

ALIENATED™

CREATED BY SIMON SPURRIER & CHRIS WILDGOOSE



WRITTEN BY
SIMON SPURRIER

ILLUSTRATED BY
CHRIS WILDGOOSE

COLORED BY
ANDRÉ MAY

LETTERED BY
JIM CAMPBELL

COVER BY
CHRIS WILDGOOSE

UNLOCKED RETAILER VARIANT COVER BY
JOE QUINONES

DESIGNER
SCOTT NEWMAN

ASSISTANT EDITORS
RAMIRO PORTNOY & GAVIN GRONENTHAL

EDITOR
ERIC HARBURN



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Look at them.

The smirks. The sneers.



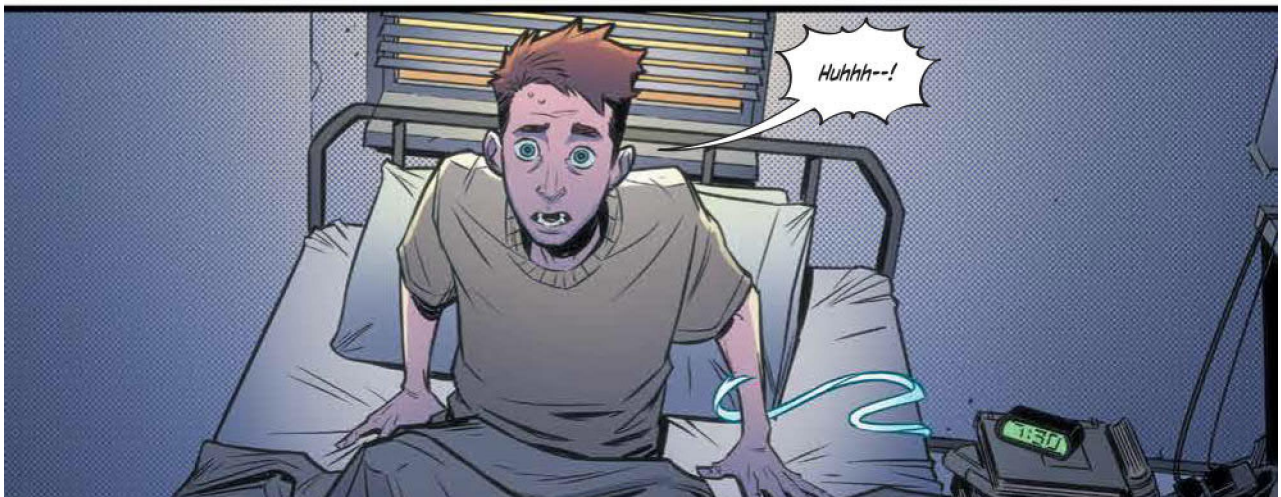
All so busy bein'--bein' *mindful* and #\$\$&in' *woke*, they never even *tried* to know me.

Whatever happens *next*? It's *their* fault.

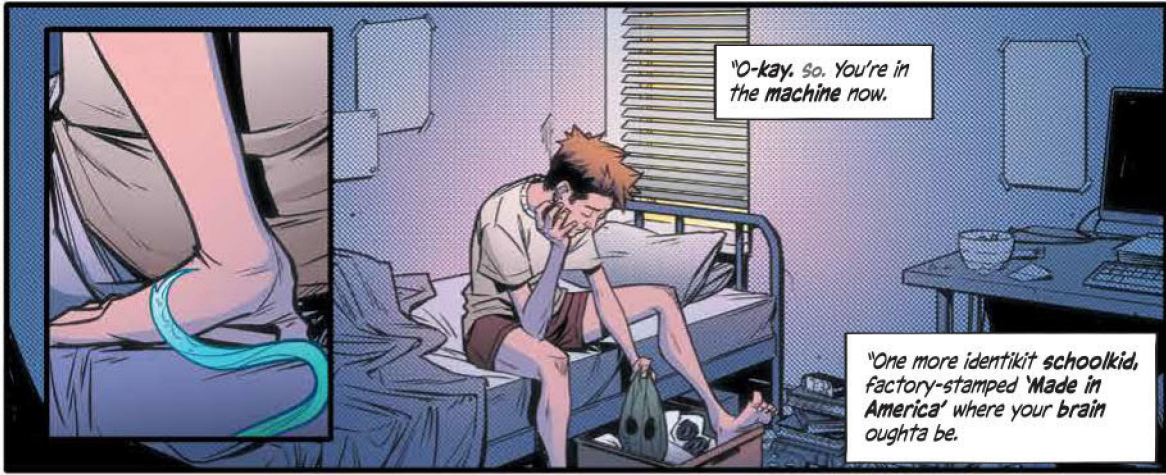
I *deserve* to be liked.



But being *noticed*'ll do.



Huhhh--!



"O-kay. So. You're in the machine now.

"One more identikit schoolkid, factory-stamped 'Made in America' where your brain oughta be.



But say you're *different*. Say you're not *meant* for the 9-to-5, *coffee-before-noon*, *beer-after* kinda life.

Say you *excel*. What *then?*



I'll tell ya. The bigwigs pull a lever and you're off on the *monomath* track.

University, doctorates, *tenure*-- they narrow down your options and your viewpoints over and over--

--because the one thing they love more than a *drone?*



Is an *expert* without a single original thought.



Come *on*, America! They're filling our heads with *their* junk on *their* terms until...until...



shrm

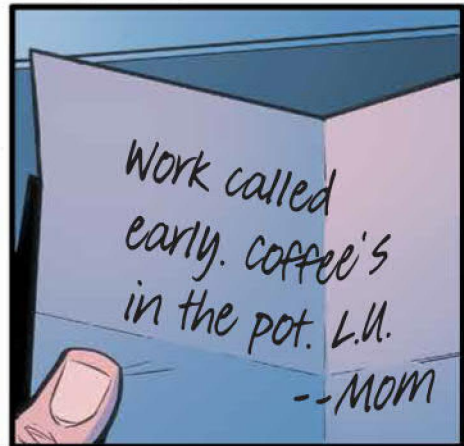


--u-until all we can do is find someone else to blame.



sigh
Until next time, etcetera etcetera.

Insert pithy motto here.



Work called early. coffee's in the pot. L.U.
--MOM



Guns, huh?

Guns and angry white clichés. That's not really my scene.

I know you're under there, Chip. Listen--I think it's only fair to ask:



I guess we coulda spent the time since then *freaking out* about that--

WANT. SAM-SAM-SAM! WANT!

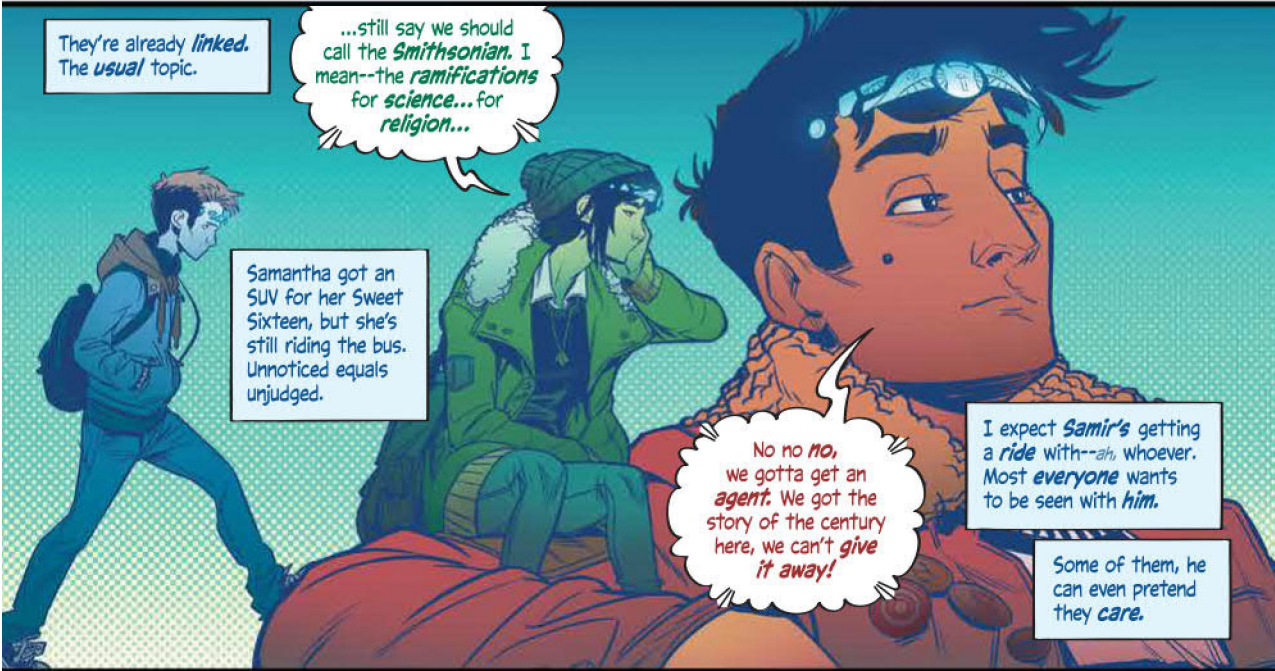
Hey--calm down already! I'm tuning in.



--but mostly we've just been working on our *privacy settings*.

It's amazing how fast things stop seeming amazing.

Guys? It's *me*-- I'm coming in. Stay outta my memories!



They're already *linked*. The *usual* topic.

...still say we should call the *Smithsonian*. I mean--the *ramifications* for *science*...for *religion*...

Samantha got an SUV for her Sweet Sixteen, but she's still riding the bus. Unnoticed equals unjudged.

No no *no*, we gotta get an *agent*. We got the story of the century here, we can't *give it away!*

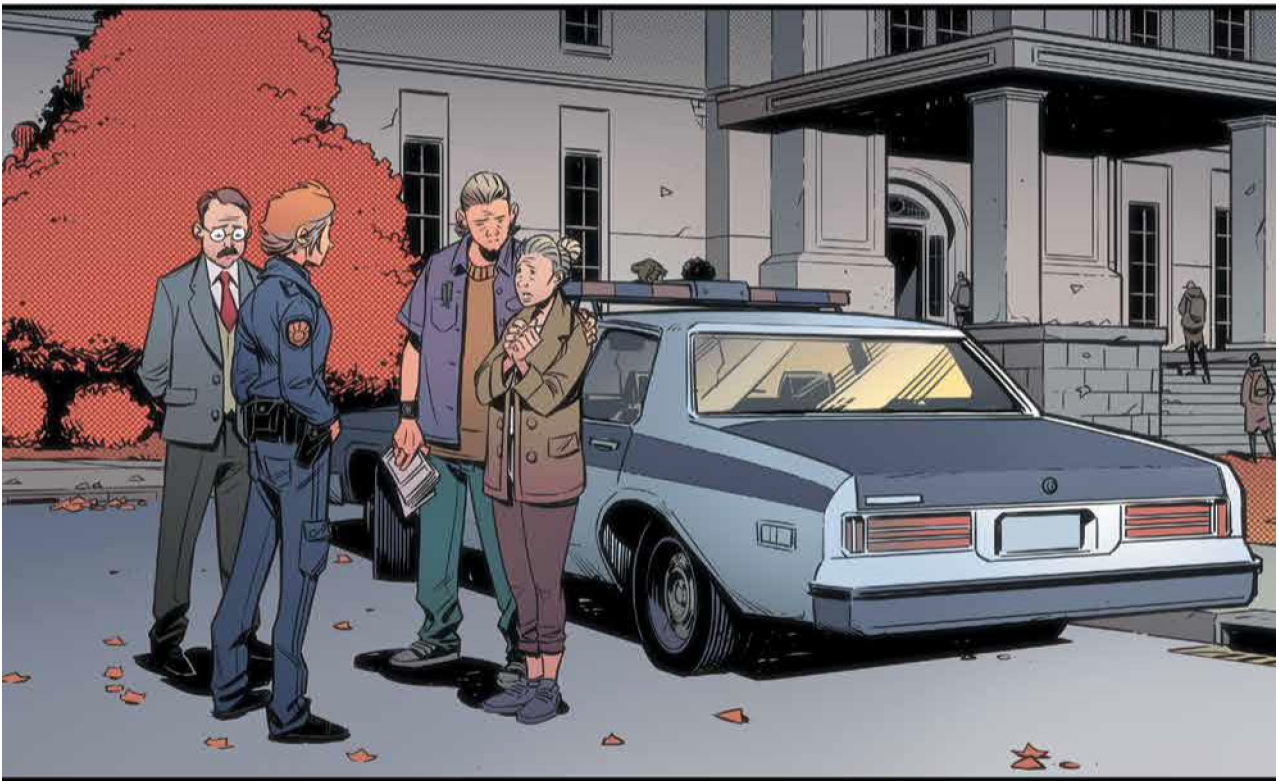
I expect *Samir's* getting a *ride* with--*ah*, whoever. Most *everyone* wants to be seen with *him*.

Some of them, he can even pretend they *care*.

And then there's me.



We can't tell anyone.



Chapter 2: WE NEED TO TALK