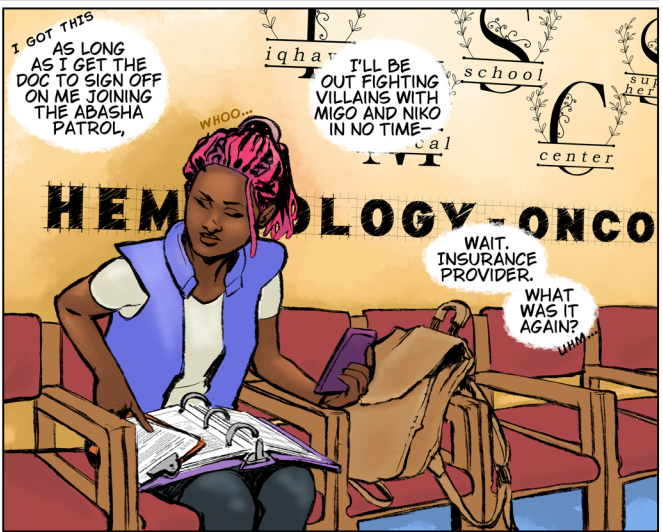
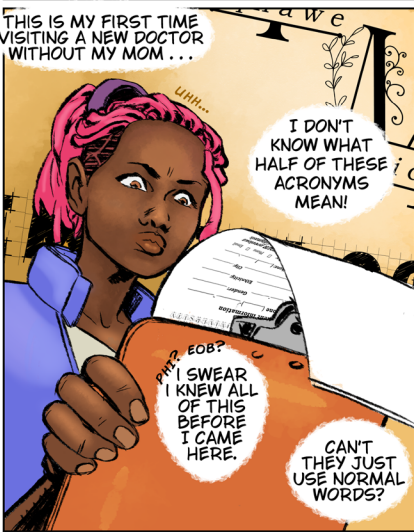
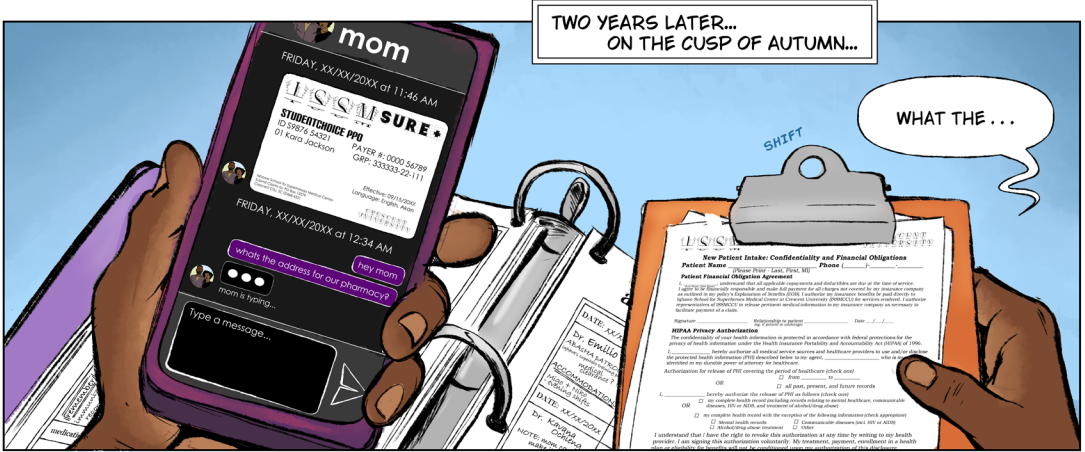
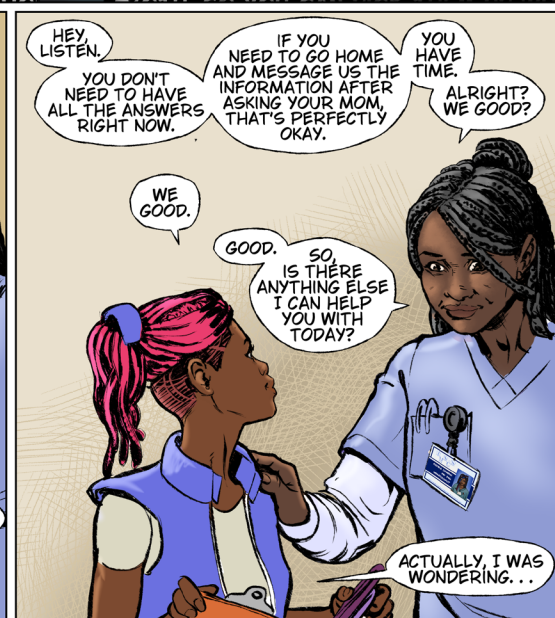
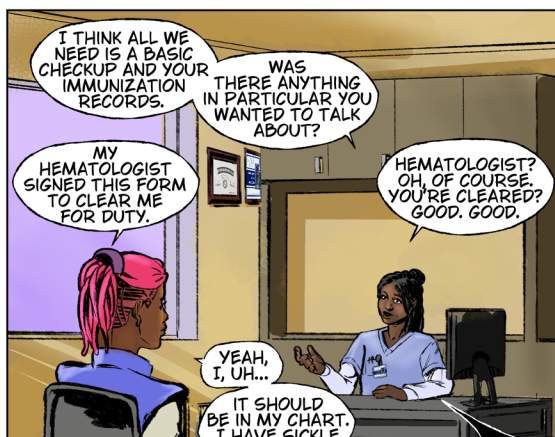




next
step







I NEED TO SUBMIT A REQUEST FOR ACCOMMODATIONS AT THE DISABILITY OFFICE,

BUT I WASN'T SURE WHAT I COULD ASK FOR.



OH. HMM...

I WAS THINKING THERE MIGHT BE A LIST I COULD LOOK AT

WELL--

OR... I'M JUST NOT SURE WHAT I'M ALLOWED TO...

UH...

AHA!
OKAY. OKAY. SO, THE THING IS

THAT ALL DEPENDS ON WHAT **YOU** NEED.



???

WHAT I NEED?

YUP!

I KNOW PEOPLE OFTEN THINK ABOUT IT AS, "WELL, WHAT'LL THEY GIVE ME?"

BUT IT'S REALLY MORE ABOUT YOU AND WHAT WILL HELP YOU FUNCTION AT YOUR BEST.

R-RIGHT...

LIKE GLASSES.



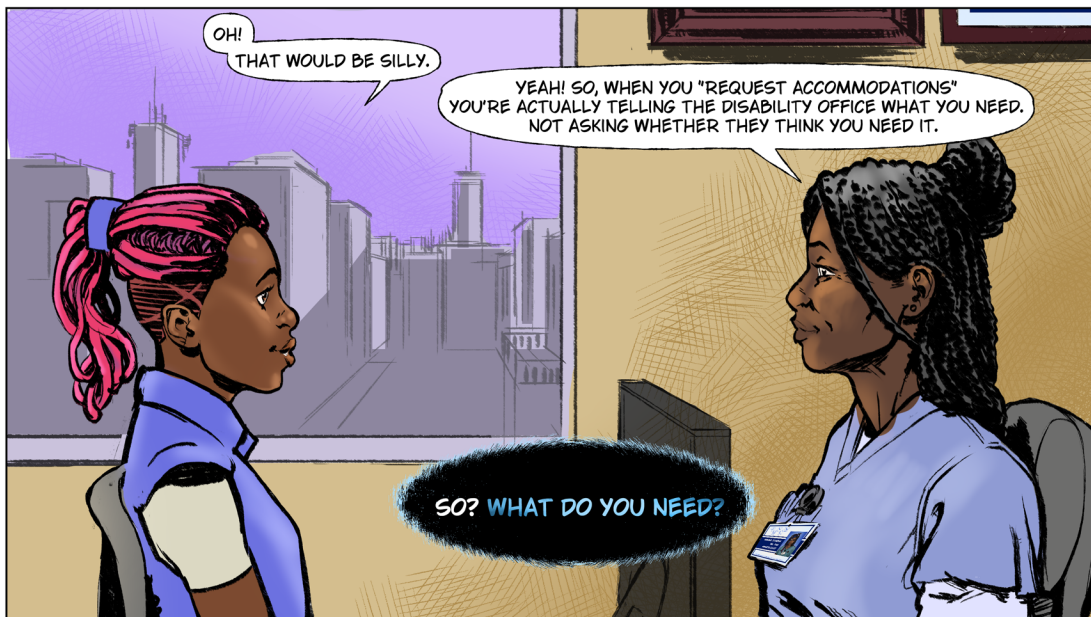
NOD
NOD

HUH?

I MEAN...

IF YOU WERE NEARSIGHTED AND NEEDED GLASSES TO SEE THE TEACHER

WOULD YOU ASK FOR PERMISSION TO WEAR THEM DURING CLASS?



OH!

THAT WOULD BE SILLY.

YEAH! SO, WHEN YOU "REQUEST ACCOMMODATIONS" YOU'RE ACTUALLY TELLING THE DISABILITY OFFICE WHAT YOU NEED. NOT ASKING WHETHER THEY THINK YOU NEED IT.

SO? WHAT DO YOU NEED?



I...

I DON'T
THINK I CAN
WORK WITH ...

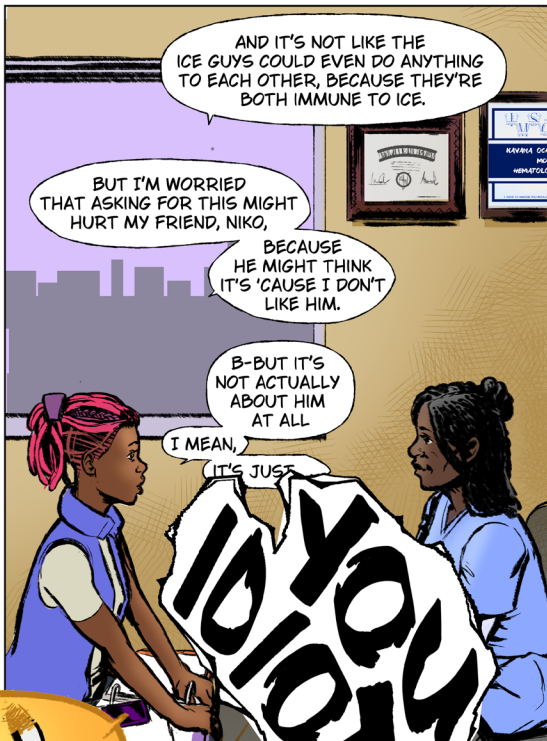
UH ...

WITH PEOPLE
WHO HAVE
ICE POWERS.

SUDDEN COLD
COULD TRIGGER
A PAIN CRISIS.

IF I'M FIGHTING
AN ICE GUY AND
MY PARTNER'S ALSO
AN ICE GUY, THAT JUST
DOUBLES THE ICE I'LL
BE AROUND ...

I'D JUST BE
SETTING MYSELF UP
FOR A BAD TIME.



AND IT'S NOT LIKE THE
ICE GUYS COULD EVEN DO ANYTHING
TO EACH OTHER, BECAUSE THEY'RE
BOTH IMMUNE TO ICE.

BUT I'M WORRIED
THAT ASKING FOR THIS MIGHT
HURT MY FRIEND, NIKO,

BECAUSE
HE MIGHT THINK
IT'S 'CAUSE I DON'T
LIKE HIM.

B-BUT IT'S
NOT ACTUALLY
ABOUT HIM
AT ALL

I MEAN,
IT'S JUST

I'M SORRY



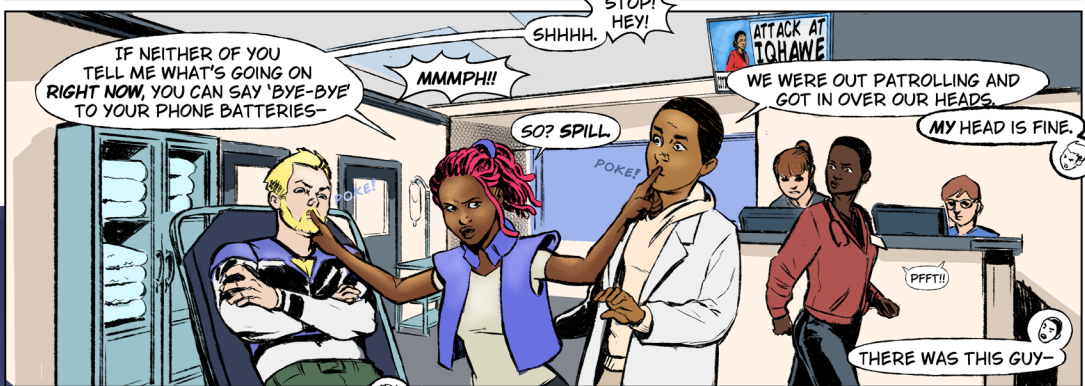
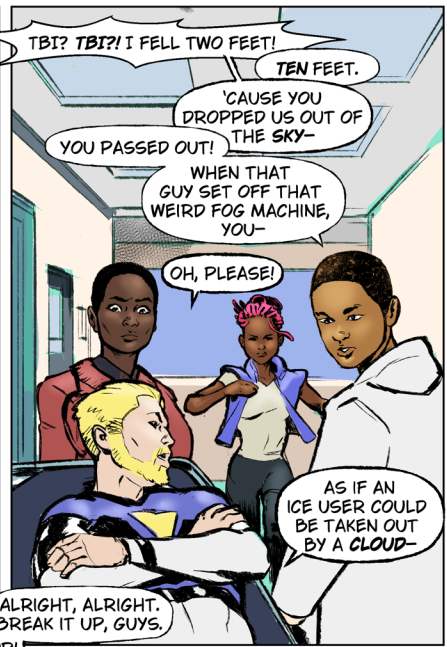
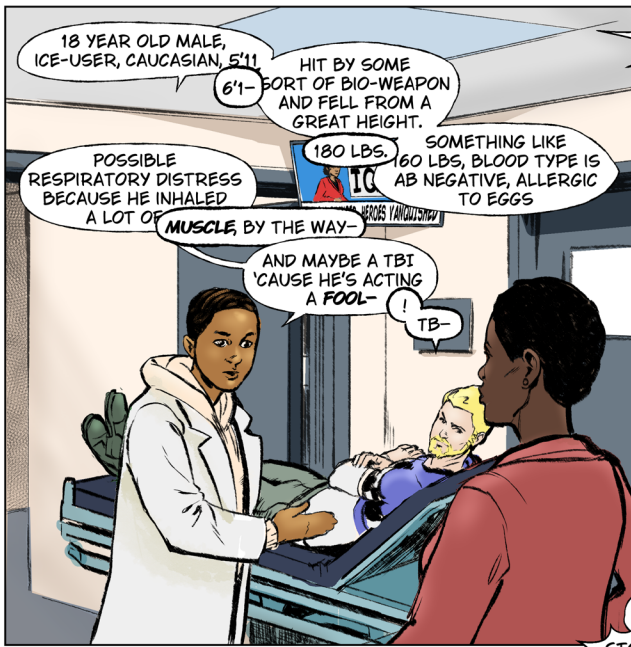
HE'S RIGHT THERE

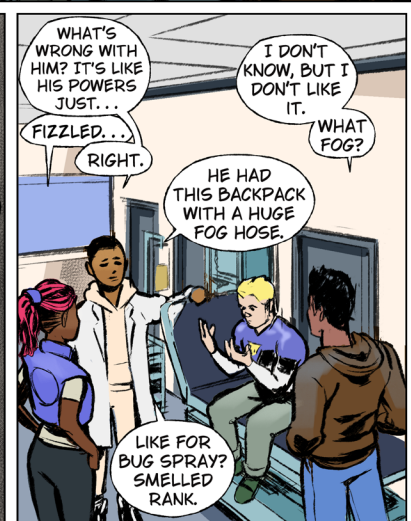
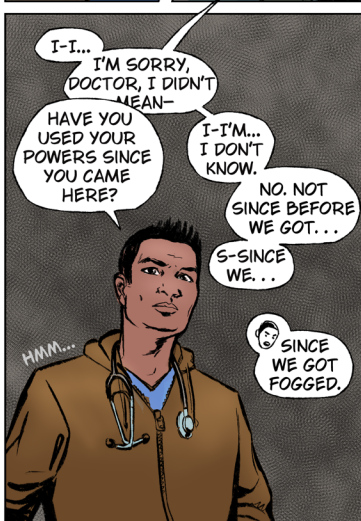
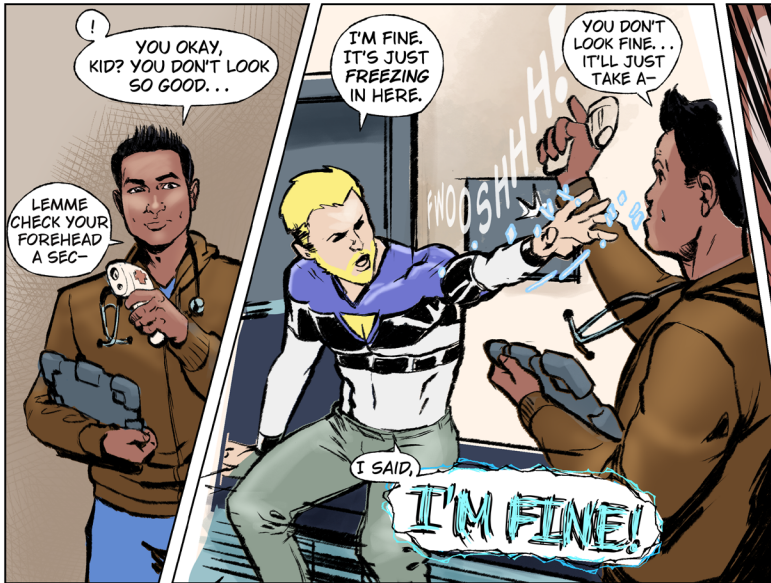
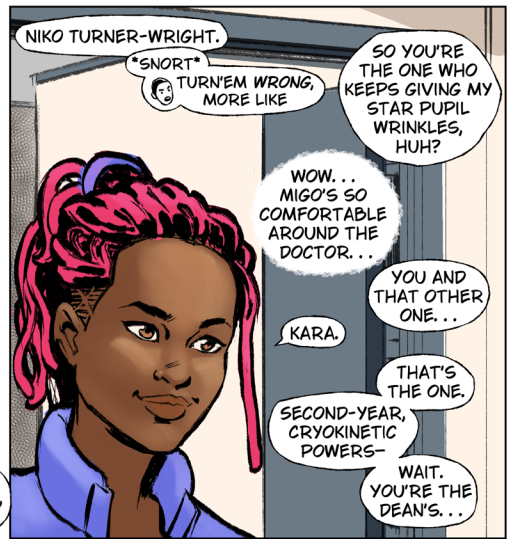
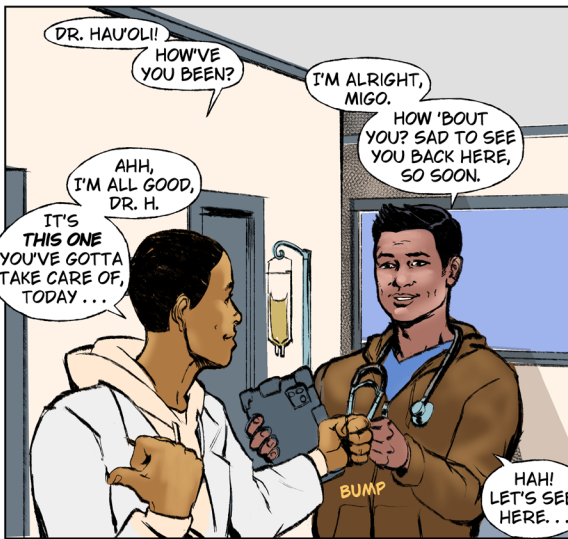
LET ME GO

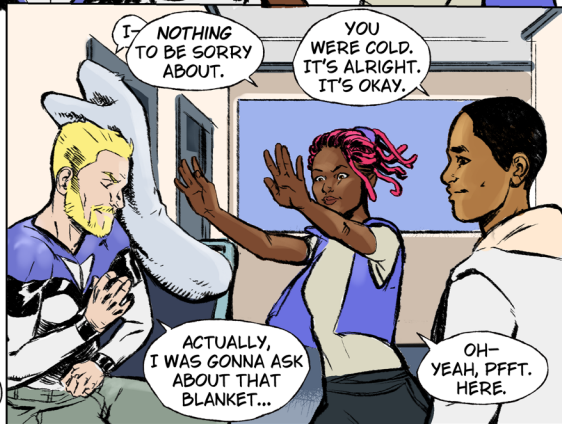
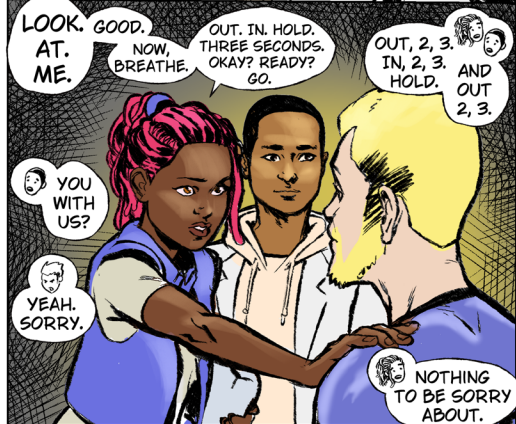
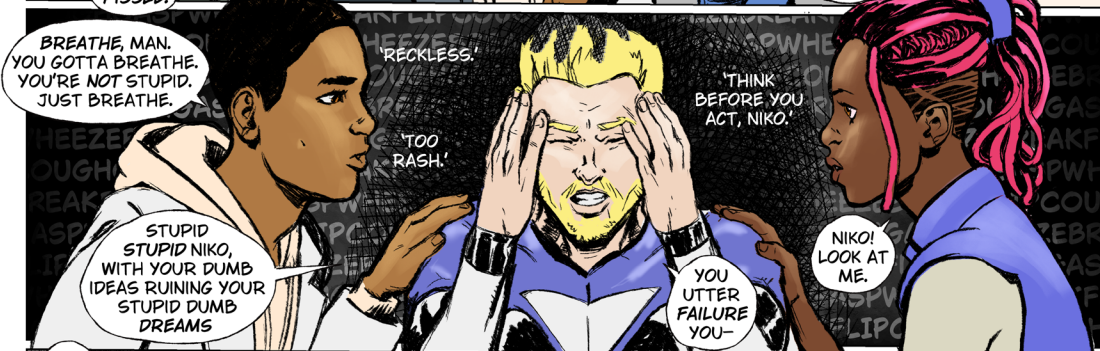
NAH, FAM.
WE'RE GETTING
OUT OF- OH!

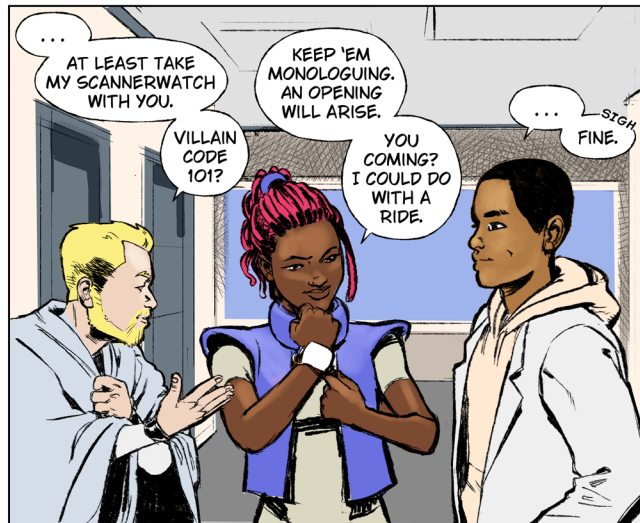
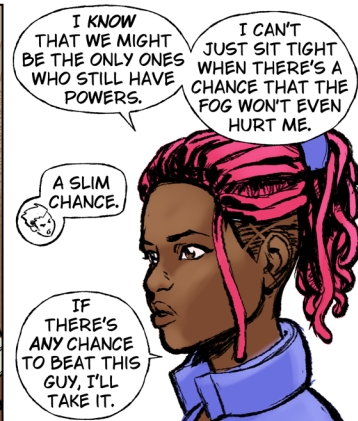
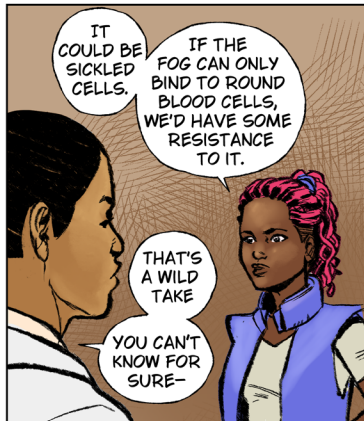
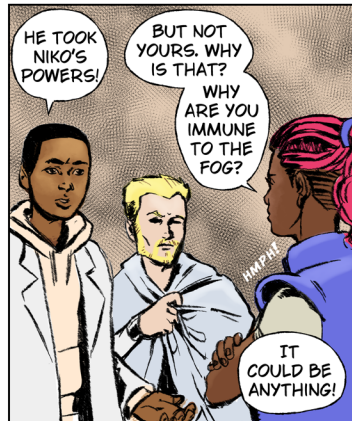
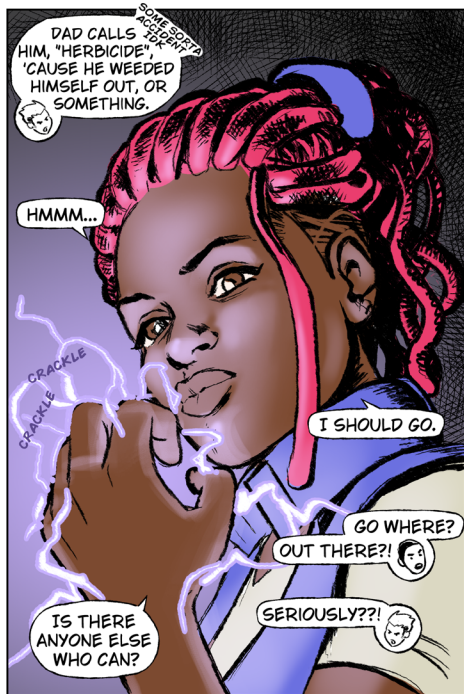
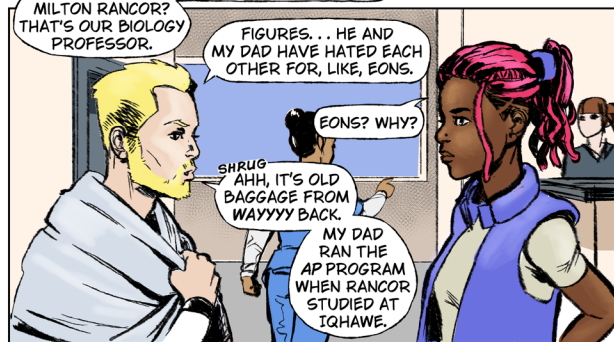
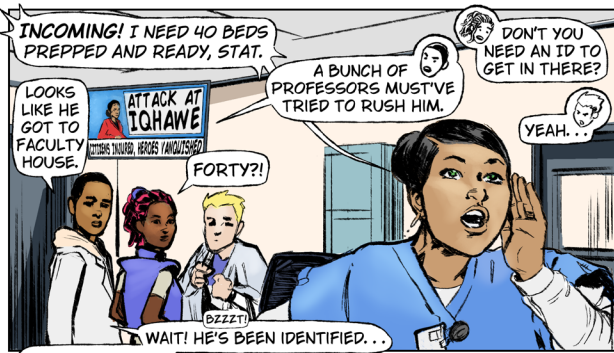
'SUP KARA!

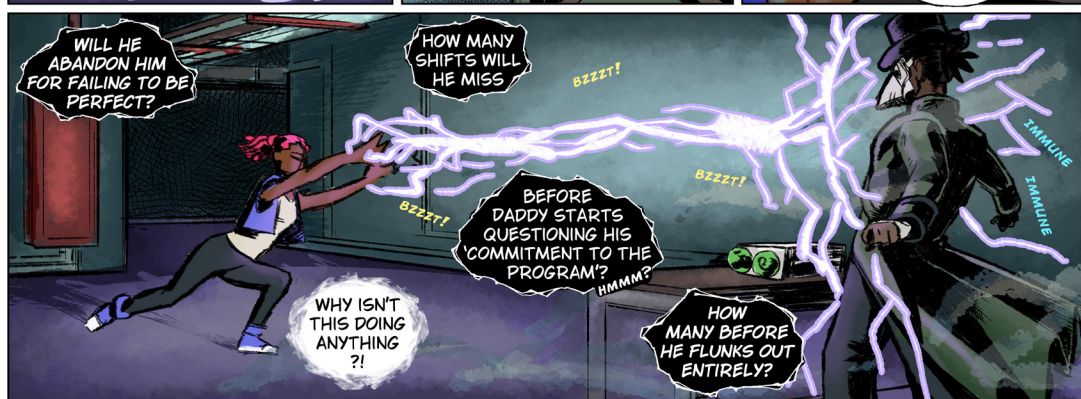
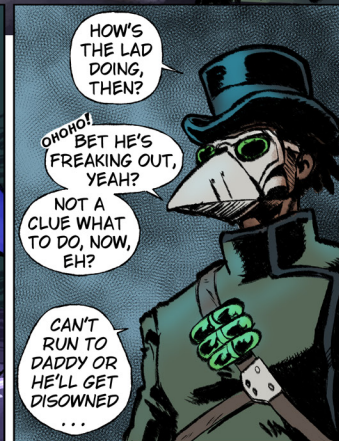
COME TO THE ER

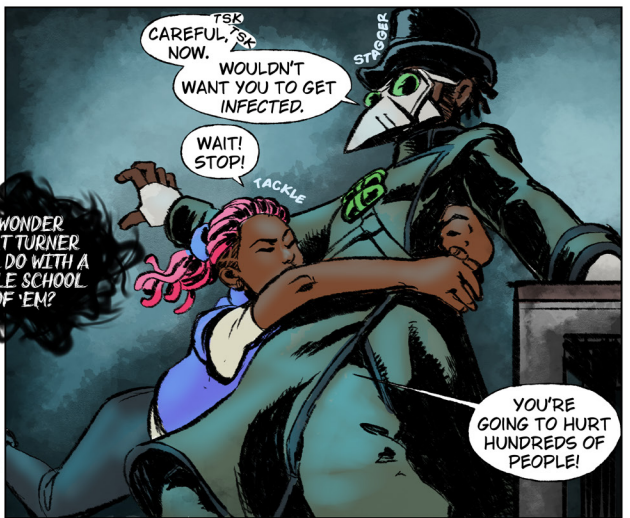














A CHILD WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS TO BE BROKEN.

BUT DON'T WORRY.

YOU WILL SOON...

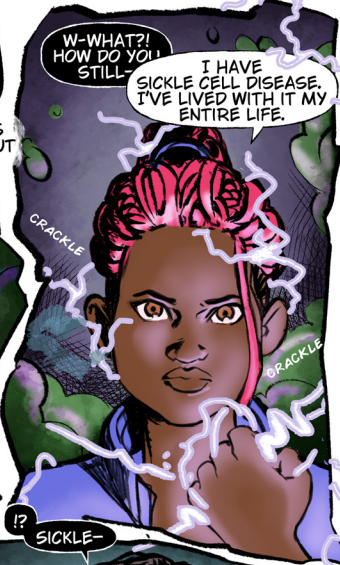
TMP
TMP



YOU DON'T KNOW A THING ABOUT ME.

LOOKS LIKE I WAS RIGHT ABOUT ME AND MIGO.

YOU THINK YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO'S HAD IT BAD?



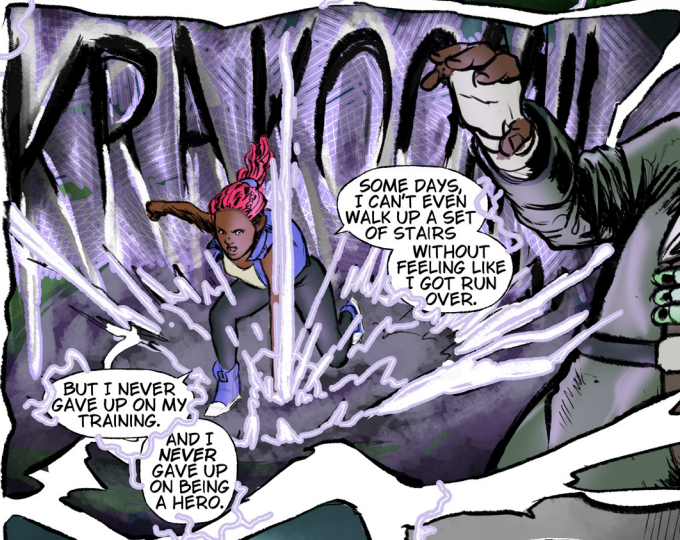
W-WHAT?! HOW DO YOU STILL--

I HAVE SICKLE CELL DISEASE. I'VE LIVED WITH IT MY ENTIRE LIFE.

CRACKLE

CRACKLE

!? SICKLE--



SOME DAYS I CAN'T EVEN WALK UP A SET OF STAIRS WITHOUT FEELING LIKE I GOT RUN OVER.

BUT I NEVER GAVE UP ON MY TRAINING.

AND I NEVER GAVE UP ON BEING A HERO.



HAT!



YOU DID.

WHY?



I WAS BROKEN--!

ABANDONED...

YES. AND TIMES HAVE CHANGED.

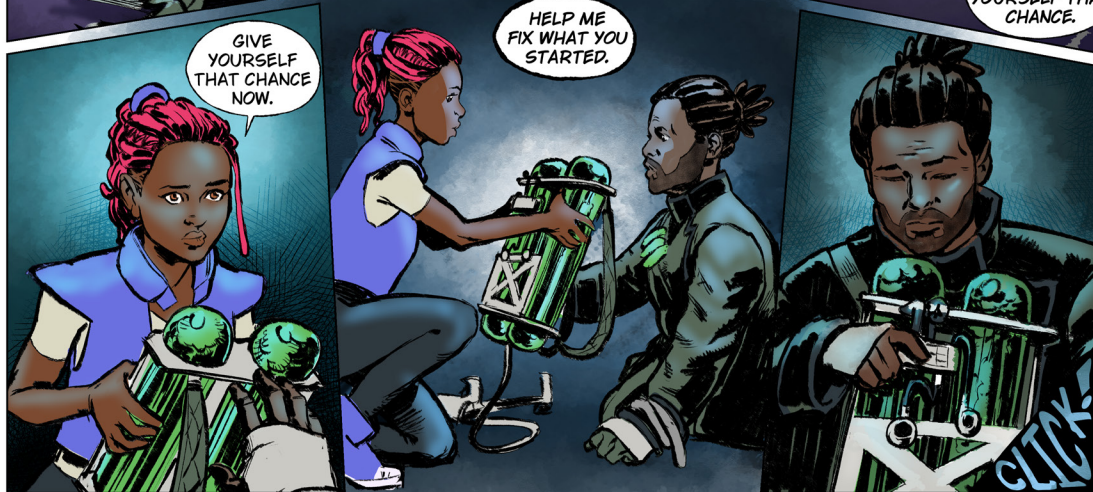
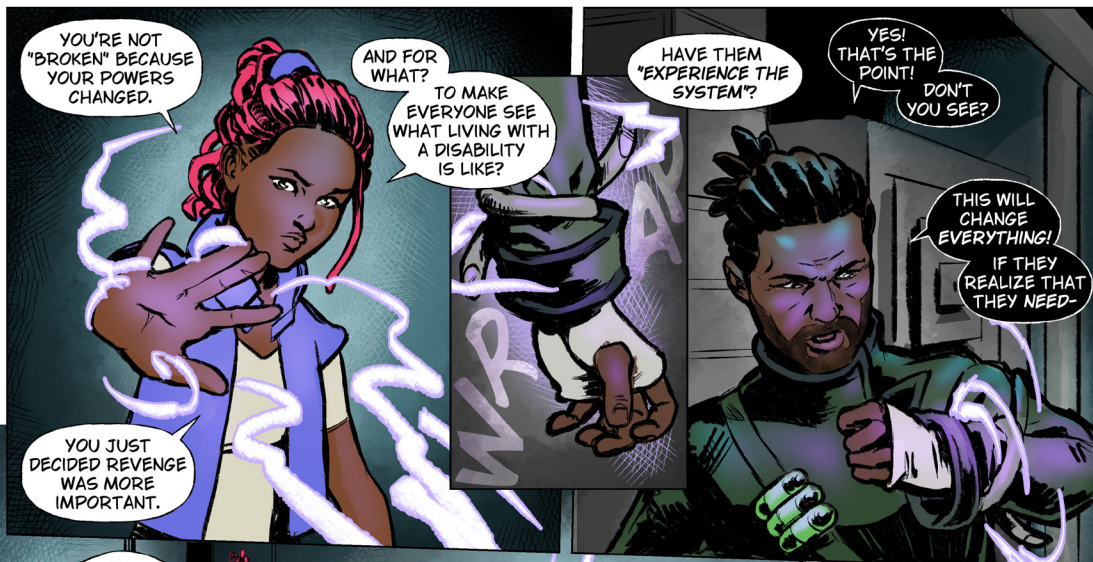
LOTS OF KIDS AT IQHAWE NEED ACCOMMODATIONS.

BUT THE SYSTEM...

AND THERE ARE SYSTEMS IN PLACE TO HELP KIDS LIKE ME.

KIDS LIKE US.

SPLINTER
SPLINTER



YOU ARE MORE THAN A MEDICAL CONDITION.

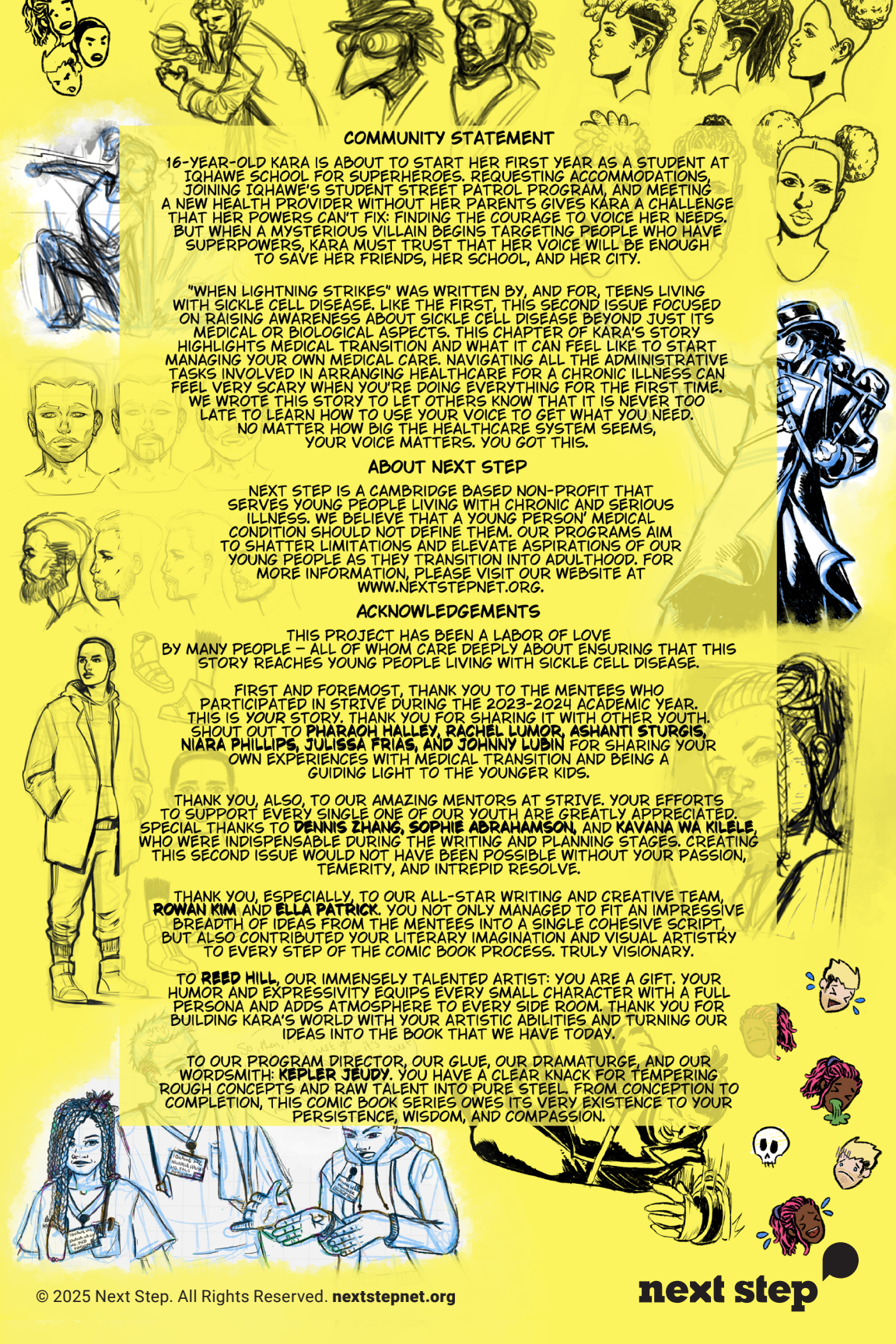
Living with a chronic illness can feel isolating and uncertain. At Next Step, you will explore your sense of self, unleash your creative expression and envision a future that's **unique to you**—all with the support of young people just like you who really get it.



Want to give this a try? Scan the code above to see the Next Step experience.



CONTACT US 617.864.2921 | info@nextstepnet.org | nextstepnet.org



COMMUNITY STATEMENT

16-YEAR-OLD KARA IS ABOUT TO START HER FIRST YEAR AS A STUDENT AT IQHAWE SCHOOL FOR SUPERHEROES. REQUESTING ACCOMMODATIONS, JOINING IQHAWE'S STUDENT STREET PATROL PROGRAM, AND MEETING A NEW HEALTH PROVIDER WITHOUT HER PARENTS GIVES KARA A CHALLENGE THAT HER POWERS CAN'T FIX: FINDING THE COURAGE TO VOICE HER NEEDS. BUT WHEN A MYSTERIOUS VILLAIN BEGINS TARGETING PEOPLE WHO HAVE SUPERPOWERS, KARA MUST TRUST THAT HER VOICE WILL BE ENOUGH TO SAVE HER FRIENDS, HER SCHOOL, AND HER CITY.

"WHEN LIGHTNING STRIKES" WAS WRITTEN BY, AND FOR, TEENS LIVING WITH SICKLE CELL DISEASE. LIKE THE FIRST, THIS SECOND ISSUE FOCUSED ON RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT SICKLE CELL DISEASE BEYOND JUST ITS MEDICAL OR BIOLOGICAL ASPECTS. THIS CHAPTER OF KARA'S STORY HIGHLIGHTS MEDICAL TRANSITION AND WHAT IT CAN FEEL LIKE TO START MANAGING YOUR OWN MEDICAL CARE. NAVIGATING ALL THE ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS INVOLVED IN ARRANGING HEALTHCARE FOR A CHRONIC ILLNESS CAN FEEL VERY SCARY WHEN YOU'RE DOING EVERYTHING FOR THE FIRST TIME. WE WROTE THIS STORY TO LET OTHERS KNOW THAT IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO LEARN HOW TO USE YOUR VOICE TO GET WHAT YOU NEED. NO MATTER HOW BIG THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM SEEMS, YOUR VOICE MATTERS. YOU GOT THIS.

ABOUT NEXT STEP

NEXT STEP IS A CAMBRIDGE BASED NON-PROFIT THAT SERVES YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING WITH CHRONIC AND SERIOUS ILLNESS. WE BELIEVE THAT A YOUNG PERSON'S MEDICAL CONDITION SHOULD NOT DEFINE THEM. OUR PROGRAMS AIM TO SHATTER LIMITATIONS AND ELEVATE ASPIRATIONS OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE AS THEY TRANSITION INTO ADULTHOOD. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.NEXTSTEPNET.ORG.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN A LABOR OF LOVE BY MANY PEOPLE - ALL OF WHOM CARE DEEPLY ABOUT ENSURING THAT THIS STORY REACHES YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING WITH SICKLE CELL DISEASE.

FIRST AND FOREMOST, THANK YOU TO THE MENTEES WHO PARTICIPATED IN STRIVE DURING THE 2023-2024 ACADEMIC YEAR. THIS IS YOUR STORY. THANK YOU FOR SHARING IT WITH OTHER YOUTH. SHOUT OUT TO PHAROAH HALLEY, RACHEL LUMOR, ASHANTI STURGIS, NIARA PHILLIPS, JULISSA FRIAS, AND JOHNNY LUBIN FOR SHARING YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES WITH MEDICAL TRANSITION AND BEING A GUIDING LIGHT TO THE YOUNGER KIDS.

THANK YOU, ALSO, TO OUR AMAZING MENTORS AT STRIVE. YOUR EFFORTS TO SUPPORT EVERY SINGLE ONE OF OUR YOUTH ARE GREATLY APPRECIATED. SPECIAL THANKS TO DENNIS ZHANG, SOPHIE ABRAHAMSON, AND KAVANA WA KILELE, WHO WERE INDISPENSABLE DURING THE WRITING AND PLANNING STAGES. CREATING THIS SECOND ISSUE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOUR PASSION, TEMERITY, AND INTREPID RESOLVE.

THANK YOU, ESPECIALLY, TO OUR ALL-STAR WRITING AND CREATIVE TEAM, ROWAN KIM AND ELLA PATRICK. YOU NOT ONLY MANAGED TO FIT AN IMPRESSIVE BREADTH OF IDEAS FROM THE MENTEES INTO A SINGLE COHESIVE SCRIPT, BUT ALSO CONTRIBUTED YOUR LITERARY IMAGINATION AND VISUAL ARTISTRY TO EVERY STEP OF THE COMIC BOOK PROCESS. TRULY VISIONARY.

TO REED HILL, OUR IMMENSELY TALENTED ARTIST: YOU ARE A GIFT. YOUR HUMOR AND EXPRESSIVITY EQUIPS EVERY SMALL CHARACTER WITH A FULL PERSONA AND ADDS ATMOSPHERE TO EVERY SIDE ROOM. THANK YOU FOR BUILDING KARA'S WORLD WITH YOUR ARTISTIC ABILITIES AND TURNING OUR IDEAS INTO THE BOOK THAT WE HAVE TODAY.

TO OUR PROGRAM DIRECTOR, OUR GLUE, OUR DRAMATURGE, AND OUR WORDSMITH: KEPLER JEUDY. YOU HAVE A CLEAR KNACK FOR TEMPERING ROUGH CONCEPTS AND RAW TALENT INTO PURE STEEL. FROM CONCEPTION TO COMPLETION, THIS COMIC BOOK SERIES OWES ITS VERY EXISTENCE TO YOUR PERSISTENCE, WISDOM, AND COMPASSION.