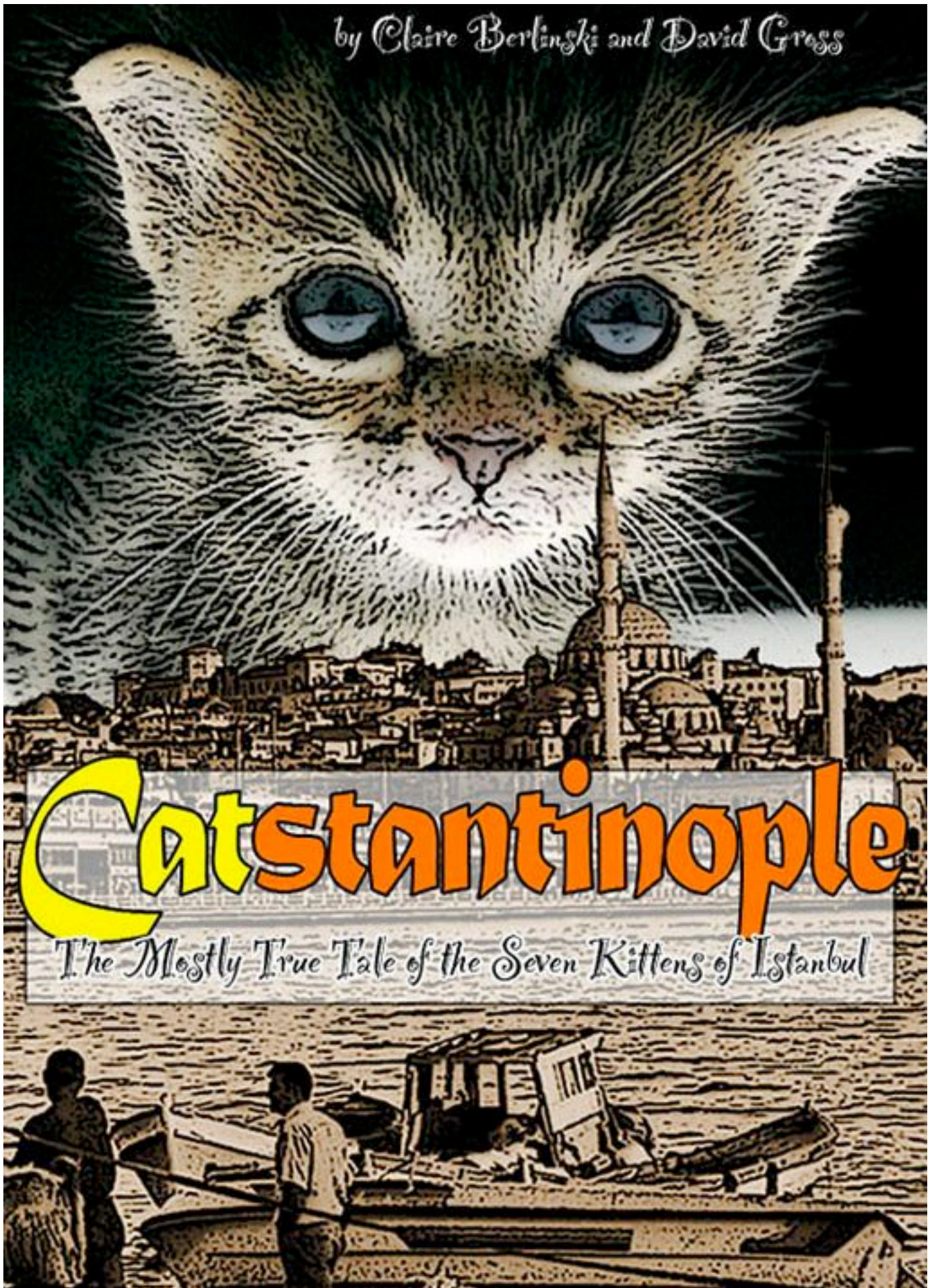


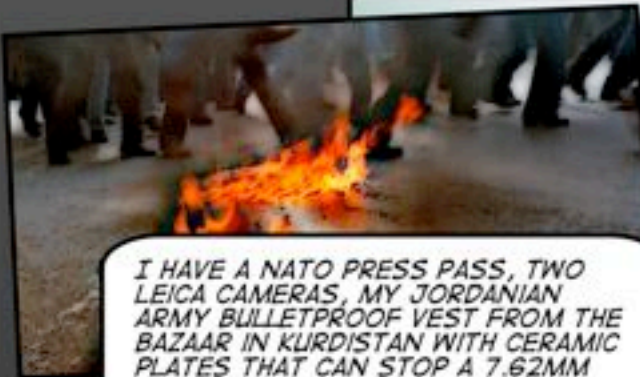
by Claire Berlinski and David Gross



# Catstantinople

*The Mostly True Tale of the Seven Kittens of Istanbul*





I HAVE A NATO PRESS PASS, TWO LEICA CAMERAS, MY JORDANIAN ARMY BULLETPROOF VEST FROM THE BAZAAR IN KURDISTAN WITH CERAMIC PLATES THAT CAN STOP A 7.62MM KALASHNIKOV BULLET, A DOUBLE-EDGED 5" FLIP-KNIFE FOR TIGHT SITUATIONS, A KIT-BAG FULL OF ANTIBIOTICS, DULL GREEN T-SHIRTS, AND JIMI HENDRIX AND THE DOORS ON MY IPOD.



I'D DONE KOSOVO, MACEDONIA, JORDAN, ISRAEL, KURDISTAN AND IRAQ.



A PHOTOGRAPHER HAS TO BE READY AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE TO JUMP THE NEXT BLACKHAWK INTO THE ZONE.

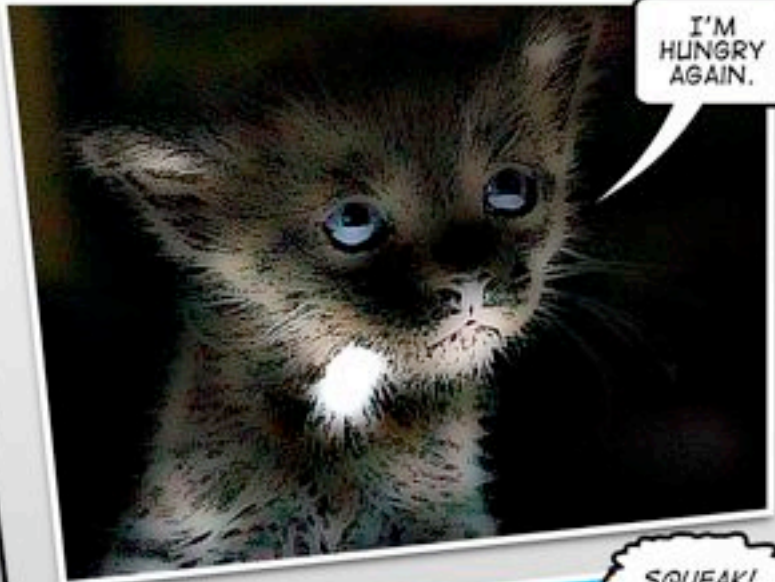


I'M THE LAST GUY IN THE WORLD WHO NEEDS A KITTEN.





...OR *SEVEN* KITTENS, FOR THAT MATTER.



I'M HUNGRY AGAIN.



CLAIRE!

GET THE CATS OUT OF MY...



SQUEAK!



NO! NO! GET OFF MY NEGATIVES! OFF!



SQUEAK!

CLAIRE!





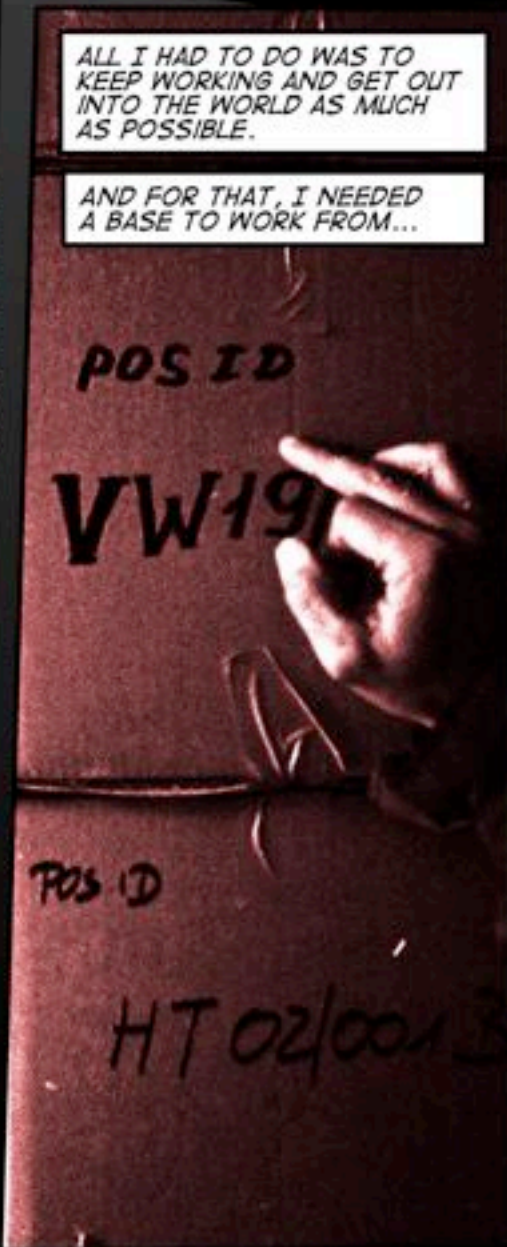
I MOVED TO ISTANBUL SIX YEARS AGO BECAUSE IT'S CLOSE TO THE BALKANS, THE MIDDLE EAST, EUROPE, AND NORTH AFRICA.

I WAS WORKING ON A PROJECT IN KOSOVO, AFTER THE WAR. IT WAS A STORY ABOUT FINDING AND IDENTIFYING THE PEOPLE WHO'D BEEN KILLED.

I WAS ON THE PATH TO SUCCESS. I WON A BIG PRIZE FOR MY PICTURES, AND I WAS CERTAIN I WAS GOING TO BE FAMOUS.

ALL I HAD TO DO WAS TO KEEP WORKING AND GET OUT INTO THE WORLD AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

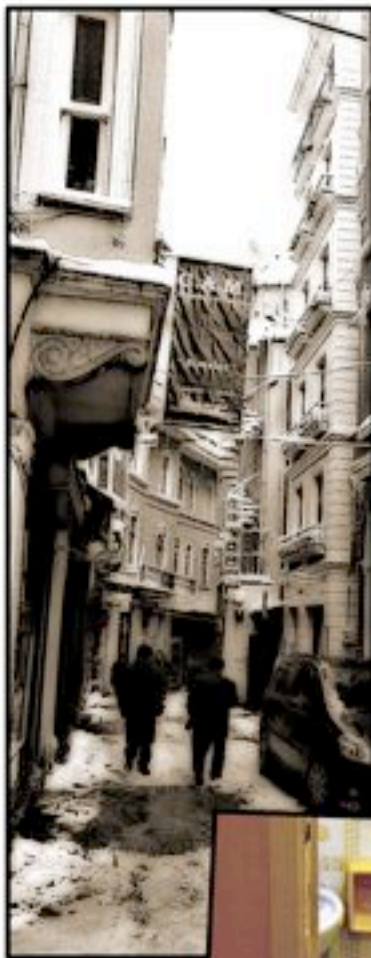
AND FOR THAT, I NEEDED A BASE TO WORK FROM...



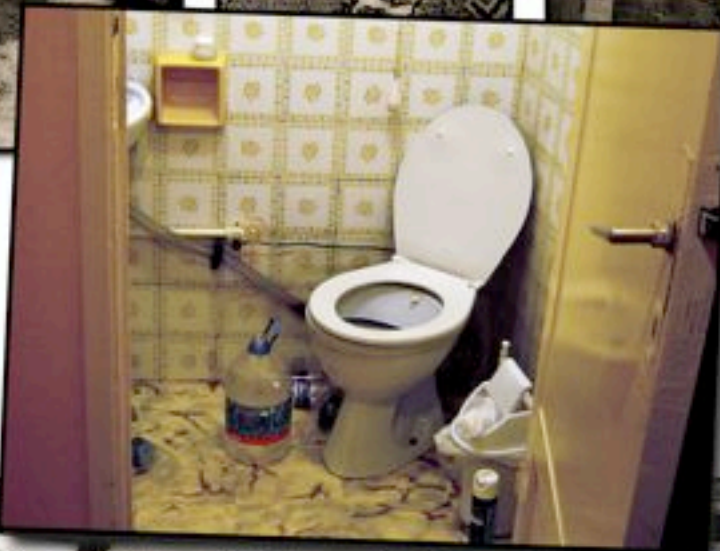








ISTANBUL WAS CHEAP WHEN I ARRIVED IN 2001. THERE'D BEEN A BIG ECONOMIC COLLAPSE.



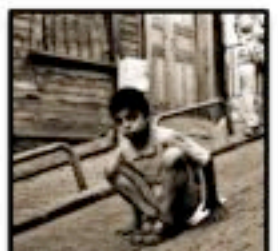
I RENTED A BIG APARTMENT FOR A FEW HUNDRED BUCKS A MONTH. IT WAS IN AN OLD NEIGHBORHOOD, VERY SCENIC.

I COULD LIVE HARD AND WORK CHEAP.



THE ROOF LEAKED, THE PLUMBING STANK, AND THE LANDLORD WAS NUTS, BUT IT WAS JUST ME I HAD TO TAKE CARE OF, SO WHO CARED?

THINGS WERE GOING WELL, AND I WASN'T THERE MUCH ANYWAY.







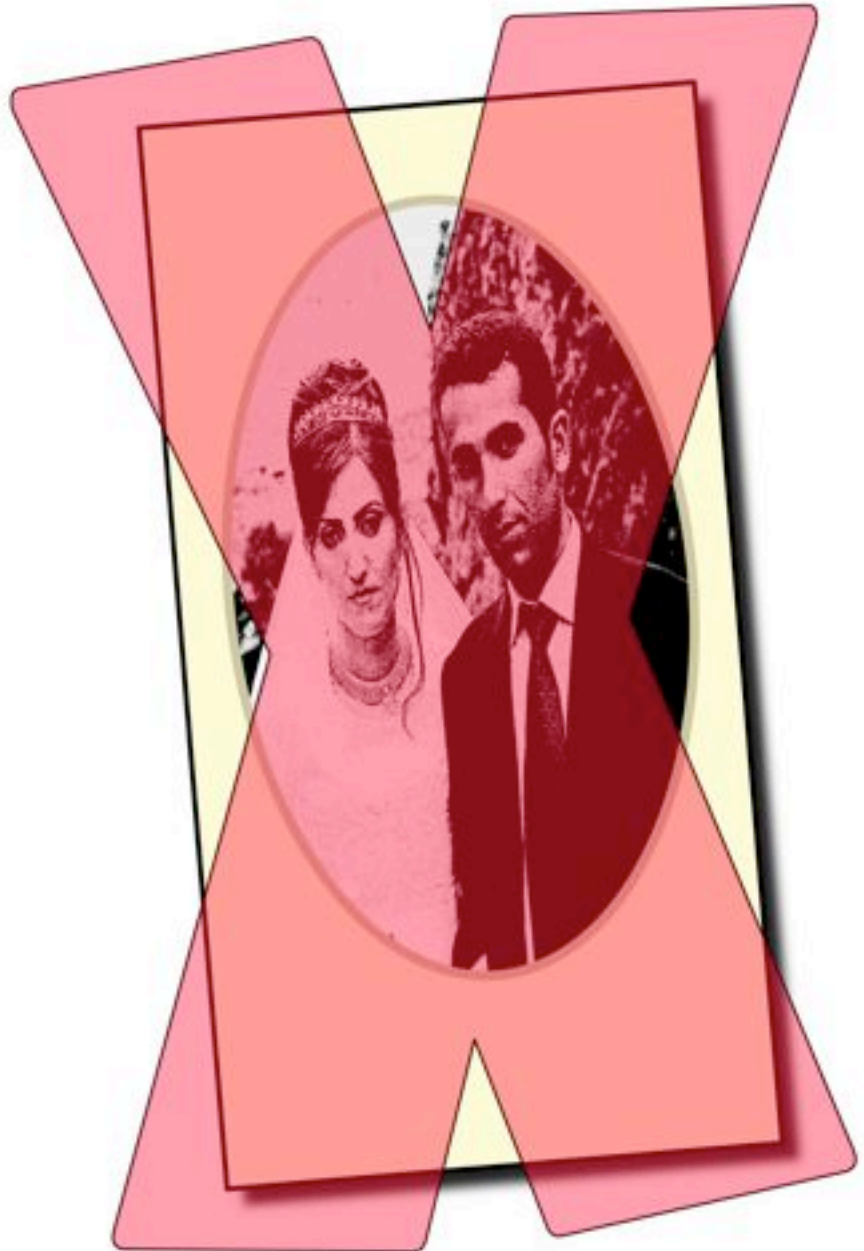
SPOKE NO ENGLISH.

I DATED A FEW TURKISH GIRLS, BUT WE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH IN COMMON. I MEAN, ONE GIRL ONLY SPOKE TURKISH, BUT SHE REALLY LIKED FOREIGN MEN. REALLY, REALLY.

THEN THERE WAS THE KIND WHO WAS PLANNING OUR WEDDING ON THE SECOND DATE.



STOLE \$5000.



INTO CRYSTALS.

I DIDN'T NEED THAT KIND OF HASSLE. I SWORE THEM OFF.

THAT'S HOW I FOUND MYSELF LOOKING AT THE PERSONAL ADS ON THE INTERNET LATE ONE SATURDAY NIGHT...





Photo obviously by a professional, and in fact Marlon Etlinger, the famous photographer of authors

## 36 YEAR OLD WOMAN IN PARIS, FRANCE

LOOKING FOR MEN FOR A  
LONG TERM RELATIONSHIP,  
A FRIEND OR AN ACTIVITY  
PARTNER.

OCCUPATION:	WRITER
EDUCATION:	PH.D.
SPEAKS:	ENGLISH
STATUS:	SINGLE
HAVE CHILDREN:	NO
WANT CHILDREN:	YES

HEIGHT:	165-166 CM
BODY TYPE:	AVERAGE
HAIR COLOR:	IT DEPENDS
EYE COLOR:	BROWN

YOU SOUND LIKE A NICE  
GUY, BUT I'M NOT  
LOOKING FOR A LONG-  
DISTANCE RELATIONSHIP.



I JUST TOOK  
ANOTHER LOOK AT  
YOUR PHOTO...

# Claire's Profile

...AND ON SECOND  
THOUGHT, I AM!

### THE LAST GREAT BOOK I READ:

JOHN BLOFELD'S *CITY OF  
LINGERING SPLENDOR: A  
FRANK ACCOUNT OF  
PEKING'S EXOTIC PLEASURES.*  
SO BEAUTIFUL, SO  
LYRICAL, SO SAD!

PLEASE NOTE: IF YOU HAVE  
LISTED ANYTHING BY  
**BUKOWSKI** IN THIS  
SECTION, IT WON'T WORK.  
WE'RE **INCOMPATIBLE**.  
DON'T WRITE, DON'T **WINK**,  
DON'T EVEN **TALK** TO ME  
ABOUT IT.

### IF I COULD BE ANYWHERE RIGHT NOW:

ANYWHERE? REALLY? WELL, THEN, **PEKING**, 1934, HAUNTED BY THE  
POWERFUL SPIRIT OF THE LATE DOWAGER EMPRESS TZU HSI, AMID  
THE PALACES AND TEMPLES OF THE **FORBIDDEN CITY**, THE  
LOTUS-COVERED LAKES AND LUSH **PLEASURE-GARDENS**, THE  
BUSTLING **BAZAARS** AND PEACEFUL **BATHHOUSES**...

BUT WAIT, ANYWHERE? WHAT ABOUT **MEDIEVAL PERSIA**, IN A  
GOLD-FLECKED CITY OF REFULGENT ROSE AND LAPUS LAZULI, THE  
ROOFS AND EDGES OF THE BUILDINGS FORMING LOOPS WITHIN  
RIBBONS WITHIN SWIRLS, SNOOZING IN THE GARDEN OF AN  
**ONION-DOMED PALACE**, PERCHED UPON A ROCKY HILL,  
PRESIDING OVER PEACOCKS AND BLOSSOMS, PEACH TREES IN FRUIT,  
A VANILLA-SCENTED BREEZE IN THE AIR?

BUT I COULD GO ON LIKE THIS FOR A WHILE, "**ANYWHERE**" IS QUITE  
AN INSPIRING IDEA.

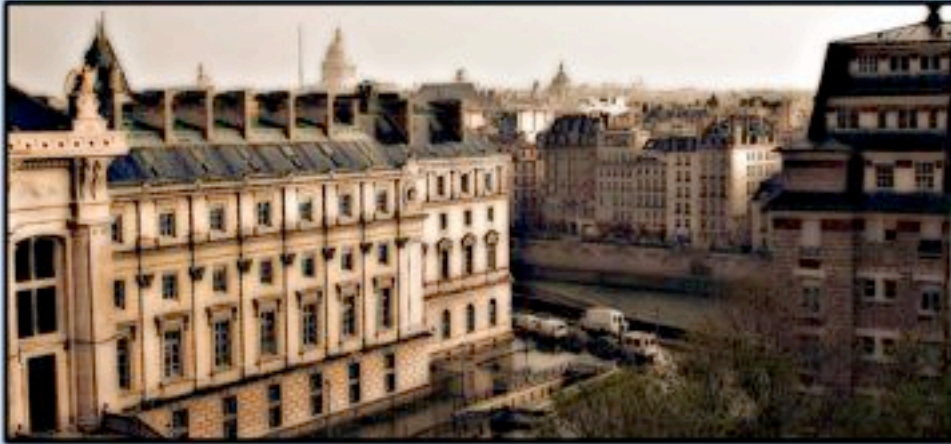
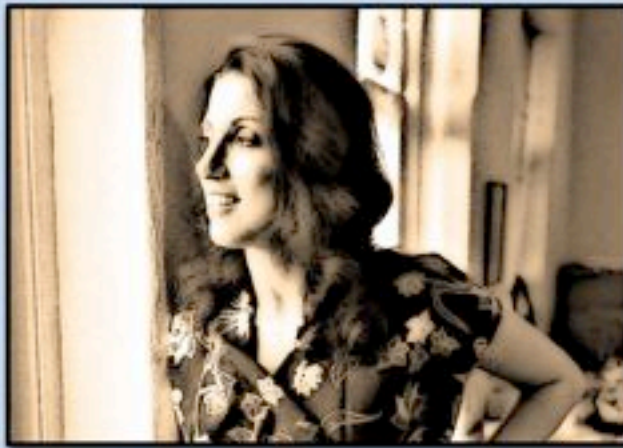


I HAD TO COLLECT A DEBT IN PARIS, SO I DECIDED TO FLY UP.

SHE LOOKED LIKE HER PHOTO. WE HIT IT OFF.

SHE HAD AN APARTMENT WITH A VIEW, A PLACE TO GET OVER THE POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS.

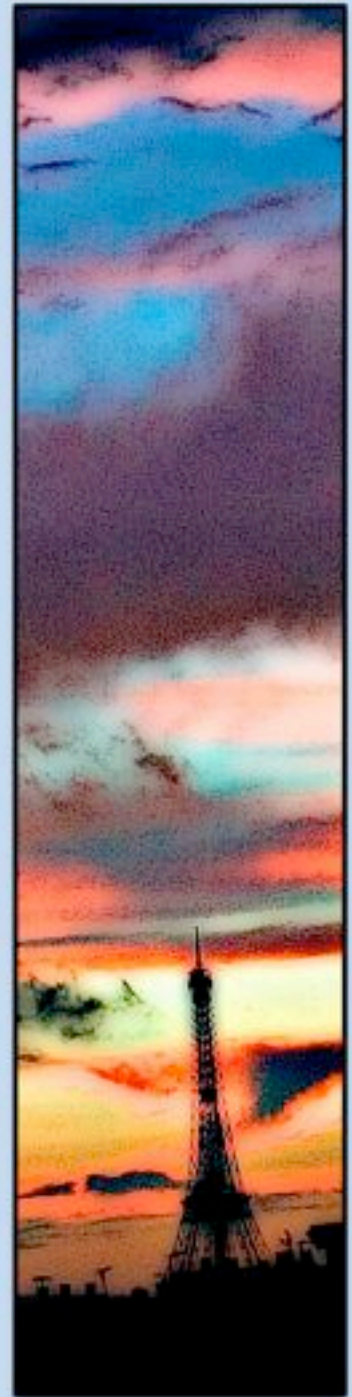
WHEN I NEEDED HER, THERE SHE WAS.



THAT YEAR, WE HAD SOME GREAT ADVENTURES.

SHE FLEW TO ISTANBUL, THEN WE WENT DOWN TO THE DOCK AND HITCHED A CARGO BOAT TO TRIESTE.

WE WENT OVERLAND TO MARSEILLE, STOPPING IN VENICE.



IN BERLIN, WE INTERVIEWED A WEIRD GERMAN BAND CALLED RAMMSTEIN.



WE LIVED LIKE THAT FOR A YEAR, ME VISITING HER IN PARIS, HER VISITING ME IN ISTANBUL.

SHE WAS KIND, LOVING, BRILLIANT, ADVENTUROUS, SEXY, CREATIVE, AND A GREAT COOK.

I WAS MADLY IN LOVE WITH HER.



CLAIRE MOVED IN WITH ME A YEAR LATER. SHE WASN'T EXACTLY THRILLED WITH THE STATE OF MY EXCELLENT BACHELOR'S PAD.

SHE PLANTED A GARDEN ON MY BALCONY, AND I PAINTED A MURAL FOR HER ON THE WALL.

AT NIGHT WE'D LIGHT INCENSE AND SIT IN THE GARDEN. SHE'D RUB MY BACK, AND I'D THINK HOW LOVELY IT WAS TO LIVE WITH HER.

I FIGURED THIS WAS THE BEGINNING OF A LIFETIME OF ADVENTURE WITH CLAIRE. I'D ALWAYS WANTED A WOMAN LIKE HER... SOMEONE WHO WOULD SHARE MY LIFE.

CLAIRE WAS A WRITER, I WAS A PHOTOGRAPHER, AND I FIGURED WE COULD BE A PERFECT TEAM.

ONLY THING IS, CLAIRE'S IDEA OF ADVENTURE WASN'T ALWAYS THE SAME AS MINE.



HEY, DO YOU WANT TO FLY TO *KURDISTAN* WITH ME? WE COULD HANG OUT WITH THE *PESHMURGA*!

DO I WANT TO DO *WHAT*? ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR *MIND*?

MY MOTHER WOULD *PLOTZ* IF I TOLD HER I WAS GOING TO *IRAQ*!





# Visit Kurdistan!

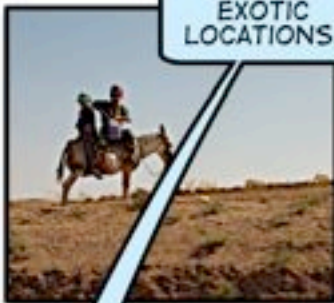
"IT'S NOT REALLY IRAQ!"



FRIENDLY PEOPLE!



EXOTIC LOCATIONS!



MEN WITH MUSTACHES



CHEAP CARPETS!



IT'S ONLY *KURDISTAN*,  
CLAIRE, IT'S VERY SAFE!

NO, THAT'S THE *LAST*  
PLACE I WANT TO GO.

BESIDES, I DON'T HAVE  
TIME. I HAVE TO FINISH  
WRITING MY *NOVEL*.

WELL, THEN...I GUESS I'LL  
HAVE TO GO BY MYSELF.

WHAT? I JUST *MOVED*  
HERE -- TO BE WITH YOU!

I DON'T SPEAK  
A WORD OF  
TURKISH!

YOU'RE GOING  
TO LEAVE ME  
HERE ALONE?

I'M SORRY, CLAIRE... BUT  
I'M A PHOTOJOURNALIST!  
GOING AWAY IS WHAT I DO!





SO I WENT TO KURDISTAN BY MYSELF.

I MISSED CLAIRE.

I WAS A LITTLE WORRIED ABOUT LEAVING HER ALONE IN ISTANBUL.



BUT CLAIRE SURVIVED JUST FINE. IN FACT, WHEN I CAME BACK SHE'D LEARNED TO SPEAK TURKISH -- BETTER THAN ME!



MERHABA!

MERHABA, GÜNAYDIN! NASILSINIZ?

İYİYİM, TEŞEKKÜR EDERİM. SİZ NASILSINIZ?



CAY İSTİYOR MUSUNUZ?

SHE HAD MADE FRIENDS WITH THE FRUIT SELLER, THE FISHMONGER, THE JUNK MAN WITH THE WOODEN PUSHCART...AND ALL THE STRAY CATS IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD.



CLAIRE LOVED CATS, AND EVERYWHERE WE WENT IN ISTANBUL, SHE'D STOP TO PET THEM.



OH, LOOK AT HIM!  
DAVID, YOU'RE NOT  
EATING THAT KEBAB, GIVE  
HIM A PIECE, HE'S  
**HUNGRY!** HEY, LOOK AT  
**THAT** LITTLE GUY! OH,  
YOU'RE SO **FRIENDLY**,  
AREN'T YOU SWEETIE?  
COME HERE! YOU LIKE  
YOUR EARS SCRATCHED,  
DON'T YOU? EXCUSE ME,  
KITTY, I DIDN'T MEAN TO  
INTERRUPT YOU, GO  
BACK TO WHAT YOU WERE  
DOING, DON'T MIND  
ME.... OH, YOU WANT TO  
**PLAY?** DON'T **WORRY**,  
DAVID, I'LL WASH MY  
HANDS BEFORE I EAT  
AND IT WILL BE **FINE**.

HERE, KITTY, KITTY,  
KITTY! CHECK OUT THE  
**EARS** ON THAT ONE,  
DAVID...SHE LOOKS LIKE  
A **BAT!** LOOK, **KITTENS!!!**  
WHERE'S YOUR **MOM**,  
LITTLE GUYS? IS SHE  
OUT MOUSING? WOW,  
THAT ONE LOOKS LIKE  
A **TIGER**, DOESN'T HE?  
HEY DAVID! DOESN'T THIS  
ONE HAVE A SWEET  
FACE? OH, THE POOR  
LITTLE THING IS SO  
**THIN**. GIVE HIM THE REST  
OF YOUR KEBAB, HONEY,  
HE NEEDS IT MORE THAN  
YOU DO... DON'T BE  
AFRAID, KITTY, I JUST  
WANT TO SAY **HI!**  
OH, **WATCH OUT FOR**  
**THE CARS!**





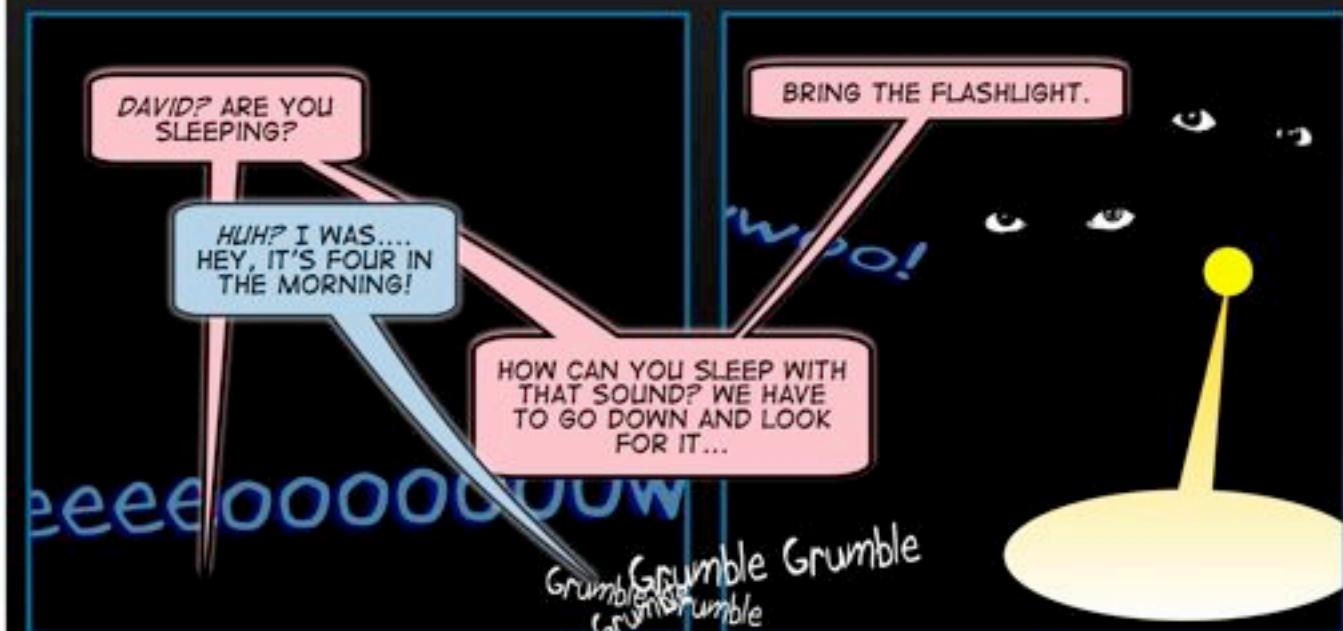




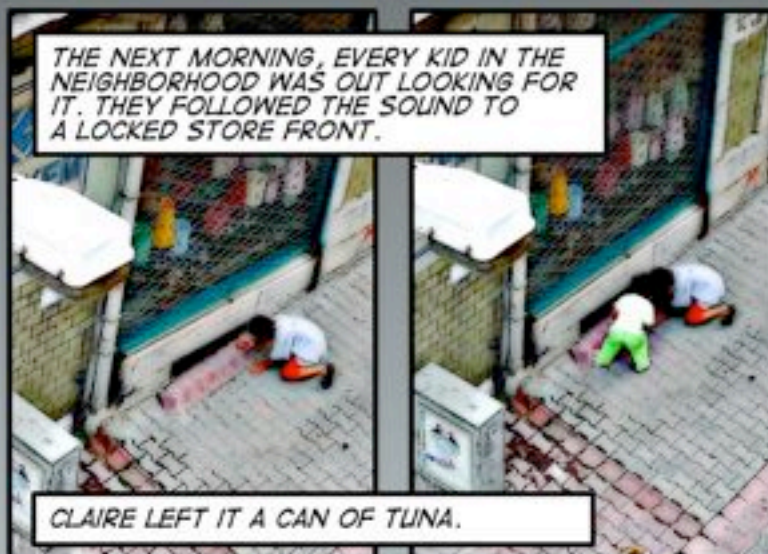
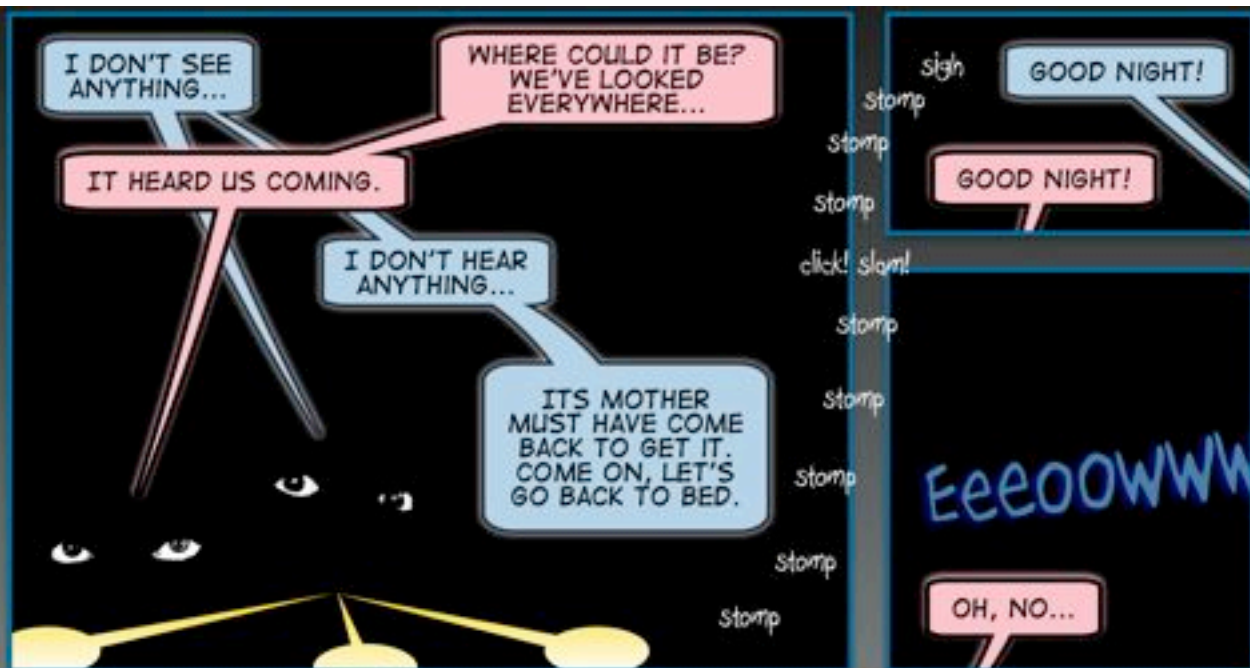
The Secret of  
the Noise  
in the  
Middle of the  
Night













CLAIRE TRIED AND TRIED TO REACH IT, BUT IT WOULDN'T COME OUT.

IT WAS STILL CRYING THE NEXT MORNING, BUT THE SOUND WAS GROWING FAINTER...

I KNEW ITS MOTHER WASN'T COMING BACK.

BY AFTERNOON ITS CRY WAS SO WEAK THAT THE MUEZZIN AND THE SEAGULLS ALMOST DROWNED IT OUT...

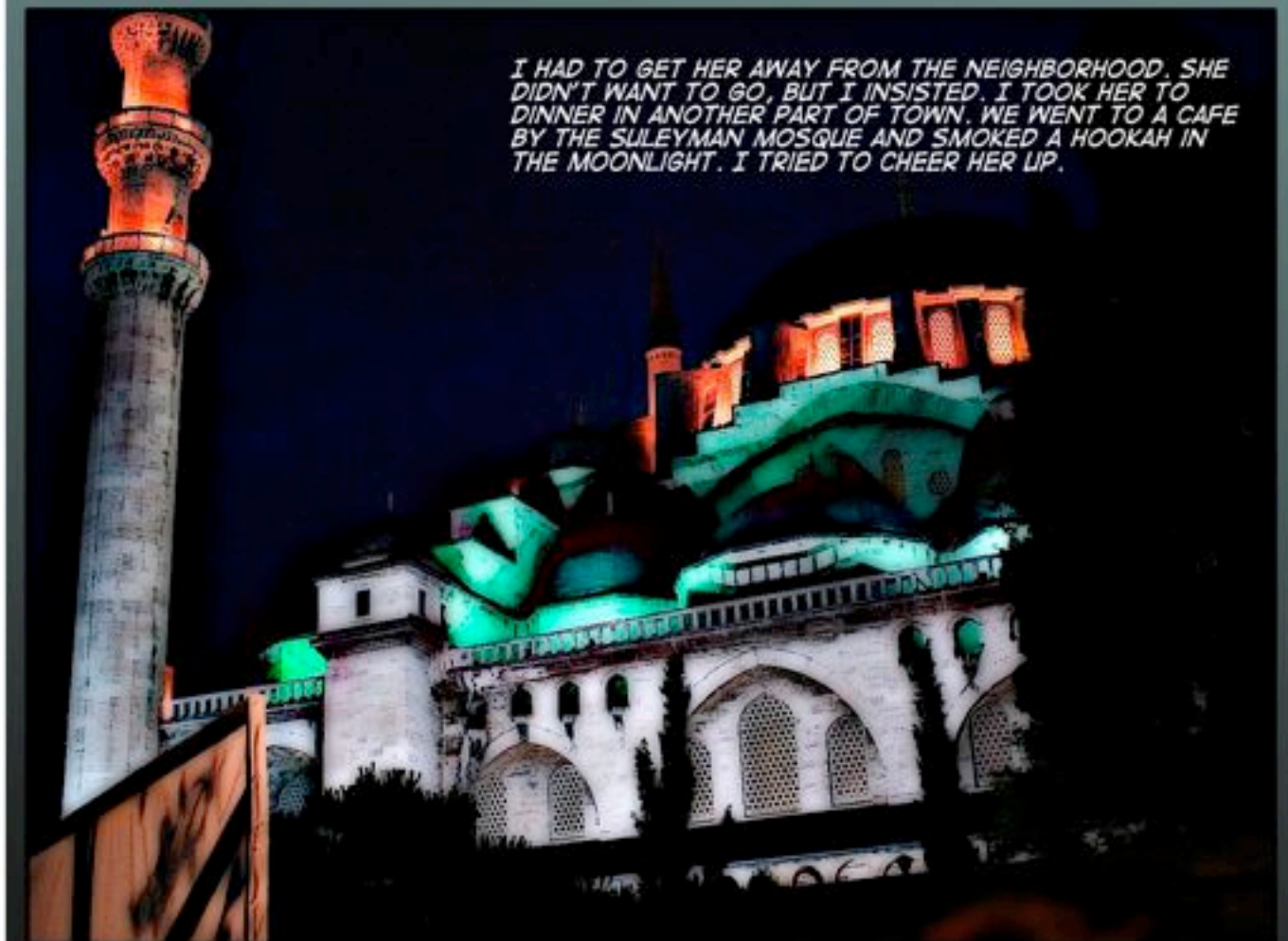
CLAIRE LOOKED AT ME ALL DAY WITH SAD, ANXIOUS EYES. WE BOTH KNEW IT WAS LOSING STRENGTH.

THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO... IT WAS HIDING DEEP IN THE EAVES OF THE BUILDING OVER THE SHOP. I COULDN'T TEAR THE BUILDING DOWN.

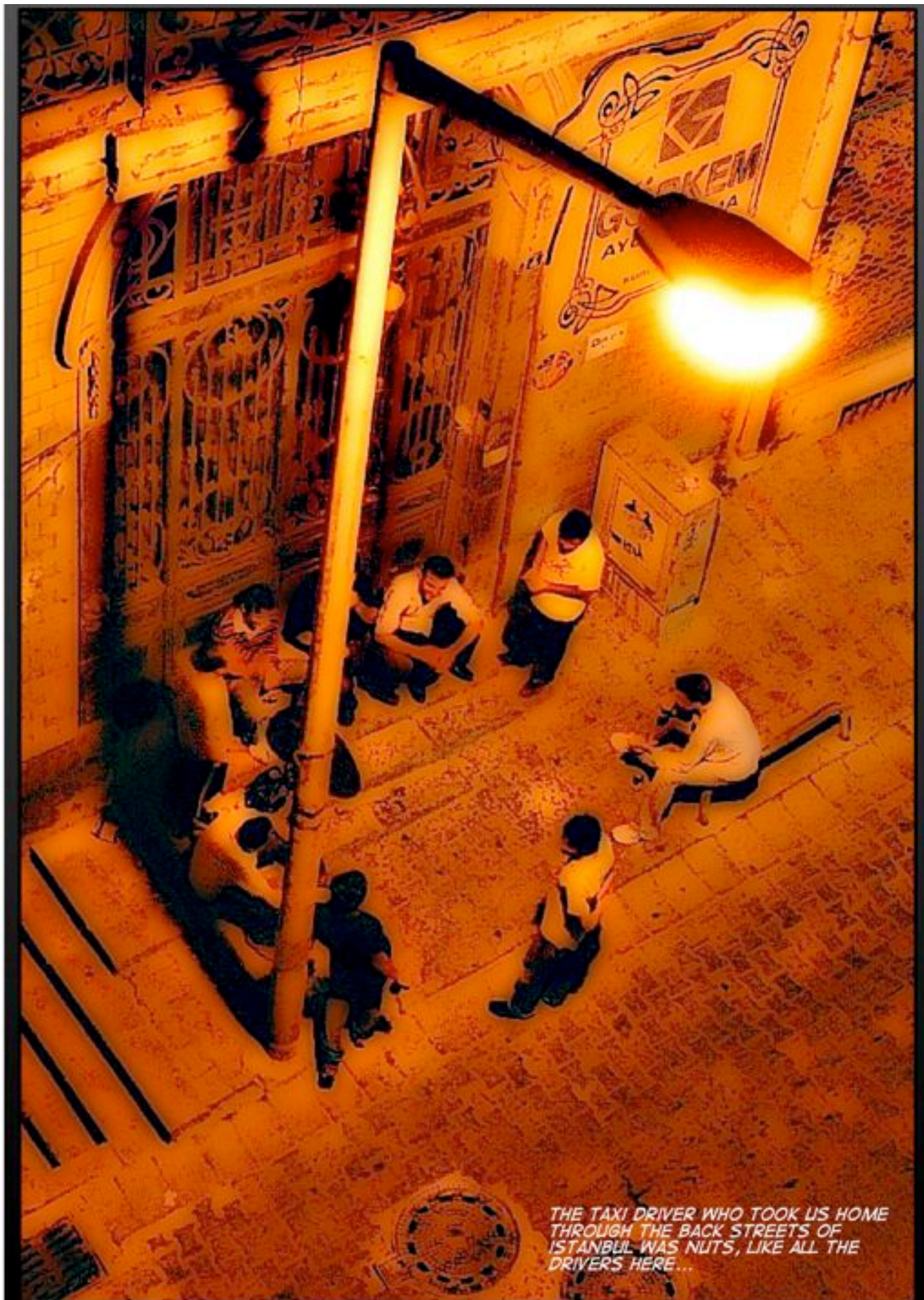
I'M A PHOTOJOURNALIST. I'VE SEEN WARS AND MASS GRAVES. I KNOW THAT LIFE IS TOUGH. BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO SEE CLAIRE'S FACE WHEN ITS CRYING STOPPED...FOR GOOD.



I HAD TO GET HER AWAY FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD. SHE DIDN'T WANT TO GO, BUT I INSISTED. I TOOK HER TO DINNER IN ANOTHER PART OF TOWN. WE WENT TO A CAFE BY THE SULEYMAN MOSQUE AND SMOKED A HOOKAH IN THE MOONLIGHT. I TRIED TO CHEER HER UP.









HE VEERED UP TO THE CURB OUTSIDE OUR APARTMENT WITH HIS TIRES SCREECHING.

THAT'S WHEN CLAIRE SAW IT, CLINGING TO THE METAL GRILLE OUTSIDE THE SHOP, LIKE A TINY, TINY CIRCUS ACROBAT. THE NOISE OF THE TAXI CAUGHT IT BY SURPRISE. TERRIFIED, IT BEGAN SCRABBLING MADLY UP THE GRILLE.



CLAIRE LEAPT OUT OF THE CAB AND RACED ACROSS THE STREET...



*I'VE GOT  
HER!!!*







OF COURSE SHE'S CUTE, BUT CLAIRE, WE **CAN'T** KEEP HER ... I CAN'T TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR A **CAT**, I'M AWAY HALF THE TIME! MY CAREER IS JUST TAKING OFF ... I NEED TO BE FREE TO GO AWAY!

NO, YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE WE CAN'T KEEP HER. THAT'S A SILLY <sup>uh huh</sup> THOUGHT.

WE HAVE TO FIND A HOME FOR HER. THERE'S AN OLD LADY UP THE STREET WHO TAKES CARE OF A LOT OF STRAY CATS ... WE CAN TAKE HER THERE.

I'M LIVING ON  
A **SHOESTRING**...  
I CAN'T AFFORD  
VET BILLS!



WE'LL DO THAT.  
TOMORROW.

OF COURSE. I AGREE WITH YOU COMPLETELY.



I MEAN, I WANT YOU TO BE ABLE TO TRAVEL WITH ME... I WANT TO GO ON ADVENTURES TOGETHER... WE CAN'T DO THAT WITH A PET!



PURRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR



OH, SHE'S  
*PURRING...*

DO YOU LIKE THE  
NAME *FÉLINE*?



RRRRRR

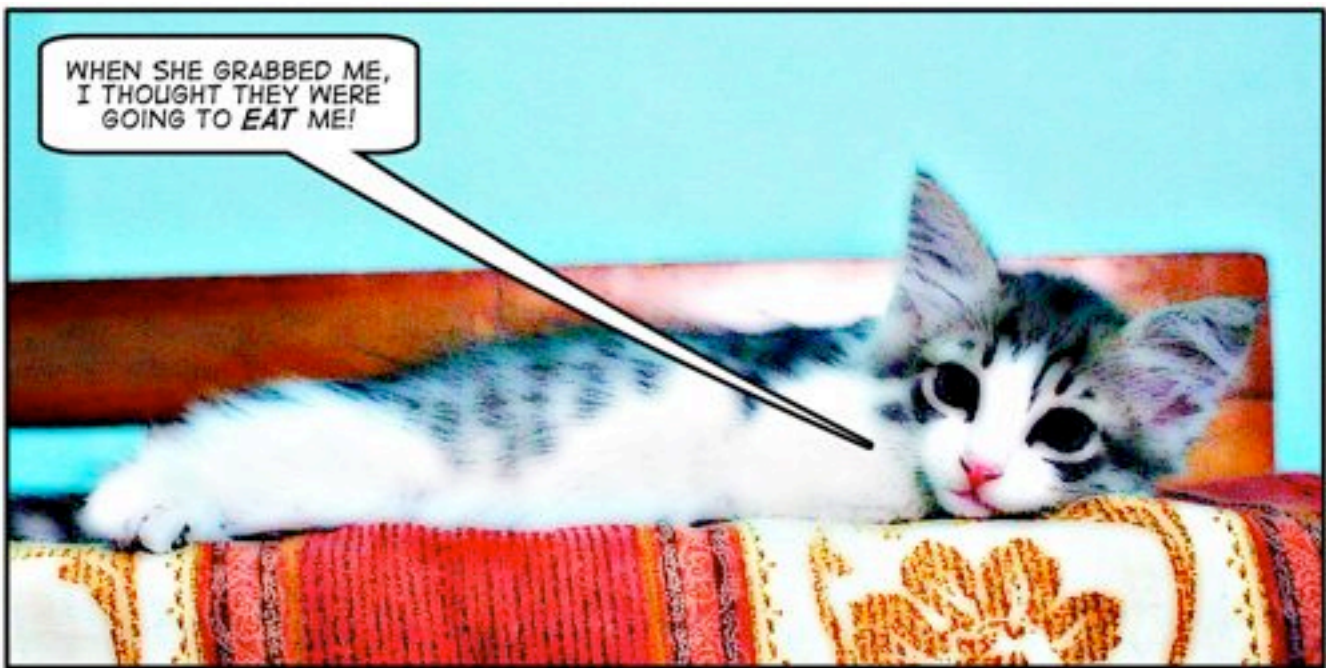
LOOK, IF SHE STAYS HERE, SHE IS **COMPLETELY** YOUR RESPONSIBILITY. I WANT **NOTHING** TO DO WITH THIS.



The Most  
Absolutely  
Last Thing  
We Need  
Around Here





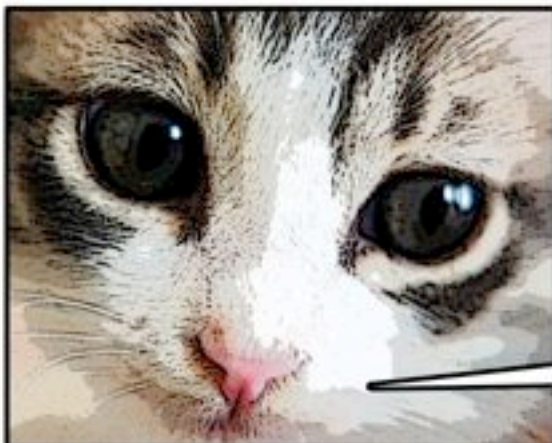


WHEN SHE GRABBED ME,  
I THOUGHT THEY WERE  
GOING TO *EAT* ME!



I HID UNDER THE FRIDGE FOR  
DAYS. I ONLY CAME OUT AT  
NIGHT, WHEN THEY WENT AWAY.

SHE LEFT TUNA FOR ME, AND  
A WARM HAMBURGER, ONCE...



AFTER A WHILE  
I GOT USED  
TO THEM...

...BUT I'VE ALWAYS  
WONDERED WHERE  
MY MOM WENT...AND  
WHY SHE LEFT ME.



DAVID! SHE'S LETTING ME PET  
HER ... SHE'S NOT HISSING  
ANYMORE!

LISTEN! SHE'S *PURRING*!

BUT...CLAIRE, WHAT ARE  
WE GOING TO *DO* WITH  
HER? WE CAN'T ADOPT  
A *CAT*!



# Roots

WE WONDERED WHERE FÉLINE HAD COME FROM. WE WOULD NEVER KNOW FOR SURE, BUT WE HAD OUR SUSPICIONS...







PAMUK? GOOD LOOKIN' CAT, YEAH, BUT **GOOD LOOKS** DON'T DO YOU NO GOOD ON THE **STREET**. DON'T MATTER HOW **FLUFFY** YOU ARE OUT HERE!



PAMUK ALWAYS HAD **HER NOSE IN THE AIR** JUST BECAUSE SHE USED TO BE SOME KIND OF FANCY **HOUSECAT**. DIDN'T FOOL ME. I ALWAYS **KNEW** THAT CAT WAS JUST A **TRAMP**.



PAMUK WAS GOOD FOR ONE THING... A **GOOD TIME**.



OH, THAT **LITTLE GIRL** OF HERS, THAT POOR, **POOR** WEE THING. PAMUK JUST **LOST HER** ONE NIGHT, AND **NO ONE EVER SAW HER** AGAIN... (SHUDDER)

NAH, THE KITTEN WASN'T MINE. **HIC!** I MEAN, **PAMUK'S** BEEN WITH EVERYONE.



**WHAT?** WHAT ARE YOU **LOOKING AT ME** LIKE THAT FOR? ANYONE COULD **LOSE A KITTEN**. YOU TRY **KEEPING TRACK OF A WHOLE LITTER!** DO YOU SEE **HOW HARD** I HAVE TO **WORK** JUST TO KEEP MY **FUR CLEAN** ON THIS **FILTHY STREET?**

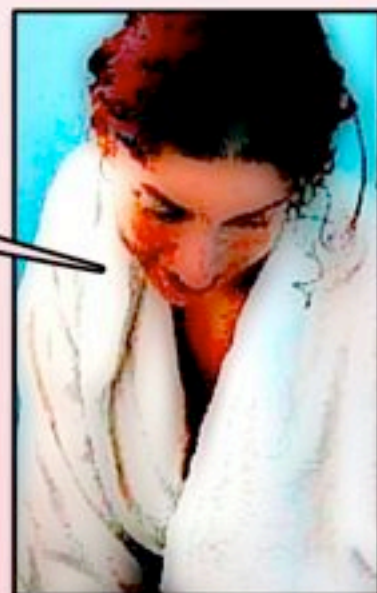
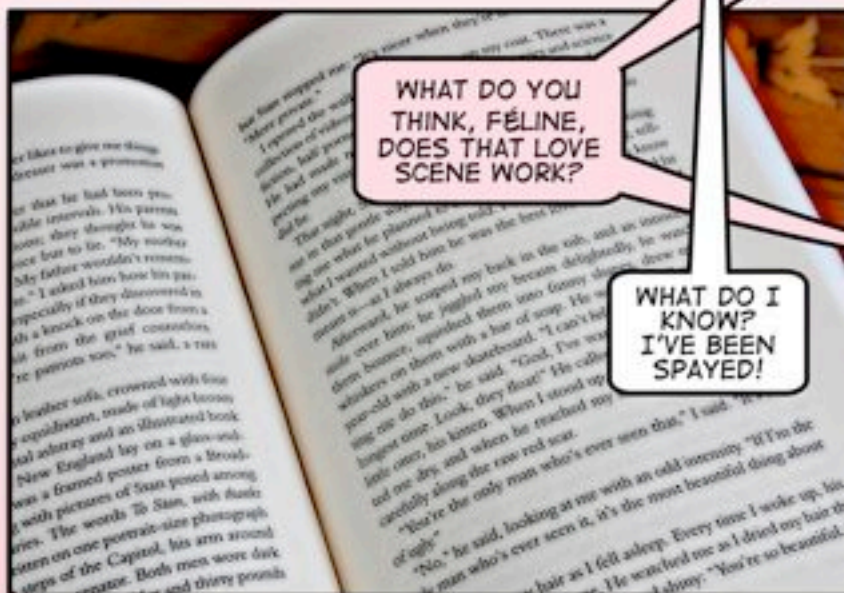
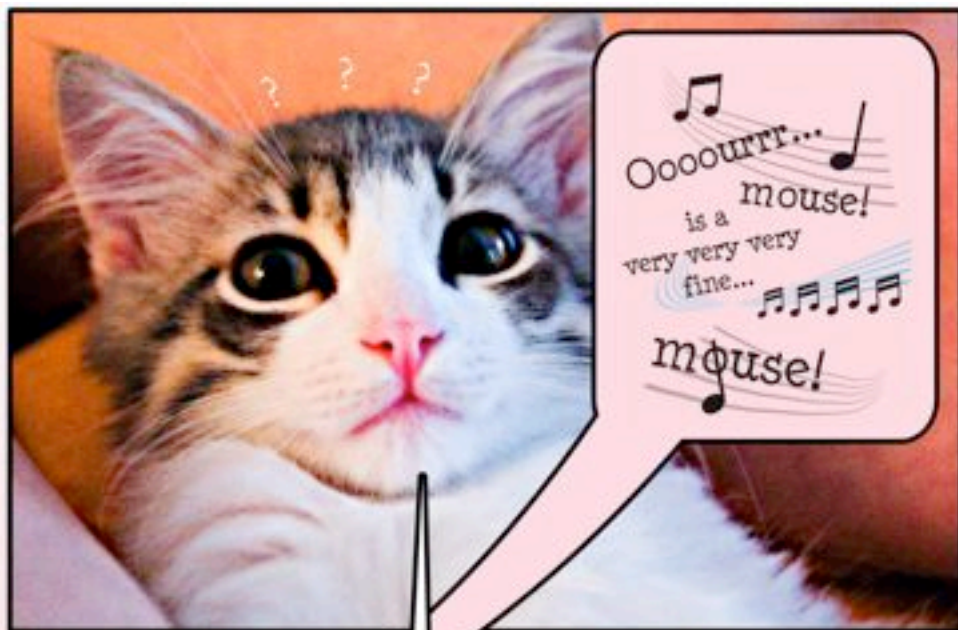




CLAIRE DOTED ON  
FÉLINE.

SHE SANG TO HER.  
SHE READ TO HER.  
SHE MADE TOYS  
FOR HER.

THEY SLEPT  
TOGETHER IN THE  
AFTERNOONS  
WHILE I WORKED.  
PLAYED TOGETHER  
IN THE EVENING,  
AND SLEPT  
TOGETHER AGAIN



ONE DAY, FÉLINE  
CRAWLED INTO BED  
WITH CLAIRE AND  
STARTED TRYING TO  
NURSE ON HER  
SWEATSHIRT.

THAT'S WHEN CLAIRE  
BEGAN DROPPING  
HINTS ABOUT  
MARRIAGE AND KIDS.

AND THAT'S WHEN  
OUR LIFE STARTED  
GETTING  
COMPLICATED...









I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO TO MAKE HER HAPPY. IT WASN'T LIKE I WANTED TO SPEND MY LIFE WITH ANYONE ELSE BUT CLAIRE, BUT CLAIRE'S IDEAL OF MARRIAGE WAS A HOME, A KID, AND A CAT...



...AND I HAD MY OWN WANTS.

I STILL WANTED TO TRAVEL THE WORLD. I WANTED MY CAREER. I WANTED TO TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS THAT MATTERED, THAT MIGHT JUST CHANGE THE WORLD IN SOME SMALL WAY.

LIKE EVERY MAN, I WANTED A LITTLE BIT OF IMMORTALITY.

CLAIRE WANTED TO BUILD A HOME WITH ME.



HEY! THIS PICTURE IS A LIE!

DON'T PIN THIS SUBURBAN NIGHTMARE ON ME! THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN BY A HOME.



A PLACE YOU NEVER LEAVE, WHERE YOUR LIFE IS STABLE AND PREDICTABLE...



WELL, IT'S WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT A HOME THIS IS WHAT I SEE!

"A FINE PLACE TO RAISE KIDS."



CLAIRE NEVER WANTED TO GO ON ADVENTURES ANYMORE...

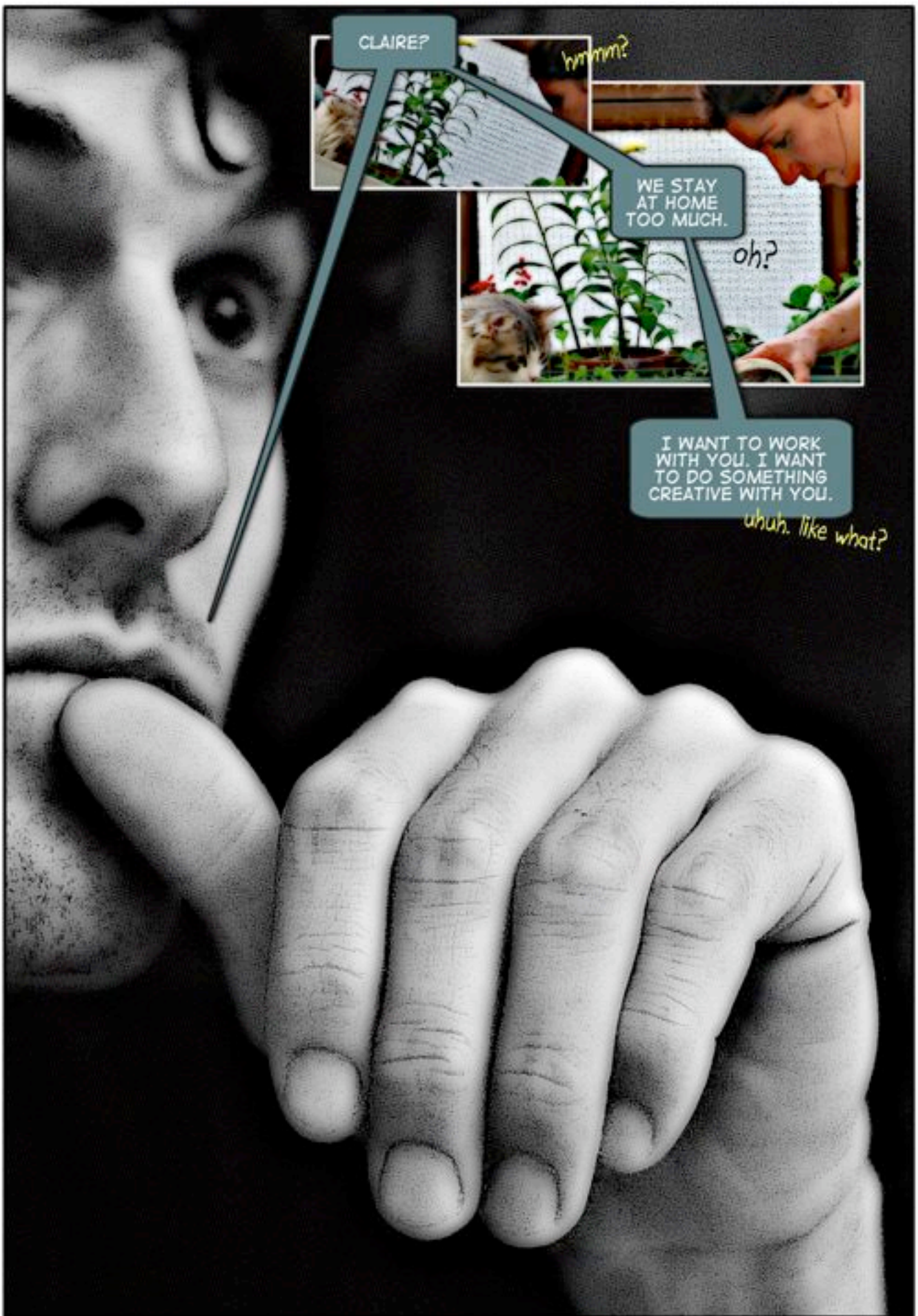
DAVID, THIS BOOK HAS TO BE ON MY EDITOR'S DESK NEXT WEEK! I HAVE A CAREER TOO... I CAN'T JUST PICK UP AND GO LIKE YOU CAN.



I LOVED FELINE...BUT I WAS BEGINNING TO RESENT HER, TOO ...

BESIDES, WHO WOULD TAKE CARE OF FELINE?







MAYBE WE CAN GO TO  
LATIN AMERICA AND DO  
A STORY ON A MASS  
GRAVE THERE! I'VE GOT  
GREAT CONTACTS...

Um...next idea?

I HAD TO COME UP  
WITH SOMETHING SHE  
REALLY WANTED TO  
DO, OR SHE'D NEVER  
DO IT.

igen doesn't he? Hey Dav  
sn't this one have a swe  
face  
ING  
est  
or little  
Give him  
ib, honeu.



, kitty, kitty, kitty.

David...she looks like  
a bat! look, kittens!!! Where  
our mom, little guys? Is s  
ut mousing? Wow, that one





SPECIAL REPORT

# The Secret Lives of The Cats of Istanbul

a creative project with original reporting by David Gross and Claire Berlinski

OUR DESCENT INTO ISTANBUL'S FELINE CITY WAS A RISK WE HAD TO TAKE, AND WE WENT...ALONE. NO TRANSLATOR, NO FIXER. JUST GUTS.

AHEM. WE JOURNALISTS HAVE A TERM FOR JUMPING INTO A FOREIGN CULTURE WITH NO PREPARATION. WE CALL IT...PARACHUTING.

OUR FIRST CONTACT TOOK US TO THE GALATA WATERFRONT, WHERE WE ENCOUNTERED THIS ETHNICALLY DIVIDED NEIGHBORHOOD...PERHAPS ON THE BRINK OF CIVIL WAR.

THAT'S RIGHT, DAVID. IT LOOKS LIKE WE'VE GOT SOME CLAN RIVALRY HERE AT THE HOTLY CONTESTED GARBAGE DUMP...HAVE TO WATCH OUT...THE MOOD CAN CHANGE QUICKLY WHEN FOOD'S INVOLVED...

...OH MY GOD, THAT WAS CLOSE! THESE SKIRMISHES ARE TENSE INDEED. IT LOOKS LIKE THE DOGS HAVE WON THE DAY...FOR NOW. BACK TO YOU, DAVID.

...ANCIENT ETHNIC HATREDS...

EVERY EVENING, AT DUSK, WE WENT OUT TO STUDY THEM. ISTANBUL, WE DISCOVERED, WAS TWO CITIES -- THE CITY OF TURKS AND THE CITY OF CATS...





I CAUGHT A LUCKY BREAK WITH THIS ABANDONED BUILDING. IT'S A GOOD PLACE TO RAISE A FAMILY. NO KIDS, NO DOGS. NOT TOO COLD.



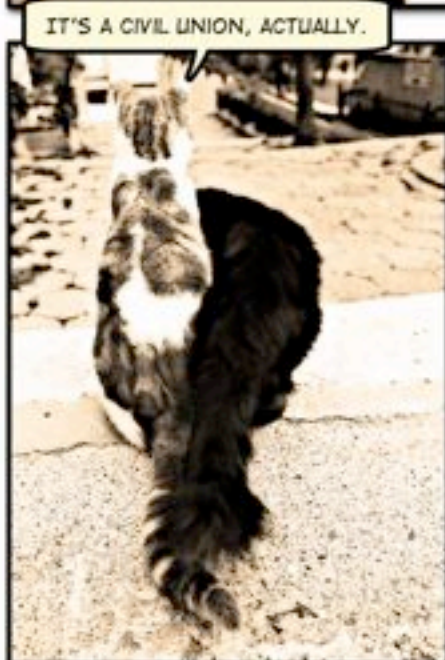
THIS PIECE OF SIDEWALK'S BEEN MINE FOR A FEW MONTHS NOW, I HAD TO CHEW SOME GUY'S EAR OFF FOR IT ... BUT NOW THEY GIVE ME *RESPECT*.



THE DOGS ON THIS STREET AIN'T TOO BAD...THEY MOSTLY JUST SLEEP.



MY NAME IS RED.



IT'S A CIVIL UNION, ACTUALLY.



THIS IS A PRETTY GOOD DUMPSTER, YOU GET SOME CHICKEN SOMETIMES, CAUGHT A *GREAT* MOUSE HERE TWO NIGHTS AGO...







# The Story of The Smudge





# Meanwhile...

The Golden Horn, ancient harbor of Byzantium and Constantinople, divides the city in two. The estuary opens to the Bosphorus, and as the sun sets, the water blazes yellow in the light...



On its banks are the oldest neighborhoods of Istanbul.



They are in a state of decay and renewal.



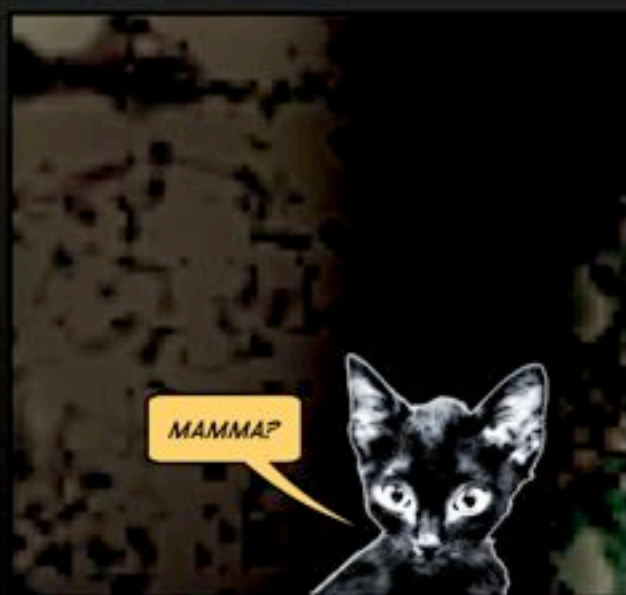
Mostly decay.



MAMMA! I'M HUNGRY. MAMMA, I WANT TO NURSE!











I SAT BESIDE MY  
MOTHER FOR A  
LONG, LONG TIME...

GROWING  
COLDER AND  
HUNGRIER...

THEN, AT LAST, I STUMBLED OUT  
INTO A CITY WHERE NO ONE CARES IF  
A LONELY KITTEN *LIVES OR DIES*...



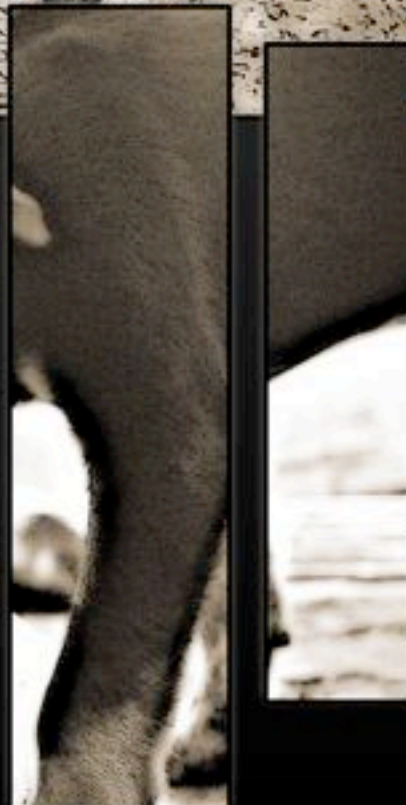
THIS CITY HAS TOO MANY DIRTY  
STREET CATS, THAT'S WHAT I SAY.

YES, EFENDIM. ANOTHER TEA?



COME CLOSER,  
LITTLE KITTEN!

JUST A LITTLE  
CLOSER...







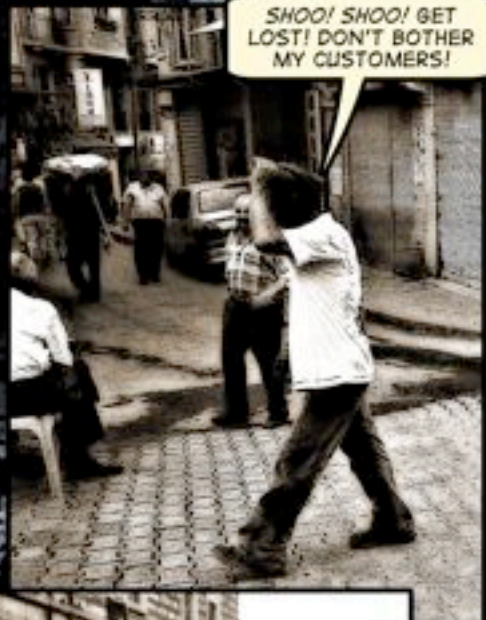
THIS DUMPSTER AIN'T NO  
*ORPHANAGE*, KID.  
BUGGER OFF!



GET AWAY, CAT!  
NOTHING HERE  
FOR YOU!



NO, HONEY, DON'T  
TOUCH THAT KITTEN,  
IT'S *SICK*...



*SHOO! SHOO!* GET  
LOST! DON'T BOTHER  
MY CUSTOMERS!



ALL RIGHT,  
FLEABAG, HAVE  
SOME KEBAB.

DID YOU SEE *THAT*? THAT  
TOMCAT JUST STOLE THE  
WHOLE KEBAB! SORRY, KITTY,  
THAT'S ALL I'VE GOT.

NO, DON'T *TOUCH* ME! I  
DON'T WANT YOUR *FLEAS*.







MEOW?



MEOW?

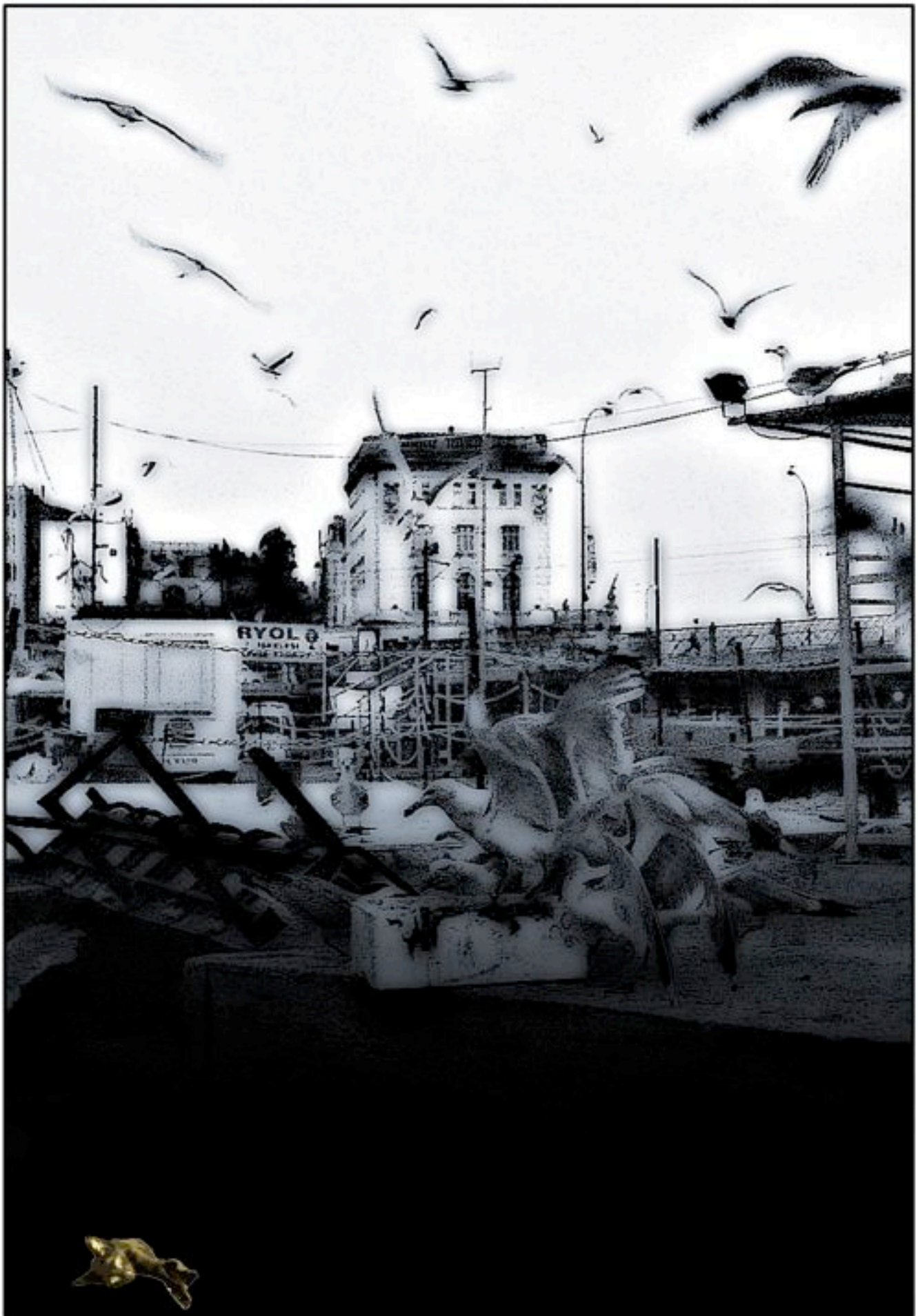
CENGİZ, YOU STUPID DONKEY! GET RID OF THAT FILTHY CAT BEFORE IT **STEALS** SOMETHING!



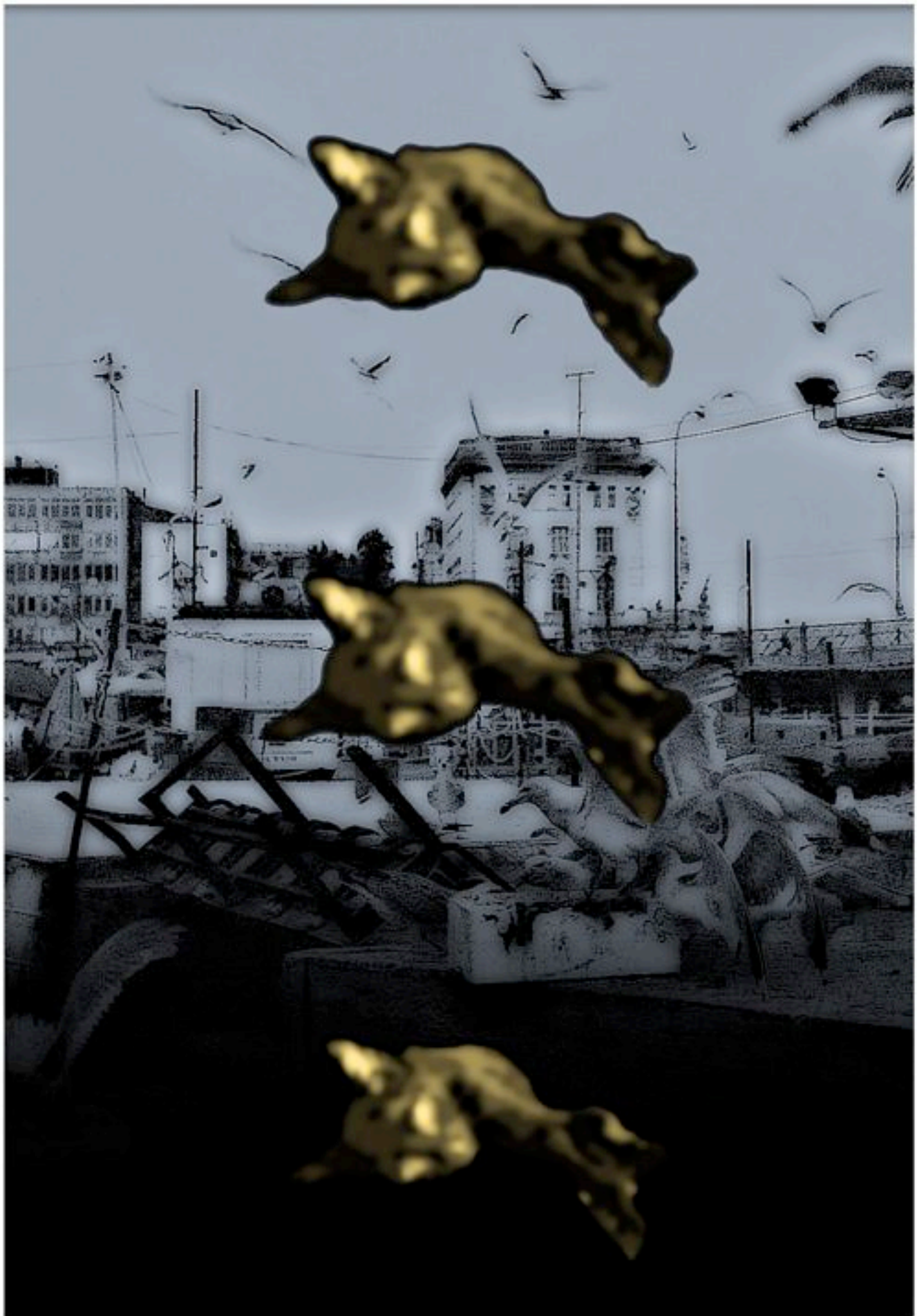
MEOW...?

THOSE BIRDS ARE JUST WAITING FOR THAT KITTEN TO **DIE**, AREN'T THEY...











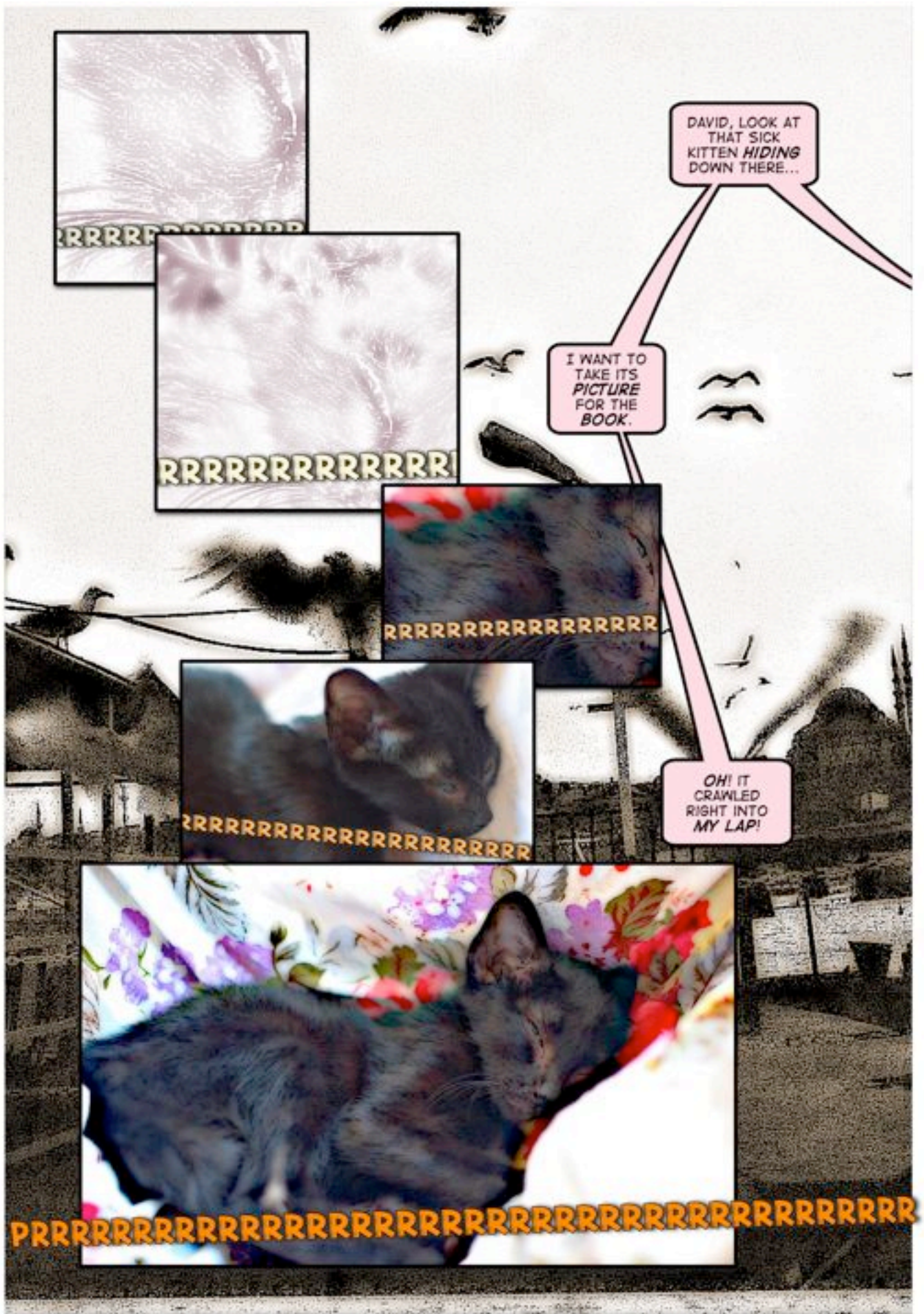
A dark, atmospheric illustration of a dilapidated building with a small dog in the foreground. The scene is rendered in a dark, moody style with a color palette dominated by dark blues, greys, and blacks. The building's facade is crumbling, with missing bricks and peeling plaster. A small, dark silhouette of a dog is visible in the lower left foreground. The overall mood is somber and evocative.

...and I was all alone, wondering the streets...

..but now we're  
together again...

XX

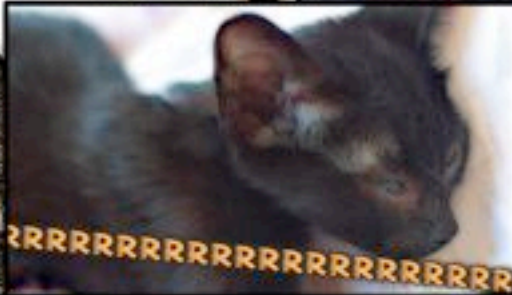
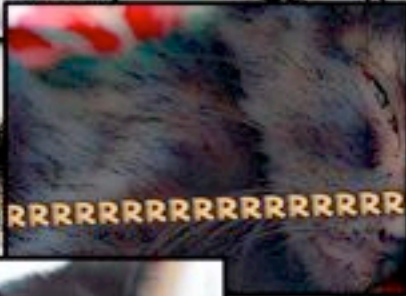




DAVID, LOOK AT  
THAT SICK  
KITTEN *HIDING*  
DOWN THERE...

I WANT TO  
TAKE ITS  
PICTURE  
FOR THE  
BOOK.

OH! IT  
CRAWLED  
RIGHT INTO  
MY LAP!







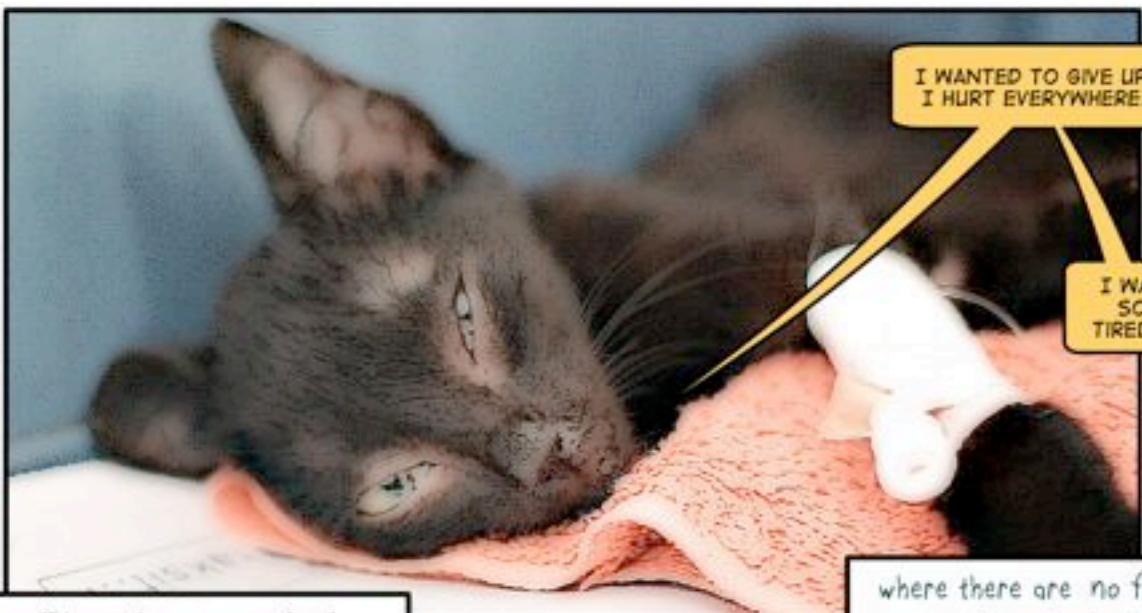












I WANTED TO GIVE UP.  
I HURT EVERYWHERE.

I WAS  
SO  
TIRED...

There will be sardines, yes, sardines! Have you ever had a sardine? Well, there will be plenty of sardines! You'll sleep in bed with us every night, on a soft pillow, and you'll have toys to play with, and anchovies for breakfast - yum! - and chicken drumsticks for lunch. And you'll have a big sister named Felice, and you'll play in the garden and chase butterflies ... we'll grow fresh catnip for you, pots and pots of it! And you'll sit in my lap while I work, and when it's cold in the winter you'll sleep on the radiator ... we'll throw paper balls for you, and we'll play chase-the-mousie, and your fur will grow back and you'll be sleek and glossy

and you'll be so snug and cozy and you'll grow strong and healthy. So don't die, kitten ... you're not supposed to! It's not time for you to die, you're too young! If you live, I promise you you'll have a wonderful life ... I'll bring you home, and you'll be safe and warm and clean forever ... Just keep breathing, little kitten, keep fighting, you're not alone anymore. So just hang on, little kitten, you're going to feel so much better, and so much stronger, you just can't die now, little kitten ... You'll grow up in a wonderful paradise

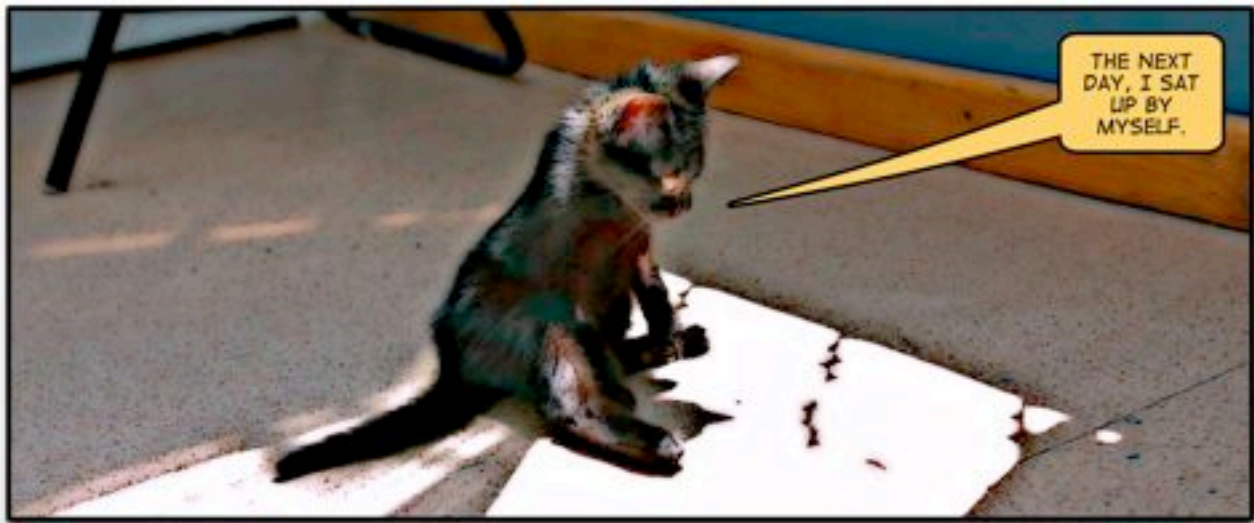
where there are no fleas, and no big animals who steal your food. You've got to stay alive so you can taste your first sardine! And when springtime comes there will be so many houseflies! You'll chase them all around the apartment, and when you catch them we'll applaud and tell you what a clever little kitty you are! There will be lovely sunbeams to nap in, and you'll never be hungry again...

...BUT SHE SPOKE  
KINDLY TO ME...

...AND SAT BESIDE  
ME ALL DAY LONG,  
STROKING ME...







THAT EVENING, SHE BROUGHT ME HOME.



I Hate Her!







I HAVE MY FOOD DISH, MY WATER BOWL, MY FAVORITE ARMCHAIR, MY WARM NOOK ABOVE THE RADIATOR, AND MY SPECIAL CLOSET WHERE I SNUGGLE UP IN THE AFTERNOON FOR A NAP ON TOP OF THE BULLETPROOF VEST WITH CERAMIC PLATES THAT CAN STOP A 7.62MM KALASHNIKOV BULLET.

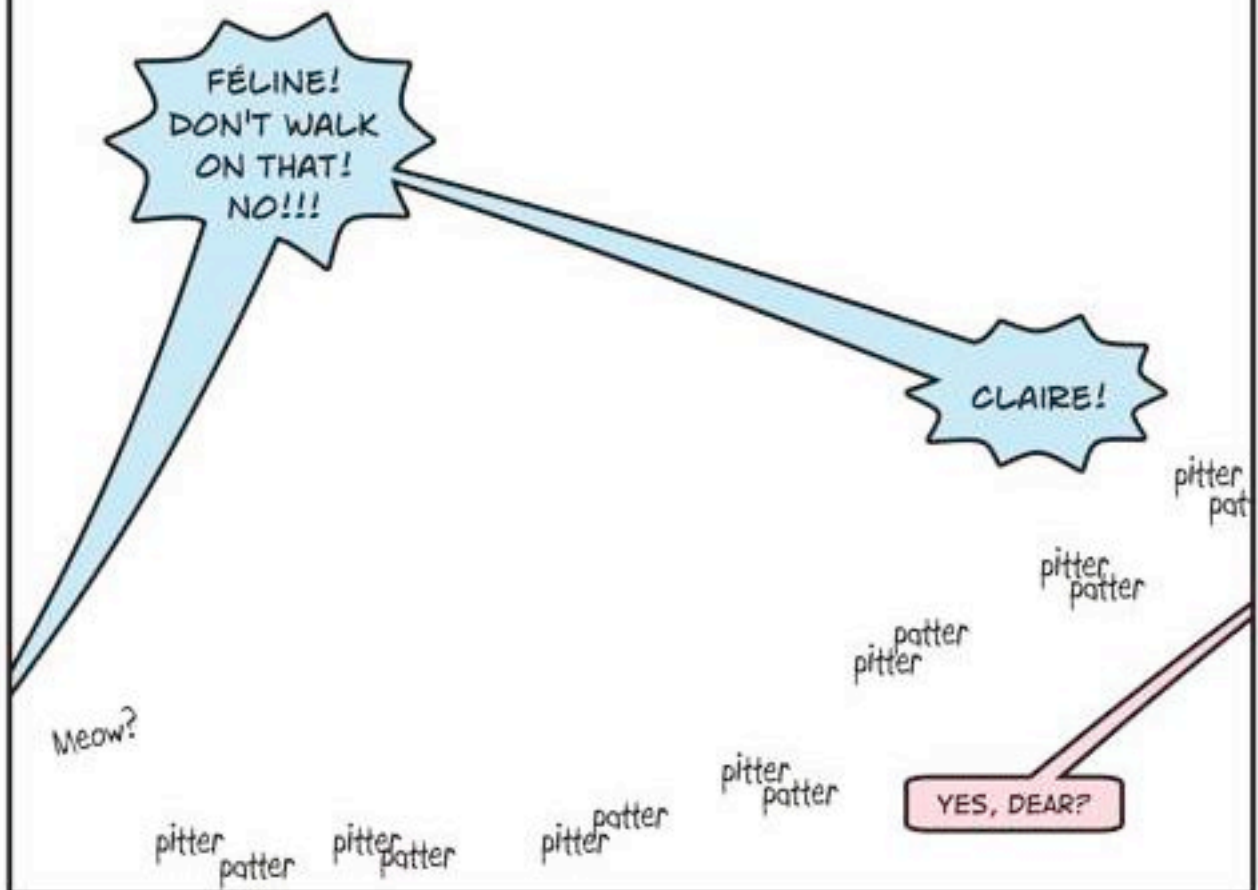
I HAVE MY WINDOW SILL FOR WATCHING PIGEONS, MY SCRATCHING POST, AND MY PERSONAL, PRIVATE LITTER BOX.

I HAVE THE WHOLE APARTMENT SCENT-MARKED JUST THE WAY I LIKE IT.

I'M THE LAST CAT IN THE WORLD WHO NEEDS A KITTEN.



The Adventure of  
the Seven Cats of  
Istanbul is not  
over yet...





# Still to Come...

## Hostage!

DAVID IS HELD CAPTIVE IN AZERBAIJAN...  
CLAIRE COMES TO THE RESCUE!



## Missing Katrina

HURRICANE KATRINA DEVASTATES NEW ORLEANS, BUT CLAIRE INSISTS DAVID MEET THE PARENTS...

## In Too Deep

CLAIRE WANTS TO SAVE ALL THE STREET CATS.  
IT'S JUST A DOCUMENTARY, SAYS DAVID.



## Tick Tock

THE DOCTOR TELLS CLAIRE, YOU  
WANT A BABY? IT'S NOW OR NEVER.

## Boy Loses Girl!

DAVID WON'T SAY "I DO." CLAIRE FLEES  
ISTANBUL IN FRUSTRATION. HE STARES AT HIS  
PHOTOS AND WONDERS, IS THIS ENOUGH?

I WANT TO  
GET MARRIED.

I WANT A BABY.

AND I'M KEEPING  
THE KITTENS!

## The Kitten Bomb!

A YOUNG MAN RUSHES INTO THE MOSQUE WITH A  
BOX OF ORPHANED KITTENS. HE HAS BROUGHT THEM  
TO THE TOMB OF EYÜP FOR ALLAH TO SAVE...



## David's Choice

CLAIRE IS AWAY AND DAISY  
FALLS ILL. DAVID MUST DECIDE  
BETWEEN DAISY AND THE KURDS.



## Boy Gets Girl!

THE HOTEL PHONE RINGS. CLAIRE HEARS DAVID'S  
VOICE: "I LOVE YOU. I'M OUTSIDE YOUR DOOR...AND  
THE CATS CAN STAY."