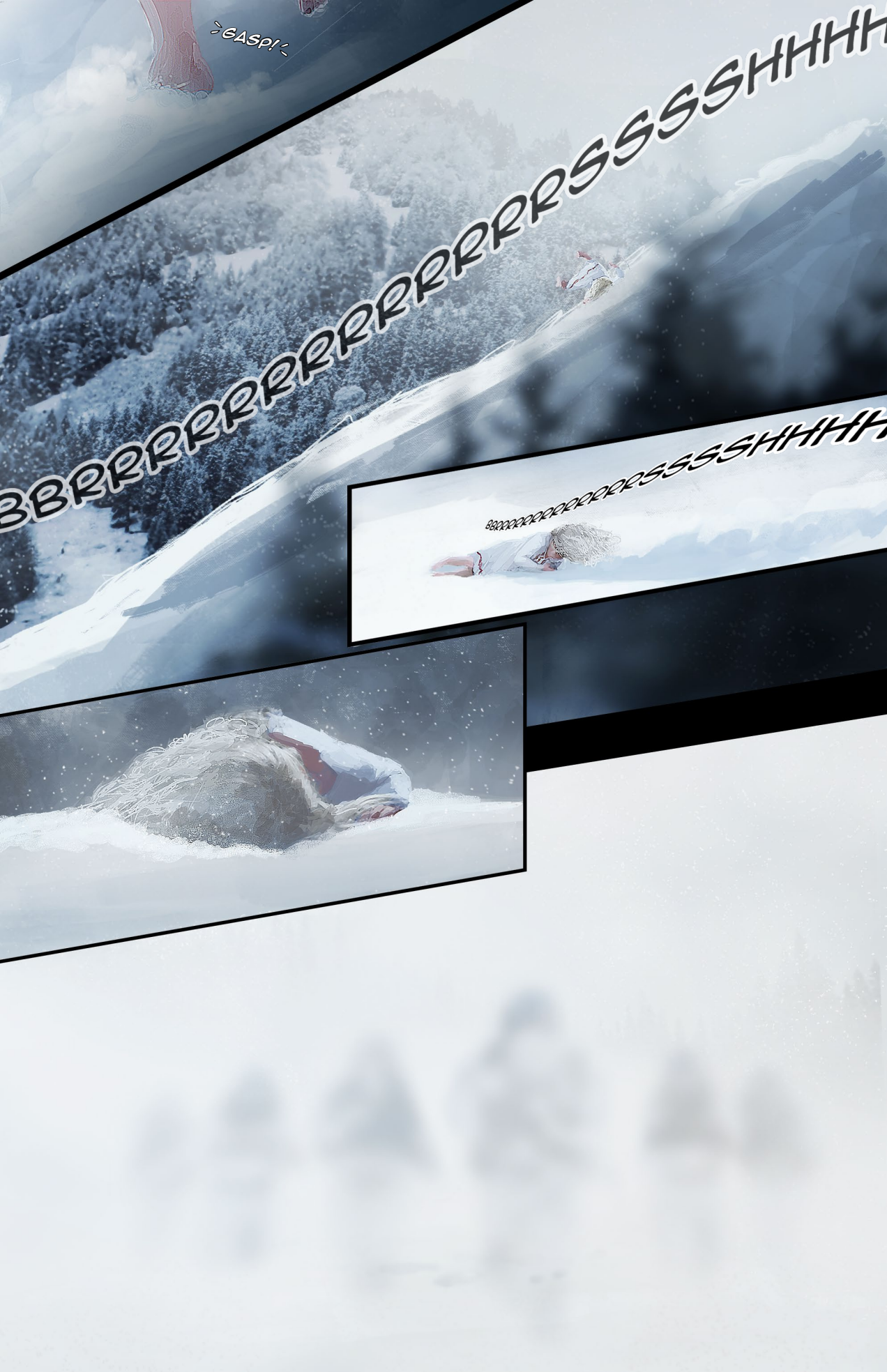
A C T I

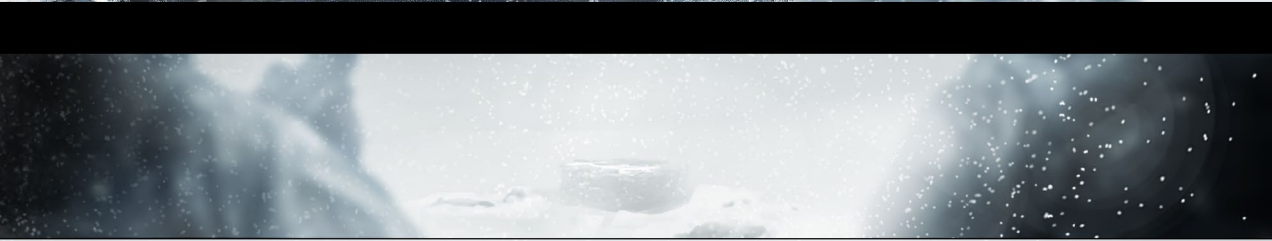
HIDDEN VALLEYS,
BALKAN REGIONS

23 YEARS AGO...



A multi-panel comic strip depicting a character's fall down a snowy mountain. The main panel shows the character at the top of a steep, snow-covered slope, looking down in shock with a speech bubble saying "GASP!". Large sound effects "BRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRSSSSSHHHHH" are written across the slope. An inset panel shows the character lying face down in the snow, with the sound effect "SSSSSHHHHH" written above them. The background features a dense forest of evergreen trees under a cloudy sky.

[illegible][illegible]



VWWWOOOOOSSSHHHH



SRW!
SRW!



SIR! THE
SOLDIERS
WERE
INDEED
KILLED

BUT THEY
WEREN'T
SHOT
--

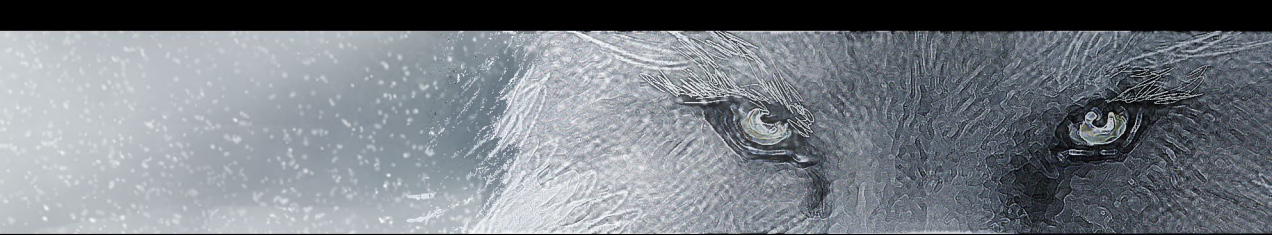
--
THEIR
THROATS
HAD BEEN
TOR-

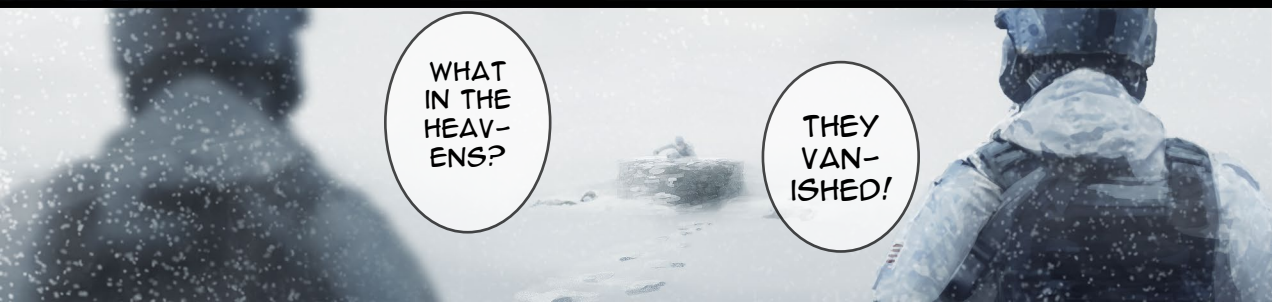
HOWWWWLL!!!

VOOOOOOSSHHHH

SRW!





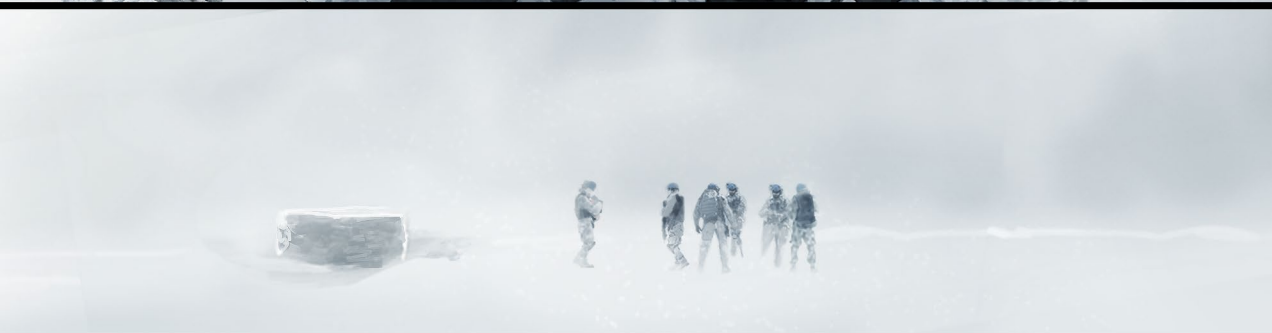


WHAT
IN THE
HEAV-
ENS?

THEY
VAN-
ISHED!



.....
W...WHY
DIDN'T
THEY
ATTACK
HIM?



.....
HOW'S
THE
KID?



A digital painting depicting a young boy with a bloody forehead being held by a soldier in camouflage. The boy has a distressed expression and is looking towards the viewer. The soldier's face is partially visible, wearing a helmet and camouflage. The scene is set against a light, hazy background.

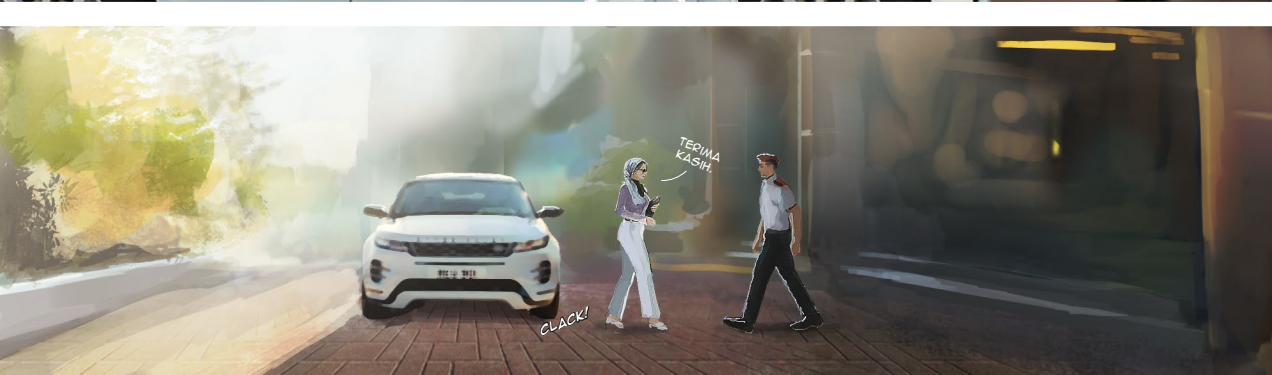
HE'S
SAFE!

HARLIN...

....
*LISTEN
TO THE
SKIES.*

BANGSAR,
KUALA LUMPUR,
MALAYSIA

YEAR 2018





CLACK!
CLACK!
CLACK!

NOW THAT'S
HOW YOU
KILL AN EN-
TRANCE!

HMP.

GLACK!
GLACK!

GLACK!
GLACK!



WELL
YOU'RE
EITHER
BUTTERING
ME UP
--

--
OR YOU
JUST
LANDED
US INTO
SOME-
THING BIG!

OUT
WITH
IT, Z!

HEY,
HEY**,
NOT TOO
SHABBY
FOR MY
MENTEE!

THEY'RE
NOT WRONG
ABOUT
BRAINS
MEETING
BEAUTY,
EHP?

I GOT
JULIUS A
FEW TRICKS
UP MY
SLEEVES TO
CRACK UP A
MIND-BLOW-
ING STORY.

**IMITATING THE STYLE OF
MOROCCAN CHEERS



IT'S ALL
SURVIV-
AL ONCE
YOU GET
THROUGH
THAT DOOR,
MARINA.

I HOPE
YOU'RE
READY TO
GET YOUR
HANDS
DIRTY.



THESE
GOD-FEAR-
ING HANDS?
NEVER!

BUT
DON'T
SLOW ME
DOWN,
WILL
YOU?

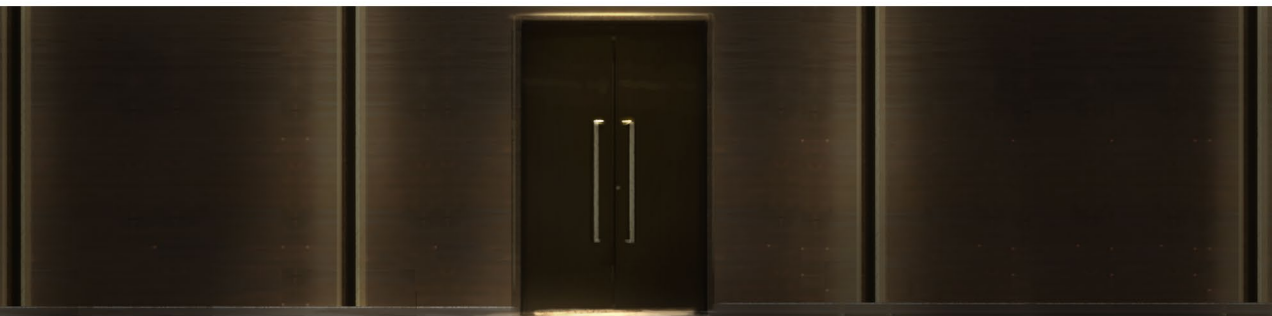


CAN'T MAKE
PROMISES,
SMARTY-
PANTS!



YOU'RE
ABOUT
TO!

PFFF!





IT'S BEEN
23 YEARS.
WHAT'S
TRIGGERED
THIS IN-
TEREST
NOW?

A MIX
OF
THINGS.



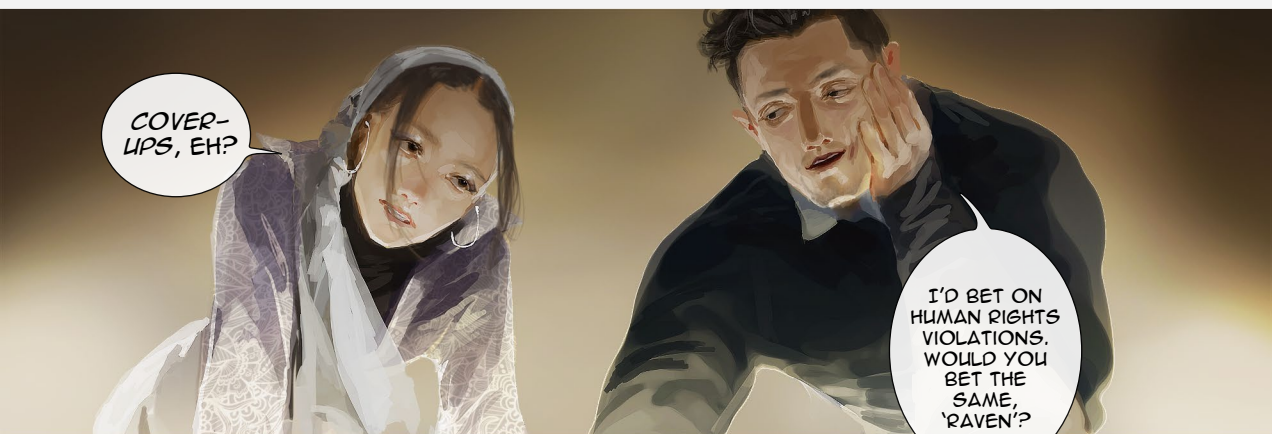
APPARENTLY,
ZAYD GOT
WIND OF
SOME OLD
RESURFACING
STORIES--

A FEW
DISCREPANCIES
IN THE RE-
CORDS, AND-
VERY IMPOR-
TANTLY
--



A COUPLE
OF WHIS-
PERS FROM
SOURCES
WHO WERE
THERE.

THEY'RE
HINTING THAT
THE STORY
WE'VE BEEN
TOLD ISN'T
THE FULL
PICTURE.



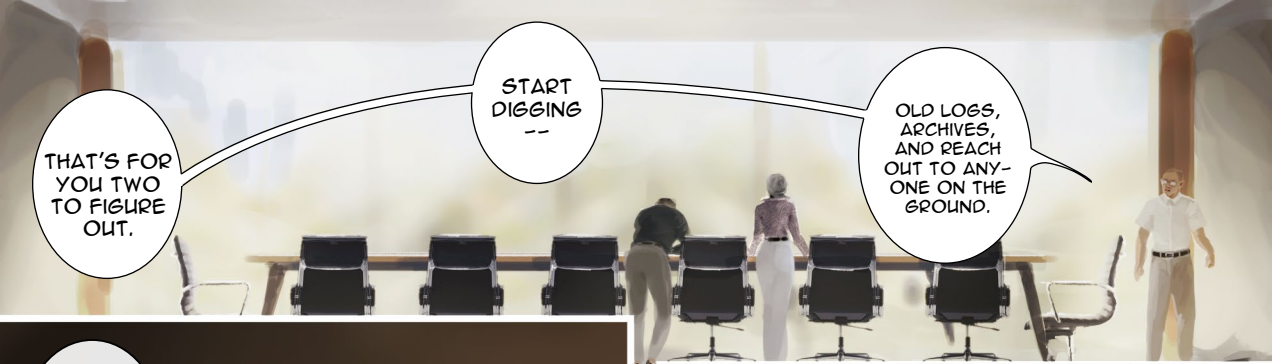
COVER-
UPS, EH?

I'D BET ON
HUMAN RIGHTS
VIOLATIONS.
WOULD YOU
BET THE
SAME,
'RAVEN'?



MOST
LIKE-
LY!

OR HEY!
MAYBE IT'S
JUST ALL
A RUSE.



THAT'S FOR
YOU TWO
TO FIGURE
OUT.

START
DIGGING
--

OLD LOGS,
ARCHIVES,
AND REACH
OUT TO ANY-
ONE ON THE
GROUND.



AND
ZAYD!

MIGHT WAN-
NA START
LEANING
ON YOUR
EUROPEAN
CONTACTS.



I GOT A
FEELING
THIS COULD
HAVE INTER-
NATIONAL
LESS.



UNDER-
STOOD.
WE'LL START
WITH THE OF-
FICIAL CHAN-
NELS AND
GO FROM
THERE.

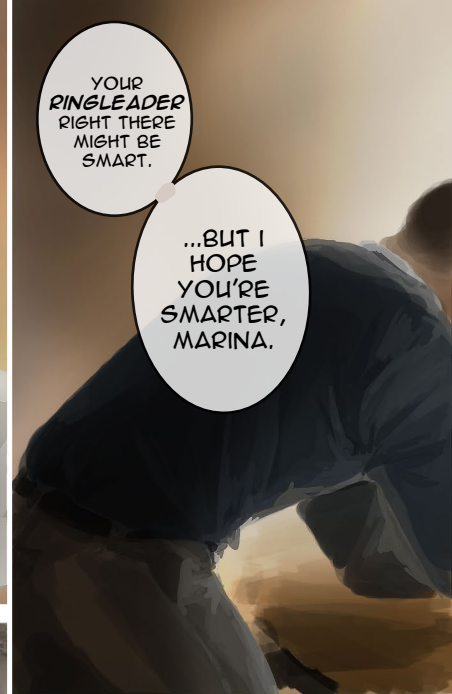
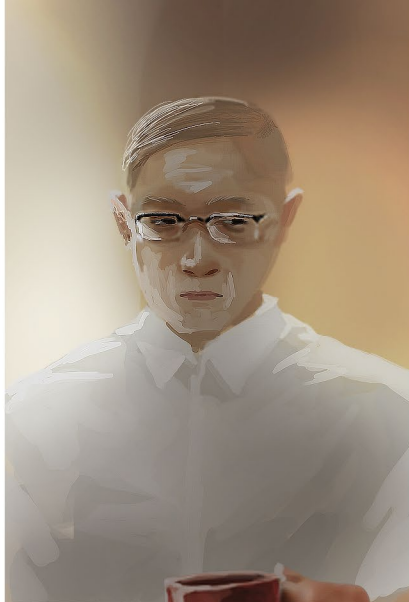
AND IF
THERE'S
MORE,
WE'LL
FIND IT.



DON'T
FORGET!
--



.....
THIS KIND
OF STORY
CAN STIR
UP A LOT
OF DUST.



YOUR
RINGLEADER
RIGHT THERE
MIGHT BE
SMART.

...BUT I
HOPE
YOU'RE
SMARTER,
MARINA.



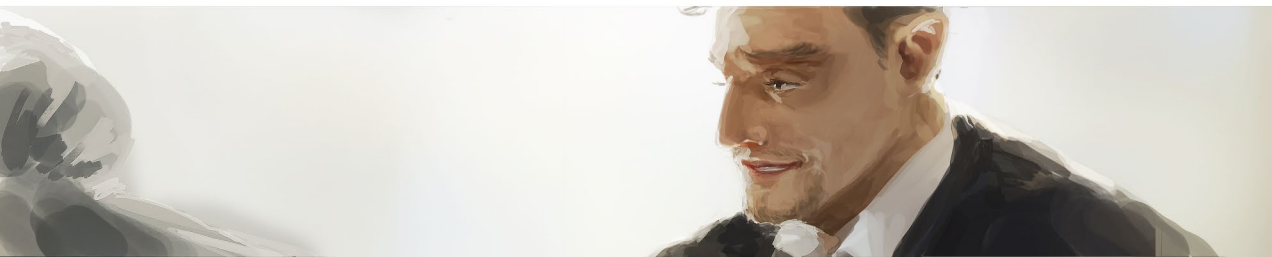
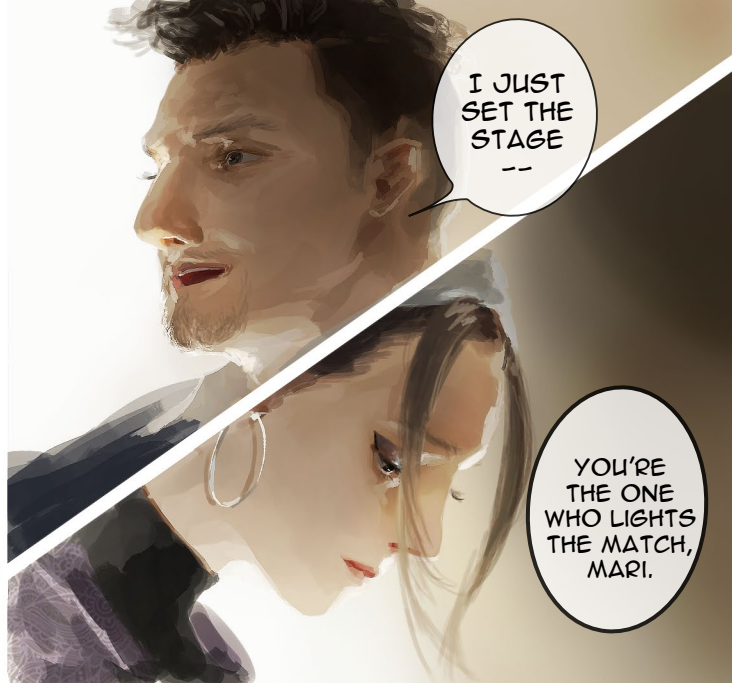
WELCOME
TO THE
DEEP END,
RAVEN.



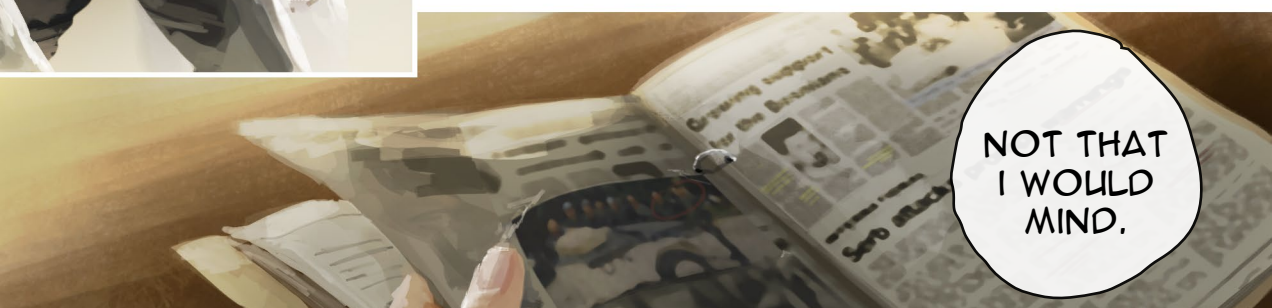
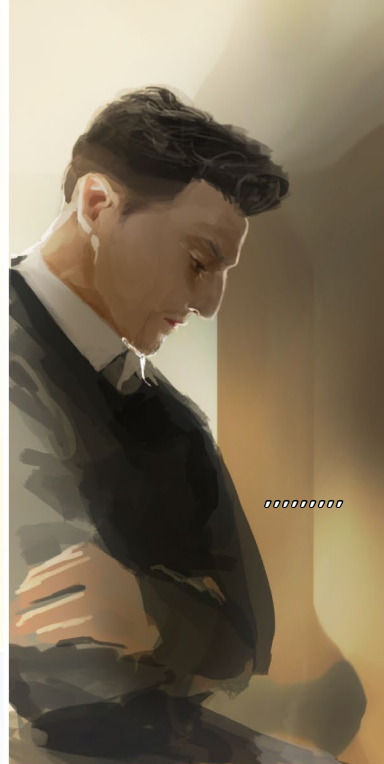
TELL ME,
HOW'S THE
VIEW FROM
THE TOP
RUNG?

OH WE'RE
SKIPPING
THE RULE-
BOOK,
Z! SKY'S
WIDE OPEN
NOW.

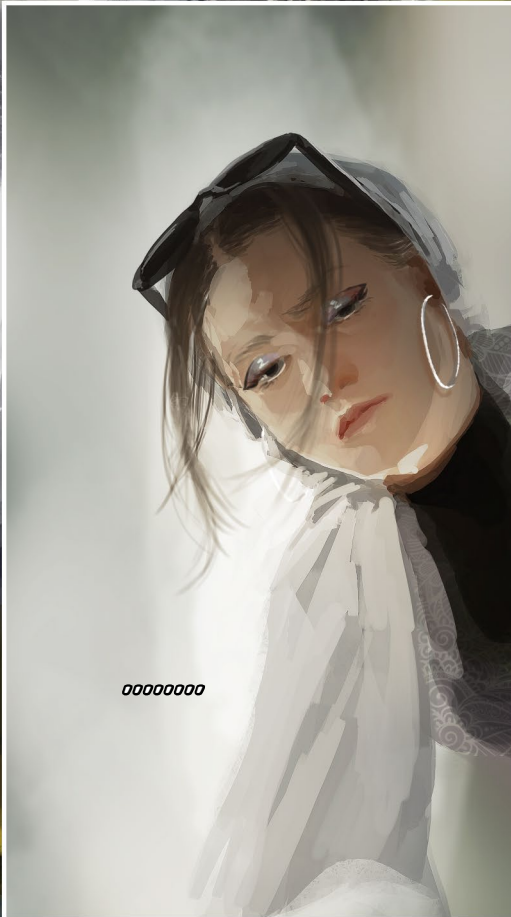
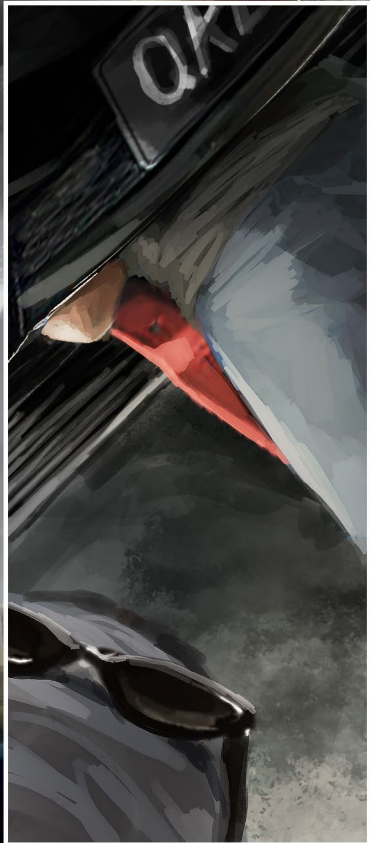
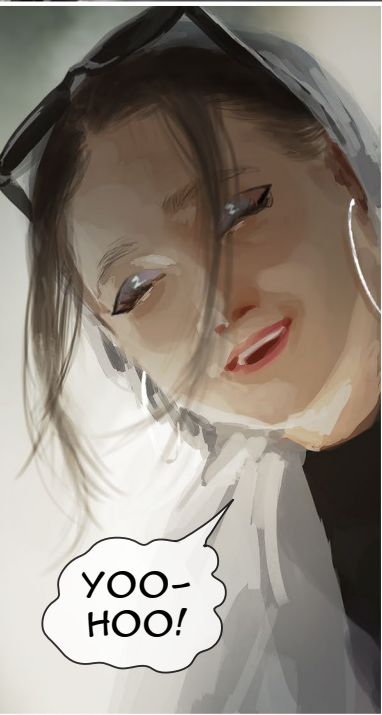
I SLEEP EASY
LONG AS
YOU'RE NOT
THE ONE
WRITING THE
FLIGHT PLAN!





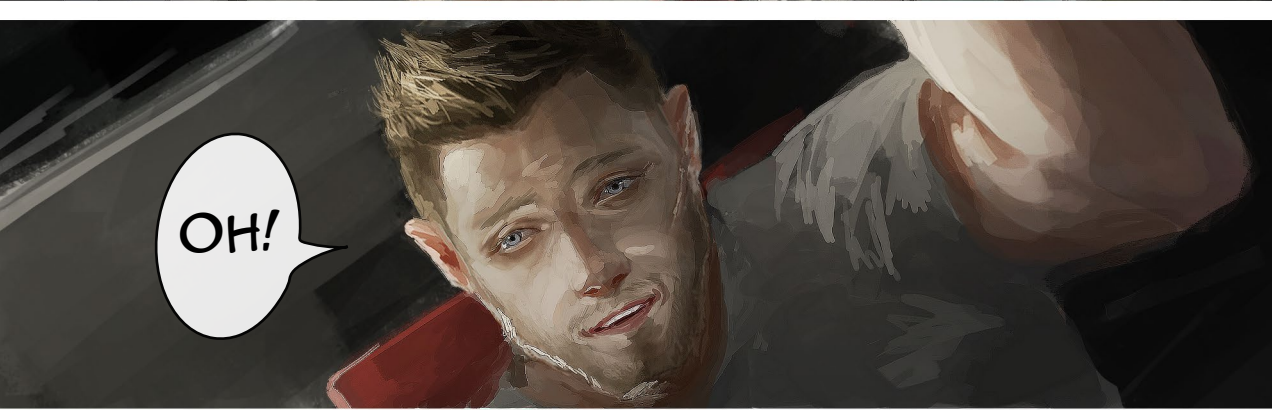






ASSALA-
MUHALAIKUM**!

**AN ISLAMIC GREETING THAT TRANS-
LATES TO "PEACE BE UPON YOU"

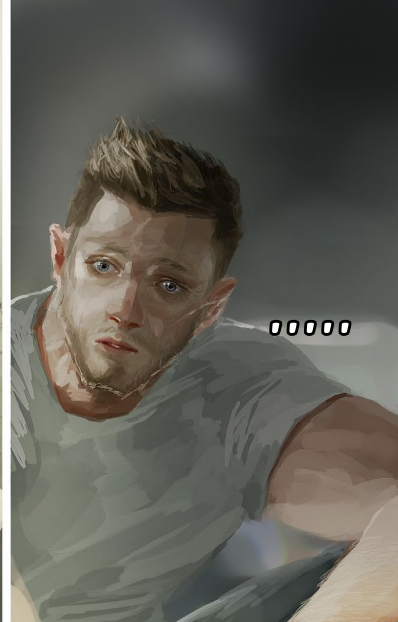




DON'T
WORRY
ABOUT
IT!



HEY,
COME
WITH
US TO
LUNCH!



OOOOO



...UH, I
TOOK
MINE A
COUPLE
HOURS
AGO.



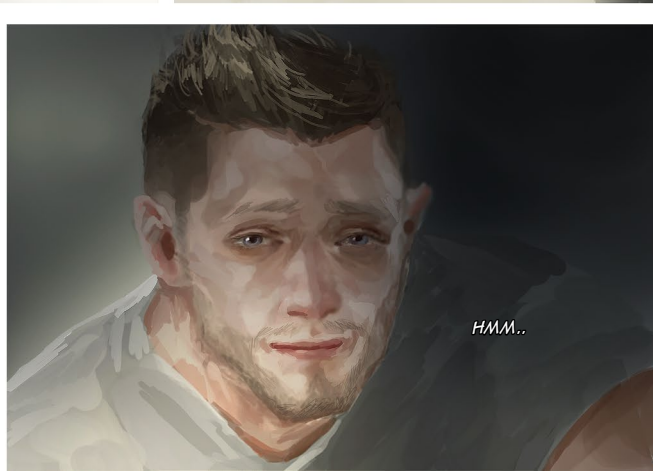
OOKAY
MAYBE
A SHORT
TEA BREAK
THEN?



HEARD
THEY'RE
SPRUCING
UP A GOOD
"TEH
TARIK"
DOWN
OUR USUAL
SPOT!



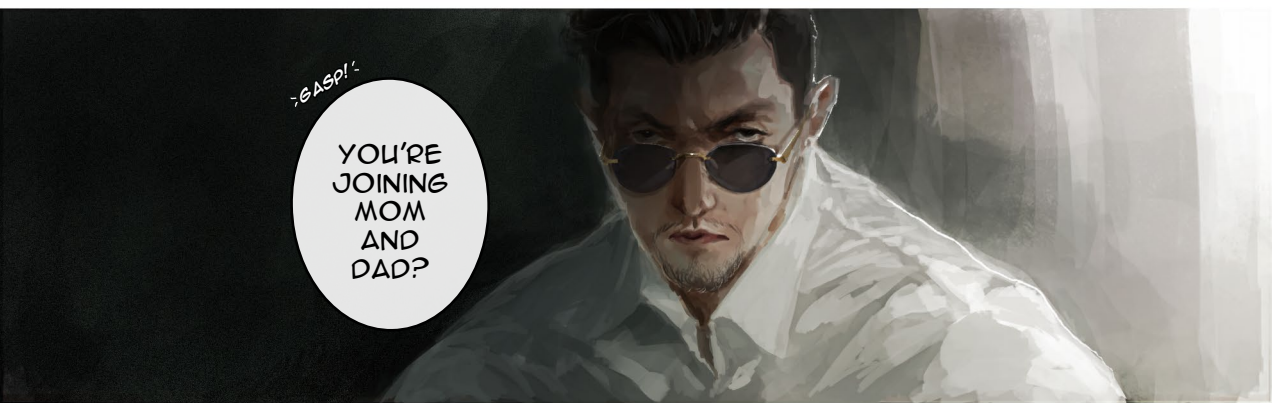
ACTUALLY,
MY GUY
NEEDS
THIS CAR
SET UP IN
AN HOUR...



HMM...

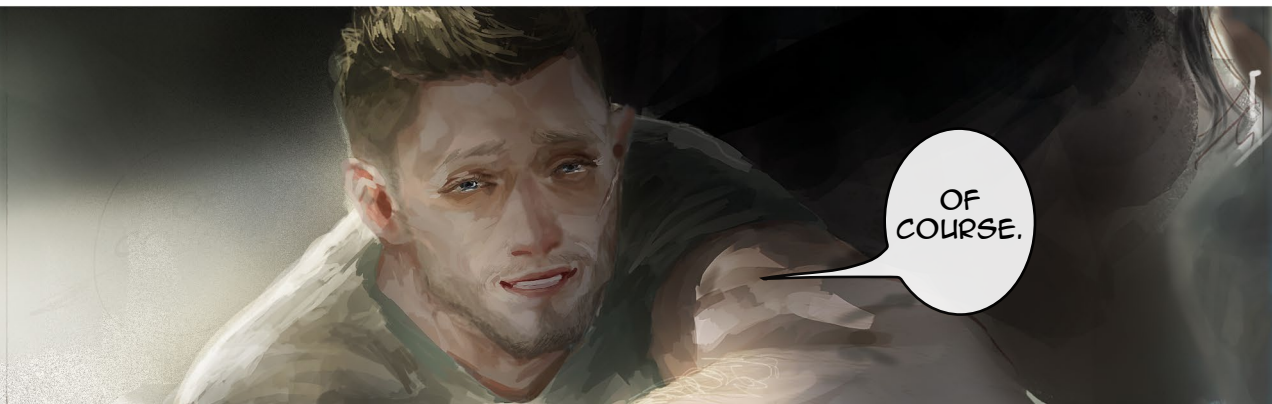


BUT HOW DOES DINNER AT THE BUNGALOW SOUNDS TO YOU?

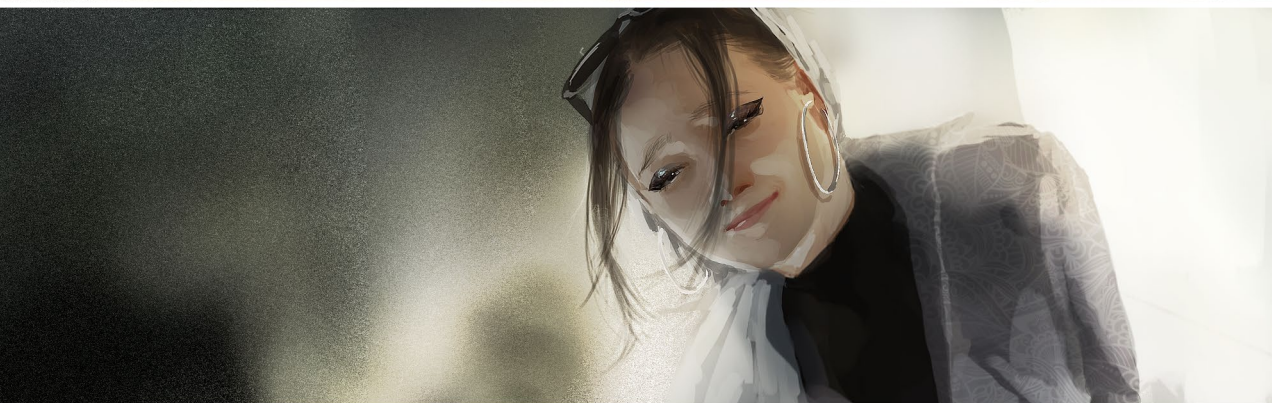


GAASP!

YOU'RE JOINING MOM AND DAD?



OF COURSE.



***ADIK** IS YOUNGER SIBLING IN MALAY



OKEY!
I'LL SEE YOU TONIGHT THEN!

ASSALAMU-LAIKUM, DIK.**

WAA-LAIKUM-SALAM!

