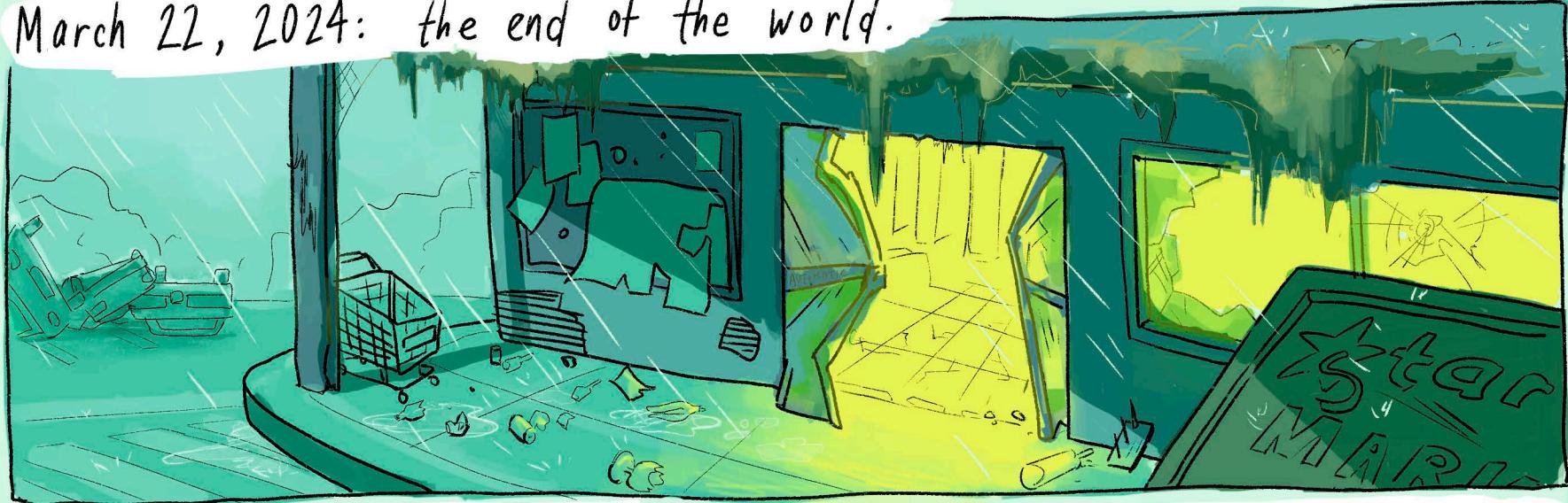


ENDGAMES



Story and
art by
Isabella Yu

March 22, 2024: the end of the world.



One year ago, a deadly, experimental virus was accidentally released from a U.S. biotech lab. It quickly eliminated everyone on Earth except for Marina and Luke,



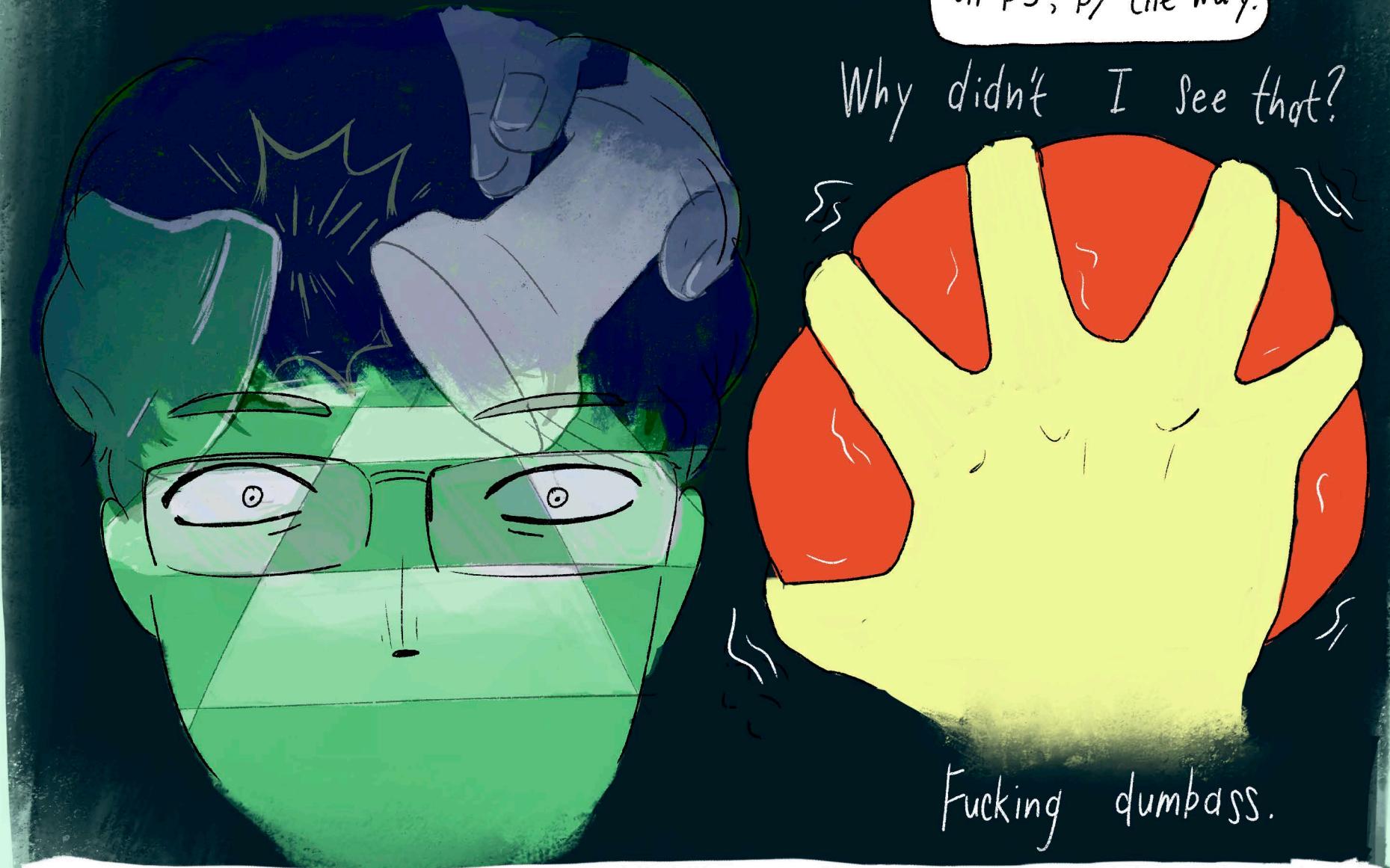
who were grocery shopping

and playing a game of mental chess.



Rook takes pawn on b3, by the way.

Why didn't I see that?



Fucking dumbass.

Marina was the world chess champion. Well, she used to be the 5th best, but ... you know.



Luke was a physics professor at Stanford. He was 23.



It's just practice; I've been telling you for years.
And it's nice playing with someone who catches on so
quickly!

It only took an apocalypse for me to play chess for chess's sake again...

Marina was good at... life. Enjoying what was left. Always learning, adapting.

~~ed loved~~
~~hated~~
loved
her.

The image is a hand-drawn illustration of a green-skinned character with dark hair and large white eyes. The character is looking slightly upwards. Handwritten text in black ink is overlaid on the image, appearing as if it's floating around the character's head. The text is a mix of thoughts and statements, suggesting the character is reflecting on their actions and relationships.

I WANT TO BE BETTER THAN HER.

You really don't look well. Do you want to go h —



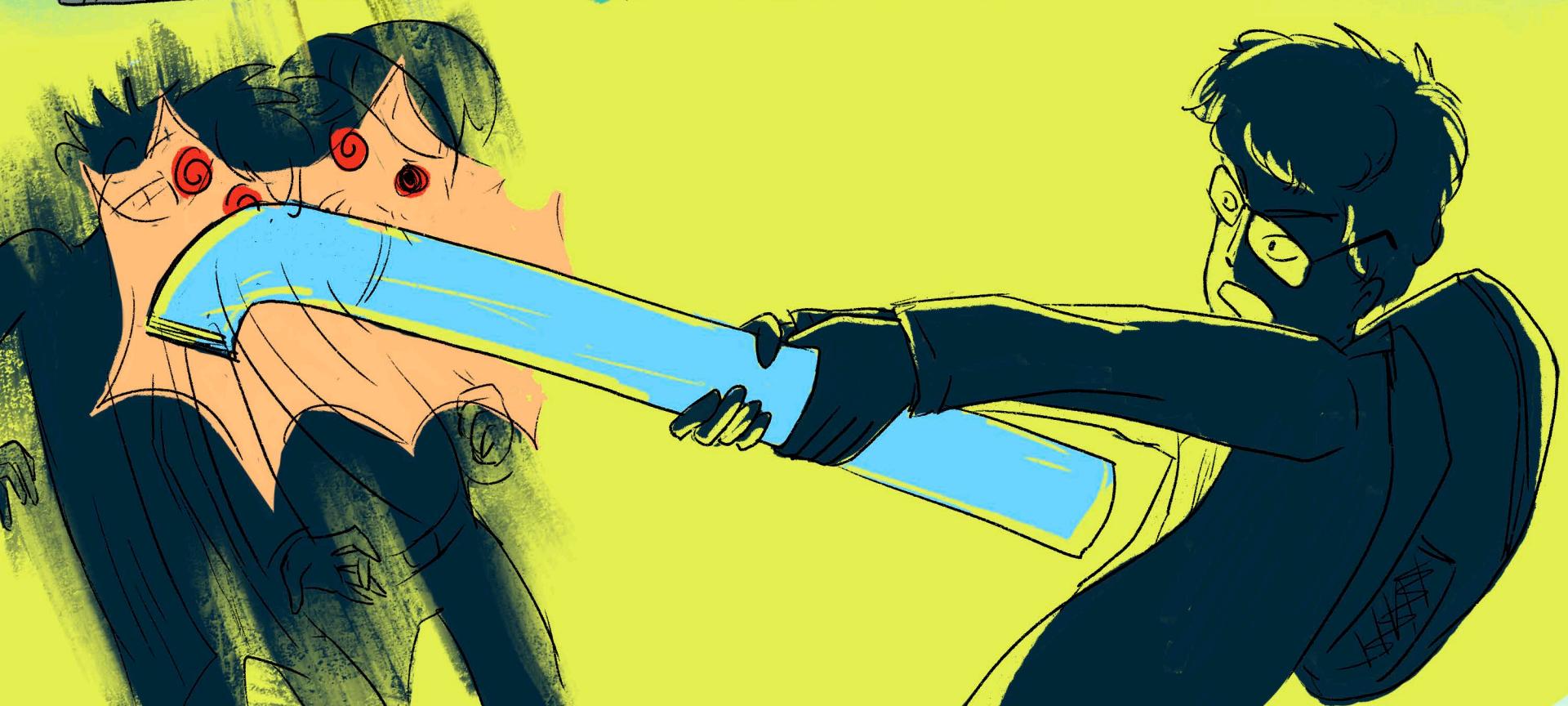
The infected weren't all gone yet.



Most were harmless, but a few were deadly.

For context, the virus that destroyed society was created to increase human motivation and ambition. The strain that escaped did exactly this — to a fatal degree. People were so fixated on accomplishing their goals that they either worked themselves to death or died of anger if they couldn't.

On one hand, some infected scientists at CERN discovered dark matter a few months after the outbreak before promptly dying. On the other hand, you had people like Elise Ma.



Holy shit! We would have been done for if it weren't for you.

Did I... protect her?

Does this mean I was better than her?
That I beat her? No, that's the wrong word,
I mean I just saw the pipe first, there's
no intellect required for this so it doesn't
really count I didn't win anything —

I need a breath of fresh air...
do you want to go up that hill with me? We haven't been in a while

STOP IT JUST ENJOY THIS FOR
ONCE, WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?

One of my colleagues worked with the satellite dish at the top of this hill. Rook to f2, check.

Ah, I remember visiting him, those final days. At least, do you think he was happier after unveiling the reionization of the universe? King e1.

Perhaps, though he wasn't a happy man to begin with. I don't know if he needed recognition or to understand the universe, or therapy.

Rook g2

Interesting move...

Is it that windy up here? My eyes are all dried up.

Rook g2? pawn g2 check? ... No there's a trap there.

A few hours later:

I'm reading this paper from during the outbreak that posits that more ambitious people create more dopamine, which rewards immune cells.

You think that's why we're We haven't gotten it yet? King f1.

Probably one of many reasons, including the ones you've looked into. Rook a2

If that was the main reason, then surely Silicon Valley would've lasted longer than 5 days. Rook e3.

... but even though we're far from perfect, I'm grateful we can face this together.

I know I've said that a million times—

Why are your eyes so red what's happening you haven't been yourself these weeks oh no oh-

LUKE!

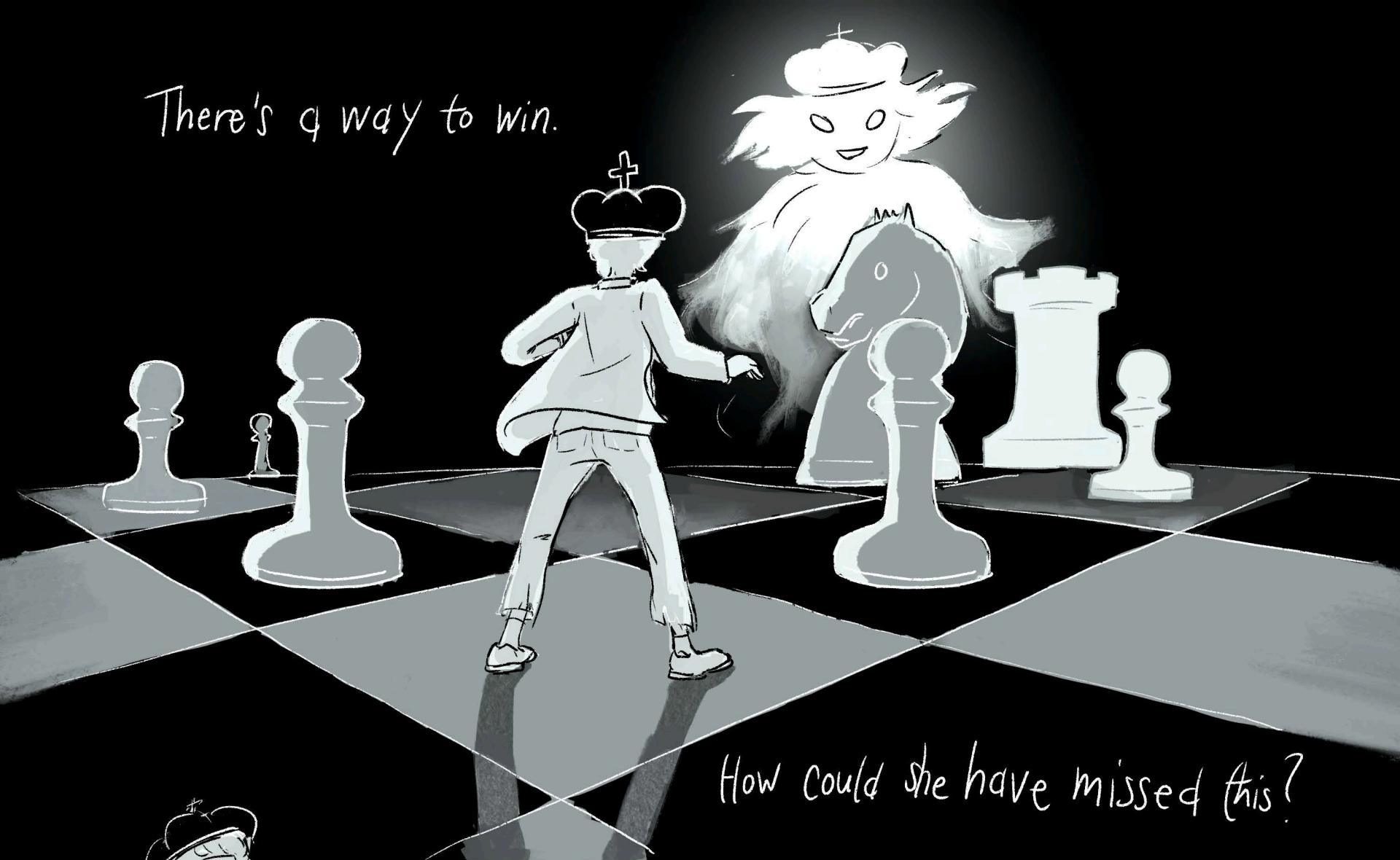
THAT BEAUTIFUL FACE...
I WANT TO PUNCH IT

But please could I be better than her in some way. I don't even know what that means anymore but it's all I want

WAIT...

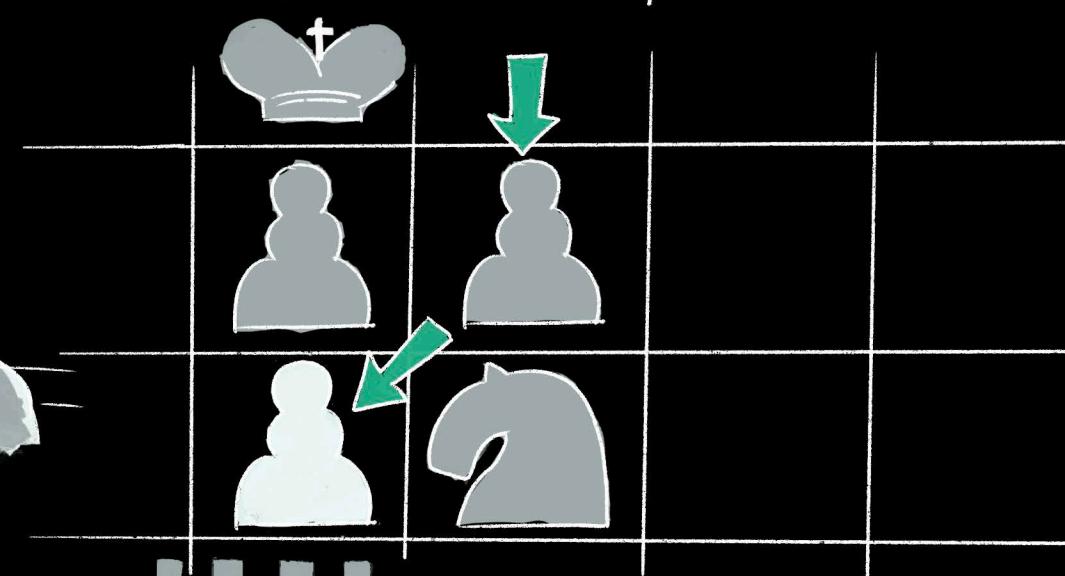
How could I hate her?
She's an angel.

There's a way to win.



How could she have missed this?

If I just move my e pawn forward,
threatening to take her pawn,



My pawn will advance and become queen. She cannot stop it.

If knight e2 knight d2 check, Kf2, then I push my e pawn to white's side,



She'll be helpless.

Checkmate.



FINALLY I WIN I BEAT HER MARINA I'VE BEAT YOU ISN'T

Marina?