

The ThreatLab Presents...

DIGITAL DISCERNMENT



Information that is incorrect or under-researched and articles that sensationalize, use emotional manipulation, and play on people's fears are prevalent in many of the online spheres people engage with every day.

In collaboration with DoD's Counter-Insider Threat Program and the National Insider Threat Task Force, The Threat Lab created this graphic novel to raise awareness of the tactics and features that make internet disinformation and misinformation so compelling and to present some strategies for evaluating the content consumed online.

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SPONSORS

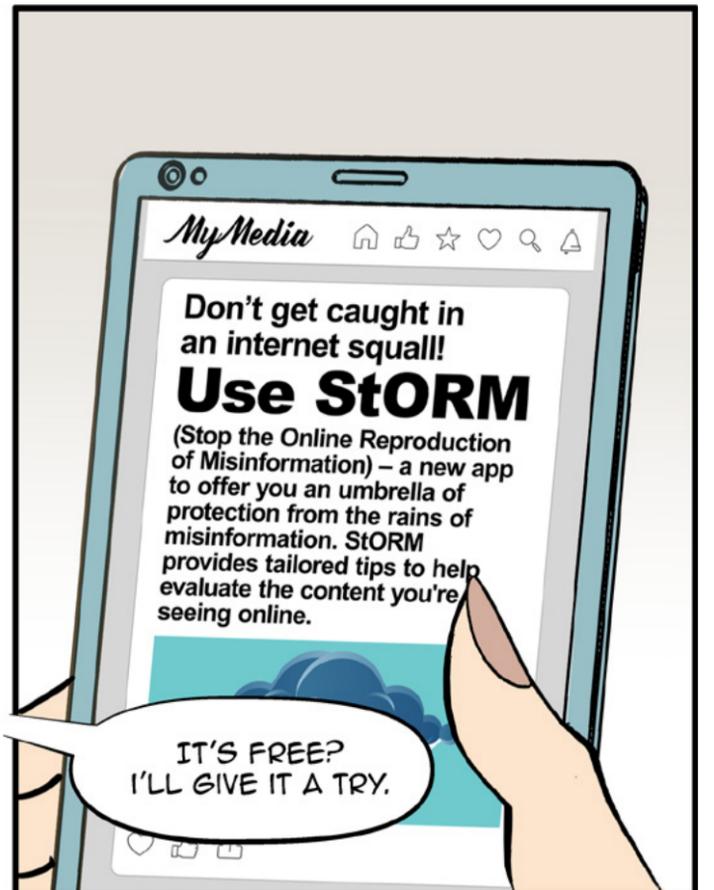
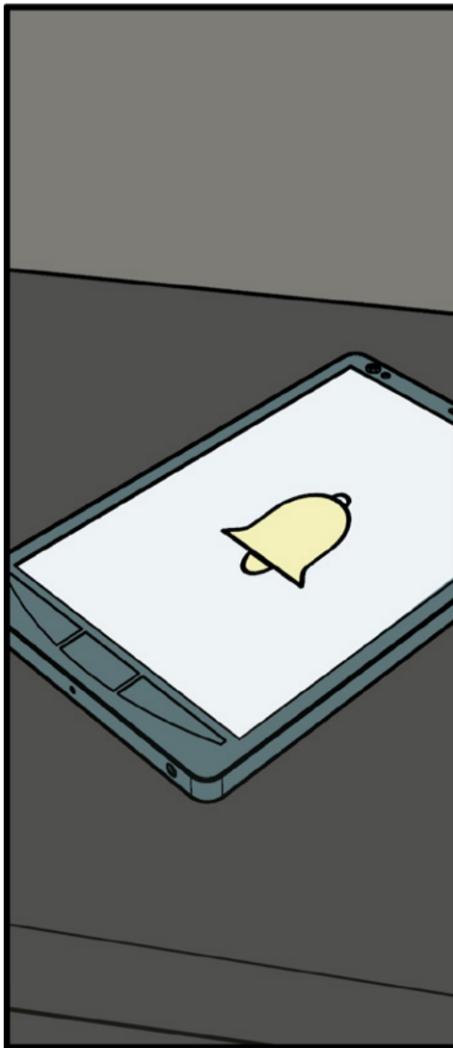
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense
for Intelligence and Security (OUSD[I&S])

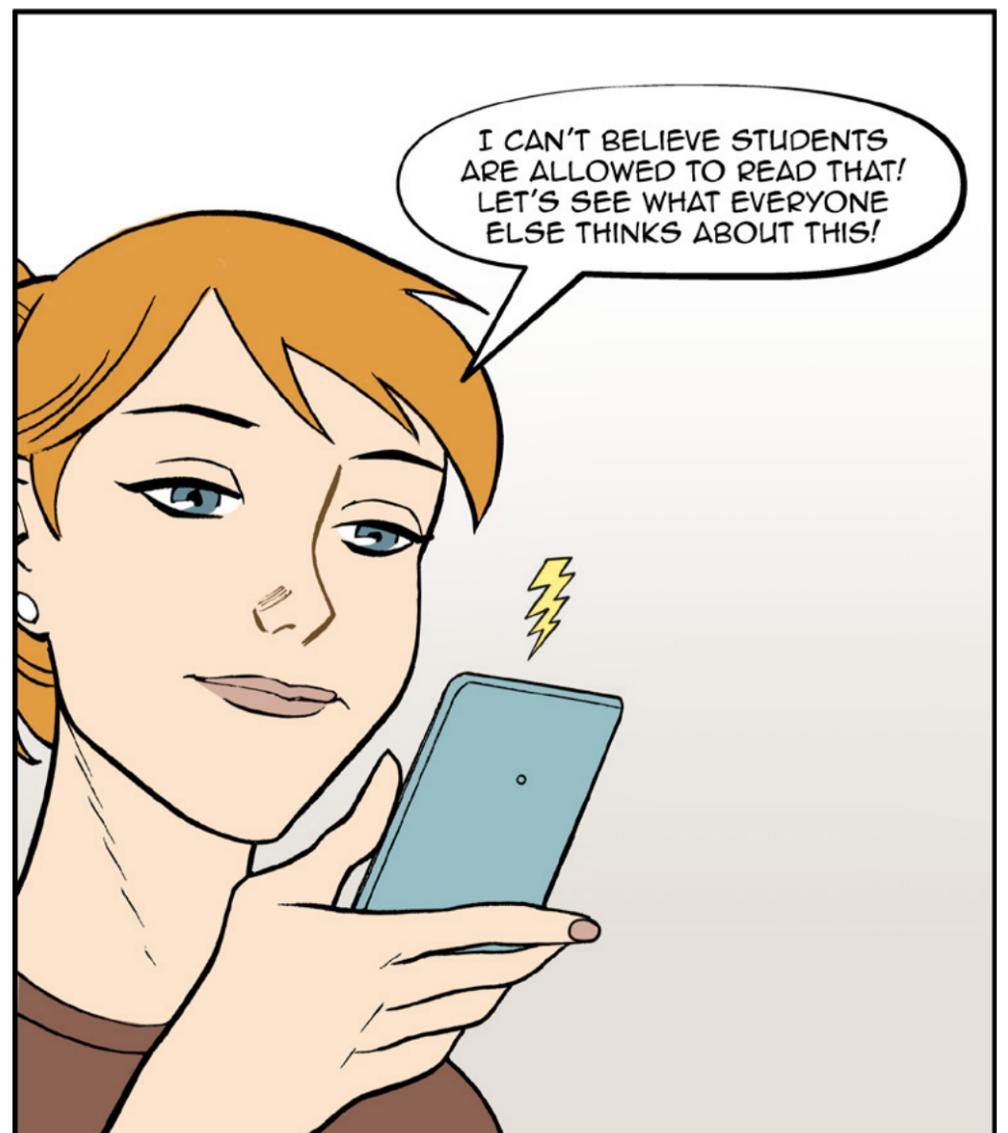
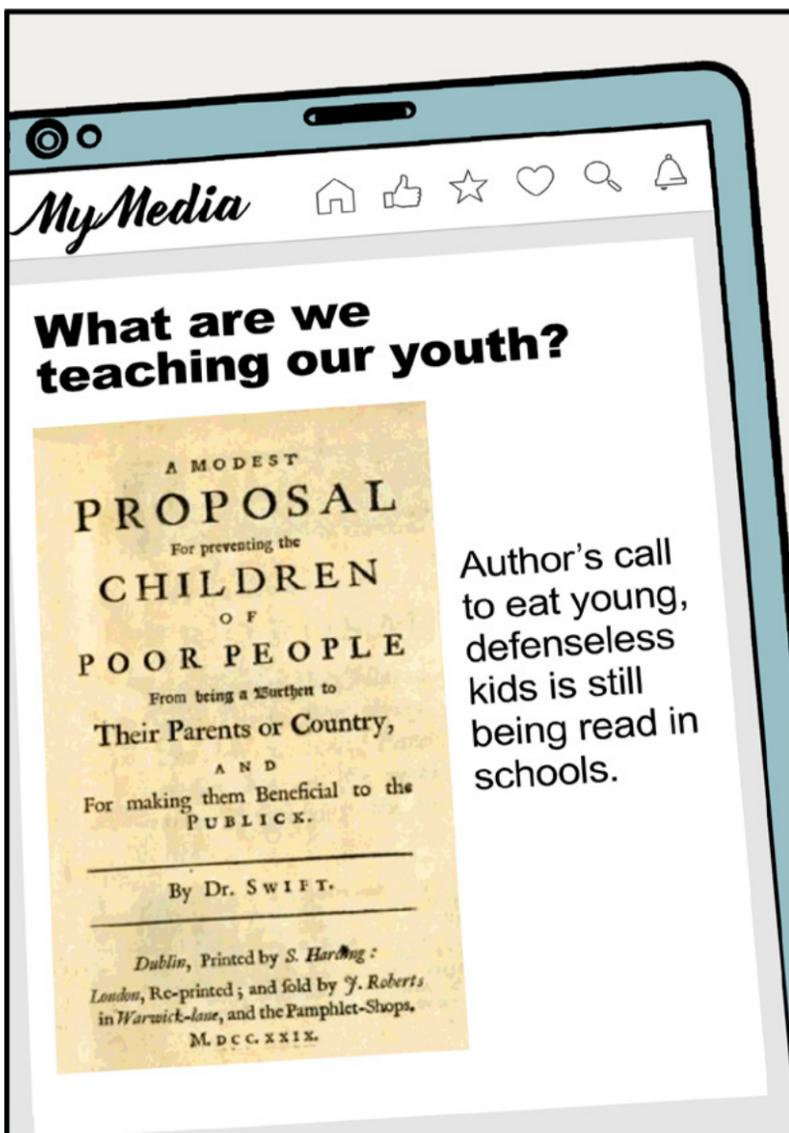
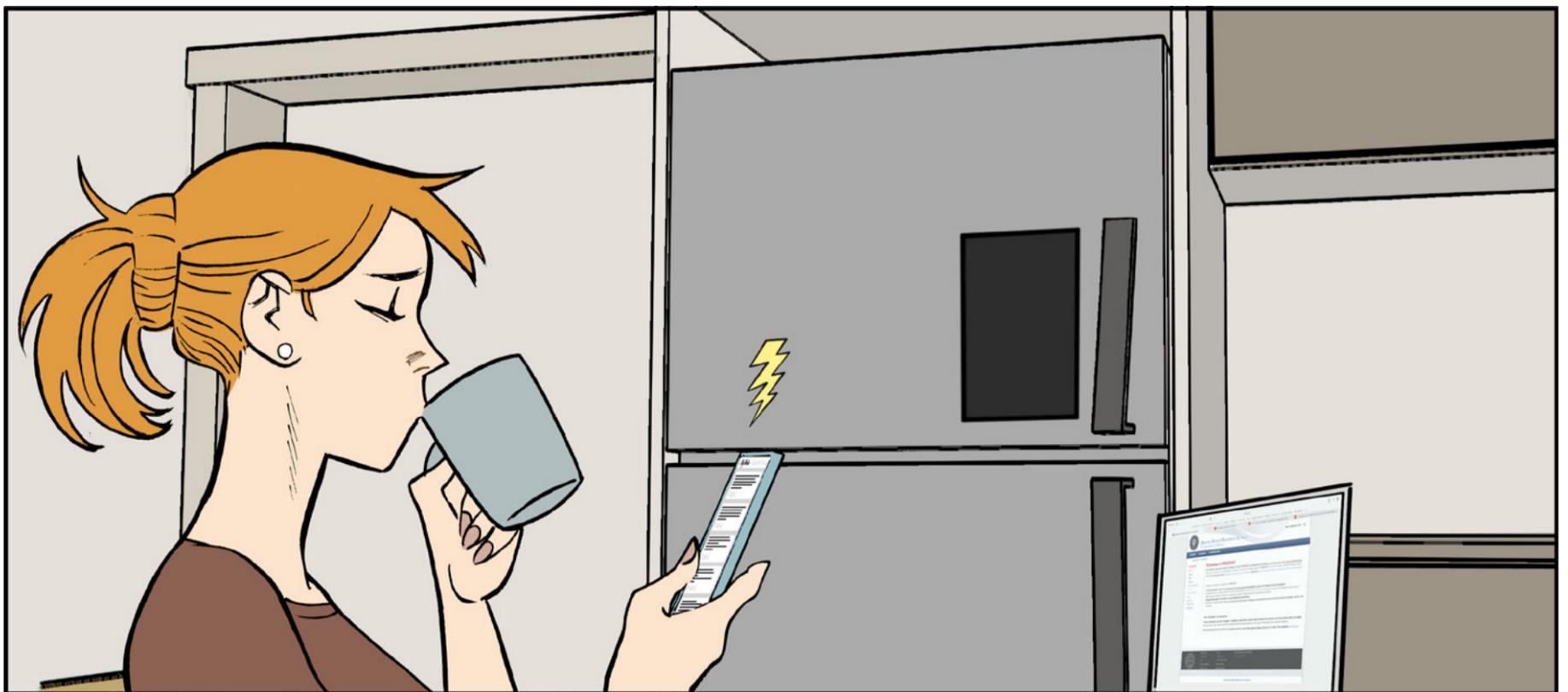
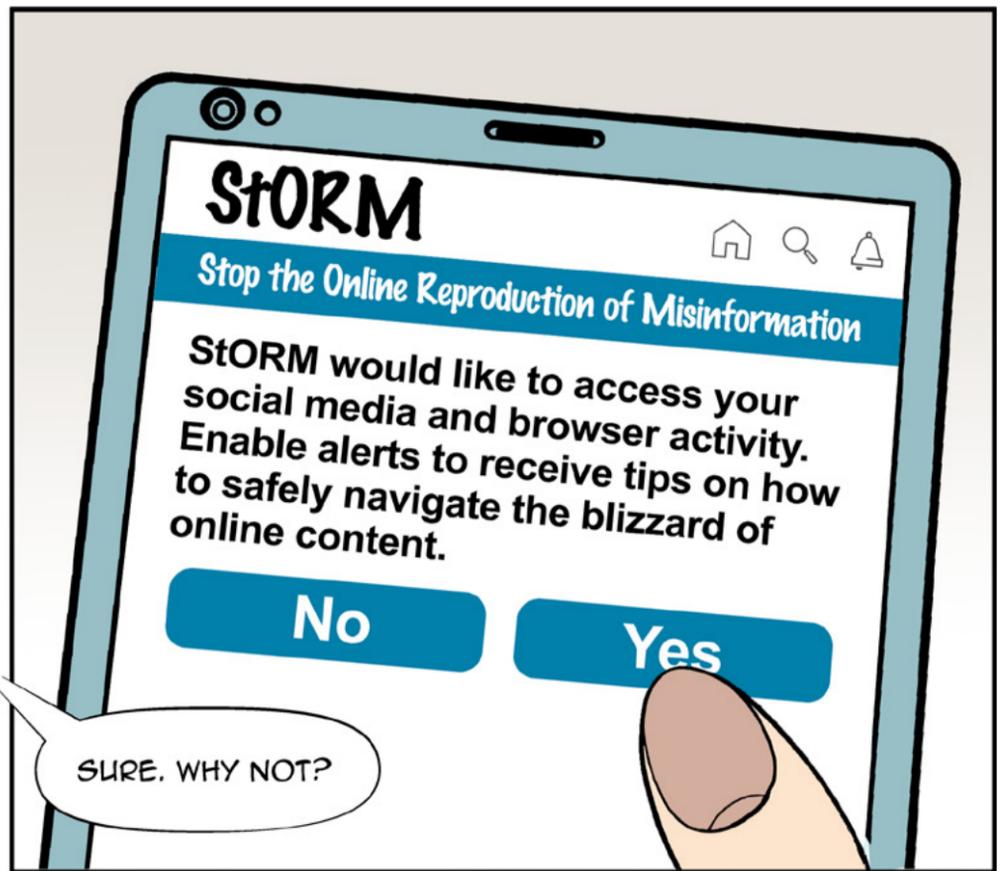
National Insider Threat
Task Force (NITTF)

Acknowledgements

Thank you to those who reviewed early drafts of this graphic novel and shared their time and expertise with us. We appreciate their help in making this an engaging and thought-provoking story!





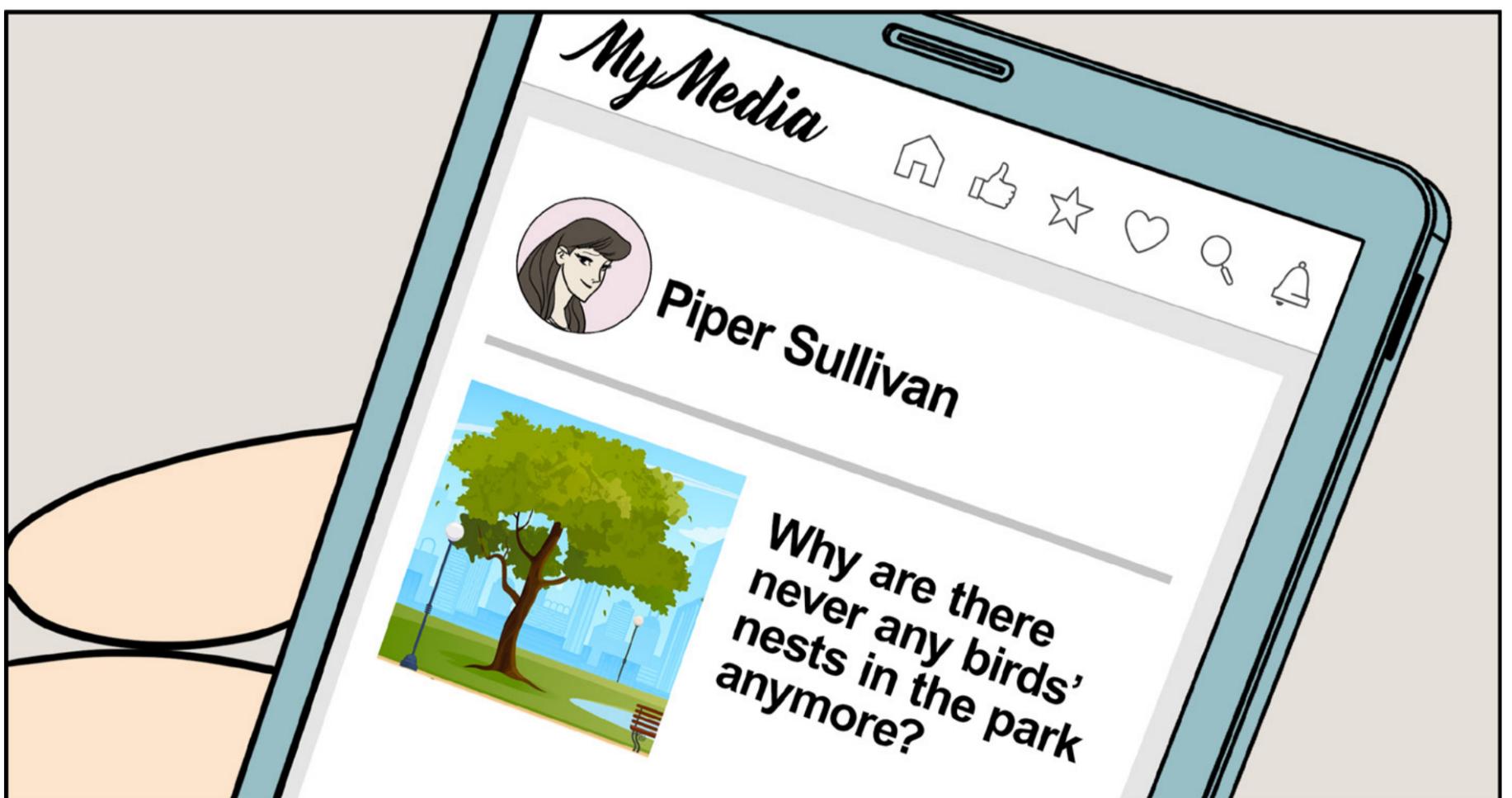


NOTE: A MODEST PROPOSAL IS A 1729 PIECE OF SATIRE BY IRISH AUTHOR JONATHAN SWIFT. THE ESSAY MAKES OUTRAGEOUS, SATIRICAL SUGGESTIONS IN AN ATTEMPT TO ADDRESS THE PLIGHT OF THE IRISH LIVING IN POVERTY AND THE WAY THE WEALTHIER BRITISH PEOPLE VIEWED THEM.

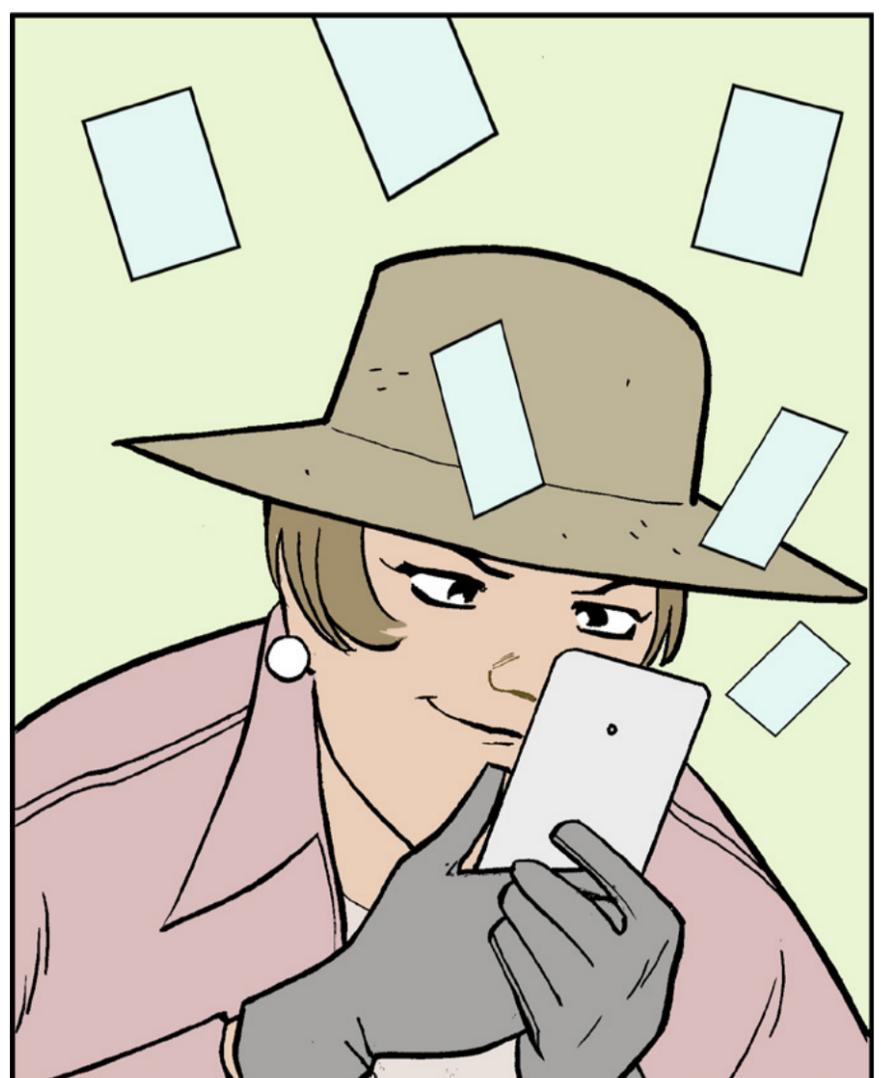
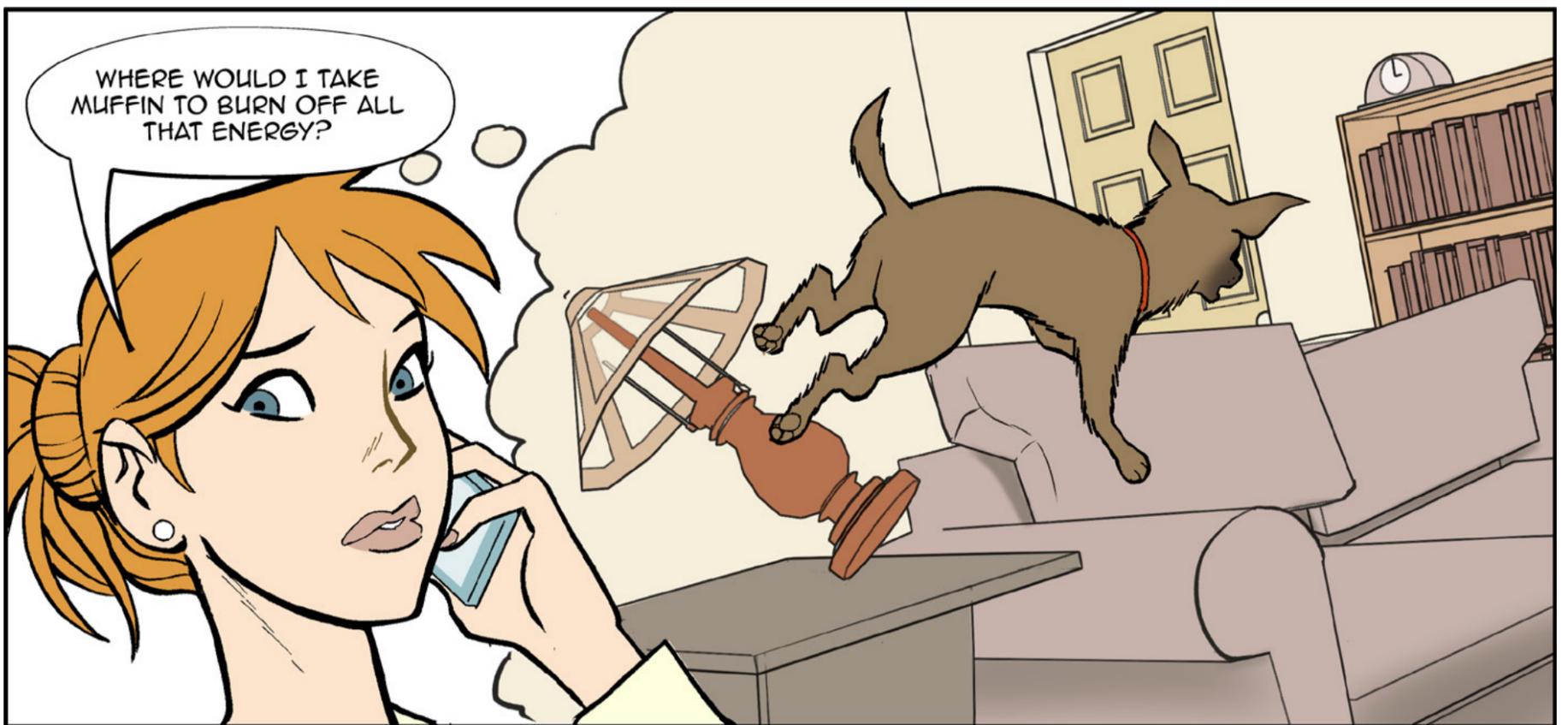
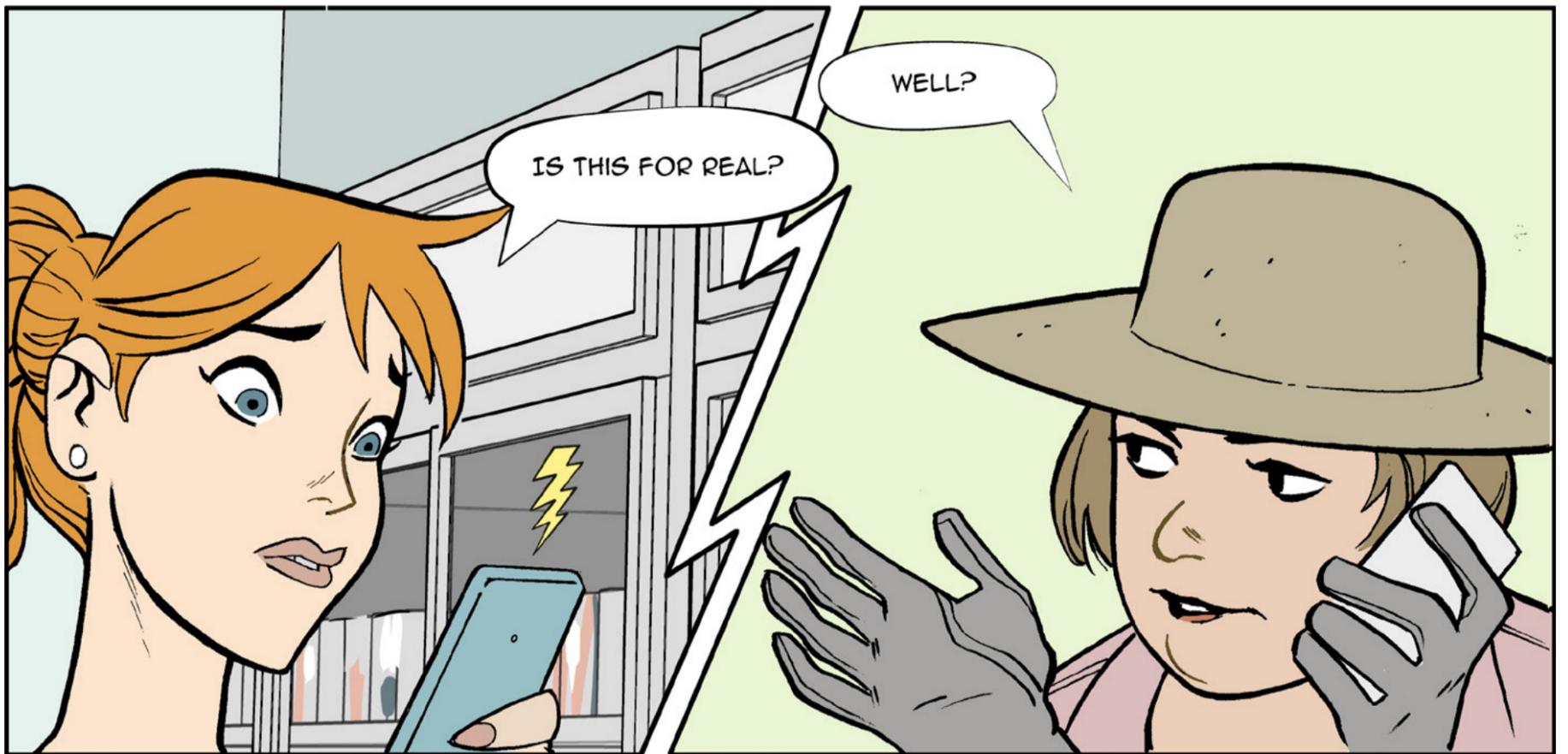


Whoa there! To avoid future embarrassment, before sharing an article or post, make sure you read it all the way through. Did you confirm what **A Modest Proposal** is about, or take the post at its word? Do you know if the poster even read **A Modest Proposal**? Even if **A Modest Proposal** does advocate eating babies, the idea seems extreme and unrealistic, right? How could anyone really hold that position? Finally, if you didn't ask any of these questions before posting, how do you know that the person who posted this story first did??

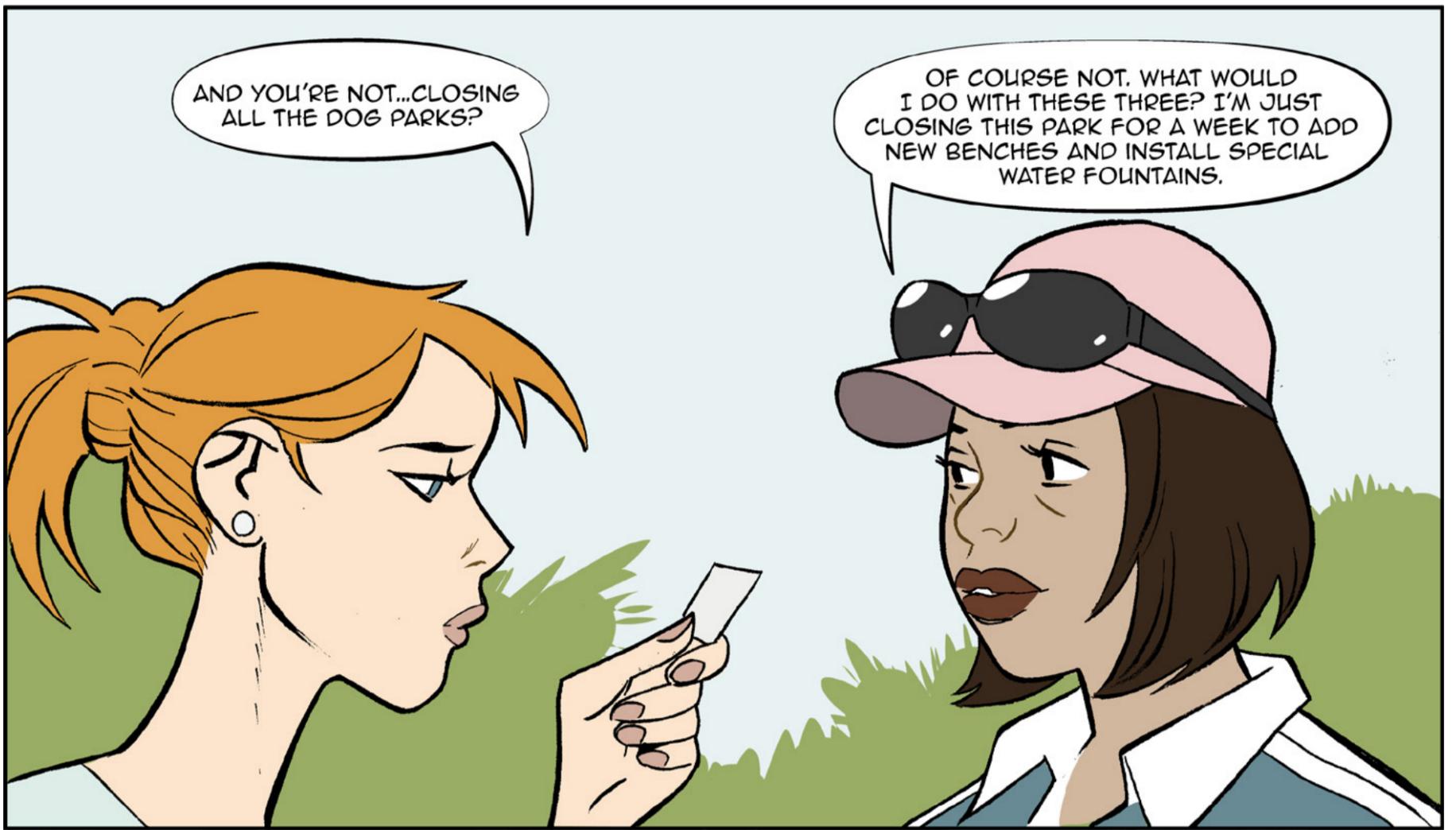
Knowing what questions to ask and learning how things end up in your feed are your first steps to being a savvy and discerning online citizen.



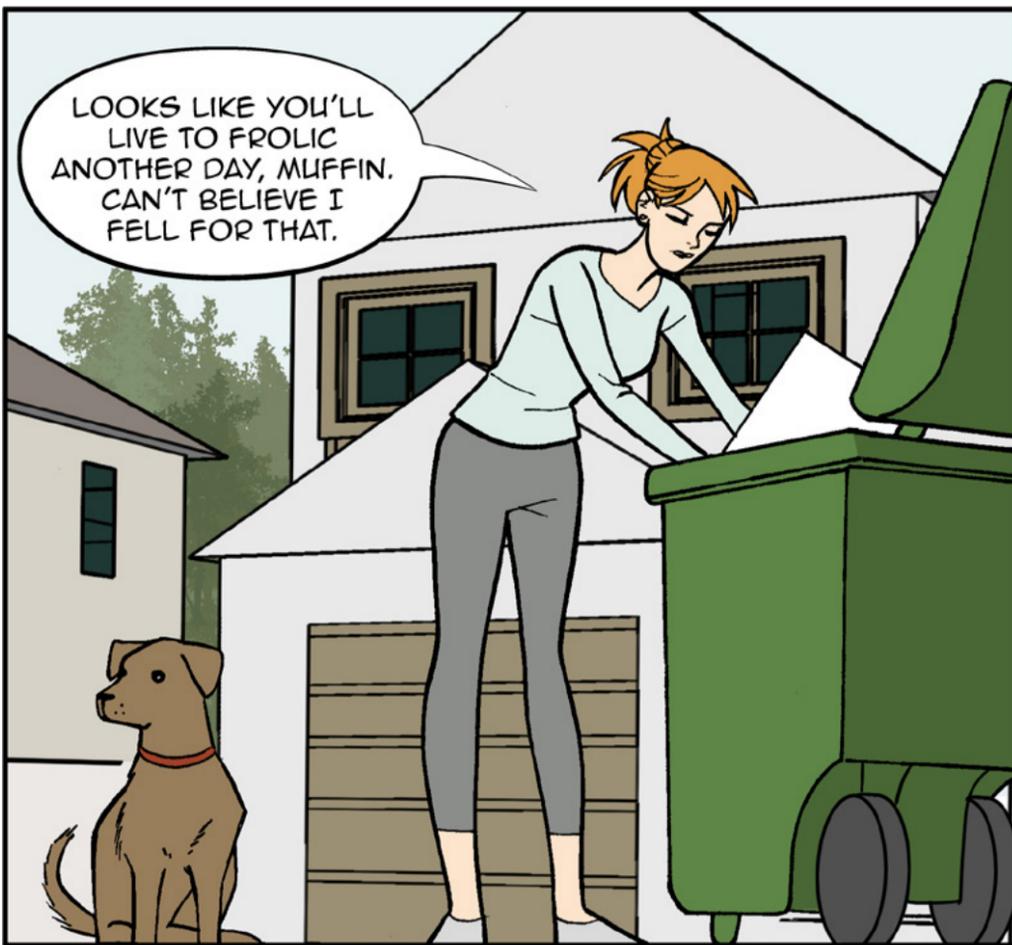








Every communication has a purpose, sometimes it's obvious, other times it's hidden. Take a closer look at this post: There's lots of emotional language, there's a narrative of threat with a slippery slope argument (i.e., a temporary ban will become a permanent ban), and the poster frames this as an attack against innocent friends. Who wouldn't defend their innocent friends?! You would, right? **Right!** The communication is clearly trying to use emotional manipulation to override your brain from formulating any questions. Being an active participant in whatever you read is key to avoiding falling for manipulation.



I'm just wondering why the birds we see today in the U.S. seem so different from the birds my parents grew up with and the birds I've seen in old movies. I've never once, ONCE seen a baby chick hatching. Why is that? We already know THEY'RE always listening to us. Maybe these twenty-first century 'birds' are helping them out. We're conditioned to ignore them, and they can fly anywhere. What better way to track our every move? It's the perfect drone.



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PiperS#1Fnnnnn
Are you serious? This is so crazy. Telling everyone.
- 

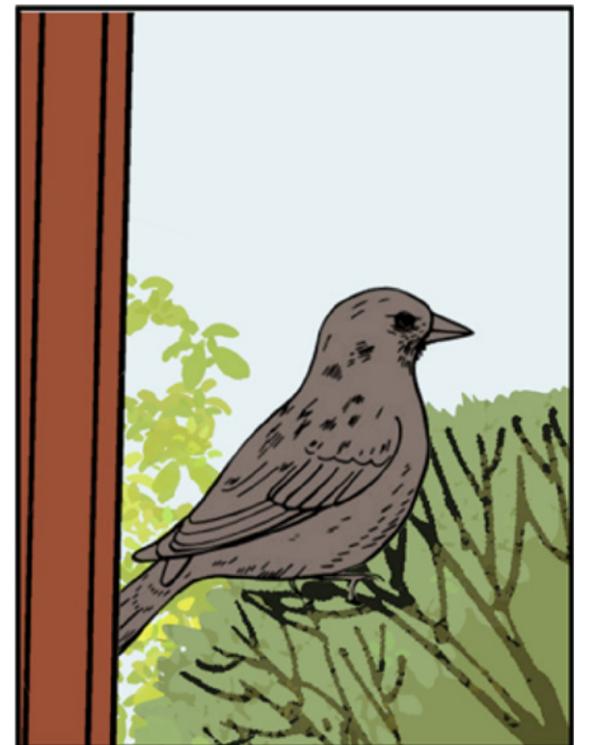
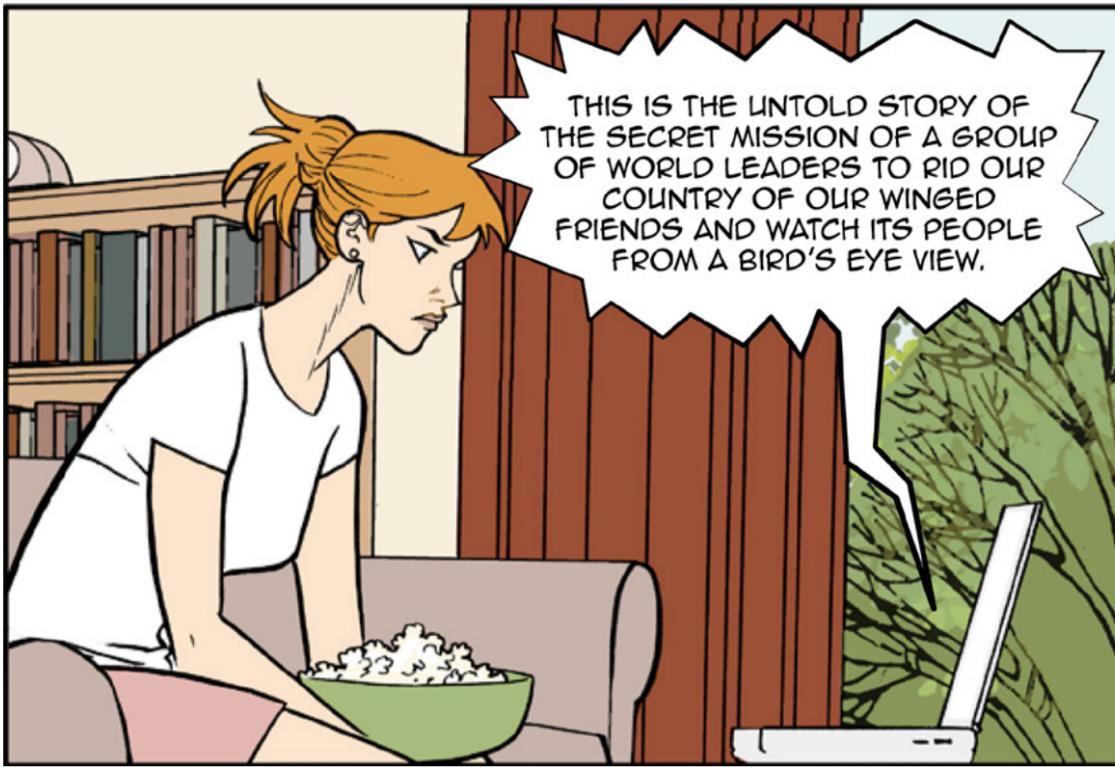
BirdTruther87
Thx for being bold enough to share the truth
- 

AnnaBanana45
It has been a long time since I saw a bird poop on everyone...
- 

RobotBirds
There's tons of evidence for this. American birds haven't seen birds since the 70s.

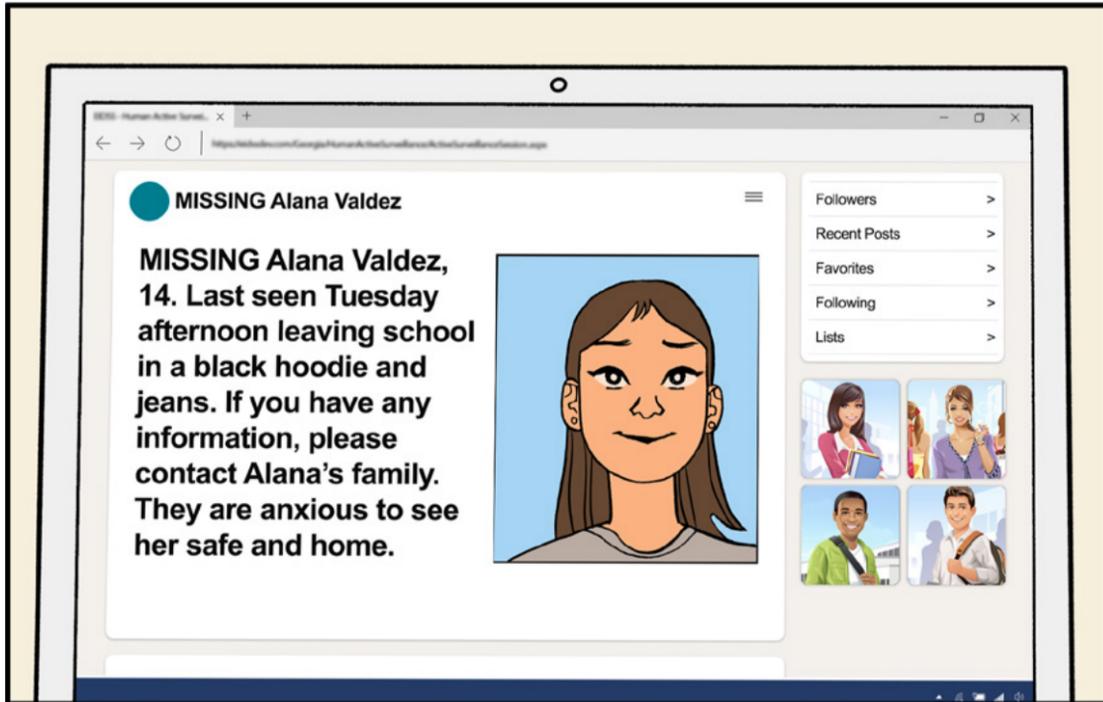


NOTE: "BIRDS AREN'T REAL" IS ACTUALLY A SATIRICAL CONSPIRACY MOVEMENT USED TO PARODY AND CONTENT WITH THE CURRENT PROLIFERATION OF MISINFORMATION. HERE, WE'RE USING THIS FAUX-CONSPIRACY THEORY TO ILLUSTRATE THE WAYS THAT SOMEONE CAN FALL VICTIM TO MISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS.



Fancy graphics and a serious soundtrack do not a factual documentary make! When considering whether to trust a source, it helps to ask questions about the author or content creator. What else have they produced? Are they an expert in a relevant field? Do they cite sources to back up their claims? Are those sources relevant to the topic? Do the cited sources actually back up the claims being made, or have they been misconstrued? Are there other sources that are not being cited that are evidence against the claims the author or content creator is making?

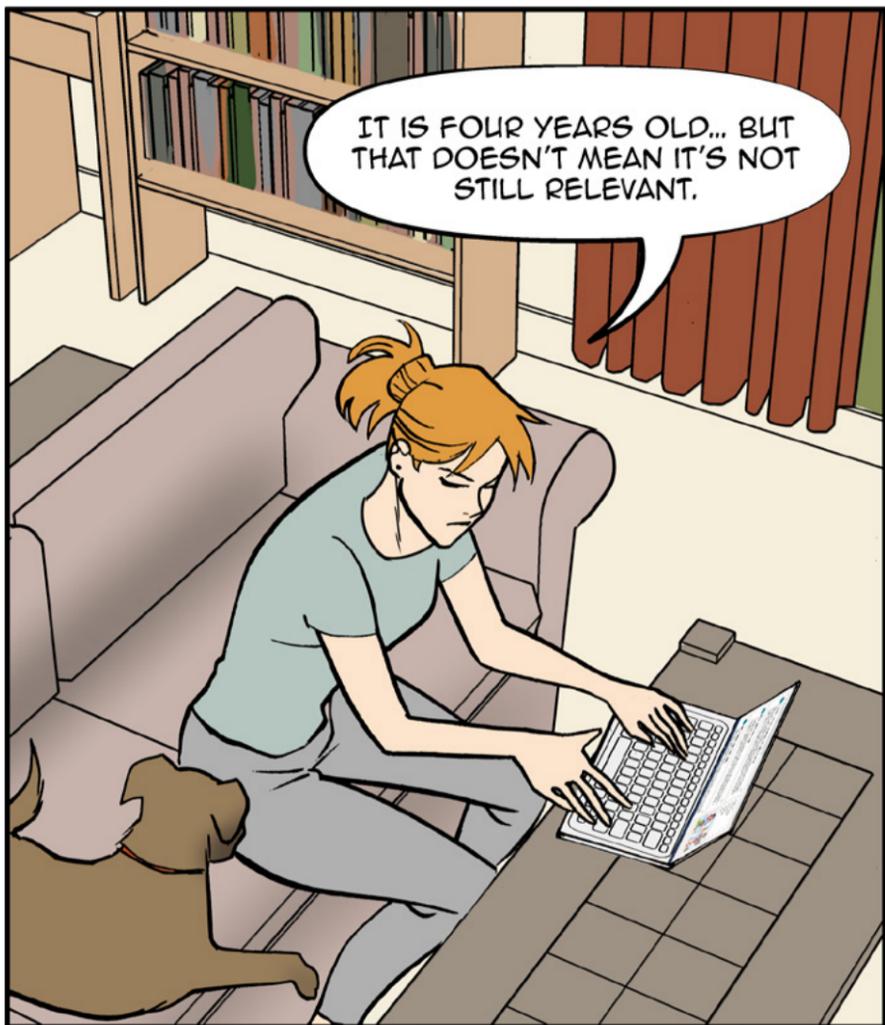
Questions are your friend! Be an active participant, not a passive consumer, of messages you receive.



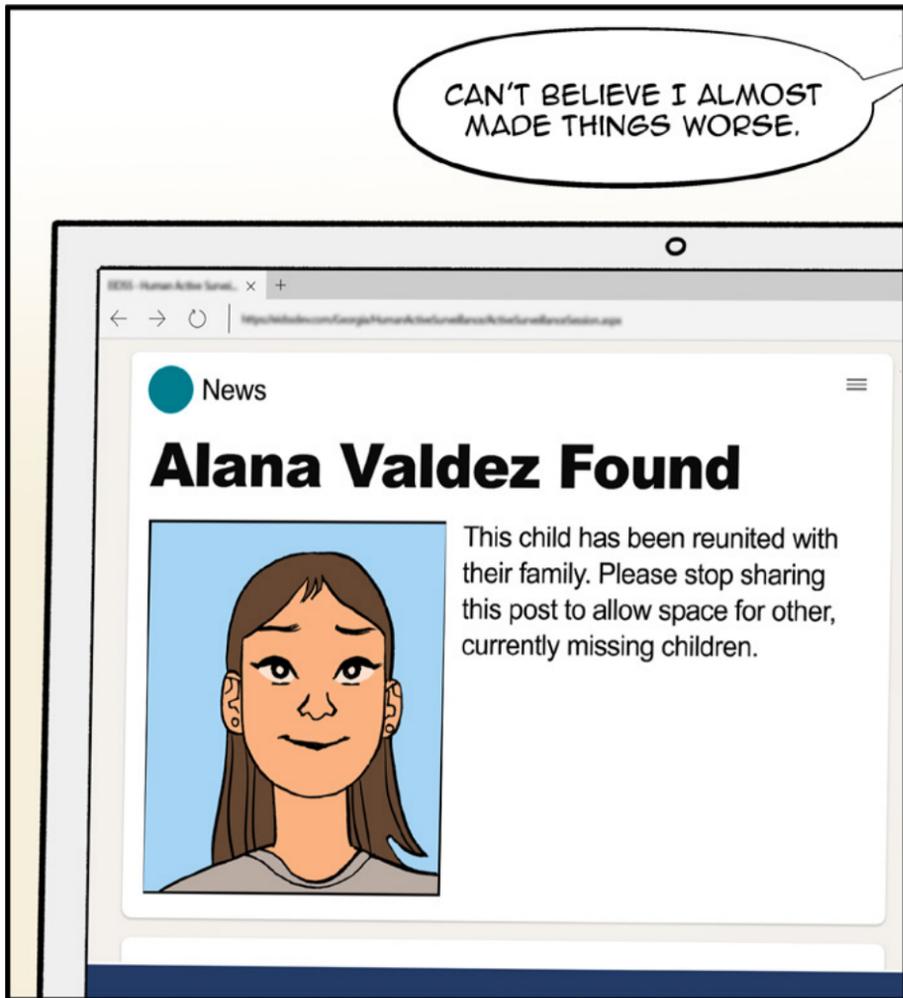
Don't forget to check when something was originally posted to confirm that any information you're sharing is relevant and timely.



I'M SURE THESE WOULDN'T STILL BE AROUND IF THEY WEREN'T RIGHT, BUT I'LL JUST CLICK BACK TO MAKE SURE.



IT IS FOUR YEARS OLD... BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN IT'S NOT STILL RELEVANT.



CAN'T BELIEVE I ALMOST MADE THINGS WORSE.

News

Alana Valdez Found

This child has been reunited with their family. Please stop sharing this post to allow space for other, currently missing children.

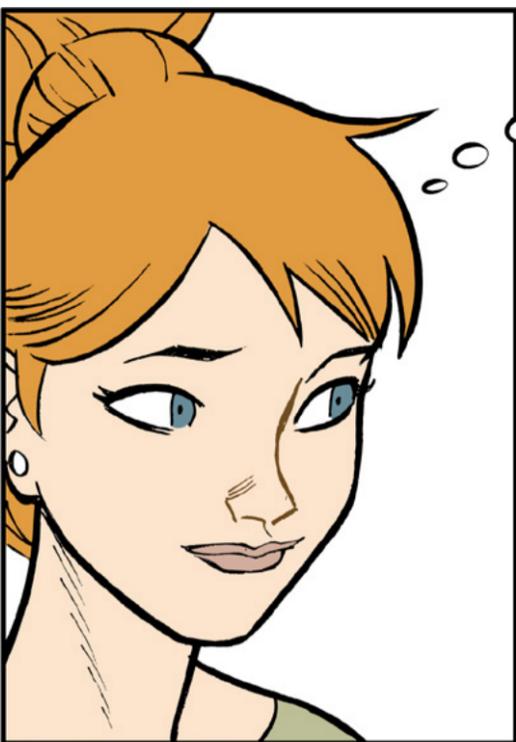
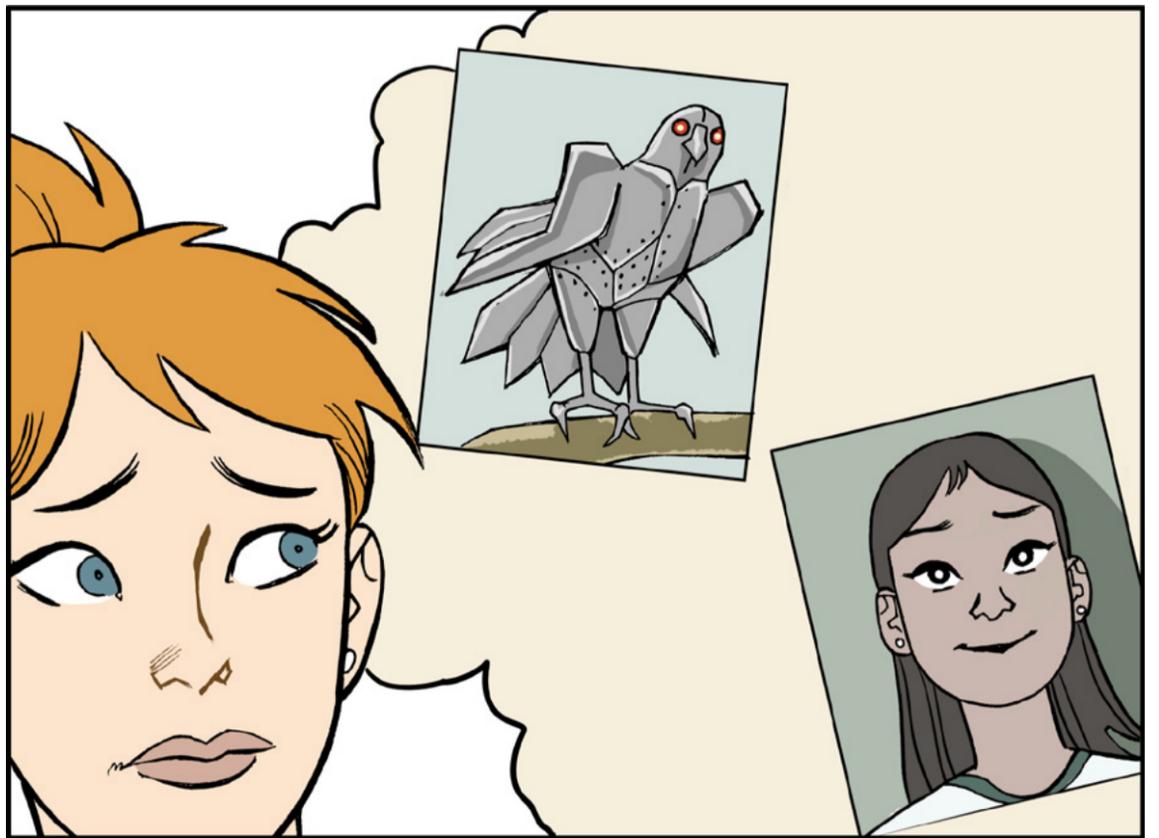
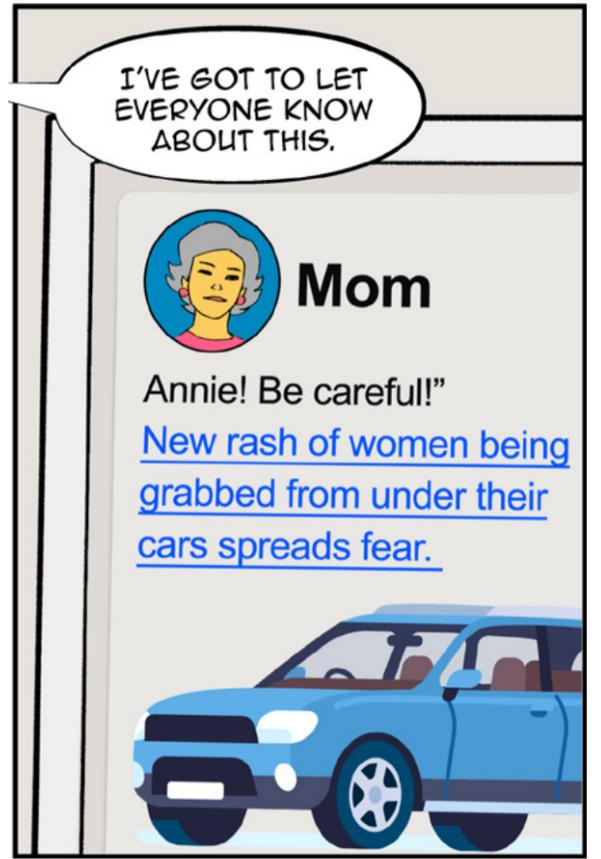


GLAD NOBODY SAW THAT.



Once something is posted online, it is very difficult for it to ever truly disappear. Old photos, stories, studies, and videos are often saved for a long time. Even if something is posted on an authoritative website such as a government, scientific, or academic website, it may no longer be relevant. Never assume that those who post content have taken the time to vet the information they share for truth, relevancy, or recency.

Remember, questions are your best friend! Is this the most up-to-date source? Does this represent a consensus among experts? Has other information come out since the posting of this story or article.



THE END

Practicing Digital Discernment

To protect yourself against misinformation, it pays to be an active participant in the media you consume. We all have busy lives, and it can be exhausting to investigate everything you read with a fine-tooth comb to see what is true or not. Instead, you can follow a simple checklist of questions to ask when you're consuming any media:

P Purpose	A Author	R Relevance	C Currency	S Sources
What is the aim of the author making a claim? Are they trying to influence my emotions or provide accurate information?	Who made the claim, and does the person have qualifications to make that claim? If they do have qualifications, are they the right qualifications to make the claim?	Do the claims being made apply to you? Are the claims matching with the sources cited?	Is the claim being made with up-to-date information, or are there more recent updates? Has newer information come out that contradicts earlier information?	Are there good references and do well qualified individuals agree with the claims?

Unless you're a total star, you won't have time to ask every single question, but it is important to try! By simply asking a few questions, you might find that you're better able to detect when a claim is trying to influence you. Awareness of emotional manipulation is key to not falling for misinformation!

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PERSEREC is a Department of Defense entity dedicated to improving the effectiveness, efficiency, and fairness of DoD personnel suitability, security, and reliability systems. PERSEREC is part of the Office of People Analytics (OPA), which is a component of the Defense Human Resources Activity (DHRA) under the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness).



Within the National Counterintelligence and Security Center (NCSC), the primary mission of the National Insider Threat Task Force (NITTF) is to develop a Government-wide insider threat program for deterring, detecting, and mitigating insider threats, including the safeguarding of classified information from exploitation.



The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) is responsible for policy development, planning, resource management and program evaluation. OSD includes the offices of top civilian defense decision-makers with regard to personnel, weapons acquisition, research, intelligence and fiscal policy, as well as offices the Secretary establishes to assist in carrying out assigned responsibilities.

The Threat Lab: A Brief History

The Defense Personnel and Security Research Center (PERSEREC) founded The Threat Lab in 2018 to realize the DoD Counter-Insider Threat Program Director's vision to incorporate the social and behavioral sciences into the mission space. Our team is headquartered in Seaside, California, and includes psychologists, sociologists, policy analysts, computer scientists, and other subject matter experts committed to workforce protection.

Our business model is simple: We work with stakeholders to transform operational challenges into actionable research questions. We then design and execute research projects that result in accessible, concise findings and recommendations that we integrate into training and awareness materials for organizations to use as is or to customize for their own purposes.

For more information or to request a briefing, please email us at dodhra.ThreatLab@mail.mil

