

THEN SOMETHING BAD HAPPENS: SELENA GETS STUNG...

HEY...

REMEMBER HOW WE WERE TALKING ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SEX WORK AND SEX TRAFFICKING A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO?

WELL, YOU'LL NEVER BELIEVE WHAT HAPPENED TO ME THIS PAST WEEKEND.

OH NO...

WHAT HAPPENED, SELINA?

I WENT OUT OF TOWN TO WORK IN A HOTEL FOR THE WEEKEND.

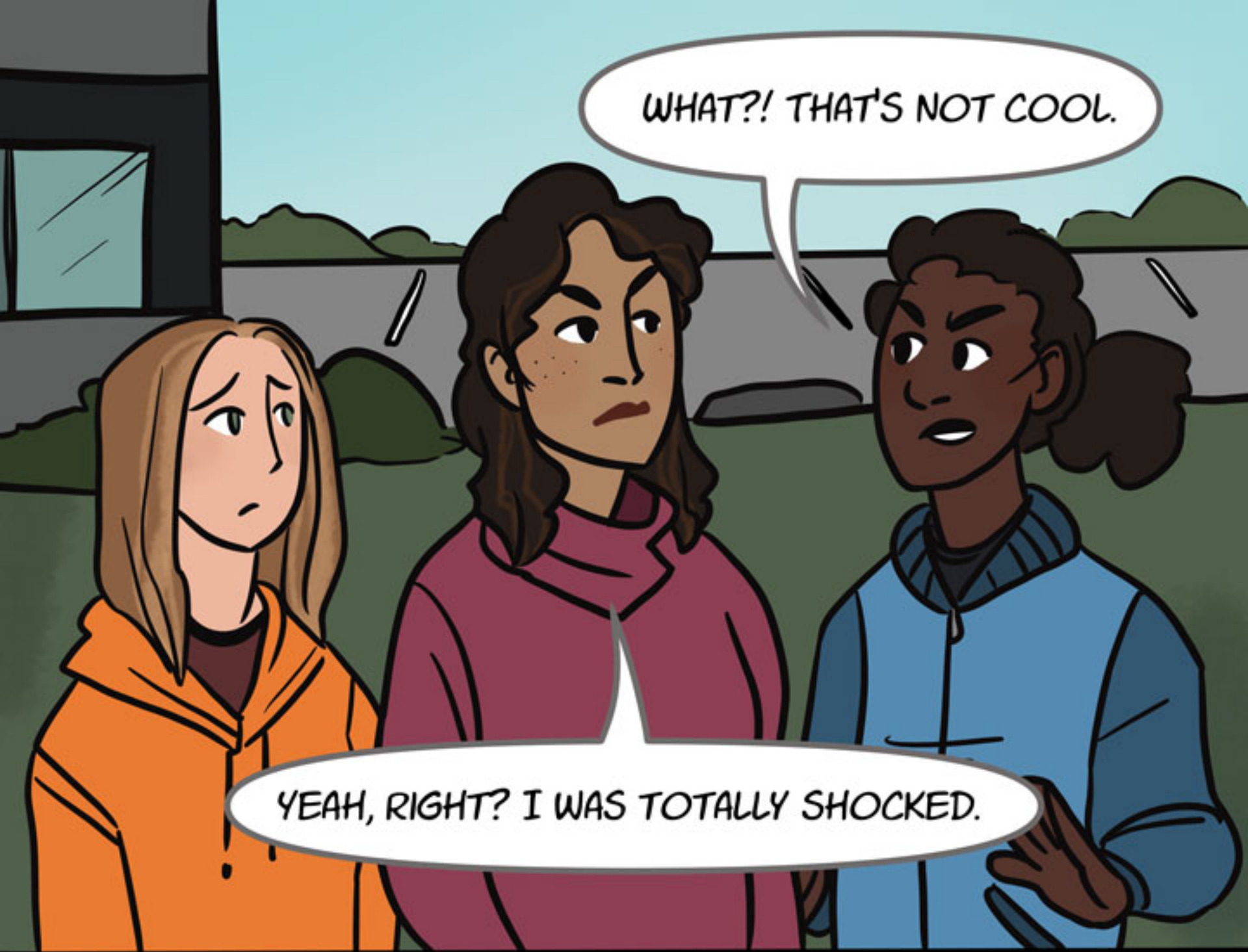
I TRAVEL AROUND THE PROVINCE WHEN I CAN TO DO SEX WORK;

I CAN CHARGE MORE AS THE "NEW GIRL IN TOWN".

EVERYTHING SEEMED FINE. I SCREENED CLIENTS AND BOOKED APPOINTMENTS.

BUT, AT 8:00 FRIDAY NIGHT, THERE WAS A KNOCK AT MY DOOR AND, WHEN I OPENED IT EXPECTING MY DATE, I FOUND TWO COPS AND A SOCIAL WORKER.





WHAT?! THAT'S NOT COOL.

YEAH, RIGHT? I WAS TOTALLY SHOCKED.

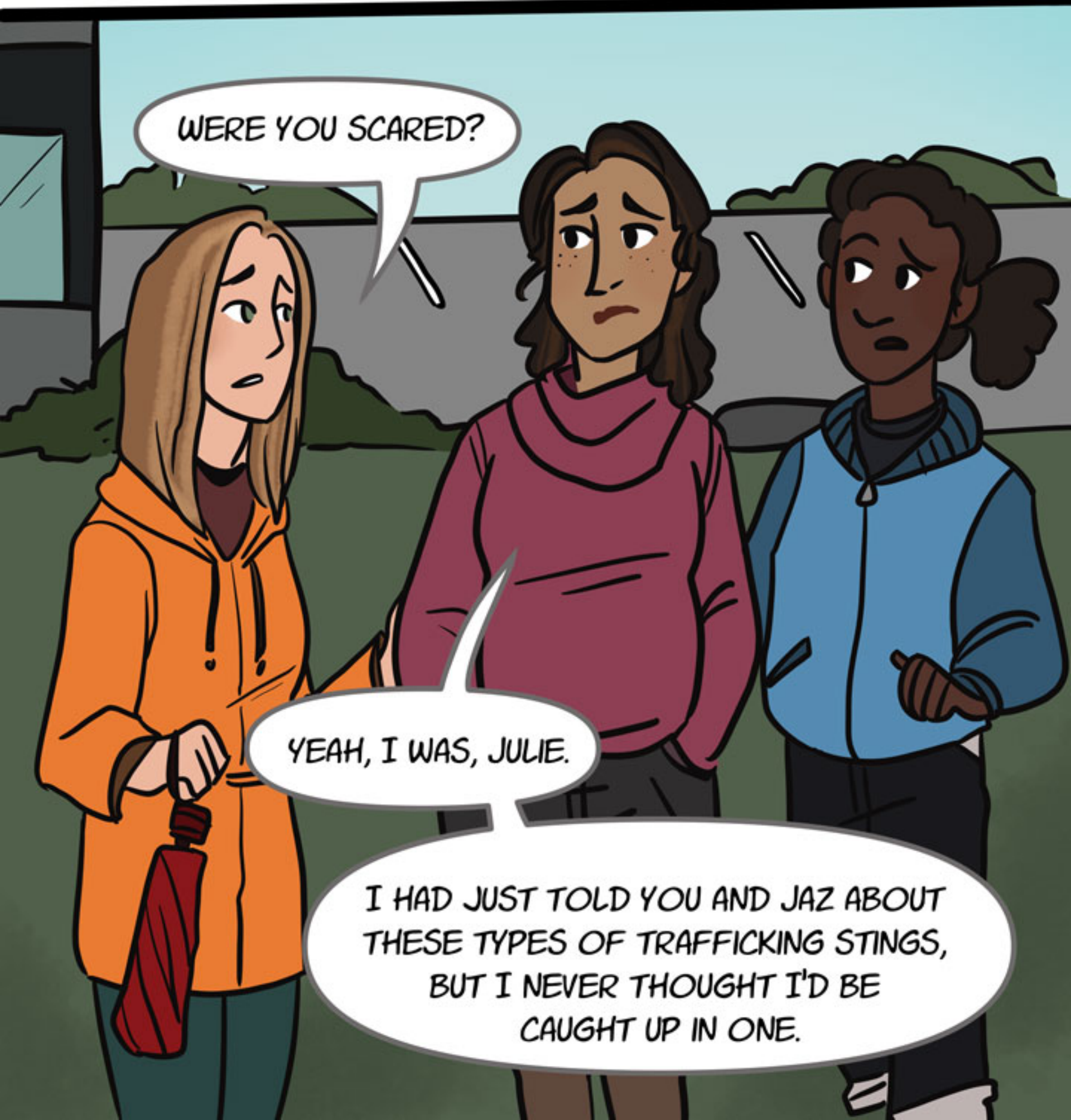


THEY KIND OF PUSHED THEIR WAY IN,
SAYING:

"WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU,
DON'T WORRY,
EVERYTHING IS OK..."

AND I'M LIKE,
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE!?
WTF IS GOING ON?

WHY ARE THEY HERE?!



WERE YOU SCARED?

YEAH, I WAS, JULIE.

I HAD JUST TOLD YOU AND JAZ ABOUT
THESE TYPES OF TRAFFICKING STINGS,
BUT I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE
CAUGHT UP IN ONE.

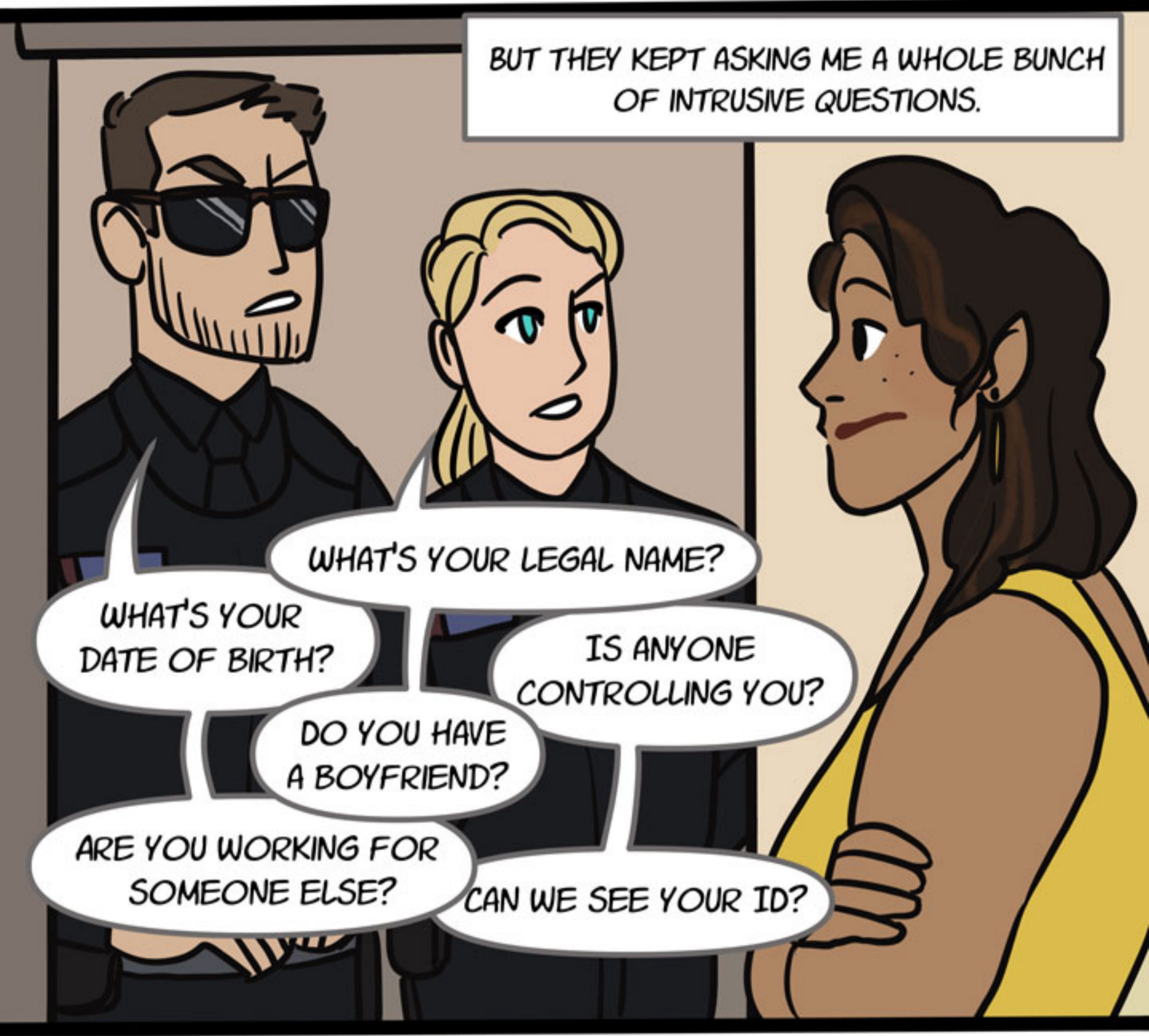


ARE YOU OK? WHAT HAPPENED?

I'M FINE NOW...

THEY SAID THEY WERE THERE TO DO A "WELFARE CHECK" ON ME, TO MAKE SURE I WASN'T BEING TRAFFICKED.

I TOLD THEM I WAS FINE, AND THAT I WAS WORKING.



BUT THEY KEPT ASKING ME A WHOLE BUNCH OF INTRUSIVE QUESTIONS.

WHAT'S YOUR LEGAL NAME?

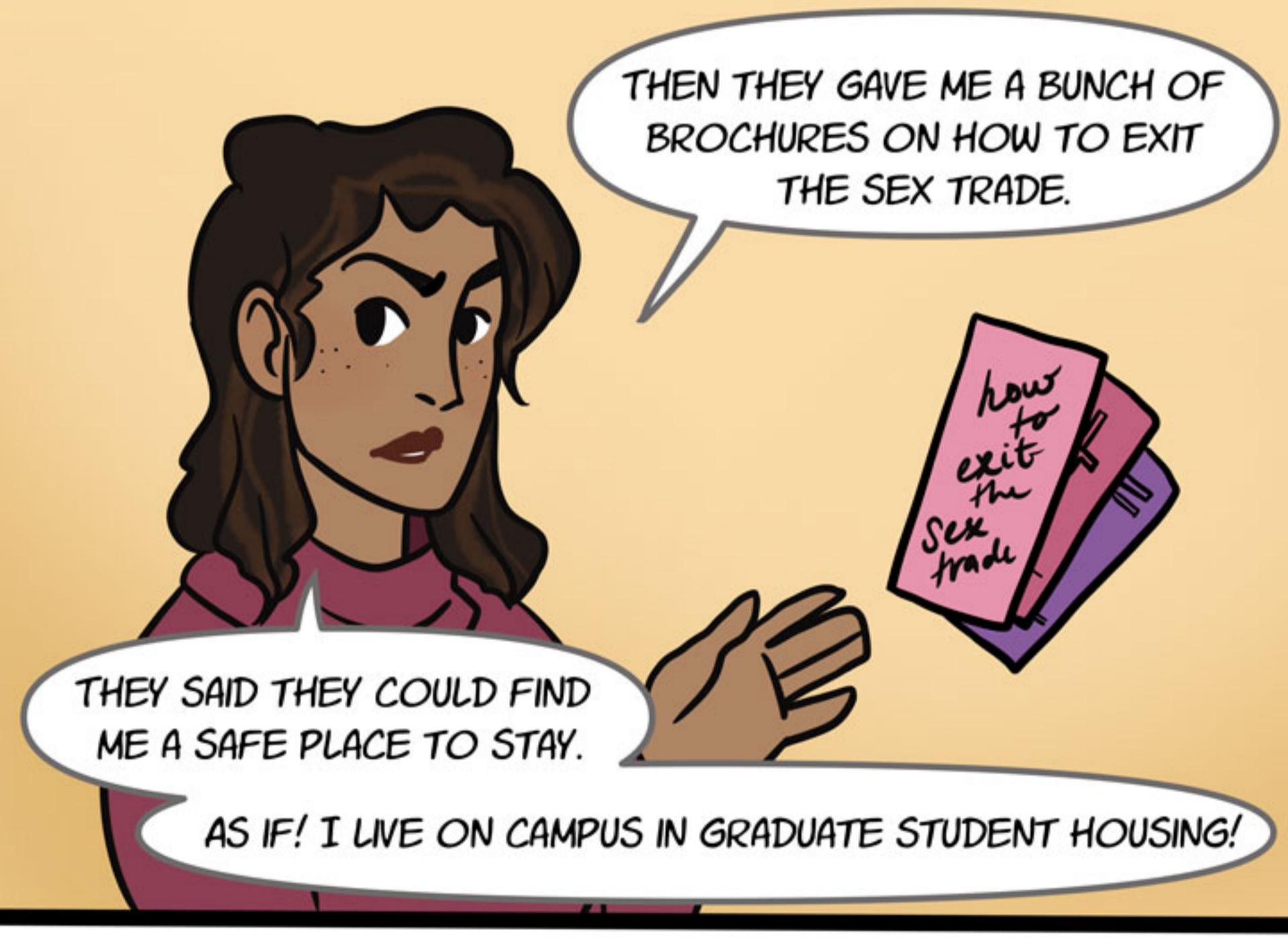
WHAT'S YOUR DATE OF BIRTH?

IS ANYONE CONTROLLING YOU?

DO YOU HAVE A BOYFRIEND?

ARE YOU WORKING FOR SOMEONE ELSE?

CAN WE SEE YOUR ID?

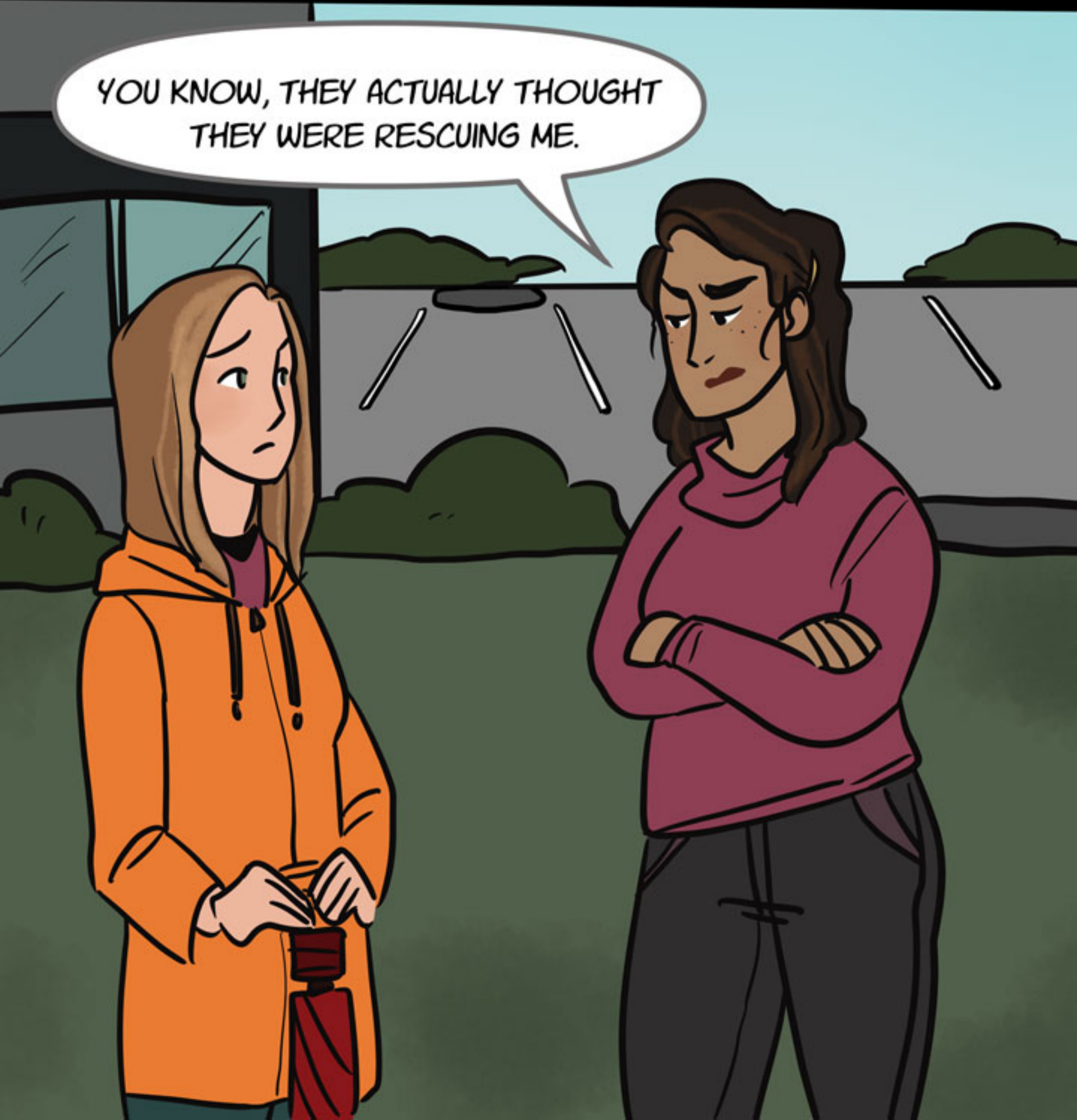


THEN THEY GAVE ME A BUNCH OF BROCHURES ON HOW TO EXIT THE SEX TRADE.



THEY SAID THEY COULD FIND ME A SAFE PLACE TO STAY.

AS IF! I LIVE ON CAMPUS IN GRADUATE STUDENT HOUSING!

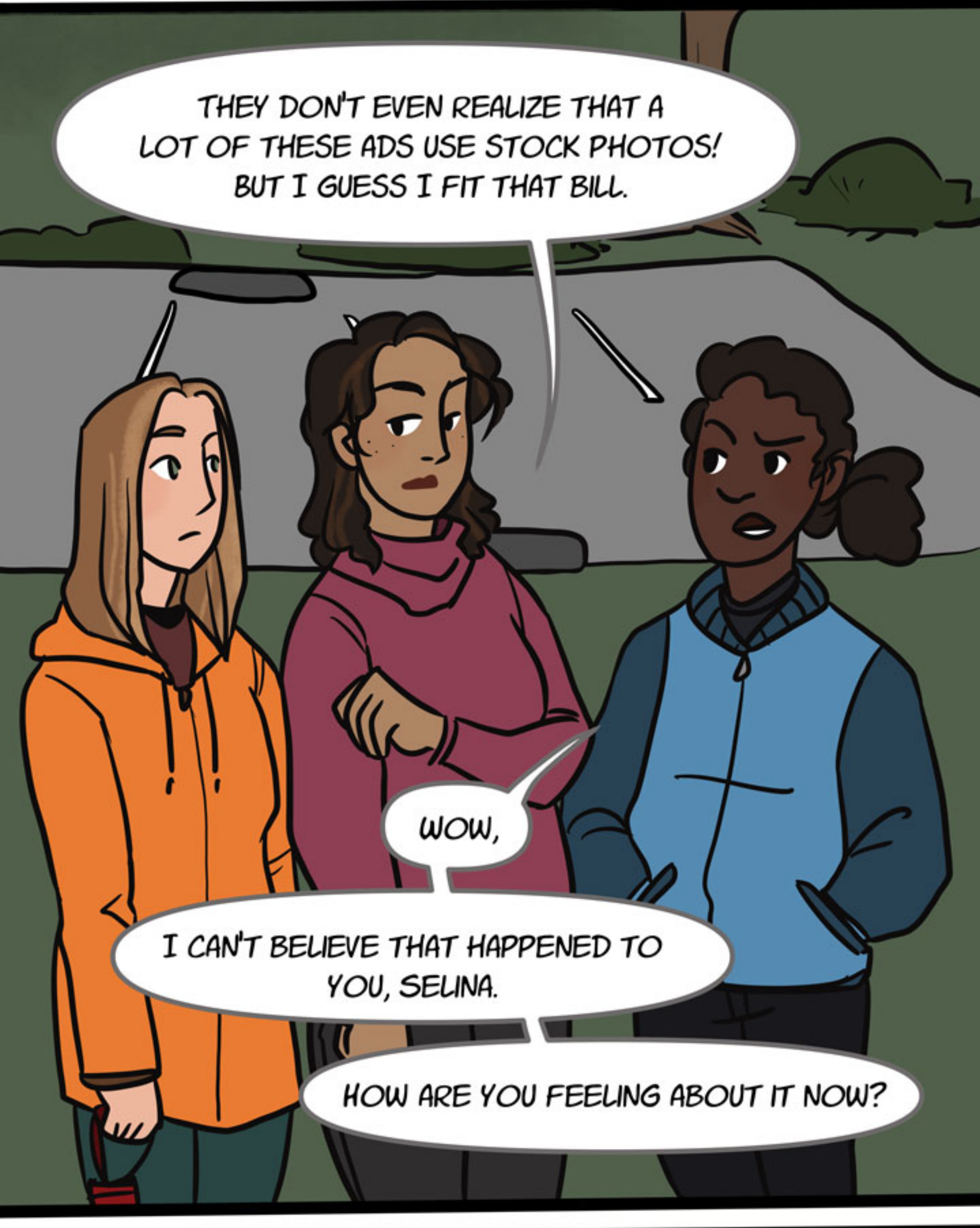


YOU KNOW, THEY ACTUALLY THOUGHT THEY WERE RESCUING ME.



SO THE COPS LOOK AT ONLINE ADS AND SET UP FAKE APPOINTMENTS TO TRY TO FIND TRAFFICKING VICTIMS?

YES. I'VE HEARD FROM OTHER SEX WORKERS AT THE DROP-IN CENTRE THAT THEY LOOK FOR ADS WITH YOUNG, RACIALIZED SEX WORKERS.



THEY DON'T EVEN REALIZE THAT A LOT OF THESE ADS USE STOCK PHOTOS! BUT I GUESS I FIT THAT BILL.

WOW,

I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT HAPPENED TO YOU, SELINA.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING ABOUT IT NOW?

I WAS SCARED, CONFUSED, THEN HUMILIATED.


NOW I'M ANGRY.

AFTER THEY LEFT MY ROOM, THEY STAYED PARKED OUTSIDE.


I THOUGHT THEY WERE GOING TO TRY TO ARREST MY CLIENTS, SO I CANCELLED ALL MY APPOINTMENTS FOR THE WEEKEND.

I LOST A LOT OF MONEY.

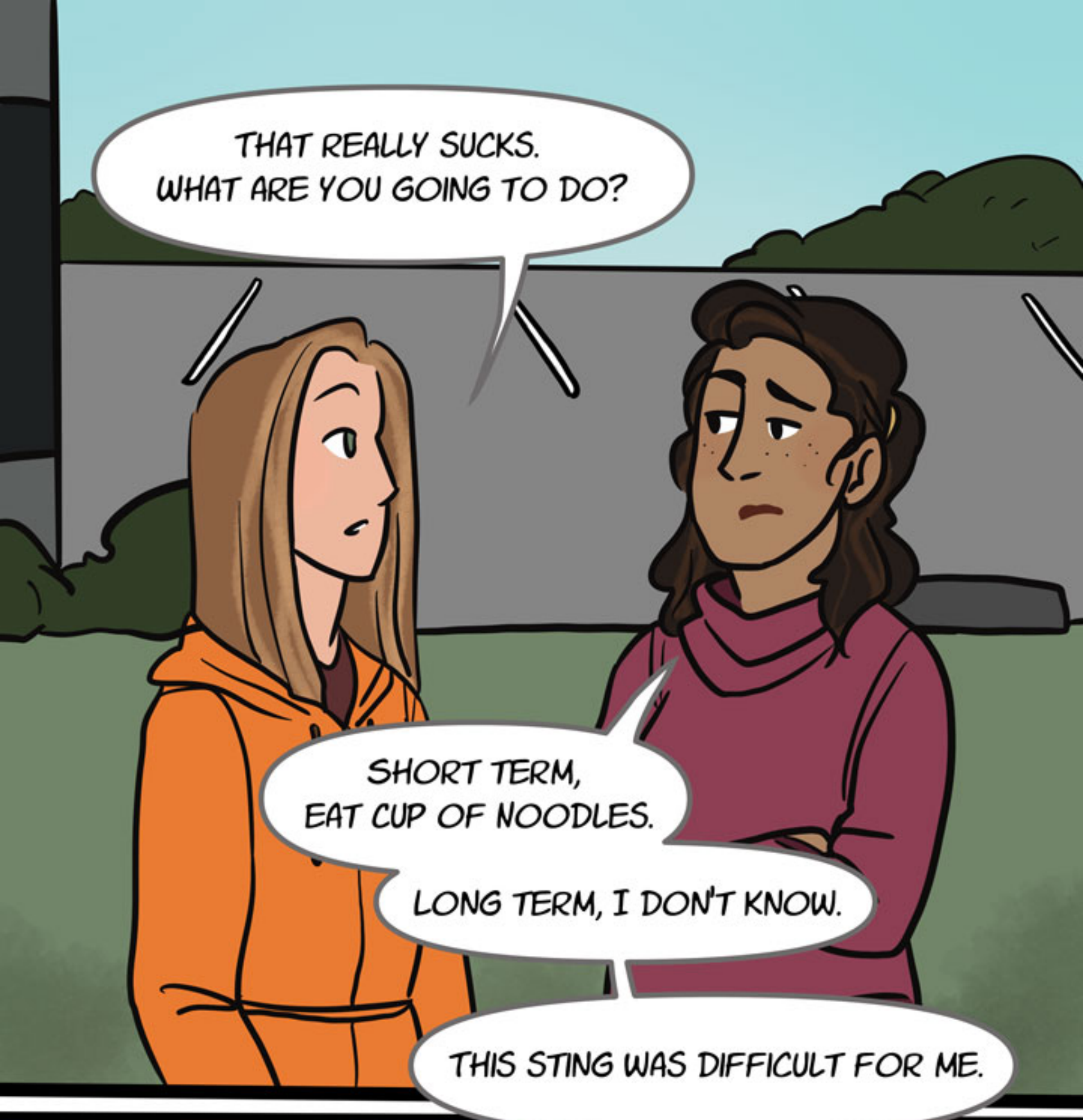
BUT, HONESTLY, I'M JUST REALLY RELUCTANT TO ENGAGE WITH THE COPS AT ALL, EVEN IF I HAD SOMETHING TO REPORT.



IT SOUNDS LIKE WHAT YOU TOLD US ABOUT CRIMINALIZATION: THESE RESCUE INITIATIVES JUST GIVE SEX WORKERS ANOTHER REASON TO DISTRUST THE COPS.



YEAH, AND SINCE PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENCE KNOW WE'RE RELUCTANT TO REPORT, THESE INITIATIVES ACTUALLY INCREASE THE RISKS OF VIOLENCE.

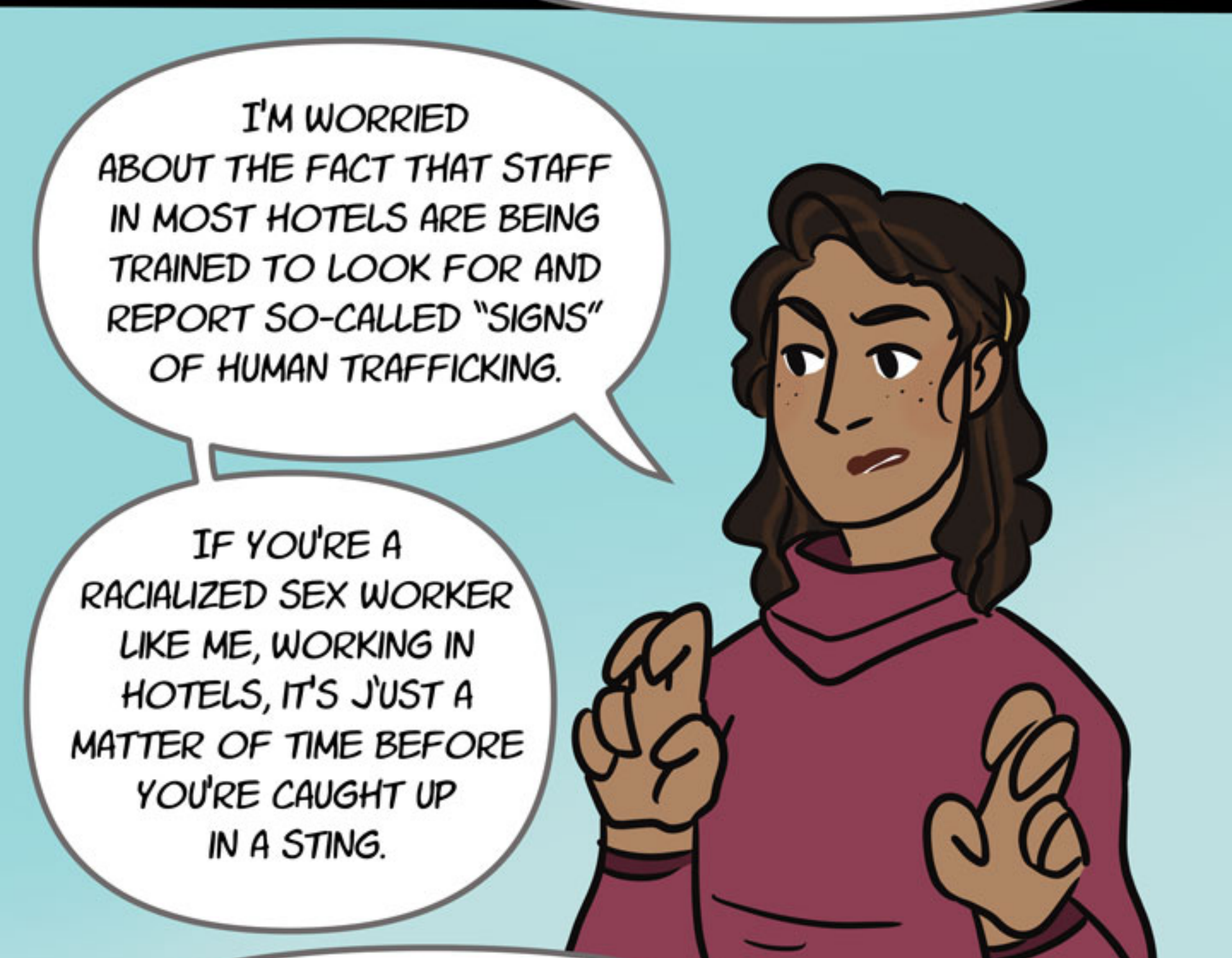


THAT REALLY SUCKS.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

SHORT TERM,
EAT CUP OF NOODLES.

LONG TERM, I DON'T KNOW.

THIS STING WAS DIFFICULT FOR ME.



I'M WORRIED
ABOUT THE FACT THAT STAFF
IN MOST HOTELS ARE BEING
TRAINED TO LOOK FOR AND
REPORT SO-CALLED "SIGNS"
OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING.

IF YOU'RE A
RACIALIZED SEX WORKER
LIKE ME, WORKING IN
HOTELS, IT'S JUST A
MATTER OF TIME BEFORE
YOU'RE CAUGHT UP
IN A STING.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS I WANT
TO DO SEX WORK AND DO IT SAFELY.
I GET PAID \$20 AN HOUR AS A
RESEARCH ASSISTANT AND \$250 AN
HOUR FOR A DATE.

WITHOUT THE SEX
WORK, I CAN'T COVER ALL
MY EXPENSES.



THE COPS DON'T CARE ABOUT ME,
AND THEY DON'T RESPECT SEX WORKERS;
THEY WON'T EVEN LET ME DO MY JOB.

IT'S LIKE THEY THINK THEY
CAN TAKE THESE REALLY INTRUSIVE STEPS
IN THE NAME OF "RESCUE".



IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO THAT
ISN'T A GESTURE EXPRESSING MY OWN
NEED TO BE A WHITE SAVIOUR??

NOPE!! BUT I'LL LET YOU KNOW IF I NEED ONE...

SERIOUSLY THOUGH, JUST
BEING A FRIEND AND LISTENING TO ME VENT
HAS BEEN SUPER HELPFUL.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ADDISON FINCH
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