

# ZTV UNDEAD EMPIRE

ISSUE #0

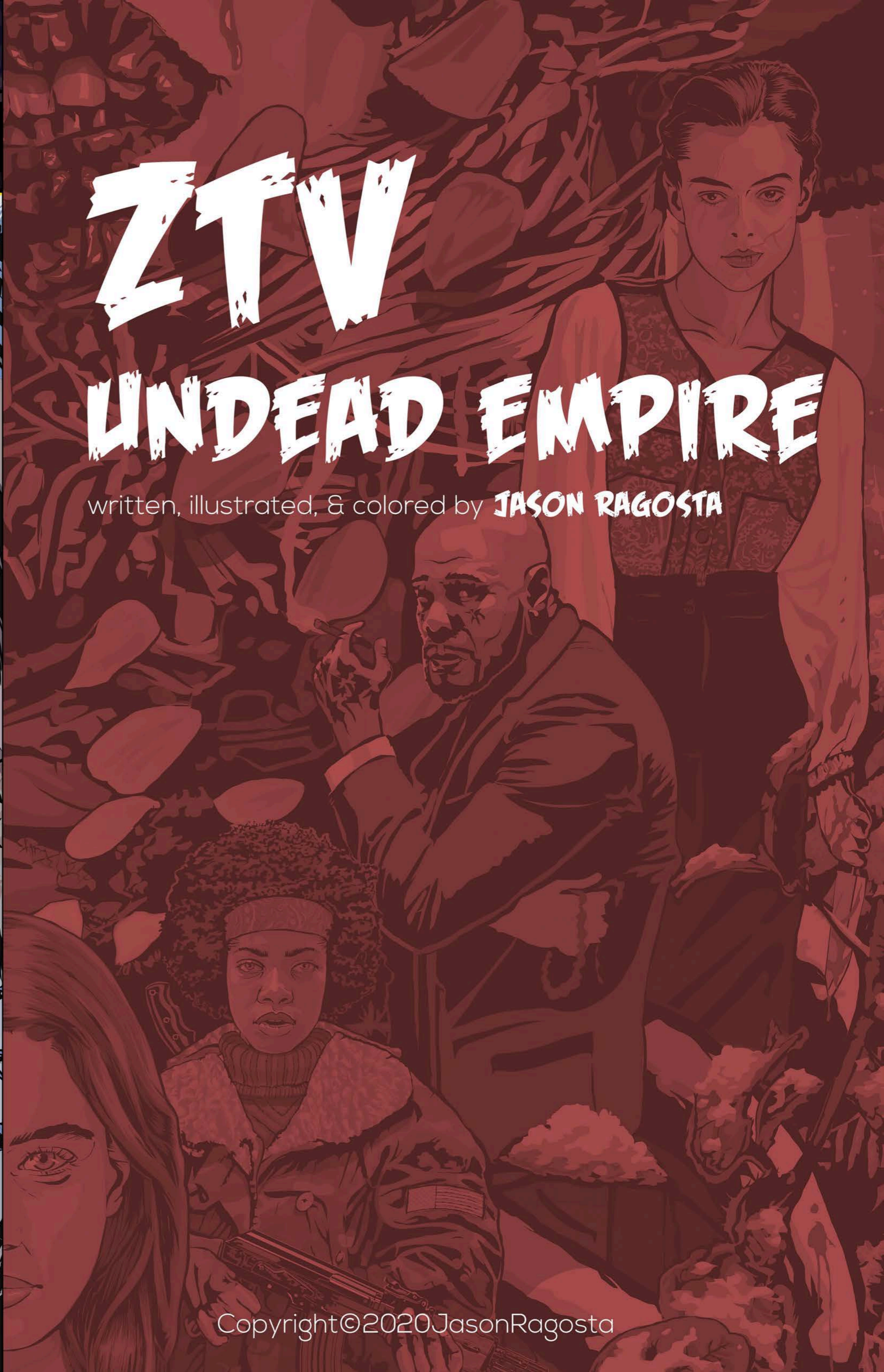


JASON RAGOSTA

# ZTV

# UNDEAD EMPIRE

written, illustrated, & colored by JASON RAGOSTA



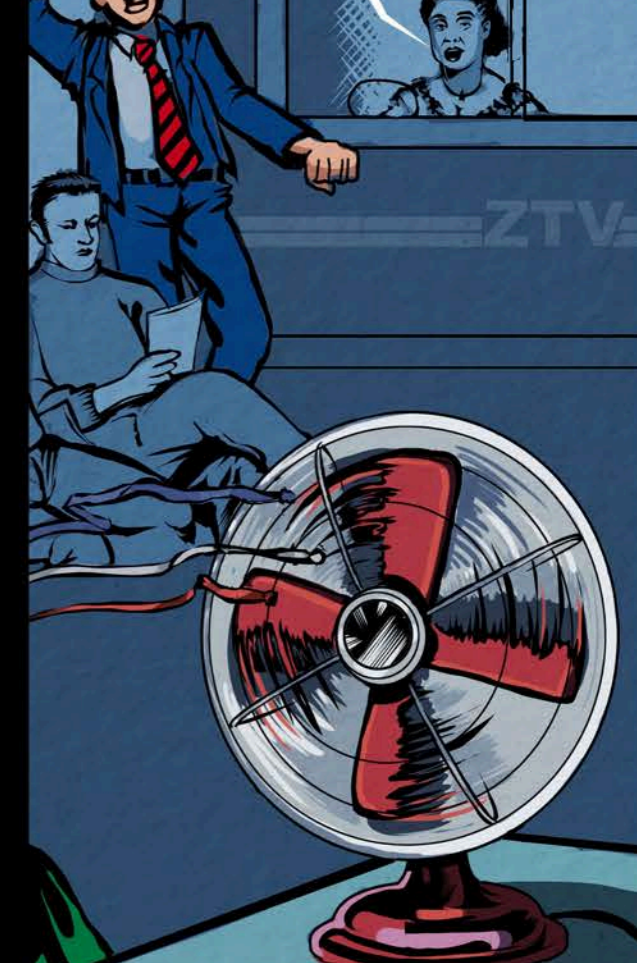
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EVERY SWINGIN' DICK, THAT DARED TO DREAM. STUFFED IN A *SWEATY* LITTLE ROOM. FOR *HOURS*. I CAN STILL TASTE THE *SMELL* OF IT.

SCREW THIS! THESE PEOPLE ARE BATSHIT CRAZY.

FOUR SIXTY EIGHT? MANNINGS?! YOU'RE UP!



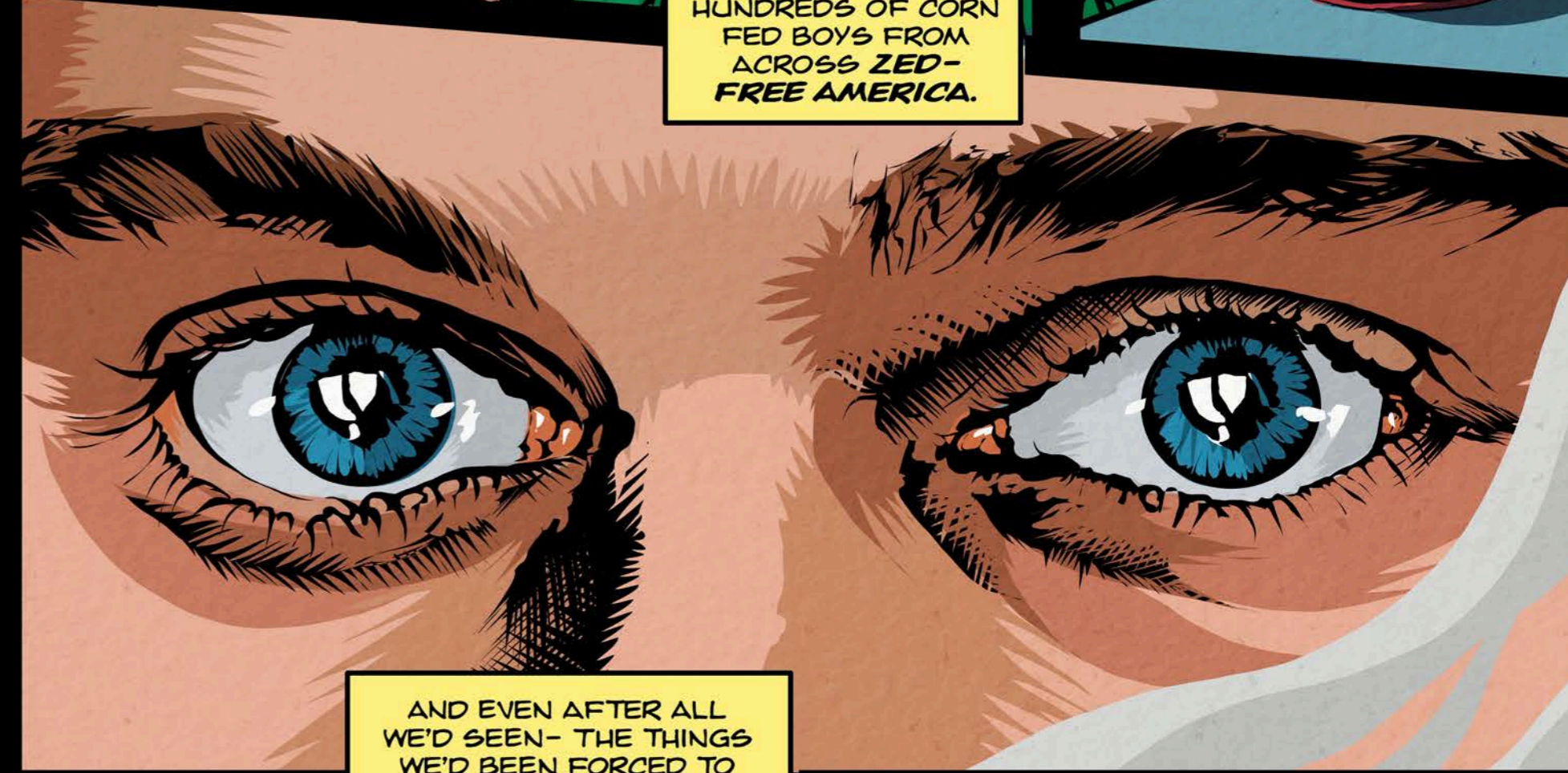
HUNDREDS OF CORN FED BOYS FROM ACROSS *ZED-FREE* AMERICA.



# "A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS"

WRITTEN, ILLUSTRATED, INKED & COLORED BY JASON RAGOSTA PART 1

*The milk  
worst  
feathe  
open  
the bed A  
JANET RE  
THE*



AND EVEN AFTER ALL WE'D SEEN- THE THINGS WE'D BEEN FORCED TO DO- IN *THE WAR*. THERE WAS ONLY ONE OF US WITH THE STONES TO LAND THIS GIG...



WHEN WORD GOT OUT THAT ZTV WAS LOOKING FOR A NEW HOST, THE FLOOD GATES OPENED.



I'D DECIDED BEFORE I GOT ON THE *BUS*- IT WAS GONNA BE ME.



STATE YOUR NAME AND AGE INTO THE CAMERA.

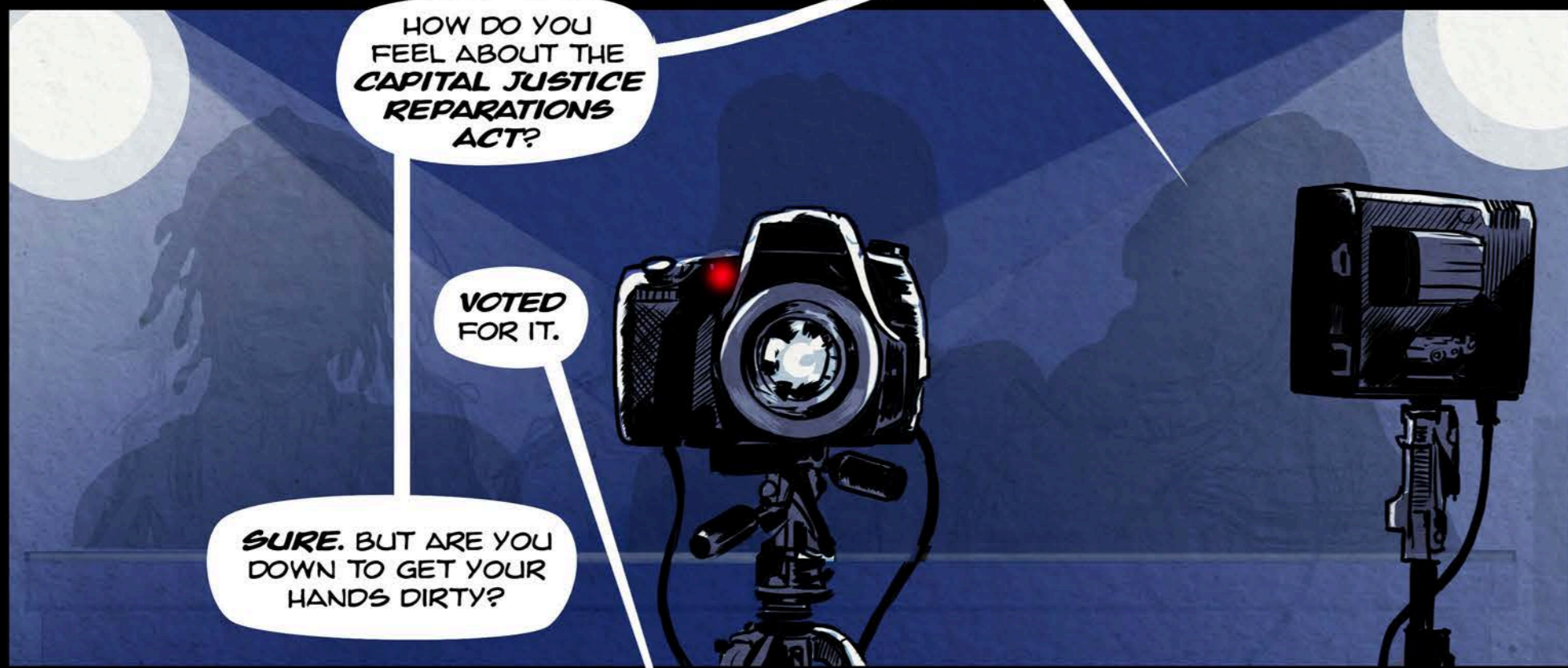
BRAD MANNINGS. TWENTY-THREE YEARS OLD.

SO, TELL ME BRAD...



THAT'S EXACTLY THE SORTA BULLSHIT ANTI-CAPS SPEW ARGUIN' FOR LIFE SENTENCES.

ANTI-CAPS CAN GO FUCK THEMSELVES.



HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE CAPITAL JUSTICE REPARATIONS ACT?

VOTED FOR IT.

SURE. BUT ARE YOU DOWN TO GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY?



FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, FEEDIN' THE PRICKS, FEET-FIRST INTO A WOODCHIPPER'D, BE GOIN' TOO EASY ON THOSE PINKO, TREE HUGGIN' FUCKERS.



MY HANDS ARE SOAKED IN BLOOD, SAME AS EVERYONE ELSE'S.



BRAD, WE NEED YOU TO THINK THIS THING THROUGH- THE POSITION AMOUNTS TO BEING A CELEBRITY EXECUTIONER. THE HANDLERS- THEY ALL WEAR MASKS, AFFORDING THEM A DEGREE OF ANONIMITY, WHEREAS YOUR FACE WILL BE ON BILLBOARDS- A HUNDRED FEET HIGH.

YOU UNDERSTAND?



LOOK, I GET IT, OK? I WOULDN'T BE SITTING HERE IF I WASN'T A HUNDRED PERCENT DOWN.



to prey on dozens of innocent child

WELL, HE TALKS PRETTY LET'S TRY HIM THE FUCK OUT ALREADY.

BRING IT.



OK BRAD. STAND ON THE MARK AND READ THE LINES PROJECTED ON THE WALL BEHIND US.

CLICK



BIGGS AND CHARLES- HERE, WILL SERVE-

AS YOUR SCENE PARTNERS.

LET'S GO.



80min

REC

GREAT. BEGIN.

WELCOME BACK TO THE PREZERVE! I'M YOUR HOST, BRAD MANNINGS-

-WE'RE COMIN' AT YOU LIVE FROM THE MIDANDS QZ, WITH SERIAL CHILD STRANGLER, CHARLES SPLETT.



children. Isn't tho

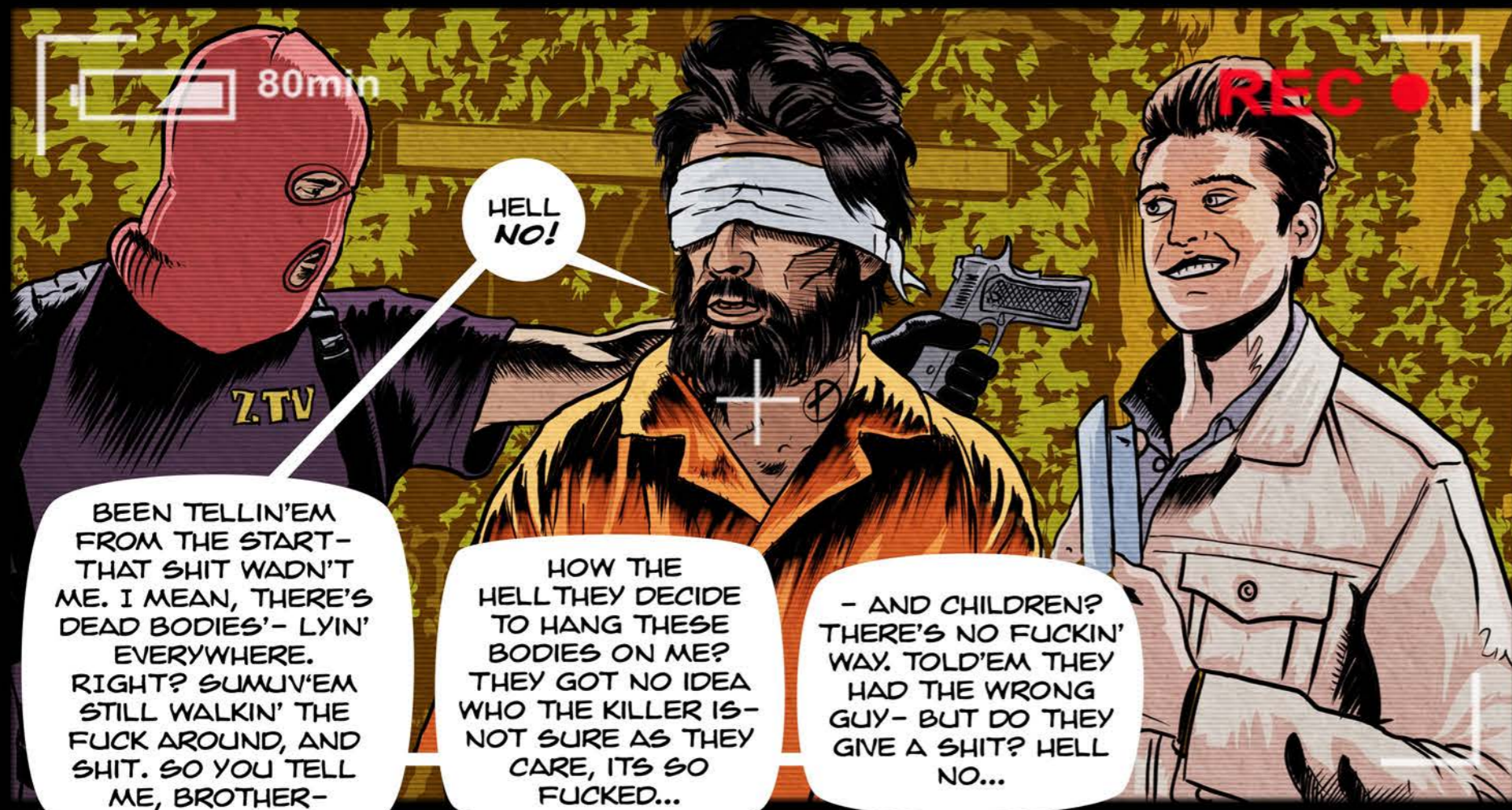
80min

REC

YOU USED THE CHAOS OF THE AMERICAN ZOMBIE WAR-

TO PREY ON DOZENS OF INNOCENT CHILDREN.

DIDN'T YOU CHARLIE?



HELL NO!

BEEN TELLIN'EM FROM THE START- THAT SHIT WADN'T ME. I MEAN, THERE'S DEAD BODIES'- LYIN' EVERYWHERE. RIGHT? SUM'V'EM STILL WALKIN' THE FUCK AROUND, AND SHIT. SO YOU TELL ME, BROTHER-

HOW THE HELL THEY DECIDE TO HANG THESE BODIES ON ME? THEY GOT NO IDEA WHO THE KILLER IS- NOT SURE AS THEY CARE, ITS SO FUCKED...

- AND CHILDREN? THERE'S NO FUCKIN' WAY. TOLD'EM THEY HAD THE WRONG GUY- BUT DO THEY GIVE A SHIT? HELL NO...



BANG!



BUT YOU KNOW, I'M ON APPEAL. MY JEW-CHICK LAWYER SAYS I'LL BE OUT SOON. SAYS THE EVIDENCE IS CIRCUMSTANTIAL AT BEST. DNA'S INADMISSABLE- OR SOME SHIT.

FOR PROFIT PRISON, YEAH? SURE. DOES'EM JUST FINE TO HAVE A NAME TO PIN IT ON. THE WHOLE A' ZED FREE 'MERICA BEIN' PAID BY THE HEAD, AM I RIGHT?



THAT GUY WAS FUCKING **TEDIOUS**- WASN'T HE, BIGGS?

SURELY WAS.



LAWYER SAYS, THE COPS FUCKED UP GOOD AND PROP-

OH!

DIDN'T KNOW IF HE'D EVER SHUT-

THE **FUCK-UP!**



WELL, THERE YOU HAVE IT, FOLKS. SPLETT WENT **SPLATT.**

A PUS FILLED BOIL, **LANCED** FROM THE COLLECTIVE ASS OF ZED FREE AMERICA. WITH A **BULLET.**

TUNE IN NEXT WEEK, MY FAITHFUL COMPATRIOTS, FOR THE GROUP EXECUTION OF A CLOSED ORDER OF MONKS, CAUGHT RED-HANDED RUNNING A HUMAN TRAFFICKING RING OUT OF THE BASEMENT OF A SECOND RATE SUB SHOP IN MINNEAPOLIS.

SEE IT **LIVE.** SEE IT **BLEED.** SEE IT **ONLY-** ON **ZTV!**

AND-CUT!



THANK YOU, BRAD. WE'LL BE IN TOUCH.

GIVE US THE ROOM.



THAT'S ALL PUBLIC RECORD. DON'T WASTE MY TIME WITH THAT BRAD.

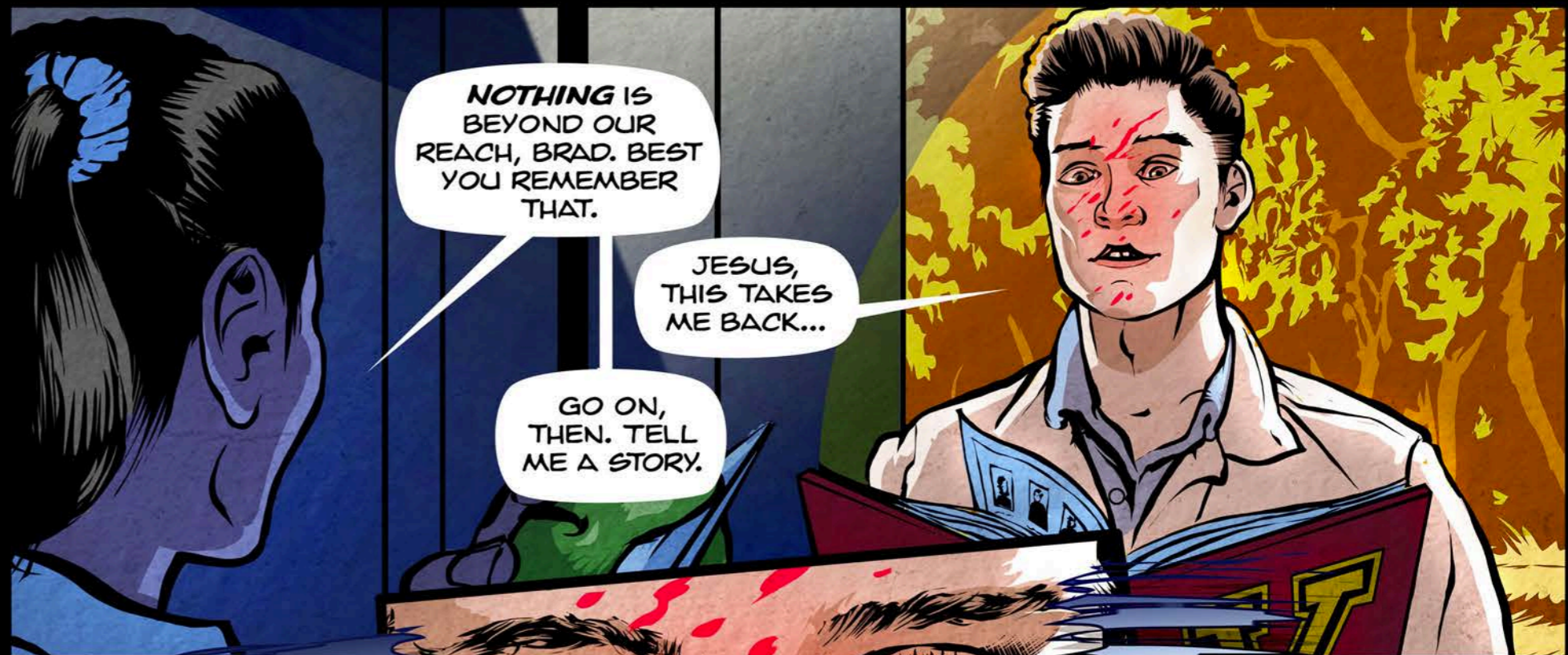
TELL ME ABOUT THIS BRAD. THE VALEDICTORIAN. THE CAPTAIN OF THE FOOTBALL TEAM. THE FUCKING PROM KING.

I WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE BRAD WHO LIVED AT 421 DOWNING LANE.

WHERE THE HELL DID YOU FIND THAT?



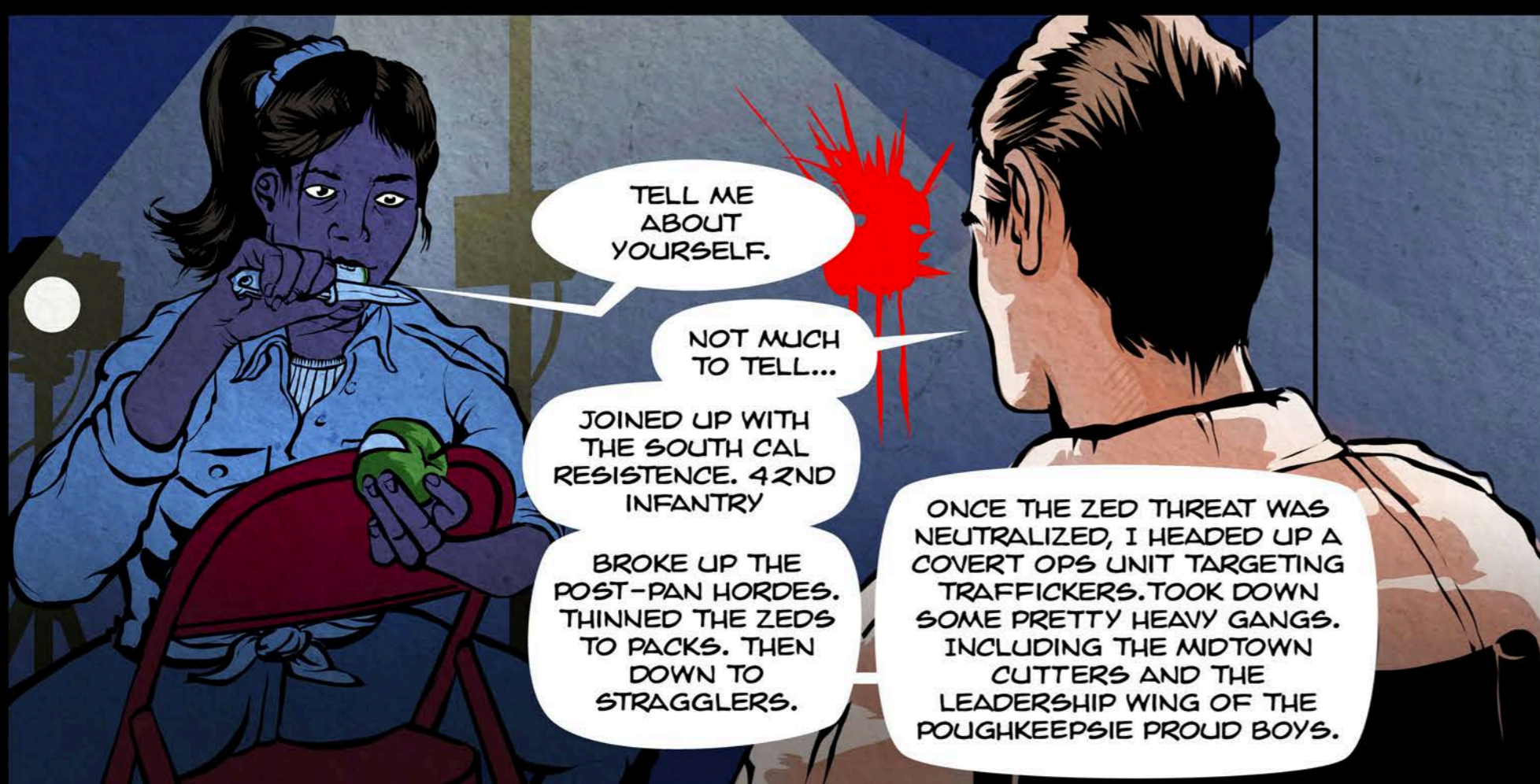
TAKE A SEAT, BRAD.



NOTHING IS BEYOND OUR REACH, BRAD. BEST YOU REMEMBER THAT.

JESUS, THIS TAKES ME BACK...

GO ON, THEN. TELL ME A STORY.



TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF.

NOT MUCH TO TELL...

JOINED UP WITH THE SOUTH CAL RESISTANCE. 42ND INFANTRY

BROKE UP THE POST-PAN HORDES. THINNED THE ZEDS TO PACKS. THEN DOWN TO STRAGGLERS.

ONCE THE ZED THREAT WAS NEUTRALIZED, I HEADED UP A COVERT OPS UNIT TARGETING TRAFFICKERS. TOOK DOWN SOME PRETTY HEAVY GANGS, INCLUDING THE MIDTOWN CUTTERS AND THE LEADERSHIP WING OF THE POUGHKEEPSIE PROUD BOYS.



BRAD MANNINGS  
STARTING QUARTERBACK

TEAM CAPTAIN

HEAD CHEERLEADER

RENEE CROSS

WELL...

VT



I-I WAS THE **KING** OF THIS SCHOOL-



A-AND **RENEE**, SHE WAS MY **QUEEN**...



IT ALL WENT DOWN AFTER MY LAST BIG GAME...



I LED THE TEAM TO A STATE CHAMPIONSHIP.



IT WAS A FRIDAY NIGHT. DATE NIGHT...

SHE DRAGGED ME TO SEE SOME TWISTED OLDSCHOOL MOVIE...



RENEE, HOLD UP.

FOLLOWED BY SOME HEAVY PETTING UP AT LOVER'S LANE...

DID I DO SOMETHING WRONG, BABE?



NO- ITS JUST EVERYTHING'S HAPPENING SO **FAST**, YOU KNOW?

VALEDICTORIAN, CAPTAIN OF THE FOOTBALL TEAM, PROM KING-

AND QUEEN.

SURE- RIGHT. ALL OF IT.



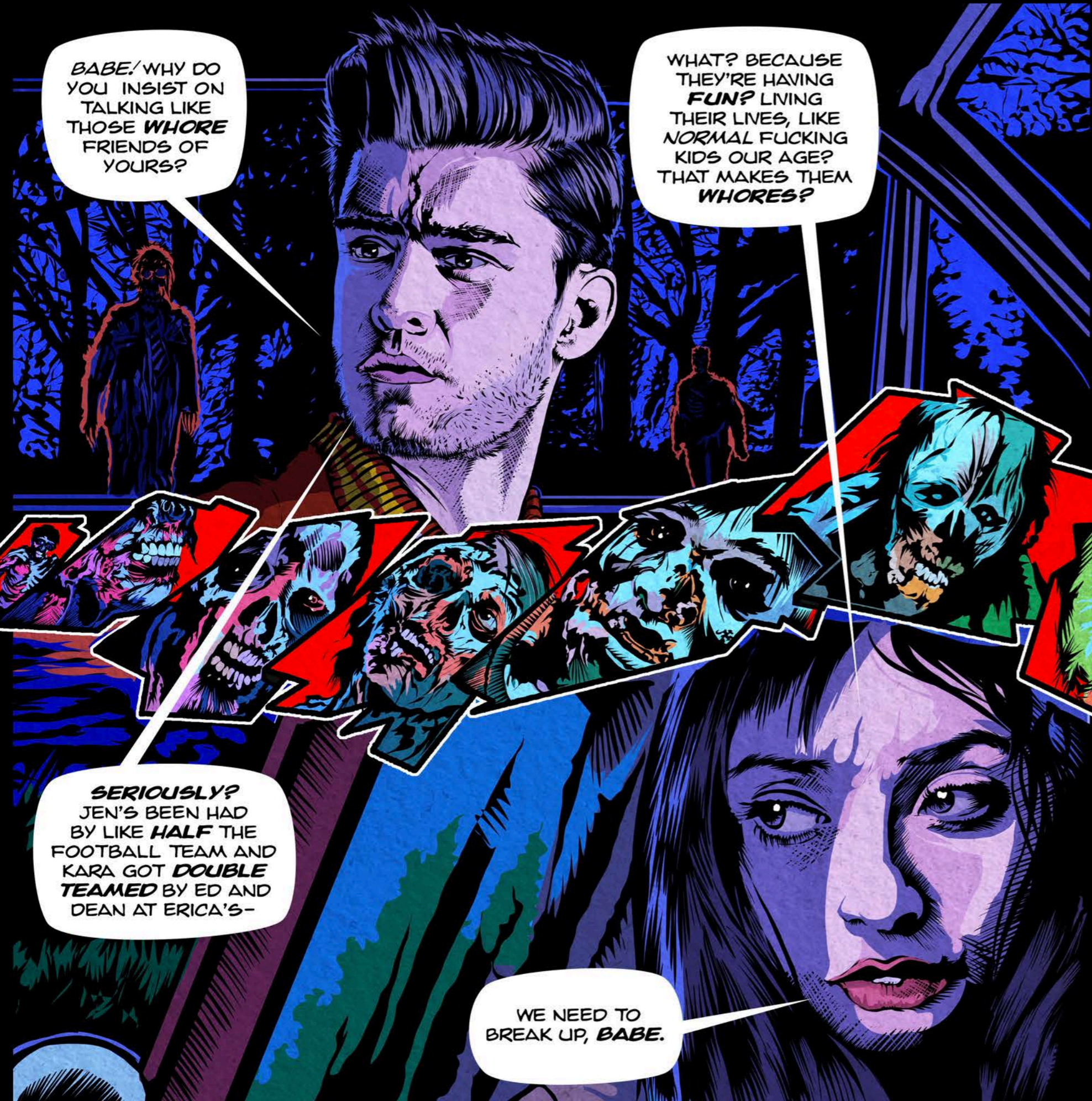
ISN'T IT WHAT YOU WANTED?

IT'S WHAT WAS PROMISED.

BY GOD?

THAT'S RIGHT.

AND THAT'S WHY WE CAN'T FUCK?

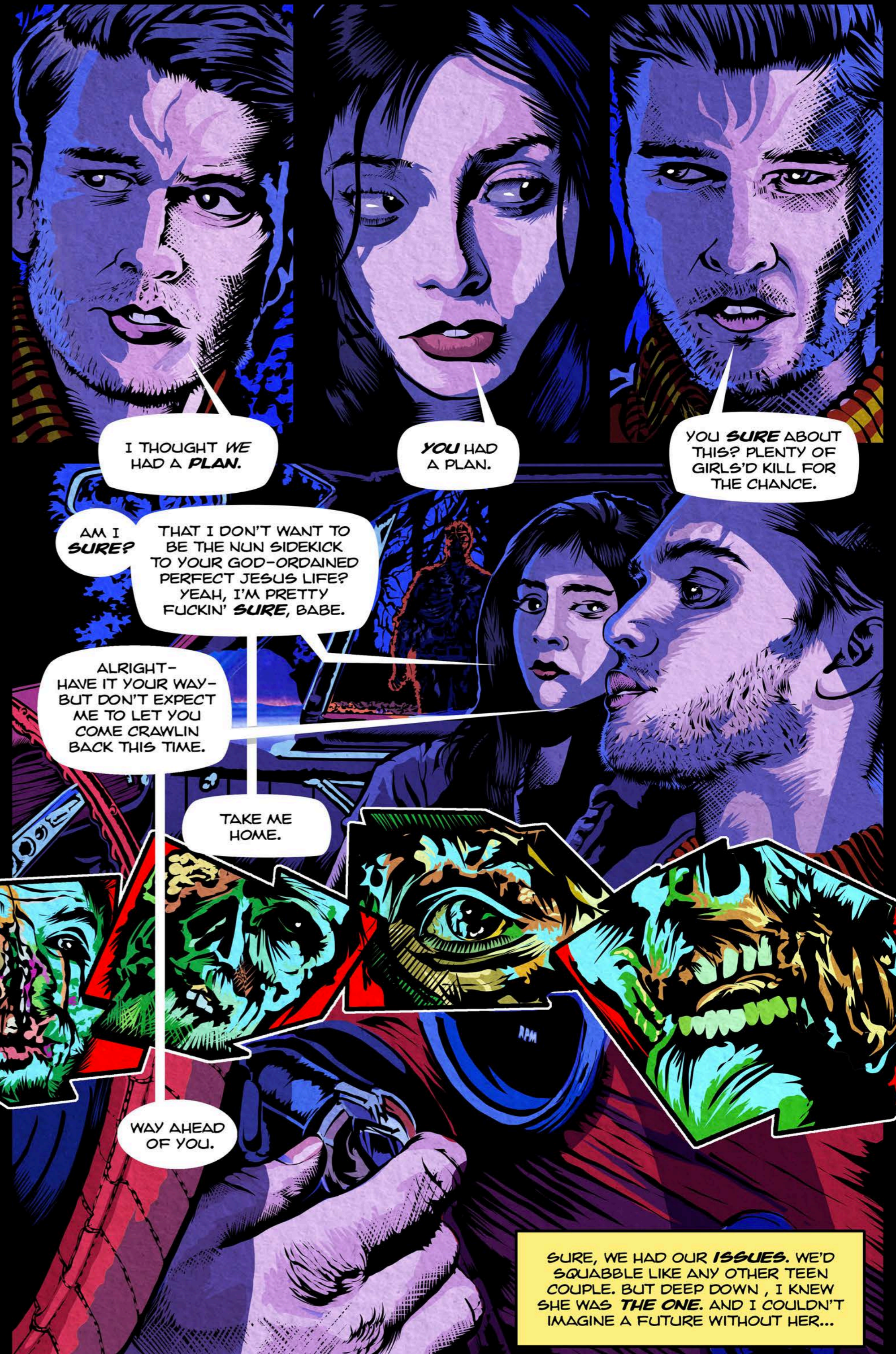


BABE, WHY DO YOU INSIST ON TALKING LIKE THOSE WHORE FRIENDS OF YOURS?

WHAT? BECAUSE THEY'RE HAVING FUN? LIVING THEIR LIVES, LIKE NORMAL FUCKING KIDS OUR AGE? THAT MAKES THEM WHORES?

WE NEED TO BREAK UP, BABE.

SERIOUSLY? JEN'S BEEN HAD BY LIKE HALF THE FOOTBALL TEAM AND KARA GOT DOUBLE TEAMED BY ED AND DEAN AT ERICA'S-



I THOUGHT WE HAD A PLAN.

YOU HAD A PLAN.

YOU SURE ABOUT THIS? PLENTY OF GIRLS'D KILL FOR THE CHANCE.

AM I SURE?

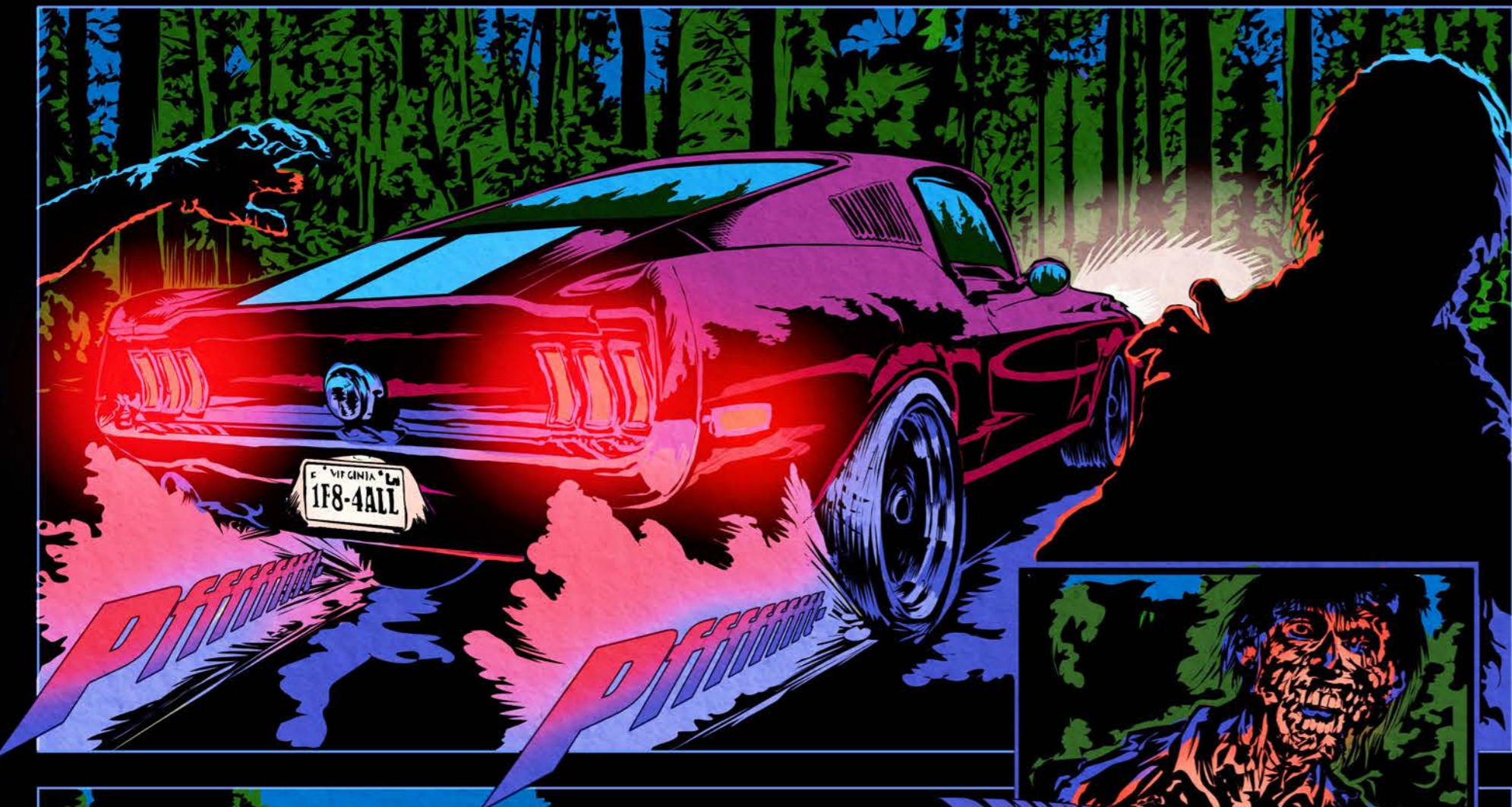
THAT I DON'T WANT TO BE THE NUN SIDEKICK TO YOUR GOD-ORDAINED PERFECT JESUS LIFE? YEAH, I'M PRETTY FUCKIN' SURE, BABE.

ALRIGHT-HAVE IT YOUR WAY-BUT DON'T EXPECT ME TO LET YOU COME CRAWLIN BACK THIS TIME.

TAKE ME HOME.

WAY AHEAD OF YOU.

SURE, WE HAD OUR ISSUES. WE'D SQUABBLE LIKE ANY OTHER TEEN COUPLE. BUT DEEP DOWN, I KNEW SHE WAS THE ONE. AND I COULDN'T IMAGINE A FUTURE WITHOUT HER...



WHAT'S THIS GUY'S DAMAGE?

NO CLUE.

WHAT THE ACTUAL FUCK?

WHAT ARE THEY DOING TO HIM?!

IS THAT BLOOD?

-OH SHIT!

THERE'S A POLE IN THE ROAD!

THEY'RE FUCKING EATING HIM!!! JESUS-

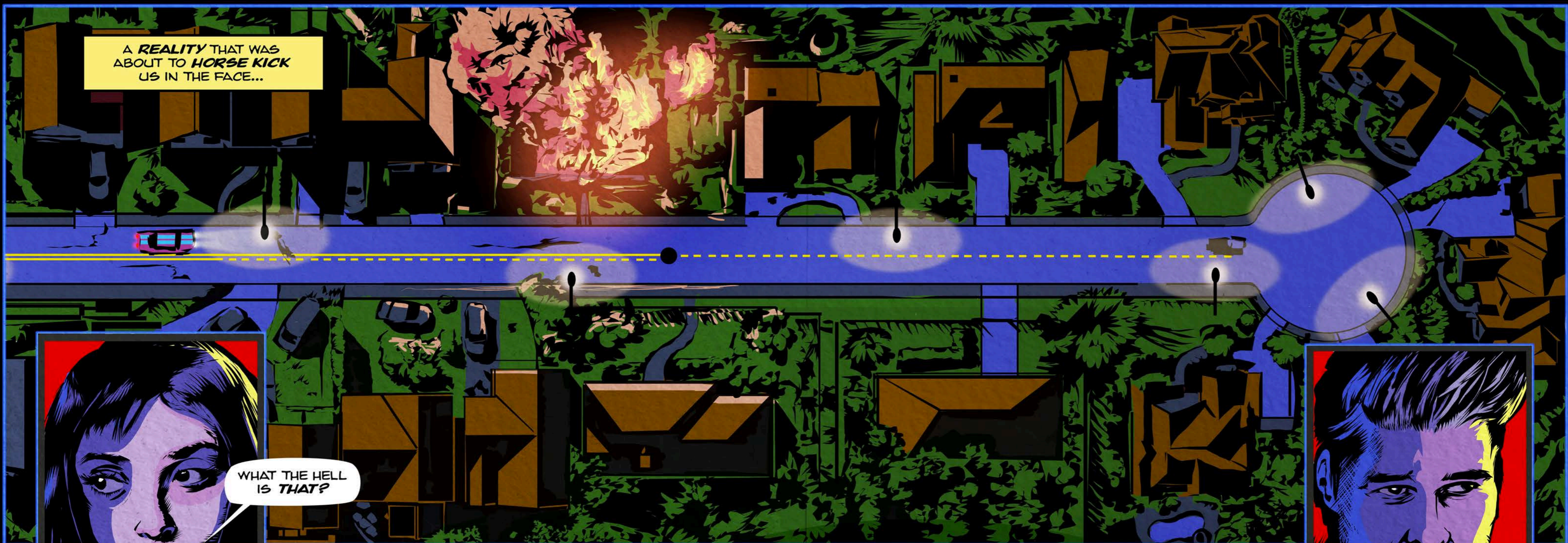
HOLD ON!

THAT'S SOME FAST AND FURIOUS SHIT!

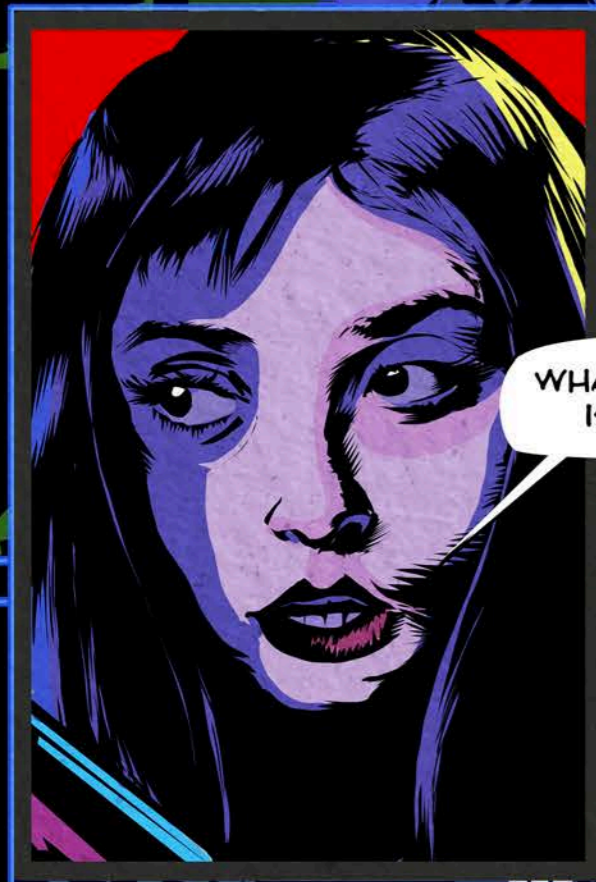
THERE IS SOMETHING SERIOUSLY WRONG WITH YOUR BRAIN.



I'M SURE EVERY KID, CLUTCHED IN THE DEATHGRIP OF PUBERTY, THINKS A BREAK UP IS **THE END OF THE WORLD**. ONLY IN OUR CASE IT WAS A LITERAL REALITY...



A **REALITY** THAT WAS ABOUT TO **HORSE KICK** US IN THE FACE...



WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?



A HOUSE ON FIRE.





KYLE?! STOP!-  
WHAT THE HELL'S  
WRONG WITH YOU?

WHY WON'T  
YOU DIE!?



BANG!  
BANG!  
BANG!

OH  
SHIT!



IS THAT-  
LARRY?  
FROM NEXT  
DOOR?



BRAD!  
LOOK OUT!!

RAWWWRRRRR



WHAT  
THE-  
SHIT!



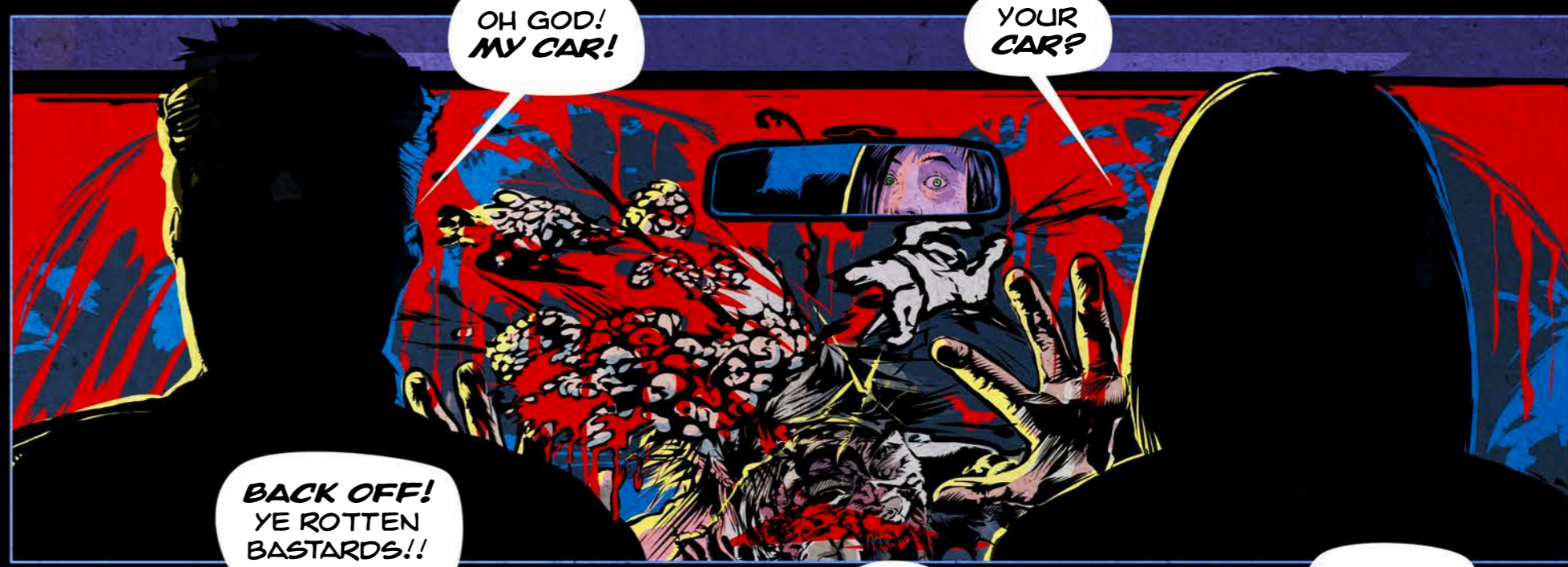
RAWWWRRRRR



CRASH



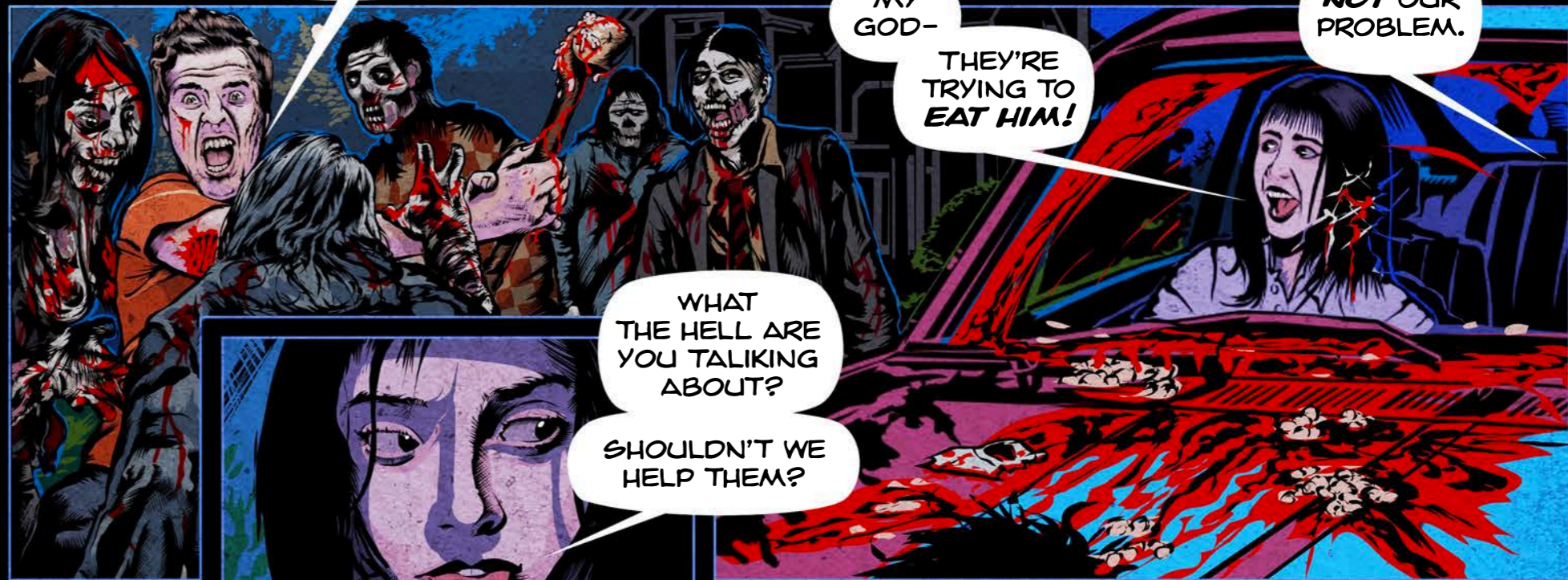
WHAT THE FUCK IS  
HAPPENING?!?



OH GOD!  
MY CAR!

YOUR  
CAR?

BACK OFF!  
YE ROTTEN  
BASTARDS!!



MY  
GOD-

THEY'RE  
TRYING TO  
EAT HIM!

NOT OUR  
PROBLEM.

WHAT  
THE HELL ARE  
YOU TALKING  
ABOUT?

SHOULDN'T WE  
HELP THEM?



NO.

LOOKS LIKE IT'S  
EVERY MAN FOR  
THEMSELVES.



OH, NO-  
BRAD, YOUR  
DOOR!





MOM...

IT WAS JAKE TALPET FROM NEXT DOOR...

HE'D GONE CRAZY- HE-



COME ON, MOM. WE GOT TO GET YOU TO THE HOSPITAL.

NO BABY.

THE... WORLD'S GONE MAD. YOU GOTTA... RUN. YOU RUN FROM HERE- AWAY FROM THE LIGHTS AND THE SOUNDS OF CIVILIZATION- YOU RUN AND DON'T YOU LOOK BACK.

TAKE THE KEYS- UM, TO THE CABIN-



RAWRRRRRRRRR



GO!

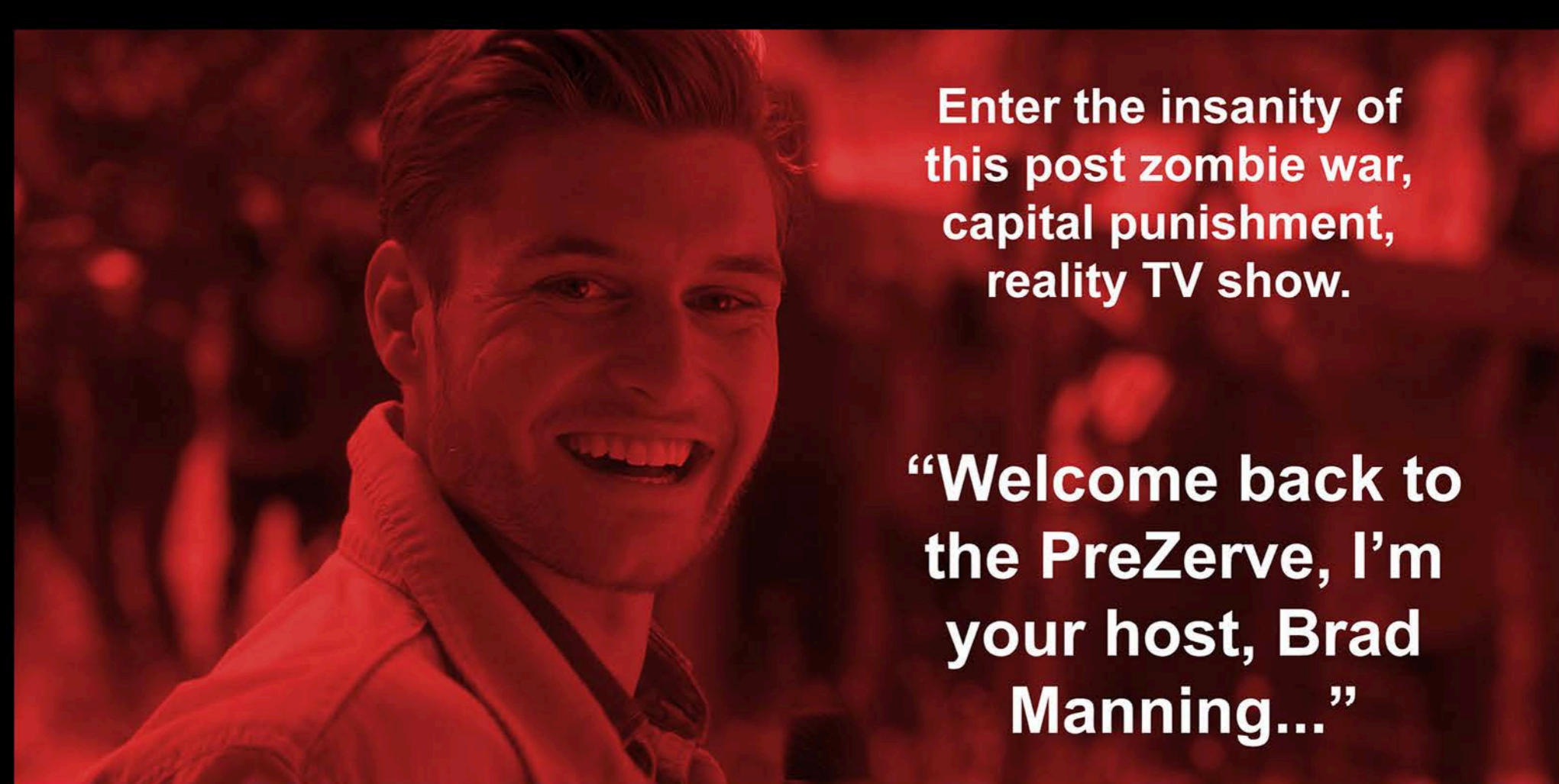
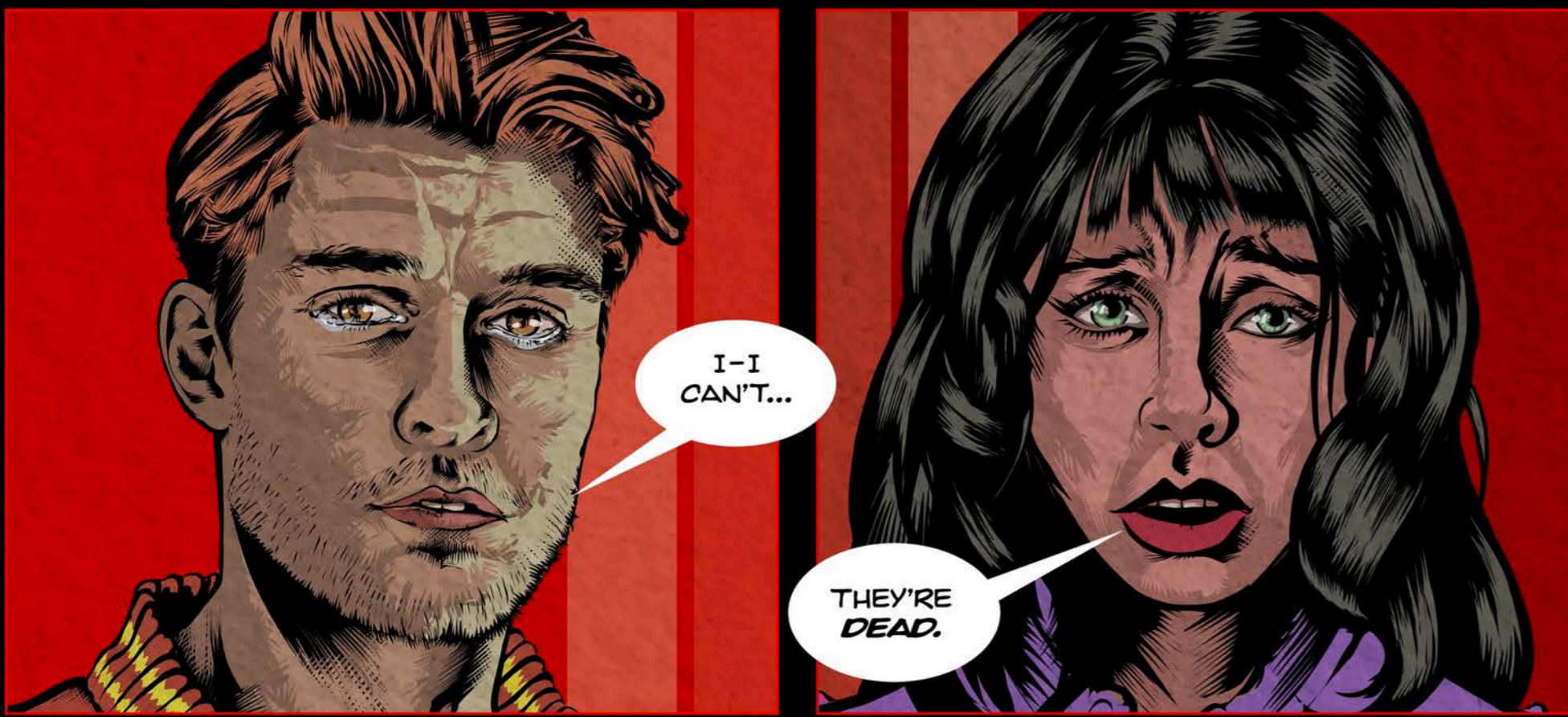


BRAD...? HONEY YOUR FATHER- HE... OH GOD...



DAD! NO!

BRAD! WE'VE GOT TO GO!



Enter the insanity of this post zombie war, capital punishment, reality TV show.

“Welcome back to the PreZerve, I’m your host, Brad Manning...”

## Labor of love: Creating the ZTV Universe

In **December** of **2017**, I began writing a feature length screenplay for a film I ended up calling **ZTV: The PreZerve**. I had written it to be a stripped down, low budget feature, but even after stripping it to bare bones, my producing partner, **Marisa Garay (Garbo Films)**, and I did not have access to enough money to shoot the full feature.

Instead, we decided to shoot a proof of concept **Short film/Episodic Pilot** that we called **ZTV: Sympathy for the Devil** which we were fortunate enough to shoot in two parts in **January** of **2018** and **June** of **2019**. We raised the money through a combination of pooling our own money, gathering a handful of small investors, and Indiegogo contributors. The film wouldn't have been possible without our key collaborators and partners on the project: **Margaret Caragan & Tony Aldrich (PandoraFX)**, **Pascal Combes-Knoke** (Director of Photography), and **Justin Amore** (Editor) and our crew. We also had the good fortune to work with some amazing actors, some of whom graciously agreed to appear in the comic book such as **MacCallister Byrd** (Brad), **Molly Ratermann** (Karen), and **Daniel Sullivan** (Biggs). At the time of this writing, we are currently in the final phase of post production, having received our amazing live recorded score from our composers **Susan Dibona & Salvatore Sangiovanni (The Villa Studios)**, with only our sound edit and final mix remaining to complete the film/pilot.

Because funds were extremely limited in post, and being well versed in the immutable law of the Creative triangle: Time, Money, Quality, pick two, I chose Time and Quality and made the best of our two years of post to write out and plan the expanded universe of **ZTV**. I felt this could be explored, free of the limitations of film budgets, through the creation of the comic book you are reading now, **ZTV Undead Empire**.

Believe me when I tell you, this first issue is just the minuscule tip of a massive iceberg. The sheer amount of story, that I have already planned out, will span over dozens of graphic novel volumes to come. So welcome, and **stay tuned** as we take this journey together and see how humanity fairs in the face of the living dead....

- **JASON RAGOSTA**  
August 23rd, 2020



**PRACTICAL MAKE-UP FX**

# ZTV SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL

Pandora FX is a company of Special Effects Artists owned and operated by the incomparable **Margaret Caragan**. They serve productions throughout the greater San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, and around the world.

Pandora Fx's list of credits includes: **Sorry to Bother You, Fruitvale Station, Lasso, The Violent Kind, and ZTV: Sympathy for the Devil.**

Several members of the Pandora Fx team have been contestants on the **SYFY Channel's FACEOFF**.

They specialize in medical/ Wound blood, Creatures, Beauty, Hair, and Body Painting work as well as specialty costumes and special makeups, with built-in puppetry rigs. Their lab work includes sculpting, visdev/concept art, sculpting, life casts, and mold making, transfers, and custom prosthetics.

Margaret and Jason are long time collaborators and mind-adopted family, she is the very first call when he has a new project and worked closely with Producer Marisa Garay / Garbo Films in producing **ZTV Sympathy for the Devil.**



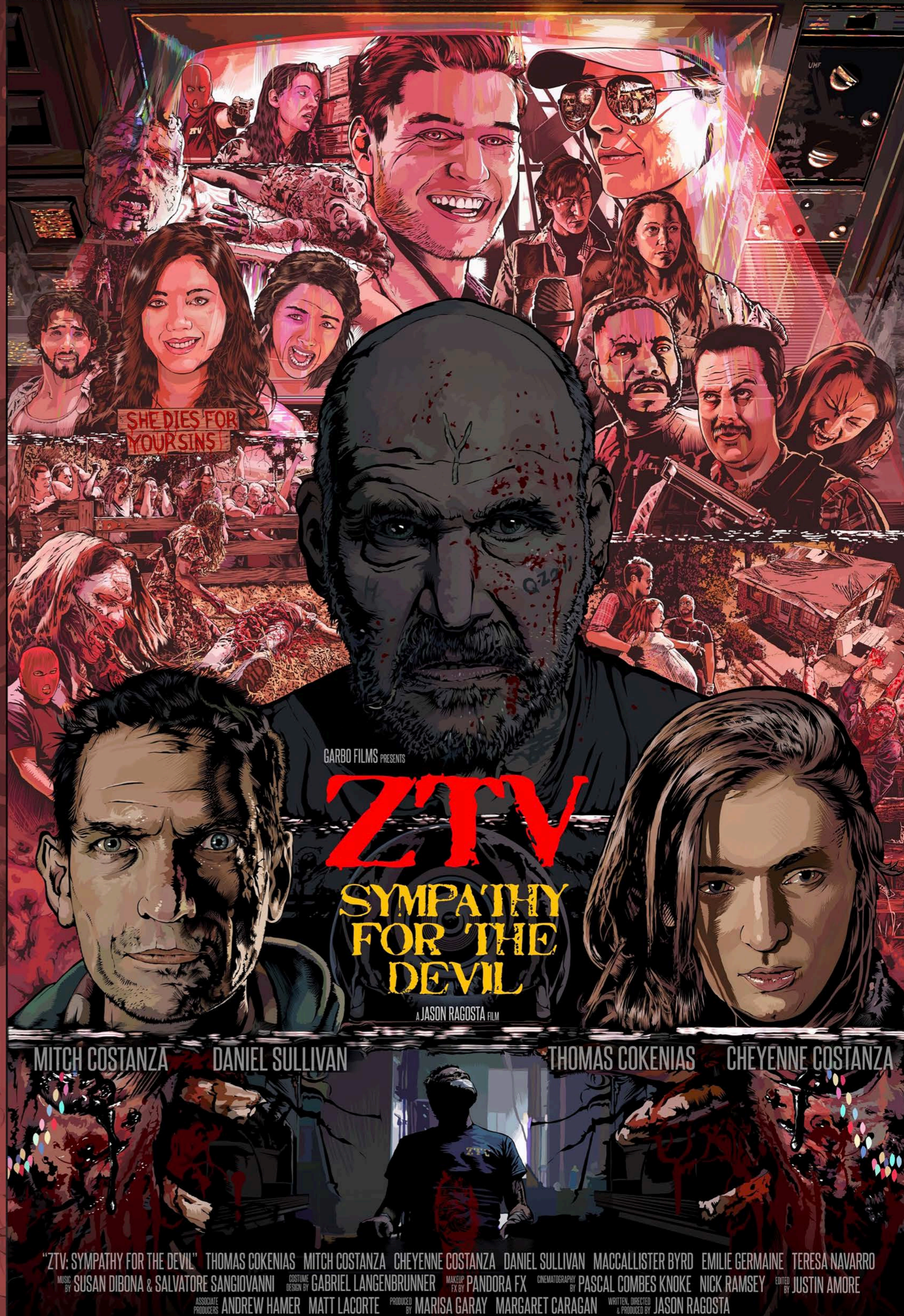
A very special **THANKS** to our generous **INDIEGOGO** contributors.

Sade Robinson  
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Josh Rickert  
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Cary Agtane  
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Krystal McKnight

Cliff Treaman  
Dave Moutray  
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Gloria Ragosta  
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Diana Mastromarino  
Margaret Caragan  
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**Ian Leer**  
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**Erin Reilly**  
Lola Getsit  
Andre Welsh  
Gloria Ragosta  
**Alana Garay**  
**Cole Winokur**  
**Joe McDonough**  
Morris Kent Mazingo  
Shaun Davis  
**Tony Aldrich**

\*Contributors in bold also appear in this issue in character cameos.

You each have a very special place in **ZTV**'s undead heart.  
This book wouldn't exist without you.



"ZTV: SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL" THOMAS COKENIAS MITCH COSTANZA CHEYENNE COSTANZA DANIEL SULLIVAN MACCALLISTER BYRD EMILIE GERMAINE TERESA NAVARRO  
MUSIC BY SUSAN DIBONA & SALVATORE SANGIOVANNI COSTUME DESIGNER GABRIEL LANGENBRUNNER MAKEUP FX BY PANDORA FX CINEMATOGRAPHY BY PASCAL COMBES KNOKE NICK RAMSEY EDITED BY JUSTIN AMORE  
ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS ANDREW HAMER MATT LACORTE PRODUCED BY MARISA GARAY MARGARET CARAGAN WRITTEN, DIRECTED & PRODUCED BY JASON RAGOSTA