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Twisting My Fate

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TWISTING MY FATE

BY: LAUREN KATZ



THE FIRST DAY OF SPRING BREAK...

I'M SO
HAPPY I GET A
BREAK FROM
SCHOOL.



SECOND
SEMESTER
HAS BEEN SO
HECTIC...



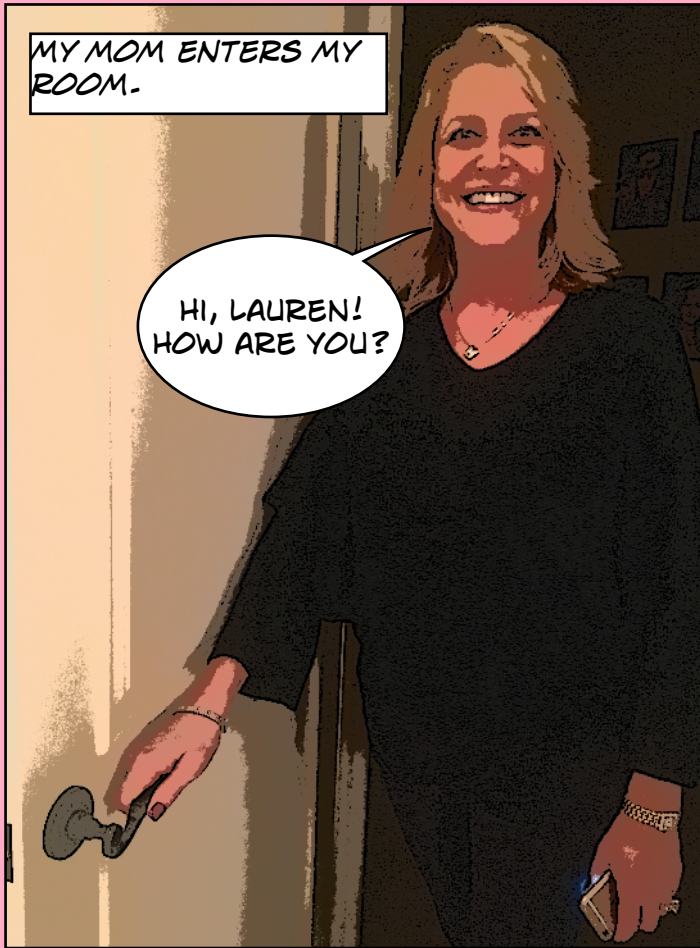
ESPECIALLY
SINCE MY
CLASSES HAVE
BEEN HARDER...

AND I
JUST JOINED
DG...



MY MOM KNOCKS ON MY DOOR.

COME IN!










THIS NEWS IS
GOING TO KILL
HER...

WELL... THEY
FOUND A LUMP IN
MY LEFT
BREAST...

MY MOM BREAKS THE NEWS...

LAUREN... I
HAVE BREAST
CANCER.





I FEEL LIKE TIME HAS
COMPLETELY STOPPED...

MY MOM'S
SICK... IS SHE
GOING TO DIE?

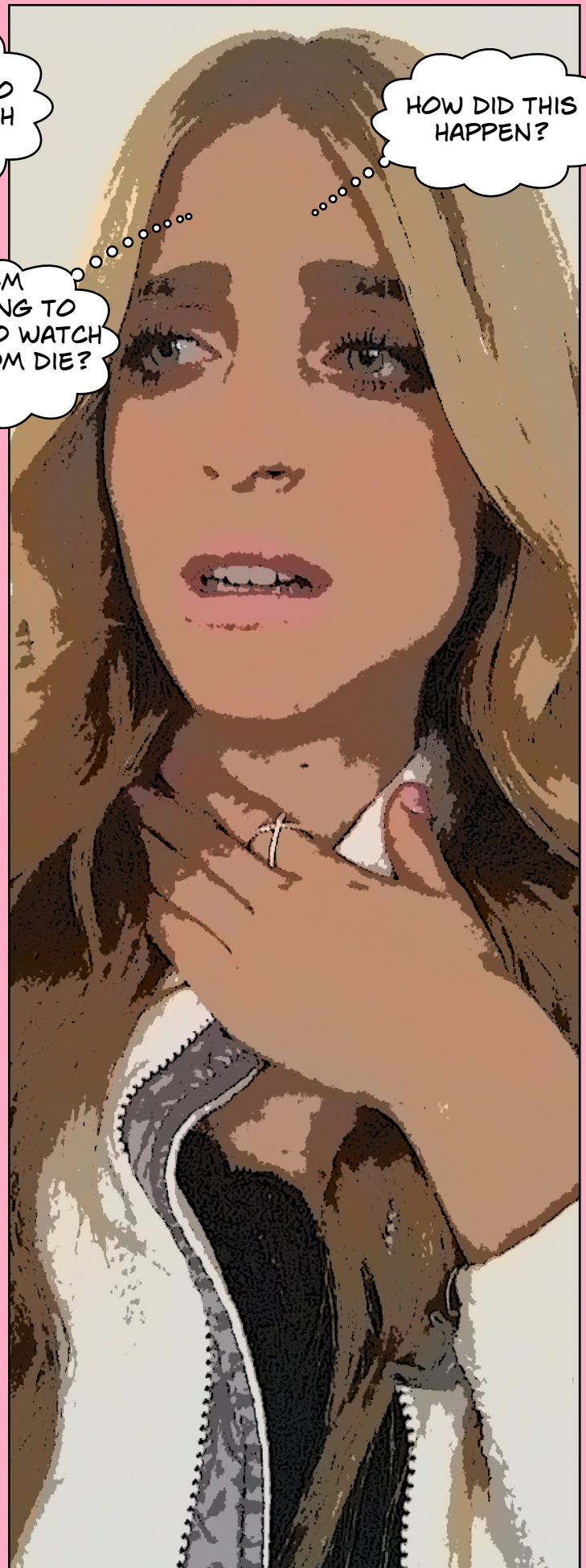
AM I
GOING TO
HAVE TO
WATCH HER
SUFFER?

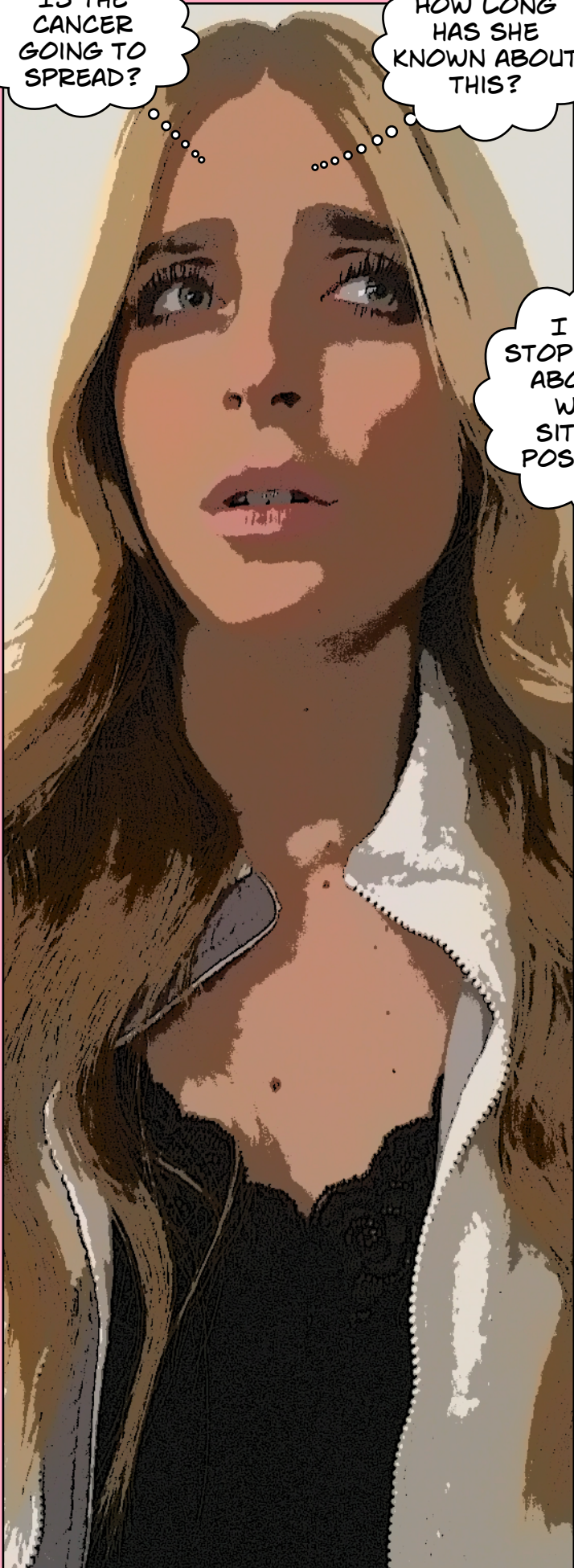
AM I
GOING TO
HAVE TO MOVE
BACK HOME?

WILL
SHE LIVE TO
SEE ME
GRADUATE?

IS SHE
GOING TO BE
IN PAIN?

MY INTERNAL THOUGHTS ARE MOVING
AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT...





IS THE
CANCER
GOING TO
SPREAD?

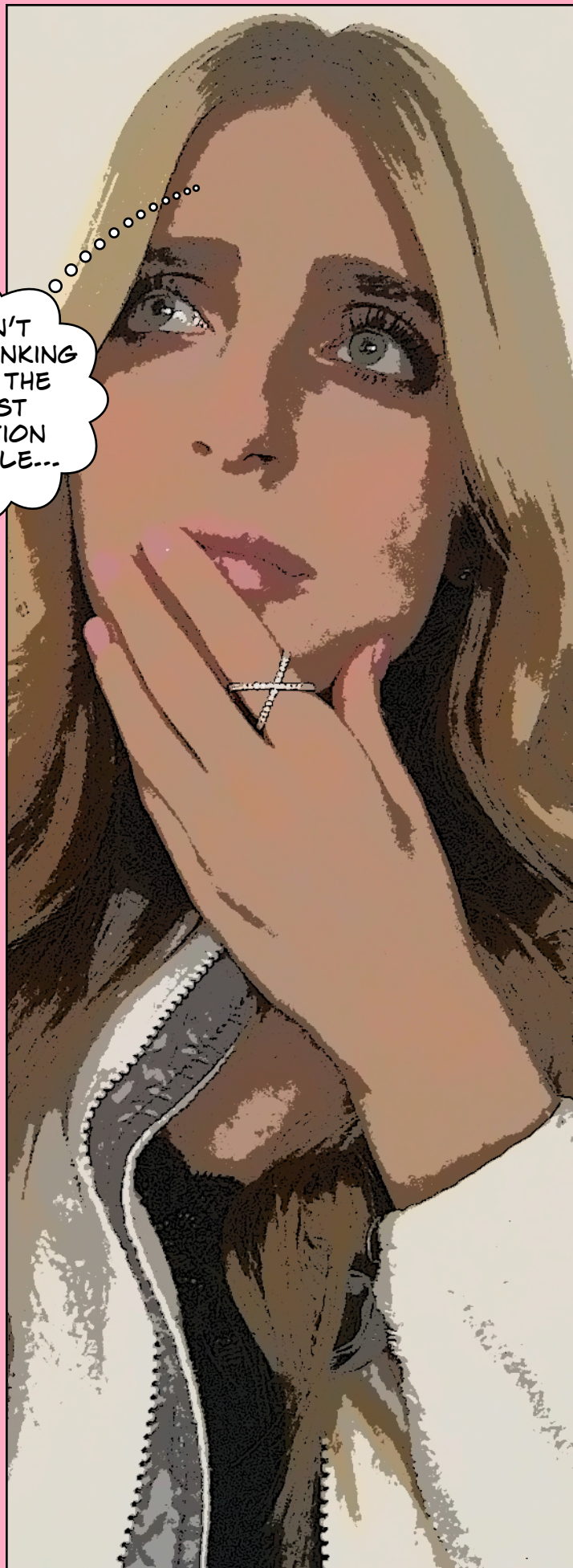
A comic book panel showing a woman with long blonde hair and blue eyes, looking upwards with a worried expression. She is wearing a white jacket over a black top. The background is a solid pink color. A speech bubble is positioned above her head, and a dotted line connects it to her forehead.

HOW LONG
HAS SHE
KNOWN ABOUT
THIS?

A second speech bubble is positioned above the woman's head, with a dotted line connecting it to her forehead.

I CAN'T
STOP THINKING
ABOUT THE
WORST
SITUATION
POSSIBLE...

A third speech bubble is positioned to the right of the woman's head, with a dotted line connecting it to her forehead.



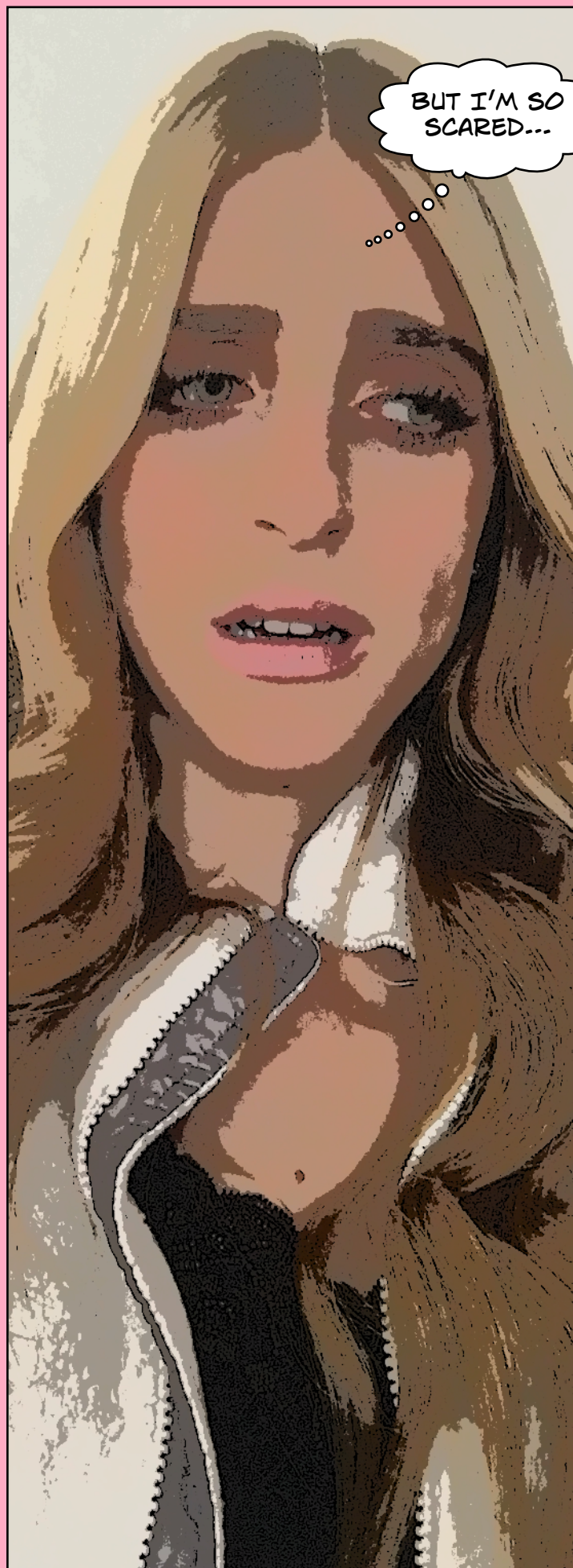
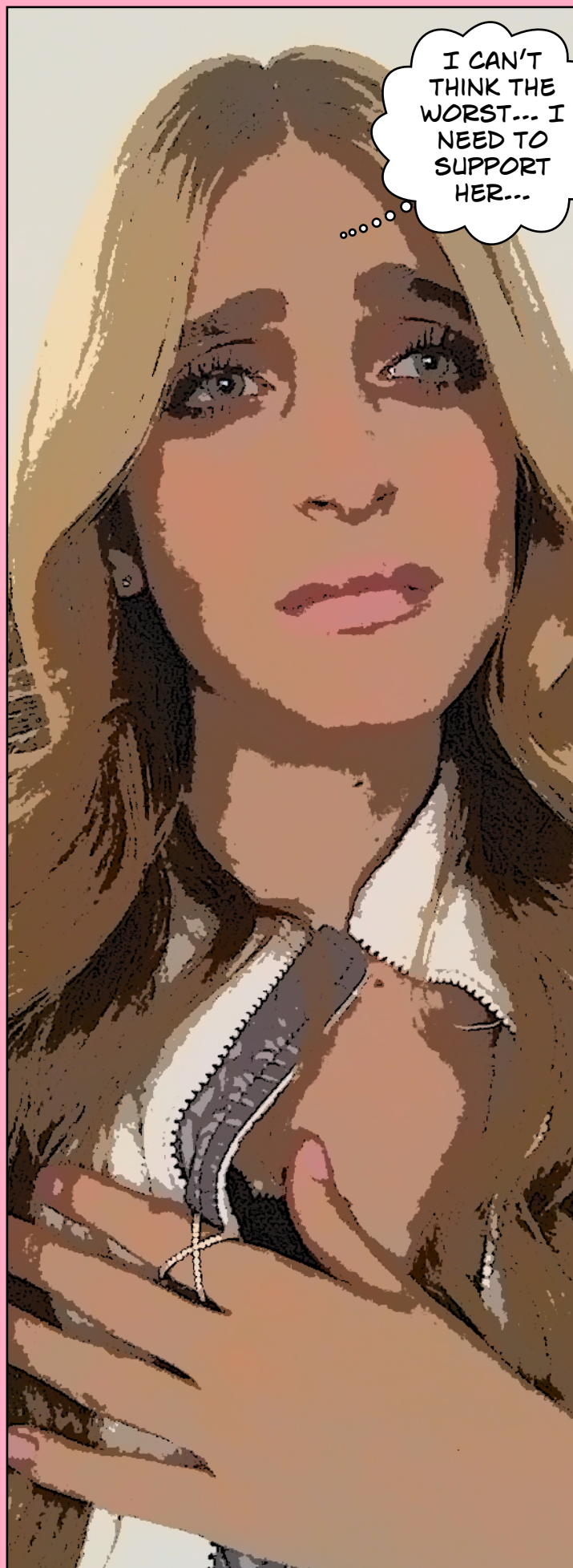


THIS IS ALL
TOO MUCH...

I ALWAYS
THOUGHT MY
MOM COULD
NEVER GET
SICK... SHE'S A
SUPERHERO...



BUT NOW SHE
IS...

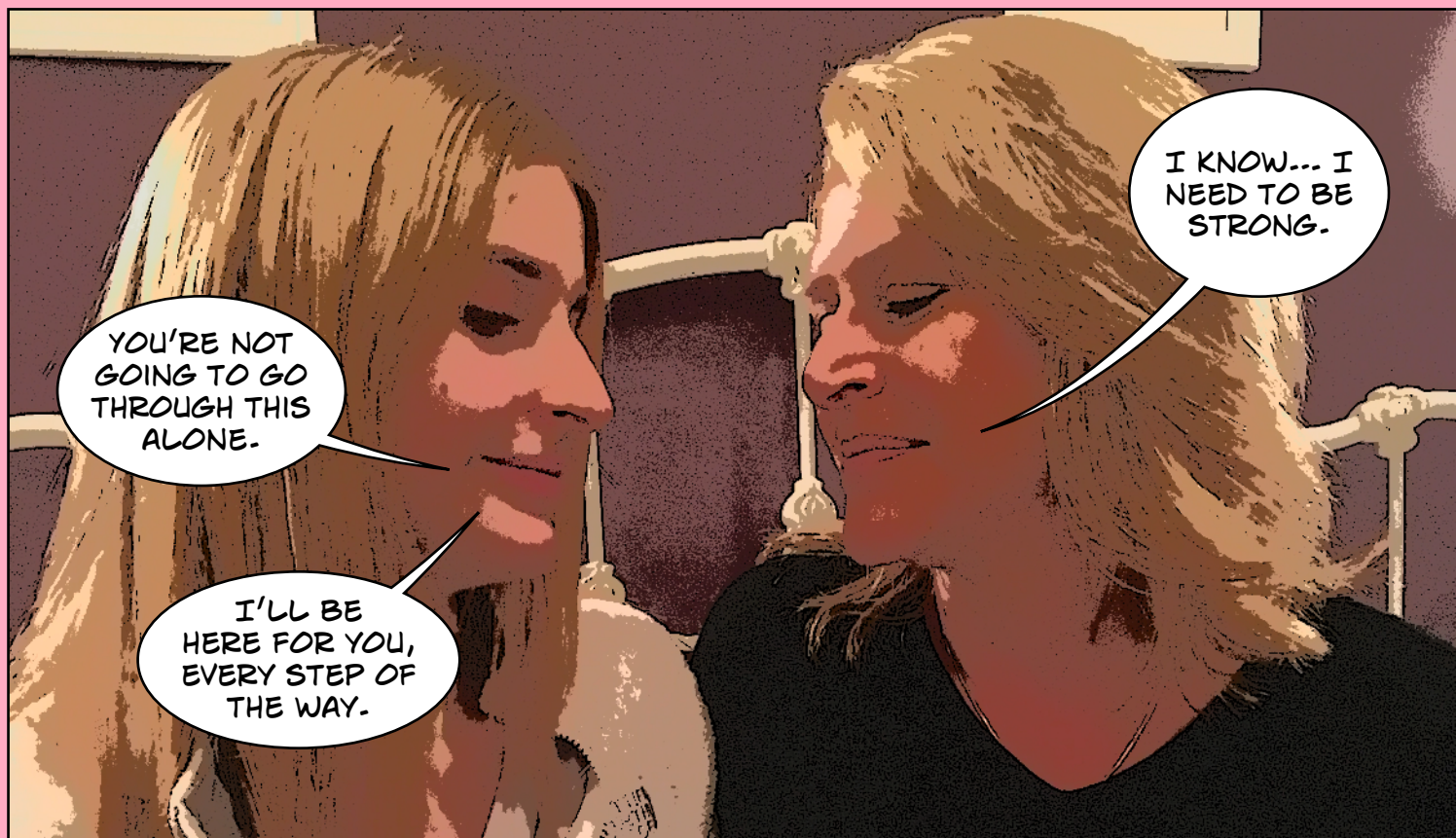


MY MOM STARTS TO CRY.

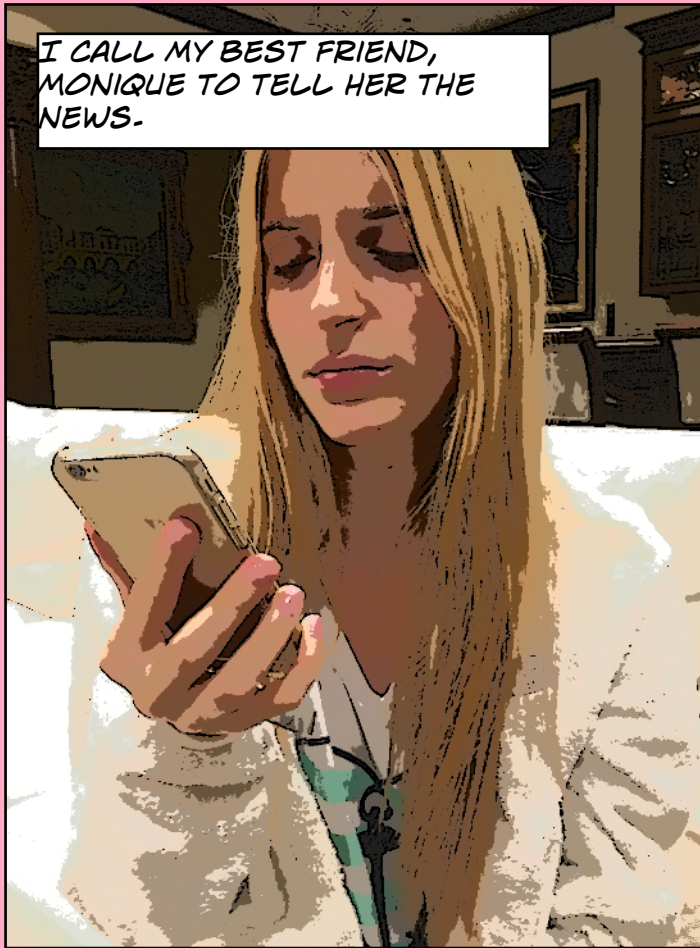
I'M SO SORRY,
LAUREN...

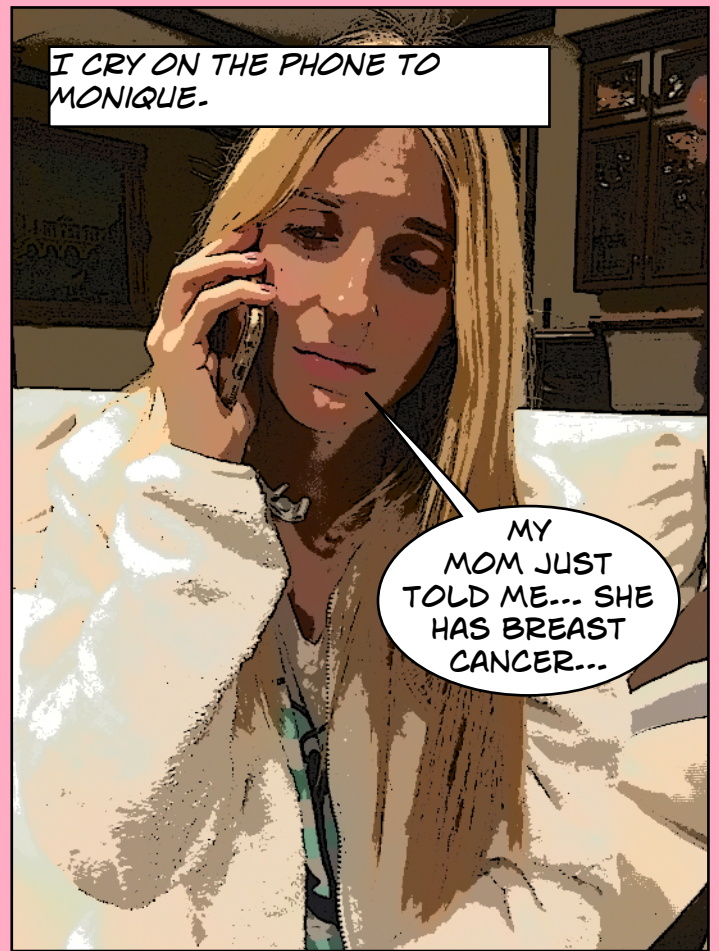
IT'S
OKAY, MOM.
WE'LL GET
THROUGH
THIS...

I KNOW. WE
HAVE SUCH A
SUPPORTIVE
FAMILY.

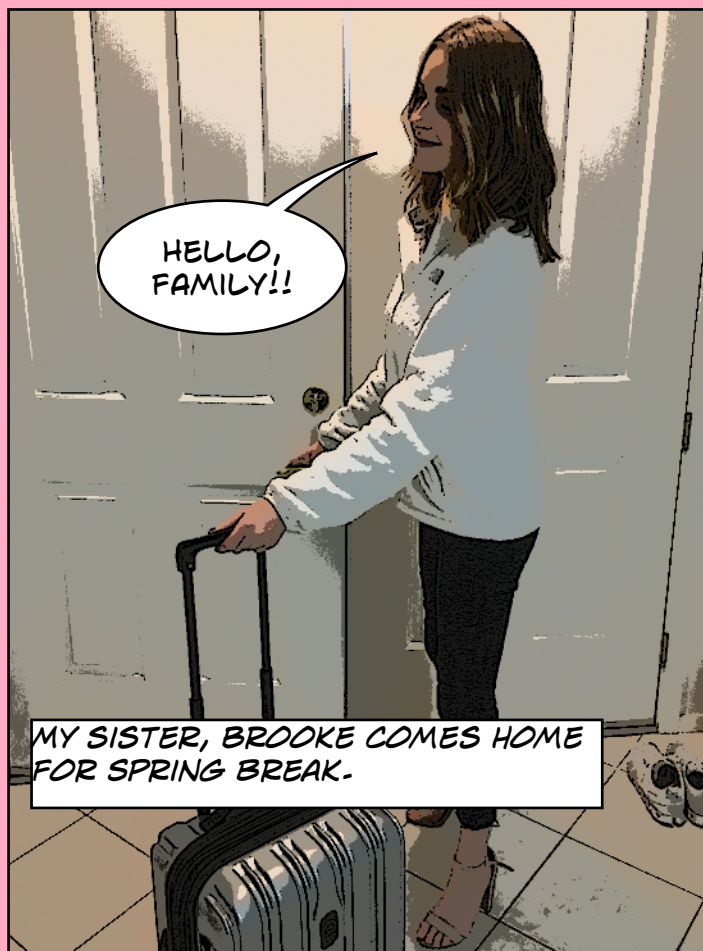














THROUGH ALL THE COMMOTION, I FORGOT FOR A SECOND THAT TOM WAS STILL COMING OVER...

Delivered

Today 5:29 PM

Can I still come over I'm on my way?? 💜

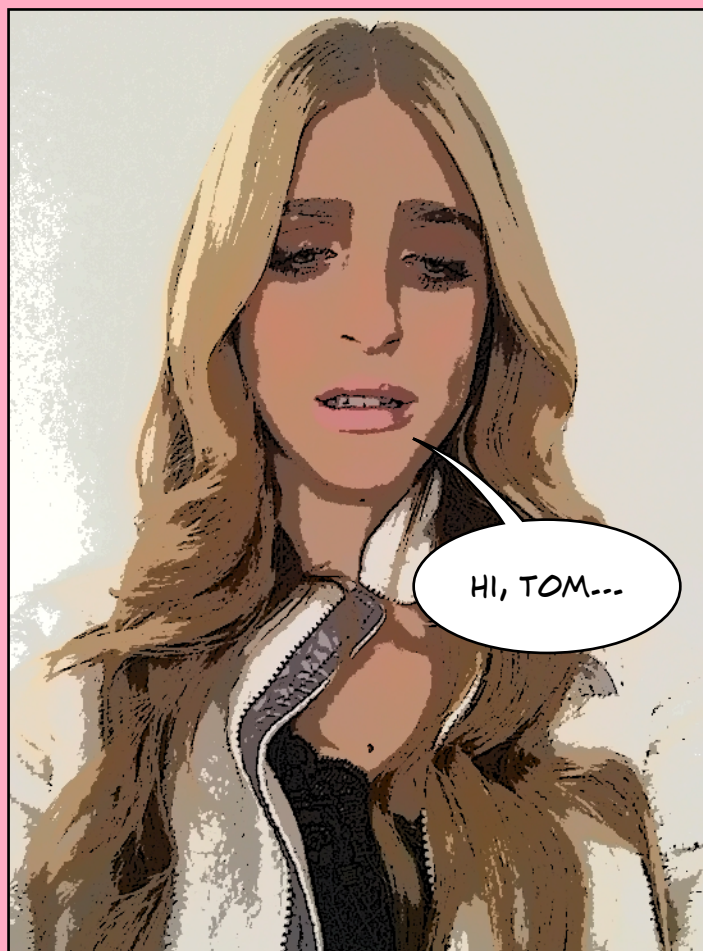


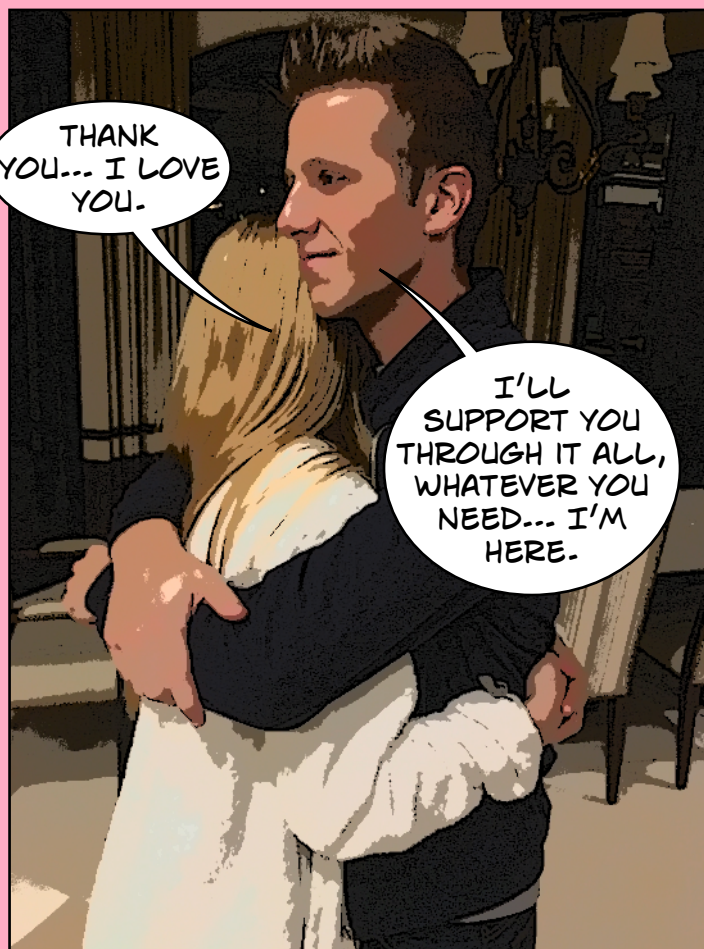
HE DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT WHAT'S JUST HAPPENED...



WOW...
DINNER SMELLS
GREAT!

HI, LAUREN!
I'M HERE!!





TOM TAKES ME INTO THE KITCHEN AND WE SIT
DOWN AT THE TABLE WITH MY FAMILY.

DINNER'S
READY!!!

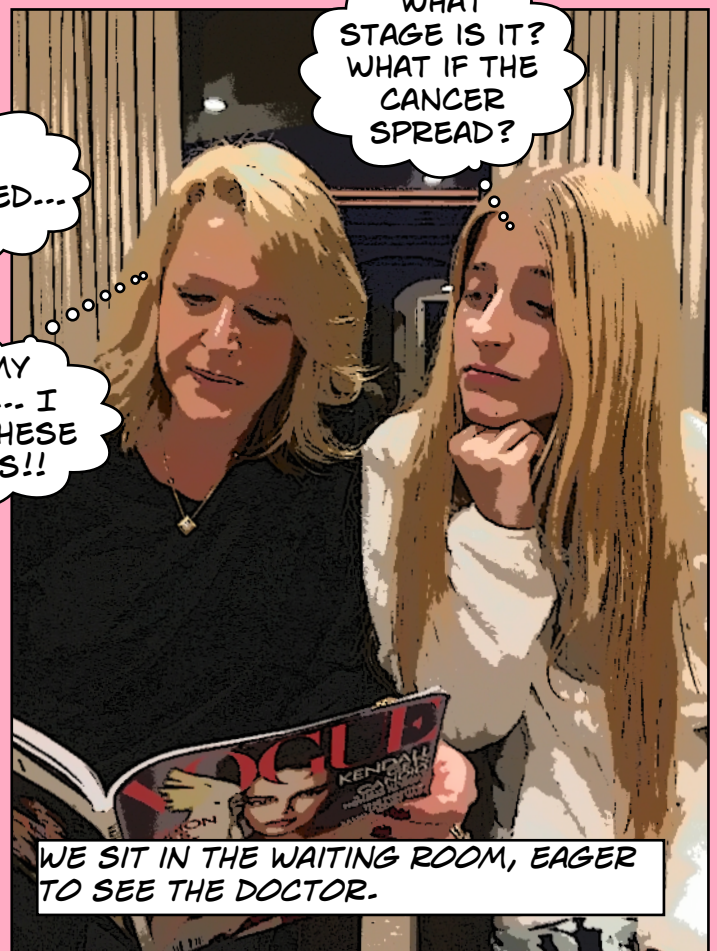




THREE DAYS LATER: I'M WITH MY MOM AT HER FIRST ONCOLOGY APPOINTMENT.

I'M WORRIED...

OH MY GOSH... I NEED THESE SHOES!!



WHAT STAGE IS IT? WHAT IF THE CANCER SPREAD?

WE SIT IN THE WAITING ROOM, EAGER TO SEE THE DOCTOR.

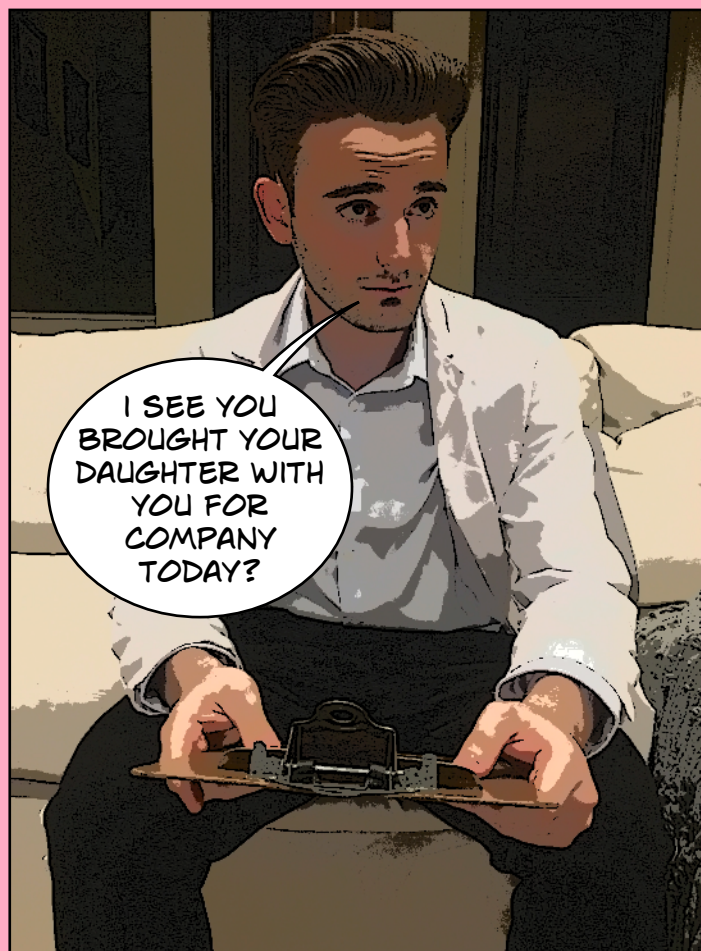


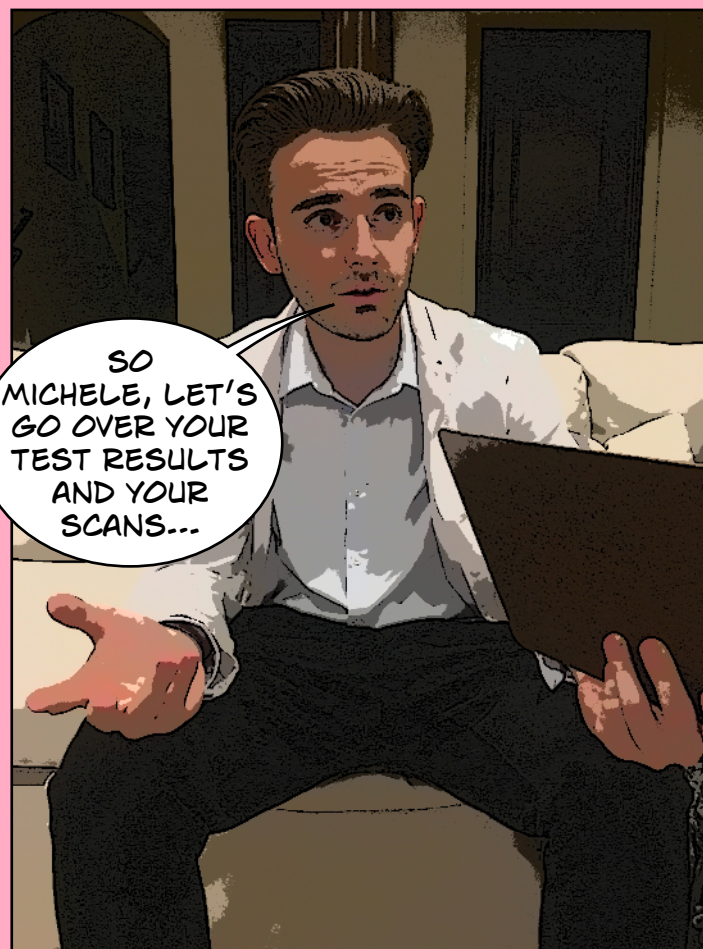
DR. MCMURRERY APPEARS.

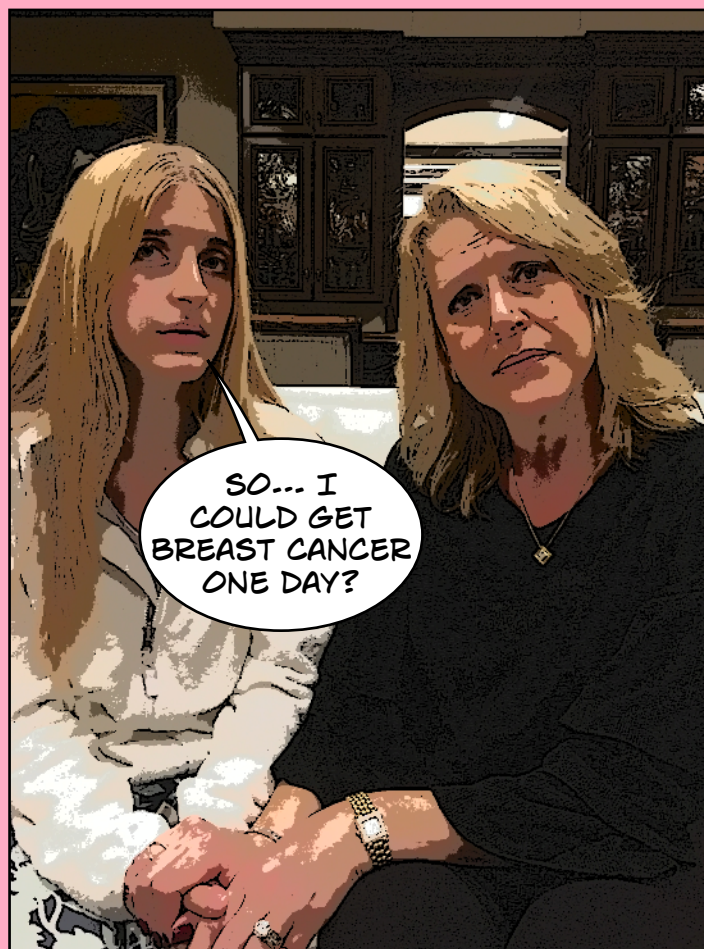
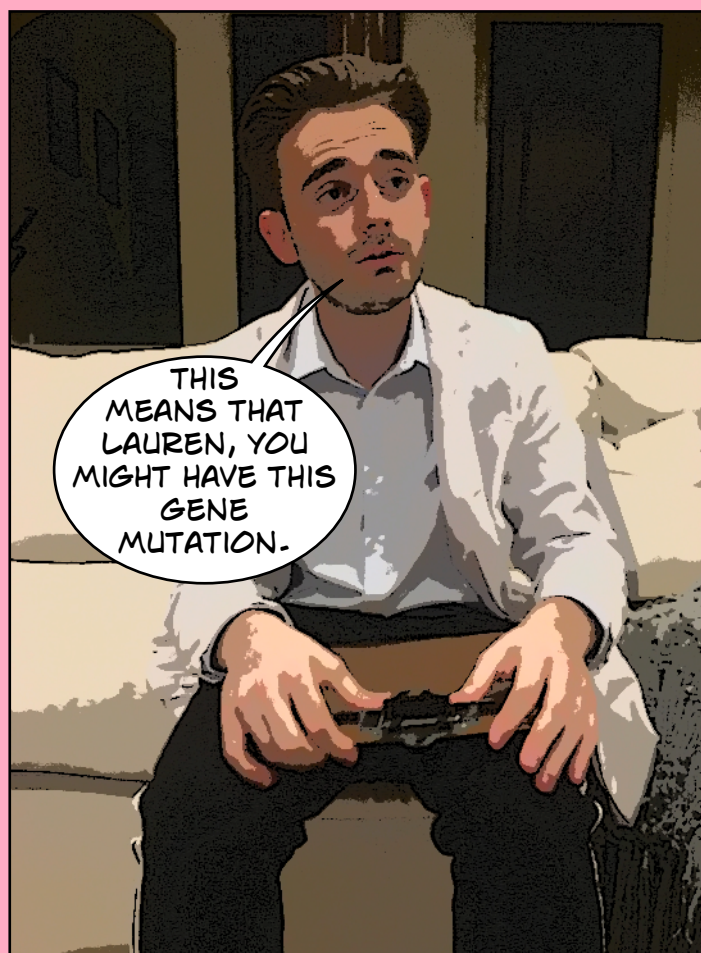
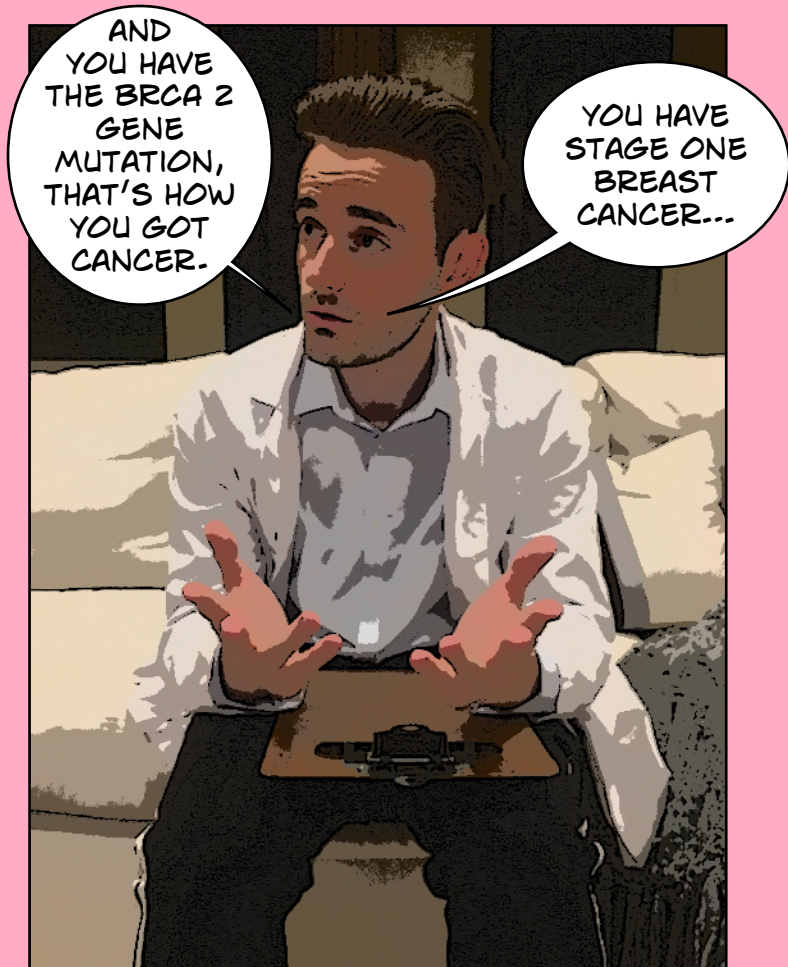
MICHELE KATZ?



RIGHT THIS WAY, PLEASE.



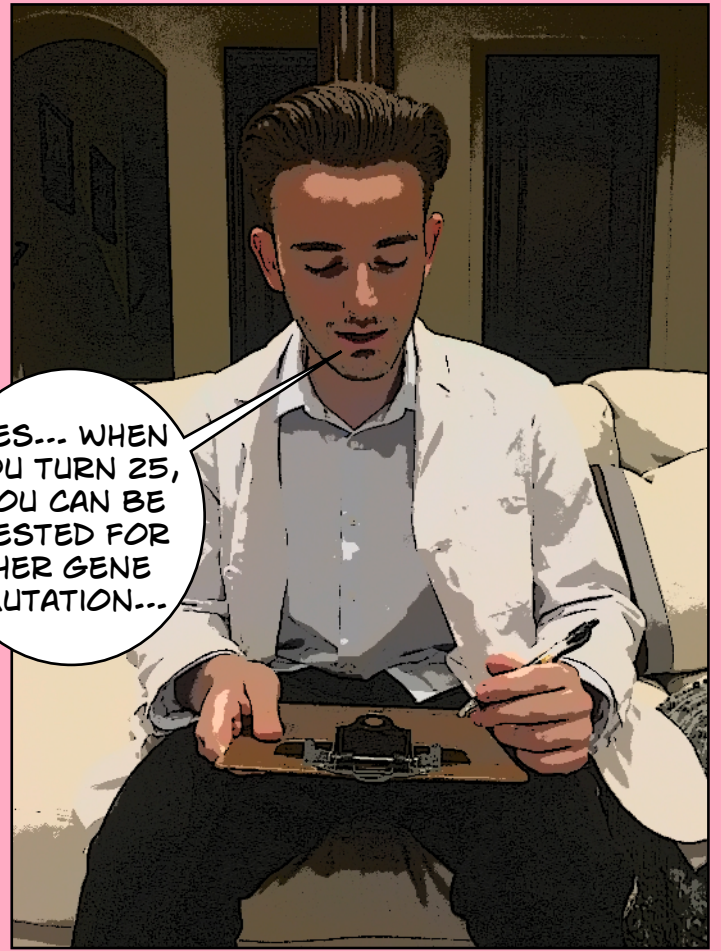




MY MOM AND I ARE BOTH IN SHOCK...



YES... WHEN YOU TURN 25, YOU CAN BE TESTED FOR HER GENE MUTATION...



AND IF YOU DO HAVE IT... THERE'S A HIGHER CHANCE THAT YOU MAY GET CANCER TOO.



MY MOM AND I ARE AT A LOSS FOR WORDS.



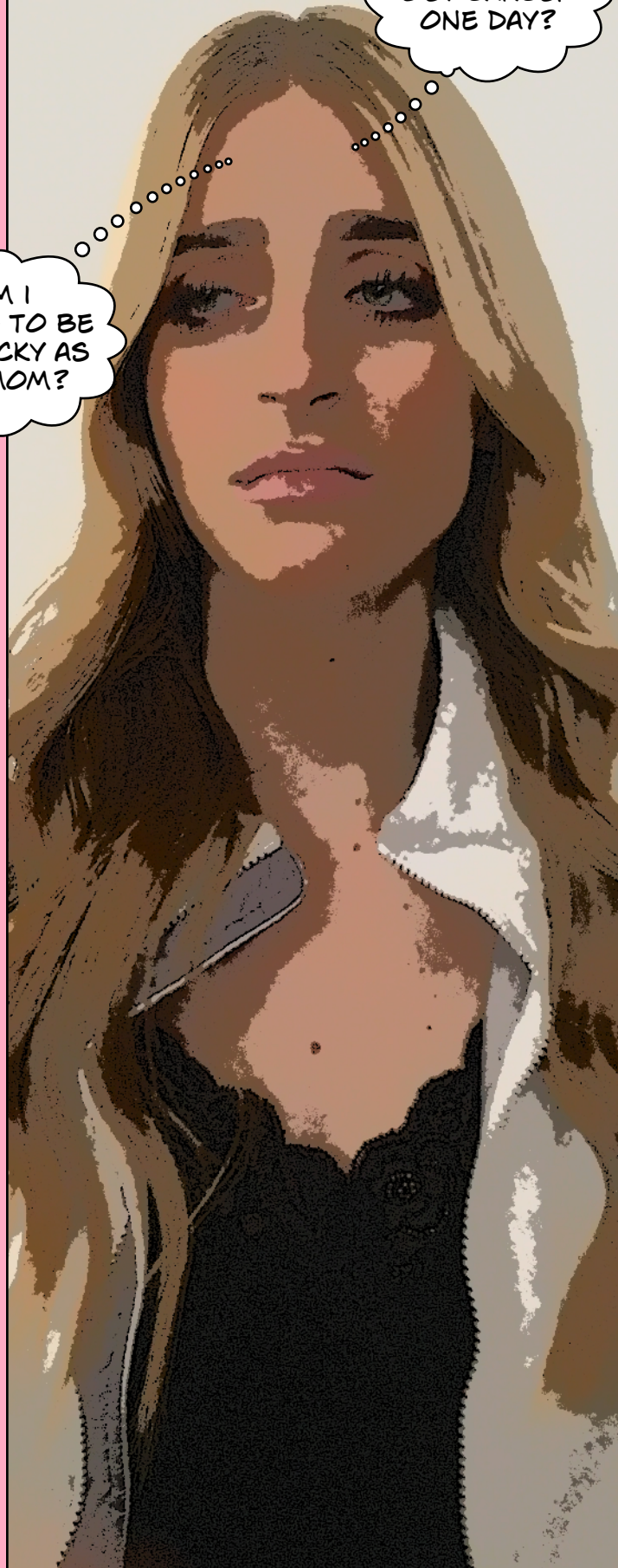
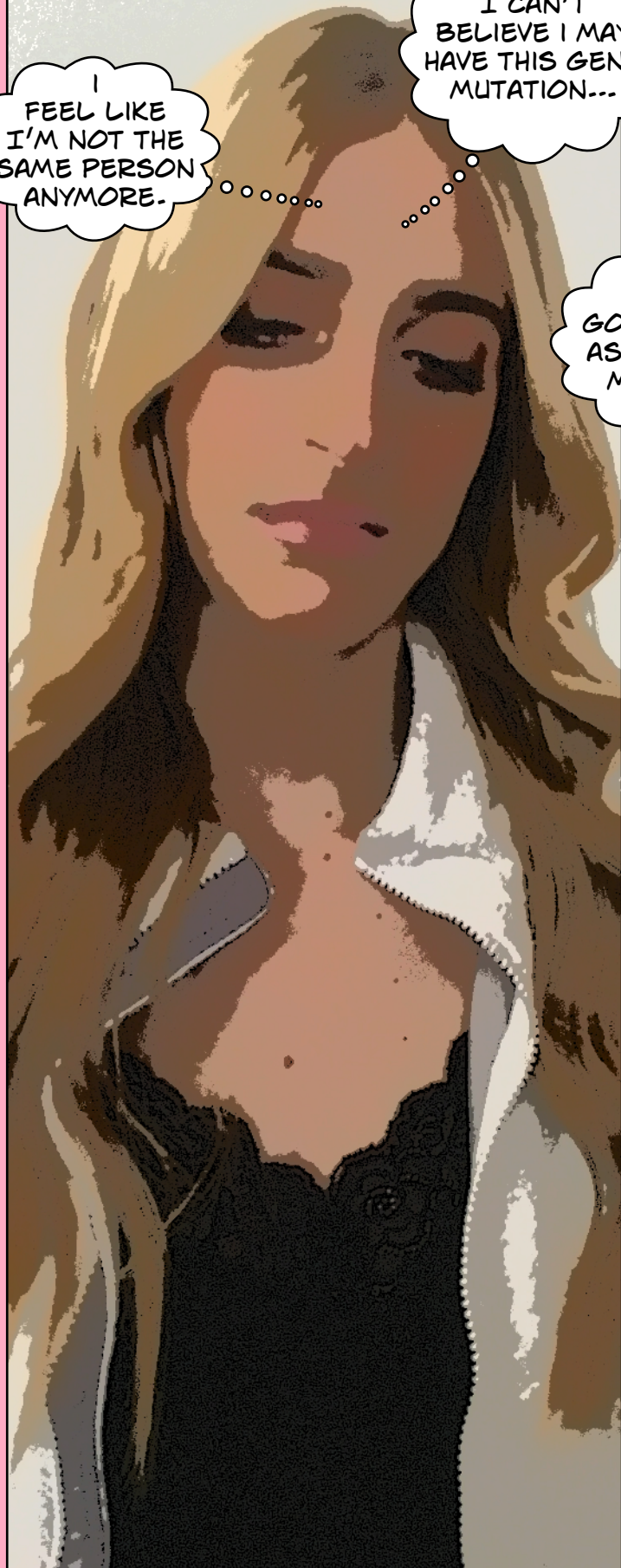
I FEEL LIKE TIME HAS
STOPPED AGAIN...

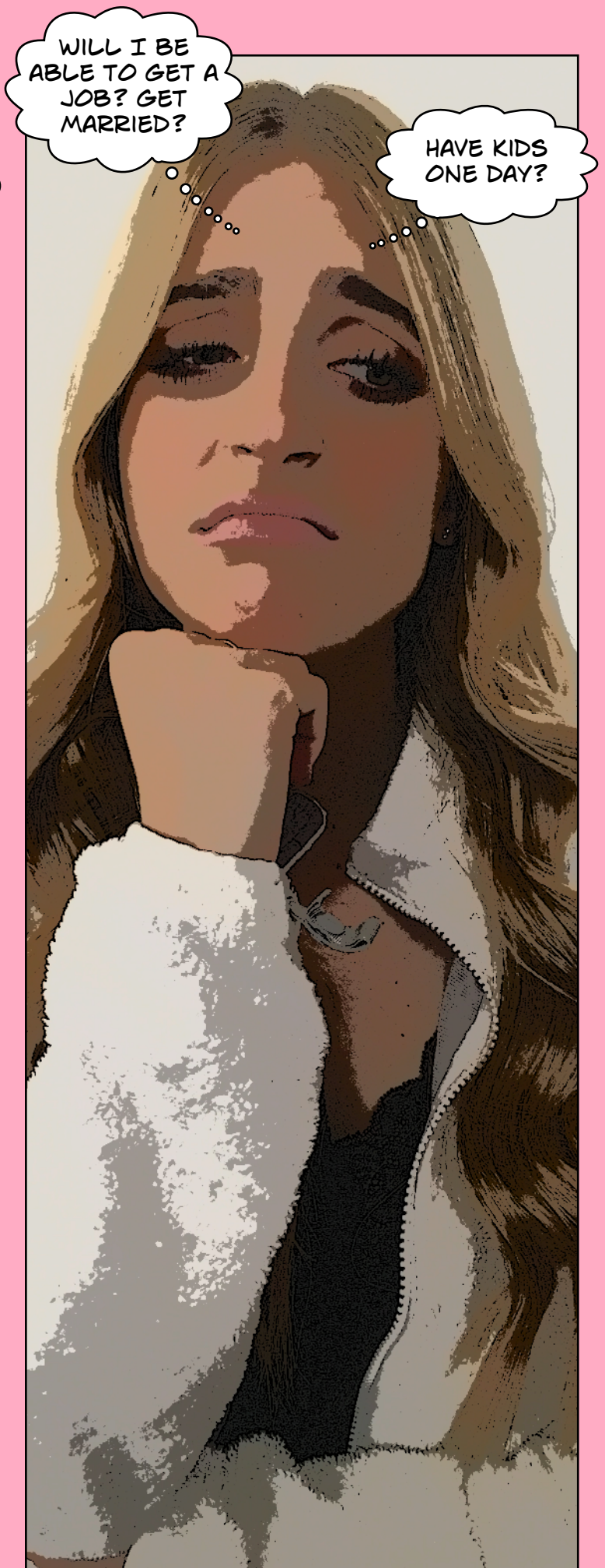
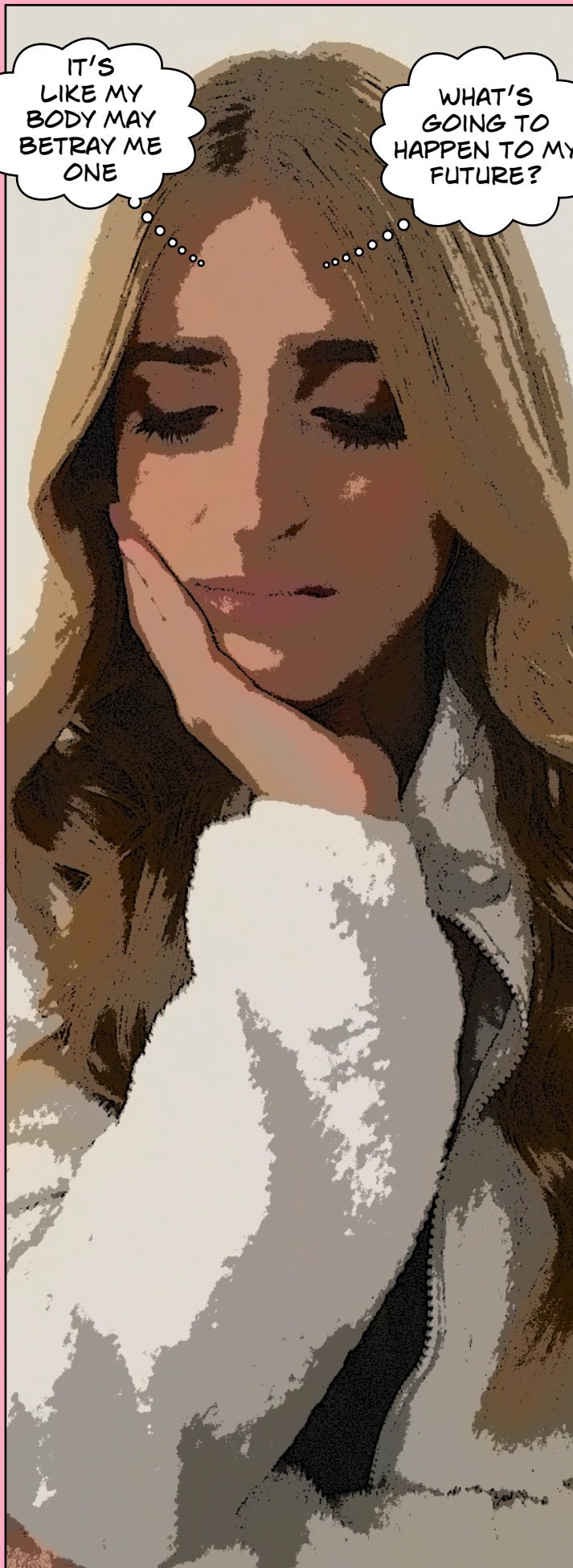
I
FEEL LIKE
I'M NOT THE
SAME PERSON
ANYMORE.

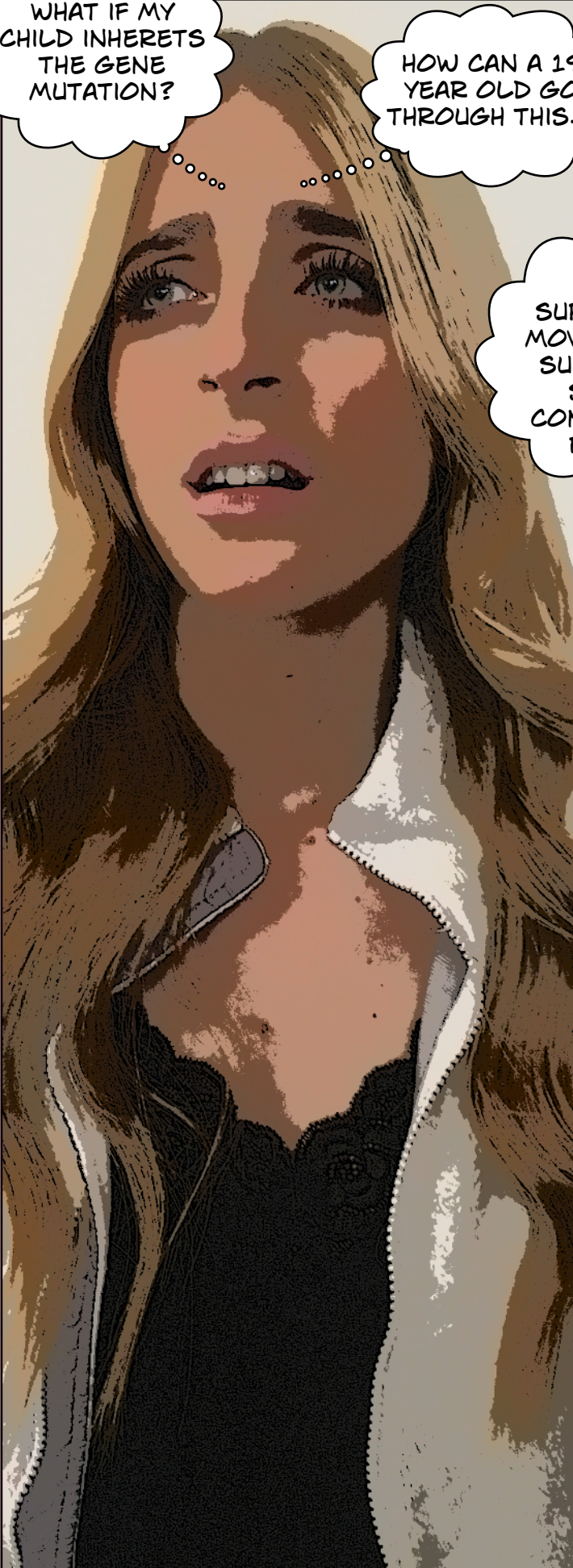
I CAN'T
BELIEVE I MAY
HAVE THIS GENE
MUTATION...

AM I
GOING TO BE
AS LUCKY AS
MY MOM?

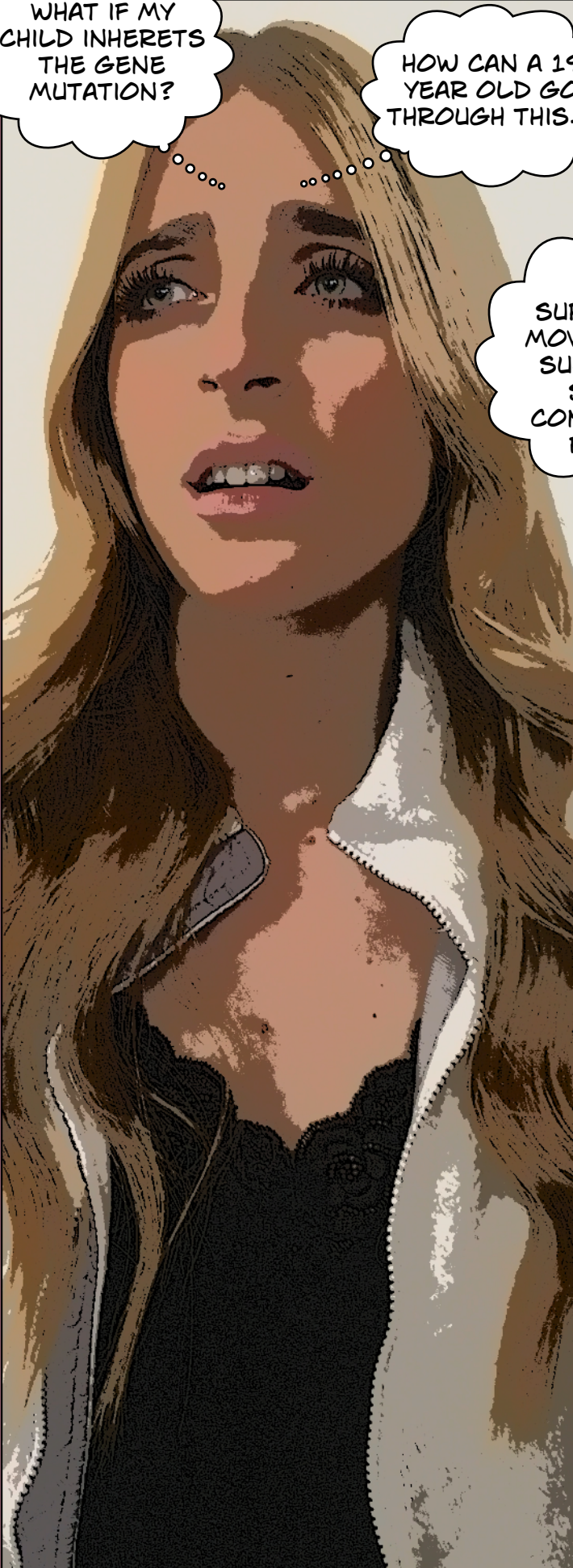
WHAT IF I
GET CANCER
ONE DAY?



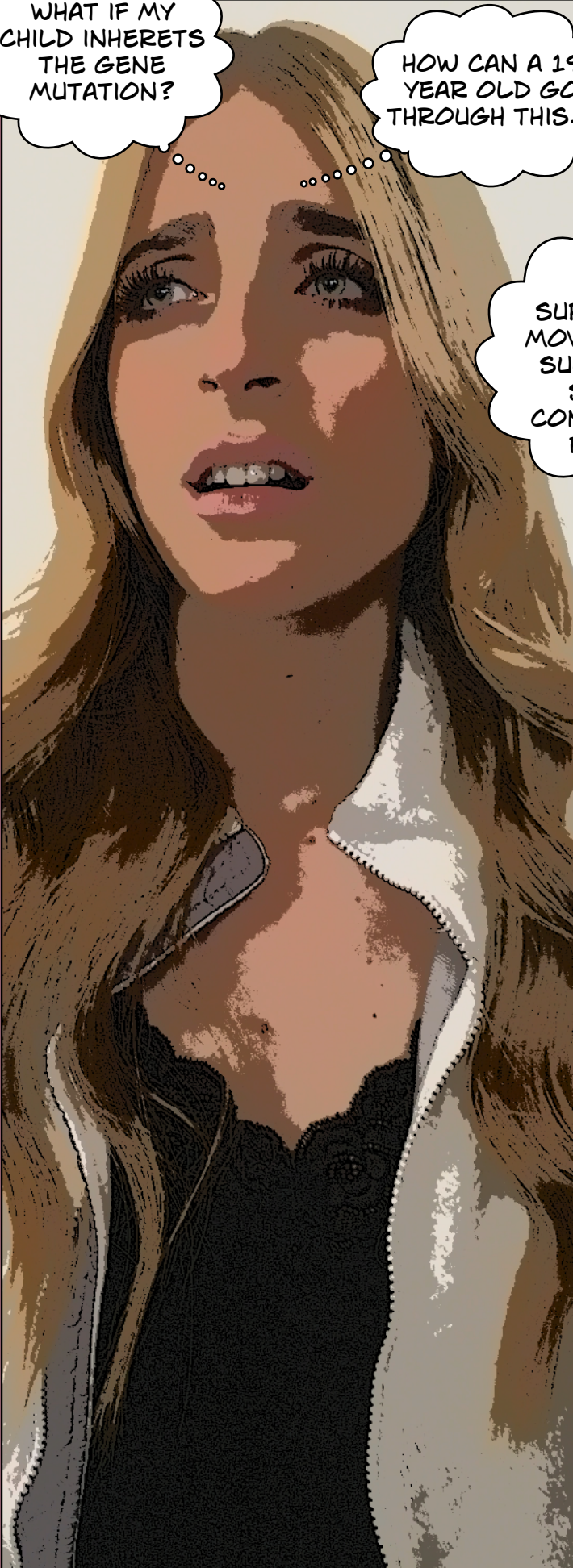




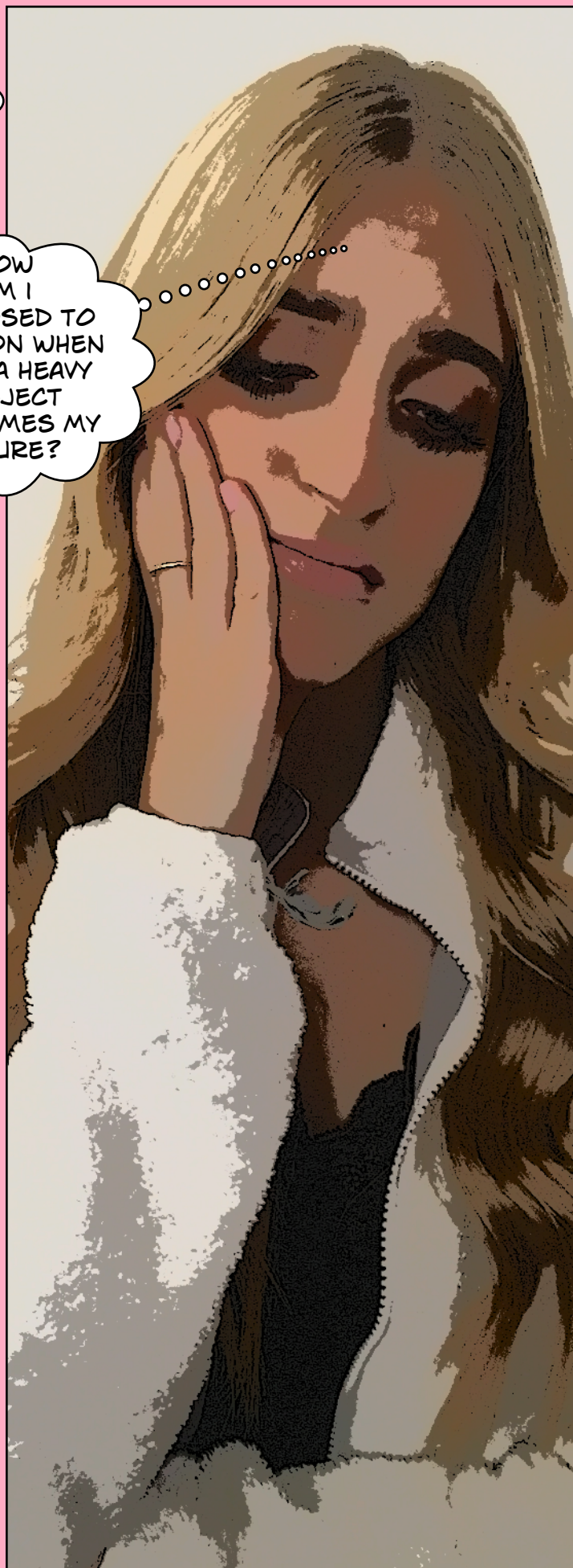
WHAT IF MY
CHILD INHERETS
THE GENE
MUTATION?



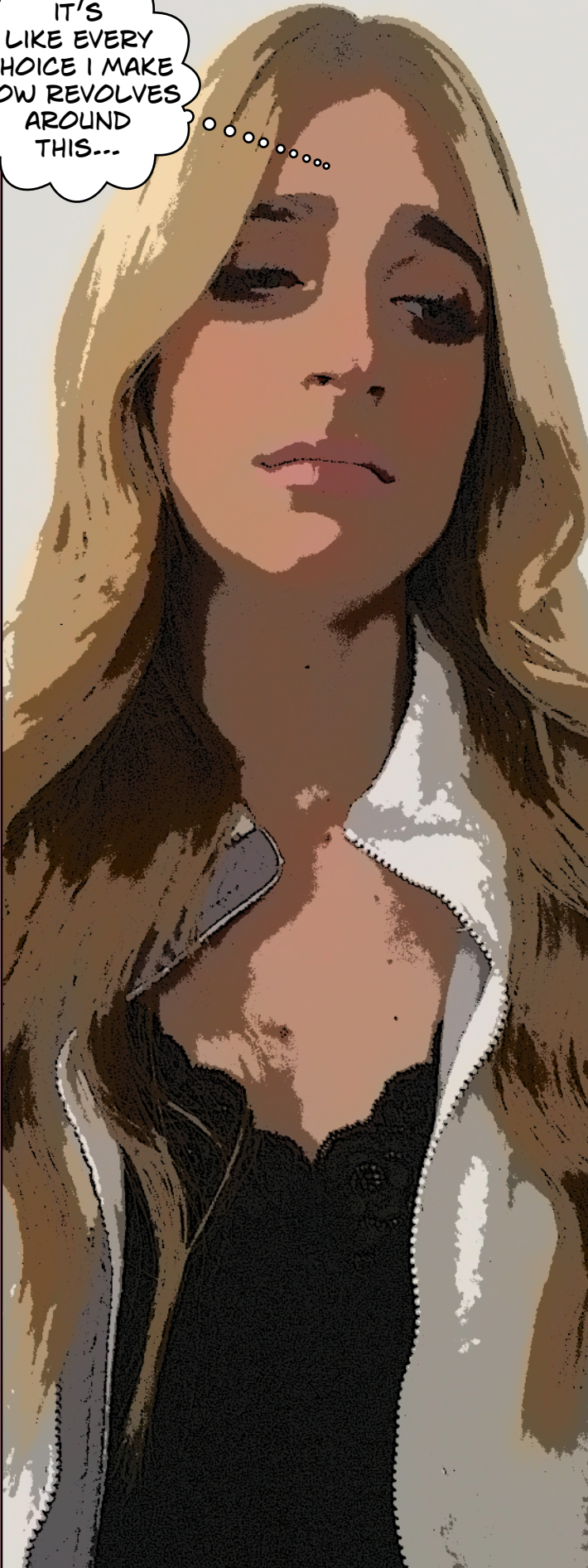
HOW CAN A 19
YEAR OLD GO
THROUGH THIS...



HOW
AM I
SUPPOSED TO
MOVE ON WHEN
SUCH A HEAVY
SUBJECT
CONSUMES MY
FUTURE?



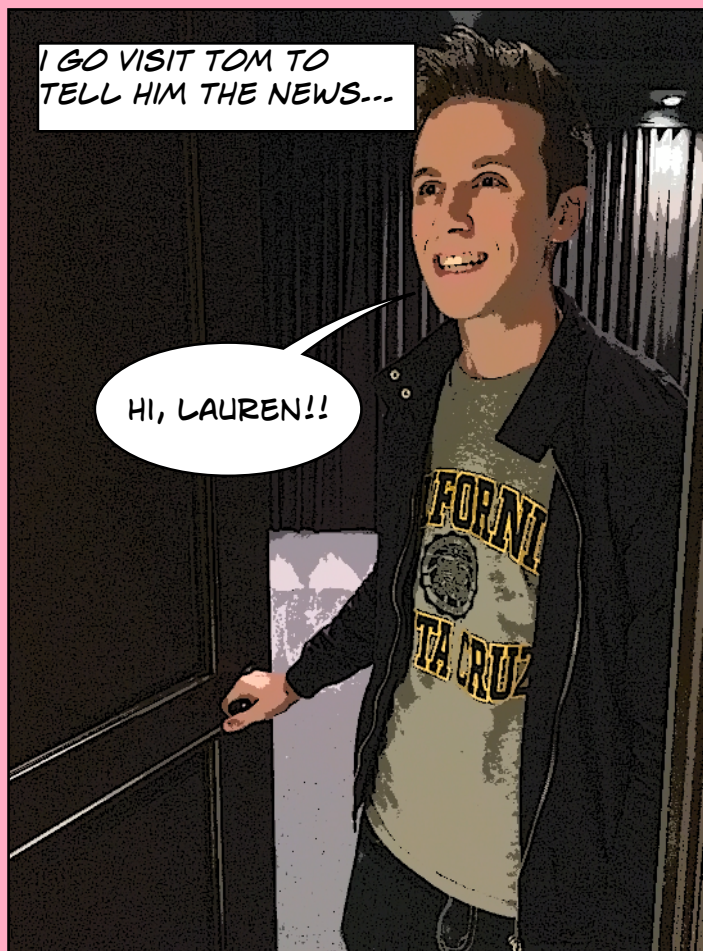
IT'S
LIKE EVERY
CHOICE I MAKE
NOW REVOLVES
AROUND
THIS...

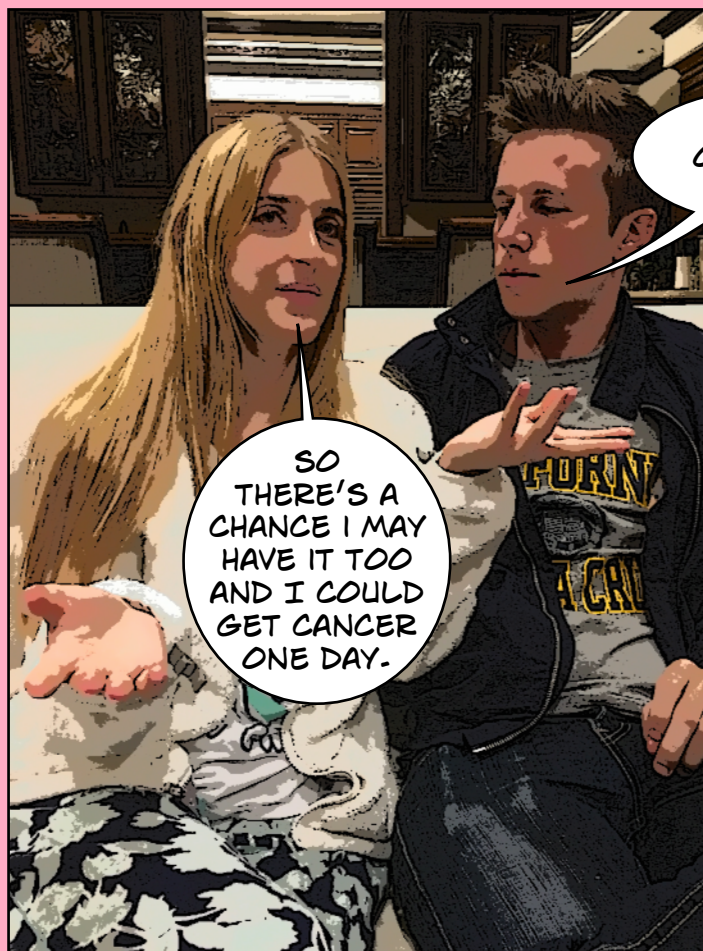


THIS IS
ALL TOO
MUCH TO
HANDLE...

I NEED TO
GO TELL
TOM...

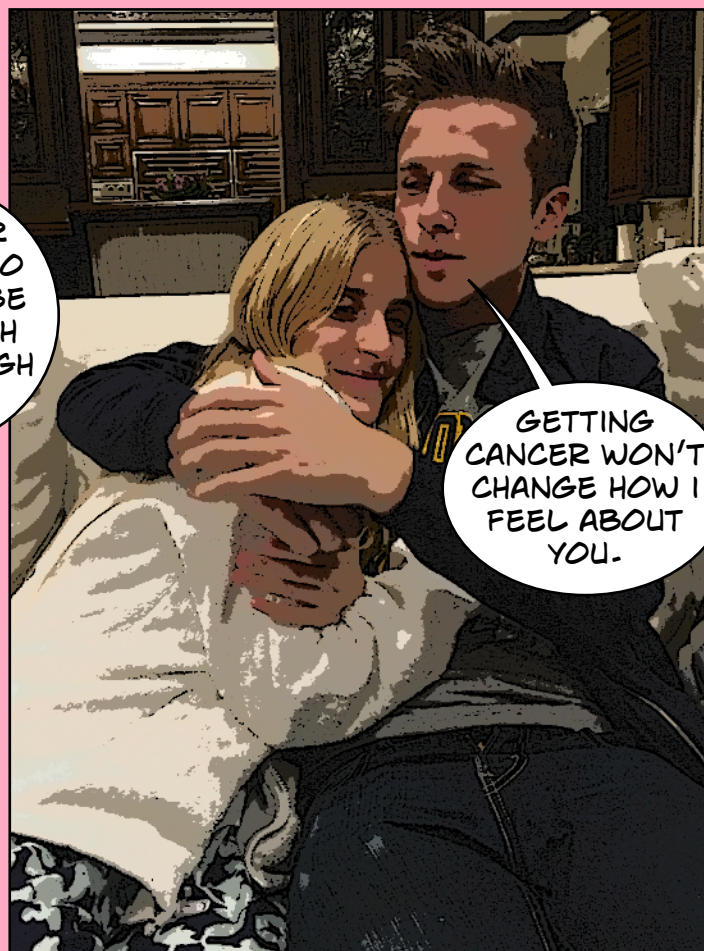








WHATEVER
HAPPENS TO
YOU, I'LL BE
THERE WITH
YOU THROUGH
IT ALL....



GETTING
CANCER WON'T
CHANGE HOW I
FEEL ABOUT
YOU.



I LOVE YOU
TOO.

I LOVE YOU
SO MUCH... LIFE
WON'T ALWAYS
BE PRETTY, BUT
WE WILL
OVERCOME
ANYTHING.



I'M
REALLY
LUCKY....

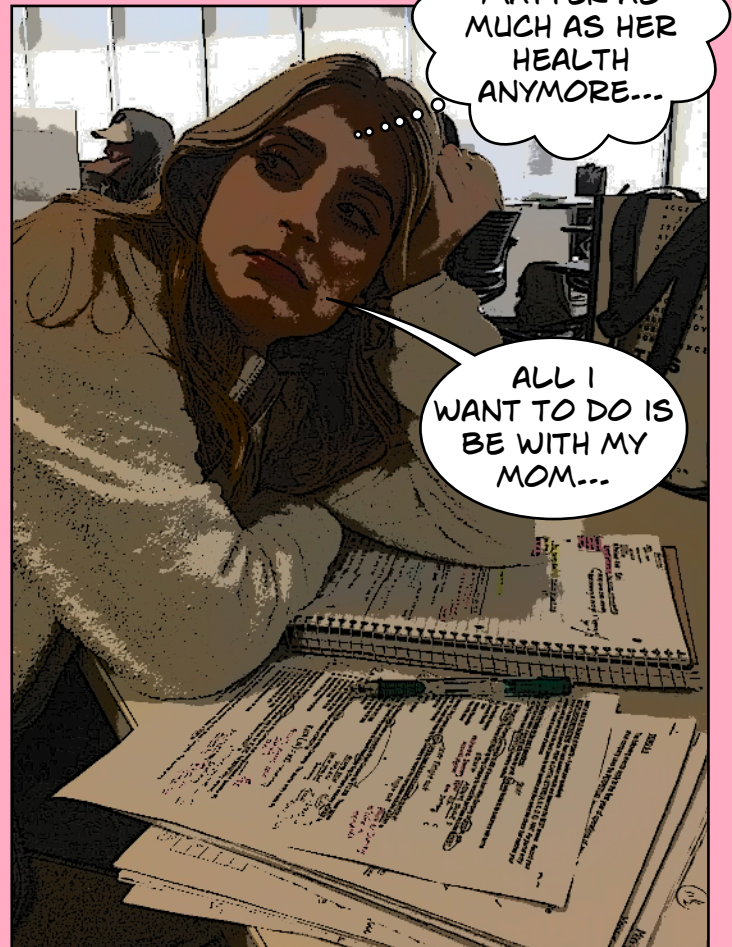
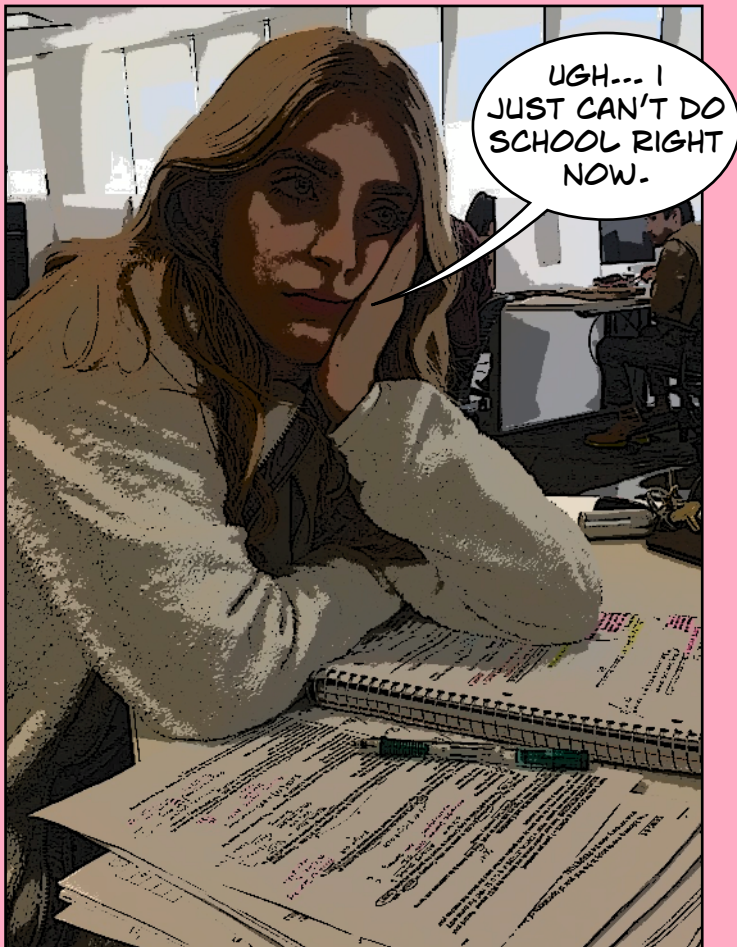
AS LONG
AS WE HAVE
EACH OTHER.

THE FIRST WEEK BACK AT SCHOOL AFTER
SPRING BREAK.



I'M ABOUT TO FALL ASLEEP
AT MY DESK...



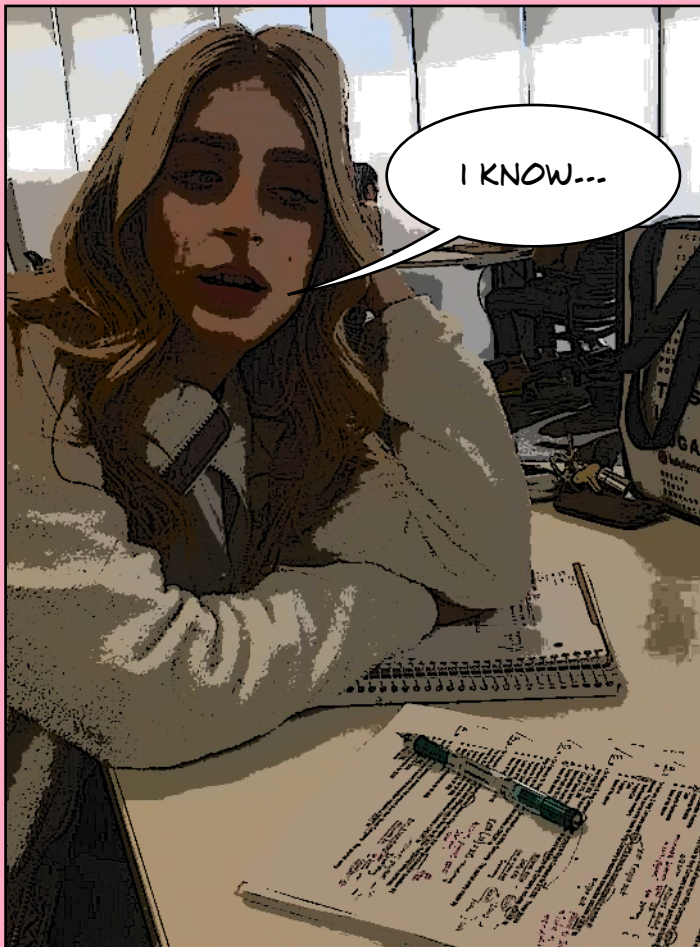




I KNOW,
HUN... BUT YOU
CAN'T DROP OUT
OF DG OR FAIL
YOUR
CLASSES...



IT WOULD
MAKE HER SO
HAPPY TO SEE
YOU SUCCEED!



I KNOW...

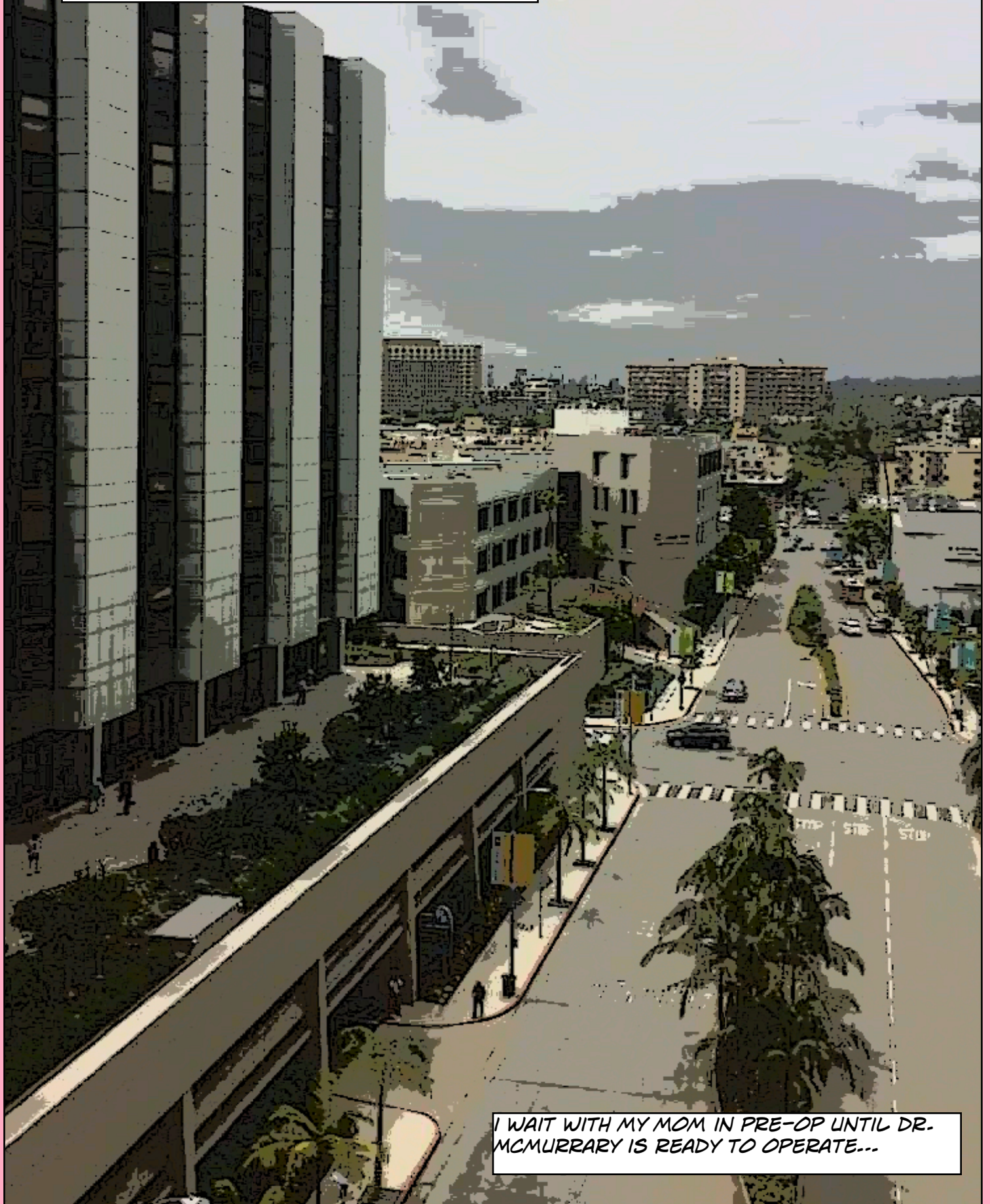


I WOULD
JUST HATE
FOR
SOMETHING TO
HAPPEN TO HER
WHEN I'M NOT
THERE...



UGH HHHH... I WISH
SUMMER WOULD
COME SOONER!

MAY, 2019: MY MOM'S FIRST DAY OF SURGERY.

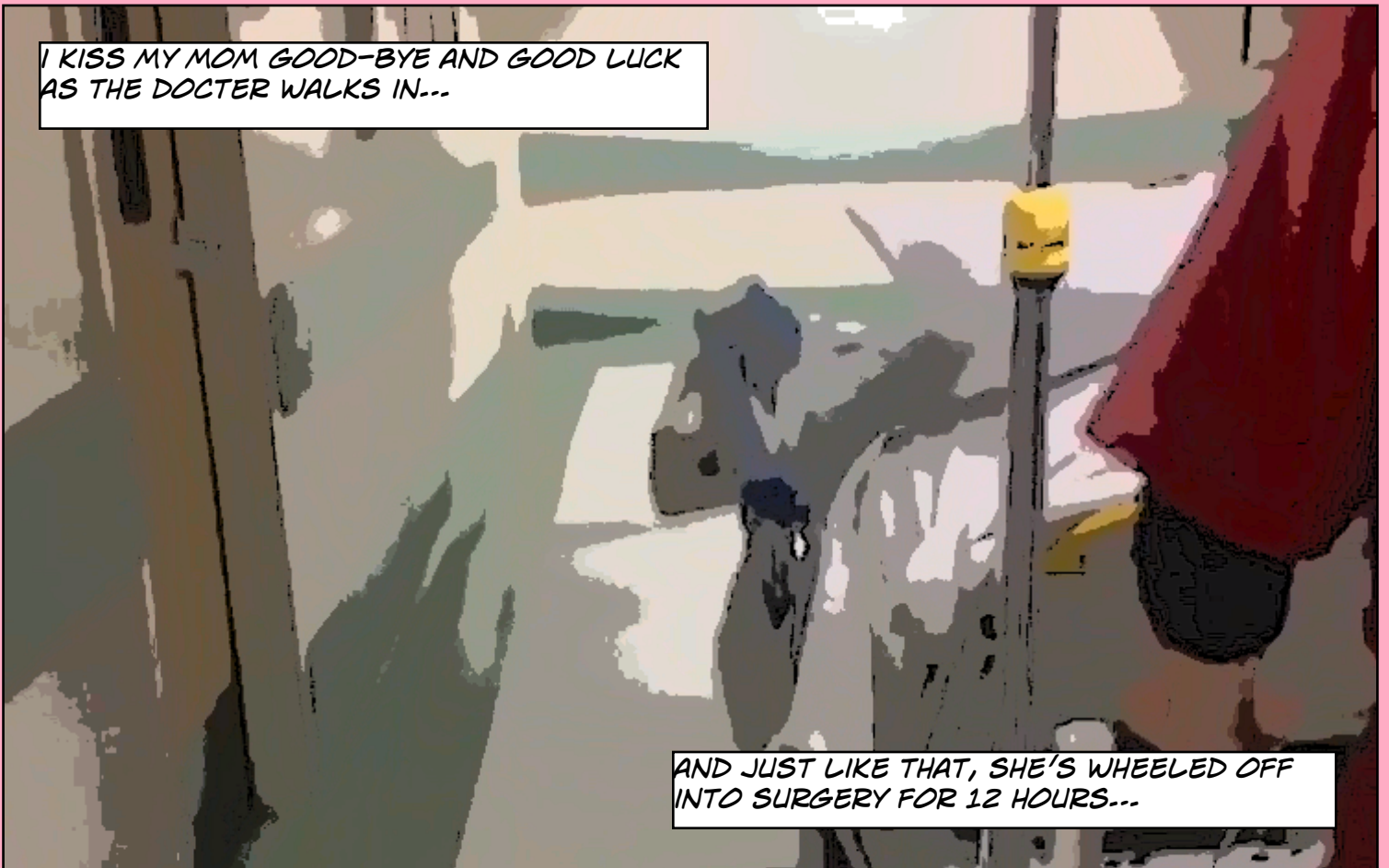


I WAIT WITH MY MOM IN PRE-OP UNTIL DR. MCMURRARY IS READY TO OPERATE...

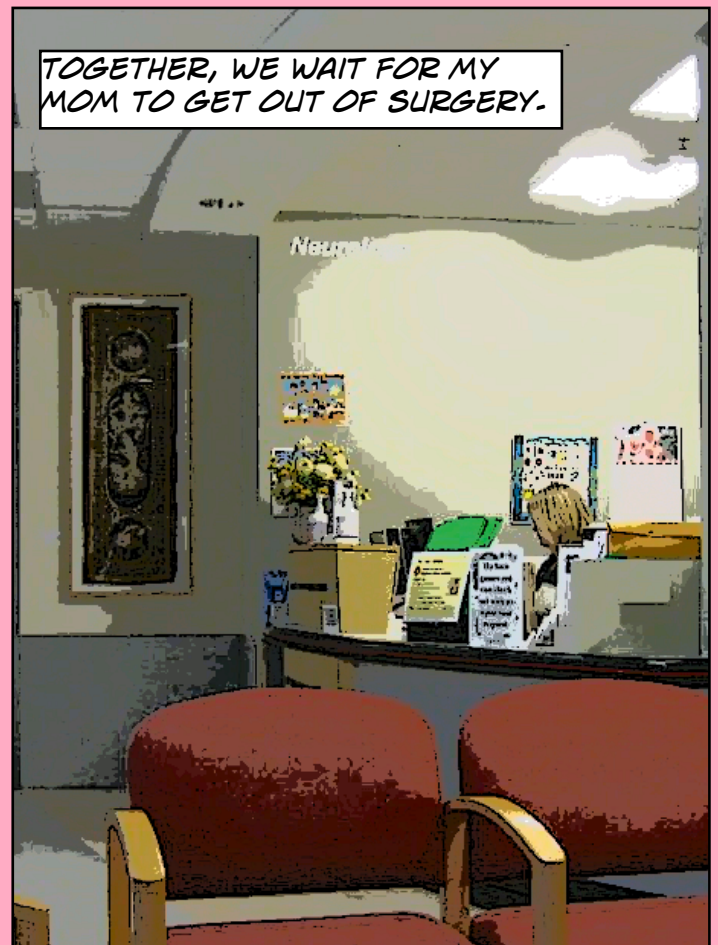
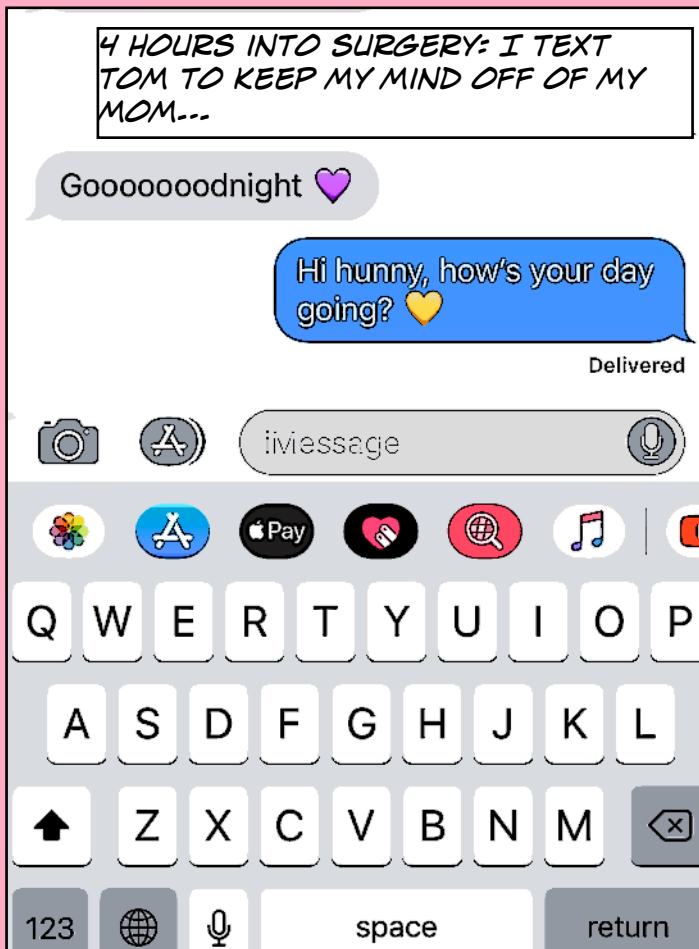
SHE'S EXCITED, BUT NERVOUS. SHE'S READY TO BE CANCER FREE.



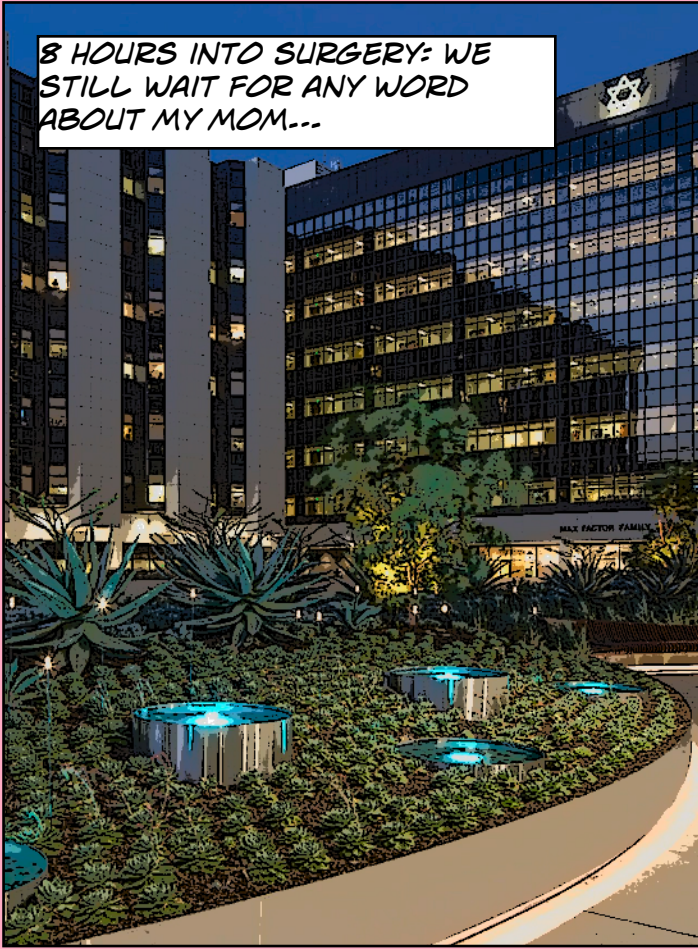
I KISS MY MOM GOOD-BYE AND GOOD LUCK AS THE DOCTOR WALKS IN...



AND JUST LIKE THAT, SHE'S WHEELED OFF INTO SURGERY FOR 12 HOURS...



8 HOURS INTO SURGERY: WE STILL WAIT FOR ANY WORD ABOUT MY MOM...



TOM HASN'T TEXTED ME BACK ALL DAY...



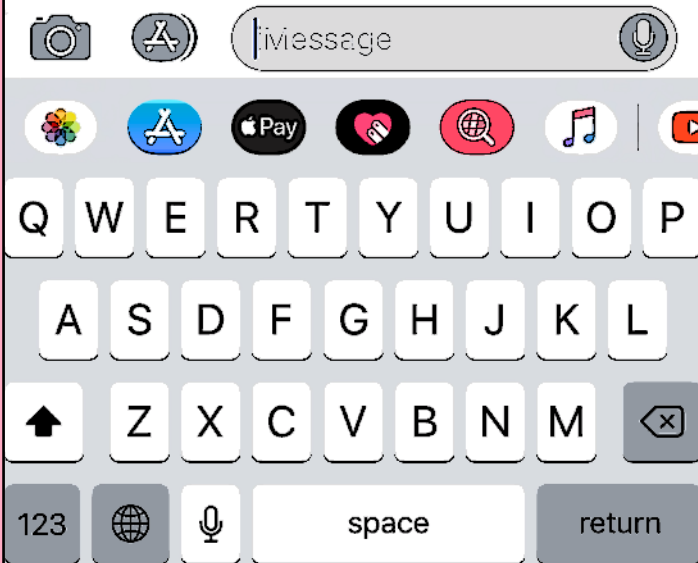
I WONDER IF EVERYTHING'S OKAY...

I DECIDE TO TEXT HIM AGAIN...

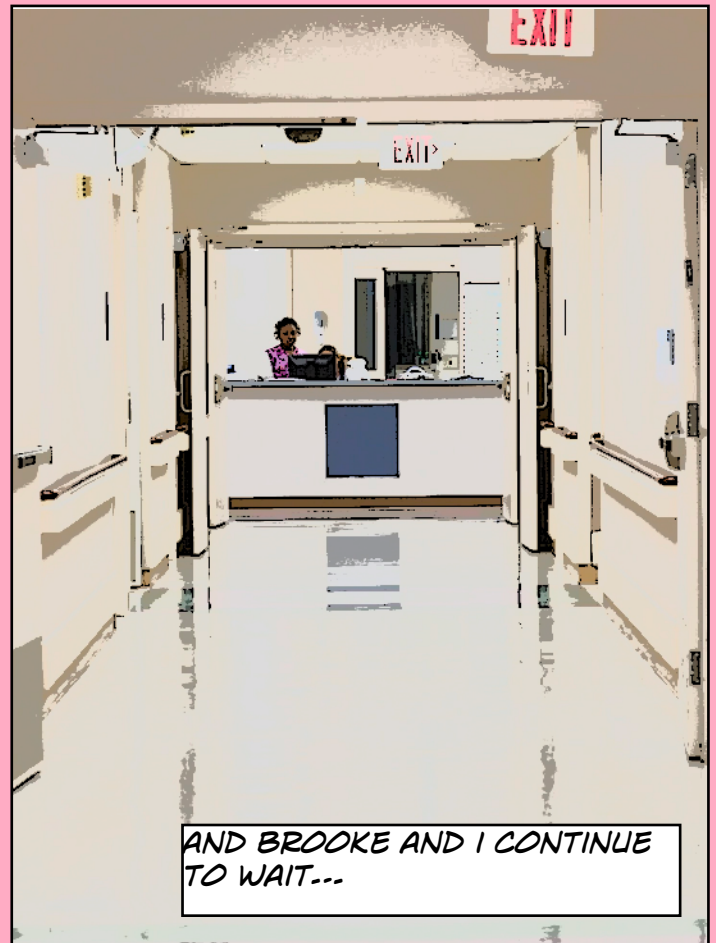
Hi hunny, how's your day going? 🧡

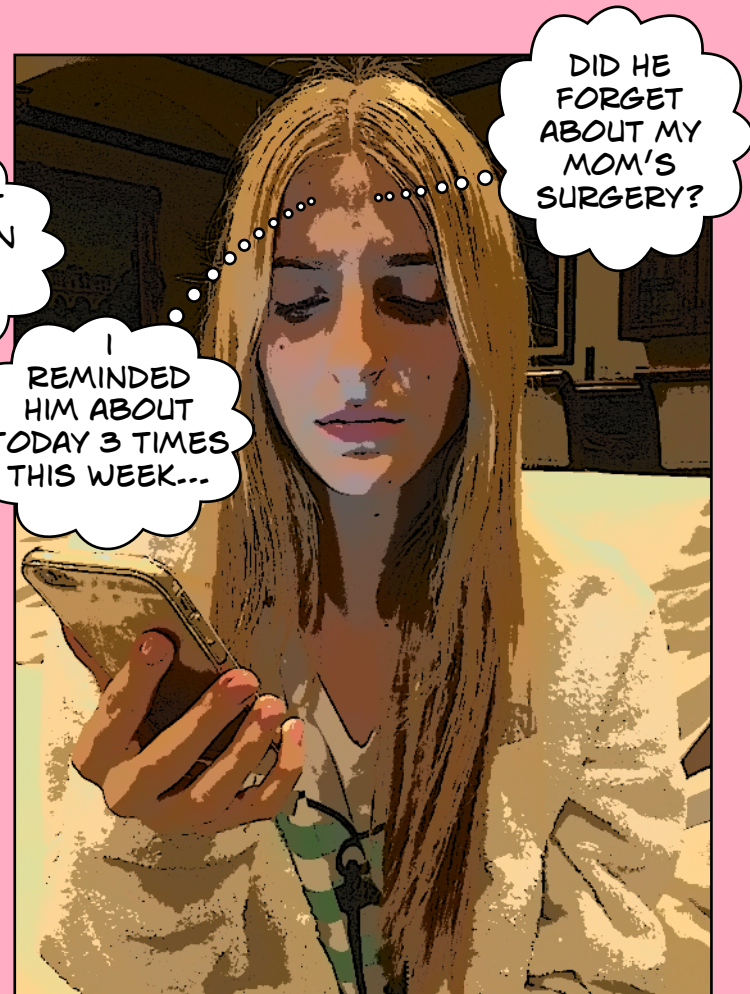
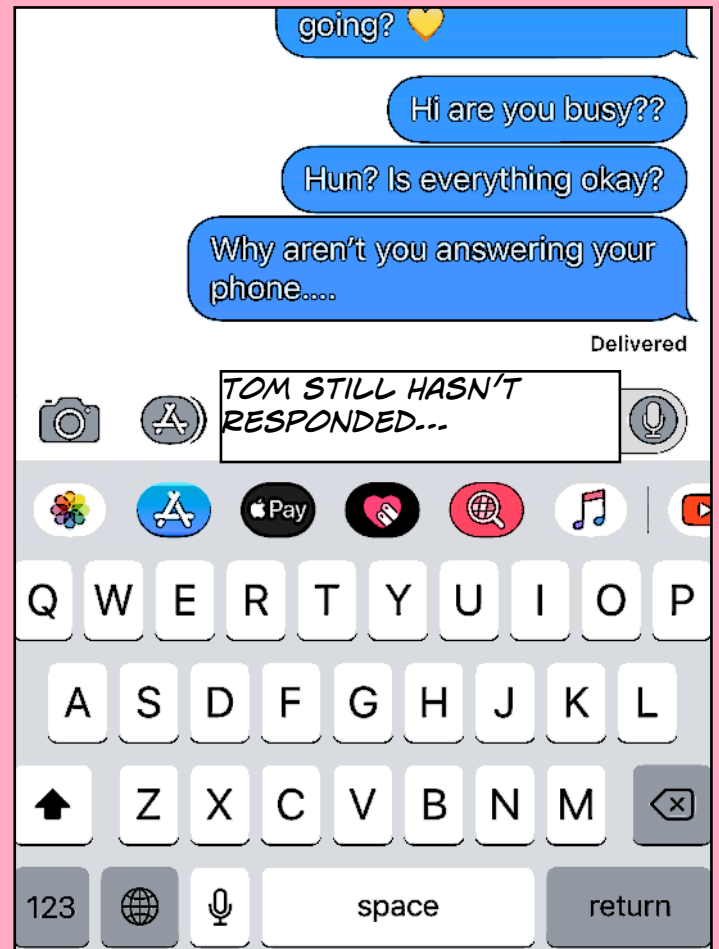
Hi are you busy??

Delivered



AND BROOKE AND I CONTINUE TO WAIT...







HI,
BROOKE AND
LAUREN...
GOOD
NEWS!!



YOUR MOM IS
OUT OF
SURGERY AND IS
RECOVERING
PERFECTLY.



YOU'LL
BOTH BE
ABLE TO SEE
HER IN THE
NEXT HALF
HOUR.



BROOKE AND I SCREAM IN
EXCITEMENT...

YAYYYY!!
MOM'S GOING
TO BE OKAY!

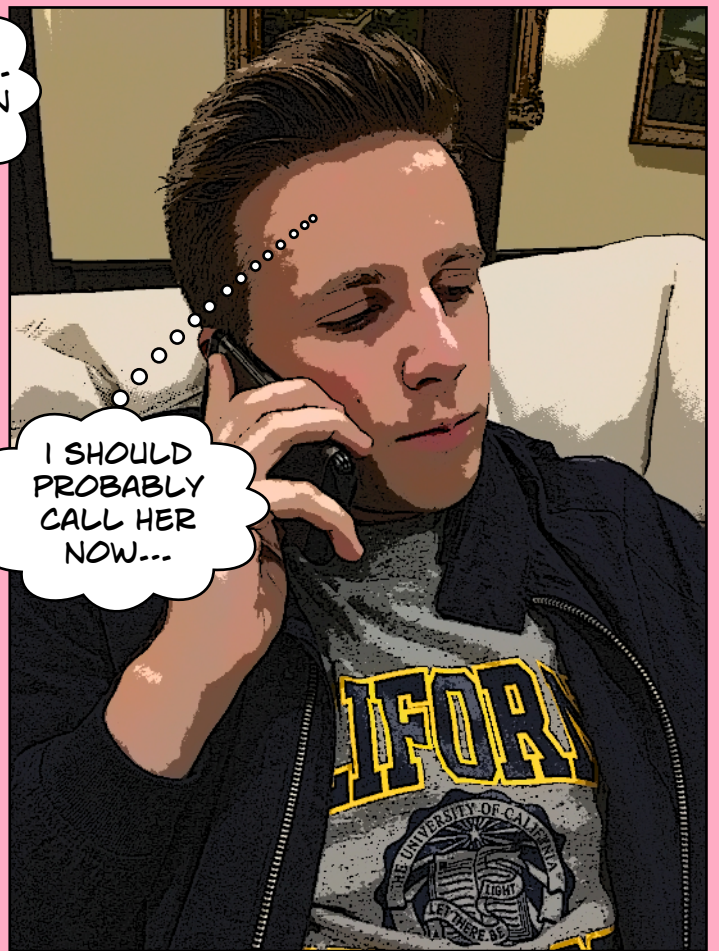
A woman with short brown hair is lying in a hospital bed, smiling broadly. She is wearing a white hospital gown. The bed has white pillows and a white blanket. In the background, there is a medical monitor and some equipment. The overall tone is positive and hopeful.

AND SURE ENOUGH, MOM WAS
LOOKING BETTER THAN EVER...

FINALLY, SHE WAS CANCER FREE.



I WAS SO BUSY TODAY... I DIDN'T EVEN TALK TO LAUREN!



I SHOULD PROBABLY CALL HER NOW...



WOW... TOM'S FINALLY CALLING ME BACK...



THIS SHOULD BE GOOD...

HELLO?



HI, BABE!
HOW'S YOUR
DAY GOING?



I
KNEW HE
FORGOT
ABOUT
TODAY...

IT'S
9 PM TOM...
I'M WITH MY
MOM RIGHT
NOW...

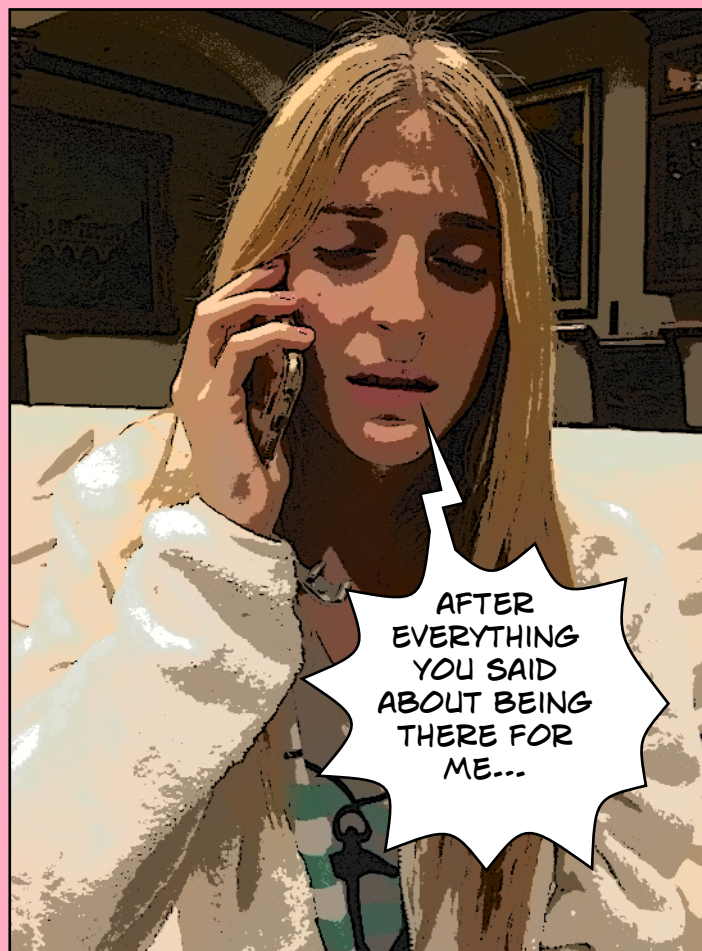



OH, THAT'S
NICE. HOW IS
SHE?



DO YOU
REMEMBER
WHAT DAY IT
WAS TODAY,
TOM?





A woman with long blonde hair is shown from the chest up, holding a silver mobile phone to her ear. She has a distressed expression, with her mouth open as if speaking or crying. She is wearing a white, textured cardigan over a green and white striped shirt with a large black anchor graphic. The background is a dimly lit room with wooden paneling and a framed picture on the wall.

I CAN'T
BELIEVE THIS IS
HAPPENING...

BULLSHIT, TOM!!
SO WHAT IF I HAVE
CANCER ONE DAY...
ARE YOU GOING TO
FORGET ABOUT ME
THEN TOO?





YOU
MEAN THE
WORLD TO
ME... THE LAST
THING I'D EVER
WANT TO DO IS
HURT YOU...

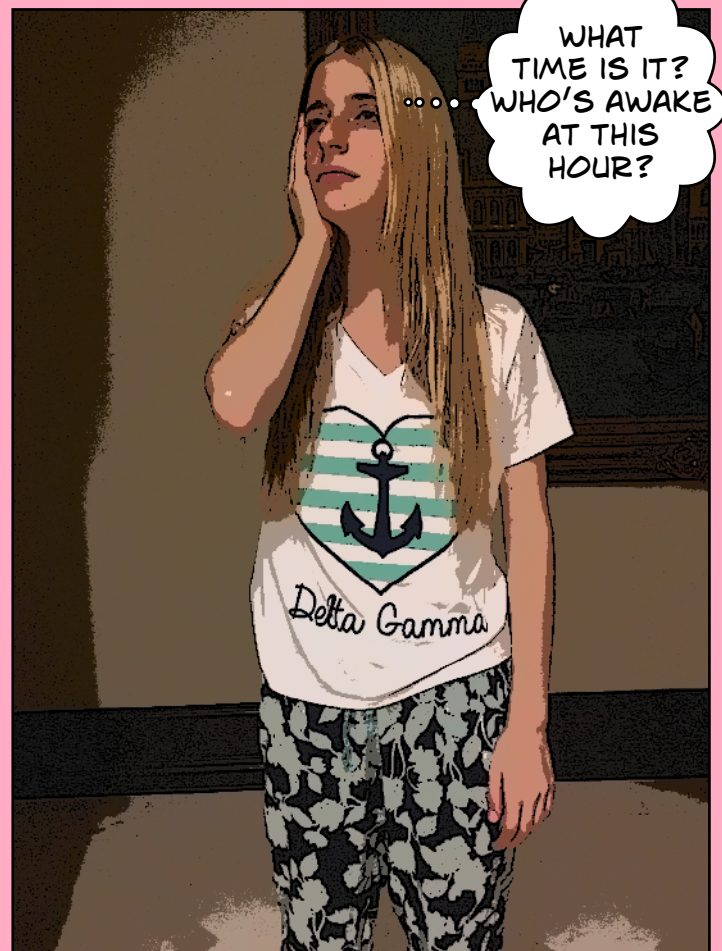


I'M GOING
BACK INSIDE
NOW TO SPEND
TIME WITH MY
MOM... I'LL
TALK TO YOU
LATER.





JUNE, 2019. IT'S 2 AM. I HEAR A NOISE COMING FROM DOWNSTAIRS.



WHAT TIME IS IT? WHO'S AWAKE AT THIS HOUR?




OH, IT'S JUST MOM... BUT WHY DOES IT LOOK LIKE SHE'S BEEN CRYING?

I APPROACH MY MOM IN THE KITCHEN...




HI, LAUREN...

A woman with blonde hair is sitting at a table, looking thoughtful. She has her hand near her face, with her fingers slightly curled. She is wearing a black top and a necklace with a small pendant. The background shows a kitchen with wooden cabinets and a window.

I LISTEN TO MY MOM AND ASK HER
WHAT'S WRONG...

I DIDN'T MEAN TO
WAKE YOU... I WAS
JUST SITTING HERE,
THINKING...



I'M SO
SCARED I'M
GOING TO GET
CANCER AGAIN
SOMEWHERE ELSE
BECAUSE OF MY
GENE
MUTATION...



ONCE YOU
GET
DIAGNOSED WITH
NO SYMPTOMS...
THE FEAR NEVER
REALLY GOES
AWAY...



AND I CAN'T
GO THROUGH
CANCER AGAIN...
I JUST CAN'T.

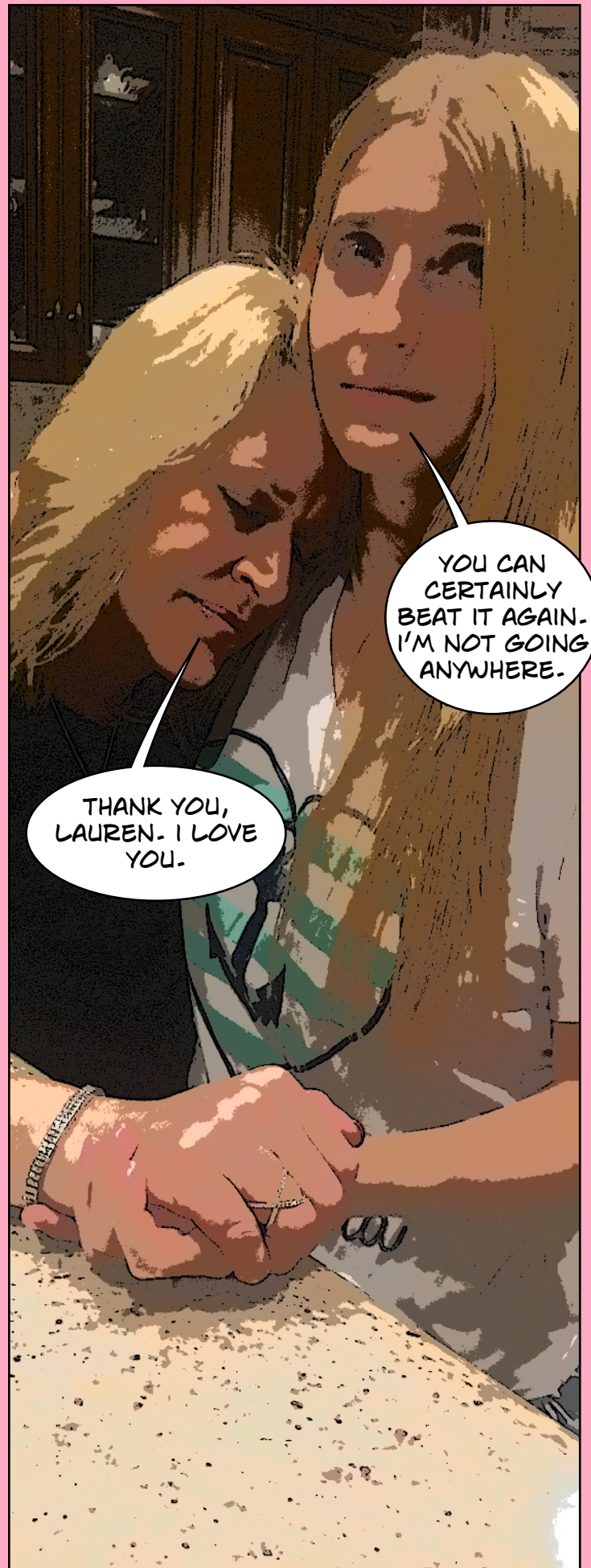


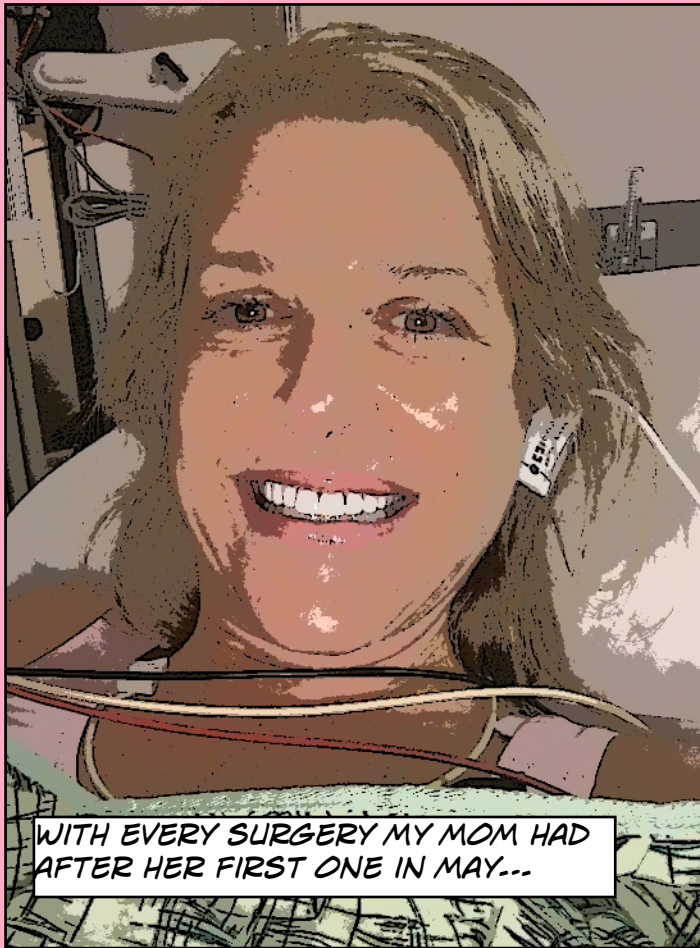
I COMFORT MY MOM AS
SHE CRIES.

MOM, STOP
WITH THAT
NONSENSE...



YOU'RE
NOT GETTING
CANCER AGAIN,
YOU'RE GOING
TO BE JUST
FINE...





WITH EVERY SURGERY MY MOM HAD
AFTER HER FIRST ONE IN MAY...



SHE GOT STRONGER AND
STRONGER.



IN NO TIME, SHE WAS BACK
TO HER USUAL SELF...

PARTYING AND ENJOYING LIFE
WITH HER FAMILY!



AND SHE WAS ABLE TO
CELEBRATE HER 49TH BIRTHDAY,
CANCER FREE.



WE WENT TO CELEBRATE AT HER
FAVORITE PLACE, DISNEYLAND!!



AND MONTHS LATER, SHE WAS
EATING CRUSHED ICE IN ARIZONA...

JUST LIKE AFTER EACH
SURGERY IN THE HOSPITAL!



I ALWAYS HAD TO BE STRONG
FOR HER...



EVEN WHEN ALL I WANTED TO
DO WAS BREAK DOWN...

I EVENTUALLY LEARNED TO FORGIVE TOM...



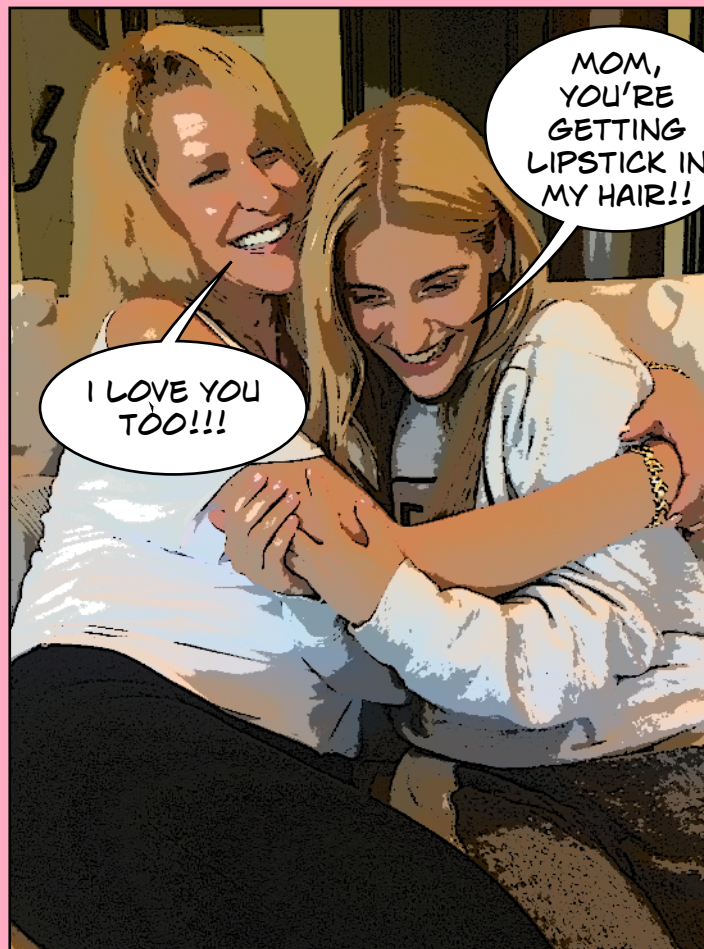
HE HELPED MY MOM THROUGH HER RECOVERY.

AND HE LEARNED HOW TO BE MORE SUPPORTIVE...



JUST INCASE I GET SICK ONE DAY.









NO MATTER IF I GET CANCER ONE DAY, I KNOW I'LL BE OKAY. I'LL HAVE MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS AND THAT'S ALL I NEED...



LIFE IS TOO FRAGILE. EVERYDAY SHOULD BE LIVED LIKE YOUR LAST BECAUSE YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN THE JOURNEY IS GOING TO END.