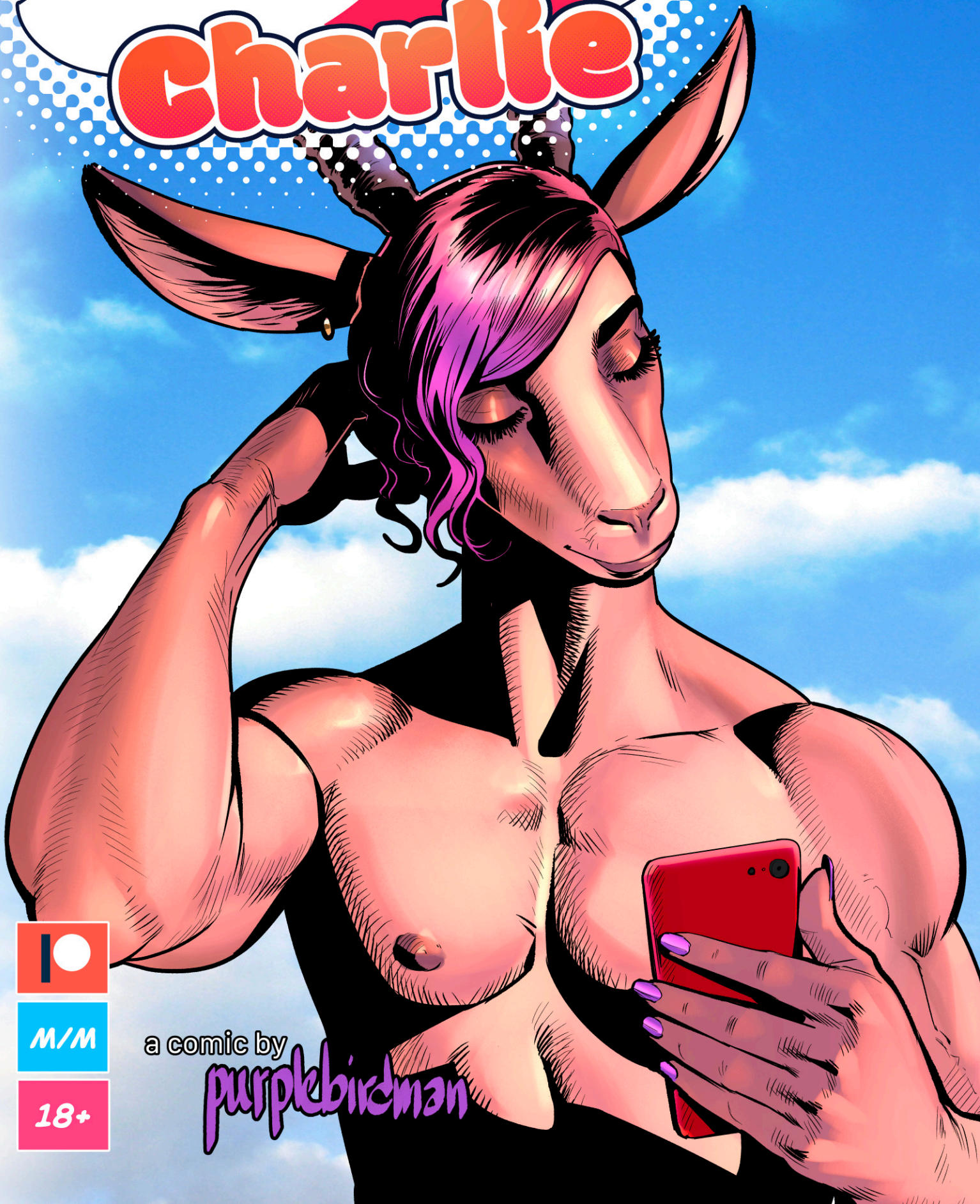


Chasing Charlie



M/M

18+

a comic by

purplebirdman

HEY

HEY, BUDDY

POUR ANOTHER ONE, WOULD YA?

SURE, BUT...

I'LL BE BACK
IN THE HIGH
LIFE AGAIN

ALL THE
DOORS THAT
CLOSED ONE
TIME...

YEAH, HEY,
I'LL BE DONE
SOON

WAITING FOR
SOMEONE

SOMEONE
SPECIAL, IF THERE
IS SUCH A THING

MAYBE HE
WON'T COME

MAYBE NOT

BUT WORTH
A SHOT

...OR TWO,
OR THREE

...HOW OLD
ARE YOU?

THIRTY?

TWENTY-
THREE

CHRIST!

I CAN'T
TELL
ANYMORE

NO OFFENSE

JUST...

TIME WAITS
FOR NOBODY

...TO MAKE
LIFE BELONG
TO ME...

NOT BUSY
TONIGHT,
IS IT?

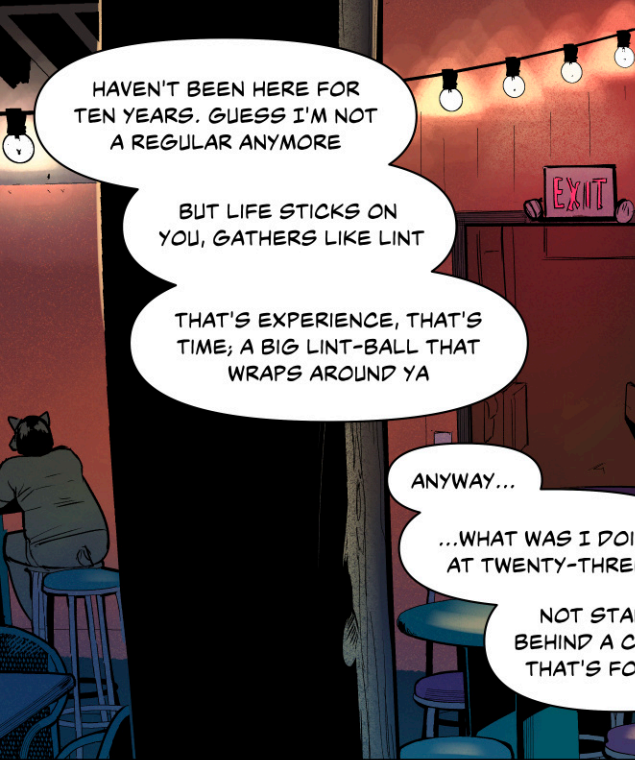
WEEKDAYS ARE
JUST REGULARS

BELIEVE IT
OR NOT, I USED
TO BE ONE OF
THOSE GUYS

FIFTEEN
YEARS NOW

...YOU
WERE EIGHT

...FUCK



HAVEN'T BEEN HERE FOR TEN YEARS. GUESS I'M NOT A REGULAR ANYMORE

BUT LIFE STICKS ON YOU, GATHERS LIKE LINT

THAT'S EXPERIENCE, THAT'S TIME; A BIG LINT-BALL THAT WRAPS AROUND YA

ANYWAY...

...WHAT WAS I DOING AT TWENTY-THREE?

NOT STANDING BEHIND A COUNTER, THAT'S FOR SURE



...NOW, I AIN'T GUNNA KNOCK TENDING BAR, IT'S A NOBLE THING

A PUBLIC SERVICE

WE GOTTA HAVE THIS PRESSURE VALVE HERE, OR THE POT, IT'S GUNNA BOIL OVER

KEEPING THE PEACE, SON

THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE DOING



CHEERS



BUT AT TWENTY-THREE, ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS DRIVE, MAN

DAD HAD AN AUTO SHOP, I LEARNED CARS THERE

YEAH, I DID THE COLLEGE THING, GOT MY BUSINESS DEGREE, GOT PUSSY AND TAIL AND A COUPLE NASTY HABITS

FUCK, LOOKS GO, BUT BACK THEN...

...BACK THEN,
I WAS A KING

THE LAST THING
DAD GAVE ME WAS A
TESTAROSSA, WHEN
I GRADUATED

THAT WAS
MY THRONE

WE USED TO RIP AROUND
ALL WEEKEND IN THAT
TESTAROSSA, THE BOYS
AND I, AND I TELL YA MAN
GETTING TAIL WAS SO EASY
IT FELT LIKE CHEATING!

EVERY MONDAY I'D VACUUM
THE CAR OUT, THE FAST FOOD
AND CONDOM WRAPPERS
AND MUD CRUST, AND NEXT
WEEKEND WE'D DO IT ALL AGAIN!

GOD DAMN!

TRUTH BE TOLD, I
DIDN'T STOP THAT
LIFE AFTER I GOT
A PROPER JOB

I KNEW MY CARS,
I WAS HANDSOME,
COULD STILL TALK A
SWOONING DAME
OR GENT INTO
HIGHBALLING

WHEN I WASN'T
WORKING, I
PARTIED

I WAS STILL
THE MAN, MAN!

I HAD CASH,
THE TESTAROSSA,
AND MY BIG
FUCKIN' DICK

OPEN ROAD
AHEAD, NO
LIMITS

AND I DIDN'T GET BORED OF THAT LIFESTYLE, I GUESS

IT GOT BORED OF ME

ON MY THIRTY-THIRD BIRTHDAY, I WOKE UP WITH A SPLITTING HANGOVER AND AN ANKLE I DIDN'T REMEMBER TWISTING, AND A TERRIBLE THOUGHT:

"MY BODY CAN'T DO THIS ANYMORE"

I LIMPED INTO WORK, STILL DRUNK



THIRTY MINUTES LATER, I LIMPED OUT, MINUS A JOB AND MY DIGNITY

I LIVED IN A SHITHOLE CITY APARTMENT NEXT TO THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT. NEVER SPENT TIME THERE EXCEPT TO SLEEP. WITHOUT A JOB, WITHOUT AN ANKLE, I HAD A LOT OF TIME TO SIT THERE AND THINK

FELT LIKE THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE THINGS HAD SLOWED DOWN ENOUGH FOR ME TO THINK PROPER

DIDN'T HAVE THE SMOOTH COLLEGE BOY ABS. HAD A GUT, MY HAIR WAS GOING, AND I'D BEEN DOING THE SAME SHIT JOB FOR TEN YEARS

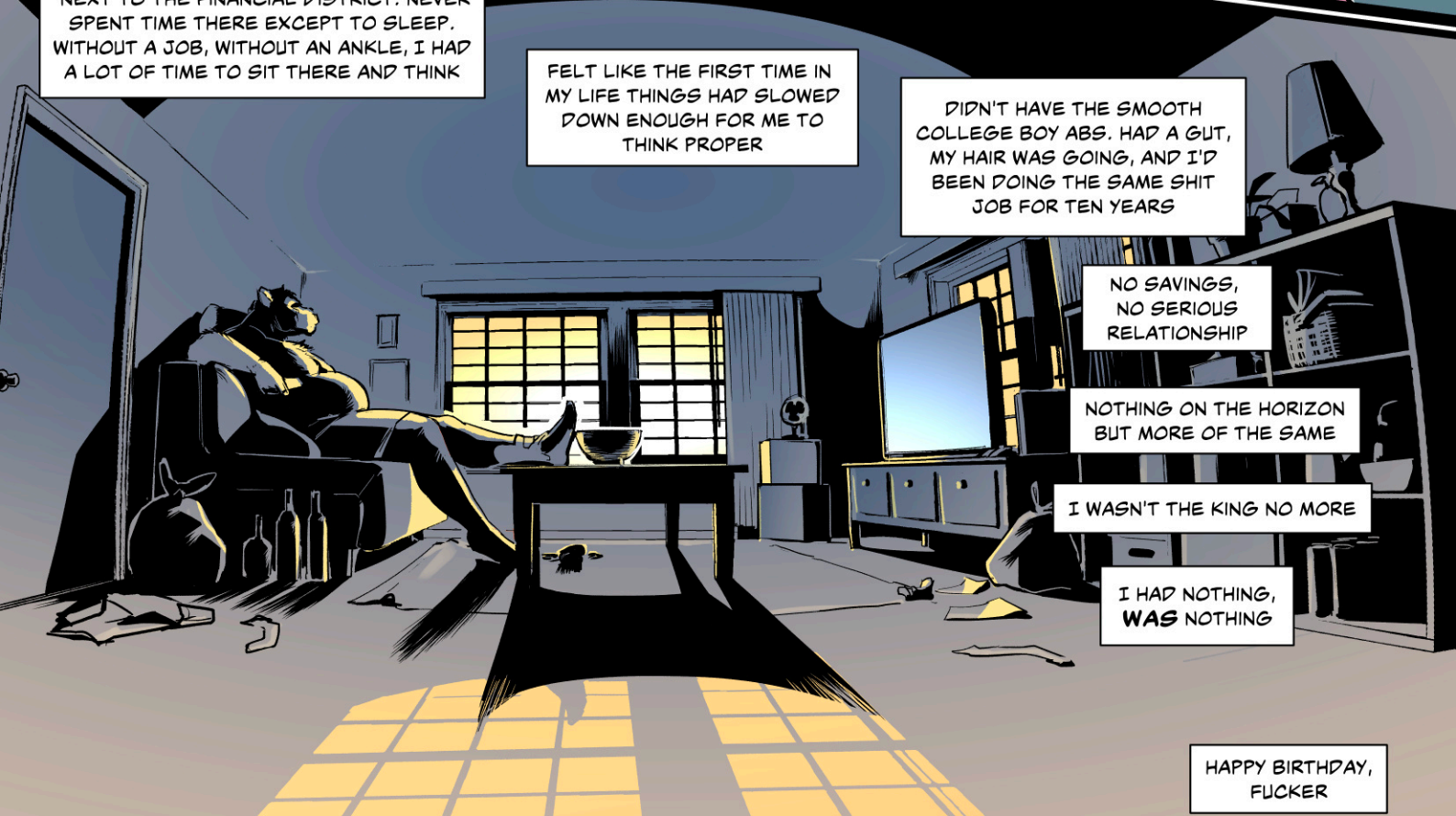
NO SAVINGS, NO SERIOUS RELATIONSHIP

NOTHING ON THE HORIZON BUT MORE OF THE SAME

I WASN'T THE KING NO MORE

I HAD NOTHING, **WAS** NOTHING

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, FUCKER



DAMN, IT STILL HURTS TO THINK ABOUT THAT WEEK

MY EX-WIFE CALLED, HAD TO TELL HER I LOST MY JOB. SHE DIDN'T LIKE IT, I COULD TELL SHE DIDN'T, BUT SHE LEFT IT ALONE

DANIE WAS A GOOD WOMAN

SHE ASKED ME IF I NEEDED HELP. I SAID NAW BUT TOLD HER I DIDN'T WANT TO SEE MEGGIE UNTIL THE ANKLE WAS BETTER. MEGGIE WAS OUR DAUGHTER. SHE WAS FIVE AT THE TIME

NO FIVE-YEAR-OLD WANTS TO HANG OUT IN A DAMP DIRTY APARTMENT WHILE DAD SITS AROUND, UNABLE TO WALK

I WANTED TO STAY PARK DAD IN HER MIND; HER COOL DAD WHO MET HER AND DANIE IN THE PARK AND ALWAYS HAD FUN GAMES TO PLAY

INSTEAD, I WENT TO SEE NATE

NATE AND HIS WIFE HAD GRADUATED WITH ME AND DANIE, STILL TOGETHER

I DIDN'T APPRECIATE GUYS LIKE NATE THEN, DO NOW. I HELPED HIM BUY HIS FIRST CAR AND DIDN'T REALIZE I'D MADE A FRIEND FOR LIFE

THEY HAD TWO KIDS, A HOUSE, THE WHOLE THING. WHENEVER I PULLED UP TO THEIR TWO-STORY IN MY TESTA, I FELT A WEIRD PANG. IT WAS LIKE I WAS PULLING UP TO MY PARENTS' HOUSE

HE WAS STILL THE PERSON I KNEW, BUT MORE SOLID, MORE SELF-ASSURED SOMEHOW AT 150 LBS THAN I WAS AT 280

THAT SCRAWNY, QUIET COLLEGE GEEK, WHO'D HUNG ONTO MY EVERY WORD WHEN I TALKED ABOUT CARS AND GIRLS, HE'D BECOME SOMEONE ELSE

I COULD NEVER SHOW HIM THAT SHITHOLE APARTMENT OF MINE

THE NEXT DAY,
AFTER THAT NIGHT
WITH NATE, I SAW
HIM FOR THE FIRST
TIME

CHARLIE,
I MEAN

PEOPLE MOVED IN AND OUT OF
THAT SHITHOLE APARTMENT ALL
THE TIME. I DIDN'T KNOW MY
NEIGHBORS. LIKE I SAID, I WAS
NEVER THERE

BUT TODAY I WAS THERE,
RIGHT THERE, KITCHEN WINDOW
ON THE FIRST FLOOR LOOKING
OVER THE STREET. THE HALLWAY
FIRE EXIT WAS RIGHT NEXT TO ME,
NO ALARM, NOTHING, PEOPLE
PUSHED THROUGH IT ALL THE TIME

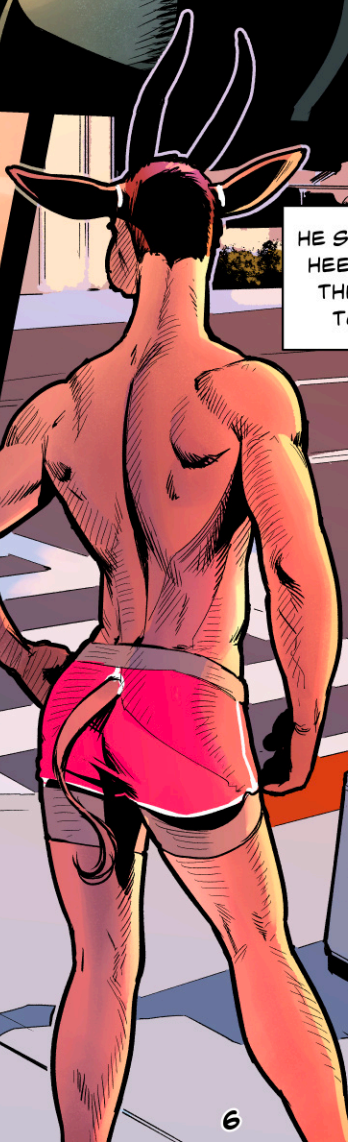


AND I WAS UP EARLY
FOR ONCE, PUTTING
WEIGHT ON MY ANKLE,
HEARD THAT DOOR
OPEN, AND I SAW--



--A BEAUTIFUL MAN

I NEVER UNDERSTOOD
FOLKS WHO SAY A MAN
CAN'T BE BEAUTIFUL



HE SHIFTED HEEL TO
HEEL, WAITING FOR
THE CROSSWALK
TO BLINK "GO"



THEN--

--HE WAS GONE

THE SUN
HAD BURNED
THE CURVE OF
HIS SPINE IN
MY EYES



...DAMN!

DAMN!

THAT'S A
REAL GOOD
LOOKIN' BOY!

YOU BETTER
BELIEVE I WAS
THERE NEXT
MORNING, AND
SURE ENOUGH



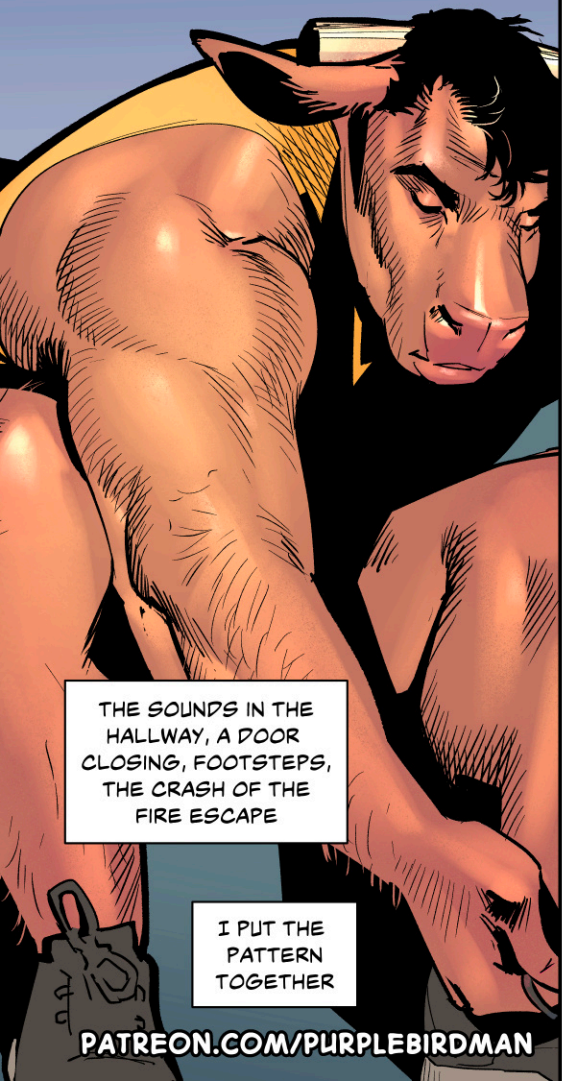
THE FIRE EXIT
CRASHED OPEN,
THE PERFECT
NAKED SPINE,
THE IMPATIENCE AS HE
ROCKED AT THE
CROSSWALK

I GOT TO THINKING
I SHOULD TAKE
UP JOGGING

MY ANKLE WAS FEELING
BETTER AND I'D BEEN
HITTING THE GYM AGAIN.
NOTHING LIKE THE OLD
DAYS, BUT ENOUGH SO MY
BODY WAS REMEMBERING
ITS OLD SELF, JUST A BIT

AND THIS GUY, THIS
GAZELLE, HE WAS
INSPIRING, Y'KNOW?

HE RAN EVERY MORNING, SAME
TIME, AND I STARTED TO HEAR IT



THE SOUNDS IN THE
HALLWAY, A DOOR
CLOSING, FOOTSTEPS,
THE CRASH OF THE
FIRE ESCAPE

I PUT THE
PATTERN
TOGETHER



SO ONE
MORNING,
WHEN
I HEARD
HIS DOOR
OPEN...



...I JUST
HAPPENED
TO GET TO
THE FIRE
ESCAPE
FIRST!

...HE WAS TALLER THAN I THOUGHT BY AT LEAST A FOOT!

GOOD MORNING!

UM!
...HELLO

HIS VOICE WAS HIGH, TREMULOUS

YOUNGER THAN I THOUGHT

COLLEGE AGE?

NICE SHOES

A FELLOW RUNNER, I SEE

MM-HMM

GOD, HE WAS CUTE!

GOOD FOR YOU

GETS THE BLOOD MOVING EARLY IN THE MORNING

I CAUGHT HIM GAWPING AT MY ARMS IN A NOT VERY HETERO WAY

BUT HEY

YOU MUST HAVE PLACES TO GO, DON'T LET ME STOP YOU, TALL GUY

I'M JOSH

SEE YA AROUND

OKAY!

...I'M CHARLIE!

UH--
BYE!

YEAH, THERE MIGHT BE SOMETHING HERE

BYE, CHARLIE



HEADS TURNED AS HE WENT PAST, PERFECT TRIANGLE OF HIS BACK FLEXING... GOD!

I FELT SOMETHING LIKE ENVY

THAT WAS HOW I USED TO BE

PEOPLE USED TO LOOK AT ME THAT WAY

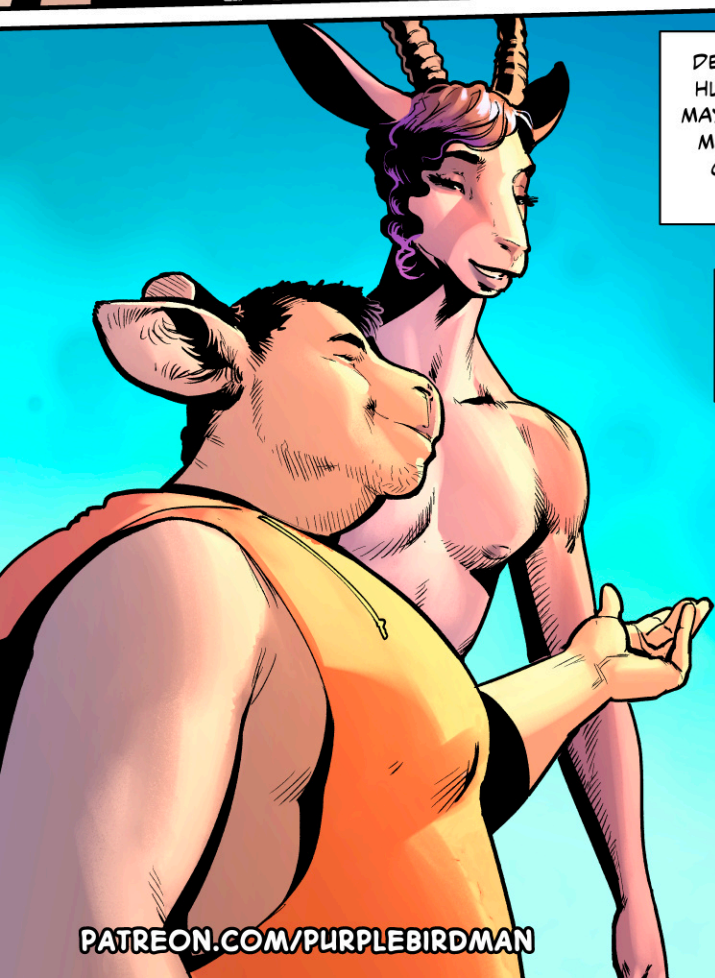


I STARTED MEETING CHARLIE BY THE DOOR EVERY MORNING. HE RELAXED AND STOPPED ACTING SPOOKED, SEEMED GLAD TO SEE ME

OUR CONVERSATIONS WERE SHORT, PERFUNCTORY, BUT LONGER THAN THEY NEEDED TO BE

HE THOUGHT HE WAS SUBTLE, CHECKING ME OUT, BUT I'D BEEN PLAYING THIS GAME A LOT LONGER THAN HIM, I KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING

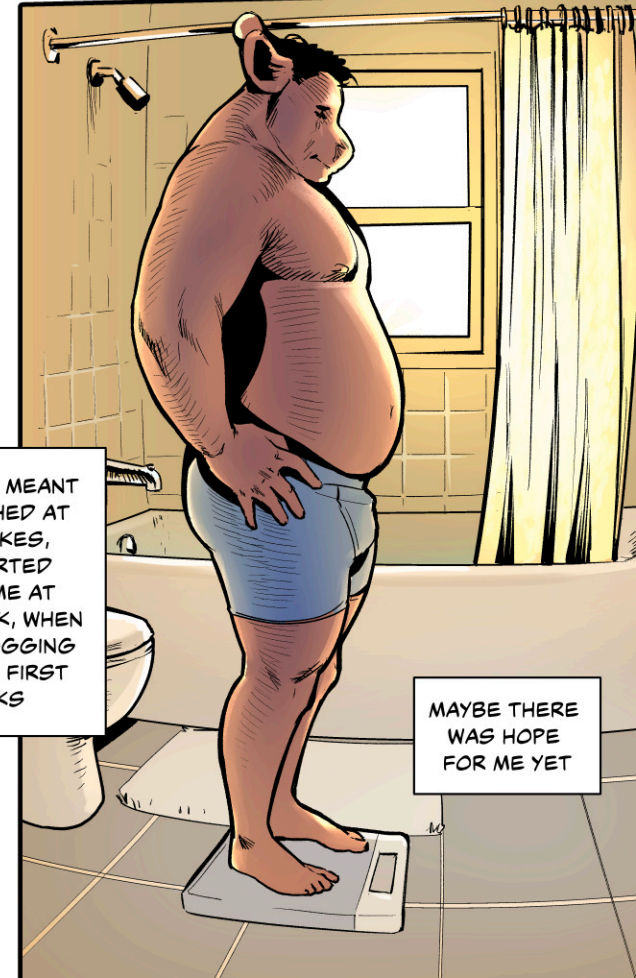
SOME DAYS I'D WEAR A LOW CUT TANK TOP OR DO A FEW CURLS TO GIVE HIM A TREAT



DESPITE THE JOB HUNT AND ANKLE, MAYBE I WASN'T AS MUCH OF A LOST CAUSE AS I'D THOUGHT

THE WAY HE LOOKED AT ME, I KNEW THAT LOOK

I KNEW WHAT IT MEANT WHEN HE LAUGHED AT MY STUPID JOKES, WHEN HE STARTED WAITING FOR ME AT THE CROSSWALK, WHEN WE STARTED JOGGING TOGETHER THE FIRST FEW BLOCKS



MAYBE THERE WAS HOPE FOR ME YET

THEN I GOT A VERY WELCOME PHONE CALL



DANIE NOTICED MY CHANGE IN MOOD WHEN I MET HER AND MEG AT THE PARK



DANIE HAD AGED MORE GRACEFULLY THAN ME

SHE STILL HAD HER FIGURE, HER SENSE OF HUMOR, AND SHE WAS A GOOD MOTHER

I KNEW SHE WAS A GOOD MOTHER BECAUSE SHE HAD TOLD ME I WAS A BAD FATHER

THANK GOD SOMEONE HAD



HONESTLY, I WAS WORRIED. YOU HAVEN'T GOTTEN RELIGION OR SOMETHING?

SOMETHING BETTER, I HOPE!



OLD FLEET MANAGER QUIT, THEY'RE ASKING ME TO COME BACK AND TAKE HIS SALARY!

AND I'VE BEEN JOGGING

EXERCISE HELPS, Y'KNOW

THEY SAY THE MIND-BODY DICHOTOMY IS BULLSHIT, RIGHT?

MEGGIE CAME OVER AND WANTED TO RIDE IN THE "TESSA"

IN HER EYES, DADDY WAS STILL THE COOLEST



HOW COULD I SAY NO?

I TOLD CHARLIE ABOUT THE JOB OFFER

WE SPOKE AT THE DOOR OF MY APARTMENT THESE DAYS

WHAT DO YOU DO FOR WORK ANYWAY?
I MIGHT BE ABLE TO GET YOU A SALESMAN POSITION

OH... NO, NO, THANK YOU!
I HAVE A JOB
I WORK FROM HOME

AH YOU STREAM VIDEO GAMES OR SOMETHING?

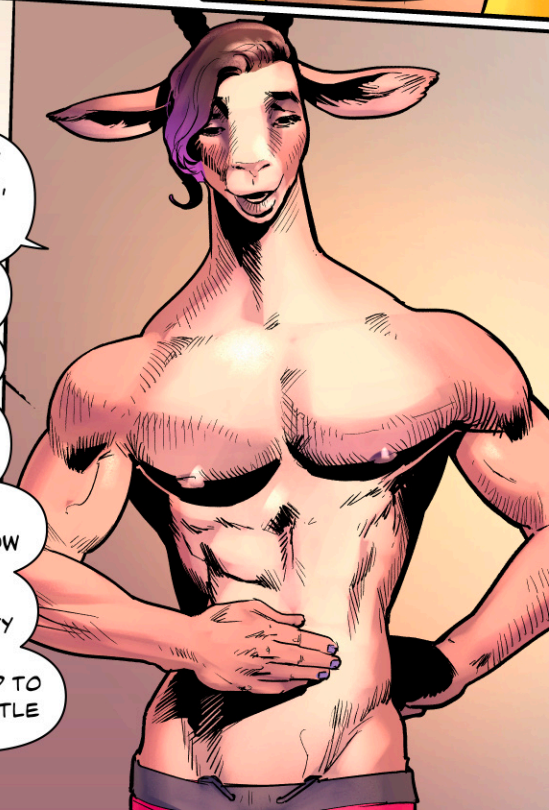


HAH! NO-- NOT GAMES I STREAM... ME HAHA!
YOU STREAM... OH

UH... NO OFFENSE, DO YOU MEAN...

...YOU MEAN PORN?
SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

MMHMM
HEY, IT'S OKAY NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT
LOOK, YOU GOT THE BODY FOR IT, I GUESS WHILE YOU'RE YOUNG
OH IS THAT WHY YOU RUN?
YEAH IT'S GOOD TO BE THIN, THEY LIKE ABS
IT'S A GOOD JOB
IT'S NOT-- I'M NOT GOING TO DO IT FOREVER
I NEED MONEY NOW
I'M GOING TO UNIVERSITY
BUT I NEED TO SAVE A LITTLE



YEAH, I KNEW THE FEELING,
COULDN'T BLAME CHARLIE

AND TO BE HONEST WITH YOU,
THE THOUGHT OF THAT BEAUTIFUL
FELLOW, SPREAD ON HIS BED,
SHOWING OFF, PART OF ME RATHER
LIKED THE IDEA

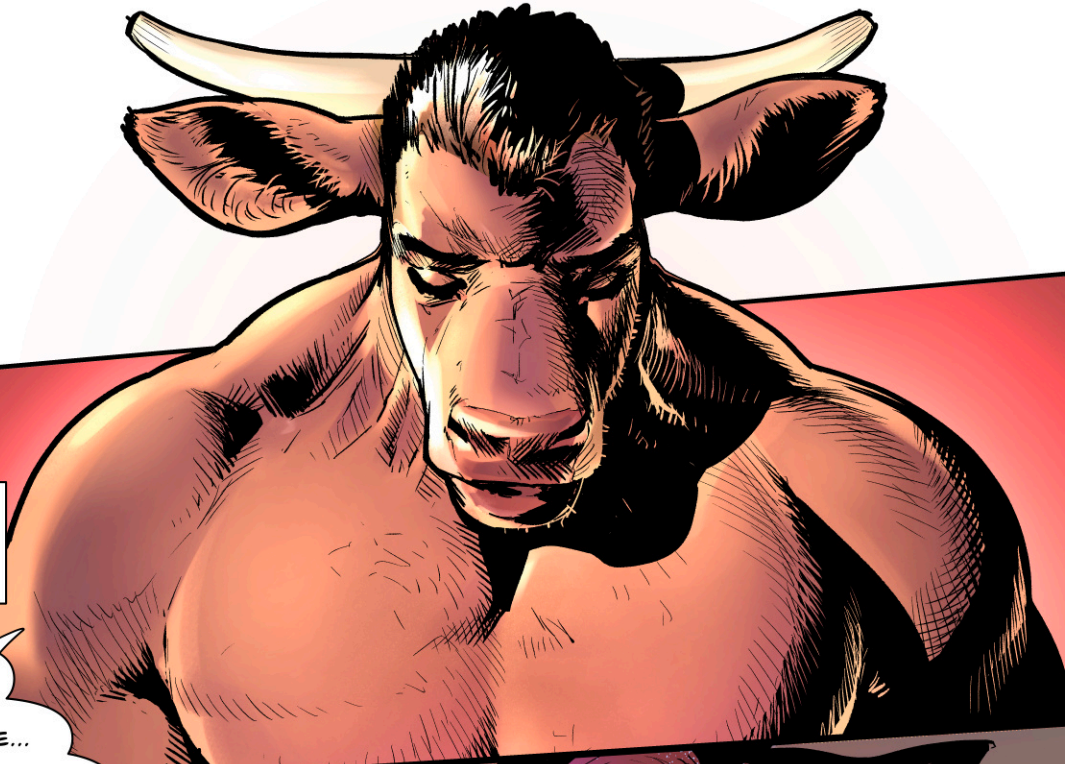
AND YOU KNOW, I THINK
HE KNEW THAT, AND THAT'S
WHY HE TOLD ME

A FEW DAYS LATER,
I GOT A PRIVATE
SHOW

OHHH...

CHARLIE...

CHARLIE...



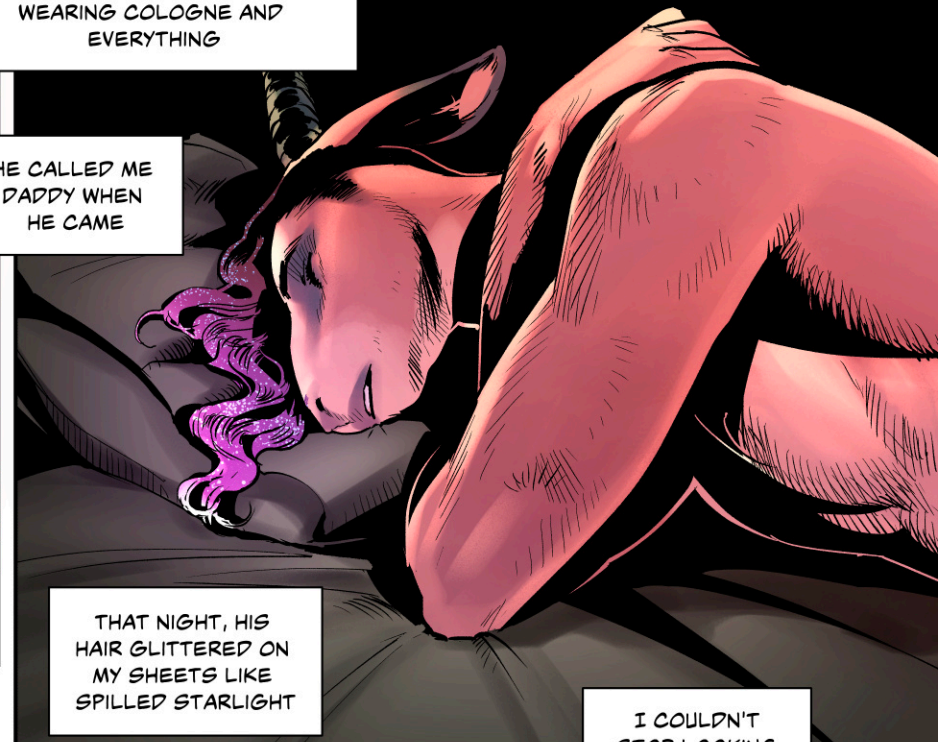
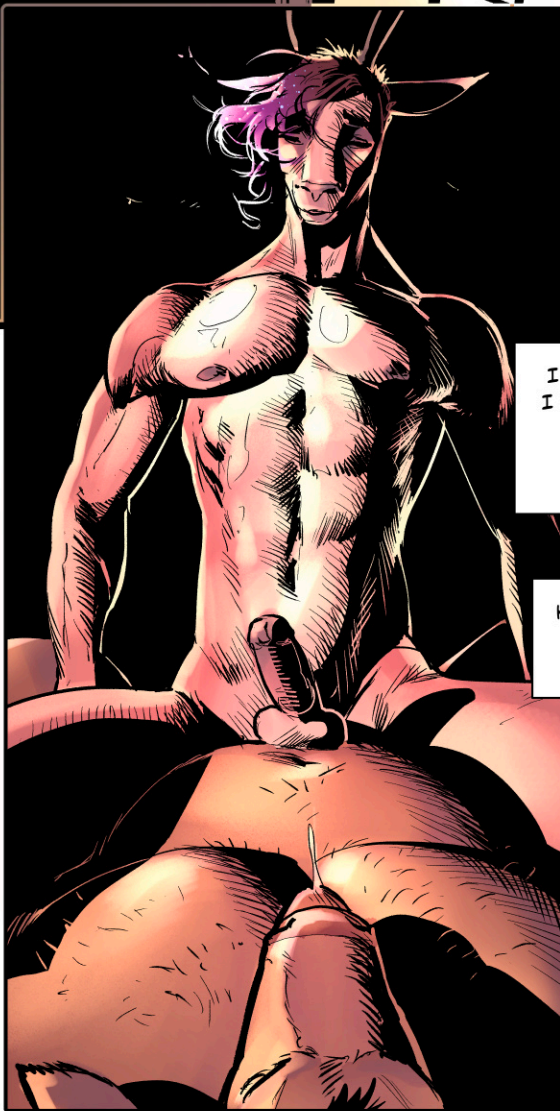
WE DIDN'T JOG
THAT MORNING

I WASN'T EXPECTING MUCH, SO
I WAS SURPRISED WHEN HE WAS
BACK AROUND DINNERTIME,
WEARING COLOGNE AND
EVERYTHING

HE CALLED ME
DADDY WHEN
HE CAME

THAT NIGHT, HIS
HAIR GLITTERED ON
MY SHEETS LIKE
SPILLED STARLIGHT

I COULDN'T
STOP LOOKING



"NATE, DO YOU MIND
IF I BRING A PLUS ONE?"

THEY GOT ALONG WELL

CHARLIE DRANK PINOT GRIGIO
AND LOOKED AT ME HUNGRILY
WHEN I SMILED AT HIM

I WAS DRINKING
MINERAL WATER



WHAT ARE
YOU GOING TO
SCHOOL FOR,
CHARLIE?

I WANT TO
BE A MEDICAL
DOCTOR

BUT...

IT'S
EXPENSIVE

I DON'T
KNOW IF I'LL
BE ABLE TO

MAYBE I'LL
GET A
SCHOLARSHIP

YOU'RE NOT
IN SCHOOL
YET?

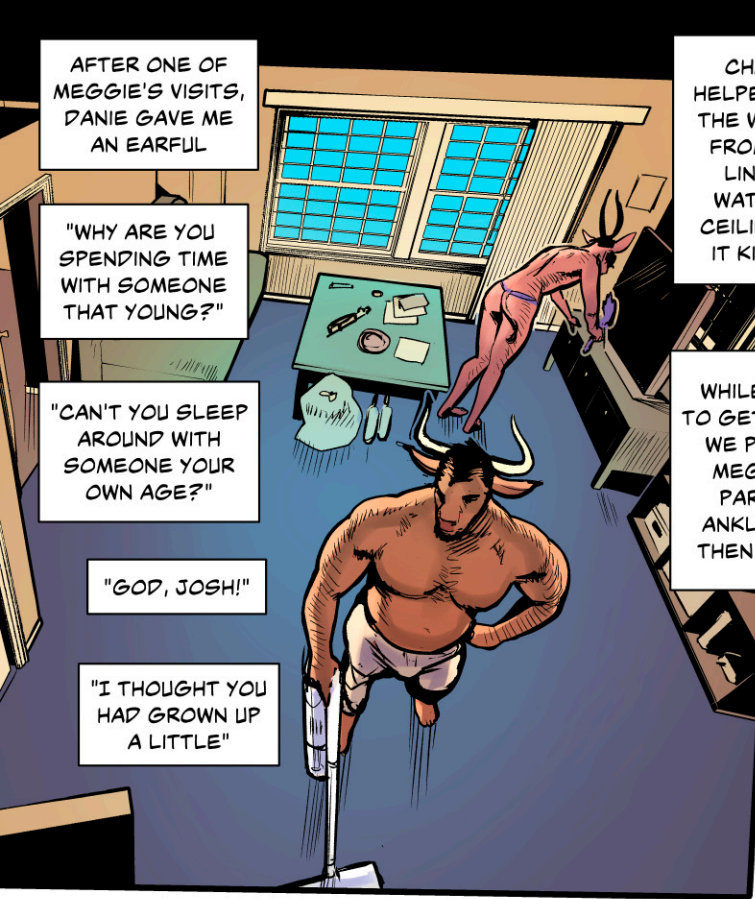


NOT YET

...MAYBE
NEXT YEAR

HEY

CHARLIE NEVER
WANTED TO TALK
ABOUT MONEY



AFTER ONE OF MEGGIE'S VISITS, DANIE GAVE ME AN EARFUL

"WHY ARE YOU SPENDING TIME WITH SOMEONE THAT YOUNG?"

"CAN'T YOU SLEEP AROUND WITH SOMEONE YOUR OWN AGE?"

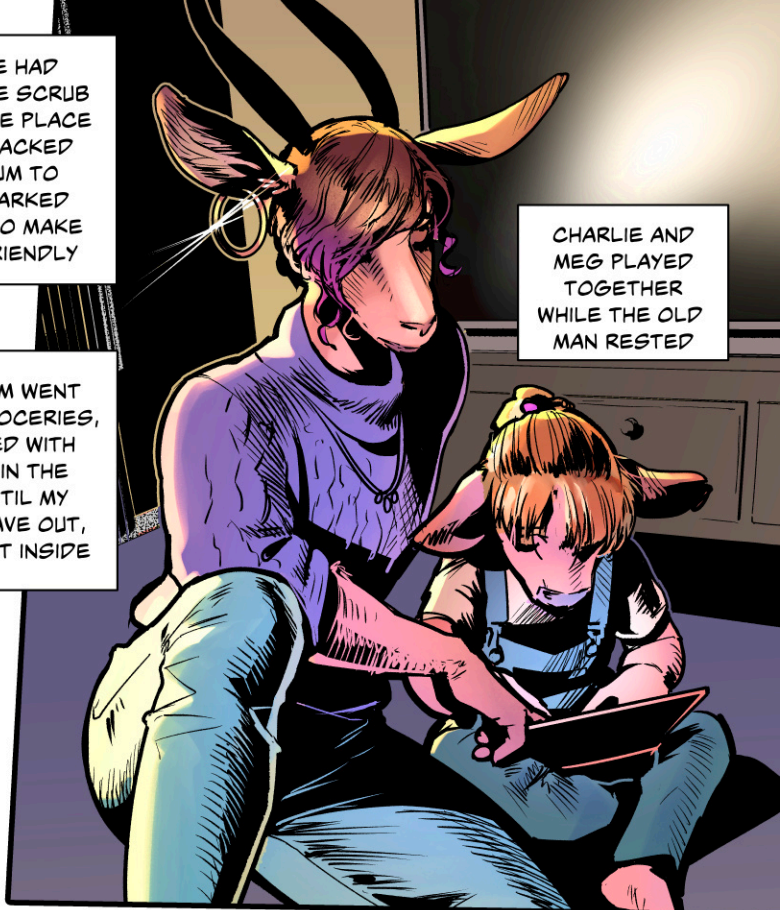
"GOD, JOSHI!"

"I THOUGHT YOU HAD GROWN UP A LITTLE"

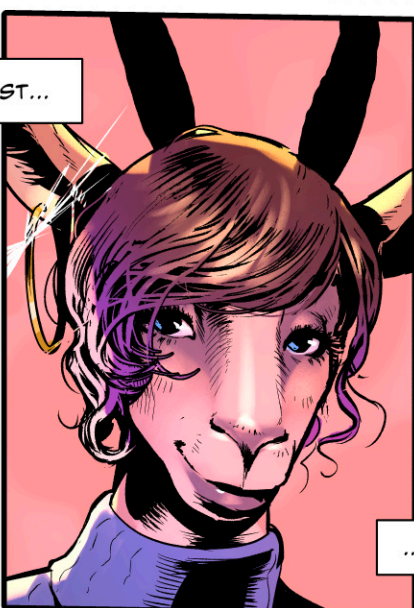
CHARLIE HAD HELPED ME SCRUB THE WHOLE PLACE FROM CRACKED LINOLEUM TO WATERMARKED CEILING TO MAKE IT KID-FRIENDLY

WHILE MOM WENT TO GET GROCERIES, WE PLAYED WITH MEGGIE IN THE PARK UNTIL MY ANKLE GAVE OUT, THEN WENT INSIDE

CHARLIE AND MEG PLAYED TOGETHER WHILE THE OLD MAN RESTED



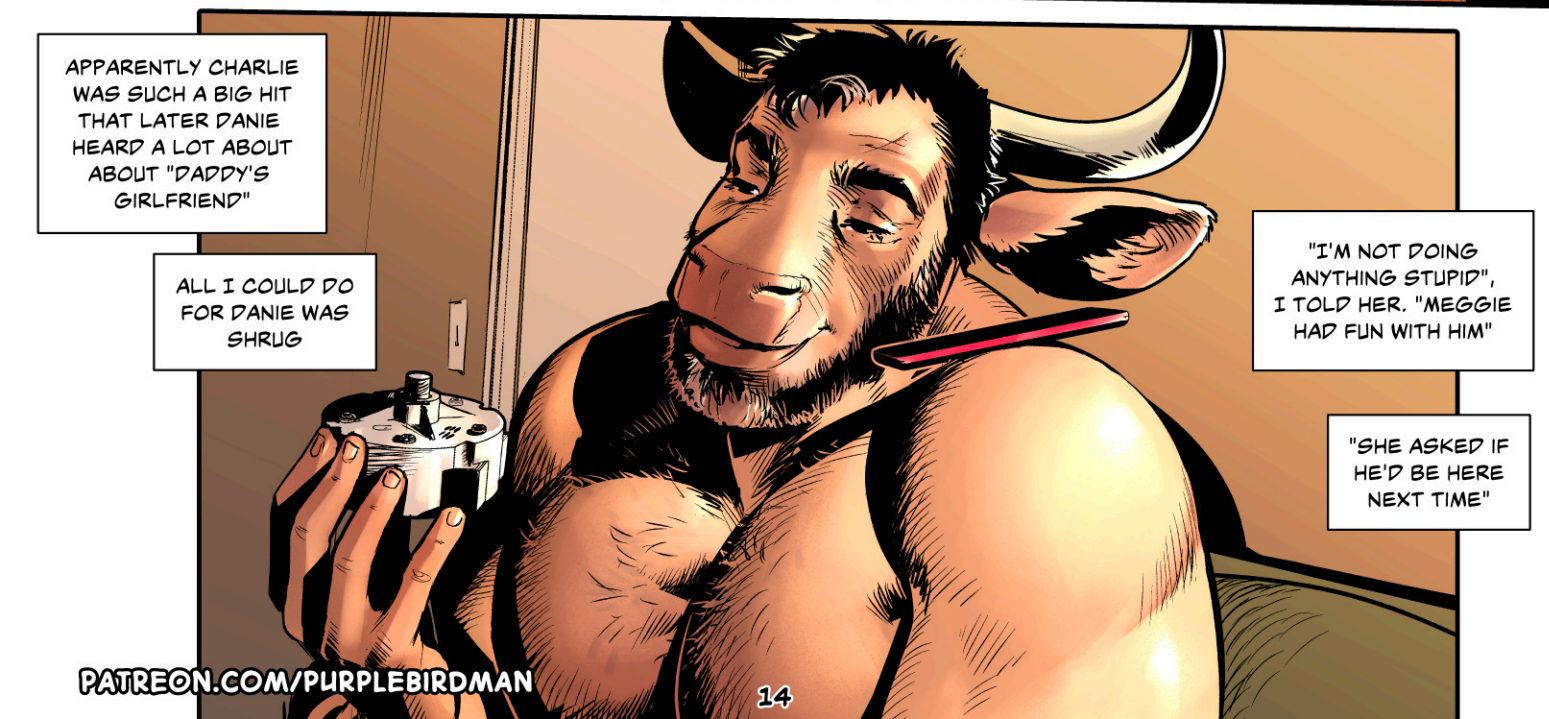
I REMEMBER HOW HIS EARRINGS CAUGHT THE SUNLIGHT



JUST...



...LOVELY



APPARENTLY CHARLIE WAS SUCH A BIG HIT THAT LATER DANIE HEARD A LOT ABOUT ABOUT "DADDY'S GIRLFRIEND"

ALL I COULD DO FOR DANIE WAS SHRUG

"I'M NOT DOING ANYTHING STUPID", I TOLD HER. "MEGGIE HAD FUN WITH HIM"

"SHE ASKED IF HE'D BE HERE NEXT TIME"

MY GUT WAS GONE

RUNNING AND A GOOD DIET HAD FIXED ME UP

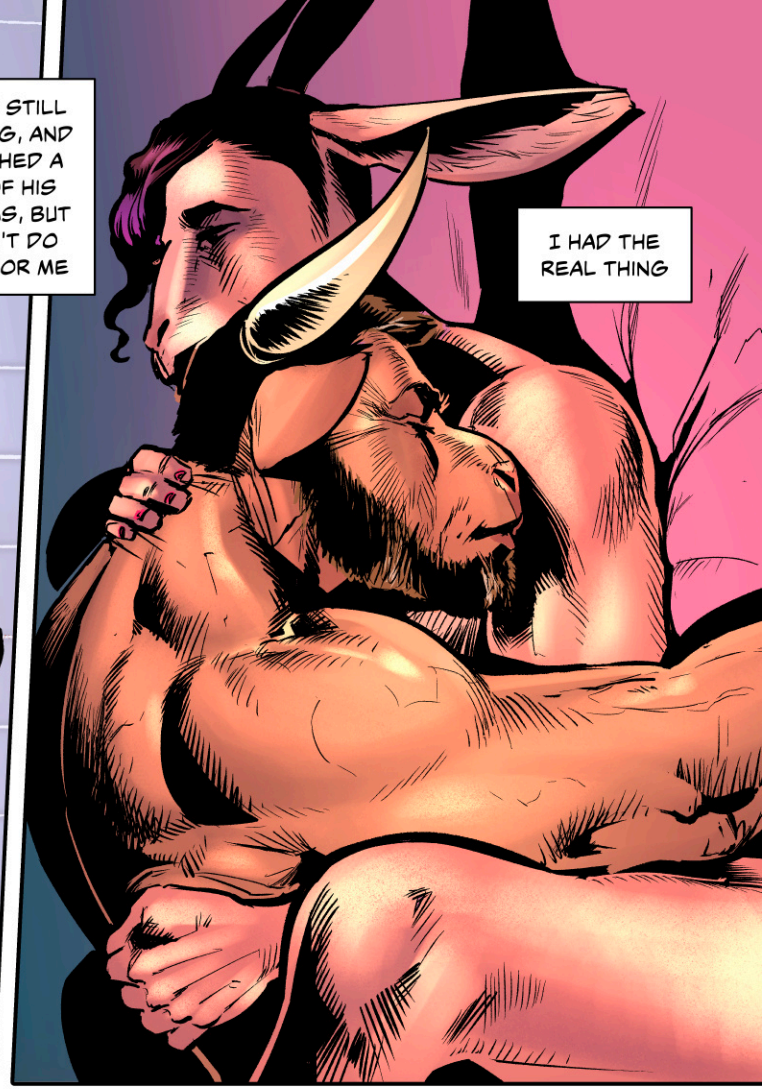
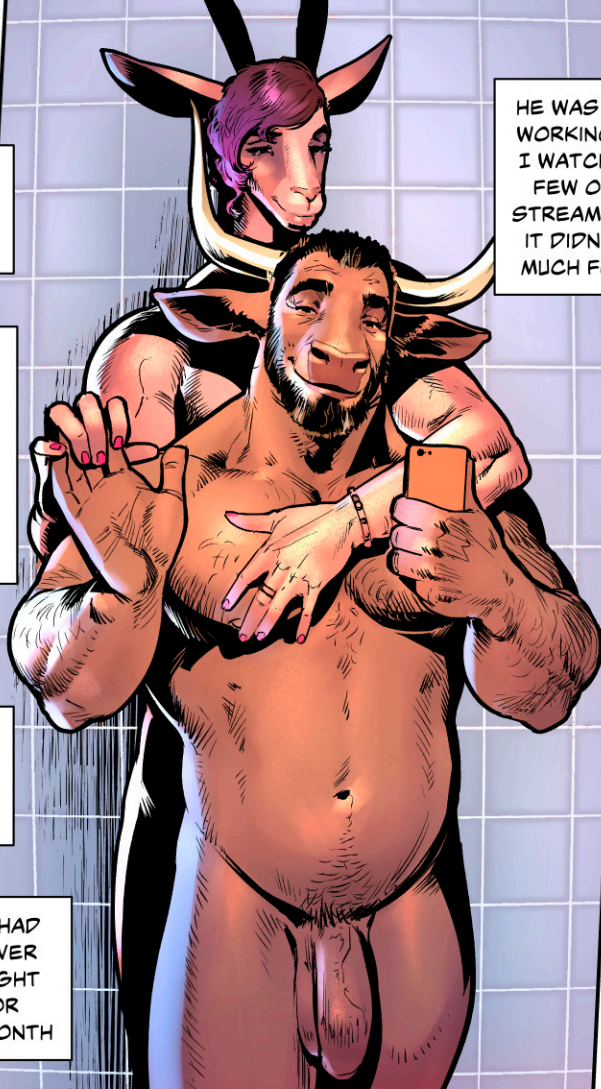
DESPITE THE BAGS UNDER MY EYES, DESPITE THE CREASES, MY EYES WERE SMILING, AND I LOOKED...

...HELL, BETTER THAN I HAD IN A LONG, LONG TIME

CHARLIE HAD SLEPT OVER EVERY NIGHT NOW FOR OVER A MONTH

HE WAS STILL WORKING, AND I WATCHED A FEW OF HIS STREAMS, BUT IT DIDN'T DO MUCH FOR ME

I HAD THE REAL THING



I TOOK HIM ON WEEKEND TRIPS IN THE TESTAROSSA

HE HELPED ME POLISH AND BUFF AND CHANGE THE OIL AND TUNE THE OLD ENGINE

HE WAS WAY SMARTER THAN ME, THAT CHARLIE

I ONLY HAD TO TELL HIM HOW TO DO SOMETHING ONCE AND HE NEVER FORGOT



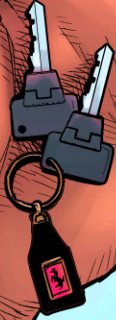
HE COULD PICK UP THINGS LIKE THAT, JUST BY READING

I KNEW HE COULD BE A DOCTOR

HE COULD BE ANYTHING



AND ME?



I WAS NEVER GOING TO BE MORE THAN A GARAGE MANAGER, A GEARHEAD, A SALESMAN, LIVING IN A SHITTY APARTMENT

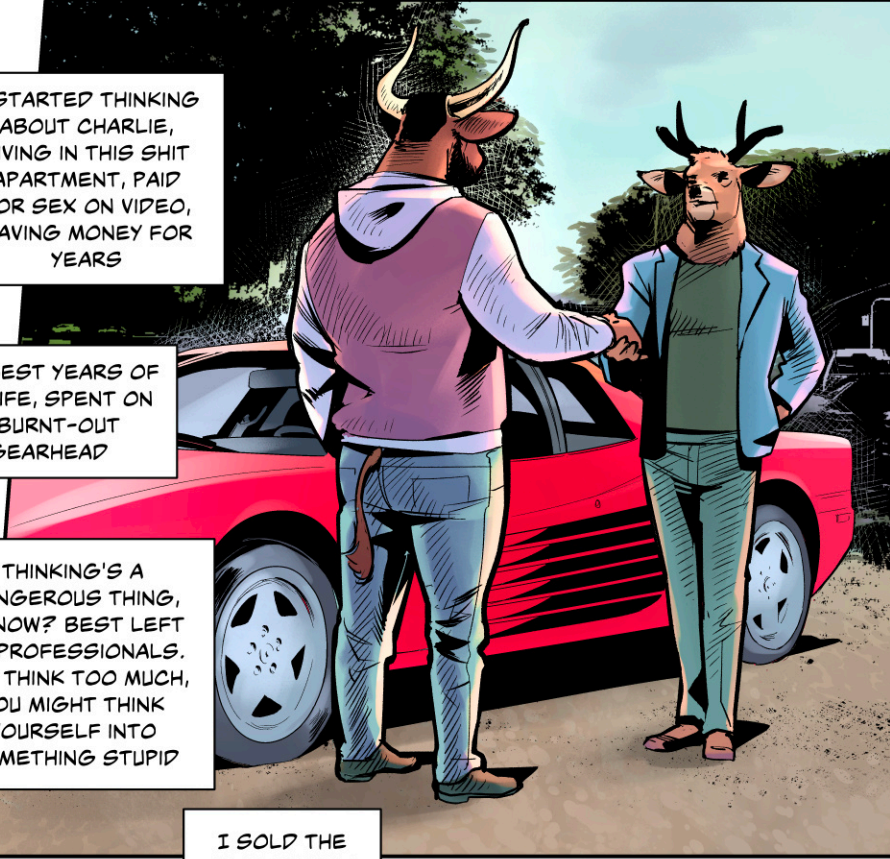
LIFE WAS BETTER NOW, SURE, BUT I STARTED THINKING

I STARTED THINKING ABOUT CHARLIE, LIVING IN THIS SHIT APARTMENT, PAID FOR SEX ON VIDEO, SAVING MONEY FOR YEARS

THE BEST YEARS OF HIS LIFE, SPENT ON A BURNT-OUT GEARHEAD

THINKING'S A DANGEROUS THING, Y'KNOW? BEST LEFT TO PROFESSIONALS. YOU THINK TOO MUCH, YOU MIGHT THINK YOURSELF INTO SOMETHING STUPID

I SOLD THE TESTAROSSA



AND HOLDING THAT MONEY IN MY HAND, MORE CASH THAN I HAD EVER HELD...

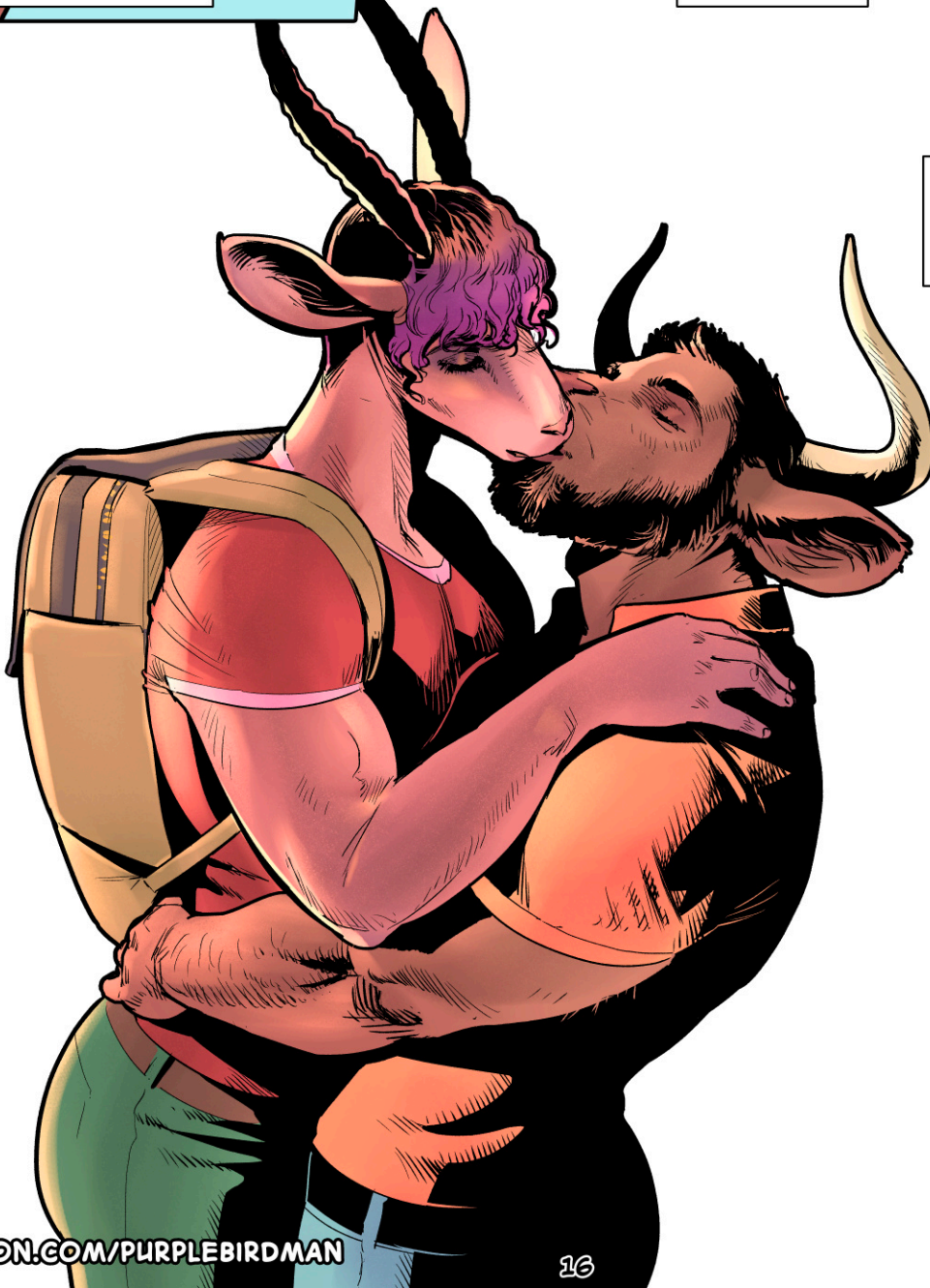
I GUESS IT STILL DIDN'T HIT ME THEN, BUT AFTER CHARLIE LEFT A COUPLE MONTHS LATER TO START HIS FIRST SEMESTER, I REALIZED I MUST HAVE BEEN IN LOVE

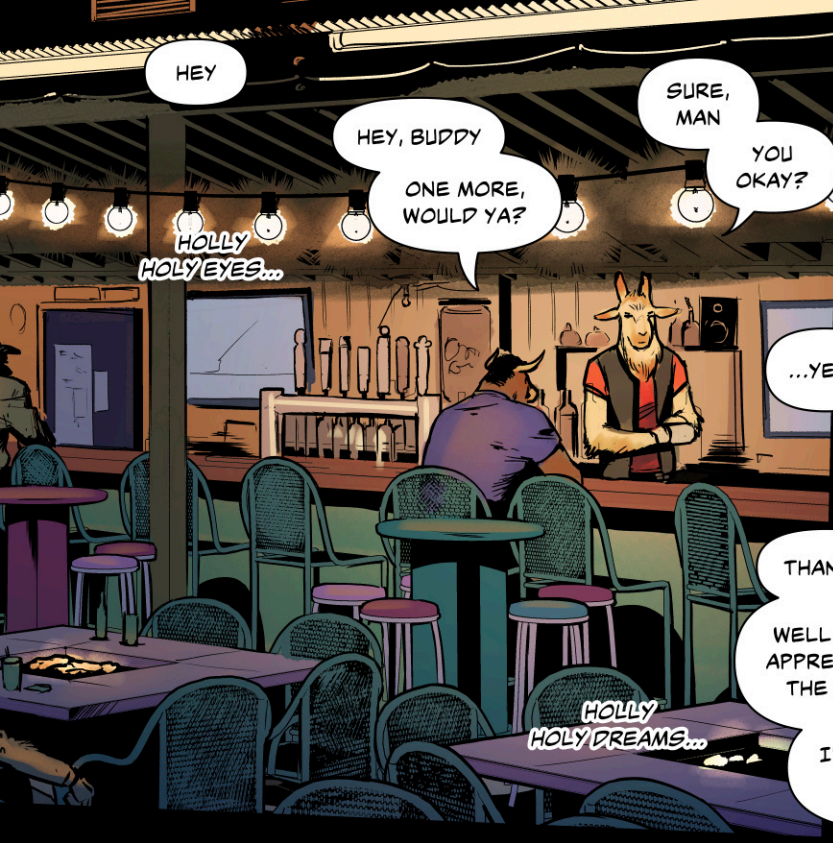
WE TALKED HERE AND THERE AFTER, BUT IT WAS EASIER TO LET THINGS GO

MAYBE THE FIRST TIME I DID SOMETHING RIGHT

AH WELL

YOU LIVE, YOU LEARN





HEY

HEY, BUDDY

ONE MORE, WOULD YA?

SURE, MAN

YOU OKAY?

HOLLY
HOLLY EYES...

HOLLY
HOLLY DREAMS...

...YEAH

THANKS

WELL, HEY,
APPRECIATE
THE EAR

I'M RAMBLING,
I KNOW



I'M NERVOUS



IT'S BEEN
TEN YEARS

PEOPLE
CHANGE

AND IF I
FELT OLD
AT THIRTY-
THREE...

BUT HE
DID WANT
TO--



AH!

MY GOD

OH MY GOD...



AH,
CHARLIE,
CHARLIE

THERE YOU
ARE, THERE
YOU ARE



SING A SONG
SING A SONG OF SONGS

HAVE YOU
BEEN GOOD,
SWEET
CHARLIE?

SING IT OUT
SING IT STRONG

THE
END

THANKS FOR READING MY COMIC!

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Charlie

