

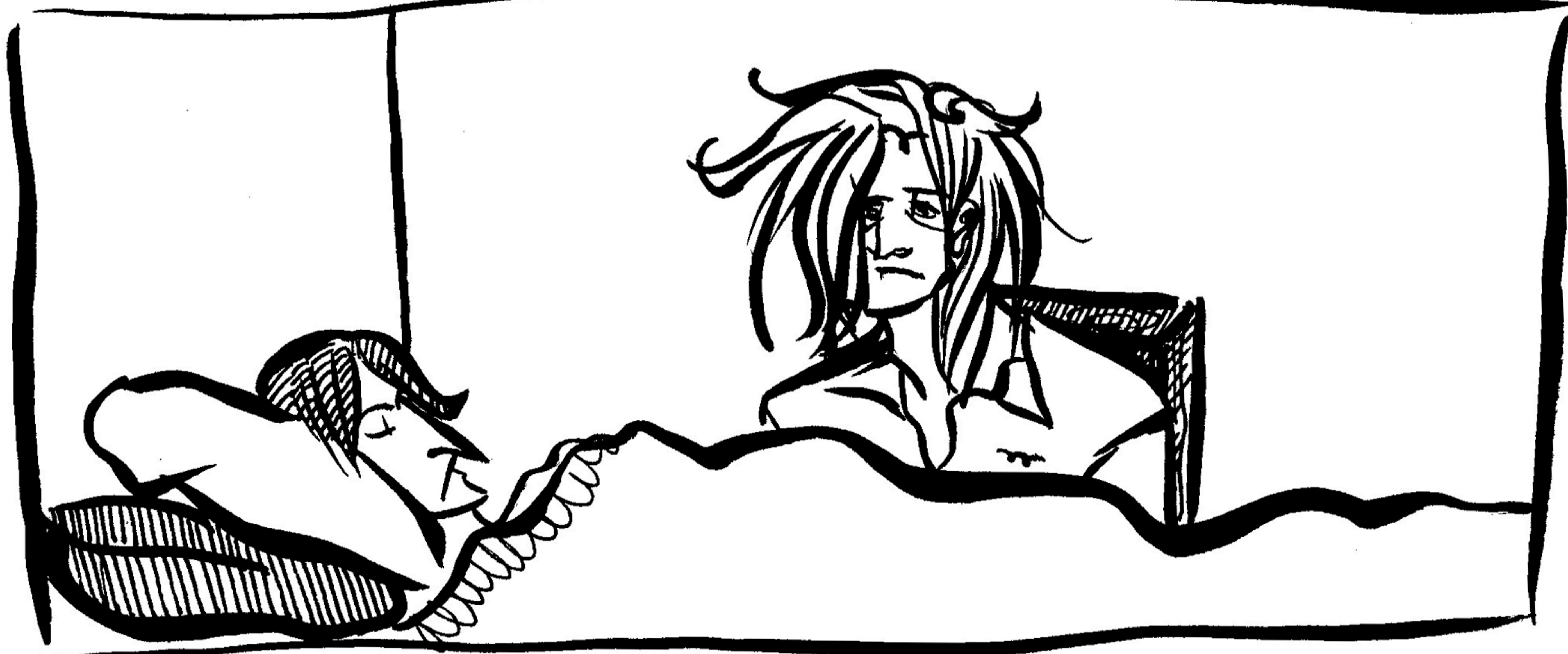
# GRAYLING

I  
s  
s  
u  
e  
2



by  
Arborwin





Are you pretending  
to be asleep?

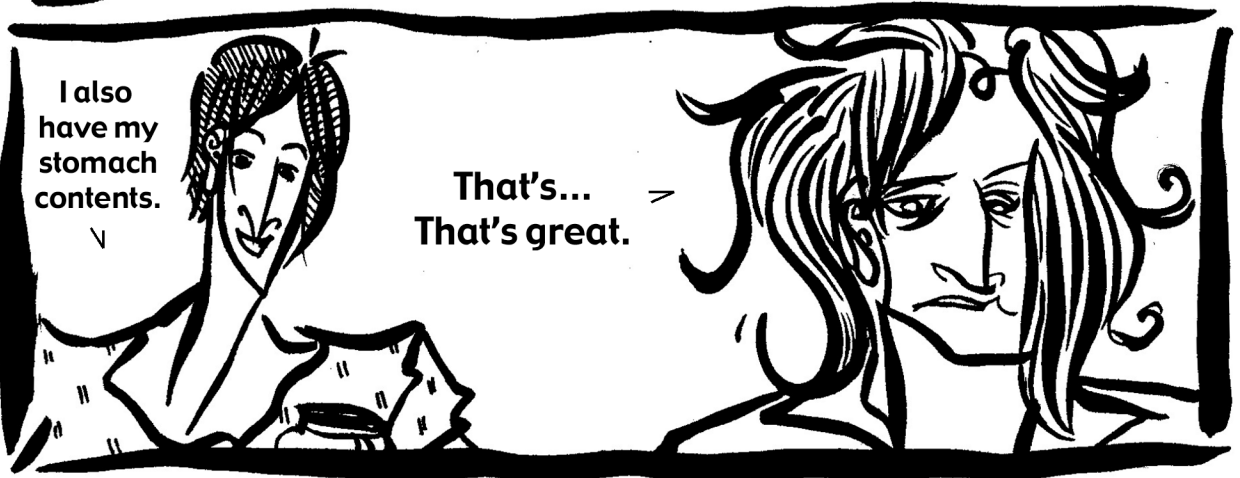
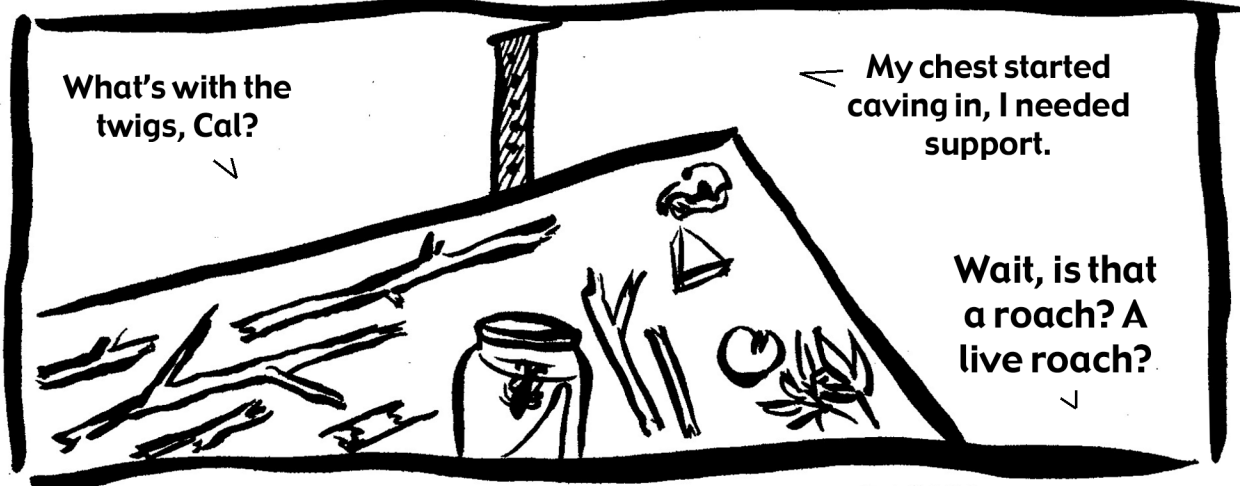
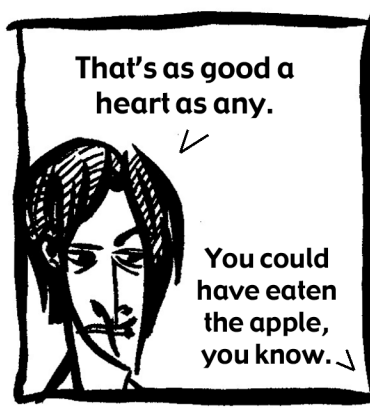
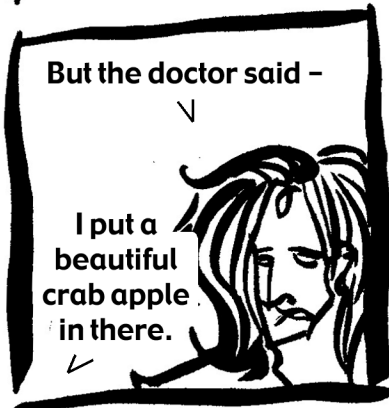
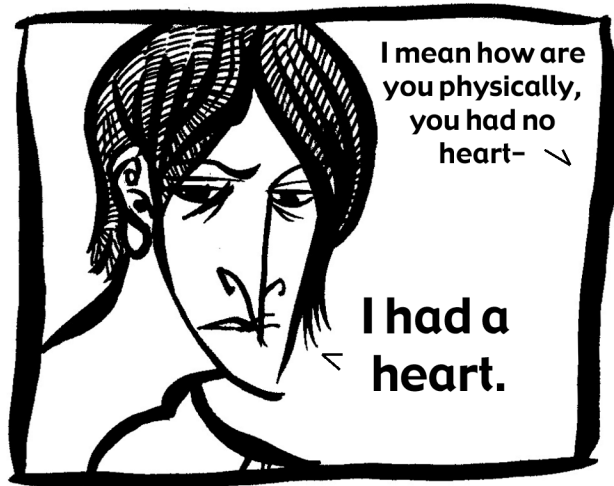
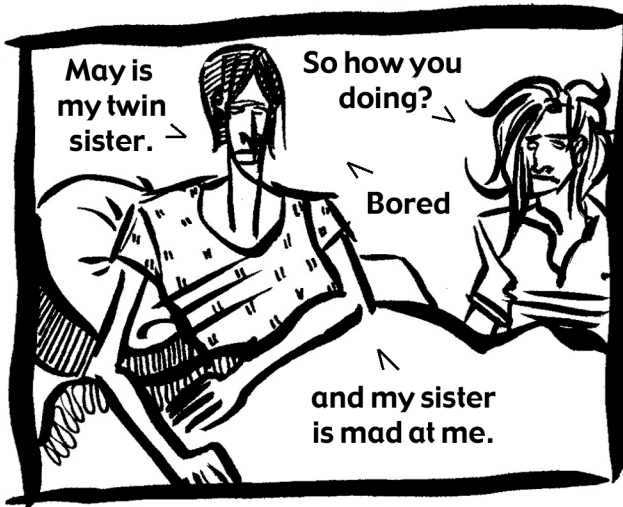
Your sister was just  
in here talking to you.













Dr Bogart didn't seem to have much time to explain things to me -

Do they really expect these ridiculous things to keep your feet warm?

I'm going to look for neccos.

Why not?

I might as well take advantage if I'm stuck here.

I don't care if you don't care about neccos.

Whatever!

Are you talking to me?

There aren't any. Yes I looked, why wouldn't I look?

Hey! Listen to me!

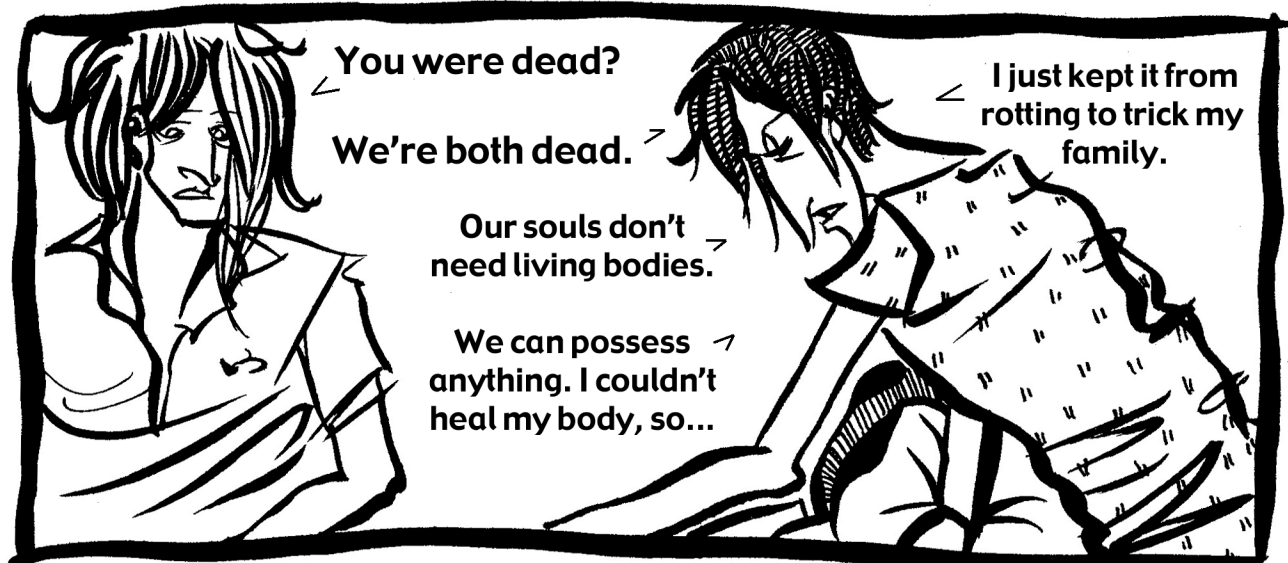
I just want to know how you were still alive!

I'm going to be your aide.

So I should understand this stuff.

I wasn't alive, I was just puppeting my corpse around.





You were dead?

We're both dead.

Our souls don't  
need living bodies.

We can possess  
anything. I couldn't  
heal my body, so...

I just kept it from  
rotting to trick my  
family.



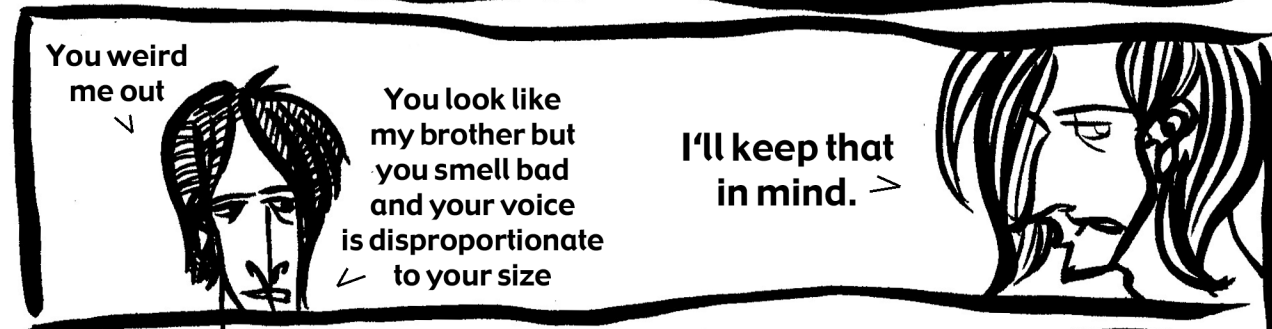
Felt bad  
though,  
man.

I guess that explains  
why you looked  
so horrible before.



So are you going away now?

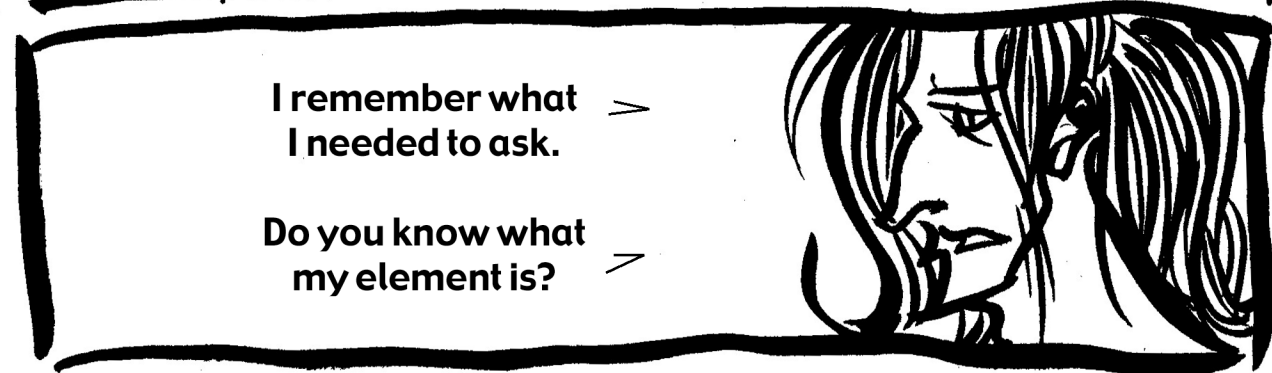
Me? No, we  
still have a lot  
to discuss.



You weird  
me out

You look like  
my brother but  
you smell bad  
and your voice  
is disproportionate  
to your size

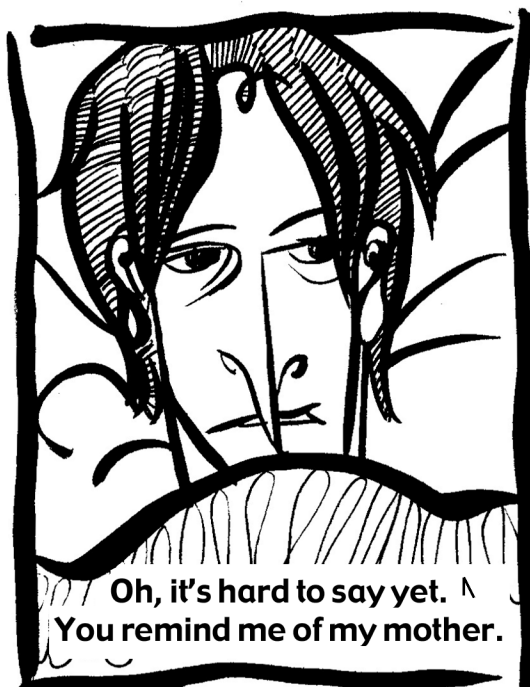
I'll keep that  
in mind.



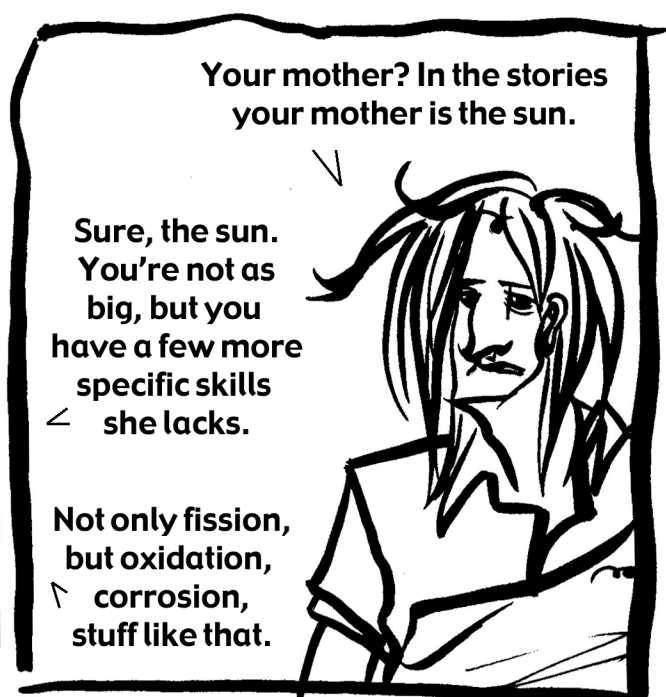
I remember what  
I needed to ask.

Do you know what  
my element is?





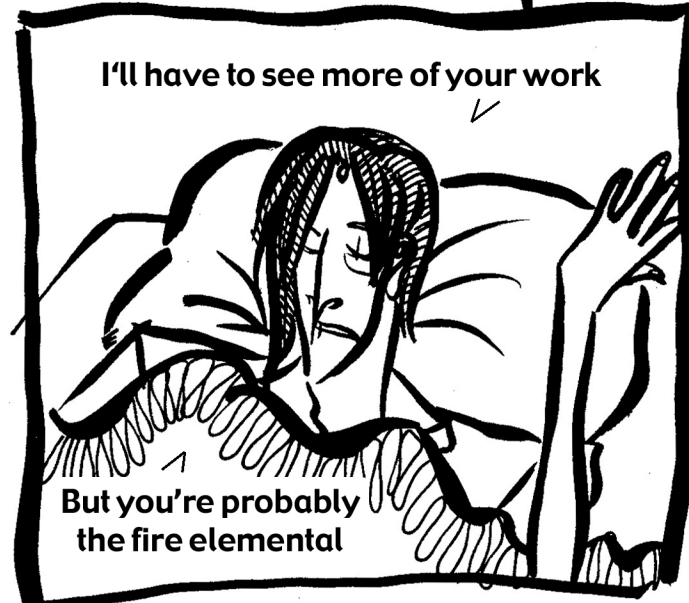
Oh, it's hard to say yet. ^  
You remind me of my mother.



Your mother? In the stories  
your mother is the sun.

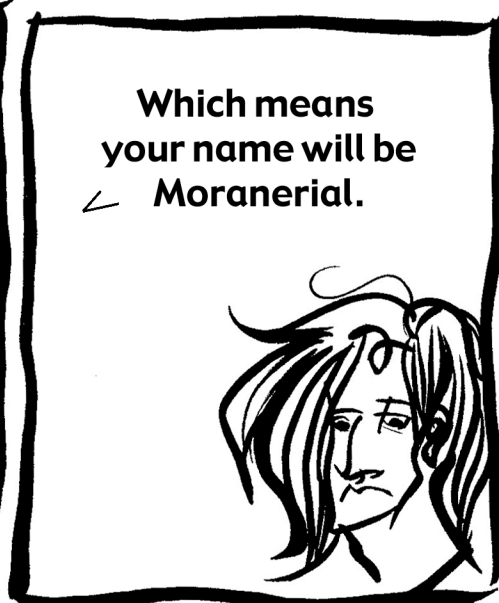
Sure, the sun.  
You're not as  
big, but you  
have a few more  
specific skills  
^ she lacks.

Not only fission,  
but oxidation,  
^ corrosion,  
stuff like that.



I'll have to see more of your work  
^

But you're probably  
the fire elemental



Which means  
your name will be  
^ Moranerial.



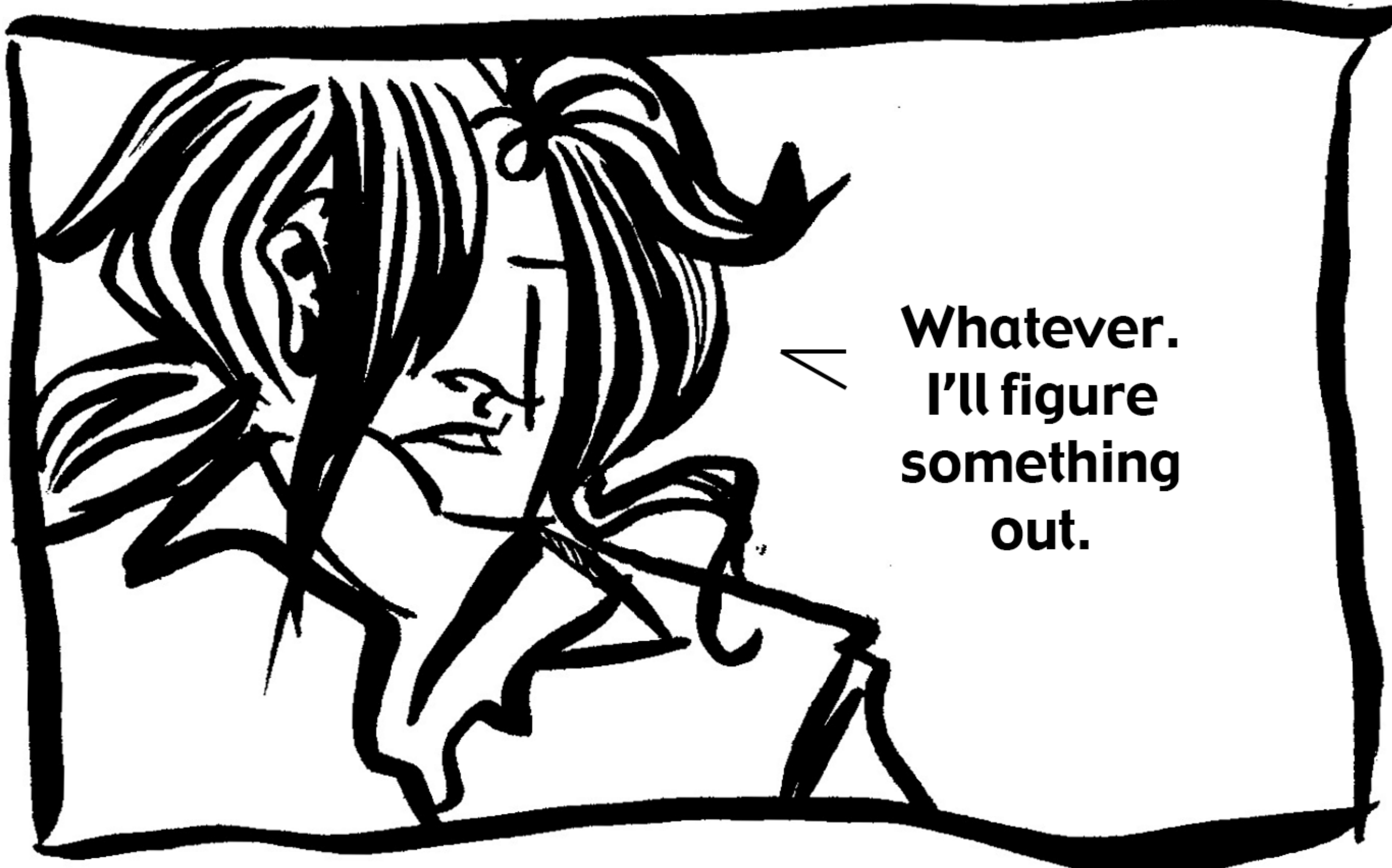
Look,  
can't you  
give this  
job to some  
other guy?



It's not  
^ really  
a job.

It's just what  
^ you are.





Whatever.  
I'll figure  
something  
out.



You're not  
understanding  
something  
fundamental  
here.

Of course I'm not  
understanding.

✓

A short while  
ago I was just  
a mortal guy.  
A farmer.

✓

None of you  
have told  
me anything!

✓



Okay, say you tried to reverse  
the flow of every water course  
on Faidia.

✓

Suppose  
your only  
tool for this  
project was  
your pinky  
fingernail.



You would find that task far  
less painful and time consuming  
than forcing your magic into  
someone else.

✓

You also  
wouldn't get  
wiped out of  
existence.

>

Unless that's  
what you want.



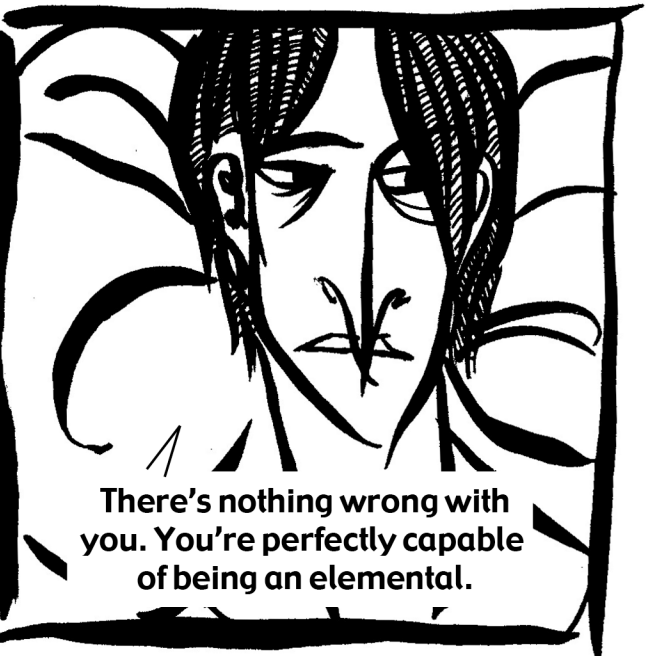


I dunno. Maybe. Sometimes.



It's not  
what we  
want.

There's nothing wrong with  
you. You're perfectly capable  
of being an elemental.



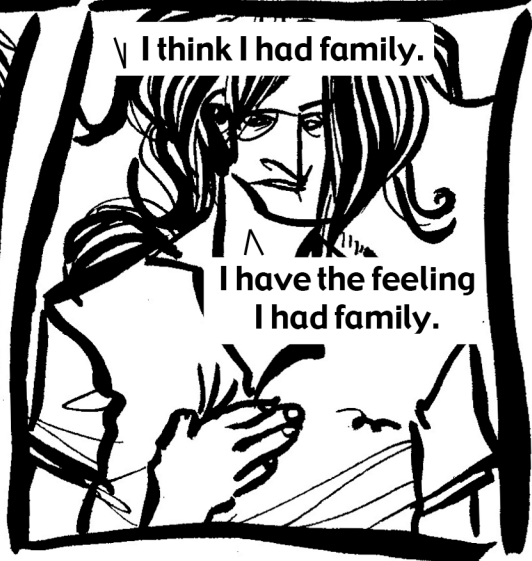
I don't know  
that. I don't  
know anything  
about myself.

Do you?  
Do you know  
who I am?  
Where I came  
from?



I think I had family.

I have the feeling  
I had family.



If I could see them,  
I think it'd help me  
with all of this.

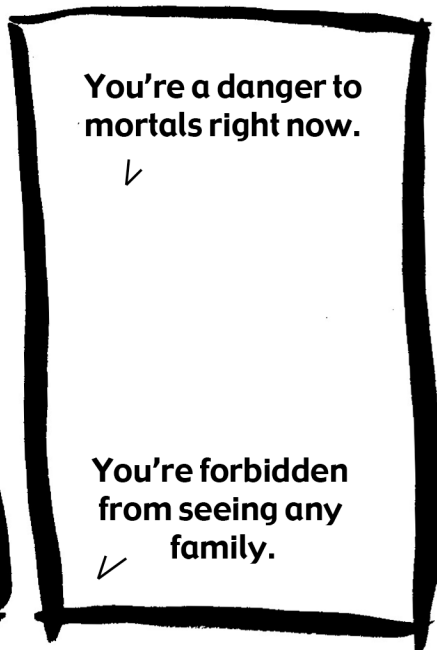


You're...



You're a danger to  
mortals right now.

You're forbidden  
from seeing any  
family.



So, later, if I learn how to use my powers, I can see them, right?



I suppose?

Look, none of the others have been allowed to do this, so, don't get your-



Hey, am I interrupting something?



Oh, hello.



Hi there, you must be our new recruit!



A favor. While I talk to my brother, find me a small mirror.



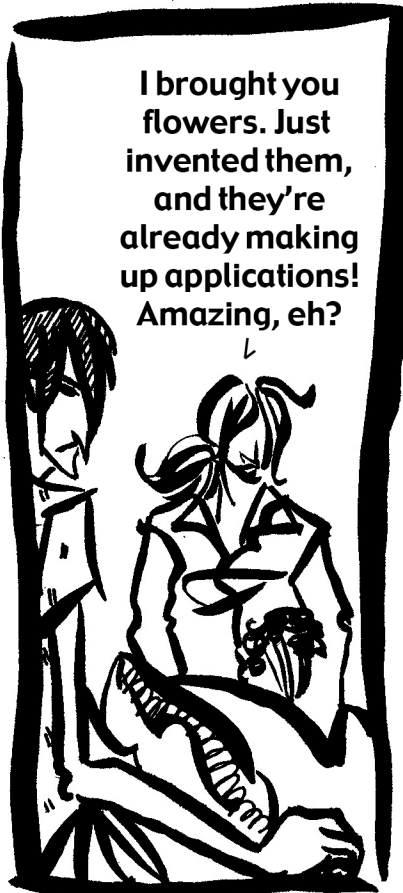
Uh. Sure.





After you.

Thanks.



I brought you  
flowers. Just  
invented them,  
and they're  
already making  
up applications!  
Amazing, eh?



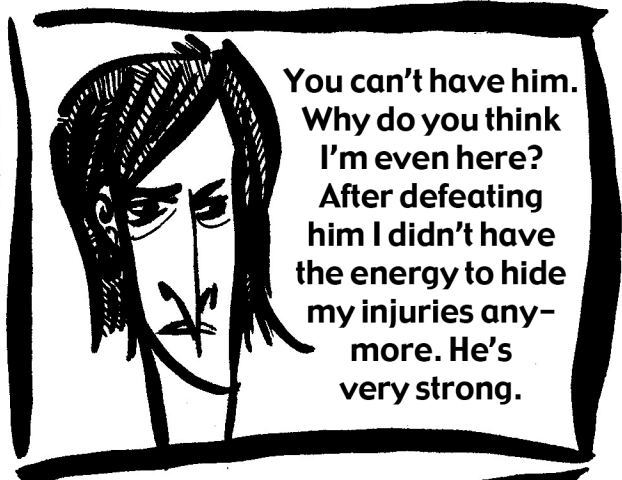
You had better have  
an amazing reason

to violate the  
restraining order.  
Where's May?



See, if May  
were here,  
I couldn't say  
what I needed  
to say, so.  
Pointless,  
you know?

I want him.



You can't have him.  
Why do you think  
I'm even here?  
After defeating  
him I didn't have  
the energy to hide  
my injuries any-  
more. He's  
very strong.



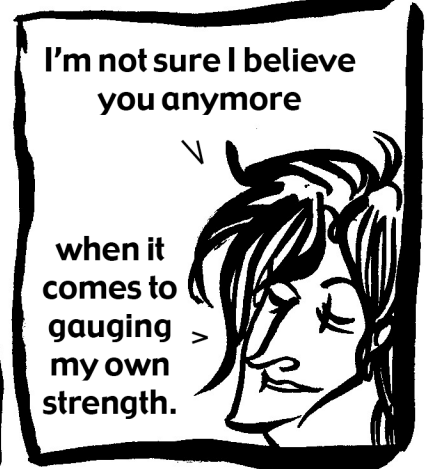
He's defeated now, no?

This isn't a joke.



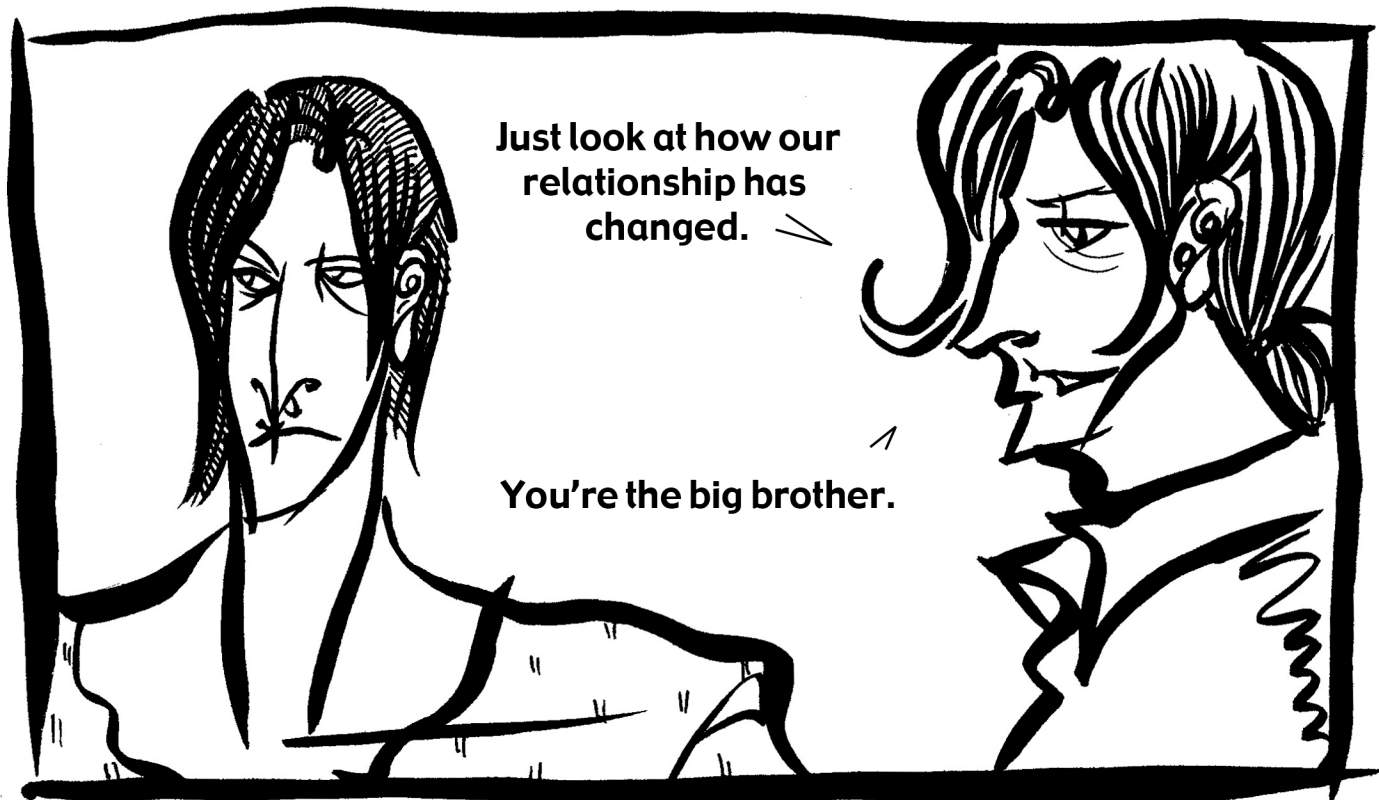
You couldn't  
handle him.

One fright,  
and he'd destroy you.



I'm not sure I believe  
you anymore

when it  
comes to  
gauging  
my own  
strength.







I'm still  
in here,

you know.

I'm watching you.



He's mine. >



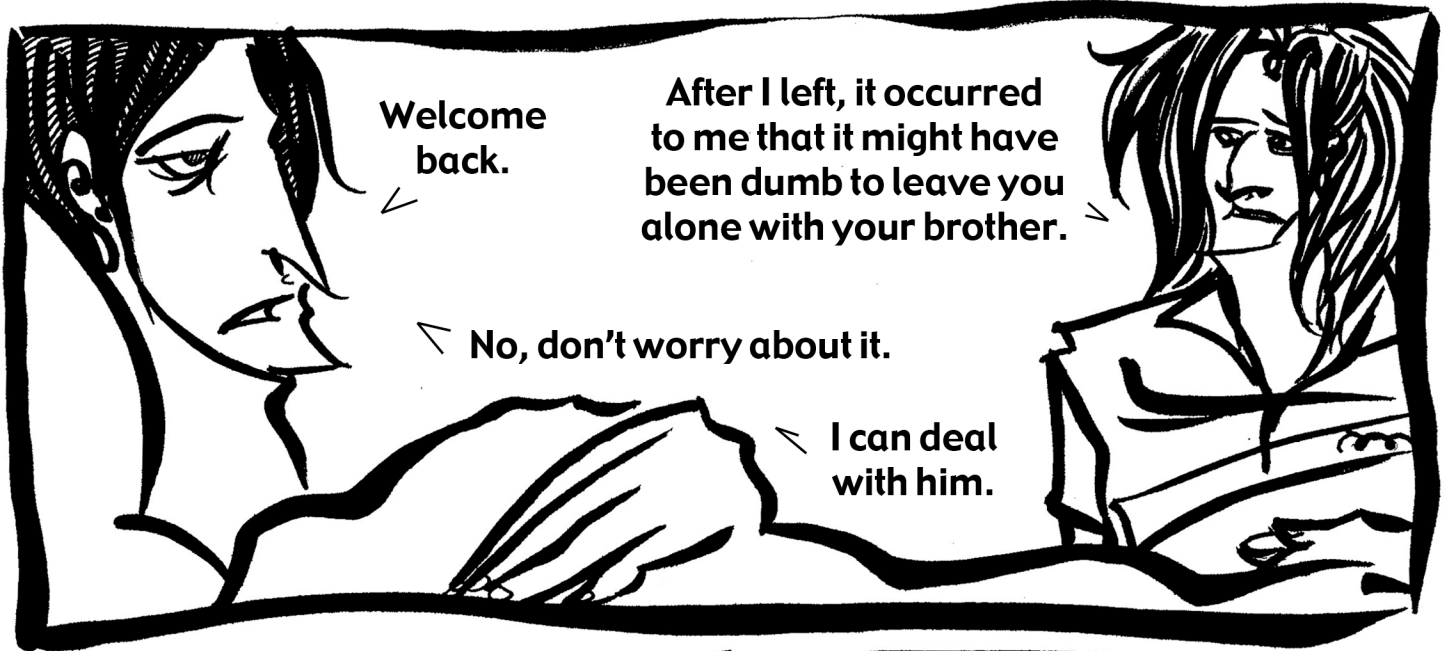
< He's mine.



Don't forget. 7





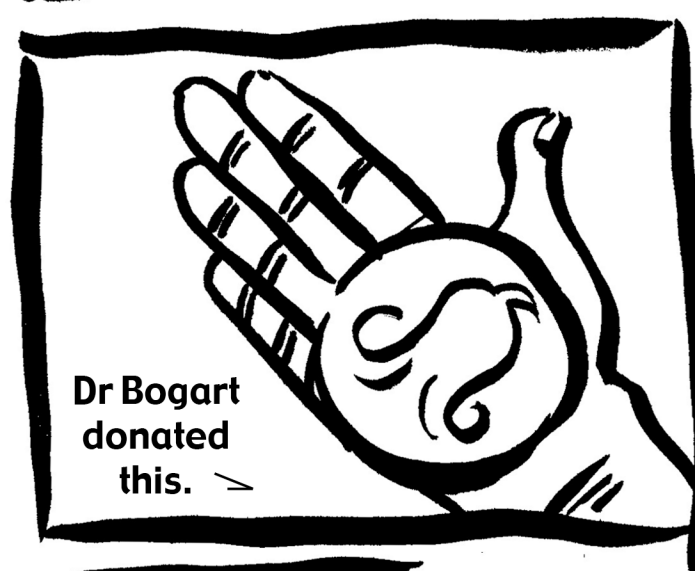


Welcome  
back.

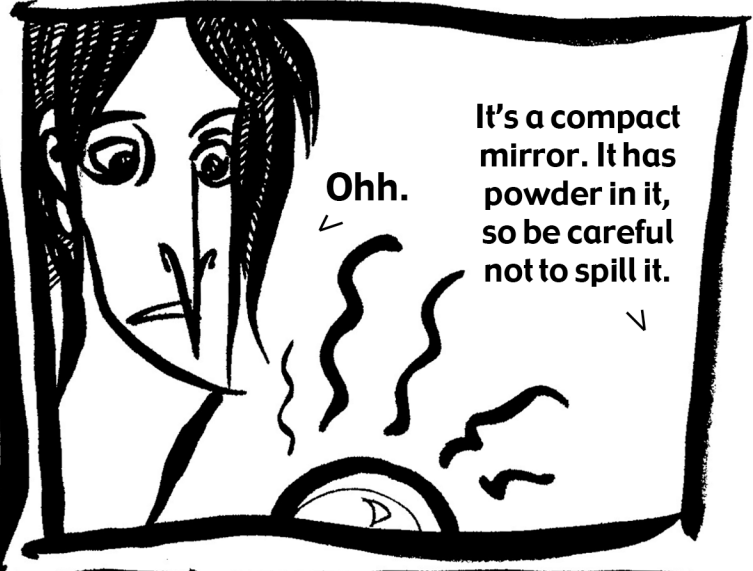
After I left, it occurred  
to me that it might have  
been dumb to leave you  
alone with your brother.

No, don't worry about it.

I can deal  
with him.



Dr Bogart  
donated  
this.

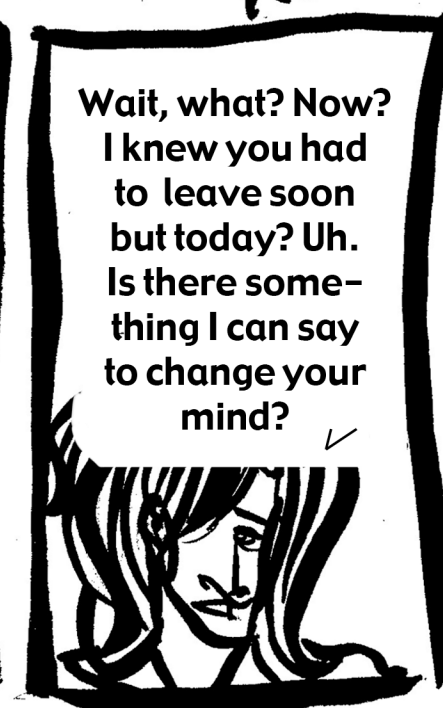


Ohh.

It's a compact  
mirror. It has  
powder in it,  
so be careful  
not to spill it.



I like it!  
Now let's leave!



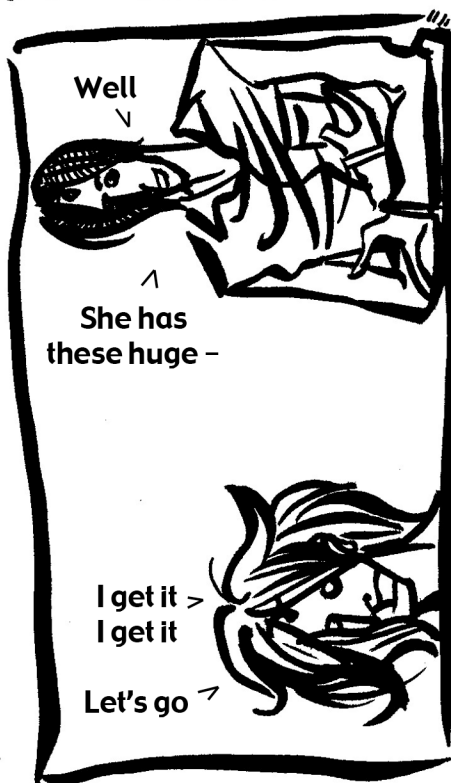
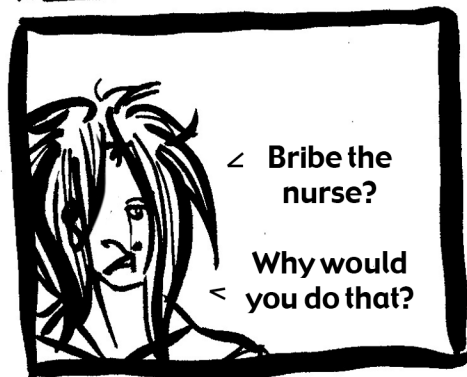
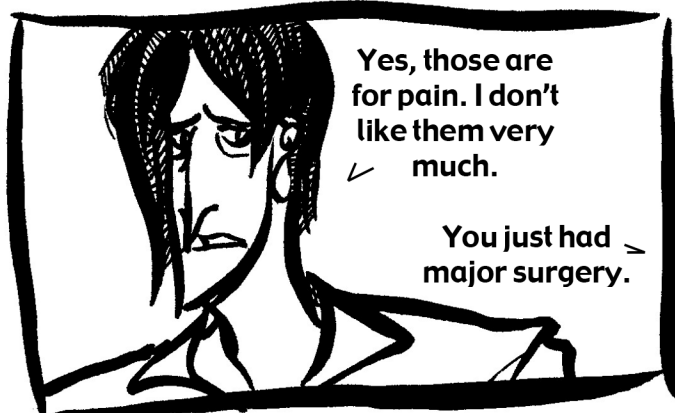
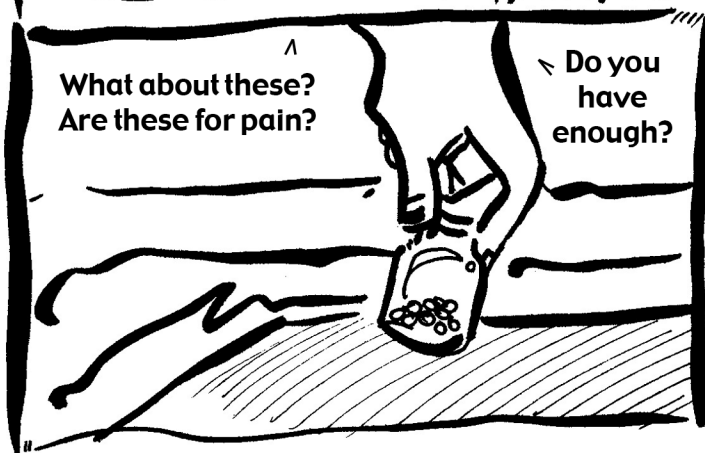
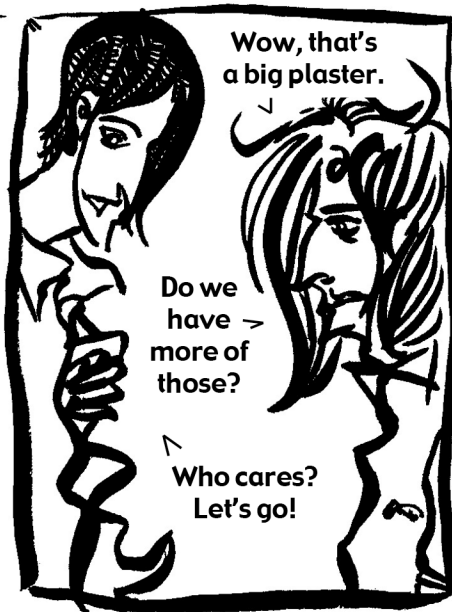
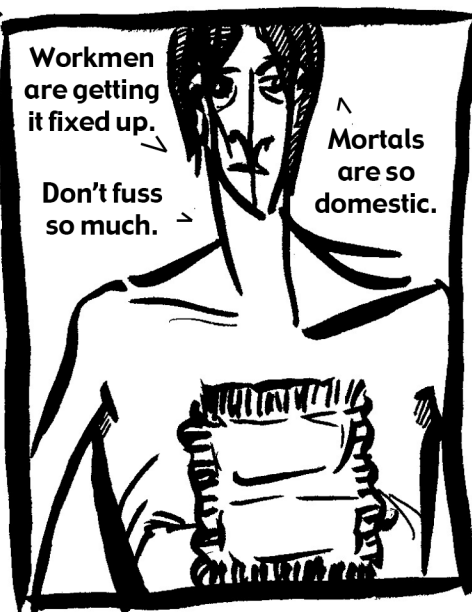
Wait, what? Now?  
I knew you had  
to leave soon  
but today? Uh.  
Is there some-  
thing I can say  
to change your  
mind?

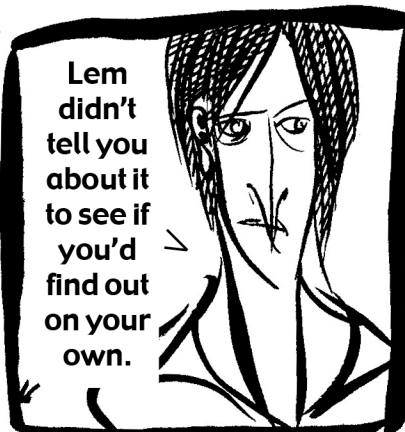
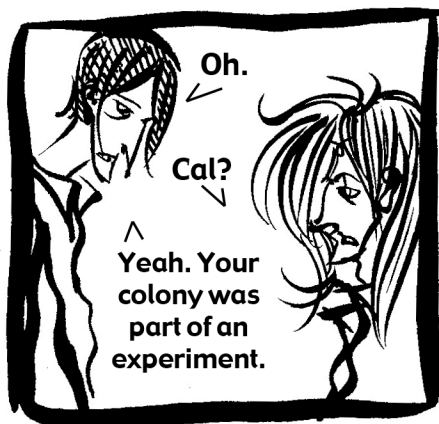
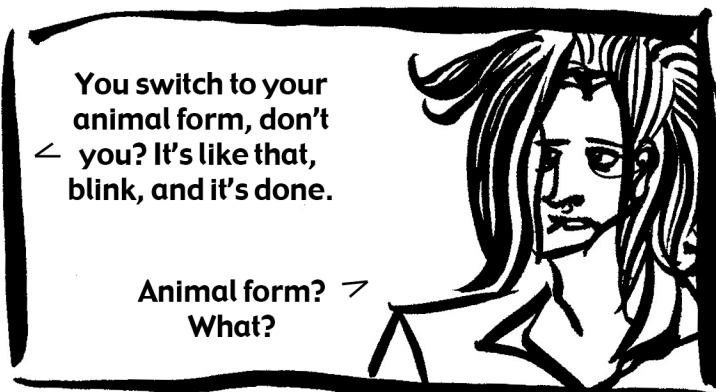
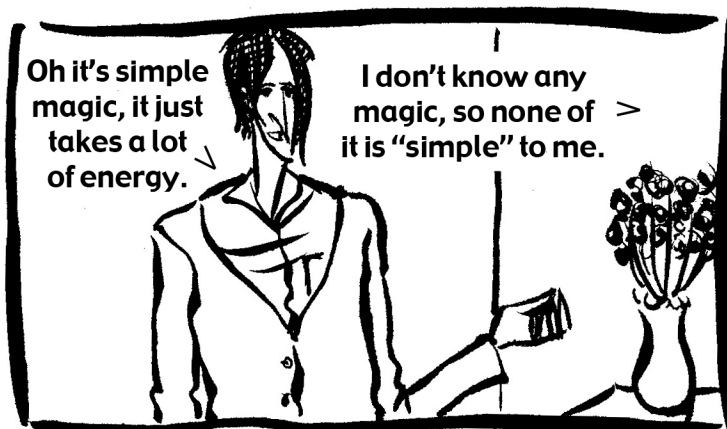


I need to be far away  
from my creepy brother.

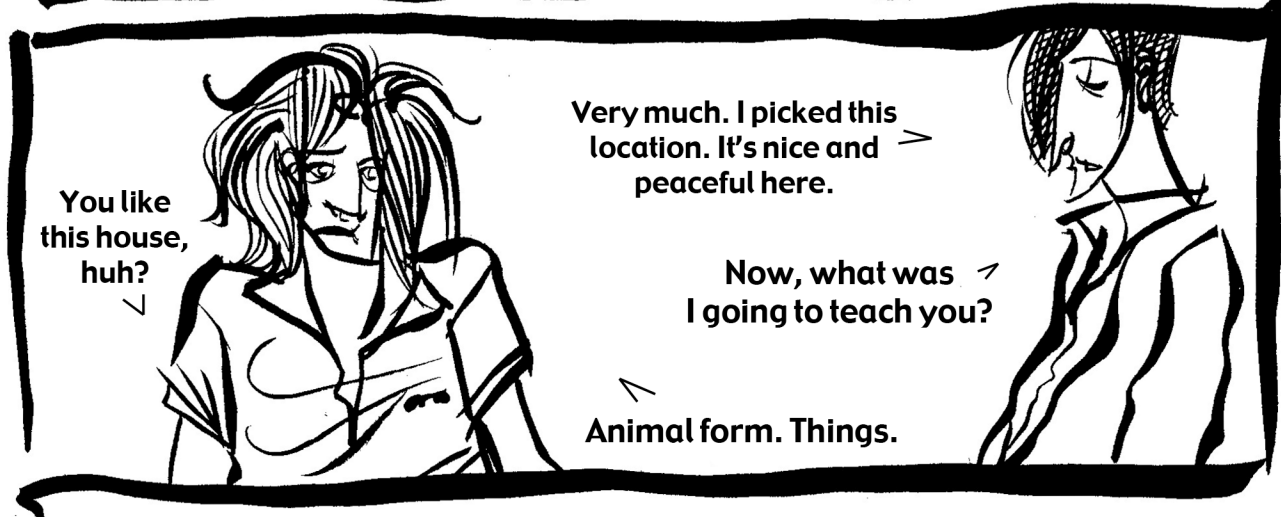
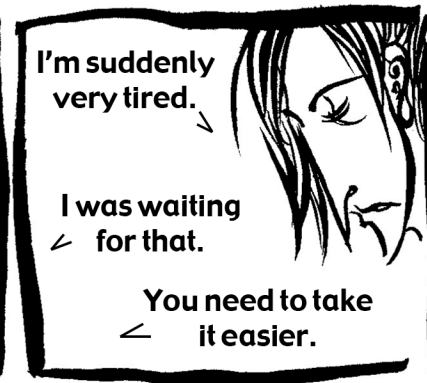
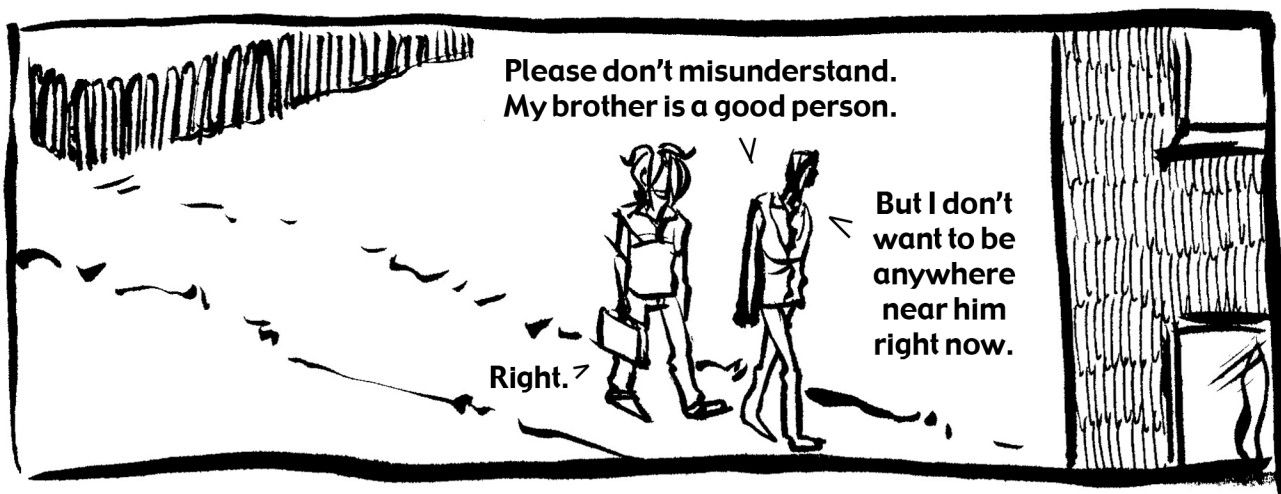
Help me take  
this thing  
off.

Shit.









How do I explain this...



Almost none of the people you have ever met are real humans. ↘



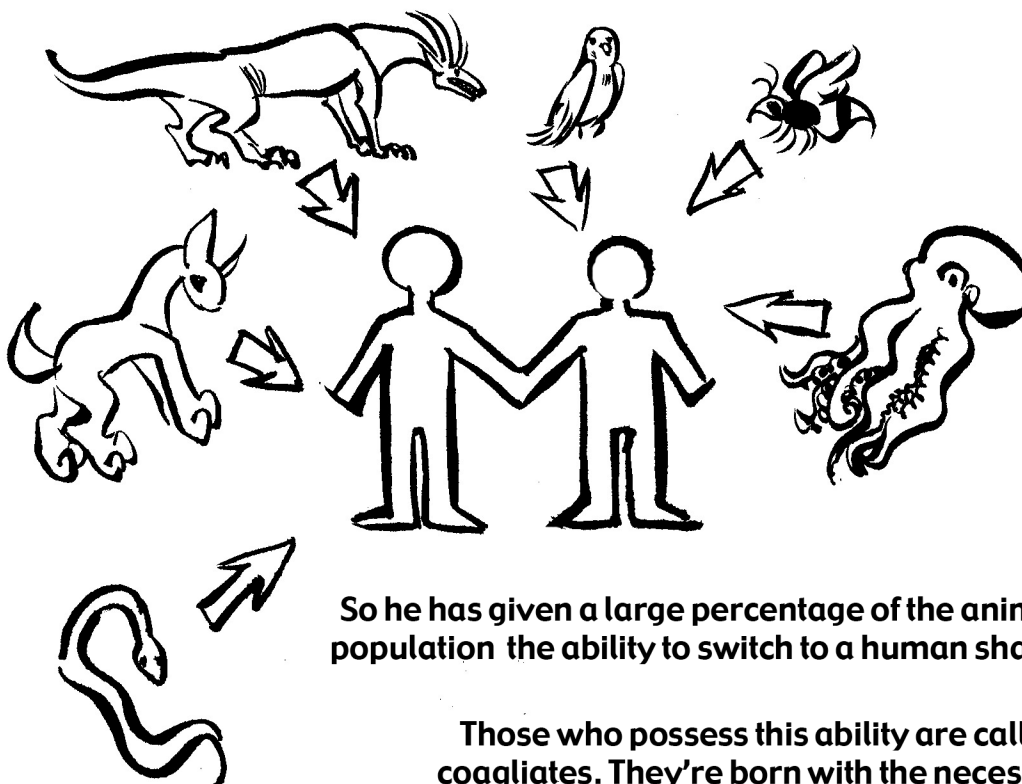
Okay. ↗

You're not human either.  
It was all Lem's idea. →

He wanted all species  
on Faidia to get along  
and communicate  
or whatever. ↗

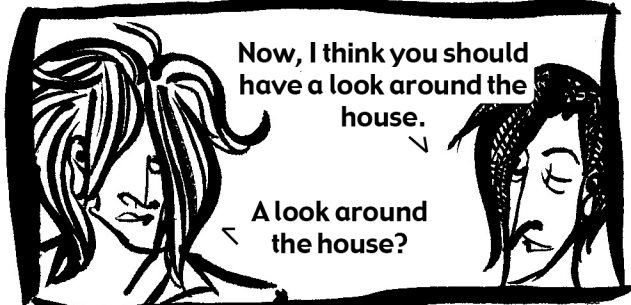
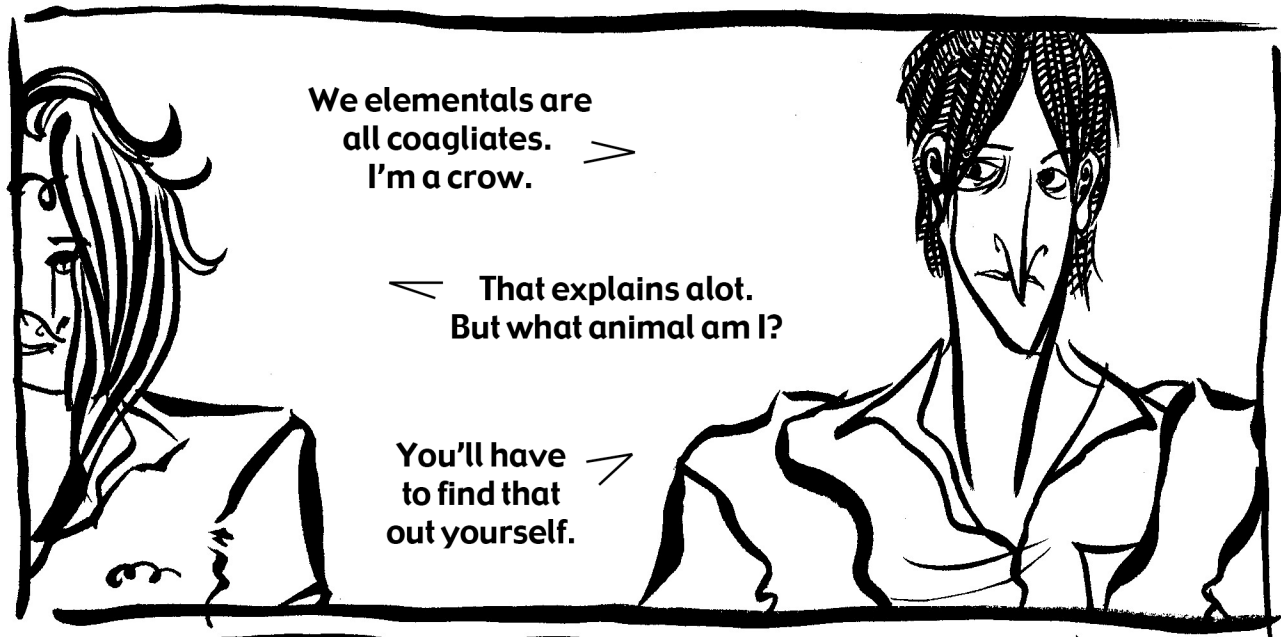


He figured out early on that every species thinks it is the best species.



So he has given a large percentage of the animal population the ability to switch to a human shape.

Those who possess this ability are called coagliates. They're born with the necessary magic ability to switch forms at will.





RAE!  
This is an  
emergency!



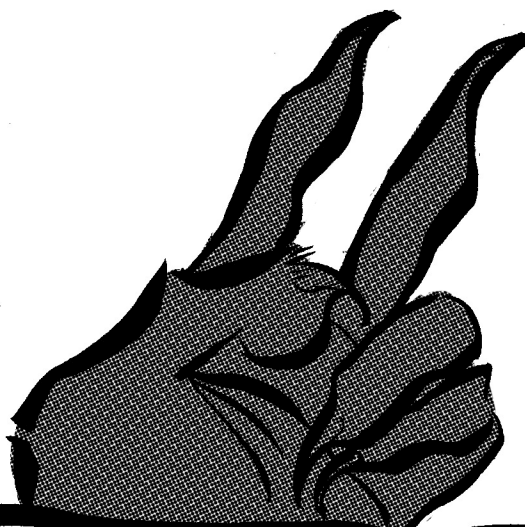
I have to let  
this stranger  
live in the  
house and  
I don't know  
what to do  
tell me what  
to do I don't  
know what  
to do and I



Two words, Cal.



Fuck him.



What?!  
I'm not  
doing  
that! >

Anyway, >  
he looks  
like Lem!

So what? All  
the more reason.  
v

< I don't want to fuck him, Rae.

There are options.  
Put a bag over his head.  
v

Are you in charge  
or not? ^

^  
This isn't what  
I need right  
now, Rae. I  
need help.  
He scares me.

I don't know about  
you, but I could do  
with a little more  
excitement >  
around here.

< Don't be scared.  
Maybe we can  
be friends  
with him.

But I've  
never  
lived  
with  
anyone  
who wasn't  
family  
before!

Why do  
you keep  
going back  
to sex?

Uhhh.

You ready?

Of course I'm  
ready. I'm  
always ready.

How is the  
house?

They patched  
a lot of the  
drywall,  
and cleaned  
up the  
garbage.

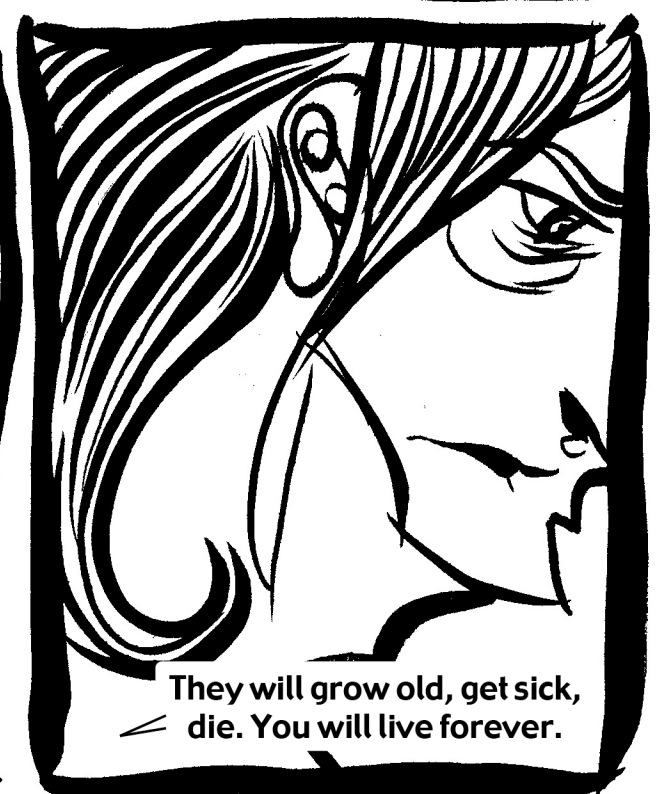
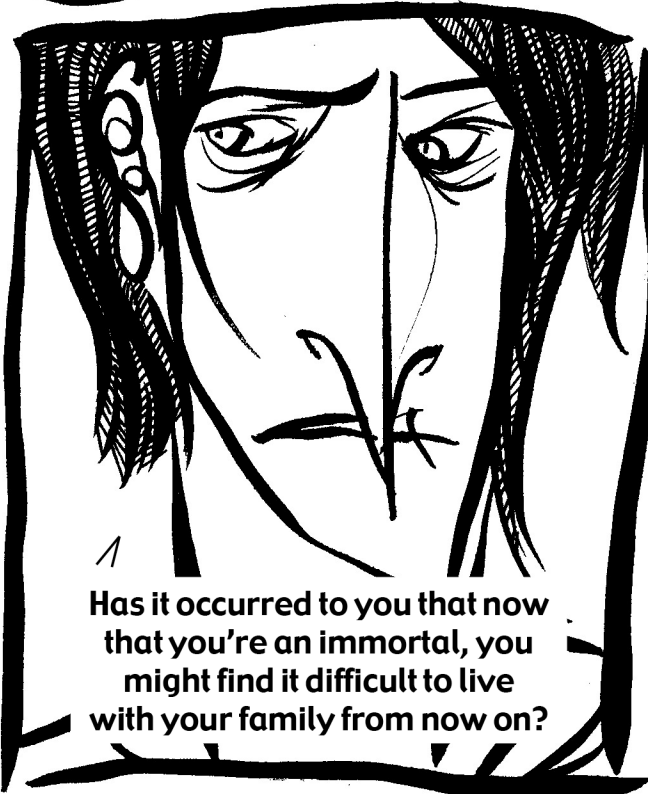
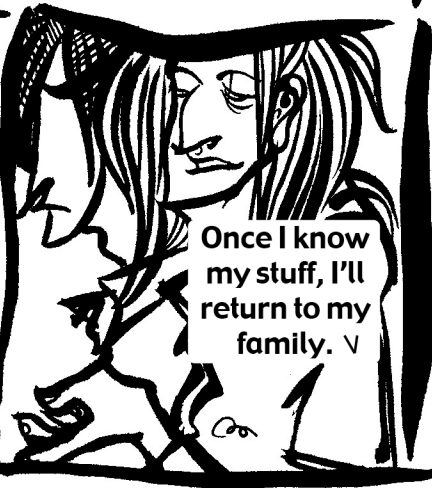
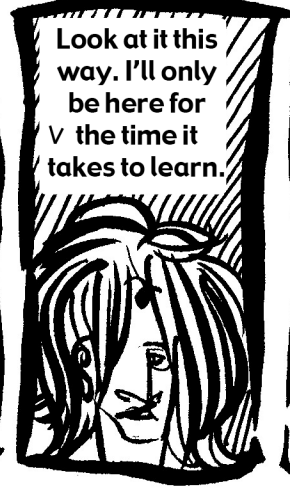
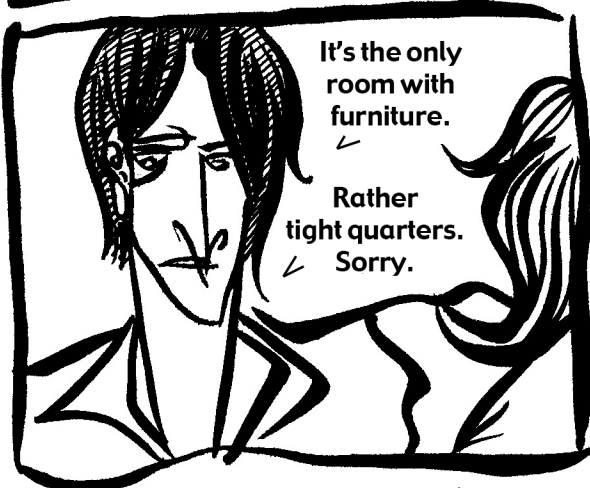
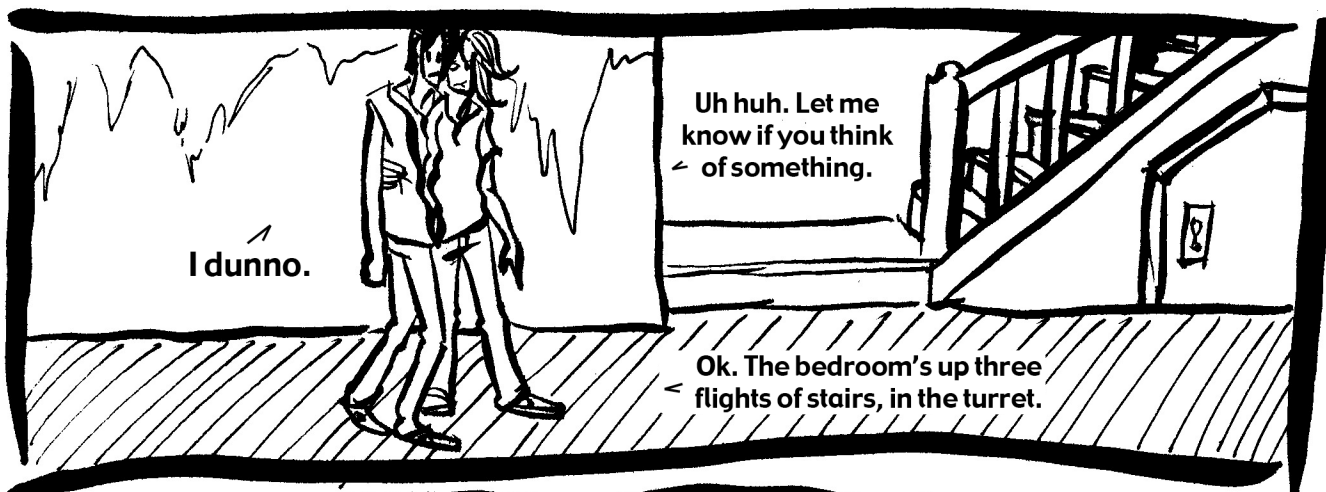
But there's a  
great deal  
of water  
damage.  
It won't  
be a quick  
or easy job.

Ah.

Sorry to intrude  
in your house.

Is there anything  
I can do to make this  
easier on us both?





Nothing will  
ever be the  
same again,  
I guess.



Even so, a man does  
not ditch his family.

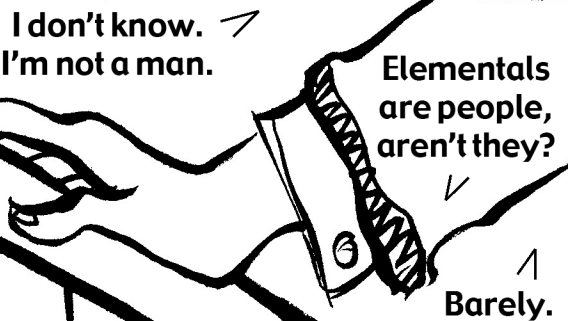
I'm sure you'd feel  
the same way.



I don't know. >  
I'm not a man.

Elementals  
are people,  
aren't they?

Barely.



I need to rest again.

Right. >



< So. About  
my "problem."



My connection  
is badly formed,  
or something?

Okay. Faidian  
magic. Basics. >



Everything in >  
Faidia, everything  
you see around you,

with few exceptions,  
traces its origins  
back to the sun.



Objects, people, plants,  
everything. All energy  
comes from the sun,  
and all matter  
is energy.

Now, when  
we're talking  
"magic"

we're not boiling  
water by using  
a stove, applying  
energy manually.  
We're talking about  
manipulating  
energy with  
our *minds*.

And even though you  
are surrounded by energy,  
whether it's  
matter, heat,  
light, what-  
ever, you  
can't use  
that.

But—

Don't interrupt me, I'm on a roll.

The energy around you has already been given a  
purpose by someone at some point, and you can't  
just "grab" it with your mind and do stuff with it.

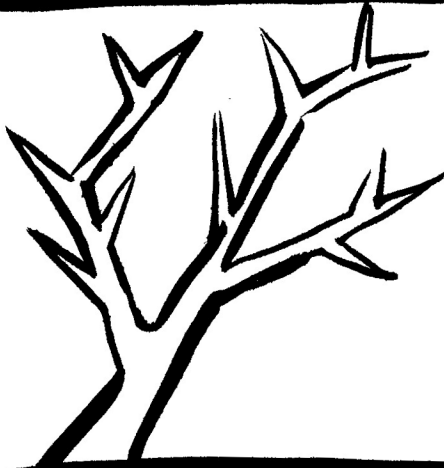
You can't think really  
hard about your coffee  
mug and make it melt  
or whatever.

So what DO you do?

You need at least  
a little bit of raw  
energy to start  
any feat of magic.  
It bridges the gap

between your mind and the other  
energy you want to tap.

All living things can access  
this raw energy from the  
sun through something  
called an "aperture."



An aperture is an opening in your mind through which energy flows in and energy flows out.

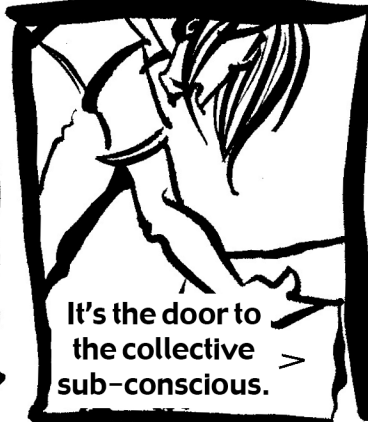
Your aperture connects you to a network, a family tree of sorts, that includes all living things.

It's arranged by proximity, blood relations, and so on.

Most people never even notice it, or only dream of it.



It's the door to the collective sub-conscious.



In mortals, the aperture



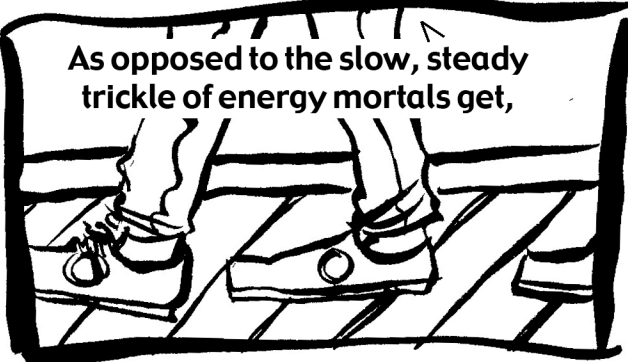
is very small.

This way.



In elementals, the aperture is huge.

As opposed to the slow, steady trickle of energy mortals get,



elementals have to contend with a positive cataract of *stuff* gushing into their heads with the force of a hurricane at any given moment.







A mortal's aperture only becomes as large as ours when they die.

That's what death *is* in Faidia.

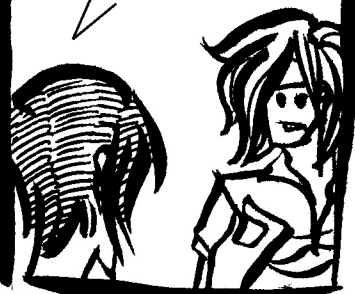
The aperture widens, the person's soul is washed away, and they become a part of the sun again.

But elementals don't get wiped away. They remain alive, despite having large apertures.



How do we do that? >

Instead of being overwhelmed by the energy <



We seize possession of it. >

Your respective energy > cooperates with you.

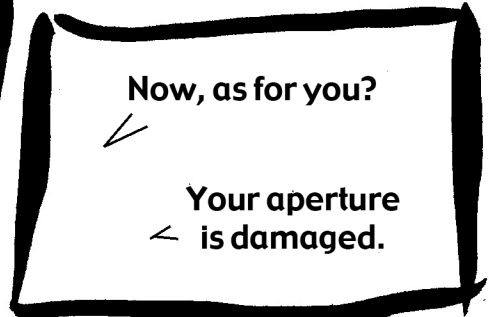


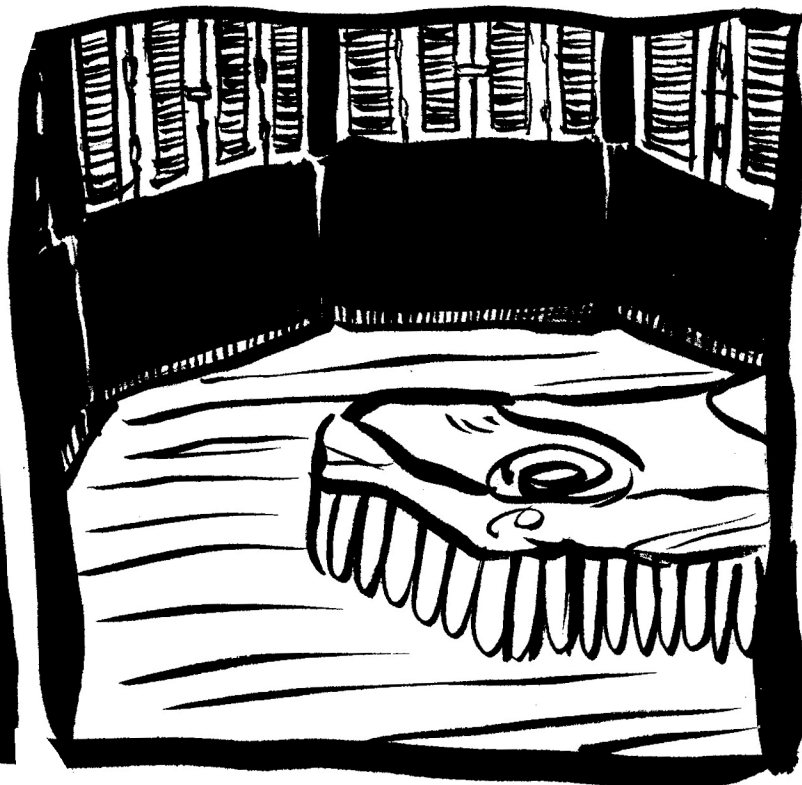
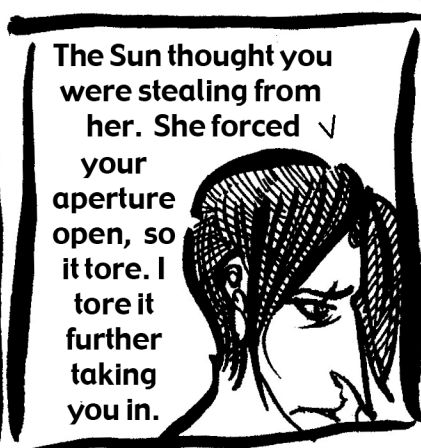
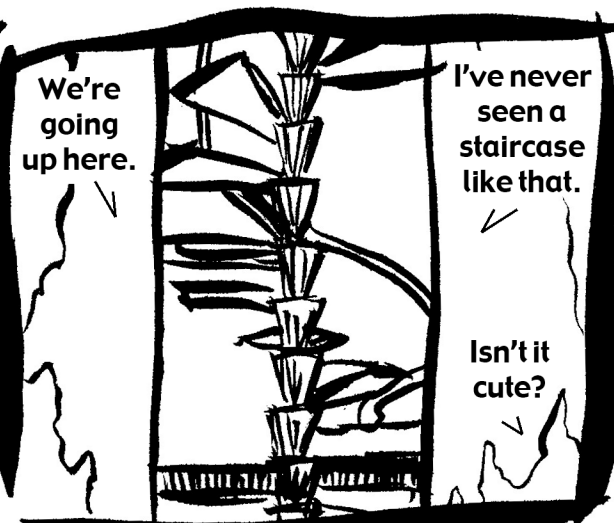
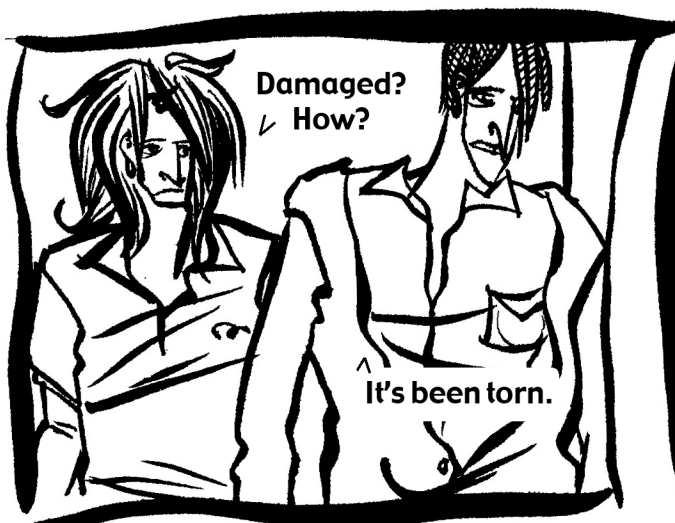
< That's why we are dead, but continue to exist.

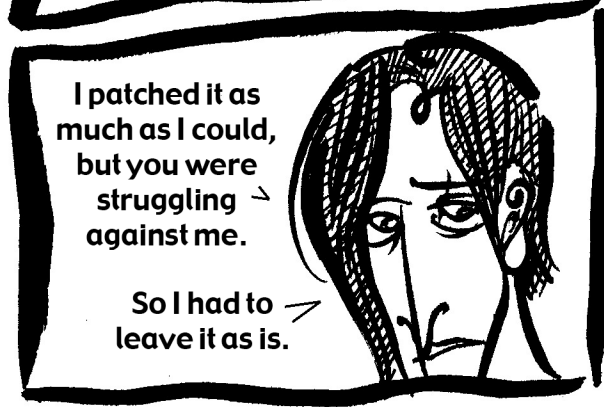
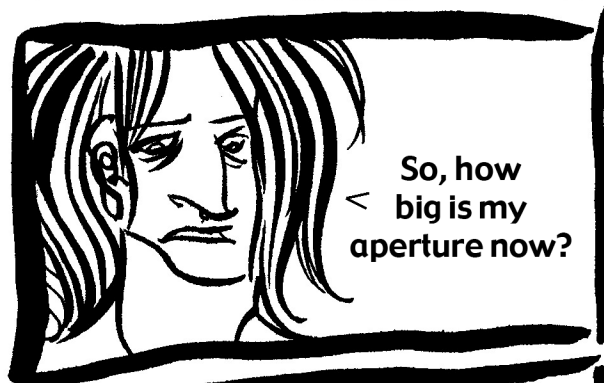
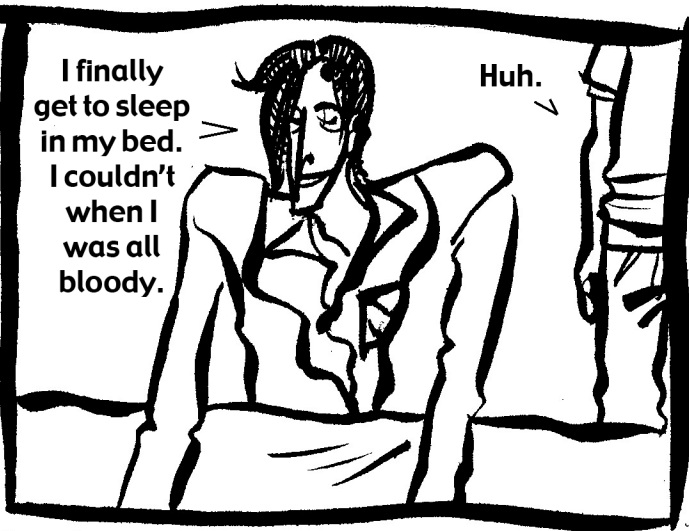
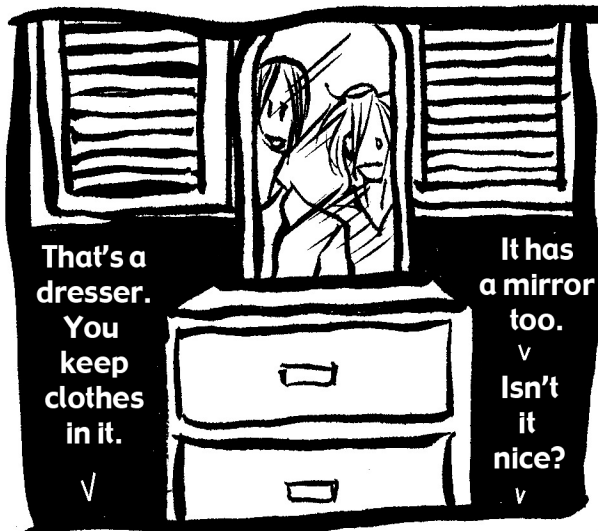


Now, as for you? <

Your aperture < is damaged.







Your aperture could  
also tear again easily  
if we keep stressing it.

The good news is,  
you're very powerful.

The bad news is,  
you can't control it

and you might  
go insane.

How big is it?

Your aperture  
was as big as  
mine before  
I patched it.

Oh,  
fuck.

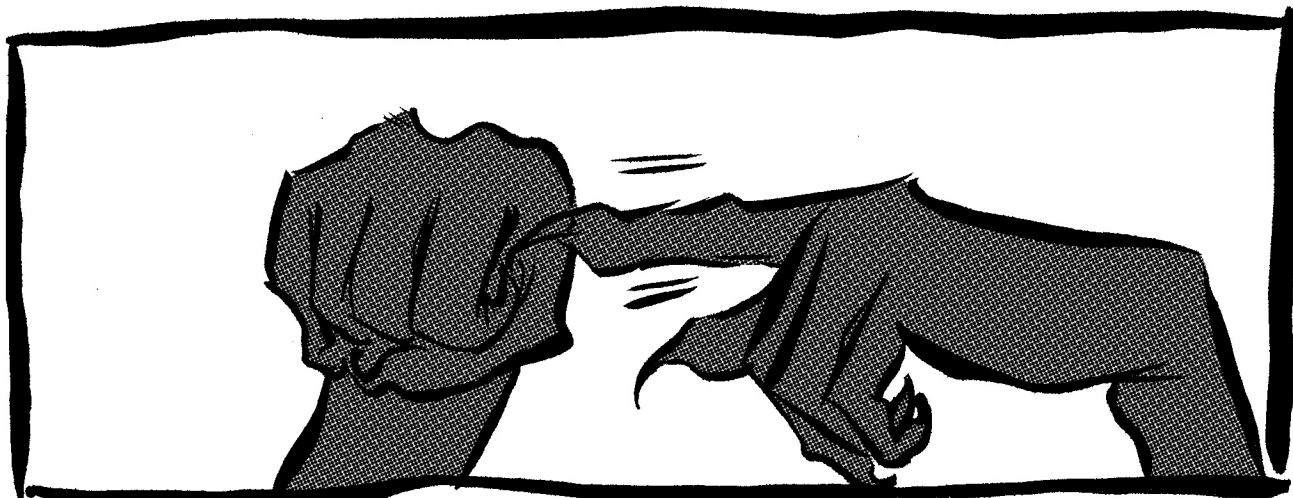
Oh.  
This  
is bad.

I wasn't supposed...  
to tell you..

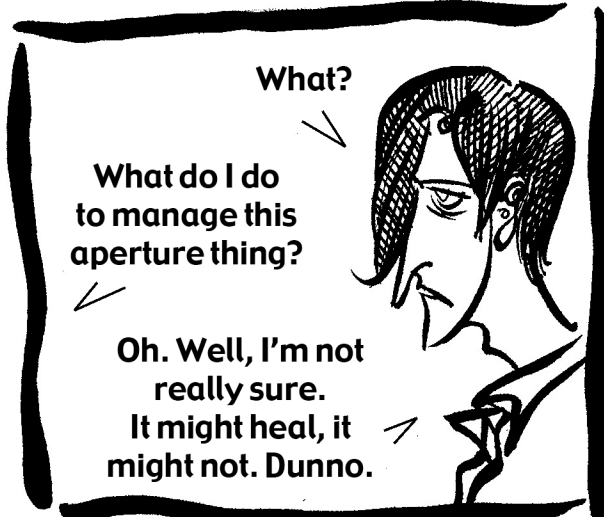
But...







...even listening  
to me? ▽



What? ▽

What do I do  
to manage this  
aperture thing? ▽

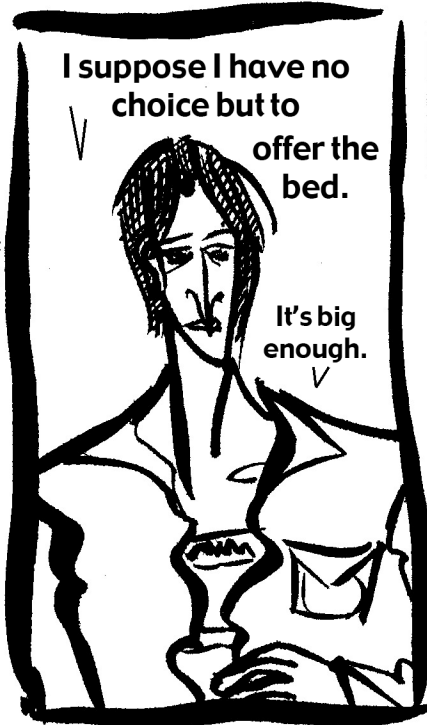
Oh. Well, I'm not  
really sure.  
It might heal, it  
might not. Dunno. ▽



Ah well, you're  
obviously tired. ▽

It's late. ▽

Where am  
I to sleep? ▽

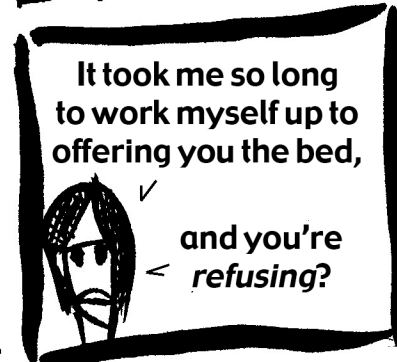


I suppose I have no  
choice but to  
offer the bed. ▽

It's big  
enough. ▽

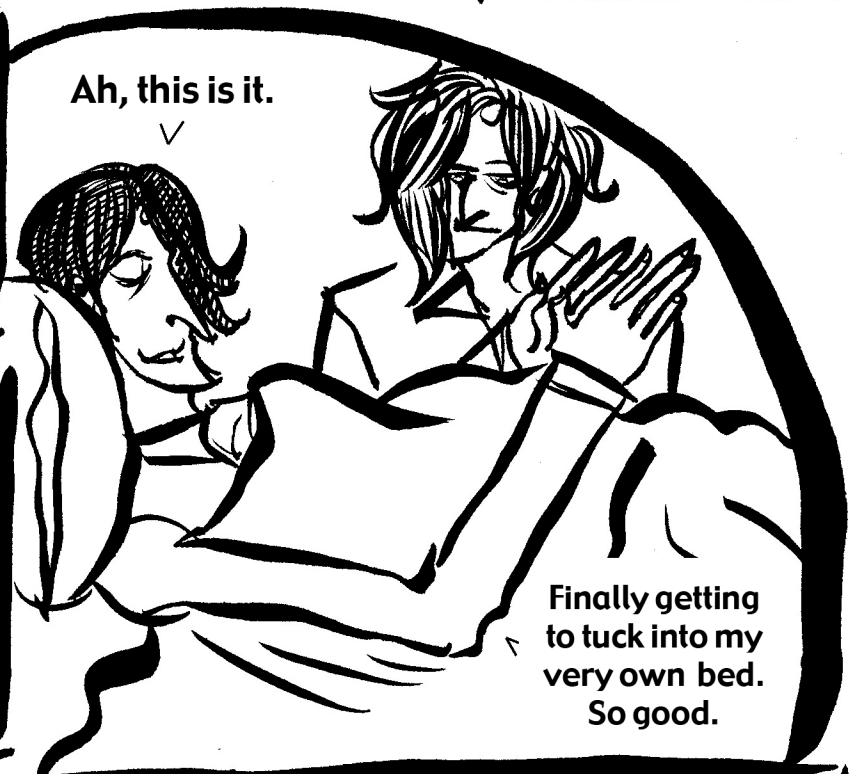
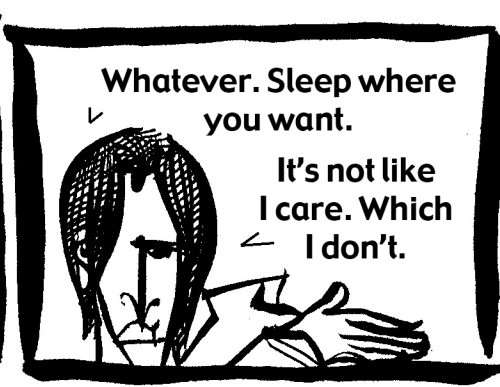


It's  
okay.  
I can  
take the  
floor. <



It took me so long  
to work myself up to  
offering you the bed,

and you're  
refusing? <





Tch. ➤



What the hell!?



It's bad enough  
you ran out of  
the hospital

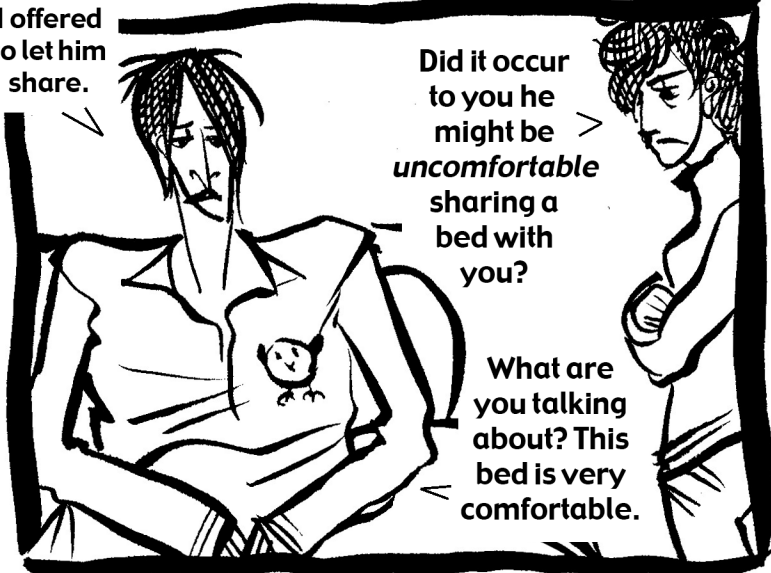
but you didn't  
even bother to  
get him a bed?



Ugh

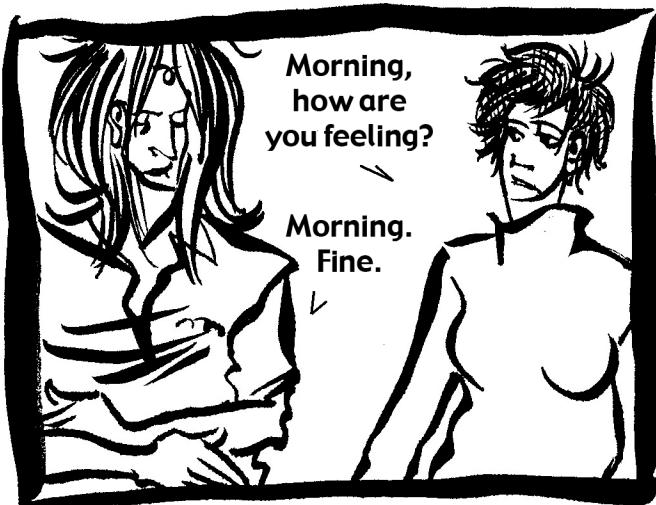
I feel like  
I just closed  
my eyes for  
a few seconds.

I offered  
to let him  
share.



Did it occur  
to you he  
might be  
*uncomfortable*  
sharing a  
bed with  
you?

What are  
you talking  
about? This  
bed is very  
comfortable.



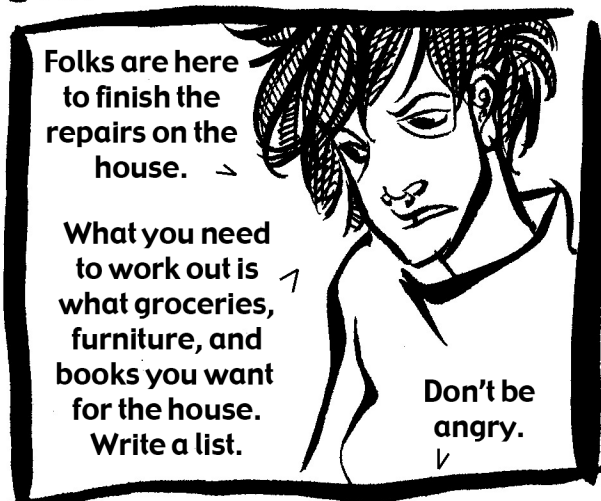
Morning,  
how are  
you feeling?

Morning.  
Fine.



Excuse me.

I have to use  
the bathroom.



Folks are here  
to finish the  
repairs on the  
house. >

What you need  
to work out is  
what groceries,  
furniture, and  
books you want  
for the house.  
Write a list.

Don't be  
angry.



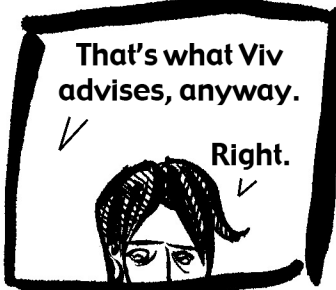
I'm  
trying.

I know, but he's picking  
up on your anxiety. >  
Anyone can see that.



You need to relax.

Take it  
slow. >  
Get the  
house  
together.



That's what Viv  
advises, anyway.

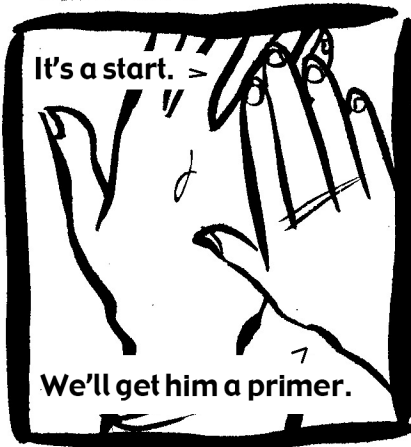
Right.



I started him on magic.

But he  
really  
needs to  
read.

Good.



It's a start. >

We'll get him a primer.



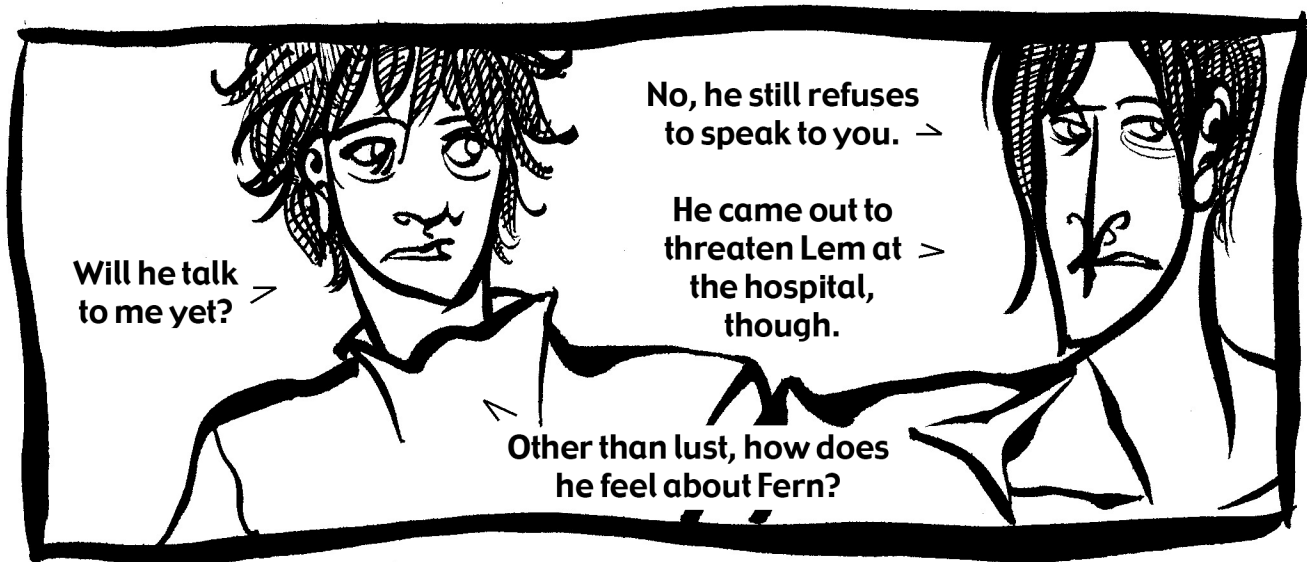
What's Rae doing?



> He wants to  
have sex with him.

No wonder  
you're anxious.



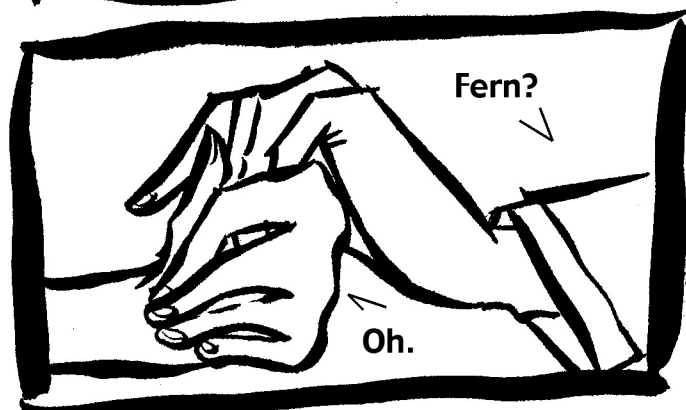


Will he talk  
to me yet? >

No, he still refuses  
to speak to you. >

He came out to  
threaten Lem at >  
the hospital,  
though.

Other than lust, how does  
he feel about Fern?



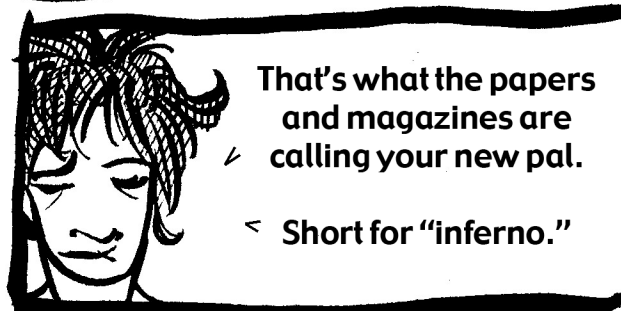
Fern? >

Oh.



Huh. I like it. >

Anyway, Rae  
wants to make >  
friends with him.



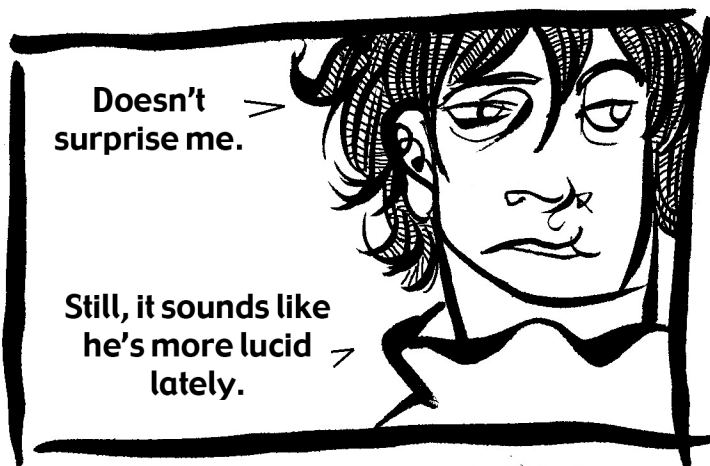
That's what the papers  
and magazines are  
calling your new pal.

< Short for "inferno."



I think he's bored. 1

Lonely.



Do these pants  
and shirt match? >

I still don't  
fathom that stuff.  
They look okay  
/ to me.



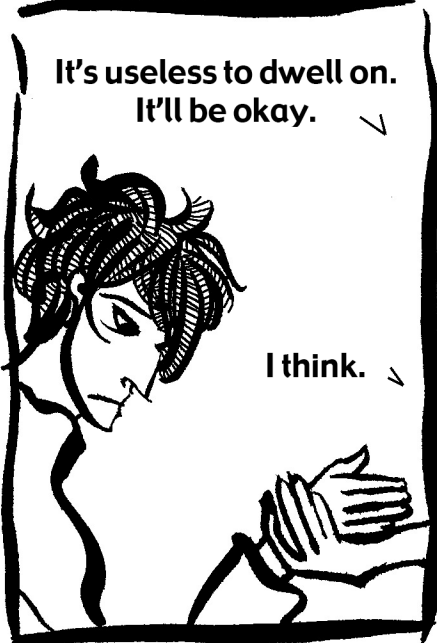
This is >  
my fault.

Shouldn't have  
asked mom for help.

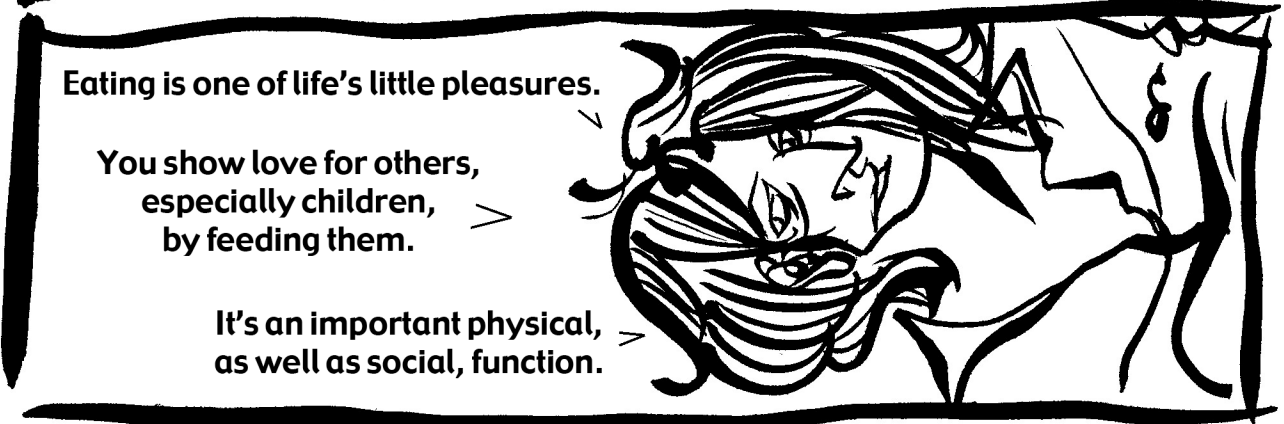
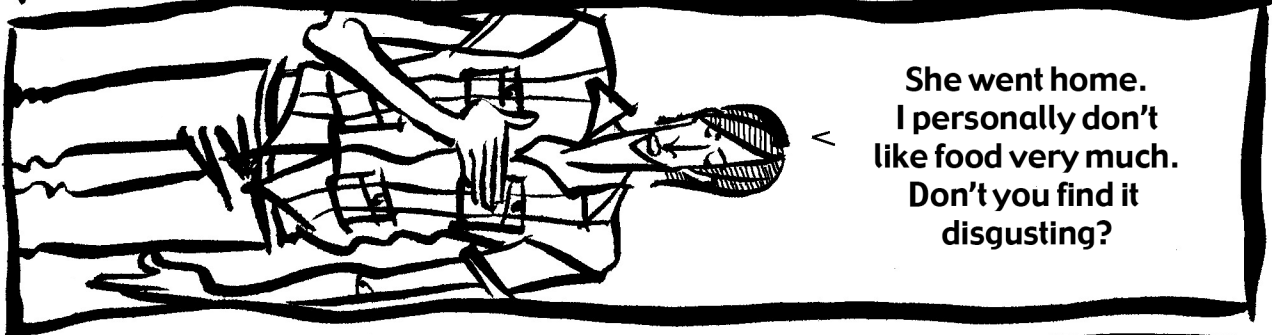


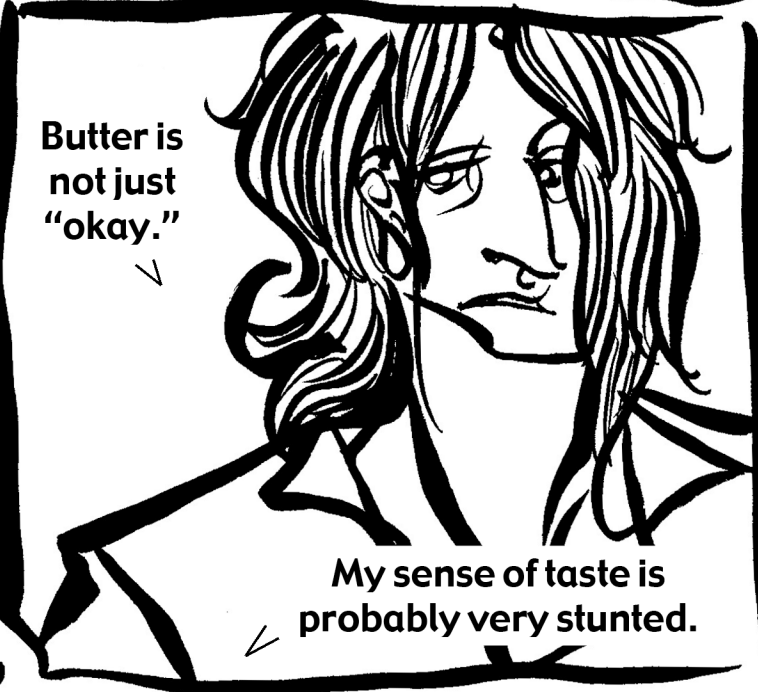
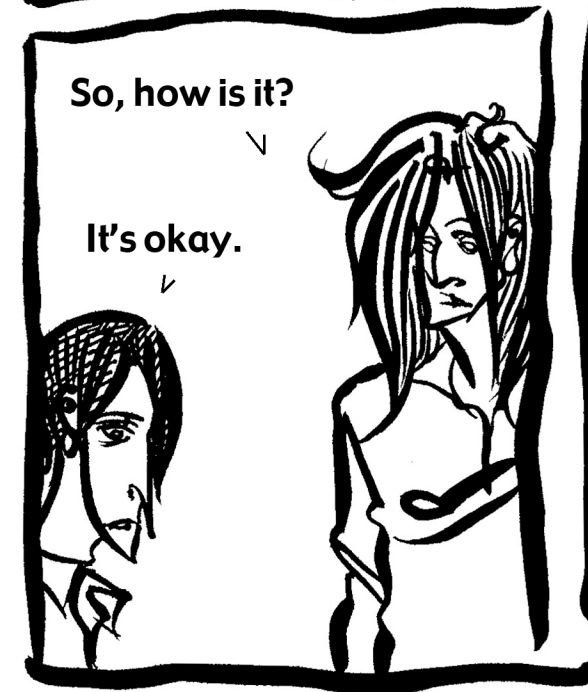
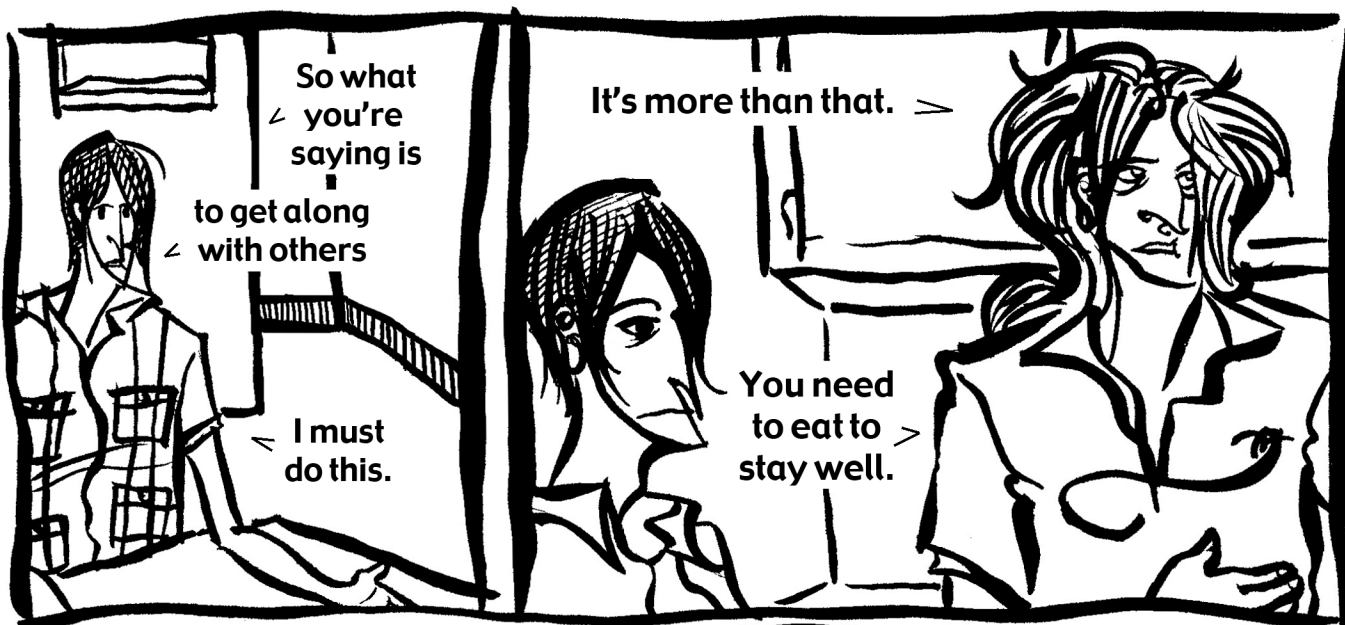
It's useless to dwell on.  
It'll be okay. >

I think. >



> It's  
beautiful

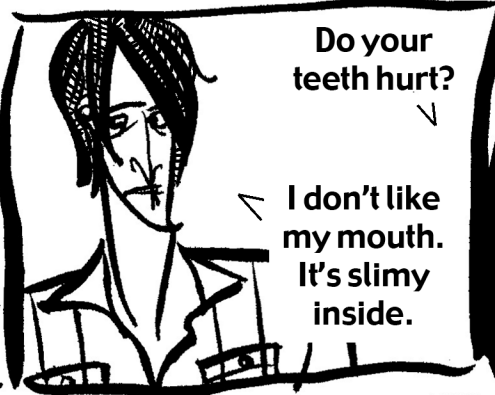






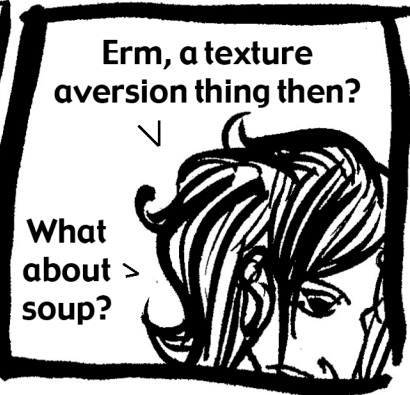


What about food don't you like?



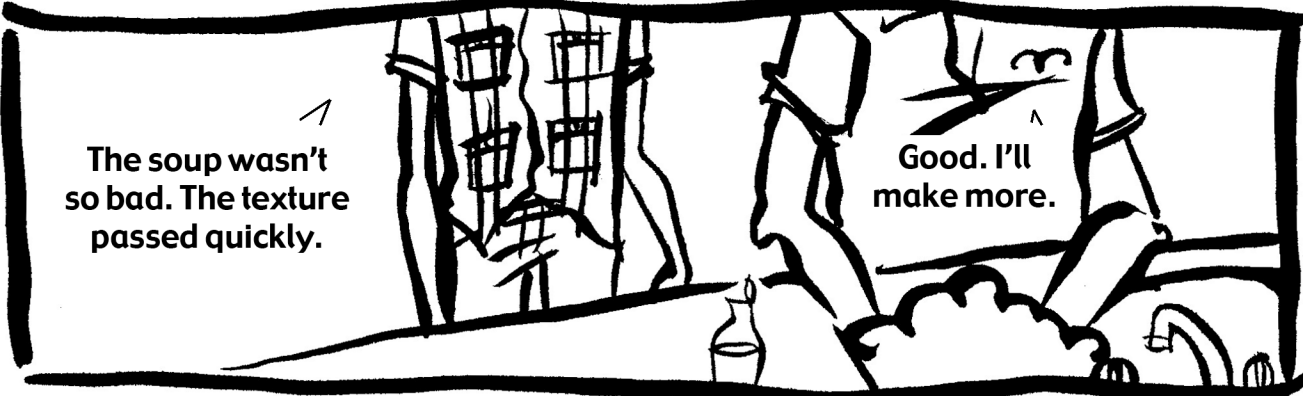
Do your teeth hurt?

I don't like my mouth. It's slimy inside.



Erm, a texture aversion thing then?

What about soup?



The soup wasn't so bad. The texture passed quickly.

Good. I'll make more.



Though, get used to it.

Being alive and all involves a lot of sliminess.



What?

Your hair is very bright.



I could make a great nest with it. A red nest.

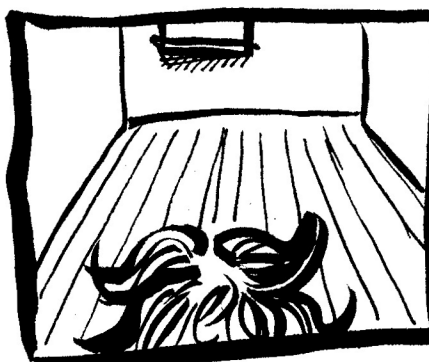


Ha, ha! Maybe later!



But right now I think I want to work on getting a bed.

Oh.



Are we done yet?

This is great. I might even sleep tonight.



You're good with colors, but isn't this a bit much for me?

A bedroom requires a bedroom set.



Can I have your hair now?

Uh. I'm tired.



Find a pair of scissors and we can do it in the morning. I'm going to bed.





Huh?



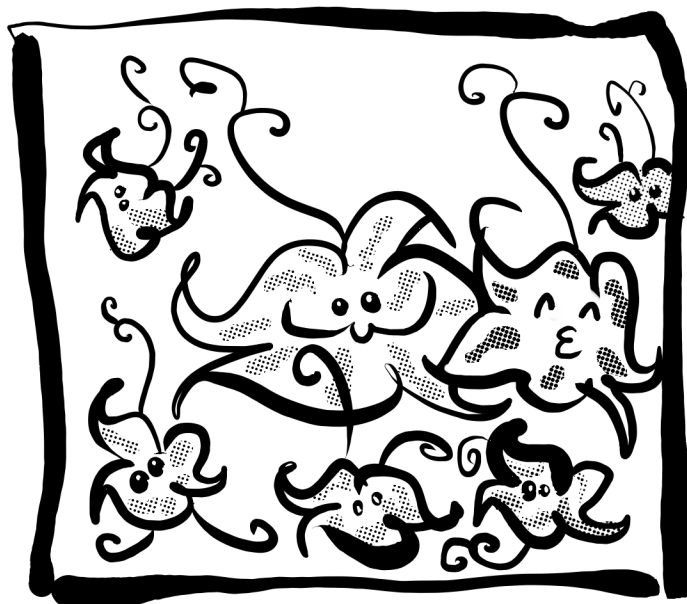
AAAGGGH!!

Next time on Grayling!



Oh? For just a nillit, he seems to have done well for himself.

For example, he has a beautiful family.



See you next time in issue 3 of Grayling!









# ABOUT Neccos

Faidia is home to a variety of dragon species, some common, some rare.

One of the more common dragons is the necco, a very small flying dragon that can be found on nearly every continent of Faidia.

The necco is a friendly and moderately intelligent creature. It plays the role of pigeons in our world in that they deliver messages and very large colonies of them can be found in cities.



Neccos are born in a wide spectrum of colors. They have soft skin covered in a very fine fuzzy material similar to down feathers. It does not particularly aid in flight, but serves to keep the necco warm.

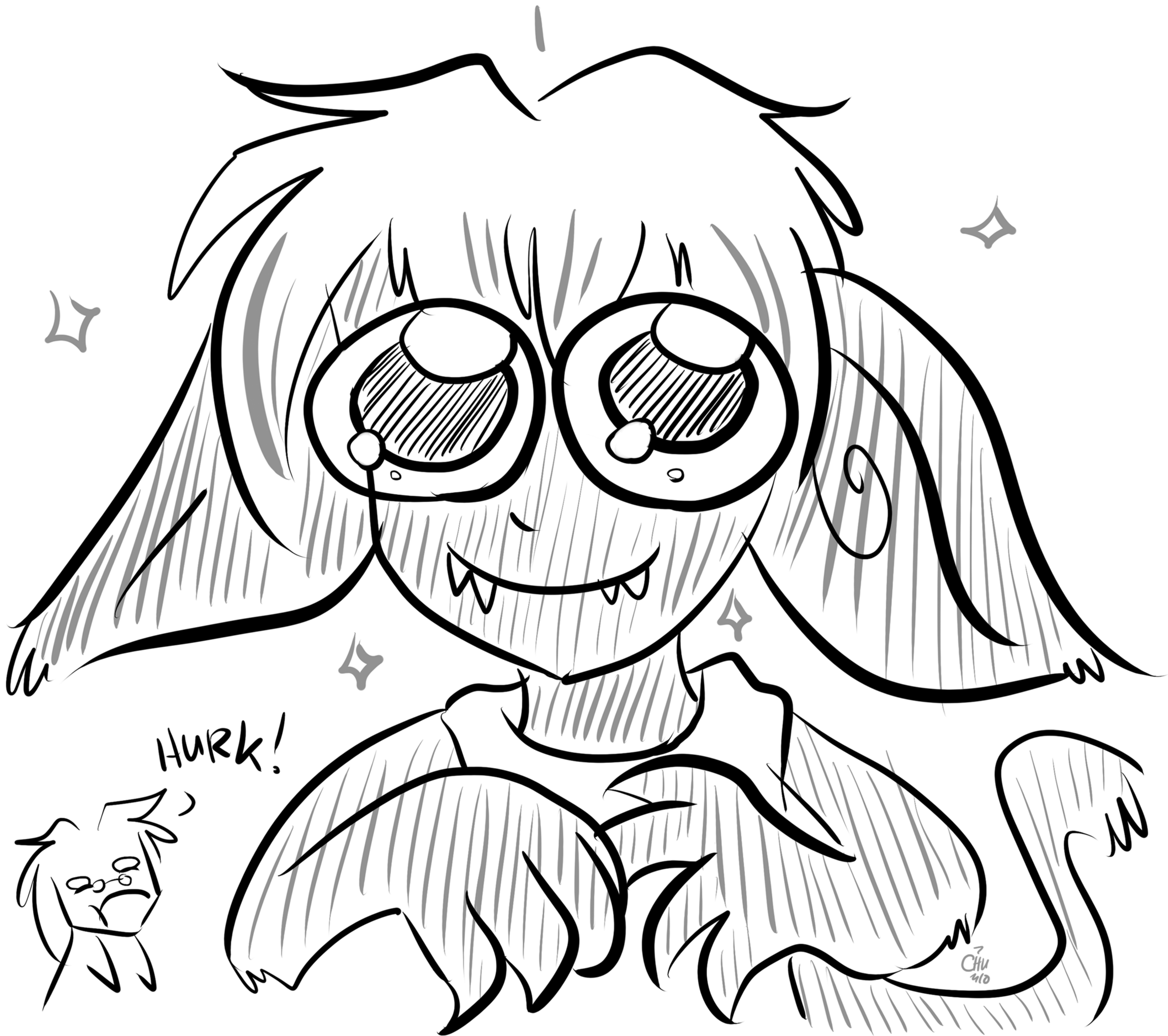
Neccos primarily feed on fruit, but they're flexible opportunists.

Most necco species are social animals, but a few, such as the oceanic necco, are solitary.

They love fruit and other high energy foods.



Am I kawii yet??







Fanart by A.Ward of  
The Good Life  
[comic.stray-children.net](http://comic.stray-children.net)



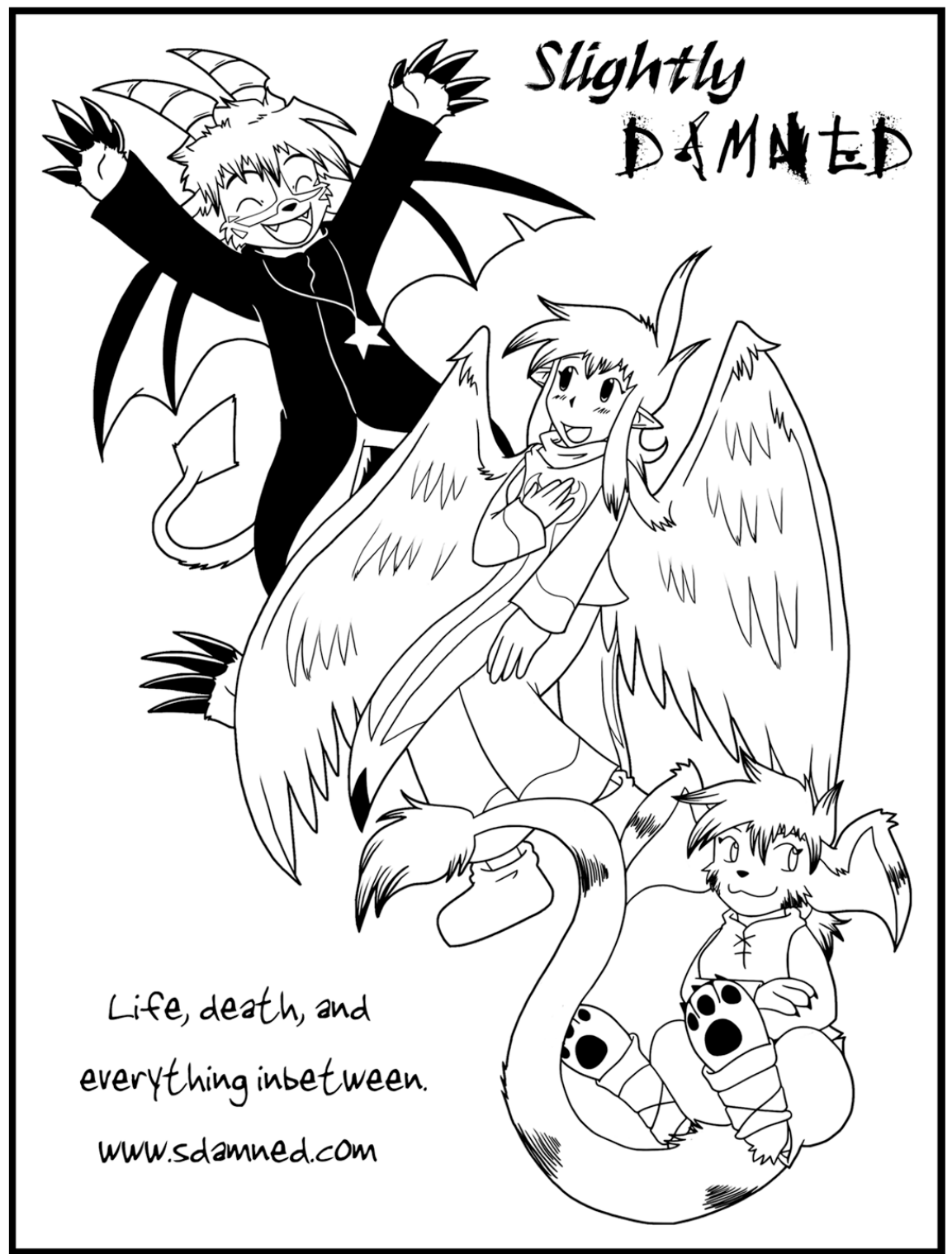
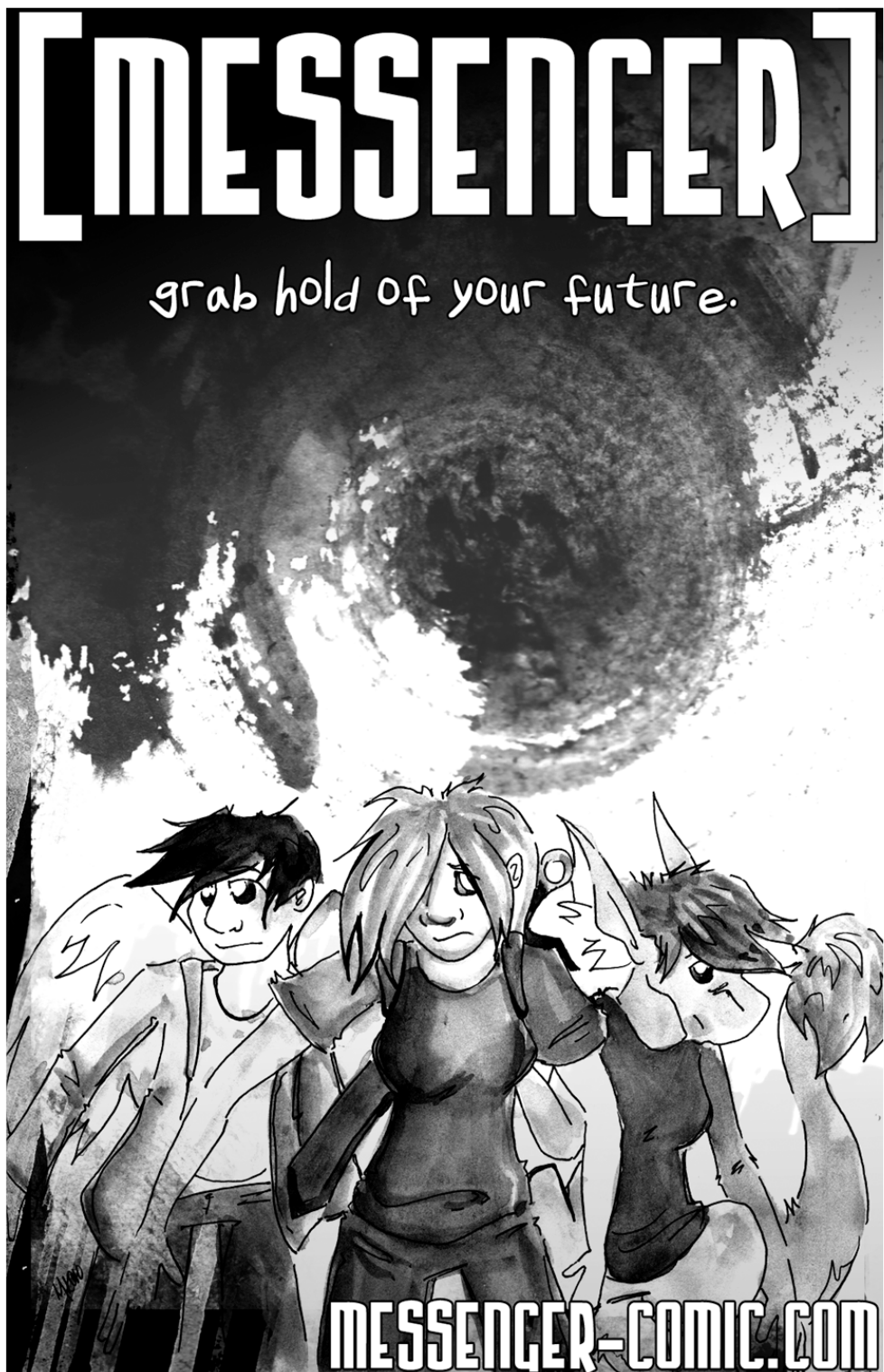


Fanart by  
Yuzuha/Misuka  
[lotus-rayn.net](http://lotus-rayn.net)



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resemblance to real persons,  
living or dead, is purely  
coincidental, and very sad.



Check out  
these other  
great web  
comics!





**I would like to thank everyone for another successfully completed issue of Grayling. I hope you enjoy the continuing stories of the elementals and friends.**

**The dedication and hard work of the Grayling team have made this webcomic's publication possible. I would like to give special thanks to Glau, who put in many long hours crunching numbers and spending her own free time making this issue possible. She went above and beyond what was expected and we thank her for her sacrifices.**

**I would also like to thank my financial team, SD Corp, for all of their input on getting us through this difficult fiscal year. It has been only through the talents you all have acquired through a lifetime of hard work that this was possible.**

**Finally, I would like to thank the animation team, though they really could have put forth a better foot this year. I know that Arborwin has tackled larger projects in the past. Although I know she is talented, we were hoping for better output. Regardless of these setbacks, we look forward to our next issue and hope all of you that have made this issue possible do the same.**