

## PAGE 58 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Tight on the Social Worker Lady. She looks down--a hard-reading expression.

1. SOCIAL WORKER LADY:

I'm sorry, kids. Our records indicate that your father did in fact marry your mother in the state of Virginia, but he moved to Norfolk in 1995. This was *after* he lived in Illinois--where he was born and raised.

**Panel 2:** Tight on Mara and Elias--Elias hangs his head, Mara glances at him--in shock. The dialogue balloon comes from ahead of them--other side of the desk (O.P.).

2. SOCIAL WORKER LADY (O.P.):

Your Dad never told you where he came from?

Strange. Seems like something a father would typically tell his children...

**Panel 3:** Tight on Mara and Elias. They now sit close together in different seats--airplane seats (in the cabin of a plane). Elias wears a sleep mask over his eyes and head bandage. His head is rested back--asleep. An overhead fan and call-button system emits a VOICE from a small intercom speaker. Mara's eyes are shifted up at it, her casted arm resting on an armrest between her and Elias.

3. VOICE (through overhead speaker):

Out to our right is a beautiful view of Chicago, Illinois.

**Panel 4:** Big panel. Pull back--Mara looks at an airplane cabin window past Elias (to his right). To Mara's left is the Social Worker Lady from earlier panels. The woman wears earplugs and lies asleep with a neck-pillow around her neck. Outside the cabin window is a dark night sky.

4. VOICE (through overhead speaker):

Soon we'll be touching down at Anachron International Airport. Please make sure any electronic devices are powered off at this time, and place seat-backs and tray tables to their full upright positions--

5. NOTE:

When we were young, Dad told us that his parents had died sometime before Elias and I were born.

But that turned out to be a lie too...according to the Social Services Department.

## PAGE 59 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Full figure on Mara. She stands with her oversized DUFFEL BAG (seen in Chapter 1, page 2) at her feet. She leans, straining as she picks up the bag (motion FX--slightly off the ground, heavy)--it has a carry-on tag on the zipper. Behind Mara is a sliding glass door (shaded, not looking inside). A sign over the door reads, "ARRIVALS." To Mara's right (also right of sliding glass door) is a directory sign with an arrow, reading: "CAR RENTAL SERVICE COUNTER."

**Panel 2:** Tight on Mara. She sits in the back seat of a car. Her head is rested against a window to her right. Her eyes are shifted, looking through the glass (shaded--dark outside).

### 1. NOTE:

I didn't know what to expect when we first arrived in Anachron.  
Right away, the town gave me a strange feeling.

**Panel 3:** From the exterior of the car--a perspective on the passenger side. The car is a plain, dark sedan. In the light of the car windows--surrounded by dark--Elias sits texting in the front passenger seat. The Social Worker Lady smiles behind the wheel, sitting in the driver's seat. Mara sits alone in the back seat--still looking out the window, into the darkness.

### 2. NOTE:

Like I'd been here before, but had no memory of it.  
Déjà vu again...

**Panel 4:** The sedan drives on the right side of an empty highway road--overgrown grass on the roadside. A signpost in the grass reads, "ANACHRON - CITY LIMIT". On the ground around the sign is trash and a pile of empty beer cans. Motion FX: the car drives past the sign, toward dark silhouettes of buildings and town structures, the moon in the distance (down the road).

## PAGE 60

### SPLASH PAGE

The sedan drives down a rundown, deserted street. On one side is a vacant, rundown lot short of an old brick mill building. Centered, the car drives through a small intersection--Mara can be spotted peeking out the open back passenger window of the car. A traffic light above the intersection dangles right next to a pair of abandoned sneakers (strung up, dangling). On the right side of the panel is a tall chain link fence with barbed wire. The fence is rusted and beat up, lined alongside a cracked sidewalk--more trash and streetlights are visible with the fence. A massive sign on the fence reads: "BIG MAGNUS FOOD CO." A huge logo beneath depicts a cartoonish outline of a man with an oversized moustache, smiling and winking one eye. Graffiti is sprayed over the sign. It reads: "RICH PRICK." Another sign, visible and posted somewhere on the fence reads, "CITY PROPERTY - NO TRESPASSING."

## PAGE 61 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Big panel. Mara, Elias, and the Social Worker Lady stand at the front door of a house (the one seen at the start of Chapter 2). A beat-up screen door hangs off one hinge (outside of the front door, opened out). A dim light over the door collects bugs. A crooked sign hanging on the door reads, "BLESS THIS HOME." The Social Worker Lady presses a DOORBELL (SFX). Elias looks up from his phone (observing surroundings). He stands left-most in the panel with a backpack on his shoulder--he looks frightened and appalled by his surroundings. Mara stares up at the bugs, standing at the door with the social worker. To her left (between her and Elias) sits her oversized duffel bag and a second luggage bag. The NOTE appears on the top edge of the panel.

### 1. NOTE:

Elias wasn't particularly happy with the relocation  
--but that goes without saying...

### 2. ELIAS:

Are you kidding me?!

This place looks like a fucking halfway house for crazy cat ladies!!!

### 3. SFX:

Doorbell ringing: 'DING-DONG'

**Panel 2:** Back to before the hospital (Mara and Elias approaching the swinging door and ringing bell SFX). The swinging door is open into a room. Mara takes a step through the doorway, looking sleepy. At her feet is a black and white checkered-pattern floor. Elias stands behind Mara in the doorway. He frowns hard at his phone (looks tired and irritated by the noise), simultaneously taking a step into the room behind her. Ringing bell SFX blare ahead of them (coming from inside the room).

### 4. SFX (O.P.):

Bell ringing: 'RING-RING-RING-RING-RING!'

5. NOTE:

It was then when we met our estranged Aunt Bethany and cousin Ziggy for the first time.

**Panel 3:** Tight perspective, looking at a woman from behind--she stands over a stove. She wears an apron--strings tied tight behind her back. She has brown hair--somewhat frizzy and unkempt, tied back in a ponytail. With her left hand, the woman holds a spatula. FX: smoke rises from sizzling bacon, in a pan on the stovetop. With her other hand, the woman holds a hand-bell. Motion FX depict her ringing it.

6. SFX:

Bell ringing: 'RING-RING-RING-RING--'

**Panel 4:** Close up on the hand bell. It sits on the countertop. Engraved on the side of the bell reads, "THE BREAKFAST BELL." Next to the bell sits a stack of buttered toast on a plate. Off to the side is the pan and bacon seen in the previous panel.

## PAGE 62

### SPLASH PAGE

Pulled back on the woman from the previous page (standing over the stove). The kitchen's decor includes: striped wallpaper, the checkered floor, a big antique fridge, and a classic Kit Cat wall-clock (cat with rolling eyes and tail). Standing at the stove, now turned around, is AUNT BETHANY: 33, frizzy brown hair (tied back), red-framed glasses, slippers, and a dress underneath her apron. On the front of her apron is an image of a smiley face--eyes made of fried eggs and smile made of bacon. A caption below this image reads, "I'm egg-static!" Bethany wears cartoonishly dilated pupils and a big, crooked smile. She always appears to have a chemically-induced spring in her step. Bethany pours coffee at a kitchen counter, next to the toast and hand bell. An arrow and SUBTITLE CAP label her: "**AUNT BETHANY.**" She smiles at Mara and Elias, who approach a circular kitchen table short of the counter. At the table sits ZIGGY: 13, small for his age, buzzed down hair, big ears, glasses, wears an oversized v-neck t shirt and cargo shorts. The table is set for breakfast--four places set. Ziggy and his plate--grapefruit and hard-boiled egg--hide behind a thick book propped up on the table. The cover reads: "MODERN ASTROPHYSICS." He turns a page. An arrow and SUBTITLE CAP label Ziggy: "**ZIGGY.**"

#### 1. BETHANY:

Oh! Good morning, kids!

## PAGE 63 (3 panels)

**Panel 1:** Mara and Elias sit at the table. Elias stares at his smartphone, holding a forkful of scrambled eggs. Mara looks at two prescription pill bottles on the table, sitting next to salt and pepper shakers.

1. BETHANY:

Dig in before your eggs get cold!

2. NOTE:

We've been living with them for almost two months now.

**Panel 2:** Bethany arranges a variety of pills in a pill organizer on the countertop--next to a toaster and an open package of white bread.

3. NOTE:

Dad lost touch with his younger sister when he left Anachron--right out of high school. Aunt Bethany was just a kid at the time, so she didn't have much to say about him.

**Panel 3:** Close up on Ziggy. He peers over his book, across the table at Mara and Elias (both O.P.).

4. NOTE:

Our cousin Ziggy is thirteen years old. He's a child of divorce, and apparently hasn't seen his father in years.

It seems to be a sore subject around the house, so we don't ask.



## PAGE 64 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Mara scrapes her plate into a waste bin. Nearby, Bethany draws a line on a doorframe over Ziggy's head.

1. NOTE:

He and Bethany are homebodies...and that's putting it lightly.  
I guess you could say they're products of their environment...

**Panel 2:** Bethany sits at an old sewing machine, pushing through a fabric. A turntable plays a record off to the side (against the wall). Motion FX: record spins on the turntable. A cat sits on top of a stack of jazz records next to it.

2. NOTE:

Bethany is a pioneer in the 'antique restoration and furniture upholstery' business.

**Panel 3:** Close up on Bethany: she tosses a pill into her mouth, head tilted back. Motion FX: pill dropping into Bethany's mouth.

3. NOTE:

She takes six different pills throughout the day--I don't know what for.

**Panel 4:** Ziggy and Bethany play an old upright piano in the corner of the den, sitting side by side. They smile at one another, gleeful as their fingers touch the keys (motion FX: on their hands and the piano keys--playing). Bethany's pupils are noticeably more dilated than before.

4. NOTE:

She and Ziggy somehow keep themselves occupied without ever leaving the house.

**Panel 5:** Mara and Elias sit at a corner of a dining room table--both look bored. Elias wears his wireless headphones from earlier. He looks up from his phone--to a handful of folded origami cranes on top of the table. Mara rests her head next to the pile. Far in the background, Ziggy and Bethany continue playing the piano (on a far wall, past Mara and Elias). Musical notes (SFX) rise from the piano in the background.

5. NOTE:

Elias and I aren't quite as introverted as the other Aldriches.  
We're still getting used to the routine of the household.

## PAGE 65 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** 'The Three' (short for Mara, Elias, and Ziggy) each stand beside school desks in the garage--three, side by side. Bethany stands next to a bigger desk in front of them, next to a blackboard. They all face a tiny American flag in a pencil cup on Bethany's desk, all pledging (hands on their chests). As Elias pledges, he slyly looks down at his smartphone--at his side.

1. SUBTITLE CAP:

"9:00 A.M."

2. NOTE:

Homeschool starts after breakfast.

**Panel 2:** Tight on Bethany. She is turned to the blackboard, a piece of chalk in her hand. On the blackboard, Bethany draws a single, short, vertical line of chalk. Her chalk stick is broken (before she can write any more)--the bigger half falling toward the floor. Motion FX: chalk (and chalk dust) falls from the board toward the floor. Bethany looks down at the falling chalk.

3. BETHANY (to herself):

Rats...

4. NOTE:

Bethany is forcing me to become a better writer. She's ruthless when it comes to grammar.

**Panel 3:** Bethany sits at a desk next to a blackboard, watching over the Three as they work--all writing. Mara erases on her paper--motion FX: erasing. On Ziggy's desk is a sheet of paper, filled with lines of writing from top to bottom (scribble lines--no detail visible). Ziggy writes at the bottom of a second sheet of paper, bearing down with determination. Motion

FX: Ziggy jotting quickly on paper. Off to the side, Elias is asleep with his pencil in his hand--upright on the paper. His sleeping head is propped up on his desk with his hand--shielding his closed eyes from Bethany.

3. NOTE:

I'm pretty sure Elias is flunking every class  
--but we won't know for sure until we get our progress reports next week.

## PAGE 66 (2 panels)

**Panel 1:** Tight on Mara and Ziggy in their school desks--side by side. Mara stares at Ziggy. Next to her, he raises his hand aggressively (to answer a question), practically standing on his desk.

### 3. NOTE:

Ziggy, on the other hand, is the star student. He's already advanced beyond the high school level. I'm starting to think he's a boy genius or something...

**Panel 2:** Full figure of Ziggy, sitting hunched over a work desk--in the corner of an attic space (Ziggy's bedroom). He works with protective glasses and a soldering iron--repairing a household electronic. The desk and corner wall are cluttered with papers, graphs, post-it notes, random hobby supplies, action figures, other trinkets. A desk lamp is the only light in the dark space--working late.

### 4. NOTE:

Especially considering he reads college science textbooks in his free time...  
I can usually hear him up in the attic past midnight, at work on some weird project.

## PAGE 67 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Ziggy is hunched over in front of a small closet space (underneath the staircase)--he kneels down in the doorway. The top edge of the panel is over his head. Next to him on the floor (outside the closet) sits a bowling ball bag--with a shiny bowling ball inside. Inside the closet is dark. Next to the closet door, Mara stands (wandering past, on her way to the stairs). She looks down at Ziggy--curious.

1. MARA:

Whatcha doing, Ziggy?

**Panel 2:** Tighter on Ziggy and Mara--standing closer. Ziggy stands in the doorway, facing away from Mara. He looks up at a shelf full of various (blank) board game boxes. Ziggy reaches up--as high as he can to the shelf above him. Mara stands next to Ziggy (significantly taller), looking up to where he reaches. She appears perplexed.

2. ZIGGY:

I'm collecting supplies--

**Panel 3:** Ziggy and Mara are turned to each other in front of the closet. Ziggy smiles as Mara lowers a box to him--from the shelf above. Motion FX: box being lowered from shelf. Ziggy's arms simultaneously reach for the box. The side of the box shows an image of two rectangular dominos. Accordingly, the side of the box (along with the image) reads, 'DOMINOS.'

3. ZIGGY:

--for my 'Rube Goldberg' project.

4. MARA:

'Rube Goldberg?' Who's that?

**Panel 4:** The box of dominos is tucked under Ziggy's arm. He smiles up at Mara, simultaneously adjusting his glasses. Mara still looks confused.

5. ZIGGY:

Not a *who*--a what.

6. MARA:

Huh?

7. ZIGGY:

A Rube Goldberg.

It's a name for a complex contraption built to accomplish a simple task.

8. MARA:

Oh.

That's really interesting...

## PAGE 68 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** At the staircase, Mara lingers at the bottom step. A few steps up, Ziggy lugs the bowling ball bag (seen earlier) up a step. The 'dominos' box is still tucked under his arm, one end of the box open. A domino drops from the box, toward the step below (motion FX: domino falling). Another domino sits a step below Ziggy, already fallen.

1. ZIGGY:

And I'm only using my Dad's bowling ball until he comes back.  
It's a secret project, so don't tell anyone, okay?

**Panel 2:** Same perspective--Ziggy has disappeared up the stairs, three dominos left behind on the steps. Motion FX: a 4th domino falls from one step to another. Mara looks up the stairs, a slight smile.

2. MARA:

Okay, your secret's safe with me!

**Panel 3:** Same perspective. At the bottom of the stairs, Mara holds a domino, examining it.

**Panel 4:** Same perspective. Mara is up a few steps on the stairs. She leans to pick up another domino. Elias descends the steps, frowning down at his smartphone--only a few steps past Mara. Mara looks over her shoulder, below, at Elias.

3. MARA:

Hey, have you seen Ziggy's 'Rube Goldberg?'

4. ELIAS:

Ew, gross...



The kid's thirteen years old, Mara. I don't even want to *imagine* what he's doing up in that attic all the time.

## PAGE 69 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Mara uses a hand-vacuum to clean under a sofa cushion in the den. Motion FX: the hand vacuum sucks up dirt under the cushion.

1. SUBTITLE CAP:

“3:15 P.M.”

**Panel 2:** Ziggy dusts the top of Bethany’s old TV set with a dusting wand.

2. NOTE:

In the afternoon, Bethany enlists us to do house chores.

**Panel 3:** Elias is equipped with a roll of paper towels and a spray bottle--he cleans the door of an old glass display cabinet. He frowns over a creepy antique ceramic figurine inside.

3. NOTE:

I constantly have to remind Elias to stay on her good side. As much as he complains, living with her is better than foster care...

**Panel 4:** Bethany smacks a window curtain with a broom--clouds of dust (motion FX: broom hitting curtain).

**Panel 5:** Mara and Elias sit crammed between Ziggy and Bethany on the sofa. The den is dark; they watch TV. Ziggy and Bethany wear blanket pajamas (like the Snuggie) as they share popcorn, both looking entertained. Mara and Elias stare blankly at the light of the TV.

4. SUBTITLE CAP:

“8:30 P.M.”

5. NOTE:

After dinner, we usually watch *Seinfeld* reruns on cable.

## PAGE 70 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Close up on Mara--she lies asleep in her bed. She stirs, eyes shut tight in the midst of a nightmare--head turned right.

1. NOTE:

And at bedtime, I again drift off into nightmare-land.

**Panel 2:** Pull back. Mara's head is turned in the opposite direction (left)--looking restless, with her eyes shut tighter. The prescription pill bottle (seen earlier, in the bathroom) sits on her nightstand.

2. NOTE:

They've become more lucid ever since Bethany gave me the spare bottle of sleeping pills she had lying around...

**Panel 3:** Tight on Mara's eyes--shut tight. The right side of her head is resting on a pillow.

**Panel 4:** Same perspective. Mara's eyes are cracked open.

**Panel 5:** Mara's eyes are shot open in terror. She GASPS.

3. MARA:

-GASP-

## PAGE 71 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Mara still lies with her head on the pillow. She gapes, stricken with terror. Past the edge of her bed--in place of the nightstand--is Dad. He sits in the dark, his head bloody and hunched over the steering wheel (same image as that at the end of Chapter 1). His dead eyes look directly at Mara.

**Panel 2:** Close up on Dad's face. He drools blood heavily, face mangled, eyes crossed as he speaks in mutters (his mouth is closed, but dialogue is coming out).

1. DAD:

Maybe we can get back on...

urghhh--

-spit-

**Panel 3:** Close up on Mara--still stricken still, gaping at Dad (now O.P.).

2. DAD (O.P.):

...if I take the highway down a few miles...

**Panel 4:** Tight on Dad's face again. His right eyeball is popped out of its socket. He drools blood--more heavily now, practically flowing from his mouth--down the steering wheel. Dad's face and the steering wheel are surrounded by darkness--an abyss of nothing around him.

3. DAD:

You can take the first leg--

**Panel 5:** Close up on Mara. She sits at the kitchen table. Her eyes are tired and red, baggy--even more so than before. She stares down at a forkful of scrambled eggs--not hungry.

4. NOTE:

Sometimes it's hard to tell if I'm dreaming or awake.  
Maybe it's because of all the monotony--repeating the same routine, day after day.  
Or maybe these meds are messing with my head...

**[Chapter 3 will start following this page in the next draft of the manuscript; the transition between sections is TBD]**

## PAGE 72 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Close up on the NOTEBOOK PAGE. Mara's hand grips the pen from earlier, writing out the end of her entry:

“Or maybe these meds are messing with my head...  
I just hope I'm not losing touch with re--”

The led tip of the pencil is broken on the paper after “re”.

**Panel 2:** Close up on Mara. She sits next to a cat on the sofa. Mara writes in a composition notebook, bearing down on an armrest of the sofa. She looks down at the broken pencil.

**Panel 3:** Same perspective. Mara erases from the page. Motion FX: Mara erases--eraser on the paper.

**Panel 4:** In the kitchen, Bethany stands in front of the big refrigerator--the door opened wide. Bethany drops a milk carton into a trash can (next to her); simultaneously, she looks into the fridge.

1. SUBTITLE CAP:

“FRIDAY”

**Panel 5:** The Three sit in the den, together on the sofa. Ziggy points a TV remote at the TV (O.P.). In the background, (distant) through the kitchen door, Bethany continues cleaning out the fridge, tossing another item into the trash. On the wall outside the kitchen, a landline phone rings. Elias text while Mara

2. ZIGGY:

Great Scott! *Back to the Future's* on ABC.

3. SFX:

Phone ringing: 'RING' 'RING'

4. ELIAS:

Never seen it.



## PAGE 73 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Ziggy looks wide-eyed at Elias. In the background, Bethany answers the phone.

1. ZIGGY:

You've never seen *Back to the Future*? It's one of the greatest movies of all time!

2. ELIAS:

And with only eight channels to choose from. I guess it's Mara and I who have been living under a rock our whole lives...

3. BETHANY:

Hello? Important information regarding my health insurance premium?

**Panel 2:** Close up on Mara, looking up at the TV from her dream journal--bags under her eyes. In the background, the long spiral cord of the landline phone stretches along the wall, past the kitchen, out of panel. Dialogue balloons come from where the cord disappears.

4. BETHANY (O.P.):

Sure, I have some time to talk!

**Panel 3:** Mara, Elias, and Ziggy sit crowded together on the sofa.

5. ZIGGY:

Fun fact: in the early drafts of *Back to the Future*, the time machine was written as a refrigerator instead of the beloved DeLorean.

6. MARA:

--would you guys wanna do something other than watch TV for a change?

7. ELIAS:

Like what?

**Panel 4:** Mara rolls her eyes. Elias hunches over his phone. Ziggy scratches his head, looks out a nearby window (a grey sky outside).

8. MARA:

I dunno...like go for a walk?

9. ELIAS:

Eh...

10. ZIGGY:

It's kinda overcast outside.

## PAGE 74 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Mara's notebook is open on her lap. She looks out woefully at the overcast sky outside. In the background, Bethany leans in the doorway of the kitchen, next to the landline phone. She continues talking (no dialogue), smiling with the spiral cord wrapped around her fingers. Her head is tilted back against the wall.

**Panel 2:** Tight on Bethany. She listens to the phone, a blank expression--no one on the other end.

1. BETHANY:

Hello--?

**Panel 3:** Close up on Bethany--she hangs up the phone. Motion FX: phone hangs up on the hook.

**Panel 4:** Mara and Elias sit on the couch, frowning at one another. Ziggy adjusts the antenna of the old TV set--static on the screen. He simultaneously looks up at Bethany--she stands next to the sofa.

2. ELIAS:

You know, they invented this cool thing a few years ago called *Netflix*. Ever heard of it?

3. MARA:

Give it a rest, Elias--

4. BETHANY:

Kids, we need to go grocery shopping...

**Panel 5:** Close up on Bethany. She wears funny antique sunglasses. She reaches for car keys hanging on a hook--on a wall next to the front door. Motion FX: Bethany reaching toward keys on the hook. A "COUPONS" fanny-pack hangs next to the keys.

5. BETHANY:

Head to the station wagon.

## PAGE 75 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Exterior of car. An old station wagon (seen in the beginning of Chapter 2) drives down a street. With woodgrain paint, the car looks like it's in need of a wash. Dialogue balloon comes out from the back window of the car.

1. ZIGGY (O.P.):

That's the dentist's office where I got my first root canal.  
It was pretty painful, even with the laughing gas.

**Panel 2:** Inside the car, Bethany sits in the driver's seat. A sewing machine is buckled into the passenger seat. The Three sit in the back seat--Ziggy in the middle, smiling up at Mara. Mara rests her head on the window, looking out. Elias texts on his smartphone in the opposite window seat.

2. ZIGGY:

But they gave me a free toothbrush after, so that was cool.

**Panel 3:** Ziggy points past Elias, out the window. Elias frowns.

3. ZIGGY:

And over there is the park.  
We had to stop going a few years ago because the jungle gym gave me sepsis...

**Panel 4:** Close up on Ziggy and Elias.

4. ZIGGY:

It has a nice pond too. We used to go there to feed the ducks and box turtles.

5. ELIAS:

Big surprise... Anachron has box turtles, but not a single Starbucks.

**Panel 5:** Mara looks out her window. They drive past empty storefronts, "FOR LEASE" signs in the front windows. Bethany sits in front of Mara in the driver's seat.

7. MARA:

A lot of these places are boarded up...

8. BETHANY:

It's been that way since Reagan was president, sweetie.

## PAGE 76 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Ziggy is turned to Mara, looking up. Even sitting, she towers over him.

1. ZIGGY:

A lot of businesses went under because of the recession. Most have been boarded up since the '80s--when the Big Magnus plant shut down.

2. MARA:

Big Magnus...do you mean that abandoned factory on the way into town?

**Panel 2:** Panel fades from previous panel. Close up: "RICH PRICK" is written in spray paint over the BIG MAGNUS FOOD CO. sign on the chain link fence (seen earlier). Dialogue balloons come from below.

3. BETHANY (O.P.):

As in Big Magnus Food Co., sweetie. It shut down long before you kids were born.

**Panel 3:** Close up on Bethany. A Jesus figurine visible on the dashboard next to her.

4. BETHANY:

But back when I was your age, Big Magnus employed hundreds of Anachronians.

**Panel 4:** Elias looks down at his phone, frowning. Ziggy smiles big next to him.

5. ELIAS:

Pfft... *Anachronians*.

6. ZIGGY:

Big Magnus was one of the biggest food processing facilities in the world. Fun fact: it's also why Anachron is best known as "Home of the TV Dinner."

**Panel 5:** Perspective from back of car, looking to the front.

7. MARA:

They made microwave dinners?

8. BETHANY:

And canned foods too--shipped all around the world! There used to be dozens of other Big Magnus plants all across America. But Big Magnus himself built the very first one here in Anachron.

9. ELIAS:

Did people seriously call this guy 'Big Magnus?'



## PAGE 77 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Perspective: from front seat, looking into back seat.

1. BETHANY:

Of course, dear. Magnus Senior was the wealthiest man in town back then. He had a big estate in North Anachron, and he even ran for mayor way back when.

**Panel 2:** Closer on Bethany--she smiles, sentimental. A thought bubble shows an image of a "VOTE BIG MAGNUS for CITY MAYOR" poster--including the Big MAGnus logo (winking man with moustache).

2. BETHANY:

I remember all of his banners and posters around town said, 'Vote Big Magnus for City Mayor!' They even used the Big Magnus company logo for the election.

3. ELIAS:

Guy sounds like an egomaniac...

4. MARA:

Did he win the election?

**Panels 3-4:** (3) A Magnus family portrait shows the Magnus family, vintage 1950's: Magnus Senior--old, white, sits in a chair. His wife, Beatrice Magnus--blonde, gorgeous, too young for Magnus Senior, stands next to him. On Magnus Senior's knee, between them, sits young Magnus Jr.--a toddler in a formal suit. The image fades into the second panel (4): Close up on Elias. In the background: Bethany in the driver's seat. Dialogue spans between the two panels:

5. BETHANY:

No, sweetie. He died before the polls even opened. Then, some time later, his son Magnus Junior took over the family business.

6. ELIAS:

What did they call him? 'Little Magnus?'

## PAGE 78 (5 panels)

**Panels 1-2:** (1) Closer up on Magnus Jr.--in the family portrait. He has a blank expression. (2) workers in jumpsuits crowd together outside the front gate of the Big Magnus Food Co. plant in protest. The gate entry is locked up with chains. The protesters rage, picket signs at hand. Cops stand off to the side with nightsticks at hand. Dialogue balloons come from below:

1. BETHANY (O.P.):

Magnus Jr. wasn't as invested in the food business as his father. Eventually, he ended up closing down all the plants and fleeing the city like the coward he is.

2. BETHANY (O.P.):

Nobody knows where he went. It's like he disappeared off the face of the earth.

**Panel 3:** Bethany hunches over the steering wheel, peering through the windshield.

3. BETHANY:

That was the beginning of the end for ole' Anachron.

**Panel 4:** Medium perspective on Mara, Elias, and Ziggy in the back seat. Mara glares at Elias, looking over Ziggy's head.

4. ZIGGY:

The Big Magnus shut-down is what caused the recession. Anachron's economy took such a bad hit, most of the locals--

5. ELIAS:

Um, I think you mean *Anachronians*...

6. ZIGGY:

--packed up and left town. It's been like this ever since.

## PAGE 79 (2 panels)

**Panel 1:** Wide panel. Aunt Bethany smiles at Ziggy through the rearview mirror.

1. ZIGGY:

Things have become a bit more gentrified though. The MEGA-MART opened up right around the corner just last year.

2. BETHANY:

But we always drive out of our way to support local business--like true Anachronians. Isn't that right, Ziggy?

3. ZIGGY:

Right. We refuse to feed those corporate leeches.

**Panel 2:** Big panel. The station wagon pulls into the parking lot of a rundown shopping square. Motion FX: the car turns into a parking space--at the edge of the parking lot. The car is parked a short distance away from a couple of abandoned shopping carts and a dumpster. The parking space is opposite another store unit. A sign hanging over the store unit next door reads: 'SAMSON'S PLACE FAMILY VIDEO' (from opening splash). Grey clouds hang over everything--threatening to rain.

## PAGE 80 (6 panels)

**Panel 1:** Bethany, Mara, and Ziggy move along an aisle with a shopping cart. Trailing behind is Elias, grabbing a bag of chips from a shelf. He carries a few other junk food items in his arms.

**Panel 2:** Close up on Bethany. She examines a can of soup closely, as Elias drops the items in the shopping cart.

**Panel 3:** Elias looks up from his phone. Bethany picks up a junk food item from the cart, frowns.

1. BETHANY:

I don't think so Elias. Put everything back right this minute.

2. ELIAS:

What? Why?!

**Panel 4:** Bethany piles the items back in Elias' arms as he sulks.

3. BETHANY:

Because the government isn't paying me subsidies every month to feed you kids rubbish. Growing children need a well-balanced diet, after all.

**Panel 5:** Ziggy holds a box of cereal. He looks over his shoulder. In the background, Elias fumes, Bethany throws a look at Ziggy.

4. BETHANY:

Same goes for you, Ziggy. You know you have food allergies--so no processed foods allowed.

**Panel 6:** Bethany looks at a grocery list as she pushes the shopping cart down the aisle, leaving Mara, Elias, and Ziggy behind.

5. BETHANY:

Ooh, ground beef is on sale this week.

## PAGE 81 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Big Panel. Bethany, Mara, Elias, and Ziggy stand on a checkout line: Bethany sifts through a mass of coupons; Ziggy reads a magazine; Mara puts groceries on the belt; Elias stands over a selection of candy and mints. Elias looks over his shoulder, slips a candy bar into his coat pocket.

**Panel 2:** Mara and Elias trail behind. Ahead of them, Bethany pushes the shopping cart toward sliding glass exit doors. Ziggy rides on to the side of the shopping cart. A STORE SECURITY OFFICER stands in their way--he wears unkempt store security attire with two noticeable food stains.

**Panel 3:** The store security officer points past Bethany to Elias. Elias looks panicked--he stares down wide-eyed at his smartphone, failing to look inconspicuous.

1. STORE SECURITY OFFICER:

Ma'am, I'm going to need this young man to empty his pockets.

**Panel 4:** Mara glares at Elias. Elias looks up--dumbfounded.



## PAGE 82 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Elias sulks, head hung as he exits the store. The sky is overcast overhead. Bethany screams in a rage after him. Behind, the store security officer sees them off.

1. BETHANY:

Shoplifting?!

2. ELIAS:

I said I'm sorry.

**Panel 2:** Bethany screams in Elias' face. Elias shuts his eyes, hair blowing back. Mara and Ziggy stand in the background, dumbfounded.

3. BETHANY:

Sorry--?! You're lucky they didn't press charges!

**Panel 3:** Bethany looks distressed, palms her head. Elias is careless--he fixes his hair, looks down at his phone.

4. BETHANY:

We're permanently banned! Jiminy Cricket! Now we're going to have to shop at the MEGA-MART!

5. ELIAS:

It's not the end of the world. And do you know how much food these places let go to waste every year? Enough to end world hunger.

**Panel 4:** Elias shows his phone to Bethany. She gapes, boiling.

6. ELIAS:

One candy bar really isn't a big deal. I mean, just look at the statistics.

**Panel 5:** Elias cowers, ducking away from Bethany as she snatches at his phone in a rage.

7. BETHANY:

GIVE ME THAT THING!

## PAGE 83 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Elias runs past the minivan as Bethany pursues, roaring. Mara and Ziggy stand in the background.

1. ELIAS:

You're fucking crazy! Get away from me!

2. MARA:

Elias, stop!

**Panel 2:** Big panel, extension of Panel 1. A bystander in the parking lot records on his phone as Bethany chases Elias around the station wagon. Motion FX: Bethany chasing Elias around the station wagon. The car is parked at the edge of the parking lot. Bethany's hand clutches the back of Elias' sweater as he evades her, stretching the collar.

3. BETHANY:

You little bastard, give me that phone!!

4. ELIAS:

Holy shit, let go of me!

**Panel 3:** Elias runs through the parking lot (motion FX), past a dumpster. Bethany follows close behind him--she huffs in a rage. Elias is terrified, looking back over his shoulder, extending his phone defensively in front of him.

**Panel 4:** Elias trips over a parking block as he enters the Samson's Place lot--a good distance away from the grocery store now. The parking block is just short of a VIDEO RETURN CHUTE on the front of the store unit. The face of the return chute reads, 'BE KIND, REWIND.'

**Panel 5:** Elias lies aching on the concrete, panicked and reaching out for his phone--just out of reach. Bethany stands over, leaning down fast to pick it up.

5. BETHANY:

I'll show you crazy!

## PAGE 84 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Elias reaches out dramatically as Bethany yells, drops his phone into the video return chute. Motion FX: phone dropping into the chute.

1. ELIAS:

NOOOOO!!!

2. BETHANY:

Now you'll never get it back!

**Panel 2:** Elias panics--he reaches his arm down into the return chute, straining himself in desperation.

**Panel 3:** Close up: Bethany frowns coldly, pressing the key fob for the station wagon. Elias continues to struggle in the background. He looks up, alarmed. "!"

3. BETHANY:

Get in the station wagon. You're grounded.

**Panel 4:** Bethany stands at the driver's side door of the station wagon. Mara and Ziggy stand at the car--both look alarmed, gaping.

4. SFX:

Van door opening: 'BEEEEEEEP'

5. BETHANY:

All three of you...

6. ZIGGY:

What?

7. MARA:

But that's not fair! We didn't do anything!

## PAGE 85 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Bethany clutches the steering wheel, glaring through the windshield. The wipers wipe (motion FX) as raindrops show on the glass.

1. NOTE:

Bethany didn't say a word the whole way home.

**Panel 2:** In the back seat, Ziggy hangs his head. Mara and Elias both frown out their windows on either side.

**Panel 3:** In the foyer, short of the stairs, Bethany hangs her coat on a rack, a dripping umbrella. Mara, Elias, and Ziggy huddle at the door. Ziggy sulks, Bethany frowns.

3. NOTE:

Ziggy seemed especially on edge. I guess he isn't used to being grounded like this.

4. BETHANY:

Go to your rooms.

**Panel 4:** Close on Bethany, ominous, frowning forward.

5. BETHANY:

And lights out. I don't want to hear a peep.

## PAGE 86 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Mara sits on the edge of her bed. She writes in her composition book (seen earlier). She looks up to doorbell SFX from outside the window--next to her bed.

1. SFX (from outside window):

'DING-DONG'

**Panel 2:** Mara stands at her bedroom window, looking out. A pizza delivery car (lighted pizza delivery car topper) on the street outside--in the distance. Dialogue balloons (O.P.) float up from below the window (front door).

2. PIZZA DELIVERY GUY (O.P.):

Extra large Hawaiian with extra pineapple?

3. BETHANY (O.P.):

Keep the change.

4. NOTE:

I can only assume Bethany's having some kind of a mental breakdown...

**Panel 3:** Side-view: in the dark, Mara sits on the edge of her bed. She looks down at the framed photo from her nightstand (in her hands).

SUBTITLE CAP:

"12:24 A.M."



## PAGE 87 (3 panels)

**Panel 1:** Same perspective as last panel on previous page. Mara looks up from the photo to SFX--coming from O.P.

1. SFX (faint, O.P., spaced out):

Screeching: 'SCREEEEEECH'

**Panel 2:** Tight on Mara. She peeks out her bedroom door (cracked open) into the hall. Music SFX come from the right.



2. SFX:

Music playing (notes spaced out, weak, faint): 

**Panel 3:** Big panel. Mara tip-toes across the hall. She looks toward the staircase at the end of the hall. Music SFX come from downstairs.

3. SFX:

Music playing (faint):

 "...Ground control to Major Tom...  
Take your protein pills and put your helmet on...  
Ten... Nine...Eight..." 

## PAGE 88 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Mara tip-toes (motion FX) toward Elias' bedroom door--a "DO NOT DISTURB" sign hanging on the knob, a light under the door. SFX come from inside the room--under the door. Mara looks to, approaches the sound.

1. SFX (O.P.):

Screeching: 'SCREEECH'

**Panel 2:** Elias pushes his BED alongside a wall, the steel legs dragging on the floor. Mara frowns at him from the doorway behind, peeking into the room. Elias looks over his shoulder, startled.

2. SFX:

Continued screeching of bed legs: 'SCREEEECH'

3. MARA:

What are you doing?

4. ELIAS:

Wha-- GET OUT OF MY ROOM!!

**Panel 3:** Elias gives the bed a final push. The headboard knocks into the wall next to a window. Through the window is bad weather and a big tree. Heavy rain falls, leaves blow, LIGHTNING strikes outside the window. Mara now stands inside the room, tensely shutting the door behind her.

5. SFX:

Lightning strike (outside window): 'CAARAAACK!'

6. SFX:

Bed knocking into wall: 'THUNK!'

7. SFX:

Bed legs screeching, louder: 'SCREEECH!'

8. MARA:

DUDE, Bethany's gonna hear you!

9. ELIAS:

And I care *why*?

**Panel 4:** A makeshift ROPE of bedsheets is piled on top of the bed. Mara looks shocked as Elias wraps an end of the rope around the headboard bar of the bed.

10. ELIAS:

That pill-popping psychopath can have her little meltdown. I'm getting my phone back.

11. MARA:

You're--WHAT?!

**Panel 5:** Elias looks down, tying a secure knot with the rope. He appears impassive while Mara looks furious.

12. ELIAS:

I'm going back to that video store. Duh...

13. MARA:

Like you haven't gotten us in enough trouble already?!

## PAGE 89 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Still focused on tying the rope, Elias glances at Mara. He wears a serious, determined expression.

1. ELIAS:

She can take my freedom, but I'll be damned if she takes my tech.

**Panel 2:** Elias strains. He tightens the rope knot--wrapped around the leftmost bar of the bed's headboard, next to the window. His face shows an angry, strained grimace (speaking in a mutter).

2. ELIAS:

Fucking opioid addict...

**Panel 3:** Tight on Mara. She frowns at Elias (O.P.), standing short of a rustic household sign on the wall. It reads in bold, welcoming, cursive black script (on white-painted wood): "BLESS THIS HOME". The sign is oddly fastened to the wood-panel wall with noticeably big nails sunk into each corner. The sign is slightly crooked--a botch-job.

3. MARA:

Language.

**Panel 4:** Tight on Elias. He picks up a pair of shoes--trendy-looking ones for 2012. He speaks with a condescending expression. His dialogue balloon touches the right edge of the panel.

4. ELIAS:

...defined by Cambridge Dictionary as--

**Panel 5:** Wide panel. Elias frowns, standing at the foot of the bed. His shoes sit on the mattress. Mara stands close by. She gives him a dry, stern glare. Her dialogue balloon (left edge of panel) interrupts Elias' thought from the previous panel.

5. MARA:

Shut up.

## PAGE 90 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Elias stands at a plain nightstand table (with drawer) with a lamp and outdated digital alarm clock on top (TIME: '9:33').

1. ELIAS:

I can only hope my screen wasn't cracked going down that video return...

**Panel 2:** Same perspective. Elias' hand touches the handle of the nightstand drawer (pulling it open--motion FX on drawer). He looks down at the alarm clock.

2. ELIAS:

With a bus ride, it's only fifteen minutes back to that shopping square. There's no time to waste.

**Panel 3:** Tight on the nightstand drawer, wide open. Inside it are a Bible and a roll of duct tape. Elias' hand reaches for the duct tape.

3. ELIAS:

Duct tape, thank Christ...

**Panel 4:** Mara is redder in the face. She fumes over Elias. He sits on the bed, hunched over as he ties his shoes. He frowns, muted, on edge.

4. MARA:

What the fuck is wrong with you? You've been acting like a complete dick-shit ever since we got here!

## PAGE 91 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Elias ductapes plastic grocery bags over his shoes. His left is already taped; he wraps tape around his (bagged) right ankle. Mara looks down, perplexed as she observes the process.

1. ELIAS:

'Dick-shit'. That's really creative, Mara...

**Panel 2:** Elias rummages through a small closet. A mink coat flies over his shoulder, followed by an old fedora. He examines a raincoat. Mara stands behind, just out of the path of the fedora. She appears angry, glaring at Elias from behind. Inside the closet hang other old clothing articles, storage boxes, cobwebs.

2. MARA:

My point exactly!

Whenever you *do* talk, you just say something sardonic--

3. ELIAS:

Like...

Emo isn't actually a lifestyle, but more accurately the parent-genre of *screamo*--one of mankind's greatest sins?

**Panel 3:** Close up on Mara, now really pissed.

4. MARA:

--and now you're *shoplifting* too?

**Panel 4:** Elias wears the raincoat--he examines how it looks on him (looking down). Mara is enraged, behind him.



5. MARA:

You've been acting like a selfish brat ever since the accident!

## PAGE 92 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Elias hunches into the closet, rummaging through more items on the floor. Mara stands behind. She appears caught off-guard as Elias' dialogue balloon mutes her (interruption of dialogue from previous panel).

1. MARA:

If Mom and Dad could see the way you've been acting--

2. ELIAS:

*'They'd turn over in their graves'...* Just like Dad would say, right?

**Panel 2:** Medium on Elias and Mara. Elias is turned away from the closet, facing Mara. He holds a fishing pole as he talks down to her, his free hand gesturing in a belittling fashion in Mara's face. Mara silently fumes.

3. ELIAS:

Newsflash: we didn't know this place *existed* until *after* the funeral. Dad probably hated Anachron even more than I do. I mean, he grew up here and never once mentioned it.

**Panel 3:** Elias stands next to the bed. He sets the fishing pole on the mattress, next to the roll of duct tape.

4. ELIAS:

You're just upset because you're the only one left to put up with my crap now. The truth is I've always been like this--even before the accident.

**Panel 4:** Tighter on Elias. He looks down over the mattress, observing his provisions. His dialogue balloon trails behind him, directed at Mara (O.P.).

5. ELIAS:

Which is probably why *you* were always the favorite.

## PAGE 93 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Elias puts on a baseball cap, eyes down, turned away from Mara. Mara stands in the background, eyes also shifted down, away--a mournful expression.

1. MARA:

That's such bullshit. You were so obviously Mom's favorite...

**Panel 2:** Elias is turned to the window, away from Mara. He hangs his head, buttons a button of his raincoat. Mara looks at him from behind. Her expression is less angry, softened.

**Panel 3:** His raincoat buttoned up, Elias observes the outdated digital alarm clock sitting on the nightstand (against the wall nearby; plugged in). The time reads: "9:39".

2. ELIAS:

I need to catch the next bus.

**Panel 4:** Elias hunches, strains to open the window. Mara stands by with an irritated expression.

3. MARA:

I don't think Mom *or* Dad would approve of you climbing out your window like a high-schooler for some stupid phone....

## PAGE 94 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Elias opens the window: his hands push up on the window, which is open all the way. Mara looks out the window at leaves blowing past with heavy rain.

1. MARA:

It's like the *Perfect Storm* out there. Have you considered calling the owner of the video store and asking them to give it back?

**Panel 2:** Close up on Elias, at the window. He SCOFFS.

2. ELIAS:

*Right*, like I'm handing my *Doe* over to the creepy owner of some *discount Blockbuster*? It's a failed enterprise, Mara. They'd probably pawn it or something.

**Panel 3:** Next to the window, Elias holds the fishing pole. Mara stands by, cross-armed as Elias talks down to her.

3. ELIAS:

Firstly, I *am* a high-schooler.

**Panel 4:** Mara looks on with a blank expression as Elias flings the fishing pole out the window (soaring object motion FX). The fishing pole is mid-air, halfway out the window. The duct tape sits on the window sill.

4. ELIAS:

And it looks more like a patchy drizzle out there if you ask me...

## PAGE 95 (3 panels)

**Panel 1:** Big panel. Elias steps a leg through the open window, heavy rain outside, more lightning in the background--dangerously closer than before (bigger lightning bolt).

1. SFX:

Lightning strike: 'CAAARRRRRAACK!!!'

**Panel 2:** Mara looks out the window with wide eyes at the storm outside. Elias remains determined. He continues climbing through the window (awkwardly positioned halfway through), also peeking in at Mara with a contemptful glare.

2. ELIAS:

And for your information: that 'stupid phone' was the special edition Doe Universe X4 *with rose gold*.

**Panel 3:** Mara stands by, rolls her eyes as Elias' other leg remains through the window--the rest of him already outside (O.P.). His dialogue balloon comes through the window, past his foot.

3. ELIAS:

And it counted as three birthday presents in one, as you know.

4. MARA:

I'm aware.

## PAGE 96 (3 panels)

**Panel 1:** Outside of the window. Elias grasps the rope as he stands outside the window. on a patch of uneven, poorly shingled roof. Blowing leaves and rain surround him. Mara peers out, now looking concerned.

1. ELIAS:

I'm starting to experience withdrawal symptoms...

**Panel 2:** Elias wears the hood of his raincoat, he looks off into the distance longingly. Mara watches, on edge. Her dialogue balloon interrupts Elias' (Mara's dialogue balloon extends to the right edge of the panel).

2. ELIAS:

We've already been apart for almost *six hours* now--

3. MARA:

Hopefully it doesn't take the ambulance that long to get here after you break your neck...

**Panel 3:** Elias frowns. He stands back from the window sill, keeping his balance on the roof. He gives the bedsheet rope a pull ('TUG' FX). Mara appears concerned, standing closer to the window. Elias' dialogue balloon interrupts her's from the previous panel.

4. ELIAS:

And as *materialistic* as it may seem to you, that phone is pretty much the only thing keeping me sane in this god-forsaken nuthouse.

SFX:

On bedsheet rope, tugged: 'TUG'

5. MARA:

Okay... But seriously, you could die out there.



## PAGE 97 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Mara clutches the sleeve of Elias' raincoat. Her eyes are widened--serious. Elias frowns down at her hand.

1. MARA:

I mean it, Elias. If you sneak out, I'll tell Bethany. It's too dangerous.

**Panel 2:** Close up on Elias, rain dripping off the visor of his cap. Mara's dialogue balloons come from the side.

2. MARA (O.P.):

And if you think living with her is bad, how'd you like to end up in a group home?

3. ELIAS:

You're really going to rat on me?

**Panel 3:** Outside the window, Elias turns away, his sleeve pulled loose from Mara (blur FX on Mara's hands, Elias' sleeve).

4. ELIAS:

Go ahead, then. See if I care.

**Panel 4:** Mara leans out the window after Elias. Elias holds the rope. He inches left along the side of the house, away from the window.

5. ELIAS:

If you snitch to Bethany, I won't be the one heading to a group home.

**Panel 5:** Close up on Mara. She appears perplexed, blank. Rain catches her hair.

6. MARA:

What do you mean?

## PAGE 98 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Elias grasps a tree branch overhead. He holds the rope with his other hand, stepping toward the edge of the roof.

1. ELIAS:

I'm sixteen years old--the 'legal age of eligibility' for emancipated minors in the state of Illinois.

**Panel 2:** Elias grasps the rope tightly with both hands and looks down, taking a cautious step back over the edge of the roof. A weed-infested patch of lattice is below the edge, against the side of the house.

2. ELIAS:

Which means I'm living here with you, psycho Aunt Bethany, and creepy cousin Ziggy *voluntarily* as opposed to visiting a juvenile court to file a guardianship petition.

**Panel 3:** Close up on Mara, looking down out the window--she looks dumbfounded. The rope trails down from the window, along the side of the house.

3. MARA:

Did you make all that up just now?

**Panel 4:** Same image as the last panel. Elias' dialogue balloon comes from below.

4. ELIAS (O.P.):

Google it.

## PAGE 99 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Close up on Elias: he climbs down the rope on the side of the house.

1. ELIAS:

According to Social Services, I can't pursue sibling guardianship until I turn eighteen in another *seventeen months, three weeks, and four days*.

**Panel 2:** Close up on Mara, leaning through the window. She appears perplexed. Elias' dialogue balloon comes up through the window.

2. ELIAS (O.P.):

I've done my research...

**Panel 3:** Mara looks perplexed, gazing up out the window. A rusty gutter above leaks rainwater, off to Mara's side.

3. MARA:

*Sibling guardianship?* You mean--

**Panel 4:** Elias is centered against the side of the house, climbing down. He reaches out a plastic-wrapped foot toward a couple of metal trash bins below. The stream of water seen falling in the previous panel barely misses him. Wet leaves stick to his raincoat.

4. ELIAS:

I mean I'm staying with you until I turn eighteen. And then we're moving to Portland, or Seattle, or something...

## PAGE 100 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Mara looks down out the window. She hangs her head, eyes shifted down--pondering.

1. MARA:

But you've barely even acknowledged my existence since the funeral...

**Panel 2:** Same perspective: Mara frowns, starting to boil.

2. MARA:

And you clearly hate it here--

**Panel 3:** Tighter on Mara, full-on boiling with anger, shouting.

3. MARA:

So why would you put yourself through living in Anachron if you're just gonna be pissed off all the time?! You think you're doing me some kind of favor?

**Panel 4:** Elias touches ground--landing on his feet between the trash bins and garden gnome.

4. MARA (O.P.):

I'm your fucking sister, not a charity case!

**Panel 5:** Close up on Mara: she looks down from the window, shouts.

5. MARA:

I know you'd rather be living off Mom and Dad's life insurance settlement in *Seattle* than wasting your time here anyway!!

## PAGE 101 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Close up on Elias. He frowns upward (toward Mara at the window, O.P.), shouting back.

1. ELIAS:

SEATTLE'S the fall-back!

**Panel 2:** Elias frowns as he lifts a trash bin lid from one of the metal bins. FX shows the lid lifting off the bin. Mara's dialogue balloon (shouting) comes from O.P., over his head.

2. MARA (O.P.):

For your information, I'd much rather be stuck here with *pill-popping Aunt Bethany* and *weird cousin Ziggy* than living with you!

**Panel 3:** Elias (focal) holds a trash bin lid over his head, stepping out on the lawn of the back yard. Behind him, Mara's silhouette leans out, shouts after him from the light of the window above.

3. MARA:

You'd probably be the worst fucking roommate of all time!

**Panel 4:** Tighter on Elias--frontal perspective, still holding the trash bin lid over his head. He looks alarmed, caught off-guard (!) by three more creepy (cast in dark) garden gnomes gathered around a small, dead garden. Over his shoulder, in the background, Mara's silhouette continues shouting after him from the lighted window above.

4. MARA:

I'd be the one doing all the cleaning and we'd probably be living off pizza rolls!

## PAGE 102 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Medium on Mara in the window (in detail)--no longer a silhouette. She shouts out into the rain, enraged, with damp hair.

1. MARA:

I mean, you *really* think I'm moving into a studio apartment with you?! Since the accident, you've been more like a ghost than a brother!

**Panel 2:** Tight on Elias' face, eyes forward, bangs damp against his forehead. In the background, overhead, a silhouette of Mara continues shouting after him from the lighted window.

2. MARA:

It's like you died with them!

**Panel 3:** Same perspective, Mara's figure slightly further away (smaller) than in the previous panel. Elias' eyes are shifted down, sad. His speech appears to come out quiet now-- only speaking to himself.

3. ELIAS:

'Since the accident'...

**Panel 4:** Close up on Elias. He walks past the oak tree, head still hanging under the trash bin lid. Close in the background is the tree's bark. An etching in the bark reads, "J+D". Elias doesn't seem to notice it, walking past.

4. ELIAS:

At least you came out of it with a broken arm. You should be thankful for that...



## PAGE 103 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Full figure. Elias hangs his head underneath the trash bin lid. He passes by a rusty tetherball pole--not standing perfectly upright, leaning slightly. A deflated, limp volleyball hangs at the end of the tether rope.

1. ELIAS:

I was technically in a coma for two days, remember?  
...and then I woke up to find out Mom and Dad were both dead.

**Panel 2:** Tight on Elias, eyes shifted back over his shoulder.

2. ELIAS:

Not to mention my *dog*, Pinky. Or did you forget about her too?

**Panel 3:** Elias approaches a patch of overgrown shrubs toward the edge of the yard. A clearing leads to a short chain link gate: an exit from the yard.

3. ELIAS:

I guess the reality hasn't sunk in yet. Doesn't help that we're suddenly living with these weird-ass distant relatives in this bum-fuck, *Twilight Zone* town.

**Panel 4:** Elias pops out the collar of his raincoat, turned away from the house. Mara's silhouette looks down from above, leaning out the window with a hand cupped behind her ear.

4. ELIAS:

Maybe I am just being selfish...

**Panel 5:** Medium on Mara in the window. She leans out--less red in the face than before, makeup running and hair wet from the rain.

5. MARA:

Wait, you're WHAT??

## PAGE 104 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Wide panel. Elias' figure (silhouette) creeps along the side of the house. Mara's dialogue balloons come from above, behind him.

1. MARA (O.P.):

I actually can't hear you because of the rain! Can you repeat everything?

**Panel 2:** Wide panel. Mara's silhouette looks out over the rain--to the overgrown lawn outside. She SHOUTS after Elias' figure below, carrying the fishing pole as he reaches the shrubs. Simultaneously, he TRIPS over an old sprinkler on the lawn, attached to a garden hose.

2. SFX:

Elias tripping: 'TRIP'

3. ELIAS:

Fuck--

4. MARA:

ELIAS, COME BACK!

**Panel 3:** Same perspective. The fishing pole disappears out of panel (right), trailing behind Elias as he exits.

5. MARA:

You're gonna get struck by lightning--ELIAS! The fishing pole's a HAZARD!

**Panel 4:** Same perspective. Elias' figure has disappeared.

## PAGE 105 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Medium, back inside the bedroom. Given up, Mara hangs her head. She leans on the window sill.

1. MARA:

Damn it...

**Panel 2:** Full figure. A pillow is on the floor at Mara's feet. She notices (!) a corner of a PAMPHLET poking out from under the mattress.

**Panel 3:** Mara holds, examines the pamphlet.

**Panel 4:** Close up on the cover of the pamphlet in Mara's hand. Slapped over a pleasant image of a RISING SUN, the title reads: "Facing Tomorrow: Coping with Loss and Grief for Teens and Adolescents".

**Panel 5:** Mara looks remorseful. The pamphlet is open in her hands. She reads closely.

## PAGE 106 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Mara steps across the hallway, centered, stepping away from Elias' door.

**Panel 2:** Mara sits on the edge of her bed, head cradled in her hands.

**Panel 3:** Same perspective. A THOUGHT BALLOON comes from Mara. It shows an image of her shouting out the window (after Elias, O.P.), a cold, almost evil rage in her eyes. This image depicts a flashback from the earlier panels.

1. MARA (in thought balloon):

It's like you died with them!

**Panel 4:** Same perspective--Mara is shifted slightly (appearing more on edge than in the previous panel). She has a new thought. The image in the thought balloon depicts a figure of Elias, walking with a fishing pole at hand. The fishing pole is struck by a massive bolt of lightning (contact shown in image). Elias' figure is enveloped in the lightning bolt.

**Panel 5:** Same perspective--no thought-bubble. Mara frowns to herself, ruminating.

## PAGE 107 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Sitting up straight, Mara palms her head--appears conflicted. She looks at the prescription bottle sitting on her nightstand.

**Panel 2:** Tight on Mara's face. Her eyes are turned down--unsure.

**Panel 3:** Standing next to the bed, Mara tucks in a pillow under the bed sheets--a "sleeping dummy".

**Panel 4:** Mara stands at her closet (side-view on Mara, with closet door opened, looking inside). She rummages through, looking between some clothing articles hanging inside.

**Panel 5:** Big panel. Perspective from inside the bedroom room, looking toward the hallway. Mara's silhouette (seemingly wearing a poncho of some sort, FX on her figure) stands in the light of the bedroom doorway, looking in. The room is dark, with only some light coming in from the hallway. Mara's hand is on the lightswitch (flipped off) next to the door.

## PAGE 108 (3 panels)

**Panel 1:** Big Panel. Perspective looks up the stairs from the den. Mara creeps down the stairs. She wears a transparent plastic dry cleaning bag over her jeans and hoodie. A small logo printed in the plastic reads, "Clary's Cleaners" in cursive, centered in the triangular center of a coat hanger. More plastic is taped around Mara's casted arm.

**Panel 2:** Mara creeps toward the den, sneaking past a grandfather clock. SFX: from inside the den, coming from the doorway.

1. SFX:

Record player skipping: 'SKIP' 'SKIP' 'SKIP'

2. SFX:

Snoring: 'ZZZZZZZZZZZZ'

**Panel 3:** Full figure of Bethany, sprawled out and passed out on the sofa. She drools, snores. On the coffee table sits a pizza box, open with only one slice remaining. Against the wall in the background, a turntable plays a record--skipping.

3. SFX:

Record player skipping: 'SKIP' 'SKIP' 'SKIP'

4. SFX:

Bethany snoring: 'ZZZZZZZZZZZZ'

## PAGE 109 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Mara stands over the coffee table--a pizza box on top. Bethany's limp arm rests on the table, amid pizza crusts and a few scattered pills. Mara looks down toward an open pill bottle.

**Panel 2:** Close up on pill bottle. A hand-written label is taped over the prescription label: "⊘ For special occasions ONLY".

**Panel 3:** Mara stands over the turntable. She takes the needle off the record. Standing against the side of the record player is a "BOWIE" record.

**Panel 4:** On the couch, Bethany continues drooling--now tucked in under an afghan blanket. The lights are dimmed around her.

**Panel 5:** Mara slips out the front door.



## PAGE 110 (2 panels)

**Panel 1:** Mara stands at a rundown bus stop on a residential sidewalk. She waits under a rusty overhead awning, her hair already drenched. Mara wrings her hair--water dripping into a puddle at her feet. One of two fluorescent light strips above her is out, dim overhead. A public transit bus arrives.

**Panel 2:** A BUS DRIVER, old, white, in a city uniform, gives Mara a look as she boards the bus. She looks like a mess, drenched with black makeup running. A PASSENGER (perspective from behind) sits in a front seat on the right, looking out the side window. The passenger's face is out of (our) view--they appear homeless, dressed in rags and leaning against the window. A beat-up guitar case sits next to the passenger in the seat. Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* triangle and rainbow icon (on a faded sticker) is slapped on the side. The case is accompanied by grocery bags full of empty cans and bottles, along with a pair of spare shoes (vintage sneakers--worn down). Mara glances in the direction of the passenger as she steps into the center aisle.

## PAGE 111 (2 panels)

**Panel 1:** Perspective is tighter on the bus driver. He pulls a lever. The folding bus door shuts (movement FX on door shutting). The driver looks over his shoulder, after Mara. He looks past (and speaks to) the passenger, seated close by. The passenger's face is still out of view--obstructed. [ALTERNATIVELY: the passenger can be seen, head down, in the reflection of the big bus rear-view mirror].

1. BUS DRIVER:

Tsk, look at this nonsense.

That's the second one tonight. Saw another kid earlier with a damn fishing pole...

**Panel 2:** The bus driver looks up to the wide rear view mirror. He wears a coy grin. In the reflection of the mirror is the passenger and his guitar, surrounded by empty bus seats. Still leaning against the window, the passenger looks up slightly to the driver in the mirror. The passenger's face is still obstructed (possibly by a smudged reflection or rags; these FX are up to the artist).

2. BUS DRIVER:

-SIGH-

Children today...

Probably all burnin' out their brain cells huffing model airplane glue, ya ask me...

## PAGE 112 (5 panels)

**Panel 1:** Perspective from the exterior of the bus--it zooms along. Tight on Mara through a side, back window. She looks out the window.

**Panel 2:** Mara looks at a folded newspaper sitting next to her--on the seat between her and the window.

**Panel 3:** Closer up on the newspaper front page, now in Mara's lap. The newspaper is "THE ANACHRON HERALD." A cover image is wrinkled, distorted by creases and a coffee stain. The big headline reads, "BREAK IN SETS OFF ALARMS AT CRESTVIEW DISTRIBUTION CENTER".

**Panel 4:** Tight on Mara. She rips a corner of the page.

**Panel 5:** Same perspective. Mara folds a small, blank piece of paper-- torn off in a perfect square.

## PAGE 113 (3 panels)

**Panel 1:** Wide panel. Exterior view of bus: frontal. The bus pulls up to a bus stop on a sidewalk--just short of a vacant lot (left).

**Panel 2:** At the front of the bus, the driver looks over his shoulder. The bus door is folded open.

1. BUS DRIVER:

Al Crowley South and Waters Ave.

**Panel 3:** A folded origami crane sits on the bus seat. Mara walks off with the newspaper under her arm.

## PAGE 114 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Big panel. The bus drives left, heading out of the panel. The figures of the passenger and driver inside can be seen through the front window. Mara stands at the bus stop on the sidewalk, still holding the newspaper and wearing her makeshift poncho. Another awning overhead (same as previous bus stop) shields her from the rain. A brown-bagged liquor bottle sits on the bench. Mara is turned right, gazing in the distance (O.P.) through rain, down the street (in the direction opposite the bus).

**Panel 2:** Close up on Mara. She looks down at a GPS map on her smartphone screen: a bold line leading to a waypoint icon.

**Panel 3:** Mara holds the newspaper over her head as she departs from the bus stop. Behind her, a lighted poster ad on the side of the bus stop reads: **READY FOR A CHANGE IN SCENERY?** The image behind the bold text shows a palm tree on sand, along with a **SETTING SUN** over blue waters. The poster is displayed beneath cracked glass.

## PAGE 115 (3 panels)

**Panel 1:** Close up on Mara as she continues down the sidewalk. She struggles to keep the newspaper pages from flying away. Heavy winds, rain, and leaves flurry around her.

**Panel 2:** Continuing down the sidewalk, Mara GASPS--a fallen street light has fallen, crashed into a parked car nearby, the windshield SHATTERED.

**Panel 3:** Close up on the "Samson's Place Video Rental" sign--not lighted. Below, letters: "CLOSED FOR GOOD - TRY REDBOX". In the background, heavy rain falls over a night sky--a lightning bolt.

## PAGE 116 (4 panels)

**Panel 1:** Mara steps into the front parking lot of Samson's Place. The SFX and dialogue are ahead of her, toward the front of the store.

1. SFX:

'CLUNK!'

2. ELIAS (O.P.):

Stupid rock...

**Panel 2:** Mara stands in front of the store unit, her path crossed by Elias. Mara holds the newspaper, folded and drenched. Elias lugs a heavy chunk of a broken concrete parking block. He strains himself, moving it from a parking space toward a nearby window of the store unit. He doesn't notice Mara as she blocks his way, cross-armed, glaring.

**Panel 3:** Same perspective. Elias pauses with the concrete--out of breath. He looks up at Mara, alarmed and caught off-guard.

3. MARA:

Hey.

**Panel 4:** Same perspective as last panel. Elias stands up straight, scratches the back of his head, frowns. Mara looks down at the chunk of concrete sitting at his feet.

4. ELIAS:

Hey...

5. MARA:

Whatcha doing with that giant chunk of concrete?

6. ELIAS:

Uh, nothing...



## PAGE 117 (2 panels)

**Panel 1:** Still cross-armed, Mara looks at a front window of the store. Elias looks away--looking guilty.

1. MARA:

You were gonna use it to break a window, weren't you?

**Panel 2:** Elias hangs his head, frowns as Mara scolds.

2. MARA:

Do you really want to upgrade from petty theft to breaking and entering all in one day?  
*Sixteen* is still old enough for juvenile hall, you know.

(END OF SCRIPT PAGES)

# Pitch Package Documents

## I. Book 1 Synopsis

*In 2013, three teenagers discover a portal into an alternate reality, hidden in a closed down video store. Mara, an introspective emo girl coping with the recent loss of her father, is accompanied by her inattentive brother, Elias, and her reclusive cousin Ziggy—a young science fiction enthusiast with a genius IQ. The three soon uncover the horrors of the alternate reality (known as 'R2-), forced to take refuge in a massive underground shelter known as Orphan City—where a population of parentless kids work as slaves for a ruthless, brutal tyrant known only as Magnus. Mara soon sets her sights on joining a secret "orphan" rebellion—dead-set on taking down Magnus and freeing the orphans from captivity. All the while, the three grapple with the task of returning to their reality.*

## II. Book 1 Overview

*Orphan with a Gun* is a dystopian concept meant to provide a lurid take on the “coming of age” genre—with a balance between tragedy and dark humor. The flow of OWAG’s narrative is driven by constant shifts in characters’ immediate settings, satirical

framework stories, and ongoing mysteries that unfold as the series progresses. The narrative arcs and character development within *OWAG* is inspired by Brian K. Vaughan and Pia Guerra's *Y: The Last Man* series, Bryan Lee O'Malley's *Scott Pilgrim* series, and Robert Kirkman's *The Walking Dead*. *Orphan with a Gun* further innovates on trends of the "Child vs. Monster" sub-genre (popular in cinematic and televised works such as *Stranger Things* and Stephen King's *It*).

### **III. Main Character Biographies**

**Name:** Mara Aldrich

**Age:** 15

**Birthplace:** Fairfax, Virginia

**Residence:** Fairfax, Virginia; Anachron, Illinois

**Physical Appearance:** Fair-skinned, skinny, noticeable slouch

**Clothing:** Oversized black hoodie, 'STOP READING ME' t-shirt, torn jeans

**Hair:** Black, razor-cut and banged, usually covering one eye

**Eyes:** Big and brown with black eyeliner

**Narrative Role:** Hero; protagonist

**Key Relationships:** Dad; Elias; Ziggy; Cisco; Paloma

**Education:** High School

**Skills:** Games of strategy; folding origami cranes, investigating strange sounds

**Fears:** Nightmares of Dad; not returning to R1

**Strengths:** Introspective; reserved, sharp and strategic; moralistic

**Goal:** To aid the orphan rebellion of East Sector, Orphan City

**Flaw:** Prone to injury; self-destructive; clumsy; emo

**Narrative Bio:**

Mara Aldrich was born in Fairfax, Virginia in 1998. After the sudden death of her mother as an infant, Mara, her father, and her younger brother Elias moved to Sacramento, California. Over the years, Mara grew particularly close to her father. Dad became Mara's closest confidant as she entered her teen years—taking after his moralistic mindset through a series of childhood life lessons (nurture). In high school Mara became an emo, notoriously quiet, shy, and disconnected from others her age. At age fifteen, the tragic loss of her parents in a car accident forced Mara to relocate to her father's childhood hometown of Anachron, to live with her estranged Aunt Bethany and cousin Ziggy. Here, she struggles to cope with the loss of her parents as she faces new challenges—and even worse, unexpected shifts in reality.

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**Name:** Elias Aldrich

**Age:** 16

**Birthplace:** Fairfax, Virginia

**Residence:** Fairfax, Virginia; Anachron, Illinois

**Physical Appearance:** Mild build; tall

**Clothing:** Skinny jeans and sweater

**Hair:** Dark brown, curly

**Eyes:** Blue

**Narrative Role:** Deuteragonist

**Key Relationships:** Mara; Ziggy; Raf

**Education:** High School

**Skills:** Dishing criticism; sardonic comments; an extensive knowledge of random stuff he's read on the internet

**Fears:** Being stuck in R2 forever

**Strengths:** A realist; good judge of character

**Goal:** To leave Anachron and move to Seattle (or Portland); to return to R1

**Flaw:** Presumptuous and confrontational in conversation; stoic to a fault; has problems with change

**Narrative Bio:**

Elias Aldrich was born in Fairfax, Virginia in 1997. As a child, he developed a strong curiosity of the world around him. Elias slowly grew more interested in trending tech devices over the years. As a teen, Elias took refuge in material items and social interests in place of a close relationship with his loved ones (nature). As a preteen, he began to get into trouble at school, acting out and naturally developing a cynical, superficial personality. In his first year of high school, Elias proved to be more social and outgoing than his sister, Mara. His smartphone became his closest possession—an item he seems to rely on to keep in touch with the world around him. Losing his parents at the age of sixteen and relocating to Anachron, Illinois left Elias conflicted and resistant to the change of living with his Aunt Bethany and cousin Ziggy.

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**Name:** Ziggy Aldrich

**Age:** 13

**Birthplace:** Anachron, Illinois

**Residence:** Anachron, Illinois

**Physical Appearance:** Small for his age; olive skin tone; big ears and glasses

**Clothing:** V-neck t-shirt, cargo shorts, socks-sandals combo

**Hair:** Buzzed down thin, accentuates his ears

**Eyes:** Brown; glasses

**Narrative Role:** Secondary; “the Brain”

**Key Relationships:** Aunt Bethany; Mara; Elias; Cleo; and Frank

**Education:** Home-schooled

**Skills:** Good with mechanics; freestyle dance master (in private); boy genius

**Fears:** Not seeing his mother again; not returning to R1; dying

**Strengths:** Science fiction expert; resourceful; builds portals

**Goal:** To construct a portal leading back to R1

**Flaw:** Physically weak; strict dietary restrictions

**Narrative Bio:**

Ziggy was born in Anachron City in 2000—born out of wedlock. Bethany, Ziggy’s mother, was only twenty at the time, and was abandoned by Ziggy’s father soon after he was born. The abandonment left a mark on both Bethany and Ziggy over the years—leading them into a reclusive lifestyle. Ziggy was home-schooled by Bethany over the years, kept indoors and accustomed to strict routines and restrictions. In this environment, Ziggy’s creativity flourished. He found his escape in retro pop culture and science fiction, also taking an interest in mechanics and physics as an ongoing hobby. In his early teen years, Ziggy is content in his withdrawal from the outside world. The arrival of his estranged cousins, Mara and Elias, sparks Ziggy’s interest in stepping out beyond his incubated normal world. With the unexpected shift into R2, Ziggy’s abilities will prove useful in navigating through an abnormal reality.

#### **IV. Working Loglines**

- A ragtag band of troubled teens discover a gateway to a dreadful alternate reality hidden in a closed down video store.
- Troubled teens Mara, Elias, and Ziggy find themselves trapped in R2: an alternate reality 1988 where orphaned kids are forced to work as food production laborers following an apocalyptic famine.
- Decades following a worldwide famine, orphaned children and teens take refuge in a small Illinois town...producing food items for a brutal tyrant known as Magnus.

- Anachron City, R2, 1988: following an apocalyptic famine, a population of orphaned kids are forced to produce food for a community of crazed aristocrats. A blooming rebellion is disrupted when unexpected visitors arrive from another world.

## V. OWAG Story Structure (and template)

### By Chapter; by Book; By Series

- **By chapter.** Each chapter is focused on clear goals and stories that allow a uniform flow of action/character movement and fit into the overall narrative of the book (and potential series). A C-Story shows up to hint at a continuation of the Arc narrative to and from each chapter.
- **By book.** Chapters are stepping-stones to greater plots. The fruition of an individual chapter means the characters are one step closer to either the “Big Boss” Goal or the Ultimate Goal. The tension and/or “difficulty level” increases with each chapter with new, harder obstacles the characters must address to advance. Respective C-Stories are concluded in each book, opening up the ongoing narrative for greater plots. Each book presents an individual theme meant to reflect important lessons learned in reaching the FINALE.
- **By series.** Each book shifts closer to the FINALE, the climactic point at which all need for series-wide goals and struggles is diminished. The efforts of characters behind every story (A-B-C-O) reflect a struggle with/against the *theme* of the individual book in the series. The FINALE is the universal result (for better or worse) of having learned these lessons.

### A-B-C-O Stories

- A-Story: Primary struggle/goal/conflict. Mini-Goal focused. Receives the most attention among panels.
- B-Story: Secondary or opposing struggle/goal/conflict. Mini-Goal focused. Receives roughly a quarter to a third of attention among panels.
- C-Story: A respective Arc Narrative or struggle/goal/conflict (appears no more than one or two brief instances per chapter). Usually focused on the Ultimate Goal or the

“Big Boss” Goal. The C-Story can reach to the end of the book or to the end of the series.

- **O-Story:** “Other” story—a mini narrative or struggle/goal/conflict. Typically for comic relief, typically very brief, sometimes recurring within or beyond the individual chapter. Typically only one per chapter, though there can potentially be more in each chapter past the MIDPOINT of the book. The O-Story is typically “in the background” and holds no stakes in primary conflicts. The O-Story can occasionally have more significance. For example—something less considered, presented “in the background” of other action in an individual chapter can uncover a “saving grace” in the resolution.

## Goals

- **Mini-Goal:** goals of A-B-C-O stories, exclusive only to chapter. Mini-goals are *procedural* in nature—reaching expiration by the resolution of a chapter. Mini-goals reflect the primary efforts/struggles/conflicts of A-B-C-O stories, though are most typically focused on A and B stories. Mini-goals can be risky and tricky. They can come in the form of a “fake-out” goal which may lead to failure instead of success. Mini-Goals, most importantly, hint at a theme. Such a theme is relevant based on characters’ efforts/needs in accomplishing Big Boss Goals or working toward Ultimate Goals.
- **“Big Boss” Goal:** a goal (typically known) to be reached from mini-goals. “Big Boss” goals are events which can occur in narrative for every few chapters—depicting the payoff or recoil of mini-goals along the way. Big Boss goals are *serialized* in nature. Meeting a Big Boss goal 1) incites a shift or major change in conflict and/or 2) depicts and accomplishment or failure in the task of reaching the Ultimate Goal.
- **Ultimate Goal:** the end-game of all Mini-goals and Big Boss goals in the narrative of the full book. The Ultimate Goal is typically faced in the final climax of the book. The Ultimate Goal is always achieved to some extent—though achievement opens the gate to a new, harder Ultimate Goal. The Ultimate Goal can hang in the background of smaller goals. Expiration and/or accomplishment of each Ultimate Goal presents a world-shifting inciting incident for a new Ultimate Goal.
  - **NOTE:** the Ultimate Goal changes at the mid-point of each book. Tensions rise among stories and conflicts following the mid-point. This change typically means that either 1) the Ultimate Goal has changed completely (due to a fake-out—where the original Ultimate Goal was a front for the actual Ultimate



Goal, please bear with me) or 2) the Ultimate Goal becomes incredibly more difficult to achieve or distant from the characters' reach.

### **Act Structure (by chapter)**

*Each chapter, not specific to a page-count, is composed of 7 separate components:*

- **Forward:** Presents an A, B, or C story. An impending conflict or goal can be hinted at in the forward. Alternatively, in Forward: the forward can also act as the inciting incident of A and/or B story; can act as a continuation of a previous story (C); can act as whatever (comic relief, focus on an important object, etc.). The forward should take up no more than 5% of the full chapter.
- **Act 1:** “Investigation and Planning”. Act 1 is A-Story forward. B-Story is introduced. C-Story may also be introduced. Act 1 further fleshes out the mini-goals or conflicts of the chapter. Characters of A and B stories typically conduct respective *investigations* and form *plans* to meet their mini-goal.
- **Act 2:** “Struggle and Obstruction”. Struggles of A and B stories are faced by respective characters. Stories may clash here—at the very least, a connection or contrast between stories is made clear in Act 2. Characters' efforts in Act 2 then hit a wall—the *obstruction*. At the conclusion of Act 2, all efforts are forced to halt. The characters of either the A-Story, B-Story, or both must reassess before continuing their story.
- **Act 3:** “Taking a Pause”. Act 3 is a break in the action. Typically, the A-Story, the B-Story, or both, take a pause between Acts 2 and 4. Focused characters consider their *obstruction* and usually find some form of clarity for how to proceed. Other times, there is no clarity to speak of and characters must advance on a big risk—vulnerable to known or unknown dangers. Alternatively, Act 3 can focus on the C-Story, depending on how important it is to decided goals. Act 3 is brief—no more than half the length of Act 1.
- **Act 4:** Drawing from Act 3, focused characters follow a *new plan* to achieve their mini-goal. This comes with restrictions. For example, if Act 3 was only focused on the A-Story and not the B-Story, the B-story would continue in Act 4, picking up from where it was left off in Act 2. Roles can be reversed here, depending on the story focus of Act 3. Act 4 will most typically start on a B-story note. This means the

A-Story will usually be the focus of Act 3, though focus in Act 3 is a variable. In Act 4, characters will face a harder obstacle and/or make progress in reaching their mini-goal. The end of Act 4 will lead into a climax for the A-Story and typically the B-Story too. Part 1 of the *climax* leaves things up in the air—leaving known goal(s) in jeopardy.

- **Act 5:** Part 2 of the *climax*. There is a drawn-out struggle (or a last-ditch effort) to complete the chapter's mini-goals. The characters may fail, succeed, or be left in a middle-ground when the climax is complete. There is a clear change to speak of. Some mini-goals may be met while others are not—it all depends. After the climax settles, the *resolution* begins. New goals sprout from failure or success of mini-goals. Questions are clearly answered. New questions may be posed. The resolution is the result of the climax, explaining 1) *what has changed* and 2) *what comes next*.
- **Afterward:** the Afterward serves to hint at continuation of a story. It can be: 1) a recovery/Part 2 to the *Forward*, 2) a direct nod to an A-B-C-O story or goal (typically an O or a C), or 3) a clear hint of what the conflict will be in the next chapter. The Afterward leaves us on an exciting, uncertain note.

## Structure Template

**Chapter synopsis:**

**Chapter [X]; [...]**

**Theme:**

**A-Story Mini-Goal Summary:**

## **B-Story Mini-Goal Summary:**

### **Other Goals:**

1) [...]

2) [...]

[...]

### **Highlights:**

[Remember: *Ultimate Goal*, "*Big Boss*" *Goal*, what must be seen now in scheme of *BOOK* and long-term *FINALE*]

### **A-Story Beats:**

1) Forward: [...]

2) Act 1: [...]

3) Act 2: [...]

[...]

### **B-Story Beats:**

1) Forward: [...]

2) Act 1: [...]

3) Act 2: [...]

[...]

### **C-Story Beats:**

- 1) **Forward:** [...]
- 2) **Afterward:** [...]

[...]

### **Act Breakdown Descriptions**

#### **Forward:**

[REMEMBER: *the hint, the story focused, how it can/must be recovered on later*]

#### **Act 1:**

[REMEMBER: *the investigation, the plan, the goal in mind for A and B stories*]

#### **Act 2:**

[REMEMBER: *the struggle, the clash or connection between A and B stories, the obstruction*]

#### **Act 3:**

[REMEMBER: *brevity, clarity or no clarity, deviation from pace, the new plan*]

#### **Act 4:**

[REMEMBER: *which story to start on, new focus, stakes higher, peak of conflict, end at start of climax, how is the goal at risk*]

#### **Act 5:**

[REMEMBER: *conclusion to climax, dust settling in resolution, something changed, what happens next (something new)*]

#### **Afterward:**

[REMEMBER: *recovery or nod, coming conflict*]

## **VI. Practice Query Letter (ROUGH)**

[DATE: XX/XX/XXXX]

Dear [X]

I'm writing to seek representation for my first graphic novel, *Orphan With a Gun*: a dystopian dark comedy of [X] pages.

The story starts with an introduction to the world of R2: an alternate reality 1988 where a long-running global famine has left America reduced to a state of nature. In Anachron City, a western mountain town, a utopian society exists under the rule of a man known only as Magnus. Teens and children orphaned in the wake of the famine are employed at Magnus'

local food processing plant--working in exchange for food rations and refuge from dangers outside of the compound. Labeled as "orphans," the kids work under strict labor contracts--kept in line by Magnus' private military of vicious soldiers known as the M-Guard.

In R1, 2013, orphaned teenager Mara Aldrich, an introspective emo girl, relocates to her deceased father's hometown of Anachron, Illinois. In R1, Anachron is behind on the times, victim of a past recession--though in a world certainly not affected by the famine in R2. Accompanied by her troubled brother Elias and their reclusive cousin Ziggy, Mara unwittingly discovers a mysterious gateway between alternate realities, hidden inside a closed-down video store.

Finding themselves trapped in R2, the three must struggle to survive in the twisted and ultra-violent version of reality, all the while trying to uncover a way to return to R1. After they are forced to work for Magnus, Mara becomes involved with a secret rebellion of orphans, dead-set on bringing down the system from the inside. The many mysteries surrounding Anachron City, Magnus, and the respective histories of R1 and R2 slowly unfold. Along the way, the stakes heighten for the orphans as new enemies and dangers present themselves.

I am a recent graduate of Kennesaw State University's Graduate Professional Writing program. My work on *Orphan With a Gun* was the focus of my final capstone project before graduating from KSU. It is my hope to follow this book with further installments for an ongoing series.

Enclosed are the first [X] pages of the manuscript, with [X] included. I hope you enjoy reading and look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

Brian Dascal

Brian T. Dascall began writing *Orphan with a Gun* in his undergraduate years as an English major. He plans to collaborate with illustrators in continuation of this graphic novel project after graduating with his Master of Arts in Professional Writing from Kennesaw State University in 2020.



“I took an interest in writing absurd fiction when I was fourteen, as a form of self-acceptance. It was at this age when I first discovered the surreal and fantastic works of Mr. Franz Kafka. *The Metamorphosis*, in particular, blew my mind—and I’ve been picking up the pieces ever since.”

-Brian T. Dascall