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Collège LaSalle, Tunis



Collège LaSalle
Tunis

Stage de Fin de Formation

Fall Anthology Comic – Costumes

Pour l'obtention du
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En
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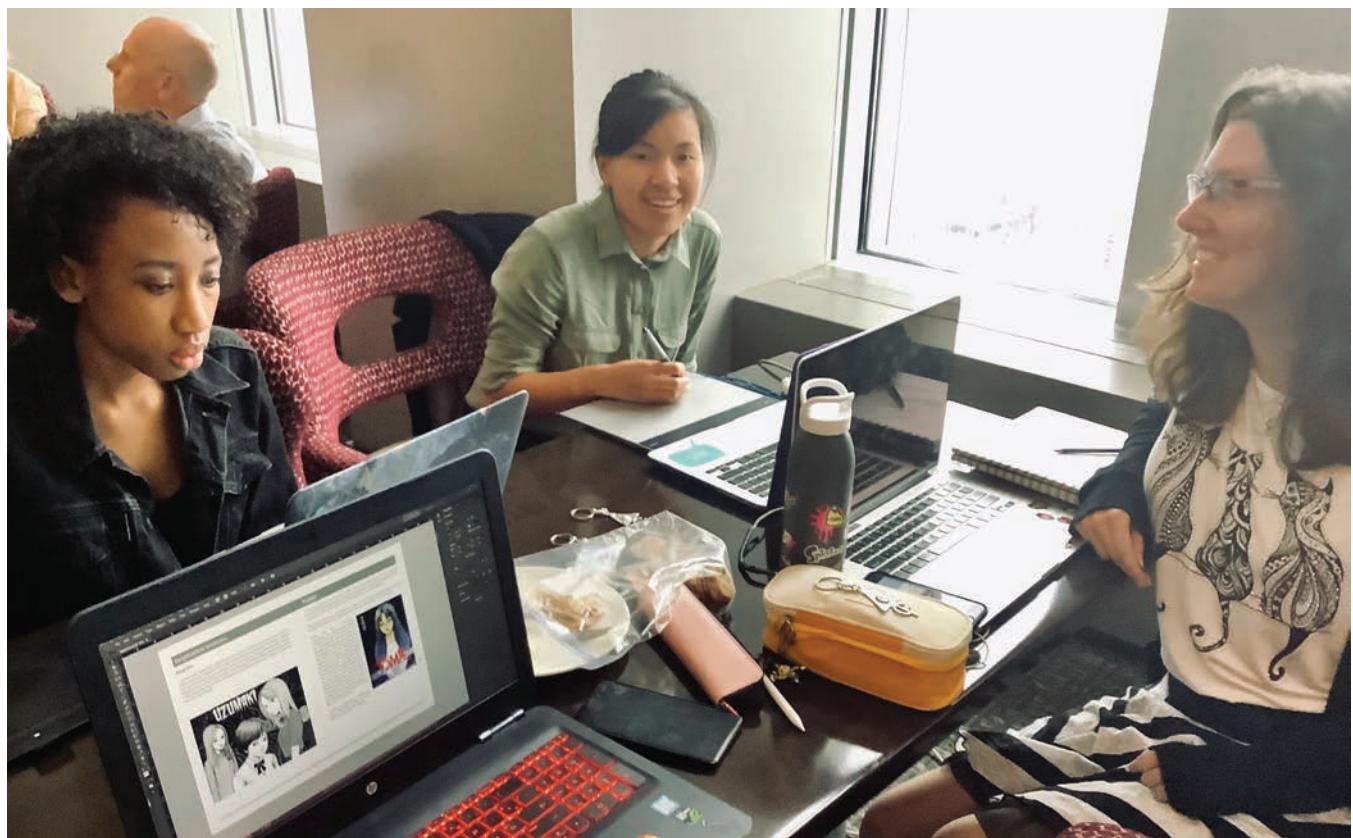
Above all else, I would like to thank Kahlil Jackson and Gobbana of GoBelieve Culture for providing me with the time and opportunity to work on this project. They were most accommodating and it was an absolute pleasure working with them.

Next, I'm grateful to the visual arts team for helping me catch up with them and making my work experience as fun and exciting as possible. Here's to Sukari Mcgee, Allison Warren, Katherine Price,

and Scott Cressman.

Finally, I'd like to thank my supervisor Hamdi Cheniour for always being most encouraging and supportive, providing me with guidance and insight over the course of my internship.

I'd like to thank my parents for making all of this possible.

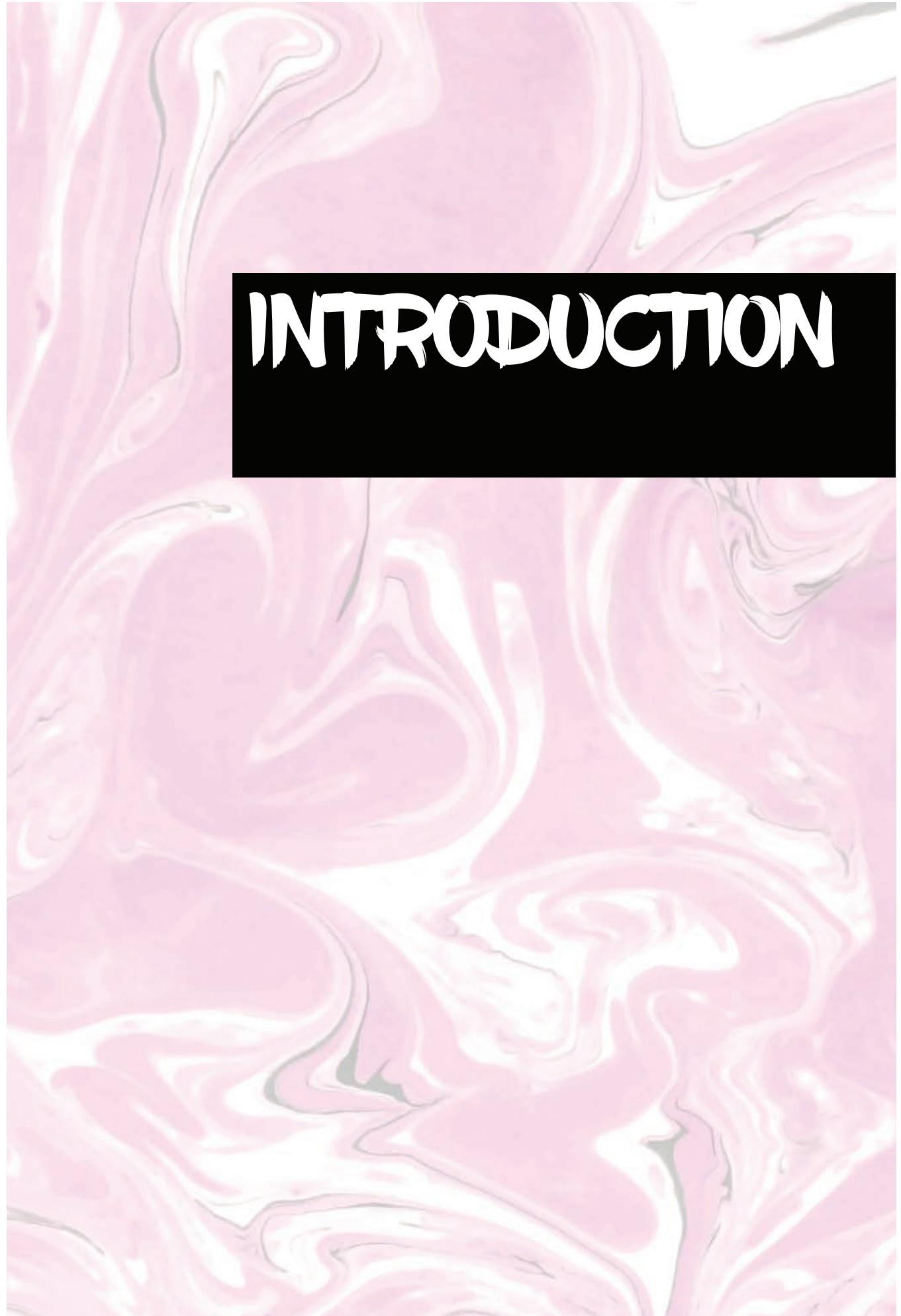


DEDICATION

To Ayla, Kyle, and Isadora:

You are all wonderful, amazing individuals who have always been there for me.

INTRODUCTION



GOBELIEVE CULTURE

GoBelieve was founded in 2012 by Aaron Pleasant and Kahlil Jackson, two childhood friends who were raised in the North Philadelphia Projects.

With the drive to leave behind their less than ideal surroundings, Kahlil and Aaron made names for themselves by getting involved in the music industry, with Kahlil focusing on the business aspect and Aaron working for the local radio station Radio 1 Philadelphia. Wanting to venture off on their own, Kahlil and Aaron decided to start GoBelieve to provide equal opportunity education for disadvantaged students and teens, both dealt with growing up. Since starting company has something they with GoBelieve, become known throughout the Greater Philadelphia region for boosting the college retention rate through their stage play “Karma 101.”

“Our mission is to give every human...‘True life’.”

Goals and Objectives

Our company promises to spark and maintain a fire to BELIEVE & PURSUE ones Ultimate Desires through various forms of entertainment, motivational apparel and instilling mental & physical growth.

Services

APPAREL - Our motivational and inspirational clothing line that serves as a reminder to chase your beliefs and conquer your fears.

ENTERTAINMENT - Educational Stage play that educates on the importance of higher education while also increasing schools retention rate.

FITNESS - Program created to help people grow mentally & physically through exercise and personal development. Participants receive a meal plan along with health tips via email.

LIFE - Offers services that give access to quality attorneys, business consultants, and identity theft specialist. This allows or members to worry less and live more knowing that they have professionals to back them up in day to day situations.

We have life events plans they help our members navigate through Daily issues of life.

Karma 101” is a college based stage production created to boost the college retention rate. The stage play is about 8 students from various walks of life dealing with social and academic issues giving viewers the proper way to overcome many situations which can typically end a college career. After the production GoBelieve has a question and answer segment handing out free motivational apparel. High Schools also have the option for a college fair.

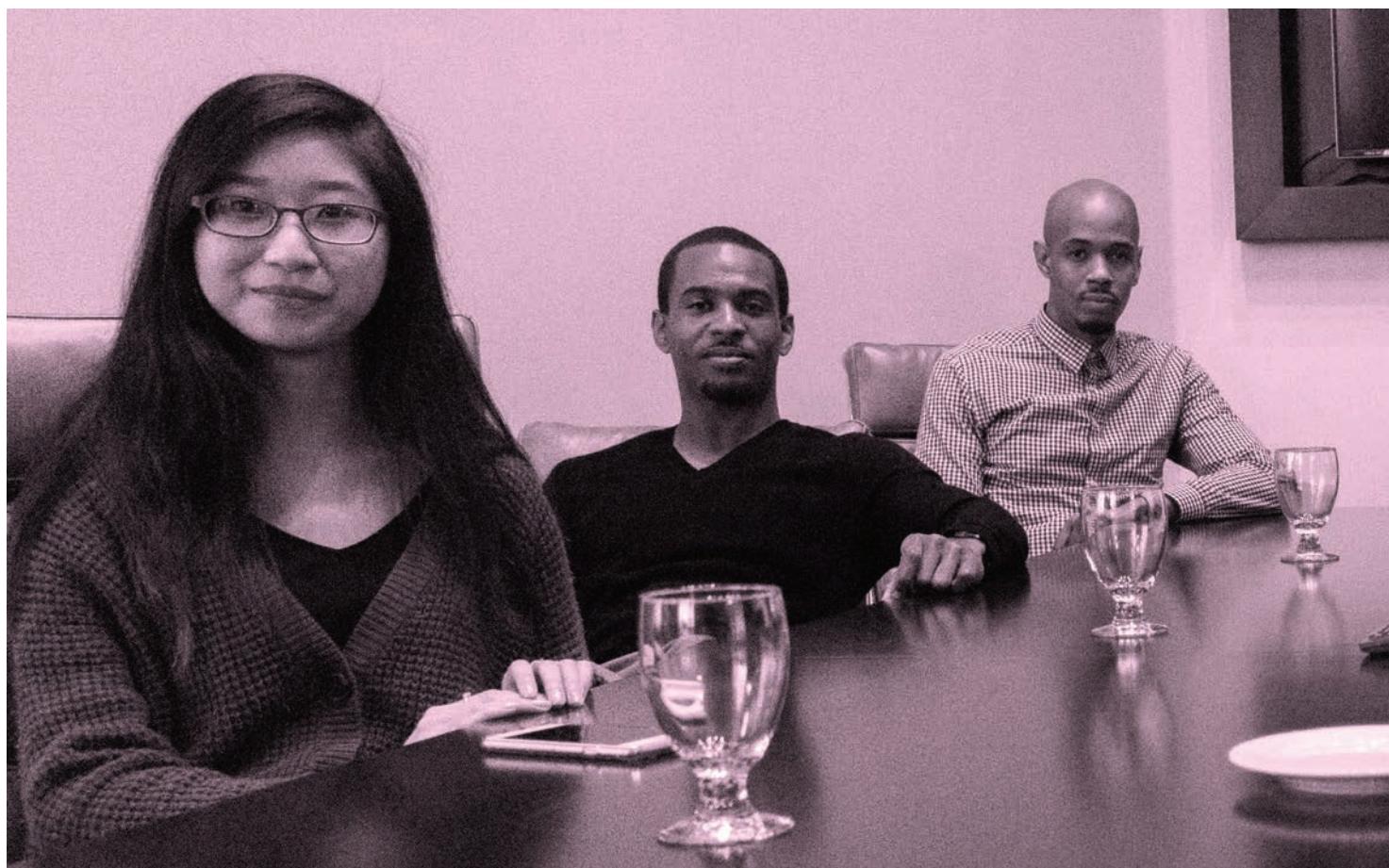
Our Gobbana JumpShot Challenge is an event designed to inspire teamwork and create equal opportunity for students. We believe that regardless of

where one comes from, access to resources should be the same. Bring the JumpShot Challenge to your school to unite your students and give fun all while educating yourself on the resources available for your school.

So many people communicate online today whether it be through social media or online gaming. Although it is easier to connect with individuals around the world, our generation lacks basic verbal communication skills. With our Smash Bros tournament we bring millennials together to level up their networking



GoBelieve



skills. Our event is located in our luxury venue and is a great way to meet peers working and living in the city.

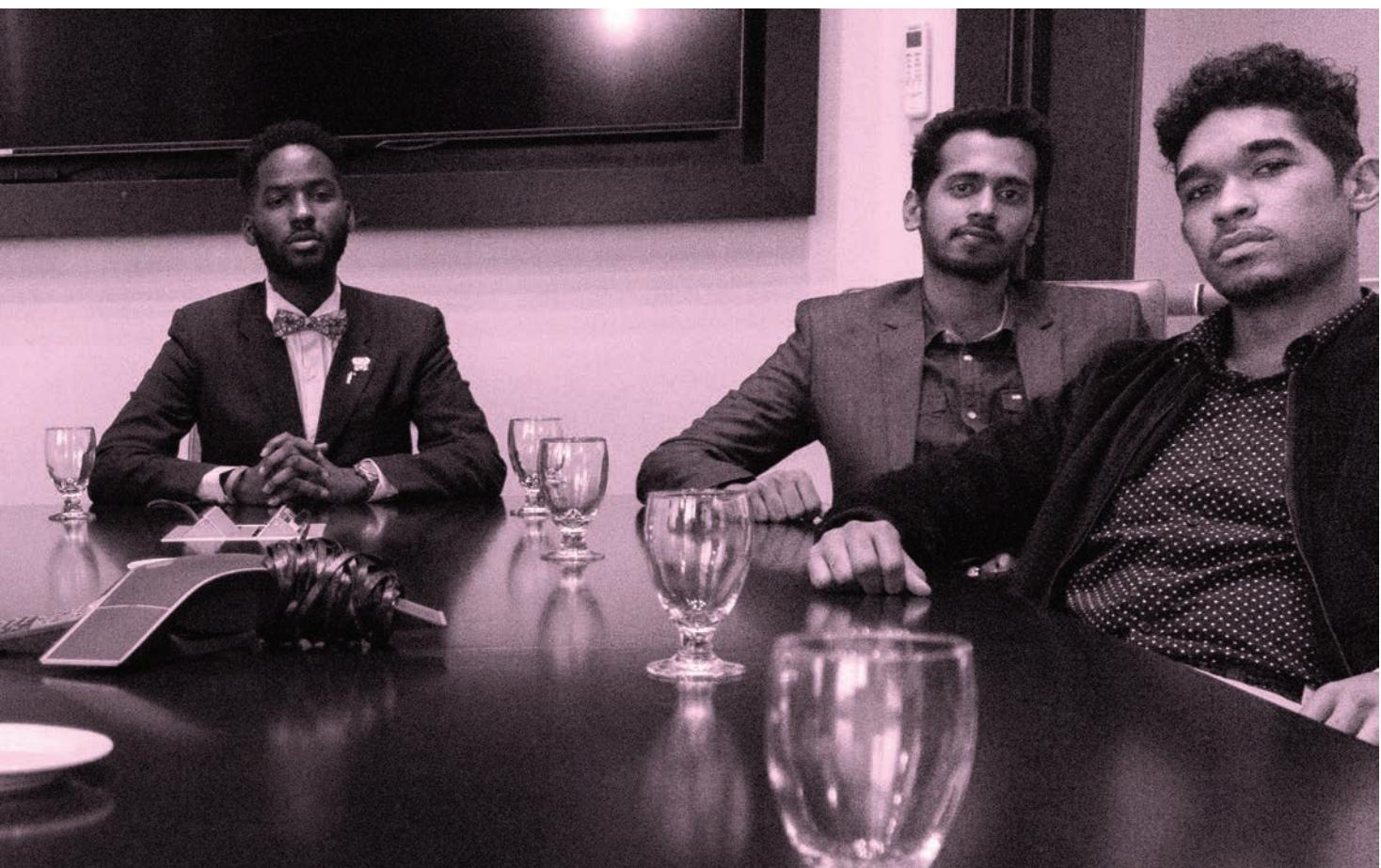
Acting can have several benefits that can increase your marketability in business. Our GoAct Courses will not only improve your acting skills but also public speaking, sales, commercial training, vocal training, and overall confidence. The workshop is intended to maximize your potential as a business professional.

GoBelieve was founded in 2012 by Aaron Pleasant and Kahlil Jackson, two childhood friends who were raised in the North Philadelphia Projects. Kahlil and Aaron decided to start GoBelieve to provide equal opportunity education for disadvantaged students and teens, something they both dealt with growing

up.

Since starting GoBelieve, the company has become known throughout the Greater Philadelphia region for boosting the college retention rate through their stage play "Karma 101." The play has toured dozens of colleges, universities, and high schools, impacting the lives of countless students. GoBelieve has since been featured on television networks such as NBC and ABC and was featured in The Philadelphia Inquirer for "Karma 101", often praised for its realistic portrayal of college life. "Karma 101" was also presented with the Multicultural Program of the Year Award from Penn State.

The Black-owned and Philadelphia-based production company, Go Believe,



is traveling the region to inspire students to pursue their education at all costs, with an original play, "Karma 101." The group showed the play to the general public, for the first time ever, this past Summer at East Falls' Venice Island Performing Arts Recreation Center and have historically shown at local colleges, including the Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) and high schools such as Audenreid, Parkway, Lincoln and the Philadelphia High School for the



Creative and Performing Arts.

"The goal is to help boost the college retention rate," said Aaron Gobbana Pleasant, Go Believe co-founder. "When I created the production, each chapter was me in a different part of my life." The production shows the experience of eight characters — all college freshmen — trying to work through their personal difficulties to get an education. Gobbana plays the main character who drops out of school to become a rapper. The other characters deal with drug addiction, unexpected pregnancies, homosexuality, police brutality and suicide.

Gobbana said such issues "happen to everybody" and that he wrote the play three years ago but adjusts the subject matter "as issues become relevant."

Milayla Gregory, an aspiring actress, played the role of Nicole, a student whose dreams of a career in fashion design are threatened when she becomes pregnant. "She has a bit too much fun one night so she gets pregnant and it throws a wrench in her career and she thinks it's over," said Gregory, adding that one can learn from her character "to stay focused and remember what you are in school for — to learn and practice your profession. I feel like everyone should make it a point to follow their dreams and not succumb to

their surroundings."

Elijah Hill, "Karma 101" assistant director, played the role of Terrence, the student who is kicked off the school's football team for being gay. Hill said although he is not homosexual in real life and it was a difficult part to play, it had to be done.

"We had to delve deep with this character," he said. "Because it's such a big issue. People don't understand how big the prejudice is."

Kay Paul played the role of a young lady who was beaten by a police officer,

leaving her in a hospital bed and unable to attend school.

"I had to get into the flow of it and be more emotional," she said of the role. "That's how I played it, as if I was really in the situation — that's why I was fighting back."

Ultimately, the characters see a little light at the end of the tunnel and are counseled back into school — except for Terrence, as he commits suicide.

"The message we are spreading is not letting anything — from your past or present — prevent you from becoming

more," said actor Matthew Brent, who plays the geeky character of the play. "It's a great positive message."

Gobbana ends "Karma 101" with a monologue.

"This is what happens when you don't go to college for the right reason, when you don't take your future seriously," he said. "Next year, don't worry about anything else. College is about your future."

THE PHILADELPHIA COLLEGE RETENTION RATE

Philadelphia's low percentage of adults with higher education degrees is often cited as a key factor in explaining the city's lackluster economic performance over the past several decades.

The Pew Charitable Trusts

Seventeen percent of Philadelphians age 25 or older—about 176,000 people—have earned some credits toward an associate or bachelor's degree but have not attained either one.

Nearly three-quarters of Philadelphia residents who haven't finished college—about 127,000—are at least 35 years old, according to the most recent Census Bureau estimates, from 2016. Thirty-nine percent live in households with children under the age of 18, and 70 percent of those with jobs work 40 hours a week or more.

In addition, Philadelphians with some college credits but no degree are disproportionately black and female compared with the city's overall population. About 8 percent are veterans. And while the percentage of residents who are college noncompleters is about the same as in other major cities, Philadelphia has the greatest proportion of adults who have never attended college—49 percent—among the 15

largest U.S. cities.

Philadelphia's low percentage of adults with higher education degrees—34 percent, compared with 53 percent in Boston and 60 percent in Washington—is often cited as a key factor in explaining the city's lackluster economic performance over the past several decades. Reducing the ranks of the noncompleters could help address that.

Barriers to college completion

Research from the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance indicates that age, parental responsibilities, and full-time work are among the factors that make it difficult to find time for classes. About 10 percent of those who haven't finished college were enrolled in school in 2016.

And according to the National Center for Education Statistics, college noncompleters nationwide borrow more on a per credit basis than do those who graduate within six years.

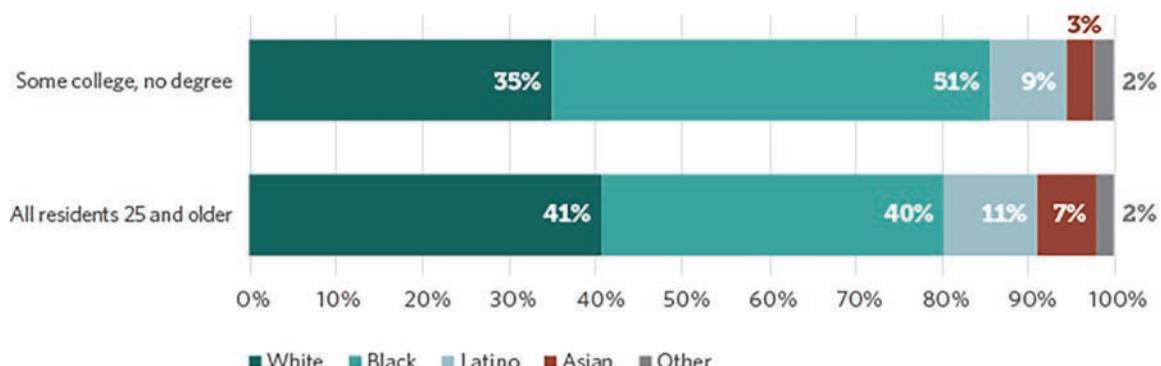
Race, ethnicity, and gender

Half of Philadelphians with some college credit but no degree are black, which is 10 percentage points greater than their share of all city residents 25 or

older. Thirty-five percent are white, 6 points less than their proportion of the adult population. And 57 percent of adult noncompleters are female, 3 points greater than their share of the 25-or-older cohort.

Figure 1

Educational Attainment in Philadelphia, by Race and Ethnicity
Compared with the city's overall adult population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Public Use Microdata Sample, American Community Survey, five-year estimates, 2012-16

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PROJECTS

The base of operation was the Pyramid Club and my works hours were typically from 4:30 PM to 7:30 PM on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

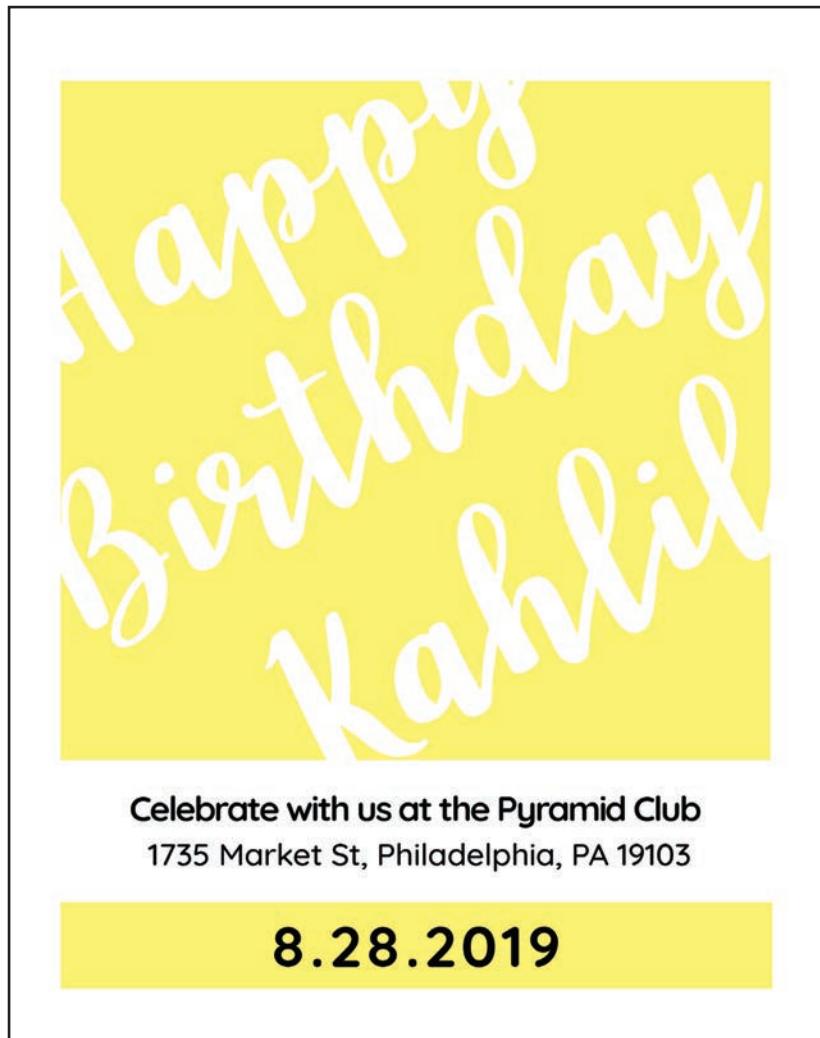
I worked on a couple of smaller projects during my internship. These consist of the initial concept for a look book and the creation of a couple of posters promoting an event. The rest of my time during the internship was dedicated to working on the children's book "I Lost Today" and my anthology.

TEACHER FASHION LOOKBOOK
Using apparel to inspire & empower

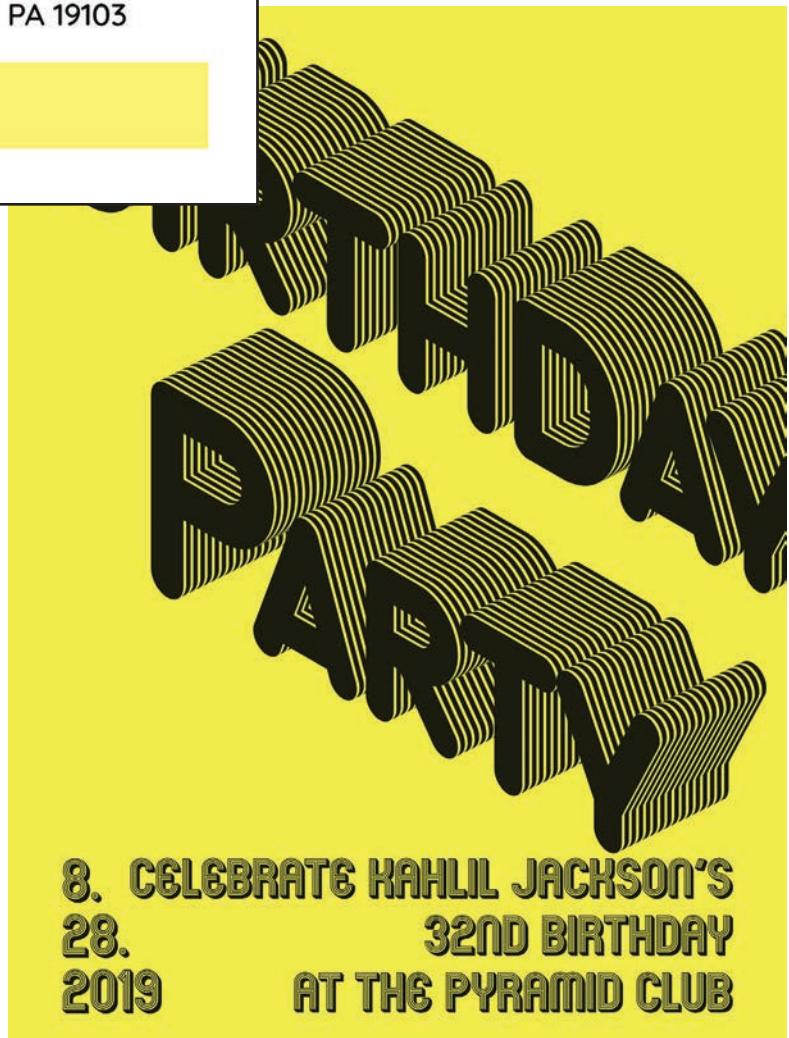
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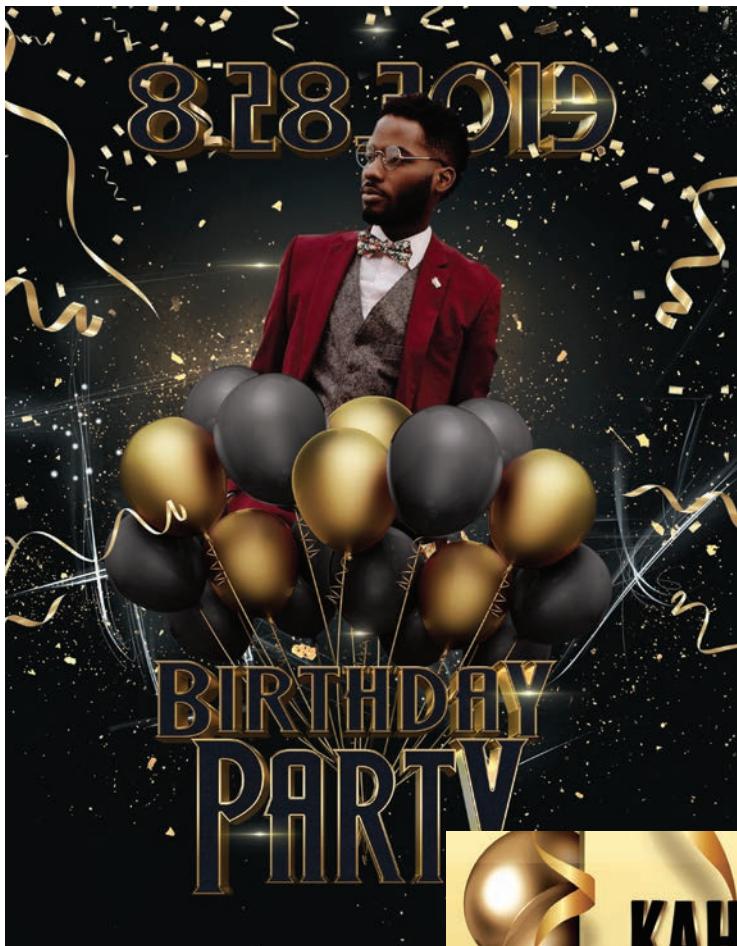
OUR STORY

Birthday Poster Propositions:



I had little to work with: the location, the birthday man, and the date. I decided to make two typographic propositions and two utilizing Mr. Jackson's photographs.



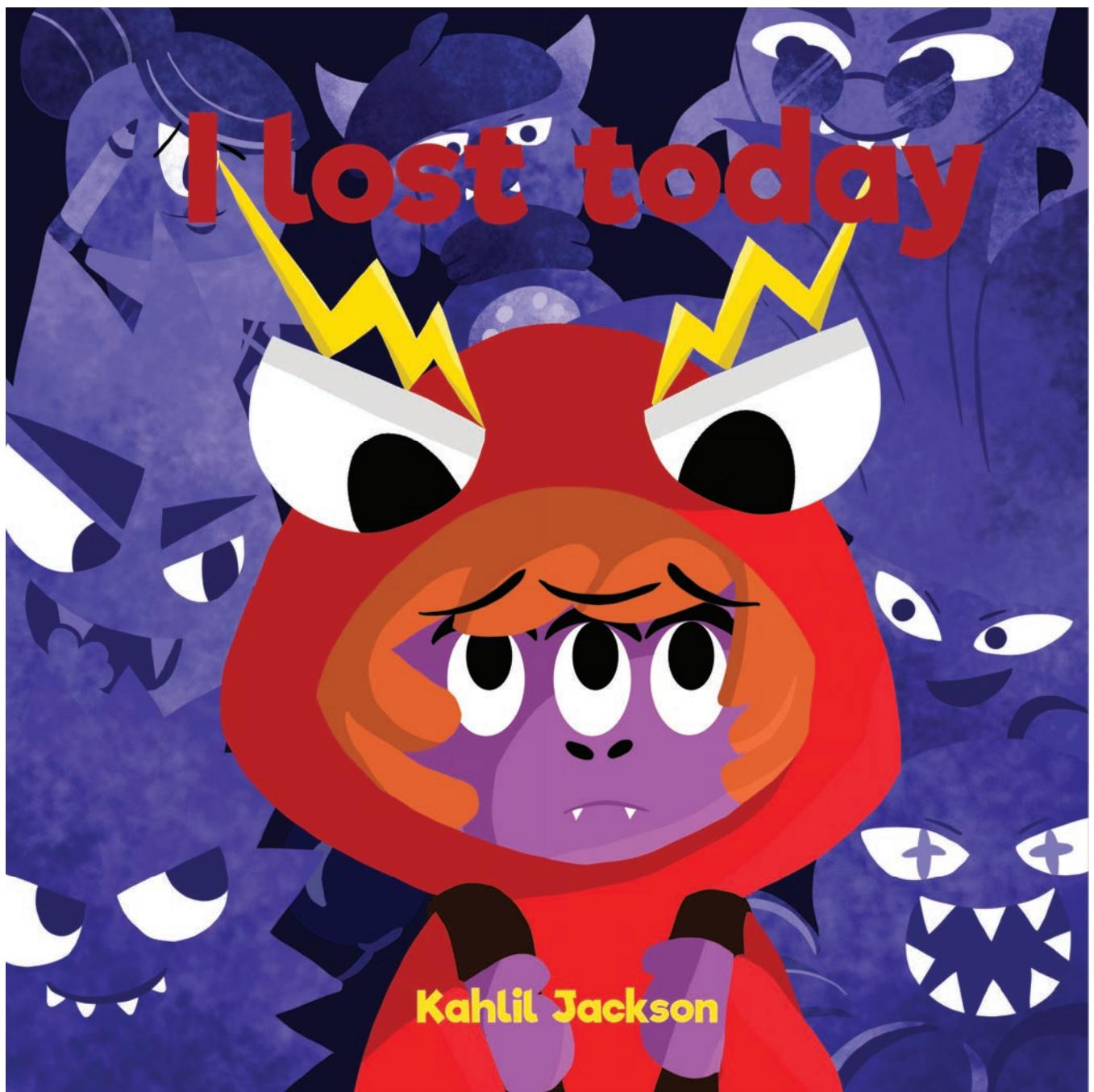


This final poster is the one that was chosen.



I LOST TODAY

I Lost Today is a children's book that Mr. Jackson and some of the other interns started working on a while before I joined them. It's the tale of Kris, a child who isn't used to being wrong or making mistakes. The story book focuses on their first day at school and their struggle with different subjects. By the end, Kris learns that it's okay to mess up and that there's a lesson to be learned from every mistake.



I helped out with the development of many of the pages which entailed drawing out clean line art and coloring in some pages.

Once that was done, I took charge of the mise en page of the story, importing all of the spreads into InDesign and dividing them into proper pages. I then optimized every page for publishing and inserted text and text bubbles.



PROBLEM



During the internship, I was informed that I could create a short comic that would be featured in a fall anthology.

The problem consists of figuring out how to create a unique and engaging visual story in a limited number of pages and time. While the short story does not need to match the other stories featured in the anthology in style, this edition of the anthology does need to fall within the theme of autumn. This presented me with a world of possibilities and only one constraint.

As a near first for me, this was both a challenging and exciting opportunity.



RESEARCH



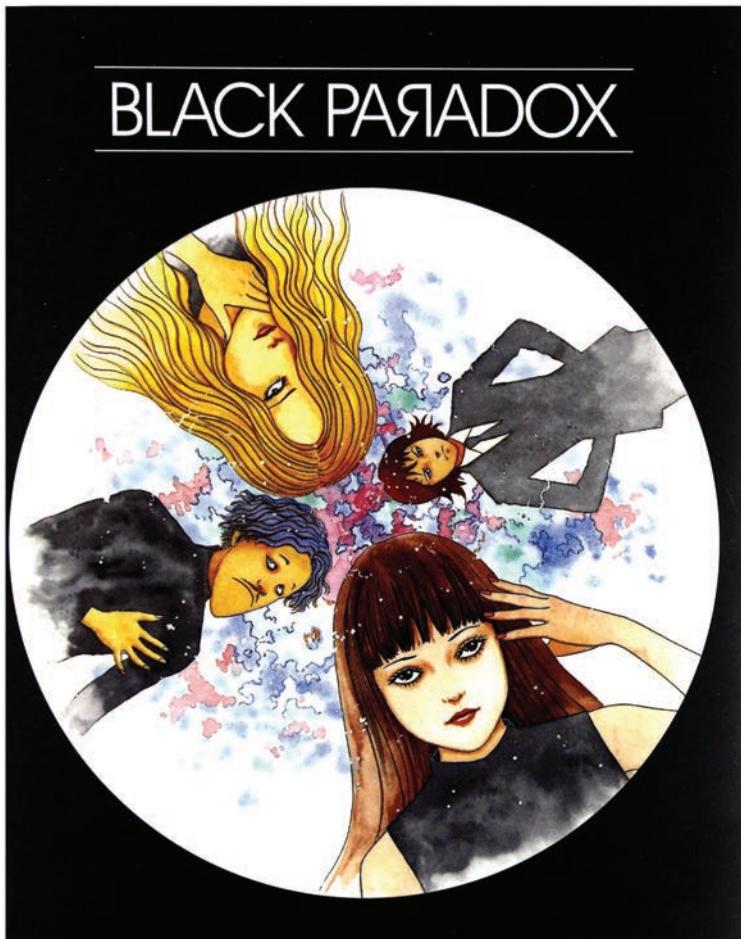
HORROR INSPIRATIONS

Junji Ito.

I immediately knew that I wanted my short story to follow the narrative and artistic style of Junji Ito. While he does have several long running series (*Uzumaki*, *Tomie*), a great deal of his works are chapter length (30 pages) stories. Even within his longer mangas, the stories are always segmented in such a way that I rarely see. Following the style of Japanese horror, his stories have unresolved, open-ended endings. More importantly, I was greatly inspired by his protagonists and leading heroines. *Tomie* in particular struck a cord with me.



However, criticism can be made regarding the lack of diversity in Junji Ito's leading women. While it can be said that they are made generic and bland to allow the horror of the situation to truly shine, throughout dozens of manga volumes, Junji Ito has failed to design a heroine who didn't fit euro centric beauty standards. It definitely wasn't due to his art style—he has designed a plethora of characters and monsters with distinct and unique features. All the same, there's no denying how alluring Kirie, the recurring protagonist of *Uzumaki*, or Mimi, heroine of *Mimi's Ghost Stories* are.



Mimi, protagonist of *Mimi's Ghost Stories*, can be said to have the exact same features and traits as Kirie.

Black Paradox featured a woman with burn scars on half of her face and a man with a unique facial shape, while the other two main characters followed the usual style Ito employed for his leads.



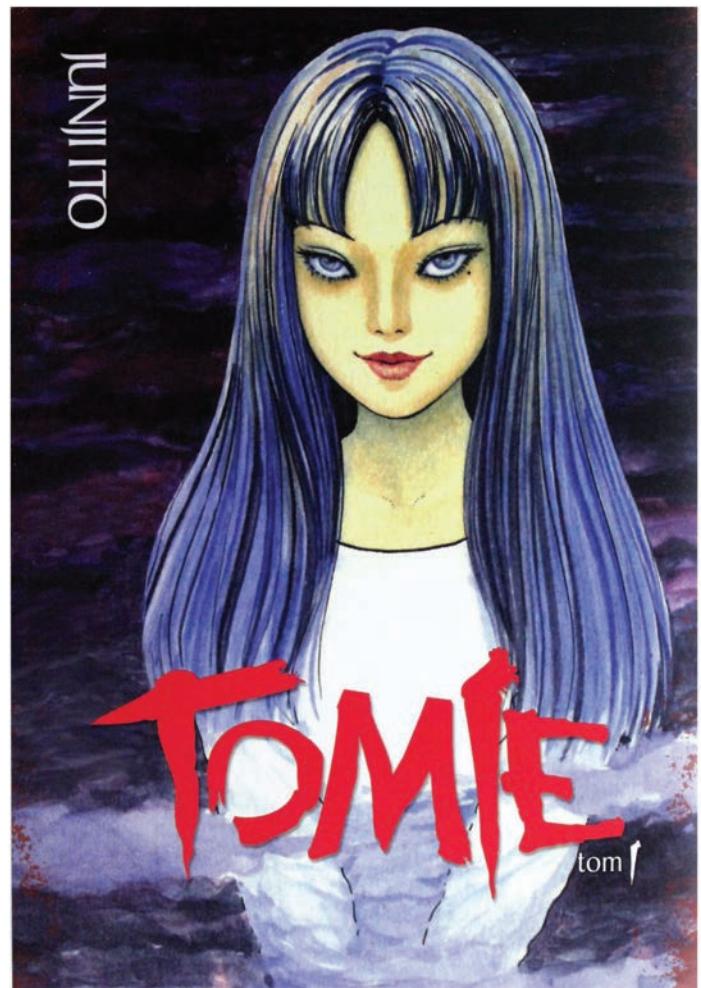
Tomie.

Tomie is a Japanese horror manga series written and illustrated by Junji Ito. Tomie was Ito's first published work he originally submitted to Monthly Halloween, a shōjo magazine in 1987, which led to him winning the Kazuo Umezu award.

The manga centers on the titular character: a mysterious, beautiful woman named Tomie, identified by her sleek black hair and a beauty mark below her left eye.

Tomie acts like a succubus, possessing an undisclosed power to make any man fall in love with her. Through her mere presence, or through psychological and emotional manipulation, she drives these men into jealous rages that often lead to brutal acts of violence. Men kill each other over her, and women are driven to insanity as well — though there are some who are strong enough to resist her. Tomie is inevitably killed time and time again, only to regenerate and spread her curse to other victims, making her effectively immortal. Her origins are never explained, though it is suggested by some older men in the series that she has existed long before the events of the manga.

Tomie is a manipulative, hedonistic, and extremely selfish woman, seducing men to do her bidding.



Tomie has two distinct powers:

- **Source of Obsession:**

Tomie's mere presence seems to drive people to become fixated on her, either positively or negatively. People thus enthralled tend to feel a mixture of intense love and hatred towards her, often beginning as the former and shifting towards the latter over time.

- **Super Regeneration**

Tomie is able to regenerate herself from the smallest living piece of herself, including hairs, skin, and drops of blood. Each separate piece can grow into a full clone of herself, with its own independent mind. The only way to prevent Tomie's regeneration is to burn every part of her, leaving nothing for her to grow from.

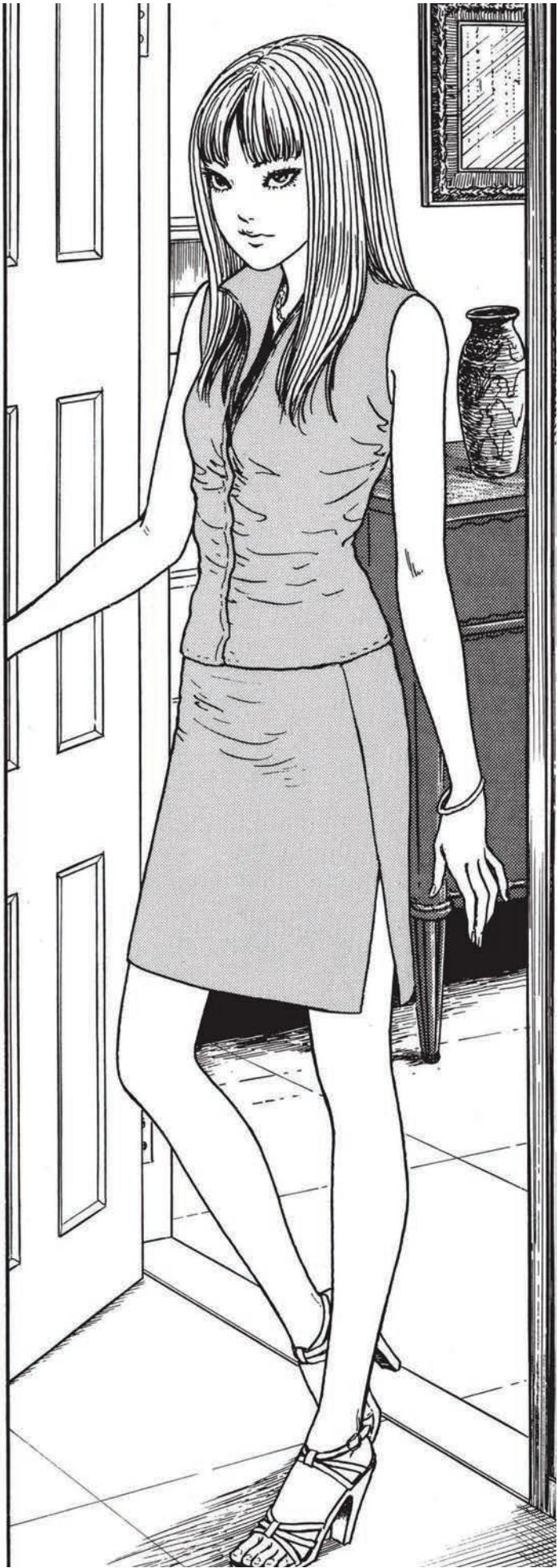
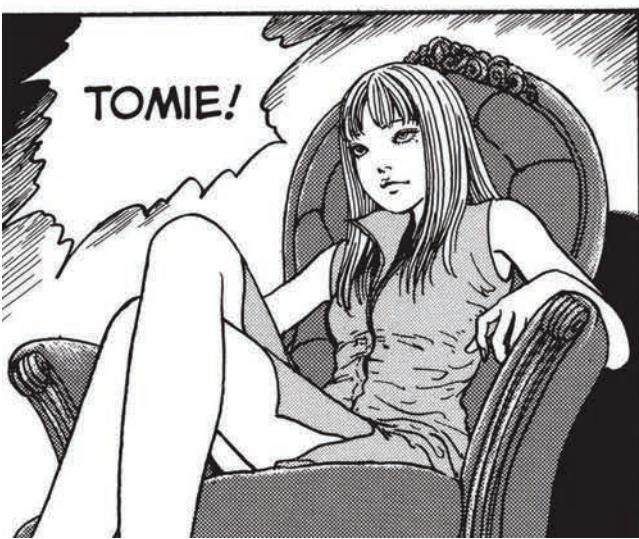


Tomie's regeneration takes time but can be expedited by bringing her food or striking her with concentrated radiation. "Little Finger" implies that she can either control her regeneration if she wishes or that her regeneration works faster if she can manipulate someone into bonding with her.

It is also apparent that if her organs are implanted into someone, even if her organs are removed later from the host, her biology will take over the recipient.

She is a powerful woman who commands attention everywhere she goes. She is not oblivious or unaware, but instead conniving and insidious. While a woman's power lying in her beauty is a typical, overused trope, Junji Ito subverts this by not being afraid to show how truly horrific she is and can be.

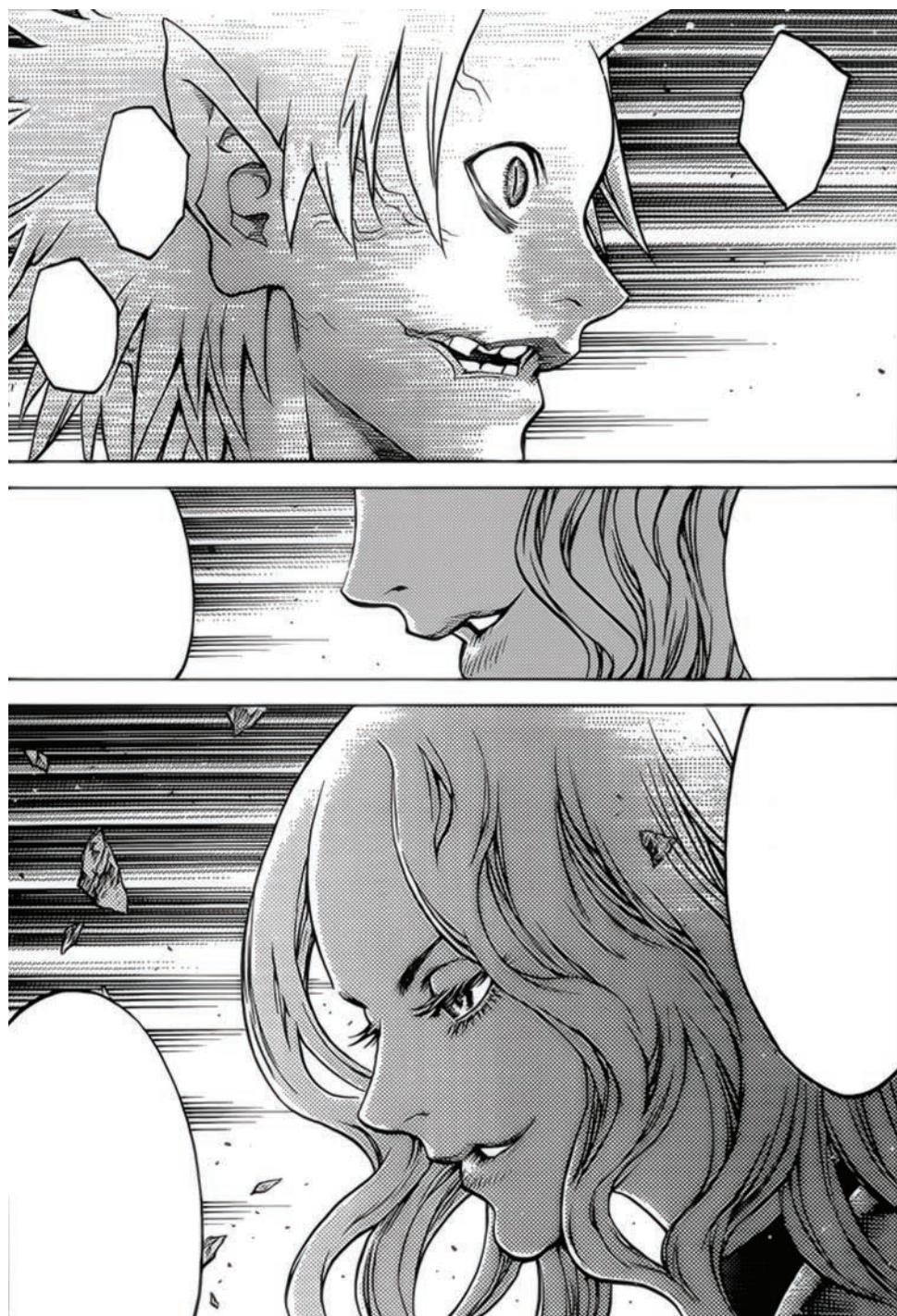




Claymore

Claymore is a Japanese dark fantasy manga series written and illustrated by Norihiro Yagi.

The series is set on a fictional medieval island where humans are plagued by Yoma, humanoid shape-shifters that feed on humans. A mysterious group, known as The Organization, creates human-Yoma hybrids to kill Yoma for a fee. These female warriors wear armored uniforms. The public refer to them as “Claymores,” alluding to their Claymore swords, or “Silver-eyed Witches,” due to their silver eyes.



While primarily targeting a younger male audience, Claymore was a successful manga featuring an almost entirely female cast, something that can be said about very few comic books in general. While there is still much criticism to be given regarding their portrayal and presentation, Claymore undeniably took several strides in the right direction.

Despite the author forcibly making all of the Claymore women light-skinned with blond hair and gray eyes, there was a definite variety in their physical appearances as well as personal ambitions, especially in a context that allowed for very little of the latter. No doubt, the more diverse traits are reserved for secondary characters, and even those have their limitations, but it is a refreshing sight nonetheless. As someone who was usually more excited by characters that were relegated to the sidelines, I knew I wanted to make a protagonist that crossed those boundaries. I didn't want a generic, palatable woman that the masses could project onto, but rather a strong individual that elicited, even demanded sympathy and understanding.

Yawara!

Another manga that greatly inspired me in the development of my character Tana is *Yawara! A Fashionable Judo Girl*.

Yawara! features Yawara Inokuma, a girl who aspires to an ordinary life but due to her innate talent is forced to practice judo by her authoritarian grandfather, Jigorou Inokuma, with the aim of achieving the championship in Japan and the gold medal in the Barcelona 1992 Olympic Games. Because of the pressure from her grandfather she has a generally bad attitude about judo, avoiding it as much as she can. However, over time she comes to understand why her grandfather loves judo and appreciates it more.

Yawara is primarily surrounded by a supportive cast of women, two male love interests, and an overbearing parental figure. While she starts out in high school, Yawara eventually progresses into college and has her moments as a working girl. While Yawara's drive, struggles, and need for independence make her a fun and relatable character, the

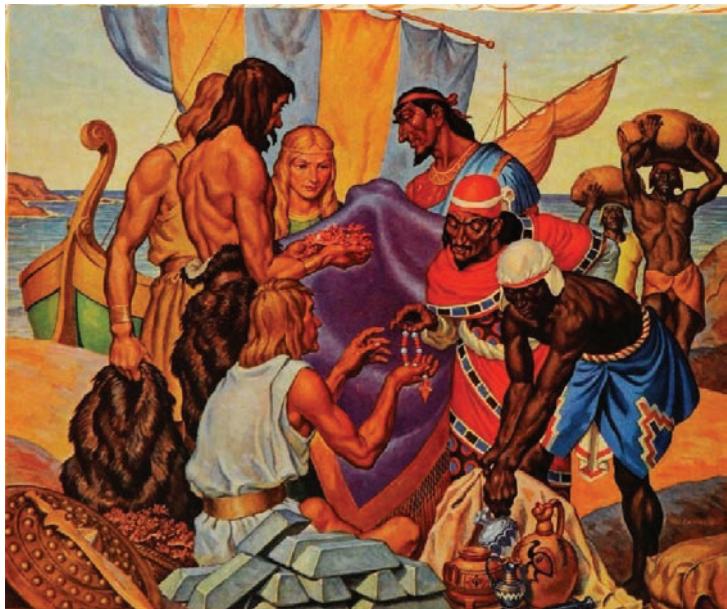


way she uplifts and is uplifted by her friends and rivals throughout the series. While Yawara is petite and looks like your typical girl, the other characters and Judo girls have much more distinct features. For example, there is Jody, one of Yawara's biggest rivals both figuratively and literally. There are also other Judo girls with more prominent musculature or masculine features.



Aside from the fun and unique sports story, the art style was also a great source of inspiration. It is simple and stylized, but it allows for much diversity, and the artist employed that well. The action scenes are also exquisite, and while there wasn't much space or time for that in my own comic, it definitely impacted how I chose to depict movement.

PHOENICIAN INFLUENCE

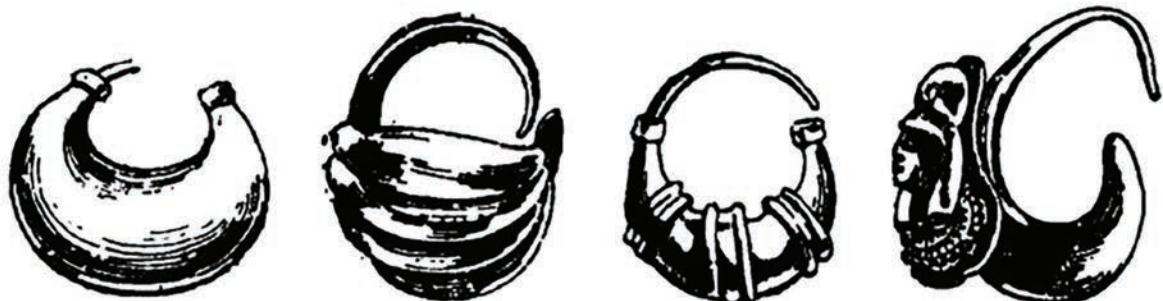


difficult to find in ancient history.

Consequently, I just wanted to be inspired by the general aesthetic of the references that I managed to gather, with the exception of Tana's jewelry:

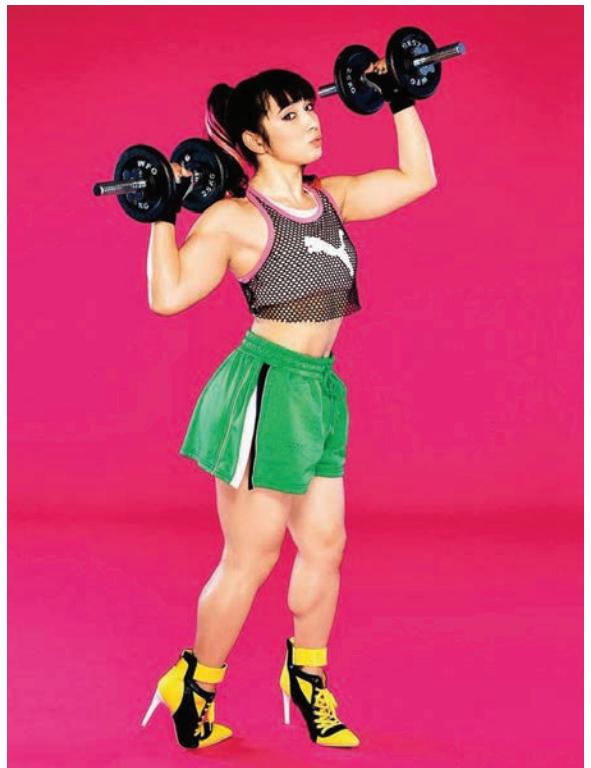
As one will see, the earrings and necklace are directly influenced by the historical images I located of them. They had such a rustic, traditional quality that would create a bit of dissonance in Tana's design.

I chose Phoenicia as a point of heritage for one of my characters simply because it is a historical location I am somewhat familiar with thanks to my primary studies. Phoenicia is the empire of Elissa, more commonly known as Dido, queen of Carthage. My main point of interest, however, was the style and common attire of Phoenicians, two pieces of information which are



OTHER STYLE INSPIRATIONS

Below are some more images that contributed to my development of Tana as an emboldened character. I sought out fashion trends as well as popular women athletes and body builders.





CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

TANA

Tana is a character that's seen a lot of development over the years and especially over the past few months of my internship.

While visually many elements of her design remain intact or somewhat similar, the most notable differences are in the connotation that lies beneath each element. Tana is a subversive take on

“She opened her mouth to take a bite out of the human’s flesh, her sharp teeth more than ready to feel metallic blood against them. Malice and hunger cut through the mask of childish naivety that her face bore.

turned arch demon, she is now but a lesser demon with an eighth of her previous powers. She roams the surface of the earth in constant search for her next source of nutrition and energy (human souls and flesh), and often finds herself weak and desperate. This is primarily done by forming contracts with humans, offering her services in exchange for their souls. A sneaky trickster, behind her vibrant, exuberant, and whimsical exterior lies a conniving, intelligent scammer.

“No! Bad Tana!” she quickly scolded herself, backing away from the human. Contract first.”

strong, identifiable character. Throughout this section, I've included excerpts from the original piece of writing in which she was featured. The task at hand for me was to transform a Manic Pixie Dream Girl into a protagonist that readers could sympathize and identify with, while still retaining the characteristics that made her so unique.

“Need a hand, Dorothy?” Tana offered as she closed the gap between her and the redhead once more, though this time she gently prodded his shoulder with her finger.

THE MANIC PIXIE DREAM GIRL

As defined by film critic Nathan Rabin, the Manic Pixie Dream Girl (MPDG) exists solely in the fevered imaginations of sensitive writer-directors to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures.” As a character that started out with little depth and was made solely to advance the plot line of the male protagonist, it comes as no surprise that Tana easily fell into that trope. She is whimsical, loud, shameless, and serves another man. But Tana’s intentions are always nothing short of malicious, and while she may portray herself as weak and naive, she is certainly neither of those traits. How others perceive her is their choice.

WHY TANA?

While she has always made for a fun and quirky villain, it was only recently that I started to consider making her a “protagonist”. As every experienced storyteller will tell you, every great villain is the hero of their own story. As a demon, Tana undeniably falls into the realm of a morally gray, possibly evil character. With no main objective or long term goals in “life”, a short, one-shot style comic was perfect for her. If the comic was meant to be longer or part of a series, it would naturally be possible to make an end goal out of her need to be restored to her former glory. However, for the purposes of this short story, she is but a lowly peddler taking advantage of the meek and weak to survive.



BEHIND THE NAME

The name Tana is a girl's name of Greek origin meaning "fire or star goddess". After all, Tana considers herself a goddess, her own god. A variant of Tanya, a Russian pet name for Tatiana. It means "fairy queen".

It is also the feminine form of the Roman name Tatianus, a derivative of the Roman name TATIUS. This was the name of a 3rd-century saint who was martyred in Rome under the emperor Alexander Severus. She was especially venerated in Orthodox Christianity, and the name has been common in Russia.

Tatiana was the name of a princess of Russia, and Tatius was the last name of the king of Sabines in BC times.

Tana, of course, is not her true name. However, she has chosen to go by this name because it is short and sweet, and alludes to just a little bit more. She never discloses any information about her real name, and refuses to share any more about her name than "Tana".

Of true Phoenician origin, she sought out a name from a faraway continent to her. She played very little mind games when it came to these things.



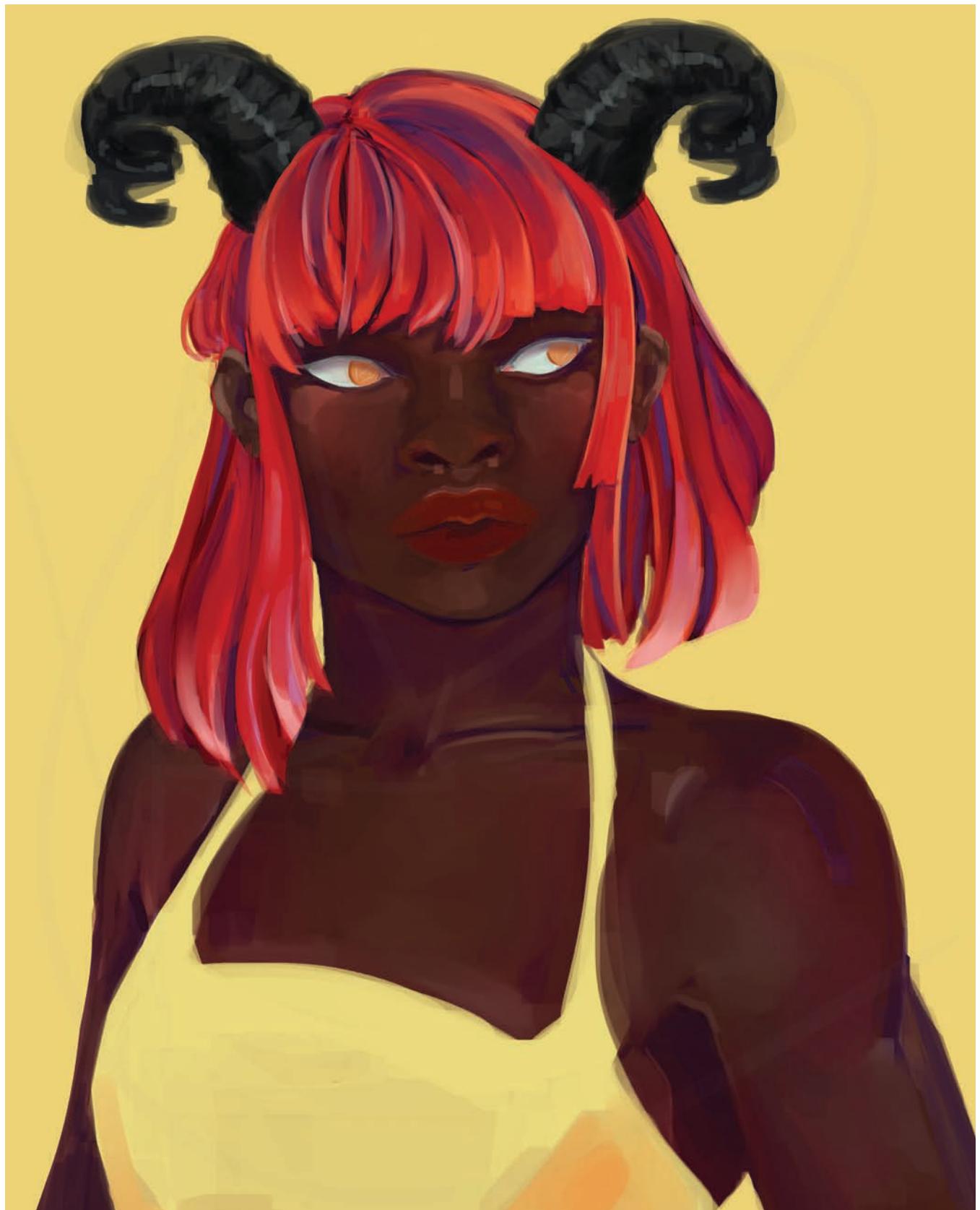
Concept sketches of Tana exploring her attitudes and posture.



infAmiNt

DEVELOPING TANA

Tana's development as a character was mostly physical. I wanted to attribute hidden meaning and history to every element of her design.



Culture

It was of the most importance that Tana has a strong cultural background, especially since she's meant to be such an ancient being. As a black person with skin on the darker end of the spectrum, she originates from Nigeria, specifically the Yoruba tribe. However, she also has ties to Phoenicia as it is meant to be her place of habitat as a young adult. Phoenicians are known tradesmen, and that trait definitely applies to Tana. As a demon, she makes sneaky deals and trades in people's souls and desires.



hardened them. She has a square jaw, a big nose, strong expressive eyebrows, and full lips. I needed her to have a piercing gaze, so her final eye color was a vibrant, amber yellow. To highlight her afro-asian ancestry, she has monolid eyes.

As for the scars on her face which look more like painted on whiskers, these are facial markings made in the Yoruba tribe. They are a rite of passage. She is indifferent towards these scars, but they are integral to her design and a sign of her heritage.

Hair



Originally, Tana's hair was a jet black. For most of her appearances, Tana's hair however is a vibrant, bright red with a



lopsided cut. Unbeknown to the reader, her hair is in fact a wig, as evidenced by some of her other concept sketches. It's a fun, quirky element, and one that makes her a trend-setter. Well, she at least thinks so.

Body

She went from a lithe, typical-looking swords-woman to a bulky, threatening individual with just a hint of goofiness. Muscular, top-heavy women are far and in between in the world of comics, even more so for leading ladies. This provided Tana with a unique, iconic silhouette. It was pivotal to her character and background that she be of short stature. The bulk is secondary.

Skin



While it is an odd thing to highlight, Tana's skin is marred by burn scars over her limbs. While her arms are entirely covered throughout the comic, her legs are bare and the burn scars are clearly visible. The history behind those scars isn't discussed, but they are marks of her fall from grace. They are on her limbs as if the flesh was torn out of, burned away from them, making them shorter. The same scars are also over her abdomen, but the reader will never get the chance to see them.

Tana has an odd relationship with her scars: if she is ashamed of them, why doesn't she cover them all up? Well, Tana views her arms very differently from how she views her legs. Her legs might as well not be there as she finds very little use for them. While it

is subtly shown, Tana is in fact floating or hovering above the ground throughout the comic, and her feet are bare. Her arms on the other hand, full of muscle and girth, are what she considers her source of strength, or at the very least her demonstration of strength. Consequently, she covers up those scars.



Horns

I remained undecided for a period of time in regards to Tana's horns. As a demon, I knew I would definitely give her horns. As a fallen demon, those horns needed to be imperfect. I toyed with the idea of giving her short, stubby horns. I also considered giving her tiny, cutesy, pointed horns.

There is a saying that the horns of demons are shaped from a halo broken in half. Ultimately, these are the horns

Attire

Yellow is an unassuming color. I strongly believe that Tana has a very well balanced color palette, so I was a bit disappointed to forgo that due to the manga formatting. I considered making her main color purple, but ultimately hints of

royalty and regality lent better to the concept of a fallen queen. Yellow and purple are of course also complementary colors, so it adds a nice contrast to her design.



I played around with the style of her attire, testing out different skirts and combos, but I wanted the Phoenician theme to come through prominently as you'll see when comparing it to my research results. The slit in the skirt was a bold, risqué choice that I made for the sake of practicality.

She is a shameless woman who wouldn't be the least bit embarrassed by someone peeking up her skirt, but I definitely didn't want her to be portrayed in such a way over the course of such a short comic. In reality, having the skirt divide as it does makes her more modest,

and it lends itself to the athletic style. However, I chose not to include short shorts under it as is evident in the panels where she's crouched. As I mentioned, she isn't ashamed by her body in that way. While the details of her skirt can be tasking to illustrate in every panel, it is such details that make her outfit more than just a halter top over a skirt.

Accessories

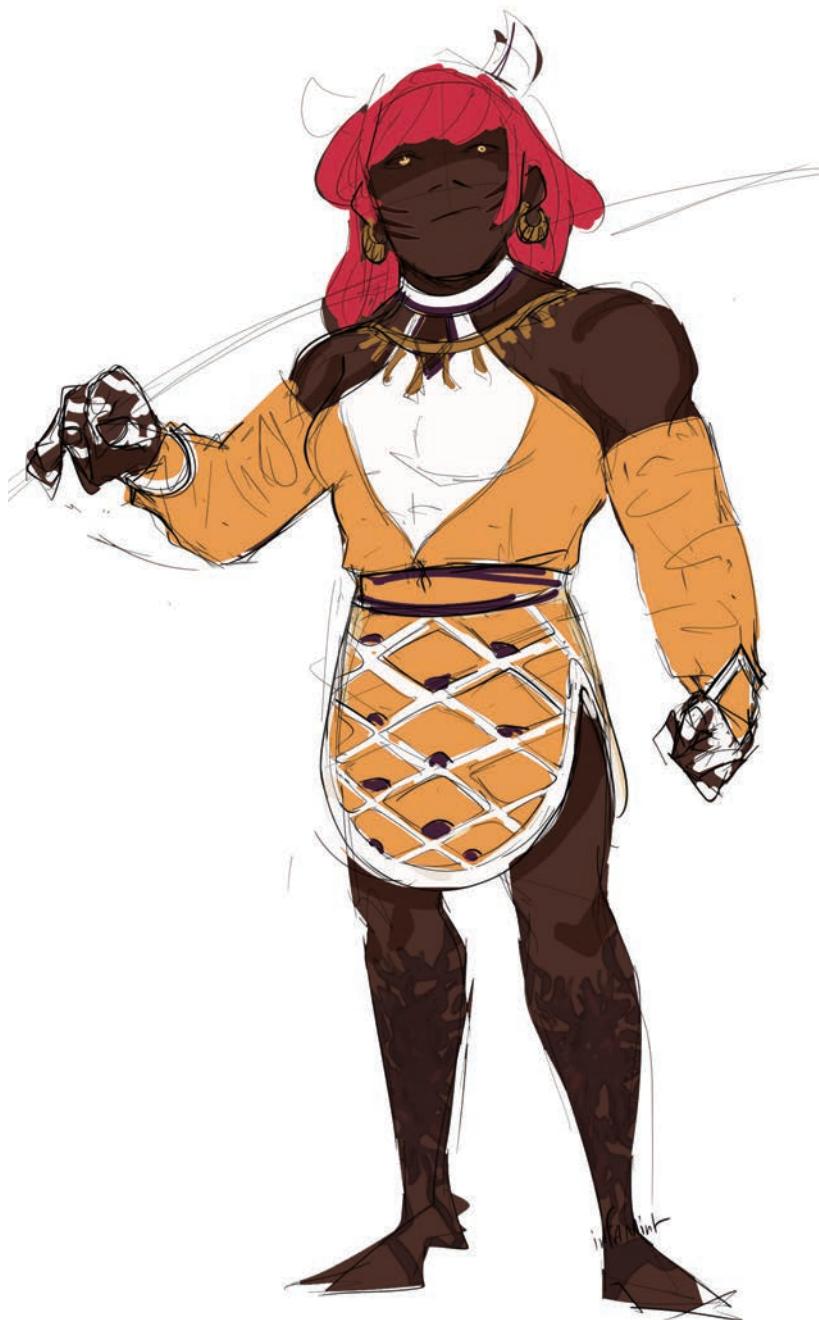
Tana has two main accessories: a wide necklace and a pair of crescent shaped earrings.

These are strictly Phoenician without any modifications.

Expressions

The demon is seen with a fairly wide range of expressions throughout the short comic. For the most part, she comes across as cocky and arrogant with a sense of humor. However, her serious side also comes through in several of the panels as well as the cover.

Sword



Tana's sword makes a short appearance in the comic. As seen in many of the concept sketches, it varied between a curved, scepter-like blade and a traditional straight edge, though it remains unnaturally long in both cases. The sword was initially an Ida, a sword hailing from the Yoruba tribe in Nigeria. The sword I ultimately chose was the Shotel which originated in Ethiopia. It was more important for the blade to have a signature look than to be culturally specific or accurate, especially since Tana's specific origins are never directly addressed.



VALENTINE



Valentine is the secondary character of the comic and is presented halfway through. In Costumes, she is a child no older than 11. Here you will find some artwork showcasing her development as a teenager and a young adult.

Valentine is an orphan child of unknown origins. She is African-American, but she also has some subtle Asian characteristics.

These are Valentine's only undeniable facts. In the comic, she appears as a young child with her natural brown hair in an afro wearing a mismatched outfit in a junior attempt at a Halloween costume.



In only her second panel, Valentine is shown disgruntled and later tearful.



Truly, Valentine is only present as a catalyst to Tana's adventure in this story. Although I clearly have big greater plans for her, in this situation she is but a mean to an end.

Valentine is easy prey as an orphan. Although she shouldn't be out in the city on her own, it isn't all too difficult to separate from one's Halloween trick-or-treating group, especially under the supervision of ill-paid caretakers.

The stray child wanders onto the Benjamin Franklin Bridge in order to cross over to Philadelphia, a long trek from Camden.



COMIC DEVELOPMENT

BASIC PARAMETERS

The given format was 6.625 x 10.125 (16.8275 x 25.7175 cm) and the comic was to be between 6 and 20 pages, with a smaller number being preferred. These were the only given technical parameters as a physical publication had yet to be considered. So, the type of comic and any other detail was entirely up to me.

As someone who's only been really exposed to manga as a comic book format, I didn't have to think too long when considering the type of comic I was going to make. I had a limited amount of time, and manga was well known for being a comic style riddled with shortcuts and quick output. However, I am not a seasoned comic book artist or writer, so I knew I had to think small enough. While colors would have been a fun and exciting visual element to include, I decided the screen tones and values would be sufficient to tell the story. Besides, Tana, the MC, is seen in her full colorful glory on the cover of the comic.

STORY DEVELOPMENT

I definitely struggled to decide on a story to tell through this comic. I started to think about different ideas the moment I heard about the anthology, but continued to focus on more pressing tasks during my internship. While I saw many an option, I had a difficult time smoothly integrating the fall theme into it.

One of the first ideas I had was to tell the quiet tale of a woman riding the subway home. She is meant to be returning from the OutFest celebration (October 13th in Philadelphia) heading back home to homophobic parents. She would gradually remove all of the pride accessories that she was wearing, while the primary story would be occurring in her head. She imagined what it would be like to come home to accepting parents.

This was inspired by real life stories I had heard about people's experiences with pride events, as well as a music video featuring a black woman's ride on the bus, her mind wandering to another world when she puts on her headphones.

This was the first story I considered, but ultimately scrapped it because I thought the tone was too depressing for the anthology, and I wasn't entirely sure about the tie-in with the fall theme.

The fall theme was actually quite the struggle for me. I didn't want it to be a simple background to the story, but rather something integral. I had a lot of other ideas based on older art and characters, but I couldn't make the connection to the fall theme.

As I mentioned, coming up with the story was a bit of a struggle for me. Throughout, I kept the idea abstract, and I tackled this as a visual project first and foremost. I knew I didn't want this to be a story with a moral lesson or a clear-cut ending.

While I don't think the sequential art is so stellar as to not require a script at all, I do believe that it is strong enough.

The guidelines I set for myself were:

- Tying in the theme.
- Keeping the comic short and understandable due to time constraints.

Due to these guidelines, the story has two main plot points:

The first couple of pages which set the scene and highlight the main character Tana's traits, and the rest of the pages which present the actual turning point and plot trigger of the story.

Part 1: Tana VS. Angel

In fact, these two separate tales stem from my desire to showcase Tana's frightful, battle-ready, and nonsense-free side. This was key because it needed to be highlighted that she is a fighter first and foremost, and a manipulative, cold woman second.

The story transitions from presenting the evil angel as a threat to be defeated, to presenting Valentine, a young, innocent girl with a very mundane problem. It is a stark contrast. Initially, we see Tana as an innocent bystander victimized by an unexpected evil, an angel, and consequently emerge as a straightforward, simple fighter who responds to aggression with aggression.

Only one page later, we see her eagerly look down upon her prey and slowly pursue it like a snake after a mouse, an innocent, naive mouse.

The tone is kept light. While the story follows the open-ended formatting of Junji Ito and has striking, terrifying visuals, I didn't want to take it that far. While the first page prepares the reader for a scary story, in the next page, Tana immediately undermines this.

In fact, the entire concept for the story started off with this sketch and the image of an angel that I happened upon.



The comic begins with a simple horizontal landscape of the Franklin bridge, the setting for the entirety of the story. The franklin bridge is a passage between Camden and Philadelphia, and it has walkways on both ends for pedestrians and cyclists to travel across. On Halloween, I expect the bridge, or at least the walkway part of the bridge, to be fairly deserted. This made for a unique and interesting setting. This part of the story takes place all the way at the top of the bridge, as indicated by a speech bubble in the very first panel.

Given the final print format size and how far away the shot is from Tana, a speech or sigh bubble was mandatory to show



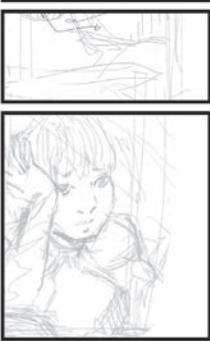
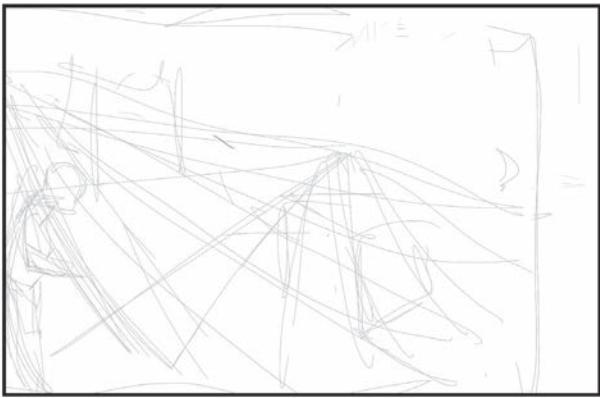
that there was some life up there, especially given that it is an unlikely location for any person.

The sequence of events is straightforward: Angel threatens Tana, Tana scoffs, Tana launches an unexpected attack, Angel is thwarted. It was pivotal that the angel come across as innocent upon first introduction, and then menacing only two panels later.

So the first part of the comic takes place high above at the top of the bridge.

The angel helps give the reader an idea of what Tana is capable of further down the story by hinting toward her evil intentions. The keen observer will notice that Tana is floating right from the second panel.

In the following page is a short glance at the development process of a page of the comic. I begin with refining the thumbnails and developing the sketch, then drawing clean line art and shading with a fine inking brush.





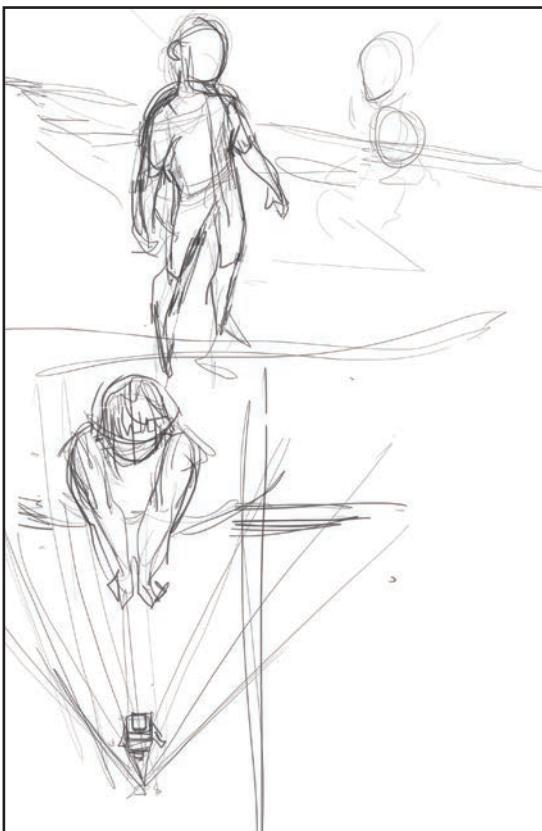
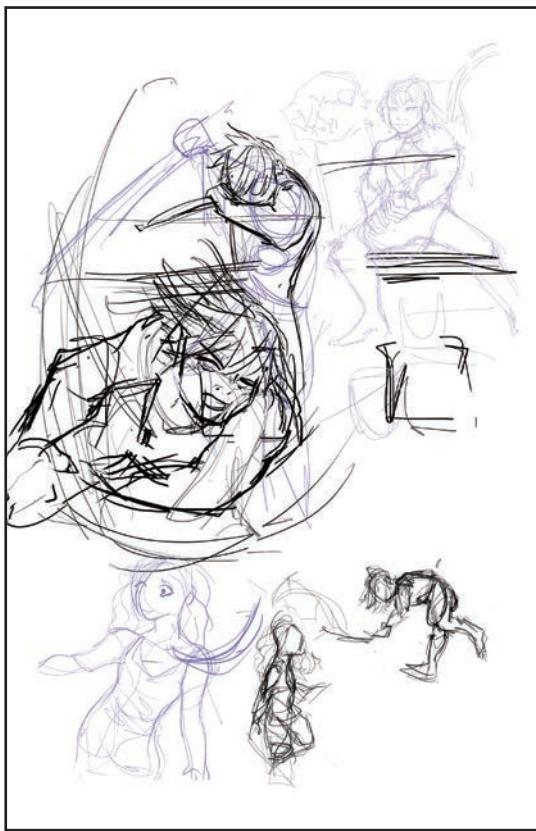
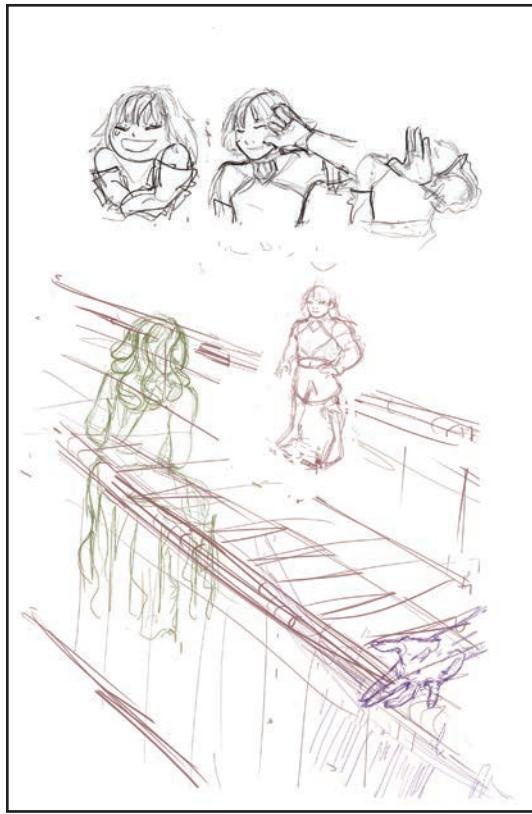
Part 2: Tana VS. Valentine

Our first introduction to Valentine is through the eyes of Tana. The demon looks down at her. The story then transitions to the more habitable area of the Franklin bridge. There, we see Valentine crying and distraught, with Tana mercilessly sneaking up to her. It is here that we see an entirely different Tana, smiling sweetly at the innocent youth. The pace picks up a tad once the two meet up, and Valentine's response isn't the main focus of the tale so much as Tana's deceitful attitude.

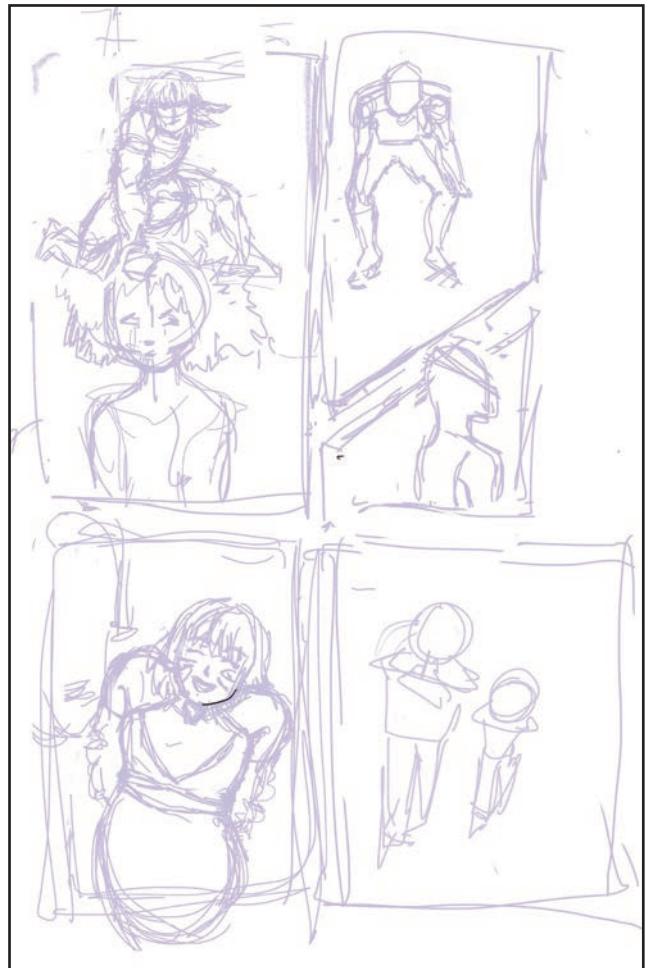
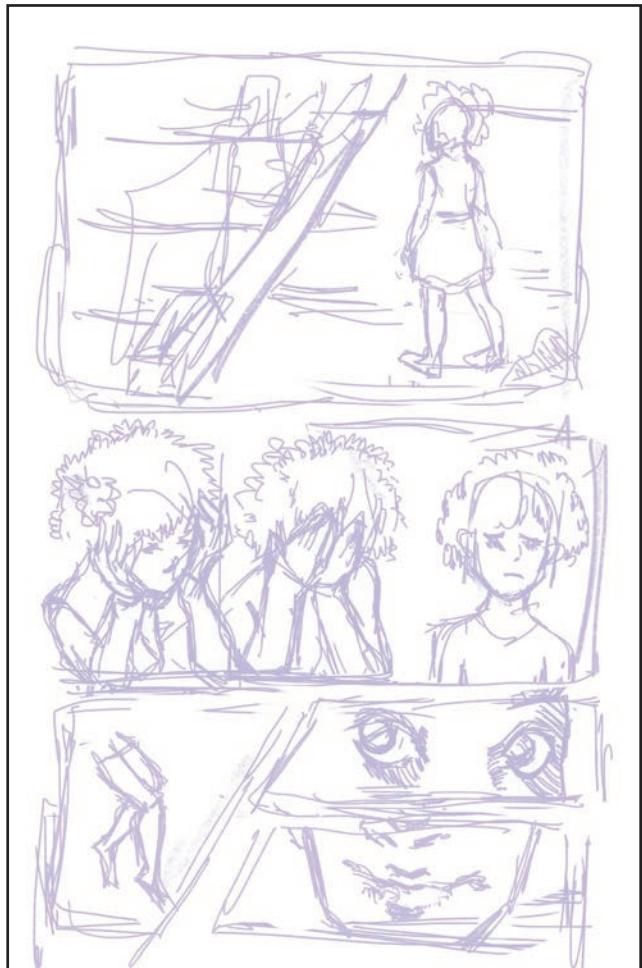
The story wraps up with the two walking together, Valentine's fate remaining unknown and Tana's plans not entirely clear.



THUMBNAILING



My process was to create fairly loose sketches with a vague idea of the panels to determine the flow of the story. Some changes were later made, but this initial concept and flow remains intact.



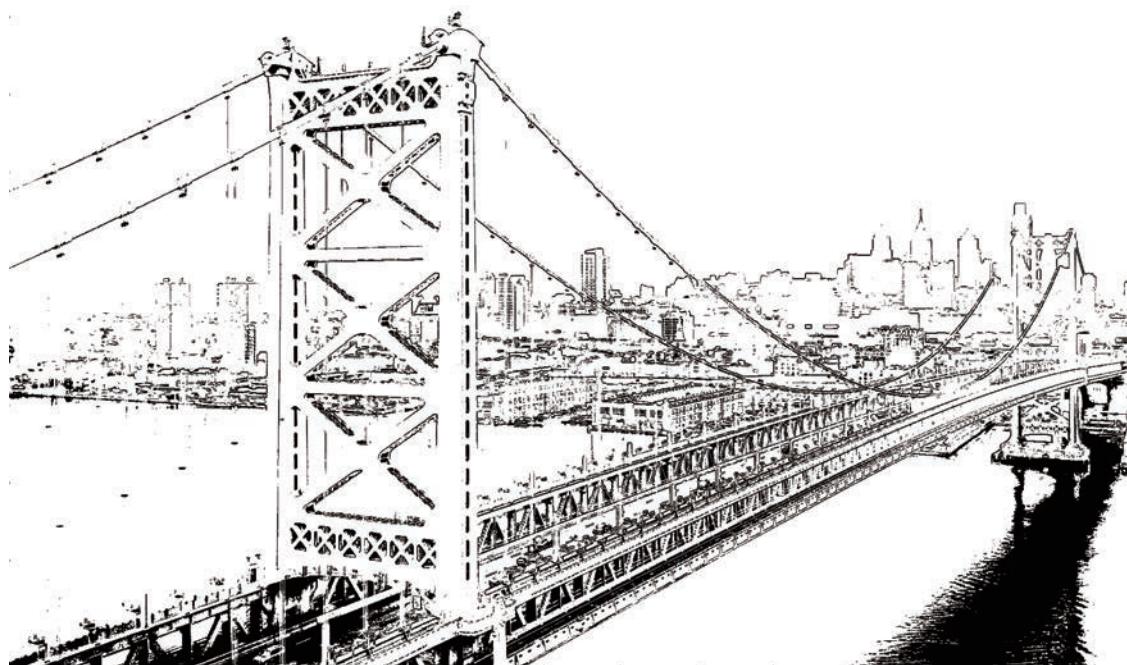
BACKGROUNDS



Since the only location of the comic is the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, I knew I needed to research some usable photographs of the bridge to transform into my backgrounds. This is the photo that I ended up utilizing because it provides a great perspective of the area and reveals the entirety of the bridge, particularly its peak.



First, I extracted the lines of the photo using tools in Clip Studio Paint.



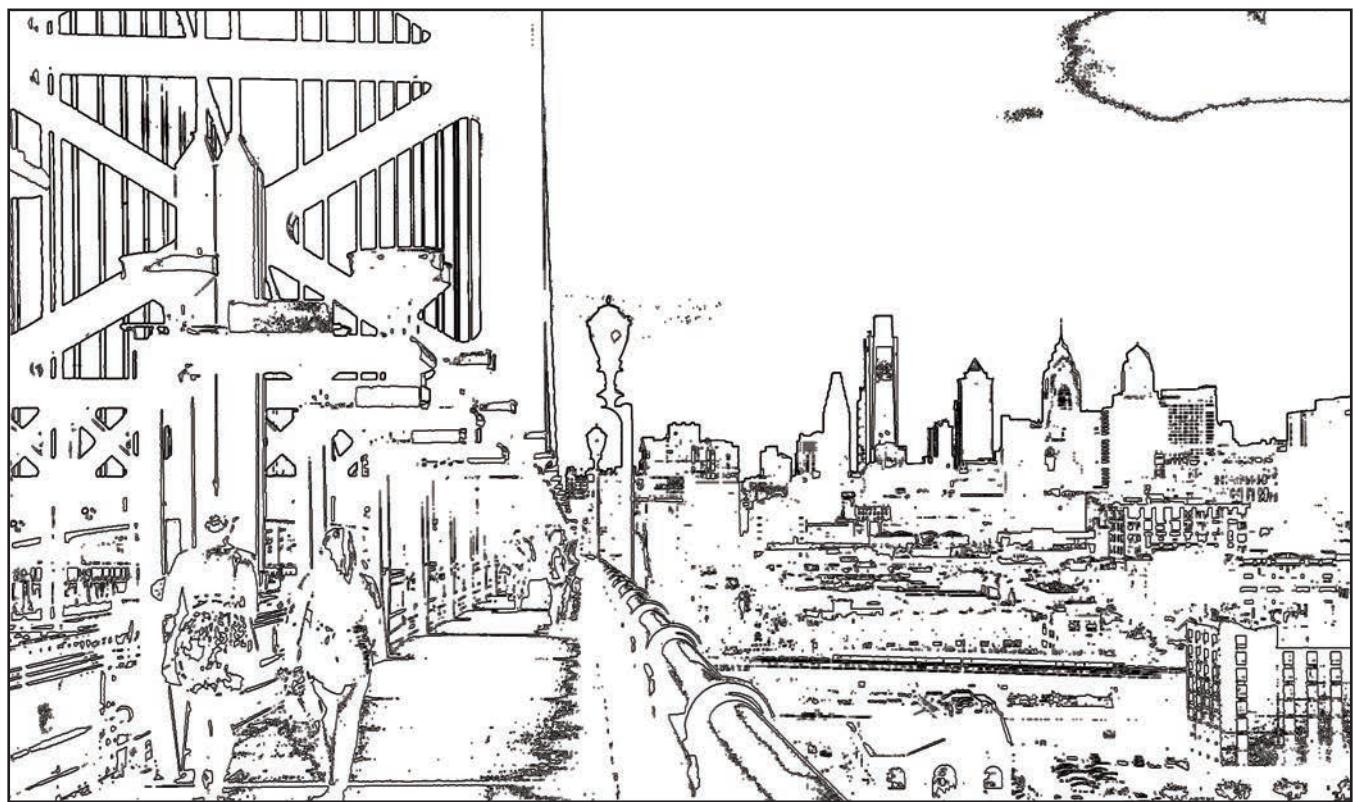
This is one of the two primary backgrounds used in the comic. After extracting the lines, I added three values of screen tones.

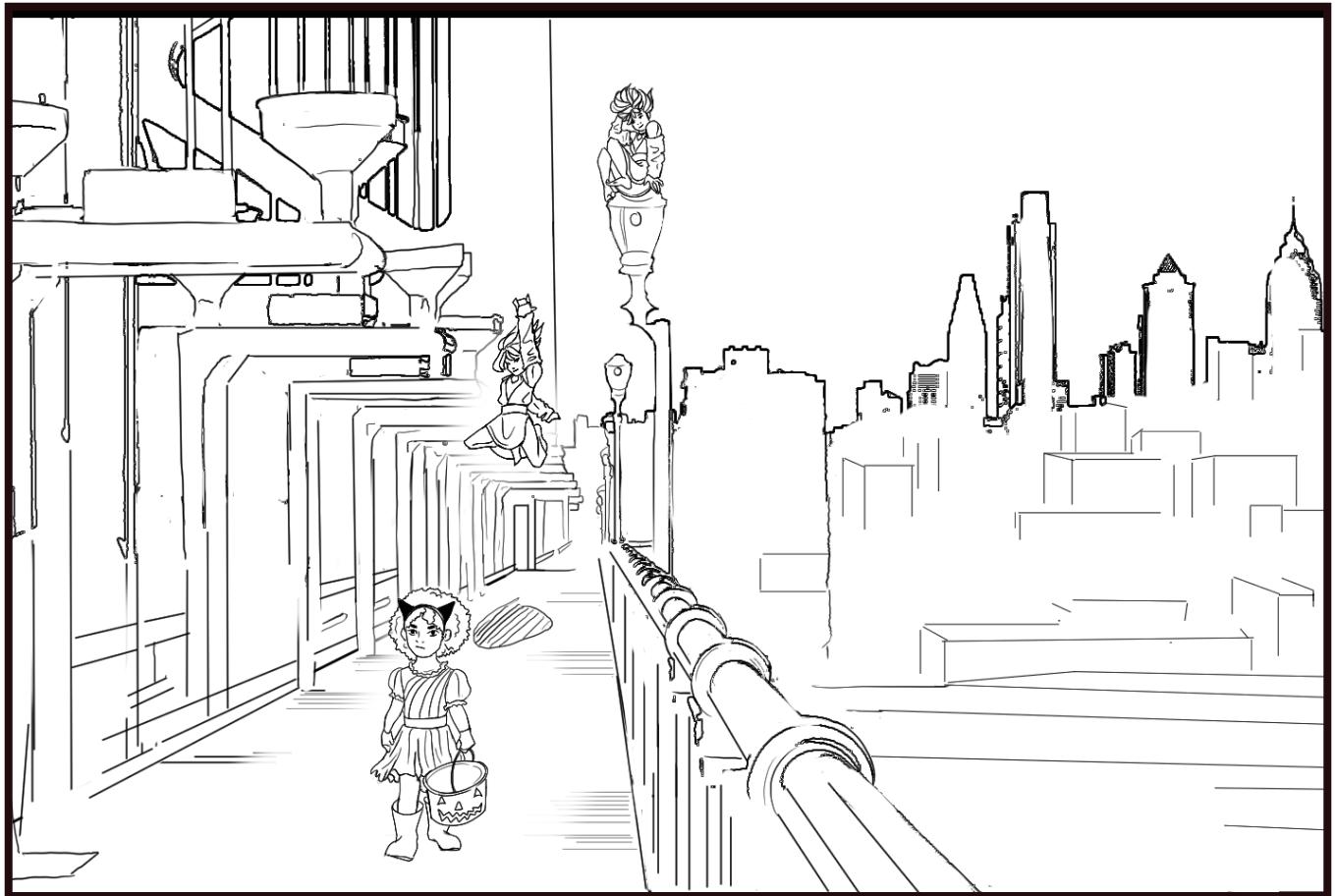


The second background I created using this method was a close up shot of the walkway on the bridge.



As is visible, there is a lot of noise and stray elements that needed to be cleaned up after posterization in order to achieve the final polished result.





Much of the artwork is now simplified to fit the theme of the comic and so as to look hand-drawn. Along with blurring out many detailed elements and erasing all of the noise, I add in texture lines and redraw some of the buildings. It is at this stage that screen tones and values will be added to further clarify the image.

NAMING



When it came to naming, I quickly narrowed it down to two options: [Devil in Disguise](#) and [Costumes](#).

Both options were very literal. The former name, Devil in Disguise, was actually inspired by the song of the same name.

As for costumes, while literal, it has several connotations. We first encounter the angel, disguised as innocent and statuesque. Then Tana, who is without disguise, pretending to be helpful and sweet when interacting with Valentine. Finally, it's Valentine who is wearing a costume and wants a better one. While the child is the only one in a literal costume, she is also the only one with pure intentions. I wanted to give the reader an idea of what to expect, and the cover sets up the expectation that Tana will be disguised or deceitful.

COVER DEVELOPMENT



As I mentioned, I wanted the cover to show off Tana in her full colorful glory. I opted for a more realistic, fully rendered style since that would be the reader's only opportunity to get an in-depth look at Tana.

As for the pose, I wanted Tana to appear menacing yet confident and self-assured.

Finally, I had to consider the typography for the title. In this case, I decided to develop the font myself, hand writing the title. It still needs to be optimized, but that is the placement and perspective that the cover will have.

CONCLUSION



This internship was a truly unique experience that gave me unprecedented insight into the workings of charitable organizations as well as small-owned businesses. I was given the opportunity to wholly express myself without limitations, and for that I have nothing but thanks and appreciation for Mr. Kahlil Jackson.

Working on *I Lost Today* with the other Visual Art interns, I became part of a dedicated team and had to adapt to their methods and utilize a dedicated file sharing system. This was a great lesson in long term teamwork and adapting to other peoples' needs while trying to meet a deadline. I also had to take plenty of feedback and make many a correction in order to achieve the results that we had.

The anthology was a great opportunity to truly test my artistic skills and aptitudes, and to be given such free creative reign was refreshing. Overall this was a great experience and I would recommend that anyone intern at GoBelieve Culture.

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