

Bad MACHINERY



THE CASE OF THE GOOD BOY

By John Allison



Bad Machinery™

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AN ONI PRESS PUBLICATION



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THE CASE OF THE GOOD BOY

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First Edition: February 2014

20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CHARLOTTE



JACK



SHAUNA



LINTON



MILDRED

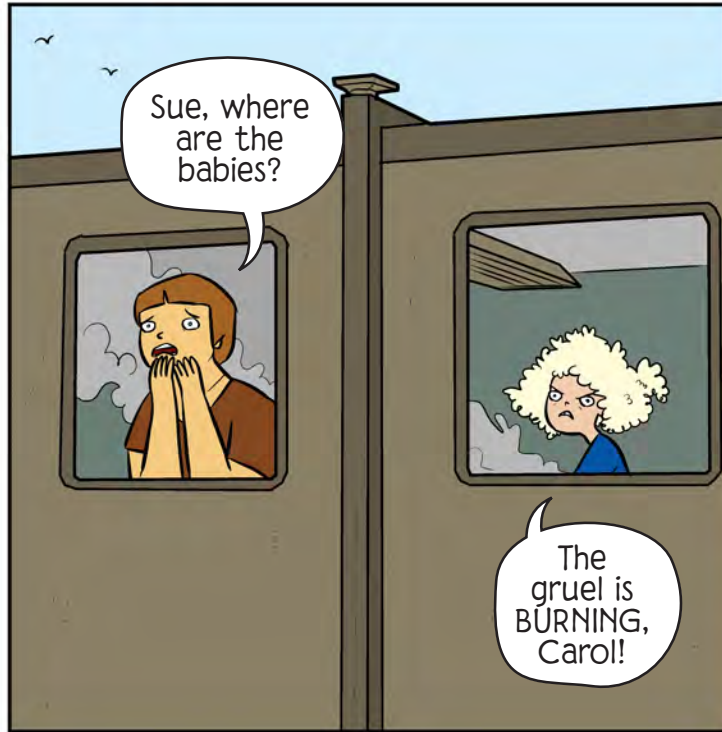
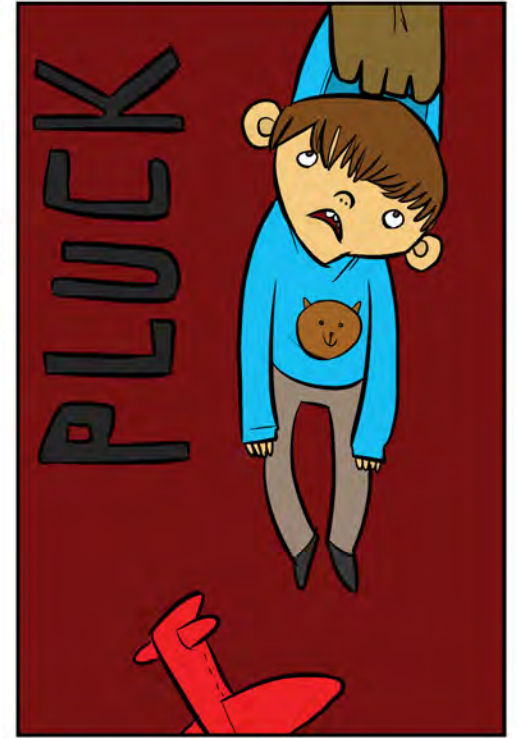


SONNY











CHARLOTTE GROTE! You're making the place look untidy.



What NO mum, I am being educational.



Take the dog out for a walk. He's forgotten what the sun looks like.



Pepper, see, that orange circle is the sun.

It's a big ball of gas what will one day turn red and destroy us all.

Probably out of anger that sunbeds have stolen all its tanning business.





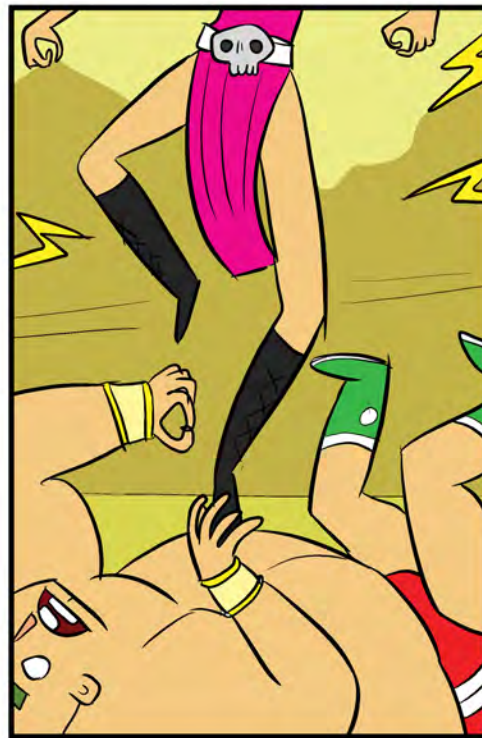
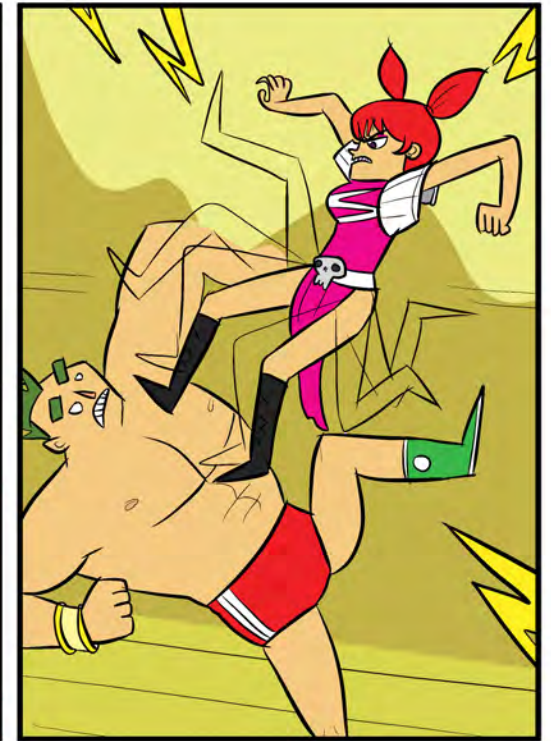
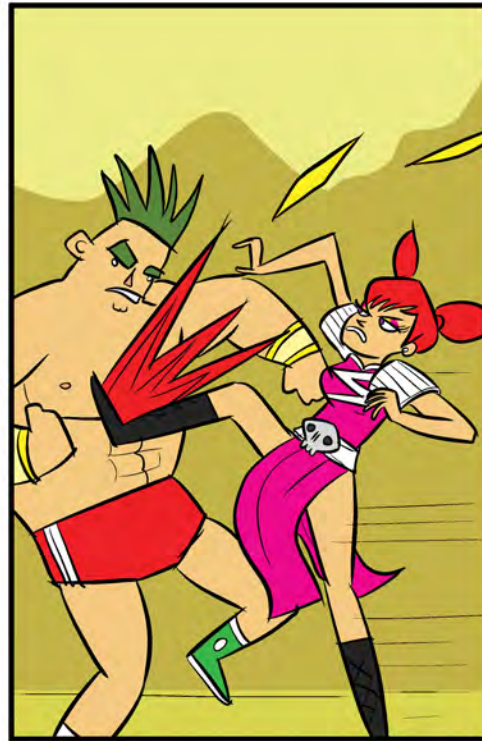
FIGHT!

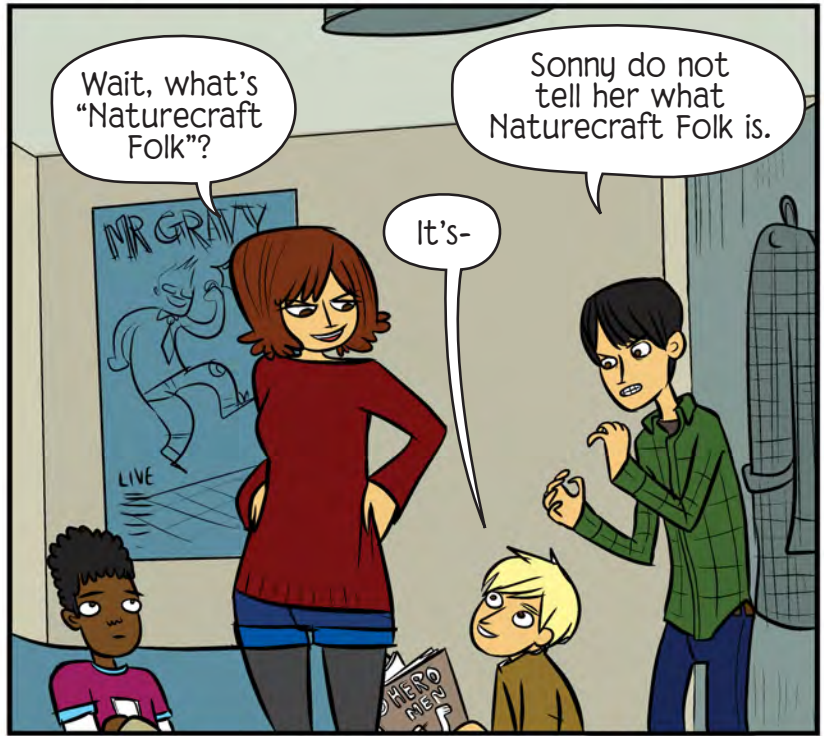
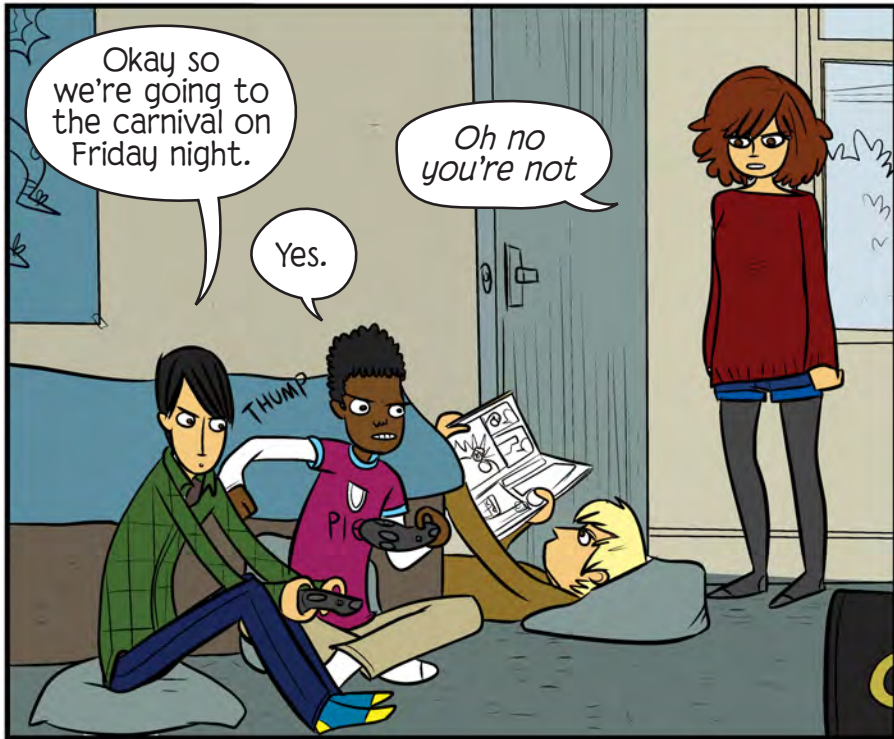


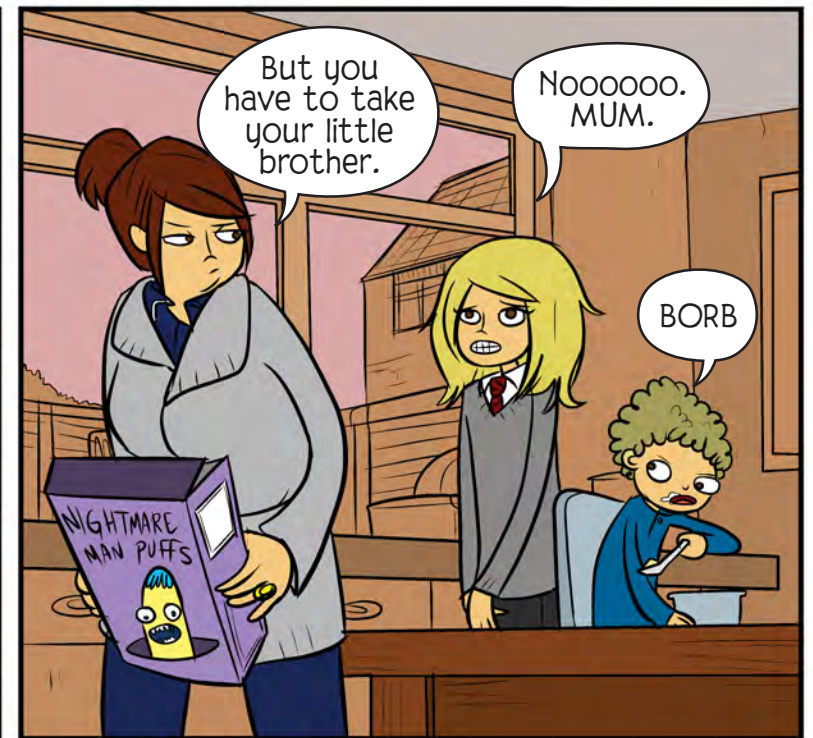
ARCH-DUKE
GRR-DINAND

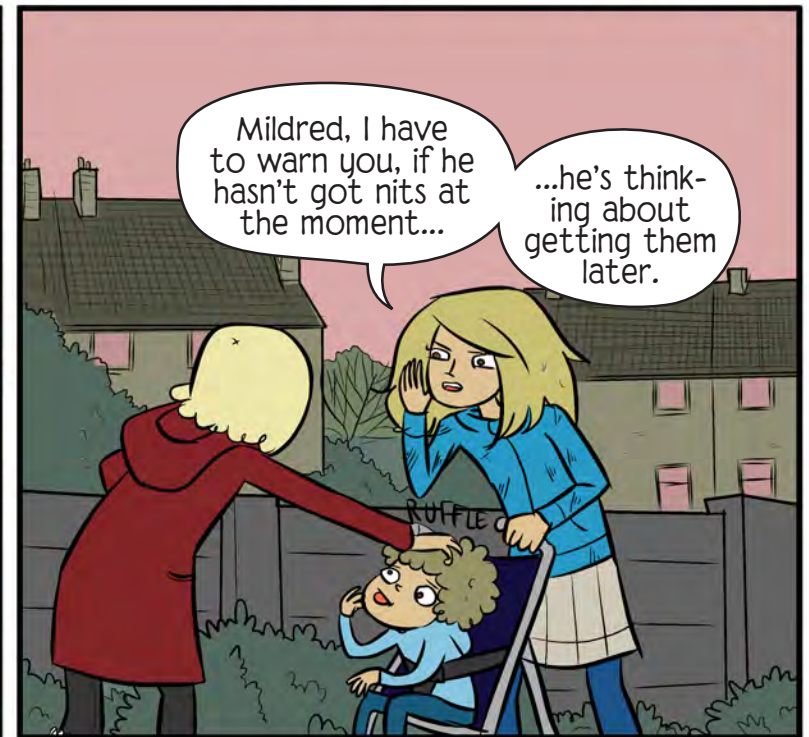
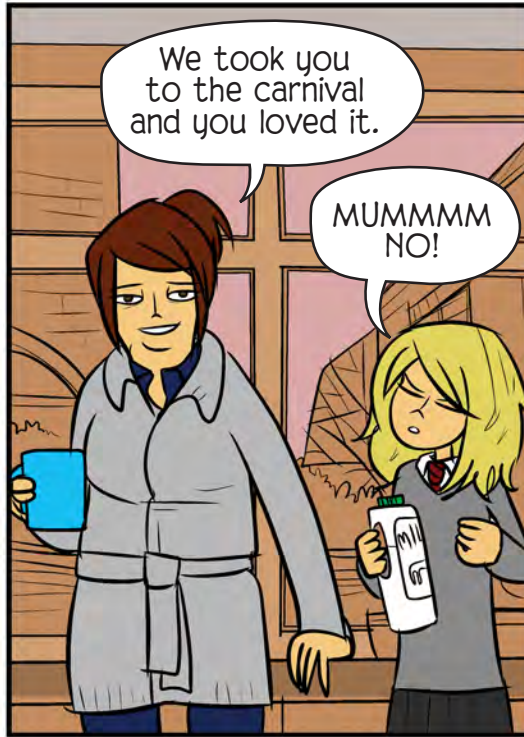
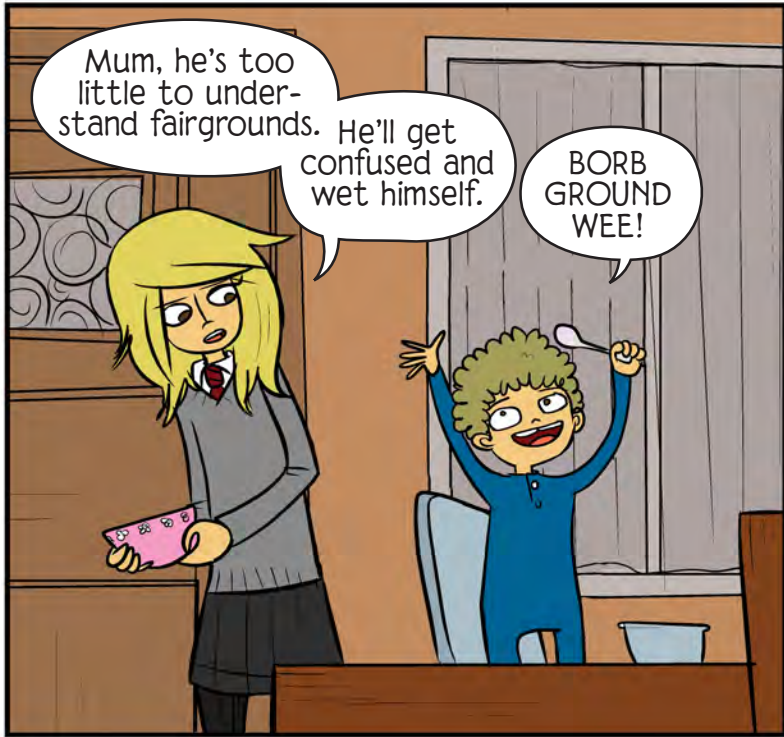


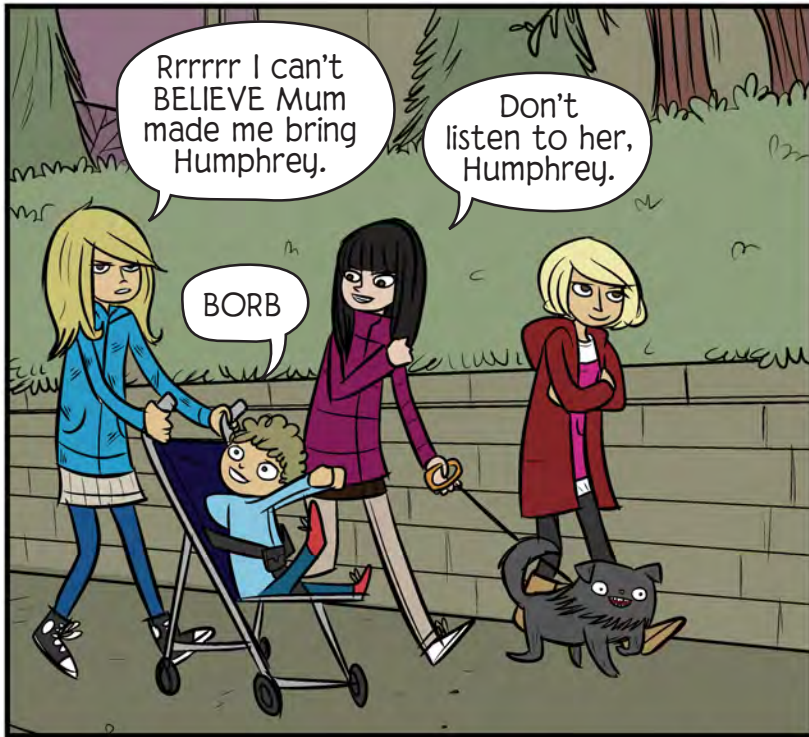
LADY
PROBLEMS

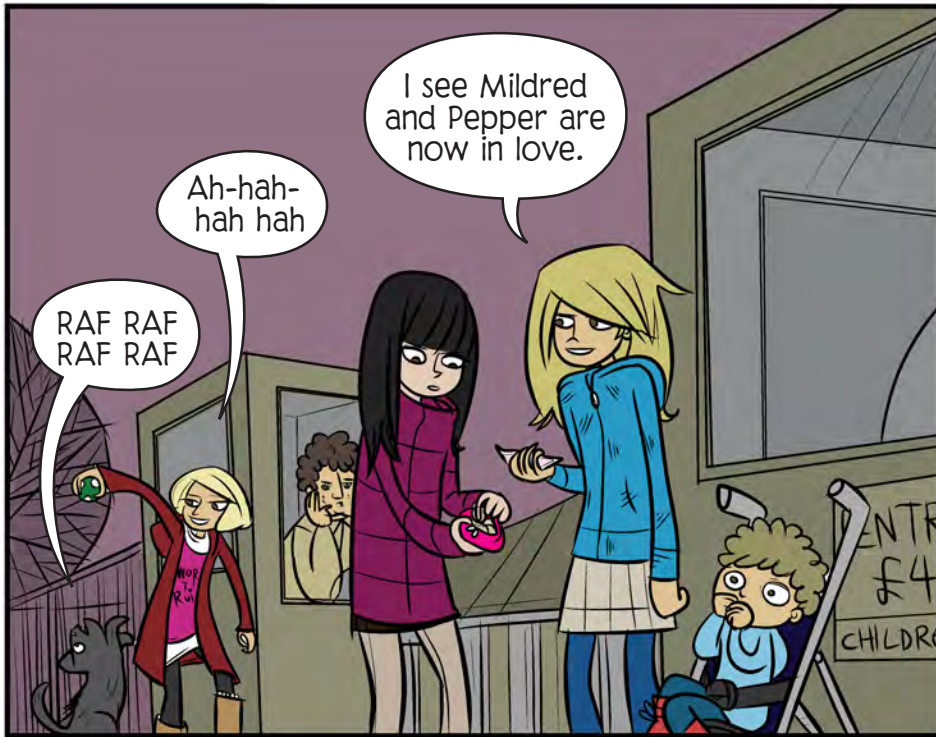












RAF RAF
RAF RAF

Ah-hah-
hah hah

I see Mildred
and Pepper are
now in love.



It is natural.
Pepper is the
best dog.

He is a
mongrel,
that is the
best breed.



Lottie a mon-
grel isn't a breed.
That's when it's not
any sort of dog.

He's obvi-
ously sort of a
dog. He's not
a parrot.



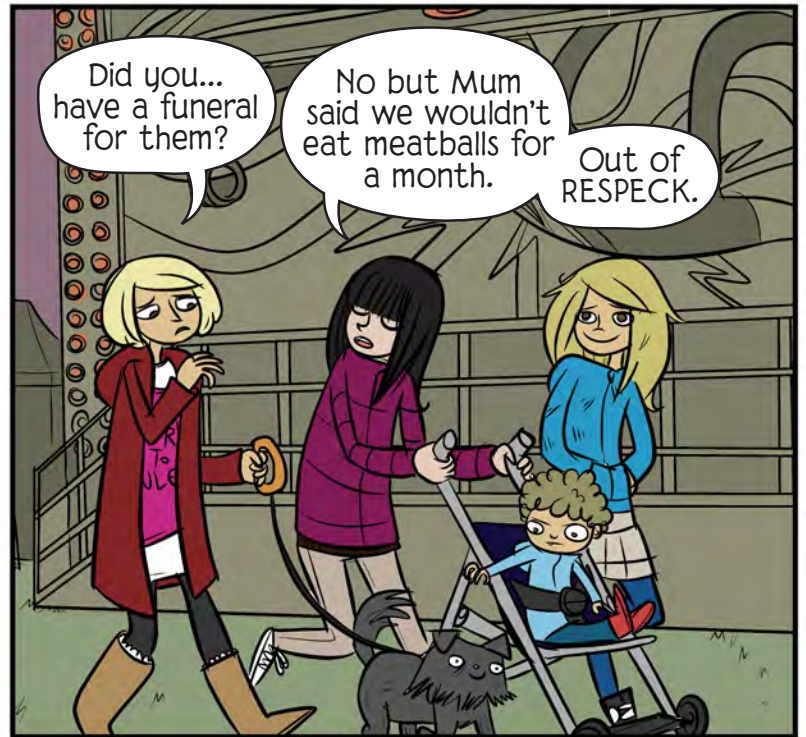
Let's find
Pepper a wife so he
can have puppies!

Puppies
for me!



Sorry Mildred
but Pepper has
been "sorted out".

His test
icles are in
heaven.

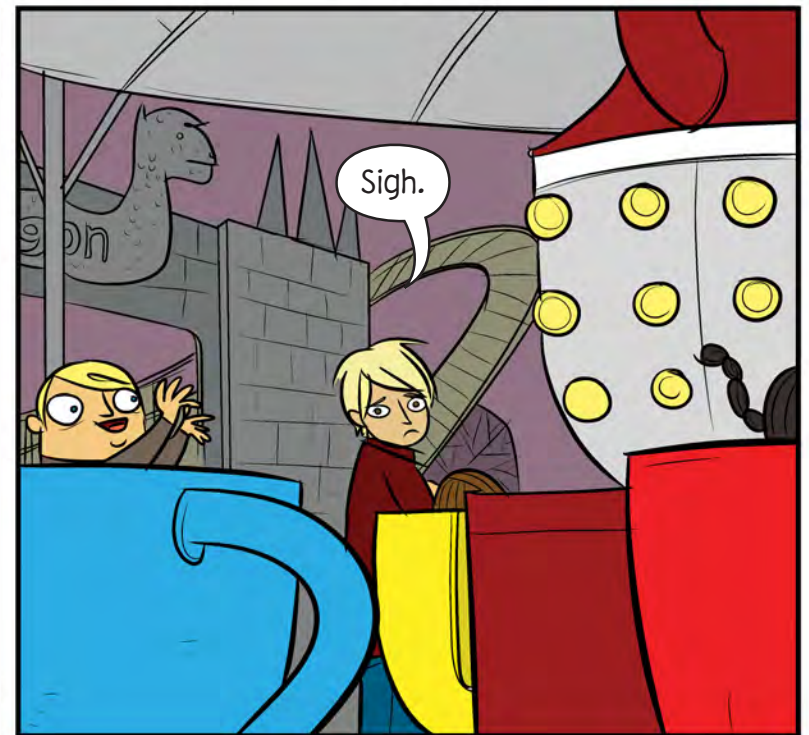
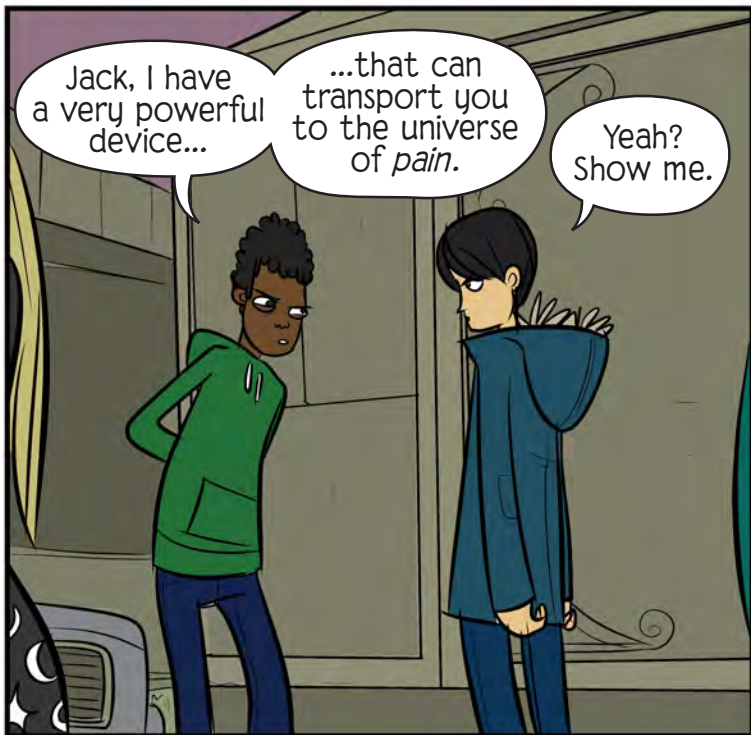


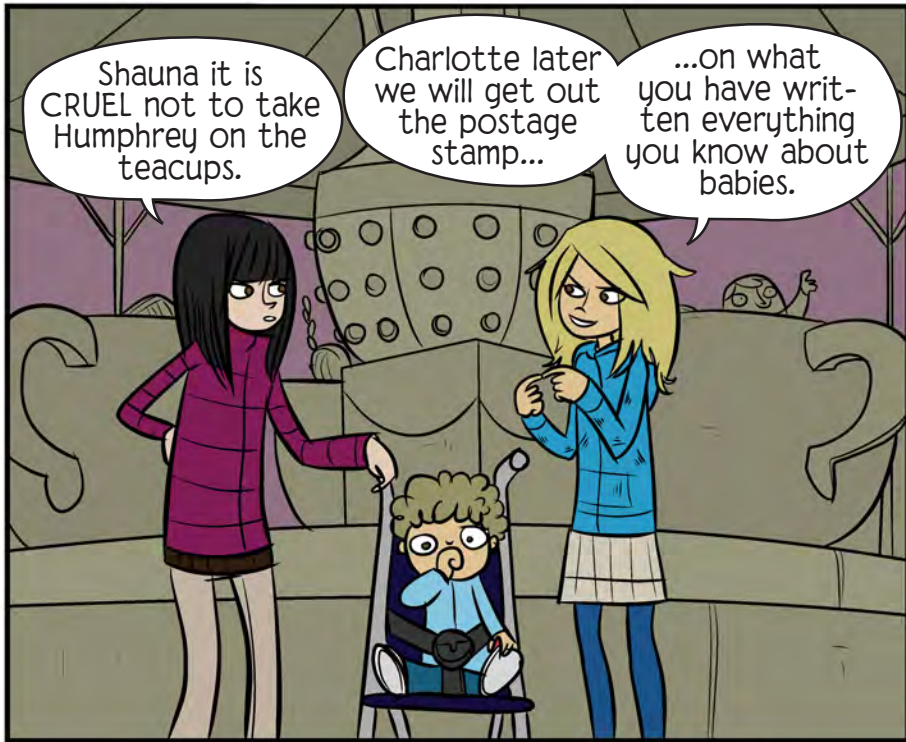
Did you...
have a funeral
for them?

No but Mum
said we wouldn't
eat meatballs for
a month.

Out of
RESPECK.







Shauna it is CRUEL not to take Humphrey on the teacups.

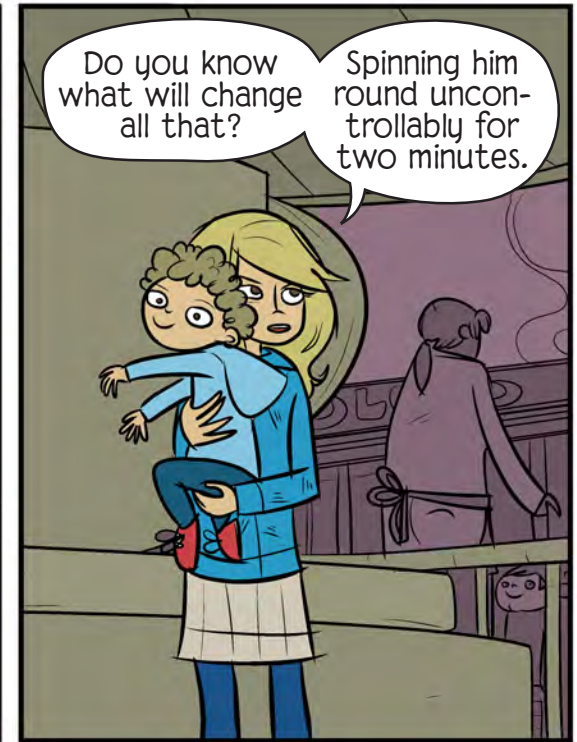
Charlotte later we will get out the postage stamp...

...on what you have written everything you know about babies.



HARSH.

Look at him. He seems quiet, he is smiling a bit.



Do you know what will change all that?

Spinning him round uncontrollably for two minutes.



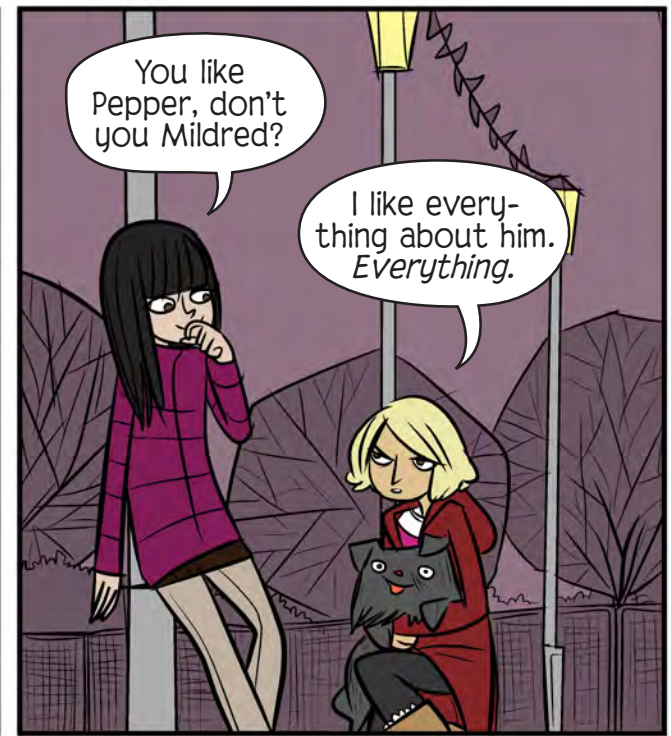
But it's slow... fun! Baby fun!

No. He only has a basic sort of mind. Like a pigeon's mind.



To him the teacup ride would be like a combination nuclear attack an' bad hair day.

He wouldn't know what end to start leakin' out of first.

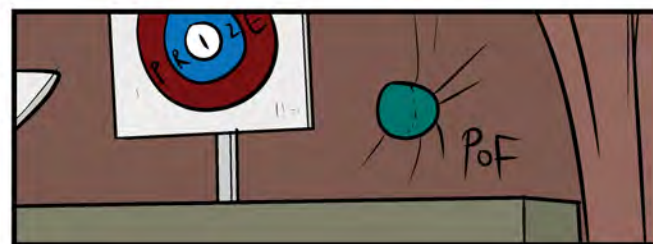
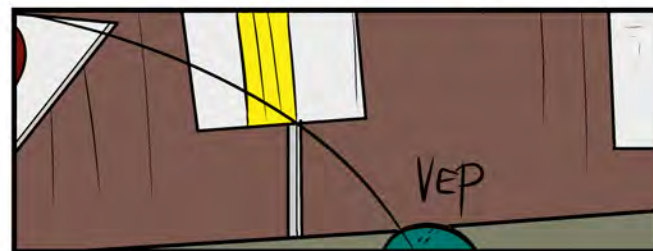


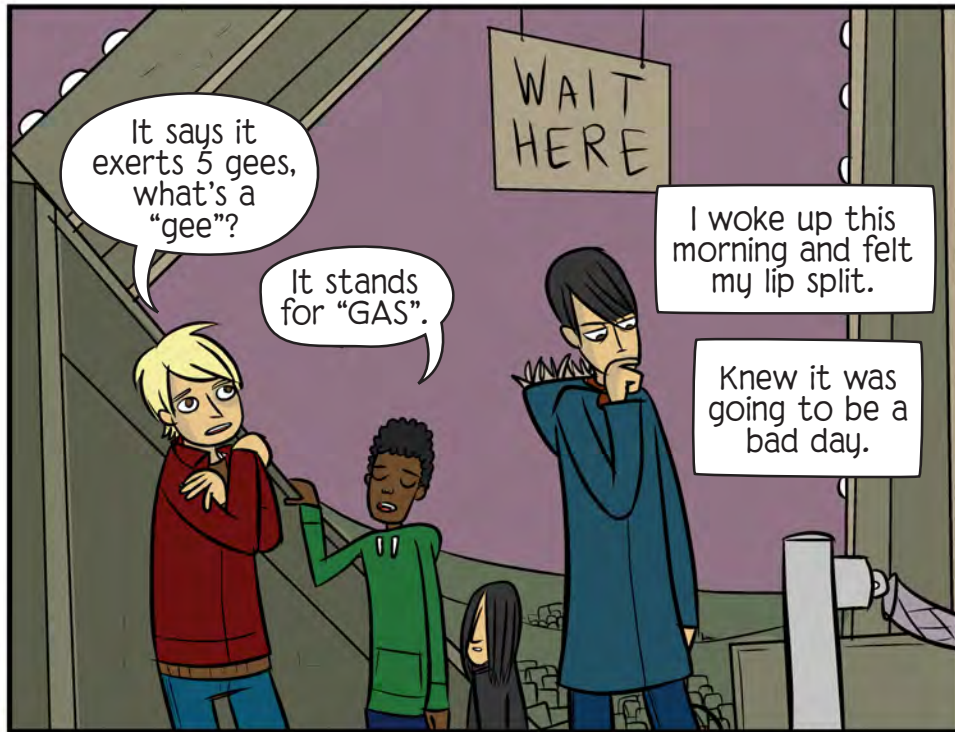
You like Pepper, don't you Mildred?

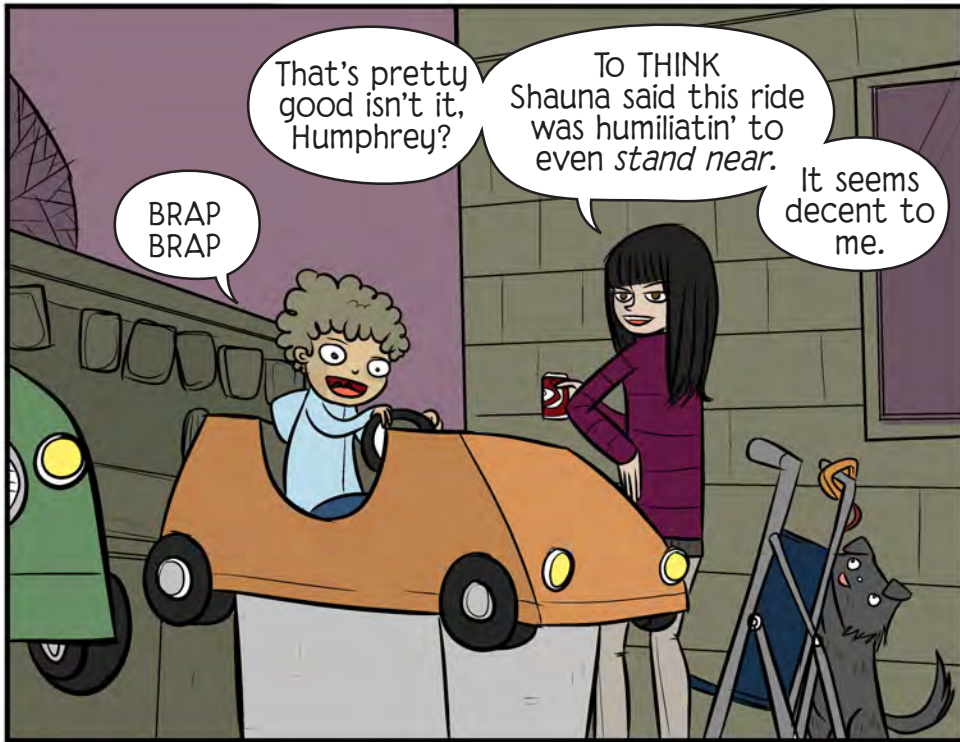
I like everything about him. Everything.

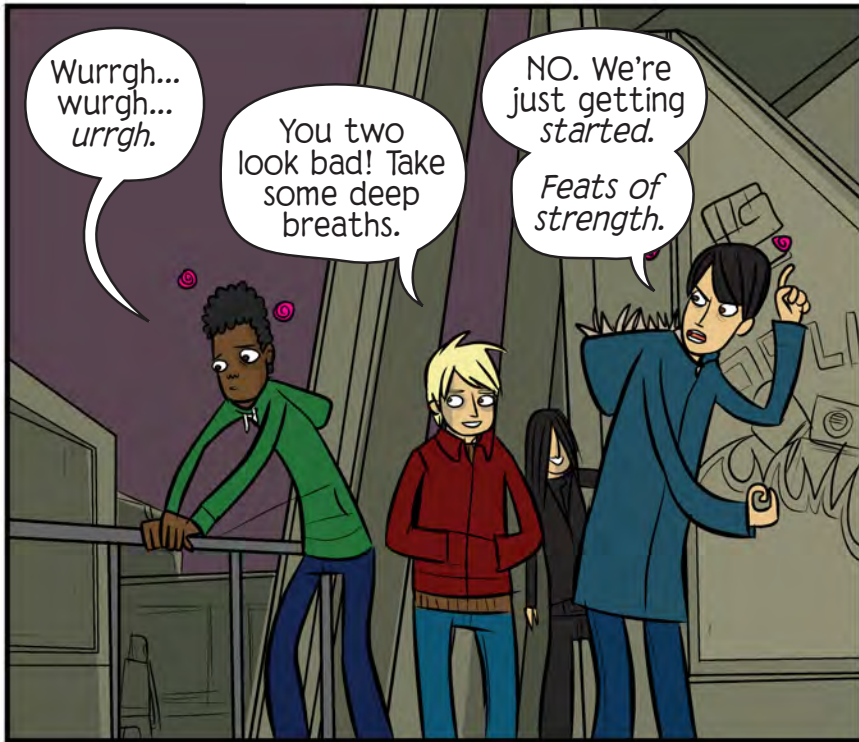














Boys, disgusting boys.
I worked it out, Shauna, there is a reason Jack Finch is so quiet.



If he walks and talks at once, he just falls over.
Well um I think that Jack-



OH HUMPHREY AARGH



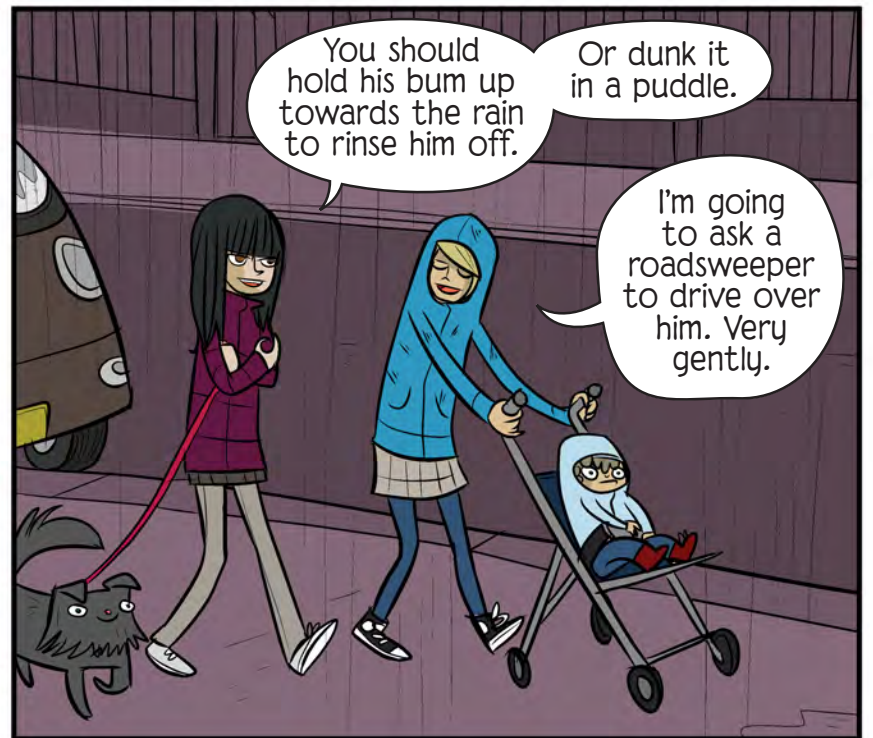
I tole you, boys are disgusting.
And now it's raining.



He's wet inside and he's wet outside.
Come on, my brother stinks, Mildred's skint and it's chucking it down.



I'm going to stay and have one more go at the magic pencil. Bye Pepper.



You should hold his bum up towards the rain to rinse him off.
Or dunk it in a puddle.
I'm going to ask a road sweeper to drive over him. Very gently.





Jack Jack wait up!

I saw them boys having a go at you.



It was nothing, it wasn't anything.

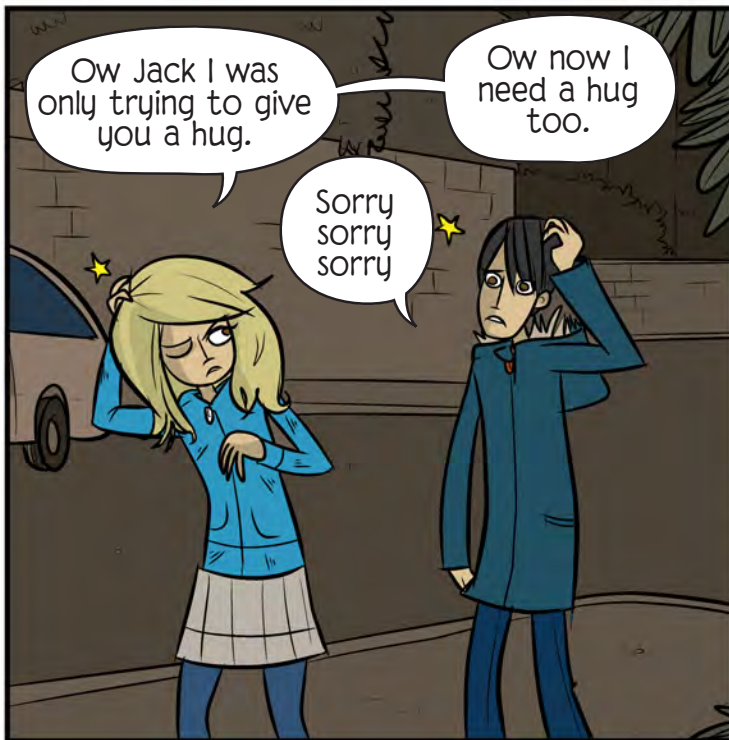


Oh Jack



OW!

CRACK



Ow Jack I was only trying to give you a hug.

Ow now I need a hug too.

Sorry sorry sorry

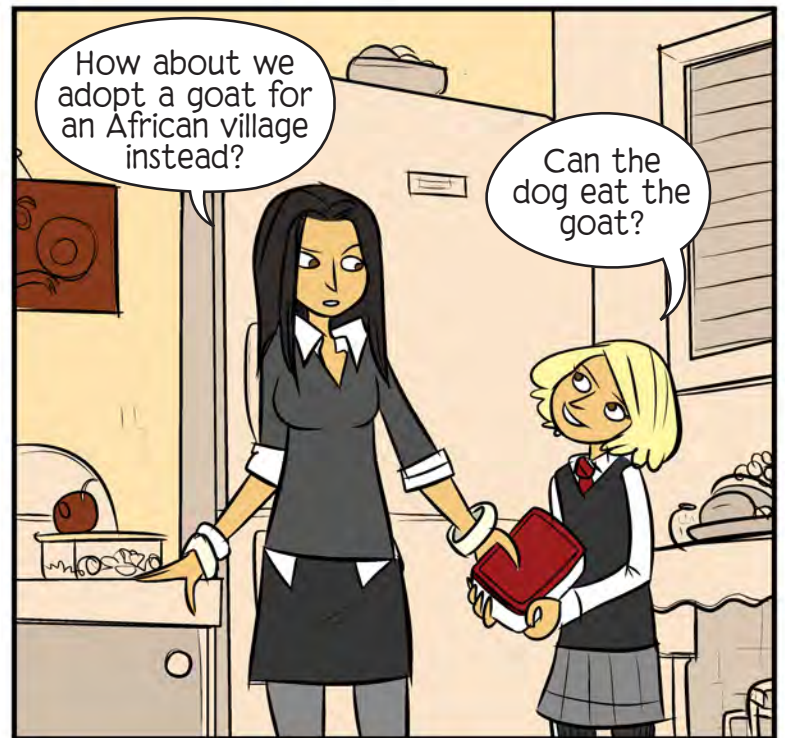
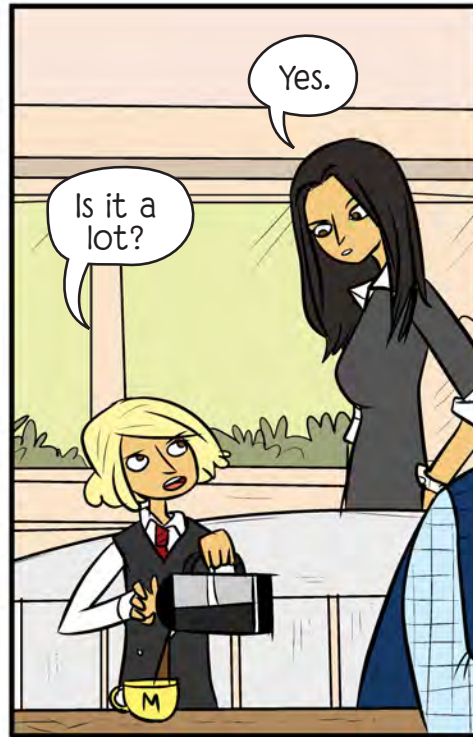
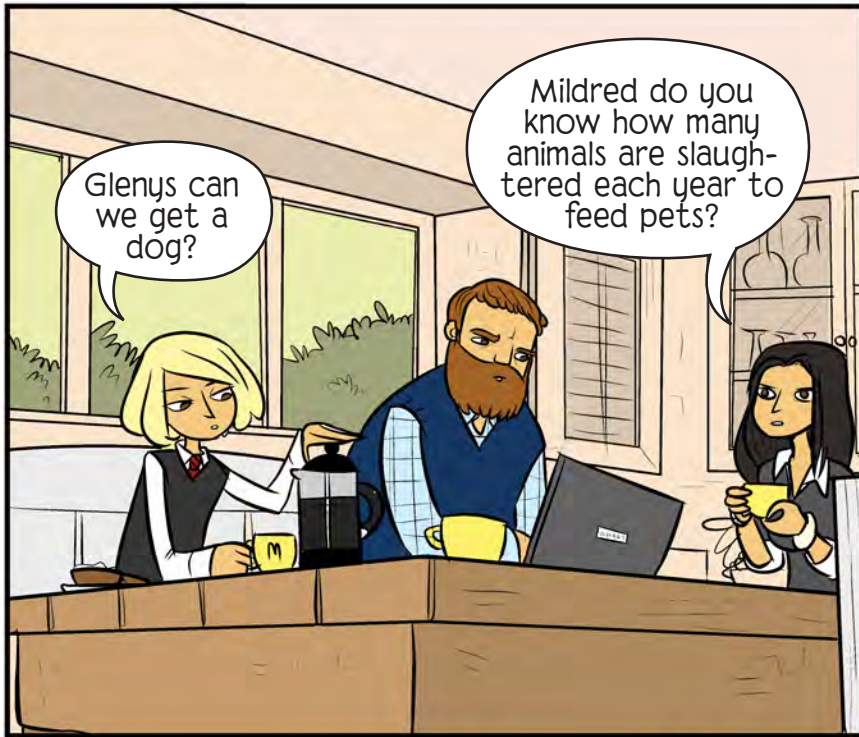


Pretend I don't smell of sick a bit.

Okay if you pretend I don't smell of Humphrey wee.



Dobby

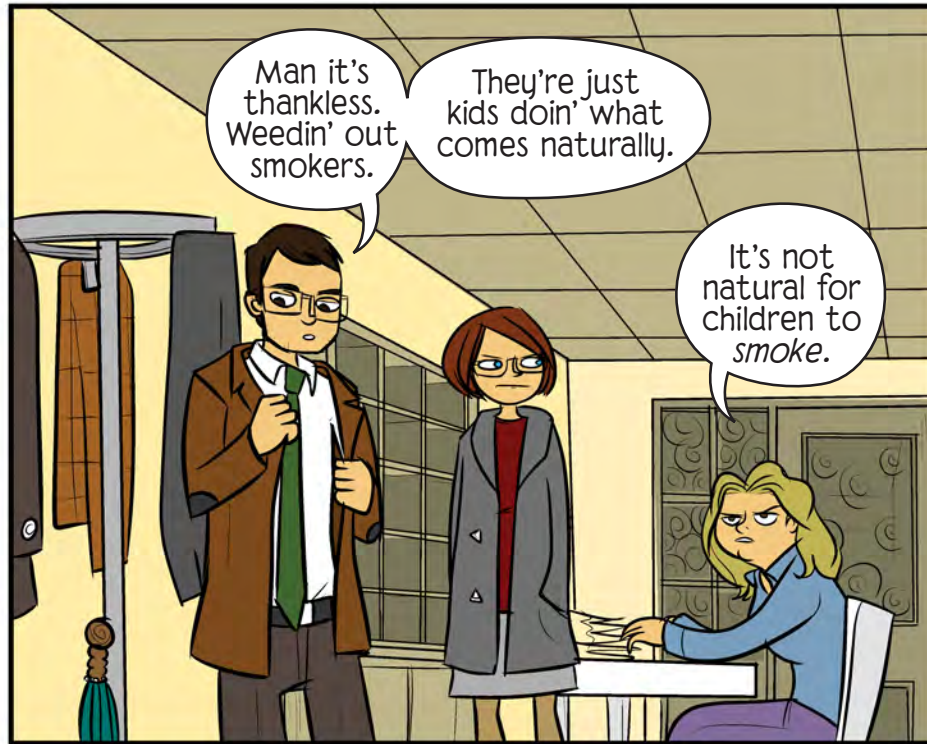




Now be good.

Don't go teaching the kids any fake alphabets or imaginary numbers.

No, dear.





Now it's really good of you guys to chase off the smokers AND stomp out their cigs.

We were worried about their health.

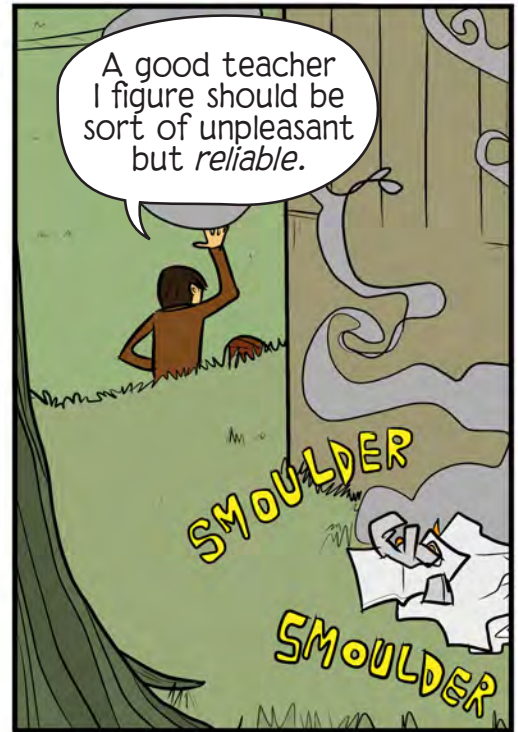
Yeh, sir.



They like you. They think you're cool.

Well they ain't meant to!

I don't dress like this for my health!



A good teacher I figure should be sort of unpleasant but *reliable*.

SMOULDER

SMOULDER

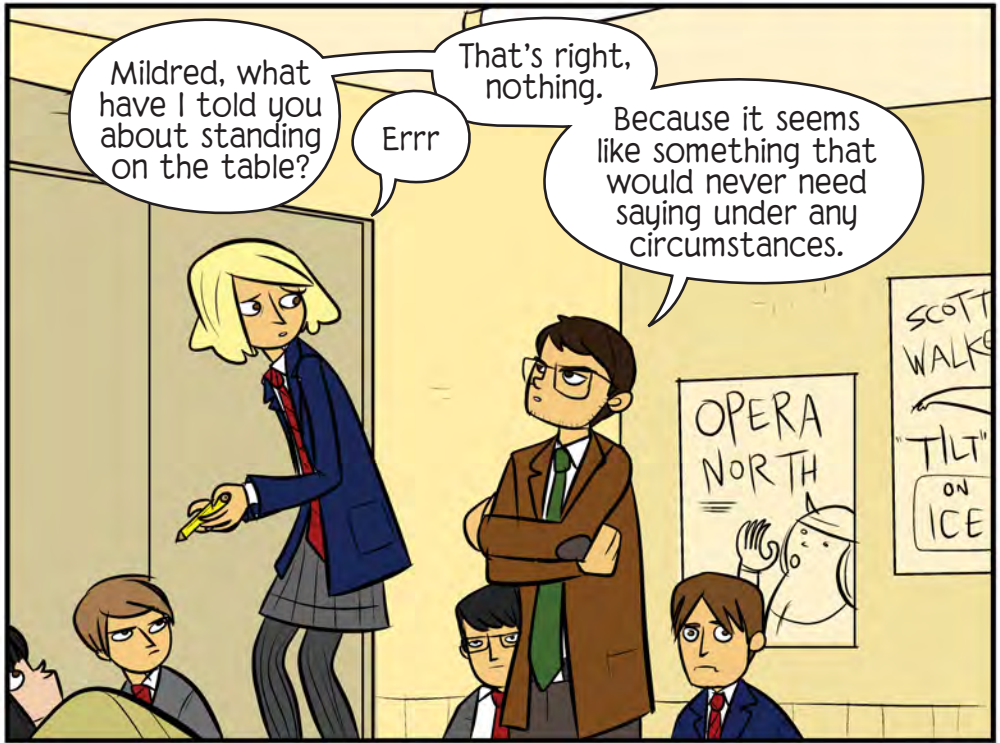


Is that...?

Corrrr



I told you I'd get it! I told you!

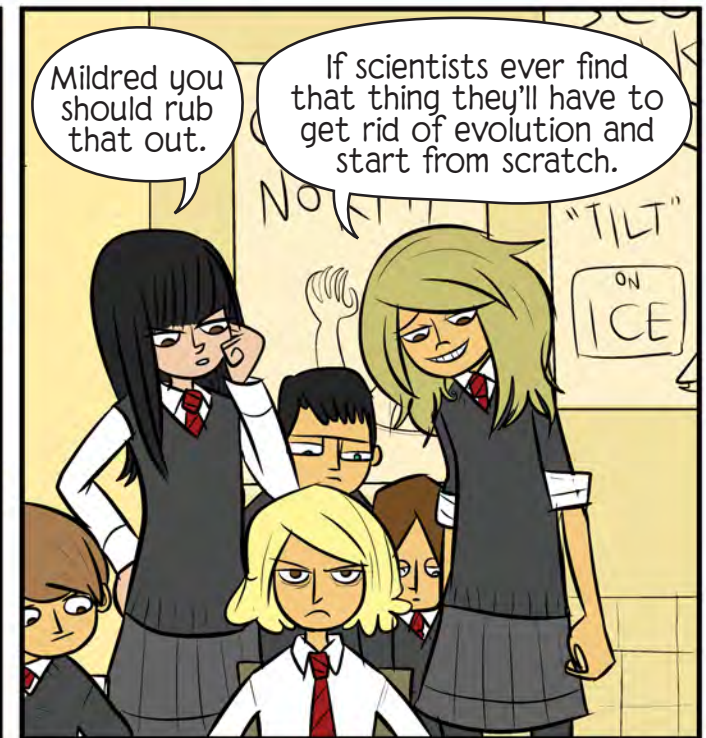
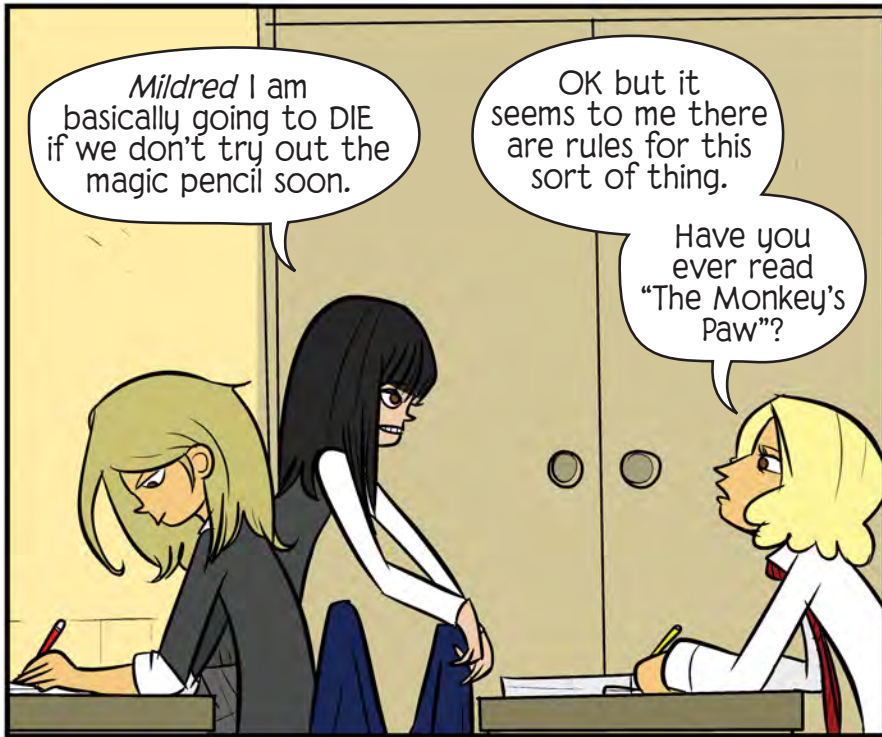


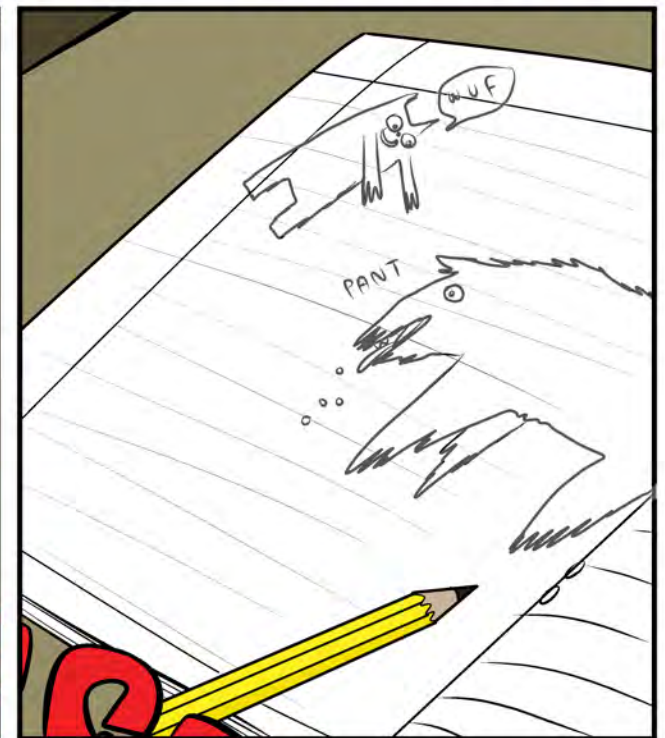
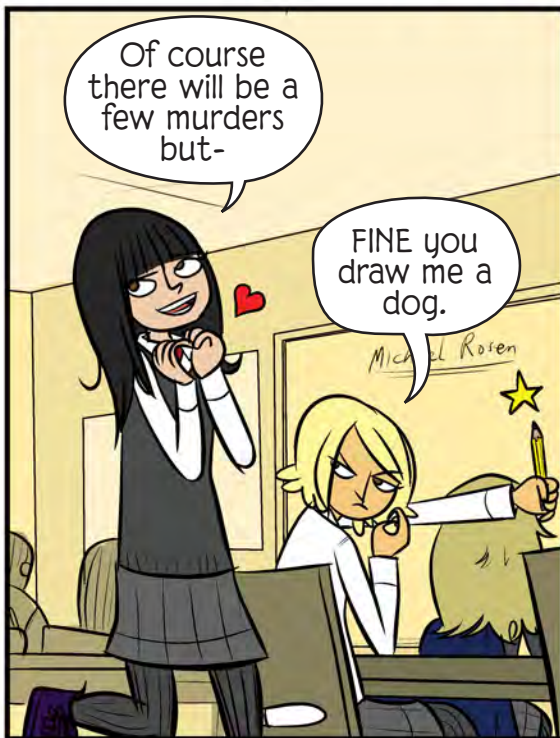
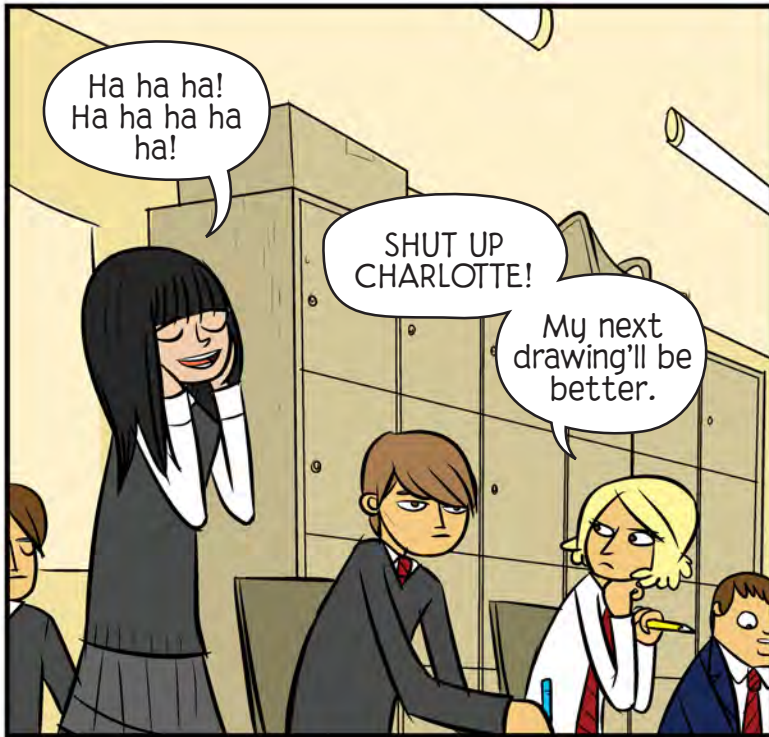
Mildred, what have I told you about standing on the table?

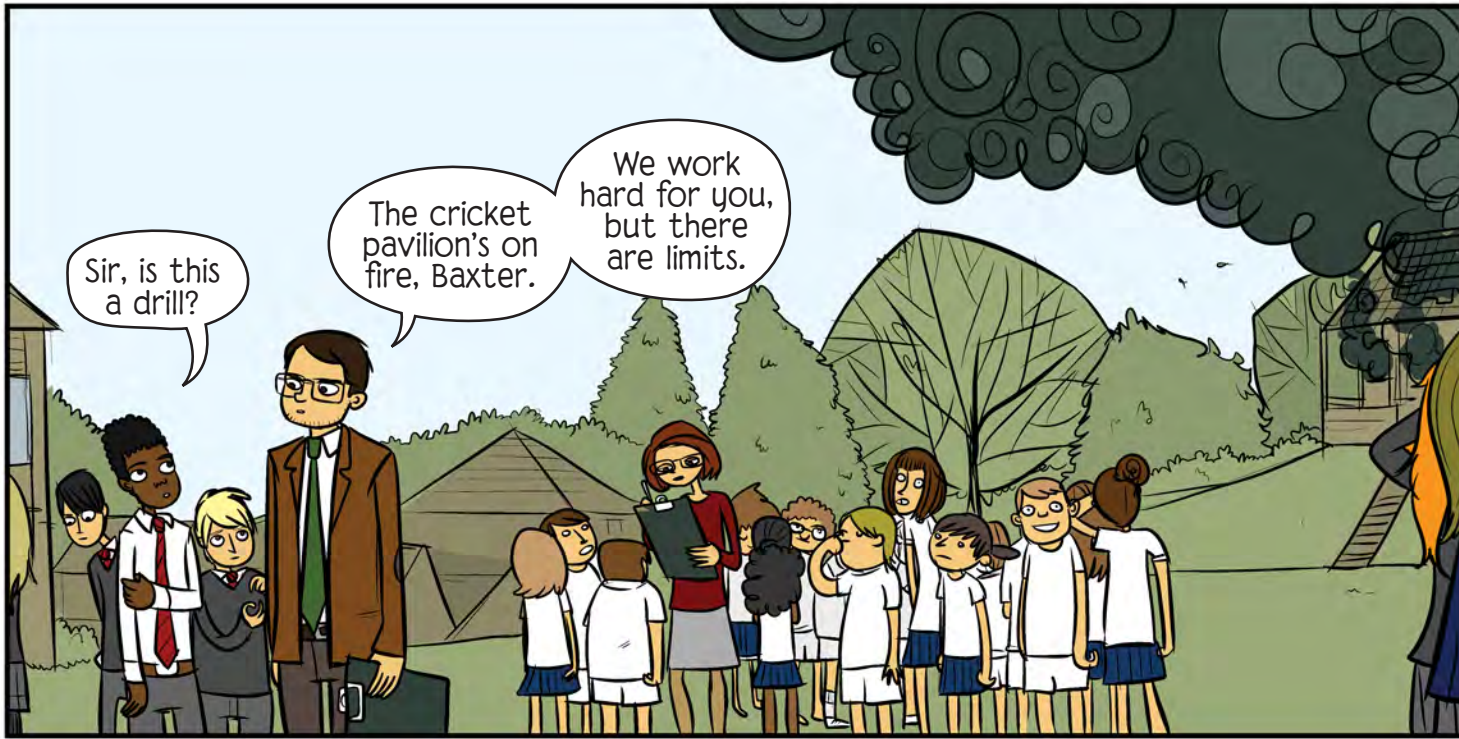
Errr

That's right, nothing.

Because it seems like something that would never need saying under any circumstances.



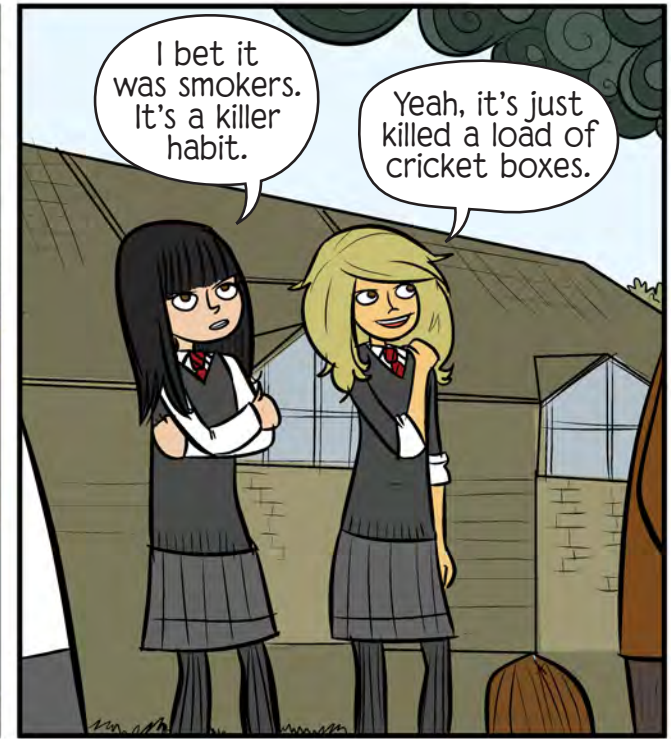




Sir, is this a drill?

The cricket pavilion's on fire, Baxter.

We work hard for you, but there are limits.



I bet it was smokers. It's a killer habit.

Yeah, it's just killed a load of cricket boxes.



It's going to be a painful summer.

Heh heh.

So many glorious summers of cricket. Such giant days.



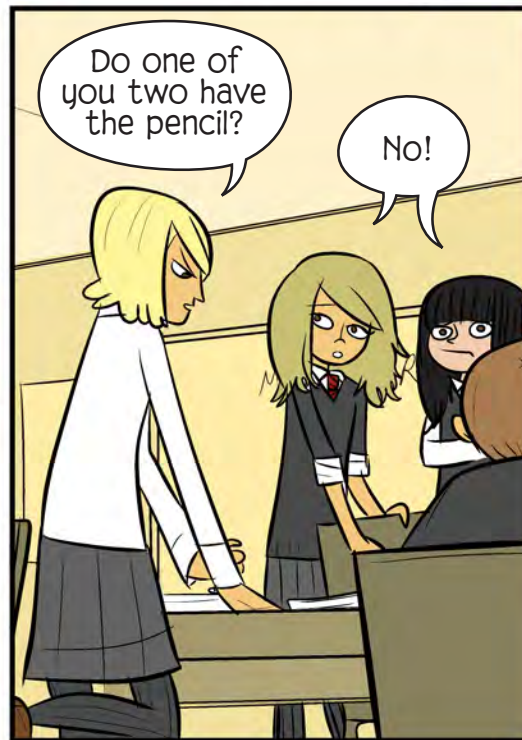
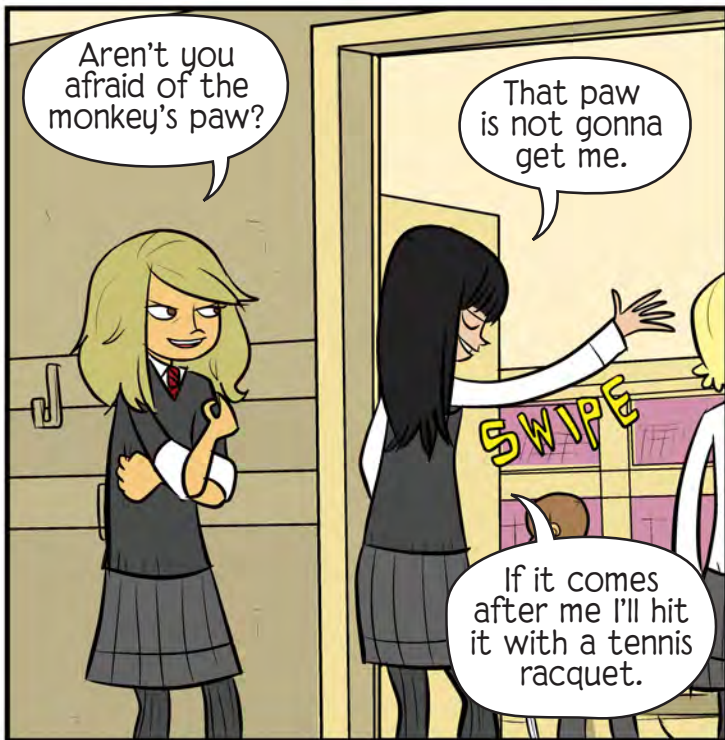
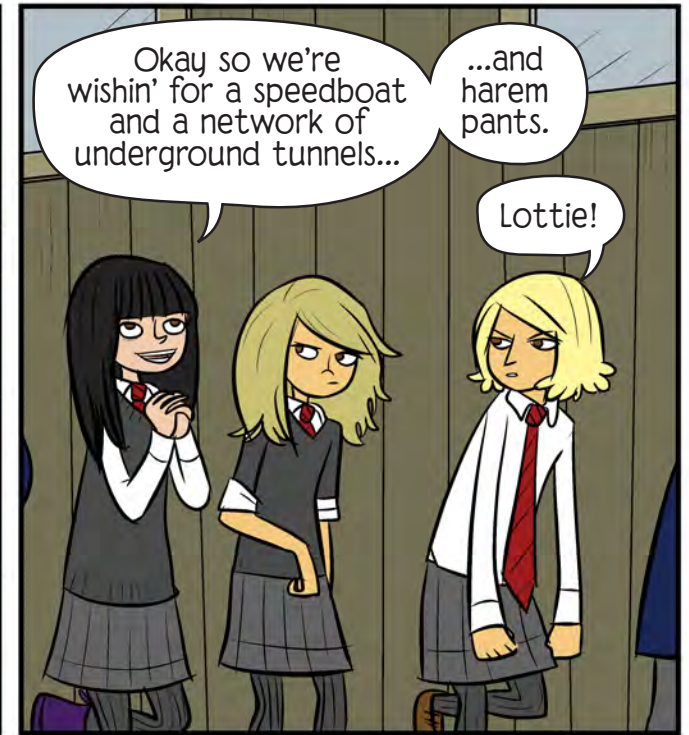
George is taking it hard.

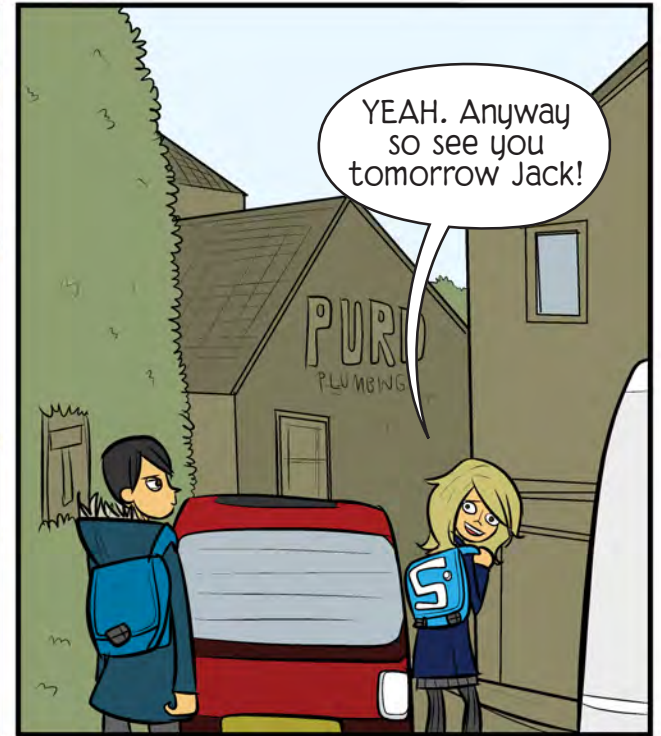
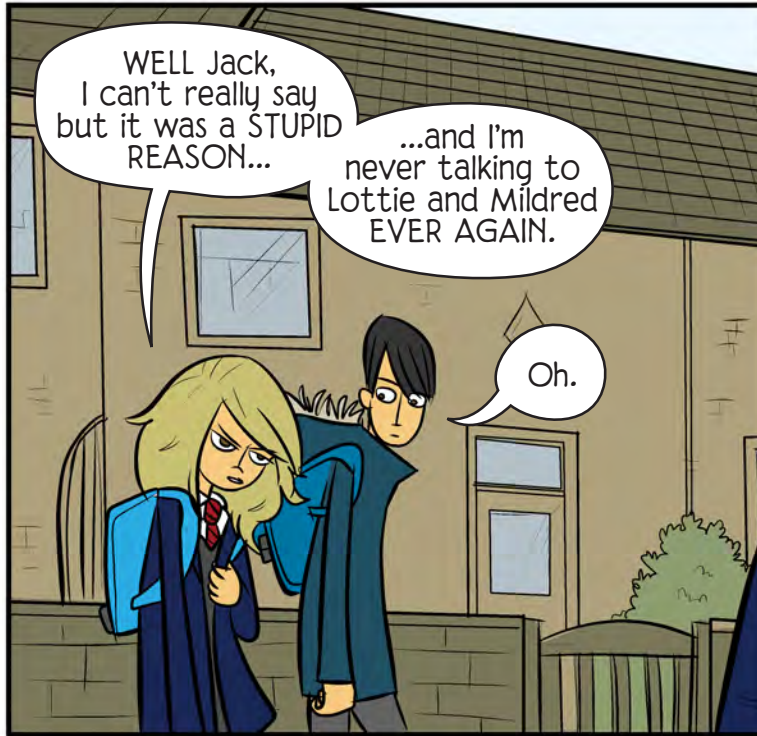
But not as hard as the guys who were on smoking patrol, eh, Miss Perks?



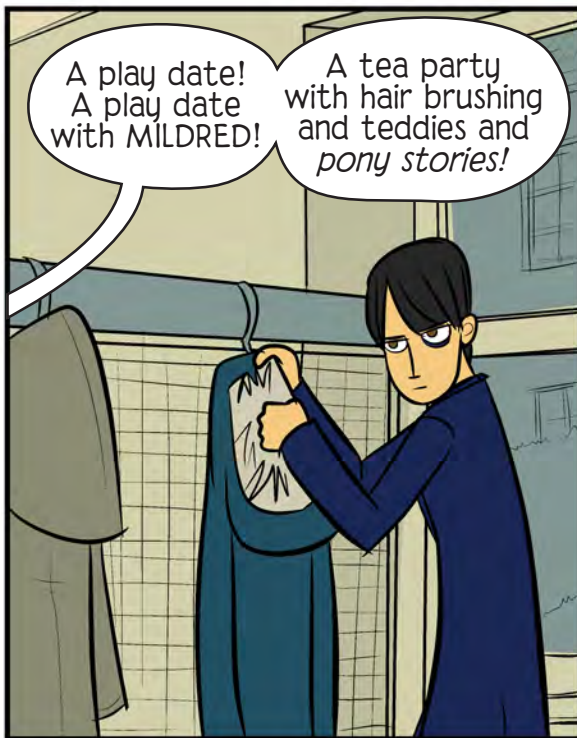
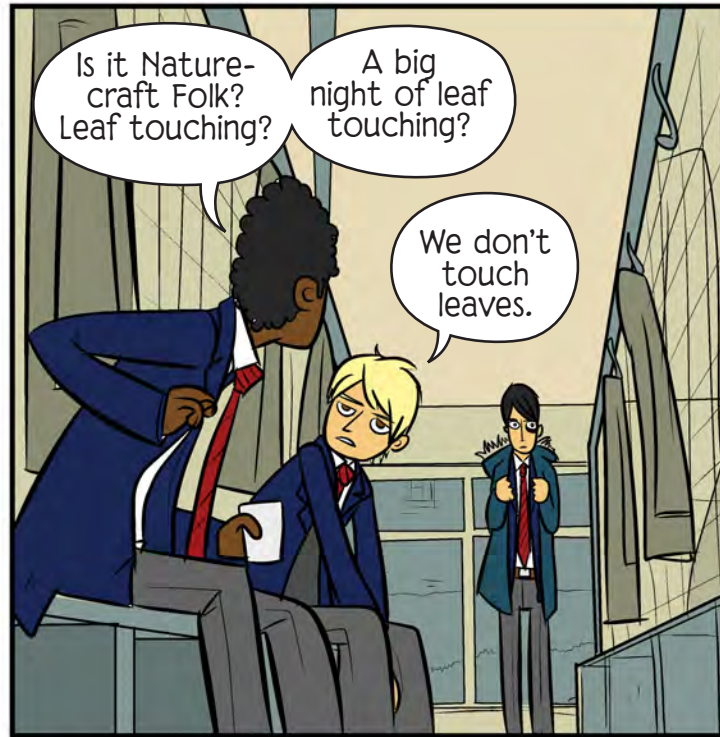
Ryan, that was *us*.

Shhh. I'm explorin' the possibility of alternate realities.











Four more little tykes disappear

by Erin Winters

The "Little Tykes" nursery in Keane End has been closed after four more children vanished - taking the total to nine.

Nursery manager Susan Bovis was at a loss to explain the disappearances of Toby Milton, Verity Bates, Sam Shaw and Abbie Cottram (all aged 2).

"One minute they were there, and the next they weren't," she said. "Little ones are always wandering off. I'm sure they'll come back. They're probably having a wonderful time."

Despite Ms Bovis' lack of concern, parents seem reluctant to return their children to her care.

Police are treating the disappearances as suspicious, but sought to reassure locals that the vanished children are the exception, rather than the rule.

DCI Mike Carver of Tackleford Police was confident that the children would be found.

"There are thousands of children in Tackleford Metro-

political Borough, but only nine have vanished in the last three weeks."

"I've got a couple of officers keeping an eye out. They'll turn up."

BEAST

Some locals have linked the disappearances to recent sightings of a "hairy beast" around dusk.

Pub landlady Elaine Hirst claims to have seen the creature crouching in a back alley.

"When it saw me, it ran away. It might have been a big dog, or a panther, but scruffy," she said.

"I only got a quick look but it scared the life out of me."

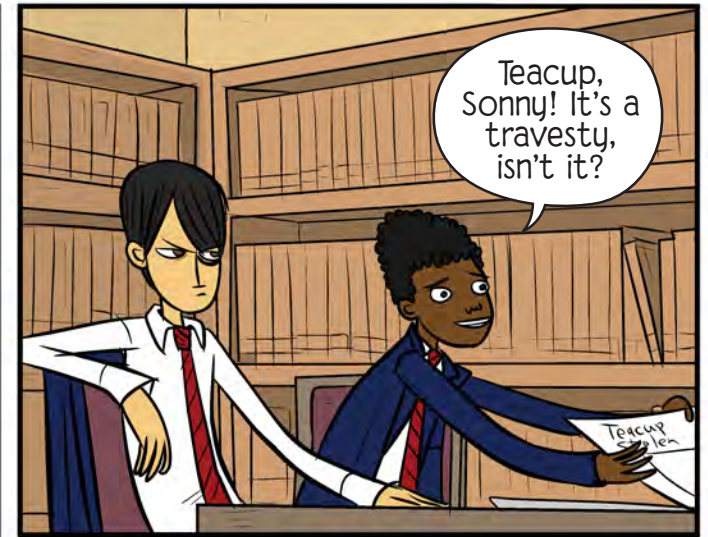
DCI Carver was quick to quash these "beast rumours".

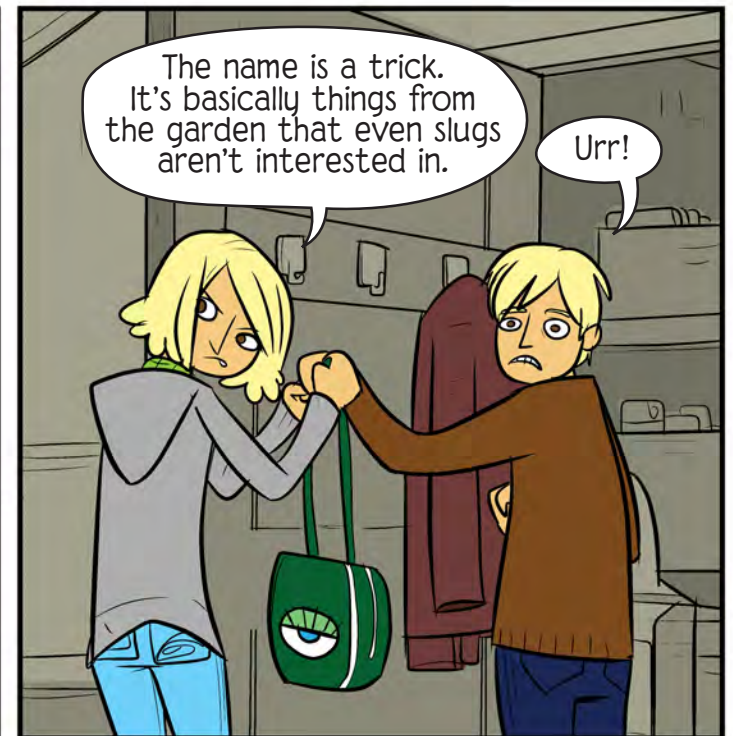
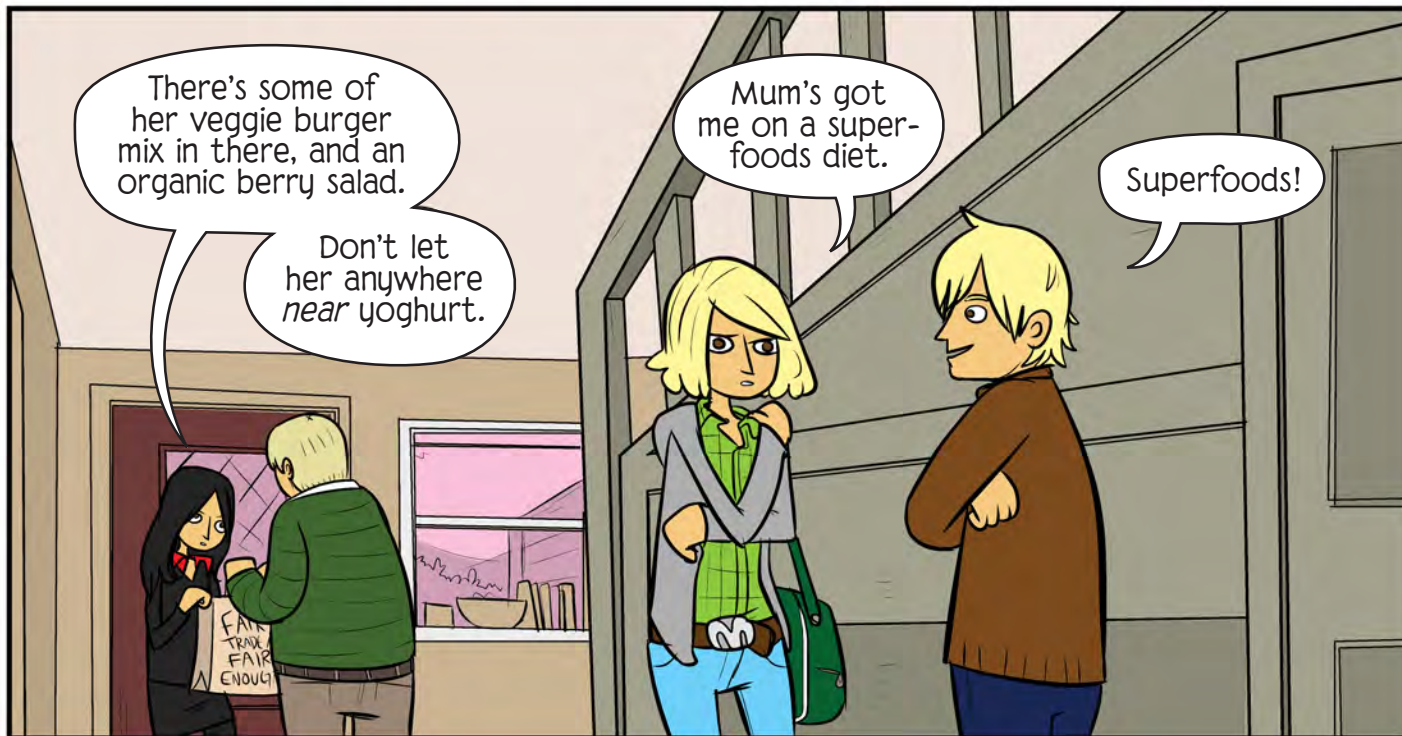
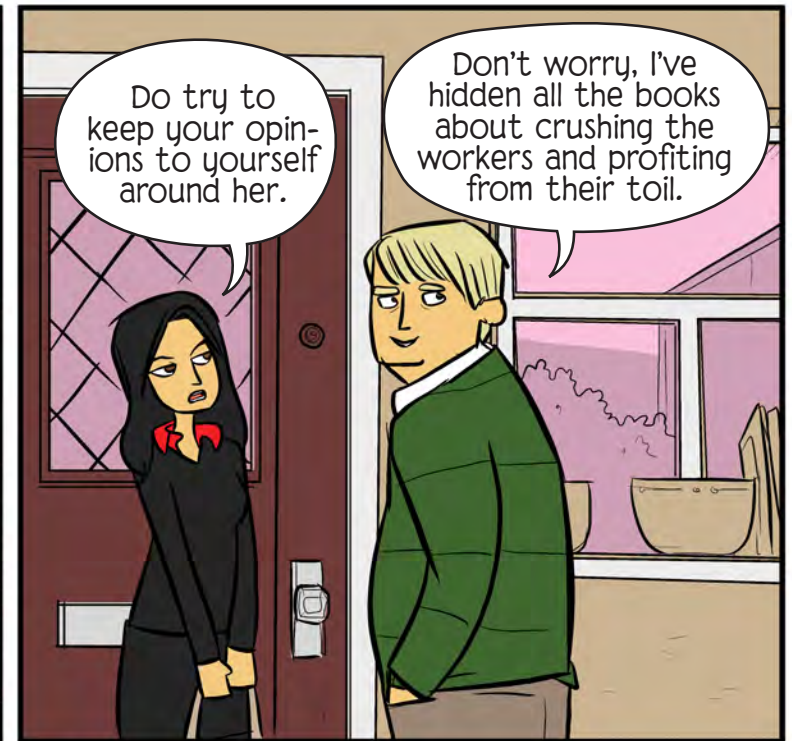
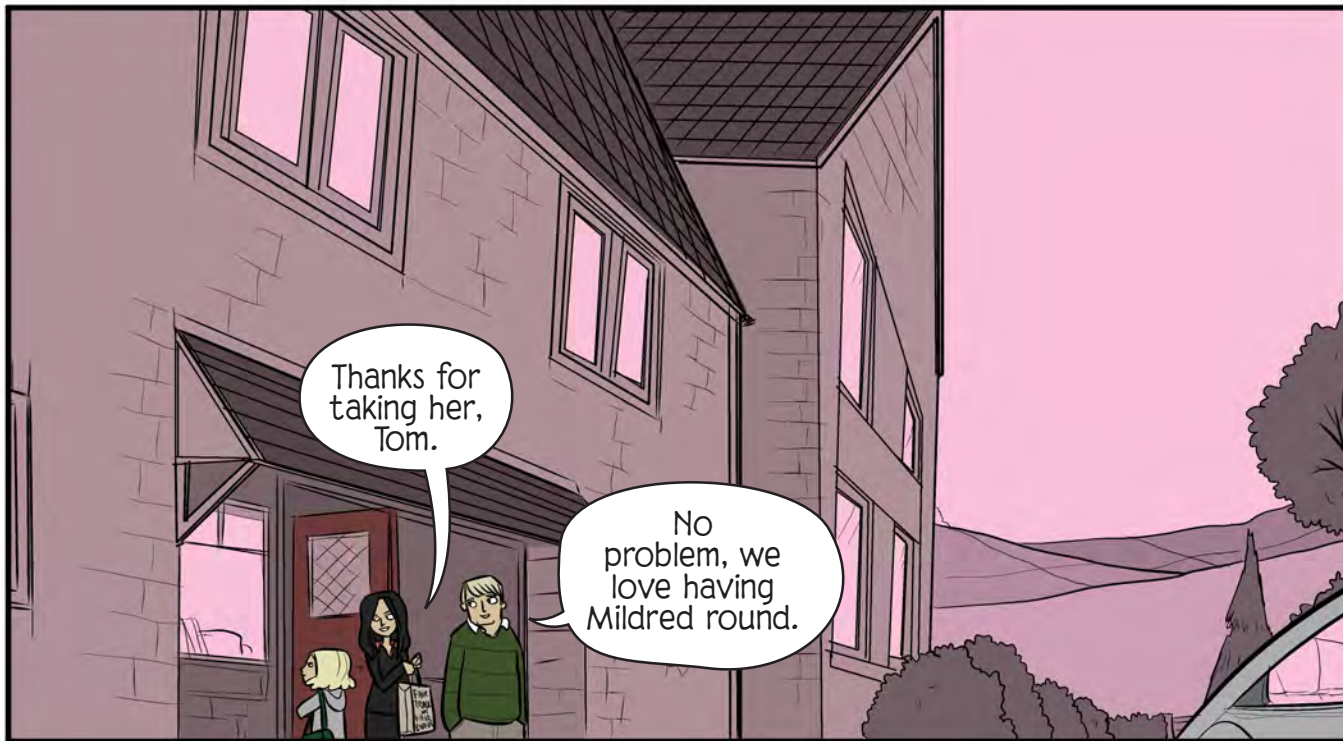
"Sightings of beasts and big cats usually turn out to be overweight domestic pets," he warned.

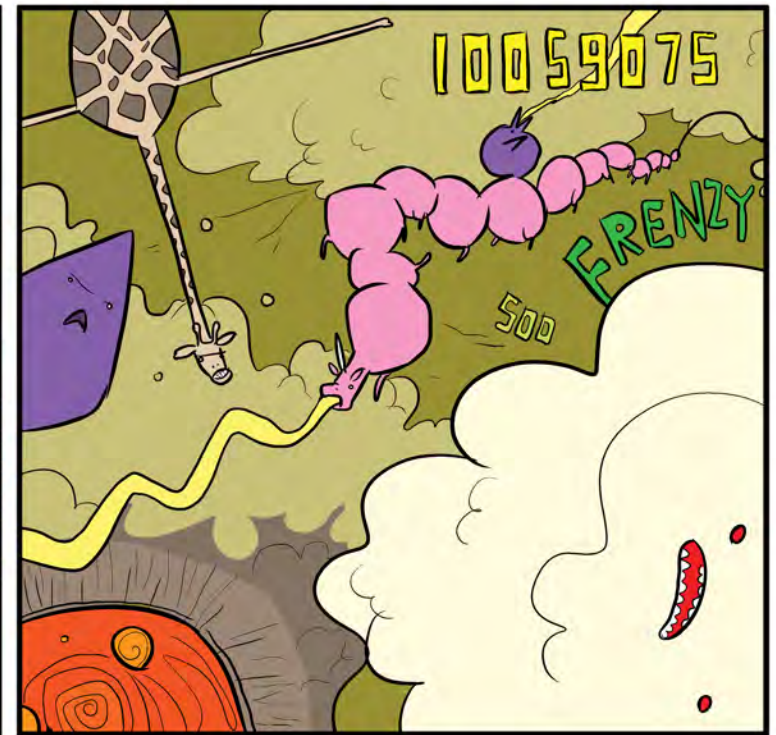
"We urge people not to become hysterical if they can possibly avoid it."

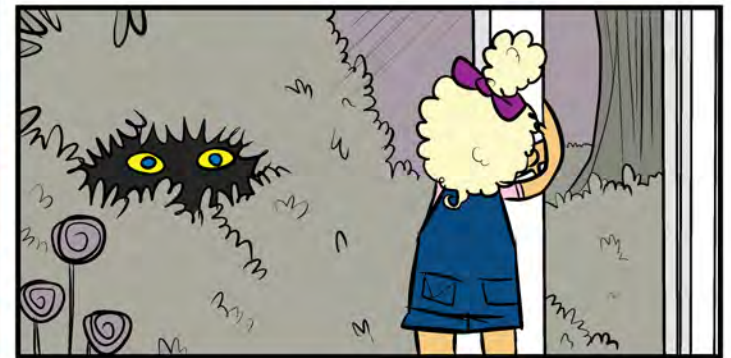
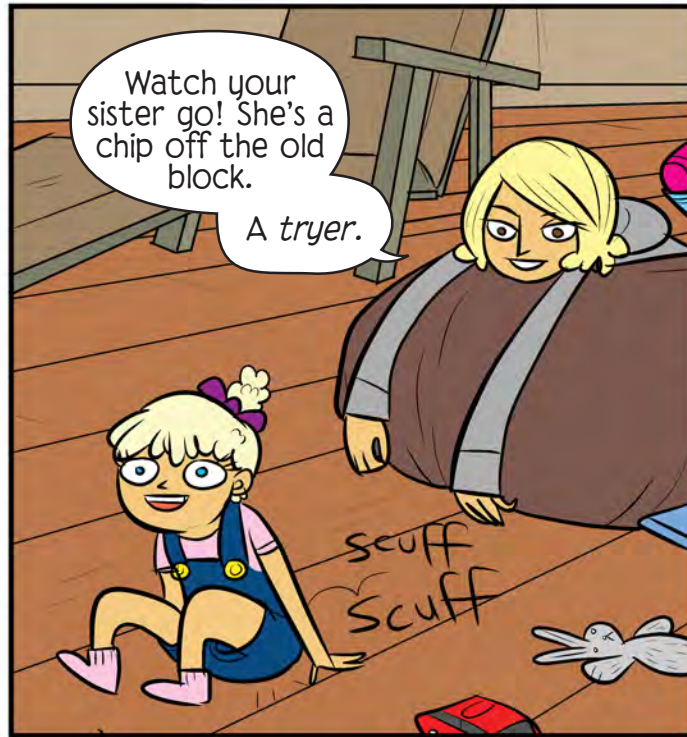
★ KEANE END COWARD CROSS KARSTEN HILL ★ 0% FINANCE

BIGGEST EVER SALE





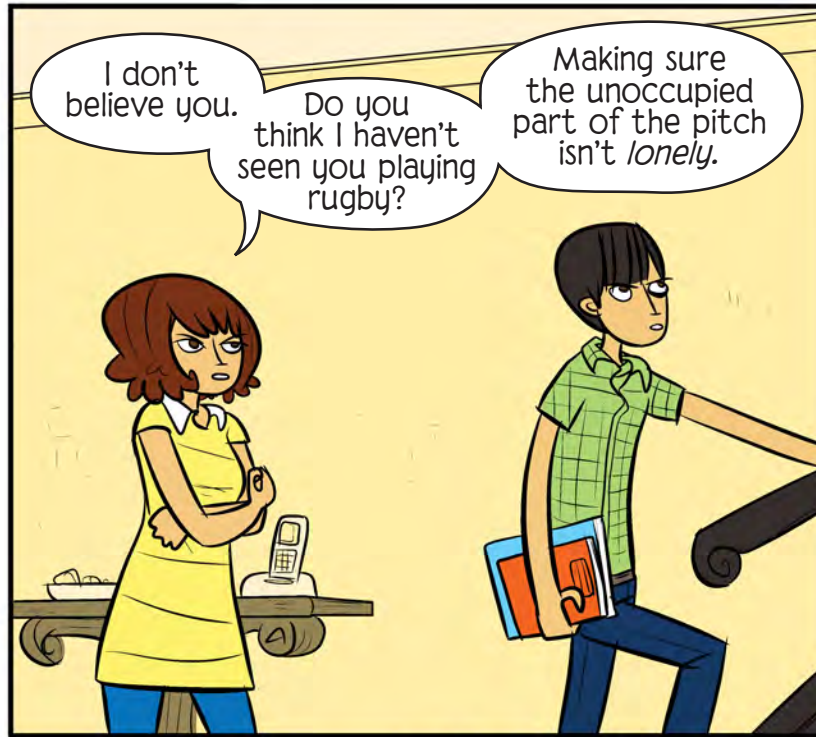






Jack how did you get that black eye?

Playing rugby.



I don't believe you.

Do you think I haven't seen you playing rugby?

Making sure the unoccupied part of the pitch isn't lonely.



I... walked into a door.



Eye first?

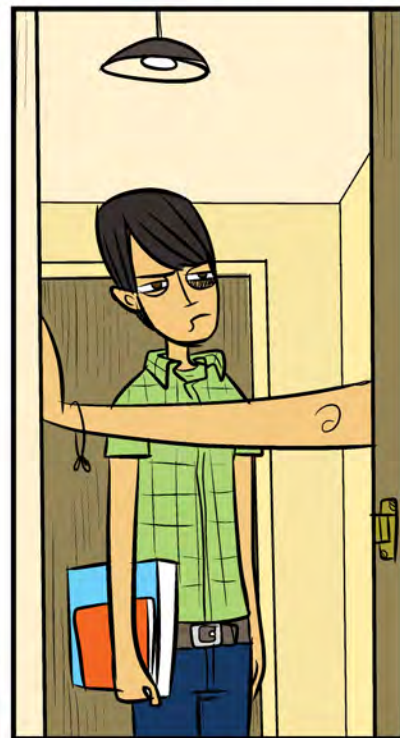


If you're going to lie, stick to the first lie.

Is someone bullying you Jack?



Because that is not okay with me at all.



Jack maybe I have pushed you round a bit over the years.

But no one messes with my personal punchbag.



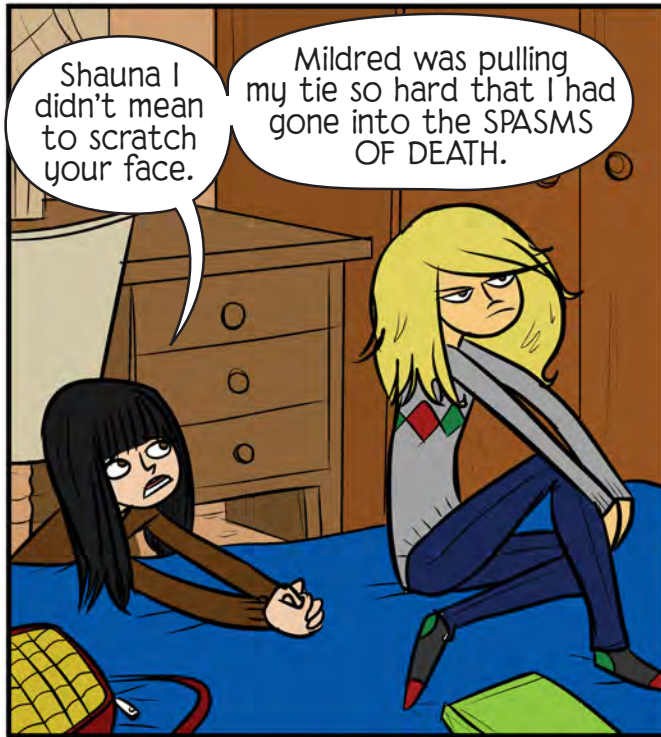


Shauna!
Lottie's here
to see you.

Tell her I
don't want
to see her!

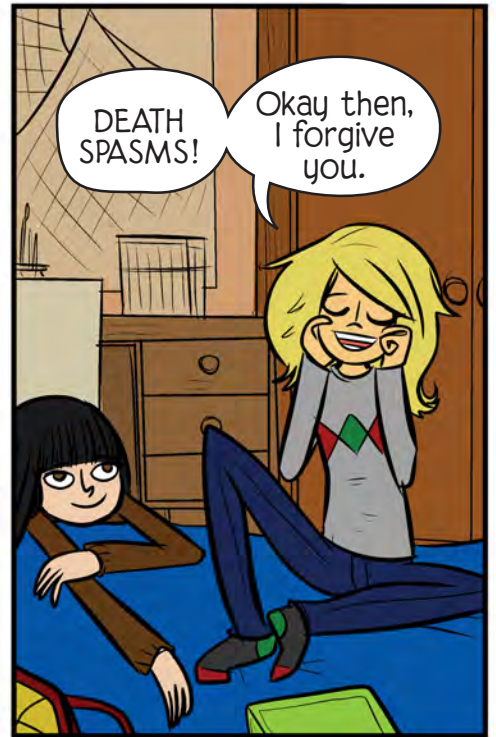


Just go up,
love. She's prob-
ably in one of
her moods.



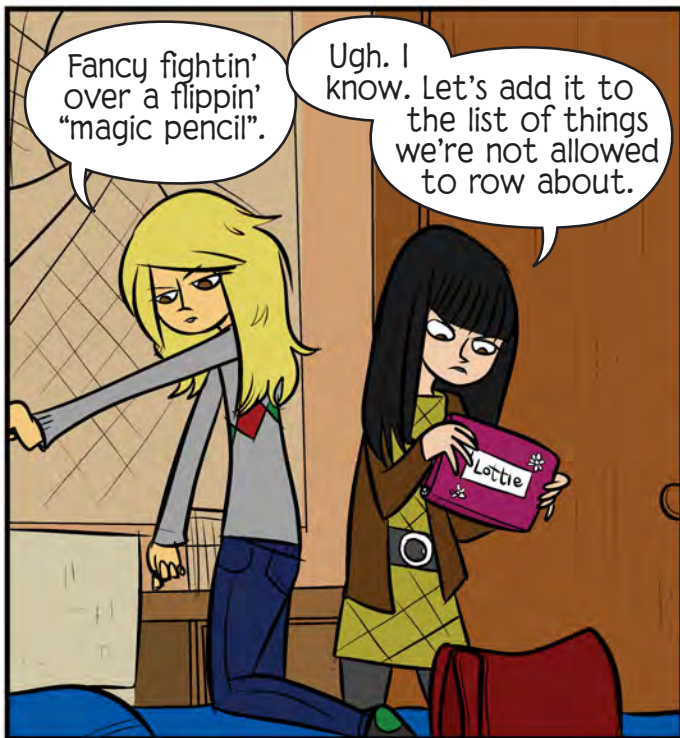
Shauna I
didn't mean
to scratch
your face.

Mildred was pulling
my tie so hard that I had
gone into the SPASMS
OF DEATH.



DEATH
SPASMS!

Okay then,
I forgive
you.

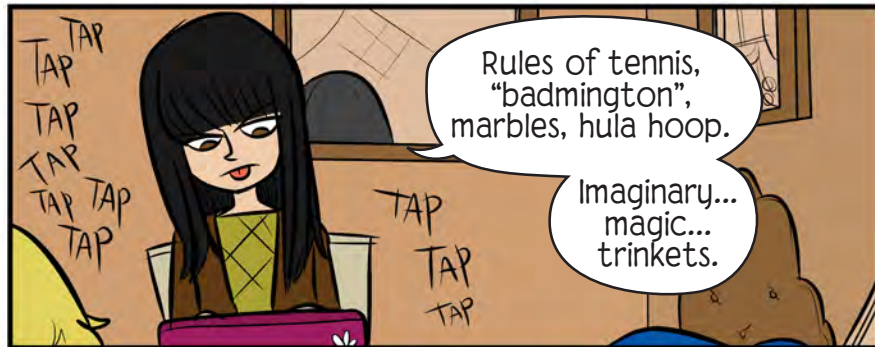


Fancy fightin'
over a flippin'
"magic pencil".

Ugh. I
know. Let's add it to
the list of things
we're not allowed
to row about.



OK. Licking
other people's
yoghurt lids. Best
singers.



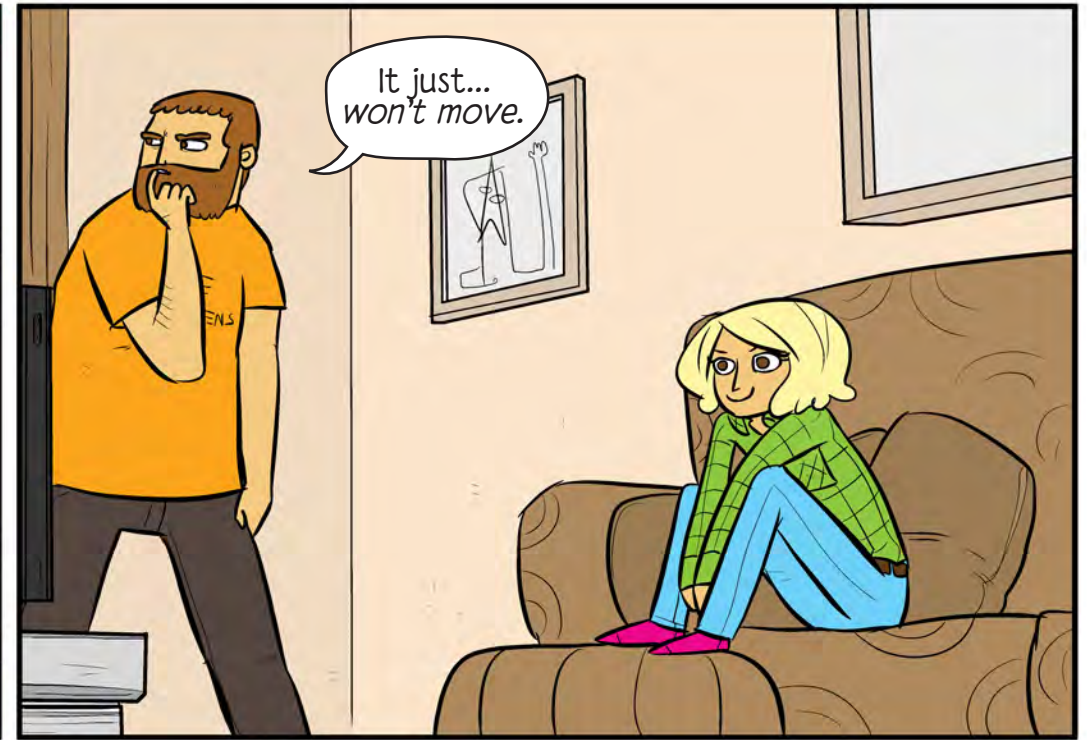
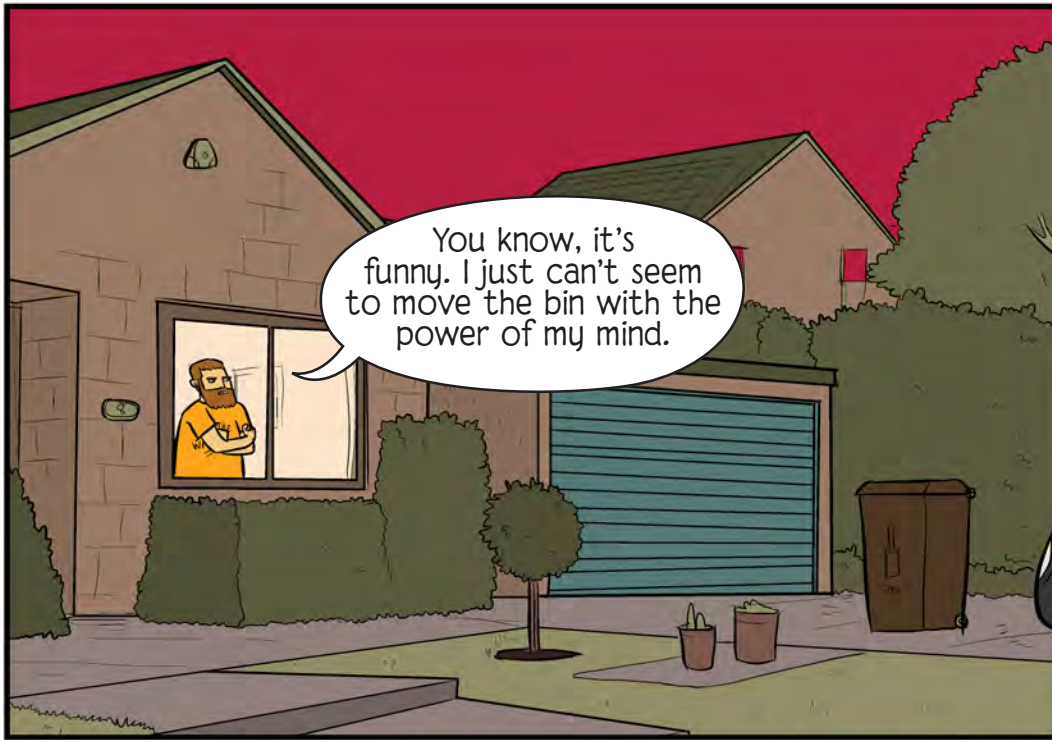
Rules of tennis,
"badmington",
marbles, hula hoop.

Imaginary...
magic...
trinkets.



Hula hoop
defo doesn't
have rules,
Lottie.

FORFEIT
DANCE,
NOW.







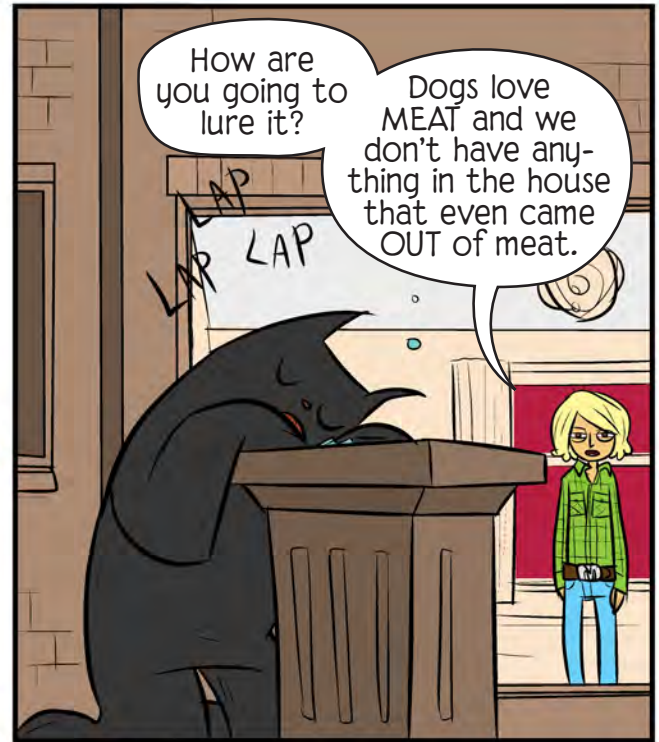
Neil, call the council!

I'm not calling the council over a dog. We can trap it.



Where?

In the garage.



How are you going to lure it?

Dogs love MEAT and we don't have anything in the house that even came OUT of meat.



Dogs like something else though... what is it... a sweet...

Chocolate!

No... aniseed balls.

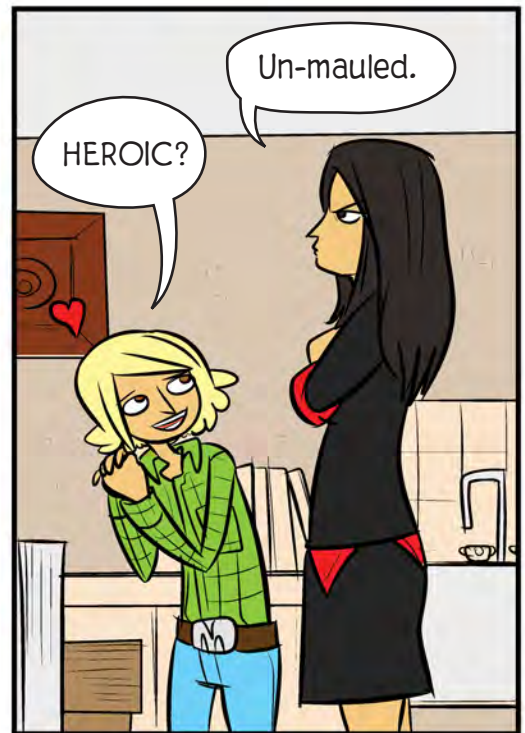


Ah yes, aniseed balls, the popular household item.

Pernod! Pernod has aniseed in it.

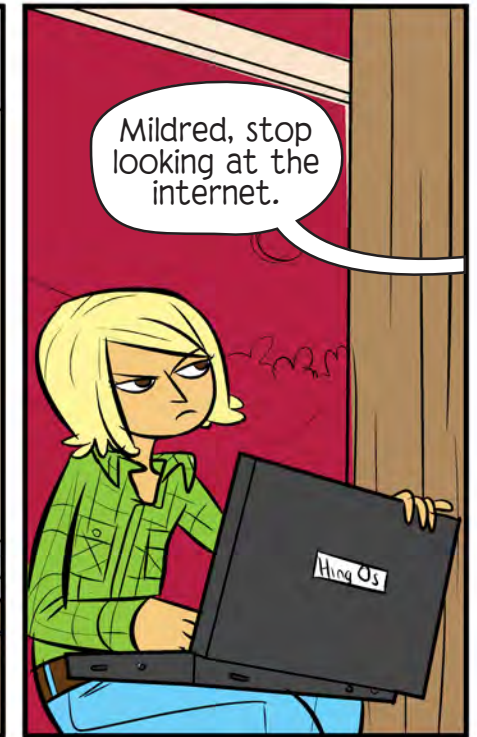
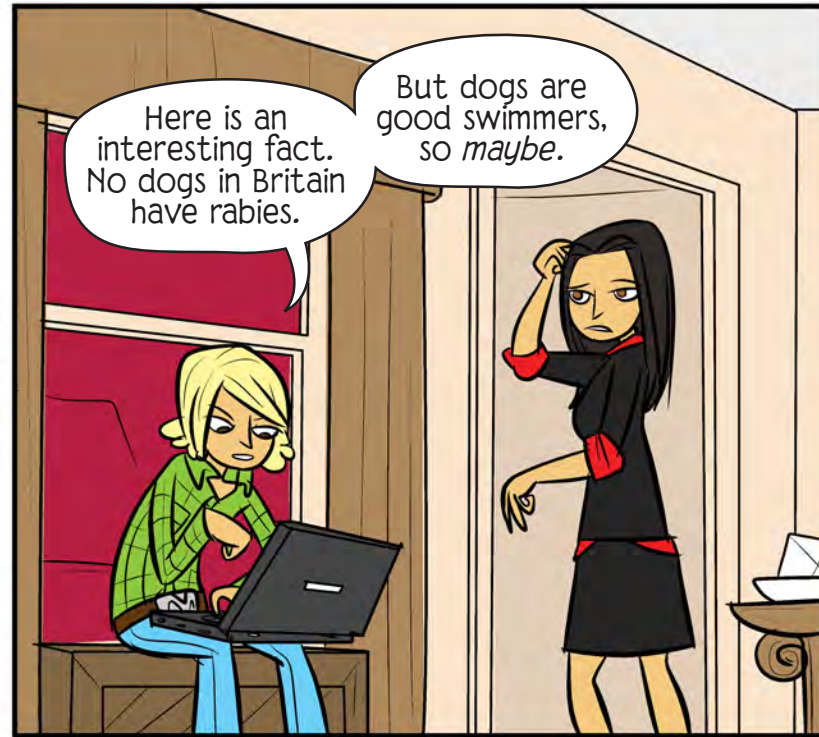
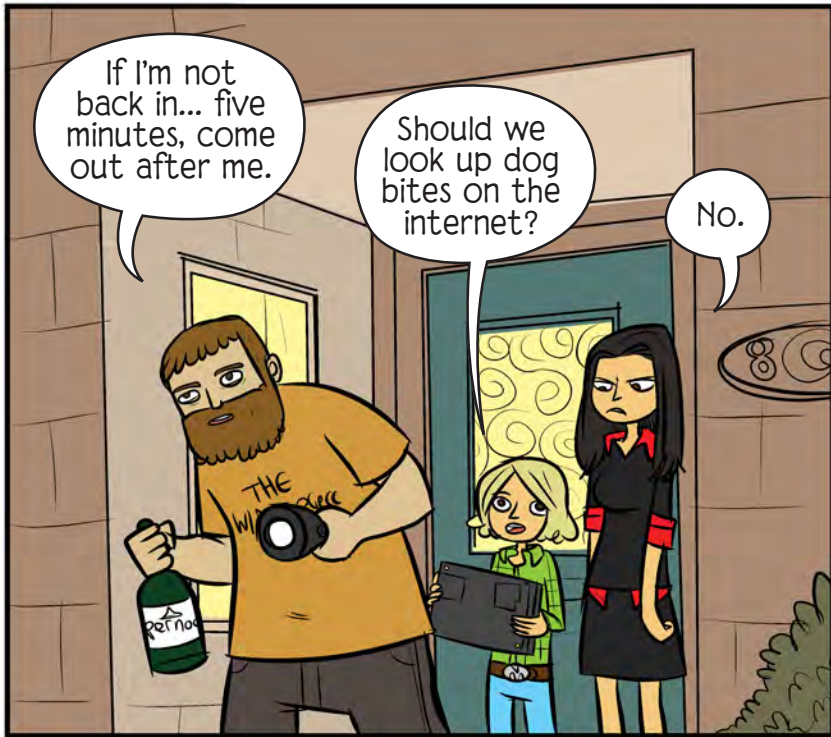


Try to remember your father this way, Mildred.

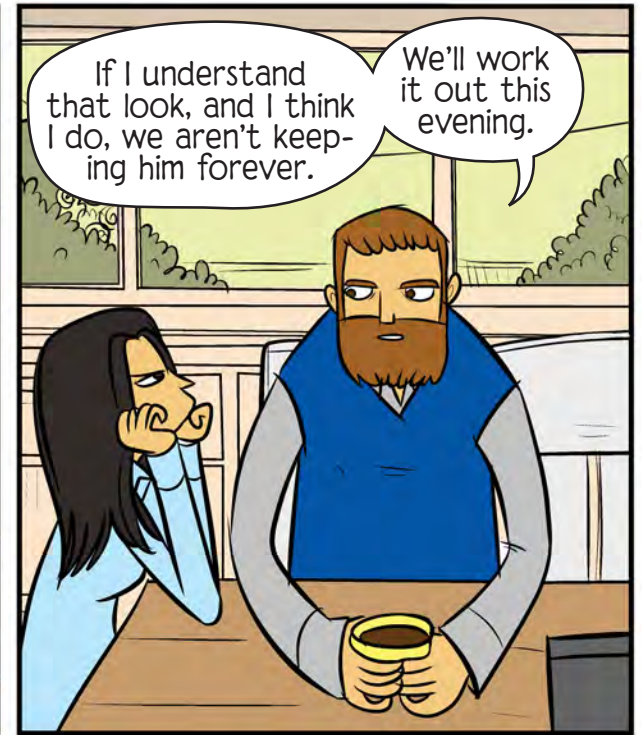


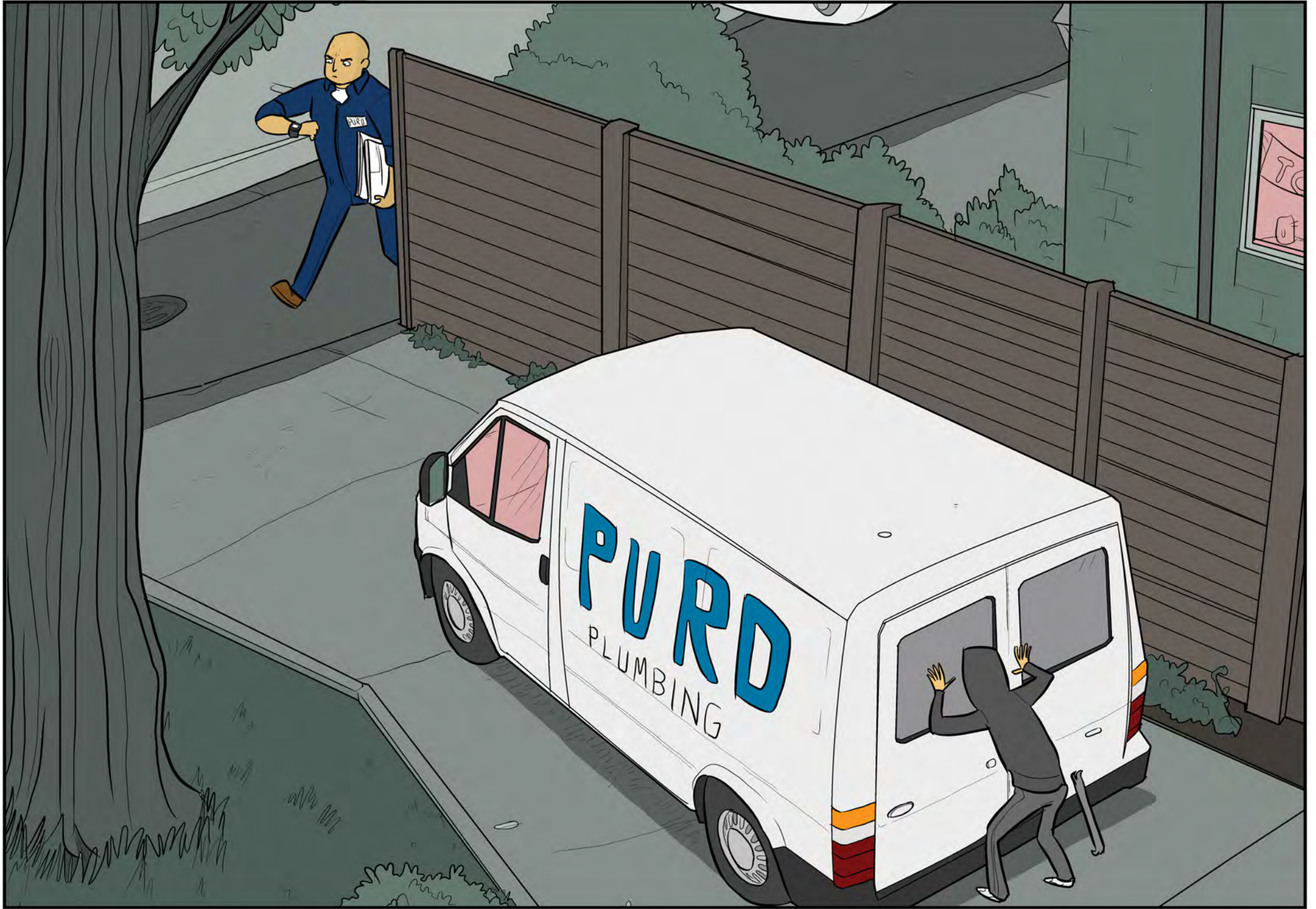
HEROIC?

Un-mauled.

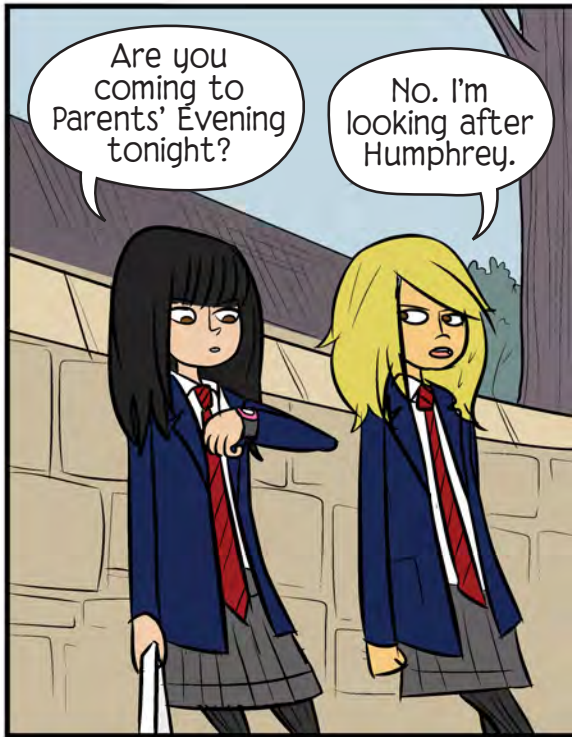






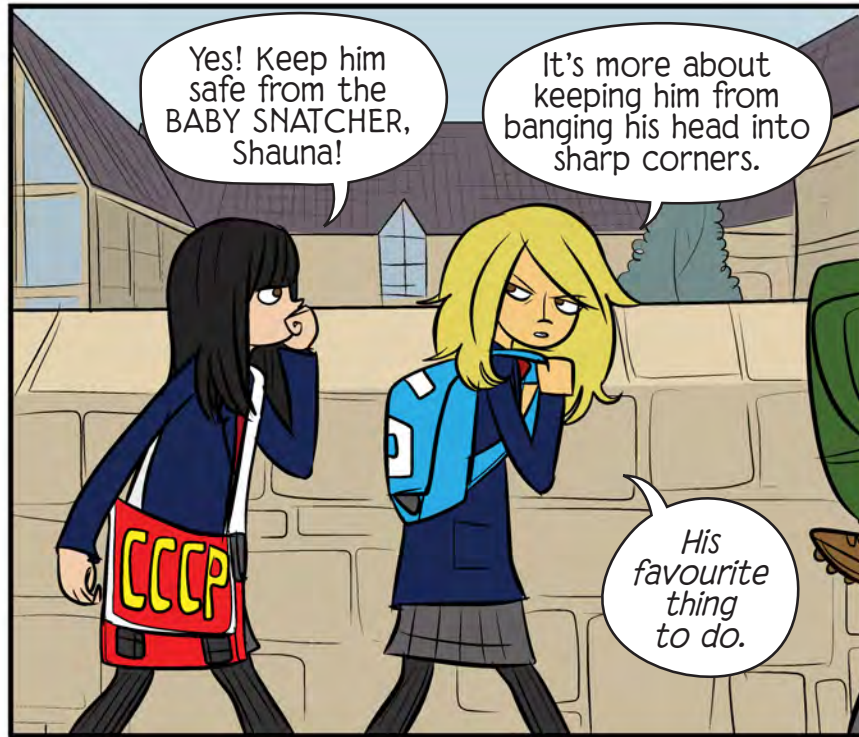






Are you coming to Parents' Evening tonight?

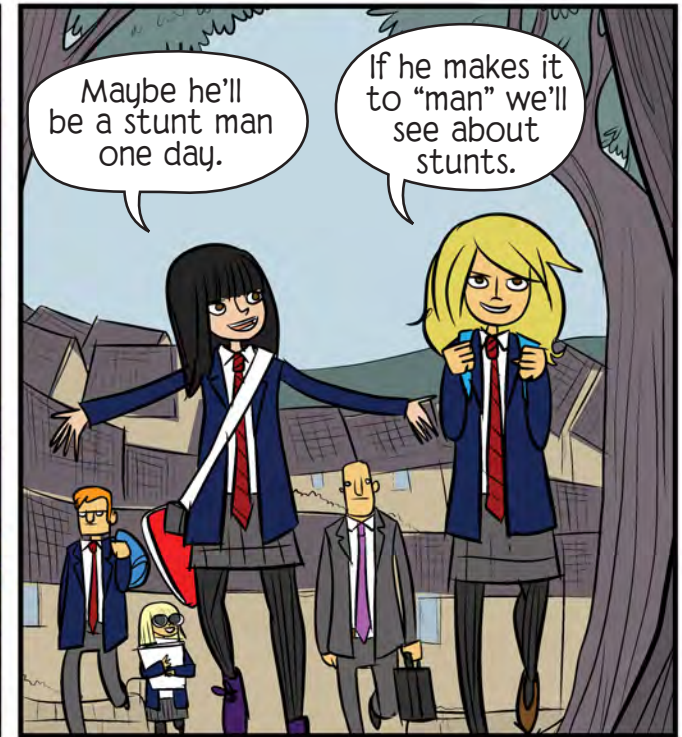
No. I'm looking after Humphrey.



Yes! Keep him safe from the BABY SNATCHER, Shauna!

It's more about keeping him from banging his head into sharp corners.

His favourite thing to do.



Maybe he'll be a stunt man one day.

If he makes it to "man" we'll see about stunts.



Aw Jack, cheer up, parents' evening won't be bad for you.

I heard of the six words you said all term, five of them were great.



LOTTIE. BE NICER.

I'm sure the teachers love your talking.



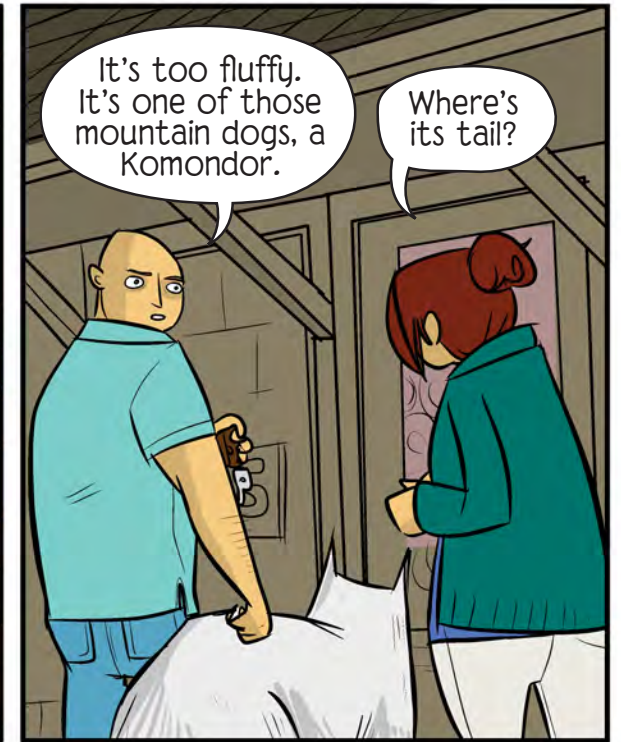
It's a non-stop reminder that they haven't gone deaf yet.

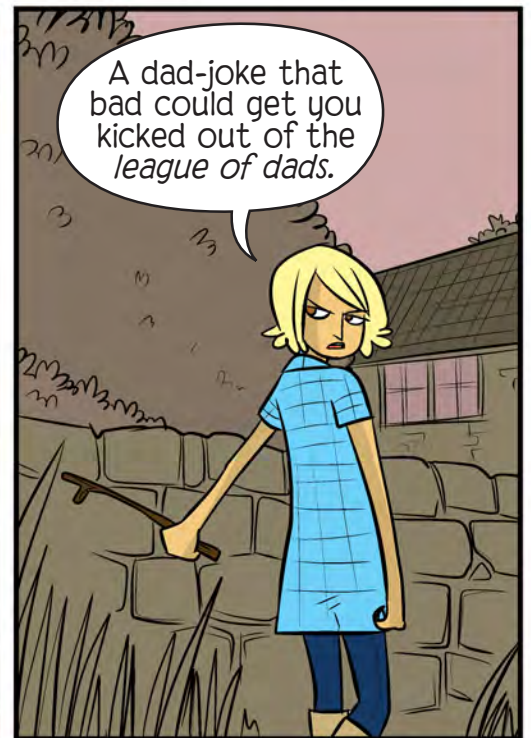
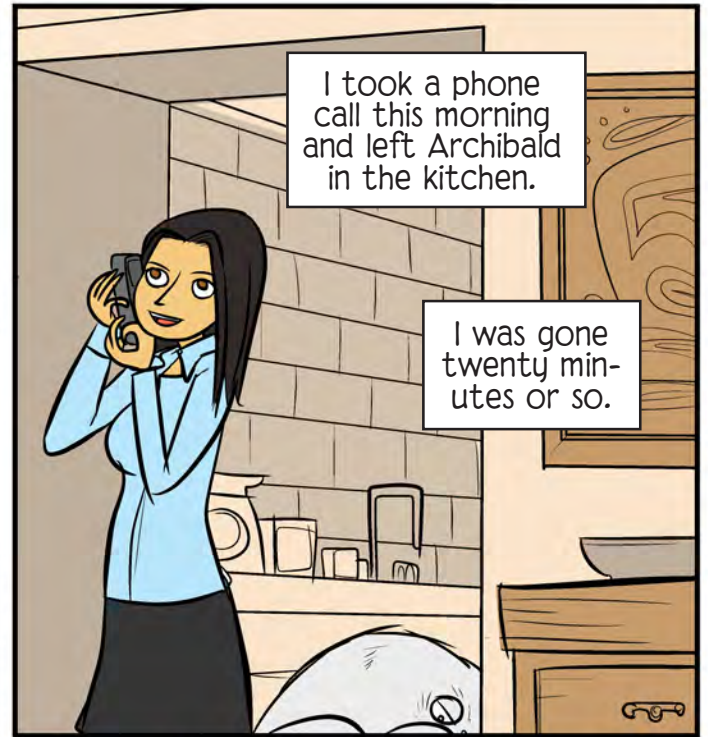














It's out there... the *beast*.



Plucking babies from their cribs with its big, hairy fingers.



Taking a fresh batch back to its cave...

...or den, if all the local caves are occupied...

...FOR SOME CHEWING.



Do the prints lead anywhere?

Towards the woods. But there's not much of a trail.



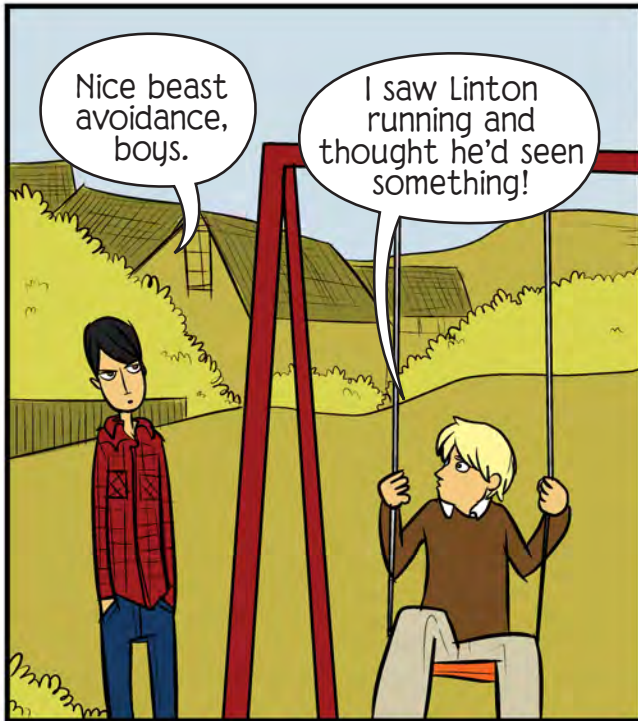
See Linton, Naturecraft Folk taught me how to track.

I guess you have to take a break from singing and clapping sometime.

SWAP



So who fancies a walk in the woods?



Nice beast avoidance, boys.

I saw Linton running and thought he'd seen something!

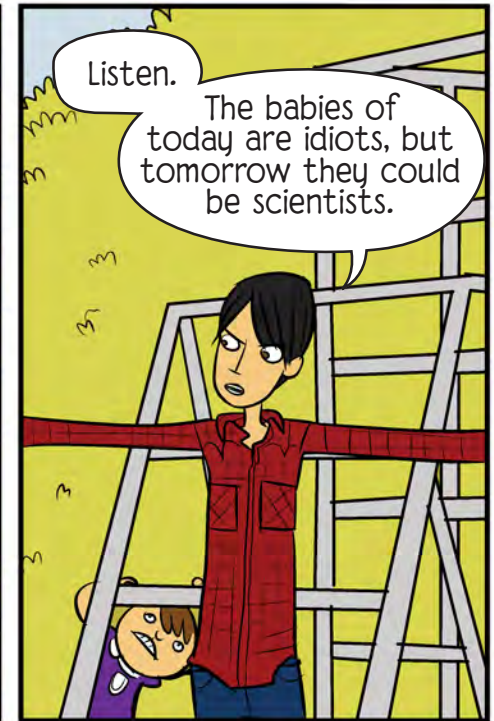


I... I thought I heard a faint cry for help coming from the park.



It turned out to be just the wind, but...

Hm yes better safe than sorry.



Listen. The babies of today are idiots, but tomorrow they could be scientists.



We will save them.

My plan involves identifying the beast, trapping it, and... and...



...STUFFING IT AS A WARNING TO OTHER CREATURES.

Whoa! Intense!

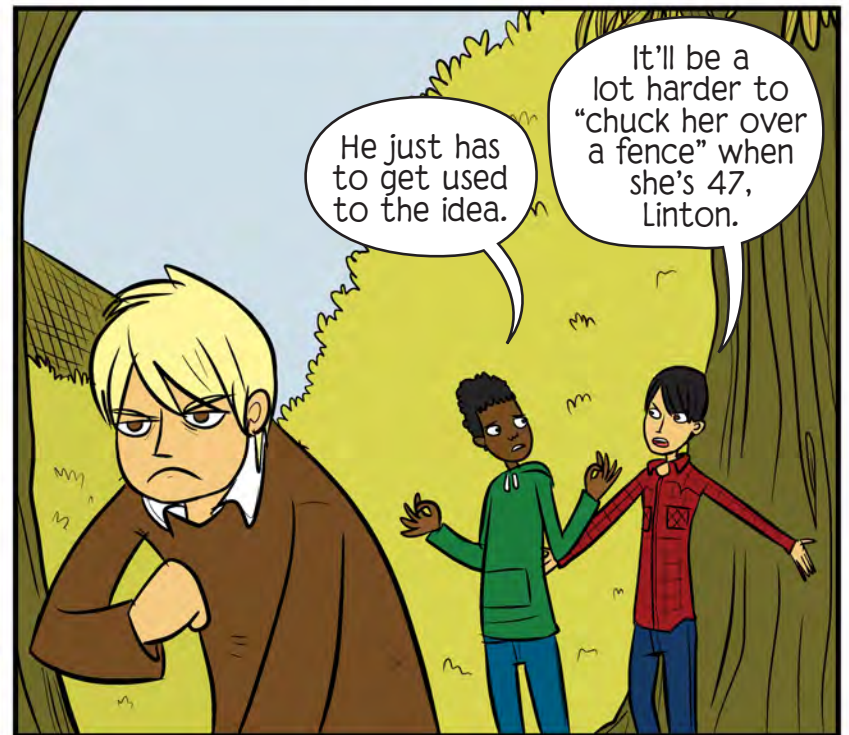
Maybe *too* intense!



Do you have any better suggestions?

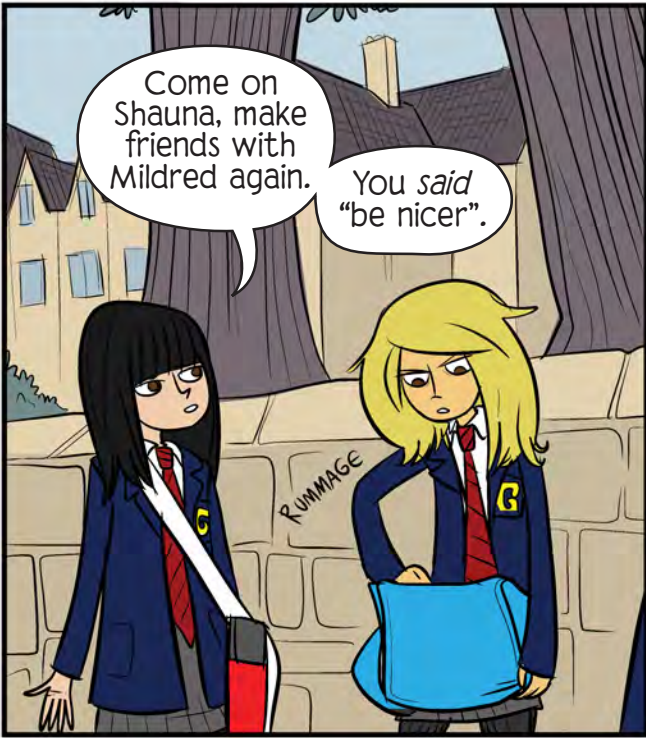
Egg it in the town square.

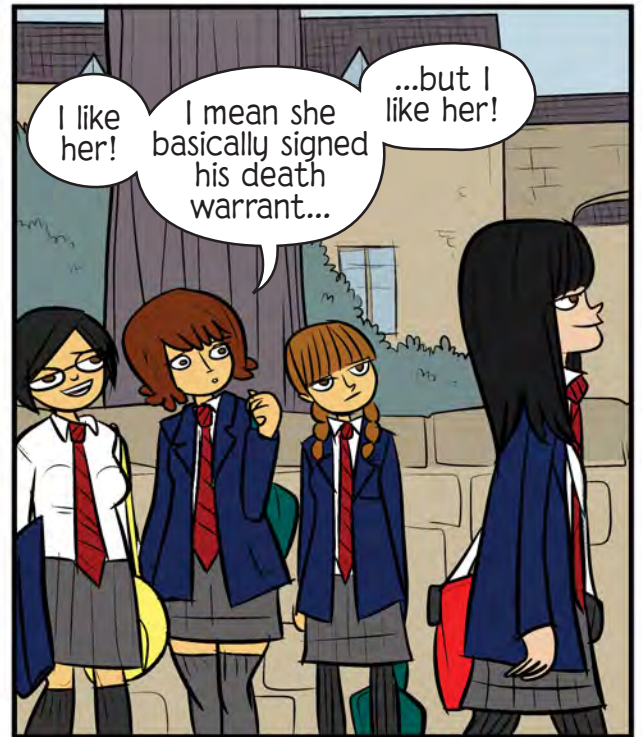




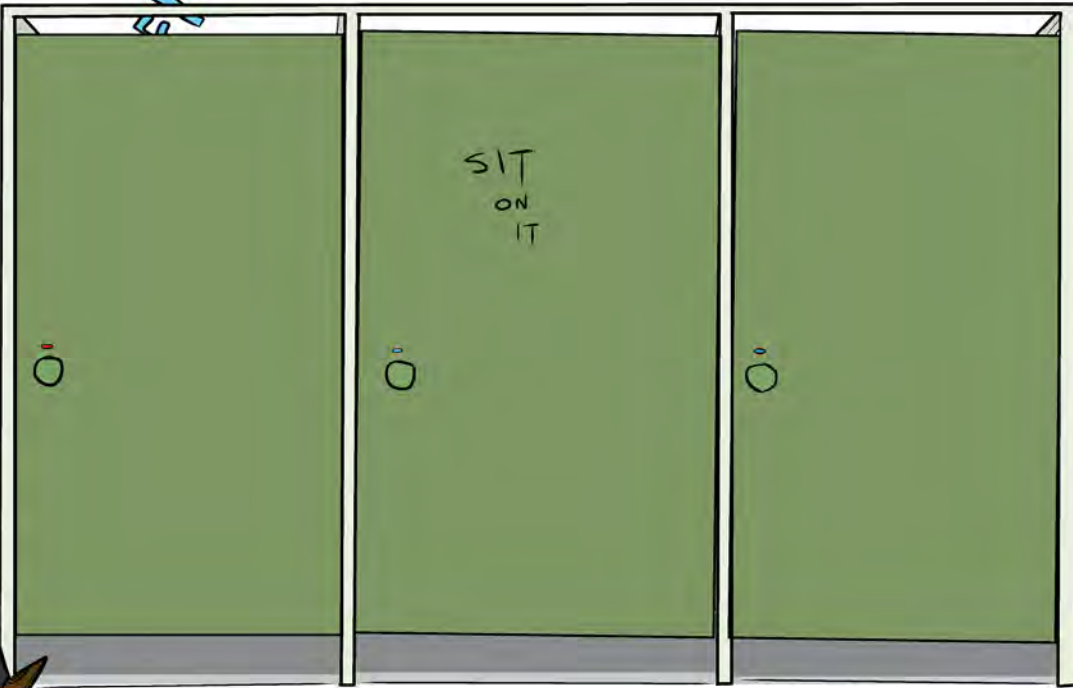


STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP

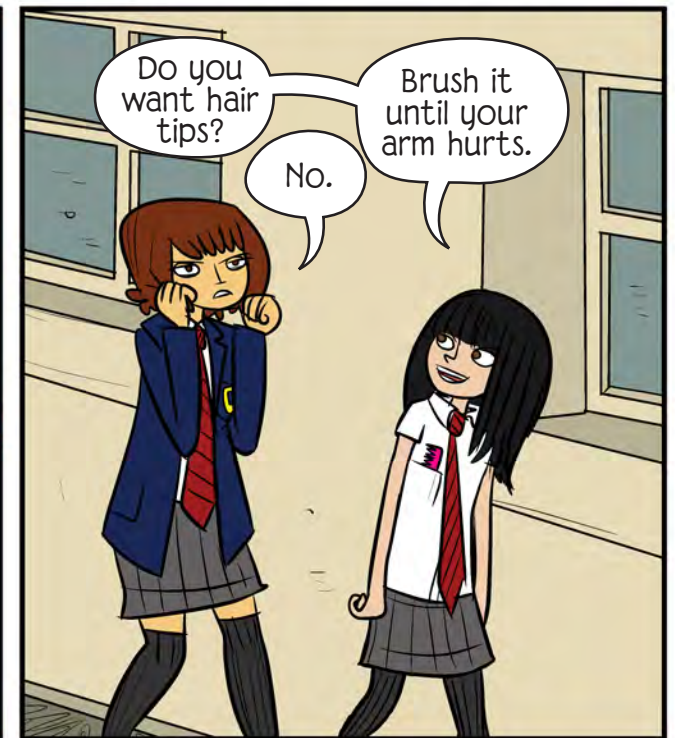
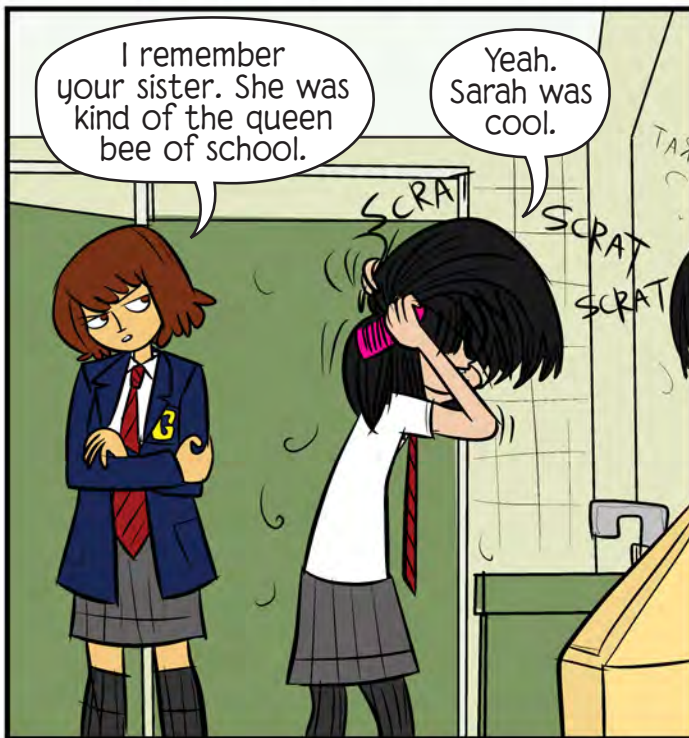
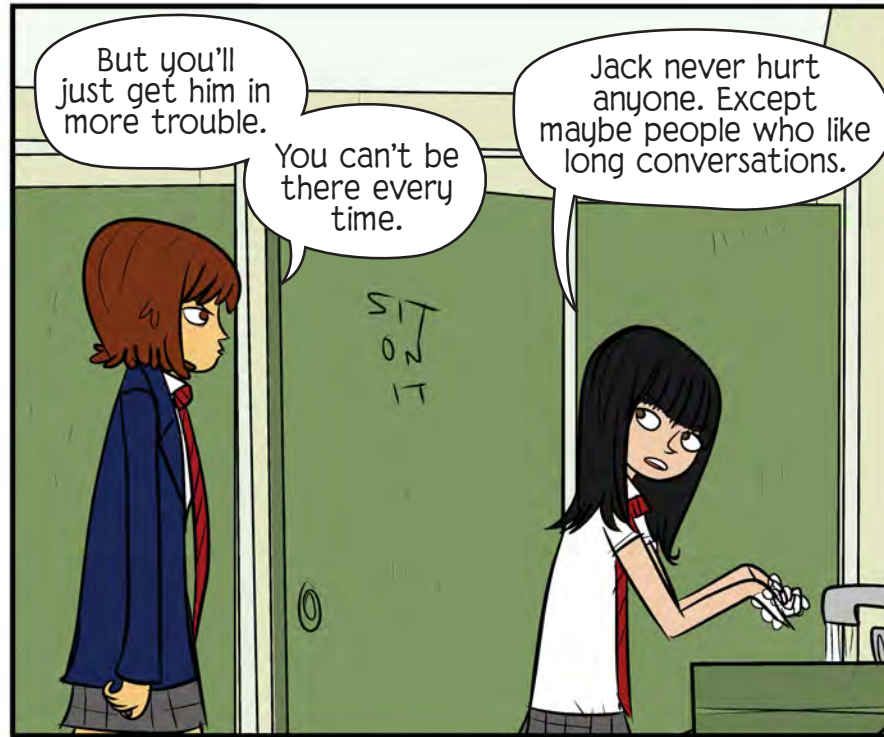


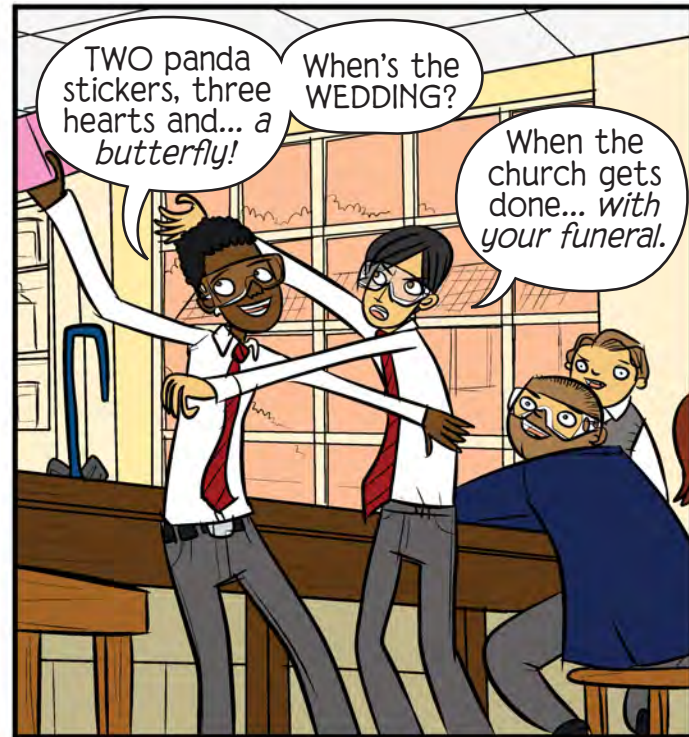
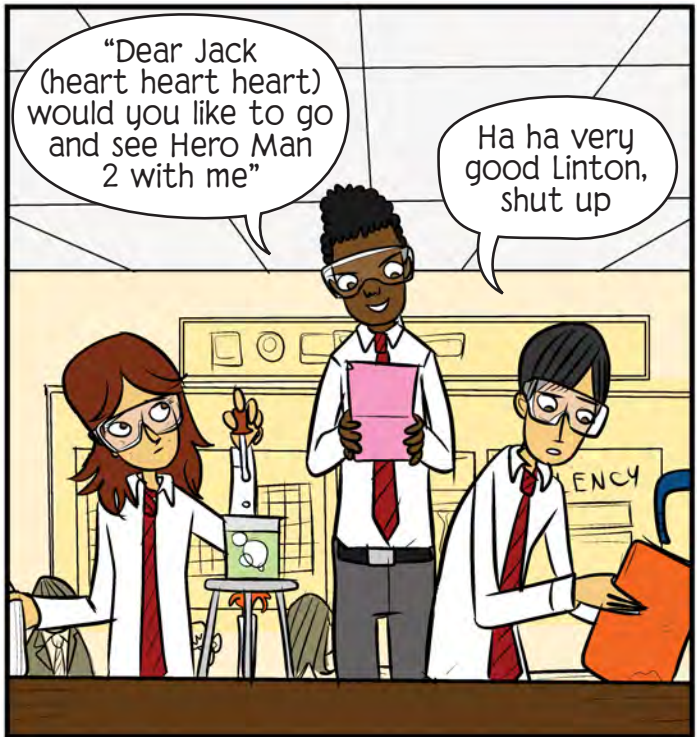
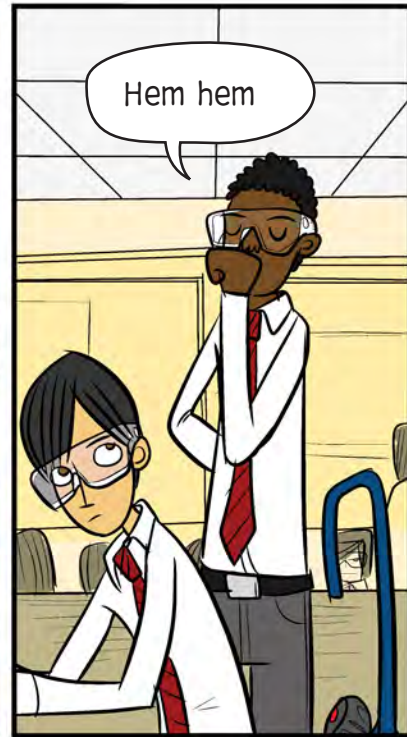


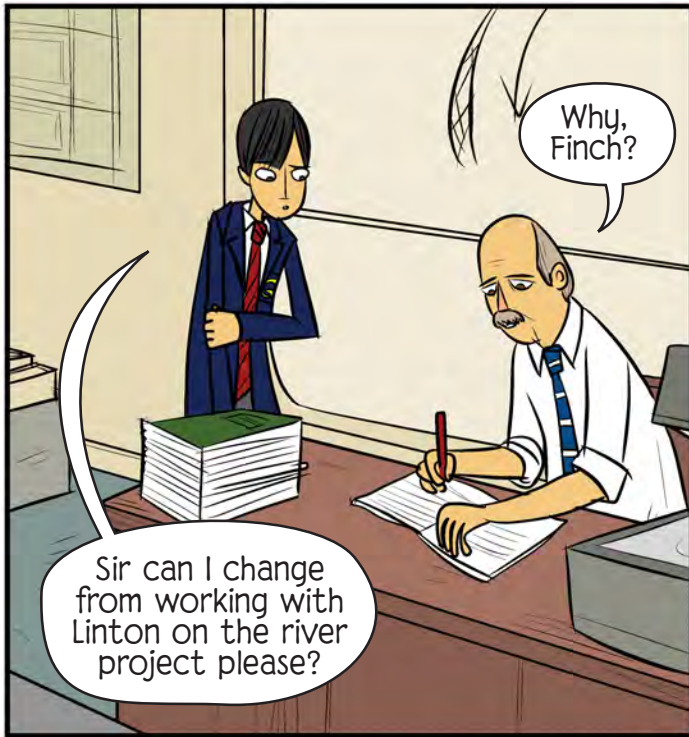
FFLUSSSHHH



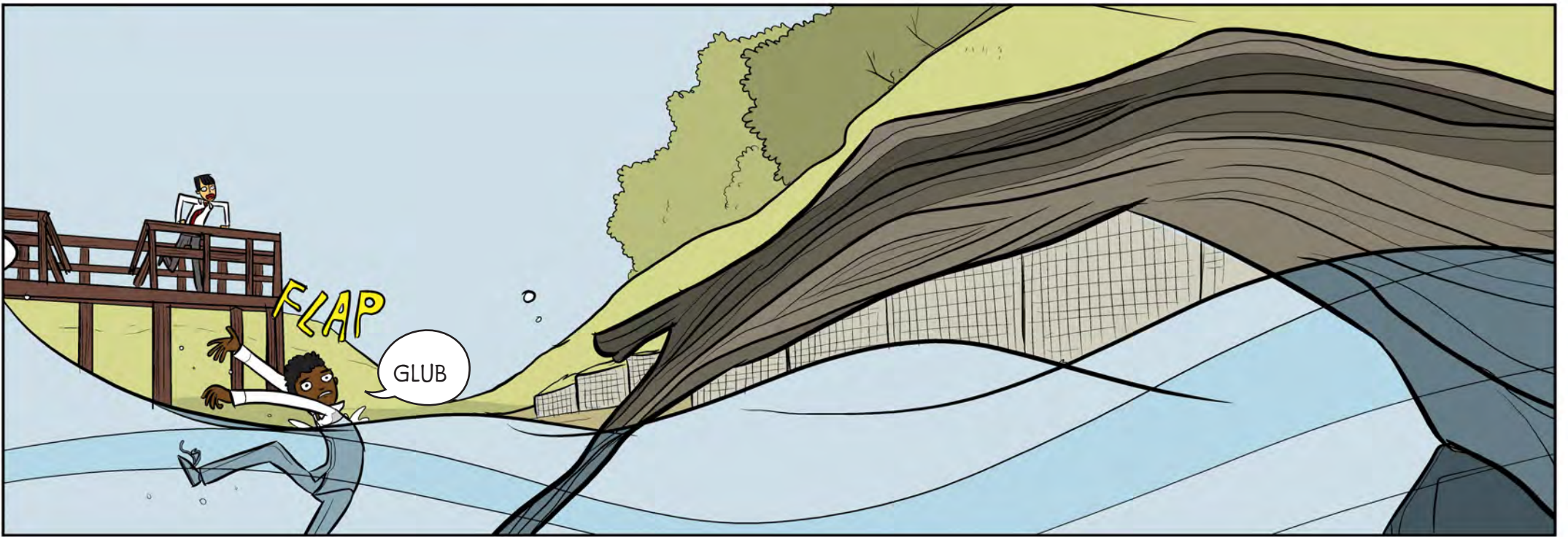
SIT
ON
IT

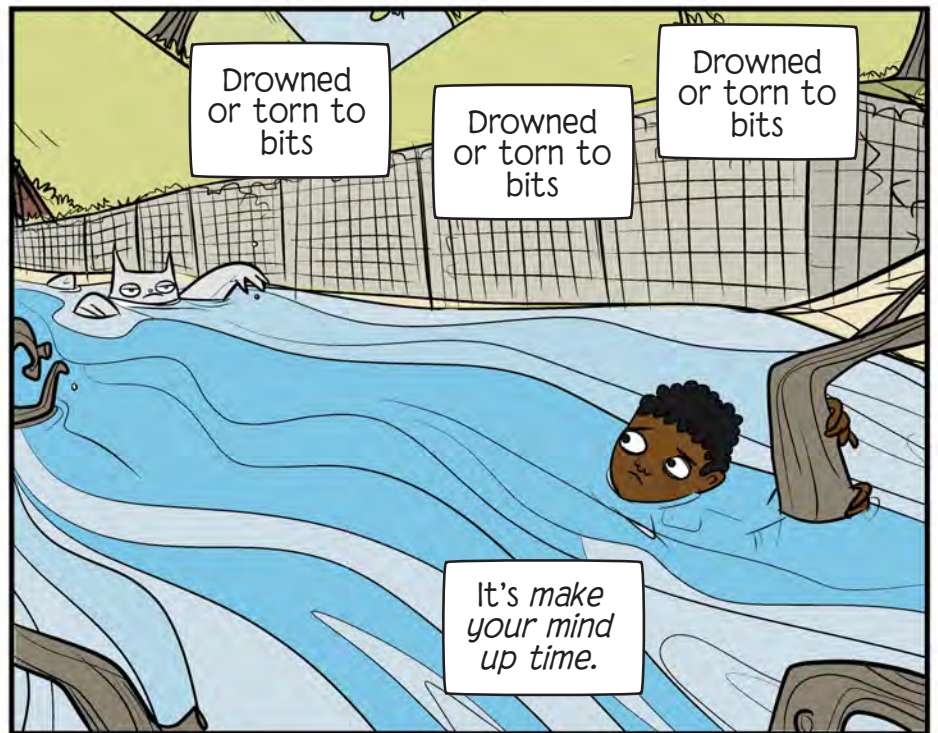


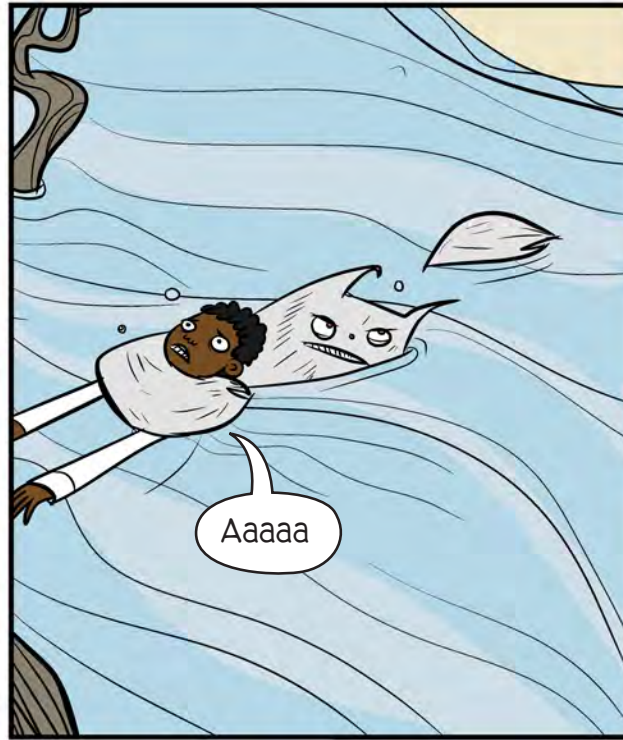


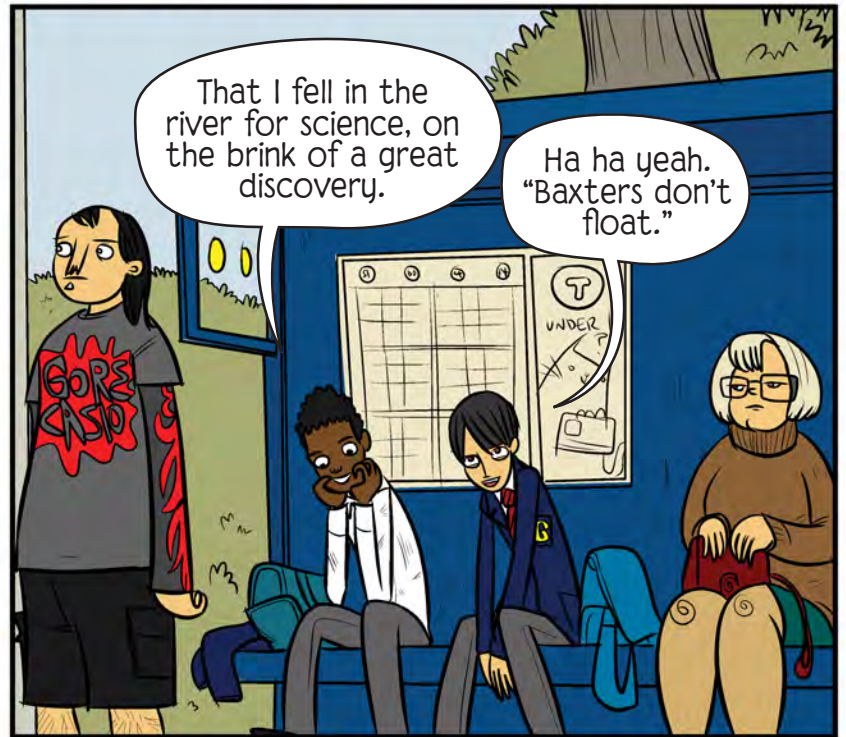
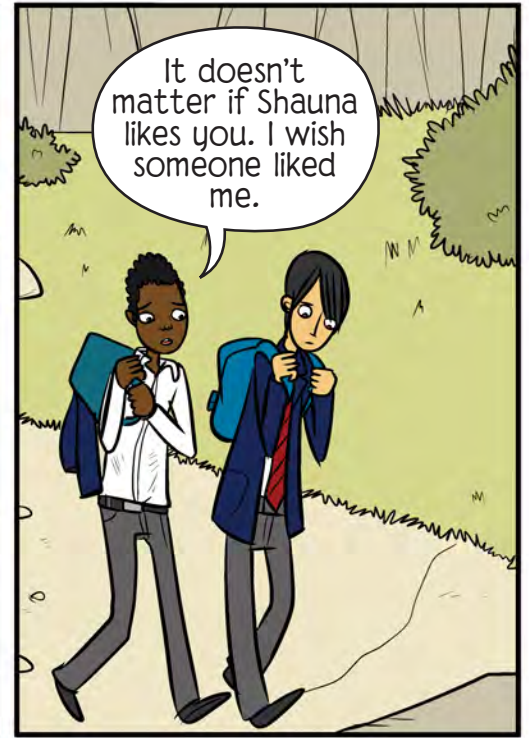














You make a better door than a window, Jack.

At least I know how to get dressed.



YUR YUR YUR

Make yourself useful.

KNOCK KNOCK

KICK



Sonny!

Hello, Jack.



Linton?

Get in.

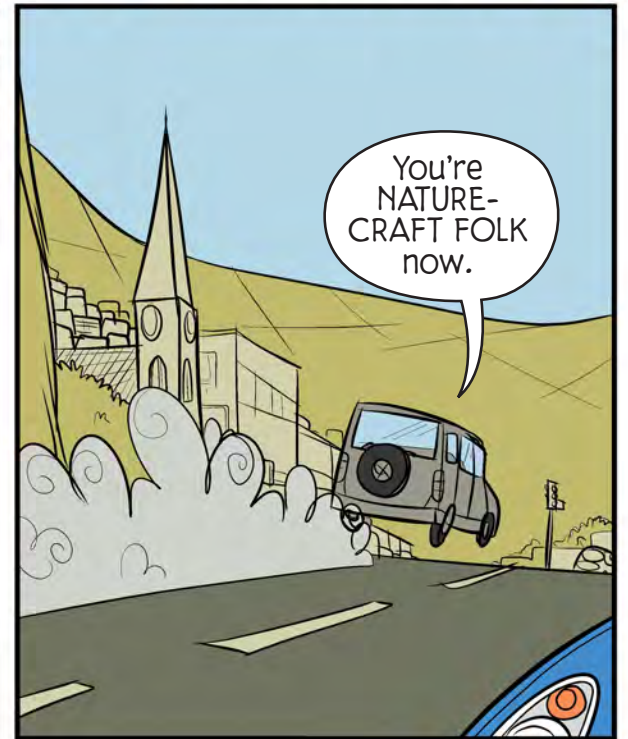


Put this on.

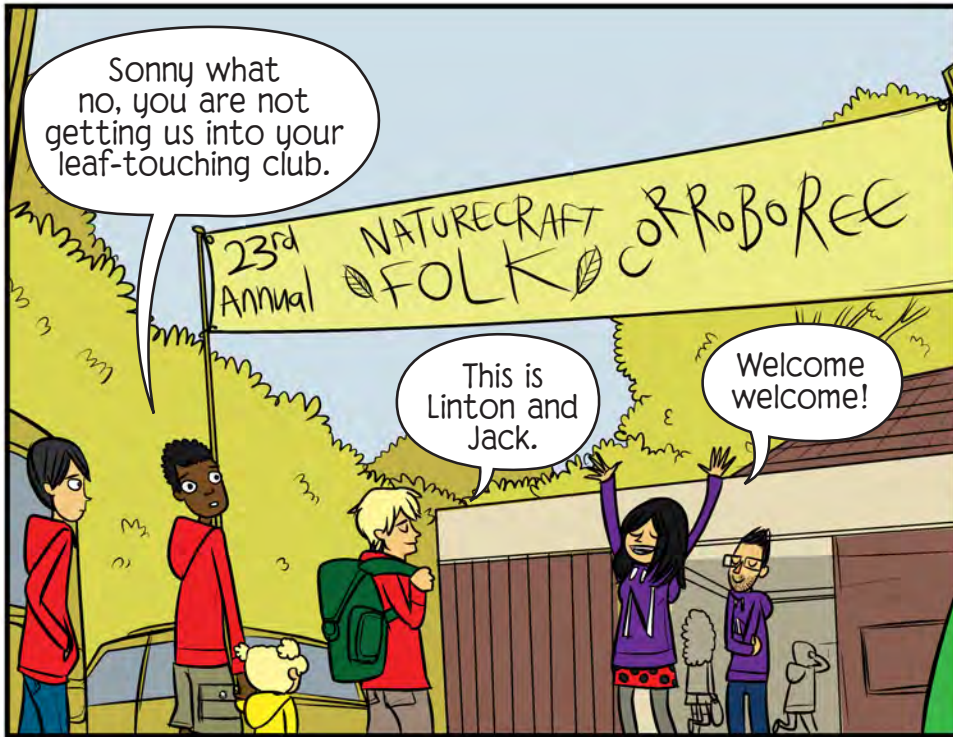


But my mum, I can't-

Your mum has been informed.



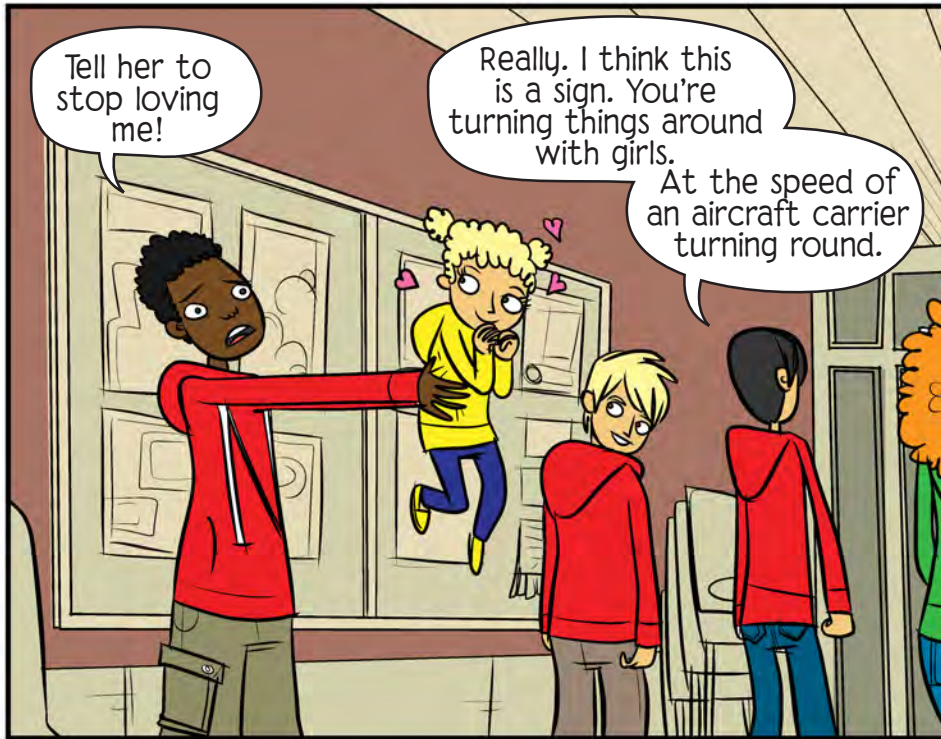
You're NATURE-CRAFT FOLK now.





I love Linton MWA MWA MWA

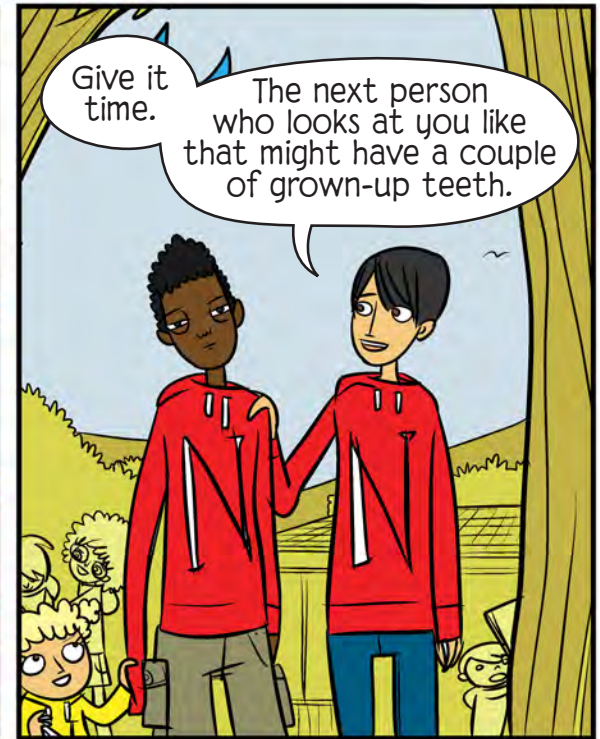
Aaagh stop!



Tell her to stop loving me!

Really. I think this is a sign. You're turning things around with girls.

At the speed of an aircraft carrier turning round.



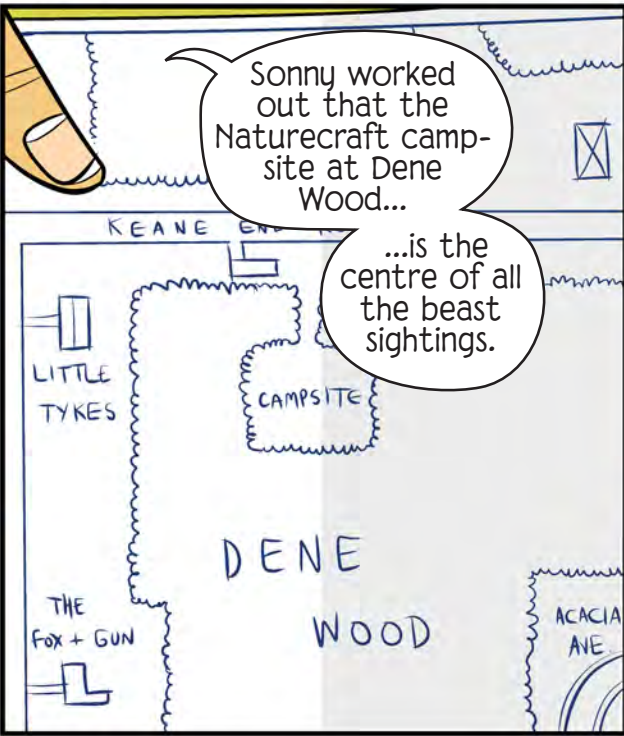
Give it time.

The next person who looks at you like that might have a couple of grown-up teeth.



Why Jack, why are we here, WHY?

Look at this.



Sonny worked out that the Naturecraft campsite at Dene Wood...

...is the centre of all the beast sightings.

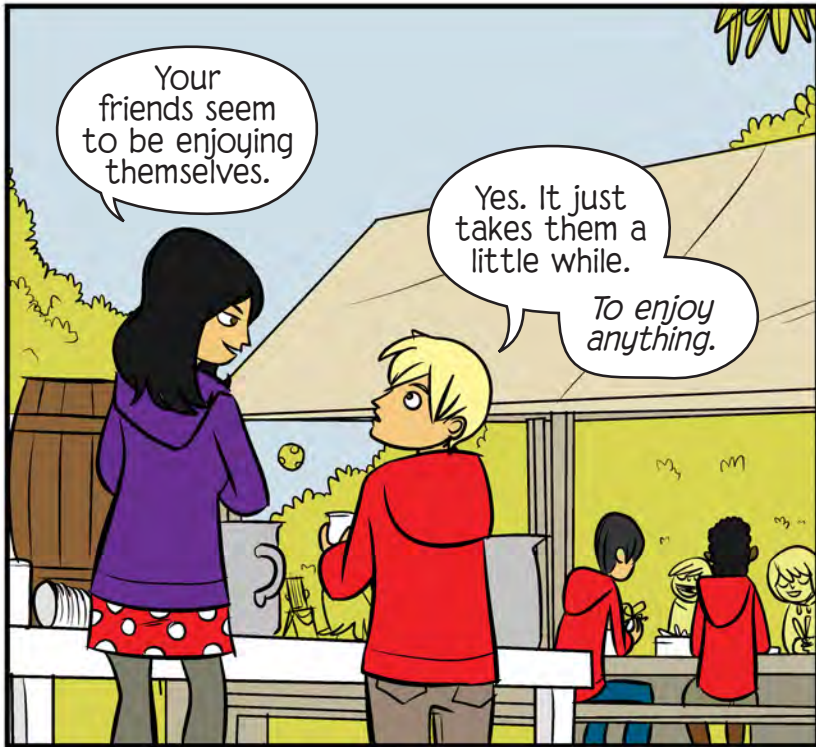


So tonight we'll draw the beast out?

Using the only girl that ever told you she loved you as bait.



Then you turn evil.



Your friends seem to be enjoying themselves.

Yes. It just takes them a little while.

To enjoy anything.



What's that?

Well it started as an elephant.. then it sort of had a "mouse stage"...



...now I think it's one of those "shrunken heads".

Yeah, nice. I've made a GUN.



All right everybody, time to go inside and-



TIME TO...

OH NO

BEEP BEEP!

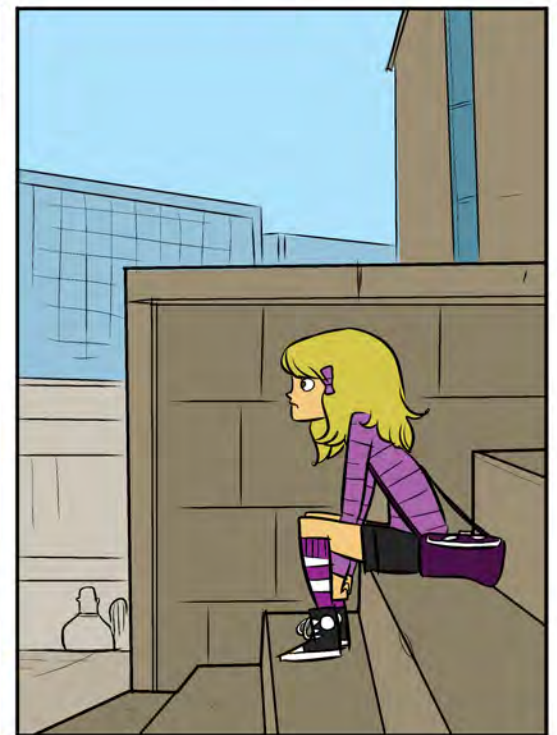
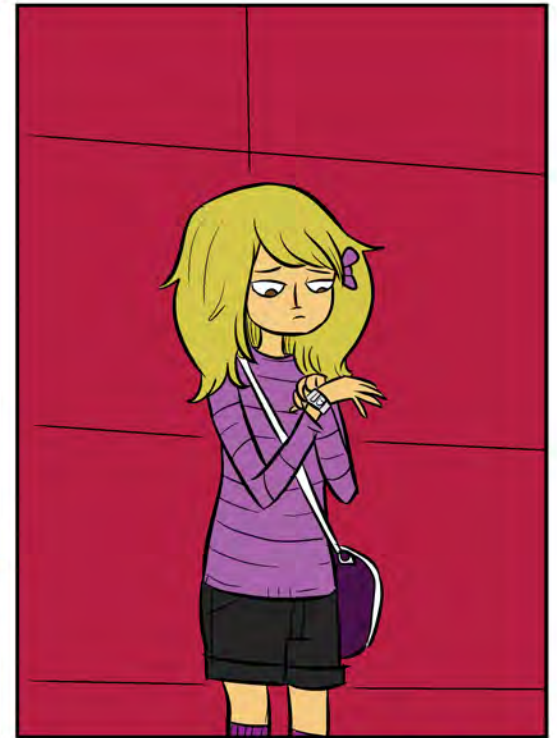
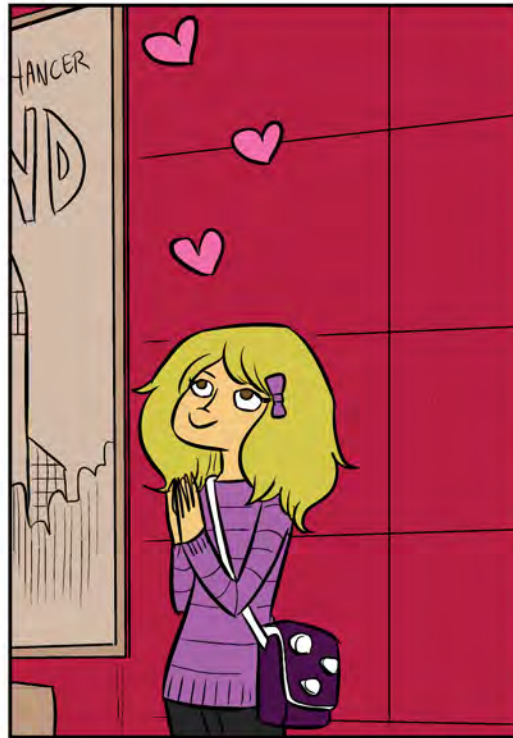
BEEP BEEP!



If Jack and I get married, I'll be MRS WICKLE FINCH.

Oh no... Wickle Finch, that's like, a baby bird.

That won't do.





He's only half an hour late.

But what if he's had an accident?



What if he's been KNOCKED OVER getting here and it's MY FAULT?



No, you'd have heard ambulances.

I wish I had a PHONE, I'm going to ask for a phone for Christmas.



Am I waiting in the wrong place? What if he thought I was waiting inside?

SHAUNA!



Hm oh what a surprise seeing you here, Lottie!

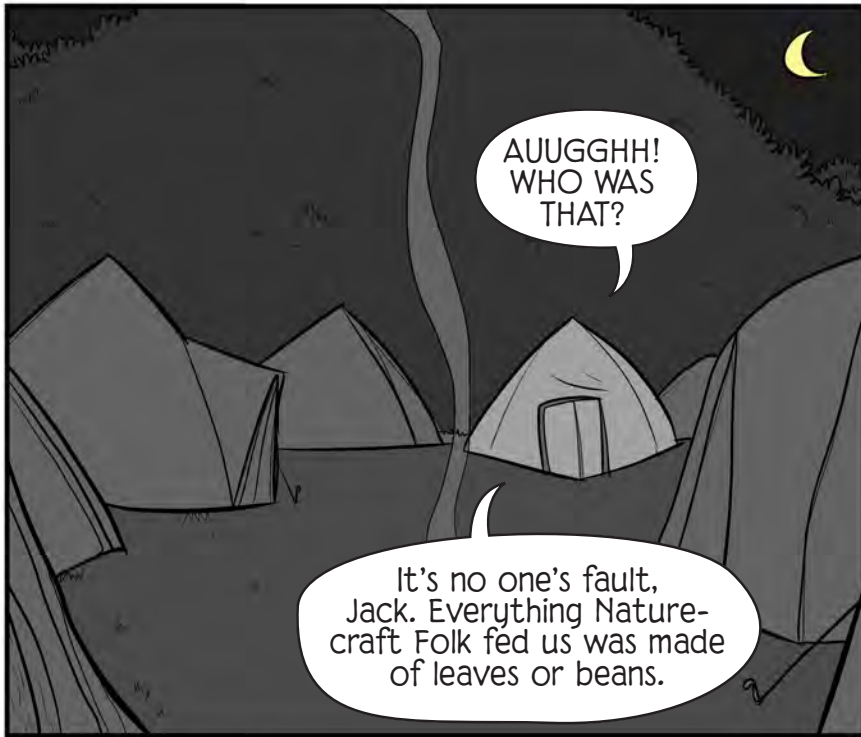


He isn't coming, Shauna.

I bought you these tissues so just start leaking any time you want.







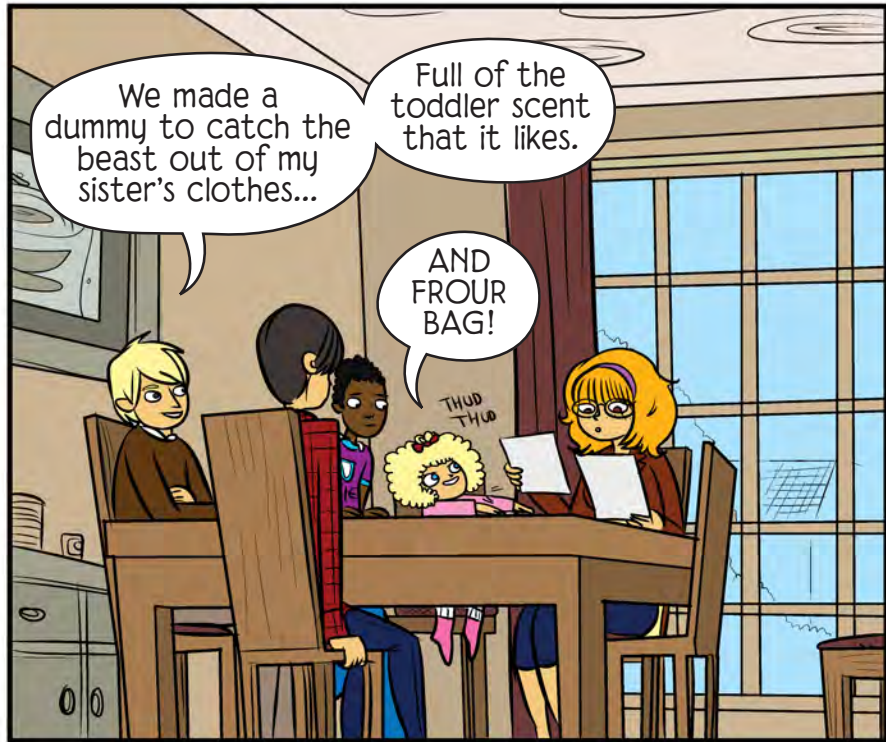






What do we do with the leftover bits?

Leave them! They're biodegradable! That's the Naturecraft way!



We made a dummy to catch the beast out of my sister's clothes...

Full of the toddler scent that it likes.

AND FROUR BAG!



I see! Boys, this is GREAT.



What is this RAG? Where is my copy of BIG GAME?

FIRST PICTURES OF TACKLEFORD BEAST
Boys capture creature on camera
By Erin Winters



Big Game comes on a Tuesday. Wednesday is local paper day.

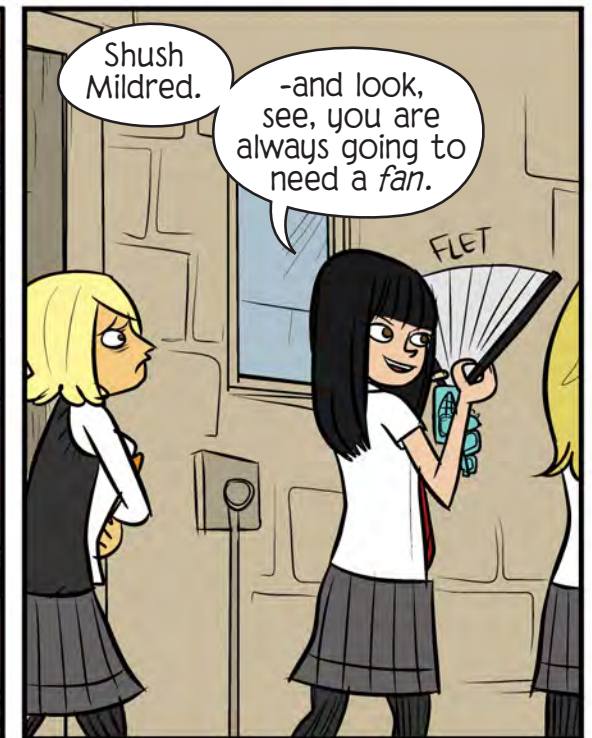
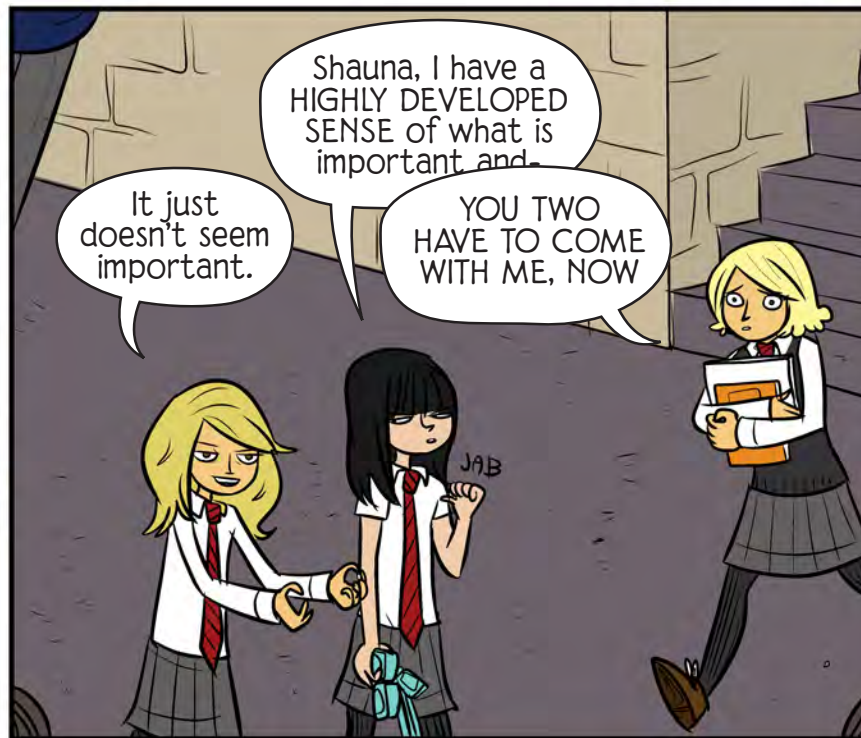
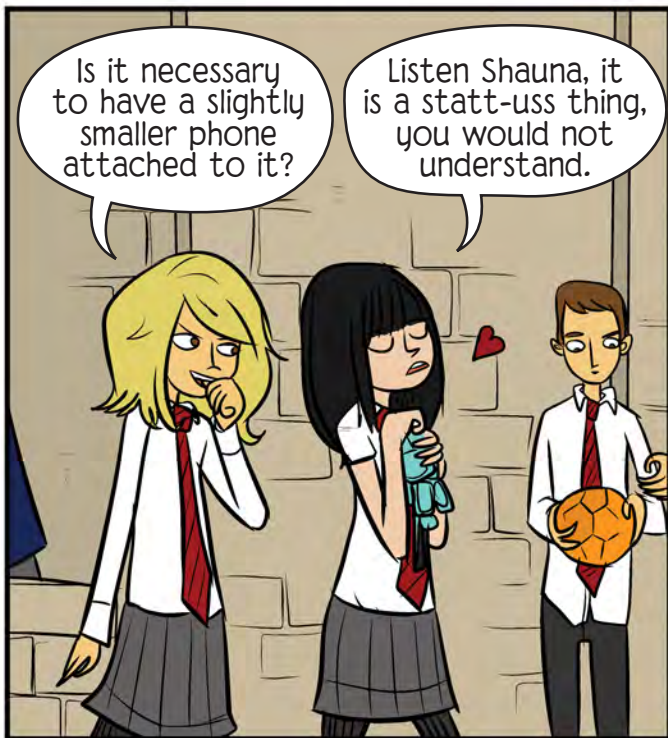
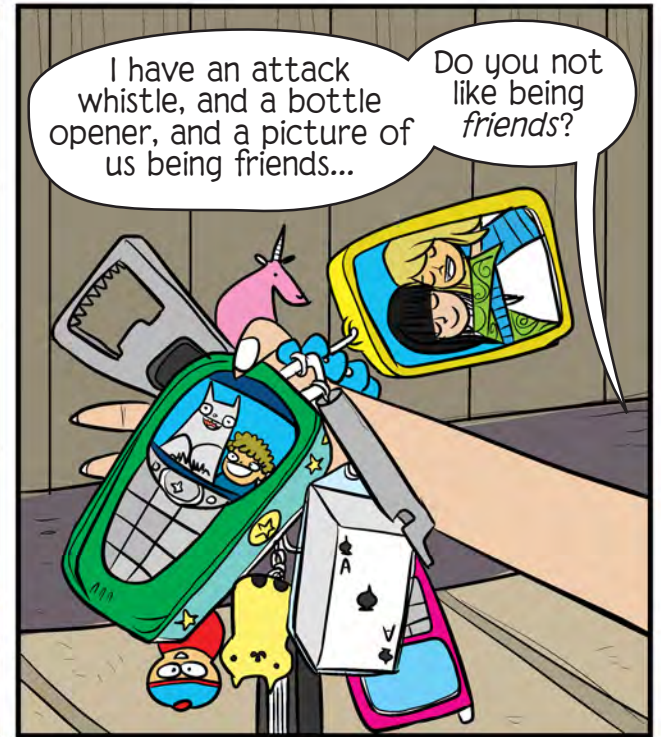
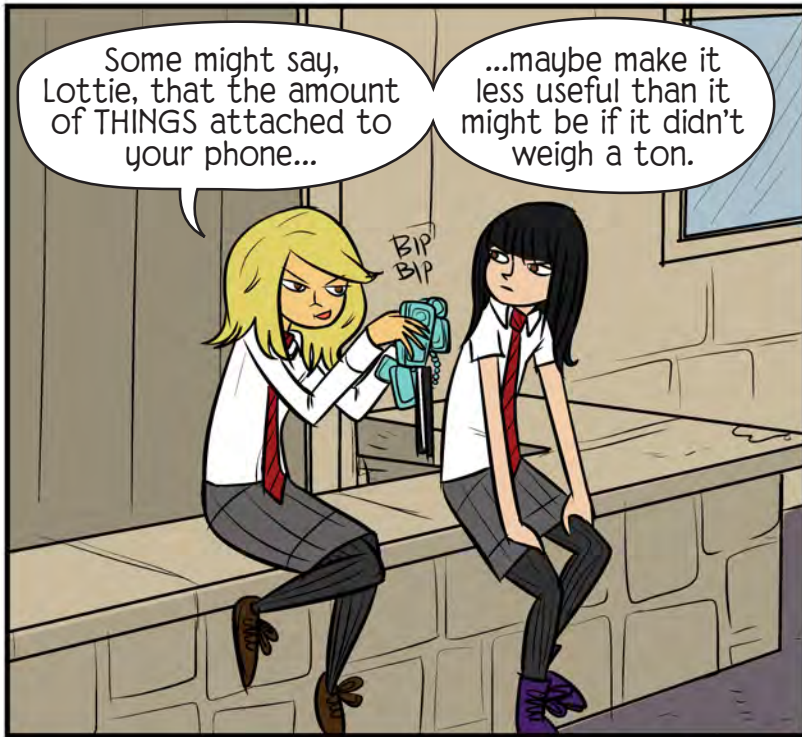
Take a look.

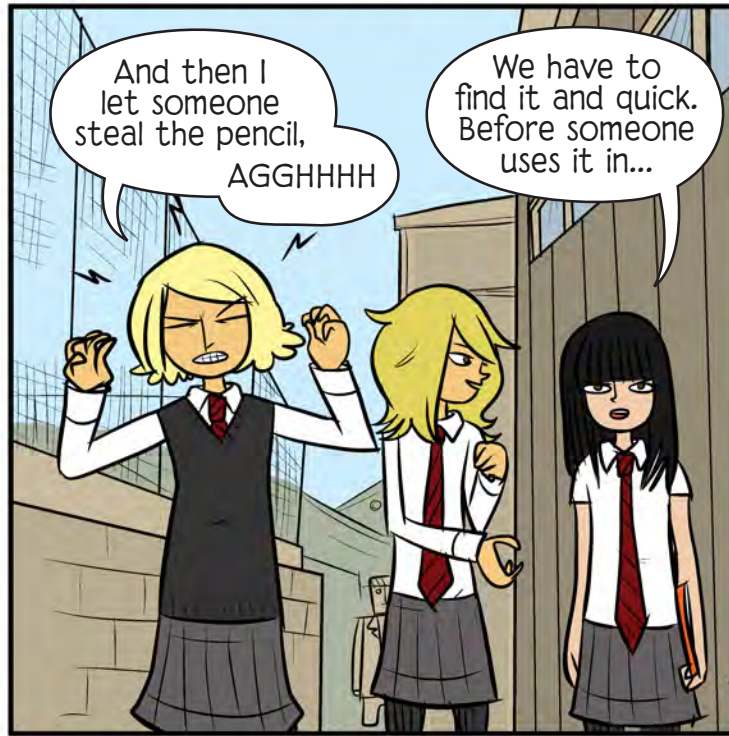
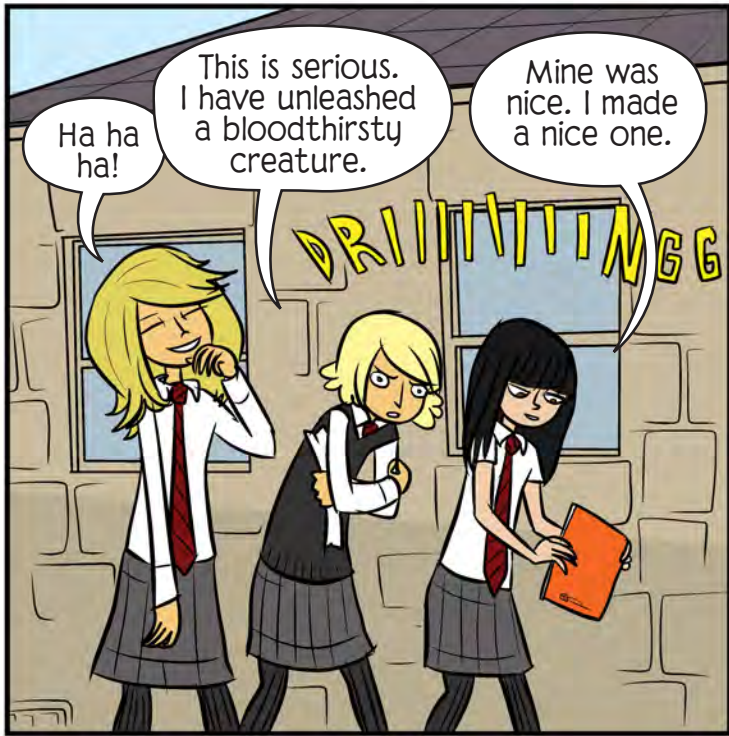
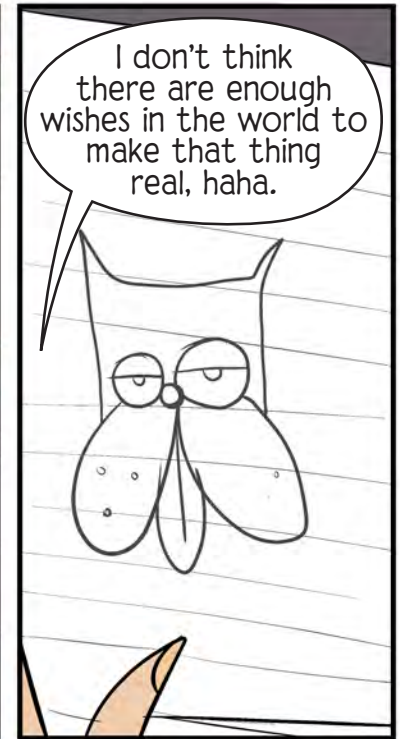
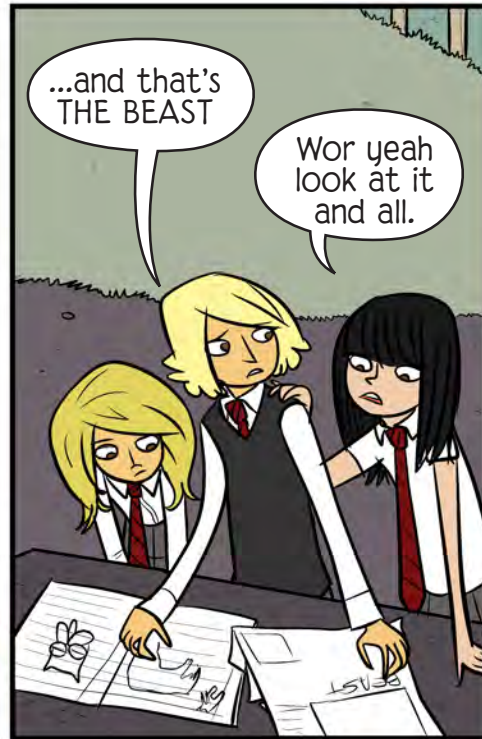
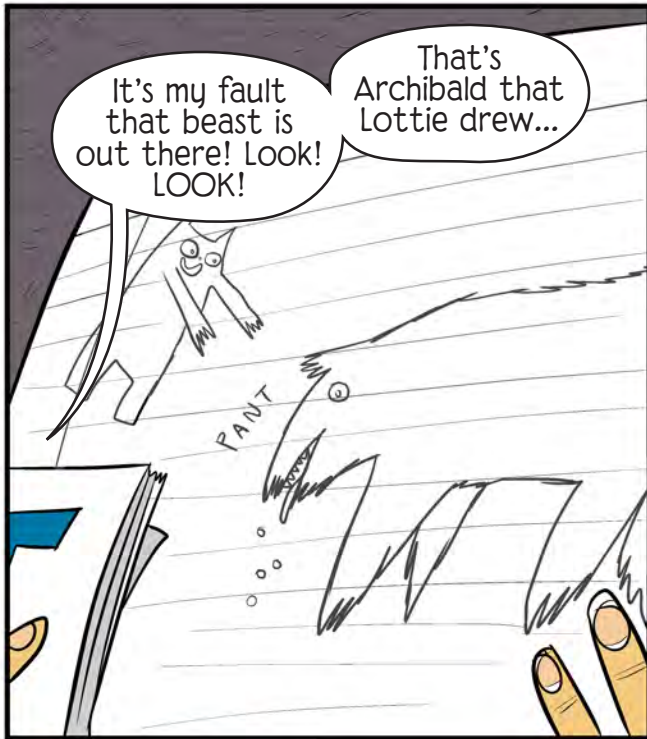


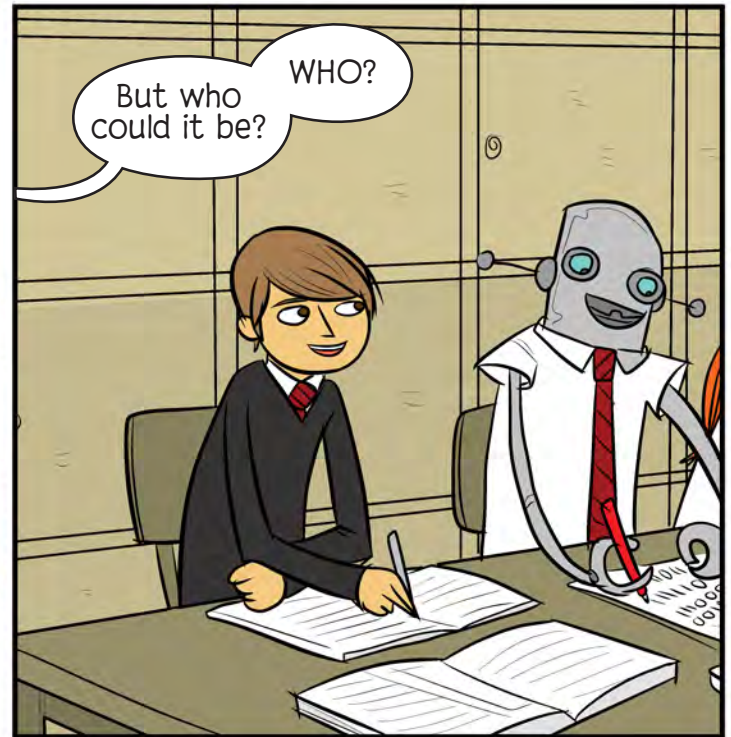
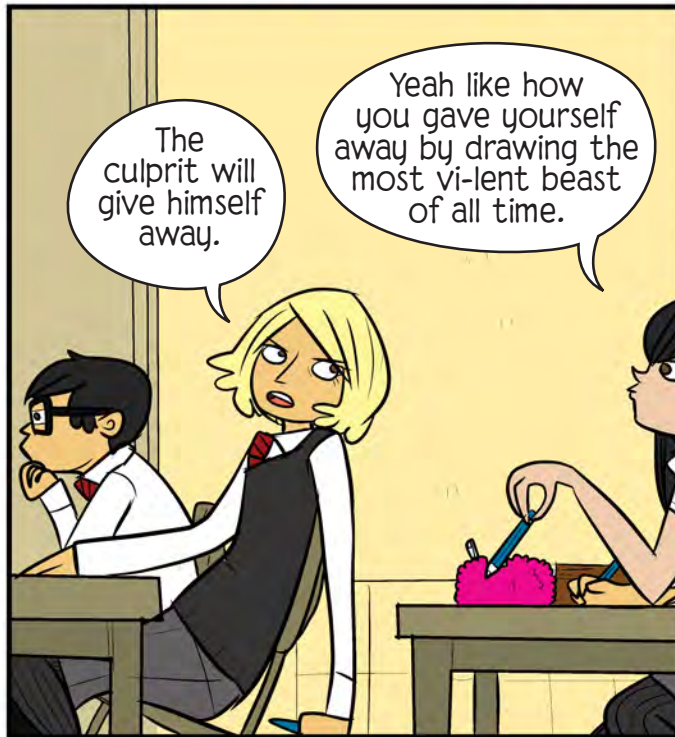
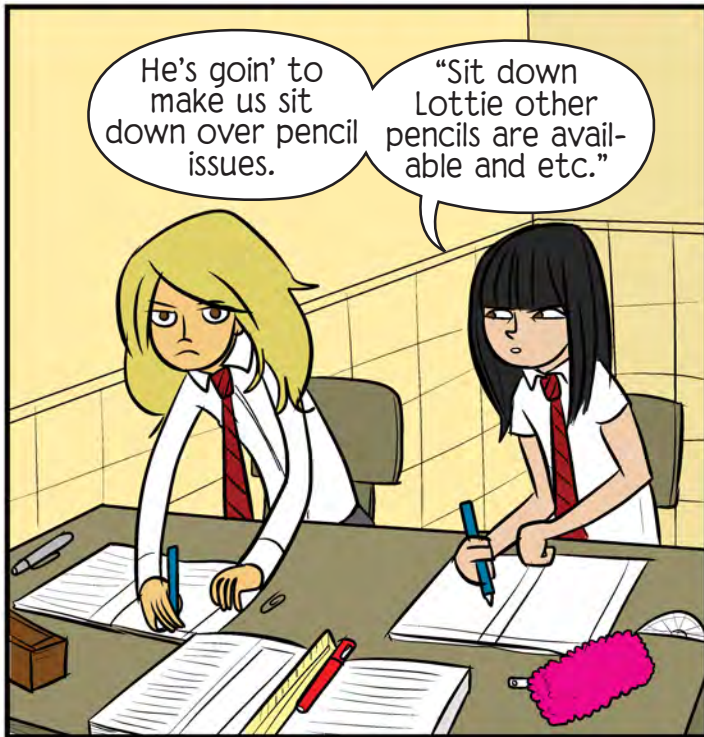
You're holding it upside down. And looking in the wrong direction.

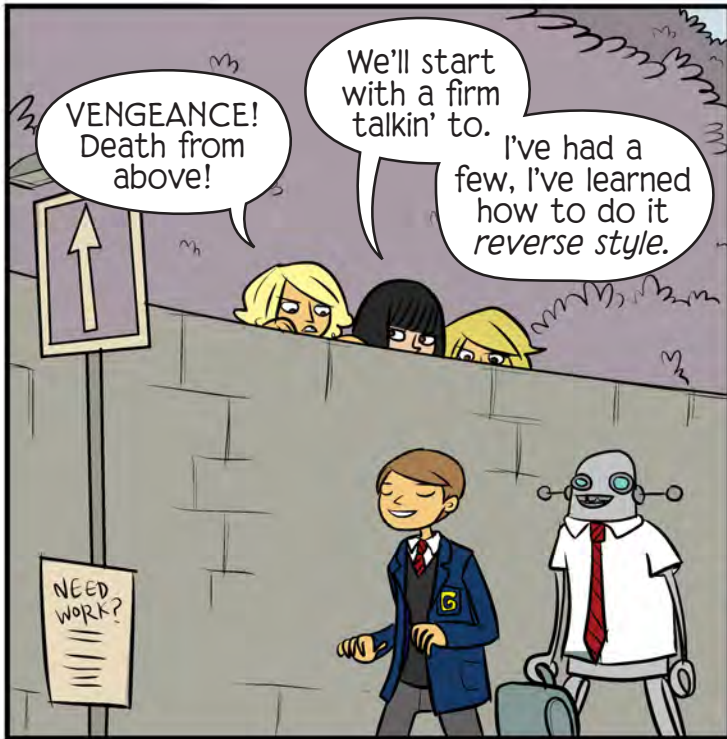
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR "DETAILS"!









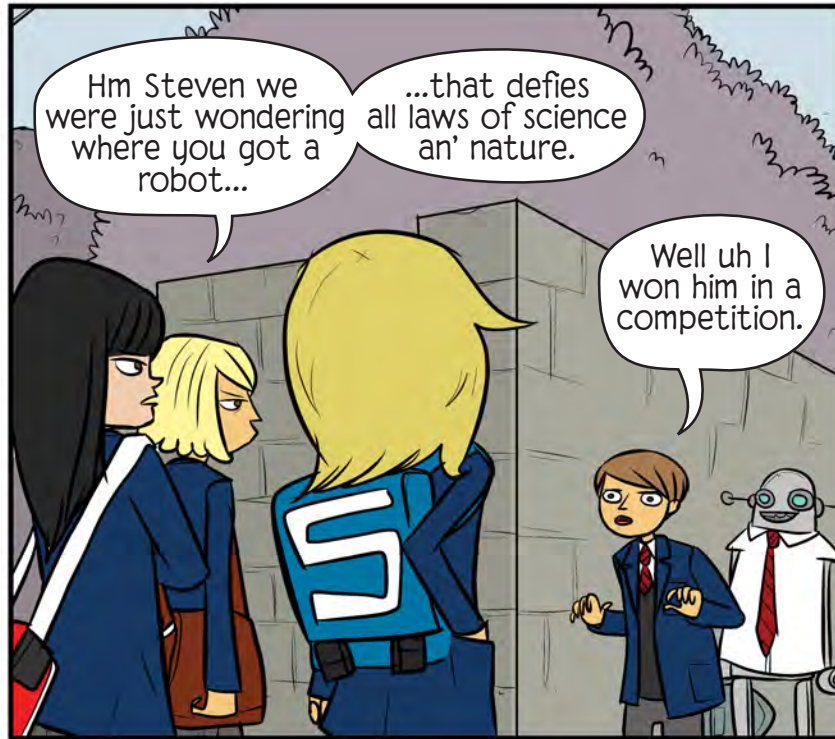


VENGEANCE!
Death from above!

We'll start with a firm talkin' to.

I've had a few, I've learned how to do it reverse style.

NEED WORK?



Hm Steven we were just wondering where you got a robot...

...that defies all laws of science an' nature.

Well uh I won him in a competition.

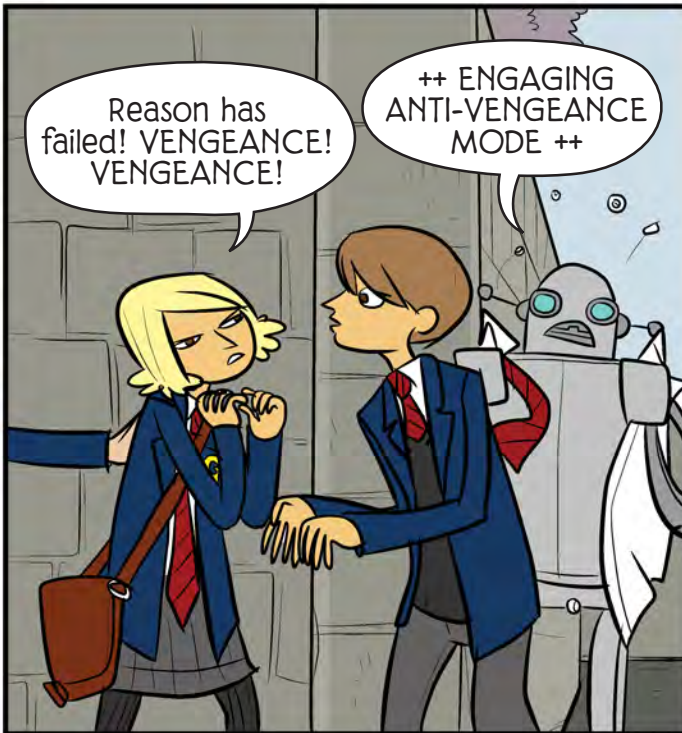


Give us the magic pencil, Steven, give it back NOW.

NO! I EARNED THAT PENCIL!



I had to sit and listen to you going on and on about it...



Reason has failed! VENGEANCE! VENGEANCE!

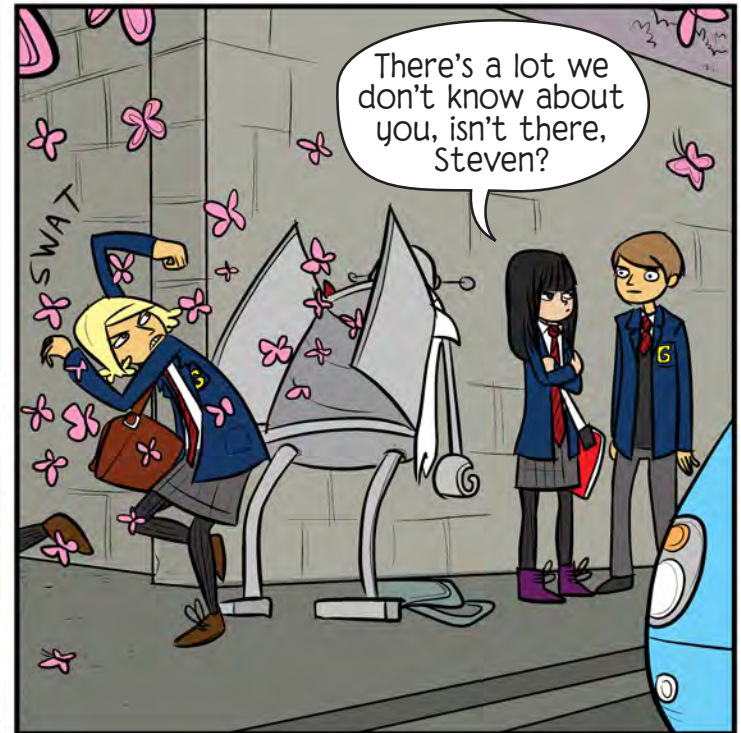
++ ENGAGING ANTI-VENGEANCE MODE ++



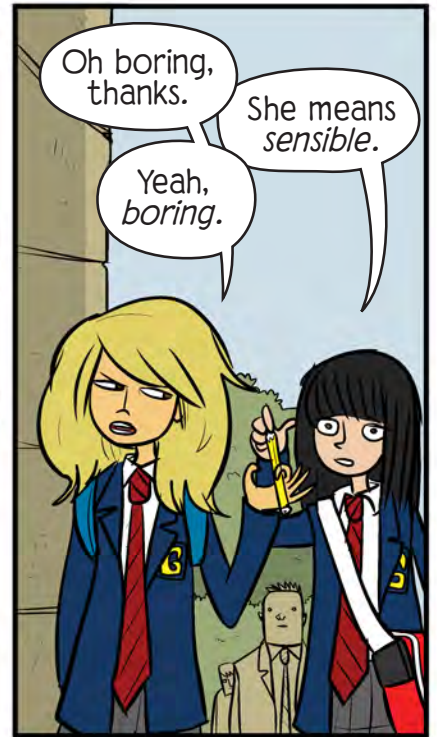
I thought I was going to go mad.

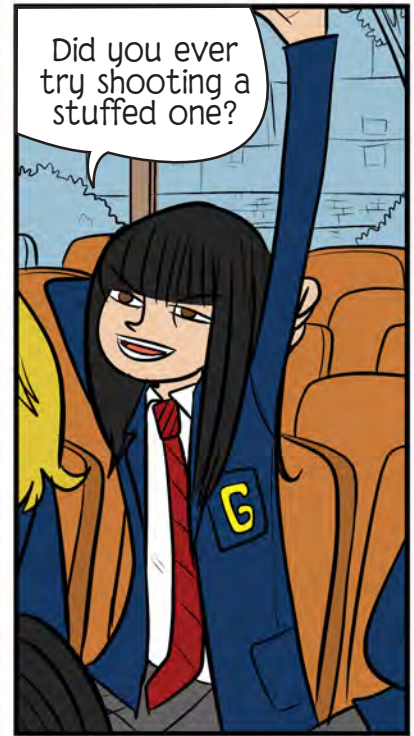
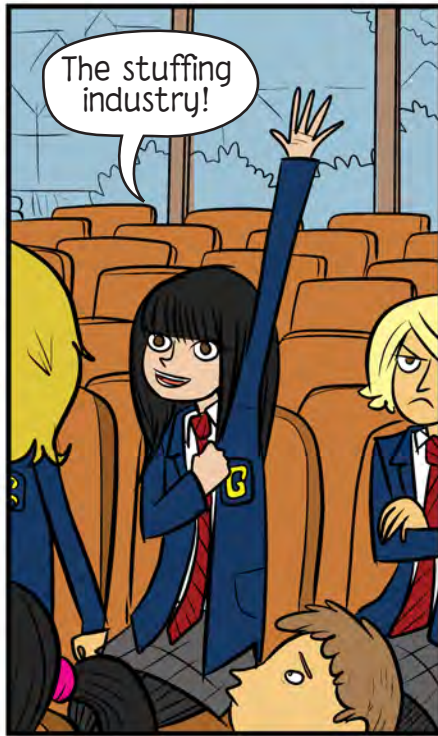
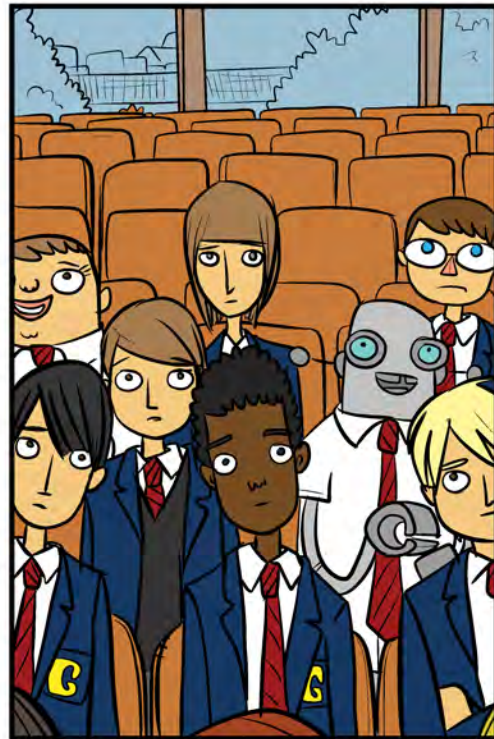
You never SHUT UP

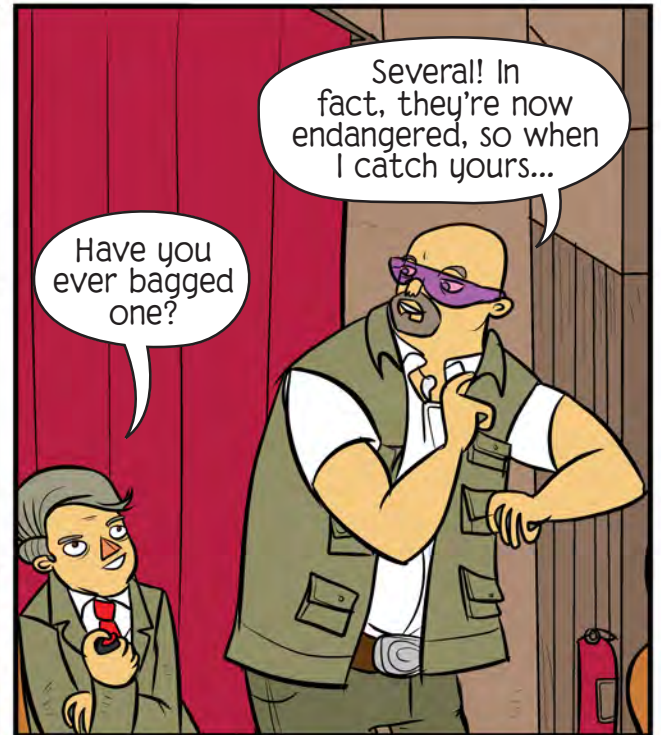
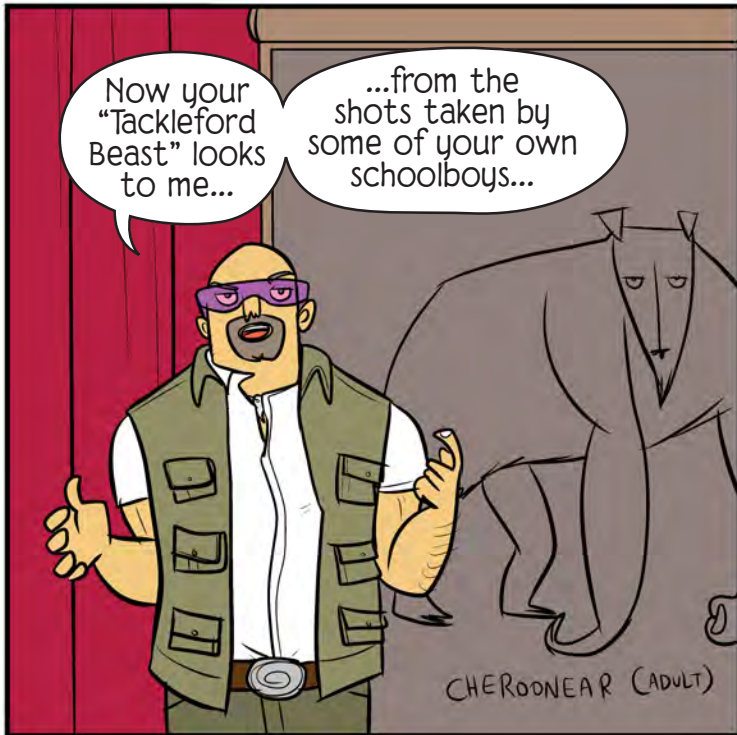
So I took it.



There's a lot we don't know about you, isn't there, Steven?

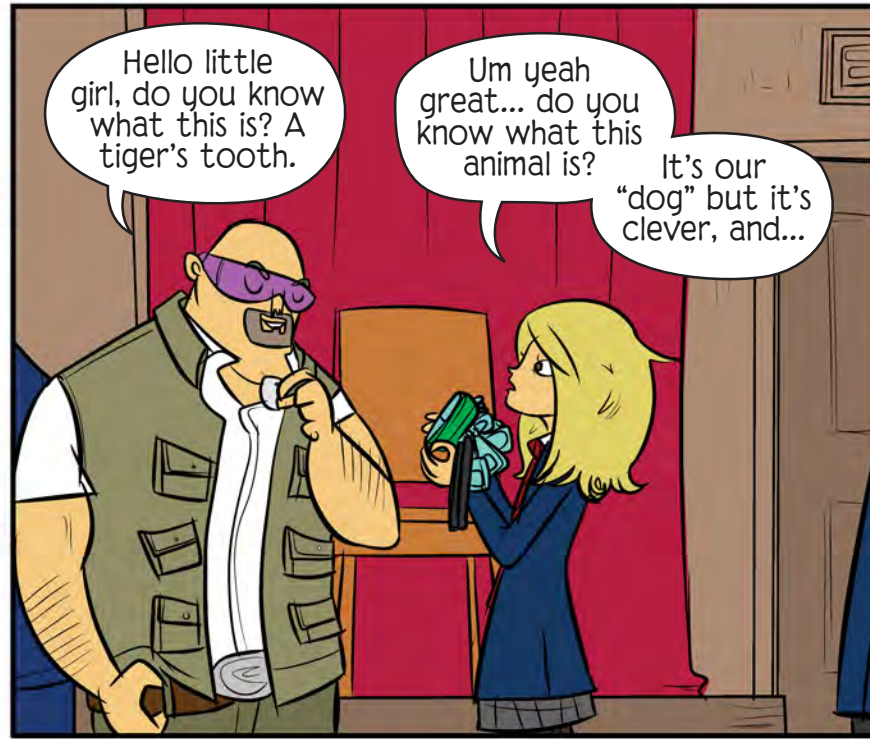






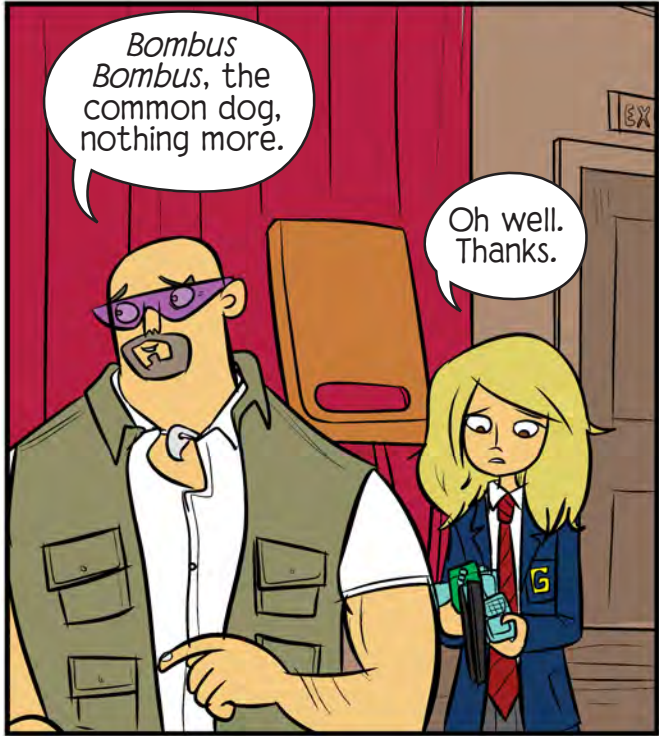
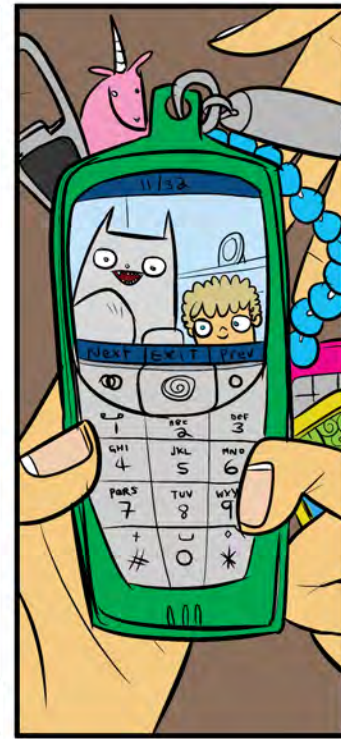


Give me your phone, Lottie! I want to ask the hunter what Archie is.



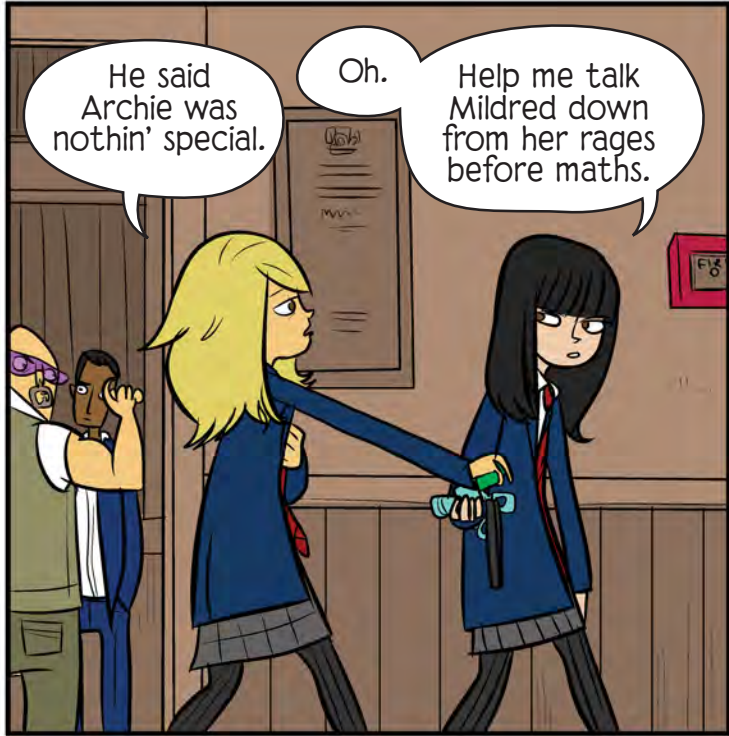
Hello little girl, do you know what this is? A tiger's tooth.

Um yeah great... do you know what this animal is? It's our "dog" but it's clever, and...



Bombus Bombus, the common dog, nothing more.

Oh well. Thanks.



He said Archie was nothin' special.

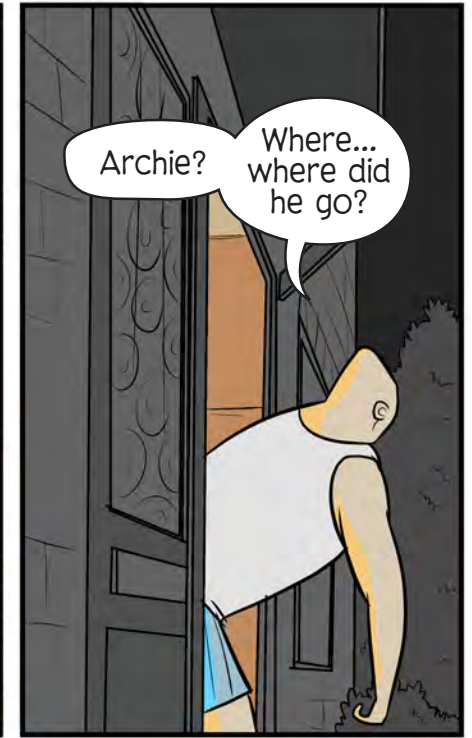
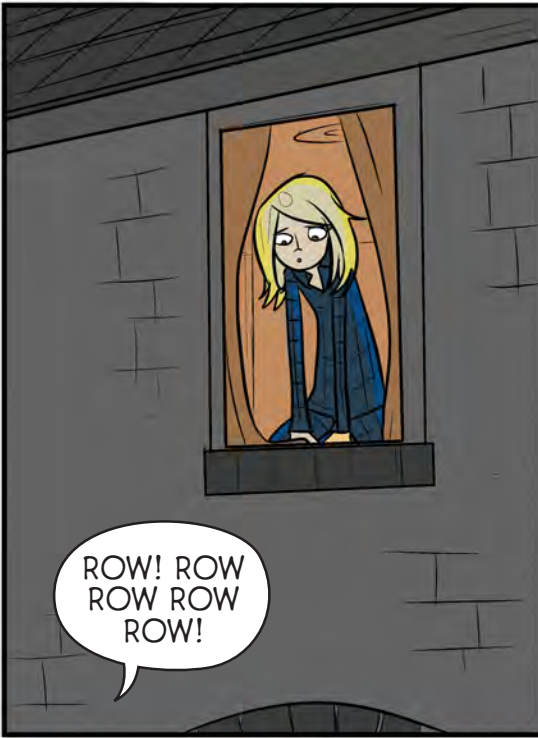
Oh. Help me talk Mildred down from her rages before maths.

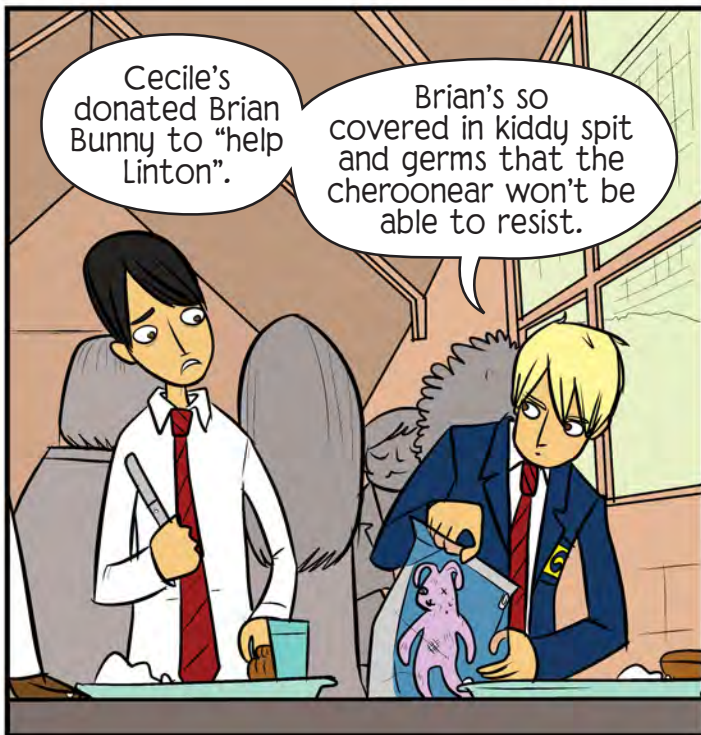
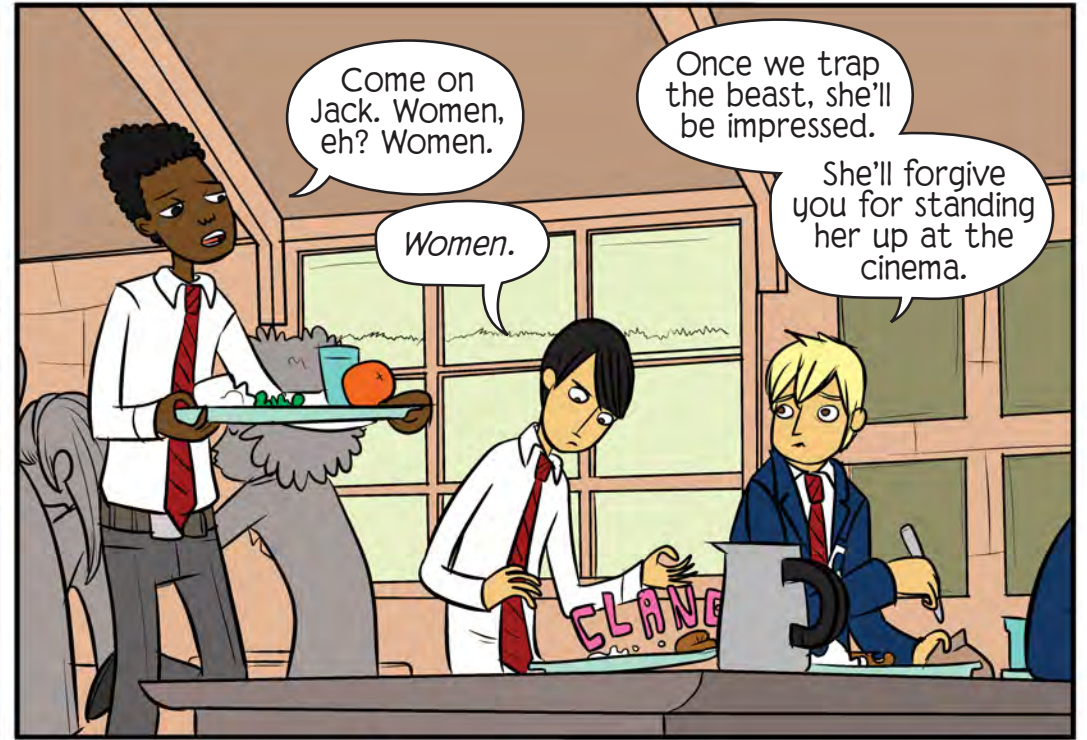
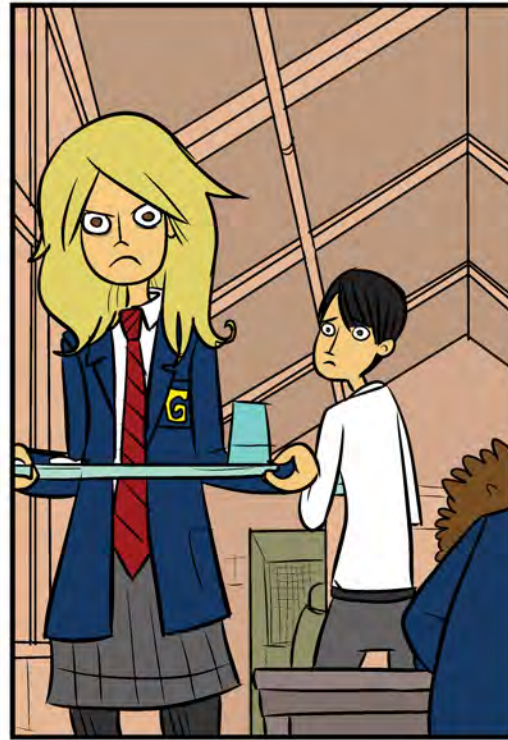
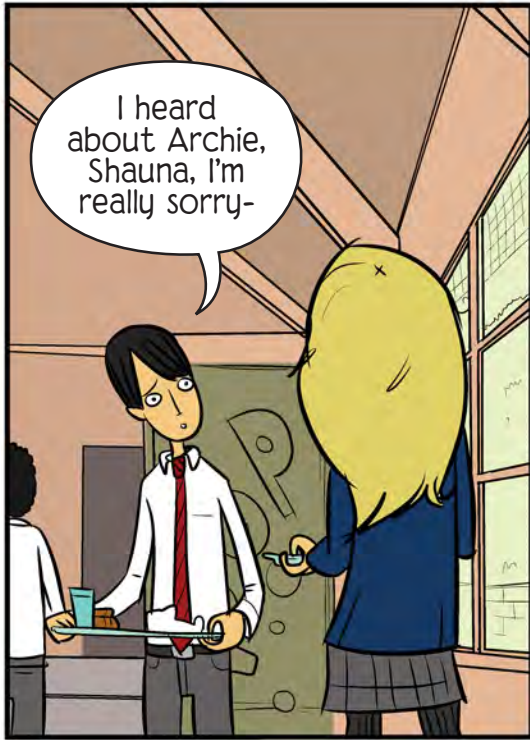


I FOUND THAT MAN OFFENSIVE IN EVERY WAY POSSIBLE.

Come on Mildew, unclench at least a couple of things or you'll stick that way.







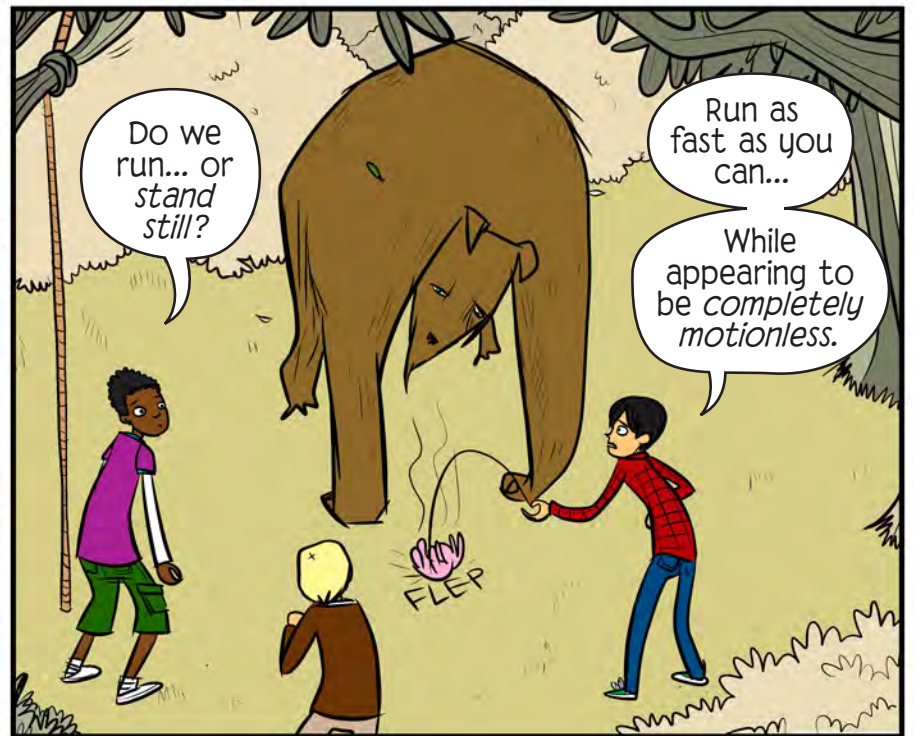


I'm almost certain these are its stools.

They're definitely not deer stools. Or dog stools.

Sonny, what kind of bookshop do you get a book about STOOLS from?

Will you PLEASE stop saying "stools".





On three, we all run in different directions.

That way he only gets one of us.

SNUFF
SNUFF



This thing only eats babies, right?

Yeah but he's not had one for two weeks...

He'd probably eat an ironing board by now...

NARF



One

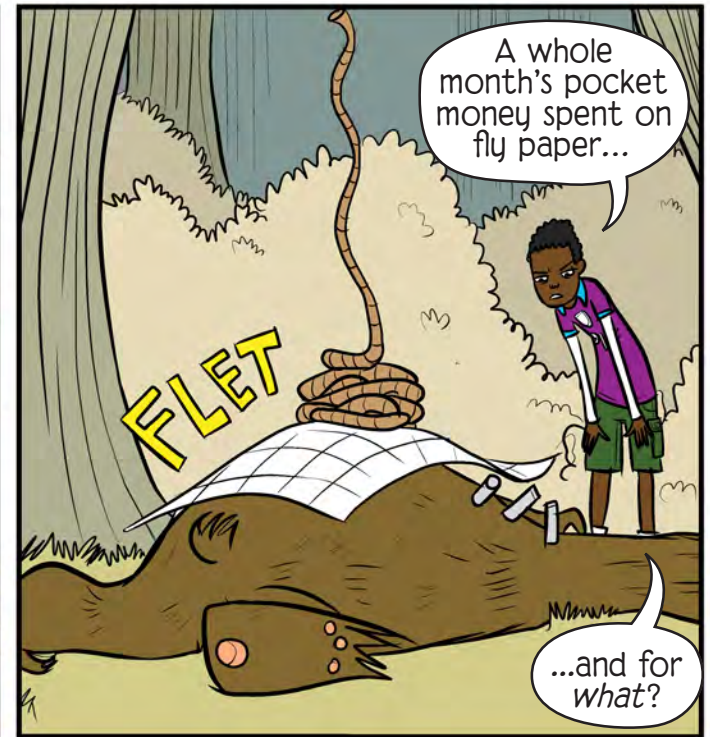
Two

THREE!

HACK
KAF



PHOOT
PHOOT
PHOOT



A whole month's pocket money spent on fly paper...

FLET

...and for what?



I found these little children lost and trembling in the woods.

Another moment and they'd have been dinner for the cheroonear.



WE WEREN'T LOST

WE WEREN'T TREMBLING

WE ALMOST CAUGHT IT

Push off, kids, the grown ups are talking.



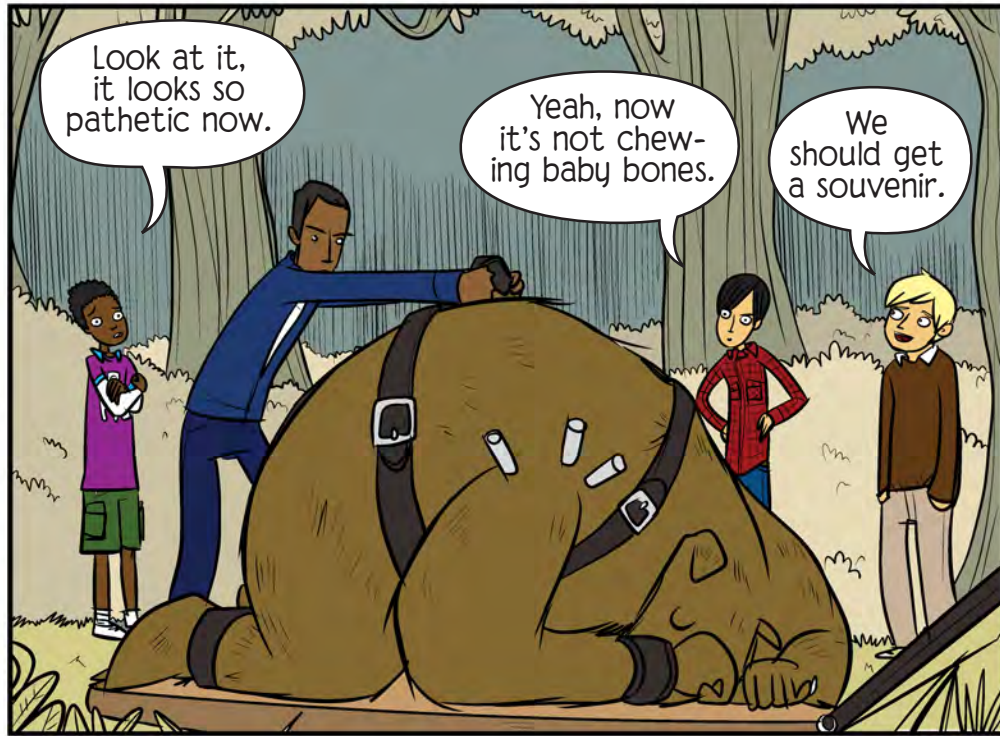
Why don't you come for a drink with me, pretty lady, I'll tell you how I trapped 'im.

Blerg okay.



WE FLIPPING CAUGHT IT, ERIN WINTERS

AAARGH



Look at it, it looks so pathetic now.

Yeah, now it's not chewing baby bones.

We should get a souvenir.



Hmm. So we can remember the time we screamed like girls, FOREVER.



He's a brute, this one, isn't he? He almost had my hand off!



Hoo hoo! Boy oh boy!

ARROO!! ROW ROWWW ROWW!

WHAM



We'll let him stew for a bit.

Look at 'im. It's almost like 'e understands 'is predicament.



I conf'dently predict we will find your dog by tea time.



Don't make promises you can't keep, Lottie.



It's not like finding a slipper.

Put your faith in Pepper's beak! He's an excellent sniffer! EXCELLENT.

SNIFF
SNIFF
SNIFF

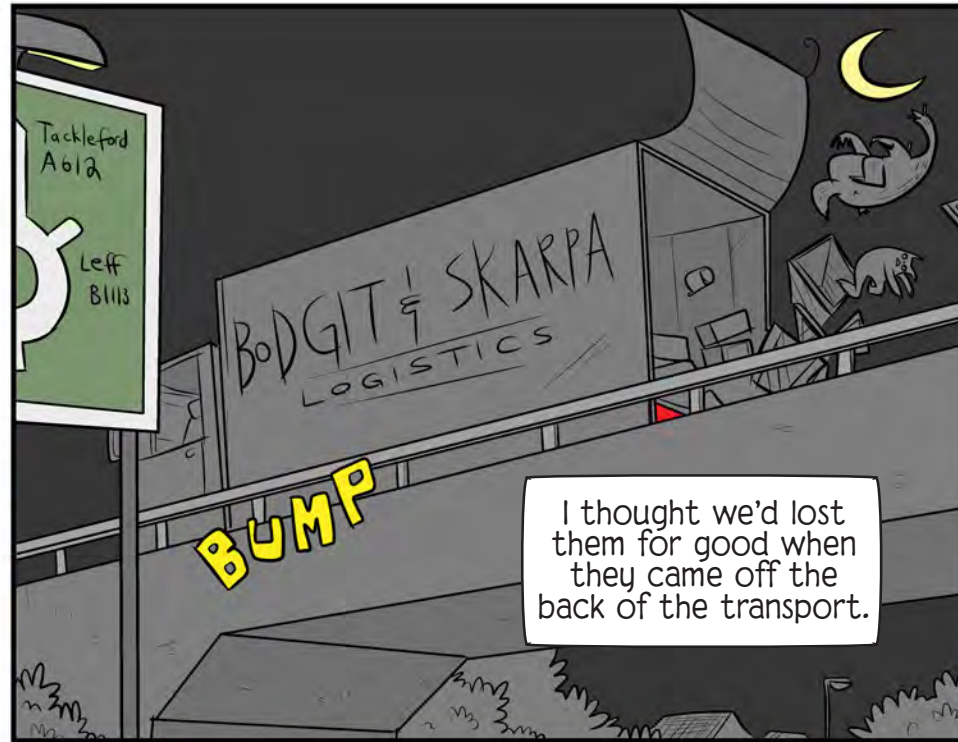


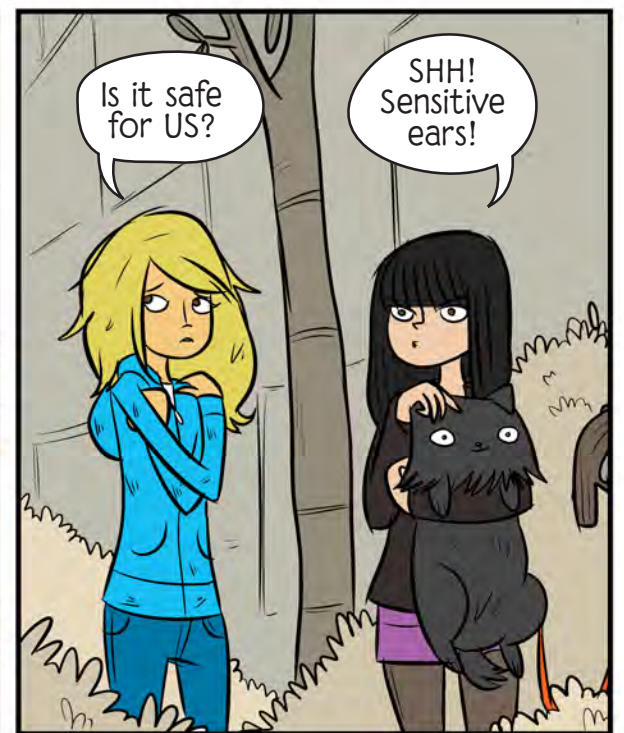
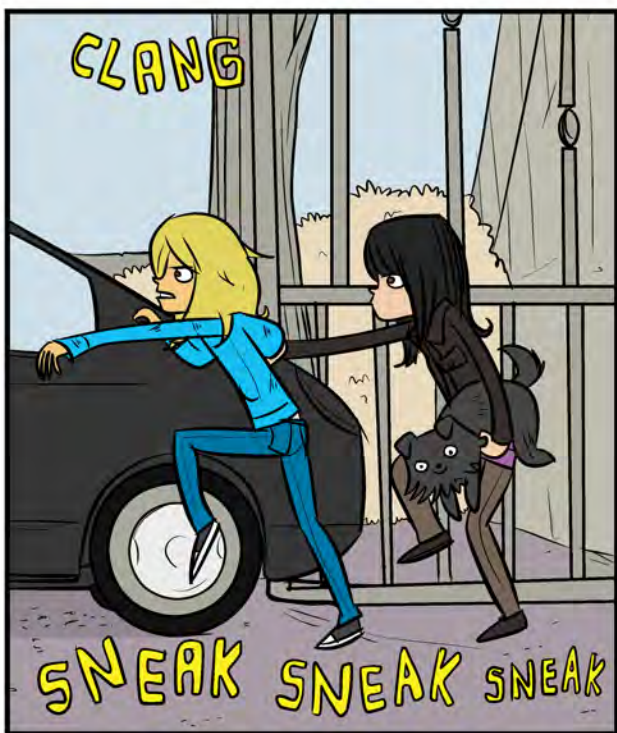
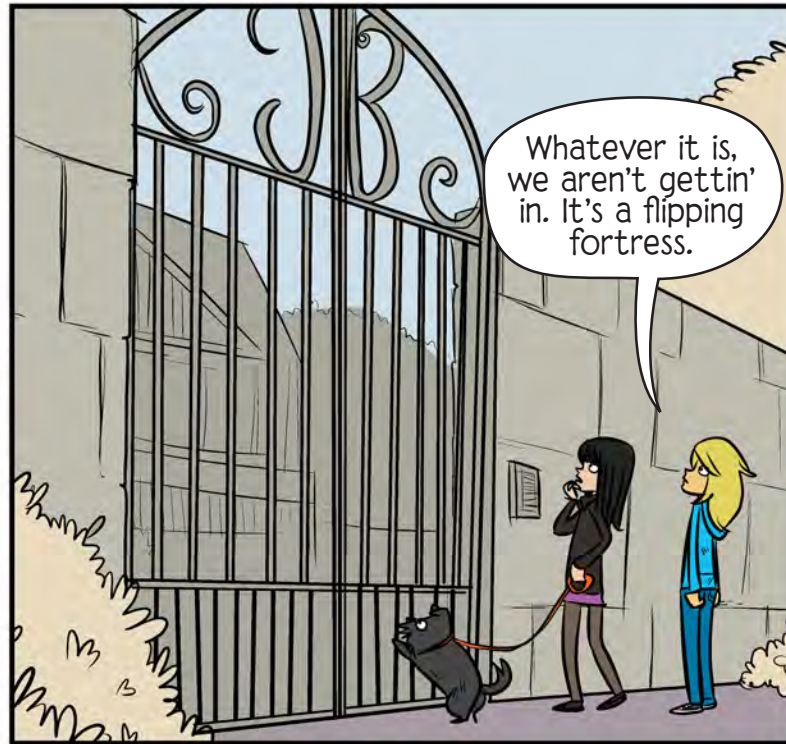
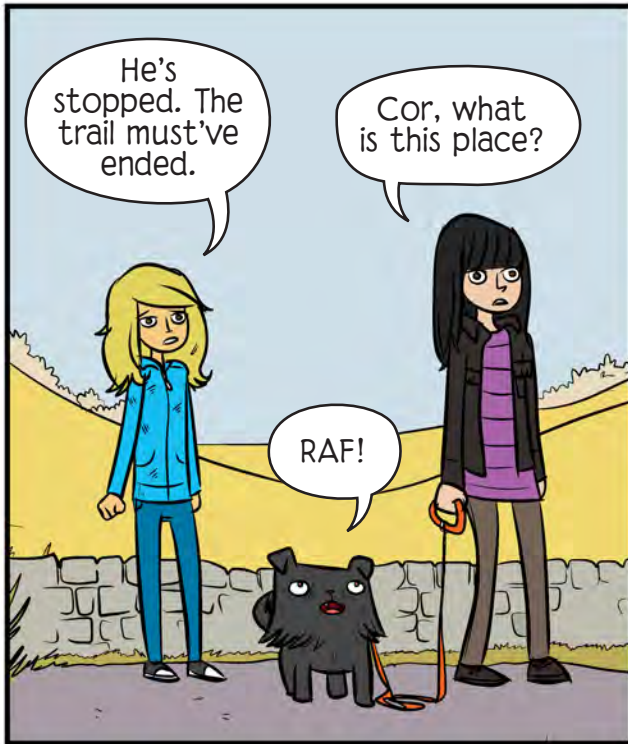
He barely even has a "beak".

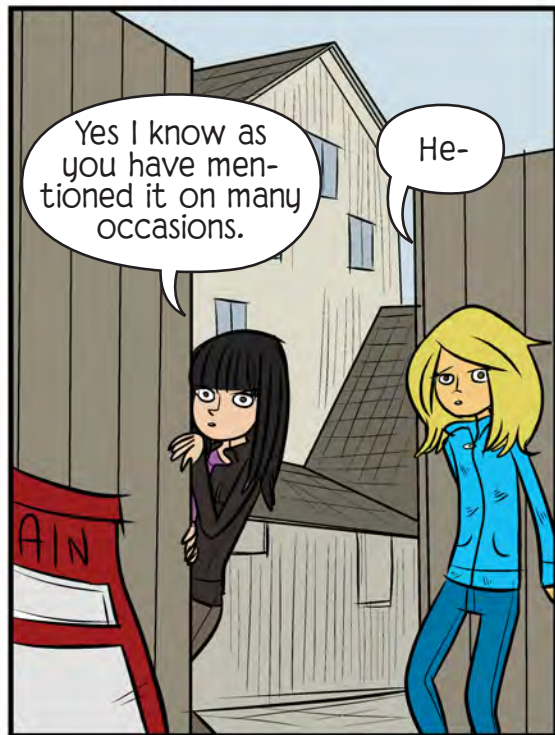
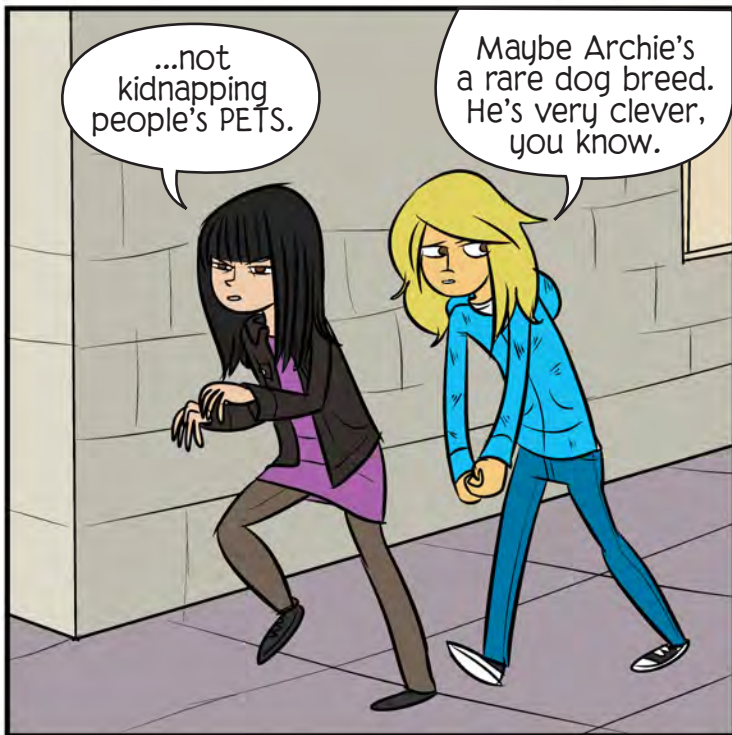
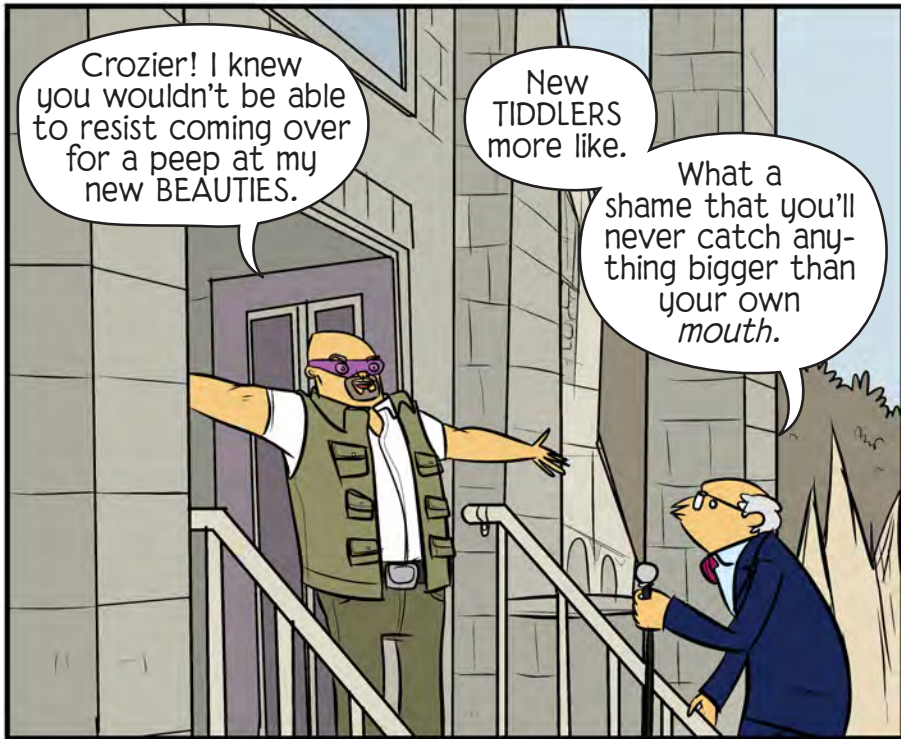
HMPH. Well, either he finds Archibald, or takes us to a sausage factory.

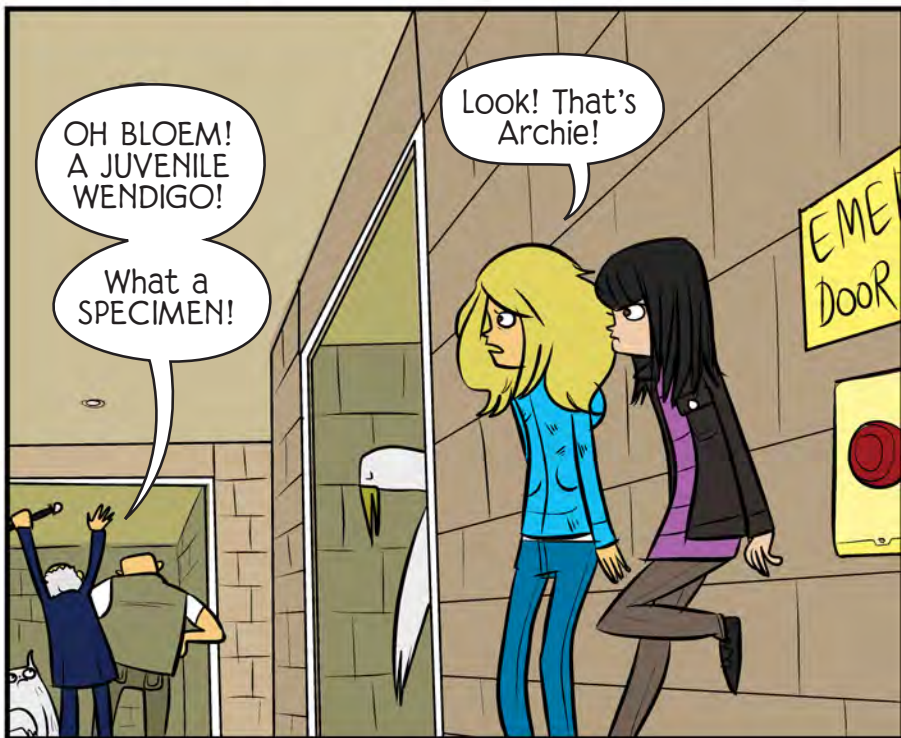
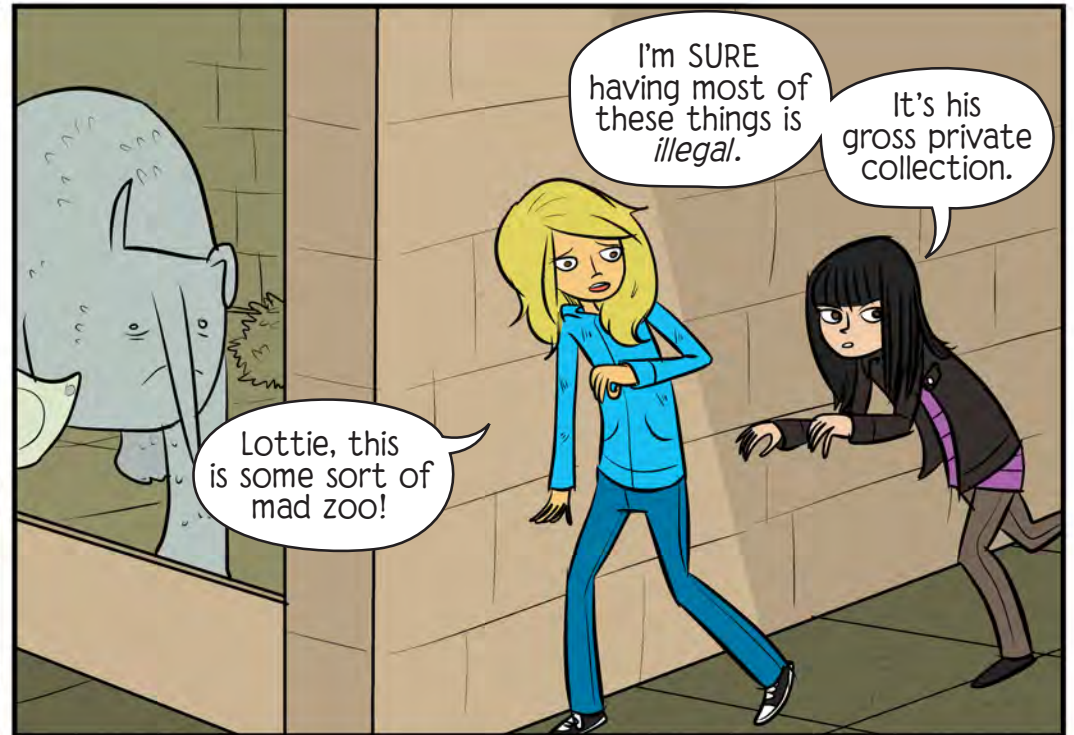
One way or the other, it's somethin' to DO.

SNIFF
SNIFF
SNIFF













Look for Archie! He'll be stampeding too, he likes joining in!

Too many BEASTS!



Maybe we should wait for everything poisonous to leave first.

They aren't gonna bite us, Lottie.

They're either leggin' it...

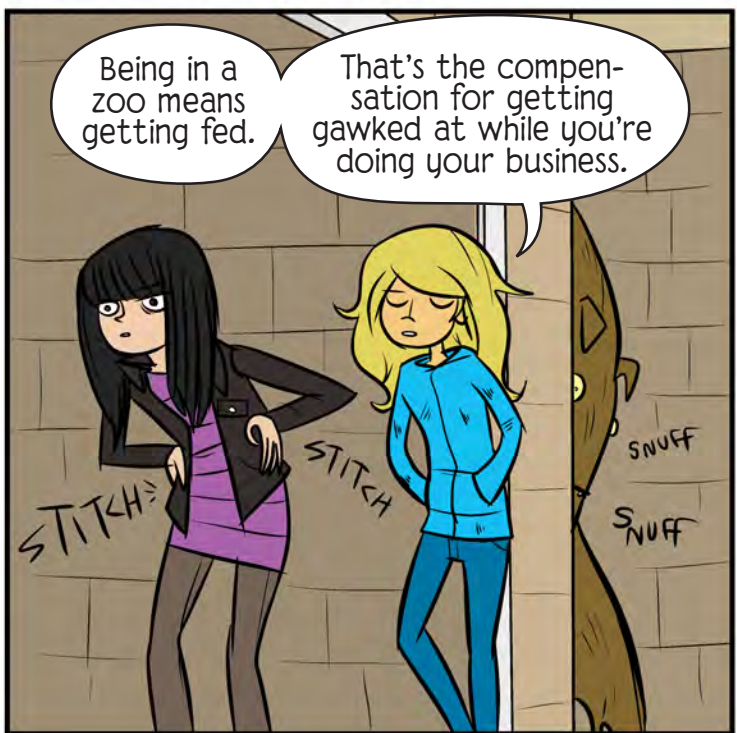


...or looking for revenge on the zoo keeper.



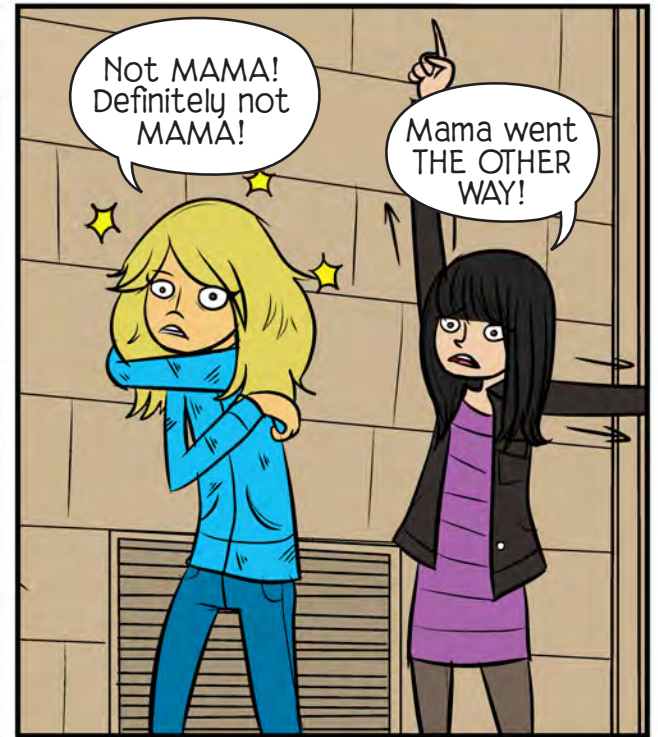
Worr he's revenging back!

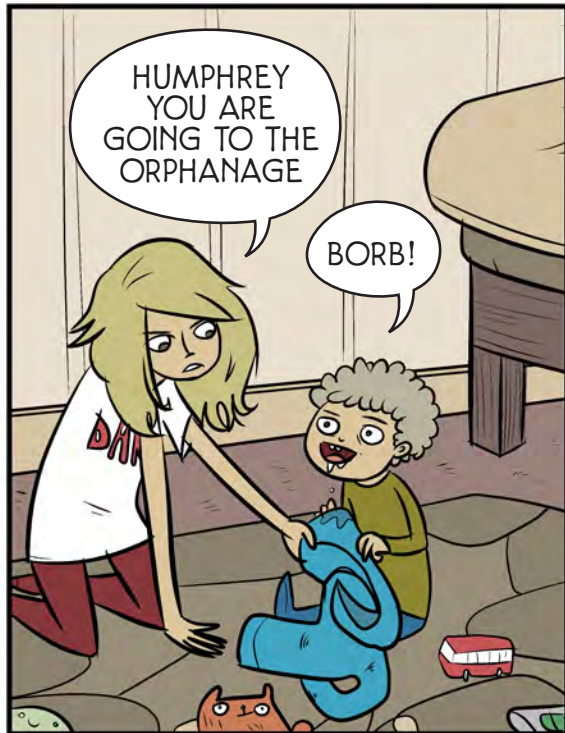
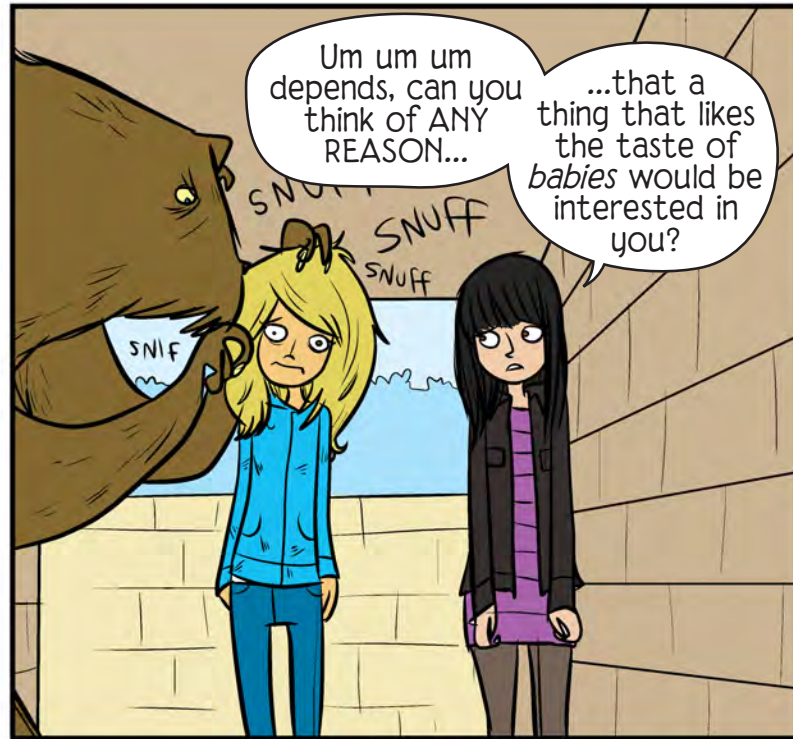
And no one's going to eat us?

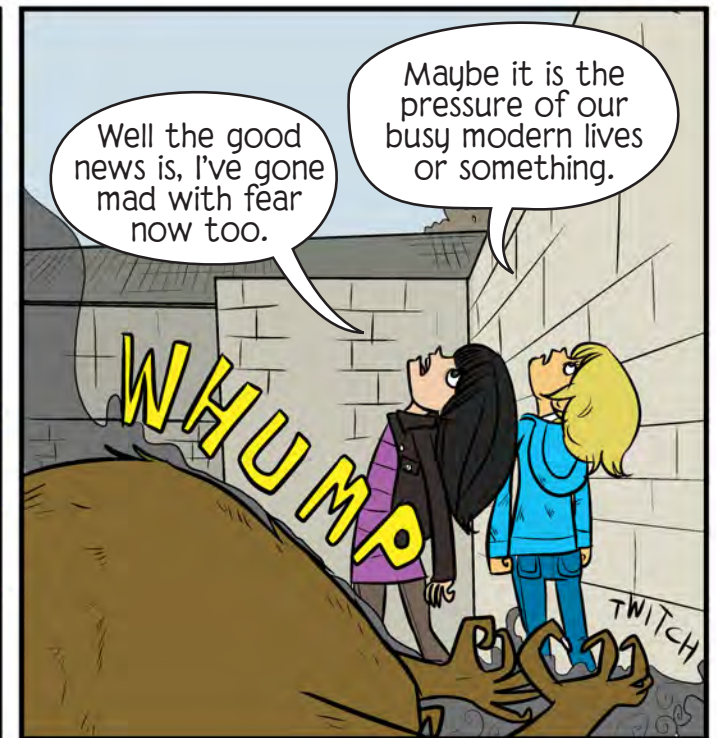
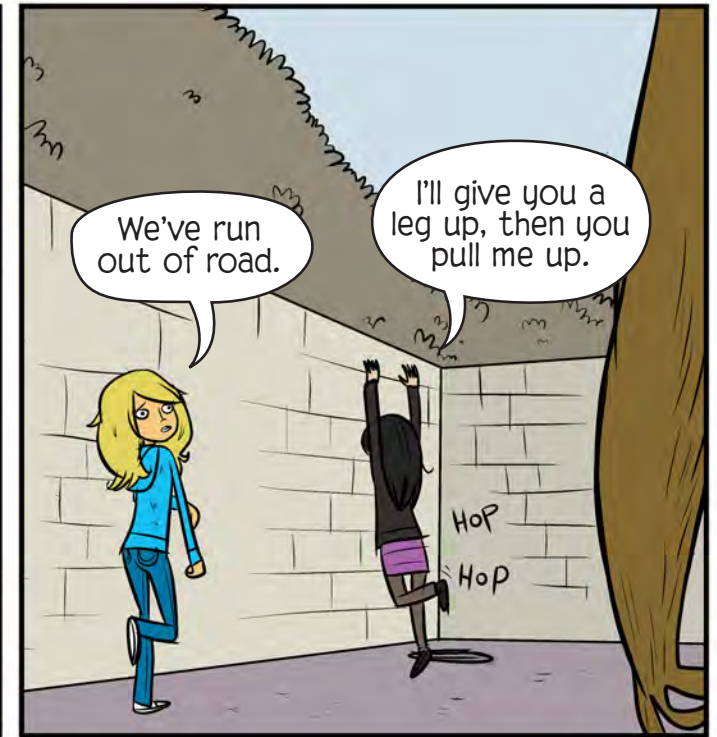


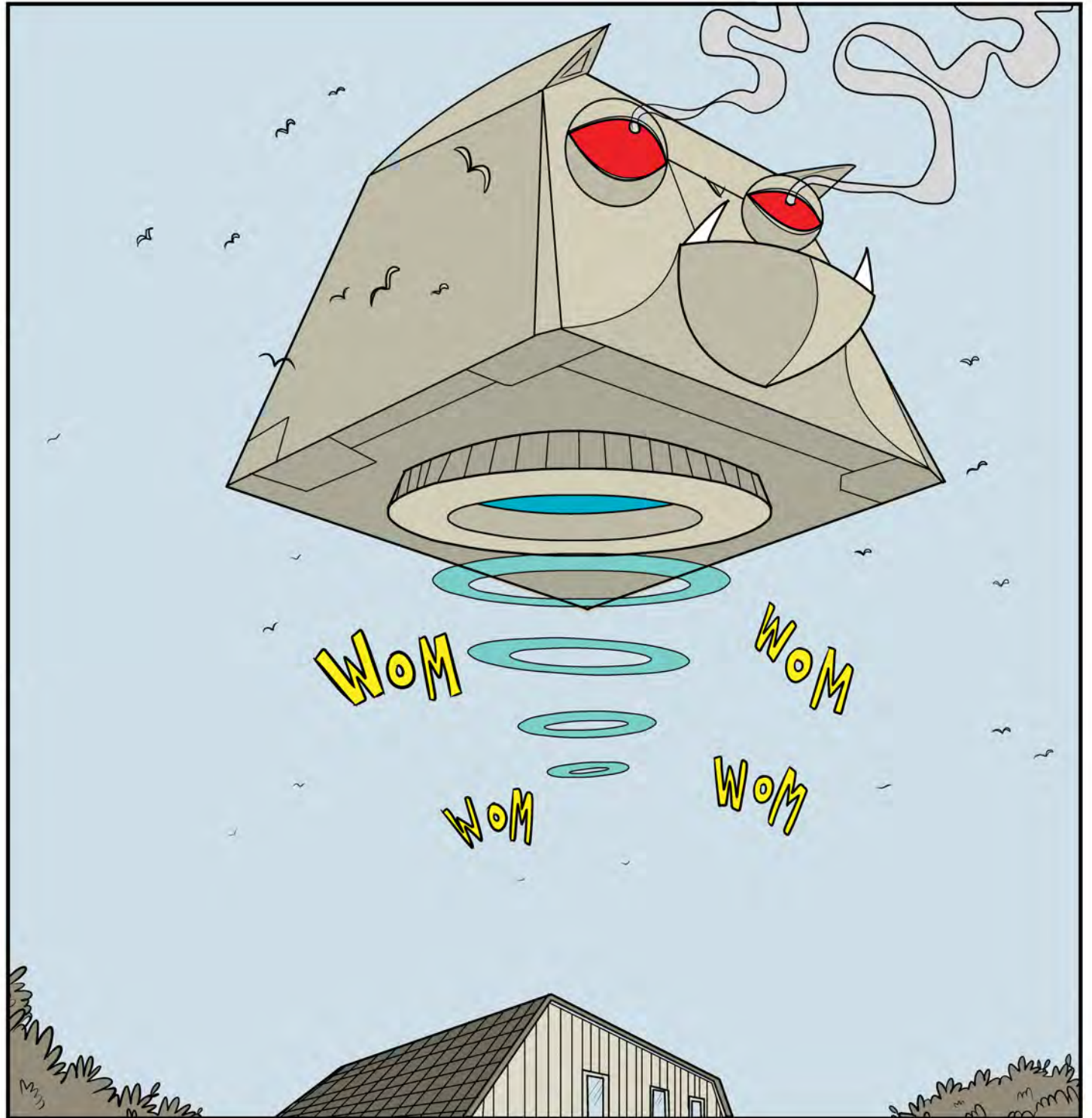
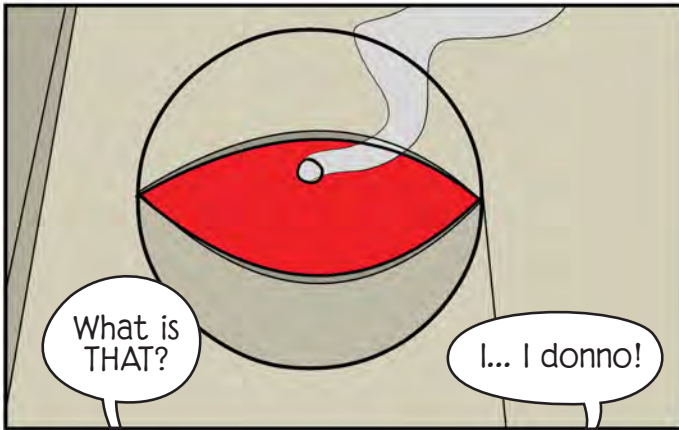
Being in a zoo means getting fed.

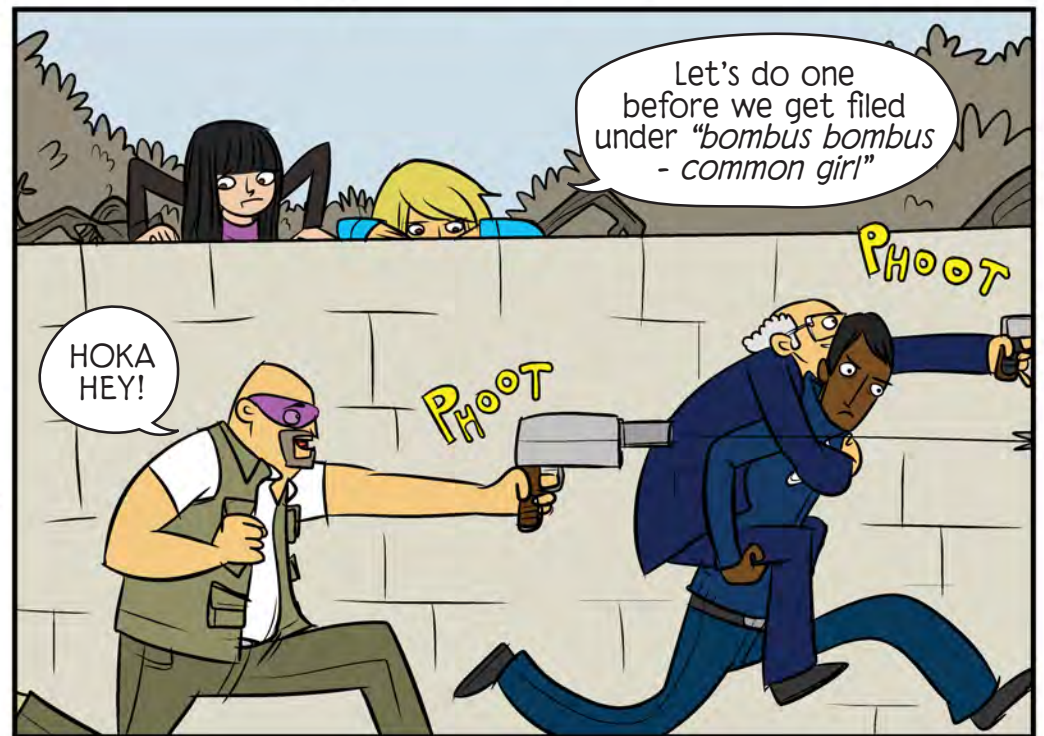
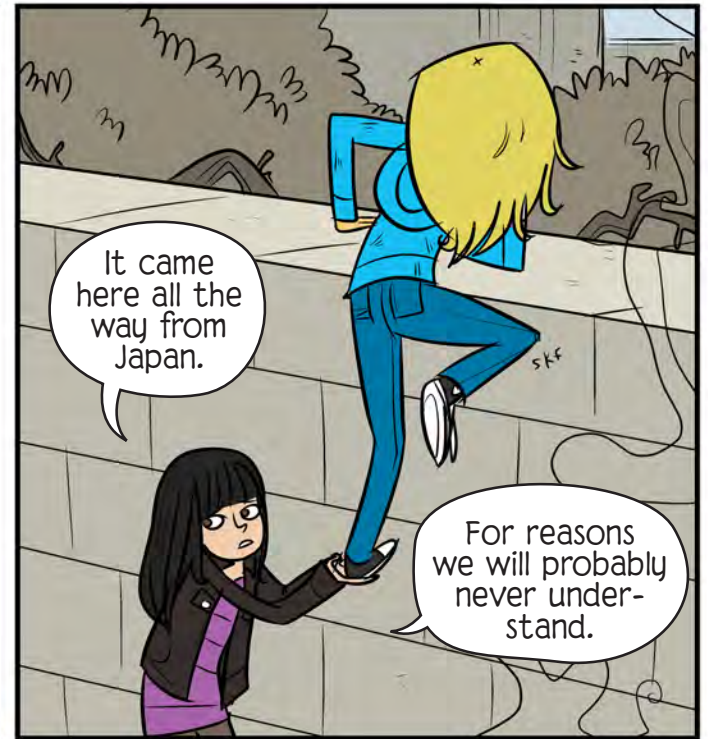
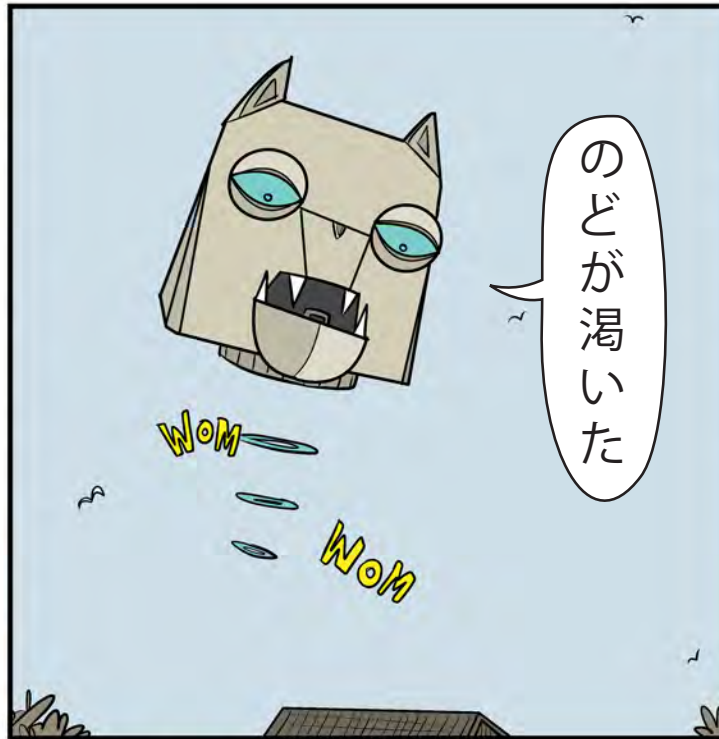
That's the compensation for getting gawked at while you're doing your business.

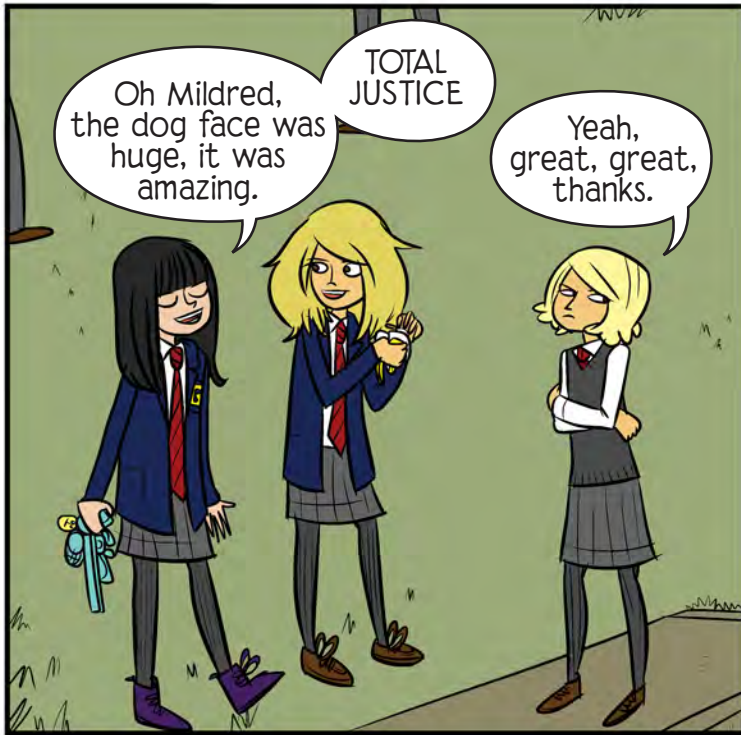


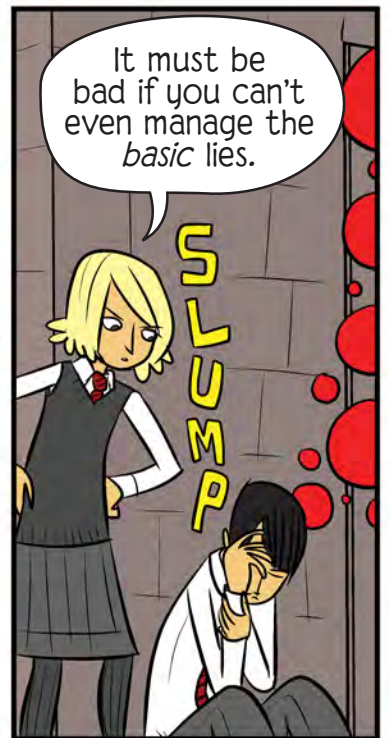
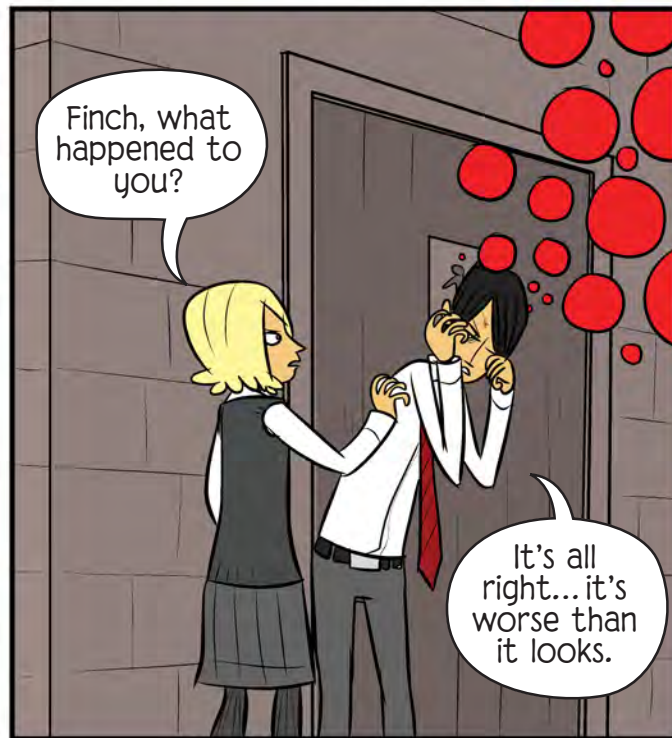


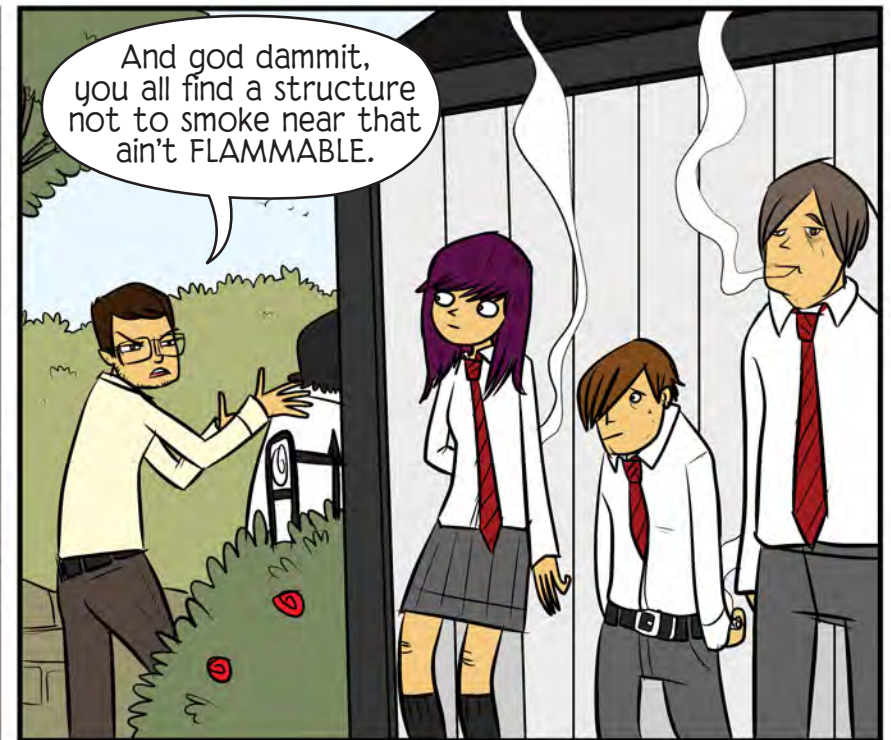


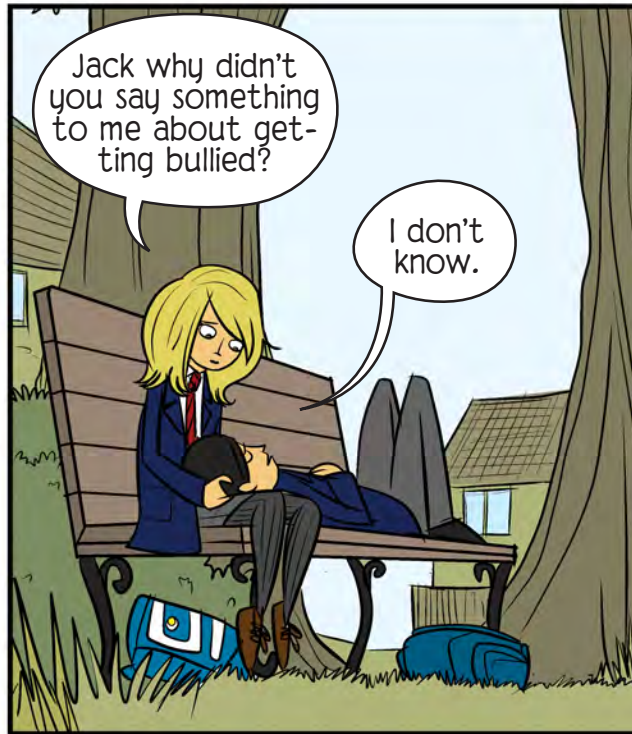
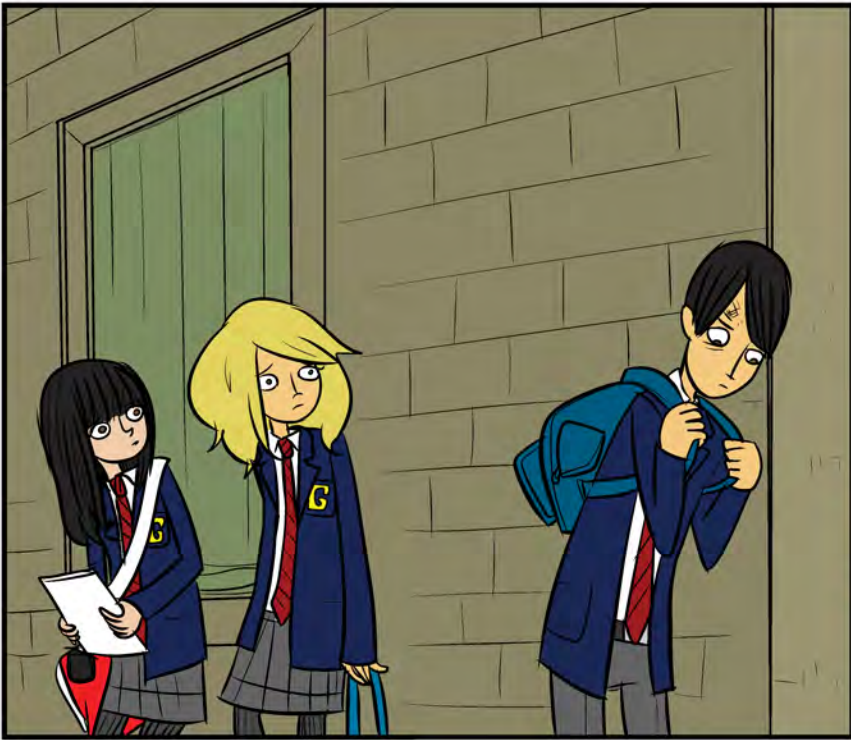


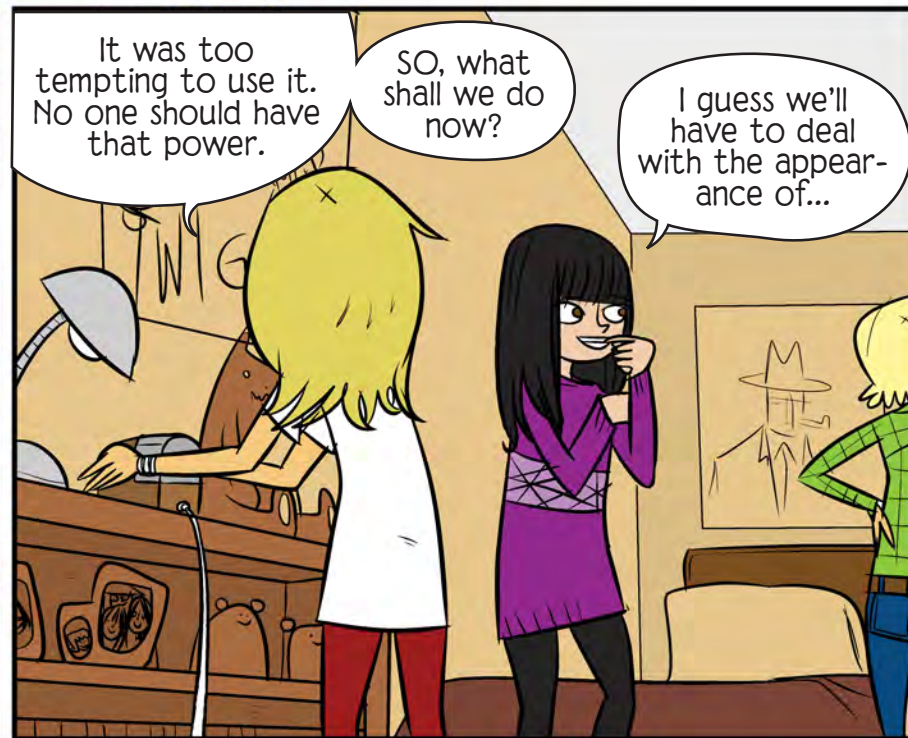
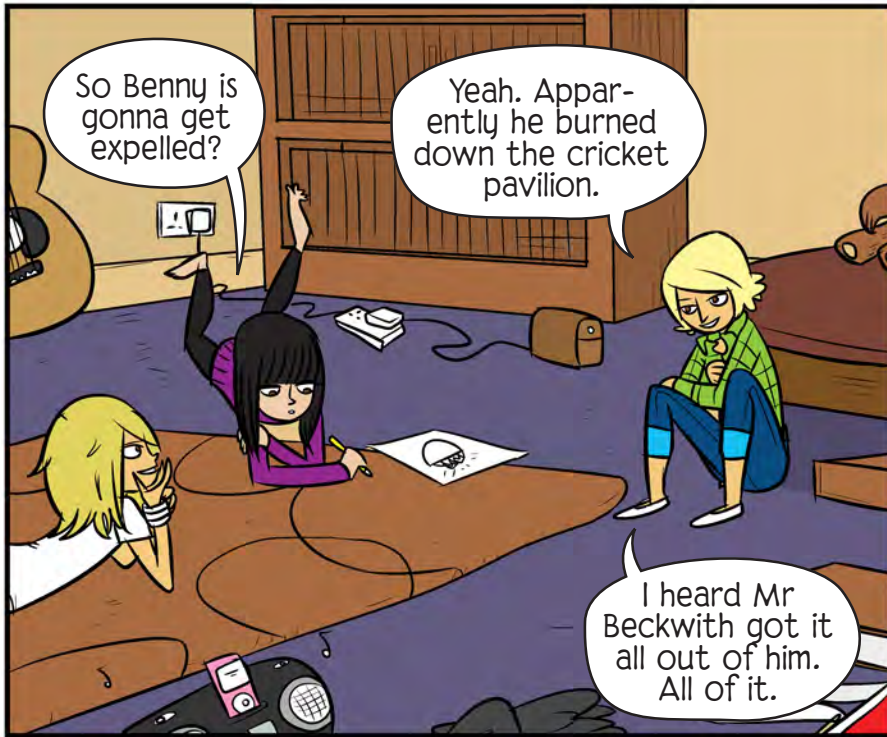








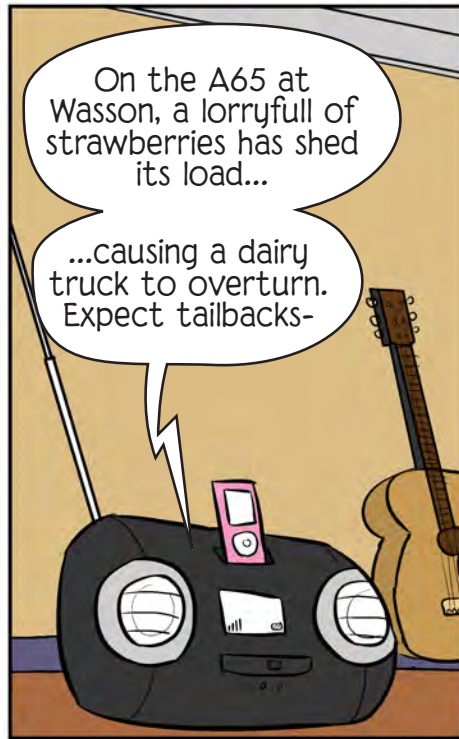






Waiting... waiting...

Still waiting...
...all dat cream



On the A65 at Wasson, a lorryfull of strawberries has shed its load...

...causing a dairy truck to overturn. Expect tailbacks-



WHOA!



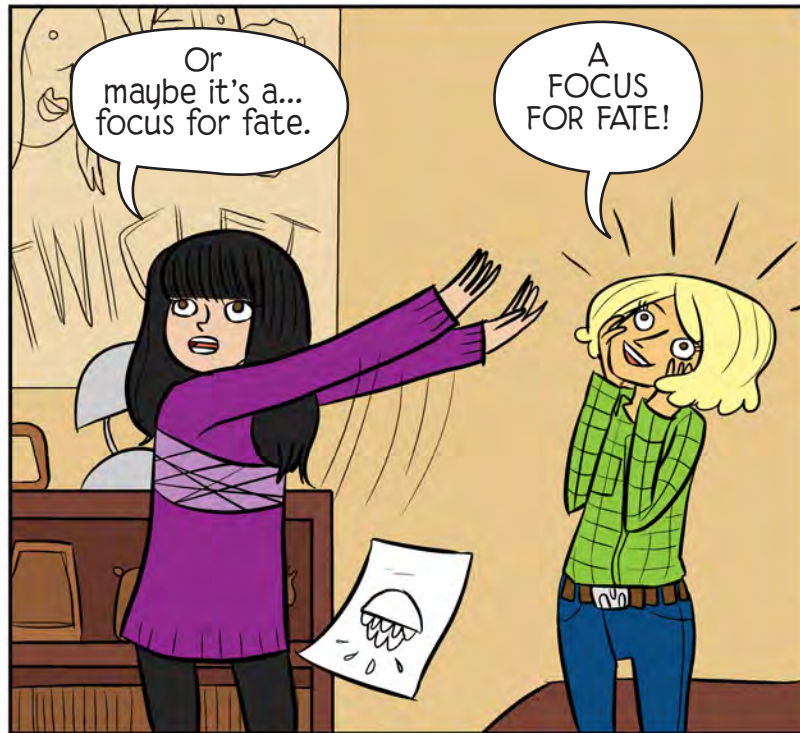
That pencil! How did it work?

SHAKE SHAKE



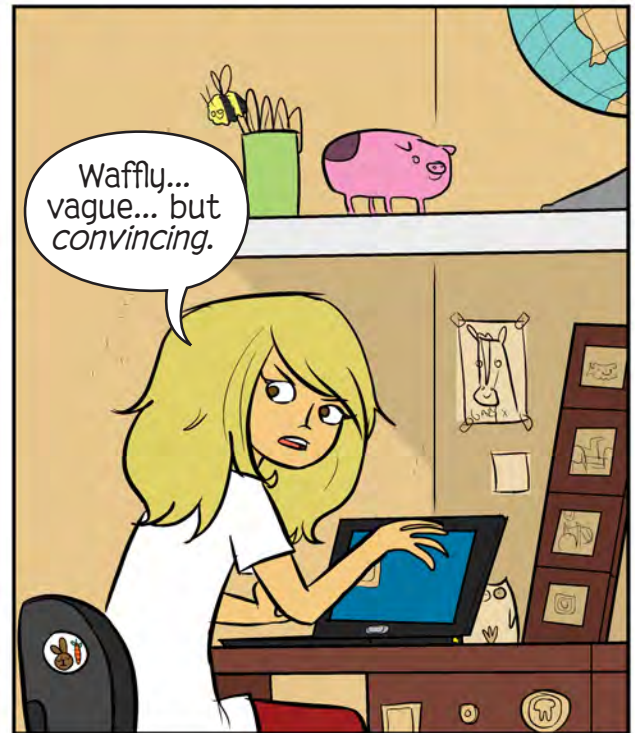
Well I reckon, and this is a guess...

...that it kind of hexes you up to draw what's gonna happen anyway.

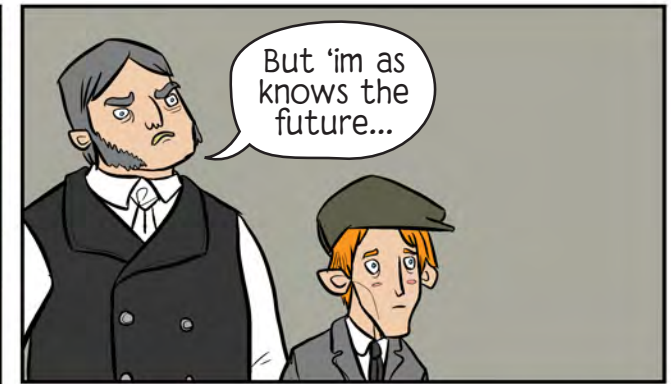
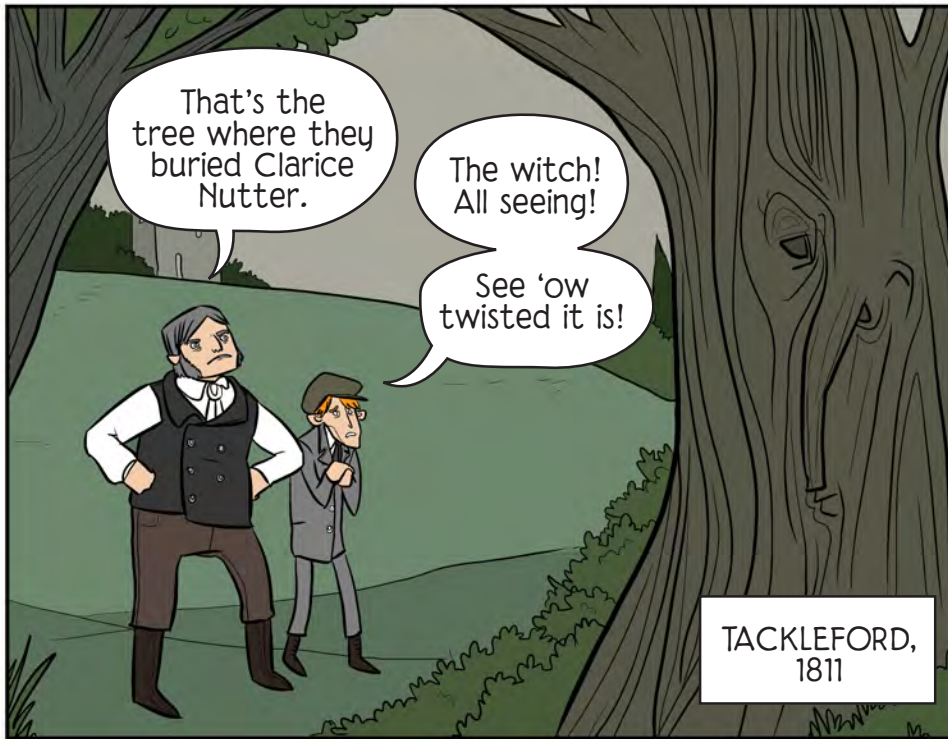


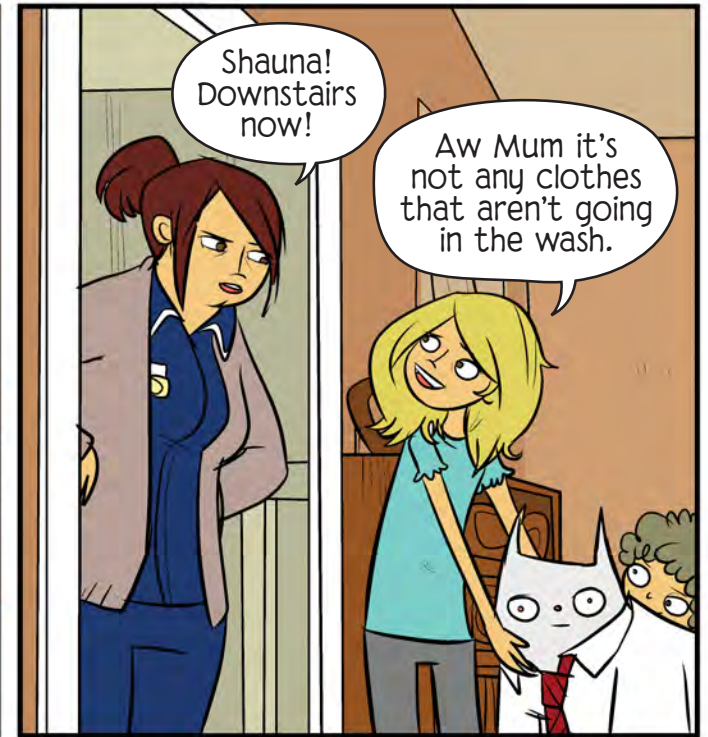
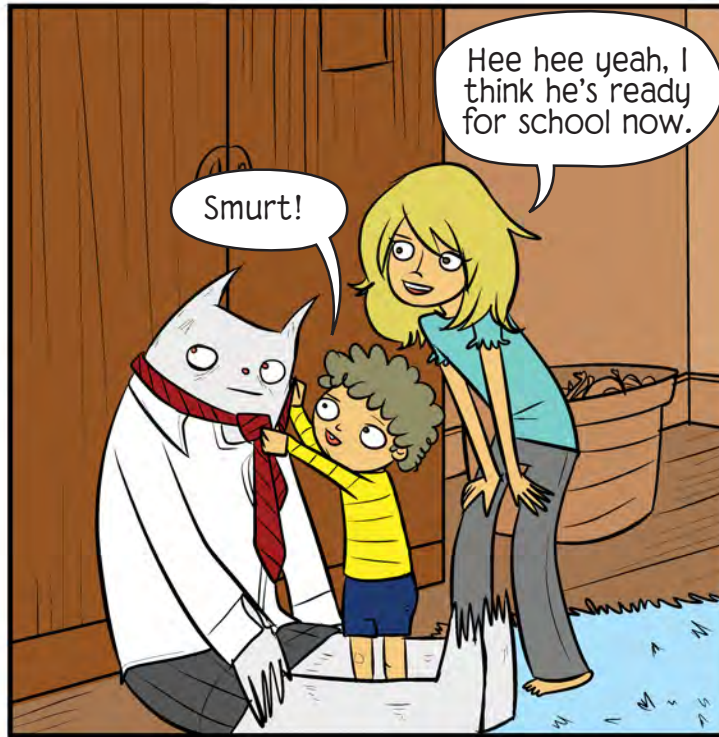
Or maybe it's a... focus for fate.

A FOCUS FOR FATE!



Waffly... vague... but convincing.





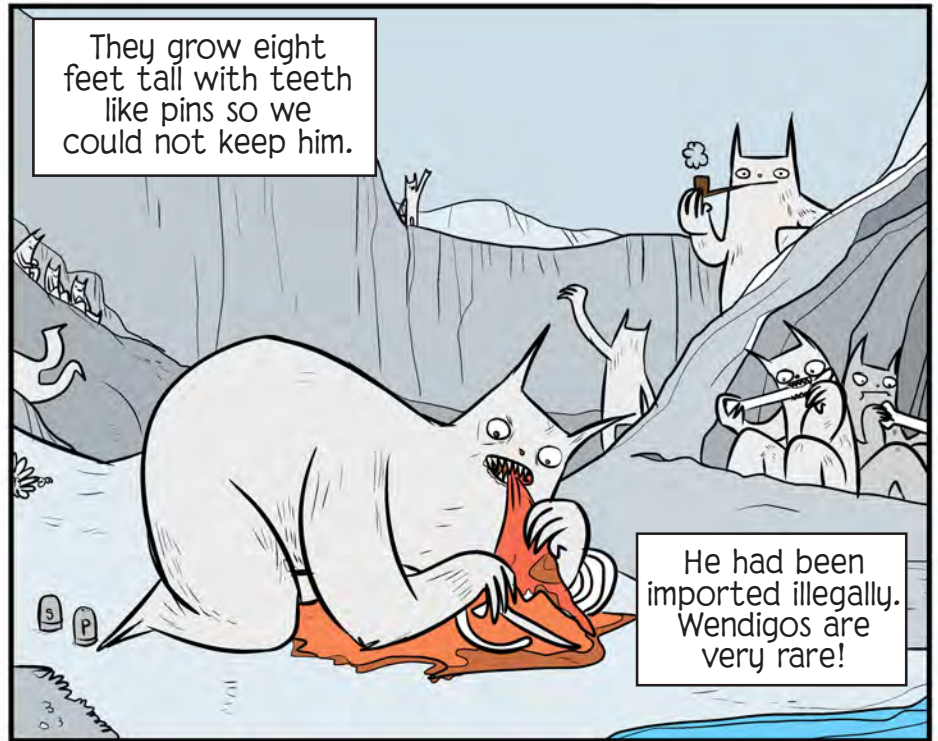


So my mum called the RSPCA and they sent an animal expert.



He said my dog Archie was actually a "wendigo"...

That is a sort of mad Canadian wolf-boy.



They grow eight feet tall with teeth like pins so we could not keep him.

He had been imported illegally. Wendigos are very rare!



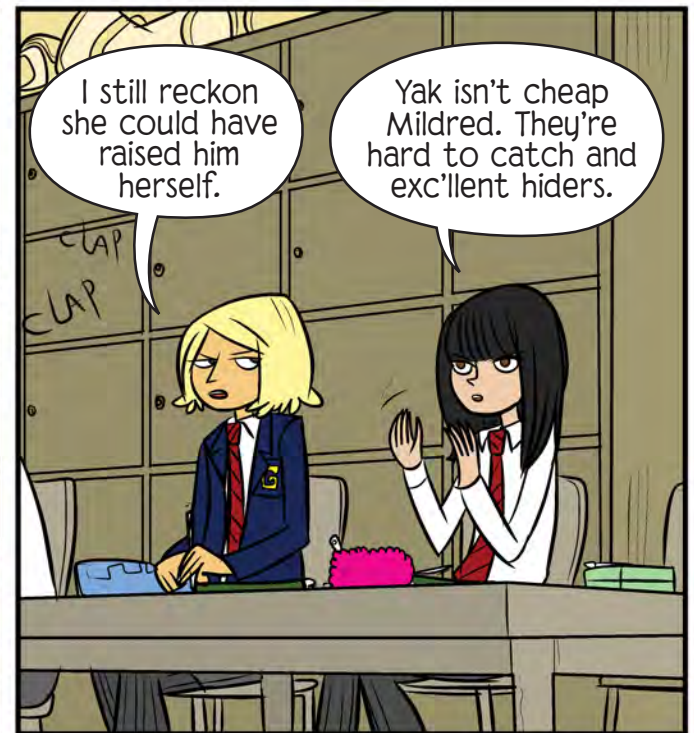
I was very sad when we said goodbye to him but he is better off in his natural habitat...

...the Canadian tundra.



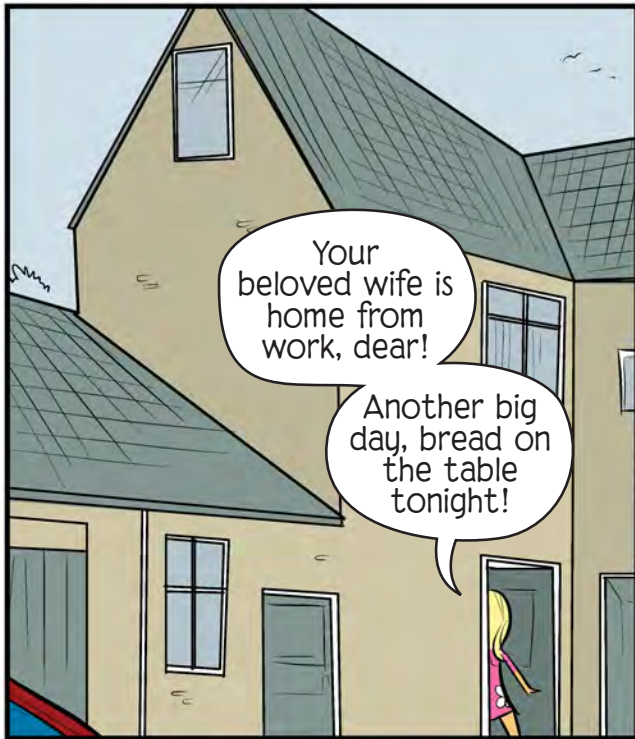
There he can hunt yaks and live with his own kind. That's it.

Thanks Shauna. Very good.



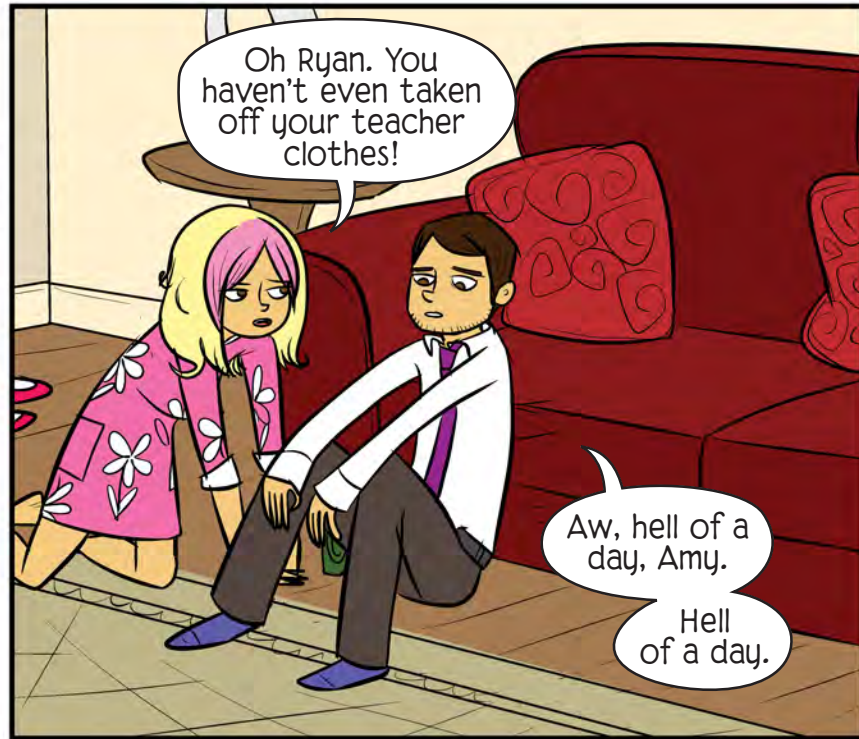
I still reckon she could have raised him herself.

Yak isn't cheap Mildred. They're hard to catch and excellent hiders.



Your beloved wife is home from work, dear!

Another big day, bread on the table tonight!



Oh Ryan. You haven't even taken off your teacher clothes!

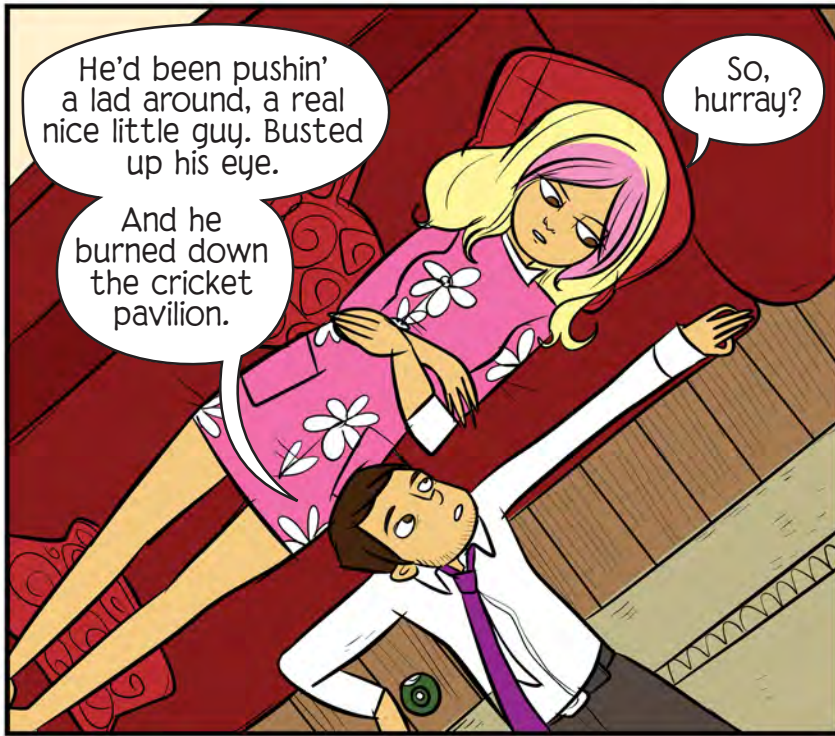
Aw, hell of a day, Amy.

Hell of a day.



We had to expel a lad today.

What did he do?



He'd been pushin' a lad around, a real nice little guy. Busted up his eye.

And he burned down the cricket pavilion.

So, hurray?

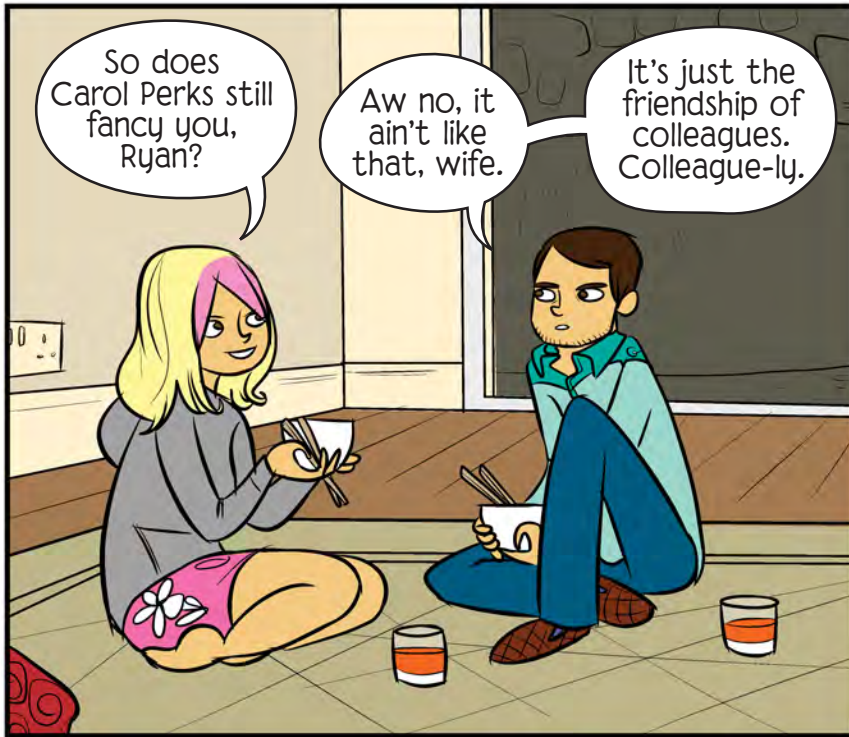


Nah, it all came out, you know? And this is his third secondary school, and-



Stop drinkin' my misery beer!

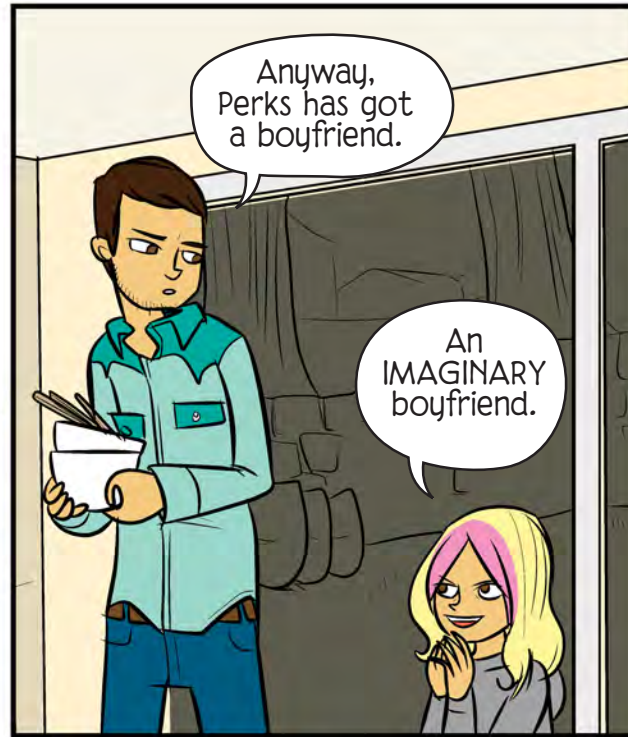
Misery tastes quite good!



So does Carol Perks still fancy you, Ryan?

Aw no, it ain't like that, wife.

It's just the friendship of colleagues. Colleague-ly.



Anyway, Perks has got a boyfriend.

An IMAGINARY boyfriend.



No he uh... manages a call centre.

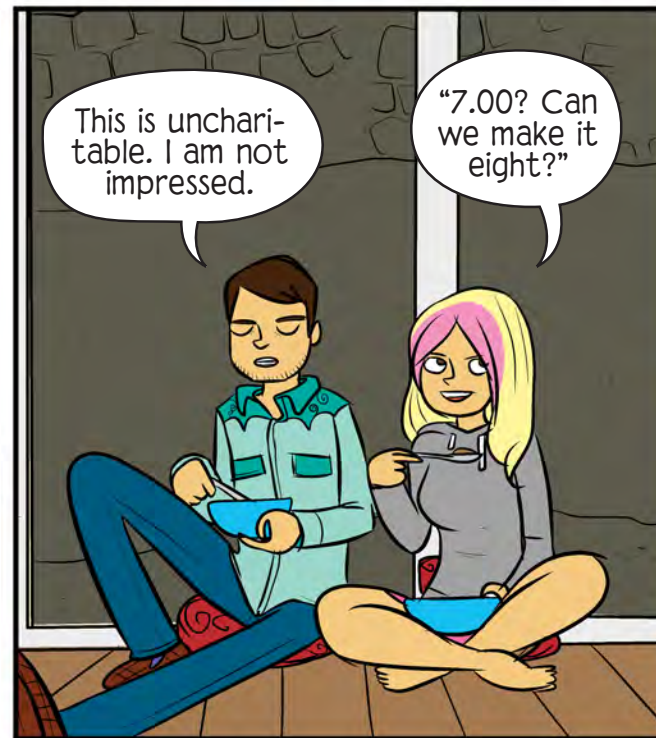
IMAGINARY call centre.

IMAGINARY CALLS!



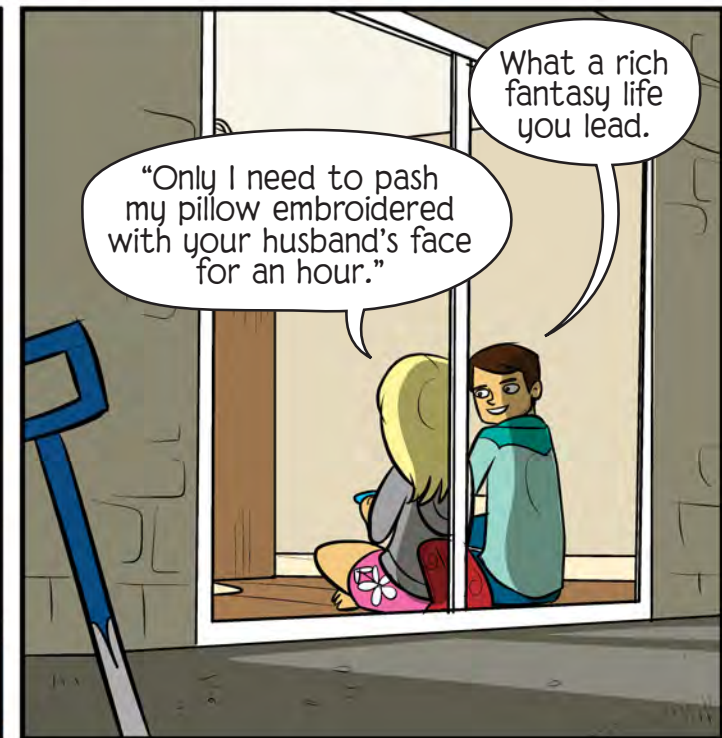
Invite them round for dinner.

"Oh KEN couldn't make it. He had to mend the call centre."



This is uncharitable. I am not impressed.

"7.00? Can we make it eight?"

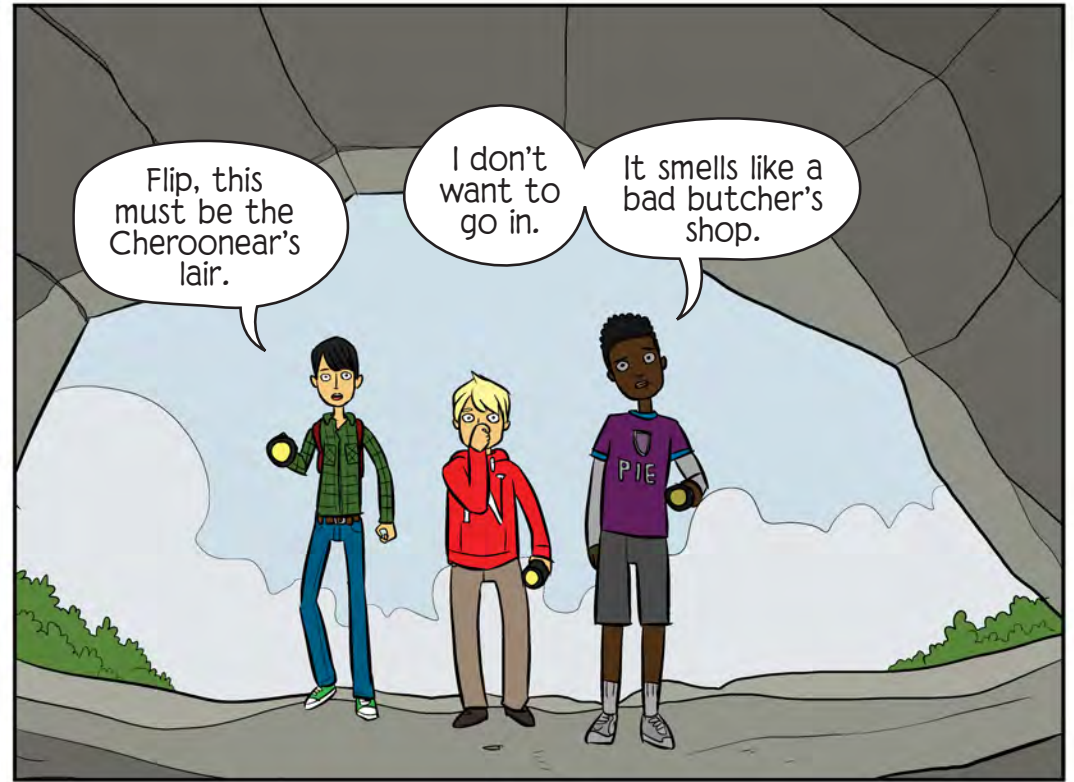


"Only I need to pash my pillow embroidered with your husband's face for an hour."

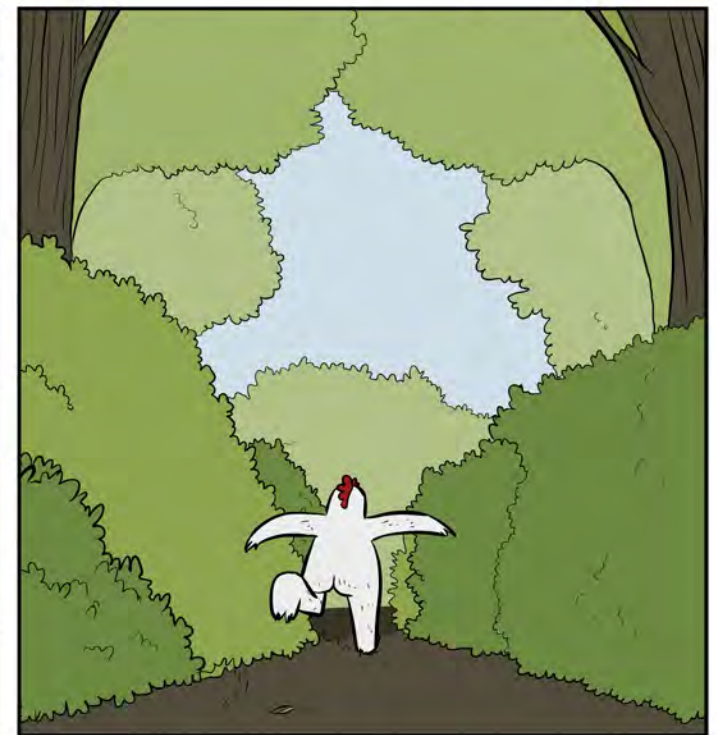
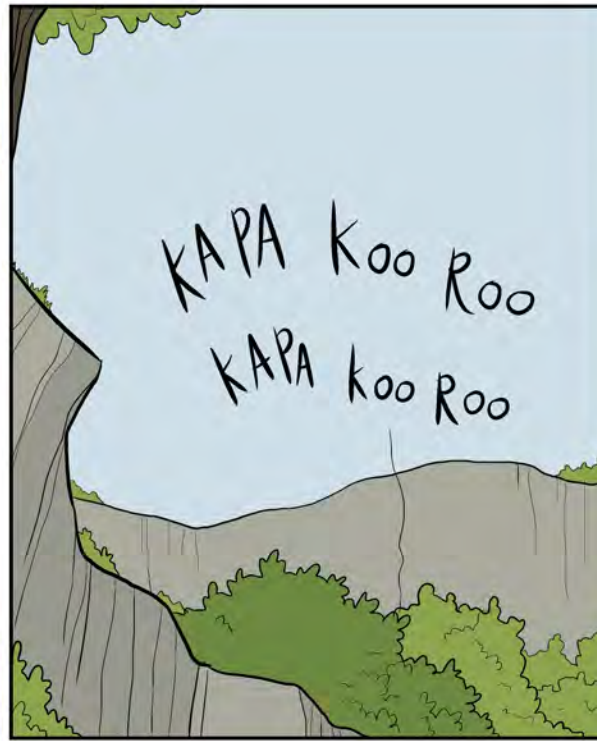
What a rich fantasy life you lead.













Dear Jack
would you like to see
Hero Man 2 on Saturday?
If so meet ME outside

★ SHAUNA ★





Charlotte Grote

"Well the good news is, I've gone mad with fear now too."



Sonny Craven

"Well, there are going to be risks on a man's adventure."



Jack Finch

"The babies of today are idiots, but tomorrow they could be scientists."



Shauna Wickle

"Being in a zoo means getting fed. That's the compensation for getting gawked at while you're doing your business."



Linton Baxter

"I wonder how my dad's going to embarrass me tonight."



Mildred Haversham

"WE'RE PLAYING UNICORN FRENZY AND WE'RE PLAYING IT NOW."



Great Britain is an island and we have our own ways. Yes we are a simple people, but we are sophisticated enough to have made up our own versions of words and phrases just for us. I will take you through them and if you complain after this, it is your problem as far as I am concerned. We're not IDIOTS, they're just IDIOMS.

LOVE,
Charlotte
XXX

GLOSSARY

Making the place look untidy: This is when you have arranged yourself very neatly on the floor and then your mum trips over you and stubs her toe because she was not paying attention jeez louise.

Nits: Headlice. Now I have never had nits but if you do get them they put this shampoo on your head that smells like the curtains at an old folks' home. Bad news. Or they use the electric comb on you which, to be honest, sounds quite good. See also: "nit nurse." The Nit nurse is a woman who comes to school and checks your head for nits, she probably hates her life a great deal.

Sick: Vomit. It is a versatile word: "I felt sick, I sicked up on Grandma and now there is sick all over my Christmas presents."



Mongrel: what the Americans call a "mutt". That is, a dog what does not cost two grand while having weak lungs and then gets stolen by dog criminals. A mongrel is a better sort of dog.

Skint: Not having any UK pounds sterling.

Test icles: Moth balls.

Pram face: a very unkind term used to describe a young mother who has not had the best of education and life opportunities etc.

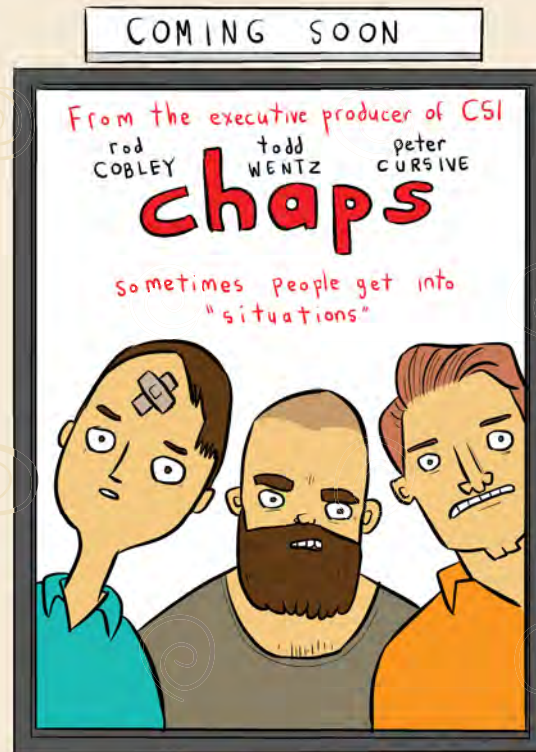
Cricket pavilion: The house that cricketers go to to put their special outfits on. It is a rarefied zone with a special cupboard for the “boxes” they use to protect their test icicles. It is not beyond imagination to think that maybe while in the pavilion they go for a tinkle before the game. But as I have never been in a cricket pavilion, I do not know.

Little tyke: A young scamp. An annoying child who is probably also quite dirty and won't leave you alone.

Chip off the old block: an apple that has not fallen far from the tree.



The Velvet Underground: Music band from the past who caused all sorts of trouble. The sound of the Velvet Underground is like a set of bagpipes going through a mangle while a German exchange student lists all the reasons you should take up living homeless as a hobby. Bad news for people who like sounds.



Cinema: The movie theatre, where one goes to be richly entertained while enjoying food and drinks at prices that even a king would think was well out of order. Is popcorn actually food? No one has ever proved it.

Pash: Ferocious kissing. Spit everywhere.

“You make a better door than a window”: Imagine that you are watching an improving and educational television programme such as *Keeping Up With Kim Kardashian's Lifestyle Choices* and then a family member stands in front of the screen and stops to have a think. This is what you say to them when this happens. It is a simple statement of fact and no one is offended.

Fancy: When you fancy someone, you want to pash ‘em up. Fancying develops into various forms of relationship, such as love relationship, or hiding from someone relationship. You can also fancy a cup of tea but I think that is international.

Lorryfull: Metric version of a “trucksworth”.

Chippy: Belligerent. “Don't get chippy with me, sunshine,” is the sort of thing an imaginary Cockney taxi driver might say if you tell him he has gone the long way round and should have driven through the industrial estate thereby saving you £5.50.

A load of old toss: The kind of items one might discard without second thought.

Quid: One pound sterling. Basic human money for the United Kingdom.

Badger: Like a low-slung bear, but smaller.



JESPER BLOEM

(Master Hunter and Raconteur)

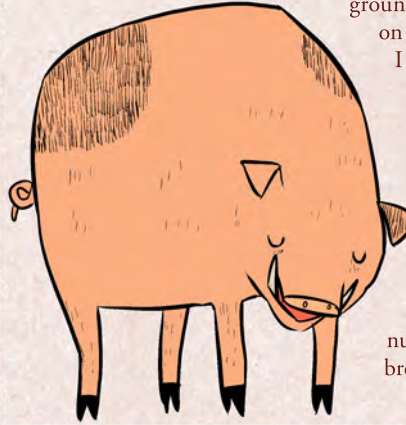
– recalls – THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY

Beasts, critters, animals and natural miscellanea who avoided capture against all odds.

I was born a baby in South Africa in the difficult years between the Great Struggle and the Big Push. Though my hands were small and weak, my father quickly pushed a crossbow into them and told me what to do. Before my first birthday, our humble mantlepiece featured a delicately stuffed bee. Sadly, that infant trophy burned, as so many things did, in the Huge Situation, but its memory will live as long as its life was short. Every Ahab has his whale, and here are mine. Eleven creatures who bested Bloem, and may yet best him again. Animals of wit, primitive intelligence, or luck. The ones that got away.

Coulomb's Boar
(*Bombus Bombus*)
ENGLAND

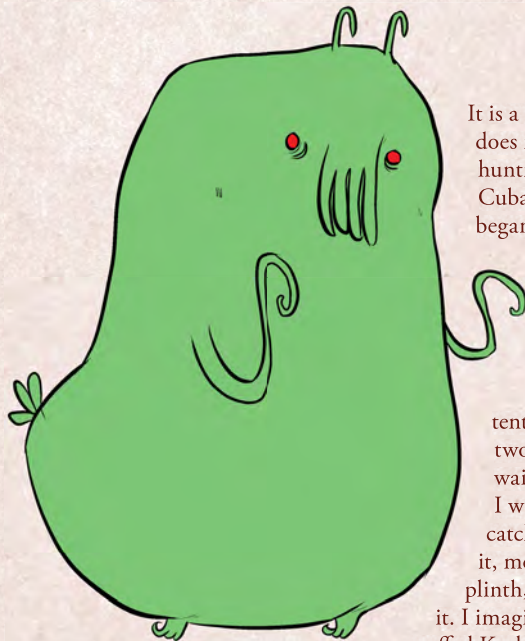
Having made my home in England, I expected that there would be little to hunt besides rabbit, grouse and maybe a pheasant for the pot. But during a heathland ramble on my estate I came across the unfamiliar form of Coulomb's Boar. Packing only a shotgun, I was overcome by the thought of bacon, when a second boar butted me from behind, knocking me onto the ground where I stunned myself on a protruding stone. When I awoke, my shirt had been completely eaten away by the little wretches. Bare-chested, I returned to the house for a larger and more vindictive weapon, but my manservant had prepared a delicious broth for lunch, so I nursed my sore head and cold breast by the fireside instead.



Silver Tom
(*Bombus Bombus*)
SOUTH AFRICA

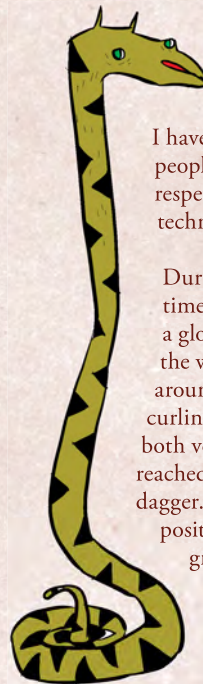
Some say that the Silver Tom is the cleverest ape, others that he is simply a man covered head to toe in fur, with a violently pink bottom. All I know is that for two years, Silver Tom was employed as my driver and valet. I have no idea how he hoodwinked me, but his erratic driving and abysmal ironing were offset by his wicked sense of fun. I have no wish to shoot Silver Tom, I simply wish to see his his furry face again, and share a banana with him as I did on many a pleasant evening years ago.

Kraken
(*Bombus Bombus*)
ATLANTIC OCEAN



It is a brave man, or a fool, who does not respect the ocean. While hunting sharks off the coast of Cuba, the men aboard the ship began a great hullabaloo. I expected a beast of some variety, but could not have anticipated a Kraken making its appearance. A hundred feet in girth, if not more, it lashed the boat with its tentacles, easily snapping it in two. As I drifted in open waters, waiting for rescue or the infinite, I was sustained by the thought of catching that sea monster, stuffing it, mounting it on a handsome plinth, and charging people to see it. I imagined a gift shop containing stuffed Kraken, sold at a handsome profit. Fortunately I was borne to safety by a man passing by in a coracle.

Giraffe Snake
(*Bombus Bombus*)
JAPAN



I have a powerful love for the Japanese people, with their culture founded on respect, politeness, efficiency, organisation, technology, and vicious feudal weaponry.

During a spiritual retreat in Nagoya, I took time out from my meditation to walk in a glorious flower garden. Resting beneath the wisteria, I felt a sudden slithering around my ankles, and saw a Giraffe Snake curling around my feet. Knowing it to be both venomous and quick to strike, I gently reached inside my kimono for a ceremonial dagger. Heart quickening at its silvery hiss, I positioned myself for the kill. It was to my great disappointment when the snake was suddenly vacuumed up by an elderly gentleman on a futuristic hovercraft.

Jenny Hen
(*Bombus Bombus*)
TEXAS, USA



Seldom have I felt more at home away from home than among the big hats and big guns of Texas. Strolling amid the oil derricks, I caught sight of the Jenny Hen, a grossly elongated, flightless bird bred for its meat in the 1950s but ultimately deemed too weird and dangerous to be cooked for dinner. I took a couple of pot shots at it but managed only to explode a pile of oil barrels, to my hosts' evident delight.

Tookey's Possum
(Bombus Bombus)

NEW ZEALAND

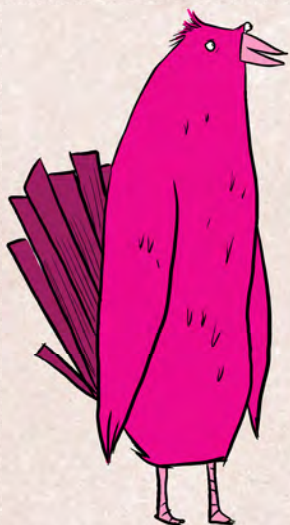


Glimpsed this beauty from my bathroom while on a weekend jaunt to Wellington. He was gnawing on chicken bones. By the time I'd got downstairs with my gun, he'd gone. In my disappointment, I failed to notice that I was completely naked, until a passer-by pointed out my embarrassment.

Tookey's Possum is renowned for its smell, which is described by locals as "a mixture of lavender, honeysuckle, and an open sewer."

Short-crested Otto
(Bombus Bombus)

FINLAND



Finland has many lakes, but it is only on the banks of Lake Saimaa that one finds the Short-crested Otto. It was during an off-the-books hunt for the Ringed Seal at Imatra that I spotted the Otto, his magenta plumage clearly visible on the shore. Armed only with four or five of my favourite clubs, I was unable to pick off the bird.

Once riled, it pursued me without mercy until I was forced to undertake the "wasp defence", submerging myself in the lake waters. At this point I was set upon by several ringed seals, and only the intervention of a gentleman in a coracle prevented my demise at their hands. Short crest, short temper, as I told the boys back at the lodge.

Cubic Salamander
(Bombus Bombus)

PORTUGAL



Portugal's hot climate favours the lizard, with his cold blood and scaly skin. While sunbathing upon a rock, not unlike a lizard, I caught sight of this square specimen darting behind a boulder. I reached for my dart gun and pursued him down the beach for a mile, all the while keeping pace and lining up my shot. Just as he paused, I was apprehended by the authorities,

as I had strayed from the nude beach to the conventional, clothed bathing area. As I was bundled into the police car, wrapped in a dirty blanket, I could see the Cubic Salamander laughing from a promontory. With luck on my side, I hope one day to craft a pair of bathing trunks from this species.

Scotch Kitty
(Bombus Bombus)

SCOTLAND
(HIGHLANDS)



Long-fabled but seldom seen, drawings of the Scotch Kitty were dismissed as mere doodles by respected naturalists including Herman Weißgarten and Hennig Plum. And in many ways it does resemble the kind of cat one might draw while on the telephone waiting for an appointment to have cable Internet installed. However, I spied one on Ben Nevis, but did not have a weapon to hand. The beef sandwich I threw at it glanced off its glossy coat with little effect.

Beaver Wasp
(Bombus Bombus)

PERU



The mysteries of darkest Peru have confounded many a hunter. From icy mountain to torrid rainforest, it boasts a biodiversity that sends even the most jaded hunter to the gun cupboard with a spring in his step. I will not, however, return to Peru. My encounter with the Beaver Wasp in the province of Madre de Dios, took place not in the boundless kingdom of nature, but rather in my own bedroom. I awoke with a powerful thirst in the night and reached for a glass of water in the dark. But instead of a tumbler of Adam's ale, I grasped a two-foot long insect with duck legs. I managed to avoid its vicious sting only by hiding under the covers, where I remained until my discovery by the hotel maid the next day.

Herbert
(Herbertus)

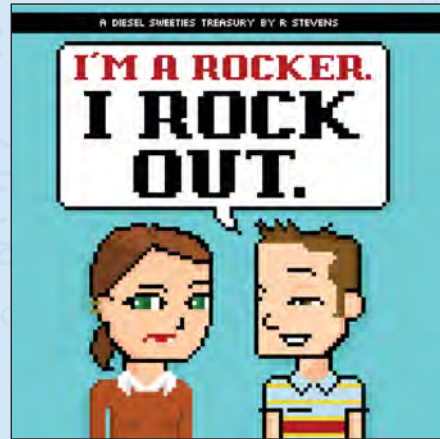
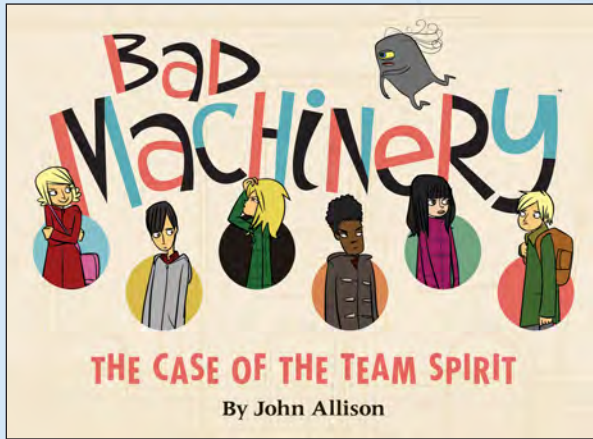
FRANCE



At the end of a long hunting season, with many trophies gained, I retired to the south of France for a little light relaxation. I anticipated a few weeks of wine, boules, bread, and beef.

It was after an evening of all four that I encountered a creature the Provence folk call "Herbert". The less said about this repulsive animal the better, suffice it to say that my meeting with this savage and unpredictable beast left me semi-nude, terrified, and eager to learn more. I cannot say exactly what Herbert is, but I have a healthy respect for it.

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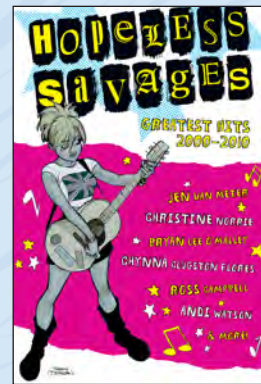
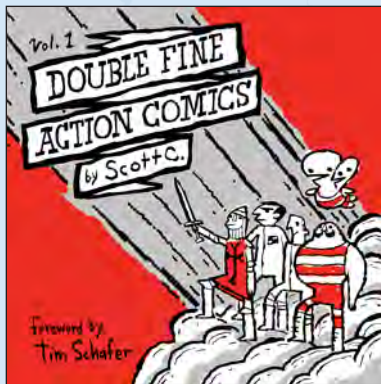


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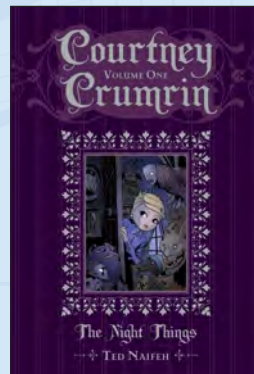


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