CHAPTER ONE: BRUISING

FIVE DAYS AGO, I LET REGGIE MANTLE BULLY ME INTO A DRAG RACE.

I KNEW IT WAS A STUPID THING TO DO. BUT AT LEAST I HIT THE "THIS IS ***CRAZY***-STUPID" BRAKES THE SECOND I SAW BETTY COOPER COMING.

REGGIE DID ***NOT***.

SHE WAS DRIVING UP TO STOP US, AND INSTEAD MANTLE'S CAR ACCIDENTALLY KNOCKED BETTY'S RIGHT OFF A CLIFF.

I'VE LOVED BETTY SINCE WE WERE KIDS. WE'RE NOT A COUPLE RIGHT NOW, BUT THAT DOESN'T CHANGE HOW I FEEL.

OR HOW MUCH I WANT TO TEAR INTO REGGIE WITH MY BARE HANDS THE WAY STUDENTS TORE INTO HIS CAR. AND THAT WILL HAPPEN.

BUT RIGHT NOW, I CAN SEE I'M NOT ALONE IN MY ANGER, AND THAT'S GOOD, BECAUSE, WELL...

...I HAVE OTHER THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT.

THE CRASH PUT BETTY IN A *COMA*. WHEN SHE CAME OUT OF IT, SHE COULDN'T...

...SHE COULDN'T MOVE HER LEGS.

...HZZZ...

...ZAH *ARCH*...?

...GNIGHT...

MR. AND MRS. COOPER ARE WAITING FOR A DIAGNOSIS.

PRAY FOR THEM.

...AND WE BELIEVE WHAT BETTY EXPERIENCED IS CALLED A ***GLIDING CONTUSION***.

DUE TO THE IMPACT OF EITHER THE CRASH OR THE FALL, BETTY'S BRAIN EXPERIENCED A BRUISING WHIPLASH. THAT ACCOUNTED FOR HER COMA.

NOW THAT SHE'S CONSCIOUS, WE'RE RUNNING SOME TESTS TO DETERMINE THE EXTENT OF THE DAMAGE AND EXAMINE HER SPINAL CORD.

IT MAY BE WHOLE, AND HER PARALYSIS MAY BE DUE TO SOME LESSER FORM OF TRAUMA.

BUT WE NEED TO PREPARE OURSELVES FOR A MORE REALISTIC VERDICT.

SHE NEEDS-- ***YOU*** NEED--TO ACCEPT THAT BETTY MAY BE BOUND TO A WHEELCHAIR.

I'M SORRY.

...NO...

PLEASE TELL HER THAT MY DAUGHTER SENDS HER BEST.

SHE LOVES HER LITTLE MATH TUTOR VERY MUCH.

A WHEEL-CHAIR...?

GO ON HOME, HONEY. WE'LL CALL YOU WHEN SHE'S READY FOR VISITORS.

...

A ***WHEEL-CHAIR?*** THAT'S NOT...

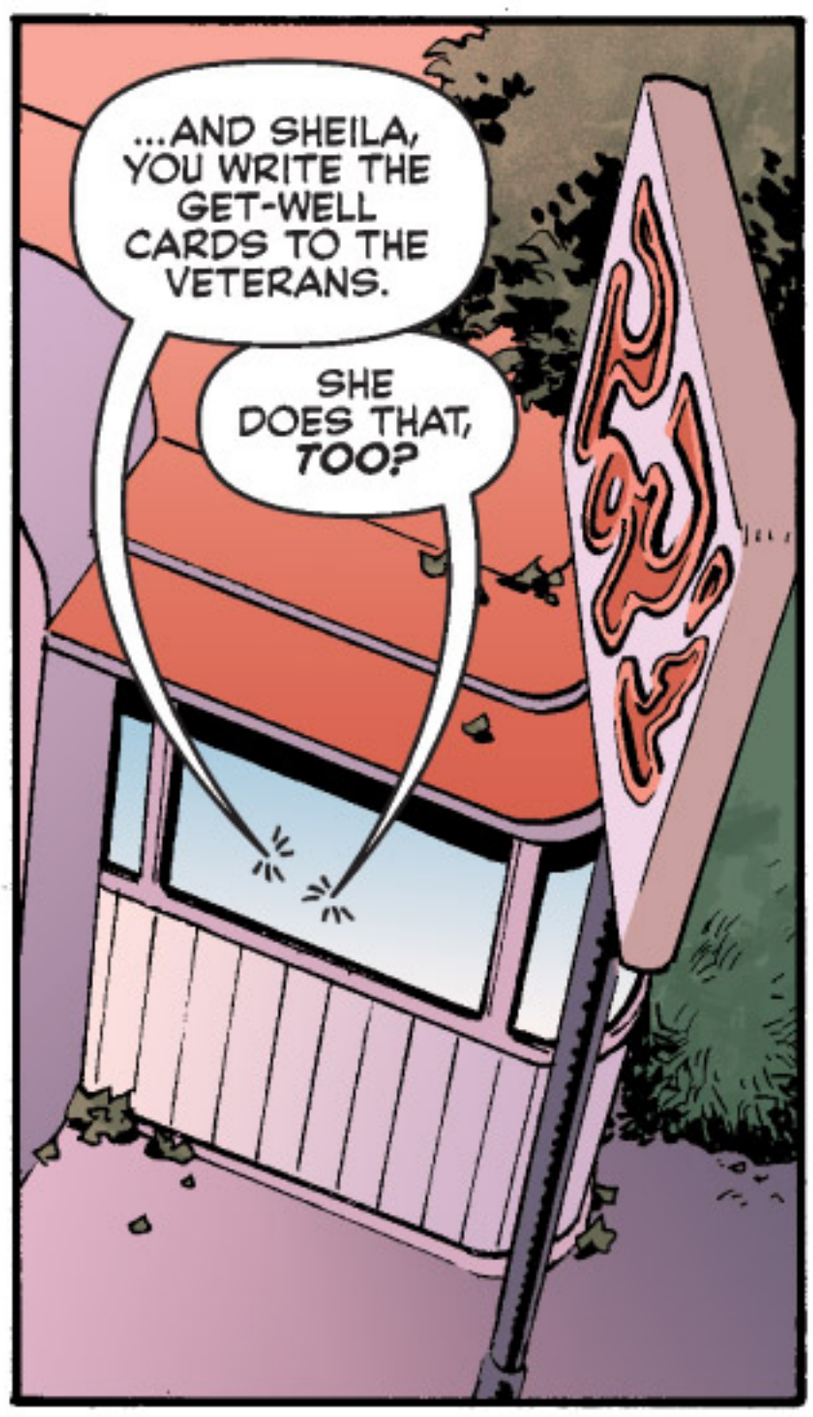
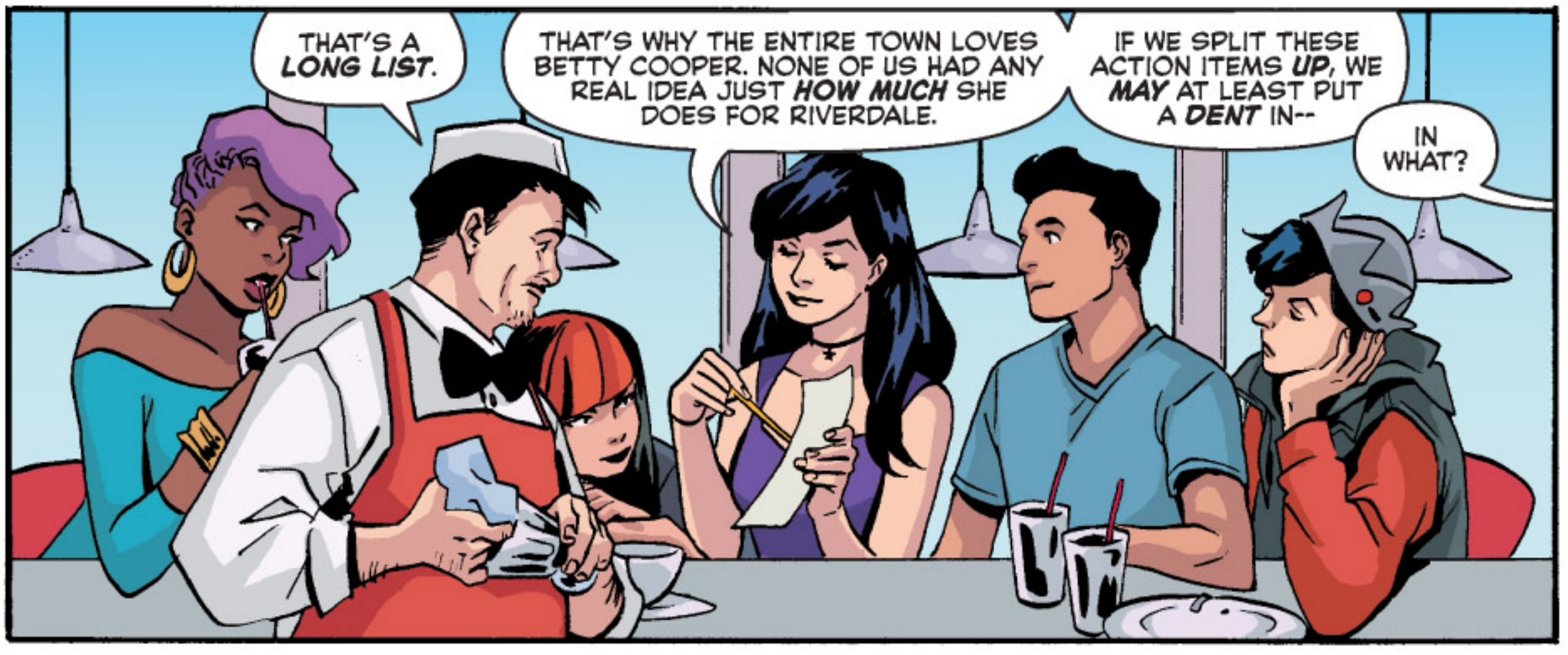
HER WHOLE LIFE IS ***BASEBALL***. AND ***WORKING ON CARS***. AND ***TRACK AND FIELD***. AND--

WE

KNOW.

GUYS, WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING FOR BETTY. SHOW HER HOW MUCH WE...

...HOW MUCH THE WHOLE TOWN...

...SOME-THING.

CHAPTER TWO: LIKE e-MAILS