

"A MASTERPIECE!"—NEIL GAIMAN



ANYA'S  
GHOST

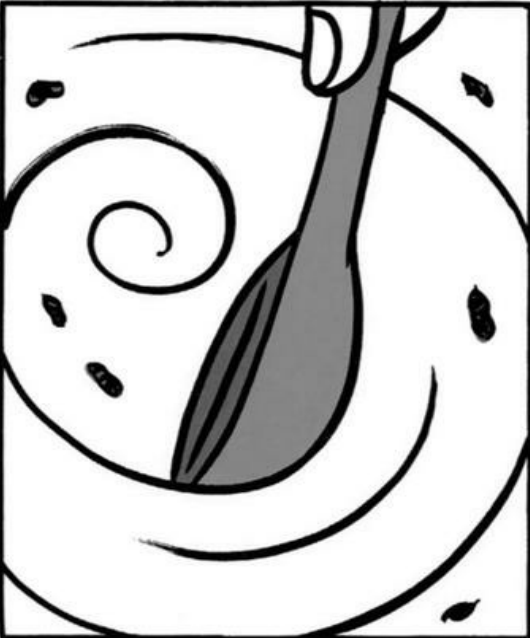
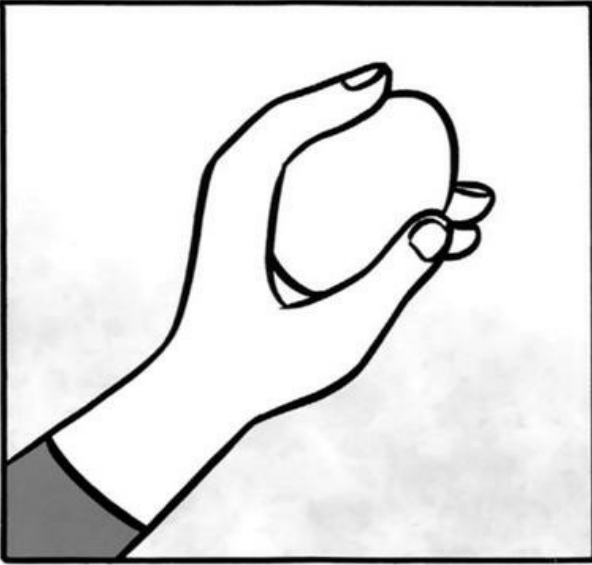
vera brosgol

# ANYA'S GHOST

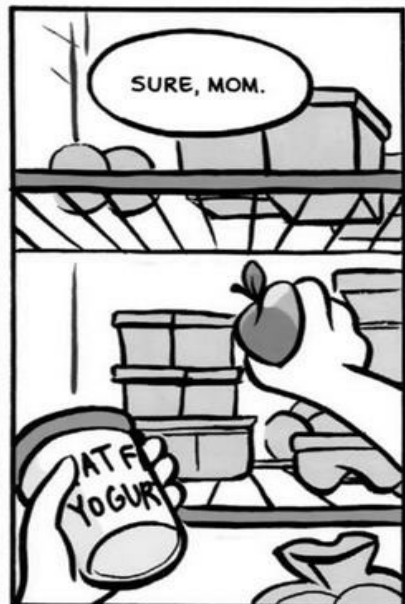
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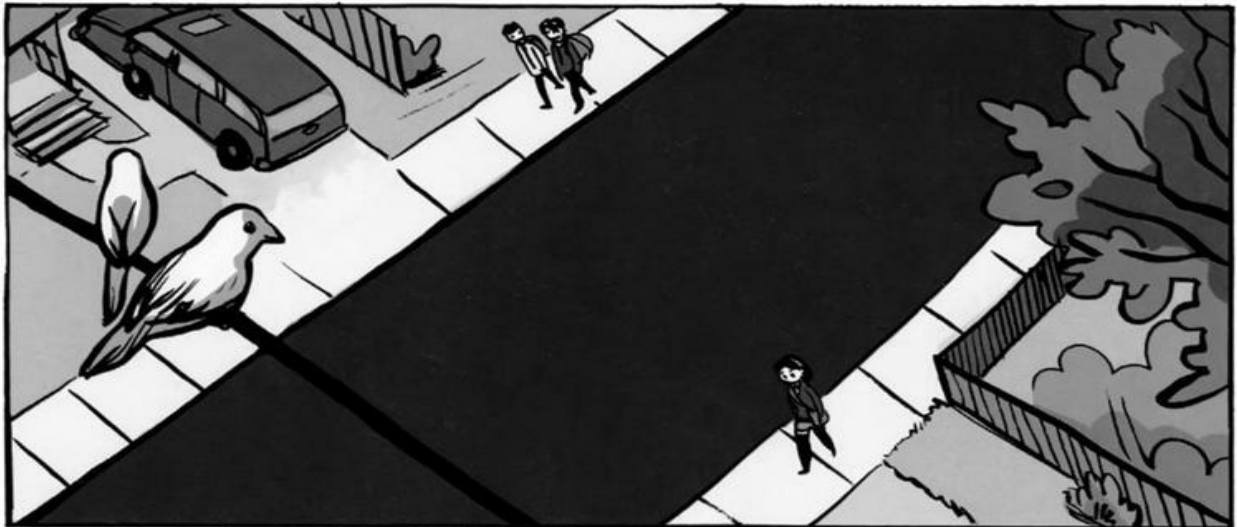
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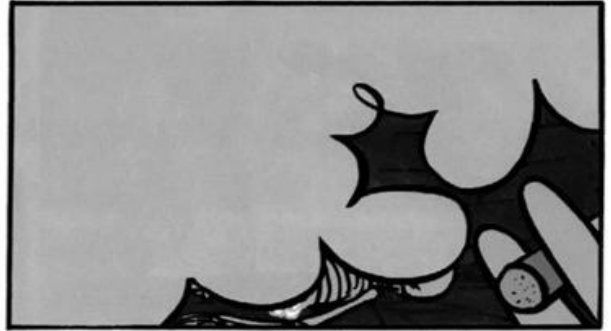
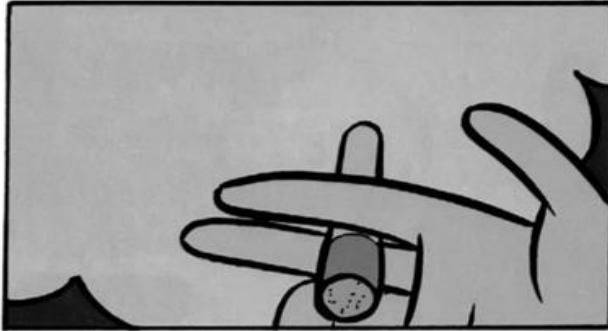














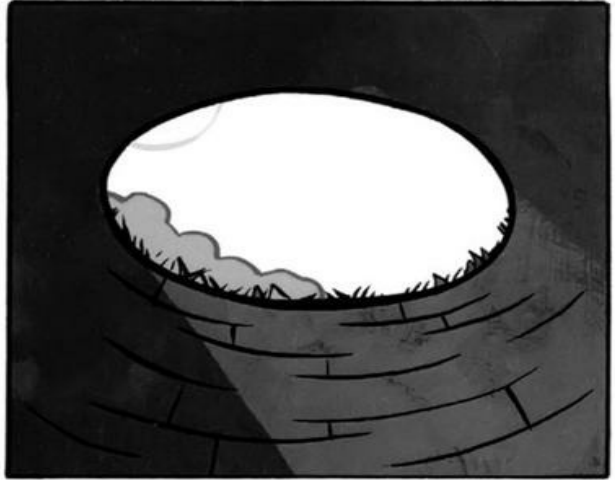
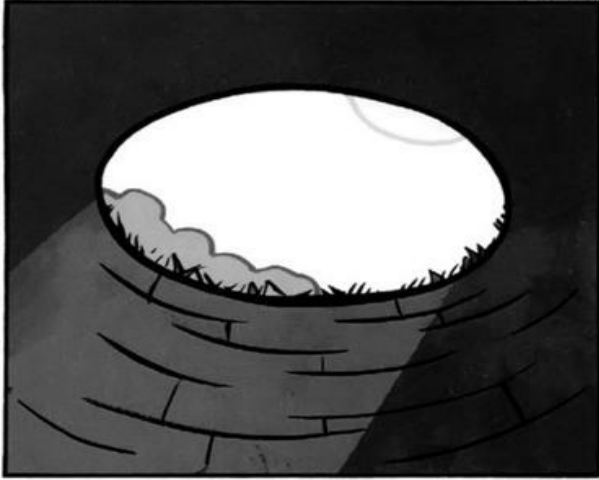






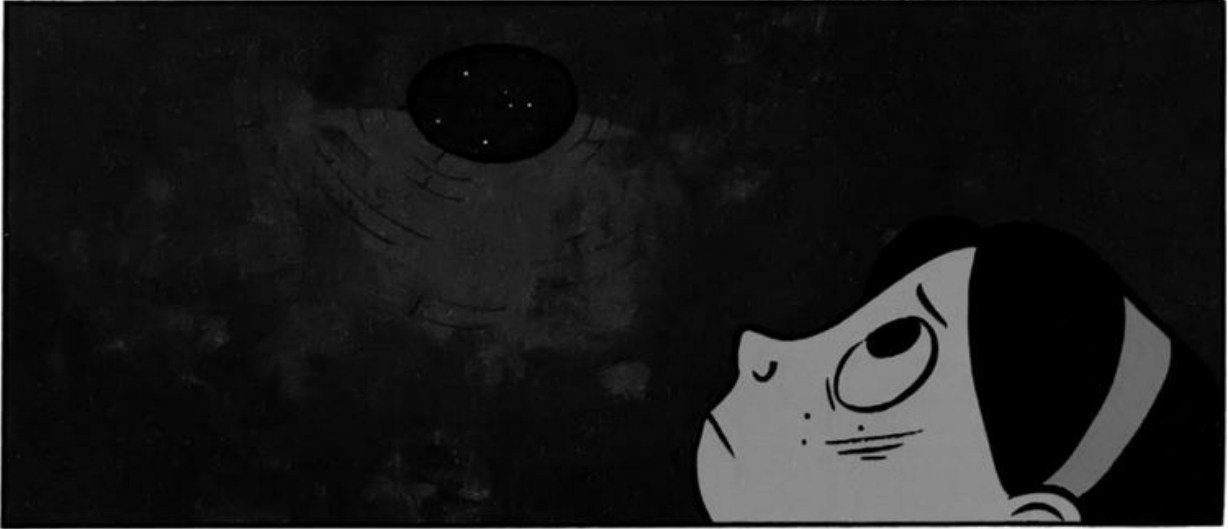


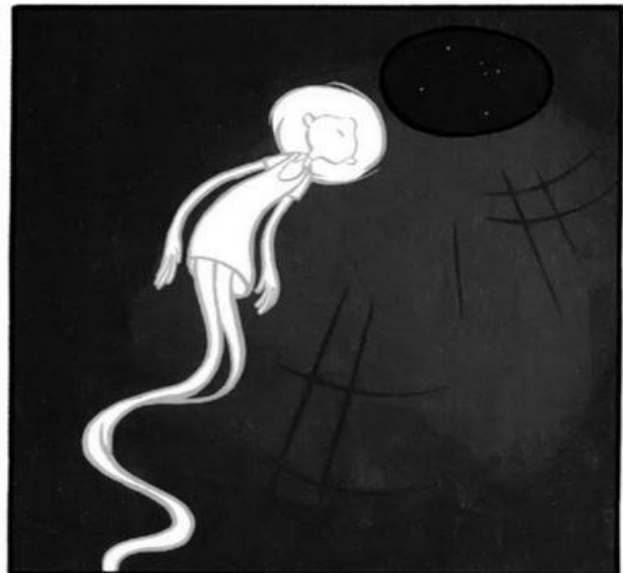






























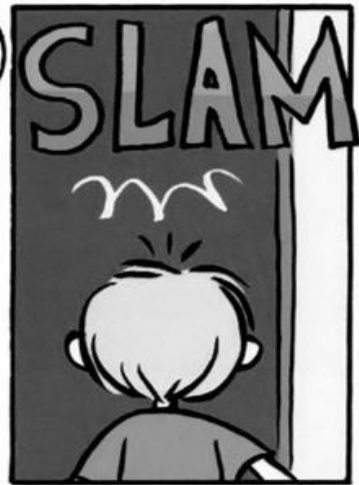


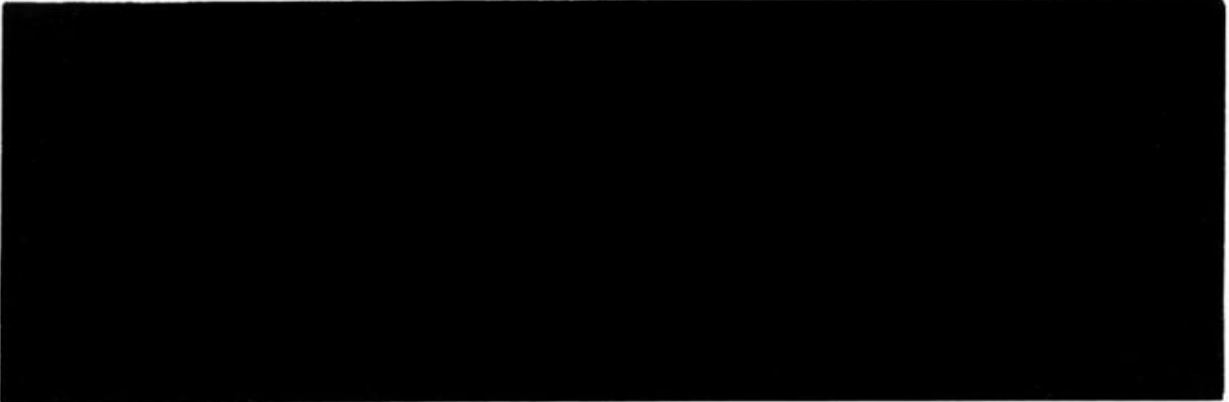
















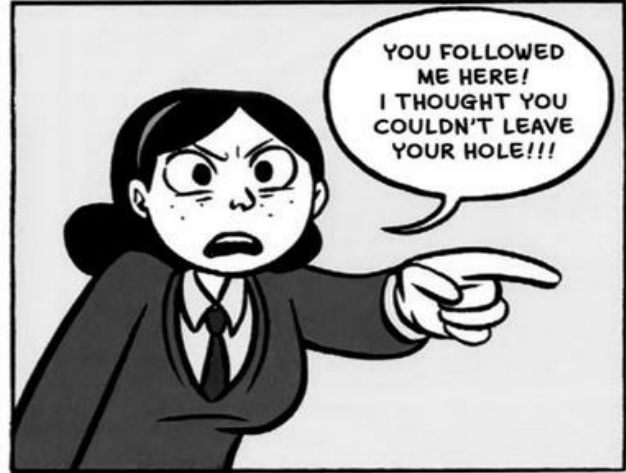








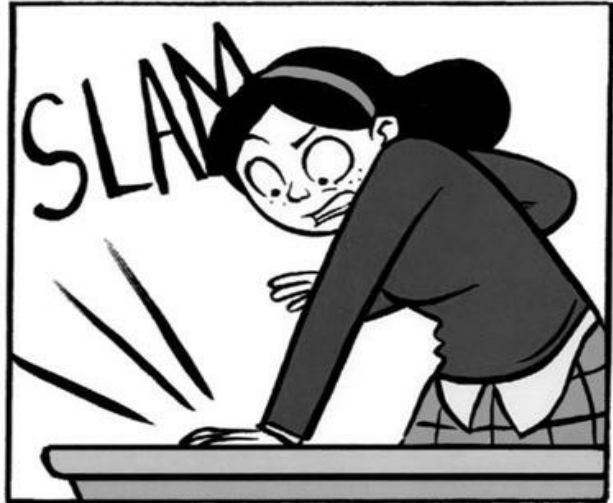






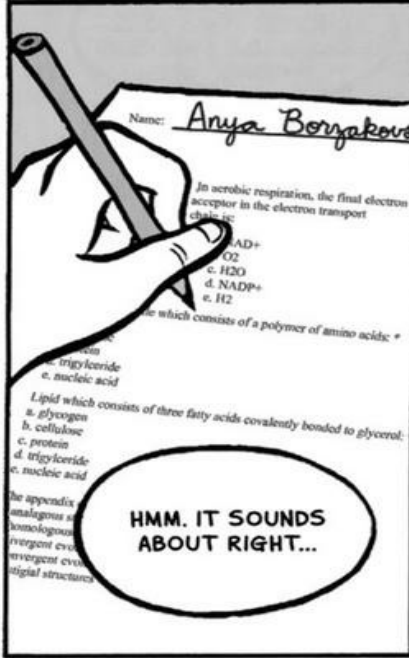








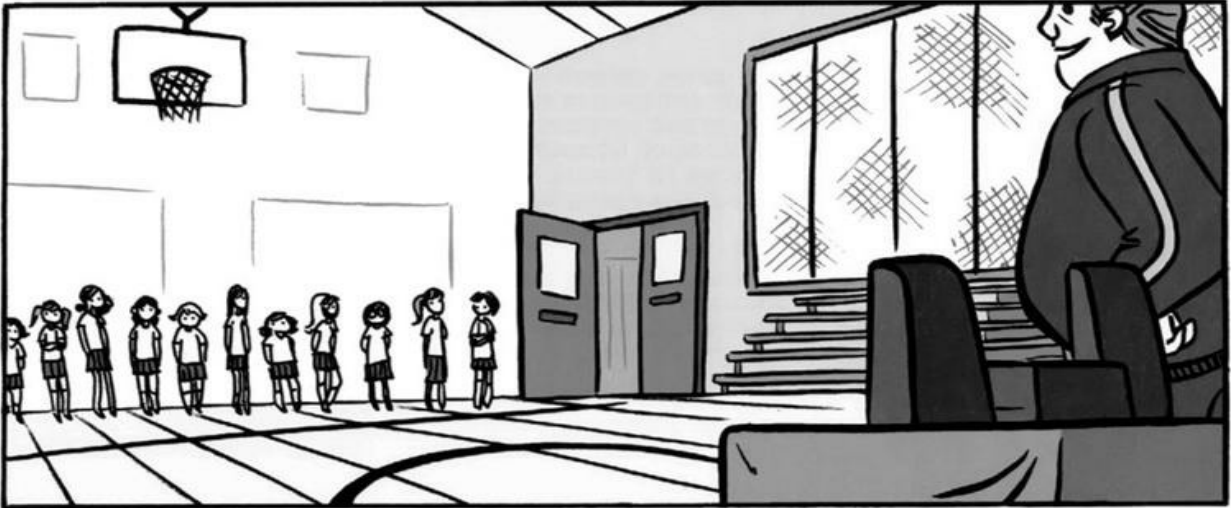










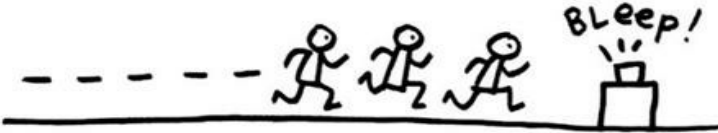




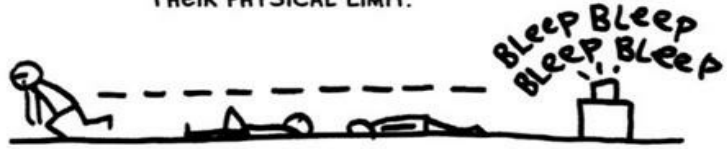
INVENTED BY DR. MAXIMILIAN G. ODOWOOD LEDGEAR IN 1982, THE MULTI-STAGE FITNESS TEST IS USED BY SUCH WONDERFUL INSTITUTIONS AS THE US ARMY, NAVY, AND THIS VERY HIGH SCHOOL!



IT ANALYZES THE BODY'S MAXIMUM OXYGEN INTAKE BY HAVING THE SUBJECT RUN BACK AND FORTH ACROSS A SET DISTANCE (IN THIS CASE THE GYM) IN TIME TO A SOUND SIGNAL, OR "BLEEP."



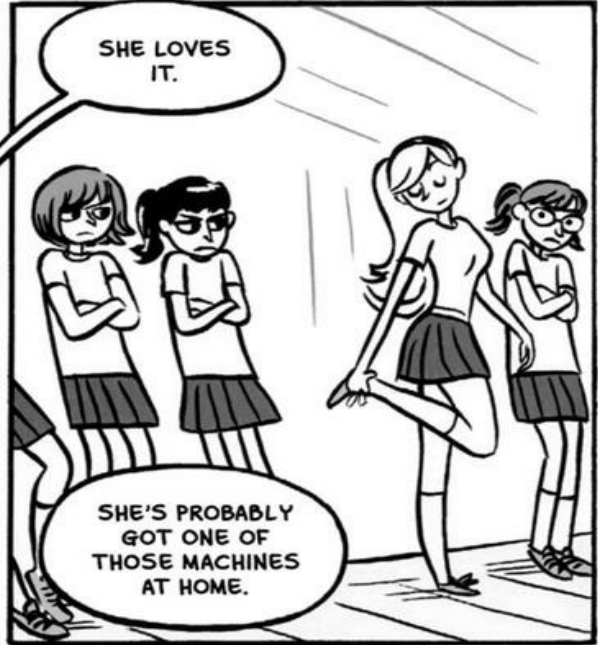
THE BLEEP INTERVAL BECOMES SHORTER, CAUSING THE SUBJECT TO RUN FASTER, UNTIL THEY REACH THEIR PHYSICAL LIMIT.



WE CROSS-REFERENCE THE NUMBER OF LAPS ON THIS HANDY DANDY SPREADSHEET, AND THUS DETERMINE YOUR VERY OWN MULTI-STAGE FITNESS LEVEL!

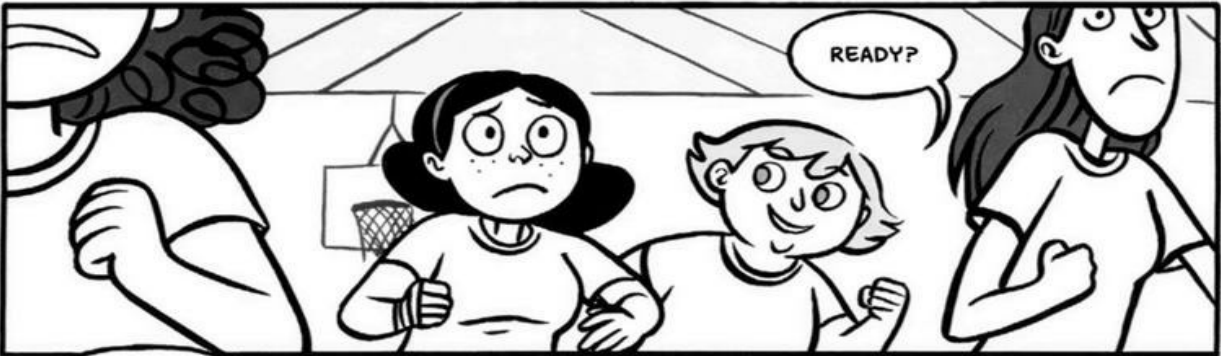
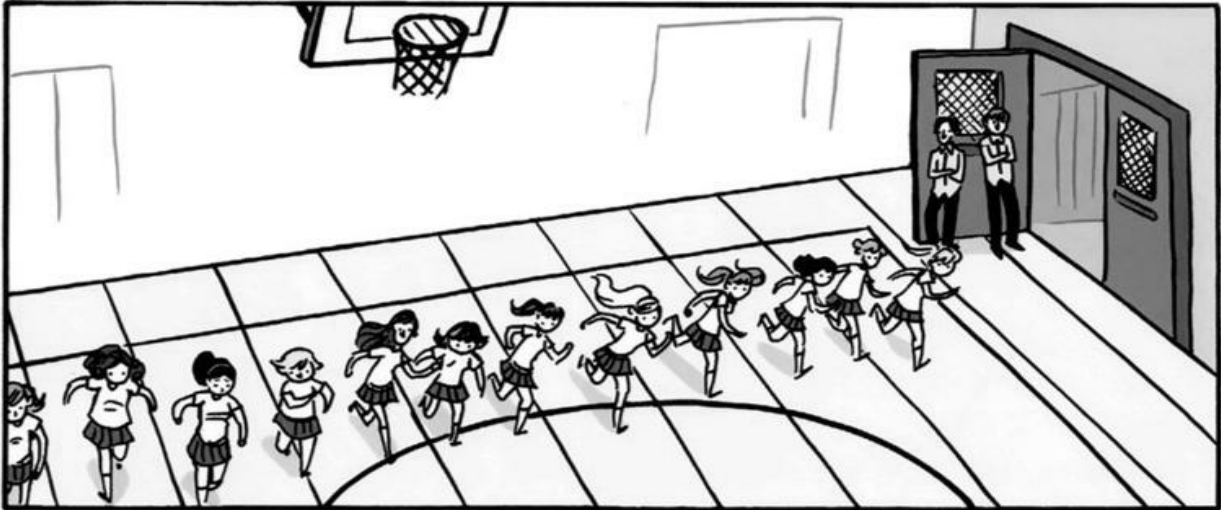


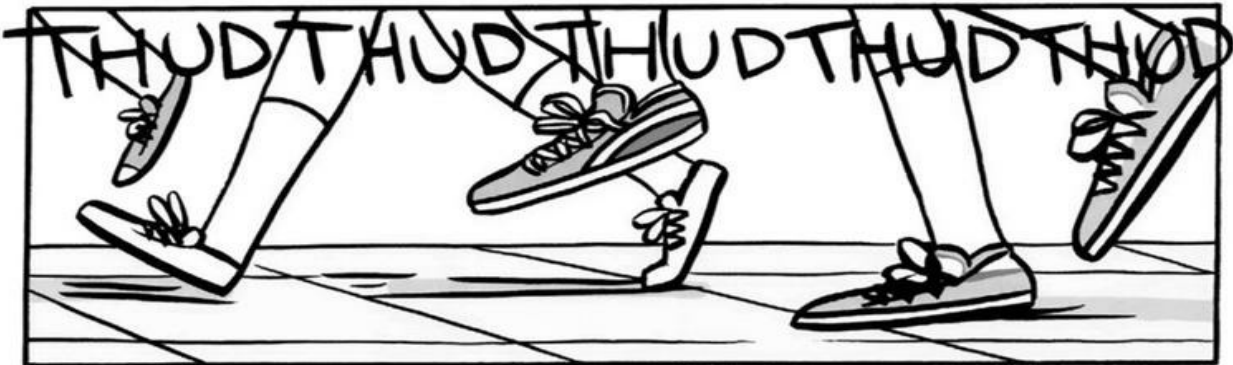
HE JUST LIKES WATCHING US RUN AROUND IN THESE STUPID SKIRTS.

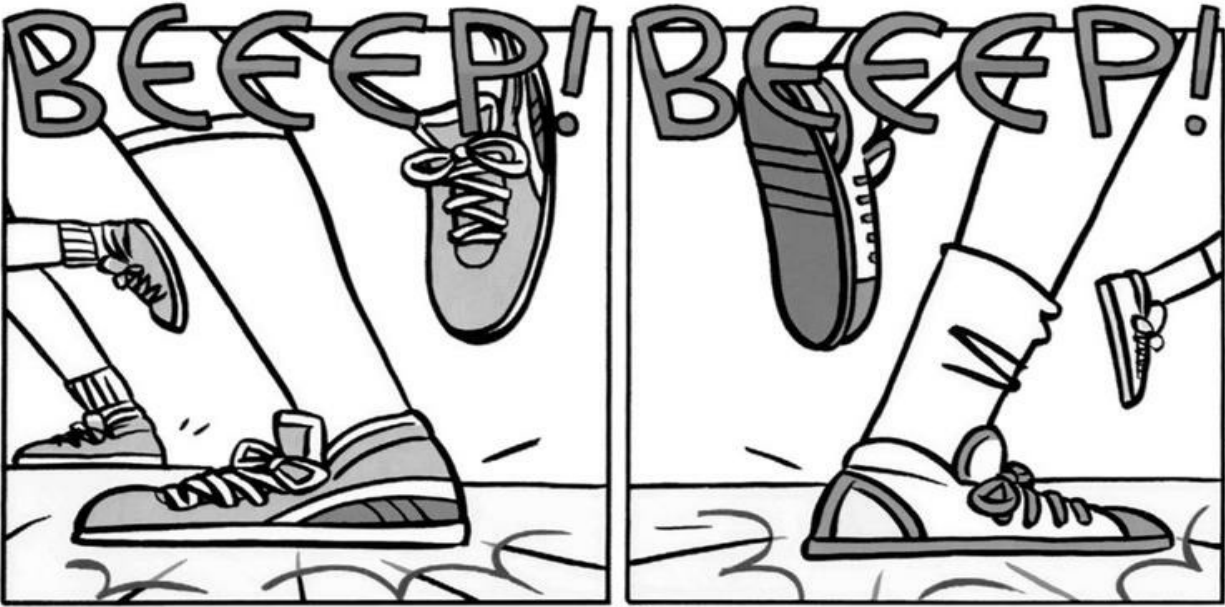


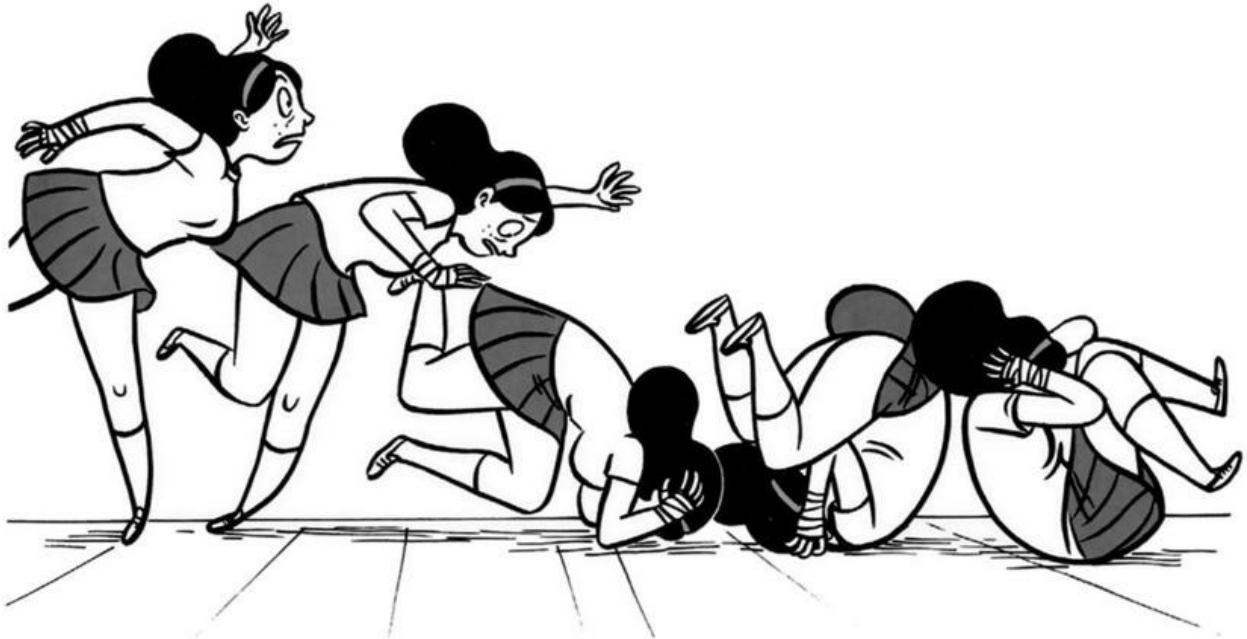


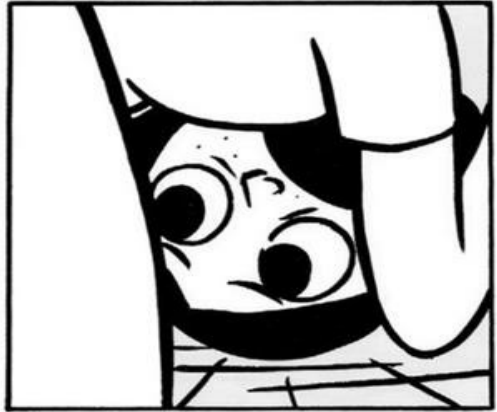




































ONLY 'CAUSE I HAVE FINALS COMING UP.



HOORRAAAAY!!!!

AND YOU HAVE TO STAY REALLY SMALL!



I WILL!  
I PROMISE!  
OH, THIS IS SO WONDERFUL!!!



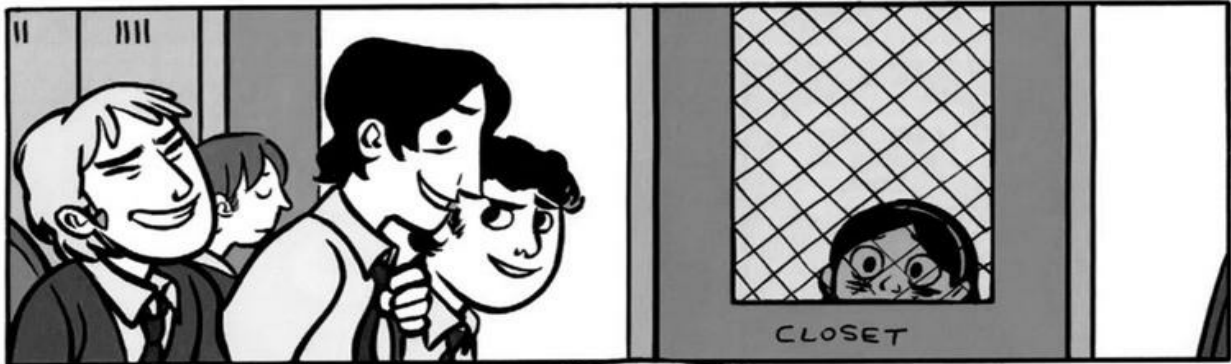
I'M SO EXCITED!  
EVERYTHING I'VE SEEN  
OF YOUR WORLD HAS  
BEEN MARVELOUS!





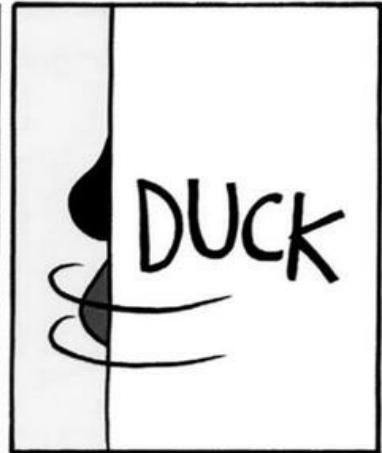
THE NEXT DAY:  
**GHOSTS ARE AWESOME**

























WHAT?!  
HOW?!!



WELL...  
MY PARENTS AND  
I LIVED ON A FARM NOT  
TOO FAR FROM THE WOODS.  
THE HOUSE WAS SO OLD  
I DOUBT IT'S STANDING  
ANYMORE...



MY PARENTS  
WERE VERY RELIGIOUS,  
AND WOULD ALWAYS OFFER A  
BED IN THE BARN TO ANYONE  
WHO MIGHT BE PASSING  
THROUGH THE AREA.



EXCEPT ONE NIGHT...  
I WOKE UP FROM A DREAM  
AND CAME DOWNSTAIRS.  
HE WAS STANDING OVER  
MY PARENTS' BODIES,  
READY TO GO  
UPSTAIRS FOR ME.  
HE SAW ME...

THE MAN  
WHO CAME THAT  
SPRING SEEMED LIKE  
A GOOD CHRISTIAN.  
HE EVEN HELPED MY  
MOTHER MAKE DINNER  
EVERY NIGHT.

I RAN THROUGH  
THE FOREST. I  
COULD HEAR HIM  
BEHIND ME...

I WAS NEVER VERY  
STRONG, AND HE  
WOULD HAVE CAUGHT ME.  
I COULD ALMOST FEEL  
HIS BREATH ON  
THE BACK OF MY  
NECK WHEN...

*I fell*

I DON'T THINK THEY EVER  
FOUND HIM.

I COULD HEAR  
THEM CALLING FOR HIM  
TO SURRENDER, TO TELL  
THEM WHERE MY BODY  
WAS...

UNTIL I COULDN'T HEAR  
ANYTHING ANYMORE.















YOU CAN PROBABLY GET BIGGER NOW. NO ONE COMES TO THIS TRAIL IN THE MORNINGS. THE JOGGERS DON'T LIKE THE GRAVEL.



I LIKE TO COME HERE TO BE ALONE WITH MY THOUGHTS AND WORK ON MY POETRY.



WHY DIDN'T YOU WANT TO GO TO CHURCH?



I DON'T THINK I'D MIND AS MUCH IF IT WAS A NORMAL CHURCH, WHERE YOU COULD WEAR PANTS. ORTHODOX CHURCH IS WEIRD.



HOW IS IT WEIRD?

I DUNNO... LONG... BORING... FULL OF RUSSIANS...



RUSSIANS ARE BAD?

WELL, NO, BUT... RRRGH.





NOPE. JUST YOUR RUN OF THE MILL RICH WHITE NEW ENGLAND PRIVATE SCHOOL KIDS.

THAT MUST BE SO SAD....



WHAT? WHY?

WELL, WHEN I WAS ALIVE ALL THE IRISH PEOPLE MAY AS WELL HAVE BEEN BLOOD KIN. THEY DEFENDED EACH OTHER, ONLY MARRIED EACH OTHER...



HA! MY FRIEND SIOBHAN IS IRISH, AND ALL THAT MEANS IS THAT SHE HAS ABOUT FIVE THOUSAND TERRIFYING BROTHERS.



IN THE SUBURBS YOU'RE PRETTY MUCH ON YOUR OWN. UNLESS YOU'VE GOT LOTS AND LOTS OF MONEY. THAT ALWAYS HELPS YOU FIT IN...



WELL, I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU AT SCHOOL, AND I'D SAY YOU FIT IN REALLY WELL.

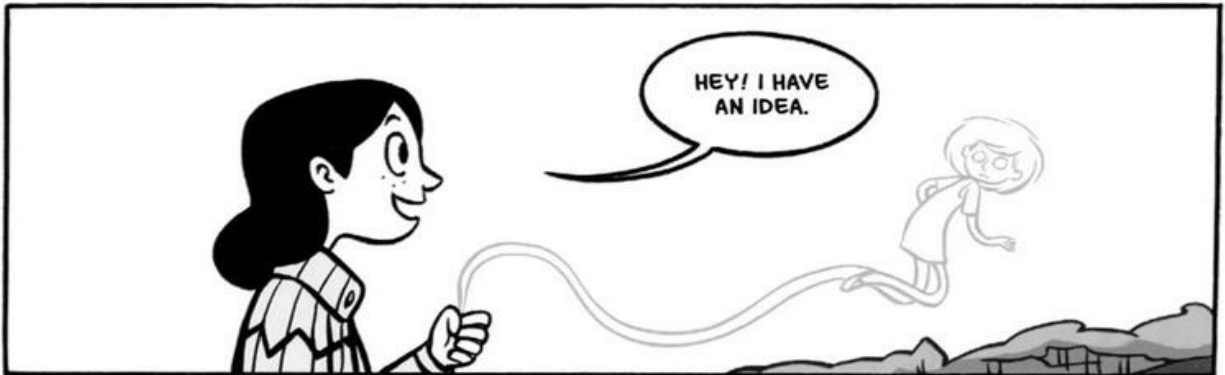
WHAT? SHUT UP.



NO, REALLY! YOU DRESS RIGHT, YOU HAVE LOTS OF FRIENDS, YOU'RE PRETTY...

OKAY, REALLY. KNOCK IT OFF.



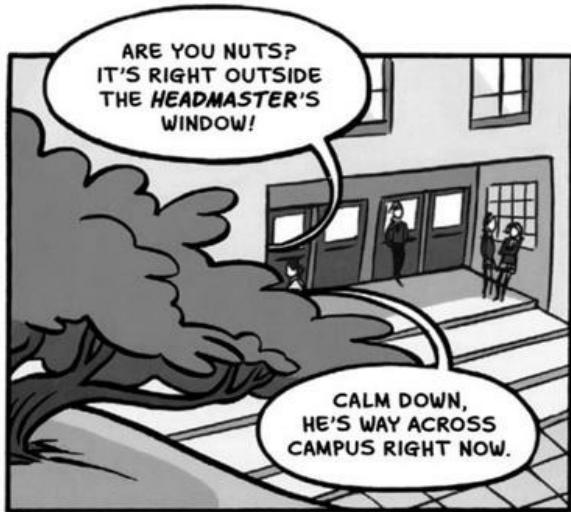














HOW I HATE THEE, ELIZABETH STANDARD.

MORE THAN YOU HATE EVERYONE ELSE?

UGH, HOW CAN YOU NOT? NICE GRADES, NICE LEGS, NICE NICE NICE.

I JUST WISH SHE'D GET A ZIT OR SOMETHING TO PROVE THAT SHE'S FULL OF PUS LIKE ALL THE REST OF US.

IT PROBABLY DOESN'T HELP THAT SHE'S DATING THE LOVE OF YOUR LIFE.

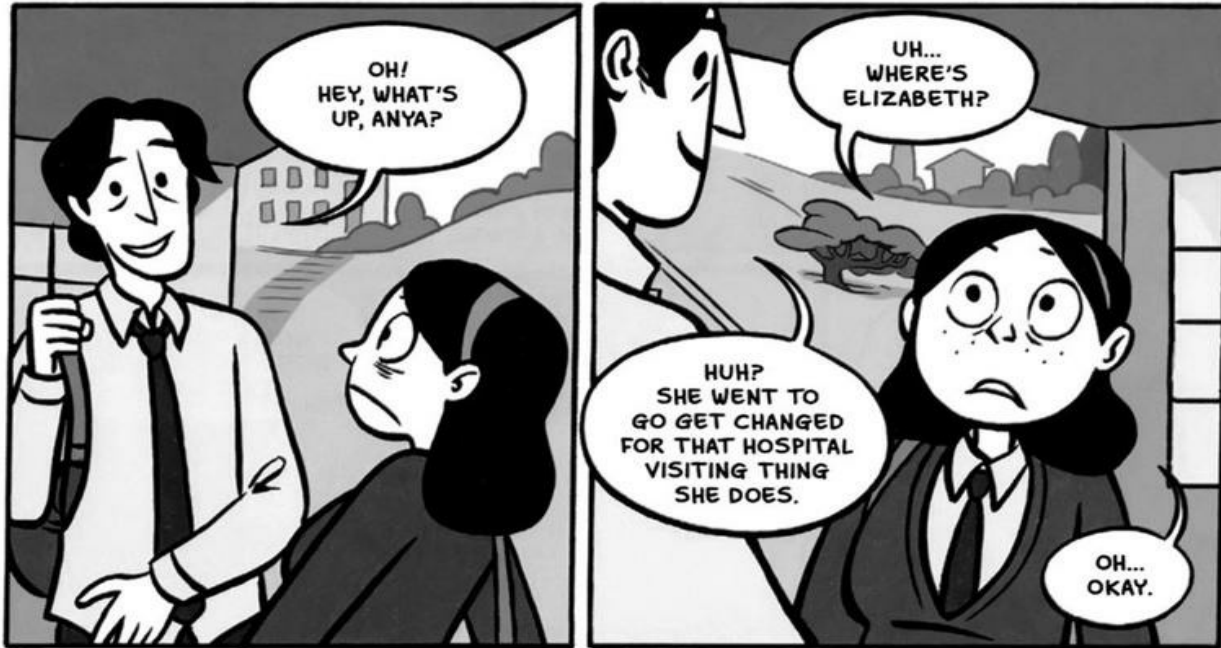
GRRRR.

I REALLY DON'T GET WHAT YOU SEE IN HIM, ANYWAY. MY BROTHER BILLY TOLD ME HE WAS KIND OF A DIRTBAG.

OH, RIGHT, YOUR BROTHER BILLY WOULD KNOW ALL ABOUT DIRTBAGS. DIDN'T HE DO A THESIS ON THEM IN JUVIE?

HEY, WATCH IT, MISSY.



















OOF...  
UGH... YOU KNOW,  
IT'S FUN TO HAVE  
SOMEONE TO GET  
DRESSED FOR A  
PARTY WITH.

SIOBHAN HATES  
THIS KIND OF  
THING.



OOF—TOO BAD  
YOU'RE NOT  
GOING TOO.



WELL, YOU  
ARE, BUT...YOU  
KNOW WHAT I MEAN.



UH...OH GEEZE.  
YOU CAN LOOK...



I'M REALLY  
NOT TOO SURE  
ABOUT THIS.



NO! IT'S  
TOTALLY PERFECT!  
YOU JUST NEED  
THE RIGHT BELT.

I NEED SOME  
INDUSTRIAL TAPE  
TO HOLD MY  
STOMACH IN.





















OH YEAH. PRESTON! OF COURSE.



YEAH, HE'S LOOKING PRETTY ROUGH.



I THINK HE'S DONE IN THE BATHROOM SO I'VE JUST GOT HIM LYING DOWN IN THERE.



SEEEAN! WHO'S THAT YOU'RE TALKING TO?

KEEP IT DOWN, AMBER.



AMBER... MATT'S GIRLFRIEND, AMBER?



UH, YEAH, SHE HELPED ME DRAG PRESTON UP HERE.



SEEEAN... I'M GETTING BORED IN HERE BY MYSELF...

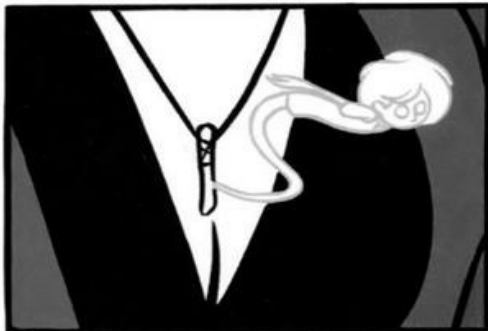


UH... LISTEN... I KNOW THIS LOOKS— AH, FORGET IT. YOU'RE COOL. RIGHT, ANYA?





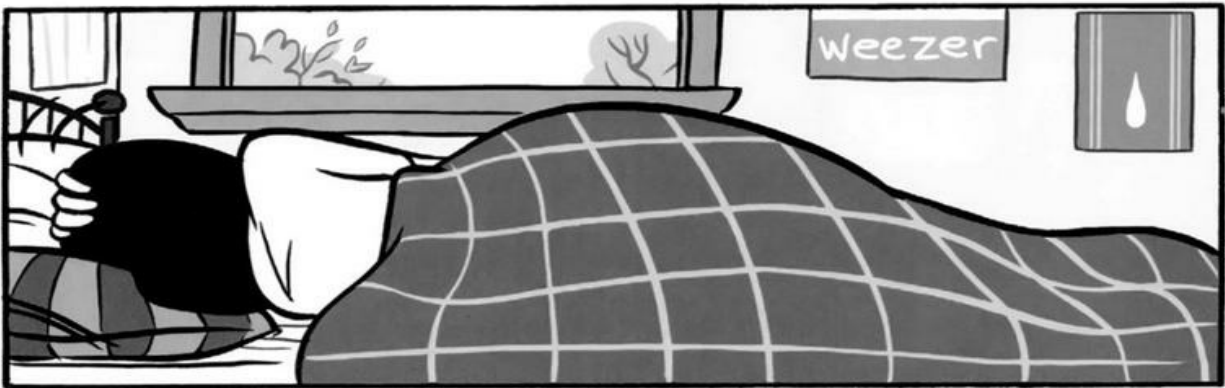
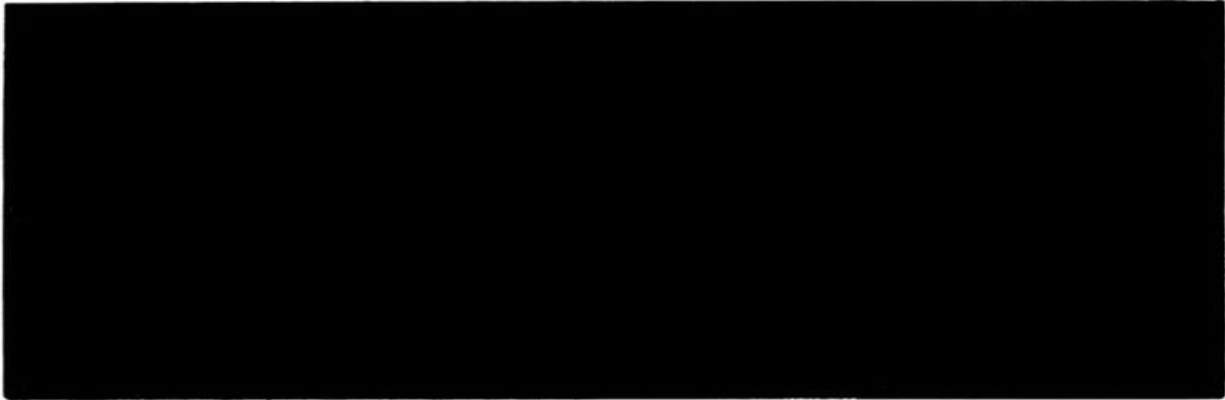


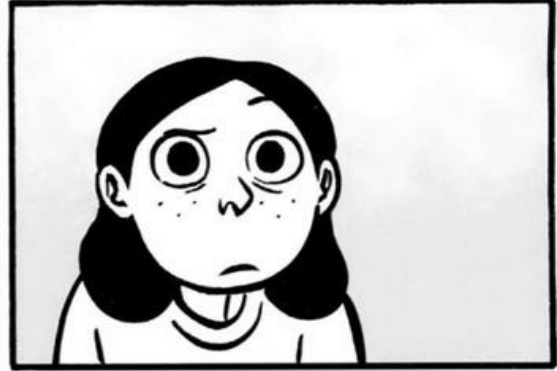








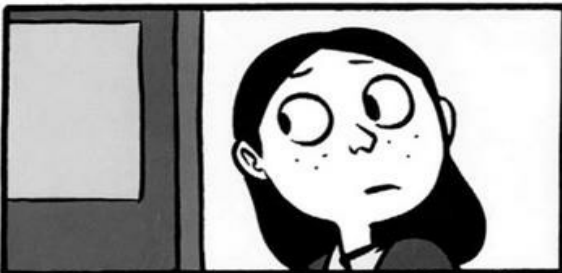


















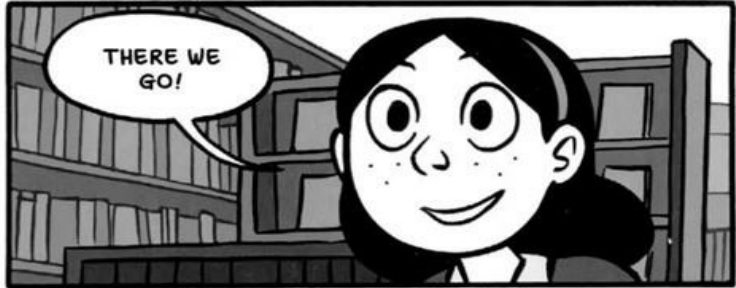












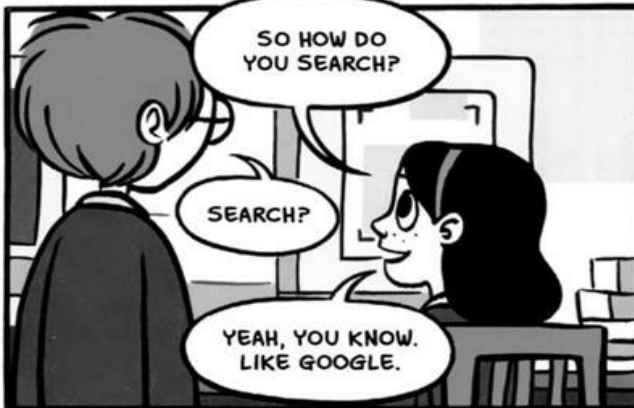
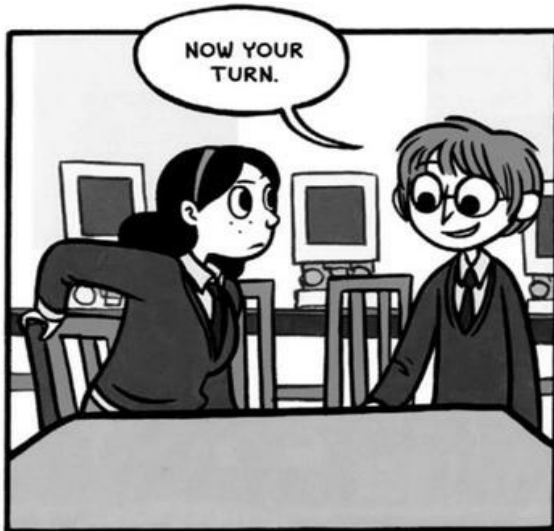


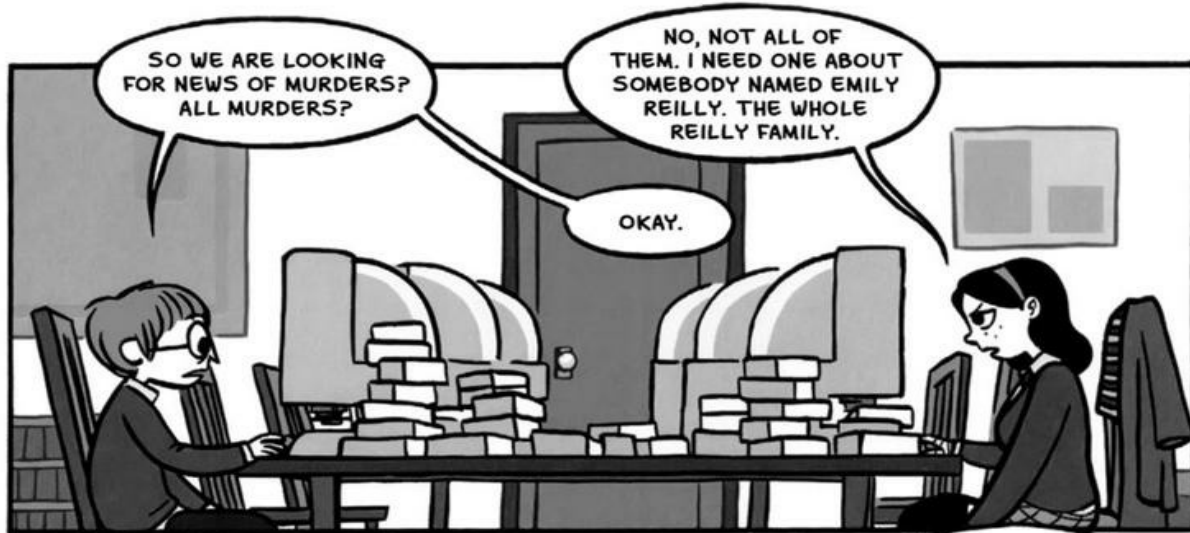




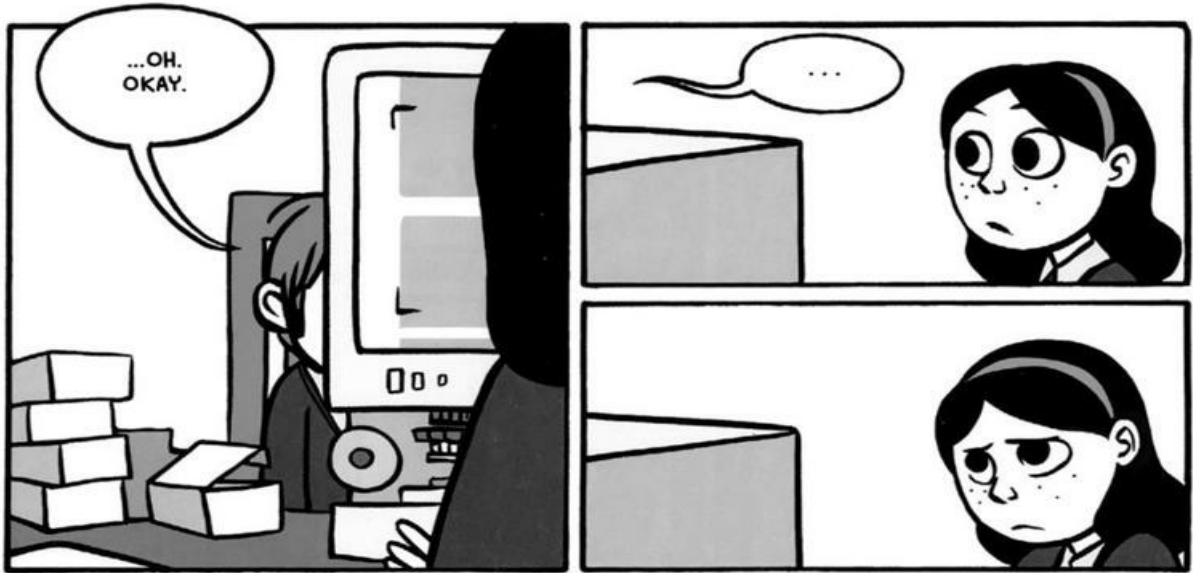












HEY...  
WHEN I FIRST  
CAME HERE, I GOT  
BULLIED TOO.



YOU...  
YOU DID?



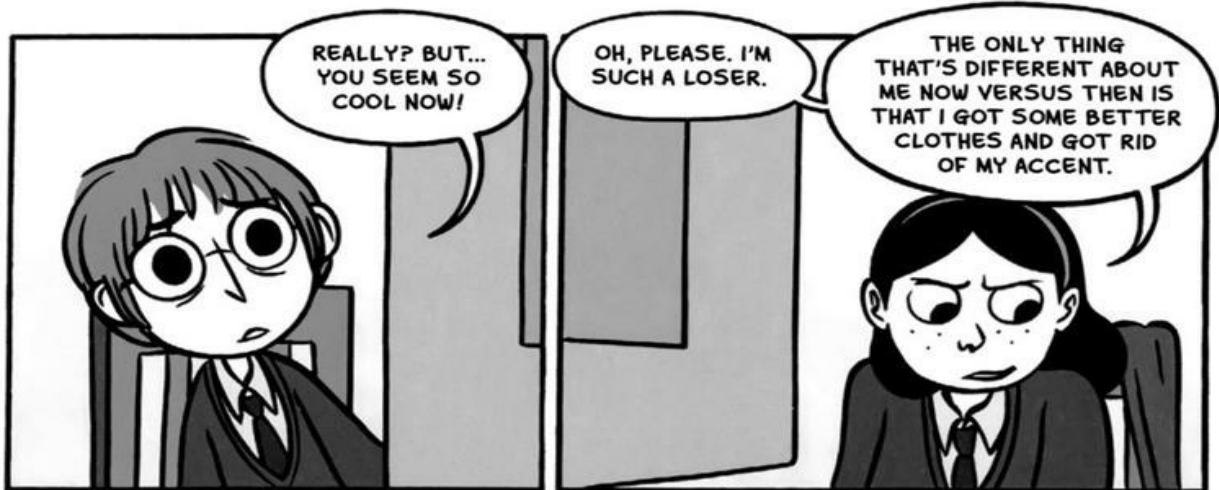
PFFT. YEAH.  
BIG TIME.

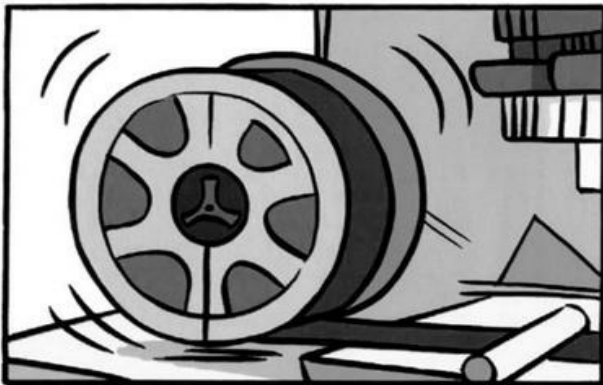


I WAS FAT,  
MY CLOTHES WERE  
FROM GOODWILL, AND I  
HAD AN ACCENT.

PEOPLE MIGHT  
THINK THAT FIVE-YEAR-  
OLDS CAN'T BE CRUEL, BUT  
I HAVE SOME STRONG  
EVIDENCE TO THE  
CONTRARY.



























I TOLD YOU, I HAD TO GO TO THE LIBRARY. FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT.



OH, THAT'S RIGHT. DID YOU LEARN ANYTHING INTERESTING ABOUT... WHAT WAS IT ABOUT?



HISTORY.



RIGHT, HISTORY. SO, REGALE ME WITH YOUR NEWFOUND KNOWLEDGE.



WELL, I KN-

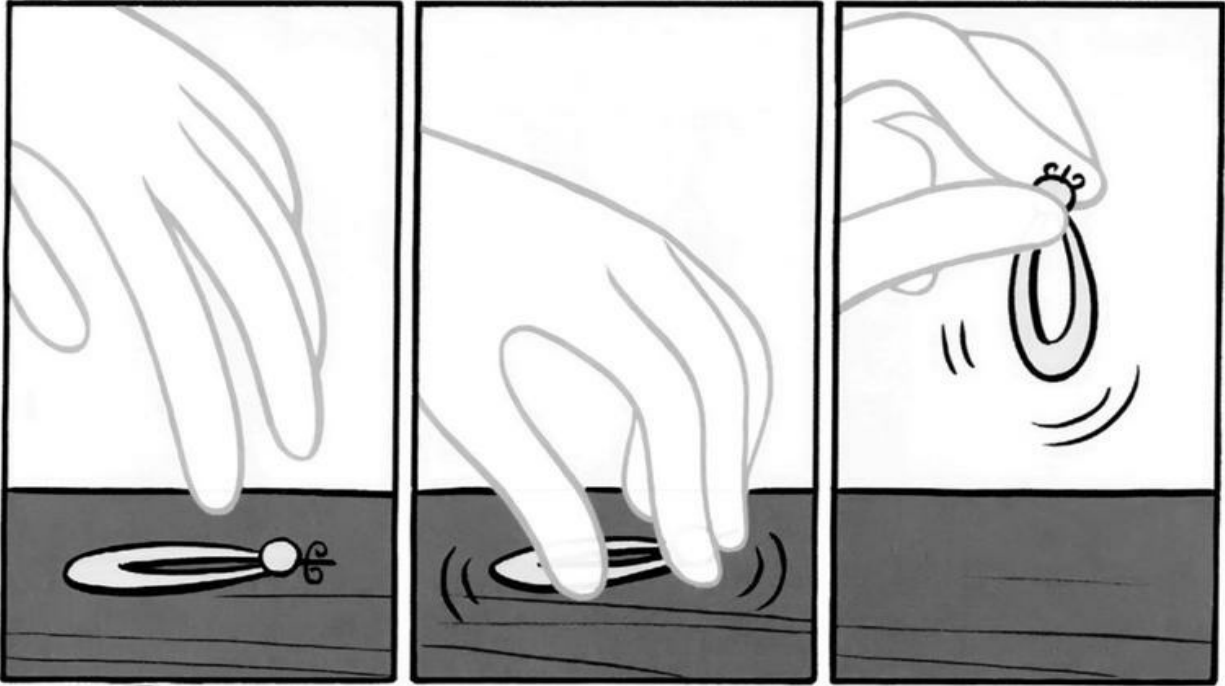
WAIT!



I LEARNED SOMETHING OF MY OWN RECENTLY! IT'S PRETTY COOL.



LET ME SHOW YOU.







AND WHAT, EXACTLY, DO YOU THINK YOU KNOW?



I KNOW YOU WERE LYING! ABOUT HOW YOU DIED, ABOUT HOW YOUR "BOYFRIEND" DIED... YOU KILLED THEM!!!



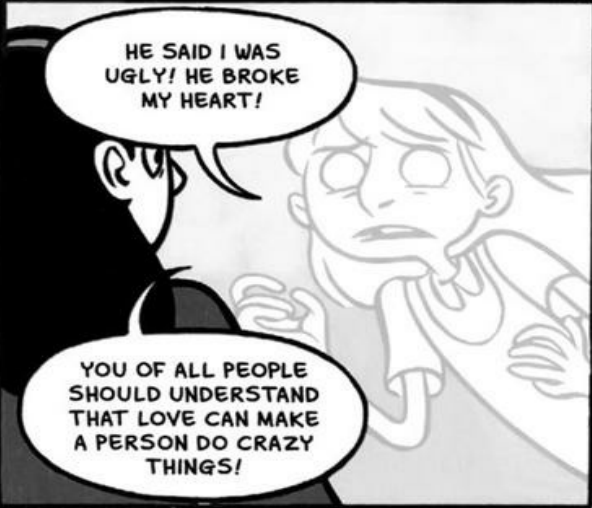
SIGH.



EMBELLISHED THE—YOU BURNED PEOPLE TO DEATH!!!!



OKAY... MAYBE I EMBELLISHED THE TRUTH A LITTLE.



HE SAID I WAS UGLY! HE BROKE MY HEART!

YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT LOVE CAN MAKE A PERSON DO CRAZY THINGS!



I DON'T THINK MURDER IS AN APPROPRIATE REACTION TO DISAPPOINTMENT.



ALL I WANT IS ANOTHER CHANCE!

I WANT TO MAKE IT RIGHT AND GIVE YOU THE LIFE I ALWAYS WANTED!



LOOK. I MADE A MISTAKE. IT HAPPENS.



I'M NOT INTERESTED IN THE LIFE YOU WANTED, OR YOUR TASTE IN MEN.



WHAT ABOUT SCHOOL? I HELPED YOU SO MUCH AND YOU WANT TO STOP?



I'LL FIGURE IT OUT ON MY OWN. NOW GIVE ME THE BONE, EMILY!



...NO.







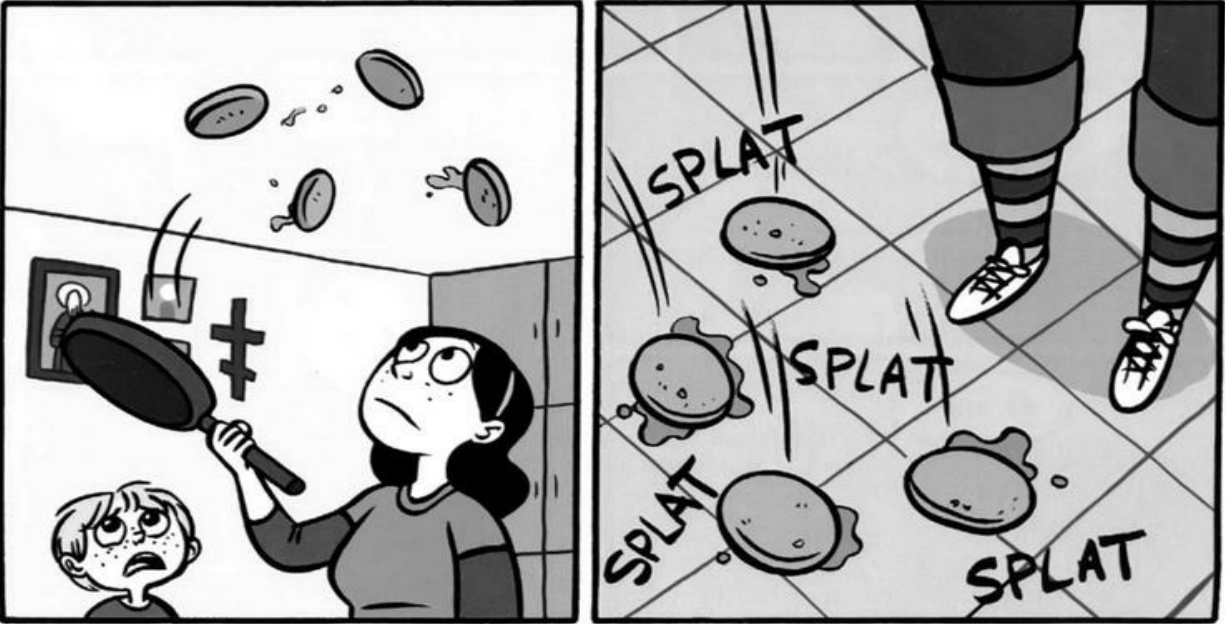


















AAAARGH!!!



THIS IS THE  
LAST CLOSET!  
WHERE ELSE IS  
THERE?!



SHE CAN'T BE  
THAT FAST!



THUMP THUMP THUMP!



WHAT  
WAS THAT?  
WHAT HAPPENED?



OY... BLEEN...  
MY LEG!













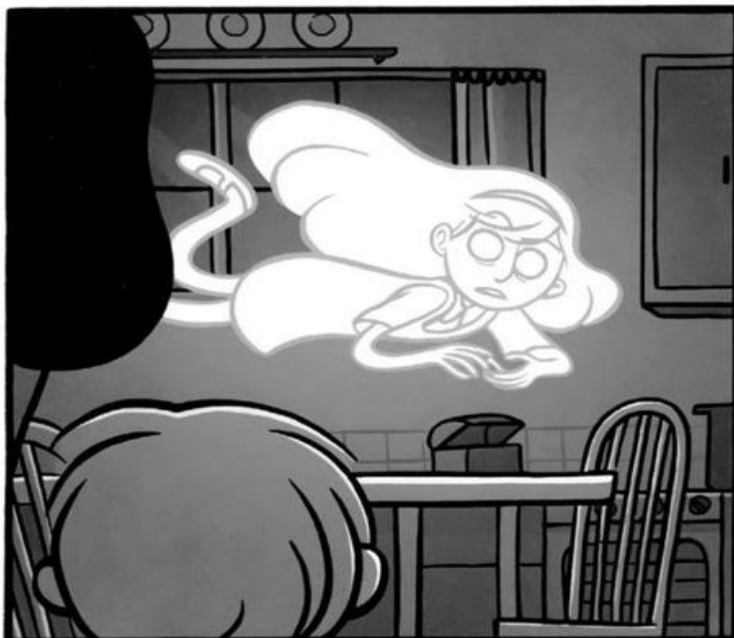






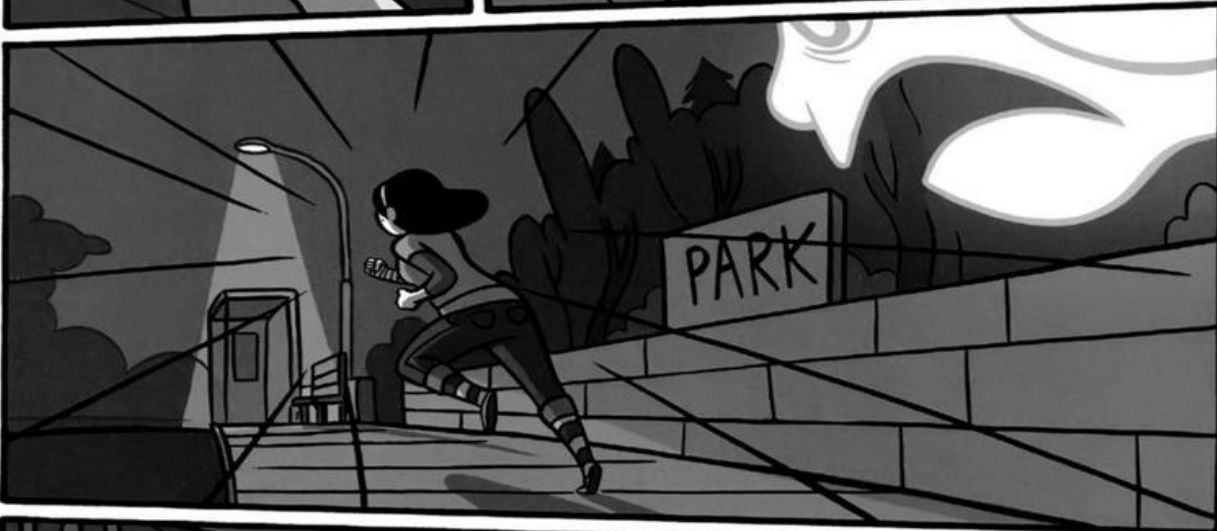












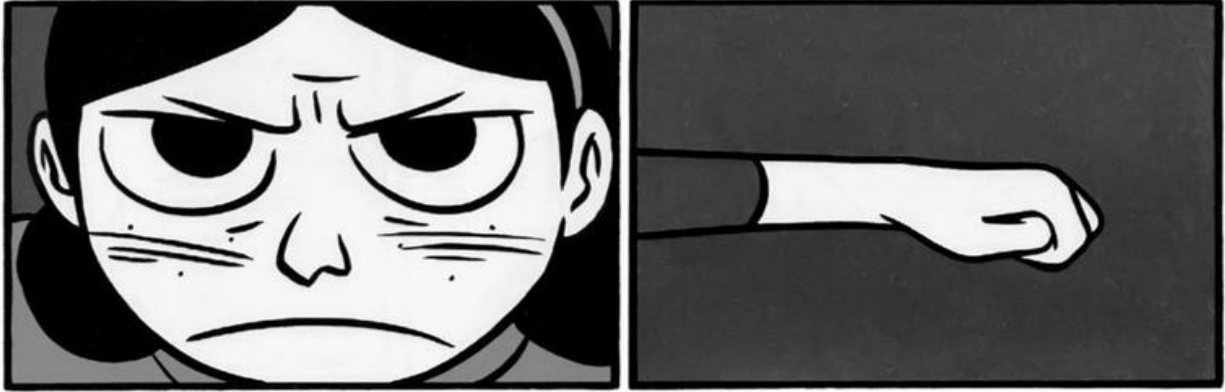


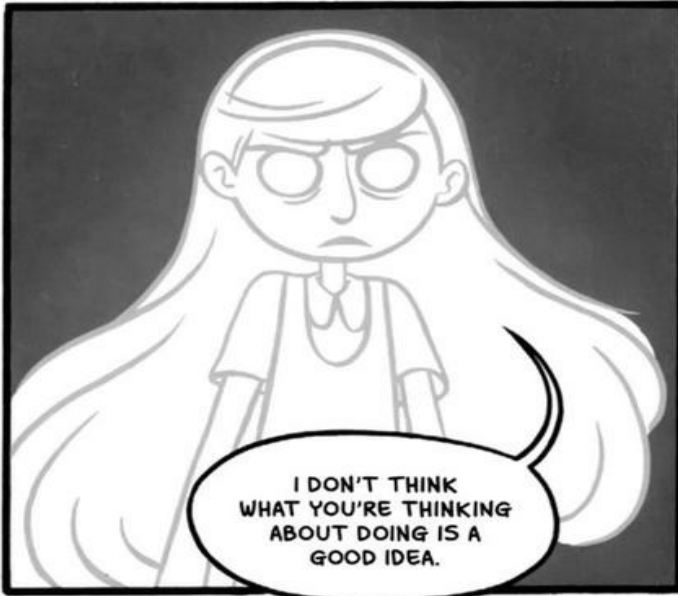












I DON'T THINK  
WHAT YOU'RE THINKING  
ABOUT DOING IS A  
GOOD IDEA.



REALLY?  
I THINK IT'S THE  
BEST IDEA I'VE HAD  
IN A LONG TIME.



I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY  
YOU'RE ANGRY. BUT I'M  
JUST TRYING TO KEEP YOU  
FROM MAKING A MISTAKE...



WOW, NICE STRATEGY!  
NATURALLY IF MY FAMILY  
WAS DEAD, I'D LOVE TO  
HANG OUT WITH THEIR  
**MURDERER!!**



I... I WASN'T GOING  
TO KILL THEM. I JUST  
WANTED YOU TO  
UNDERSTAND...



THAT I NEED YOU?  
THAT YOU MAKE MY  
LIFE BETTER?

NO, EMILY.



YOU'RE THE  
ONE THAT NEEDS  
ME.



YOU NEED ME  
TO GO TO SCHOOL,  
AND DRESS UP, AND  
CHASE BOYS, BECAUSE  
YOU NEVER GOT TO.

BUT I'M NOT LIVING  
YOUR LIFE FOR YOU.  
YOU HAD YOUR CHANCE,  
AND YOU SCREWED  
IT UP.



THAT'S ALL  
YOU GET.



LOOK... YOU DON'T  
WANT ME... OKAY.  
BUT MAYBE YOU CAN  
GIVE ME TO ONE  
OF YOUR FRIENDS?



I'M SURE SIOBHAN  
WOULD WANT SOME  
HELP WITH SCHOOL.  
YOU COULD JUST  
EXPLAIN TO HER  
AND...

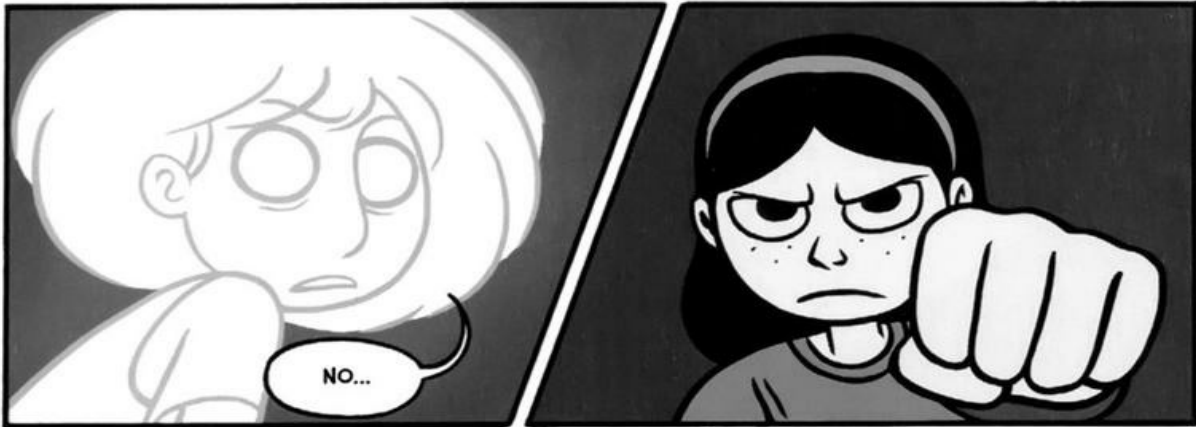






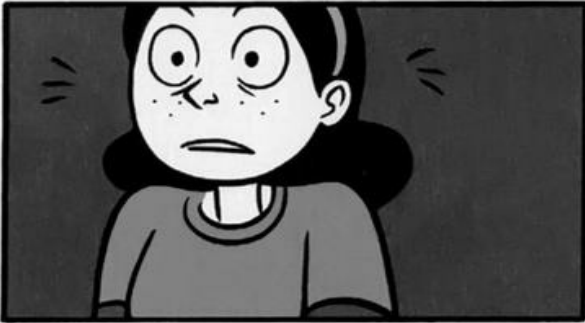


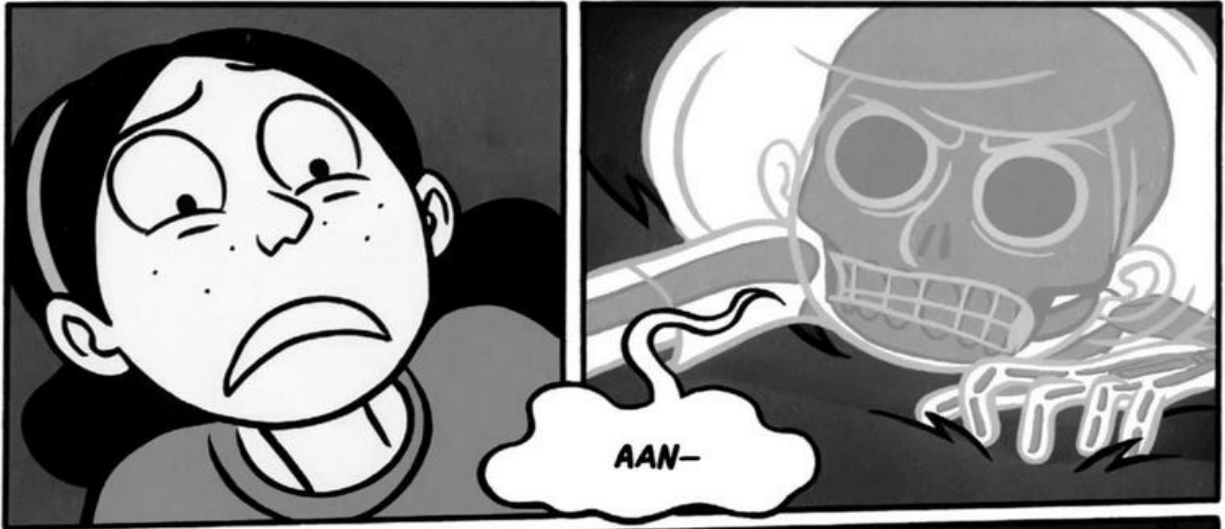














A-A-



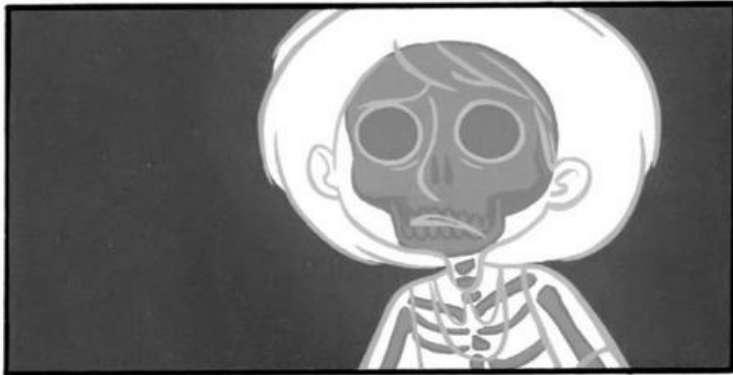


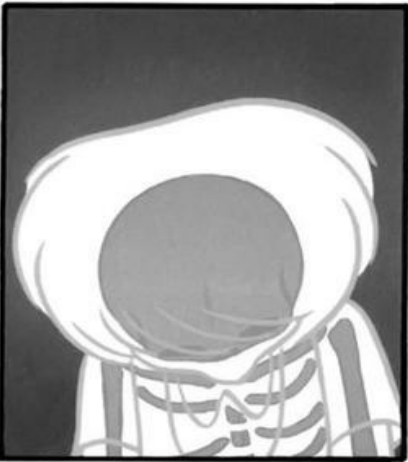








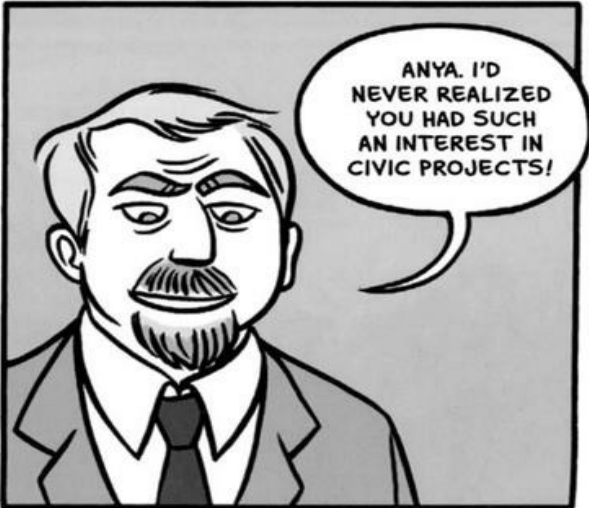


























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KIBUISHI, NEIL BABRA, SCOTT MCCLOUD, JEREMY SPAKE,  
THE LOVELY FOLKS AT :01, AND MY MOM.

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Vera Brosgol was born in Moscow, Russia, but spent most of her life being American. She received a diploma in Classical Animation from Sheridan College and spends her days drawing storyboards for animation in Portland, Oregon. At night she produces illustrations and comics, some of which have appeared in the *Flight* anthologies. This is her first book.

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# ANYA'S GHOST

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OF ALL THE THINGS ANYA EXPECTED TO FIND AT THE BOTTOM OF AN OLD WELL, A NEW FRIEND WASN'T ONE OF THEM. ESPECIALLY NOT A NEW FRIEND WHO'S BEEN DEAD FOR A CENTURY.

FALLING DOWN A WELL IS BAD ENOUGH, BUT ANYA'S NORMAL LIFE MIGHT ACTUALLY BE WORSE. SHE'S EMBARRASSED BY HER FAMILY, SELF-CONSCIOUS ABOUT HER BODY, AND SHE'S PRETTY MUCH GIVEN UP ON FITTING IN AT SCHOOL. A NEW FRIEND—EVEN A DEAD ONE—IS JUST WHAT SHE NEEDS.

BUT ANYA'S NEW B.F.F. ISN'T KIDDING ABOUT THE "FOREVER" PART...

