

2180 A.D.
The end of the
war.



Our world was destroyed
by this war.
It began more than fifty years ago.
Many of us can't remember what
'peace' was like.
Or did it
ever
exist?



The wildlife fled from
around the cities.
Plants died.
People suffered.
Some had the nerve to ask
'is this the end?'



The creatures that
remain are hungry,
waiting for a
chance to kill.



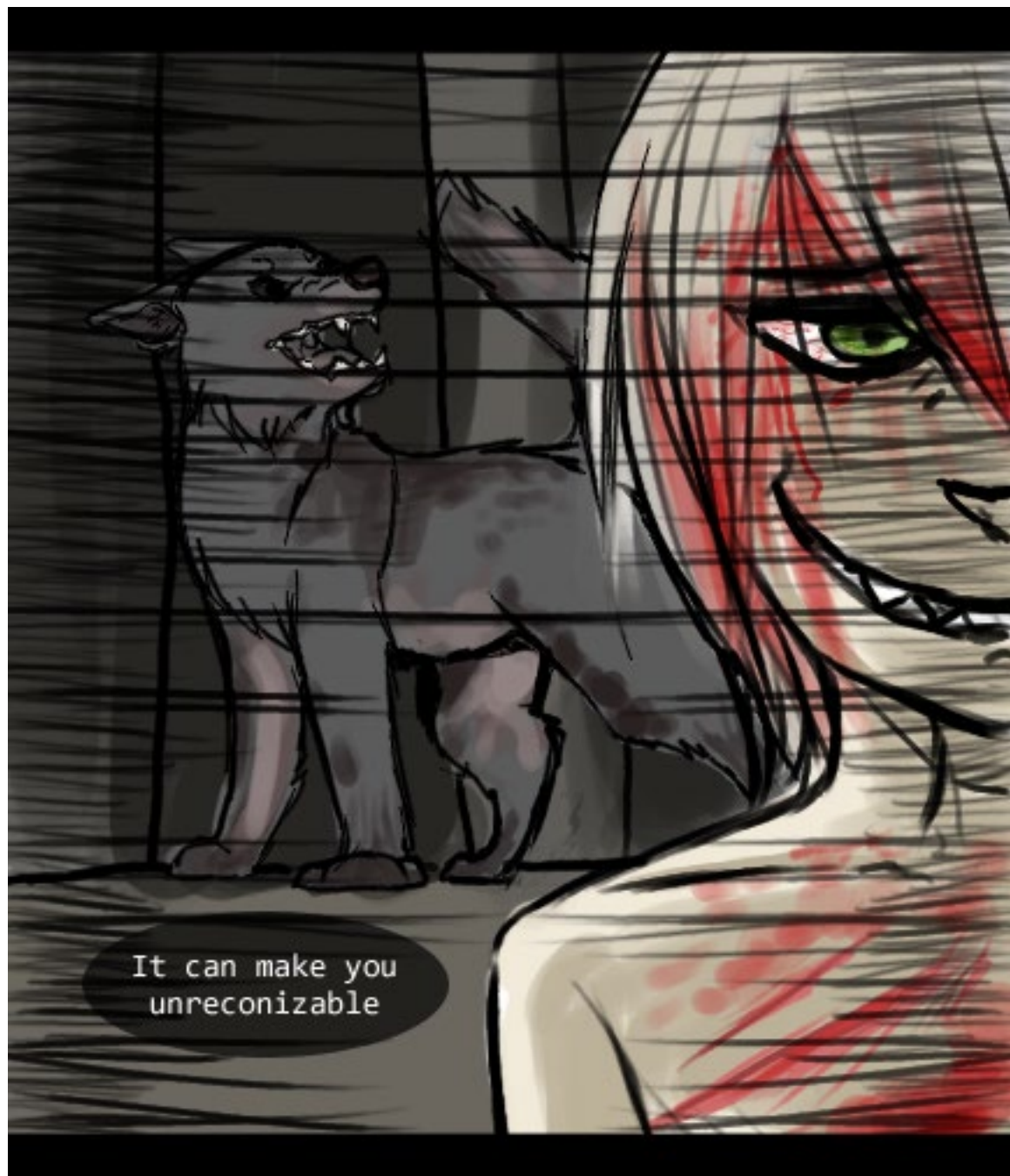
Always hunting.



We all became
hunters, long ago.



This world can change
you.



It can make you
unrecognizable

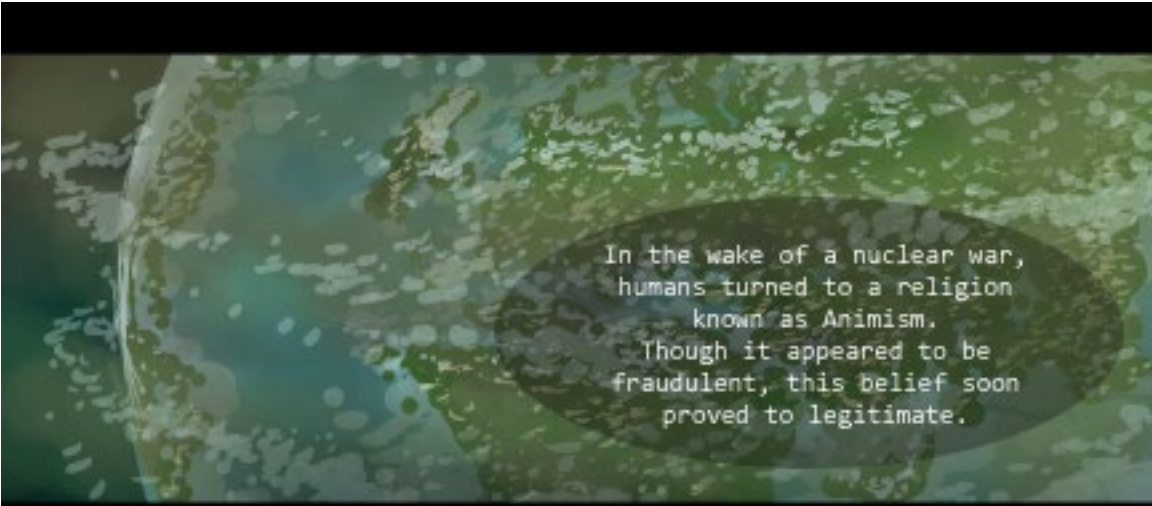
This was
supposed to be a
utopia.



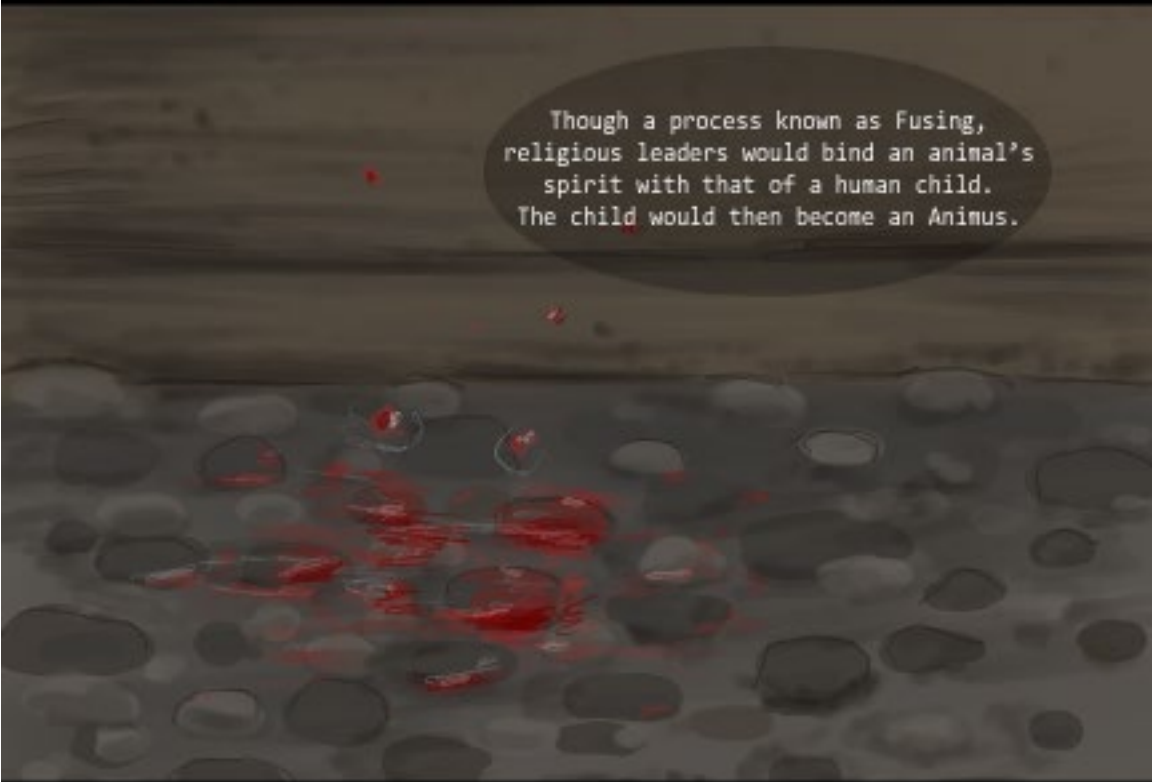


Hey, you!


In the wake of a
nuclear war came
a cult.
A religion of
sacrifice.



In the wake of a nuclear war,
humans turned to a religion
known as Animism.
Though it appeared to be
fraudulent, this belief soon
proved to legitimate.

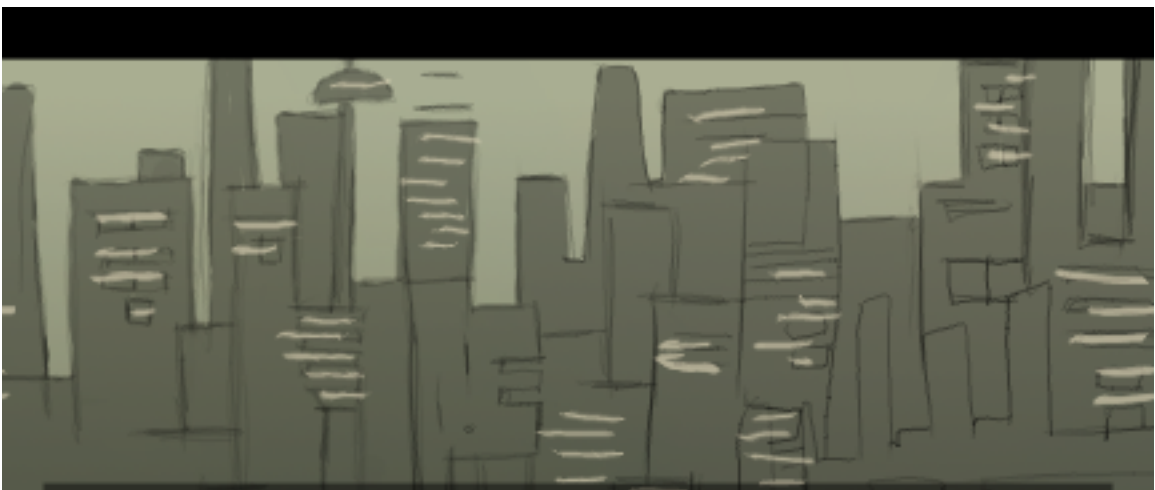


Though a process known as Fusing,
religious leaders would bind an animal's
spirit with that of a human child.
The child would then become an Animus.



The plan seemed perfect, but, as with 'every unconstitutional mishap of our ever-laboring mankind', the idea was soon shunned and eventually outlawed. However, as human nature demands, we chose not to obey the followings of our leaders.

The practice went on.



With night upon her, a world sits in stasis. She who is so plagued by devastation rests, neither condemning the wicked nor fretting over her inevitable demise.

The world is calm, and, no matter the brevity of the circumstance, this is, indeed, a magnificent moment of peace.

Generally, this world is caught in war, such as that of the past few centuries. Human development, as great as it seems, pits the very universe against itself so that it destroys what little is left in the aftermath of the humans themselves. These humans, with their petty fighting and selfish anger, unleash radiation upon a world already ravaged from industrial pollution.

Then, when they have destroyed their home, they blame the beasts and their hunger.



In this wounded world, where the wild was nothing short of demonized, a cult sprang from the very depths of the darkness.

Some business-savvy scientist, that is, learned how to bind human children to animals as separate, interchangeable beings. Finding this to be just what the panicked civilians needed, he spoke of a god and taught sacrifice.

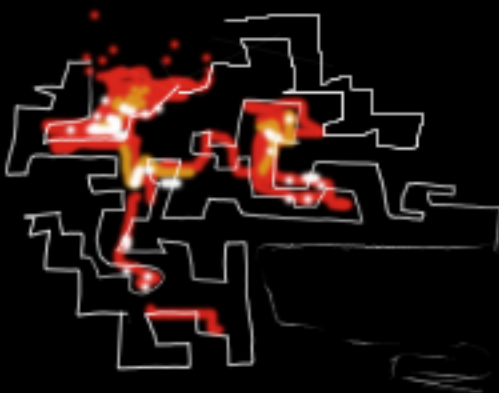
Animism, as it was later called, became a perilously powerful organization.

Of course, the practice could not go on. It was internationally outlawed and the leaders prosecuted. Nevertheless, humans are rebellious and, therefore, continued on in secret. Thus, a great rift was formed between civilians and their leaders.



Crystal's World

Chapter I




SYSTEM OF THE CITY OF ICE



A.D. 2598


This is the story of a relatively latent world, caught in midst of raging war.

Graphia is one of Europe's northernmost countries, located in the Atlantic Ocean between Iceland and Norway. Roughly the size of its eastern neighbor, and several latitudinal degrees closer to the North Pole, it is made up of a somewhat wide mainland, a northern peninsula, and a cluster of tiny islands, long ago colonized by foreigners, off the eastern shore. While, in the previous century, a slight polar shift caused the Earth's surface to cool considerably, the largest Graphian cities, Casia and Eluta, are protected by mechanically controlled magnetic fields that shield them from unsavory weather and control the temperature.



The country is invariably under an ancient monarchy and a council of twelve eligible men and women. When one party fails, the other steps up, taking the role of political leader.

Beyond the staggering poverty rates is a corrupt system, filled with greed and manipulation.



The rich hold an awful lot of power, but the poor are segregated and forced into dreadful living conditions. The measures were even taken, in an attempt to prevent overpopulation, to seal off all entrances to major cities so no one could go in or out without a substantial sum of money.

This young lady is one of the few residents who have ever visited the northern mountains and anything beyond.

She is the daughter of the Queen, sister to the heir, and third in line for the throne.

The princess's name is Ameliane Bane, and she is returning from a long stay in the mountains to help her recover from a certain ailment. Her concerned family eagerly awaits her arrival at the port.



Welcome back..




It seems she has strained her bonds with this young man, however - he is, without a doubt, her brother, Jackson Bane.





Hello,
Jackson.

Argent!

If you are at all
intelligent,
reader, you have
grasped that this
odd creature is
relevant to the
plot.



And so she is, and, with her abrupt leaving as of now, she will miss the fateful and likely eventually tragic events of this lovely yellow-skied morning autumn morning.



Shouldn't we pay him, Jackson?

No.

Why?

Have you no idea of our economic situation?

I haven't been here, Jackson.

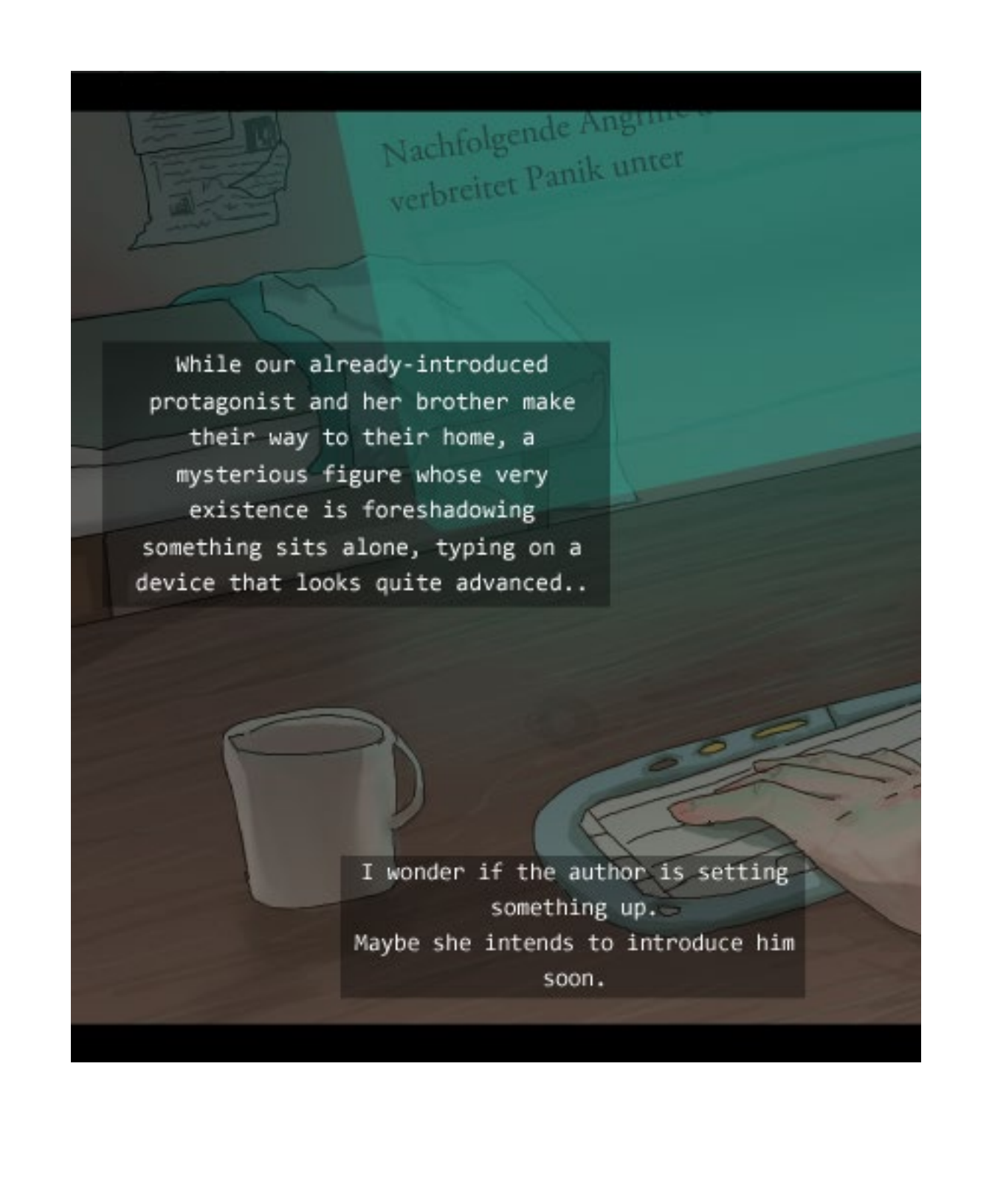
Oh, you stupid girl. You haven't been gone for
more than a season.

No, but I wasn't aware before that.

You'd make a terrible queen.

It's a good thing I'll never be one,
then.



An illustration of a hand typing on a futuristic, glowing device on a wooden desk. A white mug is to the left. In the background, a newspaper clipping is pinned to a wall. The scene is dimly lit with a teal glow from the device.

Nachfolgende Angriffe
verbreitet Panik unter

While our already-introduced protagonist and her brother make their way to their home, a mysterious figure whose very existence is foreshadowing something sits alone, typing on a device that looks quite advanced..

I wonder if the author is setting something up.
Maybe she intends to introduce him soon.



Oh, well. She
knows what
she's doing,
and I suppose
we have to
respect that.


Until then..

We'll have to wait for
the events to unfold.

However long it takes.



Mother!
This isn't fair!



I don't have time for
this, Veronica.

You will never be the
queen!

While these petty fights commence,
the city is burning, set fire by
angry criminals and terrorists.
This literally makes no sense to
her.



DETH
HNS NORTH

She doesn't understand human quarrels.

Though she is not a superior being, the creature is, perhaps, a bit more mature than the majority of people.

Her name, given to her as a mere pup, is Dark. She was the result of a genetic experiment, to create animals that could survive in the harsh, bitterly cold weather and still retain the genetic patterns of animals that would have otherwise perished.

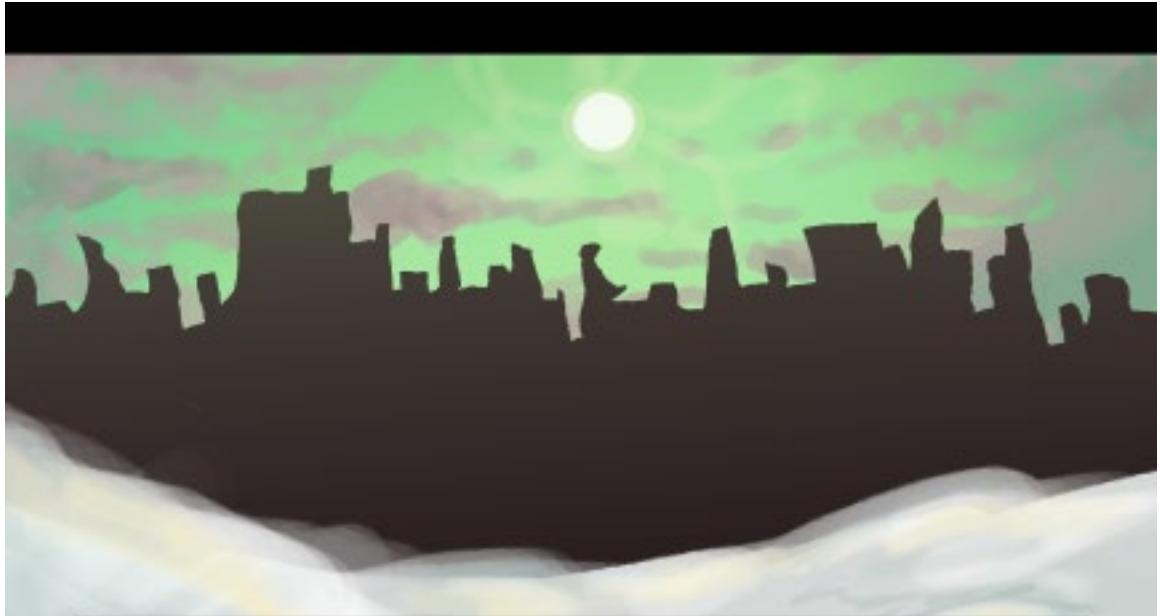
She's not the only of her kind, simply the only truly domestic creature of her kind.

'Domestic', to her, refers to a partnership between her and a man to whom she is bound, because she is the beast in the relationship of host and animus.

Terminology is very confusing.

Though she is very intelligent, nearly that of a human but lacking advanced emotions, and is fully capable of speech, the only language she speaks and understands is German.

That would attract controversy if she wasn't already a really very opinionated cat-beast.



Up on that god-forsaken Northern Peninsula, there is an immigrated civilization know as Brevi. In contrast to the fair native peoples, they have dark hair and skin as pale as the snow they live in.

They came from continental Europe, likely from some Germanic country, as they speak their language, hundreds of years ago, and, once settled in this new land, were enslaved and forced to work the mines.

They were different, so they were rejected, and, even now, attract the kind of cruel racism that's prevalent in every society.

Who cares about minorities, anyway, though?
Young Veronica, upon hearing her mother's refusal
to let her have the throne, ran to her room.



Excuse me, Amele.
Mother and I must
discuss something.

What are we to do?

But she'll destroy our
country, burn it to the
ground! We don't want
that!

Kill her? She's just a
girl!

I can't do this.

I'm not ready for this.

She'll win in any race
against us.

We have to eliminate
her, Jackson.

Jackson.

Save the country.

I'm not a monster.

But I'm not.

This is not my duty!

Can't we--.

I want to save her!

Better than a savage.

What people.

Your people will forgive you.

She will be.

But you're the prince.


You are my son. I don't
want this, but it must
be done.

Go!

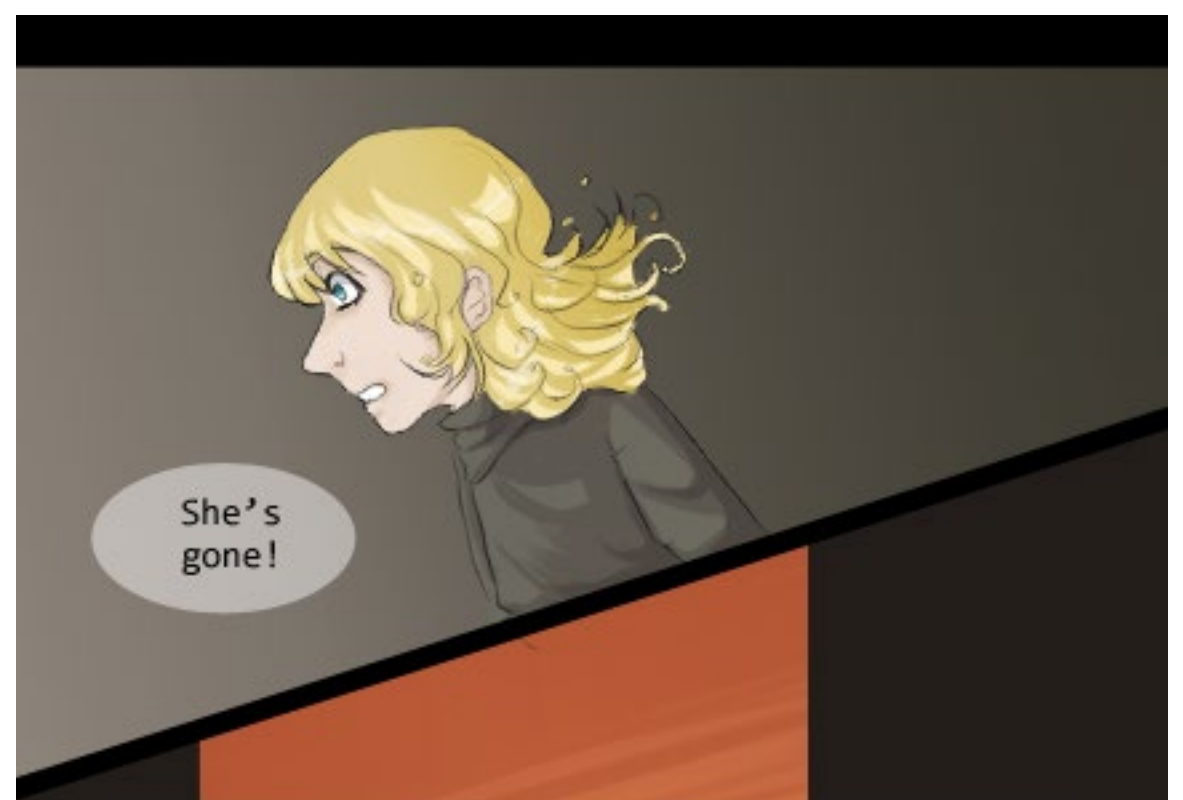
You'll be no more than
a martyr.

For your people.





I have to warn
her!



She's
gone!

And so she was. There was no point to a princess who would never have the power to control her people, so thought Veronica.

"There's no such thing as a mistake."

I think there are people that resent her decision to give up and run away, because she didn't give up, she never gave up, not for a single second, and every moment that she spent away from her family was spent making a diabolical plot.

A fool-proof plan, at the expense of another.

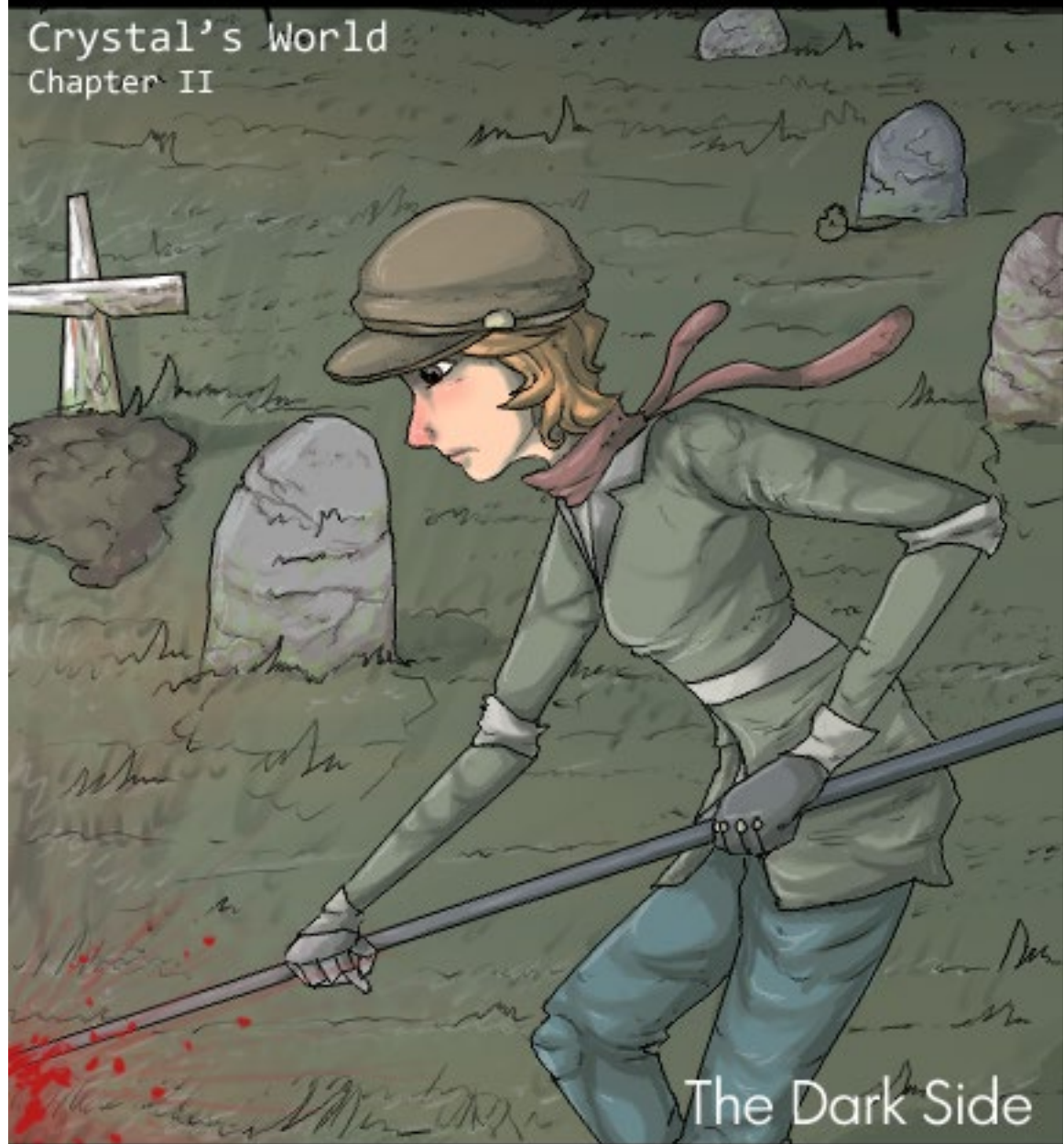
It is said that, with twins, feelings are shared, and maybe that explains why Amele chose to edge towards the window, eye the nearly two meter drop, and then quickly slide off the sill and onto the artificial grass of the courtyard. Perhaps it explains, even better, why, though she was in no immediate danger at the time and may not have been at all had she not, she ran for the streets and threw herself into the world of her people, and became one herself.

But she was afraid of the people, so she ran faster, through the cobbled side-walks and dark alley-ways, hiding herself as best as she could. She ran for hours, until it was growing dark and her legs were numb with exhaustion. The night citizens became to crawl from the darkness, dull-eyed but ever vigilant and watching her.

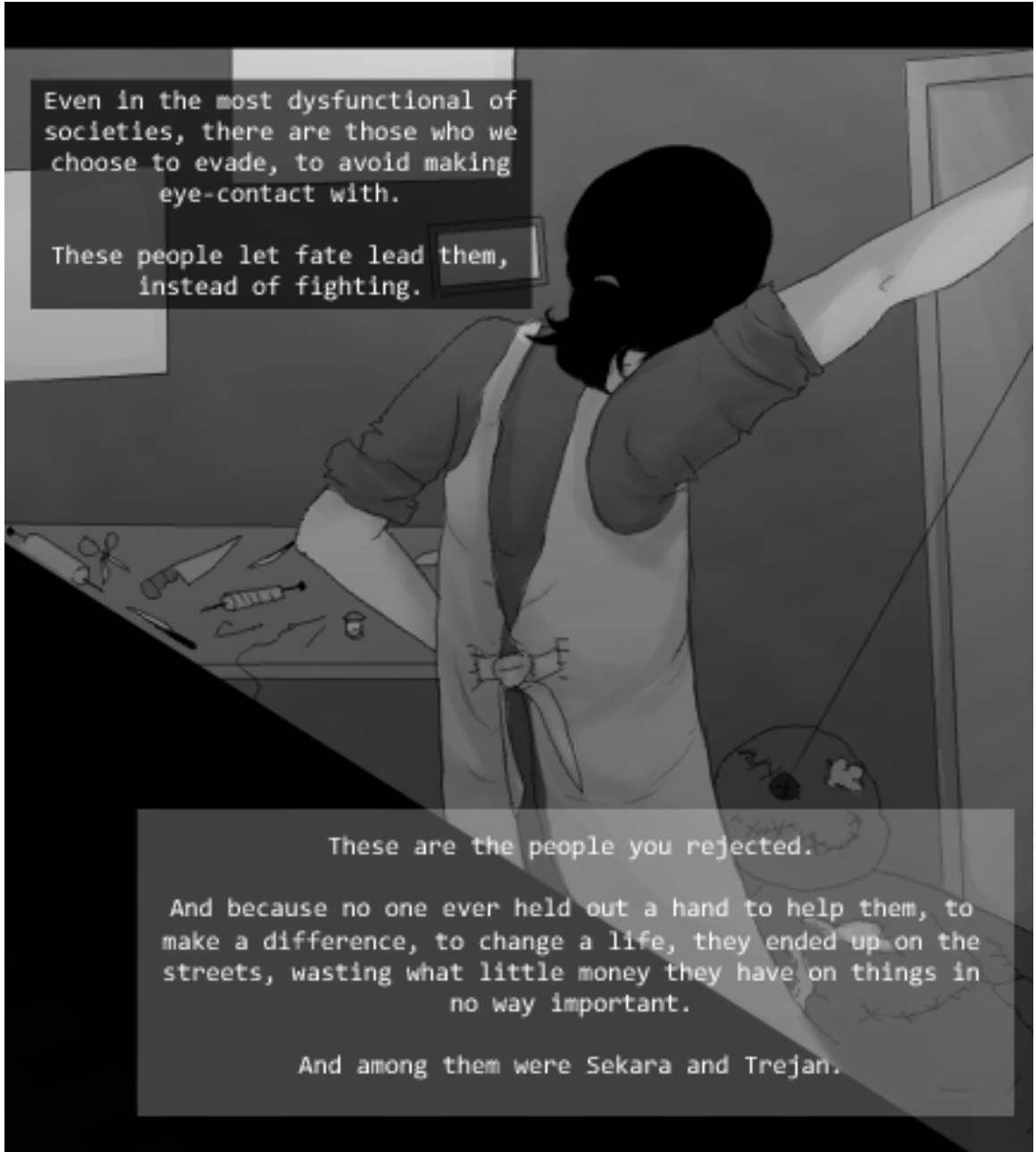
Maybe she wasn't paying attention, or maybe she had stopped paying attention, but she ran on and would have ended up under a freight truck, had she not had a fateful encounter with one of the night citizens.

End - Chapter One

Crystal's World
Chapter II



The Dark Side




Even in the most dysfunctional of societies, there are those who we choose to evade, to avoid making eye-contact with.

These people let fate lead them, instead of fighting.

These are the people you rejected.

And because no one ever held out a hand to help them, to make a difference, to change a life, they ended up on the streets, wasting what little money they have on things in no way important.

And among them were Sekara and Trejan.

A black and white illustration. On the right, a woman with short dark hair, wearing a dark turtleneck and a light-colored apron, looks towards the left. Her expression is somber. On the left, a smaller figure wearing a cap and a dark suit stands in a doorway, looking back. A speech bubble from the smaller figure says, "Sorry I left. There was an intruder." Another speech bubble from the woman on the right says, "Oh."

Sorry I left.
There was an
intruder.

Oh.

There are those who had it all; who lost it, because of something stupid and unlikely but undeniably terrible.

And there are those who wanted to oppose; to be the rebel! The savior of the cityfolk, advocate for the dead and dying! Those who were warned, time after time, "These people will hurt you! Don't go with them! You're a nice young lady and you're to be married with children in just a year!"

She later found that she was infertile, not that it matters.

And there are those who have witnessed
tragedy and accepted it...




But even those cannot fully
understand what they, simple
civilians, could possibly do
to change the world!

This world does not accept you
any more than you accept your
brothers.

There was once a boy who
dreamed of uniting a nation
that outcast him in every way.





The Brevians are a race of miners and slaves, human beings without citizenship or any consideration of existence from the country's other residents.

And among the few that escaped this life were this boy, now a man.

There is no way to erase yourself from the world, however.

Unlike our heroine, however, he had a lovely childhood. He had friends, and, though he was orphaned as a child, he was adopted into a loving family in Casia.

It's as simple as that! He came to Casia as a child and could never actually pay for citizenship, so he became one of the night citizens.

Only one who could have done so much better.

If only.

But he was upset, because his parents had worked until their deaths, and he knew that many others would suffer this very same fate! And anger led to cynicism, and a lack of faith in the world around him.

And he snapped, dropped out of school, and ran from this country, this city, these people. He hid for a long time, and maybe he wanted to be found, but he ventured out that night hoping to end this.

It might have been better if something had, indeed, ended.

Had the people of this country
been any less indecent, this
story might have ended very
differently.

Amele may have left with a simple
"Thank you," and gone on with her
life.



But this man had saved her, and she was
grateful.

Oh my god!



God isn't real, you know.



Nicht mit ihr reden!



Thanks for
grabbing me. I
might have died!



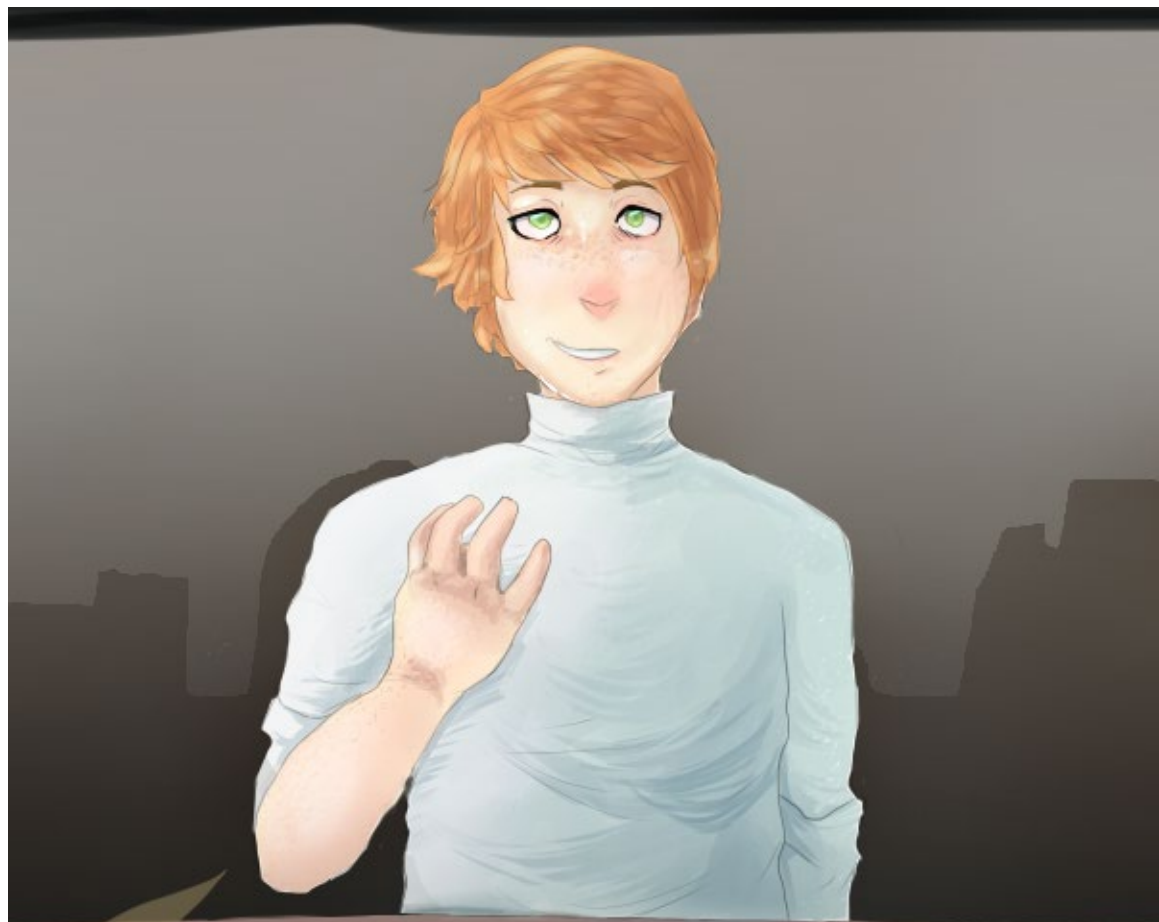






She finally left...

JA...



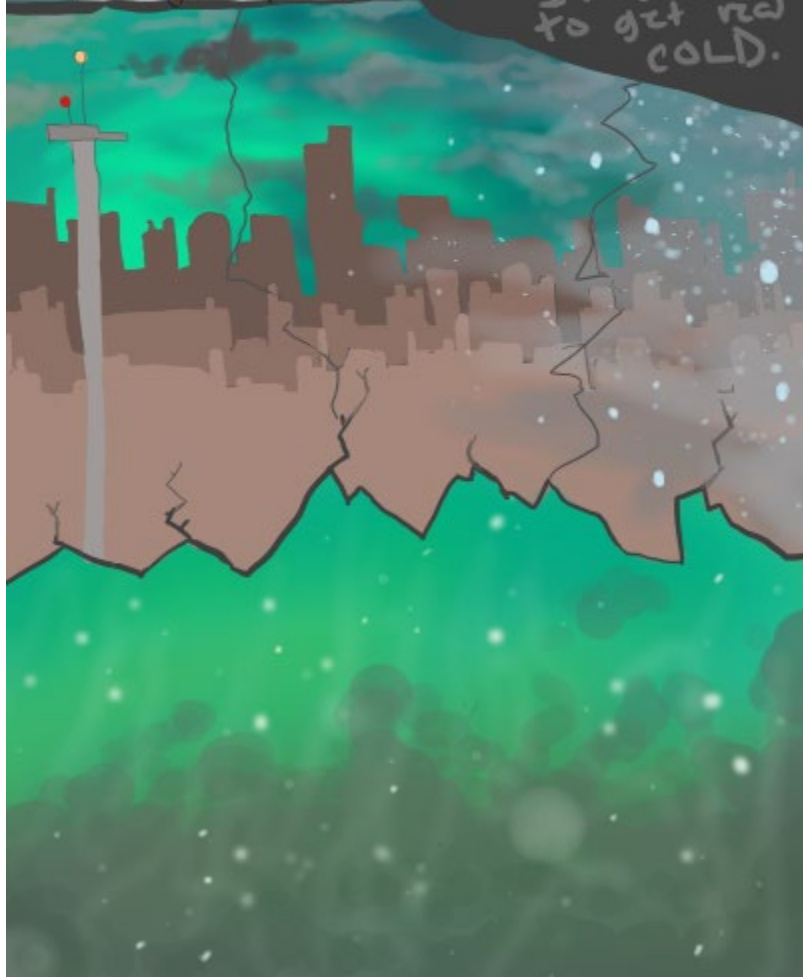
Are you going to
order something?

You know, anything
I can serve to a
minor.

Oh, no, just some
tea and bread.



Have you heard
the news?
The lights
are going off
soon. The
weather thing
keeps going
down.
It's 'bout
to get real
COLD.





It's starting to snow. Do you know of a place I can spend the night?



WAS
THAT
LIGHTNING?

No place on the West
side.
What's wrong with the
East side?
There is a wall...




That's stupid.
And now it's
raining. This
entire city
is stupid!



I'm so
sorry!
Take my
coat.

No, it's
okay!



Come on. Let's
get out of this
rain.

17 NOVEMBER
2598

a
demonstration
against
corporate
greed



What is
this?

Nothing:
They're
screaming
at the
air again.



I hear sirens.
That makes sense;







BANG

We're probably about to die, so --

UGH!

SHUT UP!



Calm down.
Shh.
Let's
go.

On
god

Shh.
It's okay.
It's okay.



--END CHAPTER TWO--



chapter 3
Night Citizens

20:47

17 November

MISTER!
We're being
poisoned!
Also, it's snowing
again.



COME HERE



|||||



BACK ON THE CITY'S GROUND LEVEL

THE NAME
IS
TREJAN
ARKWRIGHT

12 JAN 2566
TREJAN ARKWRIGHT
— STATE MORTI
LEGAL CITIZ

Kälen
Fruehauf

.. Amalie



WHAT ARE
YOU TWO
YOUNG
PEOPLE
DOING
OUT


EXCUSE
ME?

THERE MIGHT BE
MONSTERS
LURKING

JAI!
I BET!








DO YOU KNOW THE
STATE OF OUR
NATION TODAY?


Not
so
much

WELL, THE WHOLE
COUNTRY IS PRETTY
MUCH COLLAPSING
UNDER ITS OWN
OBLIVIOUS RULE

HOW SO?



WELL, THE WHOLE
COUNTRY IS DISSOLVING.
THERE'S NO UNITY, AND
THERE'S NO PUSH FOR
IT. THE ECONOMY IS
IN SHAMBLES BECAUSE
OF THE WAR. THE
GOVERNMENT ISN'T
EVEN PAYING ATTENTION



WHY... I'VE NEVER
HEARD OF THIS!

REALLY?


YES! NOT AT ALL,
I MEAN

THAT'S VERY ODD

WHY DO YOU THINK
THE KING LETS IT
GO?

I'VE NO IDEA

AND THE PEOPLE!
WHY DO THEY
BLINDLY
FOLLOW?

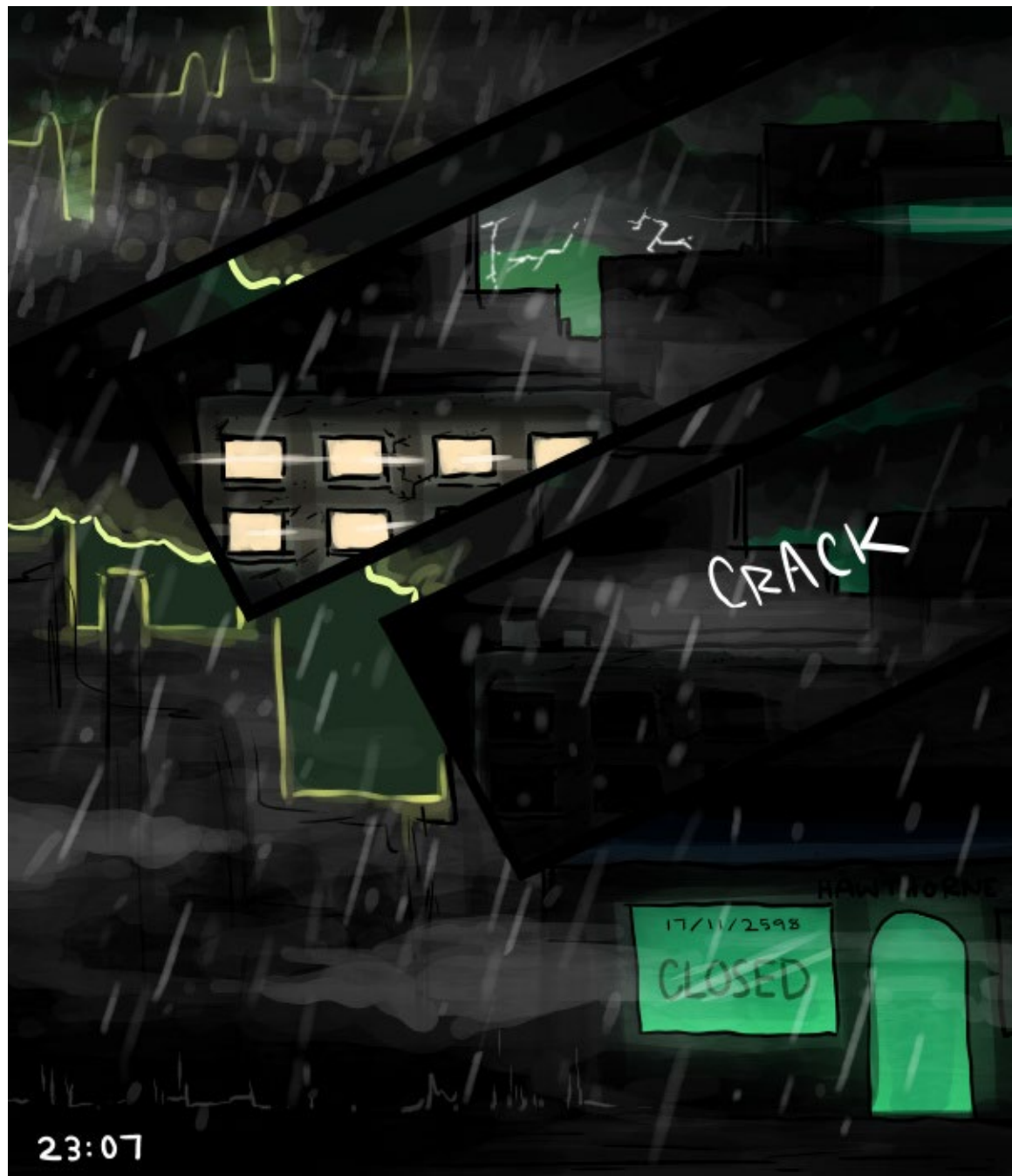


I DON'T
KNOW

WHY DON'T THEY
DO ANYTHING
ABOUT IT?

WHY DON'T
YOU?

ES IST EIN FIEBERTRAUM
VISION DER GLEICHHEIT



23:07



SHADAN HAWTHORNE
THE SON OF SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS OWNERS
SUFFERING FROM A LACK OF PERSONAL SUCCESS



SHADAN AND VERONIKA TALKED FOR HOURS

THE PRINCESS HELPED HIM CLOSE THE CAFÉ - A VERY IMPORTANT GESTURE, APPARENTLY

I'M SORRY.
I HAVE TO GO HOME

NO. WAIT





I WANT TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING

lights flickering

... FINE



GREAT



OKAY.
FIRST, LET ME
EXPLAIN

THERE ARE A LOT OF NASTY
THINGS GOING ON IN THIS
CITY

SOME OF IT'S HARD
TO AVOID. BUT THE MAIN
PROBLEM IS CLEAR:
THE GOVERNMENT

THEY'RE HORRIBLE!

AND THEY WON'T
LISTEN TO THE
PEOPLE

EVERYONE IS
SUFFERING!



IS THAT
REALLY WHAT
YOU THINK
?





JUST BE QUIET
AND FOLLOW



PEOPLE
OF CASIA!

(THE TIME HAS COME)











ALERT

ALERT

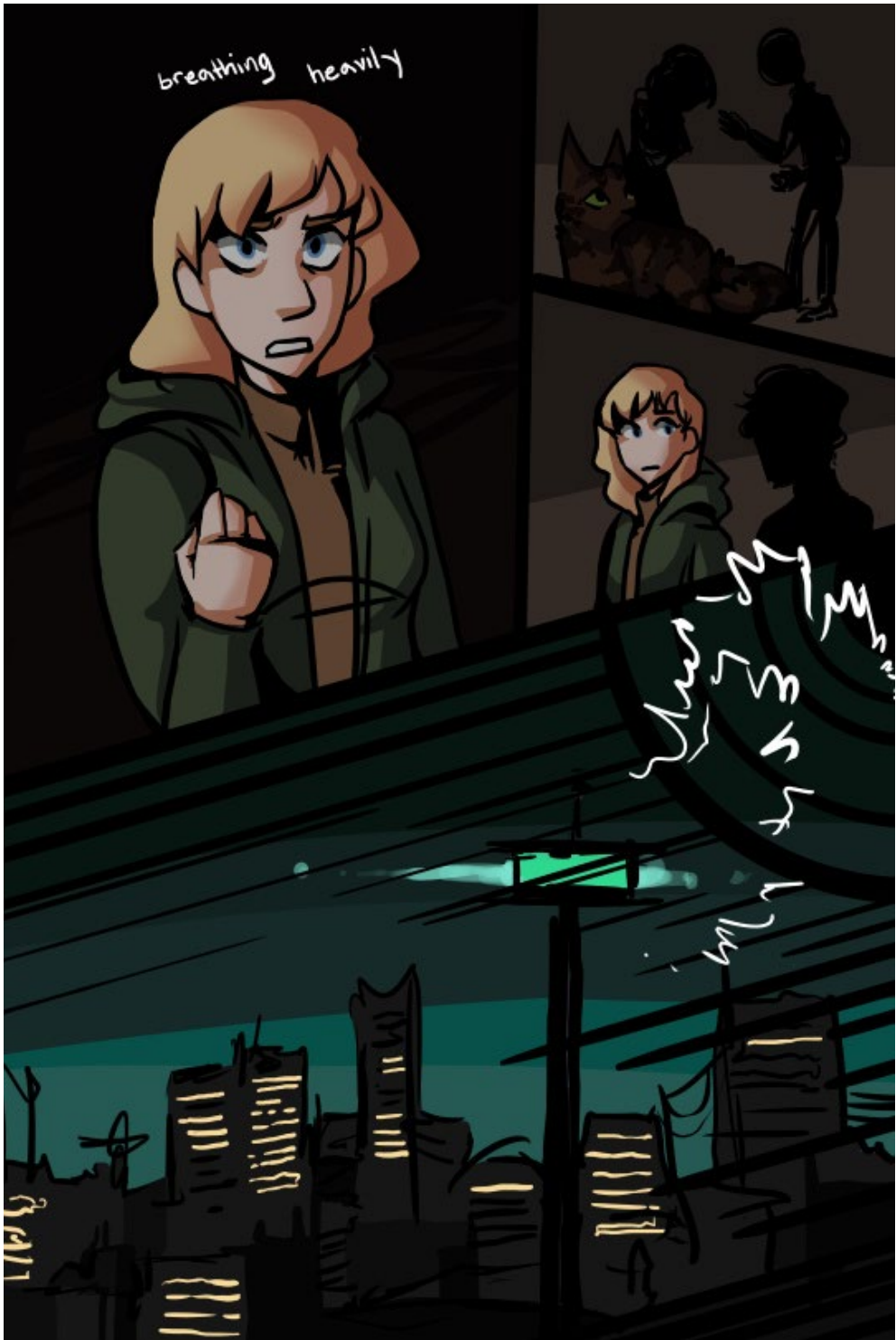
MISSING PERSON:

PRINCESS
VERONIKA BANE-
RED HAIR, BLUE
EYES
167 cm, 60kg
PLEASE
ALERT
AN AUTHORITY
IF SEEN





breathing heavily



breathing heavily

THAT'S IT
FOR THE
NIGHT,
CASIA

NOW TO SIX HOURS
OF GOVERNMENT
MANDATED
WHITE NOISE



