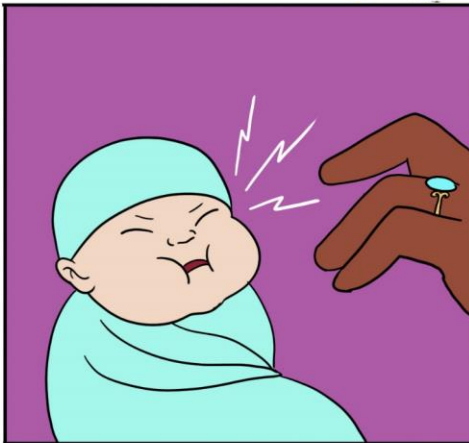




Oh Olivia, it's been so great having you and Waiola over to visit! Thanks so much for dropping by!



You say that like it's a chore, we've been aching to meet little Tulio at last!



Op- looks like he's hungry again. Hold on...



Is that your feeding journal?

No, it's my medication tracker. I'm just making sure I haven't taken anything that wouldn't have absorbed by now. I don't want to hurt Tulio.



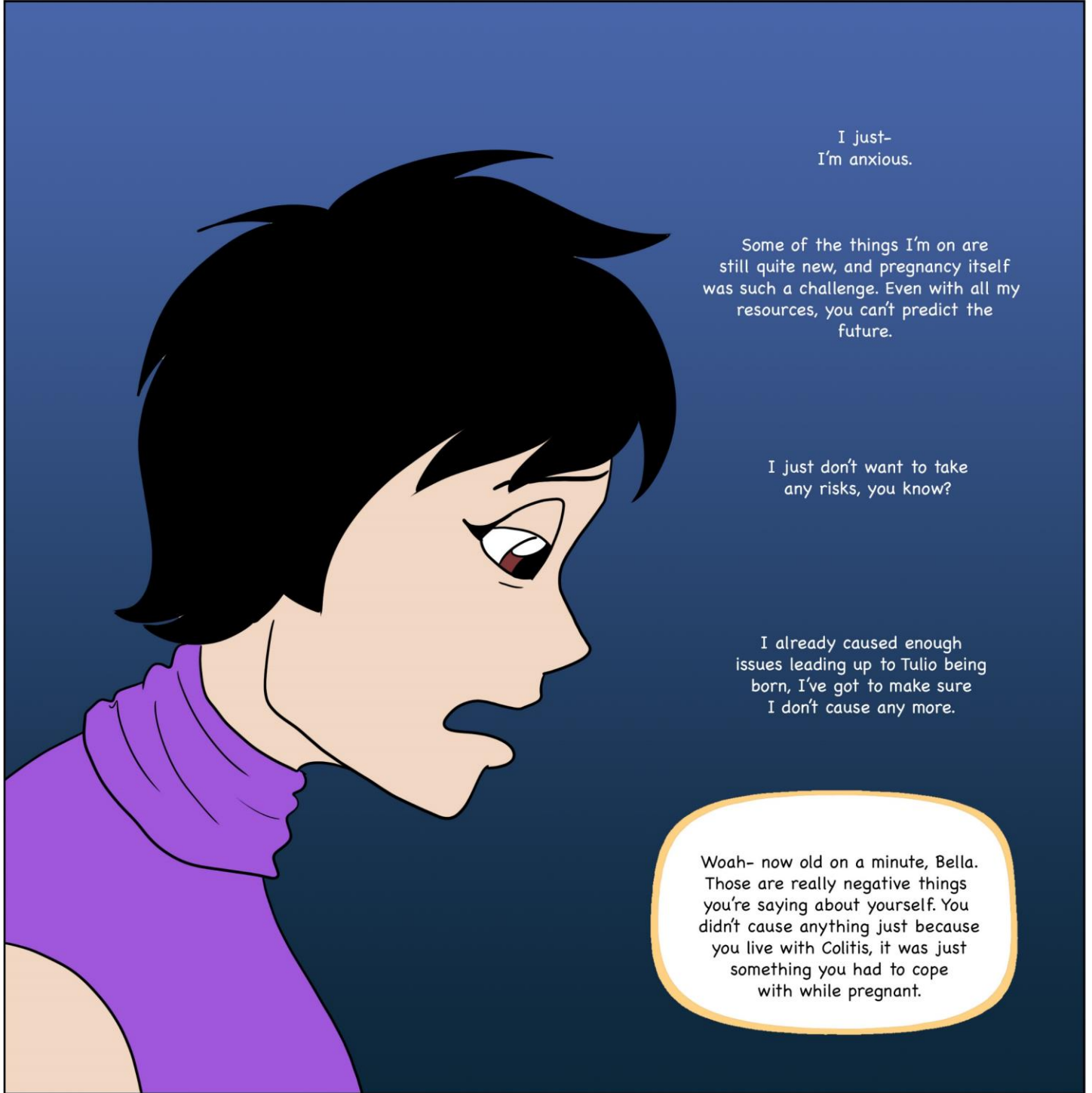
Steroids and mesalamine- for my Colitis.

... Mh, okay.

What medications are you taking?

Well, you don't need to worry about passing that onto Tullio. Some medications aren't safe to take while breastfeeding, but those two are fine. The tiny bit that DOES go into your milk is digested in his stomach and can't do anything to him. My IBD team told me that when I was breastfeeding.

... But you're still worried about it? Why is that.



I just- I'm anxious.

Some of the things I'm on are still quite new, and pregnancy itself was such a challenge. Even with all my resources, you can't predict the future.

I just don't want to take any risks, you know?

I already caused enough issues leading up to Tullio being born, I've got to make sure I don't cause any more.

Woah- now old on a minute, Bella. Those are really negative things you're saying about yourself. You didn't cause anything just because you live with Colitis, it was just something you had to cope with while pregnant.

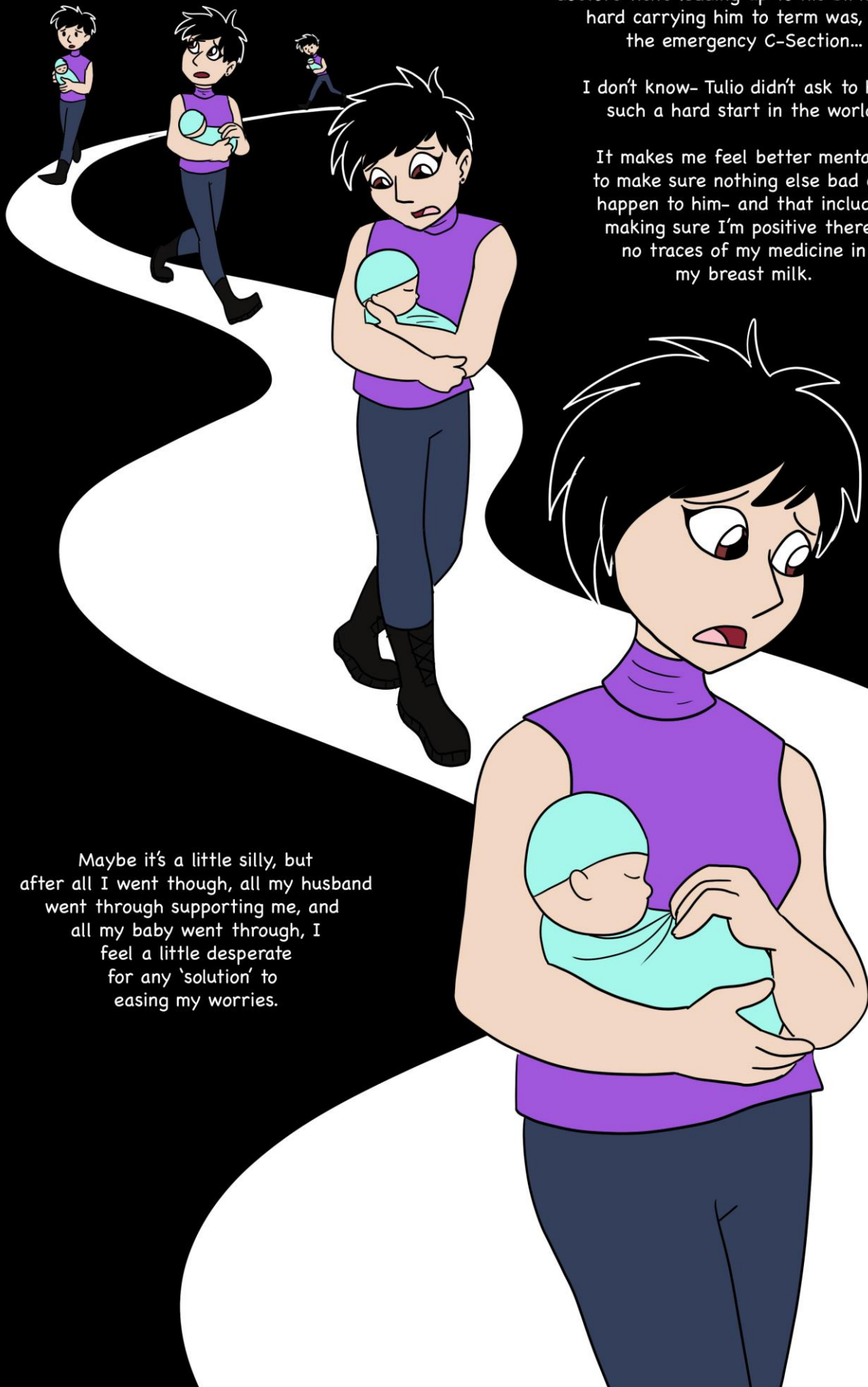
It's still so hard not to feel guilty.

After all the doctors visits leading up to his birth, how hard carrying him to term was, and the emergency C-Section...

I don't know- Tulio didn't ask to have such a hard start in the world.

It makes me feel better mentally to make sure nothing else bad can happen to him- and that includes making sure I'm positive there's no traces of my medicine in my breast milk.

Maybe it's a little silly, but after all I went through, all my husband went through supporting me, and all my baby went through, I feel a little desperate for any 'solution' to easing my worries.





It makes sense you're having intense feelings right now, but I am going to say your guilt is very misplaced.

Just because IBD is a part of you, does not mean it defines you- nor does it reflect anything moral about you. You had a bad flare at the end of your pregnancy, and needed surgery to deliver your son. Now you're on medications to manage the continued flare up.



With the help of IBD specialists, your Husband Elijah, your respective families, your friends, and your own incredible hard work, you can work with to raise your beautiful little baby boy.

How do you know all of this, Olivia?

You're not the only person who felt guilty about having a child when you're living with IBD. I held in all those awful thoughts for over a year after Keanu was born, and it was awful.

It took me a long time to open up about all these worries, but I did.

And I don't regret it for even a second. My mental health improved so much, and it meant I could guiltlessly be the best mum possible.

So don't feel bad about opening up. It's a great first step.



Okay. So. What did you do to feel less... What's the word?

Overwhelmed?

Yeah.



Well after I told my wife how I felt, I spoke to my IBD team. We set up a consultation where I asked about every single thing I was anxious about. Breastfeeding and medication, energy whilst flaring up, what to do if I need support in the evenings, what to tell a GP if I needed to speak to someone who didn't know my full history.

It didn't get rid of my anxiety, nothing fully could. But it gave me little, simple steps towards a clearer head and an eased heart. It wasn't always easy, but it was worth every single bit. And most of all?

I didn't do it alone.



