



COMICS, ONCE MARGINALIZED, HAVE TAKEN THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE IN THIS VENERABLE REPOSITORY OF KNOWLEDGE,



THANKS TO THE VISION AND PERSISTENCE OF LIBRARIAN KAREN GREEN,



WHO RECENTLY BECAME THE FIRST CURATOR FOR COMICS AND CARTOONS IN COLUMBIA'S RARE BOOK & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY.

A LIFE IN COMICS

The Graphic Adventures of Karen Green '97GSAS
How a Butler Librarian Became Columbia's First Curator for Comics and Cartoons
by Nick Sousanis '14TC



GREEN, WHO GREW UP IN MICHIGAN, WAS A SOLITARY KID WHO LOVED BOOKS.



HER PARENTS TRIED TO GET HER TO PLAY OUTSIDE,

BUT SHE'D TAKE HER BOOK AND KEEP READING.



ONE BOOK, ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND, SENT HER DOWN A RABBIT HOLE THAT LED TO A LIFELONG PASSION FOR PICTURE STORIES.

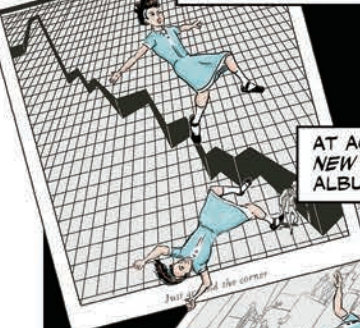


AS ALICE ASKED, "WHAT IS THE USE OF A BOOK WITHOUT PICTURES OR CONVERSATIONS?"



AT AGE 6 SHE DISCOVERED HER PARENTS' NEW YORKER 25TH ANNIVERSARY CARTOON ALBUM (1925-1950). SHE WAS OBSESSED.

AND IT HELPED HER CULTIVATE A STRONG INDEPENDENT ATTITUDE AND A FASCINATION FOR THE CITY SHE WOULD SOON CALL HOME.



THIS WAS HER INTRODUCTION TO UNDERSTANDING HISTORY,



"It's broccoli, dear."
"I say it's spinach, and I say the hell with it."

WHEN GREEN WAS TEN,
HER MOM ANNOUNCED:

WE'RE MOVING TO NEW YORK CITY

- A "LAND OF
WONDERFUL THINGS."

HER PARENTS WANTED TO GIVE
HER AND HER TWO SIBLINGS
EXPOSURE TO CULTURE.

THEY MOVED TO FORT LEE,
NEW JERSEY, JUST ACROSS
THE RIVER FROM THE CITY.

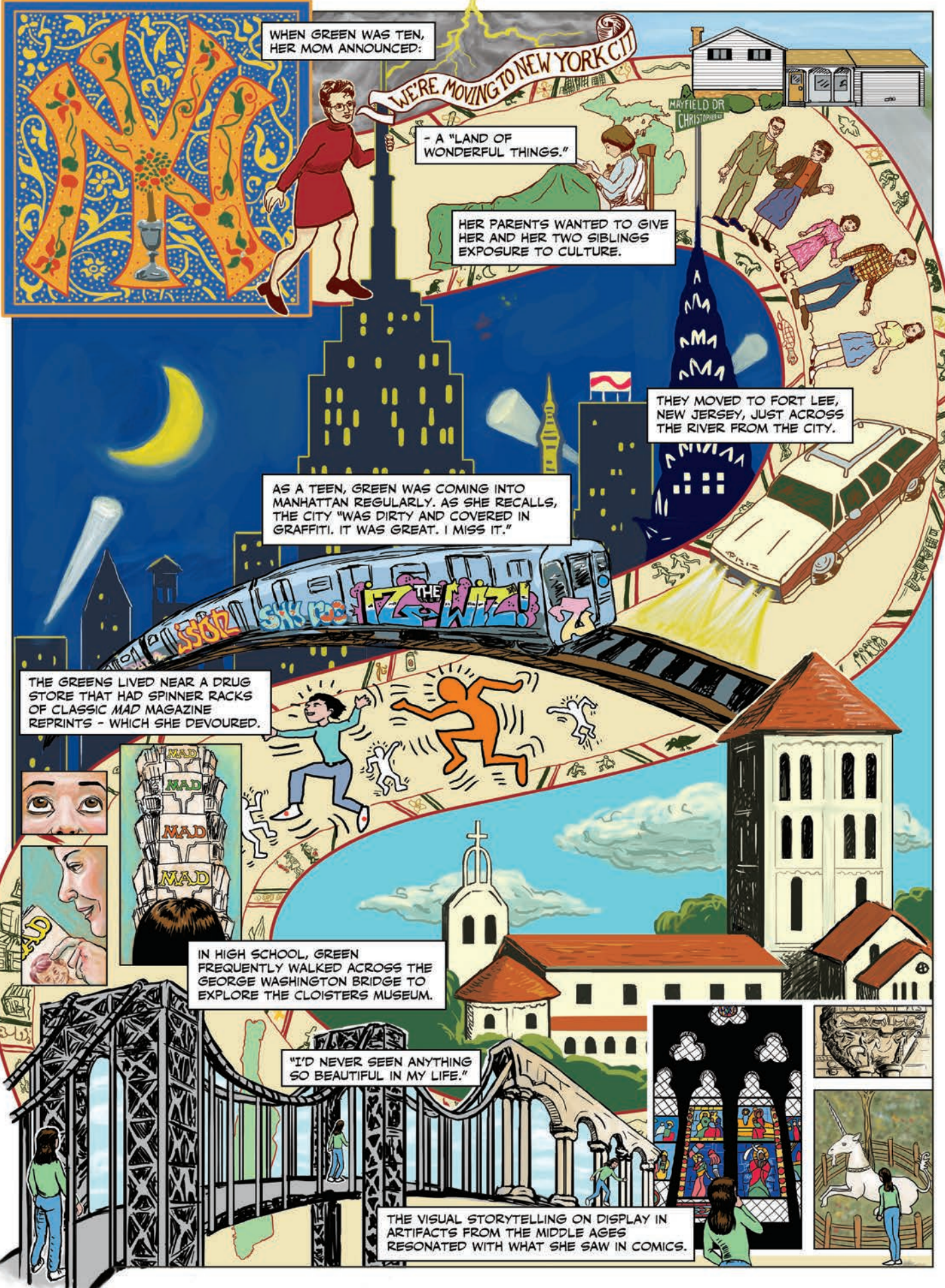
AS A TEEN, GREEN WAS COMING INTO
MANHATTAN REGULARLY. AS SHE RECALLS,
THE CITY "WAS DIRTY AND COVERED IN
GRAFFITI. IT WAS GREAT. I MISS IT."

THE GREENS LIVED NEAR A DRUG
STORE THAT HAD SPINNER RACKS
OF CLASSIC MAD MAGAZINE
REPRINTS - WHICH SHE DEVoured.

IN HIGH SCHOOL, GREEN
FREQUENTLY WALKED ACROSS THE
GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE TO
EXPLORE THE CLOISTERS MUSEUM.

"I'D NEVER SEEN ANYTHING
SO BEAUTIFUL IN MY LIFE."

THE VISUAL STORYTELLING ON DISPLAY IN
ARTIFACTS FROM THE MIDDLE AGES
RESONATED WITH WHAT SHE SAW IN COMICS.



COMICS SEEMED TO FOLLOW HER EVERYWHERE.



BACK WHEN GREEN WAS 11 SHE GOT BRACES. TO HER DELIGHT, HER ORTHODONTIST HAD STACKS OF ARCHIE COMICS.



SHE ENDED UP STAYING FOR HOURS AFTER HER APPOINTMENTS READING...



"I LOVED THOSE COMICS. I THOUGHT THAT'S WHAT HIGH SCHOOL WAS GOING TO BE LIKE. I WAS MISTAKEN."



HIGH SCHOOL PROVED TO BE A DIFFICULT AND TROUBLED TIME FOR GREEN.

IT'S THERE SHE DISCOVERED UNDERGROUND COMICS AND THE COMICS MAGAZINE

HEAVY METAL



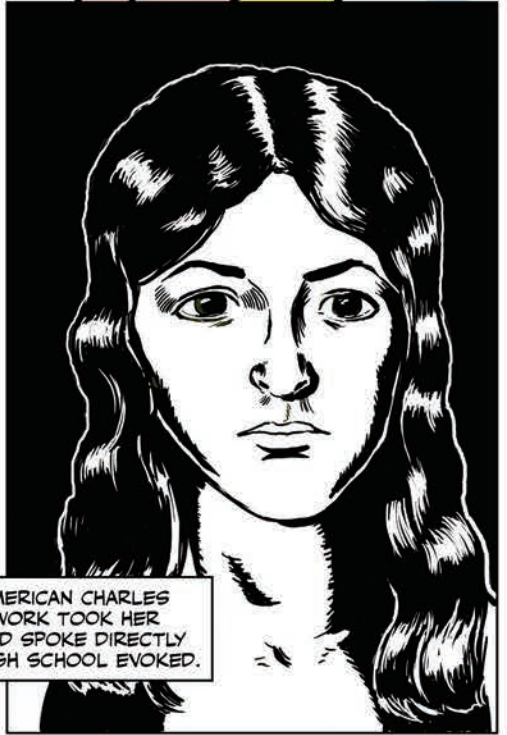
- WHICH BLEW HER MIND WITH IT'S SLATE OF EUROPEAN CARTOONISTS

after Jim Cherny



- AS WELL AS AMERICAN CHARLES BURNS, WHOSE WORK TOOK HER BREATH AWAY AND SPOKE DIRECTLY TO FEELINGS HIGH SCHOOL EVOKED.

after C. Burns



SHE MADE IT TO COLLEGE IN 1978, BUT DROPPED OUT AFTER ONE SEMESTER AND STARTED BARTENDING, WHICH SHE WOULD DO FOR THE NEXT 15 YEARS.



BARTENDING TAUGHT HER HOW TO WORK WITH AND TALK TO DIFFICULT PEOPLE AND GRIN LIKE A CHESHIRE CAT WHEN SHE WASN'T "FEELING SMILEY."

DURING THIS TIME, GREEN CHASED MANY DIFFERENT DREAMS TRYING TO FIND HER WAY.



1 (AMONG OTHER INTERESTS, SHE FELL FOR EARLY-20TH-CENTURY CARTOONISTS LIKE WINSOR MCCAY.)

IN 1989 SHE WENT TO MASSAGE THERAPY SCHOOL.



2 WHILE SHE EARNED HER CERTIFICATE, SHE DECIDED SHE DIDN'T WANT TO PRACTICE.



3 BUT HER SCORES IN PHYSIOLOGY AND ANATOMY MADE HER CONSIDER BECOMING A DOCTOR.



4 FIRST, SHE NEEDED A B.A., SO SHE WENT TO NYU. SHE ENDED UP STUDYING MEDIEVAL HISTORY.

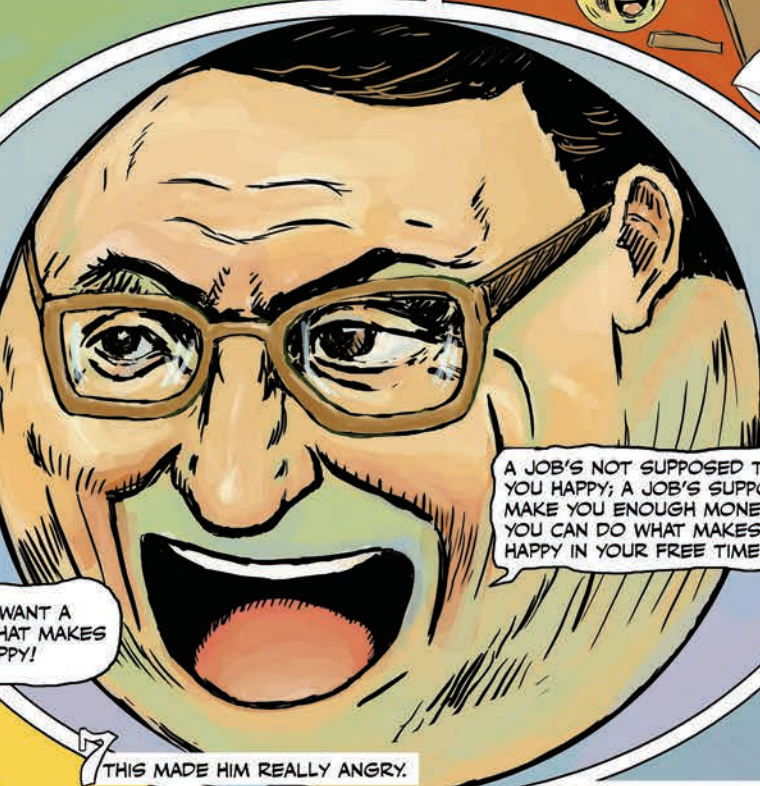
5 HER FATHER, HOWEVER, HAD ALWAYS WANTED HER TO GO INTO SALES.



6 YOU'RE SMART, YOU'RE ATTRACTIVE, YOU'RE PERSONABLE, AND YOU'D DO SO WELL.



BUT I WANT A JOB THAT MAKES ME HAPPY!



7 THIS MADE HIM REALLY ANGRY.



8 GREEN REBELLED.

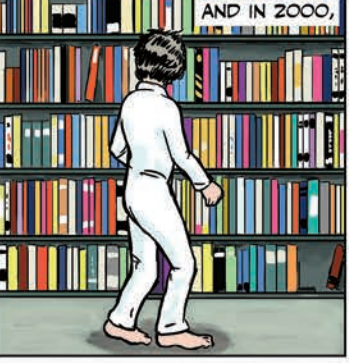


9 "I'VE DONE A LOT OF TRYING AND ABANDONING THINGS IN MY LIFE. IT WAS HARD ON MY PARENTS, WHO THOUGHT I WAS A QUITTER. BUT I JUST WANTED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WAS RIGHT FOR ME."

10 IN 1993, GREEN CAME TO COLUMBIA AND GOT A MASTER'S IN HISTORY.



11 SHE WANTED TO STAY AT COLUMBIA, SO SHE BEGAN WORKING AS THE SUPERVISOR OF BUTLER RESERVES.



12 SHE WENT TO RUTGERS FOR LIBRARY SCIENCE IN ORDER TO APPLY TO BE COLUMBIA'S MEDIEVAL-HISTORY LIBRARIAN.



13 IN 2002 SHE GOT THE JOB.



AS GREEN SETTLED IN AT COLUMBIA, SHE WONDERED WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN COMICS.



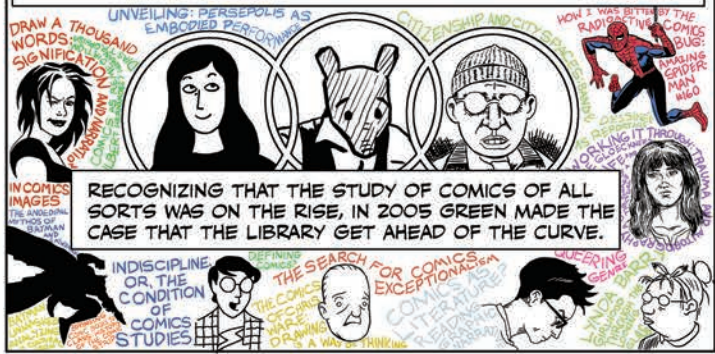
SHE BOUGHT A COPY OF PAUL HORNSCHEMEIER'S

MOTHER, COME HOME



- ITS DEPICTION OF FAMILY AND LOSS OPENED GREEN'S EYES TO WHAT COMICS COULD BE AND SPARKED AN IDEA.

THE LIBRARY'S HOLDINGS INCLUDED JUST THREE GRAPHIC NOVELS: MAUS, PERSEPOLIS, AND PALESTINE - "WORKS THAT HAD RECEIVED ENOUGH ATTENTION TO NOT BE CONSIDERED COMICS."

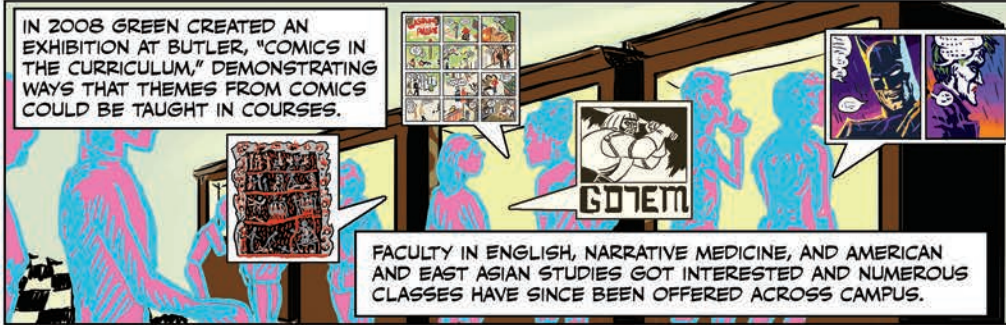


RECOGNIZING THAT THE STUDY OF COMICS OF ALL SORTS WAS ON THE RISE, IN 2005 GREEN MADE THE CASE THAT THE LIBRARY GET AHEAD OF THE CURVE.

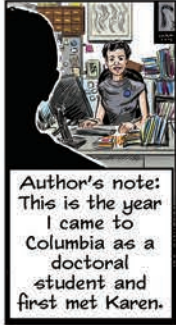


AND FROM THERE, SHE BEGAN BUILDING A COLLECTION.

IN 2008 GREEN CREATED AN EXHIBITION AT BUTLER, "COMICS IN THE CURRICULUM," DEMONSTRATING WAYS THAT THEMES FROM COMICS COULD BE TAUGHT IN COURSES.



FACULTY IN ENGLISH, NARRATIVE MEDICINE, AND AMERICAN AND EAST ASIAN STUDIES GOT INTERESTED AND NUMEROUS CLASSES HAVE SINCE BEEN OFFERED ACROSS CAMPUS.



Author's note: This is the year I came to Columbia as a doctoral student and first met Karen.

THE COLLECTION STARTED TO TAKE SHAPE.

THEN, IN 2010, OUT OF THE BLUE, LEGENDARY X-MEN AUTHOR CHRIS CLAREMONT CONTACTED GREEN TO OFFER UP HIS ARCHIVES.

BAM!

OTHERS FOLLOWED.

THIS BURGEONING CATALOGUE INCLUDES MANUSCRIPTS, SKETCHES, ORIGINAL ART, CORRESPONDENCE, CONTRACTS, AND OTHER MATERIALS.



AND THAT COLLECTION OF THREE? NOW OVER 14,000 VOLUMES!

FROM COMICS ICONS LIKE MAD'S AL JAFFEE; HOWARD CRUSE, THE FATHER OF GAY COMICS; EARLY BATMAN CONTRIBUTOR JERRY ROBINSON; ELFQUEST CREATORS WENDY AND RICHARD PINI; KITCHEN SINK PRESS; AND CARTOONIST MORT GERBERG.

WHAT LESSON CAN WE
DRAW FROM KAREN'S
ADVENTURES?

HERE WE GO WITH AN HOMAGE TO AL JAFFEE'S **MAD FOLD-IN**

Help Karen navigate the twists and turns of her seemingly chaotic path by folding the page.



FOLD PAGE OVER LIKE THIS

A ➔

FOLD THIS SECTION OVER LEFT ➔ B

FOLD BACK SO "A" MEETS "B"

NOW GREEN ATTENDS COMIC CONVENTIONS WORLDWIDE,



COMIC CON



MODERATES PANELS,



TEACHES, ORGANIZES FESTIVALS, CO-PRODUCED A DOCUMENTARY FILM,



JUDGED THE EISNER AWARDS AND PULITZER PRIZE IN EDITORIAL CARTOONING, AND



HANGS OUT WITH HER CARTOONIST HEROES LIKE JULES FEIFFER, DREW FRIEDMAN, AND AL JAFFEE.



"WHAT IS GOING ON WITH MY LIFE?!"



YOU NEVER KNOW YOU'RE
FOLLOWING A PATH WHILE ON IT. LOOKING BACK,
YOU SEE HOW IT ALL CAME TOGETHER. FOR HER
CURIUSER AND CURIUSER LED TO THE UNIVERSITY.

A ➔

➔ B