

GRAYLING



Issue 1

by
Arborwin

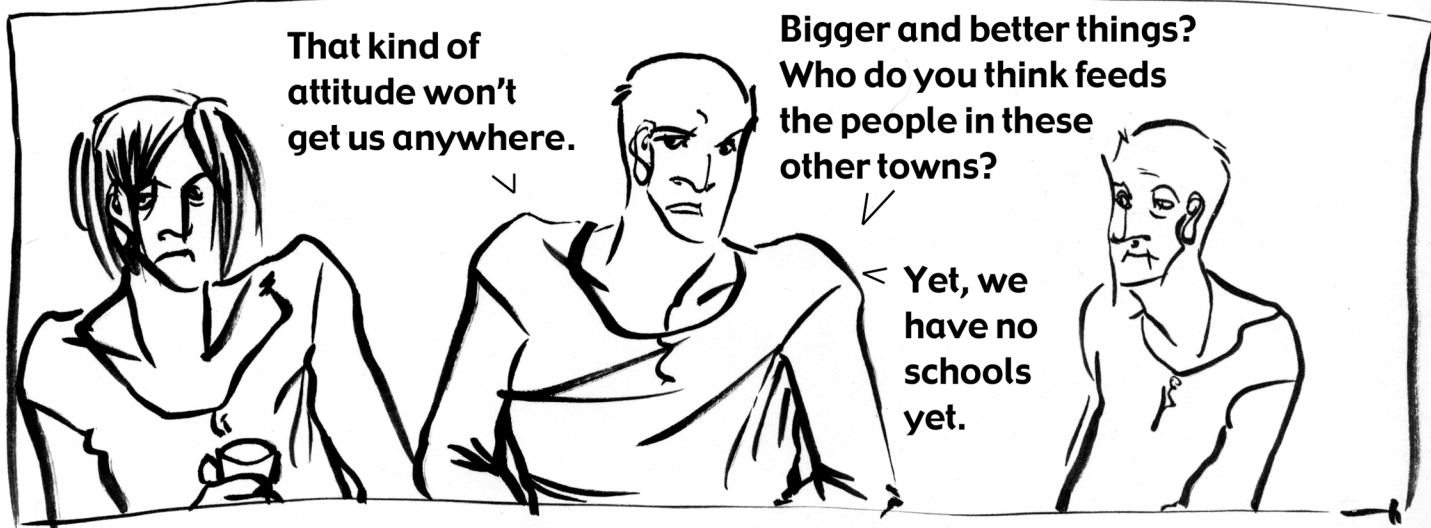
Here's my question.
What's the point of a
society where everyone
has the same face?



Isn't it obvious? Our town
was just a practice
run for Lemanerial.

He's moving on to bigger
and better things.





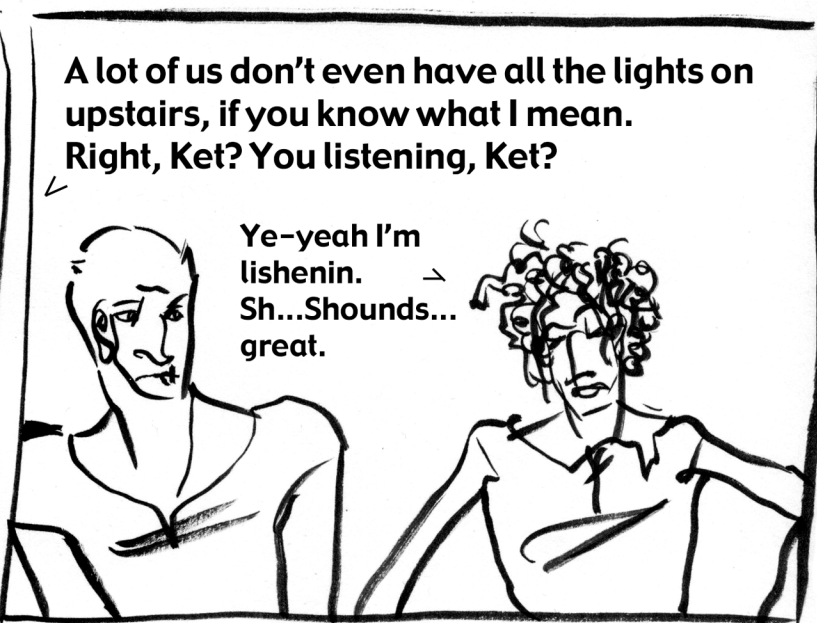
That kind of attitude won't get us anywhere.

Bigger and better things? Who do you think feeds the people in these other towns?

Yet, we have no schools yet.



Larson, you don't even know what a school is. It's just some big word that sounds nice.



A lot of us don't even have all the lights on upstairs, if you know what I mean. Right, Ket? You listening, Ket?

Ye-yeah I'm lishenin. Sh...Shounds... great.



We are still the oldest established farm community in Faidia. We provide the food Lemanerial's civilization needs to succeed.

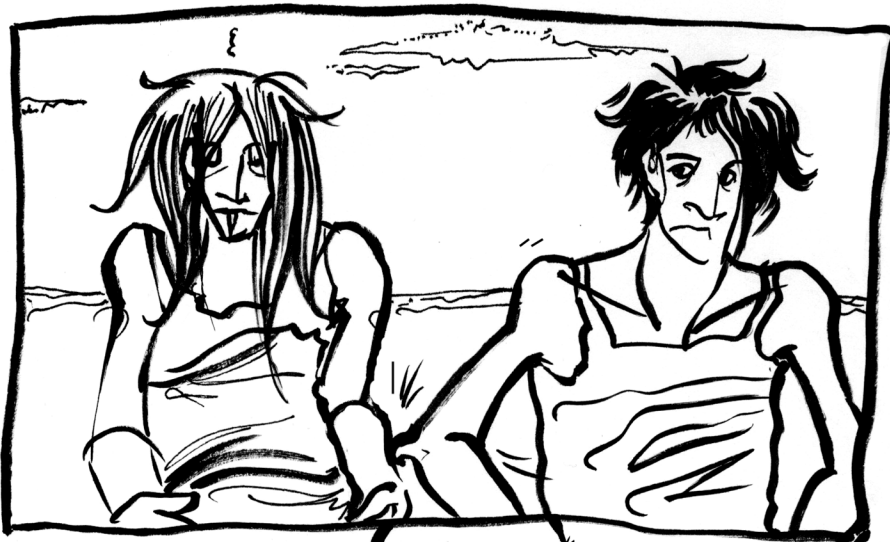
All we need to do is show a little initiative.

Lemanerial respects that. How hard could it be?



Speaking of which...

Is Buck awake?



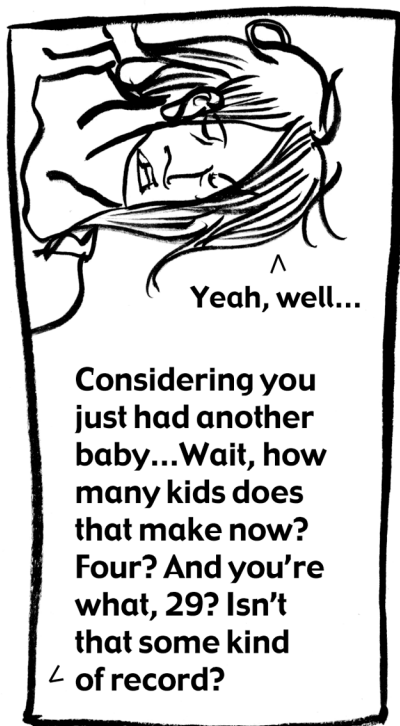
Eh? What?

I swear, you only ever come to meetings for the booze, Buck.



There was a time where I thought you took this place seriously, Buck.

What happened to that time?



Yeah, well...

Considering you just had another baby... Wait, how many kids does that make now? Four? And you're what, 29? Isn't that some kind of record?



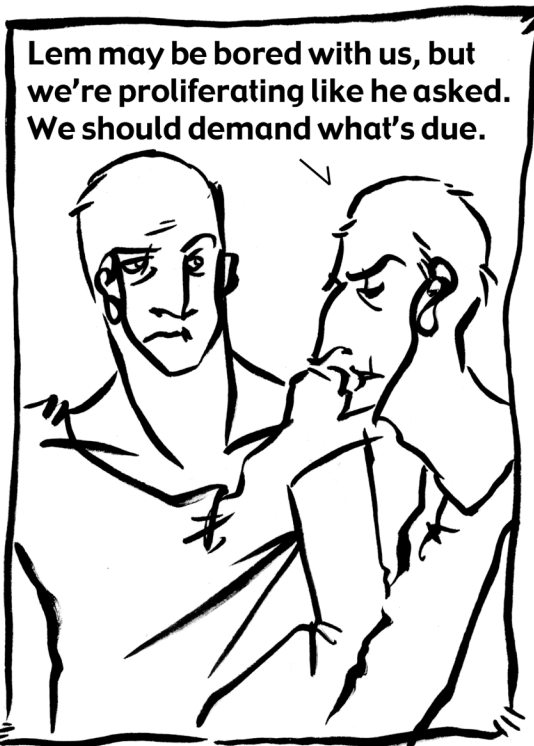
At least we know you're good at something.

heh heh



Good one, Clango.

Hah!

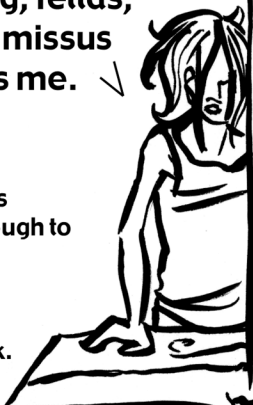


Lem may be bored with us, but we're proliferating like he asked. We should demand what's due.

Yeah, well, great
meeting, fellas,
but the missus
expects me. ✓

That means
he had enough to
drink. ✓

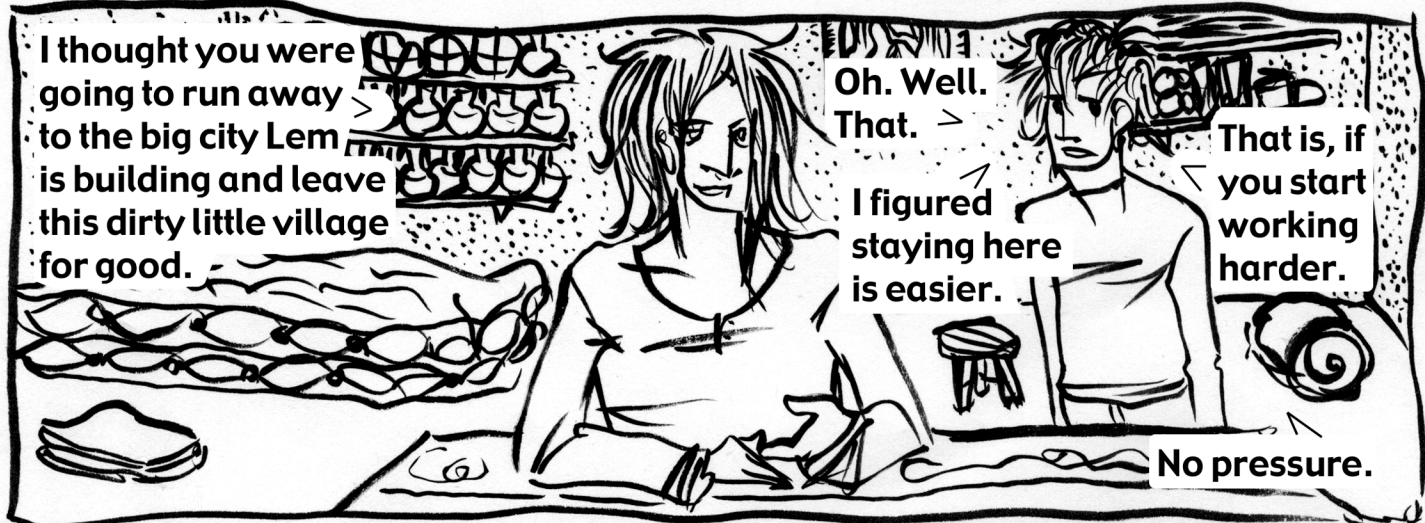
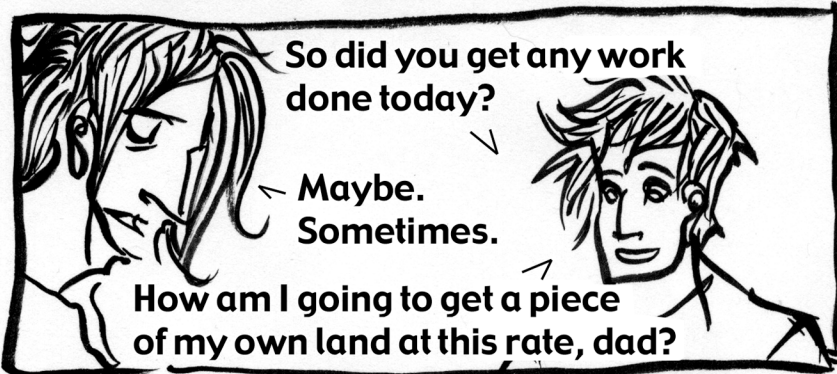
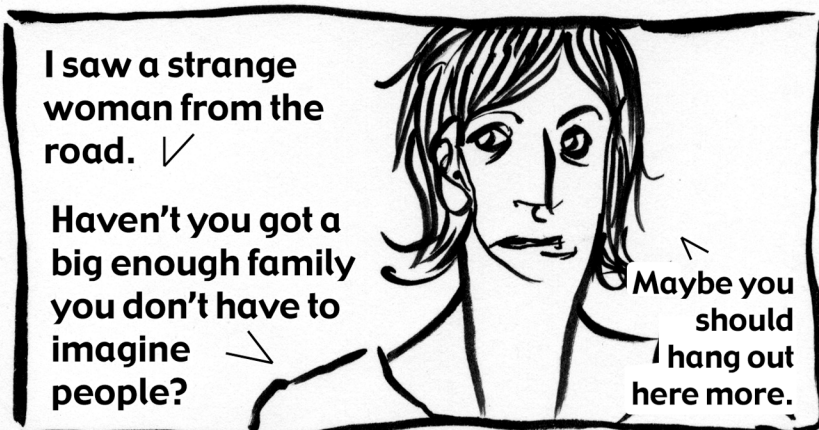
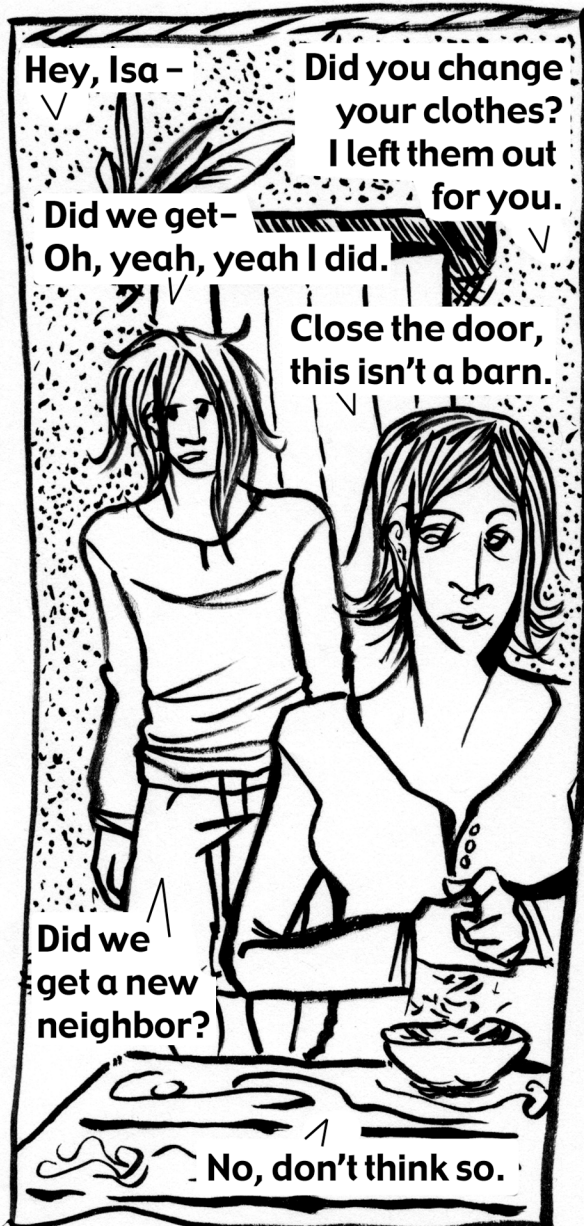
Later, Buck. ✓



7
Hello?

Miss? Are
you all right?







It may not make a difference.

All the village council can talk about anymore is what they can or can't extort Lem for.



Extort Lem? What are you talking about?

Hi. Sorry we're late.

Hello, girls. Wash up, dinner's ready soon.

Good grief, what'd you do to Kay?



Buck?

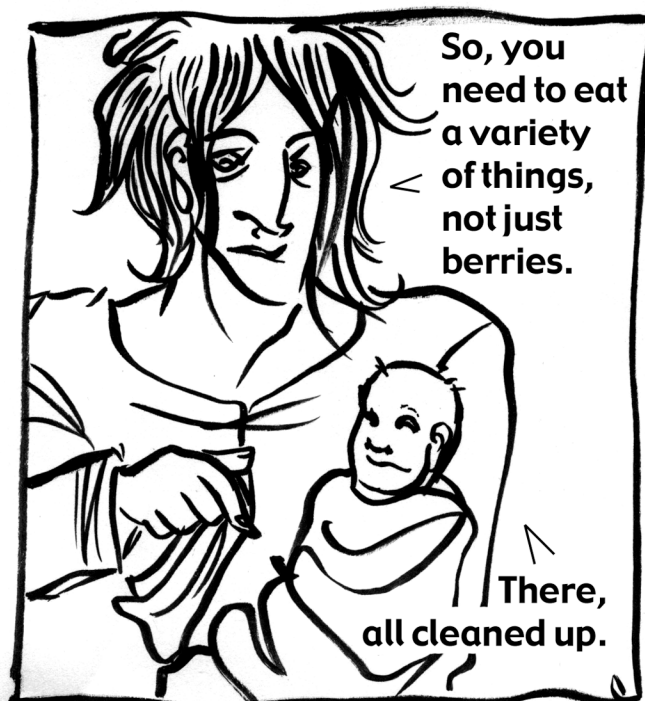
Buck, what do you mean, extort Lem?

What a mess.

It's just berry juice, dad. We went picking.

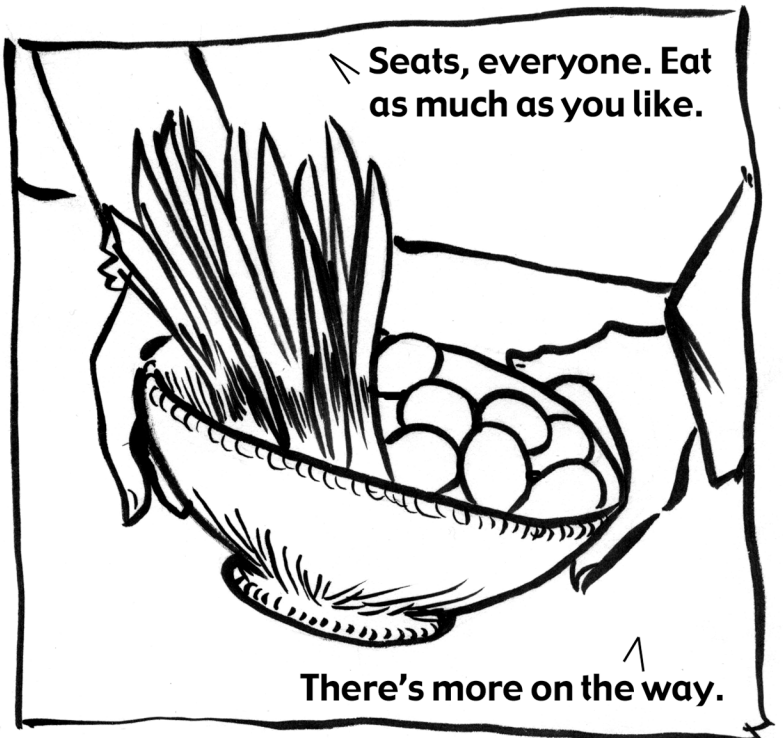
You're going to spoil your appetites.

So?



So, you need to eat a variety of things, not just berries.

There, all cleaned up.



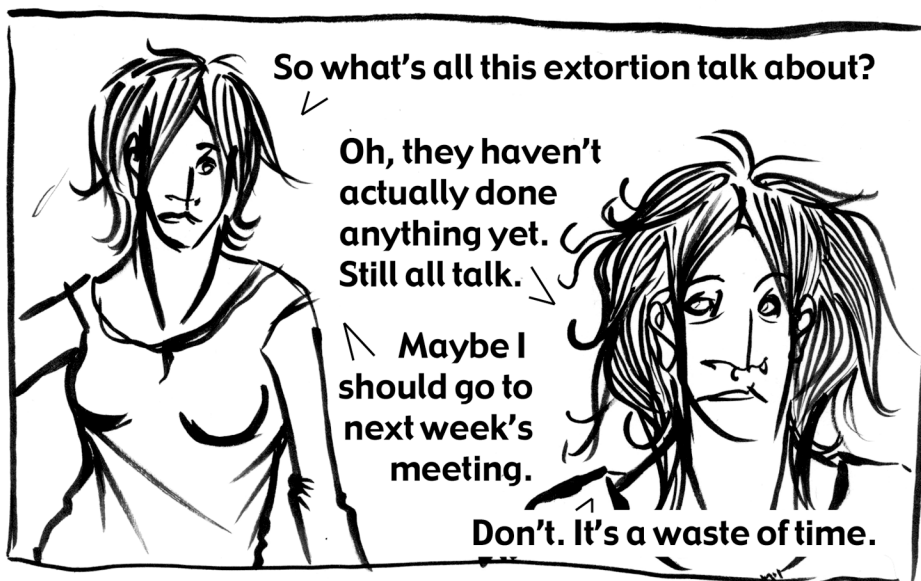
Seats, everyone. Eat as much as you like.

There's more on the way.



They're all
in bed,
finally.

Ah.



So what's all this extortion talk about?

Oh, they haven't
actually done
anything yet.
Still all talk.

Maybe I
should go to
next week's
meeting.

Don't. It's a waste of time.



I suppose.

Unless I start drinking that
smelly stuff like you do.



Definitely don't do that.

Buck, you
have
gotten so
strange
lately—

I'm sorry. I've been doing it too much. It's
not harmless like everyone thought. It's just.



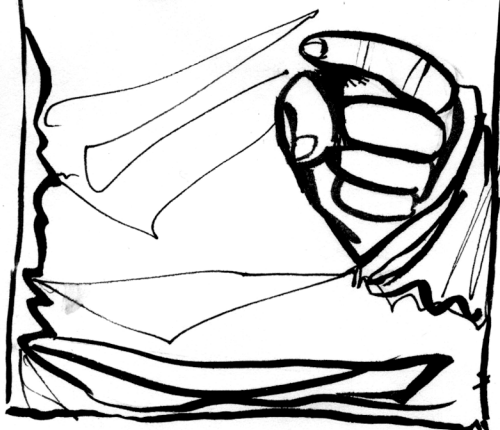
I've been
feeling sick.
The drink
helps.
Sometimes.

What kind of sick?

I have this weird dream.

I have the feeling
there's a door, or a window,
behind me, and something
is coming through it. For me.

It doesn't sound important
when I say it out loud. But
it gives me this horrible
dread. I can't shake it.



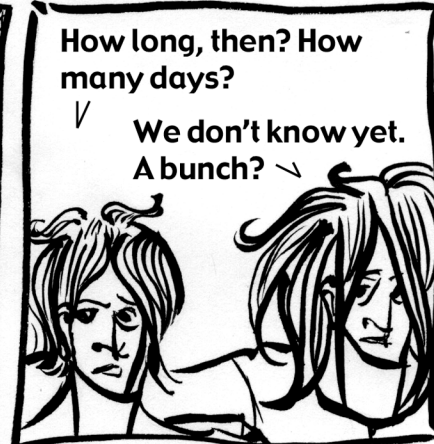
Does this have
to do with the
death rumor?

That's not a
rumor now.
Lem sent a
message
awhile ago.
We're all
going to
die eventually,
like the crops
sometimes do.



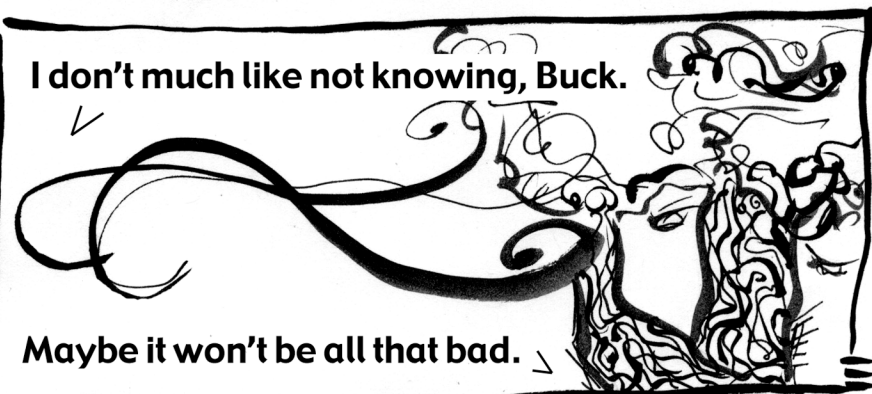
Even the
children?

Yeah. But not
for awhile yet.



How long, then? How
many days?

We don't know yet.
A bunch?

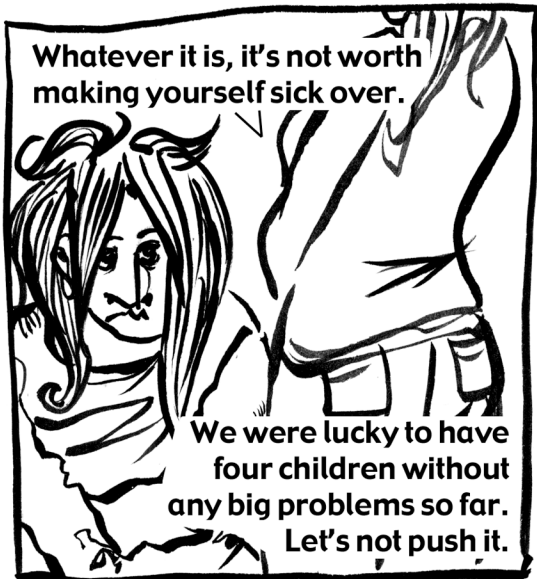


I don't much like not knowing, Buck.

Maybe it won't be all that bad.

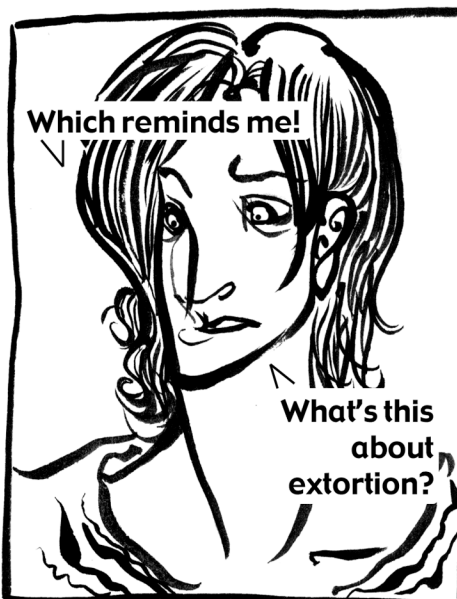
But what happens to dead things?
Where do they go?

I guess they go where
they were before they
even existed. That
makes sense, right?



Whatever it is, it's not worth making yourself sick over.

We were lucky to have four children without any big problems so far. Let's not push it.



Which reminds me!

What's this about extortion?

Apparently we have nothing better to do as a society but whine about some ideas Lem threw around years ago.

Ask him for a school, and probably make a fuss about how we want all the things the newer colonies are getting.



Now that they know crops can die, they want other forms of guarantees. New equipment, new seed lines, and so on.

Why do they expect so much? Lem was the first to admit that he didn't know what our lives were going to be like.

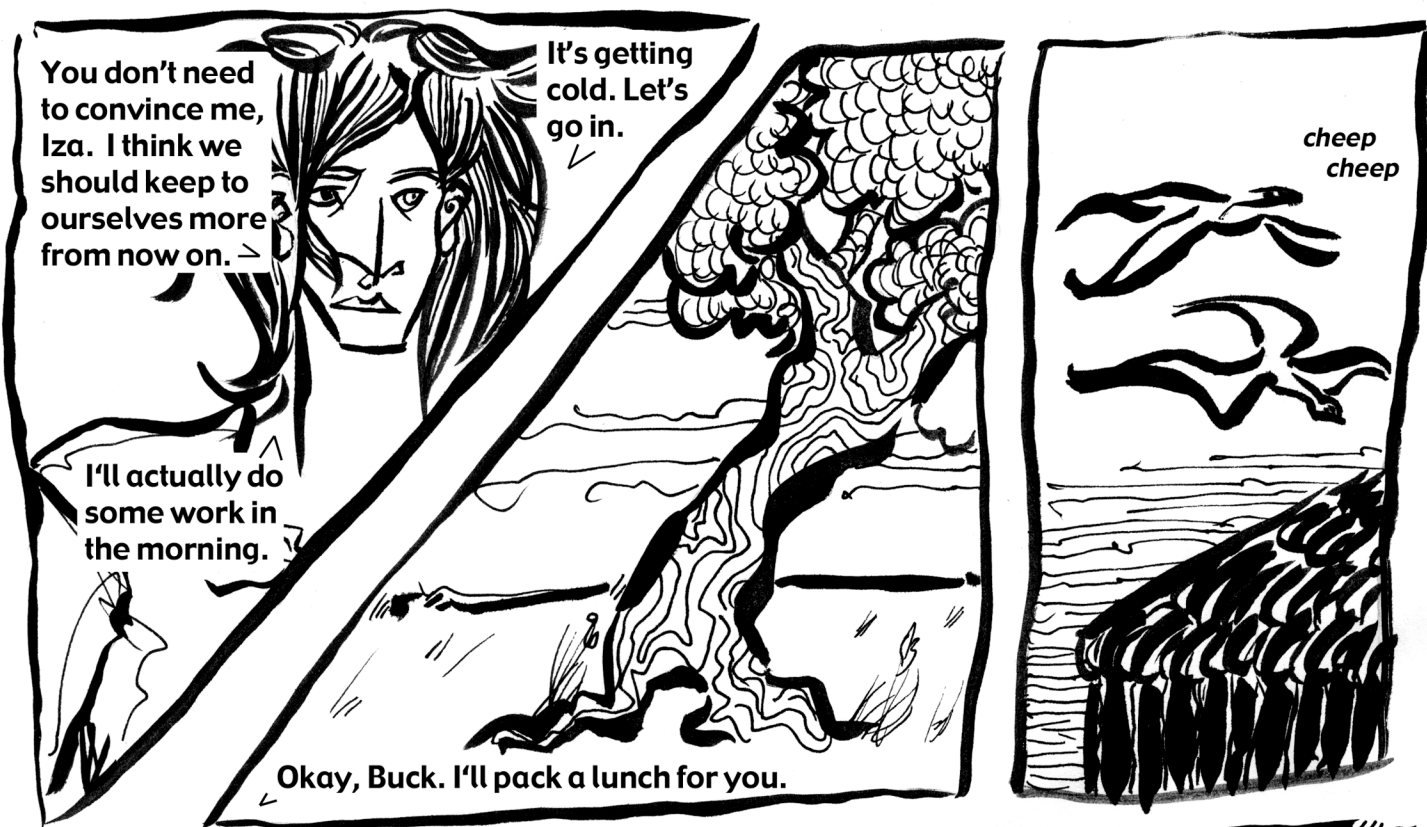
When he was still around, it was as much a learning experience for him as it was for us.



They're just envying the other colonies.

Lem is not going to appreciate that. It's going to reflect poorly on the entire colony.

If we expect our own children to leave home when they reach a certain age, shouldn't we expect the same of ourselves?



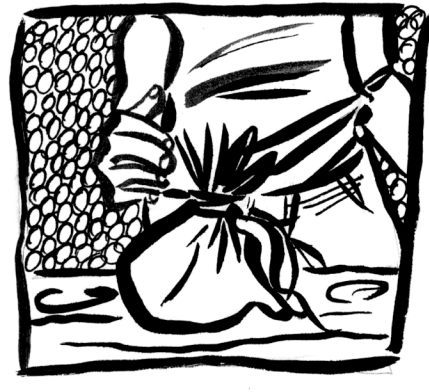
You don't need to convince me, Iza. I think we should keep to ourselves more from now on.

It's getting cold. Let's go in.

cheep
cheep

I'll actually do some work in the morning.

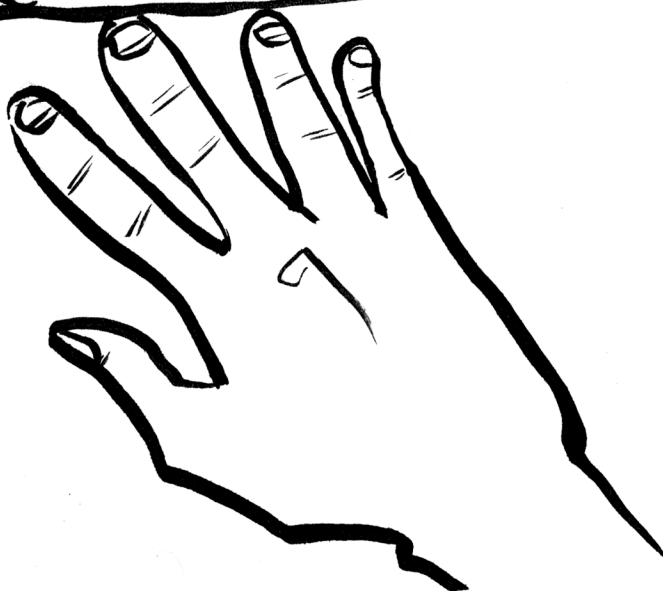
Okay, Buck. I'll pack a lunch for you.





I'm not running away this time.

Hey, lady!





Look, I don't know who you are, but leave me alone, okay?

It is *you* who should leave *me* alone.



What..?

You have been drawing power that does not belong to you.



But I don't have any magic.

You must be looking for someone else.

I have the same face as about a hundred other people.



I'm incapable of mistakes.

It's you.

Normally, I would kill you.

But since this is the first time anyone has stolen power from me, I am willing to give you a chance.

Come with me, and I will teach you how to use your skills.

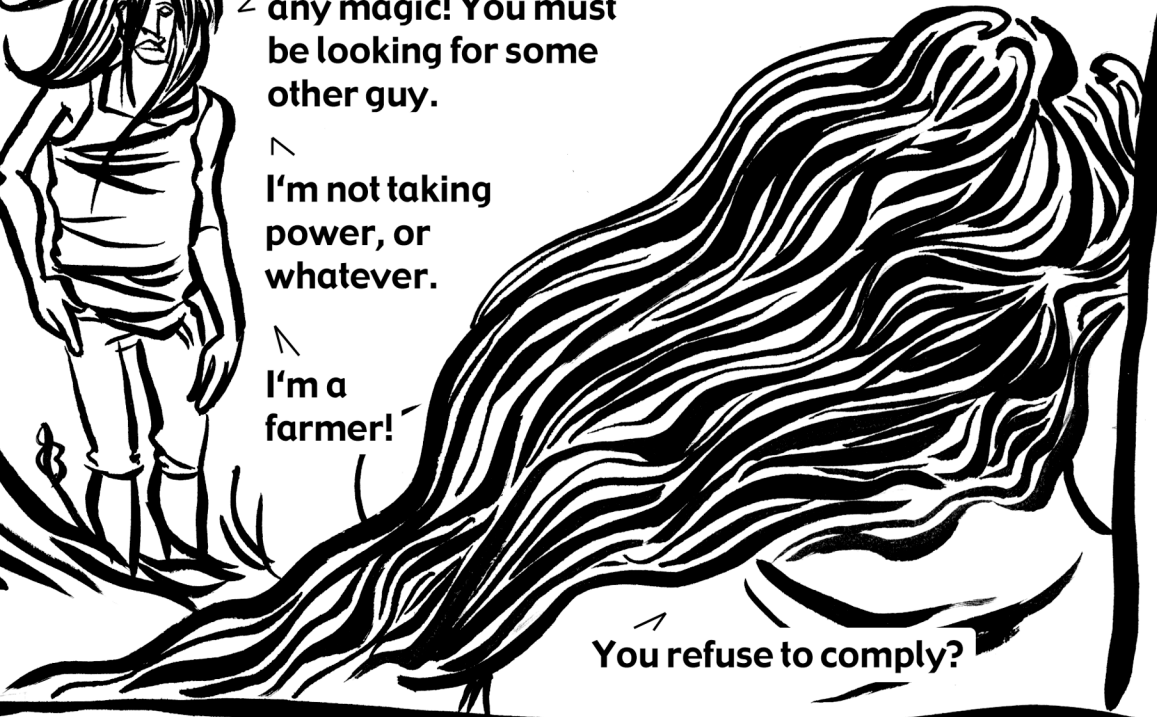
But this
is crazy!



It's not me! I don't have
any magic! You must
be looking for some
other guy.

I'm not taking
power, or
whatever.

I'm a
farmer!



You refuse to comply?



If you do not comply,
you will regret it.

I couldn't comply
if I wanted to.
I'm not the guy
you're looking
for. I'm going
home now.
I hope you find
the guy. Bye.



What was that?

An elemental?

What the hell was that?



This is bad



It can't be

This is just another dream



Huh?



I'm

burning?



It has to be
a dream

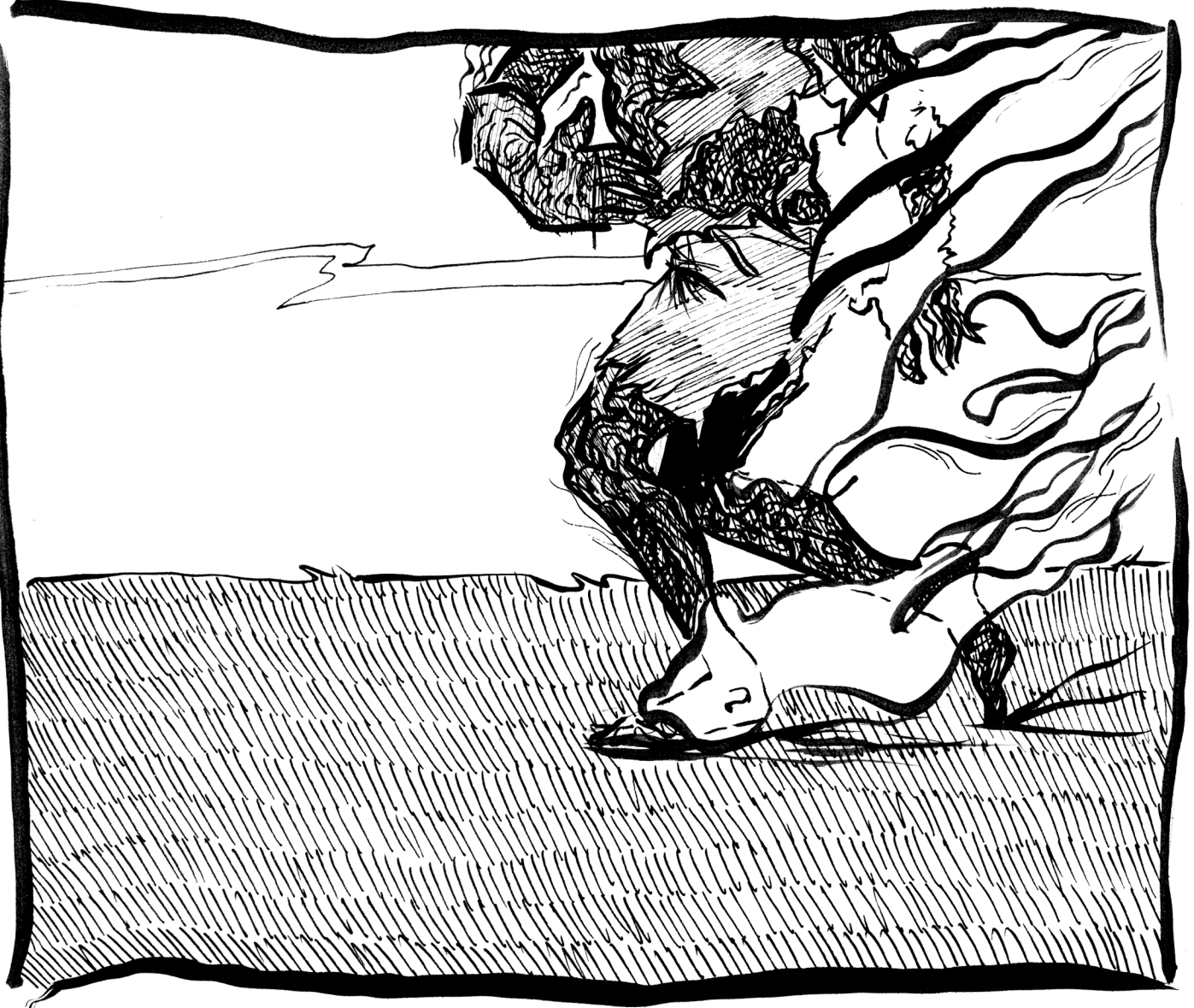
It doesn't hurt

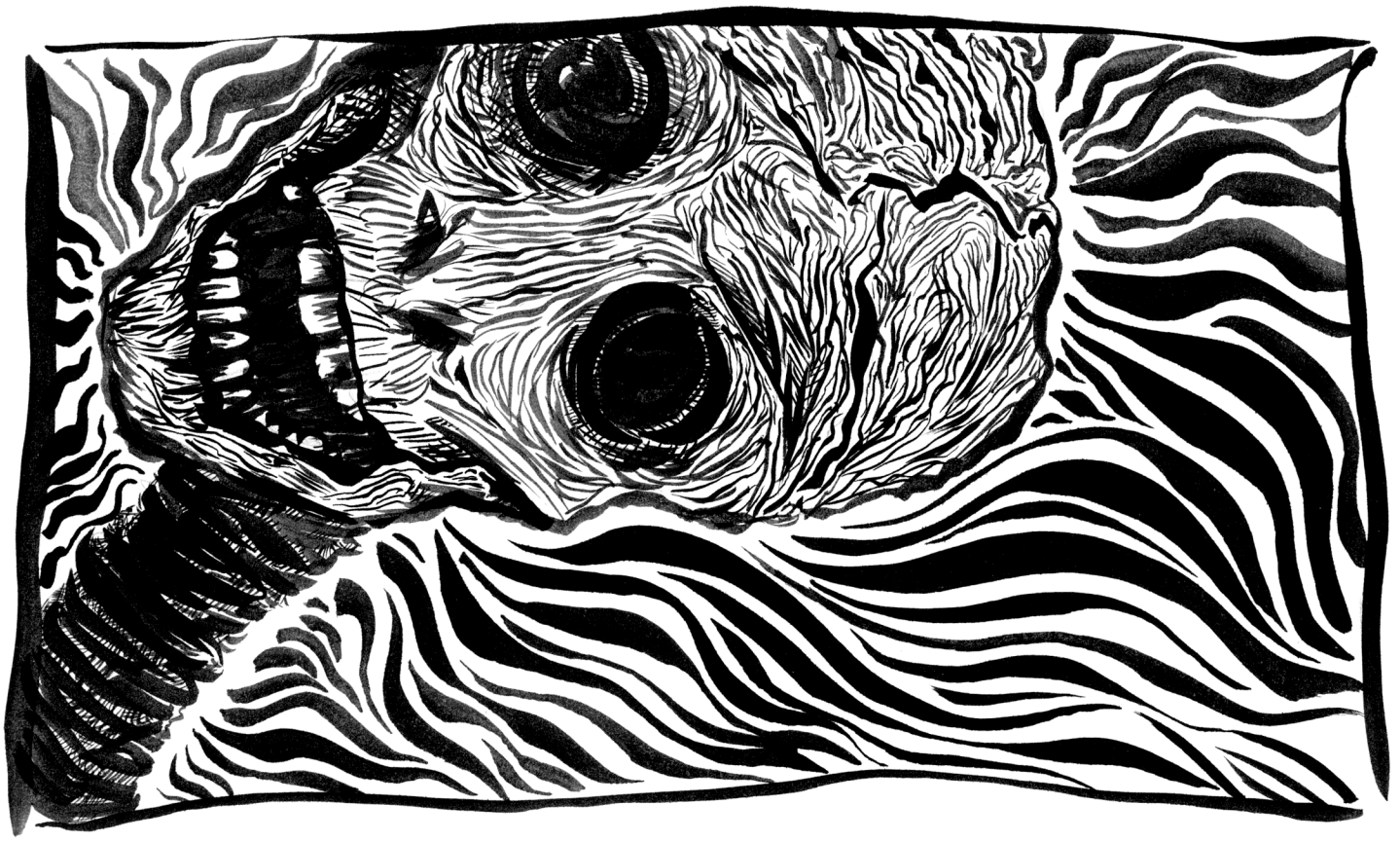


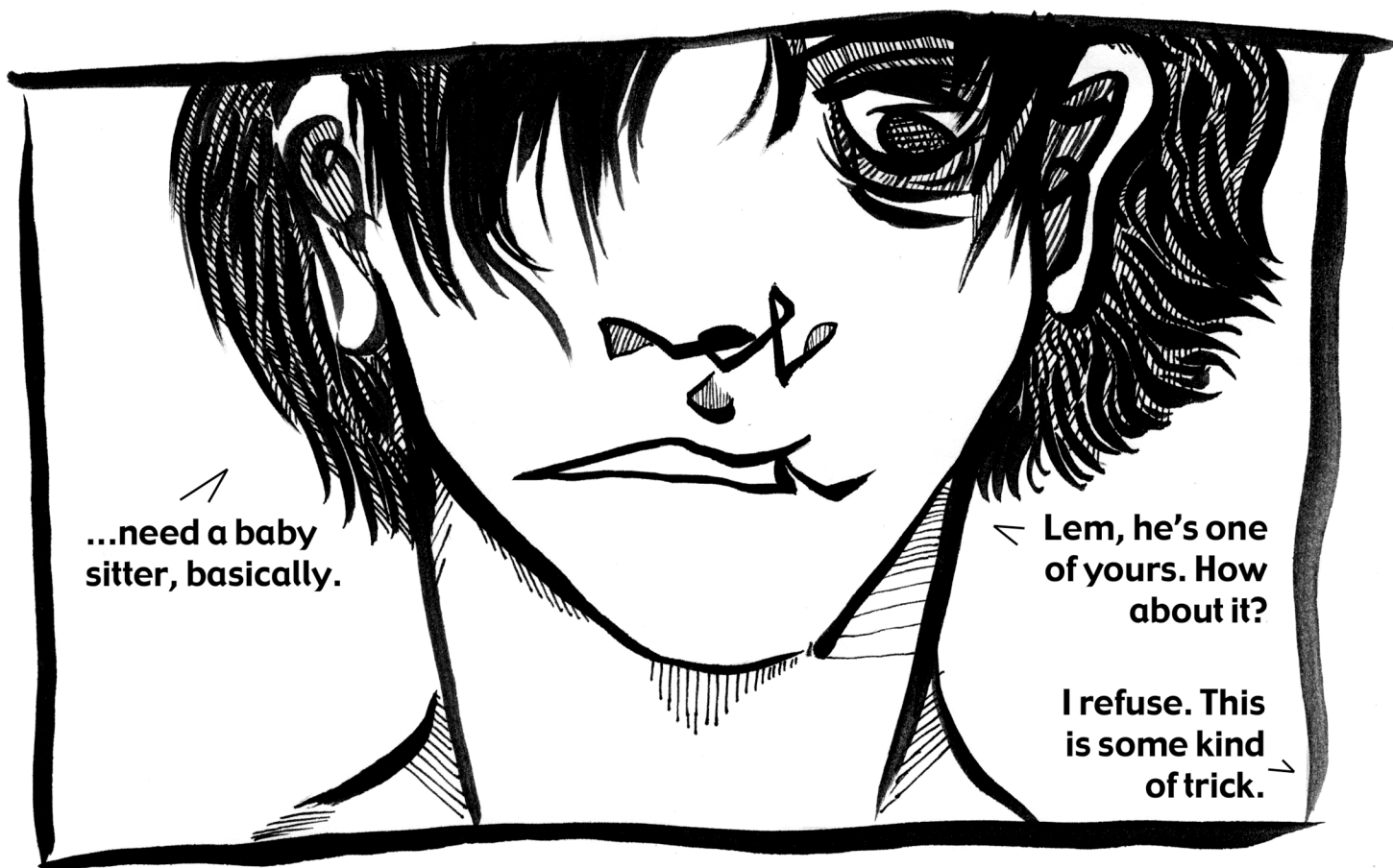
Sssss

***It's like the flames are
coming from inside me***

***I have to help Iza
get the kids out of
the house***



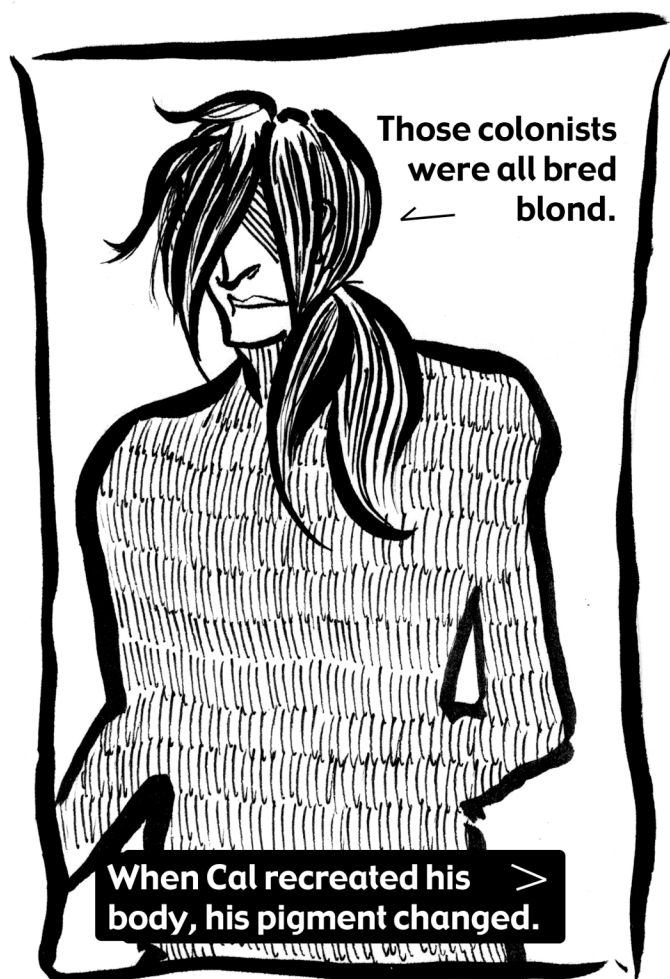




...need a baby
sitter, basically.

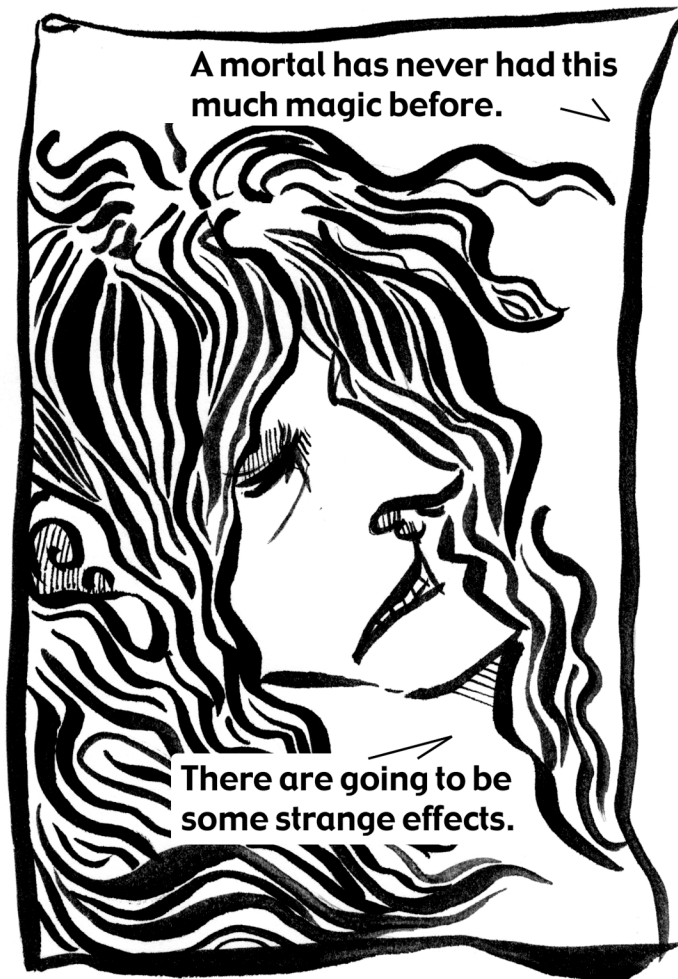
Lem, he's one
of yours. How
about it?

I refuse. This
is some kind
of trick.



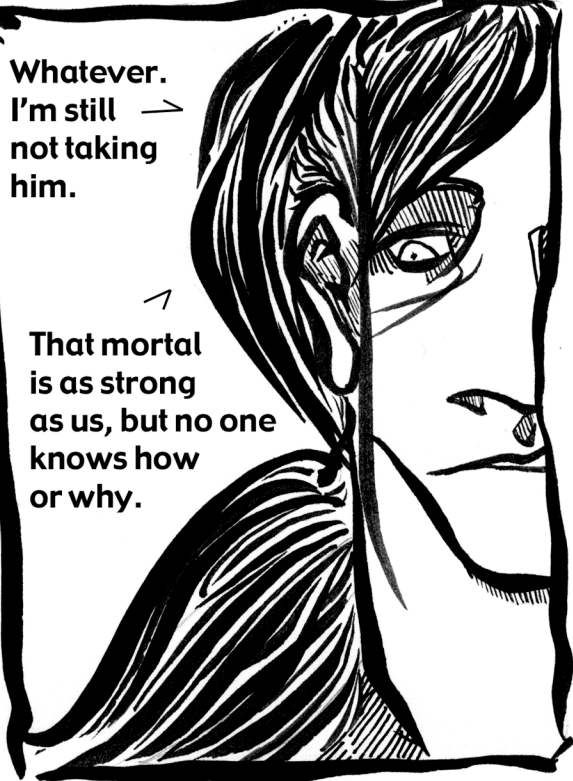
Those colonists
were all bred
blond.

When Cal recreated his
body, his pigment changed.



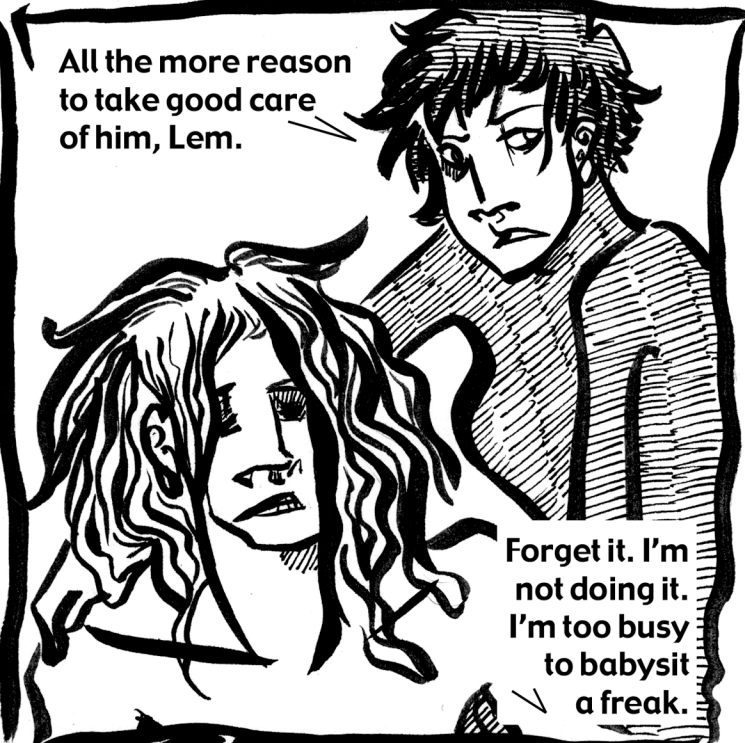
A mortal has never had this
much magic before.

There are going to be
some strange effects.



Whatever.
I'm still →
not taking
him.

↖
That mortal
is as strong
as us, but no one
knows how
or why.



All the more reason
to take good care
of him, Lem.

Forget it. I'm
not doing it.
I'm too busy
to babysit
a freak.



↖
Cal, how busy are you?

Yeah, make
Cal do it. He
subdued him,
after all.

^
Not busy.
I'll take him.



^
There's going to be more of these,
so we need to move quickly.

I'll go speak to mom now.

Let's avoid another tragedy,
if we can.





Uggh

So
sore



Never seen a
house like this
before



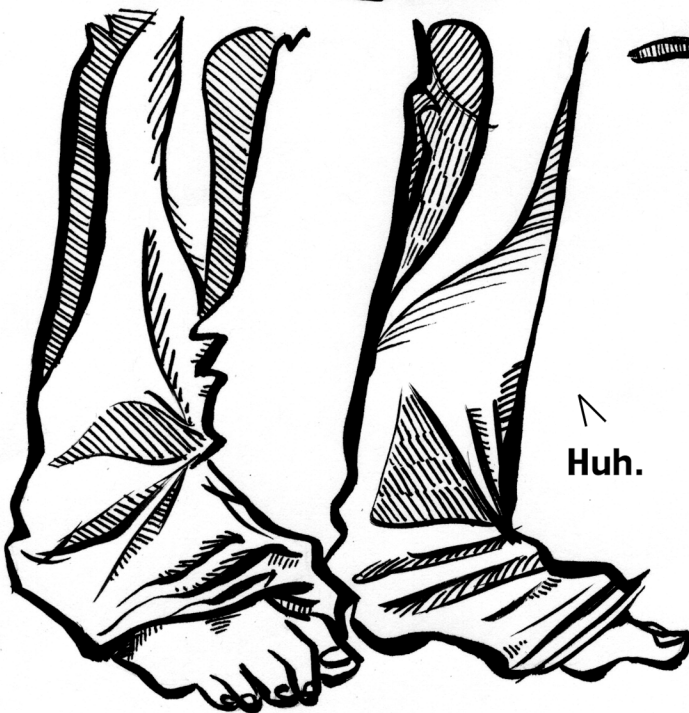
Could use a
few licks of
paint though.

Eh? A box?

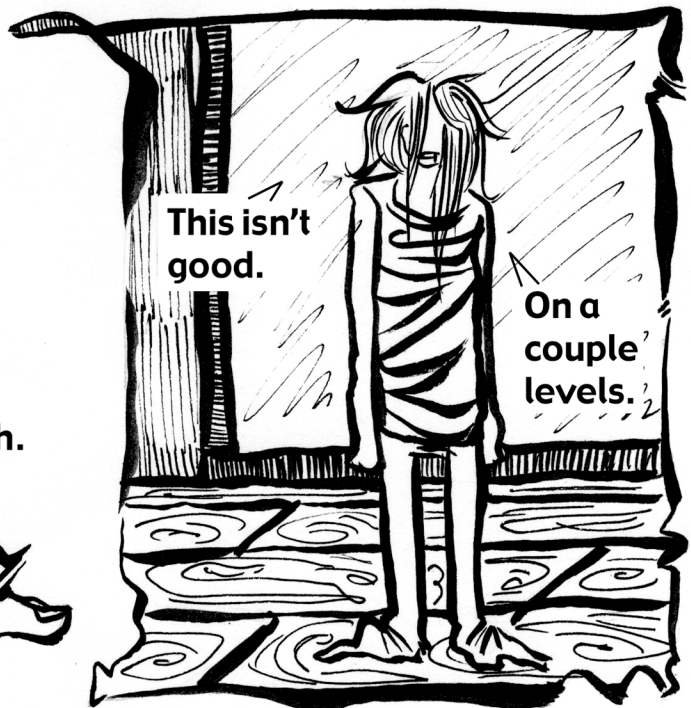


Dead animals
having a tea
party. Okay.
That's good.





Huh.



This isn't good.

On a couple' levels.



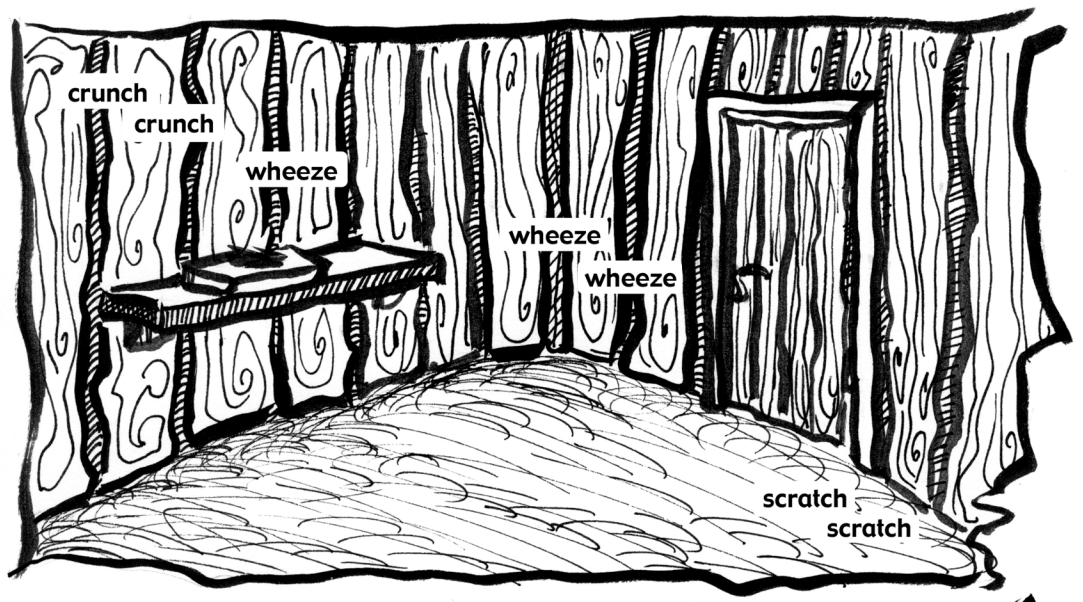


Guess I'm stuck here
for the night.



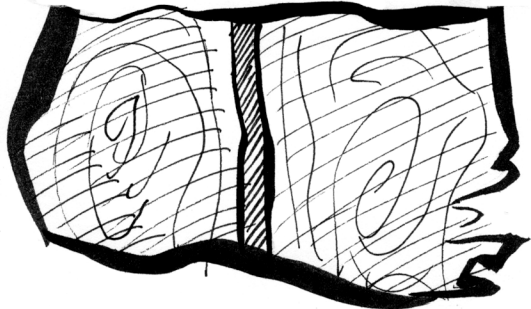
But I really need to
eat something. ↵





Go away. ∨
I'm armed.

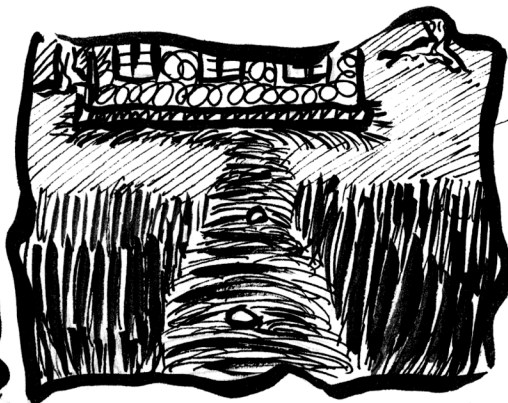
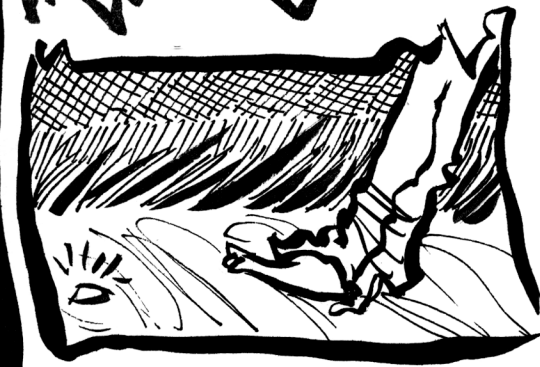
I'll knock your
head off! ∧





Okay, I'm
doing this.

Properly this
time. Okay.





Hello. I'm coming
back in.



Sorry for
intruding
and. You
know. >

I was pretty
scared. >

Ha, ha.



I see you're into uh, dead
animal decorating? >

That's cool.



You can
put ribbons
on me or >
whatever
if you really
want.

But you
don't have
to kill me.
I'm willing.



I didn't
kill any
of them.



Eh?

I found
them. I
wouldn't
hurt them.



I see.

Hey, how
about a
truce? >



> Come out of our walls and sheds.

Sit down. Talk. >

Use words. >

> Okay.

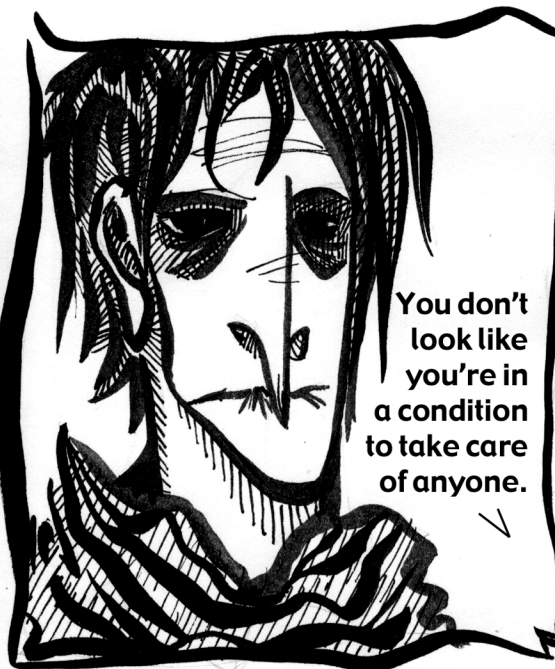


shf shf



You're one of the people I
heard earlier.

My "babysitter."



You don't
look like
you're in
a condition
to take care
of anyone.



Are you going ^
to tell me what's
happening here?



What were
you eating
earlier?

What?
Oh, the
soup.

I want some.

Sure, I'll
get it for
you.



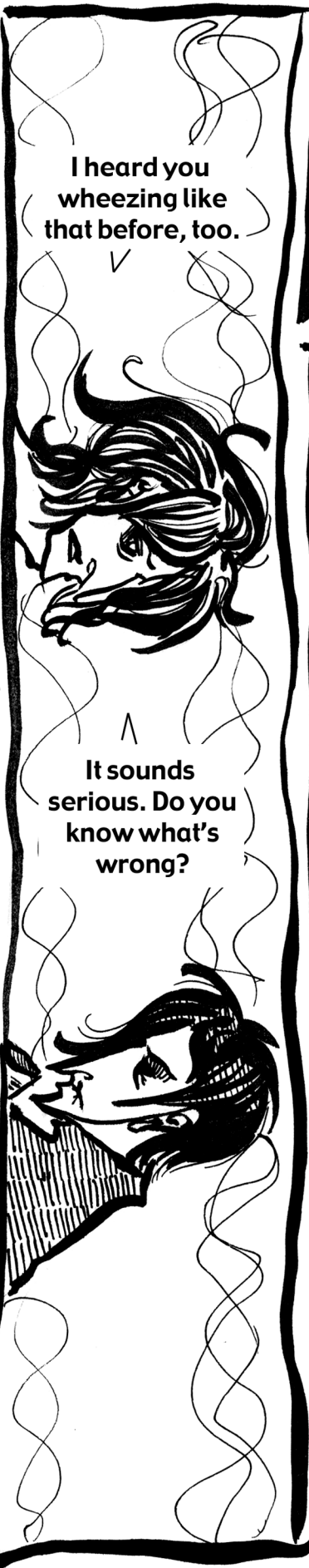
Here. Sorry, it's pretty poor stuff.



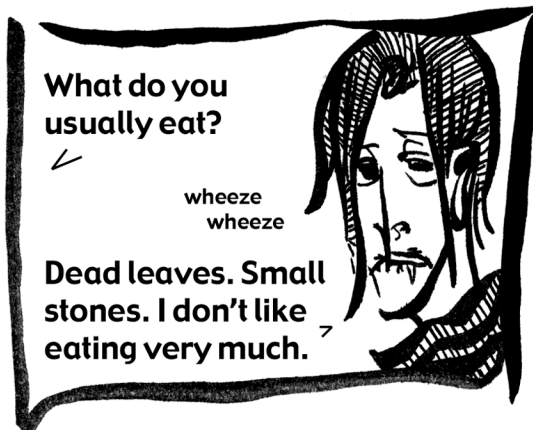
Nothing's wrong.



Watch it, it's hot!



I heard you wheezing like that before, too.



What do you usually eat?

wheeze wheeze

Dead leaves. Small stones. I don't like eating very much.

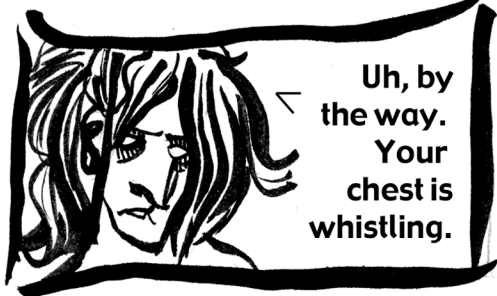


I'm sure it's none of my business, but as far as I can tell, we're stuck out here alone.

So it's in both our interests to help each other out. Right?

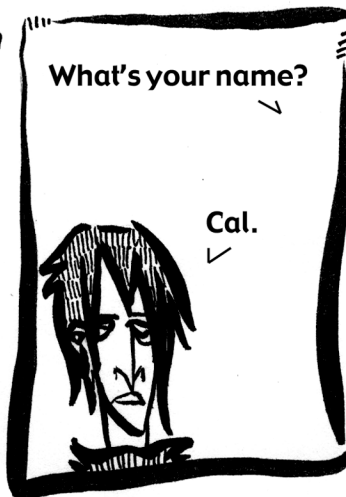


Try eating more food.



Uh, by the way. Your chest is whistling.





What's your name?

Cal.

My name's...
Well, it slips my
mind just now.



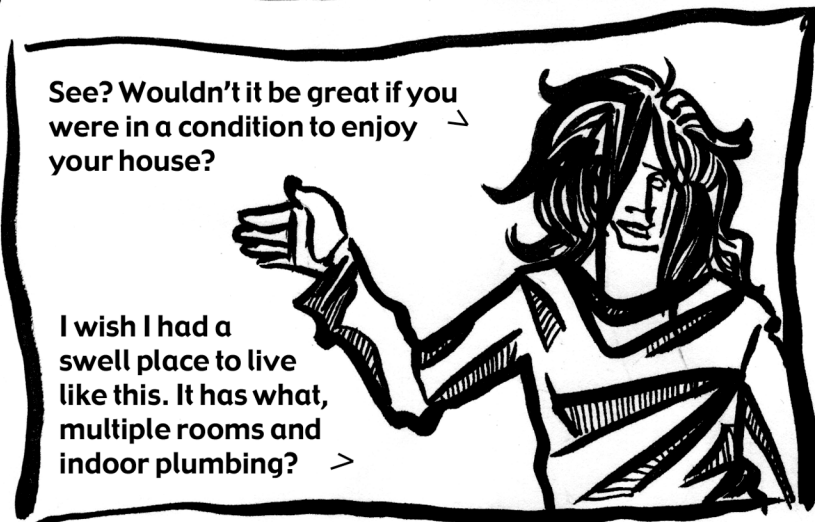
Anyway,
this is some
house, Cal.

How did you come by
a nice house like this?



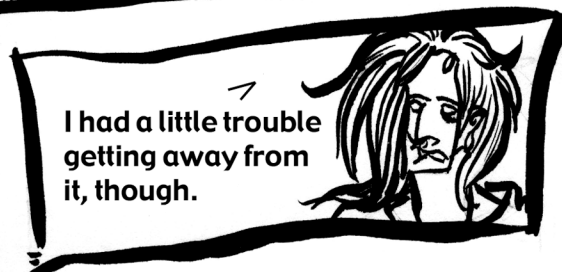
My sister and brother had it built for me.

But I've been
too ill to take
care of it.

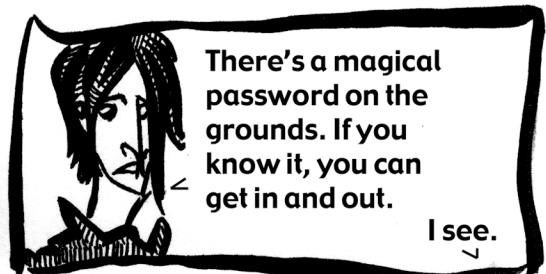


See? Wouldn't it be great if you
were in a condition to enjoy
your house?

I wish I had a
swell place to live
like this. It has what,
multiple rooms and
indoor plumbing?

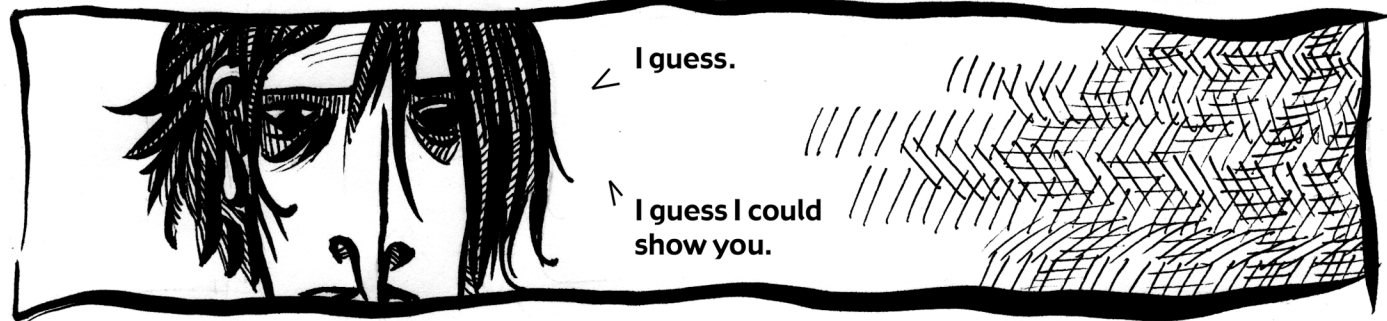


I had a little trouble
getting away from
it, though.



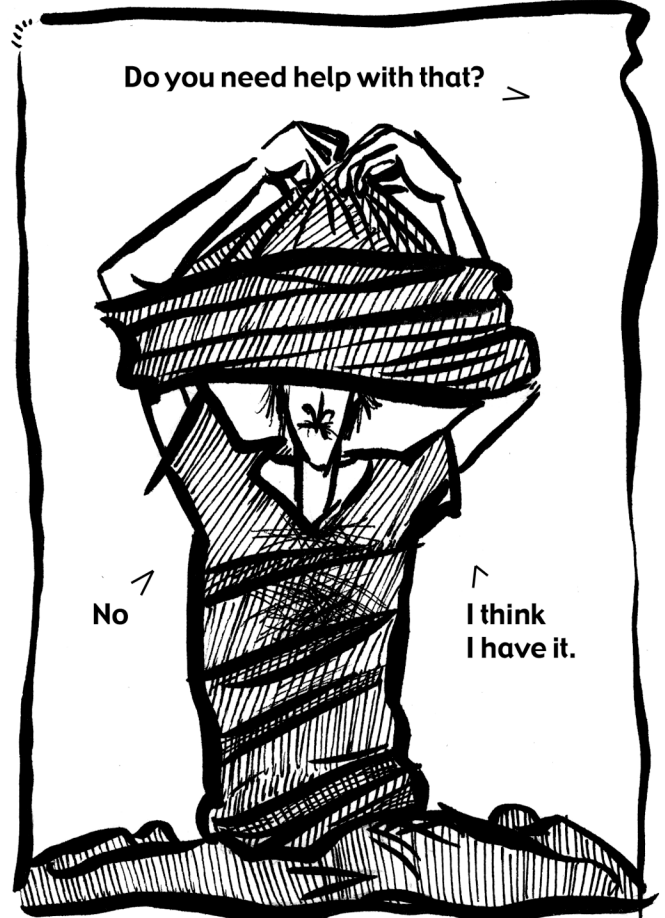
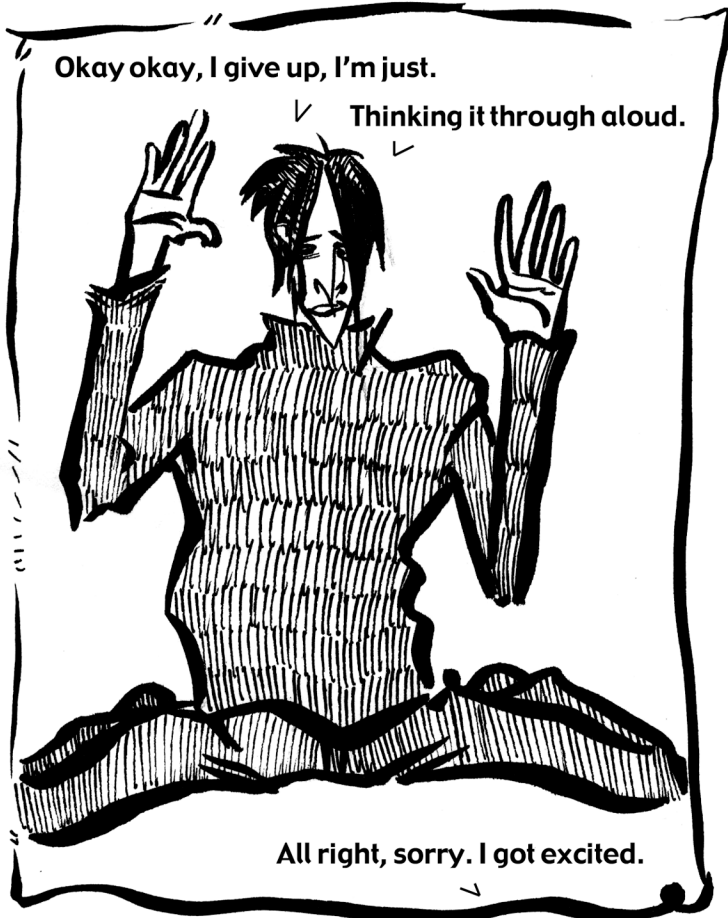
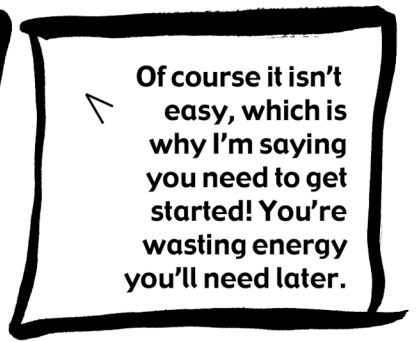
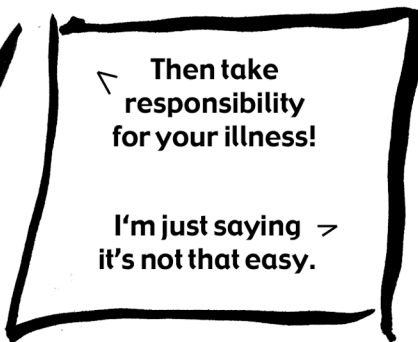
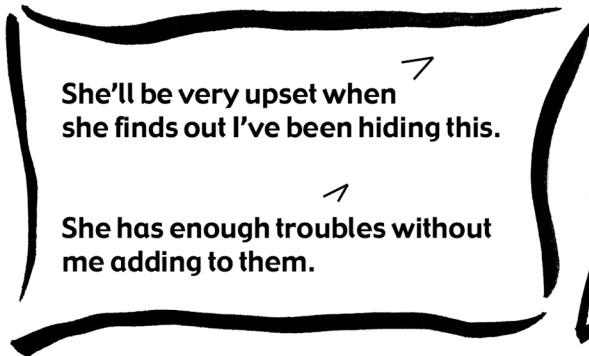
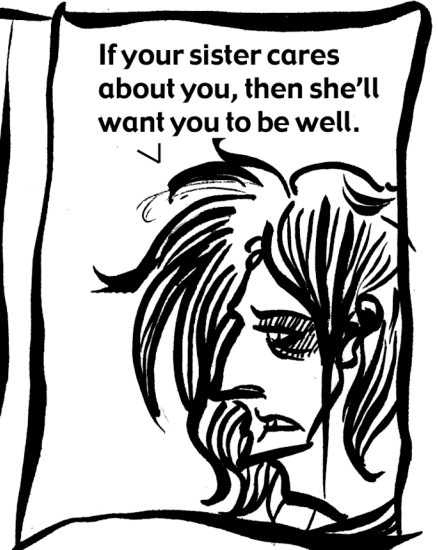
There's a magical
password on the
grounds. If you
know it, you can
get in and out.

I see.



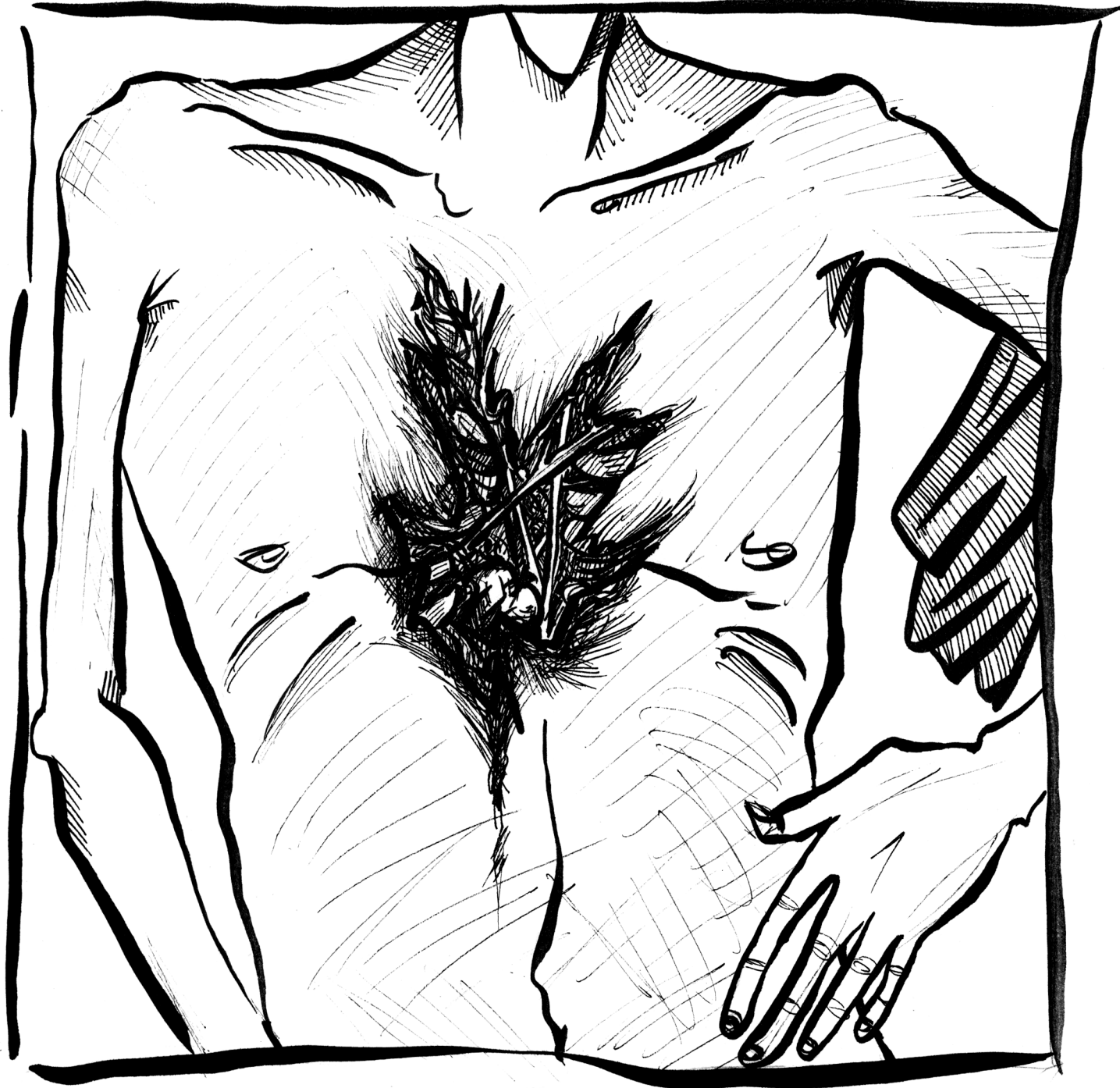
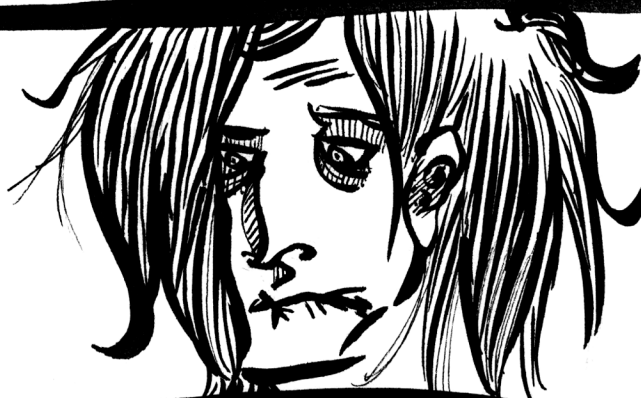
I guess.

I guess I could
show you.



< It's a cut I have on my chest.
It won't heal.

< What do you think I should do?



Huh. Well, it looks like you have a very large wound in your chest. Through which your lungs are pushing.

Huh.

Did you stick a crab apple in there? ✓

And some...
Twigs? Are those twigs?

Excuse me a minute.

HURGGGH
kaffkaff
splffh

All set. So, where's the nearest hospital?

Where is this then?

Then we're teleporting there.

↳ "Teleport."

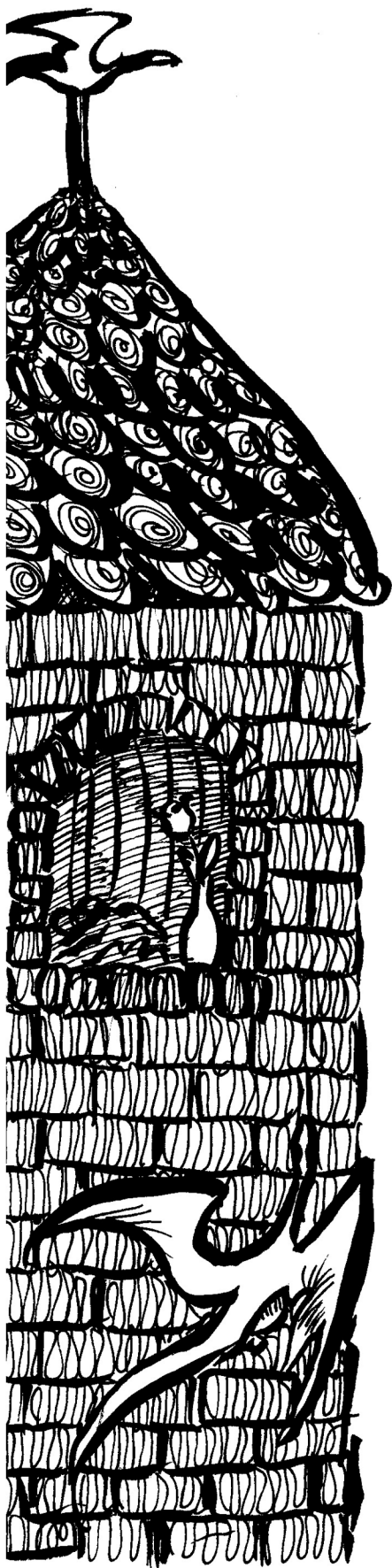
Whatever. Get up, I'll help you get your shirt back on. ➤

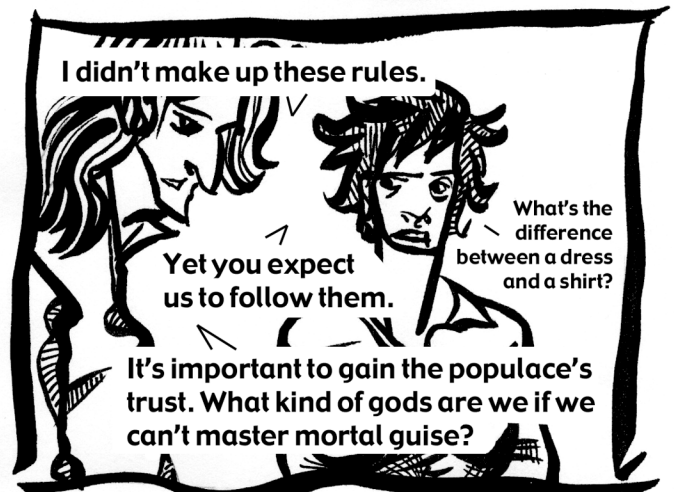
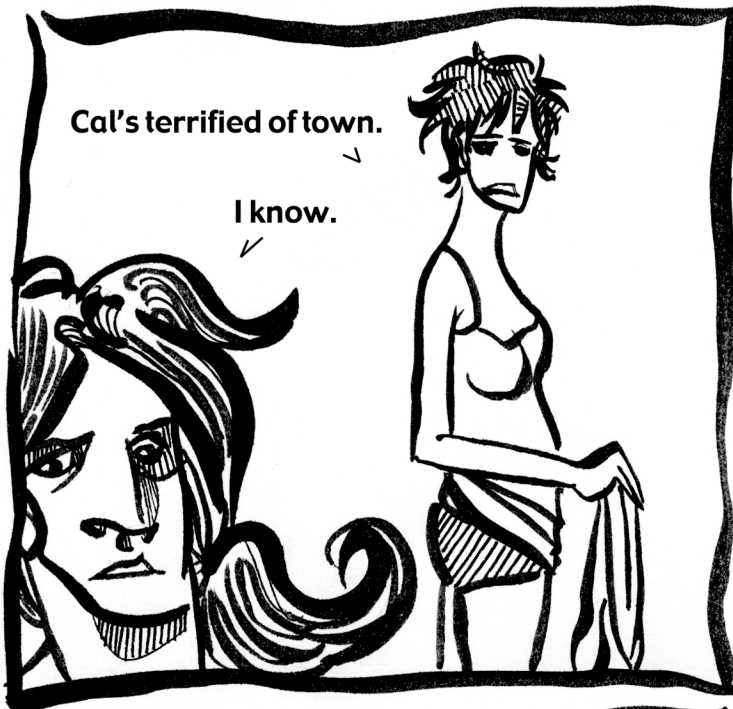
↳ I can't stand up.

I knew it. Men don't usually sit like that, you know. ➤

There's a place that treats people like me in my brother's town.

↳ We'd have to teleport there.

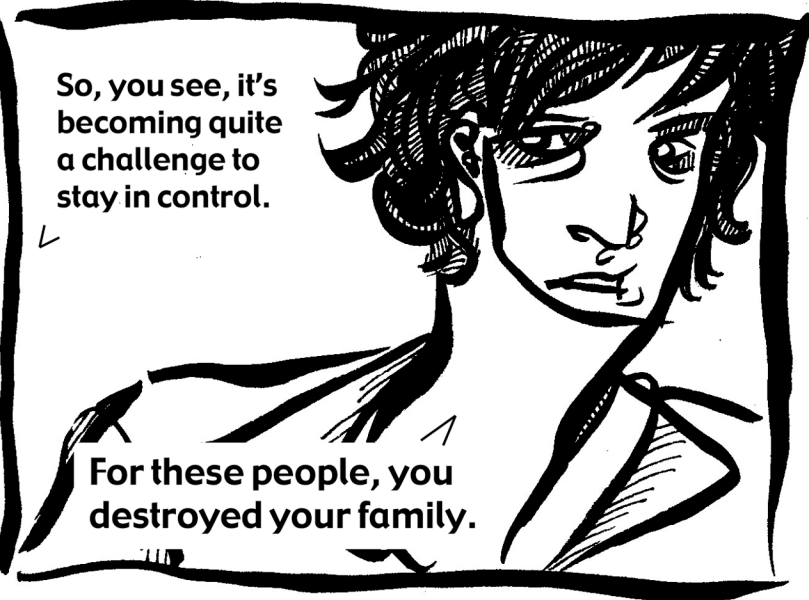







Exactly!

They're going in all kinds of unexpected directions with the whole reproductive thing.




So, you see, it's becoming quite a challenge to stay in control.

For these people, you destroyed your family.




May, I know you think of me as a spoiled, wildly indulged child. Understandable.



But I want this to work. I want to see a civilization here.



For that, I will do whatever it takes.



You can't do it without our help.



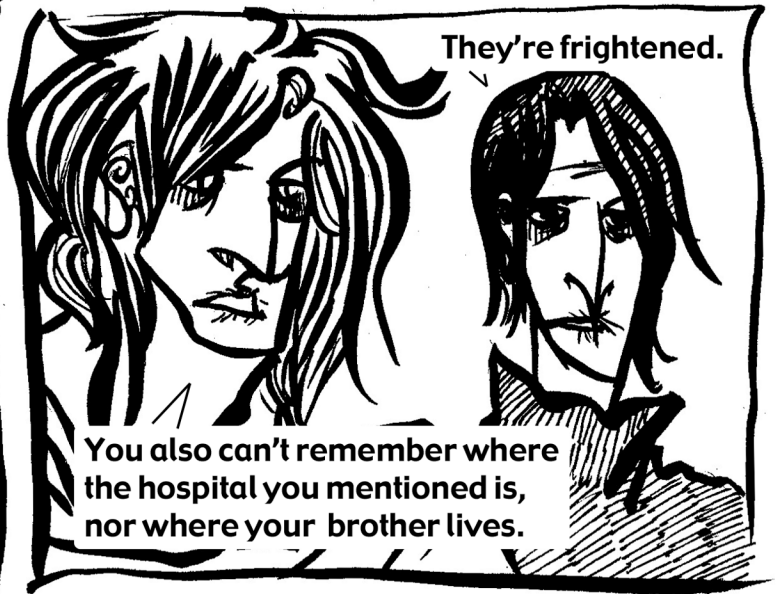
So spare us a thought now and again.

Come on, let's go find Cal.



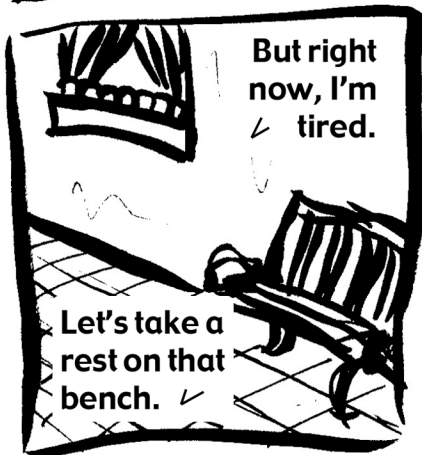
✓ We came during the night

✓ and no one is willing to treat you.



✓ They're frightened.

✓ You also can't remember where the hospital you mentioned is, nor where your brother lives.



✓ But right now, I'm tired.

✓ Let's take a rest on that bench.



✓ Lie down if you want.



✓ On the bench, doofus.





Oh yeah. I forgot
about that fellow
after all the others
started appearing.

They look like
homeless
people.



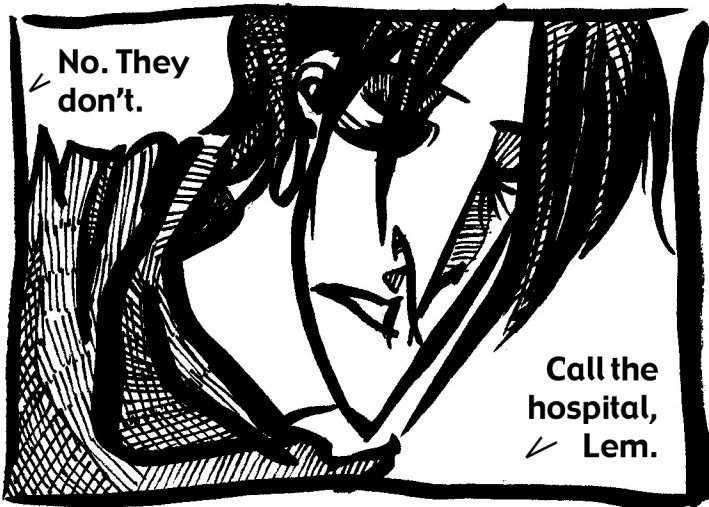
So, May.

Think he's already
playing around
with the poor sod?

What do you think?



Huh... They don't look too good, May.



No. They
don't.

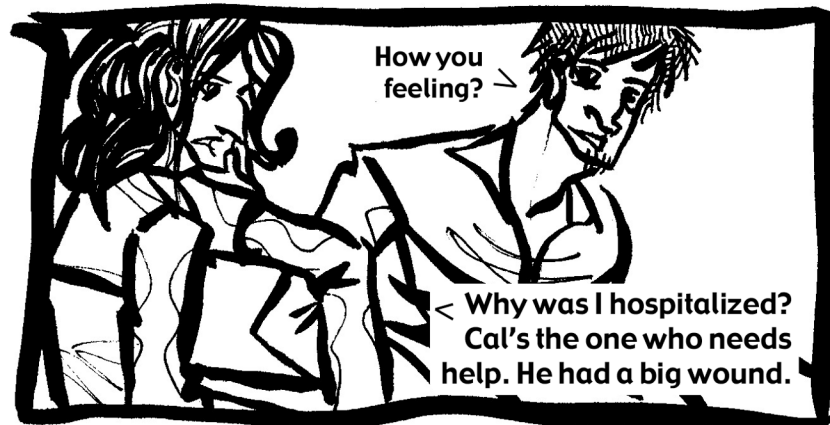
Call the
hospital,
Lem.



Pleh.

My mouth
tastes terrible.

You're
awake!
Good!



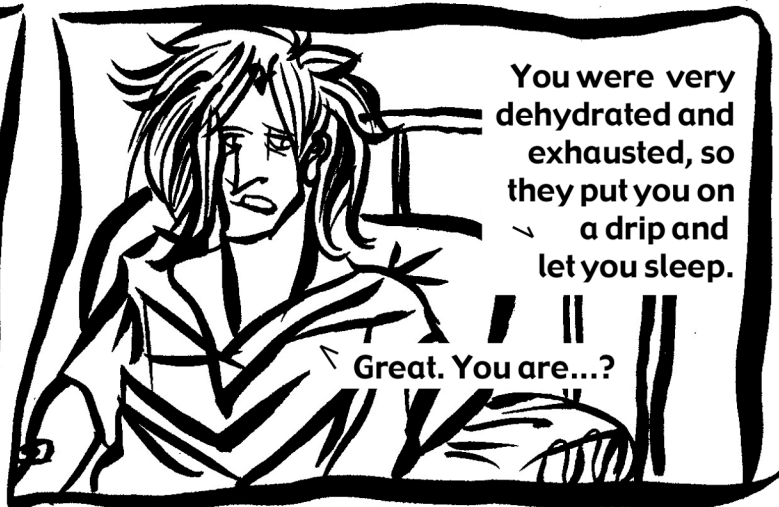
How you
feeling?

Why was I hospitalized?
Cal's the one who needs
help. He had a big wound.



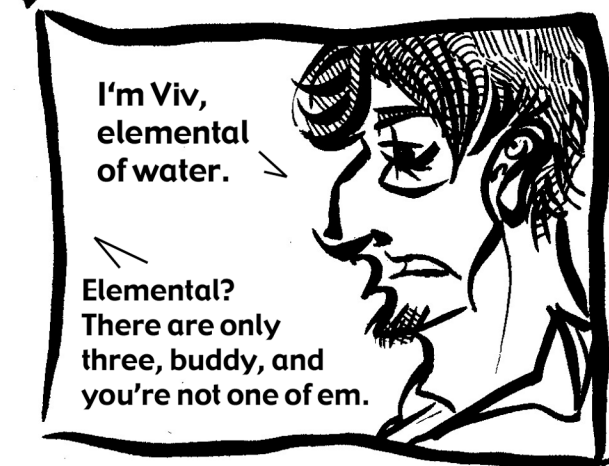
Cal's receiving
treatment too.

He's in
good
hands.



You were very
dehydrated and
exhausted, so
they put you on
a drip and
let you sleep.

Great. You are...?



I'm Viv,
elemental
of water.

Elemental?
There are only
three, buddy, and
you're not one of em.



You mean,
you really
don't know?

Know what?

A number of new
elementals
have surfaced.

They all have
dominion over
various, physical
powers in our
world.

^ Unlike the
original three,
who are all
metaphysical.



Are you saying that
I'm here because I
am one of these
new elementals?

L-look on the
bright side! We
get to live
forever



and we're
never out
of a job!



This can't be.

I didn't believe
it either, at first.
But once you see
your powers
in action, it's
difficult to deny.

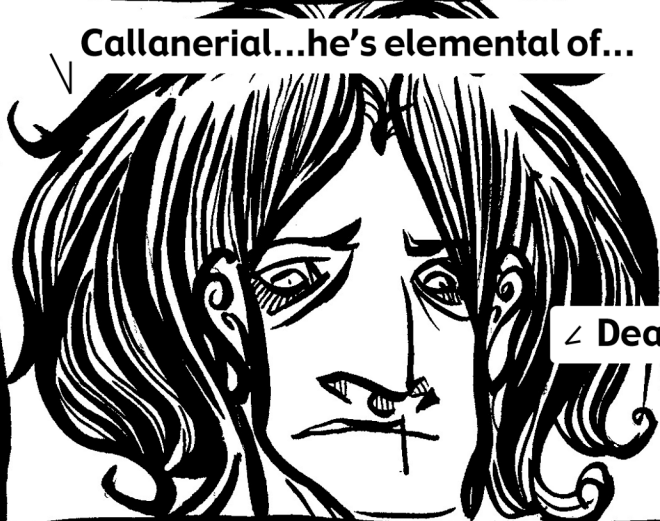
What element am I?

I don't know yet.
No one does.
You haven't
been analyzed.



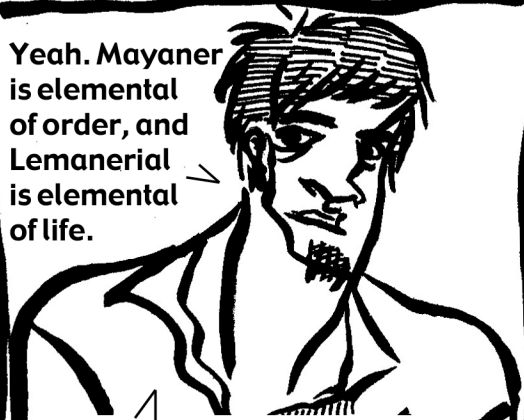
We're all receiving training
from our primaries, but it looks
like Callanerial was too
ill to start yours.

Callanerial...he's elemental of...

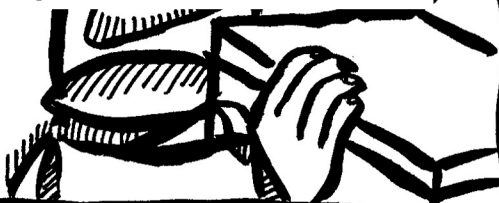


< Death.

Yeah. Mayaner is elemental of order, and Lemanerial is elemental of life.



I was also conscripted to get you some clothes and shoes.



I don't know > my name.



I don't know anything about myself.

Did we all lose our memories?

No, it's just you. >

There were problems with your conversion. >

You were new to > them.



They were ready for us.

So there are some things they have to work out for you.

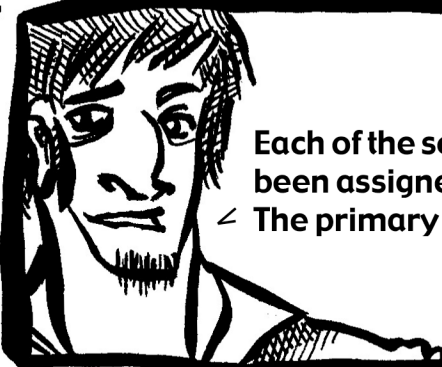
We don't even know who you have yet.



Who I have?

Each of the secondaries has been assigned to a primary. < The primary is like their boss.

Who did you get? >



Mayaner. Lem has all of the others, obviously.



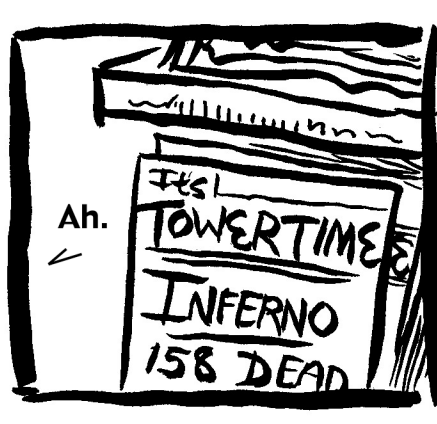
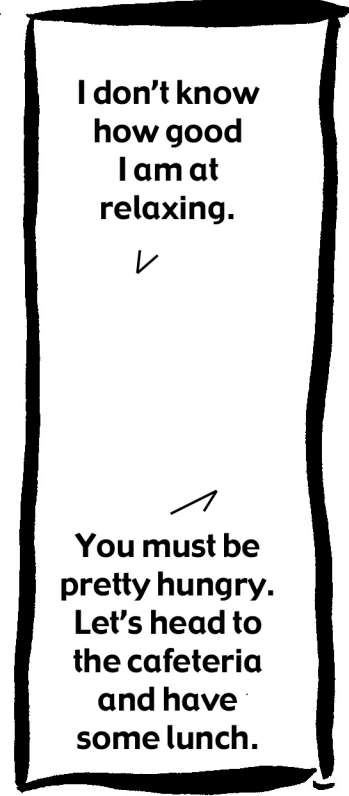
My own pair of shoes... ^



You've never...? Uh. This is awkward. >

I'll wait outside while you get > dressed, okay?



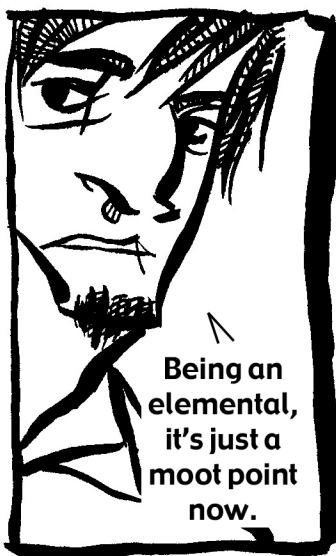




Oh, well. >

I'm er, a member
of one of the
southern royal
families.

From the coast.

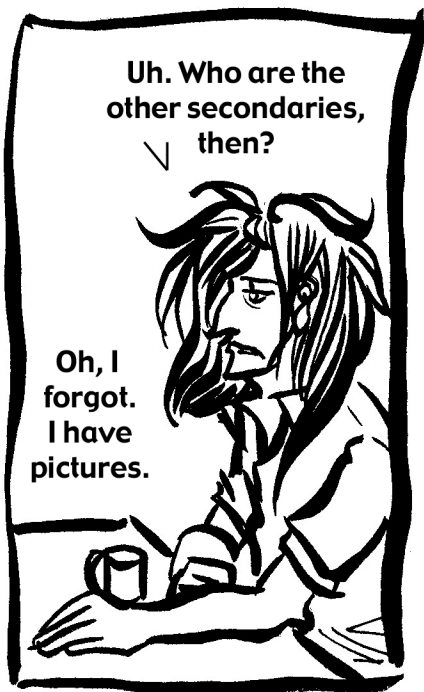


Being an
elemental,
it's just a
moot point
now.



At least you
can remember
who you are.

Yeah. Yeah, >
that's something.



Uh. Who are the
other secondaries,
then?

Oh, I
forgot.
I have
pictures.



Funaner,
earth. >

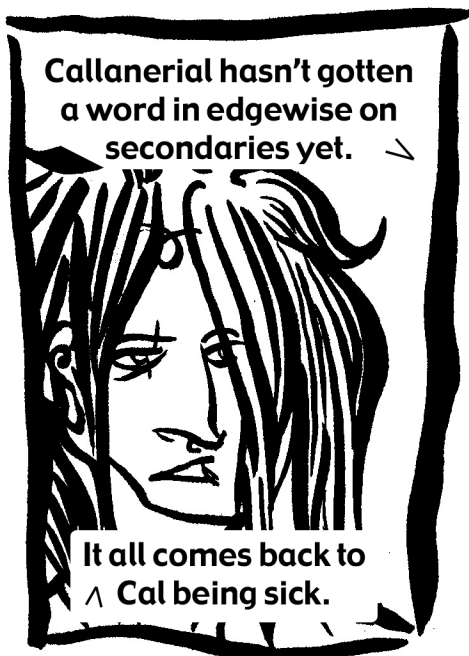
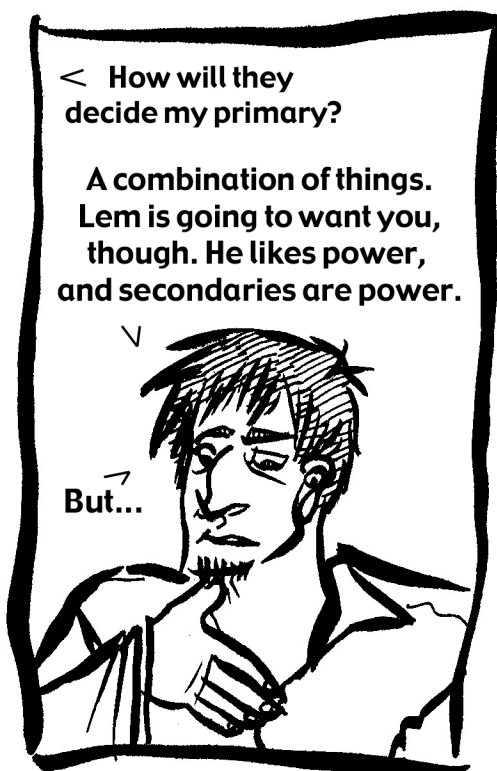
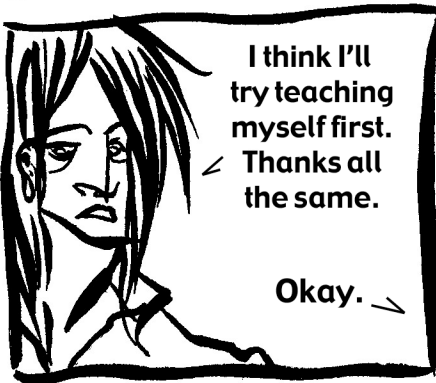
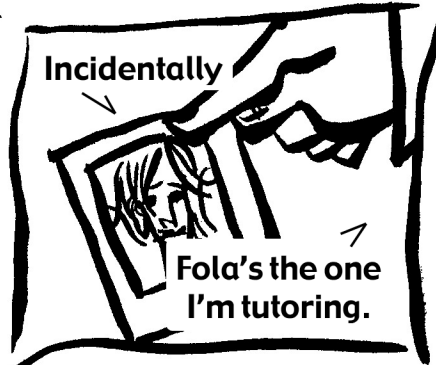
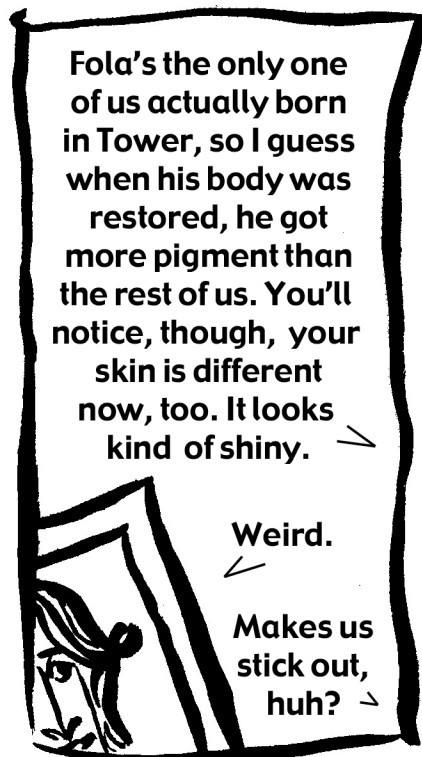
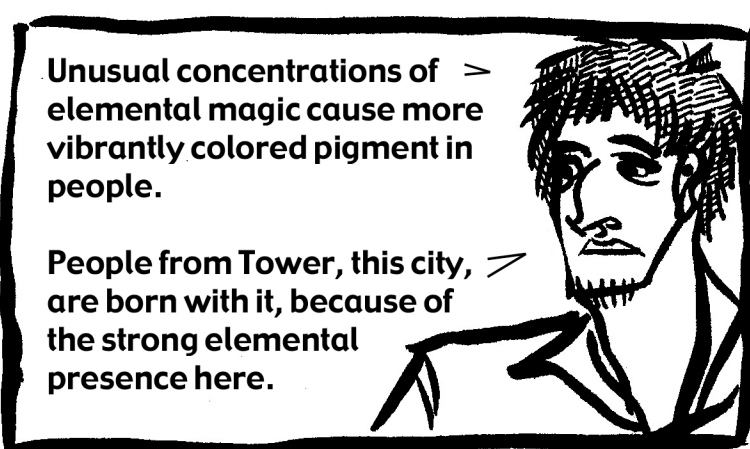
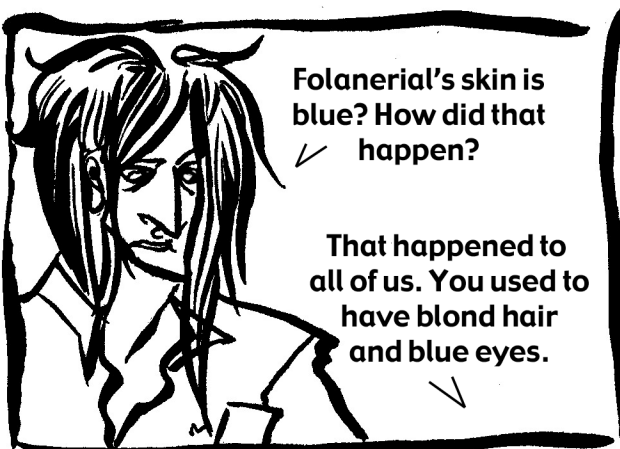
Folanerial, air.

Ellioner, time.



Whoa, did
someone
draw these?
They're so
realistic! >

N-no,
they're
photos.



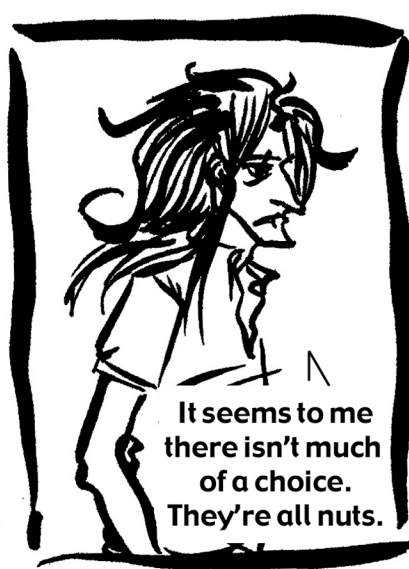


All the stories
we heard as
mortals were
made up by Lem
to make himself
look good.



That might
be why.

Almost time.
Let's walk and talk.

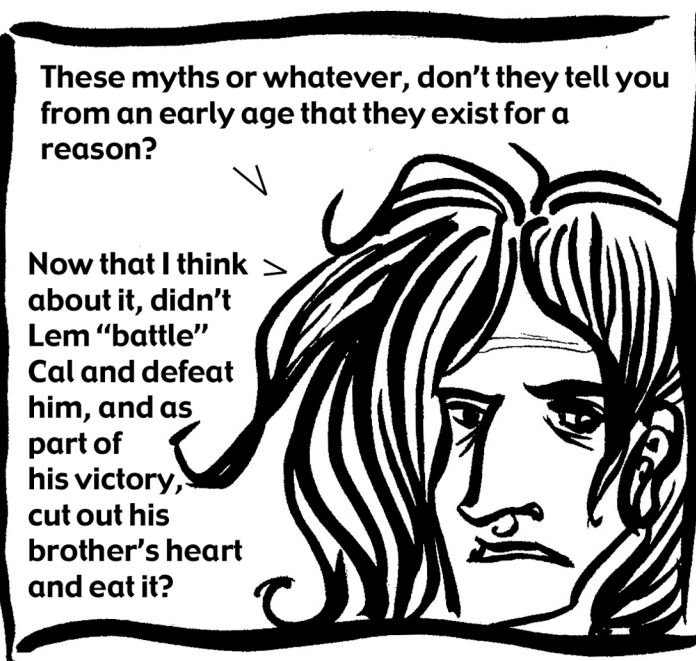


It seems to me
there isn't much
of a choice.
They're all nuts.



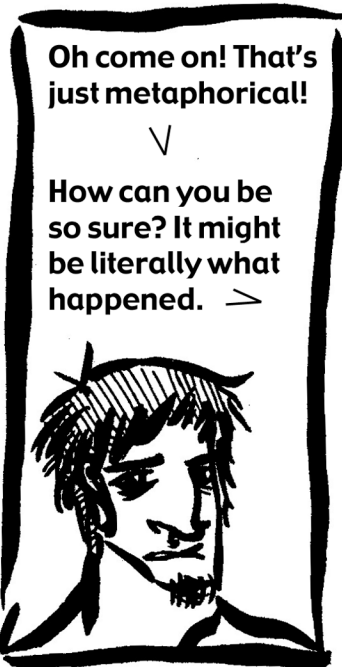
That's a little cynical.

It's healthy
to be a little
cynical.



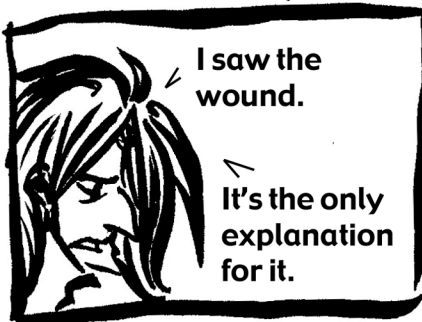
These myths or whatever, don't they tell you
from an early age that they exist for a
reason?

Now that I think
about it, didn't
Lem "battle"
Cal and defeat
him, and as
part of
his victory,
cut out his
brother's heart
and eat it?



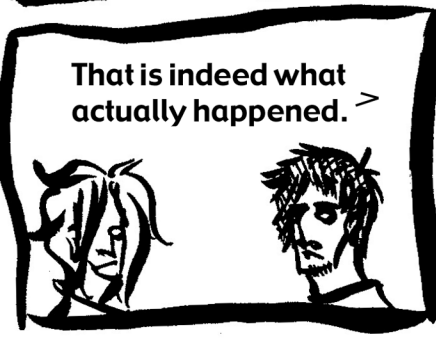
Oh come on! That's
just metaphorical!

How can you be
so sure? It might
be literally what
happened.



I saw the
wound.

It's the only
explanation
for it.



That is indeed what
actually happened.



Though it
wasn't as sound
a victory as the
story makes it
out to be.

This is Cal's physician, Dr Bogart.

Nice to meet you,
Do I get to see Cal yet?

Not yet! First, a lecture.



Please have
a seat.

Okay, let's get down to brass tacks.



As you can probably guess, Cal is a very sick elemental. Elementals are capable of healing themselves magically, but if they are psychologically impaired, that becomes less and less likely.



Rather cheerful for the topic
matter, don't you think?



We are very
grateful to >
have Dr Bogart
on the staff.

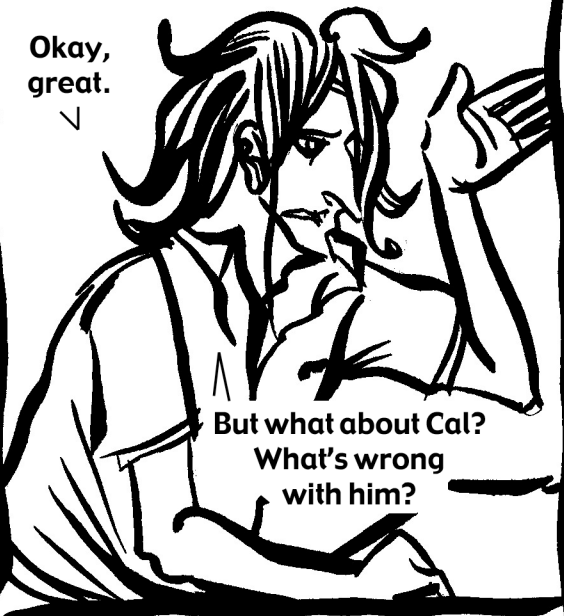


Please don't misunderstand.
It is simply very difficult to
study elementals. We have
gathered more information
in one day from Cal than in
the past ten years!



I am overjoyed
we finally have
what we need
to devise effective
medical treatments
for you all.

Okay,
great.

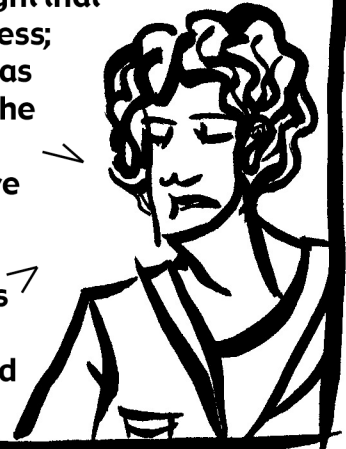


But what about Cal?
What's wrong
with him?

Sorry, I was just getting to that. The story
you know about Lem and Cal makes
sense, from an elemental perspective.

Lem originally thought that
his power was limitless;
that he could create as
many organisms as he
liked, and that those
organisms would live
forever.

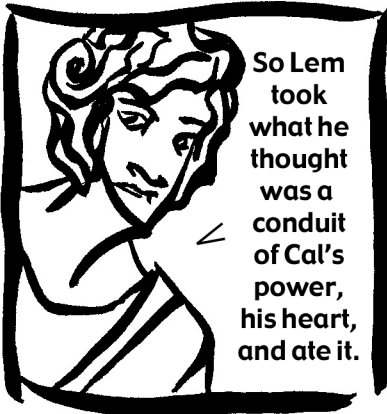
This assumption was
soon proven wrong,
so, a new system had
to be designed.



Cal suggested death. Lem said,
"Why don't I take your power
and use it for myself?"

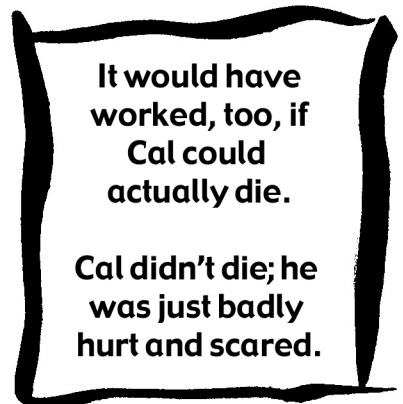


So Lem
took
what he
thought
was a
conduit
of Cal's
power,
his heart,
and ate it.



It would have
worked, too, if
Cal could
actually die.

Cal didn't die; he
was just badly
hurt and scared.



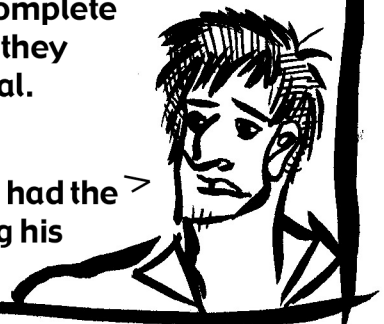
What the hell have
I gotten myself
into?

It gets
better!



In their haste to complete
your conversion, they
attached you to Cal.

Wait, I thought he had the
option of choosing his
primary. Sort of.



For all intents and
purposes, Viv, he is
Cal's secondary.

The attachment,
however, is
badly formed.



Badly formed?

It's too complicated to explain now, but you need a primary to protect you from your own magic.



And since Cal is very ill



This means you're going to be his nurse for the next few months.

What?!



I don't even know my own name! I can't nurse a sick whatever-he-is!

If you have a poor connection to your primary, he can't protect you as well.

You have to stay close to him.



You're a nice kid.

You'll be fine. Do a good deed!



I'm sorry, Doctor, but even I find this a bit unfair. > Couldn't Cal stay here, or with his sister, for his recovery?



Already explored that, but Cal can't stay here, for a variety of reasons...

And his sister is going to be far too busy.

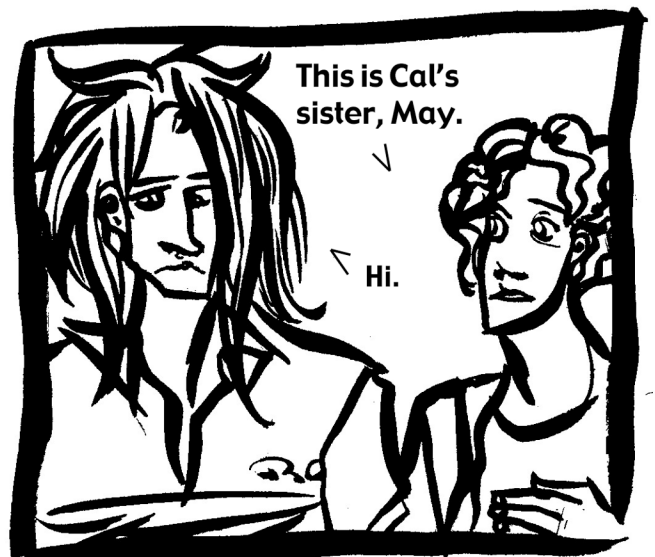
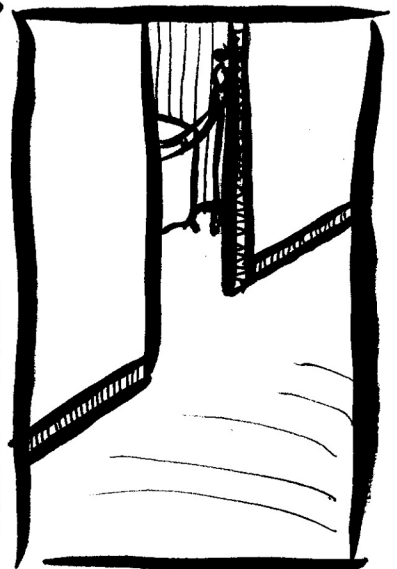


< You also need to learn about your own magic without delay, and to do that, you need Cal's help.



In short, you have nothing better to do.



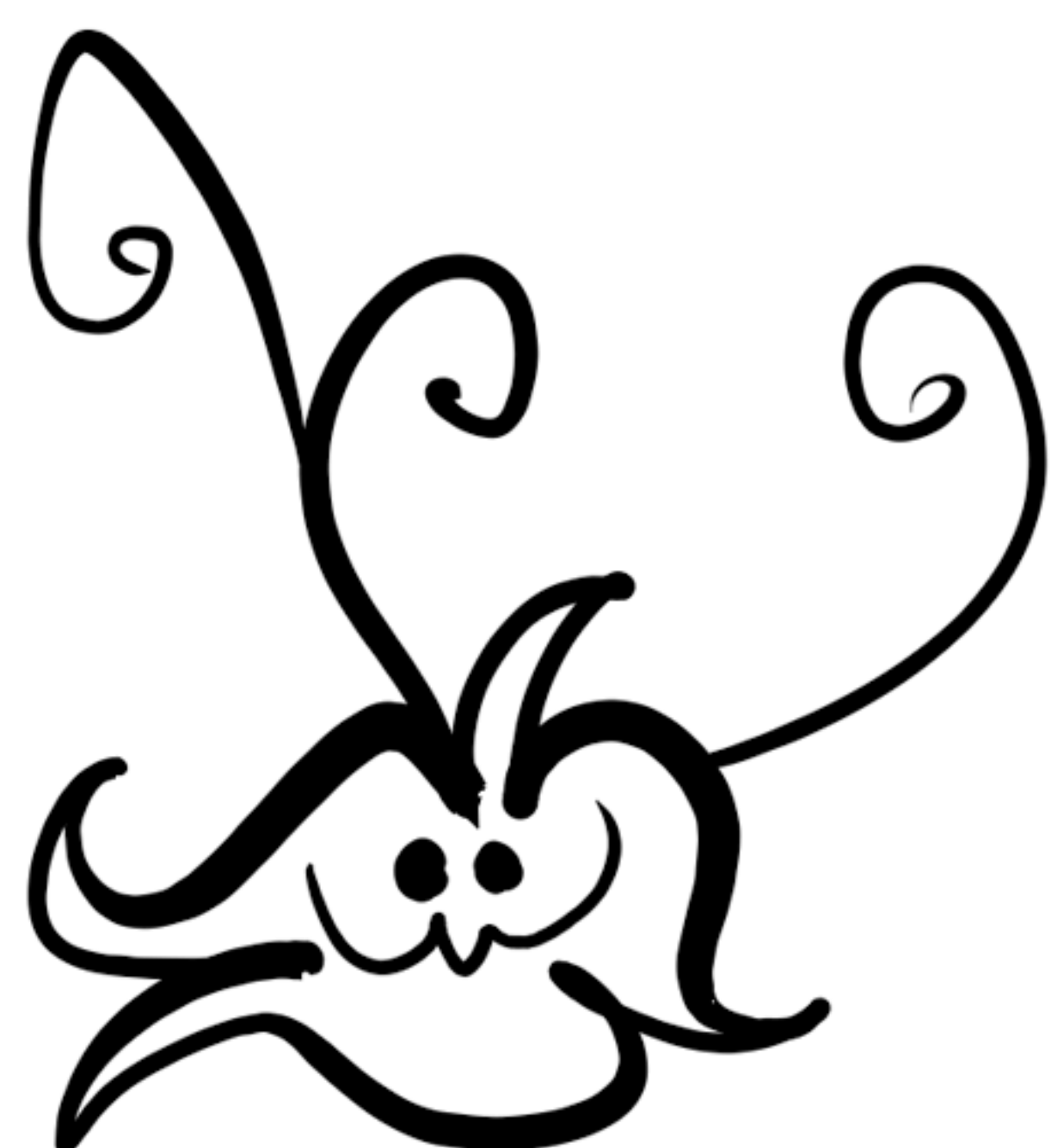




IN THE NEXT THRILLING INSTALLMENT OF GRAYLING...!



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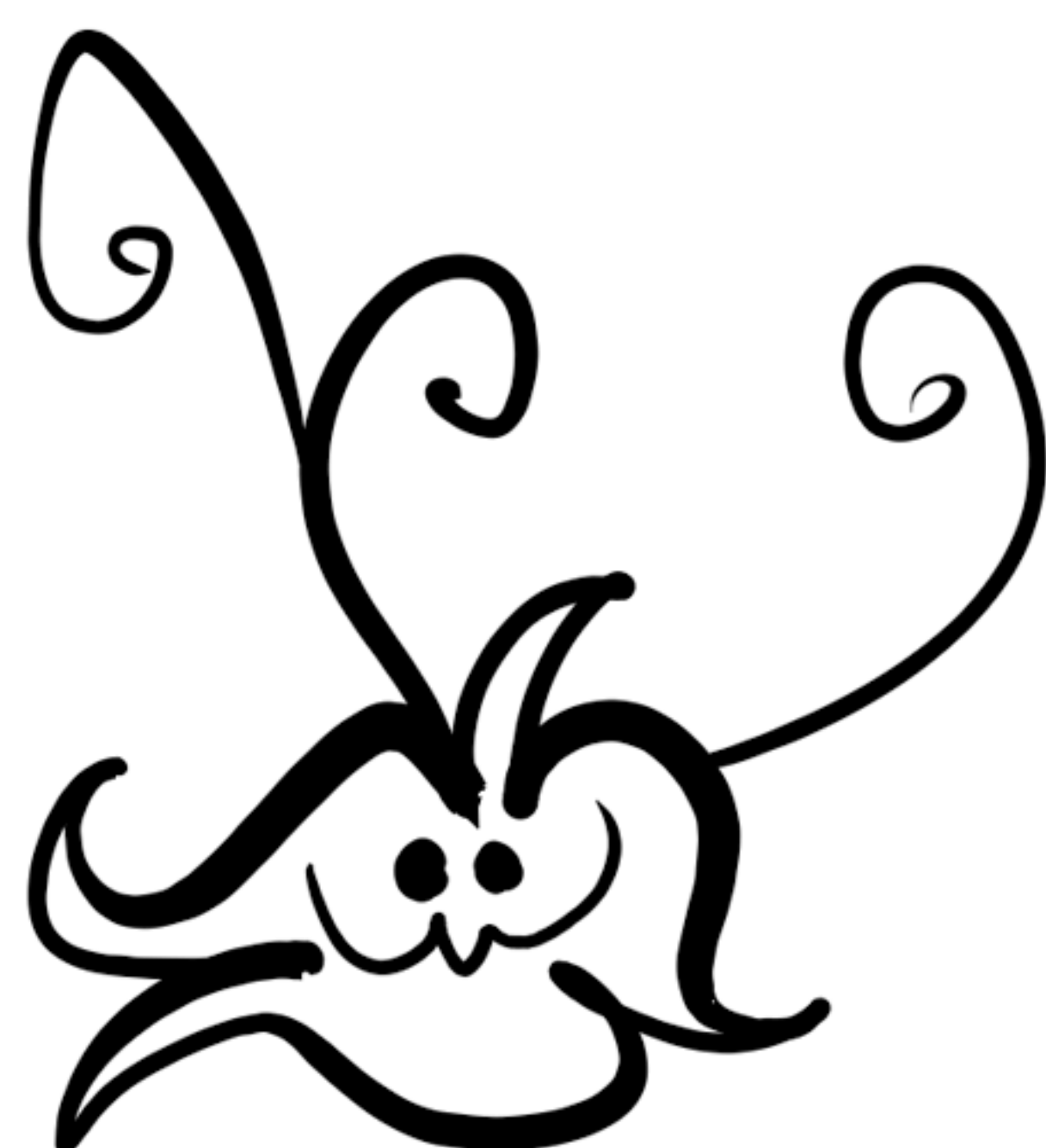
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Introducing Roderick, and his favorite prey, the giant squid!

The true creative powerhouse behind Grayling,

Roderick (Roddy to his friends) enjoys such hobbies as eating non-food items (cables and paper) and

chasing after that infinite mystery, the laser pointer.

Look at the back of future Grayling comics to see more news from the indomitable Roderick!