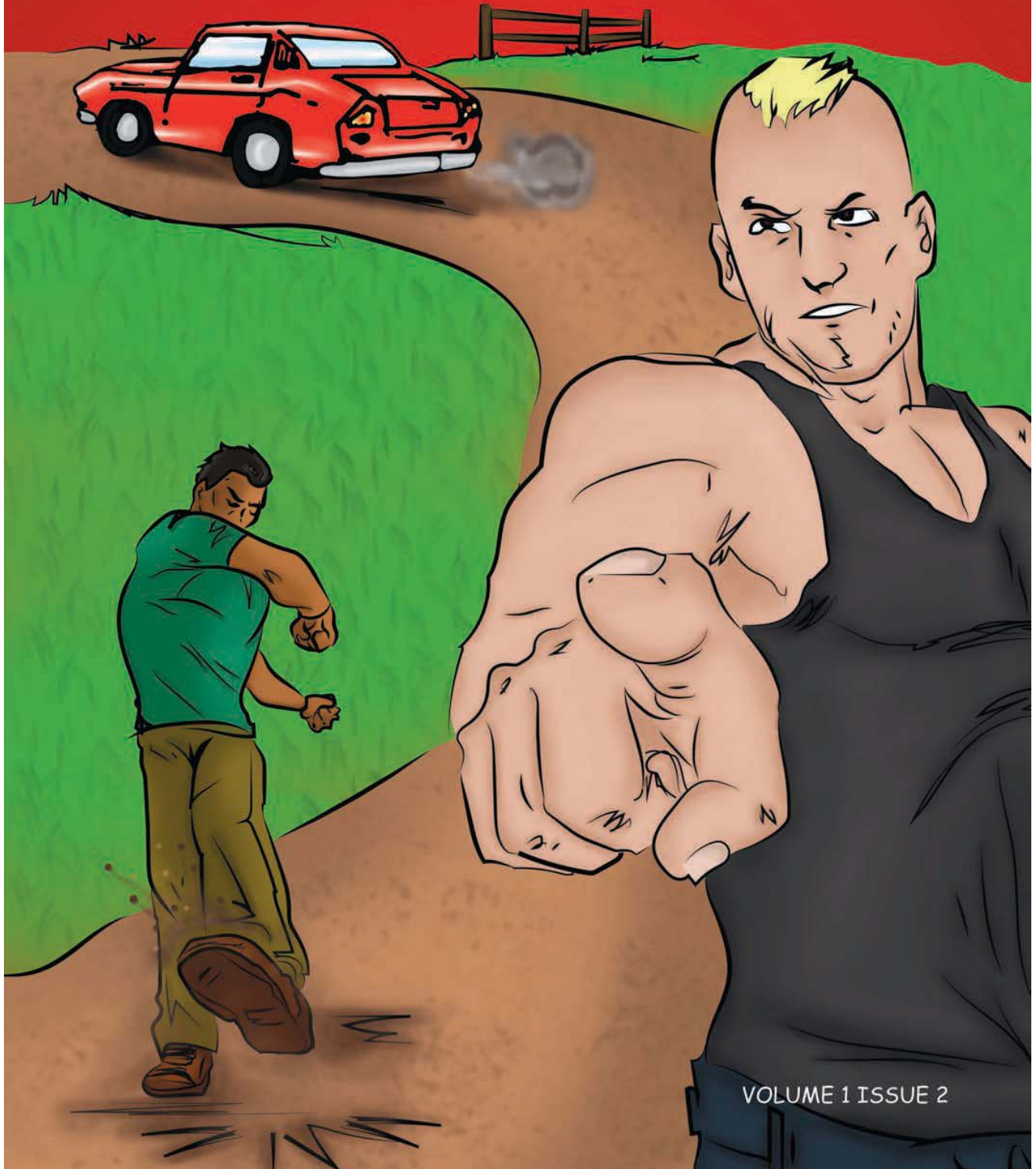


EMPOWERMENT \$AGA

QUEST FOR A JOB



VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2

The story begins with shape-shifters, four birds - Eagle, Raven, Hawk, and Owl - perched on telephone lines on the outskirts of the Native community. They are spiritual helpers to a group of teens - Shining Star, Theresa, Ranger, and Jay. These young teens learn financial resources as they embark on many adventures, and encounter intrigue in the process!

Quest for a Job uses the personal misadventures of Shining Star's father, Bear, and of her grandmother, Light Woman, to teach the importance of saving and planning for financial responsibility.



EAGLE

Eagle is an ancient spirit: all knowing, all seeing. As a human, he transforms into a strong leader who guides others through their journeys. He wears a medicine bag.



OWL

Owl is a wise one, and beyond. As a human, she conveys wisdom to others about their life situations. Owl always carries her fringed purse.



RAVEN

Raven is the one who brings balance; all-encompassing of all the attributes of life. In human form, she evokes reasonable consideration of all facts. Raven wears a turquoise ring.



HAWK

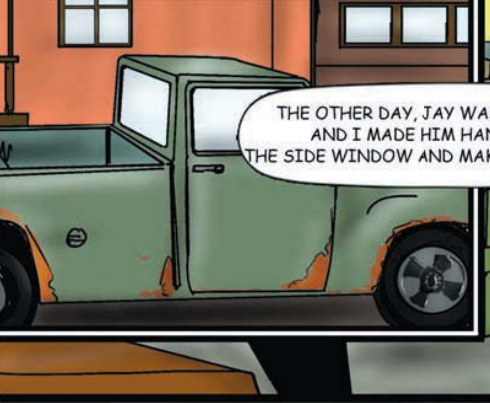
Hawk is a hunter and a messenger, a patient observer with a quirky sense of humor. In human form, he is always physically fit and active. He constantly wears his bead and bone choker.

SOMEWHERE IN AMERICA, A SMALL RESERVATION IS WATCHED BY A GROUP OF SHAPESHIFTING SPIRITS



MAN, I THOUGHT THE BRAKES WERE GOING TO GO OUT WHILE I WAS DRIVING, MY UNCLE SAID I COULD USE THE TRUCK, SINCE HE LOST HIS LICENSE FOR TOO MANY DUI'S BUT THE BRAKES ARE GOING OUT, THE HEATER GUIT, THE WINDSHIELD WIPERS DON'T WORK. WHEN IT RAINS, I HAVE TO PUT MY HAND OUT AND MAKE THEM WIPE.

OUTSIDE SHINING STAR'S HOUSE SITS A BEAT-UP 1976 CHEVY PICKUP TRUCK



THE OTHER DAY, JAY WAS WITH ME AND I MADE HIM HANG OUT THE SIDE WINDOW AND MAKE THEM MOVE.



AAANNND, IT'S A MAJOR GAS-GUZZLER. I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO RUN OUT BEFORE I GOT HERE!

I'M LOOKING FOR CARS NOW, AND I'M GONNA MAKE SURE IT WORKS BETTER THAN THAT!



FOR REAL? SERIOUSLY?



THAT IS REALLY BRAVE OF YOU. GOOD LUCK WITH THAT!

BRAVE? WHY BRAVE?



YEAH, BUT I NEED ONE OF MY OWN, BESIDES, HOW HARD CAN IT BE?

WELL, HOW EASY DO YOU THINK IT IS TO GET ONE? AND, HAVEN'T YOU BEEN USING YOUR DAD'S CAR WHEN YOU NEED IT?



I GUESS YOU'LL FIND OUT.



IN THE LIVING ROOM, BEAR IS PARKED ON THE COUCH LOOKING OVER HIS BILLS.



DAD, I WANT TO BUY A CAR - NOT NEW BUT USED.



I'M OLD ENOUGH, AND IT WILL HELP BOTH OF US OUT IF I HAVE ONE.

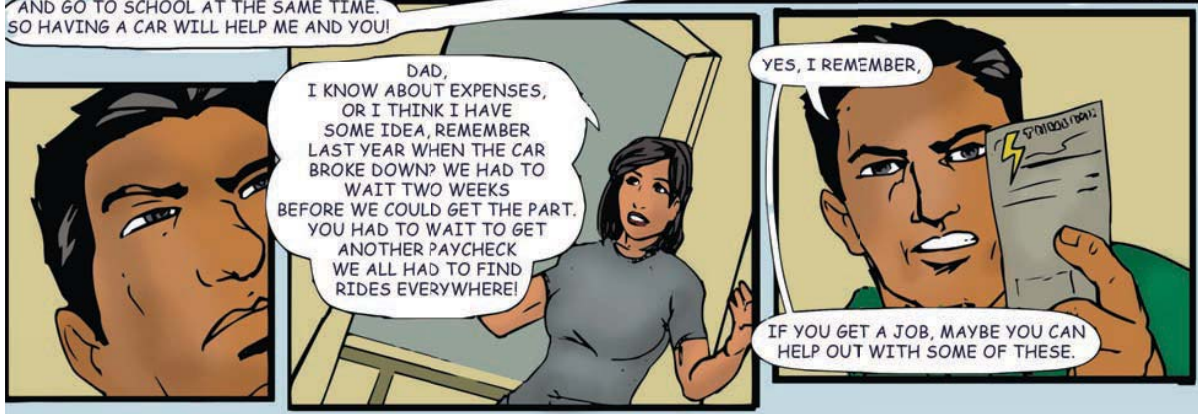
WHAT??! NO WAY! CARS ARE EXPENSIVE.

HOW WILL THIS HELP OUT, IF THERE ARE MORE EXPENSES? YOU KNOW I JUST STARTED BACK TO WORK AFTER I WAS LAID OFF FOUR MONTHS AGO, AND I'M BEHIND ON EVERYTHING!

BUT I CAN FIND A JOB.

AND I WILL PAY FOR IT MYSELF! I HAVE SOME MONEY SAVED FROM BABYSITTING. IF I HAD A CAR, I COULD WORK A LITTLE FURTHER OUT WHERE THE JOBS PAY MORE, AND IT WILL HELP ME GET TO AND FROM COLLEGE. MY CLASSES AREN'T GOING TO BE SCHEDULED AROUND YOUR WORK.

OR GRANDMOTHER'S. I WILL HAVE TO WORK AND GO TO SCHOOL AT THE SAME TIME. SO HAVING A CAR WILL HELP ME AND YOU!



DAD, I KNOW ABOUT EXPENSES, OR I THINK I HAVE SOME IDEA, REMEMBER LAST YEAR WHEN THE CAR BROKE DOWN? WE HAD TO WAIT TWO WEEKS BEFORE WE COULD GET THE PART. YOU HAD TO WAIT TO GET ANOTHER PAYCHECK WE ALL HAD TO FIND RIDES EVERYWHERE!

YES, I REMEMBER,

IF YOU GET A JOB, MAYBE YOU CAN HELP OUT WITH SOME OF THESE.





ONE DAY I WASN'T MUCH OLDER THAN YOU, AND ALTHOUGH I DON'T WANT TO MAKE YOU THINK I WASN'T A GOOD BOY, I WAS A BIT ON THE WILD SIDE.

I WANTED TO PARTY WITH MY MONEY. I WORKED HARD, SO I FELT LIKE I DESERVED TO SPEND MY HARD-EARNED MONEY AND HAVE FUN.



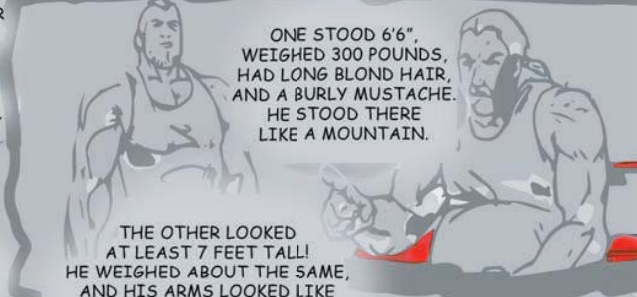
ANYWAY, I DIDN'T THINK MISSING A FEW PAYMENTS WOULD MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE. ONE DAY WHILE I WAS AT WORK AT THE SAWMILL, TWO MEN CAME AND DROVE OFF IN MY CAR.

ME AND MY TWO BUDDIES JUMPED IN THEIR PICKUP TRUCK AND CHASED AFTER THEM. WHO DID THOSE GUYS THINK THEY WERE, STEALING MY CAR? THERE WE WERE, CHASING THEM DOWN THE DIRT ROAD, DUST FLYING EVERYWHERE.



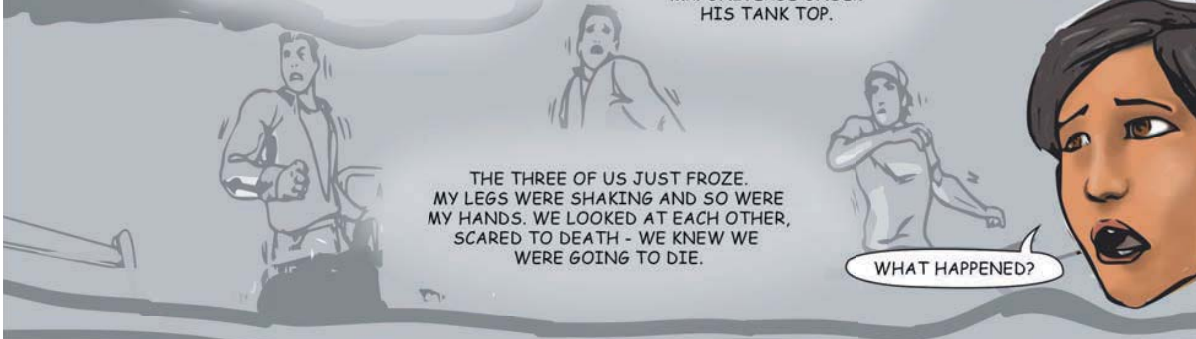
WE PULLED UP NEXT TO THEM AND RAN THEM OFF THE ROAD. WE WERE GOING TO KICK THEIR BUTTS! THEN THESE TWO GUYS JUMPED OUT.

ONE STOOD 6'6", WEIGHED 300 POUNDS, HAD LONG BLOND HAIR, AND A BURLY MUSTACHE. HE STOOD THERE LIKE A MOUNTAIN.



THE OTHER LOOKED AT LEAST 7 FEET TALL! HE WEIGHED ABOUT THE SAME, AND HIS ARMS LOOKED LIKE MR. UNIVERSE UNDER HIS TANK TOP.

THE THREE OF US JUST FROZE. MY LEGS WERE SHAKING AND SO WERE MY HANDS. WE LOOKED AT EACH OTHER, SCARED TO DEATH - WE KNEW WE WERE GOING TO DIE.



WHAT HAPPENED?

THE TALL ONE ASKED, 'WHICH ONE OF YOU IS BEAR?' SO I STOOD FORWARD. HE SAID STERNLY, 'YOU ARE FOUR MONTHS BEHIND ON YOUR PAYMENTS, SO NOW IT GOES BACK TO THE BANK.'



I WAS FRUSTRATED, AND I KICKED THE DIRT HARD. THE GUY SAID, 'YOU WANT SOME TROUBLE? I'LL GIVE YOU SOME TROUBLE.' HE MADE A FIST AND GLARED AT US.



I COULDN'T MOVE. I HAD NEVER MET SUCH GIANTS BEFORE, AND I KNEW THESE GUYS MEANT BUSINESS.



SO WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

WELL, I DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE. WE GOT IN THE TRUCK AND DROVE BACK TO THE MILL.

I WAS SO MAD AND EMBARRASSED. IT WAS A REALLY HARD LESSON TO LEARN. I DIDN'T HAVE THE MONEY TO GET IT BACK. SO, ALL THE MONEY I'D PUT INTO THE CAR WAS GONE. AND I HAD NO WHEELS ANYMORE.

THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO. BUT MY GIRL, I KNOW YOU WOULDN'T BEHAVE LIKE I DID, BUT YOU CAN SEE WHAT COULD HAPPEN IF YOU DON'T TAKE CARE OF YOUR FINANCES.

OH MY GOSH, YES! YOU NEVER TOLD ME ABOUT THAT! DAD, THAT IS AWFUL!

YES, IT WAS. DID YOU EVER THINK ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU DIDN'T PAY FOR THE CAR?

NO, NOT REALLY.

BUT I NEVER THOUGHT I COULDN'T PAY FOR IT.





WEARING A BLACK SHIRT, SHINING STAR COMES FLYING OUT OF HER DOOR.



SHE SKIP-RUNS TOWARD MAIN STREET, WATCHED ALL ALONG BY HER OVERHEAD ESCORT, EAGLE.



EAGLE LANDS AROUND THE CORNER OF THE GENERAL STORE.



EAGLE SHAPE-SHIFTS INTO AN ELDER MAN CARRYING GROCERIES.



RAVEN AND HAWK TRANSFORM INTO TEENAGE SKATERS.



THEY SPEED DOWN THE STREET TOWARD THE ELDER MAN.



HAWK SLAMS INTO THE ELDER MAN, KNOCKING THE BAGS OUT OF HIS ARMS. CARTONS AND CANS FLY INTO THE AIR, AND THE OLD MAN BARELY CATCHES HIMSELF.



HAWK KEEPS SKATING, NOT LOOKING BACK.



I'M SO SORRY!
ARE YOU OKAY?

WHO ARE YOU?
I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU
OR YOUR FRIEND AROUND HERE.

WE'RE JUST PASSING THROUGH,
THAT OTHER ONE WHO
DIDN'T STOP IS MY BROTHER.
OUR PARENTS ARE AT THE COURTHOUSE,
GETTING SOME PAPERS FILED
OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.



YOU DAMN KIDS!
WHY DON'T YOU WATCH
WHERE YOU ARE GOING?!

NO?
SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING
TO DO ABOUT THIS?

WOW, I AM SOOO SORRY, AND, AND...
I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY
TO REPLACE YOUR GROCERIES.

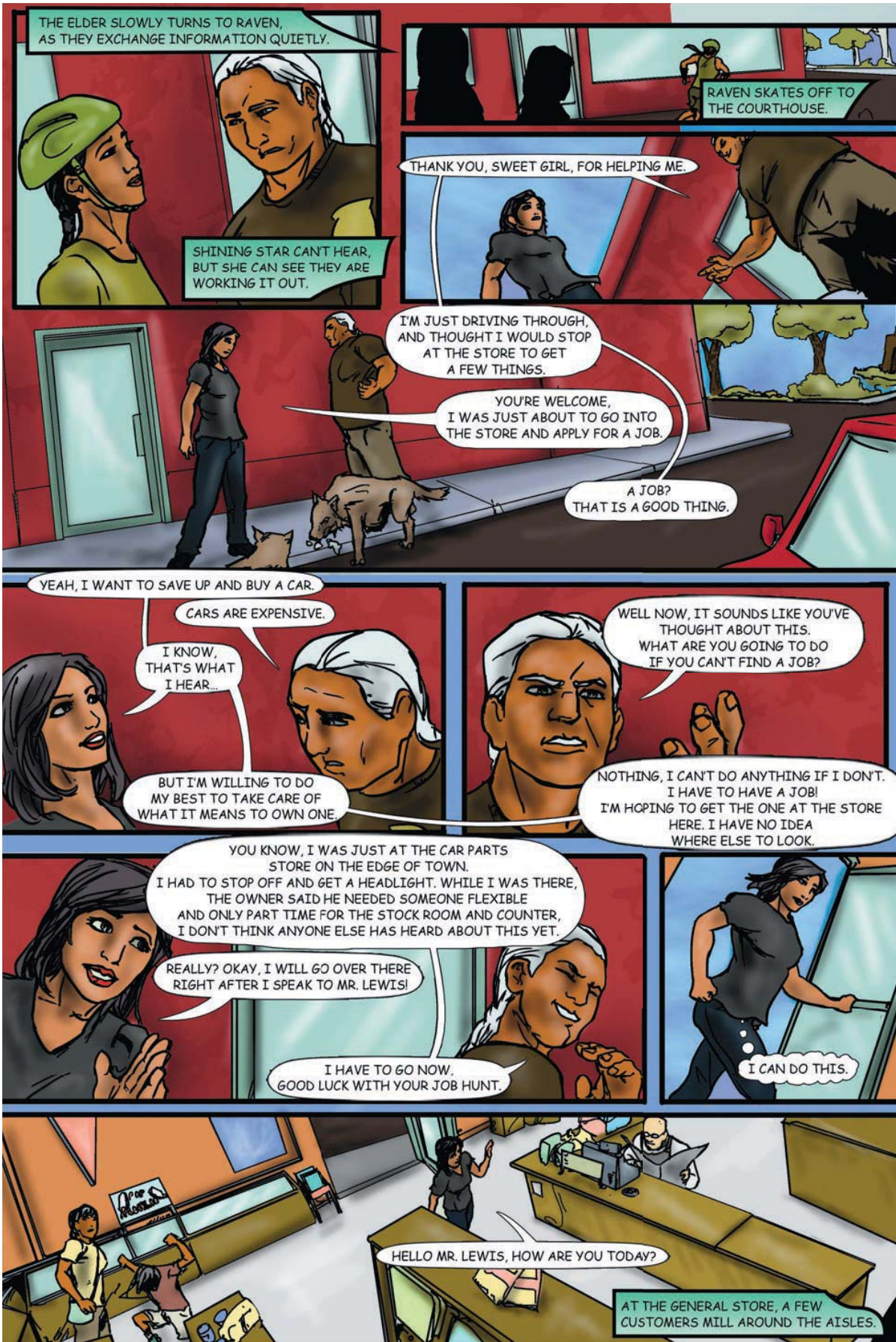


WELL, I CAN ASK MY PARENTS
TO PAY FOR THIS FOR YOU...

MY GRANDMA WOULD HAVE THEIR HIDES,
AND SHE WOULD HAVE RUN AFTER
THAT OTHER ONE. THESE GUYS ARE NOT
FROM THESE PARTS, THAT'S FOR SURE.

DO YOUR PARENTS
ALWAYS BAIL YOU OUT
WHEN YOU'RE IN TROUBLE?

WELL, UH NO, BUT MAYBE
MY BROTHER AND I CAN
WORK IT OFF.



THE ELDER SLOWLY TURNS TO RAVEN, AS THEY EXCHANGE INFORMATION QUIETLY.

SHINING STAR CANT HEAR, BUT SHE CAN SEE THEY ARE WORKING IT OUT.

THANK YOU, SWEET GIRL, FOR HELPING ME.

RAVEN SKATES OFF TO THE COURTHOUSE.

I'M JUST DRIVING THROUGH, AND THOUGHT I WOULD STOP AT THE STORE TO GET A FEW THINGS.

YOU'RE WELCOME, I WAS JUST ABOUT TO GO INTO THE STORE AND APPLY FOR A JOB.

A JOB? THAT IS A GOOD THING.

YEAH, I WANT TO SAVE UP AND BUY A CAR.

CARS ARE EXPENSIVE.

I KNOW, THAT'S WHAT I HEAR...

BUT I'M WILLING TO DO MY BEST TO TAKE CARE OF WHAT IT MEANS TO OWN ONE.

WELL NOW, IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'VE THOUGHT ABOUT THIS. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO IF YOU CANT FIND A JOB?

NOTHING, I CANT DO ANYTHING IF I DONT. I HAVE TO HAVE A JOB! I'M HOPING TO GET THE ONE AT THE STORE HERE. I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE ELSE TO LOOK.

YOU KNOW, I WAS JUST AT THE CAR PARTS STORE ON THE EDGE OF TOWN. I HAD TO STOP OFF AND GET A HEADLIGHT. WHILE I WAS THERE, THE OWNER SAID HE NEEDED SOMEONE FLEXIBLE AND ONLY PART TIME FOR THE STOCK ROOM AND COUNTER, I DONT THINK ANYONE ELSE HAS HEARD ABOUT THIS YET.

REALLY? OKAY, I WILL GO OVER THERE RIGHT AFTER I SPEAK TO MR. LEWIS!

I HAVE TO GO NOW. GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR JOB HUNT.

I CAN DO THIS.

HELLO MR. LEWIS, HOW ARE YOU TODAY?

AT THE GENERAL STORE, A FEW CUSTOMERS MILL AROUND THE AISLES.





SHINING STAR RUSHES IN THE FRONT DOOR AND INTO THE KITCHEN WHERE HER GRANDMOTHER, LIGHT WOMAN, IS STITCHING A SILK STAR QUILT.

GRANDMA! GRANDMA! I GOT A JOB!

YES, GRANDMA, I WANT TO BUY MY OWN CAR!

THAT IS WONDERFUL NEWS, MY GIRL! YOUR VERY FIRST JOB. I'M SO PROUD OF YOU!

OH MY GOODNESS, A CAR? WELL, YOU SHOULD REALLY THINK ABOUT HOW YOU'RE GOING TO PAY FOR THIS. DID YOUR DAD TELL YOU ABOUT THE..?

OH REALLY, SO WHAT IS YOUR PLAN?

REPO STORY? YES! I'M NOT GOING TO MISS MY PAYMENTS. I HAVE IT ALL FIGURED OUT, GRANDMA

GET A JOB, GET A CAR, AND MAKE MY PAYMENTS.

THERE IS LOT TO THIS CAR BUSINESS, YOU KNOW, MY GIRL?

SHE PAUSES, LOOKS UP, AND BEGINS TO WEAVE A TALE OF QUILTING: THE VALUE OF PLANNING, THE WORK AND MATERIALS INVOLVED, AND THE REWARDS OF COMPLETION AND MONETARY COMPENSATION.

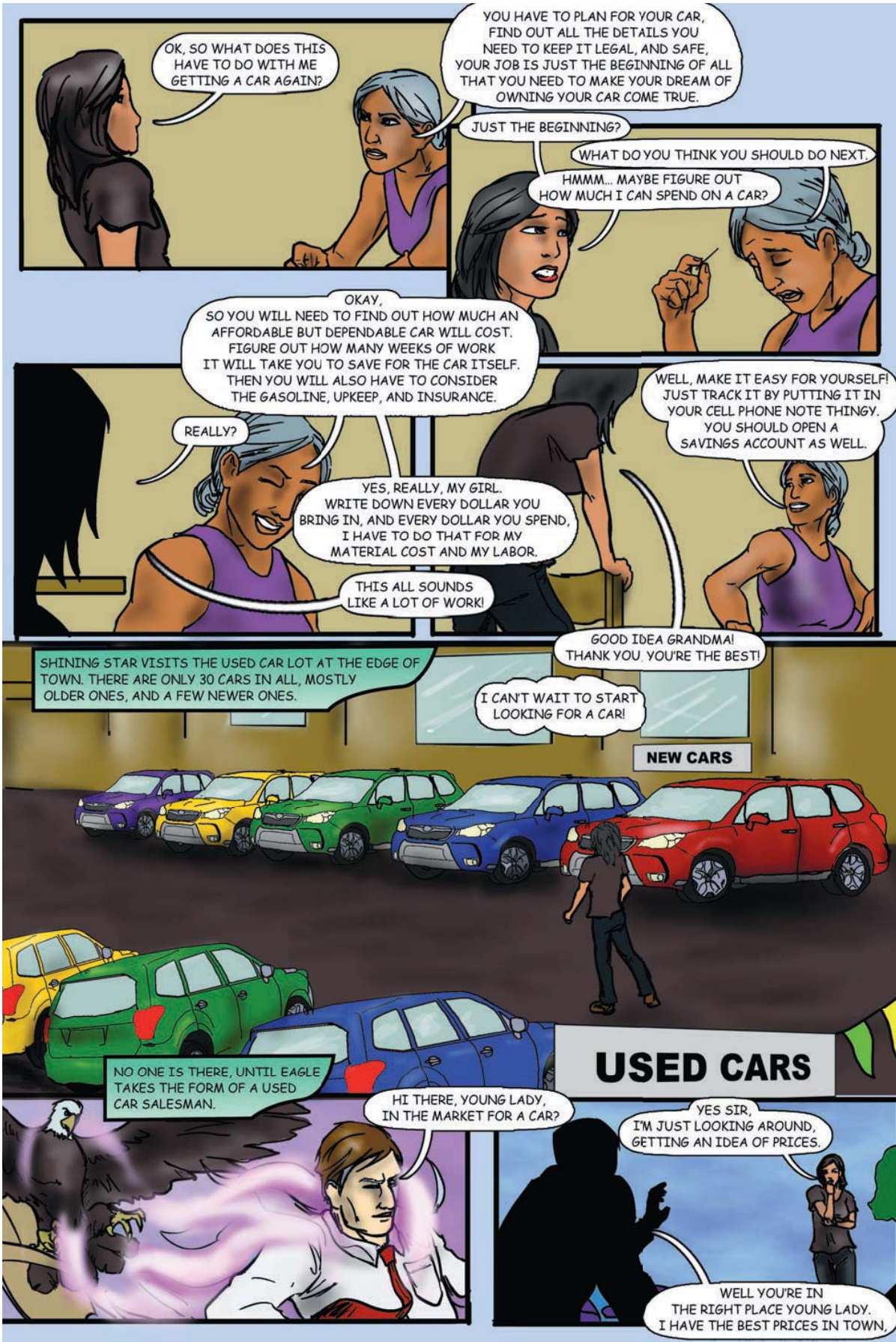
I'VE BEEN WORKING ON THIS QUILT FOR WEEKS. IT TOOK ME A LONG TIME TO PICK OUT THE RIGHT COLORS - I HAD TO FIND WHERE I COULD GET THE MATERIAL,

YEAH, SURE, I GUESS...

SILK COLORS AREN'T THAT EASY TO FIND, I HAD TO SPECIAL-ORDER. THERE ARE ALSO DIFFERENT TYPES OF STAR QUILTS AS WELL. DIFFERENT WAYS YOU CAN DO IT. DIFFERENT PATTERNS.

I HAD TO BE INSPIRED, IT TOOK PLANNING, RIGHT?

NOW THAT I'M ALMOST FINISHED, I WILL PRICE THE QUILT. I HAVE WORKED MANY HOURS, AND MY HAND HAS STITCHED EVERY INCH. MY LOVE FOR THIS WORK IS MORE THAN THE DOLLARS I WILL EARN. YET, I HAVE LEARNED THAT MY WORTH IS NOT CHEAP WHEN IT COMES TO MY STAR QUILTS, IT IS MORE THAN A QUILT - IT IS SPECIAL PIECE OF ART THAT I PLANNED, I LABORED OVER, AND NOW I'M READY TO REAP THE REWARDS.



OK, SO WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH ME GETTING A CAR AGAIN?

YOU HAVE TO PLAN FOR YOUR CAR, FIND OUT ALL THE DETAILS YOU NEED TO KEEP IT LEGAL, AND SAFE, YOUR JOB IS JUST THE BEGINNING OF ALL THAT YOU NEED TO MAKE YOUR DREAM OF OWNING YOUR CAR COME TRUE.

JUST THE BEGINNING?

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU SHOULD DO NEXT?

HMMM... MAYBE FIGURE OUT HOW MUCH I CAN SPEND ON A CAR?

OKAY, SO YOU WILL NEED TO FIND OUT HOW MUCH AN AFFORDABLE BUT DEPENDABLE CAR WILL COST. FIGURE OUT HOW MANY WEEKS OF WORK IT WILL TAKE YOU TO SAVE FOR THE CAR ITSELF. THEN YOU WILL ALSO HAVE TO CONSIDER THE GASOLINE, UPKEEP, AND INSURANCE.

REALLY?

YES, REALLY, MY GIRL. WRITE DOWN EVERY DOLLAR YOU BRING IN, AND EVERY DOLLAR YOU SPEND, I HAVE TO DO THAT FOR MY MATERIAL COST AND MY LABOR.

THIS ALL SOUNDS LIKE A LOT OF WORK!

WELL, MAKE IT EASY FOR YOURSELF! JUST TRACK IT BY PUTTING IT IN YOUR CELL PHONE NOTE THINGY. YOU SHOULD OPEN A SAVINGS ACCOUNT AS WELL.

GOOD IDEA GRANDMA! THANK YOU YOU'RE THE BEST!

SHINING STAR VISITS THE USED CAR LOT AT THE EDGE OF TOWN. THERE ARE ONLY 30 CARS IN ALL, MOSTLY OLDER ONES, AND A FEW NEWER ONES.

I CAN'T WAIT TO START LOOKING FOR A CAR!

NEW CARS

USED CARS

NO ONE IS THERE, UNTIL EAGLE TAKES THE FORM OF A USED CAR SALESMAN.

HI THERE, YOUNG LADY, IN THE MARKET FOR A CAR?

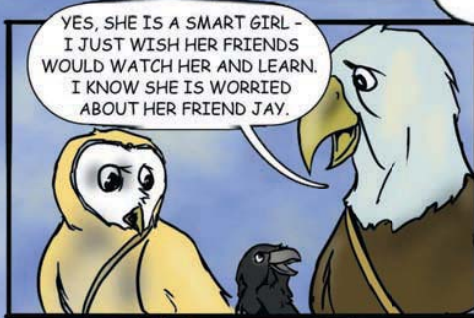
YES SIR, I'M JUST LOOKING AROUND, GETTING AN IDEA OF PRICES.

WELL YOU'RE IN THE RIGHT PLACE YOUNG LADY. I HAVE THE BEST PRICES IN TOWN.





AS THEY DRIVE OFF, SHINING STAR TELLS THERESA ABOUT HER NEW JOB.



WINDOWS DOWN, MUSIC BLARING AS THERESA AND SHINING STAR HEAD TOWARD SHINING STAR'S HOUSE.





Rose Red Elk (Sioux/Assiniboine)

Author of the Empowerment \$aga series of stories, Rose is an international performing arts entertainer, also known by her Native American traditional and stage name, Red Feather Woman. An accomplished award winning recording artist, storyteller, singer, songwriter and author from the Fort Peck Reservation in Poplar, Montana, and an enrolled member of the Sioux/Assiniboine Tribes, Rose continues to discover the realms of spiritual awareness through the gift of storytelling, in written, oral and musical forms. Her fiction is themed with traditional values, blended with ancient stories from the past.

www.redfeatherwoman.com

Matthew Barkhausen

Matthew worked with the Native American and woman owned small business Circuit Media as an illustrator for the Empowerment \$aga series of stories. His artwork for this and other projects focuses on Native American culture. He has provided artwork to the Rocky Mountain Indian Chamber of Commerce and other Native American organizations. Matthew is of Cherokee and Tuscarora heritage. He has a B.A. in interactive media design from the Art Institute of Colorado.



www.matthewbarkhausen.com

Other Circuit Media illustrators who contributed greatly to the project were **Jon Hormachea**, creative design director, **Abby McMillen**, illustrator, and **Ali Bibbo**, graphic designer.



Joseph Arnold

Working as a freelancer for a Denver based company, Joe created the original images of the characters. His artwork reflects his philosophy that dedication and practice are critical aspects of being an artist. After serving five years active duty with the U.S. Army 82nd Airborne and three years with the Colorado National Guard, Joe completed his education in June 2102 at The Art Institute of Colorado with a bachelor's degree in media arts and animation. He has worked for Disney Online Studios Boulder and 12-6 Studios in Denver.

Original concept by J.P. Barham

Creating the Empowerment \$aga

The Empowerment \$aga is a series of stories to engage youth 14-18 years of age in developing basic financial skills so they will learn how to build and preserve their own financial wealth. These stories, offered in colorful comic-style graphics, are reservation-based in order to bring "home" to Native youth the message of handling their finances from an early age.

Recognizing the importance of financial knowledge to IIM account holders, the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) has been working for years to bring financial skills training to account holders of all ages. OST has partnered with other government agencies, Native community development financial institutions, Native organizations, and others to offer culturally sensitive financial education.

The Empowerment \$aga is another opportunity to expand financial skills training in Indian Country by encouraging youth-to-youth and multi-generational discussions about this topic. The stories highlight the value of knowing these financial skills, and illustrate the challenging consequences when this knowledge is not known or used properly.

The characters and stories of the Empowerment \$aga series are wholly-owned by the government of the United States and cannot be used without the written consent of the government. For more information regarding financial education opportunities in Indian Country, please contact:

OST's Director of Financial Education

brian_ross@ost.doi.gov

or

Trust Beneficiary Call Center

1-888-678-6836

To contact your Fiduciary Trust Officer please visit:

<http://www.doi.gov/ost/fto>



U.S Department of the Interior

Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians

1849 C Street NW

Washington, DC 20240

202-208-4866