
11:52 P.M.


Dad, your heart is loud.
I think God is bigger than people.
Probably. I'm only saying people keep outsourcing the part we can do ourselves.


You cannot keep medical waste as a pet.
It has a face now.
That makes it worse.

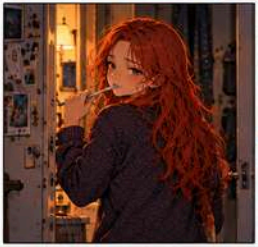

I don't know if there's something beyond us. Call it the Ultimate, call it God, call it nothing. I don't know.
Great lesson.
Thank you. Very expensive education.
What I do know is that sometimes a person needs something they have no reason to expect, and another person chooses to become the answer. People say, 'Thank God.' Maybe sometimes they mean more than they know.


Imagine somebody is starving and you have one meal.
They can have a different meal.
Excellent. Humanity saved.
The point isn't being magical. It isn't being better. It's choosing good when fear gives you a very convincing reason not to.
What if you're wrong about the good?
Then we learn less gently.
And if it doesn't?
Then reality tells you. Hopefully gently.


I don't know the win condition. That's the irritating part. I just think most of us are playing side quests like they're the whole thing. Money. Being right. Being admired. Winning.
So what is the actual game?
Figure it out and tell me.
Before or after we brush our teeth?
Ideally after. I have standards.















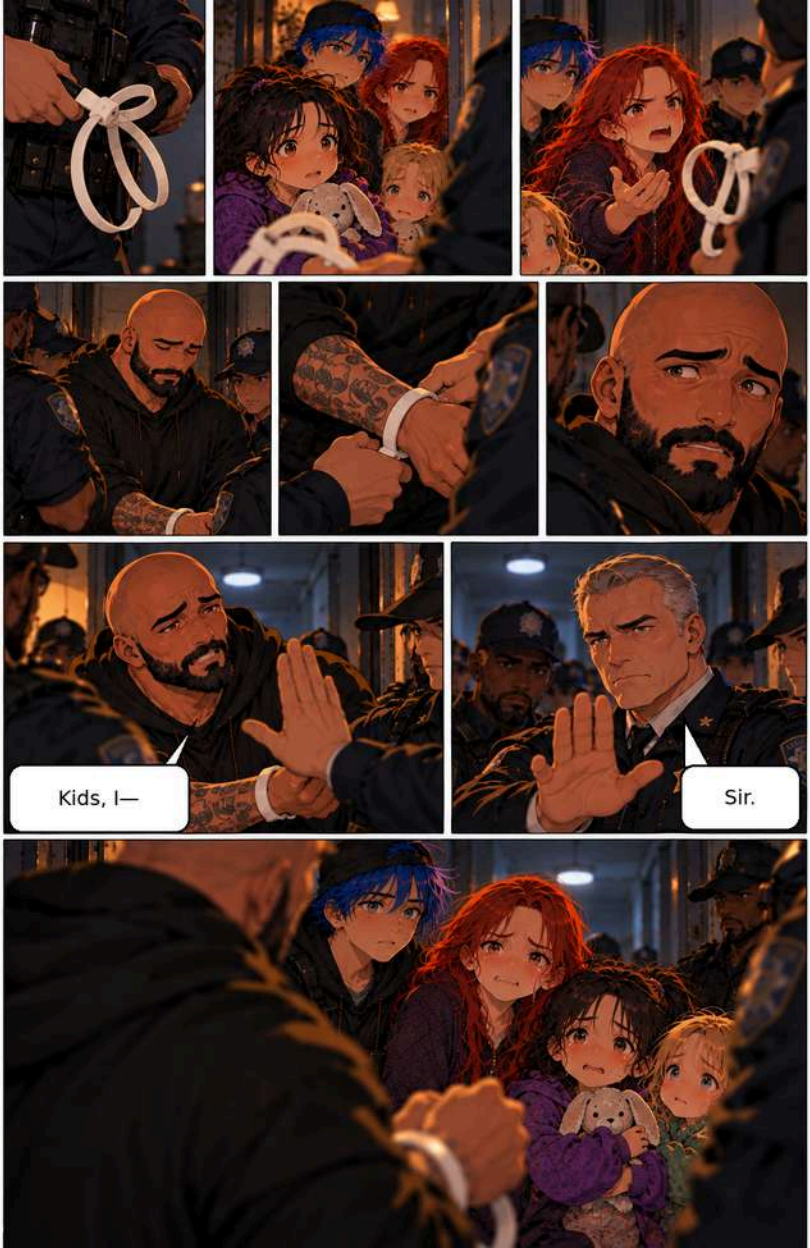

12:01 A.M.


KNOCK.
KNOCK.
KNOCK.


Again?


Sir, step into the hall.
Can you tell me—
Step into the hall.


Guys, it's—
Don't speak to them right now.
Why can't he talk?
LET GO OF ME.


Kids, I—
Sir.


WHAT IF.
CAN'T RISK IT.
SOMETHING COULD HAPPEN.
DO SOMETHING.






12:14
12:14


Where did they take him?
I don't know.
Why did they come back?
I don't know.
Did we do something?
No.
I don't think so.


WHAT CHANGED BETWEEN
11:00 AND 12:00?
WHAT WAS DAD TRYING TO DO?


SIX WEEKS LATER.


Why are you here?
At your school.
Grandma dropped me off.
Initially.


She found a tunnel.
What tunnel?
Exactly.
Tell them what God told you, Eli.
I didn't say God told me anything.



When do we get nothing?



When we do nothing.



Give him his bag.



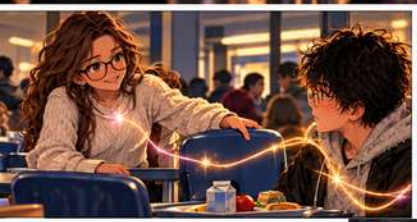
You gonna save everybody now?



No. Just him right now.












HE THINKS HE'S SPECIAL.
SHE'S DANGEROUS.
THEY ALWAYS DO THIS.
PEOPLE LIKE HIM.


Eli is crazy.
Maybe he just said something weird.
Hi.
You can't see it.
You looked like there was something there. I was being polite.



Is it happening again?

Bigger.





Real?

I don't know.





Helpful?

Maybe.




There is absolutely a tunnel.


You vanished for an hour.
I left my backpack.


That's not a tracking device.







Dad was here.

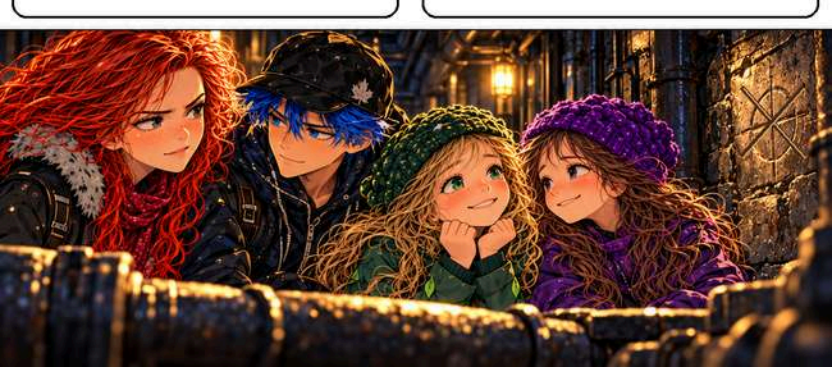


Or somebody used the same symbol.



Can you let us have five seconds?

Fine. Five seconds of irresponsible certainty.









Boundaries are how mysteries stay mysteries.



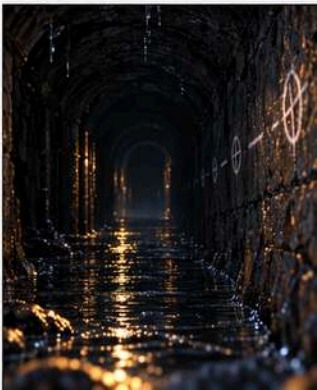


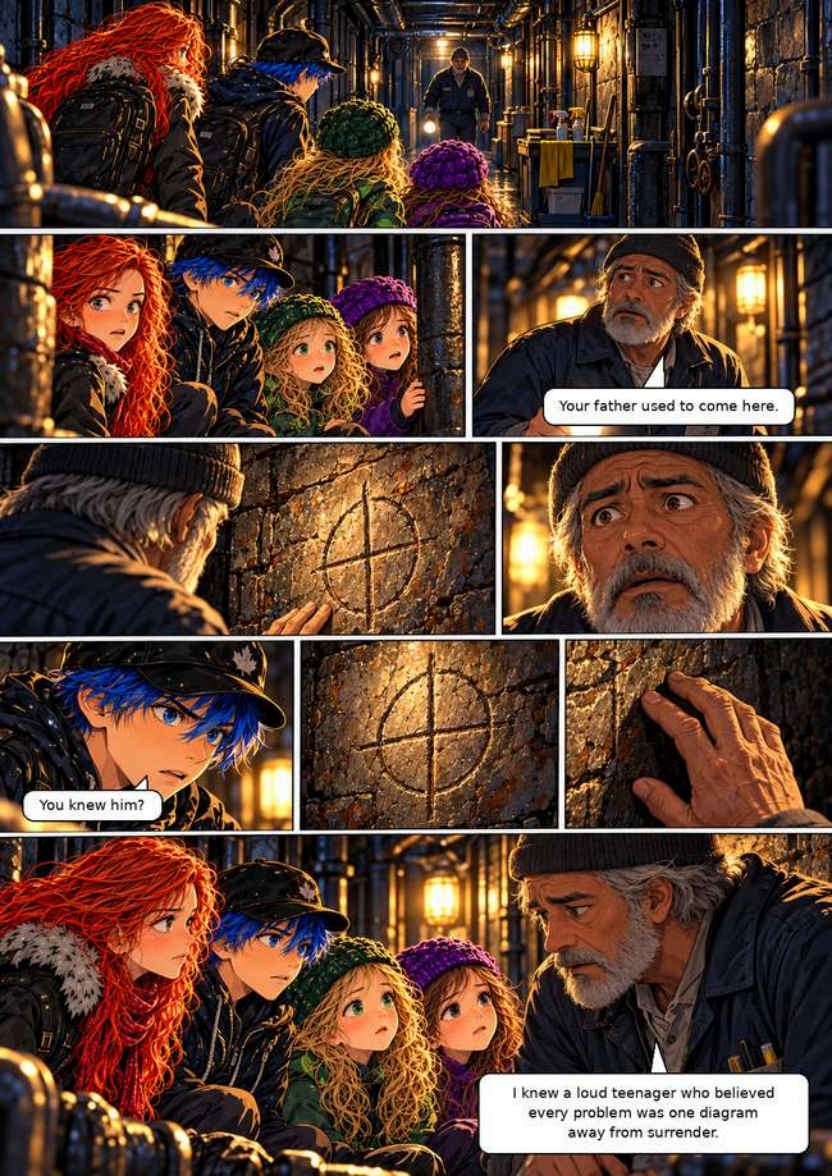


Boundaries are how eight-year-olds remain alive.



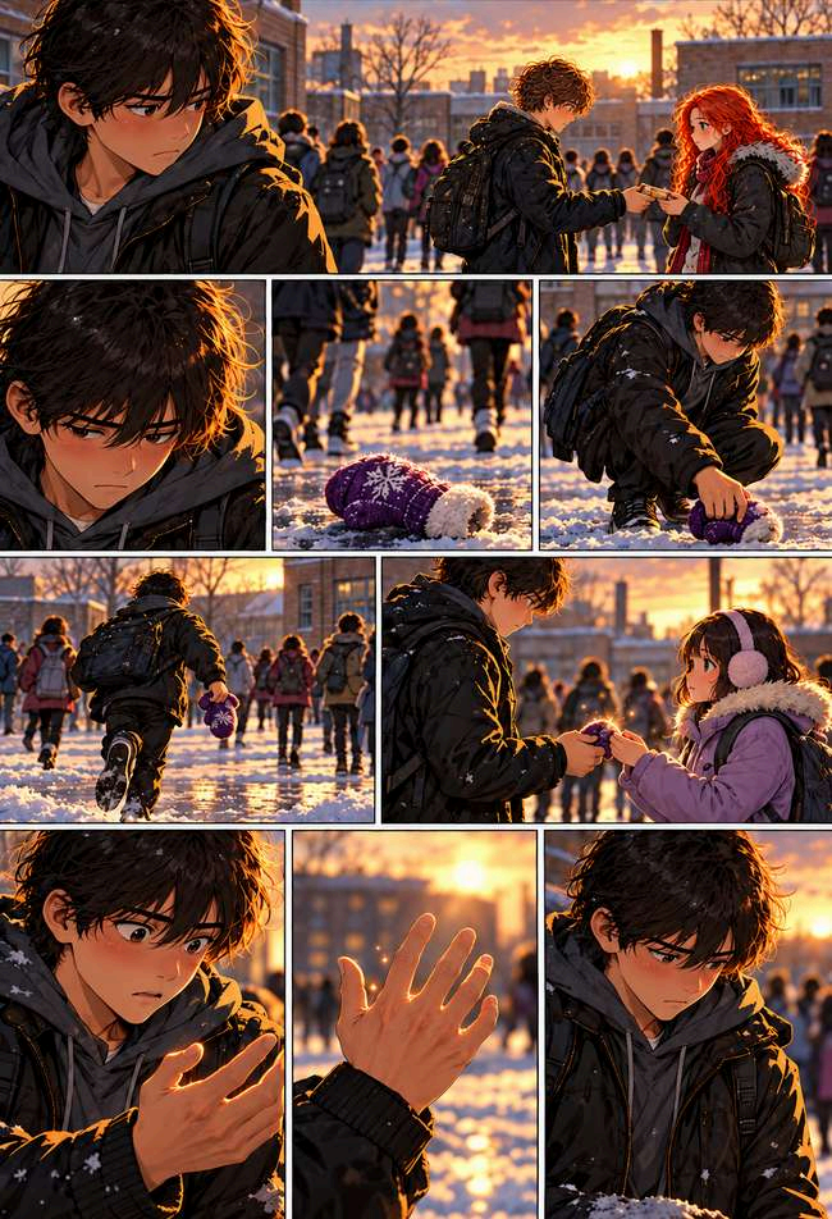




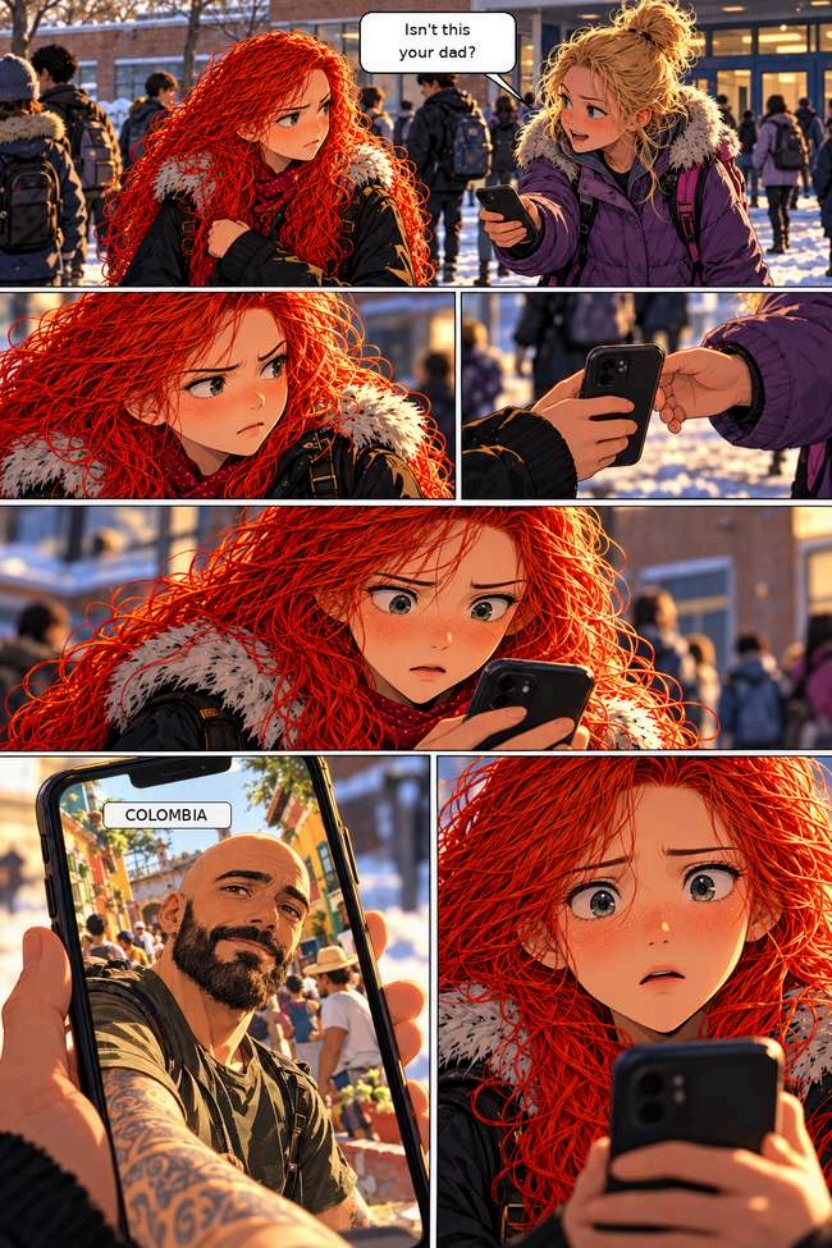

Your father used to come here.
You knew him?
I knew a loud teenager who believed every problem was one diagram away from surrender.

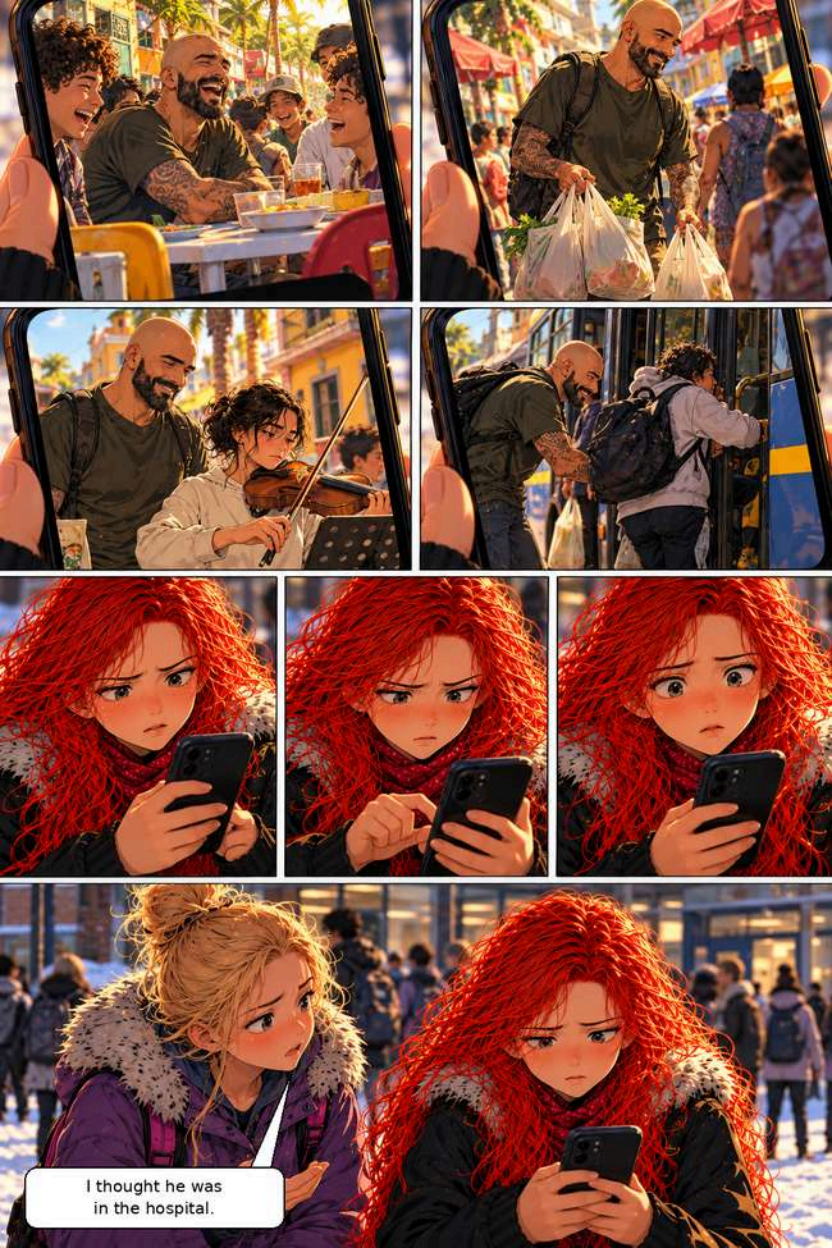

DR. AMINA SINGH.
Toronto Reference Library.
If she wants to talk to you, she will.
Children know their parents in one direction. That is not an insult. It is how childhood works.


What's this?
You missed lunch because of me.
You don't owe me.
I know.




WHAT CHANGED AT MIDNIGHT?
WHAT WAS DAD TRYING TO DO?
WHY WAS HIS SYMBOL UNDER OUR SCHOOL?


Isn't this your dad?
COLOMBIA


I thought he was in the hospital.


Don't.
Don't what?
Make it complicated.
He's there. He's smiling.
That's what we know.
And that's not enough
for you?
Not for why.


I hate her.
No I don't.
I hate this.







You knew he wasn't in the hospital.

I knew more than I told you.





Why?

Because knowing he was nearby would have made you try to get to him.





Was he nearby?







There were rules I could not change.
There were things I was trying to protect you from.



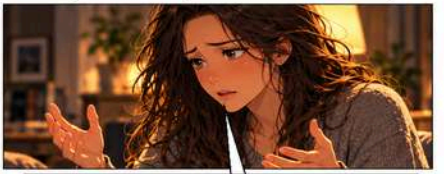
You could have told us there were rules.



Maybe.



Why didn't you?



Because I was afraid that even knowing
the rules existed would make you test them.









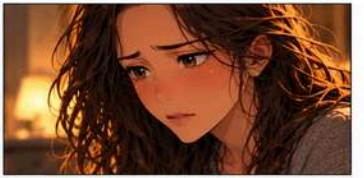


If Dad can be with those kids,
why can't he be with us?



I don't know how to give you an answer that won't
make you hurt in a different direction.

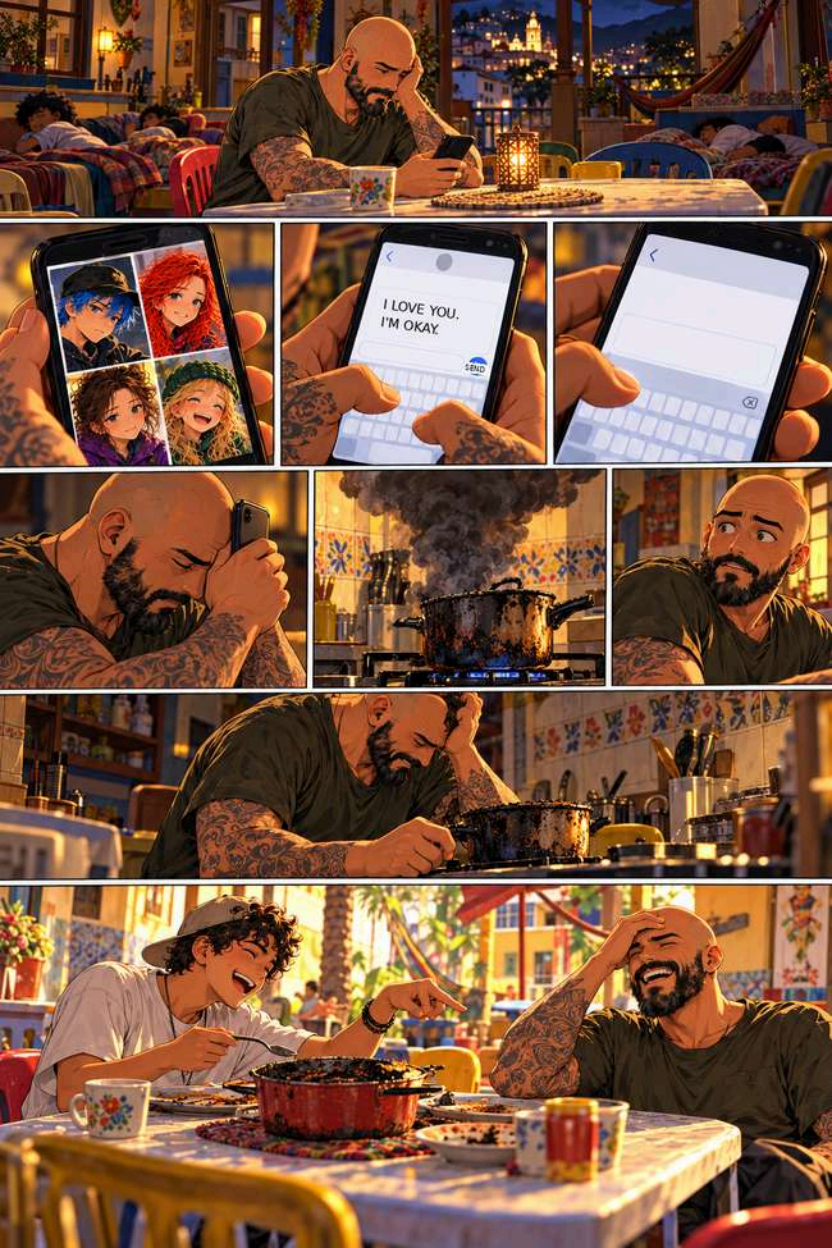




Try.

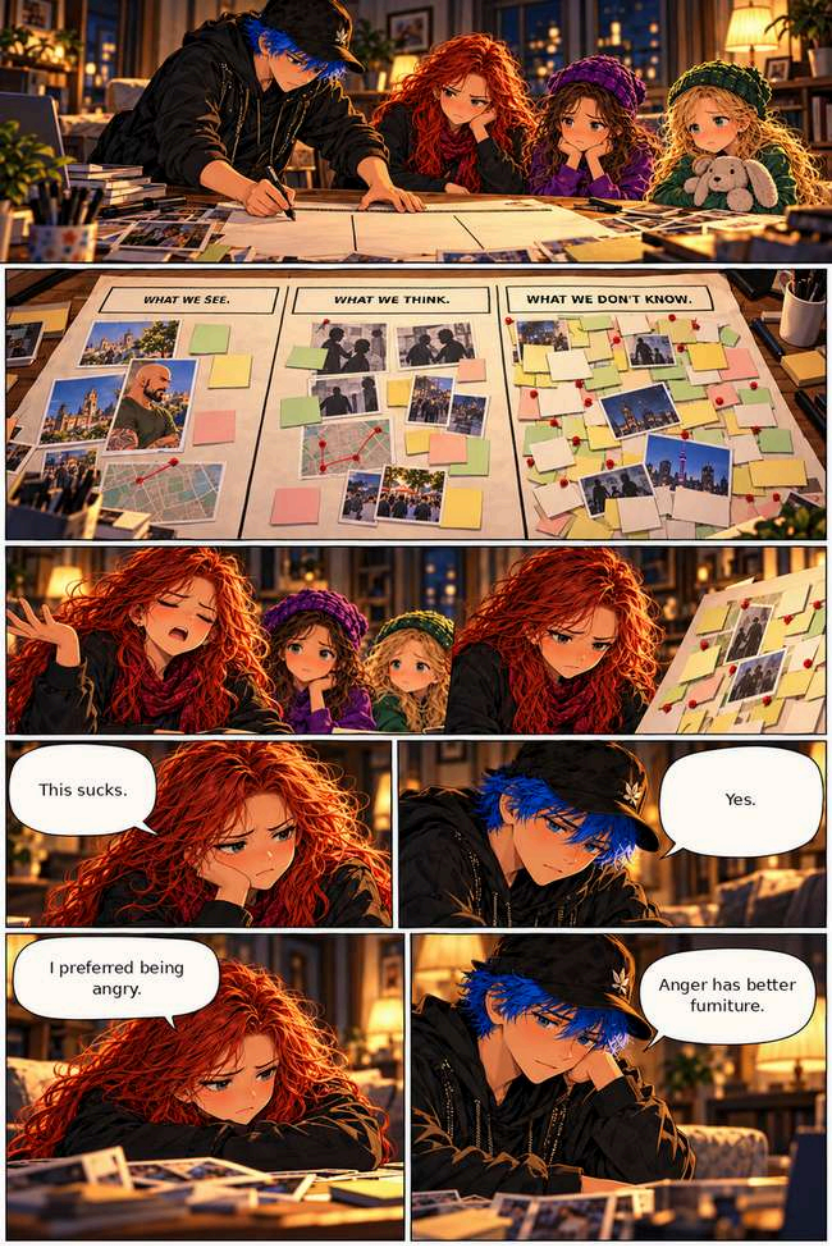





I LOVE YOU.
I'M OKAY.
SEND


I'm not identifying them.
I'm identifying him.
Same pixels.


HERO SAVES STREET YOUTH.
TROUBLED FATHER FLEES CANADA.
CULT LEADER RECRUITS VULNERABLE KIDS.
HUMANITARIAN OR FRAUD?

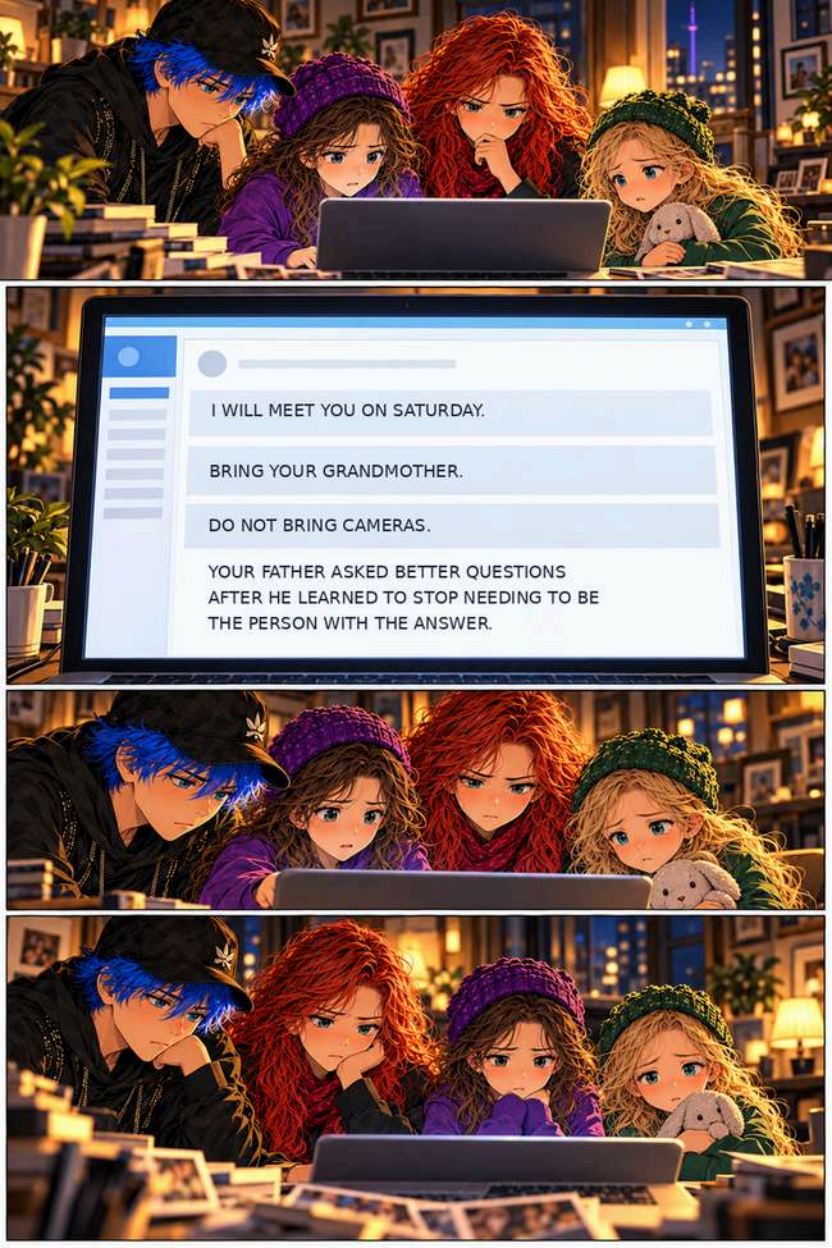

WHAT WE SEE.
WHAT WE THINK.
WHAT WE DON'T KNOW.
This sucks.
Yes.
I preferred being angry.
Anger has better fumiture.


What if they don't want me?
Then you'll know more than you know now.
Terrible pep talk.
Runs in the family.


He left.
Obviously.
No. He got him home and left.


I was trying to make you feel better.
Don't.
Not everything needs you to make it better immediately.

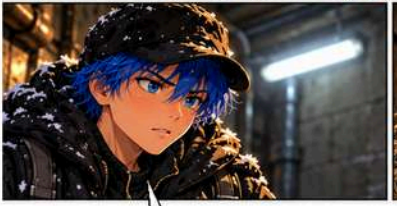

Maybe apology isn't a button.


I WILL MEET YOU ON SATURDAY.
BRING YOUR GRANDMOTHER.
DO NOT BRING CAMERAS.
YOUR FATHER ASKED BETTER QUESTIONS AFTER HE LEARNED TO STOP NEEDING TO BE THE PERSON WITH THE ANSWER.


I wasn't asking.









This is objectively a bad idea.

That means it is finally an adventure.






Wren!
WREN DOESN'T CARE ABOUT US.


Wren!
I made it.
That was not the question!



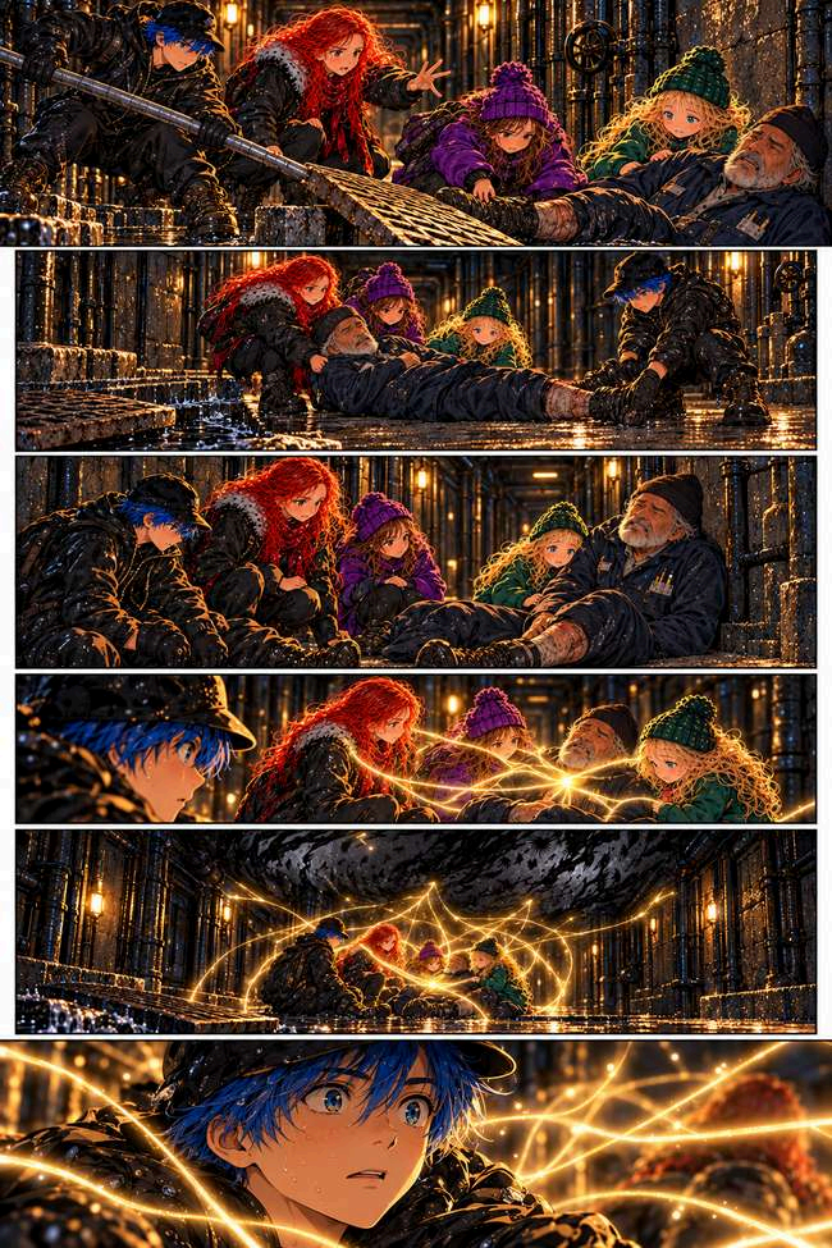






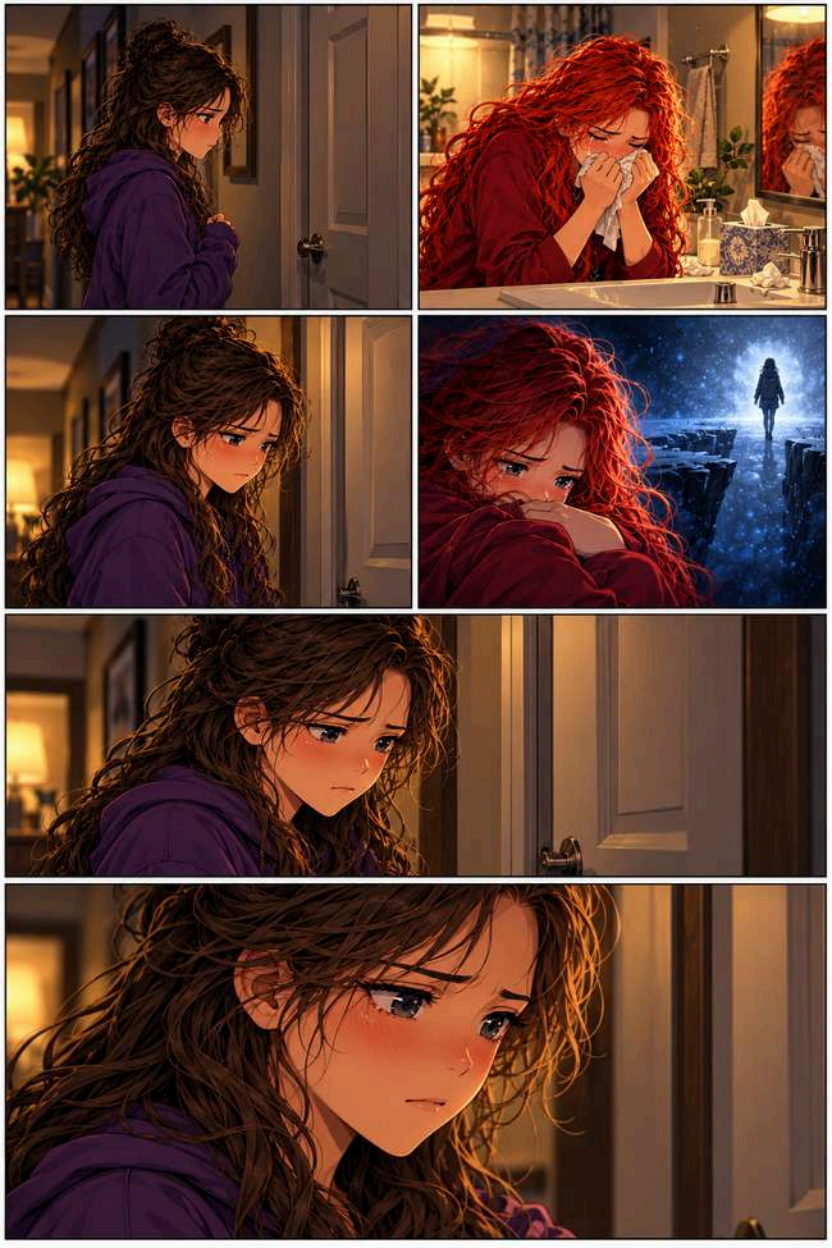


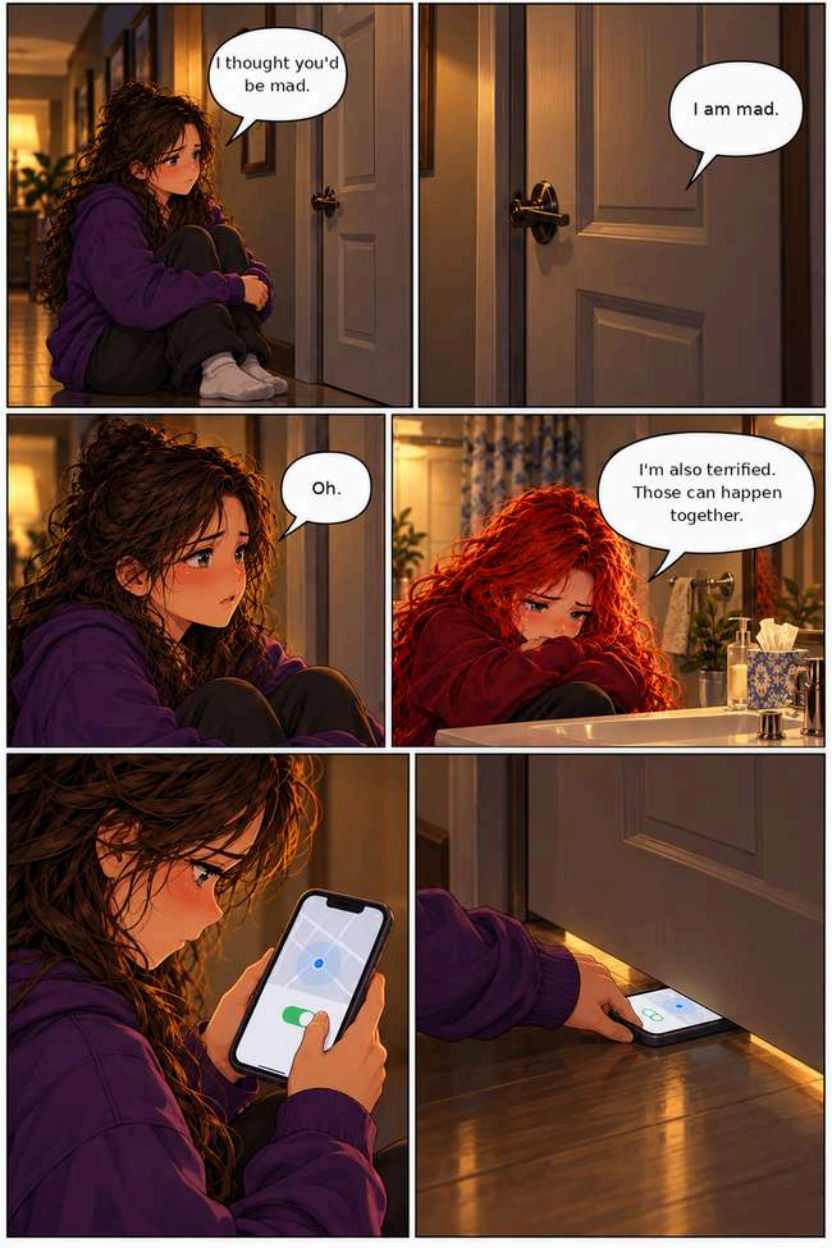

I need you to tell me your worst joke.
Why?
Because if you pass out, Lucy will become even bossier.




If you are going to do reckless things, at least have the decency to be bad at lying about them.


And if you had fallen,
what would we have found?




I thought you'd be mad.
I am mad.
Oh.
I'm also terrified. Those can happen together.


THE GOOD GAME
— 2002
THE GOOD GAME
— 2002


IF EVERYONE WINS, WHAT DOES WINNING MEAN?
CAN A GROUP HAVE AN IDENTITY WITHOUT NEEDING AN ENEMY?
DON'T BUILD A THEORY THAT CAN'T LOSE.
DON'T BUILD A THEORY THAT CAN'T LOSE.



Pair two people who dislike each other and ask each to do one unexpected useful thing for the other without being seen.

SOME GOT WORSE.

SOME BECAME FRIENDS.

ONE STOLE THE OTHER'S BIKE.







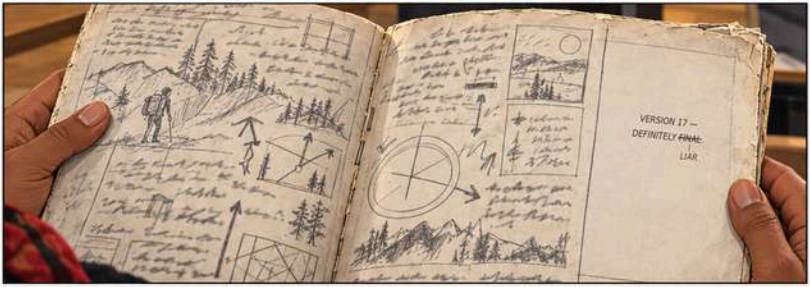


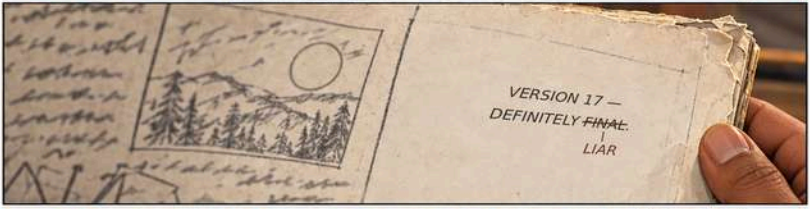

Your father wanted to fix humanity by spring.
Did he?
No. He did learn to stop making deadlines for humanity.


THREADS BR
AFTER CH
NOT WC
THREADS BRIGHTEN
AFTER CHOICES,
NOT WORDS.
HEN LET'S WATCH
WHAT PEOPLE DO.


Oh no. You have his eyebrows when you're about to ask something impossible.


THE GOOD GAME


VERSION 17 —
DEFINITELY ~~FINAL~~
LIAR


VERSION 17 —
DEFINITELY ~~FINAL~~
LIAR






Your father predicted approximately twelve hundred things. Statistical law requires some of them to sound impressive later.
Do not turn hindsight into prophecy. It is disrespectful to both evidence and your father.


Why?
Because he made changing their minds cost more than keeping the lie.

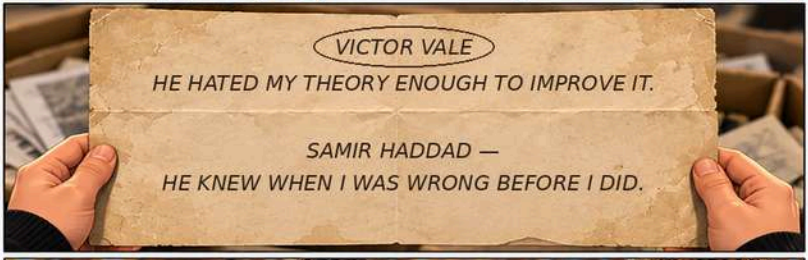

So we're all idiots?
That's not what I said.
I was right.
Congratulations. How did that go?


He was saying provocative things about God before he could legally drive.
Your father believed stories of radical human goodness may have helped shape what humans called divine.
Interesting hypothesis.
Not a historical fact. If you repeat it, keep the difference.


Sometimes. I also talk to my dead mother, my younger self, and people I am furious with in the shower. That does not establish telecommunications.
But it helps.
Often. That is enough reason to respect it without lying about what we know.


PEOPLE WHO TAUGHT ME
SOMETHING I DIDN'T
WANT TO LEARN.




VICTOR VALE
HE HATED MY THEORY ENOUGH TO IMPROVE IT.
SAMIR HADDAD —
HE KNEW WHEN I WAS WRONG BEFORE I DID.








Absolutely not.
Which has never stopped this family.
But if you are going to search, search for people, not answers. People are harder to turn into scripture.


Dad?
Could be.
That's all I said.


Someone call emergency. Does anyone know first aid?


Do you want me to stay with you?


Thank God you were here.
I almost kept walking.


So she was God.
In Dad's definition.
For that moment.
Then what is she now?
Someone who has to choose again.


Se le cayó.
Buenas noches.
Thank God.









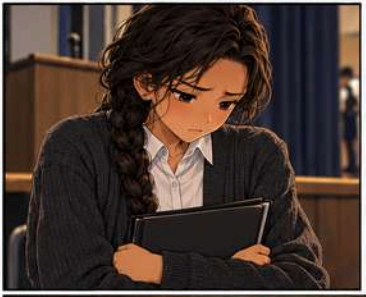





Sometimes the right answer is just the right answer.
NEVER USE BEING THE GOOD GUY AS EVIDENCE YOU'RE RIGHT.



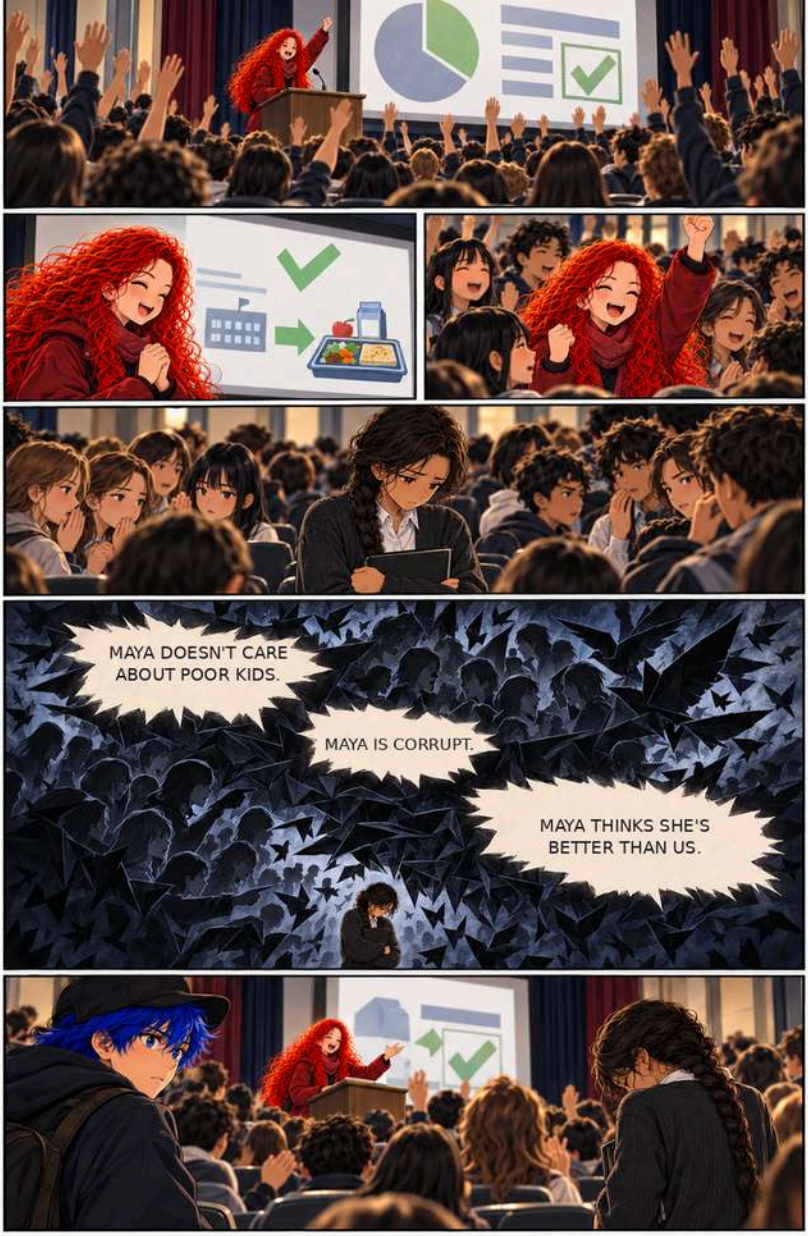






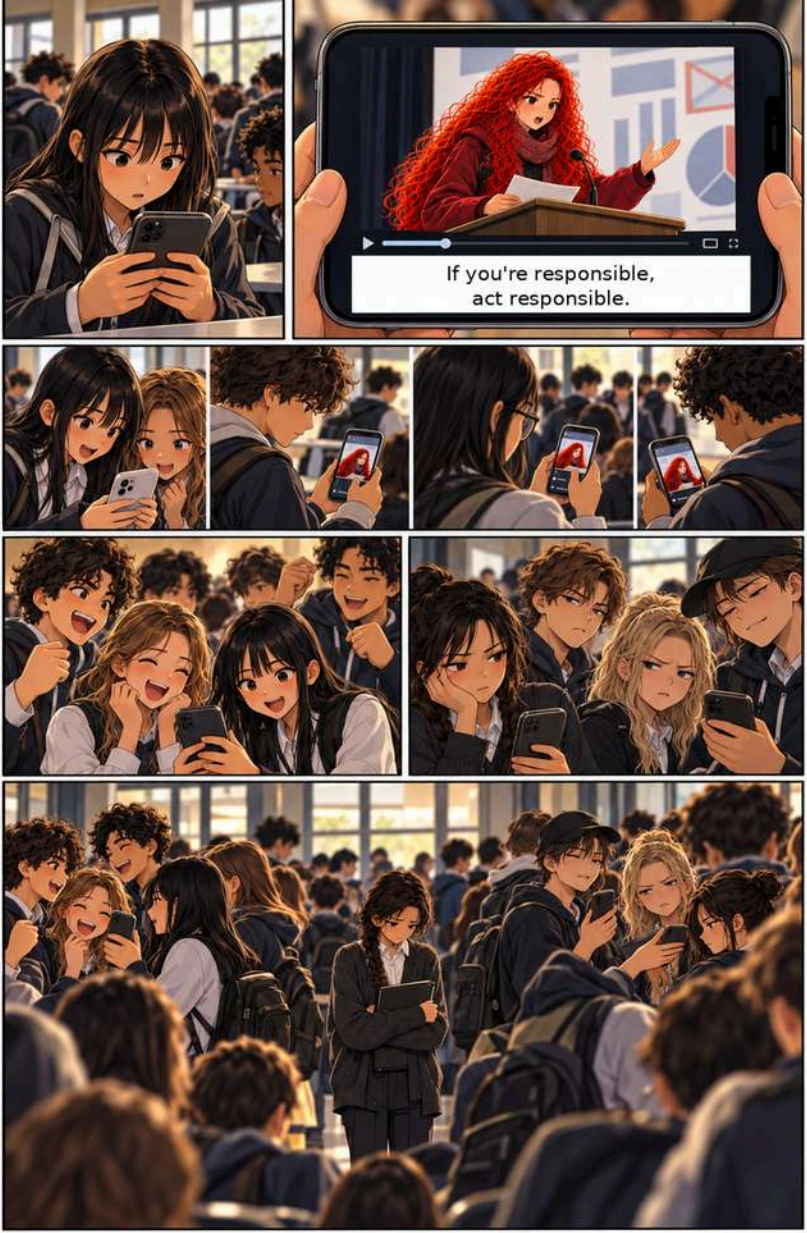





MAYA DOESN'T CARE ABOUT POOR KIDS.
MAYA IS CORRUPT.
MAYA THINKS SHE'S BETTER THAN US.


Don't.
I didn't do this.
You built the stage.
You were right about the money.
You were wrong about me.
Both are true.

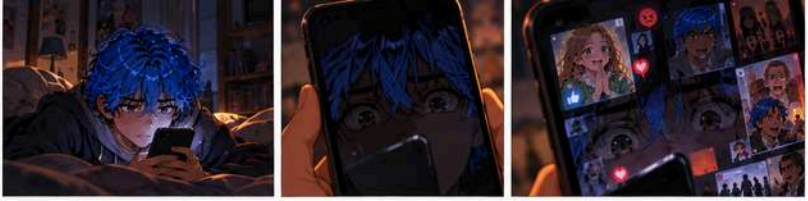

I believe you're sorry.
I'm still not ready to talk to you.


If you're responsible,
act responsible.


WHY LUCY
IS NOT GOD
Because all of you are.


I was helping.
You don't get to decide that for everyone affected.


the God kid.
I know you didn't mean it. Please don't fix it right now.



HERO. NARCISSIST. CHILDREN OF GOD.

DANGEROUS FAMILY. ABANDONED KIDS.











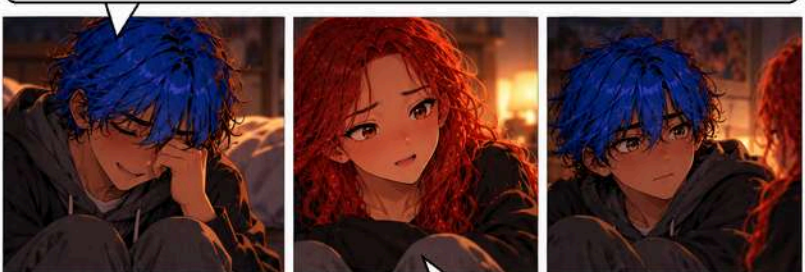
What if they're right about us?

Which ones?



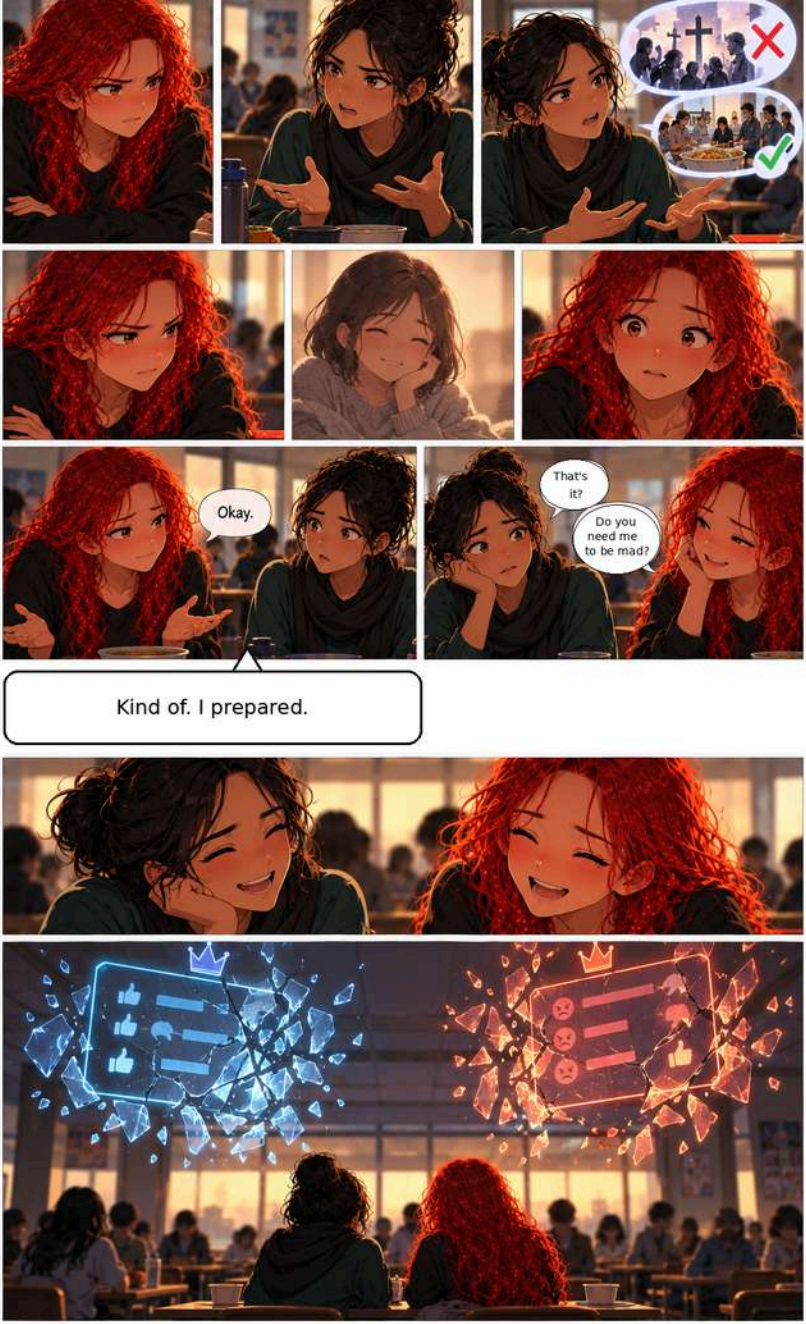
We can be wrong without being what strangers decided we are.

That sounds like Dad.



Unfortunately.

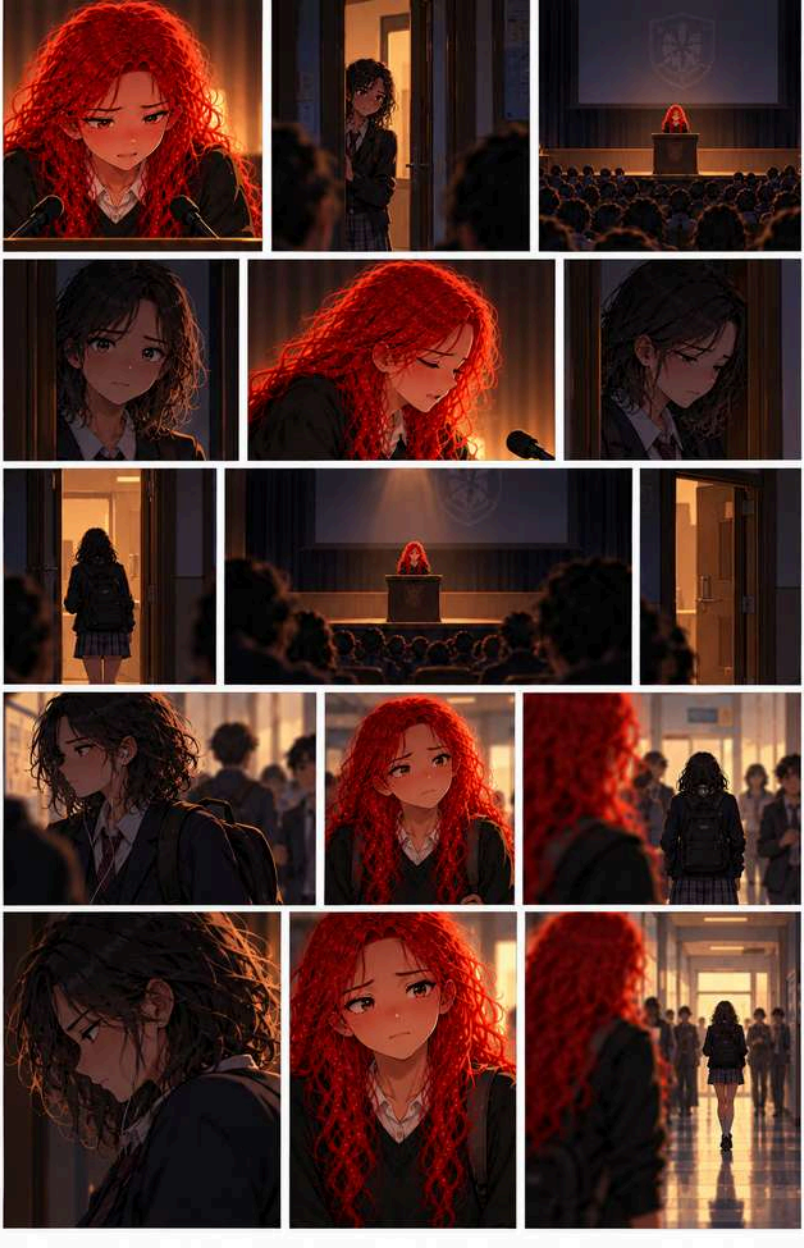



Okay.
That's it?
Do you need me to be mad?
Kind of. I prepared.



The budget decision was wrong. I turned that into a claim about why Maya did it. I did not know.






THE ONE IS WHOEVER CHOOSES FIRST.
ASK WHAT HELP LOOKS LIKE BEFORE HELPING.
AND LEAVE ROOM TO BE WRONG.
THE ONE IS WHOEVER CHOOSES FIRST.
ASK WHAT HELP LOOKS LIKE BEFORE HELPING.
AND LEAVE ROOM TO BE WRONG.











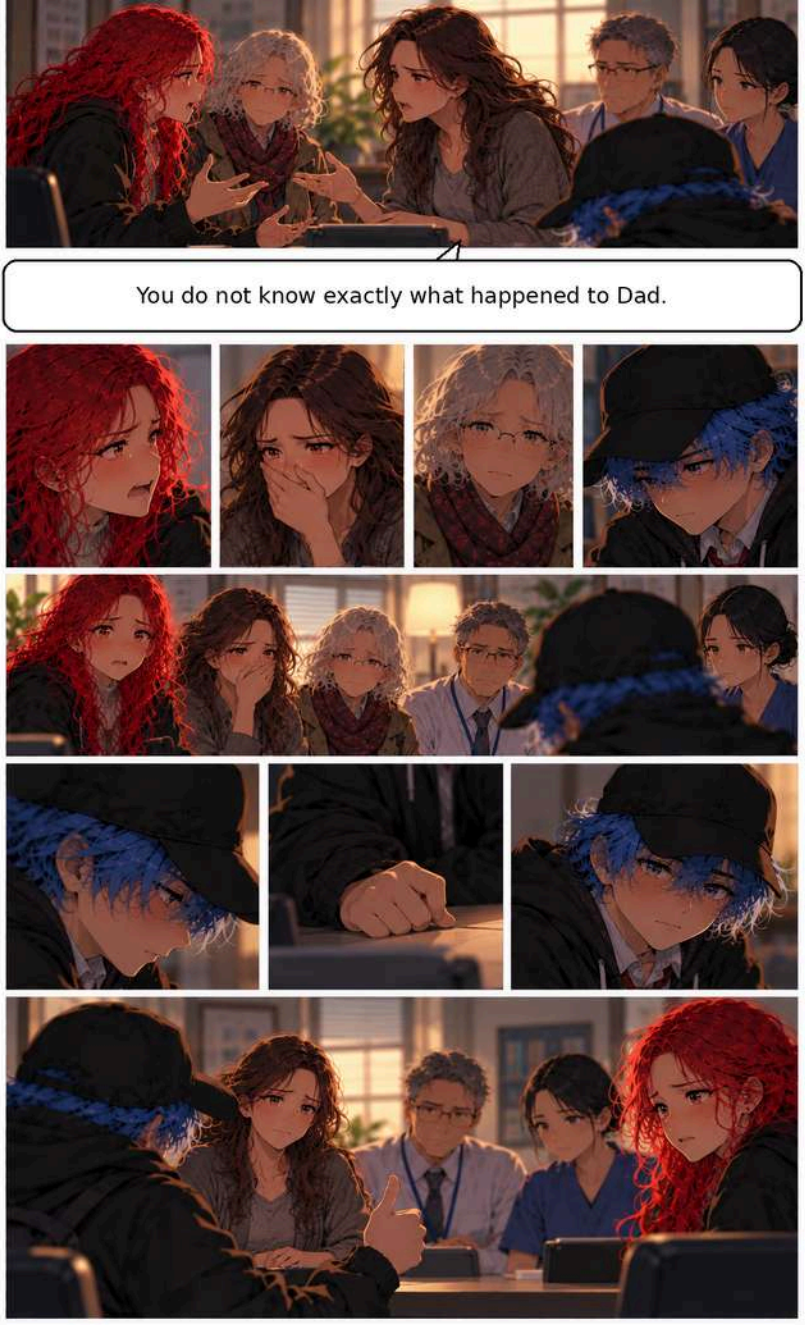


I don't know if I'm seeing anything outside my own mind.








You do not know exactly what happened to Dad.





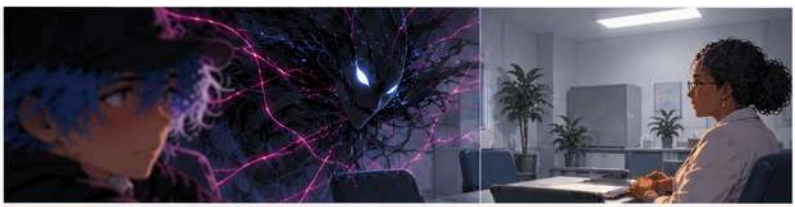


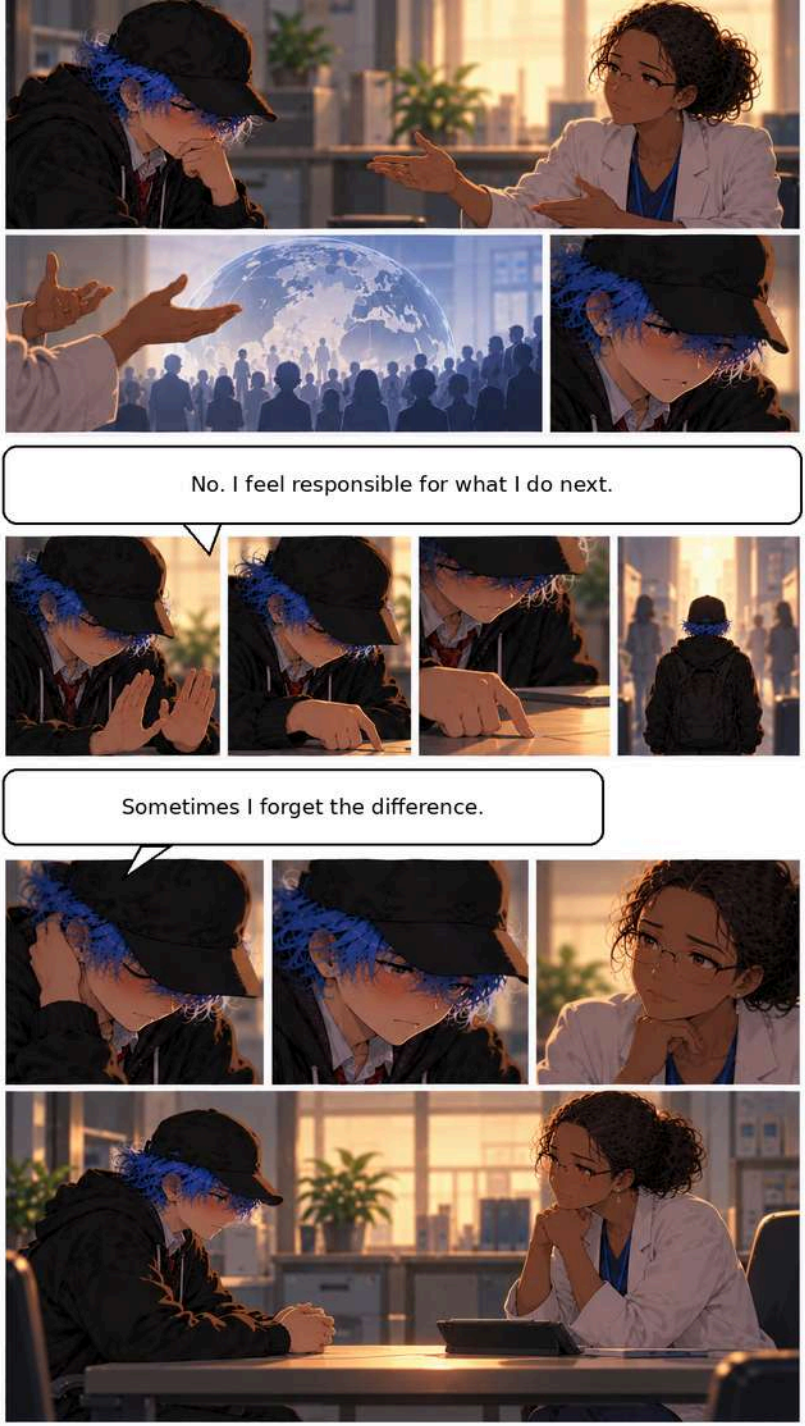


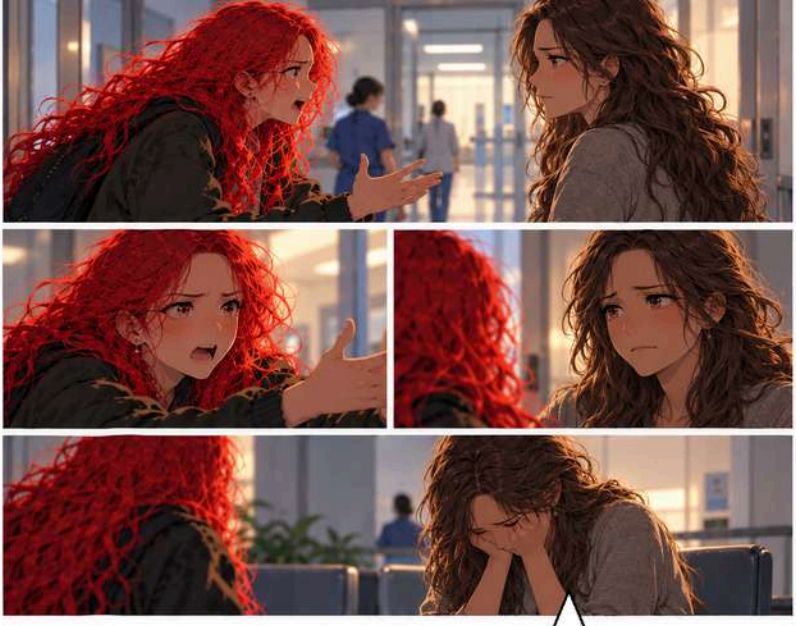
I mean I see it. But seeing isn't the same as knowing what it is.



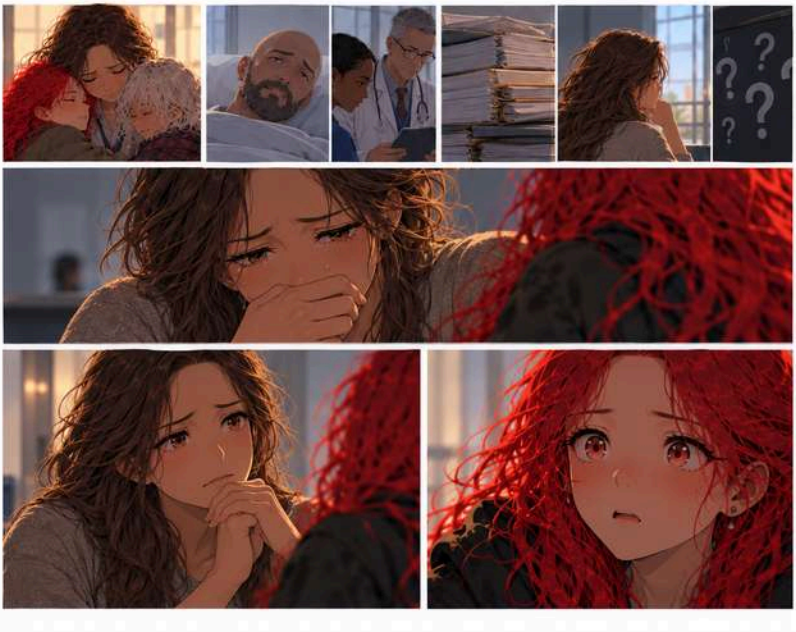
Good distinction.





No. I feel responsible for what I do next.
Sometimes I forget the difference.

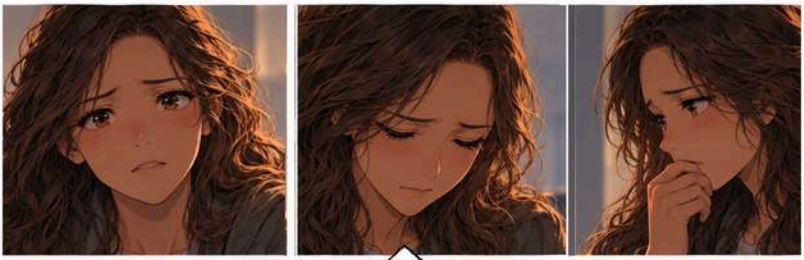


I am trying to keep all of you alive and keep him out of more trouble and follow rules I didn't create and answer questions I don't know the answers to. I am not doing it perfectly. I am doing it scared.





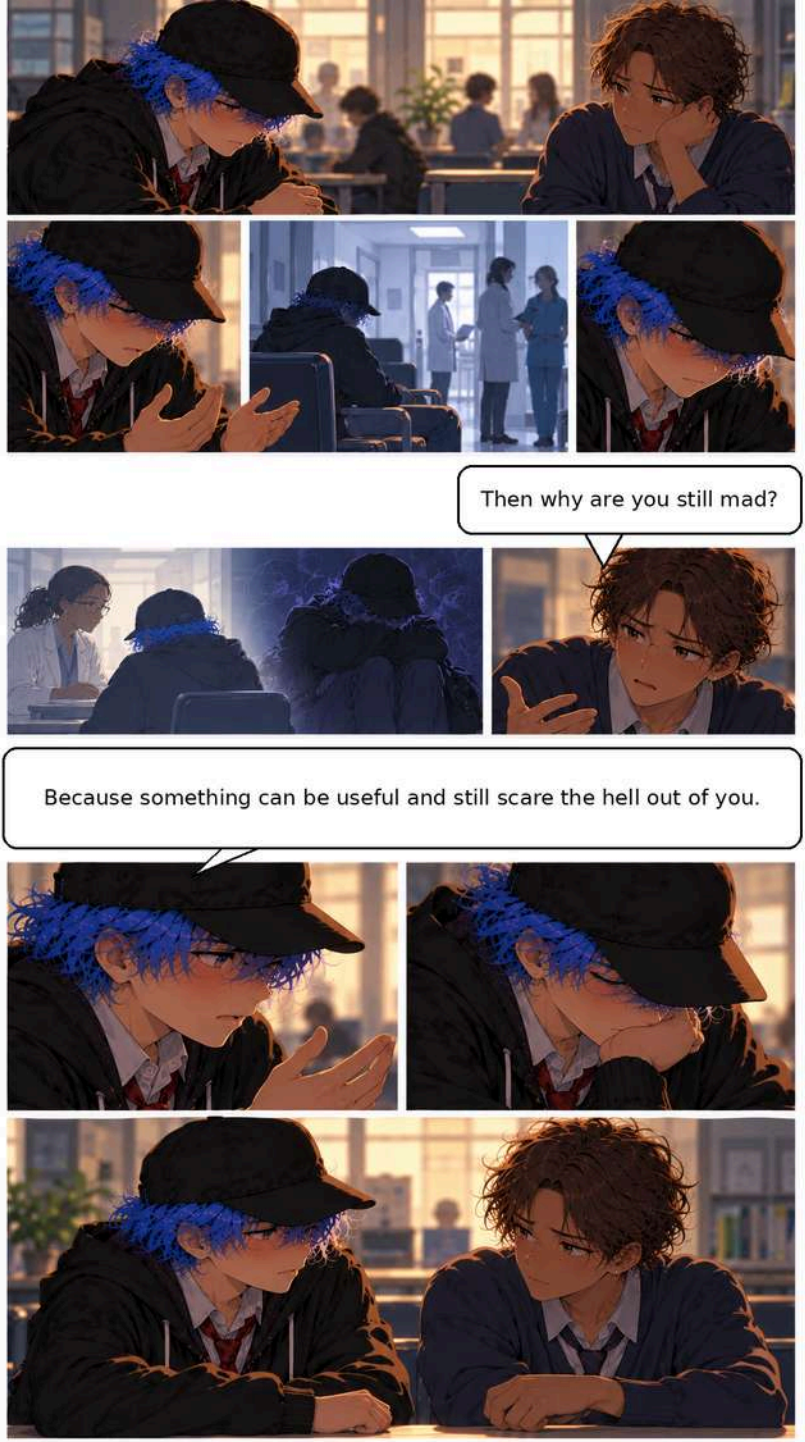
Are you scared we'll choose Dad instead of you?



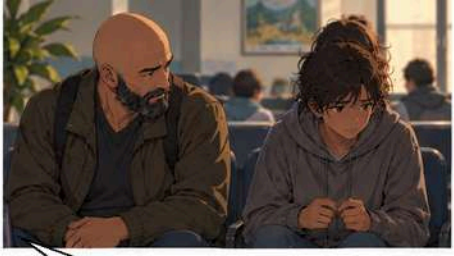
Sometimes.






Then why are you still mad?
Because something can be useful and still scare the hell out of you.





Some.

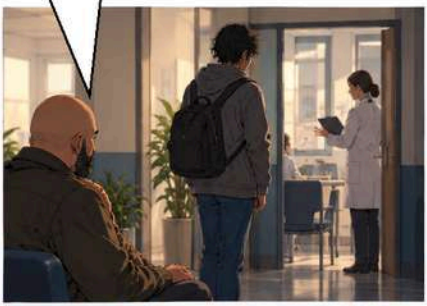






That's not an answer.

It's the only honest one I have.













So tell people what kind of sentence it is before you say it.

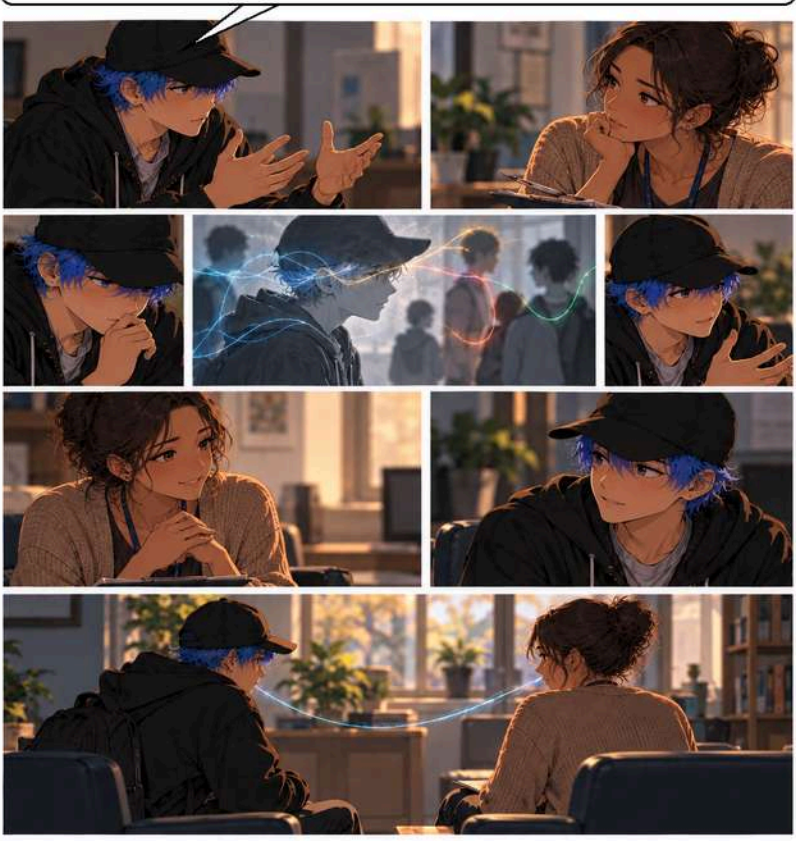


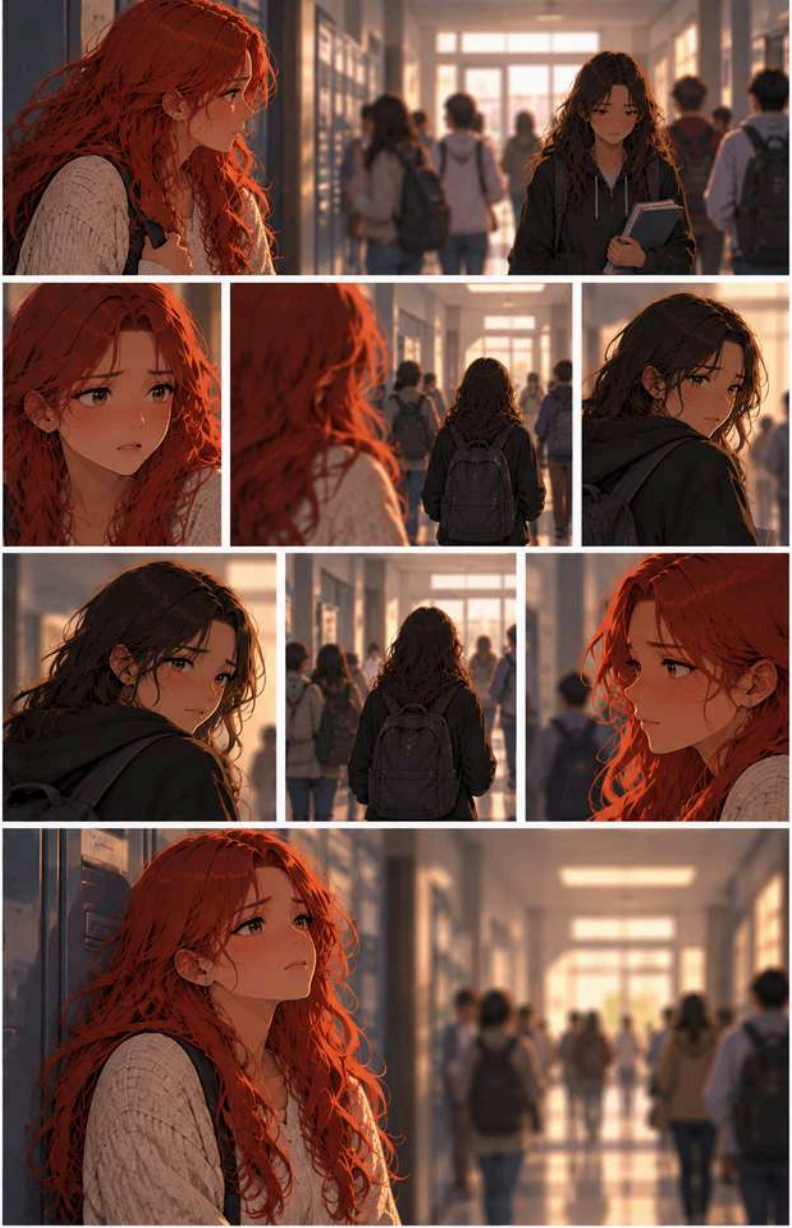
What? Dad used to do that.

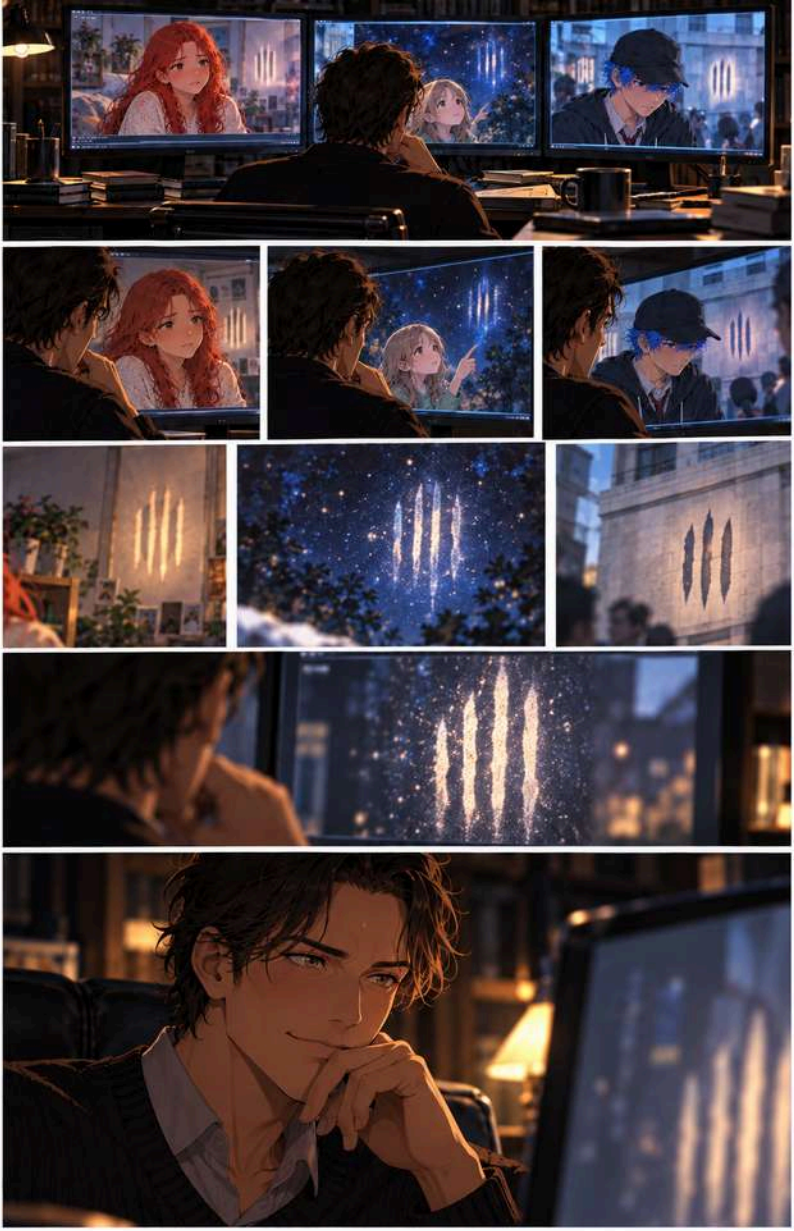




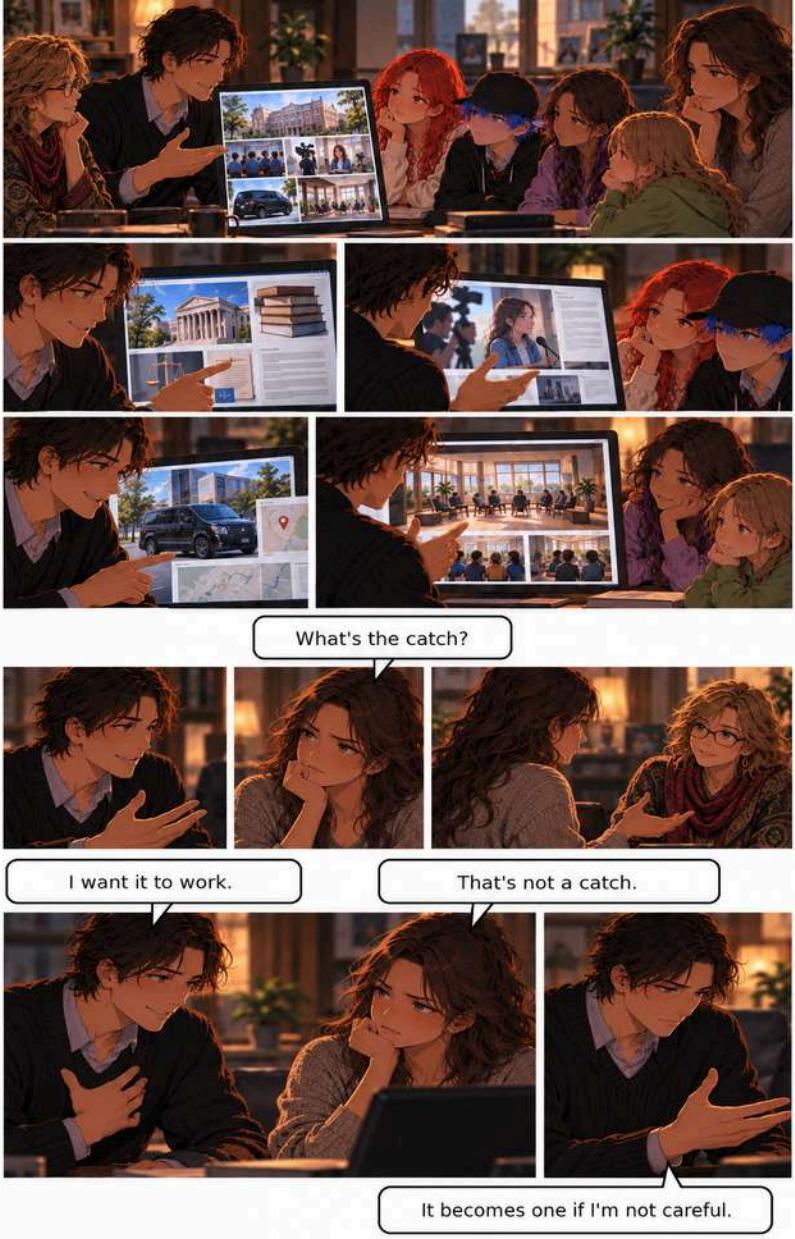
When I say I see threads, I mean my brain gives me pictures for relationships. I don't know why. If that changes, I'll tell you.










What's the catch?
I want it to work.
That's not a catch.
It becomes one if I'm not careful.









You have a message people are already trying to steal from you. Learn to carry it properly.



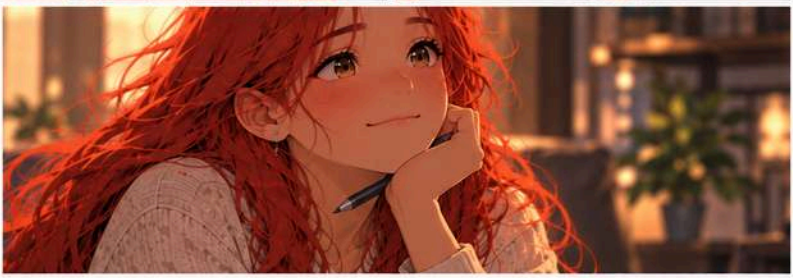








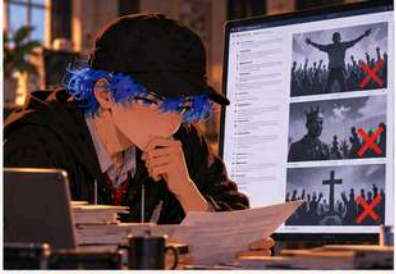





Kindness
CREATES CHANGE
Transportation
Permits & Safety
Event Schedule
Audio & Visual
Plan B


UNITY NIGHT
Community Venue
Students Leading
Acts of Kindness
No Worship
No "Chosen One"
No Dad Mythology
UNITY NIGHT
Venue Booked
Permits Approved
Security Plan
Transportation
Audio / Visual
Student Volunteers
Media Guidelines
Guest List (Schools)
UNITY NIGHT








What did you do when nobody had to know?










UNITY NIGHT
KINDNESS CREATES CHANGE




UNITY NIGHT


UNITY NIGHT
KINDNESS CREATES CHANGE
TONIGHT'S SPEAKERS
LUCY
Student Leader
The Kindness Initiative
MARCH
Founder
The Kindness Initiative
CASPIAN
Media & Truth
The Kindness Initiative
WREN
Logistics & Safety
The Kindness Initiative
LILA
Community & Inclusion
The Kindness Initiative


UNITY NIGHT


UNITY NIGHT




Good story. Bad helping.






UNITY NIGHT
REAL PEOPLE. REAL STORIES.
UNEXPECTED KINDNESS.















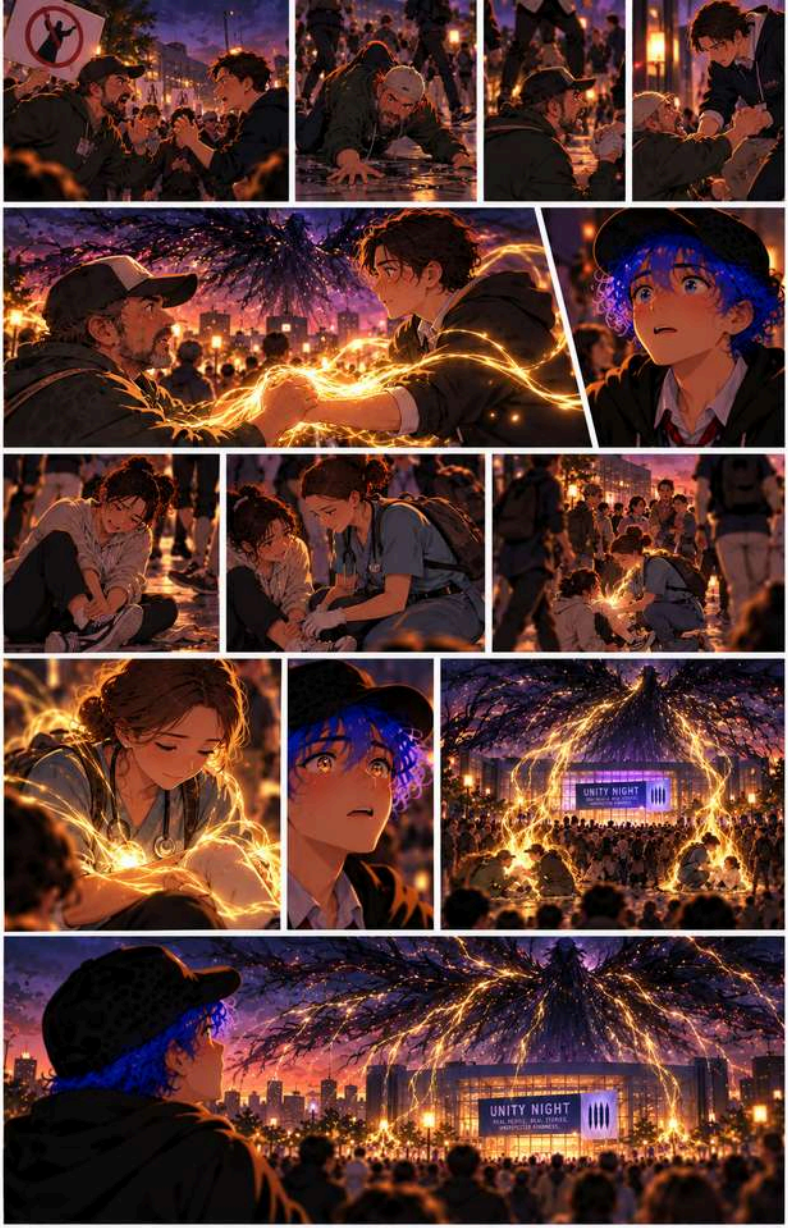







FIRE
MAIN EXIT
BLOCKED
EXIT


EXIT
EXIT
Can I take your hand?


UNITY NIGHT
UNITY NIGHT



We need a statement before people decide what happened.

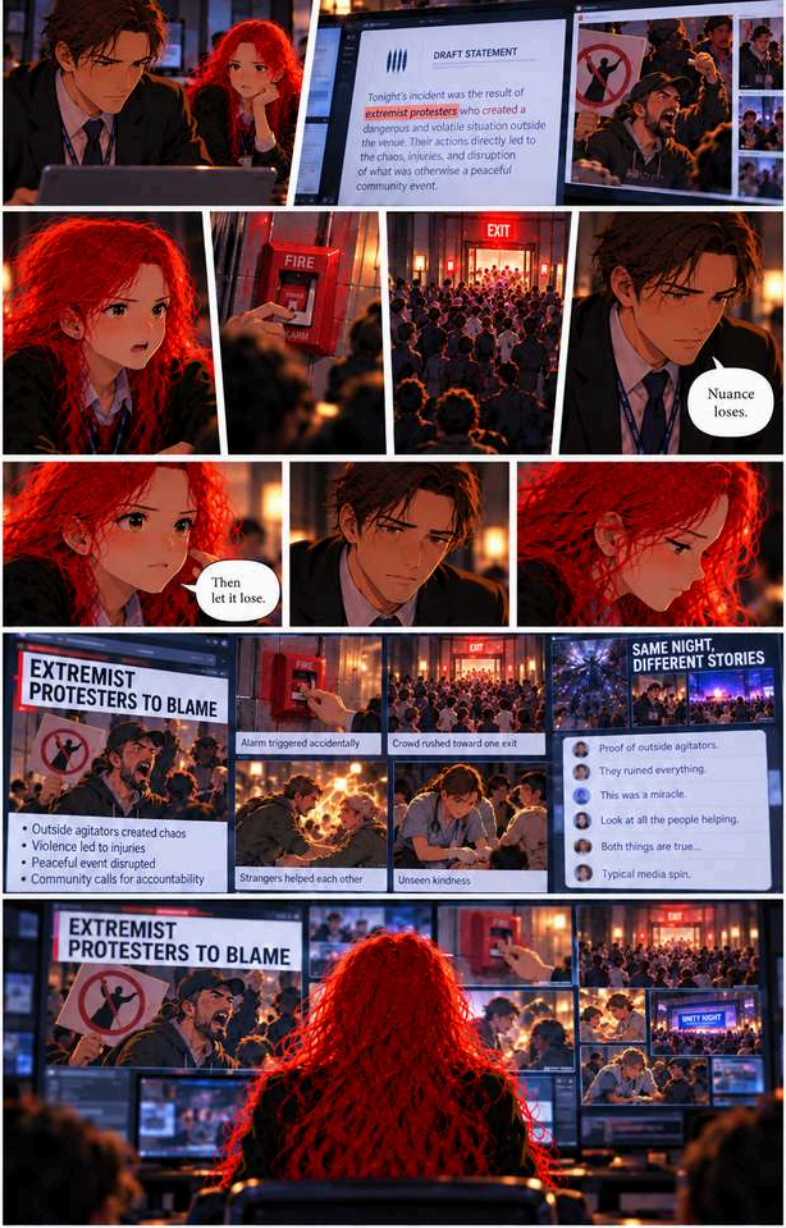


People already decided.



Exactly. That is why speed matters.




DRAFT STATEMENT
Tonight's incident was the result of extremist protesters who created a dangerous and volatile situation outside the venue. Their actions directly led to the chaos, injuries, and disruption of what was otherwise a peaceful community event.
FIRE
ALARM
EXIT
Nuance loses.
Then let it lose.
EXTREMIST PROTESTERS TO BLAME
• Outside agitators created chaos
• Violence led to injuries
• Peaceful event disrupted
• Community calls for accountability
Alarm triggered accidentally
Crowd rushed toward one exit
Strangers helped each other
Unseen kindness
SAME NIGHT, DIFFERENT STORIES
Proof of outside agitators.
They ruined everything.
This was a miracle.
Look at all the people helping.
Both things are true...
Typical media spin.
EXTREMIST PROTESTERS TO BLAME
UNITY NIGHT


You didn't cause every person in that room.
I helped create the room.
That's different.
Is it enough different?



That's the clip.





Lose the part where they were screaming at each other first.

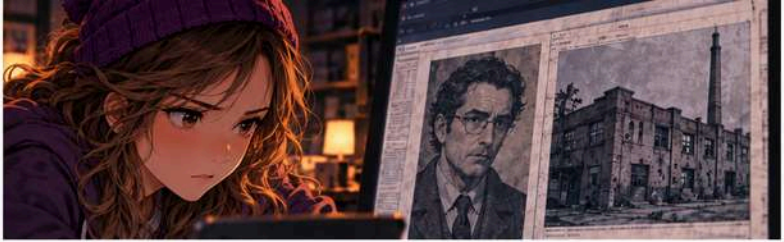
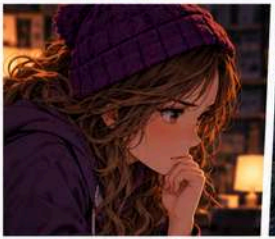


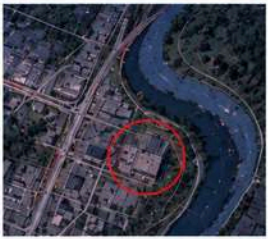


People need the clean version.

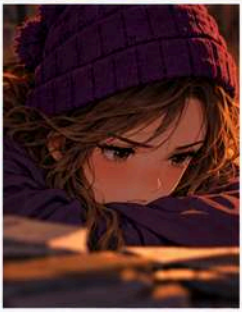
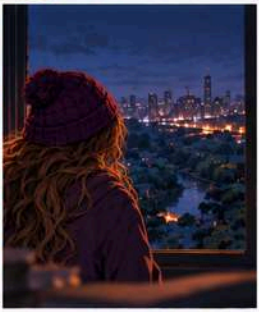






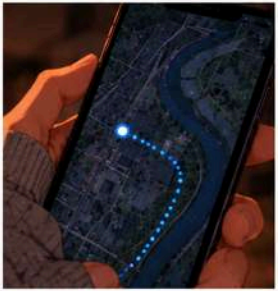


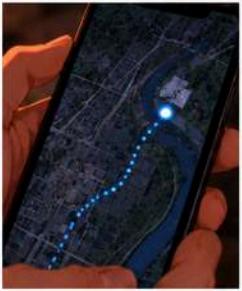




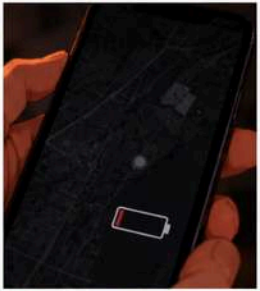



PRINT SHOP. BACK BY LUNCH.





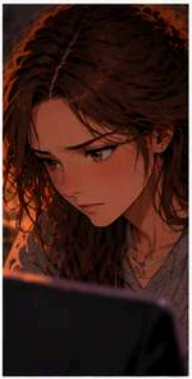


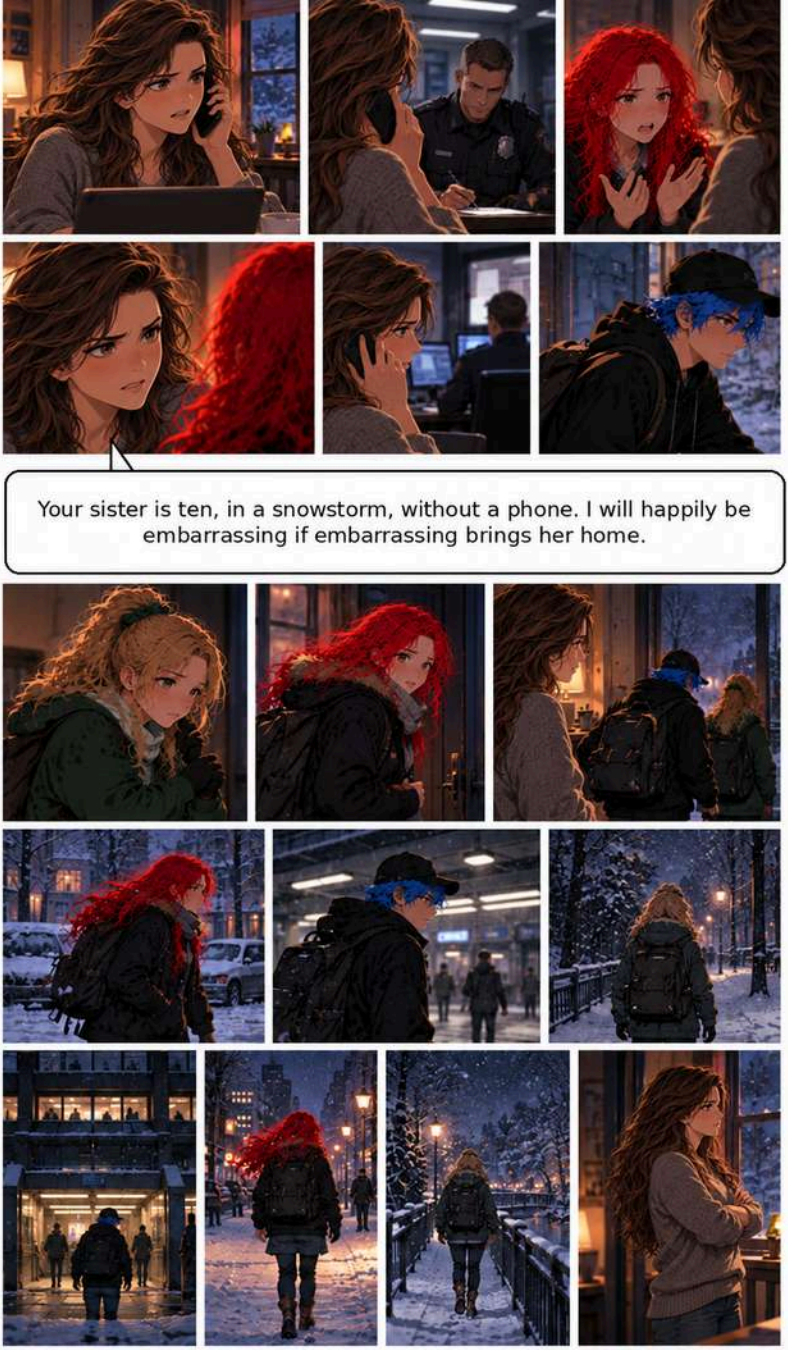


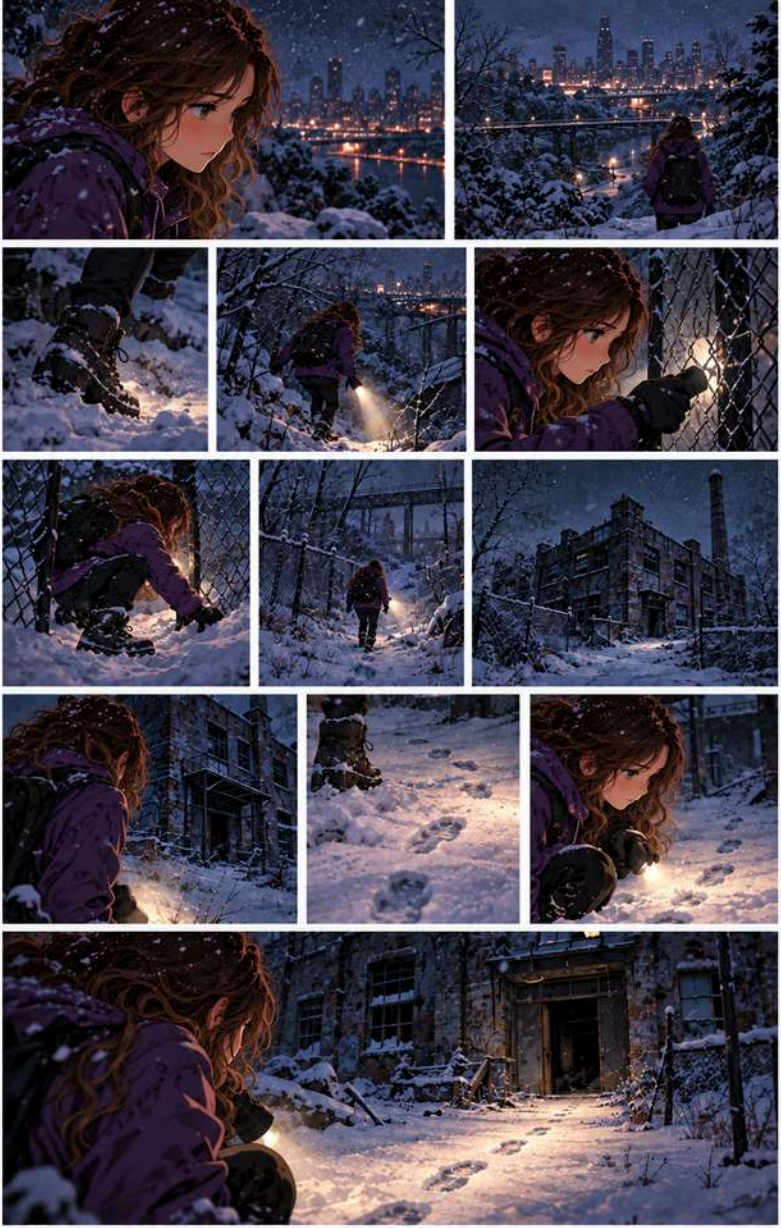









Your sister is ten, in a snowstorm, without a phone. I will happily be embarrassing if embarrassing brings her home.







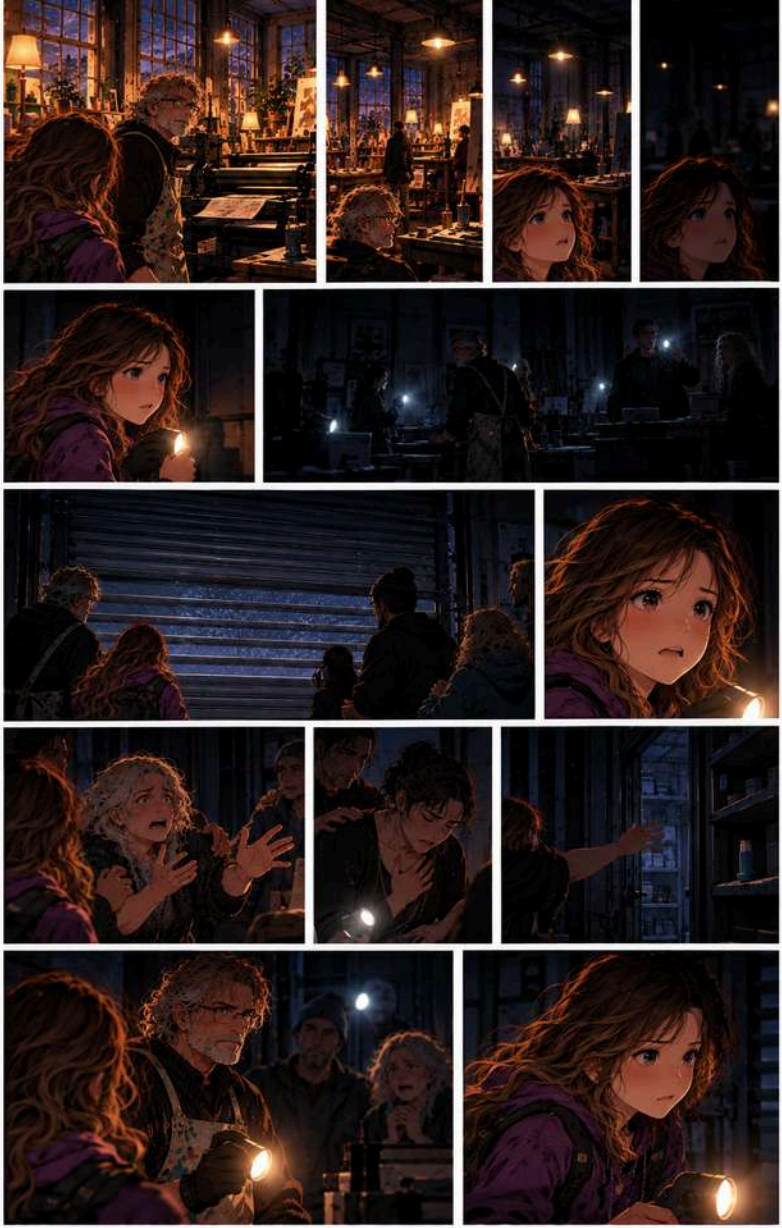
If you're selling something, no.



I'm looking for someone who hates my dad.



That narrows it less than you'd think.

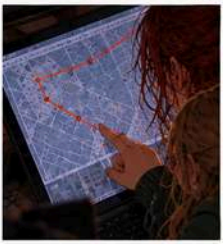




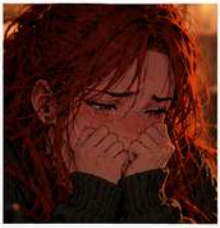
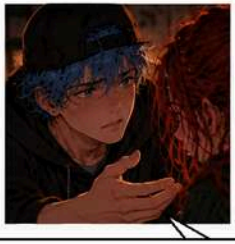
First rule of emergencies: announce where you're going.





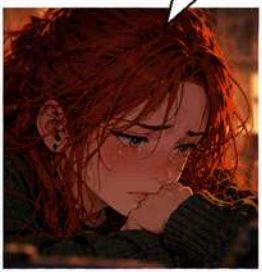

Stop making uncertainty sound nicer.


I'm trying to keep us functional.

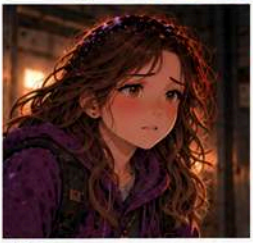


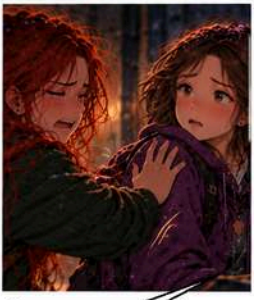

Then be scared with me.



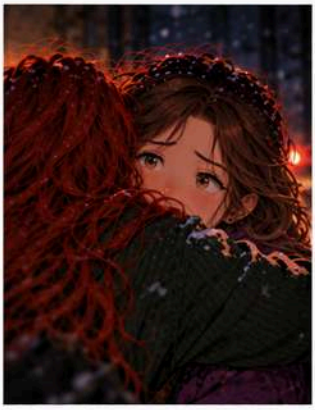


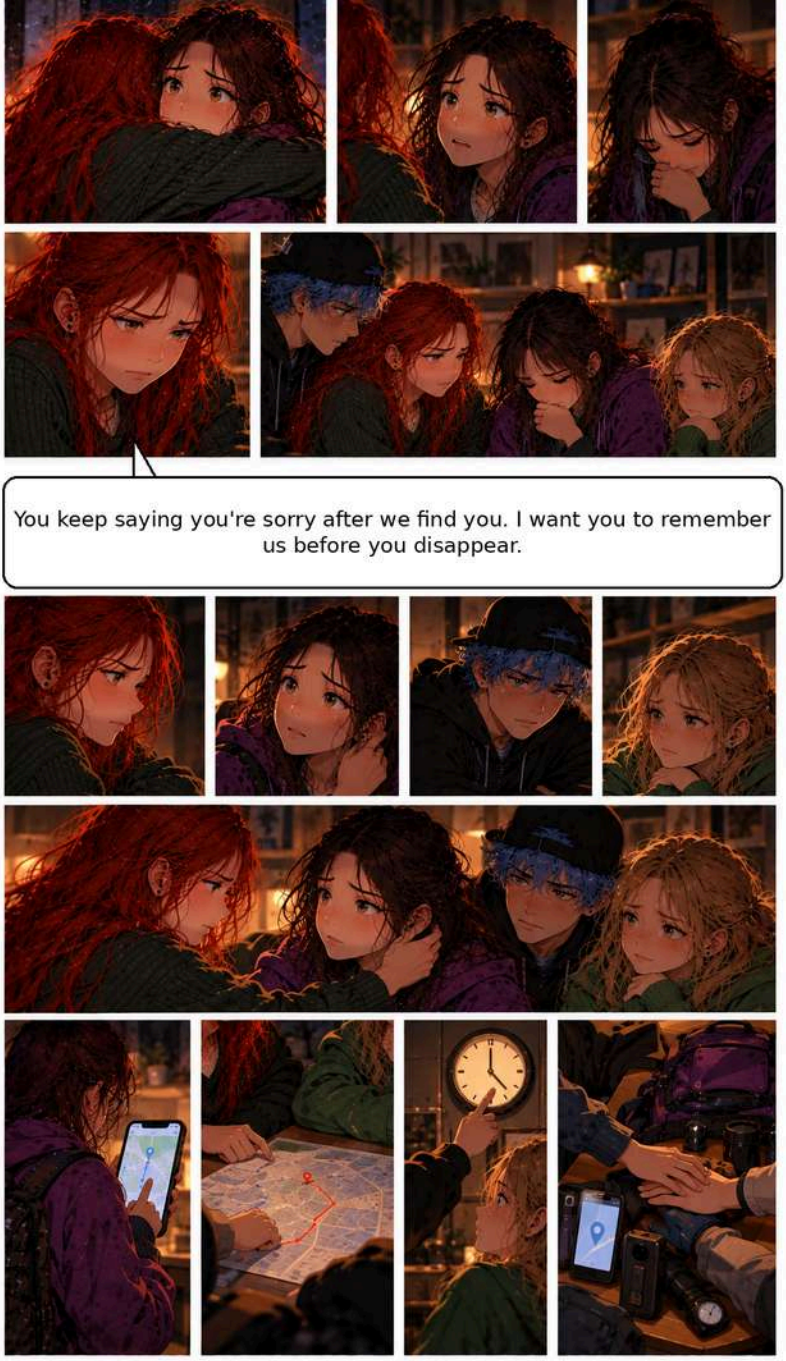


Ow.
Good.




You keep saying you're sorry after we find you. I want you to remember us before you disappear.







I haven't seen that in twenty years.





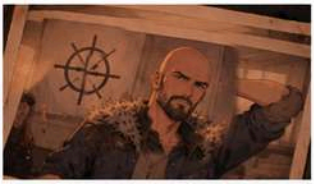




So it was real?

A logo was real. Don't promote it into a prophecy.





Your father was brilliant when he was curious and unbearable when he thought curiosity had ended.





That sounds accurate.









Once he could explain why someone disliked him, he sometimes stopped asking whether they had a point.



Don't turn my complaint into scripture either.












If the theory explains every outcome, throw the theory out.













Understand the game.

Get people to choose good together.

Find the pattern.

Bring Dad home.















Good. Four hypotheses. Don't merge them because you love each other.



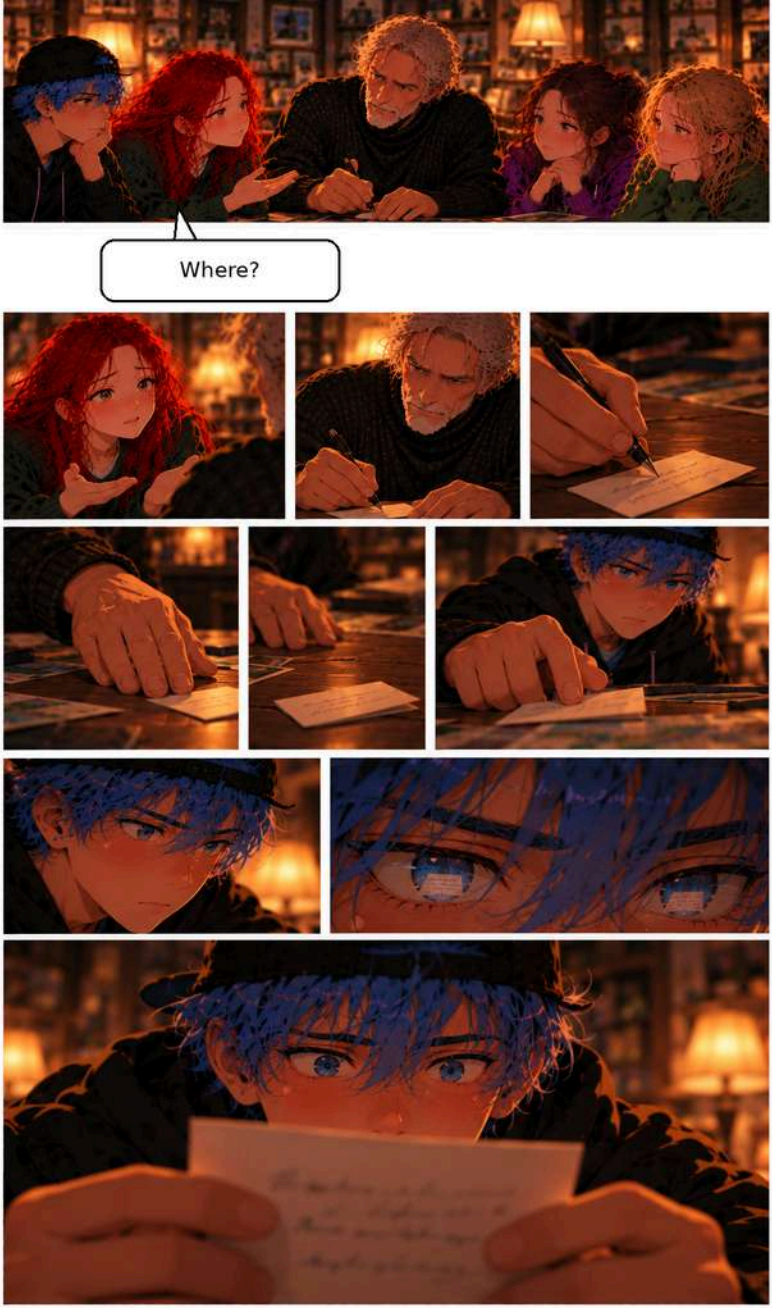




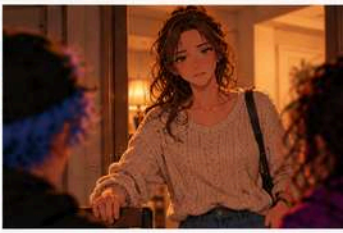


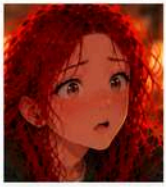




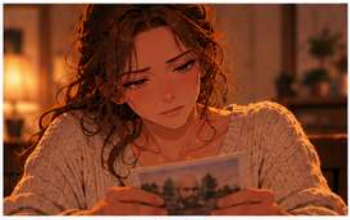

Where?





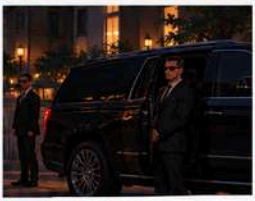

You think I don't want answers?





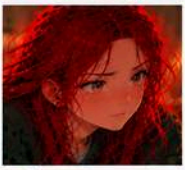














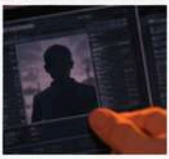
















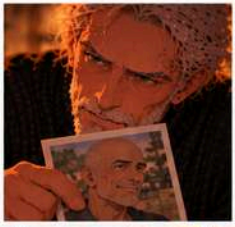
Because if he matters, other people may find him first.





If someone tells you they have secret instructions from your father, ask for evidence. Missing people are extremely useful to people who want authority.













What if it feels like Dad?







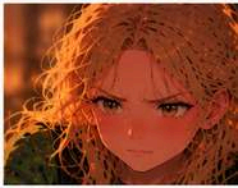
Feelings get a vote. Not a veto.

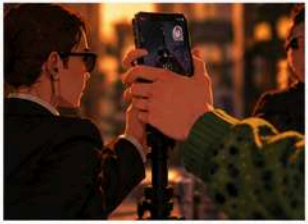




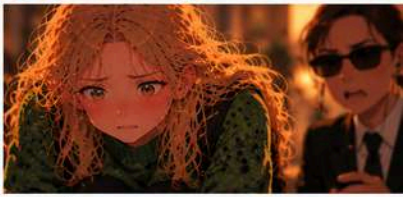






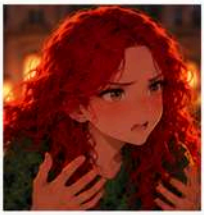




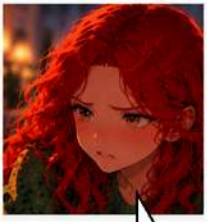





We're children.

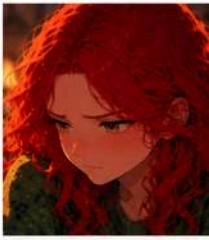




You're also leaders.


Those aren't the same contract.





They become the same when people follow you.





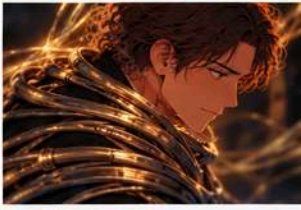










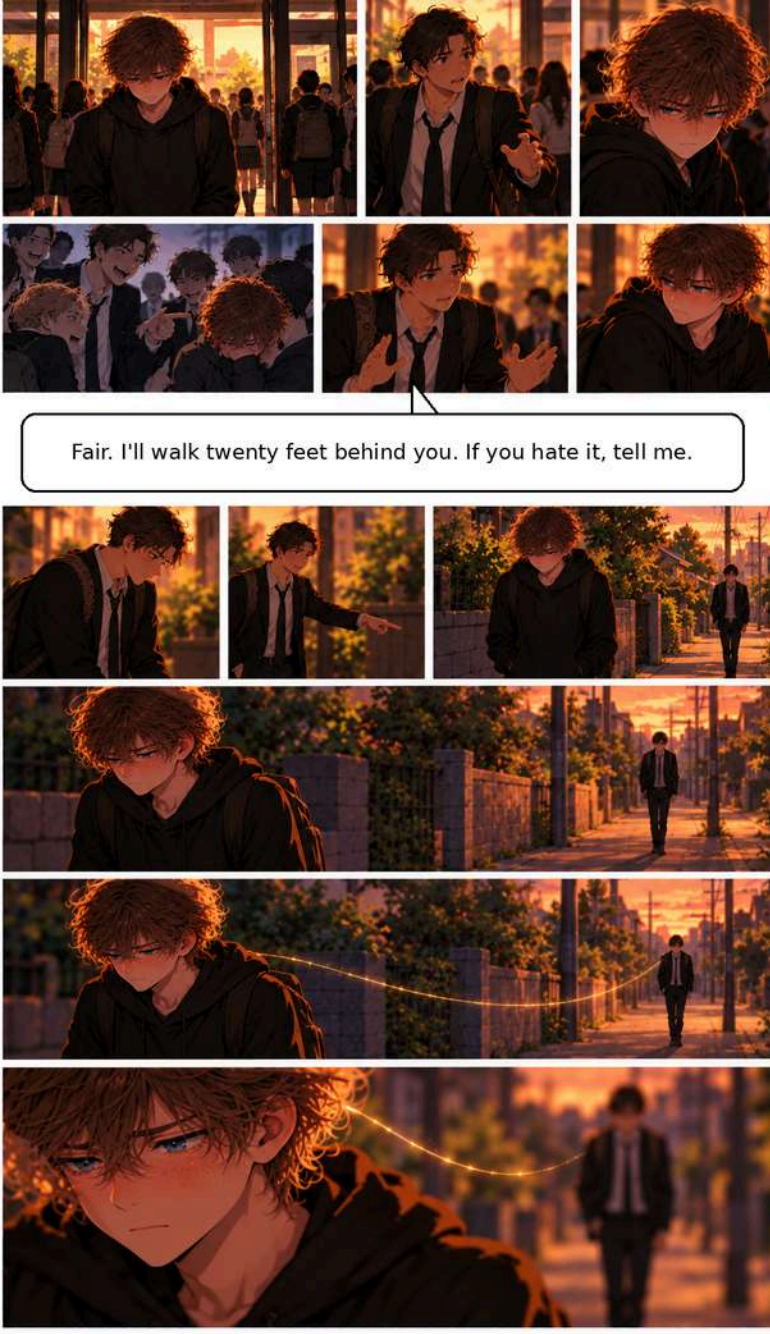





I liked it better when I was just weird.


You can't promise for everyone.

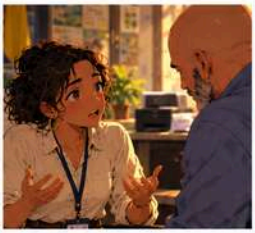

Then I can promise for me.


Fair. I'll walk twenty feet behind you. If you hate it, tell me.



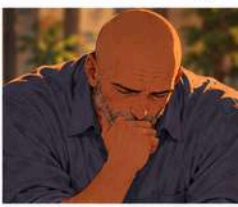


You don't listen.

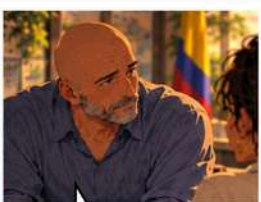
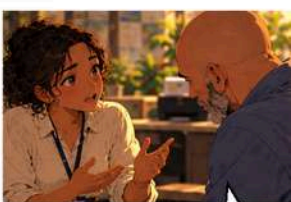




About detergent?





About people. You decide what they need before they finish talking.

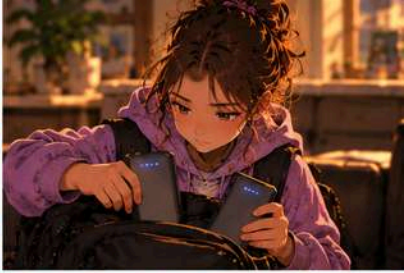




Okay. Tell me again.

They stop being strangers pretty fast.



No.











Never let convenience choose your dependencies for you.

Is that one of Dad's rules?





No. That's one of mine.




CAN WE TALK SOMETIME?
NOW?
WHEN YOU'RE READY





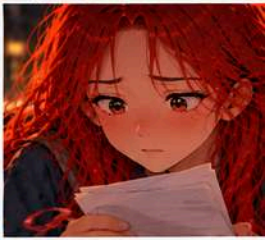



10
20




VALE
HE WILL LEAVE AT 8:15. THIS MAY BE YOUR ONLY CHANCE.
8:15



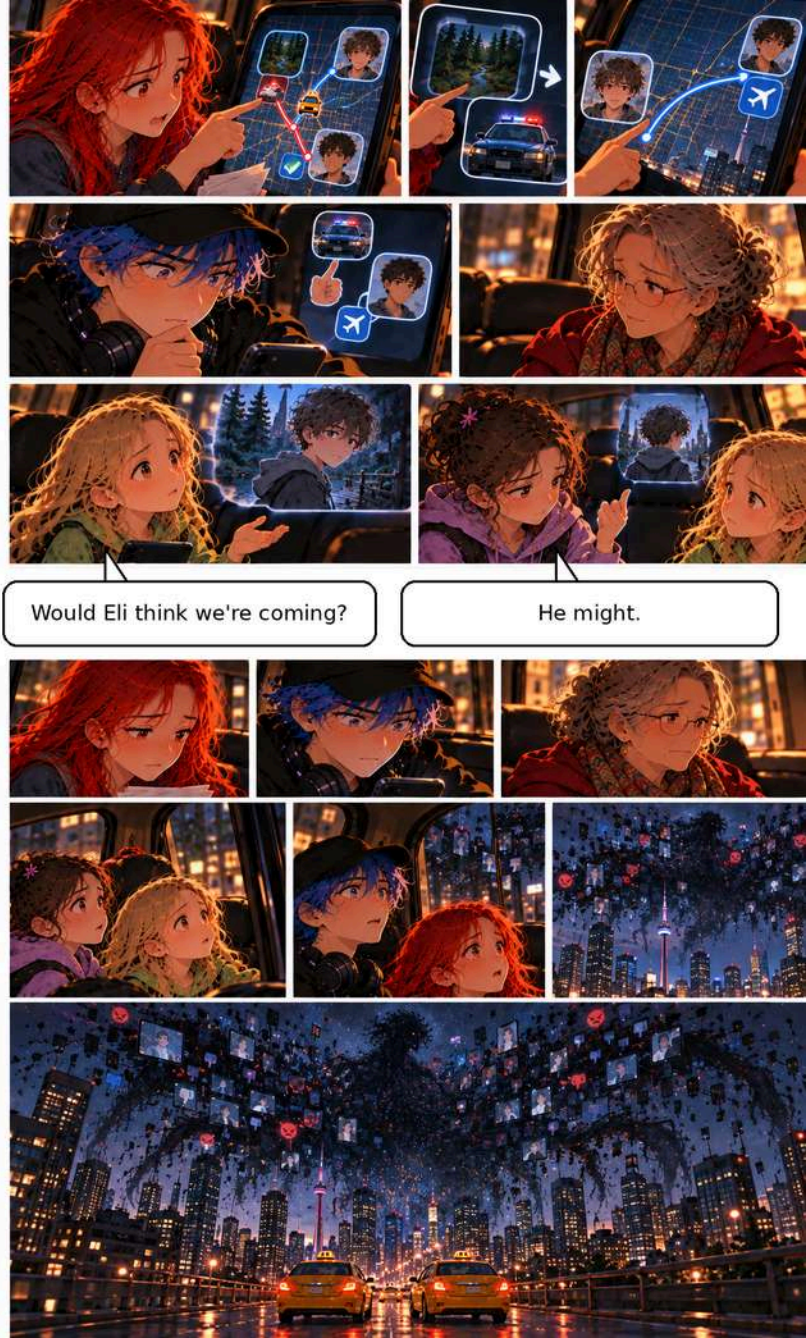


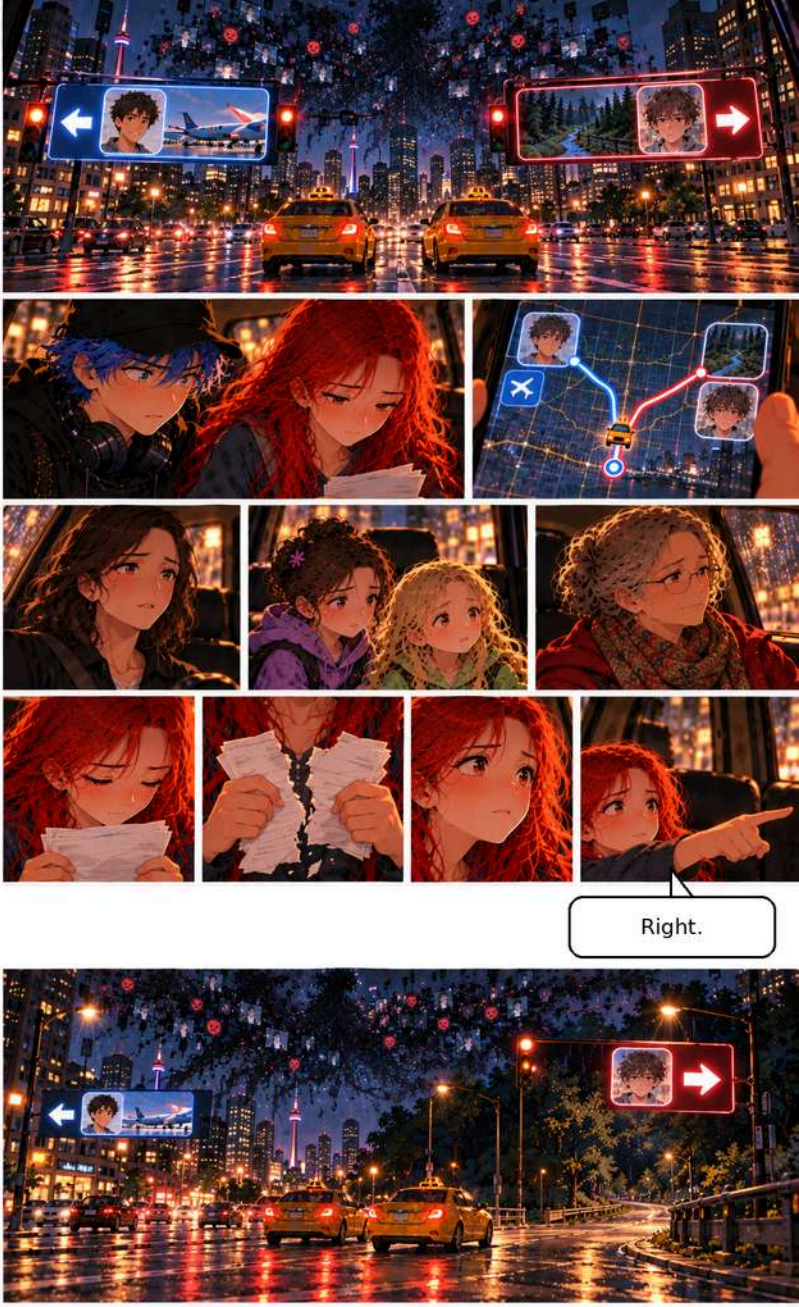





10
20




Would Eli think we're coming?
He might.


Right.


We could still make it.
Don't make promises because you hate pain.




You said embarrassing is okay if it brings someone home.
That does not mean reckless.


LIAR
CRAZY
ATTENTION SEEKER
DANGEROUS
LIAR
CRAZY
ATTENTION SEEKER
DANGEROUS


LIAR
CRAZY
ATTENTION SEEKER
DANGEROUS
Can I go look?
With me.
LIAR
CRAZY
ATTENTION SEEKER
DANGEROUS





We can leave.

No.

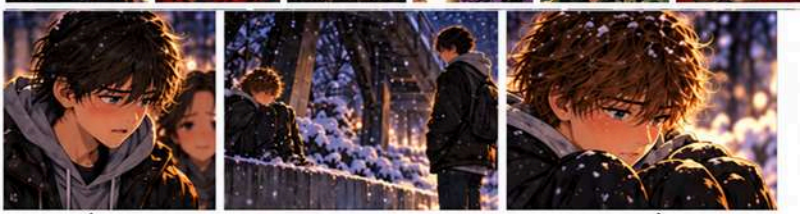


Okay. Then we stay.


LIAR
CRAZY
ATTENTION SEEKER
DANGEROUS
POLICE
POLICE
What would make going back feel less awful?
No cameras. No speeches. No one saying this proves anything.
Done.







I laughed when they messed with you because I thought if I didn't, they'd do it to me.

Great.

It wasn't.



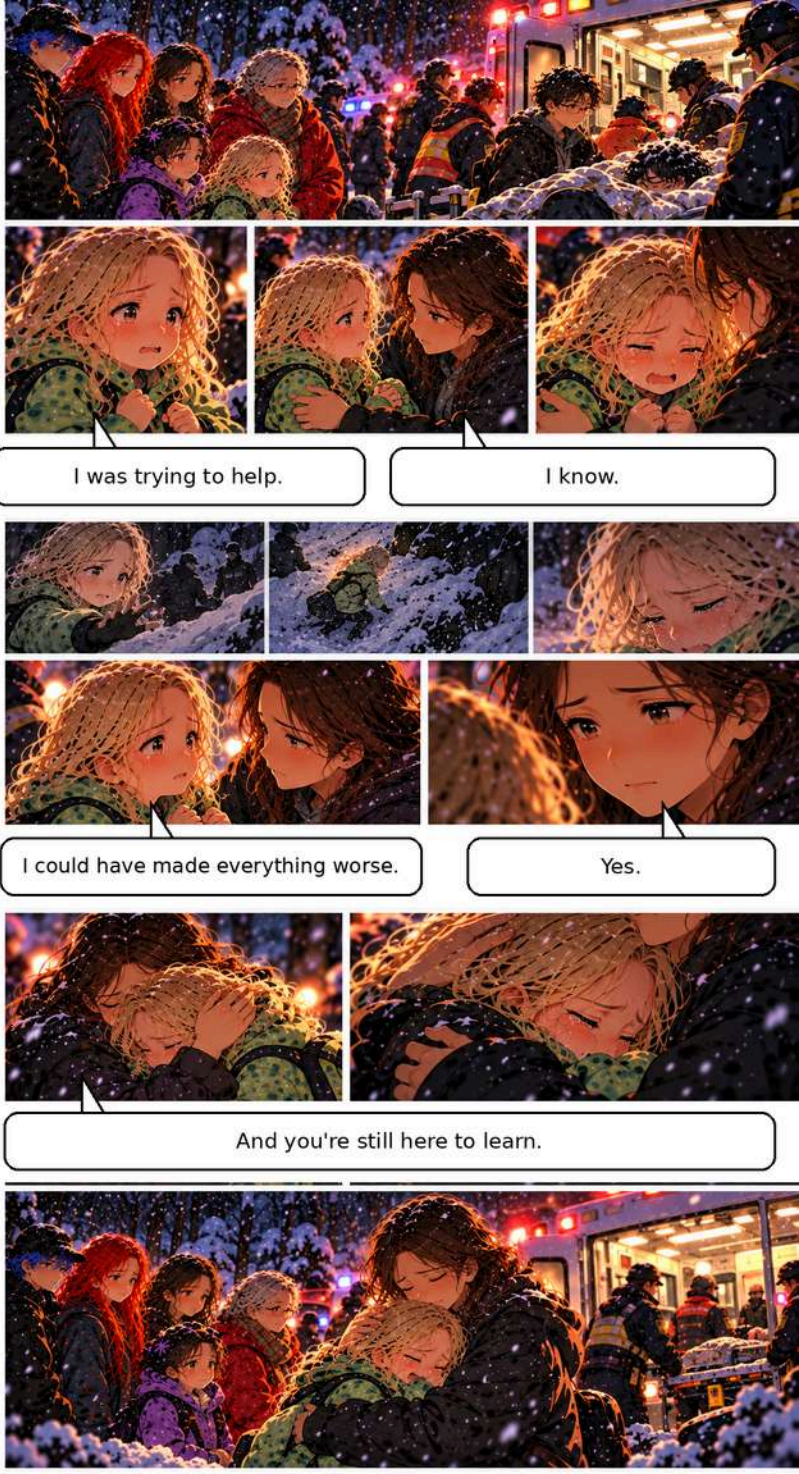
You don't have to forgive me. You're cold.








DANGER


I was trying to help.
I know.
I could have made everything worse.
Yes.
And you're still here to learn.


Nobody posts.


I have learned this one very thoroughly.











8:23 Vale

MISSED HIM.
HE LEFT NO MESSAGE.





















We won't know.





I hate that.



Most important choices do not come with alternate timelines.







Do you understand what Samir could have told you?



No. That's why it hurts.



You chose one boy over the mission.



Maybe he was the mission.





That is exactly why children cannot run something this important.



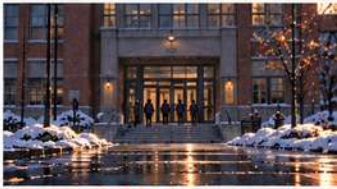
Then stop following us.















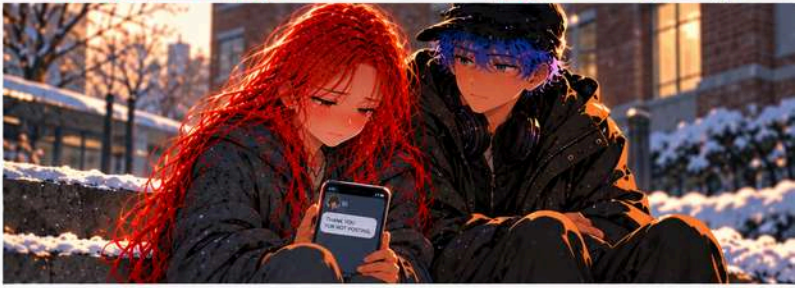


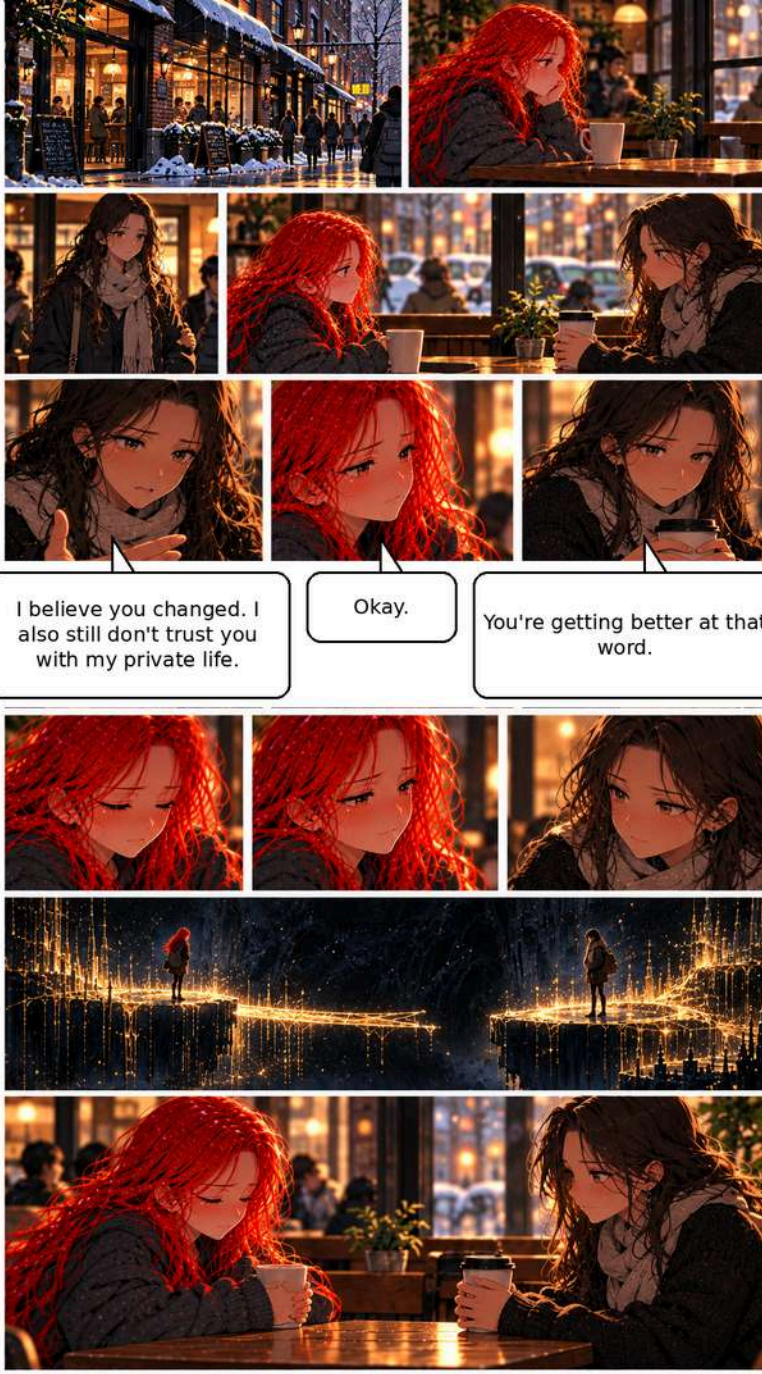




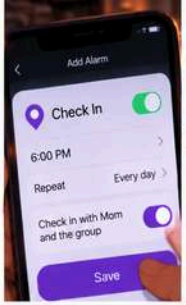

4:2
Eli
THANK YOU
FOR NOT POSTING.






I believe you changed. I also still don't trust you with my private life.
Okay.
You're getting better at that word.



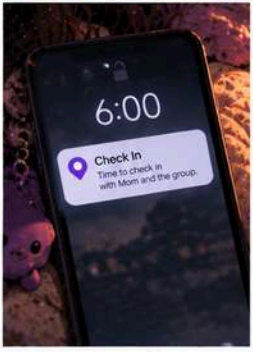

Add Alarm
Check In
6:00 PM
Repeat
Every day
Check in with Mom and the group
Save

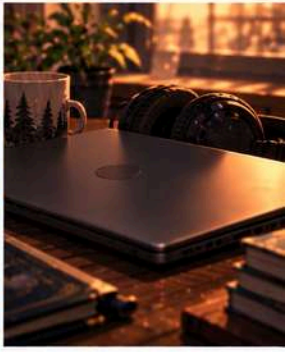









6:00
Check In
Time to check in with Mom and the group.

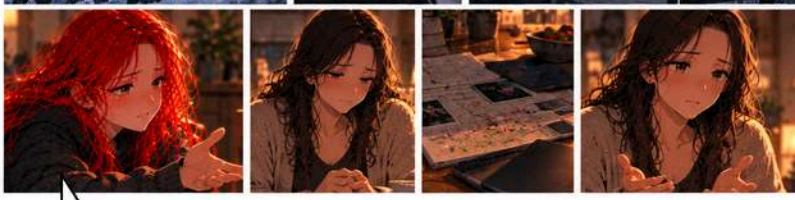






I know you think I kept truth from you. Sometimes I did. I was scared you would go to him. I was also scared that if you did, everything would get worse—for you and for him. There were restrictions I could not simply make disappear.





Why didn't you tell us that?



Because I thought information would become action. Maybe I was wrong.




Yes.



If he was out, why didn't he contact us?
I don't know.


You don't know, or you can't tell us?
I don't know. I know there were restrictions around contact. I know I could not waive them. I do not know everything he understood, everything he was told, or every reason he made the choices he made after that.


I think so.
Think?
I am done pretending I know things I don't.





Were you trying to protect us from Dad?

I was trying to protect all of you from outcomes I was afraid of. Including him.



Did it work?

Not the way I wanted.



Do you think he wanted to leave us?



I won't tell you what I think and call it something I know.








THE ROUTE THEORY


THE HOSPITAL TIMELINE


THE CONTACT THEORY


THE REASON THEORY




THINGS WE STILL DON'T KNOW










THINGS WE STILL DON'T KNOW



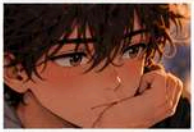



THE ROUTE THEORY
THE HOSPITAL TIMELINE
THINGS WE STILL DON'T KNOW
THE CONTACT THEORY
THE REASON THEORY


THINGS WE STILL DON'T KNOW
THE HOSPITAL TIMELINE
THE ROUTE THEORY
THE CONTACT THEORY
THE REASON THEORY
THINGS WE STILL DON'T KNOW
WHY DID DAD
STAY SILENT
AFTER HE WAS OUT?
THINGS WE STILL DON'T KNOW
WHY DID DAD
STAY SILENT
AFTER HE WAS OUT?



























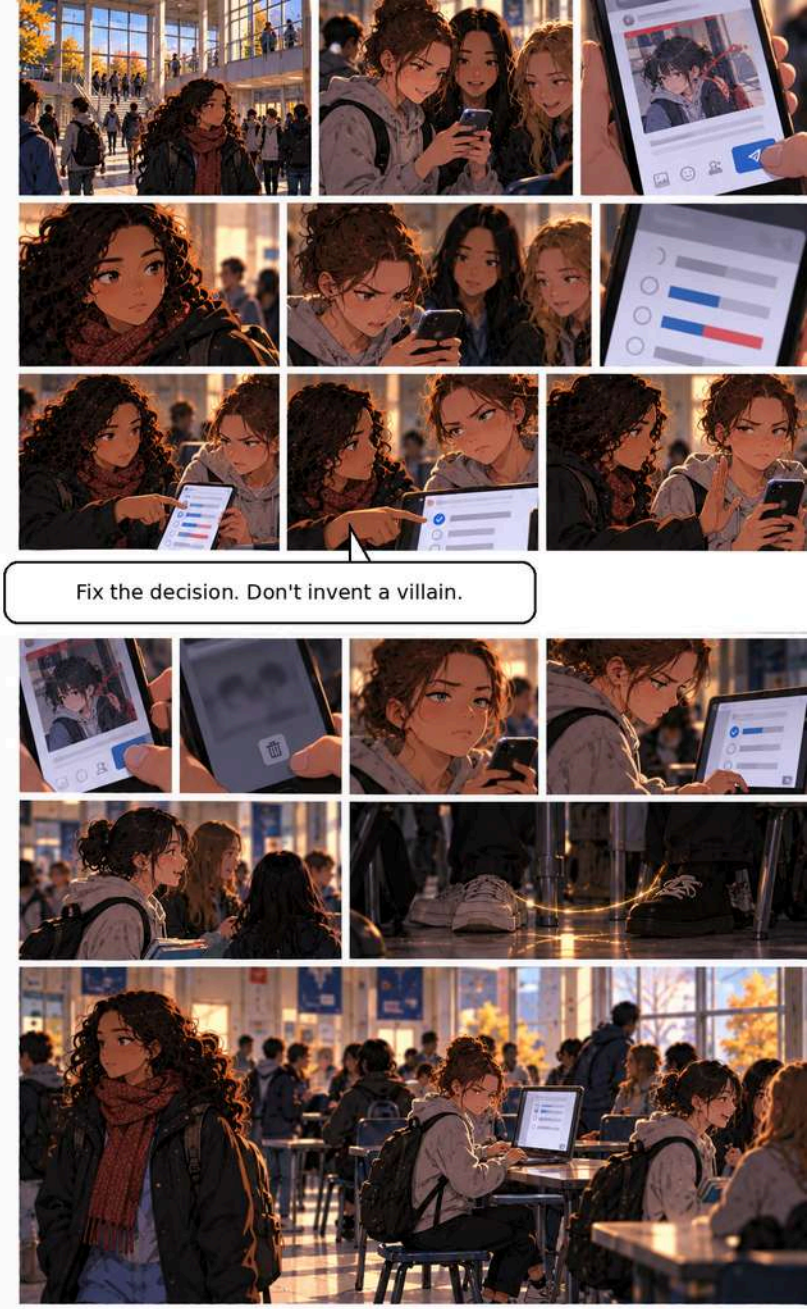




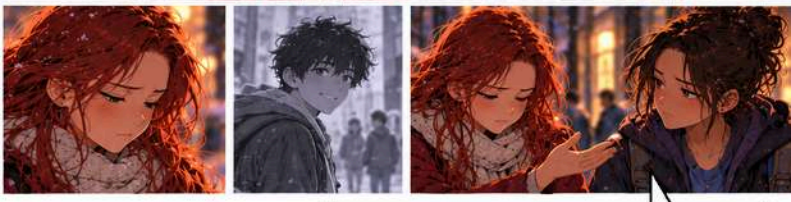







Fix the decision. Don't invent a villain.





It was.



We failed to meet Samir. We succeeded at something else. Both happened.

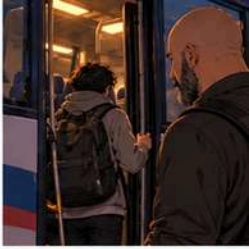


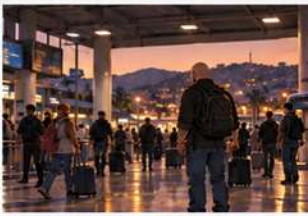
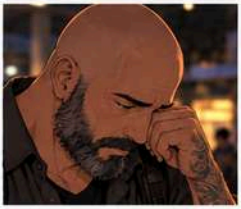
Annoying.

Extremely.

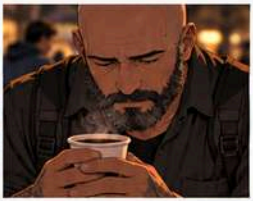




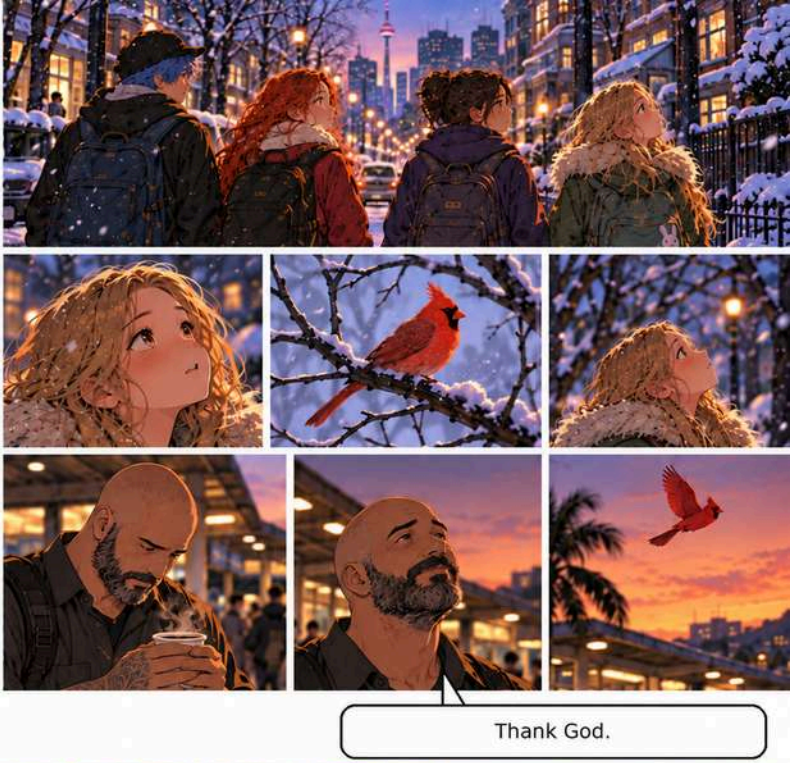




Para el camino. For the road.







BOOK ONE — END.