

AKIM ALIU **DREAMER**



WRITTEN WITH
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ILLUSTRATED BY
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This book is dedicated to my beautiful parents: I wouldn't be here without you and your relentless pursuit of your children's happiness through the countless obstacles you faced in your lifetimes. Thank you, and I love you with all of my heart.

—Akim “Dreamer” Aliu

To all of my parents (Rose, Daniel, Marie, Kethy, John) who stood behind and beside me in support through all my dreams and endeavors, and to the ones who refuse to quit their dreams . . . we persevere. Go get them.

—Greg Anderson Elysée

To my loving parents and friends, who always encouraged me to keep going and celebrated my art, and now I can illustrate inspiring stories like this one. Thank you for supporting my unconventional lifestyle.

—Karen De la Vega

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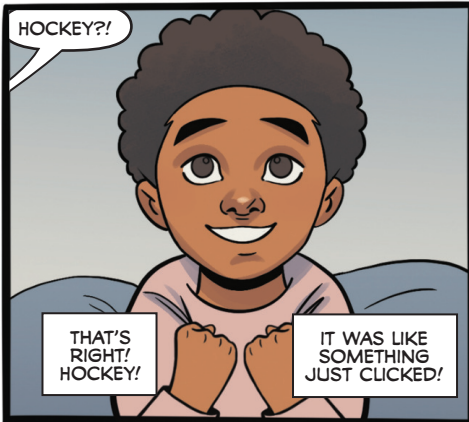
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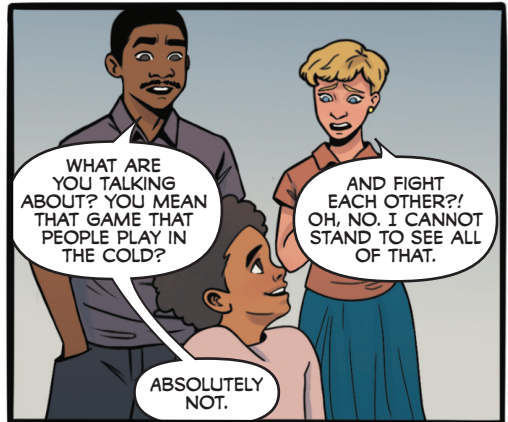
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HOCKEY?!

THAT'S RIGHT!
HOCKEY!

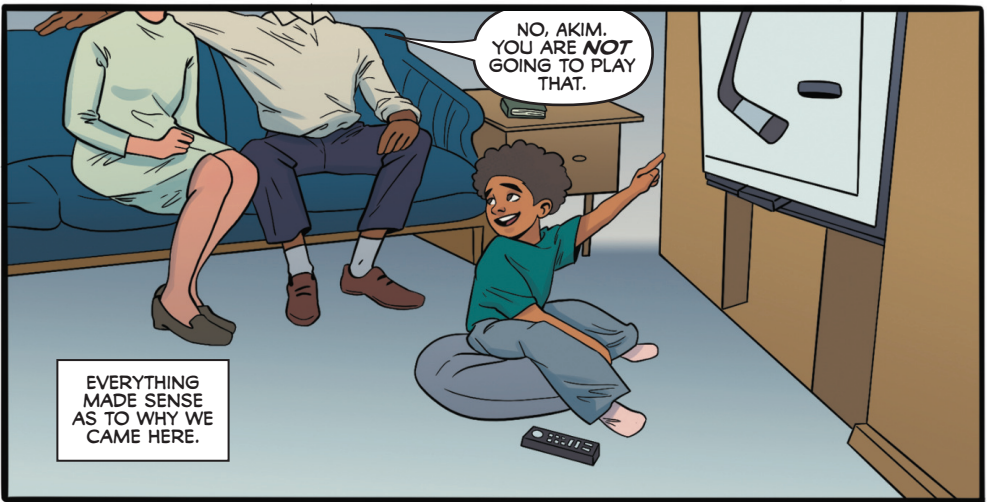
IT WAS LIKE
SOMETHING
JUST CLICKED!



WHAT ARE
YOU TALKING
ABOUT? YOU MEAN
THAT GAME THAT
PEOPLE PLAY IN
THE COLD?

AND FIGHT
EACH OTHER?!
OH, NO. I CANNOT
STAND TO SEE ALL
OF THAT.

ABSOLUTELY
NOT.



NO, AKIM,
YOU ARE **NOT**
GOING TO PLAY
THAT.

EVERYTHING
MADE SENSE
AS TO WHY WE
CAME HERE.



AND THIS WOULD BE
THAT **THING** THAT
MADE **ME** MAKE SENSE.

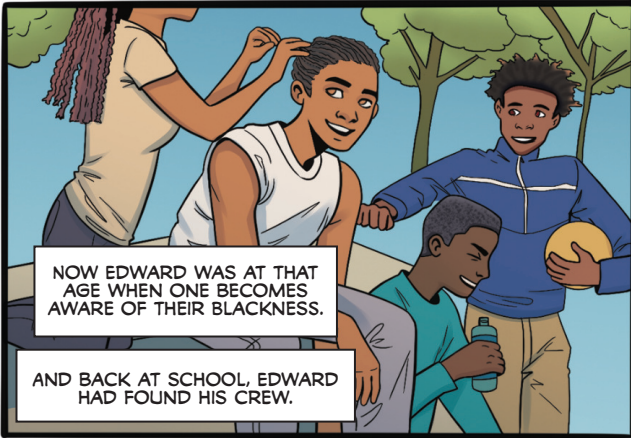
AKIM,
WE SAID
NO.



JEEZ. GIVE
IT A REST
ALREADY. BLACK
PEOPLE DON'T
EVEN PLAY
HOCKEY.

(SIGH) OF COURSE I
HAD TO HEAR
DUMB COMMENTS
LIKE THAT FROM MY
BROTHER **EVERY**,
FREAKIN', DAY!

EVERY DREAMER
HAS A HATER...



NOW EDWARD WAS AT THAT AGE WHEN ONE BECOMES AWARE OF THEIR BLACKNESS.

AND BACK AT SCHOOL, EDWARD HAD FOUND HIS CREW.



I, AS YOU CAN SEE, FOUND MY LOVE FOR HOCKEY. THIS WAS IT.

THE NHL... THE NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE.

NO MATTER WHAT, I WAS GOING TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN...



...EVEN IF IT MEANT BUGGING AND BOTHERING AND PESTERING MY PARENTS EVERY SINGLE DAY.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, AKIM. THIS IS SO EXPENSIVE. WHY DON'T YOU JUST STICK TO SOCCER? YOU'RE GOOD AT SOCCER.

OH YEAH...I ALSO LOVED SOCCER. I WAS REALLY GREAT AT IT TOO.



HE WAS BETTER AT SOCCER THAN HE WAS AT HOCKEY, IF YOU ASK ME. SO MUCH BETTER. I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY HOCKEY OVER SOCCER!



MOMMMM! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? THIS IS *MY* BOOK. ONLY *I'M* ALLOWED TO BREAK THE FOURTH WALL.

OH! I'M SO SORRY, DEAR.

BUT ALL I'M SAYING IS YOU *WERE* BETTER AT SOCCER.

(SIGH)

MOM AND POPS GOT ME THE PAIR OF SKATES AT THE YARD SALE JUST DOWN THE STREET FROM OUR APARTMENT FOR ONLY NINE DOLLARS.



THEY WERE ALL-LEATHER BEAUTIES.

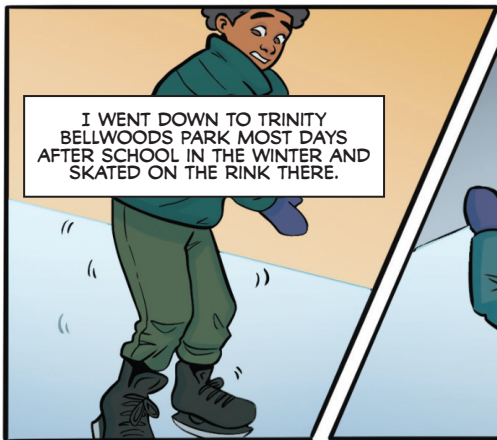


THEY DIDN'T FIT QUITE RIGHT, BUT MAN...



...THEY FELT GOOD.





I WENT DOWN TO TRINITY BELLWOODS PARK MOST DAYS AFTER SCHOOL IN THE WINTER AND SKATED ON THE RINK THERE.



I WAS CONSTANTLY FALLING. I COULDN'T STAND UP.



ALL OVER THE PLACE FOR A FEW SESSIONS...



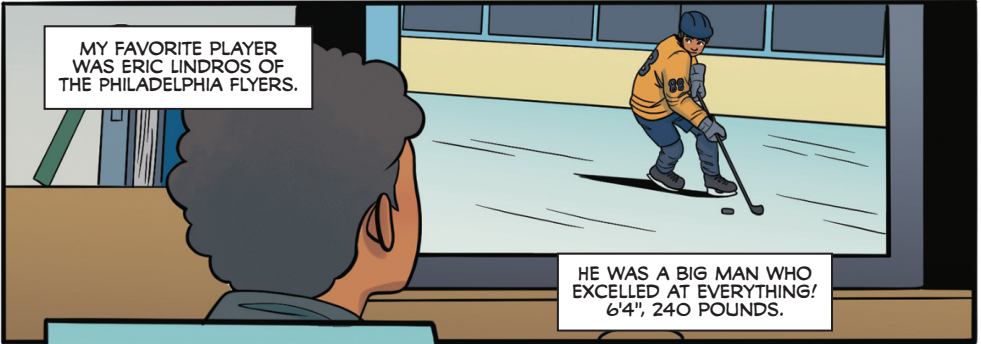
...AND THEN SESSIONS FOUR, FIVE, SIX, I GOT BETTER, AND BETTER, AND BETTER.



AND THEN A YEAR LATER...

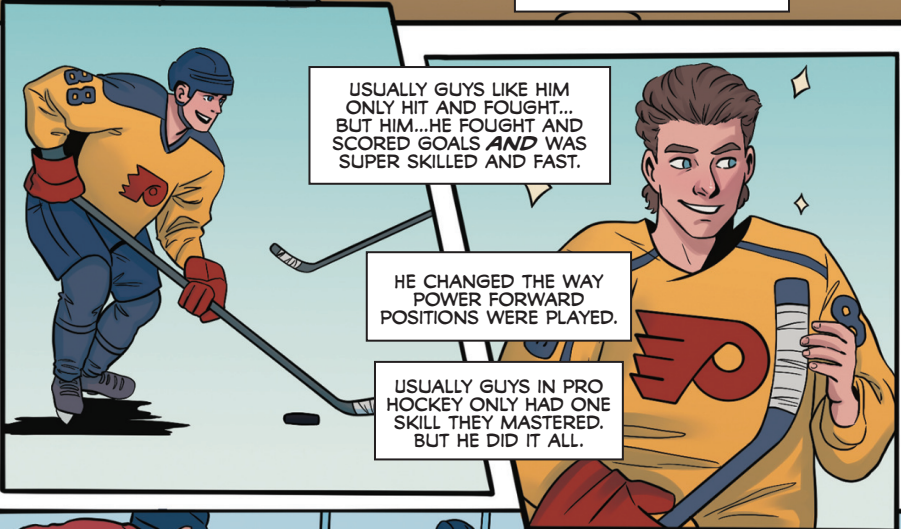


...I LED MY HOUSE LEAGUE IN SCORING.



MY FAVORITE PLAYER WAS ERIC LINDROS OF THE PHILADELPHIA FLYERS.

HE WAS A BIG MAN WHO EXCELLED AT EVERYTHING! 6'4", 240 POUNDS.



USUALLY GUYS LIKE HIM ONLY HIT AND FOUGHT... BUT HIM...HE FOUGHT AND SCORED GOALS **AND** WAS SUPER SKILLED AND FAST.

HE CHANGED THE WAY POWER FORWARD POSITIONS WERE PLAYED.

USUALLY GUYS IN PRO HOCKEY ONLY HAD ONE SKILL THEY MASTERED. BUT HE DID IT ALL.

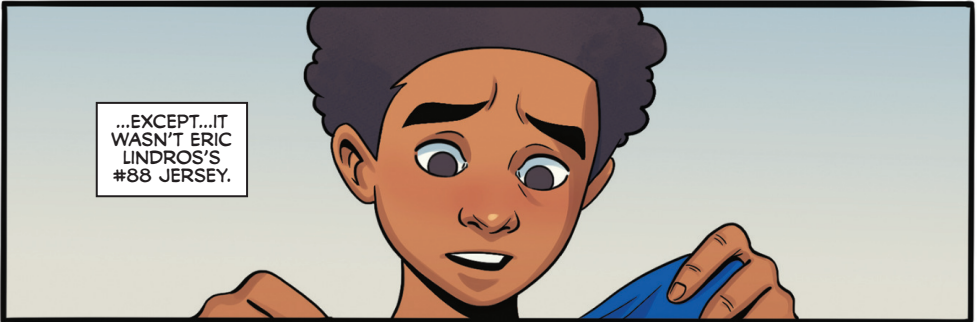


AS A BIG KID PLAYING HOCKEY, I ADMIRERD ALL OF THAT.

WHEN MY PARENTS ASKED ME WHAT I WANTED FOR CHRISTMAS, WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT, I KNEW MY ANSWER!



...EXCEPT...IT WASN'T ERIC LINDROS'S #88 JERSEY.



A WASHINGTON CAPITALS JERSEY?

