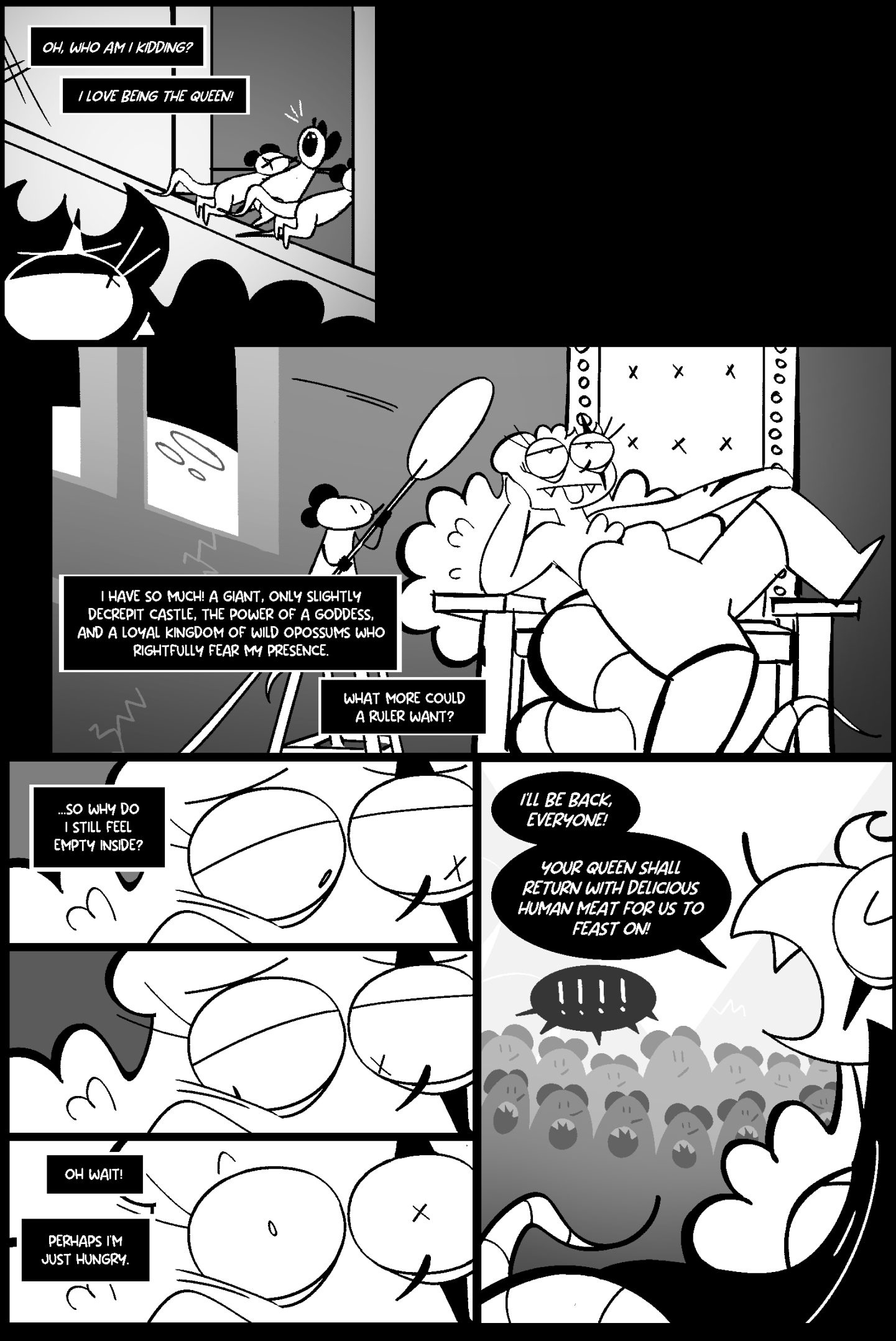
SALLOONY CO.

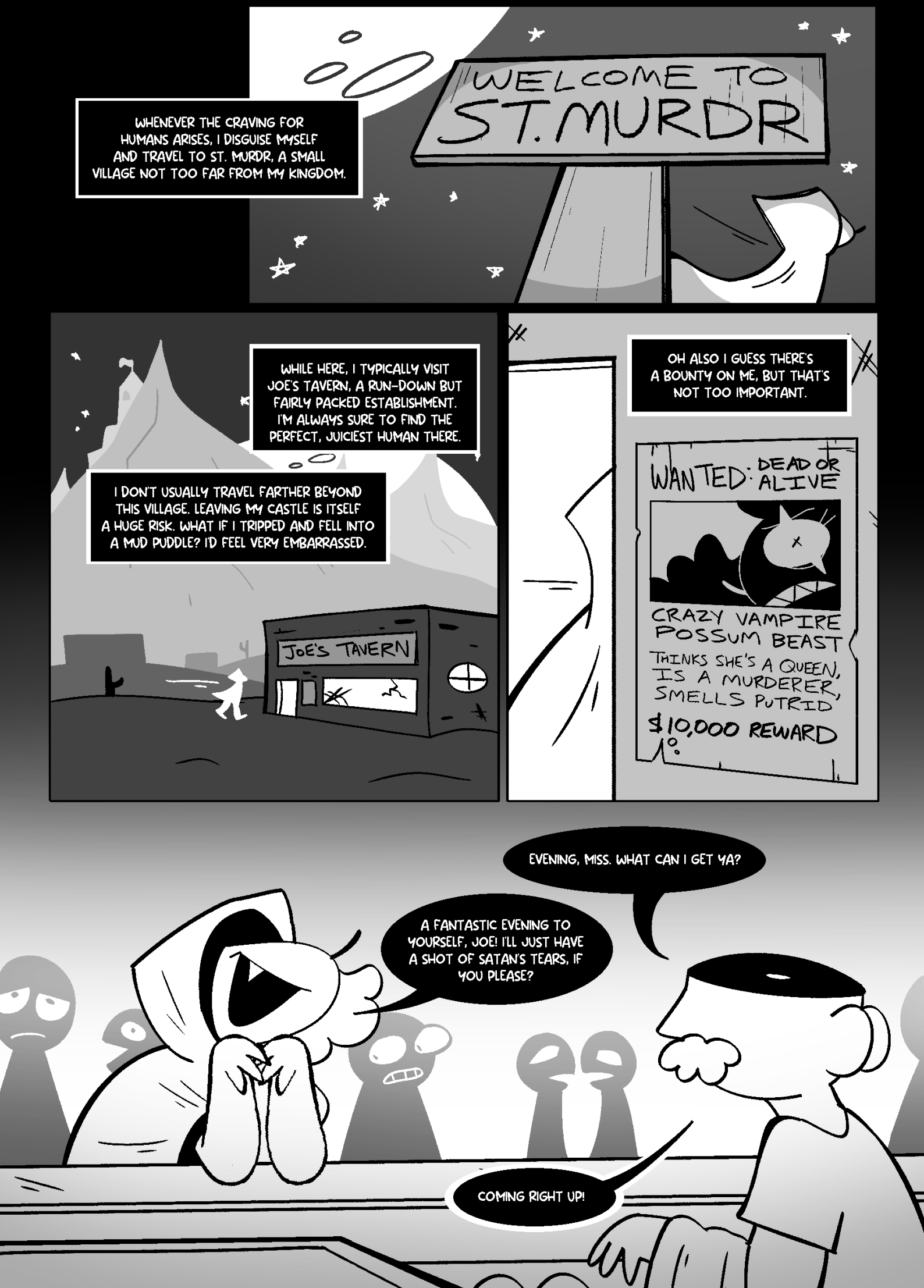
poppy 1000

by alice hahn

FOR AS FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER, I HAVE LIVED IN MY MAGNIFICENT STONE CASTLE, AND HAVE RULED OVER THE HILL IT RESTS ON, AND THE FORESTS THAT SURROUND IT.
DESPITE HAVING LIVED FOR ABOUT 1000 YEARS, MY MEMORY ONLY SPANS TO ABOUT THE LAST 90 OR SO.
THERE'S A LOT ABOUT MY PAST THAT'S A MYSTERY TO ME, BUT THERE'S ONE THING I KNOW FOR CERTAIN: WHO I AM...
POPPYFIELD
VAMPIRE QUEEN OF THE OPOSSUMS!
BUT I'LL ALLOW YOU TO CALL ME "POPPY" FOR SHORT.

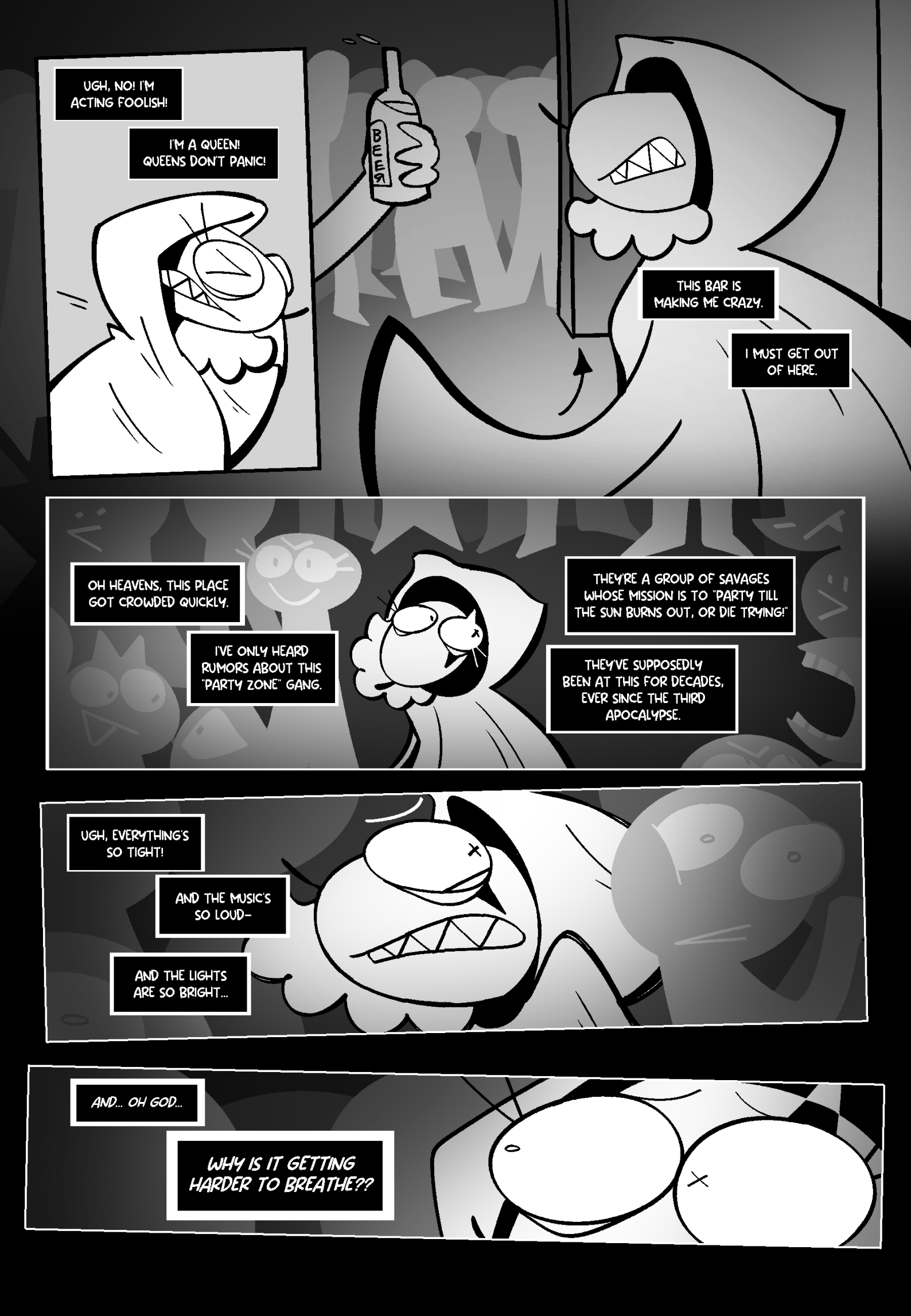
BEING THE QUEEN ISN'T AS MAGICAL AS ONE WOULD ASSUME.
IT'S A DIFFICULT CHORE MANAGING MY ROYAL DUTIES. MY LOYAL SUBJECTS CAN BE FICKLE AT POINTS.
STATUS REPORT!
HOW ARE NEGOTIATIONS GOING WITH THE GRIZZLY BEARS?
AH, VERY GOOD.
HOW THE WEATHER GONNA FAIR THIS WEEK? I CAN'T AFFORD TO GET MY GORGEOUS HAIR WET.
SPLENDID!
NOW, BE HONEST...
HOW DO I LOOK?
AM I THE PRETTIEST CREATURE OF THE LAND?
ANSWER TRUTHFULLY, DON'T BE SHY!
EXCUSE ME?!
HOW DARE YOU!!
OFF WITH YOUR HEAD!!!

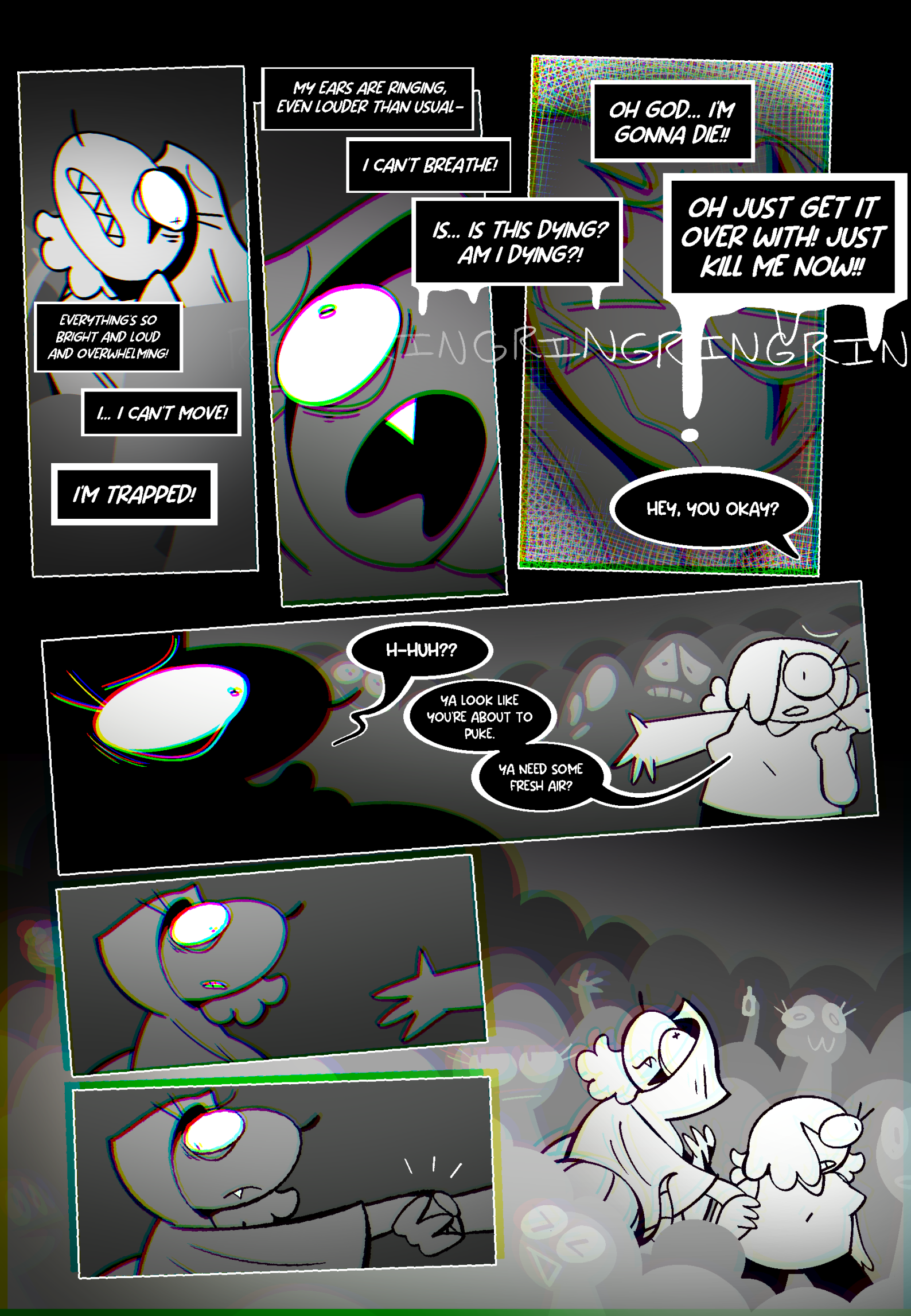

OH, WHO AM I KIDDING?
I LOVE BEING THE QUEEN!
I HAVE SO MUCH! A GIANT, ONLY SLIGHTLY DECREPIT CASTLE, THE POWER OF A GODDESS, AND A LOYAL KINGDOM OF WILD OPOSSUMS WHO RIGHTFULLY FEAR MY PRESENCE.
WHAT MORE COULD A RULER WANT?
...SO WHY DO I STILL FEEL EMPTY INSIDE?
OH WAIT!
PERHAPS I'M JUST HUNGRY.
I'LL BE BACK, EVERYONE!
YOUR QUEEN SHALL RETURN WITH DELICIOUS HUMAN MEAT FOR US TO FEAST ON!
!!!!

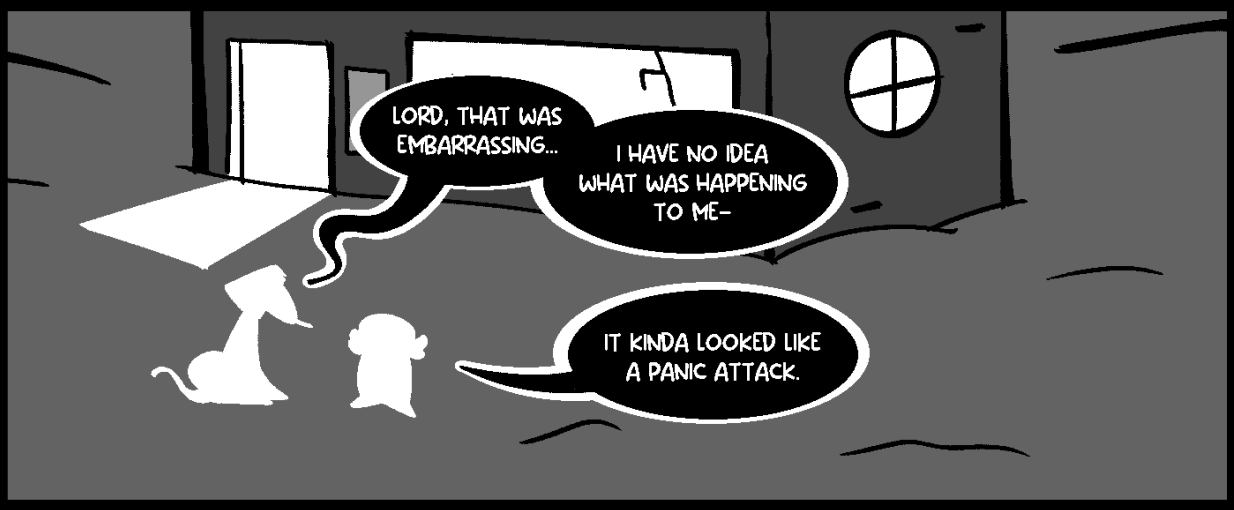

WHENEVER THE CRAVING FOR HUMANS ARISES, I DISGUISE MYSELF AND TRAVEL TO ST. MURDR, A SMALL VILLAGE NOT TOO FAR FROM MY KINGDOM.
WELCOME TO ST. MURDR
WHILE HERE, I TYPICALLY VISIT JOE'S TAVERN, A RUN-DOWN BUT FAIRLY PACKED ESTABLISHMENT. I'M ALWAYS SURE TO FIND THE PERFECT, JUICIEST HUMAN THERE.
I DON'T USUALLY TRAVEL FARTHER BEYOND THIS VILLAGE. LEAVING MY CASTLE IS ITSELF A HUGE RISK. WHAT IF I TRIPPED AND FELL INTO A MUD PUDDLE? I'D FEEL VERY EMBARRASSED.
JOE'S TAVERN
OH ALSO I GUESS THERE'S A BOUNTY ON ME, BUT THAT'S NOT TOO IMPORTANT.
WANTED: DEAD OR ALIVE
CRAZY VAMPIRE POSSUM BEAST
THINKS SHE'S A QUEEN, IS A MURDERER, SMELLS PUTRID
$10,000 REWARD
EVENING, MISS. WHAT CAN I GET YA?
A FANTASTIC EVENING TO YOURSELF, JOE! I'LL JUST HAVE A SHOT OF SATAN'S TEARS, IF YOU PLEASE?
COMING RIGHT UP!

SAY, YOU HEAR ABOUT THAT RIOT IN ATTACK COVE?
SOME GENIUS KILLED THE TOWN LEADER AND THEN TRIED TO MAKE HIMSELF THE "KING OF THE COVE."
TOWNSFOLK WERE FURIOUS.
I HEAR HALF THE COVE'S BEEN BURNED DOWN. AS IF IT WASN'T IN RUINS ALREADY.
OH I DON'T PAY ATTENTION TO THE NEWS, DEAR.
IF IT'S NOT AFFECTING ME, IT DOESN'T CONCERN ME. OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND.
AH... YOU LIVE OFF THE GRID?
YOU COULD SAY THAT, YEAH.
I ENVY YOU.
AFTER THE FOURTH APOCALYPSE AWHILE BACK, I WANTED TO MOVE INTO THE WOODS, AND LIVE A SECLUDED, NATURALIST LIFESTYLE!
BUT THE OLD MRS. WASN'T A FAN OF THE IDEA. AH WELL.
I BET IT'S NICE HAVING AN ENTIRE SPACE TO YOURSELF.
OCCASIONALLY, YEAH...
OH LORD... NOT THEM...
WUZZAH?

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,
DUDES AND DUDETTES-
KILL ALL LOSERS
-IT'S TIME TO PARTY DOWN WITH THE PARTY ZONE!
WE'RE HERE TO TAKE THIS DUSTY JOINT AND GIVE IT SOME EXTREME DANCE FRENZY A-A-A-ATTITUDE!
OH NO YOU DON'T, I'VE HEARD OF YOU PUNKS BEFORE-
GIT OUT, OR I'LL MAKE YOU GIT OUT!
UGH, LAME!
STAB!
WE'RE THE PARTY ZONE!!!
WE PARTY WHEREVER WE WANNA PARTY!
I'VE NEVER BEEN QUITE SURE WHY...
BUT WHENEVER I SEE A KNIFE, NO MATTER THE CIRCUMSTANCE-
I FEEL A DEEP, DEEP PANIC...
LIKE I'M ABOUT TO DIE.


UGH, NO! I'M ACTING FOOLISH!
I'M A QUEEN! QUEENS DON'T PANIC!
BEER
THIS BAR IS MAKING ME CRAZY.
I MUST GET OUT OF HERE.
OH HEAVENS, THIS PLACE GOT CROWDED QUICKLY.
I'VE ONLY HEARD RUMORS ABOUT THIS "PARTY ZONE" GANG.
THEY'RE A GROUP OF SAVAGES WHOSE MISSION IS TO "PARTY TILL THE SUN BURNS OUT, OR DIE TRYING!"
THEY'VE SUPPOSEDLY BEEN AT THIS FOR DECADES, EVER SINCE THE THIRD APOCALYPSE.
UGH, EVERYTHING'S SO TIGHT!
AND THE MUSIC'S SO LOUD–
AND THE LIGHTS ARE SO BRIGHT...
AND... OH GOD...
WHY IS IT GETTING HARDER TO BREATHE??

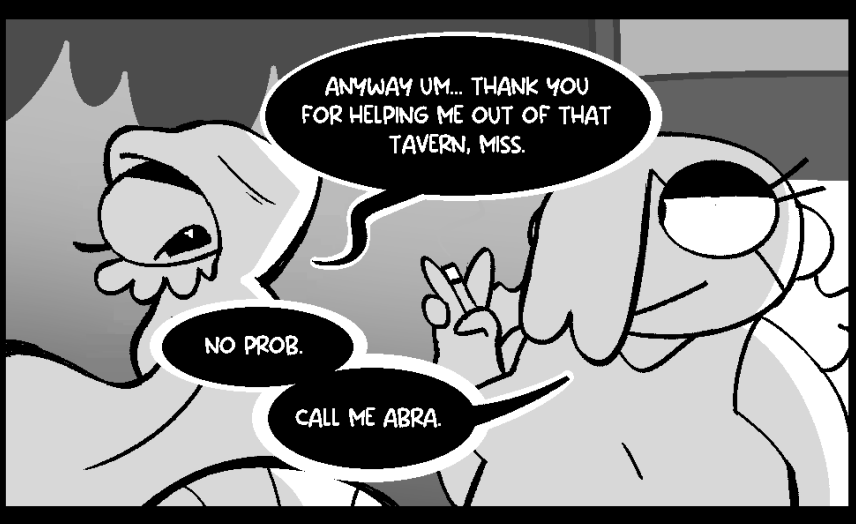

EVERYTHING'S SO BRIGHT AND LOUD AND OVERWHELMING!
I... I CAN'T MOVE!
I'M TRAPPED!
MY EARS ARE RINGING, EVEN LOUDER THAN USUAL-
I CAN'T BREATHE!
IS... IS THIS DYING? AM I DYING?!
RINGRINGRINGR


LORD, THAT WAS EMBARRASSING...
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO ME-
IT KINDA LOOKED LIKE A PANIC ATTACK.

YA HAVE 'EM OFTEN?
O-OF COURSE NOT! I DON'T PANIC.
I'M UH... I'M TOO PROUD TO PANIC!

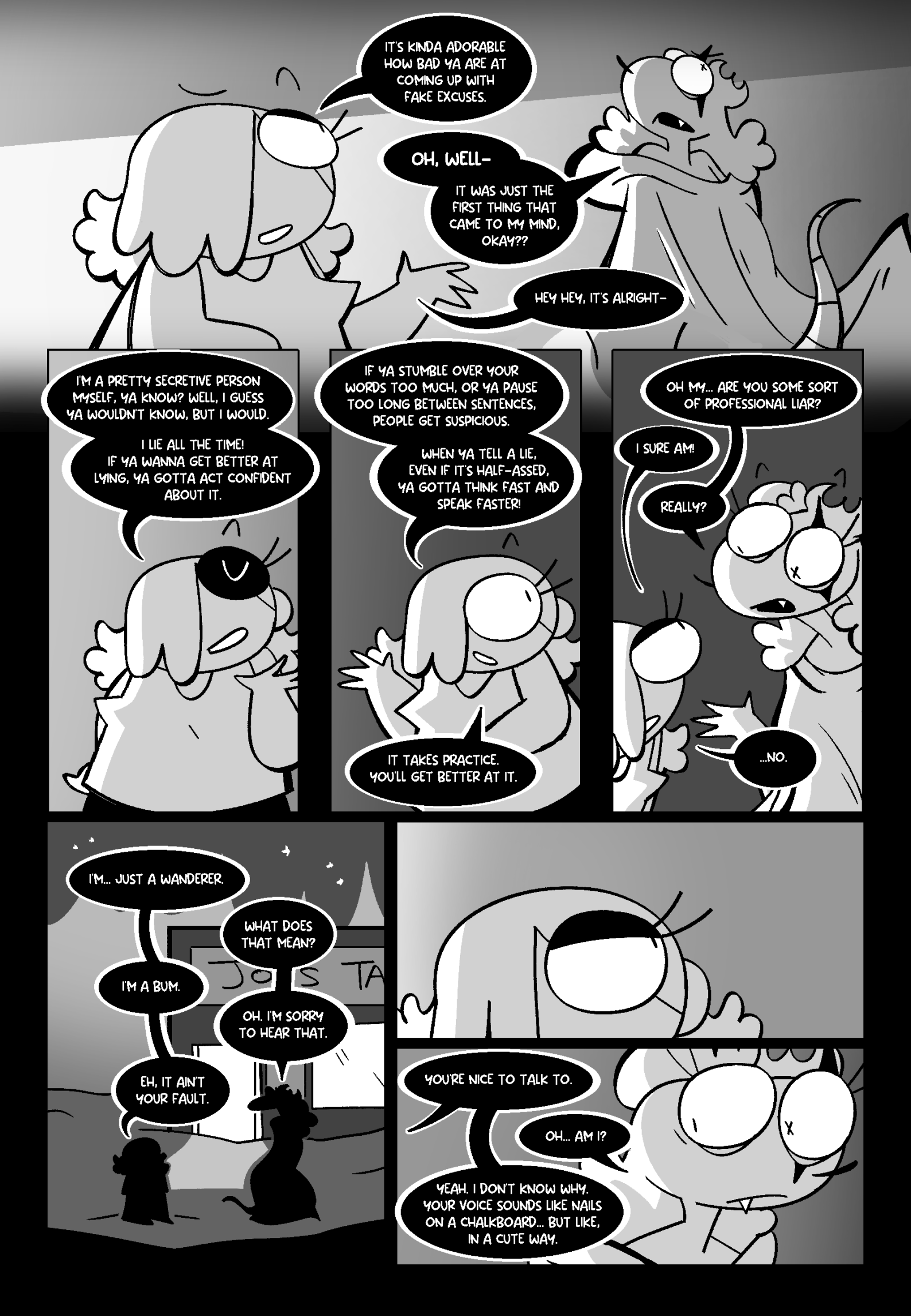
CLEARLY THOSE PARTY PUNKS WERE USING SOME SORT OF STRANGE TELEKINESIS MAGIC-
-TO TRY TO MAKE MY HEAD EXPLODE! THOSE SICK FREAKS!
AH, I SEE.

I'M UM... POPPY.
YOU'RE NOT WITH THE PARTY ZONE, ARE YOU?
OH NAH, I WAS IN THE BAR BEFORE THEY GOT HERE.
I GO TO JOE'S TAVERN EVERYDAY.


ANYWAY UM... THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME OUT OF THAT TAVERN, MISS.
NO PROB.
CALL ME ABRA.

I LIKE YOUR TAIL.
I WISH I HAD ONE.
WH-
OH, SHIT-
ARE YOU AN OPOSSUM CRYPTID? THAT'S SICK.
YA DON'T HAVE TO HIDE IN YOUR BIG CLOAK, IT'S A'IGHT. I'M NOT GONNA HURT YA.
HHH SHIT... SHE'S SURELY SEEN THOSE WANTED POSTERS FOR ME... SHE'LL RECOGNIZE ME RIGHT AWAY!
BUT I DON'T THINK I HAVE ANY OTHER CHOICE...
...WELL, ALRIGHT. IF YOU INSIST.
YEAH YEAH, I KNOW-
WOAH!
Y-YOU'RE...
YOU'RE... REALLY PRETTY.
I... I AM?
I- I MEAN, YOU THINK SO?
YEE.
I DON'T LOOK... FAMILIAR... AT ALL?
NAH. WHY WOULD YA?
UM... NEVERMIND.

THAT SCAR OVER YOUR EYE'S REALLY GNARLY.
HOW'D YA GET IT?
I DON'T REMEMBER HOW I GOT ANY OF MY SCARS. BUT IF I TELL THIS ABRA LADY THAT, I'LL JUST LOOK LIKE SOME SORT OF WIMP!
I BETTER THINK OF A REALLY COOL AND HARROWING STORY TO IMPRESS HER.
UH...
TENNIS... ACCIDENT.
OH? YA PLAY TENNIS?
NO NO UH, I WAS VIEWING A GAME, AND A BALL CAME FLYING TOWARDS ME! HIT ME RIGHT SQUARE IN THE EYE.
I UH, I ABOUT NEARLY DIED.
YA NEARLY DIED? FROM A TENNIS BALL?
YES YES, VERY SCARY.
BUT I'M UH, I'M TOO PROUD TO DIE! SO I DIDN'T.


IT'S KINDA ADORABLE HOW BAD YA ARE AT COMING UP WITH FAKE EXCUSES.
OH, WELL–
IT WAS JUST THE FIRST THING THAT CAME TO MY MIND, OKAY??
HEY HEY, IT'S ALRIGHT–
I'M A PRETTY SECRETIVE PERSON MYSELF, YA KNOW? WELL, I GUESS YA WOULDN'T KNOW, BUT I WOULD.
I LIE ALL THE TIME! IF YA WANNA GET BETTER AT LYING, YA GOTTA ACT CONFIDENT ABOUT IT.
IF YA STUMBLE OVER YOUR WORDS TOO MUCH, OR YA PAUSE TOO LONG BETWEEN SENTENCES, PEOPLE GET SUSPICIOUS.
WHEN YA TELL A LIE, EVEN IF IT'S HALF-ASSED, YA GOTTA THINK FAST AND SPEAK FASTER!
IT TAKES PRACTICE. YOU'LL GET BETTER AT IT.
OH MY... ARE YOU SOME SORT OF PROFESSIONAL LIAR?
I SURE AM!
REALLY?
...NO.
I'M... JUST A WANDERER.
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
I'M A BUM.
OH. I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT.
EH, IT AIN'T YOUR FAULT.
YOU'RE NICE TO TALK TO.
OH... AM I?
YEAH. I DON'T KNOW WHY. YOUR VOICE SOUNDS LIKE NAILS ON A CHALKBOARD... BUT LIKE, IN A CUTE WAY.

I CAN'T REALLY REMEMBER THE LAST TIME I'VE HAD THIS LONG OF A CONVERSATION WITH SOMEONE.
I'VE BEEN ALONE FOR A VERY LONG TIME.
BUT I GUESS THERE'S NOT A LOTTA PEEPS TO TALK TO ANYWAY, AT LEAST NOT IN THESE WASTELANDS.
I GUESS UH, YOU'RE FAIRLY NICE TO TALK TO AS WELL.
I'M ALSO PRETTY SECLUDED, MYSELF.
THEN YA KNOW HOW IT FEELS...
...THE INSANITY OF ISOLATION.
I LOST EVERYONE I EVER KNEW AND LOVED TO AN SANDWORM ATTACK AT A YOUNG AGE.
SINCE THEN... I'VE BEEN WANDERING.
OUT HERE... IN THIS BARREN WORLD-
-THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN COMFORT YA... WHO YA CAN TALK TO... WHO YA CAN BEFRIEND... IS YOURSELF.
BUT AT SOME POINT, YOU GET LOST IN YOURSELF. WHEN YOU'RE ISOLATED, IT'S VERY EASY TO EMBRACE THAT ISOLATION.
AND MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, YA JUST... GO INSANE.
I KNOW I HAVE, EVEN IF PARTLY.
DO YA EVER FEEL THAT WAY, POPPY?
DO YA EVER FEEL INSANE?
...YES. ALL THE TIME.