

THE BEARD

Written by Fred Van Lente // © 2015 Alison Sampson & Fred Van Lente

A

ONE

B

Panel 1: Meg's bedroom - her POV - the sun burning through her drawn bedroom shades.

LETTERING NOTE: Meg's "diary entry" captions, her internal monologue, should be in HANDWRITTEN STYLE.

C

1. DIARY:

D

Here we go. Once more, into the breach.

2. DIARY:

The daily tyranny of the familiar.

Panel 2: Meg (35-ish?) in her bed, turns on her side, checks her email on her phone, which is plugged-in on the end table by her pillow. We cannot see her face for this whole page because SPOILERS.

3. DIARY:

E

Anything come in over the wire last night? Stunning job offer? Marriage proposal? Rich relative passing?

Panel 3: Meg opens her blinds, letting sun shine in.

4. DIARY:

No, nothing so dramatic.

Panel 4: Meg sits on her toilet, having a morning pee, still looking at her phone.

5. DIARY:

Or mundane.

6. DIARY:

Ah well.

Panel 5: On the phone: A stylized notification email from an Internet dating service with a flaming heart as its symbol: **SPARX.com**.

7. NOTIFICATION:

F

Hey Meg24 really looking forward to Fri nite! Gonna book the place now so if you have any food things (allergies, vegan, paleo-cavewoman-eater, ha ha) let me know asap! Best Bob99

Panel 6: Meg's POV - squirting toothpaste onto her toothbrush.

7. DIARY:

"Everything happens for a reason."


8. DIARY:

You know who says that?

G

TWO

SPLASH: Meg looks up, toothbrush in hand, at herself in the mirror for the first time today and is stunned to see she sports a BEARD -- and not just a bit of growth, or a Van Dyke, or a soul patch, but we are talking a full, flowing, beautiful 1950s Jesus painting beard, a bust of a Greek philosopher beard. She blinks at it in surprise.

1. DIARY:  People who have no clue why anything happens to them.


2. MEG (SMALL): Fuck me.

3. TITLE: **THE BEARD**


4. CREDITS

THREE

Panel 1: Meg's phone, with the "SPEAKER" icon lit.

1. MEG (OFF): I'm sorry, is it too early? Am I calling too early?
2. PHONE (j):  No, no, just wrapping up getting Kimmie and Mitch out the door...
3. PHONE (j): What's up?

Panel 2: Meg's hands grab a box from a top shelf -- written on the side in Sharpie is "EX CRAP."

4. MEG (DOWN): Well, it's just, *you know*, when you wake up, and you've got, uh, something, uh, some *hair*, growing on your lip ... and chin...
5. MEG (DOWN): ... and, uh, *elsewhere* ... 

Panel 3: From the box Meg's hands removes a pile of porno mags, a sports jersey that says "SPORTS" on it.

6. ICON (j): Oh, sure. Everyone gets that from time to time. Just bleach it. You can do that yourself, easy—
7. MEG (OFF): I think, uh, this is sort of beyond a *bleaching* thing—
8. ICON (j): What about whitening strips? They really work...

Panel 4: From the box Meg removes an ELECTRIC SHAVER, clicks it in.

9. SFX: *vmmmmmmmmmmm*
10. MEG: I, um ... sorry love I gotta ... thanks for the advice ... but I gotta go...
11. PHONE (j): OK! See you at work!

Panel 5: Meg turns the shaver on.

12. DIARY: The same thought keeps going through your mind:

Panel 6: Meg carefully shaves in the mirror. Her face is glum, though she's not quite to tears -- not yet. She accepts this latest crisis with defiant stoicism.

13. DIARY: "In addition to everything else I have to deal with?
14. DIARY: "This *too?*"

FOUR

"Panel" 1: Later, at work, Meg's computer monitor, where into a search engine field she types:

1. TYPE: "Woke up with Beard"

"Panel" 2: On the screen the first article that pops up is:

2. TYPE: "HELP! I BANGED MY OWN FAG HAG!"

3. MEG (OFF): WHAT? NO, I DIDN'T MEAN...

Panel 3: WIDE ANGLE of Meg at her WORK STATION at the ARCHITECTURE FIRM where she works, glued to her computer screen.

4. COMMENT #1: Comment NYCray Don't say "fag hag," say "fruit fly," homophobe

5. COMMENT #2: Comment KhaleesiOfQueens Don't compare women to insects you POS

6. COMMENT #3: Reply NYCray Fuck all your holes

7. COMMENT #4: Reply KhaleesiOfQueens Cut your dick off until the stump gets infected and you die

8. COMMENT #5: Comment Antihist WHITE POWER HITLER WAS RIGHT!!!

Panel 4: CU - Meg rubs her mouth/chin area at the deluge of vitriol. Important: We can't see her beard area just yet.

9. DIARY: The Internet: Worse than useless."

10. CHRISTIE (OFF): Hey you!

Panel 5: CHRISTIE, Meg's pretty friend, approaches her workstation from the *Brazil*-esque hive network of cubes that seems to extend in all directions.

11. CHRISTIE: After today I'm gonna need some five o'clock *self-medication*. You in for tasty beverages?

12. MEG: Uh, y'know, I'm not feeling too hot, I think maybe I'll just go home...

Panel 6: Tight on Christie, brought up short.

13. CHRISTIE: Whoa!

Panel 7: Tight on Meg, who looks up -- by noon she's already got a face COVERED in FIVE O'CLOCK SHADOW.

14. MEG: What?

Panel 8: Tight on the jar of cover up Christie hands Meg: SHAME! Cover-Up for Women

15. CHRISTIE (UP): Here --

16. CHRISTIE (UP): You're gonna need a *lot* this...

17. FOOTNOTE: * This story was created with exciting new **Auto-Outrage** technology, that contains its own denunciations! For sample Tweets you can use to attack this story, visit <http://www.fruitvariantia.com/thabeard.html>

FIVE

Panel 1: A DOCTOR in his small EXAMINING ROOM talks to (off-panel) Meg and takes notes on a chart.

J

1. 1. DOCTOR: First stop after work: medical experts. DOCTOR: Do you smoke?
3. MEG (OFF): No.
4. DOCTOR: Abuse drugs?
5. MEG (OFF): No.
6. DOCTOR (OFF): Drink alcohol?
7. MEG: Well, yeah, that.
8. DOCTOR (OFF): Socially?

J

Panel 2: CU - Meg, grinning raffishly, delivers a one-liner. Her beard has now grown back so it's neatly groomed around her chin, not Jesus-length again.

9. MEG: More *religiously*.

Panel 3: CU - The doctor just looks at her.

NO COPY

Panel 4: Same shot as panel 2 - Meg deadpan again.

10. MEG (SMALL): That was a joke.

Panel 5: The BIKINI WAXER at a Massage Parlor looks down on us dubiously, cracking gum in her mouth.

11. DIARY: Blood work: Normal.
12. WAXER: Uh, you know ... this is gonna *hurt*, right?
13. DIARY: CAT Scan: Normal.

Panel 6: Reverse angle - Meg lies down on the waxing bench, the WAXING STRIPS criss-covering her now-once-again Jesus Beard.

14. MEG: Let's *do* this.
15. DIARY: Next stop:
16. DIARY: The *waxing* experts.

SIX

Panel 1: LARGE PANEL: A giant SOUND EFFECT something like "*EYAAAHHA*", takes up this whole block, superimposed with the waker's hand pulling up the strips, which have HAIR and a bunch of BLOOD attached to them.

1-2. deleted

Panel 2: Meg's TV displays the logo for a reality show, superimposed over a crying hot twenty-something woman:

3. TV SHOW:

SOUND SINGLE BITCH

4. BITCH (J):

I have to choose a man by midnight!

5. BITCH (J):

Or I lose out on \$50 thousand dollars!

Panel 3: Reverse angle - Meg lies sideways in her couch, in her robe, covered in crumpled tissues, having gone into the "Full-On Depression" stage. Her beard and her head-hair are wildly long and unkempt.

6. BITCH (OFF, J):

And my worth as a human being!

7. DIARY:

The media provides an echo chamber for every shout these days.

8. DIARY:

So when you don't hear your *own* voice...

Panel 4: Meg looks down at her phone, which lies down near her armpit on the couch, as it buzzes with an incoming text.

9. DIARY:

...the silence *deafens*.

10. TEXT:

Hey we still on?

Panel 5: Frowning, Meg looks back, still lying on her side.

11. RETURN TEXT:

Sorry who is this?

12. TEXT:

This is Bob? BOBBY? Your date?

13. TEXT:

I'm at restaurant

14. TEXT:

Will u be?

Panel 6: Meg looks terrified and baffled at her phone.

15. DIARY:

OH SHIT

16. DIARY:

Shit shit shit

17. DIARY:

What do I

18. DIARY:

Say no

19. DIARY:

Suicide?

20. DIARY:

Suicide is always an option

SEVEN

K

Panel 1: Long shot of Meg and her date, BOB, eating at a fancy restaurant. Their faces are blocked in this shot.

1. BOB: ...yeah, and after a while, I was just like too much rape, too much murder, I thought I'd try something lighter...
2. BOB: Like "Hannibal." You seen "Hannibal?"
3. MEG: Oh, I love "Hannibal." Is it weird I always feel hungry after it though?

Panel 2: Bob, a not-unattractive man Meg's age, eats his dinner.

4. BOB: *Hahahaha!* Yeah, me too? Skinned torsos have never looked so appetizing...
5. MEG (OFF): I blame their DP.
6. BOB: I don't know about you, I think this is going great ...

Panel 3: Shoot over Meg's shoulder as Bob bashfully tries to ask her a question.

7. MEG: Oh me too.
8. BOB: ... so of course my first impulse is to worry it. Forgive me for ruining it with an inability to repress my natural ***nosiness***, but...

Panel 4: Reverse angle - we see Meg in the face for the first time; she is totally shaven and sports a small band-aid on her neck. She points to it with a grin.

9. MEG: ***This?***
10. MEG: Cut myself shaving.
11. BOB (OFF): *Hahahaha!* Good one.

Panels 5: Meg awakes the next morning in her own bed, yawning. Her beard has fully grown back and is at Jesus-lengths once more.

12. DIARY: Well. That was fun.
13. DIARY: Funnier than expected, definitely.

Panel 6: She staggers to the bathroom, stretching her arms.

14. DIARY: As long as I can avoid letting him spend the night this one ***might*** work out...

EIGHT

L

Panel 1: LARGE PANEL: Oops, Meg forgot she *did* spend the night with Bob: He's sitting on her toilet in nothing but his boxers (which are down around his ankles) and flipping through one of Meg's women's magazines. They look at each other, stunned.

1. BOB (SMALL): Whoa.

Panel 2: Meg dashes out of her house wearing a bank robbery SKI MASK and carrying her purse. She's hastily throw on a sun dress and sandals and as she runs she doesn't realize her handbag isn't fully closed and crap is tumbling out of it at an alarming rate.

2. BOB (INSIDE): Meg-! Wait!!

3. DIARY: Diet, drugs, vitamins, acid, burning, cutting-- it doesn't matter--
-

Panel 3: A SCHOOLGIRL on her way to morning classes bends down to grab a fallen phial of nail polish from Meg's purse as she runs past.

4. DIARY: The beard comes back. The very next day.

5. SCHOOLGIRL: Hey lady, hold up!

Panel 4: Meg blindly barrels into the street, the Schoolgirl follows her, neither noticing the CITY BUS barreling down on them!

6. DIARY: There's nothing worse than something that never ends, that
plods on, in the same oppressive sameness.

7. SCHOOLGIRL: You dropped--

8. DIARY: When the only comfort -- is that you **can** end it--

NINE

Panel 1/2: Split screen of BUS DRIVER and Meg's eyes catching each other as the driver desperately tries to slam on the brakes (I can see an argument that we can bump this onto the top of Page Nine, too).

NO COPY

Panel 3: Impossibly, Meg stands her ground, sweeping up the girl with one arm and holding out the other -- stopping the bus with it! It buckles against as she stops it, wheels burning and spinning, because she has some kind of incredible strength!

NO COPY (Apropos of nothing, other than the bikini waxing bit, I think this story should be SFX-free, Watchmen-style.)

Panel 4: Aerial shot as the bus driver flies out of the bus and she sets the girl down. Her schoolmates swarm around her, stunned.

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 1. FLOATER: | How how did you do that |
| 2. FLOATER: | Stopped a bus with her bare hands |
| 3. FLOATER: | That was amazing |

Panel 5: Next - angle up as Meg looks down at her hands, at her newfound power, while bystanders gawk at her.

- | | |
|-----------|---------------|
| 4. DIARY: | I got it. |
| 5. DIARY: | I got it now. |

Panel 6: She pulls off the ski mask and throws her hair and her beard around like a supermodel emerging from the pool in a frat boy comedy. (I could see an argument putting this as the first panel of the next page.)

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 6. DIARY: | You don't know what your own story is. |
| 7. DIARY: | It starts one way, and goes in a completely different direction. |

Panel 1: The faces of the bystanders using and aching and looking utterly amazed.
1. DIARY: Sometimes you discover your crippling weakness before your strength.

Panel 2: Hag leaps upward, CG Superman style, toward the heavens, grinning.
2. DIARY: Everything happens to you for a reason.

Panel 3: The bystanders look up amazed as she recedes into the heavens, crap still falling out of her purse.
3. DIARY: Because you *give* it one.

Panel 4: This is kind of a surrealistic idea, so disregard it if you want, but I had the idea of the row of girls' faces, possibly on a white field, with Duchamp Mona Lisa-style beards and mustaches drawn over them. The idea being this is how they're now imagining themselves, that beards are suddenly "in".
NO COPY

Panel 5: Reverse angle - angle down - Bob, who threw on a robe, stands up looking lost, kinda disappointed.
4. BOB (SMALL): I thought it was kinda hot...
5. BLUR: END