



Musa's garden

Mari Gonzalez Curia

Overview



A lonely muse invites a disenchanted daydreamer into her magical garden to reawaken his inspiration and, in doing so, her own.

When they discover that her garden is actually a prison borne of fear, will they find the strength to switch roles and break free?



In the safety of her garden, Musa has everything she could ever want... except perhaps company. She sees helping and inspiring others as her calling, but her guests never stay and, over time, loneliness erodes her own passion.

After a long rest, she meets Dante, a disheartened student who has forgotten everything that once moved him. Determined to try again for his sake and her own, Musa invites him into her Garden, secretly wishing for change.

Her wish is granted, but after she helps Dante reconnect with his former self he proves to be *too* different from her other guests: he asks too many questions, sees right through her smile and, upon realizing her “haven” is actually a prison, cares too much for her to leave her behind.

As they explore the garden and each other’s fears together, Musa must answer the difficult questions she has been avoiding for so long, and face the truth behind her garden, her magic and herself.

MUSA’S GARDEN is a story about avoidance and the prisons we build for ourselves, to hide from the pain we don’t want to remember (and how we must face it to move on).

Overview

Specs

Audience: Young Adult

Estimated page count: 200-220 pages

Ideal final trim size: A5 / 6 x 9 in

Style: Full Color

Estimated Timeline

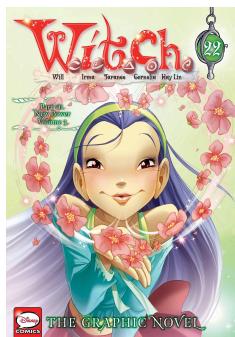
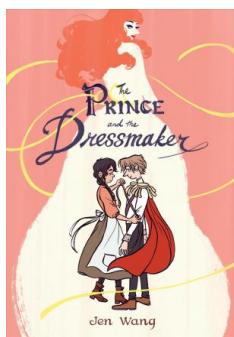
Script & Thumbs: 3 to 6 months

Pencils: 9 to 12 months

Line Art: 6 to 8 months

Colors: 6 to 8 months

Comp Titles



Musa's Garden is a fantasy story featuring resilient, non-conforming characters like *Snapdragon* (Kat Leyh) who support and inspire each other to live authentically like *The Prince and the Dressmaker* (Jenn Wang), set in a deceptively perfect magical world created to shelter from trauma and avoid reality like *WandaVision* (TV series, Marvel), with an expressive and colorful art style often compared to *W.I.T.C.H.* (Alessandro Barbucci, Barbara Canepa) and heartwarming narrative style heavily inspired by the work of *Studio Ghibli* and *Makoto Shinkai*.

Other similar books & influences:

- *My Own World* (Mike Holmes)
- *Don't Go Without Me* (Rosemary Vallero-O'Connell)
- *The Hills of Estrella Roja* (Ashley Robin Franklin)
- *The Sprite And The Gardener* (Rii Abrego, Joe Whitt)
- *Taproot* (Keezy Young)

Musa

- She / Her 

- 18 years old

- Origin: 

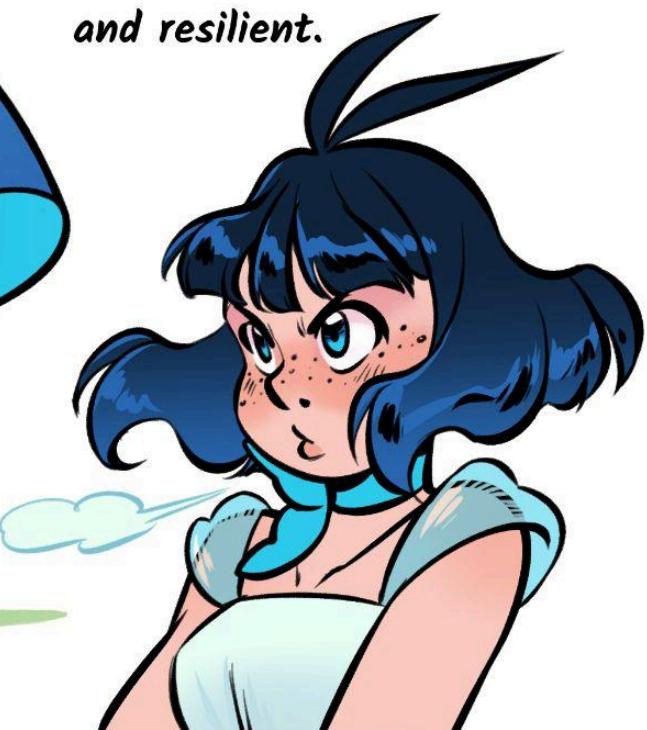
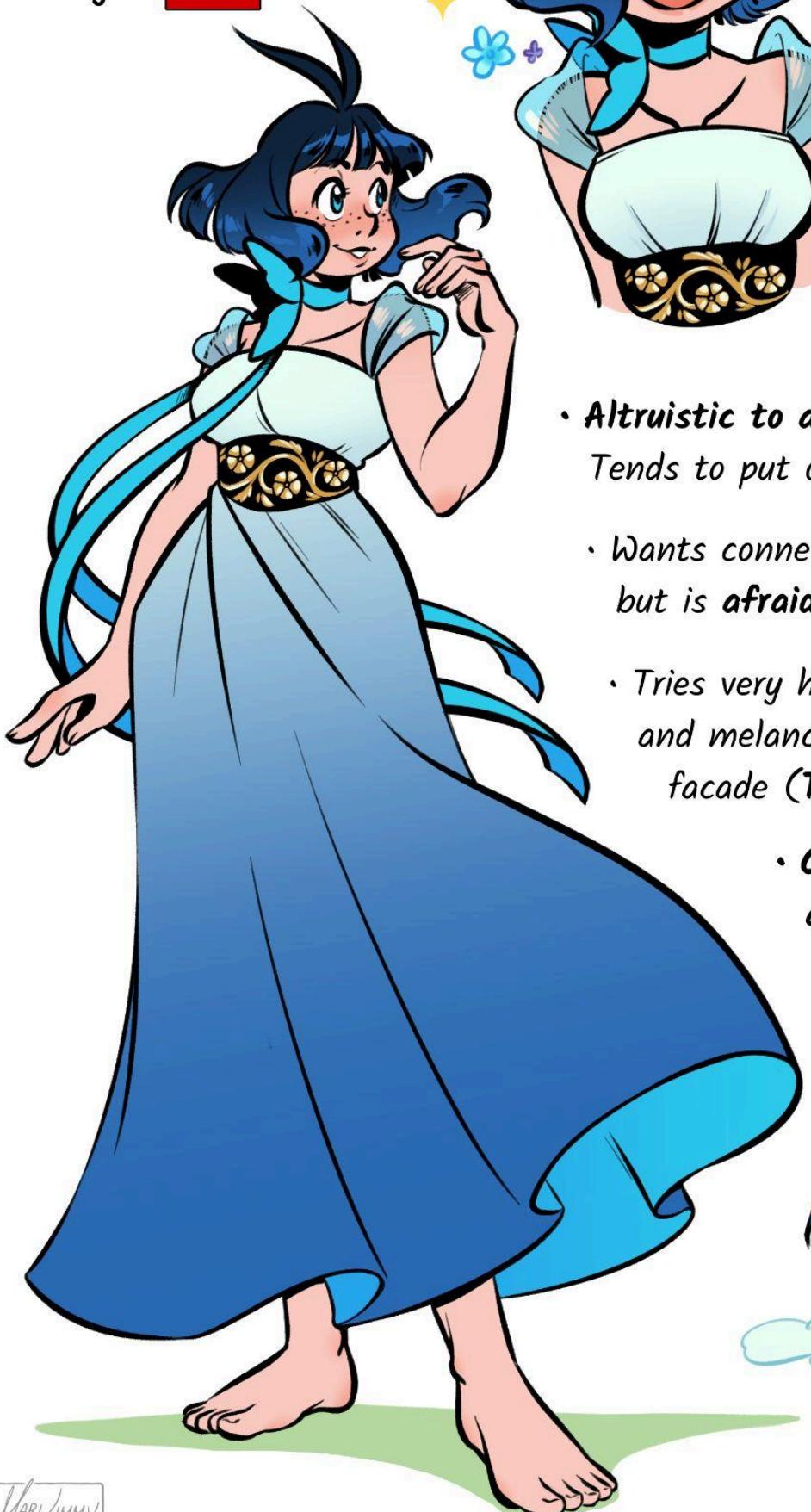
- **Altruistic to a fault.**

Tends to put others' needs before her own.

- Wants connection and company, but is **afraid to be vulnerable**.

- Tries very hard to hide her insecurity and melancholy behind an overly positive facade (**Toxic positivity**)

- Creative, empathetic and resilient.



Dante

- He / They  

- 19 years old

- Origin: 



- **Skeptical and sarcastic.**
Doesn't take most things at face value.
- Used to be more **curious and adventurous**,
but was criticized and made fun of for it until
he restrained that side of him.
- Usually expects the worst of people and
situations to avoid being hurt or disappointed
(Defensive Pessimism)
- **Introspective,**
inquisitive and
observant.
- Tends to space
out and get lost
in thought.



About the project

Musa's Garden has been a part of my life, in one way or another, since 2011, growing and changing with me along the way. Over the years, as I honed my storytelling skills, its title, characters, and even format transformed, revealing a story that was much deeper and more personal than I ever imagined.

In 2018, after completing my previous short comic, *The Shadow*, I decided it was time to give this story my full attention. After a long process of rewriting and redesigning characters, I found a version that resonated with me at the time. By late 2019, I shared a few pages online, eager to connect with my audience.

Their response was invaluable. It made me realize that the story had great potential, but it was also clear this project deserved a different format for it to truly shine. After more research, continuous refinements, and with the unwavering support of my mentor and peers, the project took on a new and exciting shape, evolving into a Graphic Novel.



This process has been a healing and cathartic experience for me as an author and I'm confident that this story has the potential to do the same for others, whether it's trying to step out of their comfort zone, confronting a history of avoidance or navigating the collective trauma of the pandemic.

Musa's Garden invites readers to step out of their comfort zones, embracing connection and acknowledging that, while our safe place may have helped us, true happiness awaits beyond its walls.

Synopsis

MUSA'S GARDEN opens in the torch-lit halls of a church in 16th Century Castille, as a girl faces trial for witchcraft. Heartbroken, she uses her magic to break free and lock herself in the scriptorium, where she casts a last-resort spell to save her life.

When she opens her eyes again, she finds herself in a small pond surrounded by a seemingly endless meadow, with no memories of her past life. As soon as she steps out, flowers magically sprout at her feet and she quickly realizes she can shape this world at will. The mirror-like pond serves as her only window into the outside world, which she begins to observe and learn from.

One day, as she watches a pianist struggle with her music, her desire to cheer her up accidentally transports her in front of her. Trying to make sense of the apparition, the pianist believes her to be a Muse which she happily runs with (even adopting the name "Musa") and invites her back to the garden to be inspired by its wonders.

The pianist eventually leaves and, with a heightened feeling of loneliness, Musa begins inviting other people into the garden, only for them to inevitably leave too. This cycle repeats over and over, isolating her further and eroding her passion until, wishing someone would just stay, she decides to rest for a while.

A century later, in 2018 Buenos Aires, a weary student named Dante wishes they could escape the hellish, vicious cycle of their routine. Musa is instantly intrigued.



On their way to work, Dante learns about an exhibit of medieval manuscripts featuring the mysterious MIRROR MANUSCRIPT, rumored to be enchanted. They scoff at the thought of magic being real, showing their disillusionment with the world and their frustration at forgetting their own hopes and dreams.

Mirroring Musa's own discomfort, they wish they could just leave. Right as they convince themselves things will never change, they lock eyes with Musa across the street. She's finally met her match. Secretly wishing for change, Musa invites Dante into the garden to reawaken their inspiration and in doing so, her own.

Dante is skeptical at first, but Musa's unrelenting cheerfulness inevitably tears down their pessimistic defenses and, by confessing her own loneliness, she also makes them feel safe enough to open up about their past. Dante gets to experiment with the Garden's magic to create things of their own and, in the process, they remember their old dream of becoming a Botanist. However, the joy is outlived, as the Garden also manifests the painful memories that led to their disillusionment.

Something *familiar* stirs in Musa as she watches Dante's memories play out. For the first time, she is not in full control of what happens and she begins to panic. Dante finally faces the source of their fear and, as the visions dissipate, is filled with renewed determination and gratitude for Musa's intervention. Seeing Dante's recovery instantly reminds Musa of her purpose, but this time, she regrets, she needs to be selfish.

She invites Dante to stay in the Garden, but they're actually ready to go back to their life and start over. Bitterly, Musa puts their wishes before hers and says they're free to go. After everything she's done for them, however, Dante cares too much about her to just leave her behind. Catching her completely off guard, they make a counter offer: *What if she leaves with them?*

On the verge of tears, Musa reveals that, no matter how hard she's tried, she can't leave the Garden. Not ready to give up, Dante insists they investigate. While searching for clues in her old paintings, they find a spot in the Garden she's always feared and avoided: an old church, towering over a bramble-covered field.

They explore the interior and finally uncover Musa's past. In a shared vision, Dante witnesses how she was chased by the same people she tried to help and how, as a last resort, she gave away her body and memories to create the Garden, a safe haven where she could never be harmed. Right before the vision ends, Dante recognizes the Mirror Manuscript as the book she used to cast the spell.

As Musa's memories return and she is overcome with despair, the spell that holds her world together becomes unstable and the Garden begins to fall apart around them. She begs Dante to leave and even tries to force them out, but even then, Dante refuses to give up on her. They vow to meet again and he agrees to return to the outside world, find the book and help her break the spell.



Once in the outside world, and with only a few hours to go until the exhibit ends, a work notification tempts Dante to return to their old routine, but the promise to Musa fuels them to rush through the city towards the Museum. Once they're in front of the book, however, they quickly realize that breaking the spell is entirely in Musa's hands: even with all the spell's conditions met, the final choice is hers.

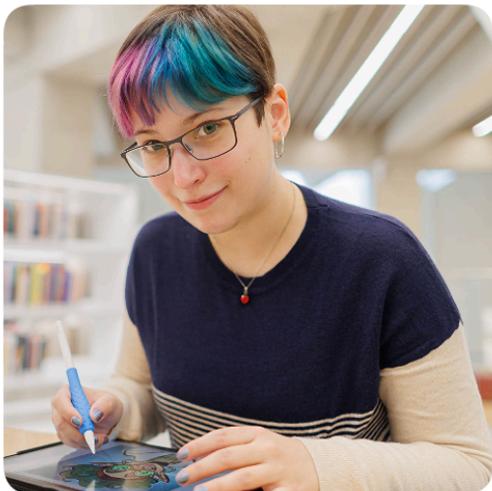
As the garden continues to collapse, the book starts to smoke as if burning from the inside, engulfing the whole room in darkness. Dante makes their final plea and confronts Musa with the harsh truth she's still trying to avoid: her garden isn't safe anymore. If she stays, she will die. Confronted with this truth and encouraged by Dante's words, she gathers her courage and takes the leap into the unknown.

The book bursts into flames and its pages fly out, magically combining to give her physical form again.

Outside, they are greeted by a cool, rainy morning - a new beginning awaits.



About the Author



I'm Mari Gonzalez Curia (AKA MariLimmy), a Comics Creator and Illustrator, born and raised in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Combining vulnerable, heartwarming storytelling with a vibrant and expressive art style, I strive to make my work an invitation to explore real emotion within fantastical worlds. Some of my favorite themes relate to facing fear, resilience, new beginnings and mental health.

My goal is to create stories that resonate, inspire or simply brighten someone's day, just like many stories have done for me :)

I studied Graphic Design at the University of Buenos Aires, learned about Comics and Perspective from Bande dessinée artist Walther Taborda and continue to develop my Digital Painting and Visual Storytelling skills under the mentorship of Chris Oatley at [The Magic Box Academy](#), where I am also currently working as Production Coordinator for the podcast *You're A Better Artist Than You Think*.

My first short comic, *The Shadow*, was published in Argentina by Purple Books in 2017. A self-published English version was also sold in Calgary, Canada, where I lived from 2020 to late 2022. Since then, I've continued to create short stories while developing my Graphic Novel pitch:

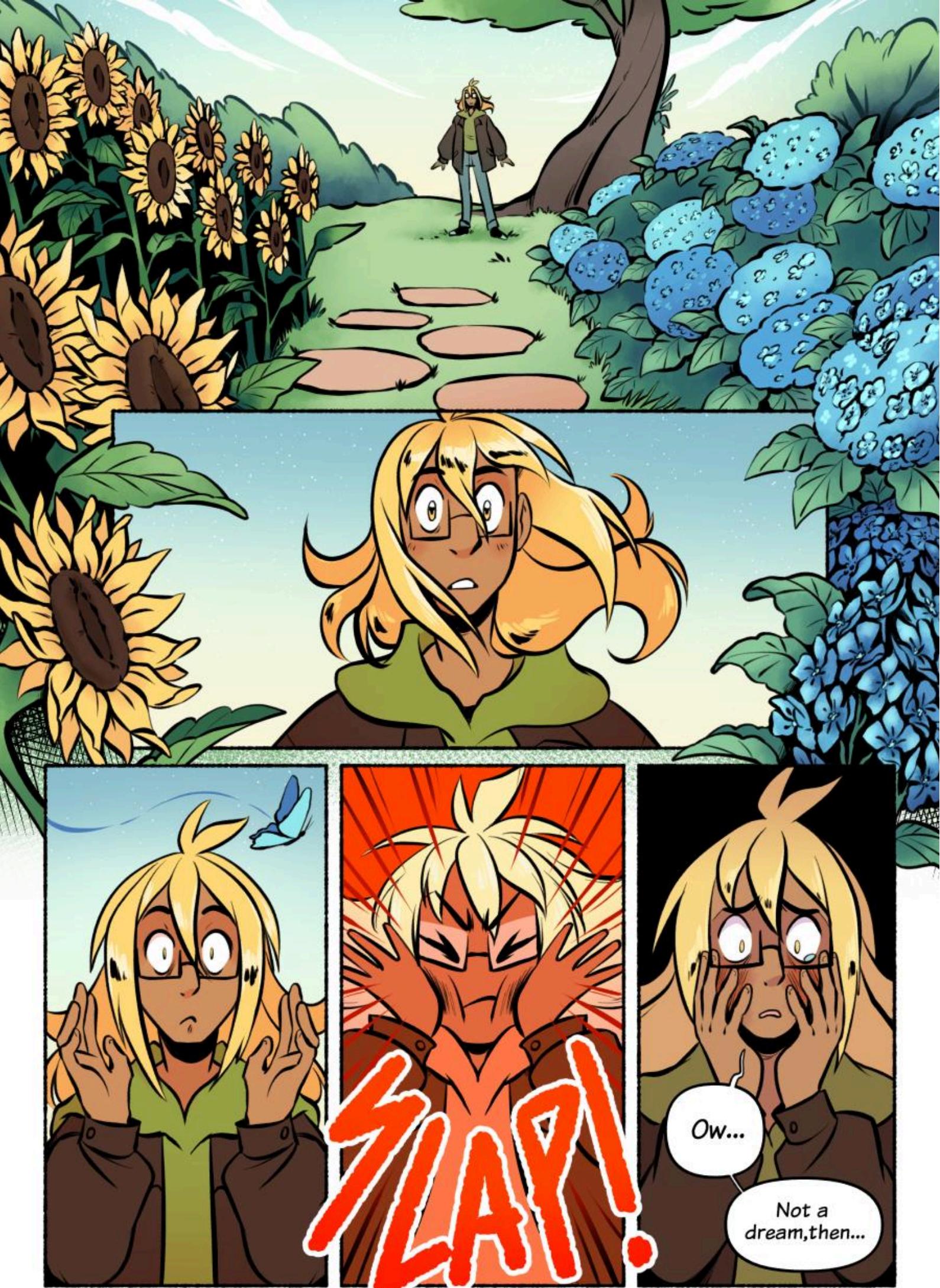


I'm currently seeking agent representation for my first Original Graphic Novel, *Musa's Garden*, as well as future projects (as author/illustrator or in collaboration with writers!).

In my free time, I enjoy practicing yoga, playing D&D (and other TTRPGs), and learning about psychology and nature.

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This isn't
Heaven...

... but
I assure you,
it is just as
SAFE.

My name
is MUSA

Welcome to
my garden!

I am so happy
to finally meet you
face to face—

D-Dante?

He's still
on edge...

I-I'm sorry
for causing so
much trouble...

RUB
RUB

I didn't
expect bringing you
here would be so
difficult!

Your world
has changed so
much...



Why?

A moment ago
you said this was
HEAVEN...

... and now
you're acting like
it's **HELL?**

Maybe people
don't believe in
Muses anymore...

Maybe
this...

...was a
MISTAKE.

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**AND
ONE MORE
THING!**

Am I
just LOSING
MY MIND?!

Because it
kinda feels
like I am...

N-No!

FOCUS!

SNAP!

It's
alright!

Your mind
is perfectly
fine, Dante!

Your curiosity
is speaking...

It can be
overwhelming...
I understand.

... and you
are finally
listening!

That's why I brought you here!

To help you recover that SPARK!

... as well as my own.

So please...

... as scary as it is...

Ask all the questions you need

and I will do my best!



Let's just go one at a time, alright?

Fine.

Where are we?

We're in my garden!

Here, let me show you...





