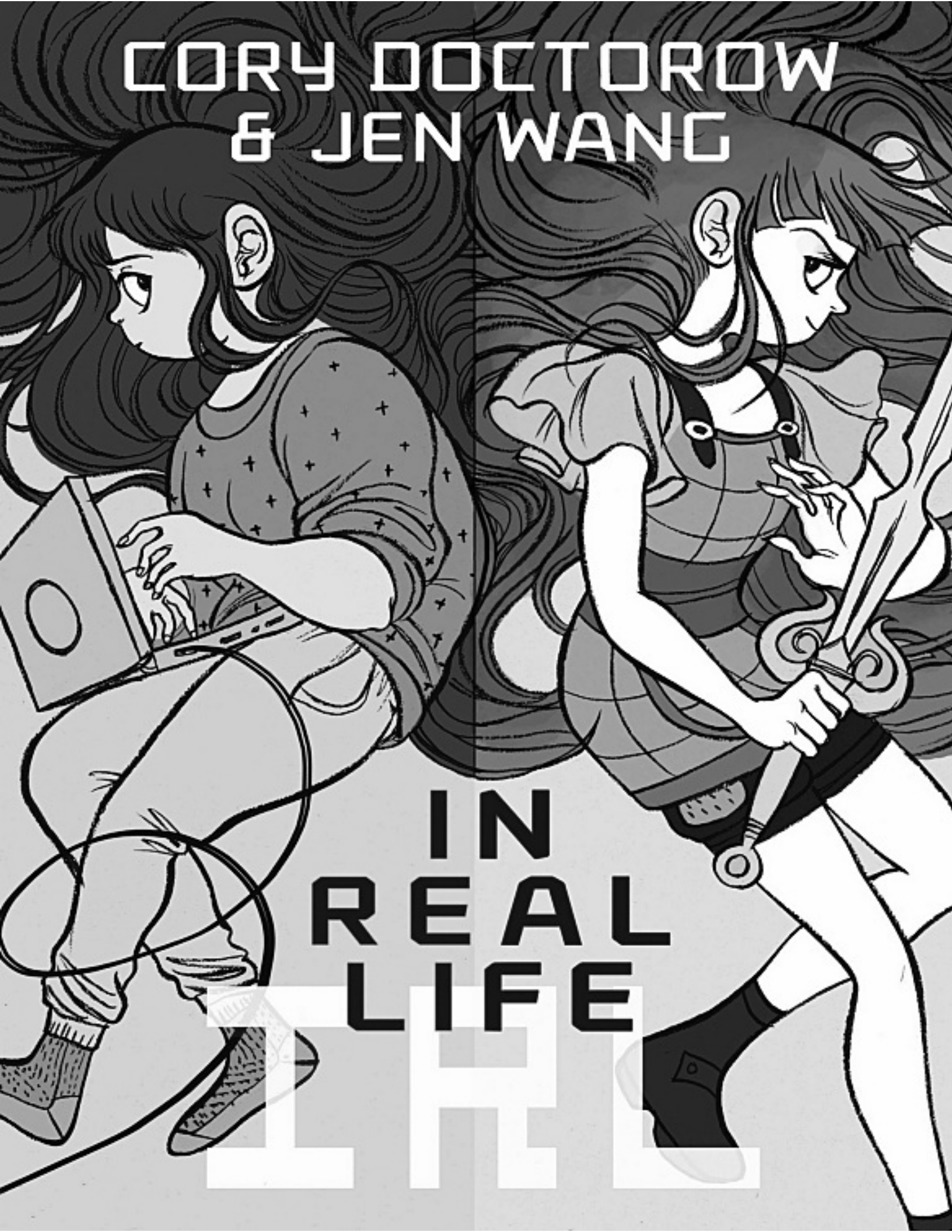


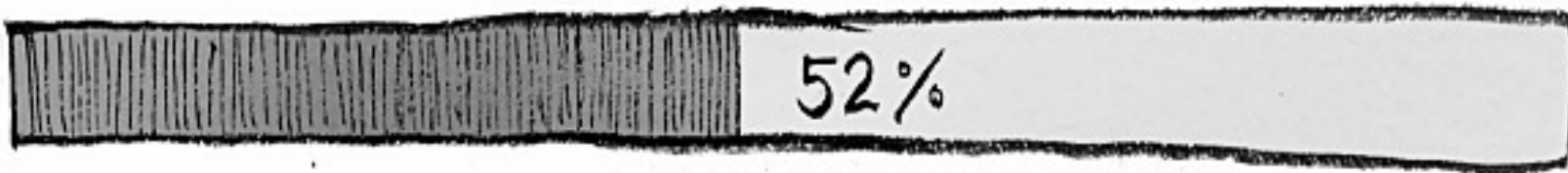
CORY DOCTOROW
& JEN WANG

IN
REAL
LIFE

TITLE



IRL



LOADING



IN REAL LIFE

Cory Doctorow
Jen Wang

:01

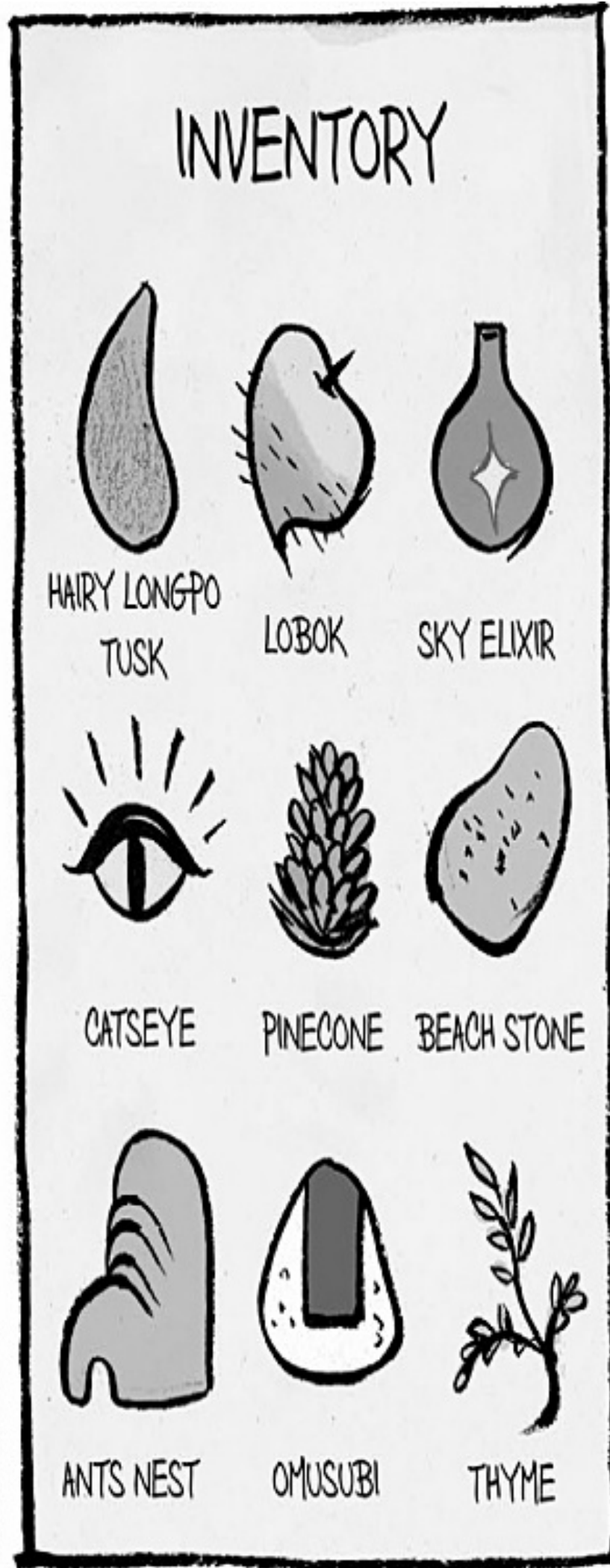
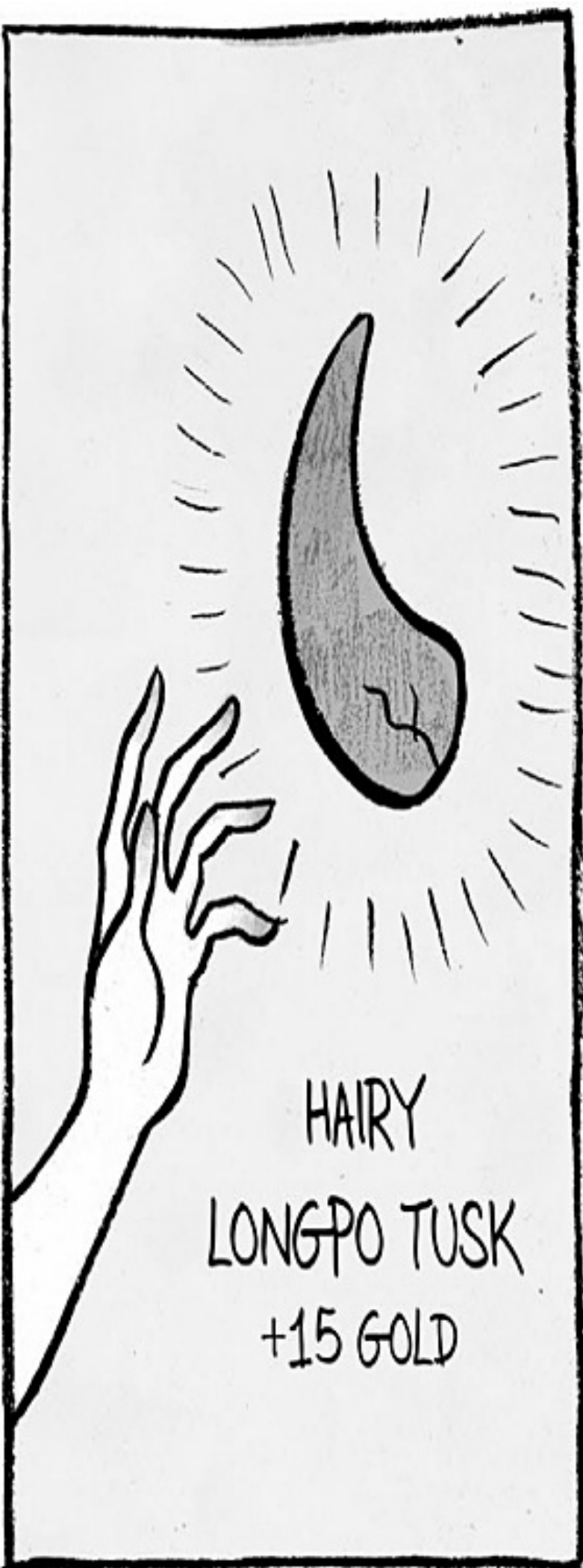
First Second
New York

For Alice, as always, my kickass
girl gamer and personal zombie-slayer.

—C.D.

Thanks to Judy Hansen, Jake Mumm,
and Yu Fong Wang.

—J.W.



INTRODUCTION

by Cory Doctorow

In Real Life is a book about games and economics. A lot of us pay attention to games, but think of them as trivial—mere amusements that help us fill the long, dismal stretch between the cradle and the grave. As for economics, well, yeah, people think economics is important, but it's also one of those intimidating no-go areas that scares people away, despite the fact that economics—the study of why people do things, really—is the subject that has the most to say about the circumstances in which they find themselves.

When you put economics and games together, you suddenly find yourself in the middle of a bunch of sticky, tough questions about politics and labor. *In Real Life* connects the

dots between the way we shop, the way we organize, and the way we play, and why some people are rich, some are poor, and how they seem to get stuck there.

I hope that readers of this book will be inspired to dig deeper into the subject of behavioral economics and to start asking hard questions about how we end up with the stuff we own, what it costs our human brothers and sisters to make those goods, and why we think we need them.

But it's a poor politics that can only be expressed by choosing to buy or not buy something. Sometimes (often!), you need to organize to make a difference.

This is the golden age of organizing. If there's one thing the Internet's changed forever, it's the relative difficulty and cost of getting a bunch of people in the same place, working toward the same goal. That's not always good (thugs, bullies, racists, and loonies never had it so good), but it is fundamentally *game-changing*.

It's hard to remember just how difficult this organizing stuff used to be: how hard it was to do something as trivial as getting ten friends to agree on dinner and a movie, let alone getting millions of people together to raise money for a political candidate, get the vote out, protest corruption, or save an endangered and beloved institution.

When I was an activist in the 1980s, ninety-eight percent of my time was spent stuffing envelopes and writing addresses on

them. The remaining two percent was the time we spent figuring out what to put in the envelopes. Today, we get those envelopes and stamps and address books for free. This is so fantastically, hugely different and weird that we haven't even begun to feel the first tendrils of it. Moments like the Occupy movement and the Gezi uprising in Istanbul will be remembered as the tiniest tremors of what happens when people can organize more cheaply.

Working together is the secret origin story of our species. We diverged from our hominid ancestors when we started to divide up labor—you watch the kids, I'll watch for tigers, and that guy's going to go and forage for fruit. The most modern part of our brains, the neocortex (the “new bark,” which wraps around all the more ancient parts of our



brains), developed around this time and is strongly implicated in managing our social relationships. Everything from language and literacy to corporations and countries are just structures for organizing human labor.

The games we play with other people all tickle this organizing mechanism. When you play hide and seek, you try and outguess where your opponents will look (or where they'll hide when they're trying to out outguess you!). When you do a mass raid on some huge instance in an MMO (a massively multiplayer online game), the "game" isn't just killing the boss, it's figuring out how to convince a couple



dozen of your friends to work with you, coordinating your schedules so that you can raid together, agreeing on tactics, even coming up with a chain of command and hammering out its legitimacy.

It's not surprising that gamespace has become a workplace for hundreds of thousands of "gold farmers" who undertake dreary, repetitive labor to produce virtual wealth that's sold to players with more money and less patience than them. The structural differences between in-game play and in-game work are mostly arbitrary, and "real" work is half a game, anyway. Most of the people you see going to work today are LARPing (live-action role playing) an incredibly boring RPG (role-playing game) called "professionalism" that requires them to alter their vocabulary, posture, eating habits, facial expressions—every detail all the way down to what they allow themselves to find funny.

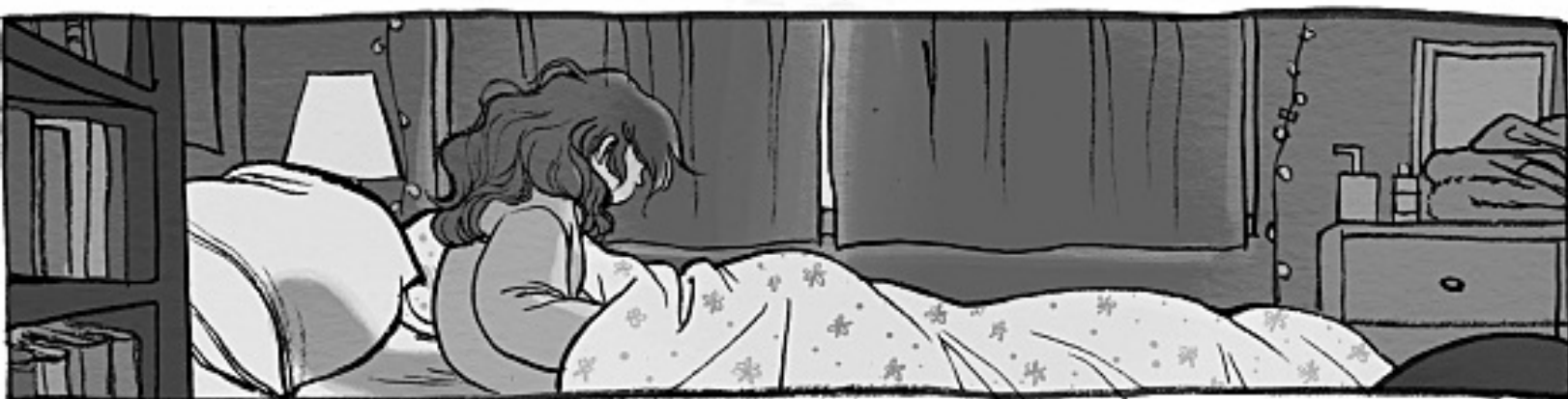
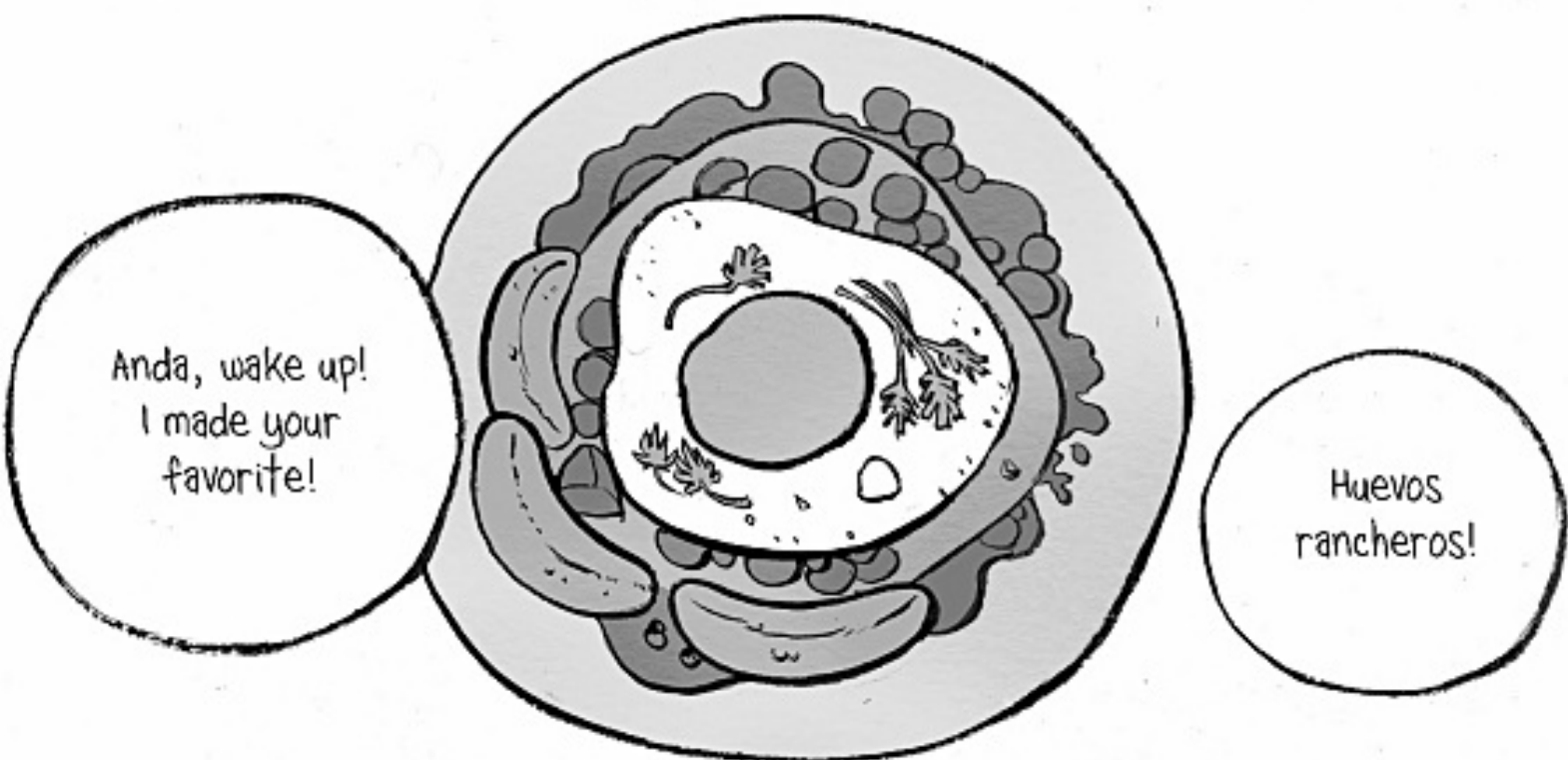
The most amazing thing about the moment we're living through is the degree to which it allows us to abolish all the boring stuff that used to be required for any kind of ambitious project. We're at a point where we can build an encyclopedia with the kind of organizational structures that were once only good enough to run an ambitious fun fair or bake sale. Hierarchy and injustice are far from dead, but the justification for continuing them gets weaker with every passing moment.


The net doesn't solve the problem of injustice, but it solves the first hard problem of righting wrongs: getting everyone together and keeping them together. You still have to do the even harder work of risking life, limb, personal fortune, and reputation.

Every wonderful thing in our world has a fight in its history: our rights, our good fortune, our happiness. All that is sweet was paid for, once upon a time, by principled people who risked everything to change the world for the better.

Those risks are not diminished one iota by the net. But the rewards are every bit as sweet.









Thanks,
Mom.



Happy
birthday,
Anda.



Bye,
Dad.

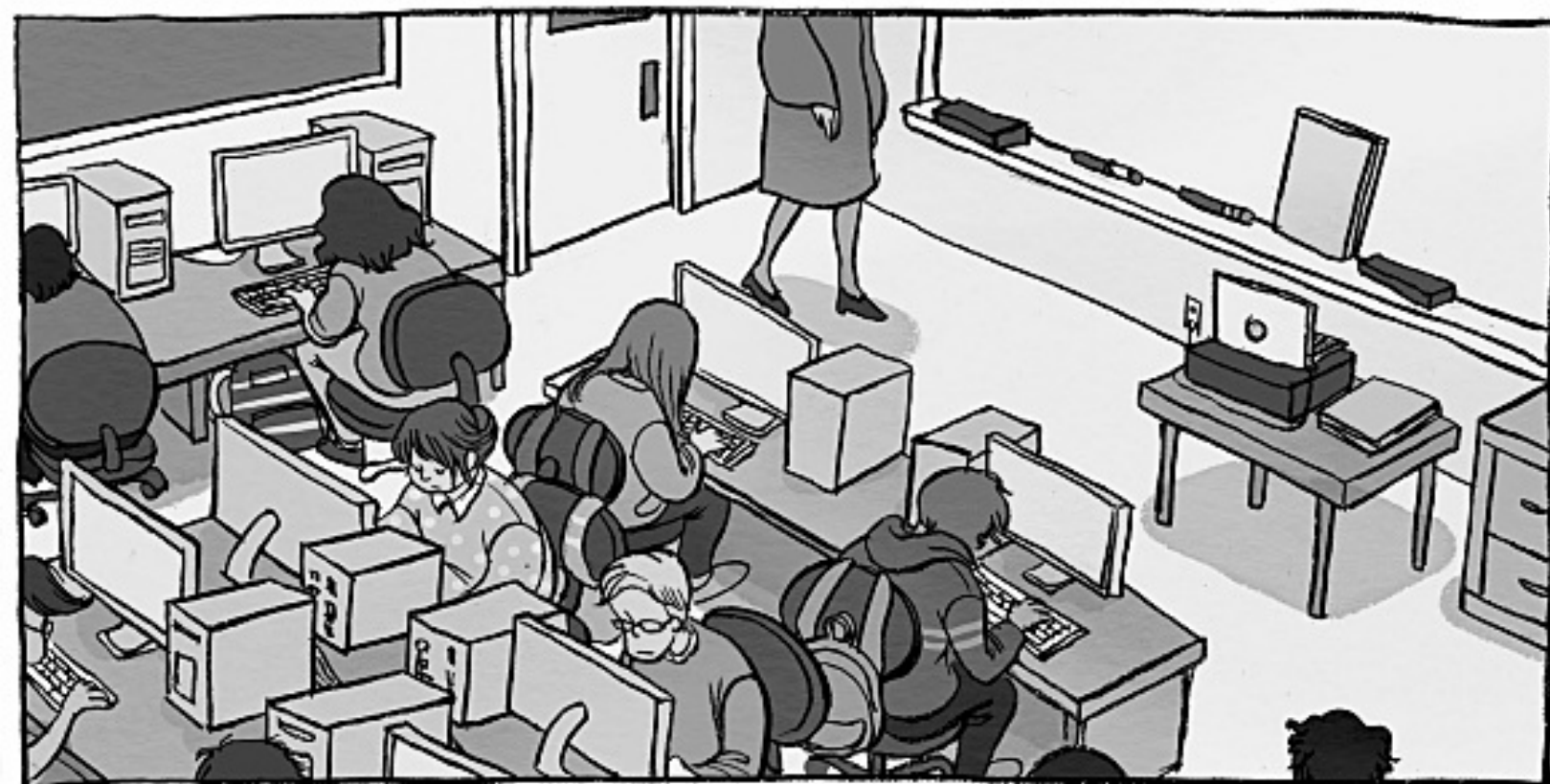
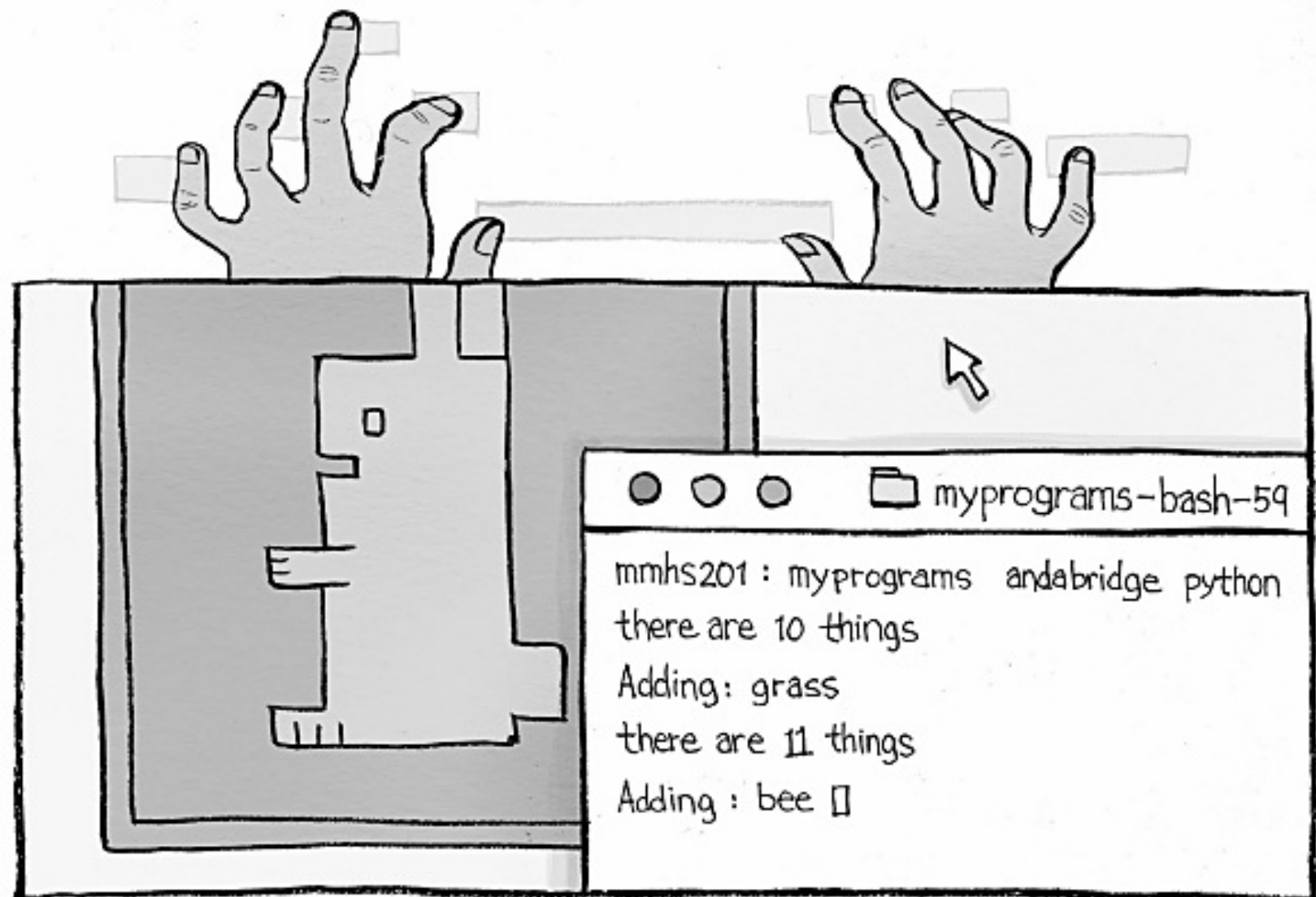


I have
something for
you.











Class! Listen up! We have a guest speaker today! Miss Liza McCombs comes all the way from Australia.

I hope you give her your full attention. Miss McCombs?



Thank you, Miss Bronson. Hullo, class!



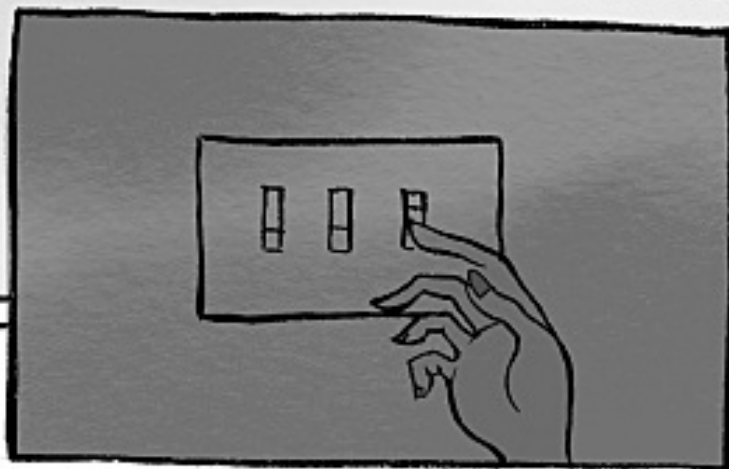
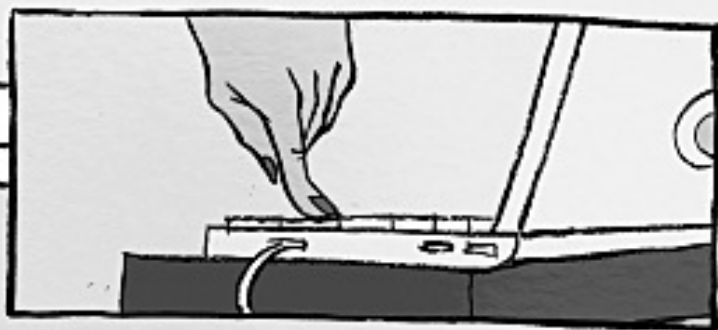
Call me Liza the Organiza.





I'm a gamer and
I kick arse. No,
seriously.

I organize a guild
online and I'm
looking for a few
of you chickens
to join me.







See, that's a tragedy. Practically makes me weep.

When I started gaming online there were no women gamers. I was one of the best gamers in the world and I couldn't even be proud of who I was.



It's different now, but it's still not perfect. We're going to change that, chickens, you lot and me.



Here's my offer to the ladies:

if you will play as a girl in Coarsegold Online, you will be given probationary memberships in the Clan Fahrenheit. If you measure up in three months, you'll be full-fledged members.



Who's in, ladies? Who wants to be a girl in-game and out?





But that means you chat with strangers?

Yes, but the guild I'm playing for is all girls and invite-only. See, it's even rated T for Teen.



I dunno, dear. I just don't think it's safe. You know that's where perverts go to meet kids.



Not interested in any of that, Mom. Please? For my birthday?



You only talk to other girls your age, you hear?

Only girls! Thanks, Mom!





USERNAME

KALI DESTROYER

PASSWORD

***** |

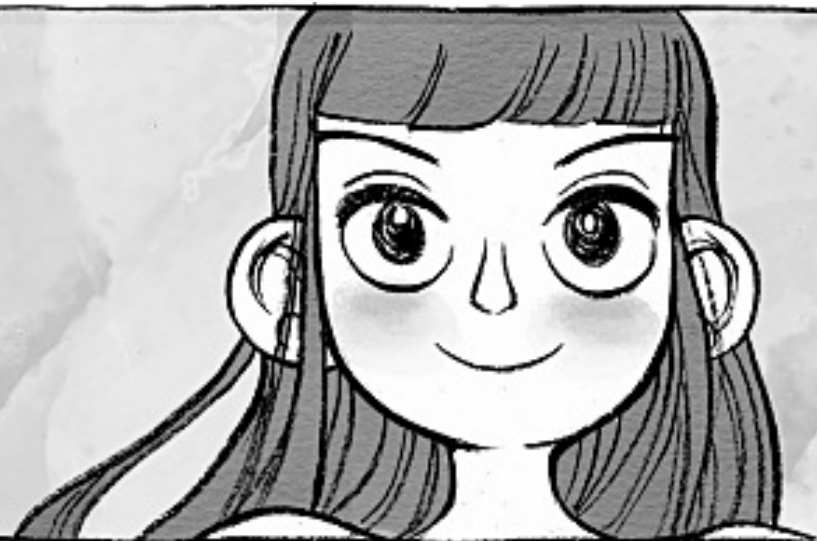
ENTER



52%

LOADING





RACE



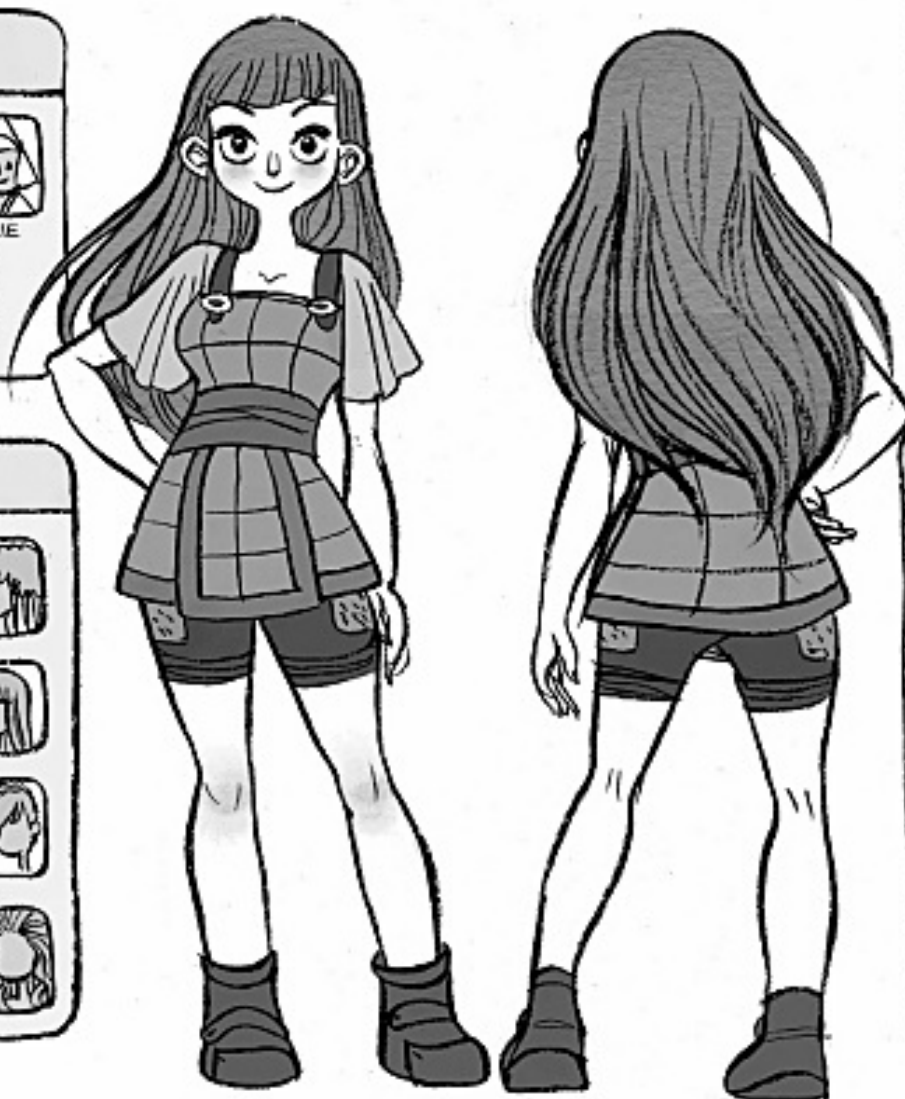
HAIR



CLASS



DRESS



KALIDESTROYER



BLUTO'S
DAGGER



BATTLE
AXE



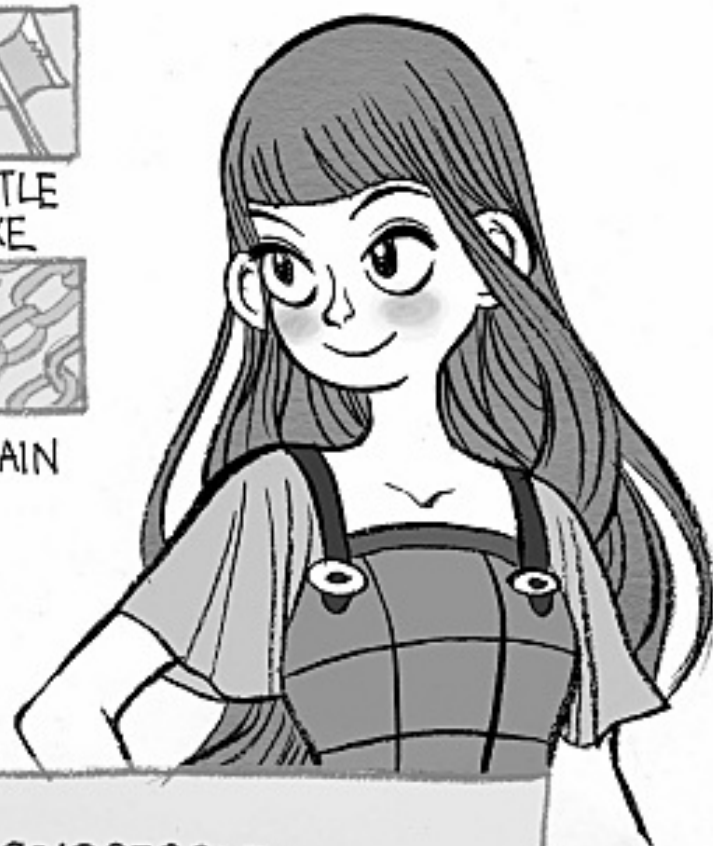
SPIKED
FLAIL



CHAIN

BACK

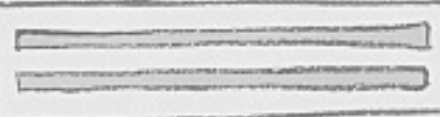
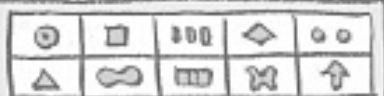
NEXT

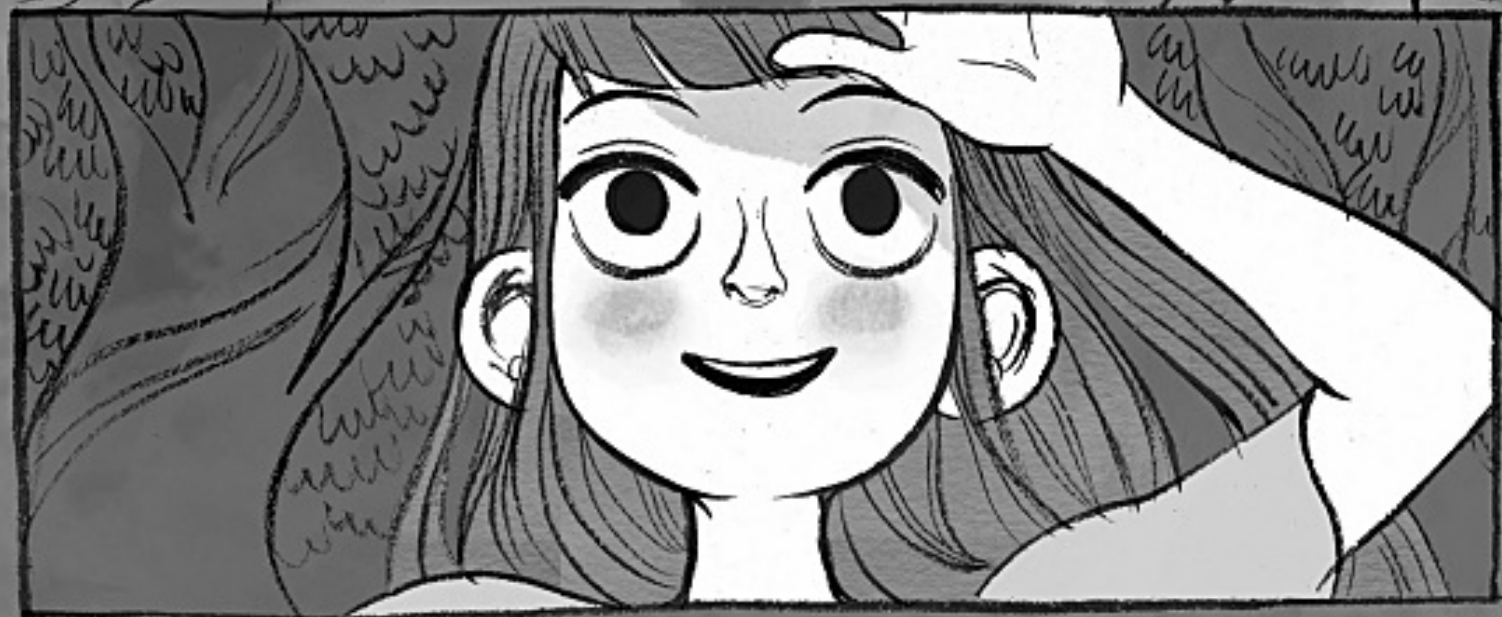


NOW ENTERING COARSEGOLD...



LEVEL 1







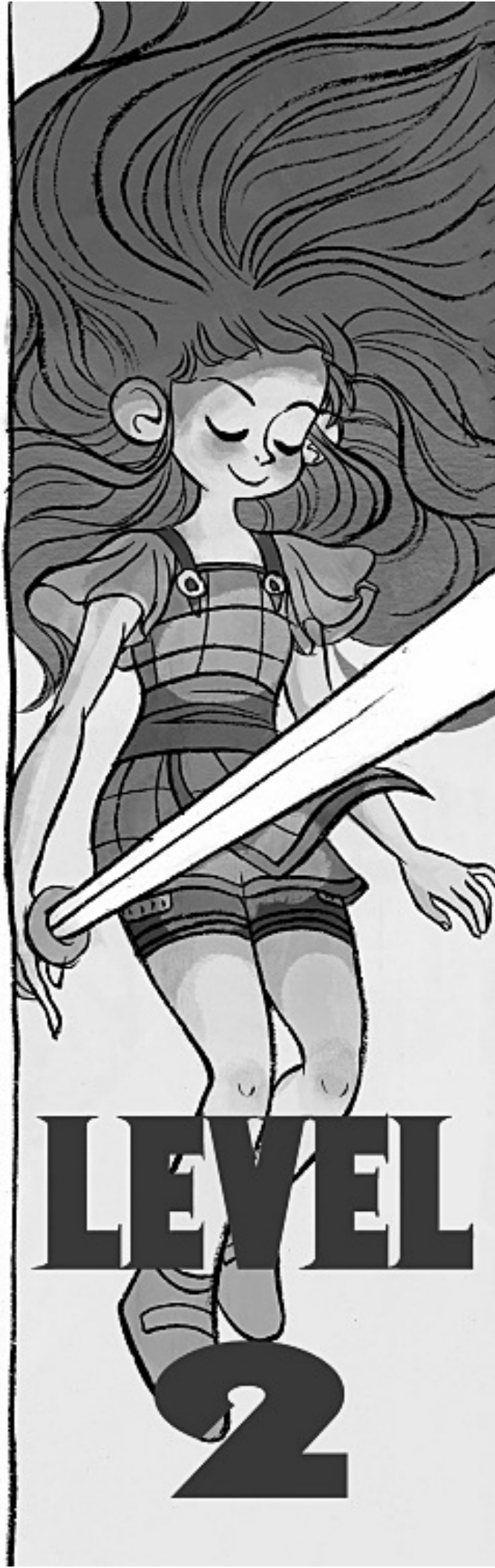
NEEDED

Warriors
and alchemists
for raid in
Scholar City

Where do
I start?





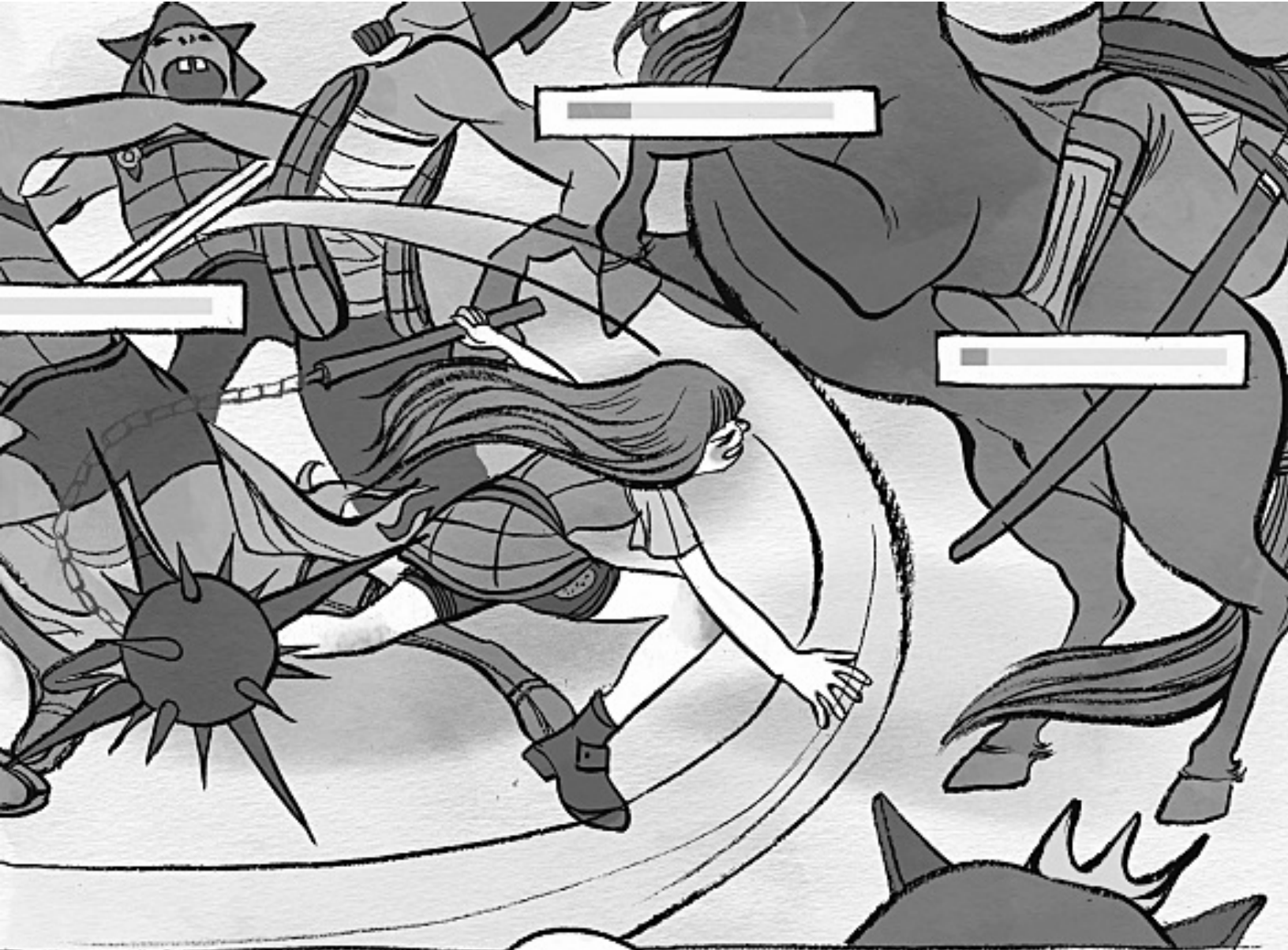




Nice WORK,
recruit.

Thanks,
Sarge.





Thanks.
That means
a lot.

Spare me
the fan-
girling.

What time zone
are you at? I wanna
make sure there are
no problems with bed-
times, dinners,
and all that.

I'm in New
York, Eastern
Standard
Time.

I'm in
Flagstaff.

what?

Where
the hell is
Flagstaff?

Arizona,
I'm on
Mountain
Time.

So you want to try
something different,
Small Town? What do you
think about making
some cash?

Oh and we
don't observe
Daylight Saving
Time.

Weird.

Cash? You mean gold?



When I said cash I meant cash.



...



Sigh.



Can you go voice?



Hello?

I'm here!
Hello?
Lucy?

Call me Sarge!
Look, I have a mission
that pays real cash.
Whichever PayPal you're
using, they'll deposit
money into it. Looks
fun, too.

What? No, geez.
All the executives in
the Clan pay rent doing
missions for money. Some
of them are even rich
from it! You can make a
lot of money gaming,
you know.

That's a bit
weird, Sarge.
Is that against
Clan rules?

It's not—you
know—pervy,
is it?

Gag me. No.
Geez, Anda. Are
you nuts? They
just want us to go
kill some guys.

Okay,
we're good
at that.



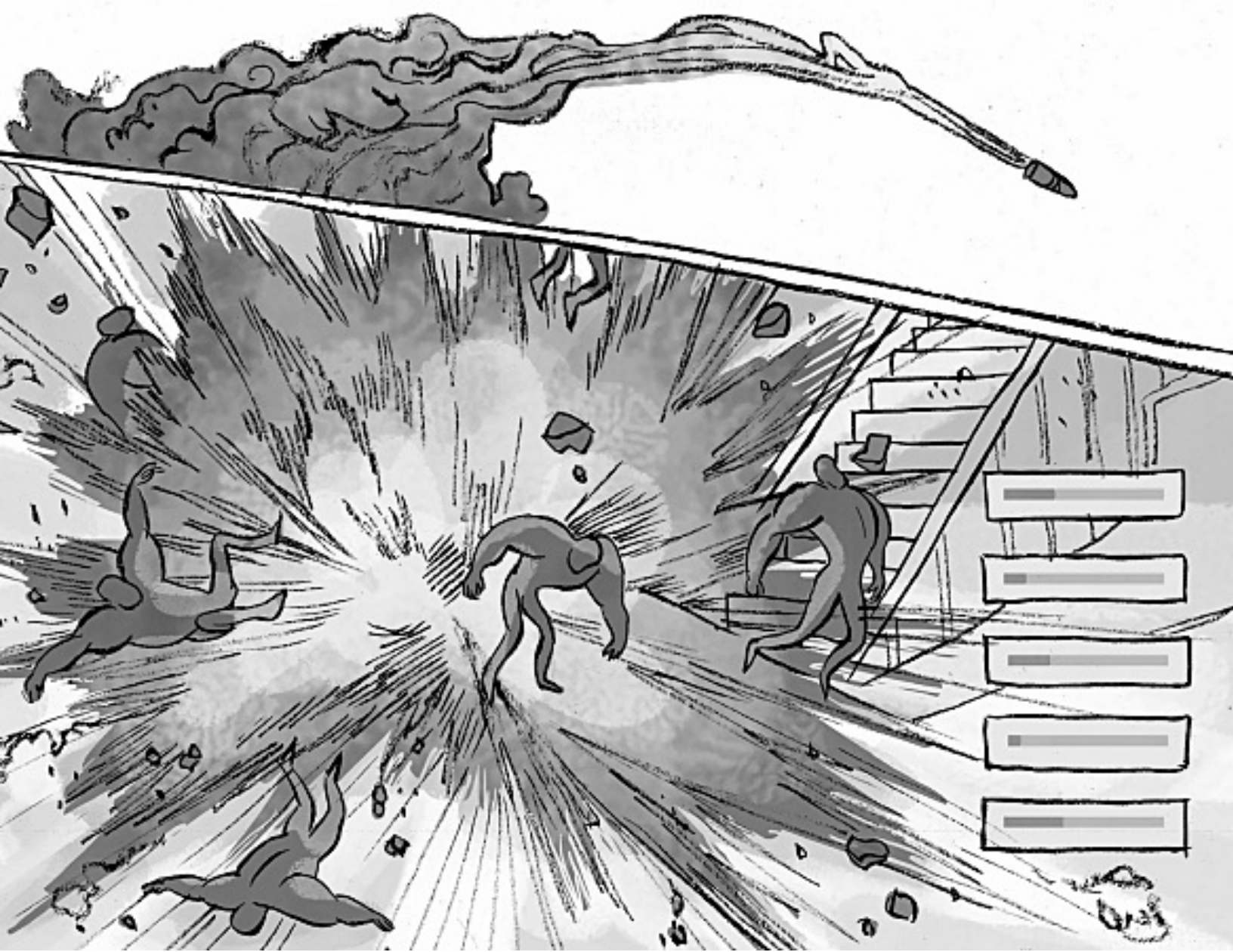
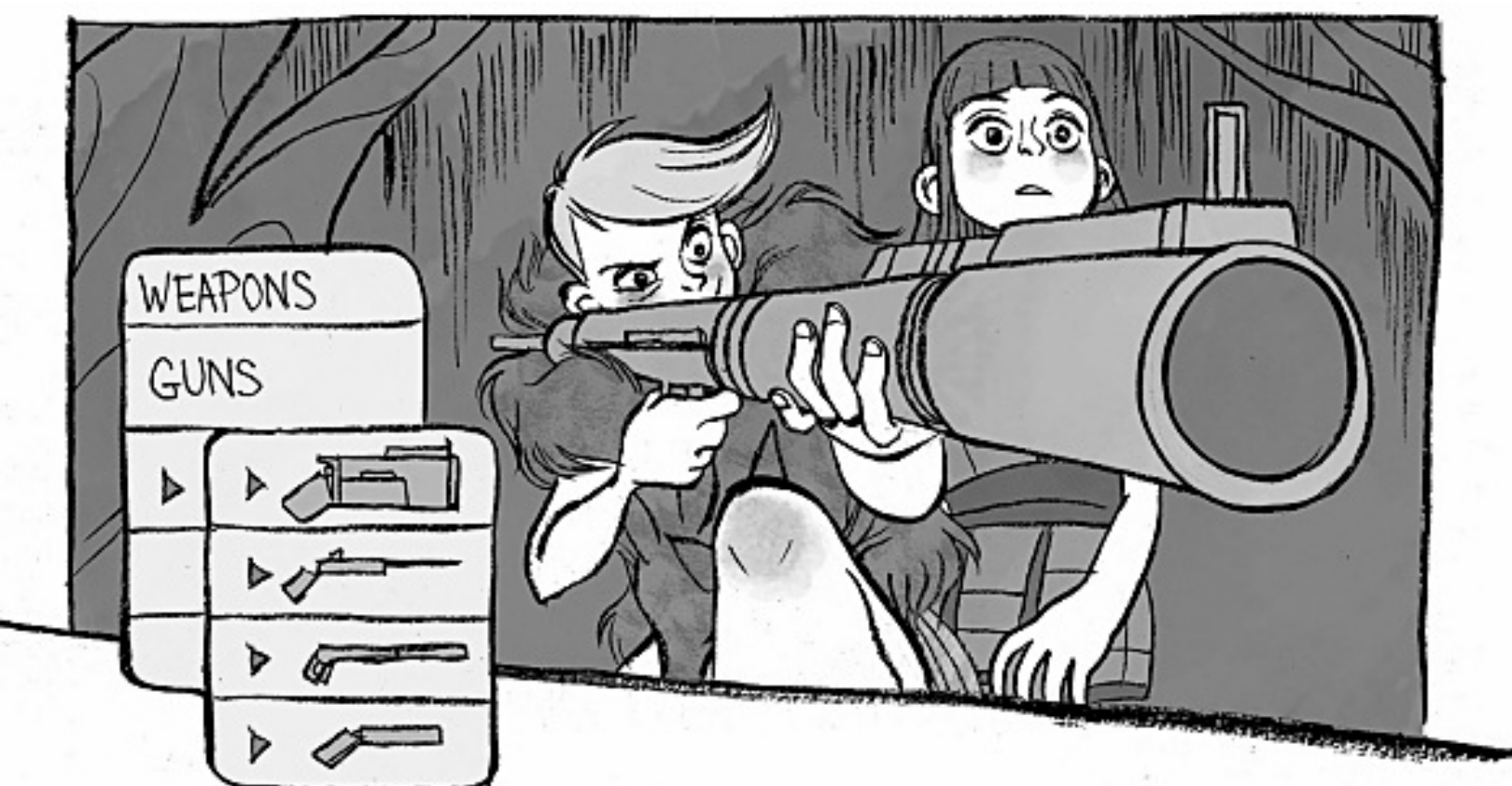




You made it!
Wow, leveled up
and everything
now. Look, that's
the house we
want to raid.



Stand back,
I'm gonna use
the BFG.



Yee haw!!
That was
TOO easy.

Okay,
we gotta
move fast.

They'll be
expecting us.
Ready?

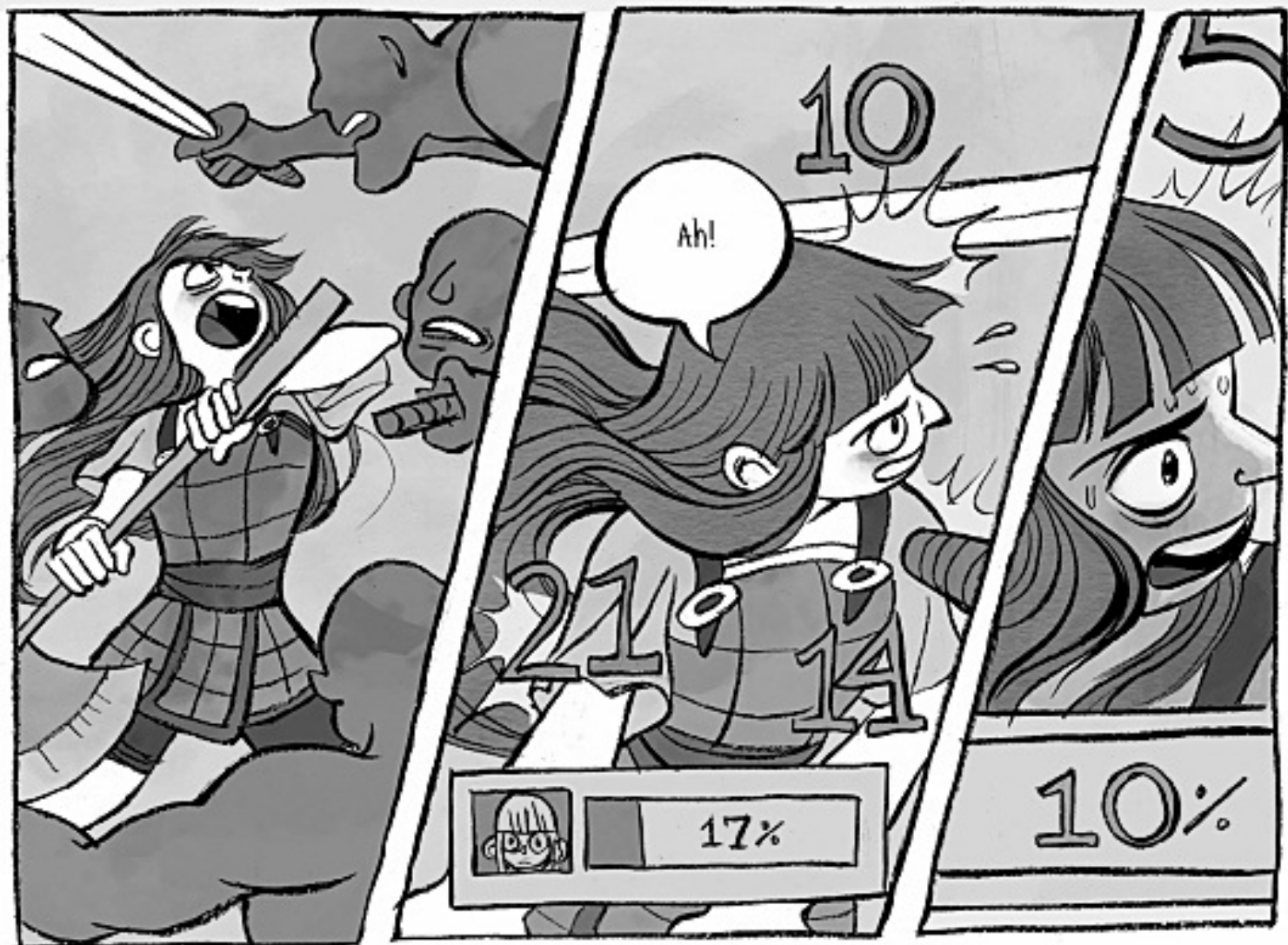
Um—

Go, go,
go!!



BATTLE AXIE









Call me Sarge!!

I'm all the way at
the Infirmary, Anda!
Bloody hell, it'll
take me 10 minutes
to resurrect!

I can complete
the mission,
Sarge. Just tell
me what to do.



You sure?
Enter the cottage
and kill all the
gold farmers.

The what?

Gold farmers.
All the people
inside!



Okay.

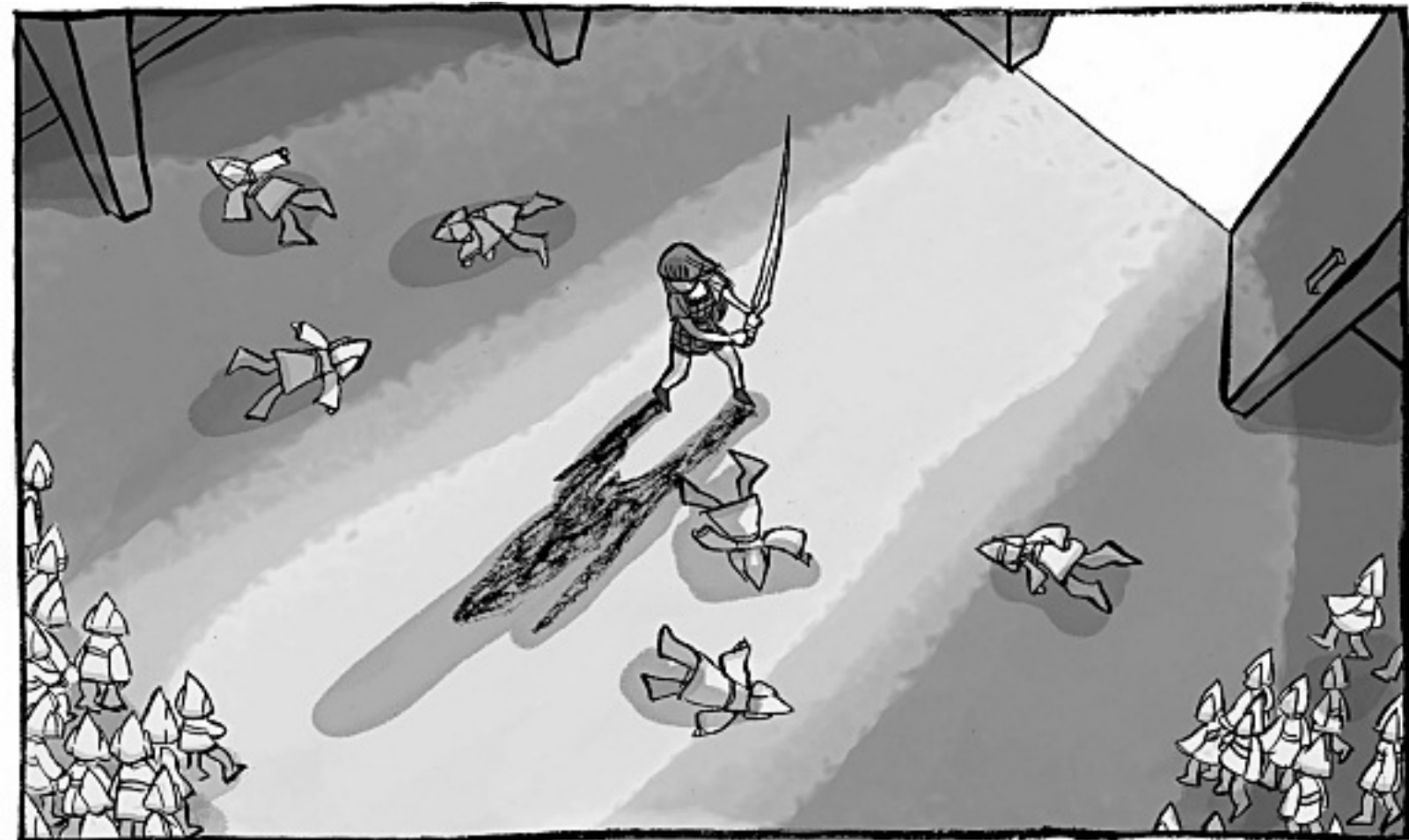
And Anda?
This is important.
Don't blow it.

I won't.





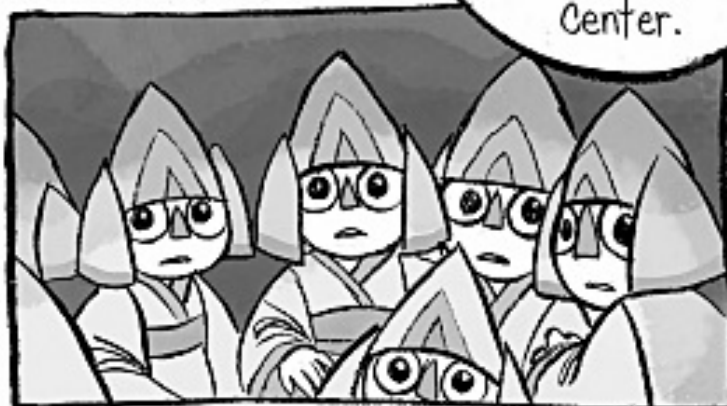




Good. Kill
'em all.

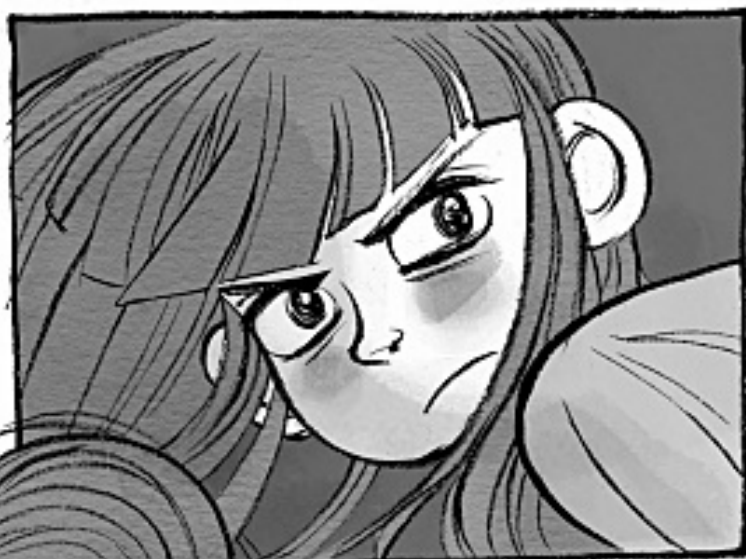
Really?

Yeah—that's
the orders. Kill 'em
all and then haul ass
back to the City
Center.

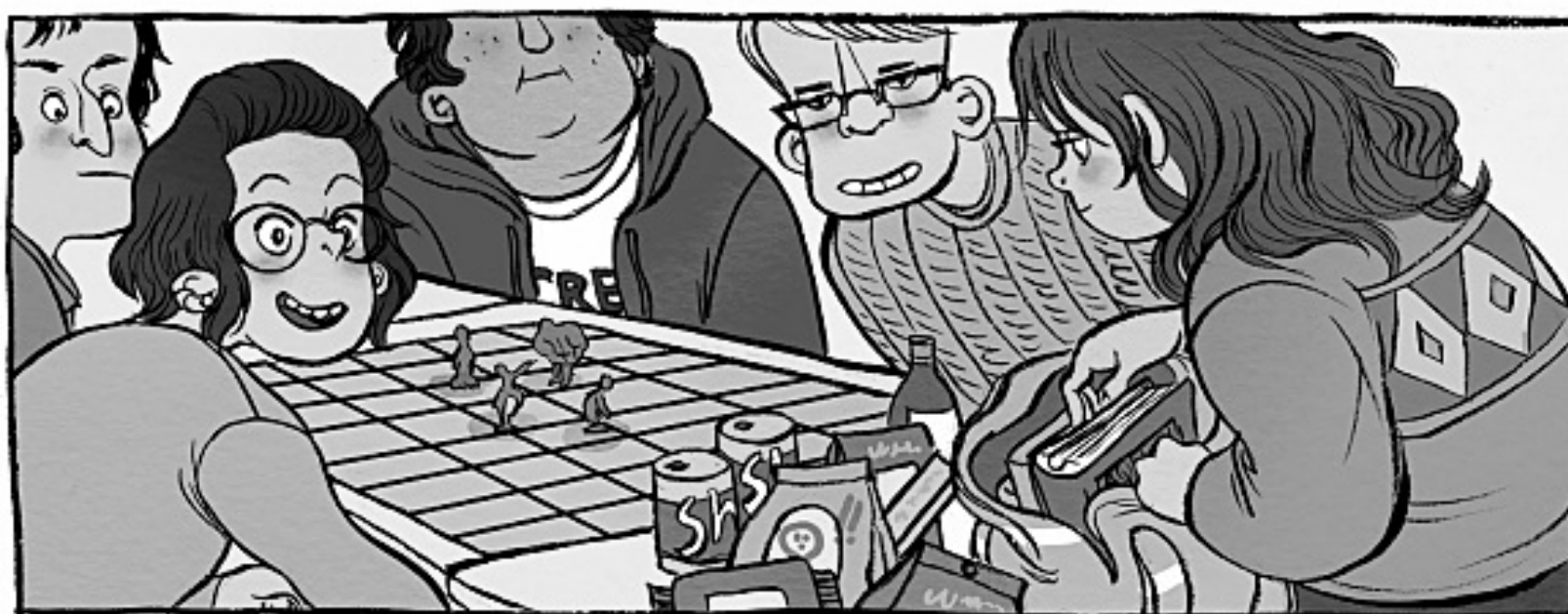
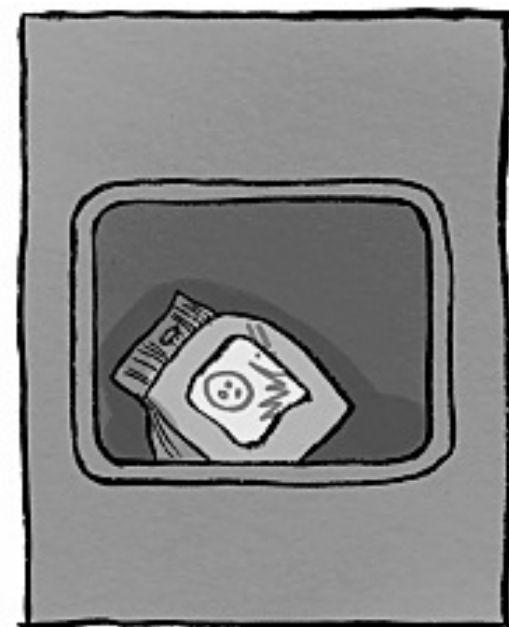


Okay.













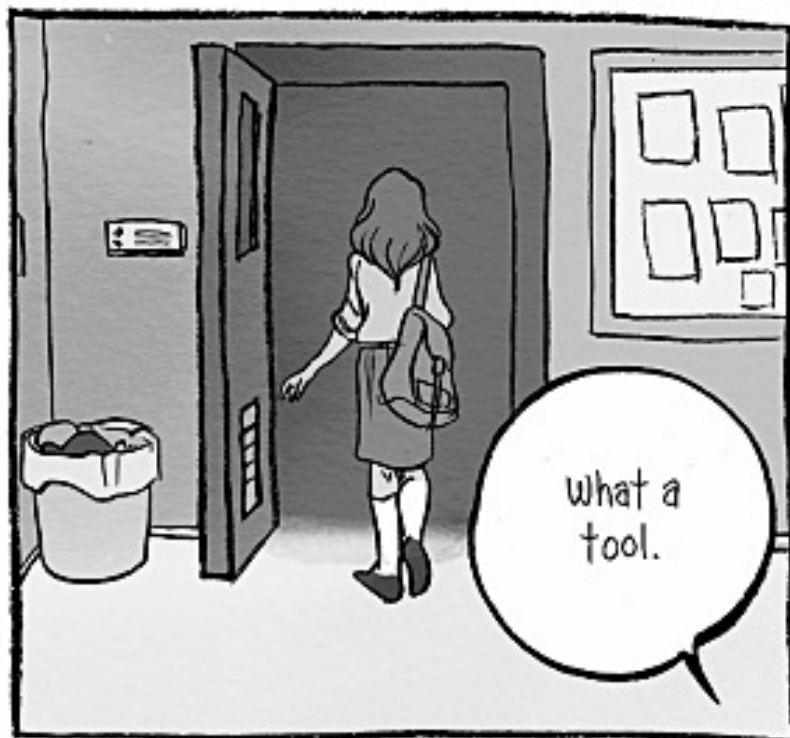
So thanks, but I think we're cool just playing here.



Okay, well. Let me know if you change your minds.



What a fool.

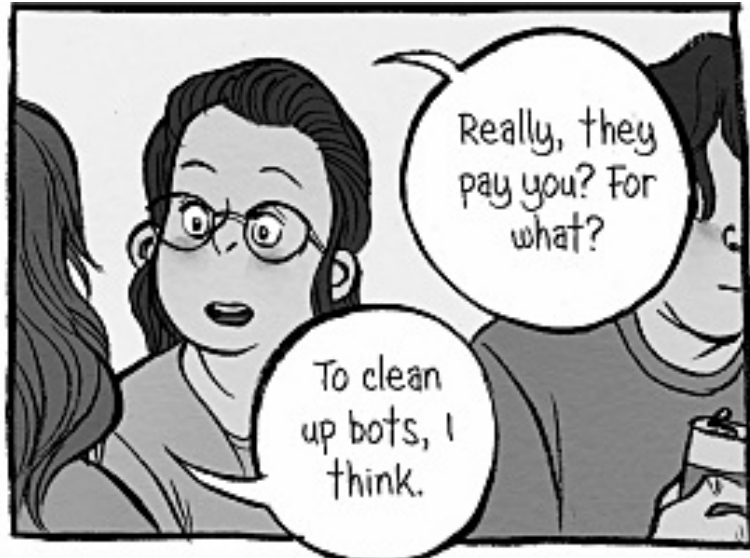


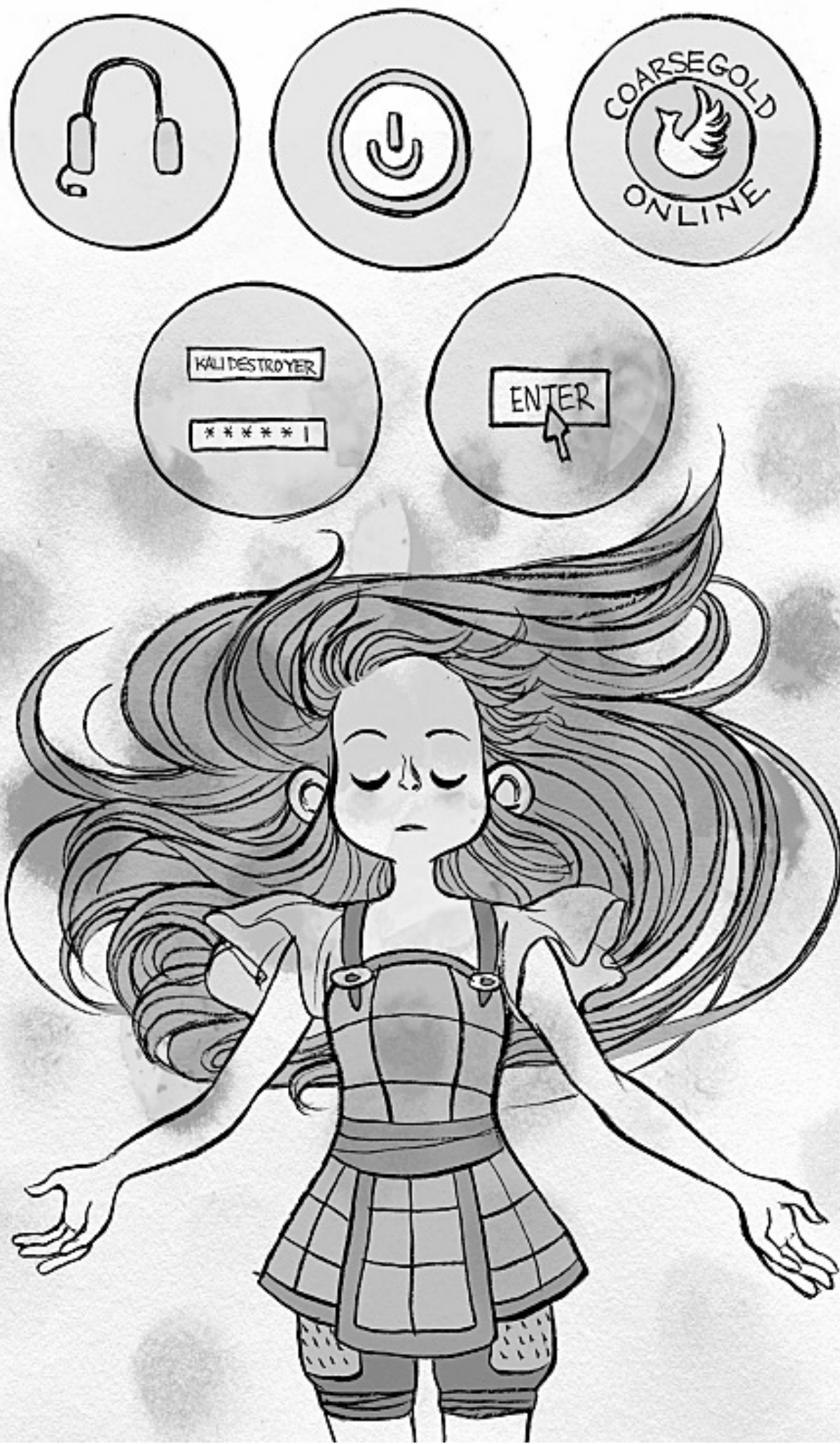
So what were you saying, Anda?


Huh?

'Bout Coarsegold?









Okay, lemme
get this right.
Mexican.

Bot.

Japanese.

<plankton rug>
\$550

Not bot.

<whip>
\$100

<ninja
stars>
\$70

Korean.

Not bot.

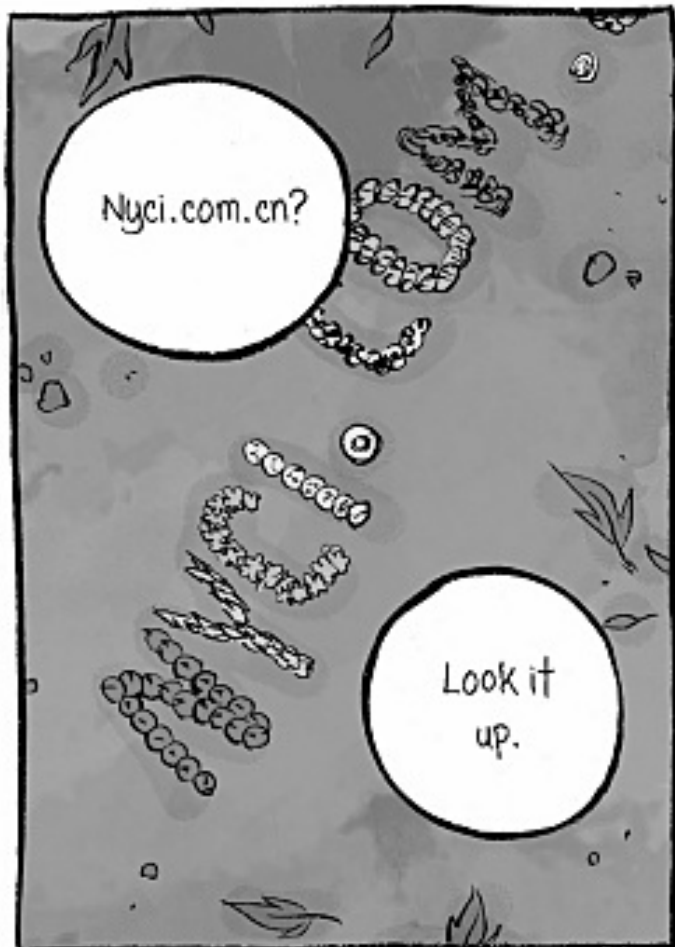
<maglar
juice>
\$90



Chinese.

SUPER bot. Look,
it's not hard. Just
talk to them, and if
they don't respond
or speak English you
should probably kill
'em.






ID	LEVEL	RACE/CLASS	PRICE (USD)
CO Account 000325	90	BEAST/SCHOLAR	\$356.00 <input type="button" value="BUY"/>
CO Account 000326	90	UNDEAD/PRIEST	\$399.00 <input type="button" value="BUY"/>
CO Account 000327	90	HUMAN/HUNTER	\$180.00 <input type="button" value="BUY"/>
CO Account 000328	90	/ THIEF	\$210.00 <input type="button" value="BUY"/>
CO Account 000329		PRIEST	\$167.00 <input type="button" value="BUY"/>
CO Acco 330		THIEF	\$499.00 <input type="button" value="BUY"/>

They're
selling...


gold?

Look!
Over
there.



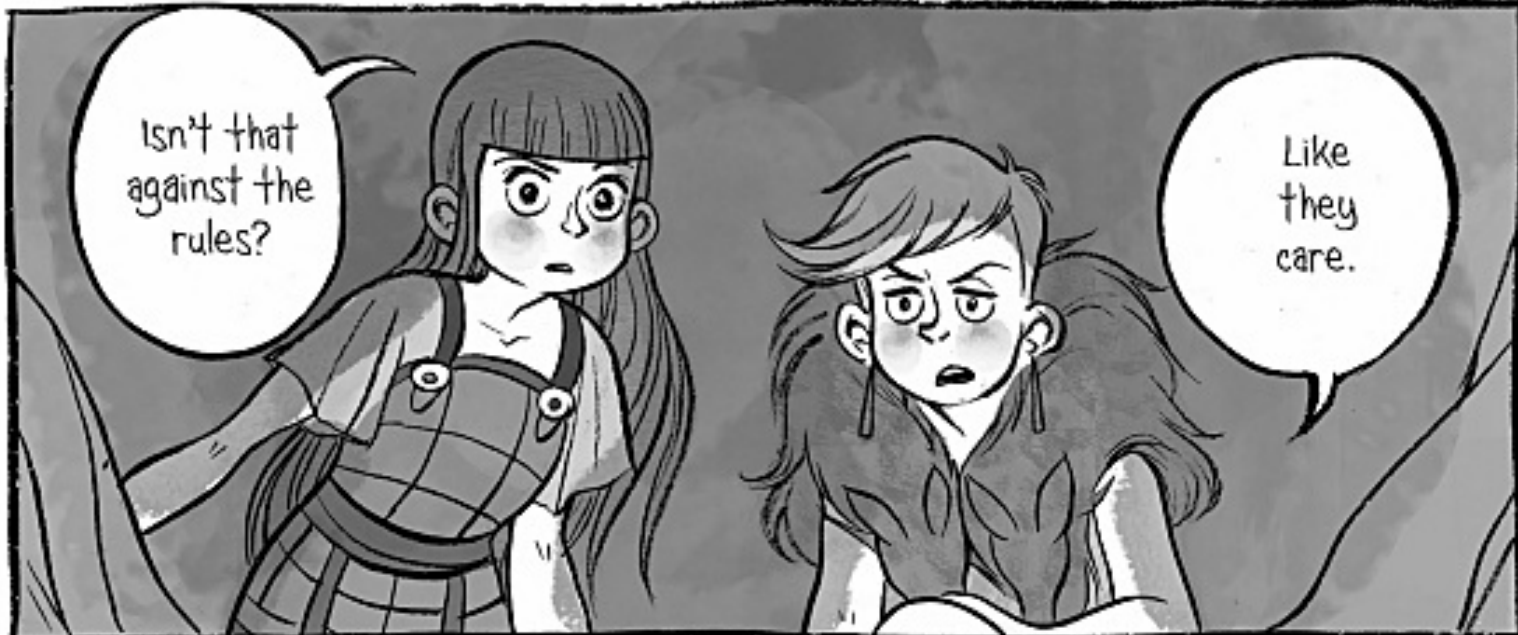
Look at
them, greedy
assholes.

What
are they
doing?




They're
FARMING.

They collect
items for gold
and sell the
gold to other
players for
cash.



Isn't that
against the
rules?

Like
they
care.



Oh my god! You can
buy a level 85 avatar
for \$100! And a
house! You can buy a
whole furnished house
for \$600!

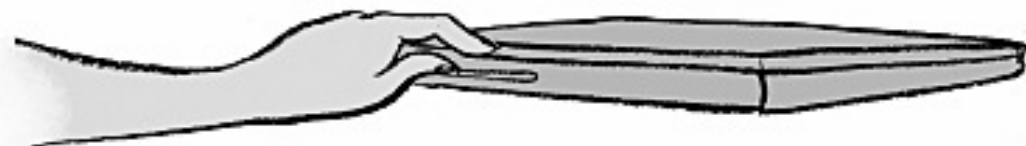
People spend
MONTHS trying
to earn that
much gold. How
is this fair?

3 BEDROOM BOATHOUSE

\$600

\$400





No. I'm with you. Let's wipe these gold farmers out.



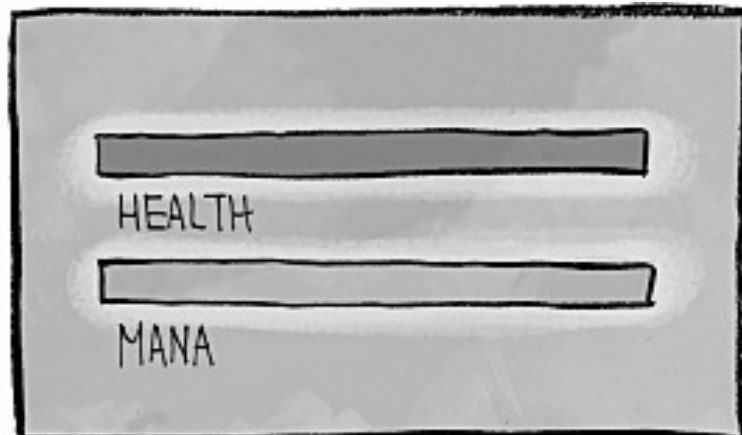
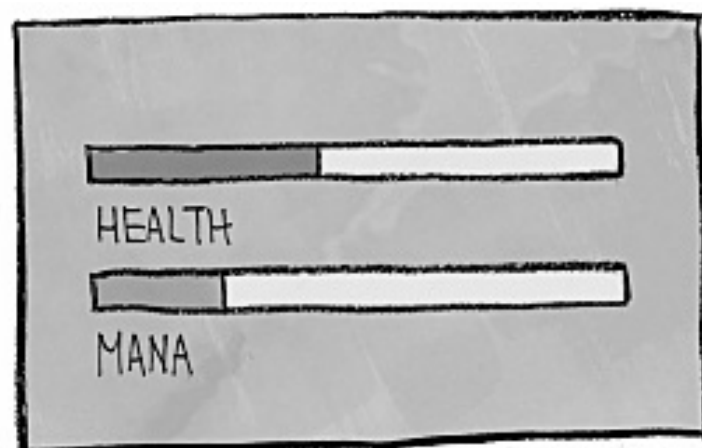
Here, take this. It'll give you a boost.



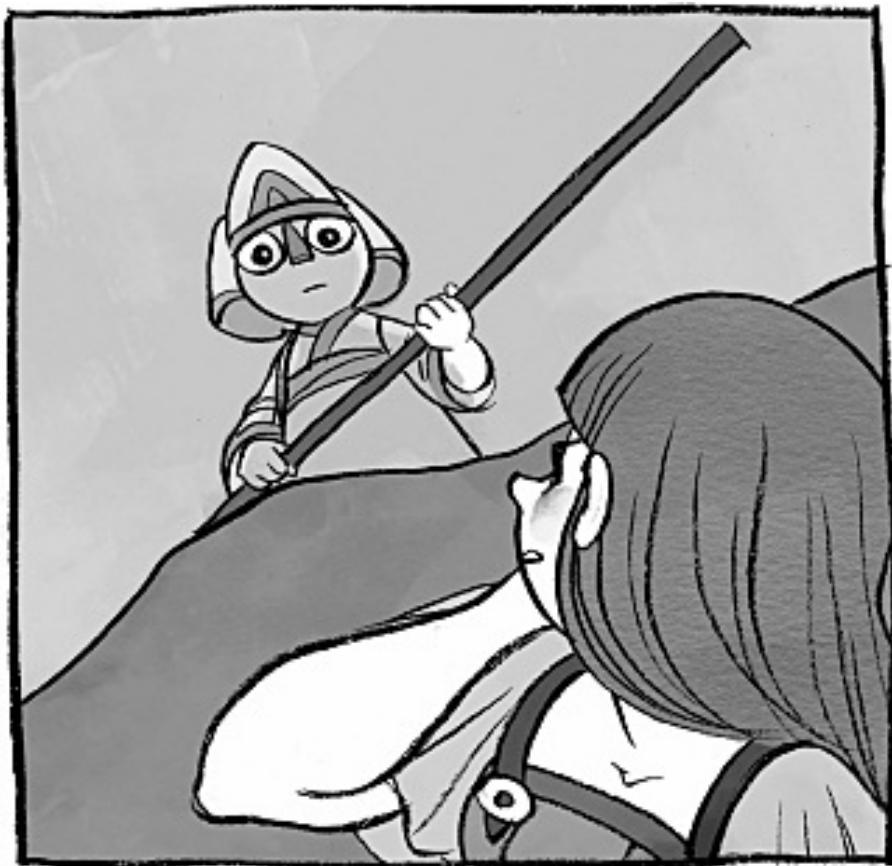
You spent 90 gold on this??



90 gold is nothing when you're the baddest bitch in the virtual universe.

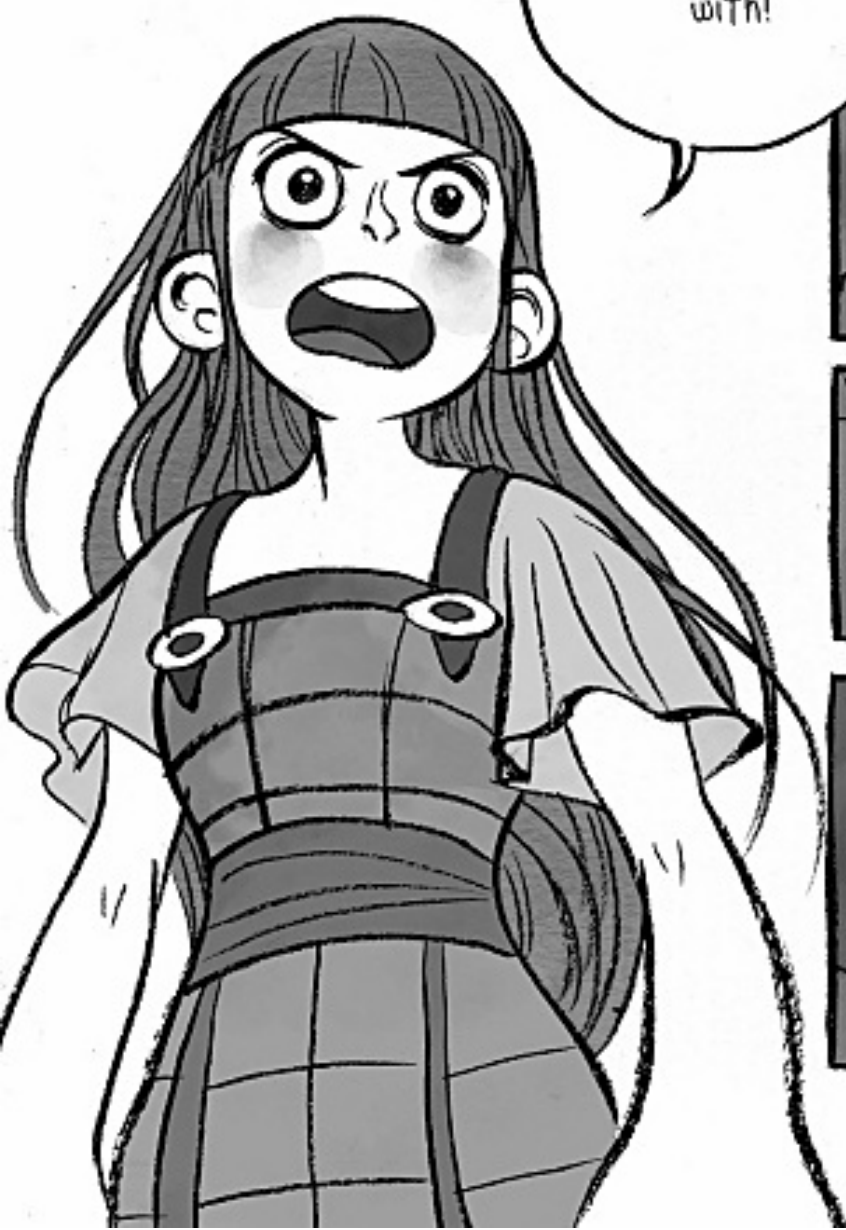








Let's just
get it over
with!





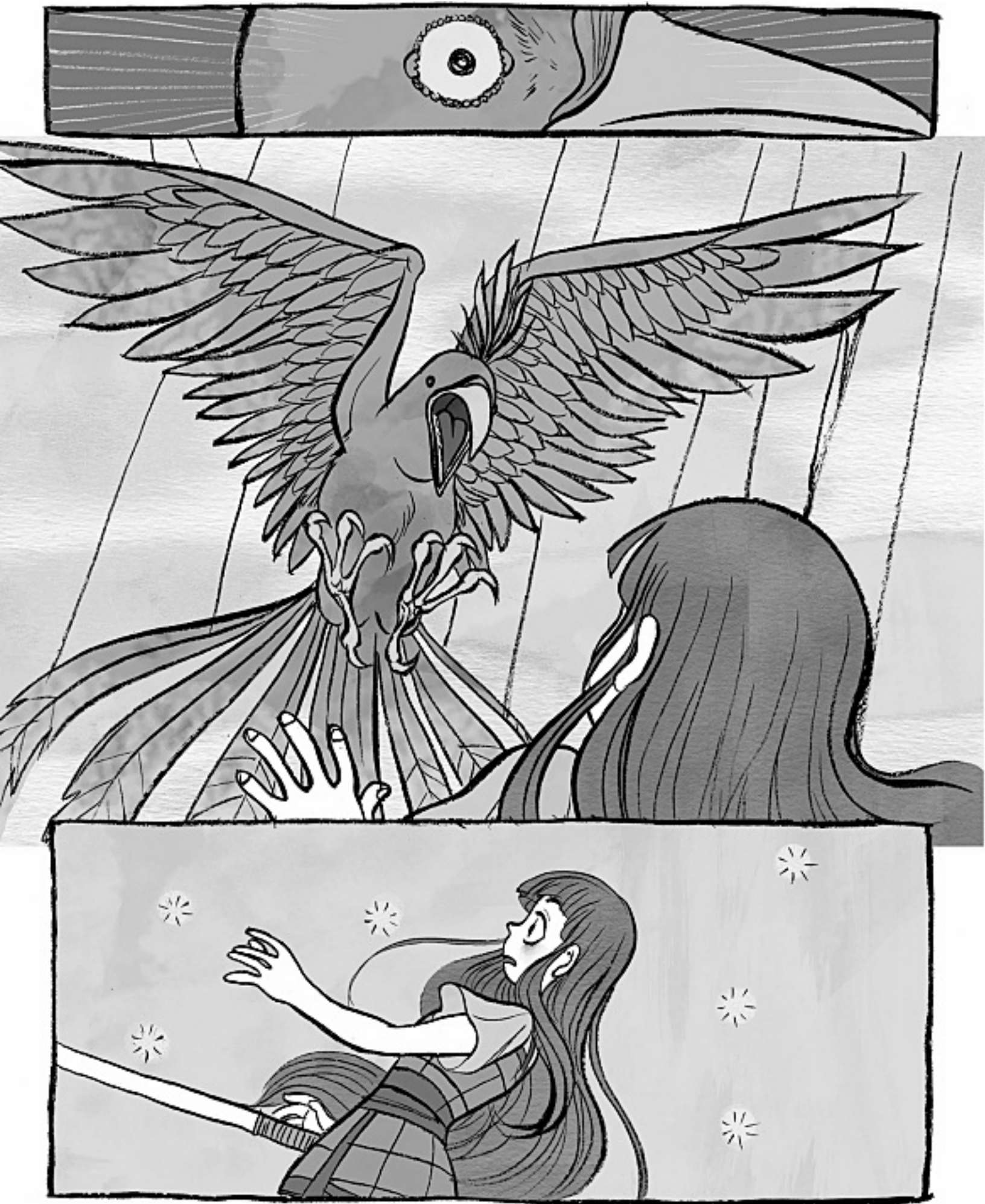
The
Emerald
Macaw!

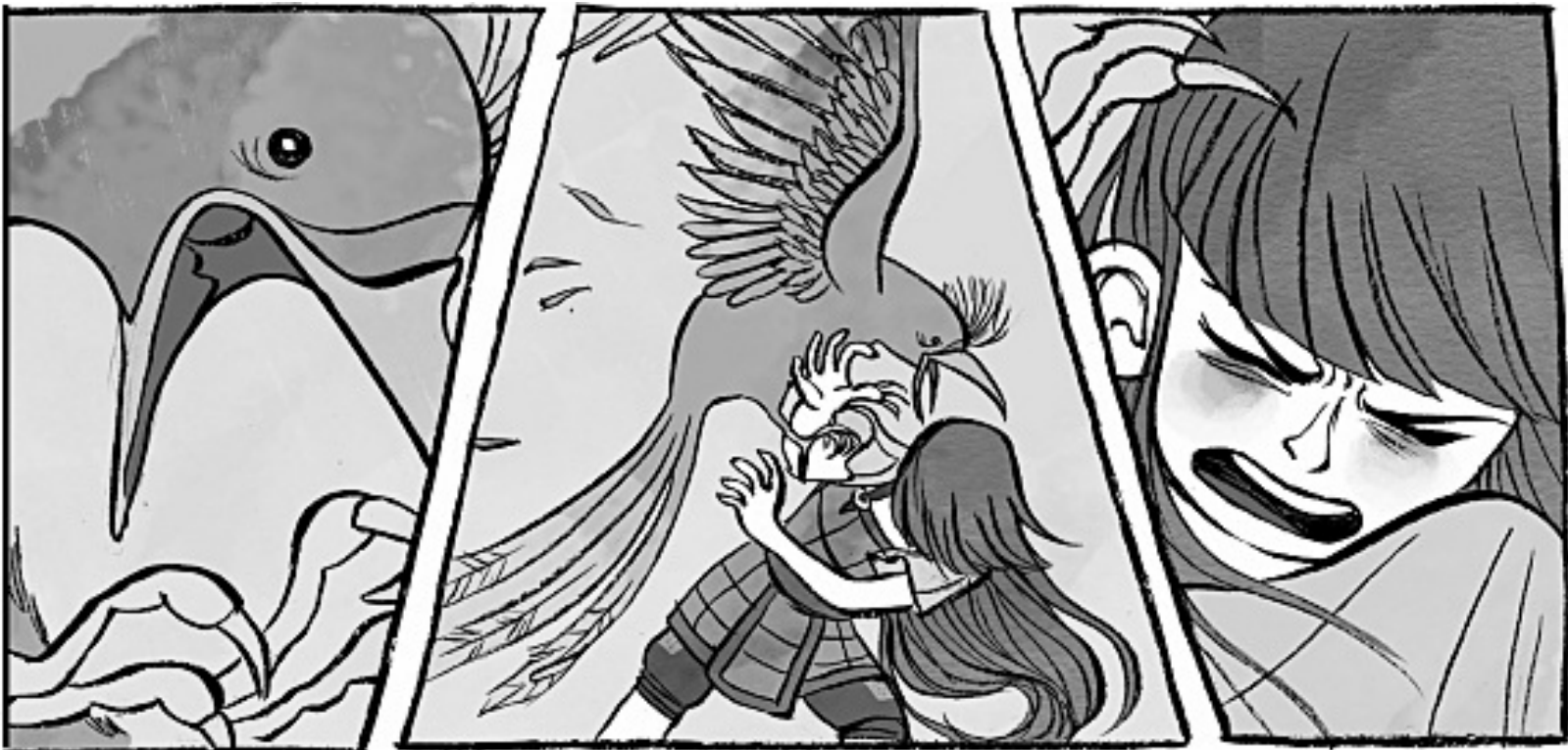
{ THE
Emerald Macaw }

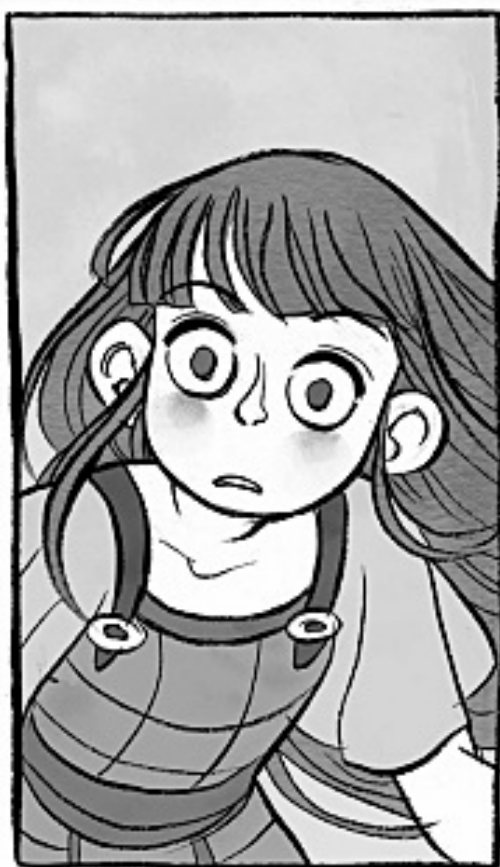
- RACE : BEAST
- LEVEL 14
- FREQUENCY: RARE

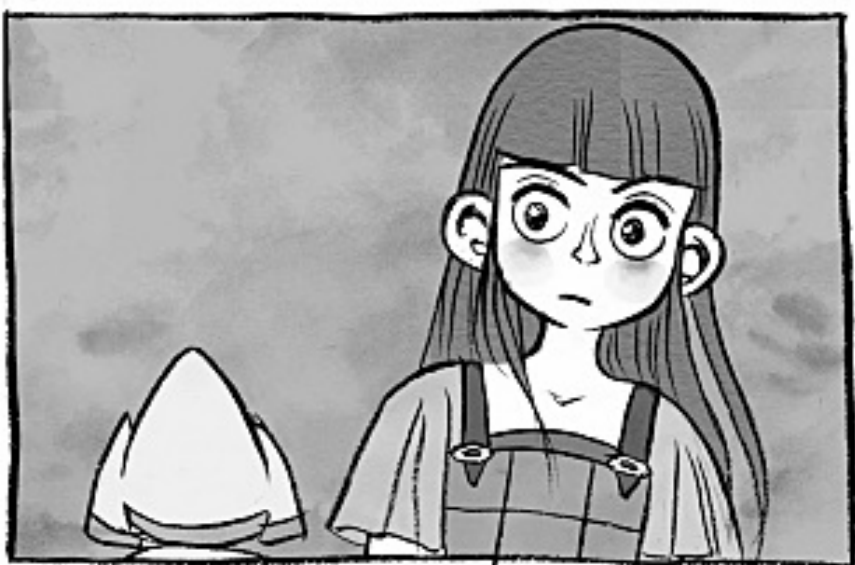
- EMERALD FEATHERS
WORTH 450 GOLD



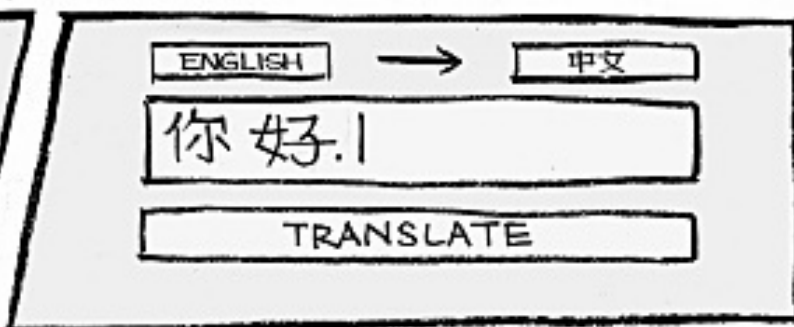
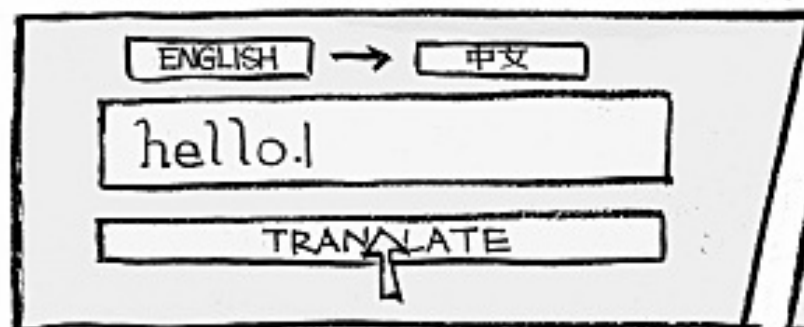
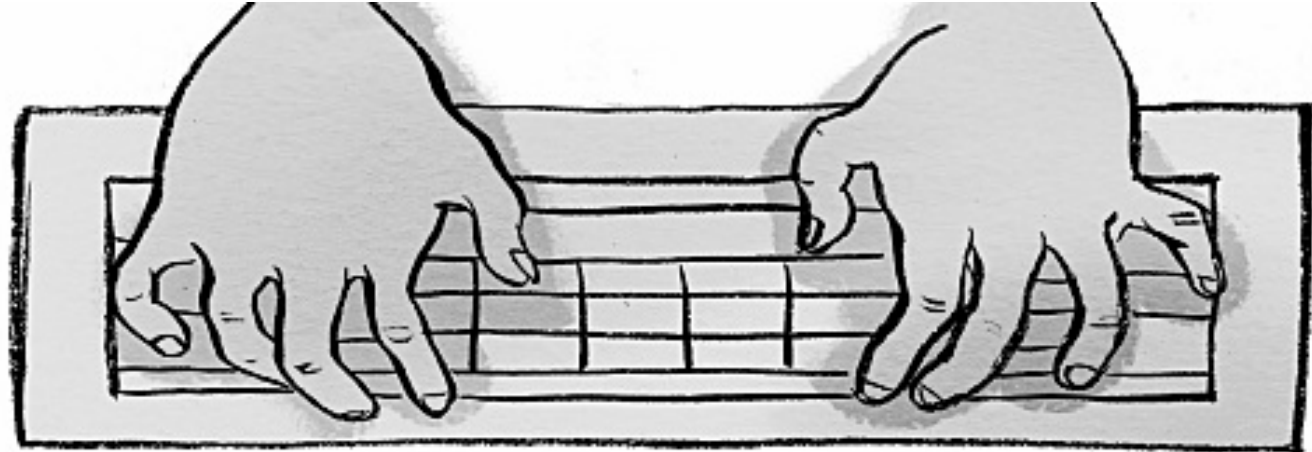






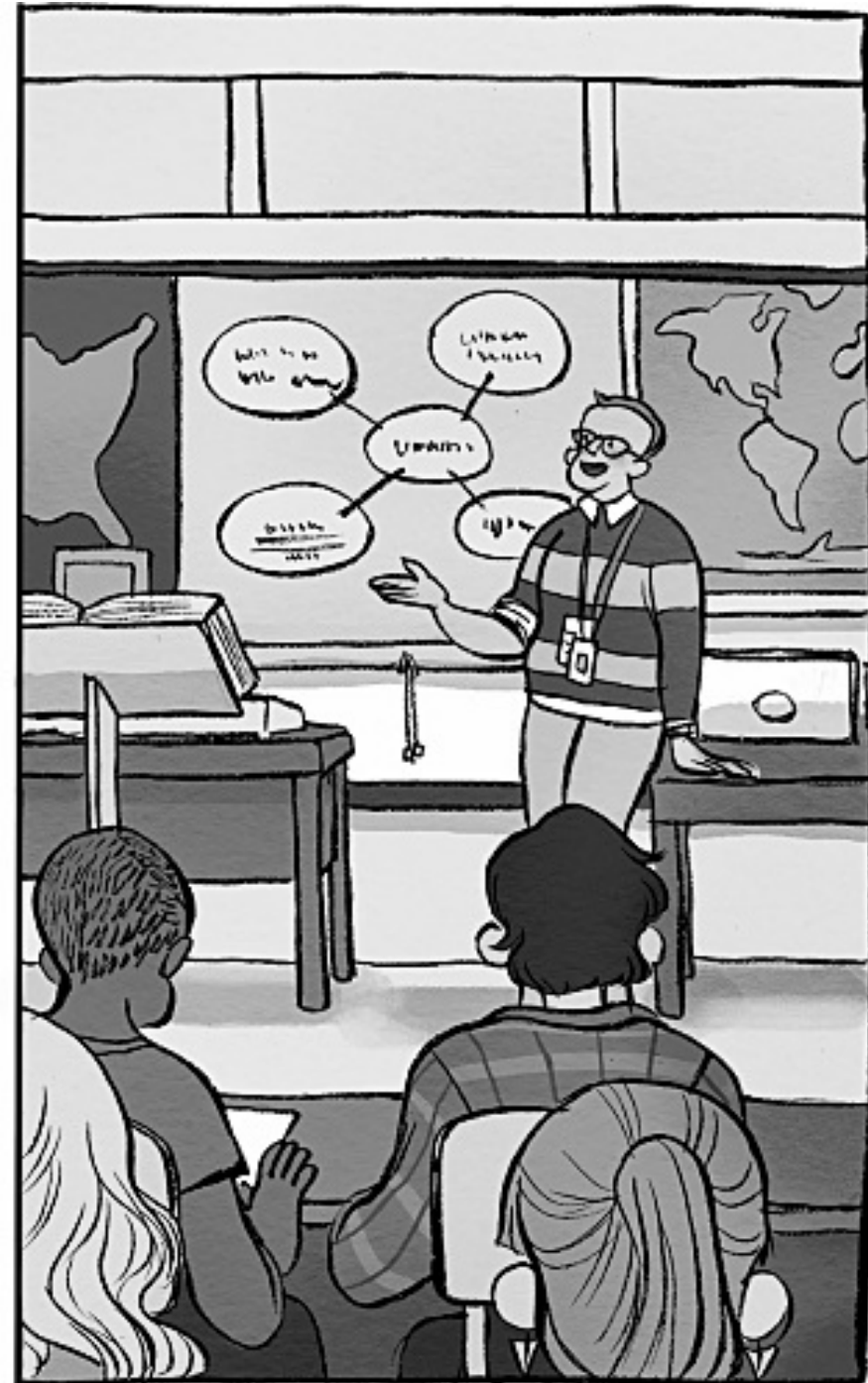
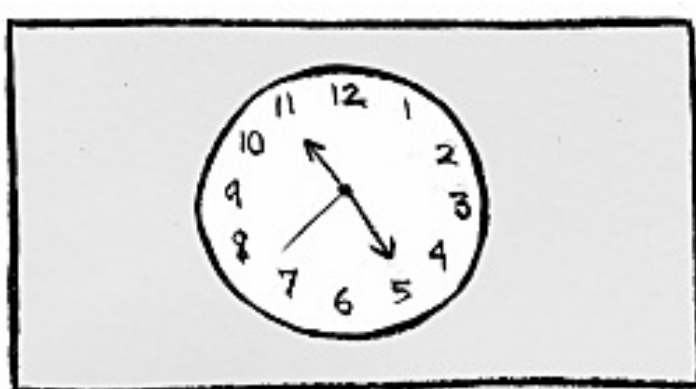


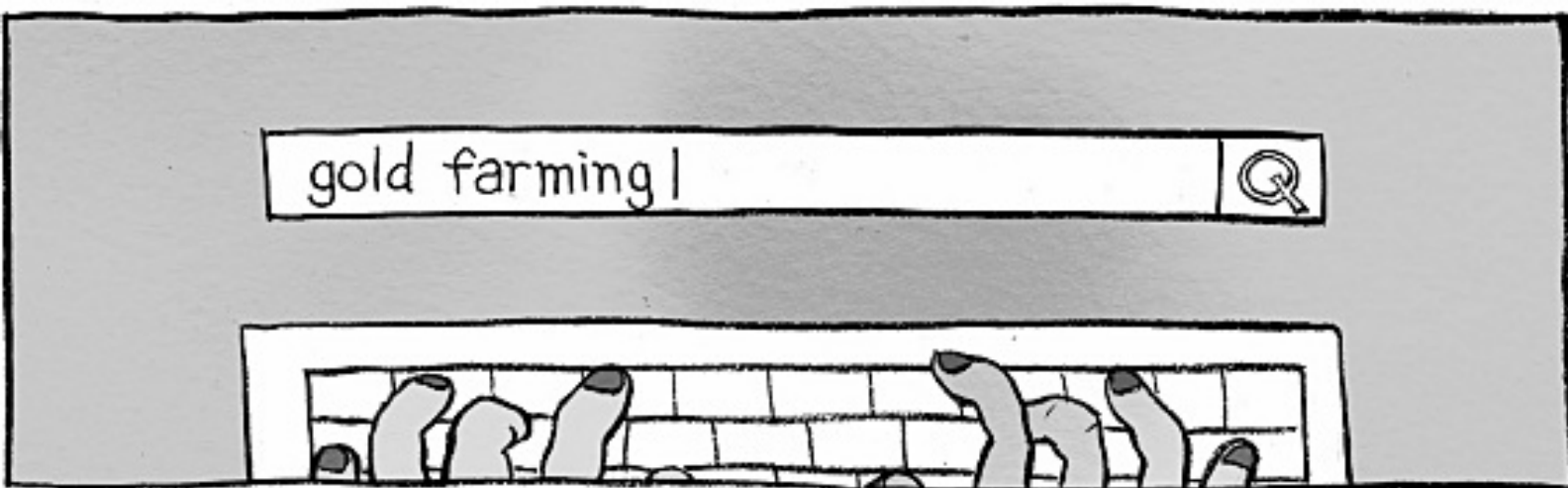


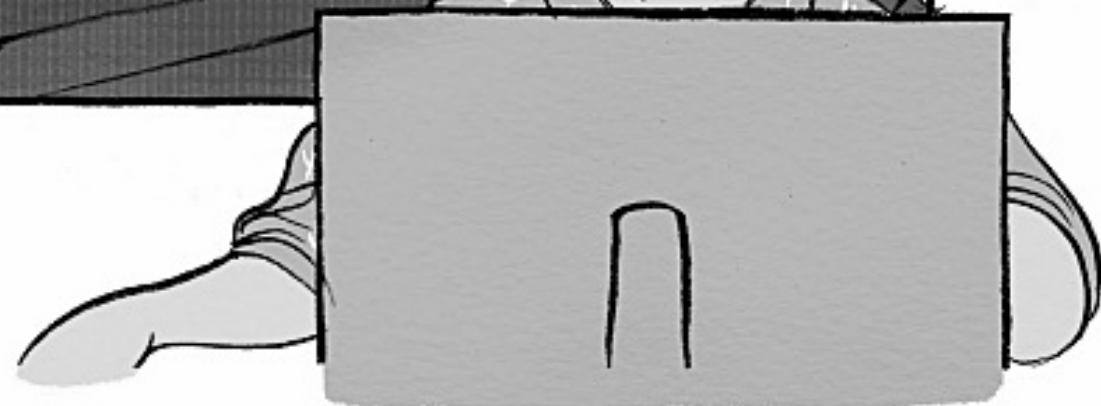
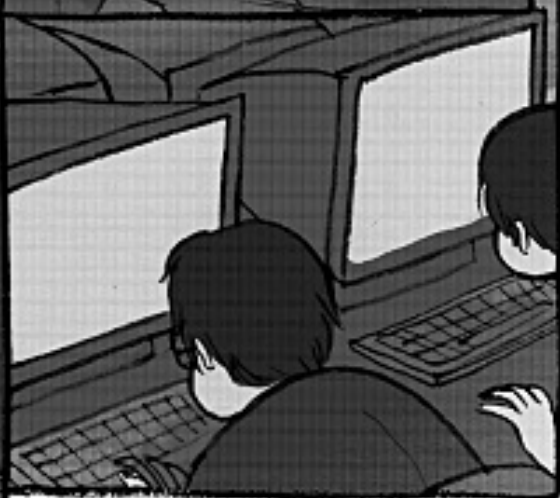
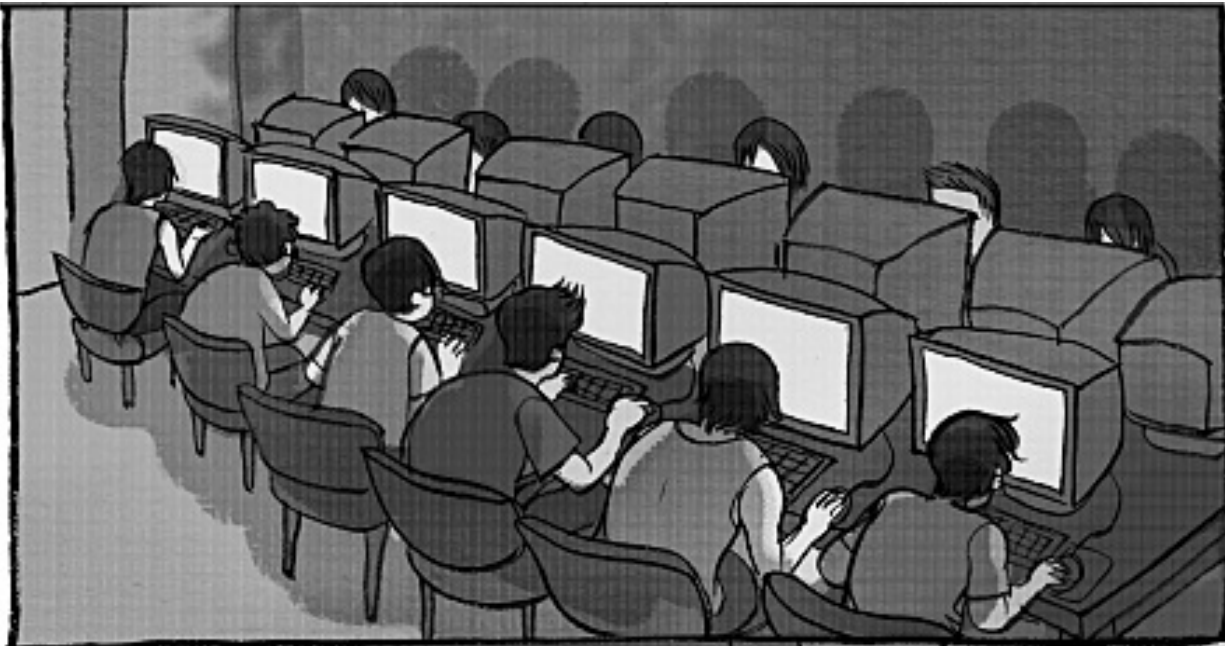


















Raymond's an English name.

Raymond is my name in English class.

You're a student? How old are you?

16.

And you work already?





(How else
am I going
to play?)

(I'm a gamer.
I collect gold for
work but on my
own time I play
Coarsegold like you.
Right now I have
free time because
my shift ended
at 6 AM.)



Ended at
6 AM??

(I work the night
shift. I like it better
when it's dark and the
boss is asleep.)



So why did
you contact
me? I tried
to kill you.



(You're the
first non-gold
farmer who's
tried to talk
to me.)

It's not personal. I know it's just your job, but we want things to be fair.

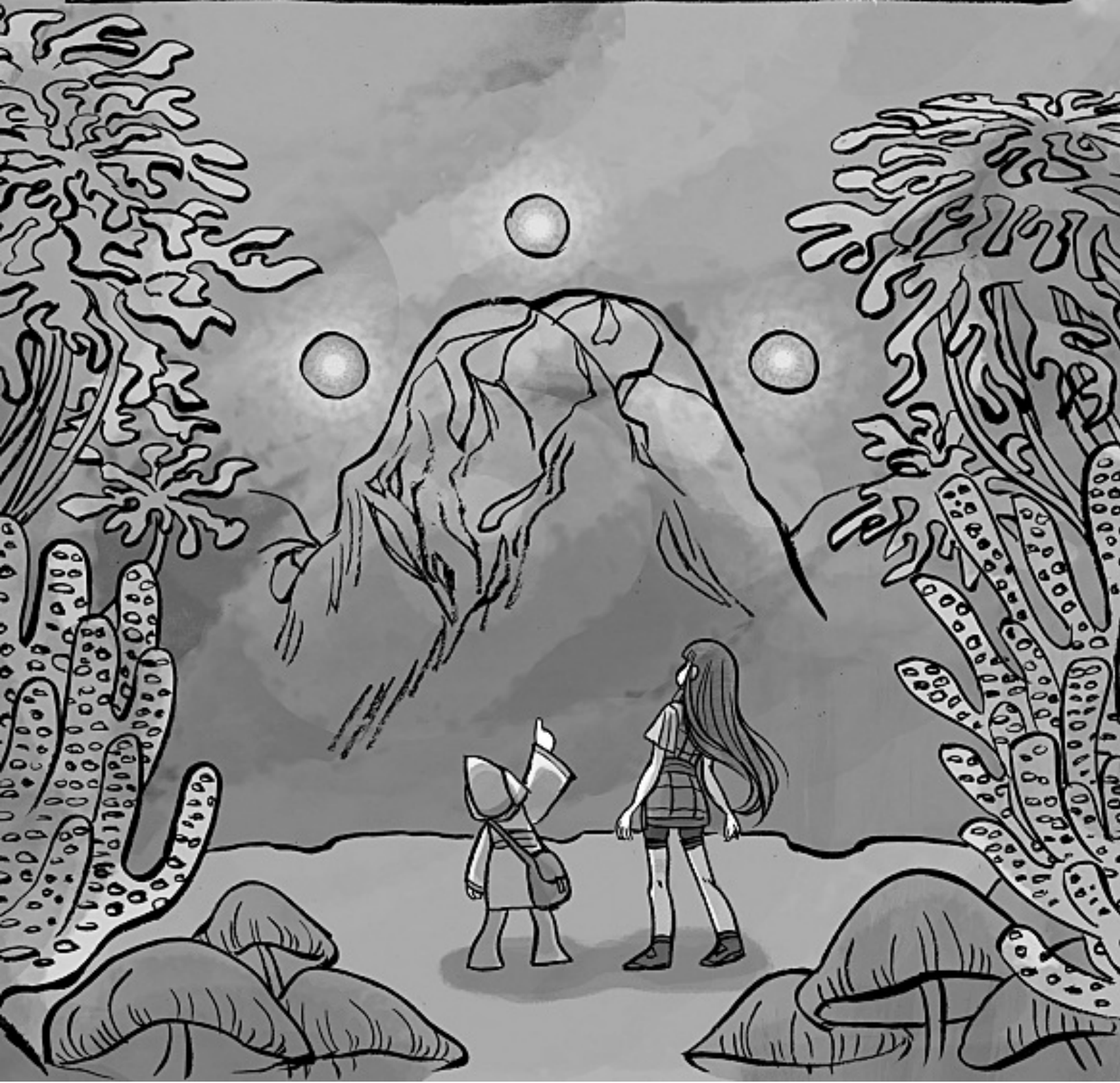
Gold farming messes with the value of gold.

(I don't care about that. I just want to join a guild and play with real gamers. Even with a different avatar, everyone is suspicious of the guy who only speaks Chinese.)

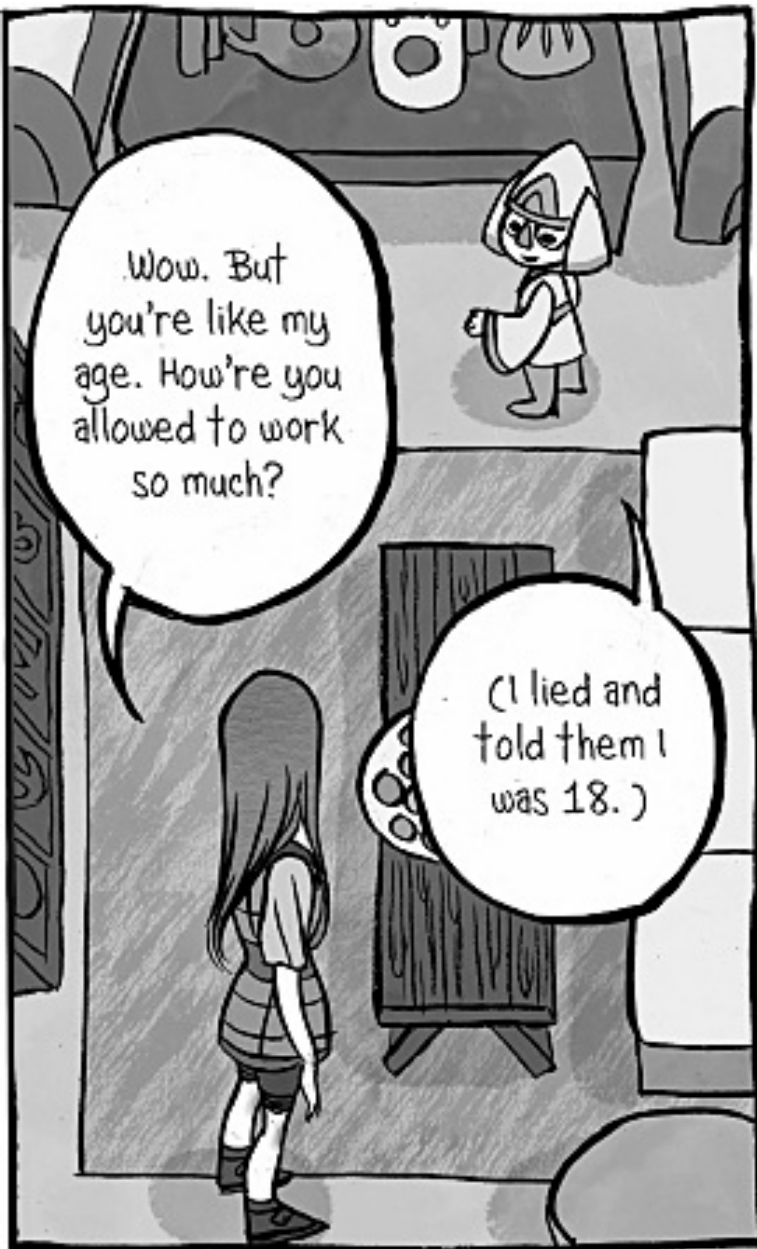
Well, you can't join my guild.

On top of the gold farmer thing, we don't allow boys.


Can you show me how you cast that spell yesterday?













That sounds awful! Why aren't you going to the doctor?

(I can't go to any local doctors!)



(I'm registered as a resident of Hunan, so I can only go to the doctor back home.)



(I'm worried if I go home I'll never come back.)


But if you keep this up you might not be able to work at all.




(It's okay, my friend Ah Duo is good with his hands. I've been trading him cigarettes for massages, and it helps.)








(I should go, my shift starts again in 5 hours and I need sleep.)




Okay. Where can I meet you again?

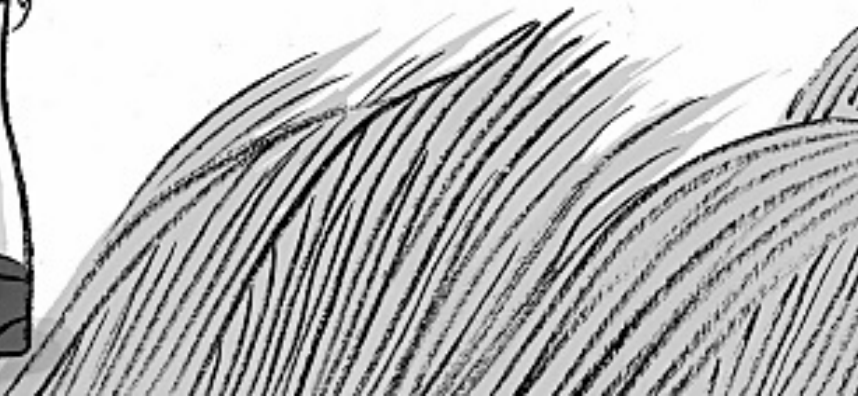
(We have to move around every day so people don't know where to find us.)

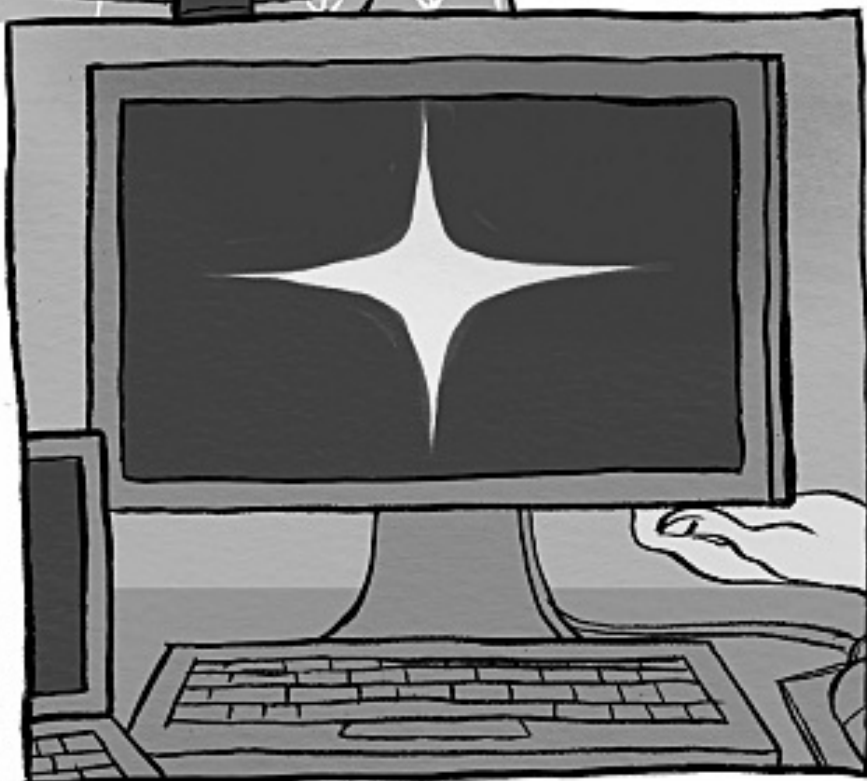
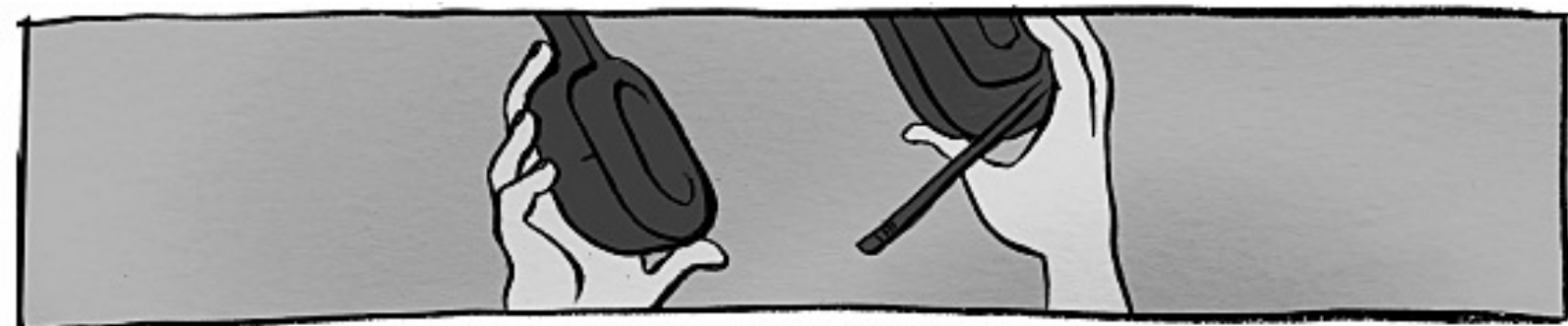


(I don't know where I'm going to be tomorrow but I'll let you know. It'll be the same time.)

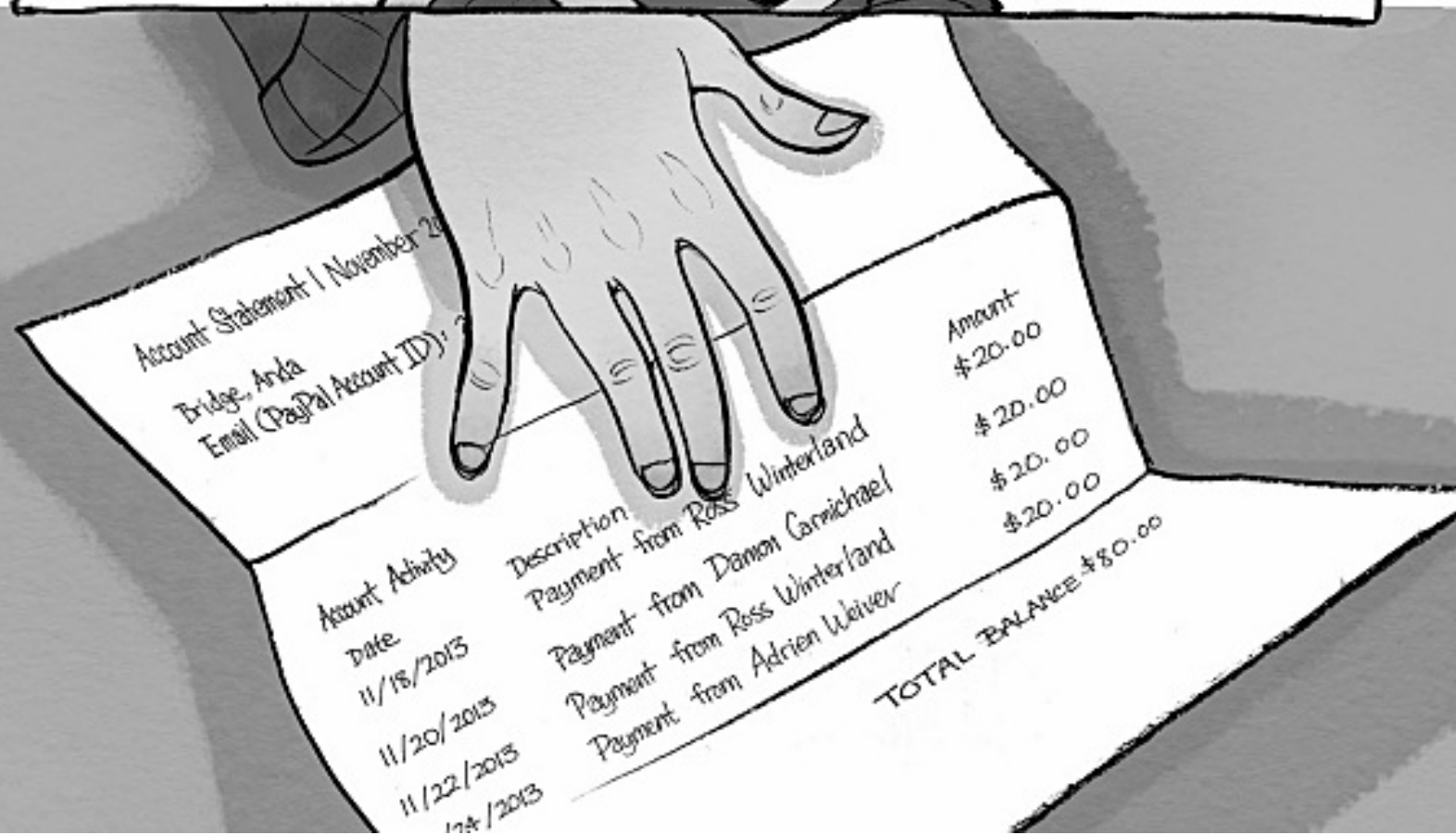


okay.











Oh my god.



In case you've forgotten, sweetie, that's my bank account you're wired to. Tell me. WHY are strangers sending you money?



Mom, this isn't what you think! They're just paying me for missions within the game. I'm serious. That's ALL there is. That's why I didn't tell you, I didn't think it was important.



I told you not to talk to strange men on the Internet.



But I've never talked to these people in my life! I don't even know who they are!

But you're okay with accepting their money? You realize how hard this makes it for me to trust you?



I knew this was a bad idea. Starting now, no more online games.



Mom!!

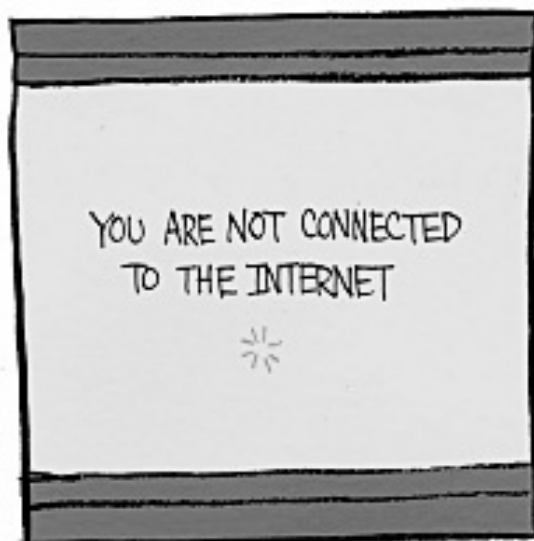


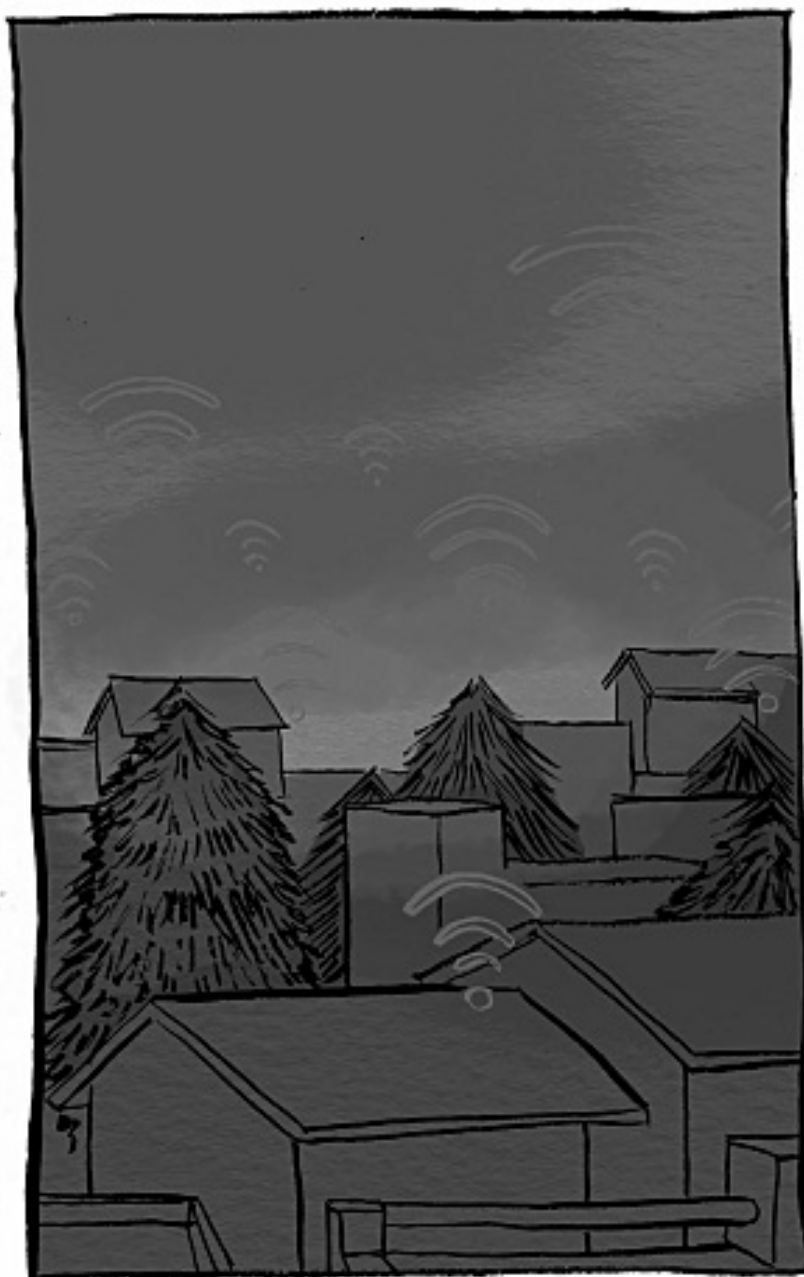
In fact . . .

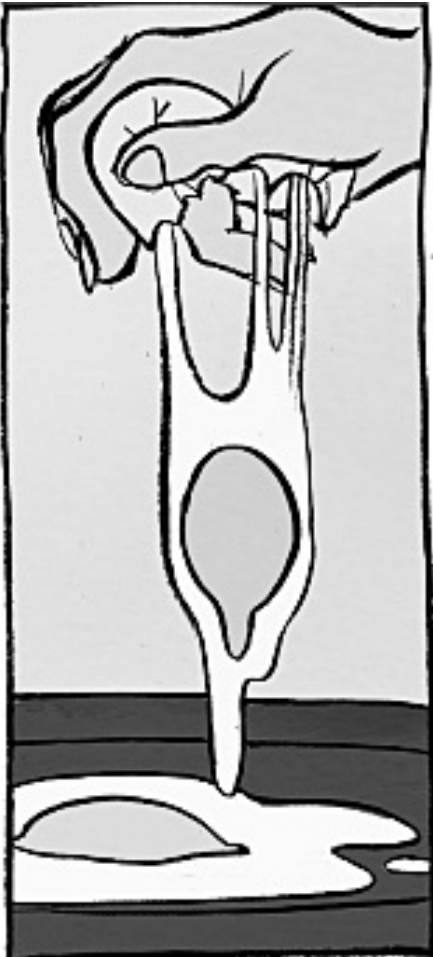
. . . no recreational Internet use for a week. I'm sorry but you have to learn this is not okay.











with American cheese
and two thick juicy
slices of bacon



don't let that
get



pphhhhbbbt
bbbt phbbbt



Uh! Hey! Ooh Ooh,
Girl!



Anda, can you turn
that down a little.



Since Saturday, December
8 at noon, Goodman
Manufacturing, which
employs more than 1,000
people, has been on strike.



Gorsh Mowee, I
can't wait for the
Pwincess's Pwahty!







Despite the pressure to reach an agreement by the holidays, both workers and management alike remain confident.



Differences between the proposals involve wages and employer contributions to medical coverage. The vote is expected to take place next Monday.



I'm Sarah Tanaka, Channel 2 News.

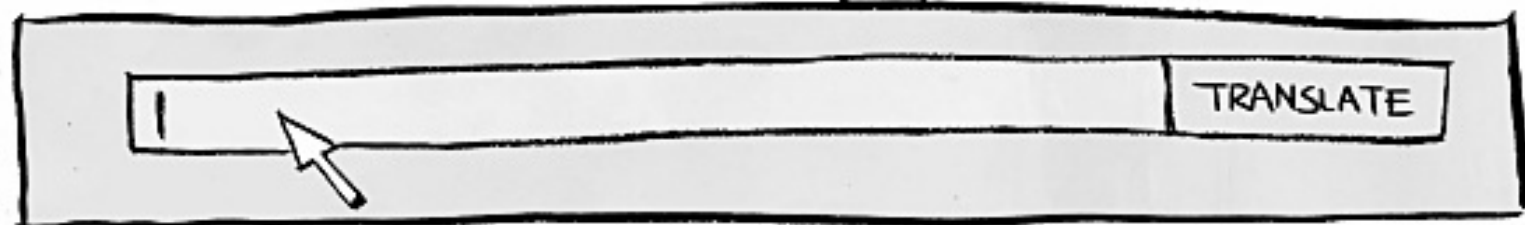




A black and white illustration of a hand writing on a time sheet. The time sheet is titled "BANG" and has columns for "TIME IN" and "TIME OUT". The names of the workers are listed in the first column, and their corresponding times are in the second column.

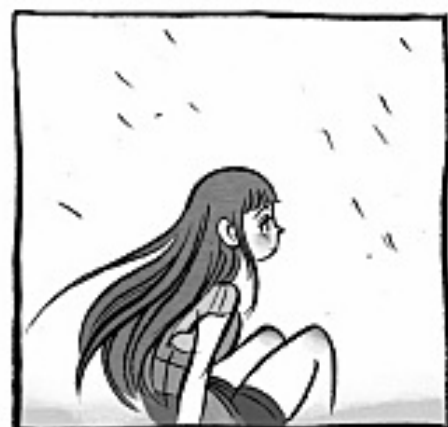
BANG		
	TIME IN	TIME OUT
OM	3:15	
BEN	3:32	
Sam	3:45	
ANDA		





[Message translated in Chinese: I'm back. Where do I meet you?]

我回來了。我在哪裡見到你？



<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	LUCY	12/5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	LUCY	12/5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	LUCY	12/5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	LUCY	12/6
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	LUCY	12/6
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	LUCY	12/6





Anda! Jesus,
where've you been?
It's been two weeks!

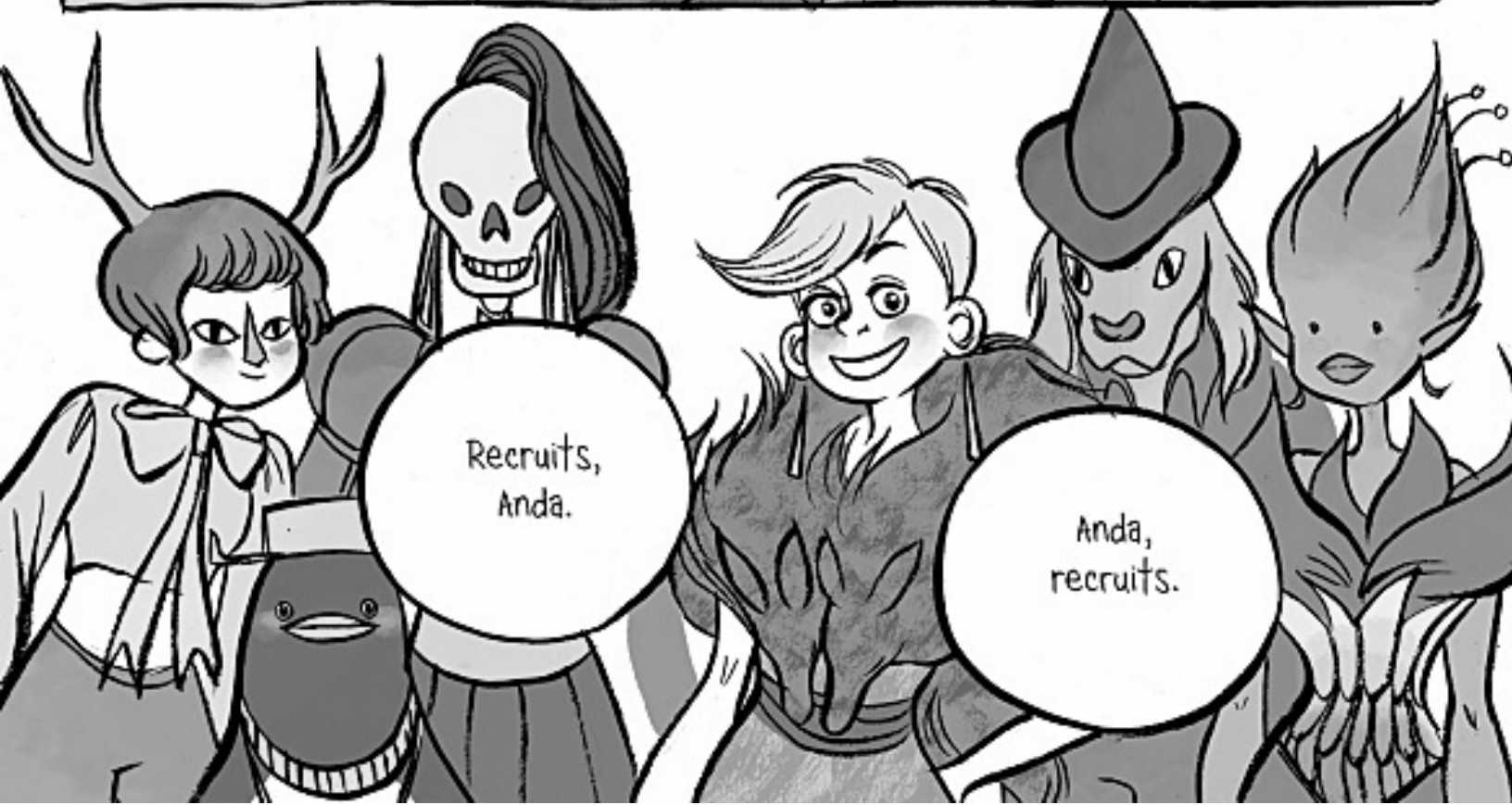


Lucy—I mean,
Sarge. Sorry, my
Internet's out. I'm
actually at a cafe.

All right, well
gimme a little
heads up next
time.

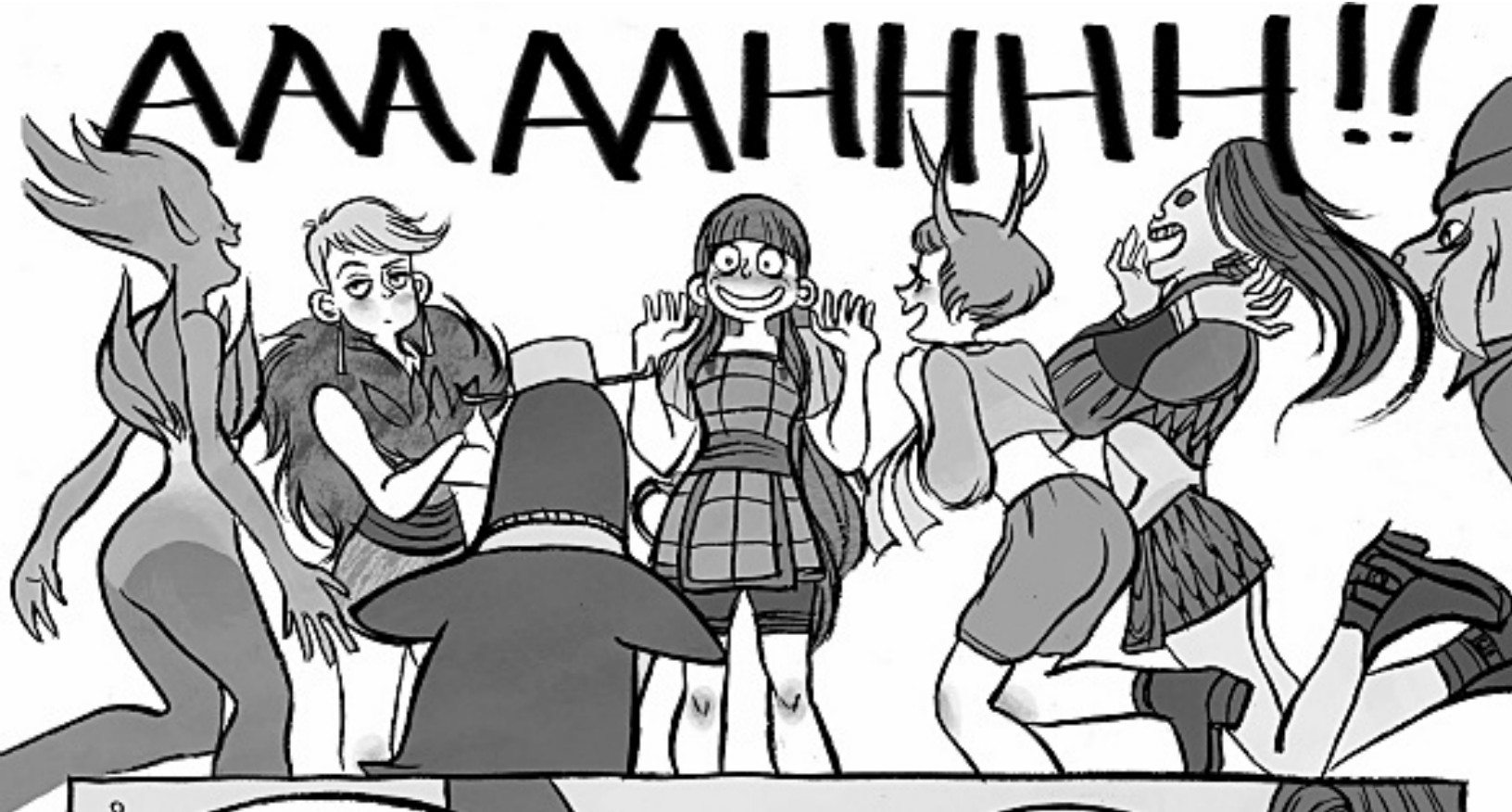


Check it out,
I got some
new recruits!



Recruits,
Anda.

Anda,
recruits.

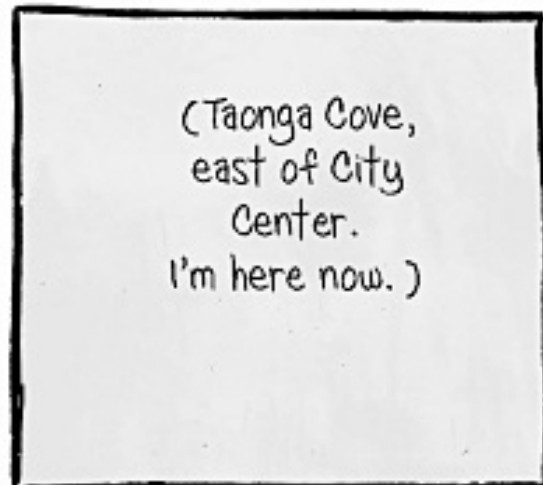




Help me.
I think Liza pulled
these noobs from
some middle school
afterschool
program.
They've never
played a non-cell
phone game in
their life.



Hey
Sergeant?



Sorry, I gotta go! I'll see you tomorrow!

It ain't dinnertime, you liar!

Daylight Saving!

TAONGA COVE

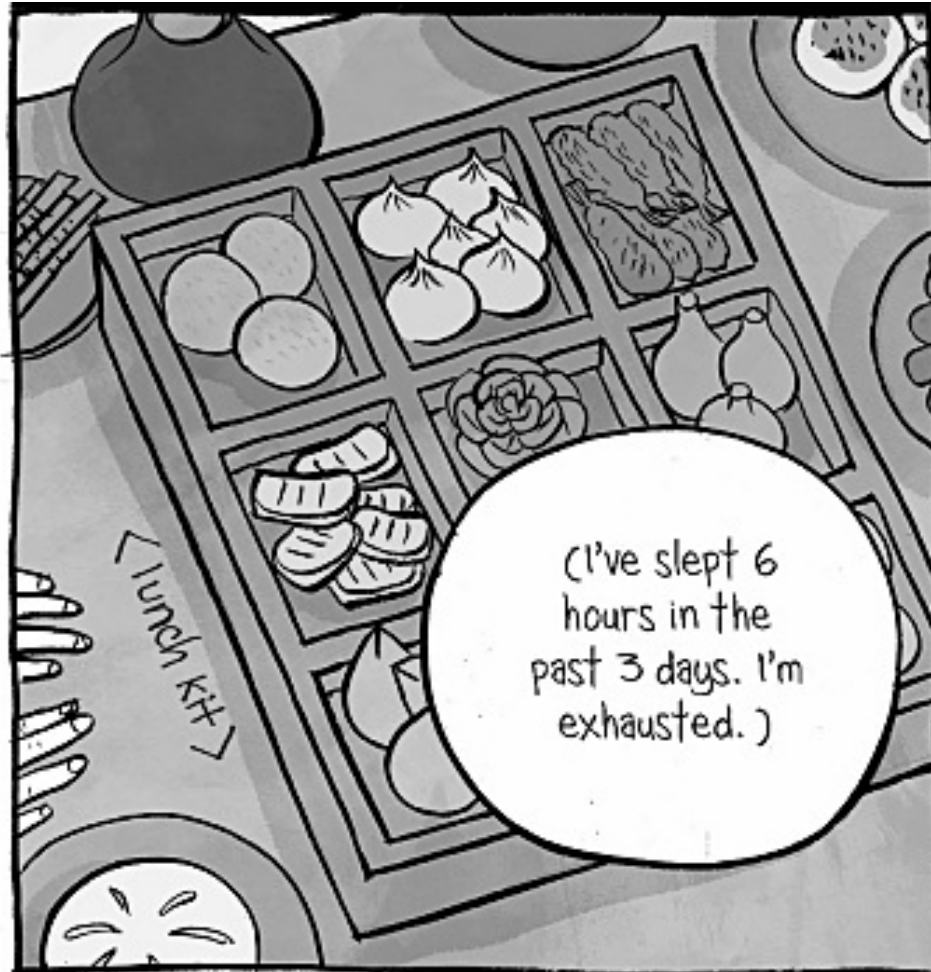






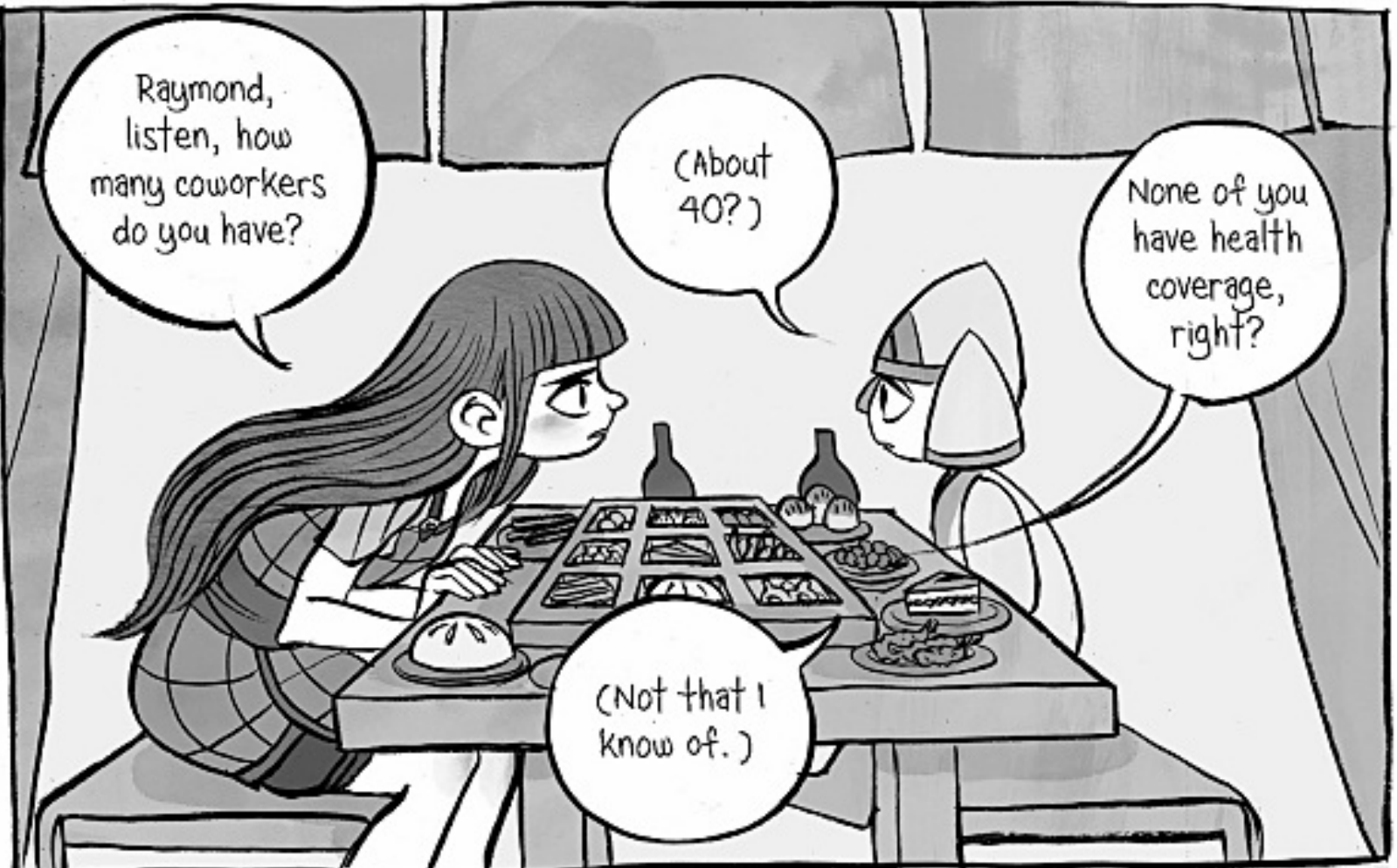
(My boss caught me sleeping on the bathroom floor and made me take a week off to heal.)

(I didn't get paid so I've had to make up for lost time.)



[Lunch Kit]

(I've slept 6 hours in the past 3 days. I'm exhausted.)




Raymond, listen, how many coworkers do you have?

(About 40?)

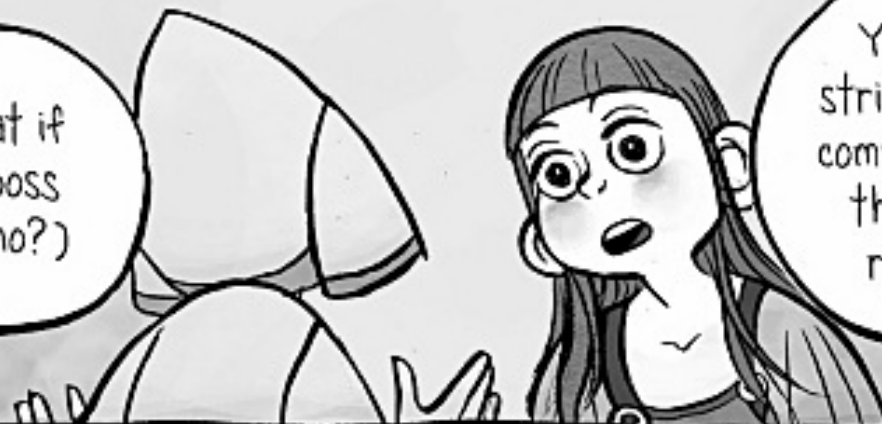
None of you have health coverage, right?

(Not that I know of.)



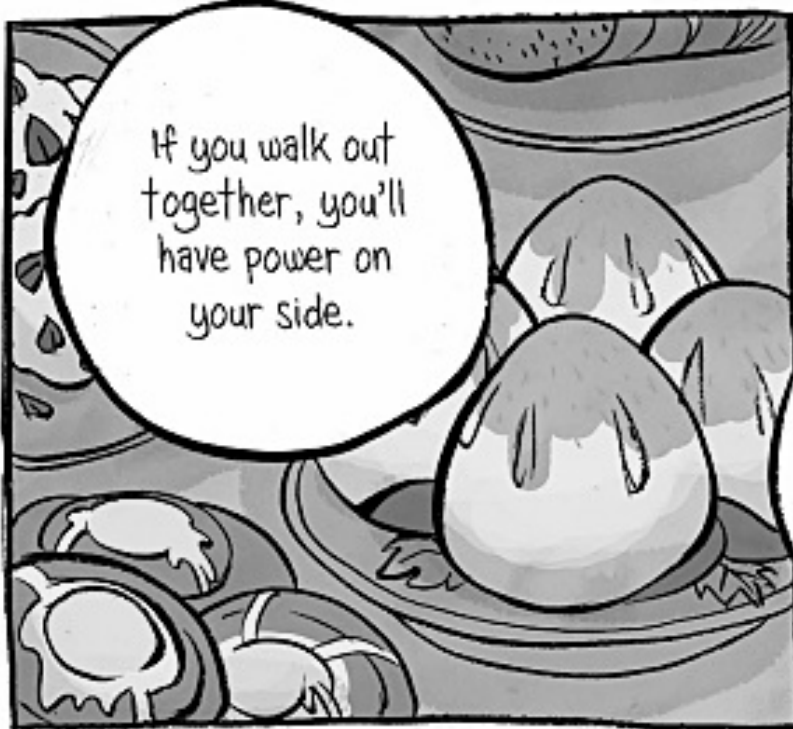
Go to your coworkers. Tell everyone you need to demand health care together.

I looked it up, there's a Urban Resident Basic Medical Insurance that you're all eligible for. As long as you work in the city, you can go to the doctor!




(What if our boss says no?)

You go on a strike. My dad's company is going through this right now.



If you walk out together, you'll have power on your side.



(But what if my coworkers aren't interested? We're all young and I'm the only one who's sick.)



That's why you're so important. You're a living example of why things need to change.



If you're keeping your problems a secret, so might somebody else!



(But I've never done anything like this before. I'm so inexperienced.)



Don't worry, I'll help. I'm gonna talk to my dad and get some advice.

We'll work out the details. The important thing is you start spreading the word.

(Okay. God,
I think I'm
gonna be
sick.)

Good. You'll
need health
insurance!

(Haha.
Thanks,
Anda.)

Let's do it. I'll
do my homework,
you do yours, and
let's meet again
tomorrow,
okay?

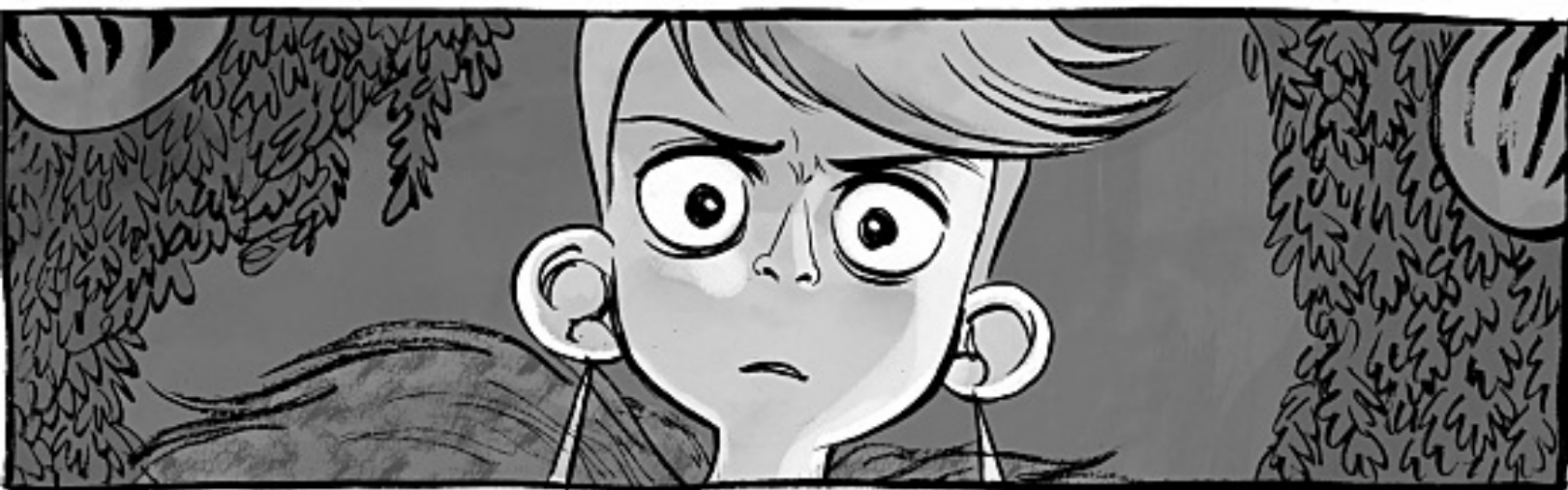


SLEEP



EXIT



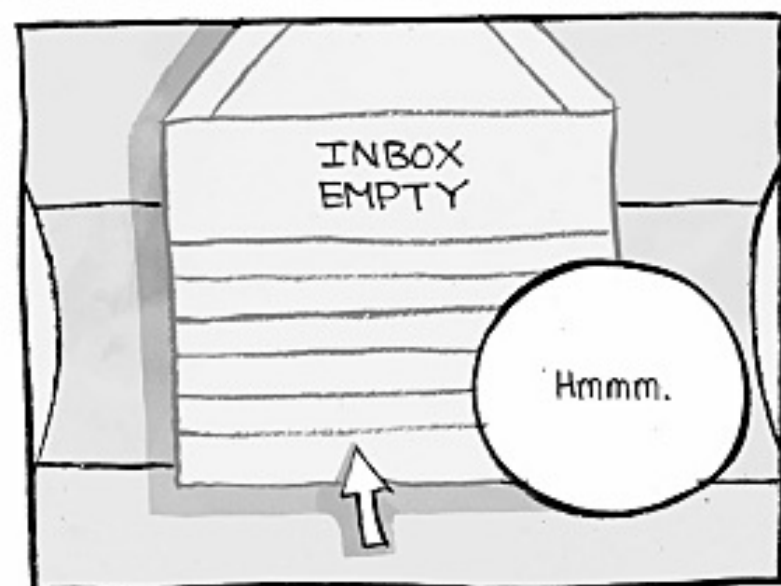


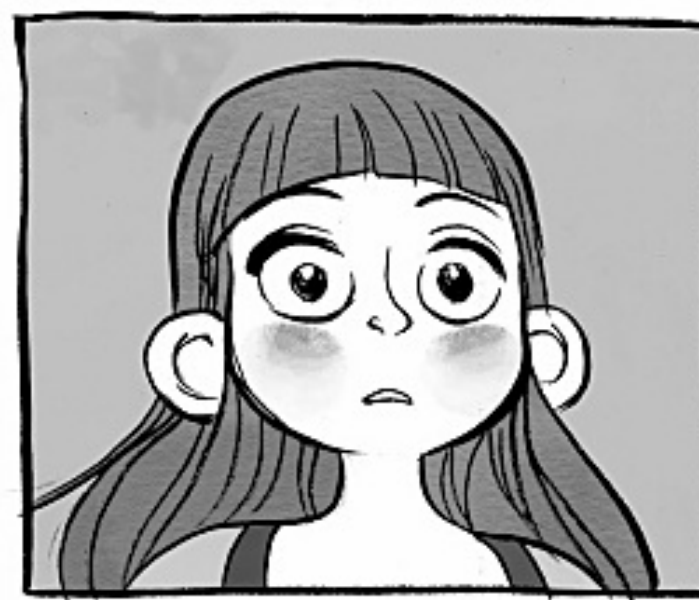
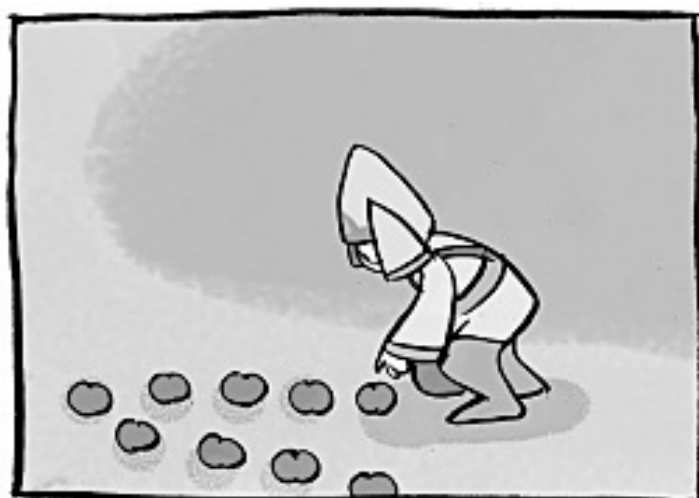

















Raymond?




你買嗎?



I knew
it.




Lucy!








We were exploiting the game too!



Oh screw you!
That was totally different and you know it.




Nothing I've done has EVER been about money.



Yeah, because it's been all about you! The "Sergeant" thing?

The giant showy fortress? The only reason gold farming bothers you is because you can't stand other people getting ahead!



You're a bully!







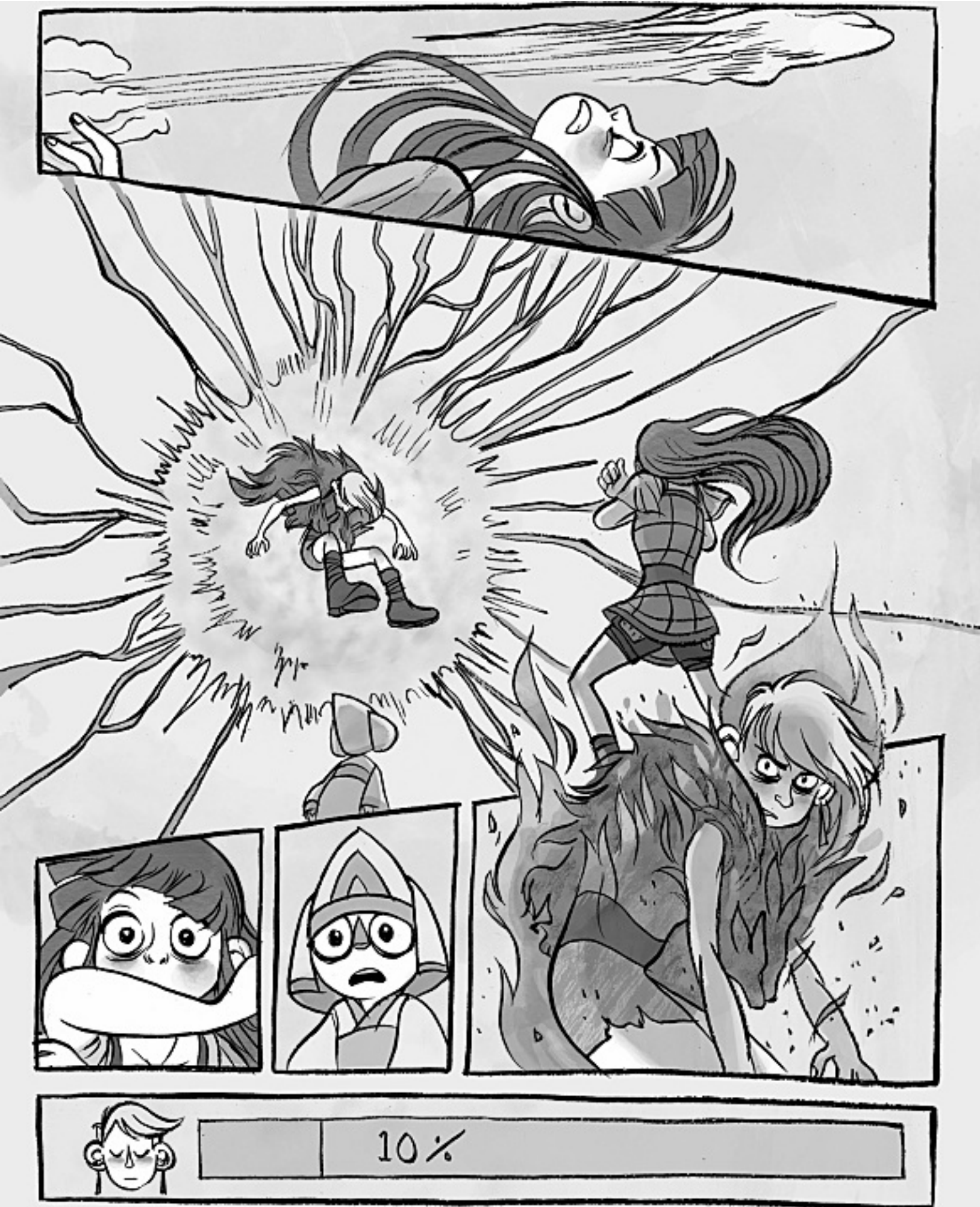


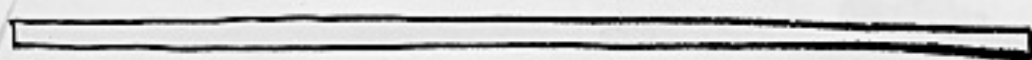


ATTACKS
▫ BLACK ARROW
▫ FIREBALL
▫ CALL PET
▫ BEAR TRAP
▫ CAMOUFLAGE

ATTACKS
▫ BLOODBATH
▫ SMASH
▫ RAGE THROW
▫ SHIELD
▫ TAUNT







0%





(Raymond!)

(Why won't
you listen
to me!)

(So it's you?
You're the
American he was
talking about?)



(Raymond
doesn't
work here
anymore.)

(The boss
caught him
conspiring to
take down
the company
and fired him
immediately. It
was your idea,
wasn't it?)

1...



(Nice job,
American. You
don't know
anything about
us.

Next time
stick to your
own game.)







From: LIZA <liza@lizanator.com>
To: Anda

Anda,

I heard about your incident with Lucy yesterday. I've also been informed of the two of you dabbling in paid anti gold-farming missions. I wouldn't normally care what you do on your own time except you are representing the Fahr-enheits, and harassing others is against our mission. You are both temporarily suspended until I've decided on a suitable punishment.

Yours,
Liza





Triple scoop
sundae,
please.



Oh honey,
you're on a
diet, that's
too much!



Can we
change that to
single scoop?
Thanks.

Oh come
on, we're
celebrating
here!



Just because you
have better health
coverage now doesn't
mean you're allowed
to blow it.



I'm not blowing
anything! Anda,
what would you
like?

I don't
want any.



You don't
want -?

Tsk, see what
you've done,
you've scared our
daughter off.






Anda? Are you feeling better?


What's bothering you?

I'm sorry I yelled at you. Everything's just been so stressful lately.


Is it because I banned your video games?




No. It's because
you're right. The
world is a cruel place.
Especially in video
games.



Oh, my
sweetheart
...



Come on.
Come watch TV
with me.



There's still
some dinner
left over.





NEW MESSAGE

onebadclam:
Do you have a minute?



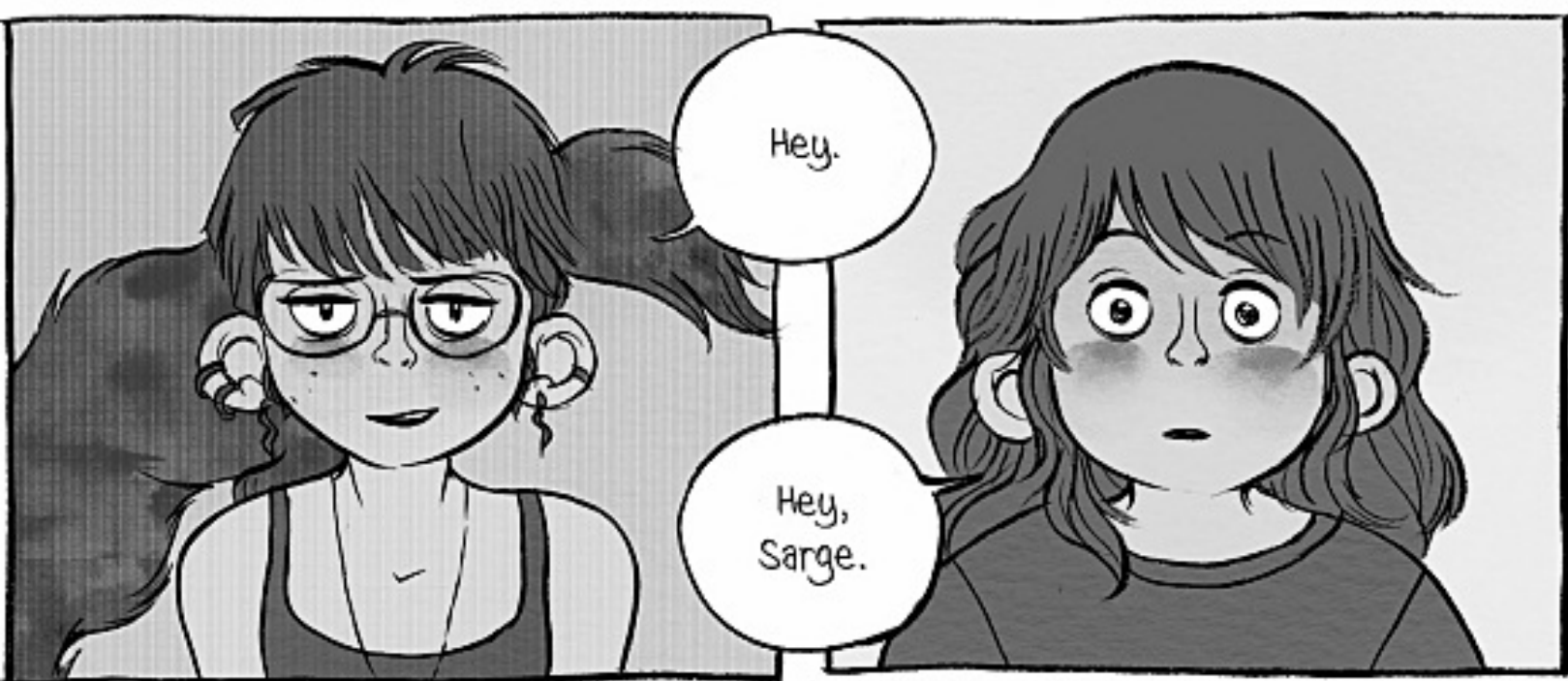
andapanda: Who is this?
onebadclam: Lucy.
Can I talk to you
over video chat?



andapanda: one sec



ACCEPT





You don't have to call me that now.
I'm suspended, remember?

Sorry.



Why am I even here . . .



You probably think I'm here to yell at you. Well, I'm not. This morning before I got kicked off, this noob found me. He wouldn't leave me alone, kept calling your name, so I assumed he was looking for you.

Raymond?



No. But he
knew him.



He said his name was "Ah Duo" and he wanted to send you something.



He seemed pretty upset.



NYCI
張喚義

公告書

員工張喚義意圖教唆其他員工從事違反公司的規定. 因此, 本公司在此除給於嚴厲的遺責, 並除其職. 永不再雇用.

XX公司



He's being made an example of. Oh, Raymond.



It's all my fault.



He was near Pirate Island farming for dog furs.



I don't know if he's still there but you might be able to catch him if you hurry.



What am I going to say to him?



Raymond's your friend, right? Maybe you both want to clear his name.



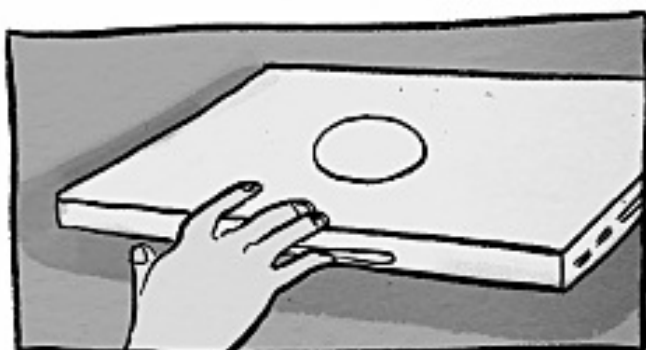
Thank you, Lucy. And Lucy?

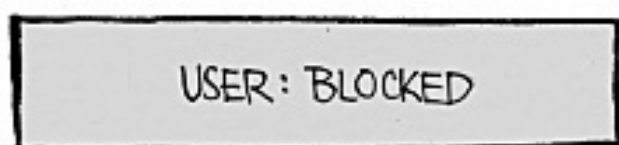


You're not a bully. You're a fighter. Anyone would be lucky to be your recruit.



Get outta here, fangirl.









INBOX

FROM: LUCY

Thought you might need
some reinforcements.
Here's the roster of recruits.

MILA - milaloff@gmail.com

KARINE - karineanne94@gmail.

JANEY - janebrain@yahoo.

SAEWON - saewonkim@gm

PRU - phirsch@gmail.com

BEATRICE - elderbea@gmail.com

CAROLINE - carolee4@gmail.com

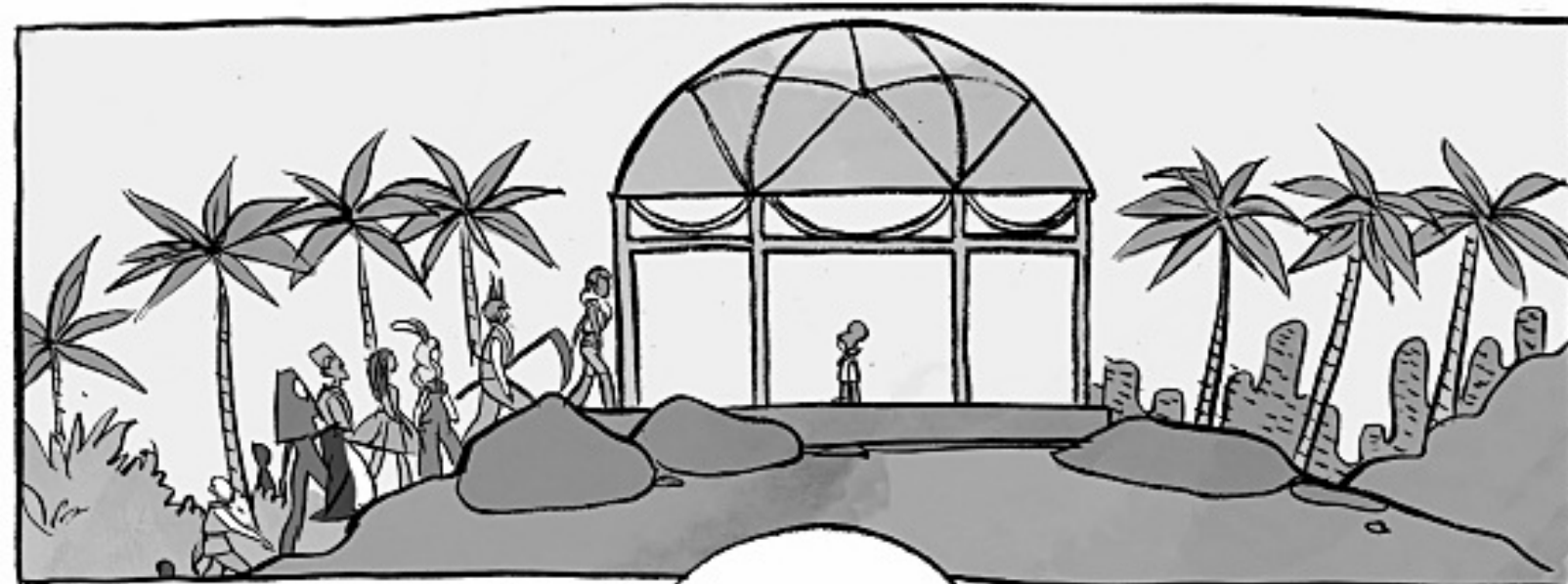
ALINNA - alinnahsu@yahoo.com

LYLA - leeleekitty@gmail.com

STELLA - smella92@yahoo.com

STAR - starrycannon@gmail.com

LYNN - lsrodriguez@comcast.net



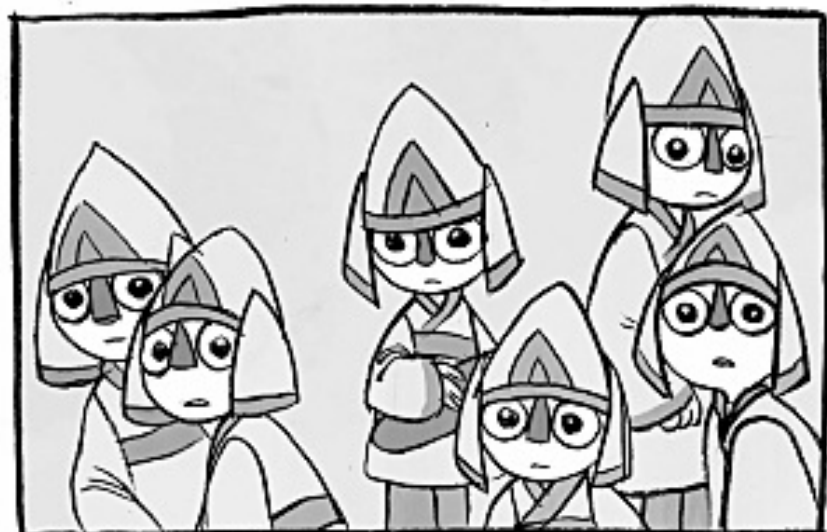
It's
hard to
explain.

It's okay,
we trust
you.

Are we ready
for this,
Fahrenheits?

Um, are
you ready
for this?

Let's go to Pirate Island!



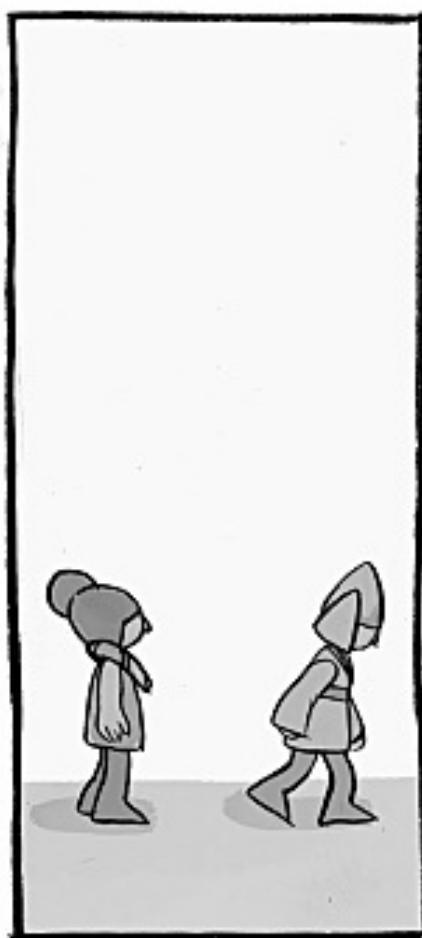
(Are any of
you Ah Duo?)



(I'm Anda.
Raymond's
friend—)

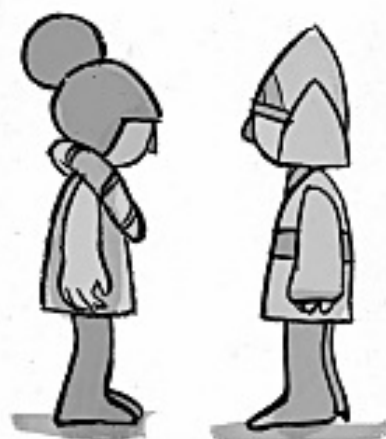
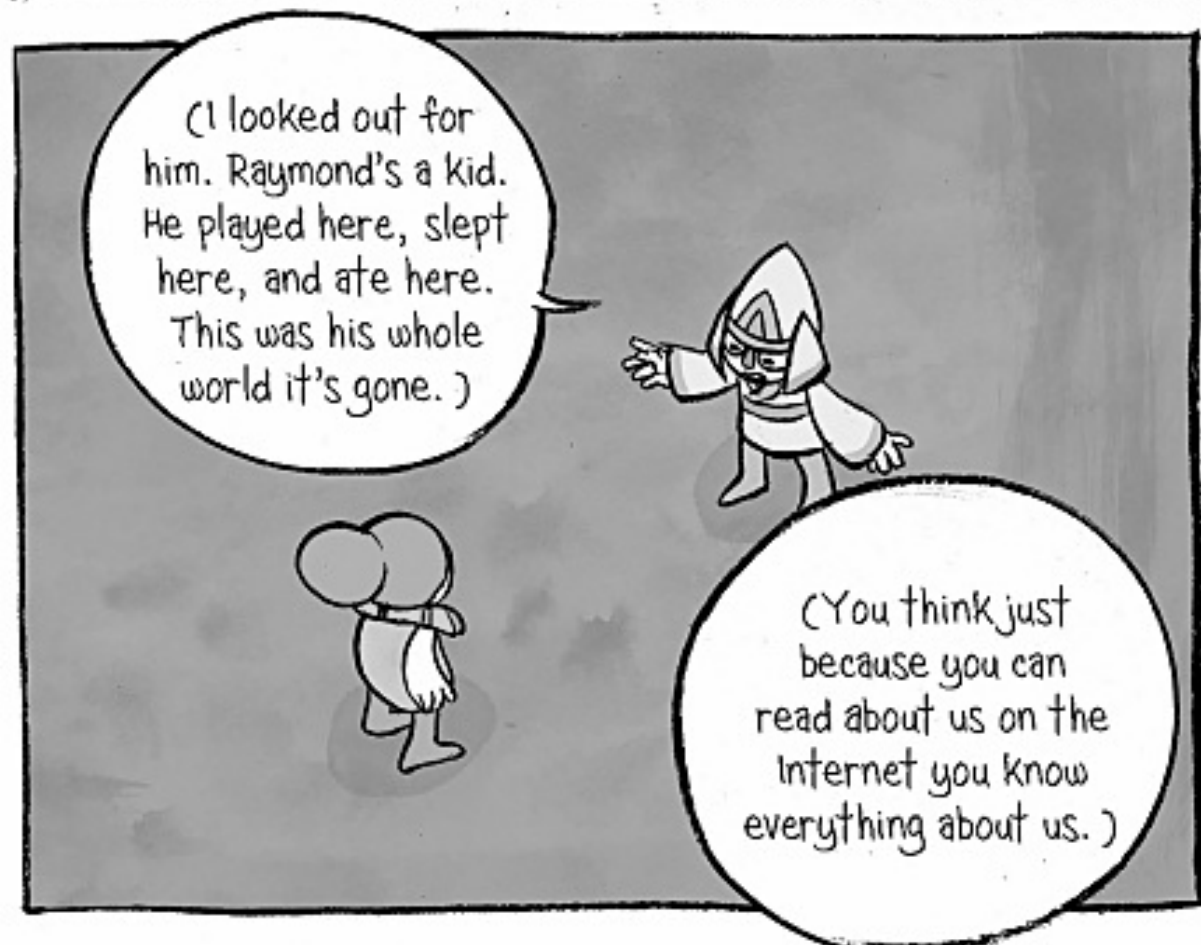
(I know who
you are.)


(Please
leave us
alone.)




(Wait, hear
me out.
Please!)









(I know, you
are absolutely
right.)



(I don't know
what it's like
to live in
China...)



(and I don't
know what it's
like to be a gold
farmer.)



(But I do know
what it's like to
be a kid who loves
video games.)

(If you would
give me a chance,
I will do anything
to help you get
him back.)



(If you really care about him, you will help me spread his message.)



(It's a call to action. I can't let my coworkers know it's from me.)

我是NYCI的员工。
我是负责玩 Coarsegold 的。
我愿意继续玩下去。
但是我的身体状
不允许我这么作，然而，
让我去作治疗几乎是不可能的。
因为NYCI认为治病是我个人的事。
但是NYCI不知道，不照顾
员工对NYCI其实是有害的。
一旦有不幸的事情 发生在所
有员工身上时，难道所有员工
也得自己负责吗？
如今，会发生在我身上的问题，
难道不会发生在你身上吗？
因此，请加入这抗争的行列。
我一个的抗争是无效的，
但集众人的力量 是可以成事的。

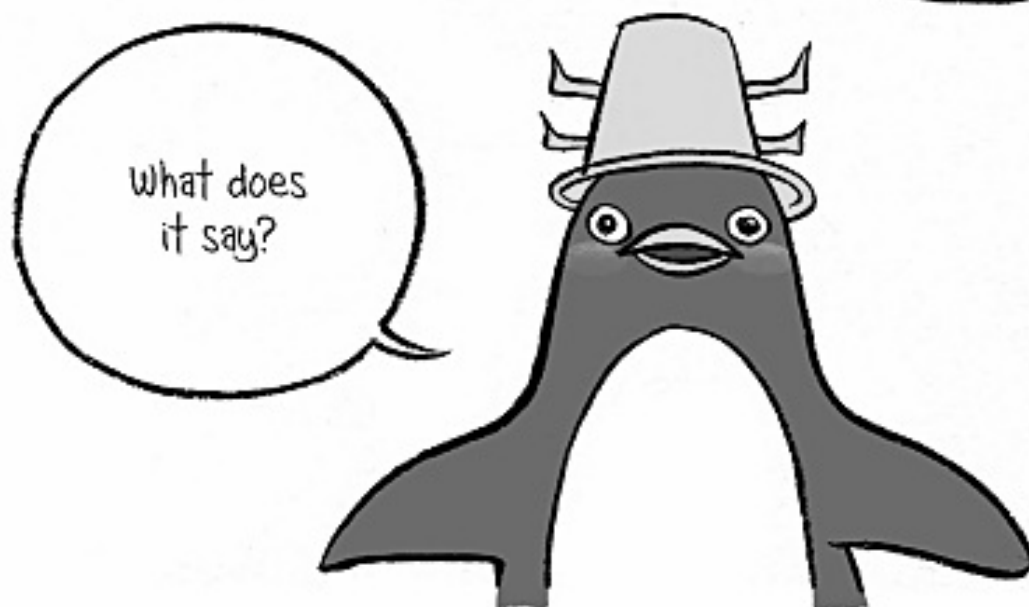
-张唤义

(Things are already tense because of what happened to Raymond.)



(If you tell me where your coworkers are, I can have the Fahrenheits send this to them.)



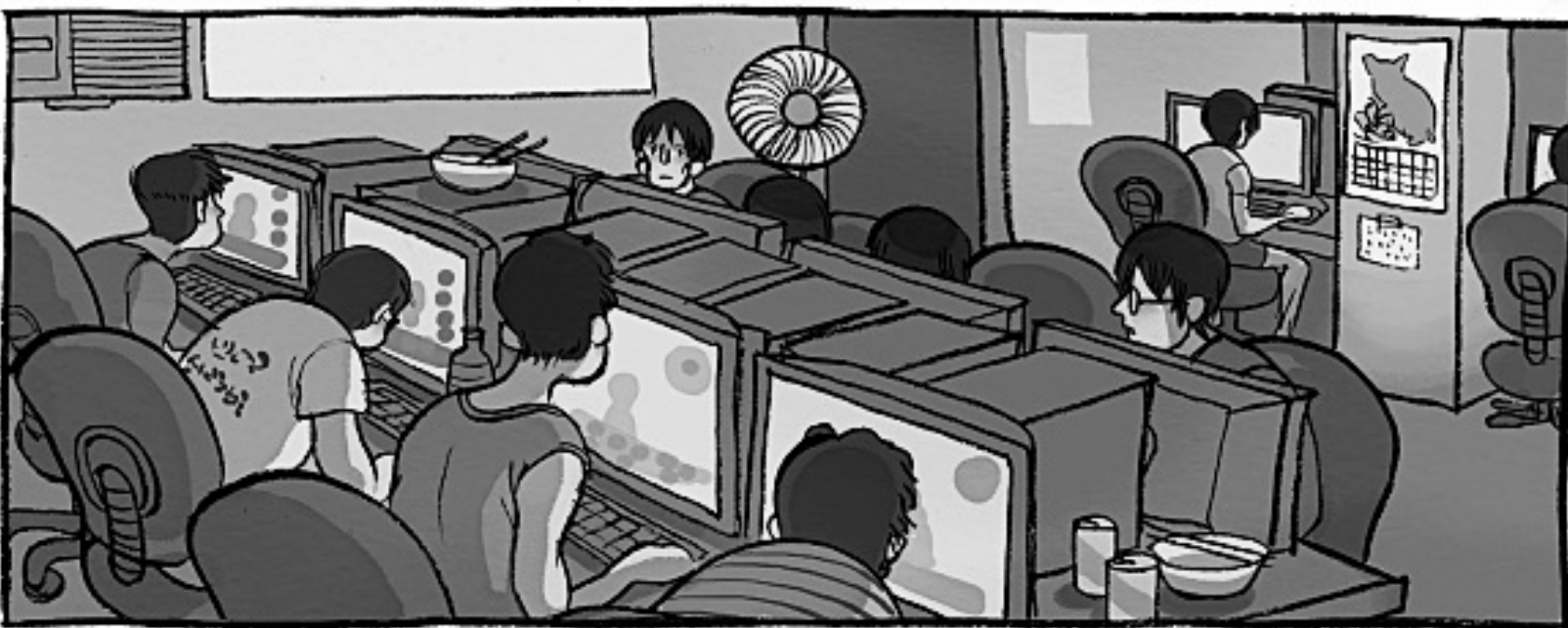


I am an employee of NYCI. I am a Coarsegold player. I want to be here. My health prevents me from doing my job but the odds are against me getting treatment.

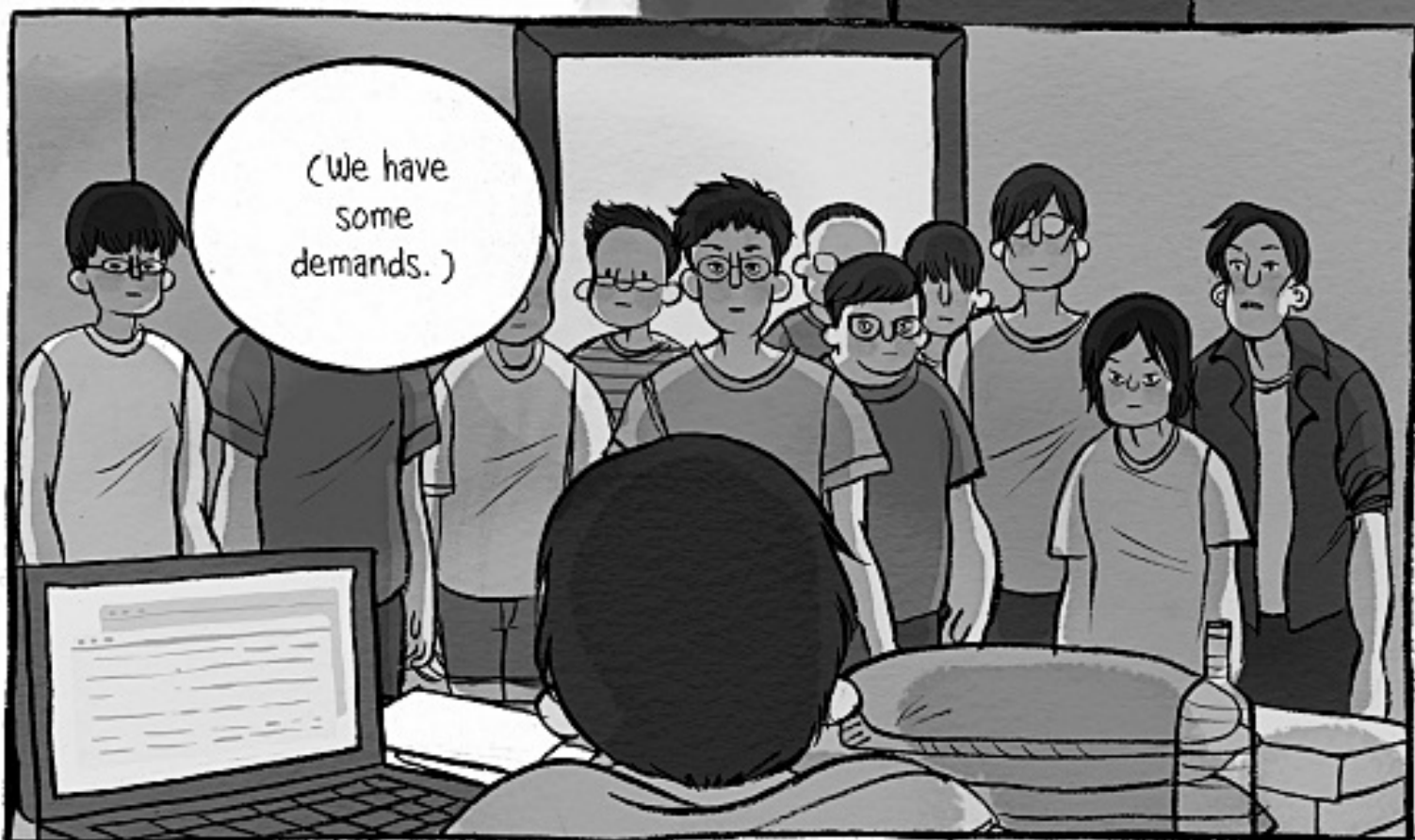
NYCI will say I am responsible for my own troubles, but they are only hurting themselves by not taking care of their people.

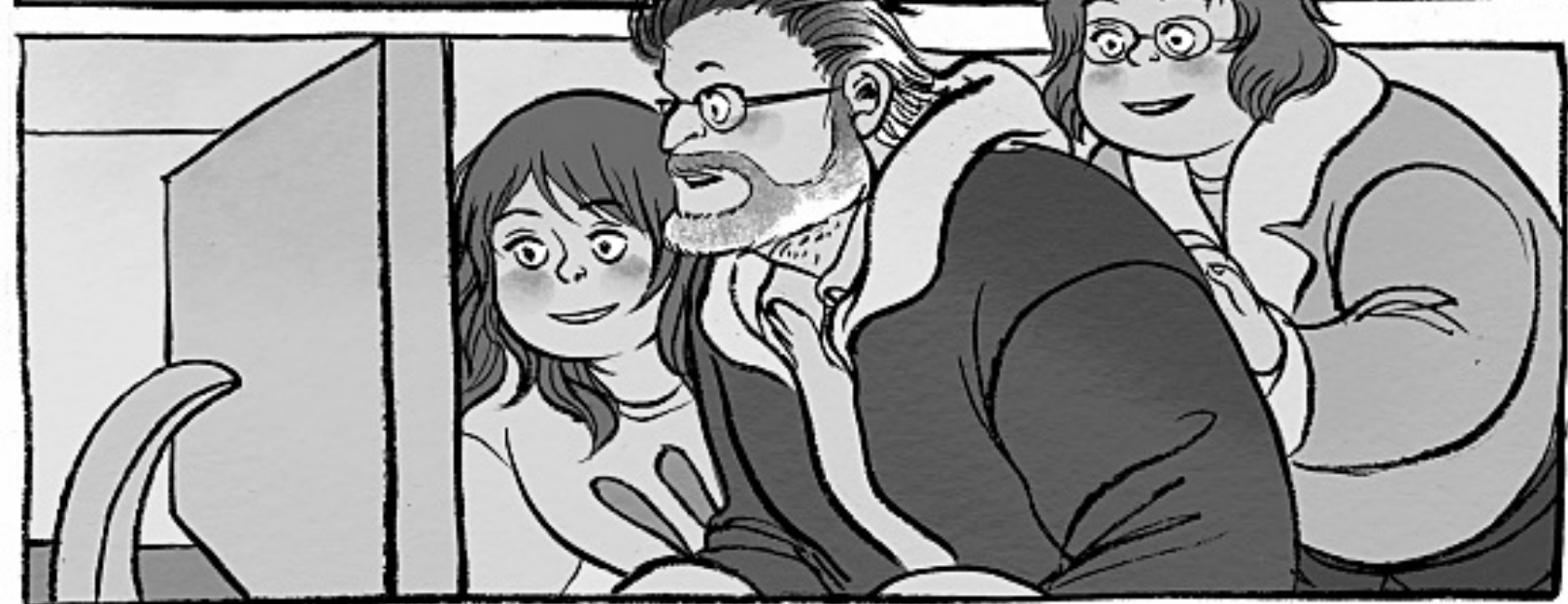


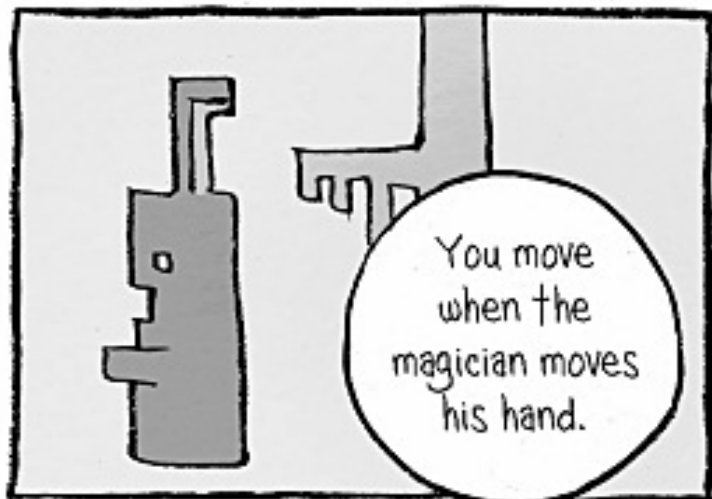
What if misfortune were to befall us all? If it happened to me, couldn't it happen to any of us? Please join me in my fight.









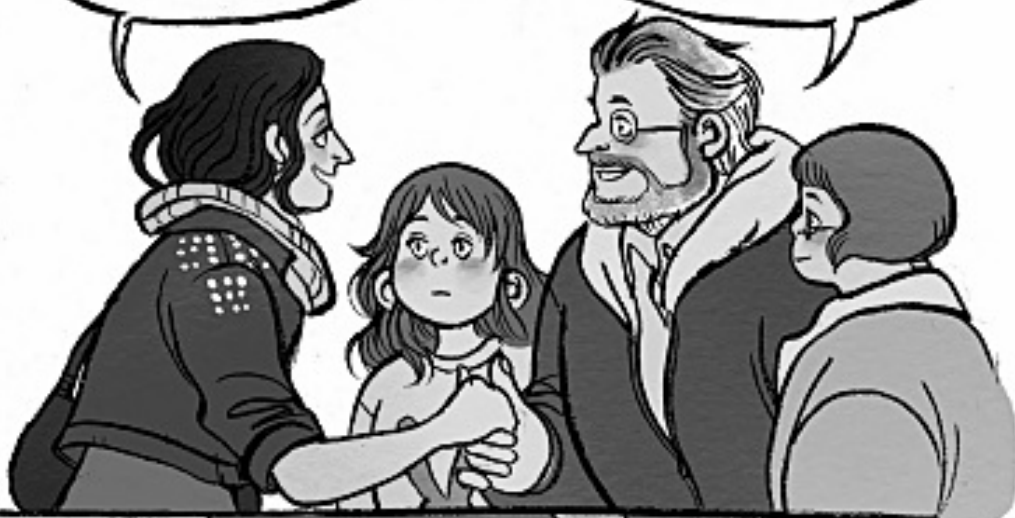




Hello, Anda!
Great to see
you again.

You must be Anda's
parents. I'm Liza, I
organize the guild your
daughter plays in.

Oh! Nice to meet
you, Liza. Can't say I
know a lot about what
you do, but it's nice to
know there's an adult
out there.



Yes. I'm sure you
already know this
but your daughter is
an amazingly mature
young woman.



I had suspended
her recently due
to suspected
bullying...



But turns out
she was doing the
opposite. She was
standing up for
bullied players.



It took a lot
of courage.





Anyway,
I would like
to formally reinvite
Anda back into the
guild, if she'd like.
Officially as a member
this time. She'd be
great for the new
recruits we have.

Actually,
my
parents...

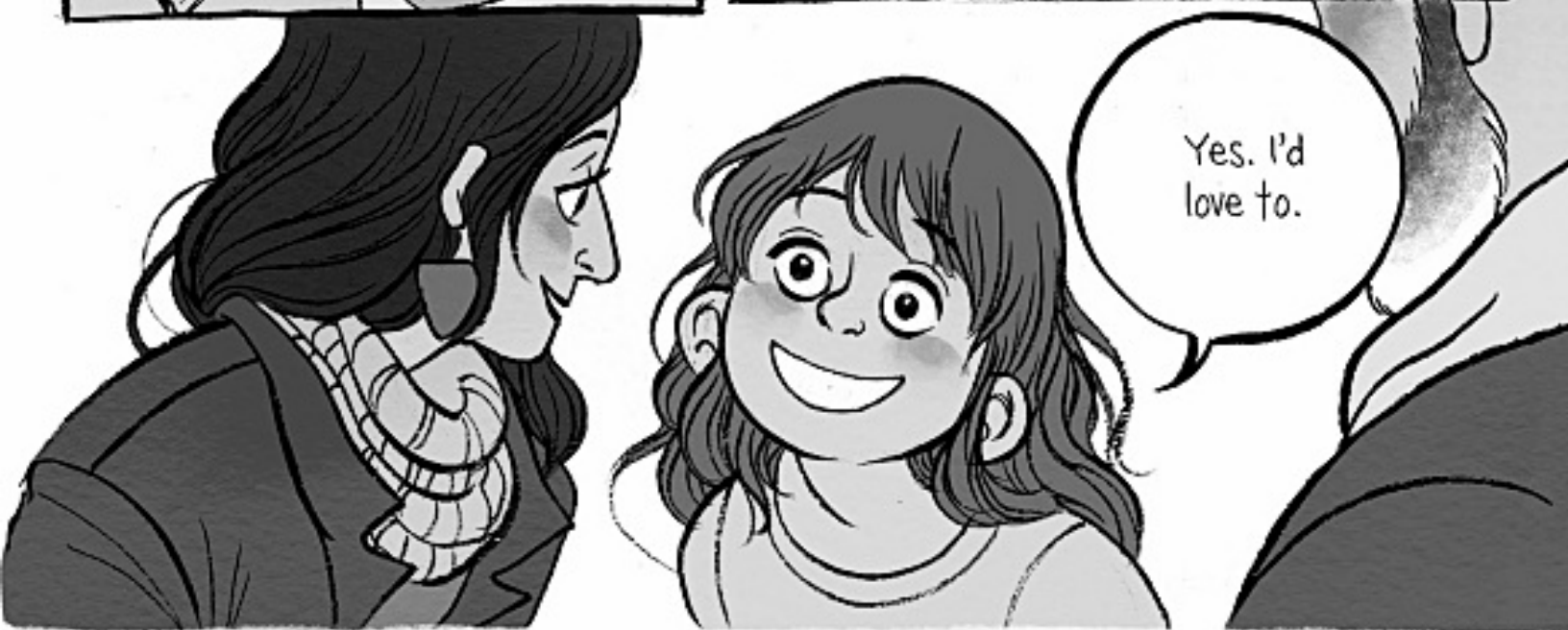
She would
love to.



Mom?



I think it's
good she's
taking on new
responsibilities. I
trust her.



Yes. I'd
love to.



Oh hey,
Steph!

Are you still
trying to put
together a
board game
club?

Yeah.

I'd love to
help out.

Really?
You would?


Yeah. And
actually, you
should join us for
D&D sometime.

I'll talk to the
guys. It'll be
like research.



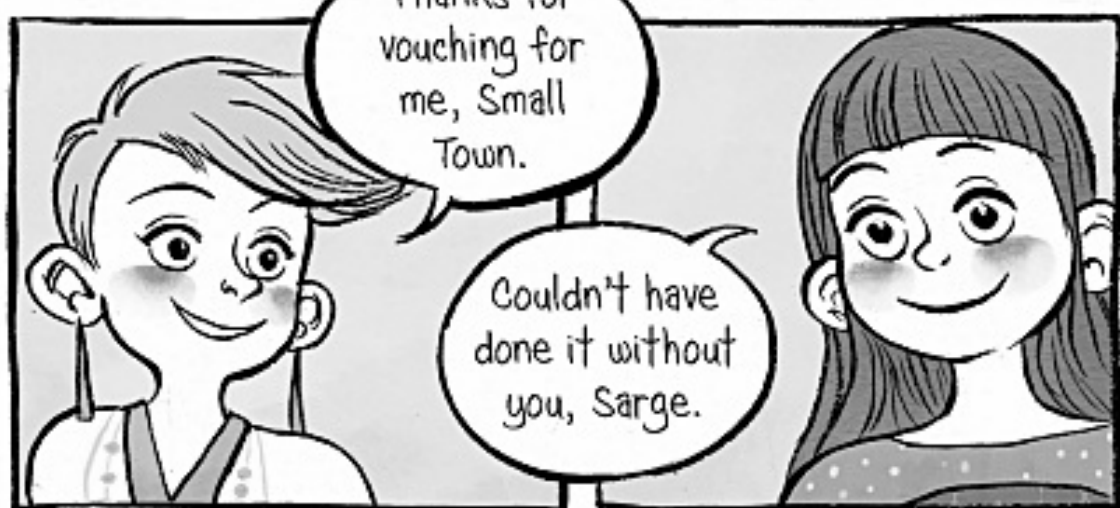
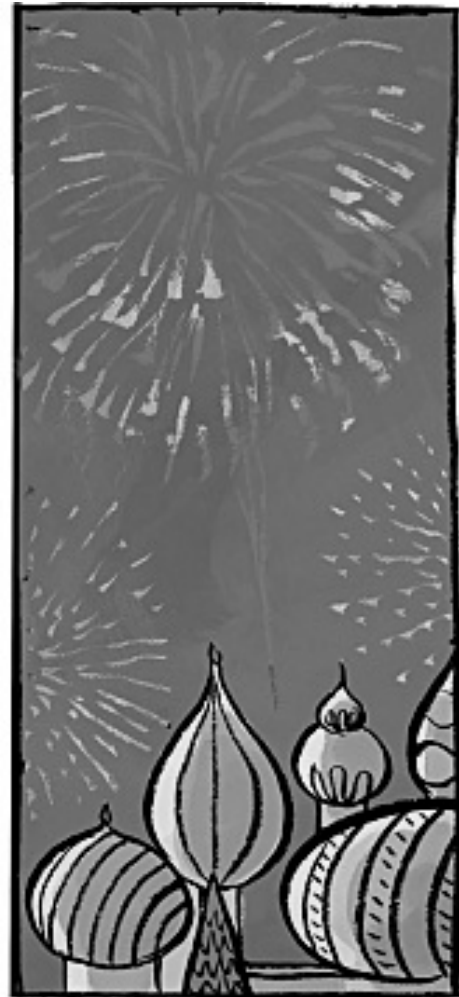


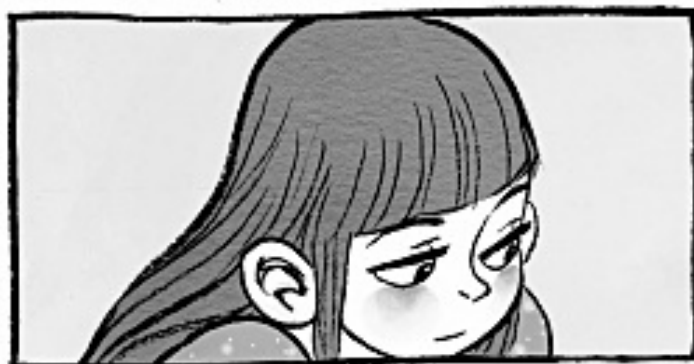
Today you join
ranks with some of
the finest players
in Coarsegold!




You will play honorably,
you will play fiercely,
and above all, you
will show others
what it takes to be
extraordinary.











Raymond?!?
You're still
here! How did
you—

Come here,

follow me.

(Ah Duo told
me things are
better now at
NYCI.

After I was let go
I met a guy at an
Internet cafe back
home who
recommended me for
a gold farming job.)





(Check it out though, at this place we get to build up avatars so we can farm in the upper levels. We actually go on raids together!)

Wow.

(I'm planning again. Now that I'm spending more work time at play I'm thinking I can spend more of my own time studying. Learn more English. Keep moving up in the world.)

So I'm not gonna see you around much then.

I'm going to miss you. But good luck.

(Not as much, yeah.)

Thanks.

(You know, I'm actually not working right now? It's Chinese New Year, which means everyone is on vacation for two weeks.)

Yeah?

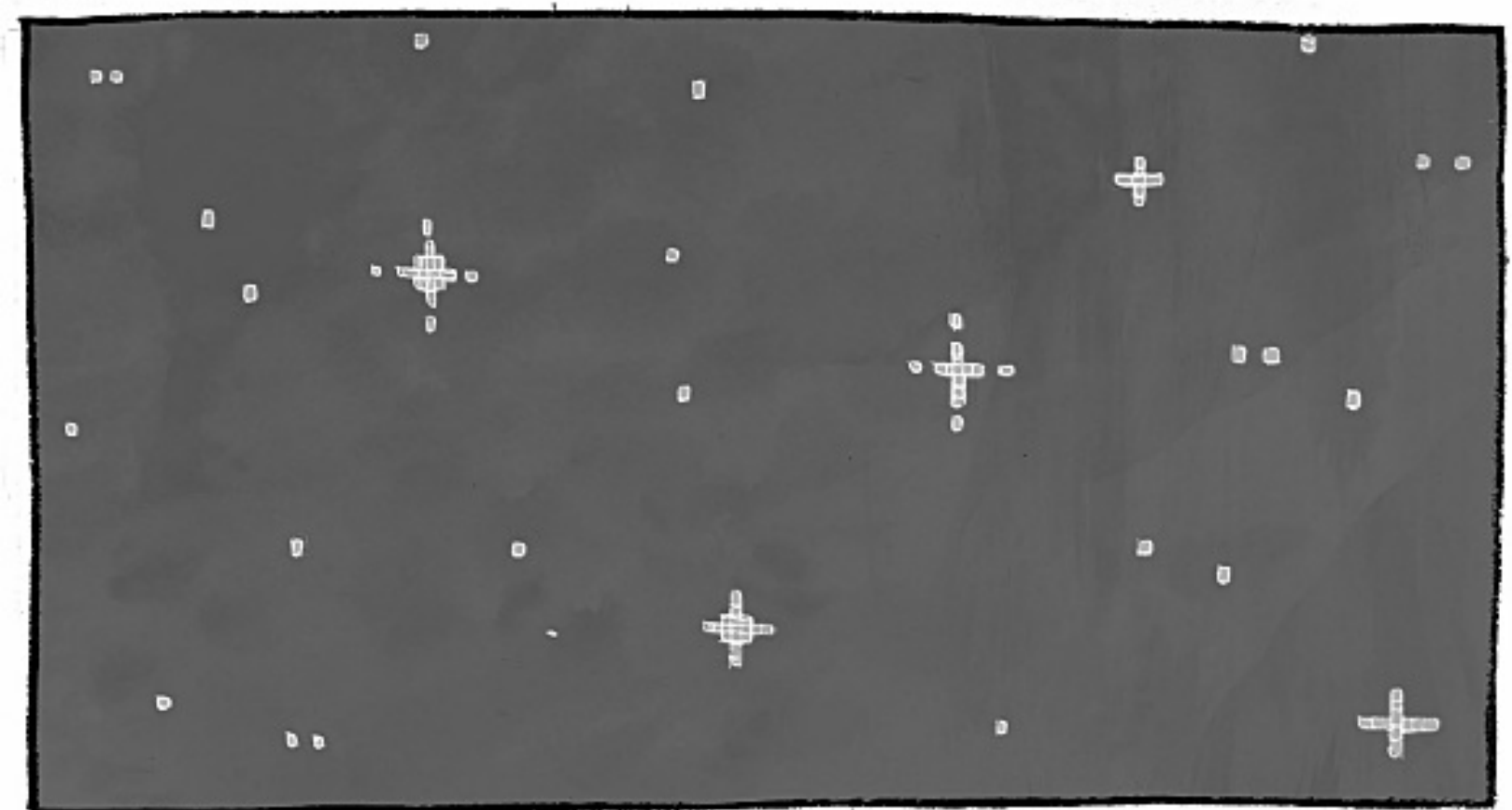


Hey, Andaaaaa!
Let's blow
this thing!

Quit flirting
and come raid
with us!



Let me
introduce you
to my friends.





SLEEP



EXIT



First Second

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Art and adaptation copyright © 2014 by Jen Wang

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EMPIRE

BlurPixel

**NOT A
HIPSTER!**