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Almudena has always wondered about the dad she never met.

Now, with her white mother headed on a once-in-a-lifetime trip, she's left alone with her Guatemalan father for an entire summer. Xavier seems happy to see her, but he expects her to live in (and help fix up) his old, broken-down brownstone. And all along, she must navigate the language barrier of his rapid-fire Spanish—which she doesn't speak.

As Almudena tries to adjust to this new reality, she gets to know the residents of Xavier's Latin American neighborhood. Each member of the community has their own joys and heartbreaks as well as their own strong opinions on how this young Latina should talk, dress, and behave. Some can't understand why she doesn't know where she comes from. Others think she's "not brown enough" to fit in.

But time is running out for Almudena and Xavier to get to know each other, and the key to their connection may ultimately lie in bringing all these different elements together. Fixing a broken building is one thing, but turning these stubborn individuals into a found family might take more than this one summer.

VERSIFY
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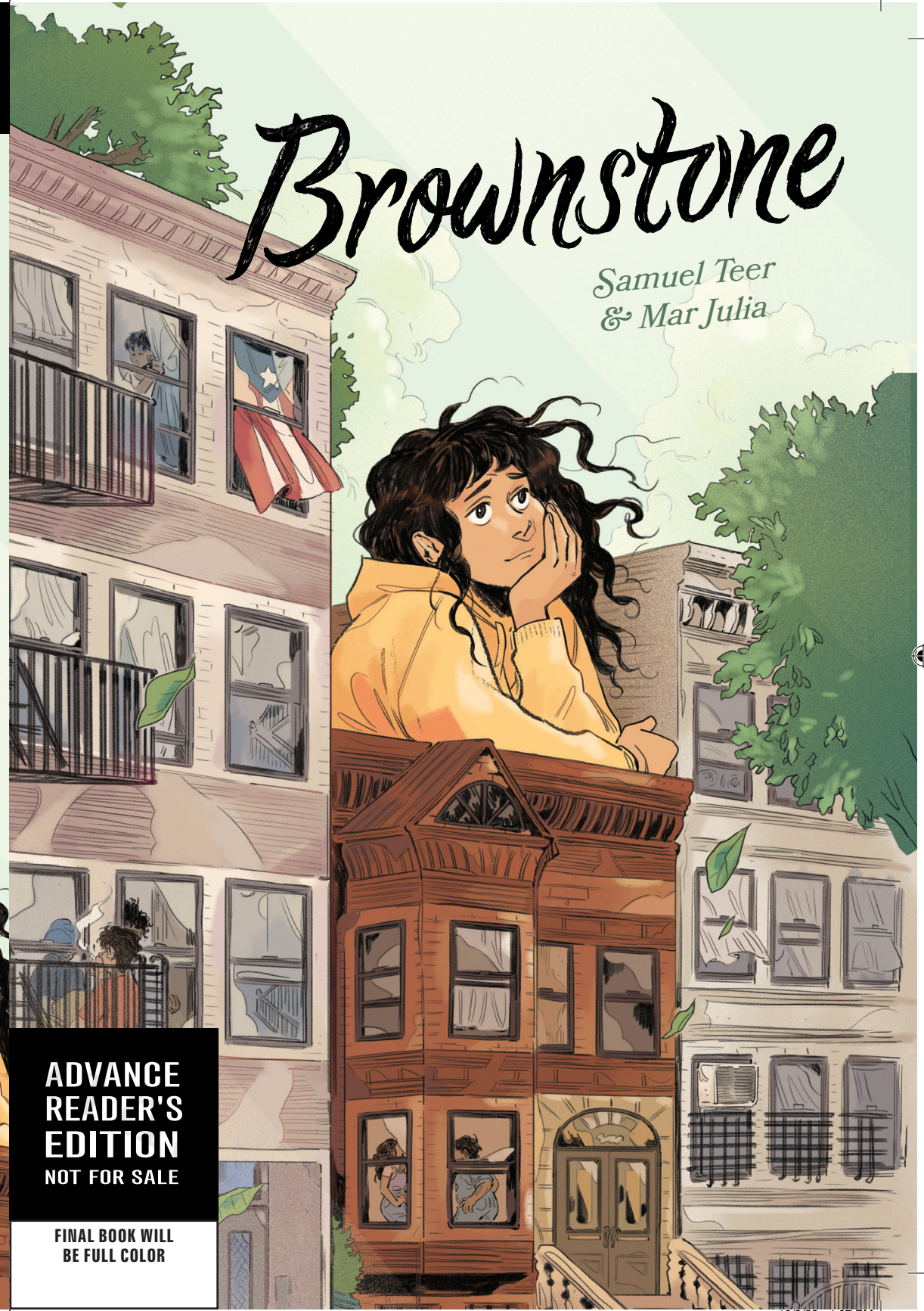
Brownstone

Teer / Julia



Brownstone

Samuel Teer
& Mar Julia



**ADVANCE
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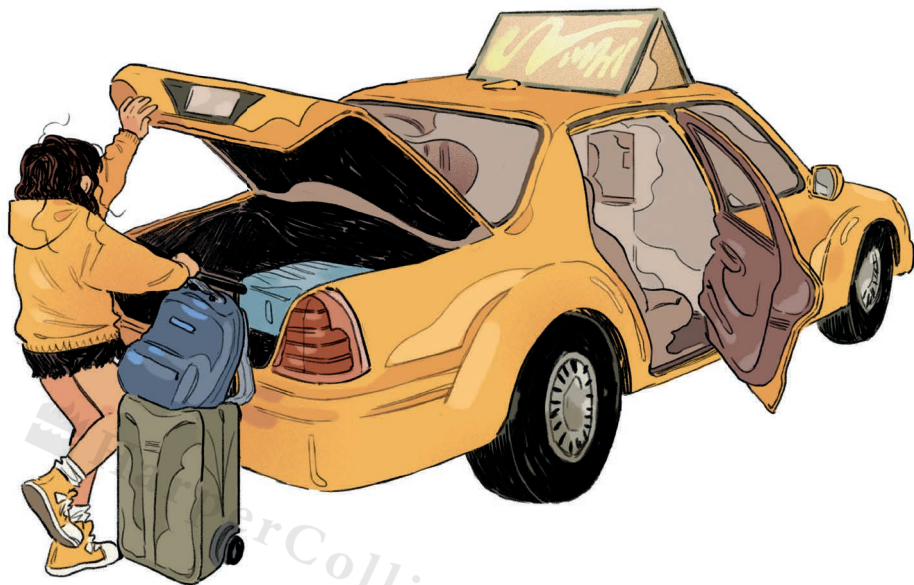
**FINAL BOOK WILL
BE FULL COLOR**

Brownstone

Written by **Samuel Teer**

Illustrated by **Mar Julia**

Color design by **Ashanti Fortson**



 **VERSIFY**

An Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers



For Mom and Dad —S.T.

*For my mom, Joanne,
and my abuela, Diamela —M.J.*

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Brownstone

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First Edition

BOOK ONE

Chapter One

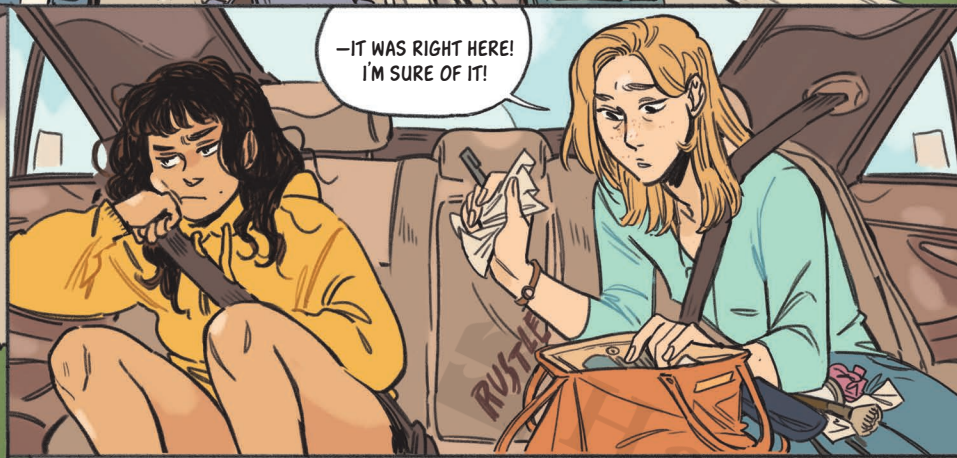


JUNE 1995



WHERE IS IT?
I JUST SAW IT THE OTHER DAY—

BLINK
BLINK



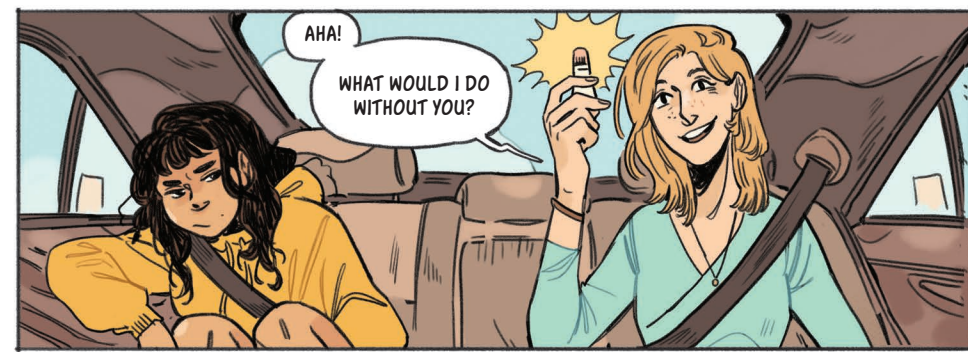
-IT WAS RIGHT HERE!
I'M SURE OF IT!

RUSTLE



INTERIOR POCKET,
LEFT SIDE.

THIS MIGHT BE THE WORST
SUMMER OF MY ENTIRE LIFE.



AHA!
WHAT WOULD I DO
WITHOUT YOU?



THINK
FORGET TO PAY THE
MORTGAGE, GET
EVICTED, AND
BECOME HOMELESS.



THAT'S
ACCURATE.



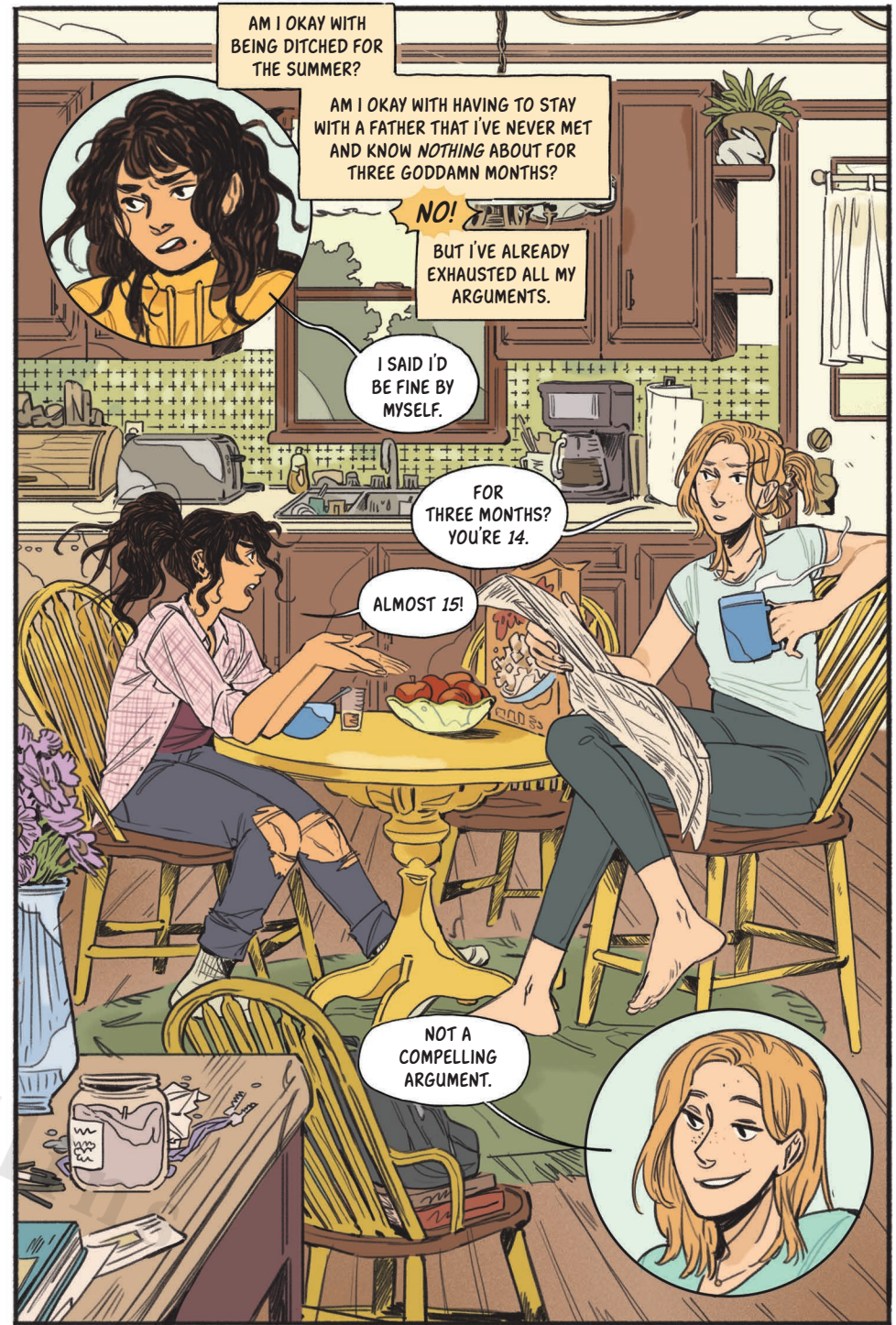
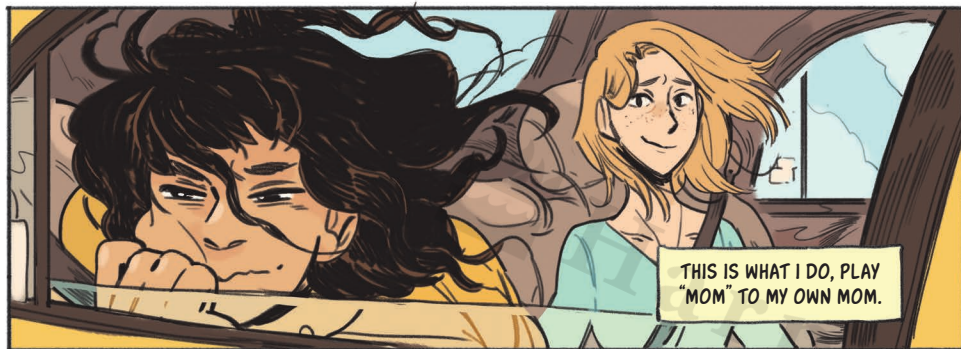
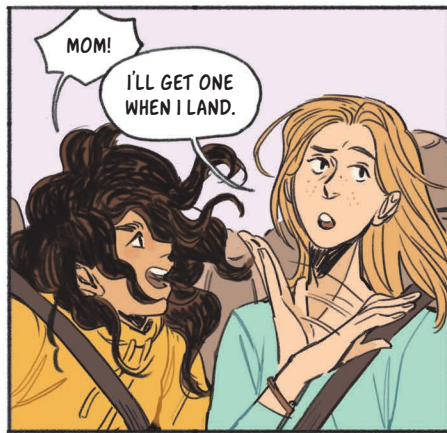
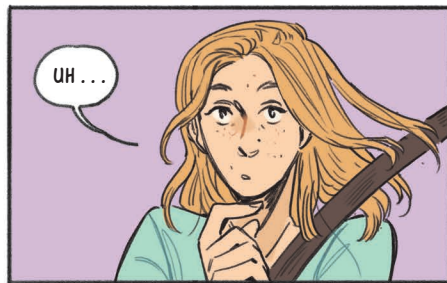
WASH

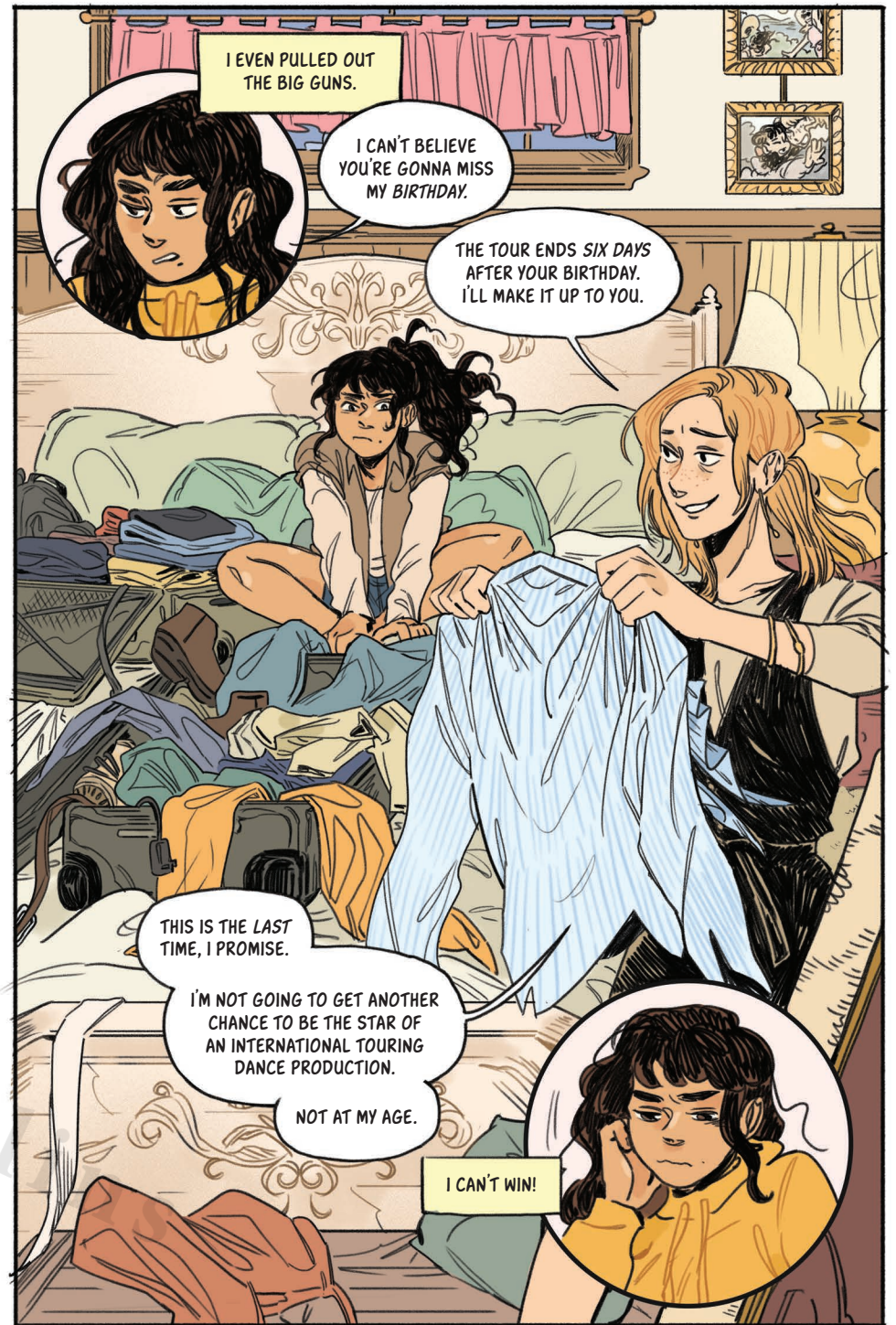


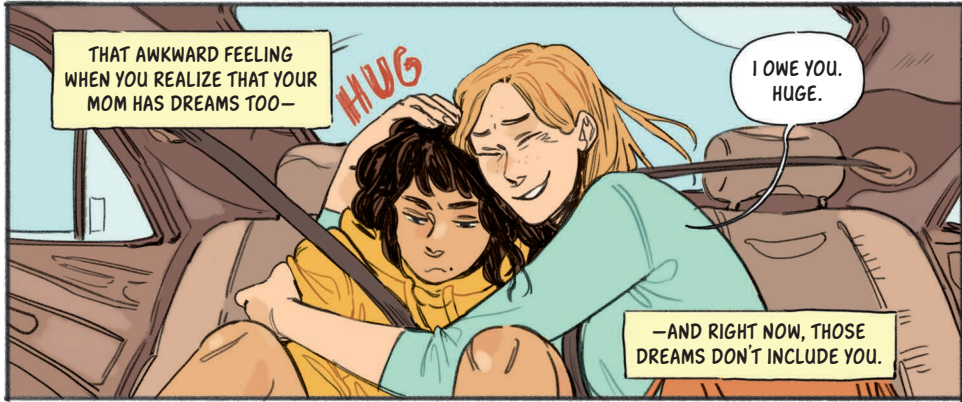
YOUR HAIR
WILL GET ALL
BLOWN OUT.



WASH





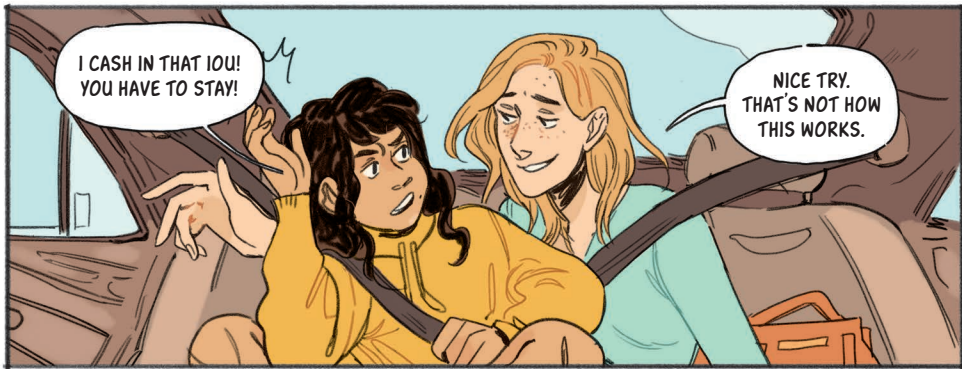


THAT AWKWARD FEELING WHEN YOU REALIZE THAT YOUR MOM HAS DREAMS TOO—

HUG

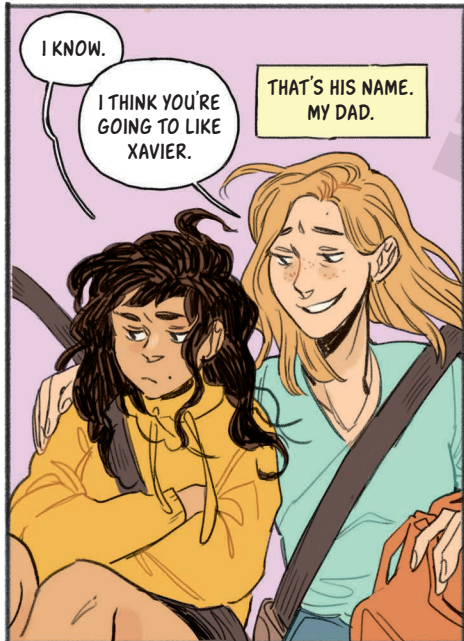
I OWE YOU. HUGE.

—AND RIGHT NOW, THOSE DREAMS DON'T INCLUDE YOU.



I CASH IN THAT IOU! YOU HAVE TO STAY!

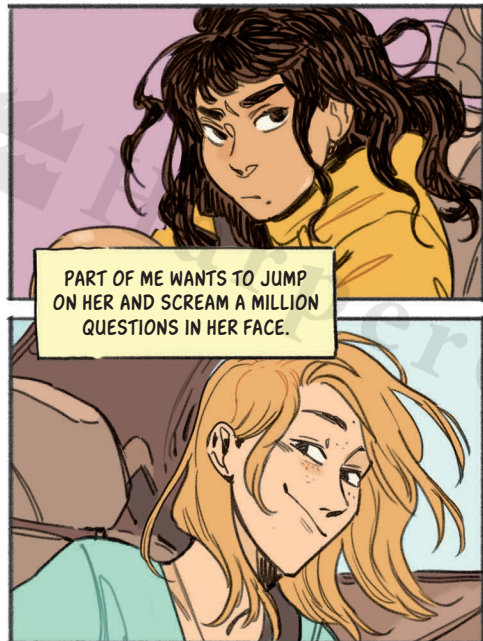
NICE TRY. THAT'S NOT HOW THIS WORKS.



I KNOW.

I THINK YOU'RE GOING TO LIKE XAVIER.

THAT'S HIS NAME. MY DAD.



PART OF ME WANTS TO JUMP ON HER AND SCREAM A MILLION QUESTIONS IN HER FACE.



WHERE DID YOU MEET HIM?

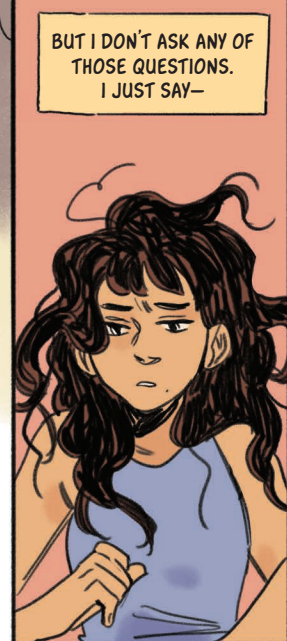
IF YOU LIKE HIM SO MUCH, HOW COME YOU NEVER TALK ABOUT HIM?

WHEN DID YOU MEET HIM?

WHY AREN'T YOU GUYS MARRIED?



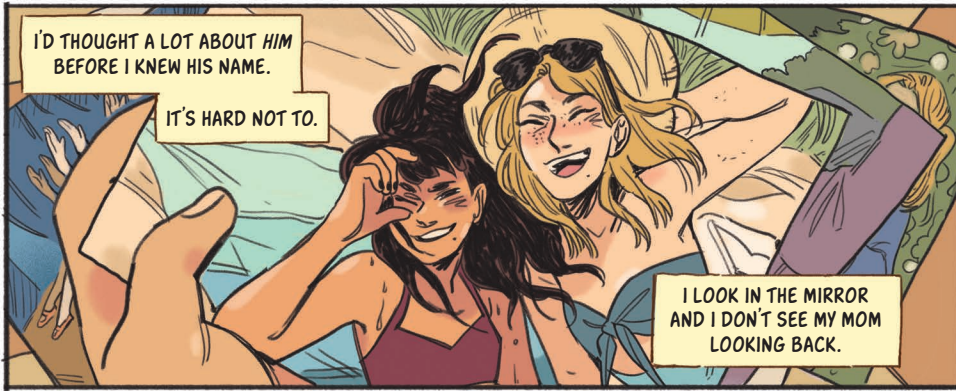
WHERE THE %*! HAS HE BEEN MY ENTIRE LIFE?



BUT I DON'T ASK ANY OF THOSE QUESTIONS. I JUST SAY—



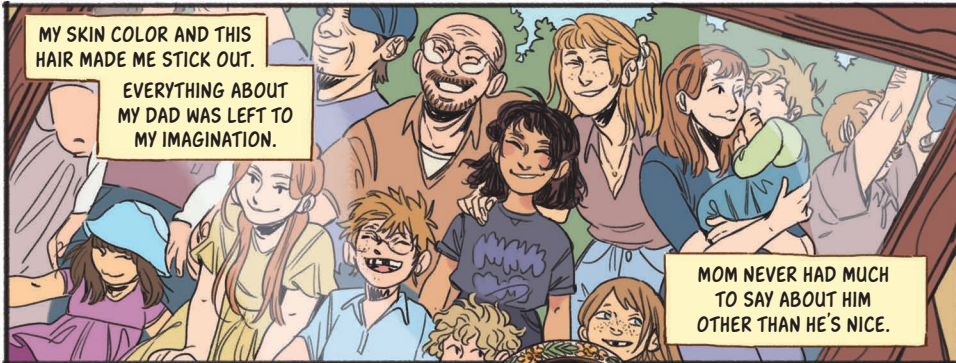
OKAY.



I'D THOUGHT A LOT ABOUT HIM BEFORE I KNEW HIS NAME.

IT'S HARD NOT TO.

I LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND I DON'T SEE MY MOM LOOKING BACK.



MY SKIN COLOR AND THIS HAIR MADE ME STICK OUT.

EVERYTHING ABOUT MY DAD WAS LEFT TO MY IMAGINATION.

MOM NEVER HAD MUCH TO SAY ABOUT HIM OTHER THAN HE'S NICE.



"NICE." WHAT DOES THAT EVEN MEAN?

IS "NICE" SOMEONE THAT DRESSES NICE?

IS HE TERRIFYING ON THE OUTSIDE, BUT KIND ON THE INSIDE?

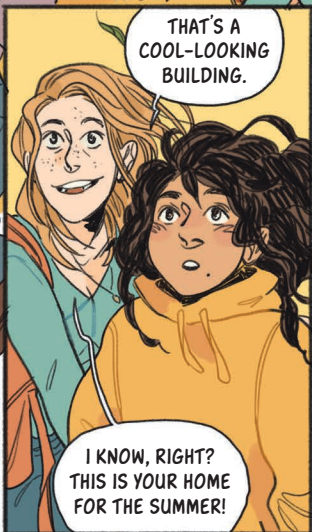
IS HE BEAUTIFUL BUT WITH THE BURNING PASSION OF A REVOLUTIONARY?



ALMUDENA? HONEY? WE'RE HERE!



WOW!



THAT'S A COOL-LOOKING BUILDING.

I KNOW, RIGHT? THIS IS YOUR HOME FOR THE SUMMER!



ALMUDENA, THIS IS XAVIER! YOUR DAD!

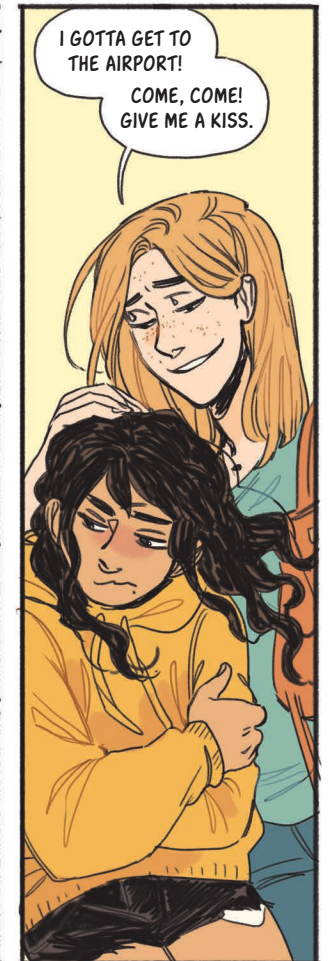
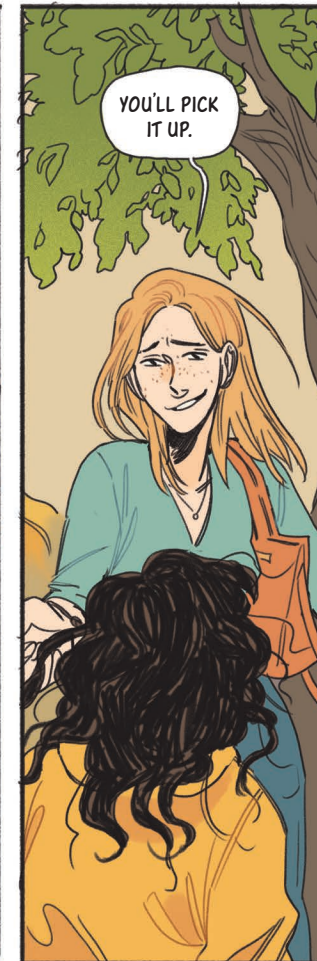
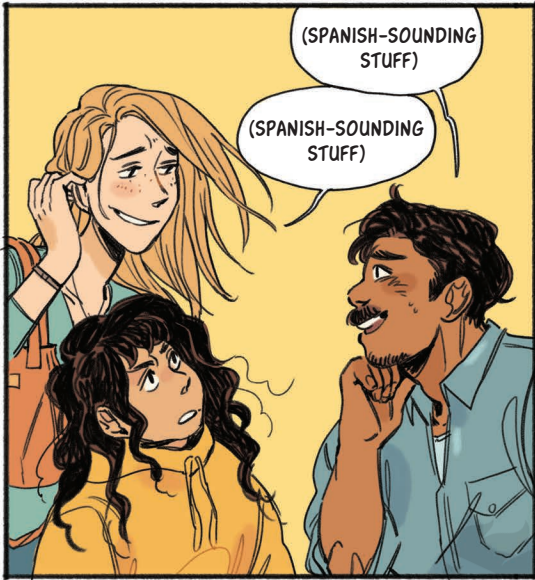
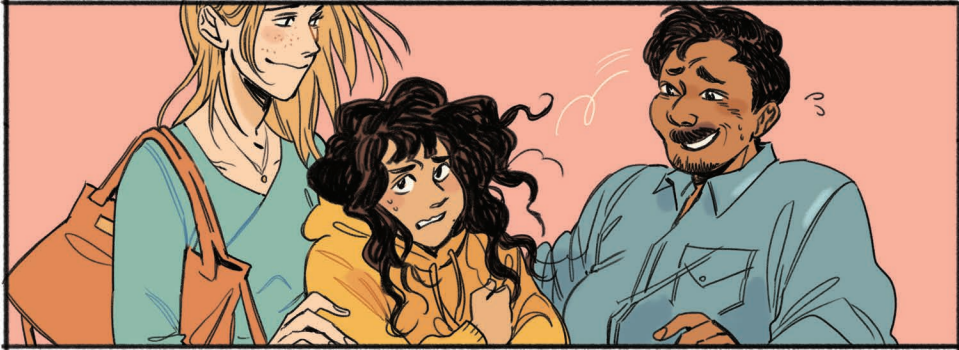


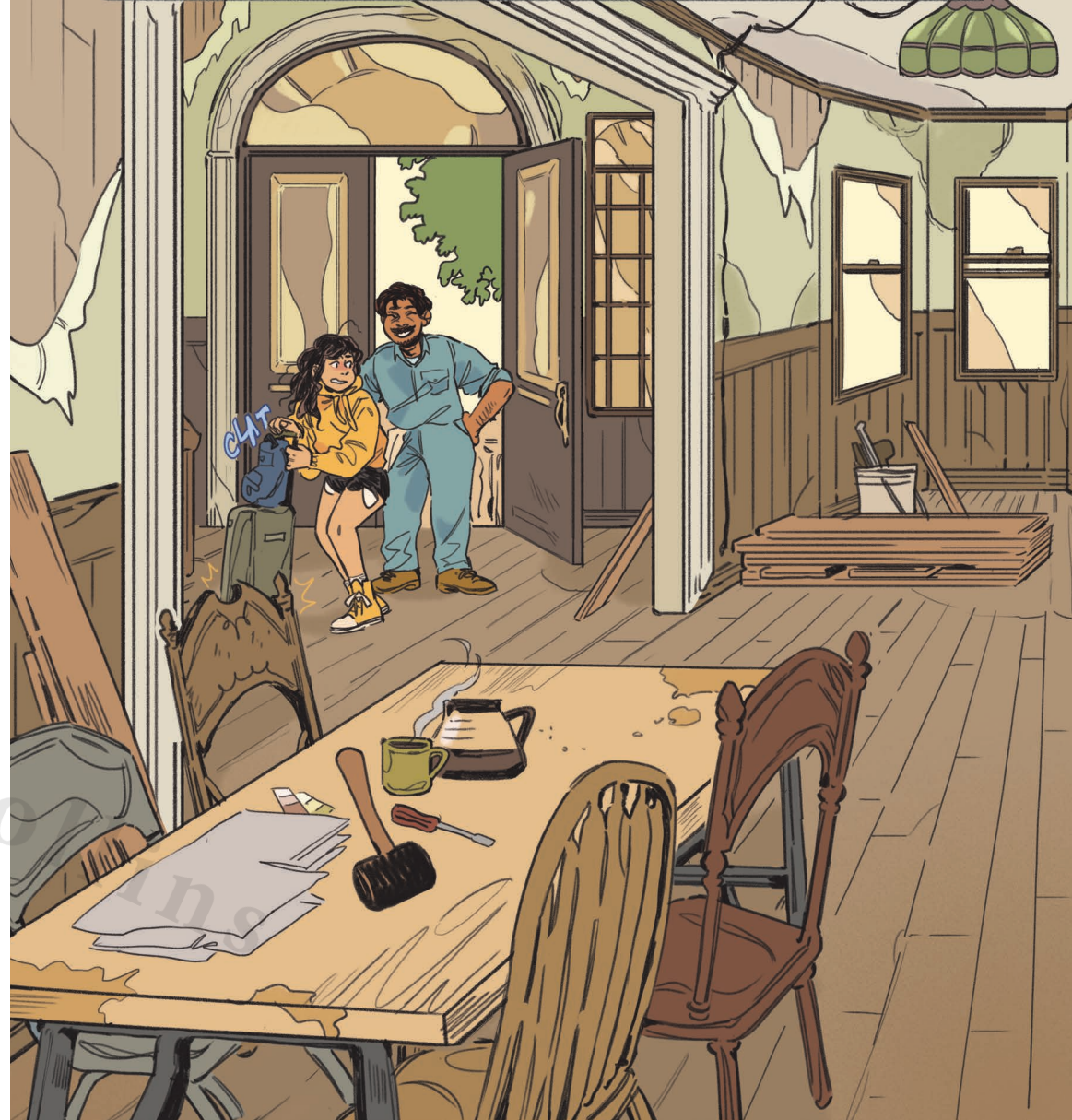
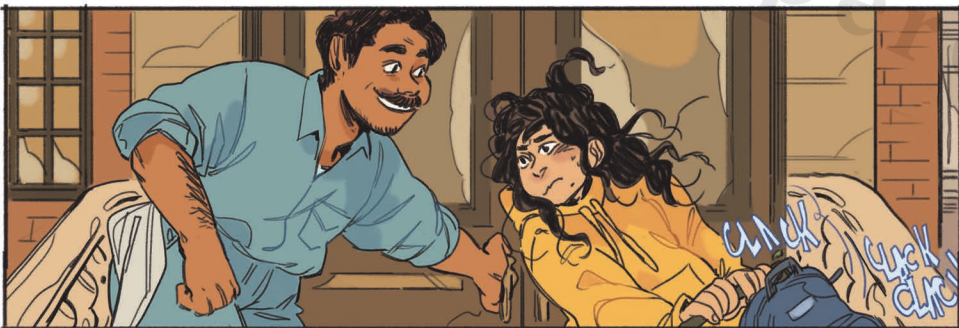
¡HOLA!

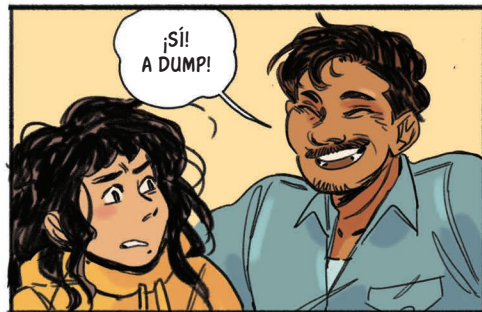


UM ... NICE TO MEET YOU-











I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO MEET MY DAAAA-XAVIER.

NOT PRECISELY HOW I IMAGINED IT.

clatter

clunk



(RAPID-FIRE SPANISH-SOUNDING STUFF)

WHAT?



¿NO HABLAS ESPAÑOL?



LIKE, I UNDERSTAND WHEN SOMEONE IS SPEAKING SPANISH, BUT MY BRAIN JUST PROCESSES IT AS:

(SPANISH-SOUNDING STUFF)

NO SPEAKY ESPAÑOL!



TÚ-

ME?



MIRA-

EYEBALL? NO-

WATCH! GOT IT!



OKAY.



NOW WHAT?



SIGH
THANKS.





(SPANISH-SOUNDING STUFF)

(REALLY FAST SPANISH-SOUNDING STUFF)



I DIDN'T MAGICALLY LEARN SPANISH IN THE LAST FIVE MINUTES!

YOU MUST BE ALMUDENA.



I'M IDOLA. I LIVE NEXT DOOR.

I'M A ... FRIEND OF YOUR DAD'S.



XAVIER ASKED ME TO HELP TRANSLATE FOR YOU TWO.

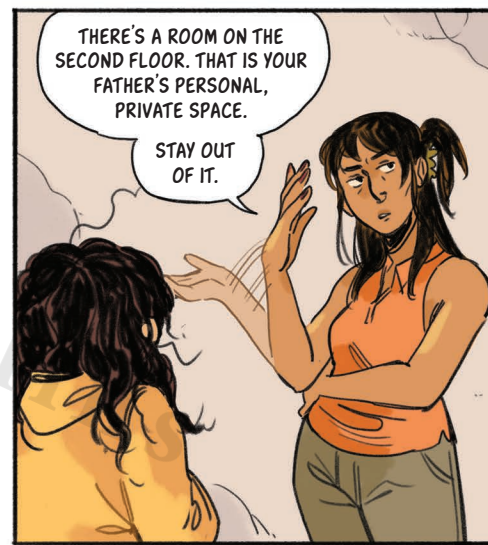
HE SAID—

DEBES TENER MUCHO CUIDADO. HAY CABLES ELÉCTRICOS EN ESTAS PAREDES. ¡PODRÍAS ELECTROCUTARTE!



¿ALGO MÁS?

RIGHT.



THERE'S A ROOM ON THE SECOND FLOOR. THAT IS YOUR FATHER'S PERSONAL, PRIVATE SPACE.

STAY OUT OF IT.



DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE TO ASK HIM?

YEAH, LIKE, EVERYTHING.



WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?



XAVIER IS TURNING THIS BROWNSTONE INTO AN APARTMENT BUILDING.

HE WANTS TO BE ABLE TO HELP PEOPLE. LIKE HE WAS HELPED WHEN HE CAME HERE.



IT'S ACTUALLY A VERY LOVELY STORY. YOU SEE, THIS NEIGHBORHOOD WAS ONCE A—

YOU DIDN'T ACTUALLY ASK HIM ANYTHING.



YOU'RE A SWEET GIRL. I KNOW YOUR DAD VERY WELL.

SUCH BEAUTIFUL HAIR!

Ruffle



IF YOU NEED MORE HELP WITH TRANSLATING OR YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR HERITAGE—



NOPE! I KNOW ENOUGH.

LIKE?

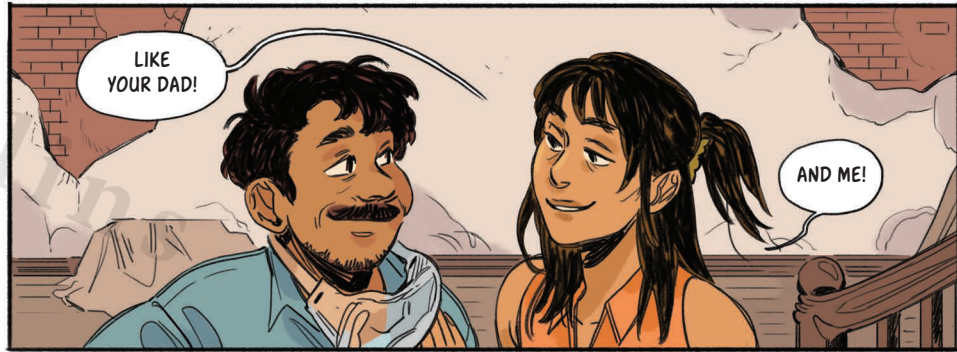


SWEETIE, THOSE ARE BOTH MEXICAN. YOU ARE NOT MEXICAN.

THERE'S A SHARP TONE EACH TIME SHE SAYS "MEXICAN."

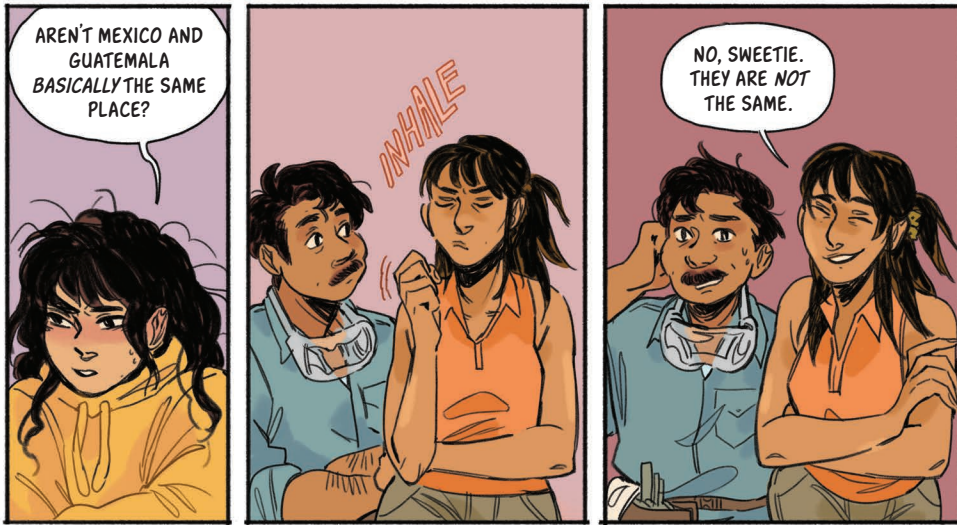


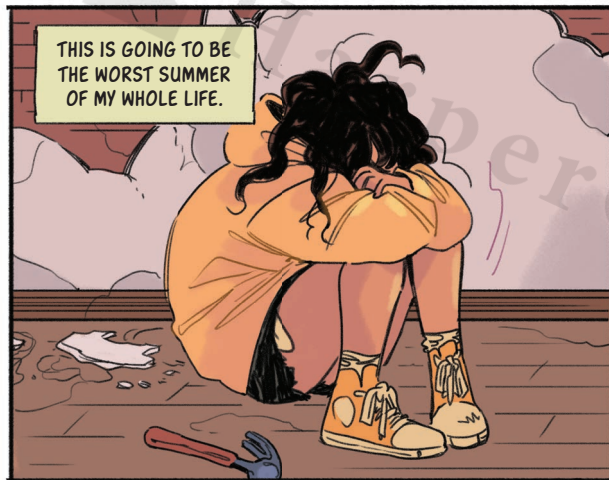
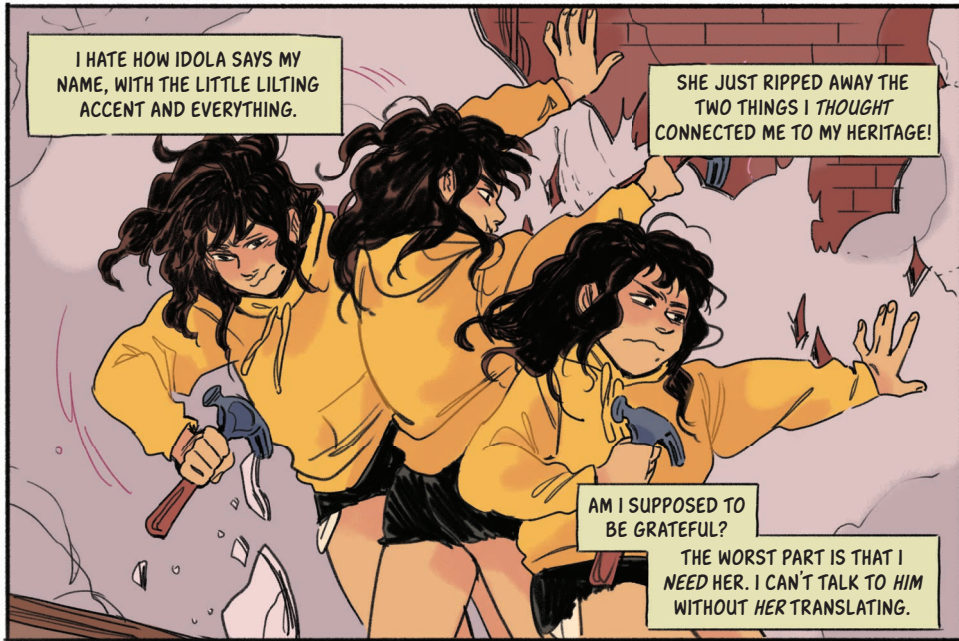
YOU ARE GUATEMALAN.



LIKE YOUR DAD!

AND ME!





Chapter Two

