

AUTHOR OF THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING **SCOTT PILGRIM** SERIES

BRYAN LEE O'MALLEY

Seconds

A GRAPHIC NOVEL



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with

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Nathan Fairbairn Color



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NEW YORK

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First Edition

I felt a kind of vertigo, as if
I were merely plunging from
one world to another, and in
each I arrived shortly after
the end of the world had
taken place

—Italo Calvino,

If on a winter's night a traveler

And I said
Could it be me?
Could it really, really be?
Over and over

—Fleetwood Mac



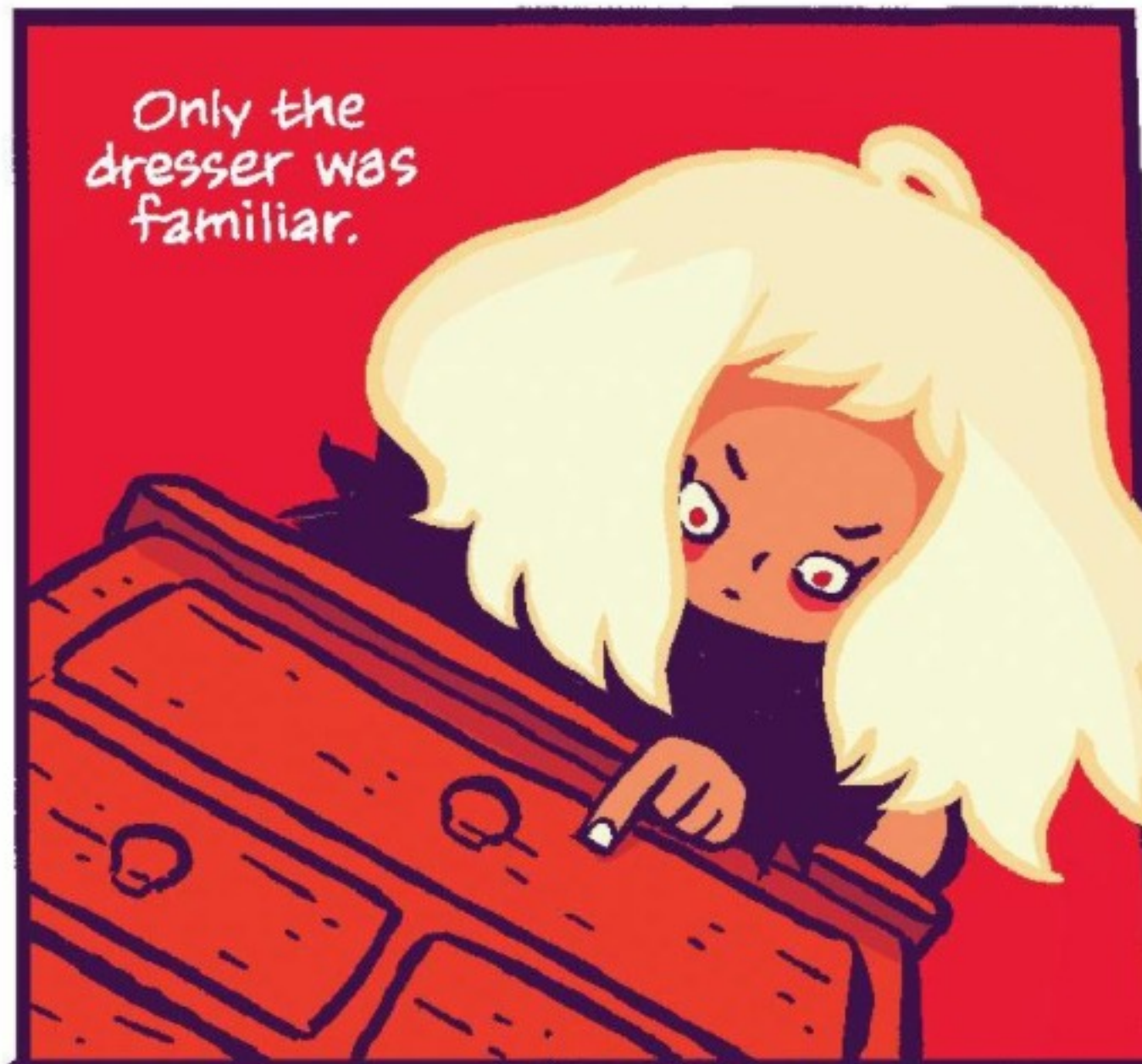


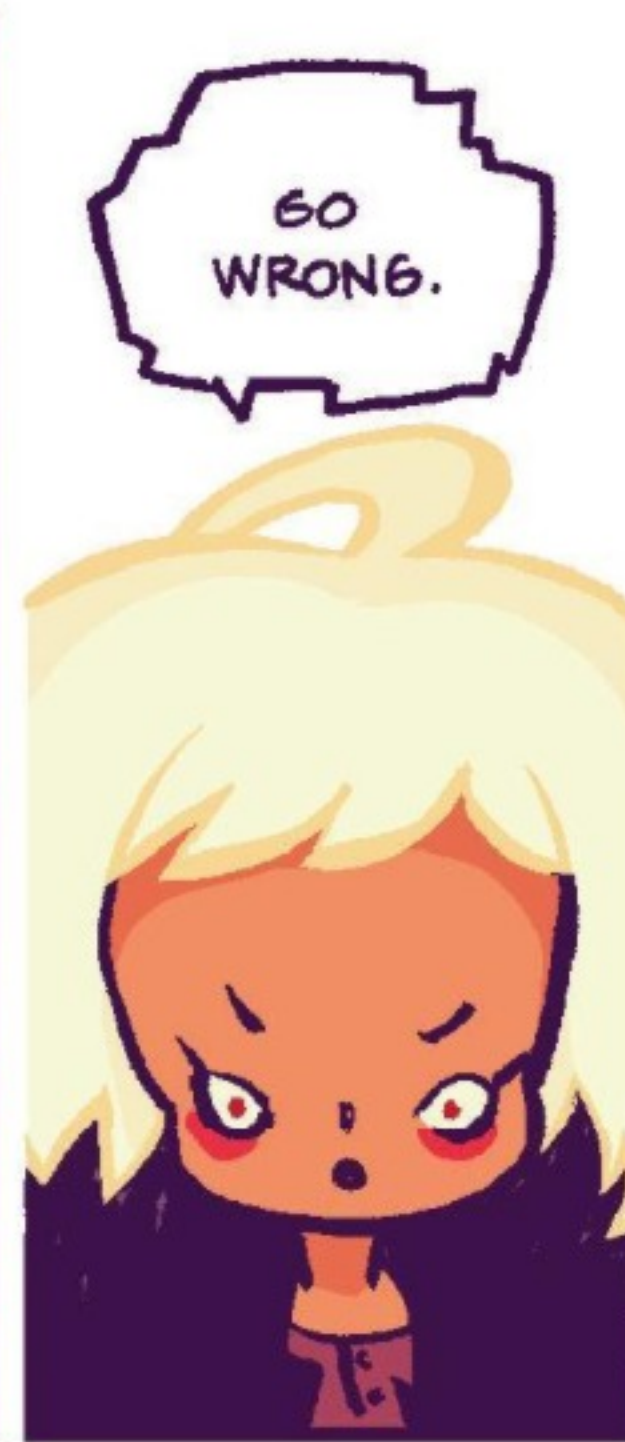
She
woke
up,

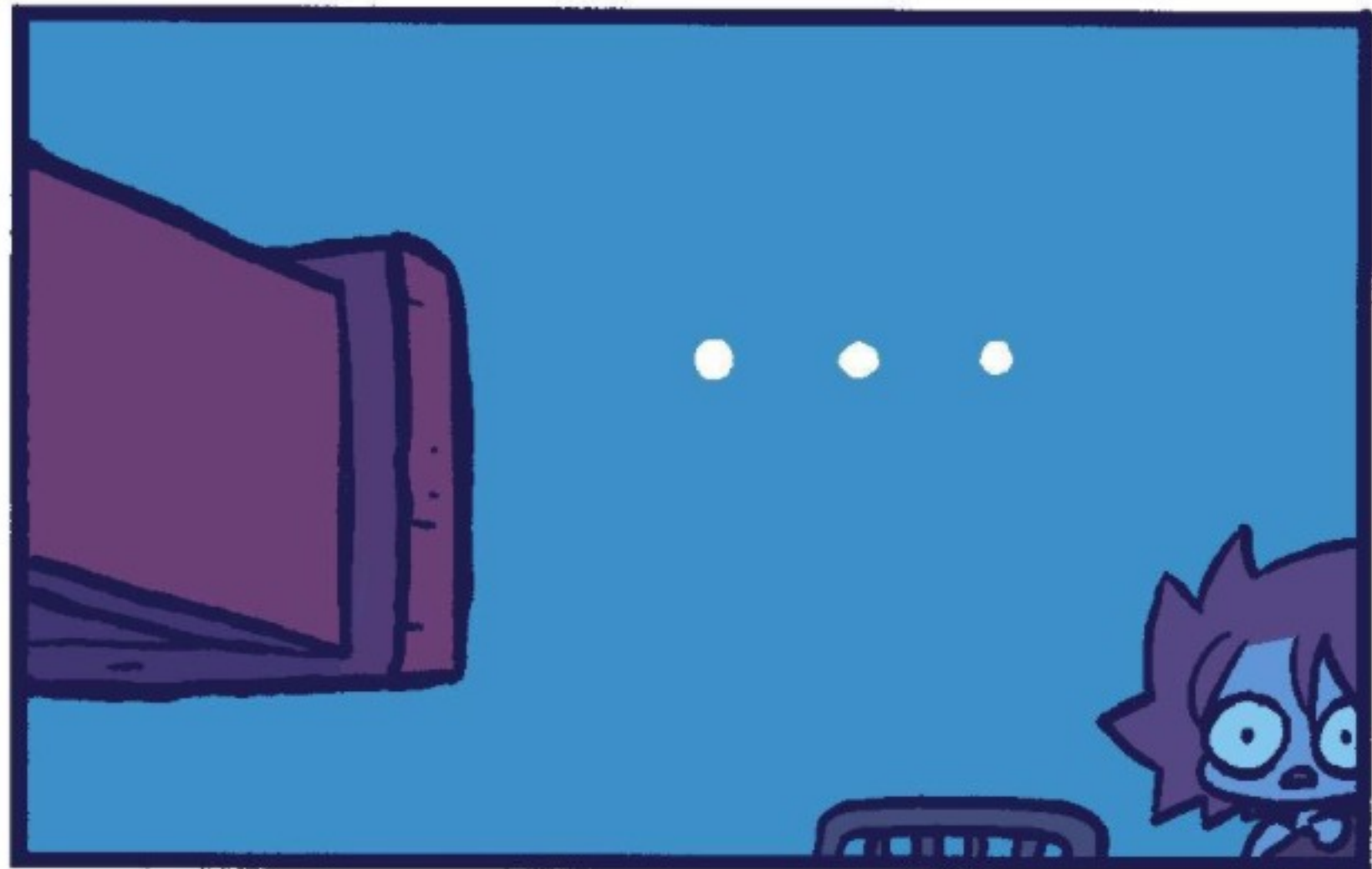
and
there
was a
glow.







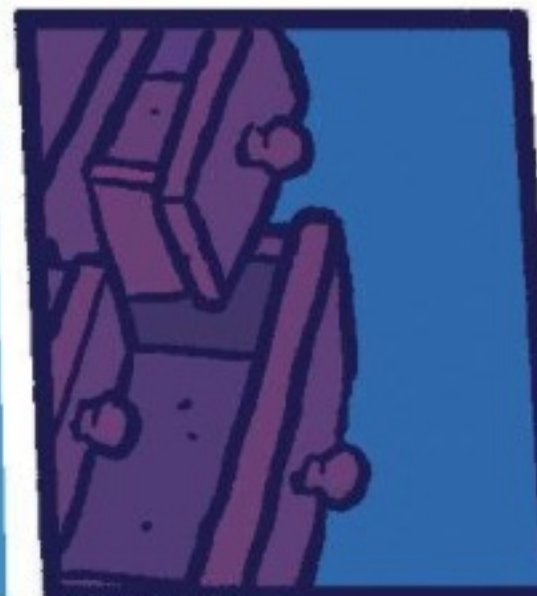




There was nothing inside.



Not
even
socks.



She woke up
the next morning
remembering
none of this.

1

Katie

Katie
was
stressed
out.

I'M
PERFECTLY
FINE.



She was
sleeping
too little,
worrying
too much,
feeling
old.

SHE WAS IN
HER TWENTIES
AND YOUNG
AND TOTALLY
GREAT.



At 29, she
felt like
everything
was
slipping
away.

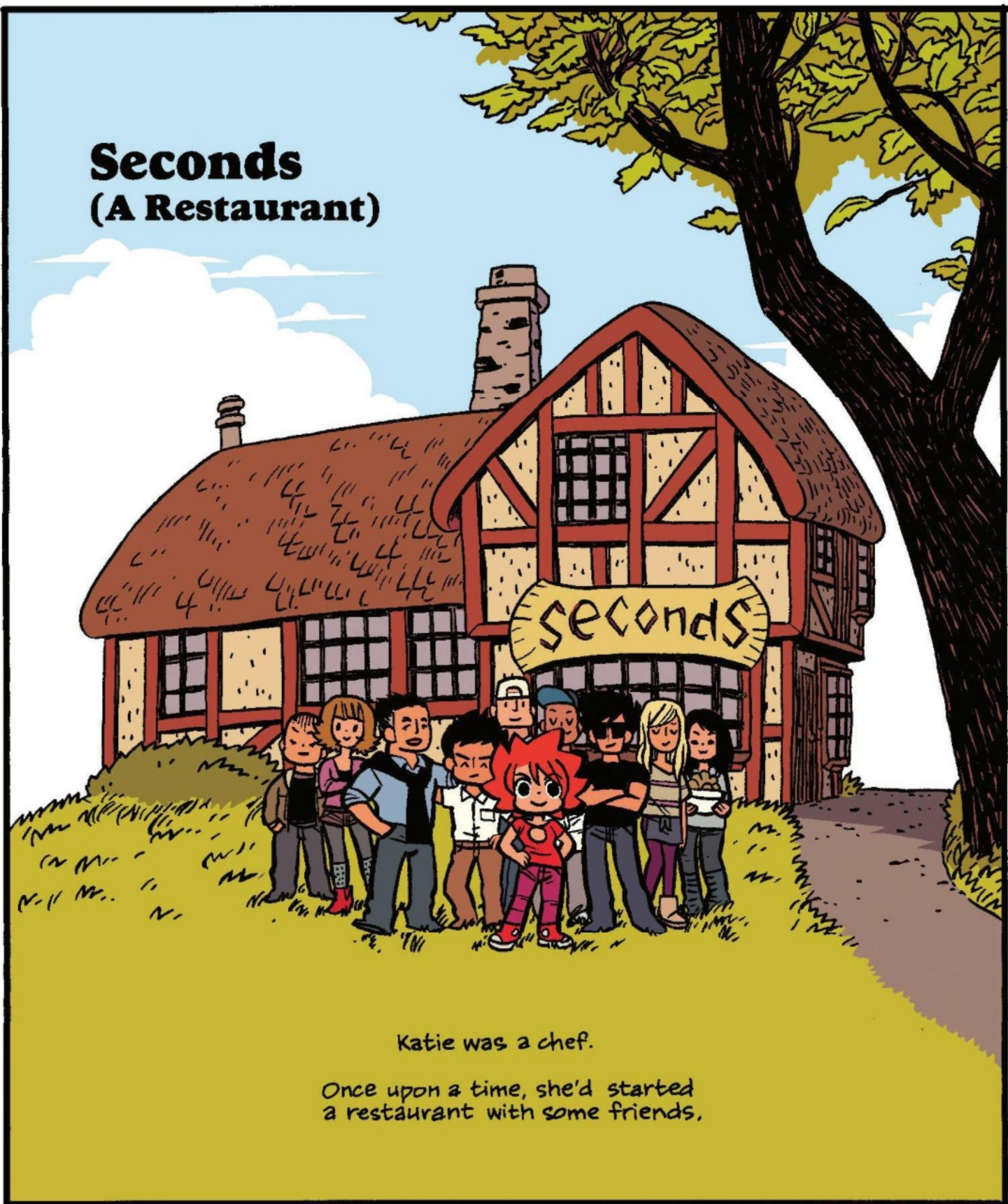
HM,
NO.



...and
she was
talking to
herself
more
than
usual.



Seconds (A Restaurant)



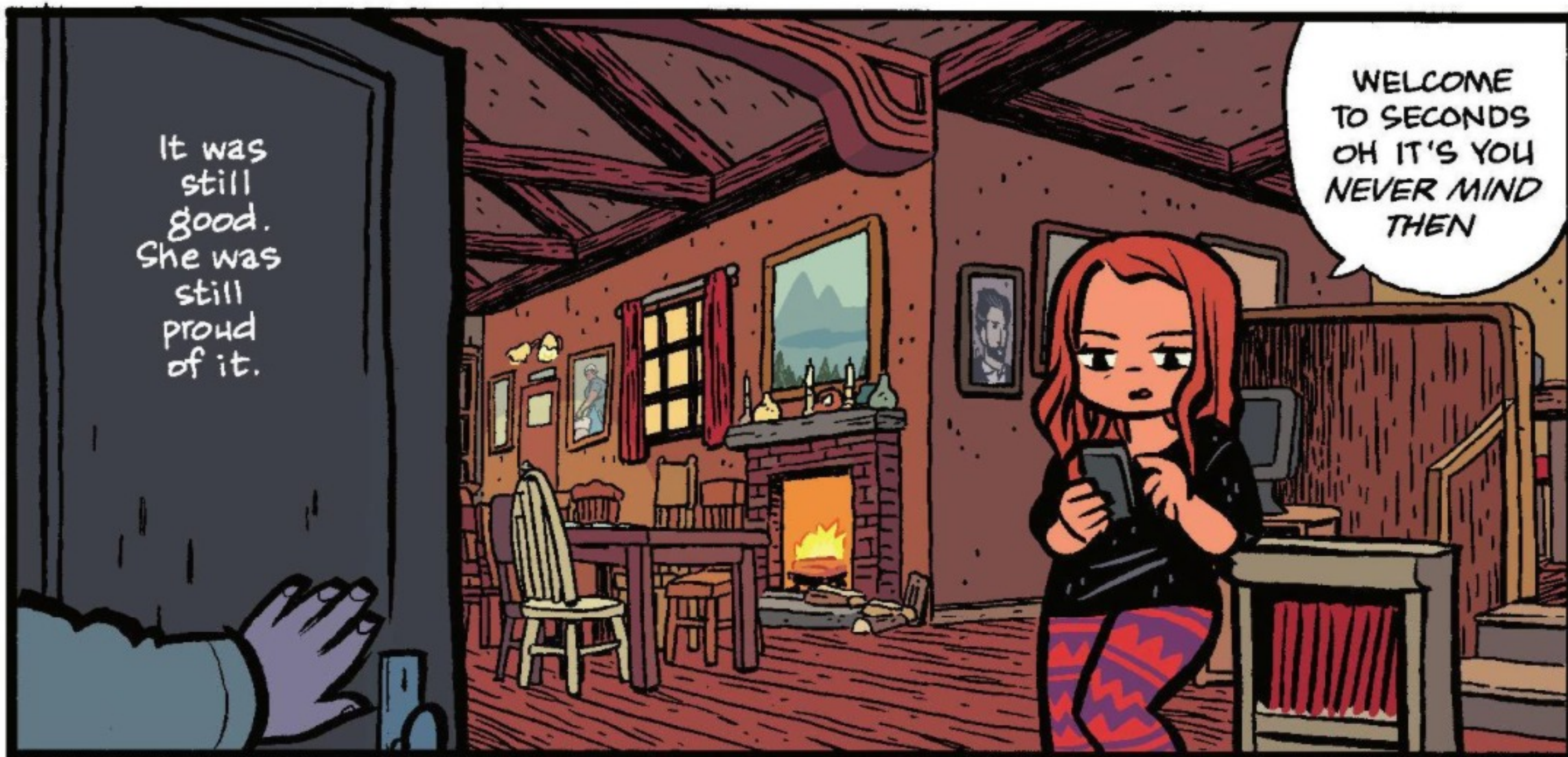
Katie was a chef.

Once upon a time, she'd started
a restaurant with some friends.

February
(Four Years Later)



Most of her friends
had since moved on.



For this and a billion other reasons, Katie was starting a new restaurant.



22 Lucknow Street
(across the river)

Ancient, decrepit, the building had been empty since she was a kid.

It was falling apart, but there'd always been something magical about it all the same.





It
would
all be
real
soon.
Real
and
perfect.

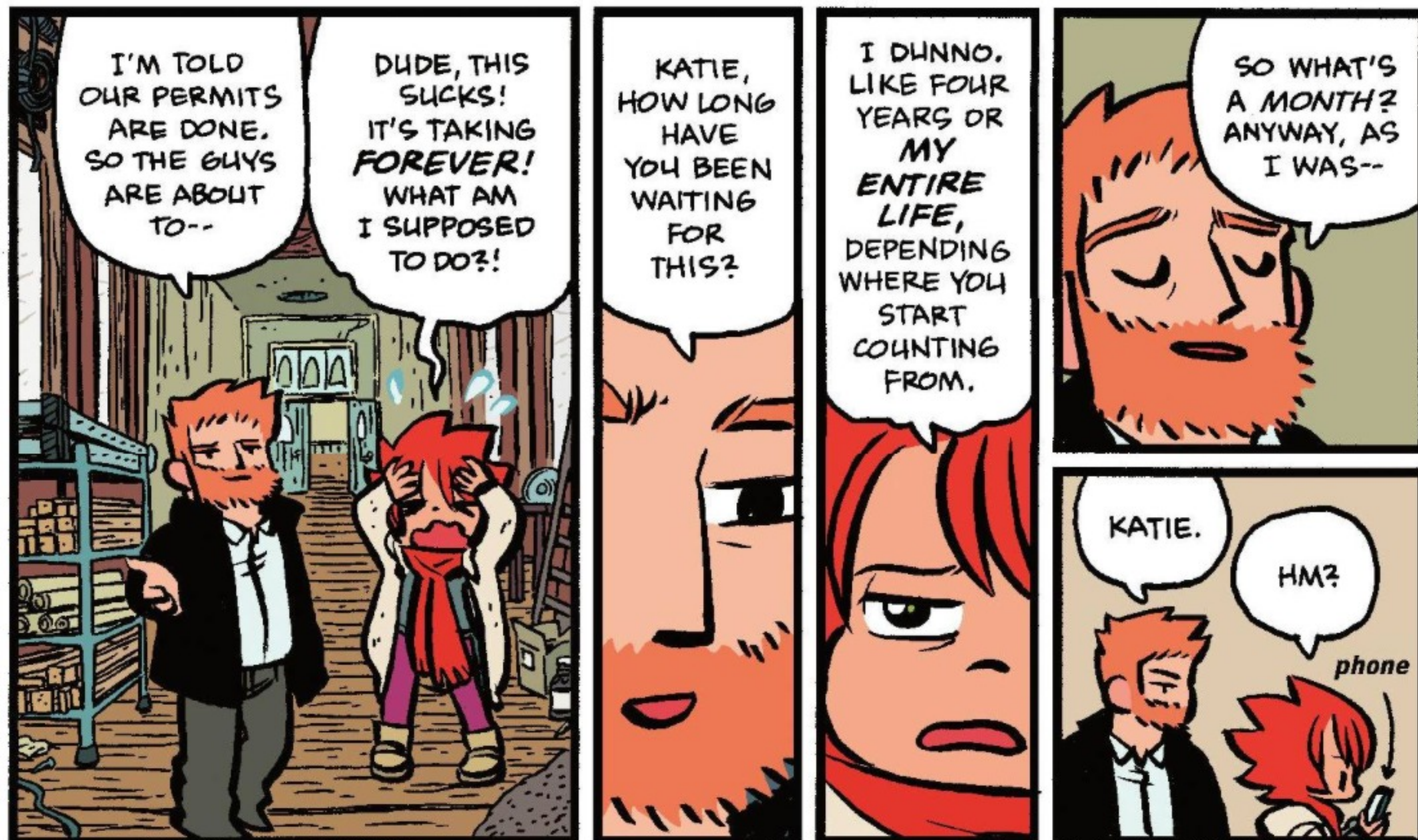
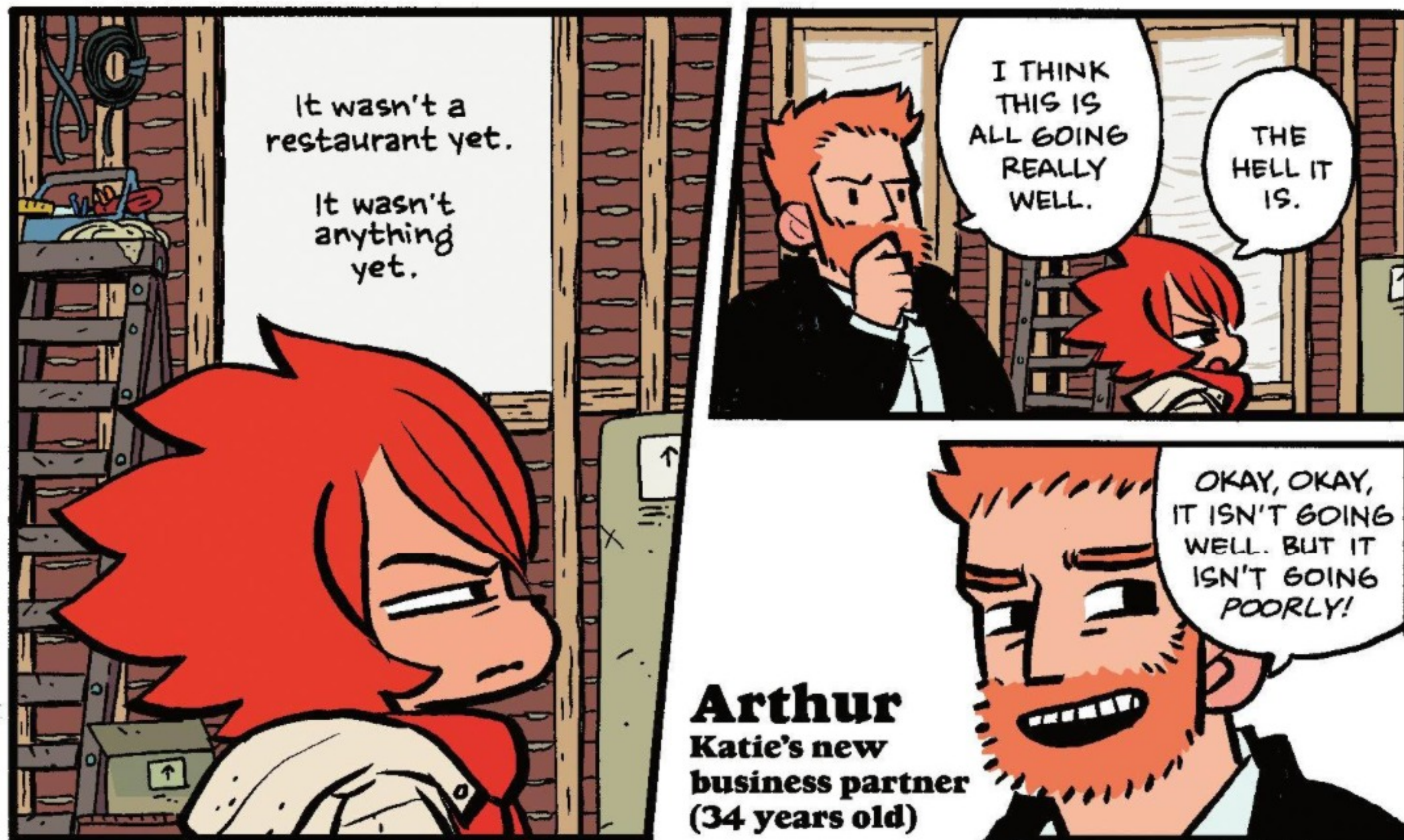
She
could
see it.
The
space.
The
light.
The
happy
people.



But
right now
the space
was all
insulation
and
exposed
pipes.

The
light
was
filled
with
sawdust.

Instead
of happy
diners
she had
boring
construction
dudes.





Lucknow
was her
everything.
Or anyway
it was going
to be her
everything.

She'd
fought
for the
location:

Wrong
side of
the river.

Tucked
away
under
the big
bridge.

It was
an up-and-
coming
spot, she
swore.



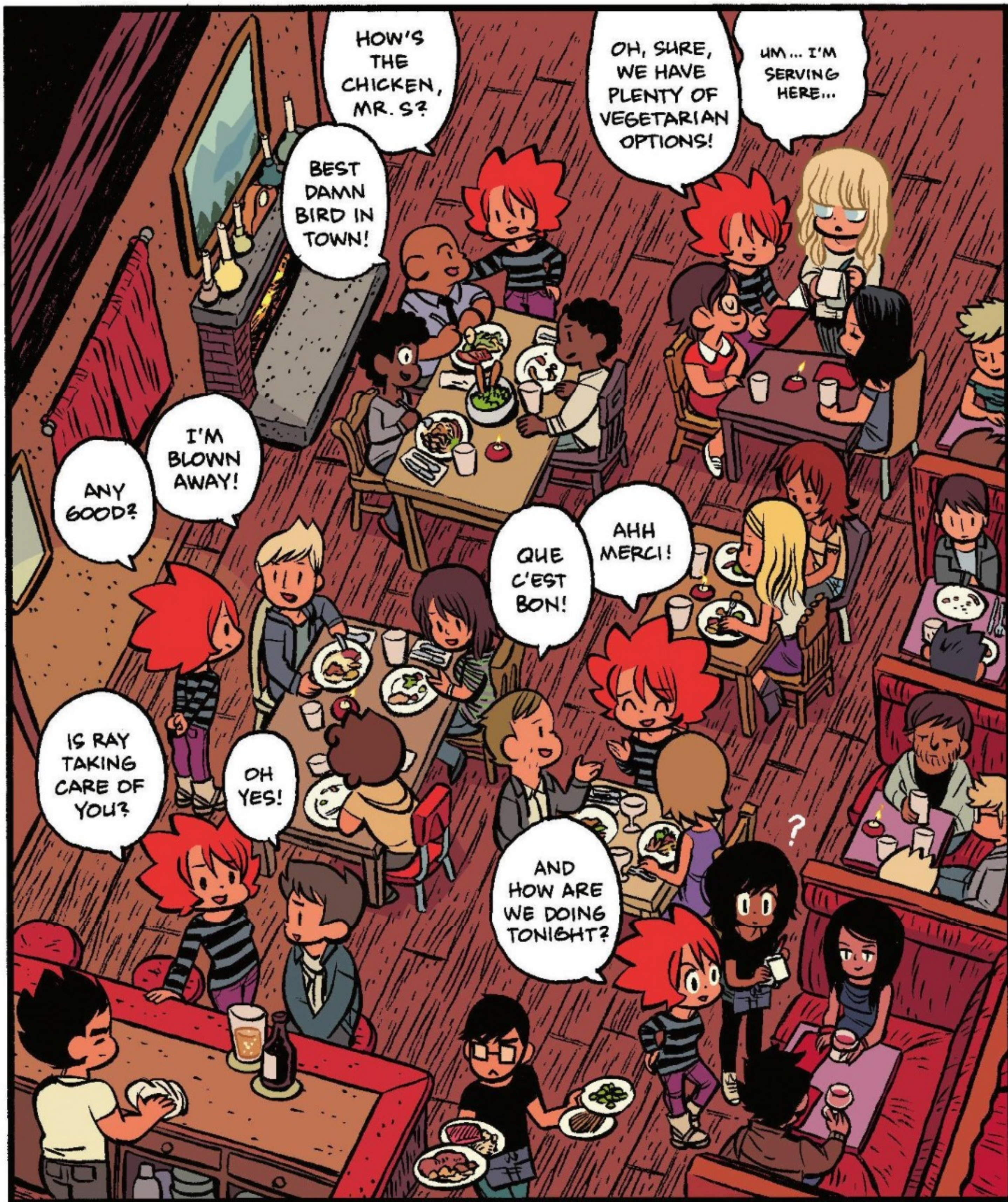
She drove back and
forth sometimes four,
five times a day.

As if one of these
times she'd cross that
little bridge and find
a finished restaurant.













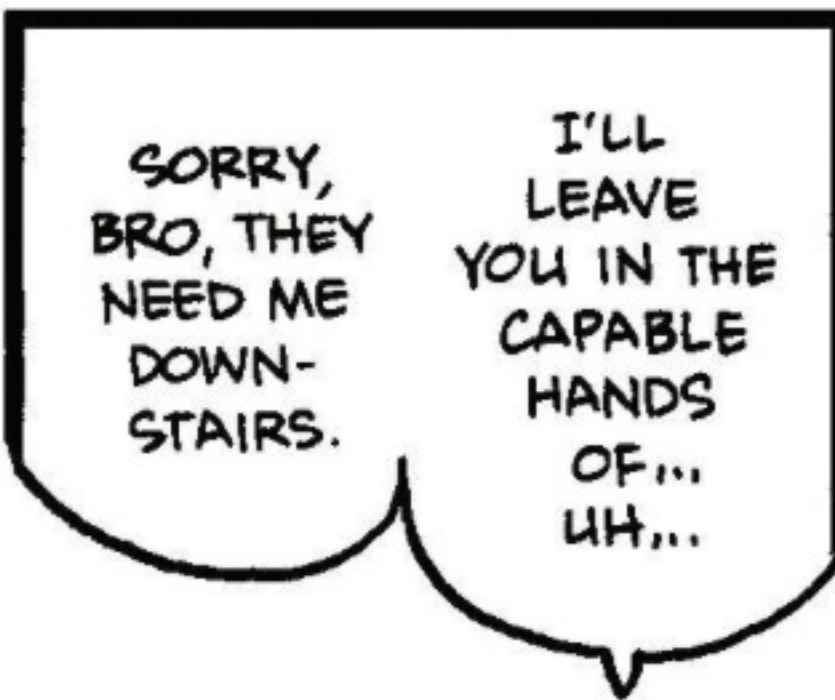
Katie melted.







SO, KATIE,
UM, IF YOU
HAVE A
MINUTE,
MAYBE WE
COULD--



KATIE...
GIVE ME
A CHANCE
HERE.



I'M
LITERALLY
TOO BUSY
TO KEEP
TALKING.

TIME IS
MONEY,
MAX!

OH
PLEASE!



Katie
was
an
idiot.

WHAT?
NO. THAT
WAS SO
SMOOTH.



Was that
really his
sister?

Had so much
time passed?



WHO
EVEN
CARES?
NOT
ME.

Seconds was in an old building, and most of the magic happened down in the basement (purely out of necessity).



For four years
she'd dreamed of
a bright, airy
kitchen, and at
Lucknow she'd
finally get it.

She really
couldn't
wait.





And she'd done it.

At Lucknow
Katie would be
an equal partner.
Just the thought
of it energized
her.



(Katie's dorky
imagination)

BUT IT'S
TAKING SOOO
MUCH LONGER
THAN I EVER
IMAGINED.

AND I
JUST

WANNA

COOOOK!

SO
COOK.
YOU'RE
THE ONE
WHO
INSISTED
ON
LEAVING.

I DON'T
WANNA COOK
HERE!
*CHOKED
SOB*

THREE MONTHS
TRAINING THE
NEW GUY AND
SCALING YOUR
HOURS BACK BIT
BY BIT. FINALLY
WE'RE PHASING
YOUR ASS OUT.
YET HERE YOU
ARE.

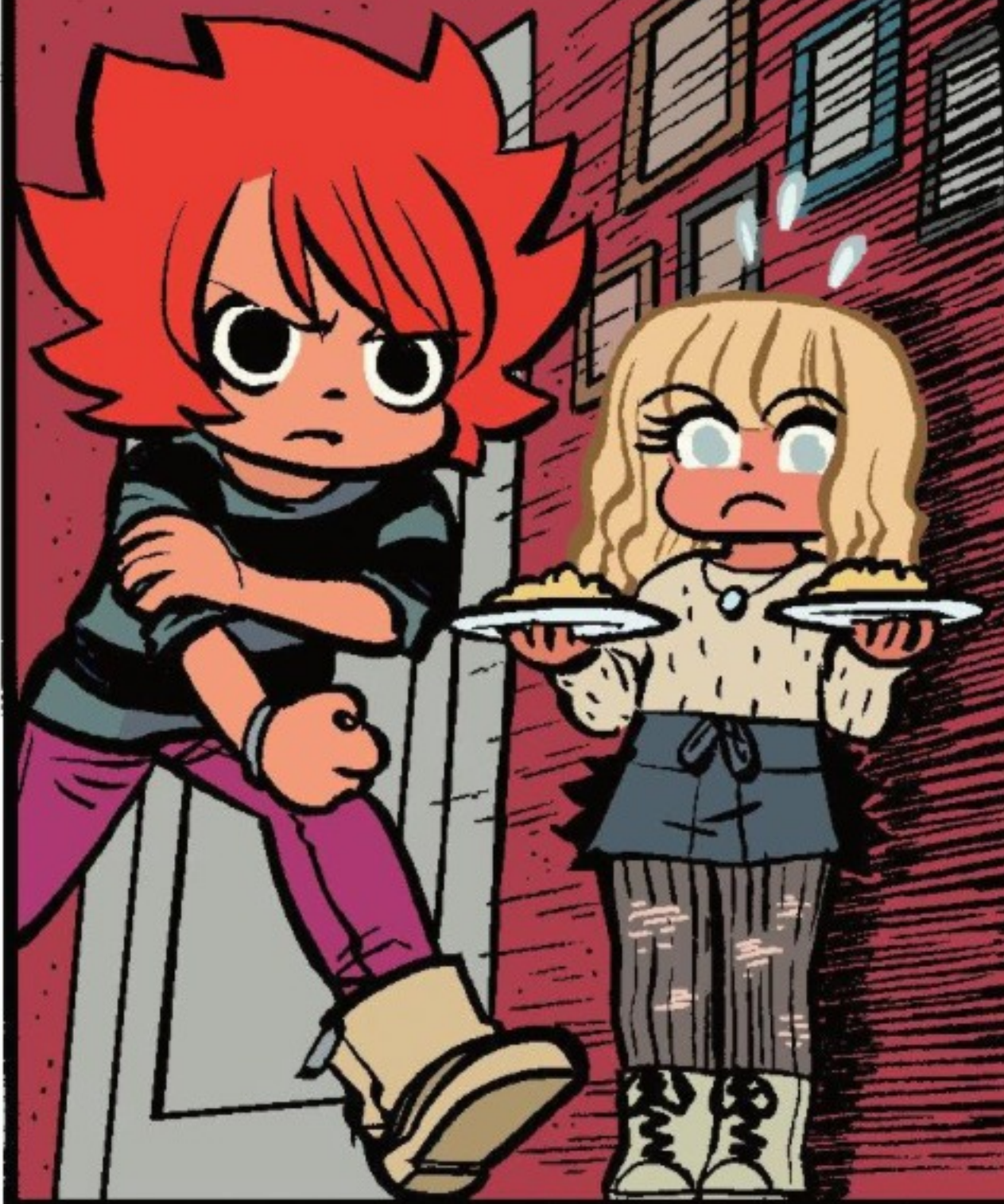
YOU
KNOW
YOU'RE
JUST
GETTING
IN THE
WAY
NOW,
RIGHT?

OFTEN
LITERALLY.

MOAANN

(IMPORTANT
PAPERWORK)

She wasn't chef anymore, or kitchen manager, or really anything. But she still acted like the boss, and the new babies at Seconds treated her accordingly.

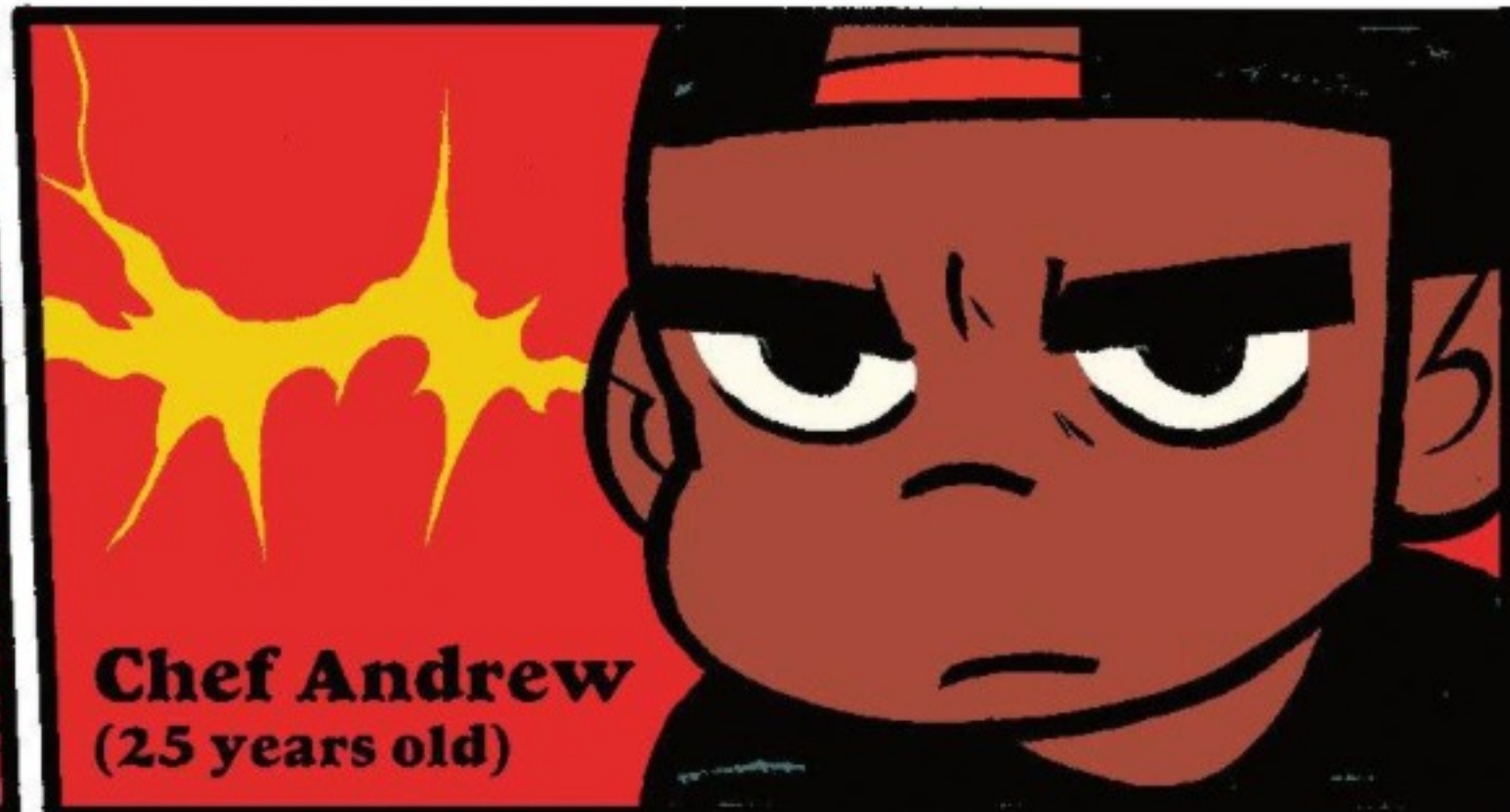


She'd hand-picked her successor.

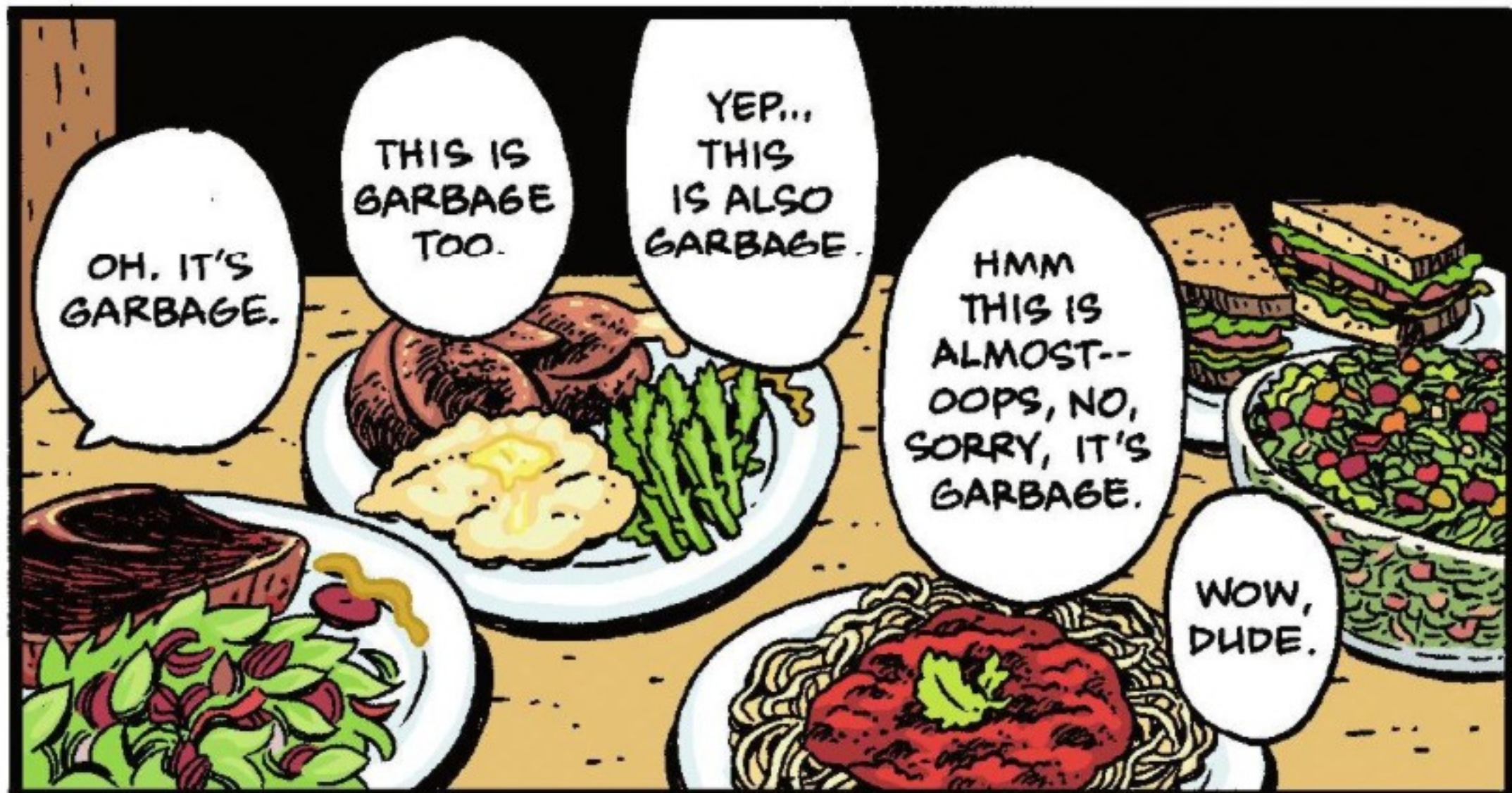


Plucked him from obscurity.

He was young, talented, hard-working. He could have been her protégé. Instead he was... not.



AND WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE?



OH. IT'S GARBAGE.

THIS IS GARBAGE TOO.

YEP... THIS IS ALSO GARBAGE.

HMM THIS IS ALMOST-- OOPS, NO, SORRY, IT'S GARBAGE.

WOW, DUDE.





OOH, I
LIKE IT
WHEN YOU
TOUCH
MY
GARNISH,
BABY.

UGH... DON'T
RUIN THIS
WITH YOUR
SASS-
MOUTH.

YOU DON'T
LIKE THE
SASS-MOUTH?
MAYBE YOU
SHOULD GET
YOUR SASS-
TONGUE OUT
OF MY SASS-
THROAT.



GET
IT?

SERIOUSLY,
SHUT THE
HELL UP.

Katie and
Andrew were
having a
thing.

No
big
deal.



Even though she wasn't technically Andrew's boss anymore, it still felt wrong.

DON'T REMIND ME.

REMIND YOU OF WHAT?



Max-- well, Max wasn't entirely out of the picture. Max was upstairs. Max had maybe inspired this chain of events.

JUST LET ME ENJOY THIS.



WOW, REALLY? YOU'RE SAYING THAT?



NO, I-- SORRY. I'VE JUST GOT A LOT ON MY MIND RIGHT NOW.

PLEASE PROCEED.



WAIT WAIT WAIT. YOU'RE NOT EVEN INTO THIS! YOU DON'T EVEN **DESERVE** THIS!



It always started as a fight. It always ended that way too.



In between, it had its moments.



This time it was the beginning of something else entirely.



Hazel
(21 years old)



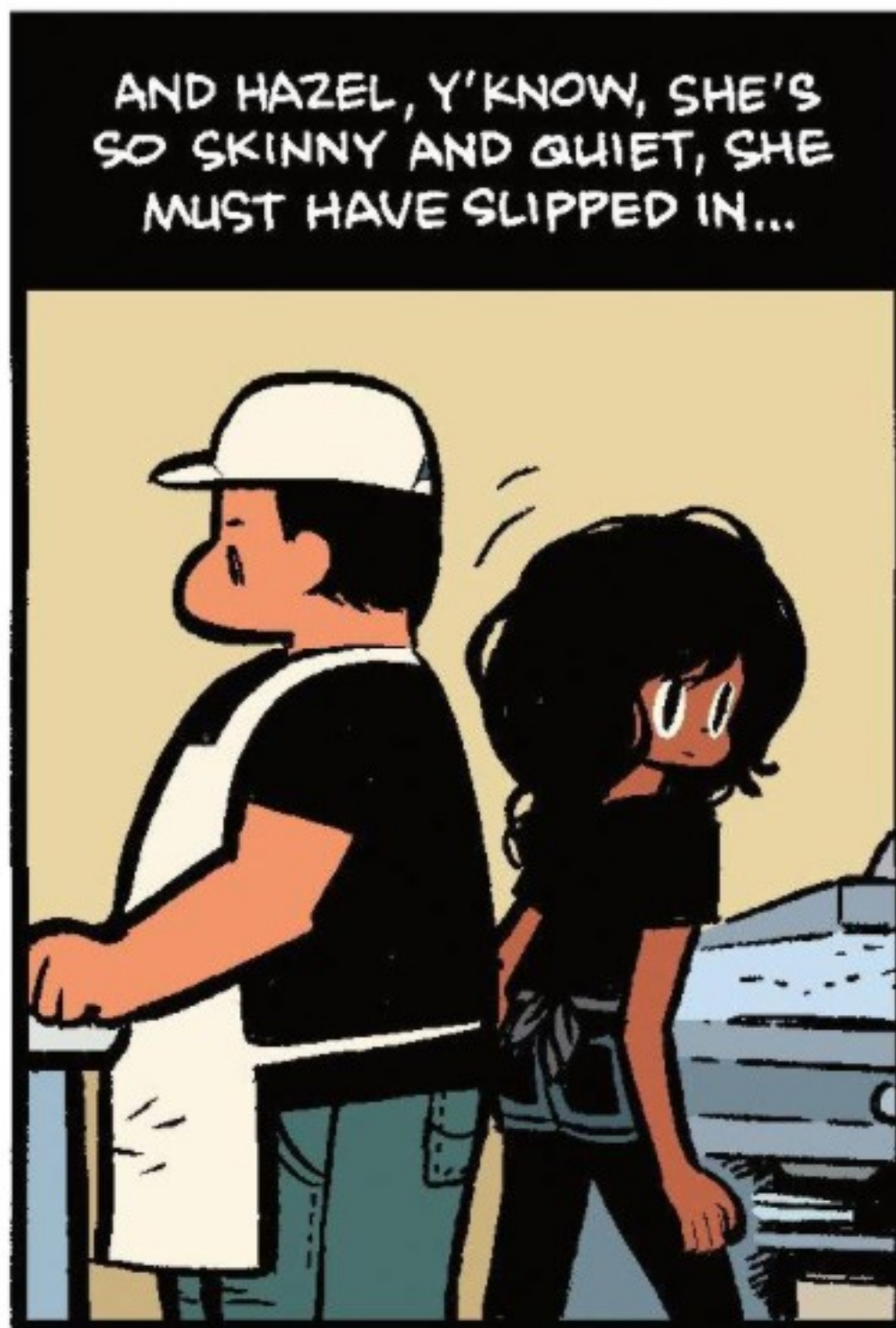
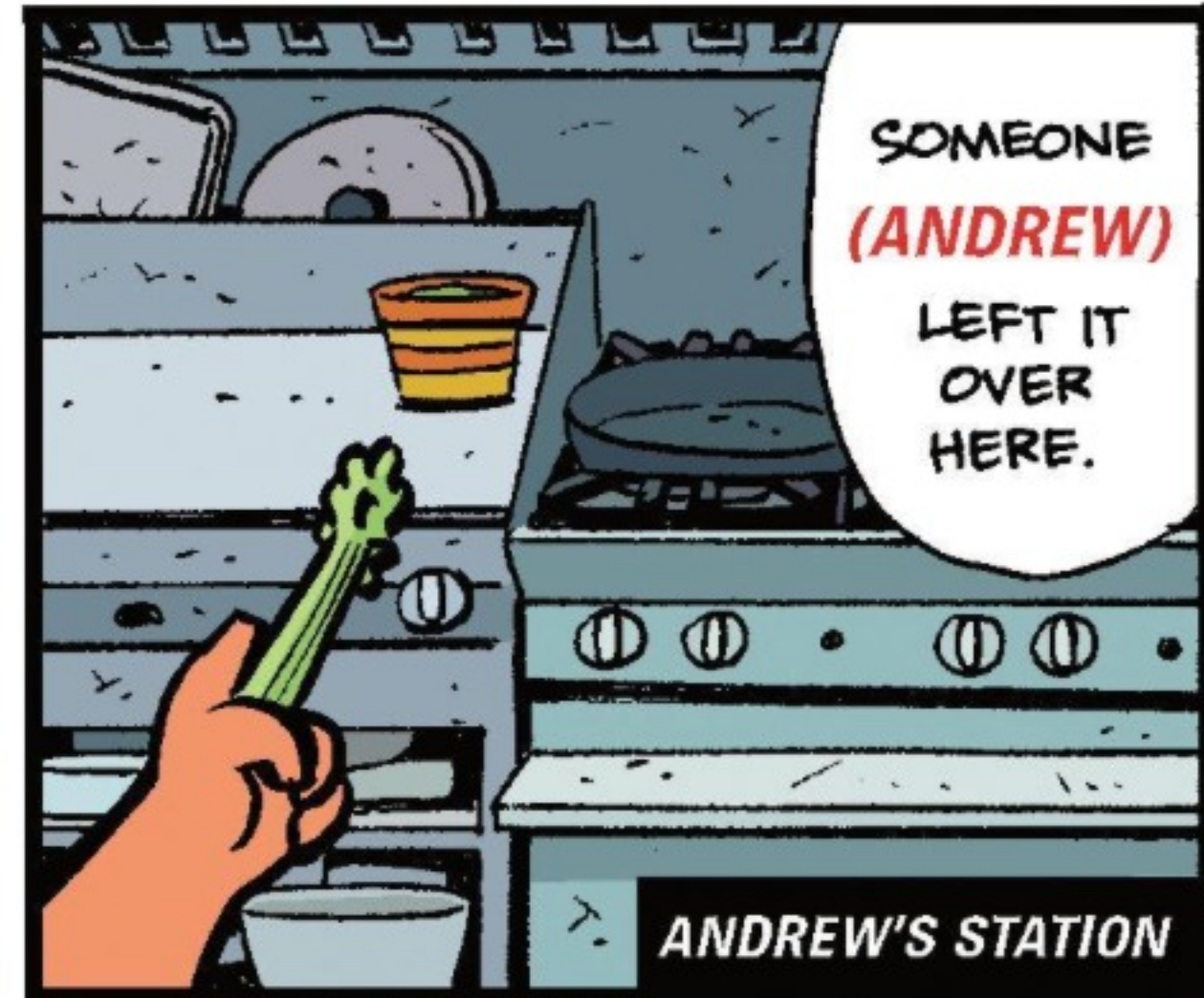


Apparently what had happened was this:

UMM,
LIKE, I
GUESS SHE
CAME IN
TO GET THE
PARSLEY?



Patrick
Line cook
(22 years old)



They kept Hazel overnight at the hospital (mostly, the doctor said, because she kept fainting at the sight of herself).



Going home was easy; she lived two floors up. She'd been renting the tiny upstairs apartment from Ray for the past four years.



It must have been three in the morning.



How
could
things



have
gone
so
wrong?

SHFF

She'd fallen
asleep.

Now, hearing
that strangely
familiar sound,

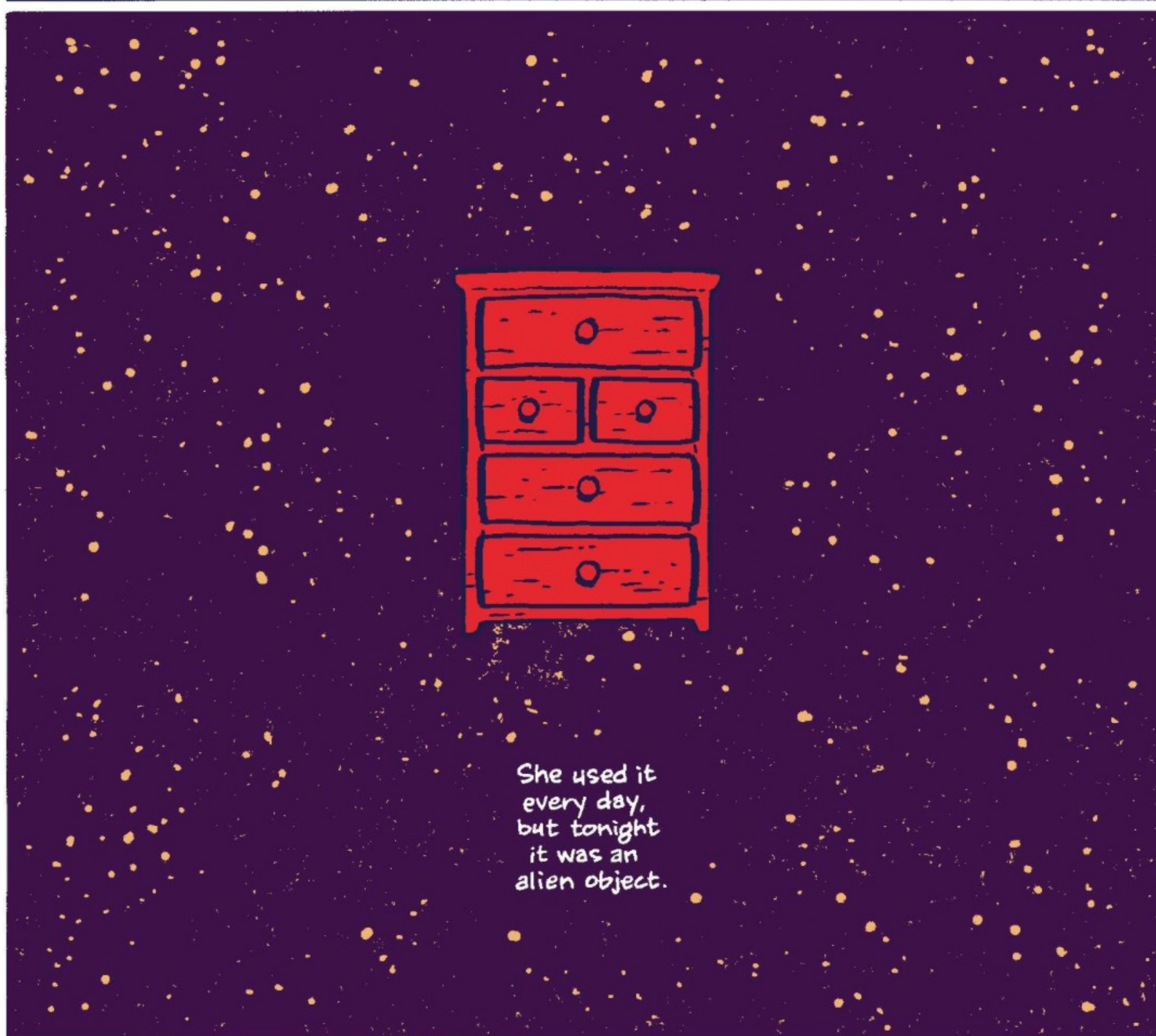
she
remembered
the dream,
the girl,

the
dresser.



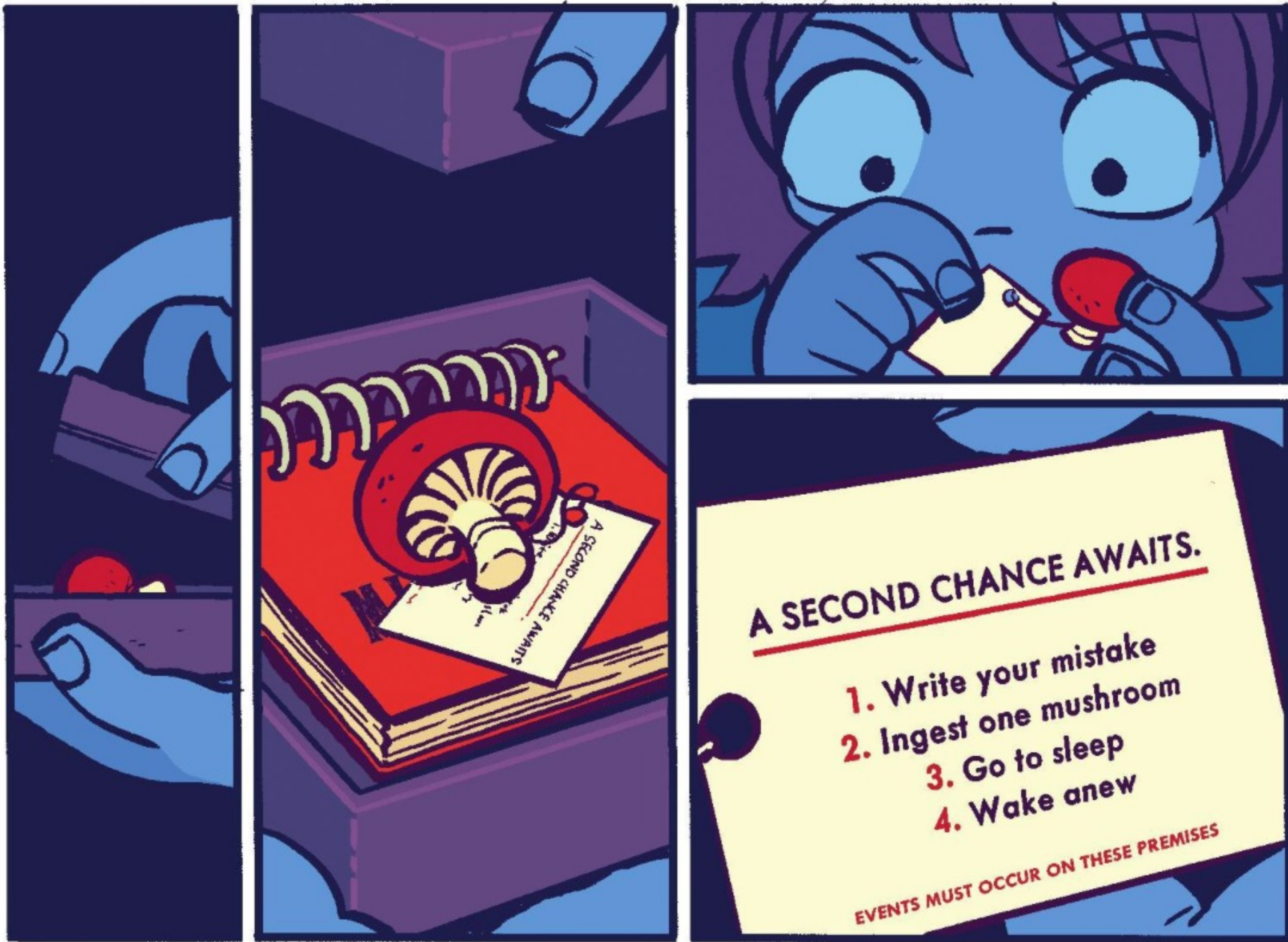
It had
been
there
when she
moved
in.

Maybe
it had
always
been
there.



She used it
every day,
but tonight
it was an
alien object.





Contents of the little box:



*notebook titled
"MY MISTAKES"*



*one (1)
mysterious
red-capped
mushroom*



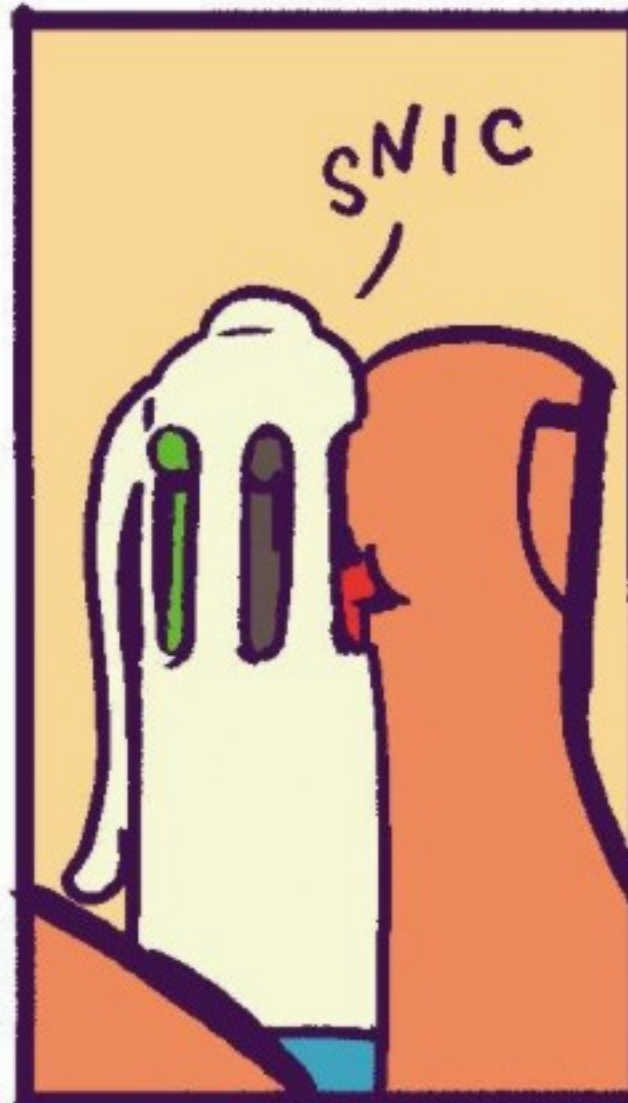
*immaculately
printed
instruction
card*



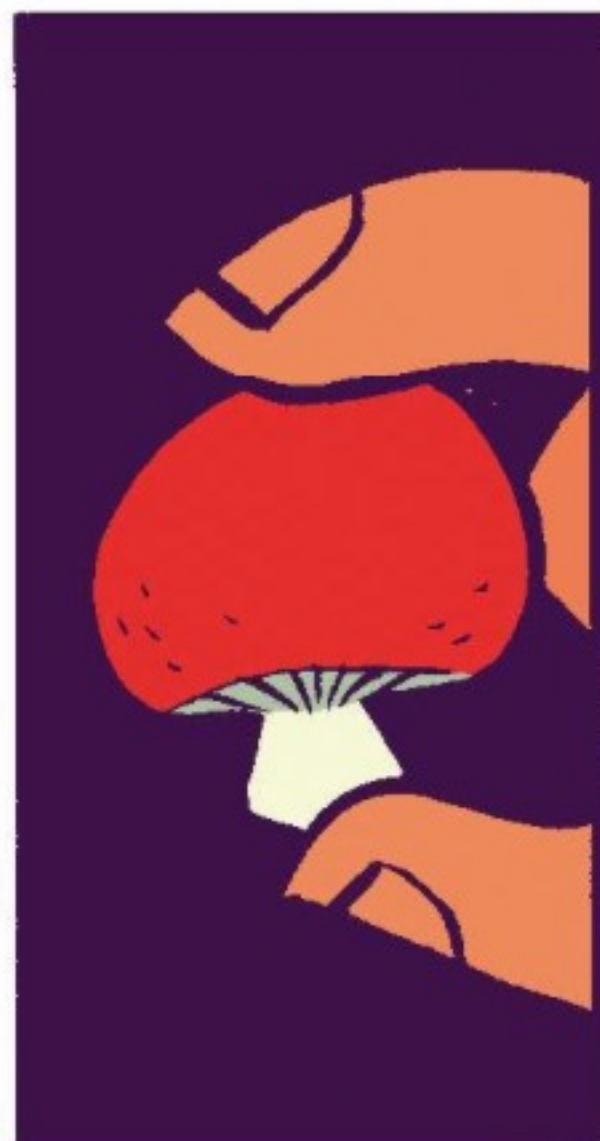
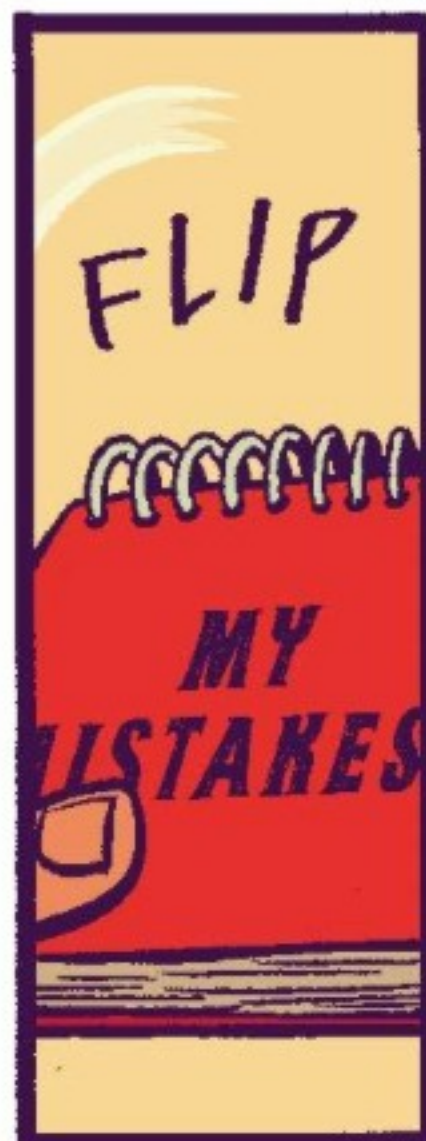
The notebook felt old, like something from an earlier era.



Judging by the heft of it, some of its pages had been removed at some point in the past.



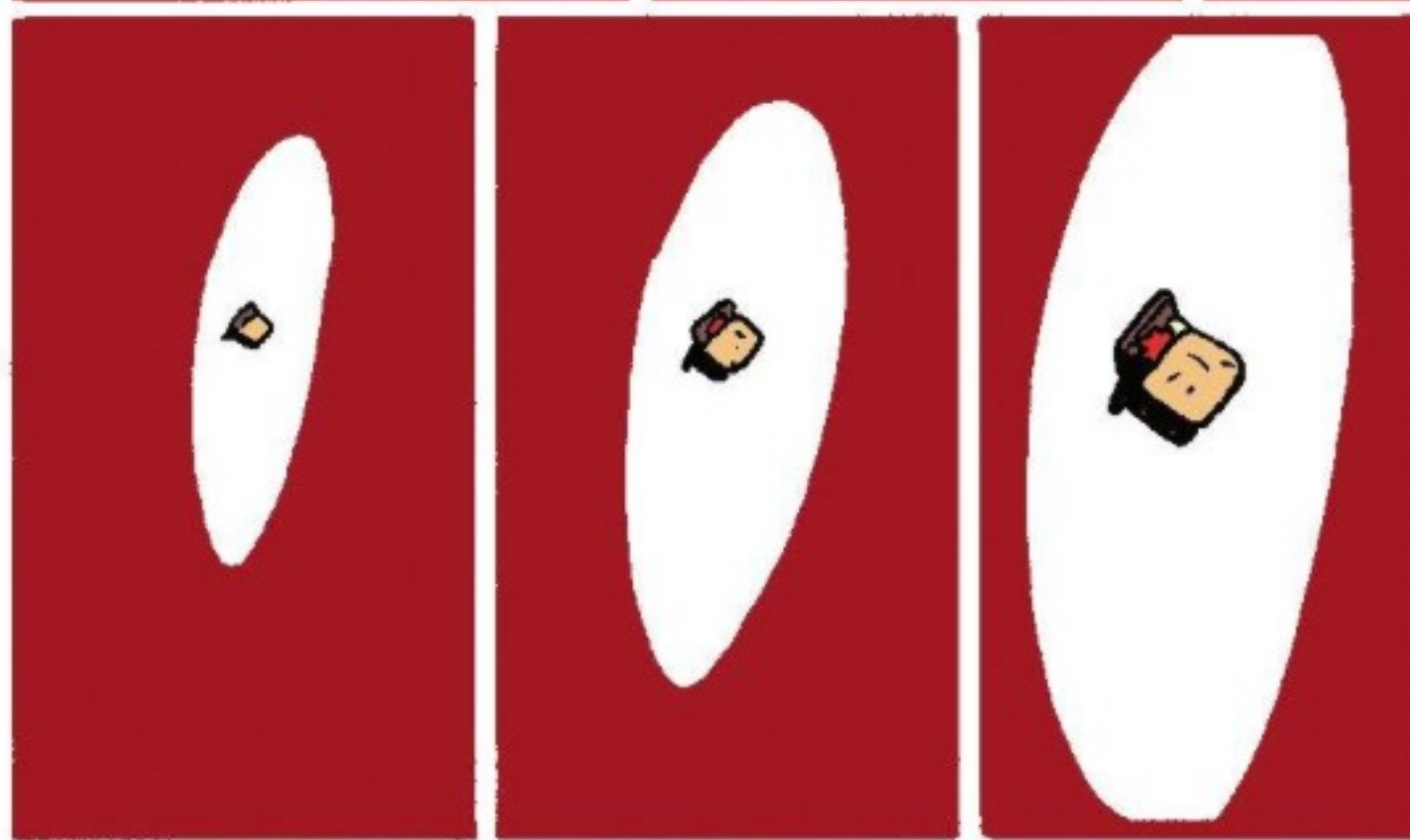
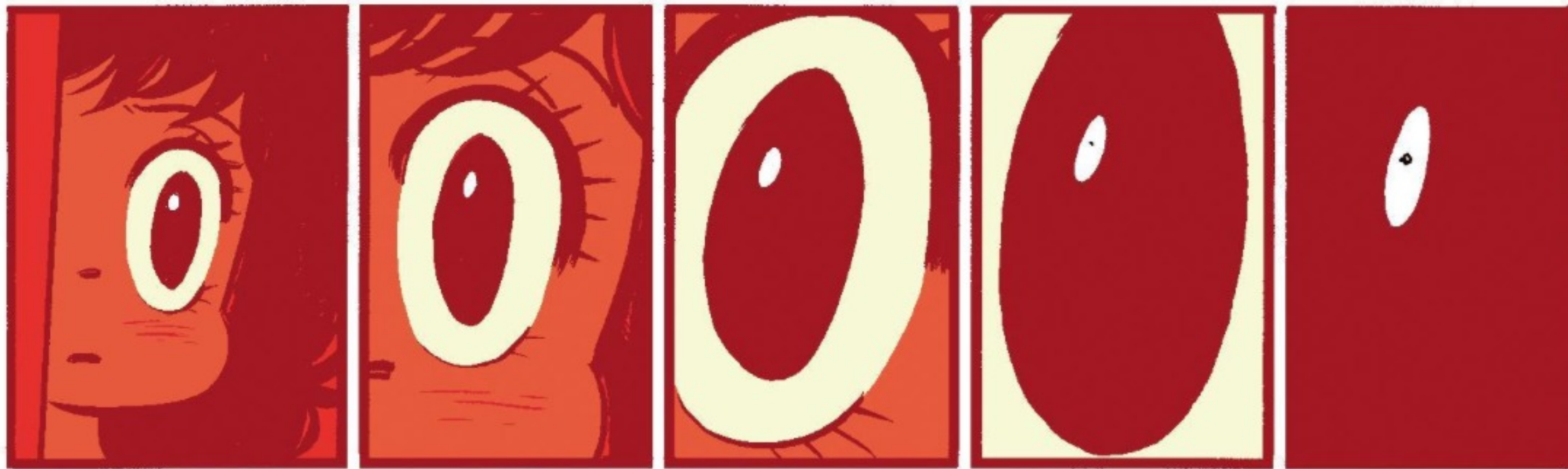
Her favorite pen. So familiar in her hand. She hadn't seen it since the third day of high school.



REVISION #1







She
woke
up.



and
something
had
changed.

2

Hazel

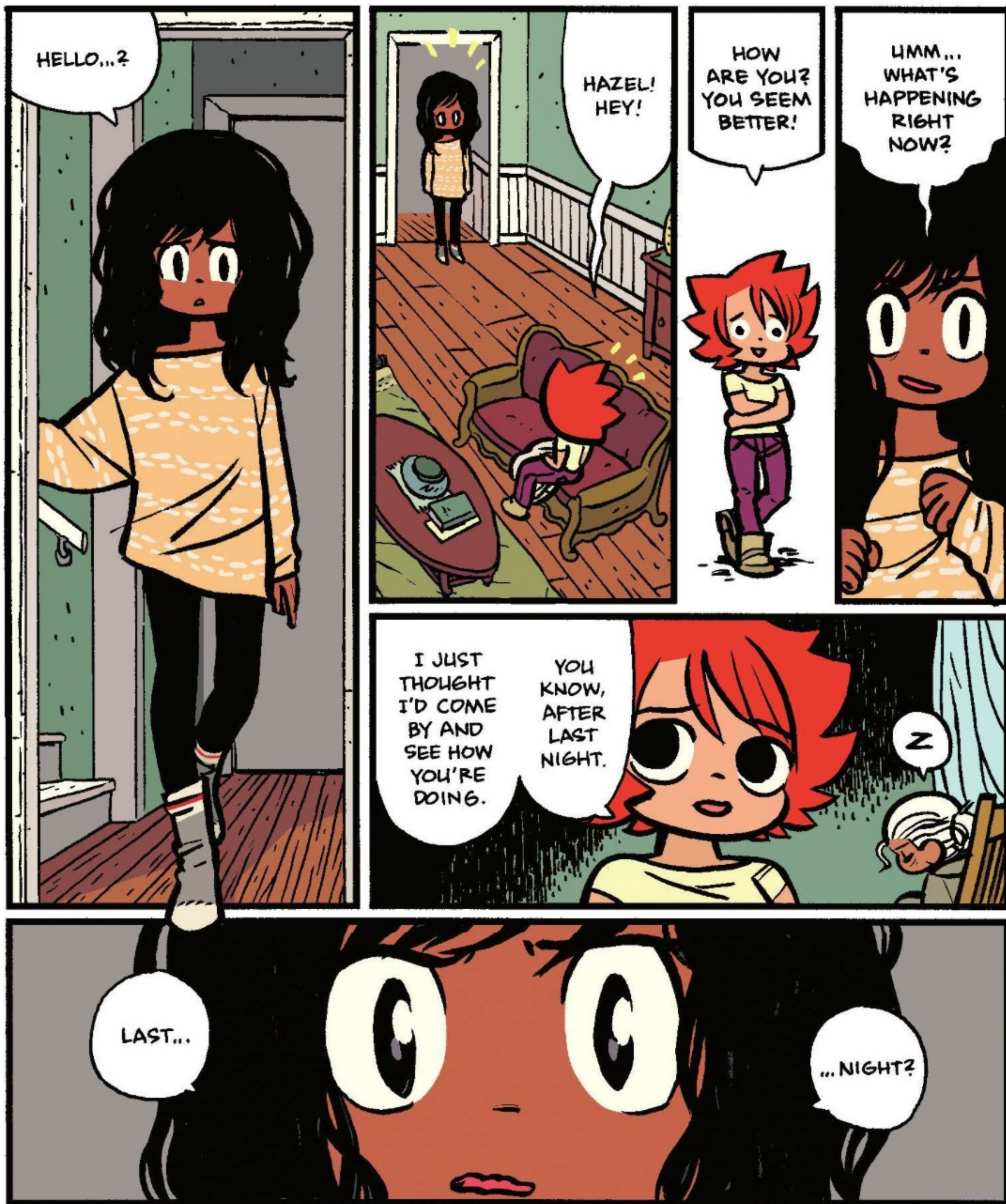




Katie found the girl's address in a three-month-old unread work email (re: new staff).

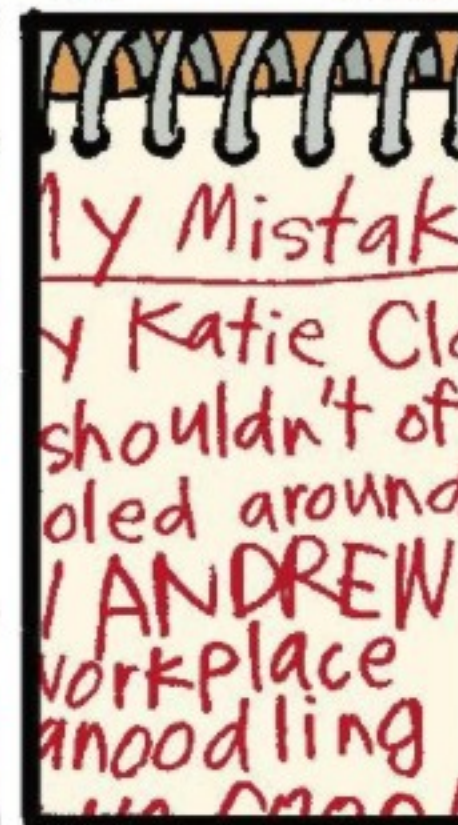
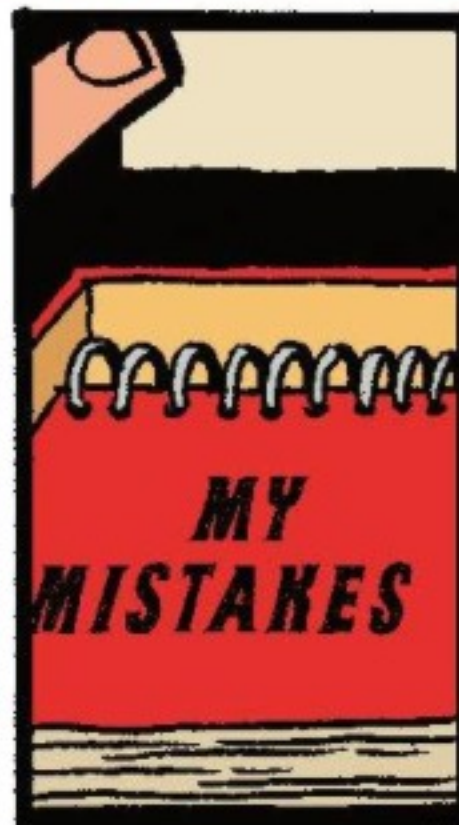














So, to recap:



Katie ate a mushroom that she'd found in her dresser drawer in the middle of the night



and either she was losing her mind



or she'd changed the universe.



But



something HAD changed.



would
be
stuck
in her
mind
for a
long
time.



Katie
had
fixed
it.



And
it
seemed
like
she
was
the
only
one
who
knew.



She quickly realized that Hazel was probably universally hated for the following reasons:





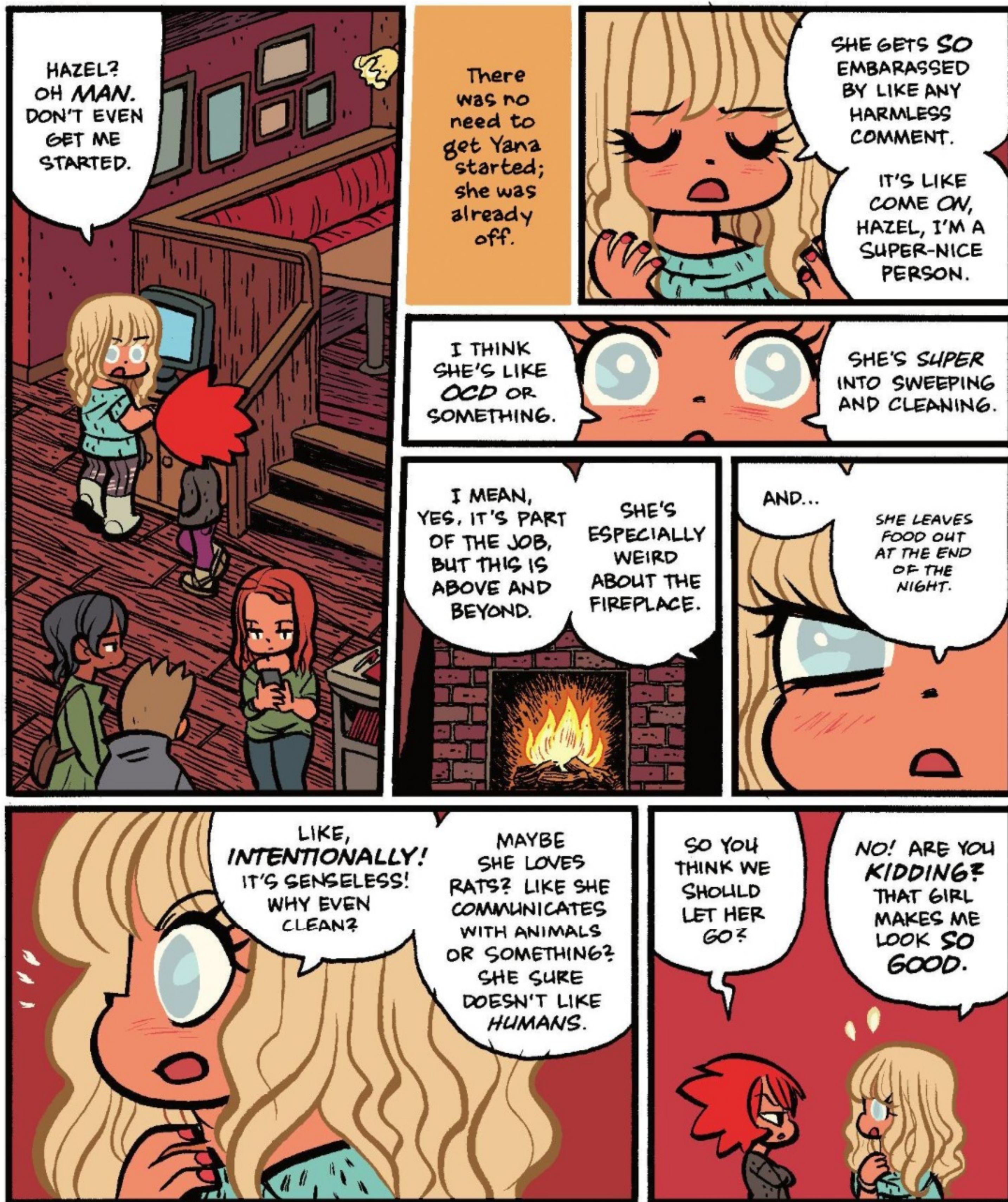
COMPARE & CONTRAST:

Yana
(21 this August)

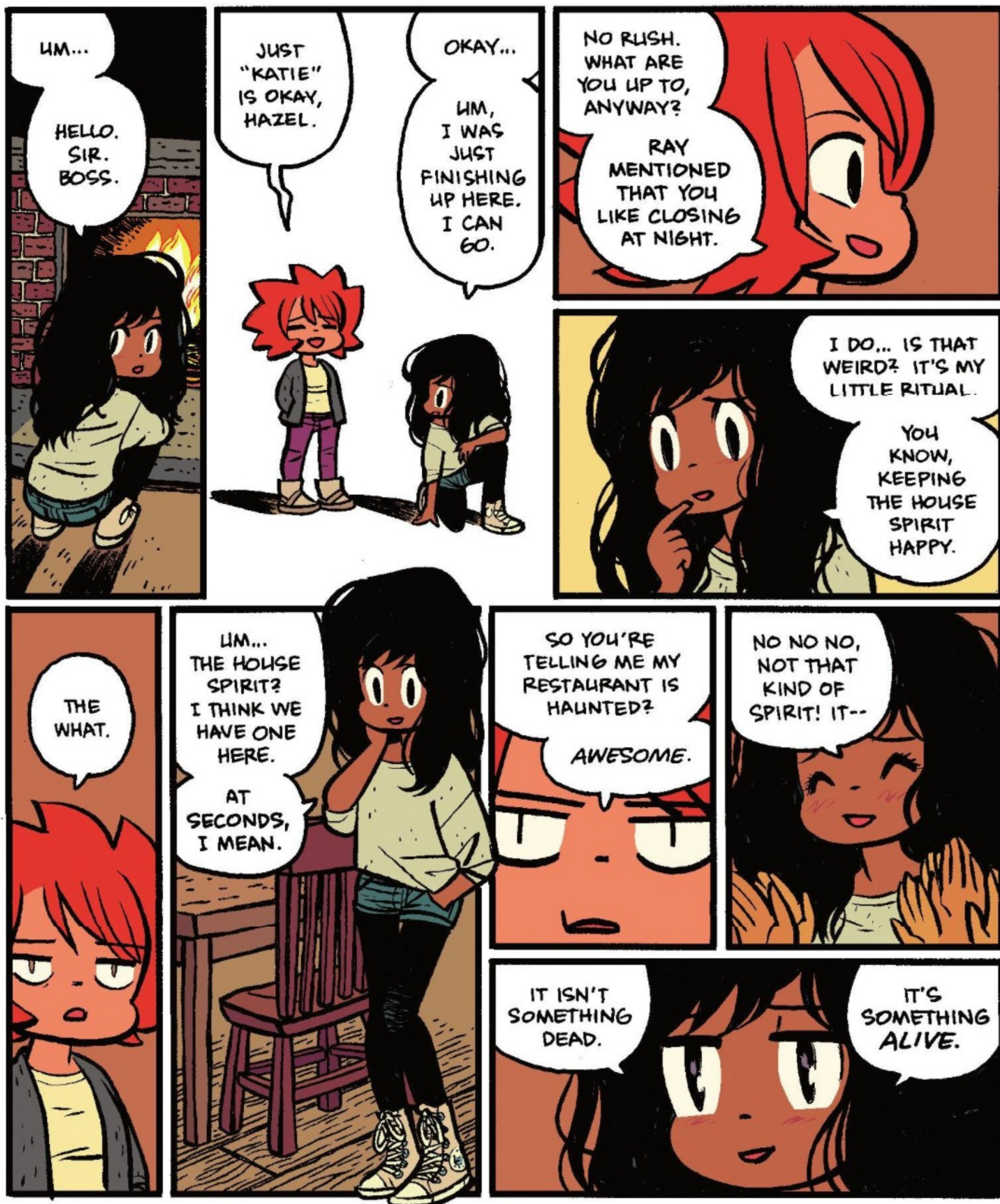


Hazel
(just turned 21)







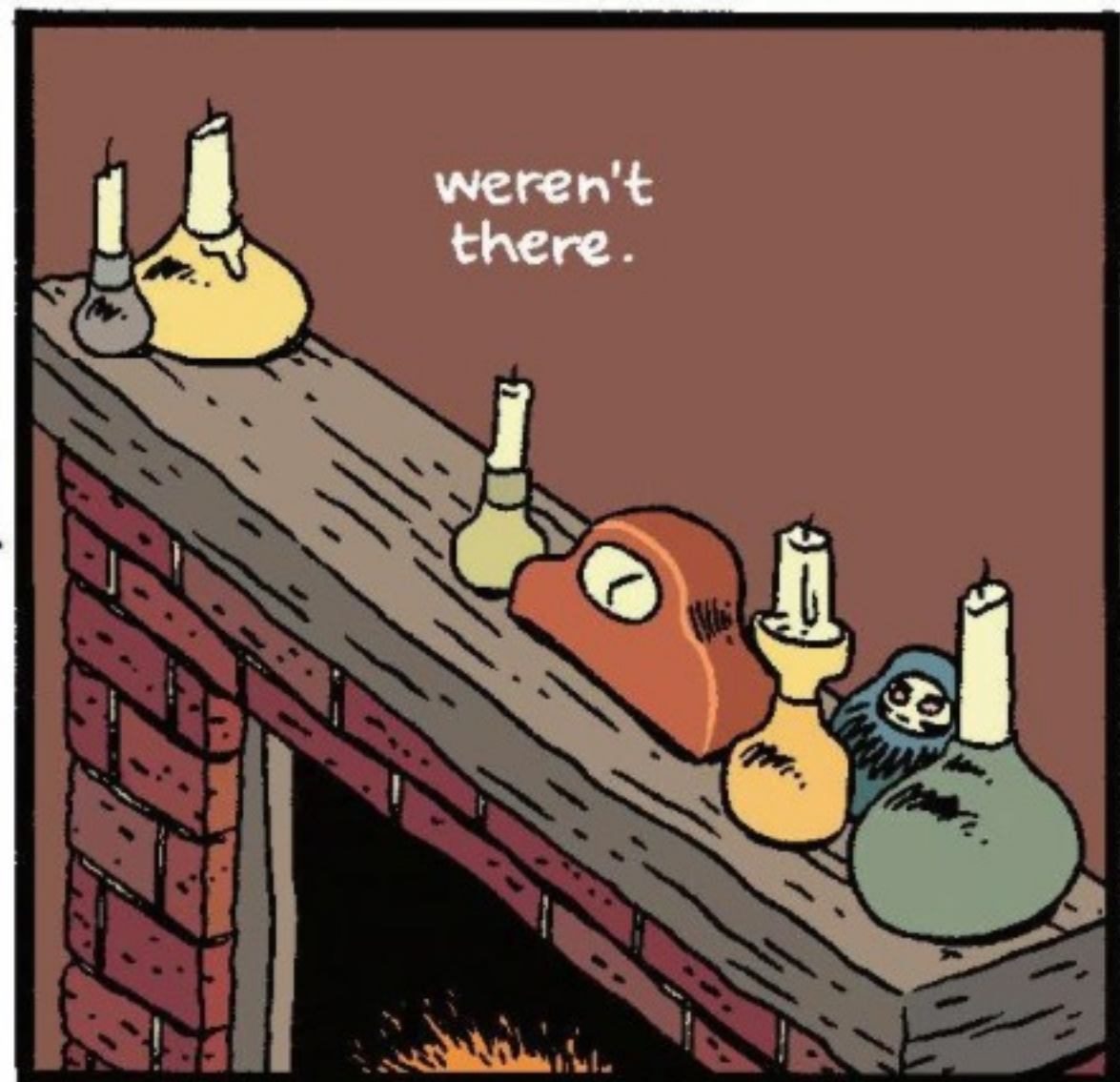
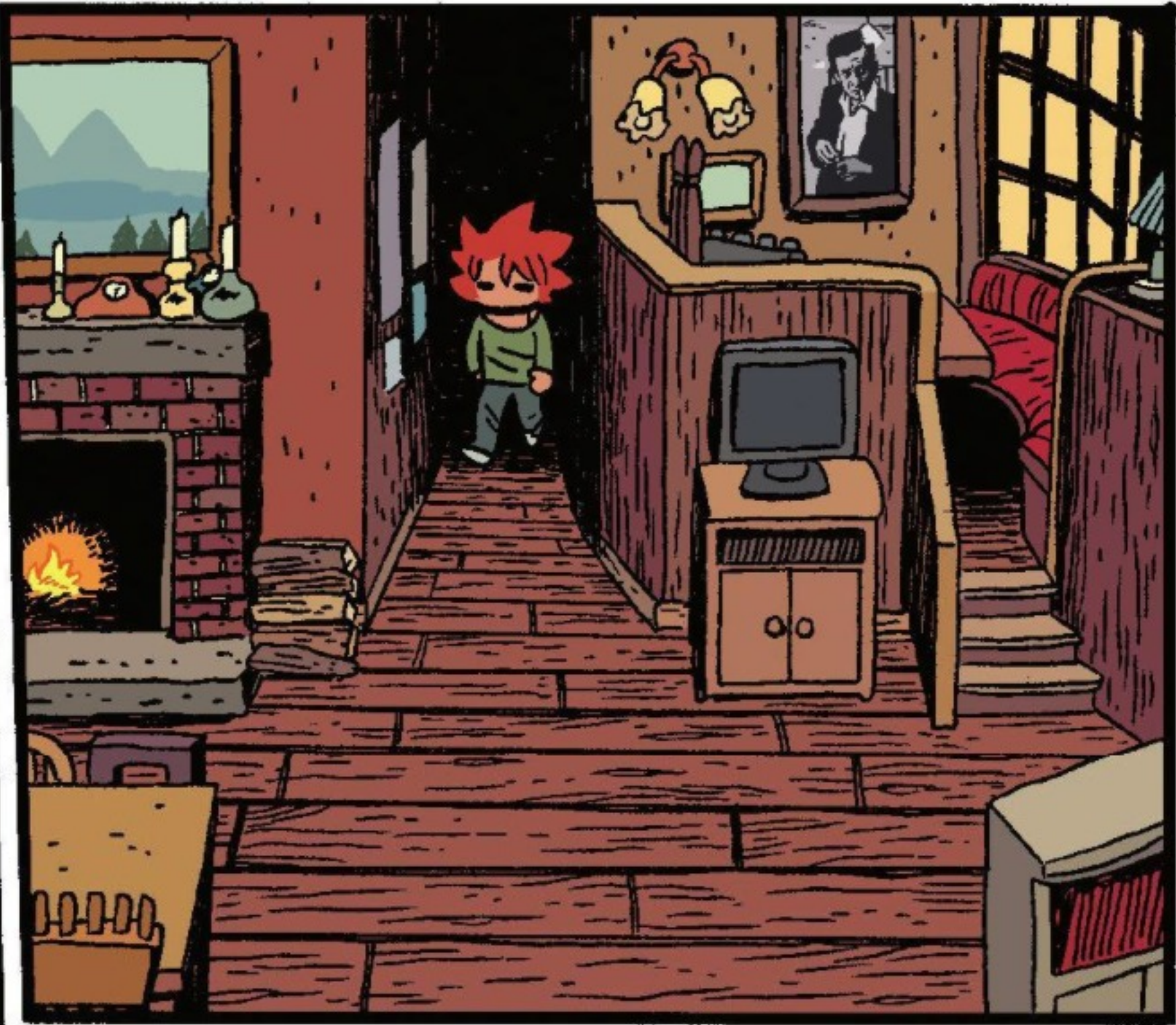














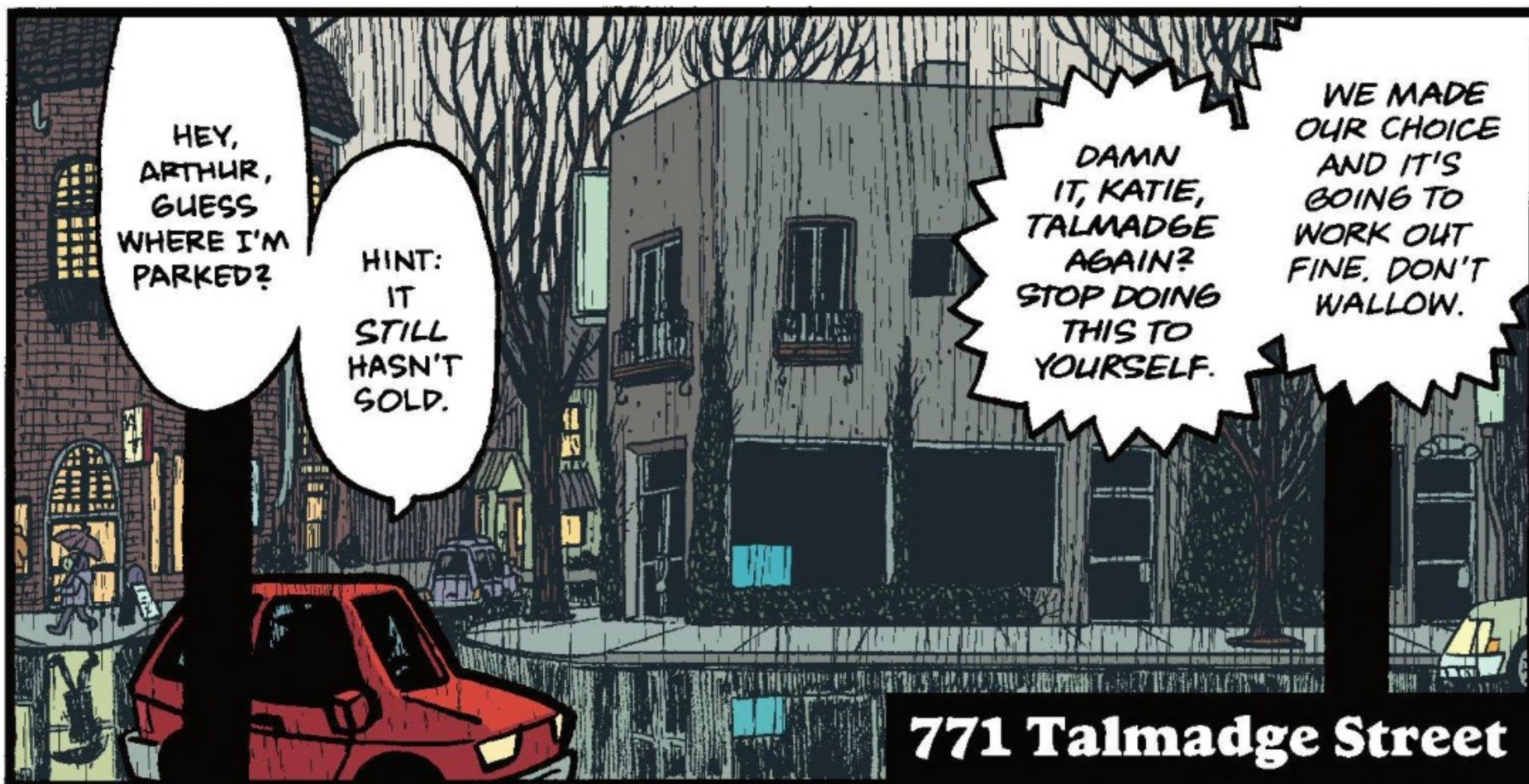


B

Lis

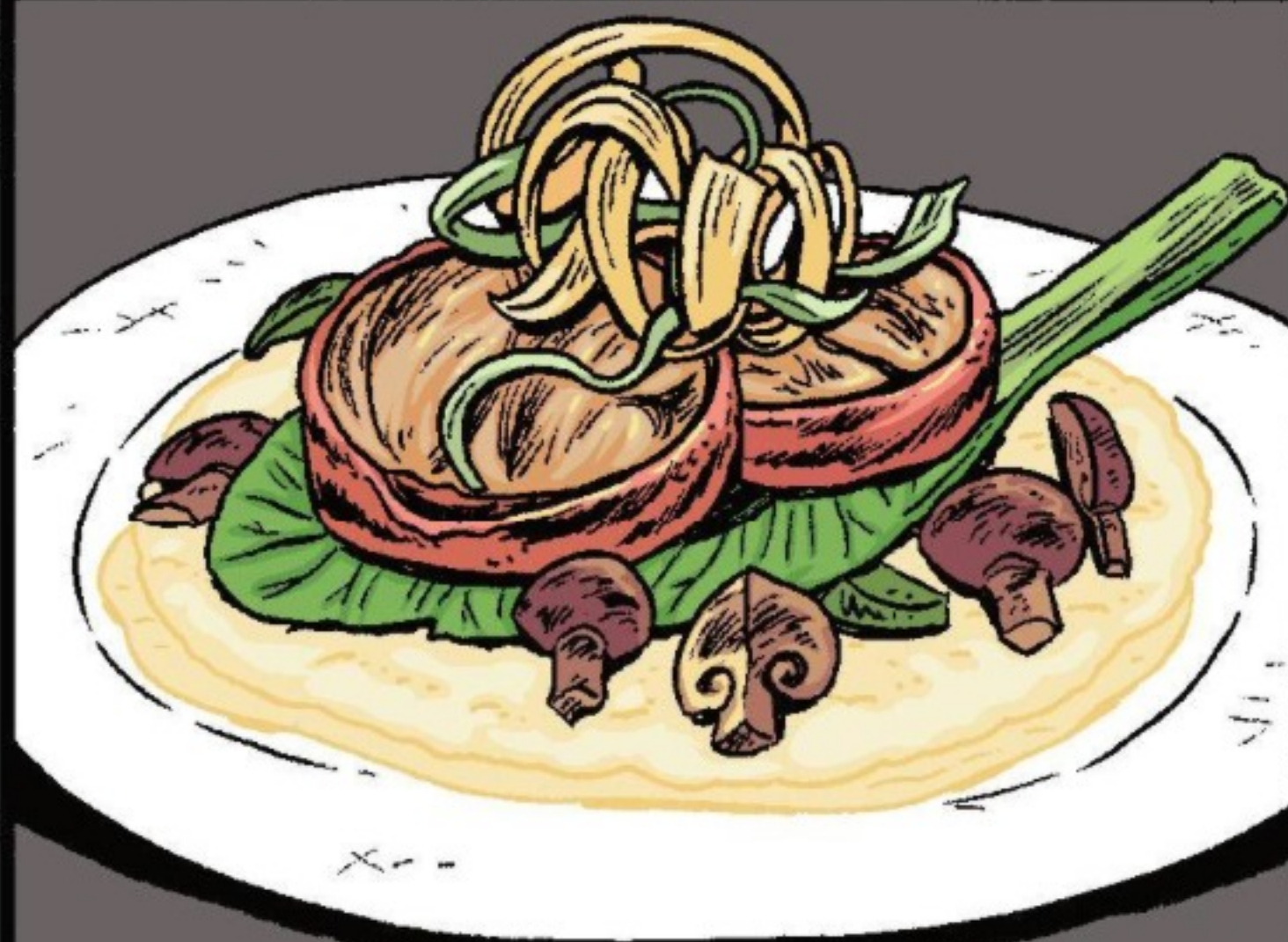
It felt like she hadn't seen Arthur in a week, which was unusual.





She'd made all of it before, but today it came together into a dish she knew was working.

**SADDLE of RABBIT
WITH PARSNIP PURÉE
& SOY-BREWED
SHIMEJI MUSHROOMS**



SURPRISE!



DUHUE,
THAT
SMELLS
AMAZING.



THIS WHAT
YOU BEEN
UP TO IN
THE PREP
KITCHEN
ALL DAY?
BUNNY?

C'MON,
TRY
IT.

SO
GOOD.
WHAT'S
IN THE
SAUCE?



TRADE
SECRET.



GREEN TEA.
THAT'S THE
BITTER,
RIGHT?



SHUT
UP. STOP
DEVELOPING
YOUR
PALATE.



IS THAT FOR
TONIGHT?
HOW MUCH
DID YOU
MAKE?



JUST
THIS. IT'S
A DEMO.



FOR
WHAT?

FOR MY NEW
RESTAURANT.
DUH.





It was pretty pathetic.



She sat there heaving and trying to make herself cry.



The saddest thing was that she couldn't have a moment away from herself.

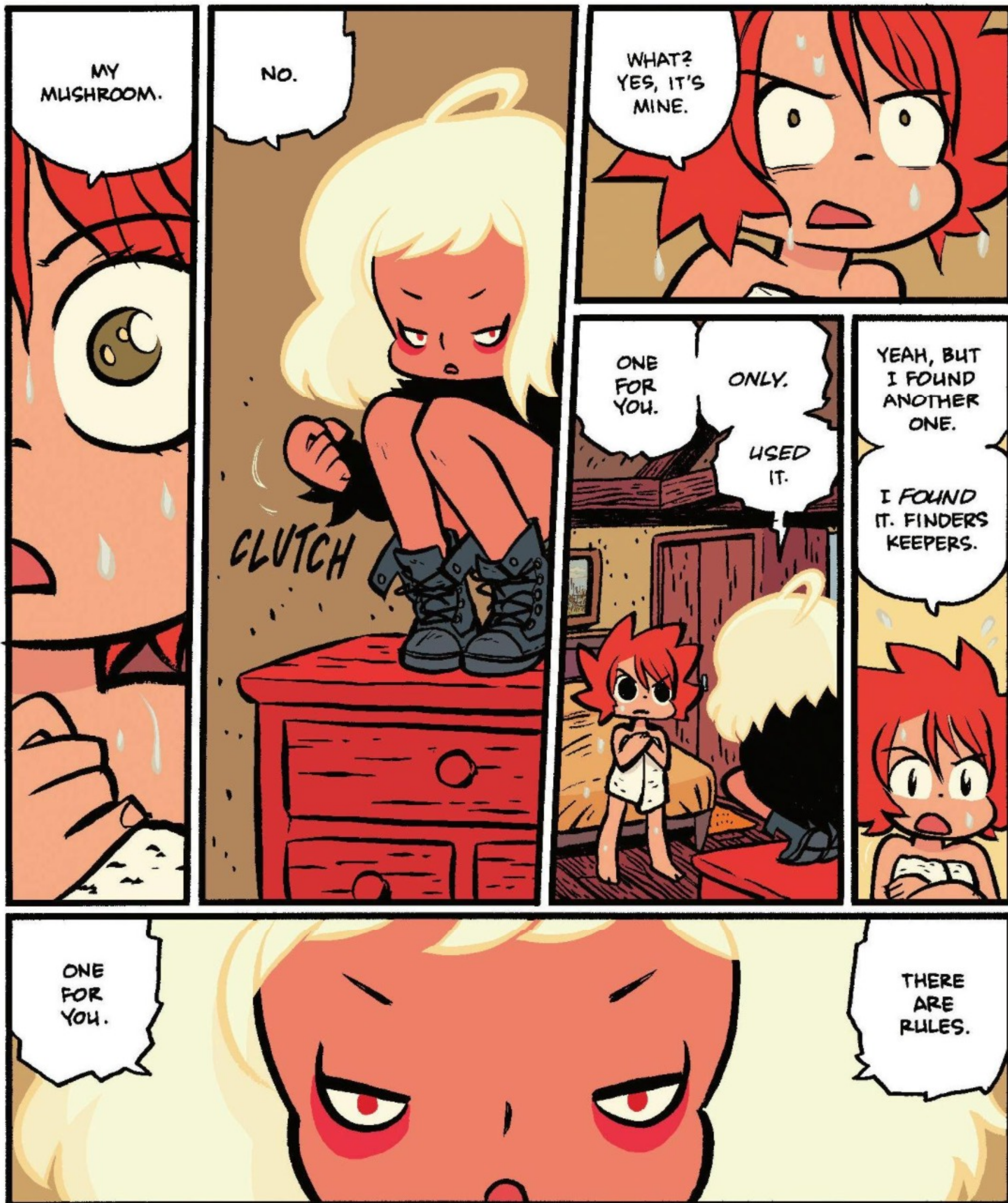


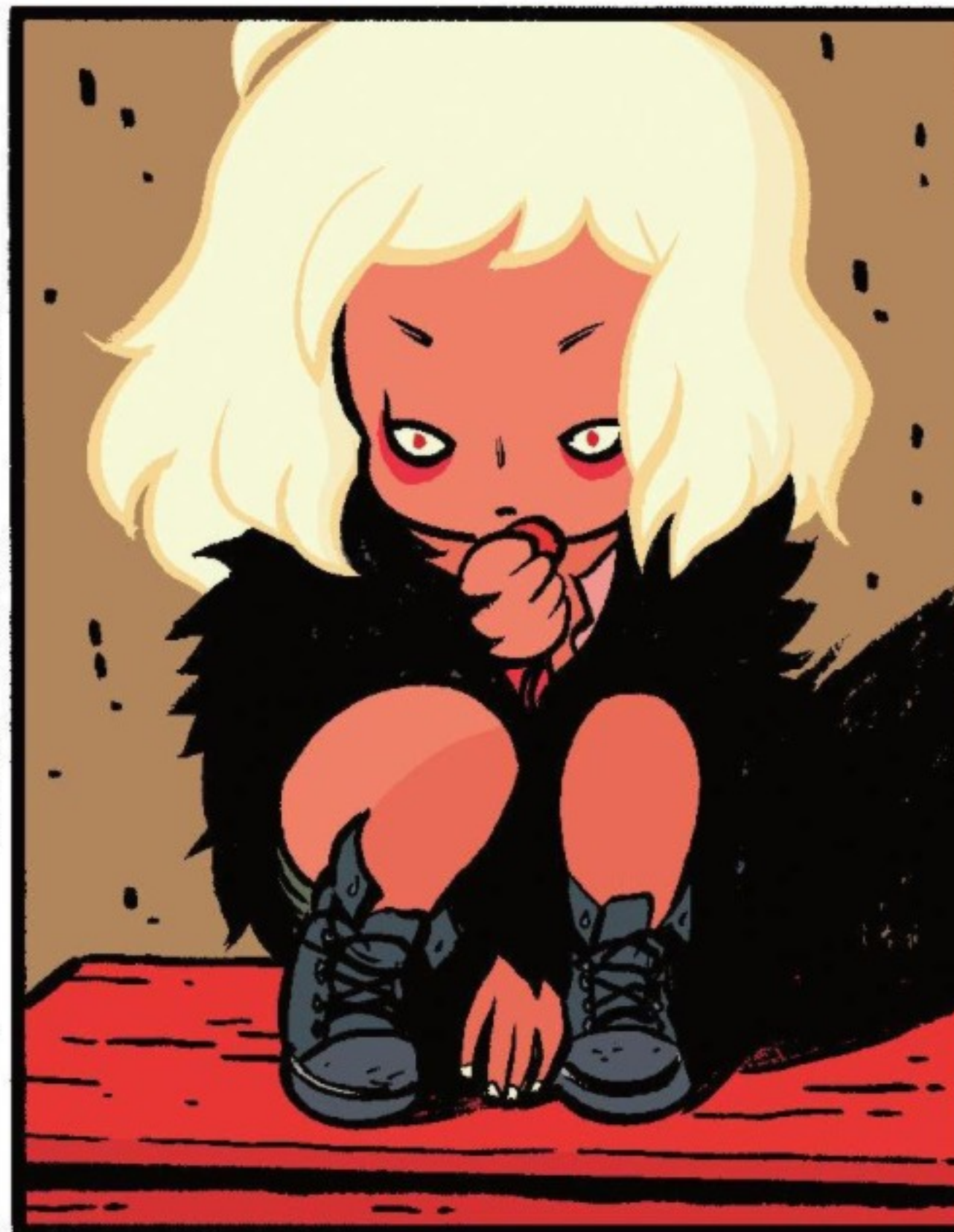


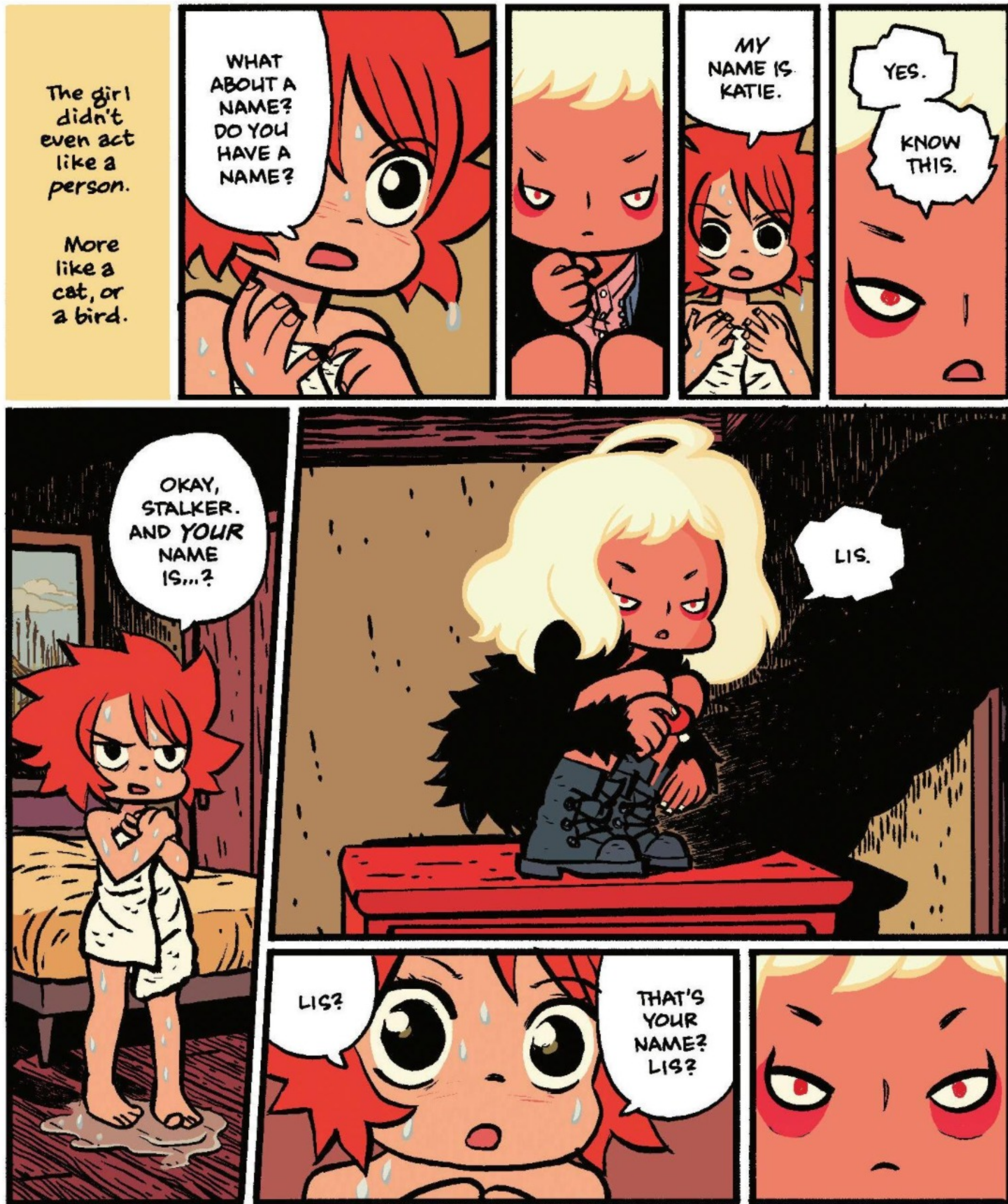
































And then
Lis
was
there.

But Katie
dodged
nimbley.

HA!



WHAT?



WHAT'S...
HAPPENING?



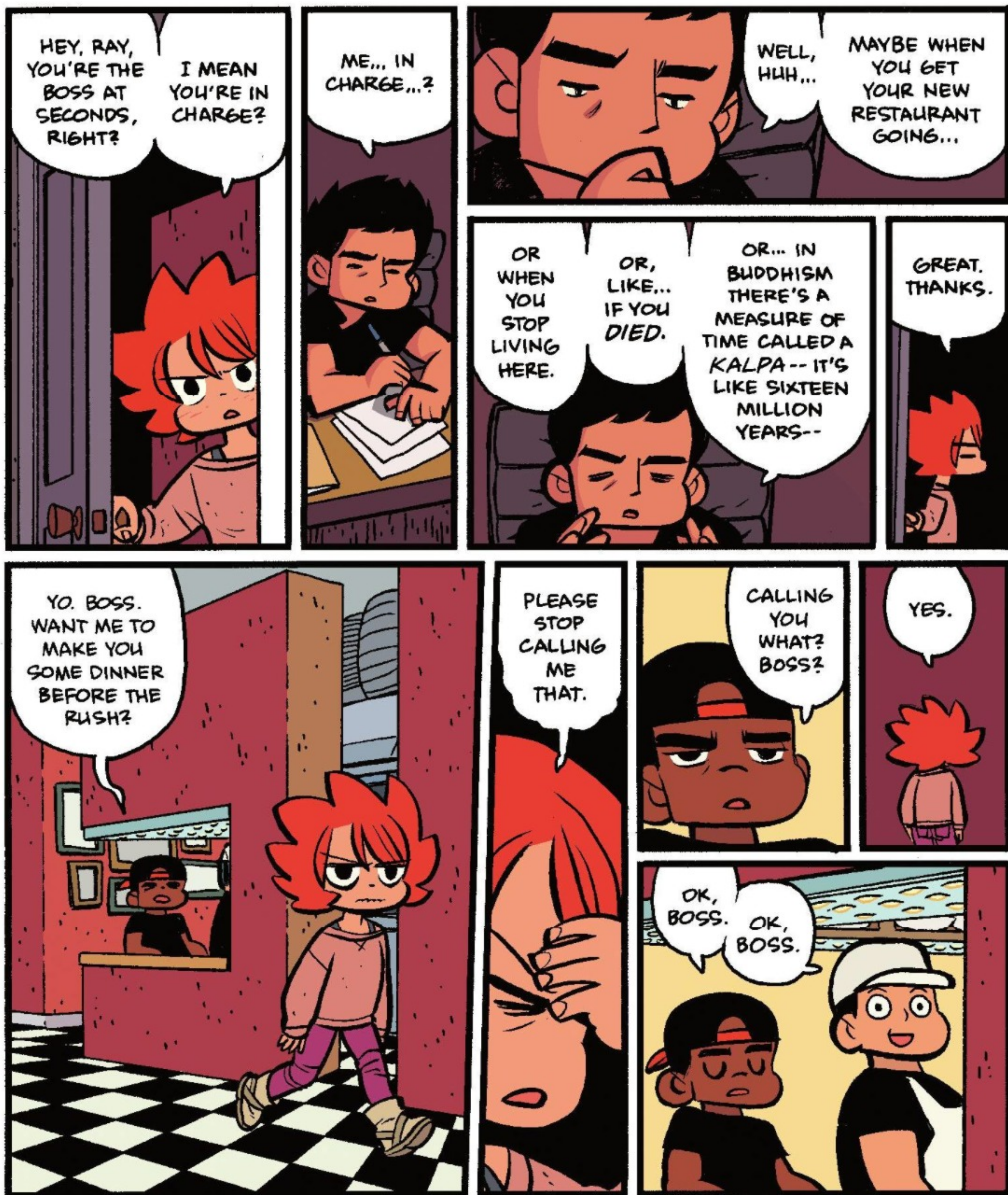
...WHAT
IS SHE
DOING?

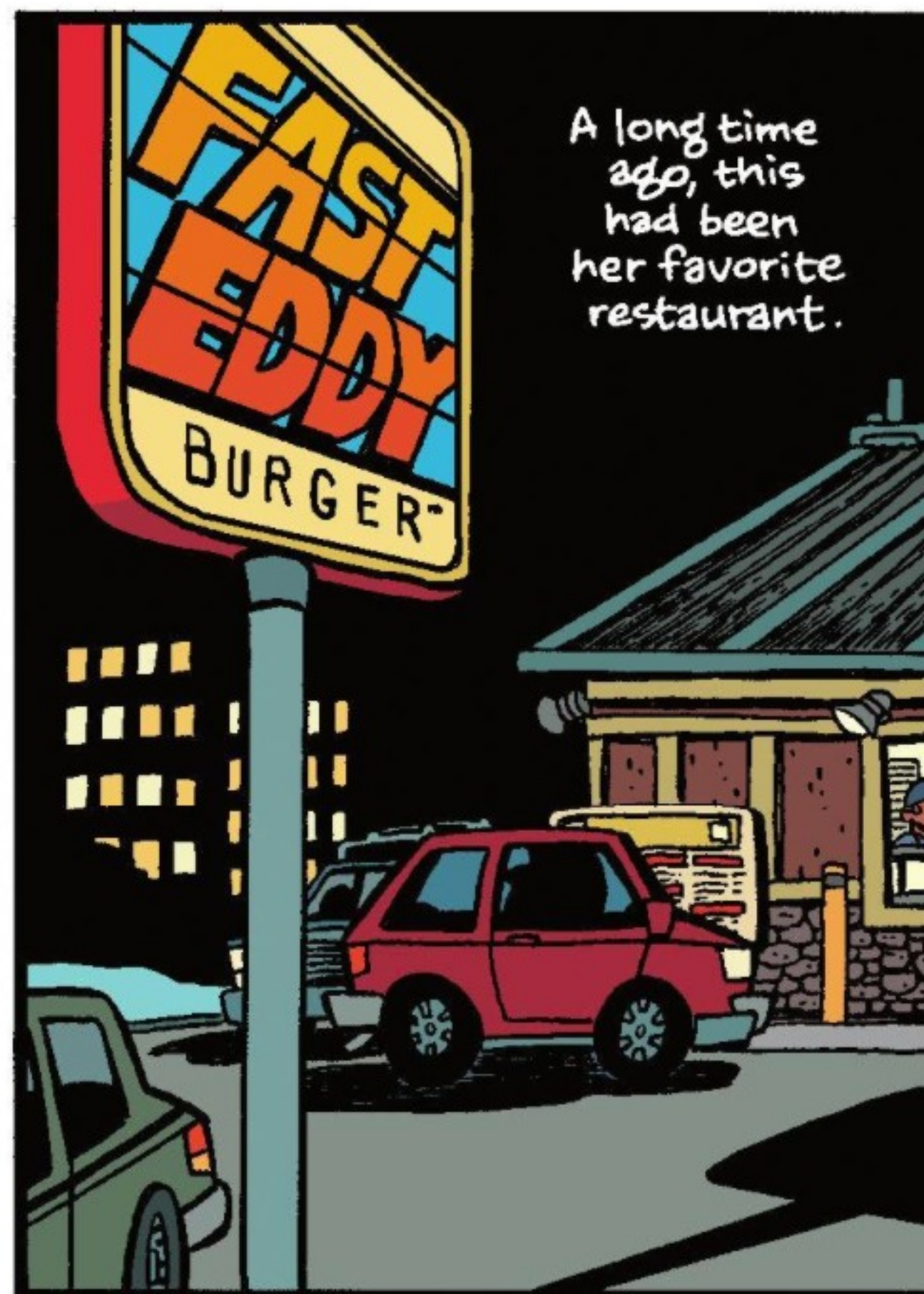
















HI.



KATIE!
HEY!

HAVE
YOU MET
ADAM?

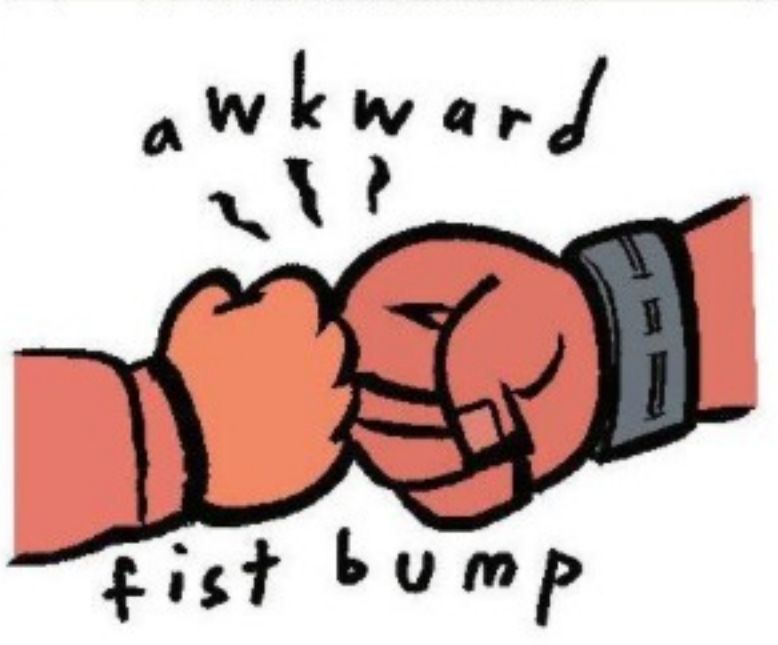
HI.



handshake?



wait...



awkward

fist bump



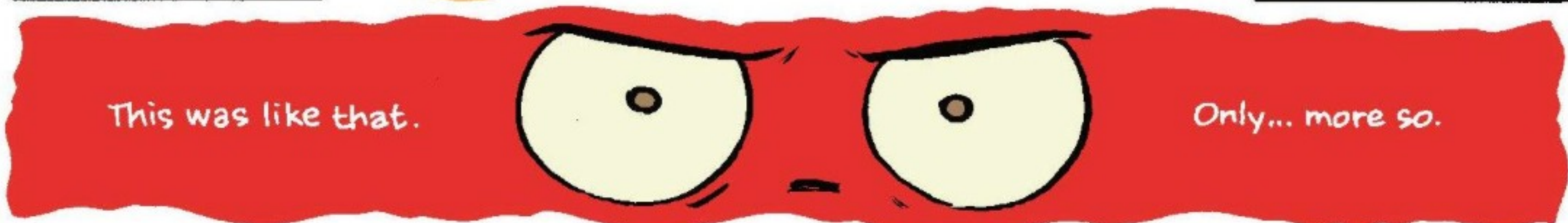
LISTEN, I
FEEL BAD
ABOUT
LAST TIME.
WE DIDN'T
REALLY GET
TO TALK.



YEAH?



YEAH.
MAYBE IF
YOU HAVE
A MINUTE
TONIGHT--?





REVISION #2





She left him there



to think about what he'd done.



And in the morning



she woke up



feeling
amazing.

4

Rules

Arthur called as Katie was getting dressed.

HOW ARE THINGS?

THINGS ARE GREAT! AND WEIRD. ...THEY'RE WEIRD.

EXCELLENT. SO, YES, PERMITS HAVE BEEN DELAYED, THE CONTRACTOR IS BEING A PETULANT CHILD...

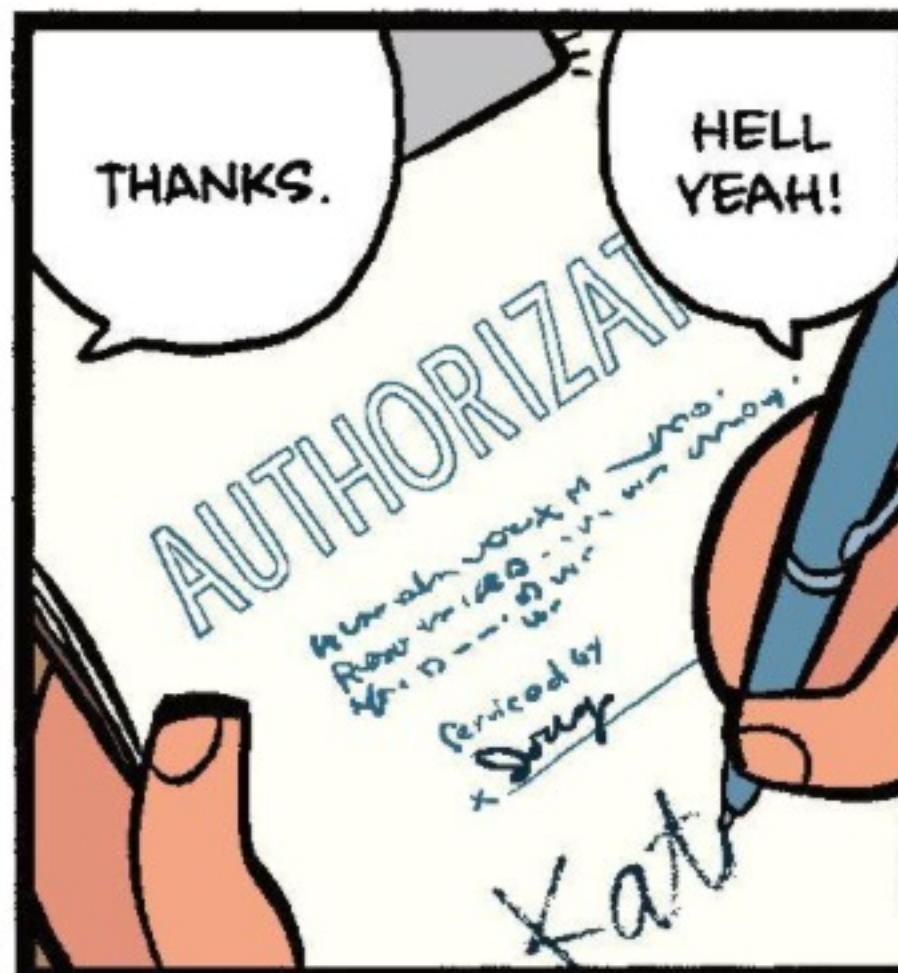
...BUT WHEN YOU GO IN THERE, PLEASE DON'T FREAK OUT ON HIM.

NOT YET, HA HA.

ARTHUR, I KNOW YOU JUST DID A FUNERAL AND YOU'RE PROBABLY MEGA BUMMED RIGHT NOW.

BUT THIS IS ALL GONNA WORK OUT. I HAVE A STRONG FEELING.

YEAH. YOU'RE RIGHT.





ARTHUR SAID THIS'S YOUR SECOND RESTAURANT. WHERE'S THE OTHER ONE AT?

FIRST AVE.



UP ON THE HILL?

I BEEN THERE. NICE PLACE. GOOD BEER.

THANKS. WHY'S THERE A FIREPLACE HERE?



OH, WE FOUND IT BRICKED UP.

PROBABLY HASN'T SEEN LIGHT FOR SIXTY-ODD YEARS.

IT WAS LIKE A MUMMY'S TOMB IN THERE.



EW. GET RID OF IT. YOU'RE GETTING RID OF IT RIGHT?

HEY, IT'S YOUR BUILDING, LADY.



YOU WANT TO KEEP ANY OF THIS OLD JUNK?

And so Katie claimed a treasure from the ancient pile before they dumpstered the whole thing.

It didn't look sixty-odd years old. It looked a thousand years old.



Back at Seconds, she went downstairs to show off a little.



...A MUMMY'S TOMB?? WICKED!

WHAT IS THIS THING? A POT?

THE WORD I'D USE IS CAULDRON. PRETTY COOL, HUH?



WHAT'S A CAULDRON?

YO, DUMMY. IT'S LIKE AN OLD POT THAT BELONGS TO A WITCH.



... WHAT?





Some part
of her brain
thought the
ashes might
make good
fertilizer.



she was
going to need
a lot of
mushrooms.



She
started
with an
even
dozen.



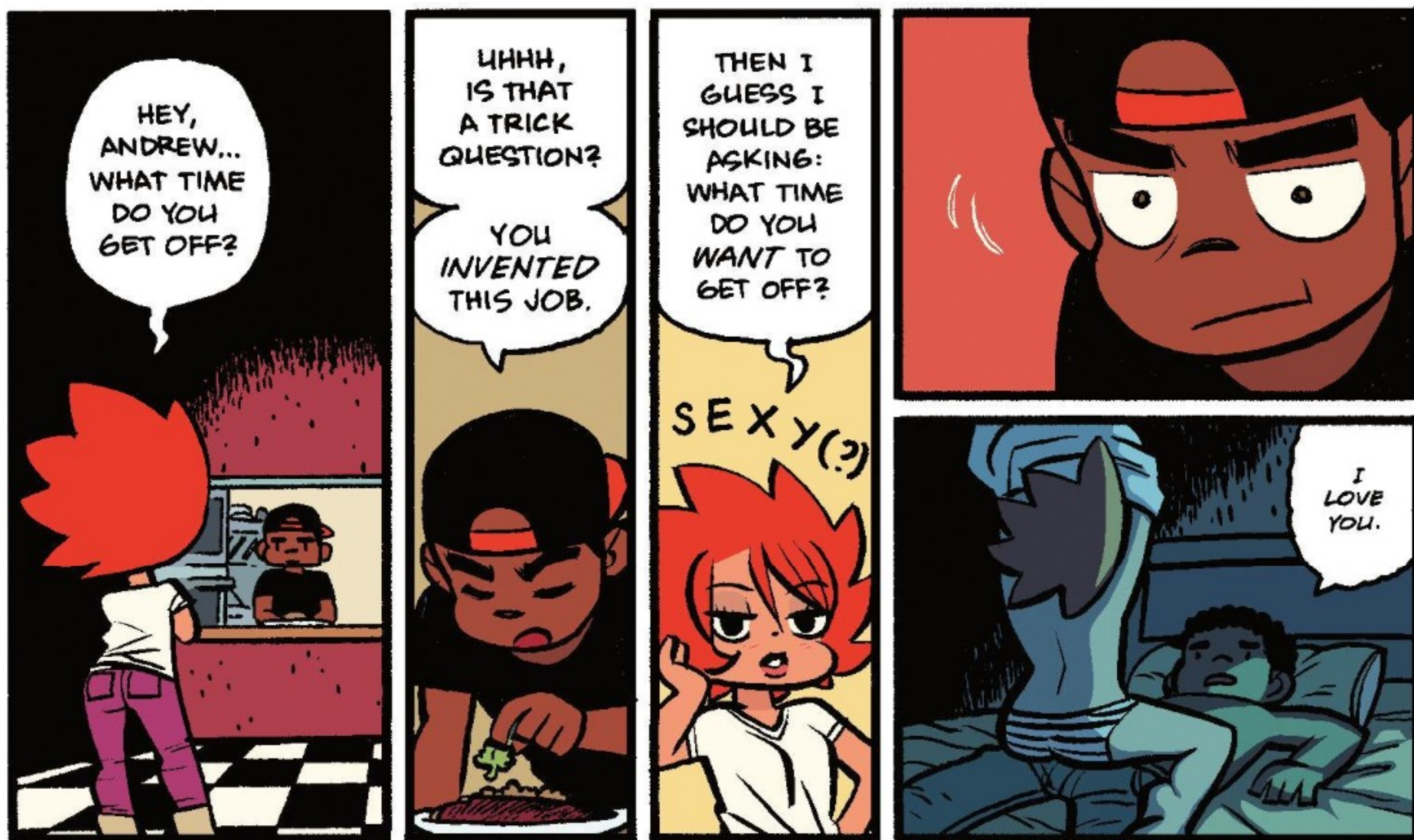






REVISION #4





REVISION #5





From: Doug To: Arthur CC: Katie Re: Payment Arthur-- As you know project in g However, th		The bottom line is I need \$12,000 by tomorrow. It's either that or we walk. Sorry. You know have other jobs	
---	--	---	--



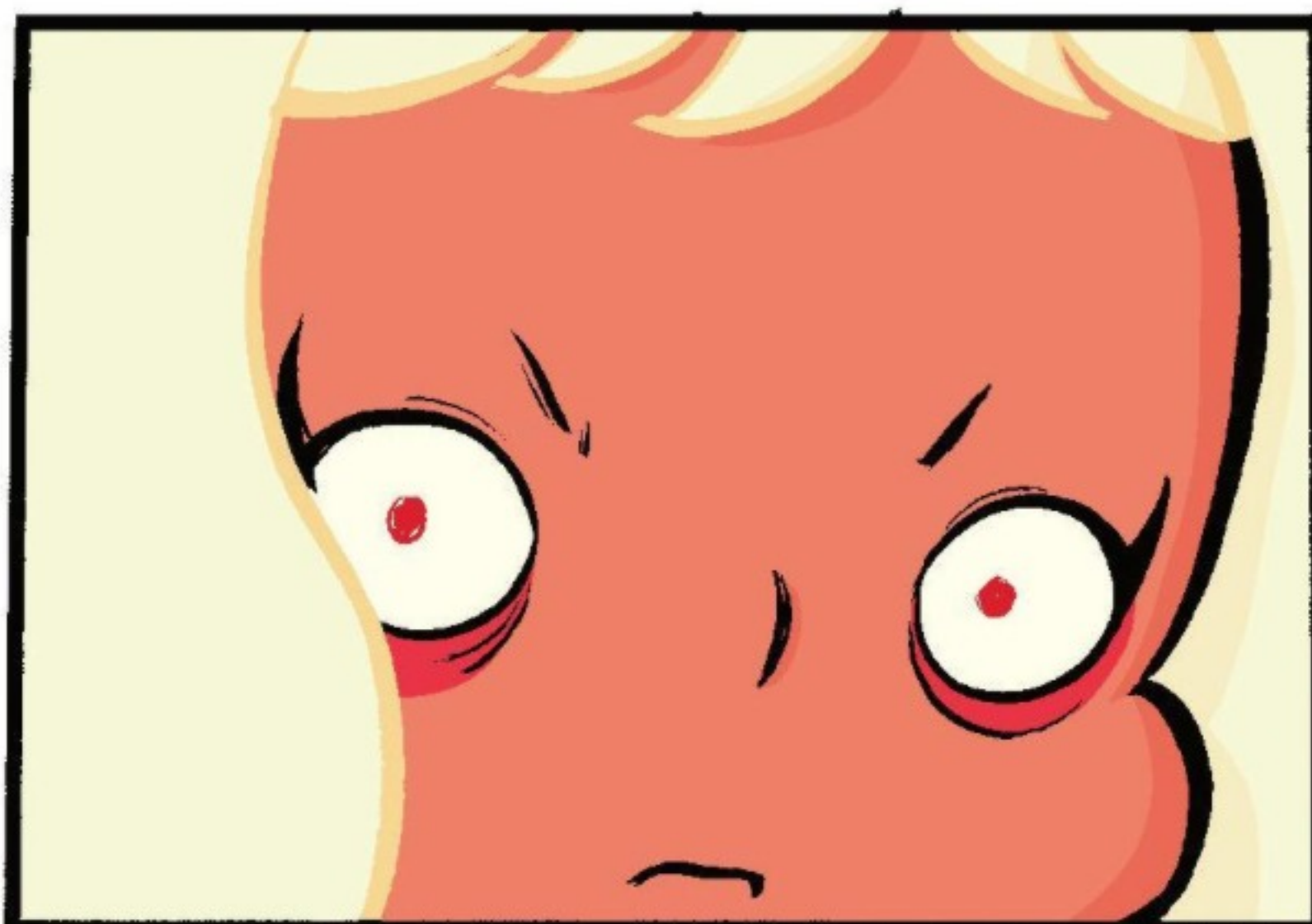




















The contractor
was a MISTAKE.
we hired a diffrent
guy and he was so
nice and my restraurant
is all done now!
YAYYYYYYYYY





The mushroom, somehow, remained unchewed.



1. Write your name
2. Ingest one mushroom
3. Go to sleep
4. Wake up
EVENTS MUST OCCUR ON THESE PREMISES

EVENTS MUST OCCUR ON THESE PREMISES



Katie wiped off the uneaten mushroom, threw it back in the witch's pot, and hid the whole thing in the back seat of her car.

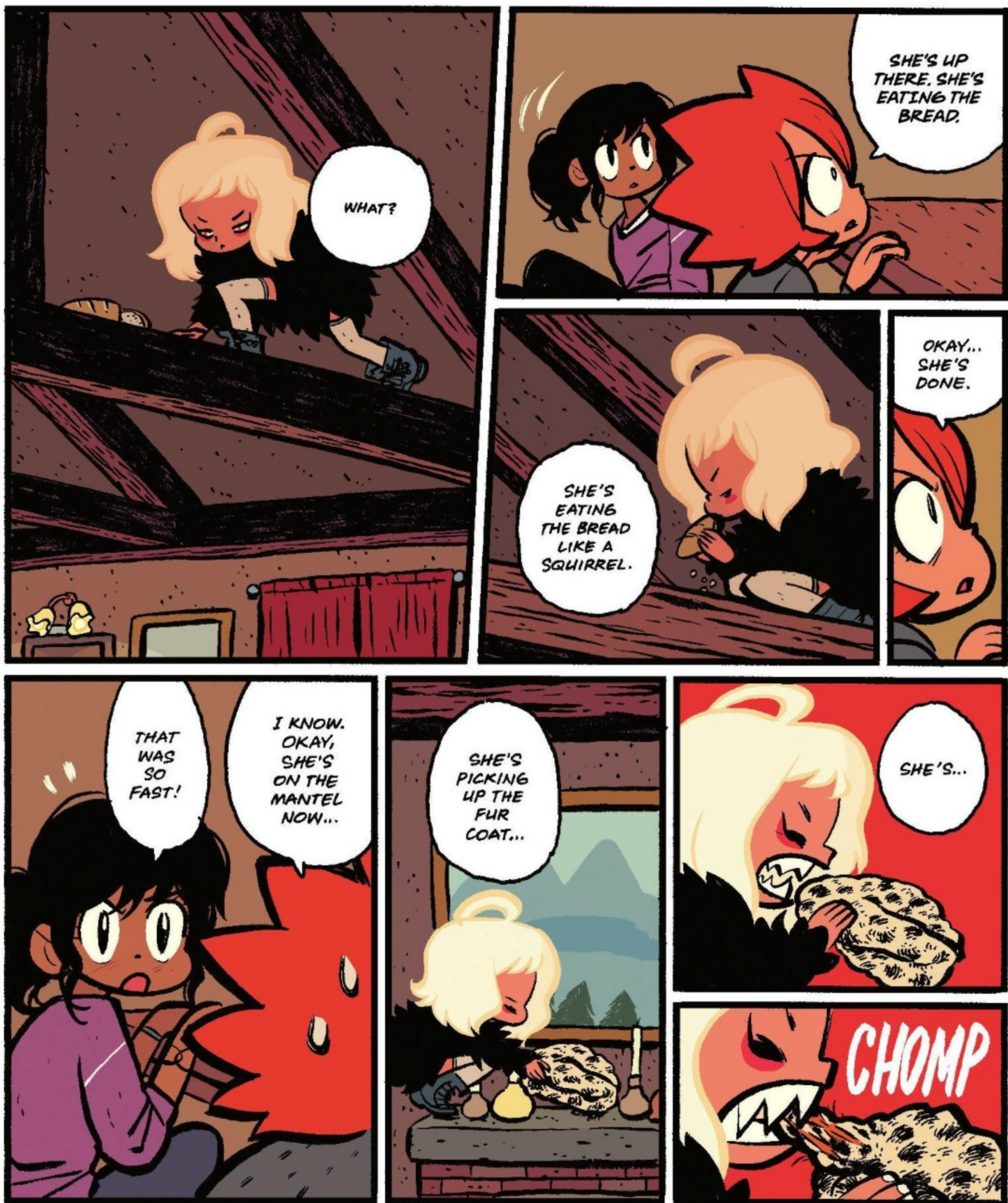


At the very least she knew Lis wouldn't steal her stash.

















HE WAS A FRIEND OF RAY'S,
AND I JUST NEEDED GENERAL
KITCHEN HELP, SO HE WAS IT.



(Max,
five
minutes
before
his first
shift)

I HATED HIM AT FIRST. HE WAS LIKE ANDREW TIMES
A BILLION. SUCH HOT SHIT. LEATHER JACKET, BLONDE ON
HIS ARM. AND HE COULD BARELY COOK.



BUT WE COULD TALK.
WE WORKED TOGETHER EVERY
NIGHT AND THE CONVERSATION
NEVER ENDED.



SO YEAH, ME AND
MAX HOOKING UP
WAS INEVITABLE.



HE GOT BETTER IN
THE KITCHEN. WE
MADE EACH OTHER
STRONGER.



WHEN SECONDS GOT
POPULAR WE HAD TO
HIRE NEW LINE COOKS
AND START SPLITTING
THE WEEK.

Andrew
(TRAINEE)



WE NEVER SAW EACH
OTHER ANYMORE.
THAT GOT HARD.



AND
I GUESS WHAT
WE HAD
WASN'T THAT
STRONG.









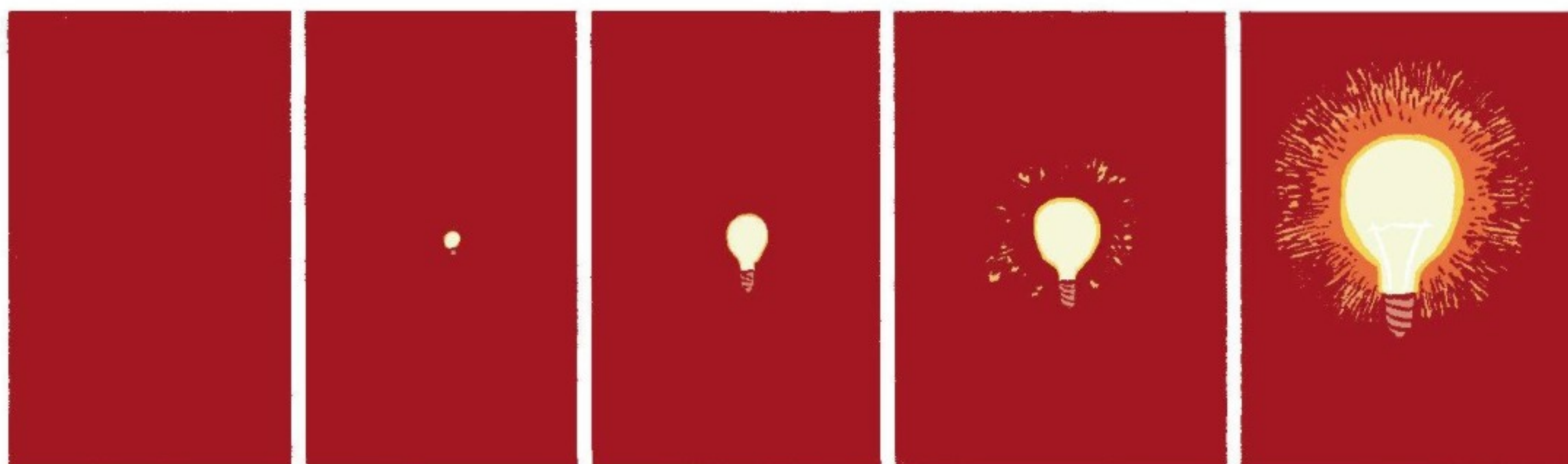
The next thing she knew, she was writing.



Writing about Max.



REVISION #6







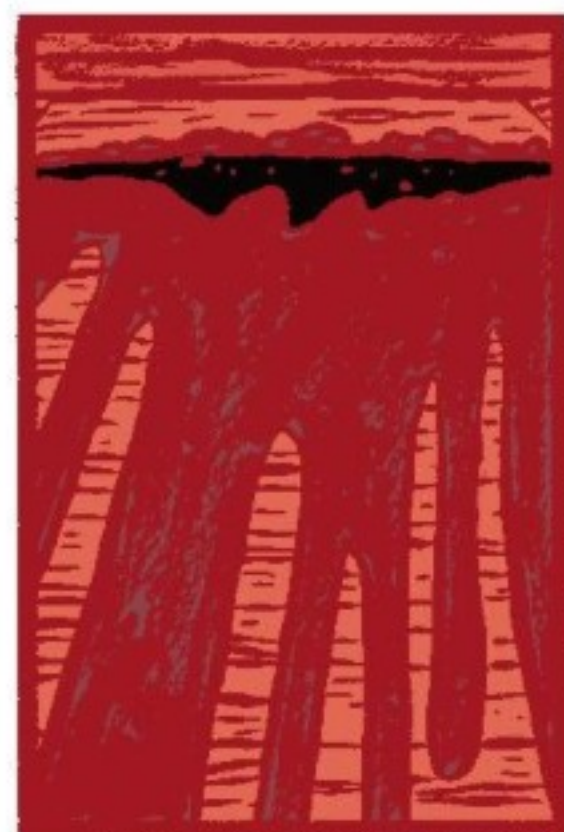
What
was
this?



What
was
she
seeing
now?



She
didn't
like
it at
all.



And
when
she
woke
up,



there
he
was.

5

Max





She woke him up the rest of the way.





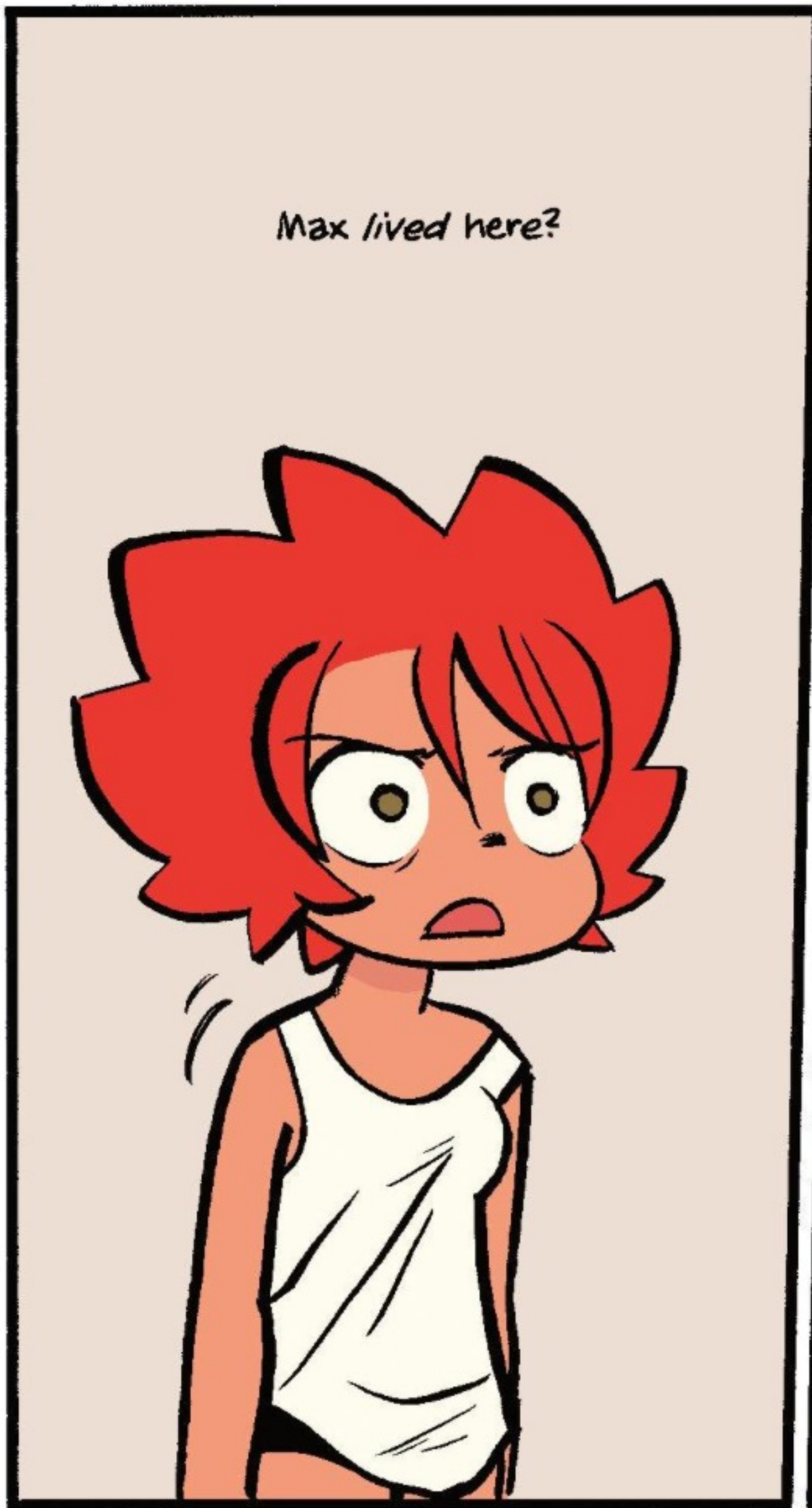
Meanwhile,
Katie took
stock of her
new and
improved
life.

WHAT
THE
HELL...?



Her home had
become strange
and boy-centric.

Max lived here.



Lis wasn't happy.



But Katie didn't
even notice.





She
dressed
cute.

She
felt newly
confident.

She
felt
cool.



She pushed away
her questions and
confusion.

This was good.
It was just good.



KATIE.
REALLY?



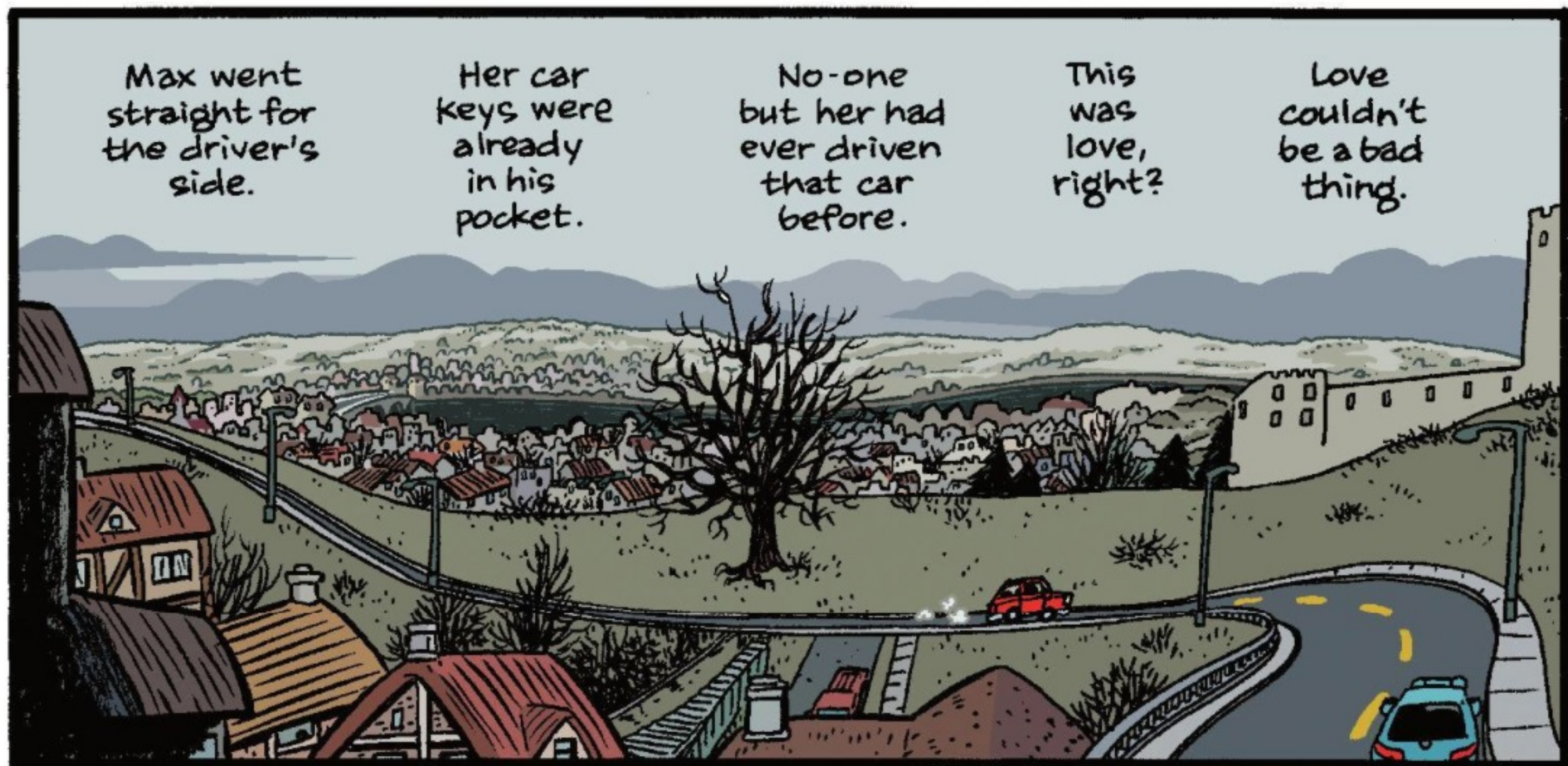
MMM.
MMMAX.
MAX MAX
MAX MAX
MAX.



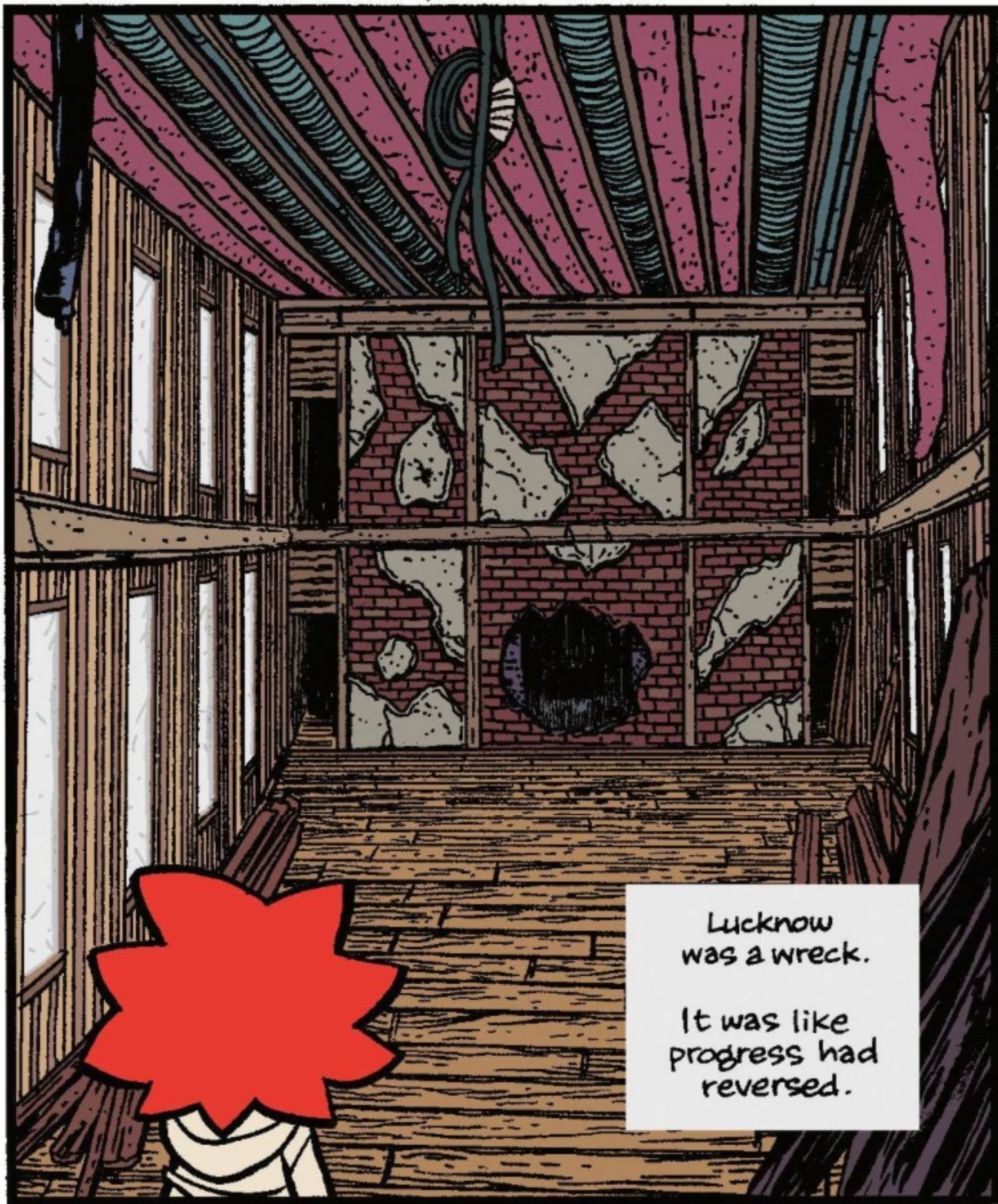
WE
HAVE
WORK,
KATIE.

BUT **MAAAX!!!**



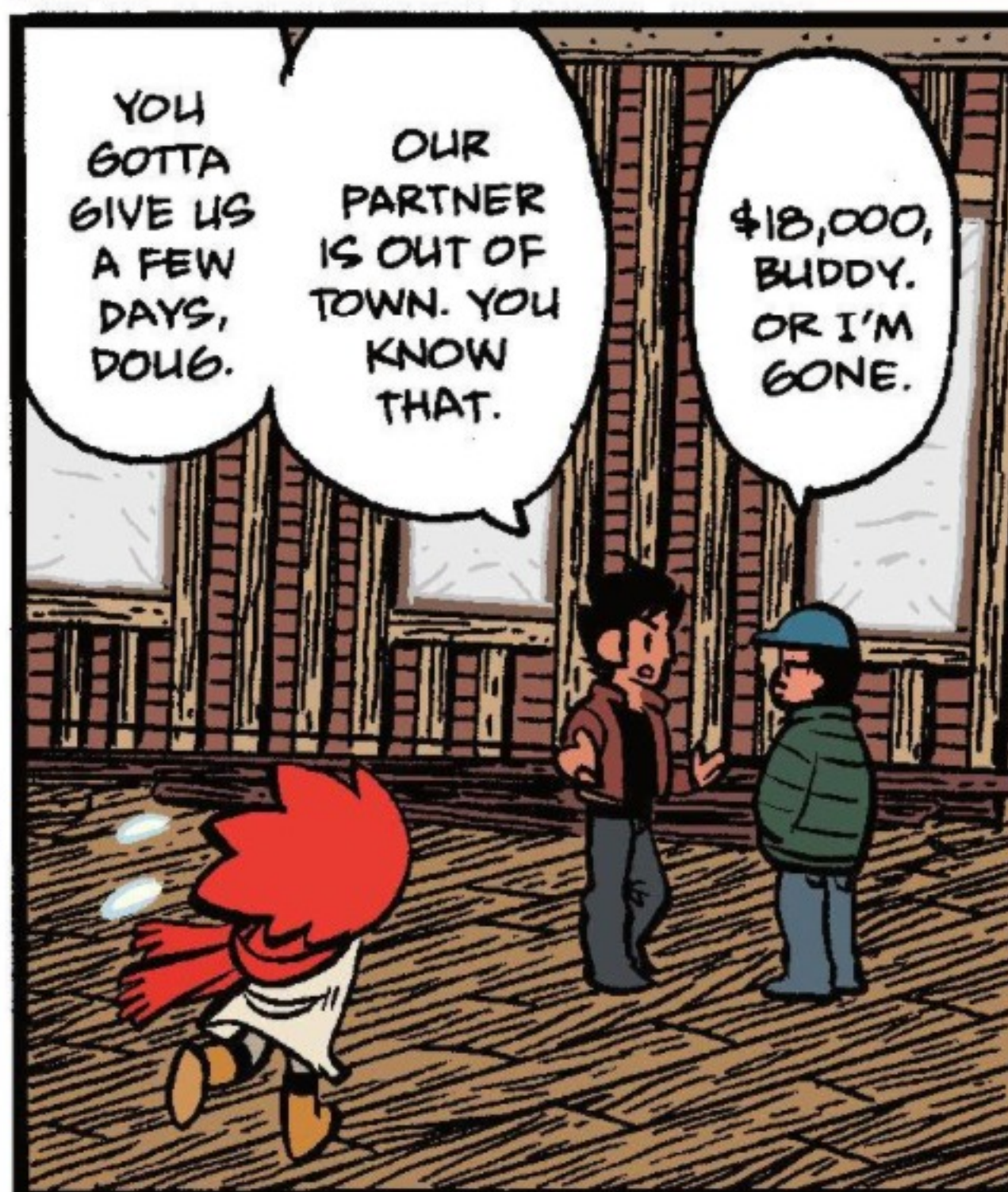


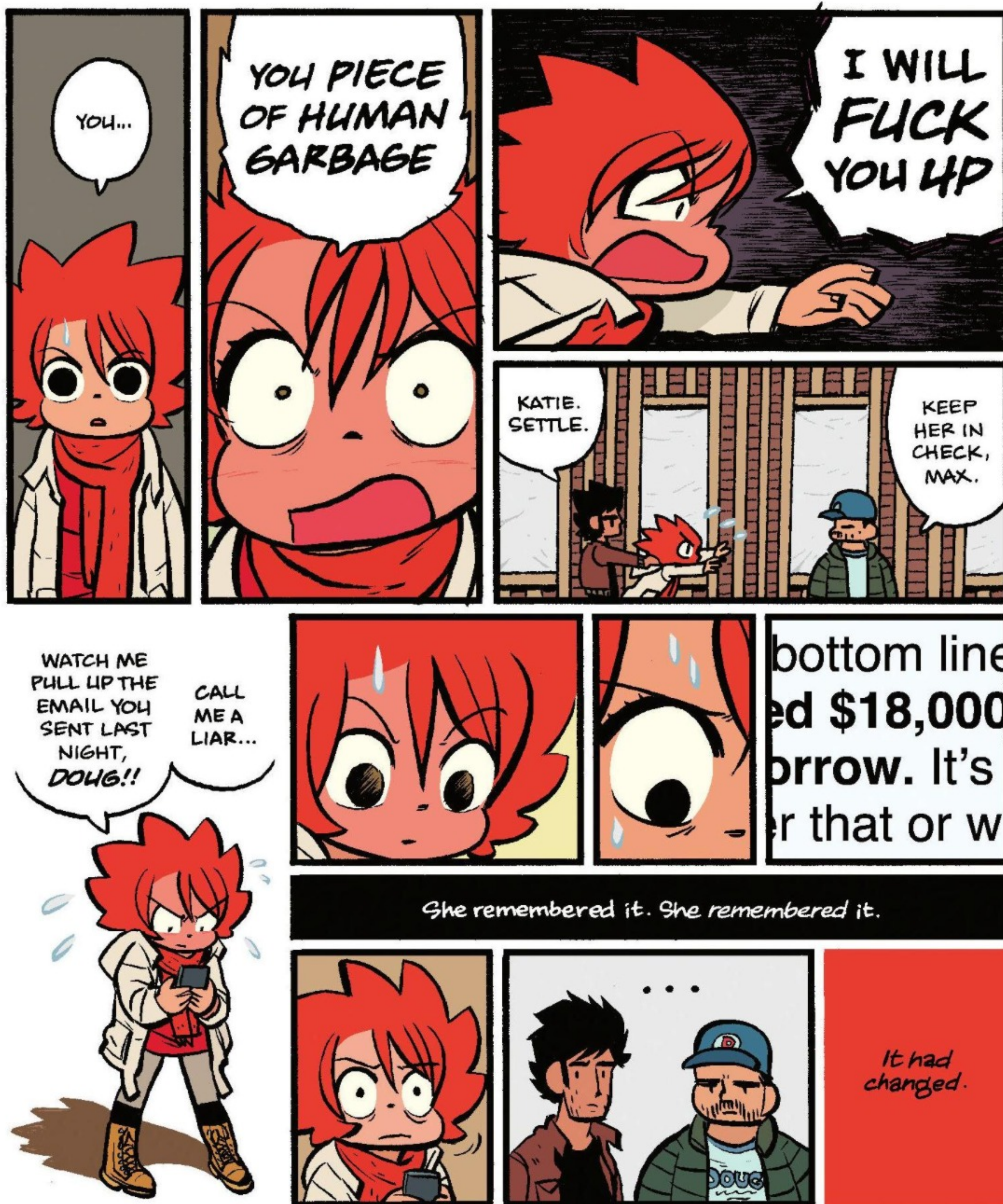




Lucknow
was a wreck.

It was like
progress had
reversed.





What
else had
changed?

What was
happening
to her?



IF YOU GET
THE FUNDS,
GIVE ME A
CALL.

YOU AND
YOUR WIFE
HAVE A NICE
DAY.



WIFE?!
EXCUSE
ME, YOU
SEXIST
DICK--



**WE'RE
MARRIED
NOW?!**



So Katie
didn't have
a restaurant.
She had
a shell.
She had
a husk.

At
least
she
had
Max
now.

Her
god damn
husband.



He'd
managed
to get
Arthur
on the
phone.



He was keeping
his voice down.
Excluding
her.



Taking
care of
things.



Just
like
she'd
wanted.



It seemed that Seconds would continue to be Katie's purgatory.

She was in no mood to interact with humans, but Max dragged her around to the front door.



OH, UH... WELCOME TO SECONDS, BUT WE'RE ACTUALLY NOT OPEN YET--



MAX!!



HEY, GUYS!

MAAAAX! WE NEVER SEE YOU ANYMORE!

WE MISS YOU, MAX!



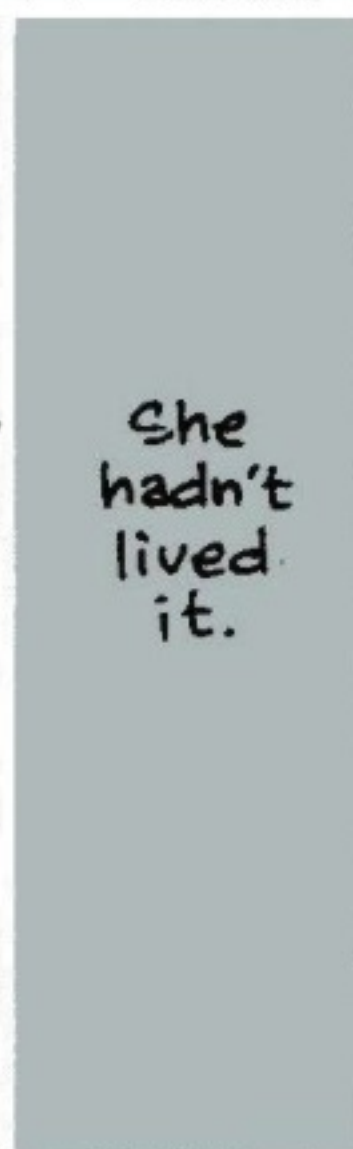
They loved him.



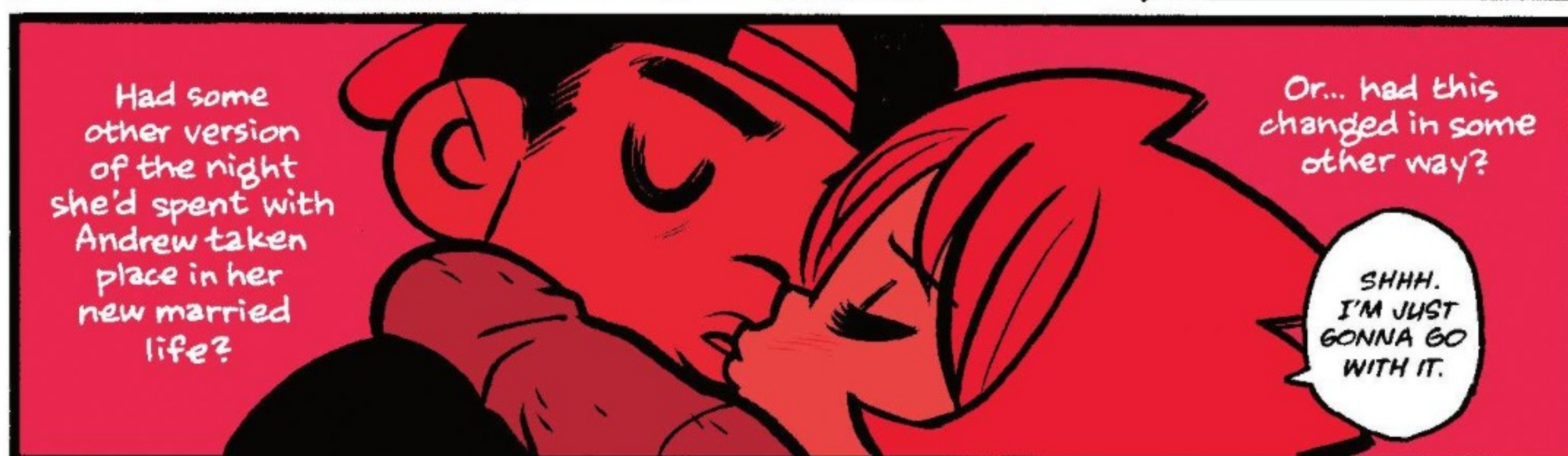
Why did they love him?



Why did they love him and not her?











**SHE'S WEARING
HEELS EVEN
THOUGH SHE'S
ALREADY TALL**











Katie suddenly remembered the first thing. The accident.

But it didn't seem appropriate to tell Hazel about that.



Back in the basement, Katie noticed that the office door was ajar...









Lucknow
had been
Katie's
choice.



In her version
of that day,
it'd been just
her and Arthur
in the room.
She'd insisted
on Lucknow.



She'd probably
argued just as
hard with Max
in this version.



But why? What did it all
add up to? Nothing.
Her past self was clearly
a pretentious idiot.

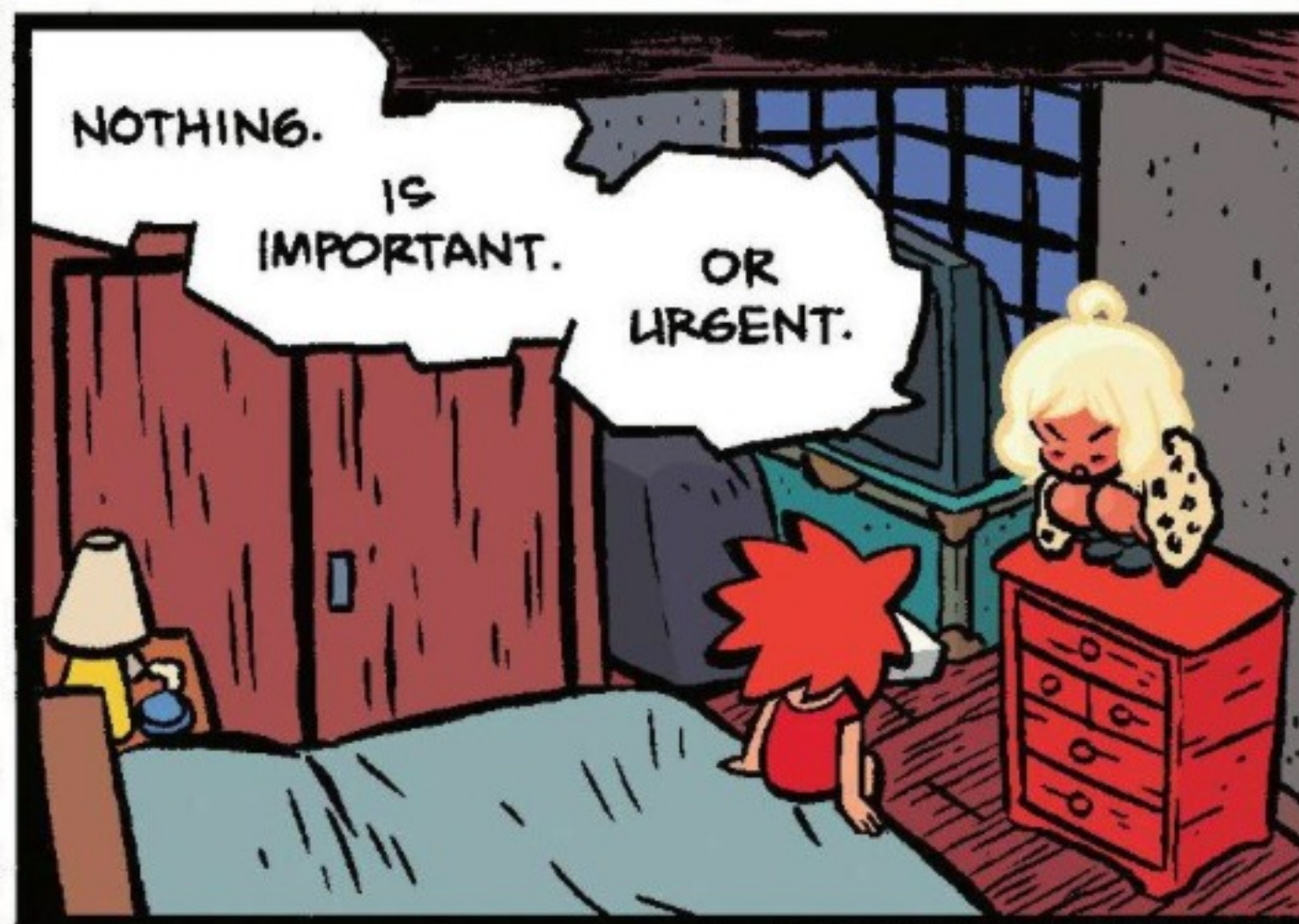


Was Max
right?

Had
she
blown
it?



















It
was a
tree.

At the
junctures
of its
branches,
she saw
points of
light.



Seconds was
nestled in the
branches, tiny
and perfect.



Then
it was
gone.



She spotted
it again,
somewhere
else this
time.



Lis was
trying to
show her
something.

This meant
something.







Whatever
that was,
it was
kind of
amazing.



Katie
was kind
of awed
and kind of
astonished.



On the other hand, she had
no idea what any of that
awesome and astonishing
shit was supposed to mean.



She was
tired, and
confused,
and tired
of being
confused,
and so...



CHEW
CHEW
CHEW



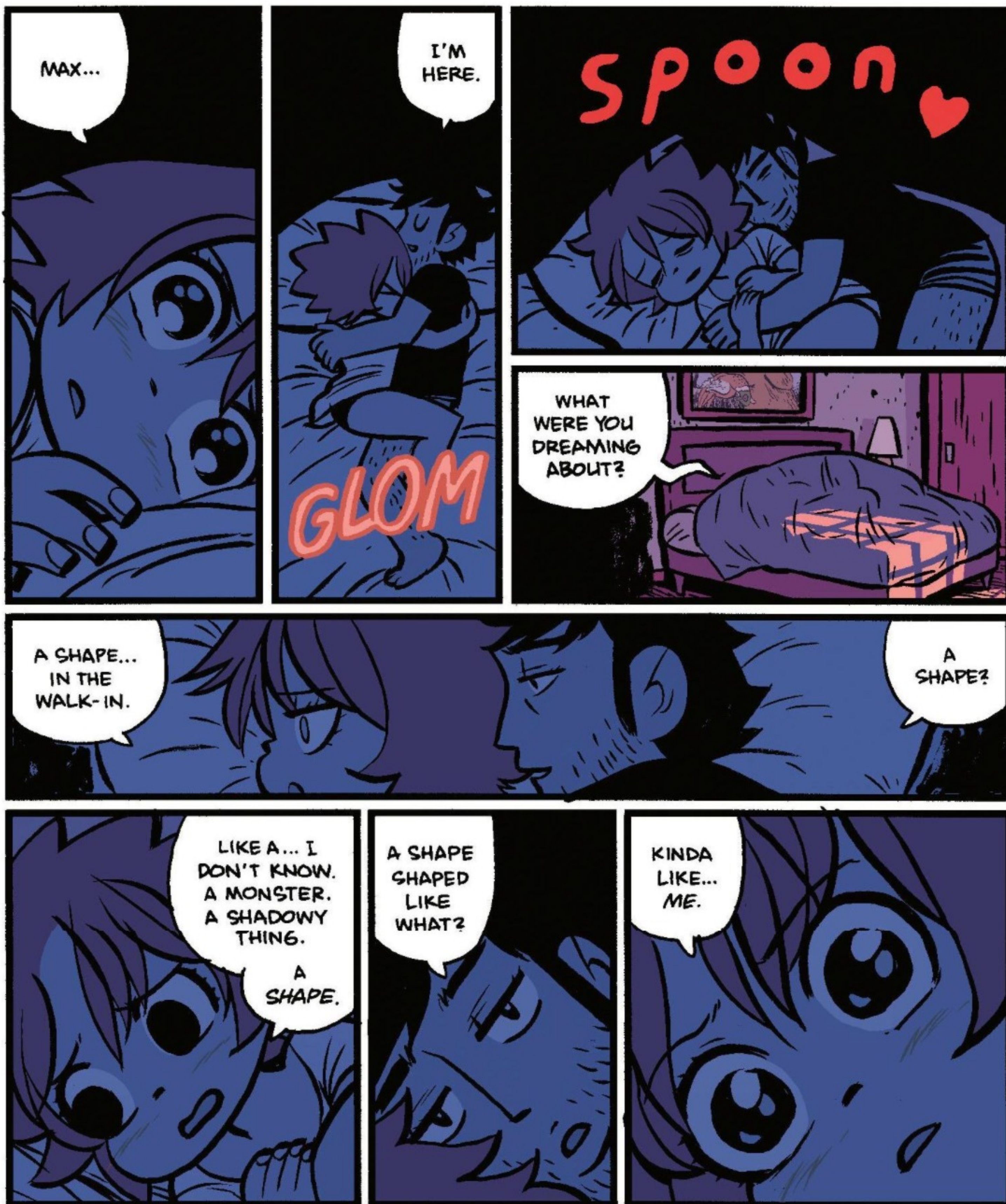


REVISION #7











HMM...

WELL, IF THERE'S
A SCARY MONSTER
DOWN IN THE
KITCHEN, I'M NOT
SURPRISED IT'D BE
YOU, BABY.



THANKS...

HOWEVER, IF WE
ANALYZE YOUR
DREAM FROM A
PSYCHOLOGICAL
STANDPOINT, IT'S
CLEARLY ALL
ABOUT--



SHUT
UP!

WHOMP

MMF
MRPH
MAH
MF



She loved him.
Or something.

I DO.
I REALLY
DO.

She felt safe
in his arms.
She needed
him now.



The
restaurant,
the house
spirit--
right now
none of it
was as
important
to her as
Max.

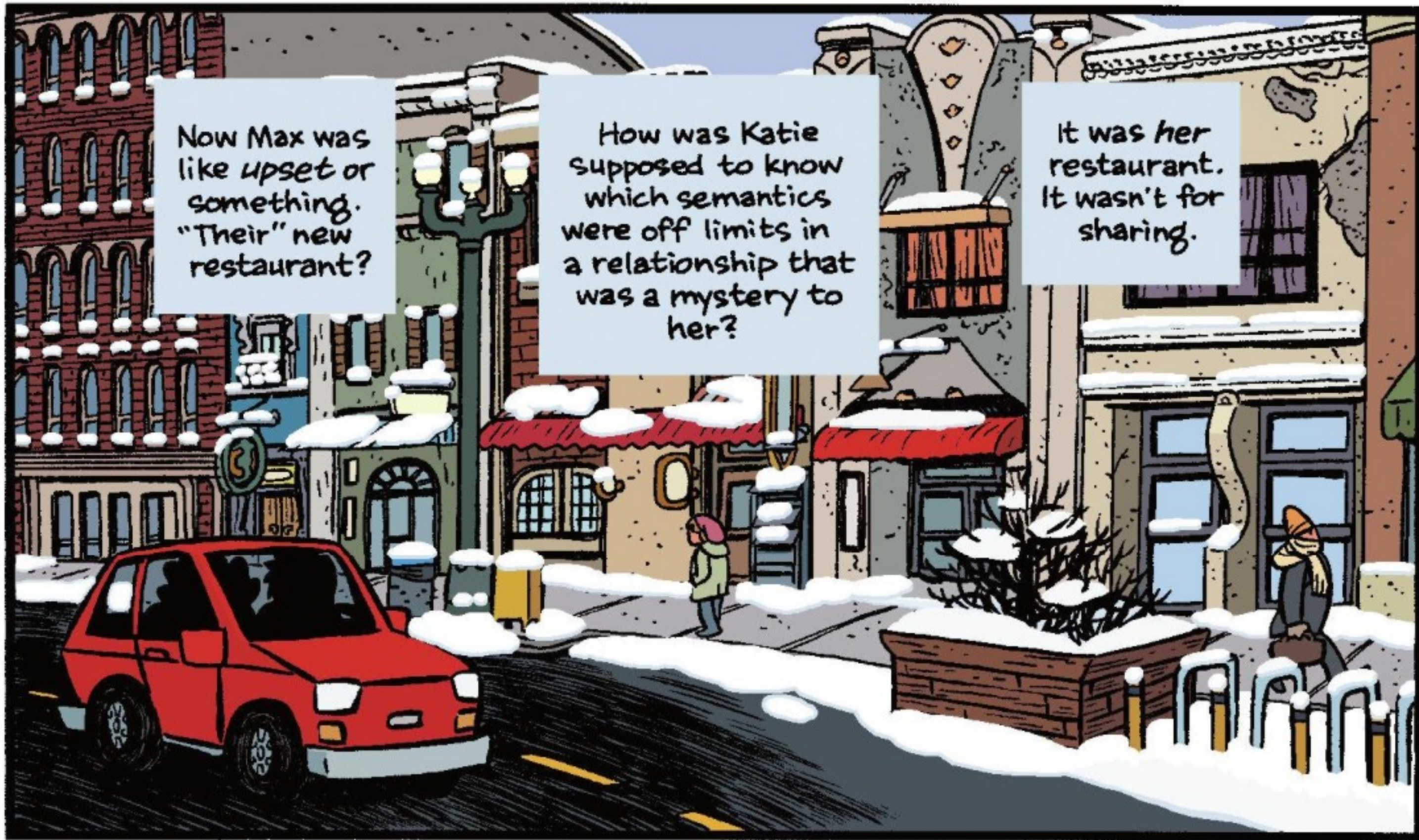
Her
god damn
husband.

YOU
DO
WHAT?

SHH.



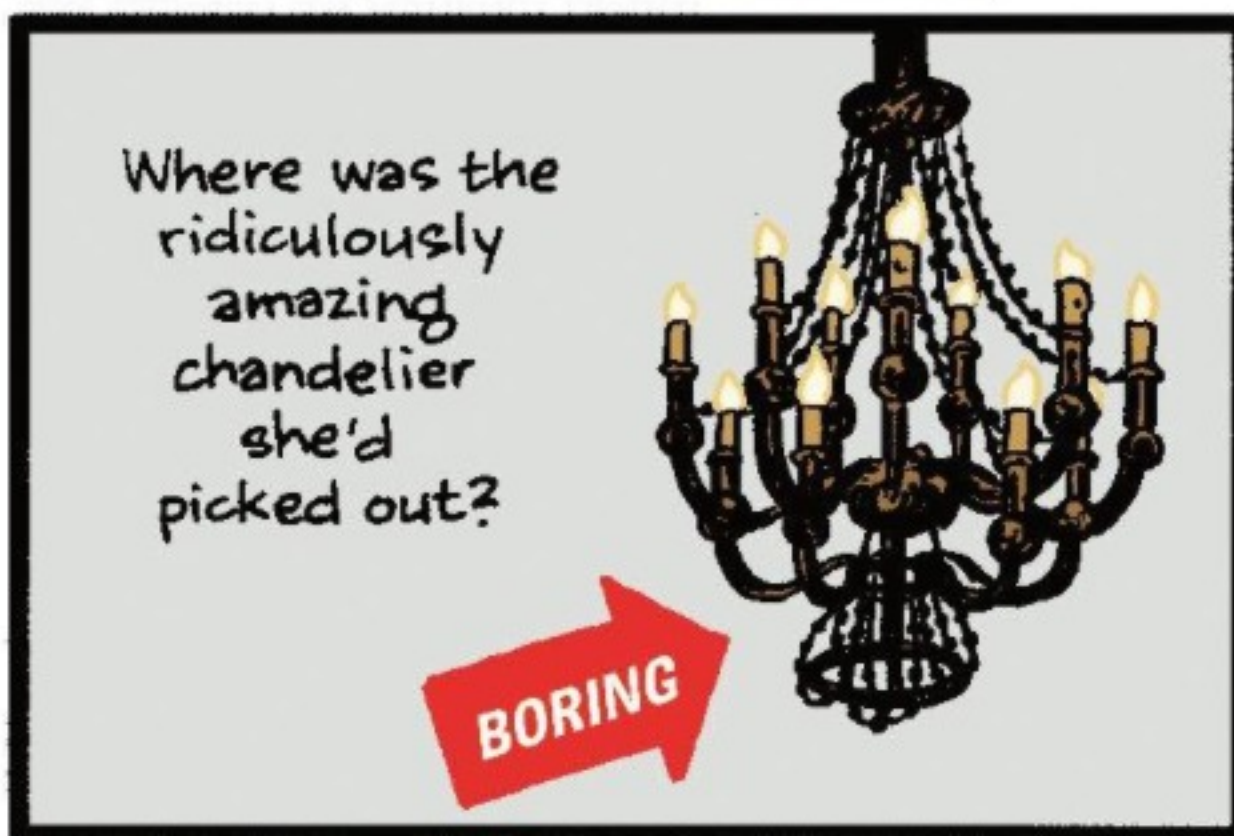








But...



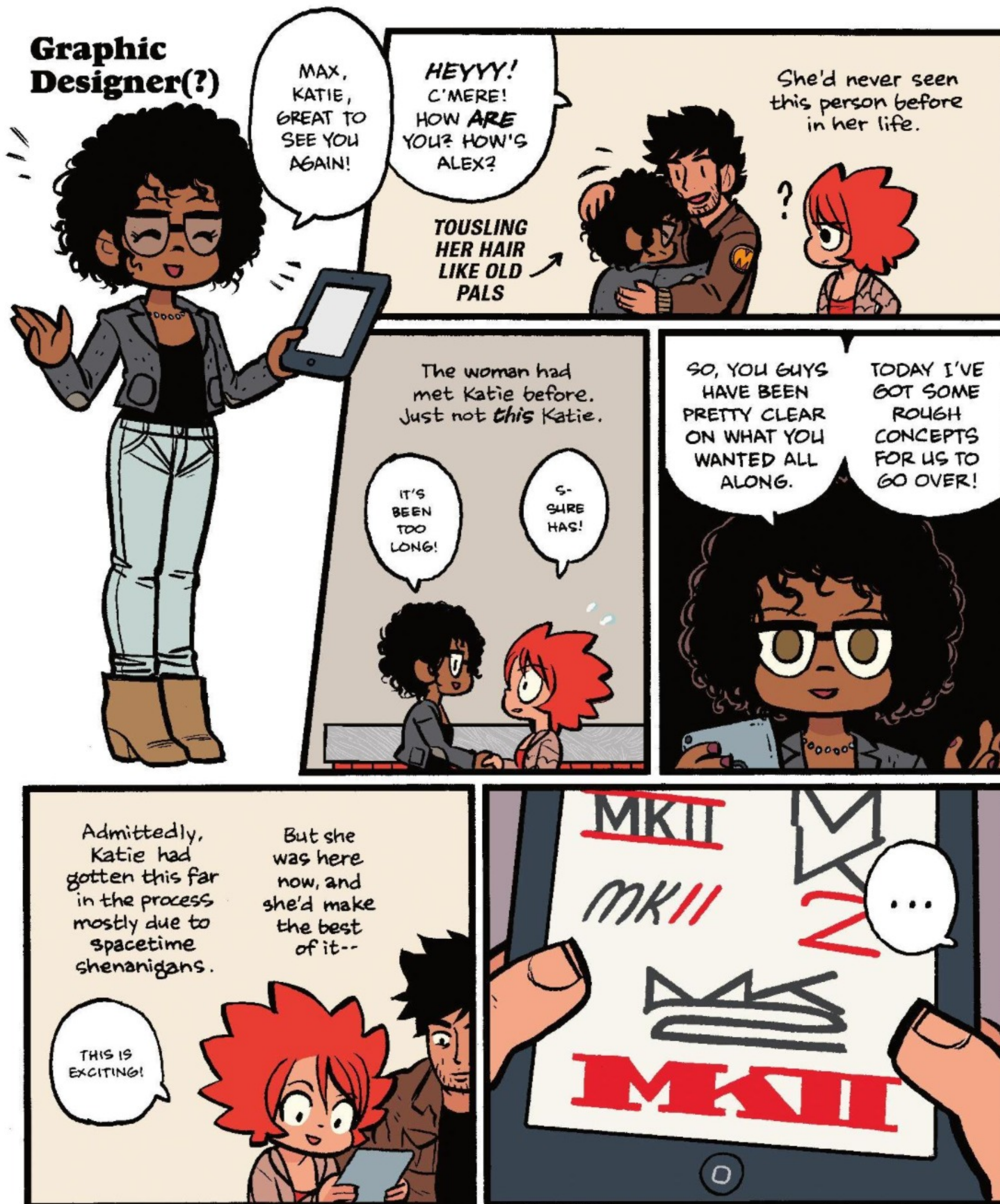
She'd given up Lucknow. She'd gotten this instead. All for a guy.



Was he worth it?



Graphic Designer(?)





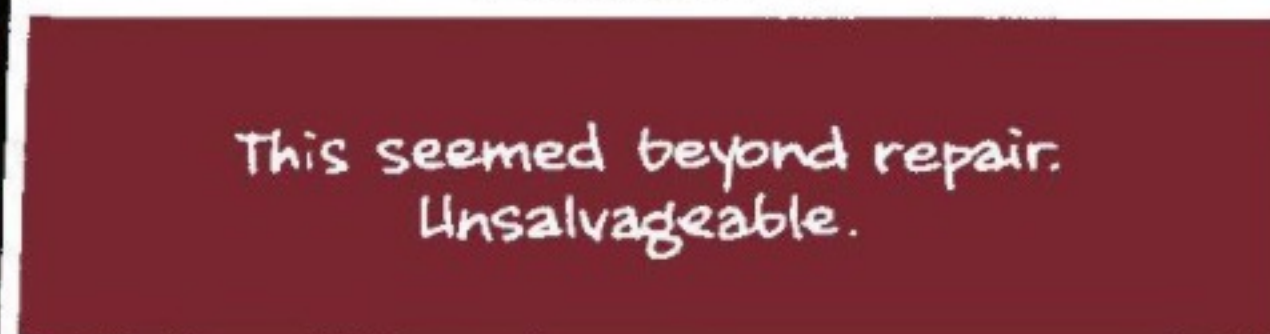




It was a ruin.



It'd always been there, as far back as she could remember. Old, junky, run-down. But never like this.



This seemed beyond repair. Unsalvageable.



LOOK AT THIS DUMP. WE MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE.

Y-YEAH...

Had she caused this?



Where was she?



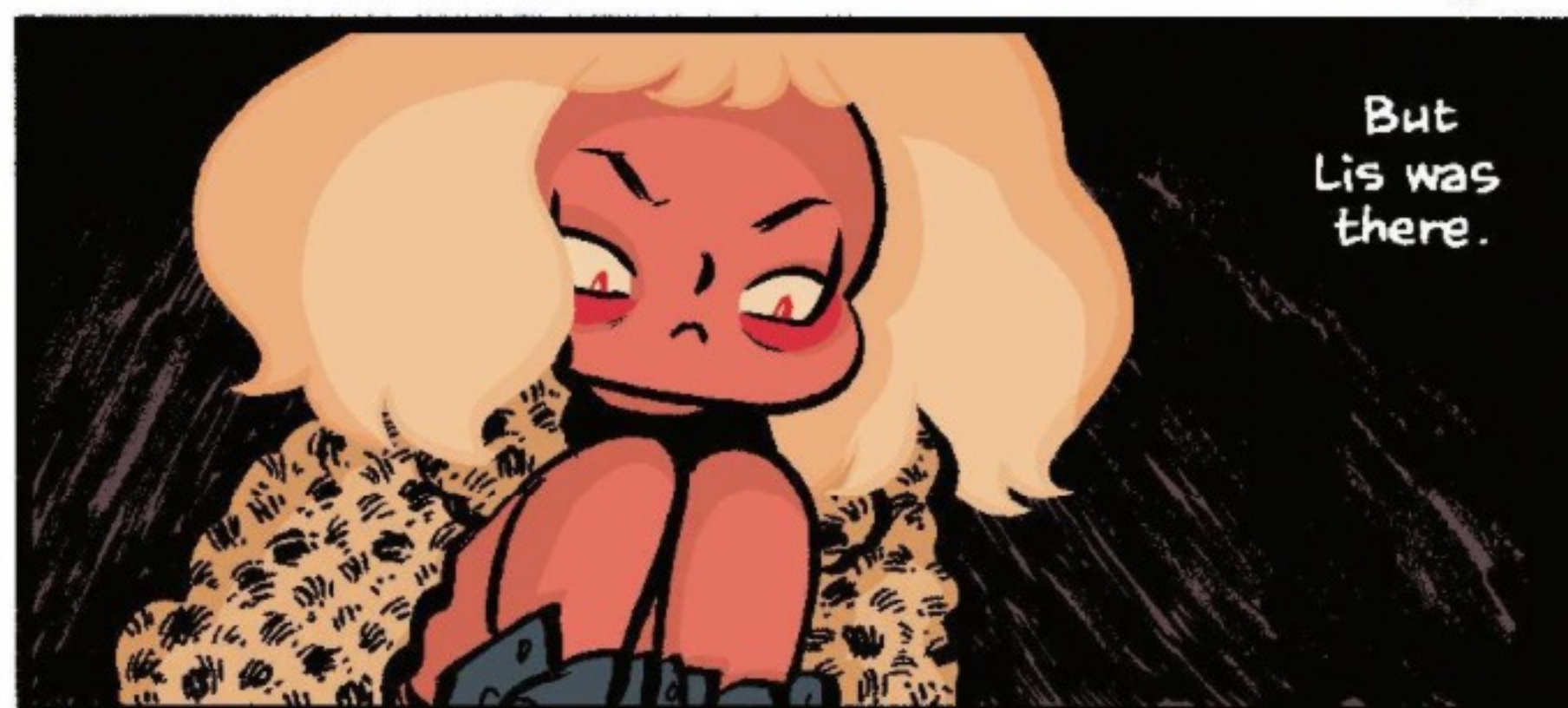




Katie stashed
the witch's pot
in the back of
her nightstand.



She couldn't
see Lis
anywhere.



But
Lis was
there.



And after,
when she
went back
downstairs,



Katie got turned around
between the stairs and the
kitchen, which was weird--

--it's not like the hallway was a maze.





LIKE THAT
FUCKING--
THAT GIRL
HAZEL? WHY
HER?

WHY CAN'T
YOU TALK
TO ME LIKE
THAT? I
WANTED US
TO BE
FRIENDS.



DUDE.
ANDREW...
I DIDN'T
KNOW
YOU FELT
LIKE--



I
GOTTA
GO.

WHAT?
HANG
ON A
SEC!



I DON'T LIKE
IT BACK HERE
ANYMORE.
THE WALK-IN...
YOU DON'T
FEEL THAT?



FEEL
WHAT?



I DON'T
KNOW.
NEVER
MIND.

But
she
did
feel
it.

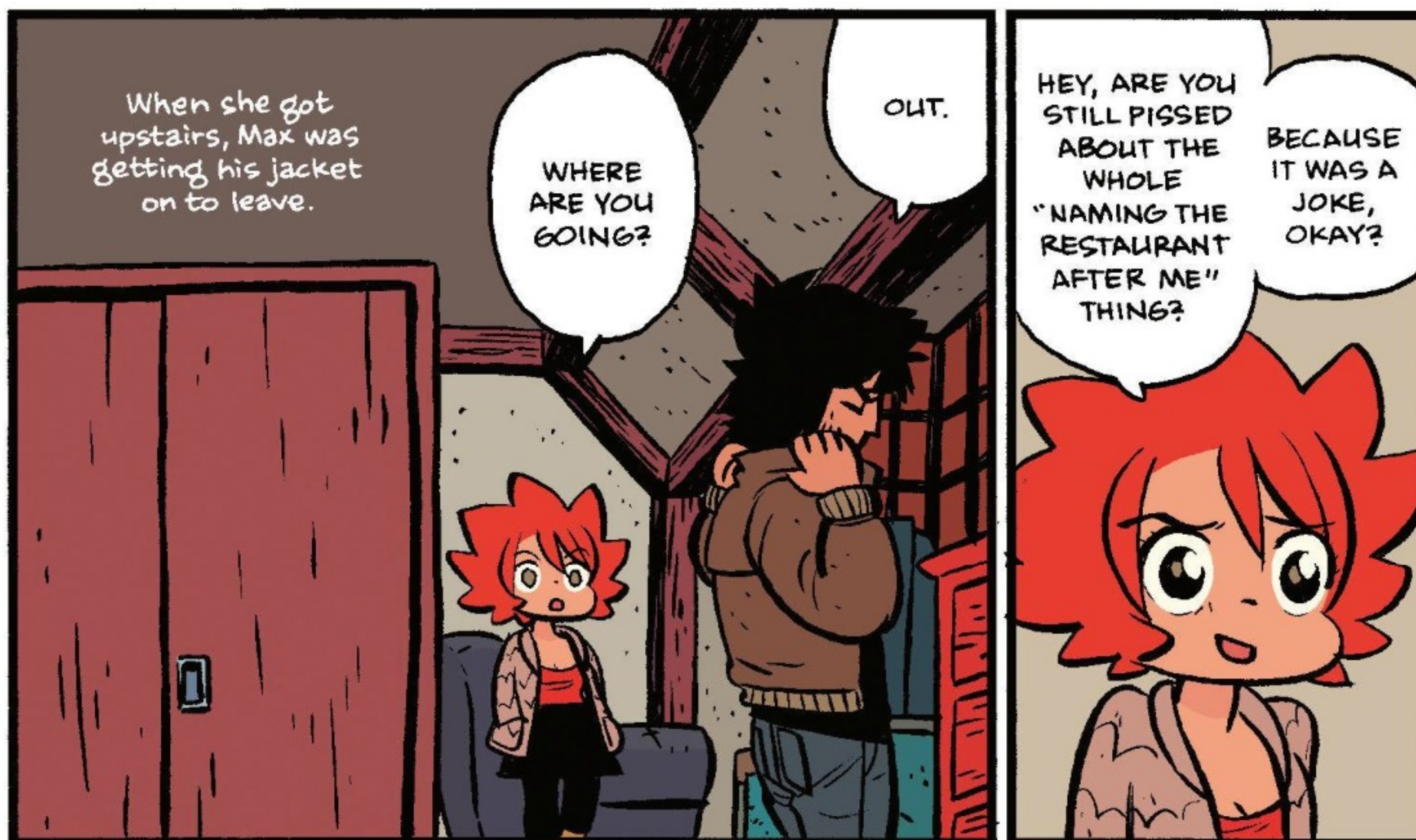


The shadow.
She knew
it was
real.



I DON'T
FEEL
ANYTHING.

Um, yeah,
she did,
actually.



There seemed to be a distinct possibility that it was not fine.











She tried to do the math, but immediately gave up.



REVISION #8





She woke
up in a
cold sweat,
moaning
non-words
in a weird,
strangled
voice.

That day
she couldn't
shake the
image of that
terrible shadow
in the walk-in.
Something very
wrong was
happening.

It was
growing.
She could
swear it was
growing.



REVISION #9

And like that, the day was over, and she could barely remember what she needed to change for tomorrow.



They had started cooking, hammering out the details of their new menu. Every moment should have been a delight, but somehow none of them were.



Max was always disappointed in her, as if she'd been perfect once. As if he was now.



Four left.

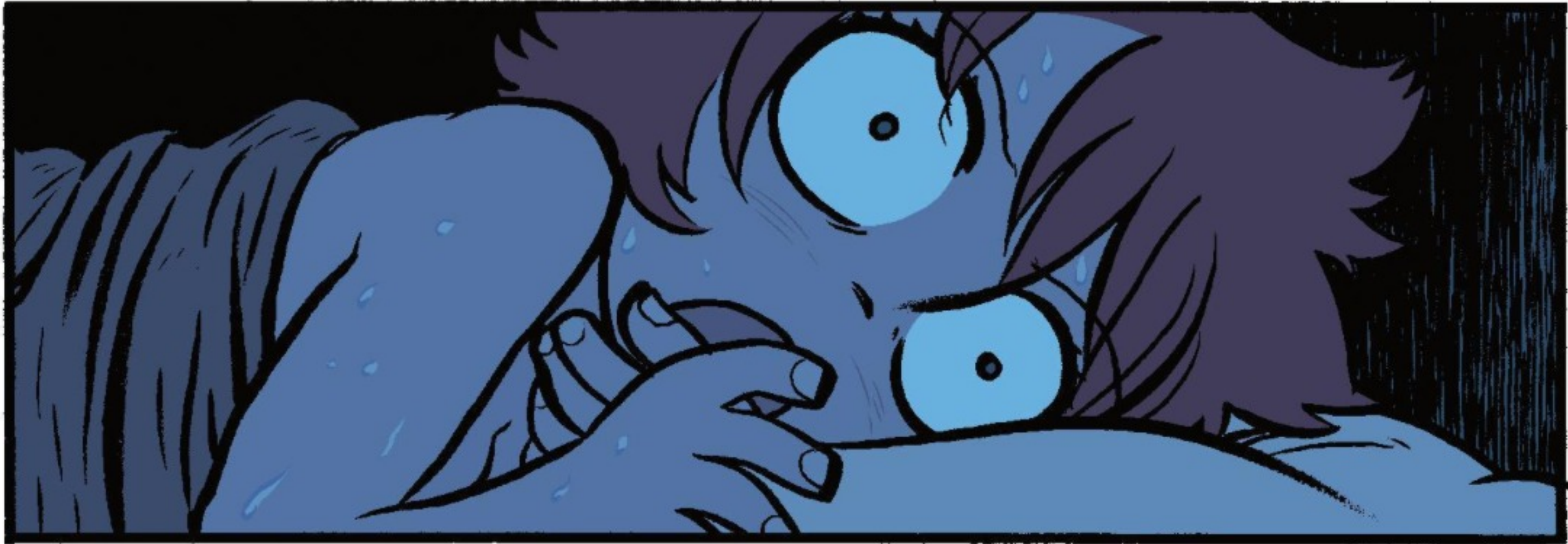


She could get it right with four more. No problem.



REVISION #10





And
Max was
there.



And she
just started
sobbing.



I
JUST...

I
JUST...

I WANTED
EVERYTHING
TO BE
PERFECT...



BUT
IT'S ALL A
MESS AND
I DON'T
KNOW
WHAT I'M
DOING
ANYMORE.



I DON'T
KNOW.

I DON'T
KNOW.



SHH. IT DOESN'T
ALL HAVE
TO BE
PERFECT,
BABY.



YES IT
DOES. IT
DOES.

I HAVE TO
FINISH
WHAT I
STARTED!



YOU
MEAN YOU
STARTED
TRYING
TO MAKE
THINGS
BETTER...

...AND NOW
YOU CAN'T
STOP UNTIL
THINGS ARE
PERFECT?



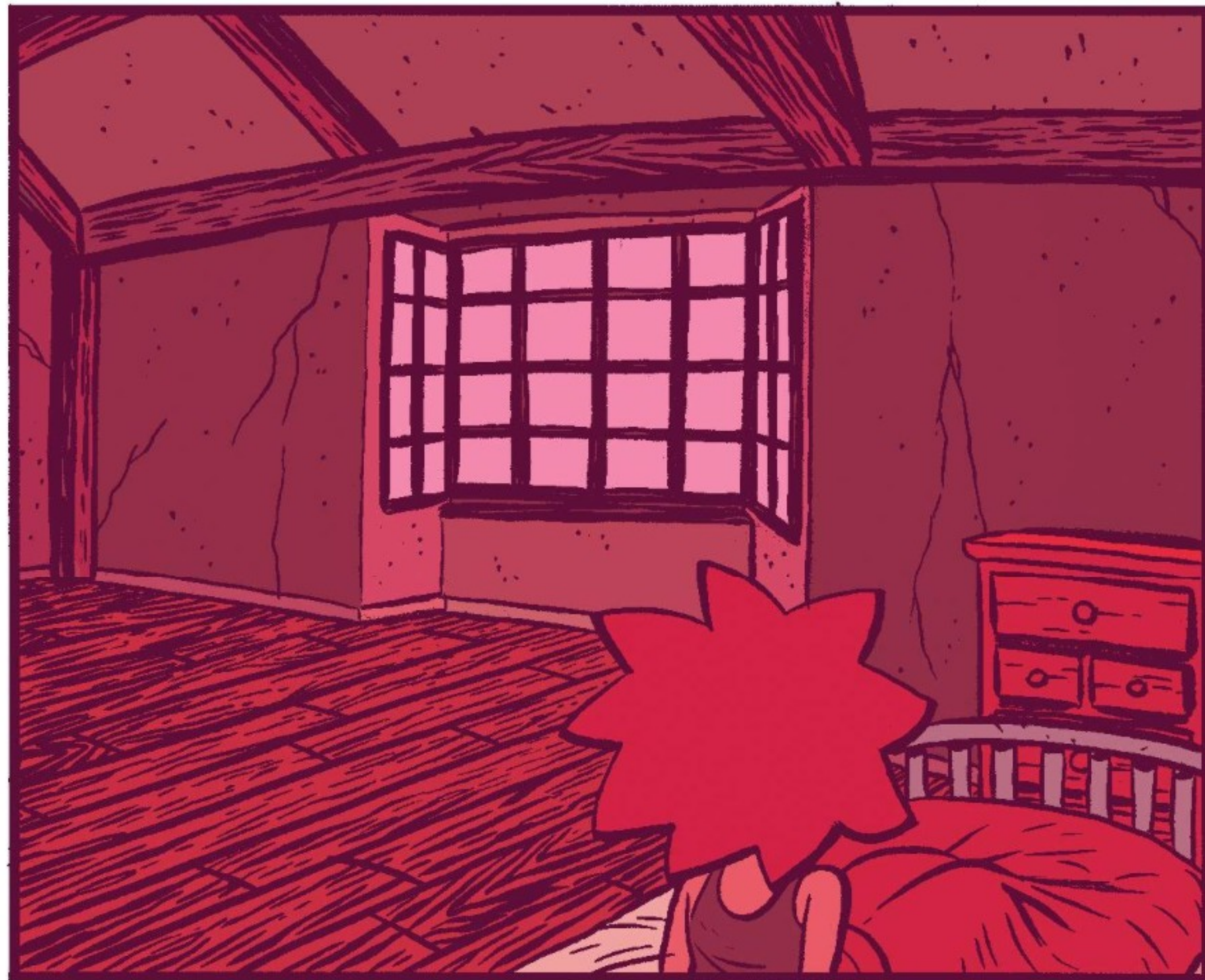
Katie
fell
asleep
again.

Her dreams were of darkness.

She
woke
up,



and there
was a glow.









6

Control



When Katie woke up, she was back in her normal bedroom with Max asleep beside her.



She decided to take an early-morning drive. Away from here.



She ended up at Hazel's house.



She wondered: was there a house spirit here too?



It seemed rude to barge in, so she texted.

Are you home?



BZZ

?

Like are you at home

BZZ

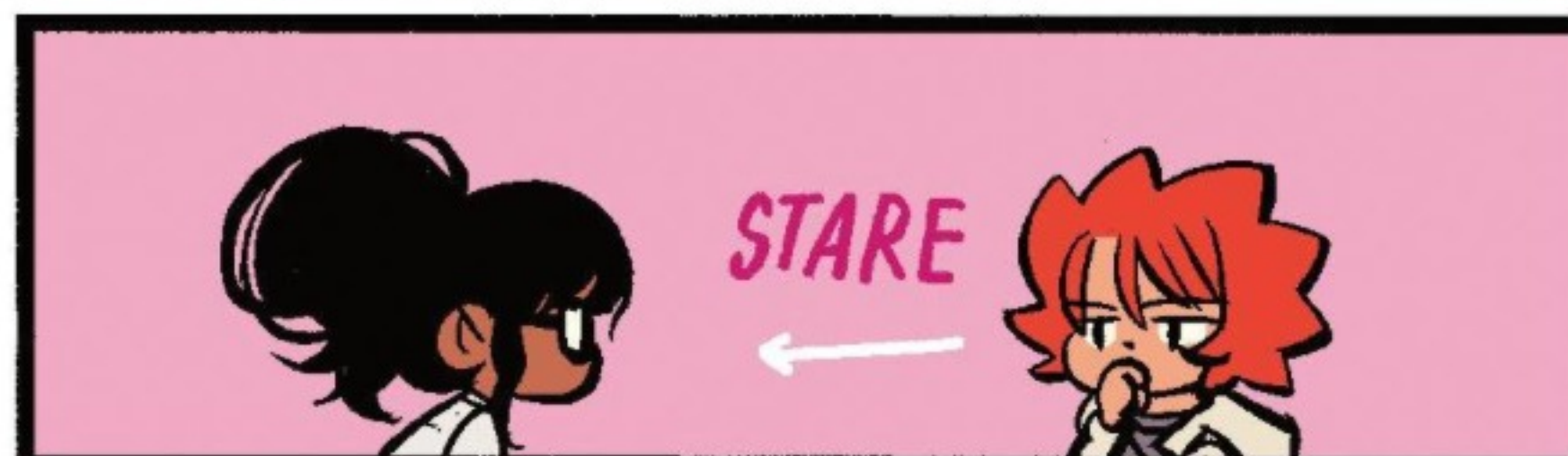
yes



Ok I'm coming in

BZZ

what









OH!
I FOUND
THIS OLD
PICTURE
BOOK
IN THE
ATTIC--



I
DON'T
KNOW
IF IT'S
FROM
WHEN I
WAS A
KID, OR
WHEN
MY MOM
WAS,
OR--

MY
AUNT
USED TO
READ IT
TO ME.
I CAN'T
BELIEVE I
FORGOT
ALL
ABOUT
IT!



GOOD
HOUSE,
BAD
HOUSE.

I THINK
I CHEWED
OFF THAT
CORNER...



THIS IS
CREEPY
FEEL'N...
IT LOOKS
JUST LIKE
SECONDS!

NO IT
DOESN'T.
SETTLE
DOWN.



OKAY, SO
THERE'S
THIS FAMILY
AND THEY
JUST
MOVED TO
A NEW
HOUSE.



BUT ONLY
THE LITTLEST
DAUGHTER
REALIZES THEY
ACCIDENTALLY
BROUGHT
THEIR OLD
HOUSE SPIRIT
ALONG.

I GUESS
HE WAS
SLEEPING
IN THIS OLD
TRUNK.



OF COURSE, THERE'S A HOUSE SPIRIT IN THEIR NEW HOUSE TOO.



SO THE TWO HOUSE SPIRITS FIGHT OVER THE HOUSE.



IT'S, LIKE, FUNNY? BUT... KINDA DARK.



THE FAMILY CAN'T KEEP BOTH SPIRITS HAPPY, 'CAUSE DIFFERENT THINGS MAKE THEM HAPPY.

EVERY HOUSE SPIRIT WANTS TO LIVE IN A DIFFERENT KIND OF HOUSE, I GUESS.



ANYWAY, THE FAMILY TRIES EVERYTHING, BUT IN THE END THIS HOUSE "GOES BAD."







The
door.
The
shadow.

She knew
it was
real. She'd
known all
along.



She'd invited it
into her home.
It didn't matter
how or why.

What mattered
was that she
had to face it.
And she was
ready.



She was
almost
ready.

She was
getting
there.



She walked
with purpose.
For like a
second.



The kitchen
seemed
farther than
ever. The
halls kept
stretching.

The basement
was changing,
evolving, with
every revision.
Katie hadn't
caused this--

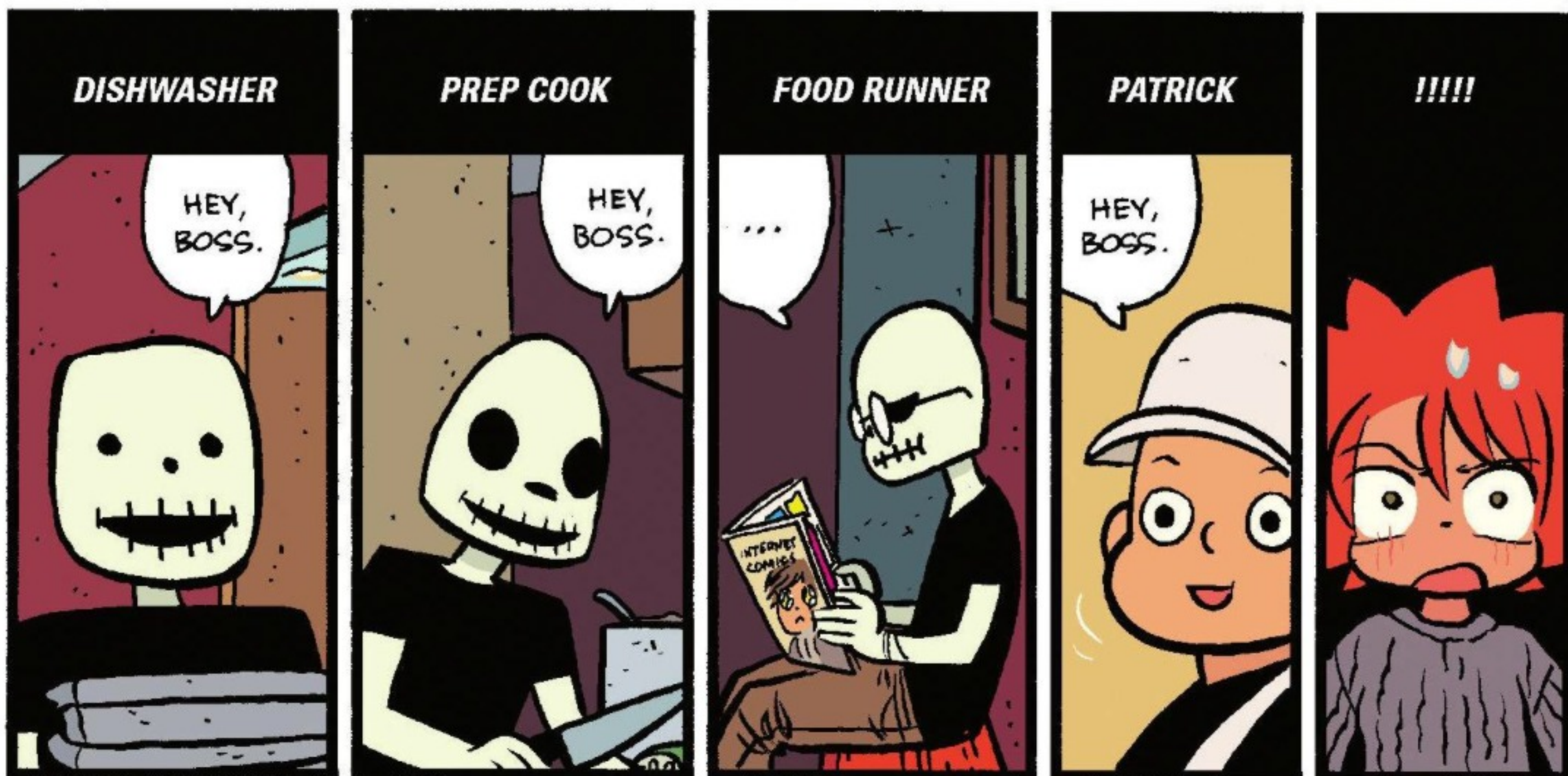
--it
had.

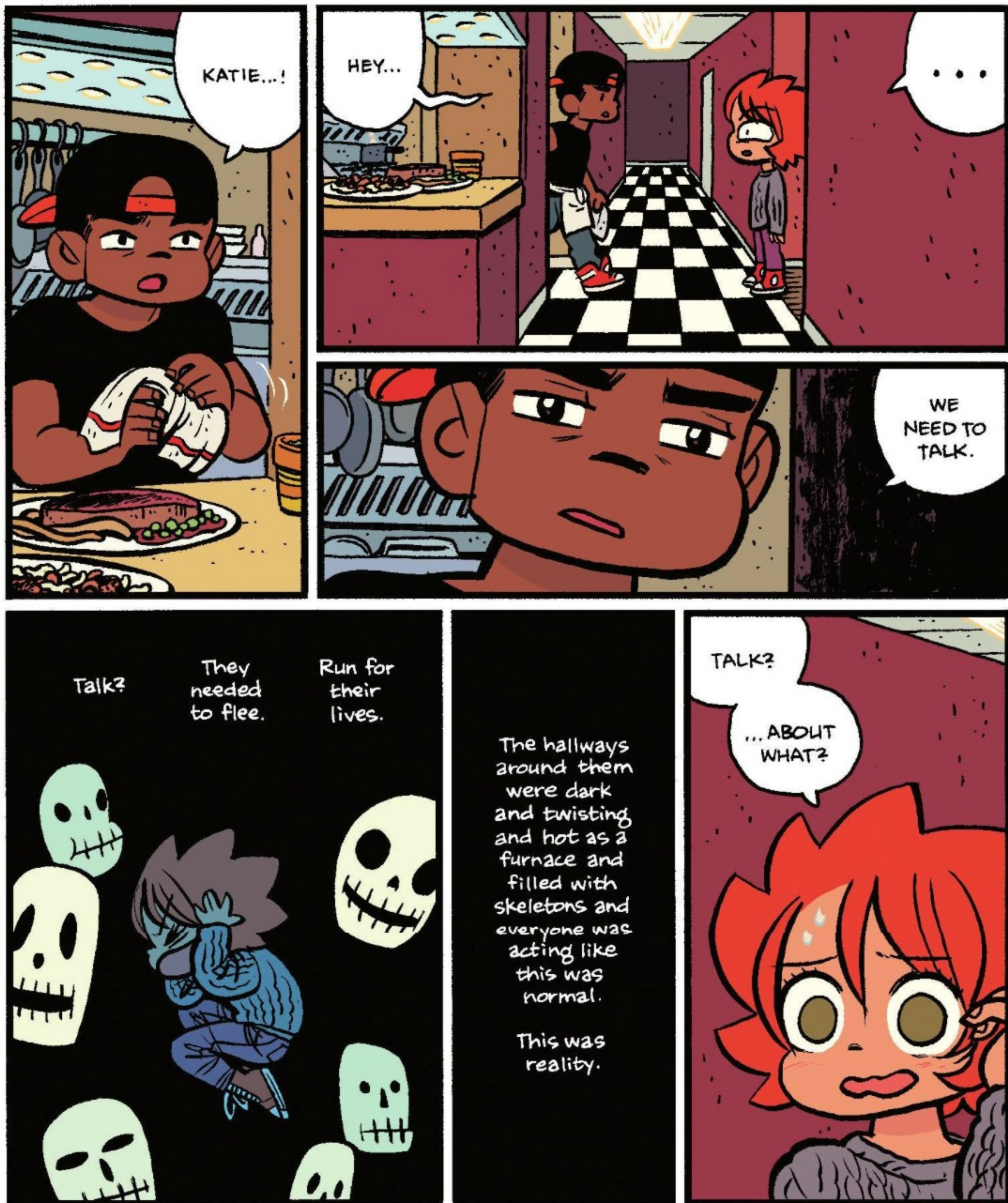


And then



way
past
weird.







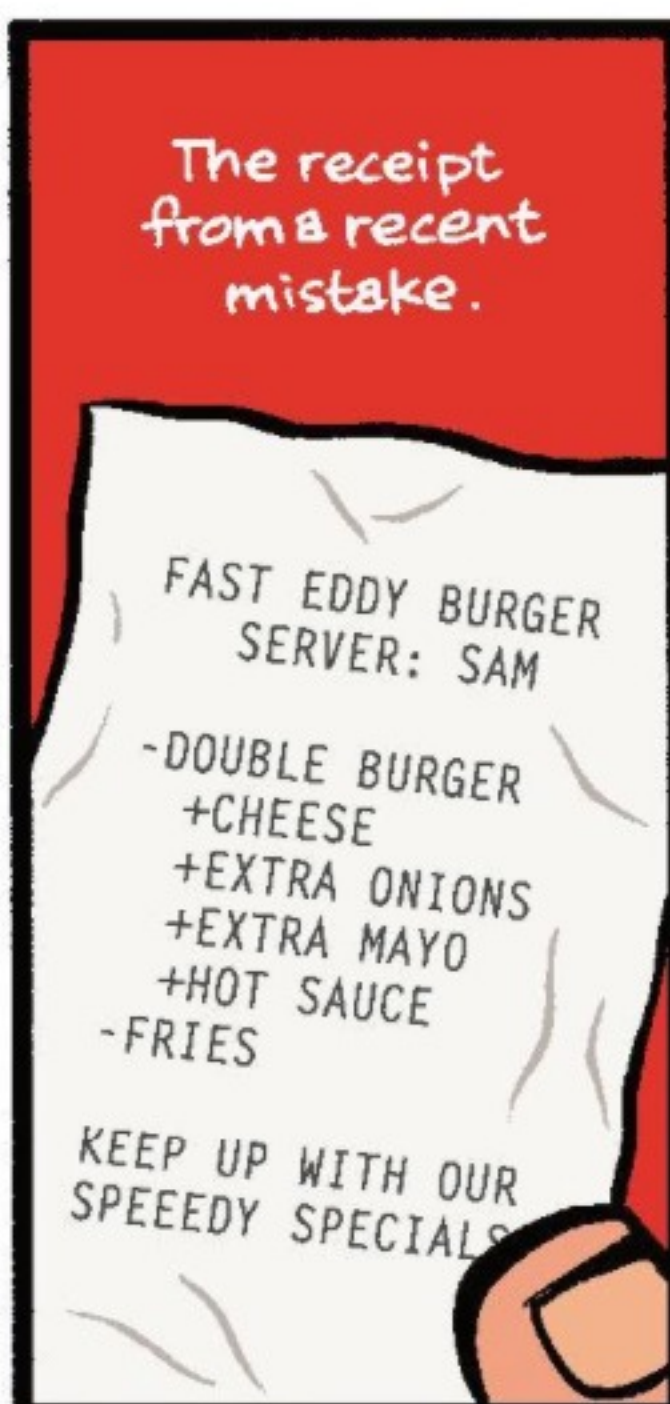


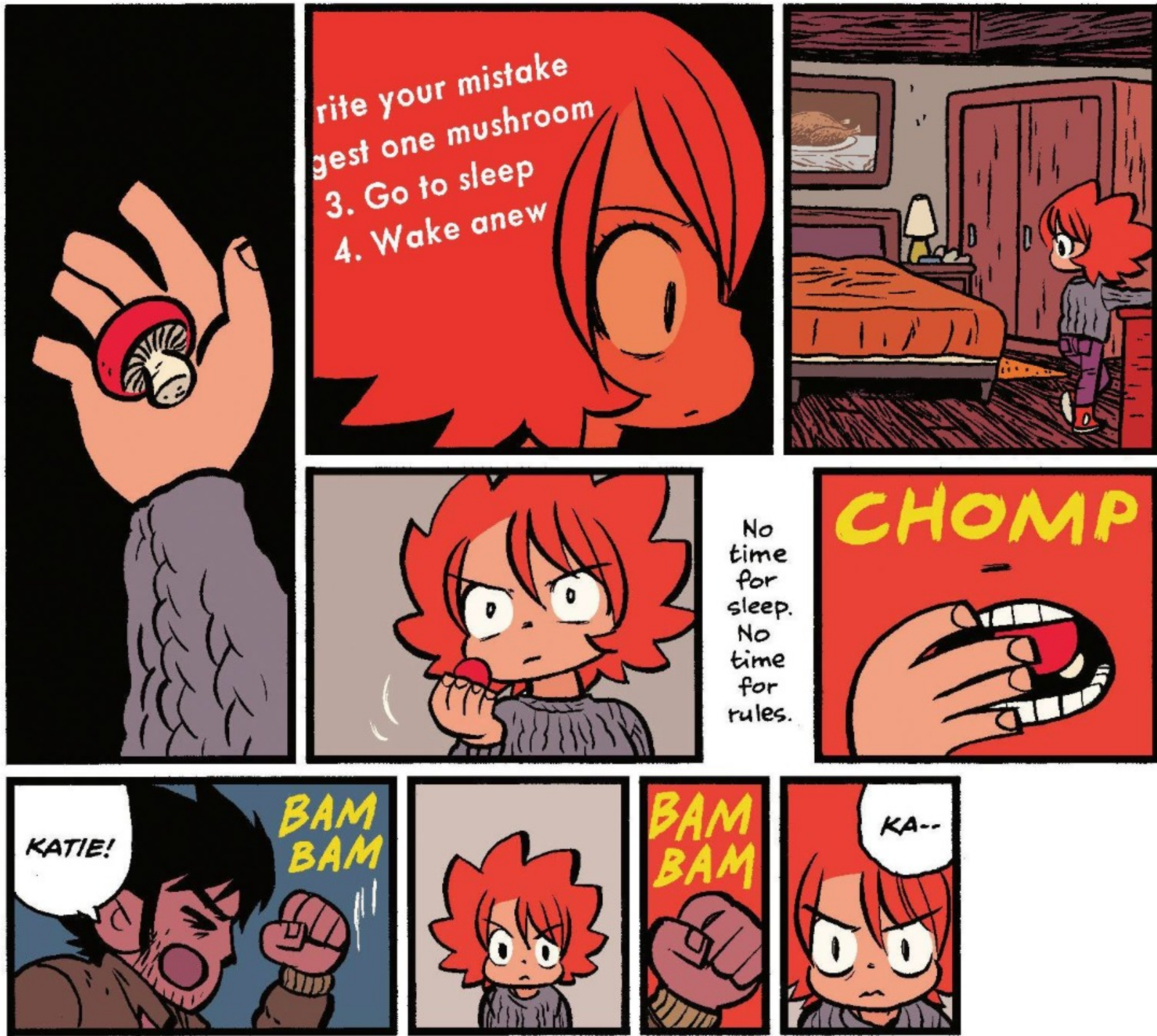












REVISION #11



She
felt it.

The
world
shuddered
and
changed.

She
felt
it.

She
half fell
into the
dresser.



The
pounding
on the
door had
stopped.



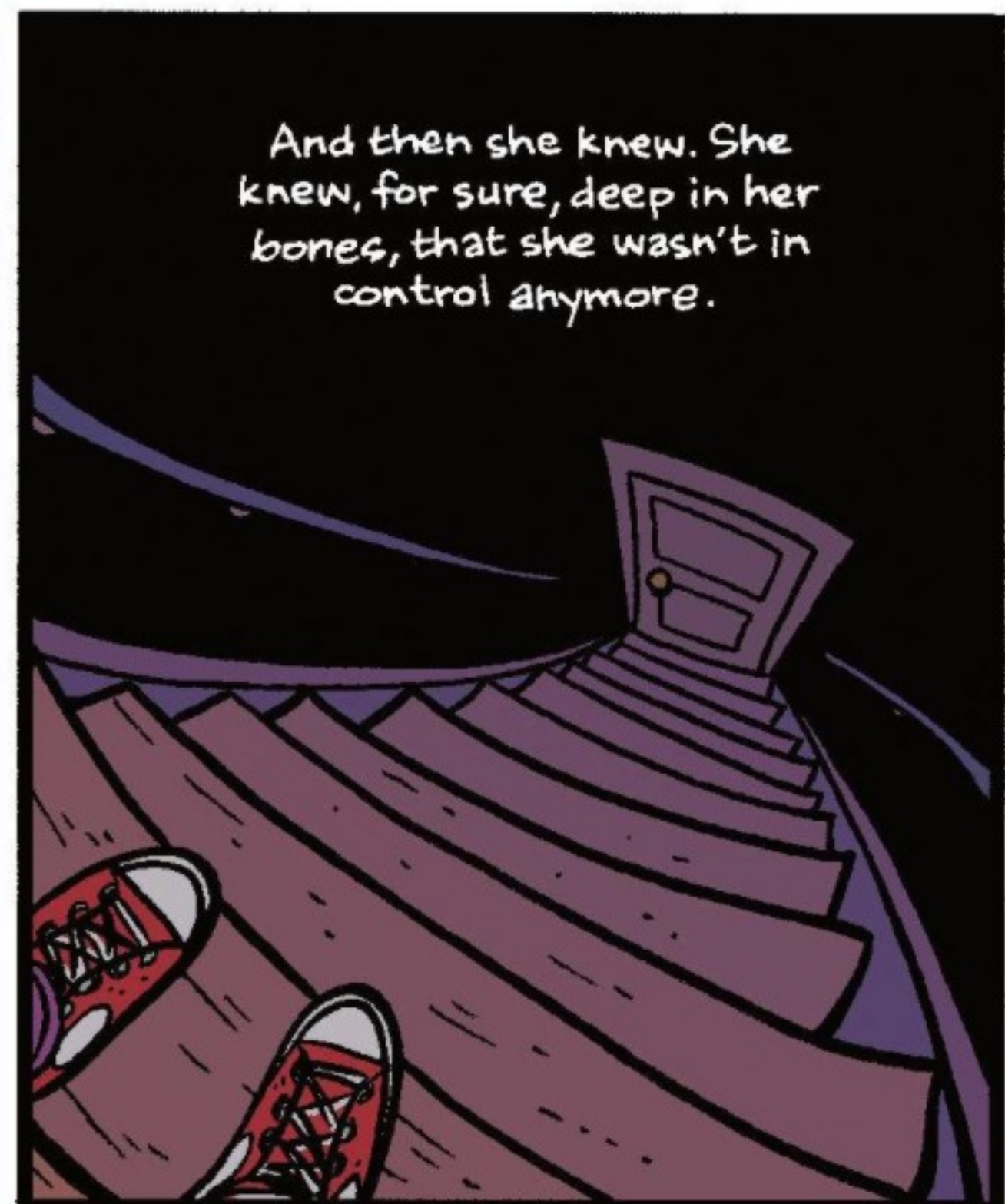


???????



She hadn't caused this one.

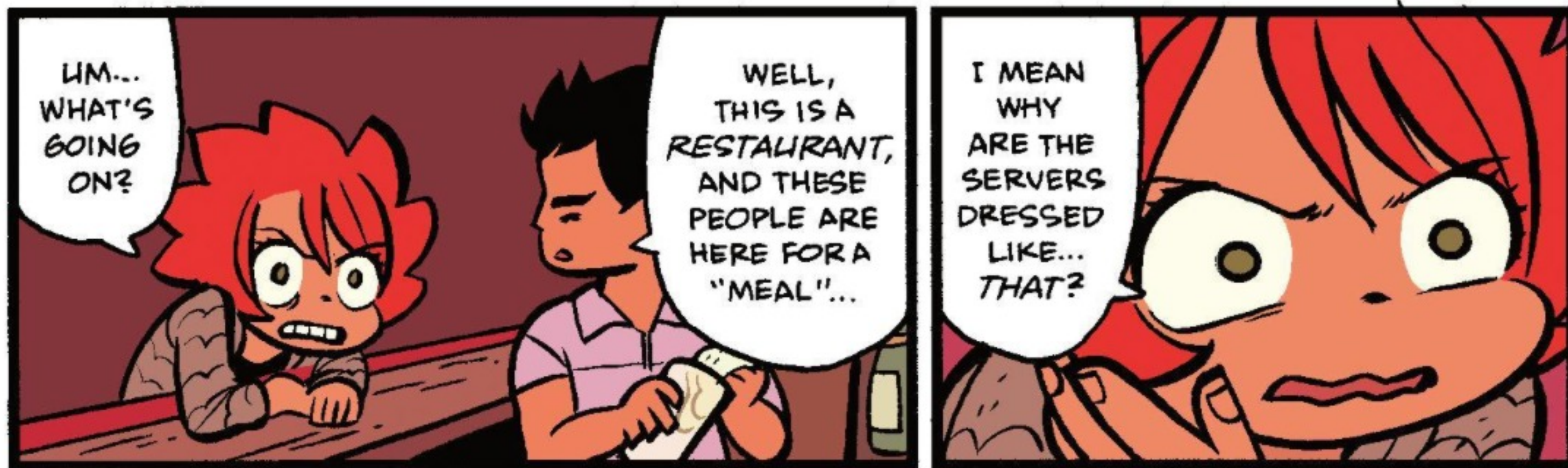
Who'd caused this one?



The state of the dining room did not dispel this notion.









The kitchen was hot and dark and impossibly far from the stairs.



And Max was back.



And he smiled, because he loved her again.



Because he didn't remember what had happened.



Because what had happened hadn't happened.





MAX...

I
LOVE
YOU.



I
LOVE
YOU
TOO.

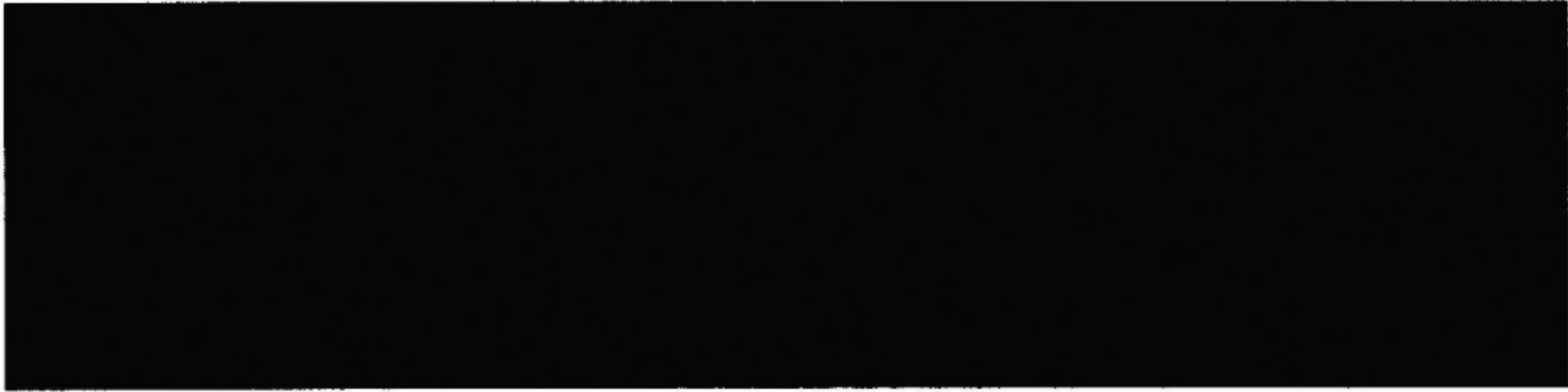
AND I'M
SEARING
THREE
STEAKS
RIGHT NOW.
I AM SO
TALENTED.

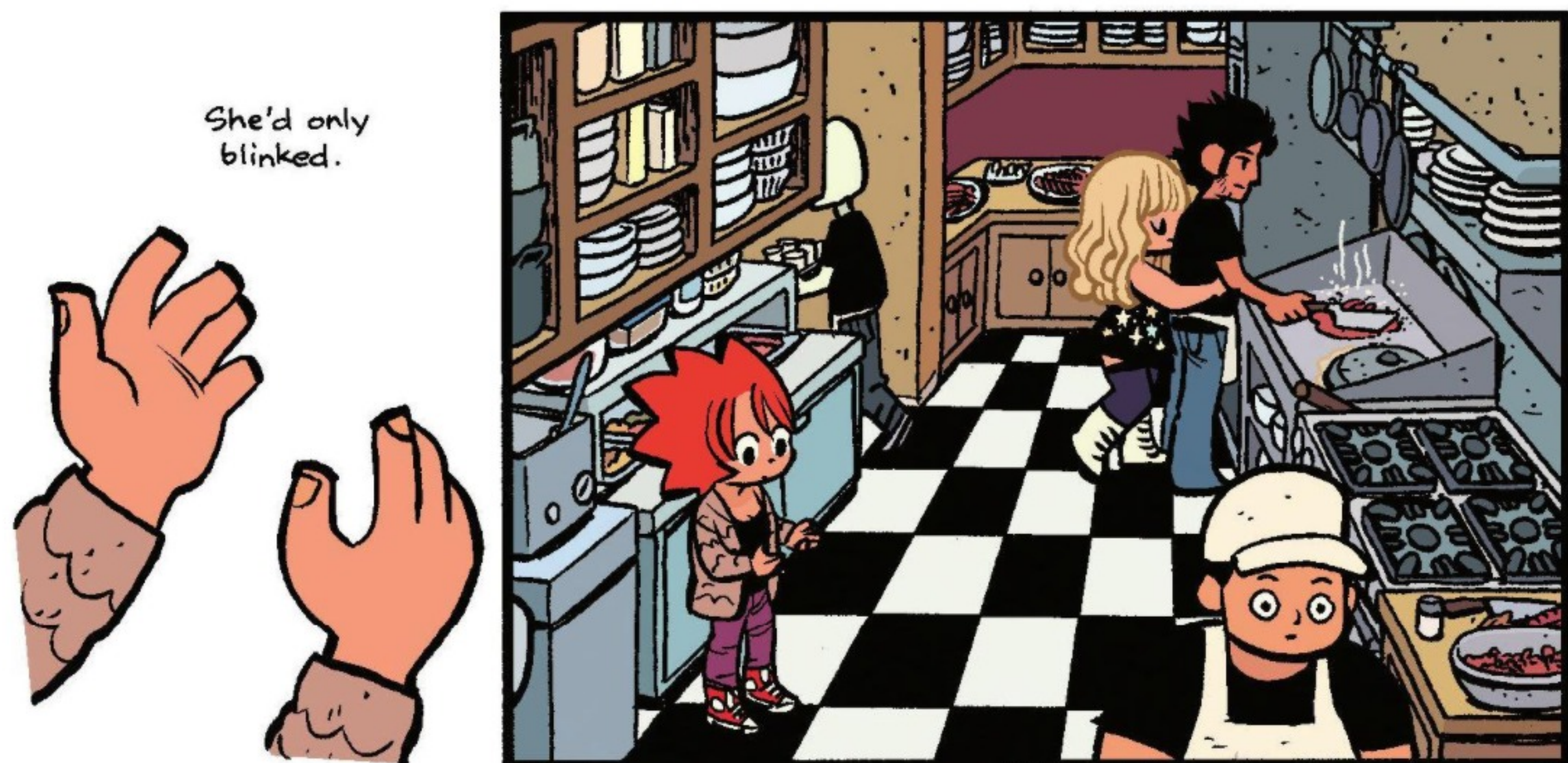


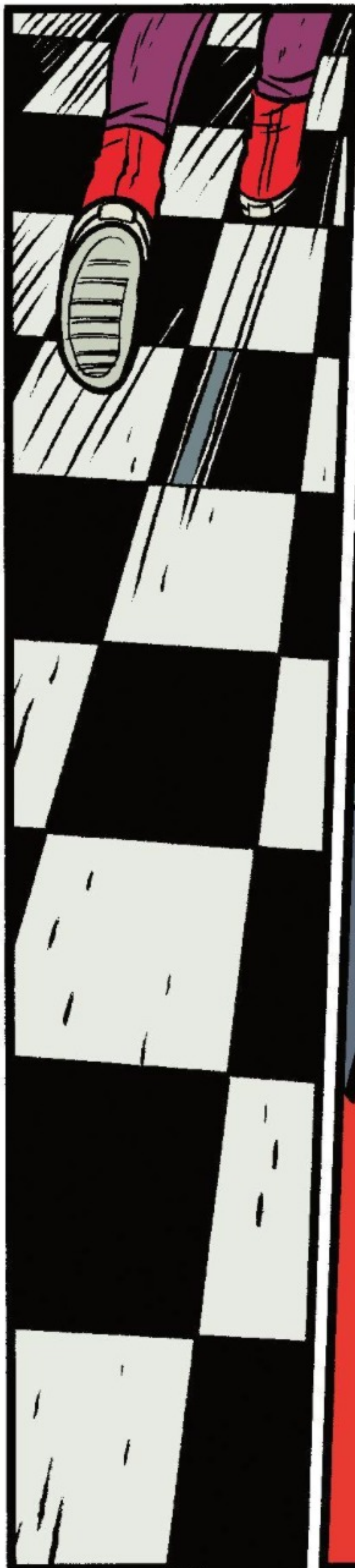
MAX.

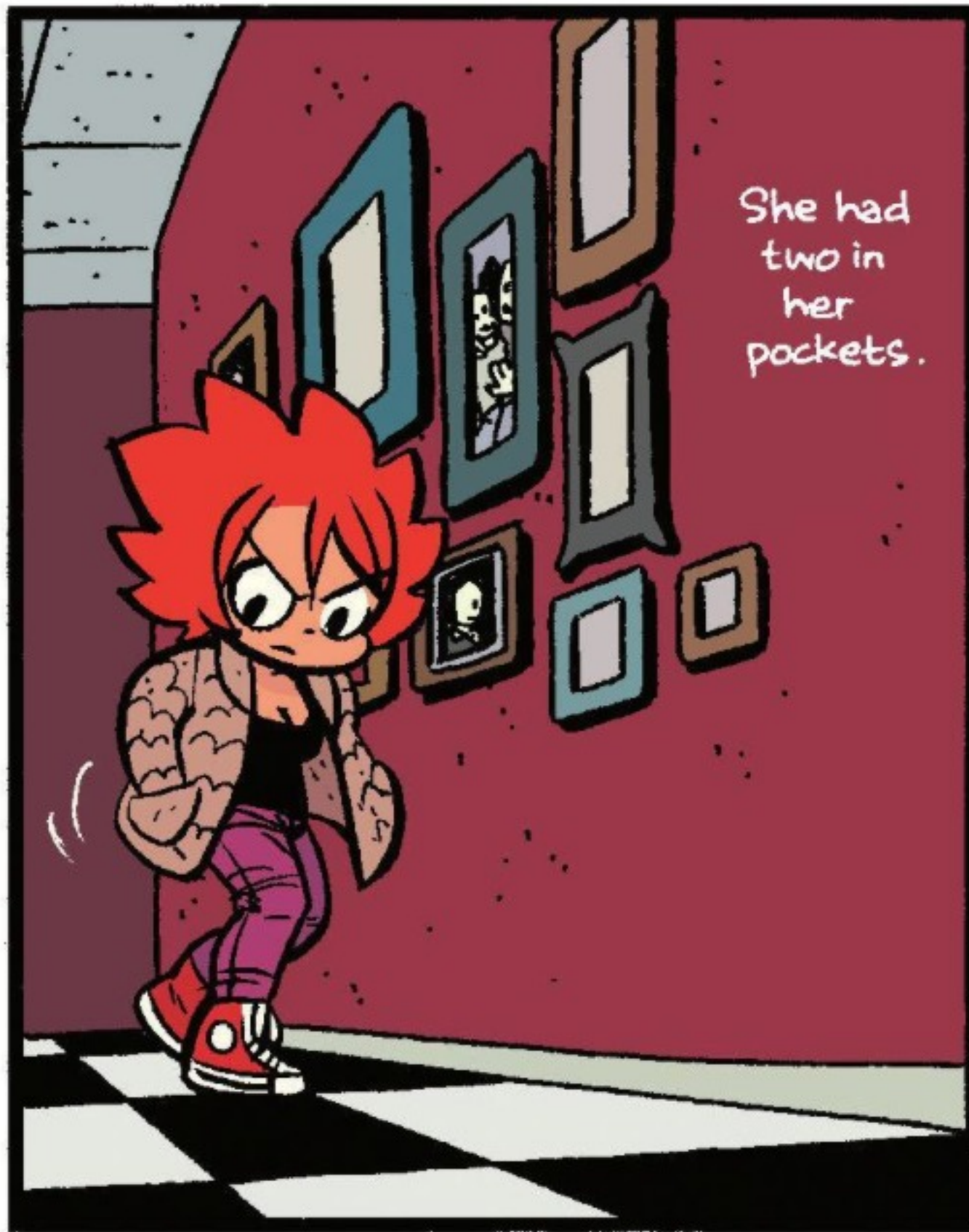
She
loved
him, and
he loved
her, and
that was
all that
mattered
now.

The other
stuff was--

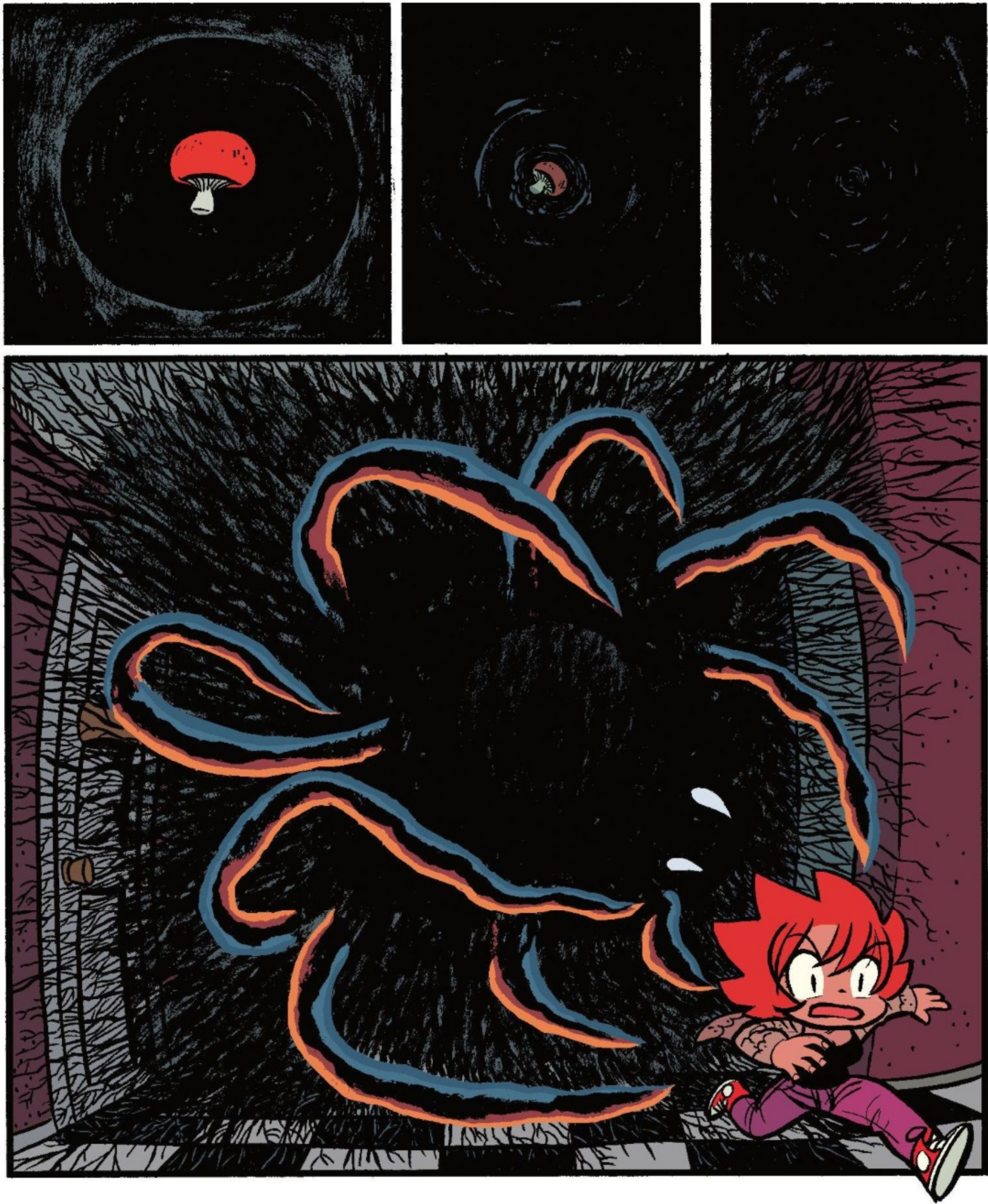


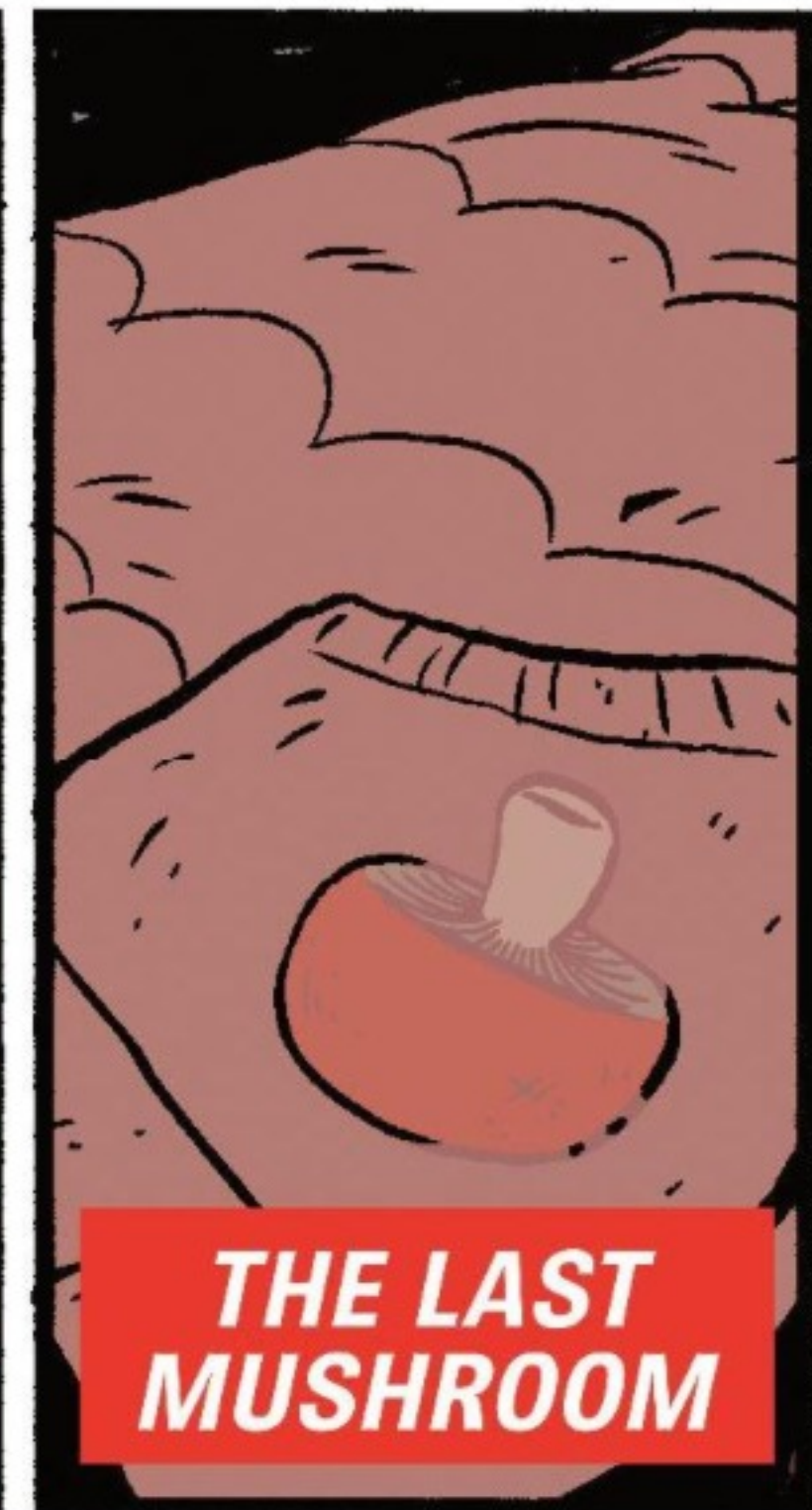












**THE LAST
MUSHROOM**







NEVER
BEEN IN A
KITCHEN
BEFORE,
HUH?

CALL
ME
"CHEF."



He
didn't
know
her.

He had
forgotten her.
Or they'd
never met.



No more
mushrooms.
This was it.
This was
life now.

Some
other
power
was
running
the
show.







Even moments later, Hazel couldn't say with certainty that she'd seen Lis, or anything at all.

Either way, it was time to get the hell out of Seconds. Maybe never to return.



Hazel sat still and silent the whole way,



clinging to the old storybook like a lifeline.



Snow fell thick and fast. Everything outside her car was blank, white, white,



as if the world

was being erased.









Can't Go Back

The
witch's
pot.



If she
could
find it,
if she
could
bring it
back--

IT'D FIX
EVERYTHING!



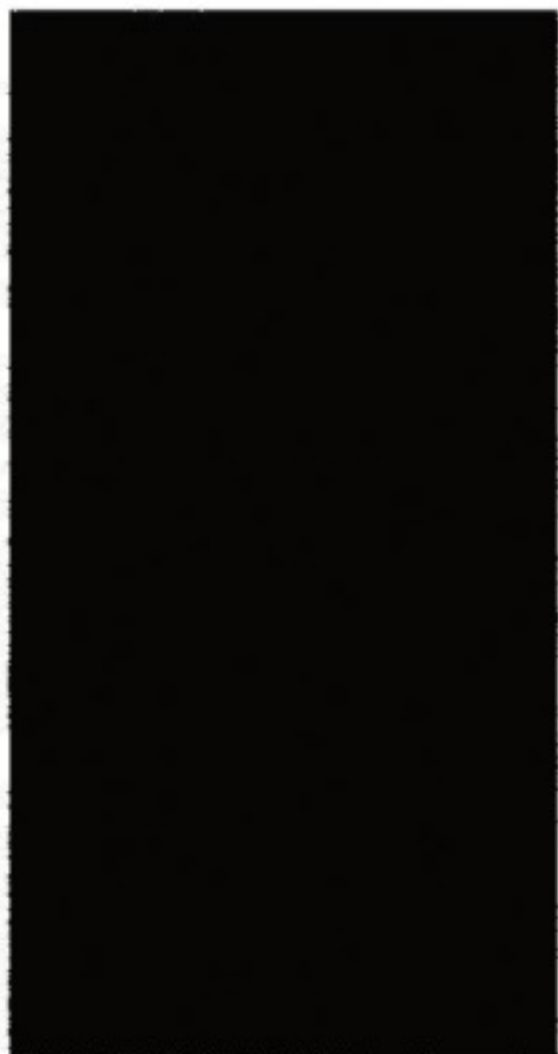
...well...
Maybe
it'd
help,
anyway.



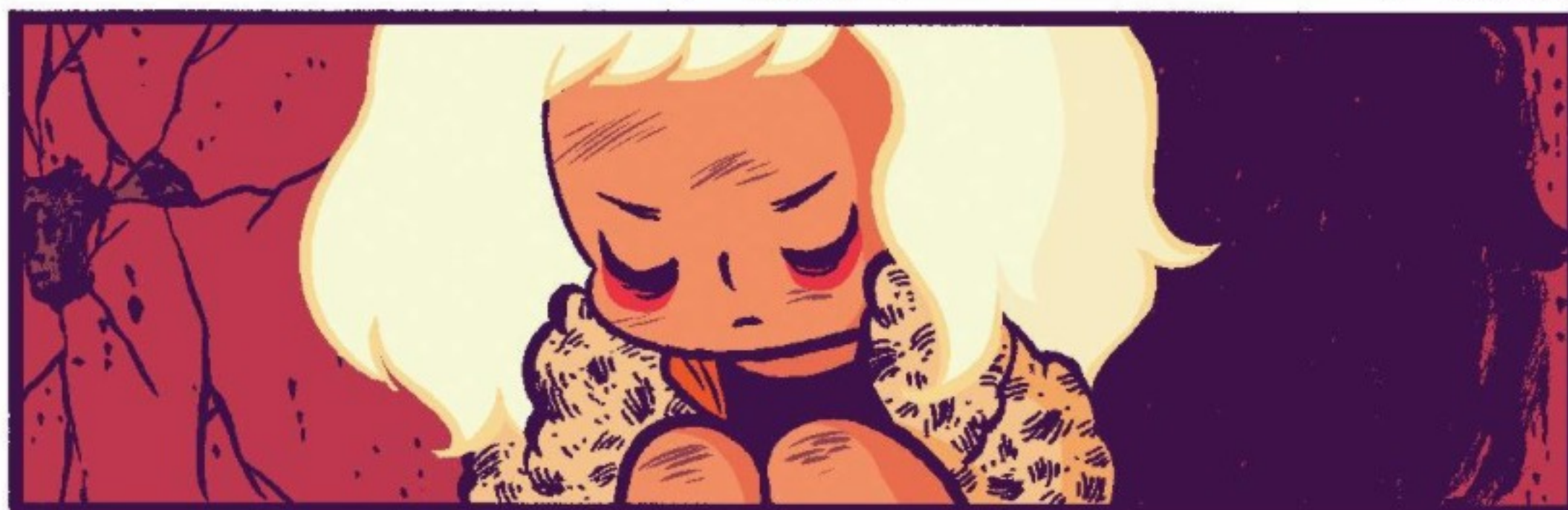
First
of all,
she had
to get
Hazel
home
safely.







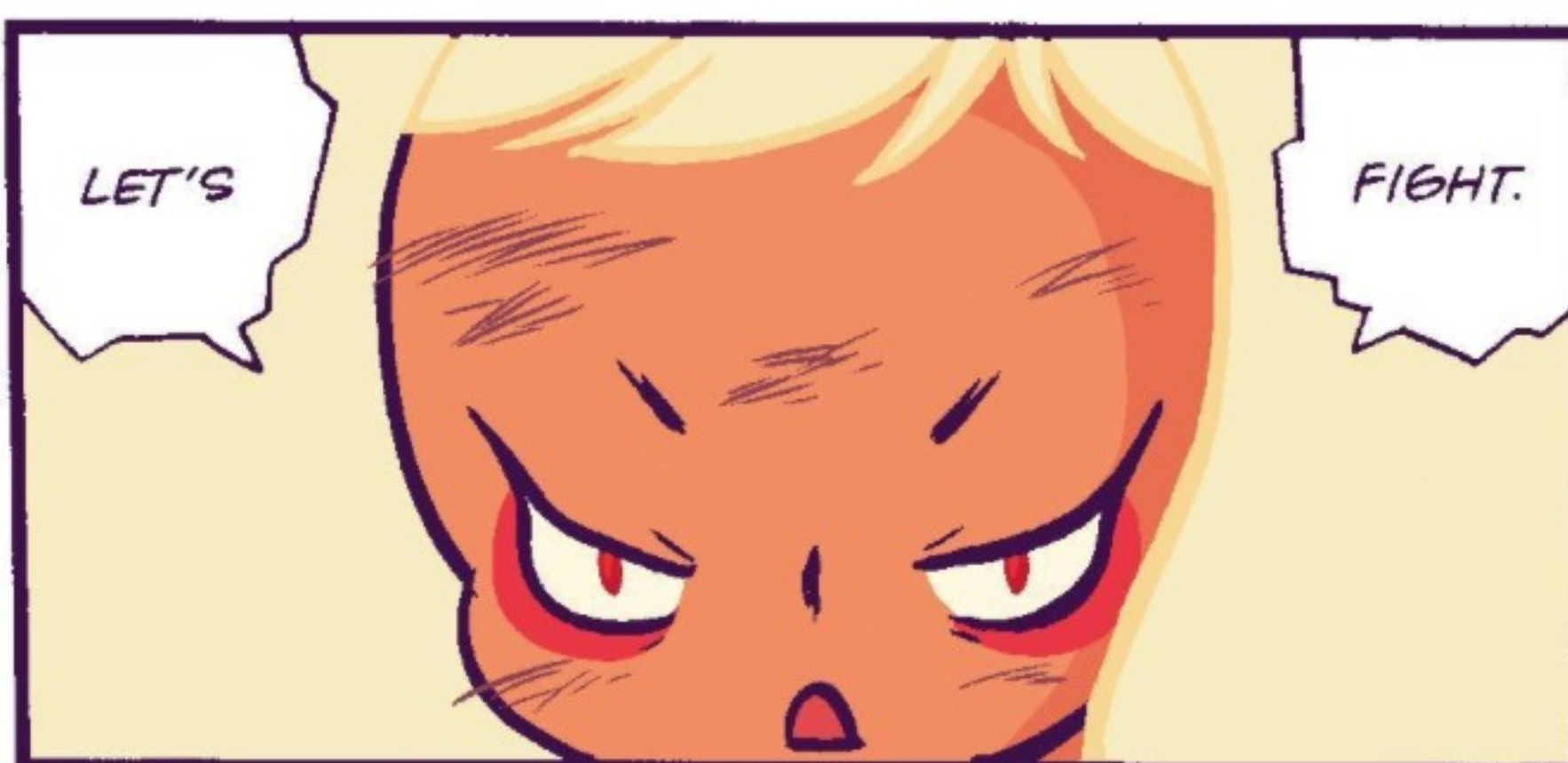
And
like
that,
she was
at the
start
again.



a
little
bit
closer
to the
end.









It
was
her.

The
witch.



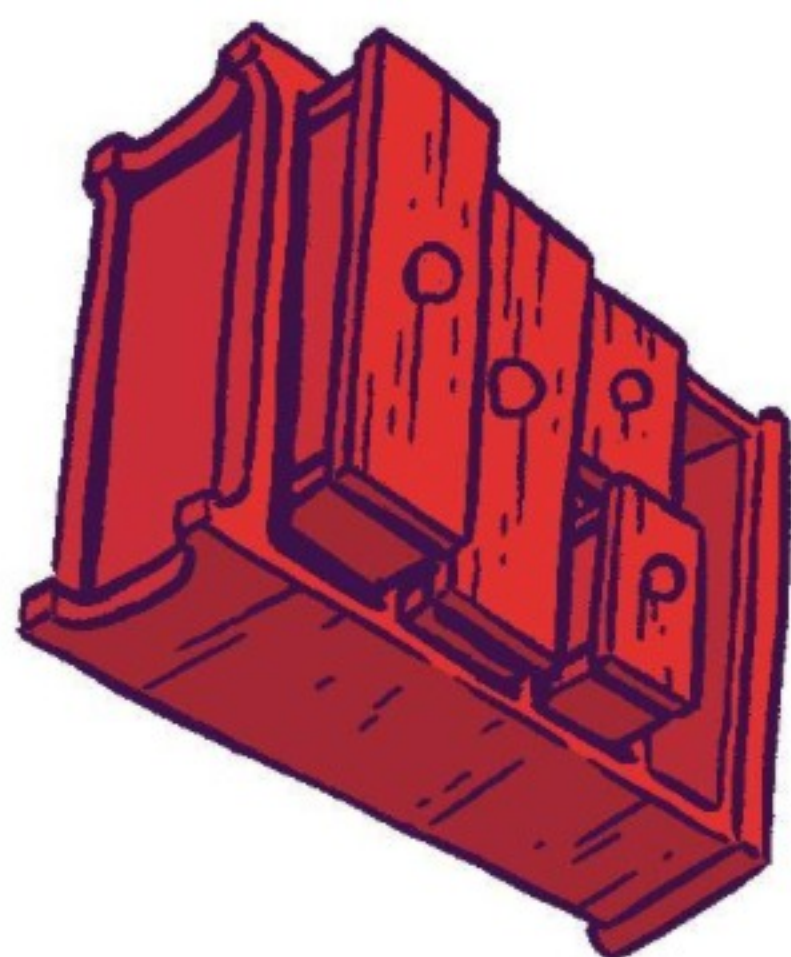
VANISH!



DAMN
IT, LIS!







She
woke
up,



relieved,
so relieved,



and then she
remembered







THIS
WORLD
IS QUIET
NOW.





And for one second, Katie understood: each point of light, each junction,

was not just a new time,



but a new place.

Another Seconds. Another Katie.



Every time she woke up it was as a different person.



In order to change her world,
she'd had to go to a new one,
where nothing needed to be changed
in the first place.

Now she was many worlds from home
and all alone.

But
so, she
realized,
was the
witch.



PLEASE--

LET ME
TAKE YOU
HOME!



**THIS IS
HOME
NOW.**







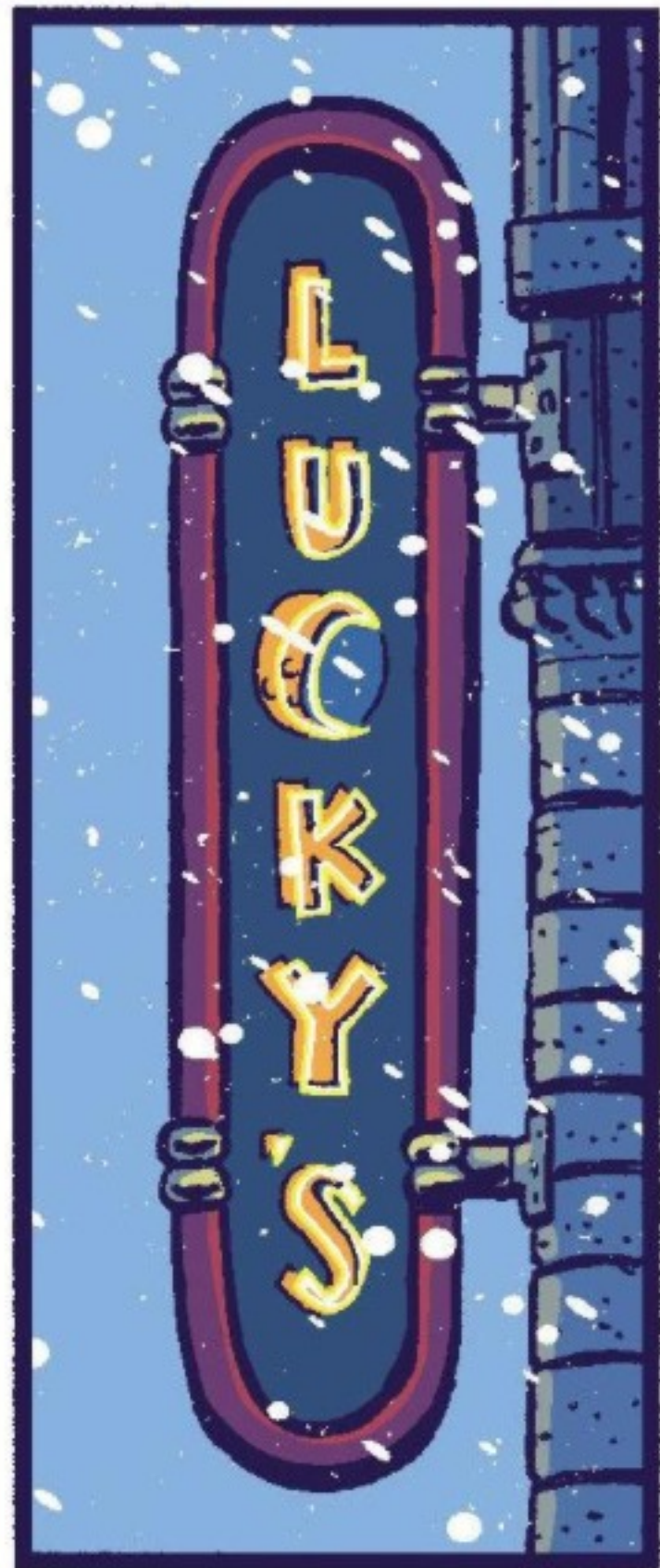
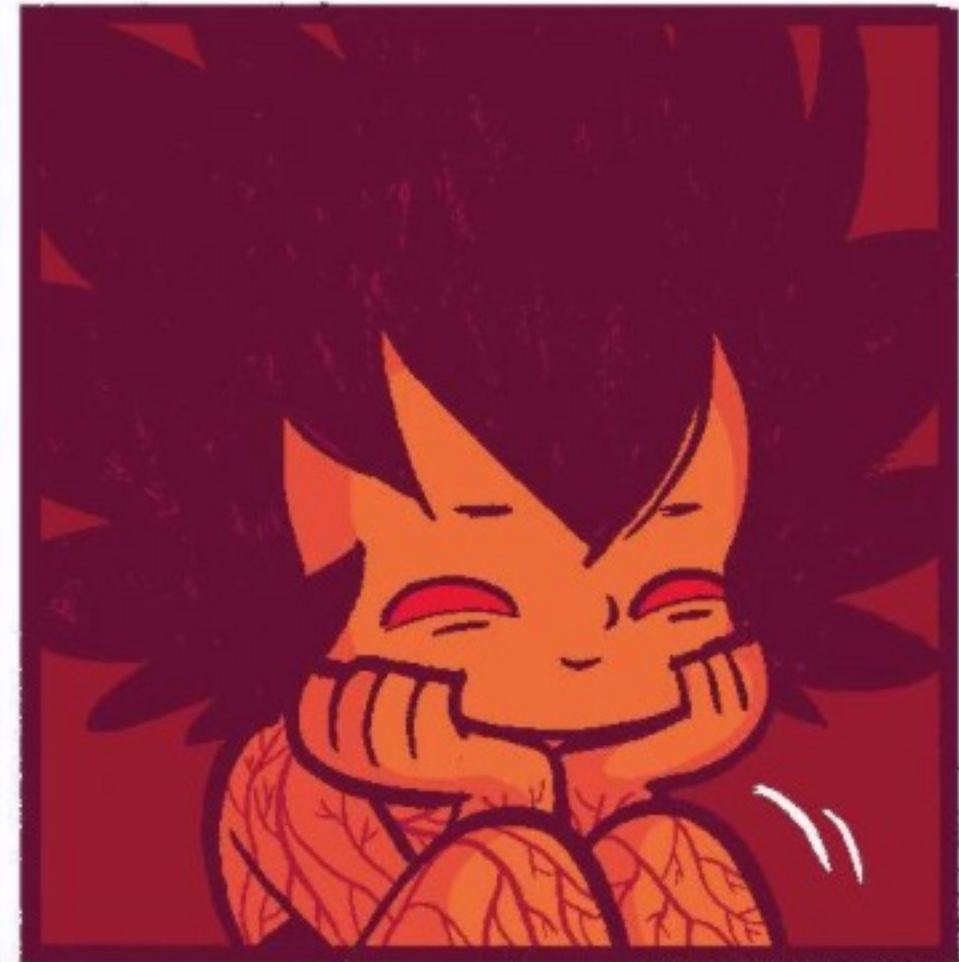






She returned the pot to its
filthy, forgotten fireplace.



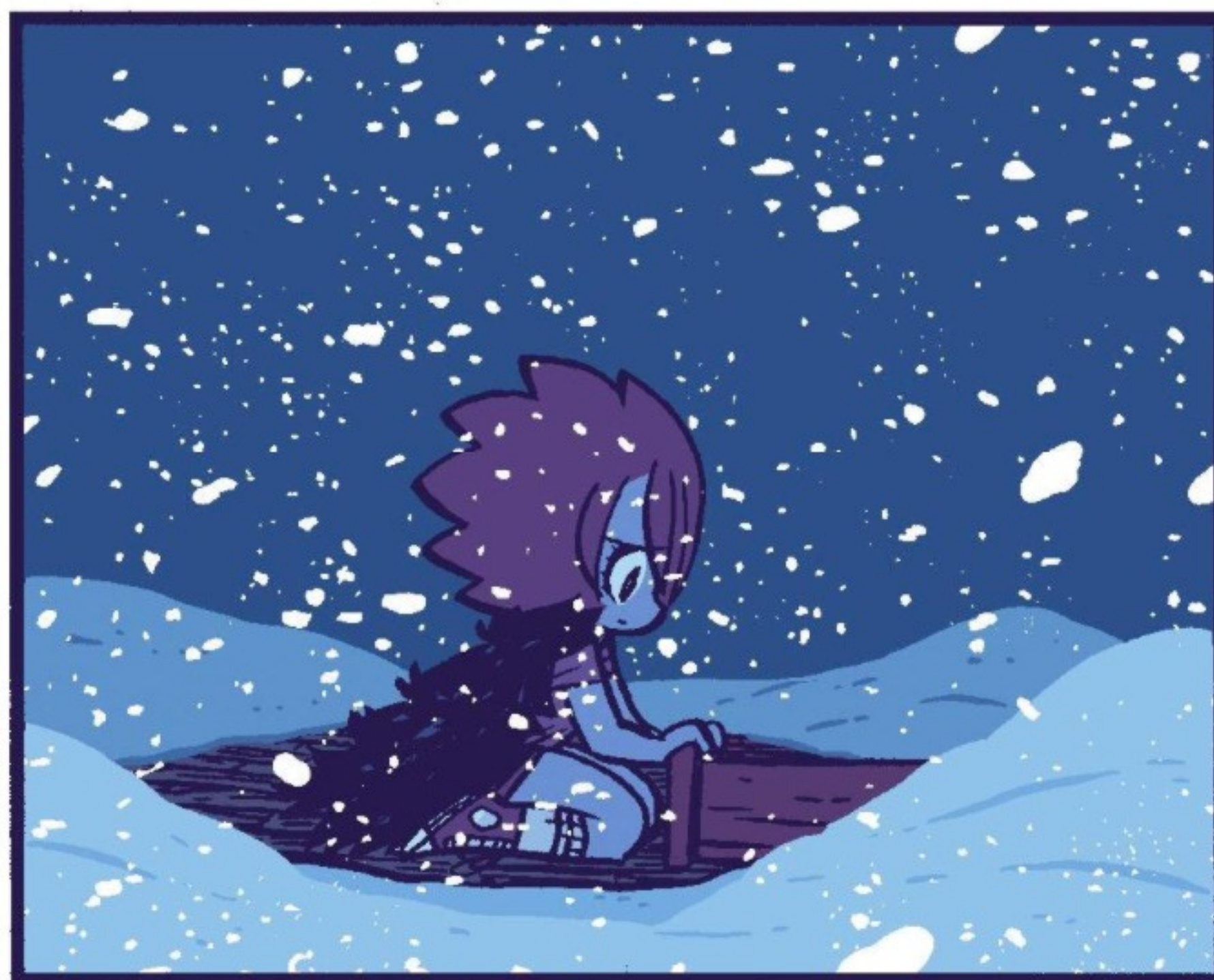








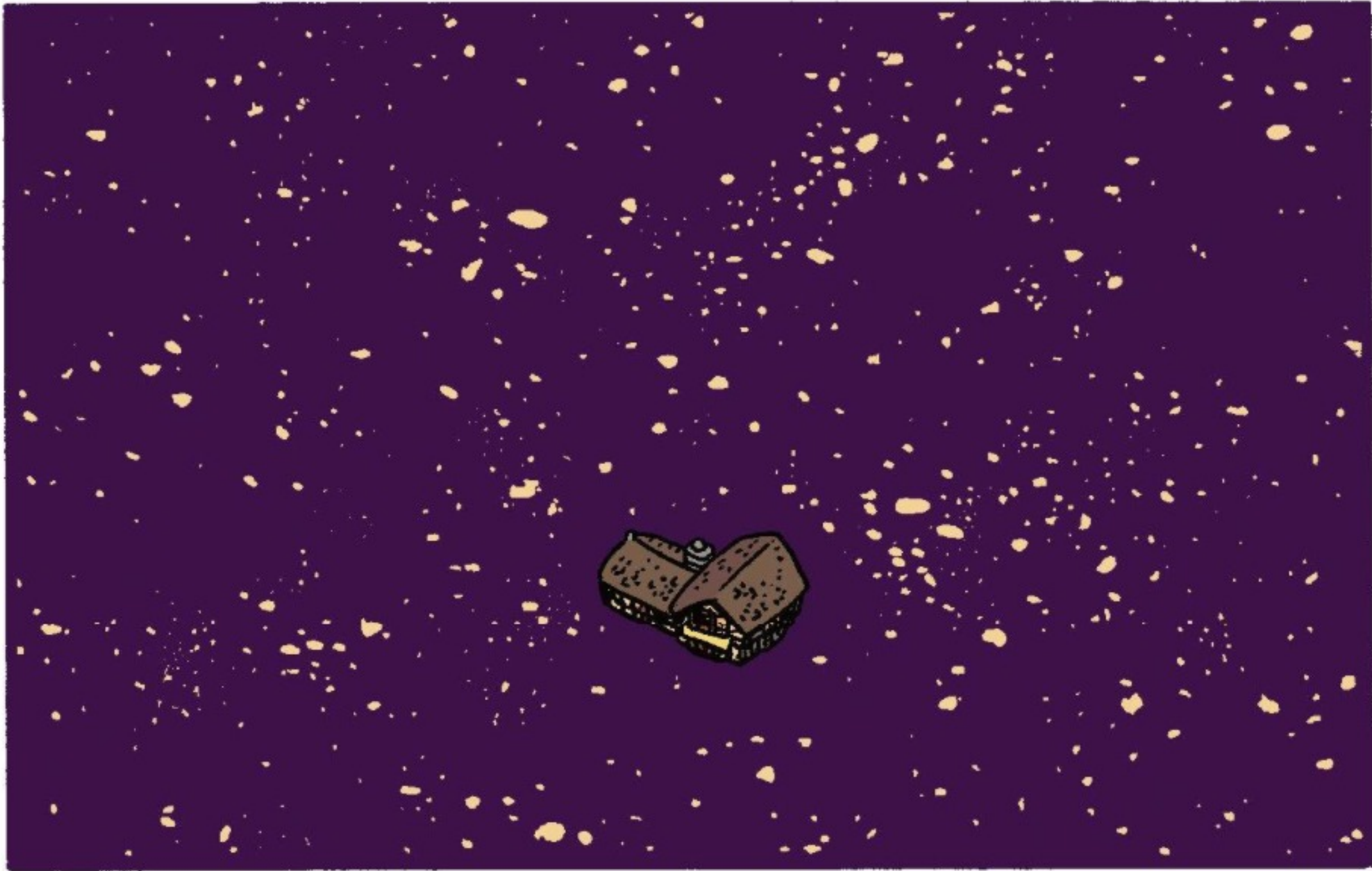
A piece of
Lis's dresser
remained.
And there she
was, curled up
inside it like
a tiny cat.





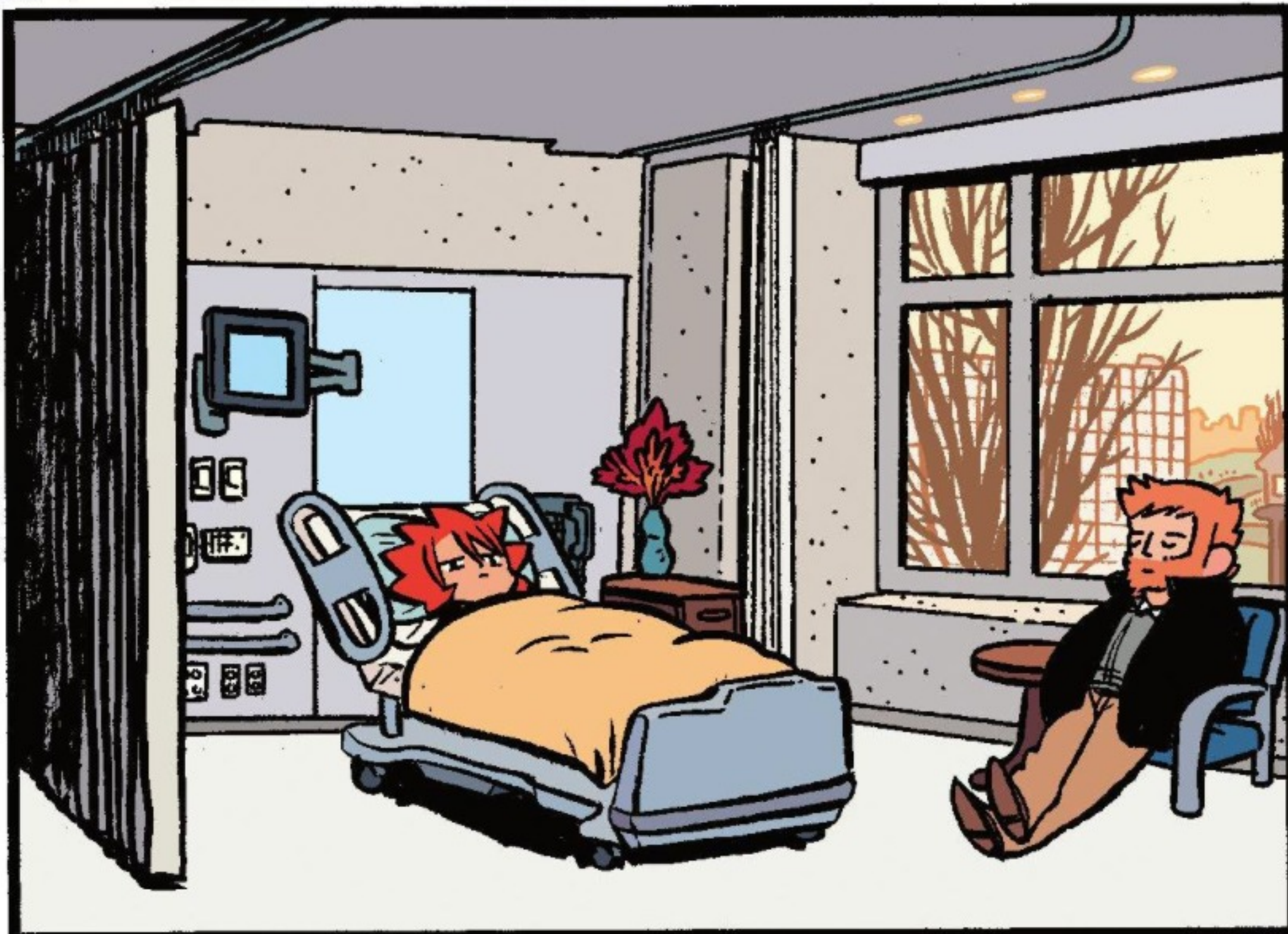
and
went to
sleep.

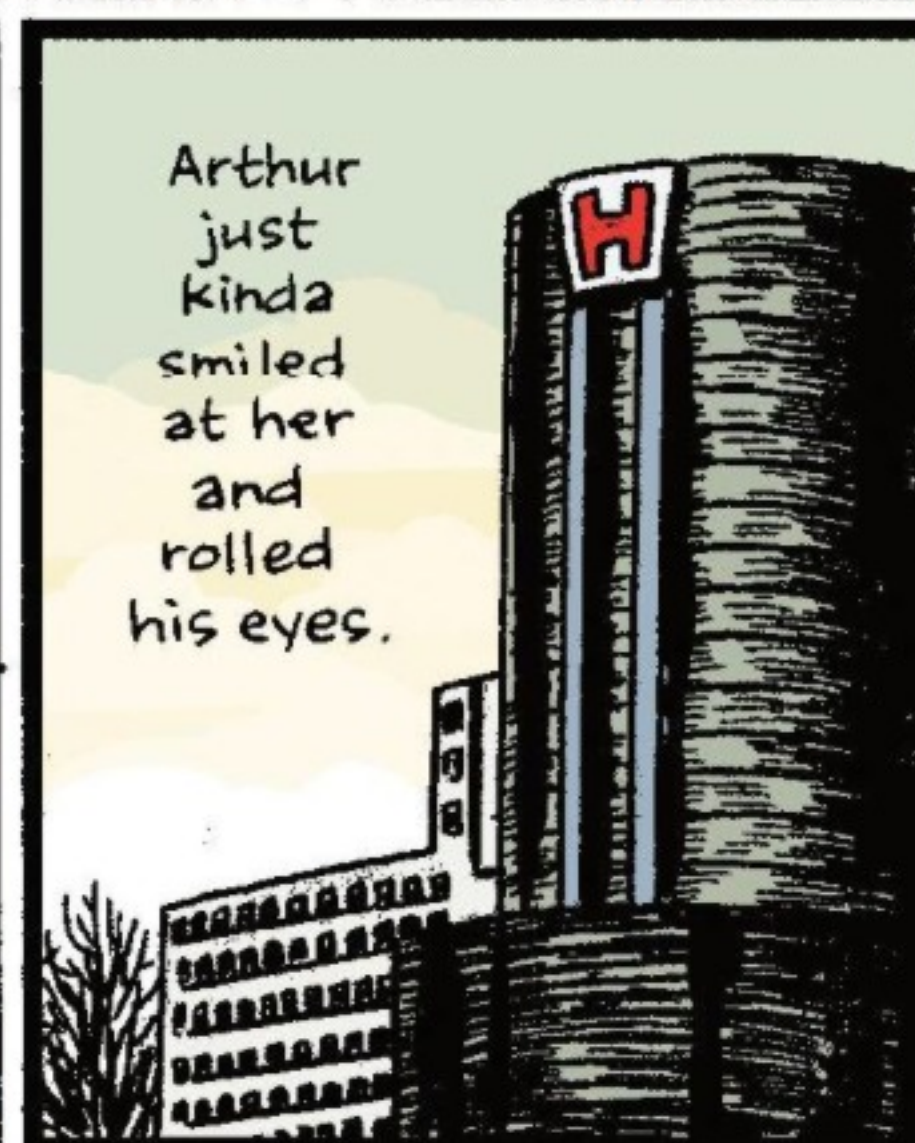
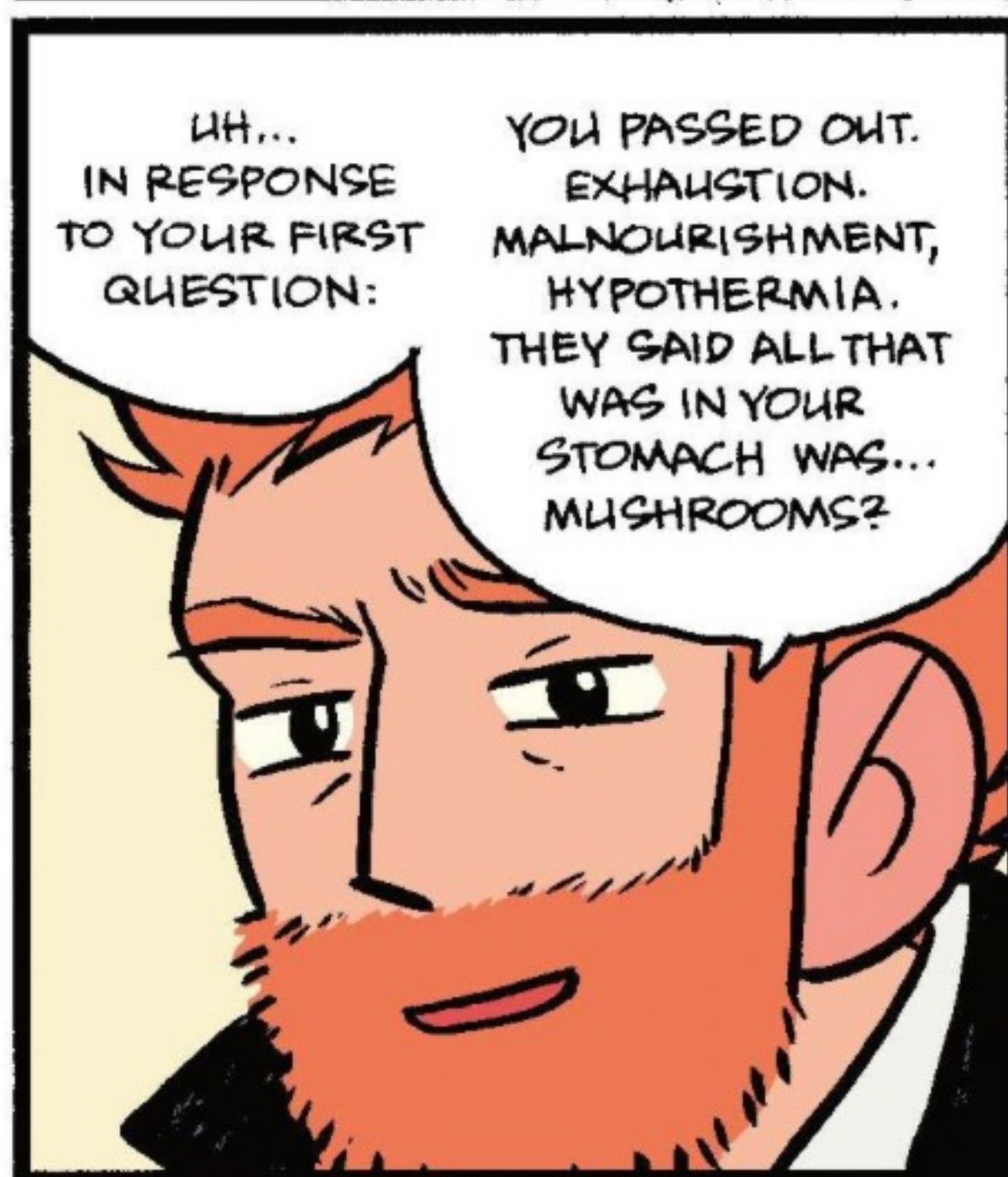


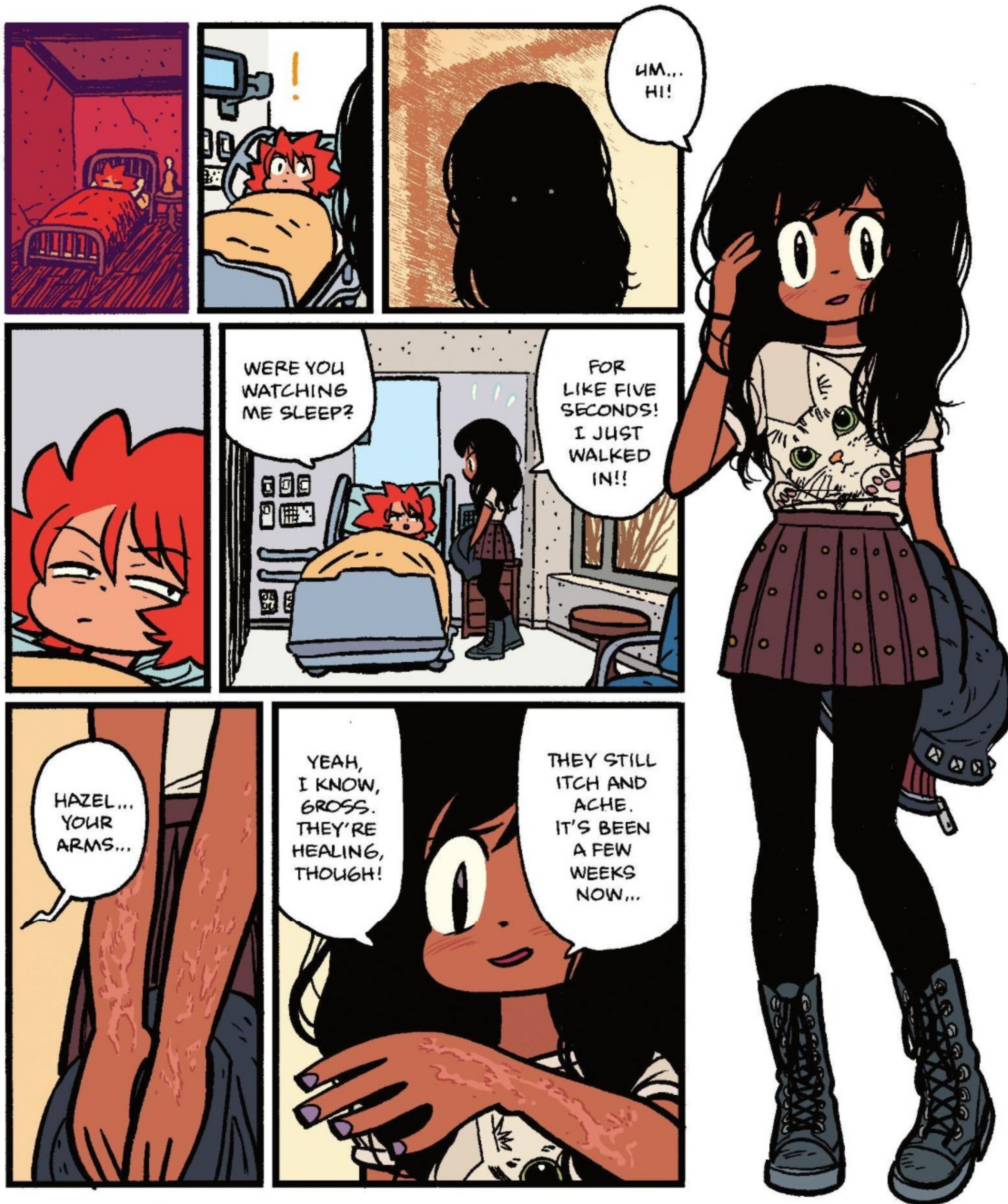




She
woke
up.









And Hazel told her side of the story:



How one day her weird interests unexpectedly became the focus of conversation with a person who had previously seemed intimidating.

An accidental friendship.



Somehow, through all the changes, this one thing had remained.



Maybe she was still feeling weak, but this was a lot for Katie to take. She got a little sobby.



HAZEL... THANKS.

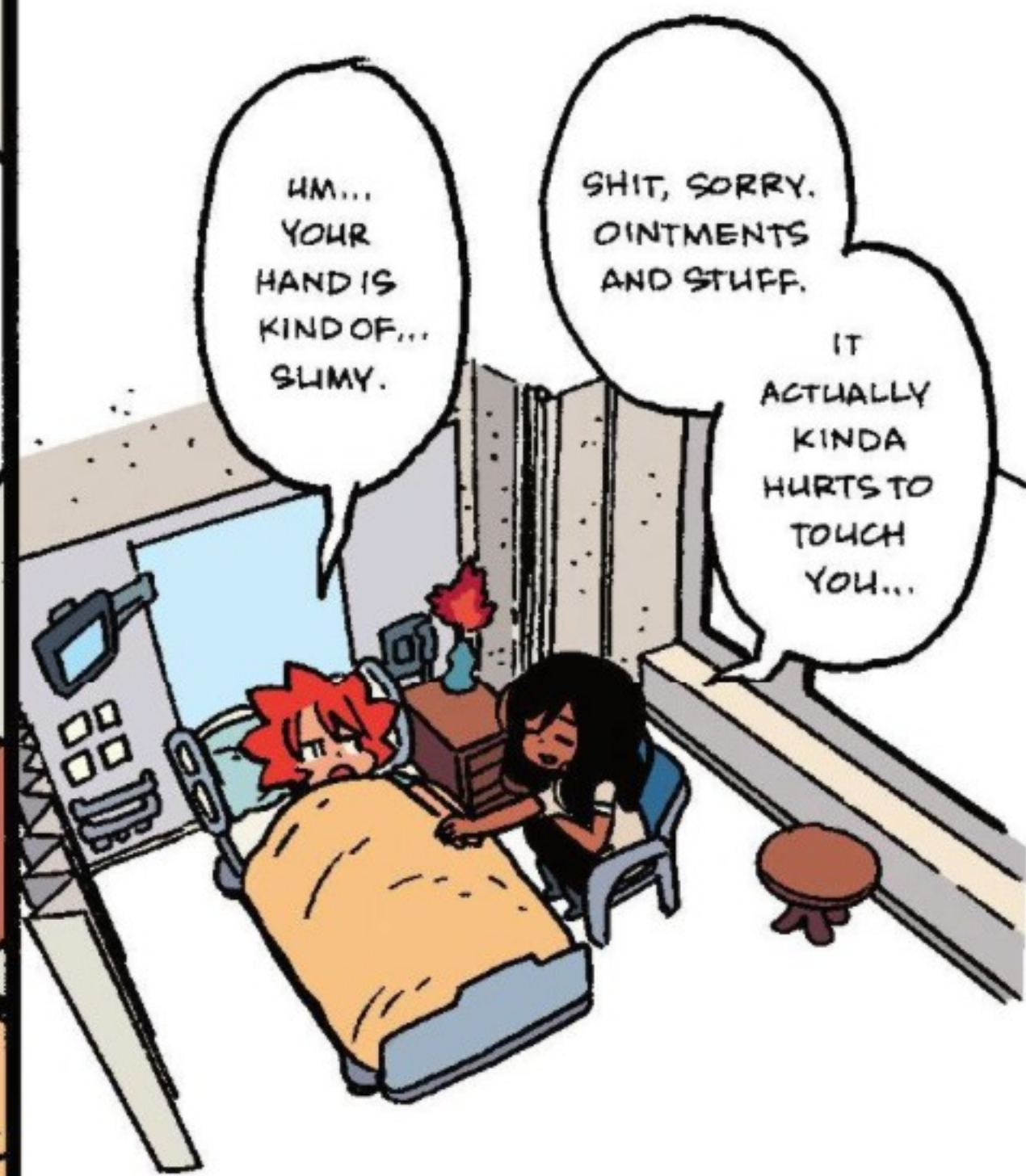
ANY TIME.



HM... YOUR HAND IS KIND OF... SLIMY.

SHIT, SORRY. OINTMENTS AND STUFF.

IT ACTUALLY KINDA HURTS TO TOUCH YOU...

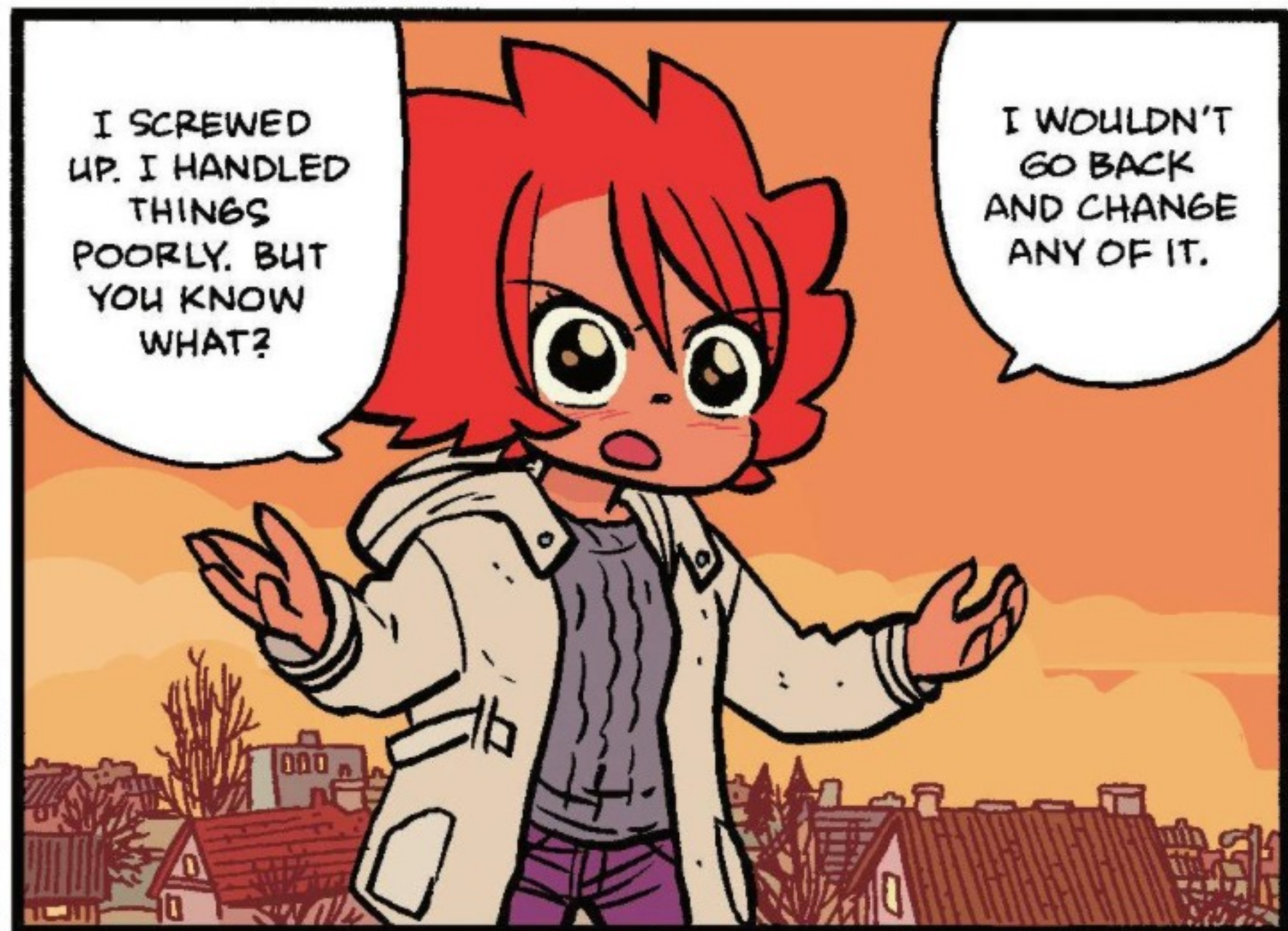




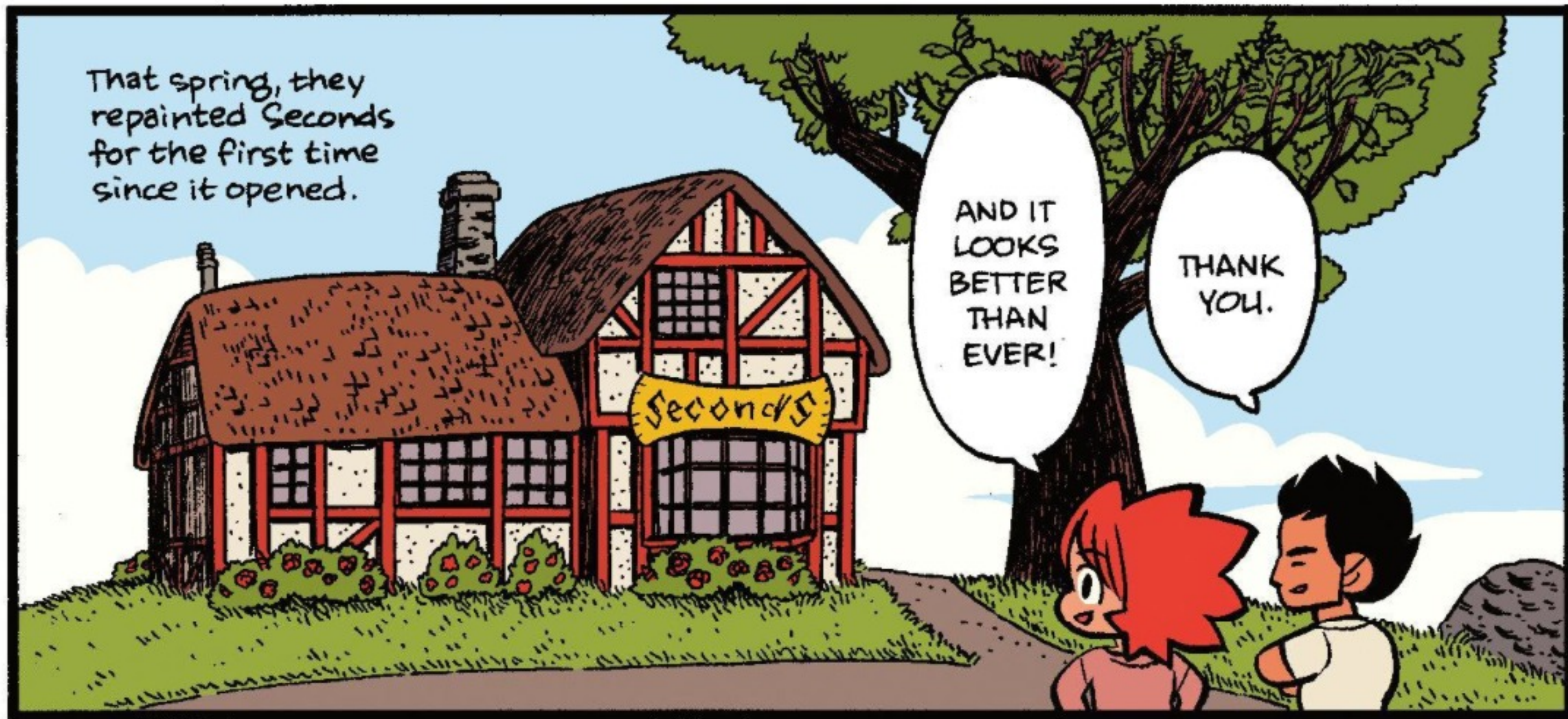
And
Katie's
life was
perfect
for
just one
moment.

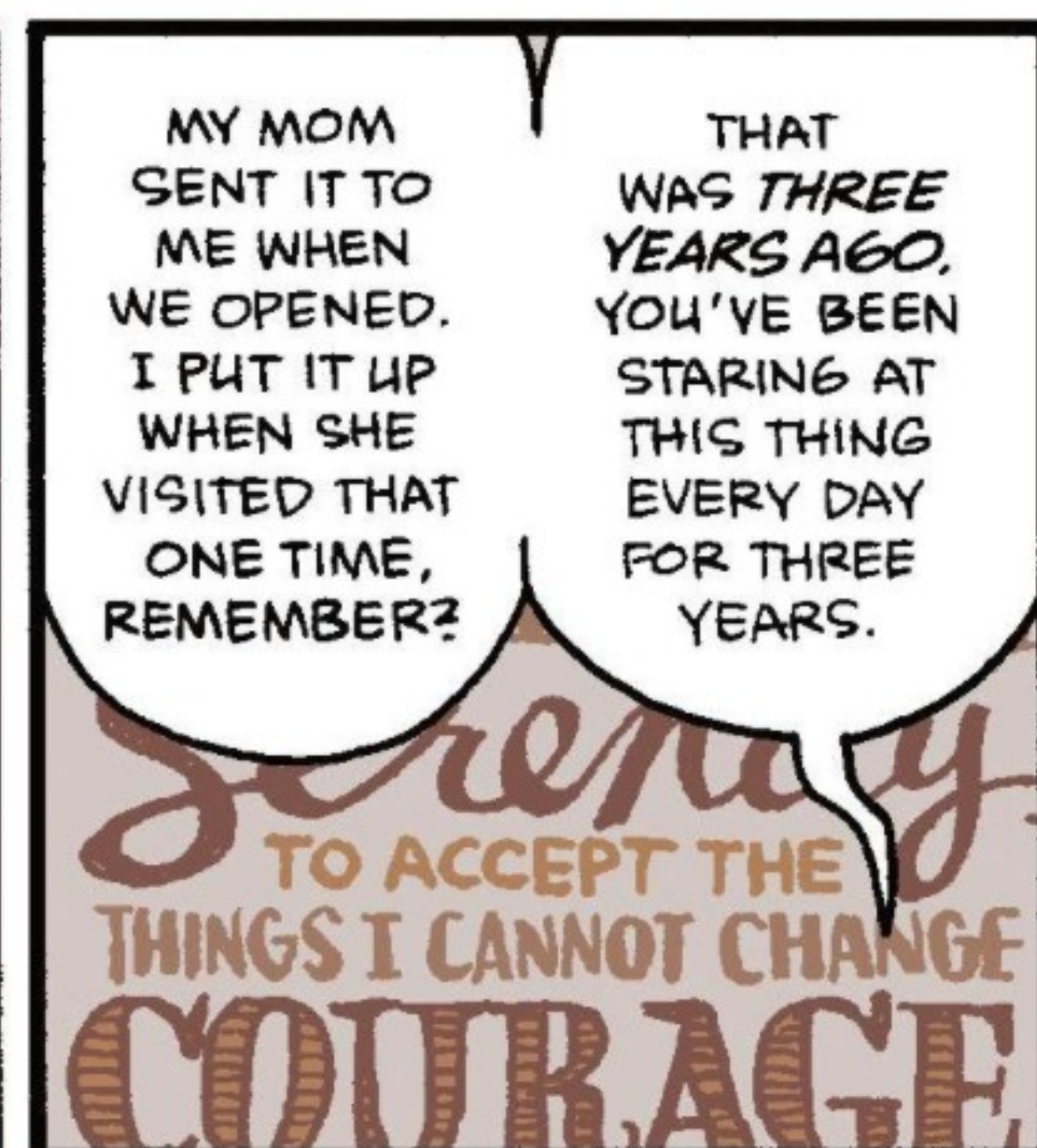












And so, life went on.
Summer came, and--



Andrew finally moved to the city. Katie wrote him a glowing letter of recommendation.



When Andrew left, Patrick became chef by default.



He asked Hazel out that same afternoon.



Katie's restaurant opened, weeks late, way over budget, but it did well, and she was happy there.



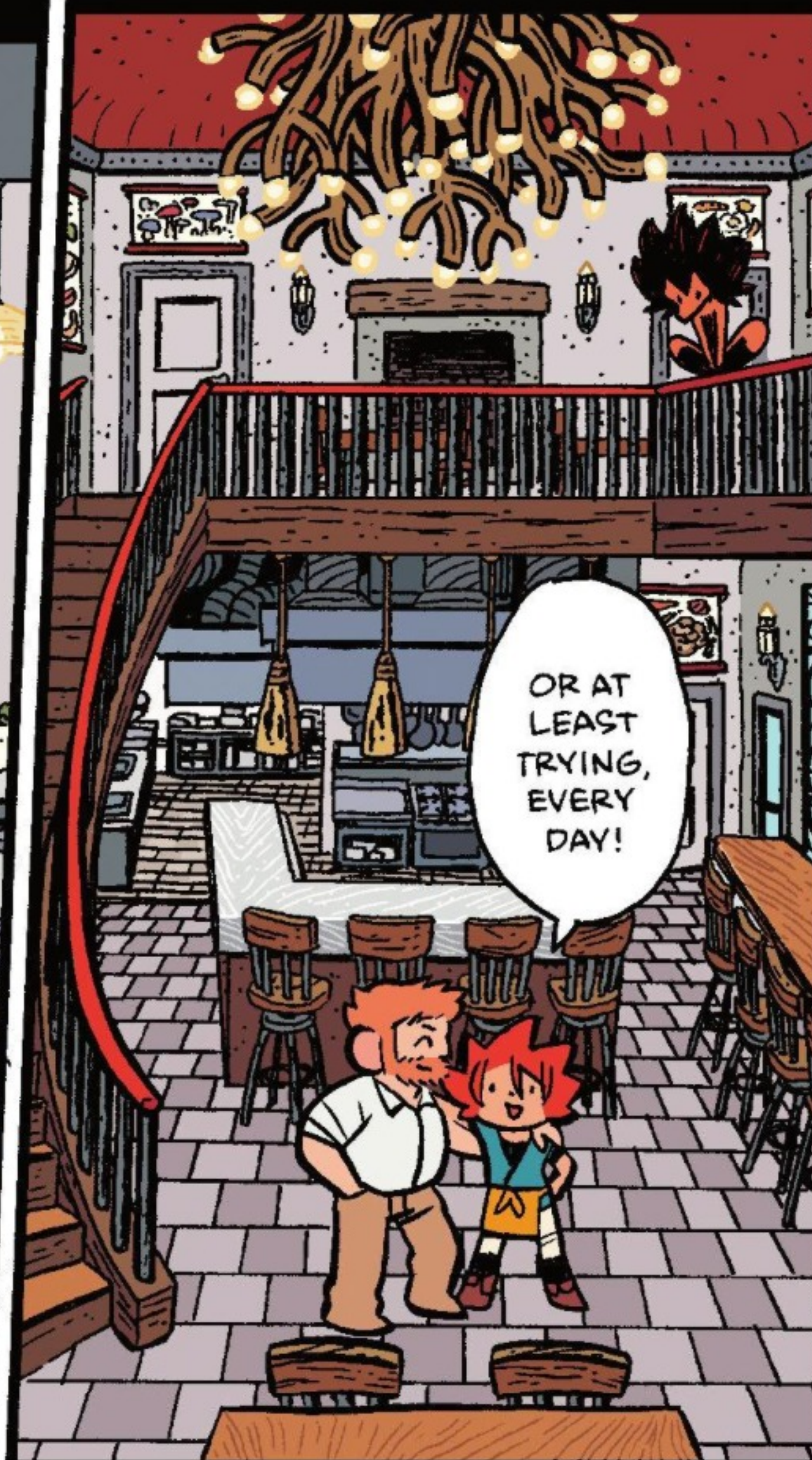
It was often said
that Lucky's had a
real energy to it, that
there was something
special about it.



And Katie? She
was the same
old Katie.



Still cooking.
Still making people happy.



... still talking to herself.



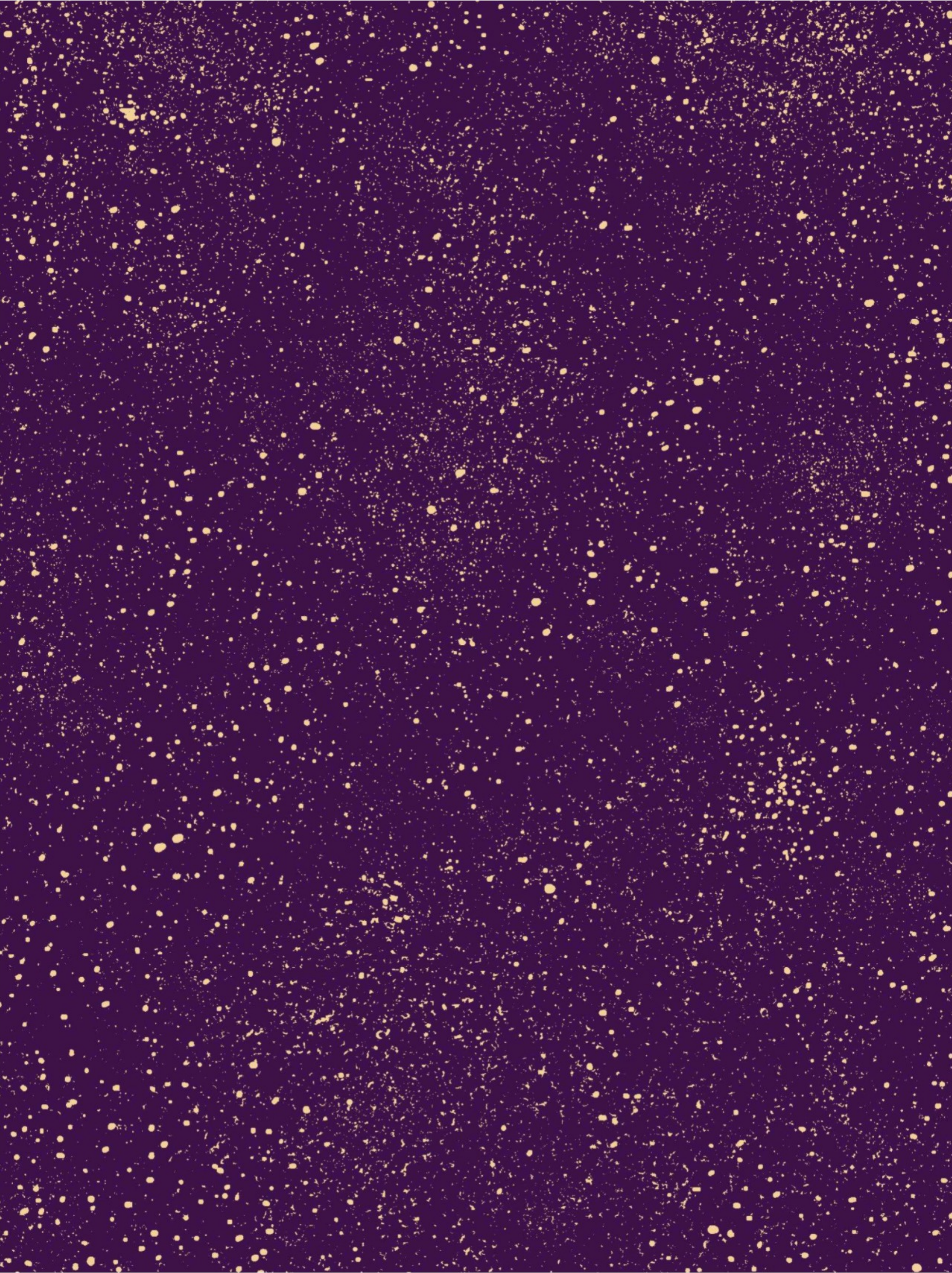


And for years after she moved out of the little apartment, Katie would drop in a few nights a week to leave bread on the rafters,





but
she
never
saw
another
house
spirit.



Acknowledgments

There would be no *Seconds* without my team of Jason, Nathan, and Dustin, and without the whole team at Random House/Ballantine. I have been truly blessed to have all of you with me on this book. All love to my friends and family for all their support during these wild and crazy years. Thanks to Mike S. for providing the recipe in chapter 3—not only did he write it, he actually came to my house and cooked it in front of me, and then we ate it. Additional thanks to Joel and Cory, my food and restaurant consultants, and very special thanks to Heather, Julie, Rosanna, Vili, and Miguel, for helping me to not completely destroy my body during this process.



A Note about the Assistants

Jason Fischer (drawing assistant) is a cartoonist from Los Angeles now living in Portland, Oregon. He loves to draw monsters and food. He enjoys collecting rocks, Daruma dolls, knives, pressed pennies, and Playmobil people.

Nathan Fairbairn (color) is a colorist and writer of comics. He's also a pretty decent cook, despite what his kids might tell you. He lives in Vancouver, Canada.

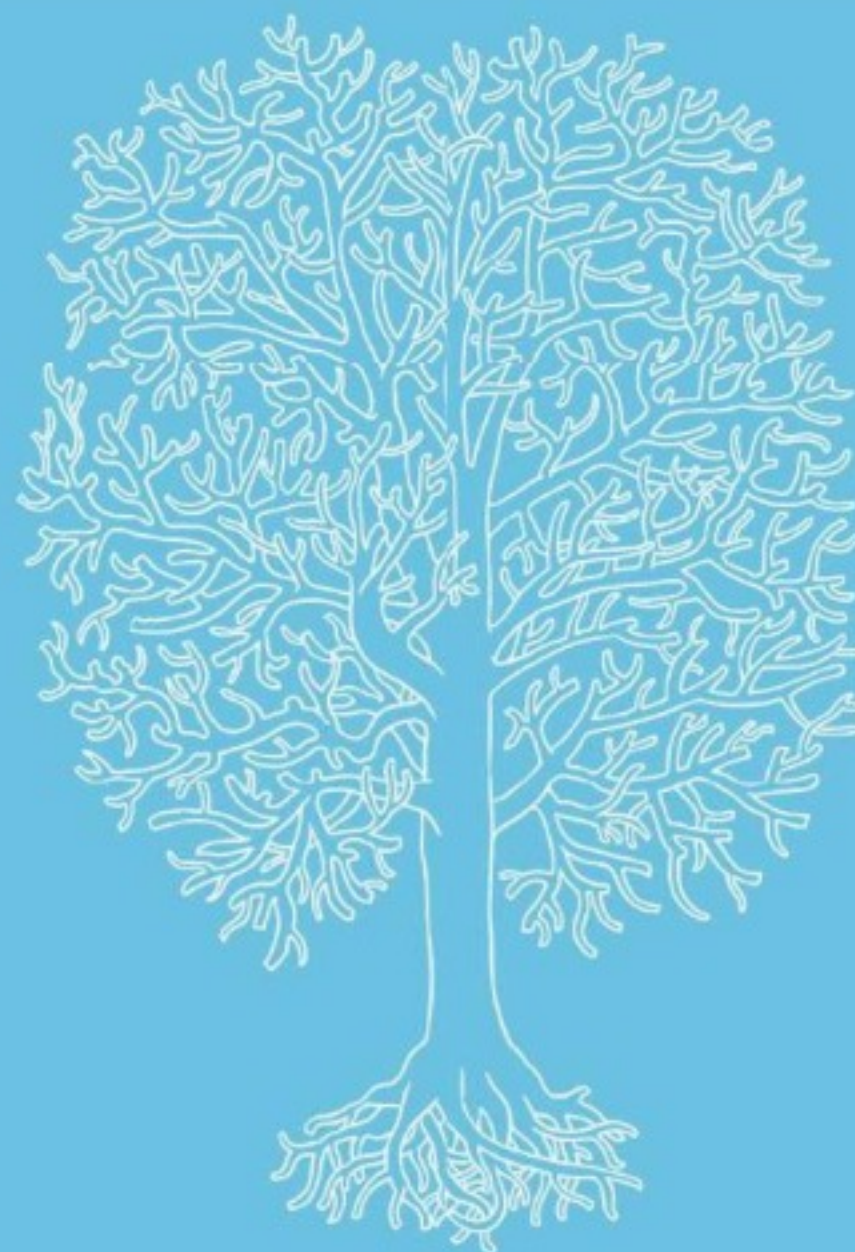
Dustin Harbin (lettering) is a cartoonist who lives and works in Charlotte, North Carolina. He's too fussy to be a good cook but just fussy enough to be an okay baker.

Additional assistance provided by Megan Messina, Hannah Ayoubi, and Jeremy Arambulo. We love them.



About the Author

Bryan Lee O'Malley is the creator of the bestselling Scott Pilgrim graphic novel series, which was adapted into a major motion picture, *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World*, in 2010. He lives in Los Angeles, where he continues to make comics.



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