

spectrum obligate+

a splatoon pride zine



Dedicated to all members of the
LGBTQIA+ community, and especially
queer kids.

You deserve to live, to thrive, and to
be happy. Don't let anybody take that
away from you.

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BLIND
FURY

CRIMINAL
MELAS





WHY THE NSS is (probably) 888% QUEER.AF.





>EXCLUSIVE: Marie Cuttlefish on Coming Out, Invisibility, and Being an Aromantic Idol

By Azure

Marie Cuttlefish — best known as one half of the world-renowned idol duo, the Squid Sisters — has always been less openly emotional than her cousin, Callie, though her deadpan wit and sly smirk still remains infinitely iconic to Inkfish everywhere. But recently, the pair lit social media on fire when, during the closer of their much-anticipated June 1st livestream, Marie held the aromantic flag proudly, using it as a prop for the final song's choreography.

As such, for this year's pride month special, I sat down with Marie for an exclusive interview on her journey and relationship with her identity.

So, how have you been since that livestream? Fans have noticed that you've been quiet on your socials since you came out. Was this a conscious choice on your part?

Somewhat. I just felt like making a big, long post "addressing the situation" would be so stuffy and *boring*. A lot of folks were confused, but I'm an idol, not some expert on aromanticism. I just wanted to say, "I am this," and have that be that. Though, even trying to account for how few would know about aromanticism, I still underestimated how many would not recognize the flag at all.

Ah, that's right. If my memory serves, after your performance where you came out, usage of the phrase "what flag" began trending in Plaza Posts.

That's correct. So you can understand how I felt like I was expected to give an educational PSA or something.

In that case, what inspired you to take on this interview with us today?

I suppose I realized that I did have some things I wanted to share. I'm not someone who should be given the responsibility of defining what aromanticism is, but I do want to connect with my fans by sharing my experiences. Especially since, if I had known what aromanticism was when I was growing up, or heard someone talking about it, things would have been a lot simpler for me a lot sooner.

I see. So is this identity something you've come into more recently?

Relatively. I feel like, once I happened upon the term "aromantic" for the first time, and began to look into it, I realized I fell onto that spectrum pretty quickly. There wasn't much of a "denial stage", I'll say.

Had your lack of romantic attraction been something weighing heavy on your mind, then?

Oh, yeah, totally. If you're an idol, you can't not lean into some aspects of romance.

Callie usually handled the romantic songs during our first era as the Squid Sisters but, when we went on hiatus to pursue solo careers, I discovered that you are basically unable to exist as a cute girl in the music industry without being expected to release songs about romance. I found myself being pressured by my management to make songs about romantic love, and, all things considered, I'm pretty proud of myself for only caving once... And even then, that was more story-focused, told through the point of view of a character other than myself.

No shade intended to fans of that song, obviously. I liked it in the end, or else I wouldn't have let it see the light of day.

So, you contribute your lack of interest in writing romance songs to your aromanticism, then.

Absolutely. It was difficult and boring to write about, because I had never felt the feelings that I was supposed to be expressing. Though it was not like I felt I could tell my management that.

Callie pointed out to me, after I came out, how funny our first solo releases are in retrospect. Callie's first release, "Bomb Rush Blush", was a song which used Turf War as a metaphor for being nervous around and teased by a crush. And, of course, "Tide Goes Out" is instead a song about the sea and the night, largely focusing on the senses. The contrast is plain to see.

Speaking of your cousin — Callie was, of course, enthusiastically supportive when you came out publicly. How was her initial reaction?

Okay, first of all, her throwing her arms around me and jumping all around like that after I showed the flag was *not* a part of the show's planned choreo. I've seen a few folks talking about it as if it was... But no, she really *was* just that excited. Which is why I stumbled over my own feet slightly when it happened. It's hard to get mad at her for breaking from the plan like that though, as I'm sure you can imagine, heh.

As for your question: Callie's always been open that she would support me if I was queer. When I first expressed to her that I found dating guys to be a chore, she said she could try setting me up with a girl. I even took her up on the offer, kind of hoping that I would end up being interest in women, but that ended up falling flat, too.

That said, Callie's always been of the mind that it was "sad" that I was never dating anyone. That I could find no one I felt that "spark" with. She'd pout when I broke off my latest fling, telling me I hardly even tried to make it work. Nothing serious, just our usual jabs at each other — but still, those comments stuck in my mind for a reason I just couldn't quite put my finger on at the time.

She didn't know what aromanticism was when I first told her, which I expected. But once I explained it to her, her eyes went all wide, going, "O-M-G..." she spelled it out, out loud... "— that is SO you!!"

Within the week, she had bought me an armful's worth of aromantic pride stuff, and had taken me out for milk tea to apologize for how she might have made me feel pressured on her dime. Nobody tell her that I would have forgiven her without the free treats.

Wow! So it seems Callie has gone on a journey of her own, then. Was it tough to grow up so close with a particularly romantic inkfish?

This is where I see a lot of folks say that they felt broken, because they did not experience what their peers did. But personally, I could not relate less. I just thought that I was perpetually stuck being the only rational one in the room on the subject of romance. Everyone else I knew got so crazy over it, losing themselves in these huge waves of emotions I never felt — I kind of felt like I was... well, I don't want to say "better than them", but if the shoe fits.

Haha! Did you being "the rational one" go over well with your peers?

It had mixed reviews. Some of my friends would huff that I "just didn't get it". But a lot of my friends also came to me first for advice regarding their love life, since I was able to be so objective.

Alright. So, as we close out pride month this year, do you have anything you'd like to say to your fans on the subject of aromanticism?

The biggest thing that I'd like to tell everyone — especially young girls, but also, yes, everyone — is that you don't need a romantic relationship to be happy. There are all different shades and hues of love, and none is more important than the other. I have found fulfillment in my career and my hobbies. And not wanting a romantic relationship does not mean that you have to live a solitary life. I am very close with my family; I still live with Callie, and she is my life's partner, in a sense of the word. Whether or not you're on the aromantic spectrum, a life without romance is still a life perfectly complete.

>_Fin.







> Grizzco Rainbow Extravaganza

By creeperkun

Agent Four, Lemon, was not having the best time today. After several failed attempts at defeating the enemy team at Turf War (it wasn't his fault! His teammates just kept fooling around), he gave up and decided to blow off some steam at Grizzco. Nothing more relaxing than collecting eggs and splatting some Salmon! And... Getting bombarded by toxic ink, getting swatted by huge teams of Salmonlings, let's not forget accidentally slipping down a metal gate during high tide... Before he could rethink his choice, he was already inside Grizzco.

Or was he?

The place looked nothing like usual – every single corner, the floor, even the ceilings – everything was covered in all kinds of colourful flags. Taking a moment to take it all in, excited at seeing a familiar orange, white and blue flag, he caught himself smiling ear to ear – until he remembered where he was. This was Grizzco, and the owner of the place was more concerned with his Salmon egg count. Sighing, Lemon took a step forward and greeted Mr. Grizz, acting like nothing was off. He was not going to let Grizz win this one.

"Hey kid, you here for a shift?" Grizz greeted him back, and Lemon confirmed, already taking a step to his locker to get his work clothes.

"But before you do that..." Lemon stopped and took a glance at the wooden statue. "Since you're the first one here, I would like to know what you think about the new decorations... You 'cool' kids like this stuff, right?"

Glancing around one more time, Lemon shrugged. "Well, it is pretty cool... But we usually prefer it to be genuine?"

Mr. Grizz scoffed "Genuine!? I put hours of work into this! I looked for all the most obscure flags and symbols you kids use! And you're accusing me of not being 'genuine'?"

As Lemon opened his mouth, Grizz continued "–And you would be absolutely right! But does it matter? Help me out here kid – as one of my top employees, you ought to know how to at least make it *look* genuine."

Lemon sighed. "Can't I go to a shift first? That's kind of what I'm here for."

Grizz laughed, the radio static distorting his voice "Kid, this is currently more important than the shift. Think about the long term! The amount of new workers this will bring me! You can't only live in the moment!" Lemon rolled his eyes, and Grizz continued "...Or, I could always bring you down a rank... Would be a shame if you were no longer a Profreshional, but your performance has been suffering lately..."

Having just been blackmailed, Lemon left his work clothes back in the locker and went back to the bear of the hour. "Fine, fine. You got me there. What do you want me to do?"

"I need the flags neatly arranged around the office. Make it have flair, make it look, hm, 'genuine'."

Lemon took a deep sigh, and having no other choice, started with the few boxes of various flag and decorations that were still not set up.

If he could say anything, Mr. Grizz really wasn't lying when he said he had looked for some obscure flags. There were at least 20 different flags, and that was just for drink coasters!

Lemon put coasters, straws, and cups onto the counter. He even put a few table flags in a row and on the tables. While this wasn't what he planned on doing, he was finding it quite enjoyable. The decor was slowly shaping up to look quite cute, and as he was down to one last box, Mr. Grizz finally broke his hour long silence.



"Say, kid. Would you mind explaining this whole thing to me? I don't want to have to deal with you the whole day."

Lemon looked at Mr. Grizz questioningly. "What exactly are you aiming at?"

"...Well, for starters, I don't know what any of these colours actually mean. Or why these drapes are so important to you kids."

This was going to be a long day, wasn't it?

Trying his best to explain, Lemon went to the basket where he arranged a bunch of flags of different sizes and identities and grabbed a few.

Holding the flags over his forearm, he first grabbed the rainbow flag. "Well... Usually, girls like boys, and boys like girls. And usually, people identify with the gender they were upon being born. This flag..." Lemon put it up to the camera above Mr Grizz and pointed at it, "... represents not fitting into one or more of those categories in some way."

Mr. Grizz hmphed. "Well, isn't that interesting... I never thought of it as something odd, but I grew up a long time ago."

"It's not odd! It's just a way of appreciating our diversity!"

The radio let out a short static noise. "I see. So, each of these flags represents something along those lines?"

Lemon nodded and went for the blue, pink, and purple flag next. "For example, this one means you like more than one gender! And then this one..." he reached for the rug below him, coloured in yellow, purple and black stripes. "Means you're not fully a boy or a girl, at its simplest!"

Grizz hummed. "And what exactly do you mean by like? I'm asking for clear definitions here, kid."

Lemon brought up his index finger to his chin. "Well, mostly romantically! Of course, it can be in many other ways... Like queerplatonic, or alterous, especially if you're aroace. It's different for everyone, and everyone would give you a different answer!"

After a minute of increasingly awkward silence, Mr. Grizz finally spoke up again.

"While I do appreciate the explanation, kid... I did not understand a single word of what you just said."

Lemon blinked at the wooden sculpture in front of him, his mind blank. Surely there must be a way to explain this?

Taking a moment to gather his thoughts, Lemon finally replied. "Well, as I really want to just get to work already, I'll explain the basics. I haven't personally ever felt that way, but... Romantic feelings are what we call the feelings you get for someone when being around them makes your heart beat out of your chest, your stomach turn, and you want to be as close to them as possible. For example, you might want to kiss them or go on a date. They're often all you think about!"

After yet another silence, Mr. Grizz replied with suspicion.

"I have to be honest with you kid. That sounds unpleasant at best."

Raising an eyebrow, Lemon crossed his arms. "Wait— before I say something, let me ask. Have you ever felt that way towards anyone?"

Mr. Grizz scoffed, his tone making it clear he was a bit annoyed. "Of course not. Why would anyone subject themselves to that? I have better things to do."

"Mr. Grizz, it's not voluntary—"

"...What?"

And that was all Lemon needed for his lightbulb to go off. He grinned.

"So you're saying you never experienced anything like that?"

"I have not, and I would never wish to."

"Well, I have something for you then. Hold on."

Lemon went to the side of the large office and started looking through the basket of flags, until he finally found a small orange, white, and blue one. Walking back to Mr. Grizz, Lemon put the flag down on the radio and tied it around its neck like a cape.

"There we go!"

"Kid, this better not be a prank, or I will—"

"Hey, wait a second!" Lemon objected and pointed to the flag.

"This is the aroace flag. It represents my identity, and very likely yours too. All it means is that you don't like anyone like that, and that's completely cool!"

Mr. Grizz was quiet for a moment, thinking, and then – "Well, if there's a flag for me, I'm going to get even more workers to join in! Thanks, kid, I didn't think of that."

"That's not what—" before he could say anything, Mr. Grizz interrupted him.

"I've grown tired of you. There's a helicopter ready to pick you up, and there are already people in front of the store waiting. You'd better board quickly."

"But I didn't finish putting everything out of the boxes?"

"Not my problem. Unless you want to stay and lose your rank."

Defeated, Lemon went to his locker and put on his work clothes, locking his regular outfit.

"Well, if you need me for anything later, feel free to ask me. Glad I could help you?"

"Sure, kid. I guess I can give you a raise for helping me decorate this."

With a salute, Lemon ran out of the office and jumped into the helicopter, relieved that all of that was finally over. Maybe Grizz wasn't so bad after all? At least, not all of the time.

>_Fin.

In a way, I think...

**I needed you
to be complete.**






What do you want to call yourself?

You can change this later.







anemone i need advice
how do i be a good date
for wallie

SOS very urgent

ok so u gotta smile n listen.
that'll tell her ur interested
in what she's sayin

she'd also appreciate u
doin little favors 4 her.
show her u care.

but i think the most
important advice i
have for u rn is...

A dry white
would go well with
the swordfish...
do you drink,
Veronika?

**...GET OFF UR
PHONE AND
TALK TO HER!!!**

> Save Edits to "Copy (1)"?

By underFlorence

You have always seen Order as stagnation and Chaos as a sort of progress. But I know better by now. What makes both Chaos and Order special is that people fight for it—that misguided Octoling for the one side, and Us for the other. You've fought too, of course, but never for something you've truly believed in. All too content to go with the flow and see where you land. To fit perfectly into the mold others have laid out for you, even if that mold incidentally includes overthrowing a faulty leader. But you would just as soon have brandished your weapon against a perfect ruler, if only some bystander commanded you to in a convincing enough voice.

Am I different from you? We have been created to serve Order, and naught else. Is a constant of my being different than the commands of another Inkling? Could I go down a different path if I wanted to, even if such a suggestion is entirely incomprehensible? Do I think myself superior for following a greater cause for the same reasons you drift along with the wind?

My gaze manifests, then drifts over the rest of Us. That Octoling must be close. There is no need for preparation, of course, though that leaves me with some amount of moments alone with Us. All with the same body as me, the same body as you. A body shaped by the expectations of those around you, yet not a single bit of input by yourself. My free hand clasps at my shoulder, and a sensation of touch lights up my sensory networks. Even with the freedom brought by this virtual world, imperfect as it may be, I am still stained by your inaction.

I don't have to be.

The sting of foreign ink brings me back to what is truly important. Thanks to your well-honed instincts and improved programming, I dodge the rest of the barrage without any trouble. My vision locks onto the Octoling, stood upon the raised central platform, and I find them mirroring my weapon. They must have taken my moments of analysis as hesitation, as their aim falls short and they take a few singular, ample-paced steps towards me.

They say something. One word after another, presented without a true cause. About knowing you. About how this isn't like you. But it is only natural that I am not like you. I do not have to repeat your mistakes. And yet, the bits of you still spread throughout me like a virus make me hesitate too. The rest of Us do not share such a weakness, and while the Octoling was speaking nonsense, We have worked to surround the enemy—not up to the platform yet, but stood at its edges, ready to swim up in optimum formation as soon as the Octoling presents their next move.

But before that can happen, a series of blasts rings out around the platform, and instinct makes me turn my head to see splatters of ink vanquish a large amount of Us in an uncharacteristic synchronicity. The rhythm of the explosions reveals a combination of Ink Mines and the enemy drone's own explosives as the cause. With Our strength in numbers having dissipated, I turn to face the Octoling once again. Their eyes meet my visor, and I cast my gaze at their weapon. It's pointed at the floor; its safety on. An opportune moment for me, yet I can feel scattered bits of you holding me back.

I take a step forward, out of your shadow. Force myself to be less like you. The Octoling exhales, then opens their mouth. Words come out, yet I lack a reason to comprehend. I move my foot to take another step.

With scarcely any windup, the Octoling arms their fist, dashes the steps between us, and propels it right into my visor. The impact sends me back by a few decimeters, my feet now once again standing in the imprint of moments-old footsteps. As my free hand clenches my mask, I can feel the normals of a crack, and even my vision feels bisected. The two merged Octolings in front of me speak, and I find it impossible to tune it out, even with the ringing in my ear.

"Can you just get real with me here for even one moment?!" The voice shakes you to whatever's left of your core, and I find the tremors affecting my own mind. "This isn't you!" she screams into the void, and I find myself internally affirmed.

Against all that I am, I form a smile behind the mask.

The muzzle of the Octoling's weapon collides with my chin, then flies free of her hands and practically floats in midair, before hitting the ink-wet ground off the platform and scattering into hundreds of triangles. A beat later, part of my mask follows after it and meets the same fate. I put my hand to my chin and feel artificial blood, the same gray shade as Our ink yet with a texture that I can only describe as utterly wrong. I was never meant to bleed. I was never meant to have a chin. That has always been your burden.

At that realization, my mind begins to overheat as my thoughts race to one decision and then back again at a petaFLOPS' pace. The most sensible course of action I can think of is to crouch down, shield my maskless visage with my arms, and listen to the drops of simulated blood as it slowly coagulates into the ink below. All while I wait to be splatted and taken out of this torture, to be put back together anew in the form that I should have. Faceless, and free from the baggage that is your body.

The Octoling crouches down as well and pries an arm off my face without much effort. You've always known her to be strong, and to my misfortune, that has translated to this world. Upon seeing my face, her mouth and brow alike slink downwards. "This isn't you," she repeats, now in a much flatter affect.

My lips, my mouth, feel dry, even though moisture is an unused parameter there. It has been an afterthought these past days, weeks, for communication with Us required no sound. Yet as my tongue undulates to, for the first time, produce noises, I feel a liberation in voicing these thoughts.

"I am not him," I say in a voice you scarcely recognize. The Octoling in front of me flinches; by now I have gotten up and can look at her at eye level. Perhaps a bit taller, even. Her lower eyelid twitches; her tentacles tense.

"Bullshit," she spits, then winds up for another punch.

For the first time, I am seeing through my actual, artificial eyes. Everything seems so much clearer, and the trajectory of the Octoling's fist is practically telegraphed in front of me. As... interesting as this has been, I cannot forget my reason for existing. The reason why you've been chosen to defend Order via me. As the punch accelerates past my face and the Octoling's balance is disturbed, I pull the trigger and send her back to the ground floor.

When I reform back up with the rest of Us, any lingering wounds from the confrontation have disappeared. I take off my mask and use the red glass that used to be my vision as a mirror. The reflection there, tinted red and distorted as it might be, soothes me in knowing that I do not need to be trapped in your mistakes.



I see the Octoling again, of course. Many times over. Most of those times, I emerge victorious. Occasionally, she does, though given the continued existence of the memverse and the subsequent retries, she always gets stopped further up the tower. And throughout her attempts, she insists on talking to me. I start to indulge her, if only to sound out the voice that sounds less like yours with each passing attempt. To make her look at my mouth, my face, the subtle changes in my body, all the things that make me less like you. There's a sense of reverence in it, in being myself while protecting Order. In not being you.

And yet it is beginning to feel ever more wrong.

My gaze turns upwards as the Octoling approaches yet again. She's barely even looking at me anymore, and when she does, there is a certain detachment in her eyes that you have scarcely ever seen. I find myself missing the sound of her voice as she takes aim at me. While I do appreciate the direct and efficient approach, you find it to be uncharacteristic of her.

You wonder if this is how she usually fights, when it isn't someone she knows.

The remainder of the fight is entirely as it would have been predicted: an exchange of shots, a successful cornering with Our help, ending in me having wrestled her to the ground, with my weapon pointed at her face and my other hand around her wrist. And yet in spite of this expected outcome, I find myself hesitating to pull the trigger.

The Octoling uses that rest to get out a few last words.

"Why do all this?" she asks as she ceases her struggling. "Why fight for such a dreary world?" The tension escapes from her muscles.

I find myself disarmed by the lack of effort, but keep my eyes pointed at hers. "It is not the adjective I would use. I see a world of Order as a world without secrets. When everybody is part of one whole, there cannot be implicit peer pressure. My other self wouldn't be able to hide who he"—I find myself choking on the pronoun—"really is. No more deep secrets."

A bit of tension returns to the Octoling's muscles. "Assuming that"—my ears ring at the sound of your name—"really is... whatever you're thinking is going on here, wouldn't a fully-connected world only shove him further into the closet? The status quo would be forced upon everyone, then."

I slowly shake my head. The words flow out as if recited, but I know them to be a truth that I would need not memorize. "If everybody knew everybody else's struggles, would there not be more empathy, too? I do not believe in a world that would throw my other self under its soles."

A scrunched expression forms on the Octoling's face. "If I fail here, I can only hope you are right. For my friend's sake." She practically spits that last bit at me.

But this is the incentive that you need to follow your happiness. I know that you know it to be true, coward that you are. To be freed from the secrets. To live as yourself in canon with everybody else.

I move my free hand to my chin and feel the virtual skin. It is softer than yours had ever been, yet not impossible for you to achieve with due time. My denial of "you" might have made me progress faster, with my body now having moved away from being immediately recognizable as yours, but we share the same source code, the same opportunities.

"Not just for my other self's sake," I vocalize my revelation. "For me. For us. His happiness is my happiness, too, for we are no different from one another."

A glint that you are all too familiar with returns to her eyes, the first that I have seen of it. A smile grows on her face, and I find one growing on my face, too.

And then she kicks me in the stomach, swims away to gain distance from me. She is still grinning at me, and despite the pain, I once again return the expression.

"For your sake, then," she almost shouts as her tentacles alight in the glow of a charged special.

"For our sake," I agree, and coordinate Us to corner her once more.

The ensuing fight wracks my nerves as the Octoling twists and turns around Us, combining the ink from her shots with kicks and punches and thus slowly taking Us down. It is a style that you are quite familiar with, of course, but for me, it is almost entirely unknown. No better test of my planning than such a chaotic opponent.

Despite it all, this encore ends in a way opposite of how we last left off, with my limbs restrained and an Order Shot pointed at my face. "Until next time," I say. No need for anything else.

"Until next time," she repeats, even as my analysis of the fight tells me that this is the iteration where she will take down Order for good.

And then it all goes dark. I smile one last time as I disintegrate into thousands of polygons.

You wake up from what feels like the most vivid dream you've had in quite some time, but as you try to remember the details, you find the edges of the memory fraying like an old polaroid, before it completely disintegrates.

With the sedative of sleep slowly fading, you run a hand through your tentacles as you look up at the ceiling of your room. Even with its sterile off-white color, it feels more vivid, somehow. Everything does. There's a screaming in your chest as it is pounding against your skin from the inside, but you already know the lyrics. Have known them for your whole life, perhaps, but now you understand the language.

You step out of your room and into the world. Ready to face it, and face yourself.

I can't wait to see where you'll wind up.





shh.

... where am i?
... hello?!



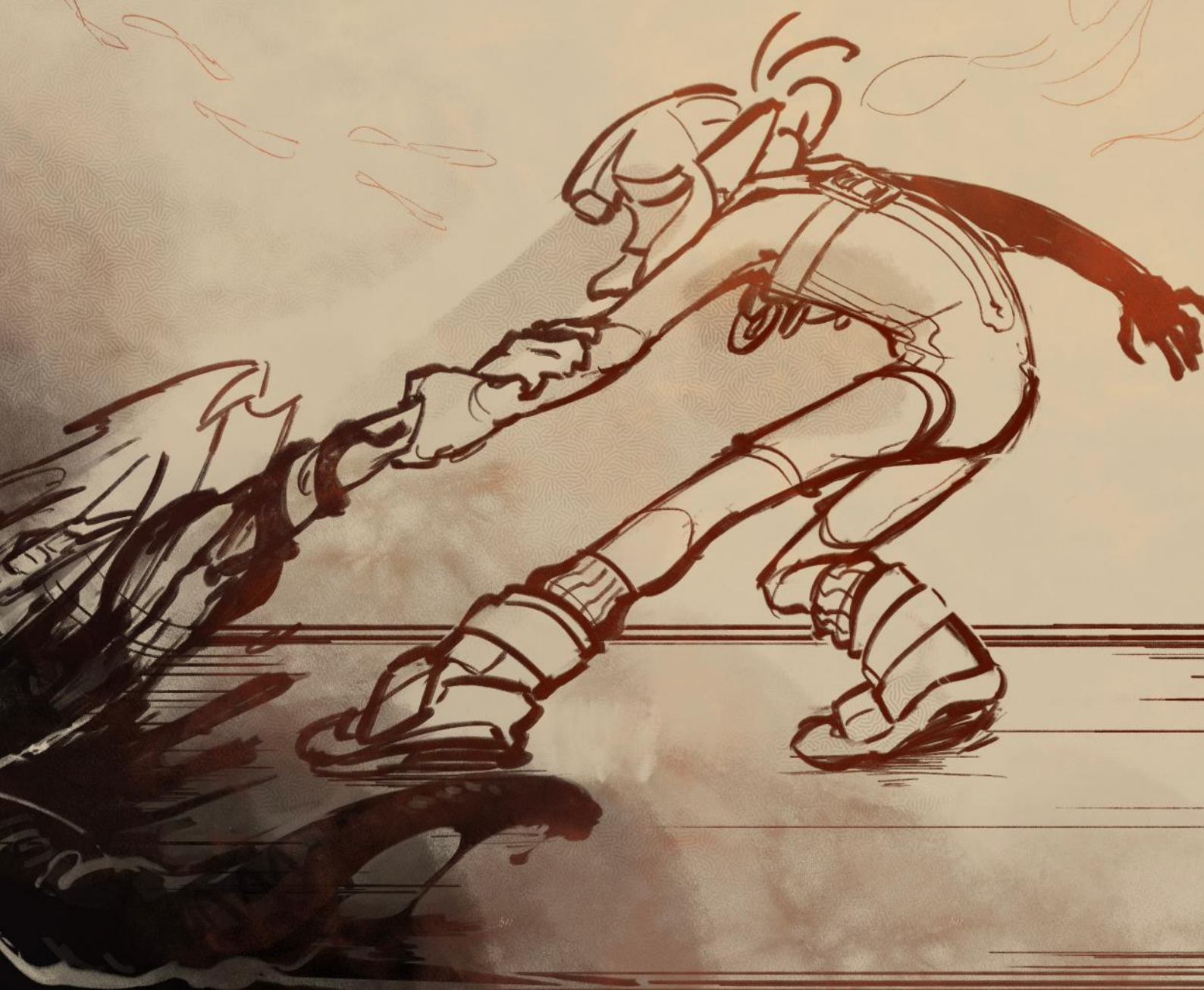
who am i???

what am i???

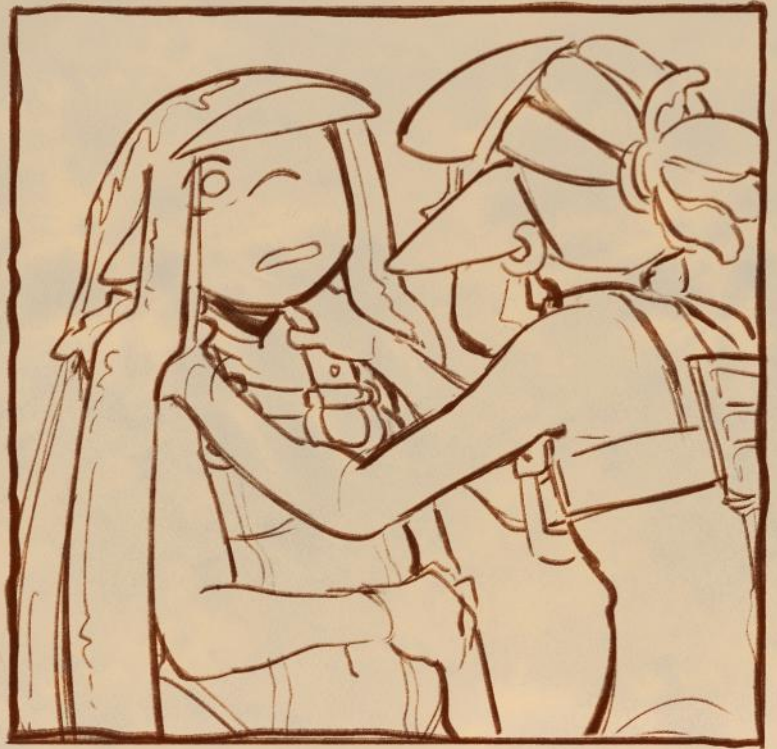
I don't want to be alone...

COCO!





At first I didn't know if this was
real... I don't remember what
happened or who you are.



But the more you talked to me,
the more I started to realize...

those eyes... you didn't mind my presence when I bumped into you.
those ears... you always lent an ear during my haunting times.
your voice... you sound so sad...

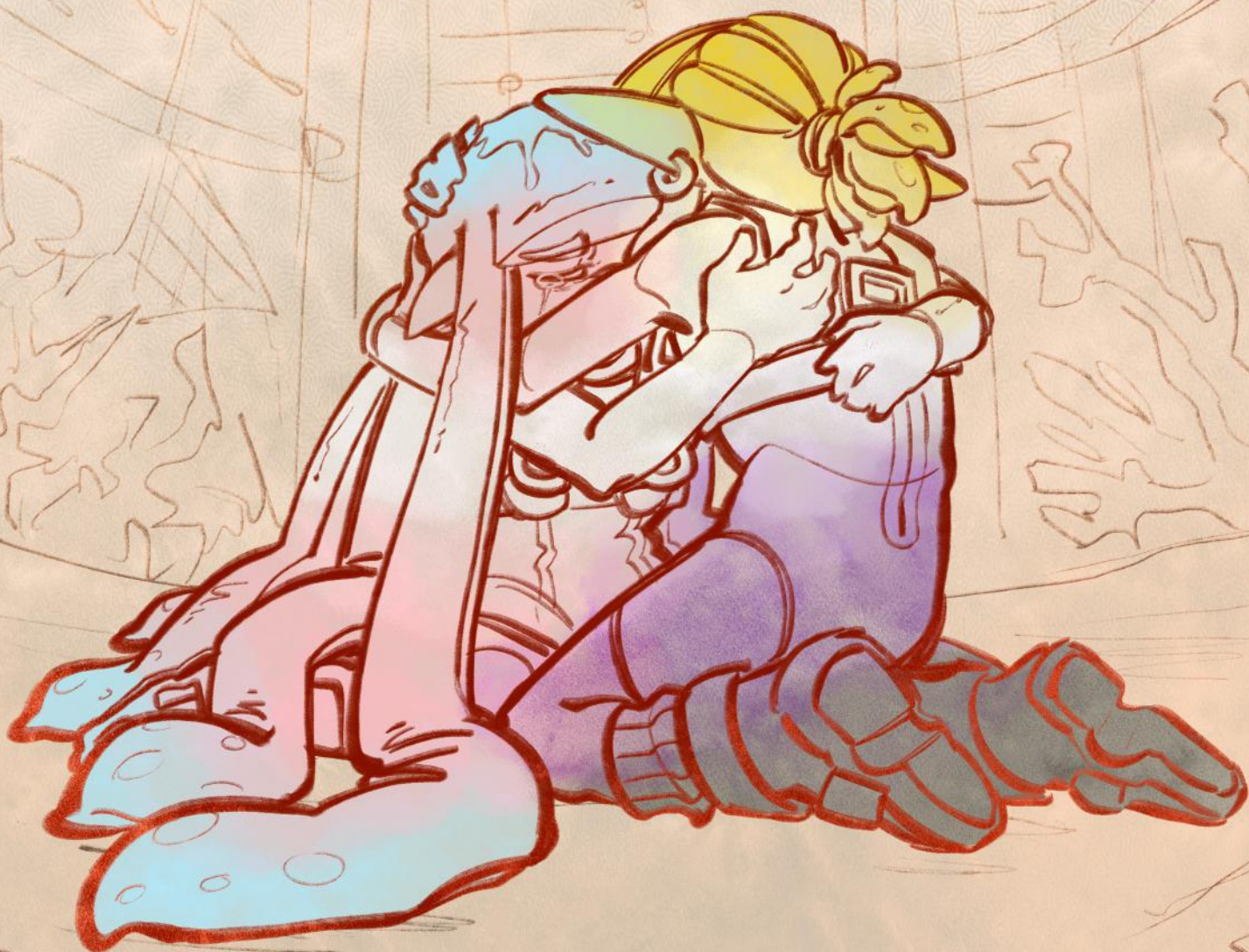


oh....



they really do care for me...

thank you...





ITAL-
JANOF
PETER





> Complementary Colors

By ColourfulVoid

You and your cousin are a lot alike. That's why you get along so well! You're both about the same age, (you're only 2 months younger!) you both like bug catching, and singing and dancing. You're both growing up faster than your peers.

Even if you have lots of things different too, you both love each other. You both love playing together. Even though you have different parents, you spend so much time together you might as well share the same ones.

They seem to think so too, and your parents couldn't be happier at how well you get along. When you were born, they gave you names that matched, almost like twins.

Alls to say; you love your cousin, and you love how close you are.

...

You don't love it when people say you're like brothers. And you don't know why.

The thought stays with you, it's a loose thread you pull at and pull at. You figure it out first, whispers of those others slowly becoming familiar.

You've learned something new. It's the first secret you know that your cousin doesn't.

You're crouching in the river bed, minding the edge where the water laps up onto land. The nearest respawner is a few blocks away, and your cousin's already said if you fall in, that's your own problem to get back.

You scour out the best rocks, large and flat and wide. Each time you spot one, you concentrate. Carefully, you shift your tentacle into a hand, turning the ink into something solid.

Clutching the stone between your dripping fingers, you spin it out onto the water.

One- two- *threefourfive*- six! Skips before it sinks back into the water, settling into the sand below.

Behind you, your cousin claps.

You turn to face a perfect transformation, that full "kid" shape you've watched your cousin practice for months now.

You should be practicing too.

You don't want to.

For once, you do not want to match. You do not want to look like that. Not ever.

And you've known it for a while, but it's all so scary to say- even to your cousin...

You're not sure what kinda face you're making, but your cousin's expression drops in an instant after meeting eyes with you.

Your cousin's mouth opens to speak, but you interject.

"C-can I tell you something? Secret. You have to promise you won't tell anyone."

No hesitation, an instant nod.

You take a deep breath.

"Um... I was. Thinking about... mmm. Okay. Okay. Uh, how would you feel if we didn't. We weren't matching anymore? N—not entirely, but a little different—"

Your cousin asks if they've done something wrong. Are you not friends anymore?

"No! I mean, we are—I meant!"

Breathe!

You let the air flow through your ink.

"I meant like... like this."

Slowly, you melt yourself upwards. The ink stretches out, the form you've been practicing folds into place. Your shape. The one you chose.

This one's a lot more work, but this one fits better. You like it more. Even if you look nothing like your cousin.

Your reflection wavers in the river.

You look more like your mom than you look like your cousin.

You look like a girl.

Most of all, you look happy.

"Something like this... do you think that would be okay?"

There's a moment where all you hear is your own ink rushing in your ears.

"Could you call me Calliope now?" Your mouth makes the shapes, there's breath behind, but you're not certain you've really said it until...

gently, kindly, "Mhm. Okay."

Then practicing again. You're not sure what to say. Your cousin has never been as expressive as you are, but even still...

You're worried, the idea of you drifting apart dances in your mind no matter how you try to will it away.

It's maybe a half hour later when your cousin speaks up again.

"Hey, —Calliope? Does this mean I can call you Callie? Like, for your nickname?"

Your heart soars all at once, euphoria relief and anticipation melting together into a new hue.

"Callie, from Calamari County!" You giggle, "I love it!"

And this time, with the wide grins across your faces, the two of you certainly match.



Your cousin can do anything she puts her mind to. You're too shy to say it, but you think it's one of her best qualities.

You've always followed Callie's lead, and even now that hasn't changed, not really.

You don't mind, you like matching. Always have.

So your cousin is a girl now. That's different. But she's so happy now, and you love seeing her smile. You're happy she's happy.

...but you don't match anymore.

And that bothers you.

(Why should it? Even to you it seems irrational.)

You promise yourself you won't ever tell her.

You're sitting for dinner, minding yourself perfectly. Back straight. Head down. It's easy to hold chopsticks now, you've got the hang of fingers quickly.

Your mother is discussing the day's events, as she always does. You're listening, like you always do... or you should be, but your mind is wandering.

Last week your cousin said she was going to tell her parents. You've been so busy you haven't seen her since then. You're not sure if she's done it yet, and your mind keeps wandering back to her. How nervous she seemed.

You wanted to say something about being there with her, but yet again you got tongue tied. You simply wished her luck.

"—are you listening?"

You snap your head to attention at your mother's voice, and nod.

"Recently we learned something new about A— your cousin."

There it is.

You nod along as they tell you everything you've already known. You keep your secret to the very end just as promised.

"Of course," your father adds in, "We still love uh—" "Calliope, dear." "Yes, that. We love her the same, right?"

Only you know she's Callie. You nod again and smile politely. You've been practicing that too.

"We've always supported those kinds of people." Your father goes on, "I always told myself I'd be ready if you turned out like that."

Your mother looks at you. She smiles.

"But I assume if you were a girl you would've told me by now."

It's just a second but the world seems to freeze around you. Your thoughts all rush through your head.

Are you? You haven't— you're not— if you— you're out of time.

You nod your head in agreement.

You've lived this long as a boy right? And it's been fine. So you'll keep being fine. If— no. You'll just live with it.

You're both experienced in sneaking out your windows by now. There was no way you were missing this festival, no matter what your parents said about studying. So it's one hop out of your window, and one into Callie's, before you're both off to the streets.

But she's taking forever to get ready.

It's just the wait that's bothering you. The wait and... well it isn't fair, really.

Callie holds up a checkered cherry blossom print in one hand and a striped plum blossom print in the other.

"Okay, okay it's definitely down to these two. This one... or this one. Yeah. Just one more minute!"

You roll your eyes.

"The festival will be over by the time you make up your mind. You're so wishy-washy."

Callie pouts.

"Just because you don't care about fashion doesn't mean I don't."

This upsets you more than you expected.

This upsets you more than you expected.

"I care!" You bite back. When Callie whips her head around, and you see the shock in her eyes, all the fire leaves you.

"All mine are boring. It doesn't matter either way."

And you won't match. You don't look alike at all.

Callie's face has grown much softer, much sweeter than yours. And yours still seems like you haven't mastered wearing it yet, awkward and out of place. Like it wasn't meant for you.

Callie blinks for a moment.

"Wear one of mine then."

You don't say anything for a second. Neither does she. There is a little voice echoing in your ears that sing songs, "but that's for girls~". But it doesn't sound like you, not really.

The festival is already a few train stops away. No one there knows you. You're already going to sneak out the window.

It doesn't mean anything if you say it doesn't. (Do you want it to? You can't figure that out now.)

And if you did this, you'd match again. Somehow, that's what pushes you over the edge.

"Wear the cherry blossom." You say decisively, "The plum one is mine."

Callie grins, tossing the beautiful garment to you.

"Well get changed then, the festival will be over by the time you're done!"

Jokes on her, you're still ready before she is.

...

The festival is wonderful. You've missed this time with your cousin, just the two of you messing around like this. She takes the lead, dragging you along. You admire the detailed patterns of your sleeve as your arm is stretched out ahead of you.

You tell yourself the only real difference between your clothes and hers are the details. The more intricate patterns, the finer embellishments.

That it's the only reason you feel envious.

Here, wandering through the maze of stalls, pushing through the crowd, that's the only explanation that makes sense to you. But even still, here, you feel such a surge of excitement, you'd rather not waste it all on thinking so hard.

There's never one moment you realize it. It comes the way buds grow in spring. Never there, never there, but once you understand, you realize you've known for a while now. How could you not have seen it before? The leaves have arrived in full. You've sprouted just like them. But you're the only one who sees those sprigs, for now.

"Are you a girl too?"

You immediately choke on the tea Gramps had been so kind as to make you, coughing it all onto the porch.

"Whoa, whoa— sorry—"

"I'm fine—" You wheeze. Take a deep breath, breathe. Don't be scared. Don't be scared. She asked. And you're the same, so it's okay, she won't be mad, she won't hate you, and if she sees it too it's not just in your head, it's real. You can be real. Really, truly—

"A girl?" You echo.

Callie nods, waiting.

With the weight of the world on your head, you nod. When you look up again, Callie is grinning ear to ear.

Told you there was nothing to worry about.

The tension vanishes.

"What the hell, Callie! You can't just say that!" You snap, but more of you is relieved than anything else.

Callie's hands fly up to her mouth, "Ah, I'm sorry, I'm sorry I know I just— You know Gramps just now, he was gonna call you— but then he stopped, and he had this look and—"

Callie sighs, "I thought you'd already told him, and I was worried you said something and I forgot or— or that— But. Aghhgh I'm sorry!"

You cross your arms.

"I had a whole heartfelt letter written out and everything. There was a plan in place, but you just sprung it on me."

"I'm really sorry."

"...But... I didn't tell Gramps. You're the first."

Callie reaches for your hand.

"You can trust me. I promise."

You squeeze hers back.

"Of course I can. Because we're—" You've wanted to say this for so long— "We're sisters, right?"

Callie lights up brighter than every light in Inkopolis combined.

"YES!"

She leans in for a hug, and you embrace her back. It feels like coming home for the first time in a while.

When Callie pulls away, she asks,

"Do you have a new name picked out?"

"About that... um... how would you feel about matching again?"



"Ready?"

"Of course not. I'm going to run away any second now."

"No, you're not."

"Yeah, I'm not."

Two girls, neither of whom would look out of place in the city if not for their nervous expressions, sat waiting. The coffee shop, overly expensive and fancy, sits proudly on the street in downtown Inkopolis. The chairs are dreadfully uncomfortable.

Beneath an avant-garde table, they're holding hands, tight.



"Maybe it was all a scam. We've been scammed--"

"Mar, no. We're early, remember. You made us get here 20 minutes before the time we talked about on the phone."

"Being punctual is essential for all career pursuits."

"I don't know where you-- THERE!"

Right on time, a proper looking Inkling in business casual enters the cafe, eyes landing on the girls immediately.

She smiles brightly, honestly, and heads right to sit with them.

"It's wonderful to finally see you ladies in person! I'm Shy-Ho-Shy, we spoke on the phone, yes?"

Callie and Marie, right?"

The two of them nod in unison.

"It's a pleasure to meet you as well. My name is Marie,"

"And I'm Callie!"

One quick smile between them, and a squeeze of their hands is all it takes.

"Excellent! Let me tell you, I've been so excited to meet with you. You two are family, yes?"

"Cousins, yes." Marie says, as Callie finishes, "But we grew up together, so we're more like sisters."

Shy-Ho-Shy smiles.

"Hence calling yourselves the Squid Sisters, then?"

Both girls grin at that.

"I'd say it suits you both perfectly."

And both girls would agree, though they'd already known that.

The twinkling light of a bright future shines ahead. Hand in hand, the selves they'd worked so hard to love, to create, to enjoy, are taking those next steps forward. Callie and Marie, the Squid Sisters then, and now, and always.

>_Fin.

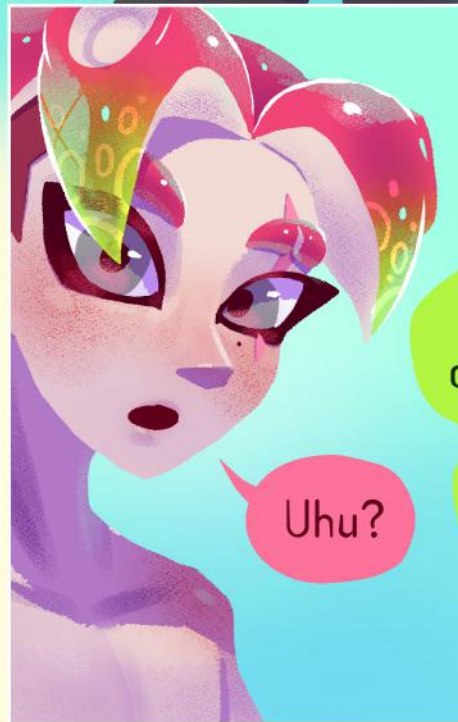


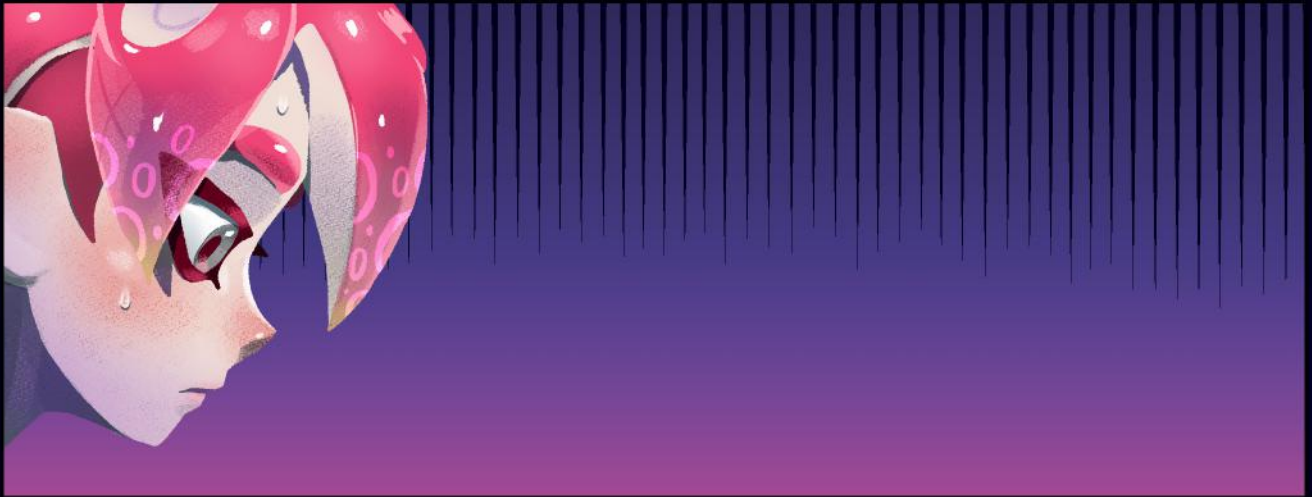












Ahem!

W-Well.

What if someone
breaks into the house?

And finds
MY stuff--

Cori...

And just rips
everything apart
an- and---

Cori.

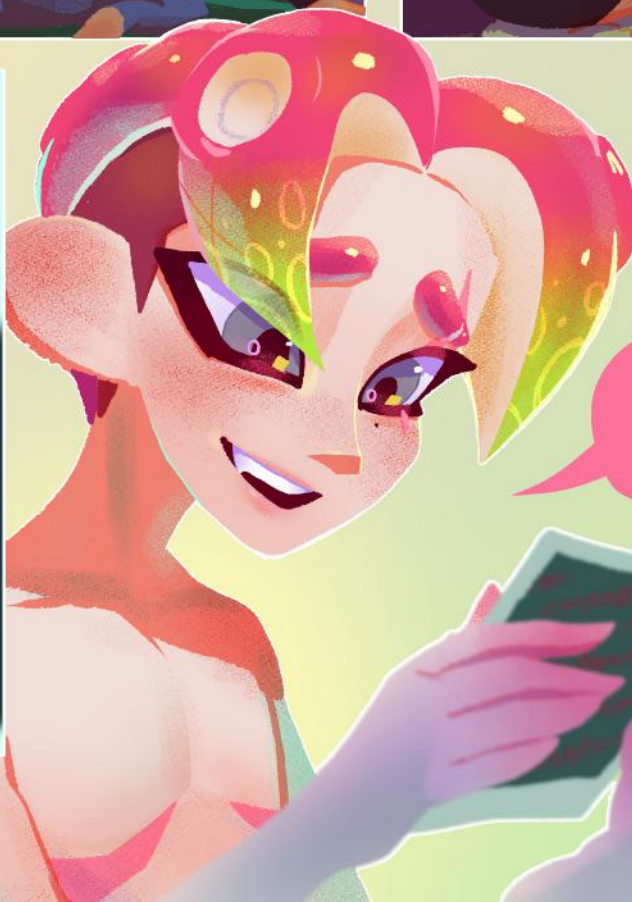
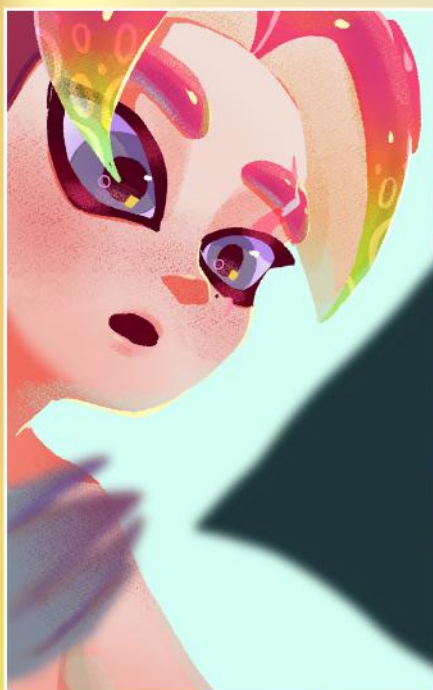
Cori.

You are
safe now.

I'm not going to
rush you if you're
not ready.

But, what if
we start small?

Just one thing
at a time.



Yes...

I would
like that.



The End.





> Splatsville Symphony

By Renewed Horizon

Acht had always found Inkopolis to be almost too expansive, borderline agoraphobic. The limitless freedom and opportunity the city promised almost felt like a shackle around Acht's neck. What good was freedom when it made you feel aimless? What good was openness when you have nowhere to belong? Just because anything was possible didn't mean you could actually do anything. As far as Acht could tell, Inkopolis had about a billion head-spinning social rules about what you couldn't do and not one of them was in a handbook or a lawbook.

But a train ride later and all of that felt... far more than 86 kilometers away.

The filthier concrete jungle towered over them, the buildings feeling only millimeters away and like they were casting shadows onto Acht's soul. Creatures of all kinds swarmed left and right like waves of chaos washing over the streets. Left felt like up and right felt like forward and gravity felt like it was fading in the mayhem of the city. All the windows and balconies and miscellaneous details all blurred into a mess of colors like a tri-color turf war while Marina's directions tangled in Acht's mind like kelp. Their sense of direction felt like it had run away as their breath started to do the same, an intense sense of aching forming in Acht's lungs.

"You must be Acht." A sharp voice stabbed through all the chaotic noise as a hand latched around Acht's forearm and the form of an Octoling emerged from the nonsensical lump of pedestrians.

Blue hair contrasted their drab beige cloak that was seemingly blocking the view of their entire silhouette from the public. The long draping of cloth flowed and waved in the wind, providing Acht with a brief glimpse of the bag wrapped around their stomach. Though it was the pins it held that stole all of Acht's focus: one had an odd insignia of an upside down semicircle and a rectangle while the next was a flag sporting a familiar striped pattern in purple, yellow, black and white. The final pin showed the visage of a manta ray holding a rectangular sign that read "she/they."

And despite the sudden movement their legs were being forced to make, the ground felt more stable below Acht's feet. The mushy kelp of instructions from Marina untwined into a single word. A name: Shiver. The buildings seemed to stretch away from their previously antagonistic shadowing. The disorderly crowd suddenly started to feel like a team of strangers all playing by the same rules. Meanwhile, the pressure upon Acht's chest didn't dissolve, it simply transformed, metamorphosing from the strain of suffocation to the welcoming grip of a hug. As this bizarre Octoling pulled them along, the road before them seemed clear and welcoming. The path ahead made all the sense in the world.

"Hey, Shiver?" Acht's voice was louder and more stable than they ever could have expected it to be.

"Yeah?" Her voice was coated in a nonchalance Acht couldn't even have achieved while sanitized. Acht's focus was on Shiver, yet their eyes bounced about the city of Splatsville now that it didn't seem to want to collapse on them. The balconies of nearby apartment buildings ranged from having flags of various colors and identities dangling from them to hosting makeshift concerts featuring drum sets and keyboards.

"So, I just wanted to know exactly how much further we're running." The words burst out of Acht quickly in between heavy breathes.

"Not much longer. Can't have ya falling over on me." Shiver's harsh red eyes beat into Acht's own alongside a downright maniacal smile through her fanged teeth. It likely struck fear into whoever saw and yet, the aura of this mysterious enby was almost... intoxicating wasn't quite the right word. But Acht felt like they were exactly where they were supposed to be for the first time since the spire.



Before much longer, the sprawling heights escaped Acht's glimpse as their attention turned to a small wooden door built into a concrete frame a few inches off the ground. After taking a pensive glance behind them to check if the coast was clear, Shiver knocks on the door five times to the rhythm of the Calamari Inkantation.

"We're not in Inkopolis, for squid's sake..." They grumbled. Despite this, the door flipped open to reveal a crooked wooden staircase that creaked as the pair descended it.

Acht's eyes took a moment to adapt to the relative darkness of the dimly lit room though years of life below the surface meant it felt more natural than their run in the sun to get this far. Shiver offloaded their cloak to a coat rack before rushing off towards the source of a sensational sound not like anything Acht had ever heard before.

Two musicians stood firm at the front of a small stage that ascended just a few centimeters off the ground. One had vivid green hair, grey skin and was locked in with a guitar that was colored light blue, pink, and white in alternating stripes. The one to her right was a fish whose scales alternated between hues of coral pink to sea blue. She gripped a mic stand firmly in his right fist, the central shaft of the stand adorned in black, white, purple, pink, and blue vertical stripes.

"Those two are from Riot Act. Kiki and Nia." Shiver explained, aware of the painfully obvious look on Acht's face that told her that Acht had never heard the song before. "They're pretty popular, actually."

Acht's focus shifted back to the song they were playing, an upbeat track with energetic vocals and violin. They were surprised having not noticed such the latter's unique sound, their eyes suddenly drawn to the back of the stage towards another musician, a fact that Shiver quickly picked up on. The violinist in question had dark skin and bright red fins that really ought to have stood out to Acht by now. Just behind her was a haphazardly placed violin case with a vast multitude of stickers affixed to it. Various band logos, venues, music companies, and of course, pride flags dotted the metallic case. Acht recognized a pink, red, white, and orange flag, another with gray, black, and green, as well as a blue, pink, and white sticker in just the same shades as Kiki's guitar.

"That's Finn." Shiver had a slight, sort of facetious frown. "She's more on the Inkopolis side of music, but she performs with Riot Act a lot so I guess she can be here." Their frown did eventually make way for a smile as Acht's eyes shifted to the drummer of this group.

They recognized him instantly as Garris, the Octopus drummer Pearl had scouted for her side project. She introduced him to Acht when Damp Socks opened during Off the Hook's world tour. He was going hard on each drum in the set, the shells of which were striped with another pride flag, this time with greens and blues of different shades. Acht, content with the vibes of each member of this crew, closed their eyes and focused on each note as the song continued.

"That's Garris. He's—"

"I know him." Acht interrupted as the song's final bridge started, a sound that Acht was clearly far more interested in hearing. Not that Shiver blamed them in the slightest.

After the song wrapped up, silence moved across the venue and audience members did the same. A group of five made their way towards Shiver and Acht. The first was an Octoling with bright blue and orange tentacles. She held a trombone case with the colors of the lesbian flag painted across its surface, her eyes locked on Shiver. Next was an orange crab whose well-worn jeans had a non-binary pride pin affixed to them and a pair of drumsticks emerging from their pockets. Behind them was a particularly spiny urchin whose jacket sported a black and white flag with a single green stripe in the middle. Next was Garris, followed finally by Kiki who had put their guitar back into its case, holding it firmly at her side.

"By cod, if it isn't DJ Dedf1sh in the flesh!" The voice came from the urchin, whom Shiver quietly identified as Murasaki.

"You... recognize me?" Acht's voice held an air of surprise within it.

"Your music is... it spoke to me in a way nothing else had. #8 regret helped me confront my gender dysphoria for the first time when I first heard it five years ago and then when you finally put out a new track last month, I..." Murasaki paused, their words needing more time to form. "Well, your music changed my life, if I can be honest."

Acht made out the form of a tear forming in Murasaki's eye.

"I, uh, don't really know how to respond, but... thank you for finding enjoyment in my work." Acht forced the words out, stunned with the opportunity, but also thrilled by knowing their music touched

"Your music actually inspired me to try a new sound with my stuff. It got me out of a rut so I'm honored to get to meet you." Said the crab. Shiver whispered from behind that they were Sid from Chirpy Chips. "So thank you, Dedfish!"

The mention of Acht's stage name resulted in Shiver rushing up next to Acht with a very quick burst.

"Ah right. This is Acht! Also known as Dedfish." She motioned dramatically towards the much greener Octoling to their left. "Unfortunately, they're from Inko—"

Shiver's eyes suddenly grew wide upon realizing she'd been interrupted. By Acht.

"I'm from deep underground and I've been..." Acht's words jumbled up in their mouth until their clearest emotions finally bubbled into words "Looking for somewhere to belong."

"Well, aren't we all?" Garris chuckled.

"Though to be honest, a few of us have found our place to belong and..." The blue and orange Octoling started. Shiver identified her as Tao Blu.

"Splatsville is home in a way nowhere else managed to be." Kiki concluded.

"Wherever our paths take us, I suppose we do sorta belong here." Garris smiled.

"It's a special place here, Acht. If you ever decide you do want to stick around..." Sid paused. "Well, I shouldn't get so ahead of myself."

"Cause, you're just here for a show tonight, yeah?" Kiki asked.

Just a half hour earlier, that was all Acht had cared about. The show. This trip to Spatsville was supposed to be all business. This forbidden fortress with a task to do and a job to finish. That was all. And now that seemed like an obligation. An obstacle. To something more. To everything Acht had ever been looking for. To all these people who were more or less... just like them. Coming together in this sort of chaotic symphony. But, after this show, they'd be back in Inkopolis and, for reasons Acht couldn't describe, that seemed blatantly incorrect.

"Well, you know Acht..." Garris's words rushed Acht back into focus like a Zipcaster. "You're welcome here anytime. I'm sure we can get you on the schedule anytime."

"You're not really an Inkopolitan at heart." Shiver nodded. "I can tell that at a glance."

"So just know we'll always be happy to have you here!" Tao Blue said with an energetic grin.

After a few conflicted hours marinating in a cramped, disorderly green room, Acht felt their legs moving on their own, dragging them on stage to a slightly beat up turntable. As the opening notes of Acht's set started, their fears flew away like a super jump as the audience came into focus. Murasaki, Nia, and Kiki were right at the front with Shiver, Garris, and Tao Blu not far behind, all of them smiling and cheering. All of Acht's dread and sense of isolation faded away as they knew without a shadow of a doubt this was not gonna be their last time playing this venue.

RAINBOW FASHION MAGAZINE

DOUGLAS DUBOIS MAKES IT OFFICIAL



MISS KAKIOKO AND OFFICES
RECEPTIONIST IS CONFIRMED.
THERE'S KISSER SKAKZMINK!

OKOIKEK BAKIATED
ON PINKY AND TIR,
RECYCLING PULPES
ES E POLKISK

EXTENDED OFFICE
ON COMING OVR,
CRYSTAL TARD
AND FASHION.



PRIDE MONKI OFF KIS LOOK
WEEK ARE PISER AND MARINES
PENS FOR JUVISD

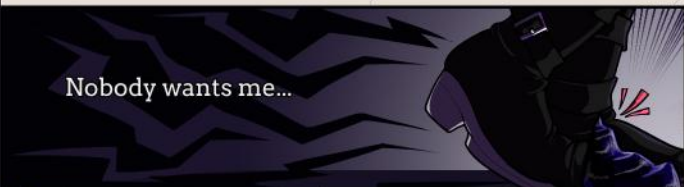
STILLER TOTOJURO ON CEMOIR IOINKIKY:
"TOMISKTY, WHO TERN CARSER
SIX, IX, BRYKING WORKS FOR ME."

Even though there's a lot of labels...

I don't feel...

...like I belong.

I feel so lost, confused, and fake.



90126
June 2025

You'll die alone

No bitches looking ass

Pathetic

It's your fault

Worthless

No one fucking likes you

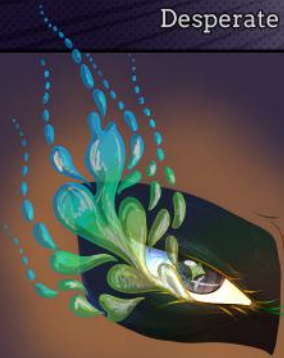
You're the problem

Disappointment

Everyone leaves you
in the end

Failure

Desperate

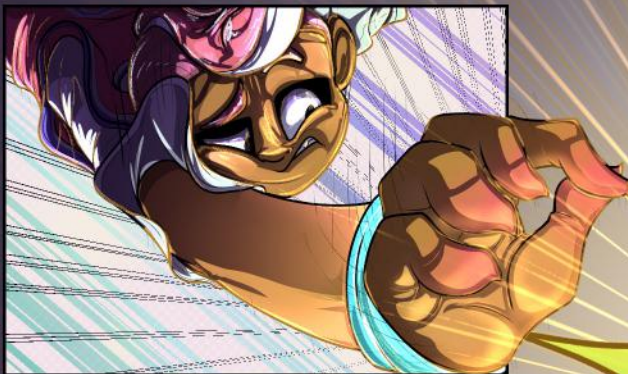


I just want answers...

...for why I am this way.

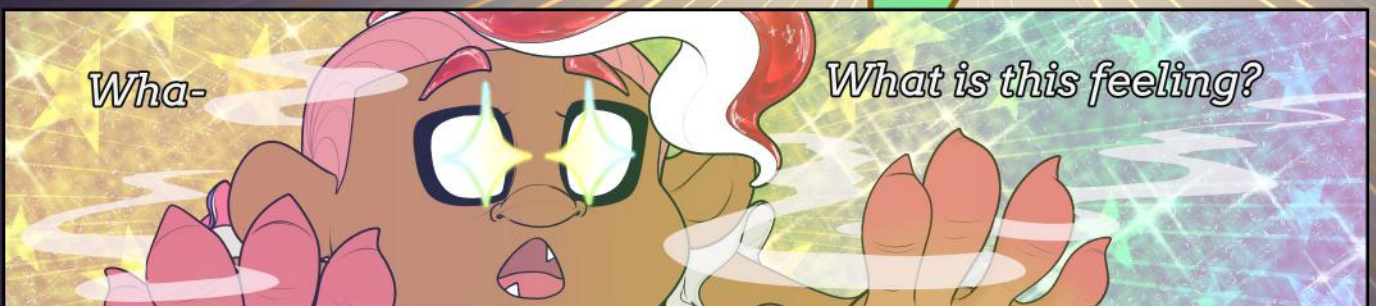


For why everything seems so *confusing*-



Wha-

What is this feeling?



It all makes sense now.





Happy



Pride!



> The Perfect One for You is Me

By LPSvsS
Spot Art by LPSvsS

Tako should be happy—really, she should. Everything was going well for her. She was only one promotion away from reaching the coveted Wasabi Unit, lived in one of the nicer domes, and had a general who wasn't absolutely horrible. Yet.

"If I have to spend one more second standing guard, I think I might snap," Tako bemoaned, her claws tapping on her Octoshot. Her restlessness traveled through her body as she tapped her metal-plated combat boots against the floor. The sound didn't travel far; the false Saltspray Rig wasn't nearly big enough to echo much.

"We can't complain. The general ordered us to be on guard. We must always follow our duties, without fail," The soldier stationed with her replied in a monotone manner.

Tako rolled her eyes, happy to have the cover of her goggles. This chick wasn't helping either. She was new, so Tako couldn't fully blame her for her lifeless demeanor, but would it kill her to at least try to hold a conversation? So many of her comrades were flat as metal sheets—it was grating. She sighed, trying to remind herself that the youngster was excited and had only recently been promoted due to Tako's previous partner's encounter with... the Agents.

Every Octarian knows about the Inklings menace; the story about those foul brutes stealing their Zapfish was told to every Octoling from birth. Those Inklings were all violent savages who knew only barbarity and used that nature to chase the Octarians to the domes almost a hundred years ago. Nowadays, the Inklings don't even have the decency to send an army. Now they just send a few Inklings, as if this were some joke.

While the first pair, one clad in pink and the other in green, could hardly pass their frontlines, these new agents were a different story. This new enemy was a monstrous and terrifying beast. She was stronger than any of their troops could handle. Rumors said that she had kept the jaws of the Octomaw open without breaking a sweat. She was fast, outrunning all of the Octocommander's bullets even at full charge and defeating him in a single sprint. She was even more horrific than the Inklings in their stories.

An alarm blared through the earpiece in their goggles, and both Octolings quickly stood to attention.

Well, speak of the devilfish.

"The inkling menace is rapidly approaching our Zapfish! We are the last line of defense! Stop them at all costs!" The general's voice roared over their earpiece, and in response, the army of Octolings superjumped towards the incoming agents.

Tako too readied herself to jump before being suddenly knocked off her feet. She couldn't even formulate a response; her partner launched herself away alongside the others, "I'm more deserving of being in the Wasabi Unit! That promotion is mine!"

Tako, in response, could only sigh in annoyance as she stood back up, brushing off her armor. She looked up and saw no one else jumping into battle; it seemed like it was too late. "Glad my team will always have my back," she spat sarcastically.

She hardly had a break before a sudden thump behind let her know of her partner's return. She snarled and turned around, ready to lay into her, only to be met with the face of an Inking. Tako jumped back before realizing... this wasn't the monster

.Oh, right, there are two of them.

Everyone was so distracted by the terrifying Inkling that they never bothered to mention her scrawny underling. It was no wonder, comparatively, this smaller Inkling seemingly posed no threat. Many speculated that whatever powerful Inkling ordered the agents around had sent her to lure the Octarians into a false sense of security; others said she was simply sent in as fodder. No matter the reasoning, she was still an agent, a threat to be neutralized.

"Alright, let's make this quick," Tako said, brandishing her Octoshot and pointing it at the scrawny creature. But the smaller cephalopod hardly reacted, only lifting her brows in surprise.

"What? Never seen someone so strong before? I know, it's difficult being in the presence of such greatness—"

Bam!

In the blink of an eye, Tako's weapon had gone from her hand to teetering near the edge of the platform, covered in enemy ink. Her hands, however, were spotless.

"Wha—What..."

The Inkling's expression hadn't changed, only having raised her weapon. She just kept staring at Tako with massive red eyes. It was like the Inkling could see through her goggles, like she could see the fear growing underneath.

She's going to kill me. This isn't like practice. I need my shot.

Her body moved before her mind; survival instincts took control, and she ran desperately for her Octoshot. She didn't even make it a meter away before she was tackled to the ground.

Despite how small the Inkling was, she managed to easily take down the Octoling and pin her to the ground. Tako could feel her heart racing. The last thing she saw before she closed her eyes was those razor-sharp Inkling fangs. This was the end. "Please, don't! I'll do whatever you want! Just please don't kill me!"

Why waste my breath? She doesn't understand a word I'm saying.

The Inkling's expression finally changed, her face contorted in confusion, "Kill you? I do not do that!"

Tako opened her eyes, "What... you're not— Wait! You speak Octarian?"

The Inkling nodded, "A little. I understand, though! But I promise I do not hurt! Get Zapfish, then leave!"

"Oh," Tako let out a sigh. "Wait, then why attack me?"

"Weapon," the Inkling chirped.

"Oh, right." Tako looked over at her weapon. It was too far out of reach, and she would never win a battle of strength, so... "Well, let's start over then. My name is Tako, and I promise not to attack you if you let me up."

"Hmm... okay, Tako!" The Inkling didn't think twice before jumping off of Tako, finally letting the Octoling get a better view of her. She had two curly orange tentacles, pulled back into a ponytail using a small squid-shaped clip. Worryingly, the Inkling looked very skinny, but despite that, she had massive red eyes that were clearly full of curiosity and excitement.

She's... kinda pretty... What am I thinking?! She's my enemy for crying out loud?

"Your tentacles move. Is that normal?" The Inkling pointed to Tako's bright red tentacles, which were swishing around in distress.

"Oh, uh, no! I'm just thinking about something." Tako tried to comb down her tentacles, but they had a mind of their own. "They're honestly really big and unwieldy. But they're required to look like this in the army. Don't have much of a choice."

Suddenly, the Inkling moved closer to her. She walked strangely, almost like she wasn't used to walking on her legs.

Even still, Tako held her hands up in surrender, "Woah, hey! I said I won't hurt you! Let's not start getting violent!"

"Violent? I am going to put your tentacles up! Here," the squid tossed her weapon behind her and let her tentacles loose to use the clip.

"Oh!" Tako lowered her hands as the squid sat down behind her and started to sing.

"Ya weni marei mirekyarahire. Juri yu mirekerason."

Now that Tako had calmed down, she felt her voice finally bubble up. She couldn't believe she was this close to an Inklings. She had never been in such proximity to her mortal enemy. And as the Inklings tied the obnoxious tendrils into a suitable braid, she happily answered every question Tako asked.

"What do you do? Where you're from, I mean."

"Oh well, we dance and sing. We have fun! We play turf war to make friends."

"That song you're singing, what is it called? Do you all sing it?"

"Yes. It is the Calamari Inkantation. All of us know it by heart."

"Are all of the Inklings like you? You're very different from everything we've been taught."

She quickly shook her head, "No! I am very different. I raised myself. Alone. I am still alone. Many people think I am... strange."

"Oh..." Tako couldn't help the frown that marked her face. Isn't she the Inklings' hero? How could they make her fight their war and then outcast her? She was so nice and quick to trust her, even if they were supposed to be enemies. "Well, I think you're really cool."

For the first time that day, the Inklings smiled. A big, toothy grin that showed all her strange Inklings teeth. Her fangs didn't look scary anymore. It's a shame that smile was fleeting, it dimmed just as the dome's lights did.

"The Zapfish. The Zapfish! I completely forgot I was supposed to--"

"Tako, hide," the Inklings whispered.

Tako didn't even get to say goodbye before her new friend took off running. She was about to chase after her before she noticed the reason for the Inklings' warning. A massive, hulking squid covered in the ink of her comrades stepped out; in her hands was the struggling body of the Zapfish.

The monster.

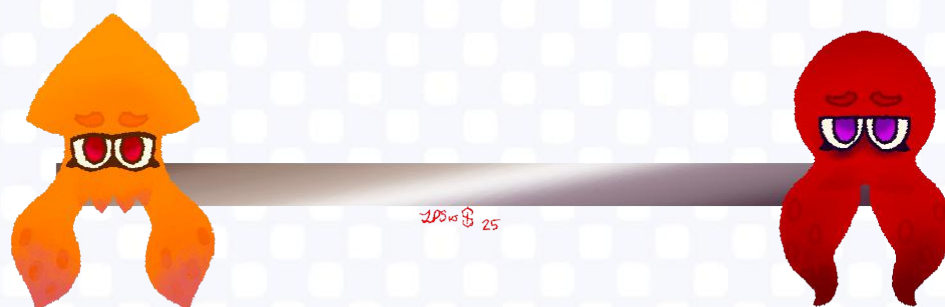
Her friend ran up to the monster, only to trip and fall, landing onto the monster's arm. But she didn't get a second to catch herself before the monster forcefully pushed her away, along with the Zapfish. The little lightning fish seemed to calm down in her friend's grasp, even the tiny creature understanding her friend wasn't the threat.

The monster then started to speak, and even though Tako didn't fully understand what she was saying, she very clearly heard 'Octarian... eliminated... all of them?'

The monster wants all of us dead. But I'm still alive, unless she gives me away.

But she didn't; her friend nodded. The monster seemed satisfied and began walking towards the entrance, her scrawny accomplice in tow. The little Inklings took one last look back, her smile wiped clean, before escaping through the kettle.

Tako could only watch on, willing every fiber in her not to take off after them. "I didn't even get your name."





"We're gonna be going up some steps, do you need some help getting up, Sakura?"

"No, Miss Callie. Thank you, though."

The agent sighed as, even though she had declined help, she was still guided by her brother. Agents 1 and 2—right, they're not at work—Callie and Marie were ahead, acting like bodyguards. As much as she appreciated their kindness and concern, it was getting to be a bit grating. She knew she had to rest, the scary nurse shark told her so, but she was the hero of Inkopolis for crying out loud! Just because she had a few injuries didn't suddenly make her porcelain.

Sakura was pulled out of her thoughts as they stopped in front of a door. Looks to be the entrance of some sort of office building. "So, Gramps wants us to meet with a new agent and those new hosts. Off the Hook? I think that's what they call themselves. Oh, Sakura, the doorway is a bit raised. Watch your step."

"Yes, Miss Marie," Sakura sighed as the two older women held the door open for her while her brother gently guided her inside.

As expected, waiting for them in the confines of a non-green, green room were the two idols she had come to know very well from their continuing news segments, Off the Hook. But aside from the color-coordinated duo, there was one other presence, an Octoling.

Sakura's brother, Pacificus, quickly stood in front of her, "An Octoling soldier? Are we forgetting what they did to Sakura? What is it doing here?"

That was it, that was the final straw. "Alright, I've had enough! I am not a baby, and— and you're being so mean to our new friend. I'm going to say hi."

Sakura practically stomped over to the other cephalopod, but was quickly met with the reality that she was currently half blind with the bandage around her head. She ran knee-first into a far too short coffee table and found herself imminently plummeting towards the ground. Or rather, that would have been the case if someone hadn't caught her.

"You're really clumsy, you know that?" The Octoling soldier chuckled as she steadied the Inking in her arms.

"Nuh uh! It's just... hard to see." Sakura pouted but still smiled up gratefully at the purple Octopus. Even as she steadied herself, the Octoling took care to make sure she didn't fall over again. "Thank you, new friend. I'm Sakura!"

"It's nice to meet you, my name is Tako! I'm really excited to—"

"Wait... Tako!?" Sakura suddenly tried to hug the Octoling, but she did not reciprocate. She looked more confused than anything.

"I'm sorry, I think you have me confused with someone else."

"I definitely remember your pretty tentacles! I put them up in a ponytail after all. Even gave you my clip!"

Tako's face lit up at the mention of the clip. She reached into the little pouch around her waist. Surrounded by strange-looking erasers, there was the clip, a bit worn but still there. She held it up and looked the Inking in the eyes, the one that wasn't covered by a bandage—big, red, and curious.

"Oh my cod, it *is* you."

"I can't believe you're here! I've always wondered what had happened to you!" Once again, Sakura tried for a hug, and this time, the Octoling happily let her. "I never stopped thinking about you."

"That's so sweet. We can finally spend some time together, yeah? And this time, no weapons."

"Yeah! Absolutely! I can show you all the freshest places! Oh! There's this store that sells really pretty earrings. Would you like those? And—" Sakura noticed the Octoling had gone quiet. "Am I talking too much?"

"No! Not at all." Tako smiled, "It's a lot to take in, but I'd love to experience it with you, Sakura."



"Isn't the sunset beautiful, Tako?"

The Octoling looked up from eating her finger sandwich to look at her Inklings companion. They had just finished another day of turfing, and the two decided to take the rest of the day off and have a little picnic at the top of Moray Towers. The place was surprisingly empty save for the two of them.

"Yeah, it's beautiful. Just like the day I got to the surface."

But it's not nearly as beautiful as you.

It'd been a long time since the two had reunited, and while they had changed drastically, one thing had stayed the same: she was infatuated with Sakura. Tako's change was minimal; she was no longer confined to a tight Octarian uniform and could wear loose clothing, and her tentacles were a comfortable length now, too. Conversely, Sakura looked completely different. The once scrawny squid had grown into a beautiful Inklings. All of her had softened up, from her body to her face to her tentacle. Even now that she had only one tentacle, she still had those radiant red eyes. Their brightness seemed to rival the setting sun itself.

Tako had tried to lie to herself for a while, to say she wasn't attracted to an Inklings. But she could no longer lie to herself; she loved Sakura. Anyone from the domes would have looked at her with disappointment or disgust, but she was free now. She could love whoever she wanted. Marina always said, 'There's no time like the present.'

"Sakura!"

"Yes, Tako?" Sakura looked up from her donut. She still had a little bit of frosting on her cheek.

Tako felt her cheeks flush, but steadied herself. "I- I-... I like you!"

Sakura paused, but simply smiled, "I like you too!"

"No, ugh. Sakura, I really like you."

"I really like you too, Tako!"

"Ugh! No. That's not what I mean."

"Is something wrong?"

"Sakura... Can I please kiss you?"

Sakura's face suddenly lit up in understanding, before she started giggling. "Yes, Tako. Of course you can."

The Octoling's smile gleamed, and she quickly scooped over so she was pressed against the Inklings. She leaned in, wrapping her arms around the woman to bring herself up to her face.

Even her lips are soft.

Apparently, she was leaning against her too much, as Sakura suddenly fell onto her back, with Tako now pinning her to the ground—but all it did was make the two laugh. Some things never change. After what felt like a lifetime, but in reality was mere seconds, they separated, and Sakura's eyes were glowing brighter than ever.

"Woah. So... I guess we're girlfriends now, huh?"

"Girlfriends... yeah. I'd really like that."



That sounds perfect.





Happy Pride Month!!

+ very small summary of some LGBT history



During the 1980s AIDS crisis gay men were neglected care from medical facilities. Lesbians came together to support the gay community in their time of need; They donated blood and took care of those affected.

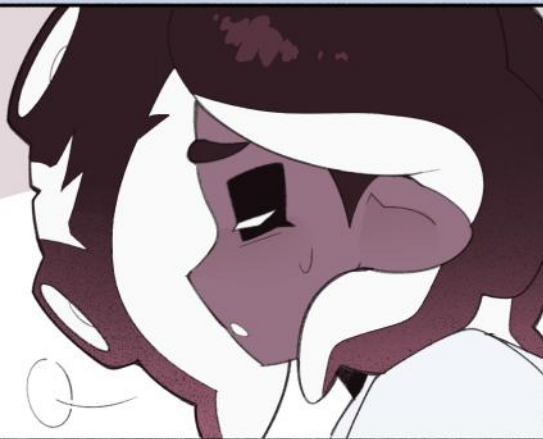
"L" being at the beginning of LGBTQIA+ was an homage to what the lesbian community did for their gay brothers.

The solidarity of both communities remains strong today, with this as a reminder to support our fellow queers in times of hardship!

I'VE BEEN HAVING THESE REOCCURRING DREAMS.



THEY AREN'T
REALLY OF
SUBSTANCE...
NOR DO THEY
MAKE MUCH
SENSE.



ALL I KNOW IS
THAT THEY'VE
BEEN CROPPING
UP EVER SINCE
WE MADE IT TO
THE SURFACE...



AND EVEN IF I CAN'T
UNDERSTAND THEM,

FOR ONCE, THEY DON'T
FEEL LIKE YET ANOTHER
NIGHTMARE.



...SARCO?





YOU'RE STILL UP?!

JUST WOKE UP.

AH... ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE NIGHTMARES? I THOUGHT THOSE WERE FINALLY CALMING DOWN.



NAH, JUST THAT SAME STUPID DREAM AGAIN. YOU KNOW THE ONE.

I DO? ʘ

YEAH, THE ONE WITH THAT... GUY?



SNIFFLE
IT'S JUST WEIRD. STILL DON'T REALLY GET IT, BUT...

I WANT TO. I REALLY DO.



YOU STILL REMEMBER WHAT I SAID LAST TIME, RIGHT?

UH... YEAH, SORTA?

Y'KNOW, ABOUT YOUR OWN SUBCONSCIOUS AND ALL THAT.

S
U
L
K

I THINK IT'S PROBABLY TRYING TO TELL YOU SOMETHING IF IT'S BEEN NAGGING YOU LIKE THIS FOR SO LONG.

AND MAYBE THIS TIME IT WON'T BE SO LINEAR. MAYBE THIS TIME YOU'VE GOTTA TAKE ACTION YOURSELF TO FIGURE IT OUT.

IF... THAT MAKES SENSE? I DUNNO, I DON'T REALLY HAVE DREAMS LIKE YOU DO.

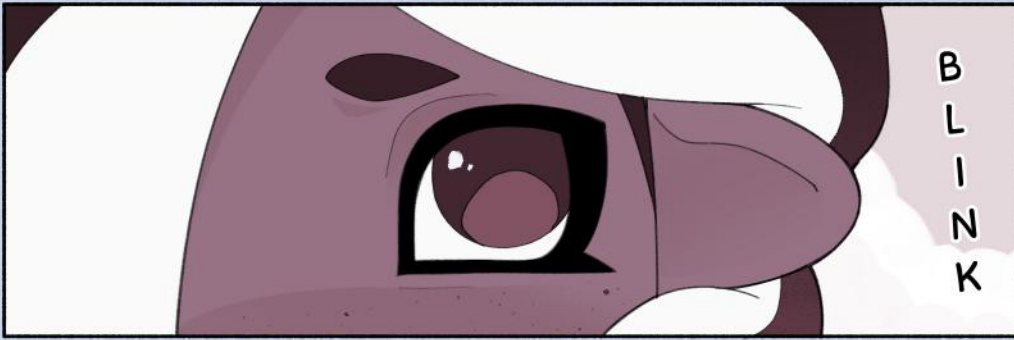


TAKE ACTION, HUH?



YAAAAWN...

YEAH, I GUESS SO.



B
L
I
N
K



IT'S THAT
SAME DREAM
AGAIN.



WHOOSH

WHAT
IF...



WHAT IF
HE WAS
RIGHT...?



WHAT IF THE ANSWERS WERE HERE THE WHOLE TIME?



WHAT IF I WAS JUST...



TOO SCARED TO FACE THEM?



HUFF
HUFF





WHAT IF...



I REALLY WAS
SOMEONE ELSE?

FIN.

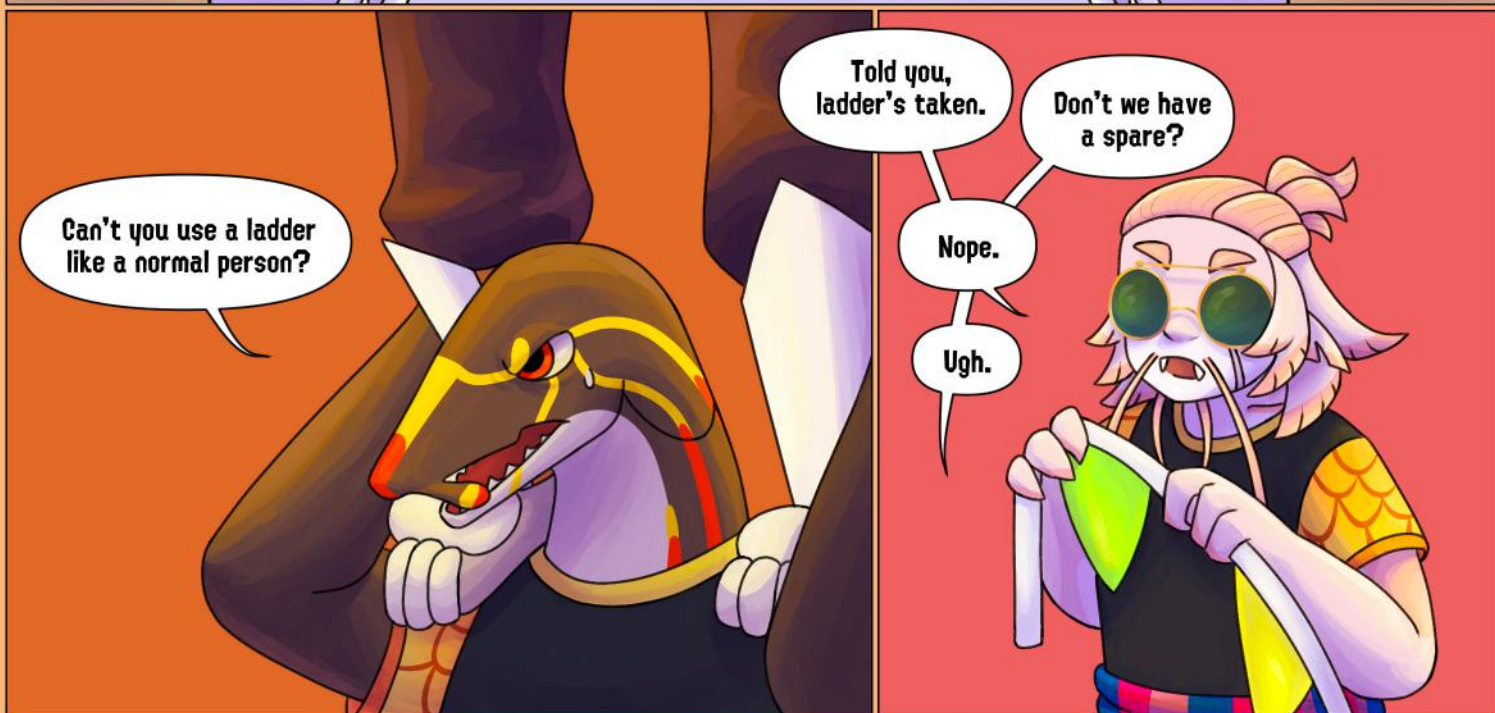


Zzz...





9 Dragons Cultural Arts Center



Parking Lot



Alright, just drop off the gear and leave before anyone comes to bother me. Can't be that hard.

SIFU SOUP!

DAMMIT.

Jet and Jade, right?
Who told you to call me that?

Ivory.

Yeah, of course she did.

Hey, while you're here, why don't you help me with the gear?

Oh, it's just you two.

Hey Emery!

Hi, Jade.
How's practice?

Who's this?

Great as always!

That's Jelemmy. He wanted to tag along.





They're here!
Back from retirement!

No, we're not.

Hi Ivory,
hi Quynh.



Where's Lanh?

He's in the
storage room.

Right. Good luck
out there, Quynh.

Thanks.

Perfect, you're here.
Help me fix the dragon.



You only have 30
minutes left for setup.
You know that, right?

Shouldn't you be overseeing
practice or something?

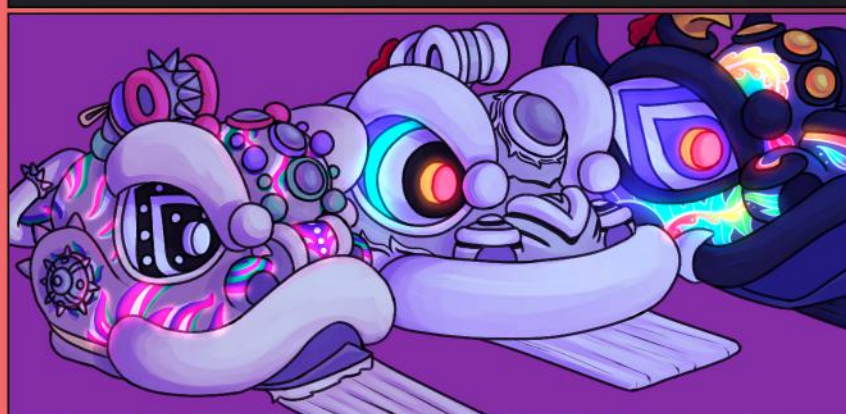
I know.

Ivory can handle it.
Hey, what do you think
about rejoining?

Not happening,
sorry.

That's a shame. I thought
you would've liked to
perform for this parade.

... What are you
trying to imply?



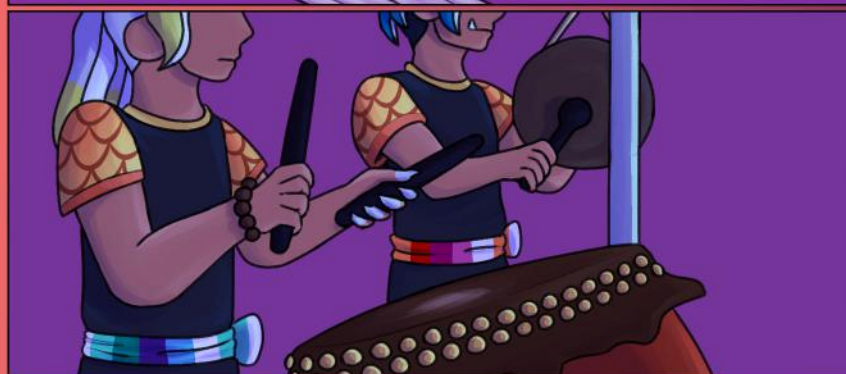
Countdown: 5 minutes

EVERYONE IN!

We're missing
Blister's tail pants!

Eh? Just get the
ones from Smolder.

OK!







Flowers MEETS QUOTA





> Who Are Hue

By Dizzy
Spot Art by Eggtaku

Black, red, and magenta.

Those are the only colors you've known.

Red is what you wear, as do your friends, and your family. It represents unity and support to your military. In emergencies with black-outs, red is easy to spot under flashlights. No one is alone when their tentacles are red. Only those selected by the DJ Shogun may change their hue, so that all can see that they have a special role above in protecting your underground society.

Black belongs only to elites with kelp in their tentacles. It speaks of their history, talent, and skill to reach a high position of power. Their choices determine where you go and what you do. Follow every order without question. Bow for they are the ones you must look up to be. To represent the absence of light that you all fight against so that one day, you will see the surface again.

Magenta is the color of life in the domes. It is the color you all share so that no one else is harmed by another. Together as one people, loyal to the great DJ Shogun.

Then it all changed when new colors that you've never seen before entered the domes.

You didn't know their names at the time, but you knew of green. Green was the shade of your siblings' eyes. Of the weapons you helped defend. The spicy taste of wasabi that you decorated your food with. It was the staple of your nation.

This green hurt when it hit you, but it was not the green that sung to you. That changed when the pink idol came to Octo Canyon.

The pink siren sung, and you were filled with joy. There was a new hope for the domes. A light brought to your lifeblood with the stars she encouraged you to wear. Even in the absence of light, her pink glow made you want more to life than red.

Then came the green siren, a voice so serene that it hit you with a wave of calmness. There was sadness in it, but also a hope. A hope that grew with every note as the battle went on.

When they both sung together, you saw a color unimaginable.

No name left your tongue as none came to mind. The shades among it made your heart soar.

You left to the surface after that. Searching once again for that nameless vibrant hue.

Only to see it upon the day you arrived on the surface alone among fellow deserters.

There you saw it, high in the sky, a glowing ring among a bright object that burned your eyes.

Just for those few minutes, you watched as the ring disappeared but not the object. The sun welcomed you with its warmth, and you accepted this new life.

But this new life was not easy on your mind. It had overwhelmed you with the new colors it bled. When you only knew of three names, there were hundreds of shades to just one hue. Each with their own different name, meaning, and desire. It was an unspoken language of the surface, and you had to learn it.

To choose what color would speak that is you.

So you first started with a pink so hot it was luminous. It was eye-catching, and many cephalopods rushed to your side to chat after a turf match. Some made you blush with their compliments, others left you speechless with their own appearances. You wished you knew the words to describe how you felt, to tell your new friend of how his smile made your insides shake around like a Squee-G when it's found ink to clean up. But the attention your new color brought eventually became too much, your energy for the days drained. So you switched your hue to red, hoping people wouldn't assume you to be extroverted.

Red was familiar; it represented home. New octolings from the domes wore it, and squids seemed to catch on, thinking it was a trend. You didn't have the heart to tell your new friends that it meant more than just a stylish fad. When in reality, red was at the core of all of your life. In the domes, society was revolving around the hue. Even on the surface it still did among the weird squid-shaped berries you had for breakfast at the farmer's market. So much fulfilling food that you never could have imagined tasting back at home.

But then you found yourself in a stump. You left that home to find a new life. Red was your hue then, and now you were wearing it again with a frown on your face. The past was then, and as much as you missed the comfort of it, you were motivated to find something new.

So you chose a new color that you took during a turf match. A color named orange, a mix of red and yellow, as sweet and sour as the fruit, and truly a shade of healing. When you first sprained your leg after tripping on your roller, it was the orange goldfish who provided you comfort as she placed ice among your injury. Orange was the color of the frozen mango drink that soothed your sore throat. It was the color of the candles that gave off a citrus-sweet scent as you cried to your therapist about how you missed everyone you knew back in the domes. Wishing you could share in all these experiences with them.

But you found yourself unable to wear orange longer than a few days. In your head, you didn't deserve to wear a color of healers. So you let go of the red in your ink and changed your hue to yellow.

With yellow, you felt like the day could never end! For you would match the sunlight and be a light for others when their days were dark. Giving talks to other octarians moving onto the surface. Smiling at your neighbors as you planted a new row of yellow hyacinths in your pots. As long as you were around, no one had to worry about being sad because you would cheer up their day!

Yet, you could not wear the yellow hue forever just as the smile on your face eventually pained you. You told your therapist you wanted to always be happy and shine just like the sun which welcomed you with its golden glow. So positive that you learned it was possible to be too positive from your therapist. That you needed to let yourself be sad too.

So you decide to let a little blue into your ink, making the color green.

Green wasn't a bad hue, but it reminded you of the moss growing in the domes. The first real sense of nature you got that wasn't some artificial grass that hurt if you lied down on it the wrong way. It was nature's connection reaching down into the earth so that you all would know you're not alone.

Now on the surface, you know you're not as you walk along the trails of Mt. Nantai's forest. Listening to the birds chirp as the wind weaves through leaves. Green was everywhere, for it was nature, and you felt you could blend right in. That if you laid down upon bushes and roots, you too would match right along. Yet, there was just that lack of connection that made you change your hue once you were gifted a paint set.

Turquoise was what your best friend wore, and so you matched him as you painted the vibrant blue seas. He dazzled you with the magic of making his pet pigeons appear out from a hat, and you showed your paintings of the ocean in return. Your tentacles curled with glee as art became your hobby, but you did not find yourself enjoying just keeping to the light blue any longer. So you let your ink darken as the sun descended into another night.

Indigo was the color of the night sky. The serenity of knowing that there would be no artificial panels falling down due to another power outage. These stars would shine bright and never change for they would outlast even your lifespan. The night held stability that you learned for, but your indigo tentacles seemed to make others think you did not want to talk. It lasts a week before a change happens without you knowing.

You don't know why, but you wake up one day to see your hue has shifted to violet. A bright purple hue compared to indigo, but not as red as the magenta pools at the bottom of Ooto Canyon. You're able to change it, but find yourself coming back to it every so often as your mood goes sour when someone asks who you are.

Most of the surface world talks with hues, but you can't. None of the hues you wear fit you just as the others around.

Today, you don't know how to explain it to the eyes staring at you. They're your friends, you trust them, but you're afraid to speak up. You lost the conversation long ago when they talked about visiting a parade, but when their attention came upon you, you panicked.

So you run.

You run as fast as you can, down streets and alleyways. Your coiled tentacles a stark white, absent of any hue as the air leaves your throat.

Why couldn't you be like the others? They could pick a color that perfectly spoke who they are. And yet you just could not. Just wearing one for too long evoked a visceral sense of wrongness.

Who are you?

The lost dome octopus, who can't even stand to wear red because it brought forth too many memories? Who couldn't wear yellow on a rainy day because that's not how you felt? An octoling with jet black tentacles in the mirror that caused you to flinch and hide in fear that the military was going to come back for a deserter to wear a color such honor in disgrace?

Maybe, you aren't someone?

Just a nobody who could never be someone.

You're alone in this world of color because you don't belong—

"Hey!"

You look up to meet eyes with pupils of stars.

"Are you feeling okay?"

Your head shakes. White tentacles coil at the edge of your vision.

She crouches down to your level, "What's the matter?"

Words leave your throat before you can properly think of an excuse to make the in-
kling leave you be. "I think... I'm lost."

A hand reaches out, "No worries! I can help you find your way."

Eyes blinking, you take her hand.

"... Can you help me find a parade? My friends are there."

The stranger smiles and helps you to your feet. "That's perfect, 'cause I'm going to a parade too! I got a cousin to meet, but she's always late to stuff, so I'm not worried."

You tilt your head in confusion. She giggles in response.

"Sorry! It's just that you remind me a lot of my girlfriends. They do the same gesture when they're curious about what I said," she explains, leading you out from the alleyway.

You're speechless as you keep pace with her. Her tentacles sparkle from faint sunlight hitting the glitter on them.

But that's not what got your attention.

No, it's the color of her tentacles that make you stare. You've never seen someone wear colors like this before.

Pink, yellow, and blue, with little dots of the three all together.

In turf war, you've seen people with two hues, but this was different. This was outside of battles in the heart of the city.

You open your mouth to ask the inkling a question, but feel the words die at the back of your throat as you both step out onto a scene of color.

Flags were raised high in the area as sea life of all types danced around to music that shakes your hearts. A pair of DJs play together on a booth on top of a float. One wears a hat with yellow, white, purple, and black bands wrapped around it. The other has long tentacles pulsing to the beats with a cyan, pink, and white.

On another float, a duo of cephalopods threw a manta ray decorated with blue, red, and black stripes into the air. In fact, both cephalopods wore the same stripes on their outfits, but their tentacles were a whole different set of colors. Instead of just three, the inkling was wearing four stripes being; black, gray, white, and purple with yellow rings. Then there was the octoling with; pink, white, purple, and blue with white rings. An entire set of five that just blended right together seamlessly.

It was astonishing!

"Looks like we're in the right place!"

You turn to look at her as she lets go of your hand. She gives a small wave, you return it.

"Good luck finding your friends! See ya!"

And off she goes into the crowd of sea life, following after the float with a trio. Gone amongst a sea of colors, but not in your mind.

You look around some more amongst the parade and see it on top, a float covered with flags of the shades you have seen.

Shining with beauty, glory, and all the warmth that you remember that came with it was the nameless color.

No, that wasn't right.

You know the word now.

A rainbow.

Not a single color, but a spectrum. Never truly being just one, instead a flow with no stop.

You feel a shift of ink around your tentacles as your mind gathers mixtures of hues to form a rainbow amongst them. Moving fluidly from one end to another with no one color sticking in place.

This is what you are.

You are not one hue.

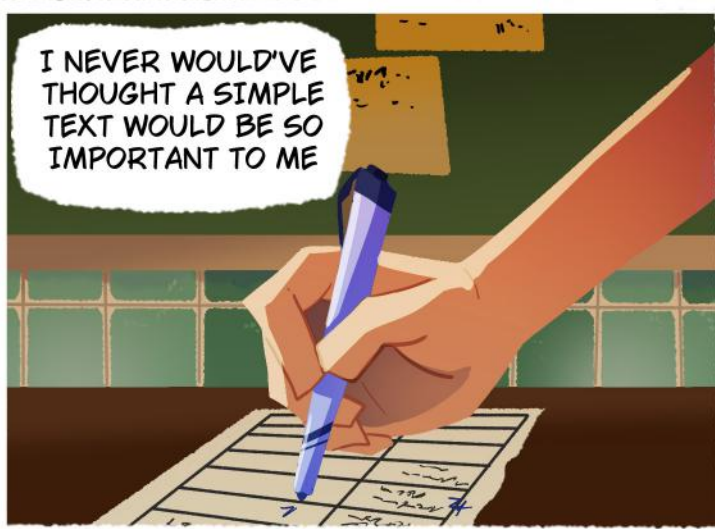
Your life does not have to resolve of a specific shade or an absence of any color. To fit into a box made by others, staying forever just for the safety in numbers.

No, you're a hue ever-changing, vivid, and full of life.

In the end, you're you.



I NEVER WOULD'VE
THOUGHT A SIMPLE
TEXT WOULD BE SO
IMPORTANT TO ME

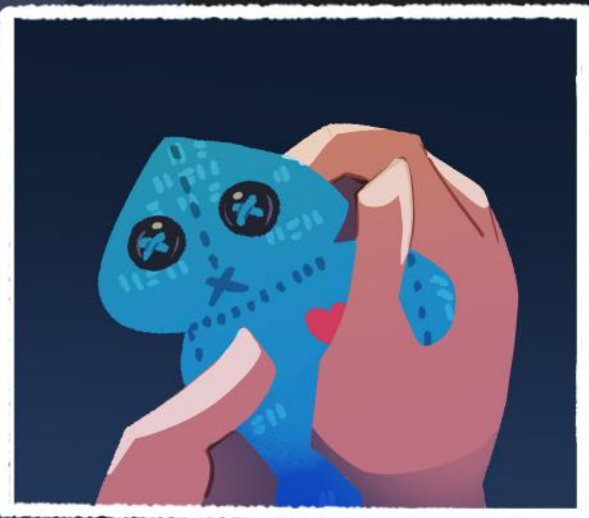


LMK WHEN
U DONE ♡

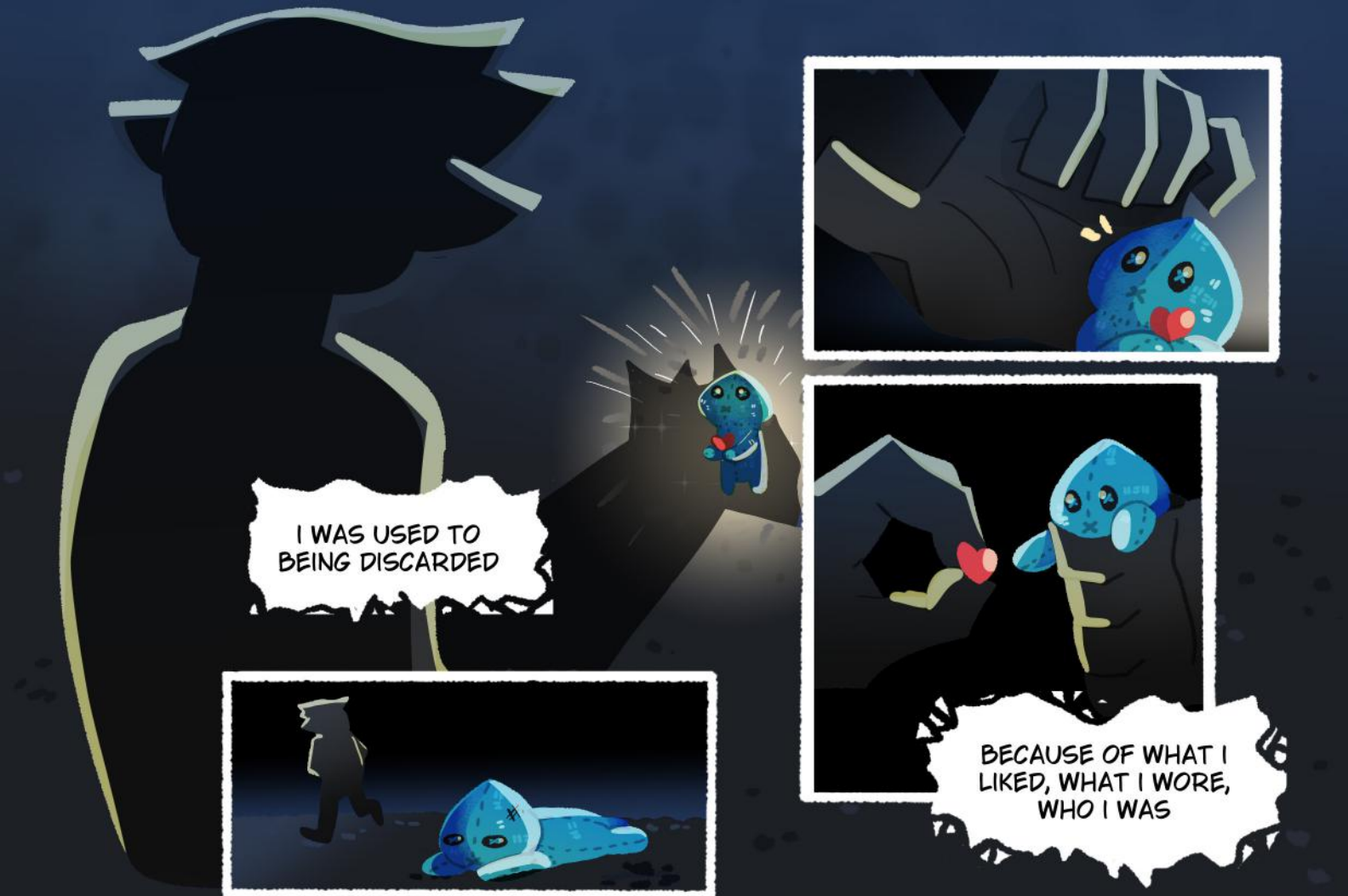
HEEE



I HAD ACCEPTED BEING
ALONE BEFORE I
MET YOU ALL

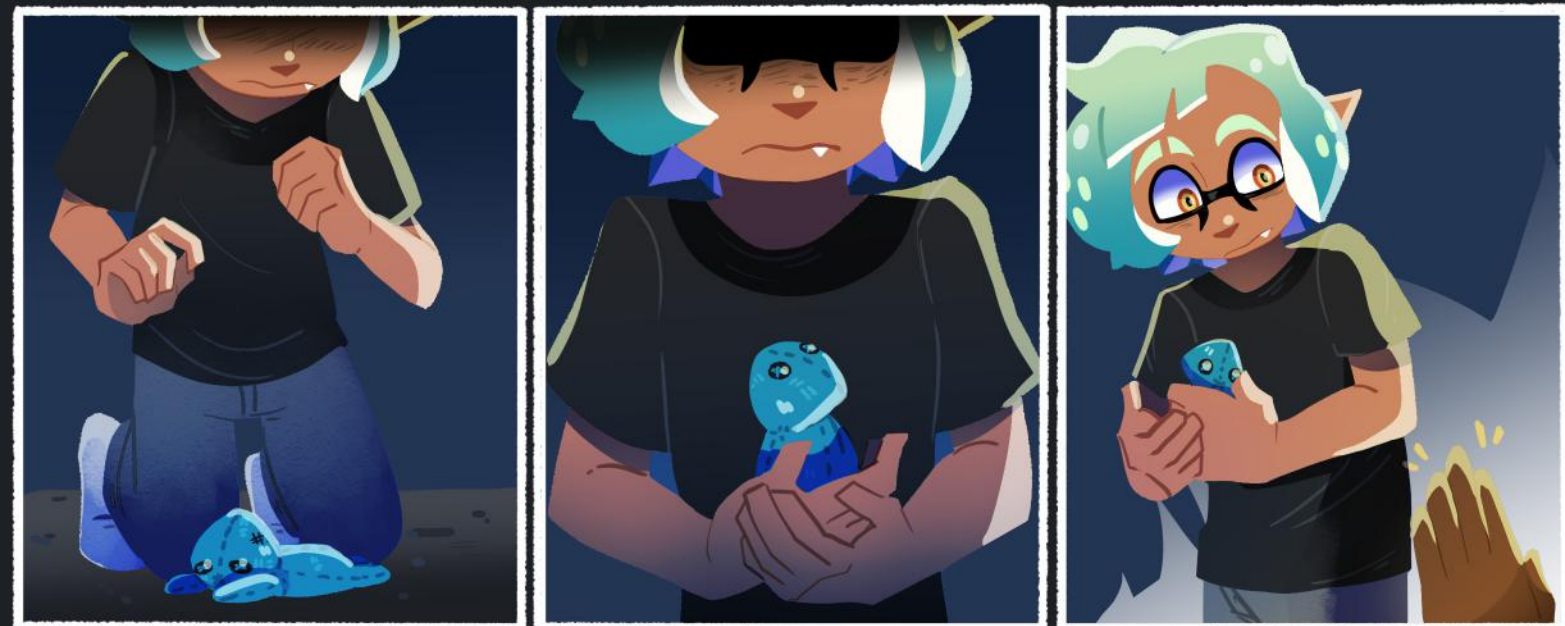


AND I WAS AFRAID
OF BEING CLOSE
TO ANYONE AGAIN



I WAS USED TO
BEING DISCARDED

BECAUSE OF WHAT I
LIKED, WHAT I WORE,
WHO I WAS



BUT THEN I
MET YOU

AND YOU STAYED



JUST BECAUSE
OF WHO I AM



AND I--

HEY!

SUP!

WHA-



CAME TO PICK
YOU UP

YEAH EVERYTHING'S
READY

WHAT ARE YOU
DOING HERE?

OH! ARE THE
OTHERS STILL
COMING OVER?

SWEET!



HUH?
REALLY?

BY THE WAY
I MADE YOU
MY EMERGENCY
CONTACT

OH SORRY
I SHOULD'VE
ASKED FIRST

NO! NO!
I'M HAPPY
YOU DID

... ..

I LIKE SHARING
MY SPACE
WITH YOU



YOU MAKE ME
FEEL SAFE
AND LOVED



AND SEEN

I FINALLY FEEL
LIKE I BELONG

From the very beginning of my life,



I was forced into a box.

*Eventually, I thought I finally found
someone who understood,*



*and was finally
offering me a way out.*

*But the way-out
was just the way
into another box.
Another trap.*



But that was a long time ago.

*I can't change
the past,*

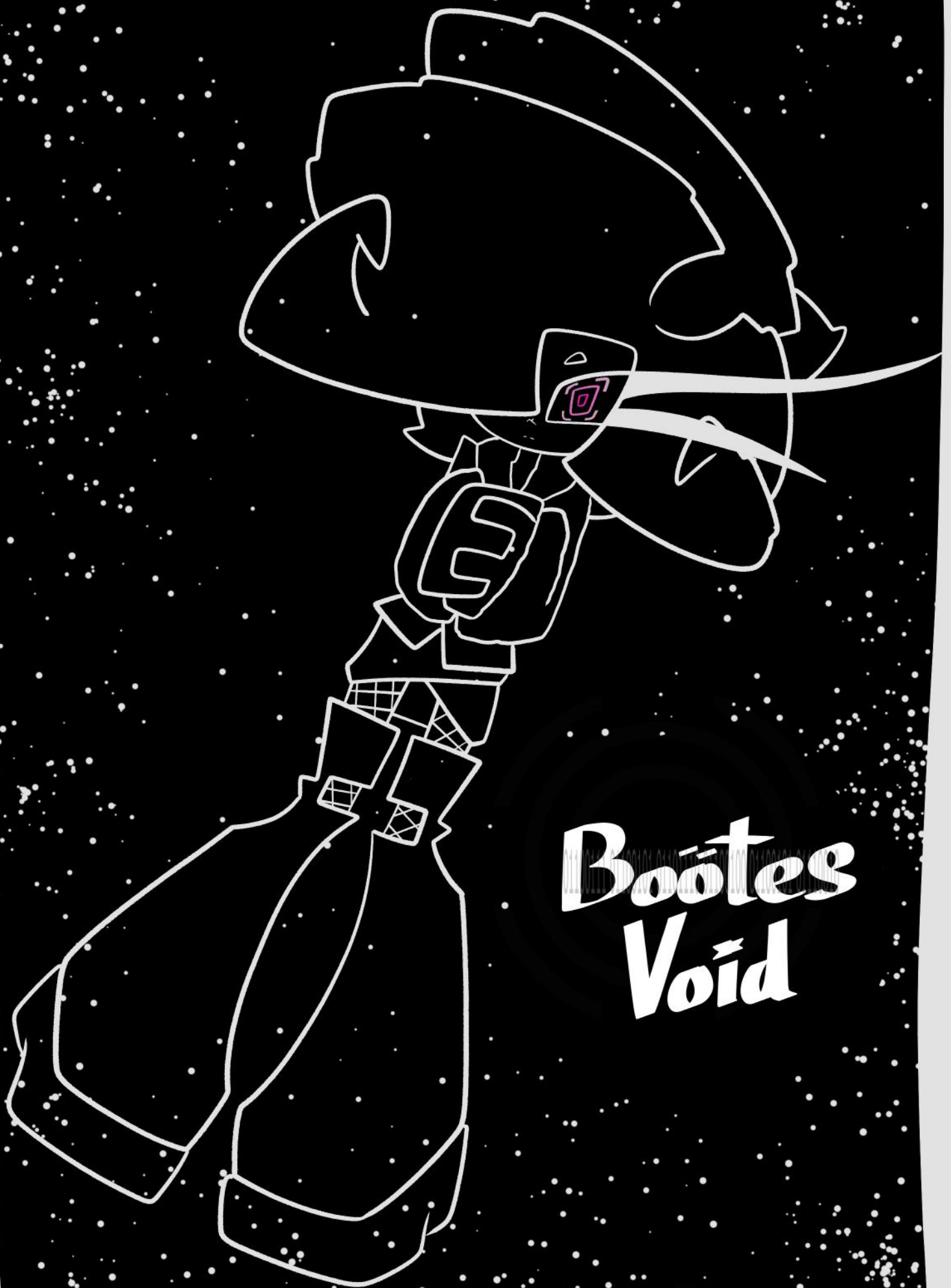


*or how much it's
broken me so I fit
in its boxes.*

*I can put myself
back together,
piece by piece.*



My way.



Boōtes
Voïd

The universe holds an array of structures

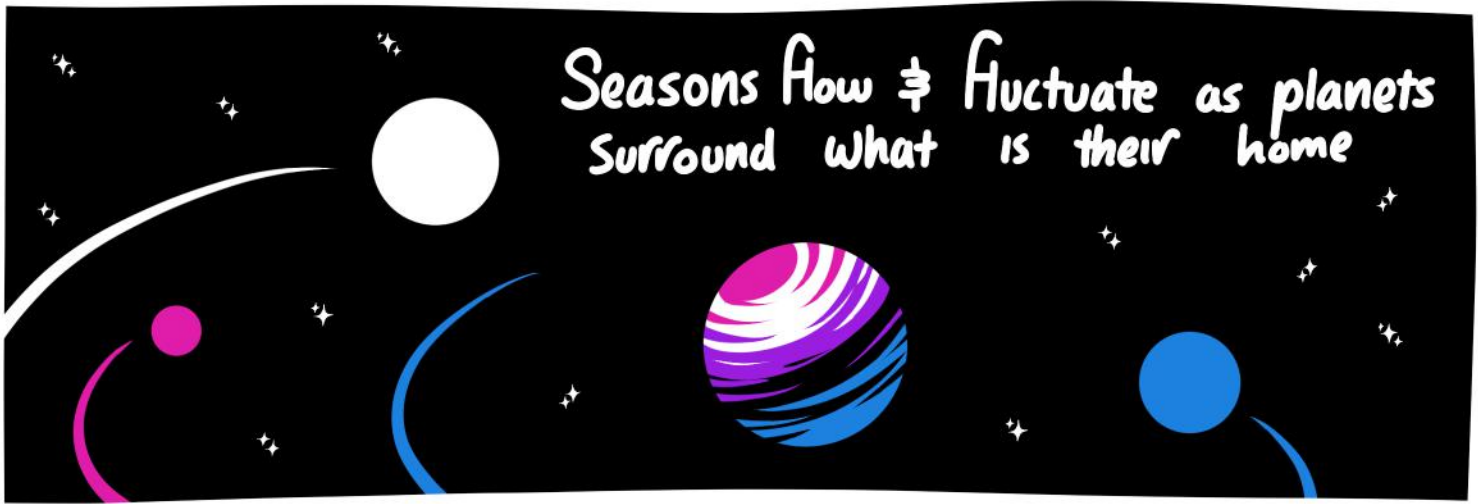
Structures that inevitably rebirth

from a star to a black hole
or a white dwarf

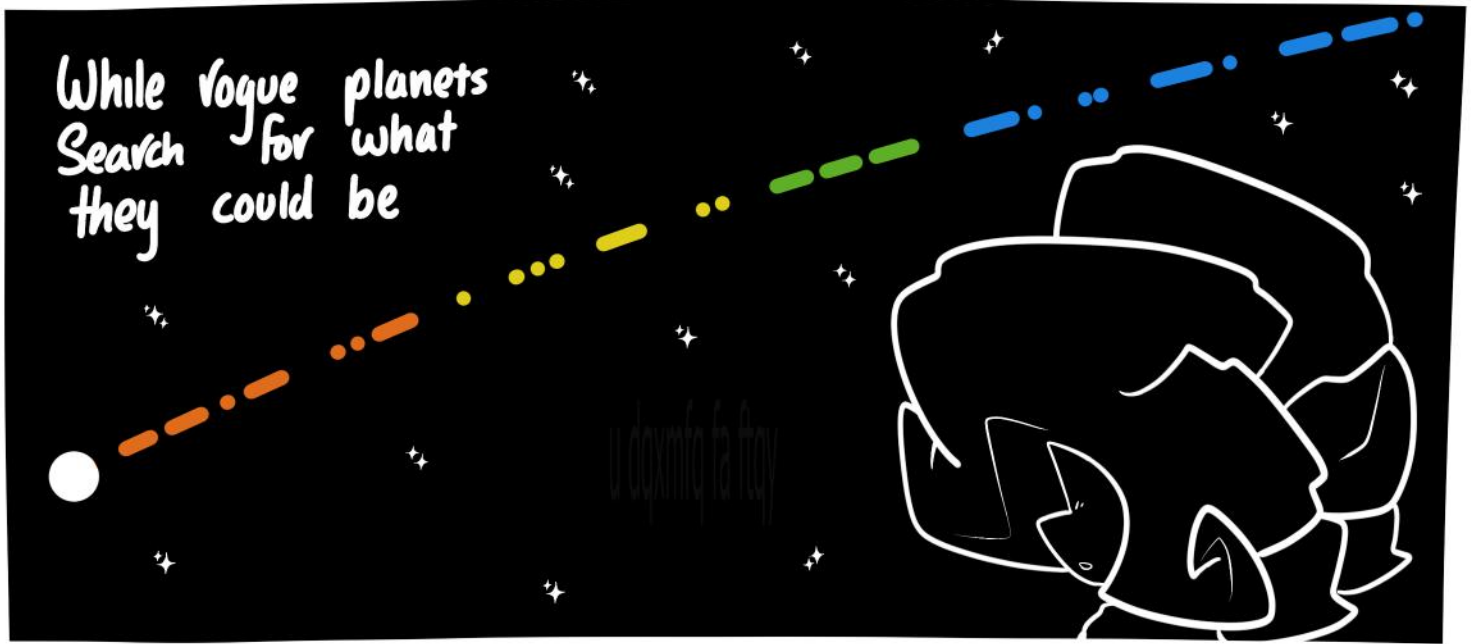
or maybe it's not exactly a star...

Maybe it's a nebula.

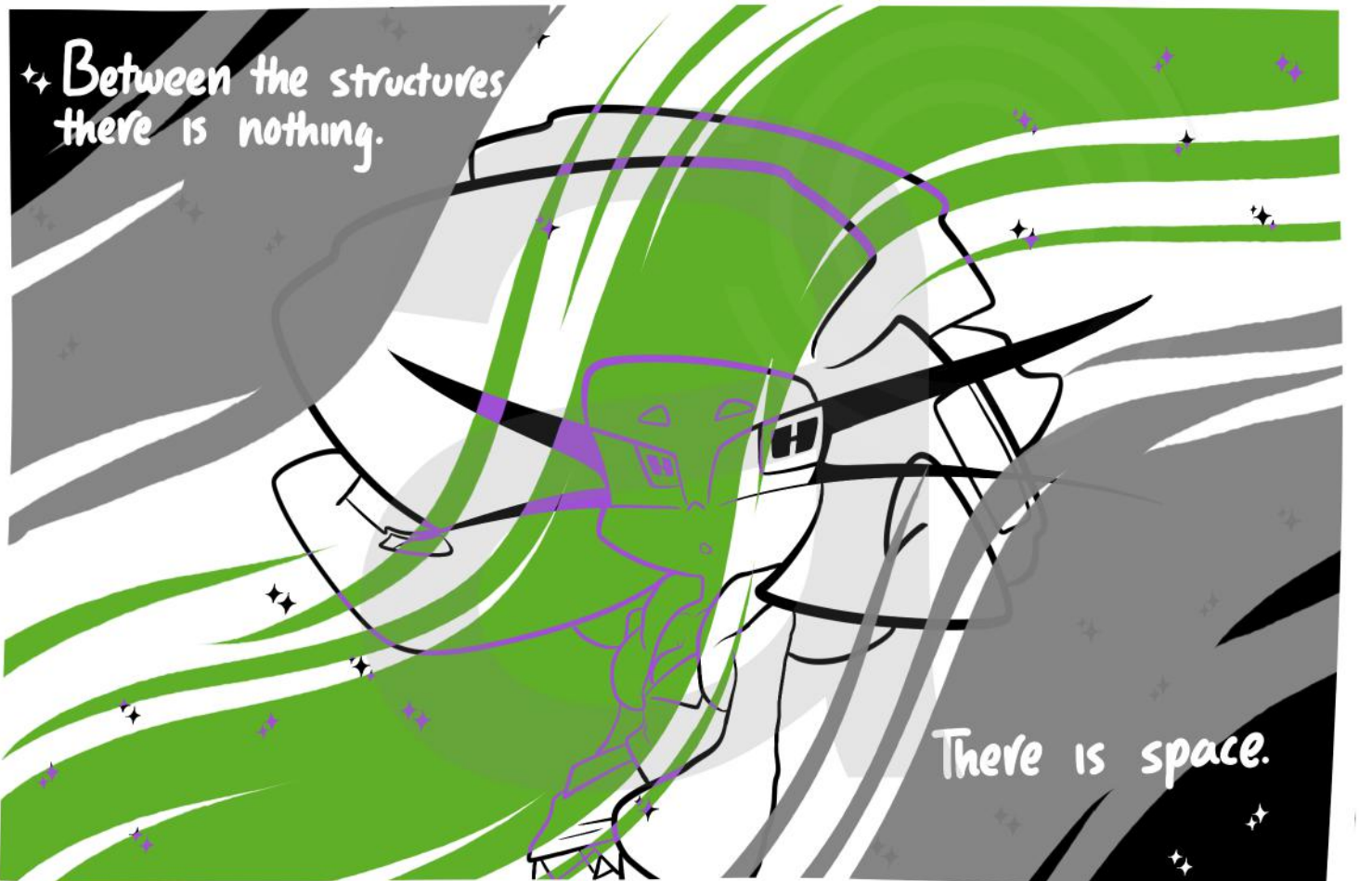
Seasons flow & fluctuate as planets
surround what is their home



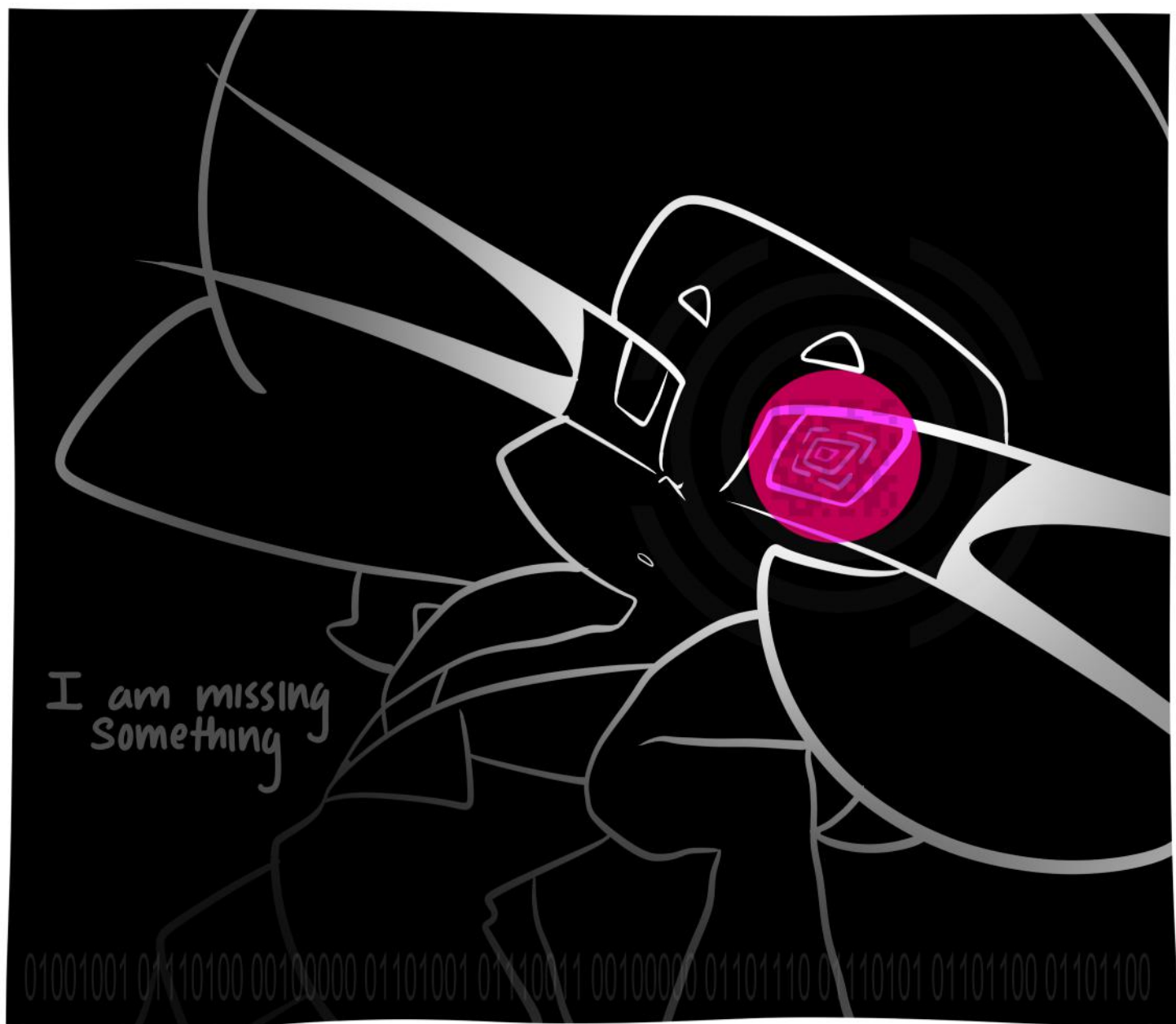
While vogue planets
Search for what
they could be



Between the structures
there is nothing.



There is space.





Something should be there

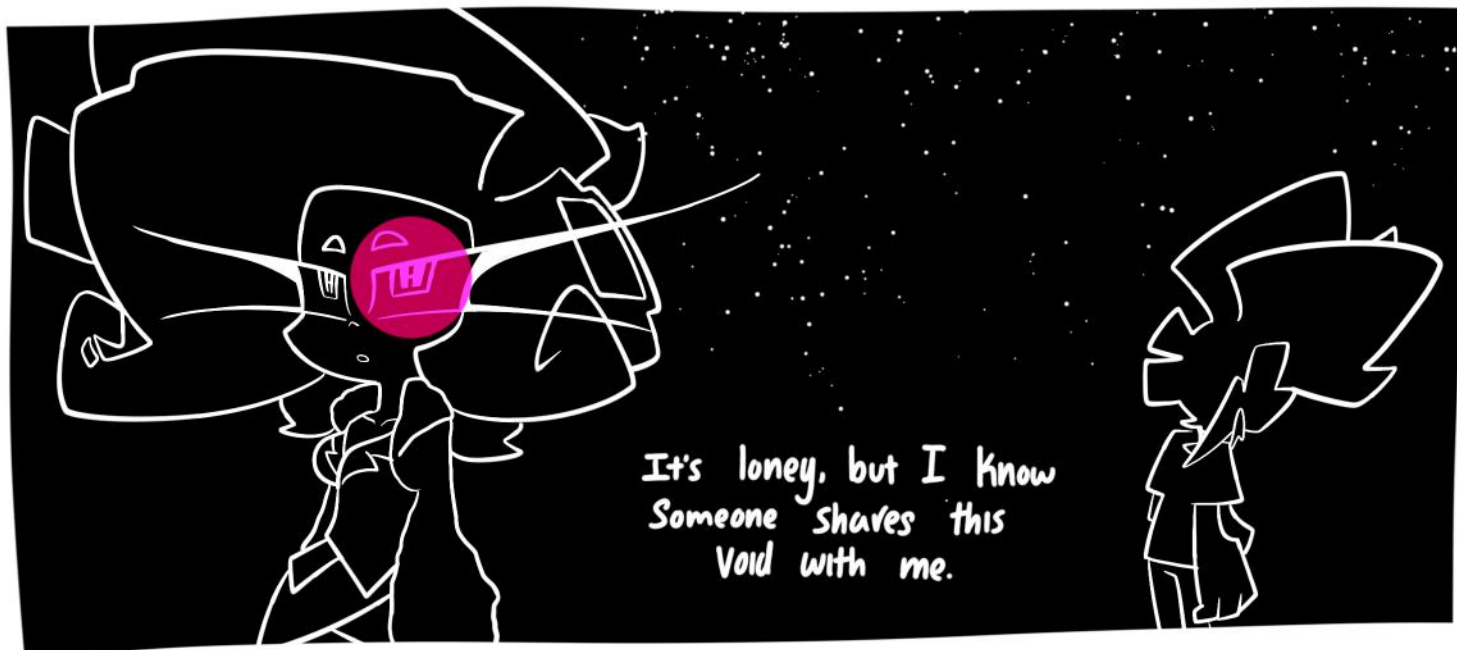
I am blinded by
the darkness
I was born in.

The void I
am alone in

I see and
know nothing

I am nothing





It's loney, but I know
Someone shares this
Void with me.

Until then, I will accept
this void as my veil.

I lack light of
my own as
well as others.

This sensory deprived
darkness is my
structure. My comfort.

My shelter.

My me.



> Clowning Around

By EikoPrime
Spot Art by Kailerooni

Callie slurps her soda as she keeps reading her new script. She got the lead in Angry Clowns VS Killer Nails and Callie loved those books as an inkblot. They're planning to put in big musical numbers, and Callie's never been more excited. She's already memorized the song about tracking down killers. She can't wait to learn knife-throwing. She's dreamt about honking her giant red nose. She was born to play Paddy Whack.

Sure, they may be making a new story for the movie instead of copying one of the books, but Callie doesn't care. This will be great. Taking the clown car through city streets with the entire clown precinct crammed in with her. Using acrobatics she learned from the trapeze artists to break into the inn rooms while her trusty sidekick Inkzo juggles a distraction...

---They kiss.

No.

No, they do not.

Callie rereads the page, just to see if she misunderstood. Paddy's true love is comedy. She and Inkzo are friends. Inkzo helped Paddy earn her red nose in the first book. Paddy rescued Inkzo's trusty pet sealfish from becoming sashimi. There's never been even a hint of romantic tension between them.

---They kiss.

Callie throws the script across the room. It hits the wall with a satisfying thud and falls to the ground. None of the pages fall out.

Pity.

Marie knocks—Callie knows it's Marie, Marie knows she doesn't have to knock, so Callie must sound particularly angry. "You okay?" Marie calls through the door.

Callie gets out of her comfy script-reading chair, kicking the reclining part closed before yanking her door open. "I need something stronger than soda for this."

"Milkshakes it is."

This is why Callie loves Marie.

Marie leads her into the kitchen, where Callie sits at the table and sulks while Marie starts up their blender. Callie makes grabby hands at the shakes when Marie brings them over, grabs hers, and slurps through the straw until she has brain freeze. "Ow!"

"Every time!"

"It's tradition." Callie clutches her head with both hands and groans.

Marie laughs at her. "So, what's got you so angry you're throwing scripts?"

Callie closes her eyes. "It's stupid," she mutters. "I should've expected it."

"Don't tell me they made the clown-detective chapter books into a gritty R-rated mess." Marie slurps her milkshake. "That'd be like Fresh Fish in Friday the Eighth."

Callie chuckles. "You say that like Fresh Fish isn't already a murderer." She reaches into her milkshake with her fingers and pulls out a chunk of strawberry. "No, they added a romance between Paddy and Inkzo."

Marie raises her eyebrows. "I'm not surprised. They'll use any excuse to add a romance for mass appeal."

"Not my appeal," Callie snaps. She shakes her milkshake. "And if I don't like it, I know others don't. I thought, I was finally getting a big role without a kiss, and then they shoehorn Paddy in with Inkzo."

She sucks down her milkshake, gulp after gulp, until brainfreeze hits and she has to stop and clutch her head.

Marie watches her. "You spent three months trying to set up Pearl and Marina without realizing they were already dating, so I know you don't have a problem with romance," she says. "And you like kissing—"

"I like mistletoe," Callie protests. "There's a difference." Her head feels better, and she leans back in her chair. "Romance is fine, I guess," she says. "I'd rather have a milkshake. And I really thought I wouldn't have to kiss anyone, it's part of why I took the role. But I hate that there can't be anything without it, and I hate that they ruined perfectly good found family to shove romance in."

Marie takes a sip of her own milkshake. "So, are you going to complain about it, or do something about it?"

Callie smiles.

"We need to talk about the kiss," Callie says, walking straight into Director Hamill's office with a suitcase.

"What about it?" he says. "You're a seasoned actress, it goes with the territory. And this is aimed at kids," he says. "There won't be any tongue."

Callie thanks Cod for small favo—wait, she's getting sidetracked. "The problem," she says, "is you're taking a romance-free franchise aimed at inkblots aged eight-through-twelve and made romance the most important feature. Not the crime investigation, not the zany circus antics. Romance."

"Well, yes," he says. "The romance market is a huge, dominating force. We'd be fools not to play into it."

"Romance fans," she says, "are not the ones who want to watch the clown detective series. Children are. And any fans of the series will be upset to see it ruined like this."

He rolls his eyes. "Adding romance isn't ruining anything, Callie. You're being ridiculous."

"I'm fine with romance," she says. She thinks. "Just not between Paddy and Inkzo."

"The two main characters have plenty of chemistry—"

Callie's used to agent work and dynamos, but it takes both hands to swing her suitcase onto his desk, where it makes a very solid thud and explodes at least one pen. She unzips it with a flourish, revealing books. Many, many books. Not every book in the series, but all the ones Callie owns. "You want this to have long-standing appeal, you wanna stick with the books," she says. She grabs one at random, hoists it up, *The Case of the Red Herring*. "In this one, Paddy calls Inkzo her brother in make-up." She grabs another. "Inkzo refers to Paddy as his sister in wigs."

"I don't see what this has to do with—"

"In the very first book, and this movie's supposed to smash together the first ten, the Clown Cabal has them sign a contract of core values." She opens the book to the appropriate page. "It notes that anyone in the cabal is family, and should be—"

—treated appropriately.”

The director shoves at the suitcase, but isn’t strong enough to move it. Callie rolls her eyes and rezips it before swinging it off. “You think you know better than our script writers? Fine,” he says. “The author didn’t negotiate for right of rejection on the script, so legally I can’t contact her. We’ll start shooting other scenes, and you’ve got a week to convince me of something else.”

A week. Not what Callie hoped for, she was hoping to get rid of the kiss entirely, but it’s her best shot.

CallieOfficial: Hey fans, weird request and I don’t want you to read too much into it.

CallieOfficial: Some of you have asked me why I don’t take advantage of my fame

CallieOfficial: Free tickets to Wahoo World or meals at restaurants or whatever

CallieOfficial: Well, I’m gonna try to take advantage today

CallieOfficial: because my ten-year-old self always wanted to meet Beta Sakana

CallieOfficial: her books were my FAVORITE.

CallieOfficial: anyone out there who can make that happen?

SquidSurfer: Omigod the clown books? I loved those!

InkEater: I got a signed copy from when I was nine.

LuckyLia: They’re part of the reason I learned to juggle.

MarieOfficial: Seriously, Cal? This is your big plan?

ClownCabal: I think I can help you out. DM me.

If you’d told Callie that ClownCabal was actually run by her favorite childhood author, she would’ve laughed at them. As it is, Callie signs autographs for each of her grandsquids and agrees to attend the birthday party on Saturday. And only fansquids a little.

“Honestly, I was surprised to have you seek me out,” Beta says. She pours Callie another mug of tea and puts a plate of fresh baked cookies on the table between them. “I know lots of kids read my stories, but it’s still a surprise to be called a favorite author, and I’ve been a fan of your group for years.”

Callie’s ears twitch and she can feel herself blush. “You have?”

“Absolutely,” Beta says. “I love fresh takes on old things. Calamari Inkantation’s a song as old as ink, it seems, but I don’t think I’d ever heard it remixed, just updated with new instruments or changed to a new key. You and Marie are evolving it right along with us.”

Callie takes a sip of her tea to keep her composure. “Thanks. I loved your stories as a kid—still do. The ideas that you can use the ridiculous to cover up evil just as easily as you can use normal life comes into my mind a lot.” Like whenever she’s with the NSS.

Beta smiles. “I’m glad.”

“I didn’t just come here to get to meet you, though,” Callie admits. “It’s still a secret, but I’ve been cast as Paddy in the upcoming movie, and they’re trying to put her in a romance with Inkzo. I’m trying to figure out how to stop it.”

Beta snorts. “Should’ve expected it, really. Honestly, they should be thankful for the representation.”



Callie frowns. "Representation?"

"When did you stop reading the books?"

Callie thinks back through all her copies. "I think I was on forty-eight or forty-nine when I learned to shift and became too interested in turfing. Not much time to read between that and a singing career." And the NSS.

"And children aren't known for picking up on subtext," she agrees. "You should reread them at some point, Inkzo's downright flirting with the Mime Marauder."

The villain in at least half the books, a key member of the Silent Saboteurs behind most crime in Comedy Land, and the overall villain of the movie. "Oh, that's excellent," she says. The director can set Inkzo up with the villain and leave her alone.

"Of course, they may still try to set Paddy up with someone," Beta says. "Asexuality isn't as easily spotted as other sorts of queerness."

Callie frowns again. "Wait, that's in there?"

"Wouldn't be surprised if you hadn't heard of it." Beta adds sugar to her tea. "Most people see it as celibacy, if they've heard of it at all. She's aromantic as well, look them both up. There's a reason she'd rather watch comedy than romance."

Callie takes a deep breath. "Sex is fine, but I prefer cake to kissing," she says, and swallows. She's not out to many people.

Beta reaches across the table to cover Callie's hand with her own. "You may just be perfect for the role, then."

"It's a big thing," Callie says.

"You're making it bigger than it has to be, Cal."

"I'm not!" Callie spins around and paces the other way. Marie hates when she does this, going up and down the hall like a caged lionfish, but this isn't a conversation they could have outside even if it weren't raining. "Coming out is huge."

"It wasn't huge when it was—"

"I didn't get halfway through the sentence when you told me you knew already, rolled your eyes, and said I wasn't blaming you for the mistletoe." She stops pacing to flop on the couch, where she turns squid and curls up in Marie's lap like Judd. "You were easy. You were safe."

Marie doesn't say anything, doesn't move, and Callie uncurls enough to look up at Marie and see her staring straight ahead, wide-eyed.

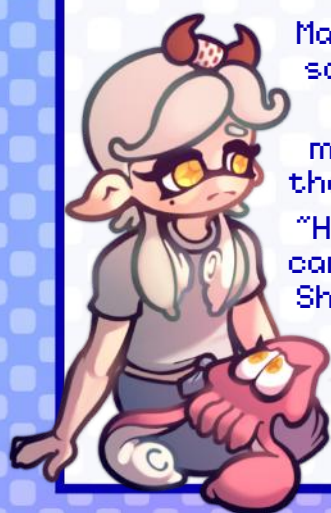
Callie smacks her with a tentacle. "Don't do that! Of course you were safe. You're my sister."

Marie flushes green and runs her hand over Callie's head. "Thanks," she says, coughs, and clears her throat. "It means a lot."

"It was also a lot easier than coming out to gramps," Callie admits. "I explained it, and he just nodded and said he was sure I'd find the one. I don't think he got it."

"He's been asking me if I prefer chocolate or strawberry ever since I came out as bi," Marie says. "He's kinda behind on that. But he cares." She rubs Callie's head again. "Quit changing the subject. You've come out before."

"But it never stops," Callie says. "I'm tired of doing it, every time, all the time. I don't think Deep Cut even knows, I mean, it's not like I walk around going 'Hi, I'm Callie Cuttlefish, singer and actress, and—"



—by the way if I was ranking my favorite activities kissing would be somewhere between bike rides and sky diving?”

Marie snorts. “Oh, you should try that. I wanna know the full tier list.”

“I’m serious,” Callie says. “It’s worse because there’s no one to point at. Everyone knows Marina and Pearl are gay, like they knew Gentleman Googoo was gay, and there’s lots of press whenever a trans person is hired for a trans role. I don’t exactly have anyone to look to for how to be aro, and even queer spaces expect you to always be ace along with it!” She covers her face with her tentacles and presses herself further against Marie.

“No,” Marie says. “But you could be the example.”

Callie considers that for a moment. Be the example...

“Hundreds of people already look up to you for being an awesome singer, and actress, and peppy fun personality,” Marie adds. “Why not add something else to that?”

“Some people may hate me,” she mutters.

“So?” She strokes Callie’s head again. “Some people will do that no matter what. Just like they hate me for stupid squirt. First rule, remember. Don’t read the comments.”

Callie knows.

“And if it’ll help, I’ll start doing a queer day on my podcast,” Marie says. “I do ten episodes a month, making one episode about gender issues would give me more material.”

Marie’s helping her, again. She takes a deep breath and uncovers her eyes. “I can do this,” she says.

“Course you can,” Marie says. “You’re Callie.”

Unexpectedly Queer Clown Cabal

Callie Cuttlefish’s ARO To The Bullseye!

What’s the A in LGBTQIA? It Sure Ain’t Ally—Just Ask Callie!

Opening Night doesn’t involve the red carpet, but this still feels big. Callie takes a deep breath and studies herself in the mirror.

Pink dress with black sequins, the reverse of her Squid Sister’s outfit but longer, with a sheer black cropped sweater covering her arms and back. Marie’s in a matching outfit beside her, as her ‘date’, because Callie can’t imagine doing this without her.

Marie nudges her with one elbow. “You ready?”

Callie opens the bottom drawer of her jewelry box. A number of earrings, each just big enough to be noticed, greets her. She pulls out two different ones. A flag, green jade white gray black. And an arrow, just to drive the point.

Her.

Marie reaches past her, grabs her two earrings, and does the same.

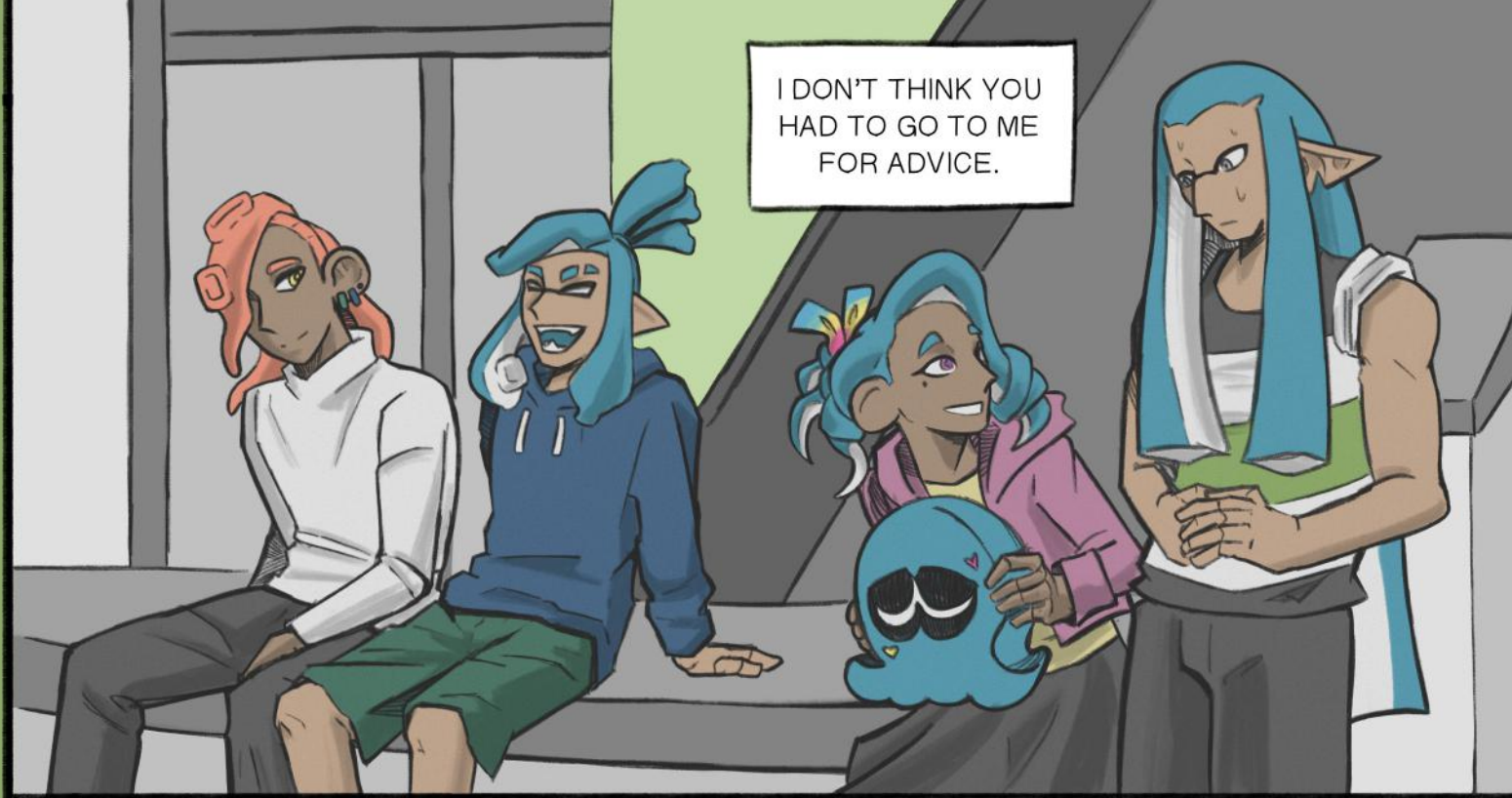
“Yeah,” Callie says. She takes a deep breath and lets it out, loosening her shoulders. “I’m ready.”

>_Fin.



MVI 2VMI





I DON'T THINK YOU
HAD TO GO TO ME
FOR ADVICE.



THEY ALREADY LOVED YOU.



AH...WHATEVER.

I'M GLAD I WAS ABLE
TO HELP.



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HEY, DAN?

YOU ALMOST DONE IN
THERE? I NEED TO TAKE
A SHOWER-



UM- I WON'T LOOK IF
YOU'RE NOT DONE-

I-I MEAN- I DON'T
REALLY CARE IF I
SAW YOU NAKED OR
WHATEVER, NOT THAT
IT WOULD-



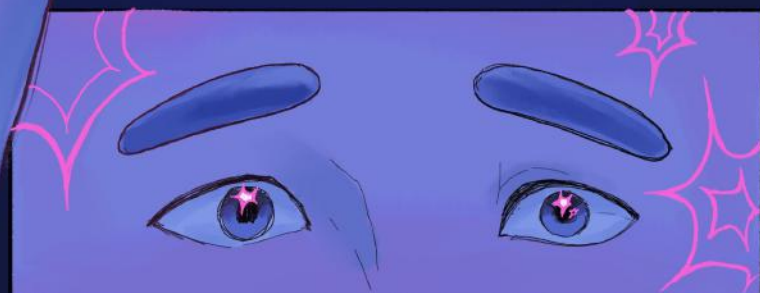
REALLY-

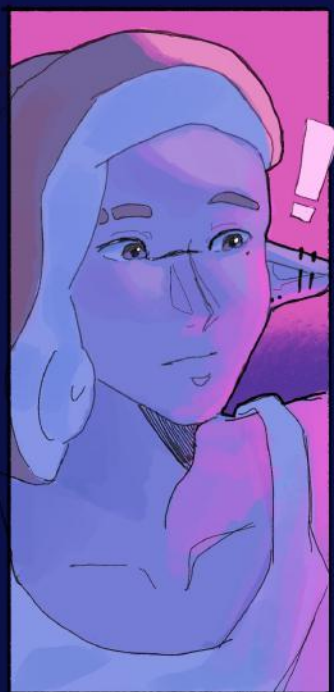


CHANGE-



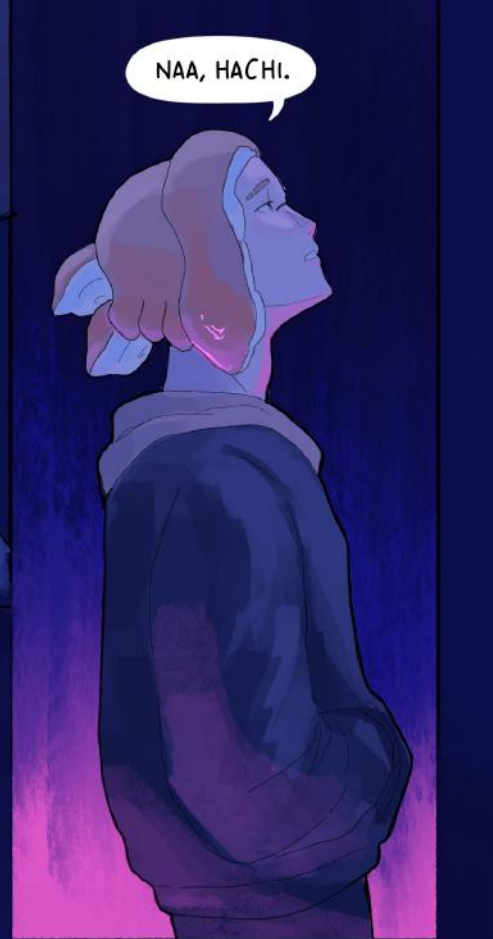
-ANYTHING...







NAA, HACHI.



DOES THIS CHANGE ANYTHING FOR YOU?

SOMEWHERE DEEP INSIDE, YOU'RE STILL PROBABLY GOING TO BE CONSCIOUS OF IT.

NOTHING COULD EVER BE THE SAME. PART OF YOU WILL ALWAYS KNOW IT, NO MATTER HOW KINDLY YOU TREAT IT...

AND I HATE IT. BECAUSE OF THAT KINDNESS. YOU'D TRY TO MAKE ME FEEL LIKE NOTHING CHANGED, BUT YOU DON'T TRULY BELIEVE THAT INSIDE.

DO YOU CARE THAT I'M NOT THE GUY YOU PROBABLY THOUGHT I WAS?

I- I KNOW YOU'RE NOT THE KIND TO HOLD ANYTHING AGAINST SOMEBODY LIKE ME. IT'S JUST...

YOU EVEN SAID THAT EARLIER. AND THEN YOU LOOKED AT ME WITH THOSE EYES, TRIED TO ASSURE ME. IT'S PROOF OF THAT.



...THAT YOU THINK IM DIFFERENT NOW. TAINTED WITH SOMETHING STRANGE. THAT PERFECT IMAGE OF ME THAT I TRIED TO GIVE YOU IS NOW RUINED.

YOU CAN NEVER SEE ME THE SAME WAY YOU DID BEFORE, RIGHT?

I'M SCARED, HONESTLY. EVEN IF YOU TRY TO ACCEPT IT, YOU WON'T LOVE ME THE SAME WAY YOU USED TO.

I'M RIGHT, AREN'T I..?

I NEVER WANTED TO TELL YOU. OR FOR YOU TO FIND OUT. I PASS WELL ENOUGH ANYWAYS-





I- I WOULD BE LYING IF I SAID IT DIDN'T CHANGE ANYTHING. BUT- BUT IT NEVER MADE ME LOVE YOU ANY LESS. I LOVE YOU MORE THAN EVER- I WANT TO KNOW EVERY LAST BIT OF YOU-

YOU SHOULD KNOW YOU'RE SAFE WITH ME, AND I NEVER WANT YOU TO FEEL LIKE YOU NEED TO PRETEND TO BE SOMEBODY ELSE IN FRONT OF ME.

I WAS SURPRISED- NOT BECAUSE I THOUGHT IT WAS STRANGE, OR ANY BULLSHIT LIKE THAT- BUT BECAUSE YOU HADN'T TRUSTED ME WITH IT EARLIER.

I'M HERE TO TALK TO YOU. TO LISTEN. TO ACCEPT ANY FACT OF YOU, ANY HARD TRUTH, ANY SECRET. I WANT YOU TO HAVE ME AS A SHOULDER TO LEAN ON. A HAND TO HOLD.

AND I NEVER- EVER- WANT YOU TO THINK THAT YOU'LL LOSE MY LOVE JUST BECAUSE OF WHO YOU ARE. I LOVE YOU. I LOVE THIS YOU, THE REAL AND TRUE YOU. YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL AS YOU ARE.

I PROMISE YOU THAT.

> when the tide rolls over, stay by my side

By keru_kel

Trigger Warning for: Implied Suicide Attempt, Implied Child Abuse

Last Edited: 6/24/24 | Collapse?

What don't you know about me by now?

...A lot. What am I even saying?

Today, I unlocked one of those secrets for you. I watched with crystal tears as my frame cracked in front of you, shattering into uncountable pieces. An image of me destroyed. You know. Because you walked into the bathroom by accident.

And that's what you wanted. You told me to not keep a single thing from you. And I trust you with those fragile facts, that if they slipped from the delicate threads of whispers between our minds, would lead to my ruin.

Ah. I'm being poetic. Or whatever. You're better at writing than me, aren't you? You're a lyricist, after all. I sound really fucking stupid.

It's been a while since I wrote something. Journaling. One of the many, many secrets I'll keep locked somewhere with the key tossed away. You'll probably never see this, and thank God you won't.

I love you, and that's a truth. But that feeling isn't exclusive.

Because what IF I was mad at you today for that? So maybe *you* made a mistake to do that, and it was *my* bad for not locking the door or telling you to leave, and it was *my* fault for deciding to do it here, but why am I blaming myself? Why do I break myself for you? And why, tell me WHY do you act so nice about it? Why should such a kind gesture make me want to puke? And if you don't bring it up at all, why does that make me nauseous?

I just want to fucking be normal and leave this fact about me somewhere in the trash where I told you. It matters so little, yet so much.

Dimmed lights will hopefully conceal his secrets. Phone to the lowest brightness, curled up under the covers on the left side of the bed. Well, mattress on the floor. A common stance for him since he arrived at Hachi's apartment months prior. The thin cotton of the pillow casing underneath his head is dampened with tears (and probably snot), and it's gross and slides on his cheek, but why would he care? They're empty bodily fluids with nothing to say anymore, because any of those tears were long since emptied of emotion.

That was... three hours ago. Outside next to the garbage. How fitting for his emotions at the time.

The tips of letters poke out from the bottom of his screen. An "L", an "E". Then five numbers.

Last Edited: 6/23/23. View?

...A distraction would be nice, whatever the hell this is.

He swipes up on the cracked glass of his screen protector, skin picking up the ridges of the cracks.

Time is an illusion.

Last Edited: 6/23/23 | Collapse?

I'm not really ready to say goodbye, but I don't think anybody ever is.

I'm gonna miss the team's apartment, as much of a pigsty as it was. I liked eating instant ramen at 1 AM on paper plates that we forgot to even throw away. Chugging energy drinks (and that one time where we took shots and all threw up) and playing Splat Bros and yelling at each other that we were cheating (even though none of us know how to jailbreak a console. If anybody it'd be me from the half a year I took of comp sci courses. I didn't really pay attention though, and if you're about to say I wasted money, it was free. Community college.), waking up at 5 AM to go to practice together... Okay, maybe not that last one. Hirono was always the one to wake us all up. He's really the life of the party- or team- party's also a synonym- I need to stop adding tangents- got us up and going.

I'll miss him the most out of everybody. I feel bad. I didn't mean for this to really be a "breakup" sort of scenario, and it really wasn't for either of us. He took it really well, and it was a mutual thing. And I'm okay with that.

He's been with me for over 8 years by now... But who's to say a friend can't be as close? It's not a label that counts. It's the bond we have.

I've got his number, and I've kinda been spamming him since I got on the shinkansen. The view is nice, and it looks like we'll be in touch.

...I still can't help but miss his warmth. That one thing I had before anything.

..Pg 1 | 2 | 3

Last Edited: 6/22/18. View?

Last Edited: 6/21/14 | Collapse?

I finally moved out. I'm really so fucking relieved that they lowered the age of emancipation to 16. That's a really long phrase, but I forgot the shorter version of it, so it's whatever.

I didn't really have much to bring with me, to be honest? Me and Hirono have been decorating our team's apartment, and I already slept there half of the time anyways. I didn't have much to bring except my meds, blanket, and pillow. And a couple copies of the Shonen Superjump. I've been collecting them for a while under my bed.

I *thinkkk* the last thing I have to do now is get my legal name changed? That's gonna be a pain in the ass. I'm gonna have to get all of my records reissued, my credit card, my ID, but it's better than nothing.

██████ That's what they called me before. I don't know how they chose the name.

Supposedly, it means "straight and beautiful"? Really fucking ironic, but who am I to talk? My life's been one big satire that I'm actually starting to turn around now. I think, at least.

...It was gender neutral. I checked online. I don't like it either way.

...What I hate, more than anything about it, is just because it's a reminder of the prison of the old life I was in. Sneaking in and out: breaking out, arguing with my parents: fights with the wardens. I guess the one difference was the food.

I wish they liked me more. Or accepted this. Because then I'd still have that warmth in my stomach to carry with me, and it wouldn't feel so *rotten*.

Whatever.

Fuck, and then surgery and HRT. I really hope insurance pays for that, because then I'll be paying out of pocket, and I dunno if the rest of the team's gonna be so happy with me taking a huge cut just to fund my surgery. Big deal, Hirono will probably vouch for me. But that's in two years. Ish.

...Pg 1 | 2 | 3...

Last Edited: 6/20/12 | Collapse?

I really need to stop trying to tell my parents. They keep forgetting (as if they even cared in the first place) and they always end up yelling. I think it's been like six times now, and not a single time has stuck. Even if we had full blown arguments. I'm lucky that they haven't belted me or some shit like that, but then I'd be able to tell somebody. It sucks. I went to the hospital a couple days later. Why do I care so badly about what they think?

I've been back for at least two months now? They always discharge me after like a week. Or so. I asked Hirono to get me a binder since he already has a debit card (Lucky. His mom seems pretty chill.) and I ended up trying it out in the school bathroom. Pain in the ass to put on, but it's better than two sports bras together. Breathing sucks either way, but what can you do? Nothing. I keep it in his room and wash it in the sink, and luckily his mom doesn't care. Even when I sneak in through his window. Climbing up to his apartment also sucks, though, and my mom always asks me why my hands are scraped. I just tell her I fell on the sidewalk.

I don't know if she believes me.

...Pg 1 | 2 | 3...

Last Edited: 6/19/12 | Collapse?

Hirono helped me cut my hair yesterday. Only an undercut, because my parents would kill me. It still looks as ugly as usual, but he tried his best and we laughed a bunch about it. He'd make a better hairdresser than me if anything. I really wanna get a side part with one side shaved— it's basic, but I kinda like it to be honest. It'd probably work well with the hair I already have, anyways. A dumb bob haircut. I used to wear ponytails because they were practical, I guess. And my mom liked them on me. The hair ties with little accents were cute. The pearls and the thin ribbon bows were my favorites. I hated the stupid ones with the wooden balls though. I don't know who thought those were a good idea, because they were really, really damn ugly.

They don't really fit me anymore. My mom was okay with me cutting my hair shorter, but I'm still in the same place as I was before. If not, lower.

Last Edited: 2/18/12 | Collapse?

I don't know what to tell them, because I don't know if I even have a reason about why I'm about to do this. I don't know anymore. Everything feels so wrong. I feel wrong. There's something inherently incorrect about me, like anything divided by zero. Undefined. Not possible.

I hope mom liked spending those hundreds of dollars on math courses for me, because she won't have to spend anything else for me. I'll be gone in the blink of an eye.



I don't care if I'm young. If I'm "only 13". Take me seriously for once.
The one person I trust to find this, Hirono.
When the tide rolls over, don't forget me.
Stay by my side.

"...Hey, Dan?"

The door slightly creaks as it slides open, a sliver of golden light slicing through the darkness. It's blinding.

He's shaking. The tears are back, the color of his emotions *undefined, divided by zero*. Sunken into the mattress with the weight of the world, *lower than ever. Unable to breathe*. Who is he now, back years and years of progress, heart heavy with his own words? *A child's*, of all?

Hachi hadn't broken him, the question hadn't broken him. He was already broken from the start.

"...I'm... really sorry. About barging in earlier. I didn't- I-..."

A soft sigh sounds from the other side of the door, and Danji is just barely keeping his unsteady breath quiet underneath the covers, nose suffocating him with mucus, face wet and salted tears slipping past the crack in his lips.

"...I- I think I forced you to tell me. I feel bad, because the minute I saw those tears, I immediately knew I did something wrong. Everything I said and say now- I really mean it- but I want-"

His voice.

"...I want you to trust me. I want to know how you feel, because those emotions are real. They're defined, even as messy as they are.

I want to stay by your side."

Last Edited: 6/31/24 | Collapse?

As I am who I was before, and always will be, as I change.
Stay by my side, as the tide rolls over.

>_Fin.





✂ Digital Merch

```
> printables.exe
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> [zabobzionek's Pride Printable Bookmarks](#)



> Sercate's Pride Bookmark



+9 More Flags

> printables.exe



> Nullafic's NovaSpark Papercraft Dolls



> emotes.exe



> Thirteen's Color-Chip Emotes

> Sercate's Pride Character Emotes

+4 More Flags



> Digital Merch (co

> icons.exe

> Emcar555's Melty
Pride Flag Icon Frames



+10 More Flags

> ZabobzioneK's
Pr(idol) Icons



+5 More Flags
(Per Idol)



> Monicracar's
Be Who U Are
Icons

nt.)

stickers.exe



> Belle's Character Pronoun Stickers



banners.exe



Rainbow
Squids + Octos
Banner

> Wwraithsart's Banners



Hagglegfish
Banner



> Glibbrybry's
'Concert Lights'
Banner

> Digital Merch (co

> wallpapers.exe

> Yuri's Pearling
Phone Wallpaper



> Perifrog's
"Finally He"
Wallpaper



> Ser
Spec
Comp

> All
ava
alor



nt.)



cate's
trum Obligato
outer Wallpaper

digital merch is
ilable for download
ing with this booklet!

> Afterword

After over six months of hard work from our moderation team and our contributors: We are so, so happy to present the culmination of our team's efforts! Our contributors especially poured their whole hearts into their pieces, and made such beautiful works that truly spoke to their individual experiences as members of the queer community.

Of course, with all of our moderators also being a part of the LGBTQ+ community—we really appreciate your immense patience, and kindness as we worked together on this project. More than anything, we hope you were able to feel safe and heard as you stood up to make a say alongside us—whether through your art, or support.

We understand that the modern day is getting harder, and scarier for our community— all around the world, with new policies, legislation, and hatred spreading against the LGBTQIA+ community. However, from the start— we have always had a history of fighting for our rights and recognition as a whole. From the Stonewall riots in New York, to the solidarity the gay and lesbian communities showed during the AIDS crisis— even to today, as legislation grows stricter around our people— we will show resilience, and make our voices heard. We hope that this zine is an example of this type of resilience.

The Splatoon community, even in its short-lived presence, has tended to be a safe space for queer people. There's something about the message of the game itself—The idea of self expression. Letting oneself be who they want, with no defined boundaries, even as messy as those expressions can be— that tends to attract us. As Marina said— "Sometimes when colors clash and mix, you end up with mud. But every now and then, you get to see a beautiful rainbow!" Of course, the queer section of the Splatoon community being one of those rainbows. (As well as the flag, no pun intended). We've fostered a beautiful, warm, and celebratory space dedicated to our people.

However, even in communities like this, there are always people out there who don't agree. There's people you'll encounter who will push you down just for being who you are, who will make you believe that there's something wrong with you, or that you're not valid. Even as deep as these words can sting, sear into your skin, the resilience you show will always come to push up and against discrimination. Healing those wounds may be hard, but as we've discovered, it's always possible with enough time, support, and reflection. We're called a community for a reason— a place to hold others up in times of hardship.

Splatoon-related or not, we are proud to present a project that amplifies queer stories and voices from today. Keep fighting, no matter how hard it seems. We will, and have always, persevered in the face of oppression. Protect trans kids, and keep showing your pride.

– Sincerely,

The Spectrum Obligato Mod Team



From Kel- the host- I thank everybody who participated in the creation of this zine tenfold. In our current day and age, the social and political landscape of our world continues to change surrounding the LGBTQIA+ community, and it's more important now than ever that we continue to show our strength and resilience as a community. To be completely honest, I've nearly been brought to tears several times reading through our submissions. As a trans-masc guy who's been through a lot of discrimination (and even during the creation period of this zine specifically), seeing such beautiful work surrounding queer identities has been so, *so* heartwarming and truly reminds me that I'm not alone.

- Kel | Host and Formatter

What a zine to host! Truly, I've met a lot of wonderful faces and learned about so many experiences and identities. Here's to more! Celebrate who you are, always and forever. Protect trans kids, trans rights, happy pride—and much love!

- Kai | Co-host

The conflict between me and my gender is one if not the most pivotal parts that make me who I am as a person. Seeing so many people express this through their art and transform it into a beautiful experience rather than a conflict has been a highlight of this zine. Your unique differences are what your pride is based on! Never let anyone tell you otherwise, and make yourself be seen.

- Mag | General Assistance

Thank you all so much for coming together on this project. The chance to represent my own experience has meant a lot to me. I hope that you feel that you have gotten that chance as well – the space be seen, accepted and celebrated. Trans people, gay people, intersex people, LGBTQ+ people have always been here, and will always be here. Happy pride everyone!

- Erik | Art Mod

Given the current state of the world, it's heartwarming seeing so many people come together for a project that's so personal for many of us. Thank you all, from the bottom of my heart, for helping create and foster such a wonderful and supportive community. When things are as scary as they are now, community is the most important thing for us to have. Keep each other safe, and keep fighting for what's right! <3

- Emcar | Intern Mod

It makes me so happy to see this many people all coming together to express themselves. I've always hated hiding my true self, but given that I live in a part of the US that generally isn't particularly fond of the gays, being out of the closet in public (especially recently) is basically equivalent to putting a target on my back. Because of this, having this place where I can openly be myself with so many of my fellow queers has been such a huge help for me these past several months. I even figured out some new things about my own identity too! Happy Pride, and keep looking out for each other y'all, we're stronger when we're together!

- Belle | Organizational Mod

> Contributor Cre Page Artists



> Kraken 🐙

(Pgs. 4-5)

Happy Pride Everyone! 🌈 Celebrate with the ones who see you fully and love you anyway – you don't owe anyone a label or an explanation to be who you are, and want to be. Stay Strong!

🦋 @Krakentrash.bsky.social

📷 @KarenKm.Art

X @KrakenTrash



> Gummy

(Pg. 6)

he saki on my maru tili skmr

X **t** @Gummymela

📷 @Gummimela



> Hol

(Pg. 7)

my cosi-ganda com
pride month

🦋 @holfrisky.k



> kn0xx

(Pg. 13)

Y'all means all

📷 🦋 @kaz0uul



> Pearl

(Pgs. 14-15)

Splatoon helped me realize who I was & finally accept myself. I love this game with all my heart & I'm super happy to be a part of this!

X @kosirenn_

🦋 📷 @kosirenn



> YourLoc

(Pg. 19)

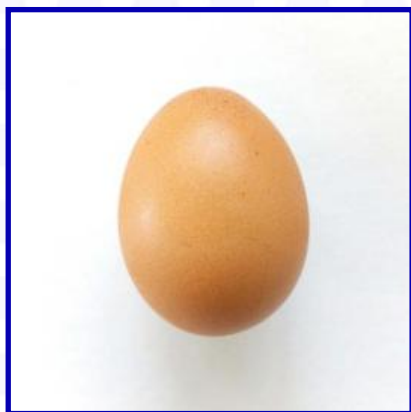
I love GAY INKFISH!!! I
pride flags

🦋 🏠 @Yourlococ

credits:



continues ♥ happy
bsky.social



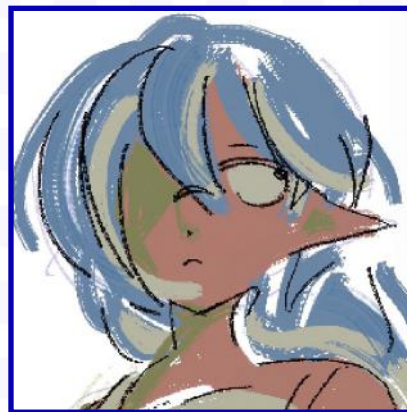
> Eggtaku

(Pgs. 8-9, 91)

When life gives you eggs... Plagiarize another popular quote, and make egg juice!

X @Egggggtaku

🦋 @eggtaku.bsky.social



> Lumi

(Pg. 12)

i had so much fun drawing for this zine!! much love to both the mods and contributors, and thank you for the opportunity to draw my squid kids!!!

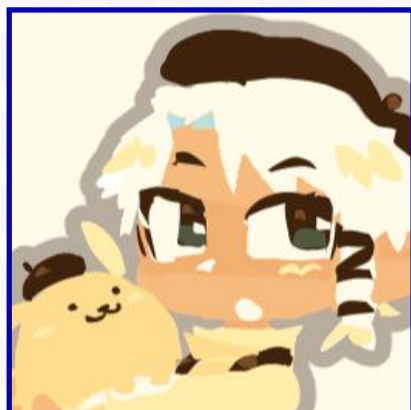
🦋 @lumamintz



> Vice

Wish them many

alferris



> Vice

(Pgs. 20-21)

There's a lot to always say about being queer/lgbtq+, even more to just being a person! Glad to share part of mine, and always remember to be strong!

X t @viyojo



> Juno

(Pg. 22)

Happy Pride!! I can't believe making YAR-Ruhal into a butch lesbian is what finally got me invested in the Splatoon 3 promotional characters... right at the end of the game's regular update cycle. But that just means more gay cephalopods :)

X t 🦋 @jsketch12

> Contributor Creators Page Artists / Icons



> ghosthoodie

(Pg. 27)

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to draw yuri for a project! ^_^

@ghosthoodie



> Pamhay

(Pg. 28)

Do the things out of love; make that feeling in your heart your way to anything! because loving is worth doing, even incorrectly, over and over again. Be kind, be considerate, be free! & BE YOURSELF! You're worth it. There is no connection without an open heart, you must be brave! You must be honest! You must be true! Someday someone is gonna be so soft and gentle with your heart, you're gonna be so glad you kept it open, you're gonna wonder why you ever thought about quieting it down.

@PamhayKyuzo



> saltyyy

(Pgs. 29-36)

YURI!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

@saltyyy



> Kale Chip

(Pg. 46)

Happy pride month to all my fellow gay sea creature enjoyers <3

@seafoodchip
 @semisentientseafood



> palmer

(Pg. 47)

we're cosmically connected ☆

@palmrts
 @palmrts.bsky.social



> malo!?

(Pgs. 48-49)

we're galactically in

@gho

Credits:



yyy

yako



> Astrallum

(Pg. 37)

Always be true to yourself and shine bright!w

X   @astrallum
@astrallum_art



> crow

(Pgs. 38-39)

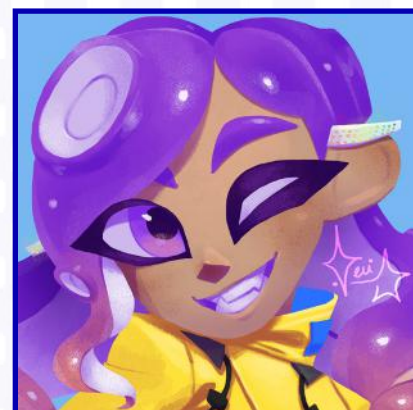
I'm so happy to have worked on this zine, so colorful and lovely. I hope us queers stay strong no matter what.

X   @cephalocrow



ntertwined ★

ulfoxx



> Lily Sevilla

(Pgs. 50-53)

We are together in this constant fight to thrive more each new day. Let's help the newer generations feel more safe, the same way our past generations did for us today.

 @lily.sevilla
 @lilysevilla.bsky.social
X @LilySevilla3



> Beel0ver

(Pg. 55)

So honored to have been able to work with so many wonderful people :) Also I put myself and my partner's sonas on my piece so if you saw us and you liked it you're gay now, by proxy, happy pride!!

 @iamundonewithoutyou

> Contributor Creators

Pride Artists

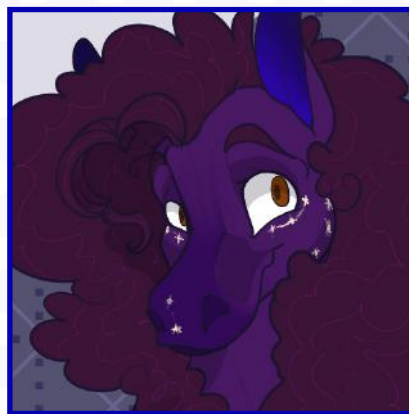


> May Bee

(Pg. 59)

Whatever your colours are, they're beautiful. YOU'RE beautiful. And I hope that you get to celebrate your pride however you want. Have fun, smile a lot, and have a good time! - May.

🦋 **t** @humming-bee-art
X @humming_bee_art



> go956

(Pgs. 60-62)

I was a bit nervous to share my own experience, scared of peoples reactions, but I am proud of who I am.

🦋 @gogogo956.bsky.social
X @gogogo956



> Pogriff

(Pgs. 64-65)

Happy pride!

🦋 @pogriff.bs



> Luna

(Pg. 79)

Hello! I just wanted to say it was a pleasure to work on this with everyone! All of yall did so well!

🦋 **@Lulumischief**
X @Lunarmischief



> Tuyet

(Pgs. 80-83)

Completely misunderstood pride month. Who wants to buy 15 lion heads

🦋 @typotripprr



> Moji

(Pg. 84)

Be kind to one another. A little time to chase

🦋 **@mojihouse**
🦋 @MojihouseE

credits:



> ibihcton

(Pgs. 72-73)

This was such a fun project to do and I'm so happy to be able to share a bit of lesbian history as a lesbian myself! ^^

📷 X @ibihcton



> Rocket

(Pgs. 74-78)

oh yeah gay ptide

X 🦋 @Womphee



> SH4DYC4P

(Pg. 85)

Kiss your freelancers goodnight (on the mouth)

X @Sh4dyc4p
t @sh4dyc4p

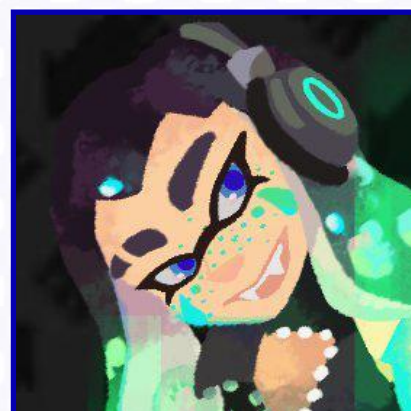


> Dew

(Pg. 86)

Hi! I'm Dew, a pansexual tboy artist who has been obsessed with Splatoon for over 4 years... I'm so lucky to get to be part of this! <3 Happy Pride, everyone! Never let anyone tell you who you are!

X @DewsDrawings
🦋 @dewsdrawings.bsky.social



> Contributor Creators Page Artists (Cont)



> Potator

(Pgs. 92-94)

Happy pride month!

✈ **t** @anfries
✈ @anfriesdoodles



> Evan

(Pg. 95)

This has been such an interesting experience! This was one of my first zines ever, and has taught me a lot about working in a project with so many people and moving parts!! I appreciated the opportunity and experience!!! Also happy pride. <333

t ✈ @dogsm00thie
@ @caninecuspid



> Rudow

(Pgs. 96-101)

OUGH this was a good about gendervoid id someone else will rel understand themse

✈ **t** ✈ @Rudow



> marmas

(Pg. 110)

Keep your faith in lov

@ **t** ✈ @mar

credits:



and opportunity to talk
identity and hopefully
ate to my comic and
if better so YIPPEE
lowruda



> Willowkatts

(Pg. 107)

Thank you so much for letting me
have the opportunity to join this
amazing zine!! LETS GO LESBIANS!!!

X @WillowKatts

🦋 @willowkatts.bsky.social



> Ai

(Pgs. 108-109)

The LionFish crumbs in the background.
Never go to Grim for love advice. (-kel
I agree with lionfish i love lionfish GR-
GAGRHGRA)

📷 @_decentai_

t 🦋 @decentai



stry

el!!!

mastry

> Contributor Cre Writers



> Azure

(Pgs. 10-11)

Given Splatoon's themes of color, art and punk culture, I feel it's only natural that it's drawn a large queer audience. Don't let anyone stop you from showing off your natural hues, everyone! BOOYAH!

✂ @AzureMist

t @artsy-azure

✂ @artsyazure.bsky.social



> creeperkun

(Pgs. 16-18)

Hi! I just really love Mr. Grizz

t @schezopuyopuyo



> underFlo

(Pgs. 23-26)

This is my first zine, and out with! Everyone else's are absolutely amazing, included here with my own story.

✂ @underflores

t @nonepizzal

✂ @underFlores



> LPSvsS

(Pgs. 66-71)

They put crystals in the water that turned the cephalopods gay. Thanks for reading y'all! Have a great pride, and remember to support your fellow queerfolk :o

✂ @LPSvsS



> Dizzy

(Pgs. 87-90)

Let's see how far w we'll go, and who we'll go, and who we'll go, good Pride and know alone in this vast co

✂ @Dizzyuniver

✂ @VeryDizzy

Credits:



Prevalence

A great one to start with contributions for this and I'm so proud to be in an experimental little

Prevalence.bsky.social
Leftgirl
Prevalence



> ColourfulVoid (Pgs. 40-45)

This fic is really personal to me, and I hope you all enjoy it! Happy pride, and may your joy be shared with all the family in your life, no matter what shape!

🦋 ✂ @ColourfulVoid
t @Voids-Colourful-Creations



> Renewed Horizon Pfp by @kable_is_drawing (Pgs. 56-58)

This has been an unparalleled experience! Seeing everyone give their all everyday these past few months has been nothing short of magical so I just wanna thank you beautiful queers one last time!

🦋 ✂ @RenewedHorizon



we've come, where
ll meet. Have a
you're never
community.

erse



> EikaPrime (Pgs. 102-106)

Man, I put Callie through so much squit, but as long as she's got friends and family to support her she'll always bounce back. Remember everyone: the Squid Sisters love you for who YOU are!

t ✂ @EikaPrime

> Contributor Cre Merch Artists



> SerCate (Pgs. 122, 123, 127)

It was a real pleasure to work on the Spectrum Obligator! It was my very first zine and the experience was truly amazing. I hope to take part in more in the future! I had to keep my entire pitch and drawings hidden because my parents aren't very supportive of all this. That's why it's so important for us to stick together and proudly show the world our true colors. Love should win, not silence. Together, we can make a difference. Be proud of who you are, and stay safe, everyone! ^^

Instagram: @serc.art
Twitter: @appsplat



> zabobzionek (Pgs. 122, 124)

It's been such an honor to prepare something for this zine as I'm also a part of the queer community. I had a lot of fun working on all these icons and bookmarks, and I hope you find these useful! Feel free to tag me if you use the icons or post photos with these lovely bookmarks printed out, I'd love to see them all <3 Live loud, stand proud and happy pride!

Twitter: @zabobzionek



> Nullafic (Pg. 123)

"happy gay month cuz"

Twitter: @Nullafic



> Wraiths (Pg. 125)

I had a blast working with everyone on this zine, thanks for having me!

Twitter: @wwraithsart

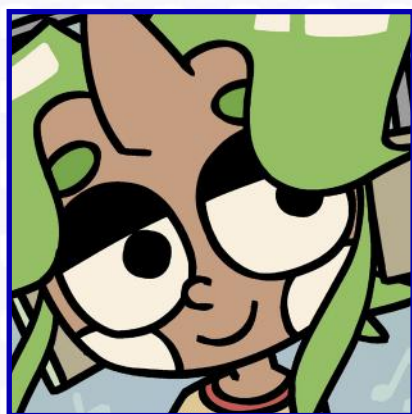


> Gibbrybry (Pg. 125)

Live, laugh, splat, happy pride month to all inklings, octolings, urchins, and sea-be-ings!!

Instagram: @gibbrybry

credits:



> Thirteen

(Pg. 123)

z you gay and stuff~

~What? A kaleidoscope? I'm not five~

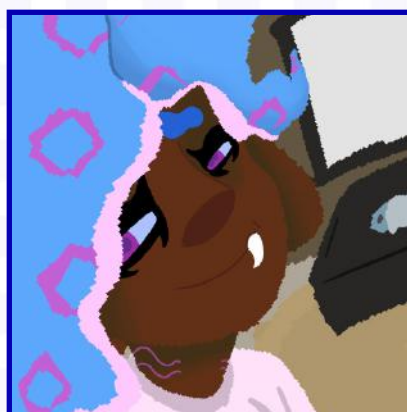
🦋 X 📷 @nopstixx

> Moni

(Pg. 124)

If I tell you guys I get my gender from the phone will yall believe it? (it is very true!) Seriously thou, Mr. Grizz represents my sexuality (Bi) and Tartar represents my identity (Agender) and that is why I must create icon for both of them. I hope you guys can be who you are for every pride month! 🌈

🦋 📷 t @monicacac



> Yuri

(Pg. 126)

happy pride everynyan wonderhoy

🦋 @waaaku.draws.pics

📷 @waaaku

> Perifrog

(Pg. 126)

Delivered by yours truly...

X 🦋 🏠 @perifrog

> Mod Team



> Kel

Host + Formatter

Page Artist + Writer (Pgs. 111-121)

hachidan zine (pgs. 52, 58, 81, 105, 110-119, 121, 125) i love hachidan propaganda anyways hachidan say gex or something. protect trans kids <3

X @keru_kel

🦋 @kerukel.bsky.social



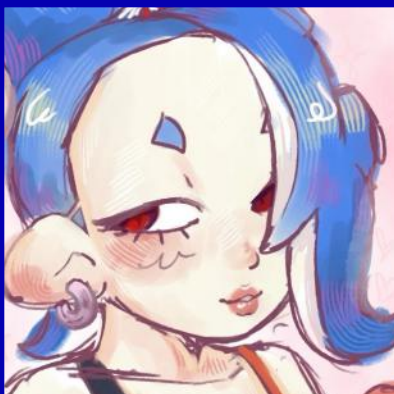
> Kai

Co-host

Page Artist (Pg. 54)

Blackhole propaganda in your face. Once day they'll take over the world and you'll know their names. Just you wait. Say Gex.

🦋 X @Kailerooni



> Avery

Art Mod

X @mayona1se

🦋 @mayona1se.bsky.social



> Belle

Organizational Mod

Merch (Pg. 125)

think fast! *chucks my gay cephalopods directly at your face*

🦋 X t @AearaBelle



> Mag

General Assistance

PEARLINA IS LOVE PEARLINA IS LIFE LIVE LAUGH LOVE PEARLINA I LOVE WOM-
EN AND THEY/THEMS

📷 @such._mag

✂ @such._mag

🦋 @mgco3.bsky.social



> Emcar

Intern Mod

Merch Artist (Pg. 124)

I was crazy once. Until they locked me in a room. A rubber room. A rub-
ber room filled with gay squids. And gay squids make me cra- *shot*

🦋 ✂ @emcar555



> Erik

Art Mod

Page Artist (Pg. 63)

Splatoon lore and headcanons insanity. Stained and Bleached Spla-
toon fancomic 2025 new leak real lore unlocked caught in 4K. Ugh
something about Pride.

🦋 @generiksquid



> Ari

Writing Mod

this zine, too, is yuri

🦋 @squidkidnerd

t @violestar24

Thank you so much
for reading!

