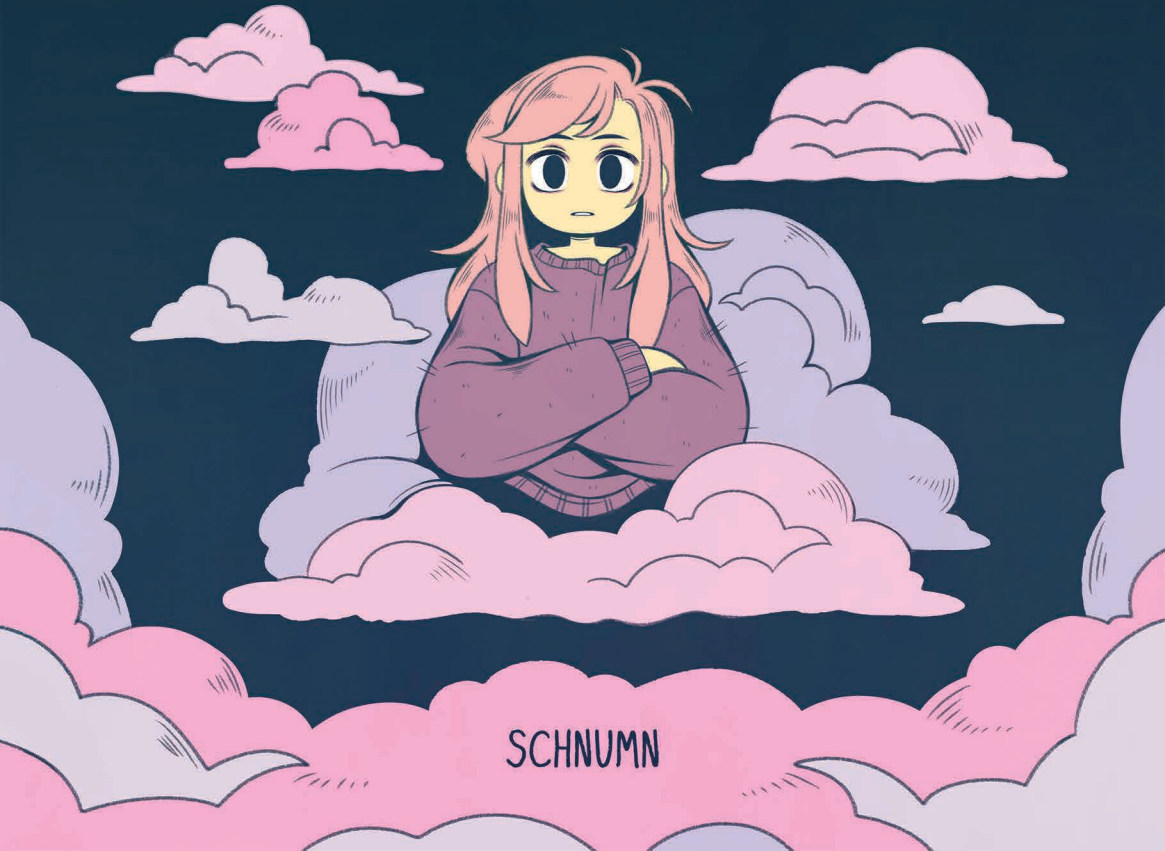


LAVENDER CLOUDS

A COLLECTION OF COMICS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH AND NEURODIVERGENCE

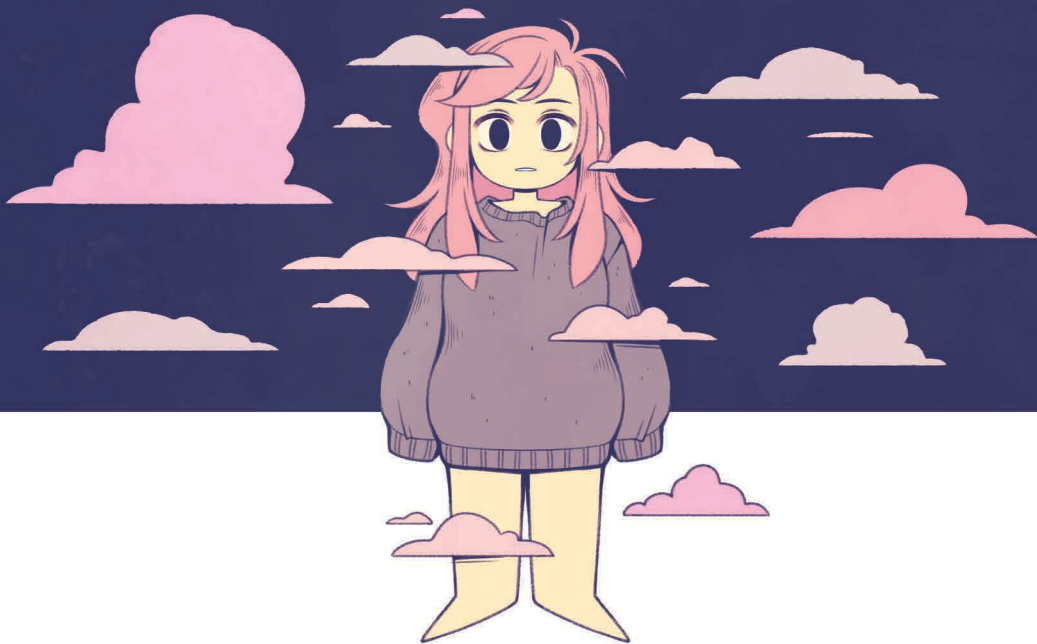


SCHNUMN




ALL RIGHTS RESERVED BY THE CREATOR. NO PART OF THIS BOOK
MAY BE REPRODUCED OR REDISTRIBUTED WITHOUT WRITTEN PERMISSION
FROM THE CREATOR.

LAVENDER CLOUDS







WHEN EVERYTHING
IS FRIGHTENING, YOU
HAVE TO LEARN TO
BE BRAVE.

SO I
LEARNED.

AND FOR
A WHILE, I WAS
GOOD AT IT.

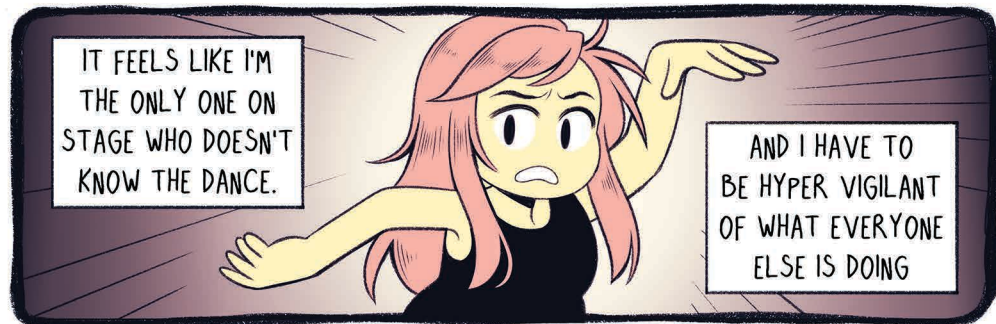
OVER TIME,
THINGS SEEMED
TO GET LESS
SCARY


AND I FOUND
THAT I DIDN'T NEED TO
BE QUITE AS BRAVE
AS BEFORE.

BUT LATELY,
THE FEAR HAS CREEPT
BACK INSIDE ME AND
TAKEN HOLD.

WHERE IS
MY BRAVERY
NOW?

DO I HAVE
THE STRENGTH TO
RECLAIM IT?





MY LIFE'S WORK
IS A COLLECTION
OF BEHAVIOURS
AND PHRASES.

THROUGH WATCHING
OTHERS, I'VE LEARNED HOW
TO POSITION AND MOVE MY BODY
IN WAYS THAT WILL MAKE
ME MORE LIKEABLE.

I'VE MEMORISED
WHICH FACIAL EXPRESSIONS
I SHOULD PERFORM FOR EACH
DIFFERENT TONE

AM I ABLE TO
TRULY CALL MYSELF
A PERSON?

OR AM I JUST
A MENAGERIE OF
STOLEN THINGS?

EVERYTHING IN MY LIFE RUNS ON A SERIES OF METERS

- COMMISSION 1
- REPLY TO CLIENT 1
- REPLY TO CLIENT 2
- UPDATE PATREON
- POST ETSY ORDERS
- REPLY TO EMAILS
- FINISH COMMISSION 2
- 2 NEW COMICS
- WORK ON PITCH

I'M GREAT AT
WORK METERS



AND TERRIBLE
AT THE REST



- CALL HOME!!
- REPLY TO DMS
- REPLY TO DMS
- SO MANY DMS HELP
- CHAT ON DISCORD
- EAT VEGETABLES
- CHANGE BEDSHEETS
- DO SOME LAUNDRY
- TAKE A SHOWER

I'M DOING AS MUCH AS I CAN BUT I ALWAYS HAVE METERS IN THE RED. I'M ALWAYS JUST ABOUT MANAGING TO STAY ON TOP OF THINGS, BUT EACH TIME I COMPLETE A TASK, ANOTHER ONE TAKES ITS PLACE IN A NEVER-ENDING CYCLE OF STRESS.

HAHA I GUESS
THIS IS JUST MY
LIFE NOW...



WHEEEE
WHEN WILL I EVER
CATCH A BREAK?

MY SOCIAL TO-DO LIST IS
ALWAYS MY BIGGEST STRUGGLE

CALL MUM, IT'S BEEN TOO LONG AND SHE
YOUR BEST FRIEND'S BIRTHDAY IS COMIN
YOUR SISTER WANTS TO VISIT. REPLY AS
MAKE A DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT
>>> GO TO THE DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT
10+ UNREAD MESSAGES ON DISCORD
20+ UNREAD INSTAGRAM DMS
10+ UNANSWERED TWITTER DMS
10+ FACEBOOK DMS
GROUP VIDEO CHAT ON SATURDAY
D&D ON SUNDAY
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN ACTIVE IN YOUR DISC
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN ACTIVE IN ANY DISCO
5+ PERSONAL EMAILS THAT NEED ANSWE

I'VE STRUGGLED WITH IT FOR MY
WHOLE LIFE AND I'VE NEVER FOUND
A LASTING SOLUTION.

HOW DO
PEOPLE
COPE?!

IT'S SO
MUCH



IT FEELS LIKE THERE'S SOMETHING
FUNDAMENTALLY WRONG WITH ME,
LIKE I HAVE A DEFECIT IN SOME WAY

SOCIAL
SKILLS

NOT
FOUND



EVEN DOING THE BARE MINIMUM
CAN BE SO OVERWHELMING. I TRY
SO HARD TO STAY CONNECTED BUT
IT'S NEVER GOOD ENOUGH.

BURNED
OUT

STOPPED
TALKING TO
PEOPLE

PEOPLE
ARE KINDA
WORRIED

AVOIDING
EVERYONE



I CAN BE VERY HOT AND COLD WHEN IT COMES TO OTHER PEOPLE. I'M EASILY HURT BUT QUICK TO FORGIVE AND I DON'T LIKE THIS ABOUT MYSELF.

THEY DID SOMETHING NICE FOR ME! I FEEL SILLY FOR BEING HURT BY THEM! WHAT THEY DID HARDLY SEEMS TO MATTER NOW. I'M SO GRATEFUL TO HAVE THEM IN MY LIFE!

OH, THEY SAID A SLIGHTLY INSENSITIVE THING TO ME AND NOW I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT ALL THE TIMES THEY'VE HURT ME. MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T BE FRIENDS...



REASONING AWAY THESE EMOTIONS IS EXHAUSTING BUT I TRY MY BEST TO BE LESS EMOTIONALLY IMPULSIVE AND FOCUS ON THE FULL PICTURE.

PEOPLE OFTEN SORT EACH OTHER INTO BOXES



THE LONGER YOU'VE KNOWN SOMEONE, THE HARDER IT IS TO BREAK OUT OF WHATEVER BOX THEY'VE PUT YOU IN



GROWTH IS OFTEN MET WITH INDIFFERENCE OR EVEN MOCKERY



SO SOMETIMES IT'S JUST EASIER TO PRETEND TO BE WHO THEY THINK YOU ARE THAN TO BE YOURSELF





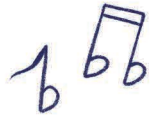
OHH HOW I
LONG FOR SOME
CLARITYYYY



OH OH OOOHHH
I WISH YOU COULD
JUST SAY WHAT
YOU MEEEEEEAN

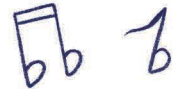


I CAN'T
DEAL WITH ALL
YOUR VAGUE
BULLSHIIIT



OOOO OOO OOOO
IT'S SO STRESSFUUL

OHH YEAHH IT
WOULD BE SO GOOD
TO COMMUNICATE
CLEARLY BABY



OH BAAAAABY I'M NOT A MINDREADER

OH YEEEAHH
MIXED MESSAGES
ARE THE WORST

YOU ALWAYS SHOW UP
WHEN I'M IN A CRISIS

I'M HERE
TO HELP

THANK
YOU

IT'S GOING
TO BE OK!



BUT YOU NEVER SEEM TO
CARE WHEN I'M DOING WELL.

I GOT A
NEW COMIC
GIG!!

THAT'S
COOL.



SOMETIMES,
I CATCH MYSELF
WONDERING...

THANKS

...ARE YOU
REALLY MY
FRIEND?

...OR DO YOU
JUST LIKE TO
GIVE ADVICE?

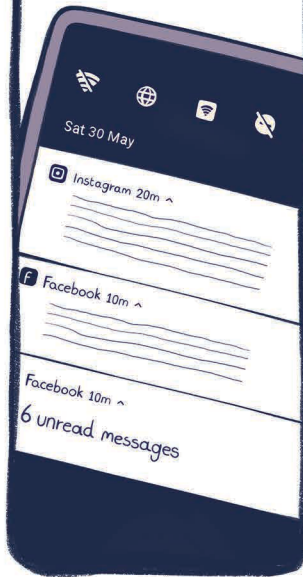


MY SOCIAL
BATTERY IS
UTTERLY
DEPLETED.



CONVERSATIONS
HAVE BEEN MAKING
ME ANXIOUS

SO I'VE BEEN
AVOIDING THEM.



I NEED TO
RECHARGE
SOMEHOW

BUT I STILL
WANT TO FEEL
CONNECTED TO
EVERYONE...



...I WISH WE
COULD BE IN THE
SAME ROOM.

MAKING A PHONECALL



RECEIVING A PHONECALL





WHY DO I ALWAYS ASSUME
THAT EVERYONE WHO DMS ME IS MAD AT ME?



AHH SHIT.
ANOTHER SHIRT
RUINED.

TIME TO
BUY A NEW
ONE.



AND THIS
TIME, I WON'T
RUIN IT!



HAHA YEA I HAVE
social anxiety



I LOVE TO SHOW UP FOR
EVERYTHING 30 MINUTES EARLY!



AND THEN SIT OUTSIDE AND PANIC



AND SHOW UP 15 MINUTES LATE!



MY INTERNAL SELF-TALK HAS BEEN REALLY NEGATIVE LATELY



IT STARTED SLOWLY BUT IT'S BECOME A CONSTANT STREAM OF CRITICISM.



WOW I'M SO BAD AT ART AND I'M SO BEHIND IN PRETTY MUCH EVERY WAY

I DO IT EVEN FOR THE SMALLEST THING. IT'S BECOME A REFLEX.

I LOST MY TABLET PEN AGAIN



I HATE MYSELF

AAAAA I'M SUCH AN IDIOT

I HATE MYSELF

I HATE MYSELF

I HATE MYSELF

I'M TRYING TO BREAK OUT OF IT BY BEING LOUDER AND KINDER THAN THE BAD THOUGHTS.

NO!!!

I LOVE MYSELF!!!

I'M OK!



I'M WORTHY OF LOVE!!

I FORGIVE MYSELF!

I WISH I WAS A GOOD DEPRESSED PERSON... THE KIND OF PERSON WHO ASKS FOR AND APPRECIATES HELP.

MAYBE THIS PHOTO OF MY CAT WILL CHEER U UP!



BUT DEPRESSION TENDS TO MAKE ME CYNICAL AND MEAN.

I LITERALLY COULD NOT GIVE LESS OF A SHIT ABOUT THIS CAT I'VE NEVER MET



I'VE LEARNED NOT TO DIRECT MY MY NEGATIVITY OUTWARDS

HAHA, VERY CUTE, THANKS.



I WISH I COULD SAY THE SAME ABOUT DIRECTING IT INWARDS

I'M SUCH A PIECE OF SHIT, THEY WERE TRYING TO BE NICE AND I'M JUST A HORRIBLE PERSON



I DON'T WANT
TO DO THIS



BUT I FEEL A STRONG
SENSE OF OBLIGATION



AND IT WOULD REALLY
HELP THEM OUT



BUT HELPING THEM
WOULD HURT ME



WILL IT HURT ME MORE
THAN IT'LL HELP THEM?



I DON'T HAVE TO HURT
MYSELF FOR A STRANGER



BUT I FEEL LIKE I
SHOULD HELP



I WANT TO BE A
GOOD PERSON



I DON'T KNOW
WHAT TO DO



EVERY TIME I
MISCOMMUNICATE, I
BLAME MYSELF FOR
NOT BEING CLEAR
OR MISREADING THE
SITUATION.

AAAA I SUCK



IF SOMEONE ELSE
MISCOMMUNICATES,
I BLAME MYSELF FOR
NOT UNDERSTANDING
WHAT THEY MEANT.

OH GOD I'M SO
STUPID AAAA



SO BASICALLY
NO MATTER WHAT,
I ALWAYS BLAME
MYSELF, EVEN IF IT'S
NO ONE'S FAULT.

WHY IS THAT?



I'M DOING THE BEST I CAN. I'M DOING THE BEST I CAN! I'M DOING THE BEST I CAN!!



ARE U THO?

YES!!!



COULDN'T U PUSH URSELF A BIT HARDER?



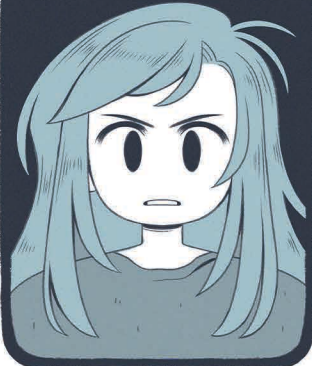
COULDN'T YOU BE MORE DISCIPLINED? OR MORE ORGANISED? MORE EFFICIENT?



I'M TRYING!!



TRY HARDER.





MY INNER
CRITIC SPEAKS WITH
YOUR VOICE.

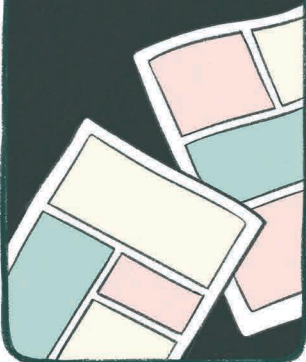
I KNOW THAT
YOU WOULD HATE
EVERYTHING I'M
DOING NOW.



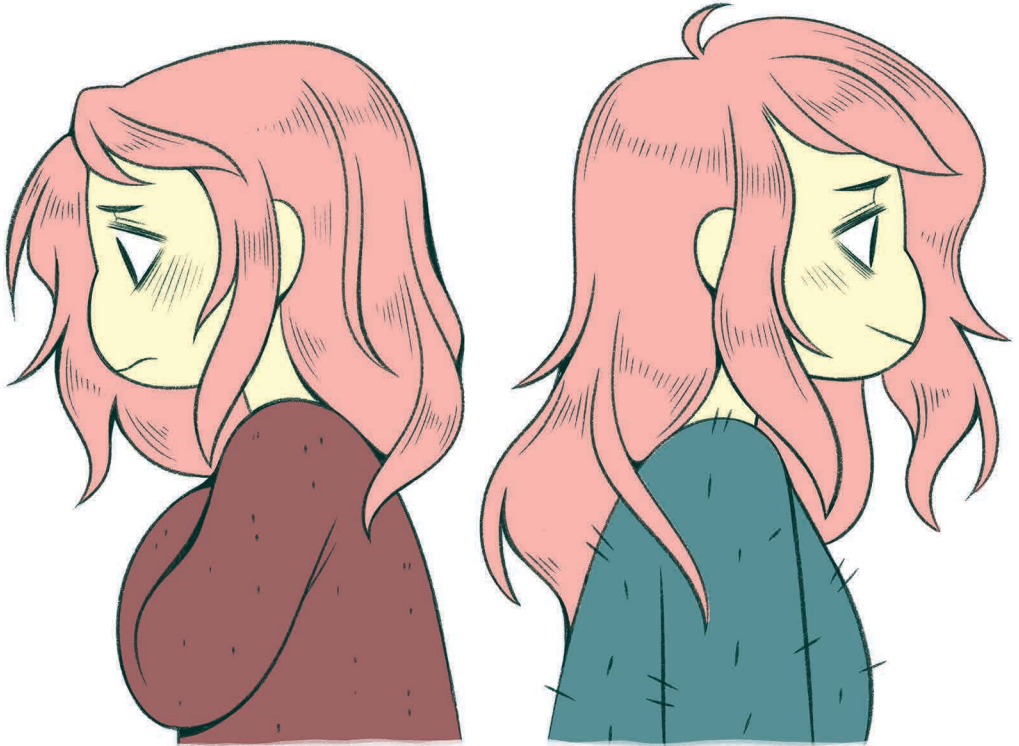
A PART OF ME
STILL YEARNS FOR
YOUR APPROVAL,
BUT I DON'T WANT
TO FEEL LIKE THAT
ANYMORE...



SO I'LL KEEP
REMINDING MYSELF
THAT HOW I FEEL
ABOUT MYSELF IS
MORE IMPORTANT
THAN WHAT YOU
THINK OF ME.



I DIDN'T REINVENT MYSELF AFTER I LEFT YOU



I COULD JUST NEVER BE MYSELF AROUND YOU

I WAS BADLY HURT,
BUT I SURVIVED.



I SWORE I WOULDN'T
LET MYSELF SUFFER
THAT WAY AGAIN...



...AND SO I WRAPPED
MYSELF IN A CHRYSALIS
AND SLEPT FOR A
THOUSAND YEARS.




I JUST NEEDED TIME, BUT THE WORLD DID NOT WAIT FOR ME...

AND WHEN I EMERGED
IN THE SPARKLING SUNLIGHT
OF A NEW MILLENNIUM,



I FOUND
THAT I WAS
ALONE.



EVERY TIME
I HURT SOMEONE, OR
WHEN SOMEONE ELSE
HURTS ME, I WANT TO
FIX THE PROBLEM
IMMEDIATELY.

I WANT TO MAKE
ALL THE BAD FEELINGS
DISAPPEAR, EVEN IF IT
MEANS DOWNPLAYING MY
OWN NEEDS.

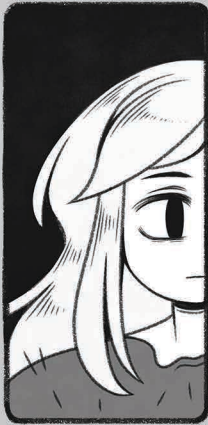
OF COURSE,
THAT JUST LEADS
TO MORE PROBLEMS
IN THE FUTURE.

RUSHING
RECONCILIATION OFTEN
LEADS TO A FRAGILE
PEACE THAT'S LIKELY
TO BREAK AGAIN.

IT'S OK
TO BE MAD AT
SOMEONE FOR
A WHILE.

IT'S OK
FOR THEM TO BE
MAD AT YOU FOR A
WHILE, TOO.

DON'T RUSH,
GIVE IT TIME.



WHY DOES SETTING AND ENFORCING A BOUNDARY MAKE ME FEEL LIKE SUCH AN ASSHOLE?

NO.

SERIOUSLY, I SAID NO.

I'M NOT BEING UNREASONABLE. YOU'RE ASKING FOR TOO MUCH.

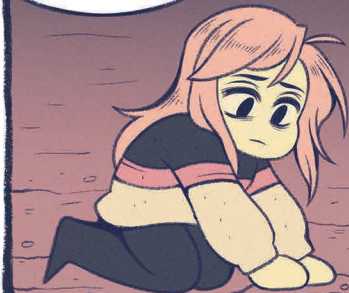
I'M ALLOWED TO SAY NO TO THINGS THAT MAKE ME UNCOMFORTABLE.

WHY ARE YOU BEING SO DIFFICULT?

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S BEING DIFFICULT...

DISRESPECTING MY BOUNDARIES SAYS MORE ABOUT YOU THAN IT DOES ABOUT ME.

I KEEP TRYING
TO PREPARE FOR
THE FUTURE...



I WANT TO
MAKE POSITIVE
CHANGES.



I WANT TO
KEEP MOVING
FORWARD.



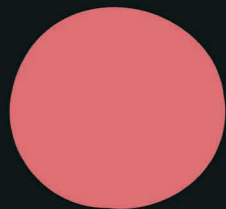
BUT WHAT
DOES THE FUTURE
EVEN LOOK LIKE
NOW?

EVERYTHING IS
SO DEVASTATINGLY
UNCERTAIN...

AND ANY
ATTEMPT TO PLAN
FEELS FUTILE

I WANT
SO BADLY TO
BECOME BETTER
THAN I AM.

BUT HOW
CAN I MAINTAIN THIS
TRAJECTORY WHEN IT
TAKES SO MUCH ALL
THE TIME?



SOMETIMES,
THE PRESSURE MAKES
ME WANT TO DESTROY
MYSELF.

JUST
BECAUSE I THINK IT
WOULD BE A RELIEF TO
PUT THE PIECES BACK
TOGETHER.

THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS
I NEED TO DO RIGHT NOW.



WHY AM I NOT DOING
ANY OF THEM?!



I'M MAKING EVERYTHING HARDER
FOR MYSELF IN THE LONG RUN.



...PLEASE JUST DO
SOMETHING!



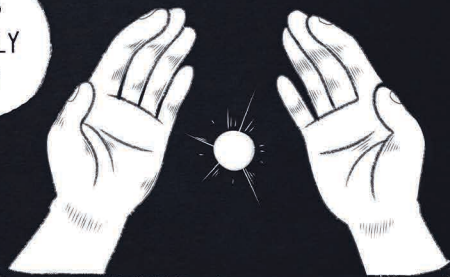
I'VE ALWAYS
THOUGHT OF MYSELF
AS BEING A STRONG
PERSON.

IT'S A CORE
PART OF MY
IDENTITY.

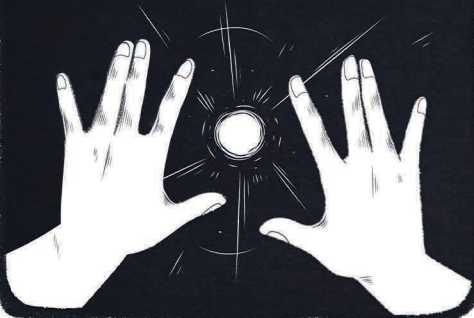


BUT IS
IT REALLY
TRUE?

WHAT MAKES ME STRONG?
IS IT MY DETERMINATION? MY
RESILIENCE? MY GRIT?



BUT EVERYONE HAS THOSE
QUALITIES. WHY SHOULD I DARE
TO BELIEVE I'M STRONG?



I THINK THAT
PROBABLY EVERYONE
IS STRONG.



JUST LIKE
EVERYONE
IS WEAK.

WHY AM I SO AVERSE TO ACCEPTING HELP? WHY DON'T I EVER REACH OUT?



I DON'T BELIEVE IT'S WEAK TO ASK FOR HELP AND I KNOW I'M DESERVING OF HELP SO THOSE CAN'T BE THE REASONS.



I THINK I JUST I DON'T KNOW WHAT I NEED OR HOW TO BE HELPED. I DON'T WANT TO SNAP AT A FRIEND IF THEY DO THE WRONG THING...



BECAUSE EVERYTHING FEELS LIKE THE WRONG THING RIGHT NOW... AND I DON'T WANT TO MAKE THAT THEIR PROBLEM.



SO MANY OF MY PEERS
ARE SUCCEEDING IN DOING THE
THINGS I WANT TO DO.



GUYS! I FINISHED MY COMIC! IT'S
COMING OUT THIS FALL!



WOAH I FINALLY GOT AN AGENT!
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!



MY SECOND BOOK WILL BE
AVAILABLE TO BUY FROM YOUR
LOCAL BOOKSTORE IN JULY!

I ASK MYSELF
'WHAT'S STOPPING ME?'



...WHAT IS STOPPING ME?!
WHY IS IT SO HARD FOR ME?



WHAT AM I DOING?! I'M
WASTING SO MUCH TIME!



LATELY, I'VE BEEN MINDLESSLY
SCROLLING SOCIAL MEDIA A LOT



I KNOW IT'S BAD FOR ME AND
THERE ARE SO MANY OTHER THINGS
I SHOULD BE DOING RIGHT NOW



EVEN SO, I CONTINUE TO REFRESH
MY FEEDS EVERY FIVE MINUTES



...I THINK I MIGHT BE
A BIT LONELY.



I AM UNFORTUNATELY QUITE
SUSCEPTIBLE TO BURNOUT

OMG I
DESPERATELY
NEED TO TAKE
A BREAK



FUN THINGS DRAIN ME JUST
AS MUCH AS WORK DOES

I PLAYED D&D
ALL DAY YESTERDAY
AND IT WAS SUPER FUN
BUT I REALLY DON'T
FEEL LIKE I'VE HAD
A DAY OFF



I WISH I COULD BE THE KIND
OF PERSON WHO WORKS ALL
WEEK AND THEN SPENDS THE
WEEKEND DOING FUN ACTIVITIES
BUT I JUST DON'T HAVE THE
MILAGE. THE ONLY WAY I CAN
TRULY RECHARGE IS TO BE
LEFT COMPLETELY ALONE
TO DO NOTHING AT ALL.

HOW LITTLE I'M ABLE TO DO
IS INCREDIBLY FRUSTRATING. I
WISH THINGS WERE DIFFERENT.



YOU ARE SUDDENLY
PRESENTED WITH A
NEW TASK TO DO!



YOU ACKNOWLEDGE
THAT DOING THE TASK
ASAP WOULD BE BEST



YOU FINALLY
START THE TASK
AND REALISE IT'S
NOT THAT BAD

WHY DID I PUT THIS
OFF FOR SO LONG???
I WASTED SO MUCH
TIME BEING STRESSED
ABOUT IT AAAAAA



WHY DO I DO
THIS TO MYSELF
EVERY SINGLE TIME
AAAAAA I SUCK!



THE TASK IS NOW
URGENT. PANIC AND
HATE YOURSELF FOR
BEING A FOOL



YOU GIVE IN TO PROCRASTINATION
(USUALLY THIS MEANS MINDLESSLY
SCROLLING TWITTER WHILE
FEELING STRESSED OUT)



ANXIETY
KICKS IN

YOU DON'T KNOW
WHAT YOU'RE
AFRAID OF

I NEED TO
STOP SCROLLING AND
GET TO WORK...



I WILL JUST
TELL MYSELF FIRMLY
WHAT TO DO...

AND THEN I
WILL SIMPLY DO
WHAT I'M TOLD.



THE GENIUS
THING ABOUT THIS IS
THAT ALL CHOICE IS
REMOVED.

I JUST NEED
TO FOLLOW THE
INSTRUCTION.

IT'S FOOLPROOF!



(IT DIDN'T
WORK)



WHAT'S
STOPPING ME
THIS TIME?

I KNOW I'M
NOT AFRAID OF
FAILURE,

I'M ACTUALLY
CONFIDENT THAT I'LL
DO A GOOD JOB ONCE
I GET STARTED.



OH!

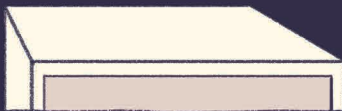


I THINK IT'S
BECAUSE...

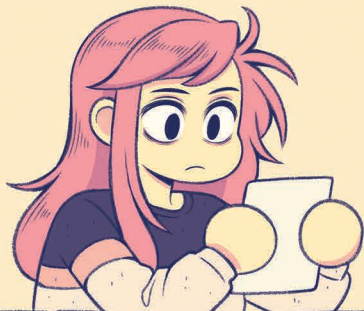
...THIS TASK
REMINDS ME OF MY
PAST FAILURE.



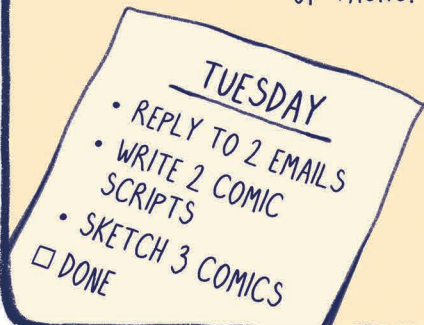
AND THOSE
MISTAKES STILL
HAUNT ME.



ALL I HAVE TO DO...



...IS THIS SHORT LIST
OF TASKS.

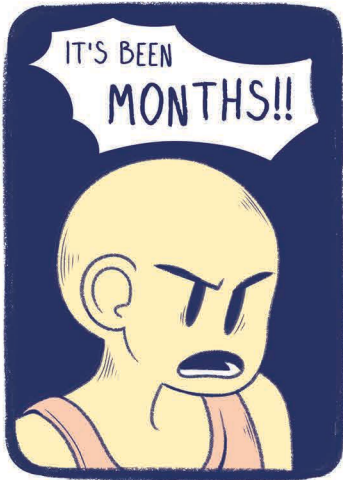
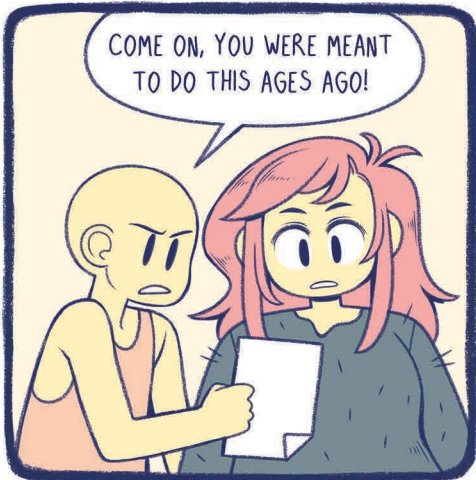


LOOKING AT THIS LIST,
IT SHOULD BE EASY.



SO WHY CAN'T I DO IT?





IT'S DIFFICULT FOR ME
TO FEEL GENUINELY EXCITED
ABOUT ANYTHING...

GOOD
NEWS



OH GOD

HOW SHOULD
I RESPOND

W-WHAT
SHOULD I DO

THIS MEANS
THAT I HAVE TO
DO SOMETHING

I'M NOT
READY FOR
THIS AAA

THIS IS
A LOT

IS THIS
EVEN REAL

I WANT TO
RUN AWAY

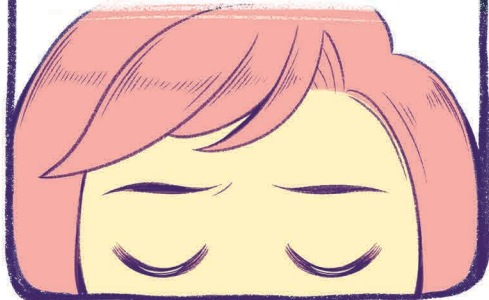
OH GOD


WHAT SHOULD BE GIDDINESS
QUICKLY TURNS INTO ANXIETY.

I TRY NOT TO FOCUS ON THE
NERVOUSNESS BUT I CAN'T REASON
IT AWAY EITHER.



ONE DAY, I HOPE MY BRAIN
CAN CHILL OUT AND STOP TURNING
EVERYTHING INTO FEAR...





IT FEELS LIKE
EVERYTHING GOOD
SLIDES OFF ME.

I KNOW WHAT
I'M SUPPOSED TO
BE FEELING...

BUT THE
EMOTIONS JUST
AREN'T THERE.

I CAN DO A
GOOD ENOUGH JOB
OF GOING THROUGH
THE MOTIONS.

BUT I
HATE FEELING
SO ABSENT.

I WANT
TO FEEL WHAT
YOU FEEL.



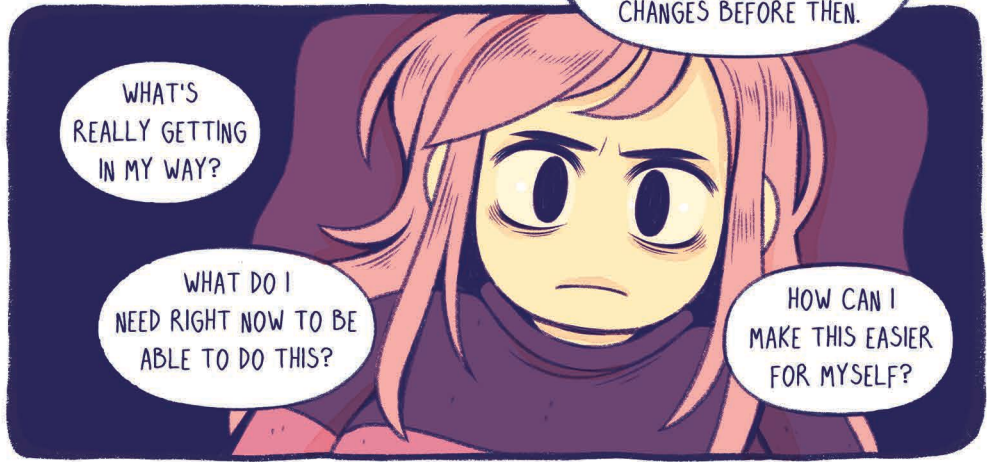
I STILL KNOW WHO I AM.



IT'S CLEAR THAT I'M STRUGGLING TO DO THIS.

THE ONLY THING I WANT TO DO IS TO PUT IT OFF FOR A WHILE

BUT I WON'T MAGICALLY BE ABLE TO DO IT LATER UNLESS SOMETHING CHANGES BEFORE THEN.



WHAT'S REALLY GETTING IN MY WAY?

WHAT DO I NEED RIGHT NOW TO BE ABLE TO DO THIS?

HOW CAN I MAKE THIS EASIER FOR MYSELF?

PEOPLE ALWAYS SAY

JUST KEEP TRYING
YOUR BEST!!



AND I AM TRYING MY BEST.
I ALWAYS HAVE. I ALWAYS WILL.



BUT I'M ALSO VERY TIRED.



IT SHOULD BE OK TO NOT PUT
IN 100% EFFORT ALL THE TIME.



I'M STILL YOUNG,
BUT IT FEELS LIKE I'M
RUNNING OUT OF TIME
AND THAT I'M SO FAR
BEHIND ALL MY PEERS.



I'M SURE SOME PEOPLE LOOK AT ME AND HAVE
THE SAME CONCERNS. IT'S ALL PRETTY SILLY.

HOW WILL I EVER BE ON THEIR LEVEL?



SO I'M TRYING
TO STOP USING OTHER
PEOPLE AS A METRIC
FOR MYSELF.



MY PACE IS
DIFFERENT AND I'M
OK WITH THAT!

I'M GETTING BETTER AT
PLANNING MY WEEKS OUT AND
STICKING TO A SCHEDULE!



I'VE BEEN TRYING TO JUST TAKE
THINGS ONE WEEK AT A TIME SO THAT
I DON'T GET OVERWHELMED



AAAAAAHHHHHHH

BECAUSE
I DON'T ACTUALLY
HAVE ONE!!!

OH MY GOD,
I'M BARELY JUST
STAYING AFLOAT

DON'T ASK ME ABOUT MY
LONG-TERM PLAN, THOUGH!



WHAT AM
I WORKING
TOWARDS?!

WHAT'S
MY FIVE YEAR
PLAN???

OH MY
GOOODDD

I'M STILL
WASTING SO
MUCH TIME!!

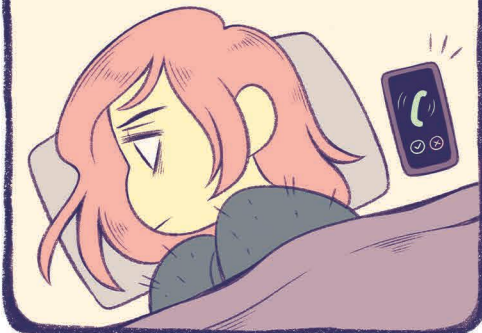
I'VE BEEN TRYING DESPERATELY
TO PROVE THAT I'M COMPETENT



I WANT TO BE SOMEONE THAT
OTHER PEOPLE CAN RELY ON



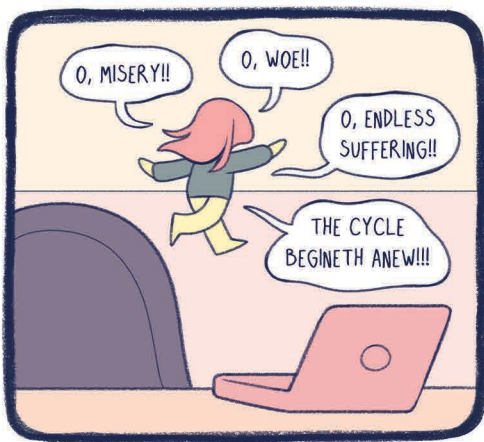
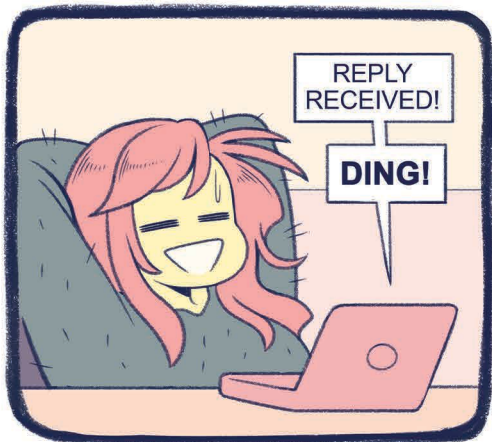
I THINK IT'S BECAUSE I WASN'T
VERY RELIABLE IN THE PAST



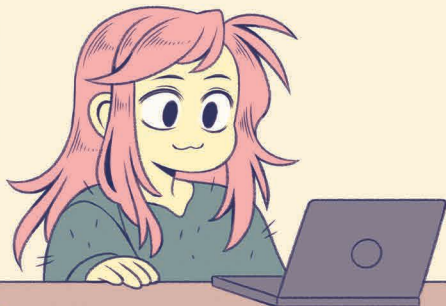
AND I'M TERRIFIED THAT PEOPLE
STILL PERCEIVE ME THAT WAY.



REPLYING TO AN EMAIL I'VE BEEN PUTTING OFF FOR ~~WEEKS:~~ MONTHS



OK, NOW I JUST NEED
TO WAIT FOR THEM TO SEND
ME THAT FILE...



IT WOULD BE MORE
EFFICIENT IF I DID SOMETHING
ELSE IN THE MEANTIME...

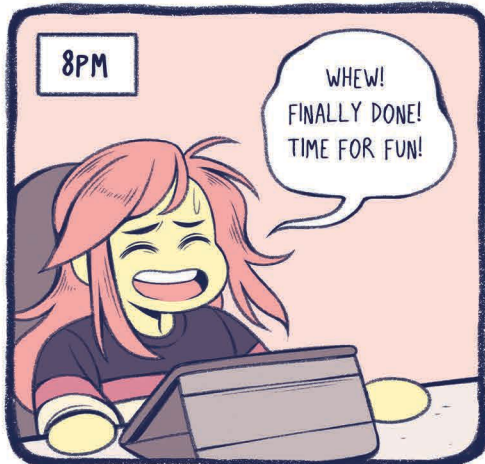


BUT I DON'T WANT TO
START A WHOLE NEW TASK ONLY
TO HAVE TO STOP SOON!



***2 HOURS OF UTTERLY
WASTED TIME LATER...***





I FEEL LIKE I'M ALWAYS TAKING THREE STEPS FORWARD



...AND TWO STEPS BACK.



IT'S VERY INEFFICIENT, BUT IT'S ALL I CAN DO RIGHT NOW



I'M SO OVERWORKED I DON'T KNOW
HOW TO TAKE A BREAK ANYMORE.

I'M FORCING
MYSELF TO PLAY
A VIDEO GAME



OTHERWISE
I'D JUST SIT
HERE AND DO
NOTHING

I NEED TO BE USING THIS TIME TO
RELAX AND HAVE FUN WHILE I CAN

WHY
CAN'T
I ENJOY
THIS



WHAT'S
WRONG
WITH ME

BUT BEING PRODUCTIVE HAS NOW
BECOME ALMOST THE ONLY THING
THAT MAKES ME FEEL AT EASE.

I WANT TO
WORK ON MY
COMIC



MAYBE
I SHOULD
ANSWER
SOME
EMAILS

I DIDN'T EVEN REALISE IT WAS SO
BAD UNTIL RECENTLY. I HOPE I CAN
GET OVER THIS MINDSET SOON.



I TRIED SO
HARD TO GROW

NOW I'M
EVEN WEAKER
THAN BEFORE

AND I'M
TANGLED BEYOND
BELIEF...

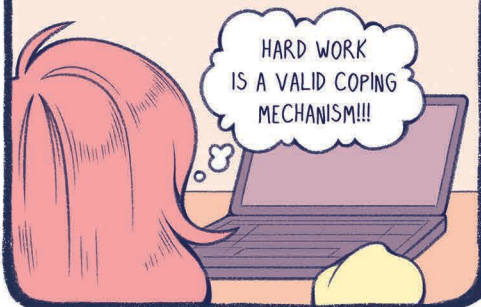
BUT I DID
TOO MUCH
TOO FAST.

IF I HAD SLOWED
DOWN, WOULD I STILL
FEEL SO ETIOLATED?

THIS YEAR, I'VE BEEN FIGHTING
TOOTH AND NAIL TO STAY ON TOP
OF MY MENTAL HEALTH



I'VE BEEN DETERMINED TO
BRUTE FORCE MY WAY THROUGH
BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY



I DIDN'T GIVE MYSELF TIME TO
PROCESS ANYTHING... I DIDN'T TAKE
BREAKS WHEN I NEEDED THEM.



PANDEMIC GLOBAL TRAUMA MONSTERS
RACISM BIGOTRY RECESSION IN POWER
CLIMATE EMERGENCY DEATH SEPARATED FROM
LOVED ONES

AND IT'S FINALLY CAUGHT
UP WITH ME.



BURNOUT AND MISERY!!!

IT'S SO FRUSTRATING
TO SEE MYSELF SLIDE BACK
INTO OLD BAD HABITS.



SQUEEEEEAK

I'M AVOIDING
READING ALL OF
MY DMS AGAIN,

I'VE STOPPED
REPLYING TO THE
COMMENTS,

I'M BEHIND
WITH ANSWERING
MY EMAILS

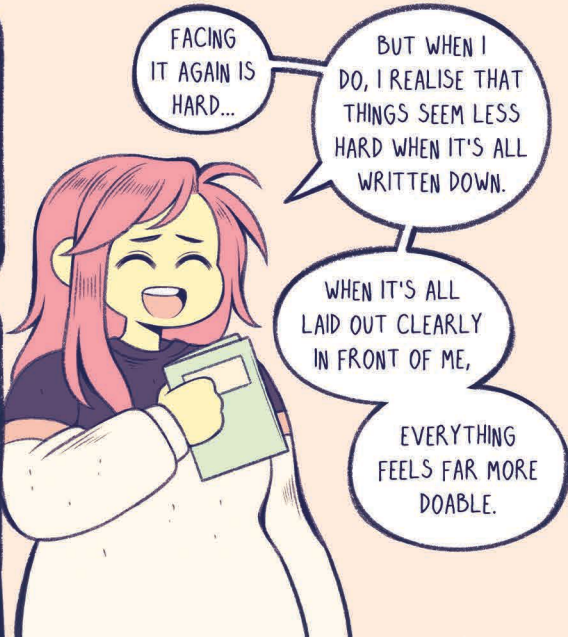
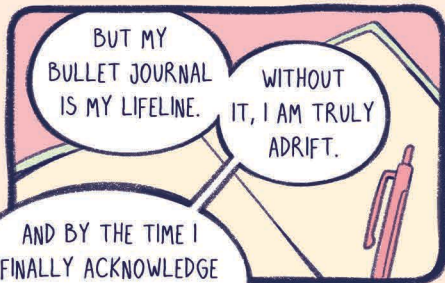
AND I DON'T
WANT TO TALK TO
MY FRIENDS...

I KNOW
I CAN'T AFFORD
TO BE DOING THIS
AGAIN...

NEST OF
COMFORT

SAD BLANKET
BURRITO

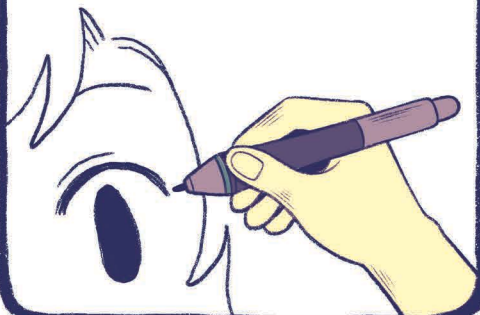
BUT IT ALL
FEELS LIKE TOO
MUCH TO FACE
RIGHT NOW...



TODAY IS A BAD ART DAY.



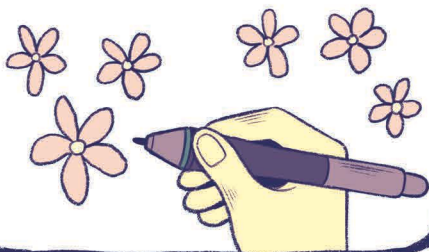
I FEEL LIKE EVERYTHING I DRAW IS WRONG AND I CAN'T FIX IT.



MY DRAWING SPEED IS ALSO EMBARRASSINGLY SLOW.



BUT I WON'T LET IT AFFECT MY SELF-ESTEEM! THIS IS A FUNK AND IT WILL PASS!





JUST
SAY HI.



JUST
OPEN THE
APP


AND SAY
SORRY FOR BEING
SO UNAVAILABLE
LATELY.

YOU
CAN DO IT.

NOBODY
WILL BE MAD
AT YOU.


AND IF
THEY ARE, IT'S
FAIR ENOUGH






THROUGHOUT MY LIFE,
I'VE BUILT A LIBRARY OF
STOCK PHRASES THAT I USE
OFTEN IN CONVERSATION.

I WORRY THAT PEOPLE
THINK I'M BEING INSINCERE
WHEN I USE THEM, BUT
THAT'S NOT THE CASE.



IT'S JUST THAT
I'VE FOUND THE RIGHT
COMBINATION OF WORDS
TO EXPRESS WHAT I'M
TRYING TO SAY.

BIG MOOD



I STILL MEAN THE THINGS
I SAY, IT'S JUST EASIER FOR ME
TO COMMUNICATE THIS WAY AND
IT HELPS ME TO FEEL MORE
CONFIDENT AND LESS ANXIOUS.

WHenever we talk about mental health, it's inevitable that self care will come up.



BUT WHAT IS SELF CARE?



PLAYING VIDEOGAMES!

TAKING A LONG BATH!

TREATING YOURSELF!

AAAAAAA



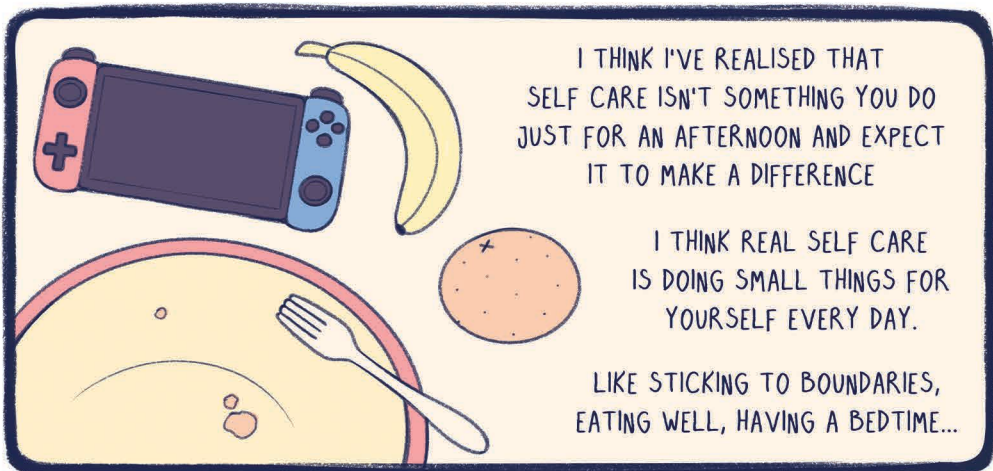
WHEN I TRY TO PAMPER MYSELF, I JUST END UP MORE TIRED.

I FEEL LIKE I'M WASTING TIME...

AND IT'S ALSO HARD TO PRACTICE SELF CARE

WHEN YOU DON'T WANT TO DO ANYTHING.





I THINK I'VE REALISED THAT
SELF CARE ISN'T SOMETHING YOU DO
JUST FOR AN AFTERNOON AND EXPECT
IT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

I THINK REAL SELF CARE
IS DOING SMALL THINGS FOR
YOURSELF EVERY DAY.

LIKE STICKING TO BOUNDARIES,
EATING WELL, HAVING A BEDTIME...



IT'S NOT PUSHING
YOURSELF TO THE POINT
WHERE YOU NEED TO TAKE
A SELF CARE DAY...

BECAUSE
YOU'RE LOOKING
AFTER YOURSELF
ALL THE TIME.

WENT TO BED
ON TIME!

I'VE HEARD IT SAID THAT
GRATEFULNESS IS THE MOST INTEGRAL
EMOTION TO LONG-TERM HAPPINESS.



THAT SOUNDS
KIND OF TRUE...

AND I
HAVE SO MUCH
TO BE GRATEFUL
FOR...



BUT I CAN'T GET BEHIND THE
IDEA THAT GRATITUDE IS A CURE—ALL
FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS.



THE IMPLICATION
THAT PEOPLE ARE DEPRESSED
BECAUSE THEY AREN'T GRATEFUL
ENOUGH IS DISMISSIVE, REDUCTIVE
AND HARMFUL.

IT'S A GOOD
EXAMPLE OF TOXIC
POSITIVITY!



FOR MANY OF US, GRATITUDE IS ASSOCIATED WITH GUILT.



YOU SHOULD BE MORE GRATEFUL!!!

OH GOD,
I'M NOT GRATEFUL
ENOUGH

I'M A
TERRIBLE
PERSON



WHAT AM I
SUPPOSED TO
DO NOW

HOW DO I
SHOW THEM I'M
GRATEFUL

AAAAAA

MENTAL HEALTH
SPIRALS ARE USUALLY
ALL-CONSUMING AND
BEYOND OUR IMMEDIATE
CONTROL.



AND JUST
BECAUSE WE CAN'T FOCUS
ON THE GOOD THINGS IN THOSE
MOMENTS DOESN'T MEAN WE
DON'T APPRECIATE THEM WHEN
WE'RE MORE ABLE TO.

OBVIOUSLY,
IT'S IMPORTANT TO
BE GRATEFUL...

BUT REMINDING
SOMEONE OF THAT DURING
A MOMENT OF CRISIS IS NOT
A GOOD SUBSTITUTE FOR
EMPATHY!



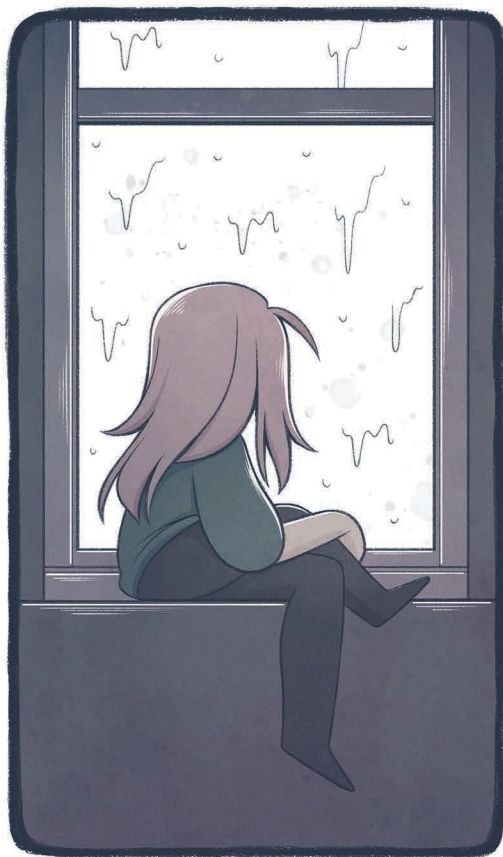
I AM SO,
SO GRATEFUL FOR
EVERYTHING GOOD
IN MY LIFE,

BUT IT DOESN'T
CHANGE OR MAKE ME
FORGET THE THINGS
THAT ARE BAD.

AND TO
ACT OTHERWISE IS
DISINGENUOUS.

IT JUST FEELS
LIKE ANOTHER WAY FOR
PEOPLE TO SHAME US FOR
HAVING MENTAL HEALTH
PROBLEMS.



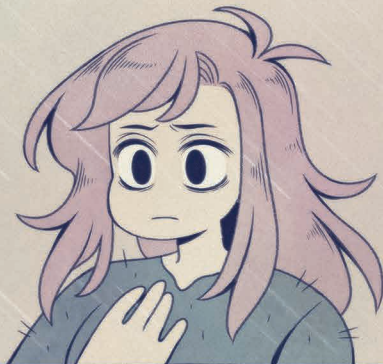


NOTHING MAKES ME FEEL AT EASE
QUITE LIKE HEAVY RAIN AGAINST A
WINDOW IN A WARM, DARK ROOM.

I CAN FEEL THE PRESSURE
RISING. THE STORM THAT I'VE NEEDED
FOR SO LONG IS FINALLY COMING.



A MONSOON TO HEAL MY SOUL.



BUT WHEREFORE ART THOU,
SWEET WATER? WHY WILLN'T THEE
TRICKLE DOWN MINE CHEEK?



ANOTHER FORECAST
PROVEN TO BE FALSE. AND SO,
THE DROUGHT CONTINUES





I'VE BEEN
YEARNING FOR
SOMETHING



I THOUGHT THAT
I WAS JUST DESPERATE
FOR A BREAK.



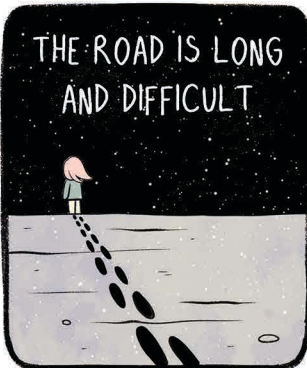
BUT NOW I
WONDER IF WHAT I'M
REALLY MISSING IS
STIMULATION.

I HAVEN'T
FELT VERY ALIVE
THIS YEAR.

HEALING HAS
NO TIMELINE



THE ROAD IS LONG
AND DIFFICULT



YOU WILL LOSE
YOUR WAY OVER
AND OVER AGAIN

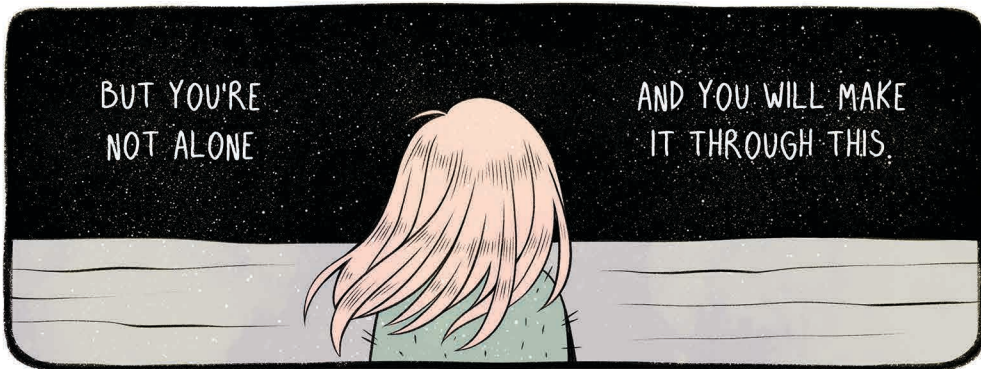


AND YOU MAY FIND THAT SOME OF
THE PEOPLE YOU USED TO RELY ON
CAN'T SUPPORT YOU ANYMORE...



BUT YOU'RE
NOT ALONE

AND YOU WILL MAKE
IT THROUGH THIS.



I'VE LEARNED FROM THE
MISTAKES OF MY PAST



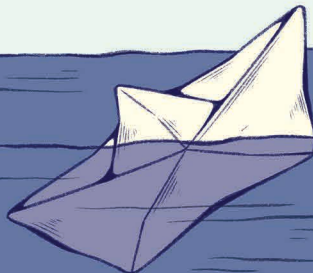
BUT IF I COULD
DO IT ALL AGAIN, OR
IF I WERE TESTED...



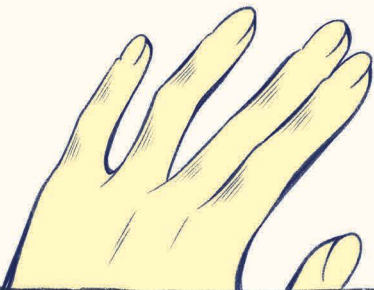
WOULD I REALLY BE ABLE
TO SHOW IMPROVEMENT?



OR WOULD I STILL MAKE
THE SAME MISTAKES?



MY FINGERNAILS PROVIDE A FAIRLY ACCURATE INDICATOR OF HOW I'M DOING IN GENERAL.



WHEN I'M IN A BAD PLACE, I COMPULSIVELY BITE AND CUT MY NAILS AS MUCH AS I CAN



AT SOME POINT WHEN THINGS ARE GOOD AGAIN, I'LL SUDDENLY REALISE THEY'VE GROWN BACK

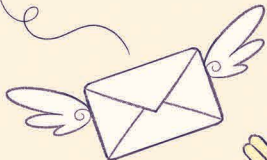


IT'S PRETTY NICE TO HAVE A VISUAL REMINDER THAT I'M OK.





AN AMAZING OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS ITSELF TO ME



OH GOD, WHAT IF I SCREW THIS UP?



...WHAT IF I DON'T SCREW THIS UP?



LATELY, I'VE BEEN
LASER FOCUSED.



I'VE BEEN
HITTING PROJECT
DEADLINES...

TALKING
TO DOZENS OF
PEOPLE...

ORGANISING
A GROUP...

I'VE BEEN
BEING A RESPONSIBLE
PERSON WHO OTHERS
CAN RELY ON.



AHHH, I'M
FINALLY BECOMING
WHO I ALWAYS KNEW
I COULD BE!!

I WISH I
COULD BE LIKE THIS
ALL THE TIME...

BUT I
CAN'T.

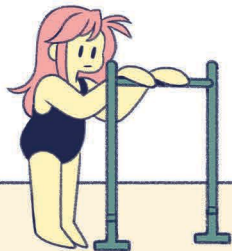


I KNOW THE
BURNOUT FROM THIS
WILL BE BAD.

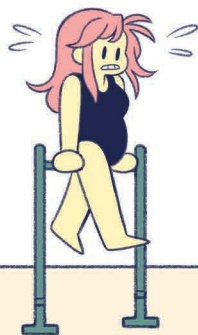
I KNOW
THAT I CAN'T
AVOID IT.

BUT I'M STILL
GOING TO ENJOY IT
WHILE IT LASTS!

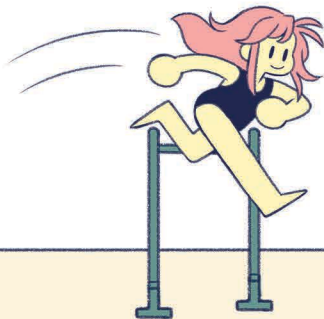
FOR THE LAST FEW MONTHS,
I'VE BEEN STRIVING TOWARDS A
VERY CONCRETE GOAL



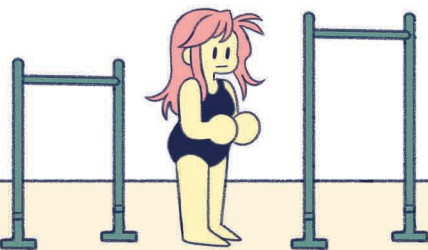
IT'S TAKEN A LOT OF TIME
BUT I'M ALMOST DONE

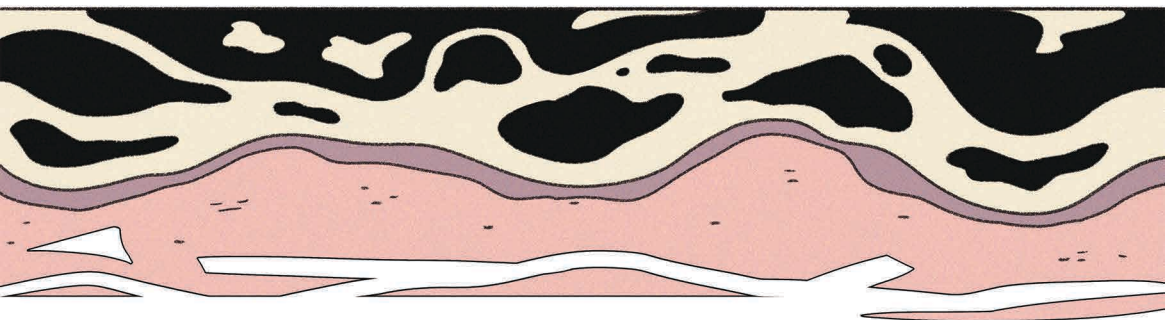


I'M HAPPY TO HAVE ACHIEVED
SOMETHING SO AMBITIOUS



BUT IT'S SCARY TO KNOW
THAT THIS IS THE NEW BAR FOR
NEXT TIME AND THAT THEY'LL
ONLY GET HIGHER FROM HERE.





ONE DAY, I WILL MAKE ALL OF THIS RIGHT.

I KNOW THAT
A RELAPSE DOESN'T
UNDO PROGRESS.

I KNOW THAT
IT'S NATURAL FOR A
TROUGH TO FOLLOW
A PEAK.


THIS KIND
OF SITUATION
DOESN'T CATCH ME
SO OFF-GUARD
ANYMORE,

SO I KNOW
I'LL FIND A WAY
TO COPE NOW, AS I
HAVE MANY TIMES
BEFORE.

BUT EVEN
KNOWING ALL OF THAT,
IT STILL SUCKS TO BE
BACK HERE AGAIN.

ESPECIALLY
WHEN I'VE DRAGGED
MYSELF OUT OF THIS
MISERABLE PLACE SO
MANY TIMES...

..AND
KNOWING THAT IT'S
ONLY A MATTER OF
TIME UNTIL I'M HERE
AGAIN



EVERY SO OFTEN, I REMEMBER HOW HARD I'VE WORKED TO GET TO THIS POINT...

IT WAS AN UNCOMFORTABLE, MESSY PROCESS




AND IT TOOK SUCH A LONG TIME

BUT LOOKING BACK ON ALL THAT PAIN, I CAN SEE HOW FAR I'VE COME.

I'VE LEARNED THAT I CAN RELY ON MYSELF

AND OPEN MYSELF UP TO OTHERS



AND IT'S SAD THAT I GIVE MYSELF SUCH A HARD TIME SO OFTEN

BECAUSE IN MOMENTS LIKE THESE, WHEN I CAN THINK ABOUT MYSELF OBJECTIVELY,

I'M PROUD OF WHO I'VE BECOME.

I USED
TO LONG FOR
CLEAR SKIES.

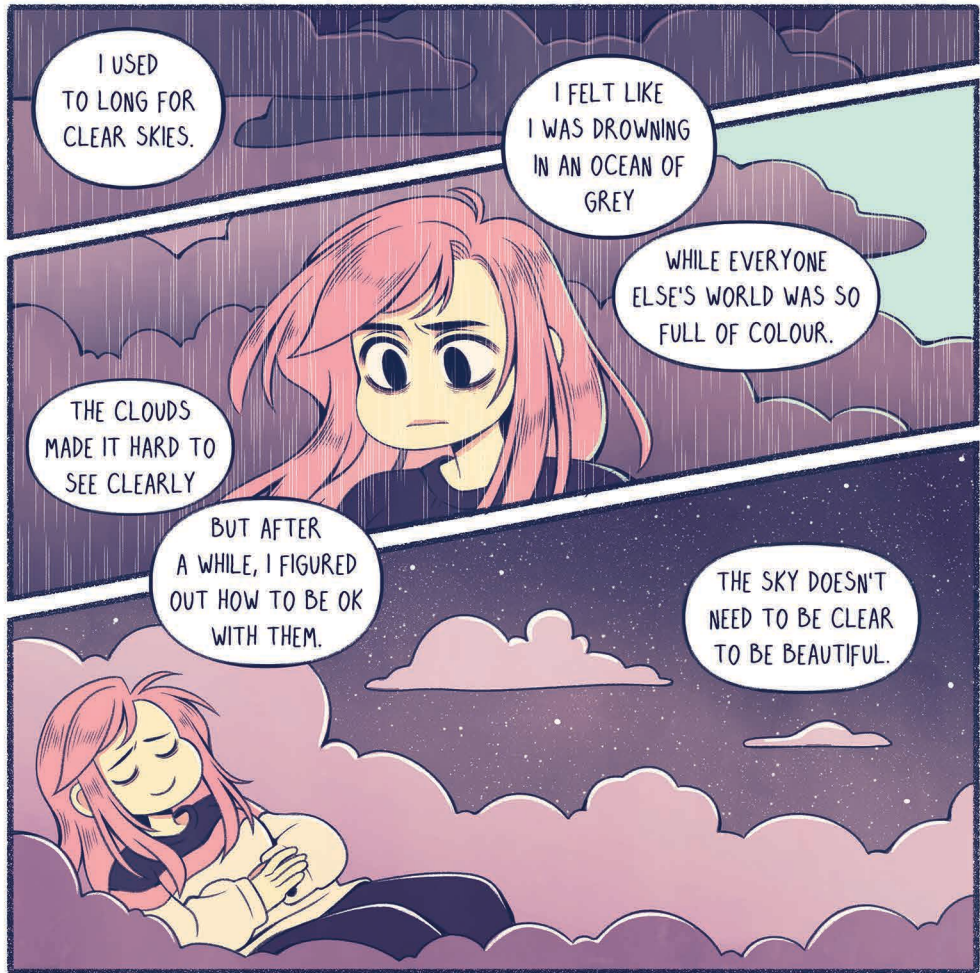
I FELT LIKE
I WAS DROWNING
IN AN OCEAN OF
GREY

WHILE EVERYONE
ELSE'S WORLD WAS SO
FULL OF COLOUR.

THE CLOUDS
MADE IT HARD TO
SEE CLEARLY

BUT AFTER
A WHILE, I FIGURED
OUT HOW TO BE OK
WITH THEM.

THE SKY DOESN'T
NEED TO BE CLEAR
TO BE BEAUTIFUL.





THANKS SO MUCH FOR READING!

I'M BEX, AN AUTISTIC + ADHD COMIC ARTIST. MAKING THESE COMICS OVER THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS HAS BEEN A VERY INTERESTING BUT ULTIMATELY THERAPEUTIC PROCESS OF SELF-DISCOVERY FOR ME. I HOPE THAT YOU WERE ABLE TO ENJOY THEM TOO!

LAVENDER CLOUDS IS AN ONGOING SERIES. YOU CAN READ MORE ON INSTAGRAM, TWITTER, TAPAS, FACEBOOK AND PATREON! I POST MY COMICS ONLINE UNDER THE HANDLE @SCHNUMN



YOUR SKY DOESN'T NEED TO BE CLEAR TO BE BEAUTIFUL

LIFE IS HARD, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT FEELS LIKE THE DECK IS STACKED AGAINST YOU. BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE MISERABLE. LAVENDER CLOUDS IS A COLLECTION OF AUTOBIO STRIPS DEPICTING THE STRUGGLES, PITFALLS AND COPING STRATEGIES OF LIVING WITH ADHD, AUTISM AND MENTAL ILLNESS IN A WORLD THAT DOESN'T SEEM TO UNDERSTAND YOU.

THIS EARNEST, RAW AND ULTIMATELY HOPEFUL MEMOIR AIMS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT EVEN THOUGH SOMETIMES, OUR STRUGGLES CAN FEEL ENDLESS AND INESCAPABLE, IT IS STILL POSSIBLE TO LEARN TO ACCEPT YOURSELF FOR WHO YOU ARE AND FIND BALANCE AND HAPPINESS IN THE LIFE THAT YOU HAVE.

