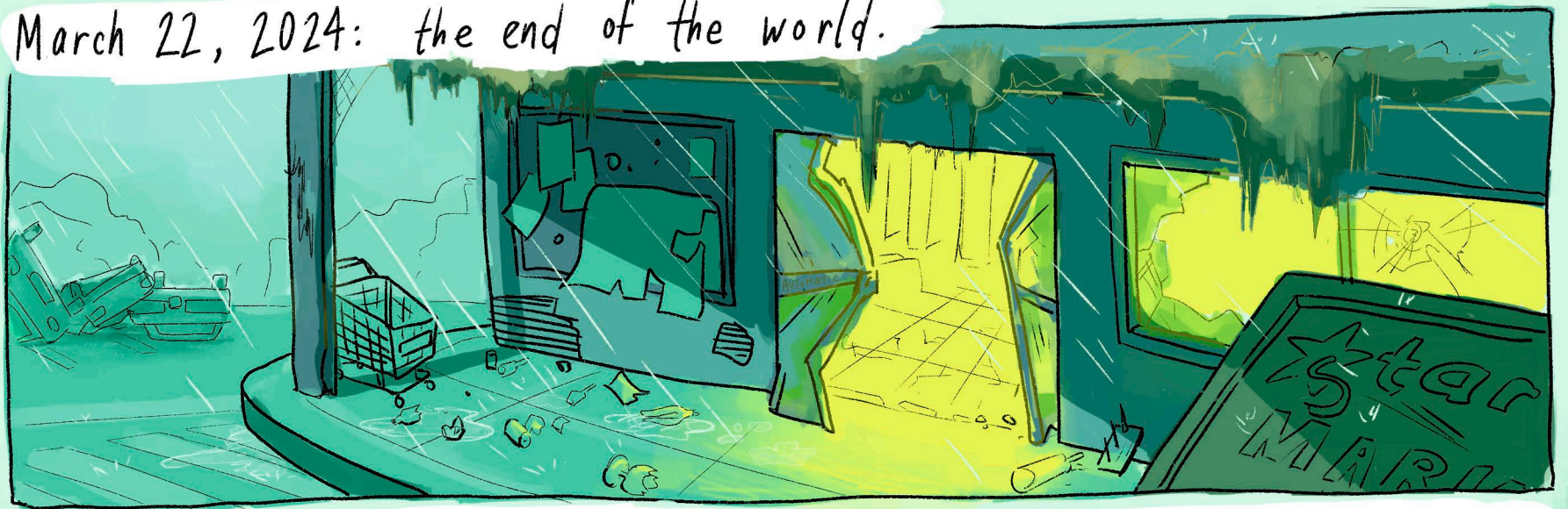
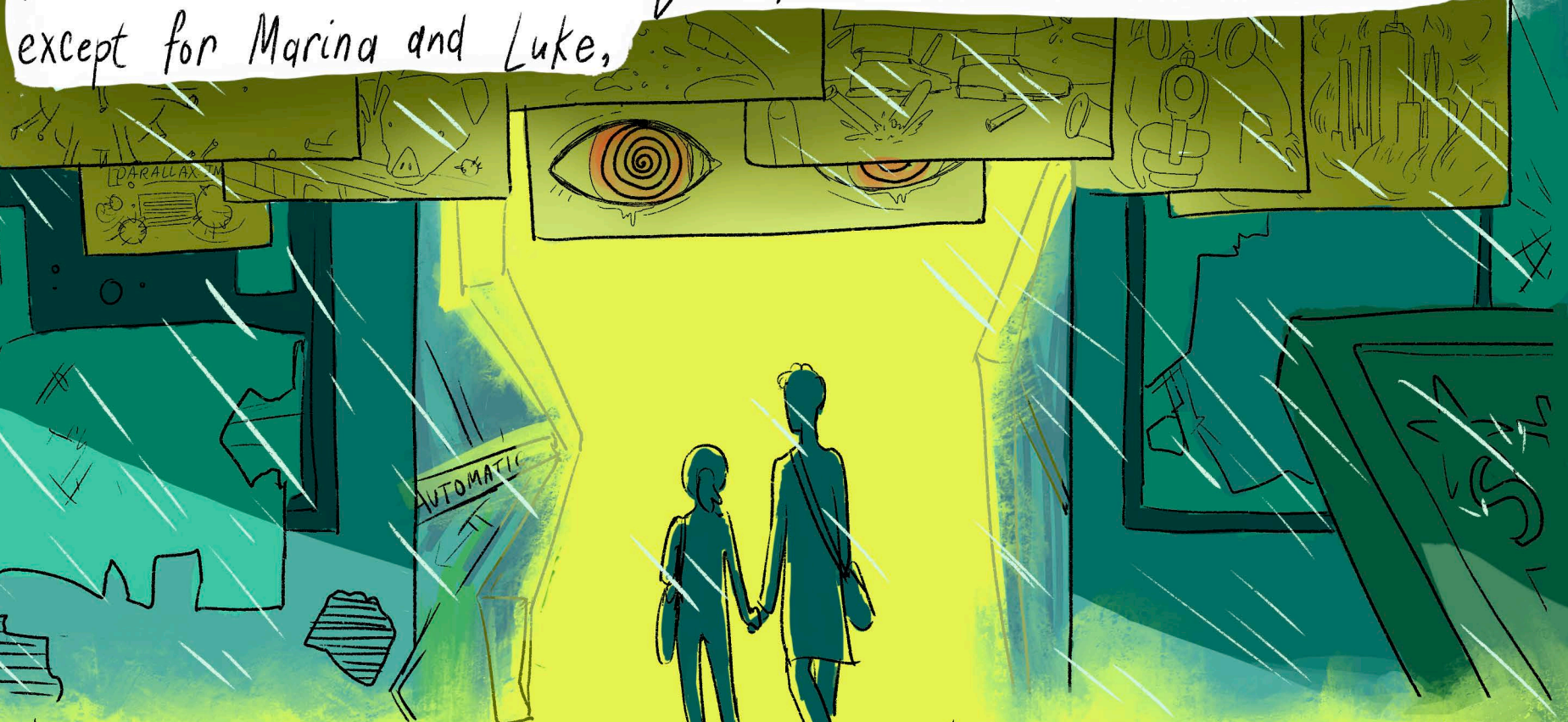




March 22, 2024: the end of the world.



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.

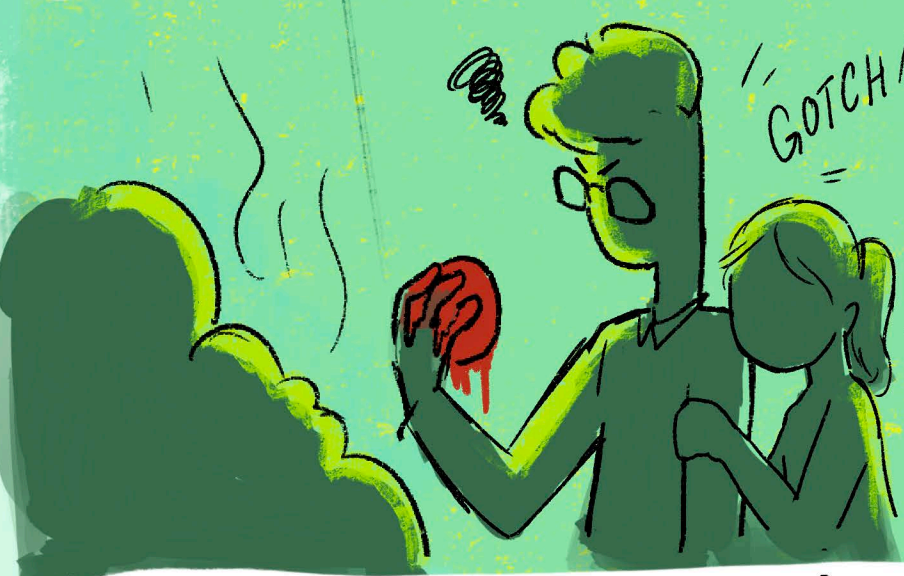


Why didn't I see that?



Fucking dumbass.

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



... are you okay? You look upset

Oh, I'm fine. That was just such a brilliant trap. How...?
(I'm a fucking dunce)

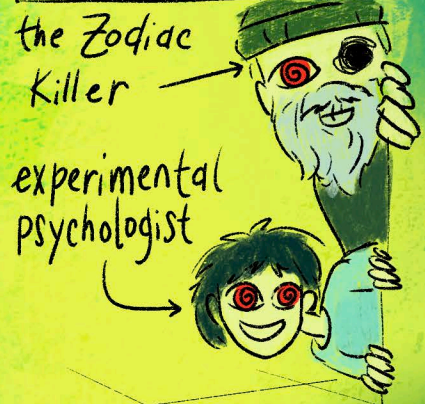
Luke was a physics professor at Stanford. He was 23.



-home?

This again?!

The infected weren't all gone yet.



the Zodiac Killer
experimental psychologist



comic book author

the manager of this store

King e3

Now's not really the time but rook b4!

Solved in 5.2 seconds

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.

PATIENT SUMMARY
Name: Elise Ma Sex: F
DOB: 4/17/1987
Symptoms: unable to blink, sleeplessness, irritability, lack of appetite, fixation on finding human subject for psychological research
Past medical history: broke left radius when 14, no surgery needed
Allergies: Peanut
9/7/23
likely infected with Parallax virus.
KEEP RESTRAINED



Would you two like to participate in a study on learned helplessness? You'll get a \$50 gift card.

DIE!!!

please for the love of god my funding's running out.



Fuck, they're gaining on us.

Wait a sec...



On your right! You got this.





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 —

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



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



≡ FLINCH ≡

That sounds lovely.



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—

Well I never said that was the main reason is that even peer I shouldn't have brought it up... how do I beat her

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.

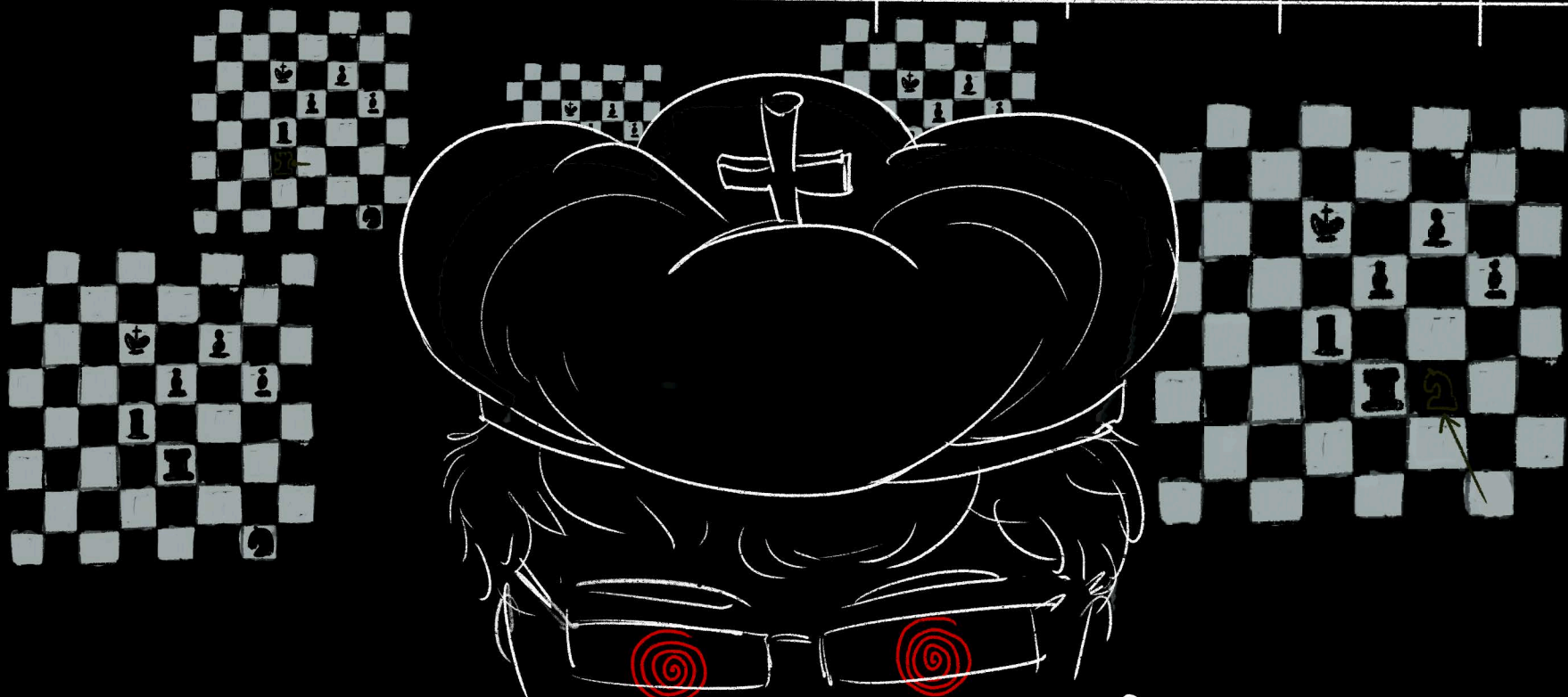
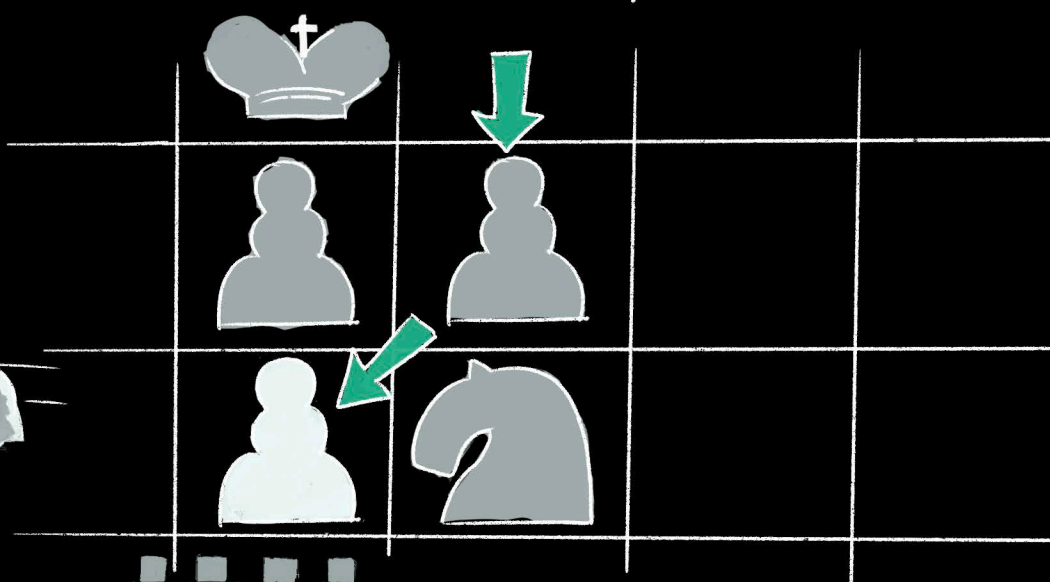


There's a way to win.



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?