

Until It Wasn't

CHAPTER

1

THE ONES WHO SHOULDN'T EXIST

NULLFRAME



UNTIL IT WASN'T

A NULLFRAME COMICS story.



For the ones who kept going when they
shouldn't have had to.

Story & Art
KEAN PRINSLOO

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There are moments that don't feel important when they happen. Not because th're small—but but because we don't yet know what they'll cost.

This is the story of what came after of those moments.

Until It Wasn't

CHAPTER I: THE WEIGHT OF BEING SEEN

IT STARTED LIKE EVERY OTHER DAY—QUIET, HEAVY,
AND PREDICTABLE.

A MOTHER'S PROMISE THAT THIS WAS THE LAST MOVE,
A LUNCH BAG LEFT ON THE COUNTER, AND THE
FAMILIAR STING OF BEING THE TRANSFER KID WHO
DIDN'T BELONG.

KAI WAS USED TO THE WHISPERS IN THE HALLWAYS
AND THE CRUELTY OF THOSE WHO MISTOOK SILENCE
FOR WEAKNESS.

HE SOUGHT THE PEACE OF THE WOODS TO ESCAPE A
WORLD THAT DIDN'T WANT HIM.

BUT THE WORLD FOUND HIM ANYWAY.

IN A SINGLE, BLINDING MOMENT OF FIRE AND FAILURE,
THE LIFE HE KNEW WAS ERASED.

HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN A CASUALTY OF SOMEONE
ELSE'S WAR.

INSTEAD, HE BECAME SOMETHING ELSE—SOMETHING
HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND.

NOTHING FELT DIFFERENT. BUT EVERYTHING HAD
CHANGED.



Until It Wasn't

CHARACTER PROFILES:

KAI

ROLE: THE OUTSIDER.

PROFILE: A TRANSFER STUDENT WHO HAS SPENT HIS LIFE MOVING BETWEEN CITIES AND SHADOWS. AFTER SURVIVING A CLASSIFIED MISSILE EXPLOSION IN THE WOODS, HIS DNA HAS BECOME A BATTLEFIELD FOR A STABILIZING SERUM HE WAS NEVER MEANT TO RECEIVE.

STATUS: STABILIZED.

THE MOTHER

ROLE: THE ANCHOR.

PROFILE: TIRED BUT HOPEFUL, SHE PROMISED KAI THAT THIS TOWN WOULD BE THEIR FINAL STOP. SHE REMAINS UNAWARE THAT THE "QUIET LIFE" SHE SOUGHT FOR HER SON ENDED THE MOMENT THE SKY TURNED TO FIRE.

MAXIMUS

ROLE: THE CATALYST.

PROFILE: A LOCAL BULLY WHO VIEWS KAI'S SILENCE AS A WEAKNESS TO BE EXPLOITED. HE REPRESENTS THE MUNDANE CRUELTY OF THE WORLD KAI WAS TRYING TO ESCAPE BEFORE THE EXPLOSION CHANGED THE STAKES OF SURVIVAL.

KATIE & HOBBS (THE ARCHITECTS)

ROLE: THE CREATORS.

PROFILE: LEAD SCIENTISTS ON A FAILED MILITARY SERUM PROJECT. WHILE HOBBS ORDERED THE "DISPOSAL" OF THE FAILURE, KATIE REALIZED THE SERUM HADN'T FAILED—IT WAS SIMPLY WAITING FOR THE RIGHT HOST.

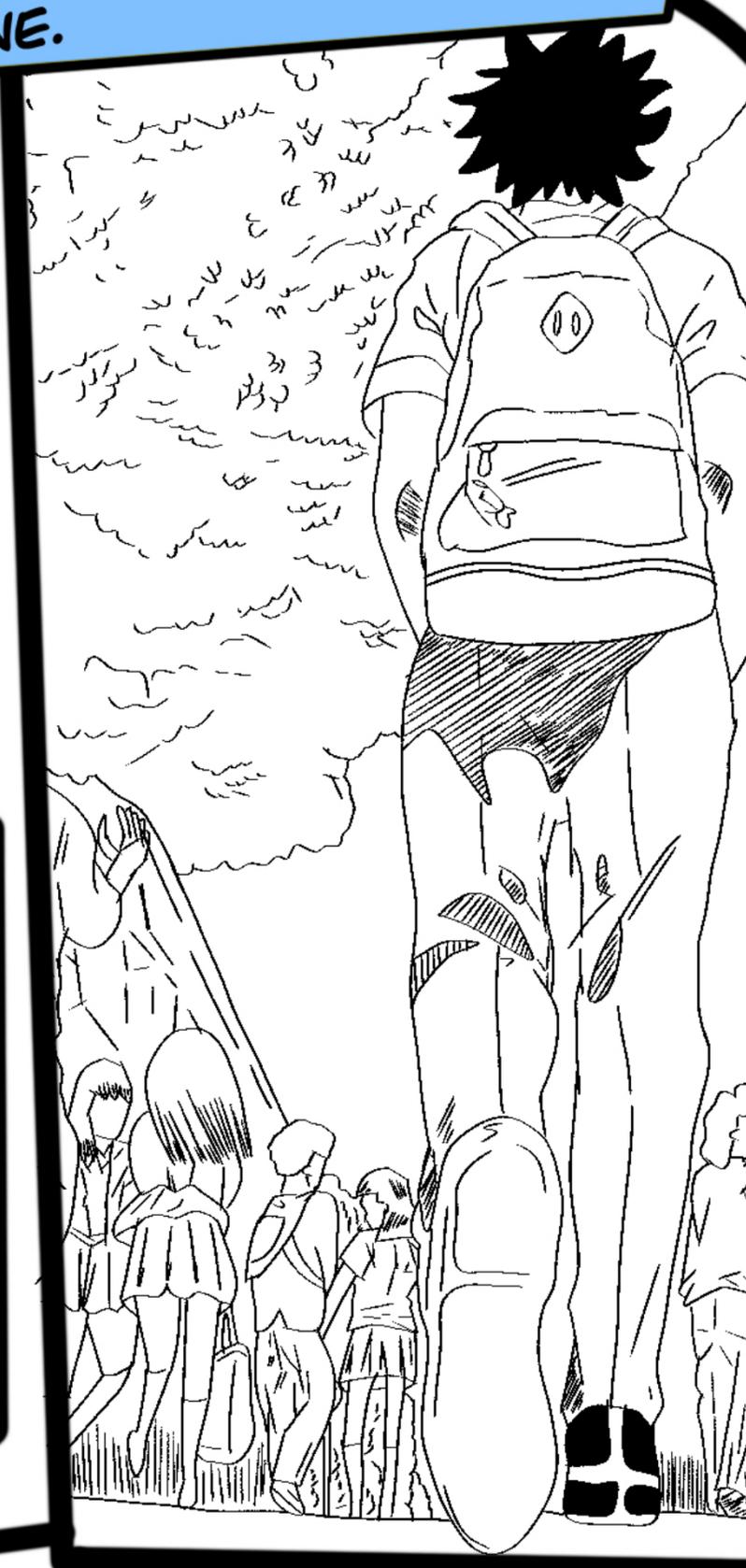
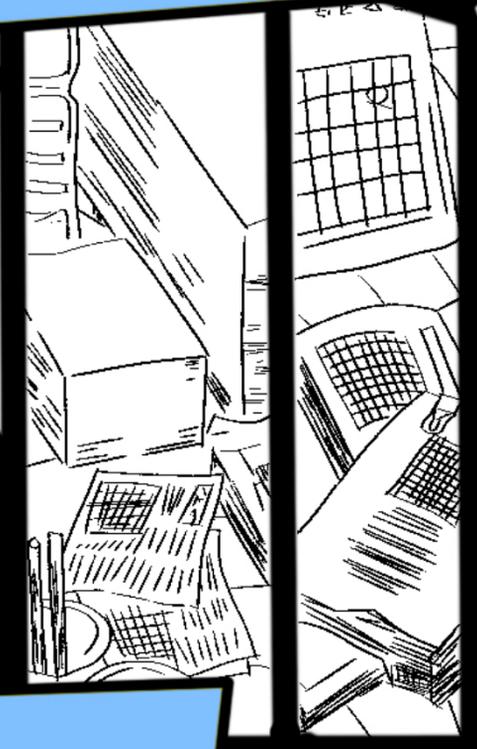


Until it
wasn't

**YAWN...
(KAI GETS UP)**



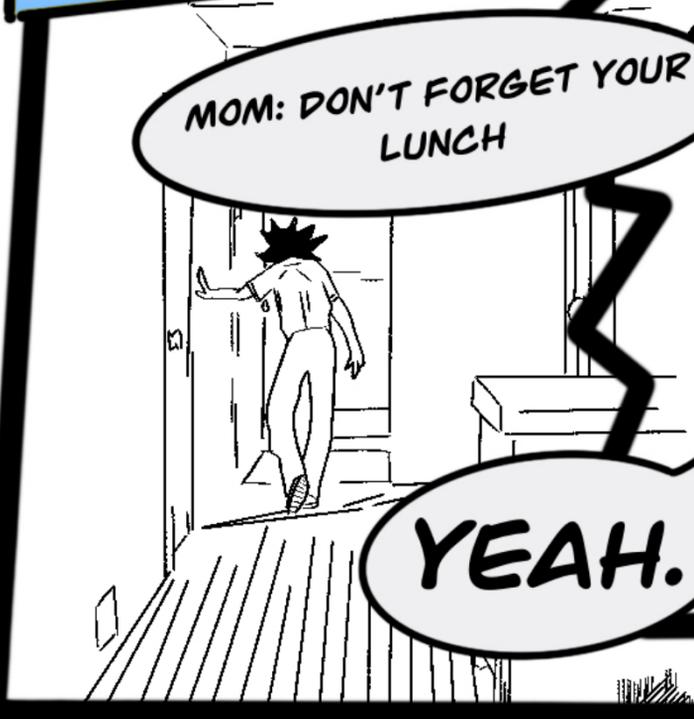
**A NEW YEAR. A NEW TOWN. ANOTHER
BEGINNING THAT DIDN'T FEEL LIKE
ONE.**



**THEY MOVED A LOT. SHE
PROMISED THIS WOULD BE
THE LAST TIME.**

**MOM: DON'T FORGET YOUR
LUNCH**

YEAH.



NEW STREETS. SAME FEELING.



MORN
ING...

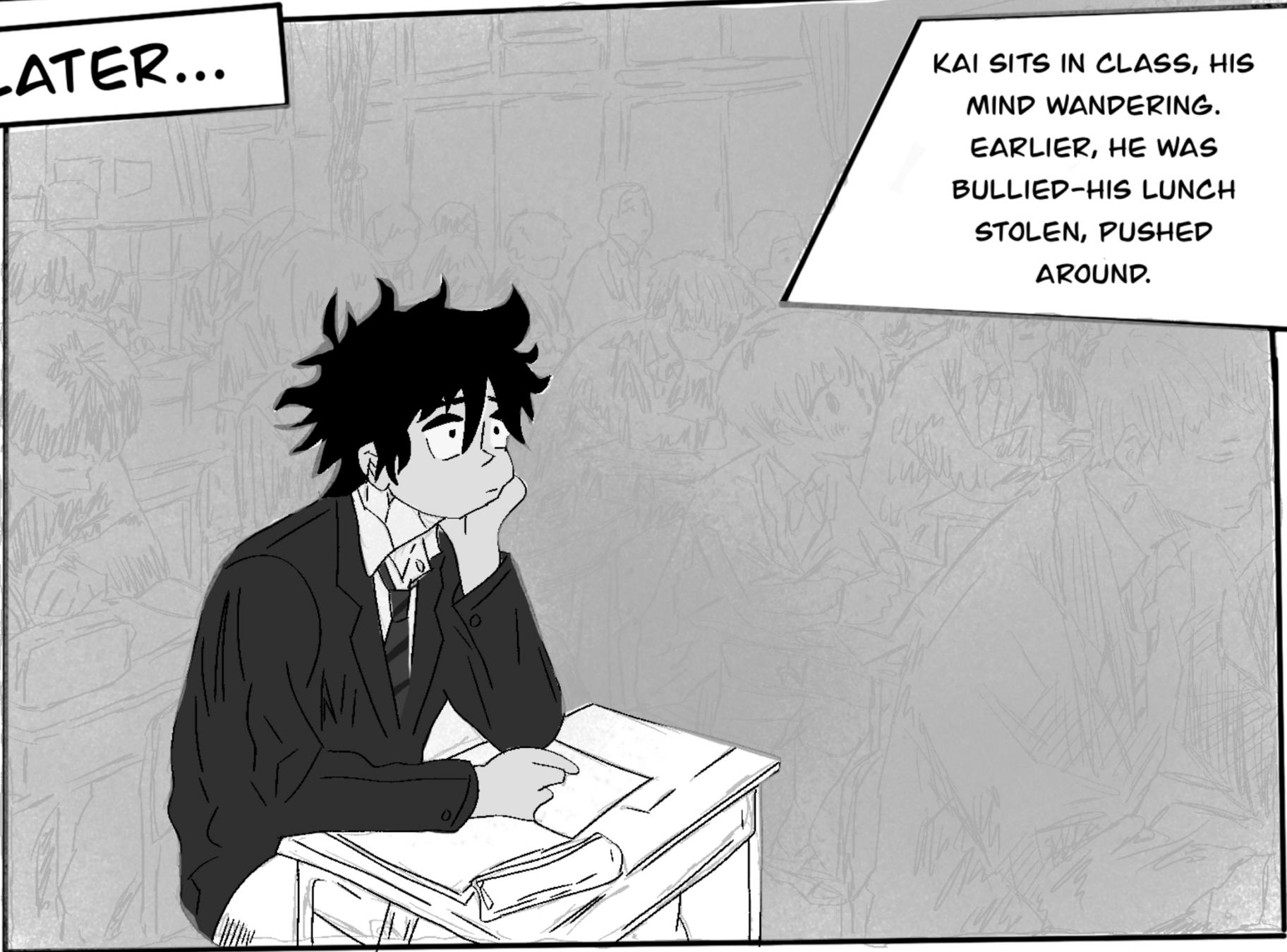
I GIVE IT
TWO WEEKS
WE WON'T
SEE THIS KID
AGAIN

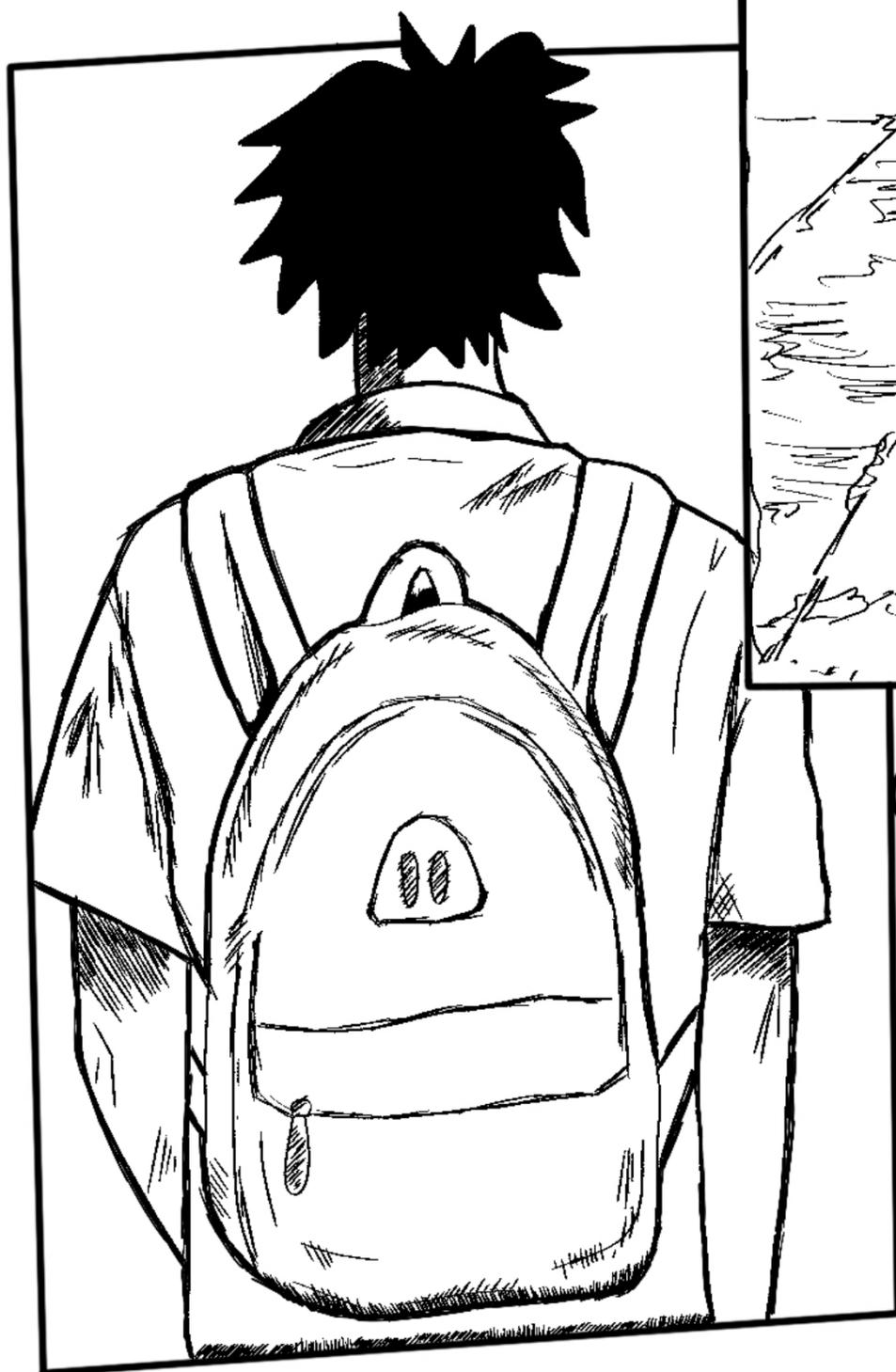
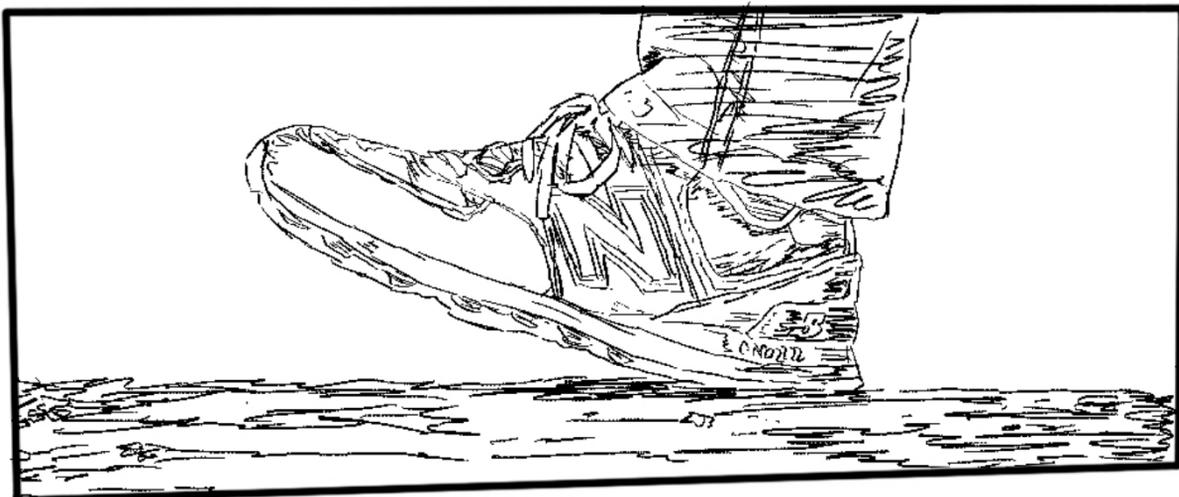
ANOTHER
TRANSFER
KID...



LATER...

KAI SITS IN CLASS, HIS
MIND WANDERING.
EARLIER, HE WAS
BULLIED-HIS LUNCH
STOLEN, PUSHED
AROUND.







FINALLY
SOME
PEACE
AND
QUIET.

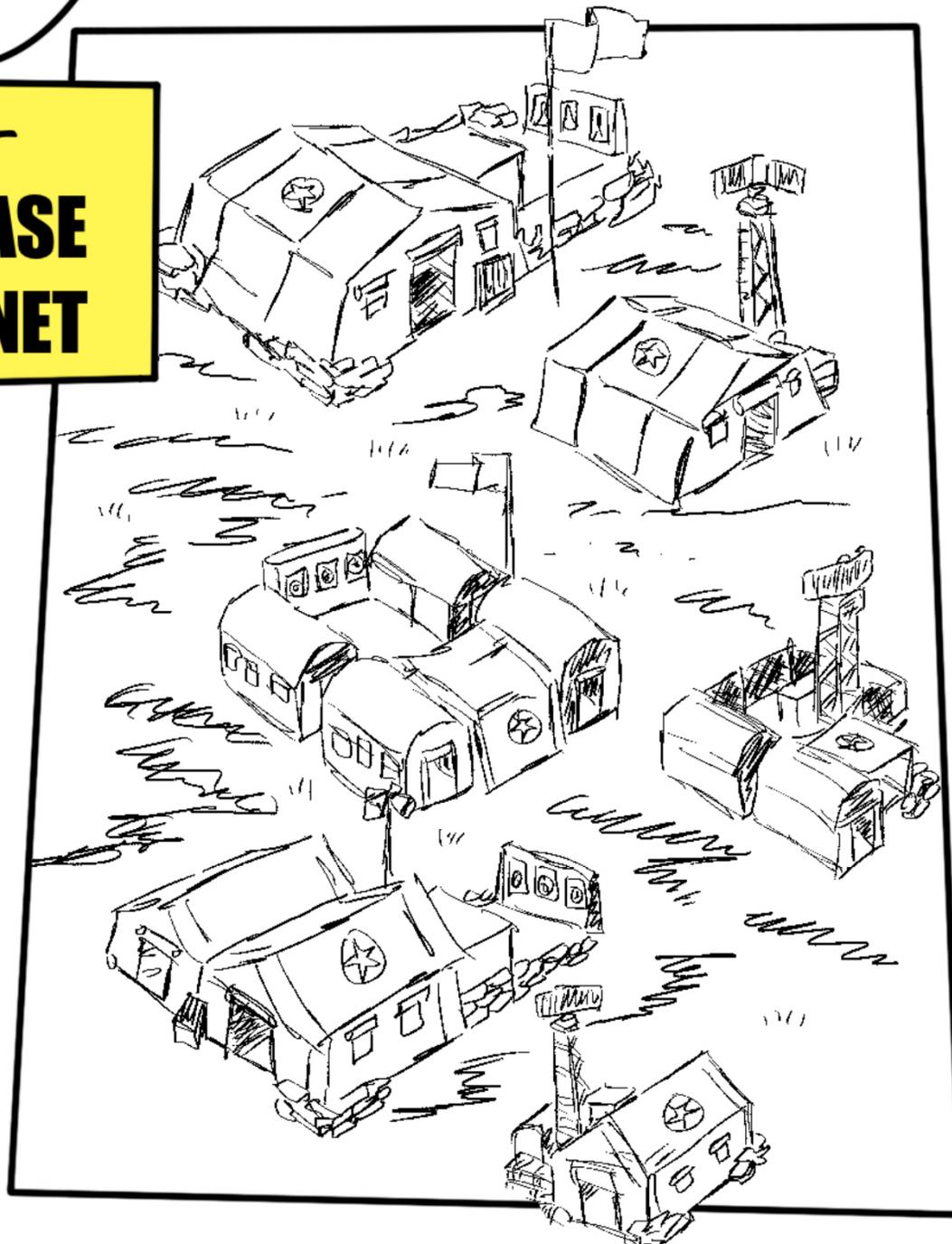
THE WOOD HAVE ALWAYS
FELT LIKE HOME. A
SECOND HOME. WHERE I
CAN BE ALONE. WHERE
NO ONE JUDGES ME.



AND THE ONE
THAT PUTS
ME IN MY
HAPPY
PLACE PLAYS
FIRST.

OVER A
THOUSAND
SONGS...

**NEARBY -
MILITARY BASE
0807 / SUBNET**



CAPTAIN HOBBS, AGENT O'S
SUBSTANCE WAS A FAILURE. ALL
TEST SUBJECTS DIED. I THINK IT'S
TIME WE SHUT THIS PROJECT DOWN
AND FOCUS ON SOMETHING THAT
ACTUALLY HELPS SOLDIERS IN THE
FIELD.

WHAT A DISGRACE. I FUNDED YOU FOR
YEARS, AGENT KATIE, AND THIS IS
HOW YOU REPAY
ME? GET OUT OF MY SIGHT. NOW. BE
GONE!

I'M SORRY TO DISAPPOINT
YOU, SIR. WHAT SHOULD I DO
WITH THE SUBSTANCE BEFORE
I LEAVE?

GET RID OF IT--JUST
LIKE THE OTHER
FAILURES.

LAUNCH IT INTO
THE WOODS FOR
ALL I CARE.

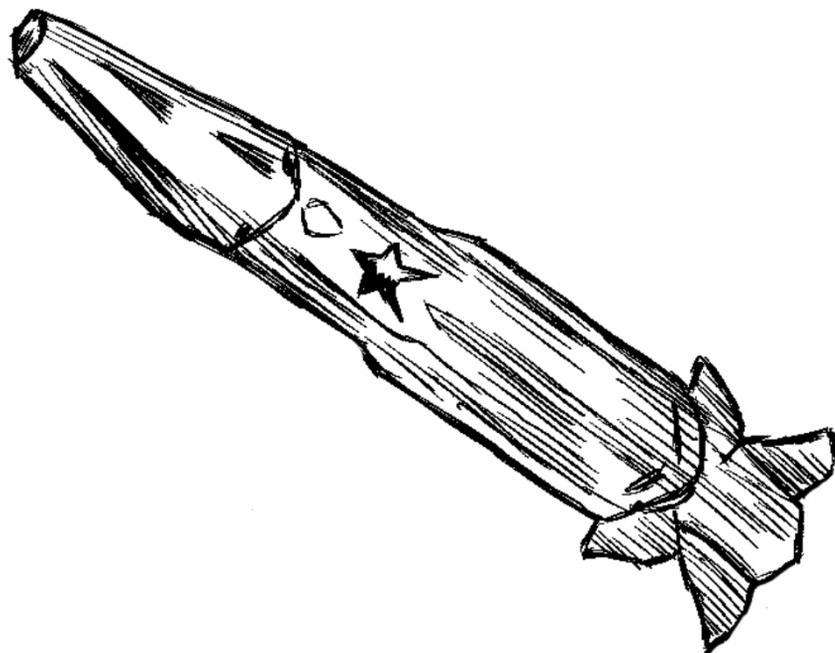
AND ONE MORE
THING, AGENT
KATIE... YOU'RE
FIRED. I WANT YOU
GONE AFTER THIS.

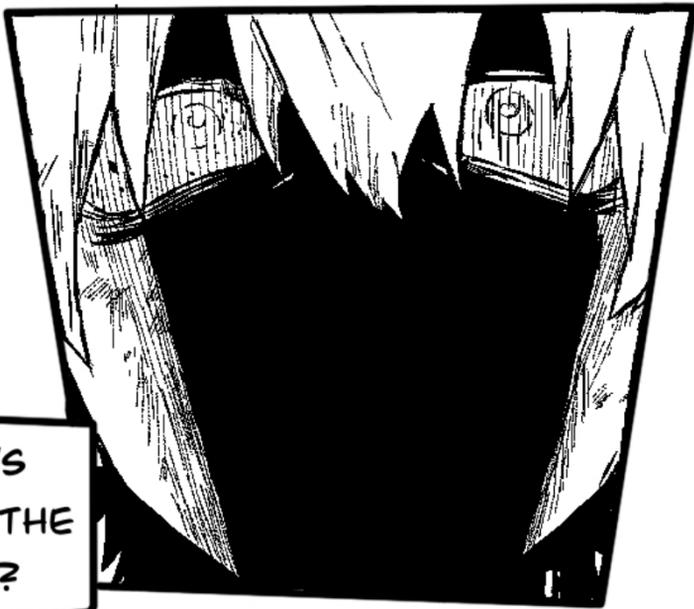
UNDERSTOOD, SIR. I'M
SORRY... ONCE AGAIN.

MISSILE LAUNCHED

PREPARING FOR
LAUNCH IN 3... 2... 1...
LAUNCH

MOMENTS LATER





WHAT'S THAT IN THE SKY...?

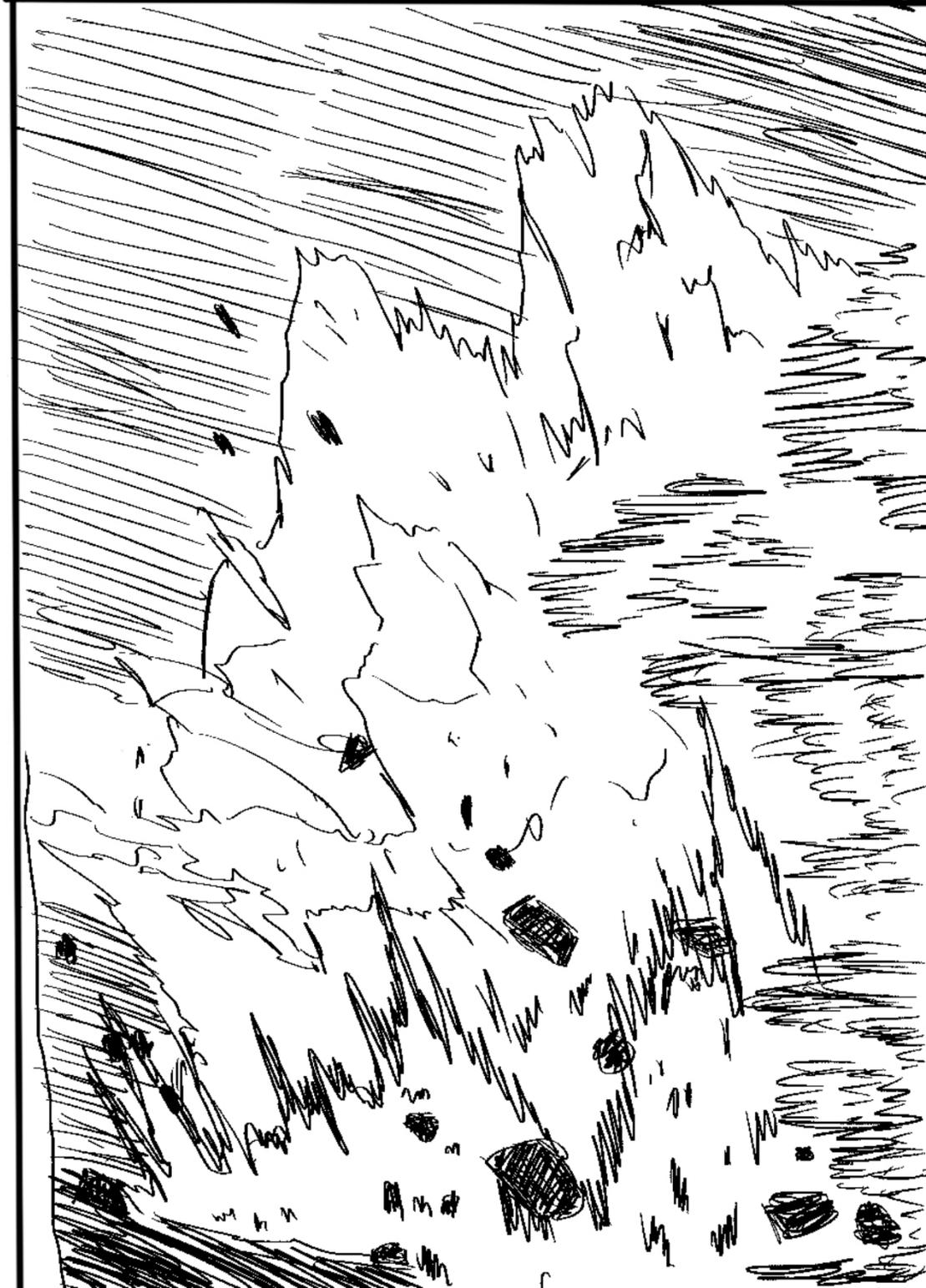
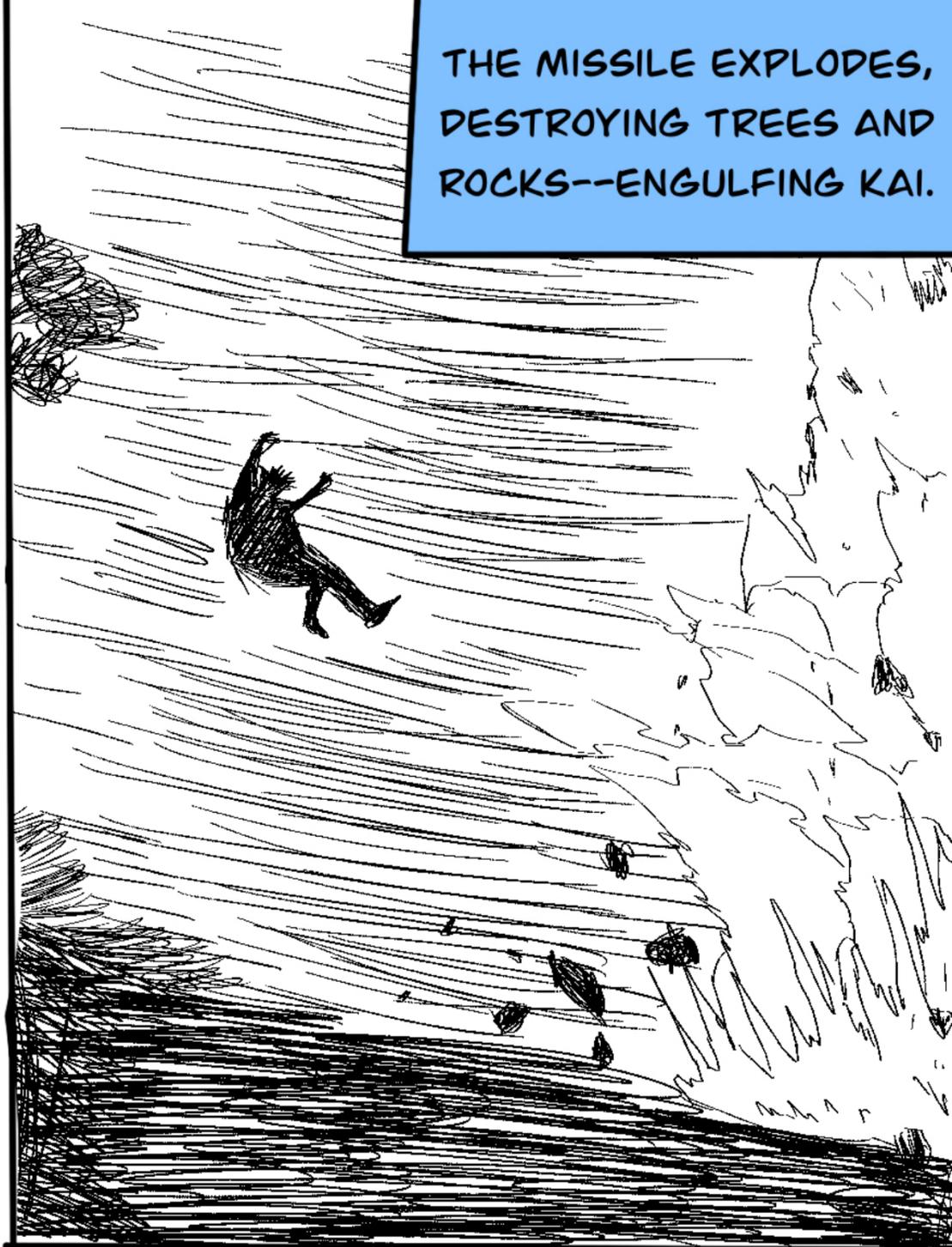


IS THAT... A MISSILE?!

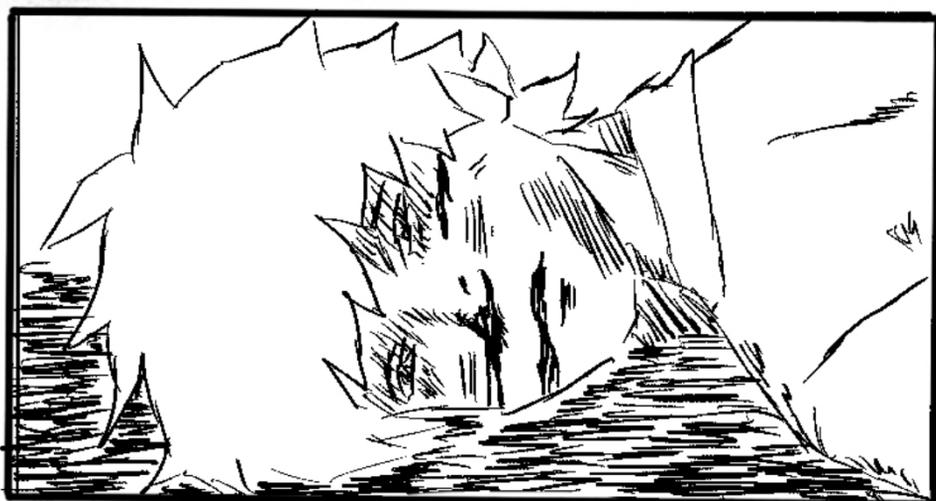


OH DAMN-- BETTER RUN!

THE MISSILE EXPLODES, DESTROYING TREES AND ROCKS--ENGULFING KAI.



THE WORLD GOES SILENT...
AS IF EVEN NATURE
FORGOT HOW TO BREATHE.



THAT...
HURT.

HE SHOULD BE DEAD.
EVERY PART OF HIM
KNOWS IT--EXCEPT HIS
BODY.

KAI'S HANDS
SHAKING

COVERED IN
DIRT.

WH... WHAT'S
HAPPENING...?



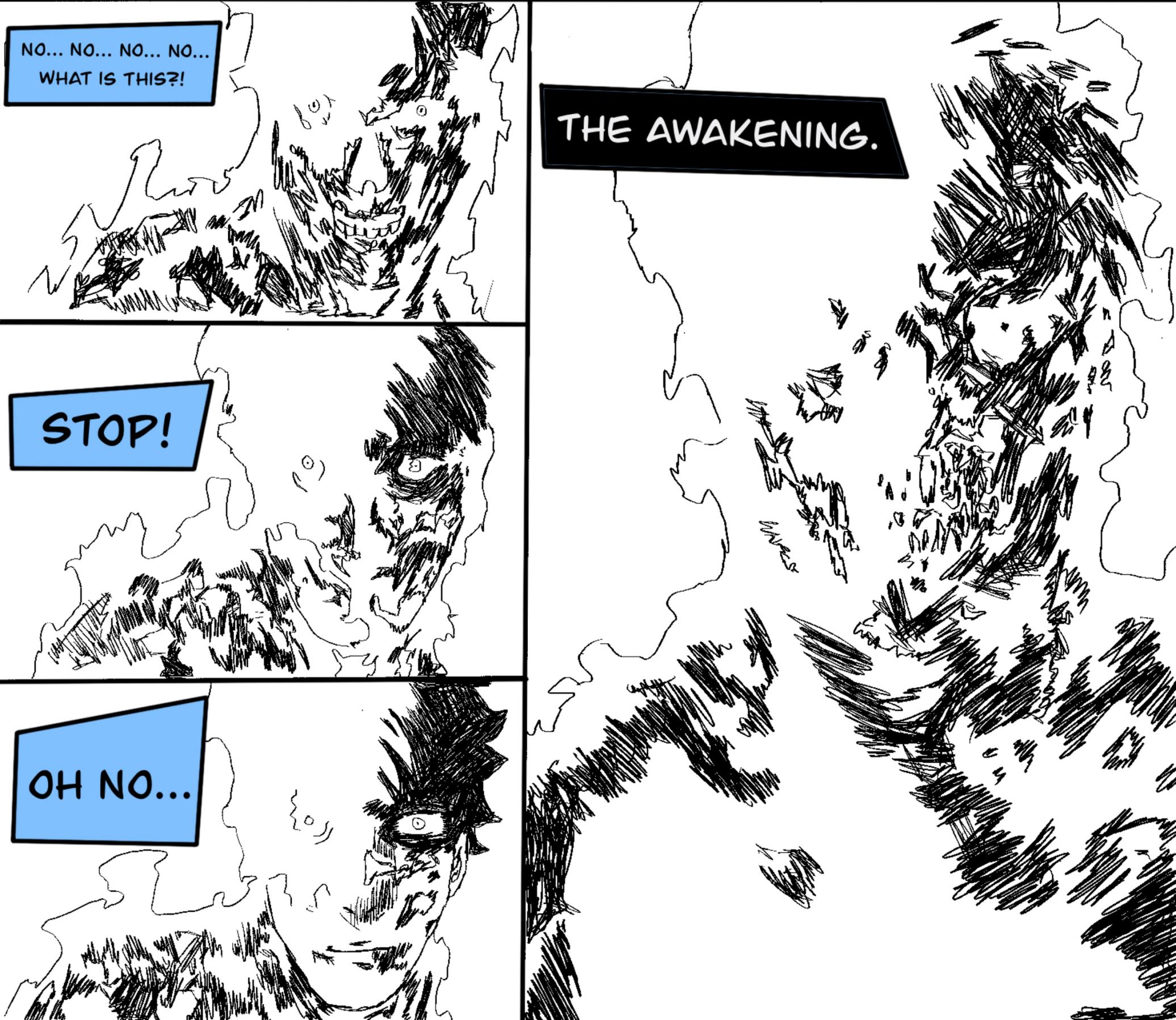
HIS FINGERS TREMBLE UNCONTROLLABLY.
KAI'S POWER AWAKENS. HIS BODY SHIFTS--CHANGING FOR A
MOMENT.

NO... NO... NO... NO...
WHAT IS THIS?!

THE AWAKENING.

STOP!

OH NO...



FEAR COMES
FIRST. QUESTIONS
COME LATER.

EVERYTHING SOUNDS WRONG.
TOO LOUD. TOO CLEAR.

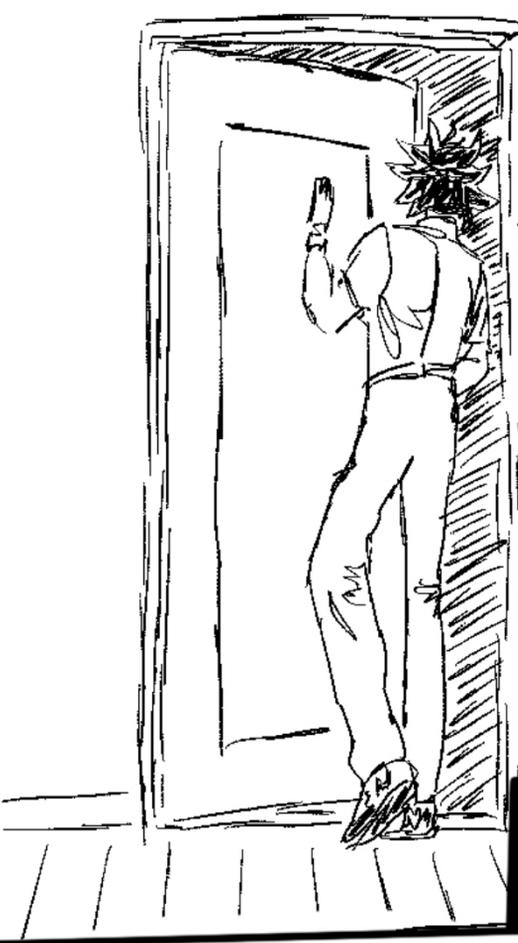
HF
HF
HF

I NEED
TO GET
HOME--
NOW.

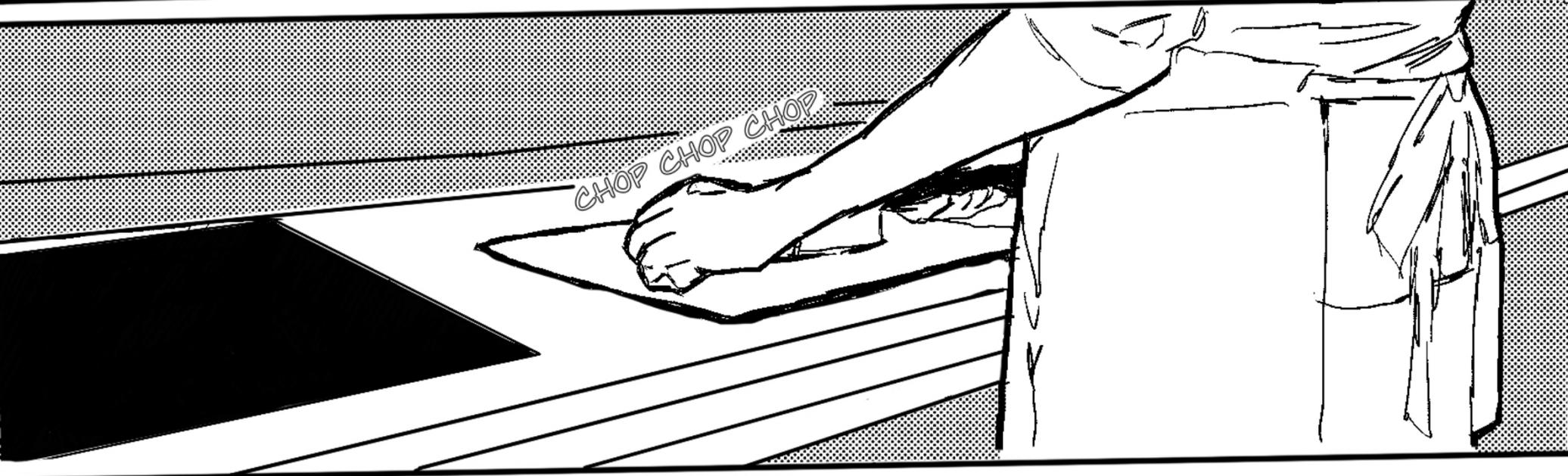
HOME.

I'M SUCH
AN IDIOT.
MOM CAN'T
KNOW
WHAT
HAPPENED.

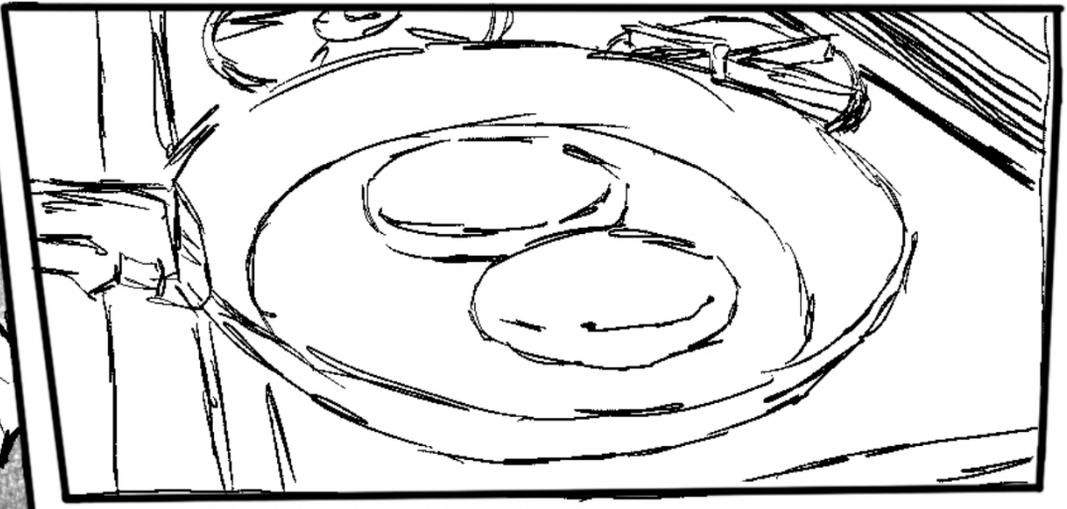
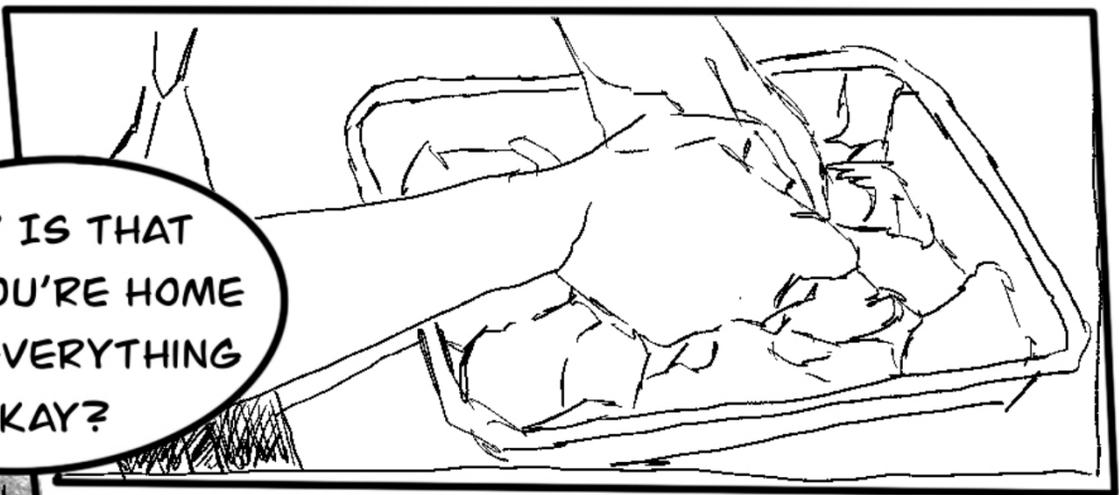




HE TRIES TO SNEAK INSIDE WITHOUT BEING NOTICED--BUT FAILS.



KAI? IS THAT YOU? YOU'RE HOME LATE. EVERYTHING OKAY?





YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME...

YEAH. I'M FINE. JUST TIRED.

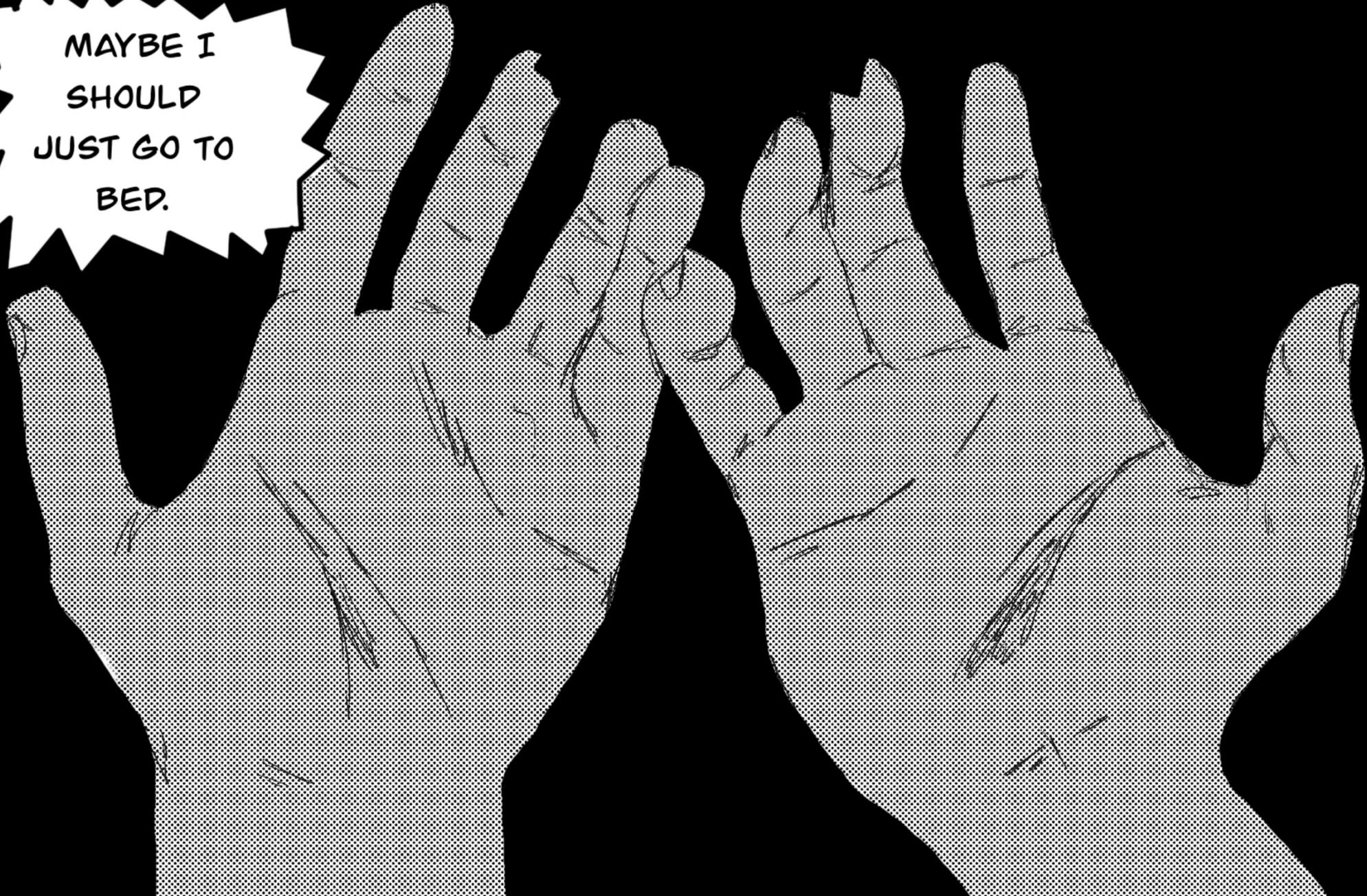
HE DOESN'T EVEN BELIEVE



EVERY WOUND--GONE. EVERY BRUISE--GONE. WHAT HAPPENED TO ME IN THE WOODS? WHAT AM I?

HIS OWN LIE.

MAYBE I SHOULD JUST GO TO BED.





HE CAN'T EAT. HE CAN'T
THINK. HE CAN ONLY HIDE.
KAI LIES ON HIS BED.



AH...

T BEGAN WITH A MORNING THAT FELT LIKE A BURIAL, A "NEW BEGINNING" IN A TOWN THAT DIDN'T KNOW HIS NAME AND A SCHOOL THAT DIDN'T WANT TO. HE MOVED THROUGH THE KITCHEN LIKE A GHOST, TAKING A LUNCH HE WOULDN'T EAT AND A PROMISE OF STABILITY HE DIDN'T BELIEVE. THE CLASSROOM WAS A CAGE OF WHISPERS, AND THE HALLWAYS WERE A GAUNTLET OF SMALL CRUELITIES WHERE MAXIMUS AND THE OTHERS TOOK WHAT THEY WANTED BECAUSE THEY KNEW HE WOULDN'T FIGHT BACK. EVERY SECOND OF THAT DAY FELT LIKE A MOUNTAIN OF LEAD PRESSING DOWN ON HIS CHEST, A WEIGHT HE COULD ONLY ESCAPE BY DISAPPEARING INTO THE TREES WHERE THE VOICES FINALLY STOPPED.

BUT WHILE KAI SOUGHT THE MERCY OF THE WOODS, A DIFFERENT KIND OF FAILURE WAS UNFOLDING IN THE SHADOWS OF THE MILITARY BASE NEARBY. A SERUM THAT REFUSED TO STABILIZE, A PROJECT ABANDONED BY THOSE IN POWER, AND A DESPERATE WOMAN WHO KNEW THAT "DISPOSAL" WAS A LIE. THEN, THE SKY BROKE. THE THOOM OF THE LAUNCH WAS THE LAST SOUND OF THE OLD WORLD, FOLLOWED BY A BLOOM OF FIRE THAT TURNED THE QUIET FOREST INTO A NIGHTMARE OF LIGHT AND HEAT. KAI DIDN'T SEE THE END COMING; HE ONLY FELT THE EARTH VANISH BENEATH HIM. BY THE LAWS OF PHYSICS AND THE CRUELTY OF FATE, HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN ERASED—HIS STORY ENDING AS A FOOTNOTE IN A CLASSIFIED REPORT. INSTEAD, HE WOKE UP. HE RAN THROUGH THE SMOKE WITH A HEART THAT BEAT WITH A RHYTHM HE DIDN'T RECOGNIZE, REACHING THE SAFETY OF HIS HOME ONLY TO FIND THAT "HOME" NO LONGER EXISTED FOR THE PERSON HE HAD BECOME. HE LOOKED IN THE MIRROR AND SAW THE SAME BOY, BUT BENEATH THE SKIN, THE ATOMS WERE SCREAMING. NOTHING FELT DIFFERENT, YET EVERYTHING HAD BEEN LOST IN THE FIRE. HE IS ALIVE, BUT THE BOY WHO WALKED INTO THOSE WOODS IS GONE FOREVER.

TO BE CONTINUED...

UNTIL IT WASN'T

A NULLFRAME COMICS story.



Until It Wasn't

KAI WAS AN EXPERT AT BEING INVISIBLE. IN A LIFE DEFINED BY CONSTANT MOVES AND QUIET HALLWAYS, SILENCE WAS HIS ONLY SANCTUARY. HE DIDN'T WANT TO BE NOTICED; HE JUST WANTED TO SURVIVE THE DAY. BUT WHEN A CLASSIFIED MILITARY EXPERIMENT TEARS THROUGH THE WOODS OF HIS NEW TOWN, THE SILENCE HE CHERISHED IS SHATTERED FOREVER.

HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN A CASUALTY. HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN ASH. INSTEAD, KAI BECOMES THE ONLY SUCCESSFUL STABILIZATION OF A POWER HE WAS NEVER MEANT TO HOLD. NOW, HUNTED BY THE ARCHITECTS OF HIS TRANSFORMATION AND HAUNTED BY A BODY THAT NO LONGER FEELS LIKE HIS OWN, KAI MUST DECIDE IF HE IS A SURVIVOR OR A WEAPON. SOME LOSSES DON'T END. THEY WAIT.

THANK YOU FOR STEPPING INTO THE WORLD OF UNTIL IT WASN'T. THIS STORY IS A LABOR OF PASSION, EXPLORING THE QUIET SPACES BETWEEN TRAGEDY AND TRANSFORMATION. YOUR SUPPORT OF INDIE COMICS ALLOWS STORIES LIKE KAI'S TO BE TOLD. WE HOPE THE SILENCE STAYS WITH YOU LONG AFTER THE FINAL PAGE IS TURNED.

WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY KEAN PRINSLOO
A NULLFRAME COMICS PRODUCTION

