

ALIENATED™

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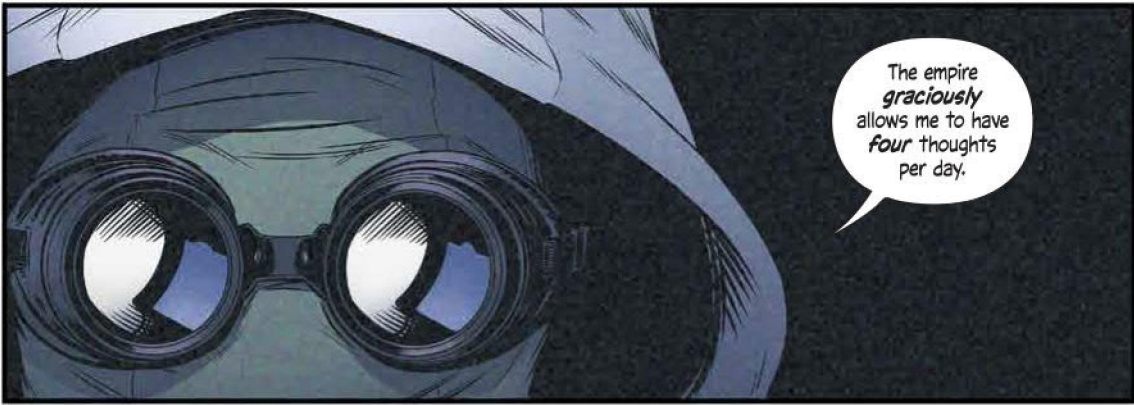
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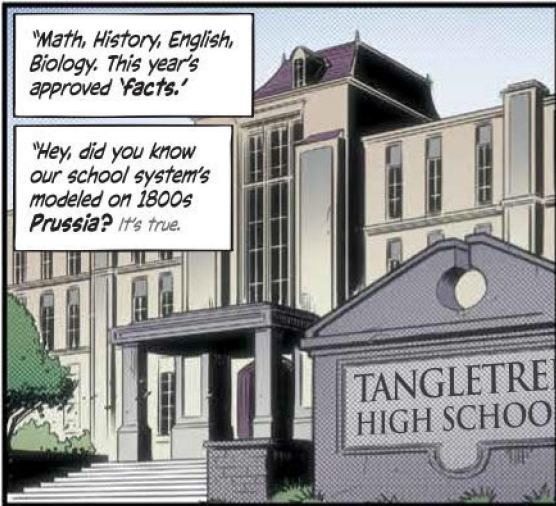
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The empire *graciously* allows me to have *four* thoughts per day.



"Math, History, English, Biology. This year's approved *'facts.'*"

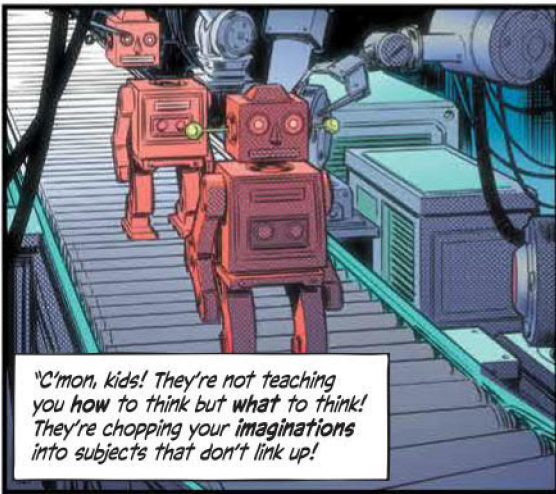
"Hey, did you know our school system's modeled on 1800s Prussia? It's true."

TANGLETRE HIGH SCHOOL

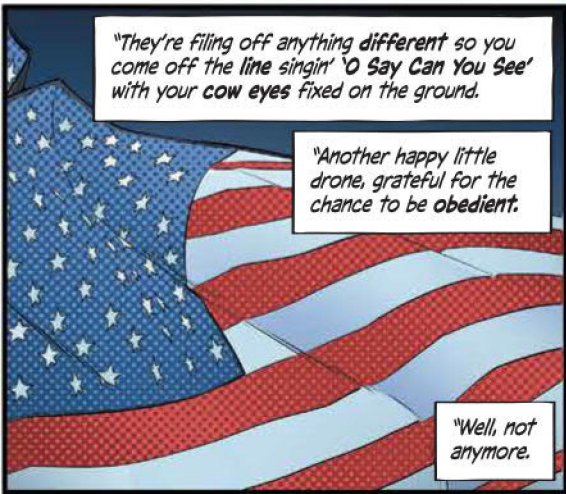


"You think those guys wanted to nurture unique minds?"

"Or did they want a generation of robots to go fight Napoleon?"



"C'mon, kids! They're not teaching you *how* to think but *what* to think! They're chopping your imaginations into subjects that don't link up!"



"They're filing off anything *different* so you come off the line singin' 'O Say Can You See' with your *cow eyes* fixed on the ground."

"Another happy little drone, grateful for the chance to be *obedient*."

"Well, not anymore."



It's *our* future, not *theirs*. It's time to *wake up!* It's time to *rage* and *roar* and *take back* the world!

It's *time--*

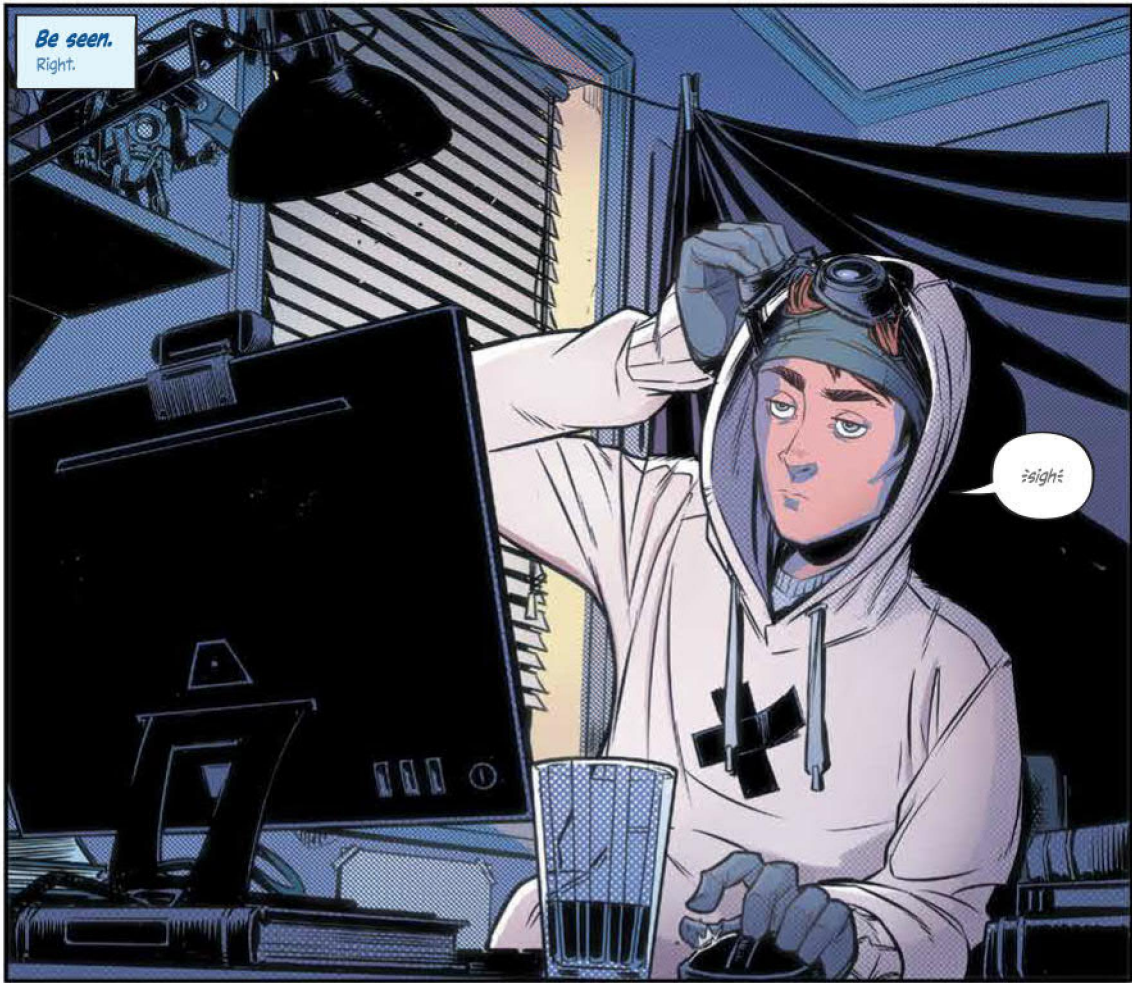


--to be *seen*.



UPLOAD

KLK



Be seen.
Right.

sigh



Weekly average of *forty-three* views.
Not exactly *world-shaking*, huh?

Got a couple new *subscribers*,
though--*that's* cool. Better a
few inquiring minds than a
billion dumb clickers.



...what's the
alternative?

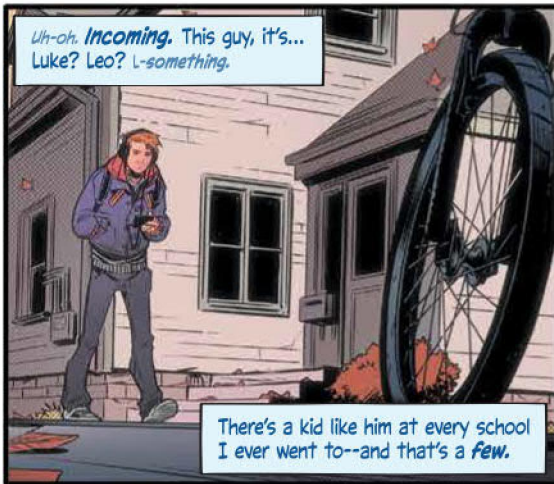
*"Factions speak
louder than herds"--*
that's one of the
golden rules.

The others are
*"Don't read the
comments"*
and
*"Keep the
damn content
flowing, dummy."*

Because...c'mon.



Anonymity?



Uh-oh. *Incoming*. This guy, it's... Luke? Leo? L-something.

There's a kid like him at every school I ever went to--and that's a *few*.



Kind who feels *persecuted* when anyone *else* gets a *win*. A *grudge* with shoes, basically.

Hey. Newbie.

Probably got a shopping list of *small arms* in the pocket of his favorite trenchcoat. One of *those* guys.

Just my luck he's the only one so far who even *noticed* me.



I said h--

Uh, *sorry*, I'm kinda--can't *hear* ya! Watchin' a *thing*, y'know?

Easy to get *tainted* by association, little town like Tangletree. That's another *golden rule*, I guess:

S A M U E L



Better anonymous than unappreciated.



Six more months.

College. New state.
New crowd.

Six more months.



Six more m--

#\$%&.



Hey--
uh, L-Leon?
It's **Leon**,
right?

C-could you tell the
driver to *wait*? I had to
walk the neighbor's *dog*
and I'm running
la--

You talkin'
to *me*,
princess?

He slows the bike
and he says that's
the first time I ever
said his name.

I'm about to
apologize for that
--I'm blushing, even--
when he meets my eye
and says a *word*.



It rhymes with
"shore."

That's
the last
one, pal.
Nobody else
comin'.

S A M A N T H A



Six more months.



Okay. Okay, sure. I will caffeinate his homophobic ass. **NBD.**

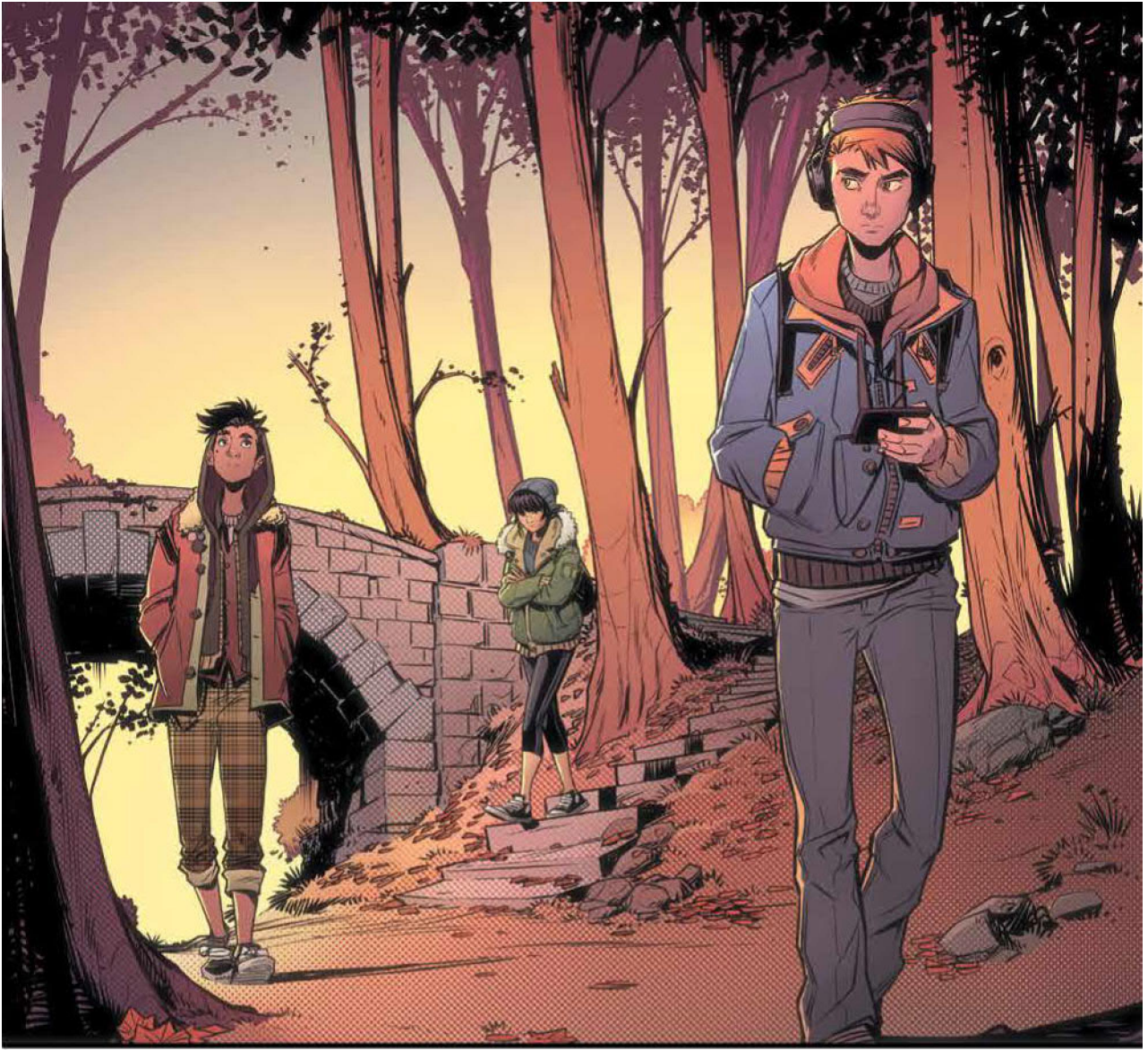
I don't need to be nice to Leon. **Everybody** hates him. I'll--what? I'll shout "You want whip with that?" and I'll throw it at his head. Yeah.

I don't *have* to be, y'know. **Liked.** Not by *everybody.*



S A M I R





**Chapter 1:
THREE KIDS CALLED SAM
GO WALKING IN THE WOODS**

