

A WOMAN
ASKED ME IF I
WAS SEEING
ANYONE THE
OTHER DAY.

I WASN'T
SURE WHAT
TO TELL
HER.

SAY
WHATEVER
YOU LIKE.



HNM...

SORRY.



I KNOW
IT SUCKS.

BUT THIS IS
THE BEST
RELATIONSHIP
I CAN GIVE AT
THE MOMENT.

IT'S
OKAY.



BUT, I'VE
LEARNED I'LL
NEVER
ADJUST.



BUT I
CAN STOP
BLAMING
MYSELF.


MY DECISIONS
DIDN'T GET THEM
KILLED. IT WAS
SOMETHING ANYONE
IN COMMAND WOULD
HAVE DONE.

THE THERAPY
IS WORTH IT,
AND IT'S **NOT**
A WEAKNESS.

IT REALLY
DOES HELP, AND
IF ANYONE HASN'T
BEEN, THEY
SHOULD
CONSIDER
IT.




THANK
YOU,
NELSON.



BEFORE WE
BREAK UP, DOES
ANYONE HAVE
ANYTHING ELSE
TO SHARE?

I DON'T
BELONG
HERE.


I'M NOT QUITE
LIKE THESE MEN.
I'M A **MONSTER**.




NOTHING
HAPPENED WHILE
I WAS IN THE
MARINE CORPS.

EVERYTHING
STARTED WAY
BEFORE THEN.


MY FATHER WAS A
CORRUPT SHERIFF
IN RURAL ALABAMA.
A MAN LIKE THAT
CAN GET AWAY
WITH A LOT.




I REMEMBER WHEN
MY MOTHER DIED,
HE WAS HOLDING
HIS FINGERS OVER
HIS EYES SO NO
ONE WOULD SEE
HIM *NOT* CRYING.



YOU MIGHT
ASSUME EVEN A
CROOKED MAN
WOULD LOVE HIS
FAMILY.



BUT SOME
ILLNESSES GO
DEEPER THAN
OTHERS.




A MAN WHO FORCES
SEX ON HIS OWN
DAUGHTER AFTER HIS
WIFE DIES, CREATES
THE MONSTER.

IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF
WHETHER THAT MONSTER
GOES ON TO ATTACK
OTHERS, OR TURNS
AROUND TO BITE HIM
BACK.




NIGHT
AFTER NIGHT.
YOU DEVELOP
WAYS TO
COPE.

SHRINKS CALL IT
"DISSOCIATION".
YOU LIVE OUTSIDE
YOUR SELF, AND
EVERYTHING THAT'S
HAPPENING AT THE
MOMENT.



BUT MOMENTS
OF CLARITY CAN
BRING EVERYTHING
BACK INTO
FOCUS.

AND YOU
REALIZE YOU
CAN'T ESCAPE
REALITY,
FOREVER.



AND WHEN YOU
FINALLY DON'T
WANT TO BE
TRAPPED ANYMORE,
YOU HAVE ALL THE
PATIENCE IN THE
WORLD.

YOU PLAN.
YOU THINK OF
EVERYTHING.
YOU KNOW THE
RIGHT TIME TO
EXECUTE.




THE
BUGS.

THE DISSOCIATION
YOU LEARN WHILE
LAYING UNDER HIS
DISGUSTING BODY,
KEEPS YOU FROM
NOTICING THE COLD
AND THE RAIN.

THE
MUD.

OR HOW
BADLY YOU
NEED TO
PISS.



THE MARINES
CONDITION YOU
TO KILL BY
REFLEX.

TARGETS POP UP AND DROP
WHEN YOU SHOOT THEM.
THEY WANT YOU TO BE ABLE
TO DO IT EASILY WHEN IT'S
THE REAL THING.



BUT WHEN
YOU'RE UNTRAINED,
NOTHING IS BY
REFLEX.

YOU HAVE TO BE
FULLY CONSCIOUS.
YOU HAVE TIME TO
WEIGH WHETHER IT'S
ABSOLUTELY
NECESSARY.

YOU REALIZE HOW
MUCH HARDER IT IS
THAN YOU EVER
EXPECTED.



DESPITE WHAT A MONSTER
YOUR TARGET IS, YOU HAVE
TO OVERCOME FEAR, AND
EVERYTHING THAT TELLS
YOU THIS IS REPUGNANT.



BUT I AM MY
FATHER'S
DAUGHTER.



A SWITCH IS THROWN
AND I TURN INTO
SOMETHING SCARY THAT
I BARELY RECOGNIZE.



THE MONSTER.



GO THROUGH
THE CHECKLIST.

HIDE EVIDENCE,
ACCORDING TO
THE PLAN.

MAKE SURE *NOTHING* CAN
BE TRACED BACK TO A
FRIGHTENED, UNTRAINED,
SIXTEEN YEAR OLD GIRL.

LUCKILY FOR ME, A
CROOKED SHERIFF HAS
A LOT OF ENEMIES.

AFTERWARDS,
YOU REALIZE
WHAT YOU'VE
DONE.

FULL CLARITY
ADDS SO MUCH
PAIN, BUT ALSO
UNCERTAINTY.

WAS I ABLE TO KILL MY
FATHER BECAUSE I
WAS *STRONG*? OR DID
NOT STOPPING MYSELF
MEAN I WAS *WEAK*?



THEN IT WAS A BARRAGE OF COUNSELORS AND INVESTIGATORS AT THE SAME TIME.


I COULD HEAR IN EVERYONE'S SUBTLE TONE: "YOUR FATHER WAS A HORRIBLE MAN, BUT YOU SHOULD STILL FEEL BAD THAT HE'S DEAD."



AT ONE POINT I WAS A SUSPECT.

FORTUNATELY, I COULD SMELL OUT A POLICE STRATEGY TO WORM OUT A CONFESSION IN LIEU OF EVIDENCE.

THE INVESTIGATION WAS EVENTUALLY DROPPED.




BUT I DIDN'T FEEL BAD THAT MY FATHER WAS DEAD.

I FELT ANGRY.


SCHOOLWORK WAS EASY. BUT MUSTERING EVERY OUNCE OF YOUR MENTAL ABILITY TO BE THE MONSTER WHO GETS AWAY WITH IT?

VERY HARD.

I WAS ANGRY THAT HE FORCED ME INTO THIS.



I NEVER HAD TO
KILL ANYBODY IN
THE MARINES,
MOSTLY THROUGH
A COMBINATION OF
LUCK AND MY
GENDER.




NOTHING I HAD TO
ENDURE THERE
COMPARED TO
WHAT I'D ALREADY
BEEN THROUGH.




WHEN MY
ENLISTMENT WAS
ALMOST UP, I GOT
A JOB OFFER.

I COULD SEE IT
ON THEIR FACES
AS THEY PITCHED
THE JOB TO ME:




I WASN'T THEIR
CHOICE *JUST*
BECAUSE I
WAS A MARINE.



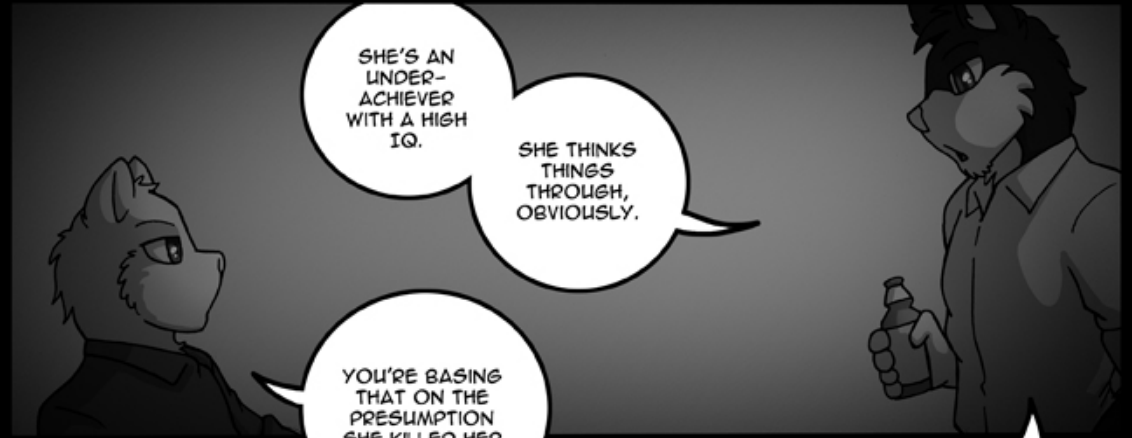
WHY DO YOU
THINK I'D BE
CUT OUT
FOR THIS?

WE *USUALLY*
HAVE A GOOD
SENSE ABOUT
WHO IS.

THEY
KNEW.




I FOUND OUT
WHAT THEY DID
KNOW BY BEING
A SNEAKY
BITCH.



SHE'S AN
UNDER-
ACHIEVER
WITH A HIGH
IQ.

SHE THINKS
THINGS
THROUGH,
OBVIOUSLY.

YOU'RE BASING
THAT ON THE
PRESUMPTION
SHE KILLED HER
FATHER.



I'VE READ
THE CASE.
I'M PRETTY
CERTAIN SHE
DID.



SO YOU WANT
TO HIRE HER
BECAUSE SHE
MURDERED
HER DAD?

NO, I WANT
TO HIRE HER
BECAUSE SHE
GOT AWAY
WITH IT.



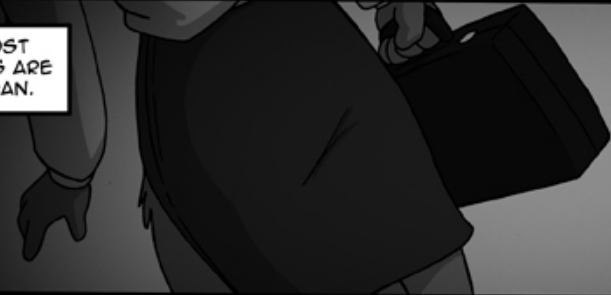
I TOOK THE JOB WITH AN INVESTMENT FIRM, WHICH FRONTS AS A PRIVATE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY.

MOST OF THE WORK TAKES PLACE IN OFFICES.



BUT INTELLIGENCE, JUST LIKE BUSINESS, STILL NEEDS PEOPLE ON THE GROUND.


WE'RE *INVESTMENT SCOUTS*, AND WE TRAVEL FREQUENTLY.



MOST JOBS ARE CLEAN.

YOU TAKE SOME PICTURES. YOU MANAGE A CONTACT. YOU LEAVE SOMETHING AT A DEAD DROP.

EASY.



BUT SOMETIMES THE JOB CALLS FOR BAD BEHAVIOR.



THE MAN I USUALLY
TEAM UP WITH HAS
TO DEAL WITH THE
SAME ISSUES.

BUT HE HAS HIS
OWN METHODS
OF DOING SO.

INTELLECTUALIZE
EVERYTHING,
RED.

THESE MEN
CHOSE THEIR
ETHICS.


THEY WANTED
TO DEAL WITH
THE WORLD BY
POINTING A GUN
AT IT.

WE GRANT
THEM
THAT.



WE'RE THE
PART OF THE
WORLD THAT
SHOOTS
BACK.






YOU COULD
BE BACK IN
THE MARINES.

YOU COULD
END UP IN A
WAR ZONE.

YOU COULD BE
POINTING YOUR GUN
AT SOME POOR
CONSCRIPTED SLOB
WHO WAS JUST
BORN IN THE WRONG
COUNTRY.



SOME SHITTY
DICTATOR
DOESN'T *GIVE*
HIM A CHOICE.

BUT
THESE
MEN HAD
OPTIONS.

THEY *CHOSE*
TO CROSS
SWORDS WITH
EVERYTHING
GOOD.



THEY
DESERVED
TO DIE.



HOW FAR
REMOVED
FROM THOSE
MEN WAS I?

DID THEY COME
FROM SHITTY
FAMILIES?

HOW *CLOSE*
DID I COME
TO BECOMING
LIKE THEM?



HOW DID
THEY END UP
BAD, WHILE I
ENDED UP-

MALLORY?

RED?

YOU
SEEM
PENSIVE.

WOULD
YOU LIKE
TO SHARE?

OH.

NO,
NOT
YET.

THANK
YOU.





I CAN'T
SHARE WHAT I
DO WITHOUT
LOSING MY
CLEARANCE.

BUT I HAVE A
CLEANSING
PROCESS.

I HAVE AN APARTMENT
IN THE CITY. A PLACE
WHERE I CAN JUST BE
THE KIND OF PERSON I
MIGHT HAVE BEEN.

THE OUTSIDE
WORLD DOESN'T
HAVE TO EXIST
HERE.

I CAN RELAX
WITHOUT IT.

I CAN LOVE
WITHOUT IT.

I CAN LEAVE
THE WORLD IN
ORDER TO CLEAN
MY SOUL.



UNTIL I HAVE
TO GO BE THE
MONSTER,
AGAIN.