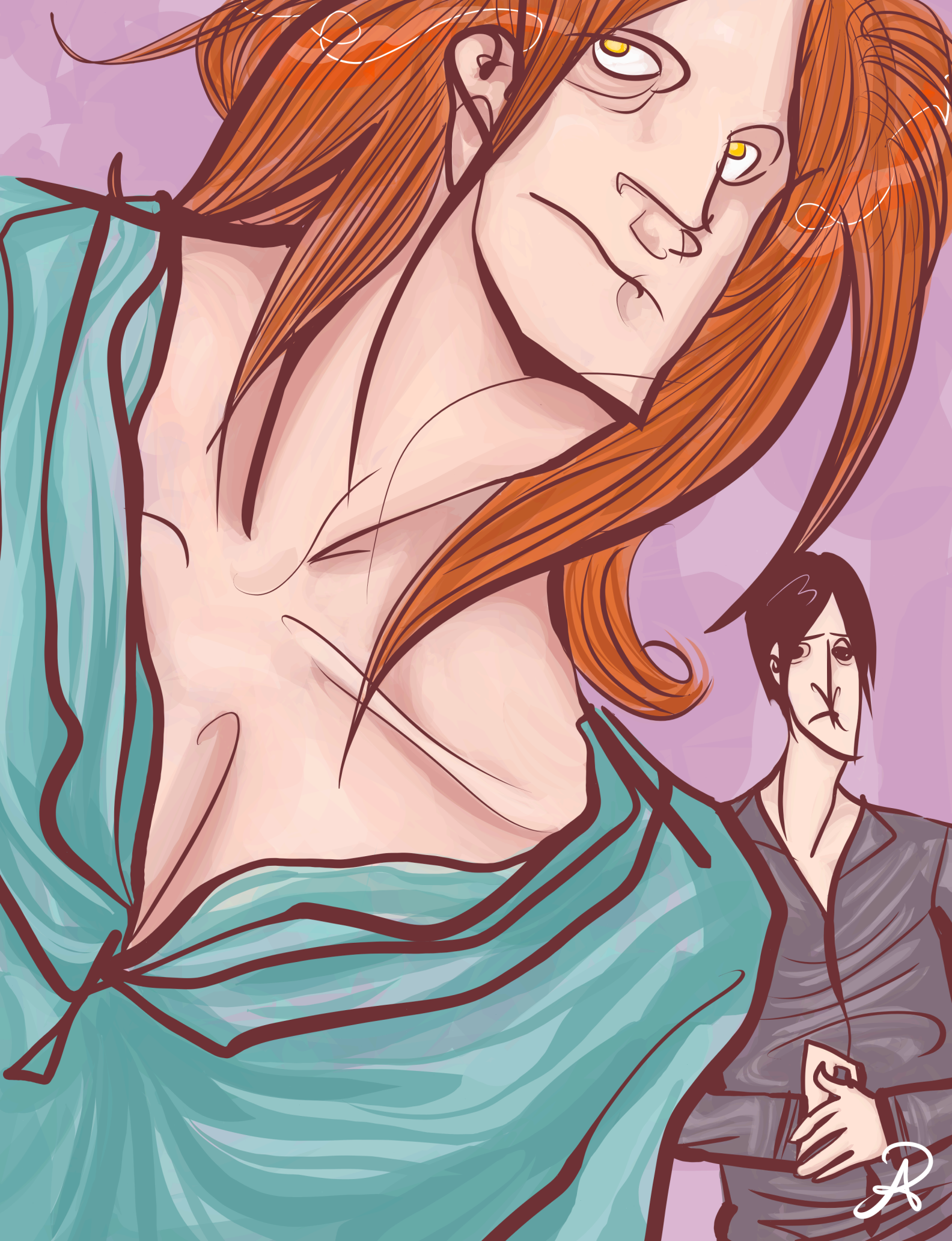




Issue 3  
by Arborwin





Cal! Cal,  
wake up!



Ugggh.

What.





Get up!

The house is infested!



Oh god  
the cold

Why

Why are  
you doing  
this to me



Pheew.  
None.

Gimme  
back

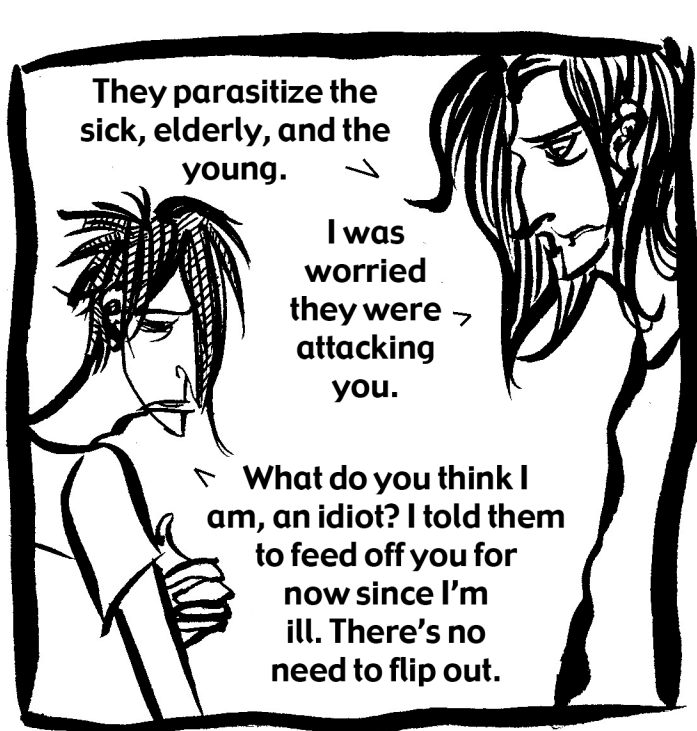


If this is  
about the  
nillits

They're  
supposed  
to be here.



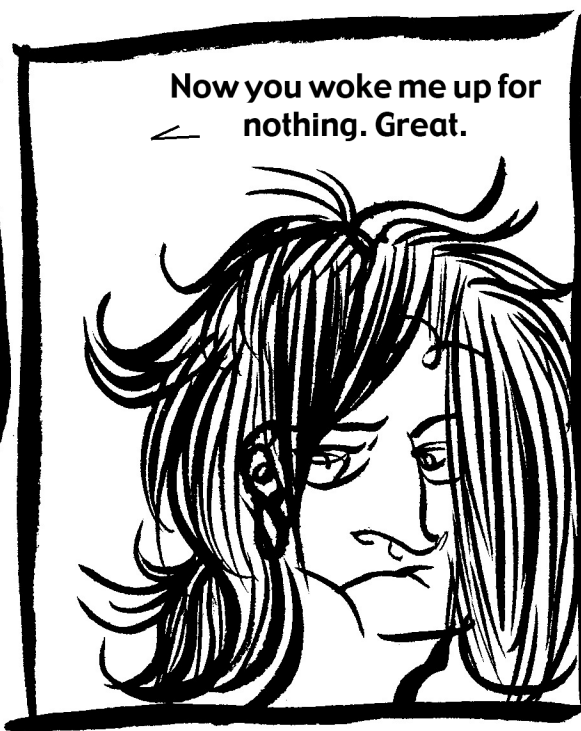
Supposed...? >



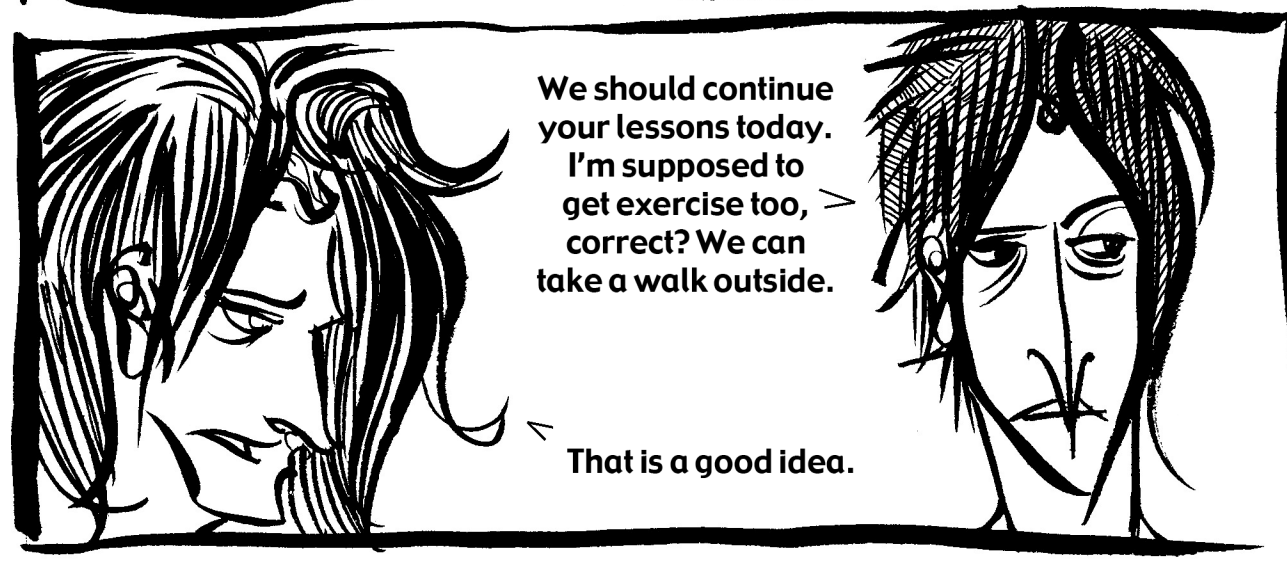
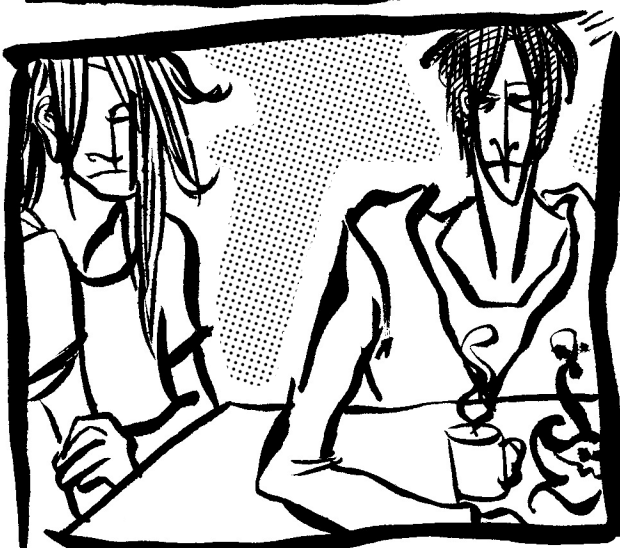
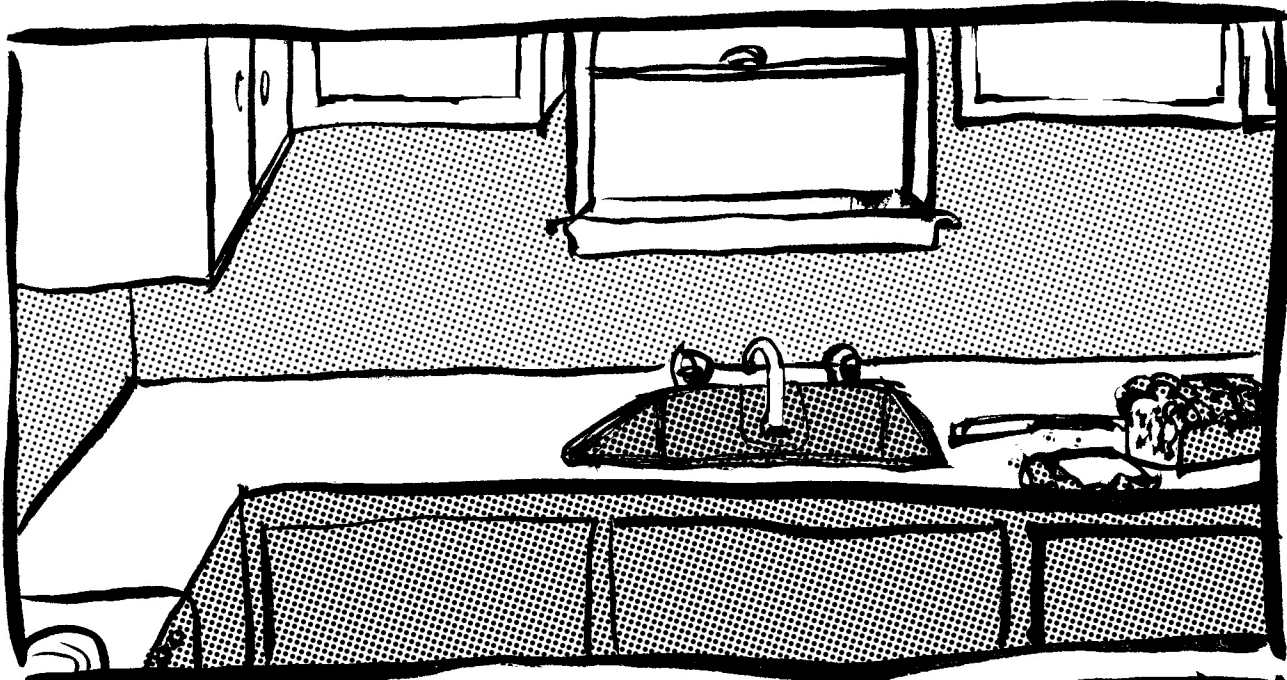
They parasitize the  
sick, elderly, and the  
young.

I was  
worried  
they were  
attacking  
you.

What do you think I  
am, an idiot? I told them  
to feed off you for  
now since I'm  
ill. There's no  
need to flip out.



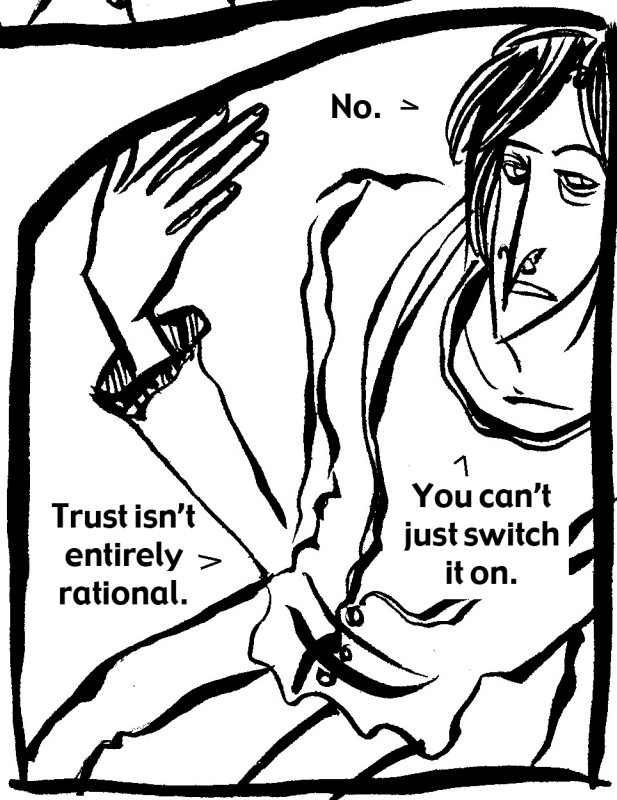
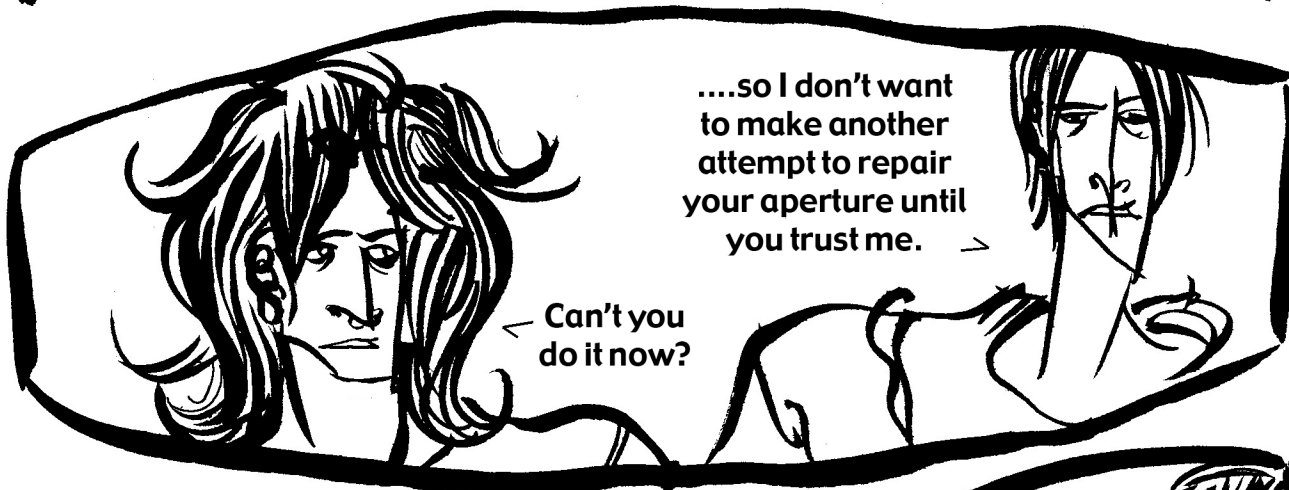
Now you woke me up for  
nothing. Great.

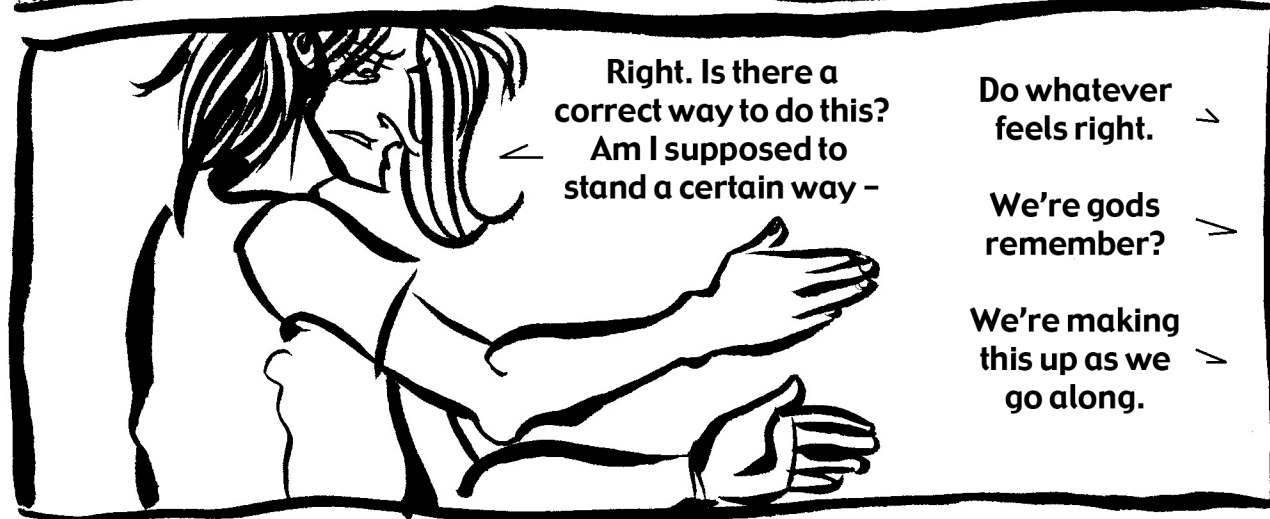


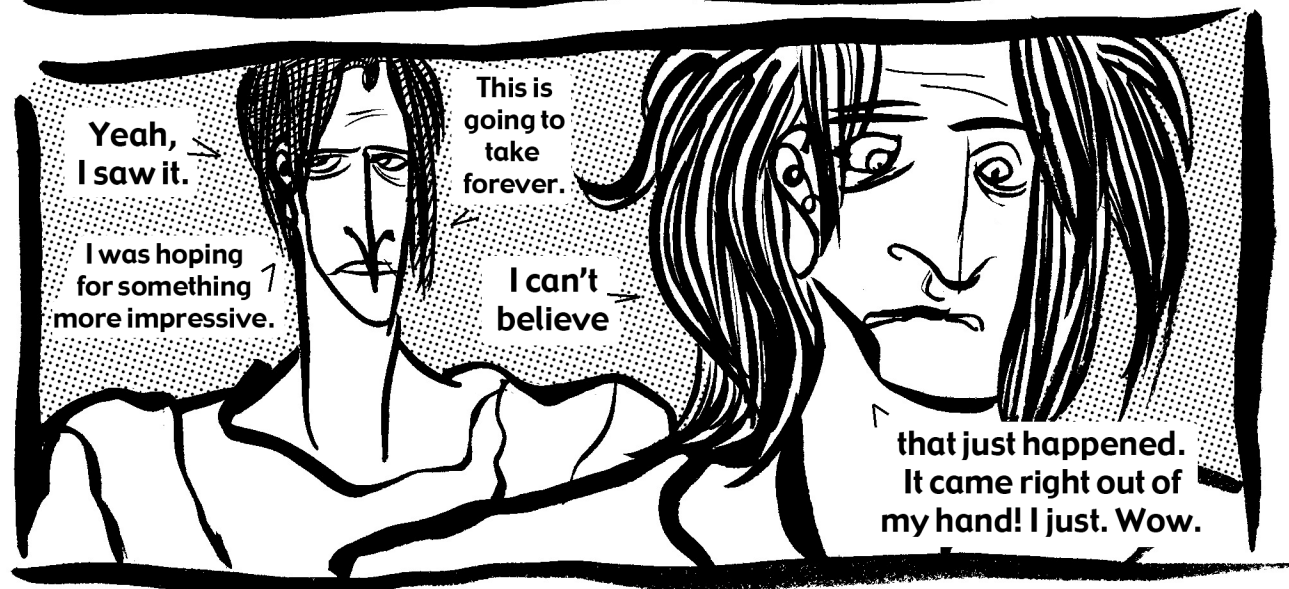
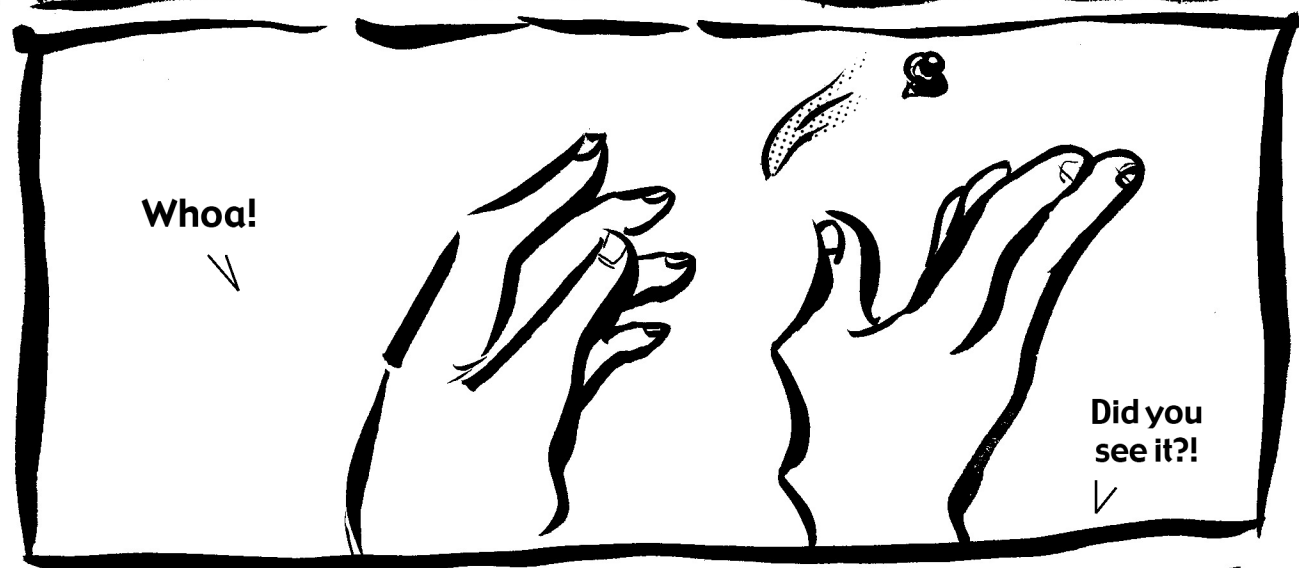
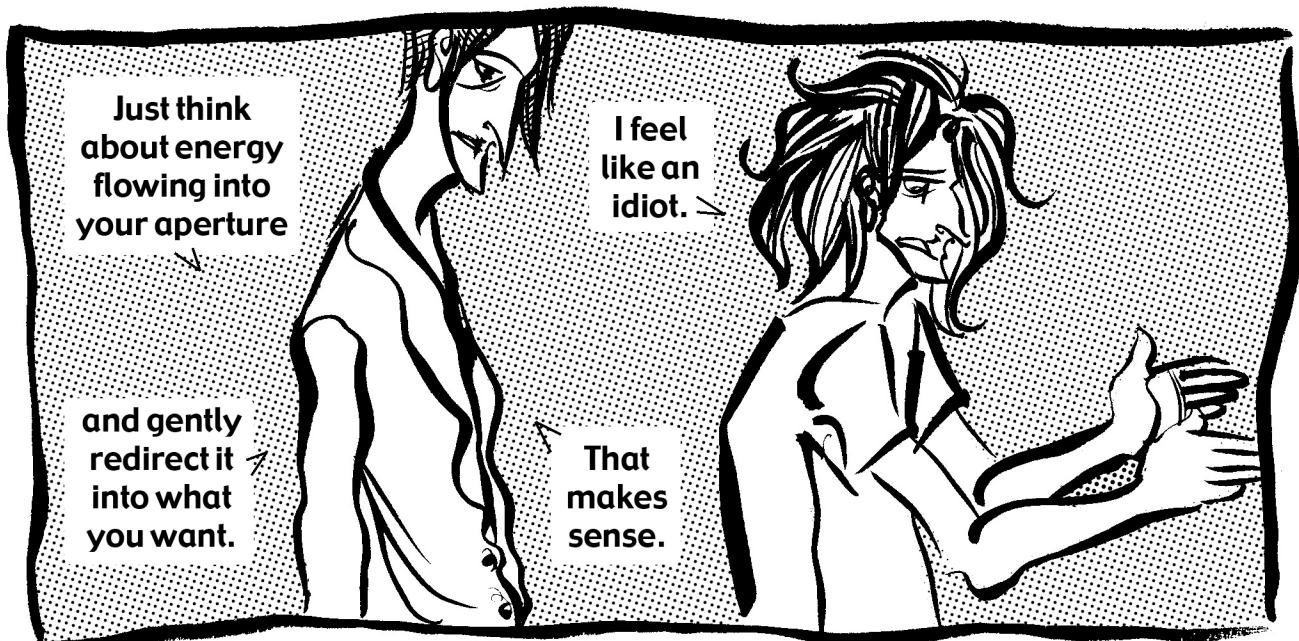
We should continue  
your lessons today.  
I'm supposed to  
get exercise too, >  
correct? We can  
take a walk outside.

>  
That is a good idea.

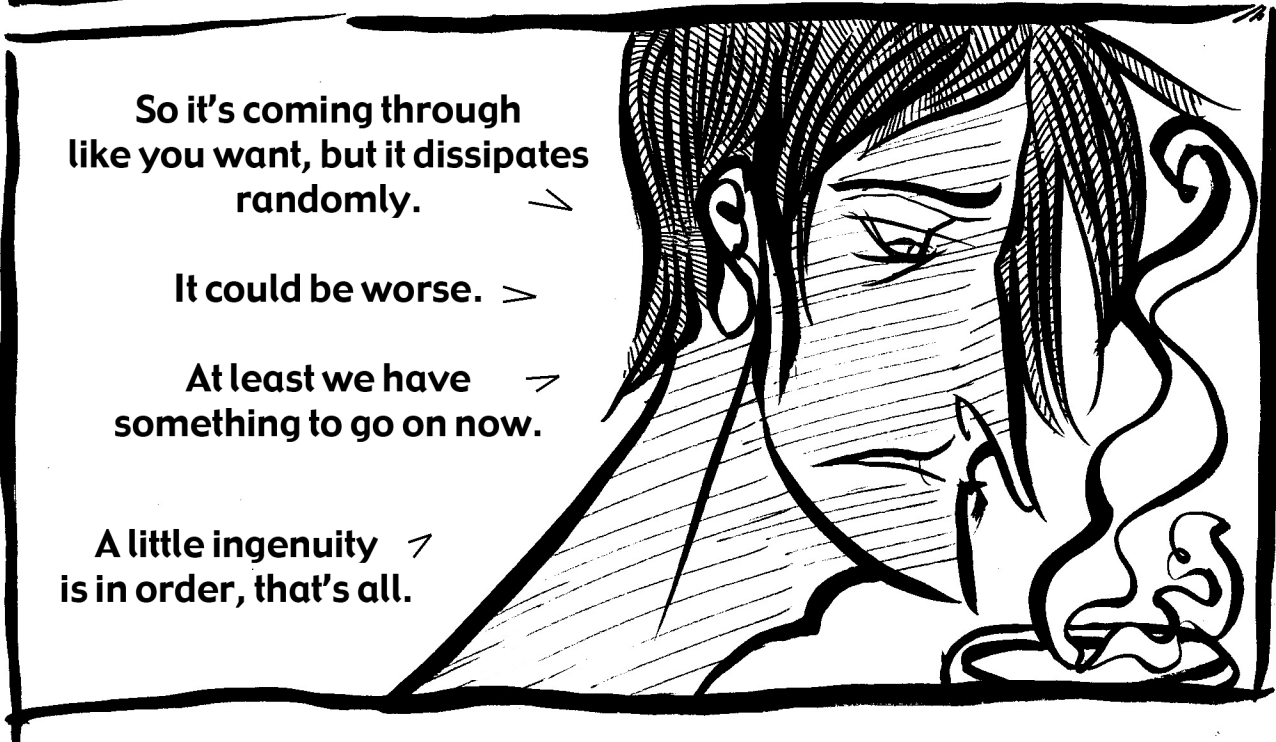
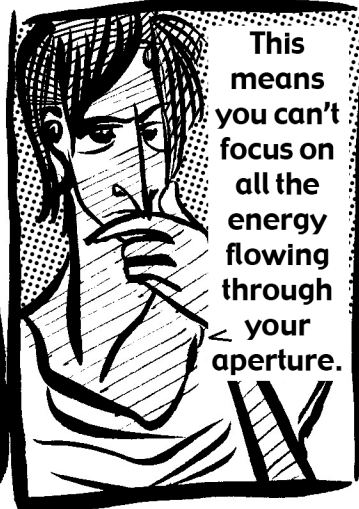


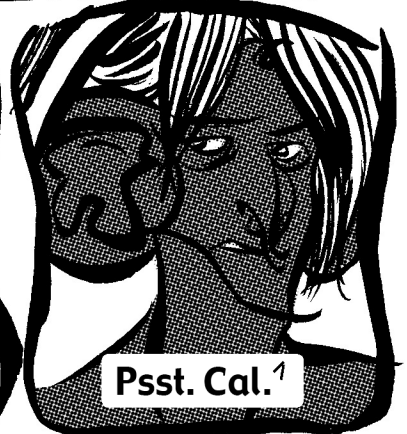
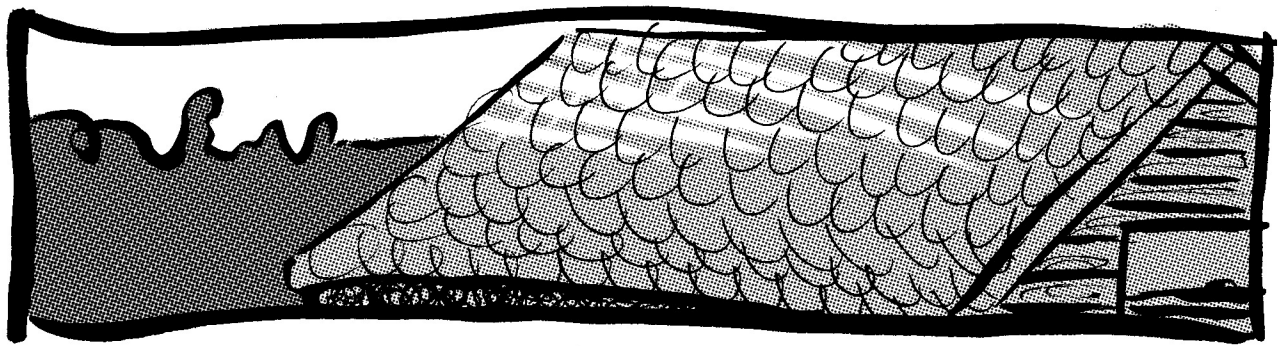












Psst. Cal.<sup>1</sup>

Unh. Yeah,  
what? ↘

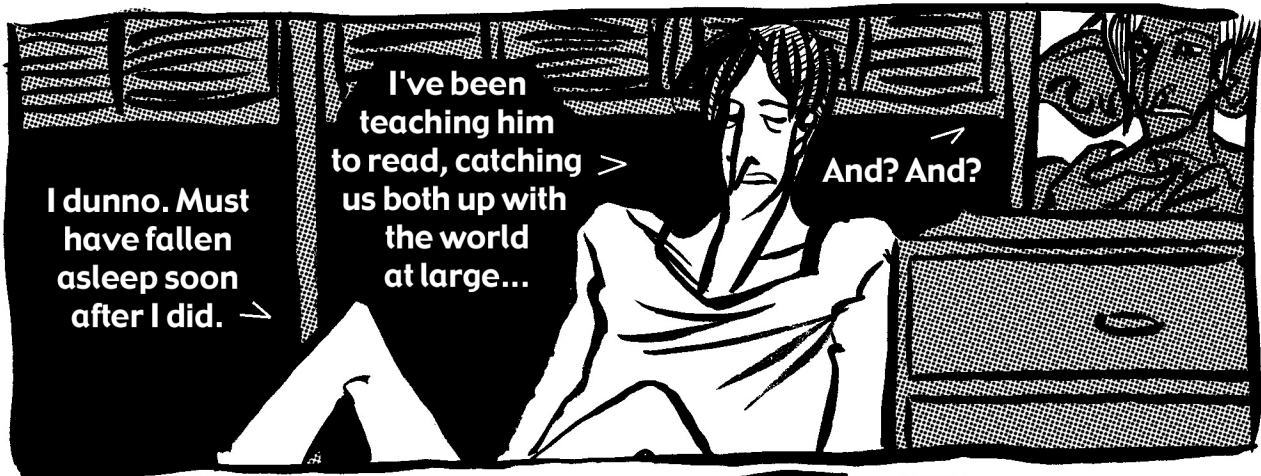


You haven't spoken  
to me in two weeks  
↙ or something.

Yeah. Yeah, sorry.  
I've been busy >  
with Fern.

Why is he  
in your bed? ↙

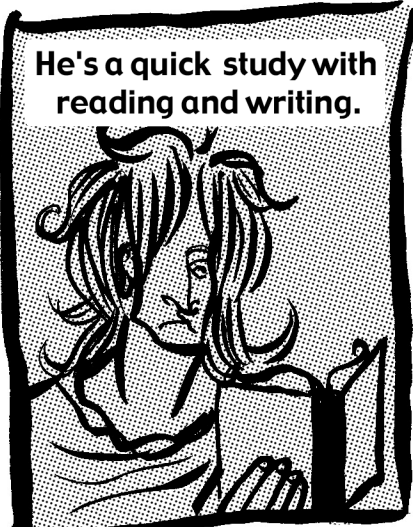




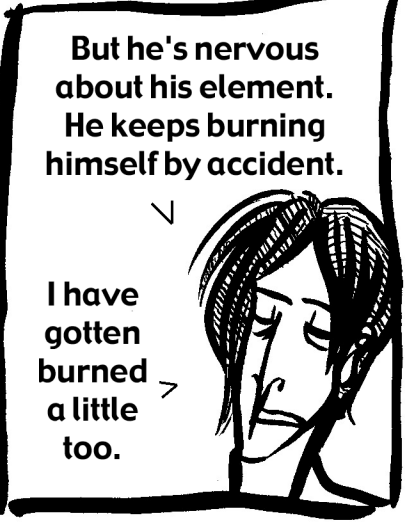
I dunno. Must have fallen asleep soon after I did. ➤

I've been teaching him to read, catching us both up with the world at large... ➤

And? And? ➤



He's a quick study with reading and writing.



But he's nervous about his element. He keeps burning himself by accident.

I have gotten burned a little too. ➤

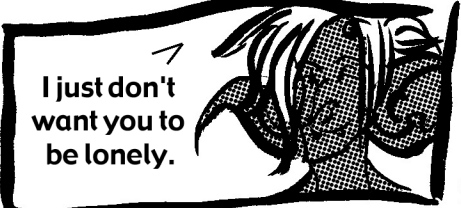


He's in your bed. ✓

Mack him already.



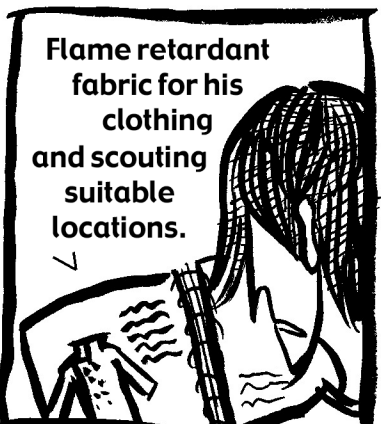
Rae, do you have any idea how tired I am?



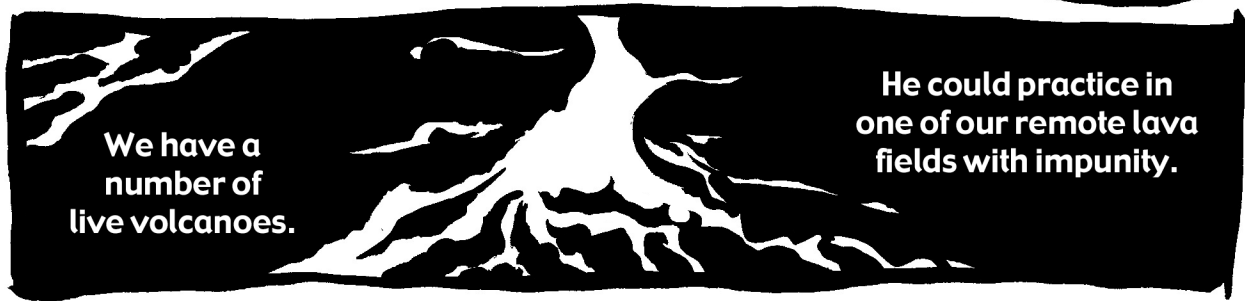
I just don't want you to be lonely. ➤



So I've been working on safeguards.



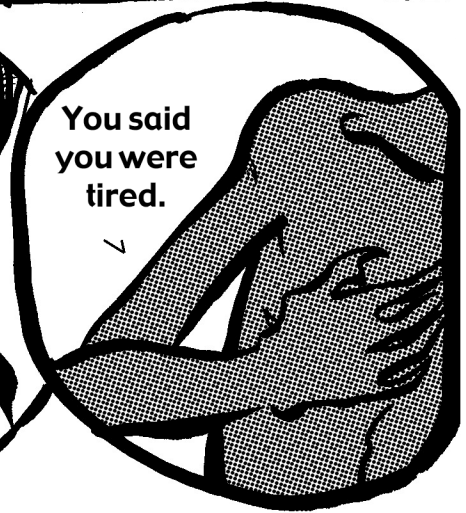
Flame retardant fabric for his clothing and scouting suitable locations. ✓

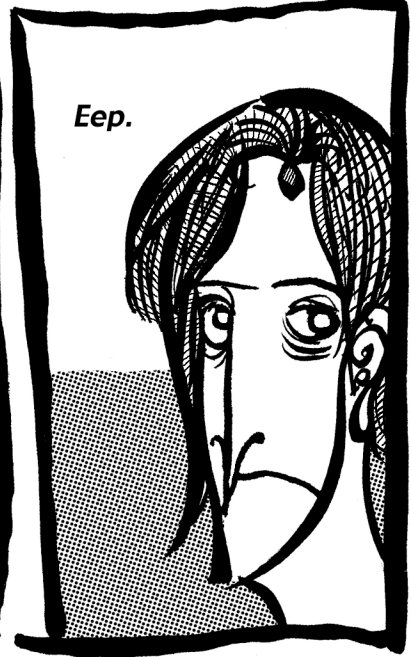
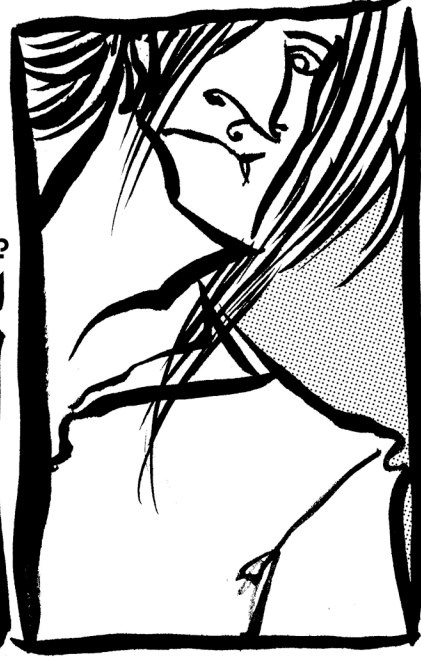
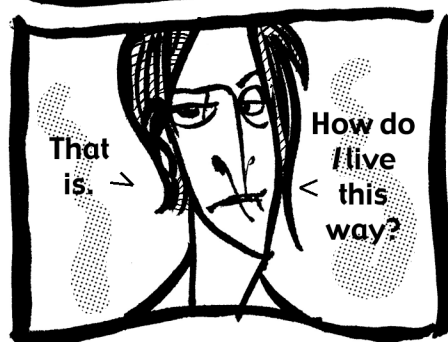
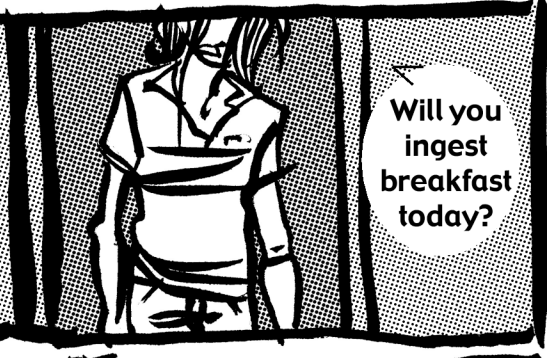
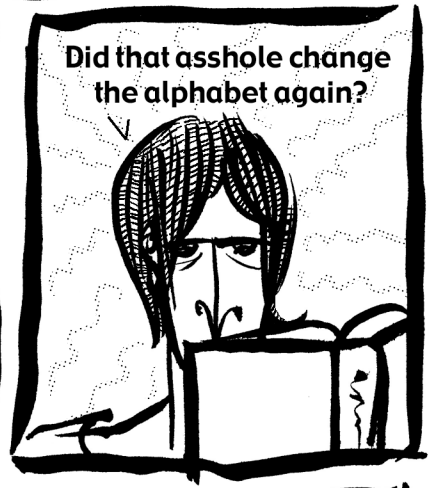
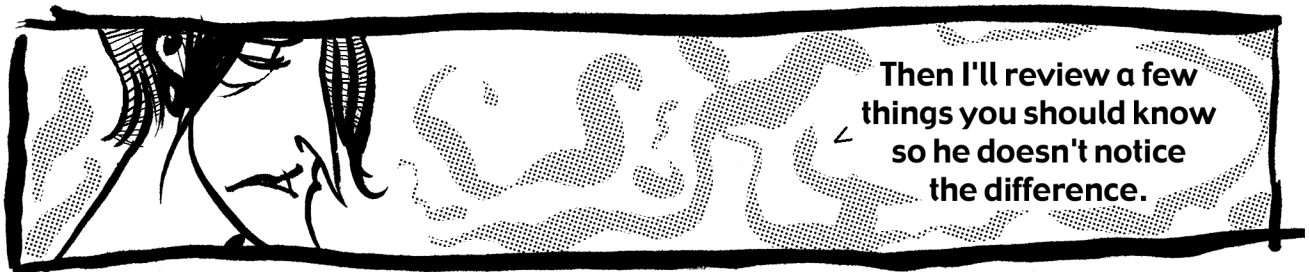


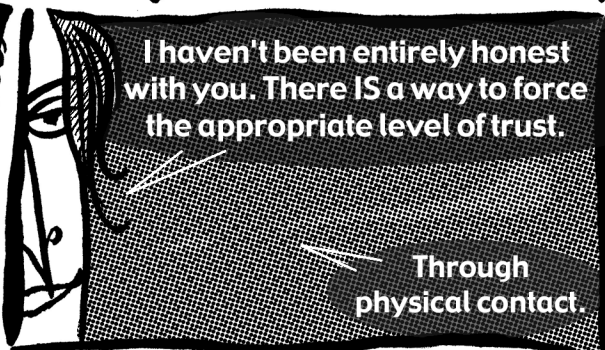
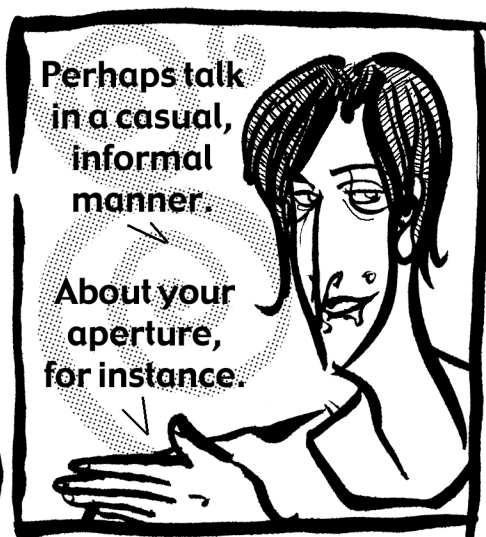
We have a number of live volcanoes.

He could practice in one of our remote lava fields with impunity.



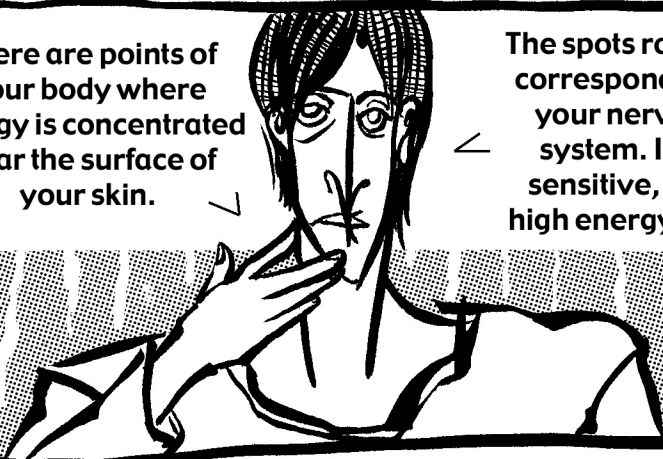








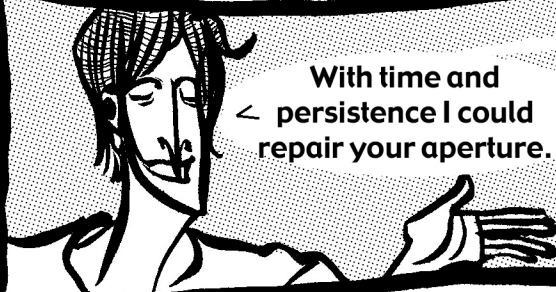
There are points of your body where energy is concentrated near the surface of your skin.



The spots roughly correspond with your nervous system. If it's sensitive, it's a high energy spot.

We need to transfer my energy to your body, so if we say, held hands, or kissed...

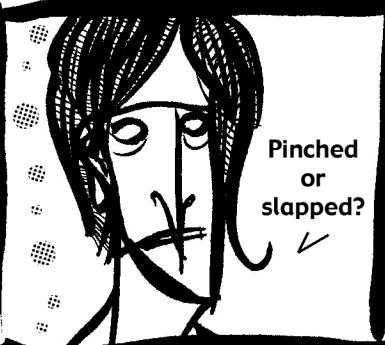
With time and persistence I could repair your aperture.



Is this really a practical solution? You seem to hate being near me. I don't particularly want to get pinched and slapped anymore than I already do changing your bandage.



Pinched or slapped?



I won't do that anymore.



Believe me.

I guess we can hold hands

on your walks.



Holding hands is good, but may not be enough.



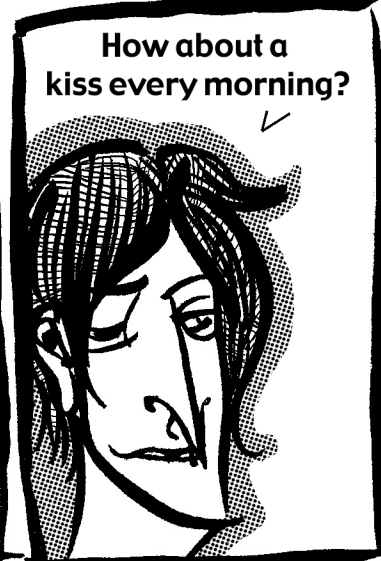
We need to do this right if we're going to do it at all.

We need something extra.



Like what.

How about a kiss every morning?





Where?



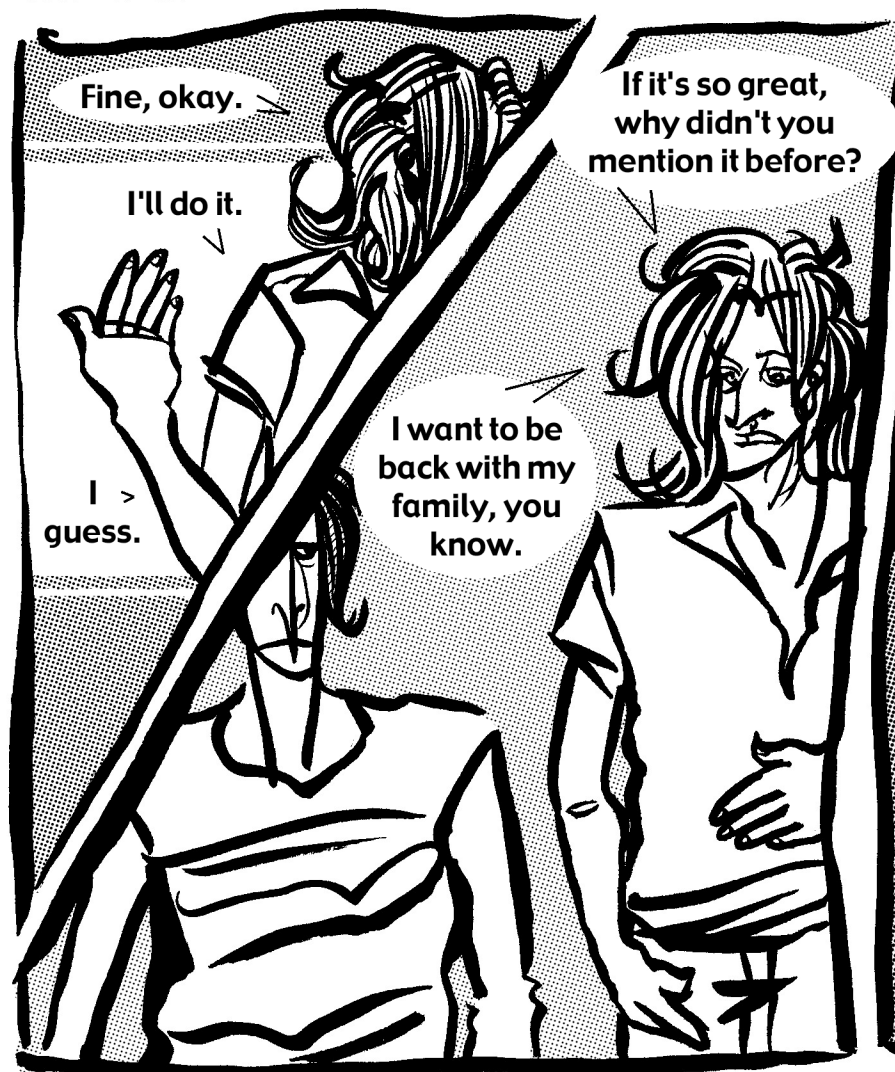
A  
light  
peck  
on the  
lips.



I dunno  
about this.



The extent to which this will improve  
your abilities cannot be exaggerated.  
One little kiss on the lips daily is a small  
price to pay for eliminating your potential  
to harm others. You'll be able to master  
your abilities in months rather than decades.



Fine, okay.

I'll do it.

I >  
guess.

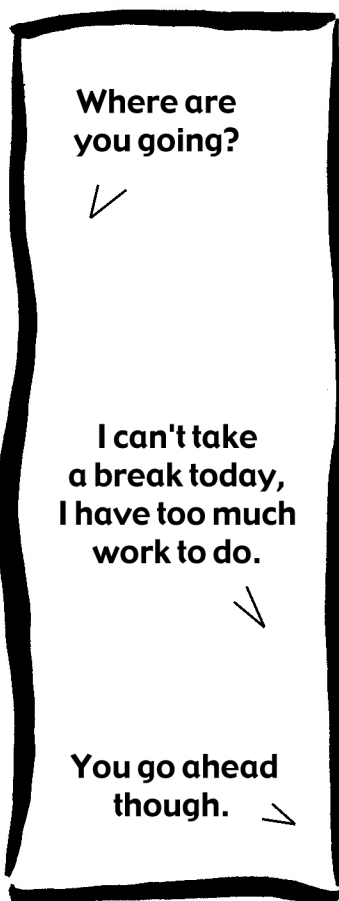
I want to be  
back with my  
family, you  
know.

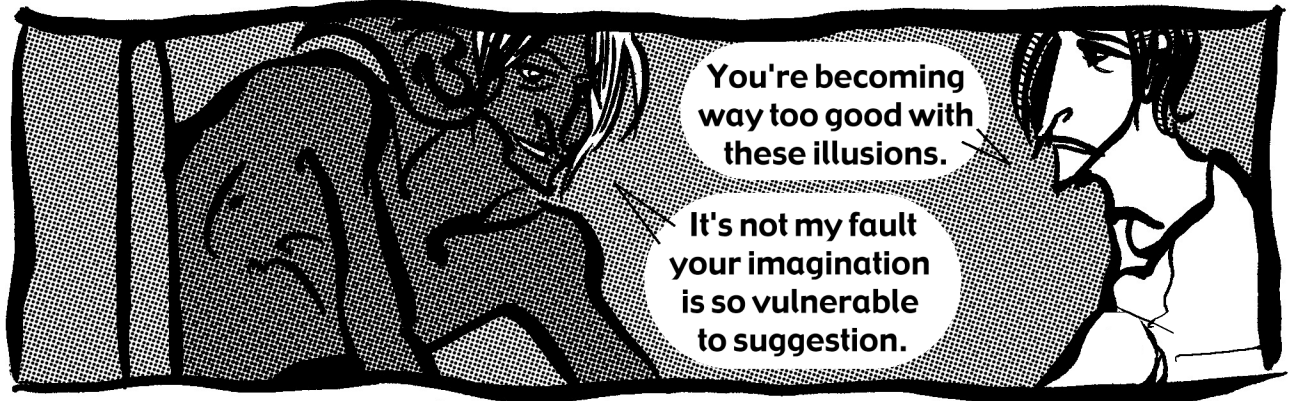
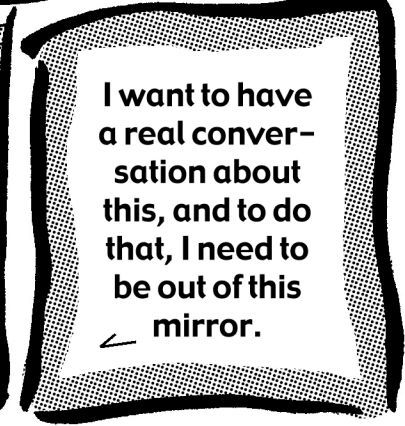
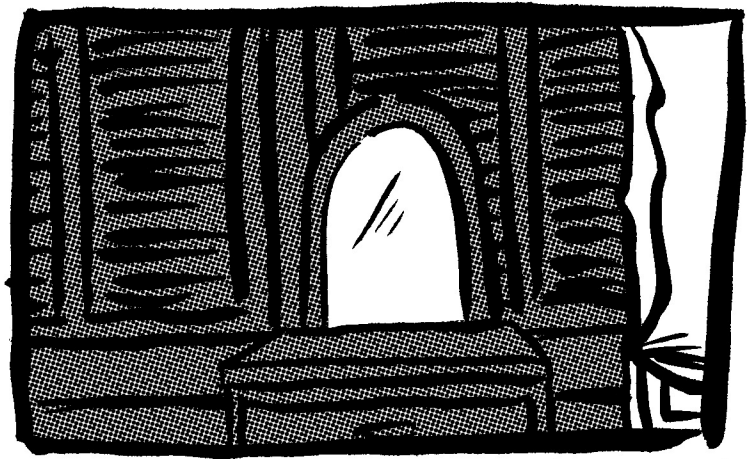
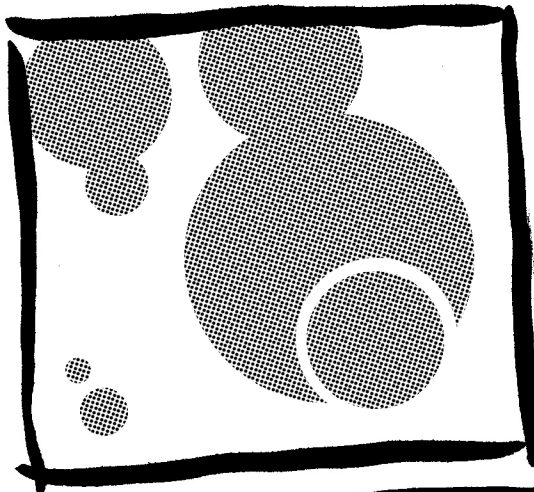
If it's so great,  
why didn't you  
mention it before?



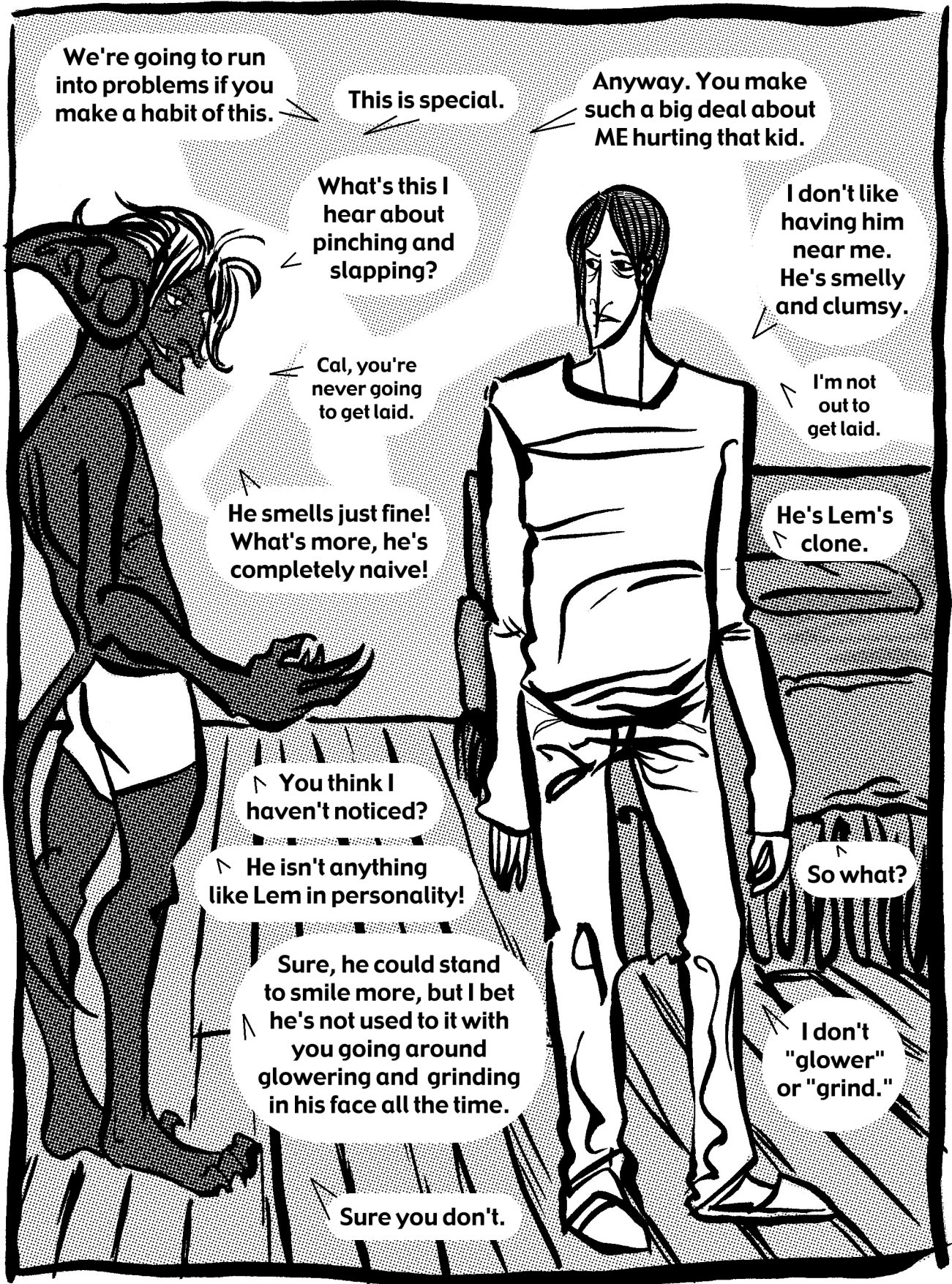
I ... had to  
think it up.

I'm also  
shy. Demure,  
even.









We're going to run into problems if you make a habit of this.

This is special.

Anyway. You make such a big deal about ME hurting that kid.

What's this I hear about pinching and slapping?

I don't like having him near me. He's smelly and clumsy.

Cal, you're never going to get laid.

I'm not out to get laid.

He smells just fine! What's more, he's completely naive!

He's Lem's clone.

▸ You think I haven't noticed?

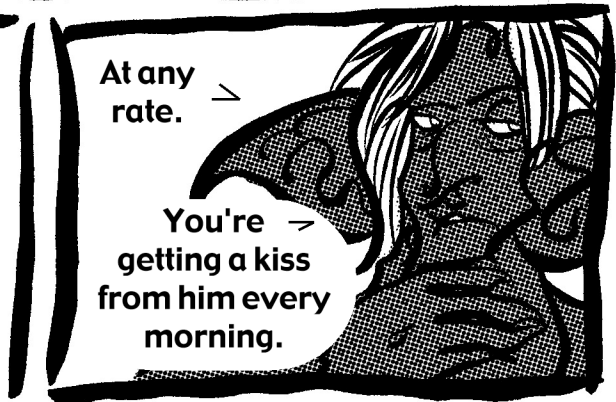
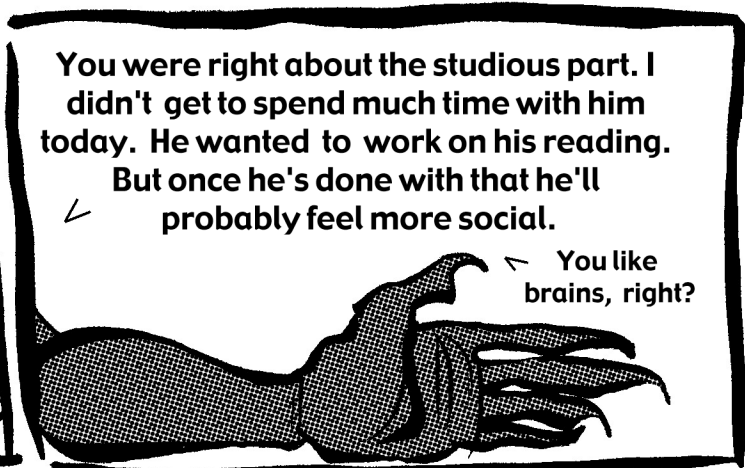
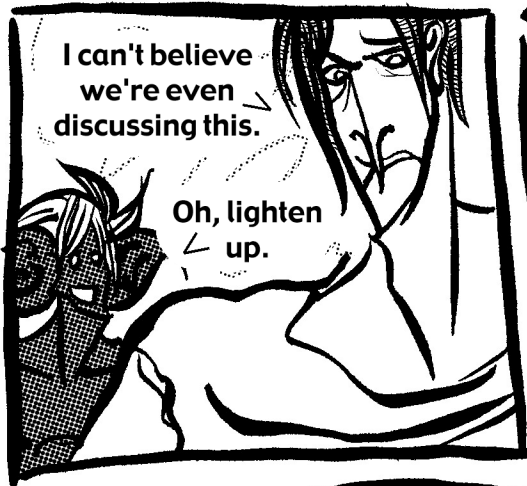
▸ He isn't anything like Lem in personality!

So what?

Sure, he could stand to smile more, but I bet he's not used to it with you going around glowering and grinding in his face all the time.

I don't "glower" or "grind."

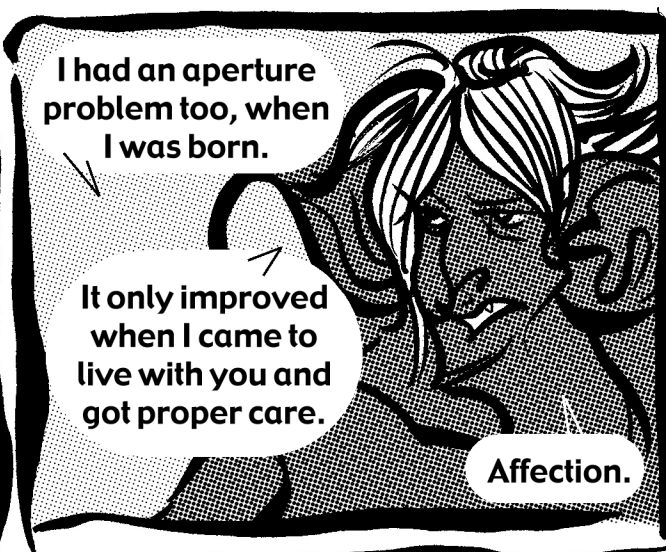
Sure you don't.





What the hell have you done?!

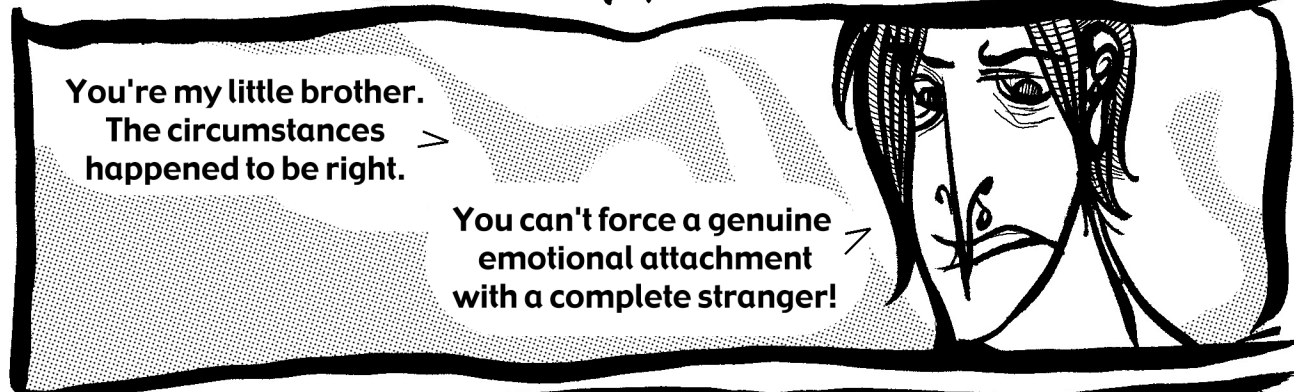
This is someone I have to live and work with!



I had an aperture problem too, when I was born.

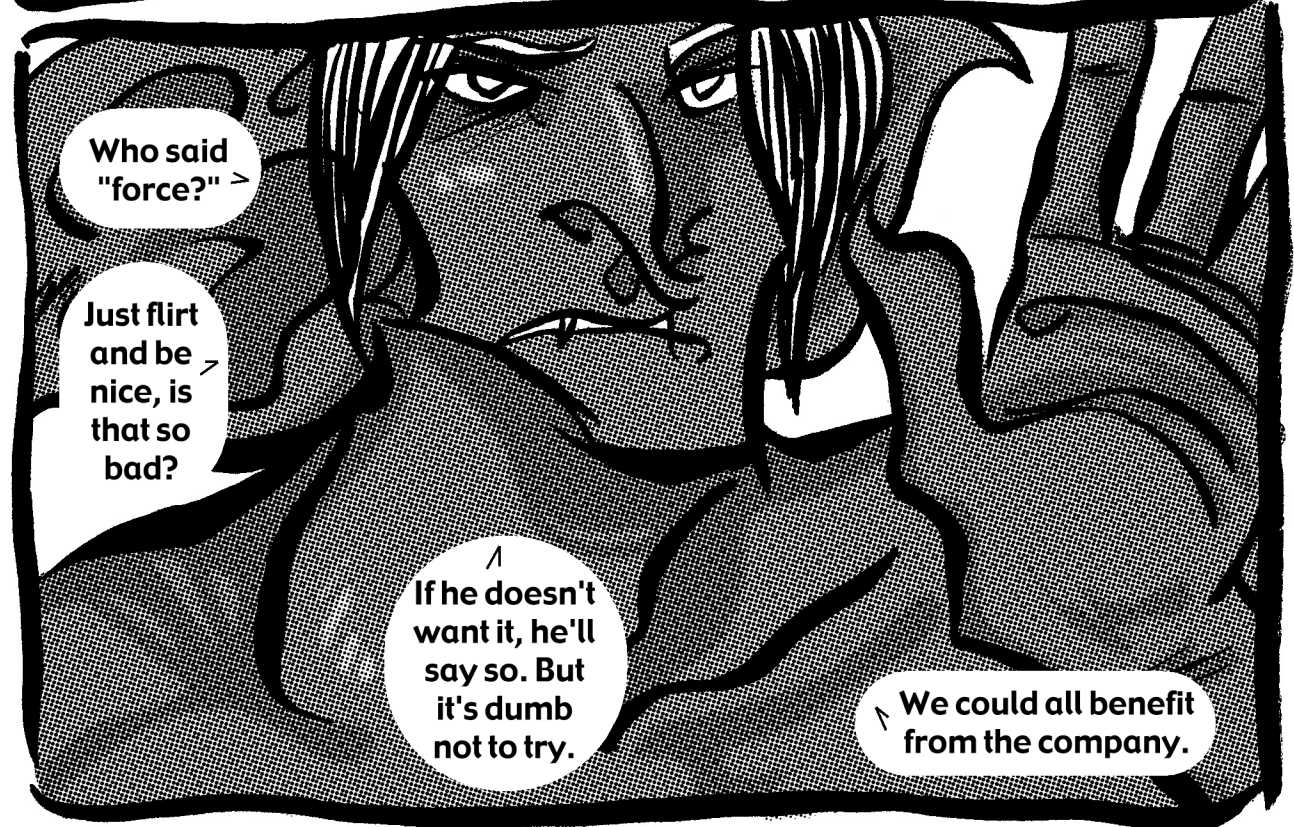
It only improved when I came to live with you and got proper care.

Affection.



You're my little brother.  
The circumstances happened to be right.

You can't force a genuine emotional attachment with a complete stranger!



Who said "force?"

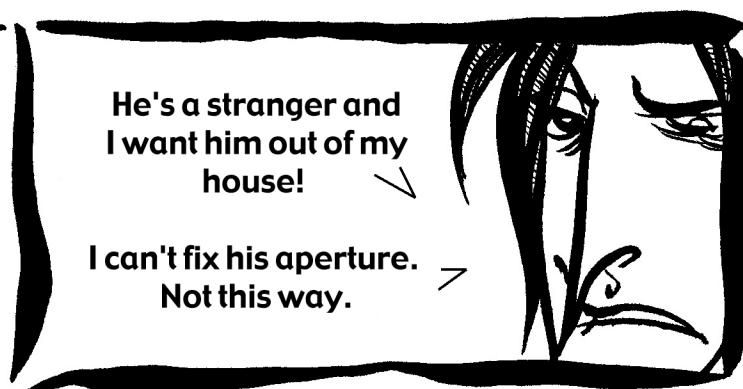
Just flirt and be nice, is that so bad?

If he doesn't want it, he'll say so. But it's dumb not to try.

We could all benefit from the company.



^ No, we can't.  
I don't like him,  
I want nothing  
to do with him.



He's a stranger and  
I want him out of my  
house!

I can't fix his aperture.  
Not this way.



What the  
**HELL**  
is the  
matter  
with you?!



Why can't  
you accept  
someone  
new!?

You keep saying  
he's a stranger,  
like that's a  
**DETERRENT.**

//  
Lem went ahead  
and made all these  
damn people, we  
might as well take  
advantage of it!



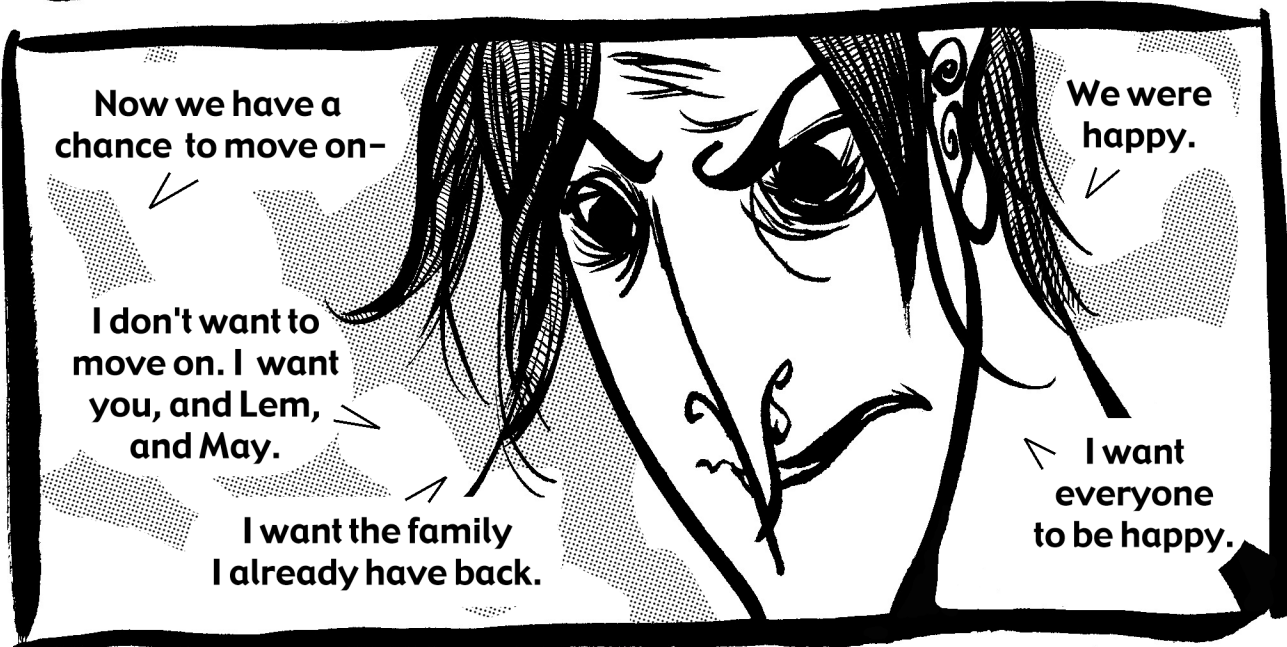
You say  
that now

When the only reason  
we're even in this mess is  
because you threatened  
to destroy it all!



No!

**YOUR** bitch of a mother  
had a grudge against me!  
*That's why we're here!*



Now we have a  
chance to move on-

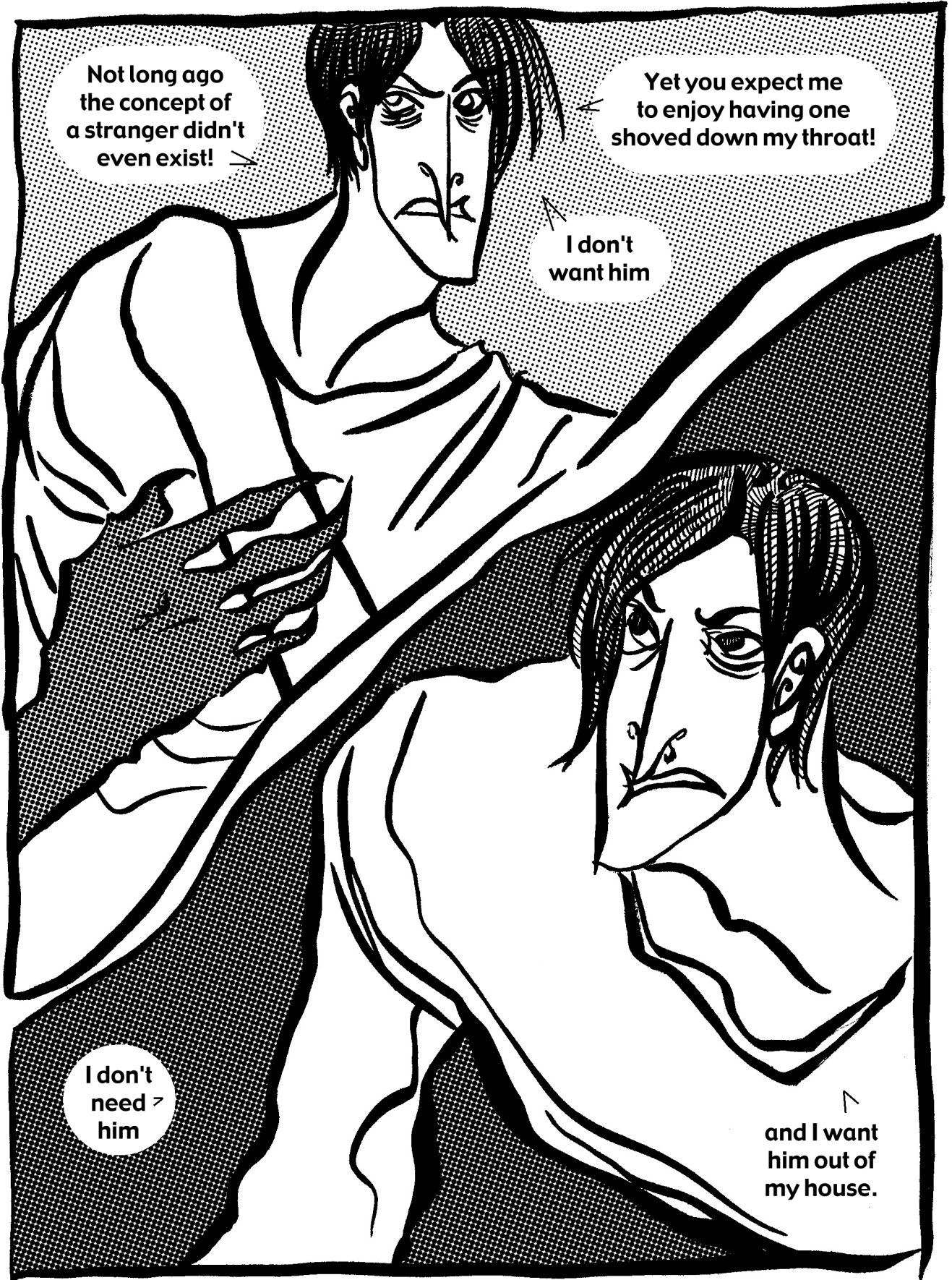
I don't want to  
move on. I want  
you, and Lem,  
and May.

I want the family  
I already have back.

We were  
happy.

I want  
everyone  
to be happy.





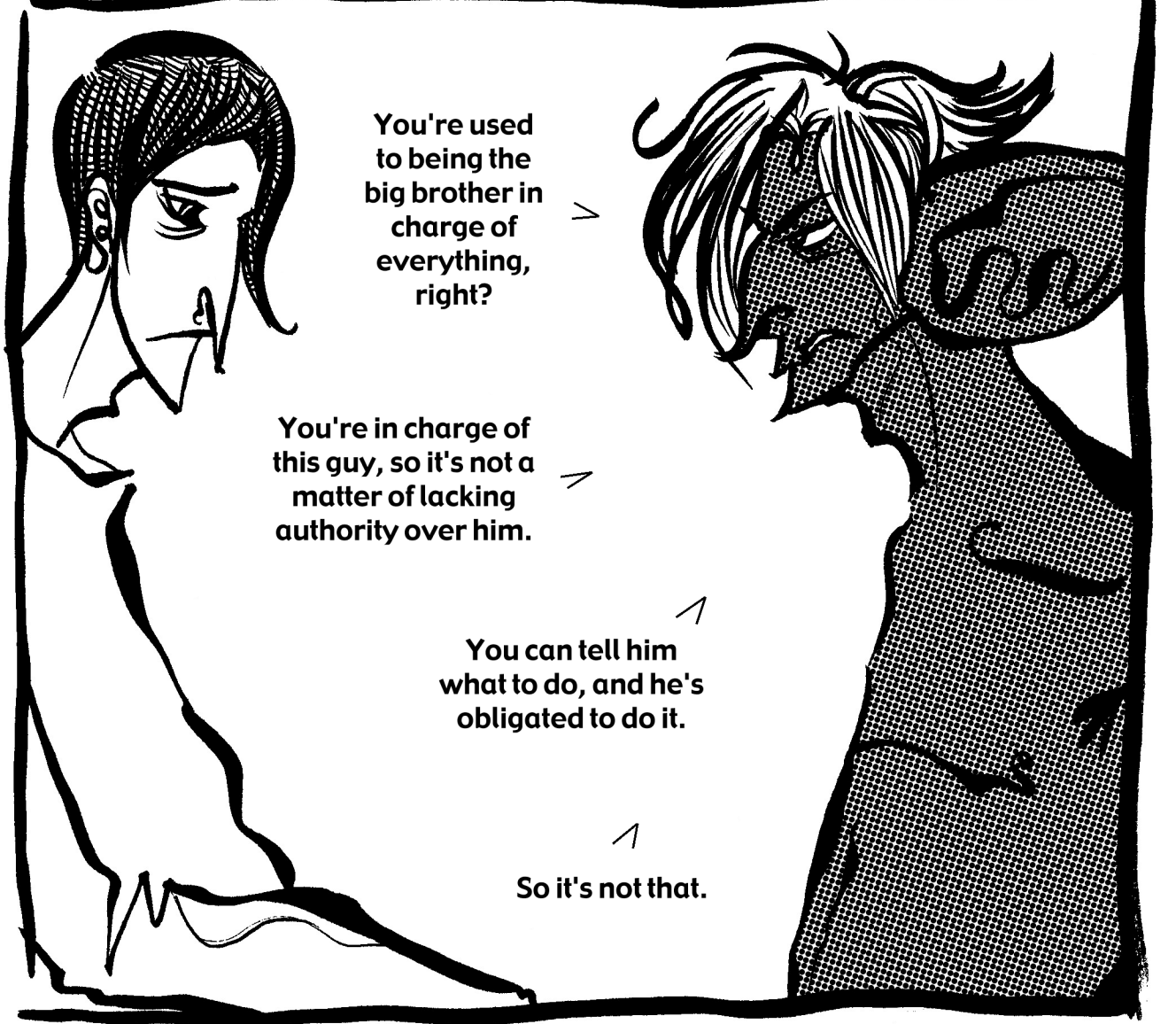
Not long ago  
the concept of  
a stranger didn't  
even exist! ➤

Yet you expect me  
to enjoy having one  
shoved down my throat!

I don't  
want him

I don't  
need >  
him

and I want  
him out of  
my house.



You're used to being the big brother in charge of everything, right?

You're in charge of this guy, so it's not a matter of lacking authority over him.

You can tell him what to do, and he's obligated to do it.

So it's not that.

So it's something even worse isn't it? You don't like this guy because he's not a little kid.

He's an adult who thinks for himself. You can't anticipate or control his thoughts.



You can't form relationships with functioning adults.

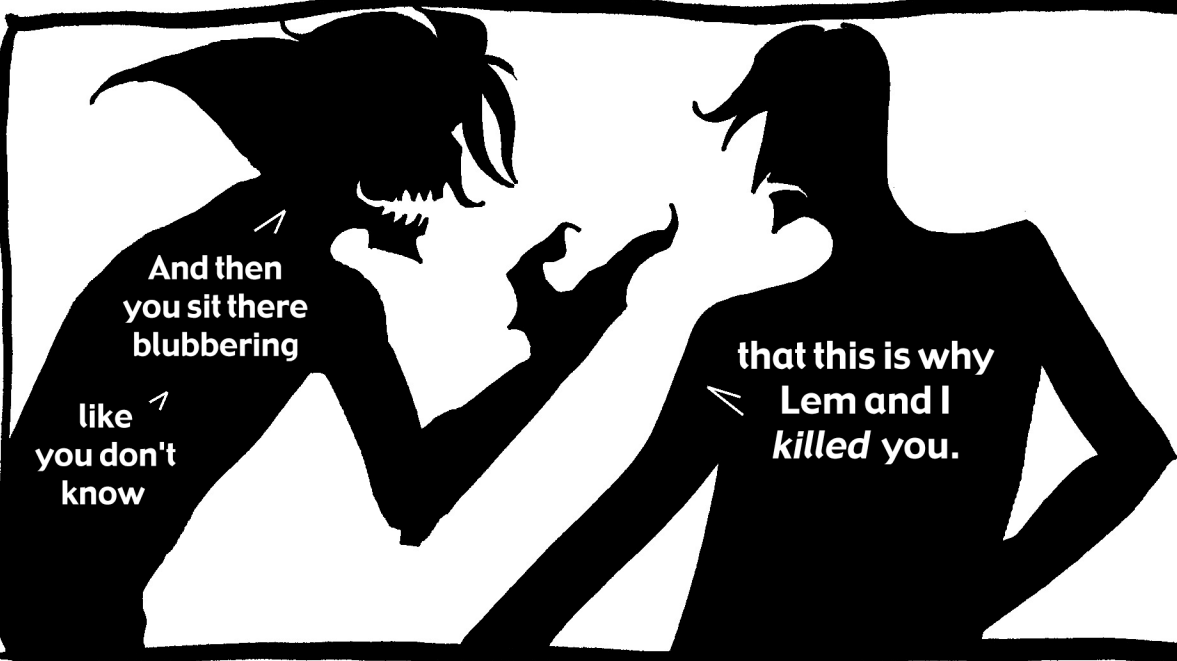
No, no -

You're a sick, sad little man. Everyone is trying to just grow up and you do your best to stand in our way because it makes YOU "happy."



And then you sit there blubbing like you don't know

that this is why Lem and I killed you.

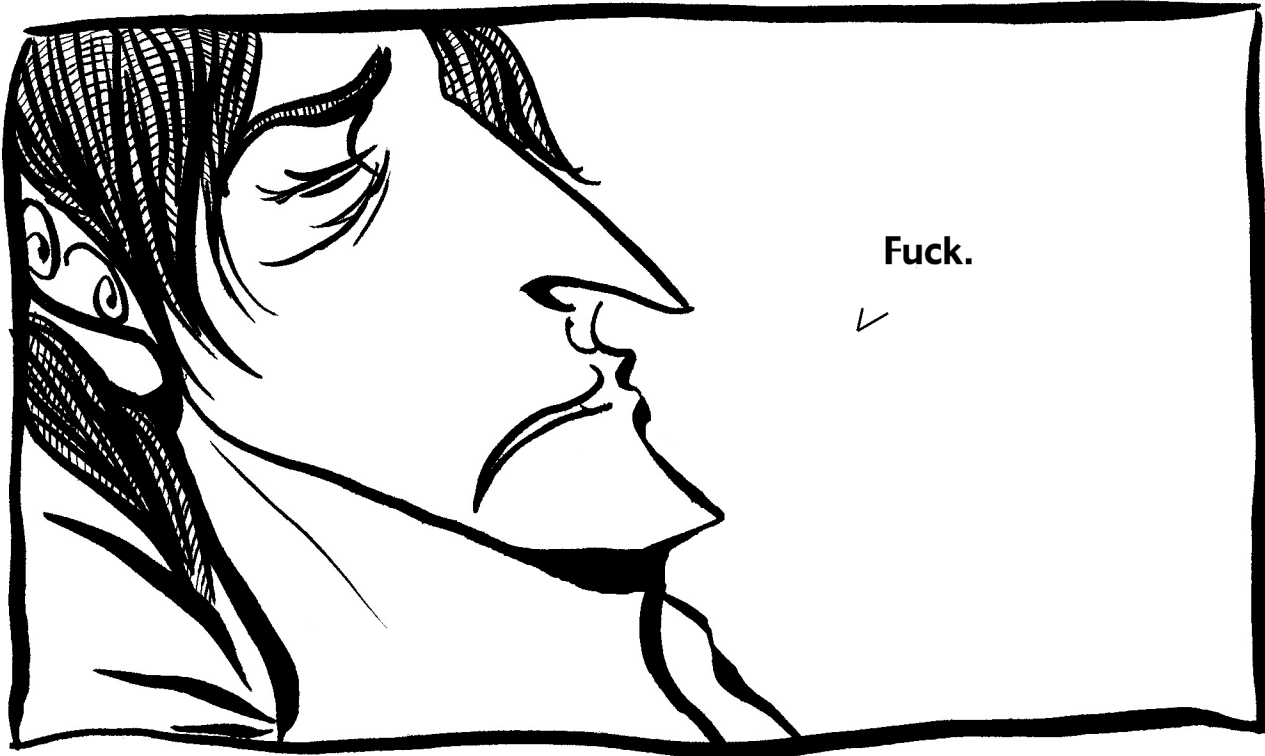
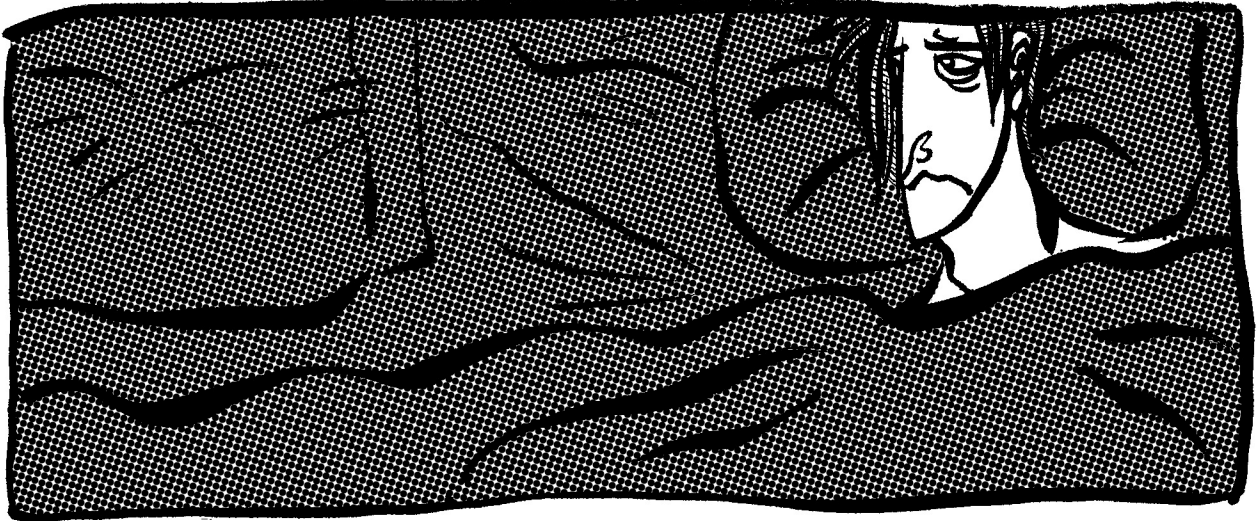
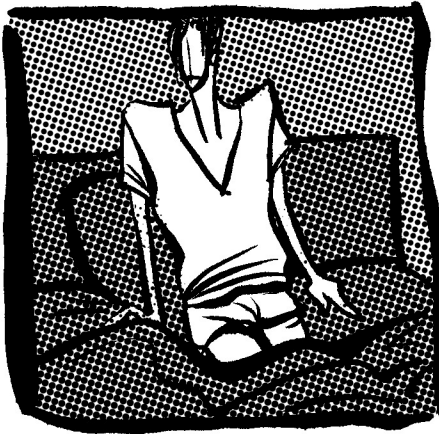


I give up. Don't  
expect to see  
me for awhile.

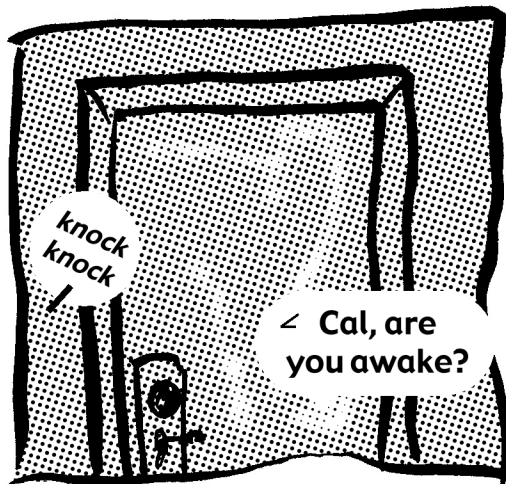


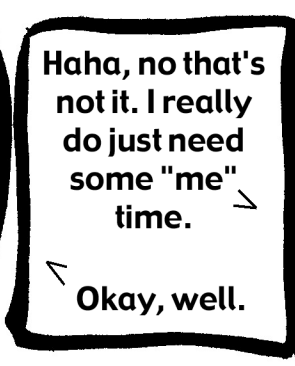
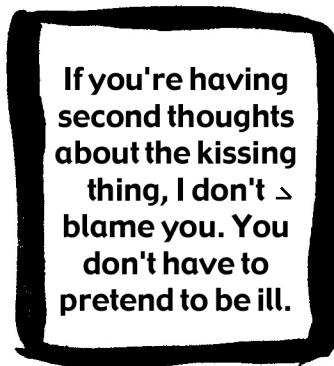
I'm just so >  
sick of you.

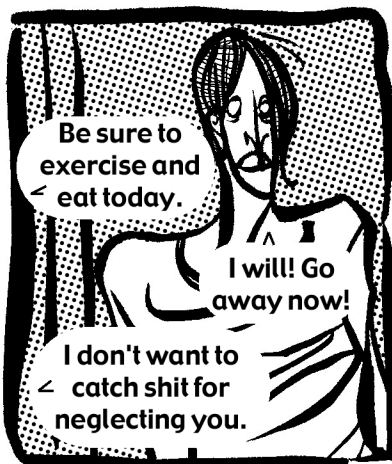








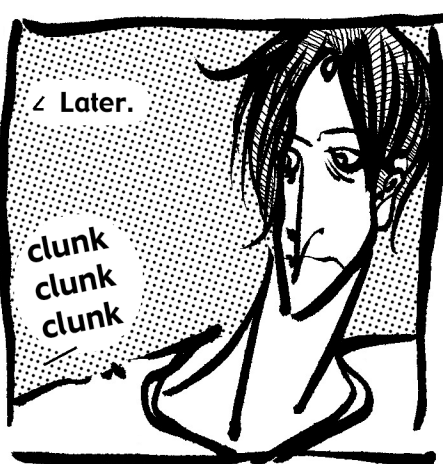




Be sure to exercise and eat today.

I will! Go away now!

I don't want to catch shit for neglecting you.

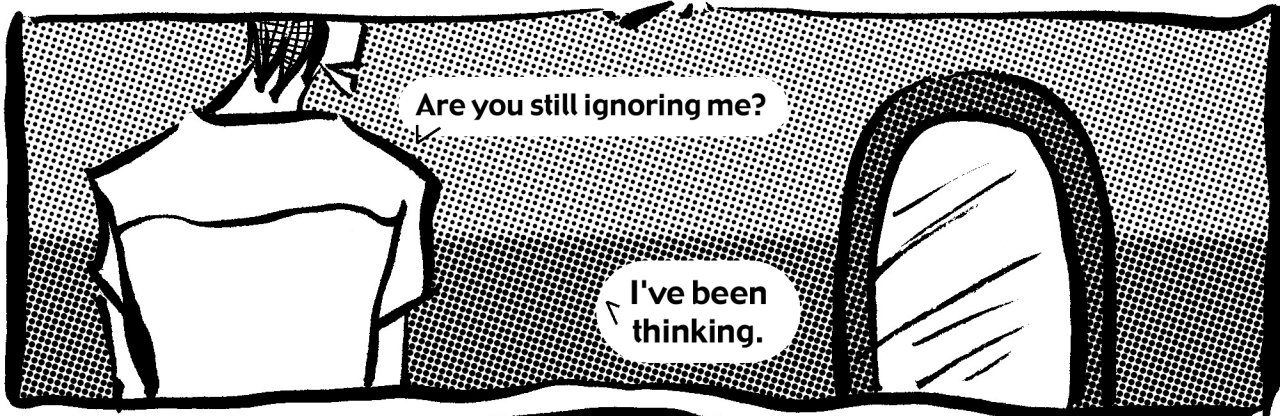


Later.

clunk  
clunk  
clunk

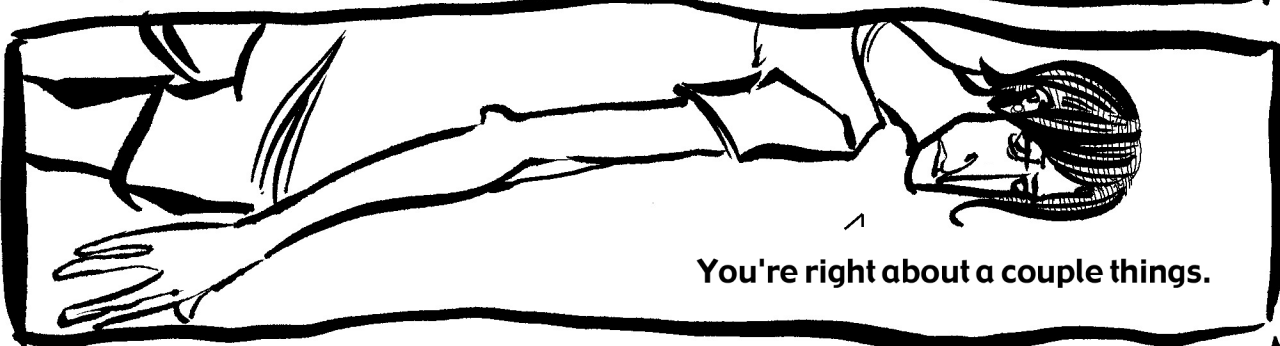


Unnh.



Are you still ignoring me?

I've been thinking.



You're right about a couple things.



The prospect of never making any new friends is disturbing.

I don't want to be all alone all the time, but I'm scared.

I have to figure this out.



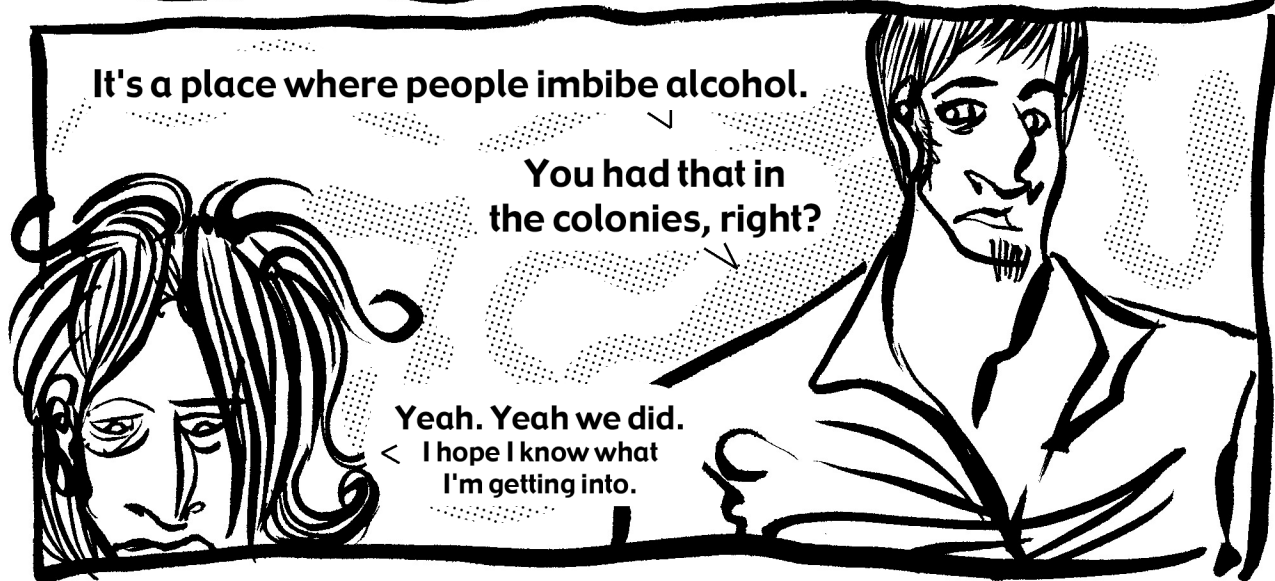
Any trouble getting here?

Nothing terrible.



Uh, Viv? What's this place? >

It's a bar.



It's a place where people imbibe alcohol.

You had that in the colonies, right?

Yeah. Yeah we did.  
< I hope I know what I'm getting into.



So alcohol still works on us even though we're living dead or whatever?



Sure. Your resistance might be different

but it works just fine. Let's sit in a booth.

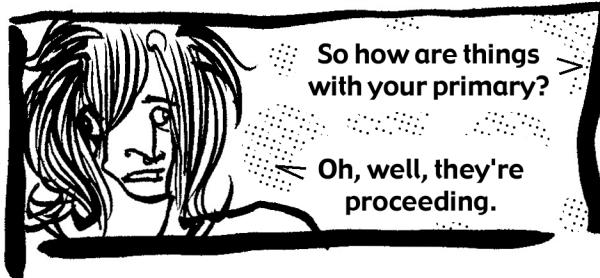
It's early yet.



Is it really okay to drink if women are joining us?

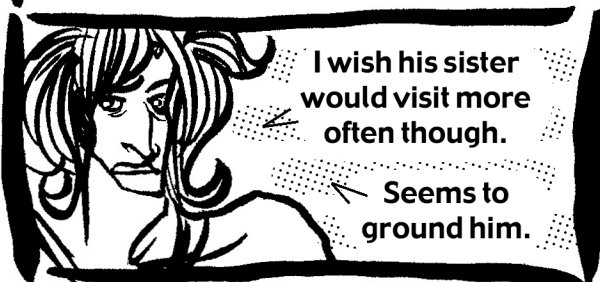
Haha, oh. You're serious. Yes, it's okay.

It's just a social thing.



So how are things with your primary?

Oh, well, they're proceeding.



I wish his sister would visit more often though.

Seems to ground him.



May is very busy, like we all are.

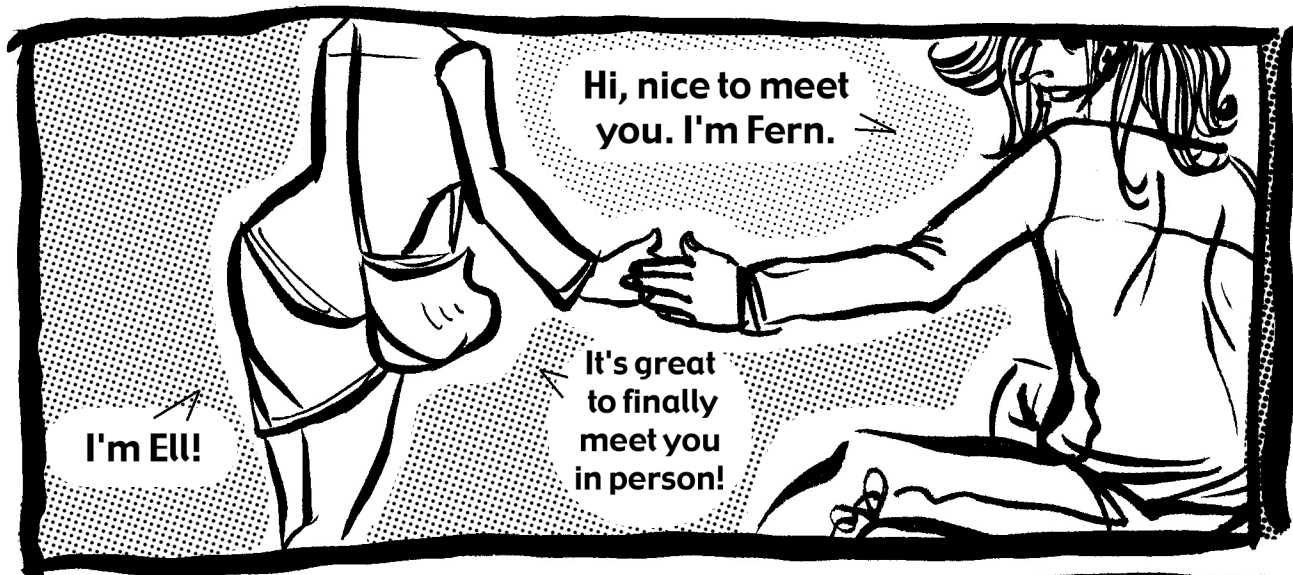
Haha, they don't make these booths for bulky southerners like me.



Hello!

We're here!





Hi, nice to meet  
you. I'm Fern.

I'm Ell!

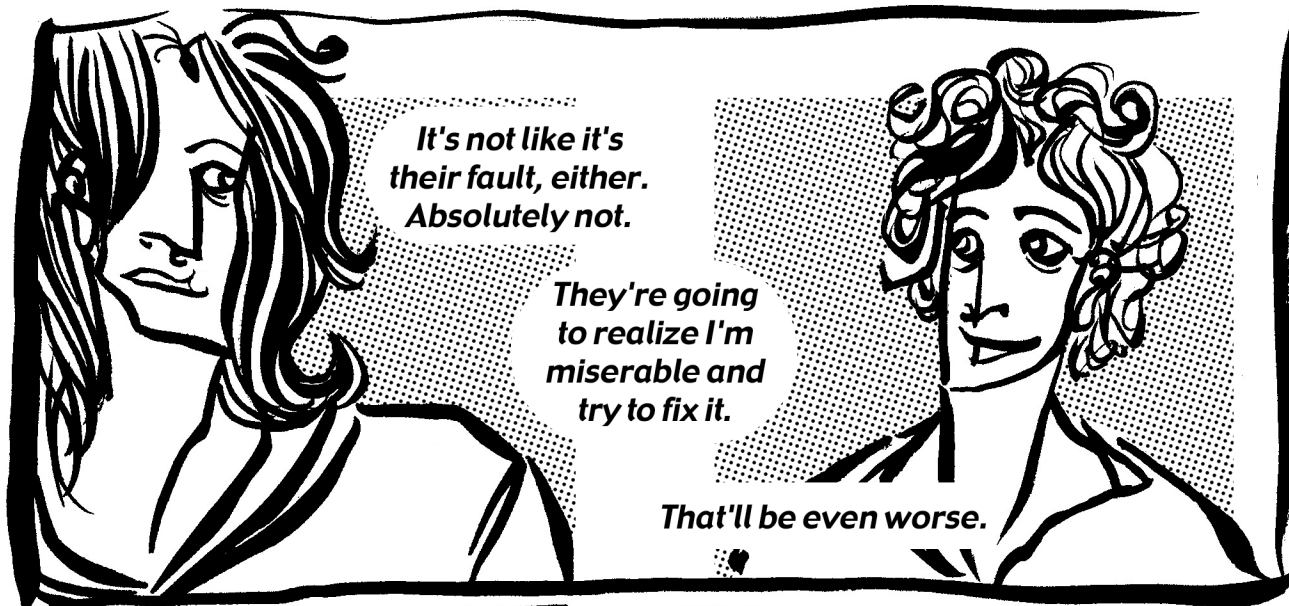
It's great  
to finally  
meet you  
in person!



And I'm  
Funa.

Sorry  
we're  
late.





It's not like it's  
their fault, either.  
Absolutely not.

They're going  
to realize I'm  
miserable and  
try to fix it.

That'll be even worse.



You'll have to  
excuse me a  
minute. √

I need to  
use the  
bathroom. >



Am I >  
freaking  
him out?

I wouldn't  
worry >  
about it.



I wonder if  
I was this fucked  
up when I was  
alive. Probably.



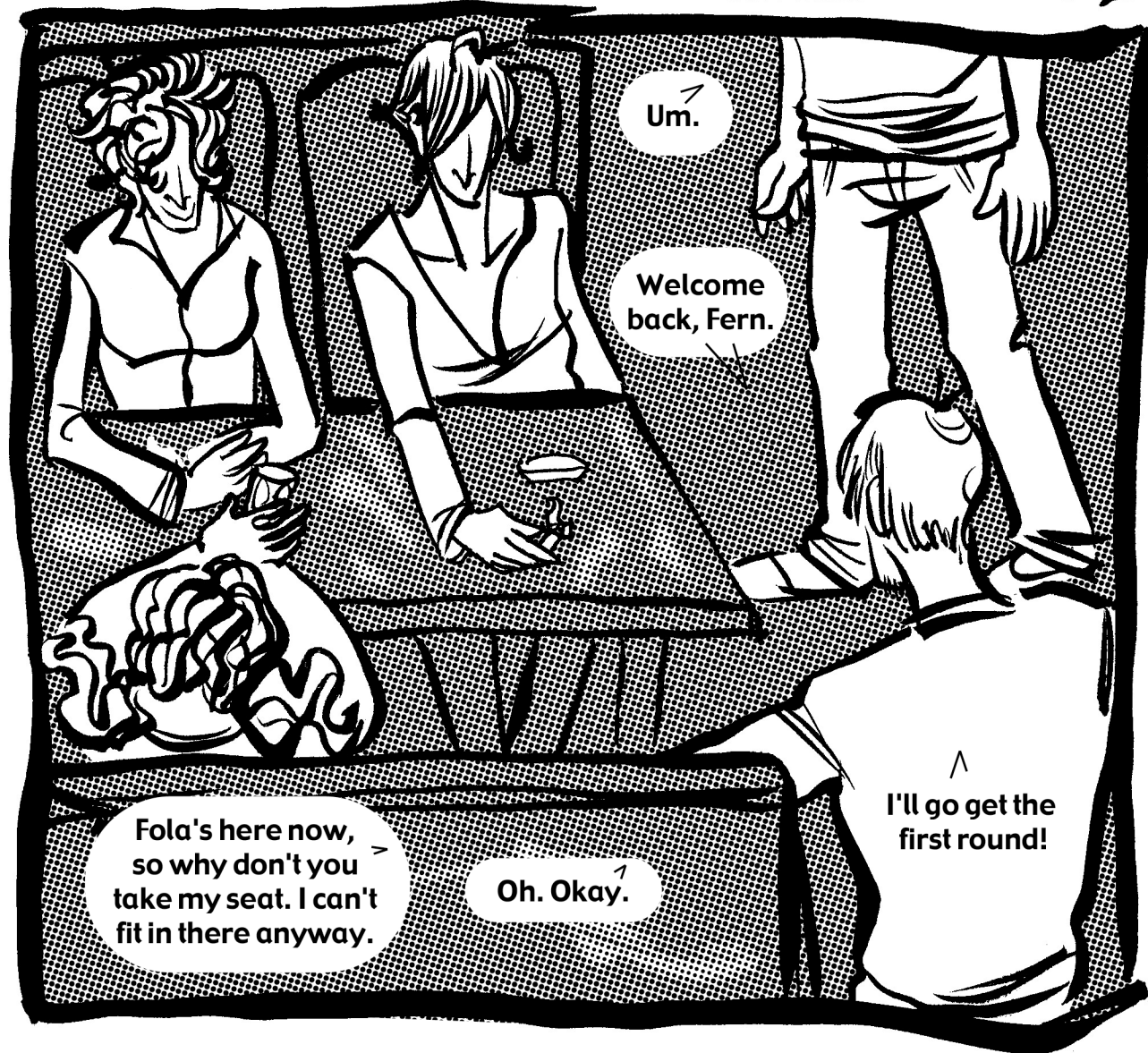
All right,  
I'm doing  
this. √



^ ...could at least smoke good cigarettes, Fola.

^ You can afford ones that don't smell like burning rubber.

Eh.  
v



Um.  
^

Welcome back, Fern.  
^

Fola's here now, so why don't you take my seat. I can't fit in there anyway.  
>

Oh. Okay.  
^

I'll go get the first round!  
^



Fern,  
meet Fola,  
elemental  
of air. ↘

↑  
Hey.



Wow.

↑  
You really  
are blue.



Thanks.

↑  
You really  
are a hick.



Haha  
ha!

Don't  
mind  
Fola.

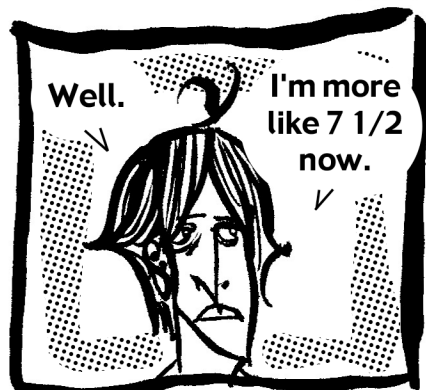
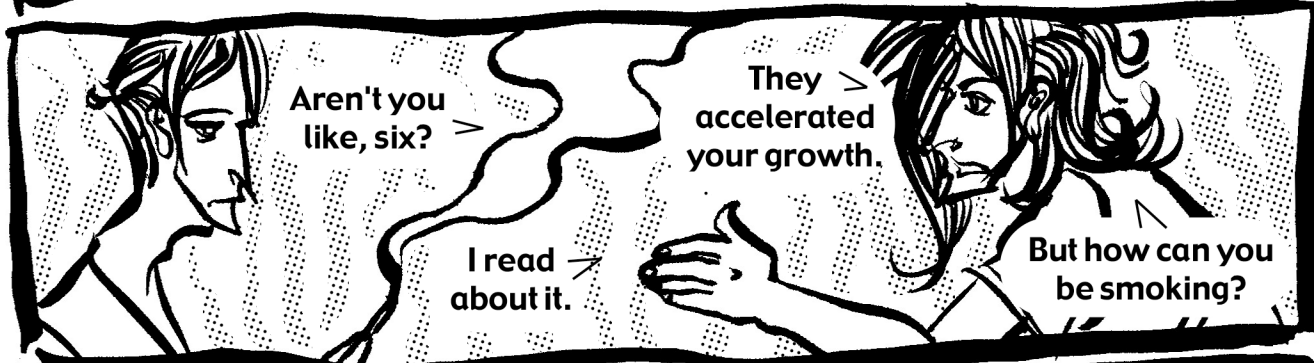
↑  
He's just.  
Honest.



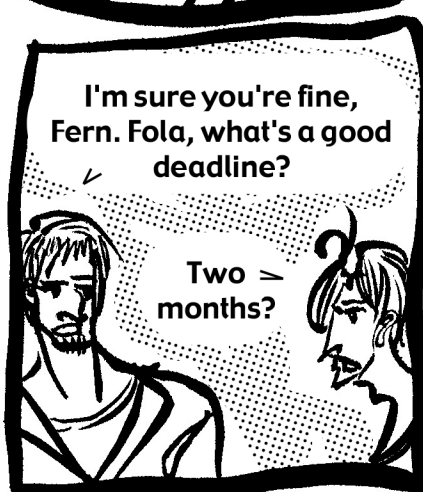
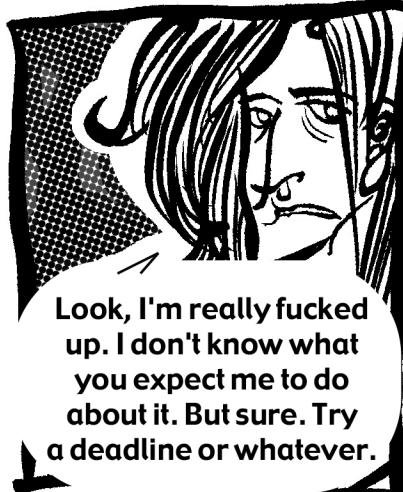
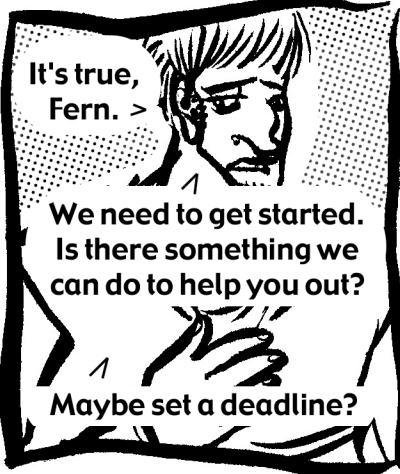
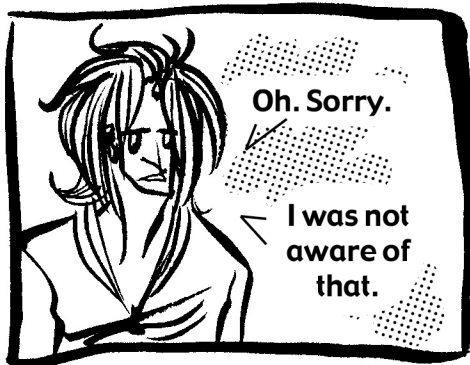
Drink up,  
everyone.  
I didn't  
know  
your  
preferences

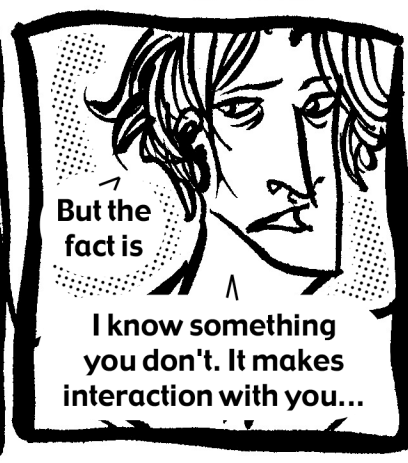
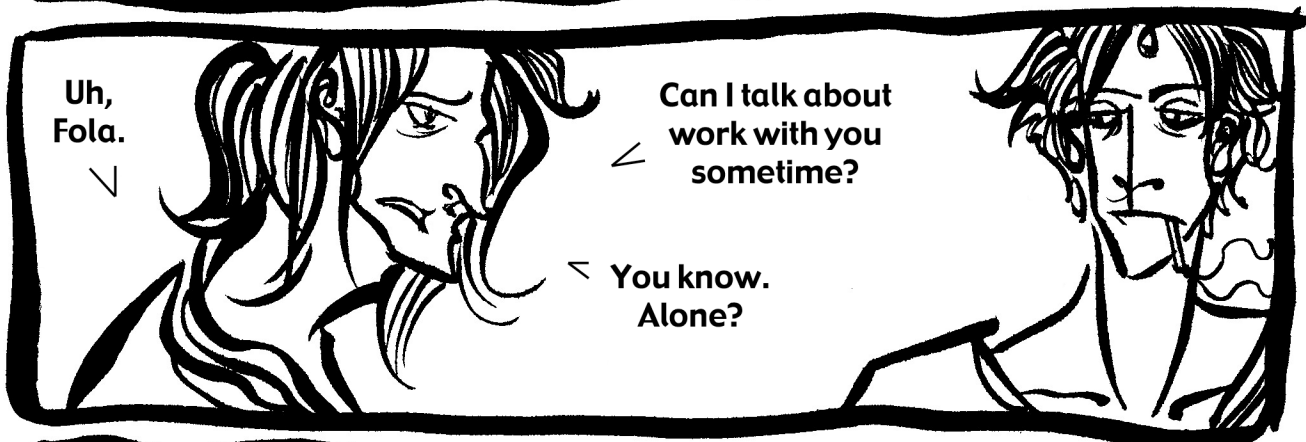
↑  
but we  
can order  
something  
different  
in the  
next  
round













My death?

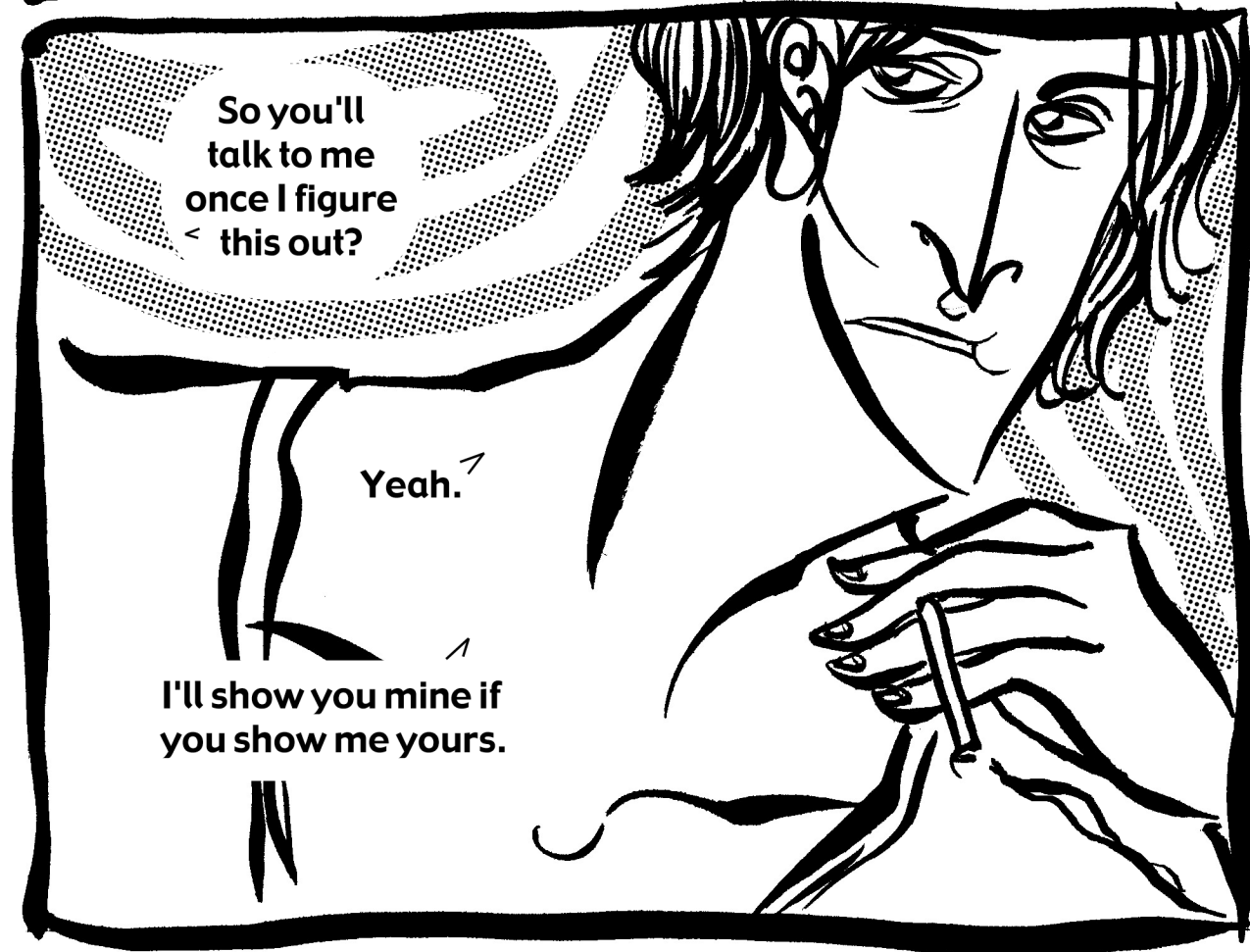
< Can't you  
just tell me?



No, I can't tell you.

I could get  
into trouble  
just suggesting  
you look into  
it. Don't tell  
< anyone I  
said this.

< Just...  
find out.

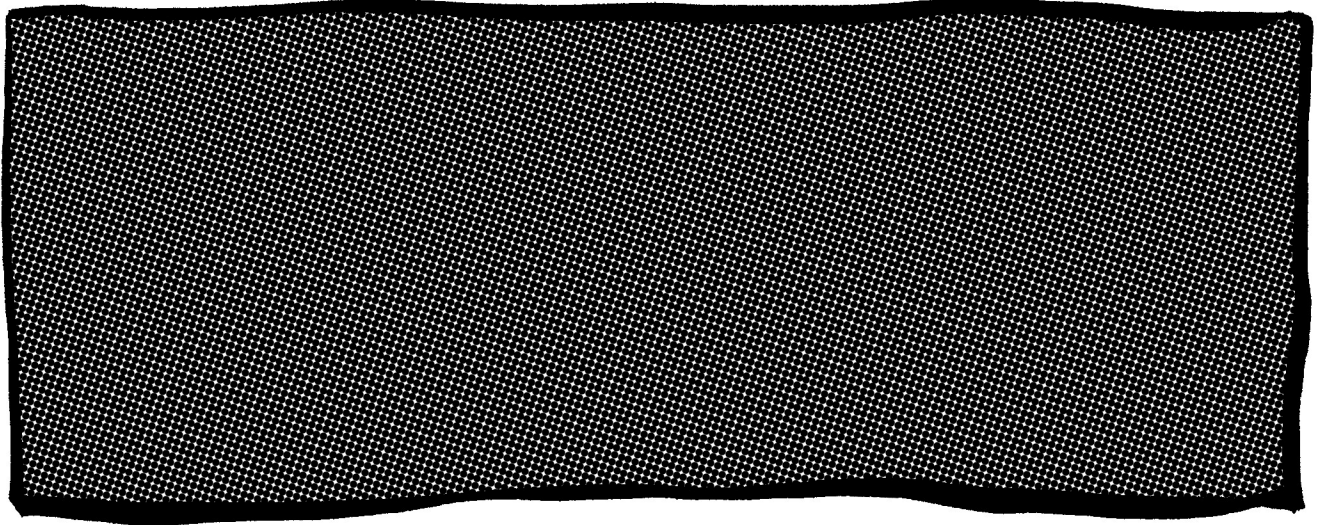


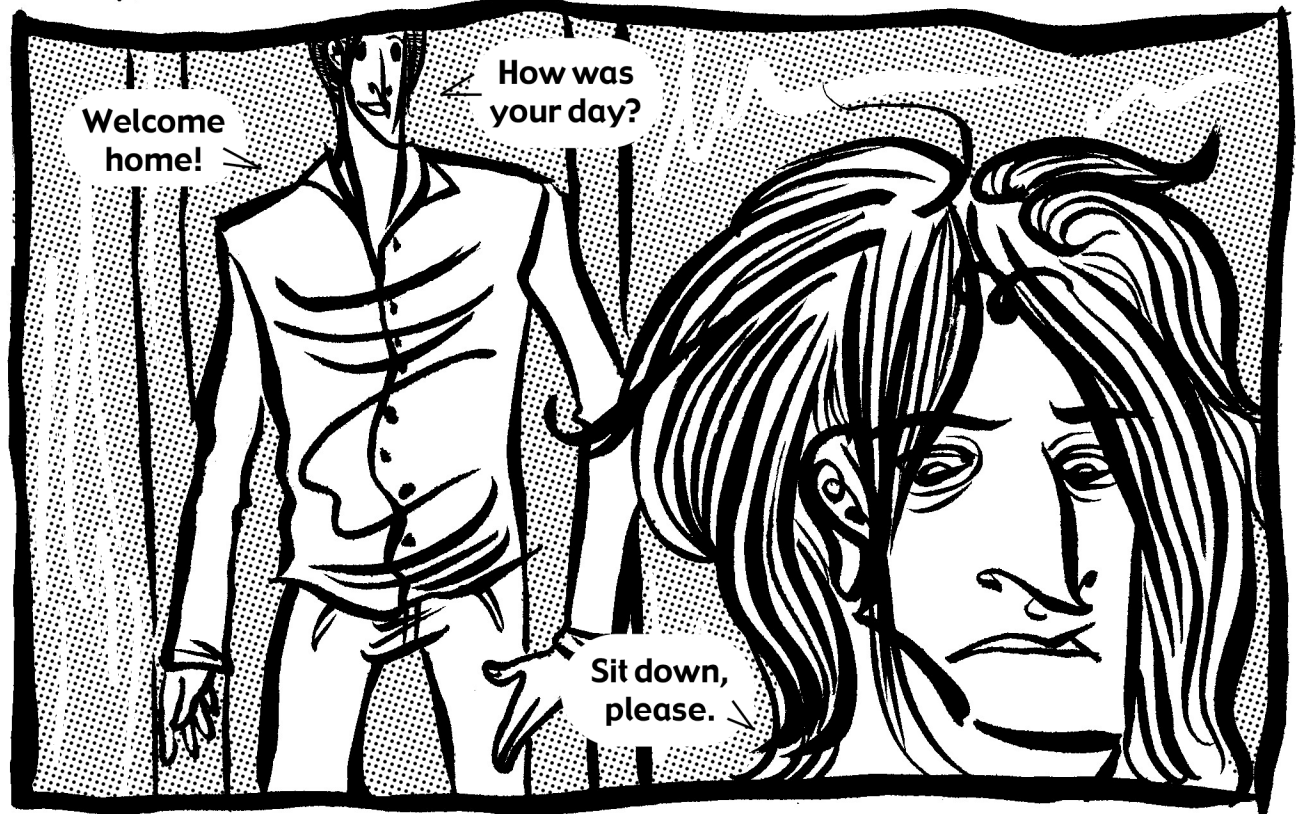
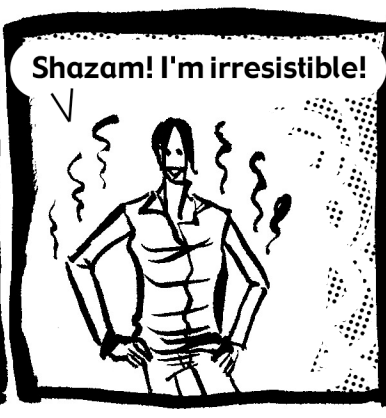
So you'll  
talk to me  
once I figure  
< this out?

Yeah.<sup>7</sup>

I'll show you mine if  
you show me yours.



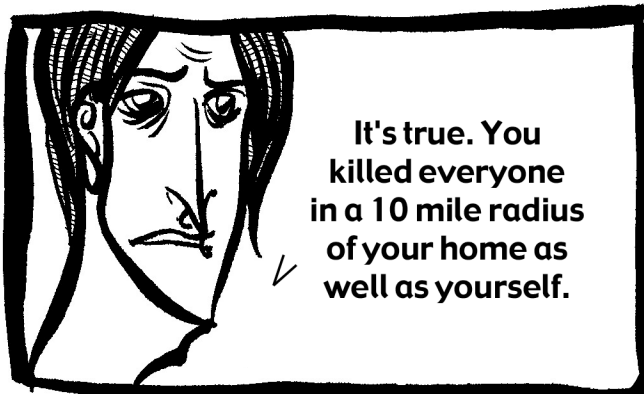






I found this in  
a garbage can.

Is it true?



It's true. You  
killed everyone  
in a 10 mile radius  
of your home as  
well as yourself.



I figured  
as much.

I understand why  
this was hidden  
from me. So let's  
put that aside  
immediately.



Though telling me that  
I would be reunited with  
my family once I was  
under control was...

Unnecessarily painful?

I know.  
That was wrong.  
I'm sorry.



It's just. It was the  
only thing that seemed  
to motivate you at all.



The media's  
convinced I did it  
on purpose.

Did I?  
I don't remember.

No, it  
was an  
accident.




Accident or not,  
I'm sure you have  
a punishment in  
store for me,  
right?

Punishment?

We're not punishing you.



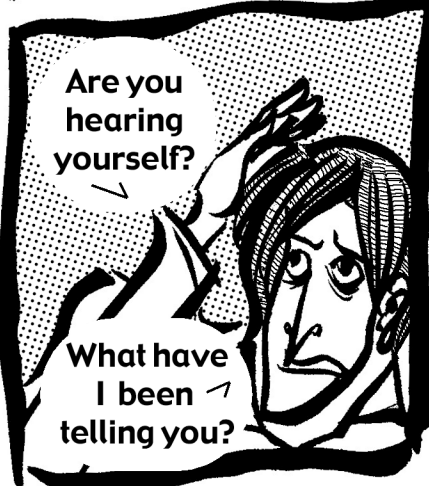
What do you mean,  
you're not punishing me?



I KILLED  
MORE THAN  
A HUNDRED  
PEOPLE!

I'M NOT SOME  
STUPID, CRAZY  
MONSTER LIKE  
YOU ARE!

I NEED JUSTICE!  
CONSEQUENCES!



Are you  
hearing  
yourself?

What have  
I been  
telling you?



You're an  
elemental.

Justice is a  
mortal luxury.



I'm  
death. >

I'm responsible  
for everything  
that has ever  
died. >



But all of the elementals kill. >

< All?

Certainly. Dehydration, drownings? Viv.  
Suffocation? Hurricanes? Fola. >  
Earthquakes? Landslides? Funa. >

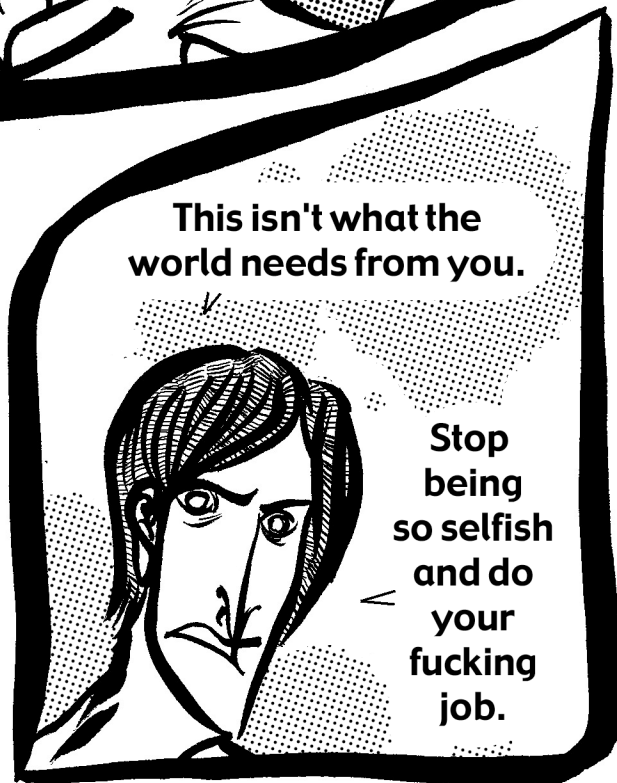
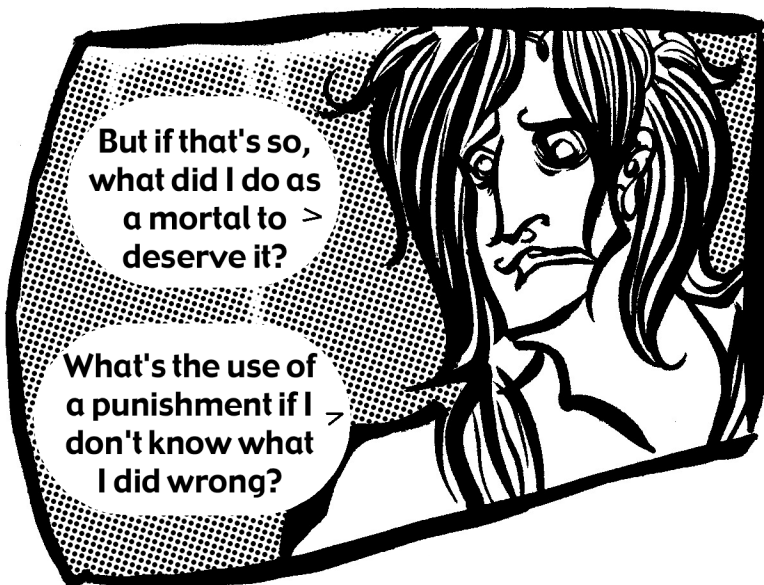
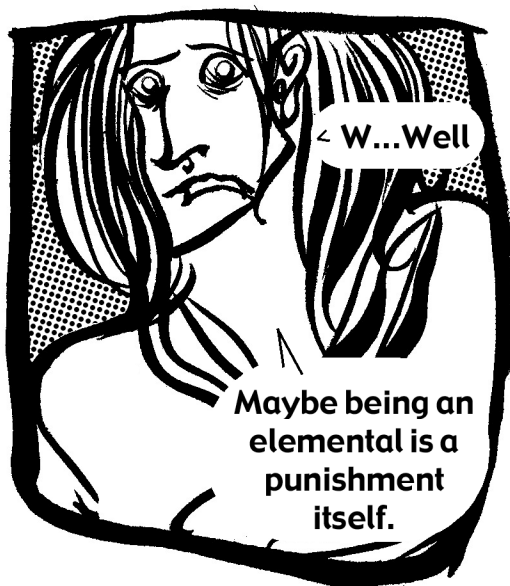
Dying of old age? Ell. >

Even Lem, who made life  
possible in the first place,  
slaughters entire ecosystems.  
An insect swarm he created  
devoured the crops of Viv's  
people and they all starved. >



Mortals  
are for  
dying.









Another successfully completed issue of Grayling. Thank you for reading this far! This issue was pretty difficult for me to finish. I apologize for the delay.

This issue is dedicated to Alex, who helped me out in a big way when I really needed it!

Things are getting a little more melodramatic as more and more information comes to light. The next issue is going to be about a lot of things: food, depression, and finding new sides to Cal. I've been really looking forward to drawing the scenes in this one. Hopefully you enjoy it too!

There have been a few continuity errors in Grayling so far, but mostly they've been pretty amusing. I couldn't make myself pick the sleeve style on Fern's hooded shirt in this issue, so he got both short and long sleeves! I fixed it in the most obvious panels, but you can go and pick out where I kept switching back and forth. Officially, the sleeves are long, and Fern just rolls them up between panels... That's the story, & I'm sticking to it!

Someone found a far bigger boo-boo in the first issue that I have fixed for future printings. It was a really tiny but significant one...if you can find it, write to me and have a guess, if you get it right, I'll draw you a gift!

Feel free to write me anytime to tell me your thoughts on Grayling. I always enjoy hearing from you!

arborwin@yahoo.com

So long for now –  
Arby

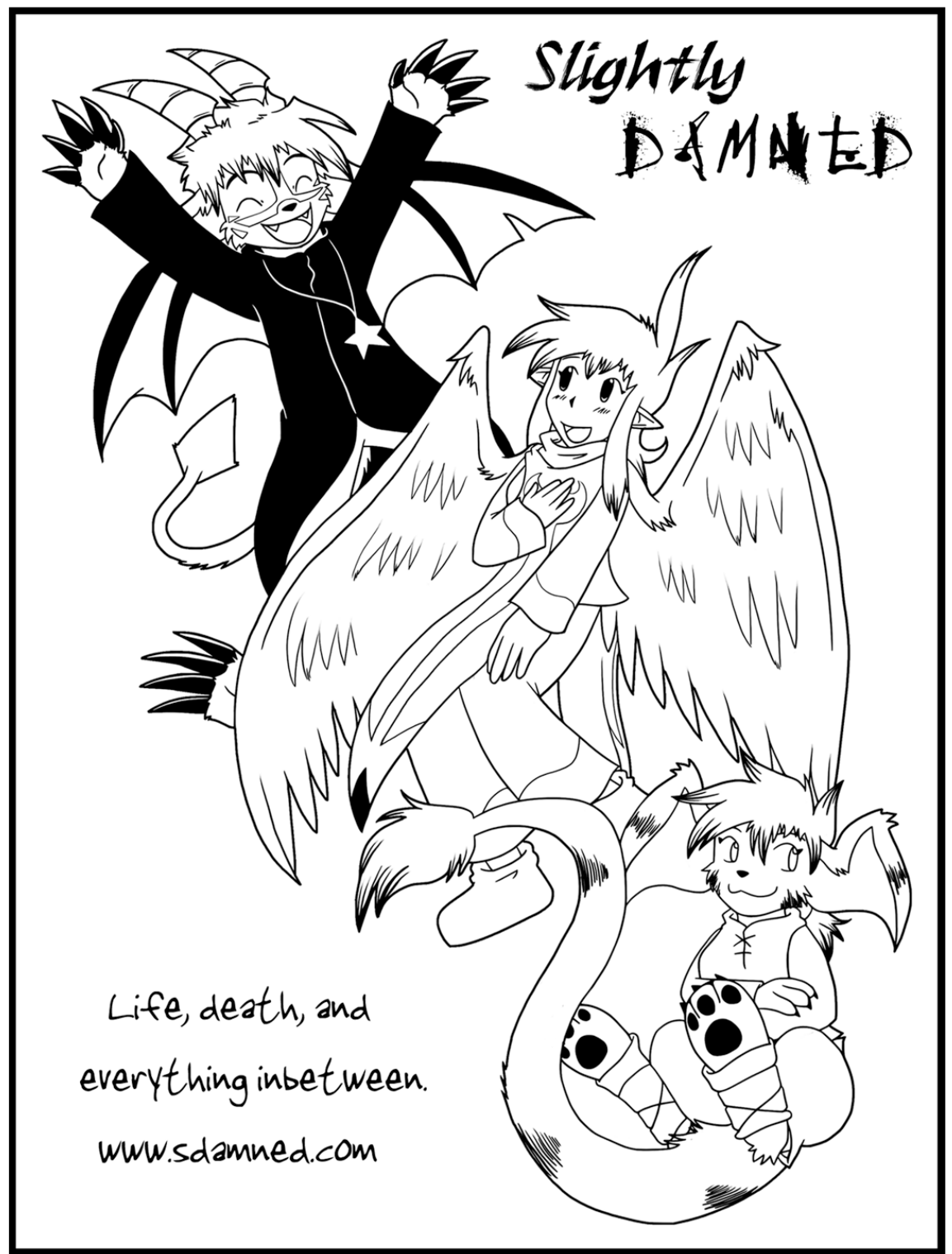
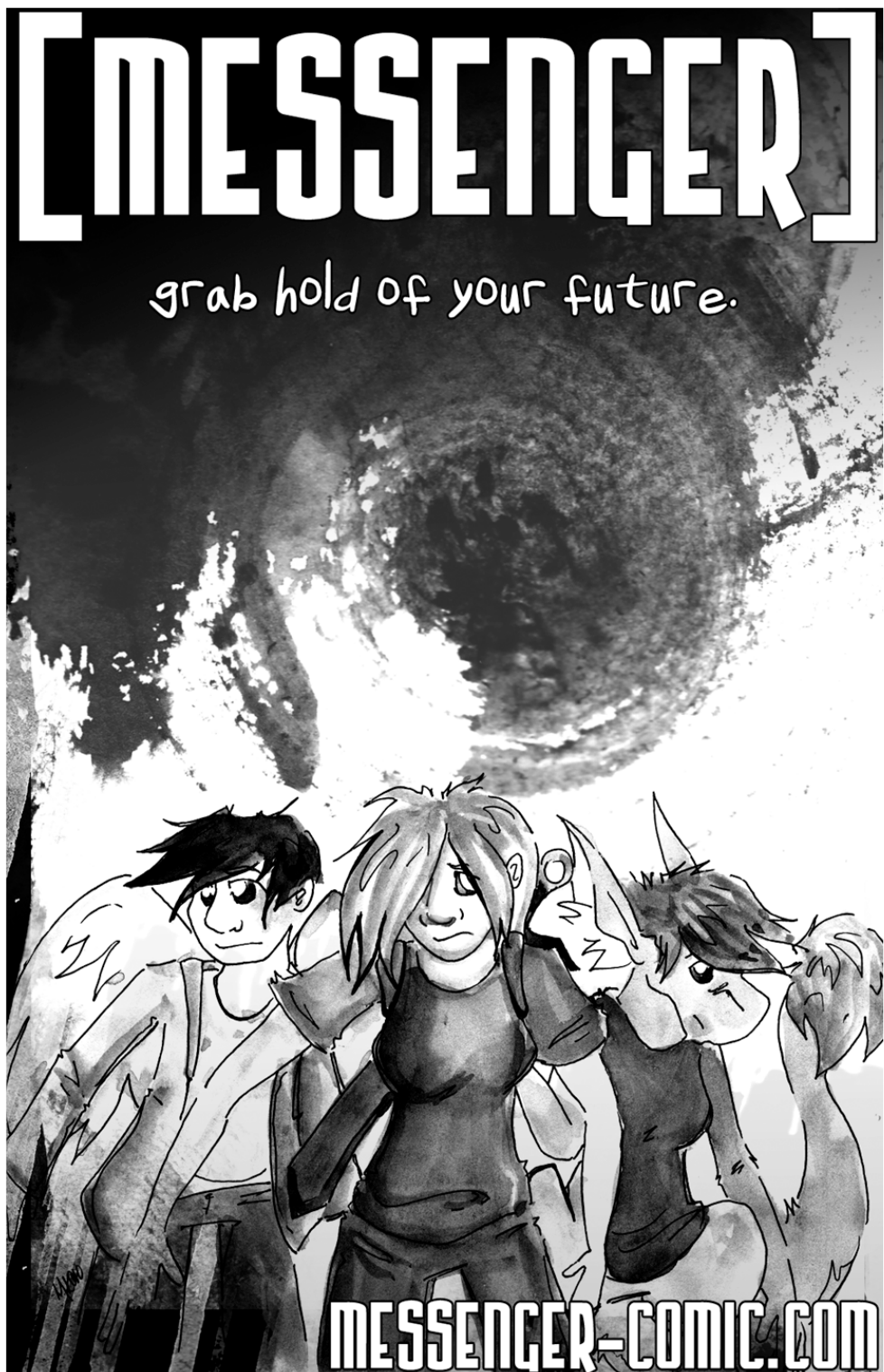


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these other  
great web  
comics!



A