

Page One - R (three panels) – Prologue

Panel 1. Medium Shot. Largest panel on the page. We are looking at RIDLEY, an underfed, lanky, sixteen-year-old girl, eyes closed, floating in an abyss of darkness. Her dark, long hair is weightless as if she is in space or underwater. Her lanky body is suspended in a position as if she were vertically lounging in a reclining chair. Her outfit resembles that of a scuba diving wetsuit or a body suit of an advanced space station. It must be clear that this is science fiction from the look of her suit. On the left side of her chest is her name “Ridley.” Under her name are the numbers “023213372”. This is her identification.

1 CAP (machine):
Presents loading.

2 CAP (machine):
Biometric sensors activating.

Panel 2. Close up shot of the right half of her face: one right eye, nose, and mouth is visible. The frame is cutting off the rest of her face. Her eye is closed, and her hair is floating around her. The dark void of still envelopes the background details.

3 CAP (machine):
Visuals stabilizing.

Panel 3. Extreme close up on Ridley’s right eye, now slightly open – the pupils large and dilated from the lack of light.

4 CAP (machine):
Good evening, Ridley. Your Virtual Reality room is ready --

Page Two - L (five panels)

Panel 1. Medium shot. Largest panel on the page. We are now standing with Ridley in an open city park, filled with people enjoying their time. Ridley appears to be firmly standing in the grass, no longer floating like before. Her hair has also been affected by the gravitational pull of the room and falls over her shoulders and down her back. The focus should be her, alone, while everyone else around her is paired off sitting, eating ice cream, playing catch, etc. Unlike Ridley's suit, everyone else is wearing conventional fashion of the modern day.

1 CAP (machine):
-- welcome.

Panel 2. Long shot. Small, narrow panel. A shot of three birds flying in front of big cumulus clouds.

Panel 3. Medium-long shot. Medium panel. Ridley is walking ahead, looking at a girl eating ice cream.

2 CAP (Ridley):
This isn't my reality.

Panel 4. Medium-long shot. Ridley is still walking, now looking at a couple looking at each other with love and happiness in on their faces.

3 CAP (Ridley):
Well, that's not true.

Panel 5. Long frame. Ridley stops walking.

Page Three - R (four panels)

Panel 1. Extreme low angle down at Ridley's head and shoulders. Ridley has her eyes closed, head tilted down, and her hand over her heart in the way someone would do when referring to themselves.

1 CAP (Ridley):
This is me. I am here.

Panel 2. Medium-close up. Ridley lifts her head and looks up.

Panel 3. Wide shot, long panel. A panoramic scene from Ridley's POV of the park as she sees it. In addition to park activities, similar to the previous page, off in the distance is an empty picnic blanket and basket on the ground that should draw our attention.

Panel 4. Ridley is next to the empty picnic blanket now, looking down at it.

2 CAP (Ridley):
But...

Page Four - L (two panels)

Panel 1. Ridley is sitting on the picnic blanket. A child is in the frame, running towards Ridley.

CAP (Ridley):

I don't live in a wide-open city with a park like this.

CHILD:

Mom, over here!

Panel 2. Side shot. The child has now joined Ridley on the picnic blanket, they are laying on their back looking overly excited, kick their legs up in the air, and stretching their arms out wide. Think of it as a kid who ran as fast as they could to the picnic blanket as if it was the safe space in part of a made-up game they were playing. That level of excitement. Ridley looks at them with passive disinterest.

CHILD: Hahaha!

Page Five - R (four panels)

Panel 1. Medium shot, front view camera on the child and Ridley. The young child is now digging into the basket sitting between them. Ridley is looking at the kid.

1 CAP (Ridley):
These people aren't real.

GIRL:
I'll grab the water.

Panel 2. Ridley sticks her hand out towards the kid.

2 CAP (Ridley):
They don't even know I am here.

Panel 3. The kid turns in a way that they collide with Ridley's hand, and it ends up sticking straight through their head, like how we think a ghost would interact with our reality.

GIRL:
Thirsty?

Panel 4. Ridley pulls her hand back, looking at the unaware child.

Panel 5. Ridley turns her head away.

3 CAP (Ridley):
Nope, no reaction.

Page six - L (three panels)

Panel 1. Establishing shot. We are looking at, what could be, ground zero of an atomic bomb explosion. The area is wiped clean of life (nature, people, civilization, etc.) In its place is a wasteland of dust and desert. Fallout lingers in the sky, in a state of stasis. The earth bends inward like the shape of a shallow crater. The focal point of this shot is the gigantic cylindrical Pillar that stands erect in the middle of the depression. The Pillar is so tall that it goes out of the frame. It has no support beams, no wires or anything to secure it in place. It merely stands by itself, fixed into place by something we cannot see. The material constructing the Pillar is a combination of concrete and metal sheets bolted into place. It's not smooth and well designed, but haphazardly thrown together, as if the design was an unintended consequence of the height. There are no windows, no vents, and no entry way. It is unclear by the look alone how one would get into the Pillar, or that it is even a place one *could* enter – it might look like a giant monolith to someone. Centered in the frame and on the Pillar, in faded, painted letters, is a giant “13”.

1 CAP (Ridley):

I'm in a Pillar - -

Panel 2. Medium shot. Zooming in, under the “13” is another line of text, much smaller, and far less easy to read from the previous distances. We see much of the rough details heavily worn by the sand and fallout. This section of the Pillar is made of concrete.

2 CAP (Ridley):

- - in a wasteland where the air will leech everything out of you.

3 CAP (incorporated as text on the Pillar):

United States | MN | 2083

Panel 3. Close up. We are focusing on the “2083”, up close and personal with the weatherworn concrete surface of the Pillar. Nothing is even, parts of the wall is cracked with small chunks coming out. We can assume that based on how poorly the maintenance has been on this painting that either we are far into the future, or the fallout and destruction to the area was so great so fast, that it damaged the surface layer of the Pillar.

4 CAP (Ridley):

That is my home.

Page seven - R (one panel)

Panel 1. Full bleed. Exposition time. We are looking down at a blueprint version of Ridley's room, a cramped room that better suited to be a storage closet. I want it to be a manual-like version of everything in the room, but from Ridley's POV. Places she'll point are the shower / sink hybrid, the bed that emerges from the wall with fresh sheets every day, the aircon that is currently broken, the garbage shoot in the floor, the recycling crate that's empty, the low table where she sits to eat but is currently covered in random gadgets, and the tv next to her bed.

1 CAP (Ridley):

Well, actually this is my home. This 60 square foot closet and everything inside it to be exact. Unit 023, in the 21st zone, on floor 3372.

2 CAP:

I don't have to make my bed, how cool is that? I just press it into the wall and new sheets come out, all plastic sealed and "fresh".

3 CAP:

My toilet / sink / shower hybrid is far less cool than it sounds.

4 CAP:

Pillar regulated TV is a wrench. The only channel I like runs Old-Earth classics like Mystery Science Theater 3000 and Third Rock from the Sun.

5 CAP:

The garbage shoot. Used to scare me as a kid. Not anymore, but still...

6 CAP:

Recycling bin. No liquids.

7 CAP:

My table, where I'm supposed to eat, but mostly where I keep my gadgets.

8 CAP:

My most treasured possession – a picture of my parents.

Page eight – L (five panels)

Panel 1. Full body shot of Ridley putting on her jumpsuit, feet first. She's wearing sporty undergarments and looks quite happy. A blurred, framed picture is behind her – her most treasured possession from the previous page.

Panel 2. Medium shot of her torso. Ridley is brushing her hair by combing her fingers through it. We get a clear shot of what's printed on her chest, "Ridley, 023213372"

CAP 1:

It's printed right here, for everyone to see. Branded under my name.

Panel 3. Ridley goes from rubbing her eyes, in wake-up mode, to turn around towards the picture frame from panel 1. She's smiling, reaching out and addressing her comments to it.

RIDLEY:

Today's the day, Mom and Dad.

Panel 4. Picture frame in hand, Ridley turns towards a large gadget that is now in the foreground of the frame. This is a battery that she made herself. She looks really proud of her work.

RIDLEY:

The day I start selling things I made myself for credits. Making my own future.

Panel 5. Ridley reaches out for her battery.

RIDLEY:

With my battery 2000 deluxe! Repurposed from all the finest junk.

Page nine – R (seven panels)

Panel 1. Ridley is kneeling down now, putting the picture from down with her left hand and putting the battery in her bag with her right hand.

RIDLEY:

If I can sell this at Max's shop, I'll be set for a while. All the food I can eat.

Panel 2. Ridley is leaning over her closed bag for a sweatshirt. The picture frame is on the table, no longer being held by Ridley.

Panel 3. Ridley is pulling the sweatshirt on over her head.

SFX:

URGG!

Panel 4. Ridley, now wearing the sweatshirt, has her cross-body bag over her chest, is ready to go.

RIDLEY:

Alright.

Panel 5. Text only: Grumble.

Panel 6. Ridley is looking upwards, drooling over the thought of a large hamburger.

RIDLEY:

I should get going. See ya, Mom and Dad.

Panel 7. We now get to see her prized possession for ourselves. A picture of young Ridley, her mom and dad all looking happy and young. Young? Why isn't there a more recent one? The plot thickens, haha.

Page ten – L (three panels)

Panel 1. Long panel, wide shot. Ridley is outside of her apartment. The hallway looks like a subway hallway—really narrow, grated floors, concrete walls, lots of graffiti, and cardboard boxes everywhere. Ridley’s door is heavy metal, with her room number on it clearly: 023 21 3372. She is locking the door.

SFX:
Click.

Panel 2. Long panel, wide shot. Ridley is walking away from her door. There is a neighbor walking past. They both say hi to each other. Ridley’s face is visible, she looks happy and smiley, like this is a neighbor she is familiar with. The neighbor is also wearing a jumpsuit like Ridley, but most of it is covered by the heavy coat they’re wearing.

1 CAP (Ridley – incorporated as floating text, not in a world bubble):
Hi!

Panel 3. Ridley is at the end of the narrow hallway where there is an intersection where we can either go straight or take a left. Ridley takes a left. The residential hallways run the perimeter of the Pillar. There are different spokes that lead towards the center of the Pillar – i.e. the hallway that Ridley takes. The hallways that head towards the center transition the residential area into the commercial area, where small restaurants and shops line the hallways. The idea is like it feels like an underground subway.

Page eleven – R (four panels)

Panel 1. Ridley is now in the spoke that leads towards the center of the Pillar. The hallway she is in now is filled with restaurants similar to the vendors that line narrow Japanese streets. Each restaurant seats 2-5 people and are incredibly cramped both for seating and cooking space. There are people loitering in the hallway, too, so that adds to this stuffy feeling. Ridley's back is to us.

Panel 2. A street vendor calls out, holding a plate of hot food to entice any passersby. Ridley is not in the shot. This is a mood establishing shot.

VENDOR:
Come get it! Hot meal for sale!

Panel 3. Profile shot of Ridley's nose in the air. She is taking a deep breath, and looks happy.

1 CAP:
That smells so good.

Panel 4. Profile, now at the bag on Ridley's hip / under her arm where the gadget is.

2 CAP:
Soon.

Page Twelve – L (five panels)

Panel 1. Ridley walking down the stairs.

SFX:

Tpt tpt tpt

Panel 2. Ridley walking into a wide-open area that has high ceilings, about forty feet. The room is the hallway before the “Seasonal Produce Arboretum,” where the “seasonal” produce of The Pillar is showcased. It’s filled with greenery and is Ridley’s favorite place. Along the top of the entrance to SPA, there is a rotating banner that lists out which produce is in season: potatoes, peas, apples, and carrots.

Panel 3. Ridley is walking through SPA, with a smile on her face, enjoying the plants.

1 CAP:

The only place I feel at peace.

2 CAP:

I wonder if the outside of The Pillar is green like this now?

Panel 4. Ridley is waiting in line for the elevator. The space is cramped, people look bored and upset like they’ve been waiting a long time.

3 CAP:

Maybe the radiation is even gone!

Panel 5. Ridley is waiting in the elevator, shoved in the corner, crammed in with other people. She is squished and making a funny face. There is a promotional Pillar poster in the background.

4 CAP:

Shoulda used the stairs! Urg!

Page Thirteen – R (four panels)

Panel 1. Overhead shot of a crowd of people walking through a hallway. The walls have the same rotating banner running along overhead. The top banner says “Floor 1476-1478 closed due to repairs to the energy regeneration grid. Flo-“. Bottom banner says, “Job openings in the new bio-food division. Contact local pillar info desk for information”.

1 CAP:

This is my tradeoff for taking the path through the “S.P.A.”

Panel 2. Ridley is walking in front of a poster for a new type of pop and a cutoff movie poster of a happy man. She is clutching her bag in front of her to protect the contents from getting pick pocketed.

2 CAP:

A sea of people for a moment of bliss.

Panel 3. Ridley is turning off from the busy hallway off into a side hallway called “Zone 7”, food sign to the left, housing to the right. In the background is a poster for “Pro Pillar Reform” with a thumbs up.

Panel 4. We are looking down a long hallway that is empty and still, except for the sound of a tink/tink coming from an opening.

3 CAP:

I hope the trek down here is worth it!

SFX:

tink tink vrrr

Page fourteen – L (five panels)

Panel 1. We are face to face with MAXINE, aka Max, a tall woman with medium short hair and glasses. She is looking at the camera head on with a serious expression.

MAX:
Not interested.

Panel 2. Largest panel on the page – borderless and full of detail. We pull back to see the entrance to Max's shop, "Max Repair – Official Pillar Maintenance". It's a small shop that has a garage-door like entrance, meaning they can roll the front of the stop up during business hours, and down for closing time. This acts as both security and to provide them with more space if needed. Max Repair's is a privately-owned business by Maxine herself. Her main line of business is taking government requests to fix the public facilities of the Pillar (lifts, VRs, etc). She does take civilian requests as they come in, but most of her jobs are government related. Max is inside of her shop, door is rolled up, and Ridley is there, holding out the gadget from before.

RIDLEY:
How are you not interested? I made this battery myself. It's fool proof!

Panel 3. Max looks at the gadget.

MAX:
Doubt it.

Panel 4. Ridley looks annoyed.

RIDLEY:
You can't tell just by looking, Max.

Panel 5. Max turns away, back her to work.

MAX:
My shop specializes in government requests: repairing lifts, VRs, and anything else the Pillar needs. If I need a battery, I make one. Simple.

Page fifteen – R (six panels)

Panel 1. Max, still turned away. Ridley looks at her, with a pout on her face.

MAX:
I wouldn't even use this for a civilian request.

RIDLEY:
I'm telling you, it works.

Panel 2. Max takes a closer look at the battery, scrutinizing it.

MAX:
Is that so?

Panel 3. Max turns it around to look at it.

Panel 4. She flips it over to look at the others side.

Panel 5. She pokes a wire that is coming out of it.

Panel 6. With one hand, Max gives the battery back to Ridley. She rests the other on her hips, smiling.

RIDLEY:
Well?

Page sixteen – L (five panels)

Panel 1. Pull back the camera to show Max's workstation. She is leaning against her table, looking at Ridley.

MAX:

Still don't need it, but maybe we could work something out.

Panel 2. Max is tilting her head to the side, eyes closed, talking more to herself than to Ridley, like she is second guessing her own idea and playing devil's advocate.

MAX:

It'd be during school hours though, so I don't think-

Panel 3. Close up of Ridley looking serious / determined. Black background.

RIDLEY:

That's okay. I don't go to school.

Panel 4. Ridley is flashing her identification badge. On it, her picture, name, date of birth, age (16), location, and working qualifications are printed on it. It also indicates that she holds a valid workers permit.

RIDLEY:

I tested out early and got my workers permit. See?

Panel 5. Max looks impressed:

MAX:

Is that so?

Page seventeen – R (four panels)

Panel 1. Max reaches for a picture on her desk with two little girls and looks at it.

MAX:
Already working at sixteen, huh?

Panel 2. Max holds out the frame to Ridley.

MAX:
I hope my girls follow your example. Your folks must be proud.

Panel 3. Ridley puts her identification card away back into her bag. She isn't looking at Max, but instead down into her bag, more to herself than anyone else.

RIDLEY:
I haven't told them yet. But I will once they return.

Panel 4. Max looks confused.

MAX:
Return? Like from a different floor?

Page eighteen – L (seven panels)

Panel 1. Ridley and Max are standing, both looking at each other. I want to show their size in comparison to each other, how Ridley is standing tall and strong from the belief of her words. No background – all white.

RIDLEY:
From the outside of the Pillar. Until then, I'm on my own.

Panel 2. Max questions Ridley.

MAX:
That's impossible. Not to mention not allowed.

Panel 3. Max looks confused / condescending.

MAX:
It's against social protocol. You can't just *leave the--*

Panel 4. Ridley holds her ground, more brash and firm than before, like everyone reacts this way, and she's annoyed that people keep telling her that it is impossible.

1 CAP:
Typical.

RIDLEY:
They went out to see if the air is safe. They're heroes, and when they come back, I'll have a family again.

Panel 5. Max looks silent, like she is at a loss for words.

Panel 6. Max tried to soft her comments before, and put a positive twist on it by changing her expression to happy / understanding.

MAX:
They sure do sound like heroes. It'd be great if we could leave.

Panel 7. Ridley looks at Max, still listening.

MAX:
Until then, I have a business to run and a job to fill.

Page nineteen – R (four panels)

Panel 1. Pull the camera back and show Max pointing to an empty workstation near the front of the store.

MAX:

If you're interested, the job is covering for Nora. She's out on maternity leave and I could use the extra hands.

RIDELY:

What'd she do?

MAX:

Civilian repairs mostly. She watched the shop while Boulder and I go out to make on-site repairs.

Panel 2. Max's face – agreeable.

MAX:

Come by the shop tomorrow and I can run you through all the duties.

Panel 3. Max looks happier, winking at Ridley with a sly / insider smile. Like the kind of smile you give your friend when you're giving them a good deal.

MAX:

You can decide then. Sound good?

Panel 4. Ridley's face - happy.

RIDLEY:

Sounds good.

1 CAP:

OH MY GOD.

PILLAR 3



RIDLEY
023213372

Presets loading...
Biometric sensors activating...

The system is taking longer this time. Maybe I requested too many details... or maybe this room should be scrapped for parts to build a new VR.



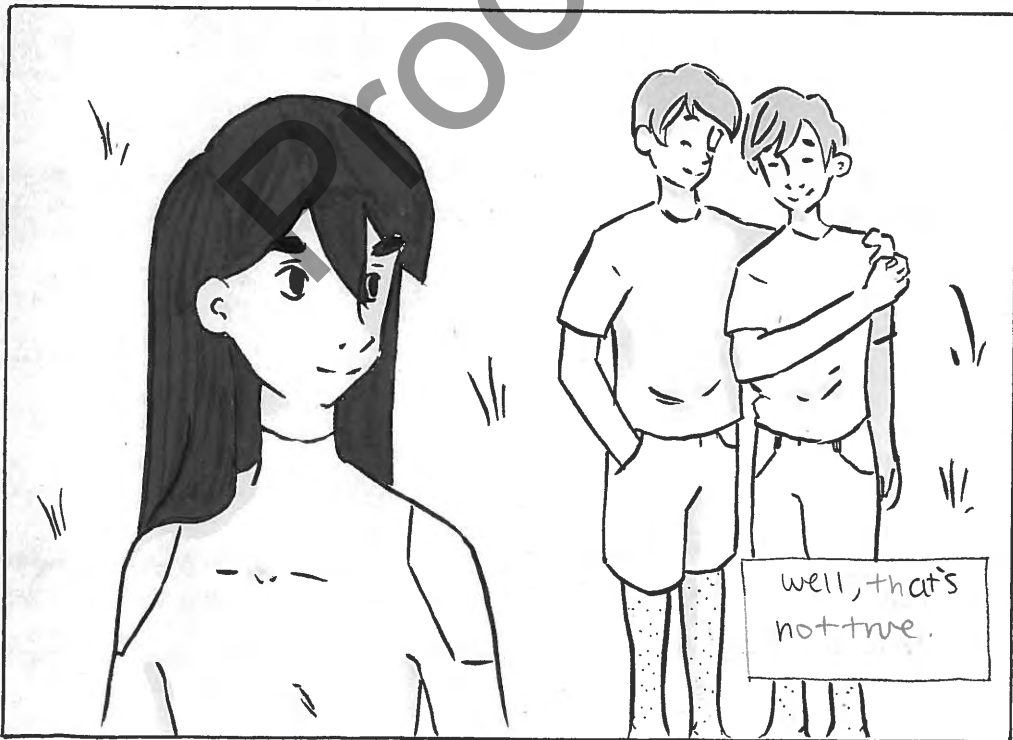
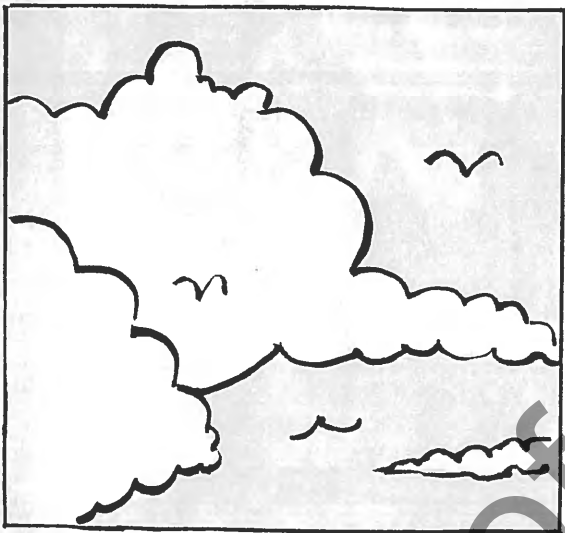
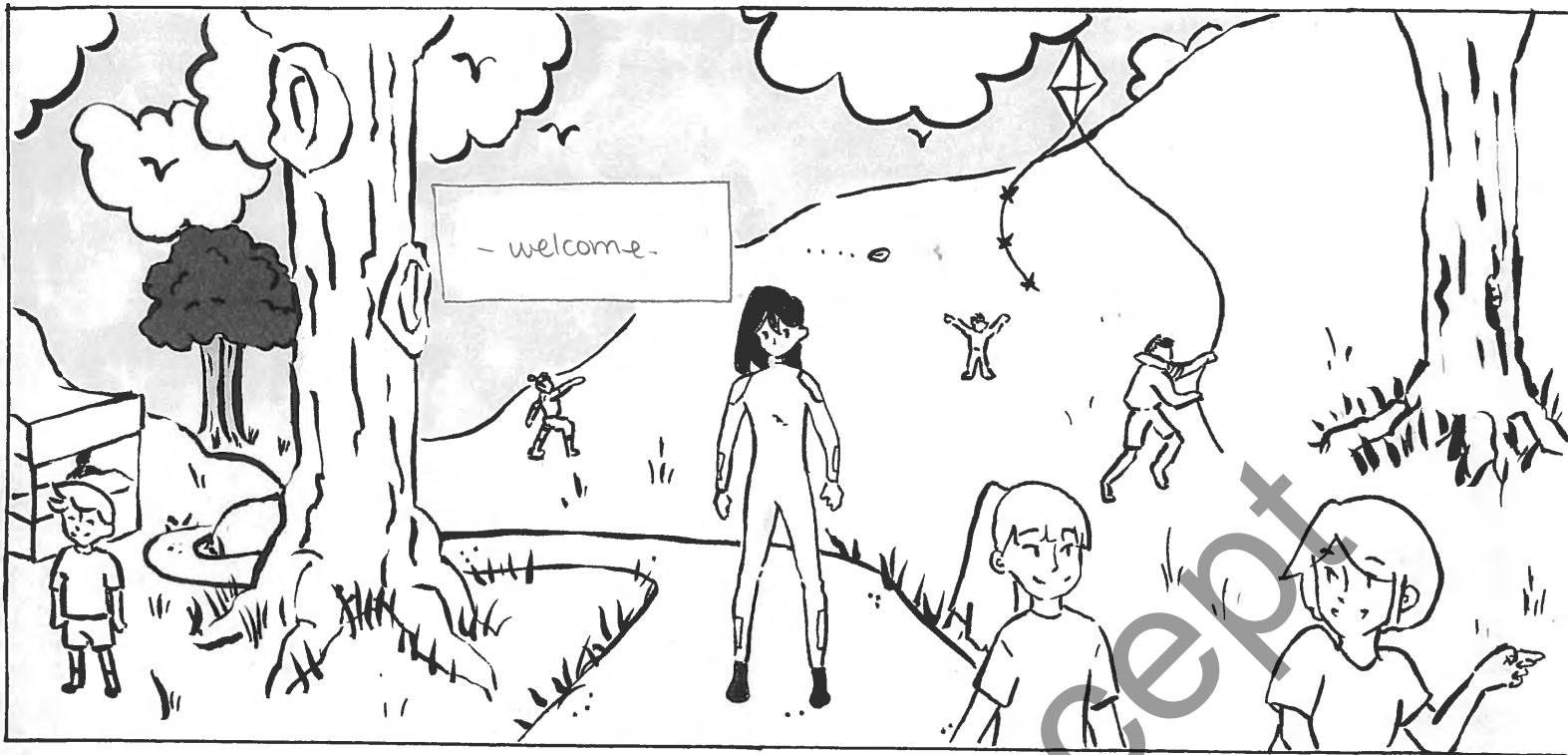
Still...
I think I could be happy in this perpetual state of loading.

Visuals stabilizing

keeping my eyes shut until some automated voice tells me it's okay to open them.

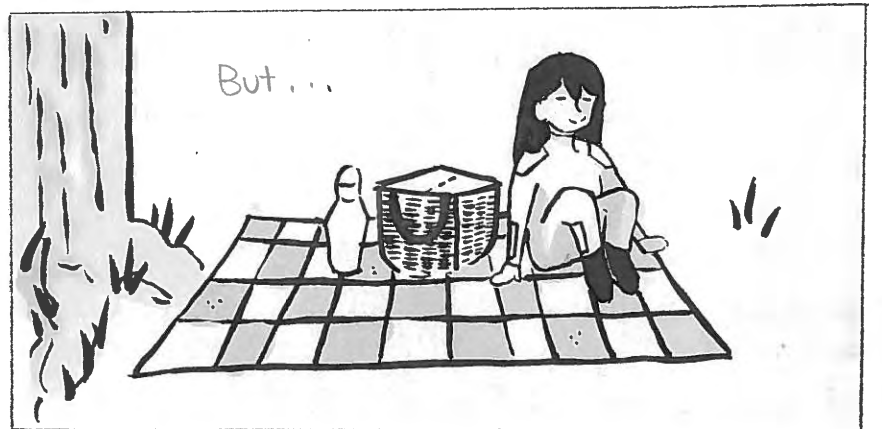
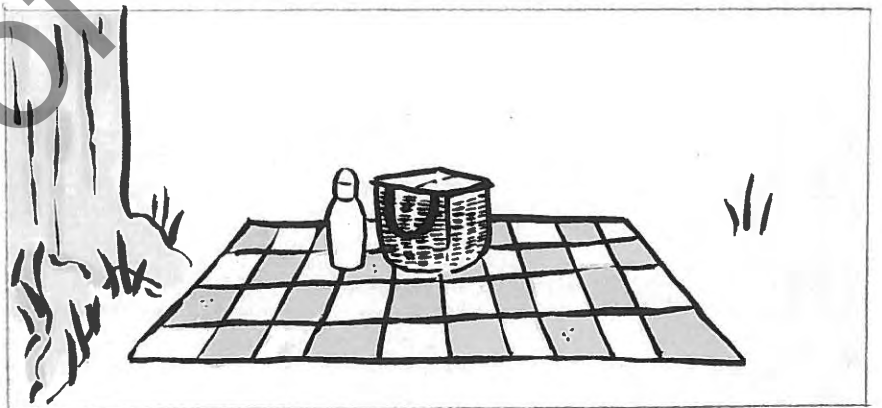
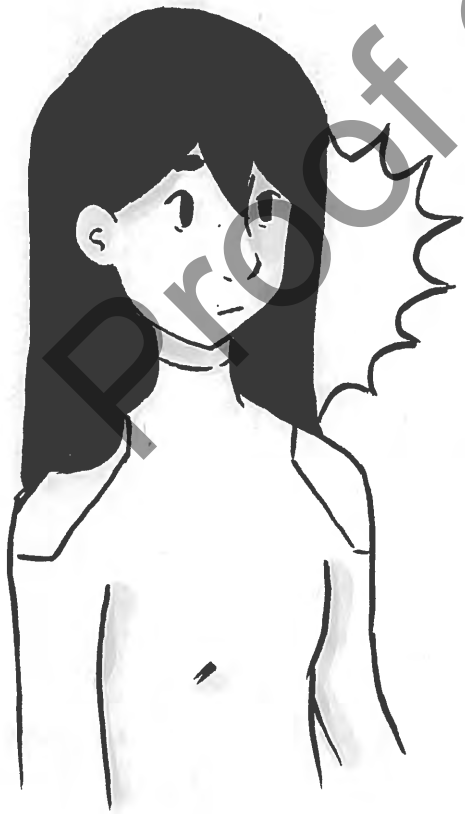
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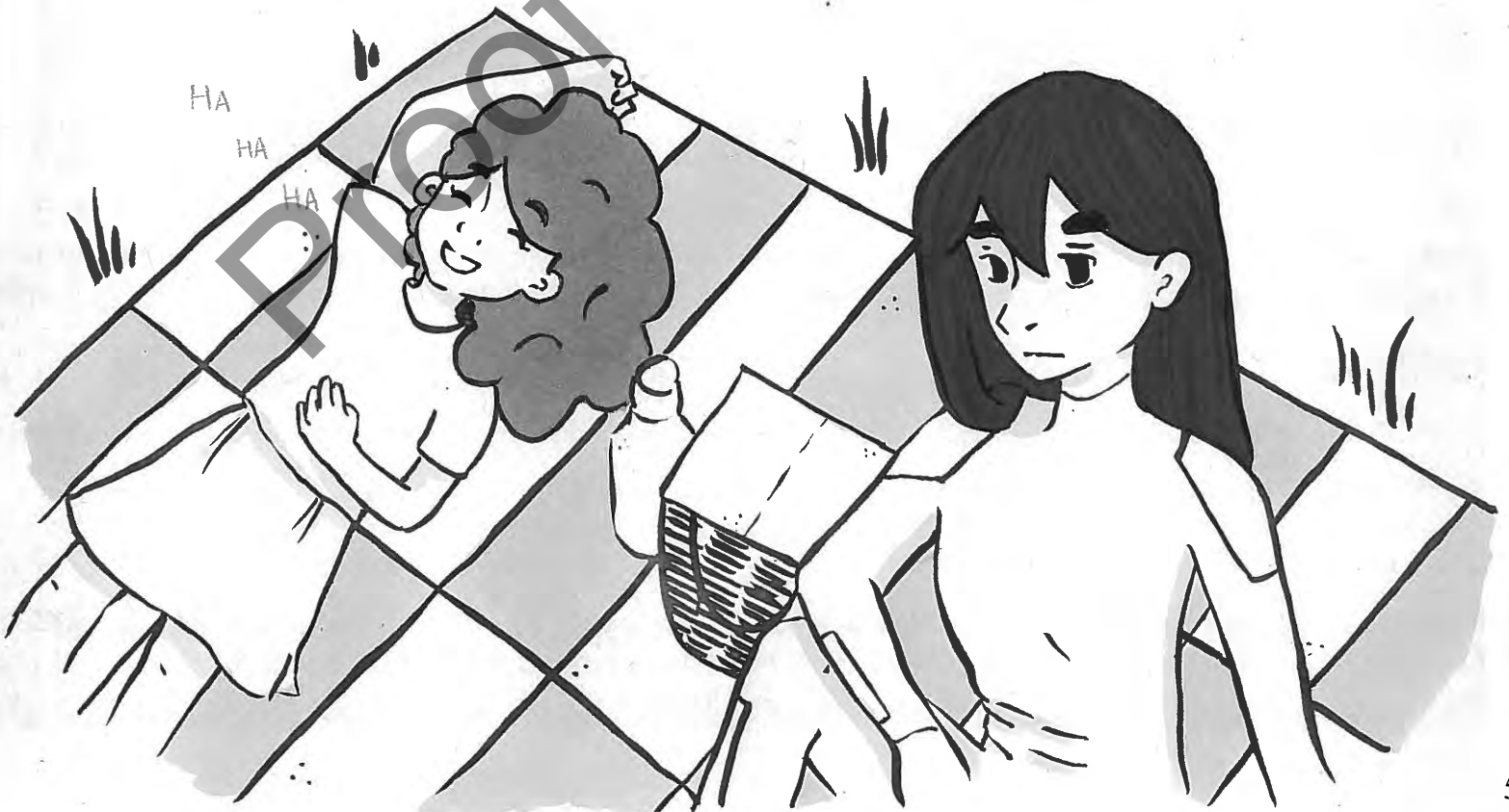
welcoming me to some new reality, but...



this is me,

I am here,





These people aren't real,

I'll grab the water.



They don't even know I don't exist.



Thirsty?



Nope, no reaction.

13

UNITED STATES | MN | 2083

I'm in a
Pillar

UNITED STATES | MN | 2083

in a wasteland
where the air
will leech every-
thing out of you.

2083

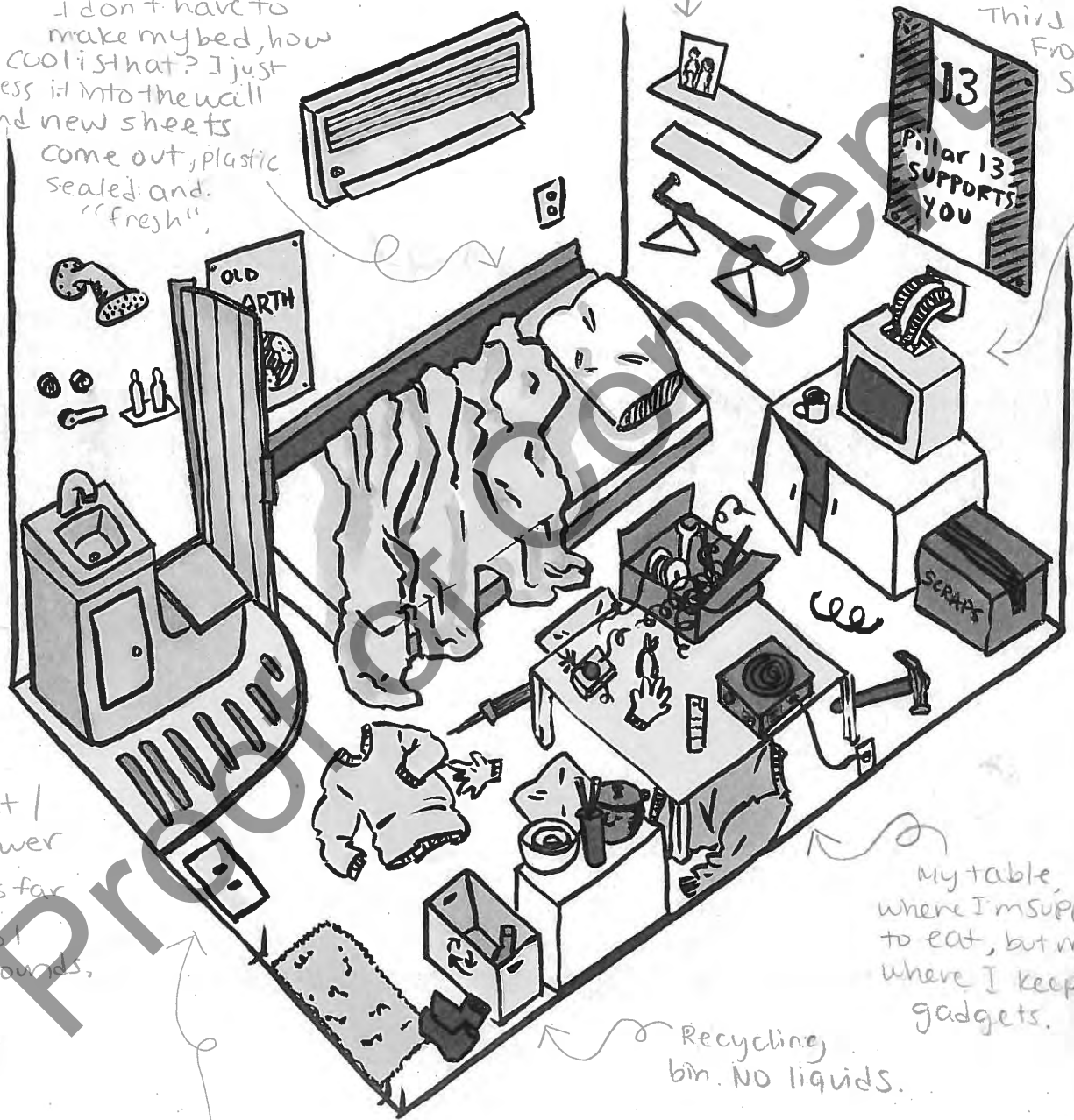
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My most treasured possession - a picture of my parents.

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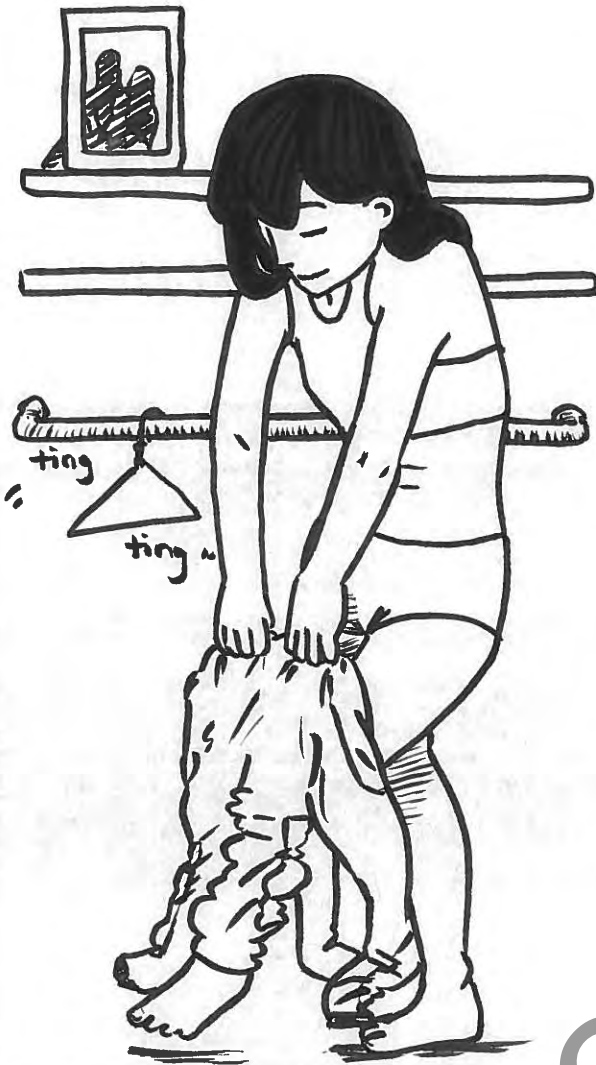
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Unit 023.
21st Zone.
Floor 3372.



If I can sell this at Max's shop, I'll be set for a while. All the food I can eat.



CRUMBLE



~ drool



I should get going. See ya, mom and dad.

