

NEIL GAIMAN

THE GRAPHIC NOVEL ADAPTATION OF THE MAGICAL NATIONAL BESTSELLER

CORALINE



Adapted & Illustrated by P. Craig Russell
winner of the Harvey and Eisner Awards



FOR
SALE

P. CRAIG RUSSELL
OPUS 62



CORALINE

based on the novel by

NEIL
GAIMAN

adapted and illustrated by

P. CRAIG RUSSELL

COLORIST:

LOVERN KINDZIERSKI

LETTERER:

TODD KLEIN

 HarperCollins *Publishers*

CORALINE

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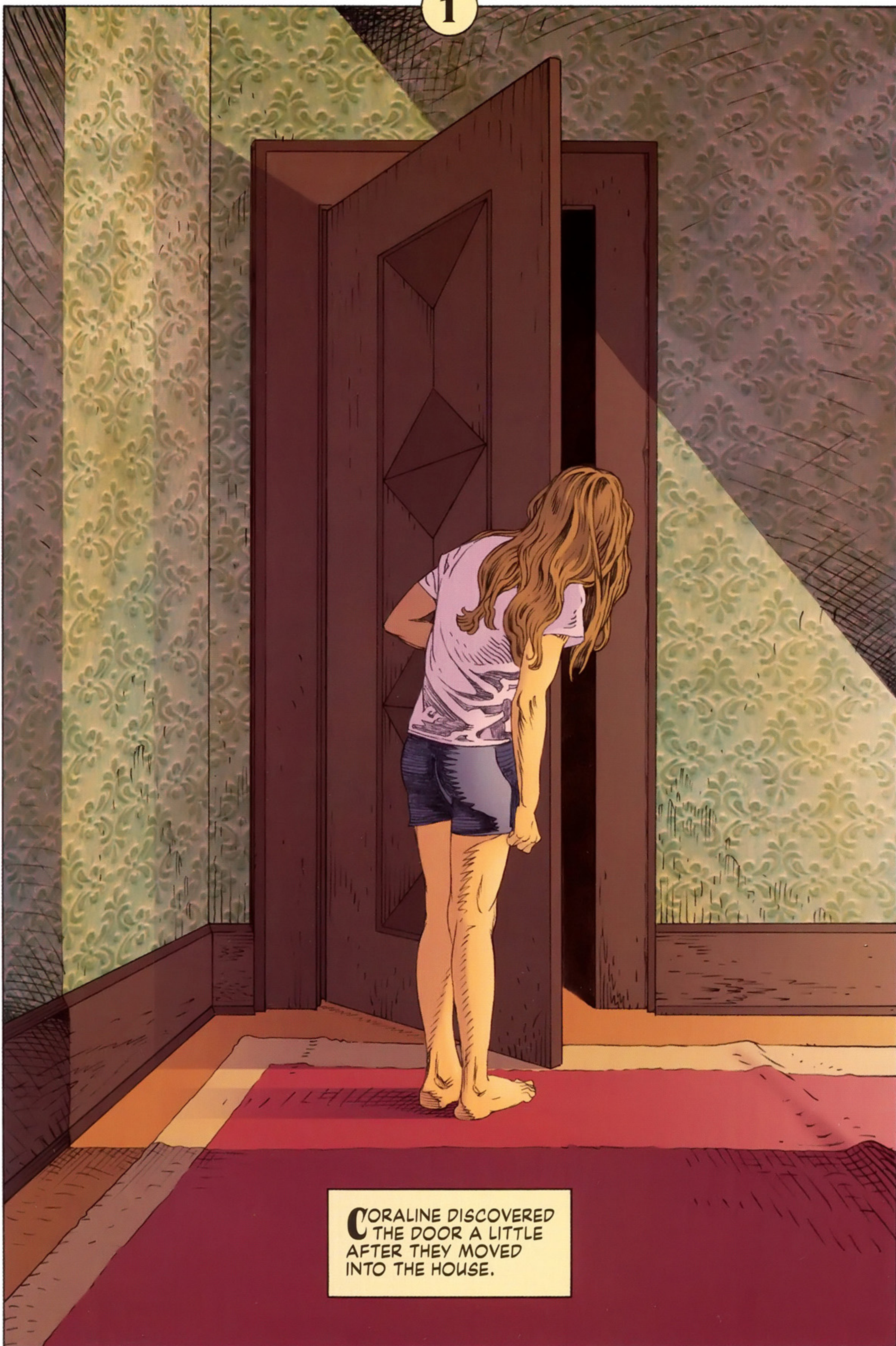
First Edition

*I started this for Holly
I finished it for Maddy —N.G.*

To Allison, Sloane, and Ivy —P.C.R.

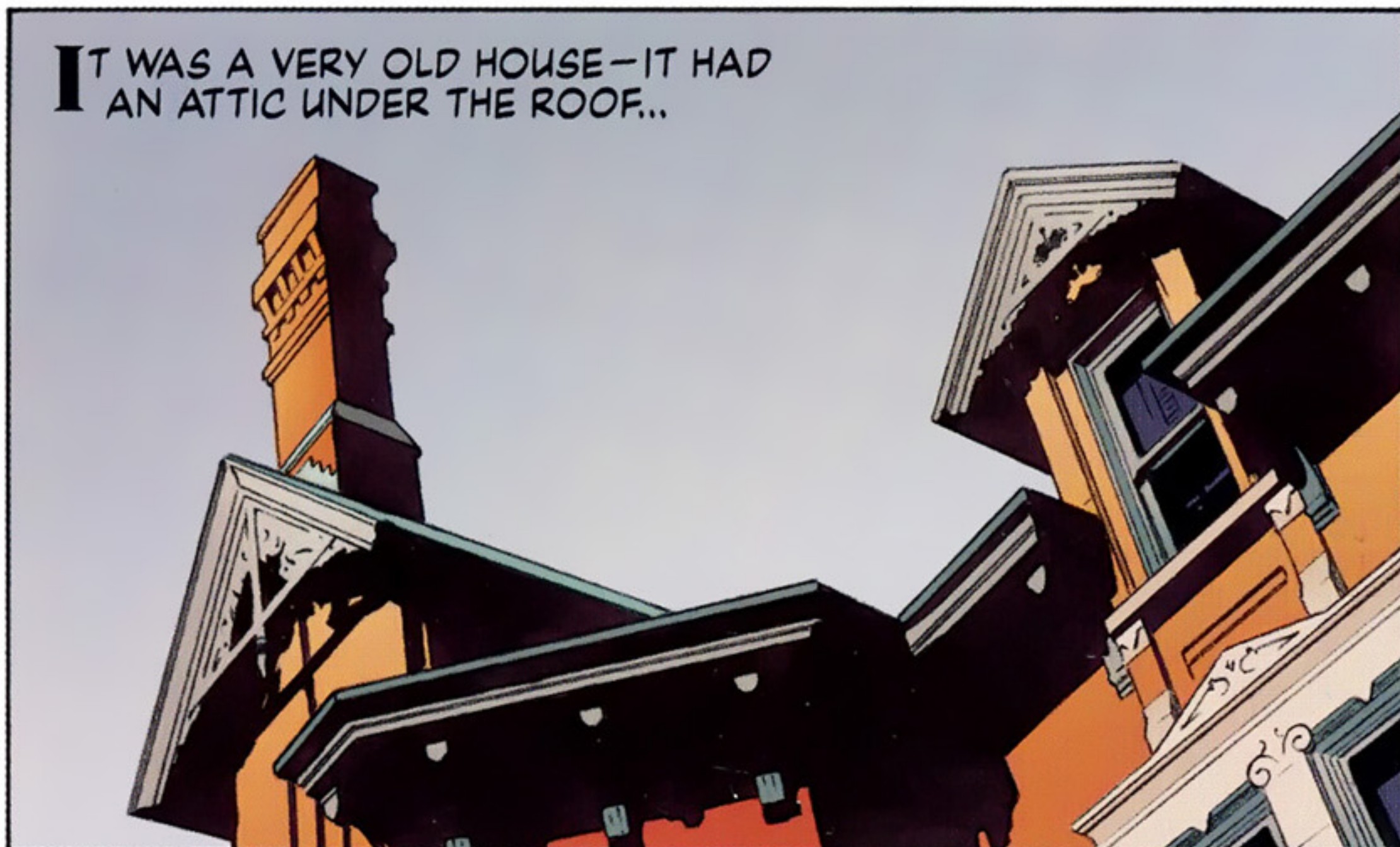






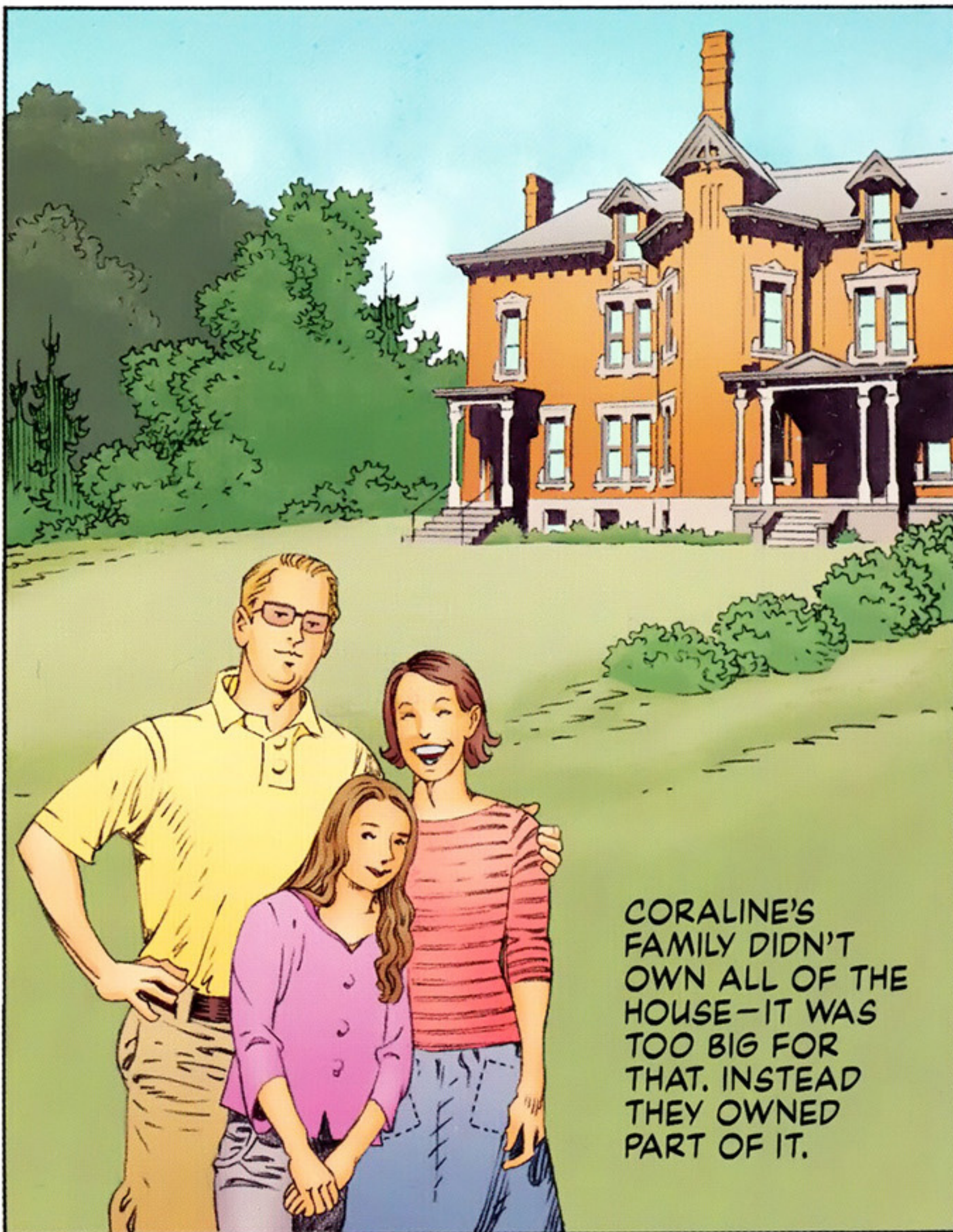
CORALINE DISCOVERED
THE DOOR A LITTLE
AFTER THEY MOVED
INTO THE HOUSE.

IT WAS A VERY OLD HOUSE—IT HAD
AN ATTIC UNDER THE ROOF...



...A CELLAR UNDER
THE GROUND...

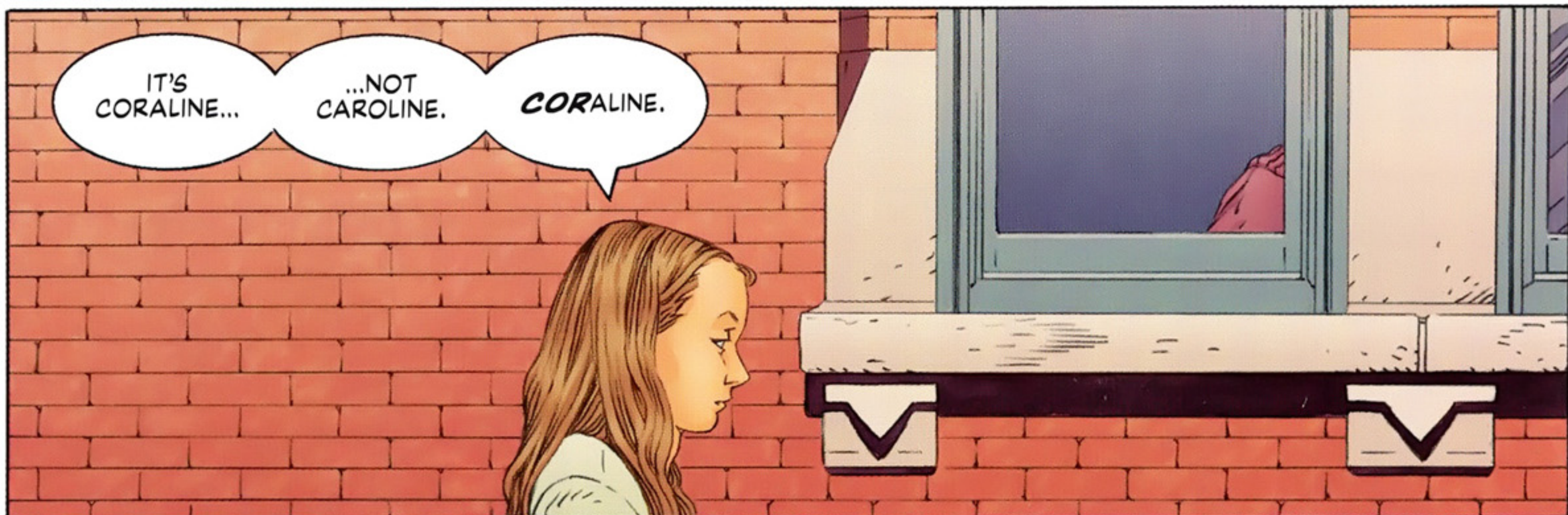
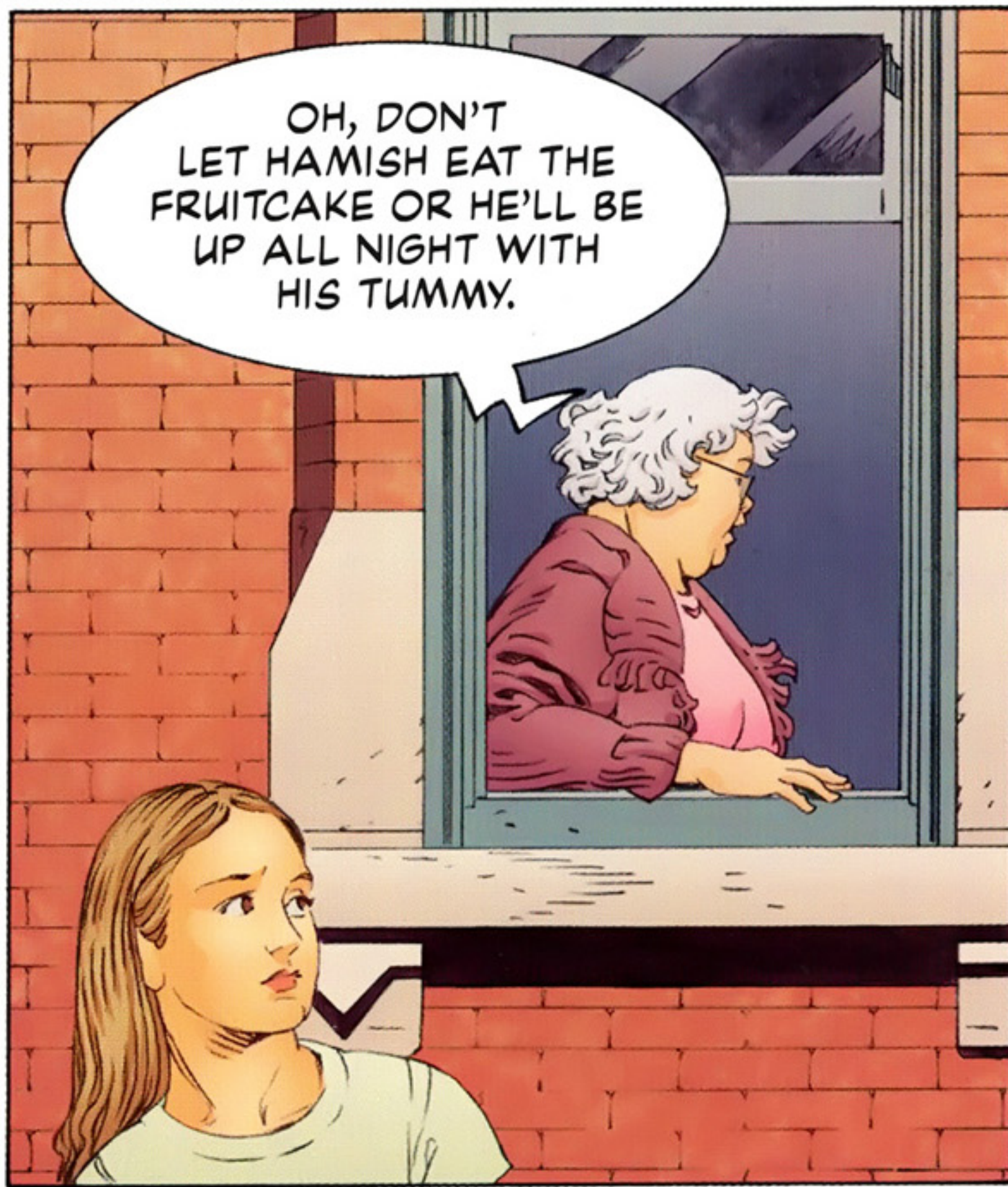
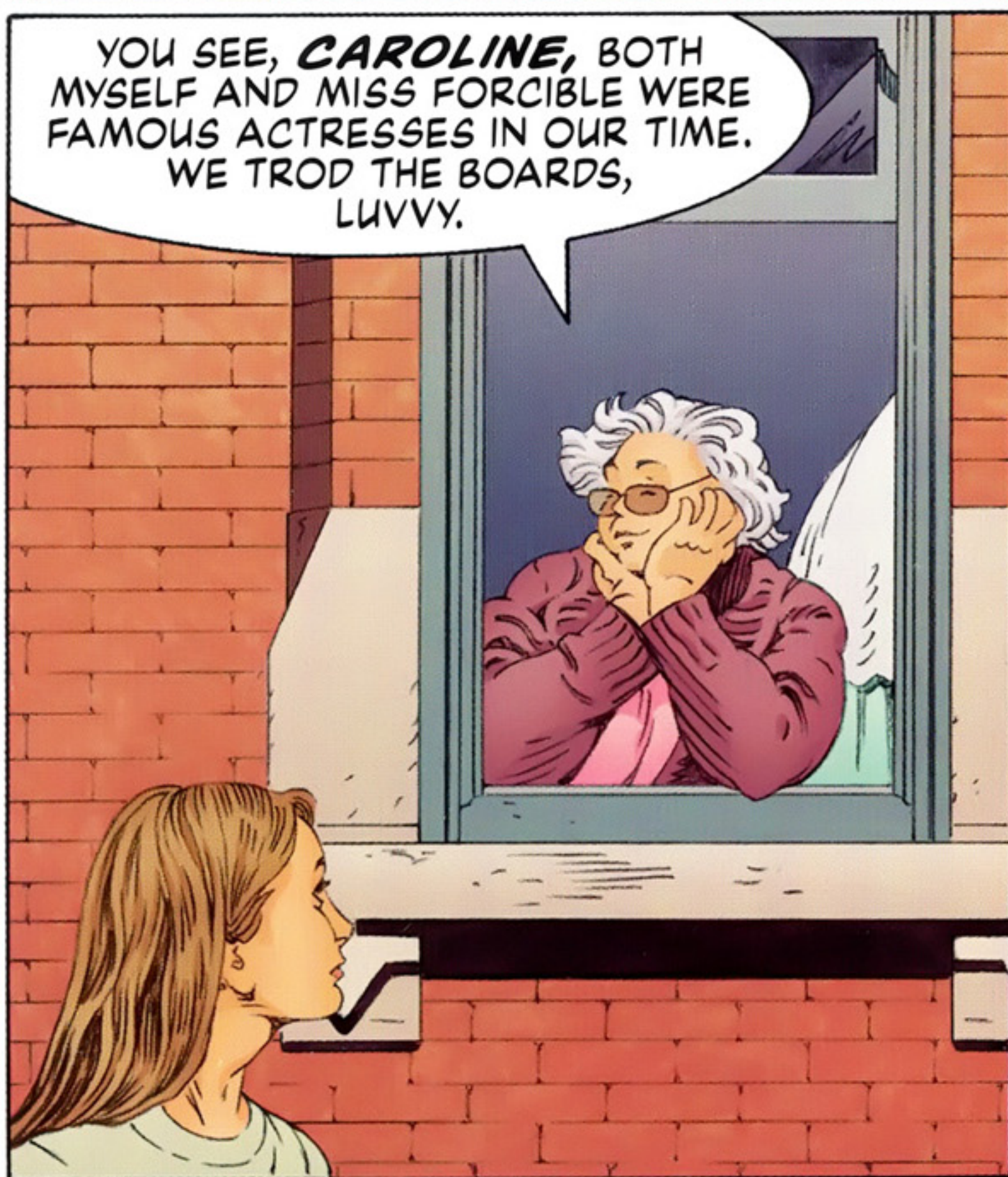
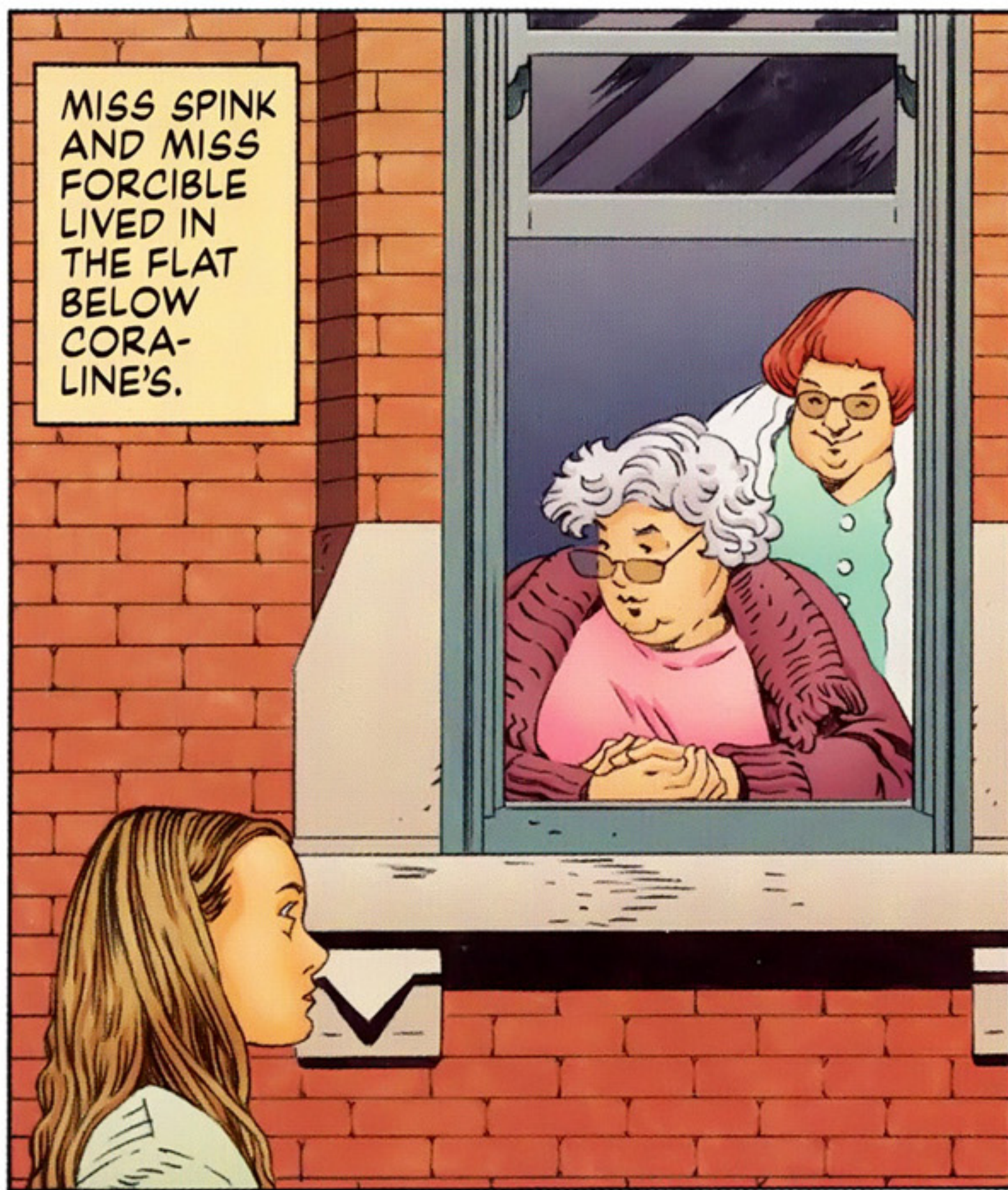
...AND AN OVERGROWN
GARDEN WITH HUGE
OLD TREES IN IT.



CORALINE'S
FAMILY DIDN'T
OWN ALL OF THE
HOUSE—IT WAS
TOO BIG FOR
THAT. INSTEAD
THEY OWNED
PART OF IT.

THERE WERE
OTHER PEOPLE
WHO LIVED IN
THE OLD
HOUSE.





IN THE FLAT ABOVE CORALINE'S, UNDER THE ROOF, WAS A CRAZY OLD MAN WITH A BIG MUSTACHE. HE TOLD CORALINE THAT HE WAS TRAINING A MOUSE CIRCUS. HE WOULDN'T LET ANYONE SEE IT.

YOU ASKED ME WHY YOU CANNOT SEE IT NOW. IS THAT WHAT YOU ASKED ME, LITTLE CAROLINE?

NO. I ASKED YOU NOT TO CALL ME CAROLINE. IT'S CORA-LINE.

THE REASON YOU CANNOT SEE THE MOUSE CIRCUS IS THAT THE MICE ARE NOT READY AND REHEARSED.

ALL THE SONGS I HAVE WRITTEN FOR THE MICE TO PLAY GO OOMPAH OOMPAH.

BUT THE WHITE MICE WILL ONLY PLAY TOODLE OODLE, LIKE THAT.

I AM THINKING OF TRYING THEM ON DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHEESE.

CORALINE DIDN'T THINK THERE REALLY WAS A MOUSE CIRCUS. SHE THOUGHT THE OLD MAN WAS PROBABLY MAKING IT UP.



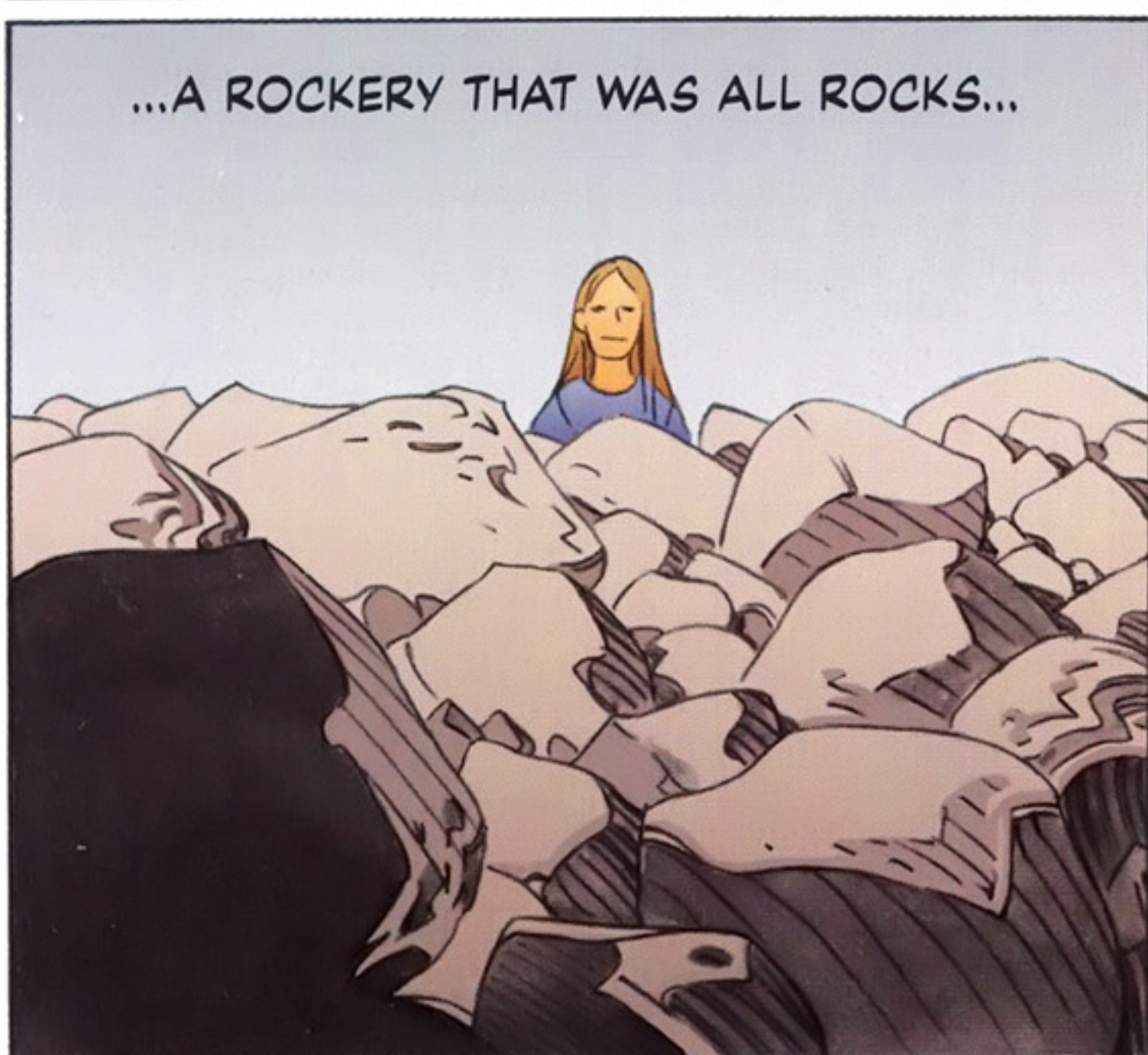
THE DAY AFTER THEY MOVED IN, CORALINE WENT EXPLORING.



SHE EXPLORED THE GARDEN. IT WAS A VERY BIG GARDEN. AT THE VERY BACK WAS AN OLD TENNIS COURT, BUT THE NET HAD MOSTLY ROTTED AWAY.



THERE WAS AN OLD ROSE GARDEN FILLED WITH STUNTED, FLYBLOWN ROSEBUSHES...

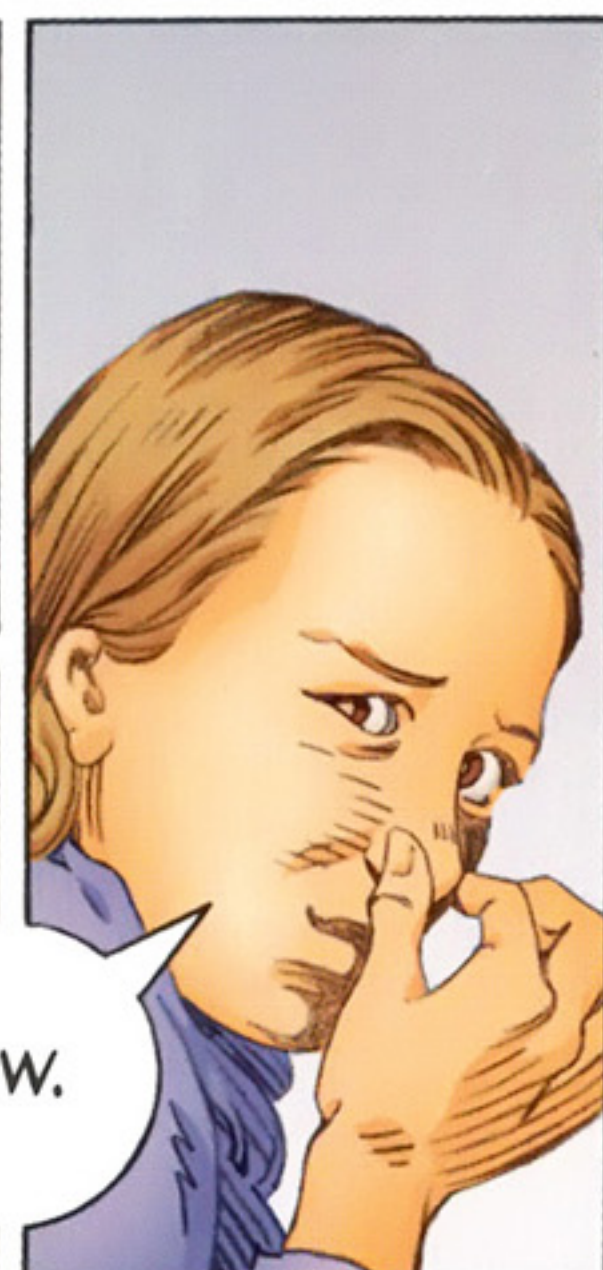


...A ROCKERY THAT WAS ALL ROCKS...



...AND A FAIRY RING MADE OF SQUIDGY BROWN TOADSTOOLS THAT SMELLED DREADFUL IF YOU TROD ON THEM.

EW.

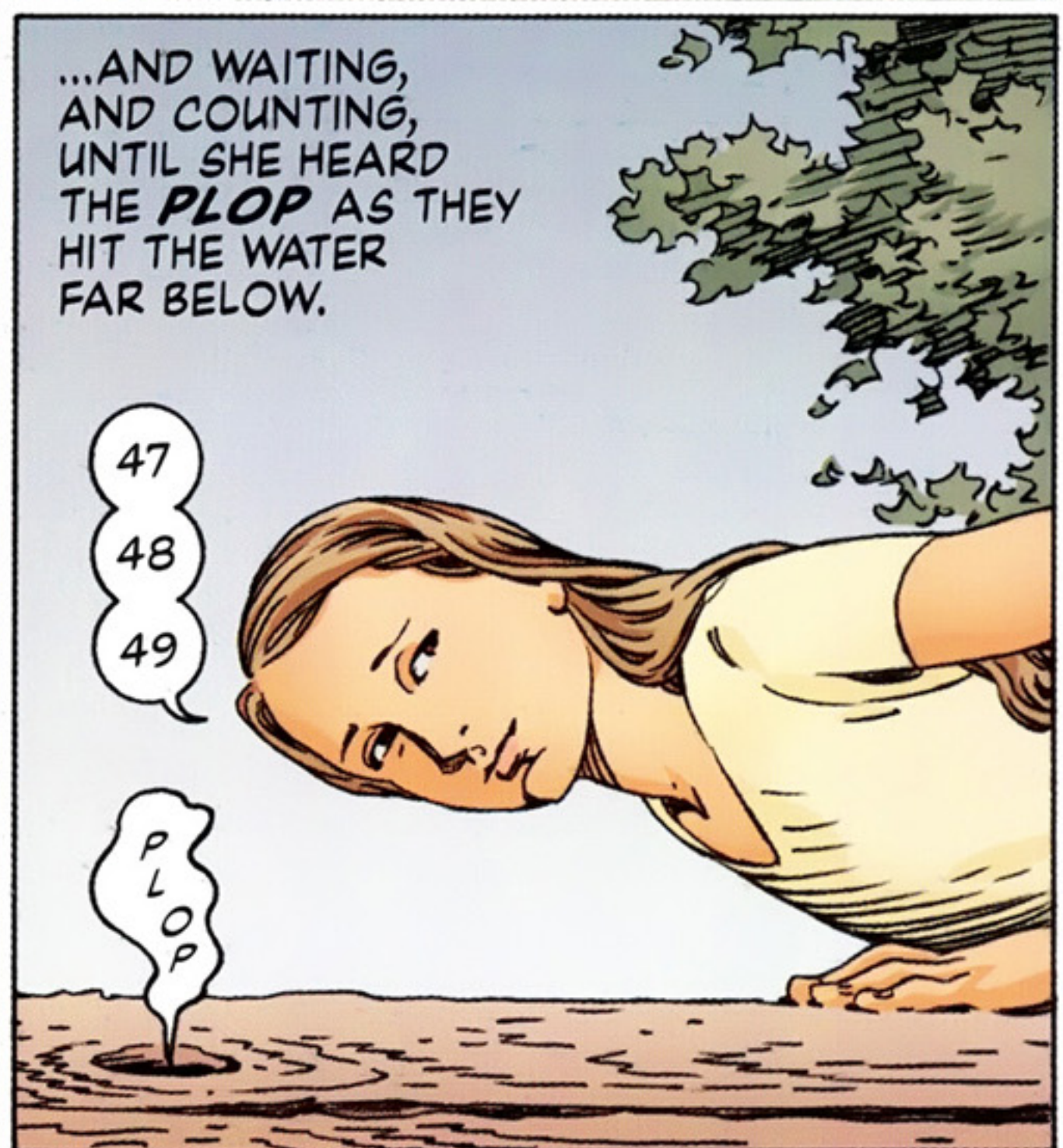
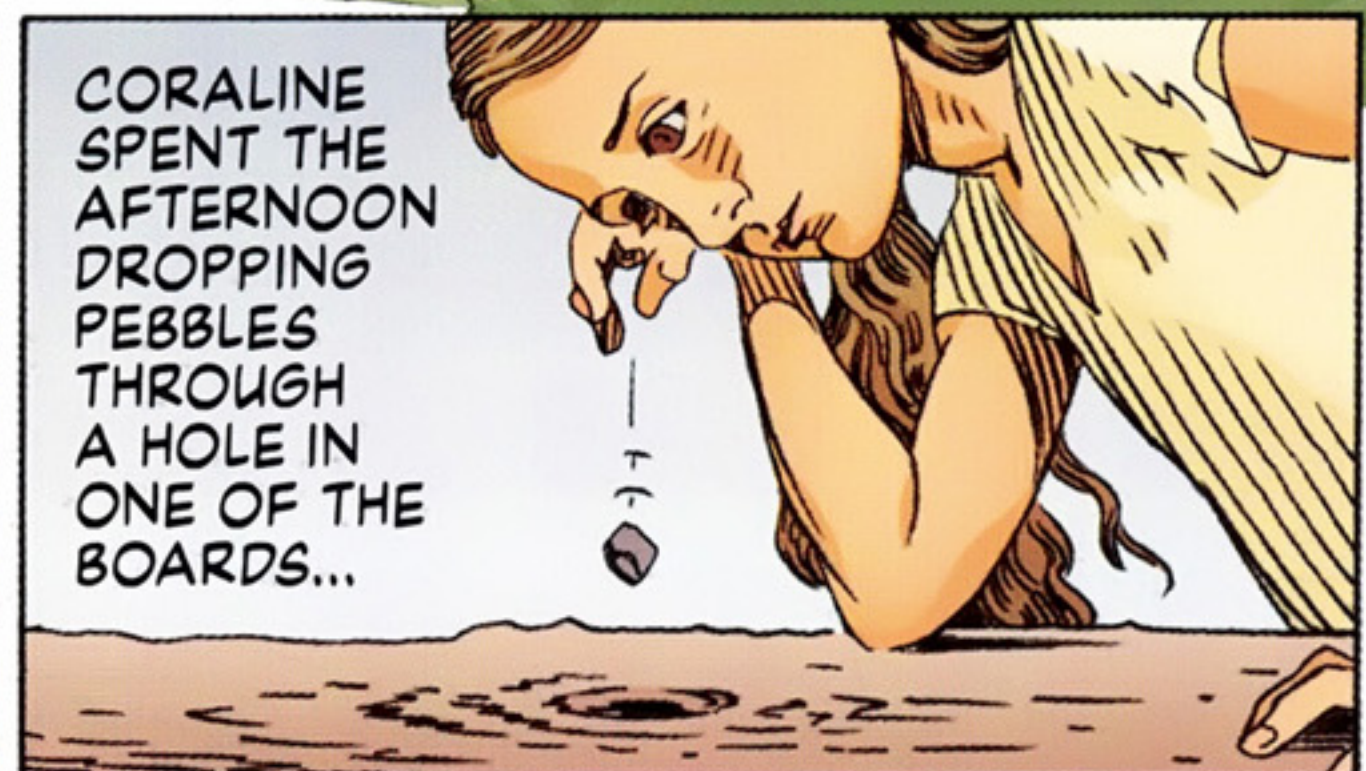
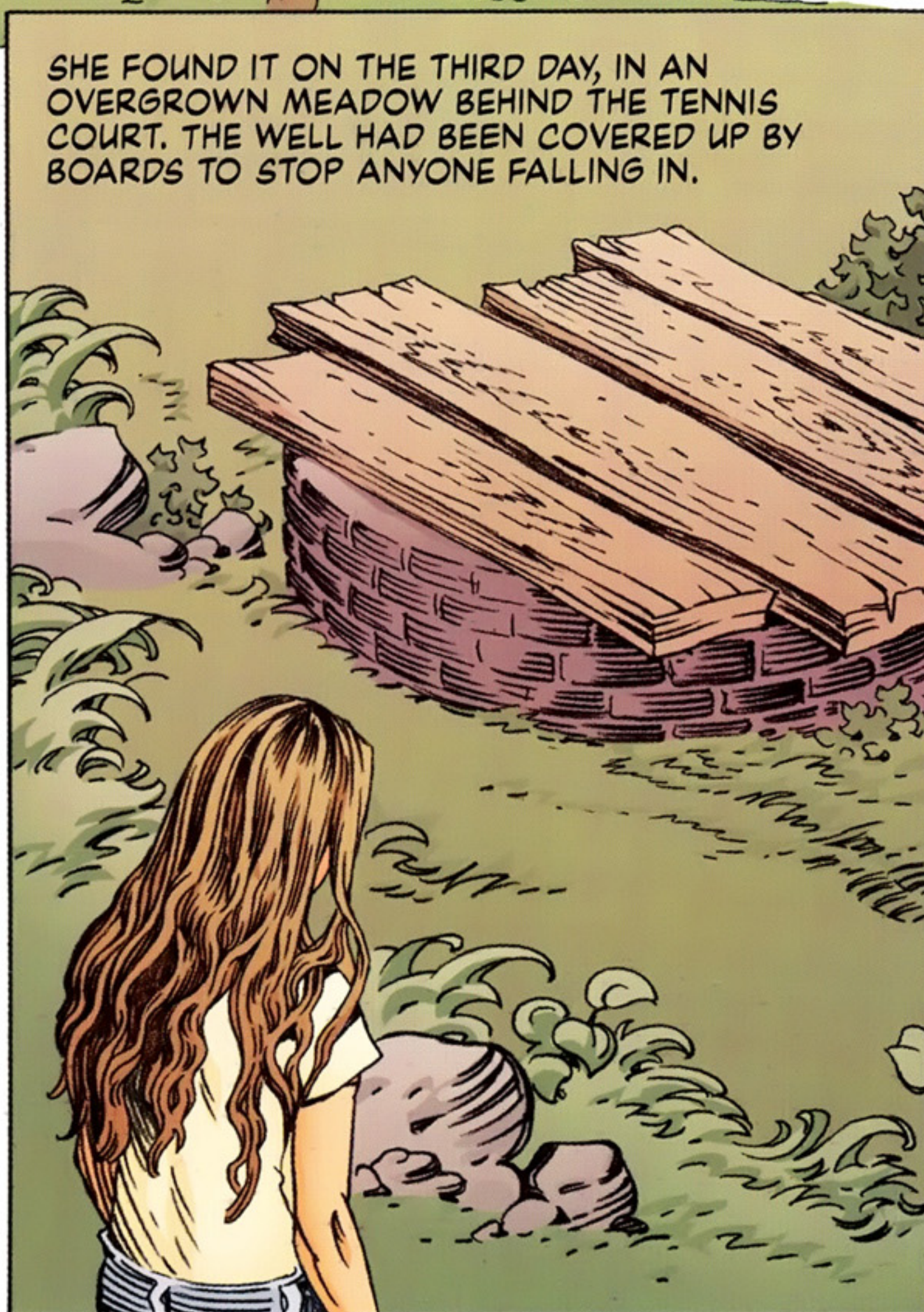


THERE WAS ALSO A WELL.



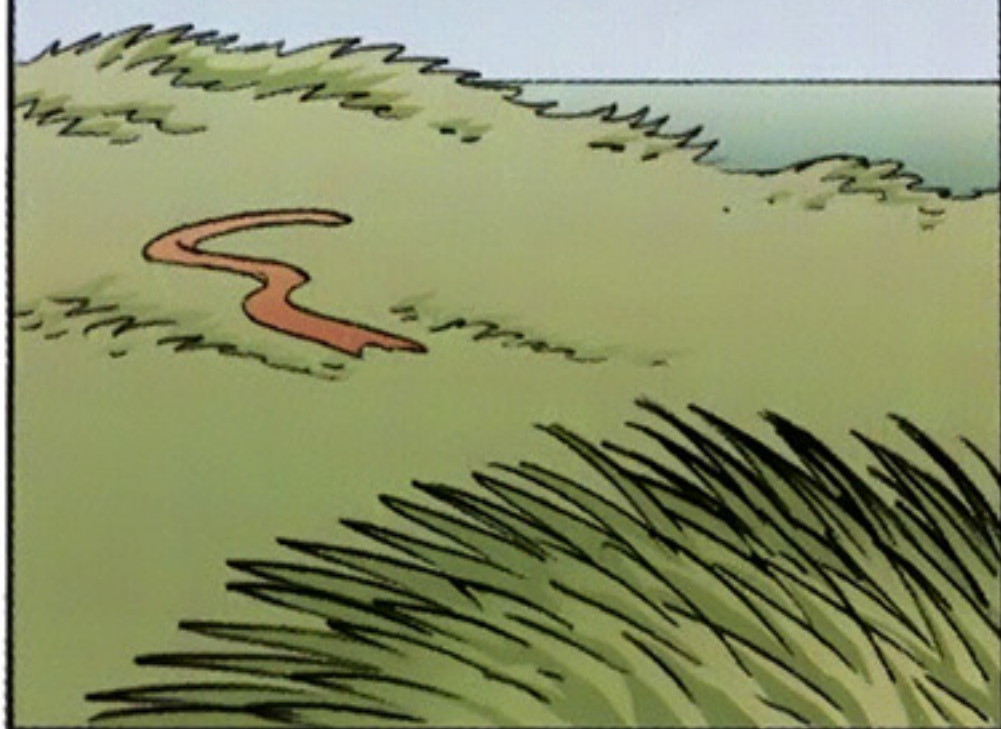


SO CORALINE SET OFF TO EXPLORE FOR IT, SO THAT SHE KNEW WHERE IT WAS, TO KEEP AWAY FROM IT PROPERLY.



CORALINE ALSO EXPLORED FOR ANIMALS. SHE FOUND A HEDGEHOG...

...AND A SNAKESKIN...



...BUT NO SNAKE.



SHE FOUND A ROCK THAT LOOKED JUST LIKE A FROG...



...AND A TOAD THAT LOOKED JUST LIKE A ROCK.



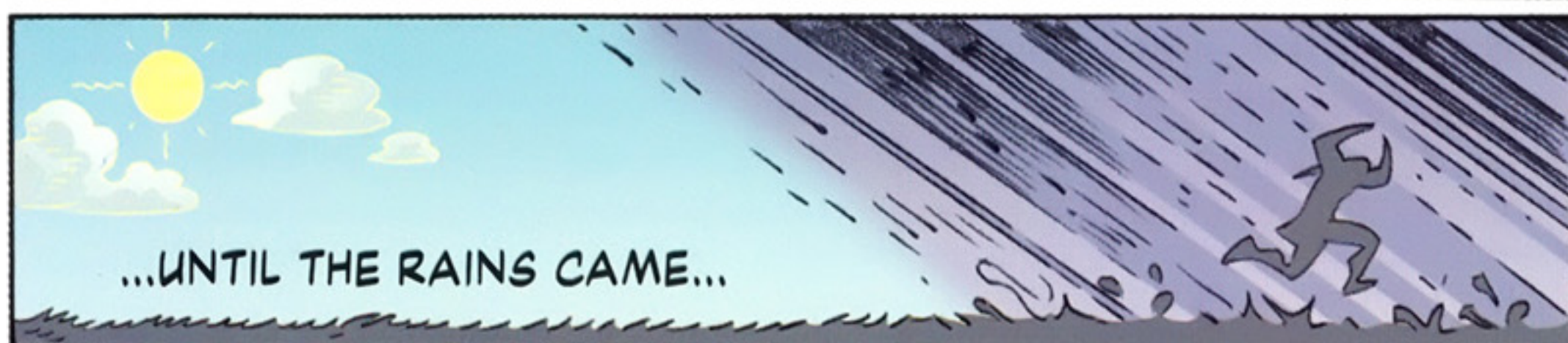
THERE WAS ALSO A HAUGHTY BLACK CAT THAT WATCHED HER...



...BUT SLIPPED AWAY IF EVER SHE WENT OVER TO TRY TO PLAY WITH IT.



CORALINE HAD TO DRESS UP WARM BEFORE GOING OUT EXPLORING, FOR IT WAS A VERY COLD SUMMER THAT YEAR. BUT GO OUT SHE DID, EVERY DAY...

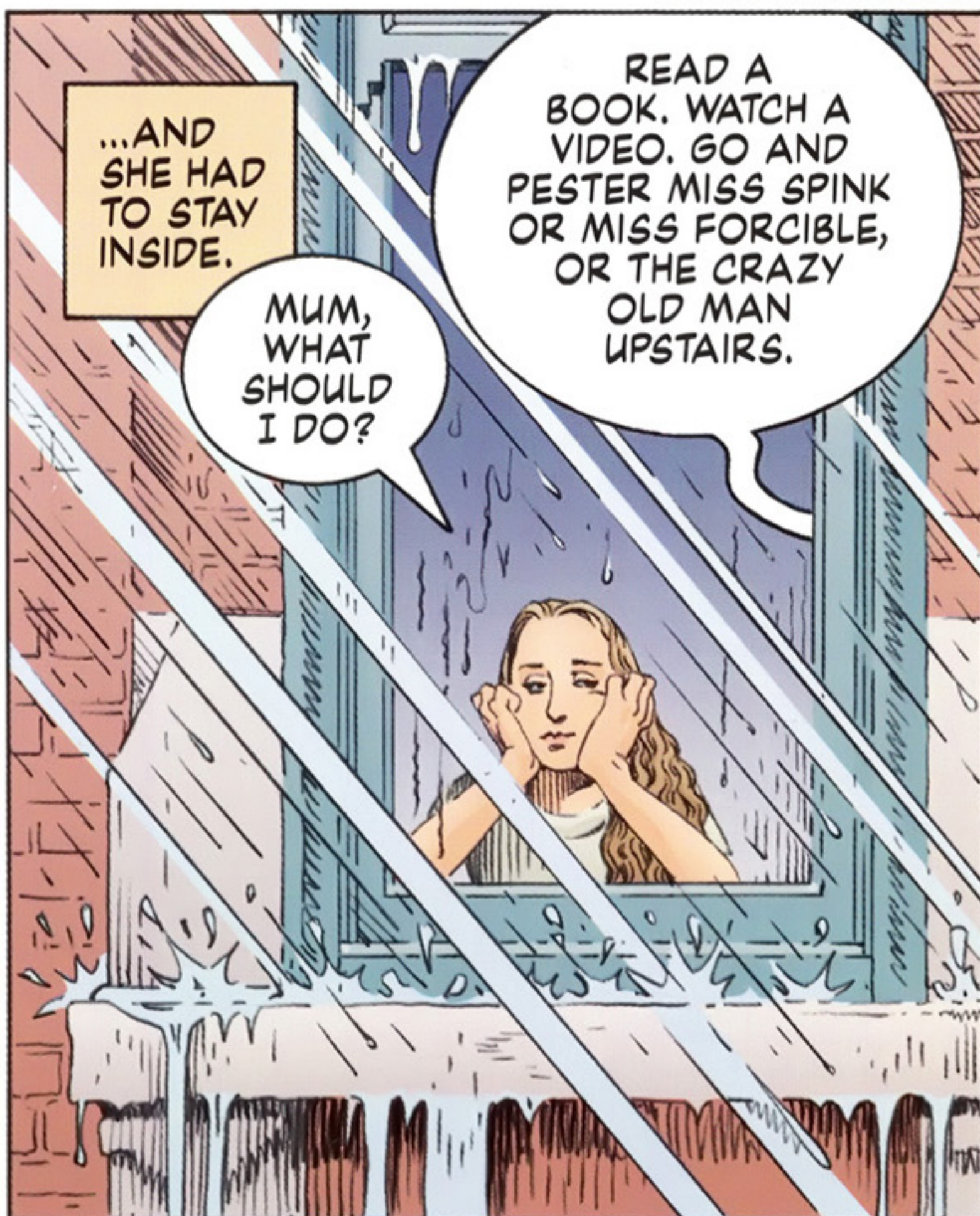


...UNTIL THE RAINS CAME...

...AND SHE HAD TO STAY INSIDE.

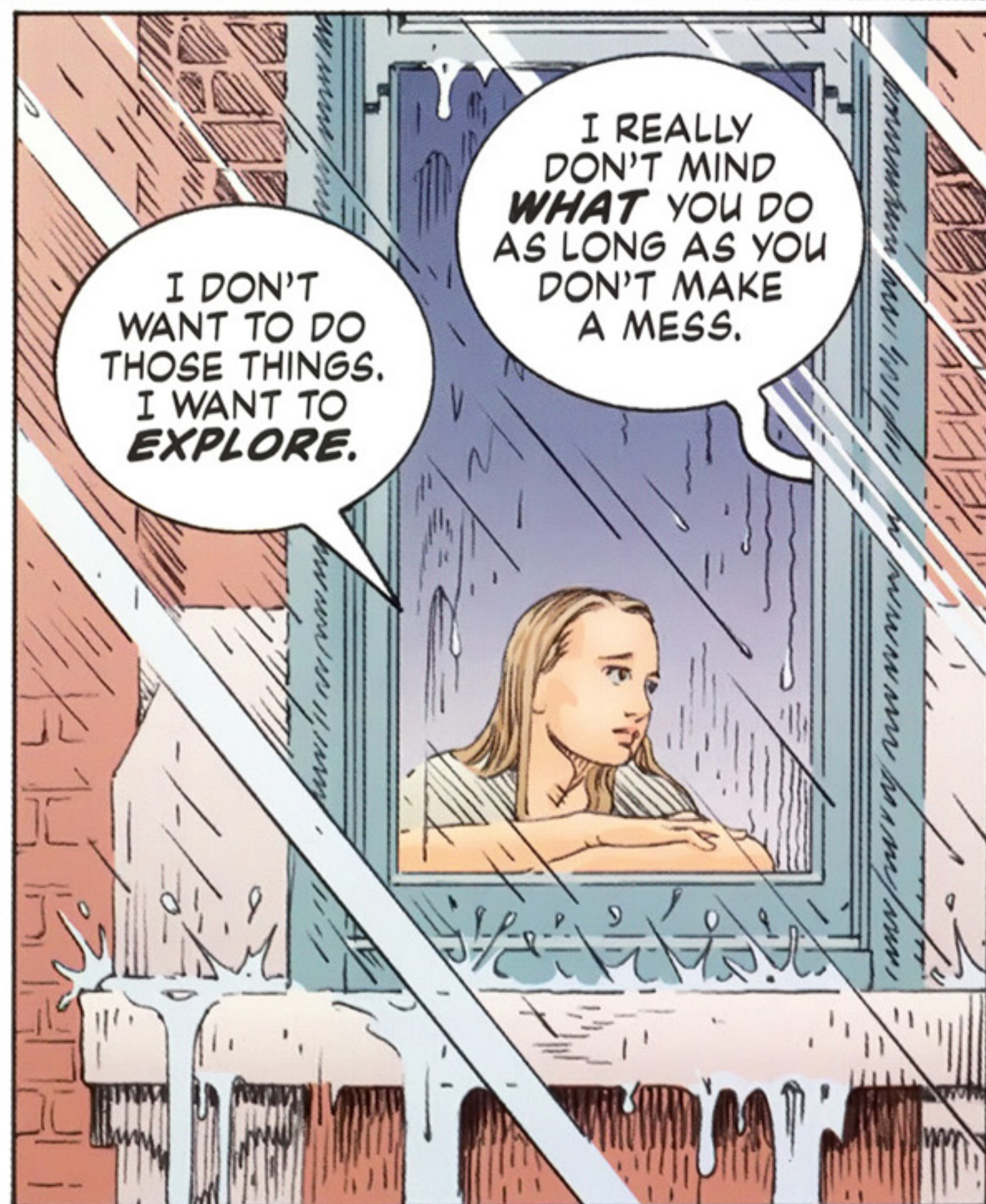
MUM, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

READ A BOOK. WATCH A VIDEO. GO AND PESTER MISS SPINK OR MISS FORCIBLE, OR THE CRAZY OLD MAN UPSTAIRS.



I DON'T WANT TO DO THOSE THINGS. I WANT TO **EXPLORE**.

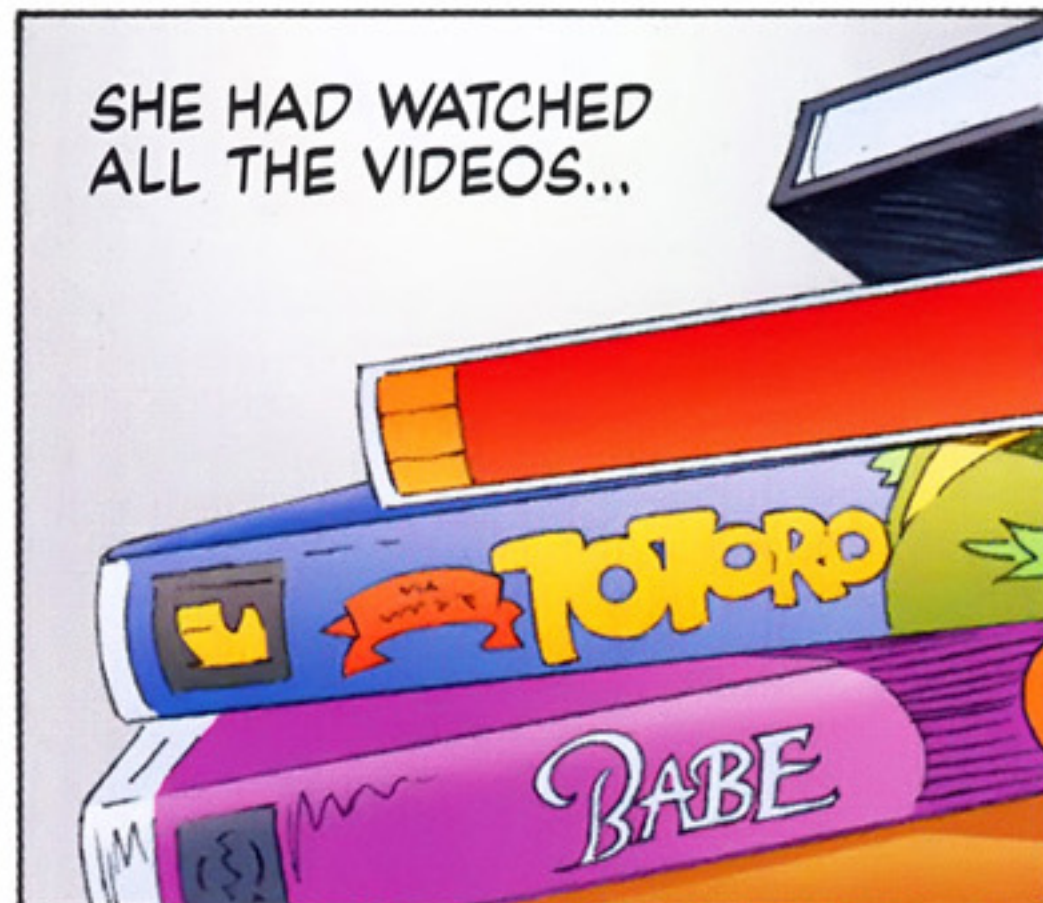
I REALLY DON'T MIND **WHAT** YOU DO AS LONG AS YOU DON'T MAKE A MESS.



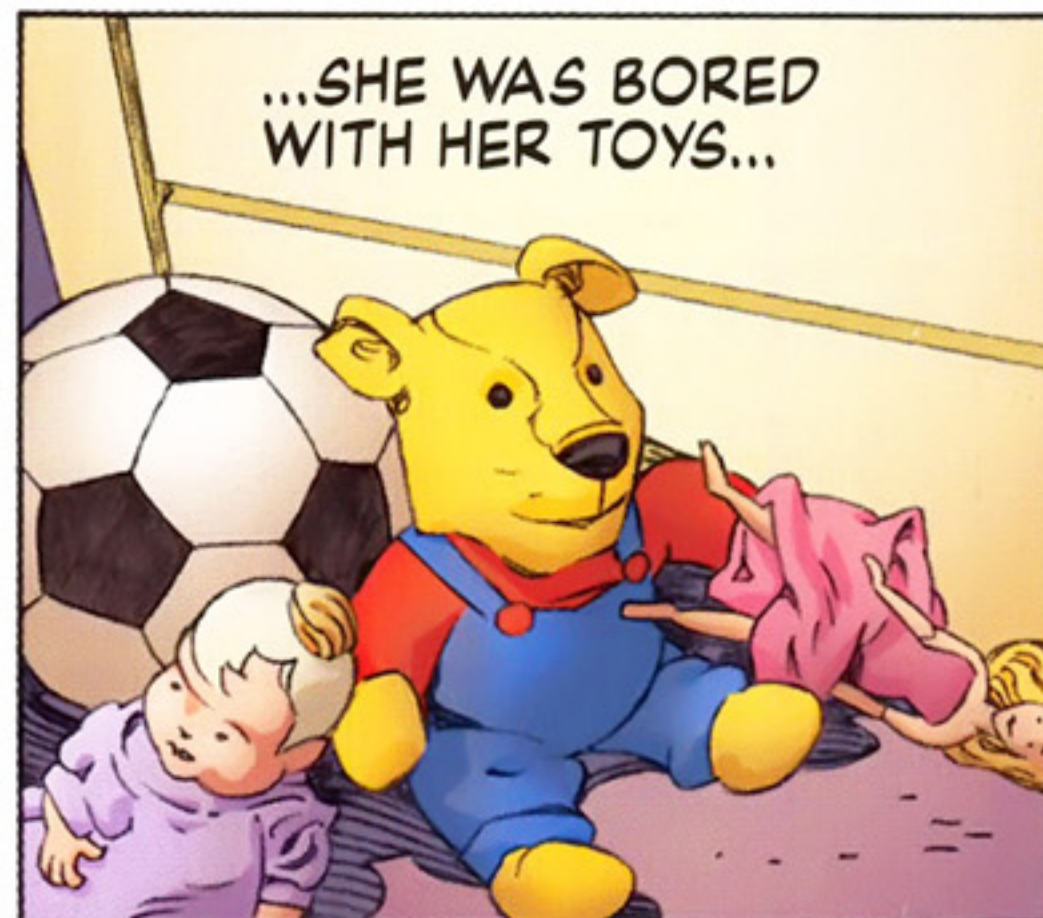
CORALINE WATCHED THE RAIN COME DOWN. IT WAS THE KIND OF RAIN THAT MEANT BUSINESS, AND CURRENTLY ITS BUSINESS WAS TURNING THE GARDEN INTO A MUDDY, WET SOUP.



SHE HAD WATCHED ALL THE VIDEOS...



...SHE WAS BORED WITH HER TOYS...



...AND SHE'D READ ALL HER BOOKS.



IT WAS TIME TO VISIT HER FATHER IN HIS STUDY. SHE WALKED DOWN THE HALL.

HELLO, CORA-LINE.

MMPH. IT'S RAIN-ING.

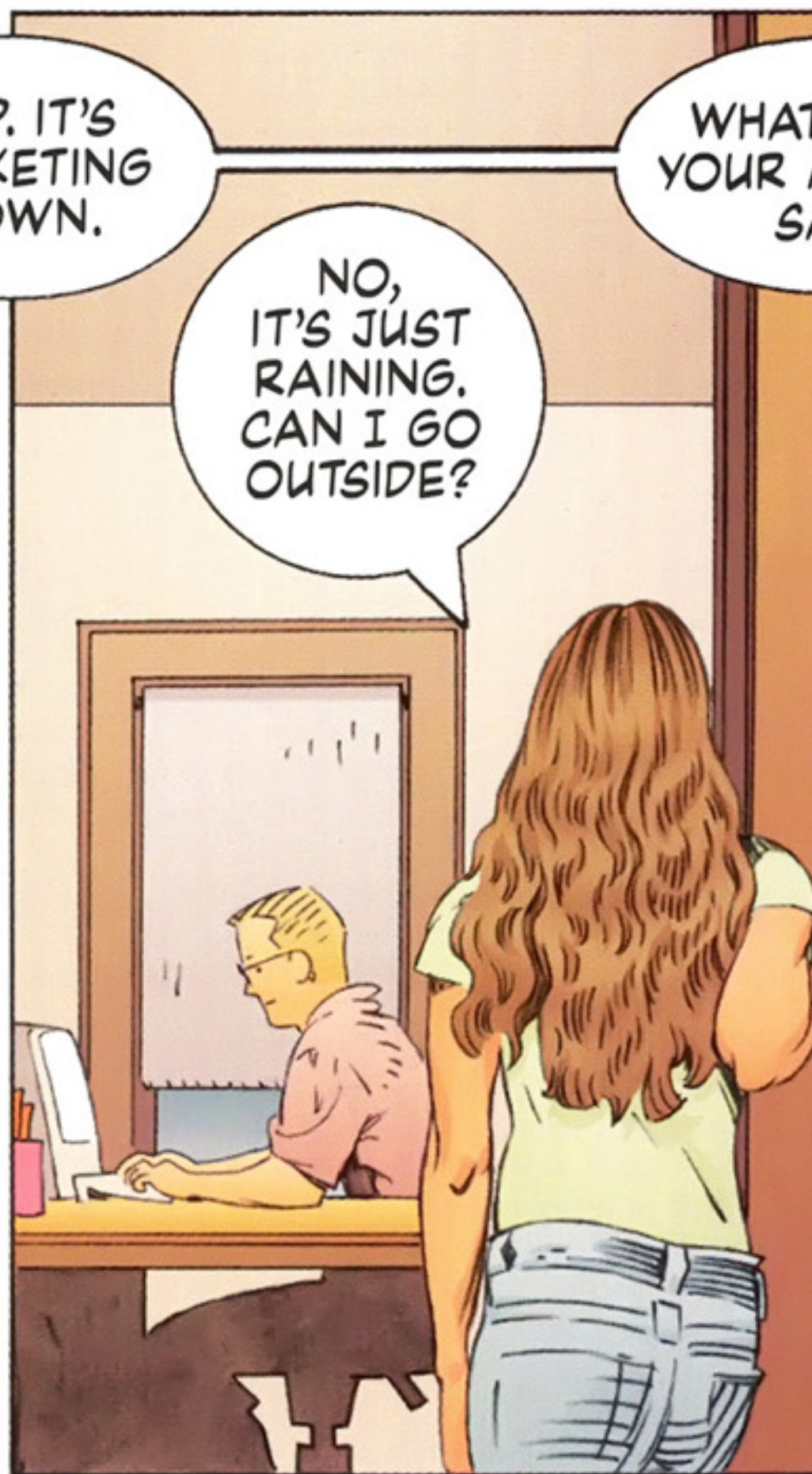
YUP. IT'S BUCKETING DOWN.

NO, IT'S JUST RAINING. CAN I GO OUTSIDE?

WHAT DOES YOUR MOTHER SAY?

THEN, NO.

SHE SAYS, "YOU'RE NOT GOING OUT IN WEATHER LIKE THAT, CORALINE JONES."



BUT I WANT
TO CARRY ON
EXPLORING.

THEN
EXPLORE
THE FLAT.

HERE'S A
PIECE OF PAPER
AND A PEN.

COUNT ALL
THE DOORS AND
WINDOWS.

MOUNT
AN EXPEDITION TO
DISCOVER THE HOT
WATER TANK.

AND LEAVE ME
ALONE TO WORK.

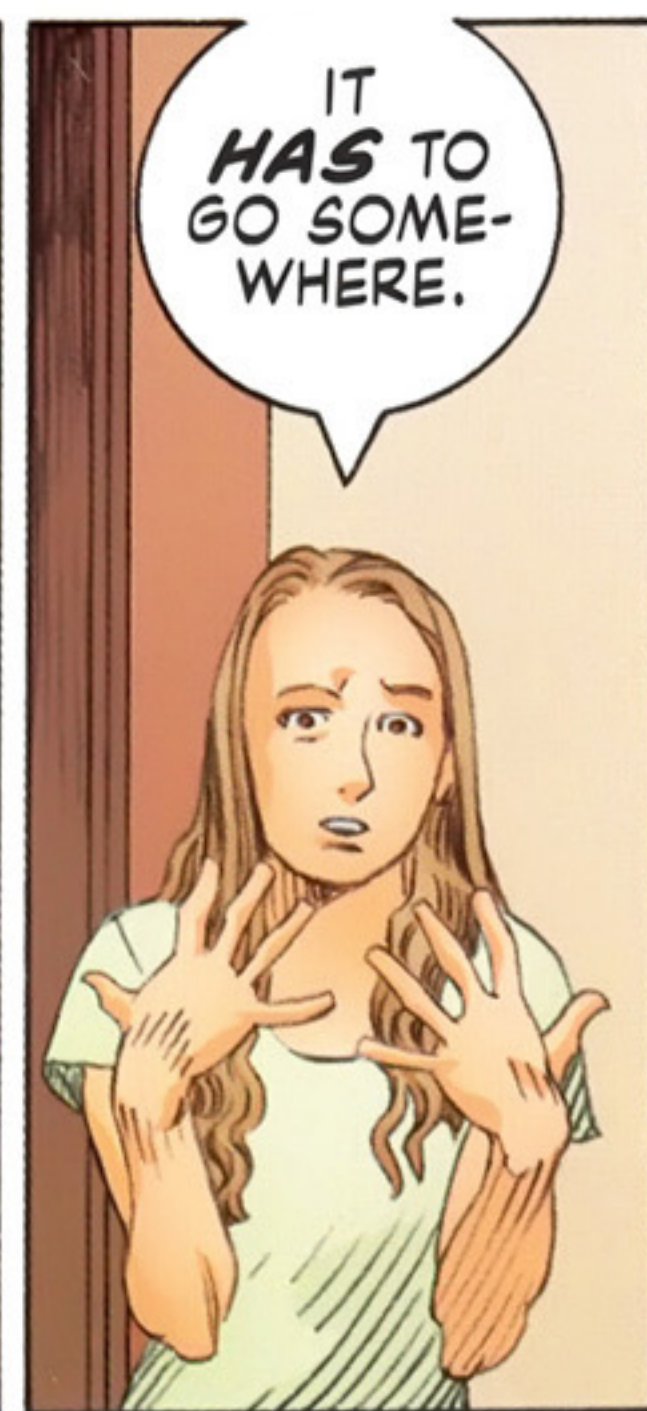
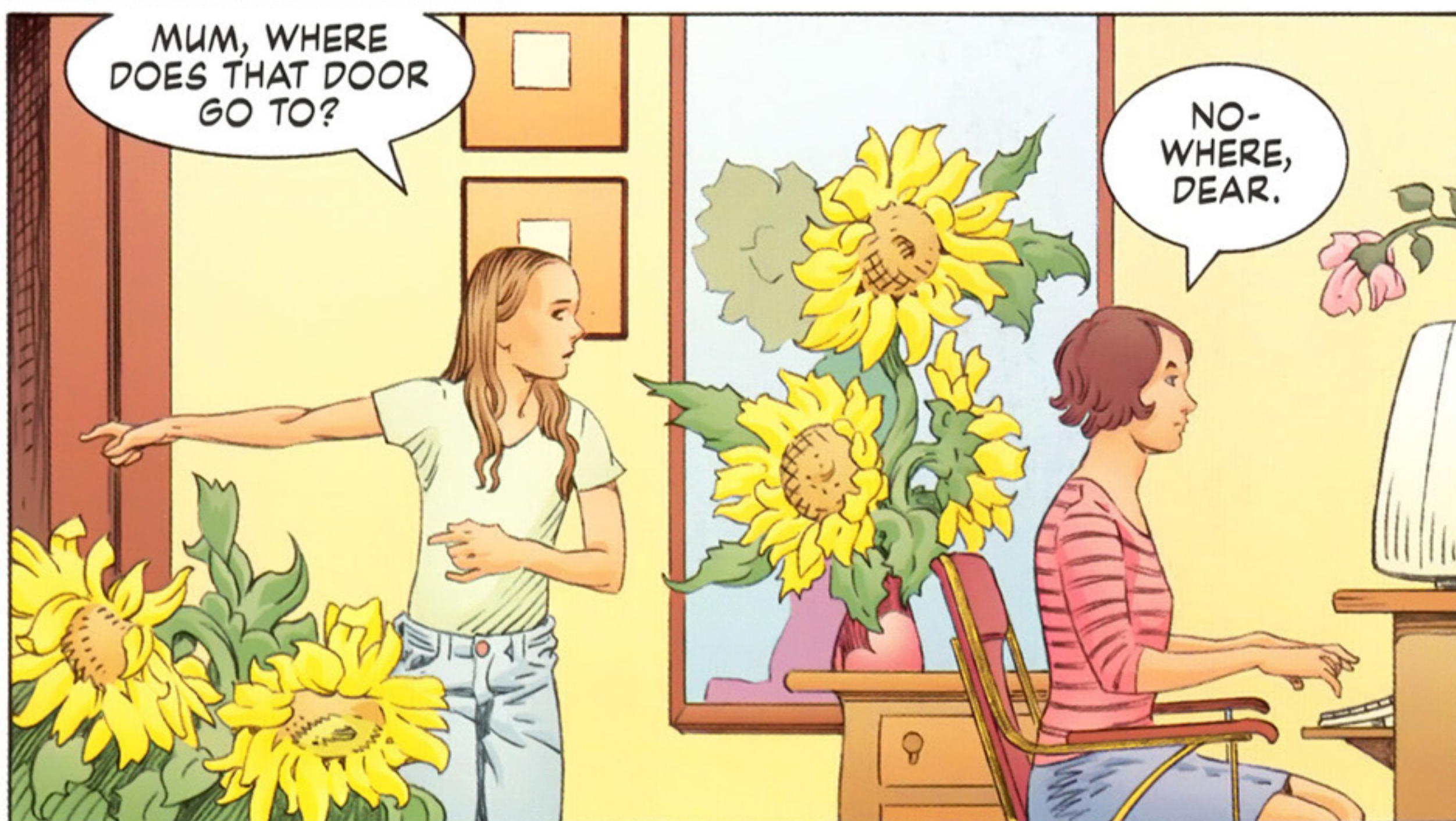
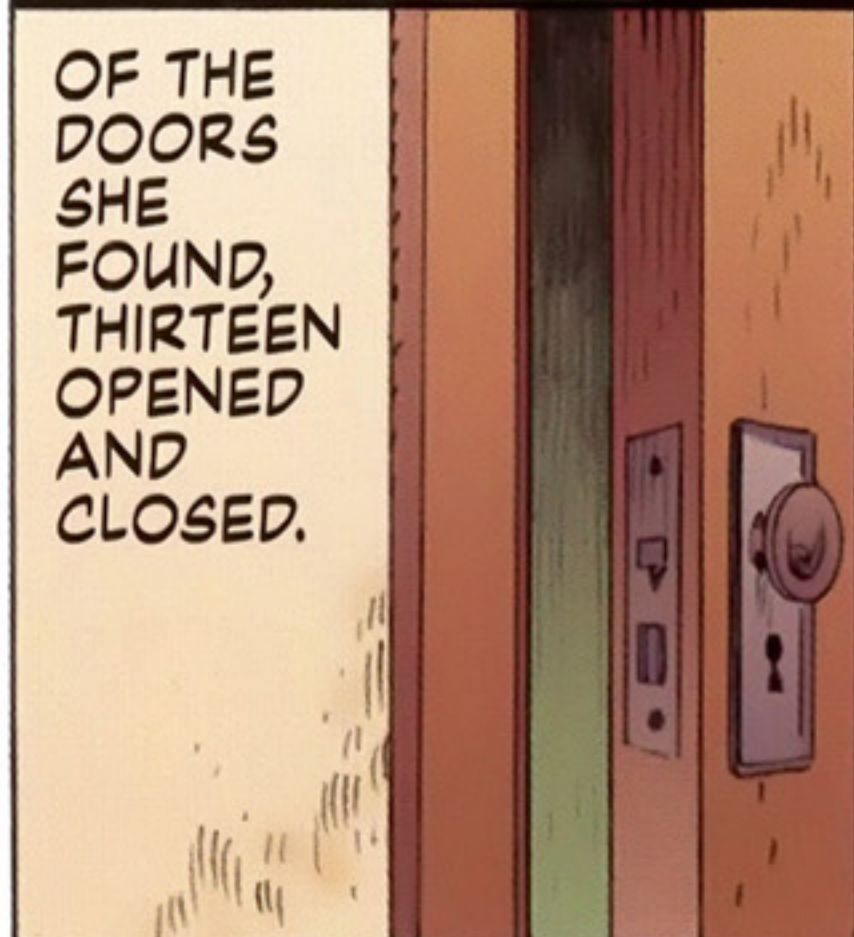
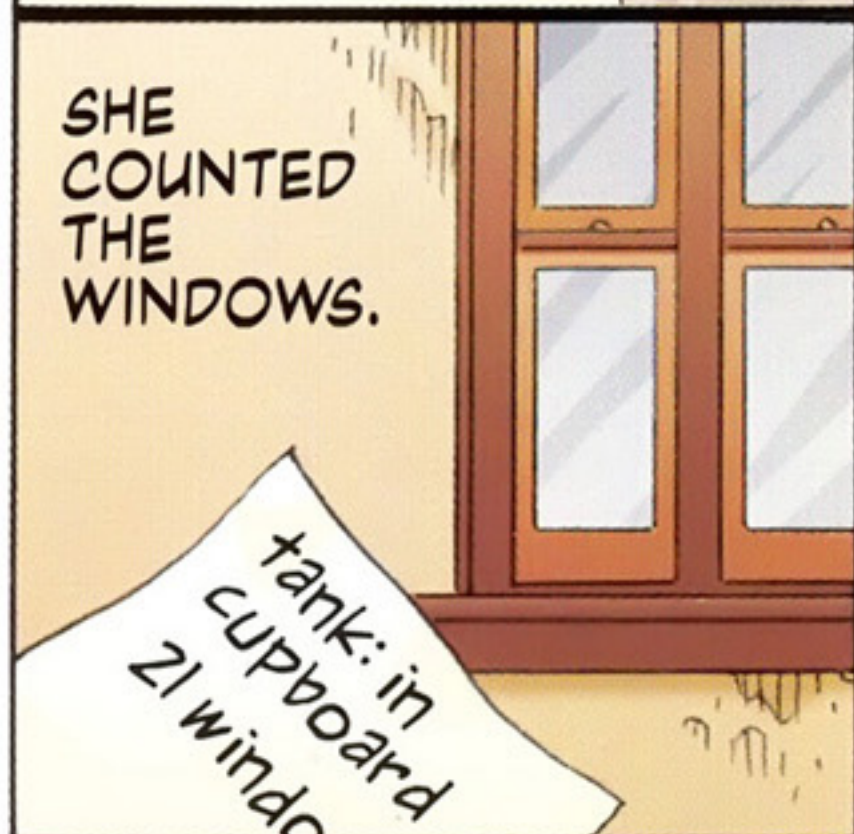
CAN I
GO INTO THE DRAWING
ROOM?

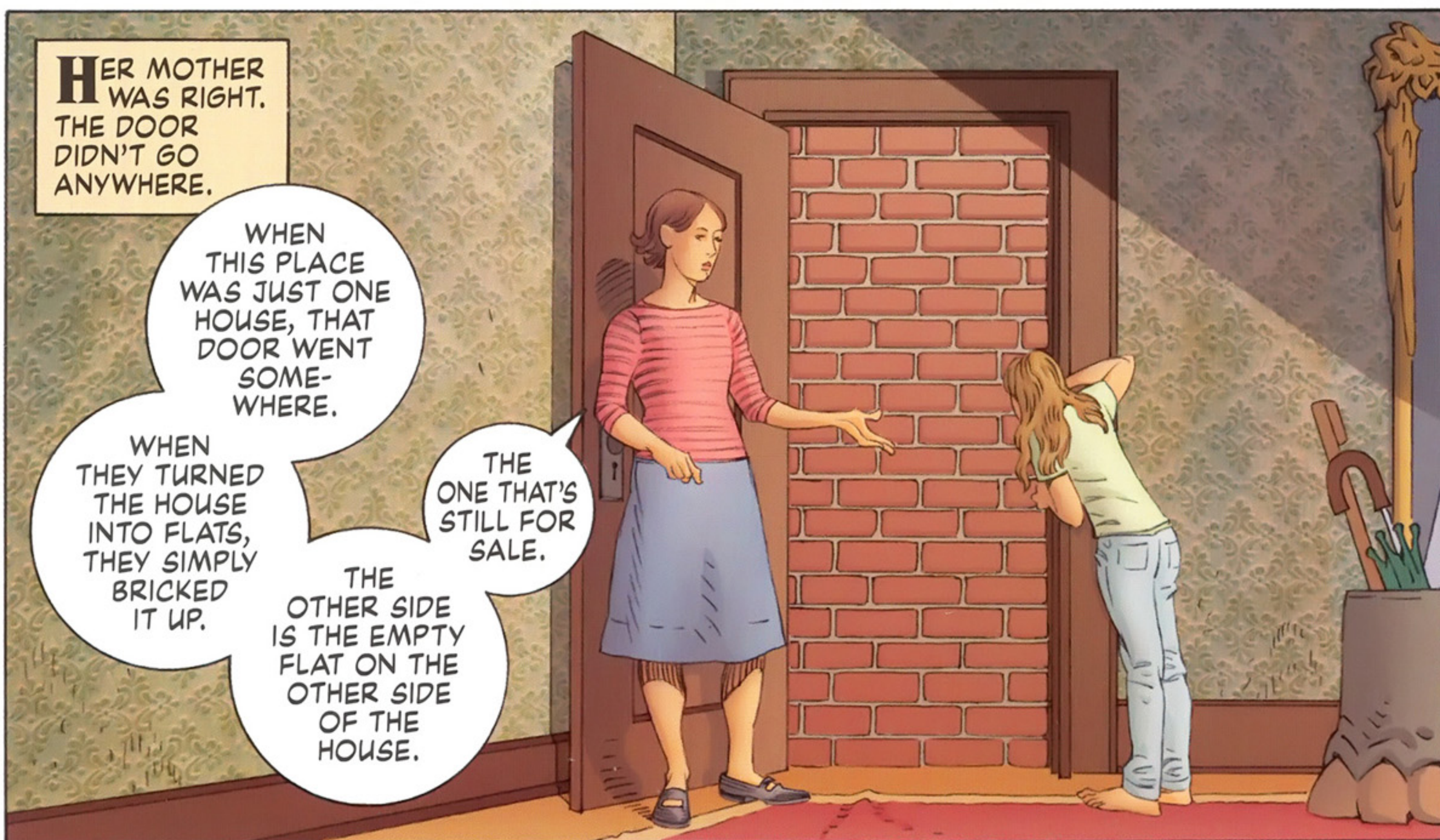
THE DRAWING ROOM WAS WHERE THE JONESES KEPT THE EXPENSIVE (AND UNCOMFORTABLE) FURNITURE CORALINE'S GRANDMOTHER HAD LEFT THEM WHEN SHE DIED. CORALINE WASN'T ALLOWED IN THERE. NOBODY WENT IN THERE.

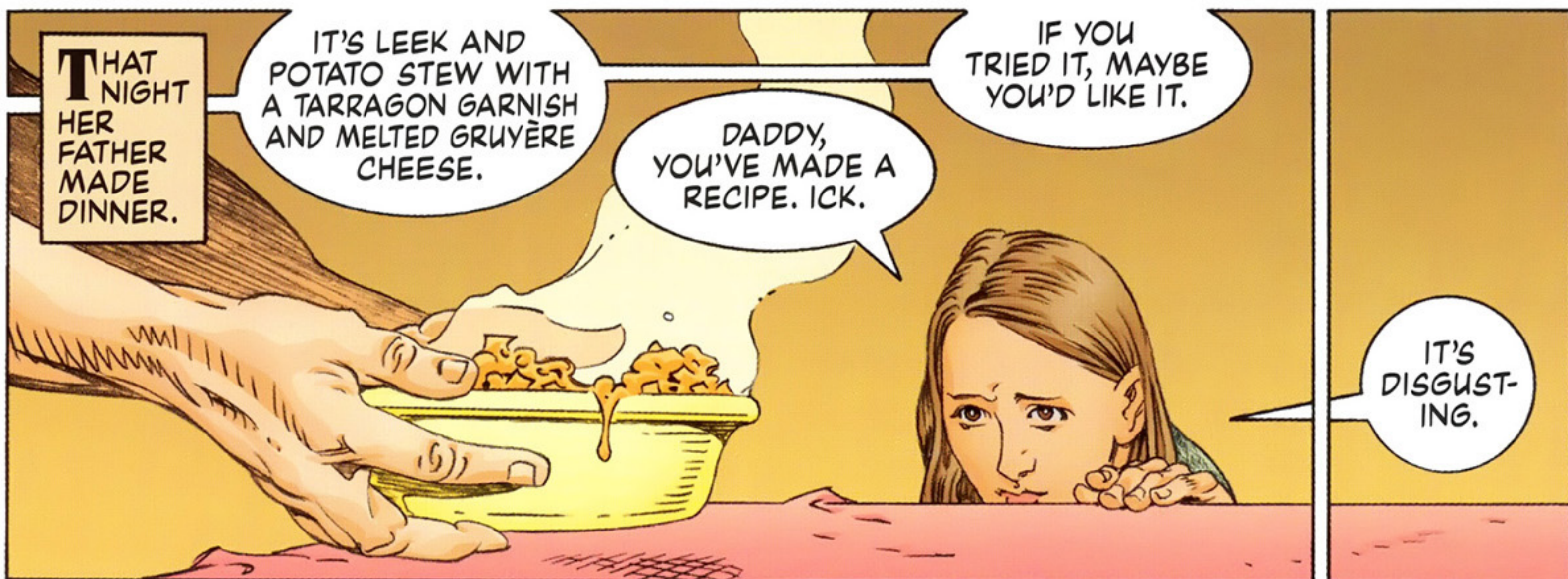
IT WAS ONLY FOR BEST.

IF YOU DON'T
MAKE A MESS.
AND IF YOU
DON'T TOUCH
ANYTHING.

CORALINE CONSIDERED THIS
CAREFULLY, AND WENT OFF TO
EXPLORE THE INSIDE OF THE FLAT.







THAT NIGHT
HER
FATHER
MADE
DINNER.

IT'S LEEK AND
POTATO STEW WITH
A TARRAGON GARNISH
AND MELTED GRUYÈRE
CHEESE.

DADDY,
YOU'VE MADE A
RECIPE. ICK.

IF YOU
TRIED IT, MAYBE
YOU'D LIKE IT.

IT'S
DISGUST-
ING.



THAT NIGHT CORALINE LAY
AWAKE IN HER BED. THE
RAIN HAD STOPPED AND
SHE WAS ALMOST ASLEEP
WHEN SOMETHING WENT...

TIK-TIK-TIK-TIK-TIK-TIK

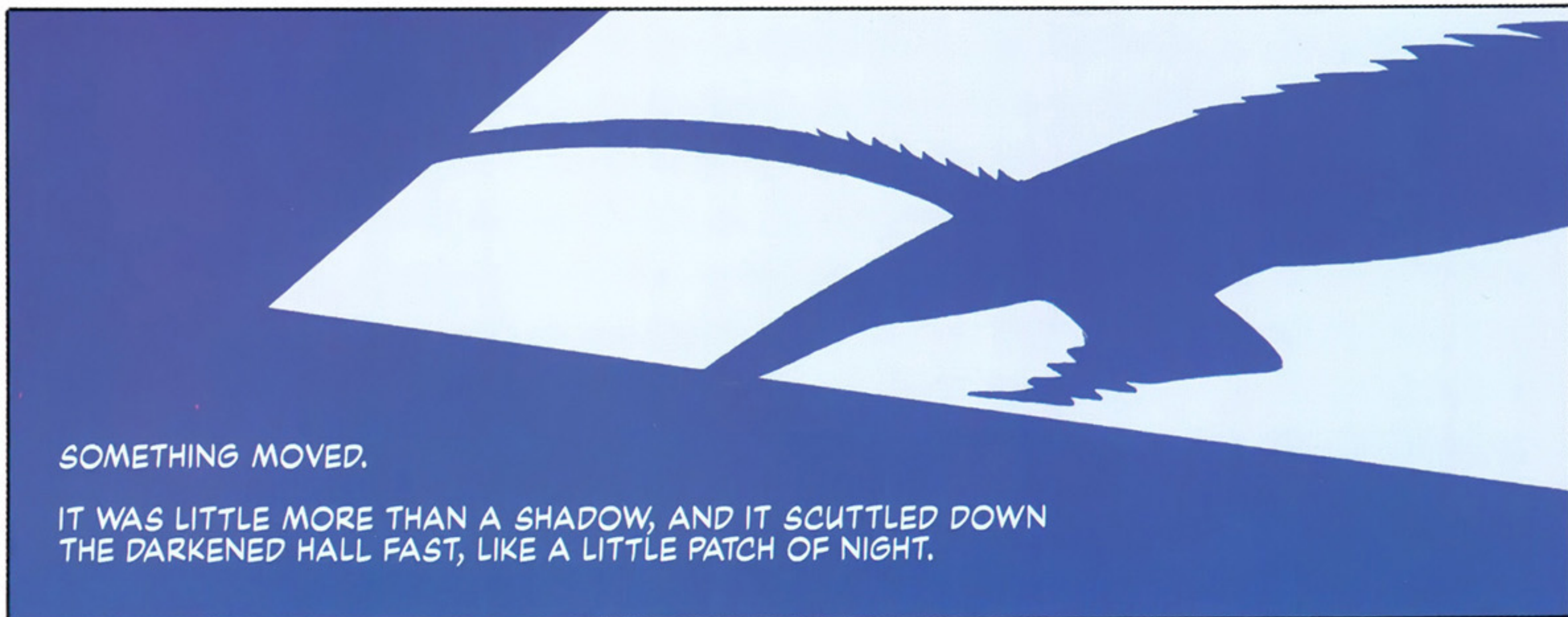


KREEEE...

...EEAAAK~



DID I
DREAM
THAT?



SOMETHING MOVED.

IT WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A SHADOW, AND IT SCUTTLED DOWN
THE DARKENED HALL FAST, LIKE A LITTLE PATCH OF NIGHT.



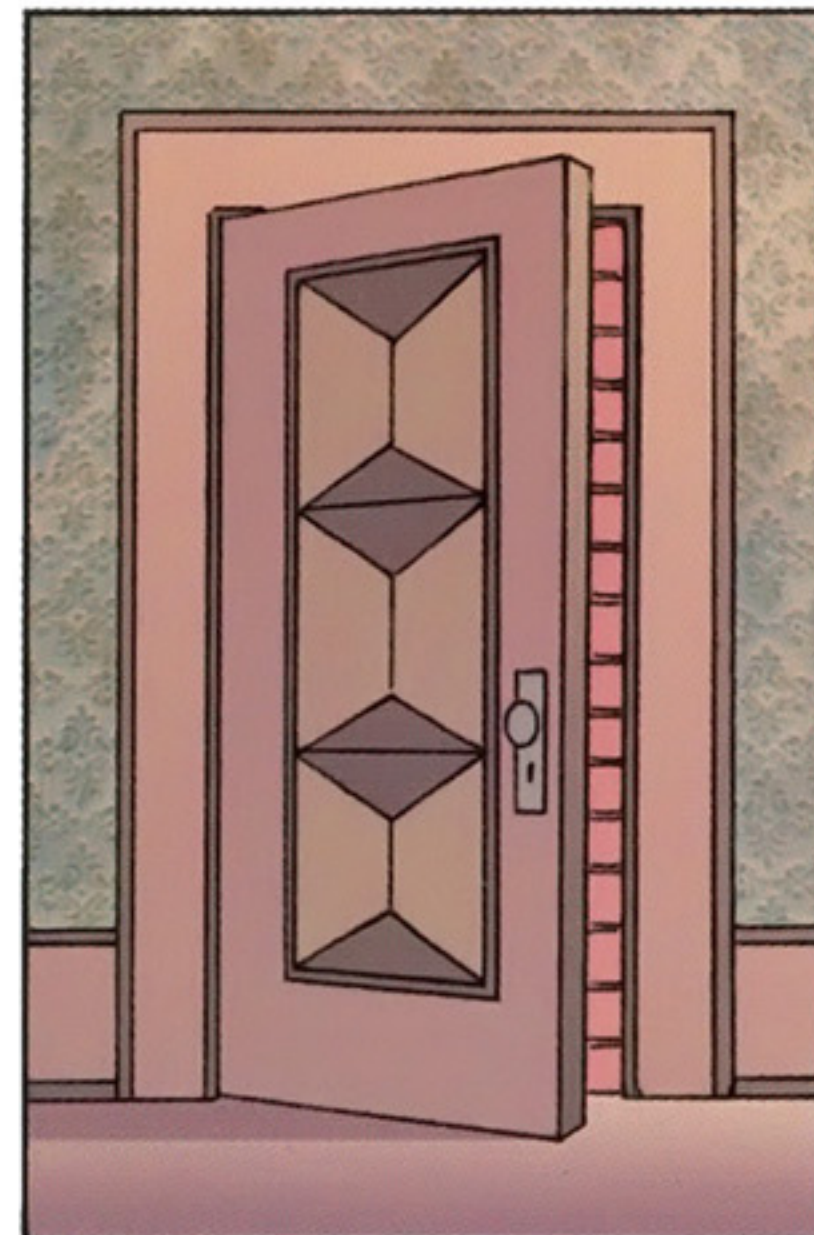
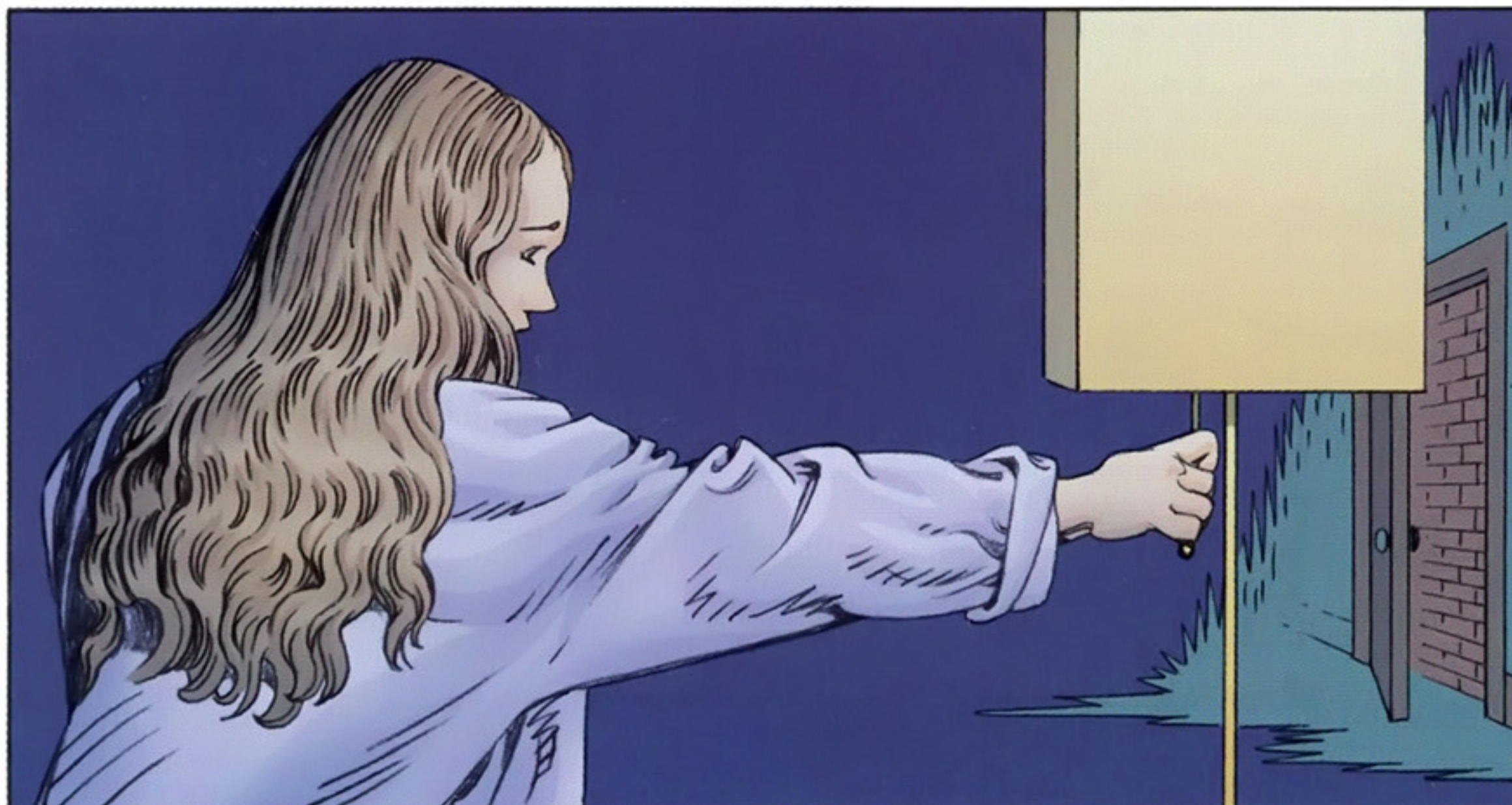
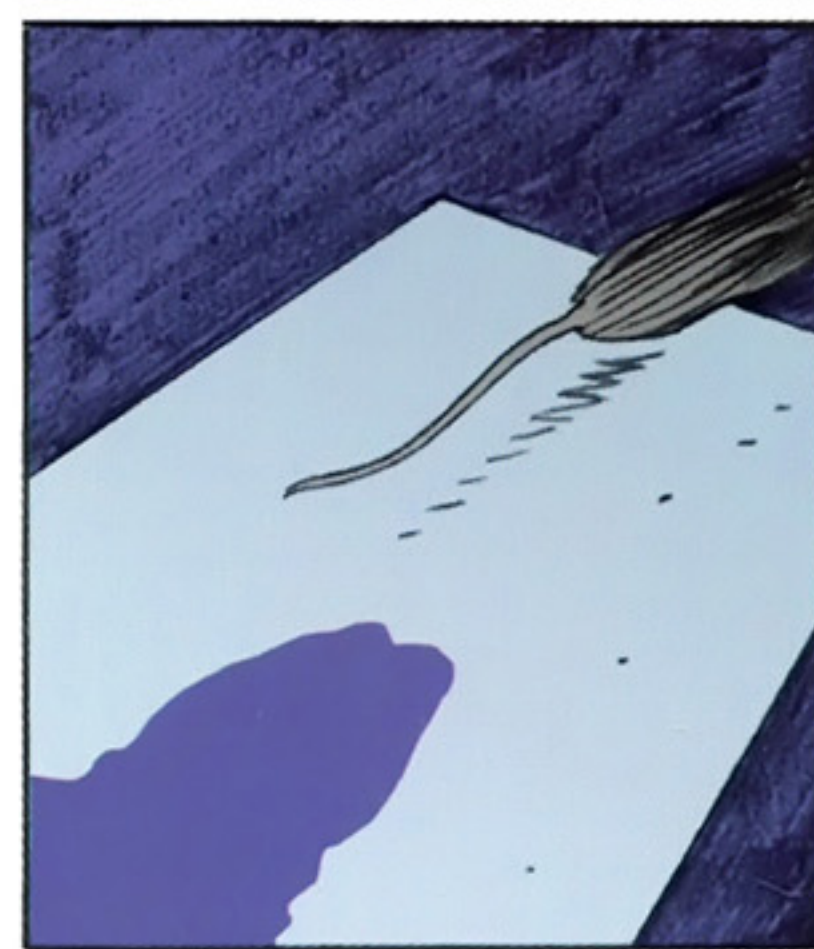
SHE HOPED IT WASN'T A SPIDER. SPIDERS MADE HER INTENSELY UNCOMFORTABLE.



THE BLACK SHAPE WENT INTO THE DRAWING ROOM.

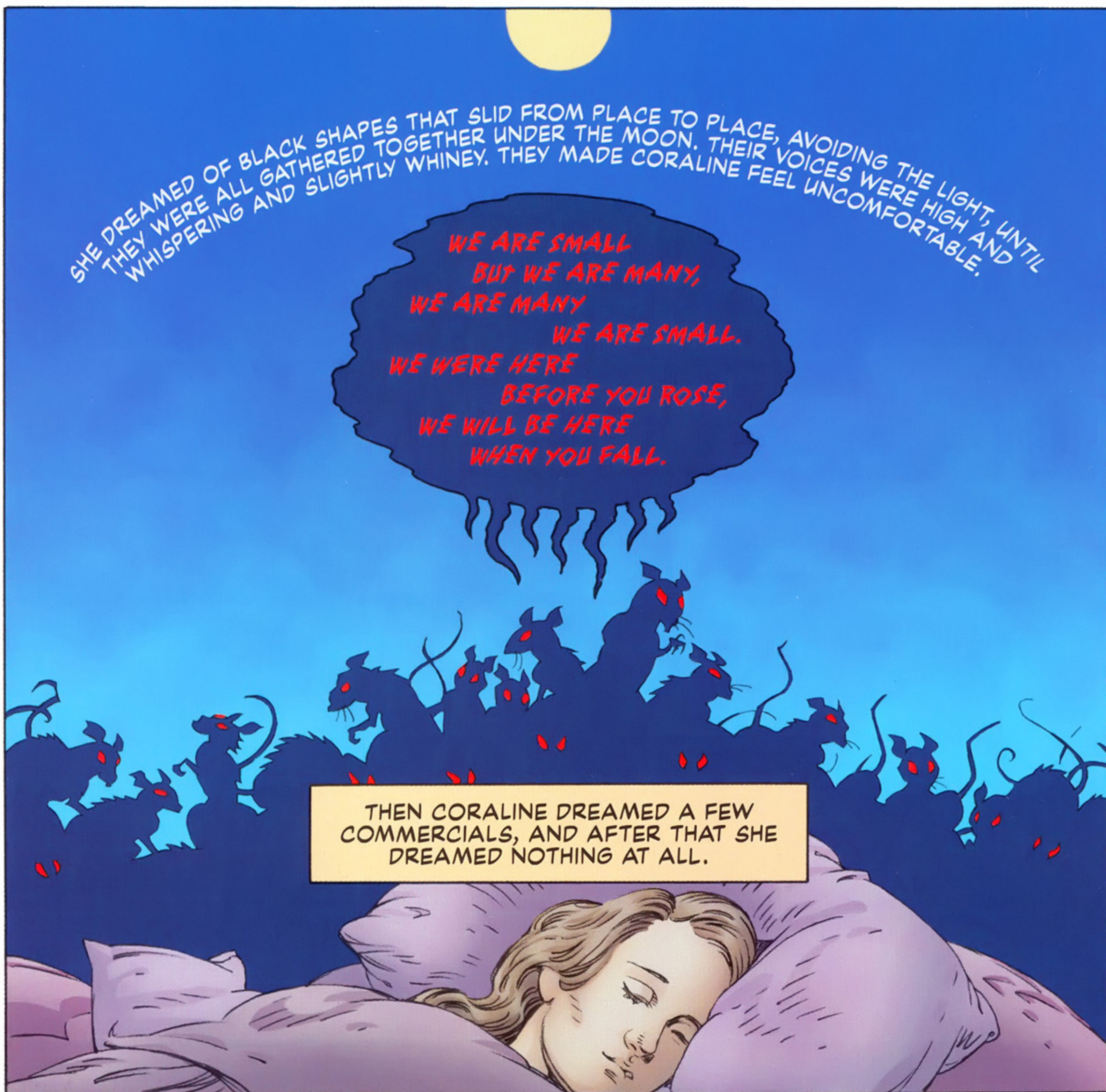


SHE FOLLOWED IT A LITTLE NERVOUSLY.





CORALINE WENT BACK TO BED.



SHE DREAMED OF BLACK SHAPES THAT SLID FROM PLACE TO PLACE, AVOIDING THE LIGHT, UNTIL THEY WERE ALL GATHERED TOGETHER UNDER THE MOON. THEIR VOICES WERE HIGH AND WHISPERING AND SLIGHTLY WHINEY. THEY MADE CORALINE FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE.

WE ARE SMALL
BUT WE ARE MANY,
WE ARE MANY
WE ARE SMALL.
WE WERE HERE
BEFORE YOU ROSE,
WE WILL BE HERE
WHEN YOU FALL.

THEN CORALINE DREAMED A FEW COMMERCIALS, AND AFTER THAT SHE DREAMED NOTHING AT ALL.

THE NEXT DAY IT HAD STOPPED RAINING, BUT A THICK WHITE FOG HAD LOWERED OVER THE HOUSE.

I'M
GOING
FOR A
WALK.



DON'T GO
TOO FAR.

AND DRESS
UP WARMLY.

YES,
MUM.



HELLO, CAROLINE.
ROTTEN WEATHER.

YES,
MISS
SPINK.



YOU'D HAVE TO BE AN
EXPLORER TO FIND YOUR WAY
AROUND IN THIS FOG.

OF COURSE YOU
ARE, LUVVY. DON'T
GET LOST, NOW.

I'M AN
EXPLORER.



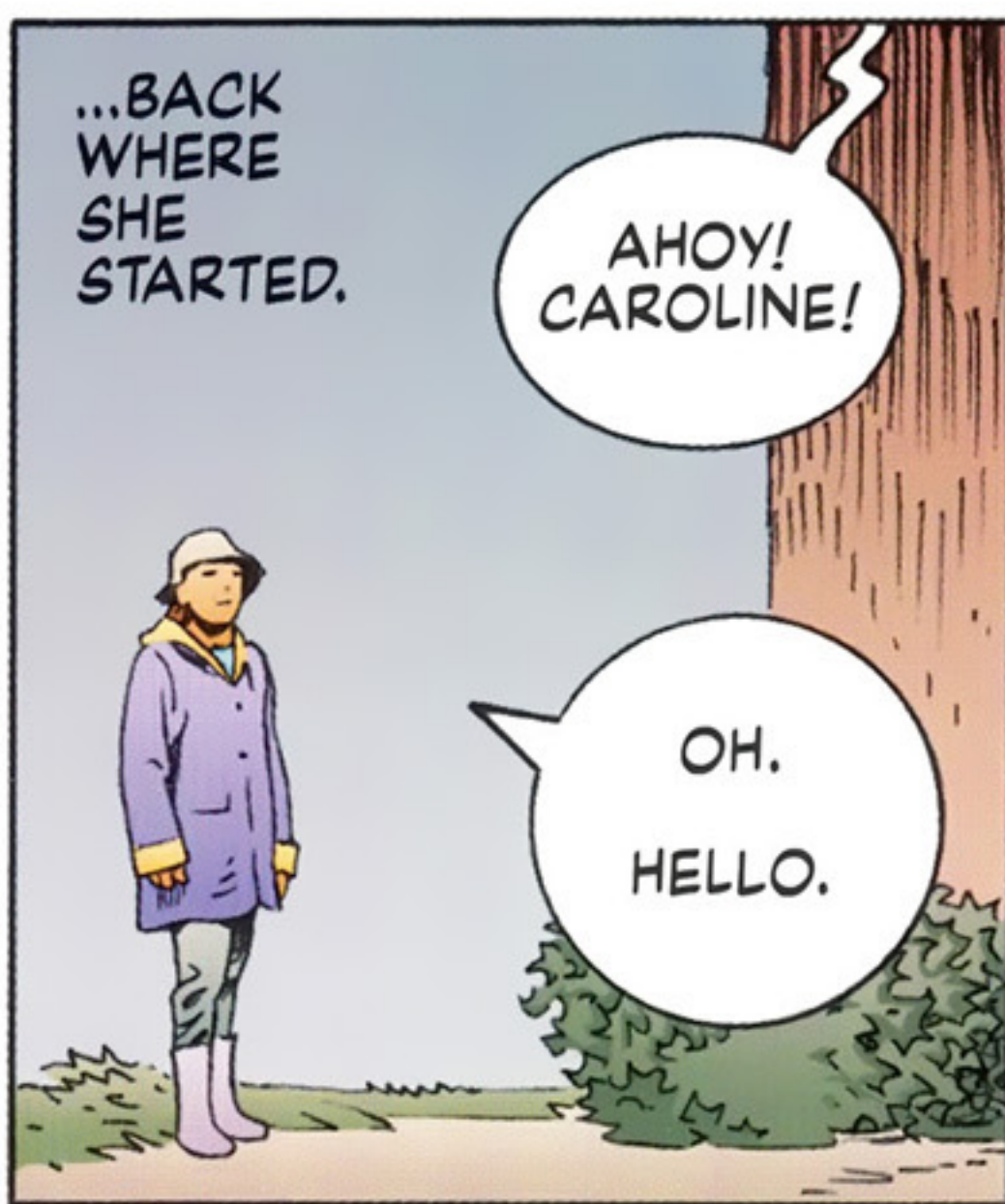
CORALINE CONTINUED WALKING THROUGH THE GARDENS IN THE GRAY MIST, ALWAYS KEEPING IN SIGHT OF THE HOUSE. AFTER TEN MINUTES WALKING SHE FOUND HERSELF...



...BACK WHERE SHE STARTED.

AHOY! CAROLINE!

OH.
HELLO.



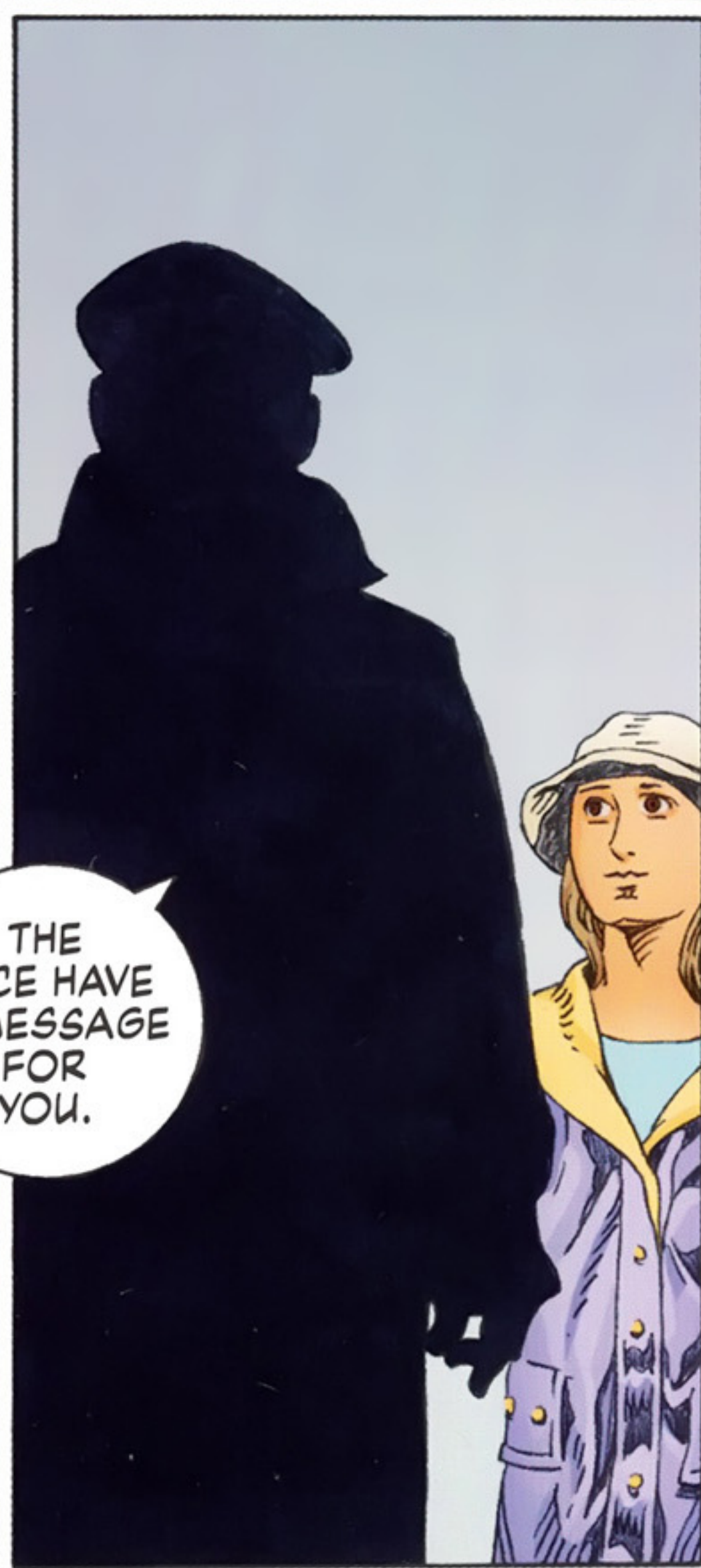
THE MICE DO NOT LIKE THE MIST.

IT MAKES THEIR WHISKERS DROOP.

I DON'T LIKE THE MIST MUCH, EITHER.



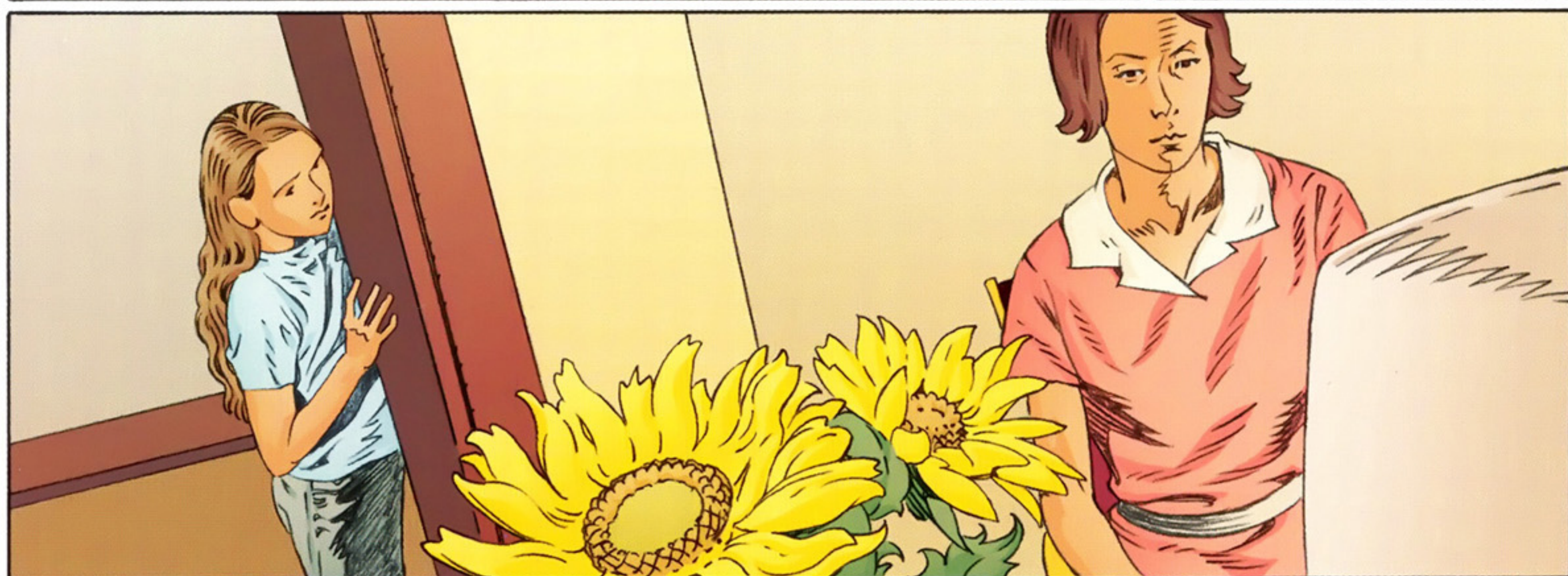
THE MICE HAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOU.

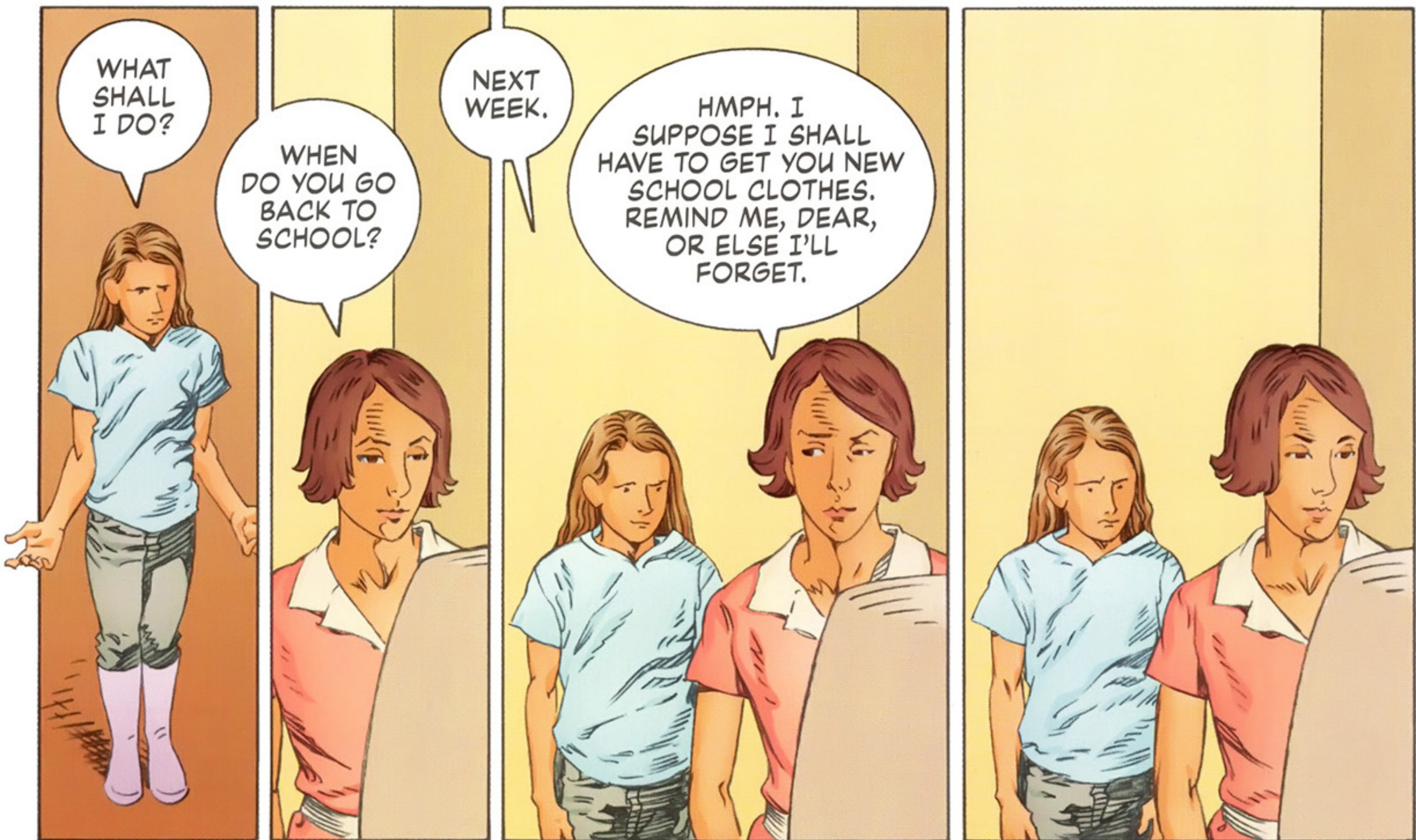


THE MESSAGE IS THIS.

DON'T GO THROUGH THE DOOR.







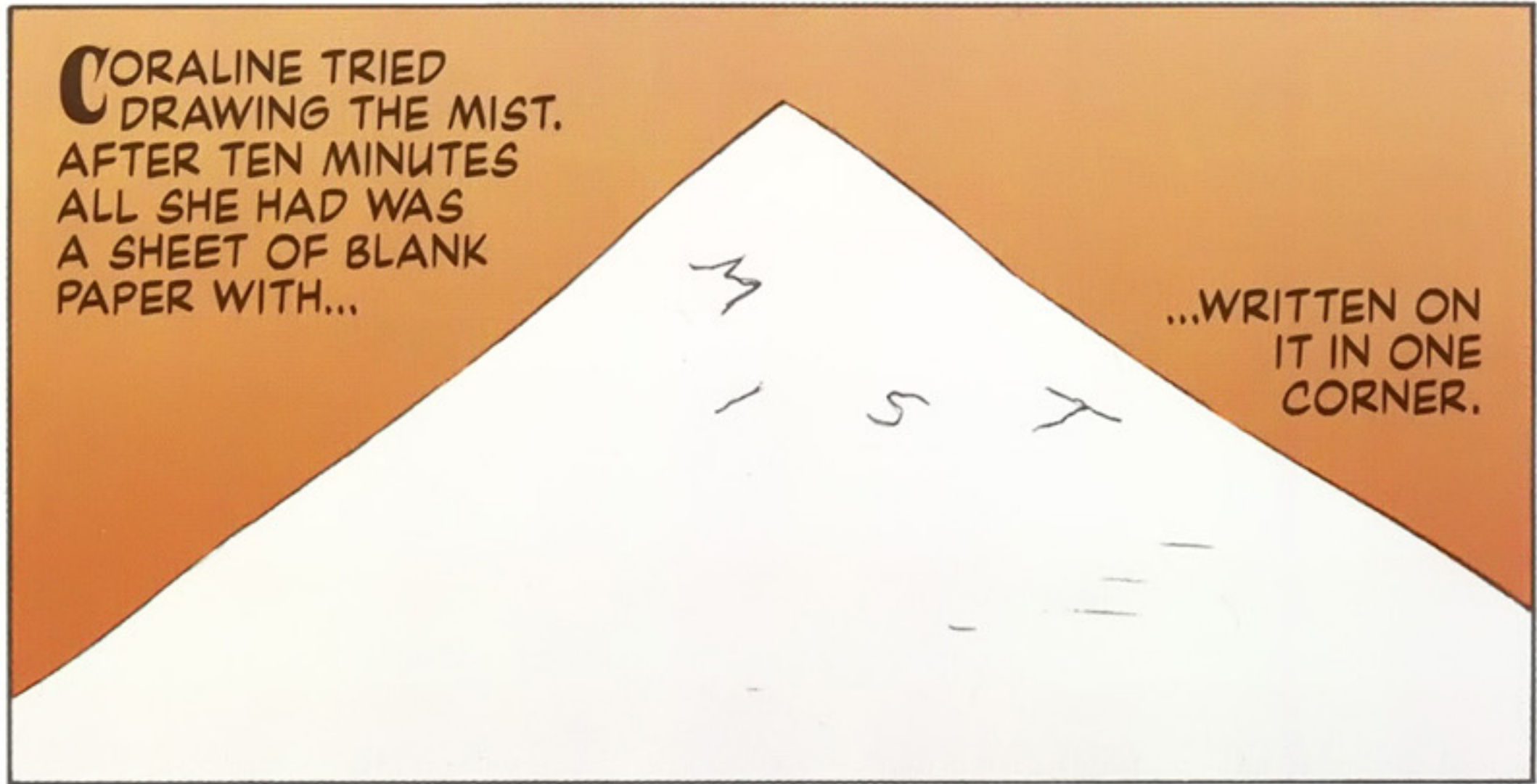
NEXT WEEK.

HMPH. I SUPPOSE I SHALL HAVE TO GET YOU NEW SCHOOL CLOTHES. REMIND ME, DEAR, OR ELSE I'LL FORGET.

WHAT SHALL I *DO?*

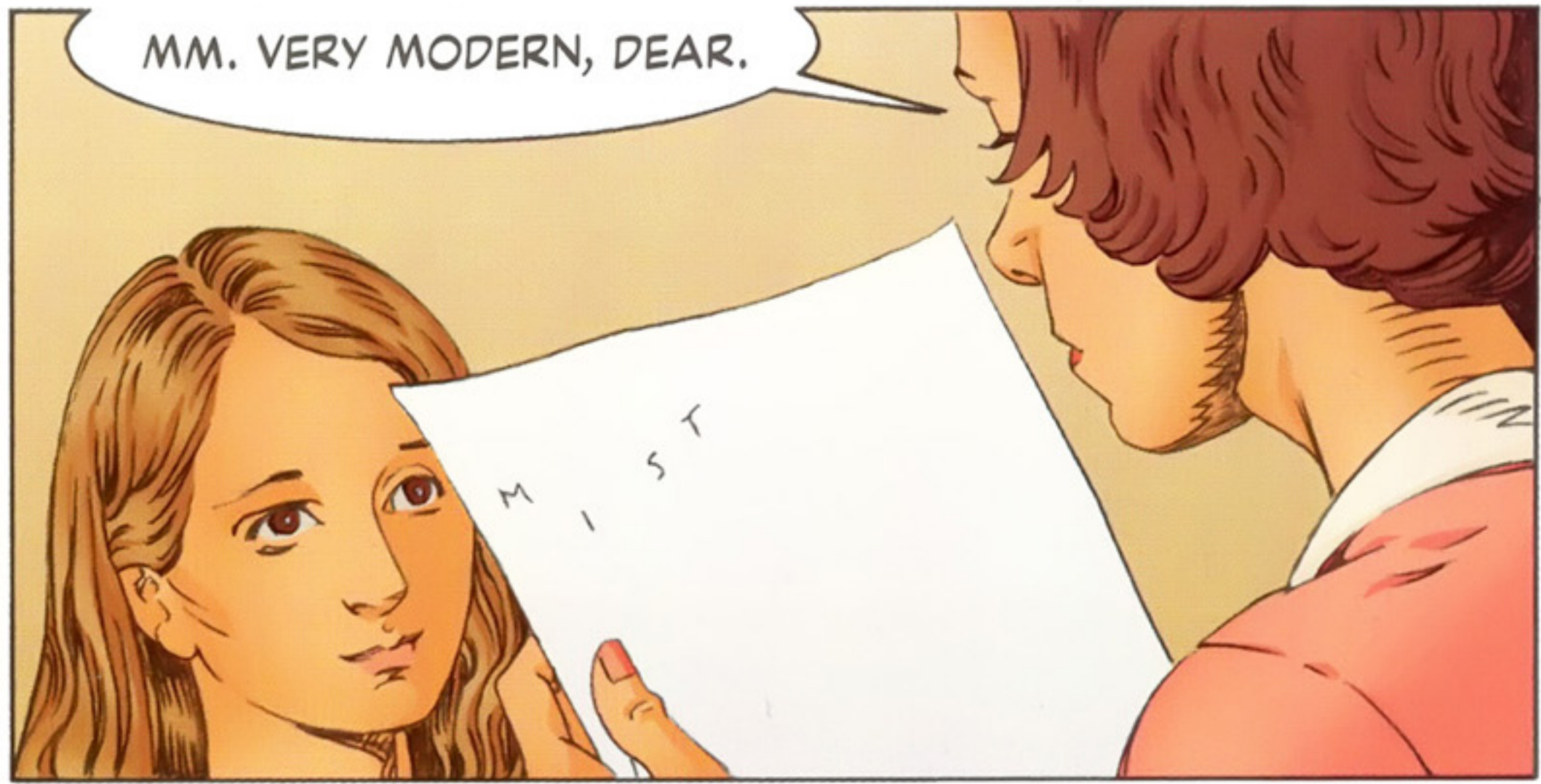


HERE. DRAW SOMETHING.



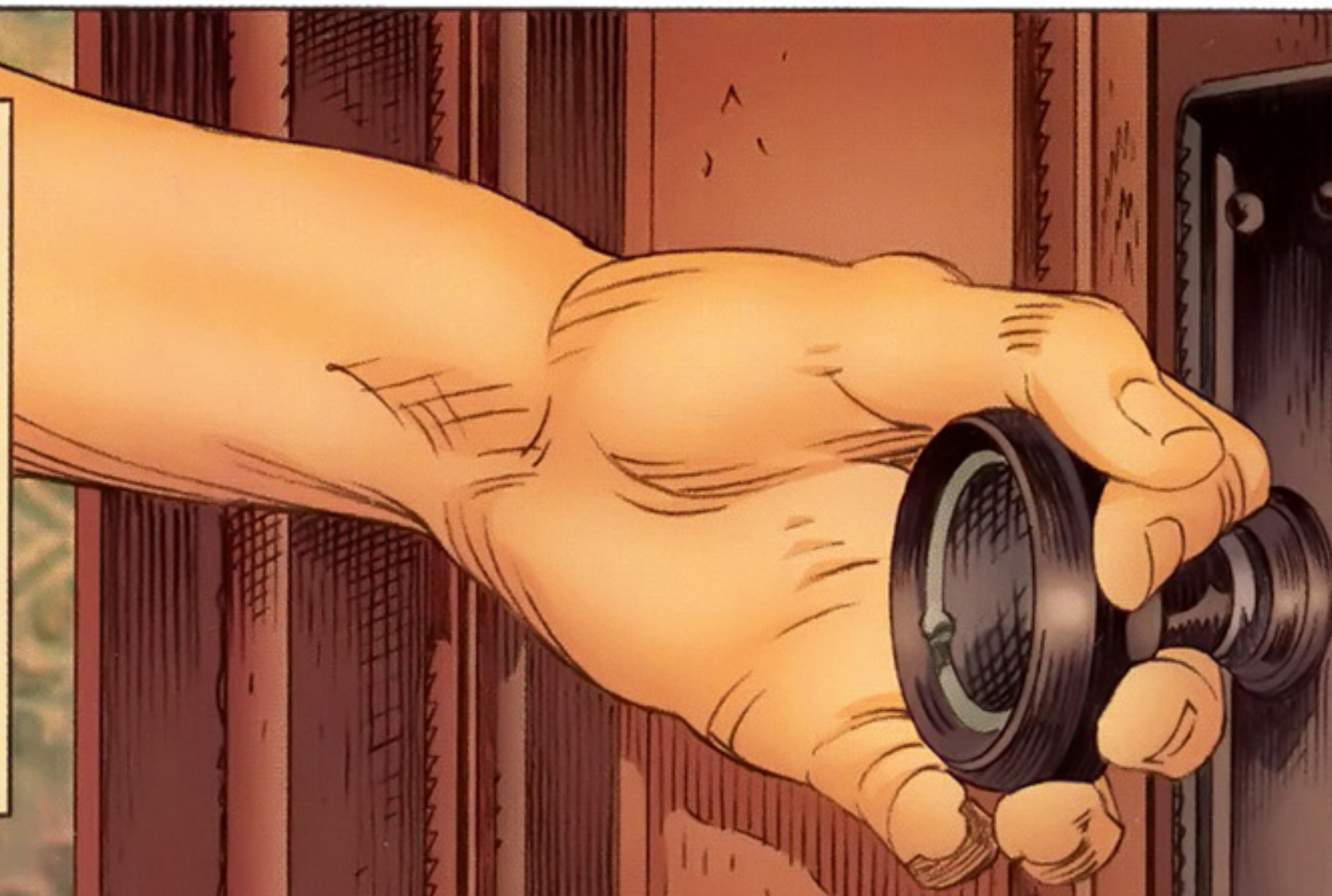
CORALINE TRIED DRAWING THE MIST. AFTER TEN MINUTES ALL SHE HAD WAS A SHEET OF BLANK PAPER WITH...

...WRITTEN ON IT IN ONE CORNER.



MM. VERY MODERN, DEAR.

CORALINE CREPT INTO THE DRAWING ROOM AND TRIED TO OPEN THE OLD DOOR IN THE CORNER. IT WAS LOCKED ONCE MORE. SHE SUPPOSED HER MOTHER MUST HAVE LOCKED IT AGAIN. TIME TO VISIT HER FATHER.



GO
AWA-AY.

I'M
BORED.

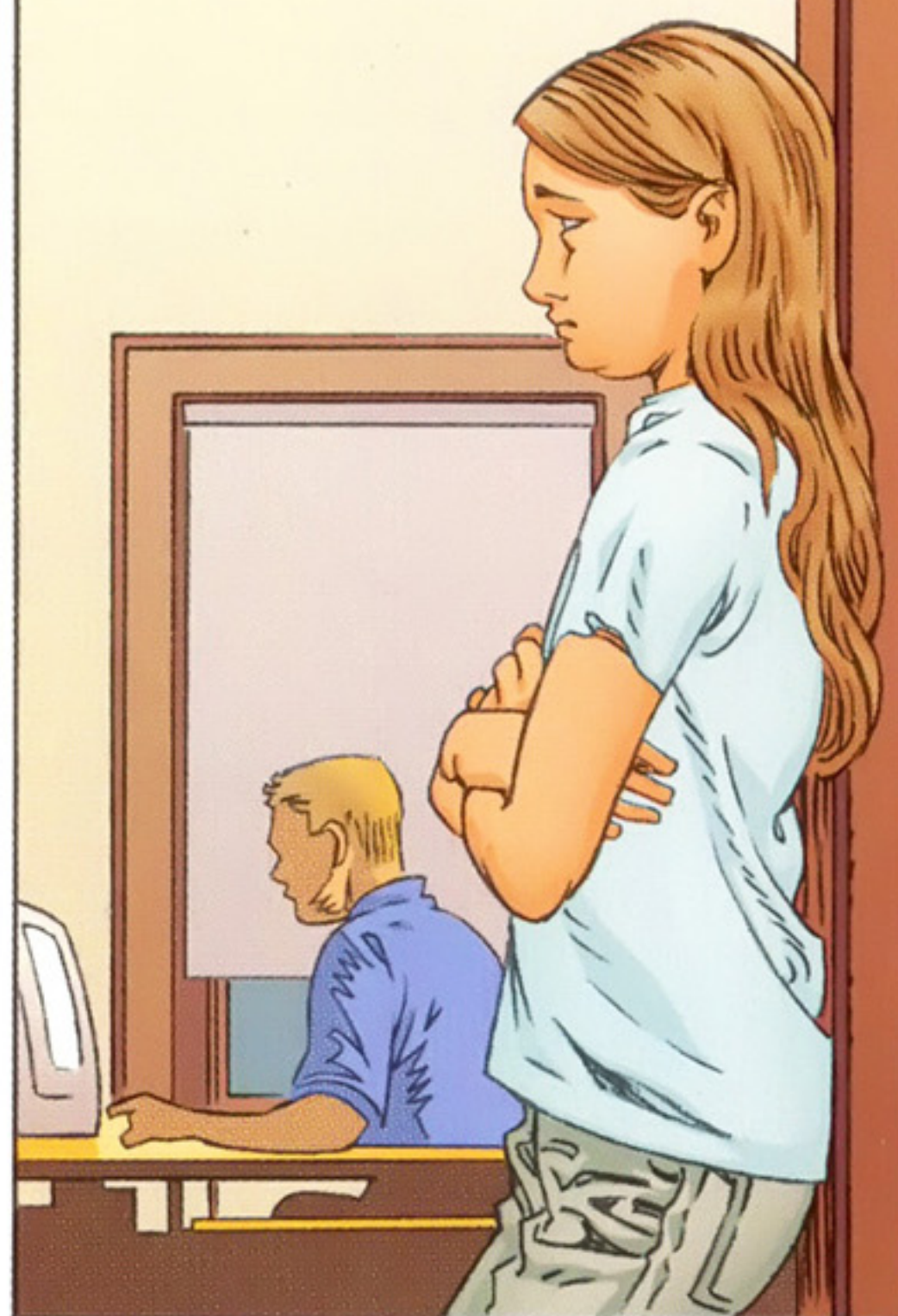
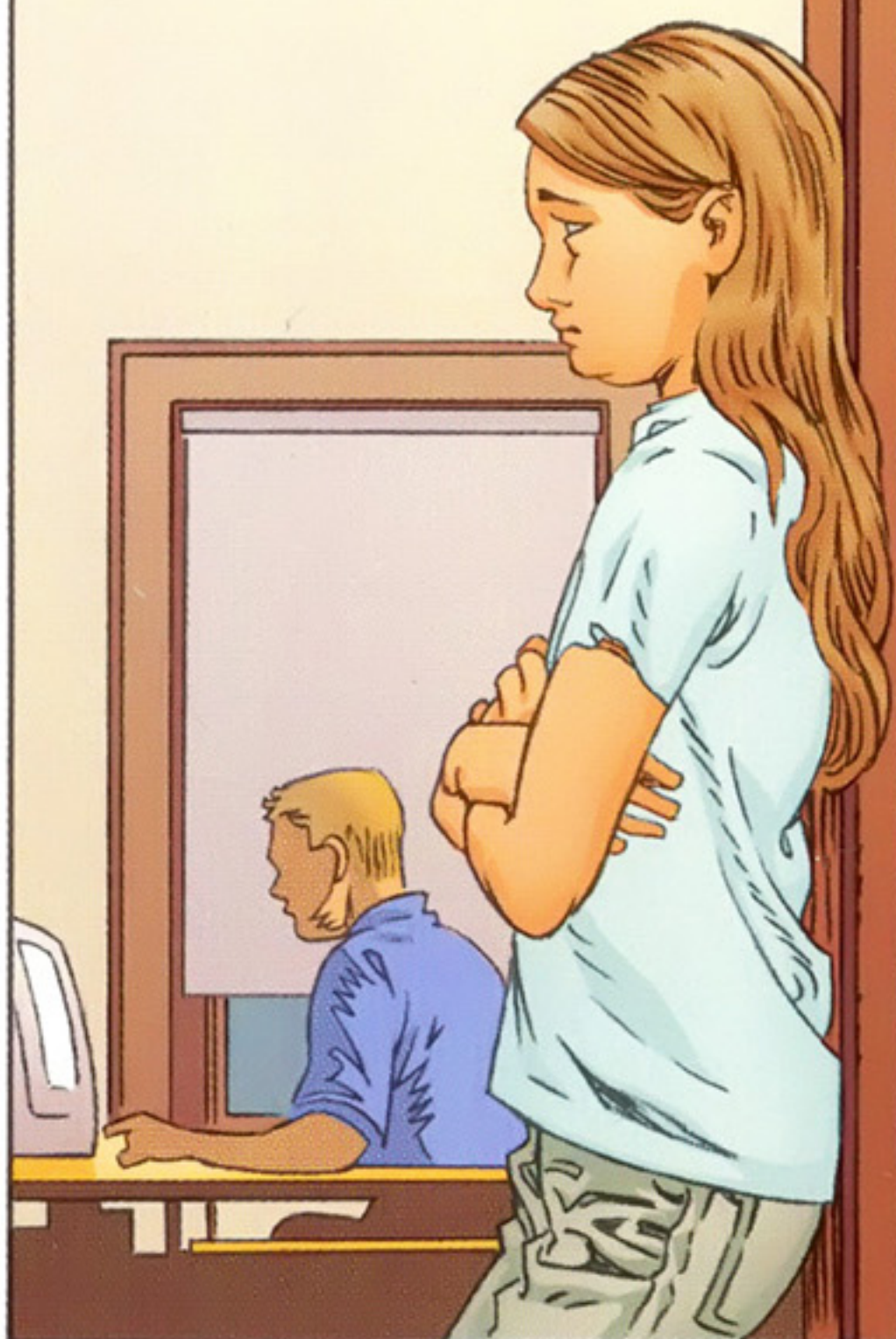
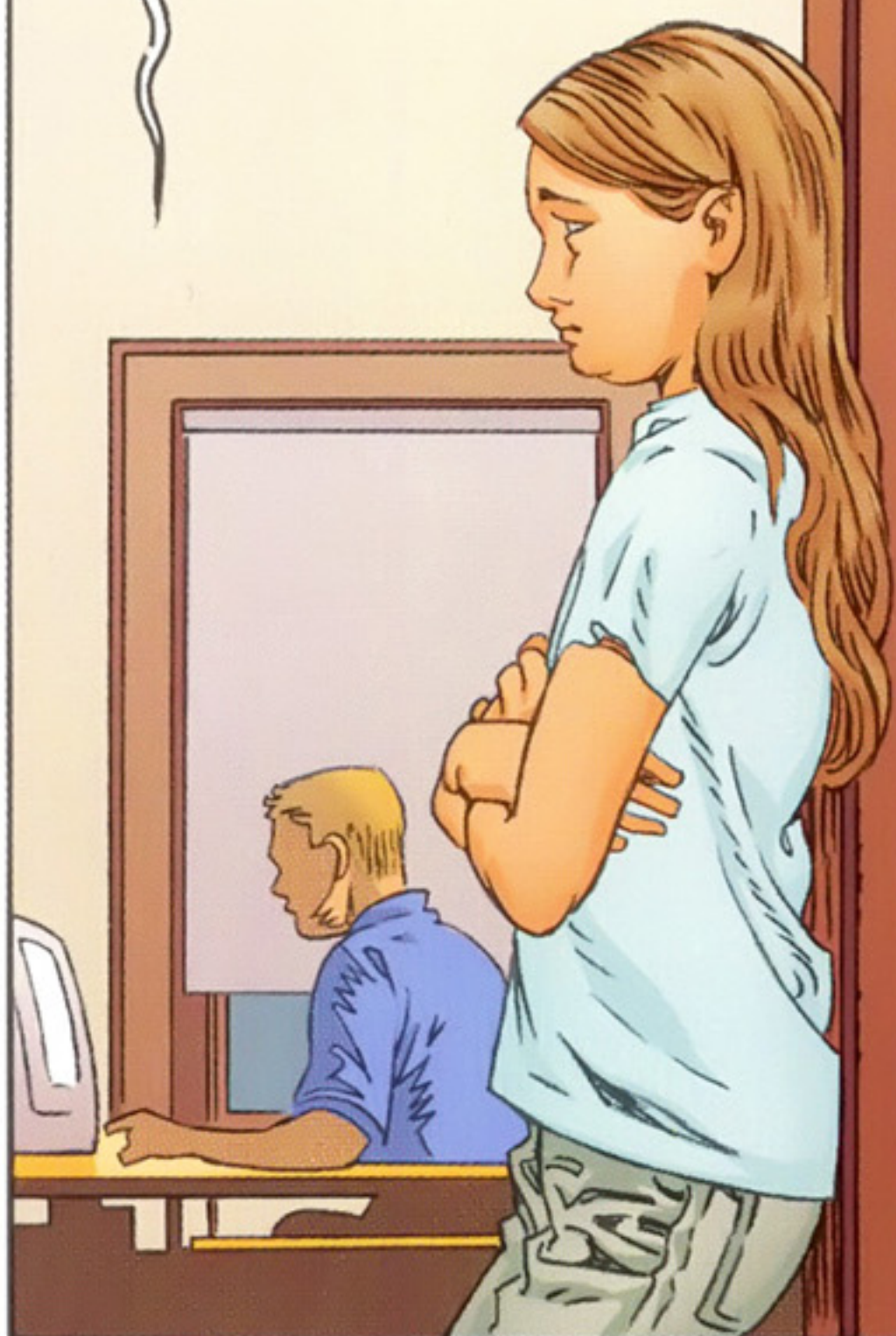
LEARN
HOW TO TAP
DANCE.

WHY
DON'T YOU
PLAY WITH
ME?

BUSY.

WORKING.

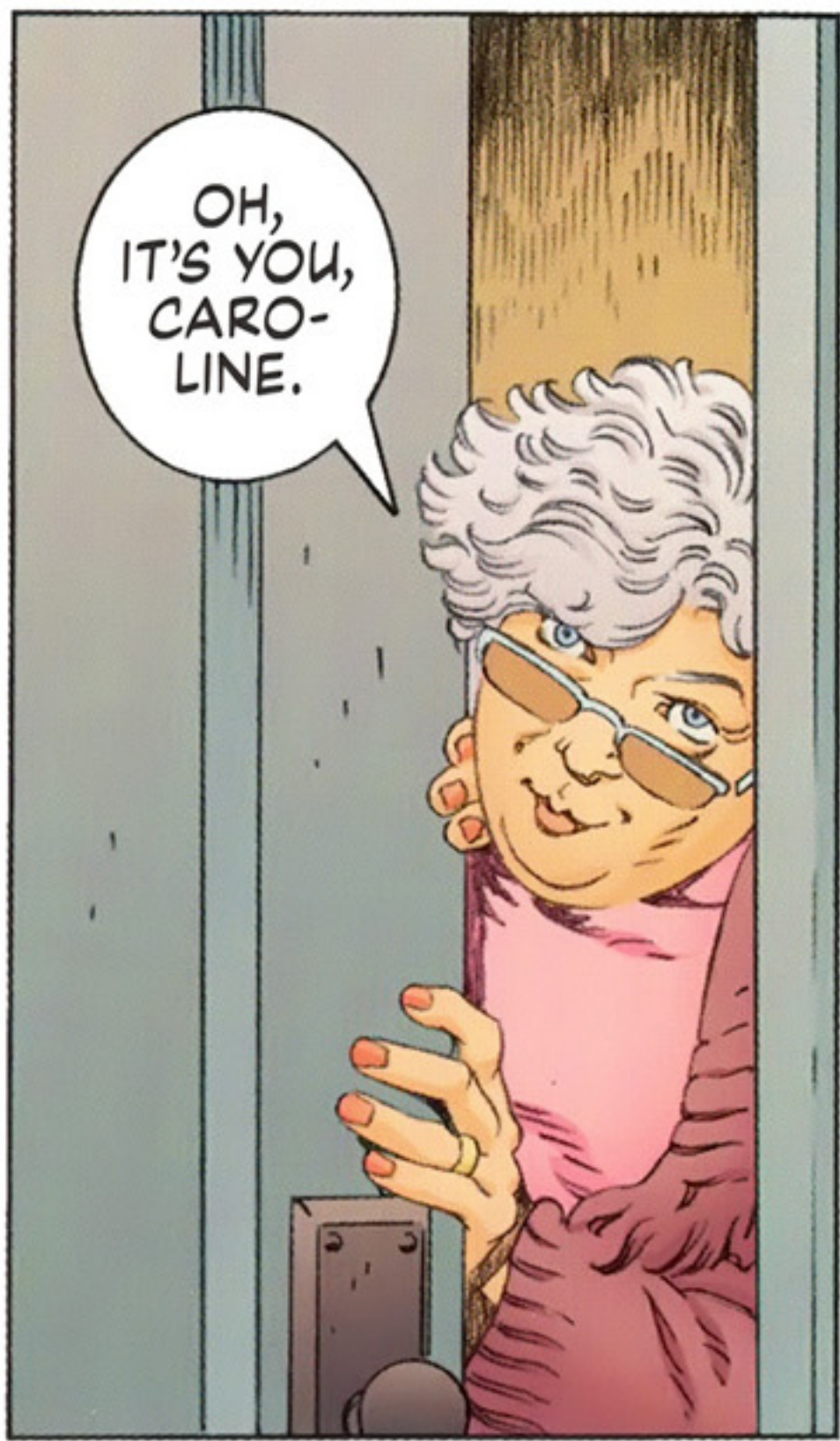
WHY
DON'T YOU GO
BOTHER MISS
SPINK AND MISS
FORCIBLE?



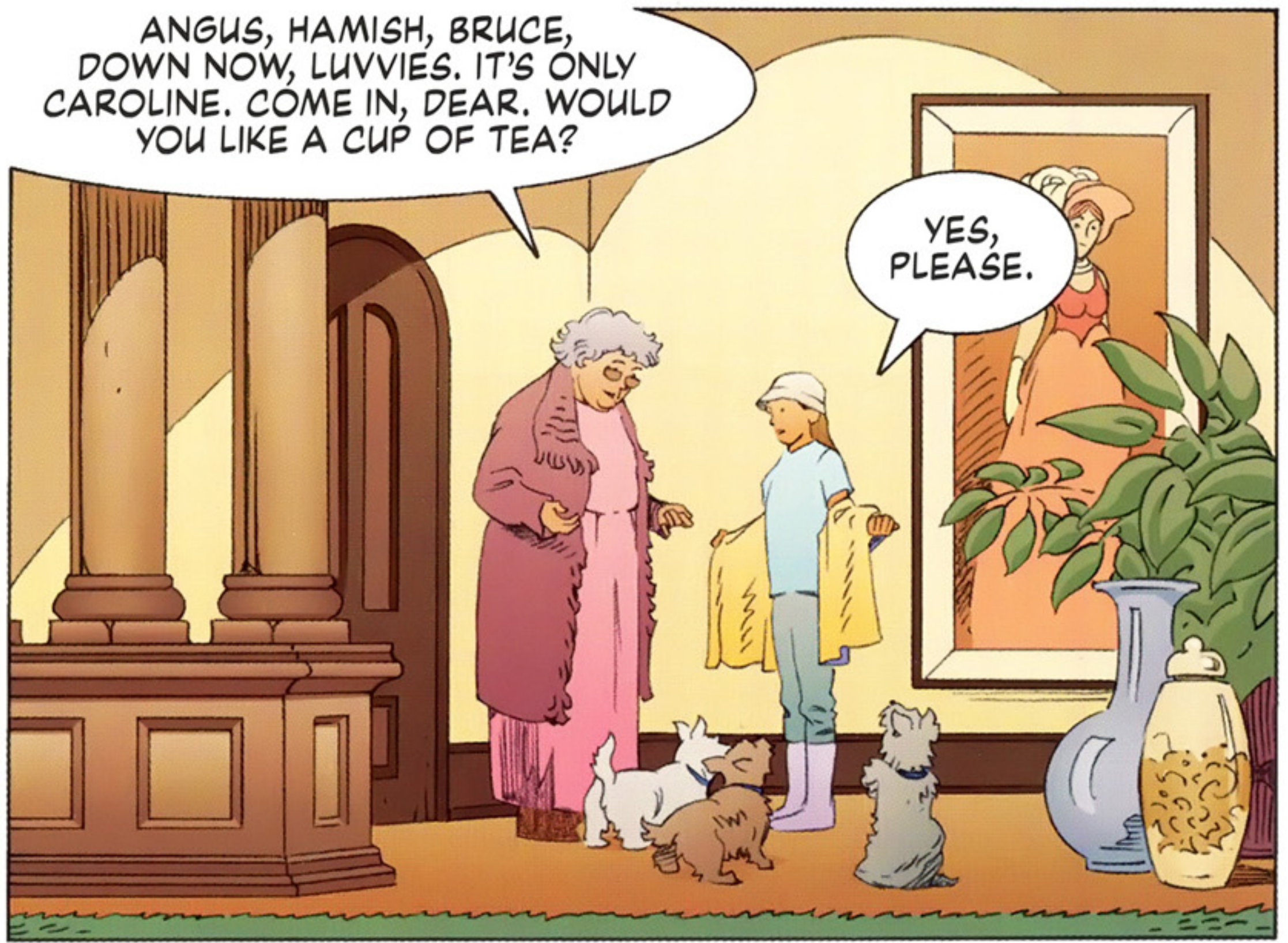
RINNN
NNG



ARROOOOOO
ARKARKARKARROO

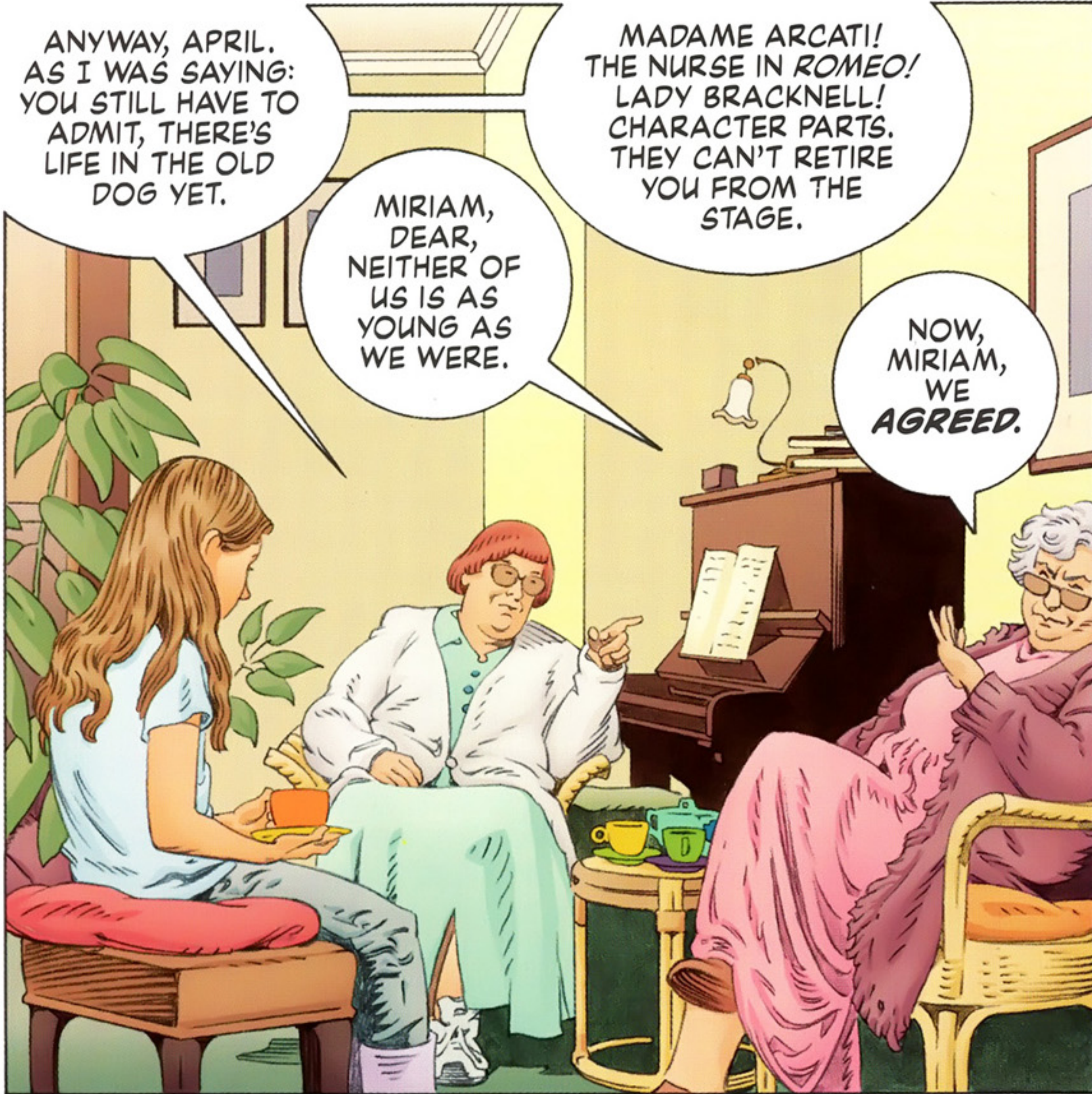


OH,
IT'S YOU,
CARO-
LINE.



ANGUS, HAMISH, BRUCE,
DOWN NOW, LUVVIES. IT'S ONLY
CAROLINE. COME IN, DEAR. WOULD
YOU LIKE A CUP OF TEA?

YES,
PLEASE.



ANYWAY, APRIL.
AS I WAS SAYING:
YOU STILL HAVE TO
ADMIT, THERE'S
LIFE IN THE OLD
DOG YET.

MIRIAM,
DEAR,
NEITHER OF
US IS AS
YOUNG AS
WE WERE.

MADAME ARCATI!
THE NURSE IN ROMEO!
LADY BRACKNELL!
CHARACTER PARTS.
THEY CAN'T RETIRE
YOU FROM THE
STAGE.

NOW,
MIRIAM,
WE
AGREED.

CORALINE DECIDED THEY
WERE HAVING AN OLD
AND COMFORTABLE
ARGUMENT. THE KIND THAT
CAN GO ON FOREVER IF
BOTH PARTIES ARE
WILLING.



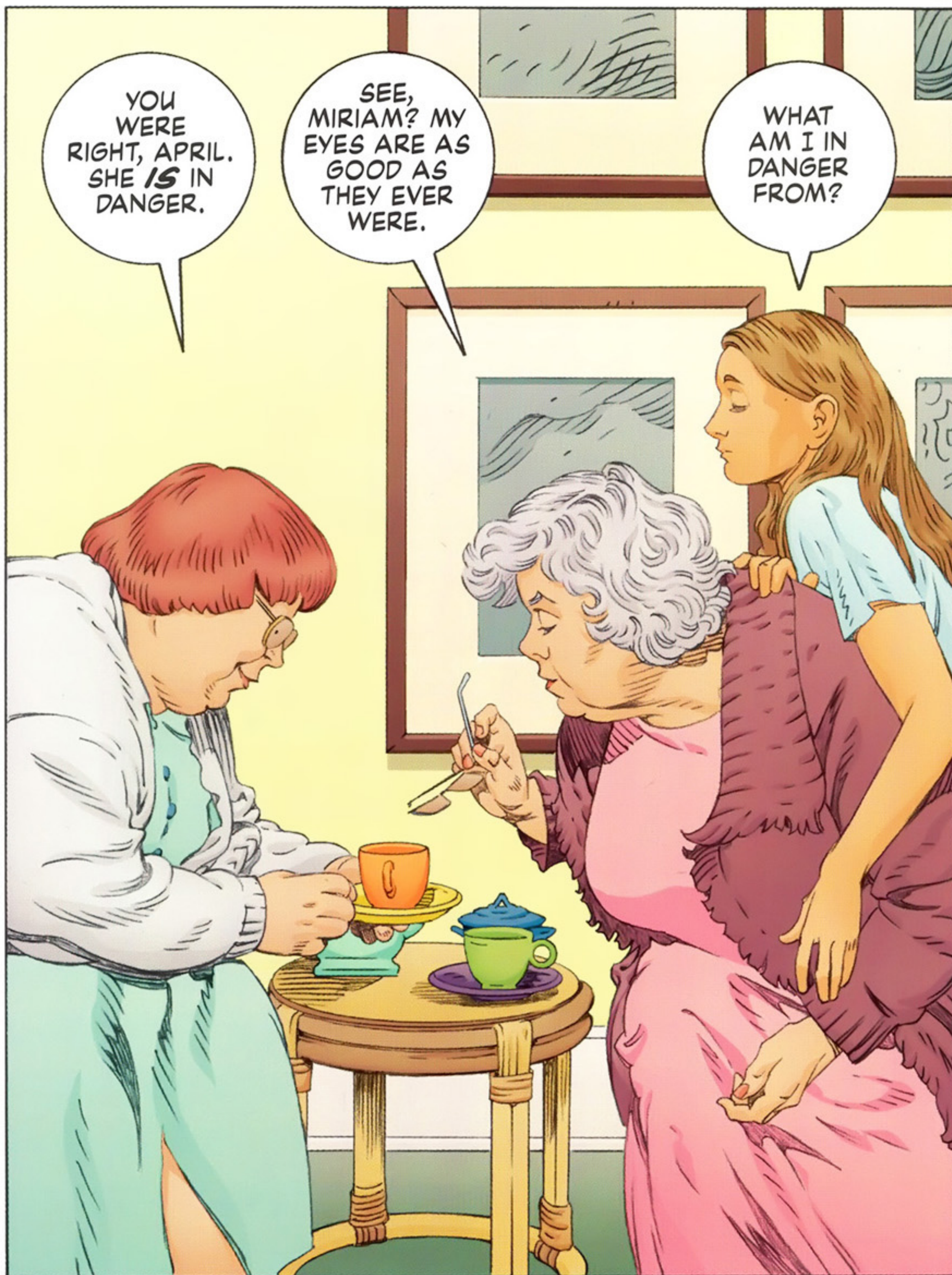
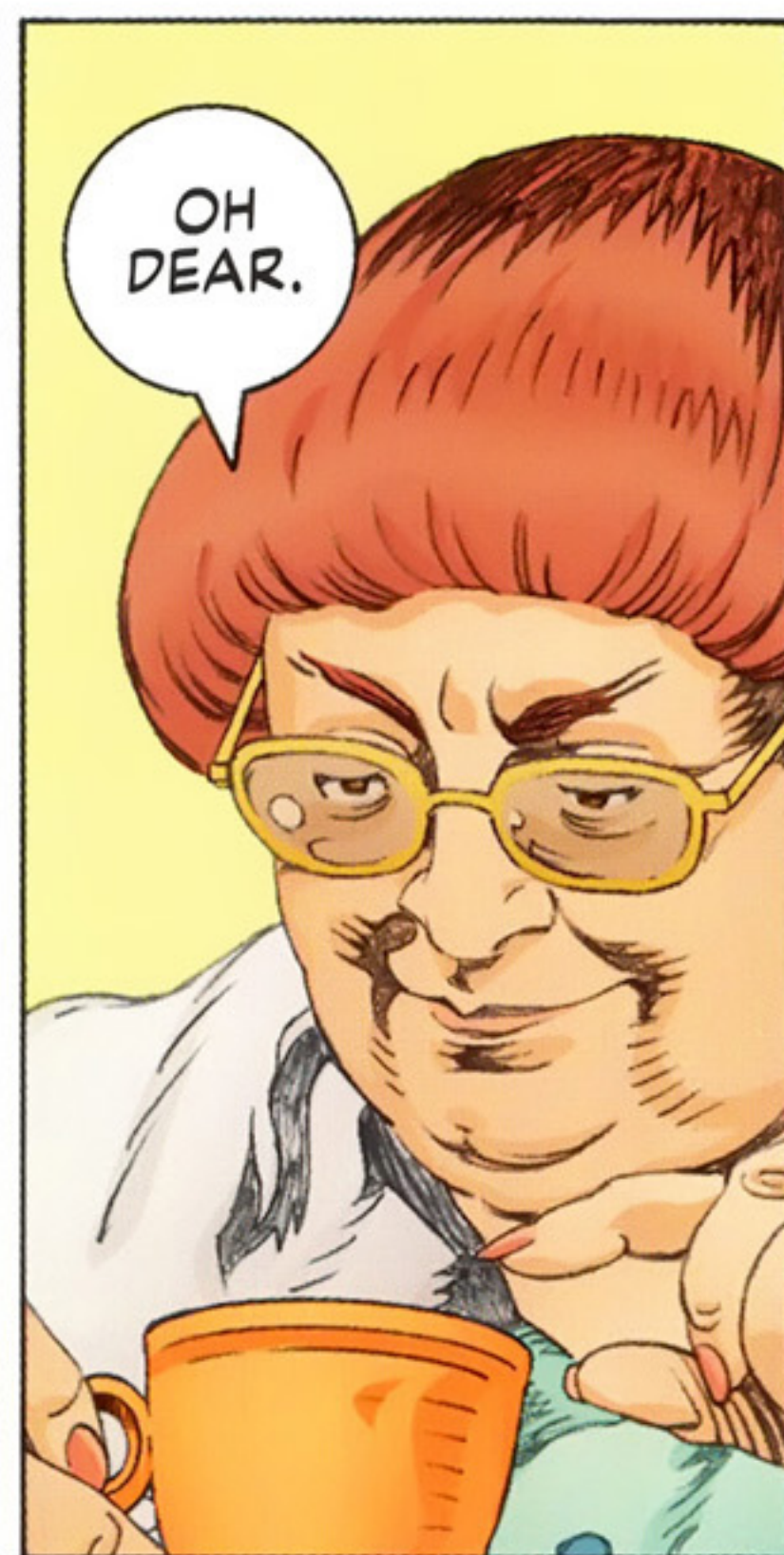
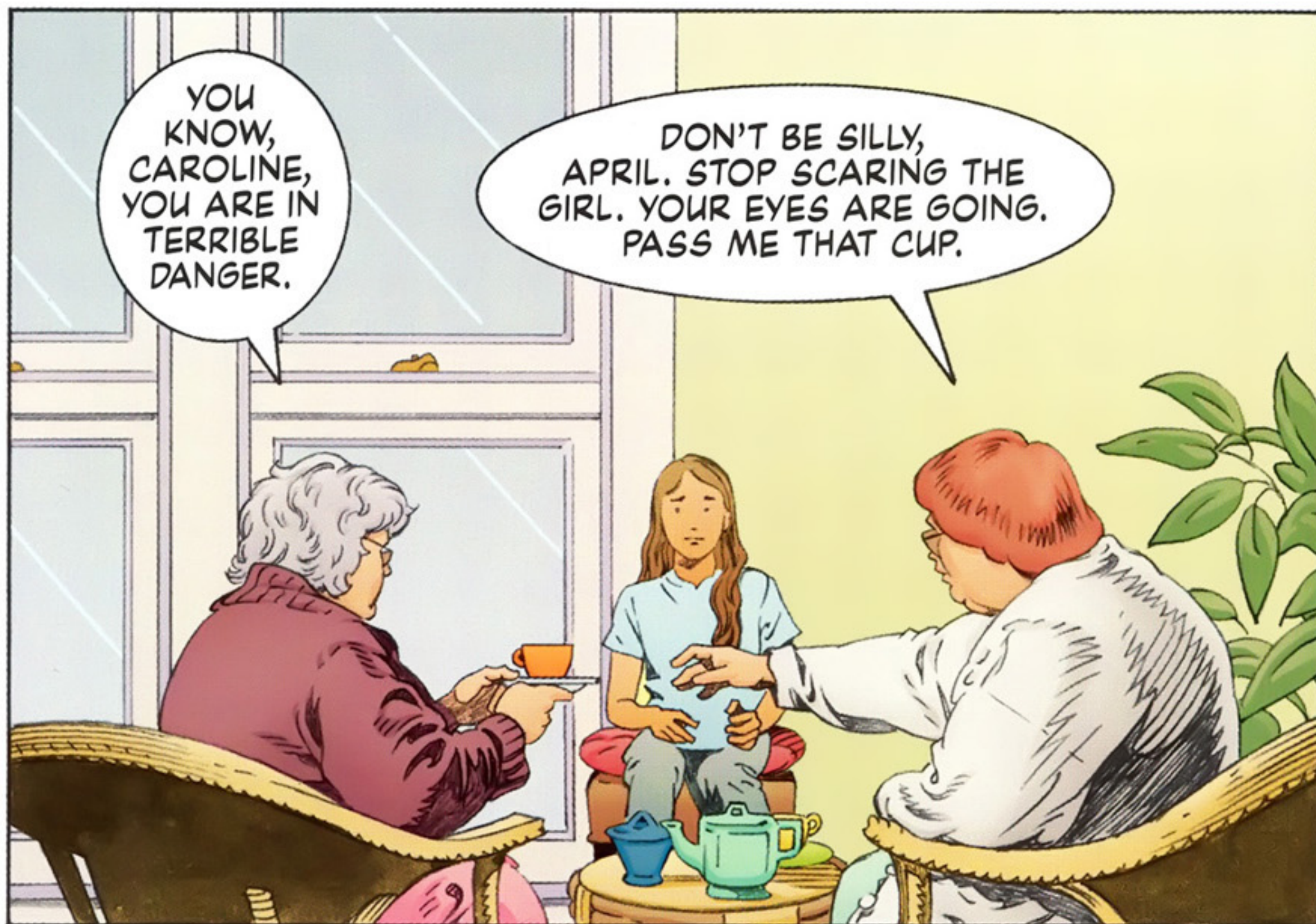
I'LL
READ YOUR
TEA LEAVES,
IF YOU
WANT.

SORRY?

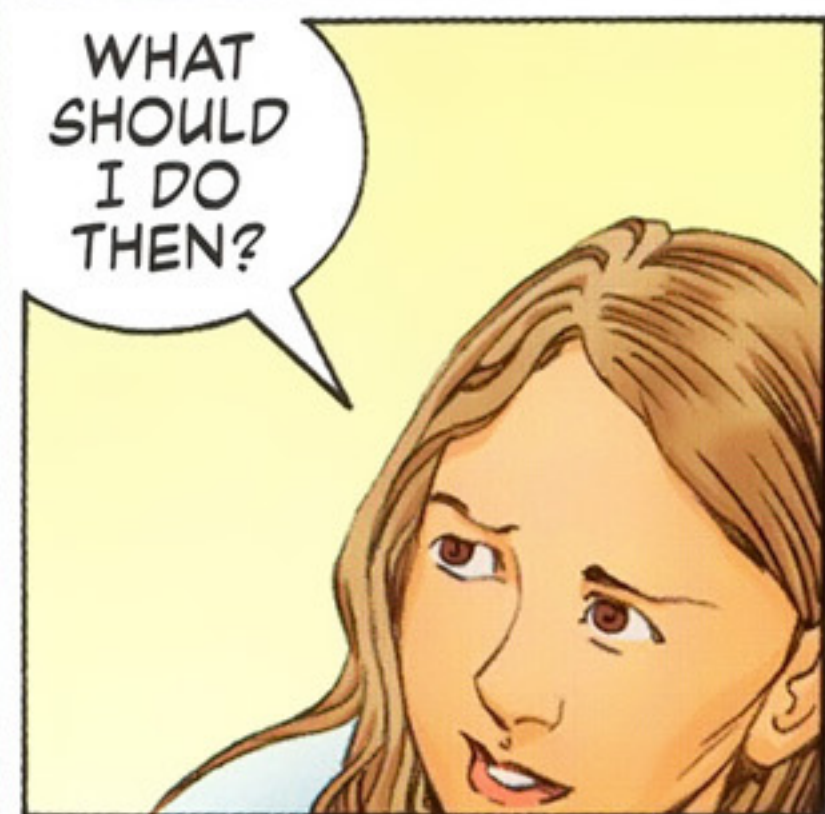


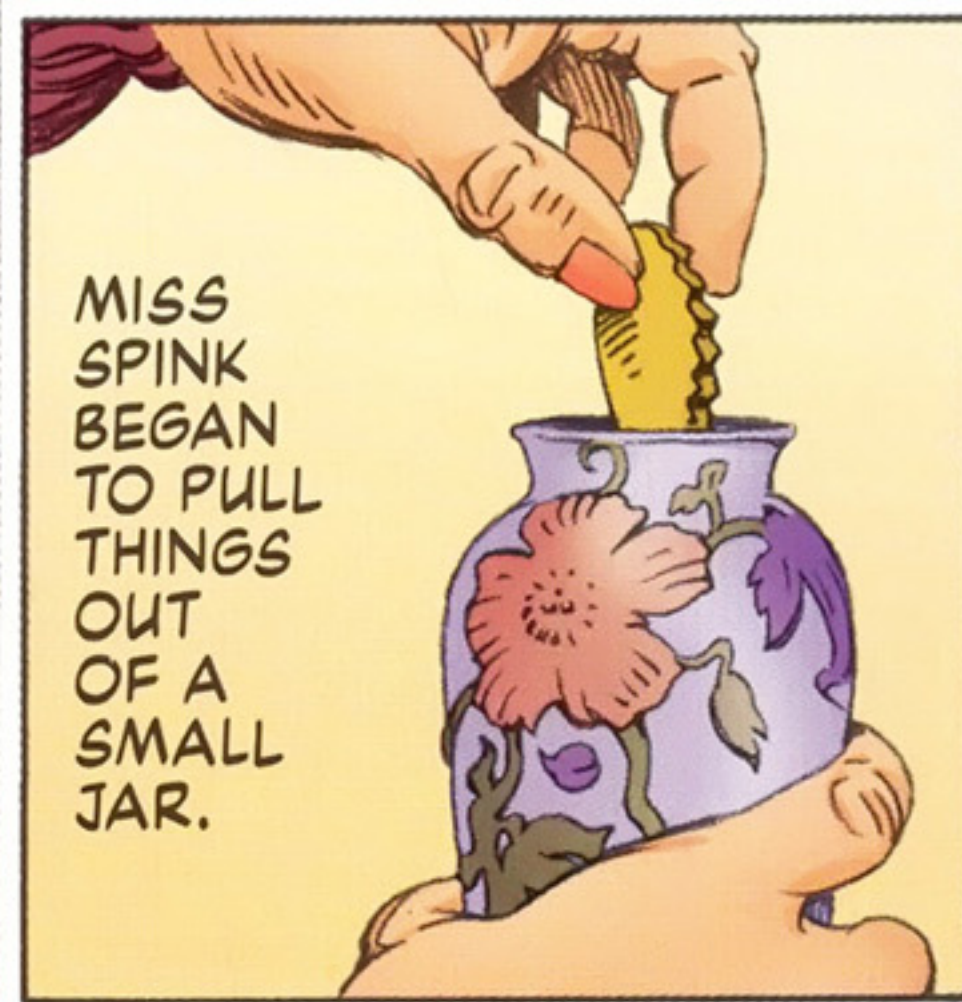
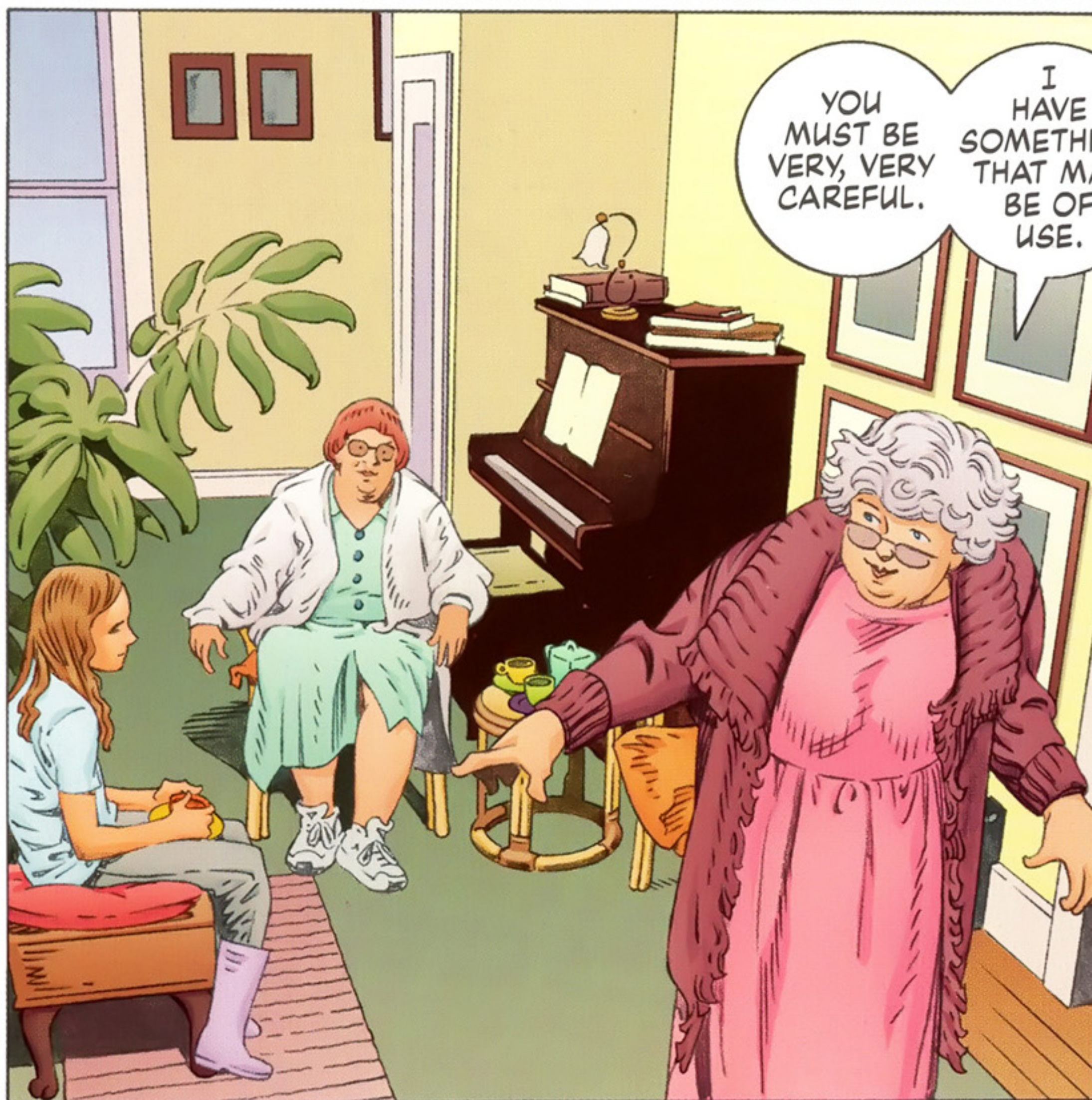
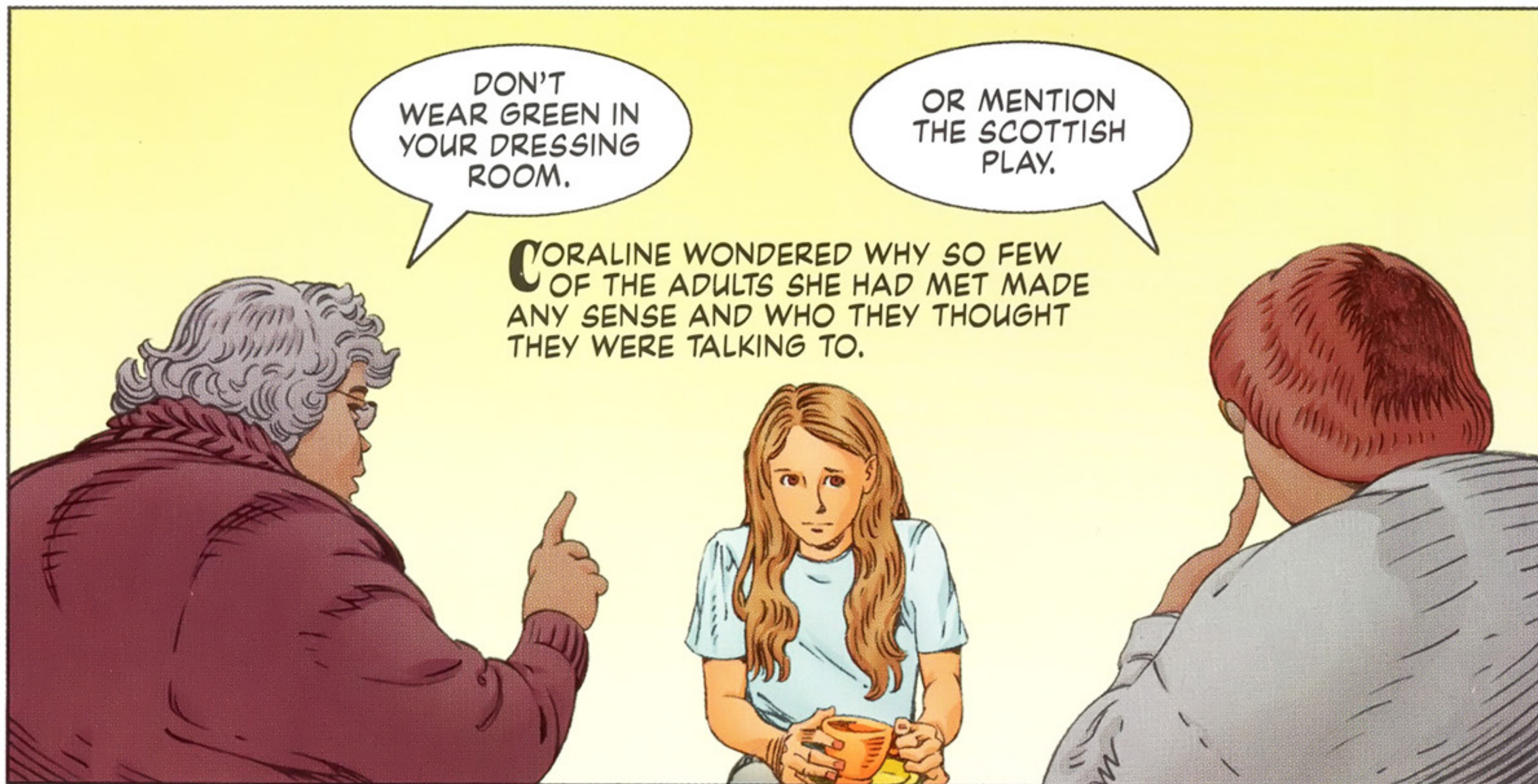
THE TEA
LEAVES, DEAR.
I'LL READ
YOUR
FUTURE.





IT DIDN'T SAY. TEA LEAVES AREN'T RELIABLE FOR THAT KIND OF THING. THEY'RE GOOD FOR GENERAL, BUT NOT FOR SPECIFICS.





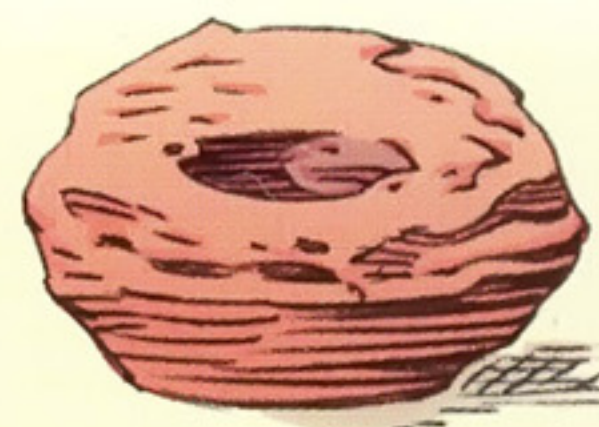
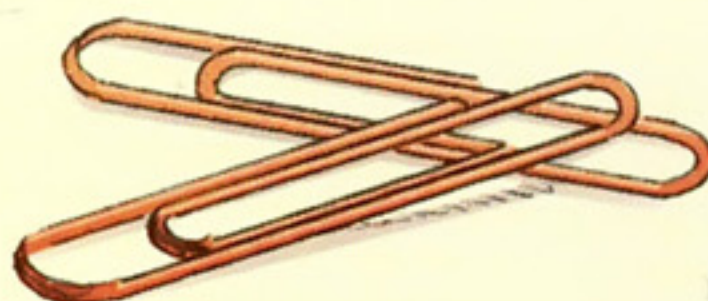
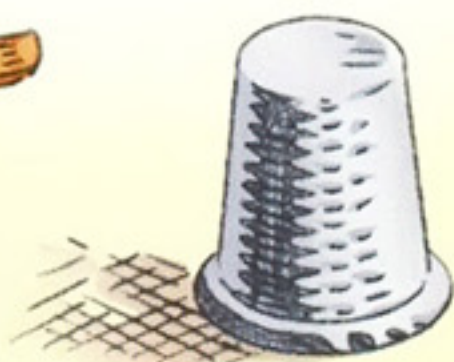
THERE WAS A TINY CHINA DUCK...

...A THIMBLE...

...A STRANGE LITTLE BRASS COIN...

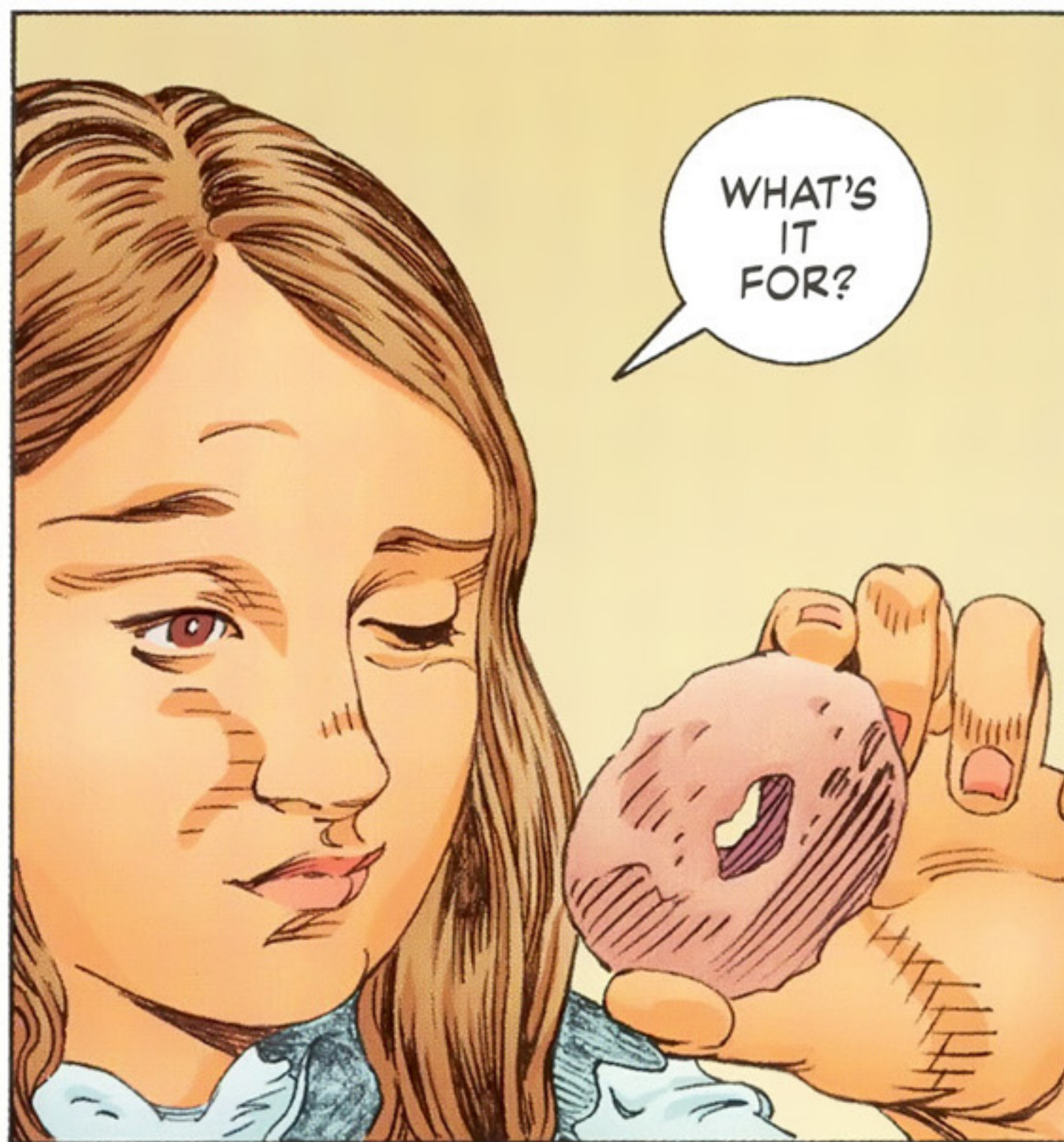
...TWO PAPER CLIPS...

...AND A STONE WITH A HOLE IN IT.





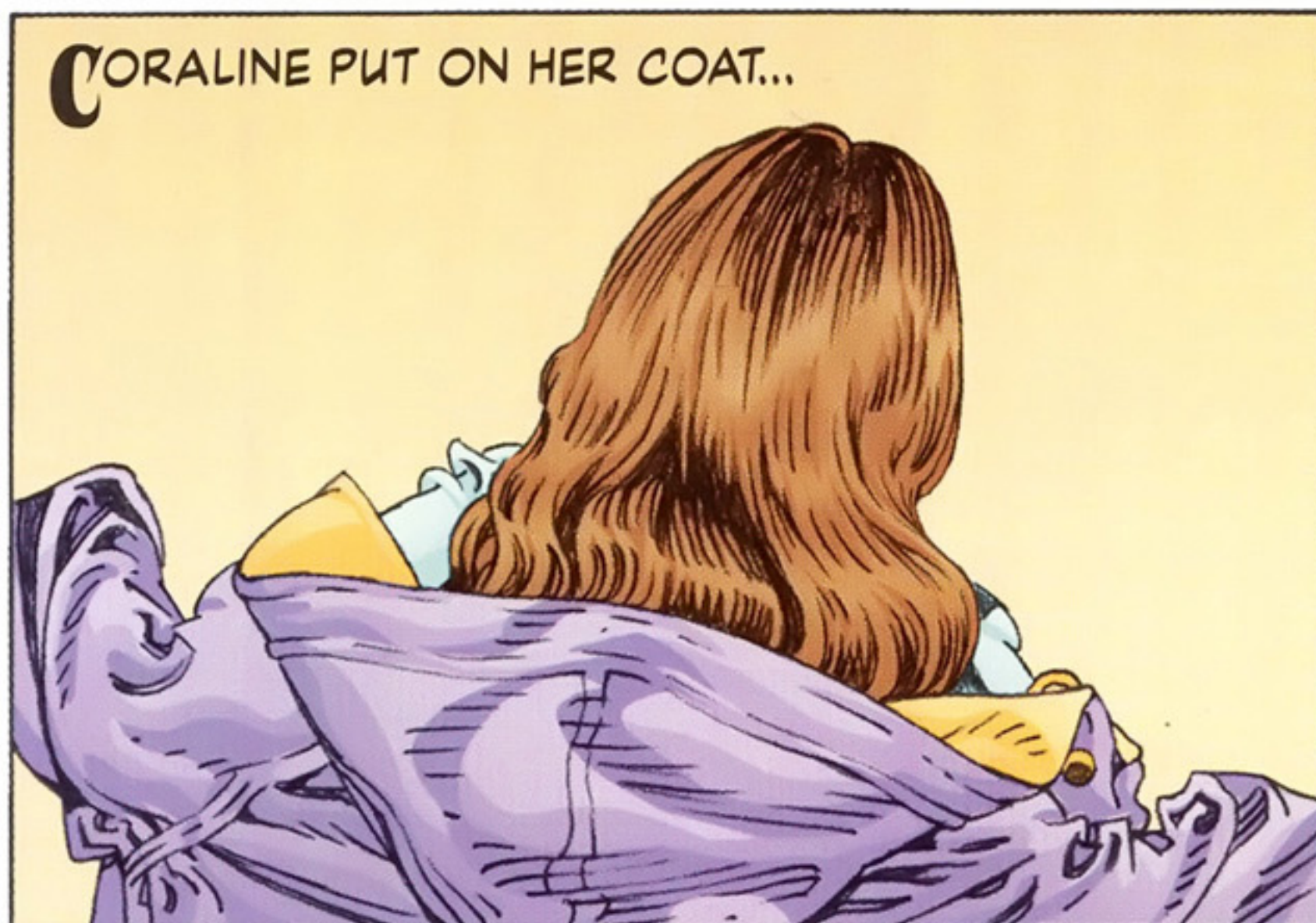
FOR YOU.



WHAT'S IT FOR?



IT MIGHT HELP. THEY'RE GOOD FOR BAD THINGS, SOMETIMES.



CORALINE PUT ON HER COAT...



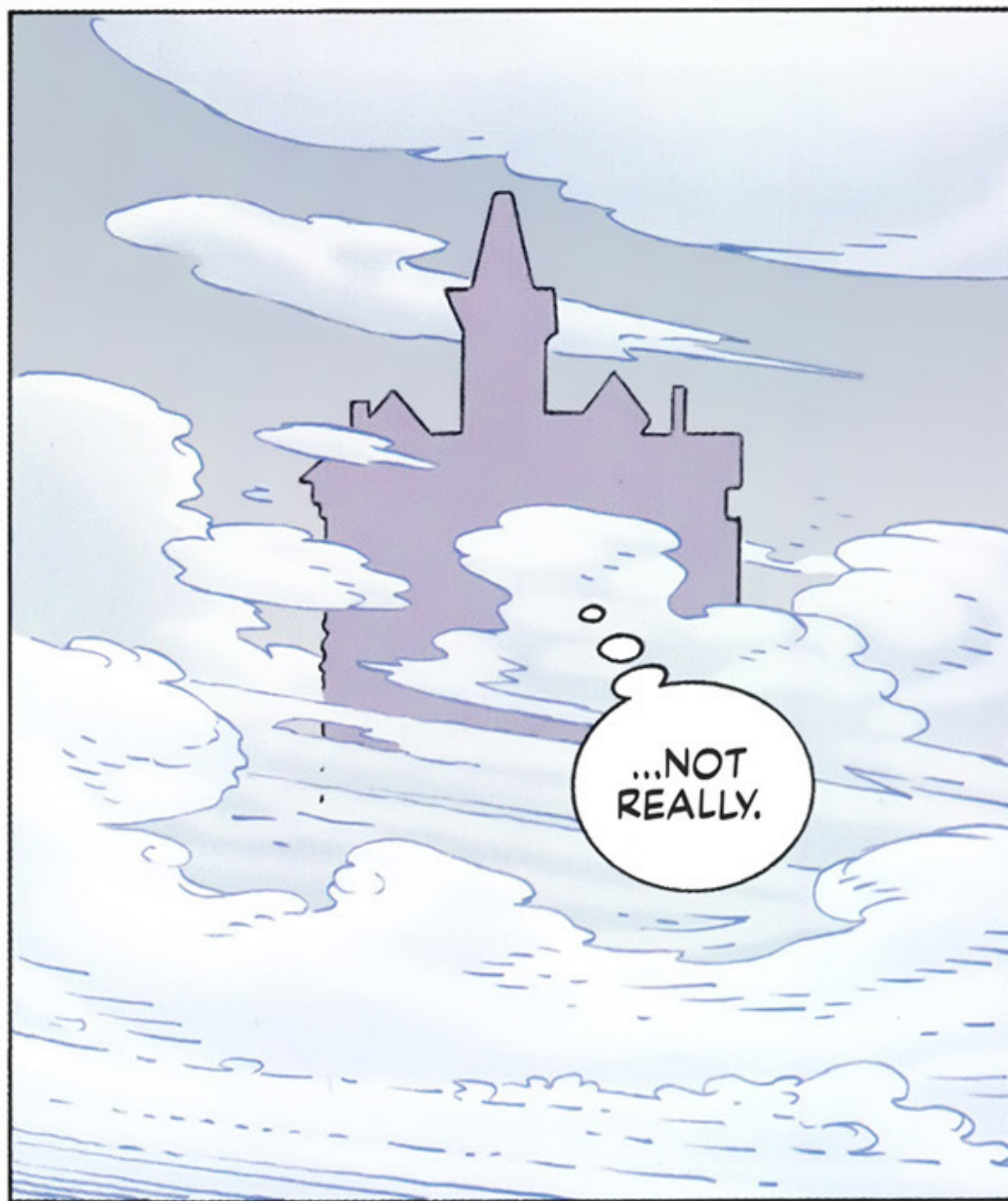
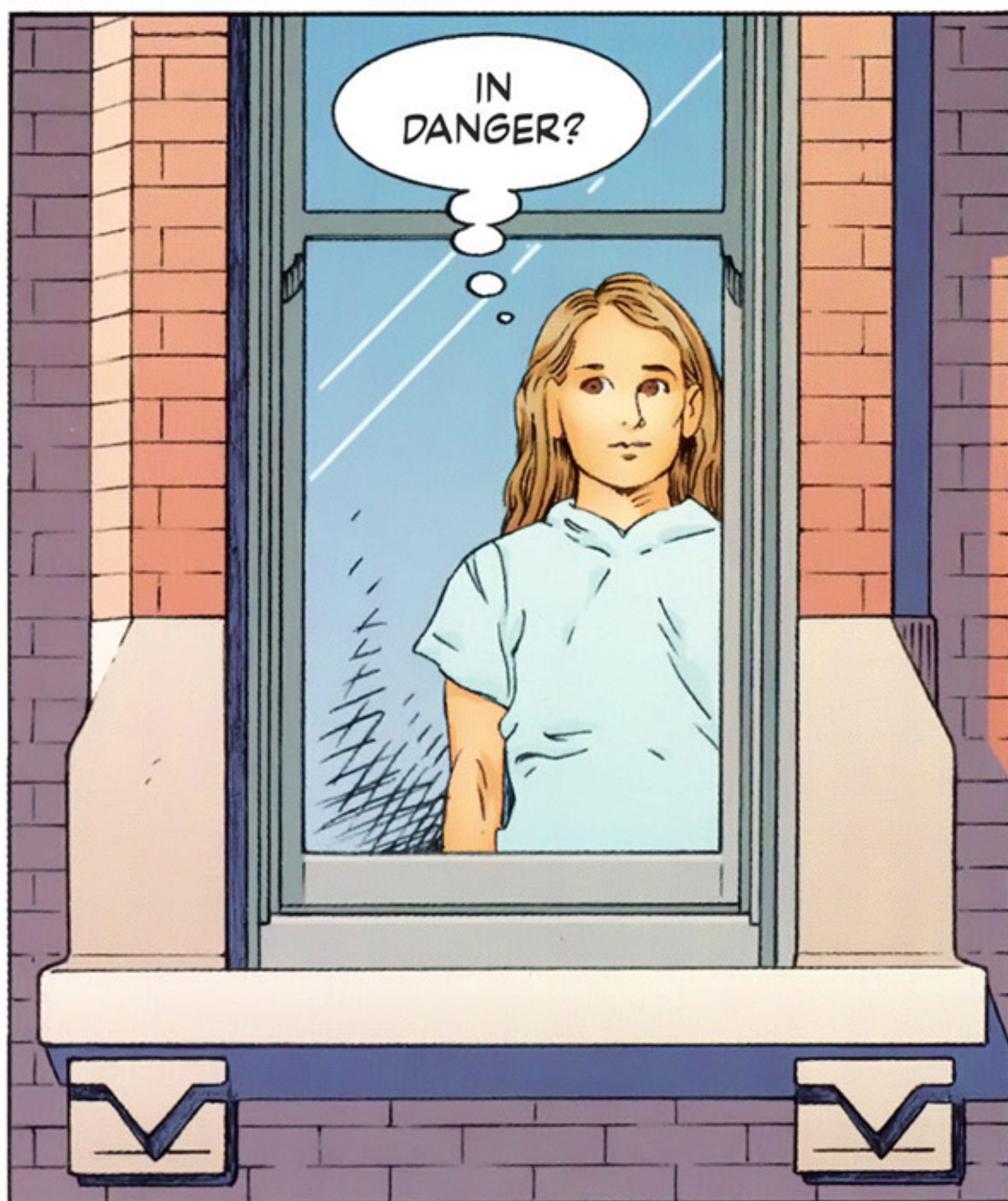
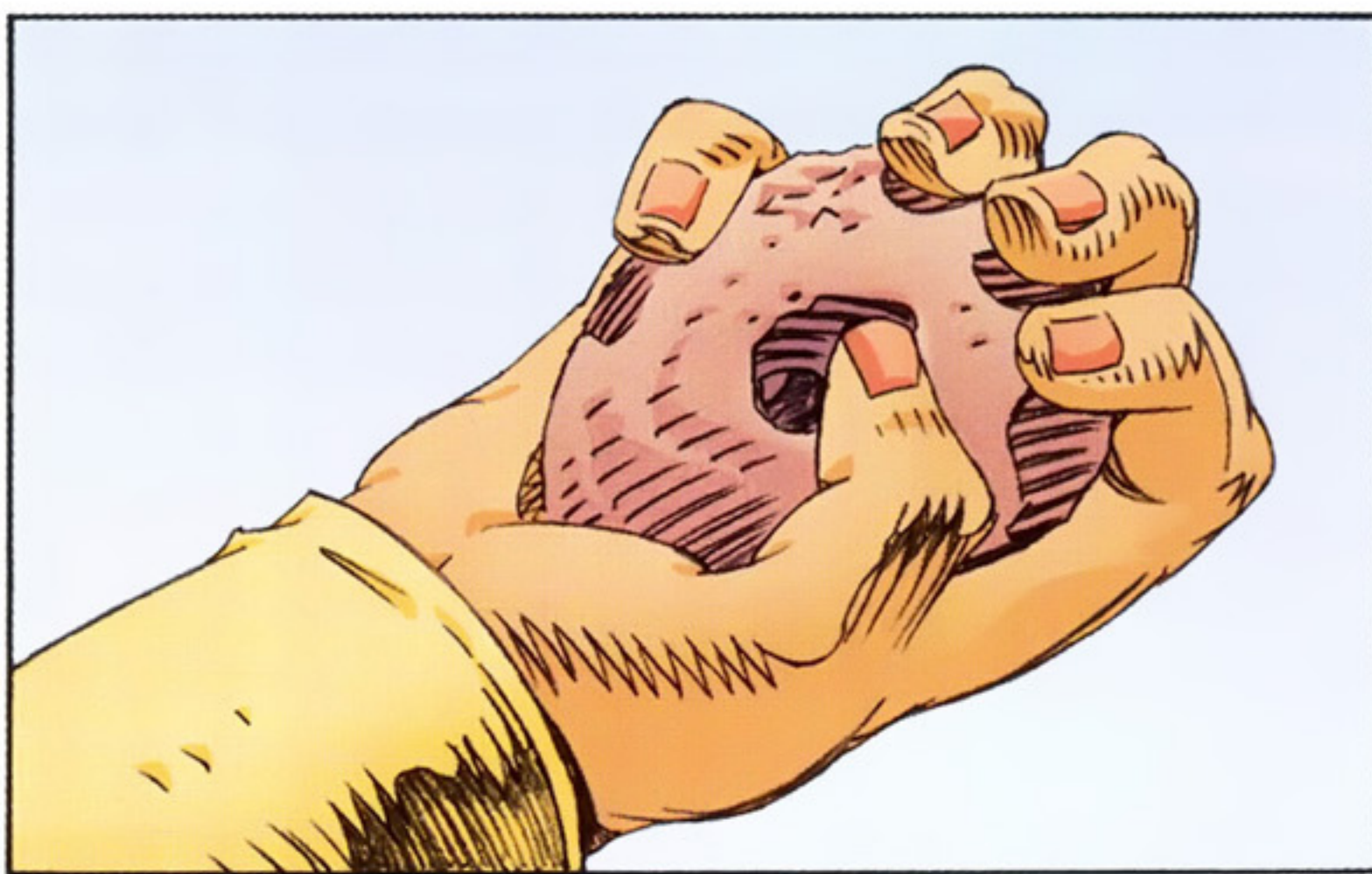
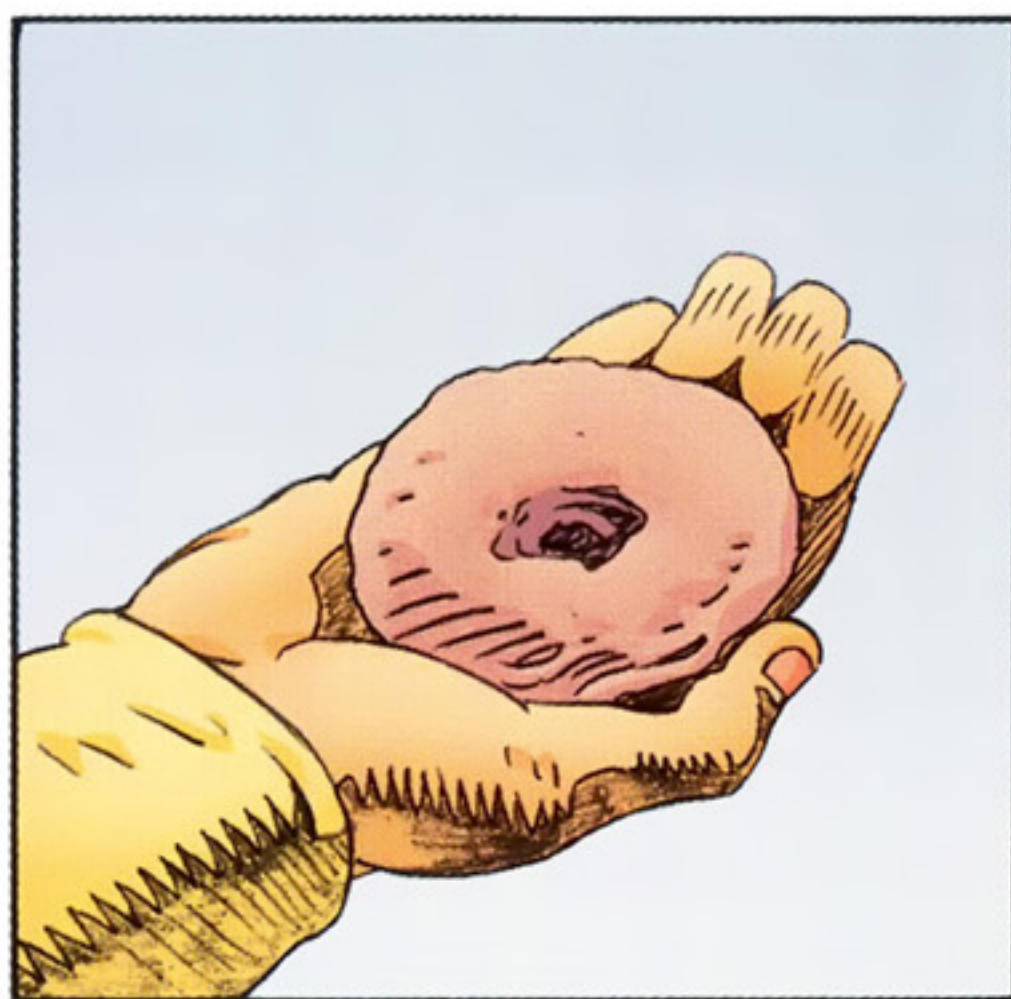
...SAID GOOD-BYE...



...AND WENT OUTSIDE.

THE MIST HUNG LIKE BLINDNESS AROUND THE HOUSE. SHE WALKED SLOWLY UP THE STAIRS TO HER FAMILY'S FLAT, AND THEN STOPPED AND LOOKED AROUND.

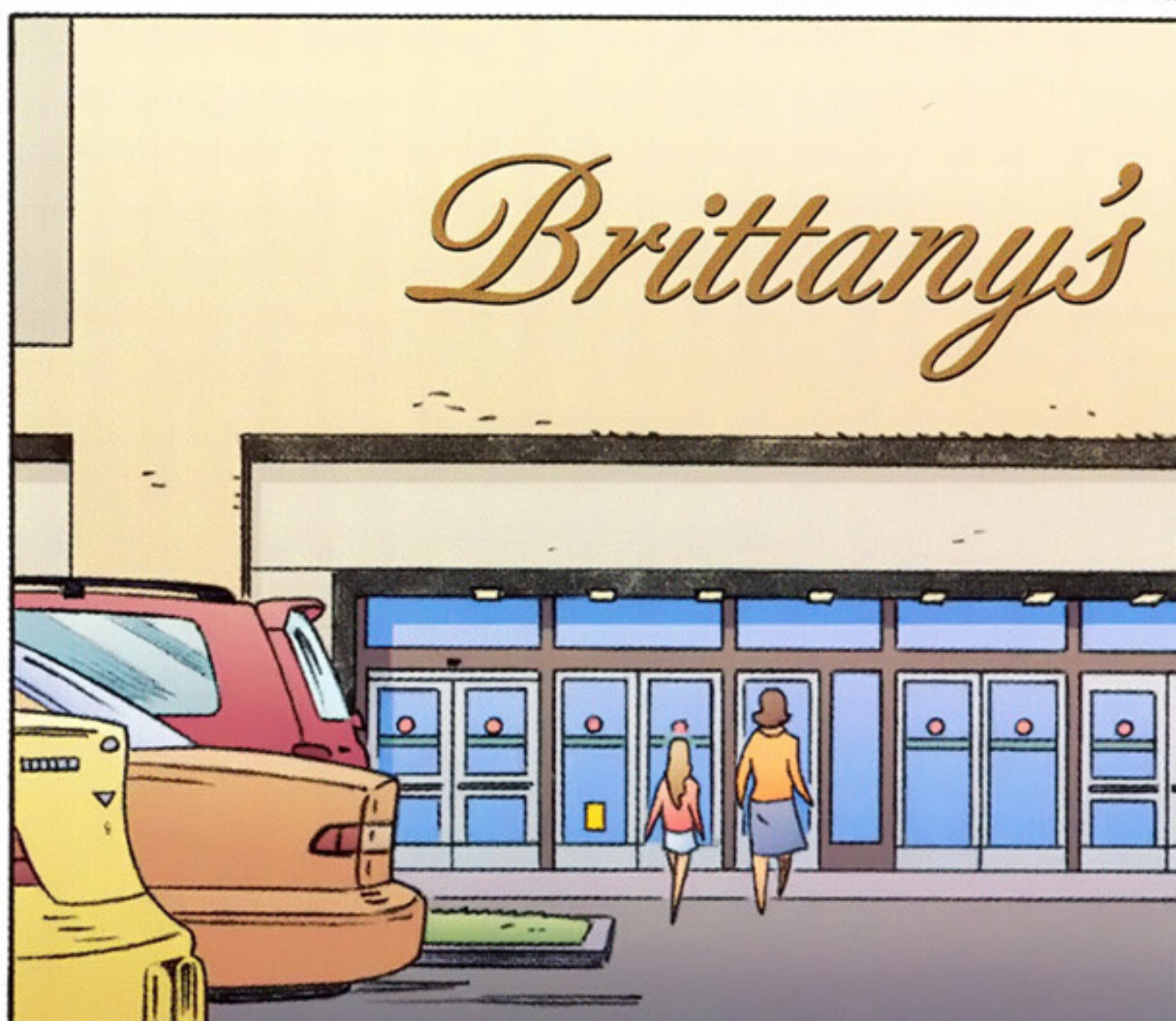




THE NEXT DAY THE SUN SHONE, AND CORALINE'S MOTHER TOOK HER INTO TOWN TO BUY CLOTHES FOR SCHOOL.



THEY DROPPED HER FATHER OFF AT THE RAILWAY STATION. HE WAS GOING INTO THE CITY FOR THE DAY TO SEE SOME PEOPLE.

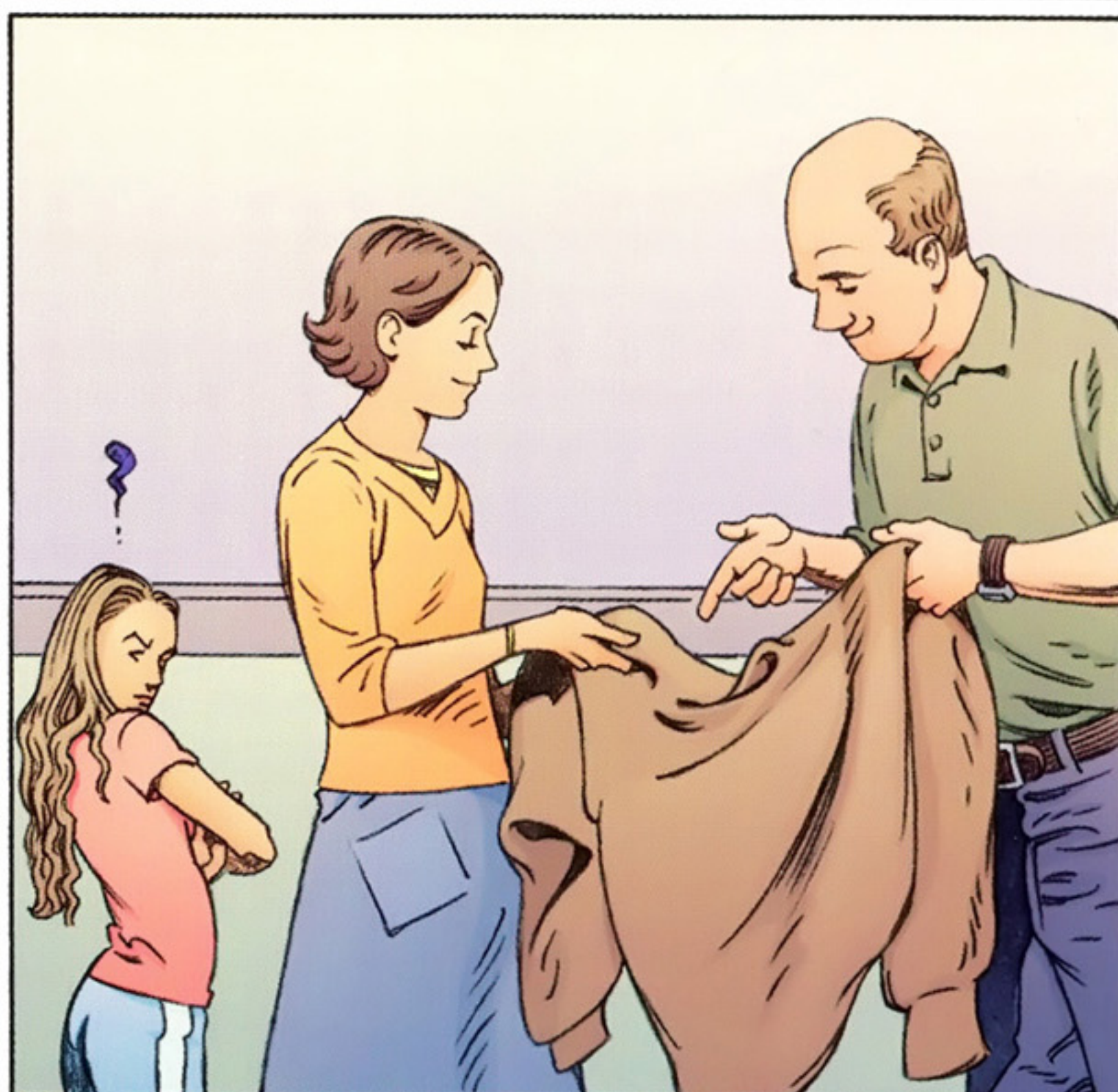


CORALINE SAW SOME DAY-GLO GREEN GLOVES.

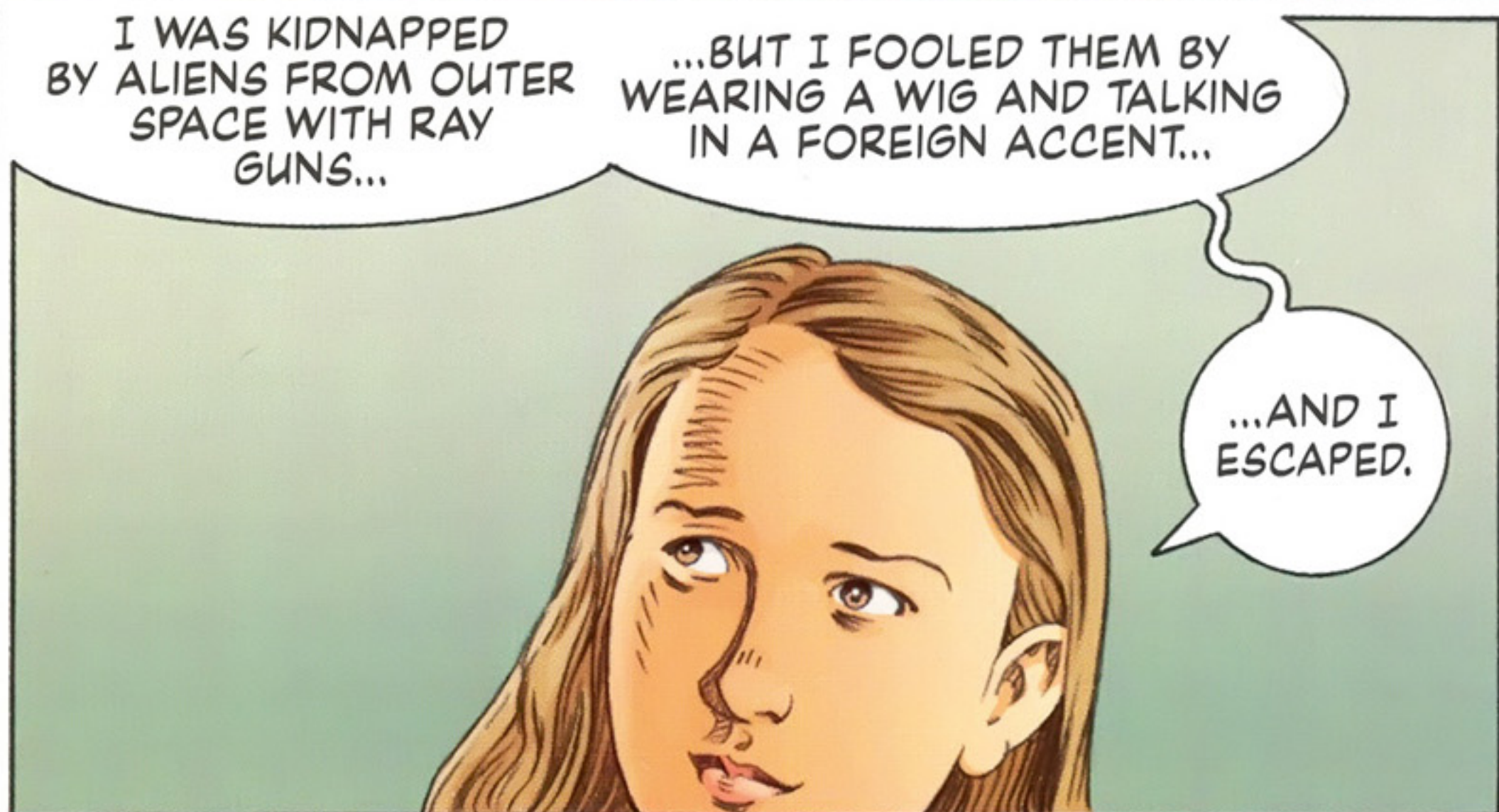
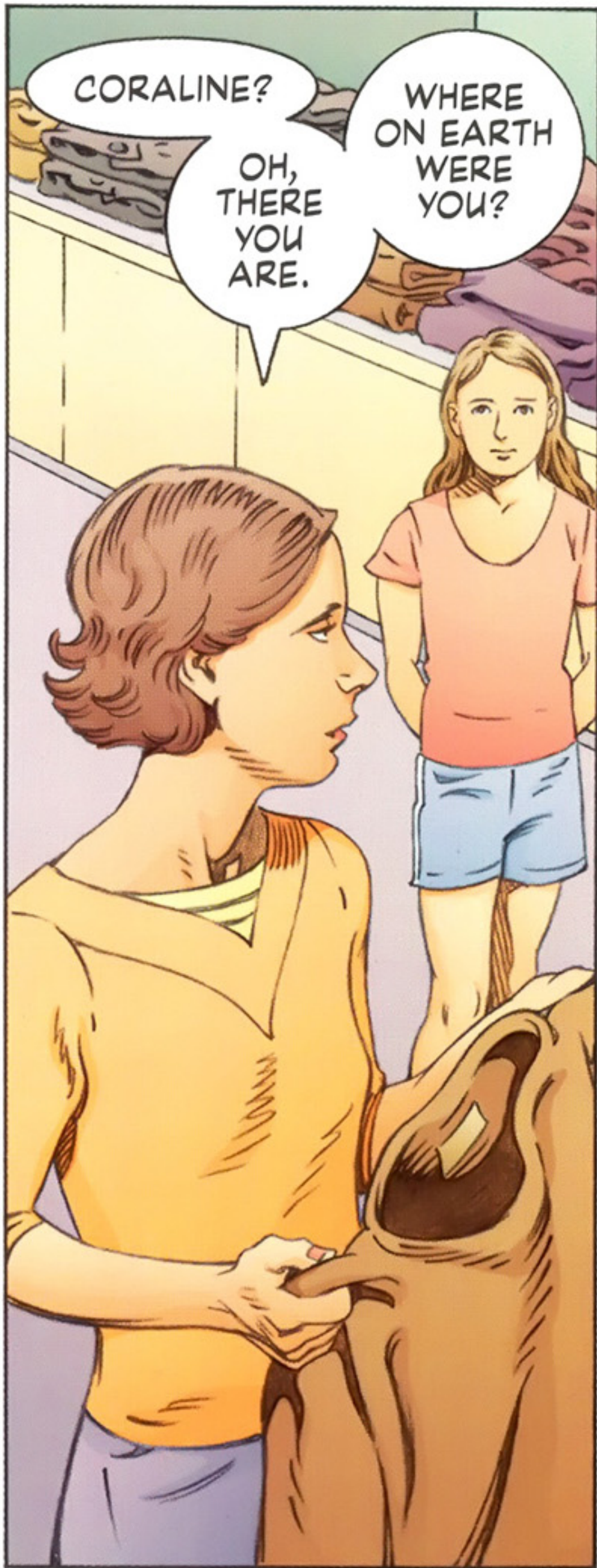
I LIKE THESE A LOT.

NO.

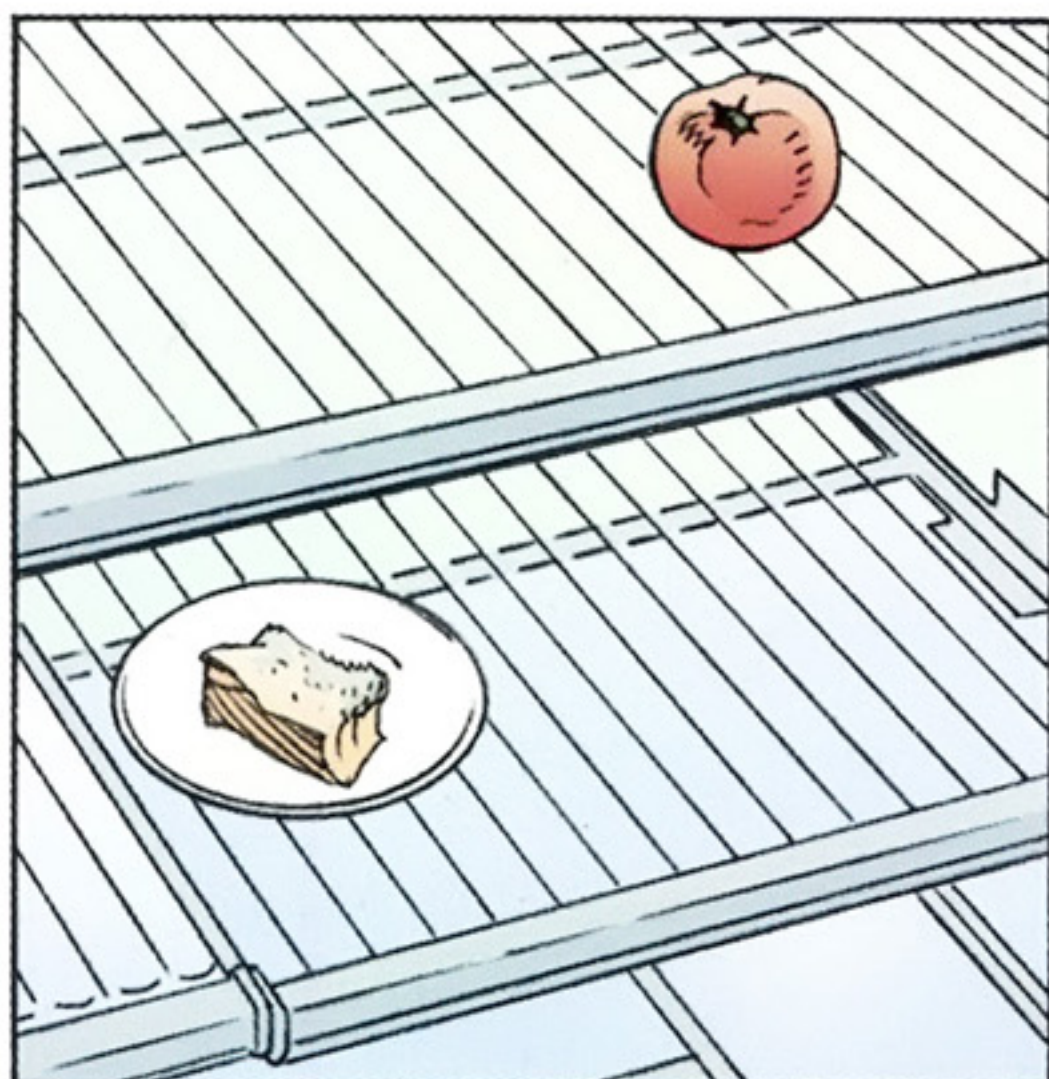
BUT MUM, NOBODY'S GOT GREEN GLOVES AT SCHOOL. I COULD BE THE ONLY ONE.



HER MOTHER IGNORED HER. SHE AND THE SHOP ASSISTANT WERE AGREEING THAT THE BEST KIND OF SWEATER TO GET FOR CORALINE WOULD BE ONE THAT WAS EMBARRASSINGLY LARGE AND BAGGY.



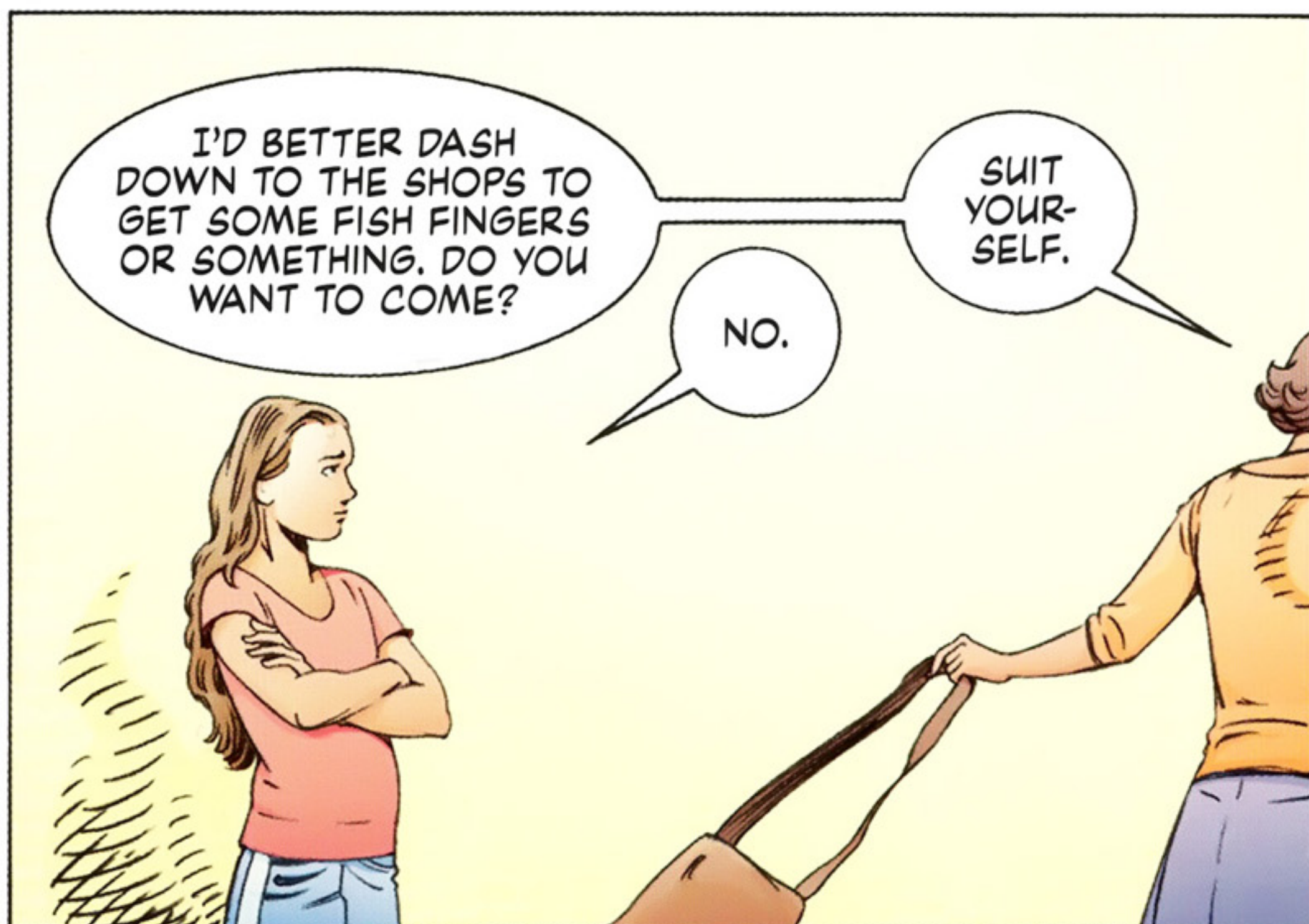
THEY GOT HOME AROUND LUNCHTIME. IN THE FRIDGE WERE ONLY A SAD LITTLE TOMATO AND A PIECE OF CHEESE WITH GREEN STUFF GROWING ON IT.



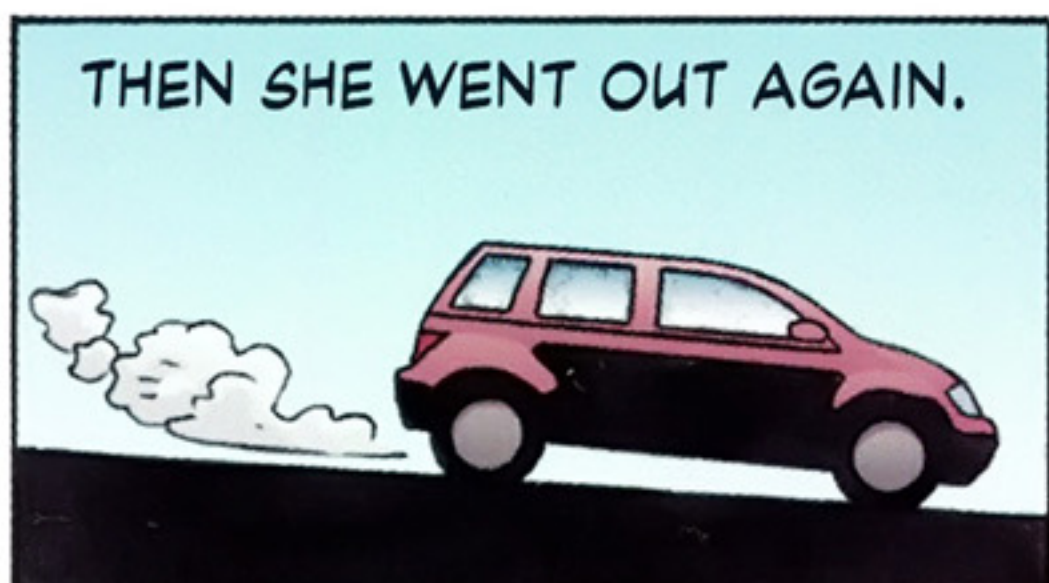
I'D BETTER DASH DOWN TO THE SHOPS TO GET SOME FISH FINGERS OR SOMETHING. DO YOU WANT TO COME?

SUIT YOURSELF.

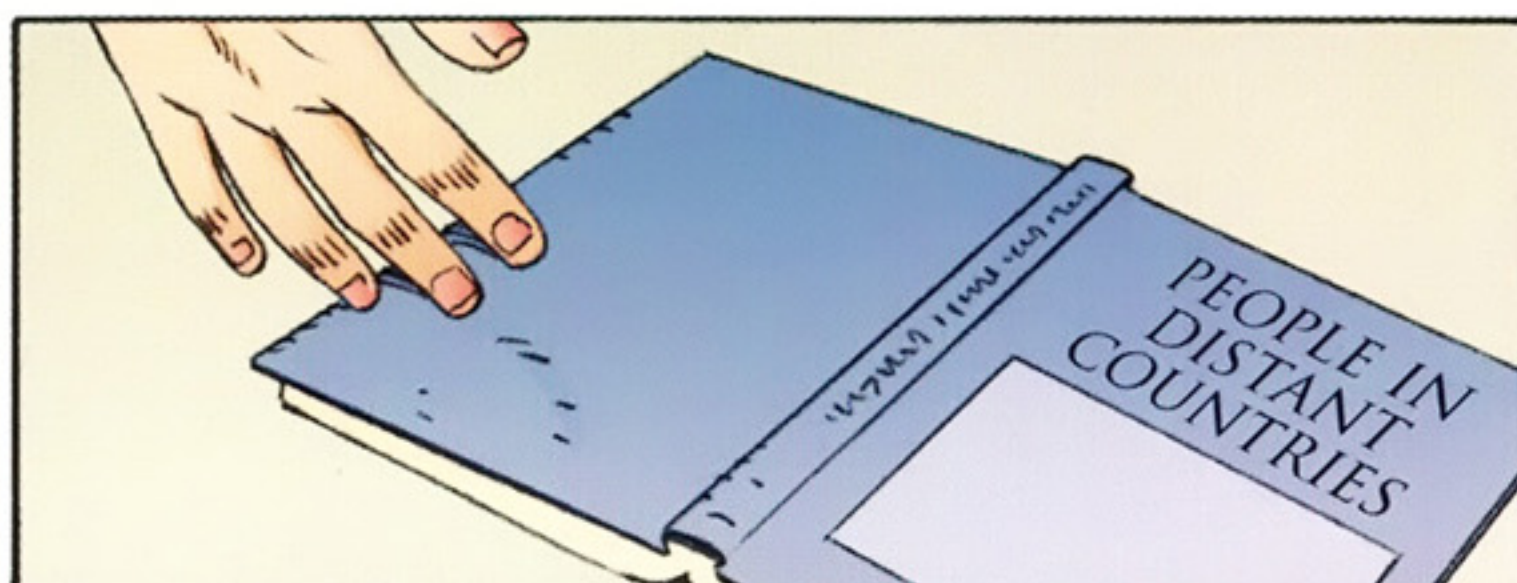
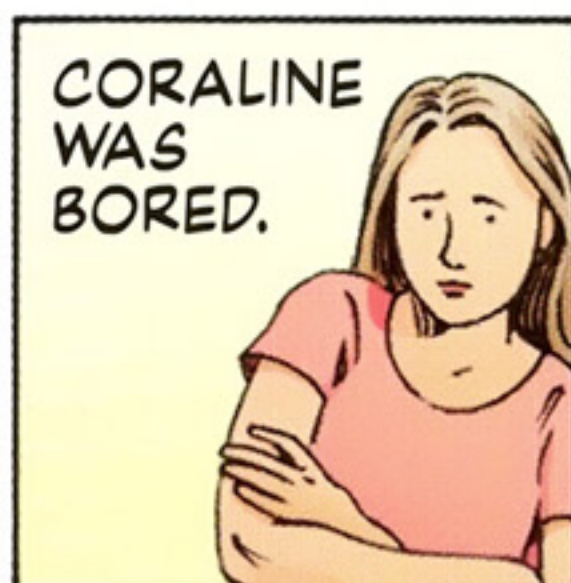
NO.



THEN SHE WENT OUT AGAIN.



CORALINE WAS BORED.



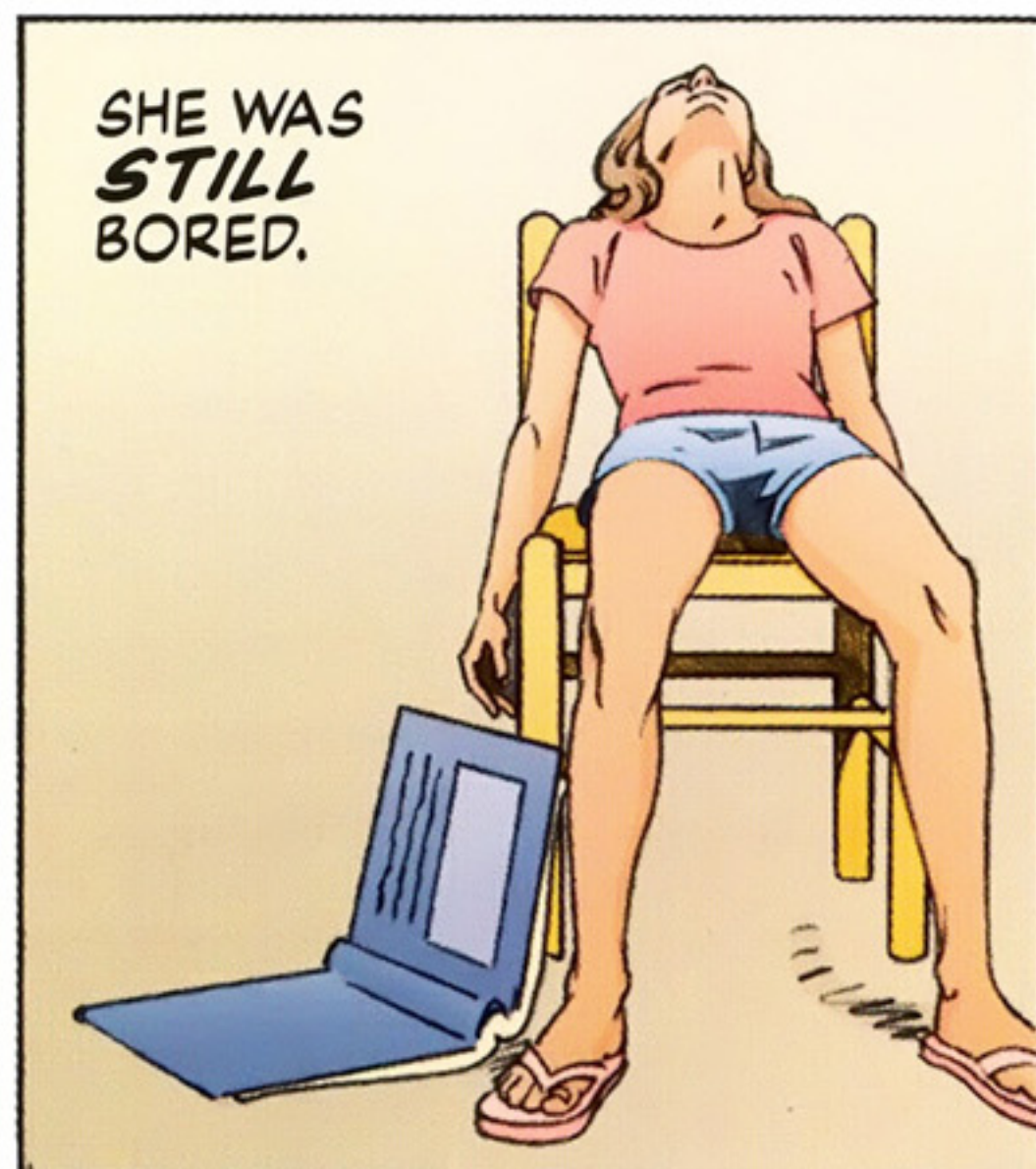
SHE FLIPPED THROUGH A BOOK ABOUT PEOPLE IN A DISTANT COUNTRY; HOW EVERY DAY THEY WOULD TAKE PIECES OF WHITE SILK AND DRAW ON THEM IN WAX, THEN DIP THE SILKS IN DYE, AND THEN FINALLY THROW THE NOW BEAUTIFUL CLOTHES IN A FIRE AND BURN THEM TO ASHES.

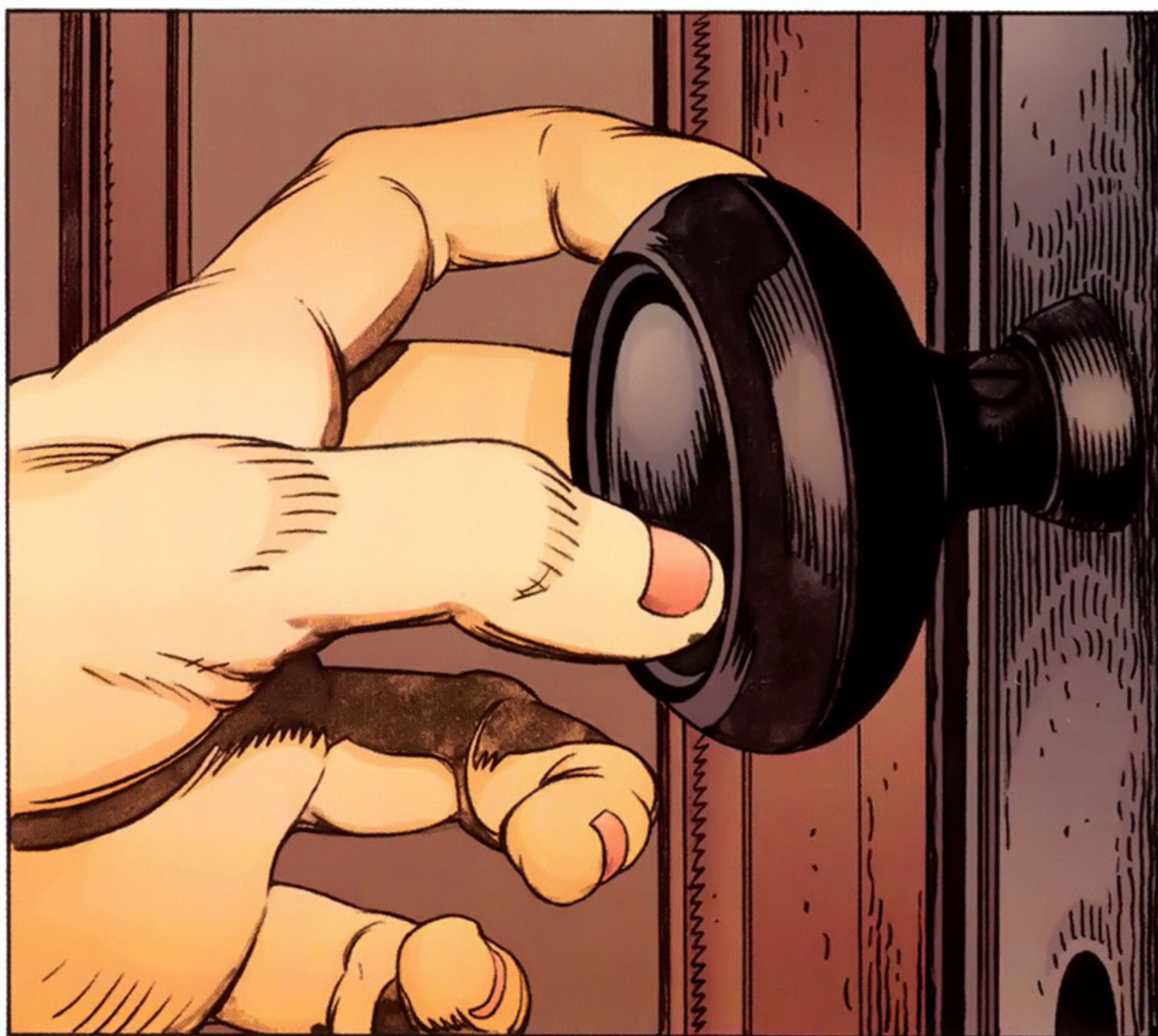
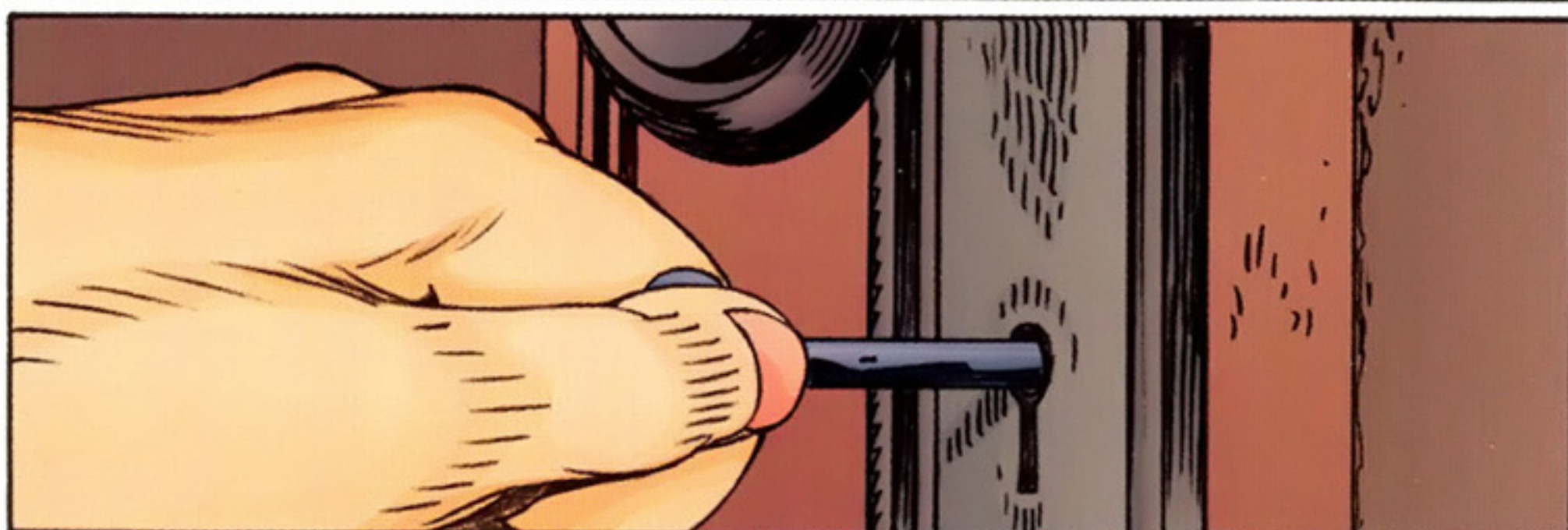
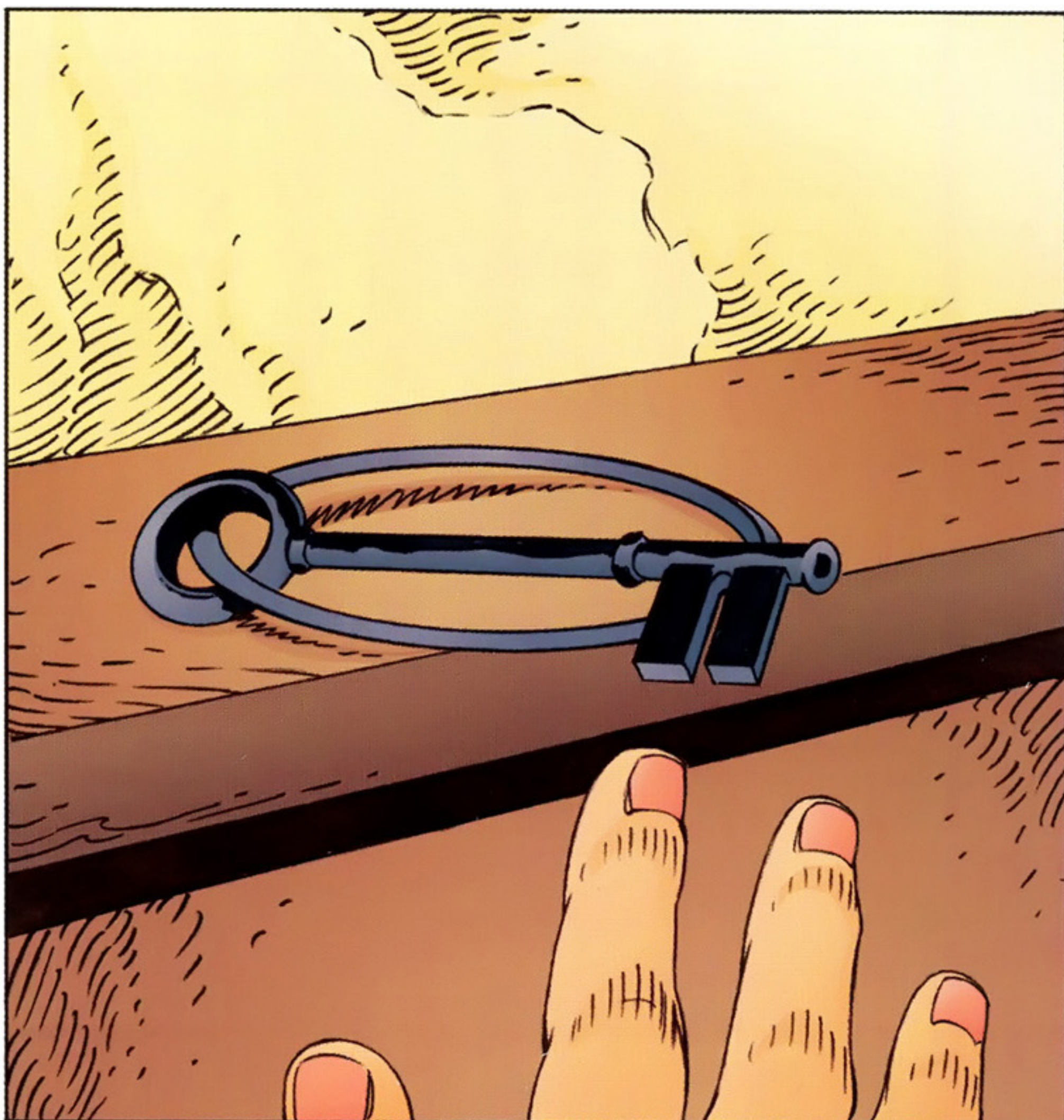


IT SEEMED POINTLESS TO CORALINE, BUT SHE HOPED THE PEOPLE ENJOYED IT.



SHE WAS **STILL** BORED.





THE DOOR OPENED
ONTO A DARK
HALLWAY. IT WAS AS
IF THE BRICKS HAD
NEVER BEEN THERE.



CORALINE WENT THROUGH THE DOOR.



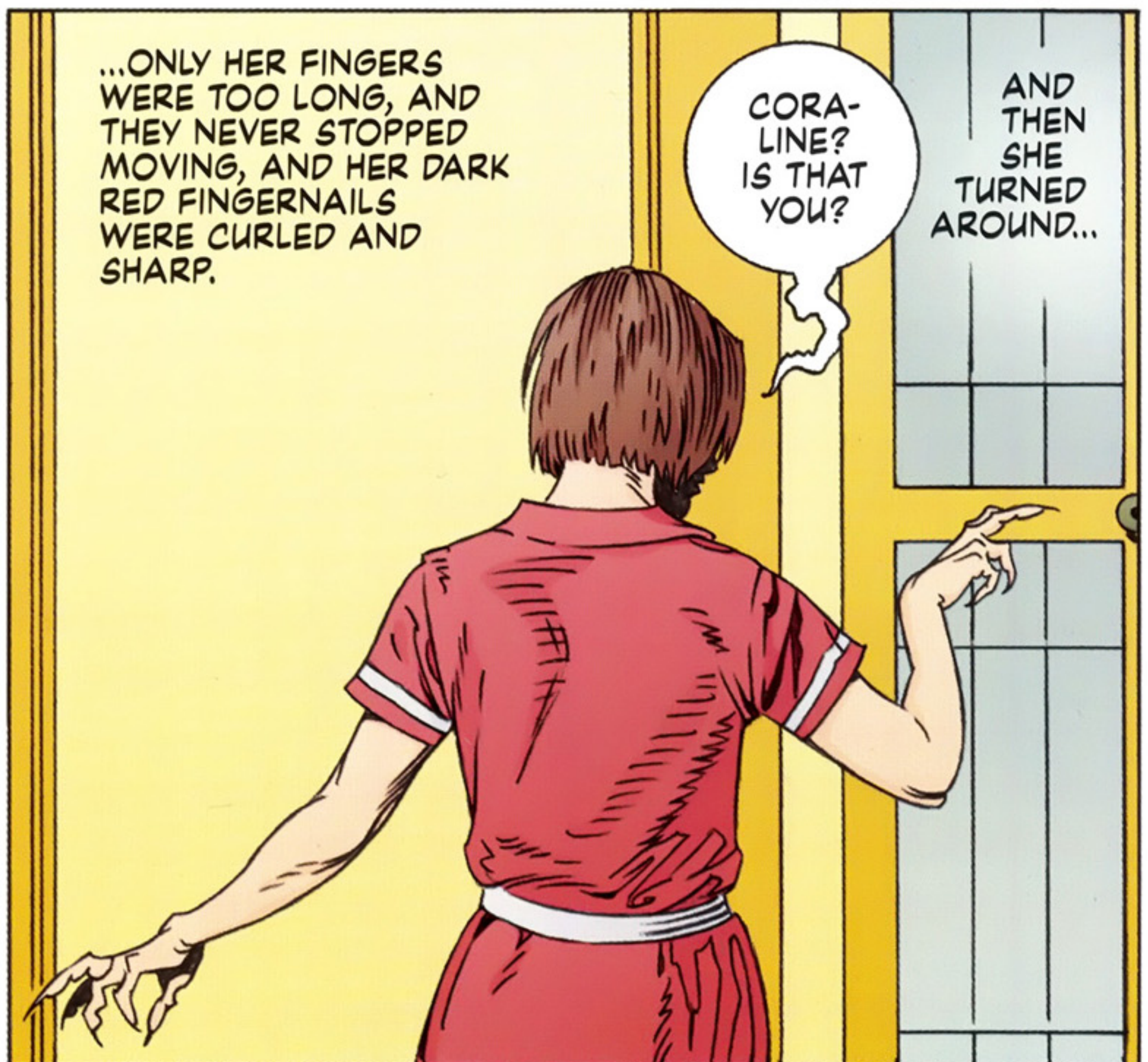


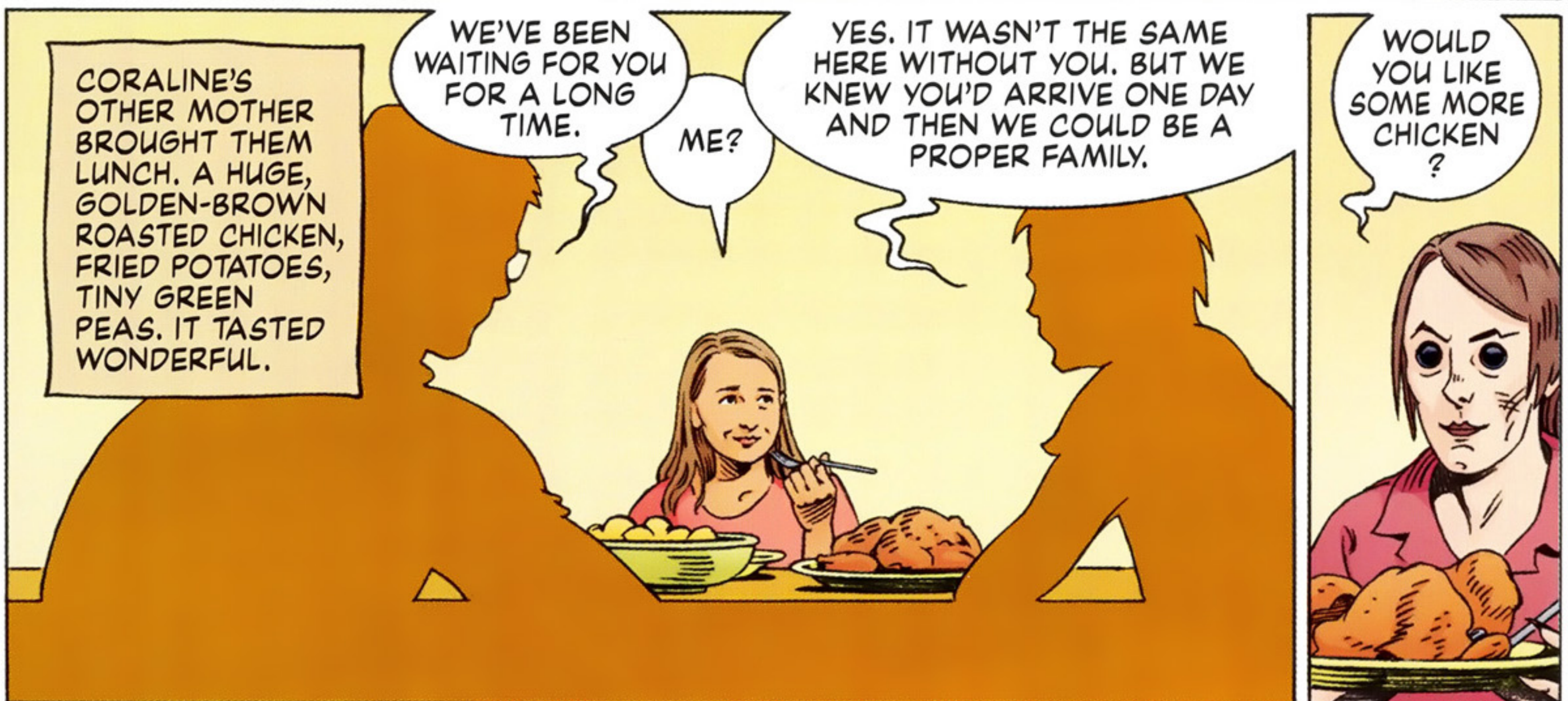
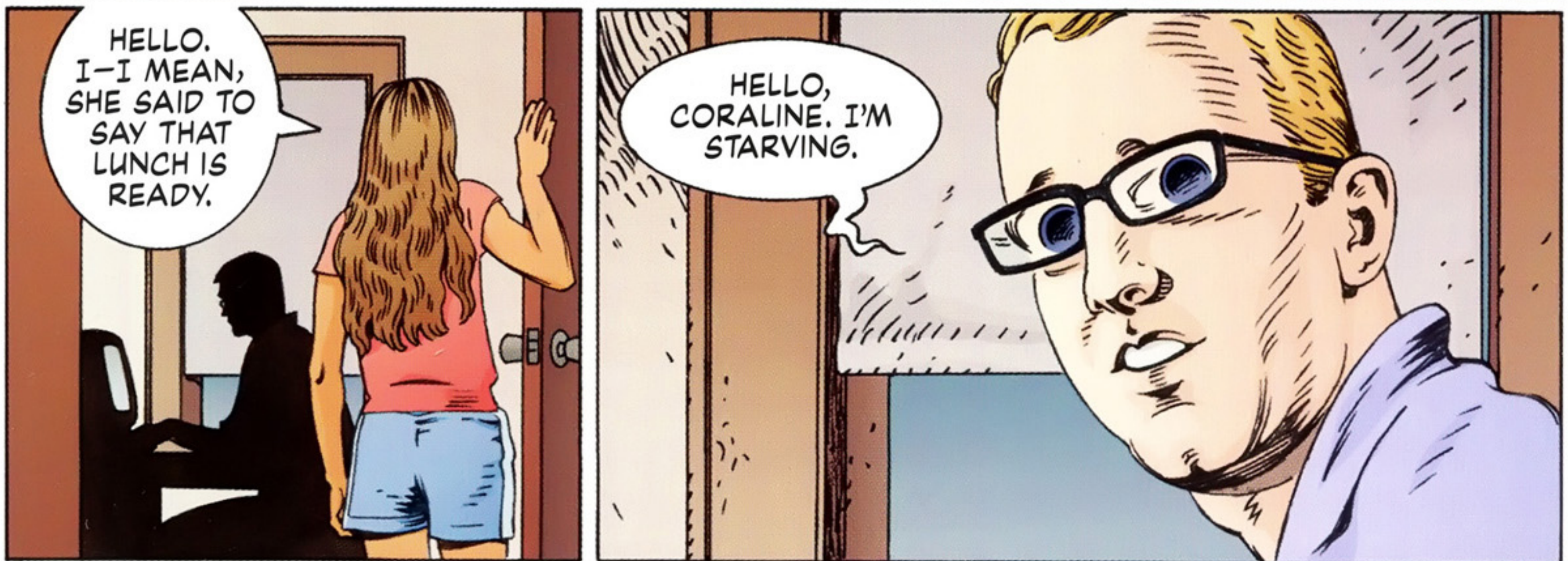
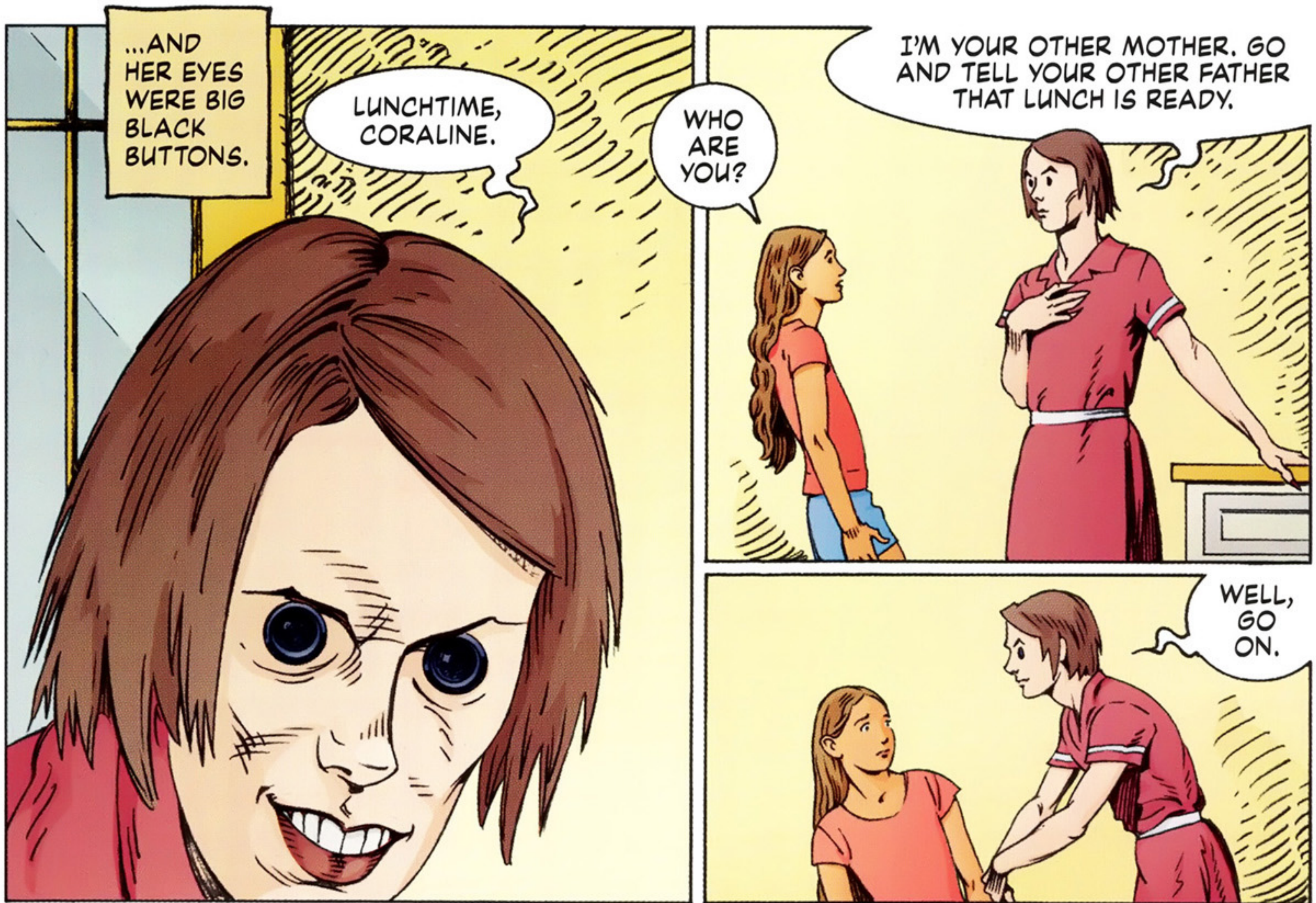
CORALINE WALKED DOWN THE CORRIDOR UNEASILY.

THE SAME WALL-PAPER.

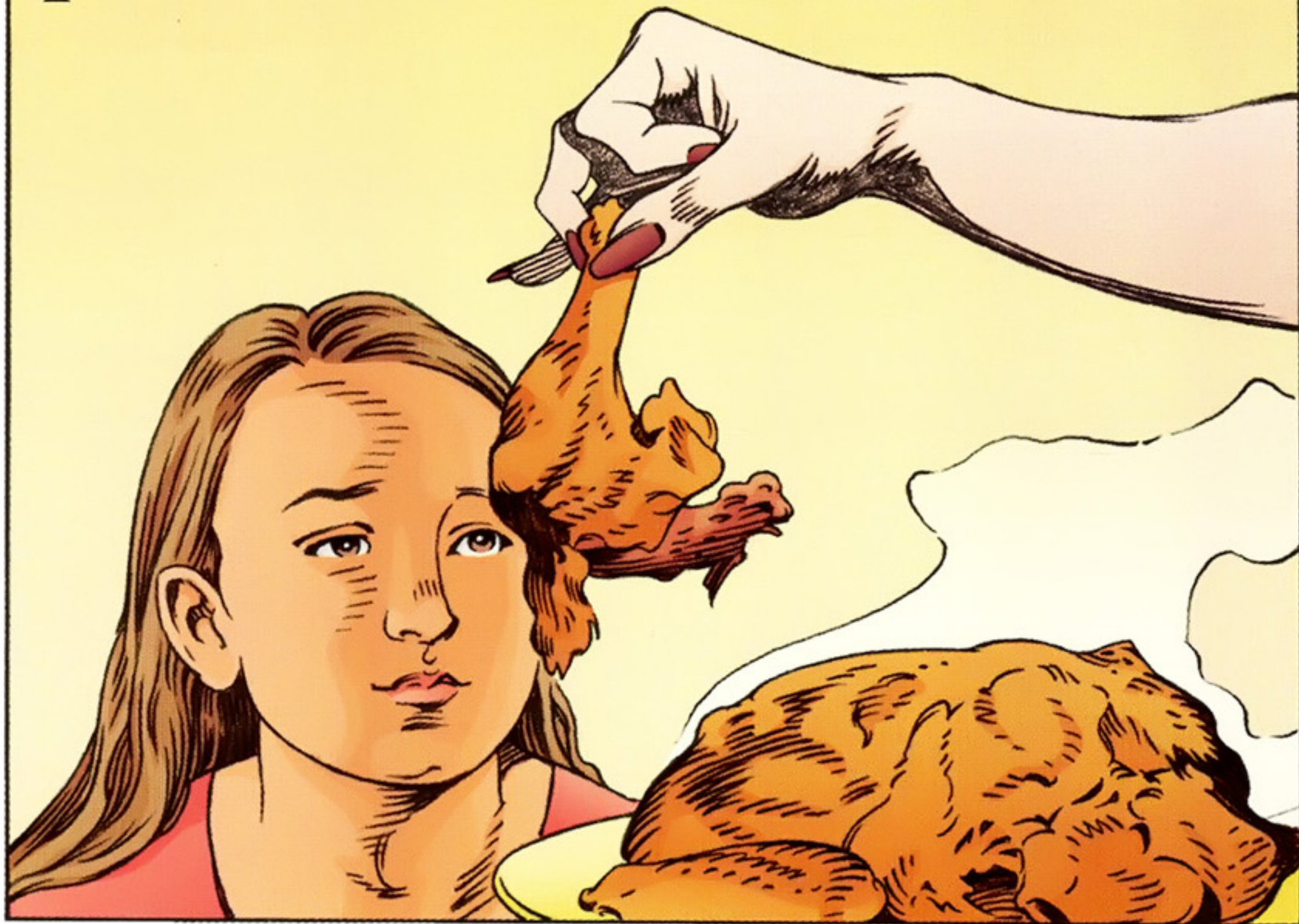


A WOMAN STOOD IN THE KITCHEN. SHE LOOKED A LITTLE LIKE CORALINE'S MOTHER. ONLY...





IT WAS THE BEST CHICKEN SHE HAD EVER EATEN.



HER MOTHER'S CHICKEN WAS DRY AND TASTELESS, AND HER FATHER DID STRANGE THINGS TO CHICKEN LIKE STUFFING IT WITH PRUNES.

CORALINE WOULD ALWAYS REFUSE TO TOUCH IT ON PRINCIPLE.



SHE TOOK SOME MORE CHICKEN.

I DIDN'T KNOW I HAD ANOTHER MOTHER.

OF COURSE YOU DO.

EVERYONE DOES.

AFTER LUNCH I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO PLAY IN YOUR ROOM WITH THE RATS.



THE RATS?

FROM UP-STAIRS.



CORALINE HAD NEVER SEEN A RAT.

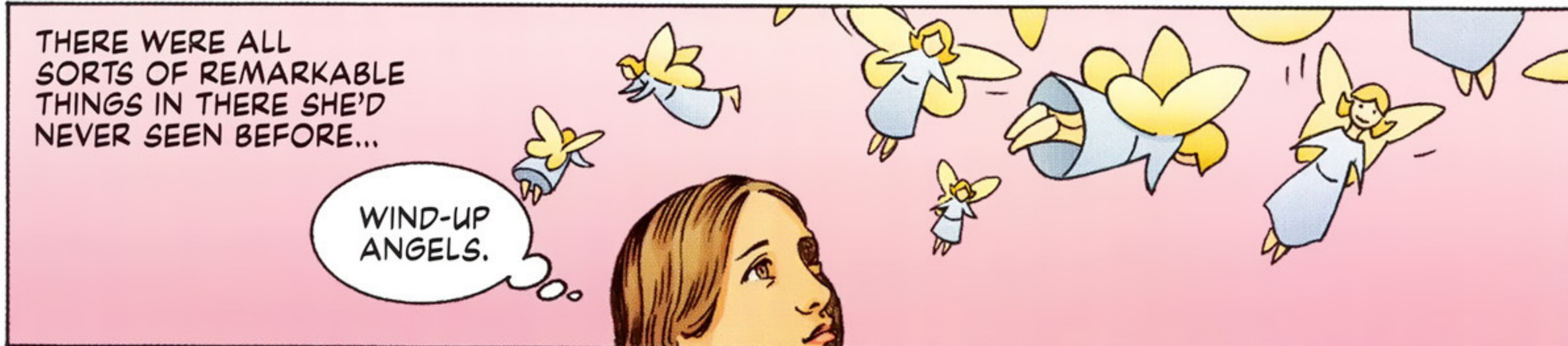
THIS WAS TURNING OUT TO BE A VERY INTERESTING DAY AFTER ALL.



AFTER LUNCH, CORALINE WENT DOWN THE HALL TO HER OTHER BEDROOM. IT WAS DIFFERENT FROM HER BEDROOM AT HOME. FOR A START IT HAD...



THERE WERE ALL SORTS OF REMARKABLE THINGS IN THERE SHE'D NEVER SEEN BEFORE...



BOOKS WITH MOVING PICTURES.



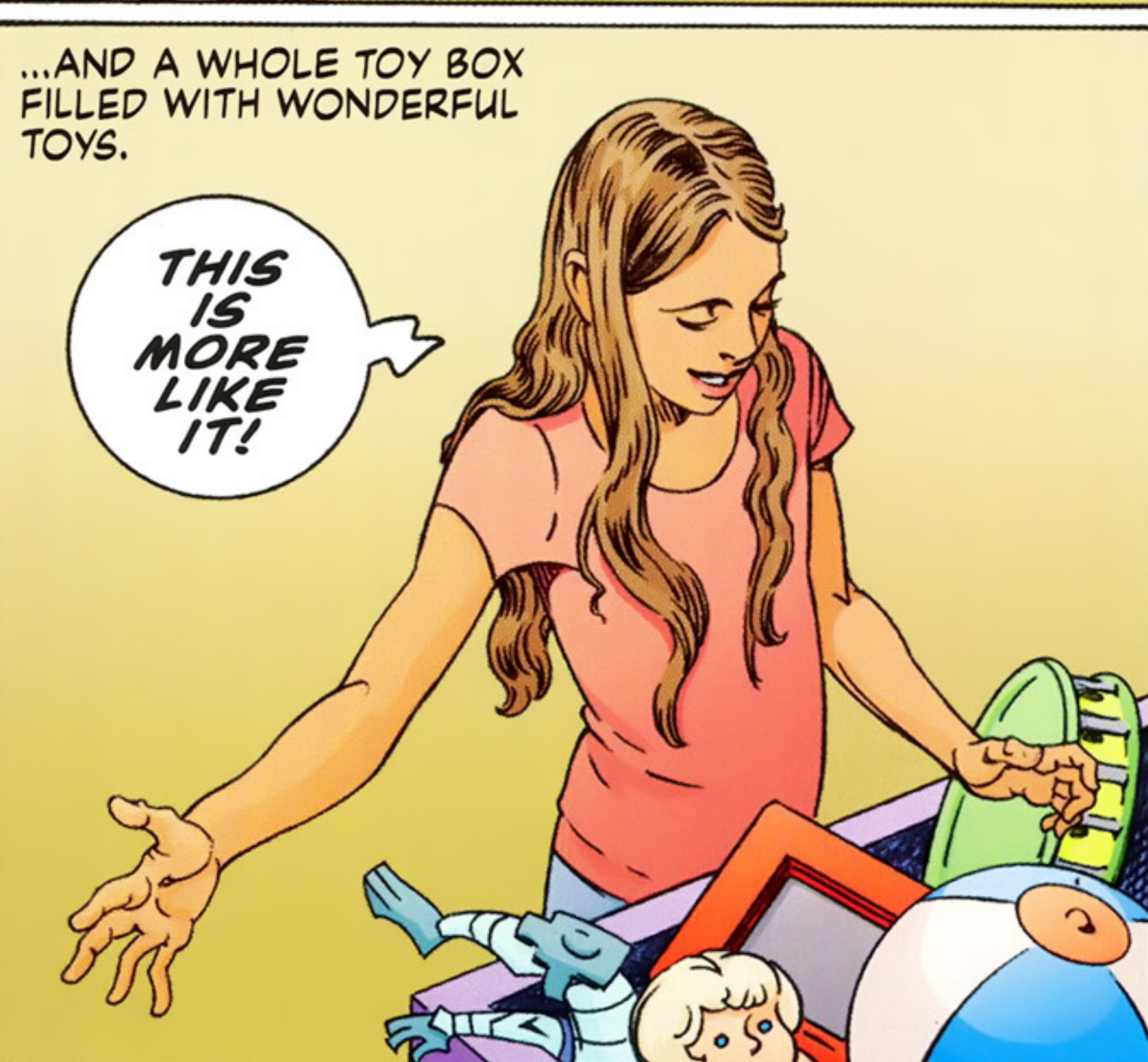
CHAKKA
CHATTA CHATTA CHAK CHAK
CHAKKA

HM.

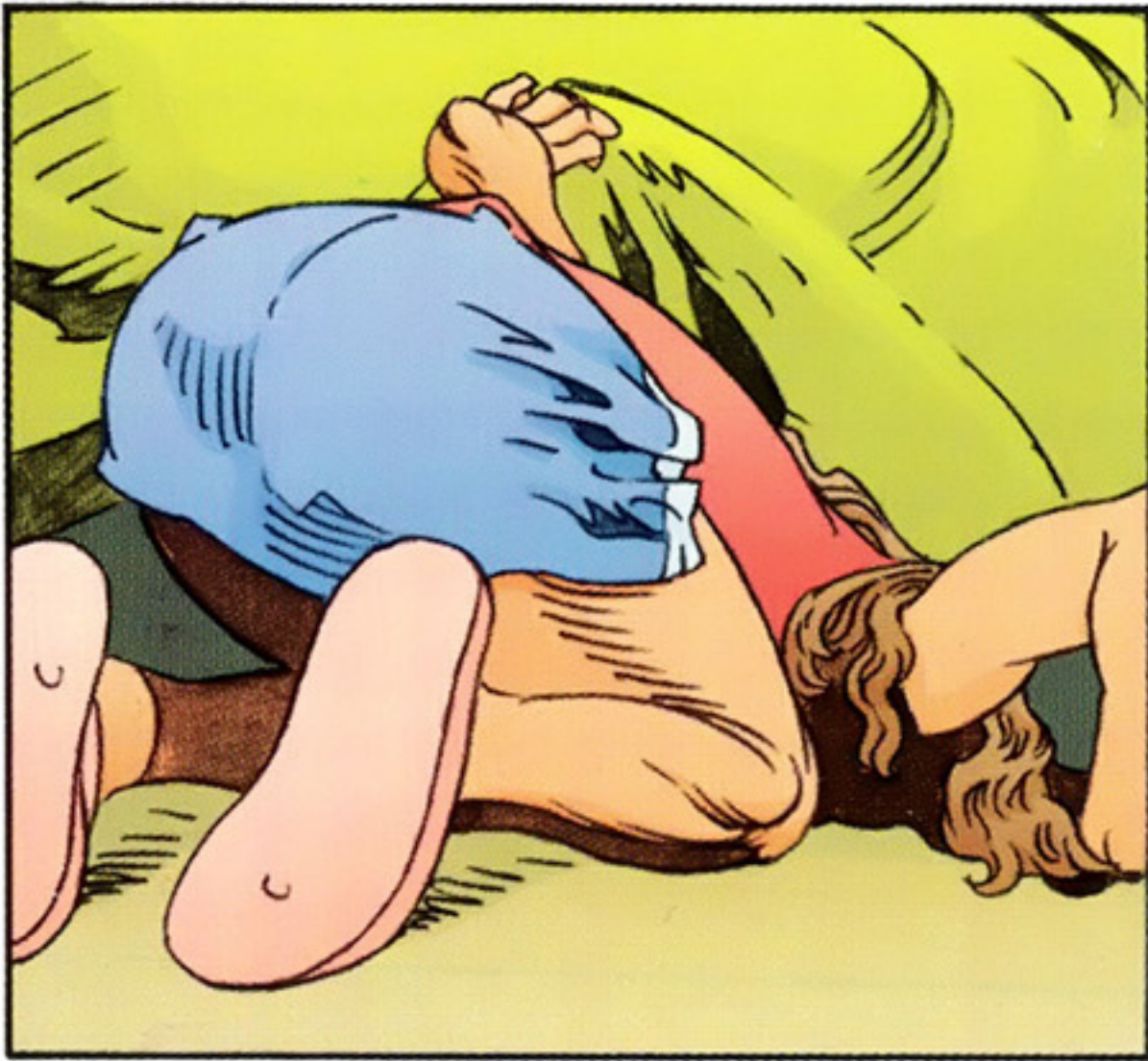
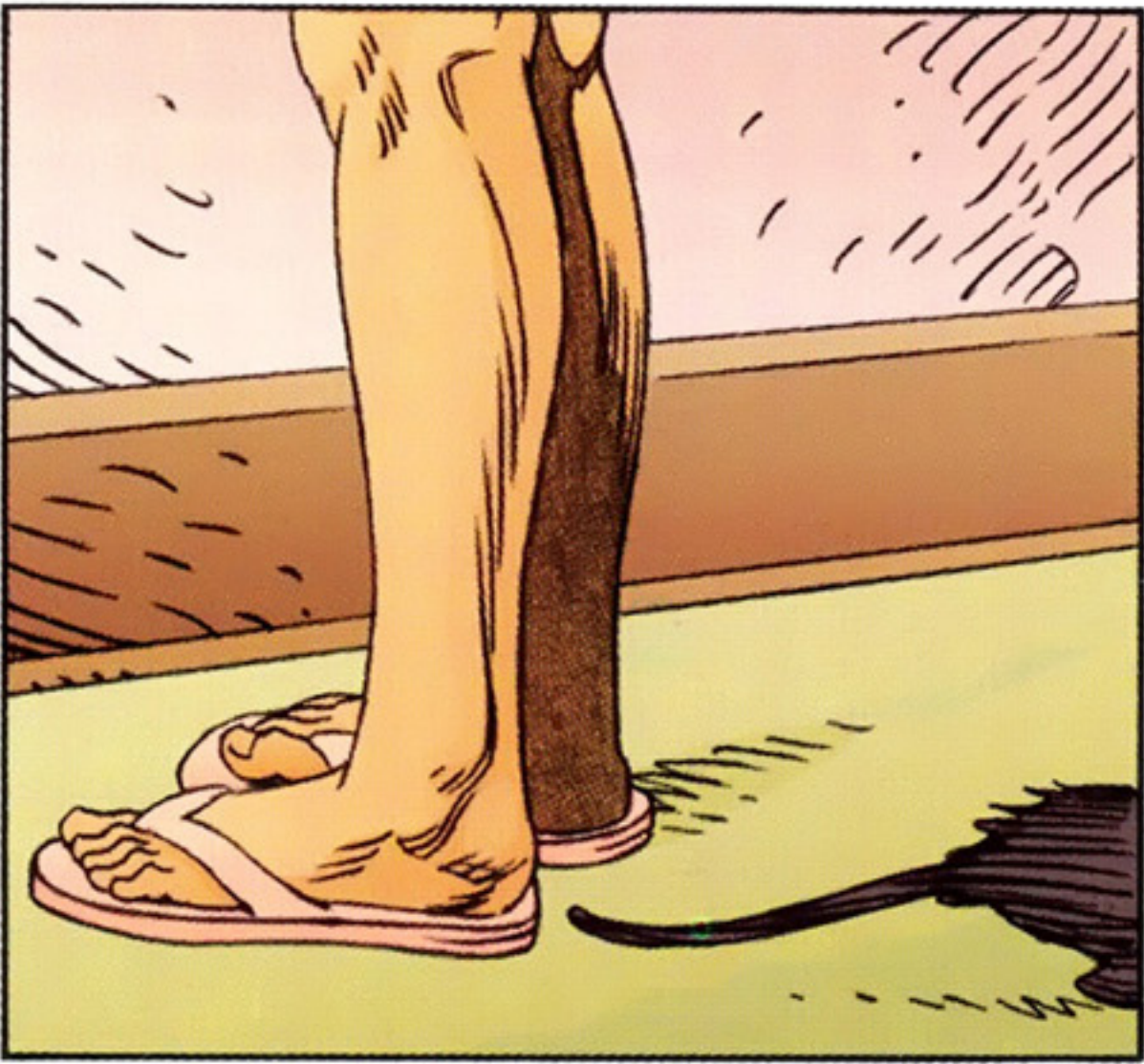
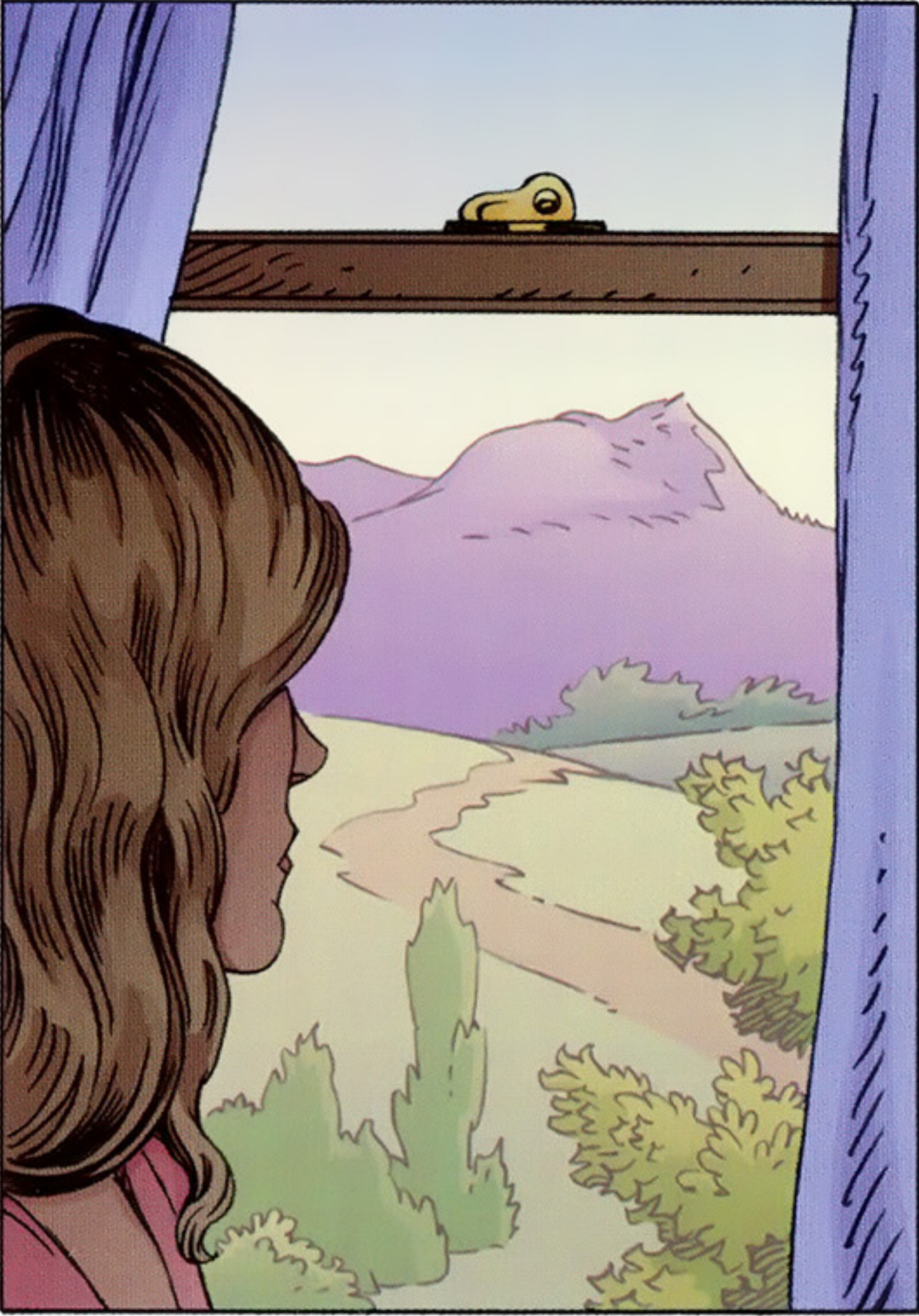


...AND A WHOLE TOY BOX FILLED WITH WONDERFUL TOYS.

THIS
IS
MORE
LIKE
IT!

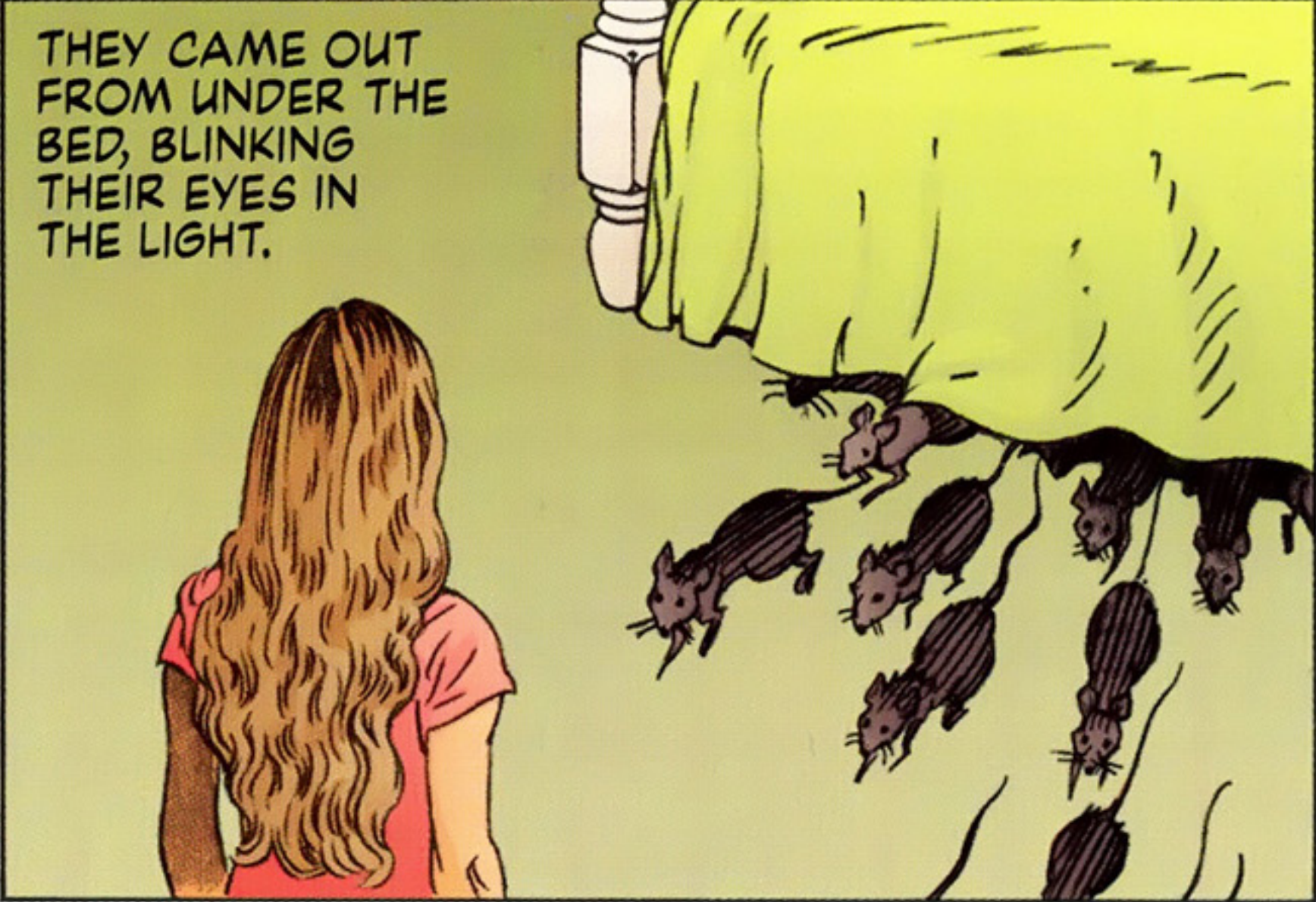


OUTSIDE, THE VIEW WAS THE SAME ONE SHE SAW FROM HER OWN BEDROOM: TREES AND FIELDS AND DISTANT PURPLE HILLS.

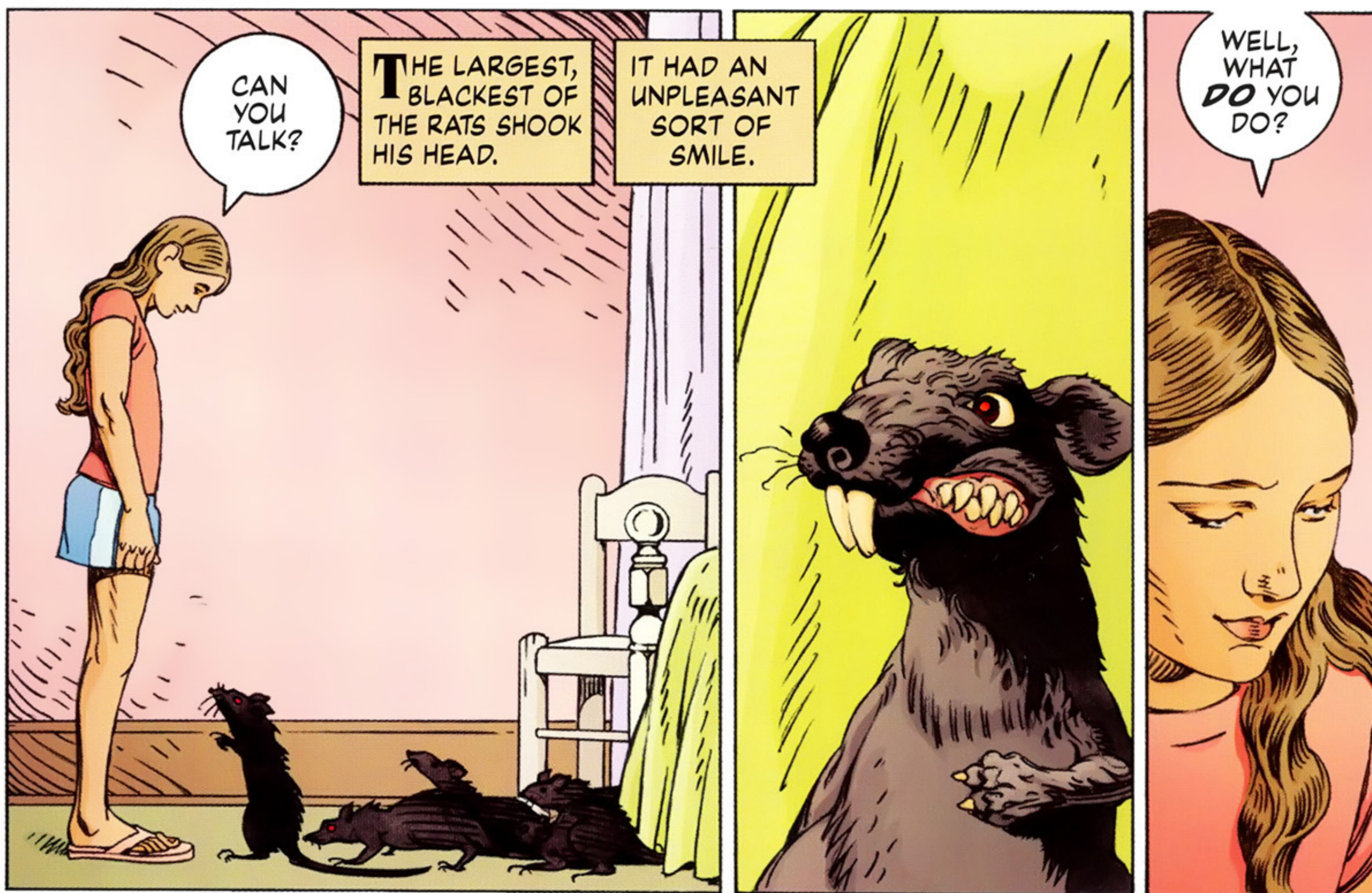


HELLO...

...ARE YOU THE RATS?



THEY CAME OUT FROM UNDER THE BED, BLINKING THEIR EYES IN THE LIGHT.



THE RATS BEGAN TO CLIMB ON TOP OF EACH OTHER, CAREFULLY BUT SWIFTLY, UNTIL THEY HAD FORMED A PYRAMID WITH THE LARGEST RAT ON TOP.



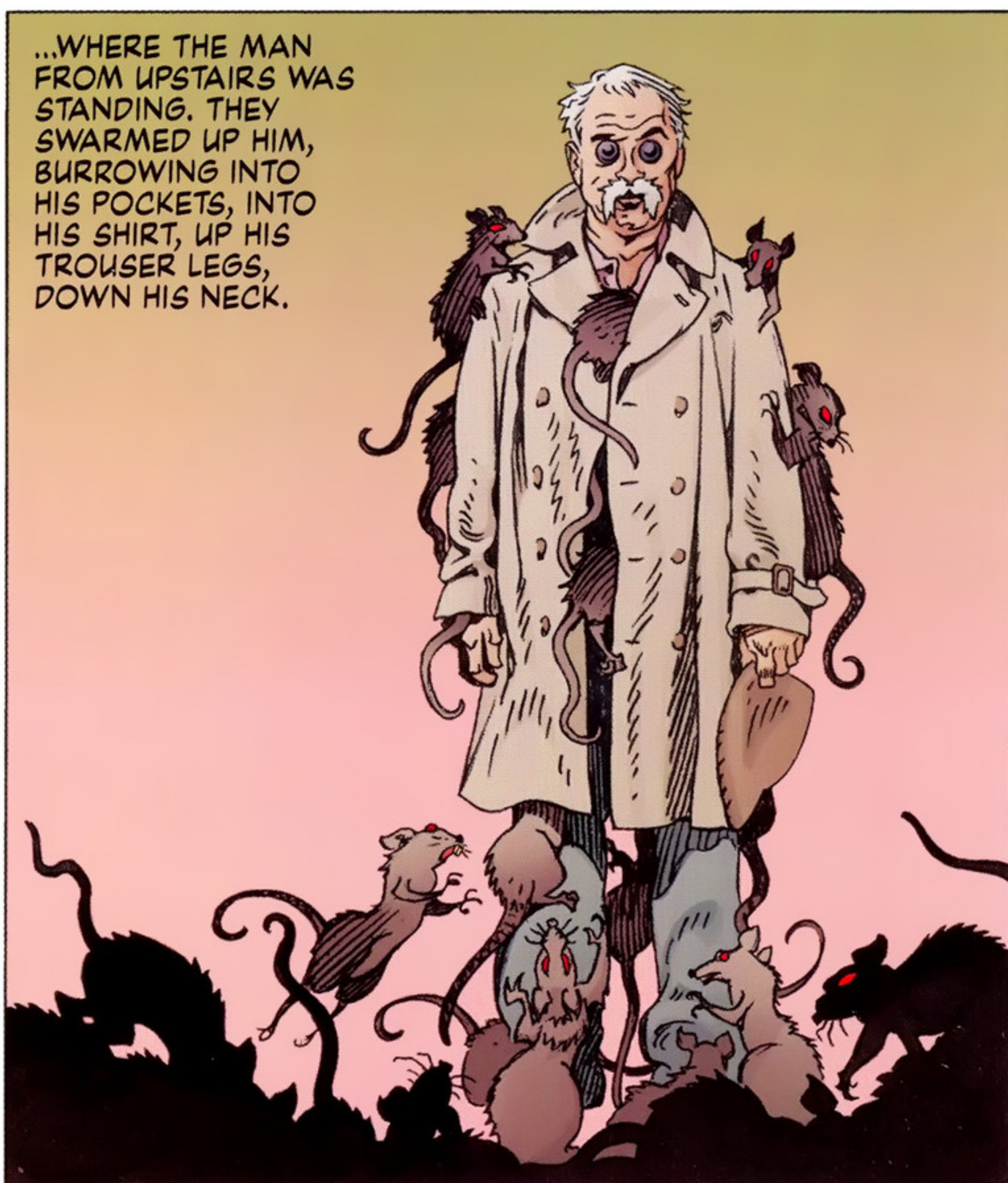
THEN
THE
PYRAMID
FELL
APART...



...AND THE RATS SCAMPERED, FAST
AND BLACK, TOWARD THE DOORWAY...



...WHERE THE MAN
FROM UPSTAIRS WAS
STANDING. THEY
SWARMED UP HIM,
BURROWING INTO
HIS POCKETS, INTO
HIS SHIRT, UP HIS
TROUSER LEGS,
DOWN HIS NECK.



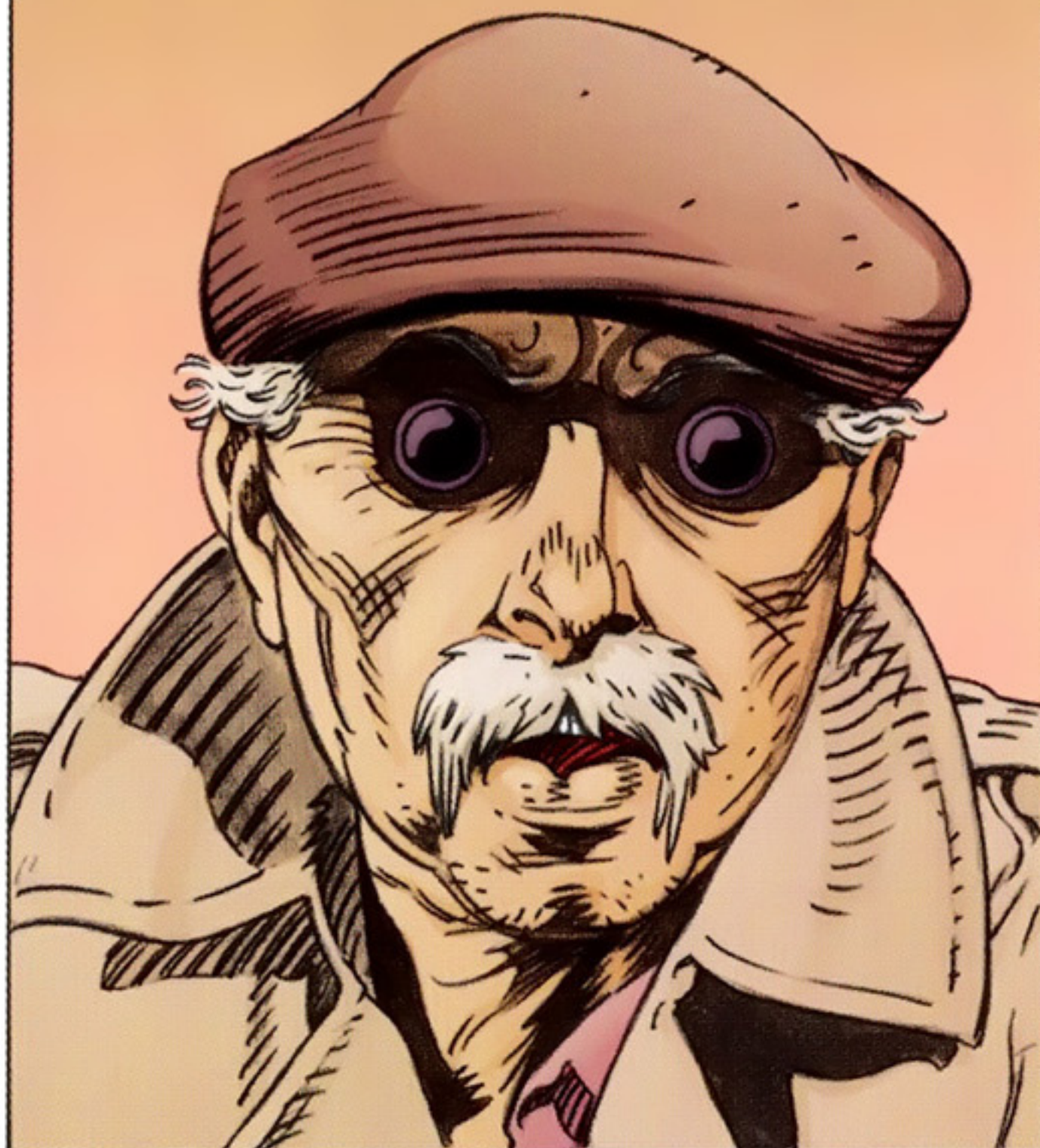
HELLO, CORALINE.



I HEARD
YOU WERE HERE.
IT IS TIME FOR THE
RATS TO HAVE THEIR
DINNER. BUT YOU
CAN COME UP WITH
ME IF YOU LIKE, AND
WATCH THEM
FEED.



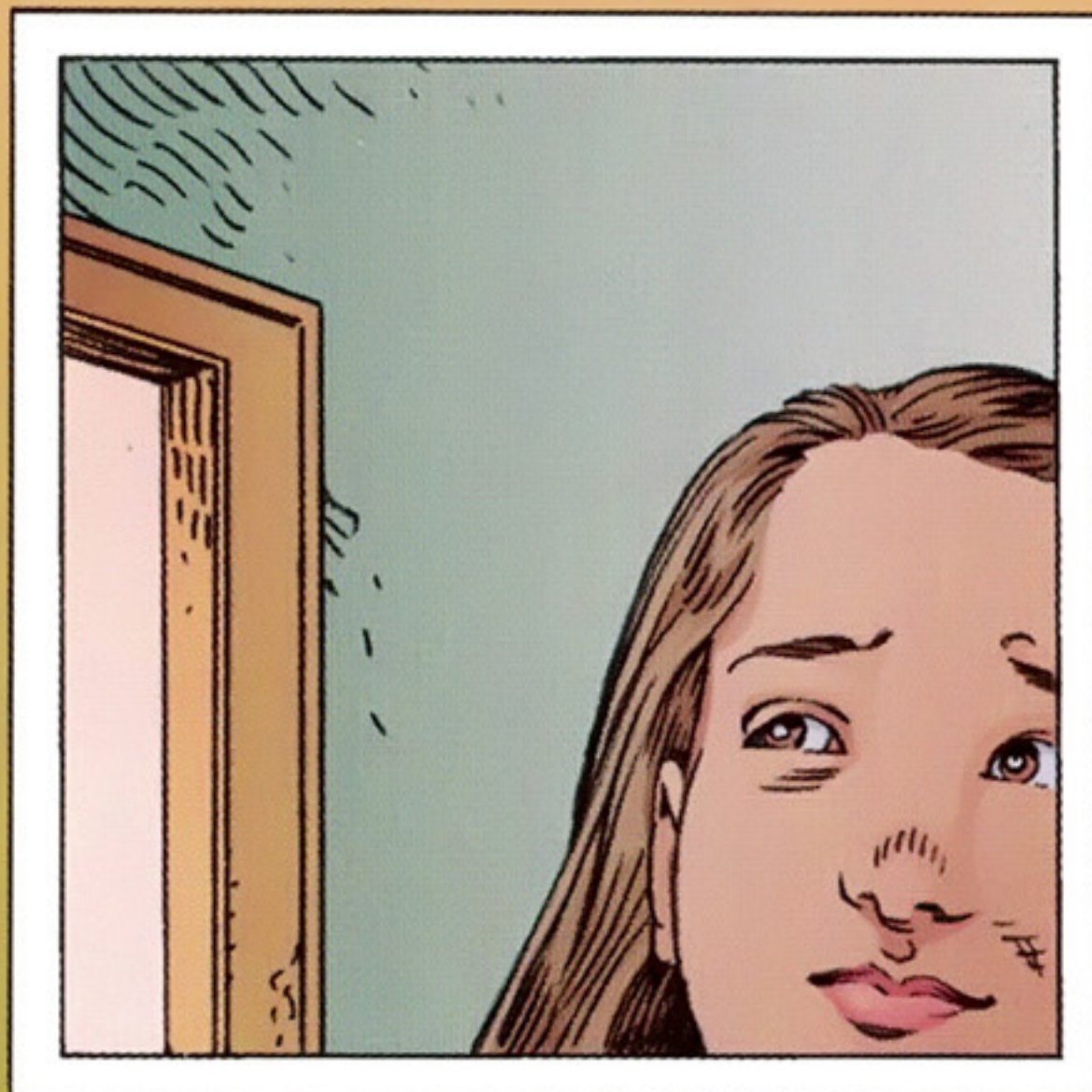
THERE WAS SOMETHING HUNGRY
IN THE OLD MAN'S BUTTON EYES
THAT MADE CORALINE FEEL
UNCOMFORTABLE.

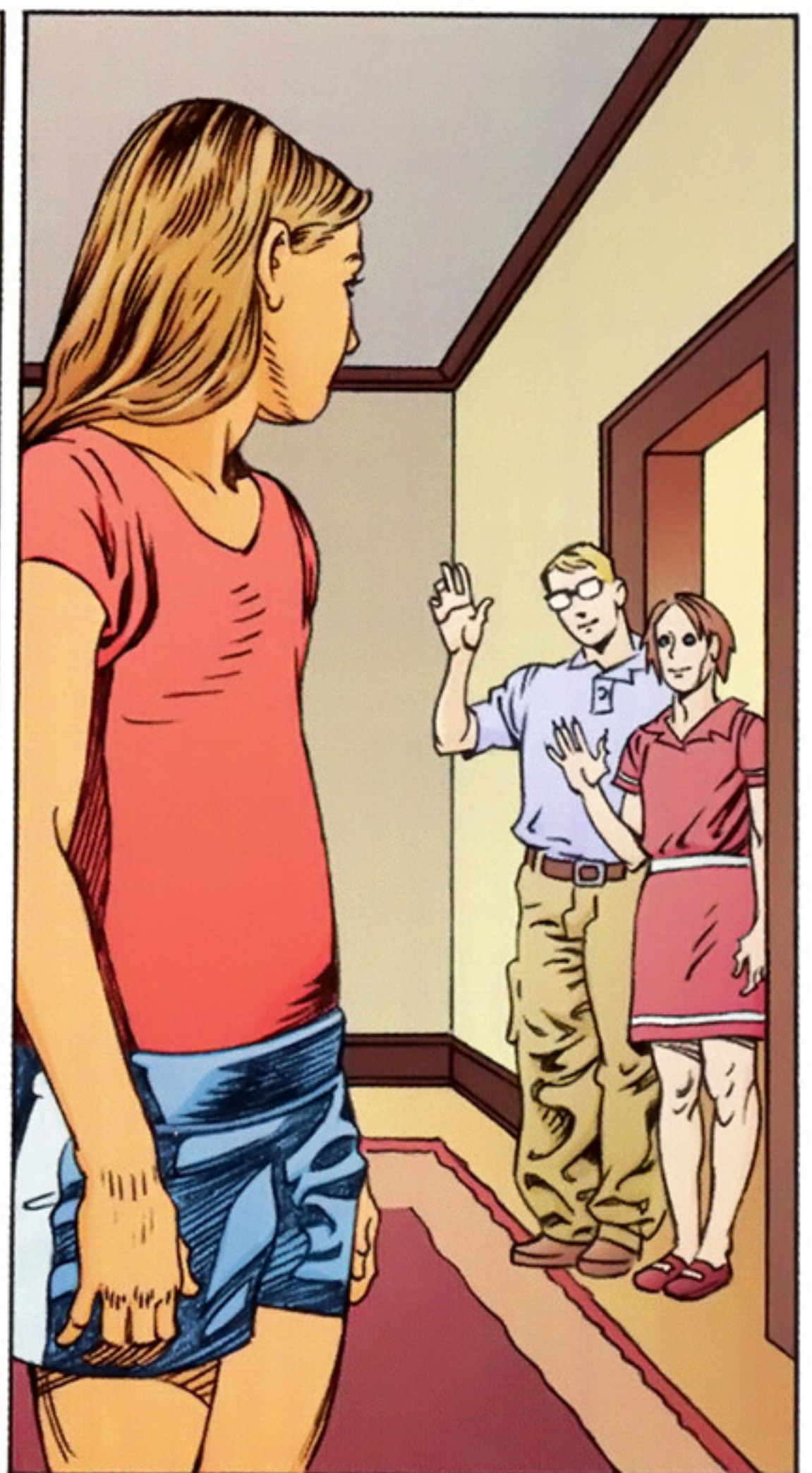
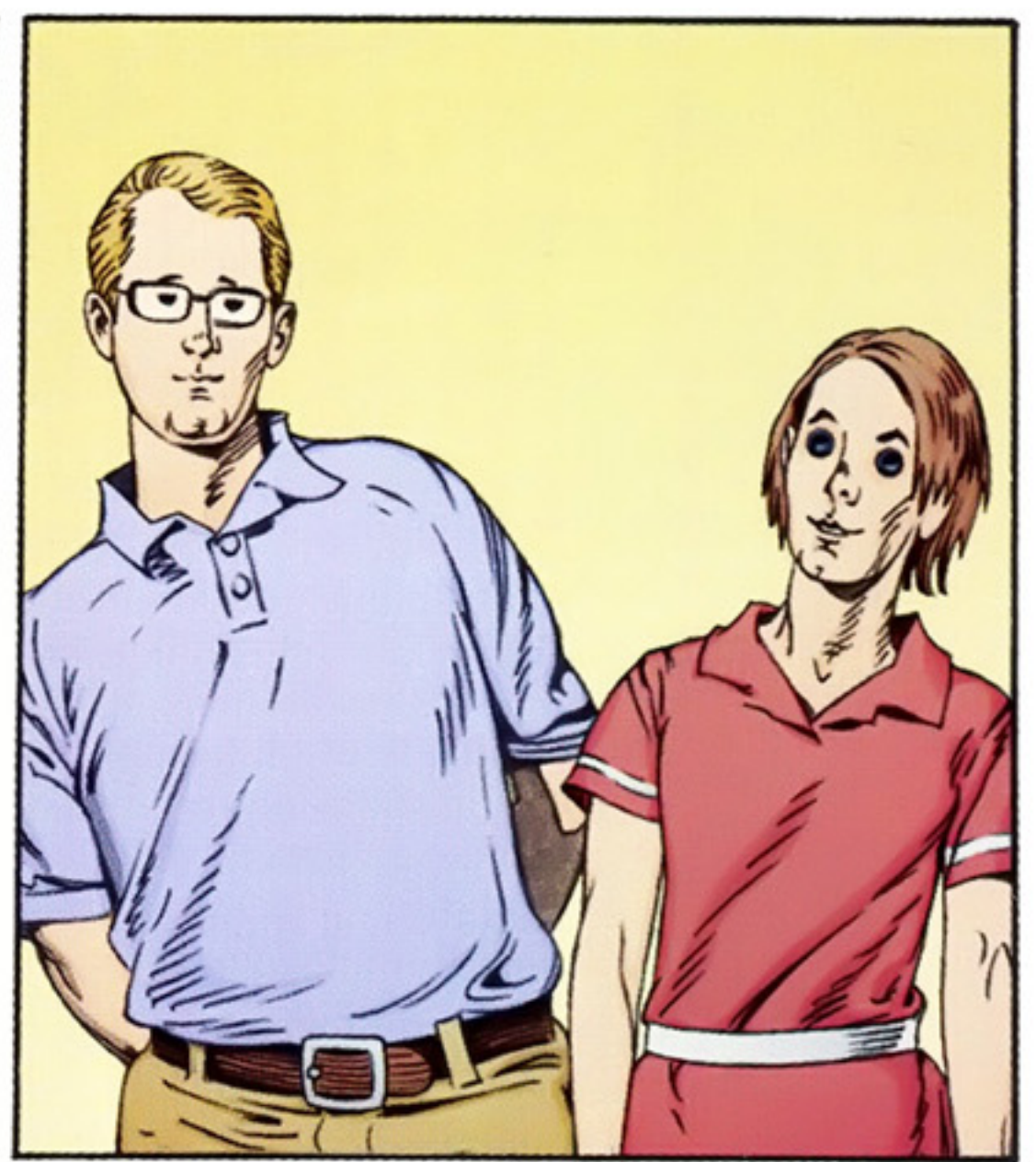
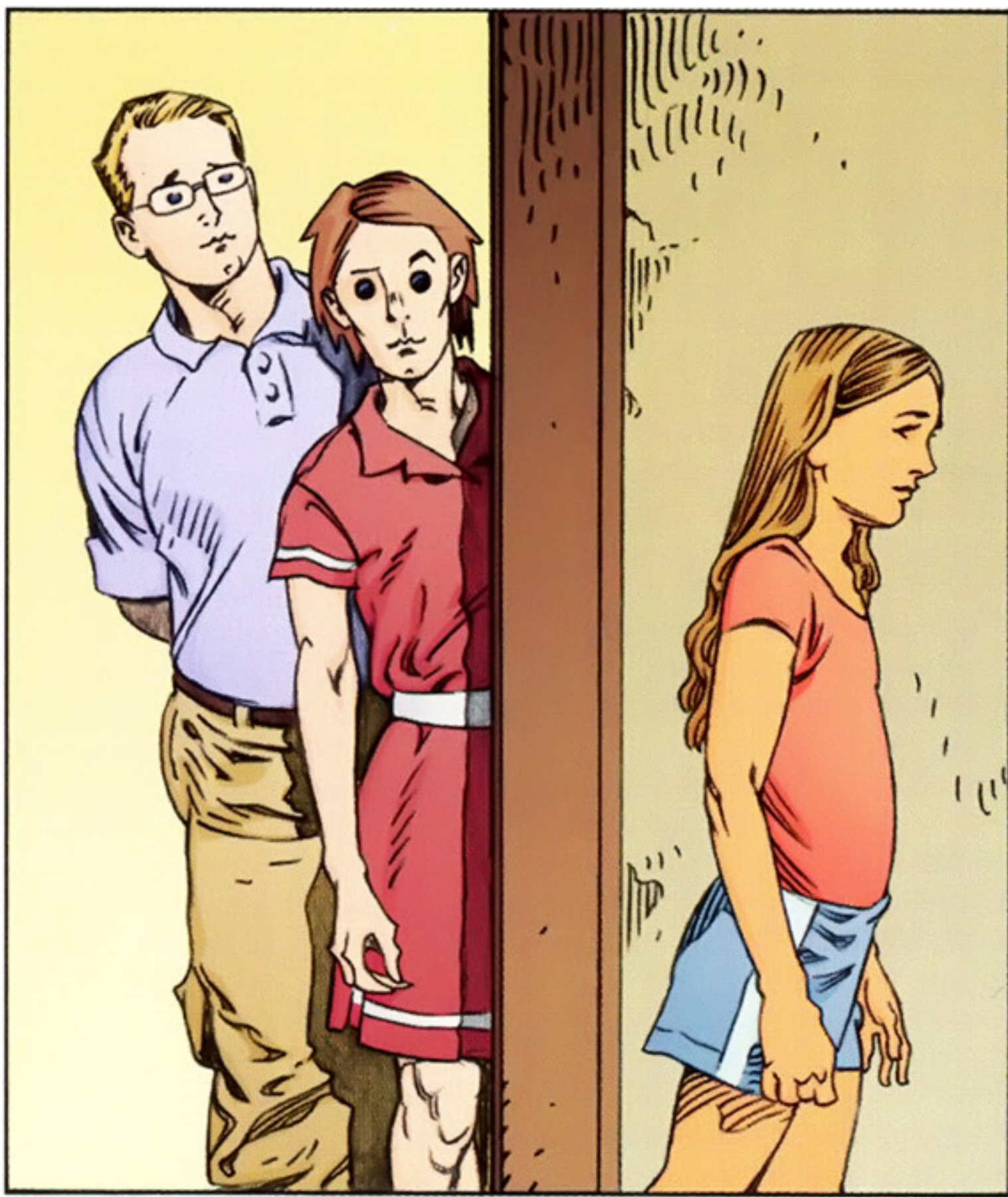


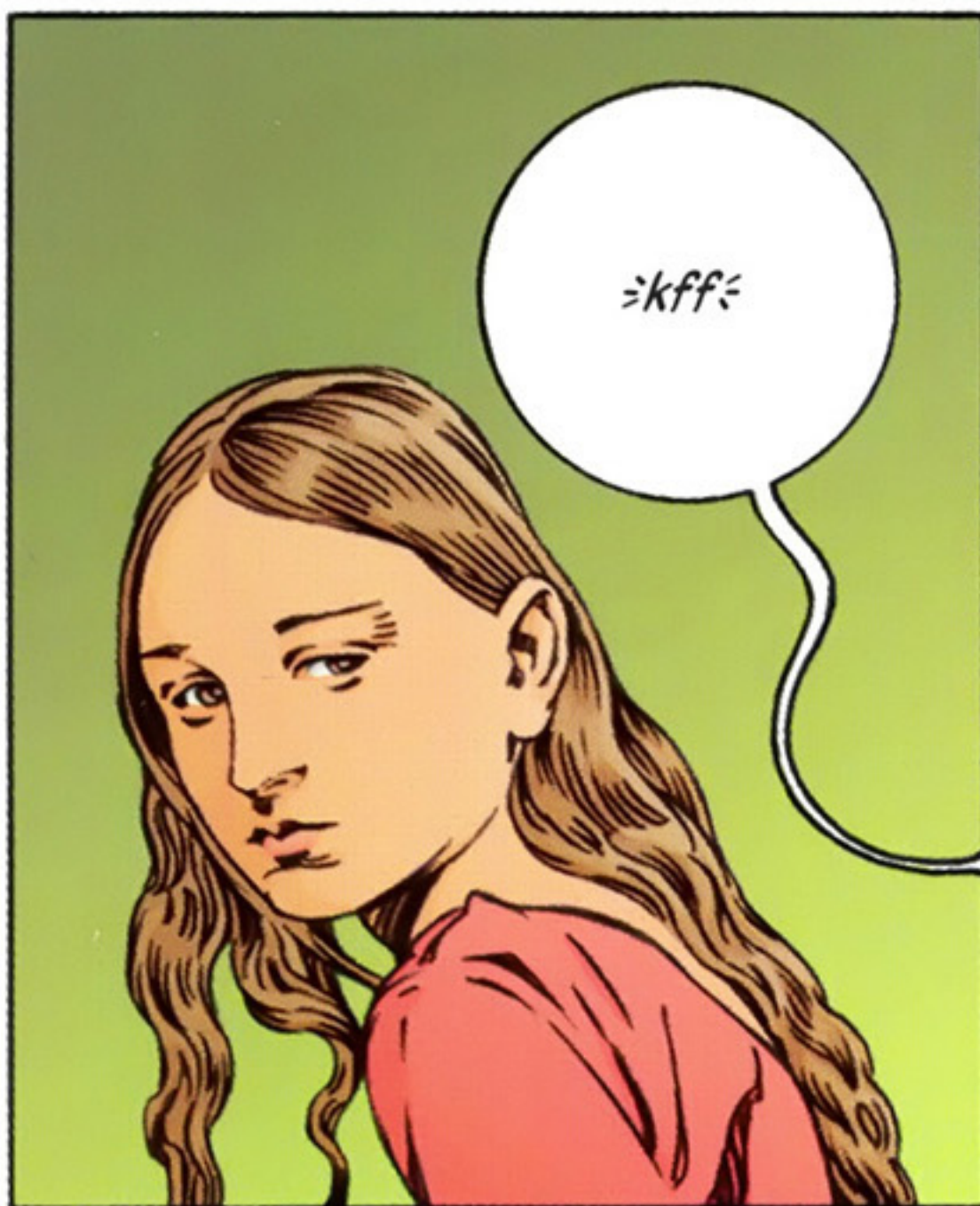
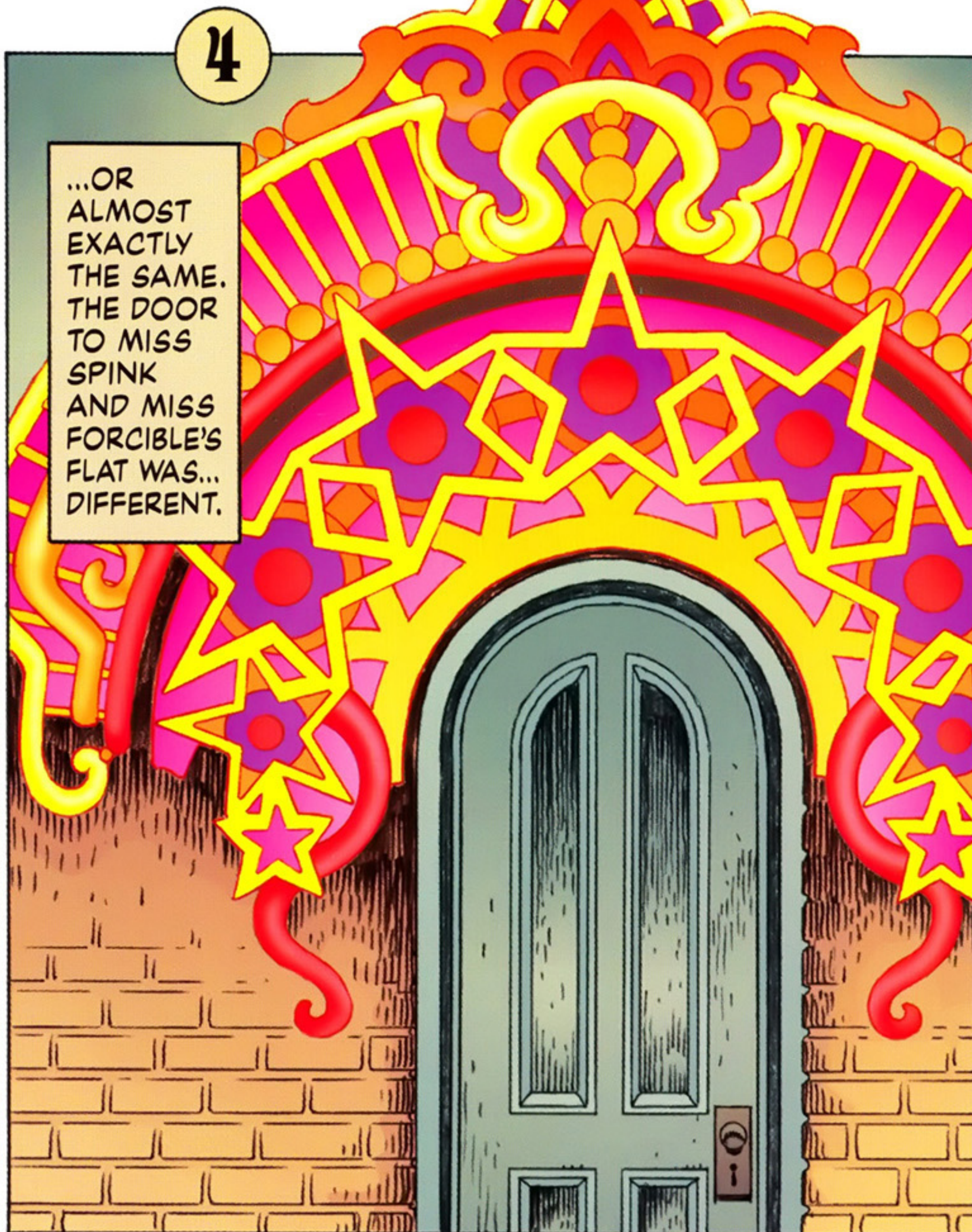
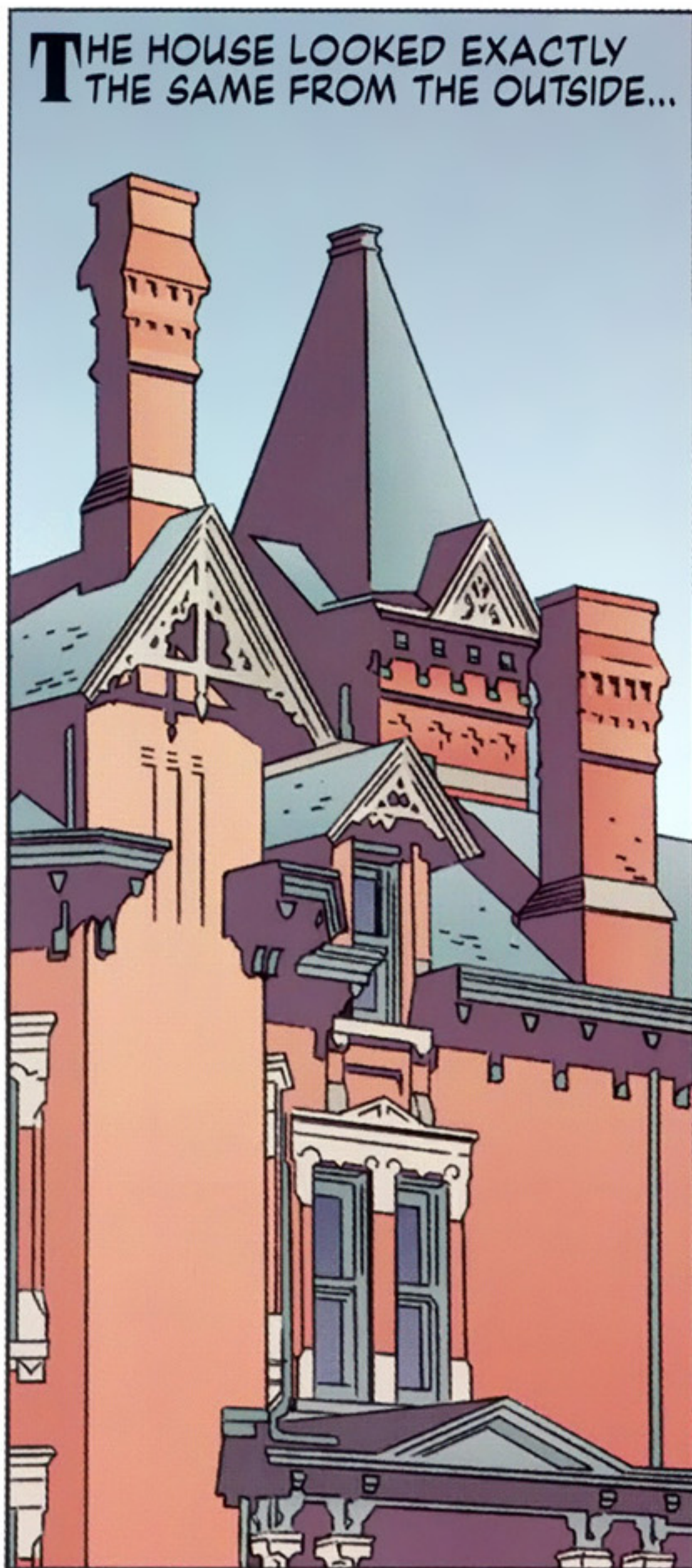
NO, THANK YOU.
I'M GOING OUTSIDE
TO EXPLORE.



CORALINE COULD HEAR THE RATS
WHISPERING TO EACH OTHER. SHE
WAS NOT CERTAIN THAT SHE
WANTED TO KNOW WHAT THEY
WERE SAYING.







YOU PEOPLE ARE SPREAD ALL OVER THE PLACE. CATS, ON THE OTHER HAND, KEEP OURSELVES TOGETHER. IF YOU SEE WHAT I MEAN.



I SUPPOSE. BUT IF YOU'RE THE SAME CAT I SAW AT HOME, HOW CAN YOU TALK?



I CAN TALK.

CATS DON'T TALK AT HOME.

NO?



NO.



WELL, YOU'RE THE EXPERT ON THESE THINGS. AFTER ALL, WHAT WOULD I KNOW?

I'M ONLY A CAT.



COME BACK. **PLEASE.** I'M SORRY. I REALLY AM.

WE...WE COULD BE FRIENDS, YOU KNOW.



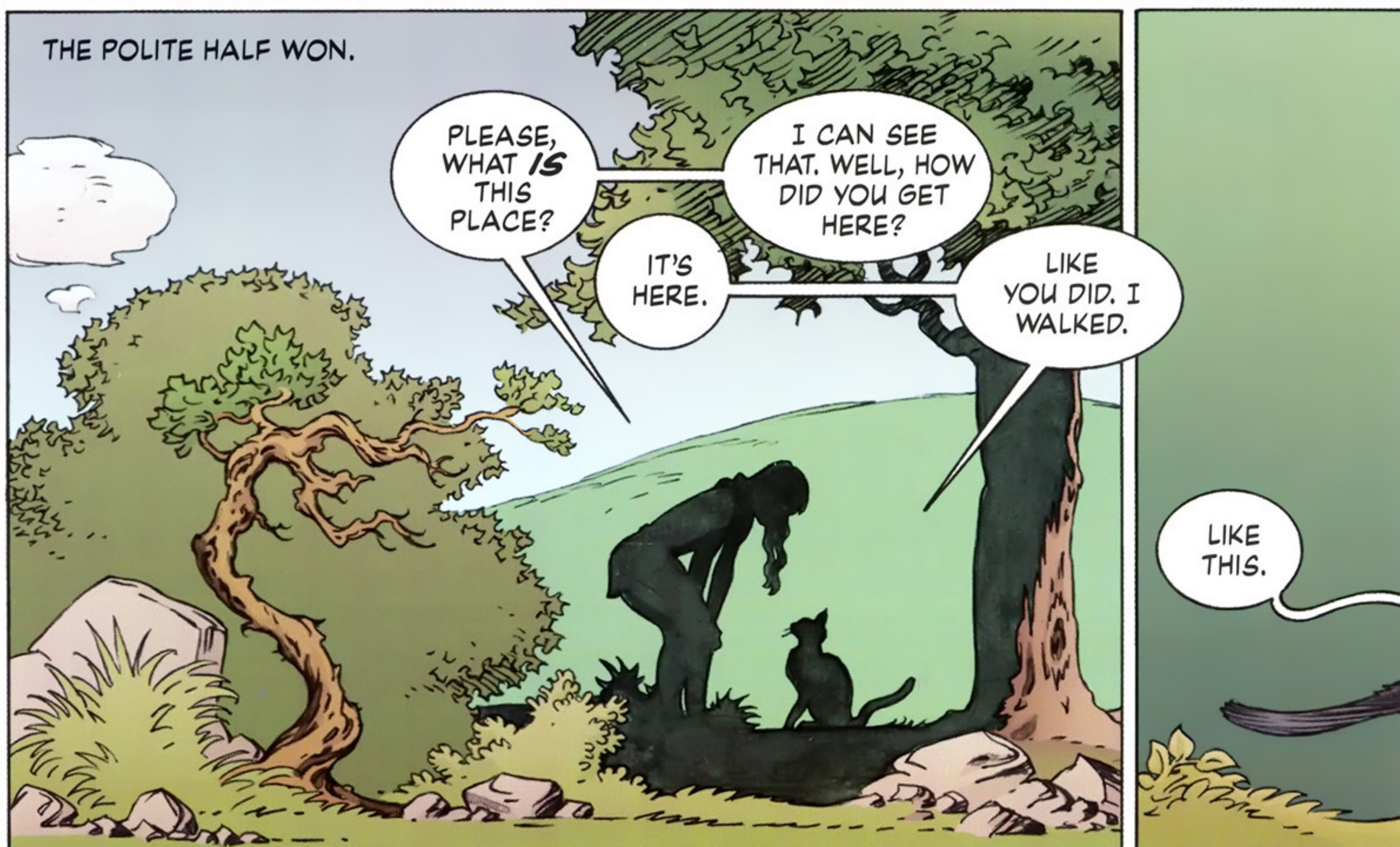
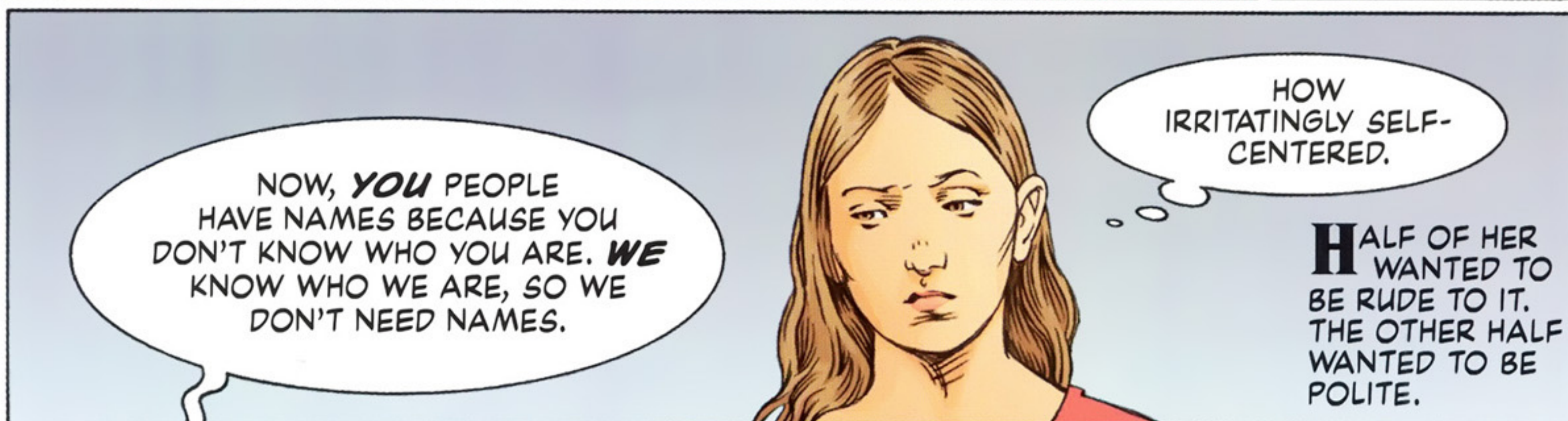
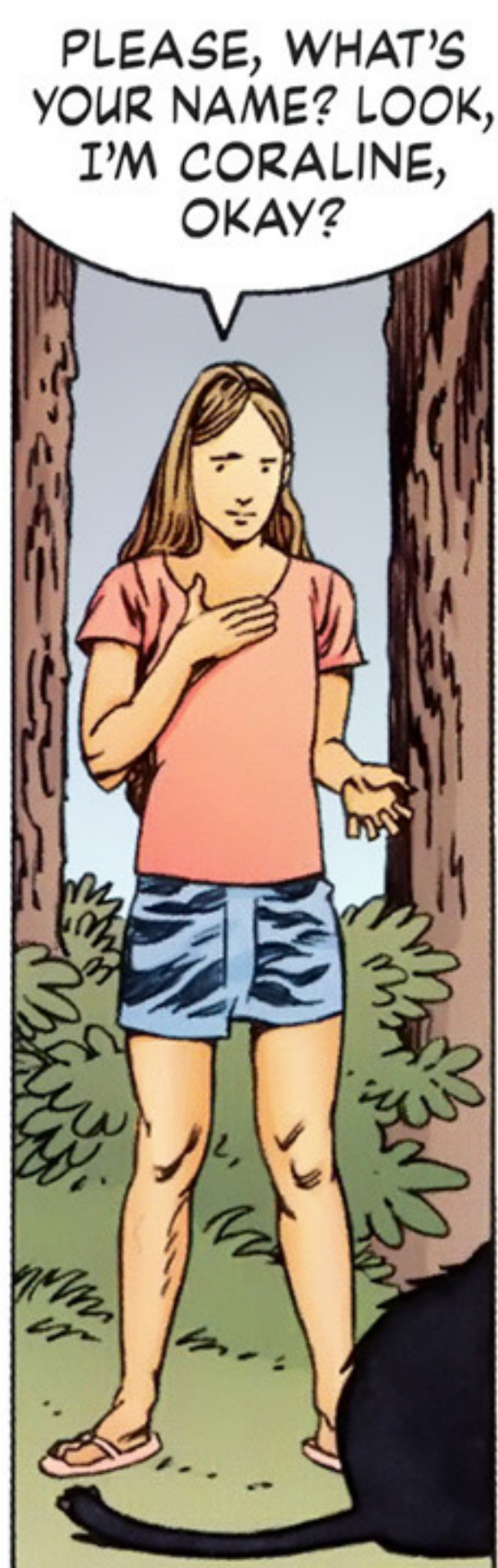
WE **COULD** BE RARE SPECIMENS OF AN EXOTIC BREED OF AFRICAN DANCING ELEPHANTS.

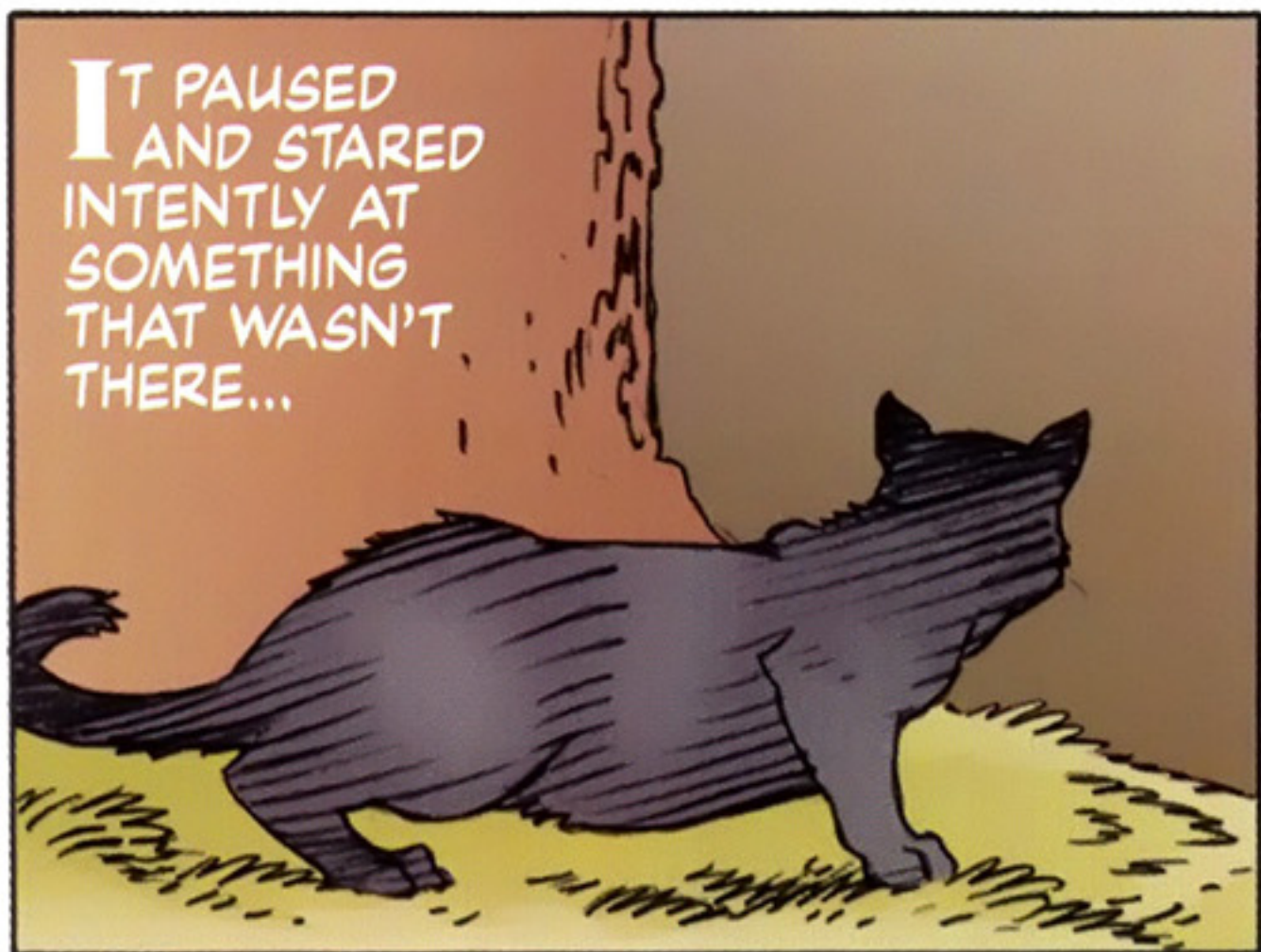
BUT WE'RE NOT.

AT LEAST...



...**I'M** NOT.



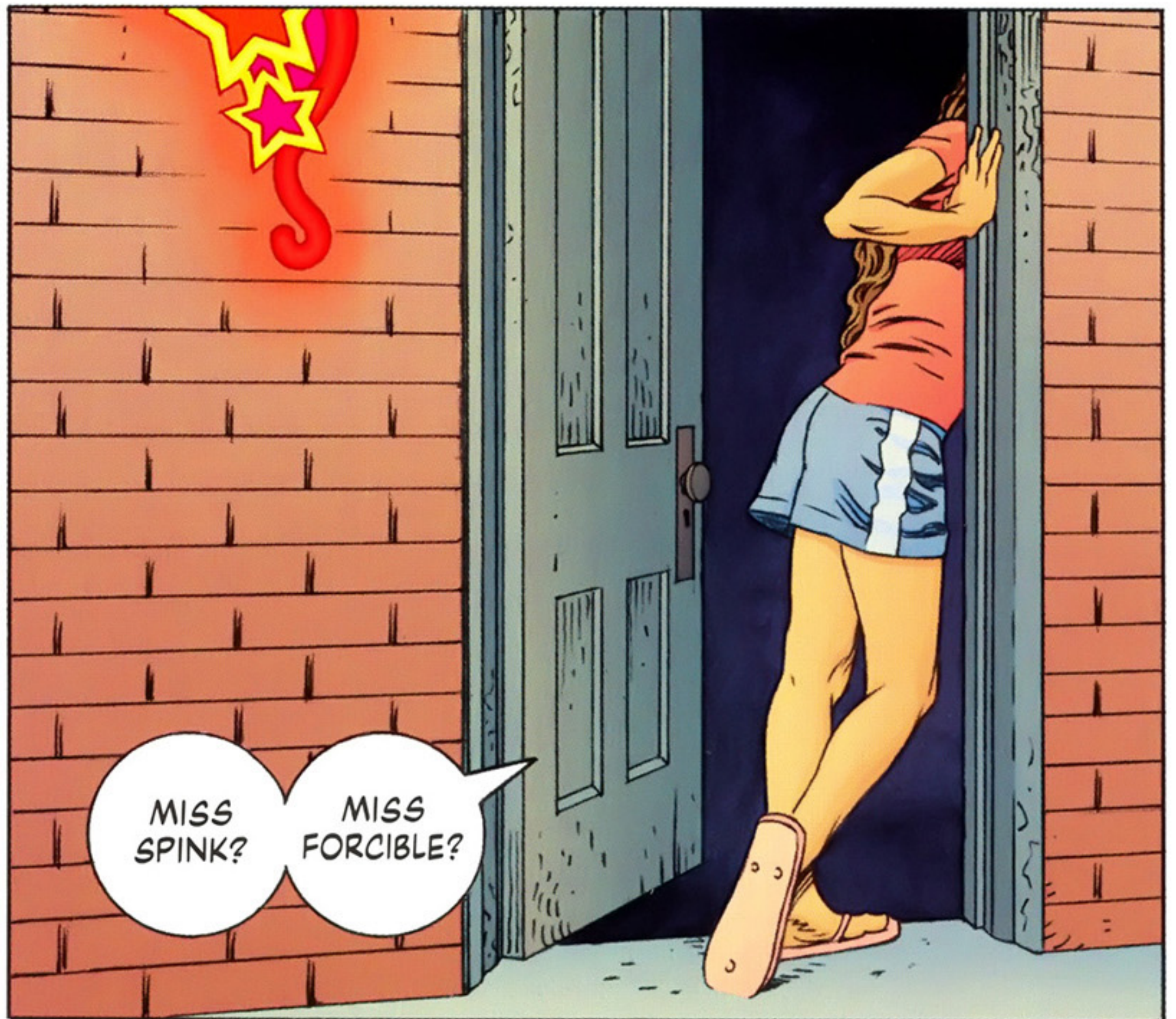


...AND VANISHED INTO THE WOODS.



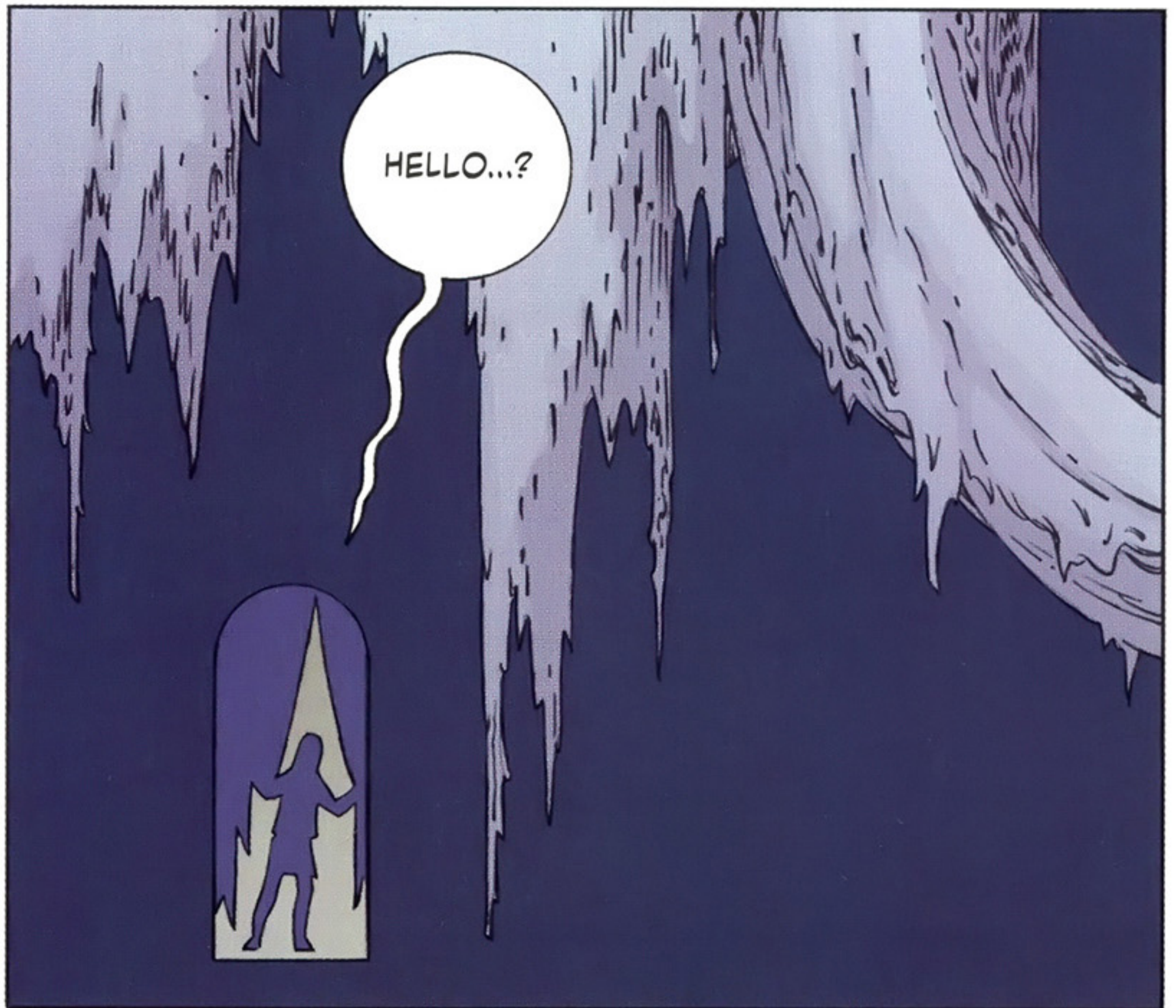
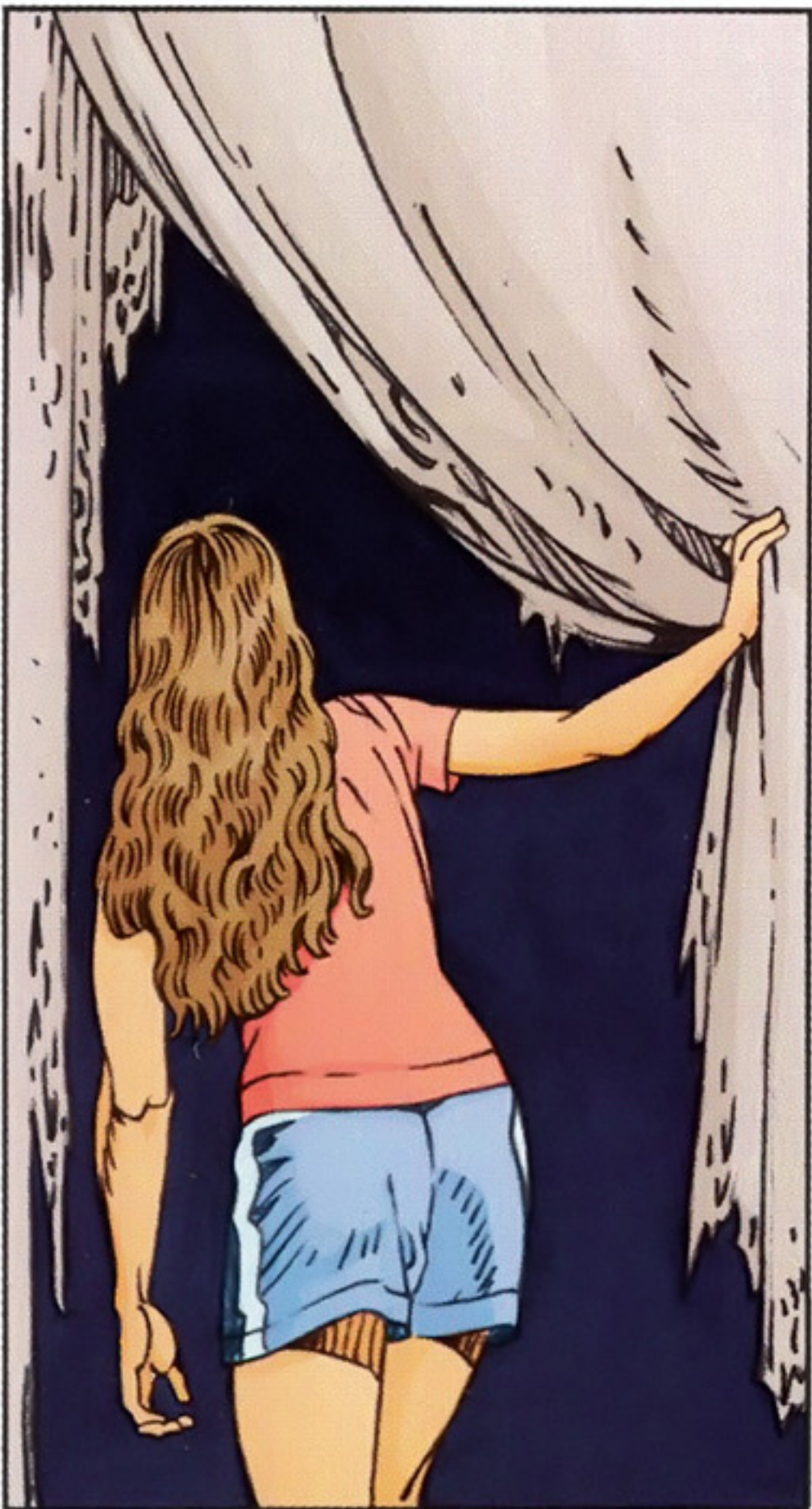


THE DOOR WAS OPEN, JUST SLIGHTLY, AND SWUNG OPEN AT HER FIRST KNOCK.

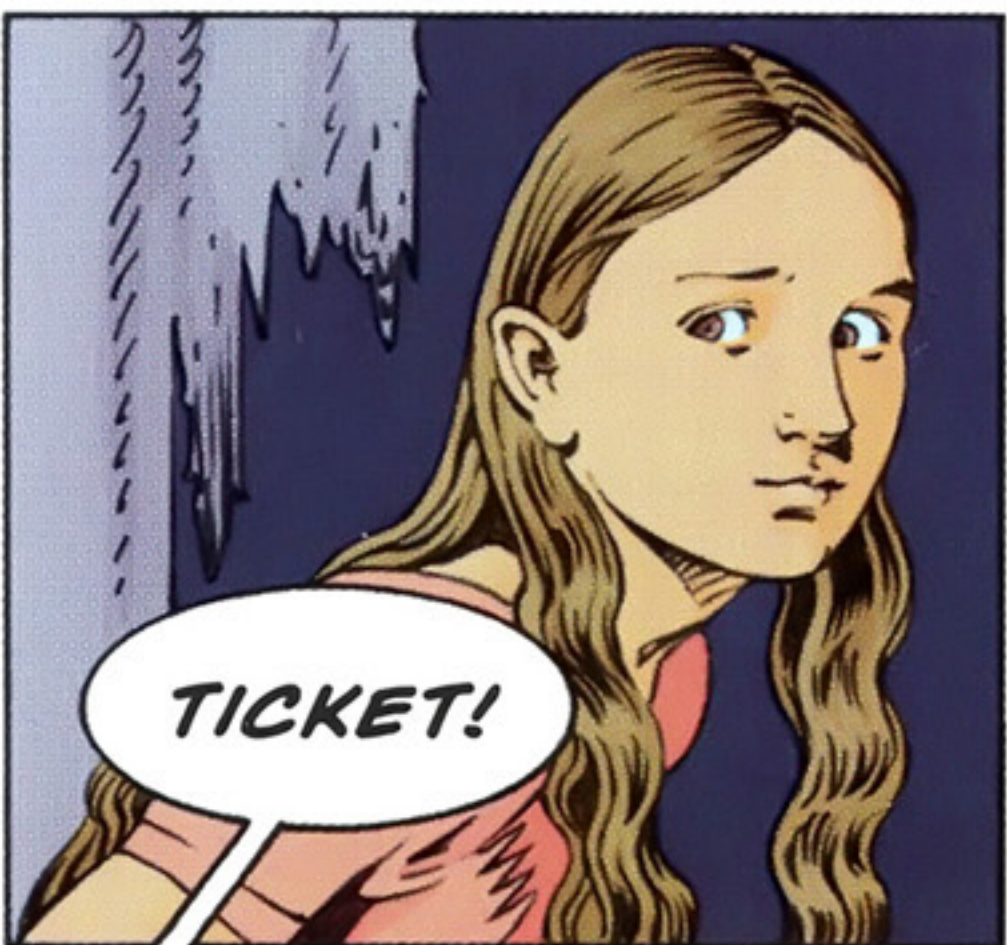


MISS SPINK?

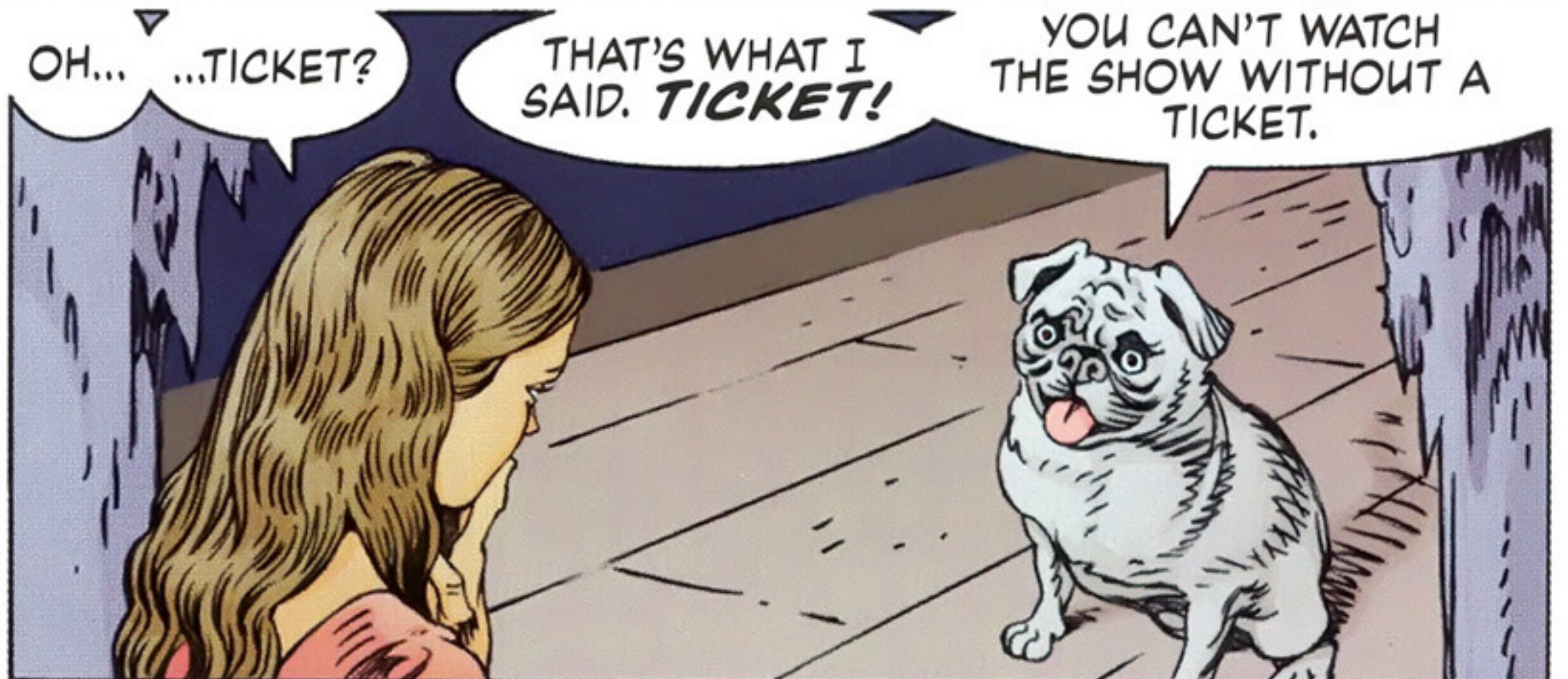
MISS FORCIBLE?



HELLO...?



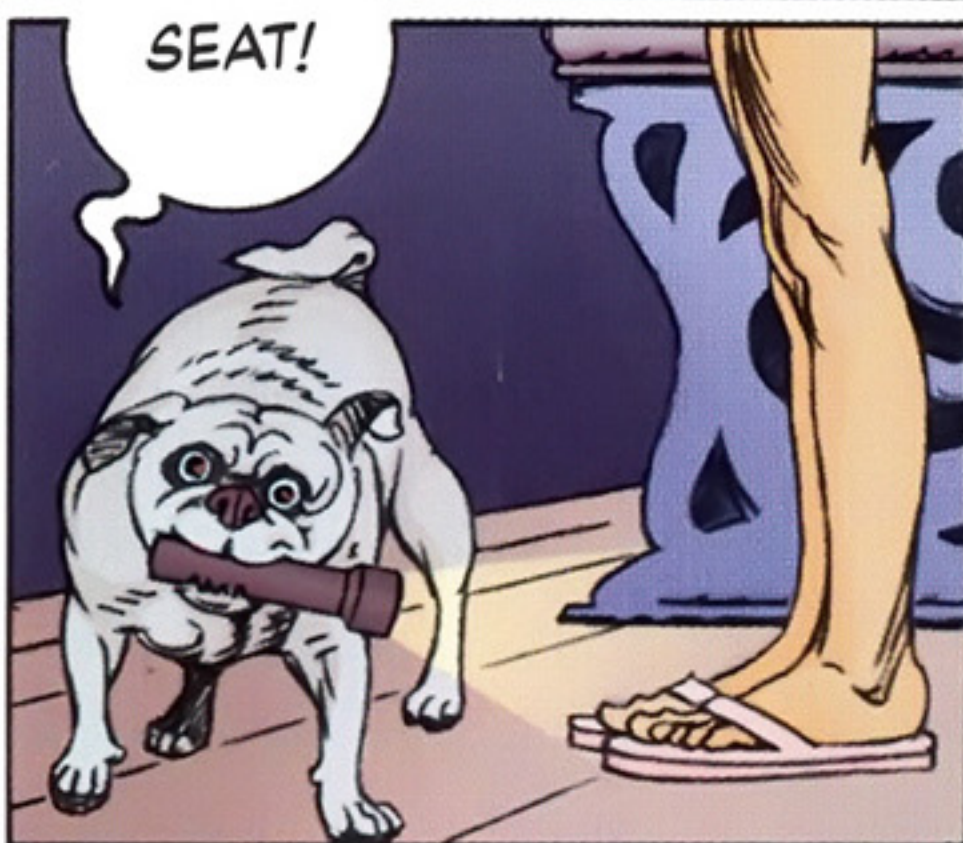
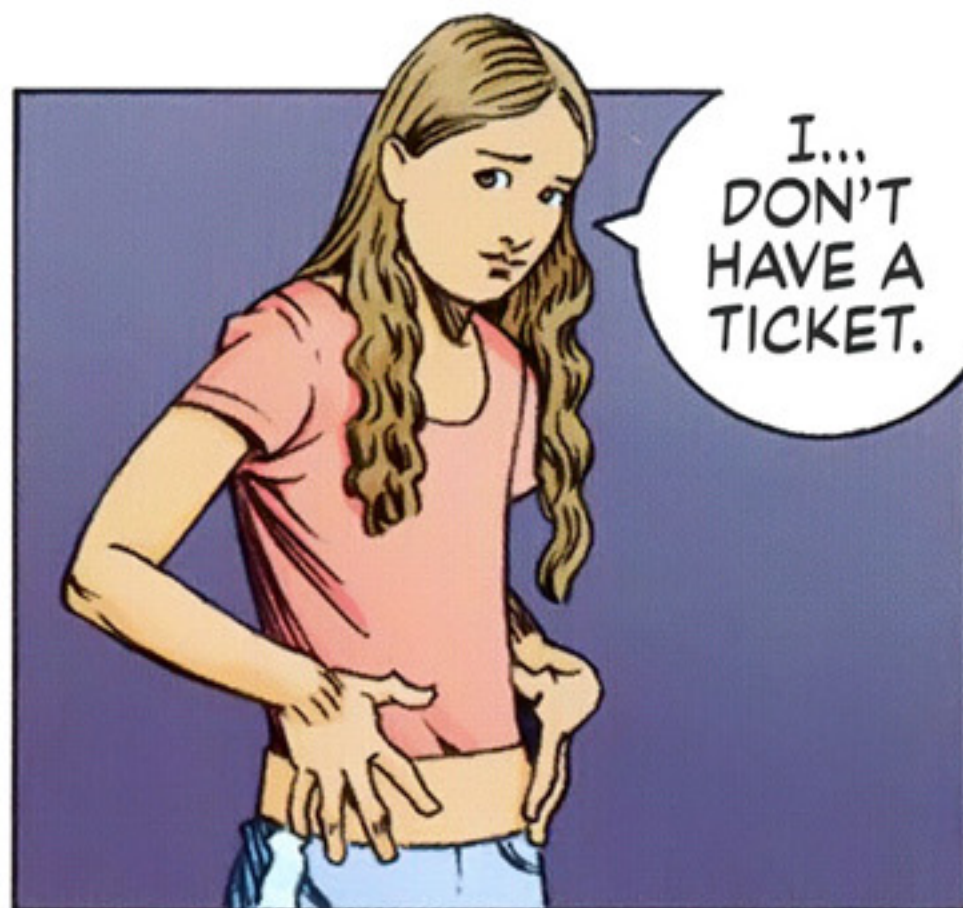
TICKET!

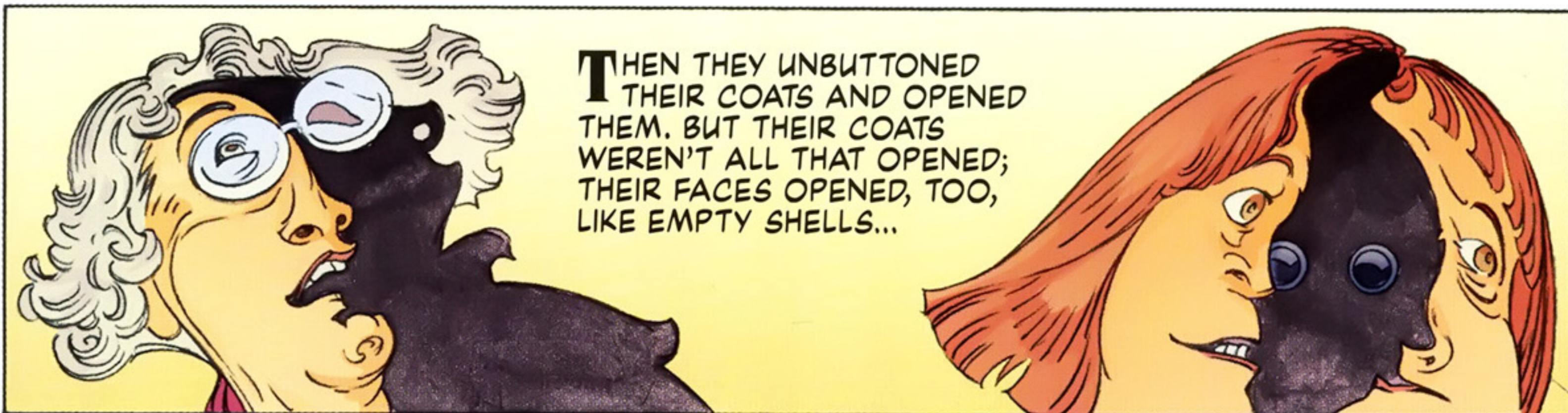


OH... ..TICKET?

THAT'S WHAT I SAID. **TICKET!**

YOU CAN'T WATCH THE SHOW WITHOUT A TICKET.





THEN THEY UNBUTTONED THEIR COATS AND OPENED THEM. BUT THEIR COATS WEREN'T ALL THAT OPENED; THEIR FACES OPENED, TOO, LIKE EMPTY SHELLS...

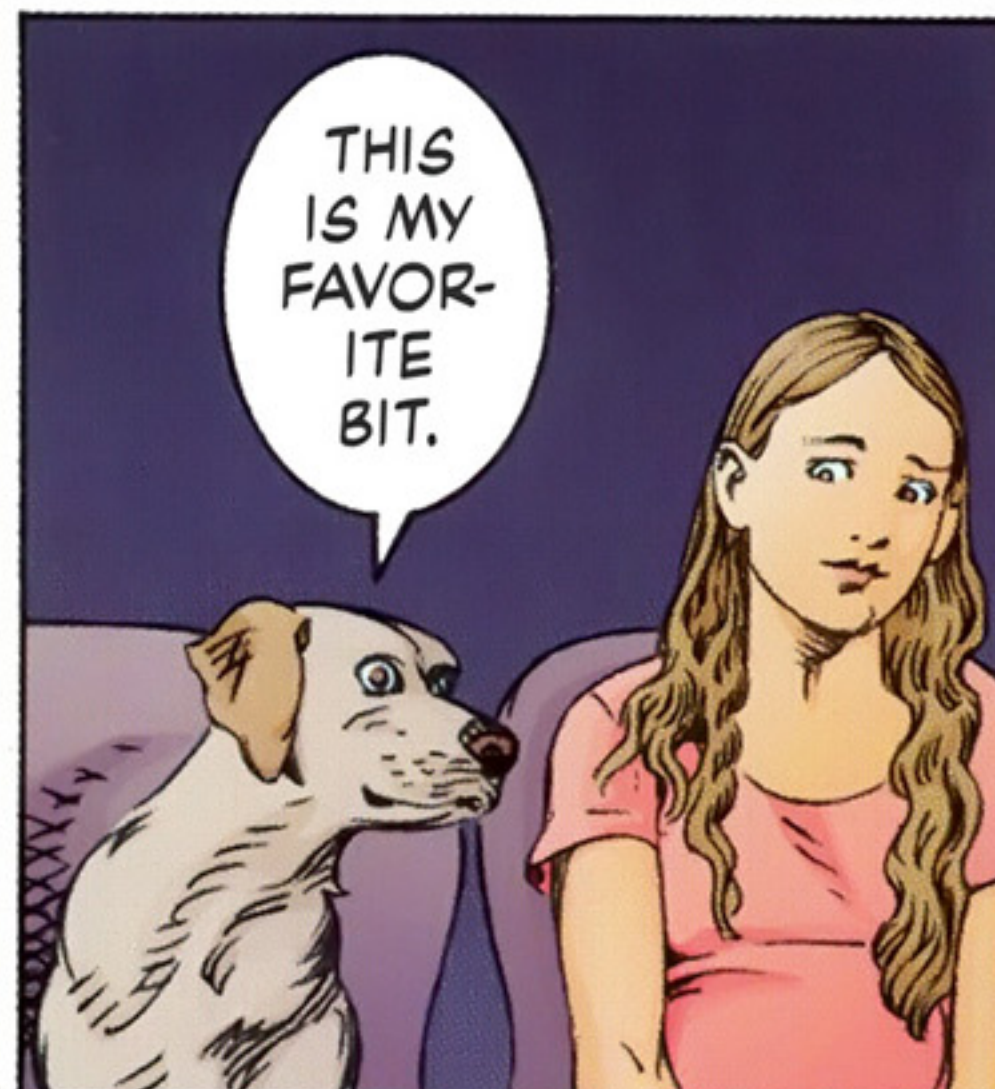
...AND OUT OF THE OLD EMPTY FLUFFY ROUND BODIES STEPPED TWO YOUNG WOMEN. THEY WERE THIN, PALE AND PRETTY...



...AND HAD BLACK BUTTON EYES.



THIS IS MY FAVORITE BIT.



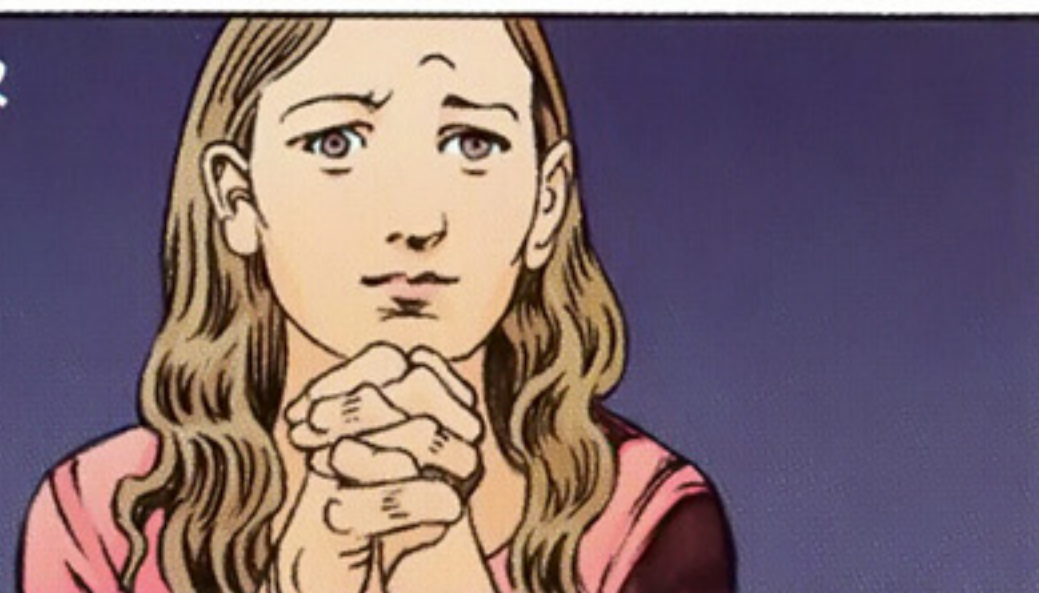
IS THIS A **DAGGER** I SEE BEFORE ME?

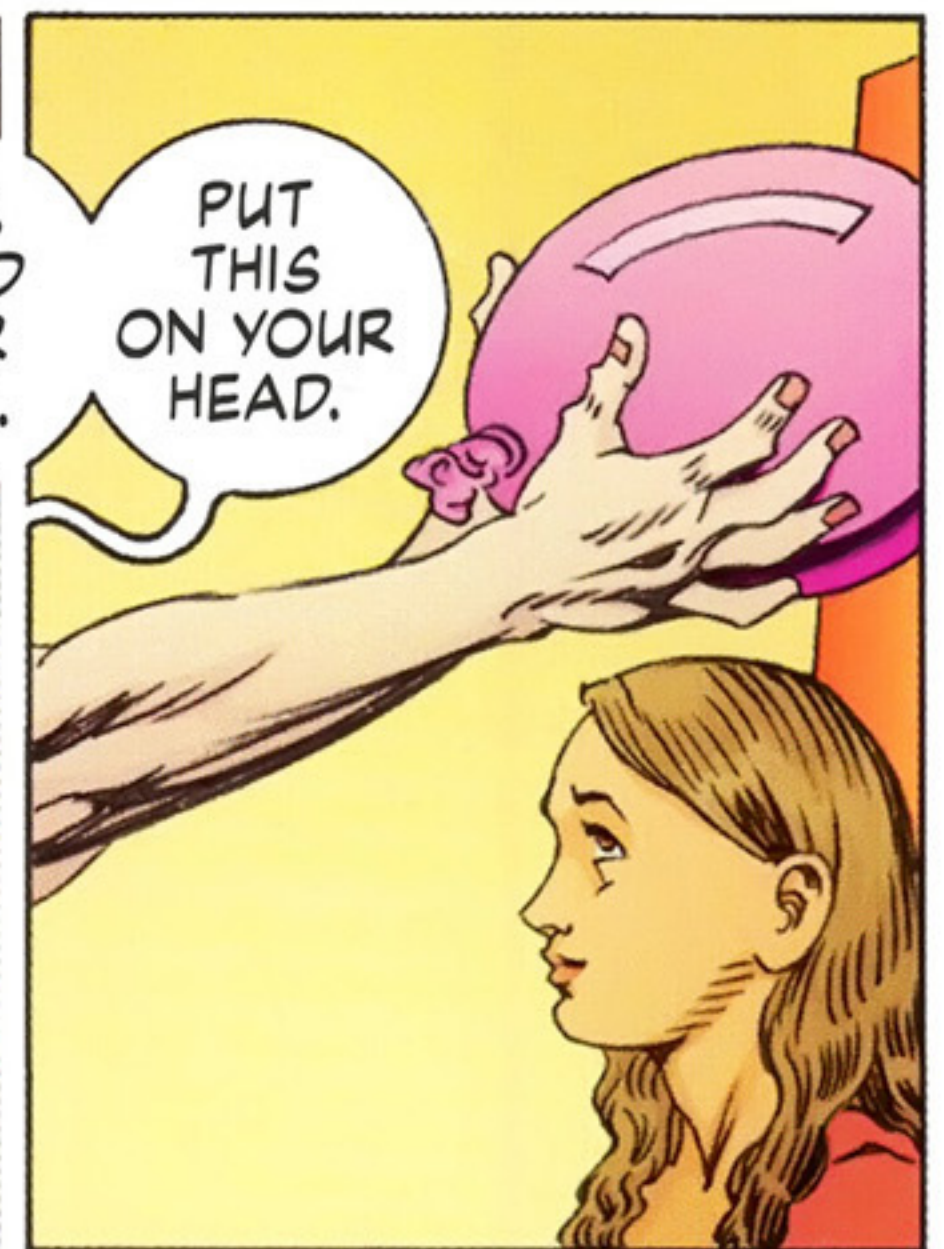
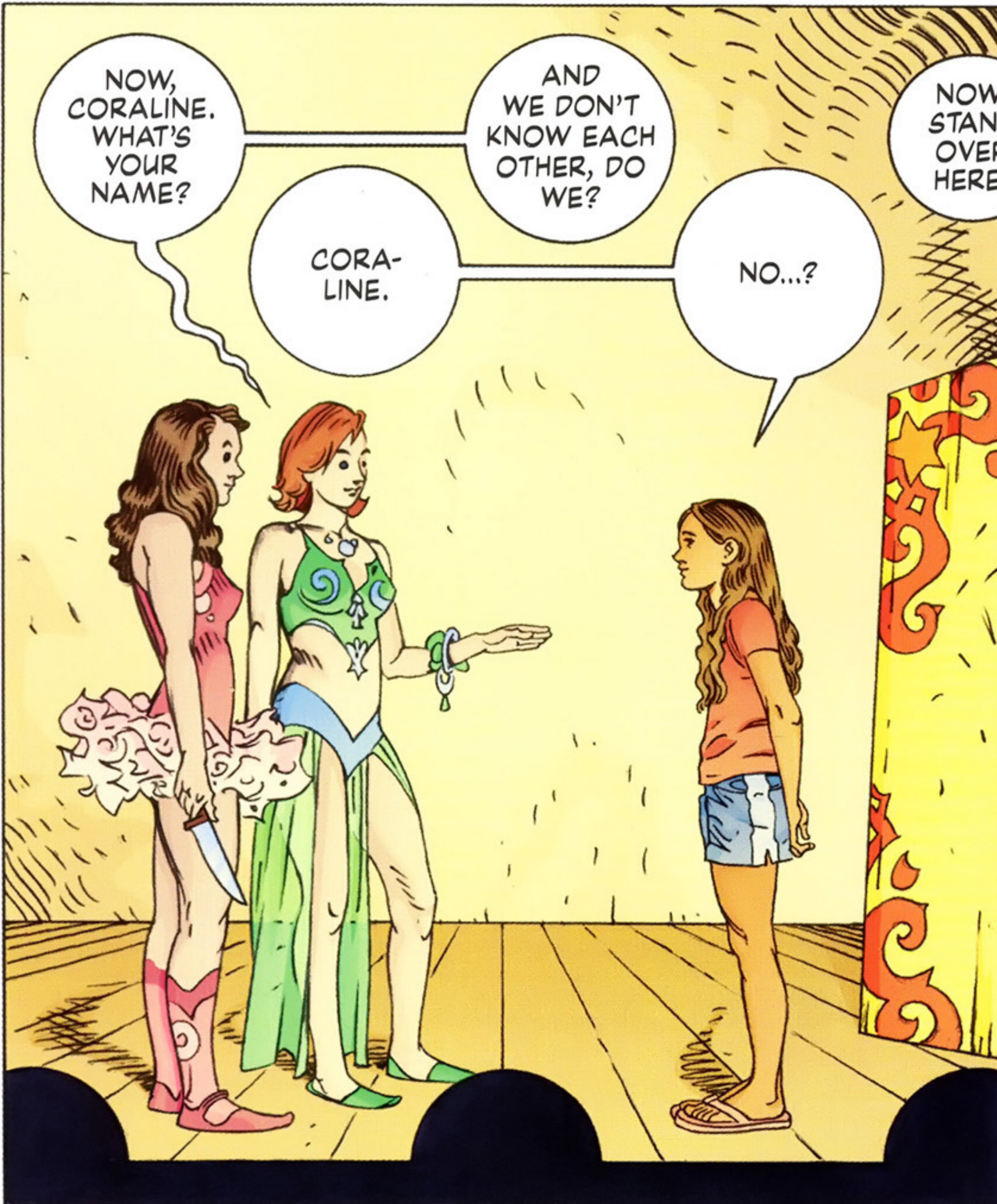
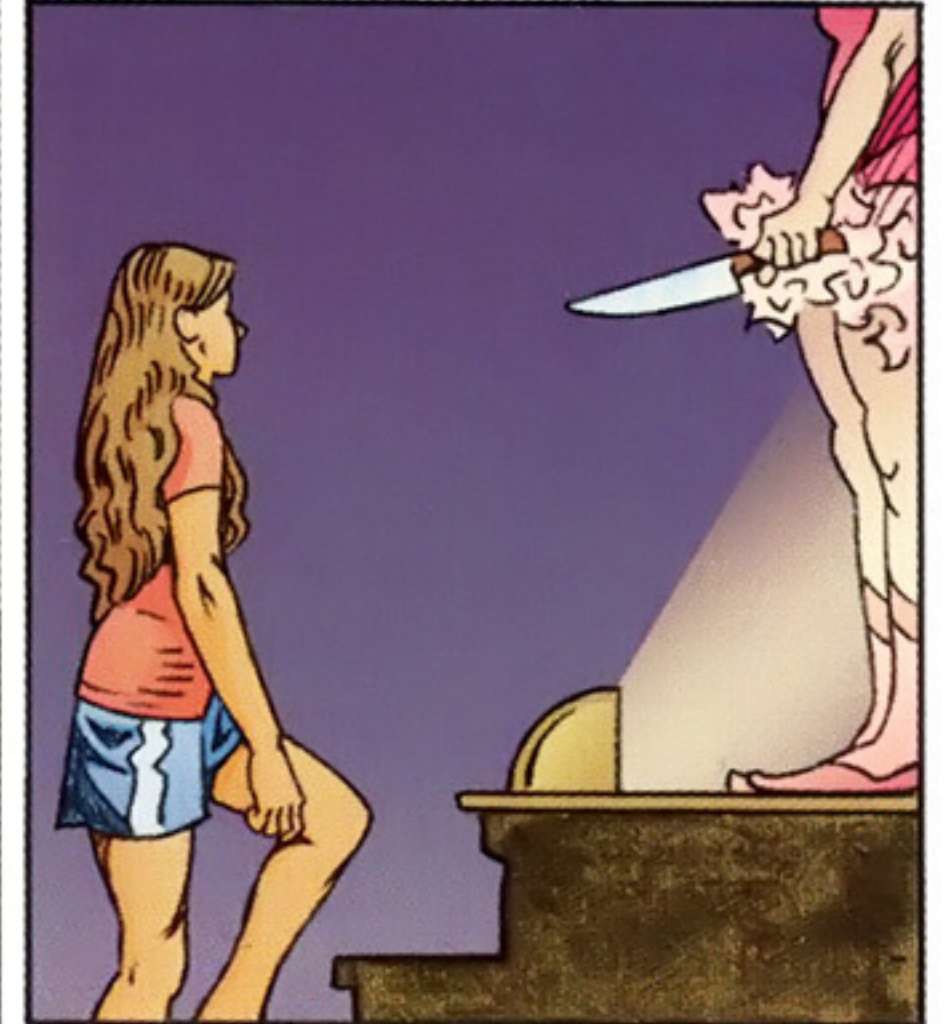
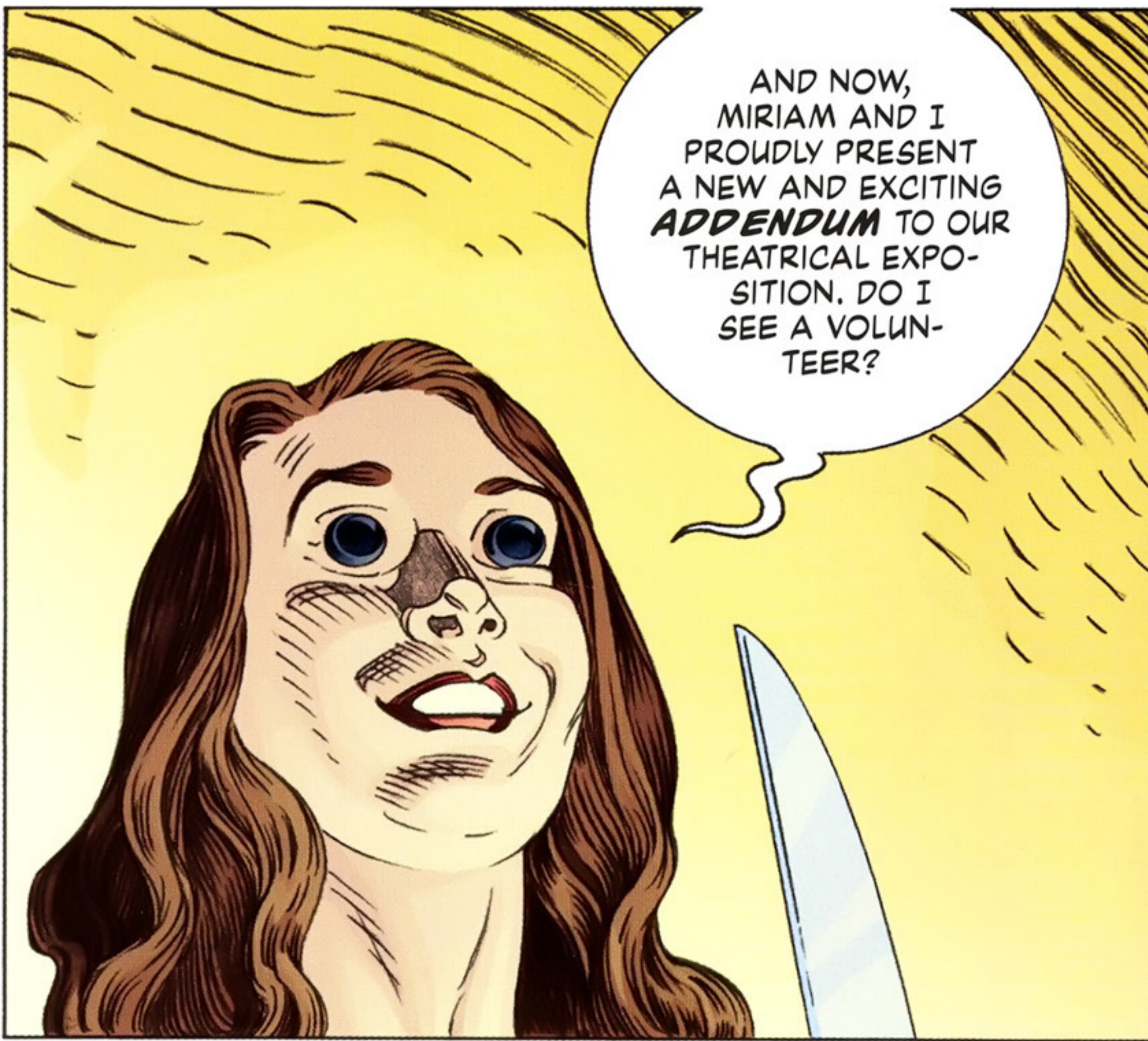


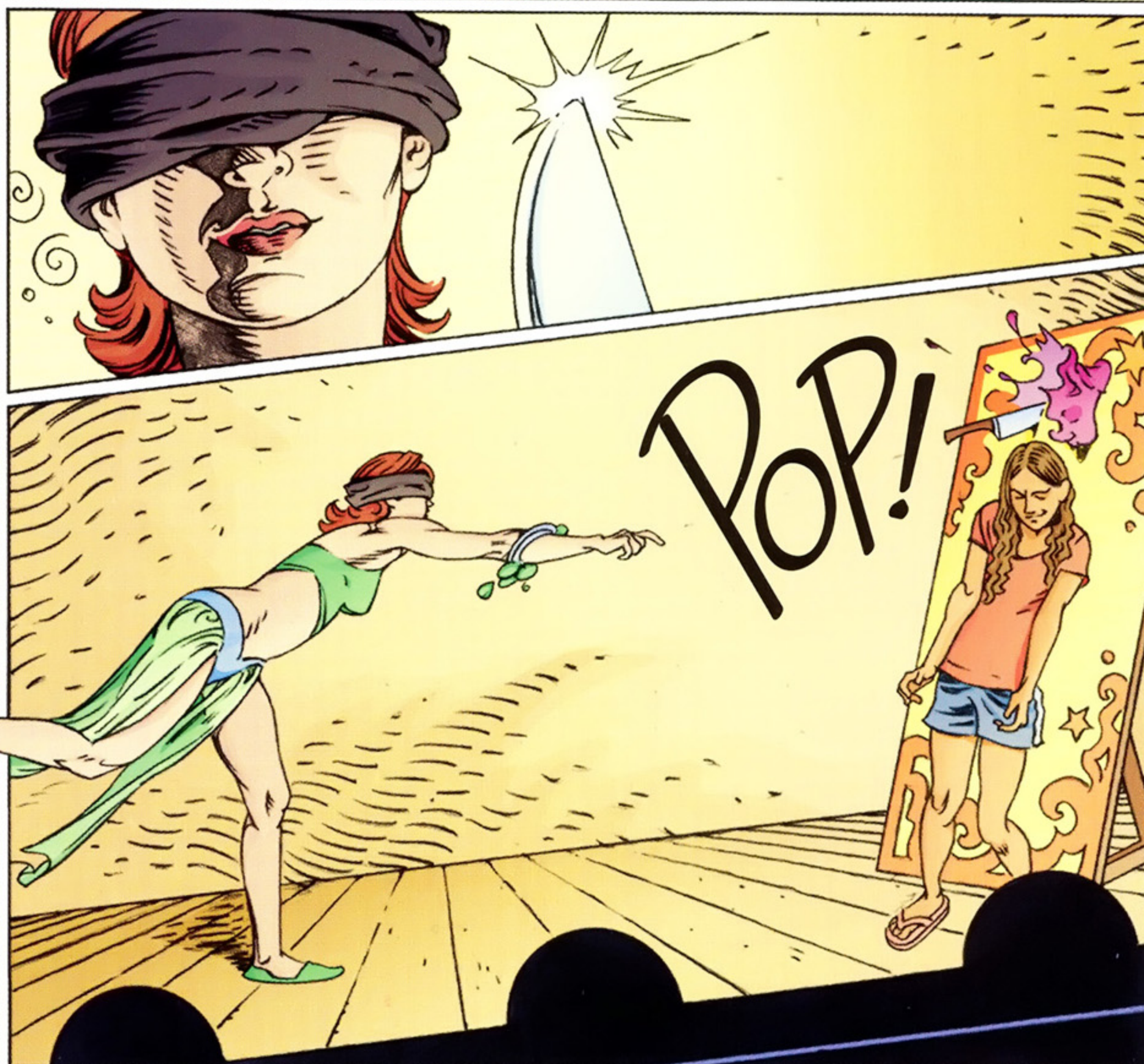
YES! IT IS!!

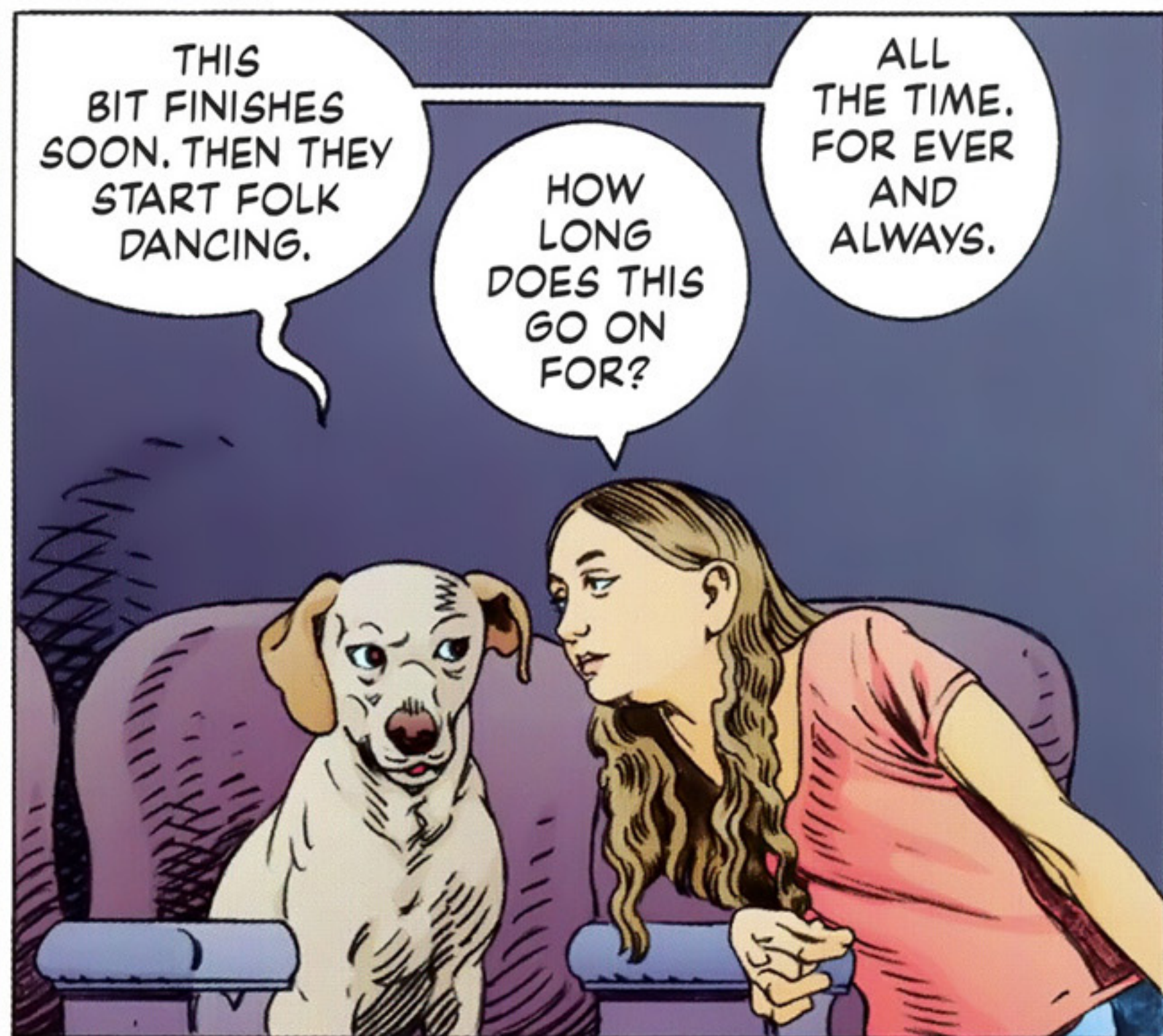


CORALINE DIDNT BOTHER CLAPPING THIS TIME.









CORALINE WALKED OUT OF THE THEATER AND BACK INTO THE GARDEN. SHE HAD TO BLINK HER EYES AT THE DAYLIGHT.

HER OTHER PARENTS WERE WAITING FOR HER.

SO. DO YOU LIKE IT HERE?

DID YOU HAVE A NICE TIME?

I SUPPOSE SO. IT'S MUCH MORE INTERESTING THAN HOME.

I'M GLAD YOU LIKE IT. YOU CAN STAY HERE FOR EVER AND ALWAYS...

...IF YOU LIKE.

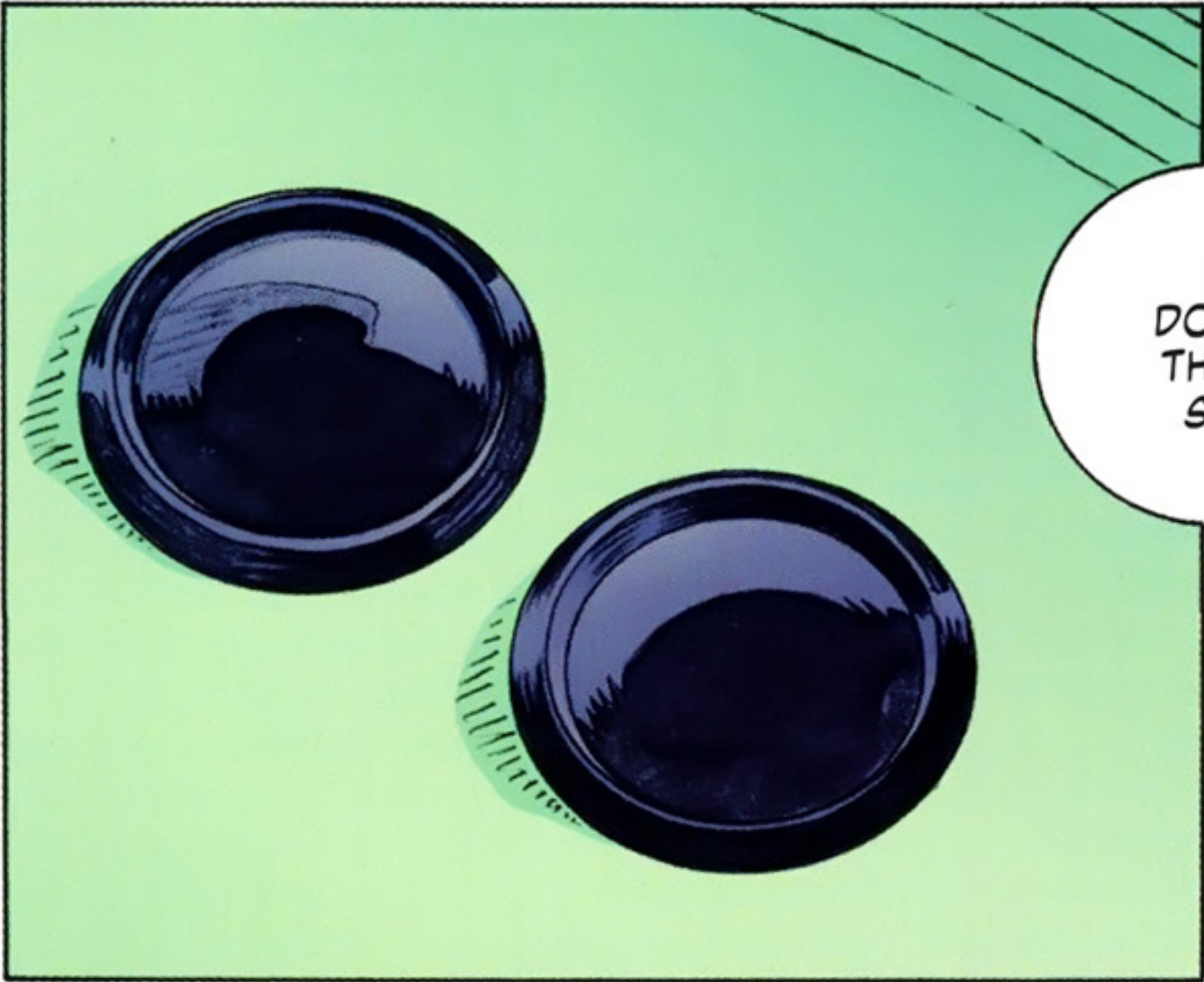
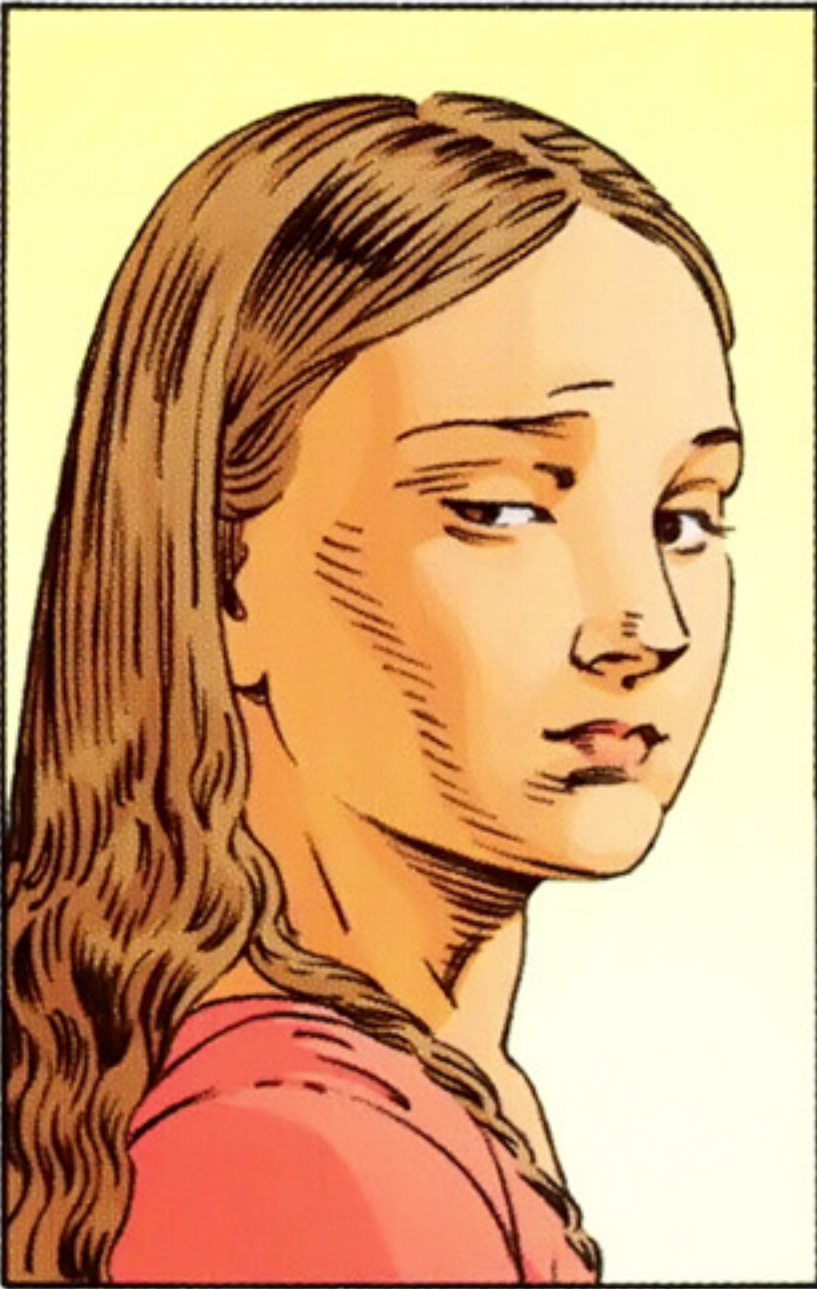
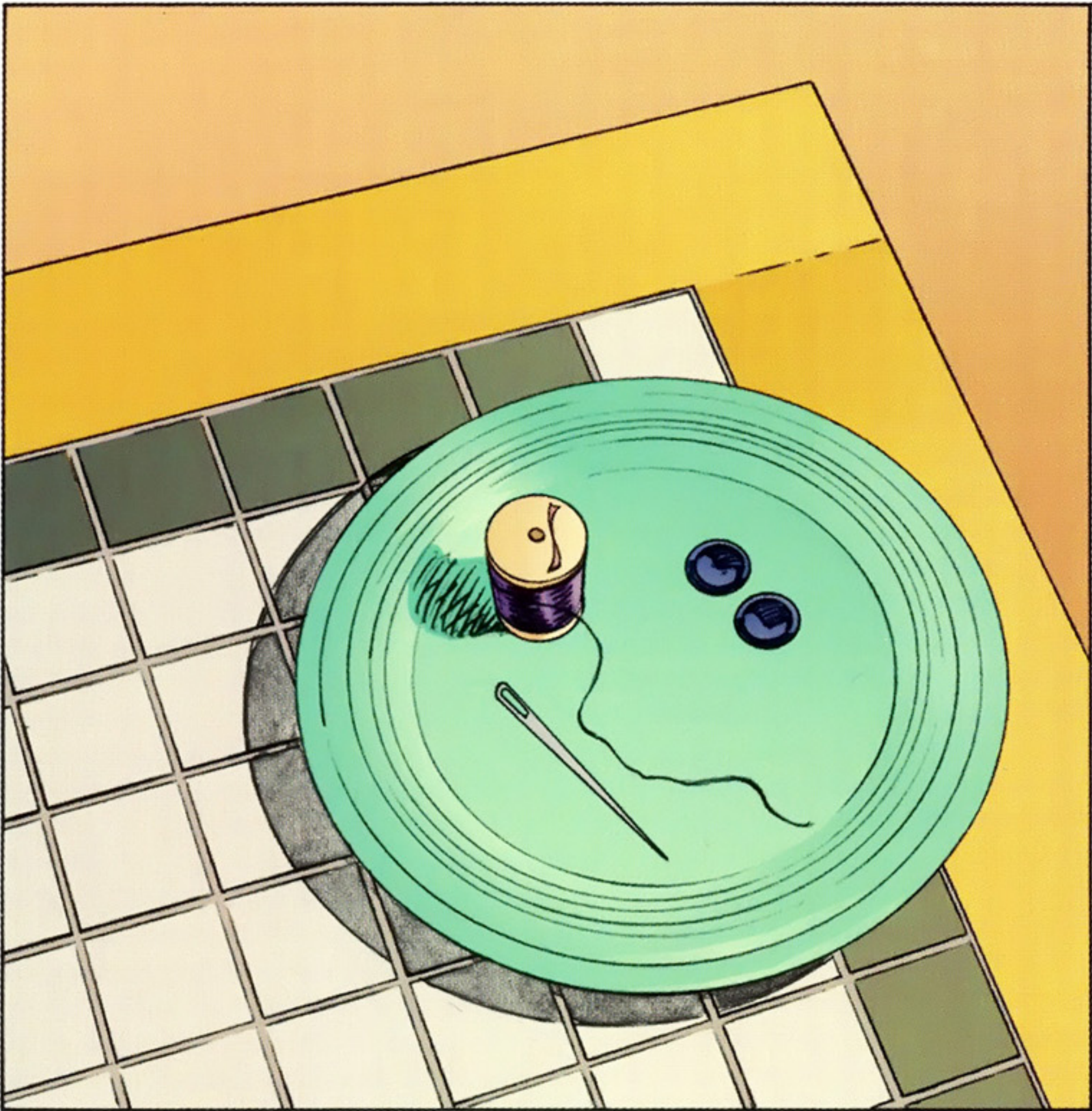
HMMM...

SHE PUT HER HAND IN HER POCKET AND THOUGHT ABOUT IT.

HER HAND TOUCHED THE STONE WITH THE HOLE IN IT.

IF YOU WANT TO STAY, THERE'S ONLY ONE LITTLE THING WE'LL HAVE TO DO, SO YOU CAN STAY HERE FOR EVER AND ALWAYS.

THEY WENT INTO THE KITCHEN. ON THE TABLE WAS A SPOOL OF BLACK COTTON, AND A LONG SILVER NEEDLE, AND BESIDE THEM, TWO LARGE BLACK BUTTONS.



I DON'T THINK SO.



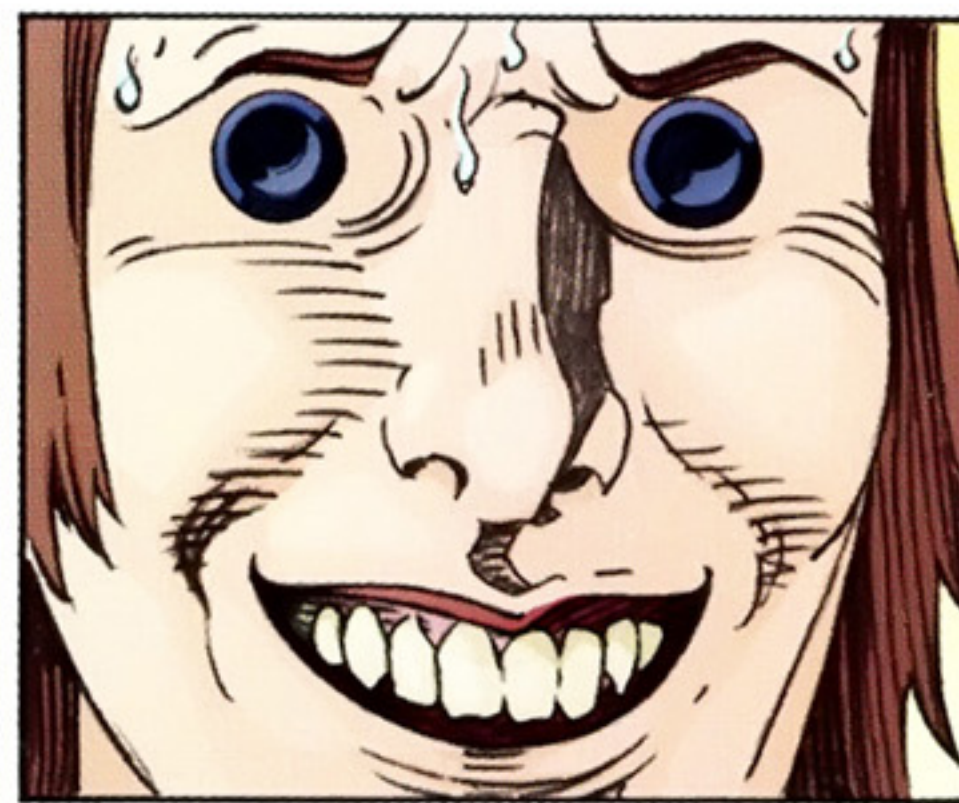
OH, BUT WE WANT YOU TO. WE WANT YOU TO **STAY**. AND IT'S JUST A **LITTLE** THING.



IT WON'T HURT.

CORALINE KNEW THAT WHEN GROWN-UPS TOLD YOU SOMETHING WOULDN'T HURT IT ALMOST ALWAYS DID.

NO!



WE ONLY WANT WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU.

I'M GOING NOW.



HER FINGERS CLOSED AROUND THE STONE WITH THE HOLE IN IT...



...AND HER OTHER MOTHER'S HAND SCUTTLED OFF CORALINE'S SHOULDER LIKE A FRIGHTENED SPIDER.

IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT.

YES!



WE'LL SEE YOU SOON, THOUGH, WHEN YOU COME BACK.

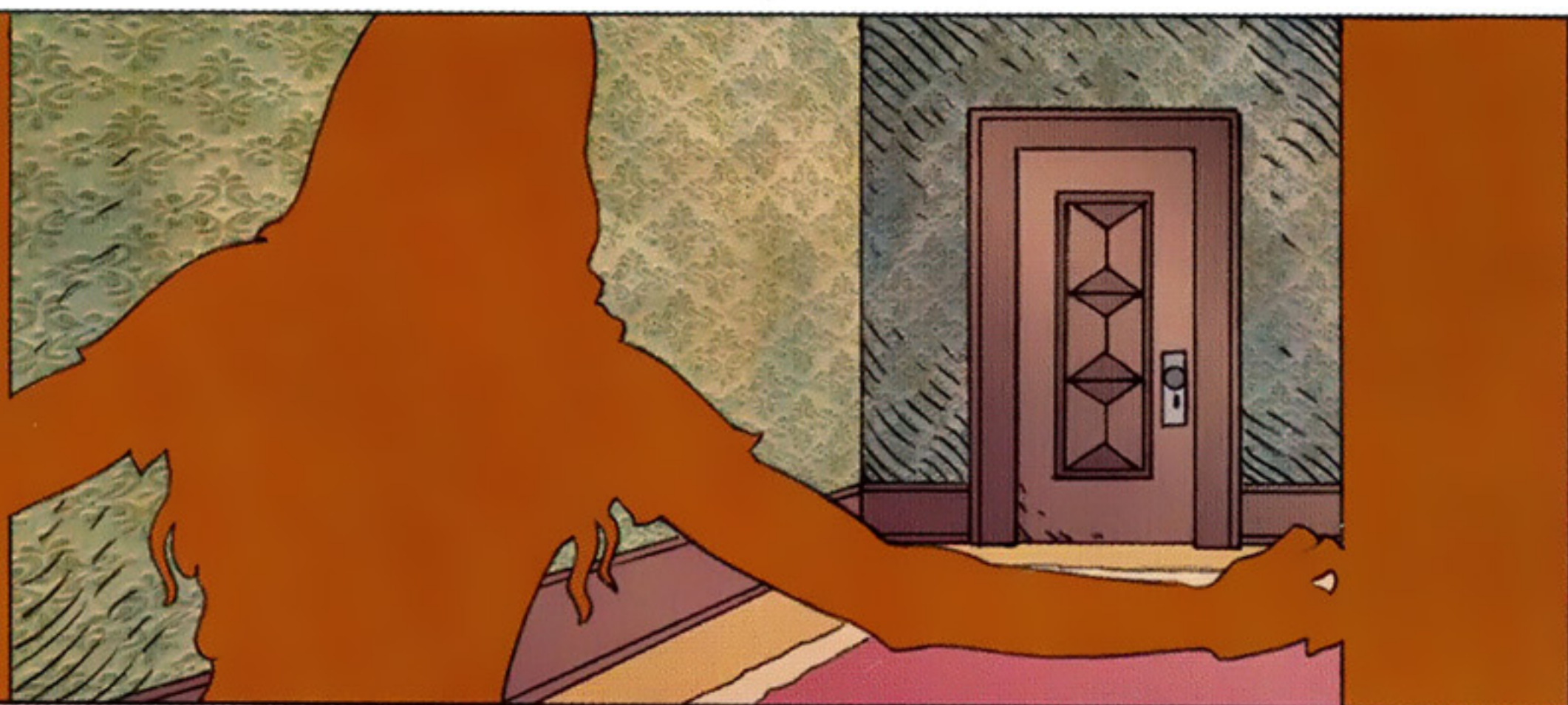
AND THEN WE'LL ALL BE TOGETHER AS ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY...



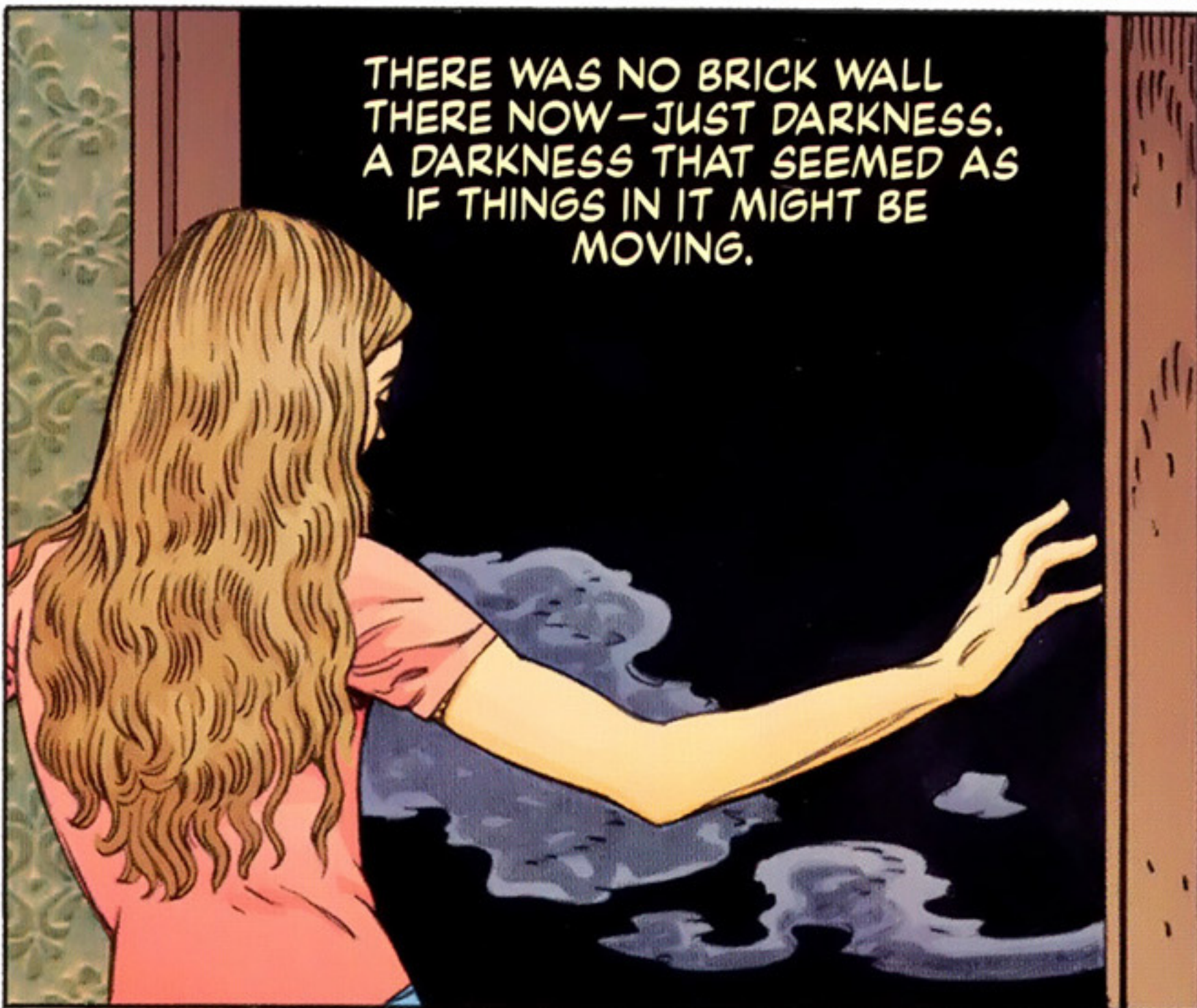
...FOR EVER AND ALWAYS.



CORALINE HURRIED INTO THE DRAWING ROOM AND HEADED STRAIGHT FOR THE DOOR IN THE CORNER.



THERE WAS NO BRICK WALL THERE NOW—JUST DARKNESS. A DARKNESS THAT SEEMED AS IF THINGS IN IT MIGHT BE MOVING.

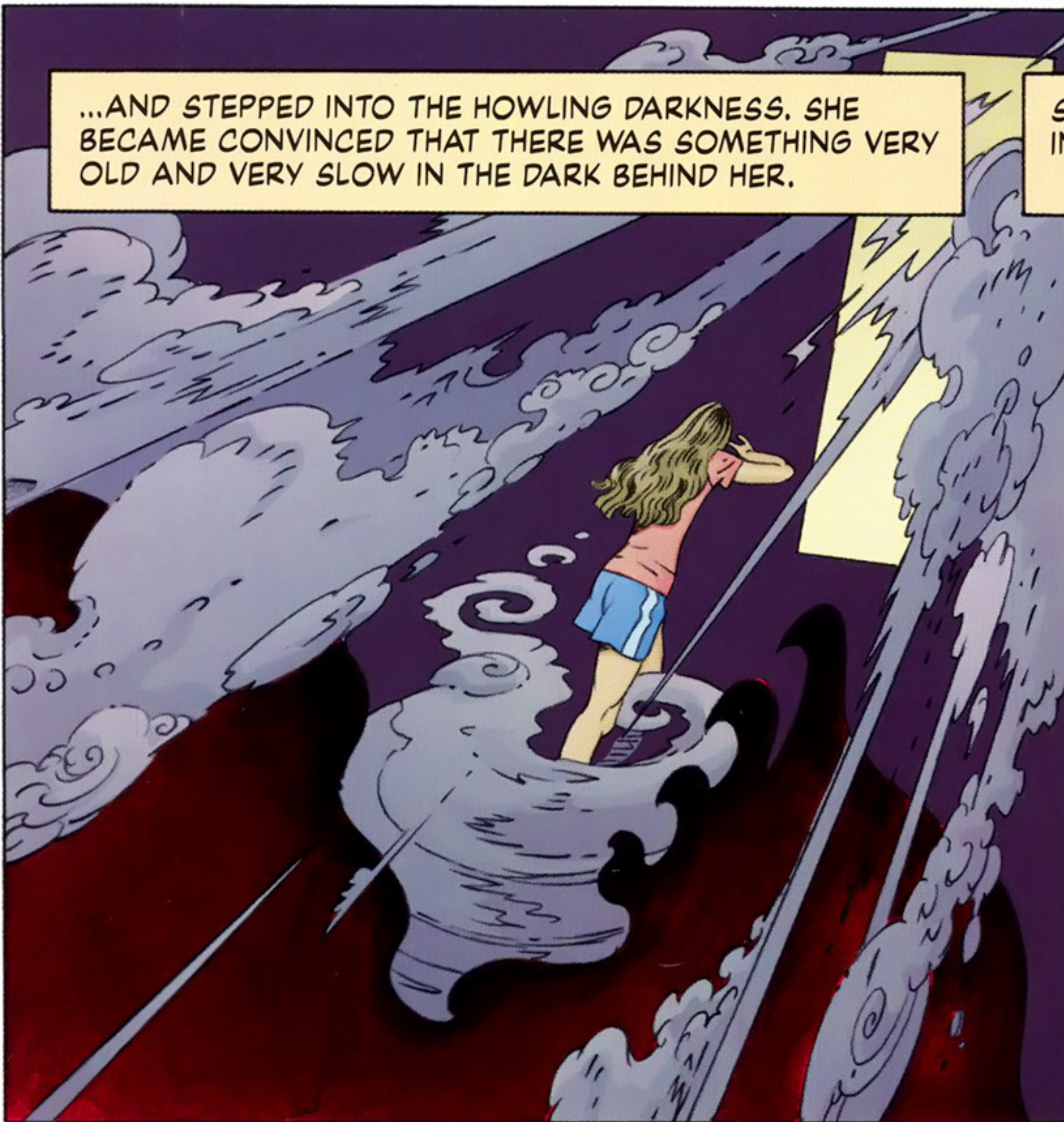


COME BACK SOON.



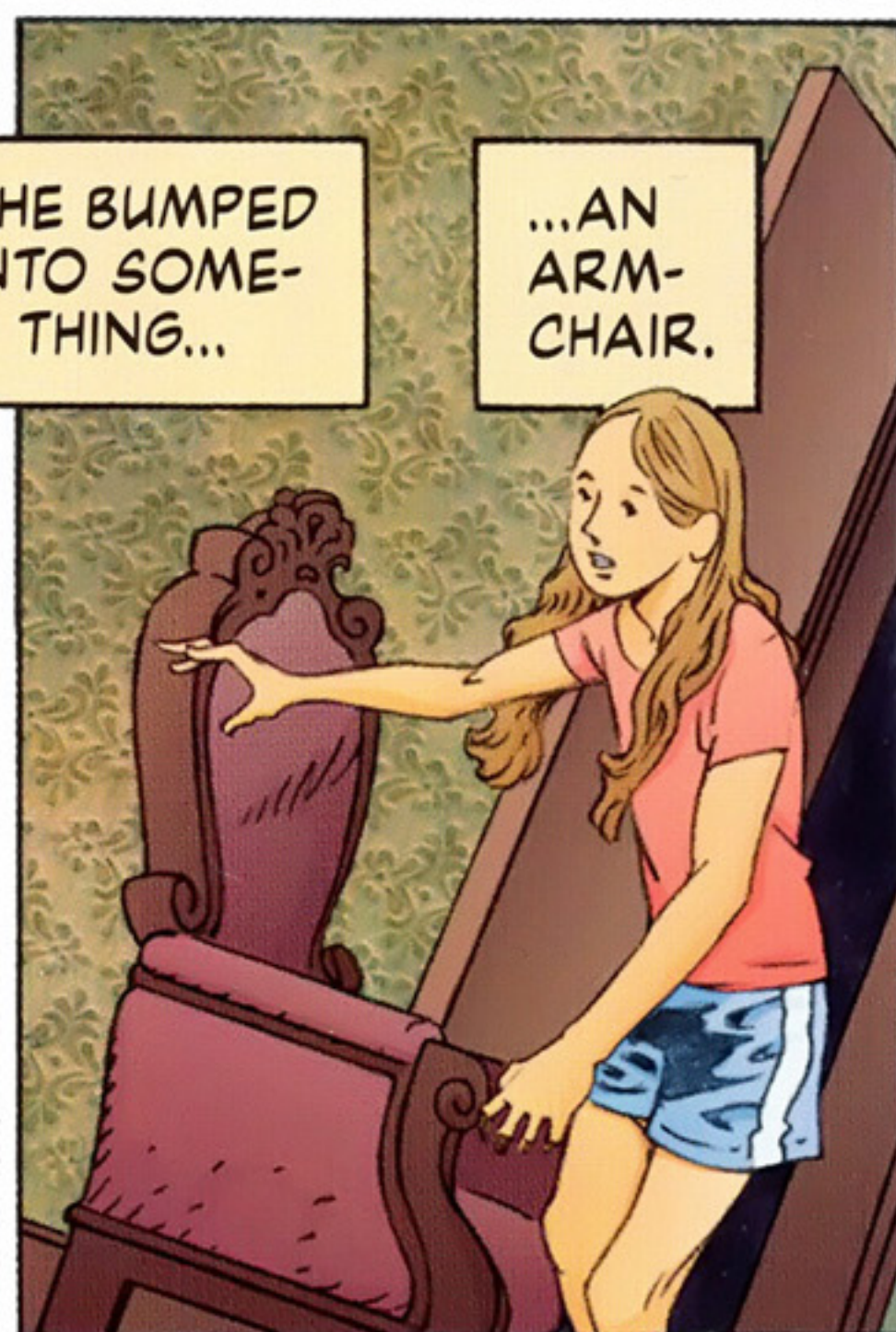
SHE TOOK A DEEP BREATH...

...AND STEPPED INTO THE HOWLING DARKNESS. SHE BECAME CONVINCED THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING VERY OLD AND VERY SLOW IN THE DARK BEHIND HER.

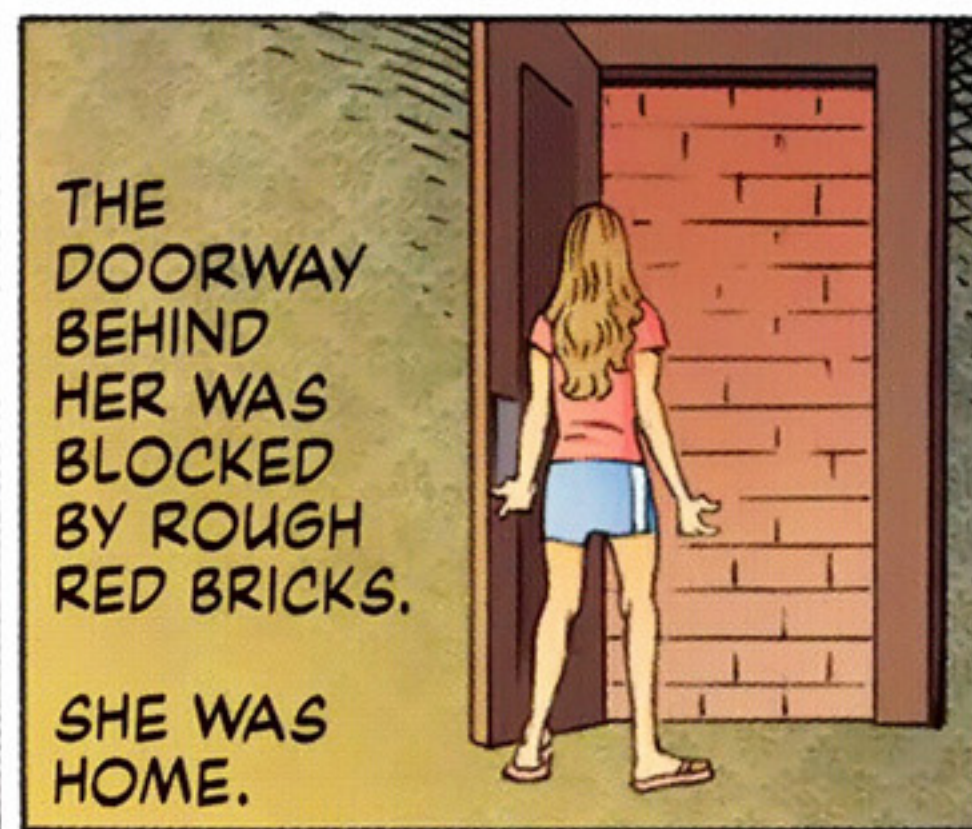


SHE BUMPED INTO SOMETHING...

...AN ARM-CHAIR.

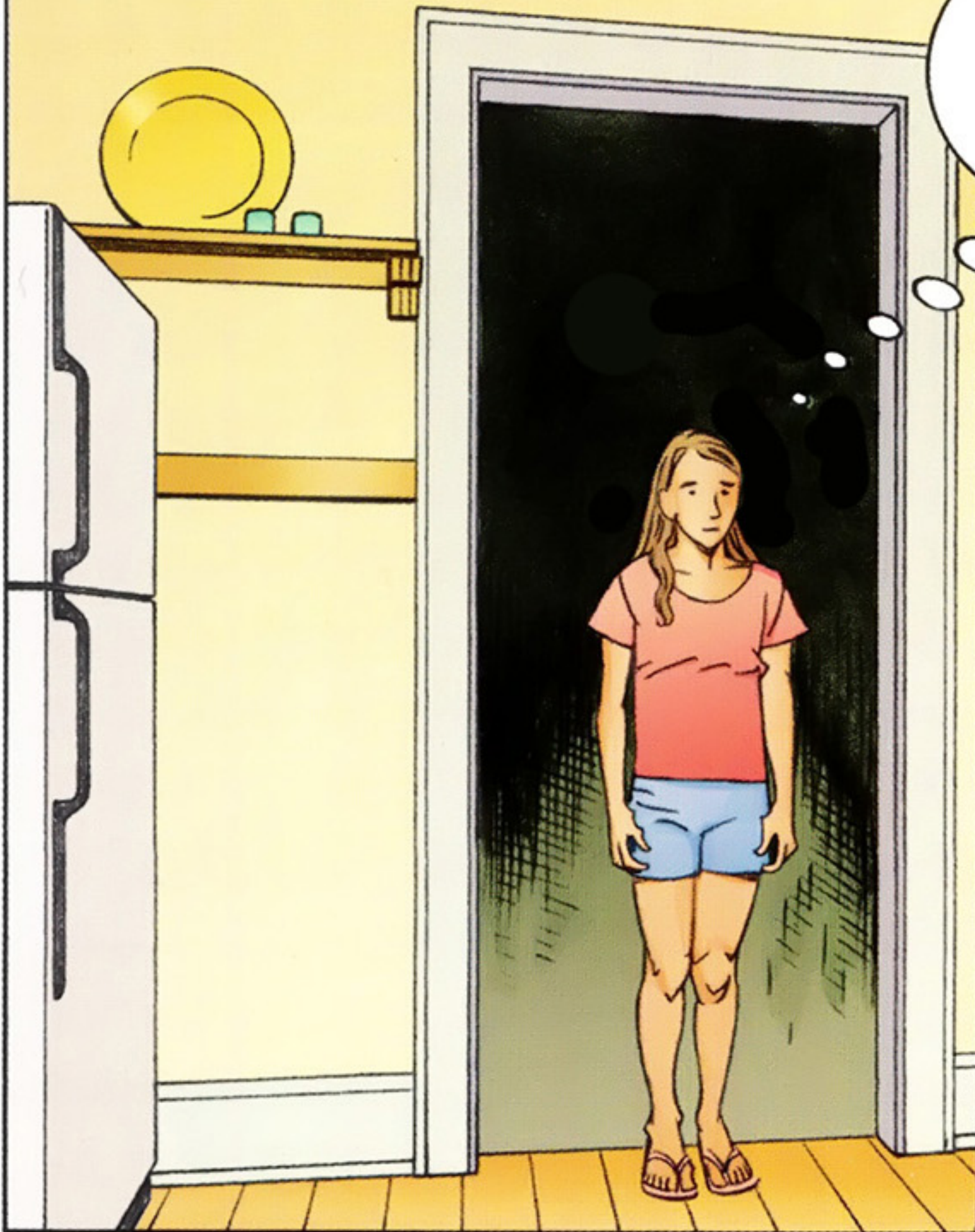


THE DOORWAY BEHIND HER WAS BLOCKED BY ROUGH RED BRICKS. SHE WAS HOME.





HER MOTHER STILL HADN'T RETURNED FROM HER SHOPPING EXPEDITION.



HUNGRY.

SO SHE MADE HERSELF SOME TOAST...



...WITH JAM AND PEANUT BUTTER...



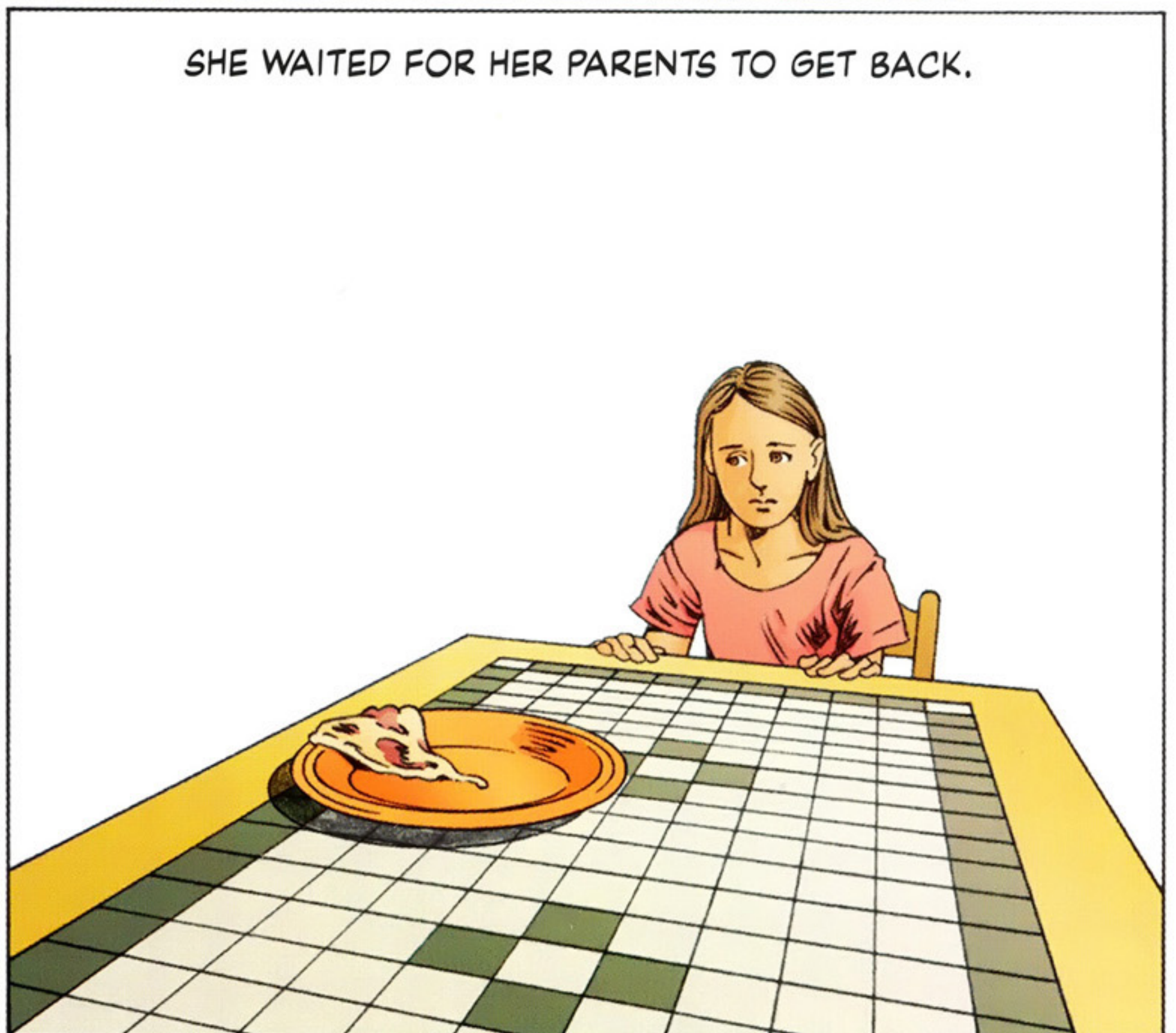
...AND DRANK A GLASS OF WATER.



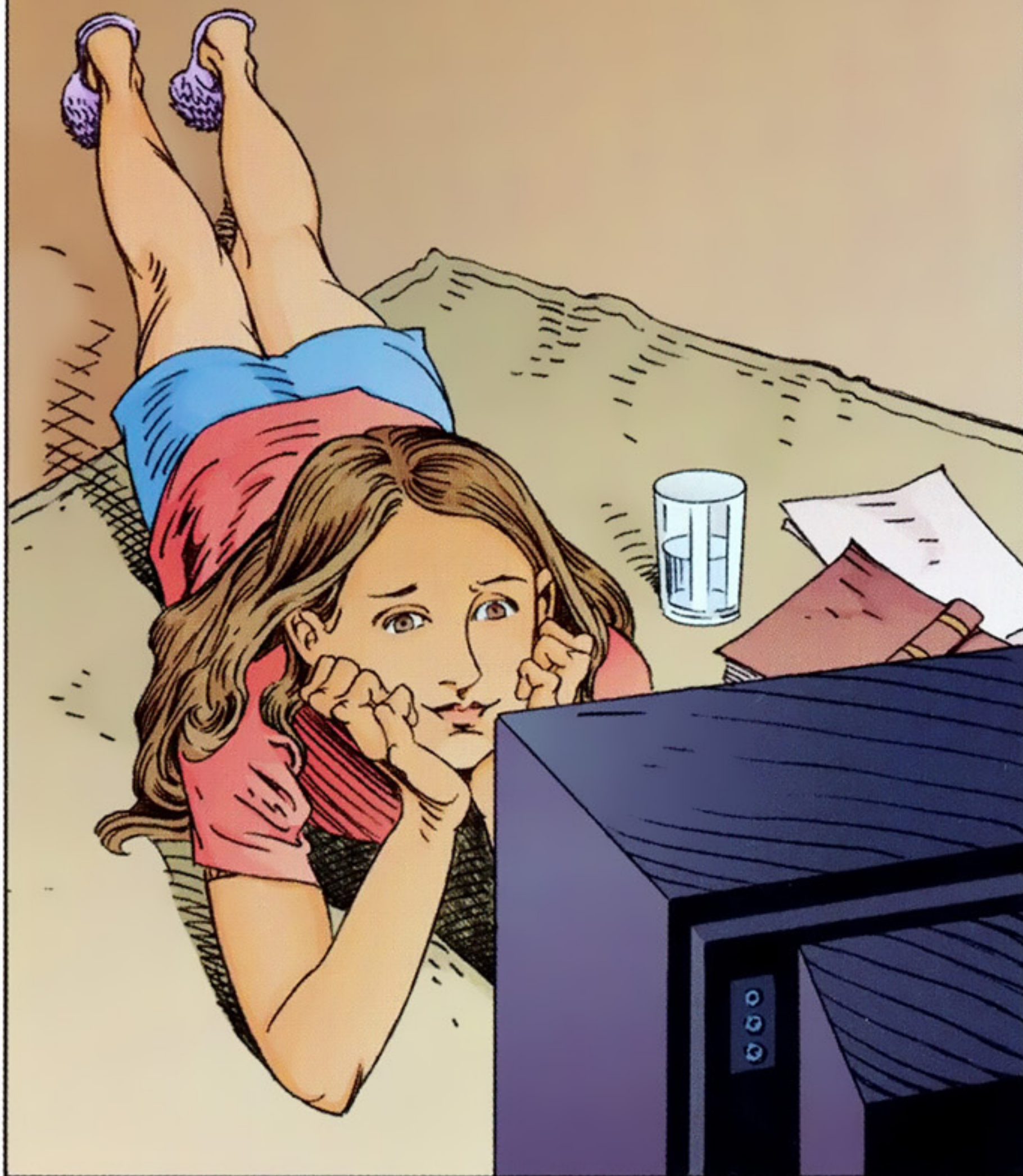
WHEN IT BEGAN TO GET DARK SHE MICROWAVED HERSELF A FROZEN PIZZA.



SHE WAITED FOR HER PARENTS TO GET BACK.



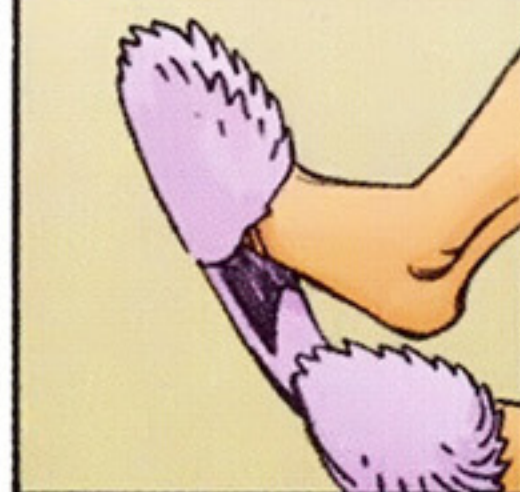
THEN CORALINE WATCHED TELEVISION. SHE WONDERED WHY GROWN-UPS GAVE THEMSELVES ALL THE GOOD PROGRAMS, WITH ALL THE SHOUTING AND RUNNING AROUND IN.



AFTER A WHILE SHE STARTED YAWNING.



THEN SHE UNDRESSED...



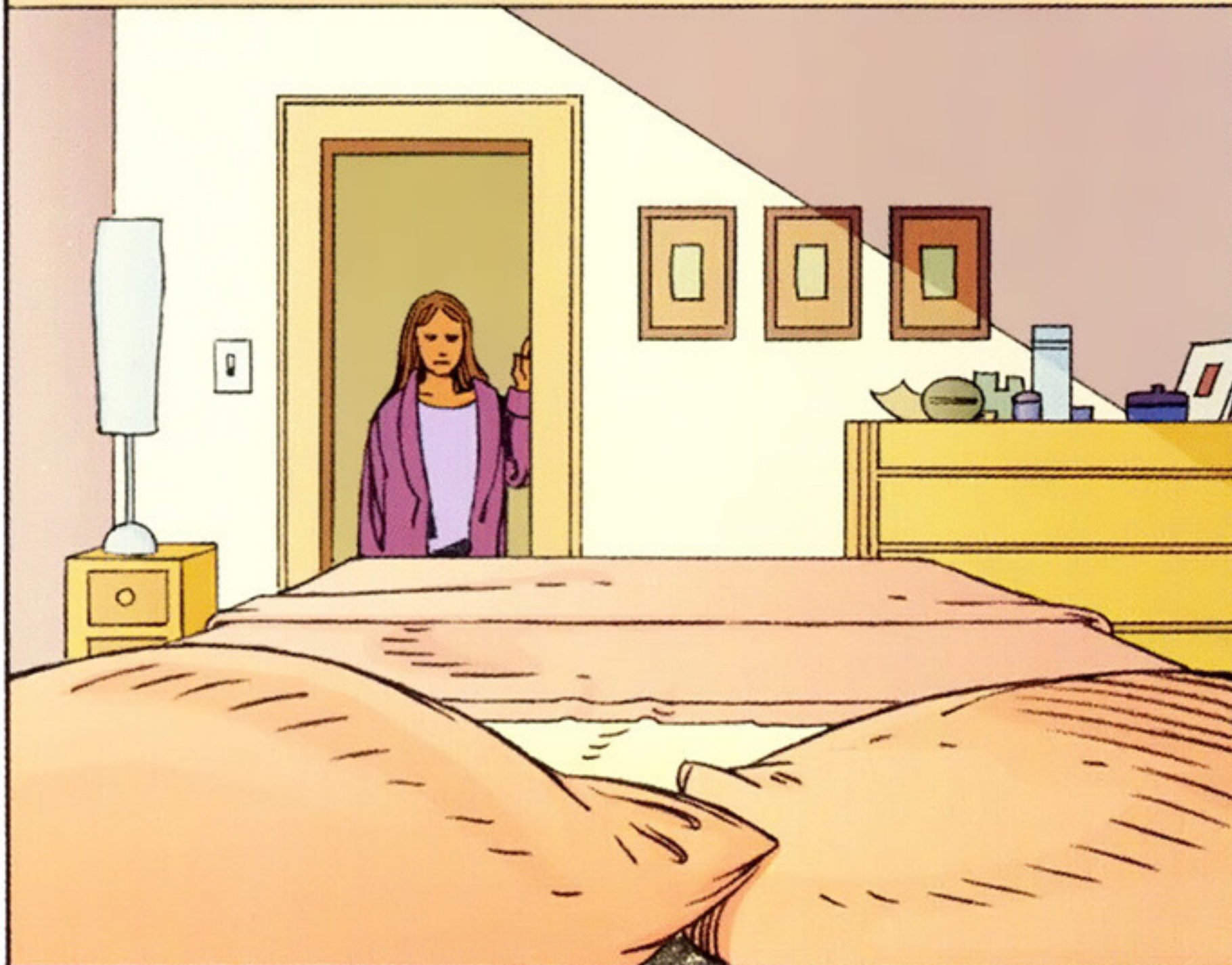
...BRUSHED HER TEETH...



...AND PUT HERSELF TO BED.



IN THE MORNING SHE WENT INTO HER PARENTS' ROOM, BUT THEIR BED HADN'T BEEN SLEPT IN, AND THEY WEREN'T AROUND.



SHE ATE CANNED SPAGHETTI FOR BREAKFAST.



FOR LUNCH, A BLOCK OF COOKING CHOCOLATE AND AN APPLE. THE APPLE WAS SLIGHTLY SHRIVELED, BUT IT TASTED SWEET AND GOOD.



FOR TEA SHE WENT DOWN TO SEE MISSES SPINK AND FORCIBLE. SHE HAD THREE DIGESTIVE BISCUITS AND A GLASS OF LIMEADE. IT TASTED BRIGHT GREEN AND VAGUELY CHEMICAL.

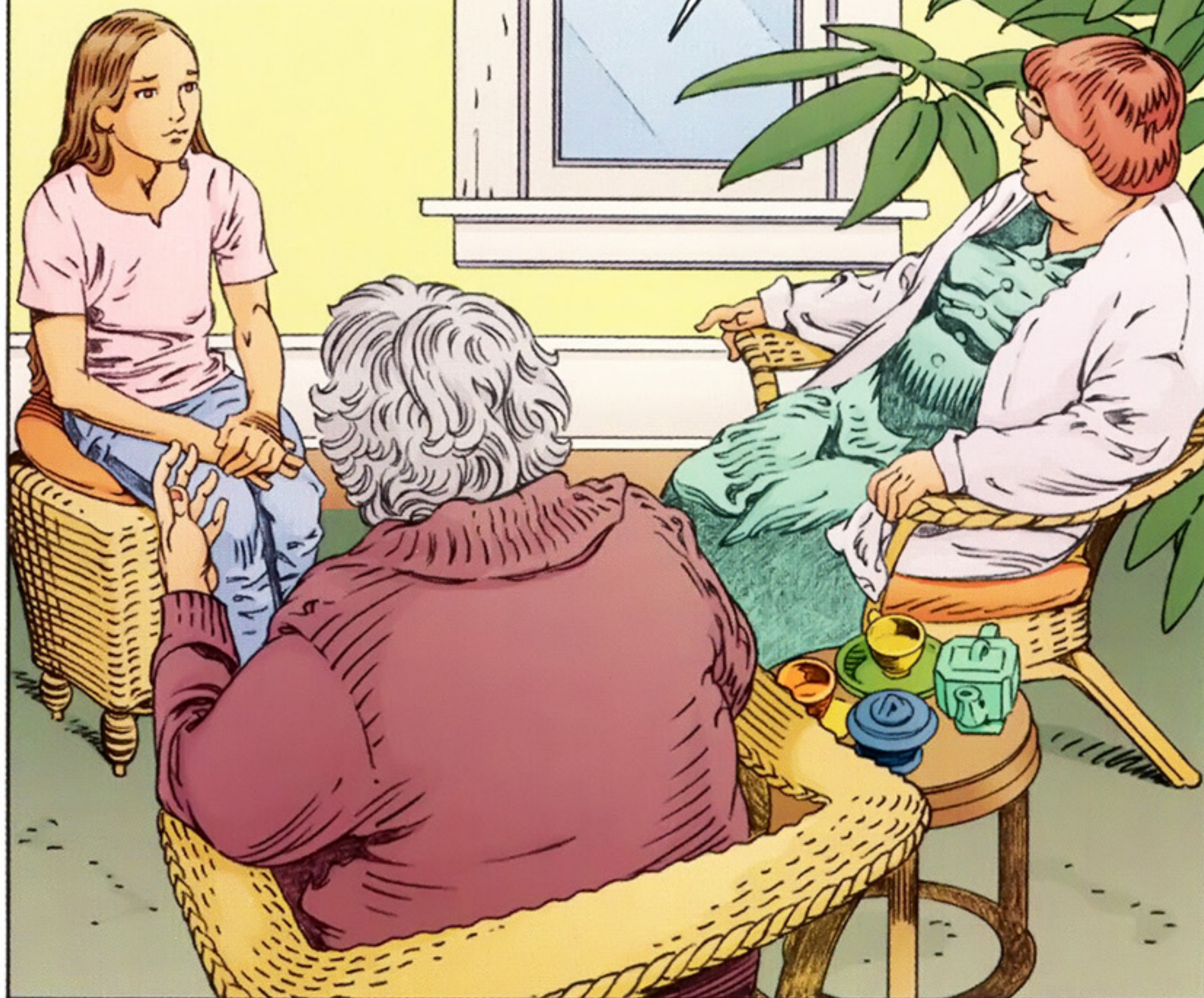
SHE LIKED IT ENORMOUSLY.



HOW ARE YOUR DEAR MOTHER AND FATHER?

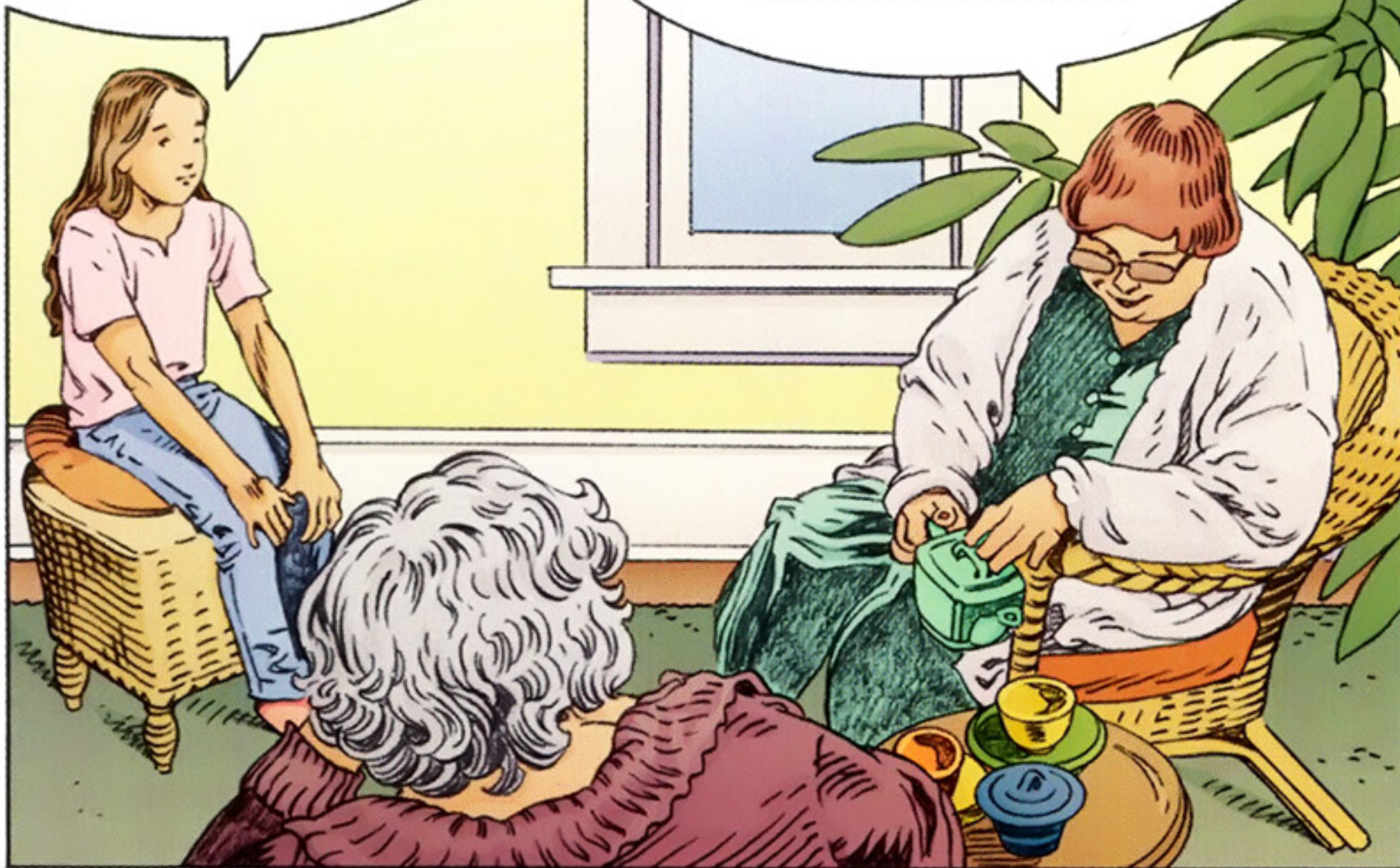
MISSING. I HAVEN'T SEEN EITHER OF THEM SINCE YESTERDAY. I'M ON MY OWN. I THINK I'VE BECOME A SINGLE CHILD FAMILY.

TELL YOUR MOTHER THAT WE FOUND THE GLASGOW EMPIRE PRESS CLIPPINGS WE WERE TELLING HER ABOUT. SHE SEEMED VERY INTERESTED IN THEM.



SHE'S VANISHED UNDER MYSTERIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, AND I BELIEVE MY FATHER HAS AS WELL.

WE'LL BE OUT ALL DAY TOMORROW, CAROLINE, LUVVY. WE'LL BE STAYING OVER WITH APRIL'S NIECE IN ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS.



THEY SHOWED CORALINE AN ALBUM WITH PHOTOS OF MISS SPINK'S NIECE IN IT.

THEN CORALINE LEFT...



...AND WALKED DOWN TO THE SUPER-MARKET.



SHE BOUGHT TWO BOTTLES OF LIMEADE, A CHOCOLATE CAKE, AND A NEW BAG OF APPLES...



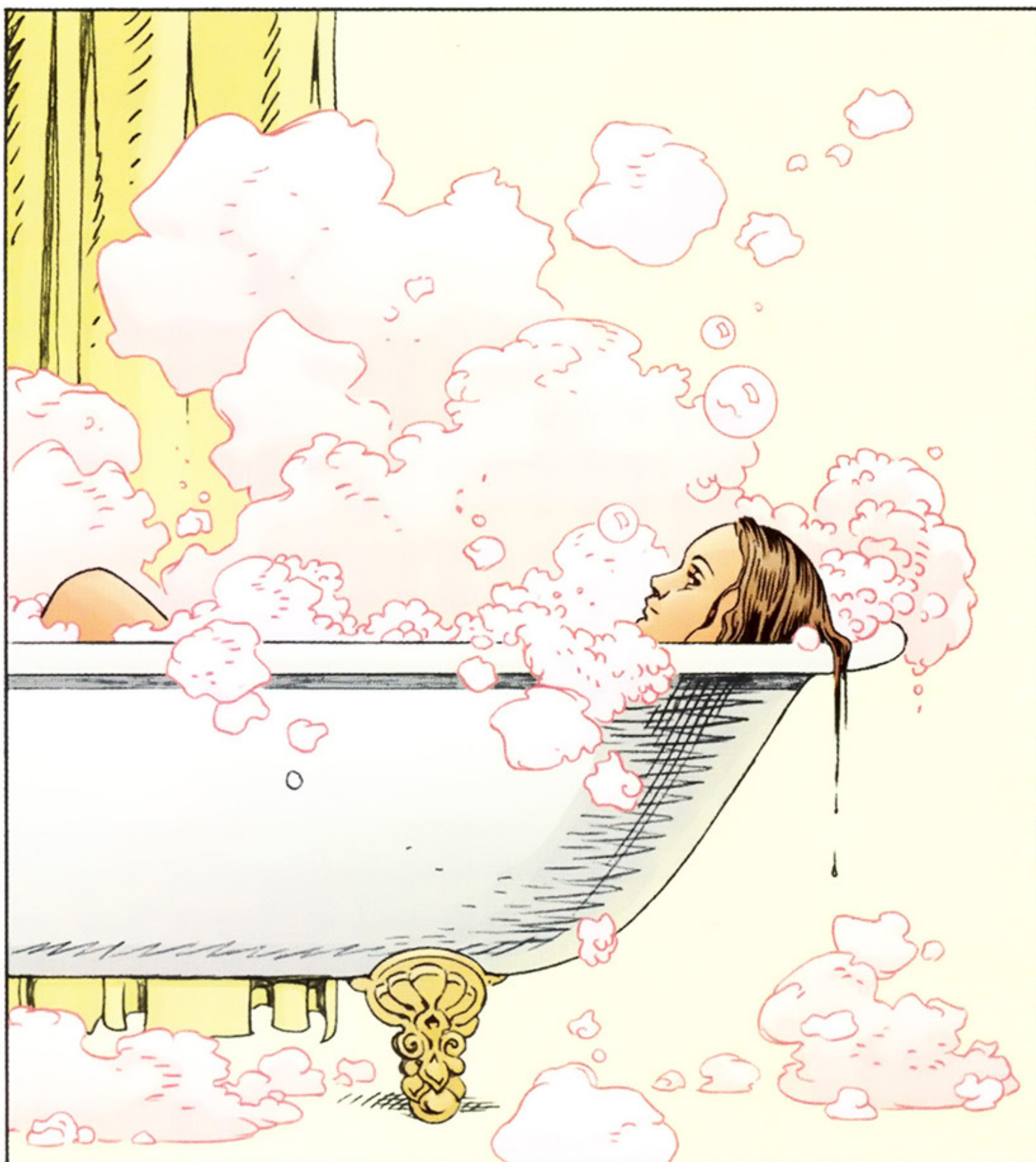
...WENT BACK HOME...



...AND ATE THEM FOR DINNER.



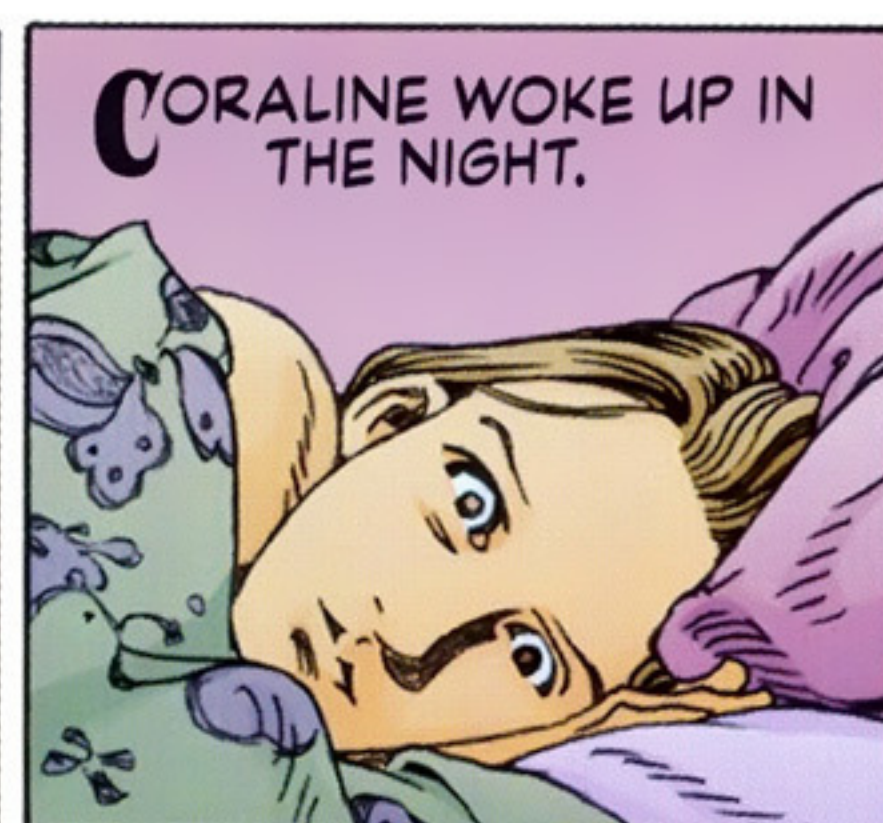
SHE RAN HERSELF A BATH WITH TOO MUCH BUBBLE IN IT...



...DRIED HERSELF AND THE FLOOR AS BEST SHE COULD...

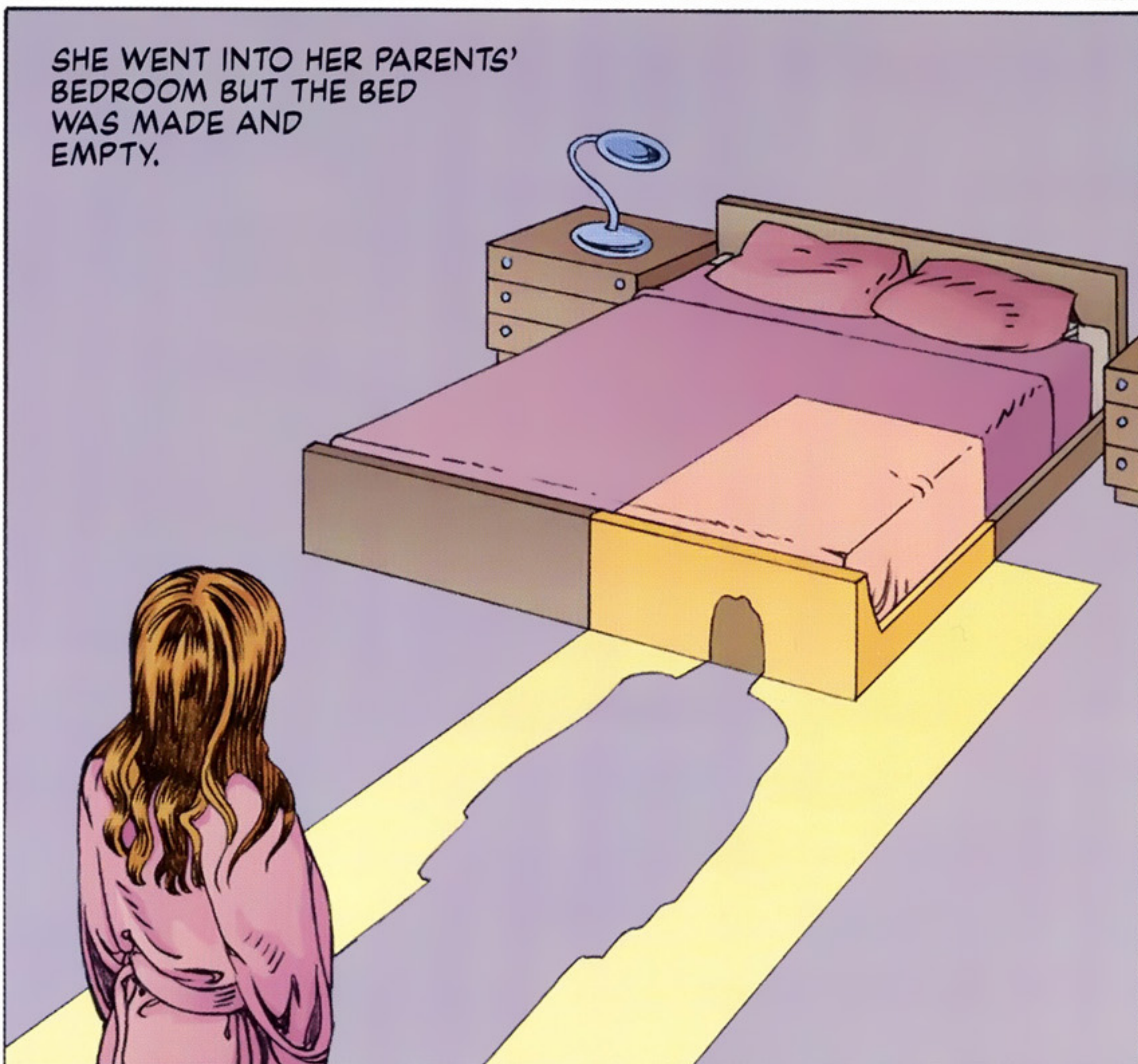


...AND WENT TO BED.

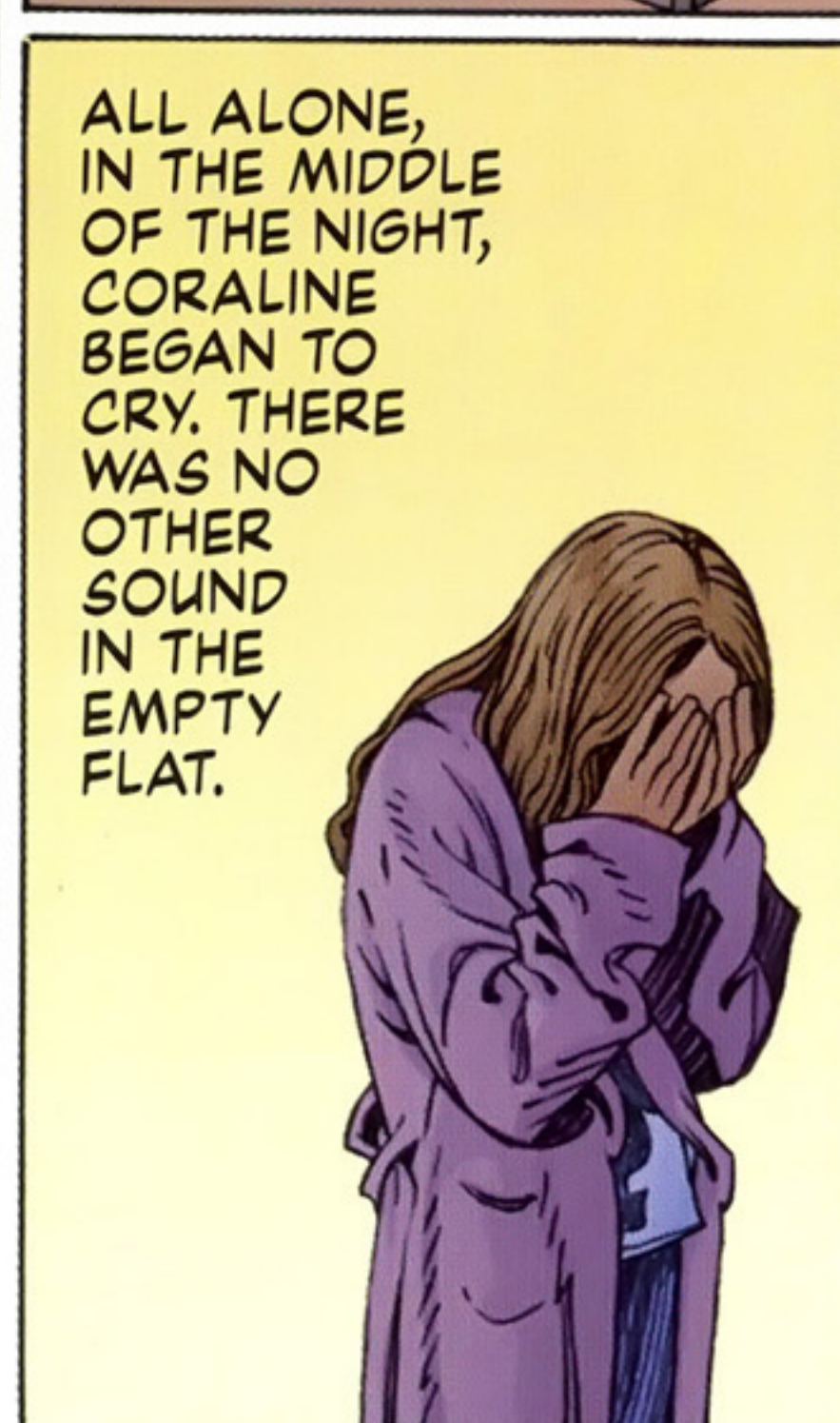


CORALINE WOKE UP IN THE NIGHT.

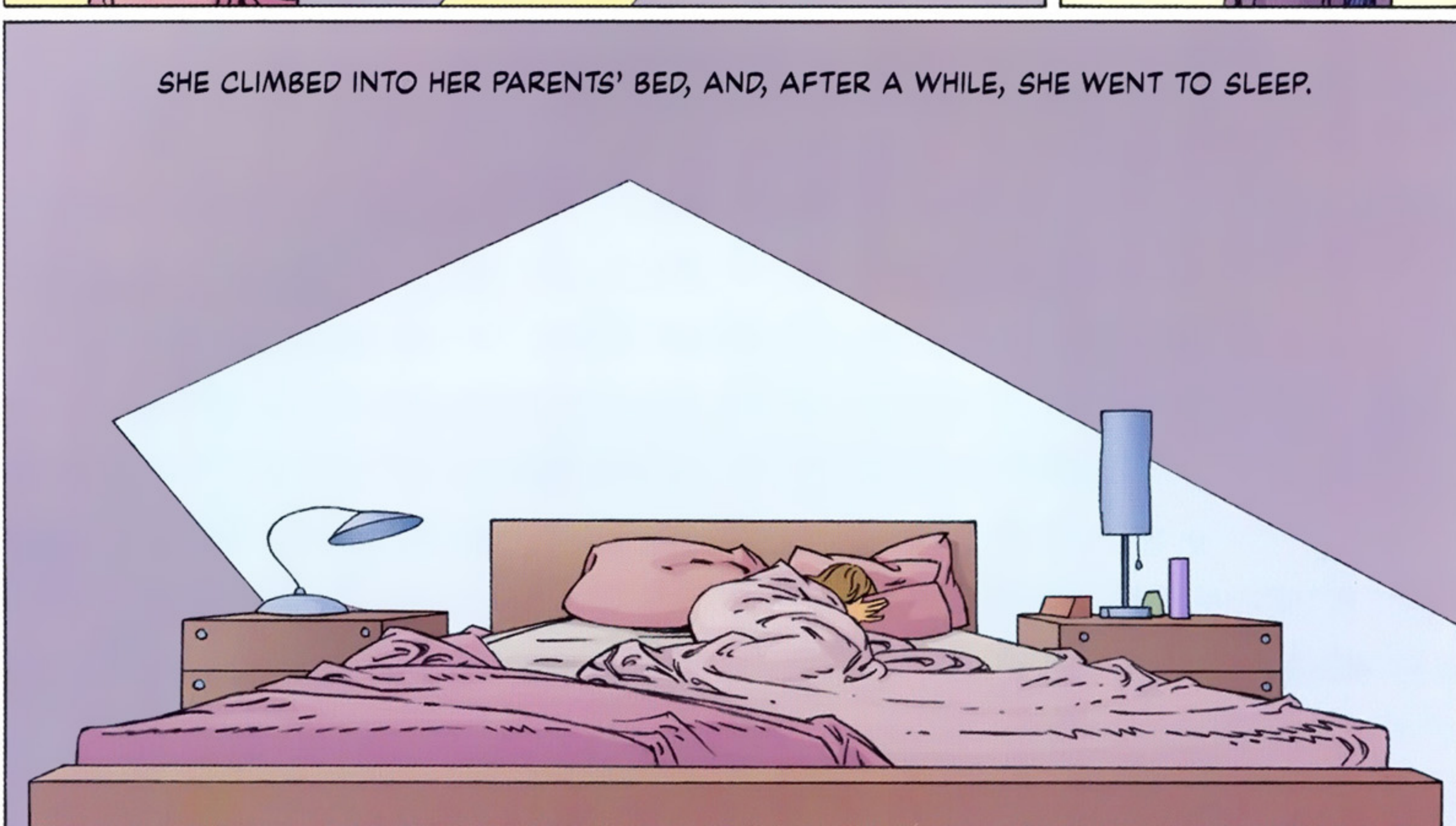
SHE WENT INTO HER PARENTS' BEDROOM BUT THE BED WAS MADE AND EMPTY.



ALL ALONE, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, CORALINE BEGAN TO CRY. THERE WAS NO OTHER SOUND IN THE EMPTY FLAT.



SHE CLIMBED INTO HER PARENTS' BED, AND, AFTER A WHILE, SHE WENT TO SLEEP.



CORALINE WAS WAKENED BY COLD PAWS BATTING HER FACE.

HULLO! HOW DID YOU GET IN?



HAVE YOU COME TO TELL ME SOMETHING?



DO YOU KNOW WHERE MUMMY AND DADDY ARE?



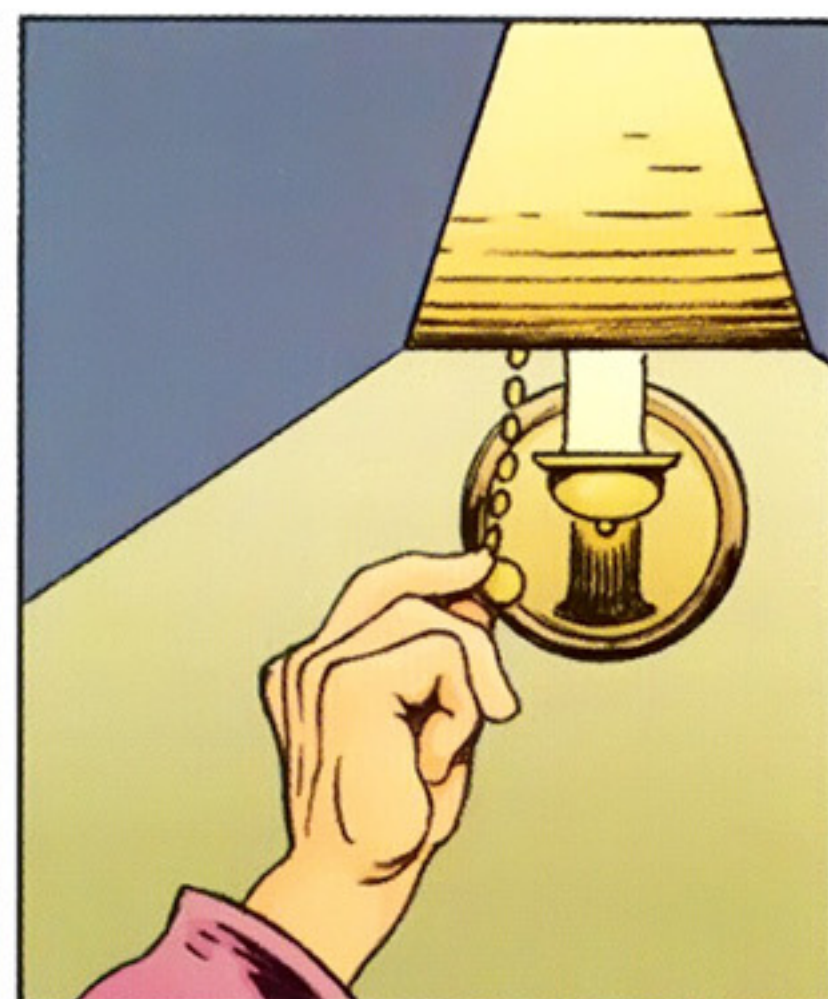
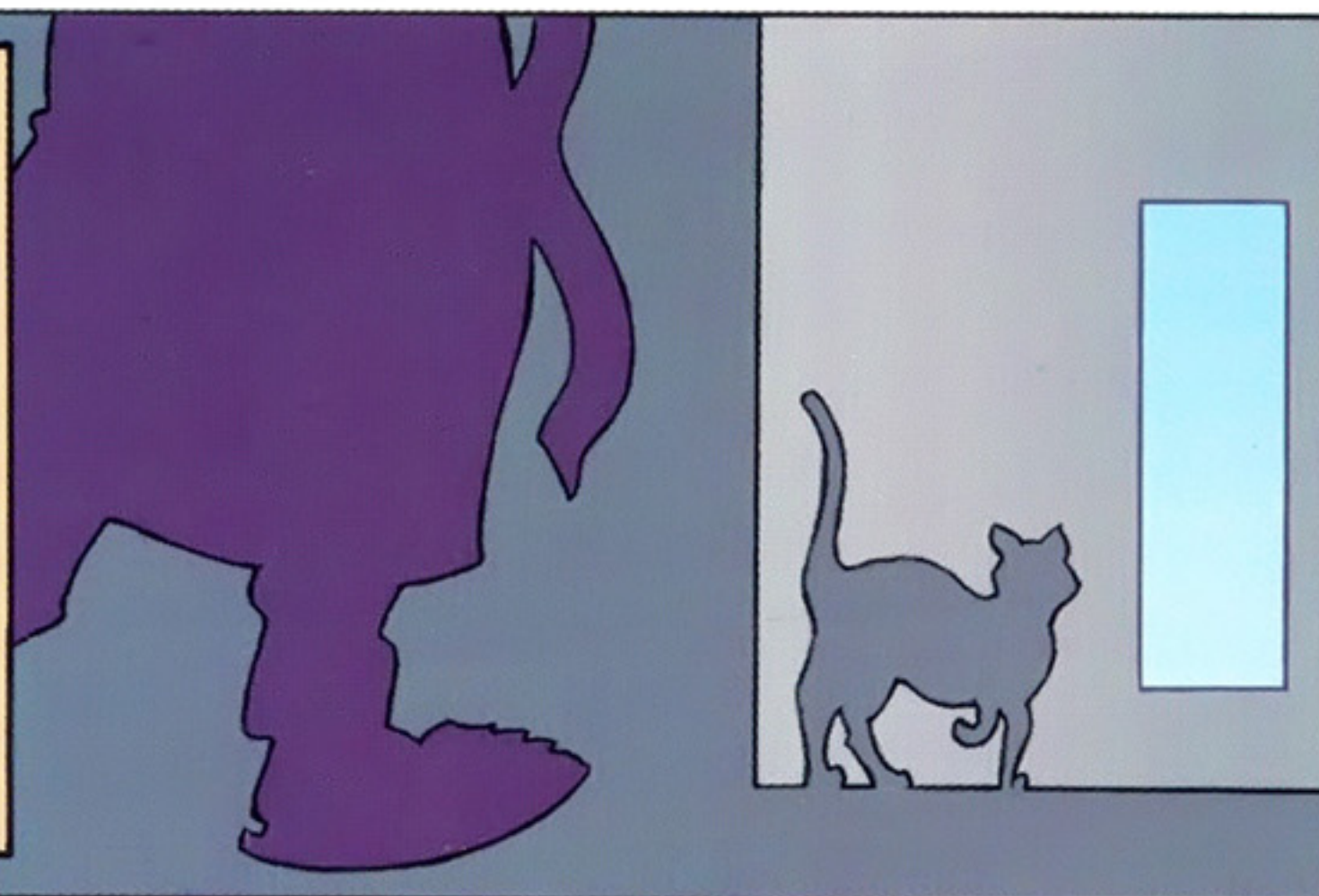
IS THAT A YES?



WILL YOU TAKE ME TO THEM?

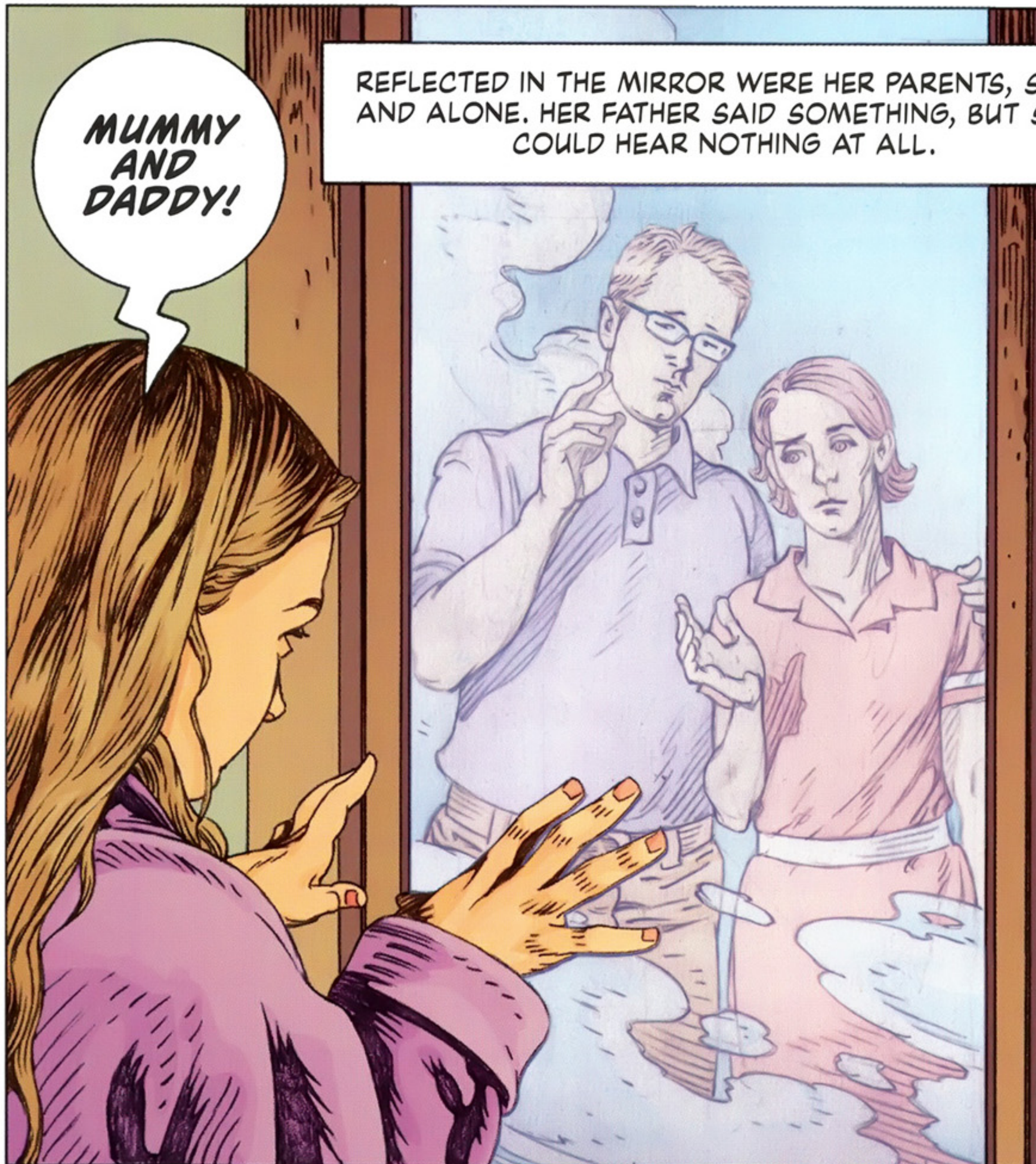


THE CAT WALKED THE LENGTH OF THE HALL AND STOPPED BY THE FULL-LENGTH MIRROR. IT HAD ONCE BEEN THE INSIDE OF A WARDROBE DOOR AND HAD BEEN HANGING THERE ON THE WALL WHEN THEY MOVED IN.



MUMMY AND DADDY!

REFLECTED IN THE MIRROR WERE HER PARENTS, SAD AND ALONE. HER FATHER SAID SOMETHING, BUT SHE COULD HEAR NOTHING AT ALL.

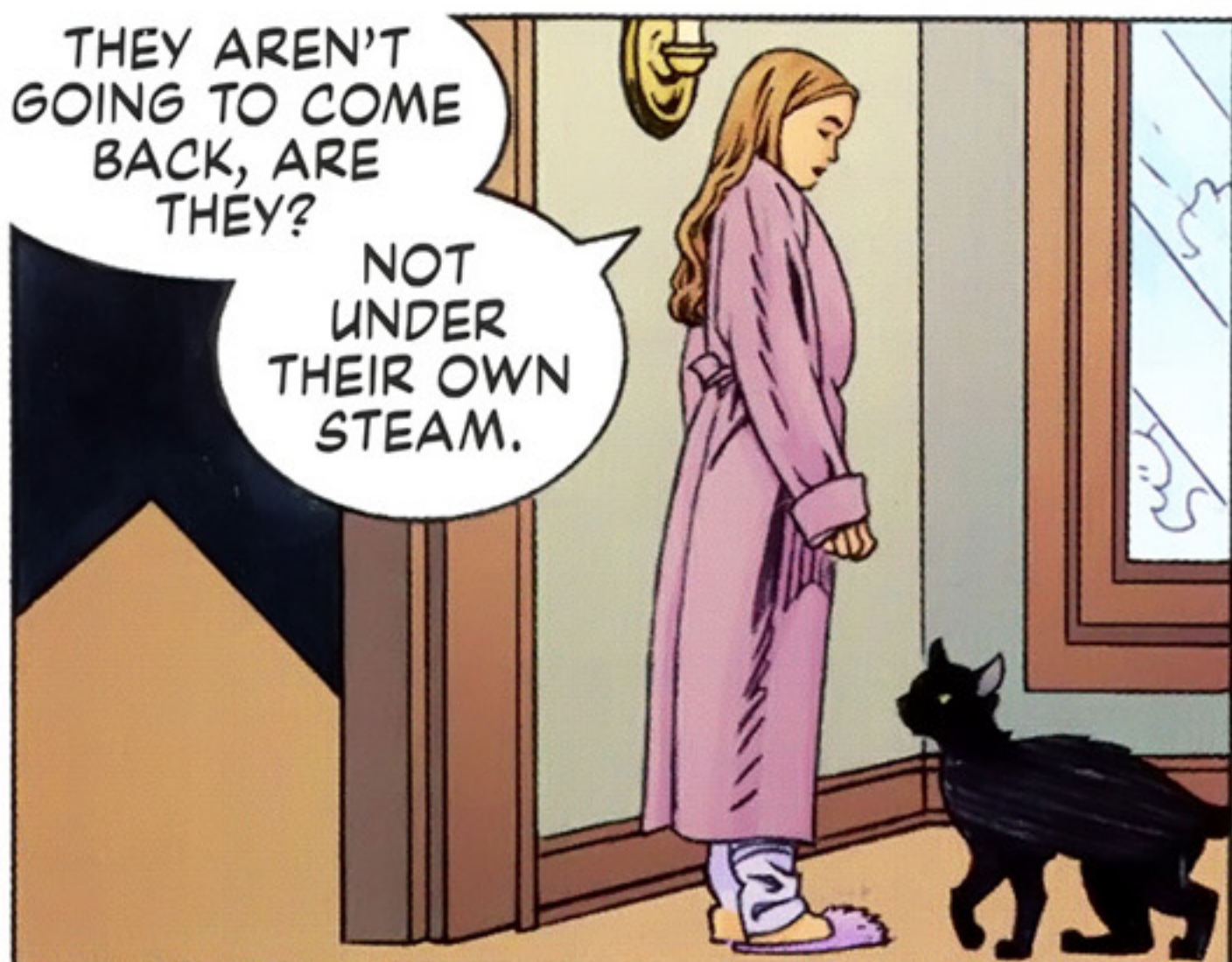


HER MOTHER BREATHED ON THE INSIDE OF THE MIRROR GLASS, AND QUICKLY, BEFORE THE FOG FADED, SHE WROTE...



THEY AREN'T GOING TO COME BACK, ARE THEY?

NOT UNDER THEIR OWN STEAM.

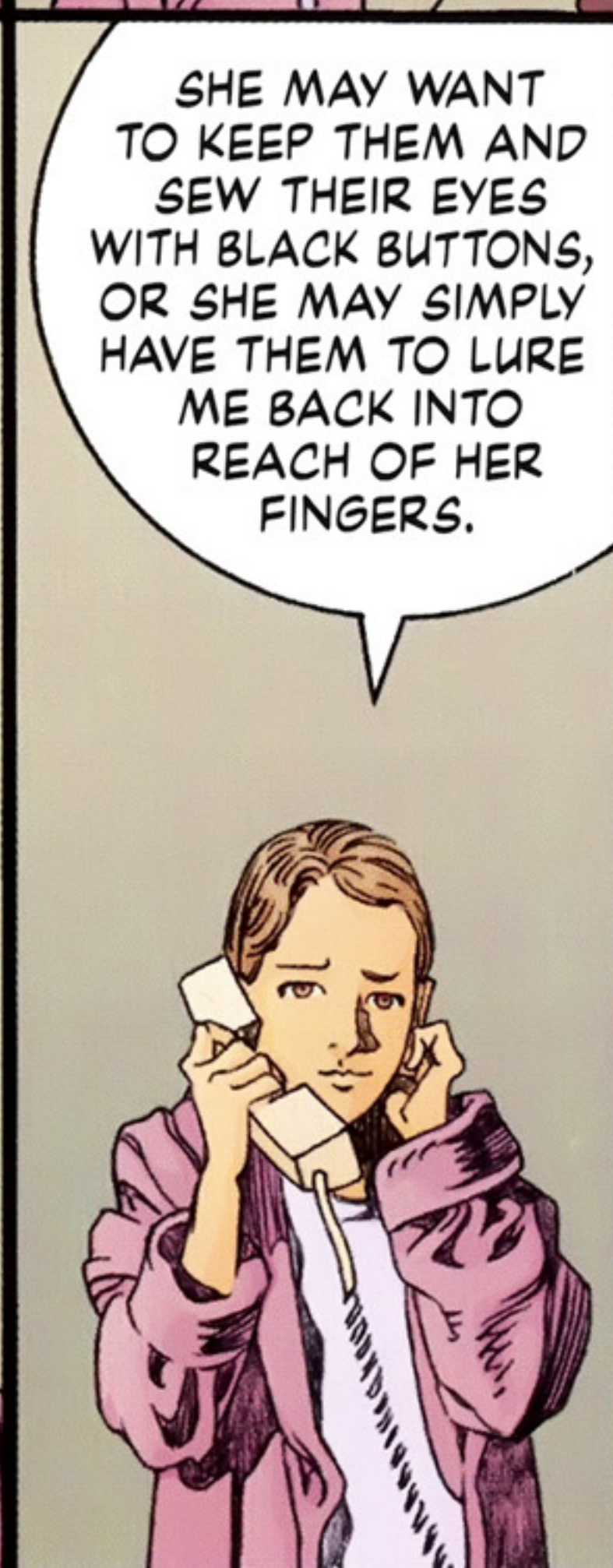
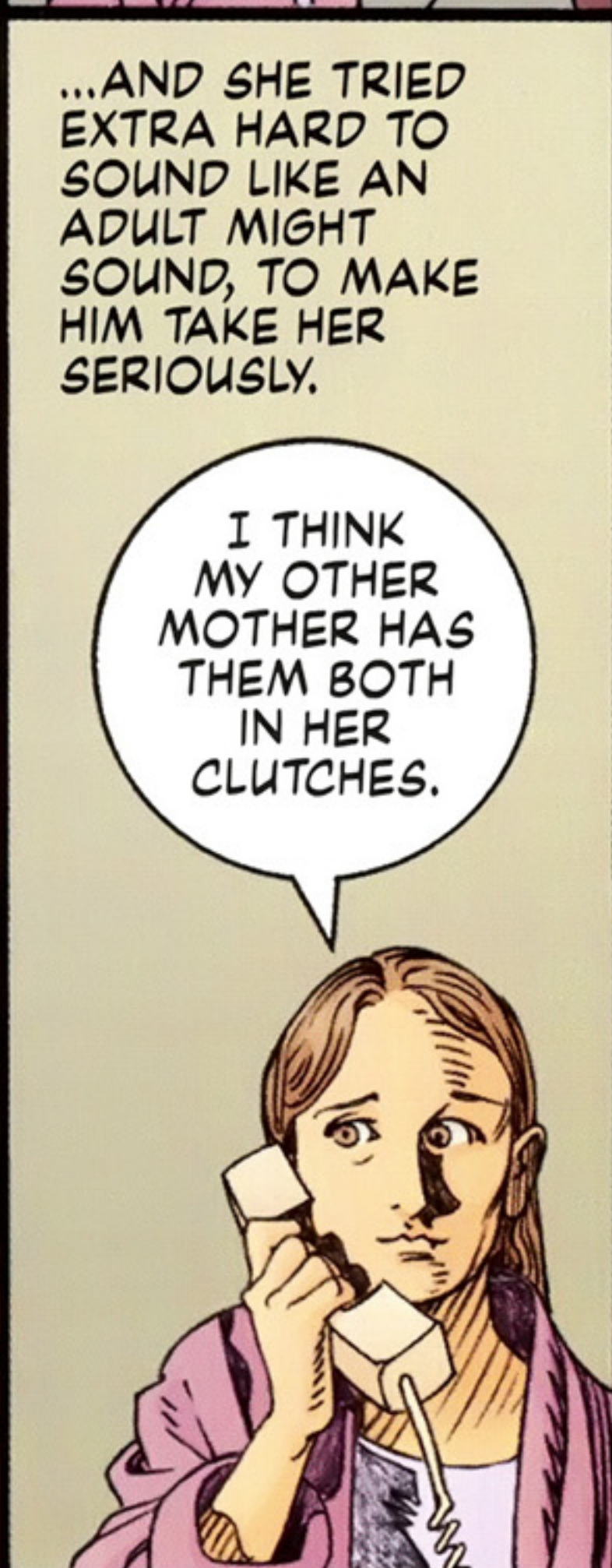


THE CAT BLINKED AT HER.



RIGHT...





AH, THE NEFARIOUS CLUTCHES OF HER FIENDISH FINGERS, IS IT? MM. YOU KNOW WHAT I SUGGEST, MISS JONES?

NO.
WHAT?

YOU ASK YOUR MOTHER TO MAKE YOU A BIG OLD MUG OF HOT CHOCOLATE, AND THEN GIVE YOU A GREAT BIG OLD HUG.

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE HOT CHOCOLATE AND A HUG FOR MAKING NIGHTMARES GO AWAY.

AND IF SHE STARTS TO TELL YOU OFF FOR WAKING HER UP AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT, WHY YOU TELL HER THAT THAT'S WHAT THE POLICEMAN SAID.



HE HAD A DEEP, REASSURING VOICE.

CORALINE WAS NOT REASSURED.



WHEN I SEE HER I SHALL TELL HER THAT.



THE BLACK CAT, WHO HAD SAT ON THE FLOOR, GROOMING ITS FUR, THROUGH THIS ENTIRE CONVERSATION NOW STOOD UP AND LED THE WAY INTO THE HALL.



CORALINE WENT INTO THE KITCHEN AND FOUND A BOX OF EMERGENCY WHITE CANDLES...



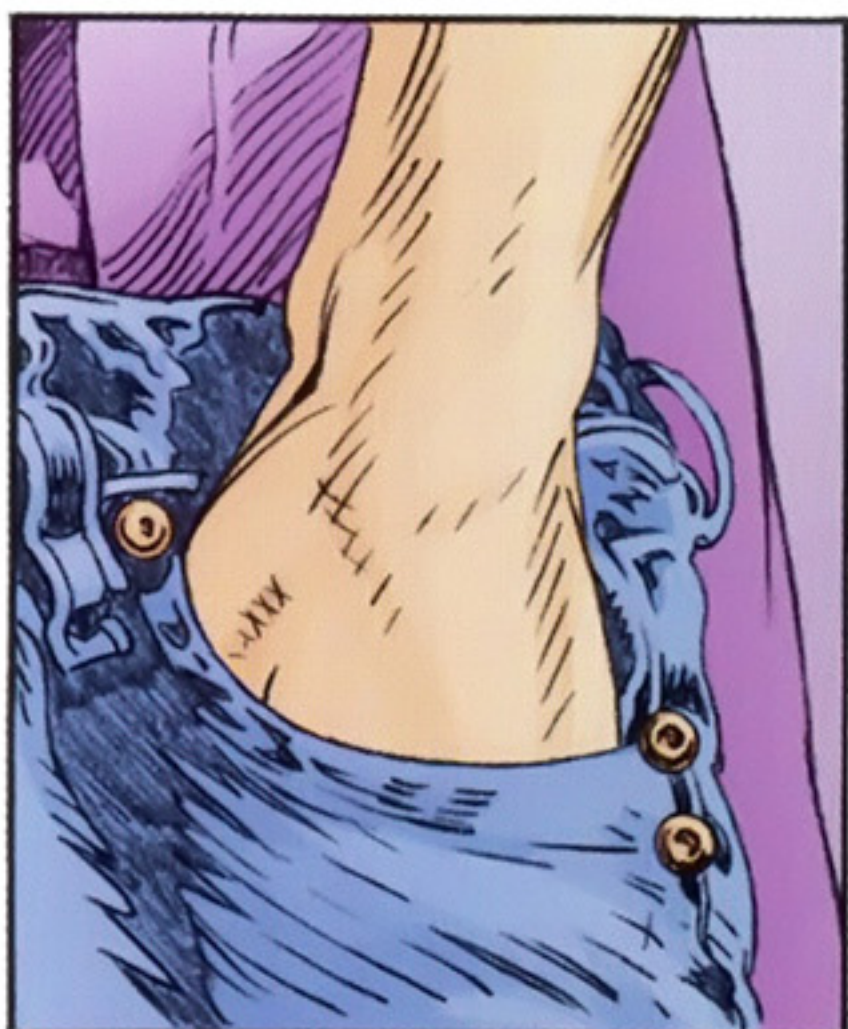
...PUT AN APPLE INTO EACH POCKET...



...AND TOOK THE OLD BLACK KEY OFF THE RING.



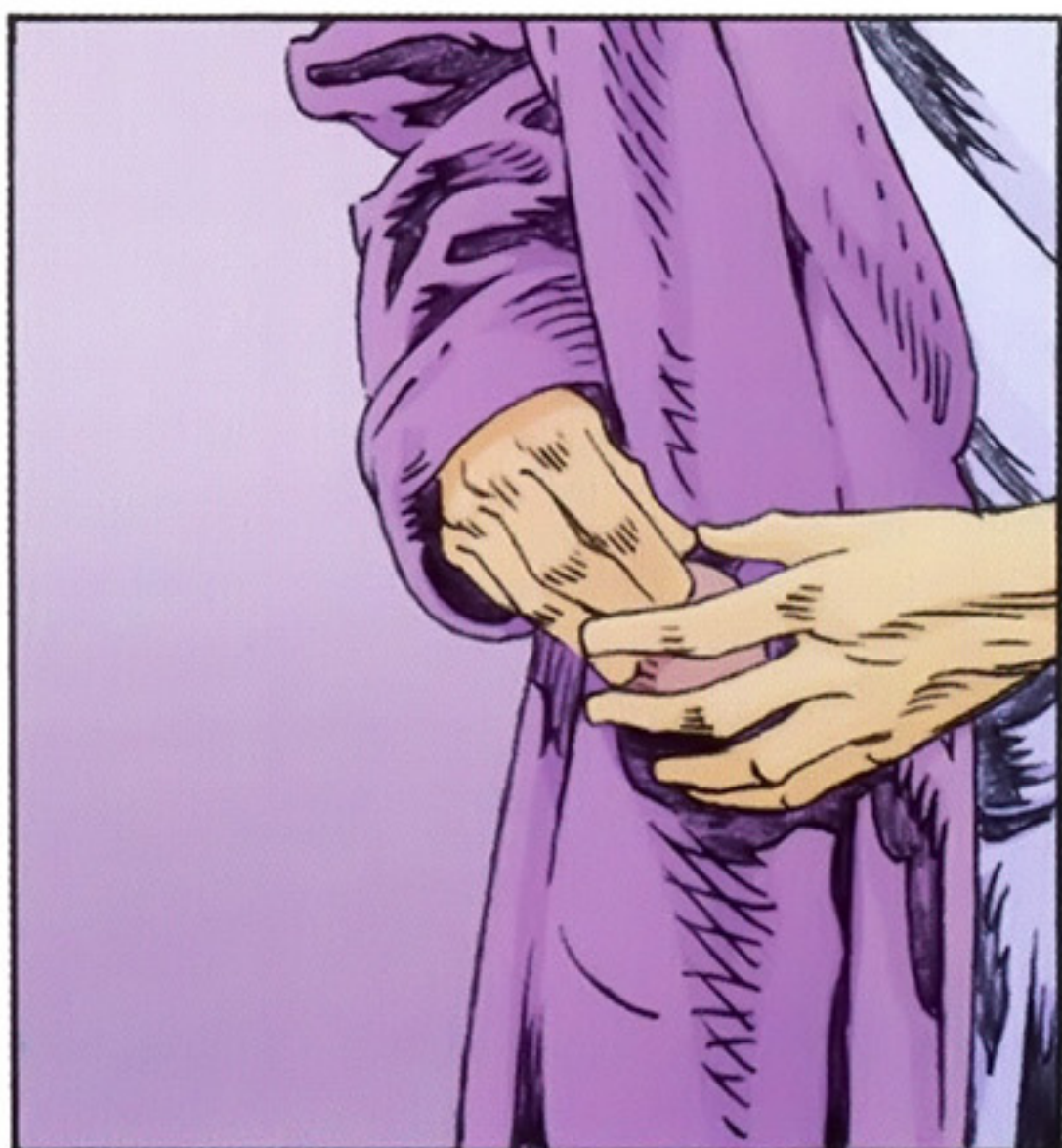
BACK IN HER BED-ROOM SHE RUM-MAGED IN THE POCKET OF HER JEANS...



...FOUND THE STONE WITH THE HOLE IN IT...



...PUT IT INTO HER POCKET...



...AND WALKED INTO THE DRAWING ROOM.

SHE HAD THE FEELING THAT THE DOOR WAS LOOKING AT HER, WHICH SHE KNEW WAS SILLY, AND KNEW ON A DEEPER LEVEL WAS SOMEHOW TRUE.



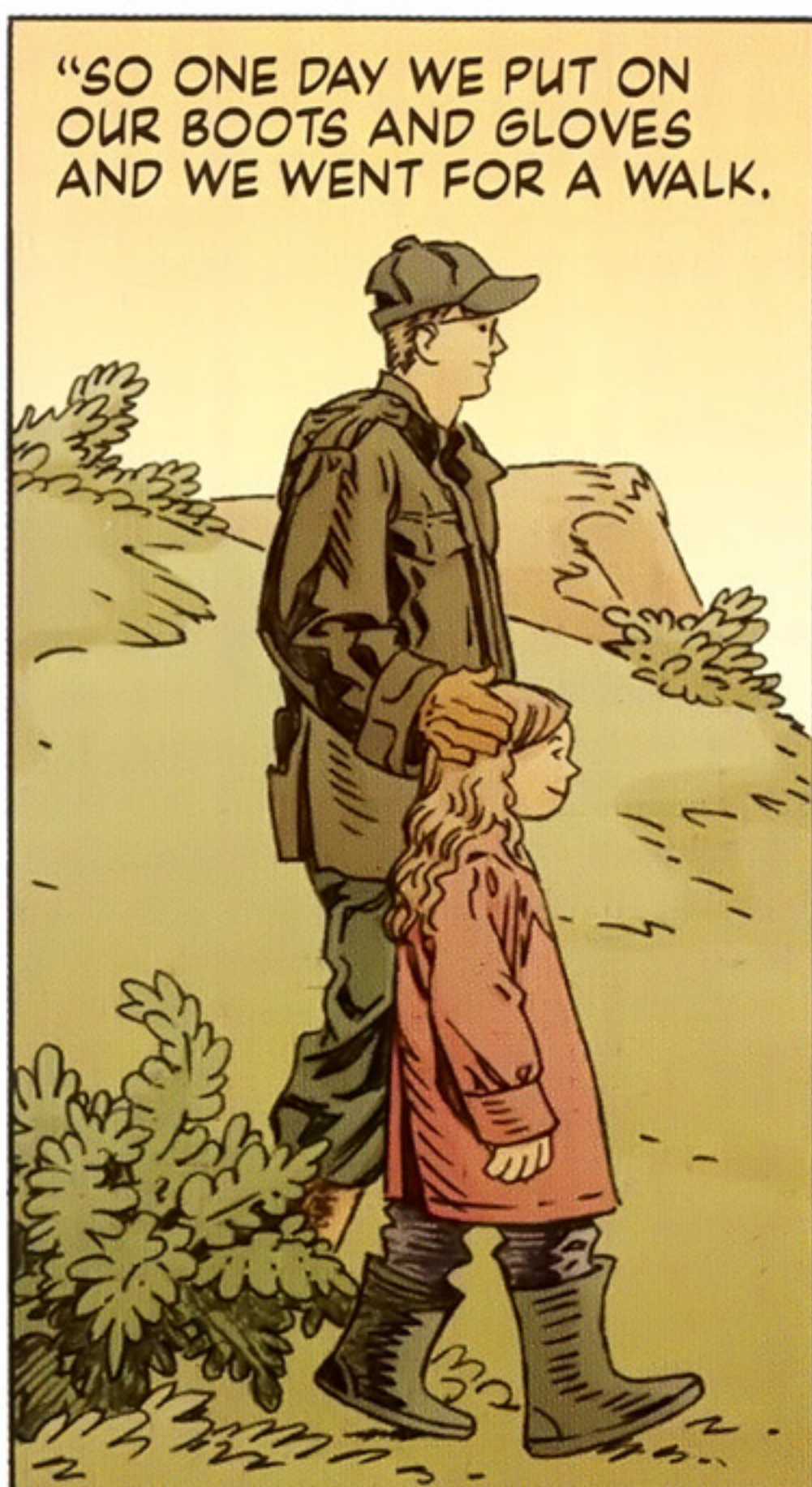
WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL, WHEN WE LIVED IN OUR OLD HOUSE, A LONG, LONG TIME AGO, MY DAD TOOK ME FOR A WALK ON THE WASTELAND BETWEEN OUR HOUSE AND THE SHOPS.



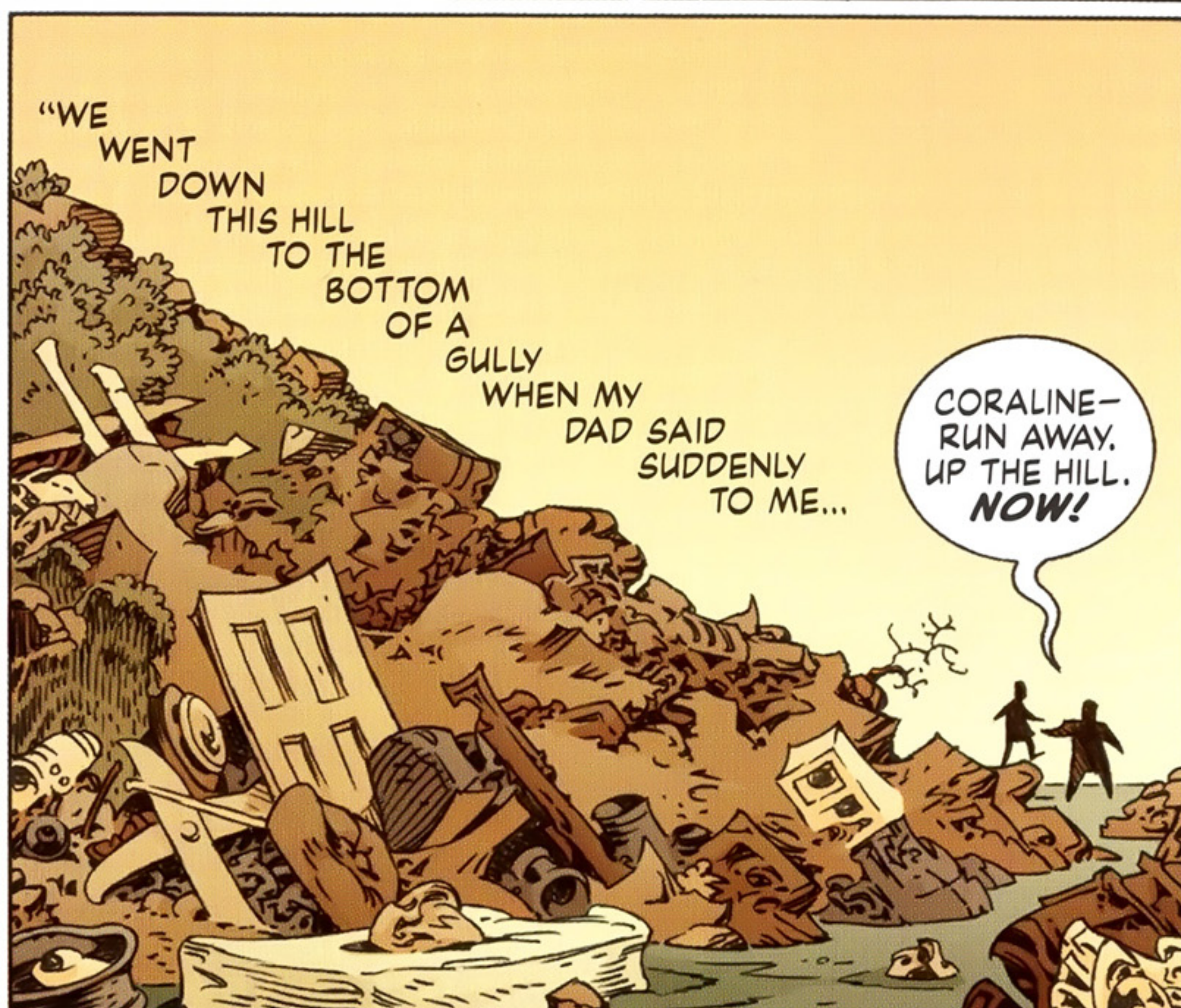
"IT WASN'T THE BEST PLACE TO GO FOR A WALK, REALLY. THERE WERE SHARP THINGS BACK THERE AND MUM SAID THERE WAS TETANUS AND SUCH."



BUT I KEPT TELLING THEM I WANTED TO EXPLORE IT.



"SO ONE DAY WE PUT ON OUR BOOTS AND GLOVES AND WE WENT FOR A WALK.



"WE WENT DOWN THIS HILL TO THE BOTTOM OF A GULLY WHEN MY DAD SAID SUDDENLY TO ME...

CORALINE—
RUN AWAY.
UP THE HILL.
NOW!

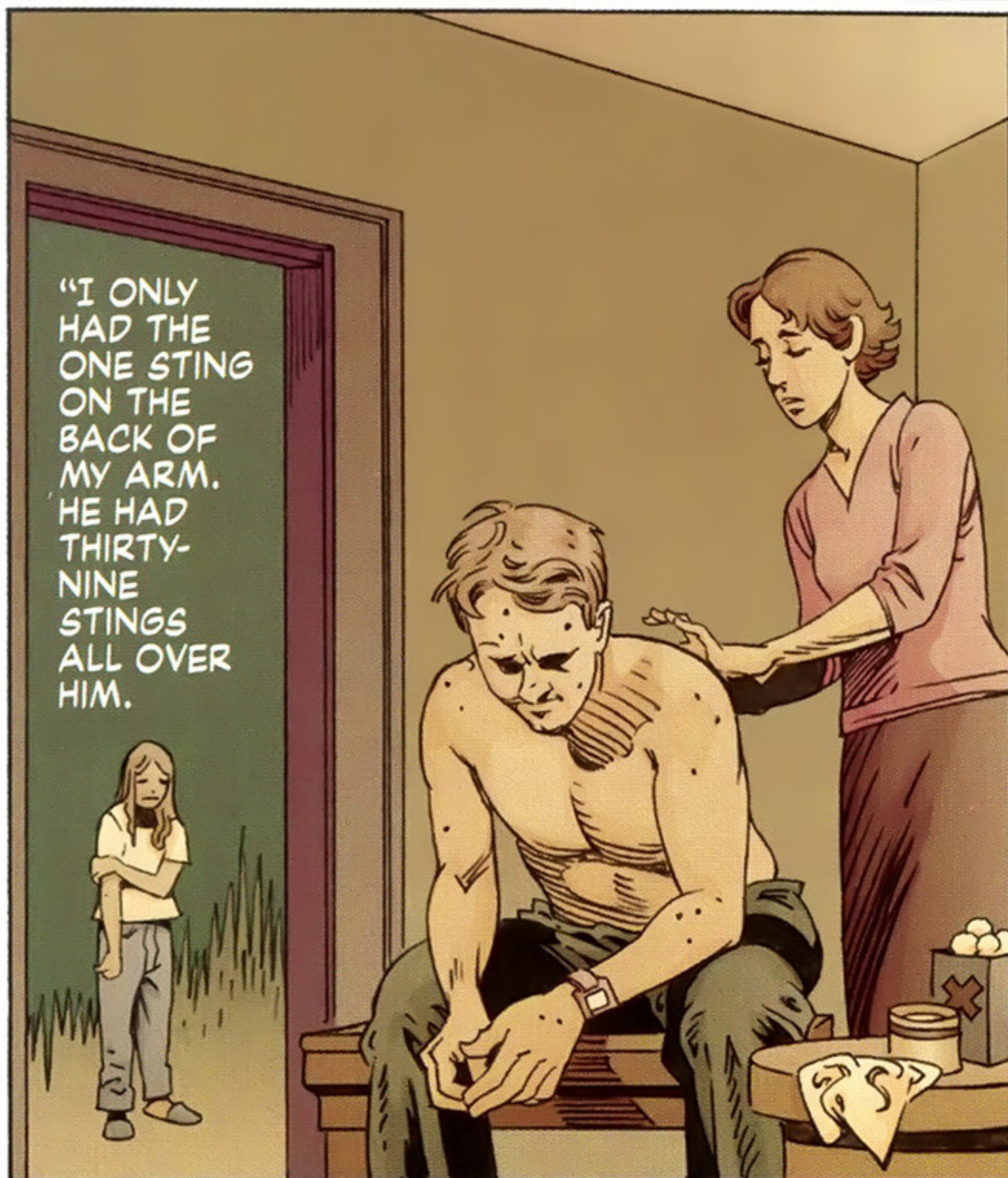




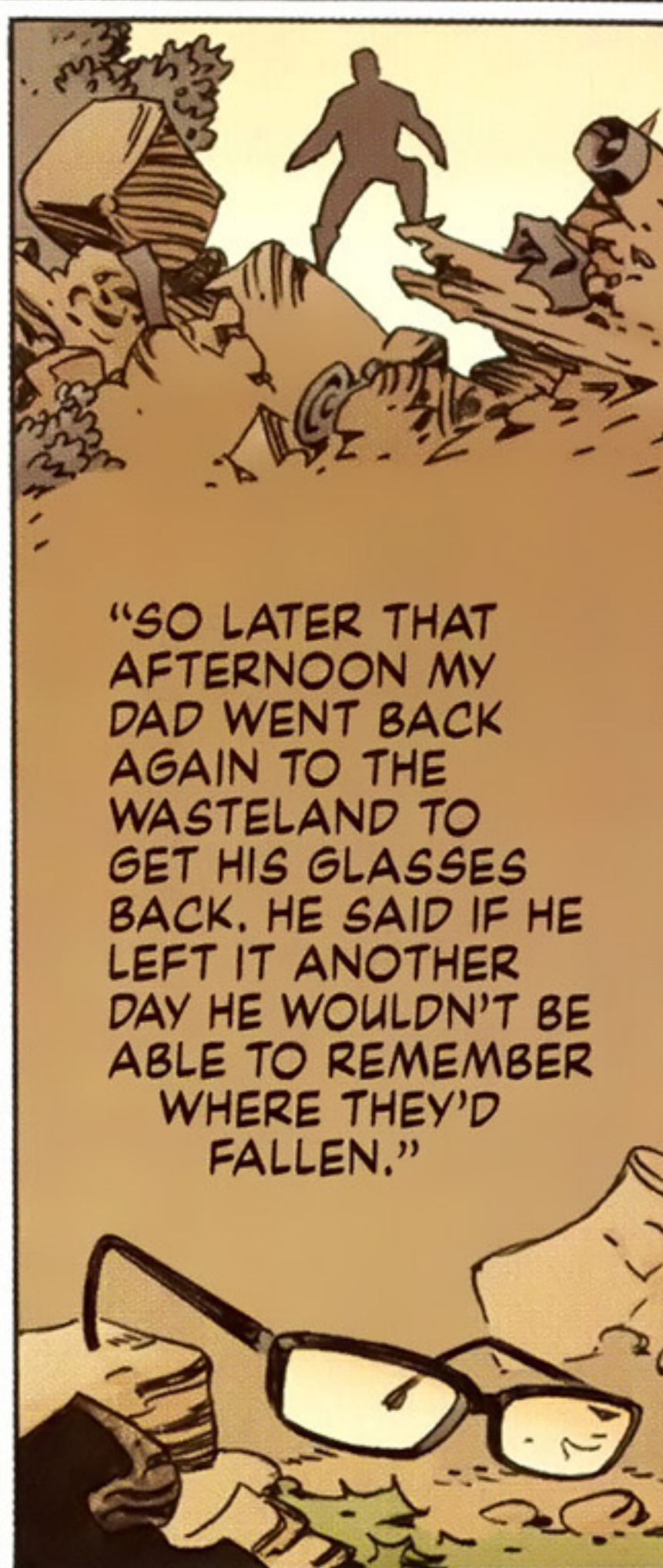
"THE AIR WAS ALIVE WITH YELLOW WASPS. MY DAD STAYED AND GOT STUNG TO GIVE ME TIME TO RUN AWAY.



"HIS GLASSES HAD FALLEN OFF WHEN HE RAN.



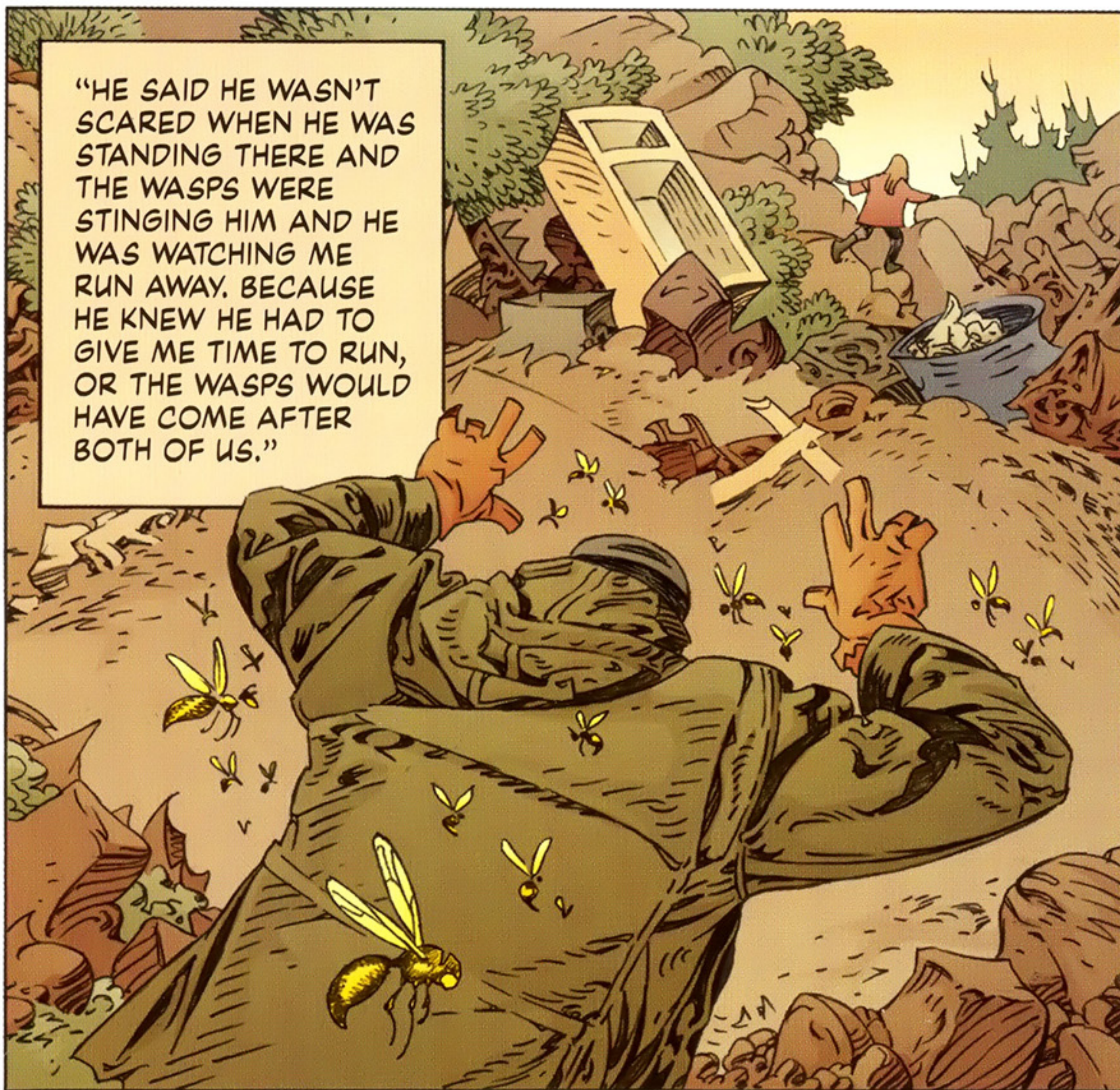
"I ONLY HAD THE ONE STING ON THE BACK OF MY ARM. HE HAD THIRTY-NINE STINGS ALL OVER HIM.



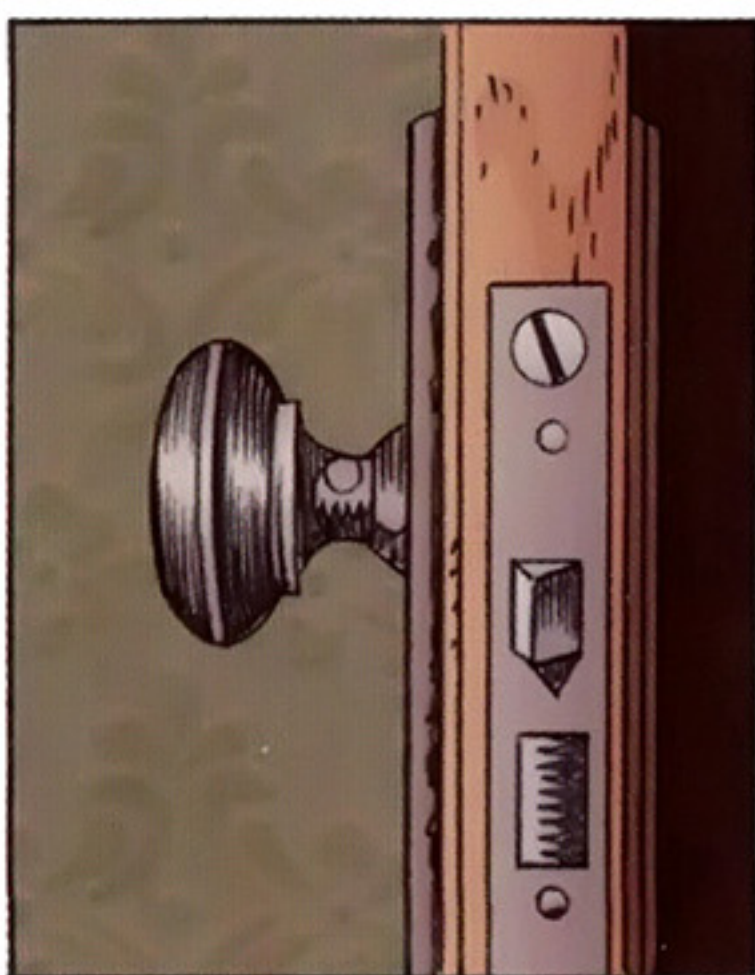
"SO LATER THAT AFTERNOON MY DAD WENT BACK AGAIN TO THE WASTELAND TO GET HIS GLASSES BACK. HE SAID IF HE LEFT IT ANOTHER DAY HE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO REMEMBER WHERE THEY'D FALLEN."



AND SOON HE GOT HOME, WEARING HIS GLASSES.



"HE SAID HE WASN'T SCARED WHEN HE WAS STANDING THERE AND THE WASPS WERE STINGING HIM AND HE WAS WATCHING ME RUN AWAY. BECAUSE HE KNEW HE HAD TO GIVE ME TIME TO RUN, OR THE WASPS WOULD HAVE COME AFTER BOTH OF US."



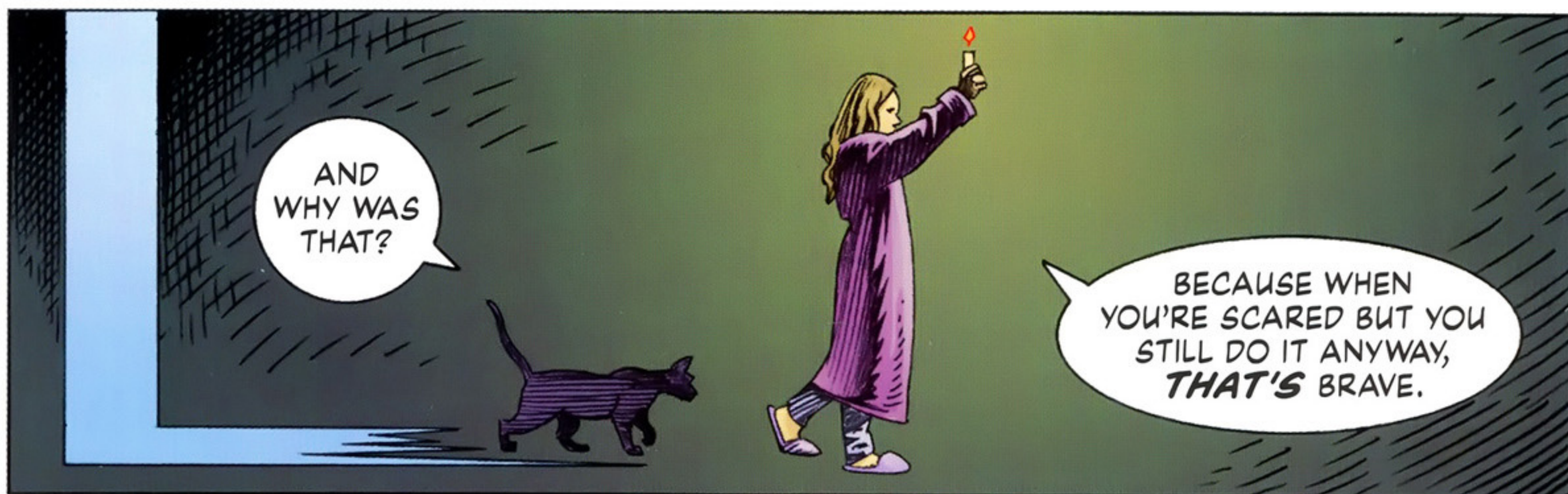
THE DOOR SWUNG OPEN.



AND HE SAID THAT WASN'T BRAVE OF HIM, JUST STANDING THERE AND BEING STUNG.

IT WASN'T BRAVE BECAUSE HE WASN'T SCARED. IT WAS THE ONLY THING HE COULD DO.

BUT GOING BACK AGAIN TO GET HIS GLASSES, WHEN HE KNEW THE WASPS WERE THERE, WHEN HE WAS REALLY SCARED. **THAT** WAS BRAVE.



AND WHY WAS THAT?

BECAUSE WHEN YOU'RE SCARED BUT YOU STILL DO IT ANYWAY, **THAT'S** BRAVE.

CORALINE HEARD SOMETHING MOVING IN THE DARKNESS. IT SEEMED TO BE KEEPING PACE WITH HER, WHATEVER IT WAS.

AND THAT'S WHY YOU'RE GOING BACK TO HER WORLD, THEN? BECAUSE YOUR FATHER ONCE SAVED YOU FROM WASPS?

DON'T BE SILLY. I'M GOING BACK FOR THEM BECAUSE THEY ARE MY PARENTS.

AND IF THEY NOTICED I WAS GONE I'M SURE THEY WOULD DO THE SAME FOR ME.

YOU KNOW YOU'RE TALKING AGAIN?

HOW FORTUNATE I AM IN HAVING A TRAVELING COMPANION OF SUCH WISDOM AND INTELLIGENCE.

HHSS...

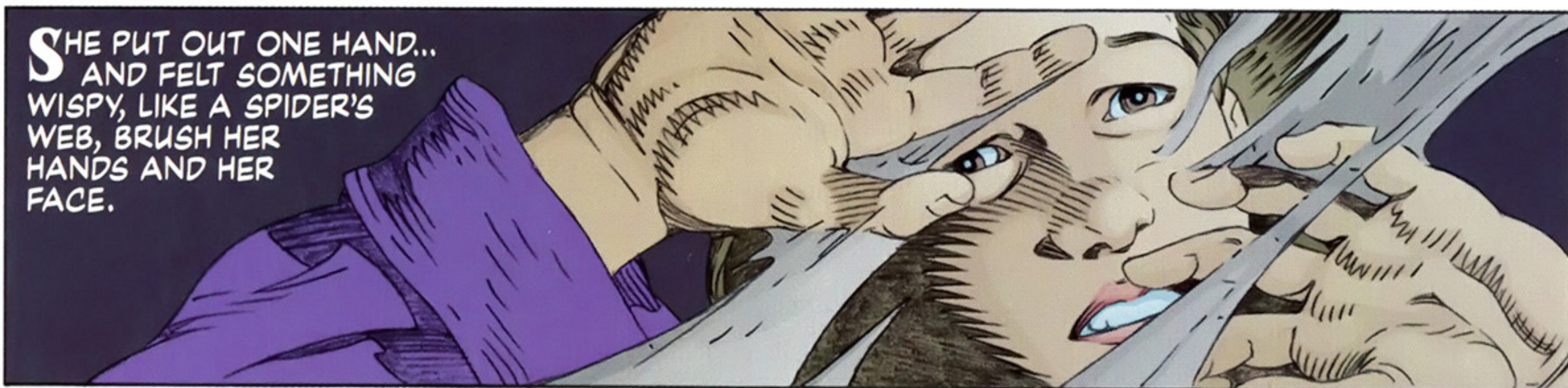
SHE WAS GOING TO SAY SOMETHING SARCASTIC IN RETURN LIKE...

SORRY...

...WHEN...

...THERE WAS A SCRABBLING AND A PATTERNING AND CORALINE COULD FEEL HER HEART POUNDING AGAINST HER RIBS.

SHE PUT OUT ONE HAND...
AND FELT SOMETHING
WISPY, LIKE A SPIDER'S
WEB, BRUSH HER
HANDS AND HER
FACE.



AT THE END OF THE CORRIDOR
THE ELECTRIC LIGHT WENT
ON, BLINDING AFTER
THE DARKNESS.

CORALINE?

DARLING?



MUM!

DARLING...

...WHY
DID YOU
EVER RUN
AWAY FROM
ME?



CORALINE
WAS TOO
CLOSE TO
STOP, AND
SHE FELT
THE OTHER
MOTHER'S
COLD ARMS
ENFOLD
HER.

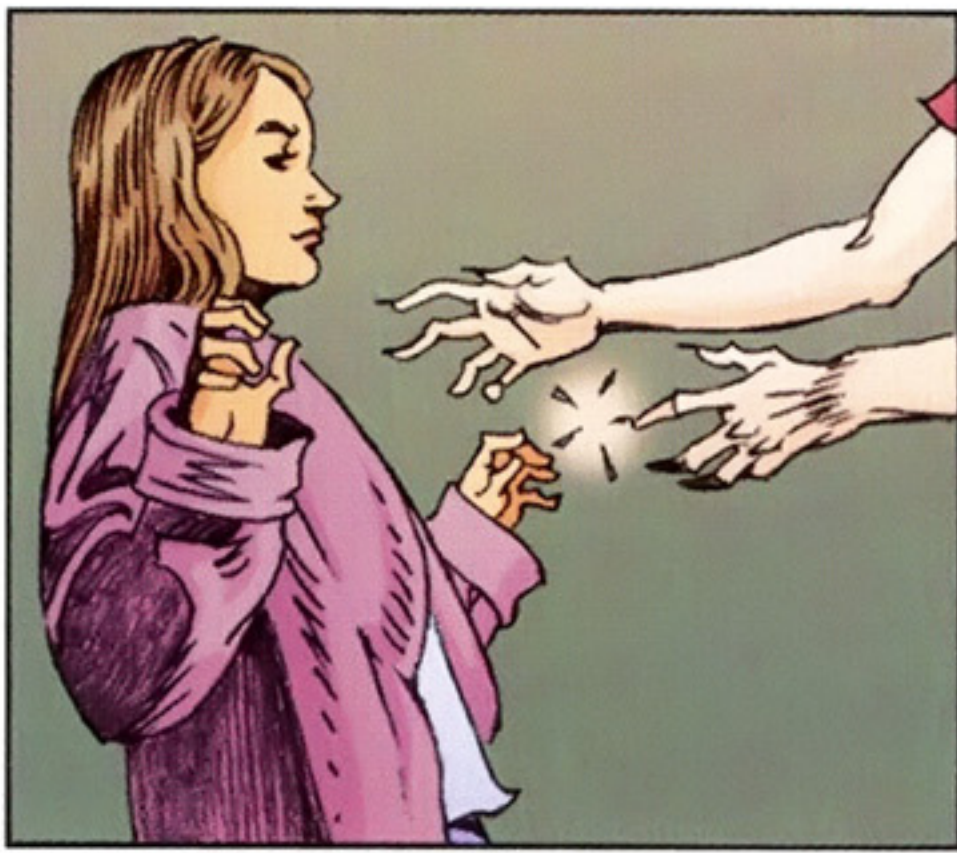
WHERE
ARE MY
PARENTS?



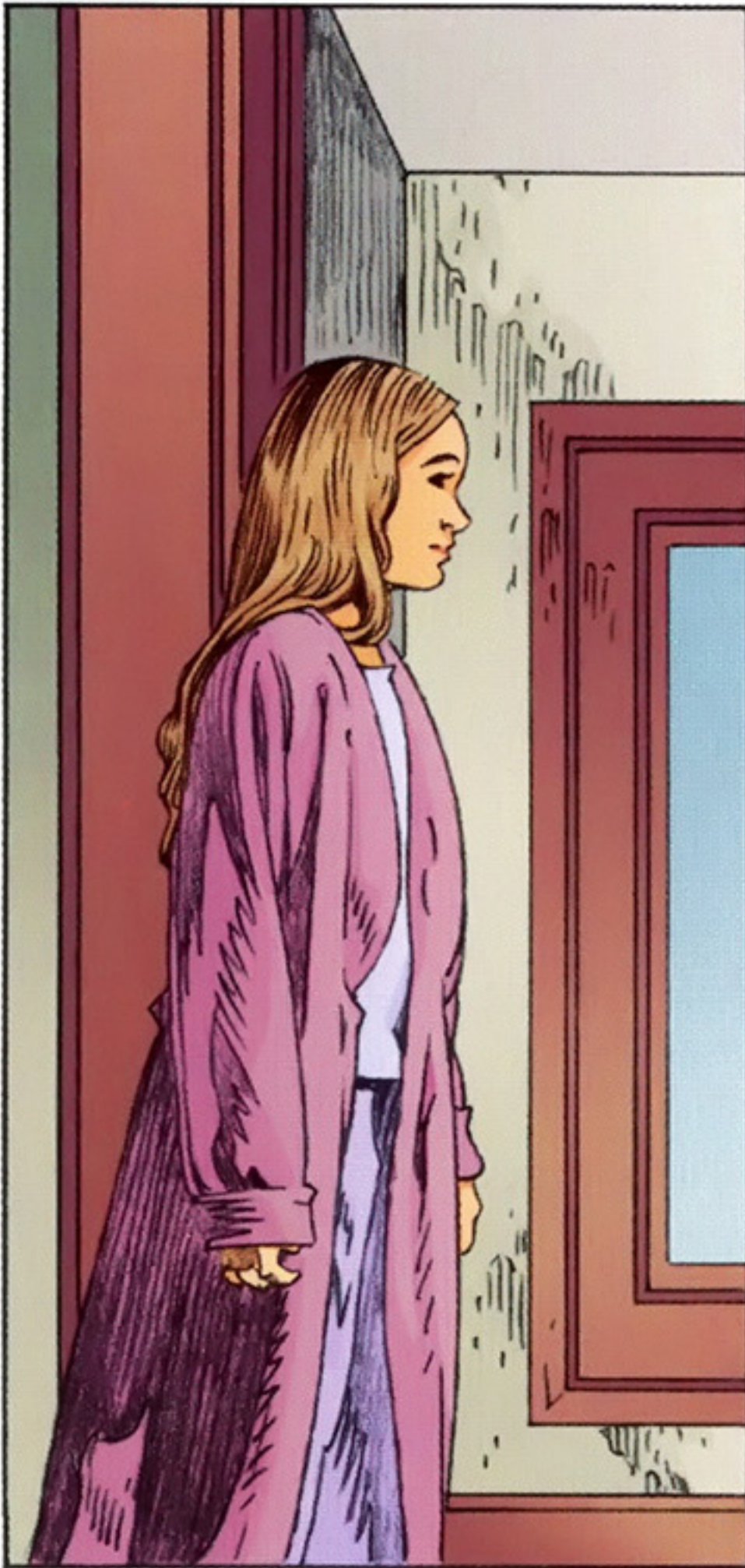
WE'RE **HERE**,
READY TO LOVE
YOU AND FEED YOU
AND MAKE YOUR
LIFE INTEREST-
ING.

COME ON INTO THE
KITCHEN. I'LL MAKE US
A MIDNIGHT SNACK.
HOT CHOCOLATE,
PERHAPS?

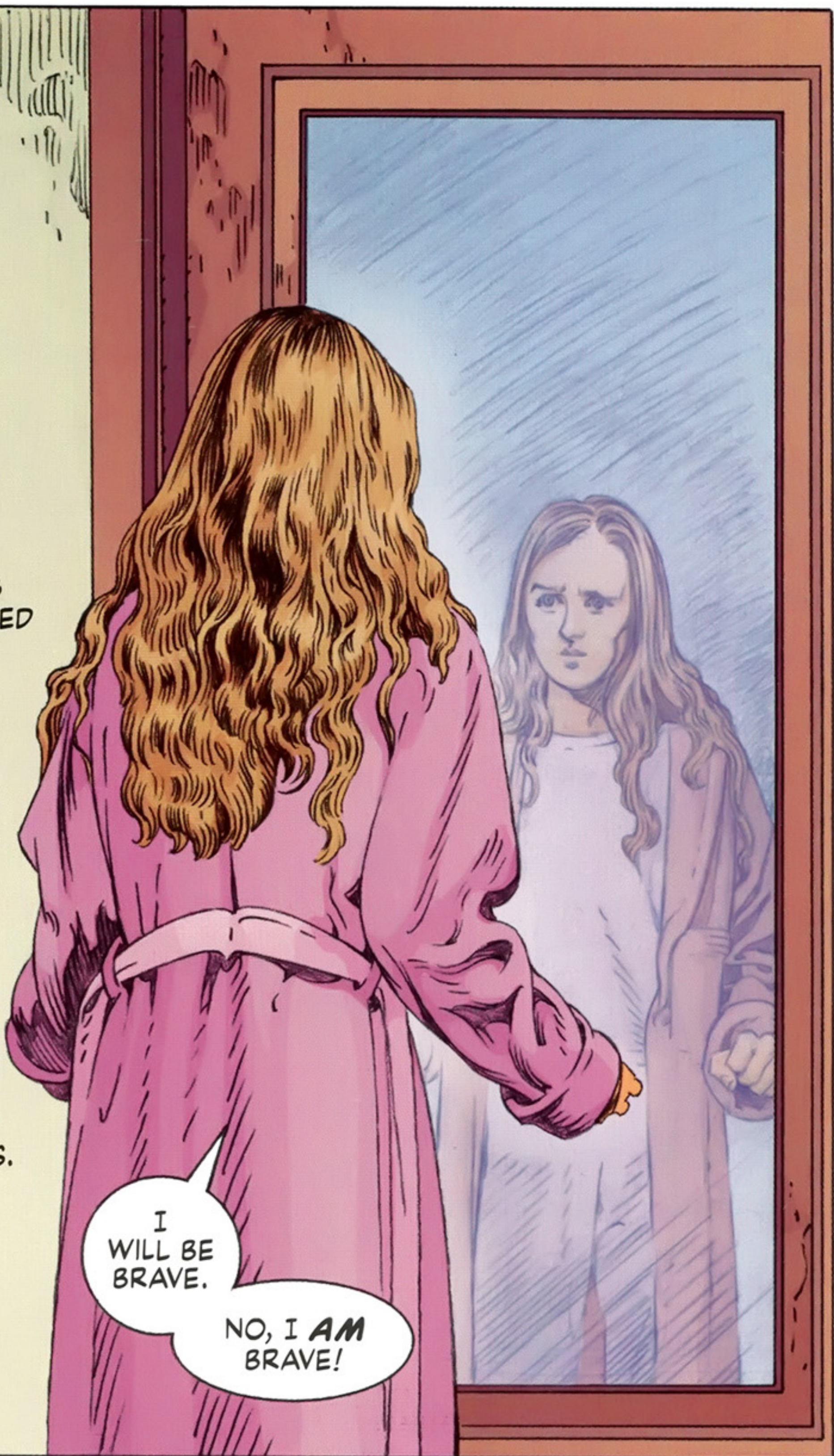




CORALINE PULLED AWAY FROM THE OTHER MOTHER, LEFT THE DRAWING ROOM, AND PASSED BEFORE THE MIRROR IN THE HALLWAY.



THERE WAS NOTHING REFLECTED IN IT BUT A YOUNG GIRL WHO LOOKED LIKE SHE HAD BEEN CRYING, BUT WHOSE EYES WERE REAL EYES, NOT BLACK BUTTONS.



I WILL BE BRAVE.

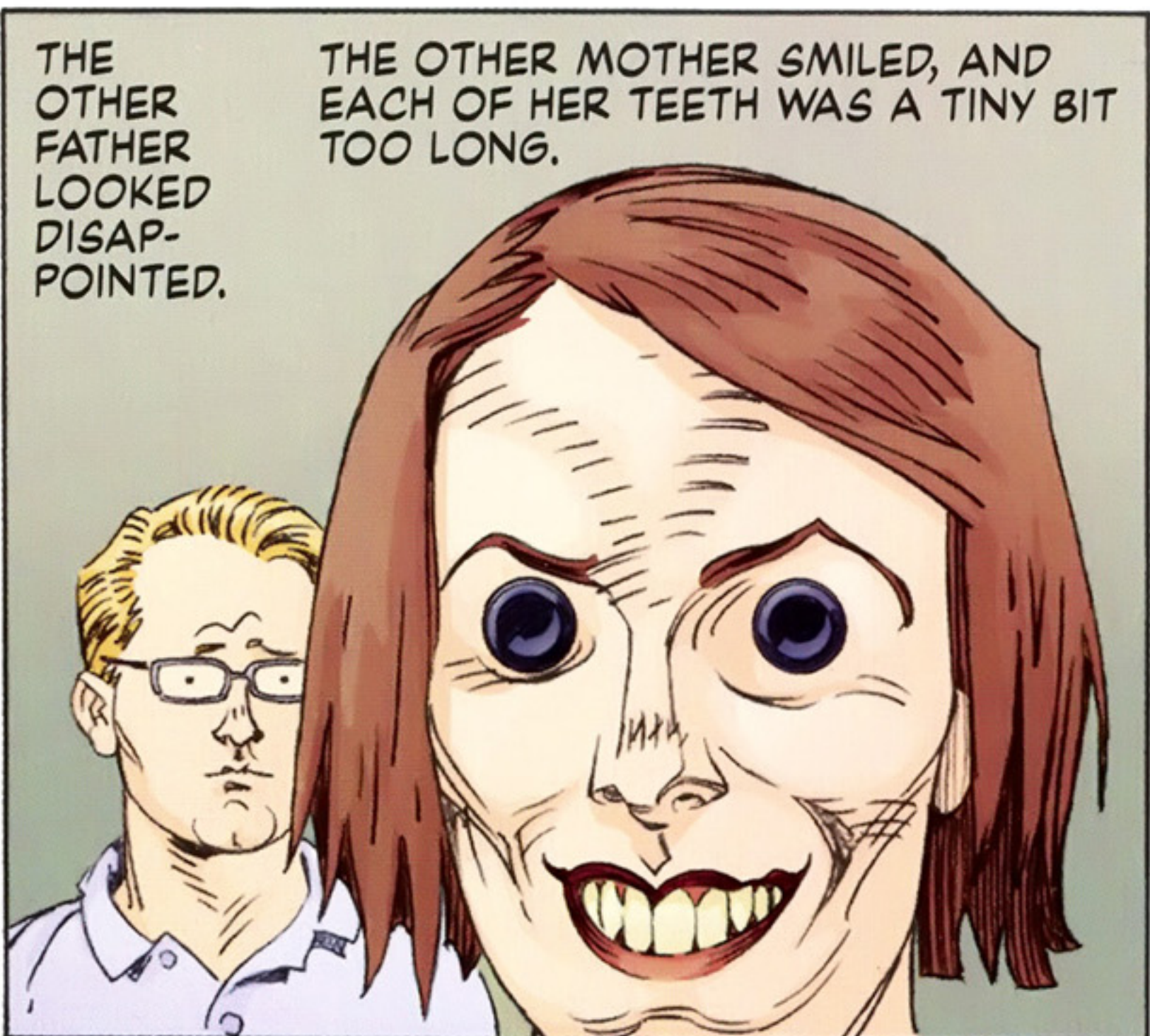
NO, I **AM** BRAVE!



I DON'T NEED A SNACK. I HAVE AN APPLE...

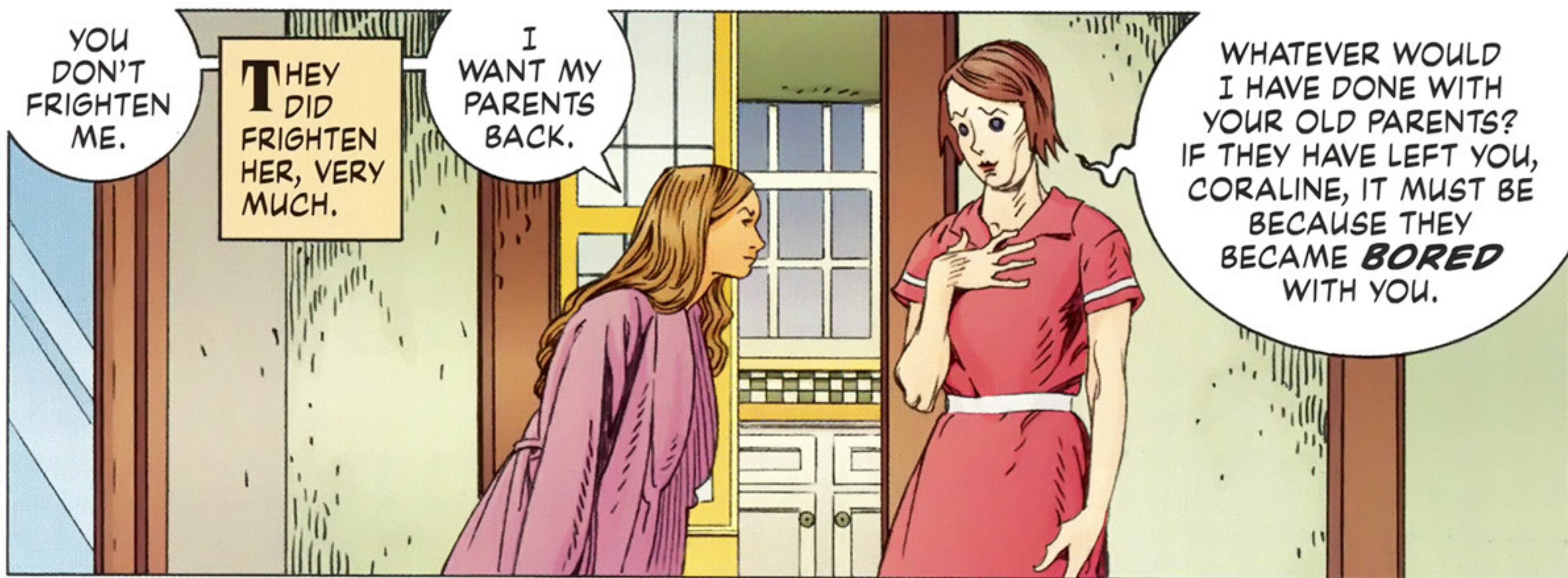


...SEE?



THE OTHER FATHER LOOKED DISAPPOINTED.

THE OTHER MOTHER SMILED, AND EACH OF HER TEETH WAS A TINY BIT TOO LONG.



YOU DON'T FRIGHTEN ME.

THEY DID FRIGHTEN HER, VERY MUCH.

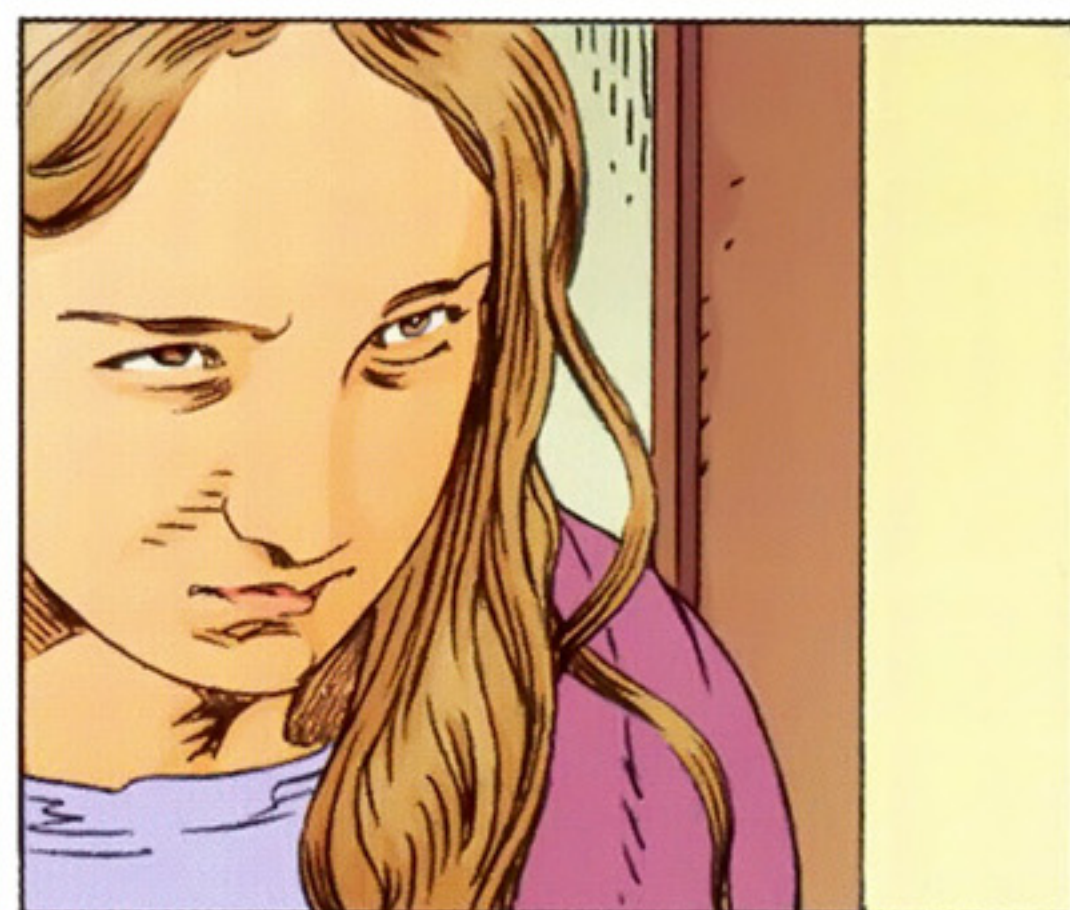
I WANT MY PARENTS BACK.

WHATEVER WOULD I HAVE DONE WITH YOUR OLD PARENTS? IF THEY HAVE LEFT YOU, CORALINE, IT MUST BE BECAUSE THEY BECAME **BORED** WITH YOU.

NOW, I WILL NEVER BECOME BORED WITH YOU, AND I WILL NEVER ABANDON YOU. YOU WILL ALWAYS BE SAFE HERE WITH ME.

THEY WEREN'T BORED OF ME. YOU'RE **LYING!** YOU STOLE THEM!

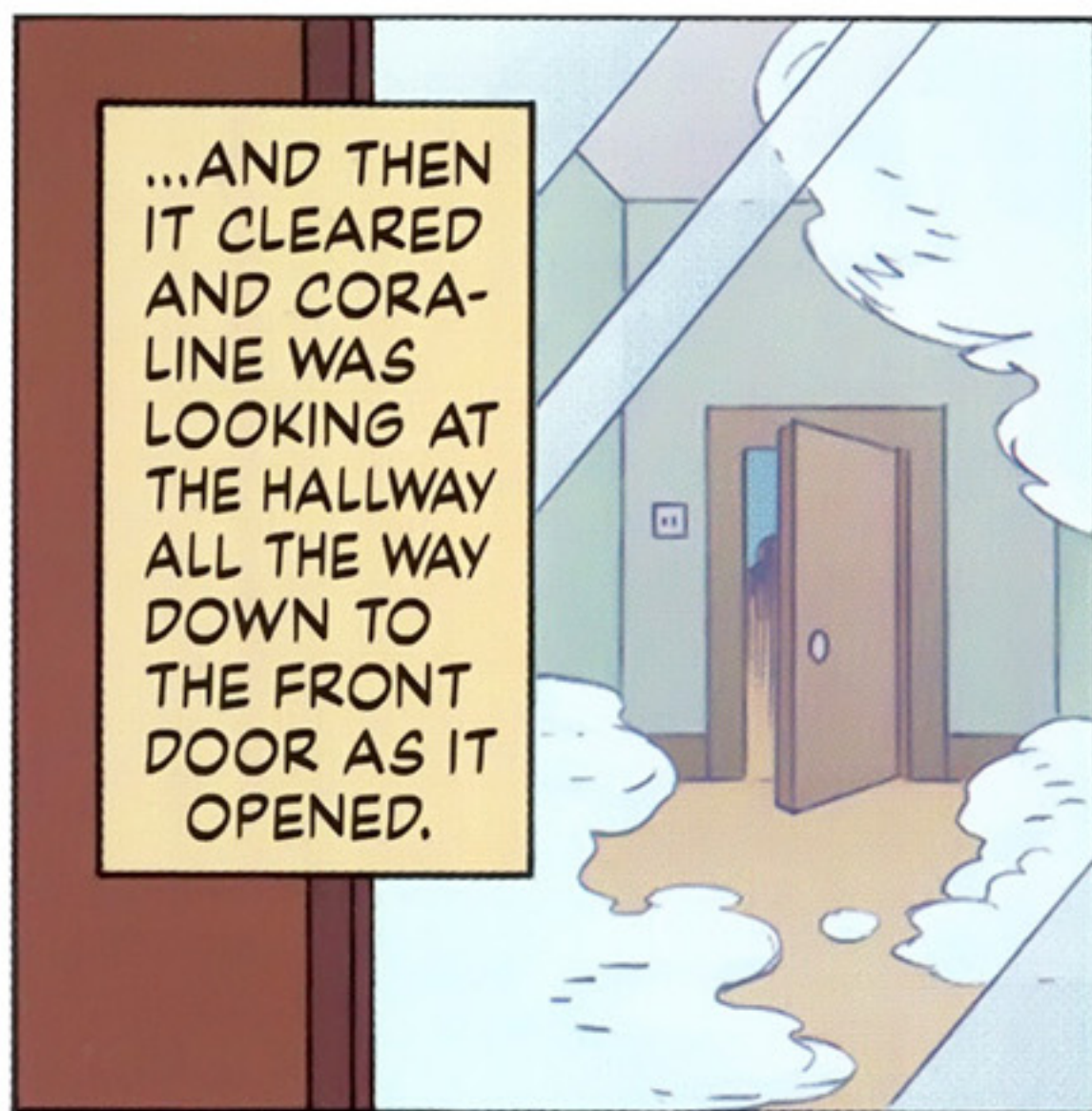
SILLY, SILLY CORALINE. THEY ARE FINE WHEREVER THEY ARE.



I'LL PROVE IT.

AND SHE BRUSHED THE SURFACE OF THE MIRROR WITH HER LONG WHITE FINGERS. IT CLOUDED OVER AS IF A DRAGON HAD BREATHED ON IT...





...AND THEN IT CLEARED AND CORALINE WAS LOOKING AT THE HALLWAY ALL THE WAY DOWN TO THE FRONT DOOR AS IT OPENED.



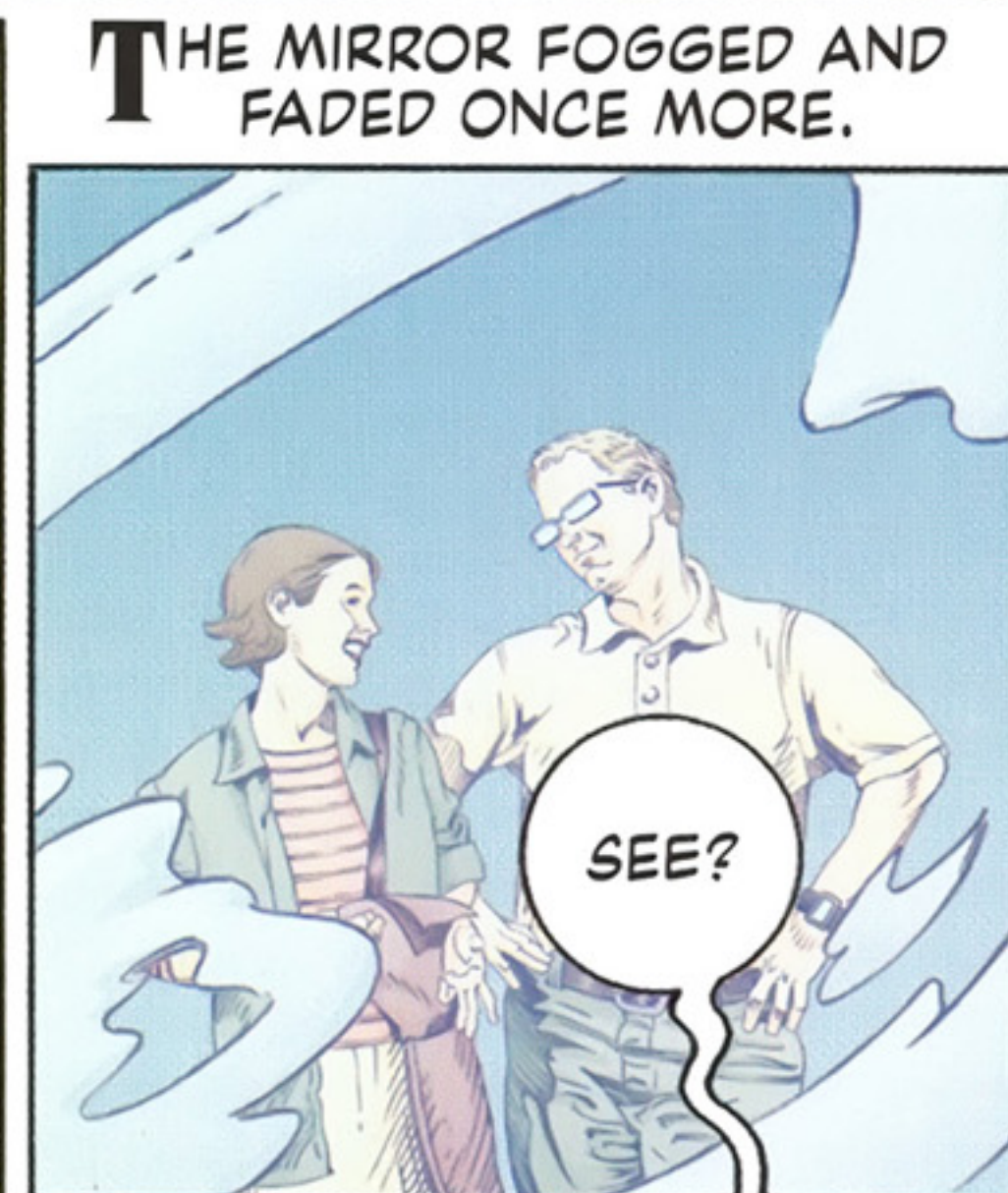
THAT WAS A FINE HOLIDAY.

HOW NICE IT IS NOT TO HAVE CORALINE ANYMORE.



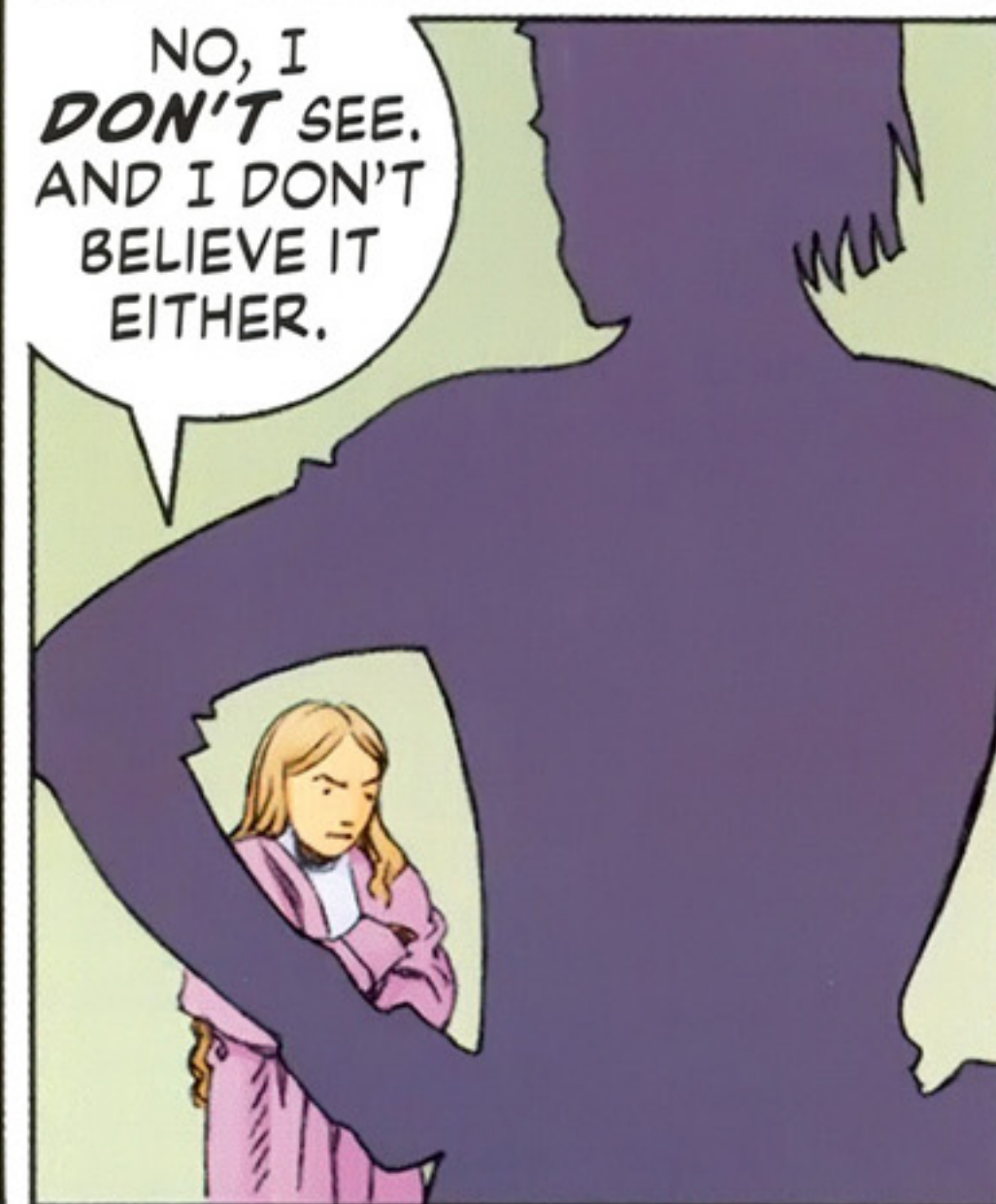
NOW WE CAN DO ALL THE THINGS WE ALWAYS WANTED TO DO, LIKE GO ABROAD, BUT WERE PREVENTED FROM DOING BY HAVING A LITTLE DAUGHTER.

AND I TAKE GREAT COMFORT IN KNOWING THAT HER OTHER MOTHER WILL TAKE BETTER CARE OF HER THAN WE EVER COULD.

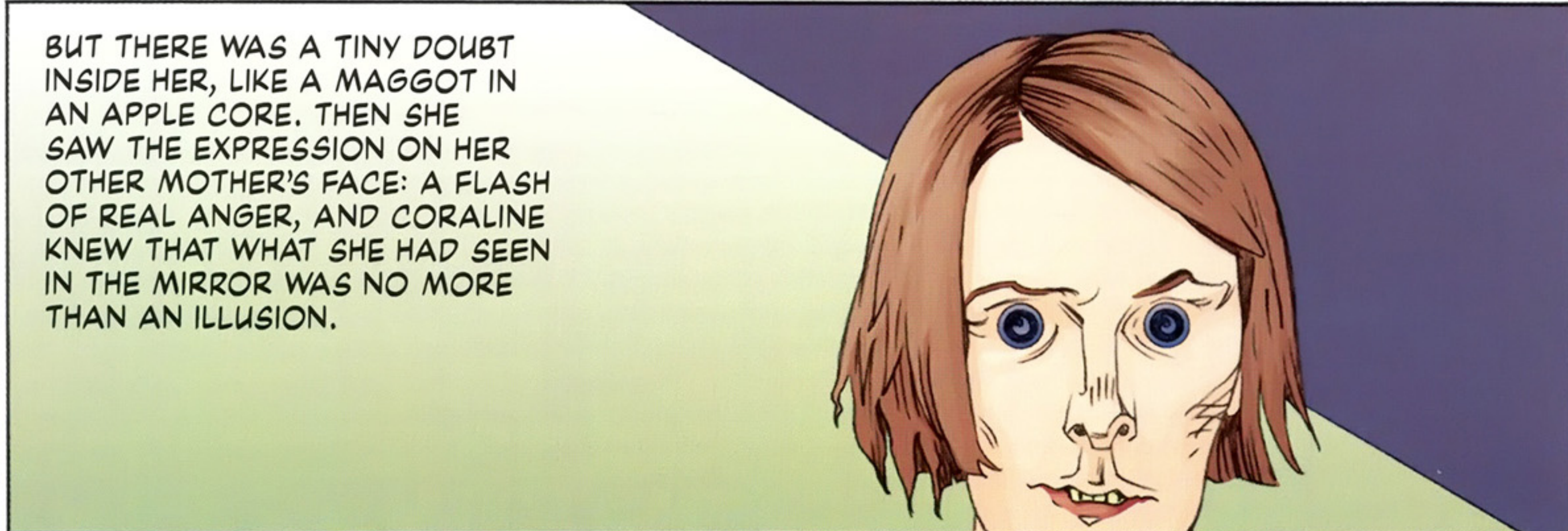


THE MIRROR FOGGED AND FADED ONCE MORE.

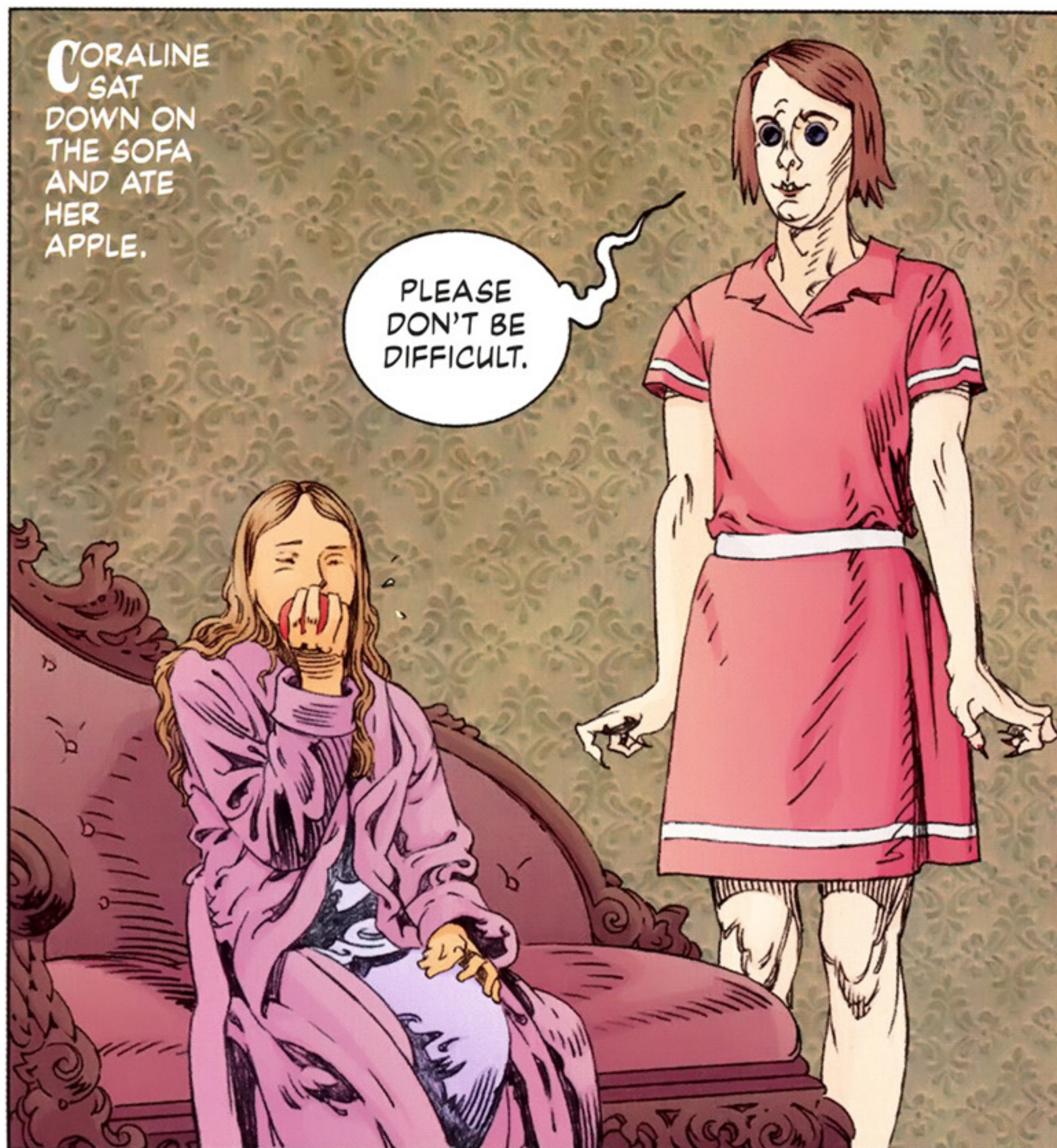
SEE?



NO, I **DON'T** SEE. AND I DON'T BELIEVE IT EITHER.



BUT THERE WAS A TINY DOUBT INSIDE HER, LIKE A MAGGOT IN AN APPLE CORE. THEN SHE SAW THE EXPRESSION ON HER OTHER MOTHER'S FACE: A FLASH OF REAL ANGER, AND CORALINE KNEW THAT WHAT SHE HAD SEEN IN THE MIRROR WAS NO MORE THAN AN ILLUSION.



THE RAT CHITTERED, RAN BACK TO CORALINE'S OWN FLAT...



...AND
RETURNED,
DRAGGING
THE KEY
BEHIND
IT.



WHY
DON'T
YOU
HAVE
YOUR
OWN
KEY
ON
THIS
SIDE
?

THERE
IS
ONLY
ONE
KEY.
ONLY
ONE
DOOR.

HUSH.

YOU
MUST
NOT
BOTHR
OUR
DARLING
CORALINE
WITH
SUCH
TRIVIAL-
ITIES.



IF WE
AREN'T
GOING
TO
HAVE
A
MIDNIGHT
SNACK,
WE
STILL
NEED
OUR
BEAUTY
SLEEP.
I AM
GOING
BACK
TO
BED,
CORALINE...

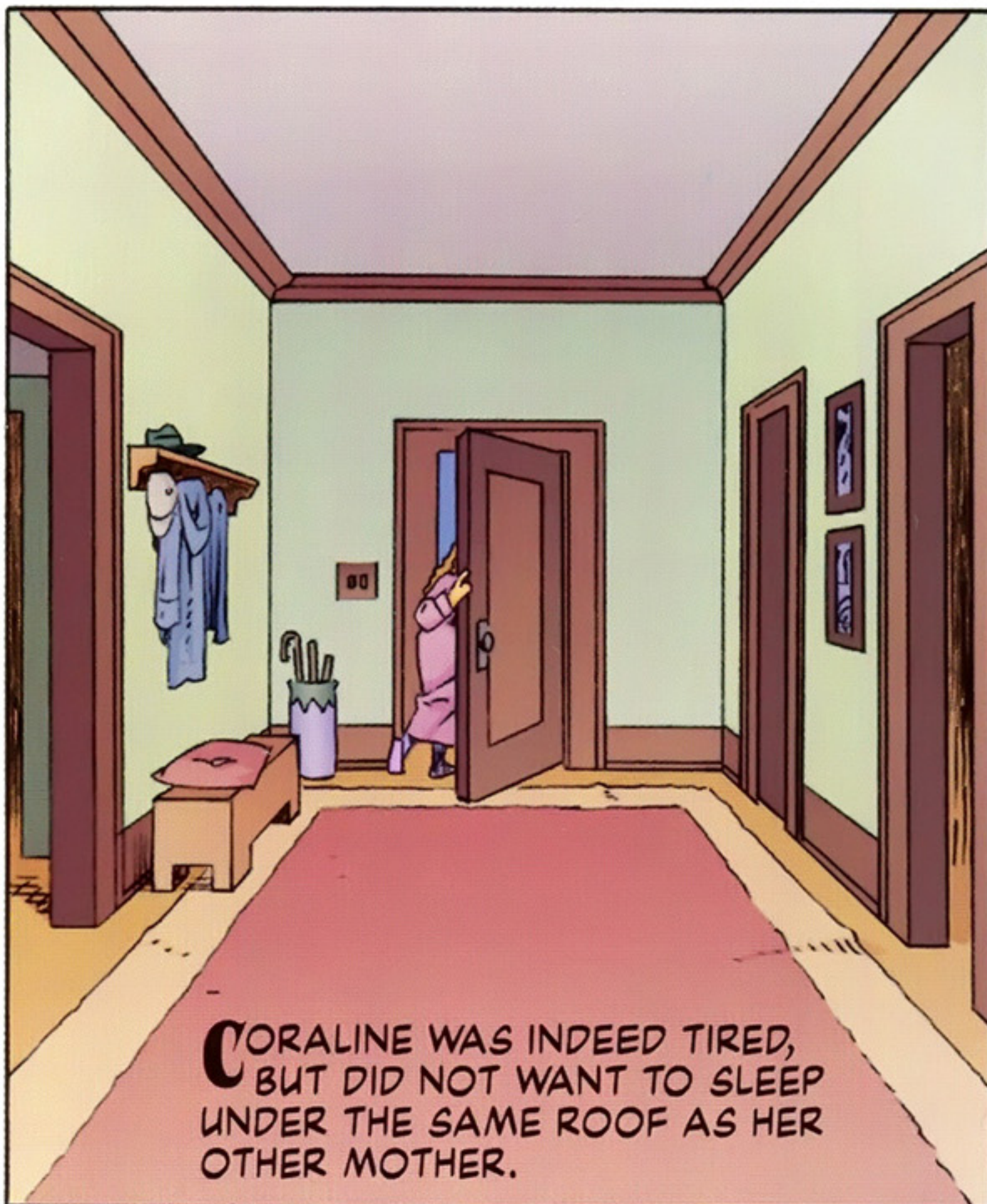


...I SUGGEST
YOU DO THE SAME.

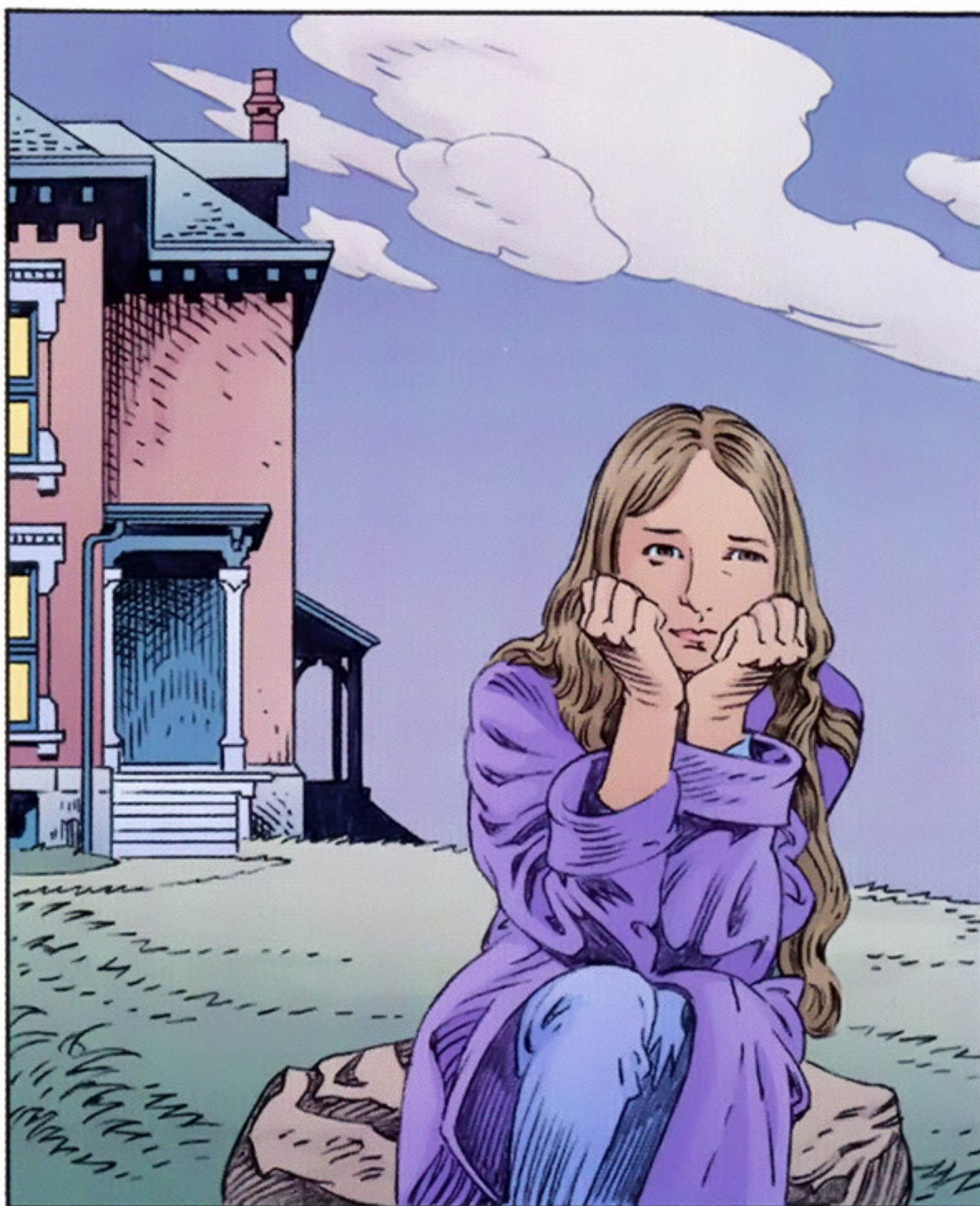
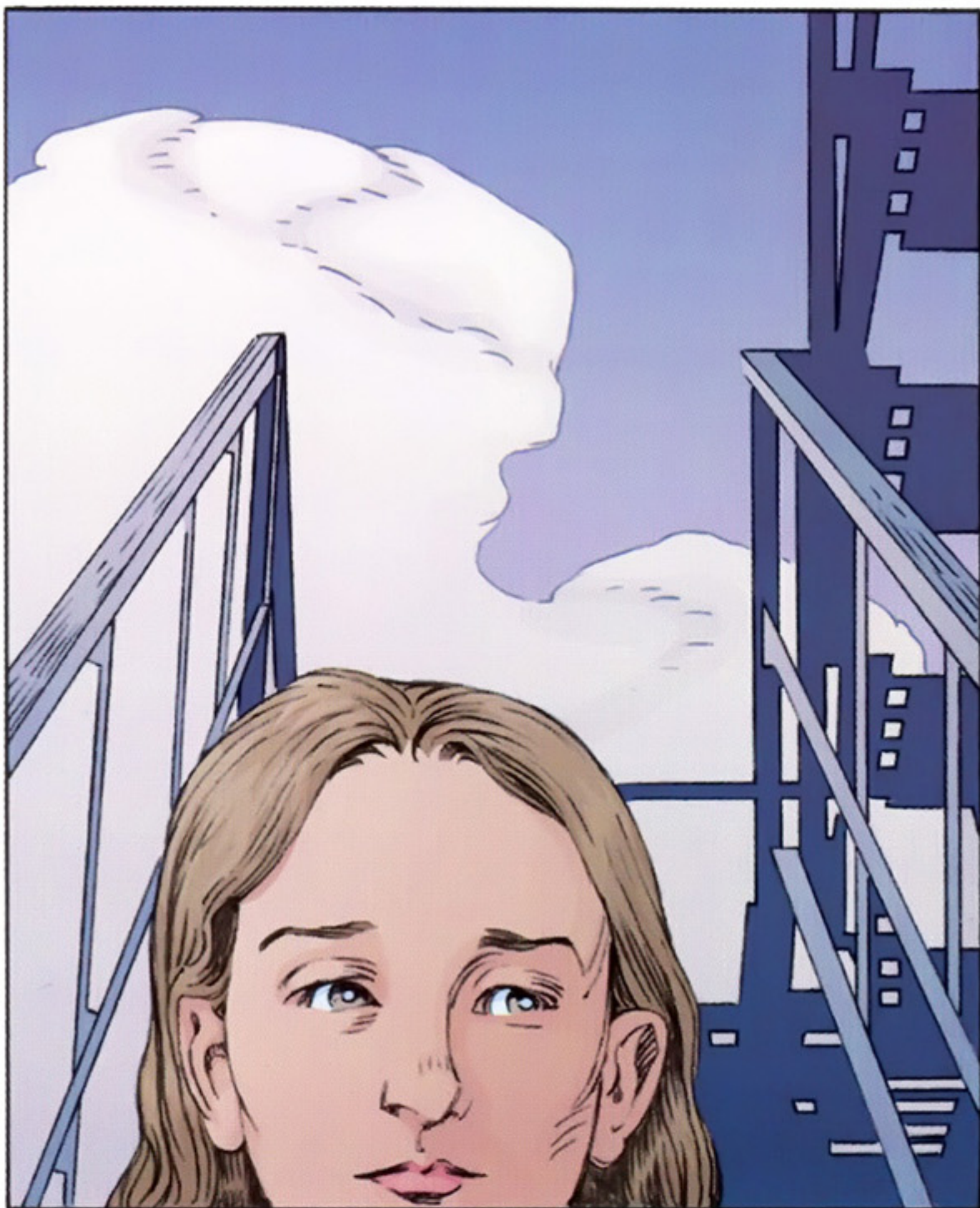
SHE PLACED HER
LONG WHITE FINGERS
ON THE SHOULDERS OF
THE OTHER FATHER...

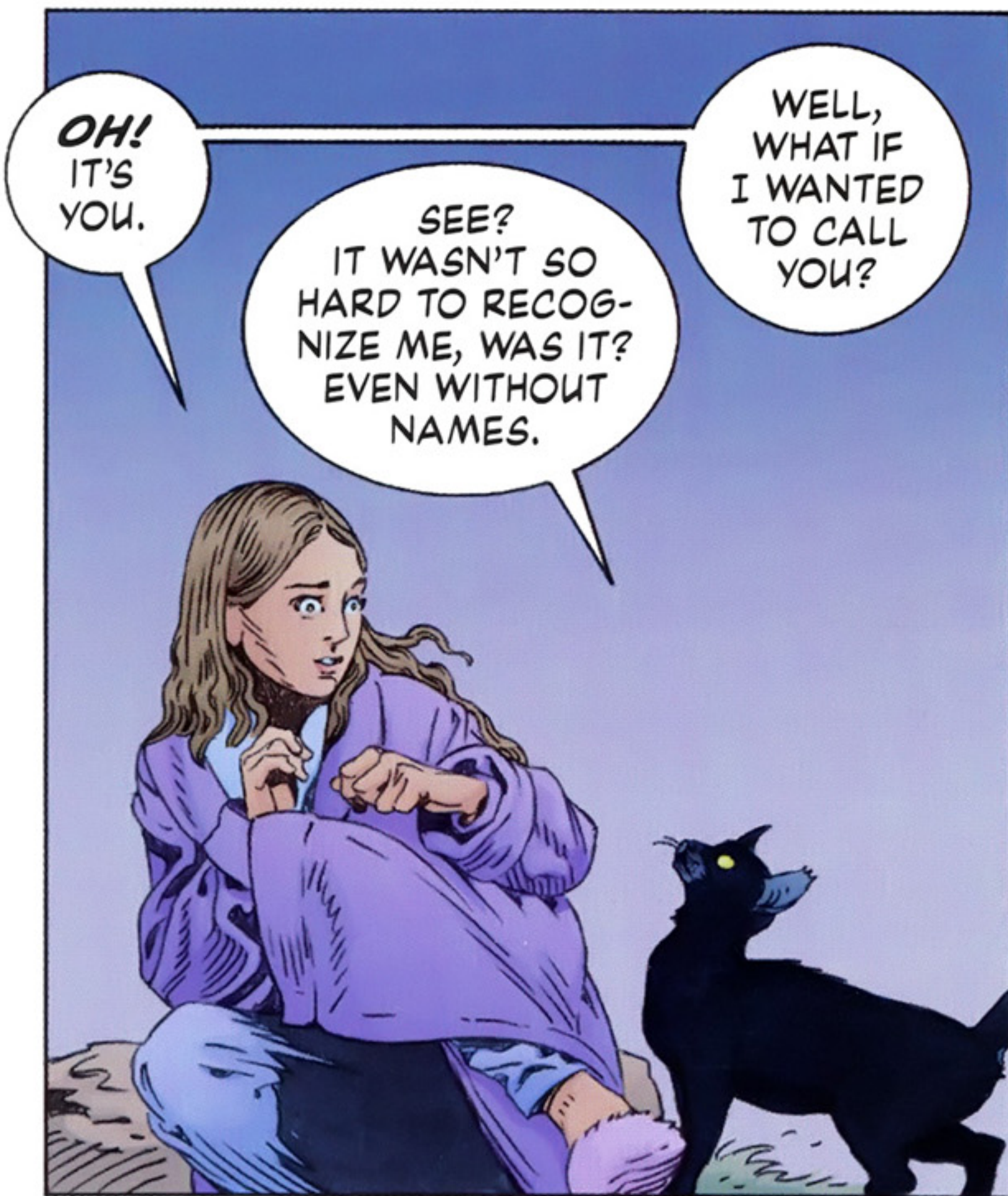


...AND
WALKED
HIM
OUT
OF
THE
ROOM.



CORALINE WAS INDEED TIRED, BUT DID NOT WANT TO SLEEP UNDER THE SAME ROOF AS HER OTHER MOTHER.

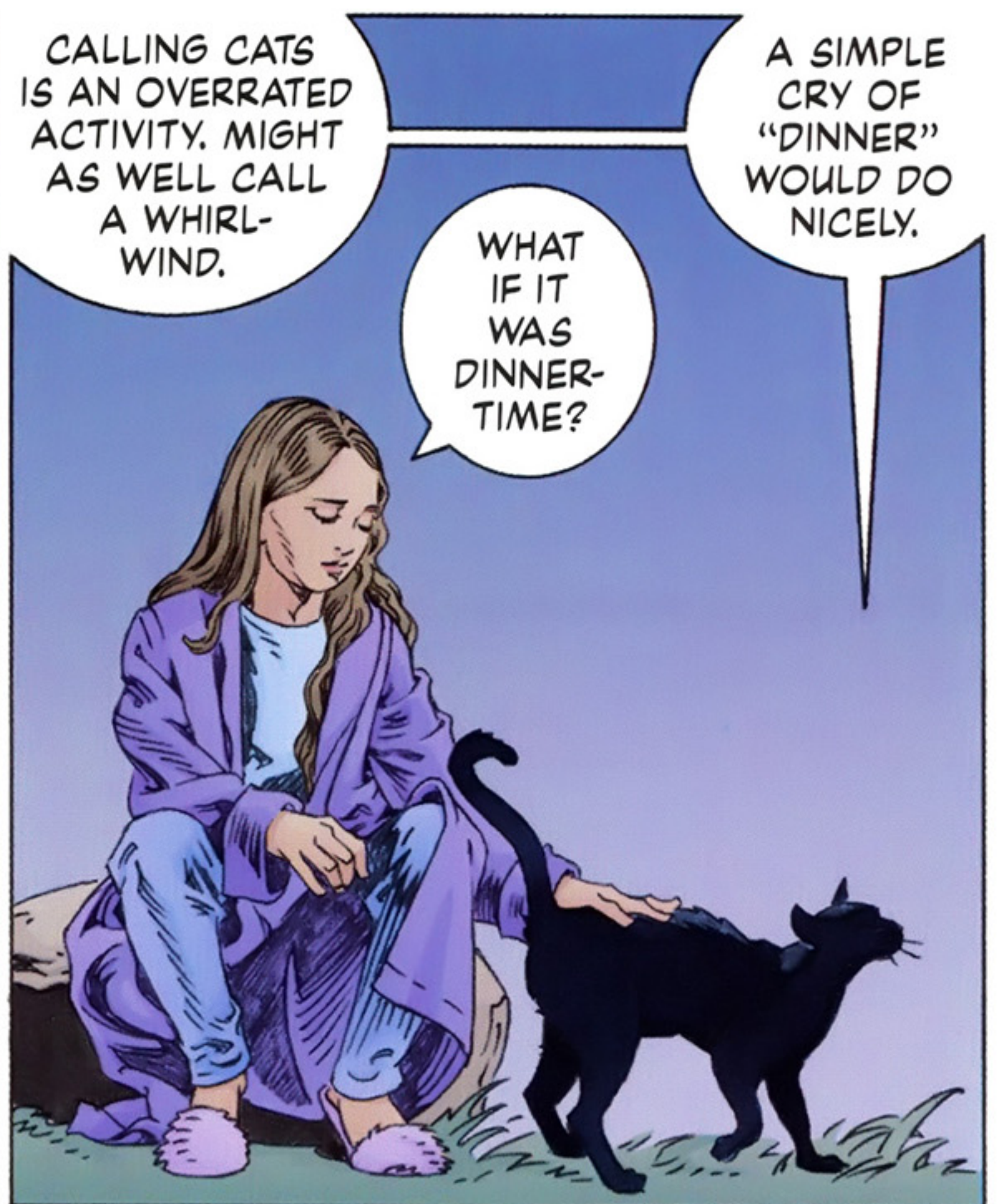




OH!
IT'S
YOU.

SEE?
IT WASN'T SO
HARD TO RECOG-
NIZE ME, WAS IT?
EVEN WITHOUT
NAMES.

WELL,
WHAT IF
I WANTED
TO CALL
YOU?



CALLING CATS
IS AN OVERRATED
ACTIVITY. MIGHT
AS WELL CALL
A WHIRL-
WIND.

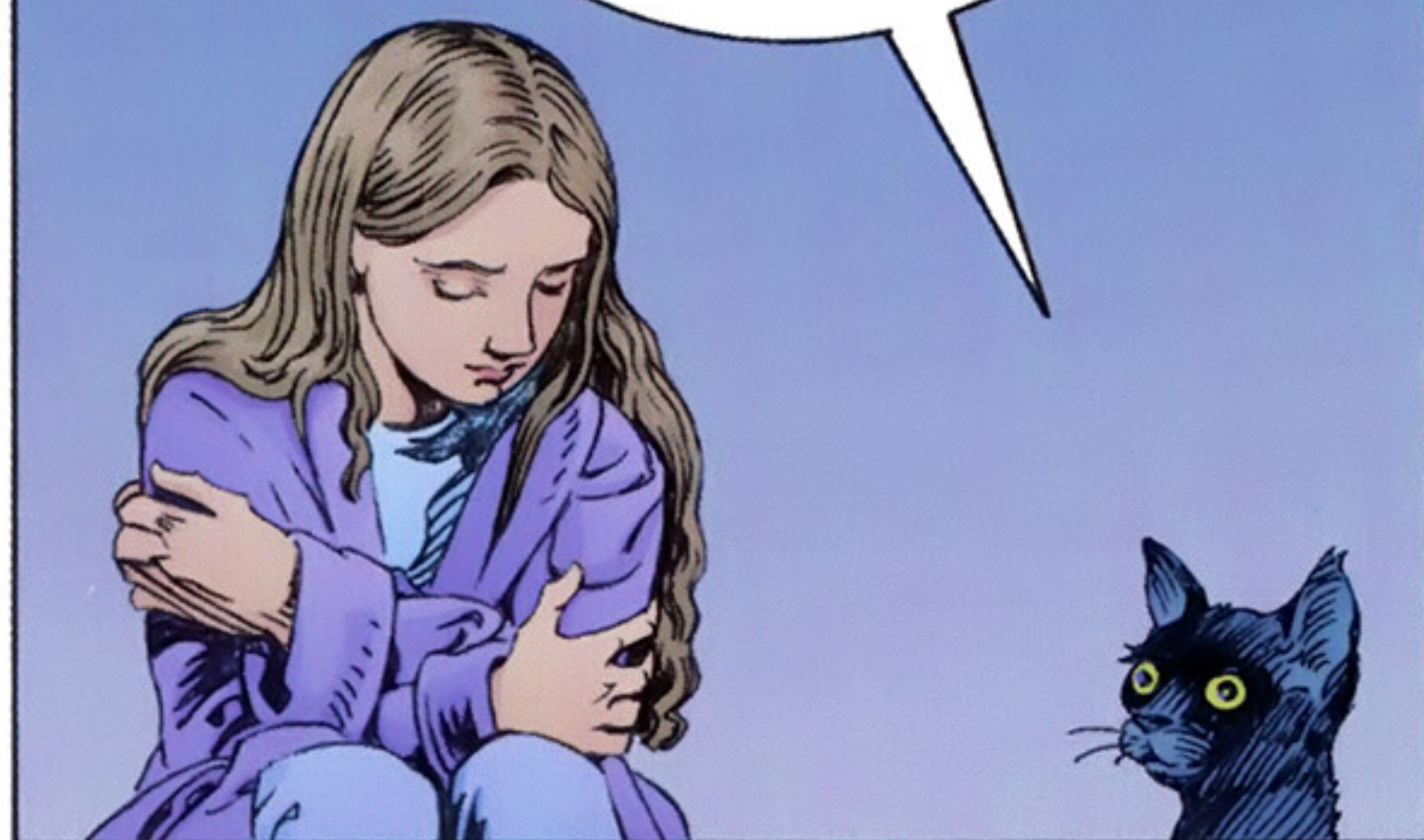
WHAT
IF IT
WAS
DINNER-
TIME?

A SIMPLE
CRY OF
"DINNER"
WOULD DO
NICELY.

WHY
DOES
SHE WANT
ME TO
STAY HERE
WITH
HER?

I THINK
SHE WANTS
SOMETHING TO
LOVE THAT ISN'T HER...
SHE MIGHT WANT SOME-
THING TO EAT AS WELL.
IT'S HARD TO TELL
WITH CREATURES
LIKE THAT.

DO
YOU
HAVE ANY
ADVICE?



THE CAT LOOKED AS IF IT WERE ABOUT
TO SAY SOMETHING SARCASTIC, BUT
FLICKED ITS WHISKERS INSTEAD.

CHALLENGE HER.
THERE'S NO GUARANTEE
SHE'LL PLAY FAIR, BUT HER KIND
OF THING LOVES GAMES AND
CHALLENGES.



WHAT
KIND OF
A THING
IS THAT?

I'D GO INSIDE
IF I WERE YOU.

GET SOME
SLEEP.

YOU HAVE
A LONG DAY AHEAD
OF YOU.

AND THEN
THE CAT
WAS GONE.

STILL...
HE
HAS A
POINT.

SHE
CREPT
BACK INTO
THE SILENT
HOUSE...

...AND PASSED THE CLOSED
BEDROOM DOOR INSIDE
WHICH THE OTHER MOTHER...
WHAT?
SLEPT?
WAITED?
AND THEN IT CAME TO HER...

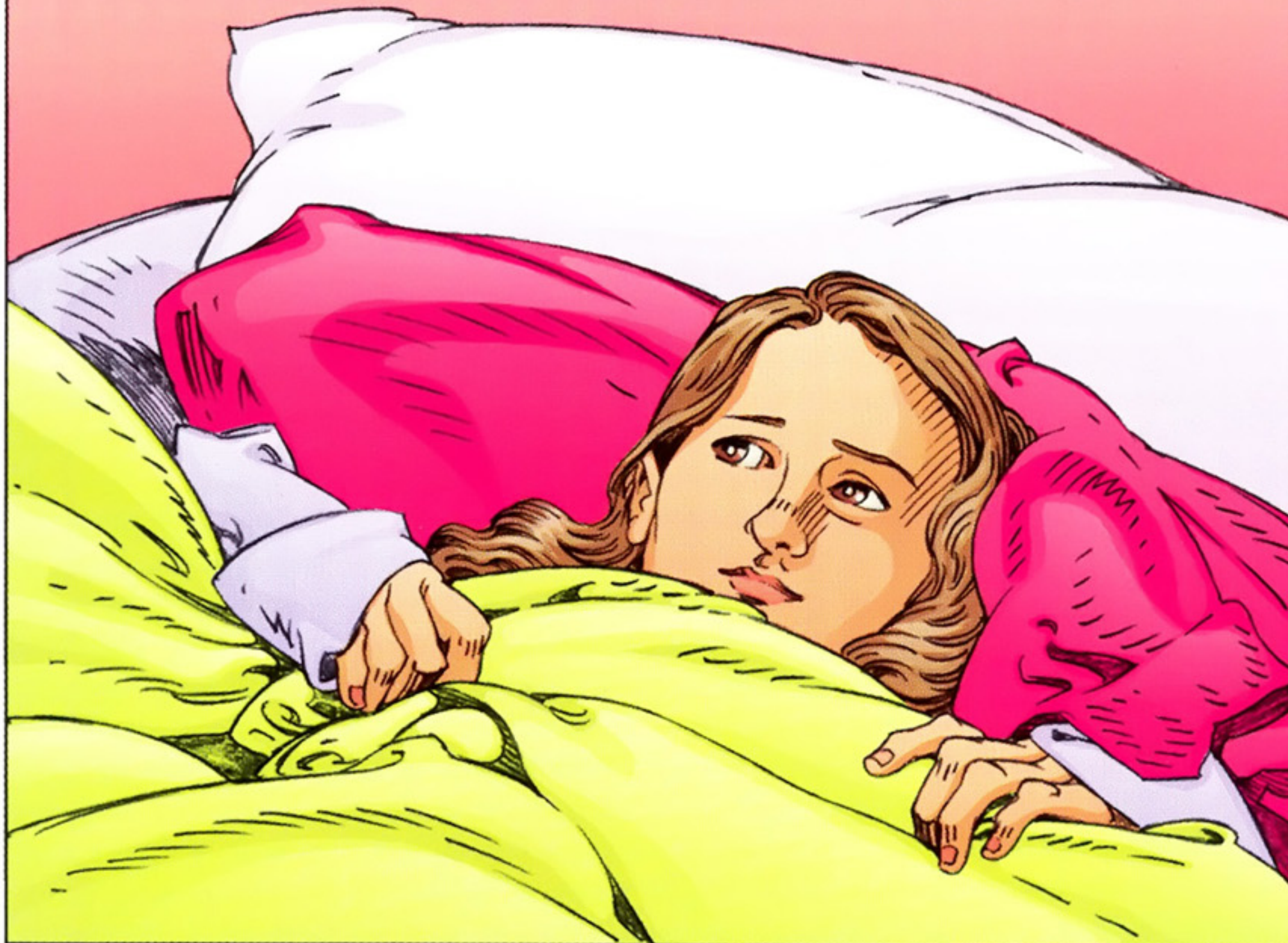
IT'S AN
EMPTY ROOM
AND IT WILL REMAIN
EMPTY UNTIL THE
EXACT MOMENT
THAT I OPEN THE
DOOR.

SOMEHOW THAT MADE
IT EASIER, THOUGH SHE
STILL CHECKED FOR
RATS UNDER HER
OTHER BED.

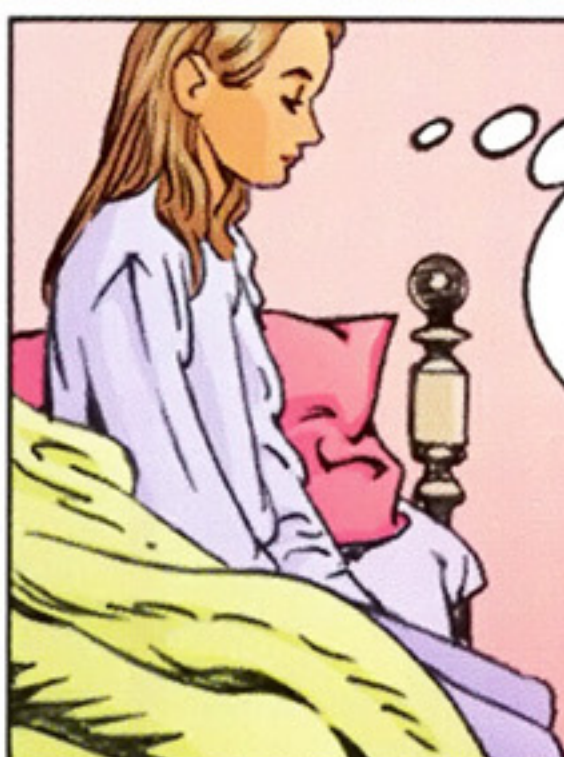
NOTHING
HERE.

SHE CLIMBED INTO BED
AND FELL ASLEEP WITH
BARELY ENOUGH TIME
TO REFLECT, AS SHE DID
SO, ON WHAT THE CAT
COULD HAVE MEANT BY...

A CHALLENGE...



AND THEN THE GREEN AND PINKNESS OF THE ROOM SHE WAS IN, AND THE RUSTLING OF A LARGE PAPER BUTTERFLY, TOLD HER WHERE SHE HAD WOKEN UP.



I CAN'T WEAR MY PAJAMAS DURING THE DAY...

...THAT MEANS WEARING THE OTHER CORALINE'S CLOTHES.

IS THERE ANOTHER CORALINE?

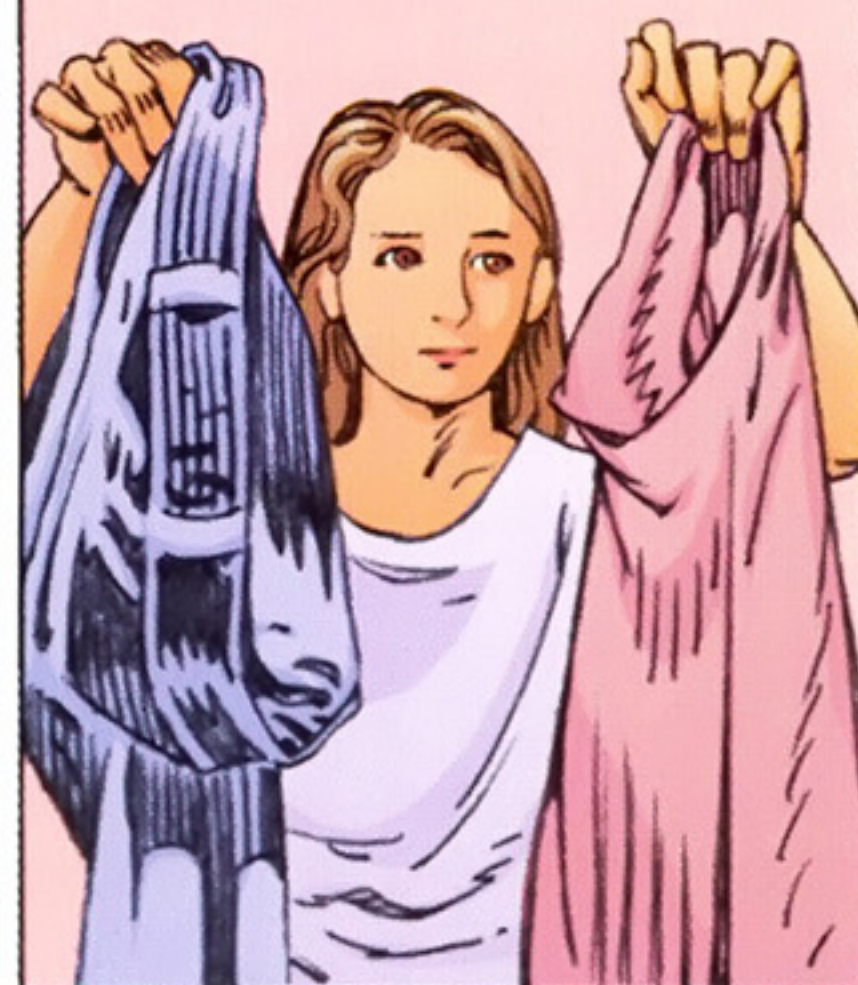


NO.
THERE'S
JUST
ME.

THERE WERE NO REGULAR CLOTHES IN THE CUPBOARD, THOUGH. THEY WERE MORE LIKE DRESSING-UP CLOTHES...OR COSTUMES.

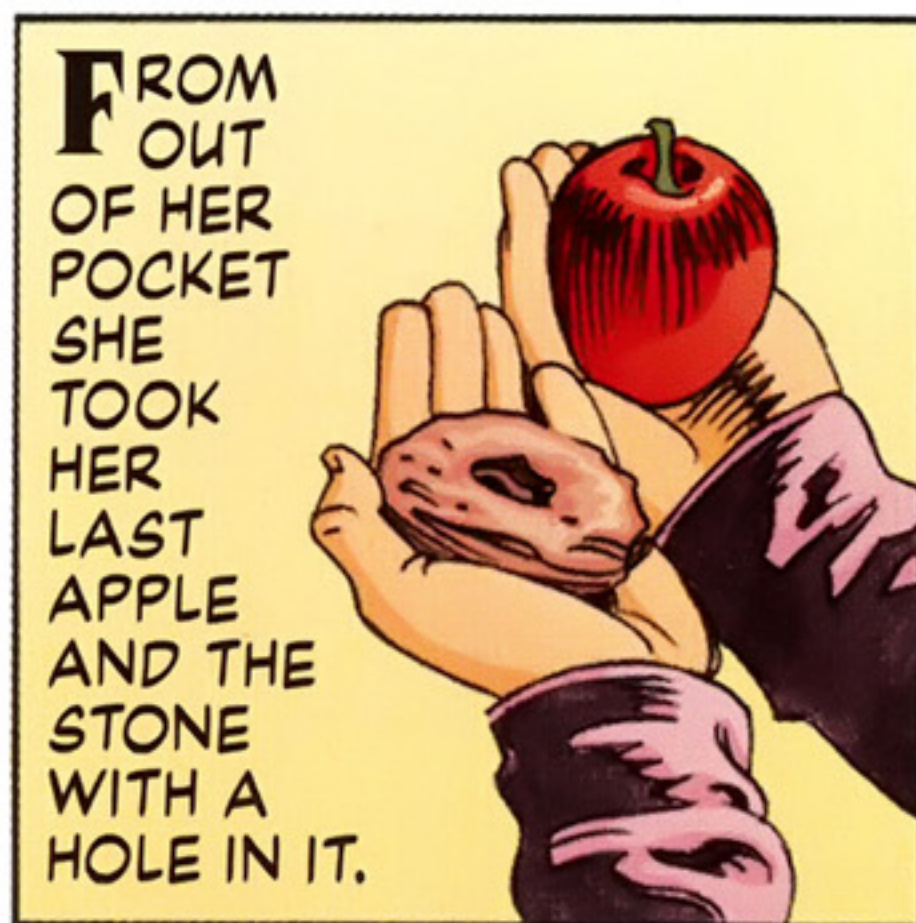


FINALLY SHE FOUND A
PAIR OF JEANS, A
SWEATER...

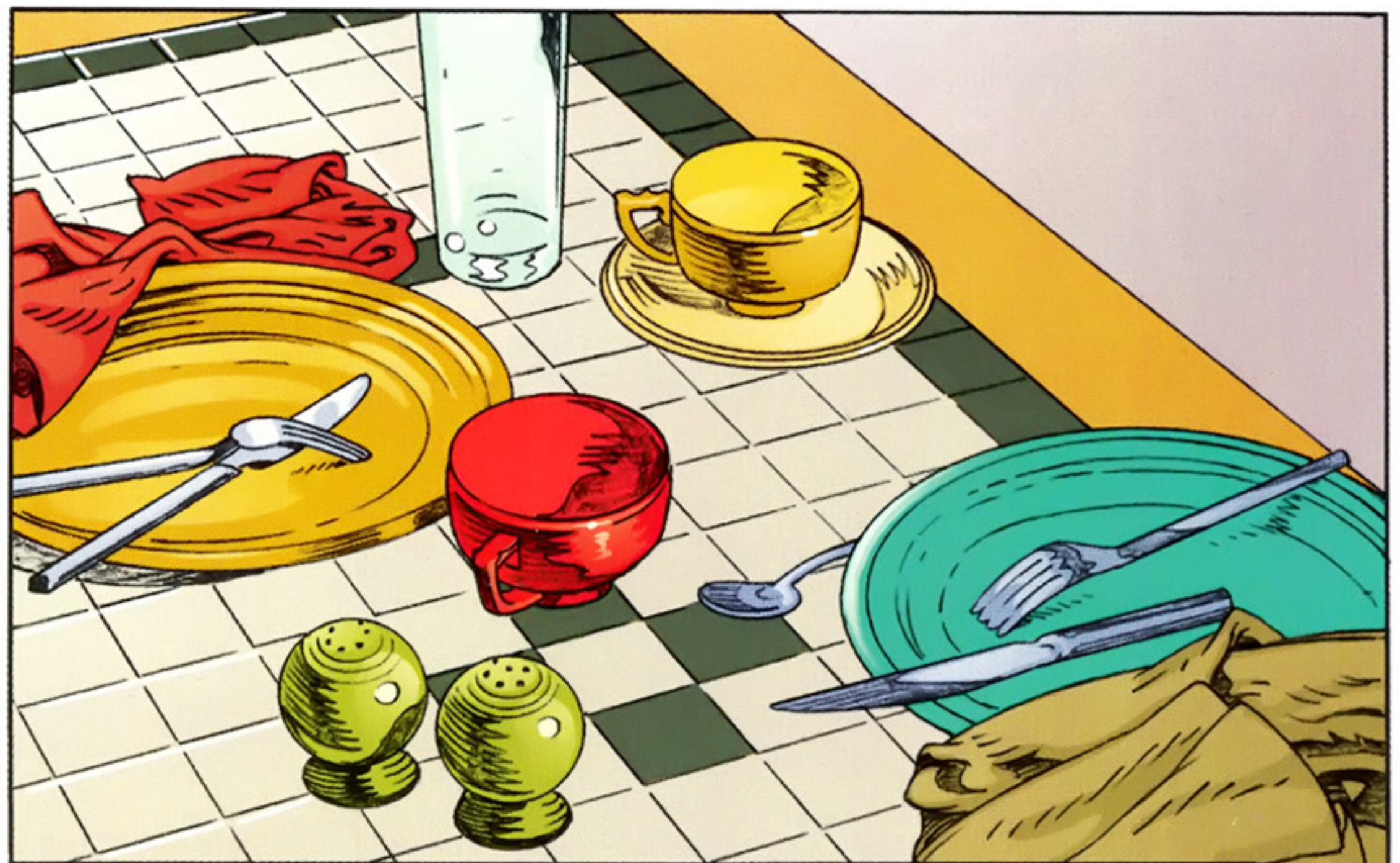


...AND A
PAIR OF
BOOTS.





FROM OUT OF HER POCKET SHE TOOK HER LAST APPLE AND THE STONE WITH A HOLE IN IT.



SHE WENT INTO THE KITCHEN, BUT IT WAS DESERTED.



...LIKE COMING OUT OF A FOG.

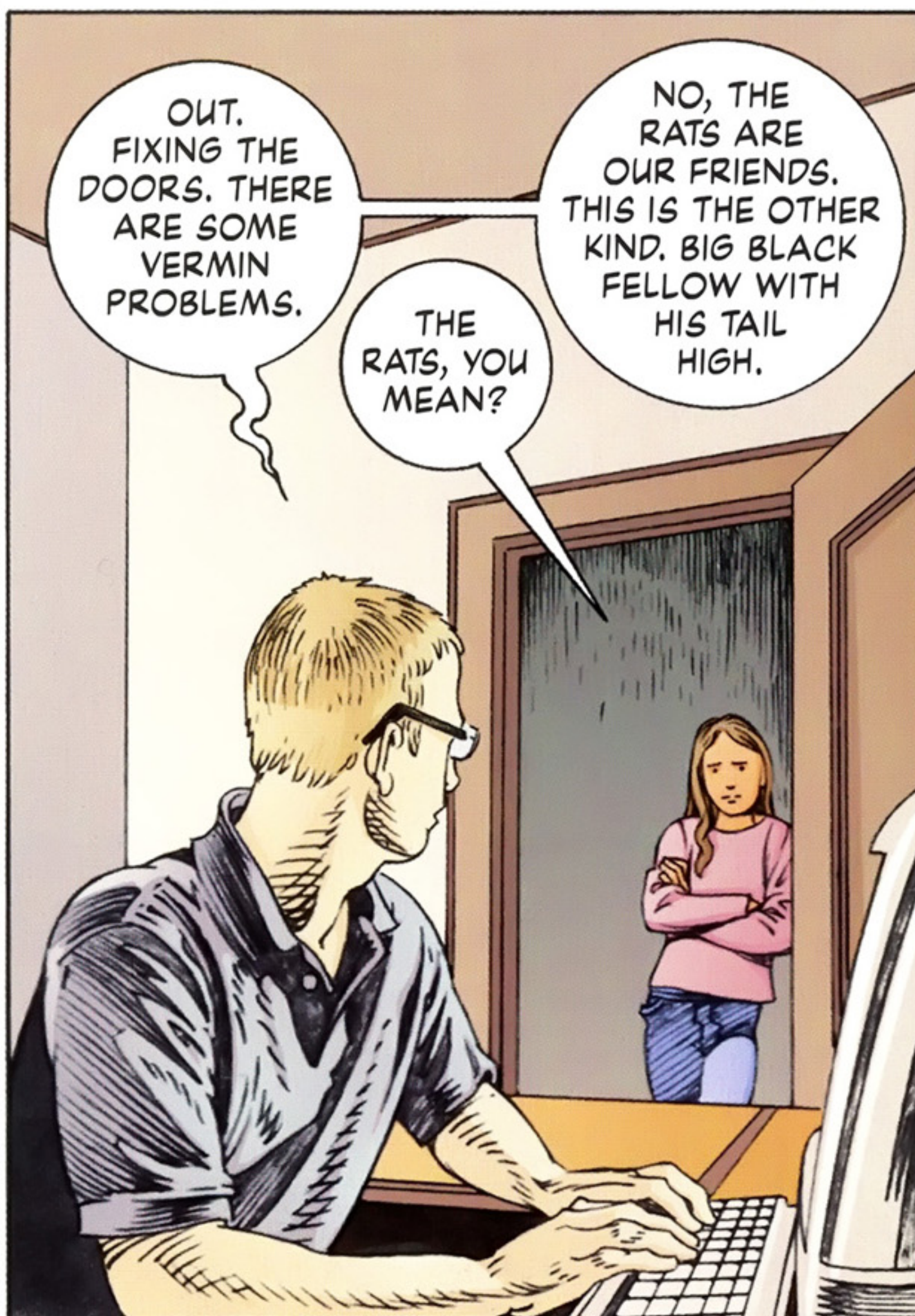


STILL, SHE WAS SURE THAT THERE WAS SOMEONE IN THE FLAT. SHE WALKED DOWN THE HALL.

THE OTHER FATHER WAS SITTING AT A DESK JUST LIKE HER FATHER'S, BUT HE WAS ONLY PRETENDING TO BE WORKING.



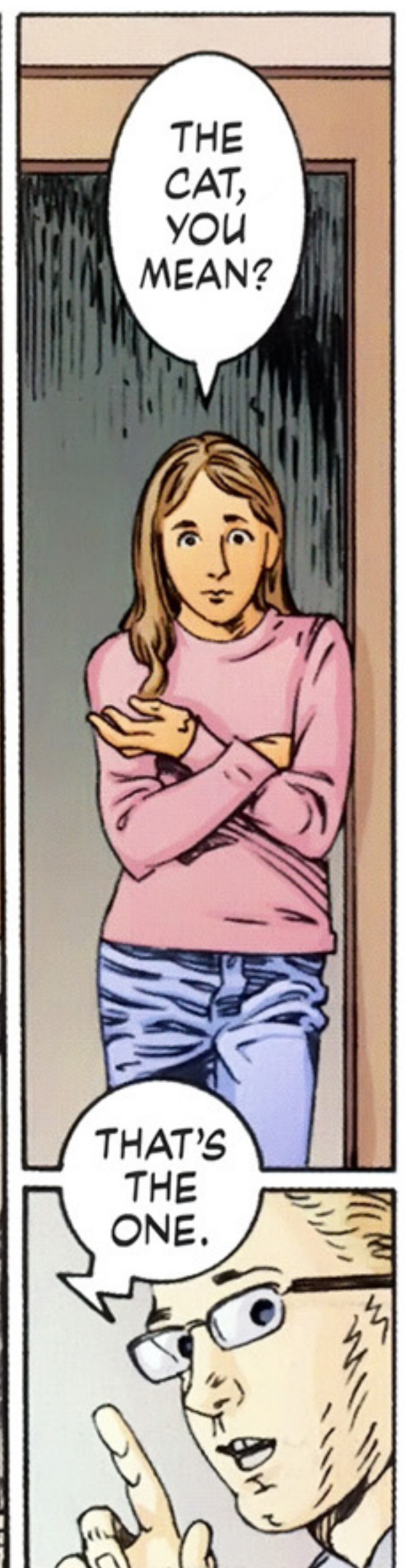
WHERE'S THE OTHER MOTHER?



OUT. FIXING THE DOORS. THERE ARE SOME VERMIN PROBLEMS.

THE RATS, YOU MEAN?

NO, THE RATS ARE OUR FRIENDS. THIS IS THE OTHER KIND. BIG BLACK FELLOW WITH HIS TAIL HIGH.



THE CAT, YOU MEAN?

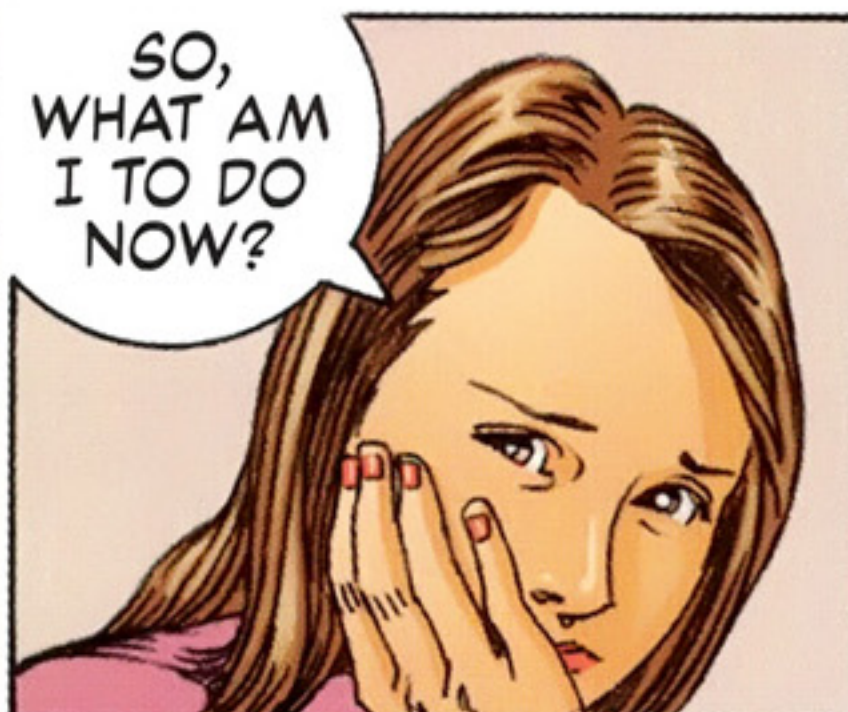
THAT'S THE ONE.

HE LOOKED LESS LIKE HER TRUE FATHER TODAY. THERE WAS SOMETHING SLIGHTLY VAGUE ABOUT HIS FACE—LIKE BREAD DOUGH THAT HAD BEGUN TO RISE.

REALLY, I MUSTN'T TALK TO YOU WHEN SHE ISN'T HERE.

BUT DON'T YOU WORRY, SHE WON'T BE GONE OFTEN.

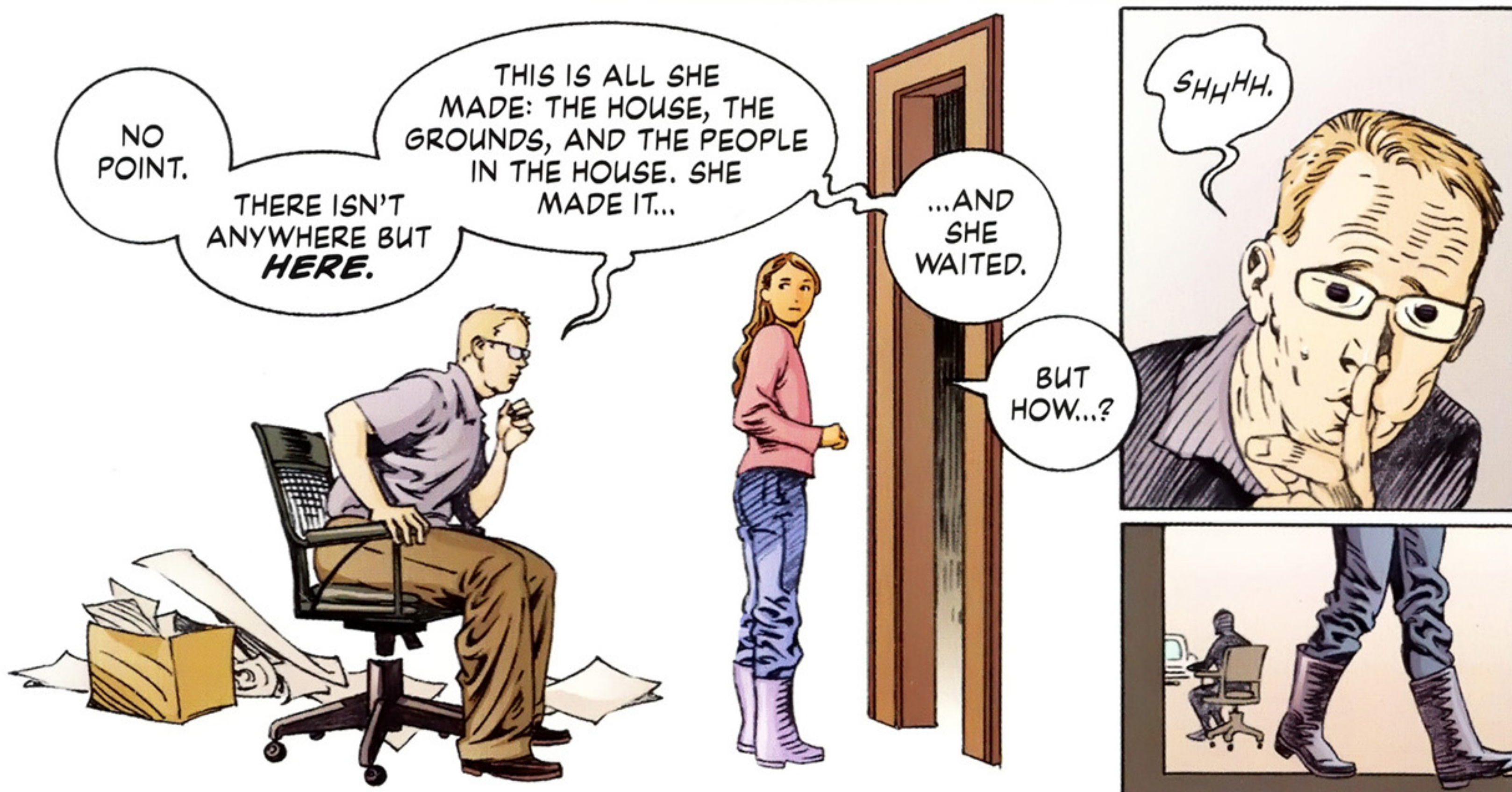
I SHALL DEMONSTRATE OUR TENDER HOSPITALITY TO YOU, SUCH THAT YOU WILL NOT EVEN THINK ABOUT EVER GOING BACK.



SO, WHAT AM I TO DO NOW?



IF YOU WON'T EVEN TALK TO ME, I AM GOING EXPLORING.



NO POINT.

THERE ISN'T ANYWHERE BUT **HERE.**

THIS IS ALL SHE MADE: THE HOUSE, THE GROUNDS, AND THE PEOPLE IN THE HOUSE. SHE MADE IT...

...AND SHE WAITED.

BUT HOW...?



SHE WENT INTO THE DRAWING ROOM, OVER TO THE OLD DOOR, AND SHE PULLED ON IT.

RATS!
IT'S
LOCKED
FAST...

...AND
THE OTHER
MOTHER
HAS THE
KEY.

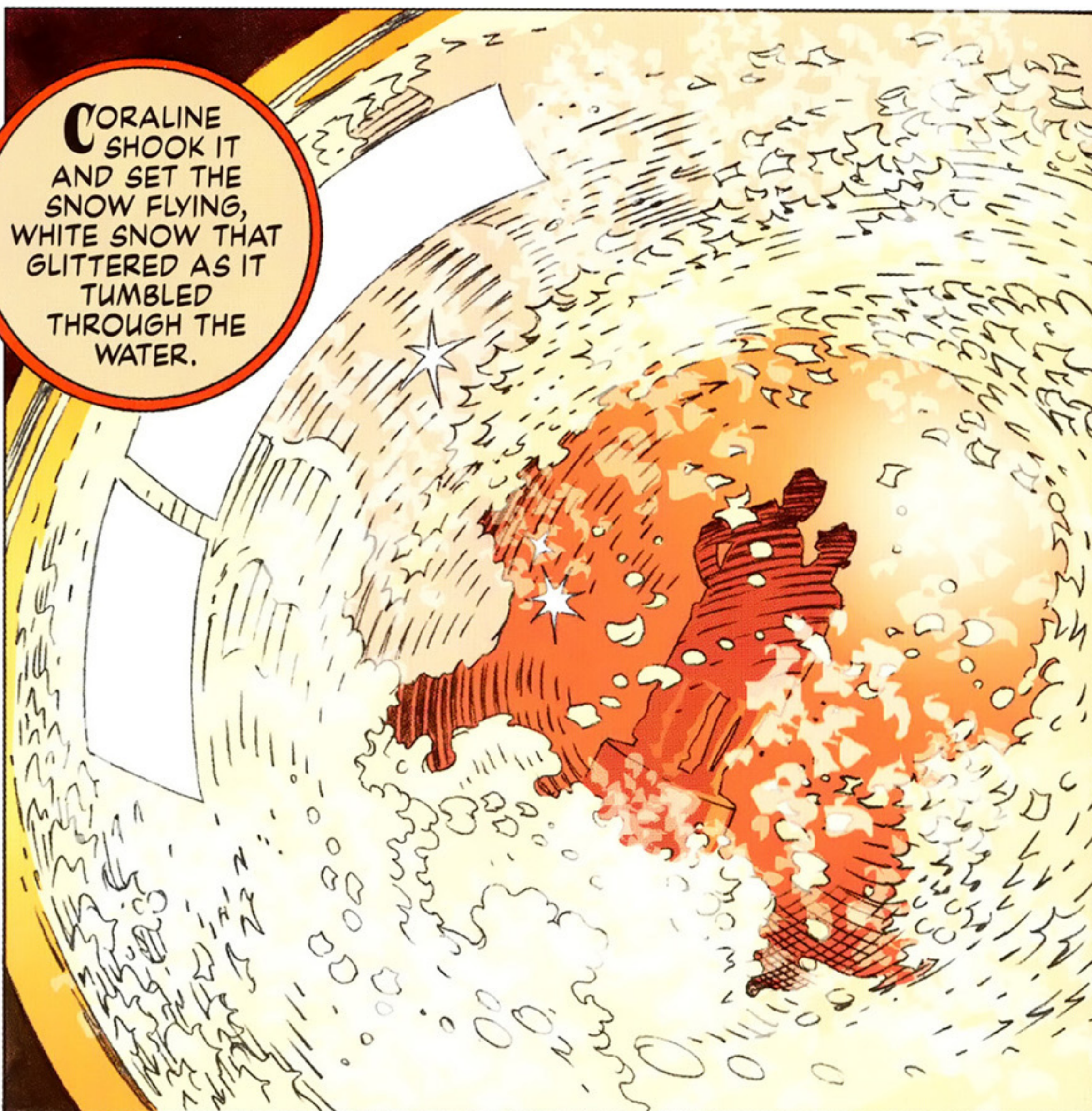
SHE LOOKED AROUND THE ROOM. IT WAS SO FAMILIAR—THAT WAS WHAT MADE IT FEEL SO TRULY STRANGE. EVERYTHING WAS EXACTLY THE SAME AS SHE REMEMBERED...

...BUT
THERE WAS
SOMETHING
ELSE...

...SOMETHING SHE
DID NOT REMEMBER
SEEING BEFORE.

A BALL OF GLASS, UP
ON THE MANTELPiece.

A
SNOW
GLOBE
WITH TWO
LITTLE
PEOPLE
IN IT.



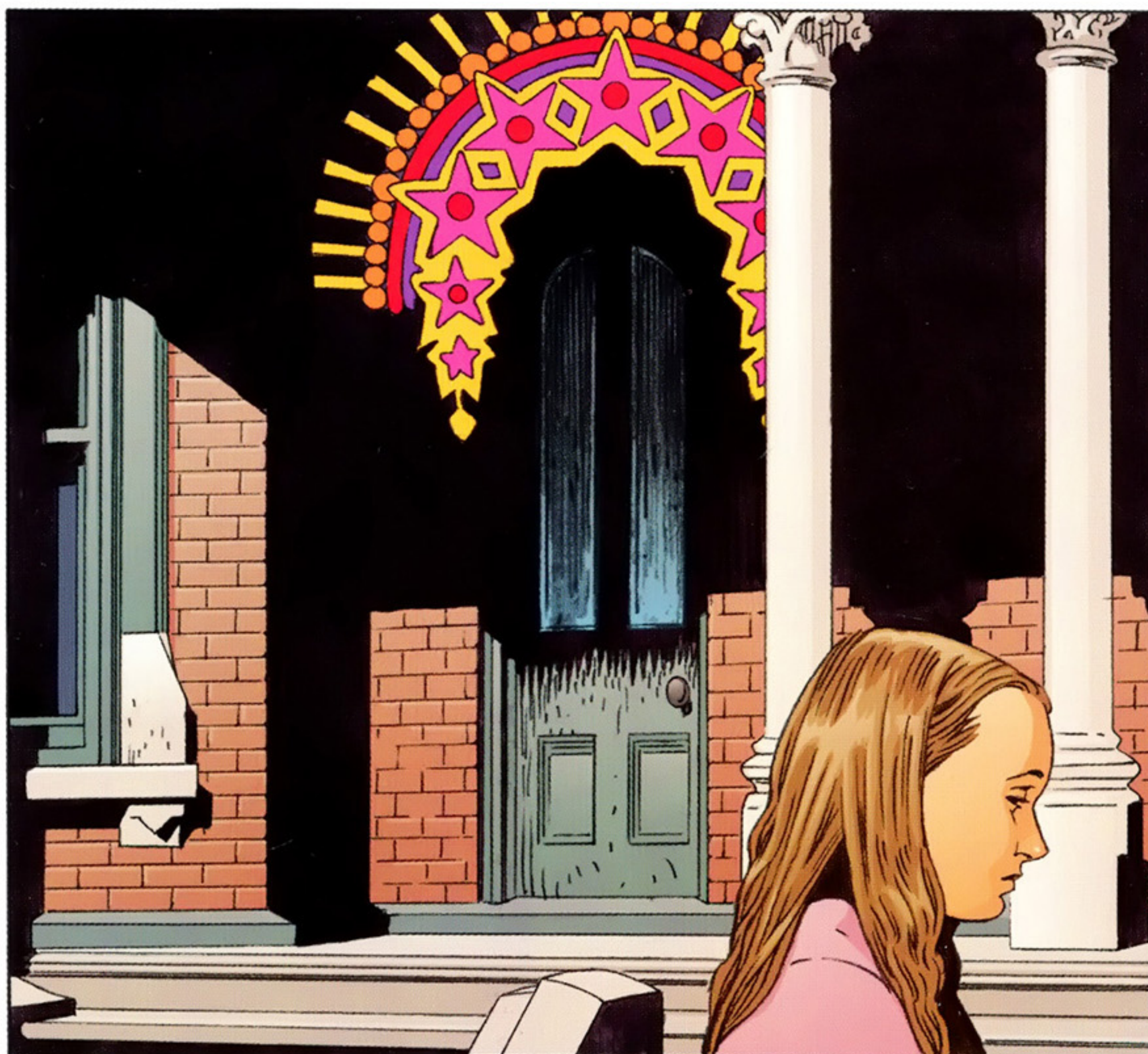
THEN SHE PUT THE SNOW GLOBE BACK ON THE MANTEL-PIECE AND CARRIED ON LOOKING FOR HER TRUE PARENTS...



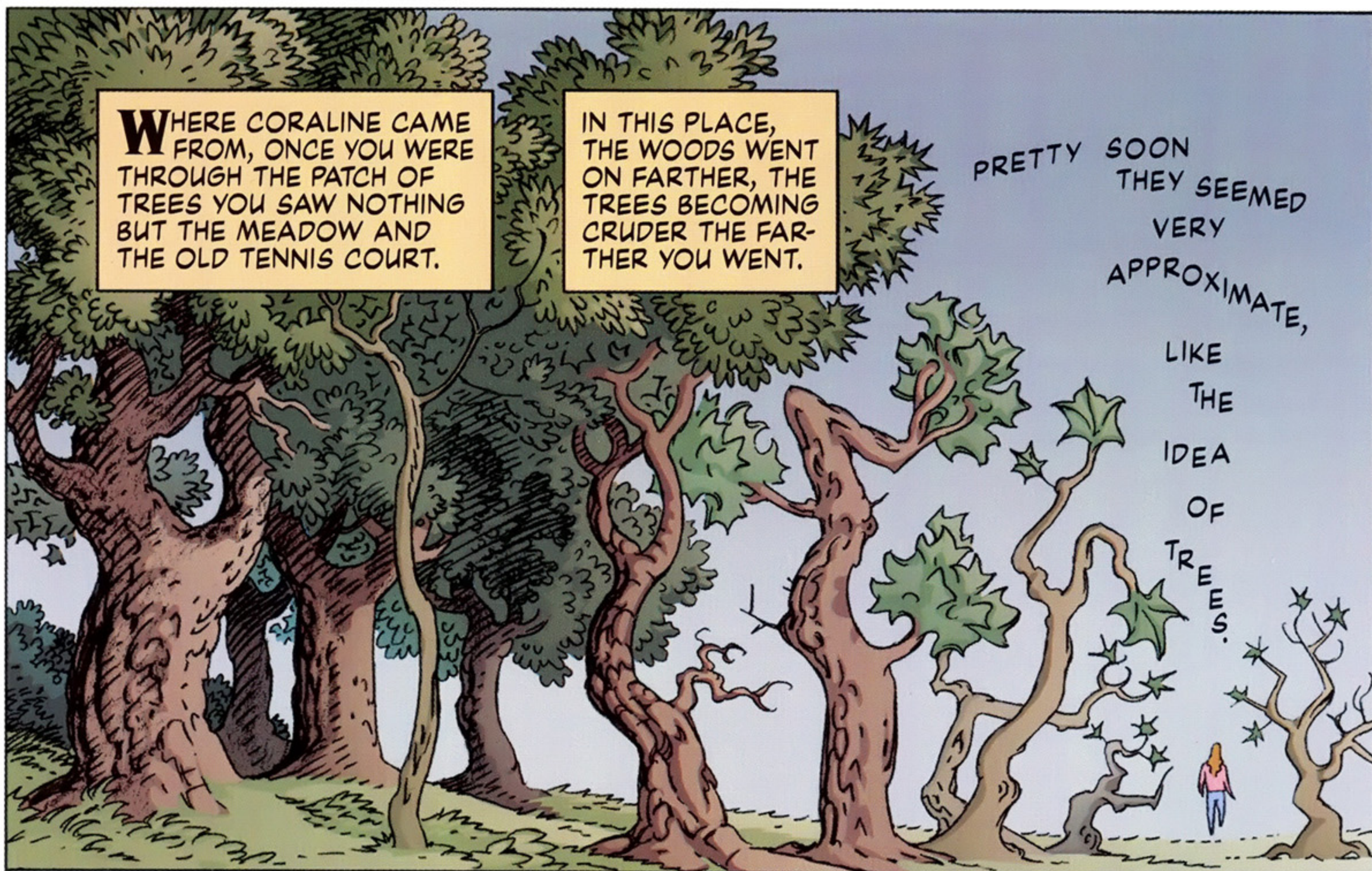
...AND A WAY OUT.



SHE WENT OUT OF THE FLAT. PAST THE FLASHING-LIGHTS DOOR BEHIND WHICH THE OTHER MISSES SPINK AND FORCIBLE PERFORMED THEIR SHOW FOREVER...



...AND SHE SET OFF INTO THE WOODS.



WHERE CORALINE CAME FROM, ONCE YOU WERE THROUGH THE PATCH OF TREES YOU SAW NOTHING BUT THE MEADOW AND THE OLD TENNIS COURT.

IN THIS PLACE, THE WOODS WENT ON FARTHER, THE TREES BECOMING CRUDER THE FARTHER YOU WENT.

PRETTY SOON THEY SEEMED VERY APPROXIMATE, LIKE THE IDEA OF TREES.



SHE KEPT WALKING.
AND THEN THE MIST BEGAN.
IT WAS NOT DAMP, LIKE A NORMAL FOG OR MIST. IT WAS NOT COLD AND IT WAS NOT WARM.
IT FELT TO CORALINE LIKE SHE WAS WALKING INTO NOTHING.



I'M AN EXPLORER.



AND I NEED ALL THE WAYS OUT OF HERE I CAN GET.



SO I SHALL KEEP WALKING.

THE WORLD SHE WAS WALKING THROUGH WAS A PALE NOTHINGNESS, LIKE A BLANK SHEET OF PAPER. IT HAD NO SMELL, TEXTURE, OR TASTE.

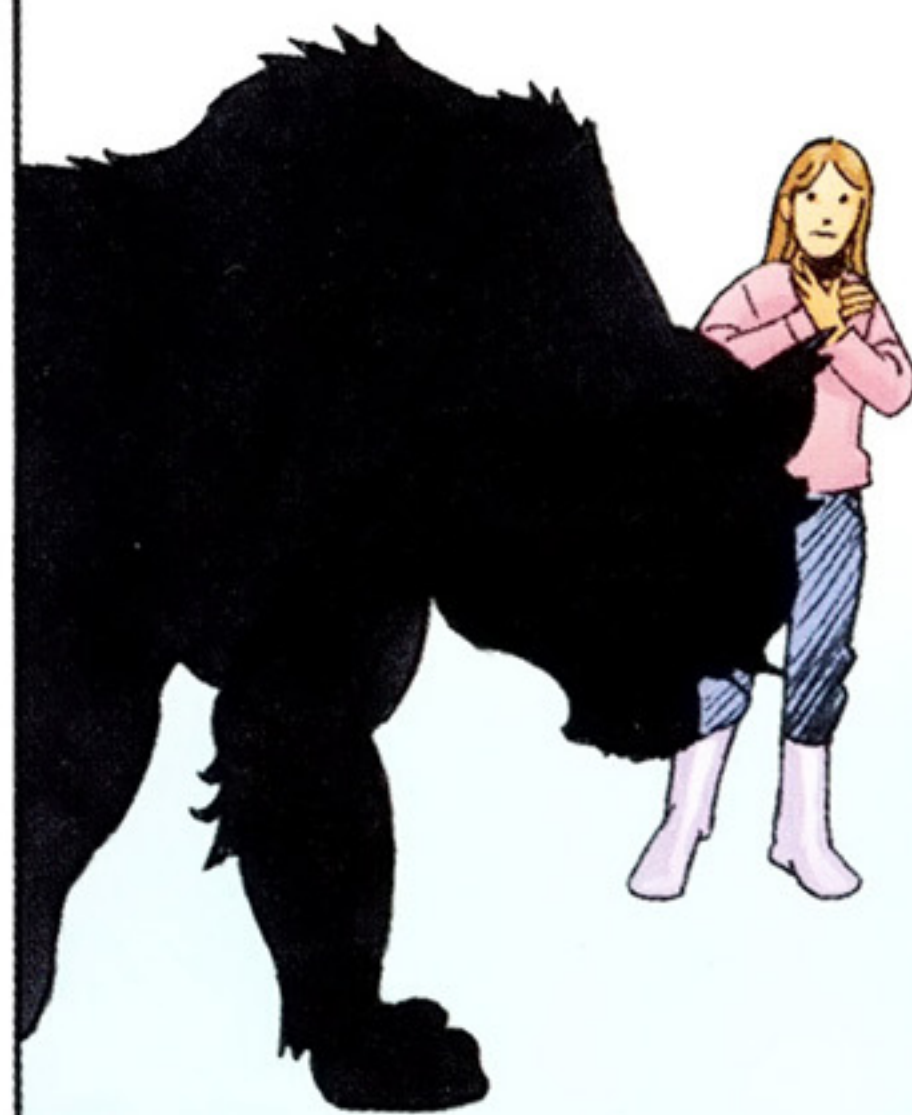


IT CERTAINLY ISN'T MIST.

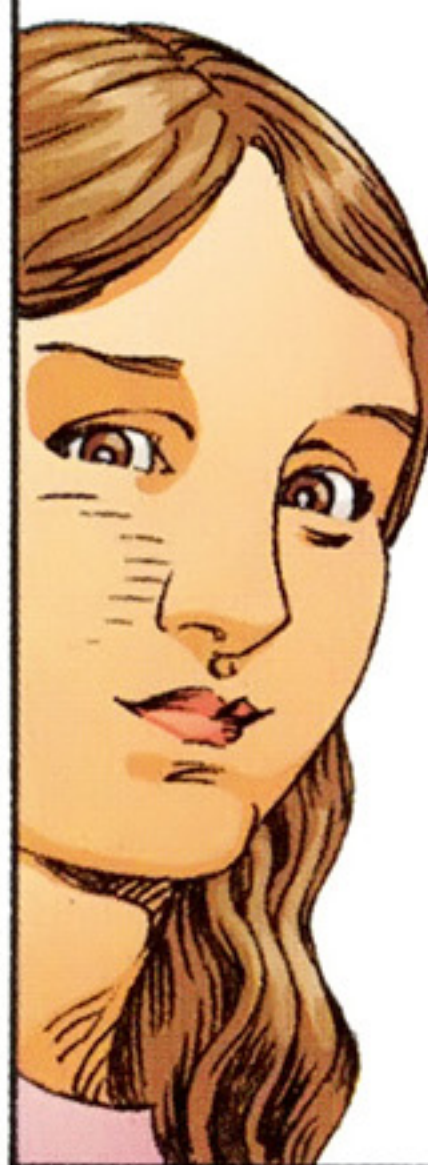
AND WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING HERE?



SHE THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE SOME KIND OF LION, AT FIRST, SOME DISTANCE AWAY FROM HER.



AND THEN SHE KNEW WHAT IT WAS.



I'M EXPLORING.



BAD PLACE FOR EXPLORING.

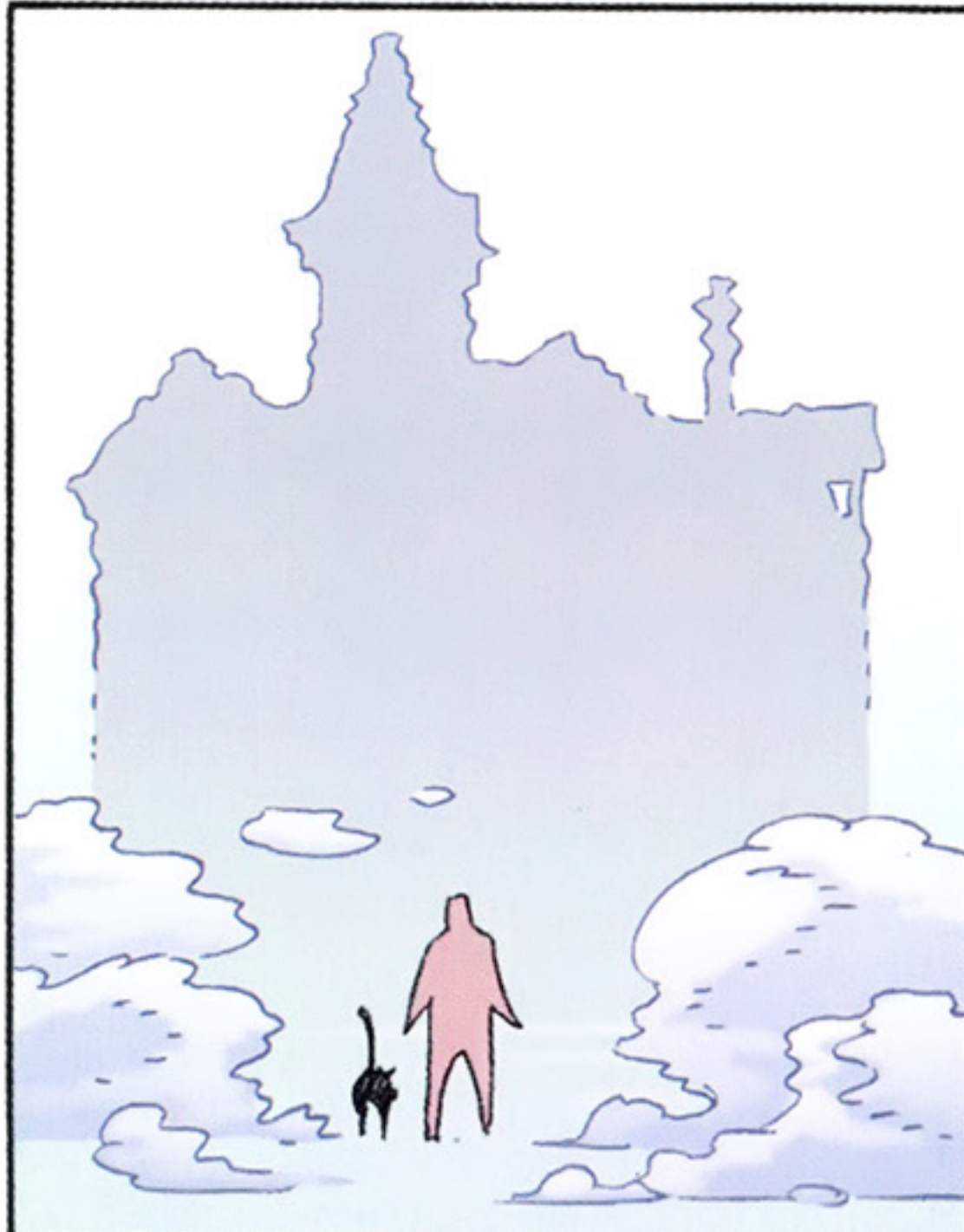
NOTHING TO FIND HERE.

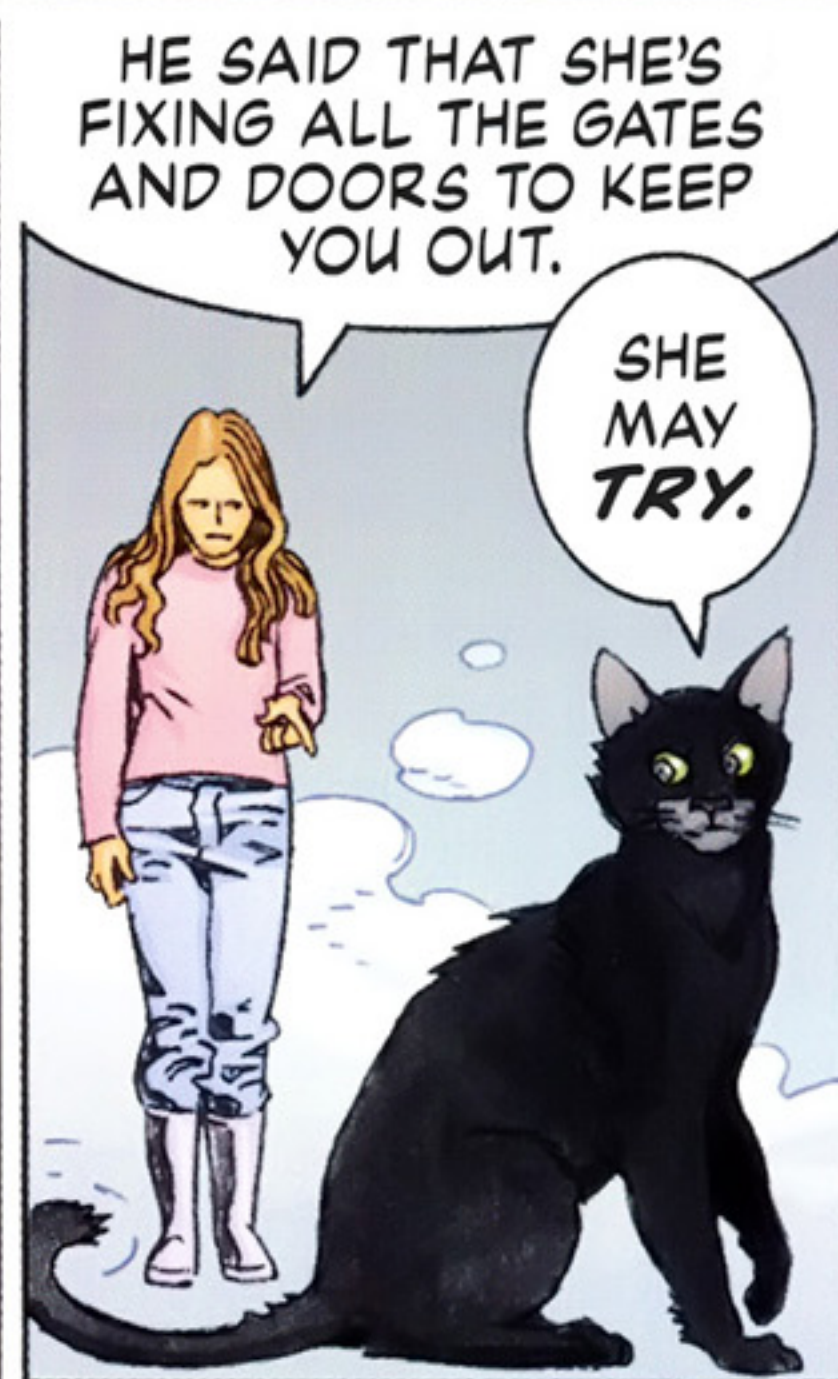
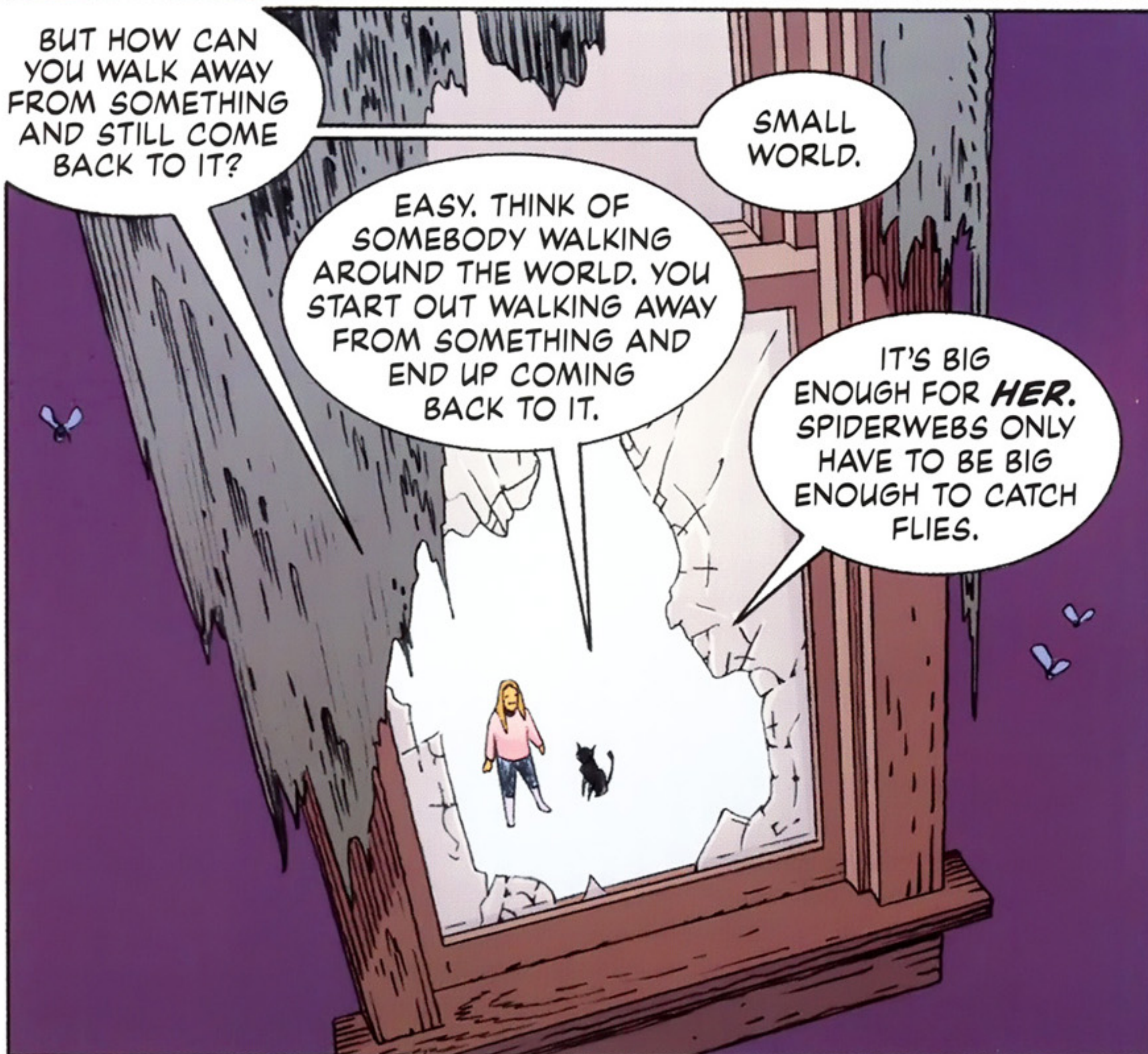
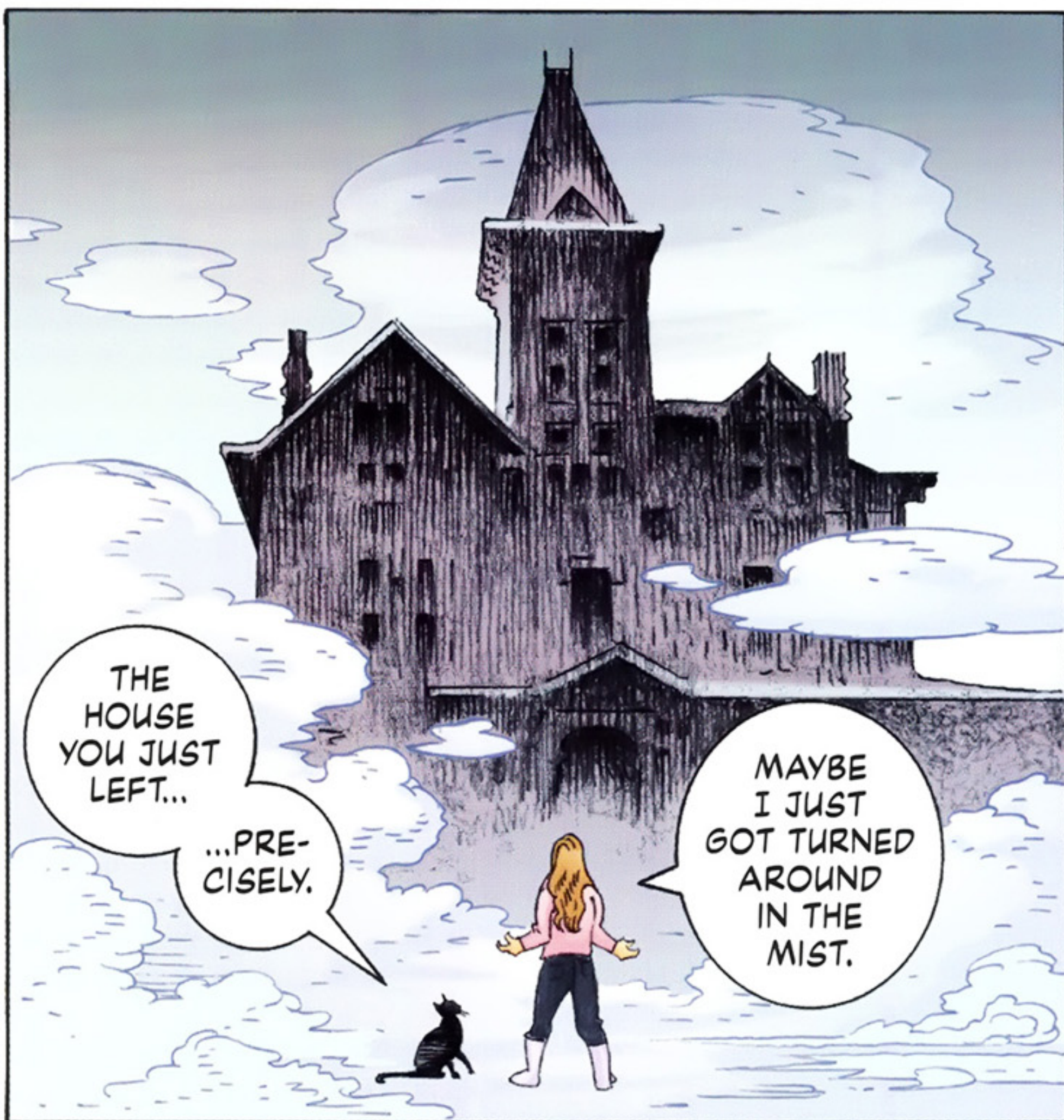
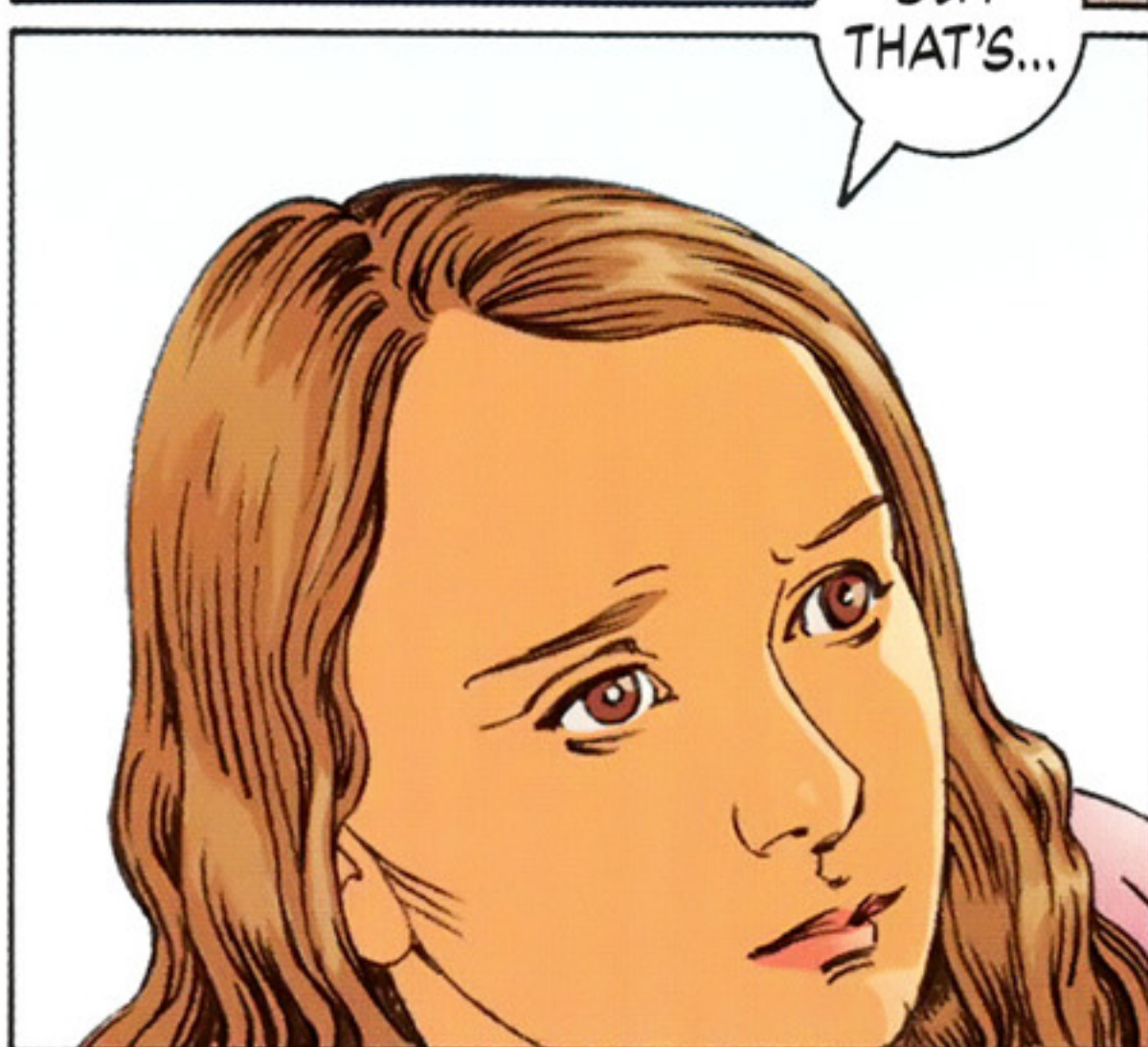
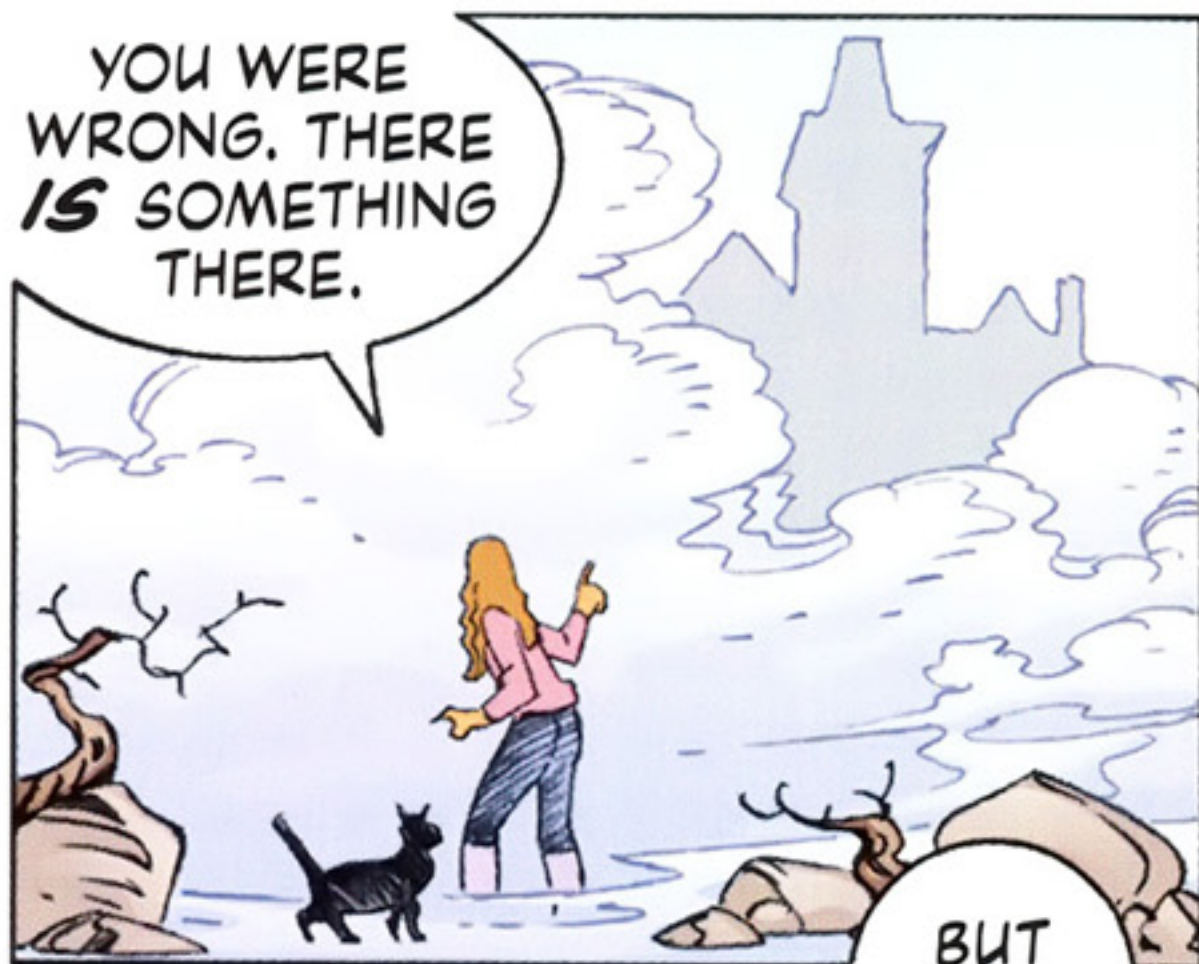
THIS IS JUST THE OUTSIDE, THE PART OF THE PLACE **SHE** HASN'T BOTHERED TO CREATE...THE ONE WHO SAYS SHE'S YOUR OTHER MOTHER.

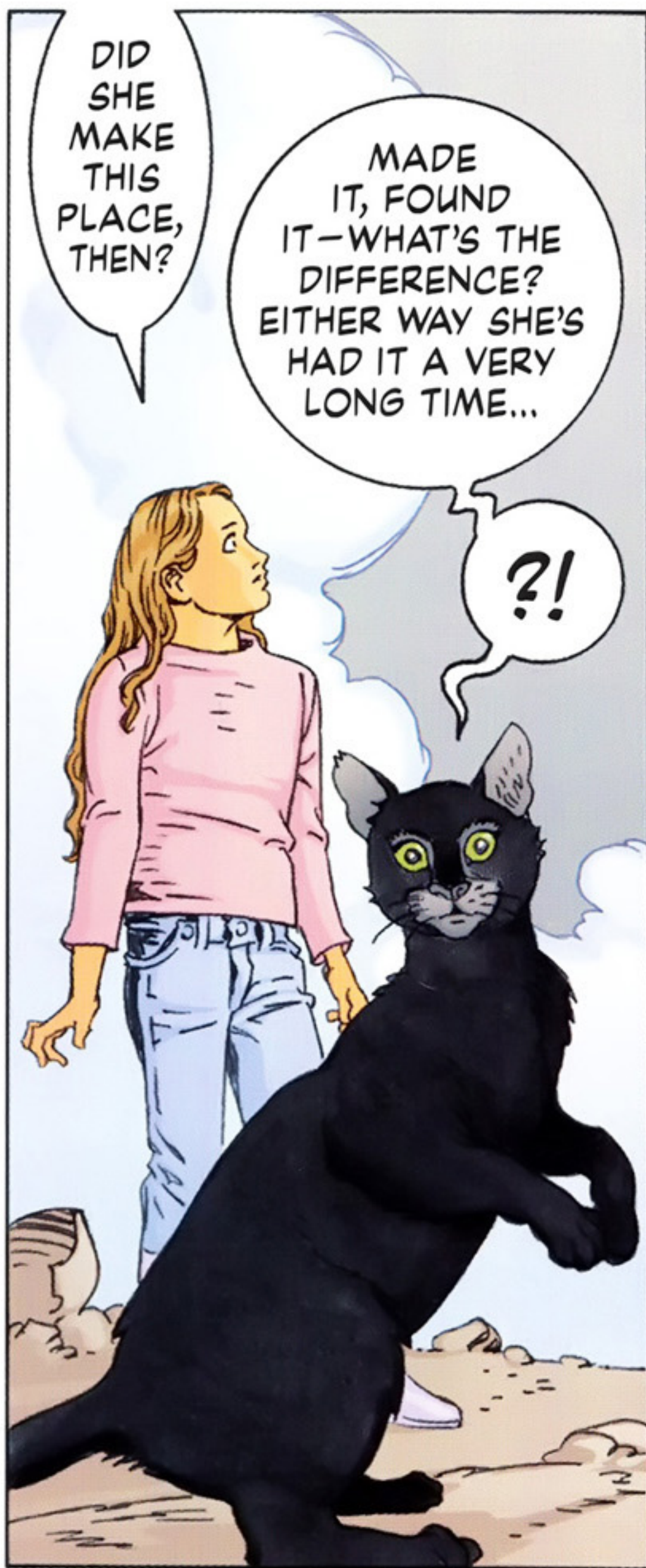
WHAT **IS** SHE?



THE CAT DID NOT ANSWER.



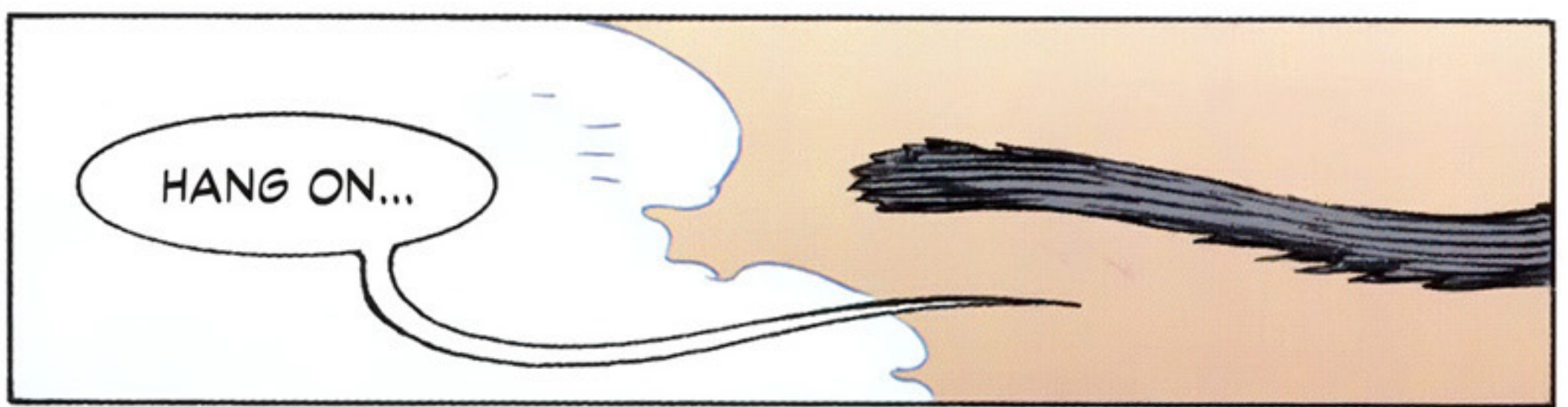




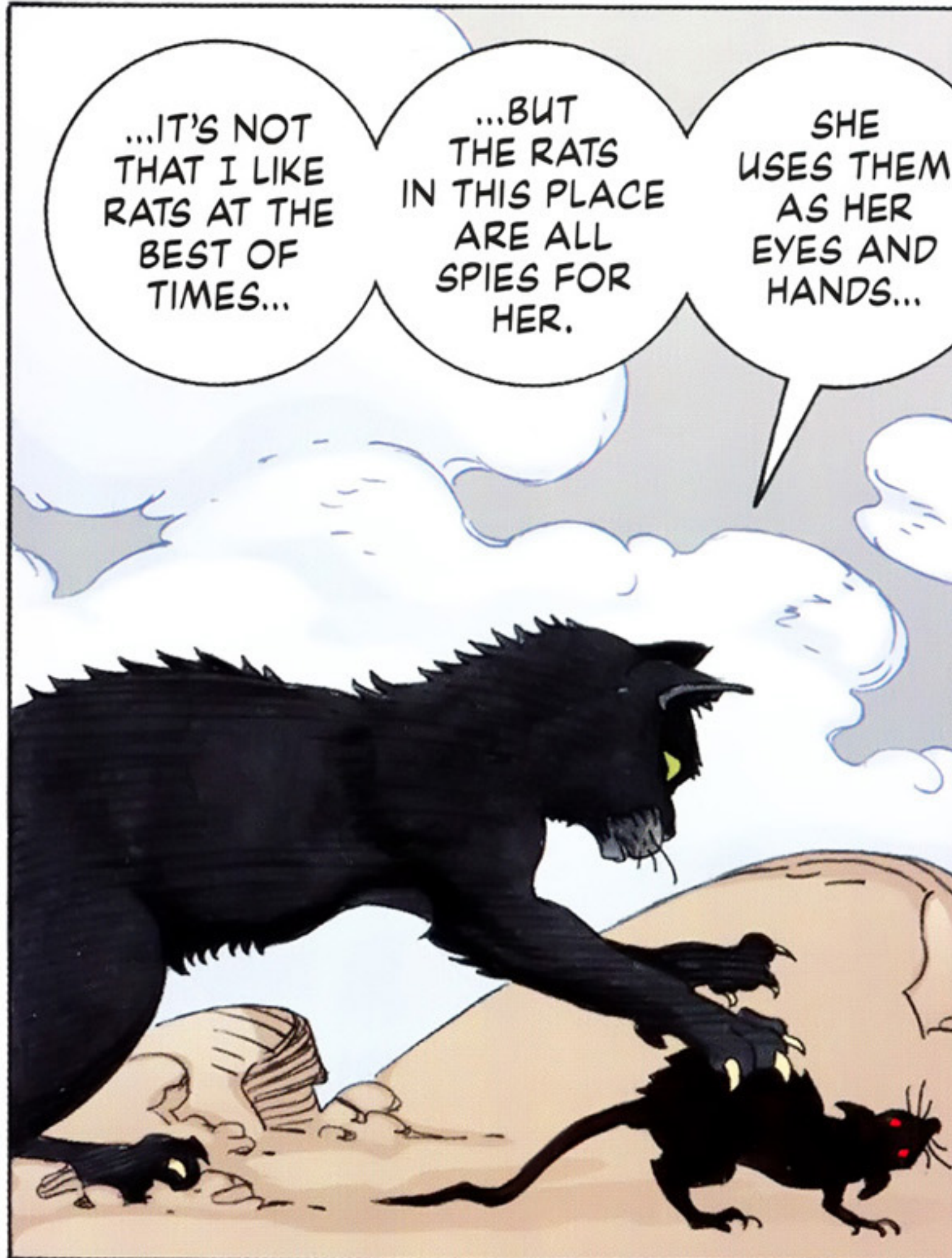
DID SHE
MAKE
THIS
PLACE,
THEN?

MADE
IT, FOUND
IT—WHAT'S THE
DIFFERENCE?
EITHER WAY SHE'S
HAD IT A VERY
LONG TIME...

?!



HANG ON...



...IT'S NOT
THAT I LIKE
RATS AT THE
BEST OF
TIMES...

...BUT
THE RATS
IN THIS PLACE
ARE ALL
SPIES FOR
HER.

SHE
USES THEM
AS HER
EYES AND
HANDS...



AND
WITH
THAT
THE
CAT
LET
THE
RAT
GO.



I *LOVE* THIS BIT.

WANT
TO SEE
ME DO IT
AGAIN?

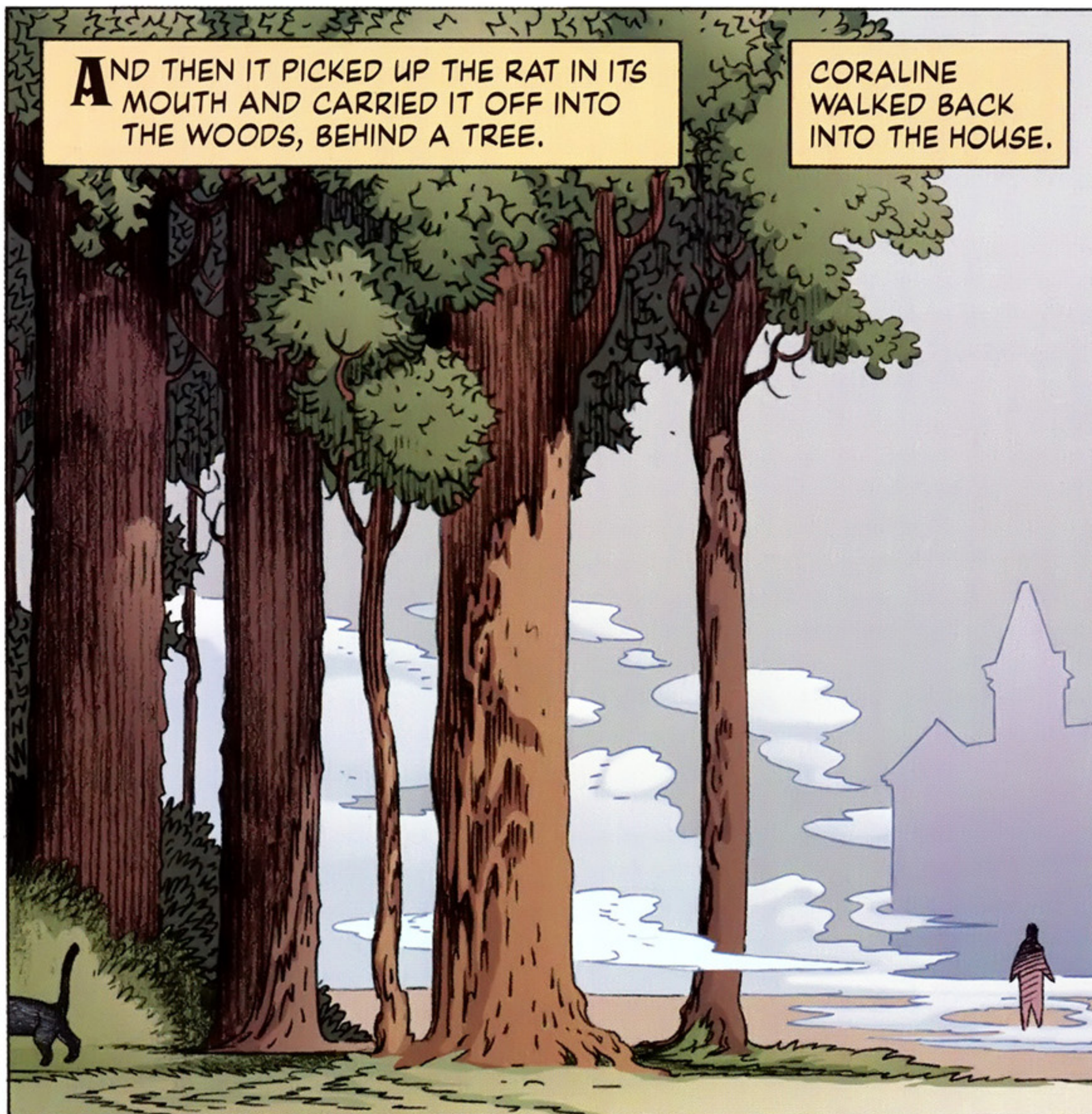




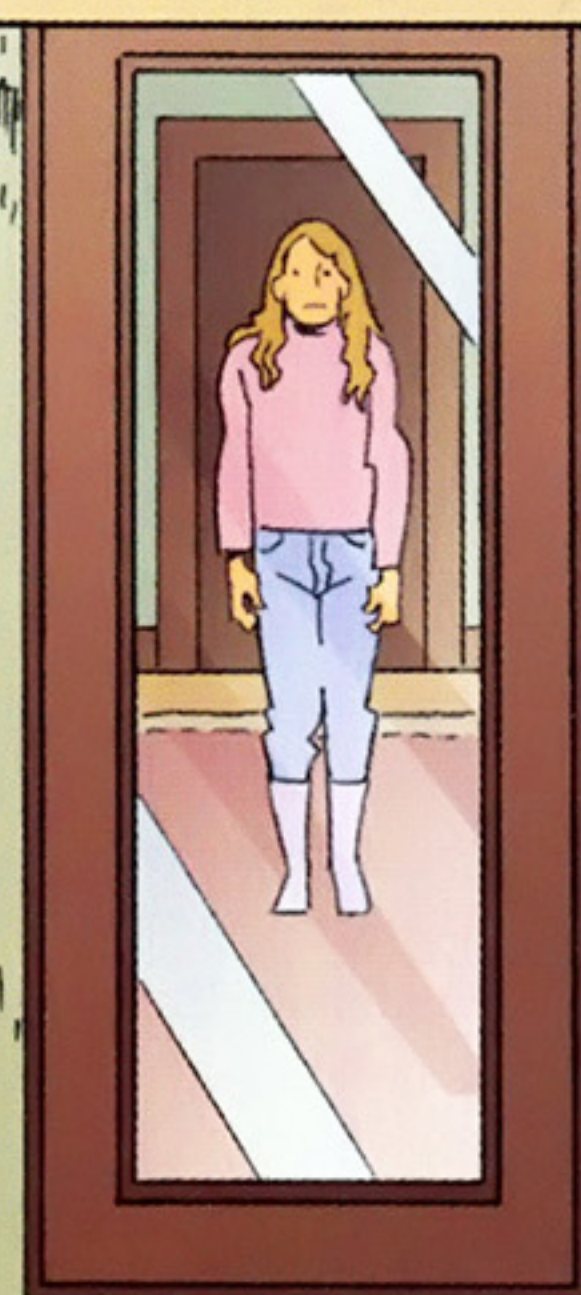
AFTER ALL, IT PERMITS THE OCCASIONAL FUNNY LITTLE RUNNING SNACK TO ESCAPE FROM TIME TO TIME.



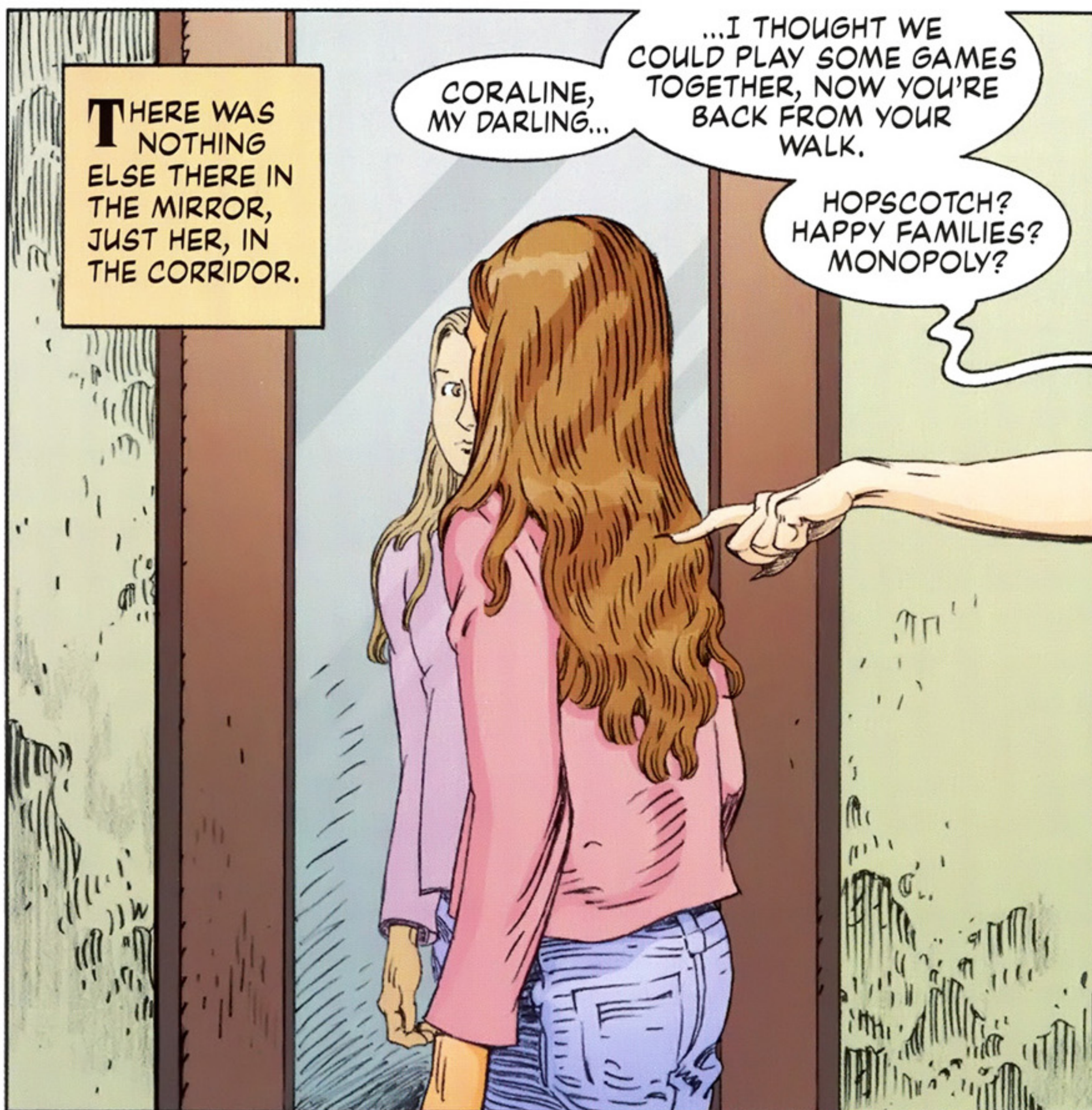
HOW OFTEN DOES **YOUR** DINNER GET TO ESCAPE?



ALL WAS QUIET AND EMPTY AND DESERTED.



SHE COULD SEE HERSELF WALKING TOWARD THE MIRROR, LOOKING, REFLECTED, A LITTLE BRAVER THAN SHE ACTUALLY FELT.



THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE THERE IN THE MIRROR, JUST HER, IN THE CORRIDOR.

CORALINE, MY DARLING...

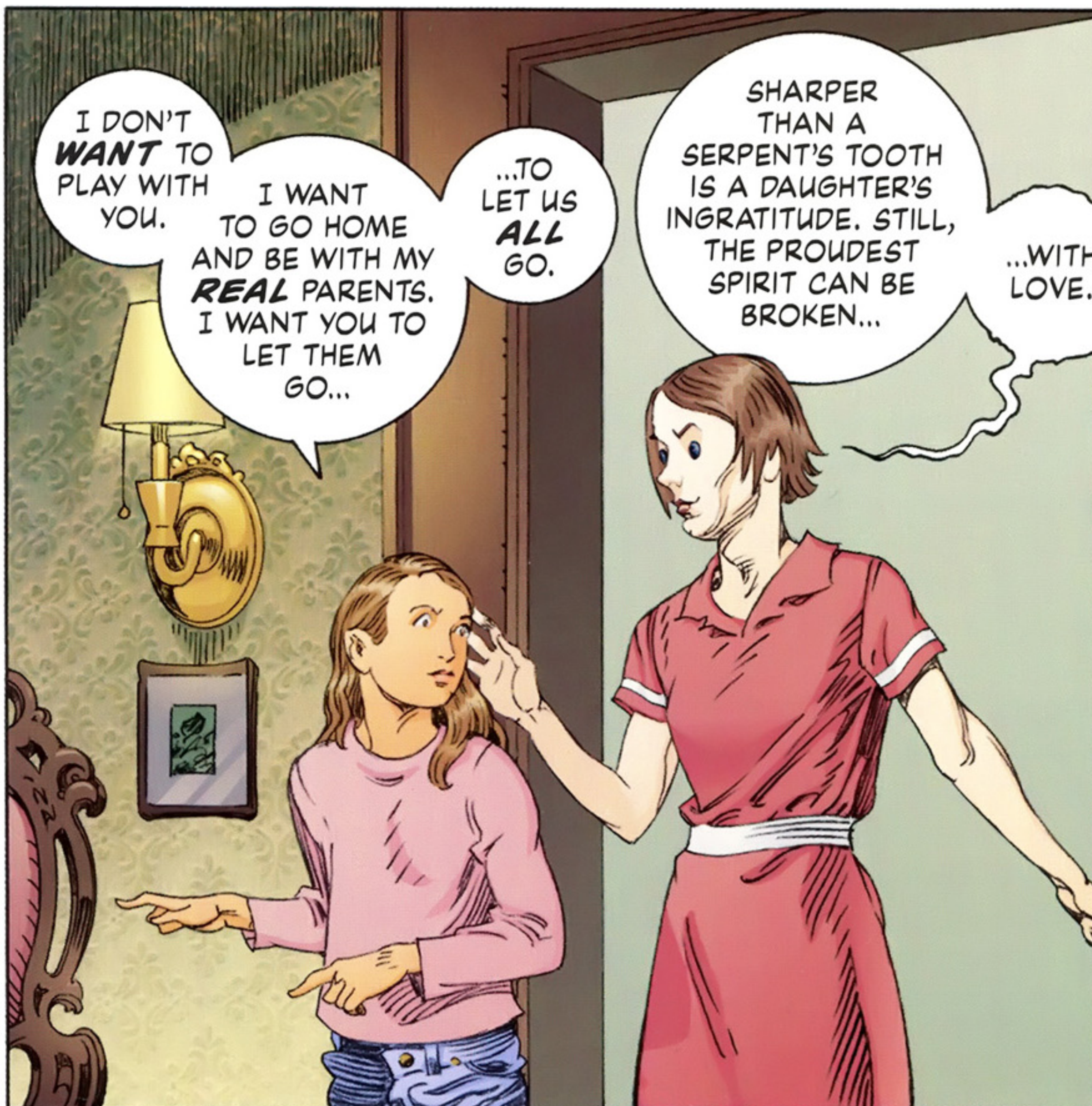
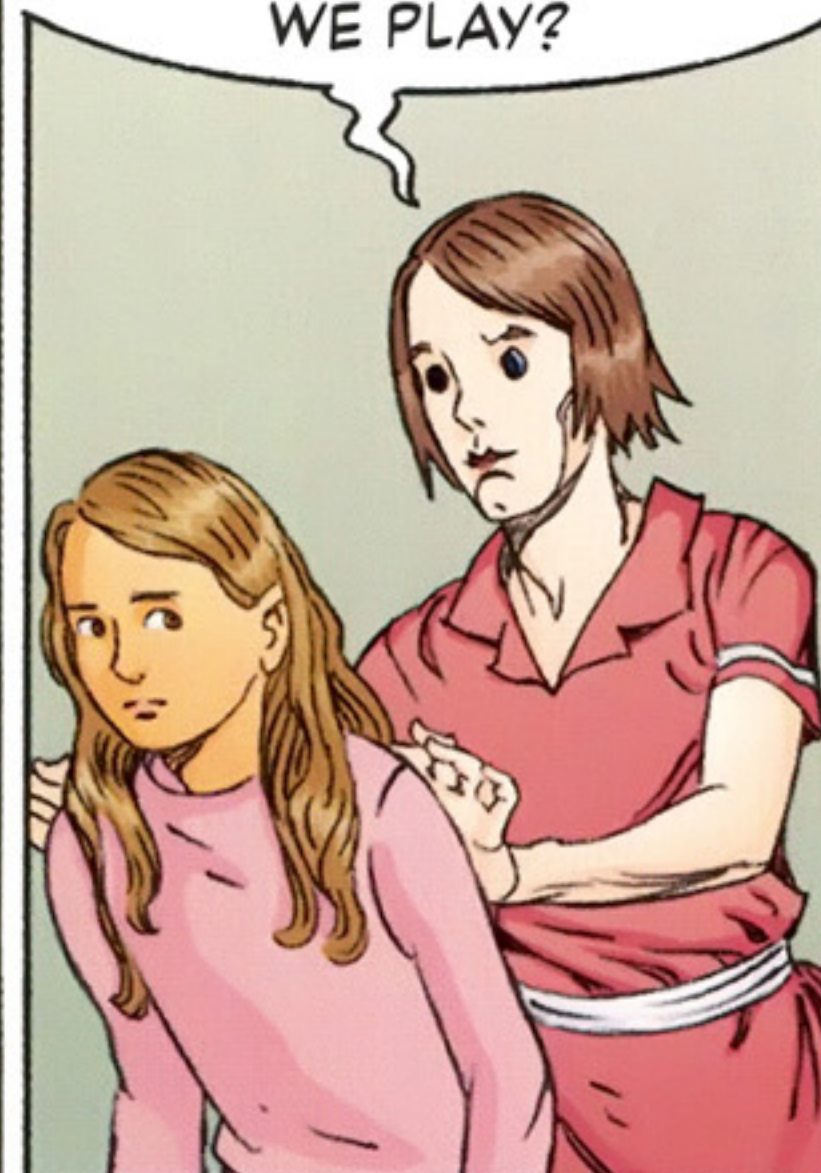
...I THOUGHT WE COULD PLAY SOME GAMES TOGETHER, NOW YOU'RE BACK FROM YOUR WALK.

HOPSCOTCH? HAPPY FAMILIES? MONOPOLY?



YOU WEREN'T IN THE MIRROR.

MIRRORS ARE NEVER TO BE TRUSTED. NOW, WHAT GAME SHALL WE PLAY?



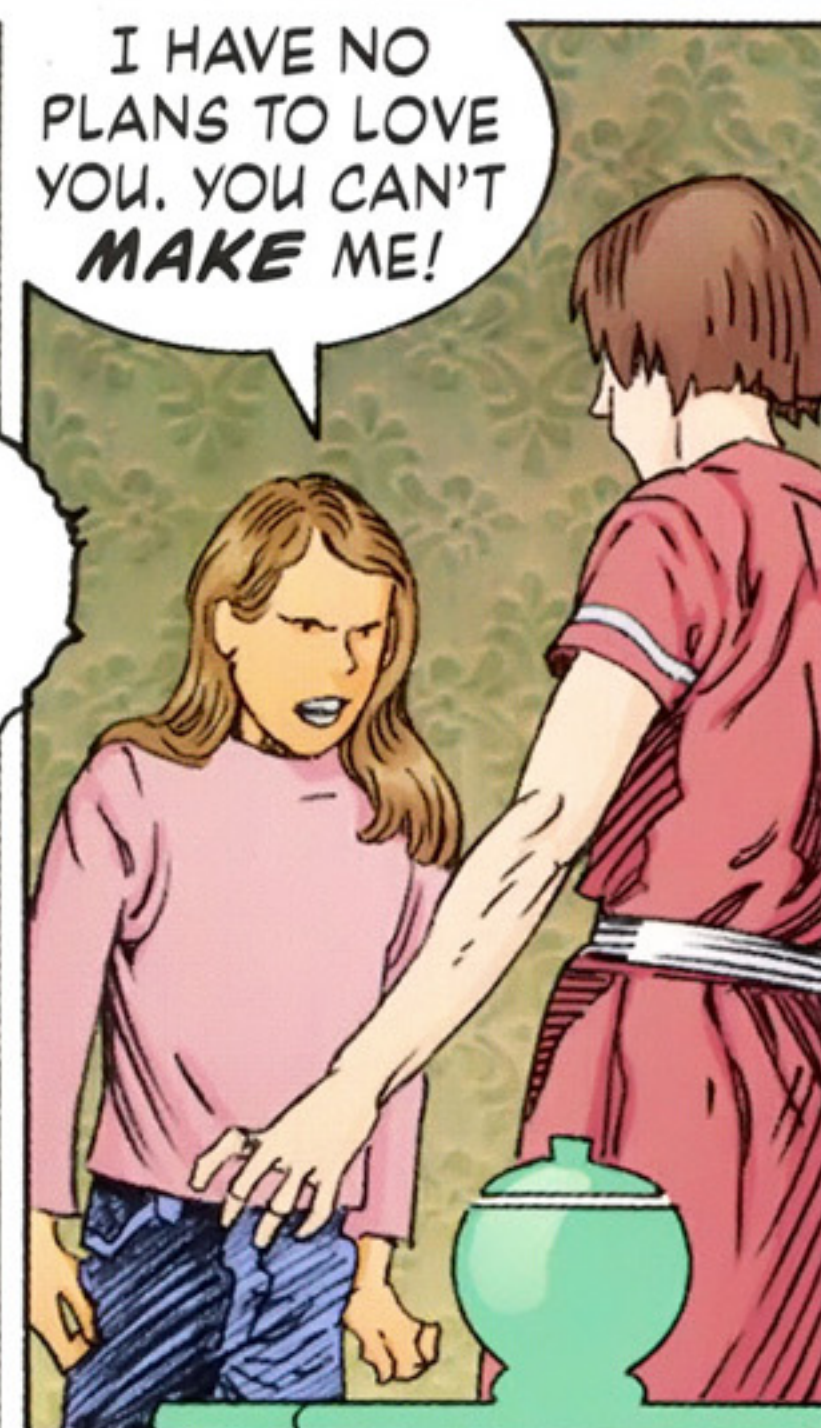
I DON'T **WANT** TO PLAY WITH YOU.

I WANT TO GO HOME AND BE WITH MY **REAL** PARENTS. I WANT YOU TO LET THEM GO...

...TO LET US **ALL** GO.

SHARPER THAN A SERPENT'S TOOTH IS A DAUGHTER'S INGRATITUDE. STILL, THE PROUDEST SPIRIT CAN BE BROKEN...

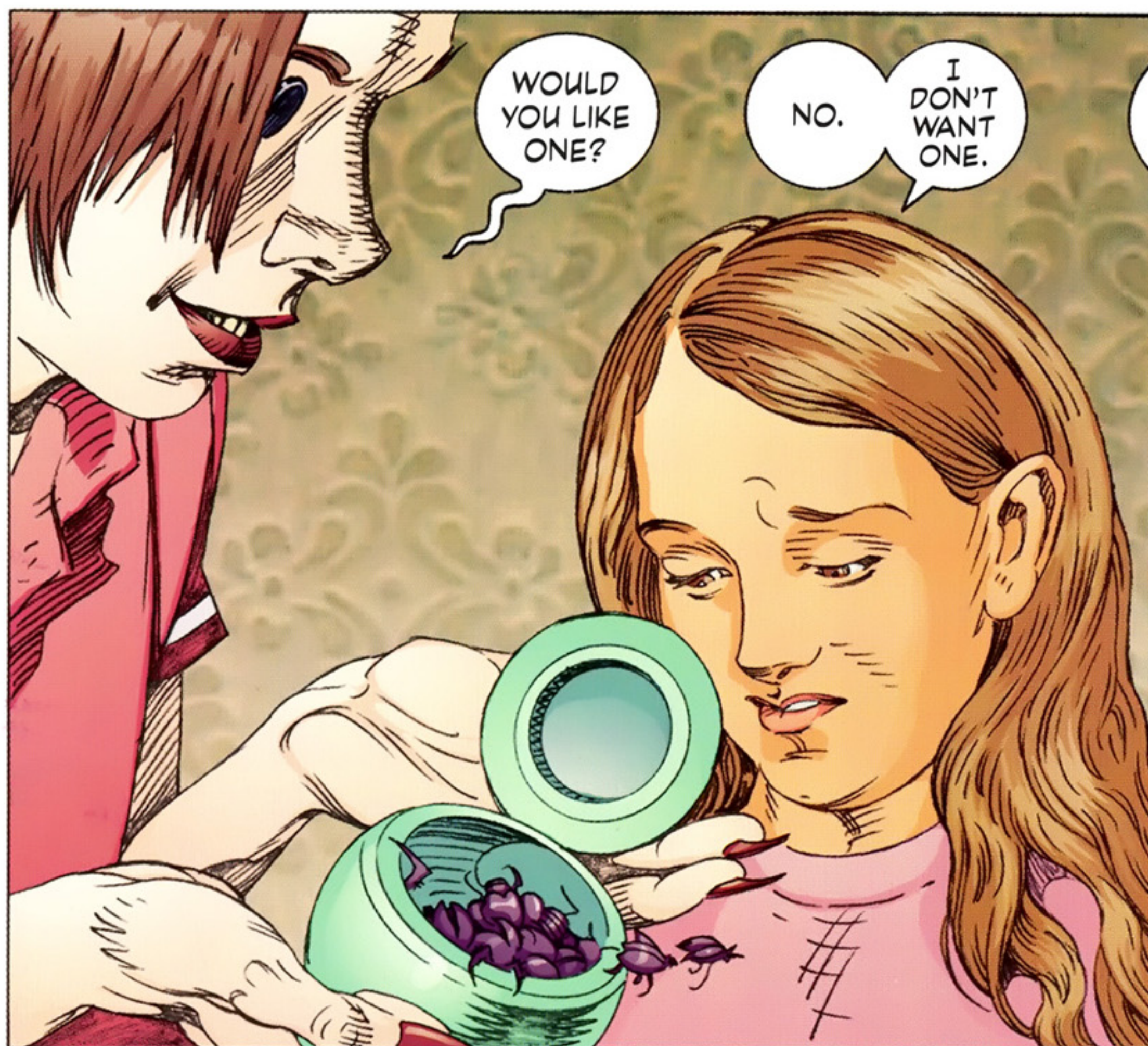
...WITH LOVE.



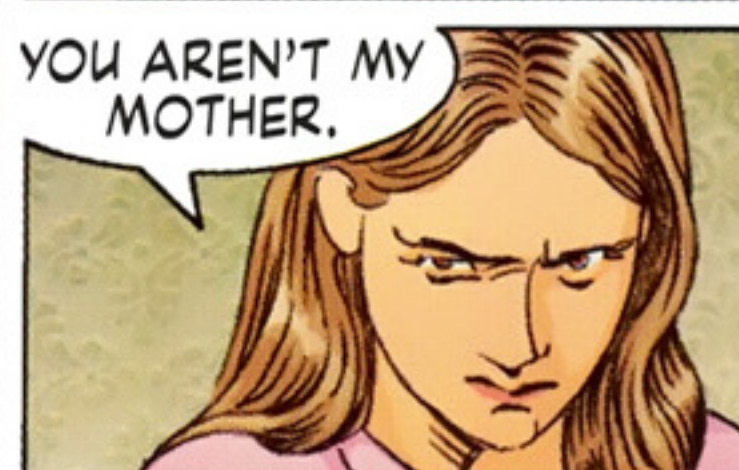
I HAVE NO PLANS TO LOVE YOU. YOU CAN'T **MAKE** ME!



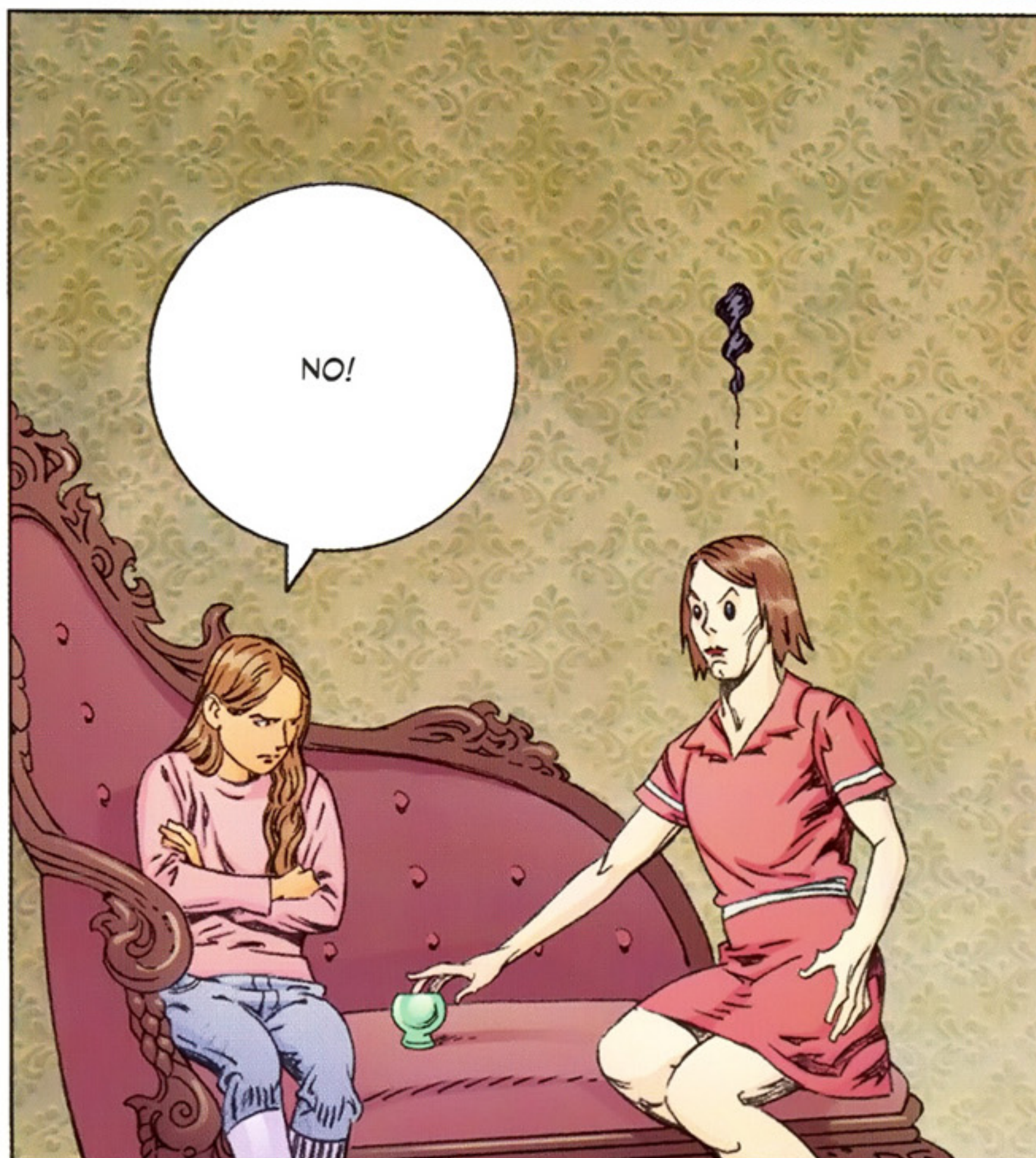
LET'S TALK ABOUT IT.

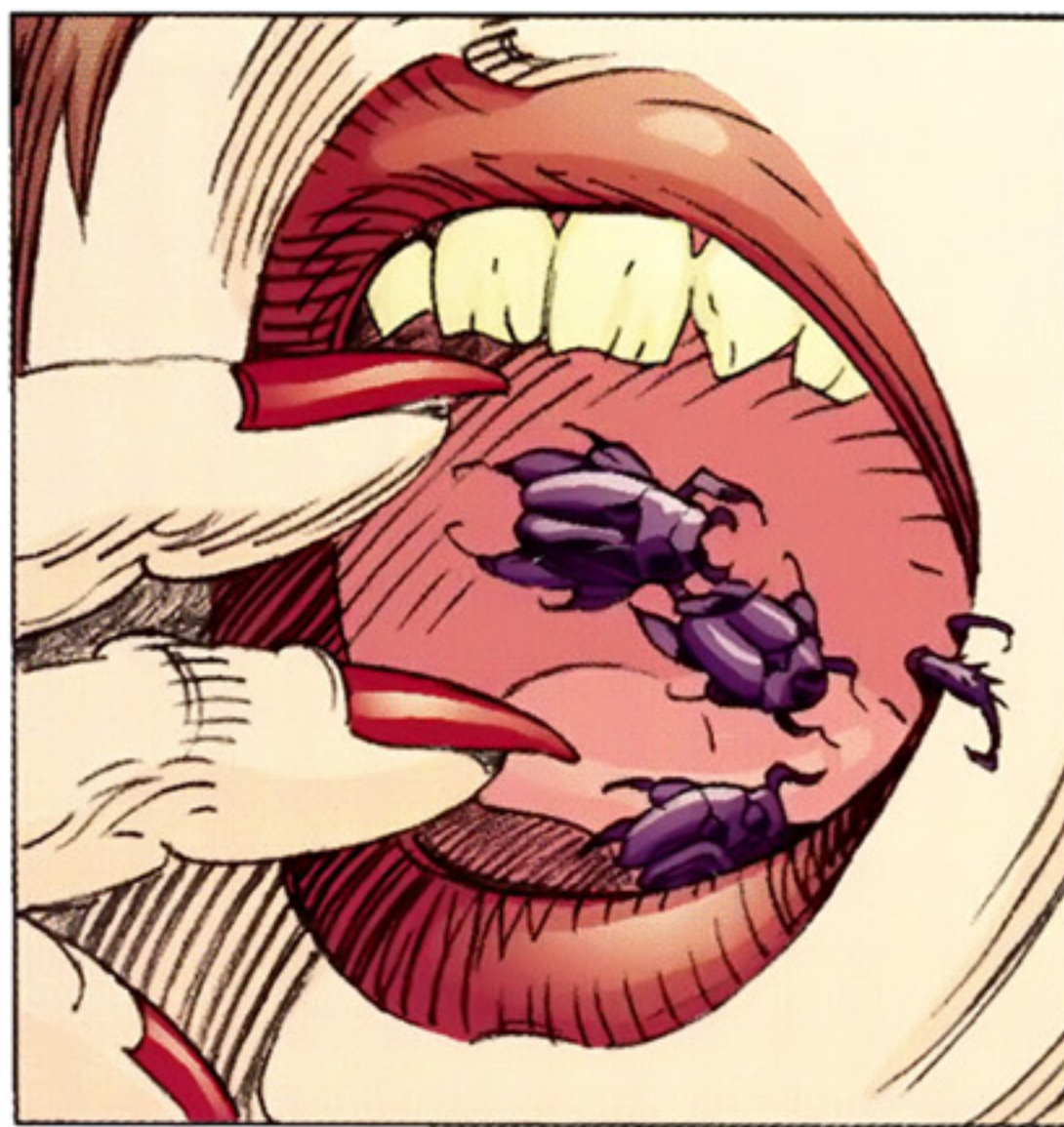
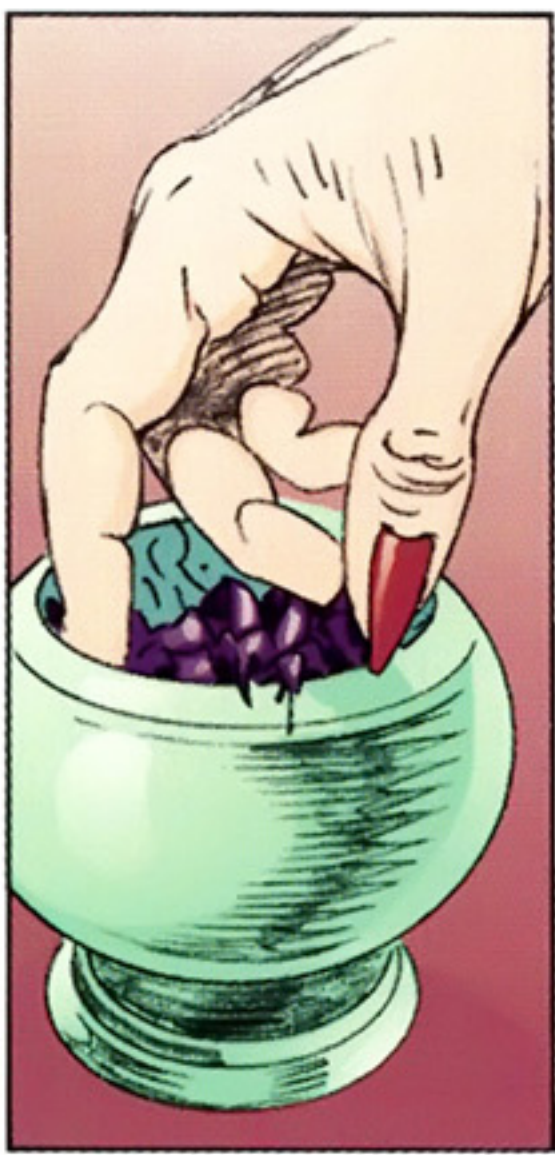


YOU'RE SICK. SICK AND EVIL AND WEIRD.



NOW, I THINK YOU ARE A LITTLE OVEREXCITED, CORALINE. PERHAPS THIS AFTERNOON WE COULD DO SOME WATERCOLOR PAINTING. THEN DINNER, AND THEN, IF YOU HAVE BEEN GOOD, YOU MAY PLAY WITH THE RATS BEFORE BED. AND I SHALL READ YOU A STORY AND TUCK YOU IN AND KISS YOU GOOD NIGHT.



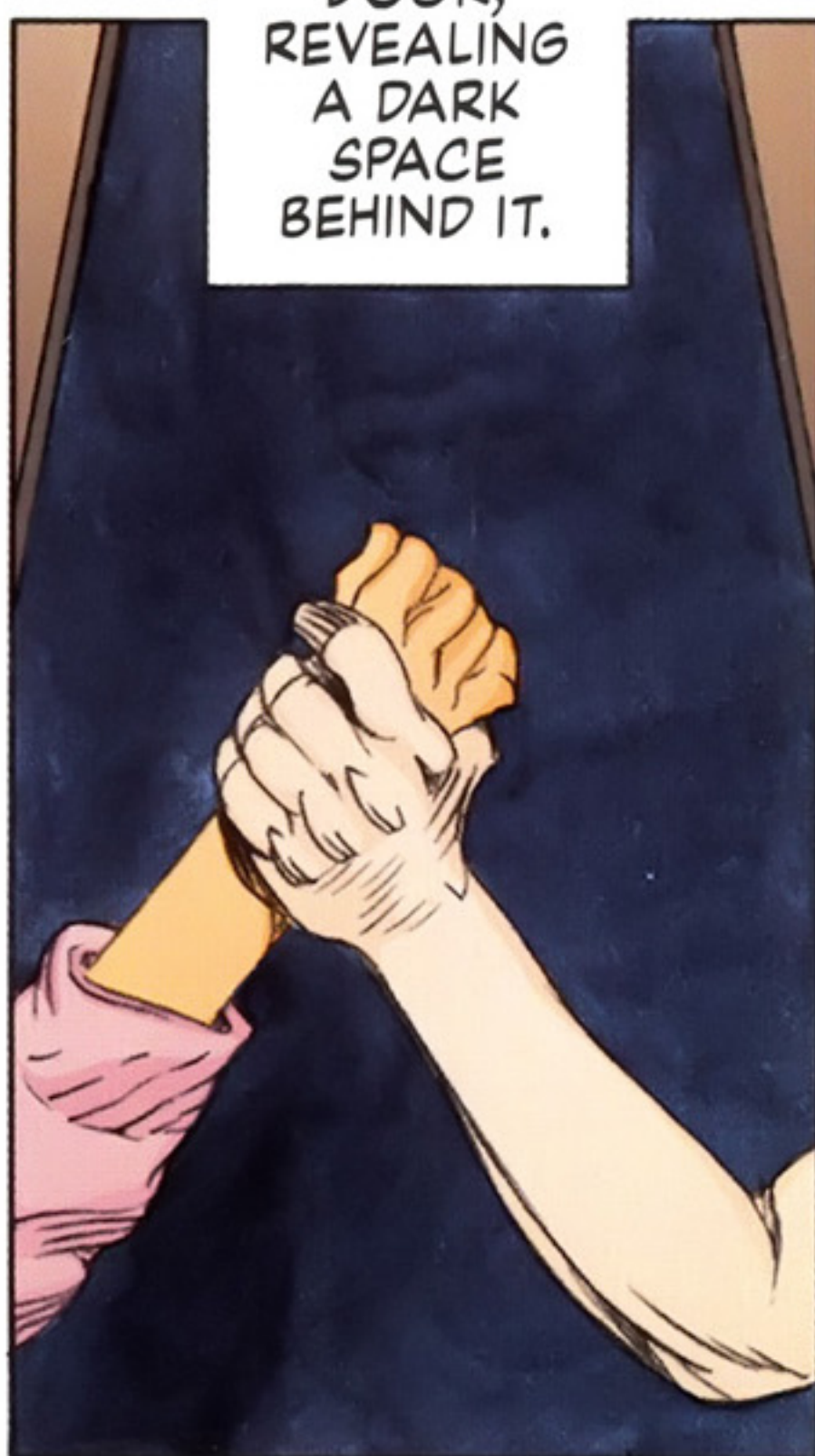


THIS IS FOR YOU, CORALINE.
FOR YOUR OWN GOOD. BECAUSE
I LOVE YOU. TO TEACH YOU
MANNERS. MANNERS MAKETH
MAN, AFTER ALL.





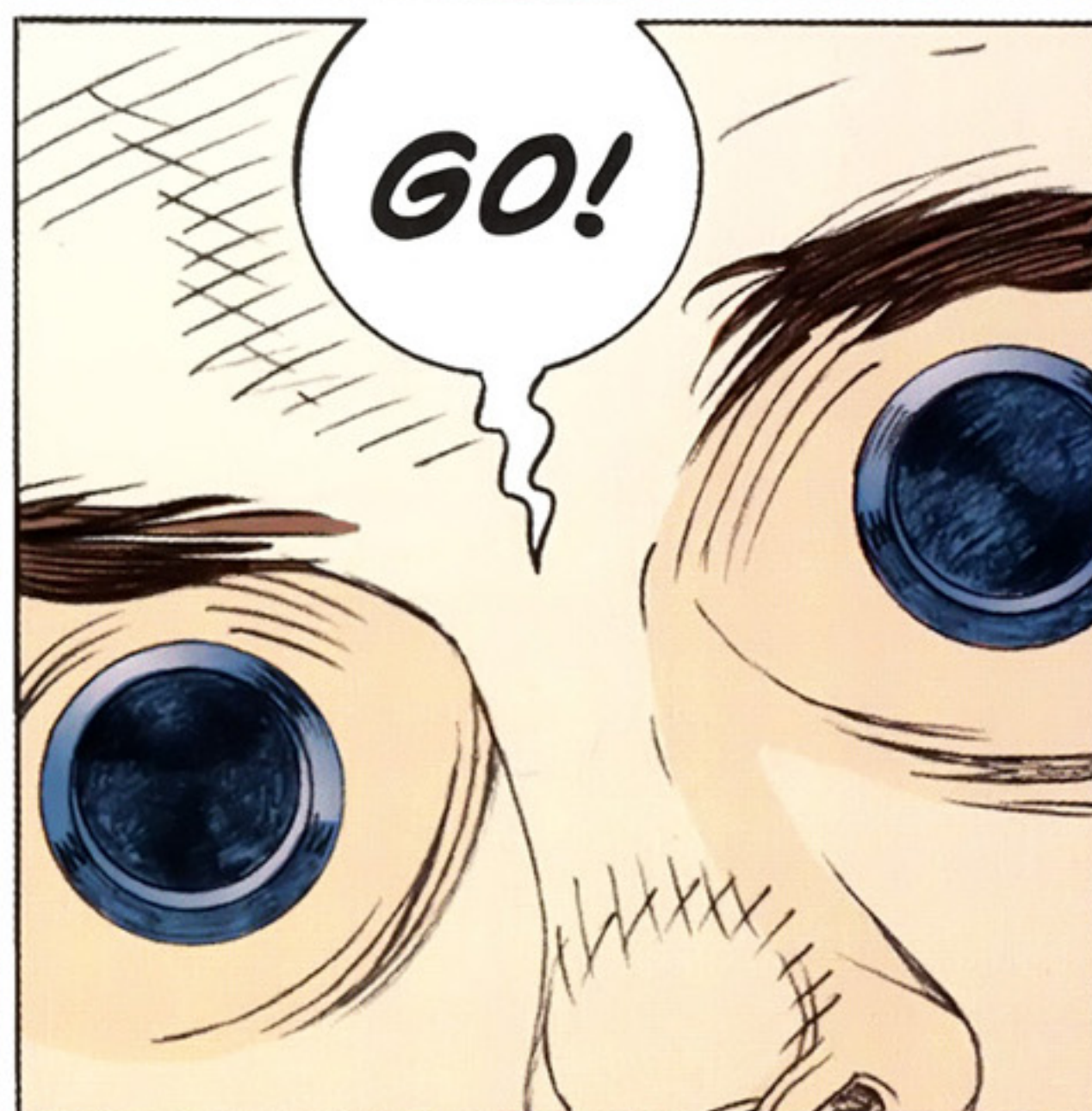
THE MIRROR OPENED LIKE A DOOR, REVEALING A DARK SPACE BEHIND IT.



SHE PUSHED CORALINE INTO THE DIM SPACE BEHIND THE MIRROR.

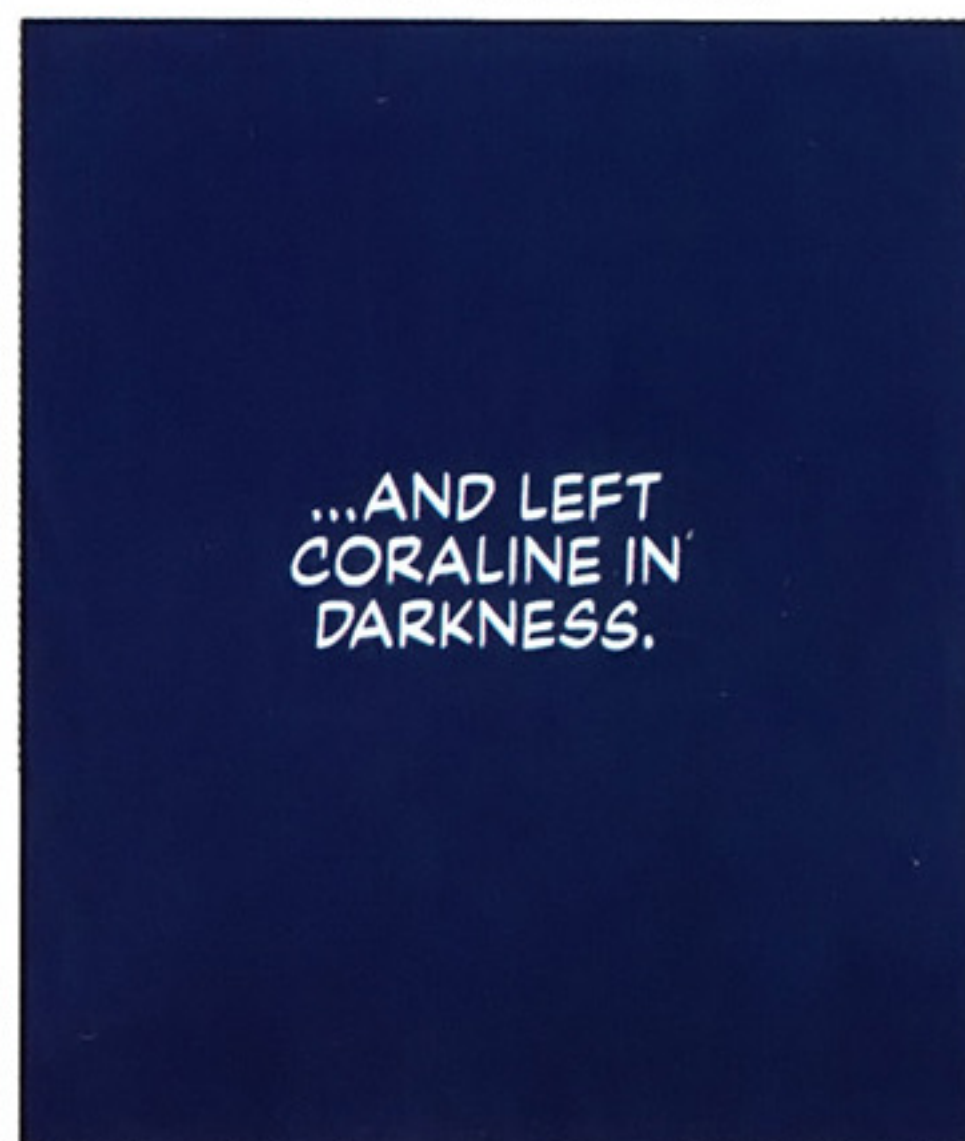


YOU MAY COME OUT WHEN YOU'VE LEARNED YOUR MANNERS, AND WHEN YOU'RE READY TO BE A LOVING DAUGHTER.



GO!

THEN SHE SWUNG THE MIRROR DOOR CLOSED...

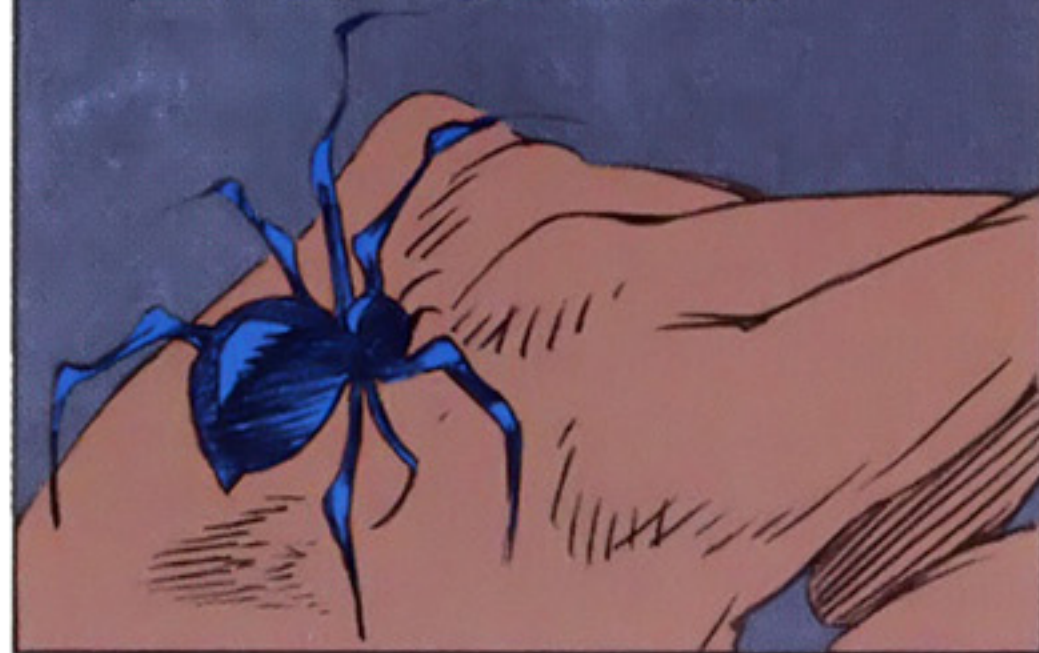


...AND LEFT CORALINE IN DARKNESS.

SOMEWHERE INSIDE HER CORALINE COULD FEEL A HUGE SOB WELLING UP. AND THEN SHE STOPPED IT BEFORE IT CAME OUT. SHE TOOK A DEEP BREATH AND LET IT GO. SHE PUT OUT HER HANDS TO TOUCH THE SPACE IN WHICH SHE WAS IMPRISONED. IT WAS THE SIZE OF A BROOM CLOSET.



THEN SHE FELT SOMETHING SCUTTling ACROSS HER HAND...



...AND SHE CHOKED BACK A SHRIEK.



BUT APART FROM THE SPIDER...



...SHE WAS ALONE.



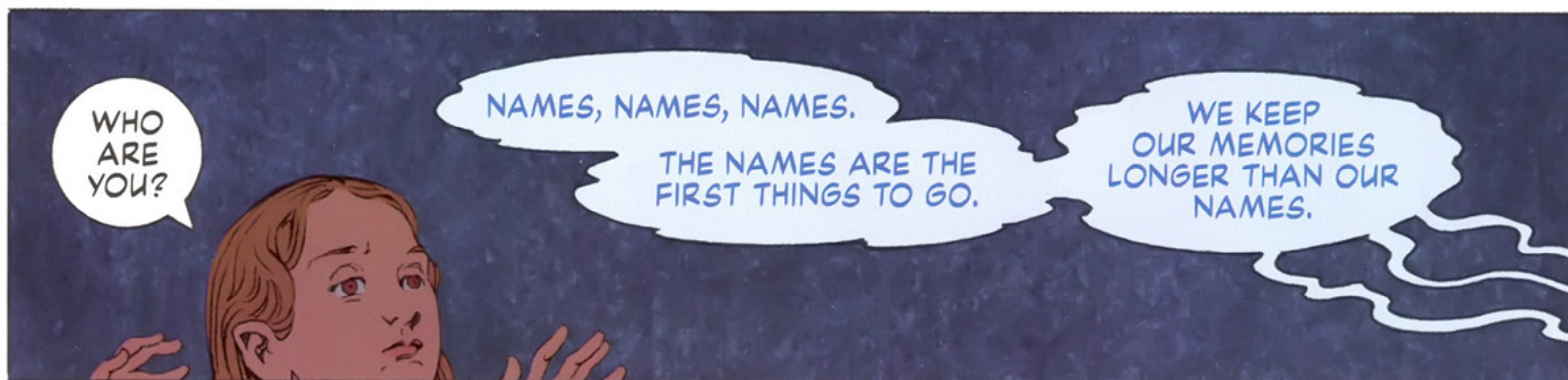
HUSH! AND SHUSH! SAY NOTHING, FOR THE BELDAM MIGHT BE LISTENING!



ART THOU...ART THOU ALIVE?

YES.

POOR CHILD.



WHO ARE YOU?

NAMES, NAMES, NAMES.

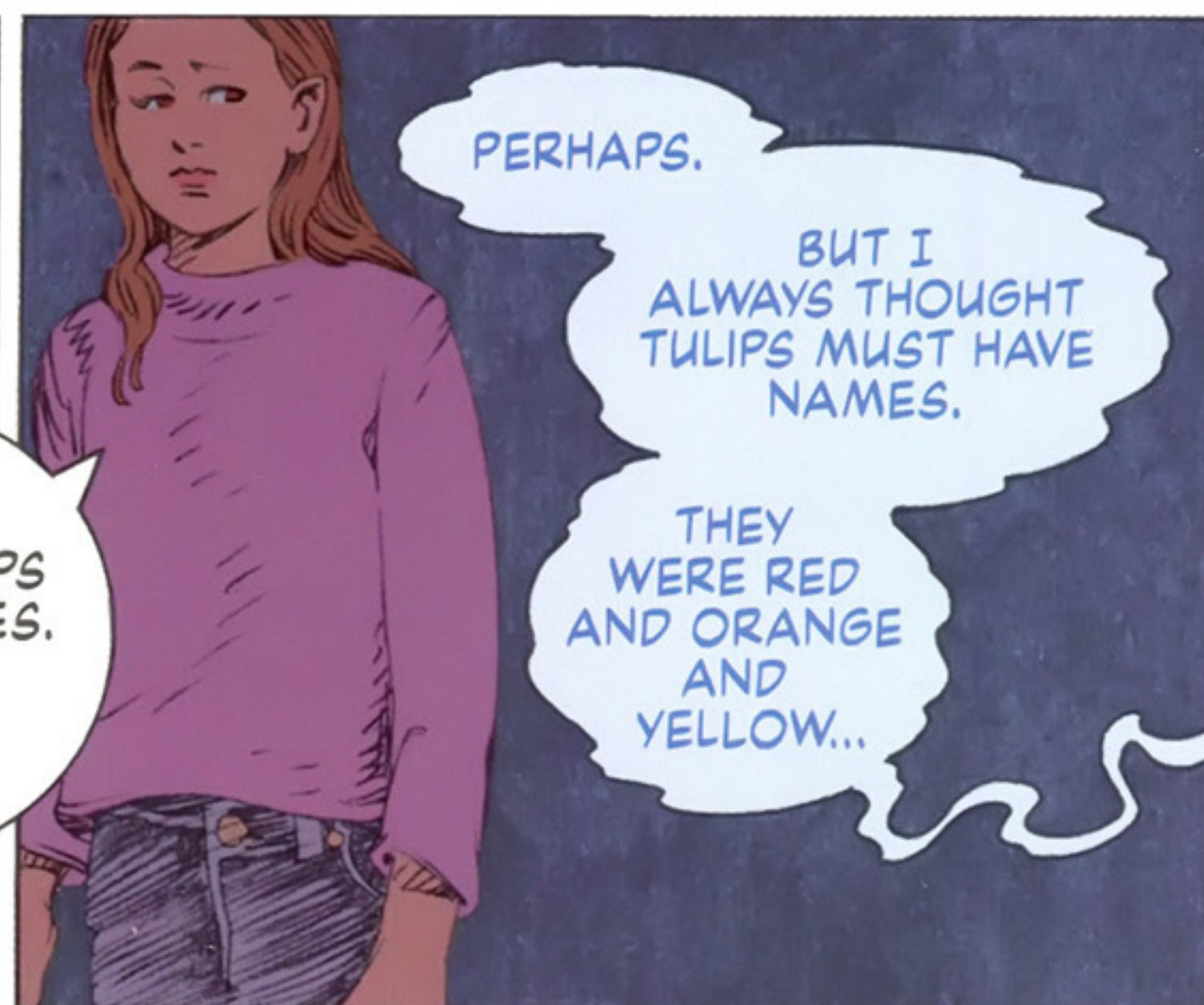
THE NAMES ARE THE FIRST THINGS TO GO.

WE KEEP OUR MEMORIES LONGER THAN OUR NAMES.



I REMEMBER MY GOVERNESS, AND THE MORNING SUN, AND ALL THE TULIPS BOBBING IN THE BREEZE. BUT I HAVE FORGOTTEN THE NAME OF THE GOVERNESS AND OF THE TULIPS, TOO.

I DON'T THINK TULIPS HAVE NAMES. THEY'RE JUST TULIPS.



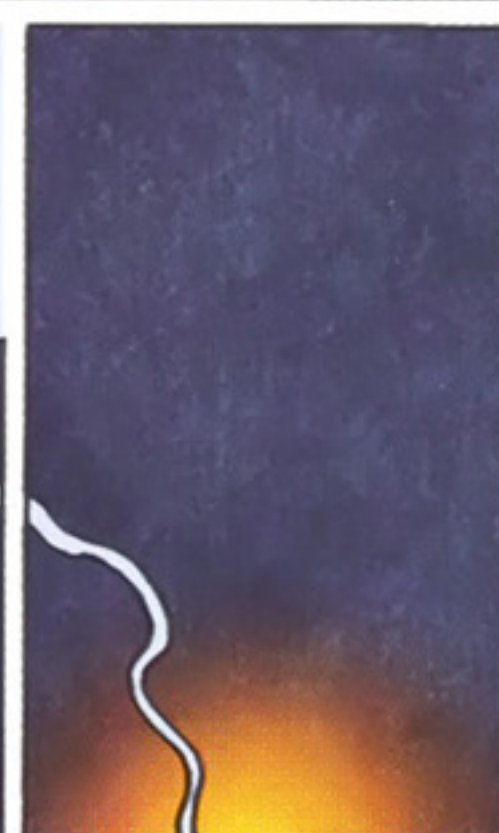
PERHAPS.

BUT I ALWAYS THOUGHT TULIPS MUST HAVE NAMES.

THEY WERE RED AND ORANGE AND YELLOW...



...LIKE EMBERS IN THE NURSERY FIRE...



...I REMEMBER THEM.



THE VOICE SOUNDED SO SAD THAT CORALINE PUT OUT A HAND AND FOUND A COLD HAND IN RETURN. SHE SQUEEZED IT TIGHTLY.

THANK YOU.



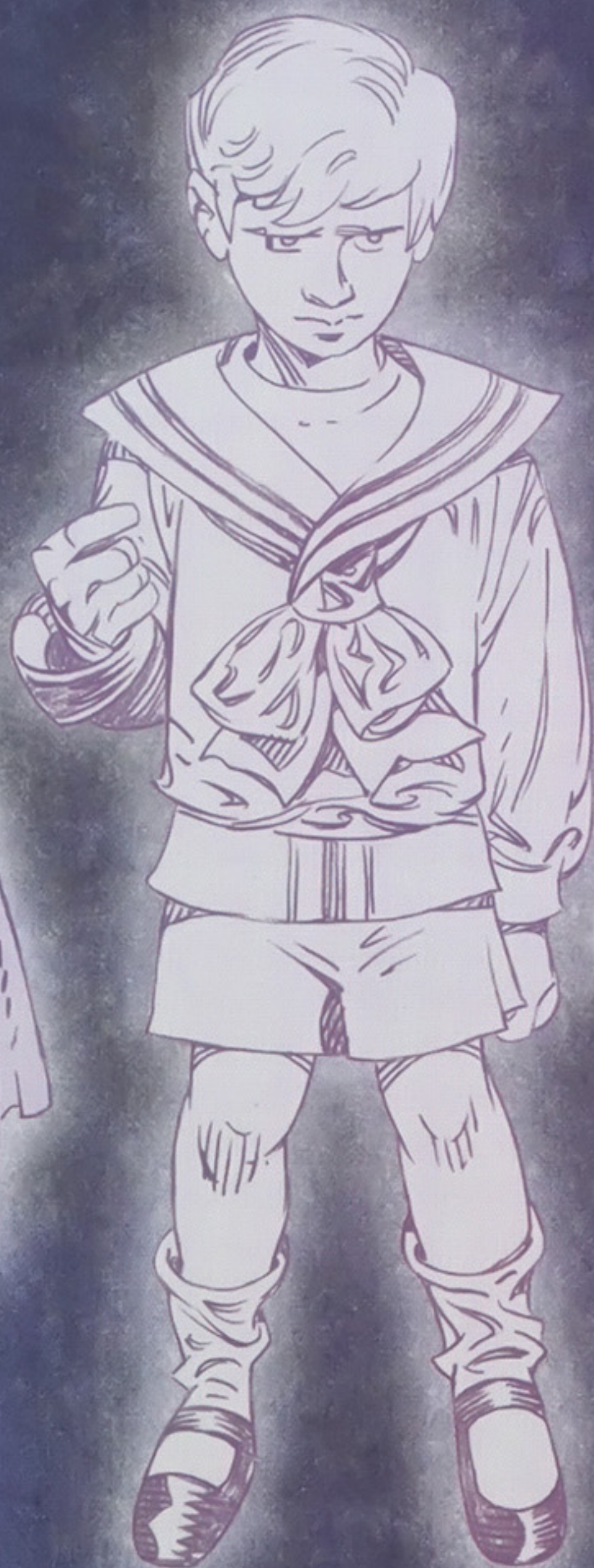
HER EYES WERE BEGINNING TO GET USED TO THE DARKNESS AND SHE BEGAN TO DISCERN THREE SHAPES, CHILD-LIKE, AND PALE AS THE MOON.

ARE YOU A GIRL OR A BOY?



WHEN I WAS SMALL I WORE SKIRTS AND MY HAIR WAS LONG AND CURLED. BUT NOW THAT YOU ASK, IT DOES SEEM TO ME THAT ONE DAY THEY TOOK MY SKIRTS AND GAVE ME BRITCHES AND CUT MY HAIR.

A BOY, PERHAPS, THEN. I BELIEVE I WAS ONCE A BOY.



WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU ALL? HOW DID YOU COME HERE?

SHE LEFT US HERE.

SHE STOLE OUR HEARTS, AND SHE STOLE OUR SOULS, AND SHE TOOK OUR LIVES AWAY.

AND SHE FORGOT ABOUT US IN THE DARK.

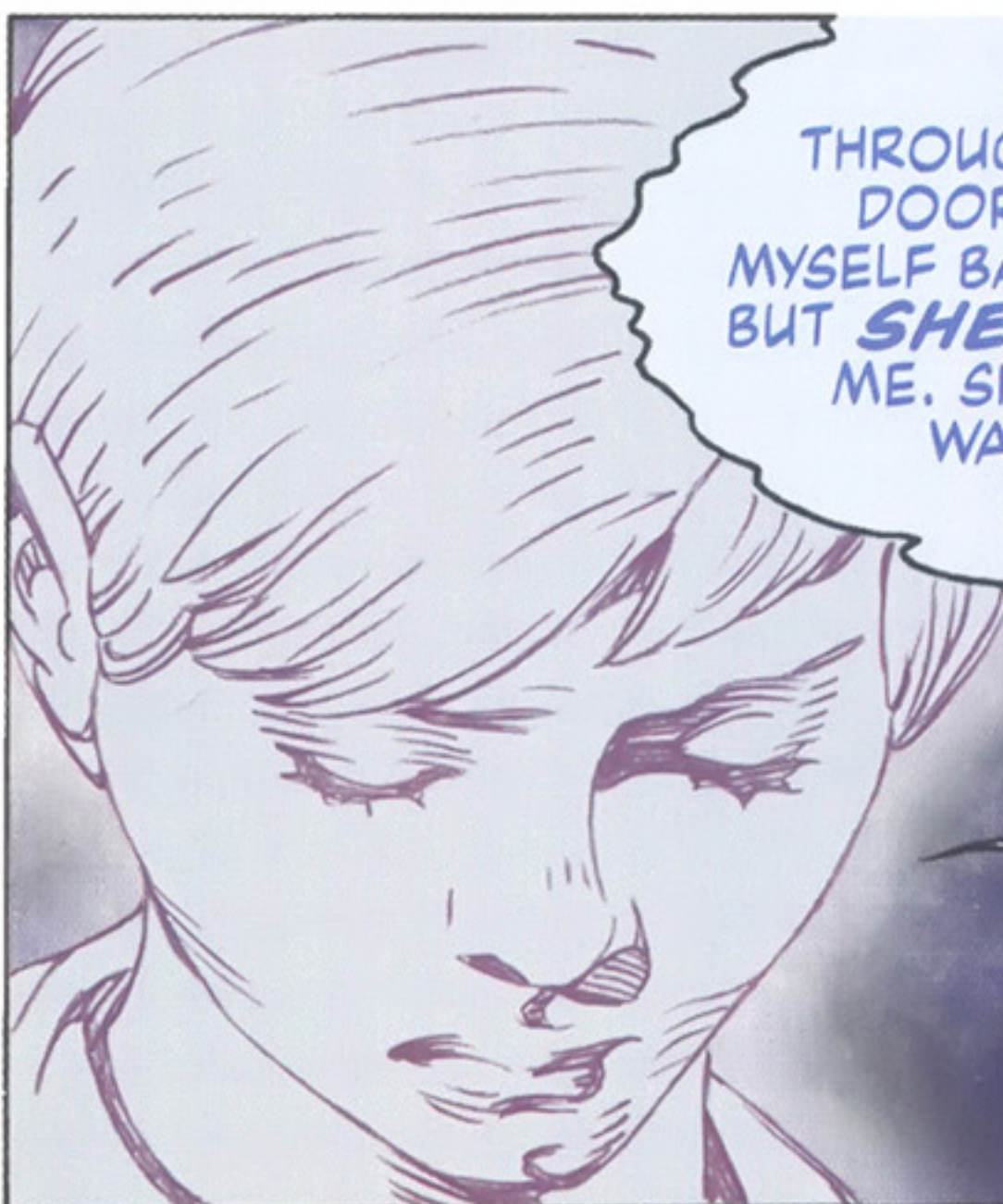


YOU POOR THINGS. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE?

SO VERY LONG A TIME.

AYE.

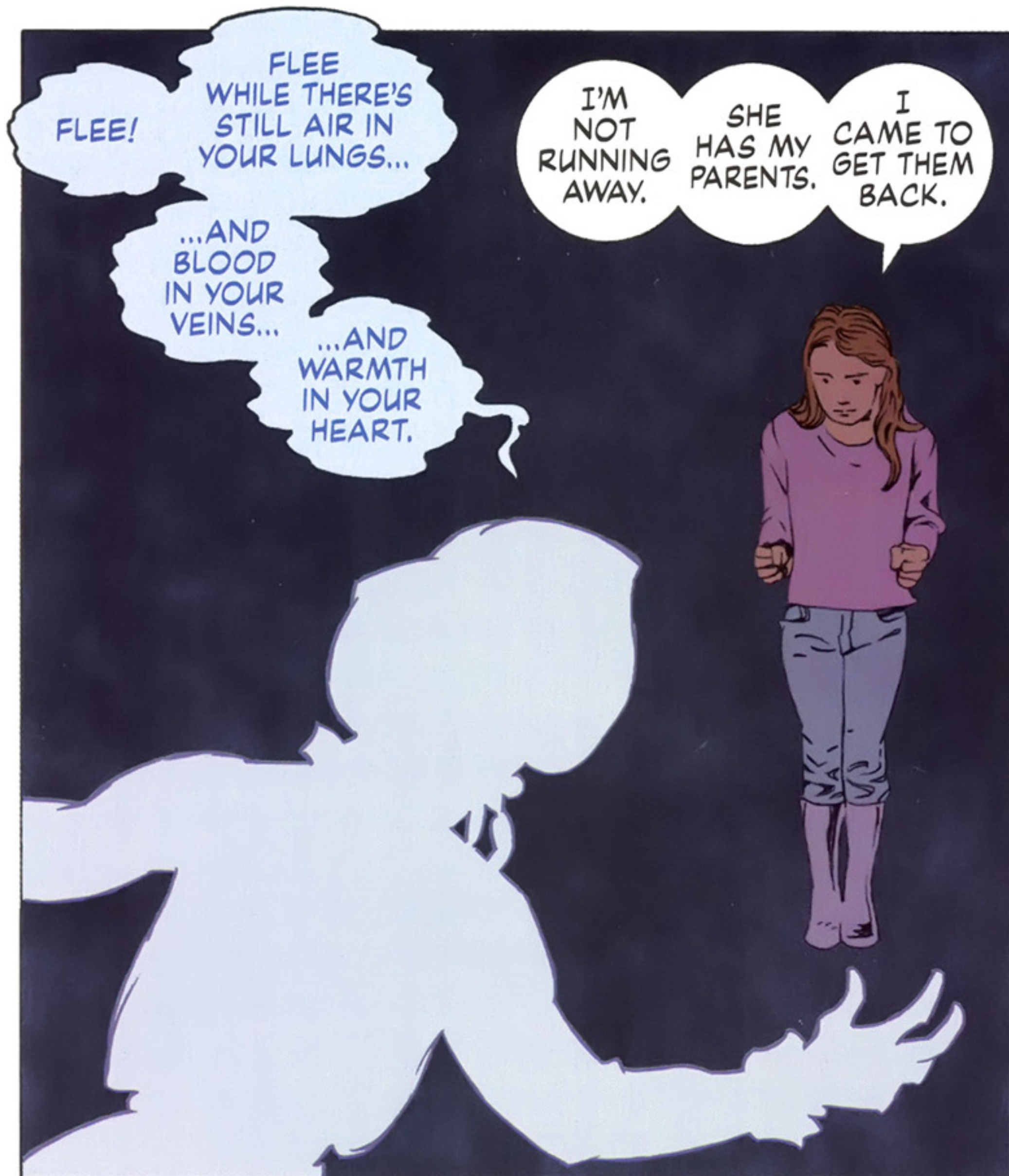
TIME BEYOND RECKONING.



I WALKED THROUGH THE SCULLERY DOOR AND I FOUND MYSELF BACK IN THE PARLOR. BUT **SHE** WAS WAITING FOR ME. SHE TOLD ME SHE WAS MY OTHER MAMMA...

...BUT I NEVER SAW MY TRUE MAMMA AGAIN.

FLEE.



FLEE!

FLEE WHILE THERE'S STILL AIR IN YOUR LUNGS...

...AND BLOOD IN YOUR VEINS...

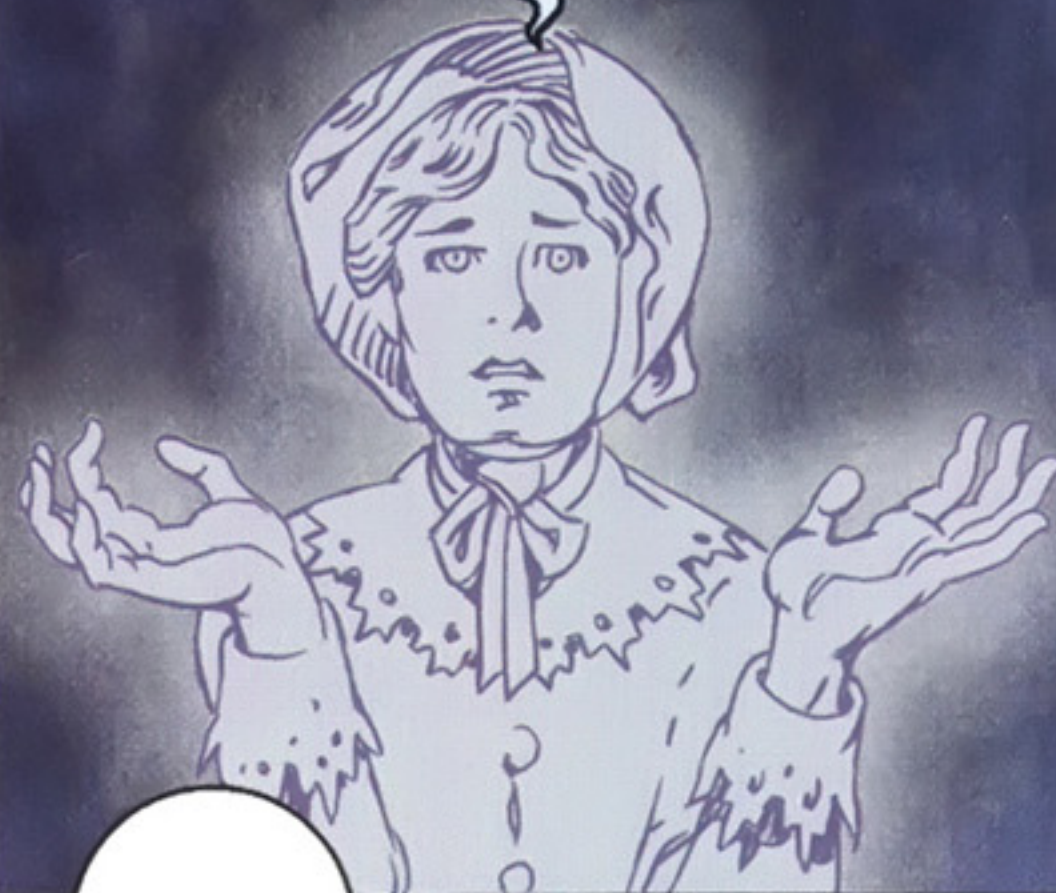
...AND WARMTH IN YOUR HEART.

I'M NOT RUNNING AWAY.

SHE HAS MY PARENTS.

I CAME TO GET THEM BACK.

AH, BUT SHE'LL KEEP YOU HERE WHILE THE DAYS TURN TO DUST AND THE YEARS PASS ONE AFTER THE NEXT LIKE THE TICK-TICK-TOCKING OF A CLOCK.



NO!

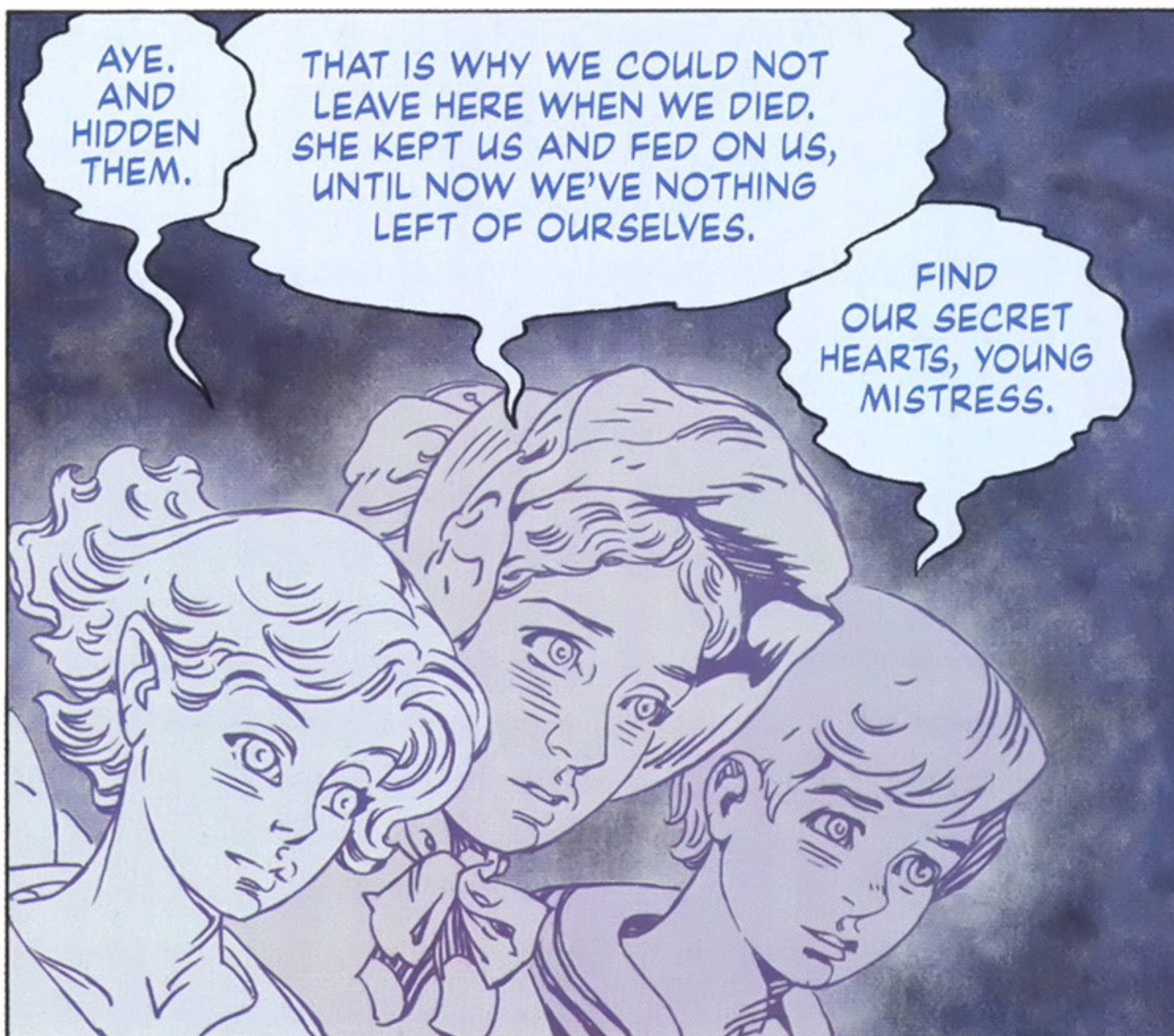
SHE WON'T.

THERE WAS A SILENCE THEN IN THE ROOM BEHIND THE MIRROR.

PERADVENTURE, IF YOU COULD WIN YOUR MOMMA AND YOUR PAPA BACK FROM THE BELDAM, YOU COULD ALSO WIN FREE **OUR** SOULS.



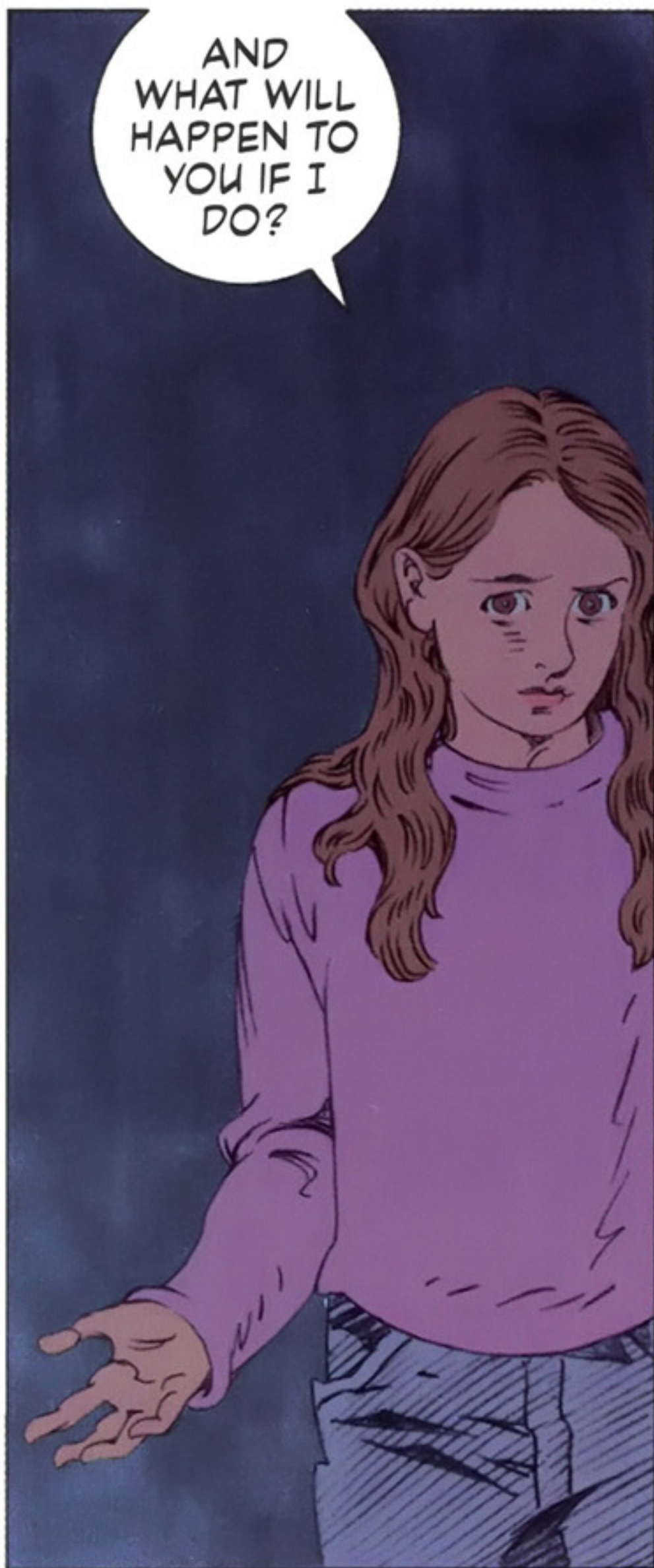
HAS SHE TAKEN THEM?



AYE. AND HIDDEN THEM.

THAT IS WHY WE COULD NOT LEAVE HERE WHEN WE DIED. SHE KEPT US AND FED ON US, UNTIL NOW WE'VE NOTHING LEFT OF OURSELVES.

FIND OUR SECRET HEARTS, YOUNG MISTRESS.



SHE WON'T
KEEP ME IN THE DARK
FOREVER.

SHE BROUGHT ME
HERE TO PLAY GAMES. GAMES
AND CHALLENGES, THE CAT
SAID.

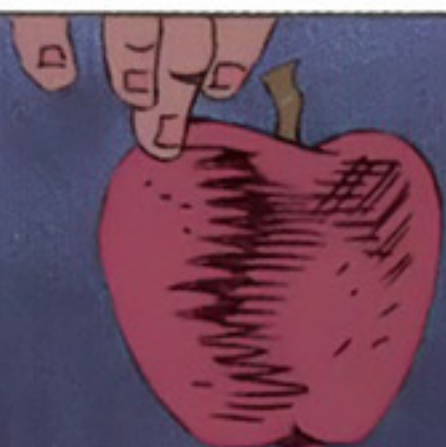
I'M NOT MUCH
OF A CHALLENGE HERE
IN THE DARK.

SHE TRIED TO GET COMFORTABLE,
TWISTING AND BENDING HERSELF
TO FIT THE CRAMPED SPACE
BEHIND THE MIRROR.

HER STOMACH RUMBLED.



SHE ATE HER LAST APPLE.



BUT SHE
WAS STILL
HUNGRY.



THEN AN IDEA
STRUCK HER.



WHEN
SHE COMES
TO LET ME OUT
WHY DON'T YOU
THREE COME
WITH
ME?

WE
WISH
THAT WE
COULD.

THE
LIGHT WOULD
SHRIVEL US,
AND BURN.

BUT SHE
HAS OUR HEARTS
IN HER KEEPING. NOW
WE BELONG TO THE
DARK AND TO THE
EMPTY PLACES.

OH.



AND AS SHE FELL
ASLEEP SHE THOUGHT
SHE FELT A GHOST
KISS HER CHEEK AND
WHISPER INTO HER EAR.



LOOK
THROUGH THE
STONE.



AND THEN SHE SLEPT.

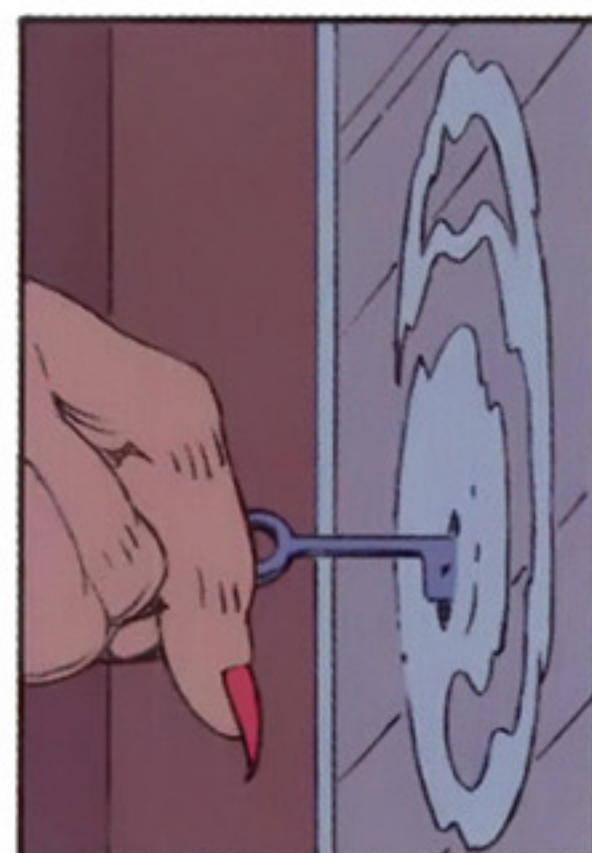
THE OTHER MOTHER LOOKED HEALTHIER THAN BEFORE: THERE WAS A LITTLE BLUSH TO HER CHEEKS, AND HER HAIR WAS WRIGGLING LIKE LAZY SNAKES ON A WARM DAY. HER BLACK BUTTON EYES SEEMED FRESHLY POLISHED.



SHE HAD PUSHED THROUGH THE MIRROR AS IF SHE WERE WALKING THROUGH NOTHING MORE SOLID THAN WATER.



THEN SHE HAD OPENED THE DOOR WITH THE LITTLE SILVER KEY...

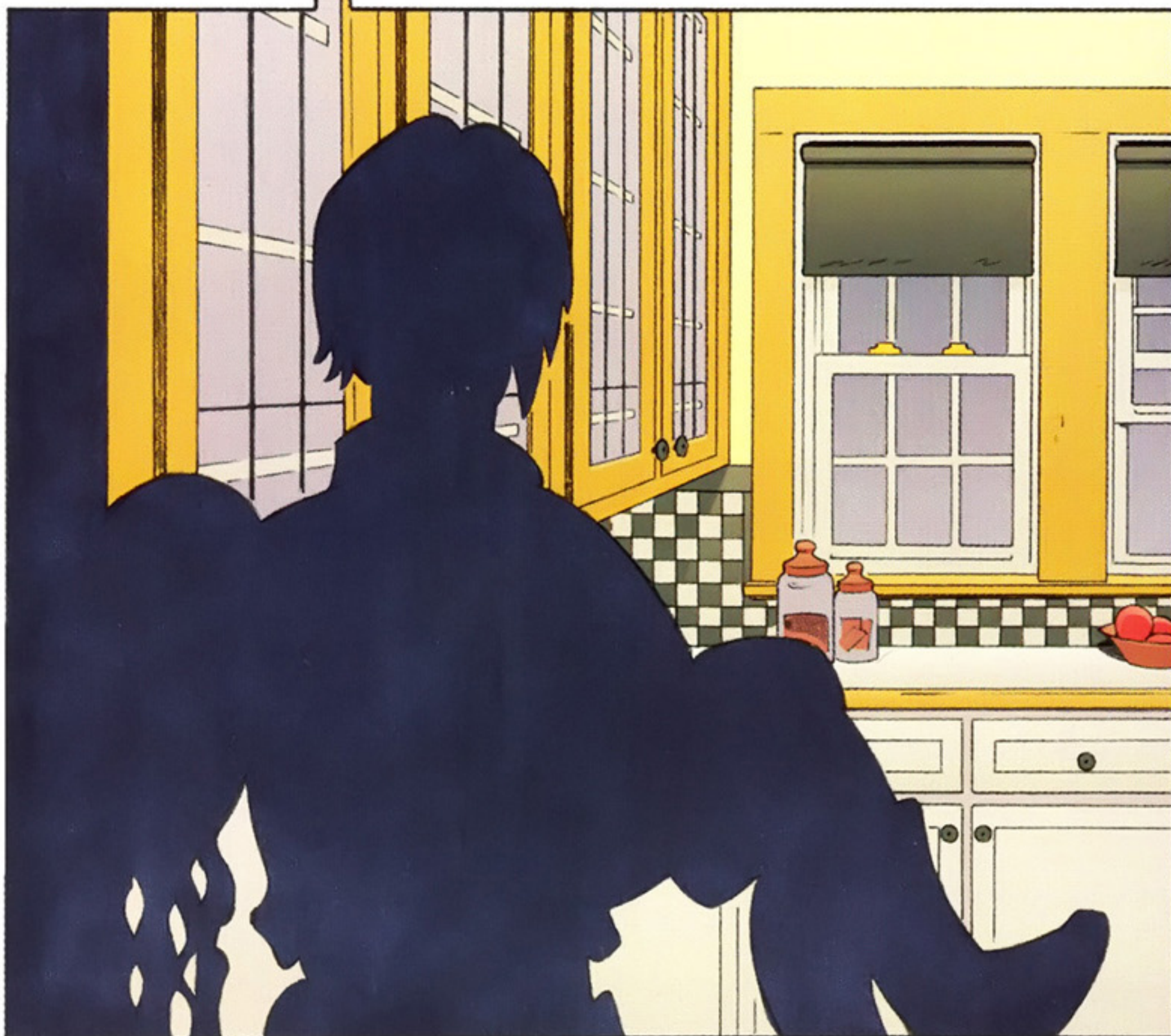


...PICKED CORALINE UP, CRADLING THE HALF-SLEEPING CHILD AS IF SHE WERE A BABY...

...AND CARRIED
HER INTO THE
KITCHEN.

CORALINE STRUGGLED TO WAKE HERSELF UP, CONSCIOUS
ONLY FOR A MOMENT OF HAVING BEEN CUDDLED AND
LOVED, AND WANTING MORE OF IT...

...THEN REAL-
IZING WHERE
SHE WAS...



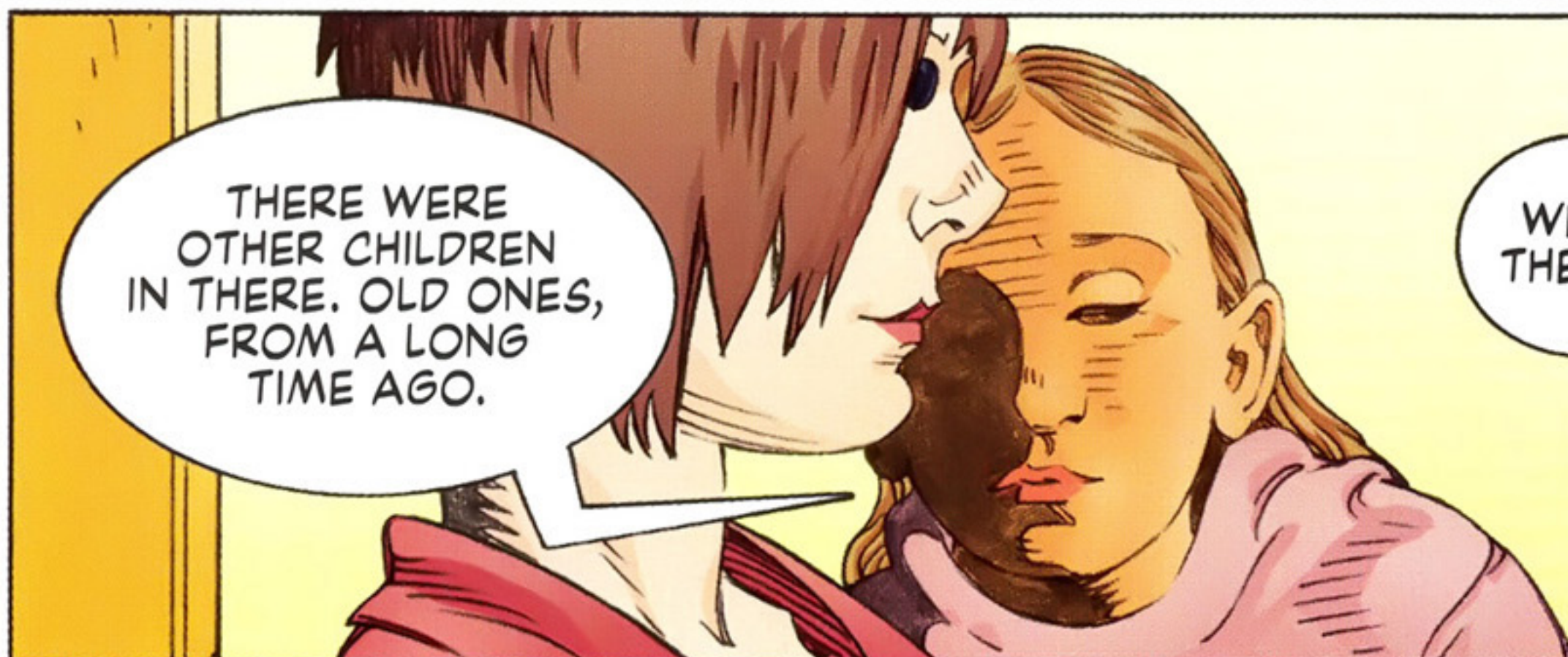
...AND
WHO
SHE
WAS
WITH.



THERE, MY SWEET
CORALINE. I CAME AND
FETCHED YOU OUT OF THE
CUPBOARD. YOU NEEDED TO
BE TAUGHT A LESSON, BUT
WE TEMPER OUR JUSTICE
WITH MERCY HERE; WE
LOVE THE SINNER BUT
HATE THE SIN.



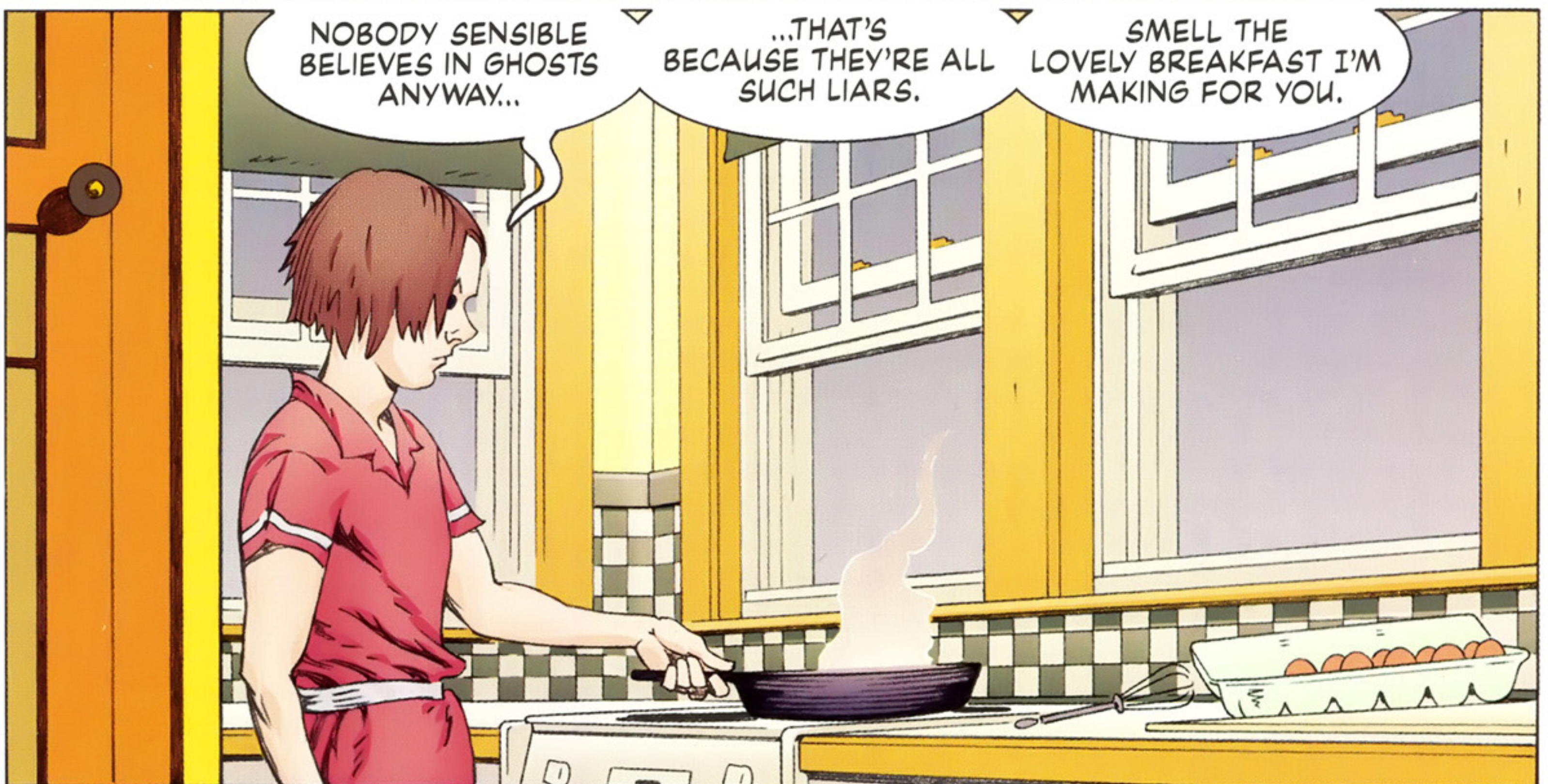
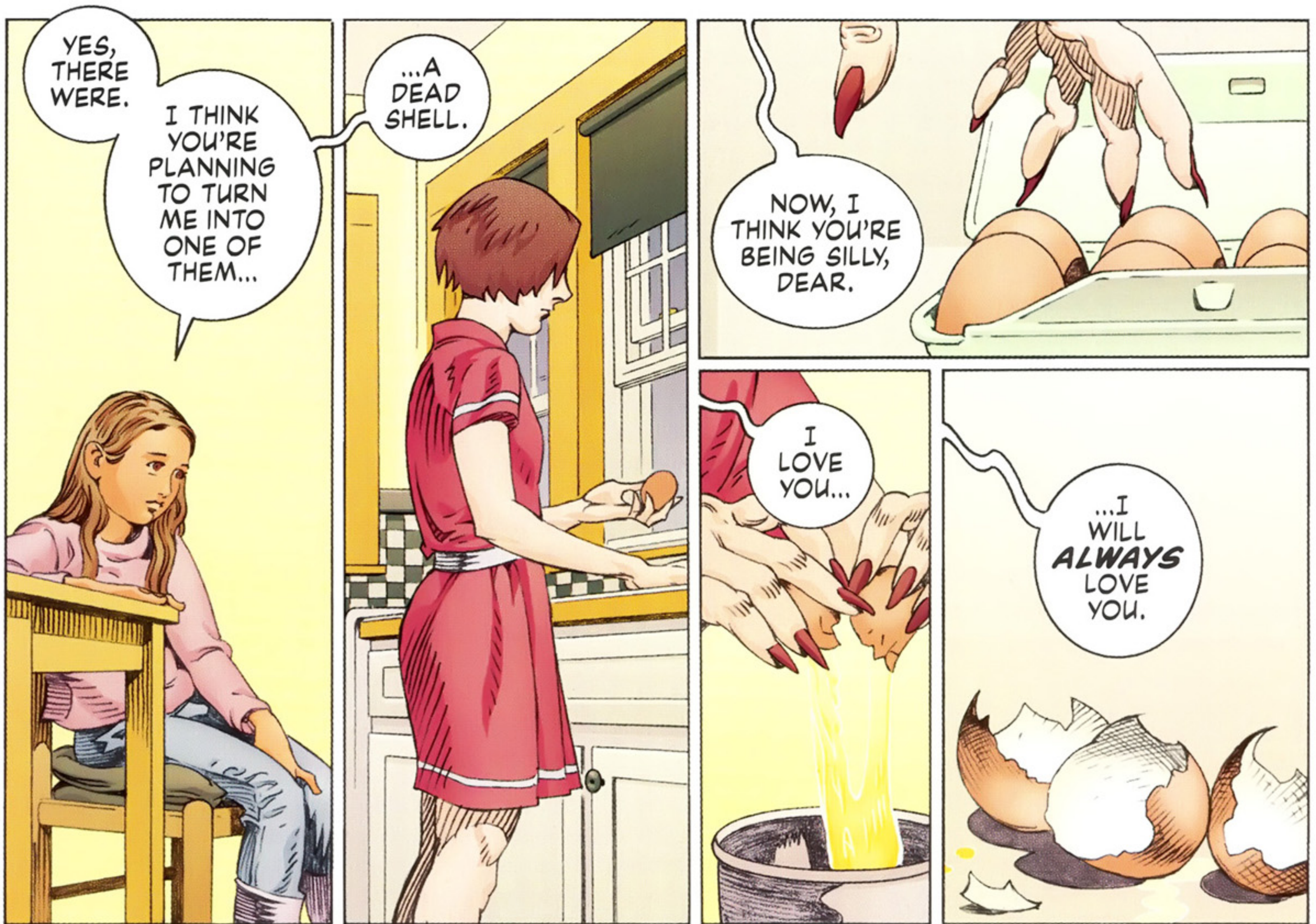
NOW, IF YOU WILL
BE A GOOD CHILD WHO
LOVES HER MOTHER, BE
COMPLIANT AND FAIR-
SPOKEN, YOU AND I SHALL
UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER
PERFECTLY AND WE SHALL
LOVE EACH OTHER
PERFECTLY AS
WELL.

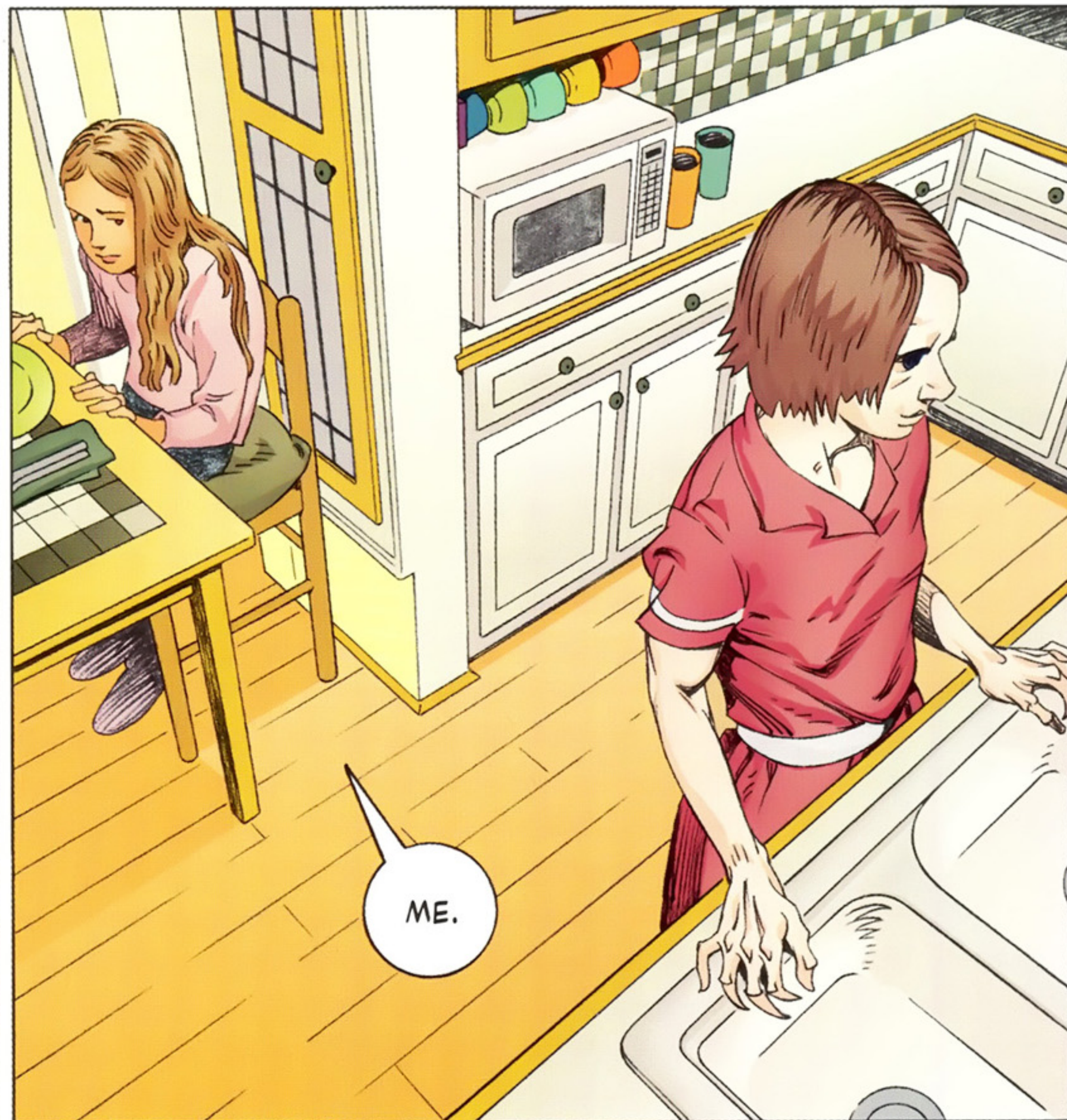
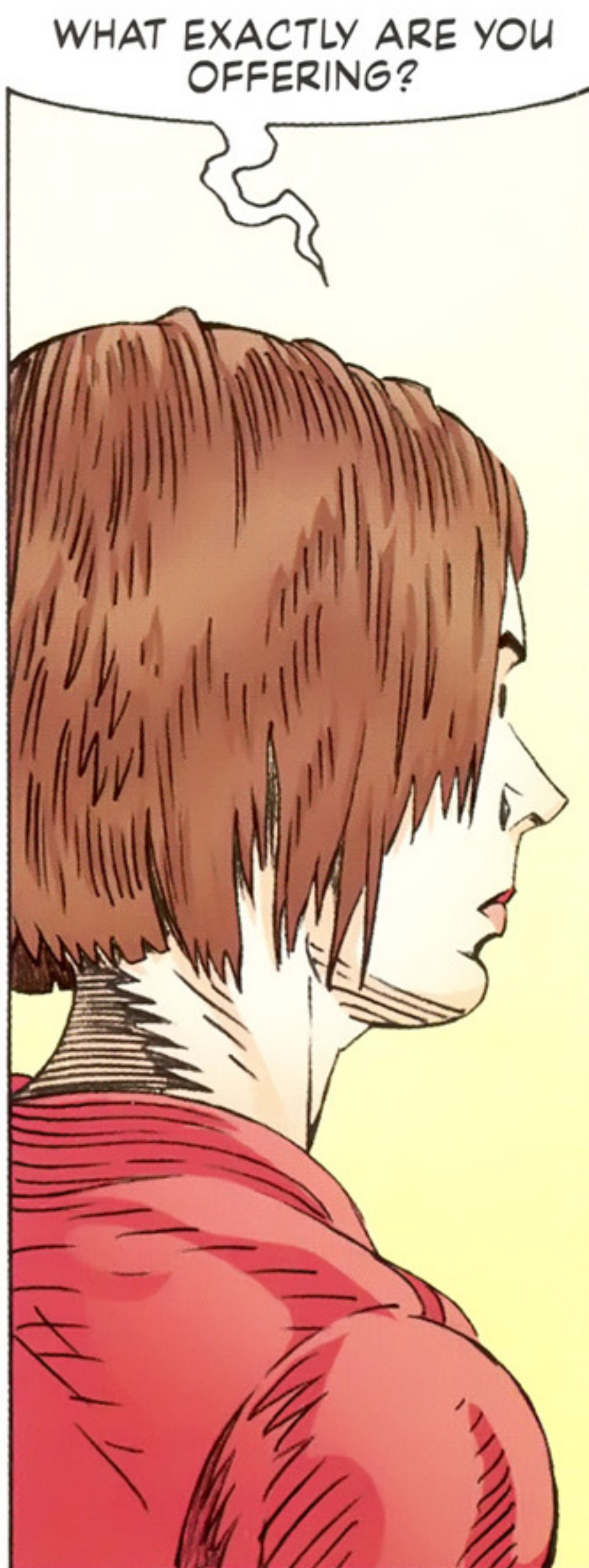
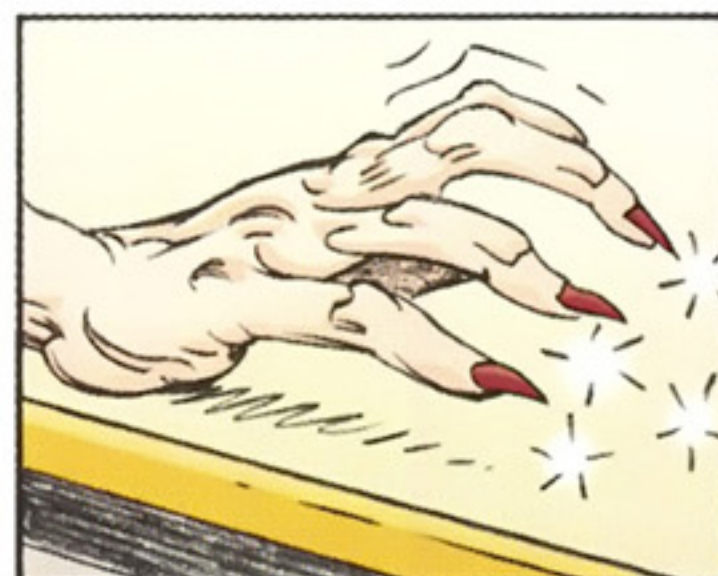


THERE WERE
OTHER CHILDREN
IN THERE. OLD ONES,
FROM A LONG
TIME AGO.

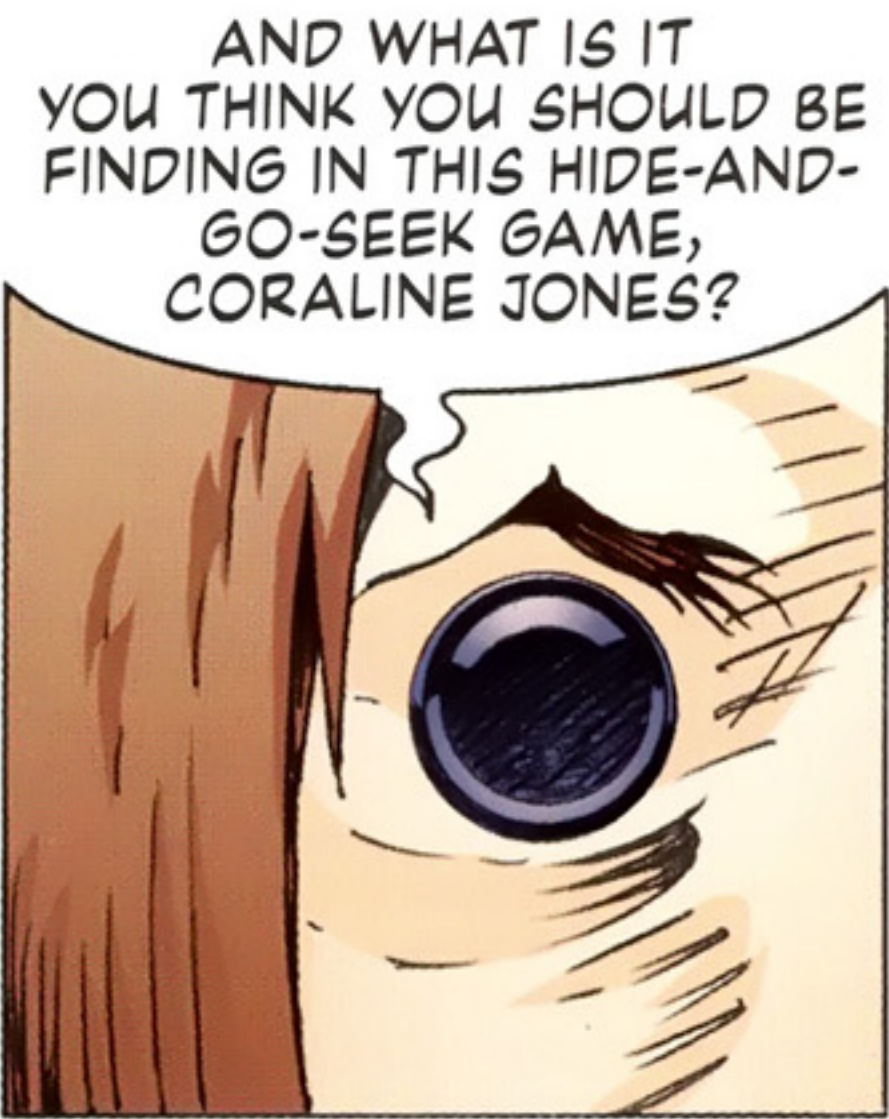
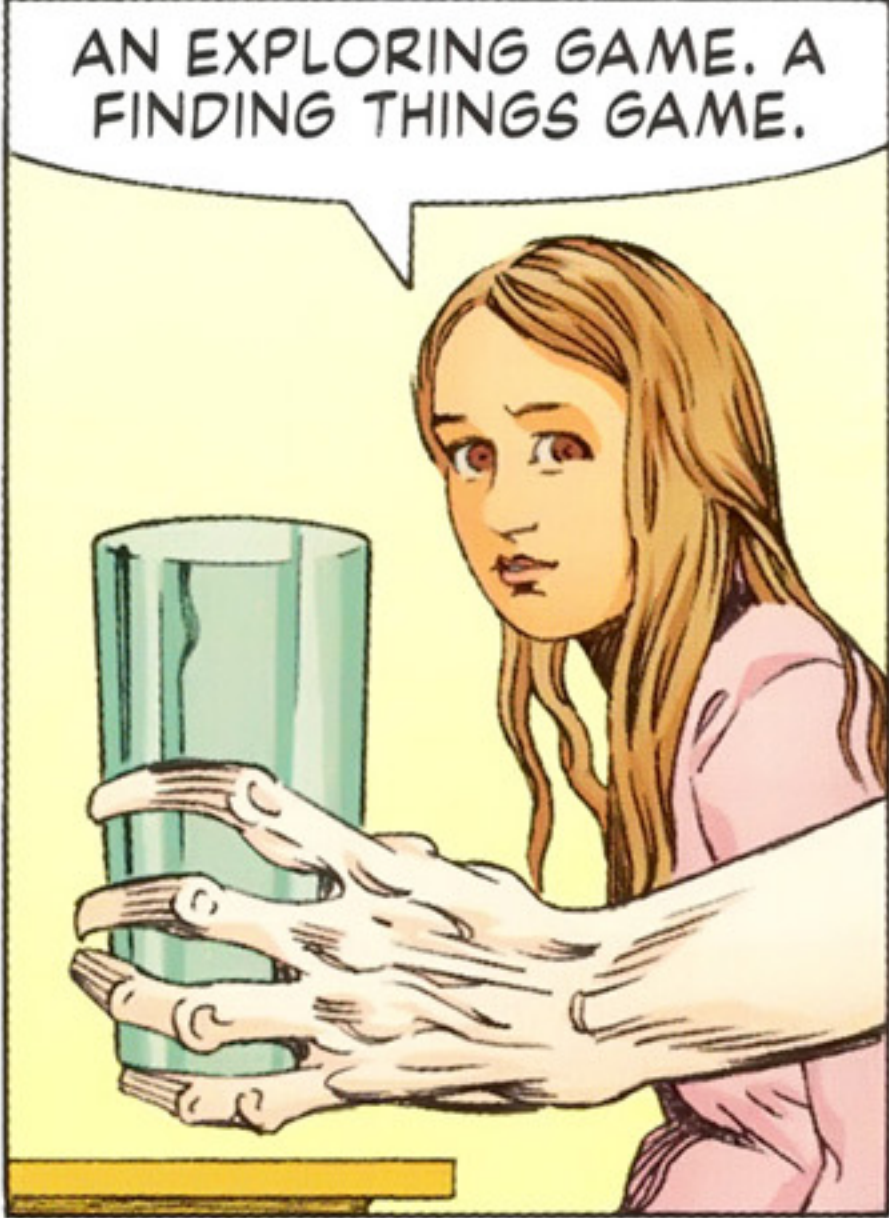
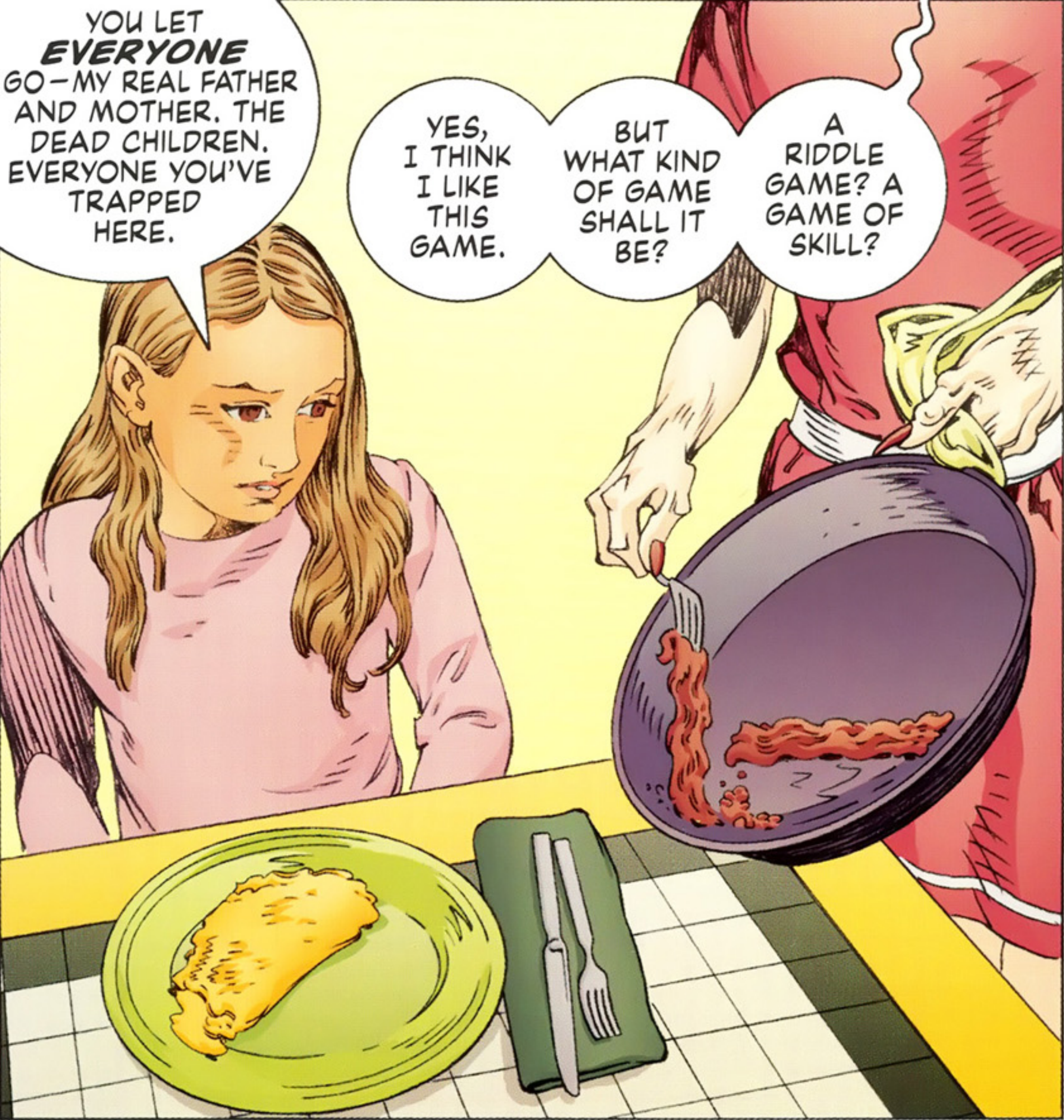
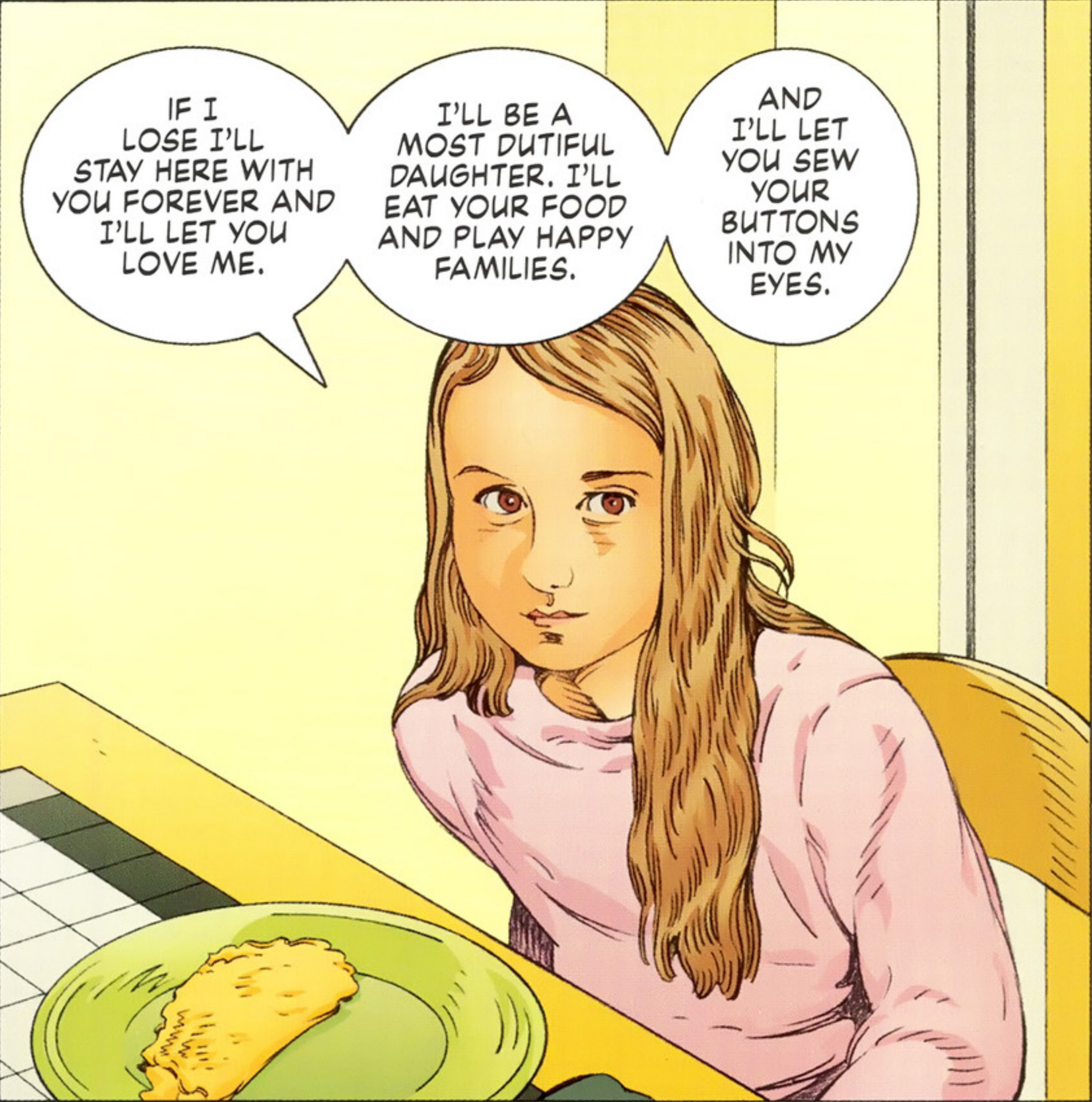
WERE
THERE?

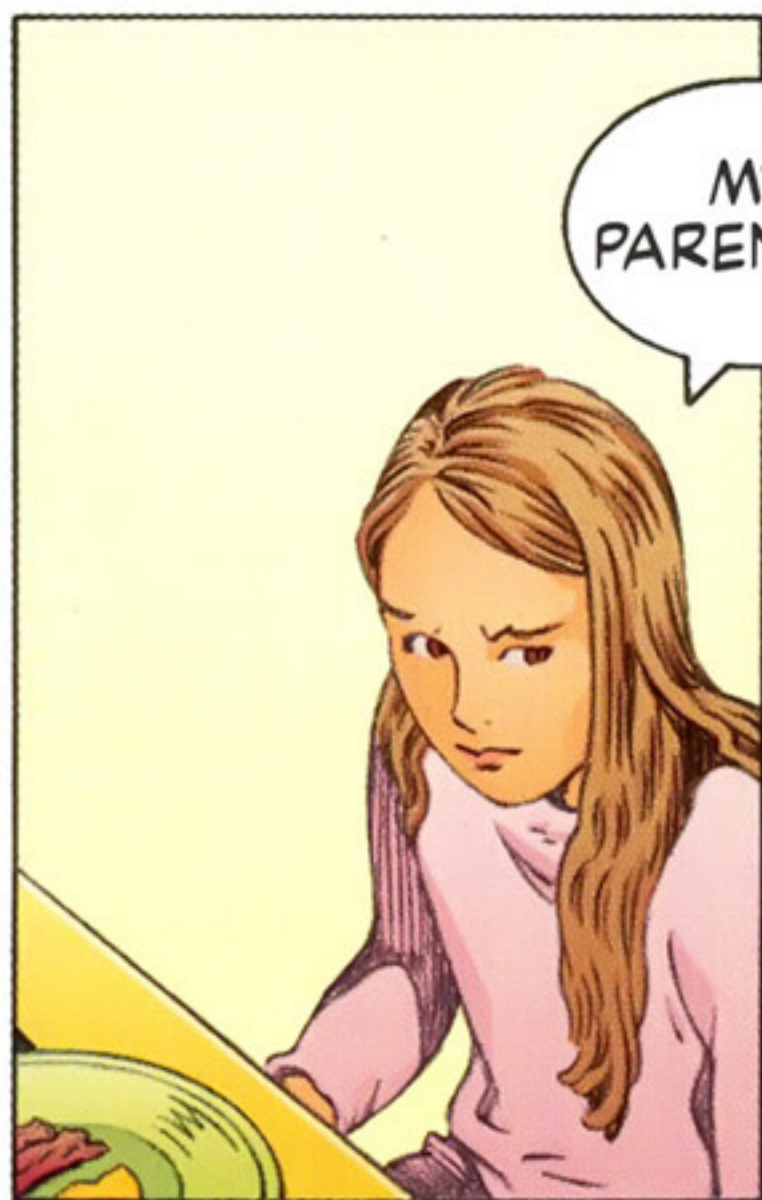




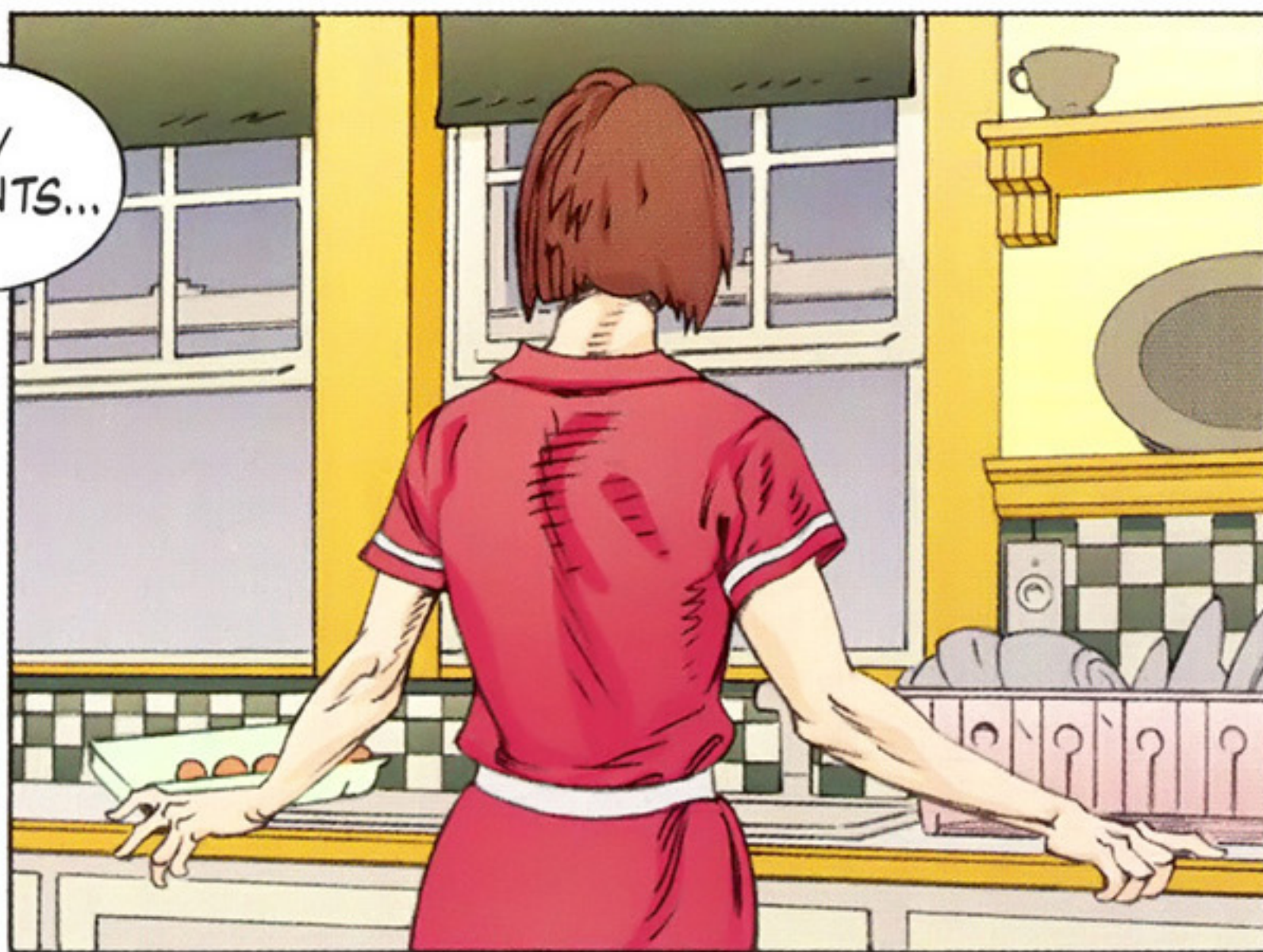


CORALINE GRIPPED HER KNEES, TO STOP THEM FROM SHAKING.





MY PARENTS...



...AND THE SOULS OF THE CHILDREN BEHIND THE MIRROR.



A DEAL!



NOW EAT UP YOUR BREAKFAST, MY SWEET. DON'T WORRY-IT WON'T HURT YOU.



HOW DO I KNOW YOU'LL KEEP YOUR WORD?

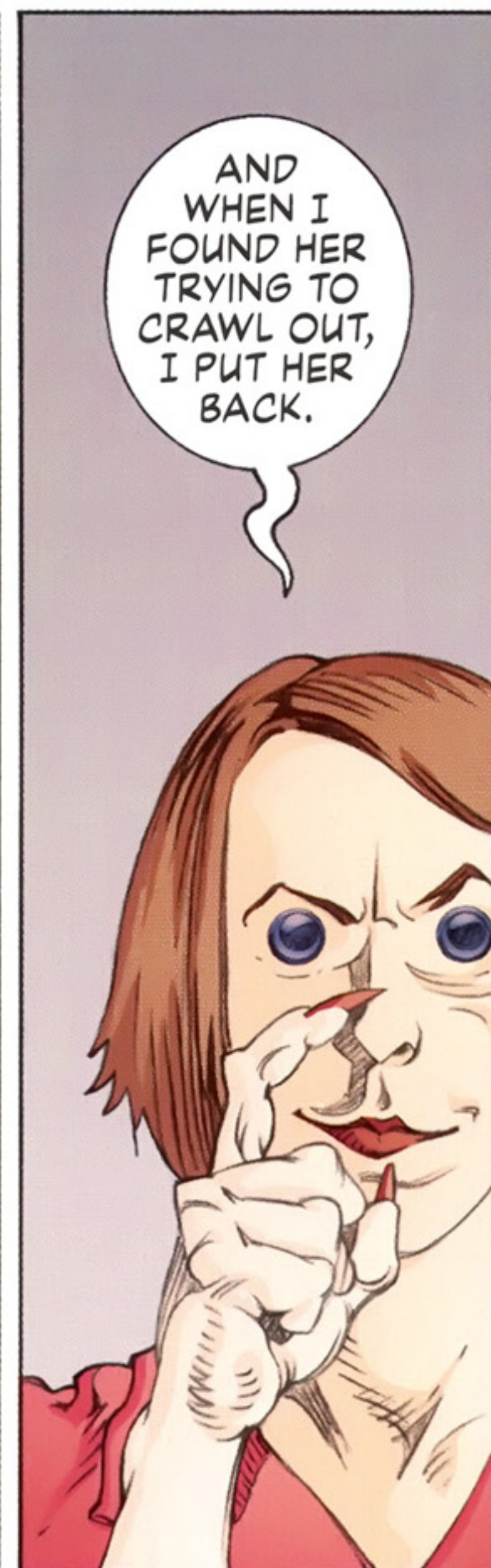


I SWEAR IT!

I SWEAR IT ON MY OWN MOTHER'S GRAVE!

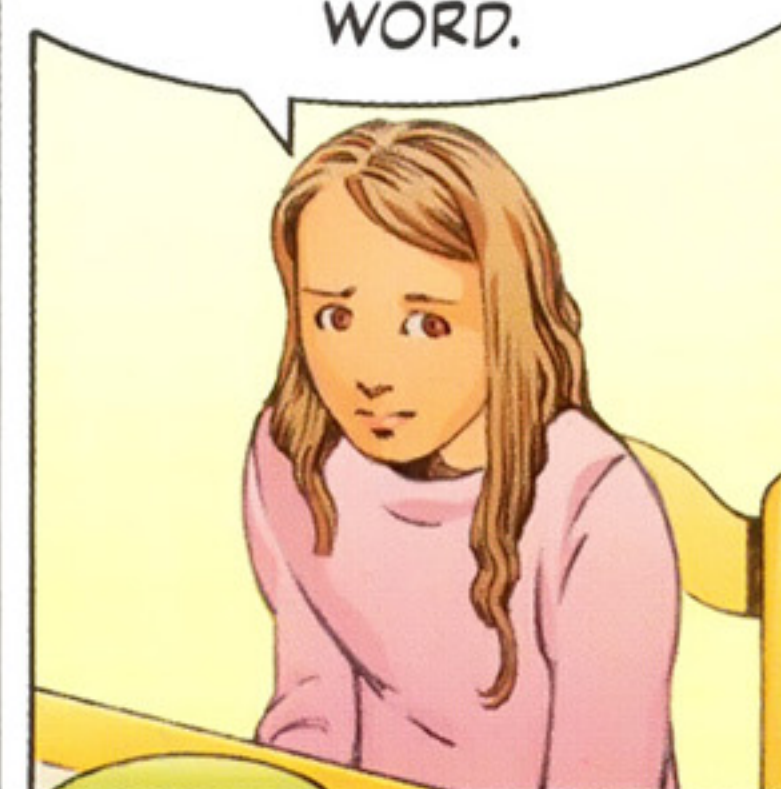
DOES SHE HAVE A GRAVE?

OH YES! I PUT HER IN THERE MYSELF.



AND WHEN I FOUND HER TRYING TO CRAWL OUT, I PUT HER BACK.

SWEAR ON SOMETHING ELSE. SO I CAN TRUST YOU TO KEEP YOUR WORD.



MY RIGHT HAND.

I SWEAR ON THAT.

OKAY.

IT'S A DEAL.



SHE ATE THE BREAKFAST, TRYING NOT TO WOLF IT DOWN. SHE WAS HUNGRIER THAN SHE HAD THOUGHT.

AS SHE ATE, HER OTHER MOTHER STARED AT HER. CORALINE THOUGHT SHE LOOKED HUNGRY, TOO.

WHERE SHOULD I START LOOKING?

WHERE YOU WISH.

CORALINE THOUGHT HARD. THERE WAS NO POINT IN EXPLORING THE GARDEN AND THE GROUNDS: THEY DIDN'T EXIST; THEY WEREN'T REAL.

ALL THAT WAS REAL WAS THE HOUSE ITSELF.

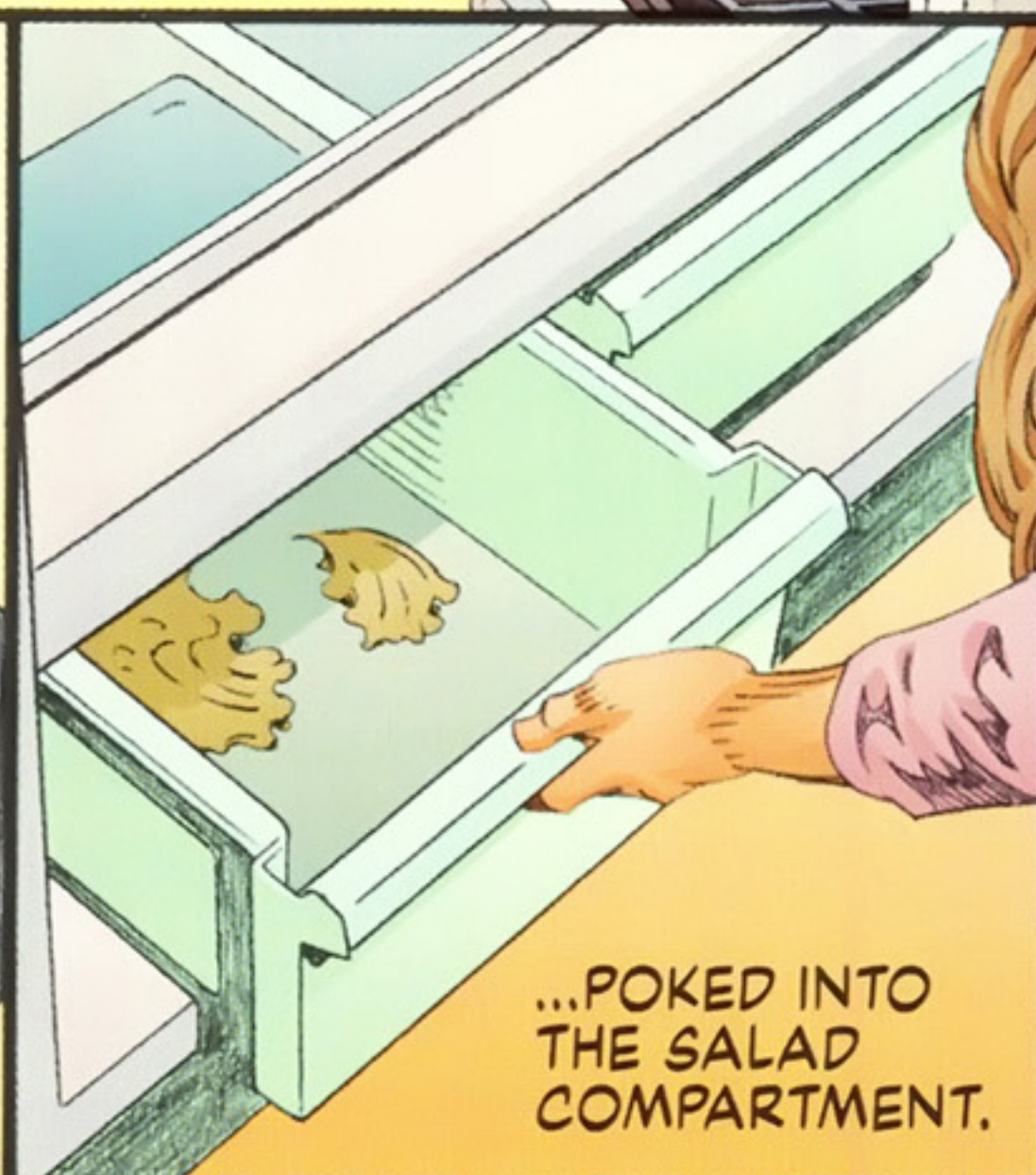
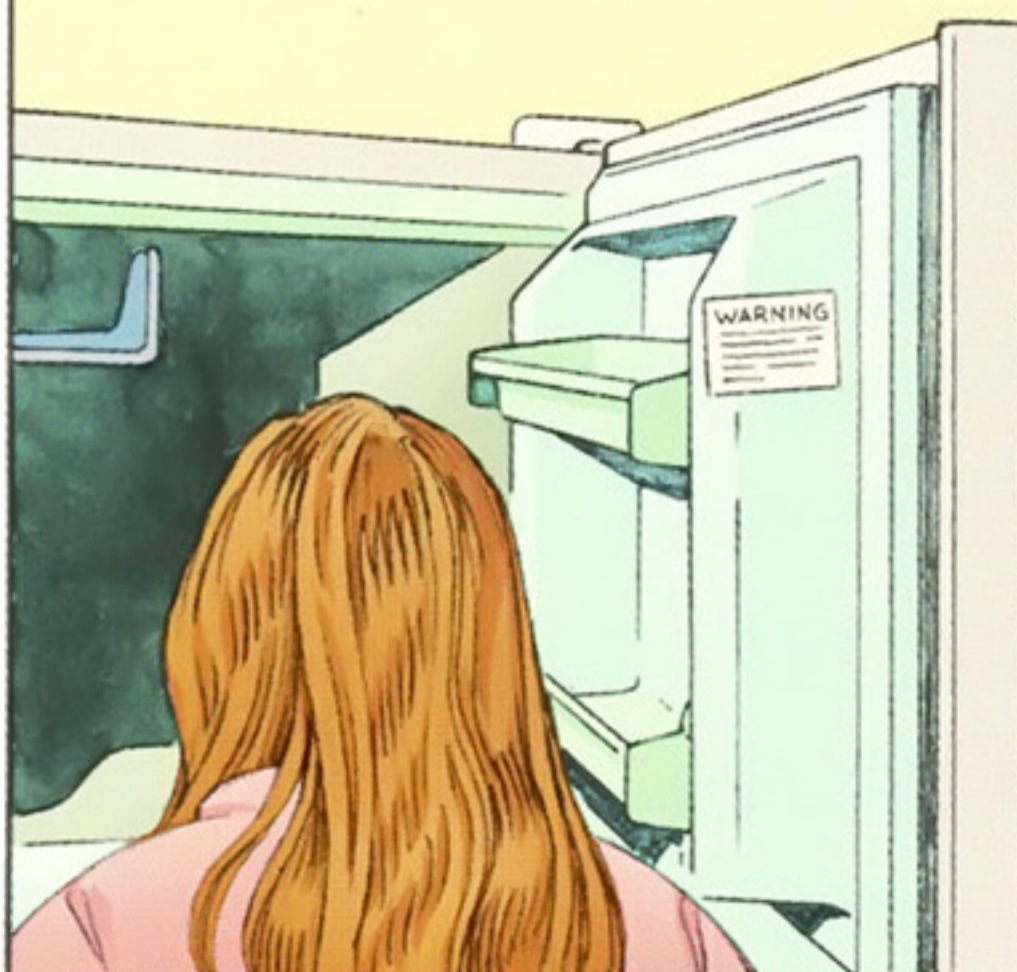


SHE LOOKED AROUND THE KITCHEN.

SHE OPENED THE OVEN...



...PEERED INTO THE FREEZER...

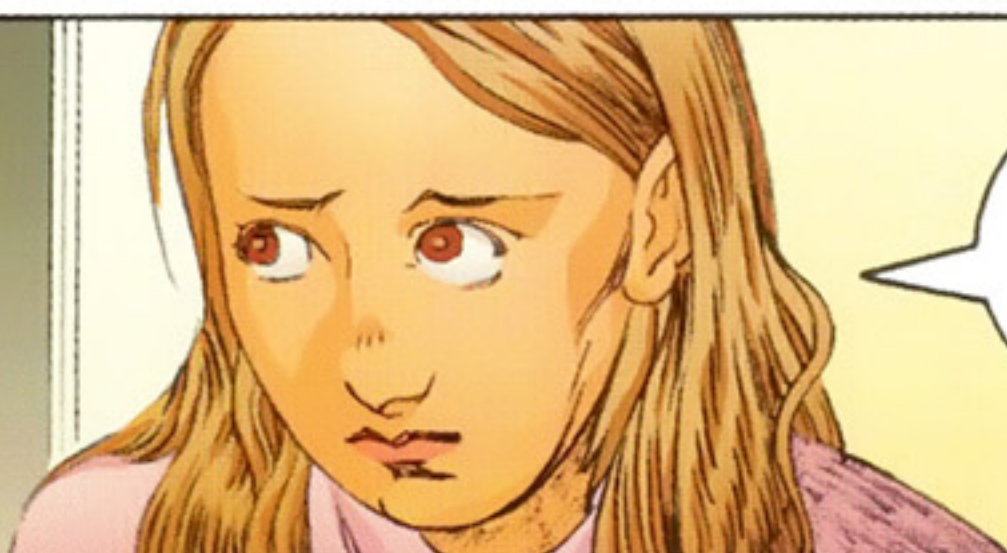


...POKED INTO THE SALAD COMPARTMENT.

THE OTHER MOTHER FOLLOWED HER ABOUT, LOOKING AT CORALINE WITH A SMIRK ALWAYS HOVERING AT THE EDGE OF HER LIPS.



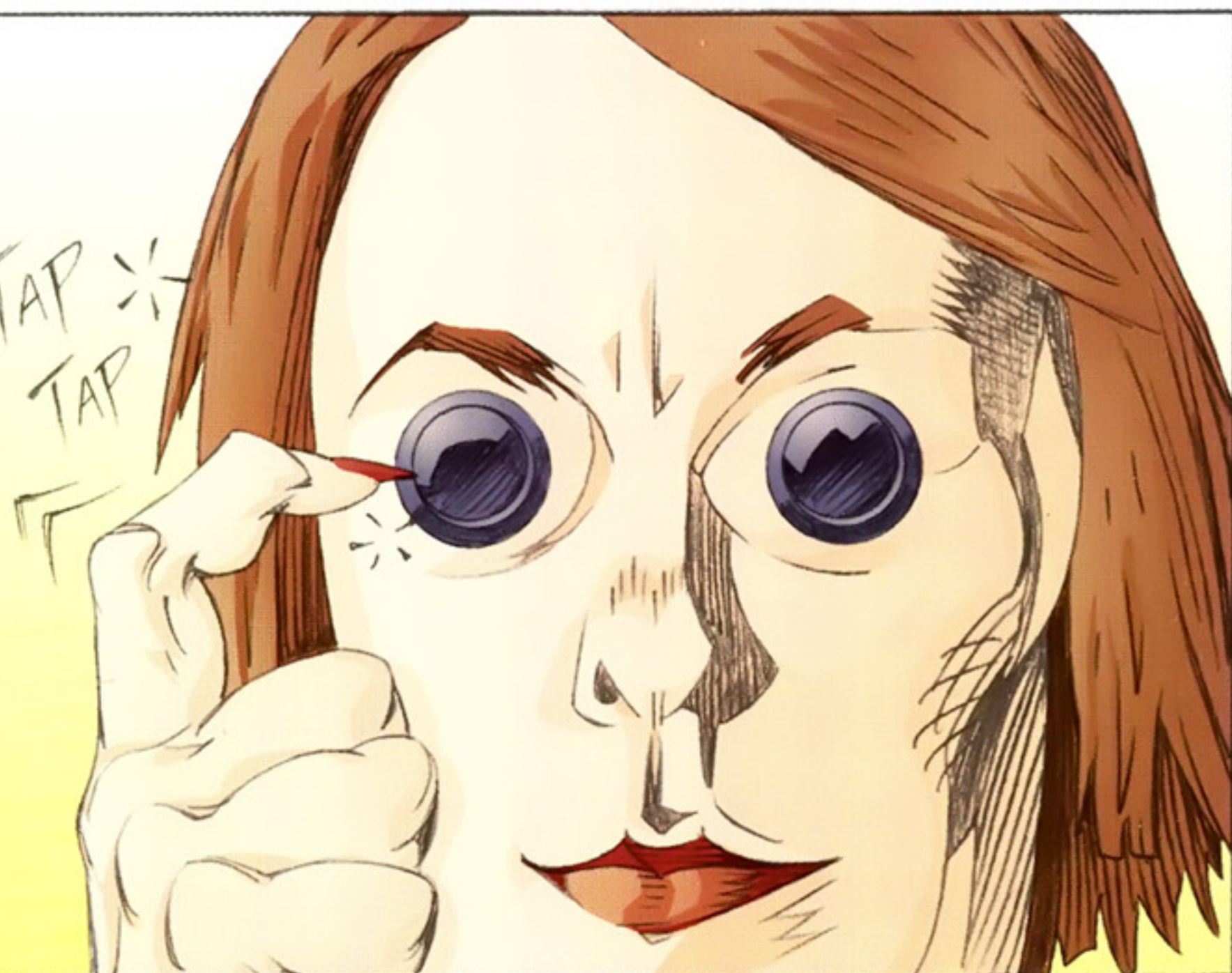
HOW BIG ARE SOULS ANYWAY?



MMM.

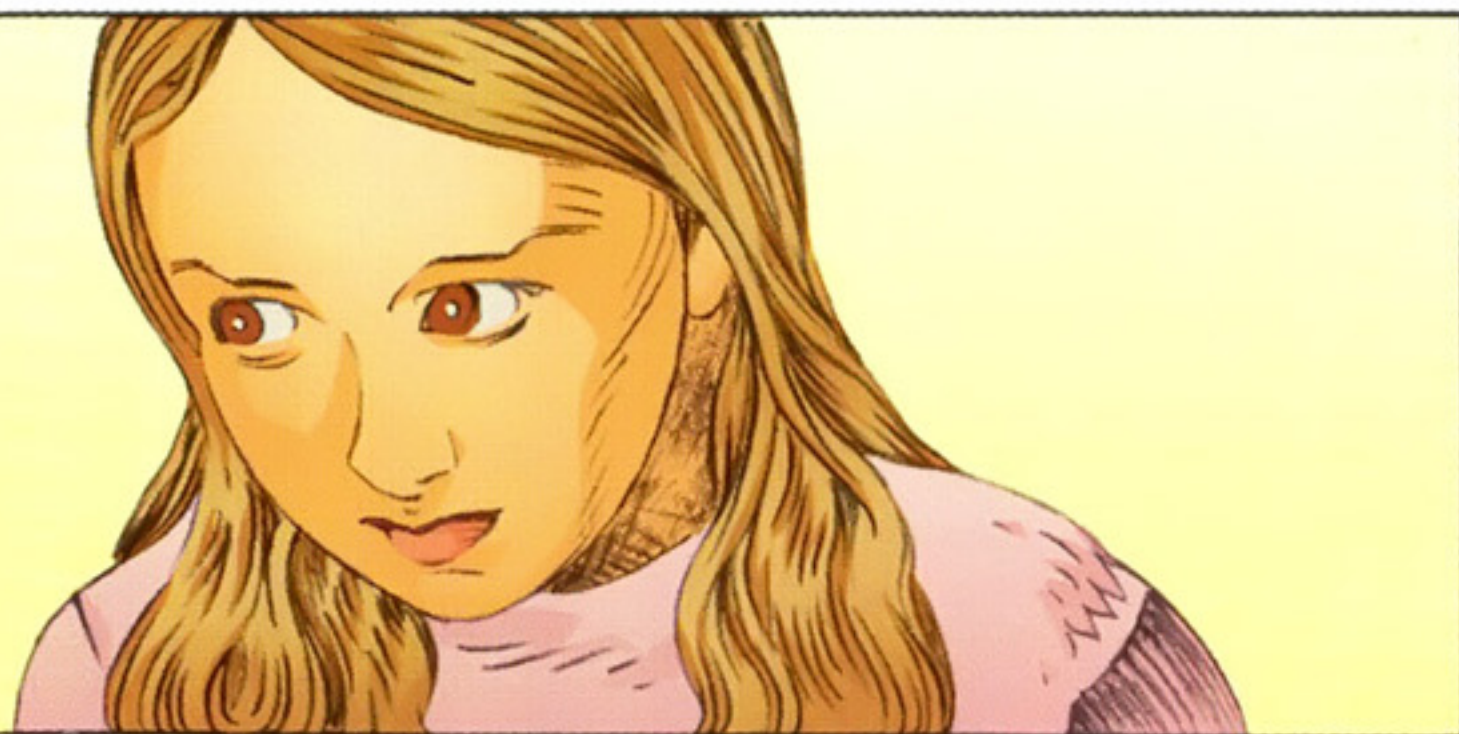


TAP TAP TAP TAP TAP



FINE. DON'T HELP ME. I
DON'T CARE. IT DOESN'T MATTER
IF YOU HELP ME OR NOT.

EVERYONE KNOWS
THAT A SOUL IS THE SAME
SIZE AS A BEACH BALL.



SHE WAS
HOPING THE
OTHER MOTHER
WOULD SAY
SOMETHING
LIKE...

NON-
SENSE!
THEY'RE THE
SIZE OF
RIPE
ONIONS!

...OR...

SUIT-
CASES!

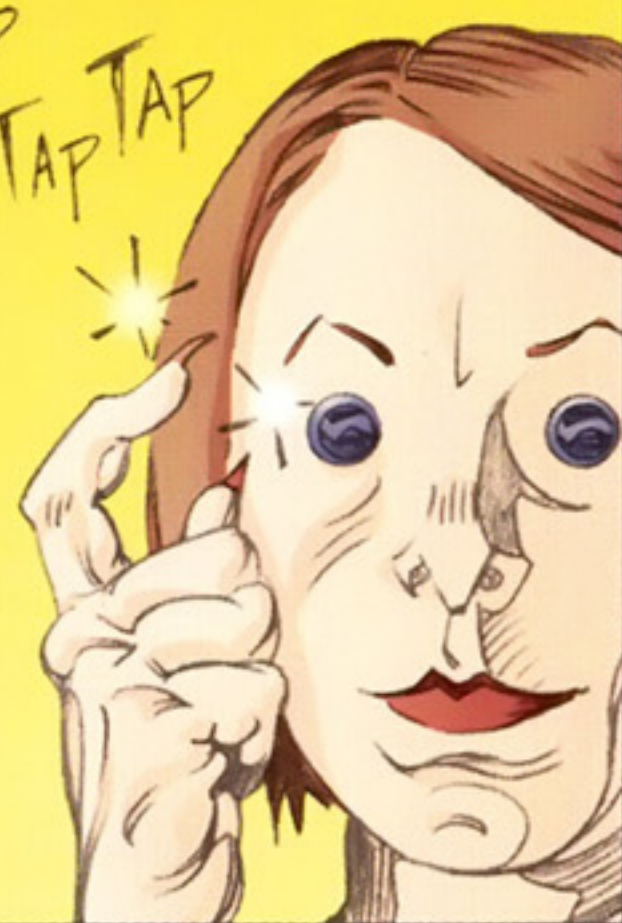
...OR...

GRAND-
FATHER
CLOCKS!

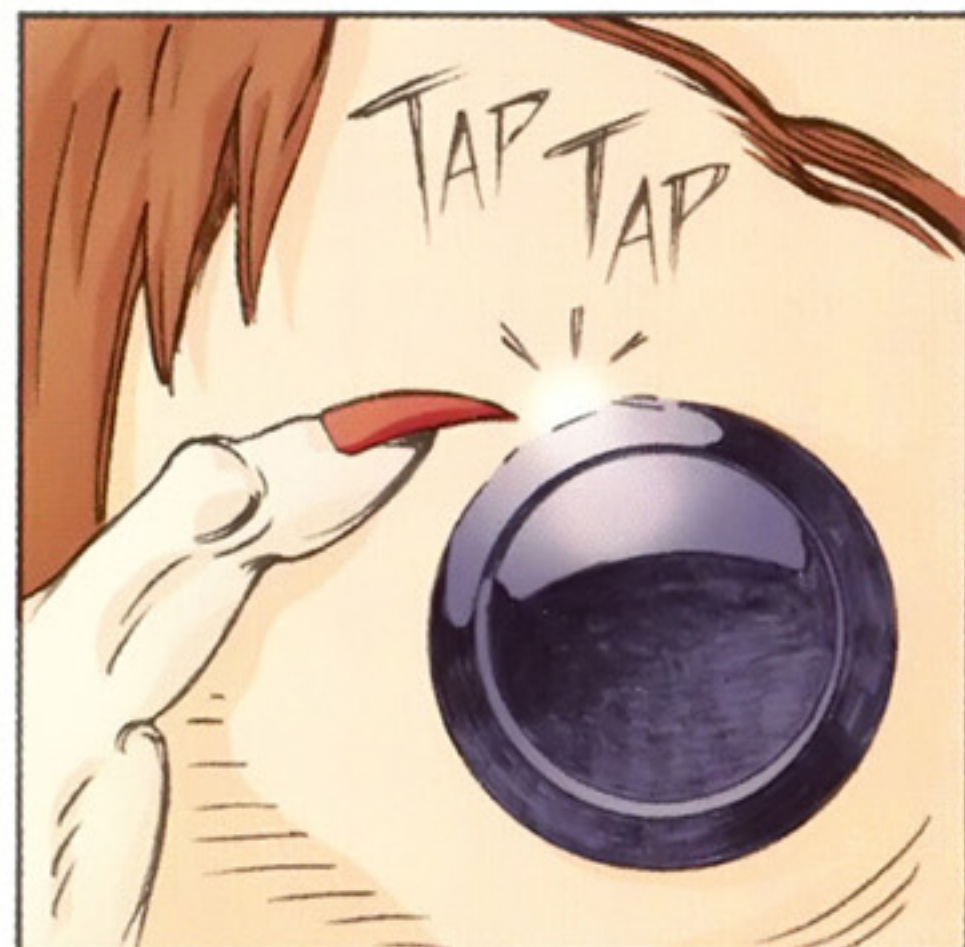


BUT THE
OTHER
MOTHER
SIMPLY
SMILED.

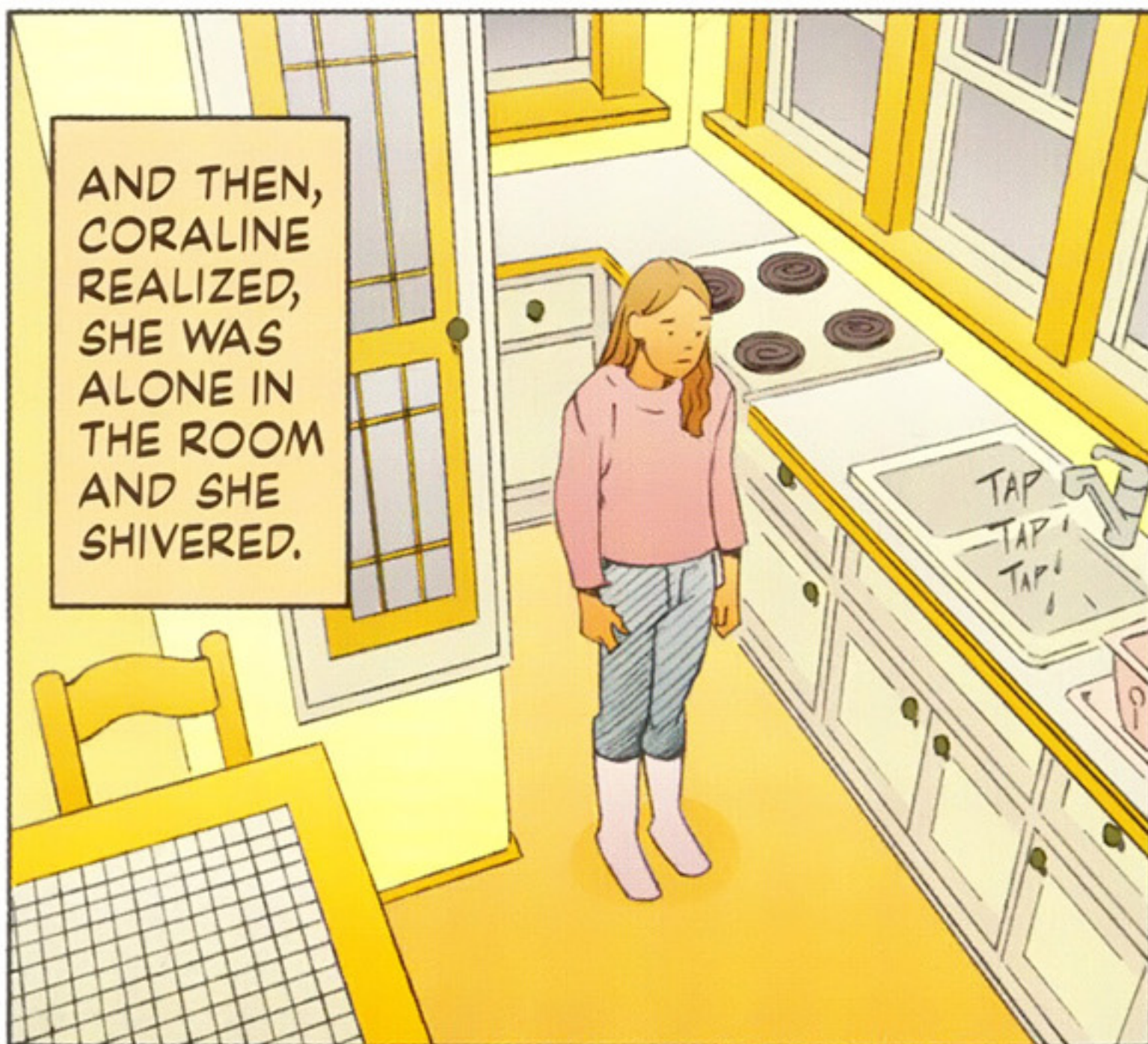
TAP
TAP TAP



TAP TAP

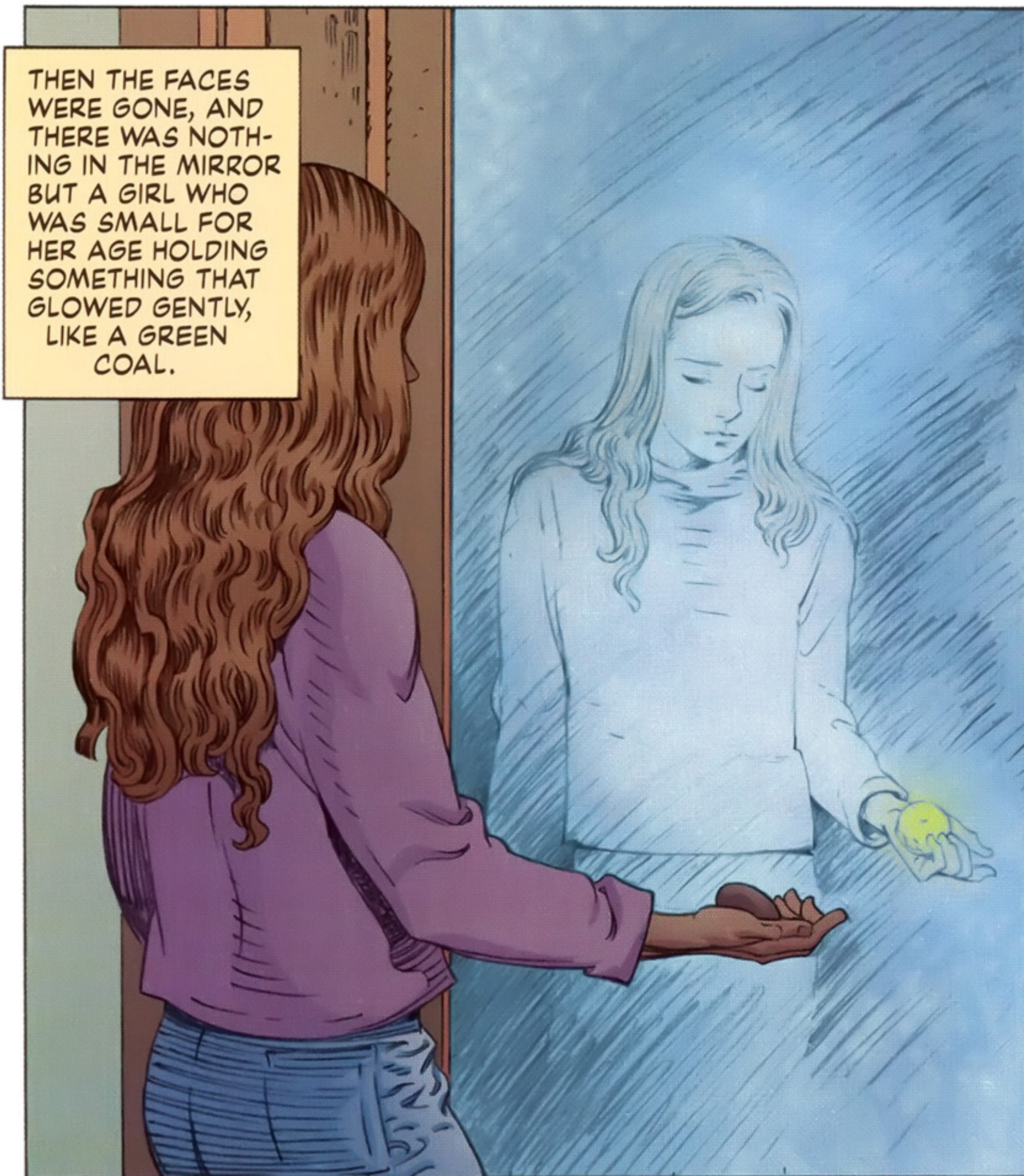
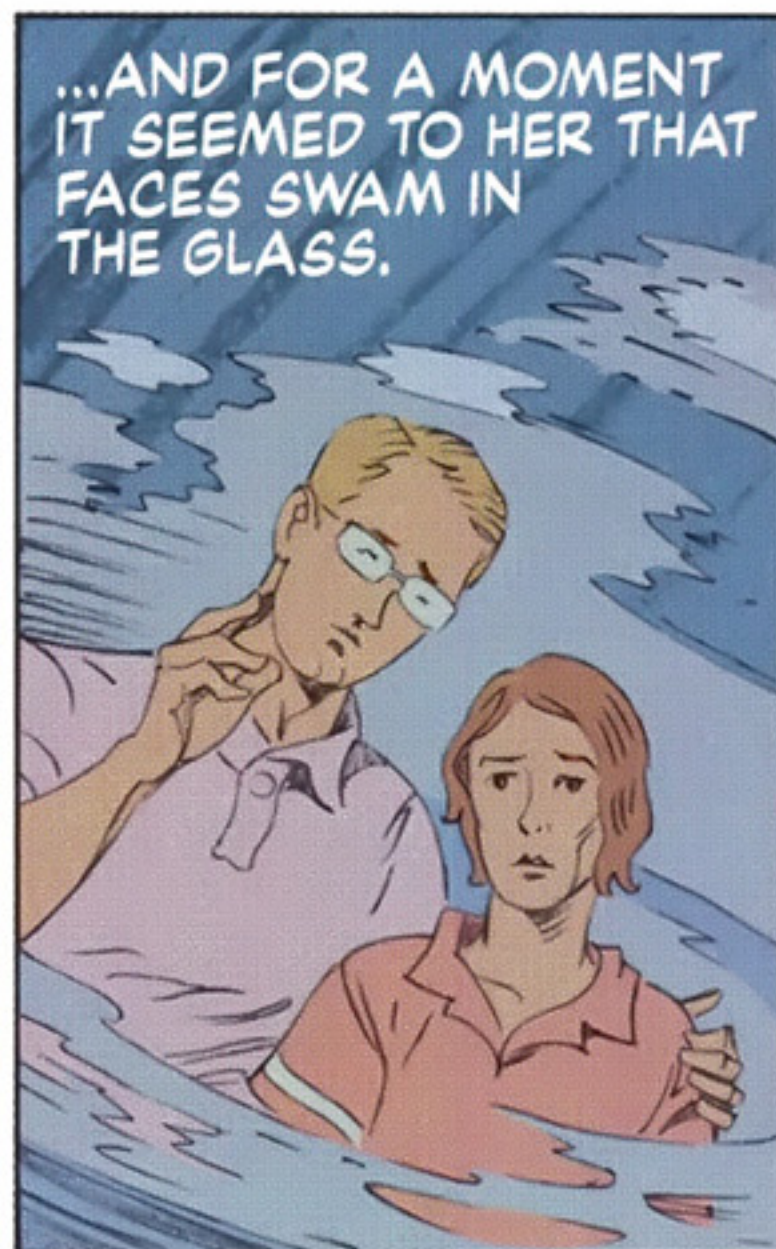


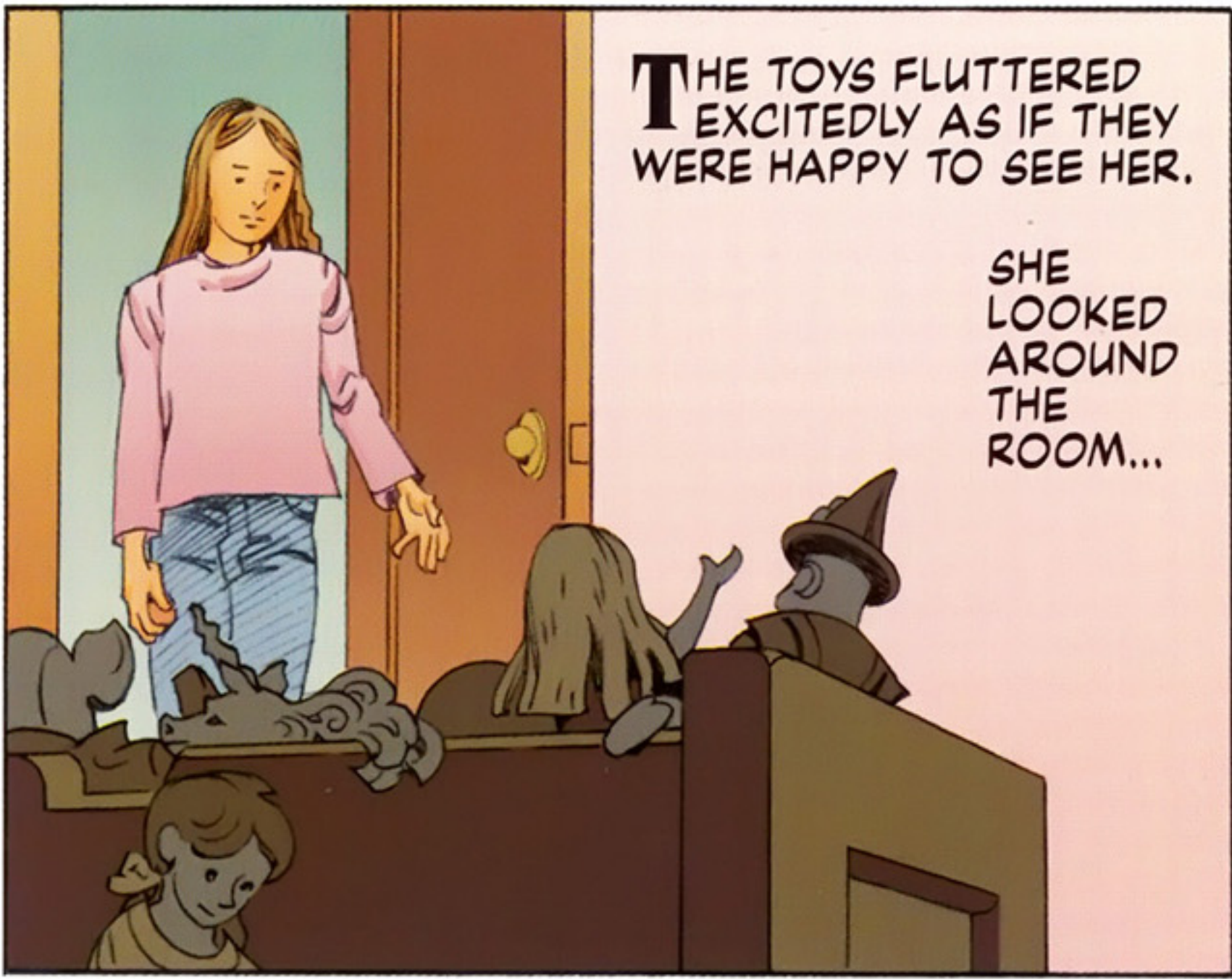
AND THEN,
CORALINE
REALIZED,
SHE WAS
ALONE IN
THE ROOM
AND SHE
SHIVERED.



SHE PREFERRED THE
OTHER MOTHER TO HAVE
A LOCATION; IF SHE WERE
NOWHERE, THEN SHE
COULD BE ANYWHERE.





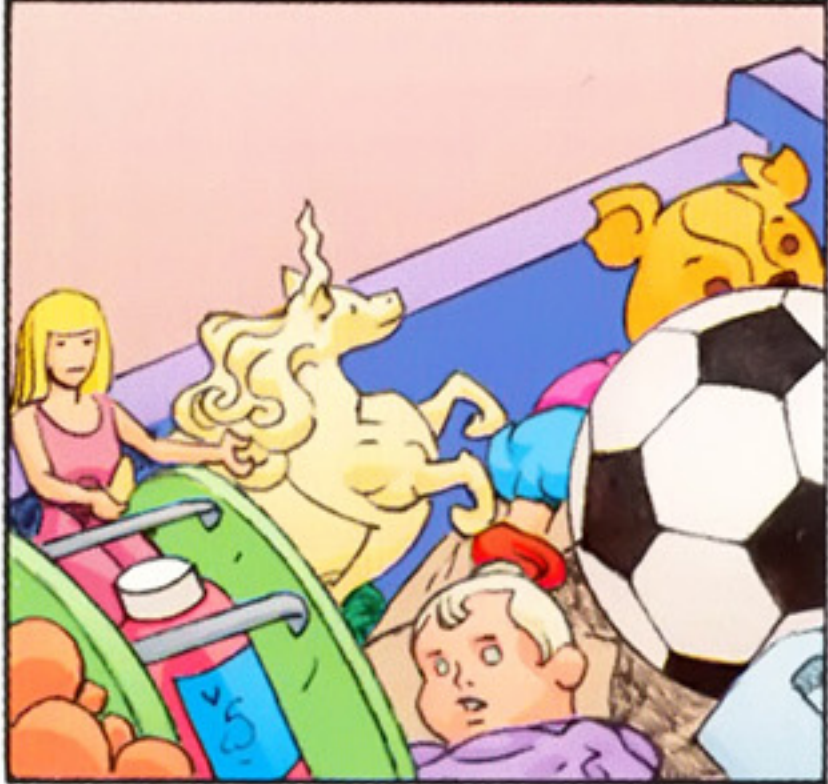


THE TOYS FLUTTERED
EXCITEDLY AS IF THEY
WERE HAPPY TO SEE HER.

SHE
LOOKED
AROUND
THE
ROOM...



...IN THE
CUPBOARDS
AND THE
DRAWERS...



...AND IN THE TOY BOX.



NONE OF THE TOYS LOOKED PARTICULARLY SOUL-LIKE.



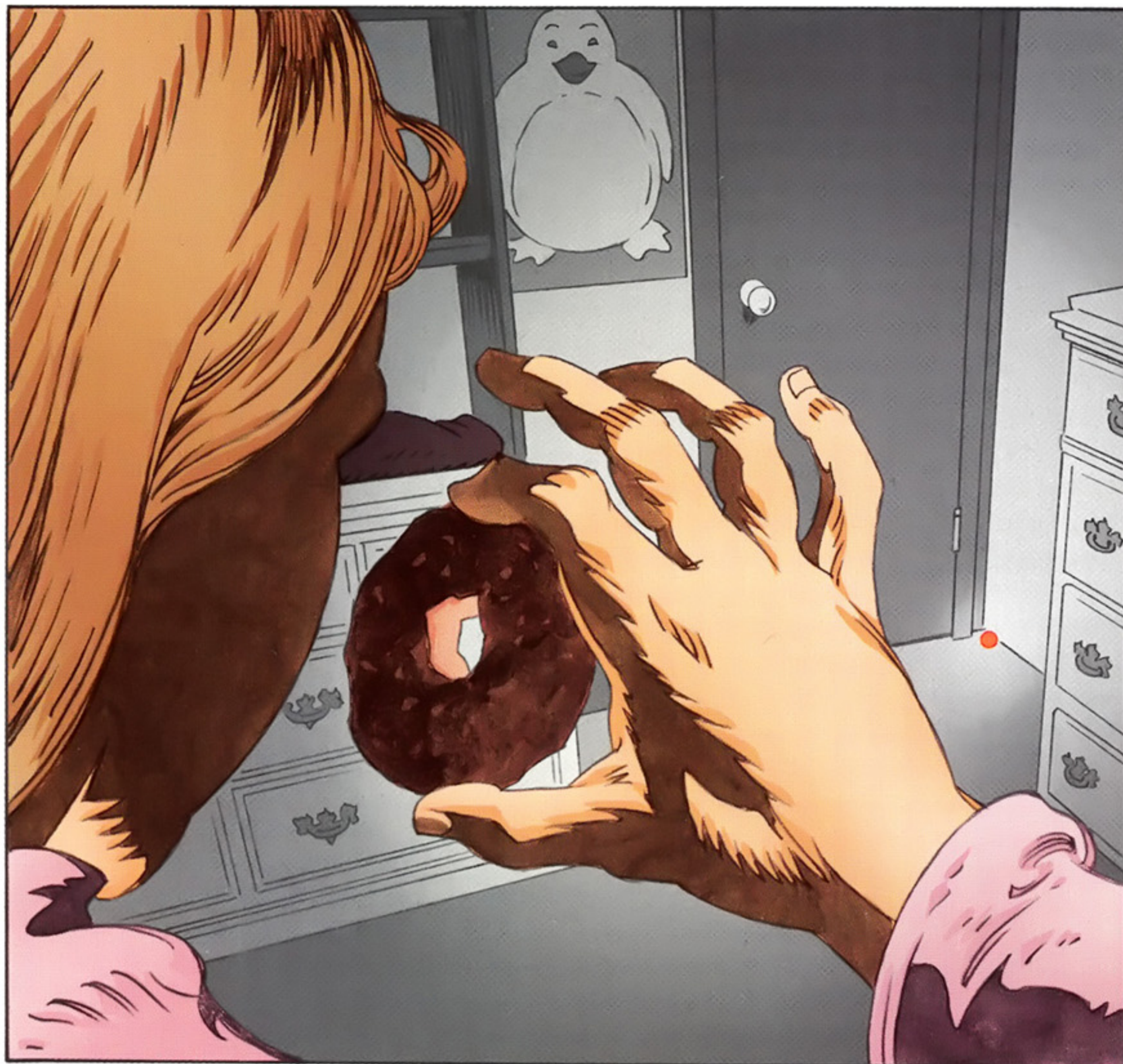
THEN
SHE
REMEM-
BERED A
VOICE...



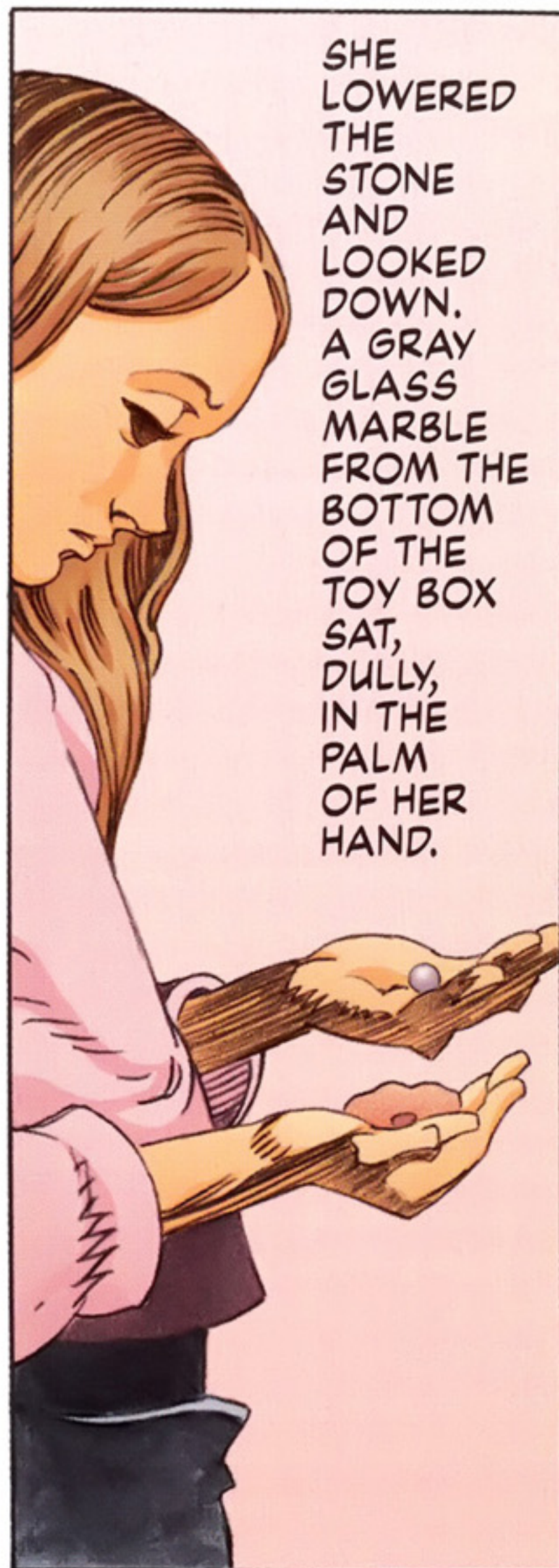
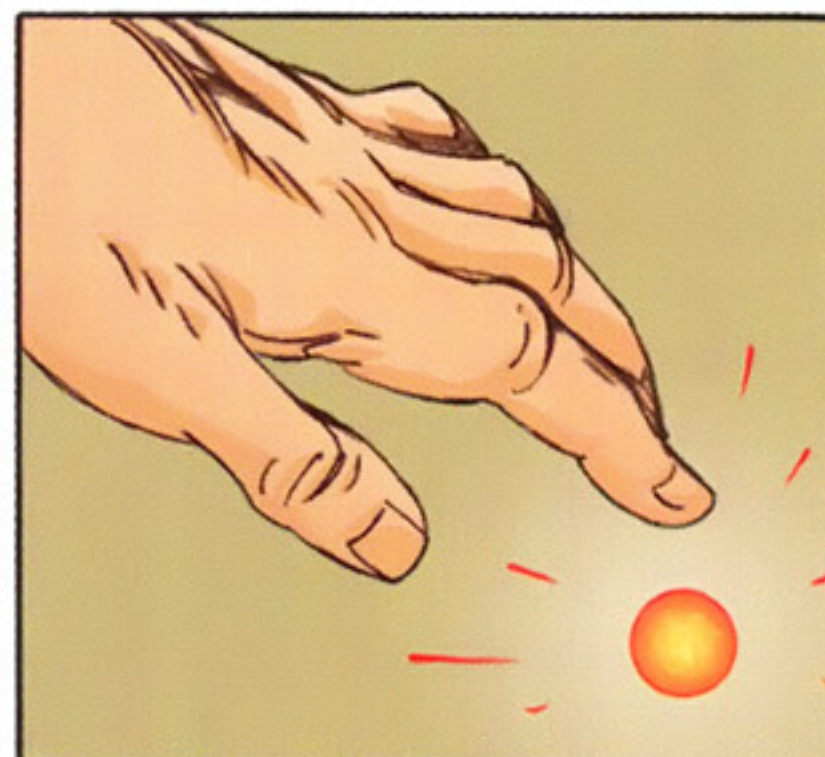
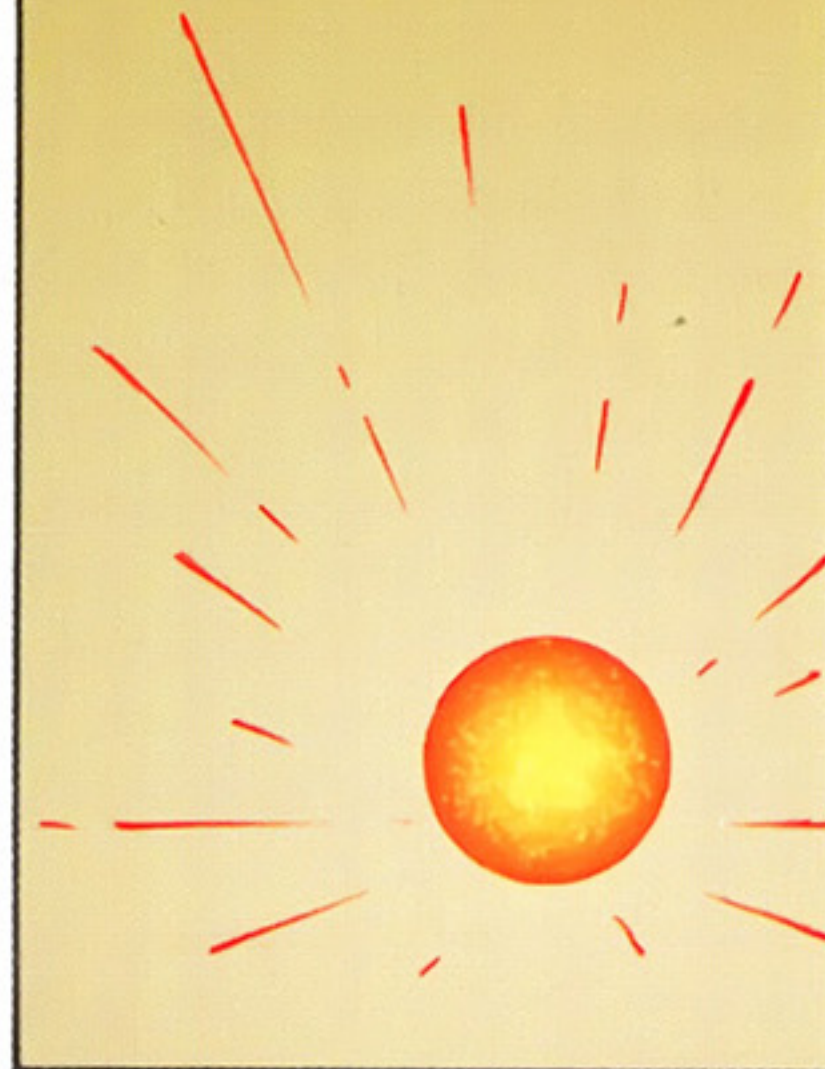
LOOK THROUGH
THE STONE.

...A VOICE IN
THE DARKNESS.

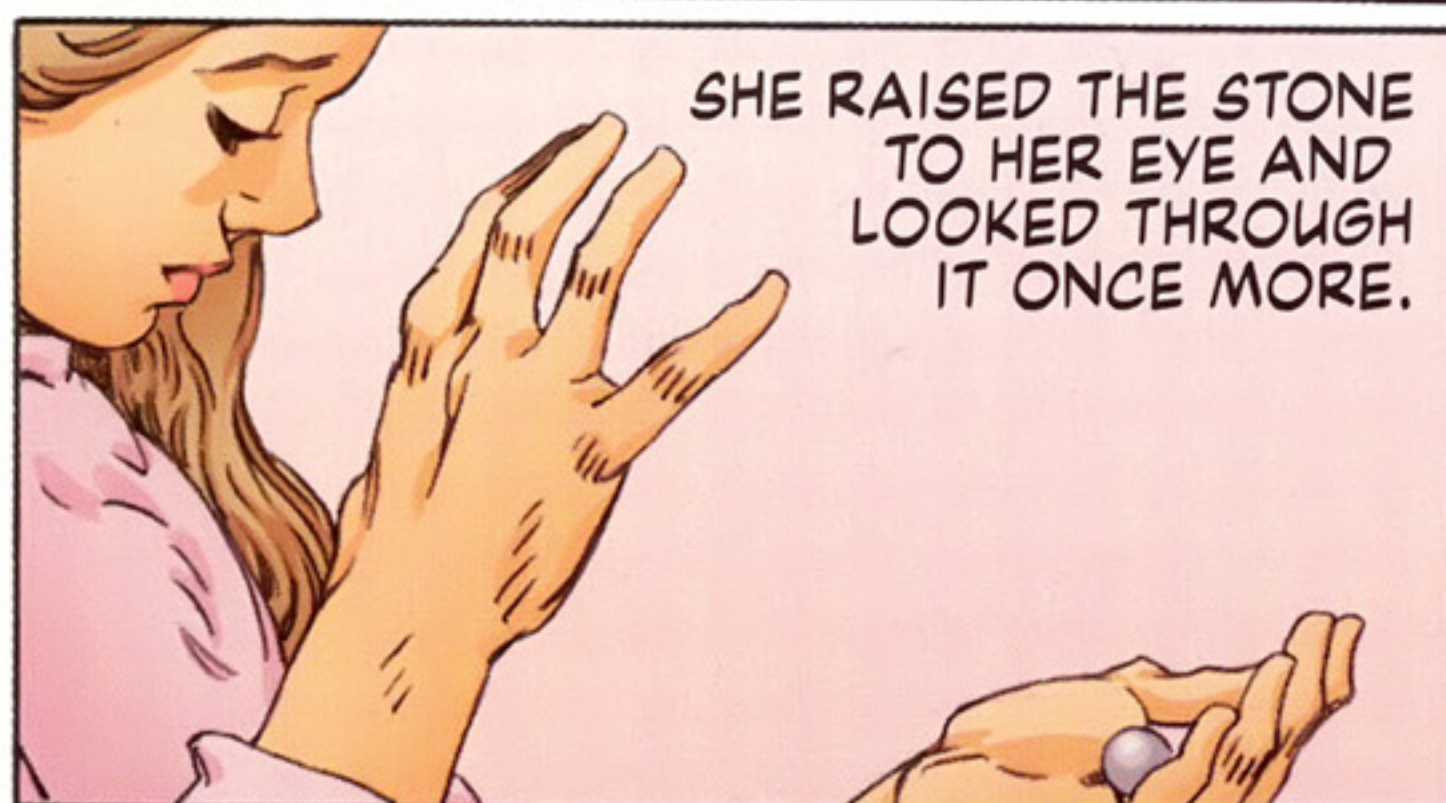
THROUGH THE STONE EVERYTHING WAS GRAY AND COLORLESS. NO, NOT QUITE EVERYTHING: SOMETHING GLINTED ON THE FLOOR.



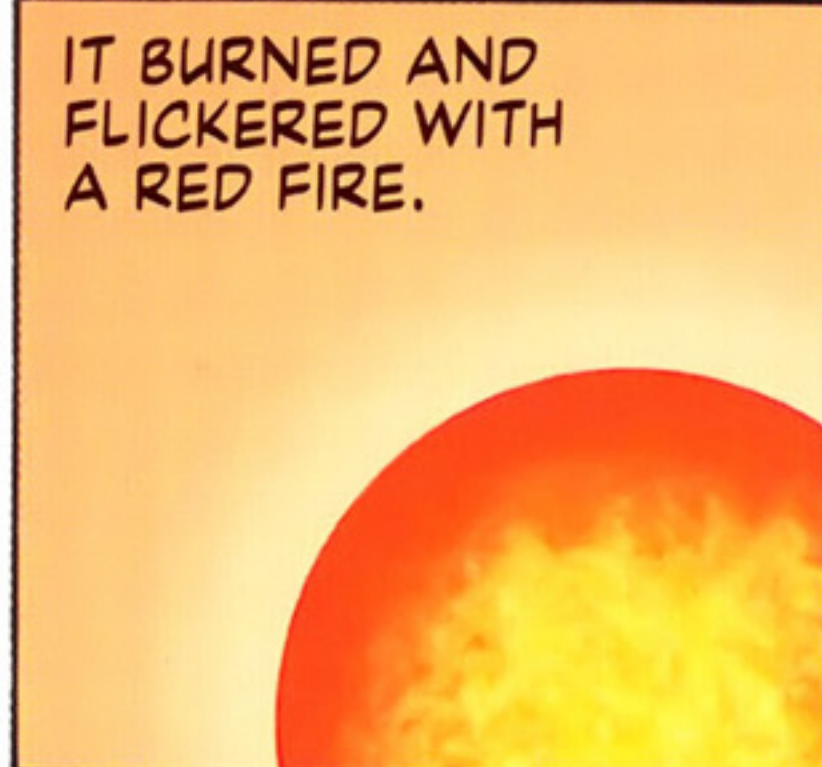
SOMETHING THE COLOR OF AN EMBER IN A NURSERY FIRE-PLACE, THE COLOR OF A SCARLET-AND-ORANGE TULIP NODDING IN THE MAY SUN.



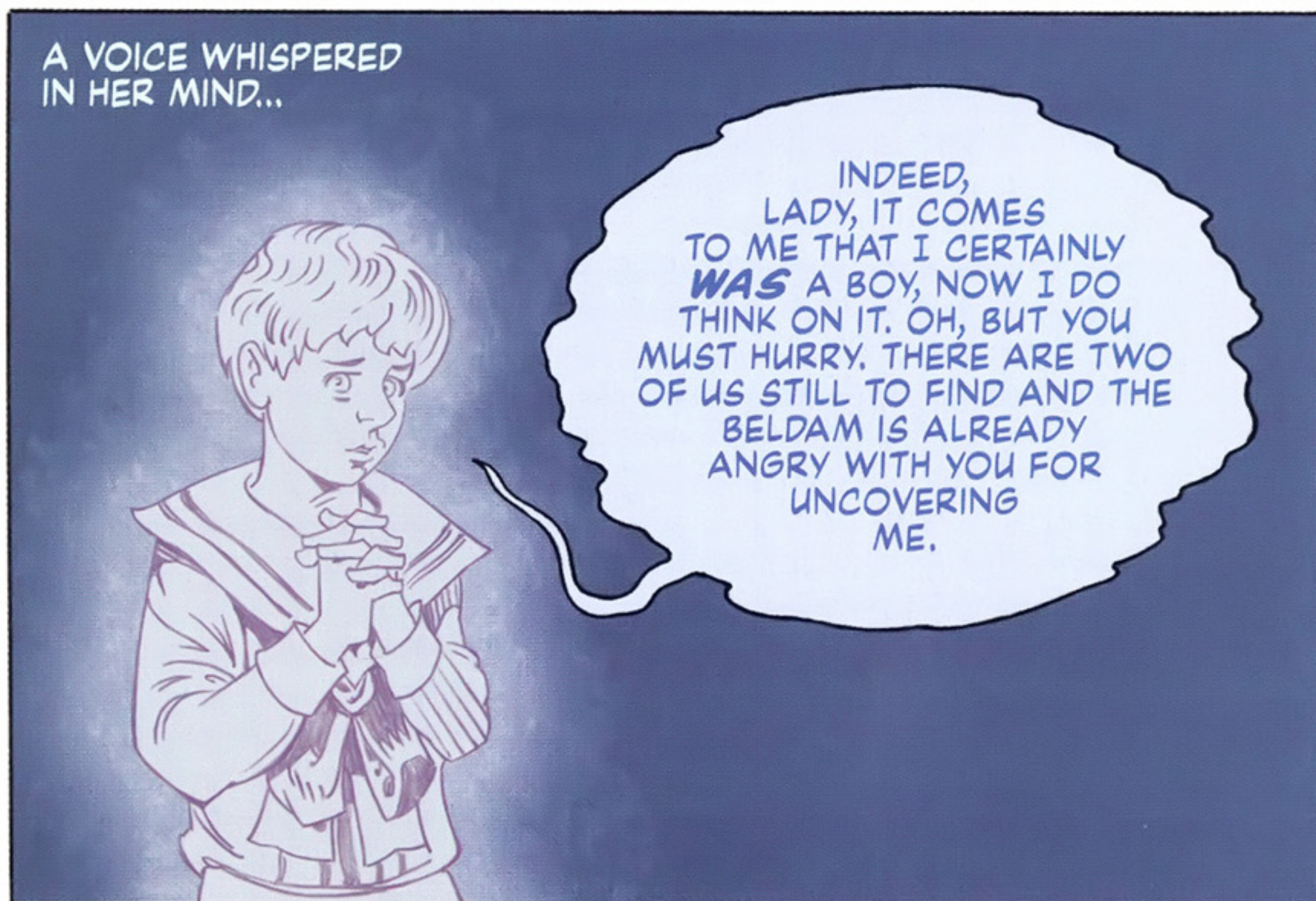
SHE LOWERED THE STONE AND LOOKED DOWN. A GRAY GLASS MARBLE FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE TOY BOX SAT, DULLY, IN THE PALM OF HER HAND.



SHE RAISED THE STONE TO HER EYE AND LOOKED THROUGH IT ONCE MORE.



IT BURNED AND FLICKERED WITH A RED FIRE.



A VOICE WHISPERED IN HER MIND...

INDEED, LADY, IT COMES TO ME THAT I CERTAINLY **WAS** A BOY, NOW I DO THINK ON IT. OH, BUT YOU MUST HURRY. THERE ARE TWO OF US STILL TO FIND AND THE BELDAM IS ALREADY ANGRY WITH YOU FOR UNCOVERING ME.



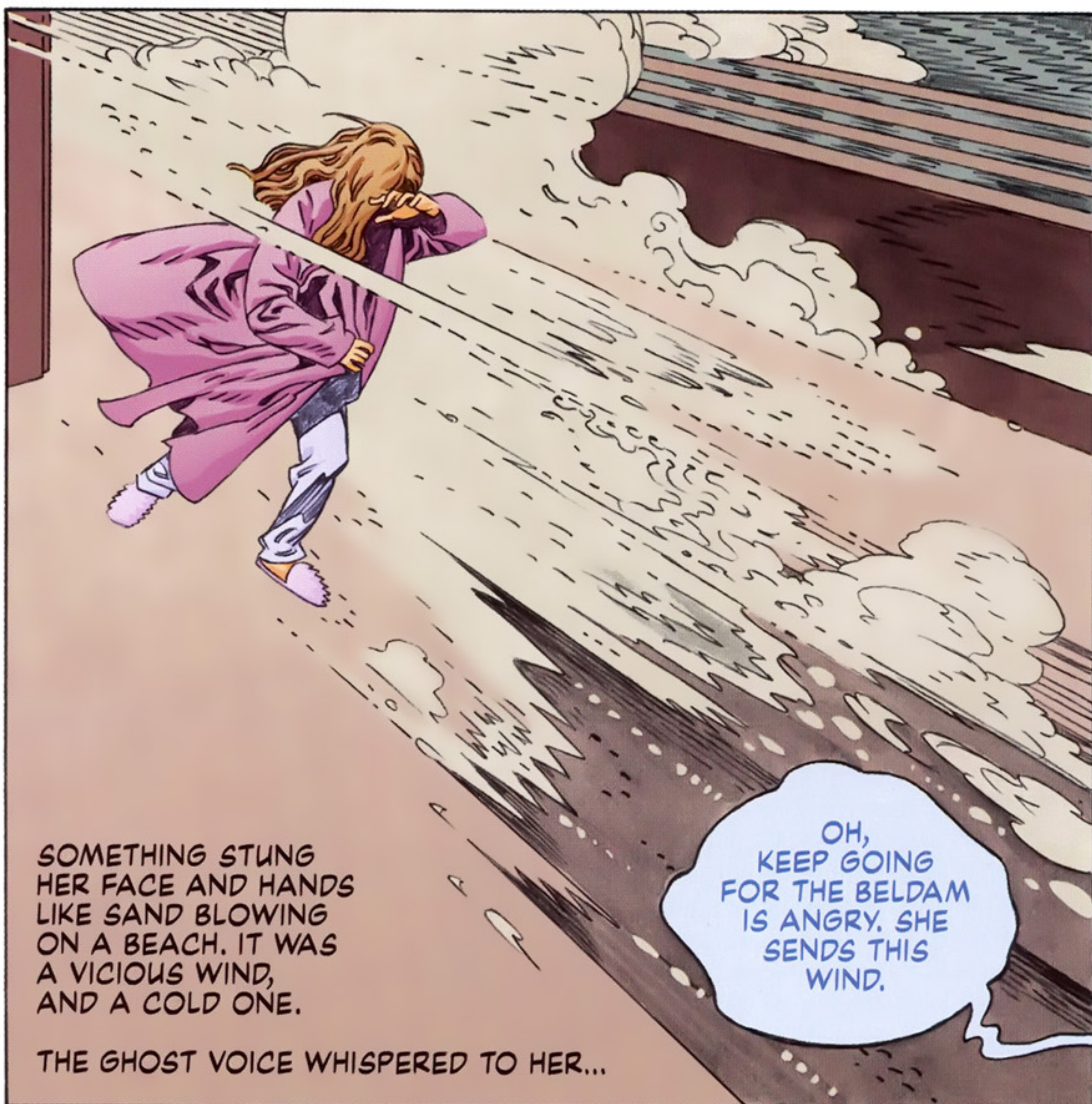
IF I'M GOING TO DO THIS, I'M NOT GOING TO DO IT IN HER CLOTHES.

SHE CHANGED BACK INTO HER PAJAMAS, PUT THE MARBLE INTO HER DRESSING GOWN POCKET AND WALKED OUT INTO THE HALL.



SOMETHING STUNG HER FACE AND HANDS LIKE SAND BLOWING ON A BEACH. IT WAS A VICIOUS WIND, AND A COLD ONE.

THE GHOST VOICE WHISPERED TO HER...

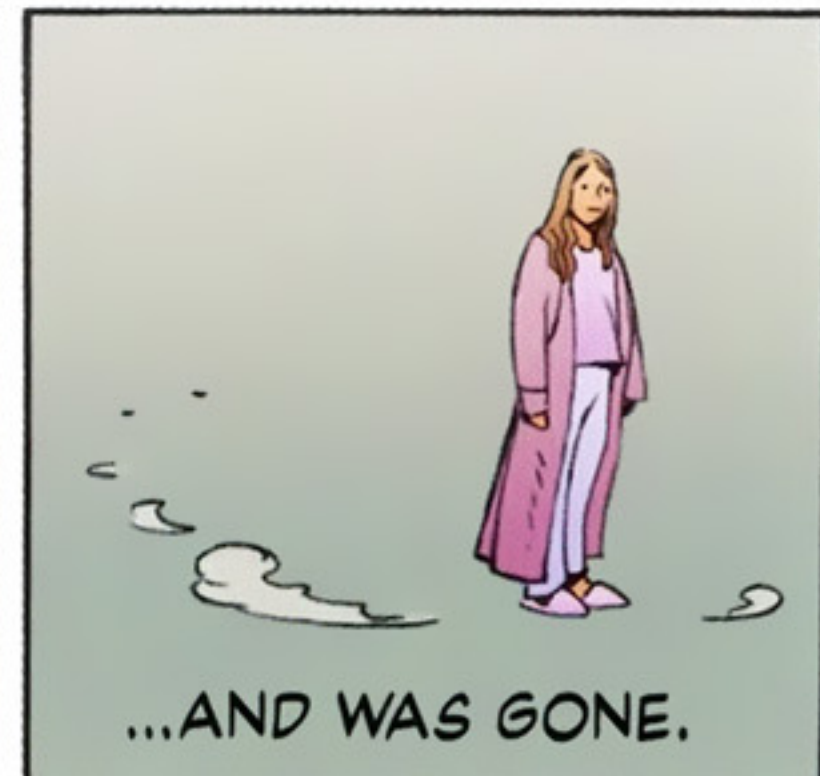


OH, KEEP GOING FOR THE BELDAM IS ANGRY. SHE SENDS THIS WIND.

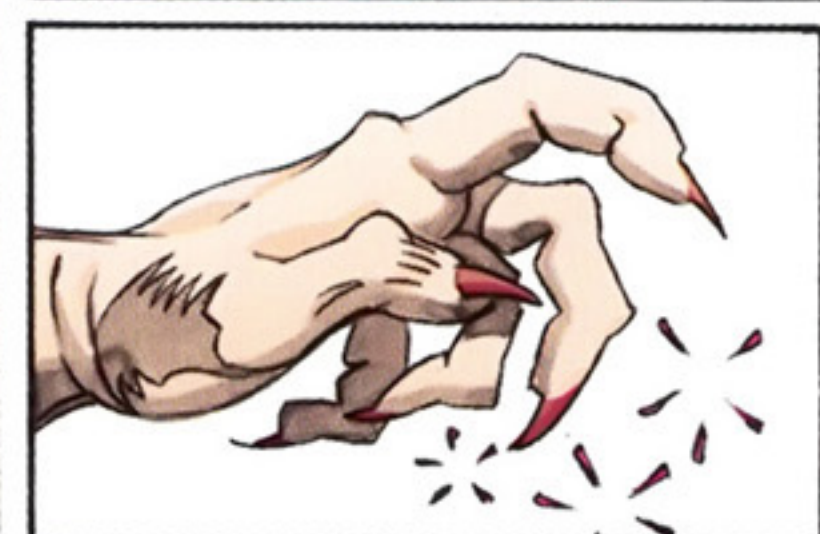


PLAY FAIR!

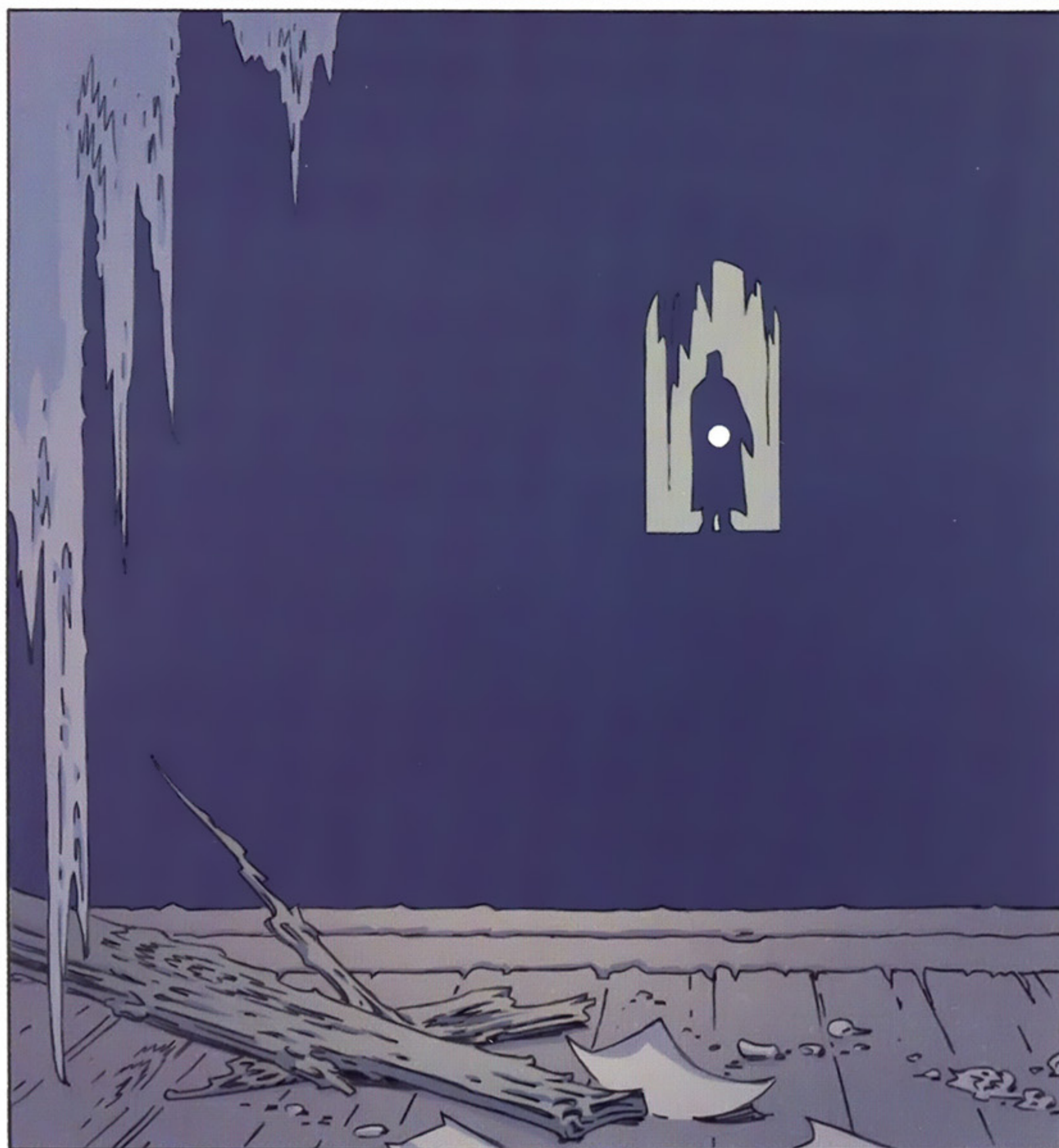
THERE WAS NO REPLY. BUT THE WIND WHIPPED ABOUT HER ONE MORE TIME, PETULANTLY, AND THEN IT DROPPED AWAY...

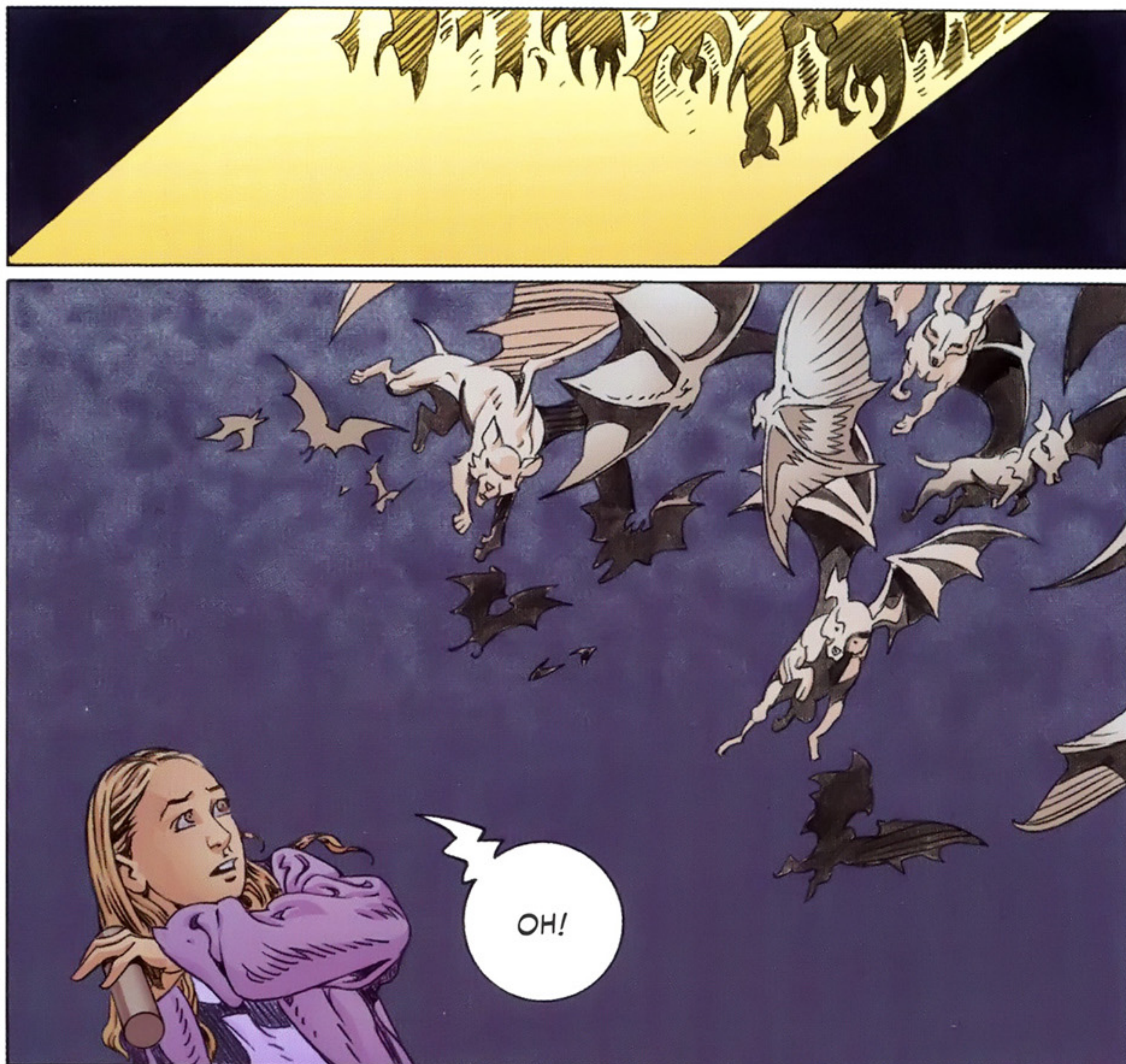


...AND WAS GONE.

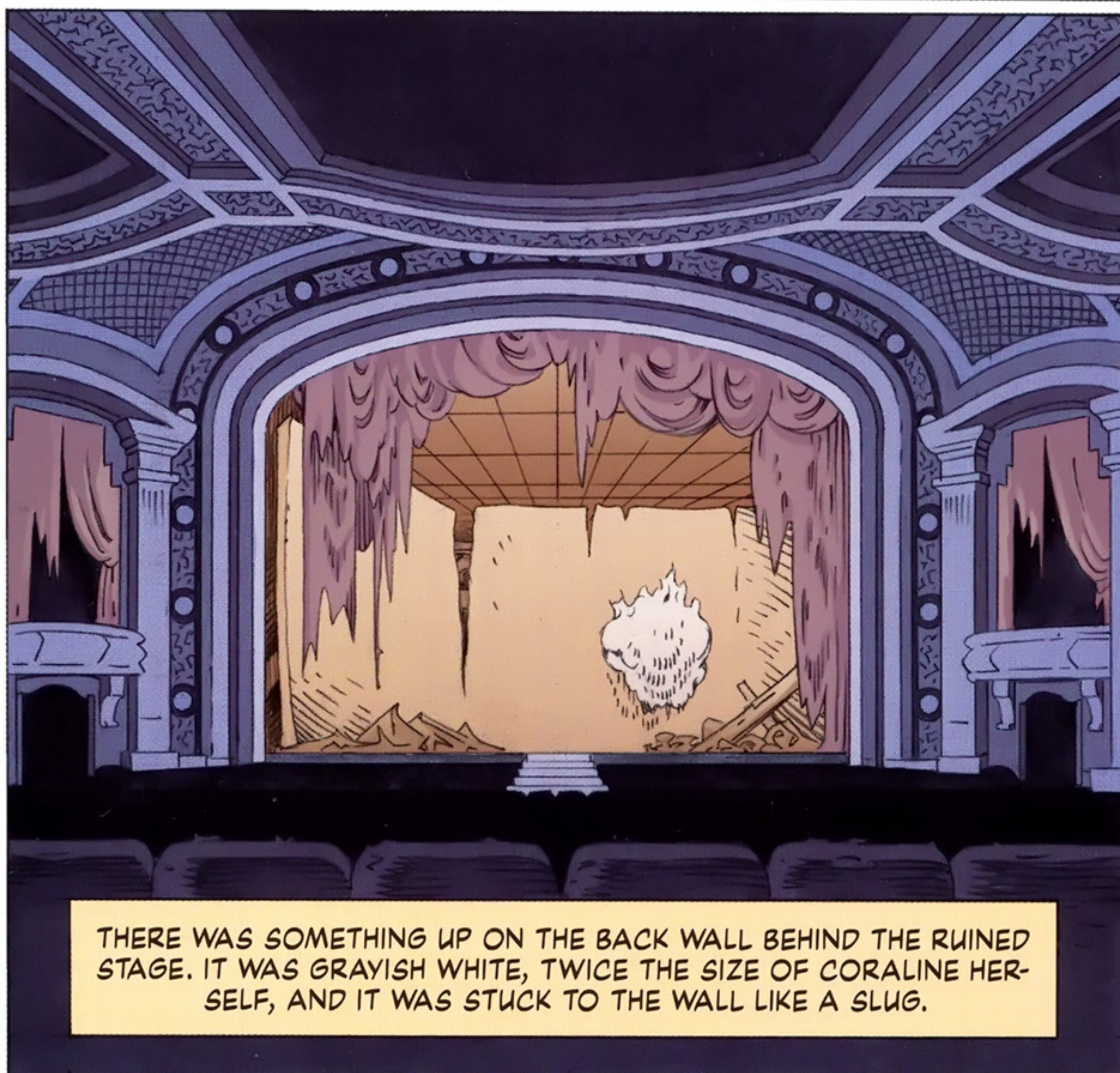


CORALINE WALKED OUTSIDE AND AROUND THE HOUSE UNTIL SHE REACHED THE OTHER MISS SPINK AND MISS FORCIBLE'S FLAT.

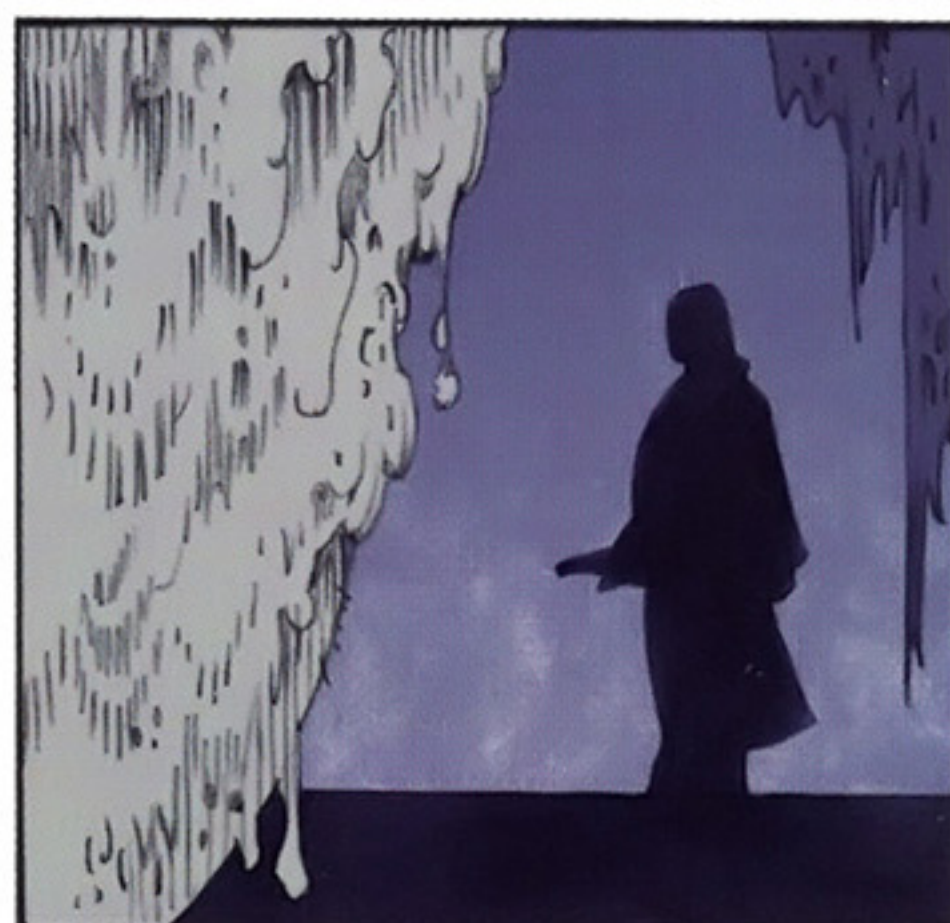
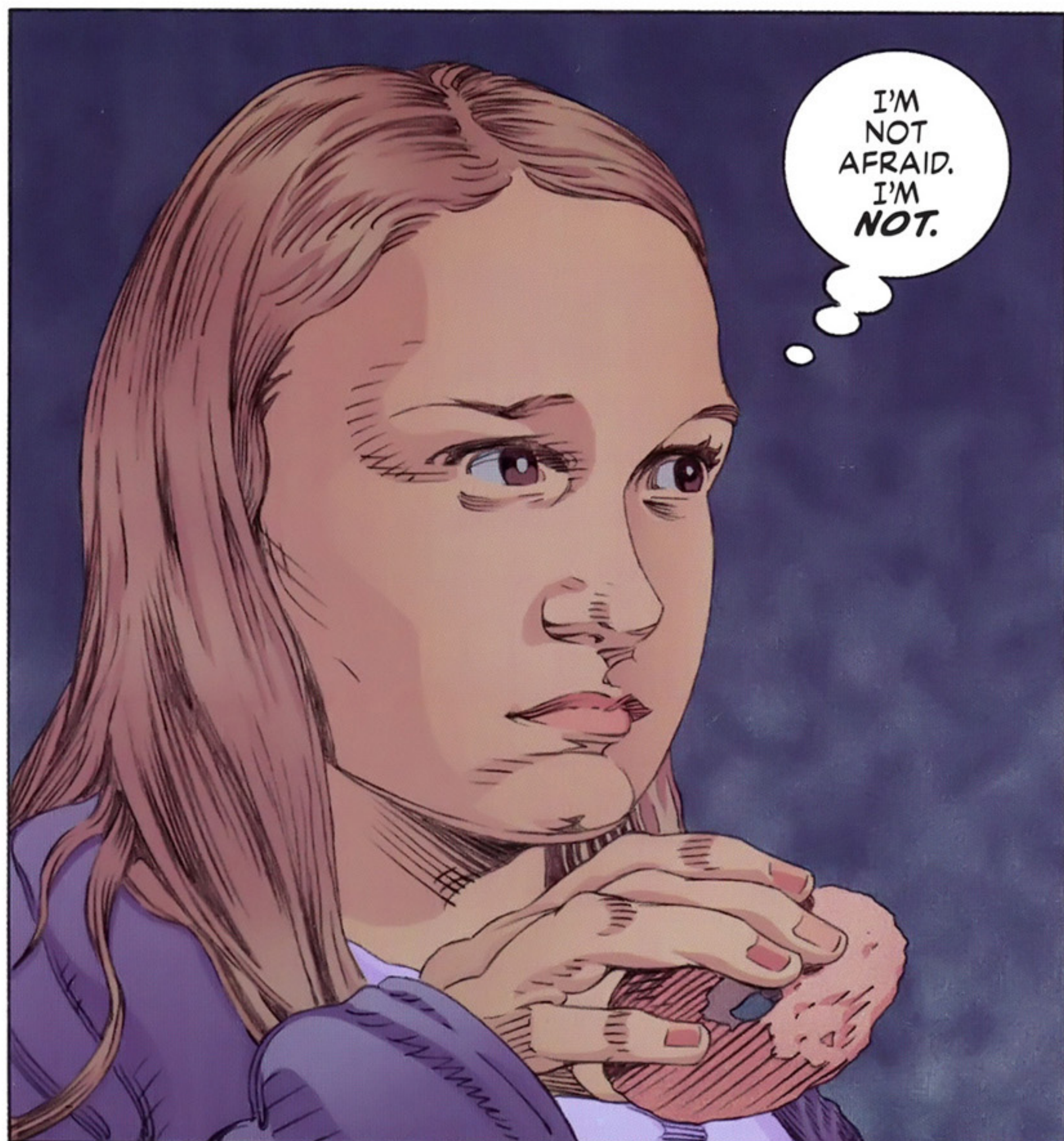




CORALINE
SCANNED
THE ROOM,
LOOKING FOR
A TELLTALE
SIGN THAT
SOMEWHERE
IN THIS ROOM
WAS ANOTHER
HIDDEN SOUL.

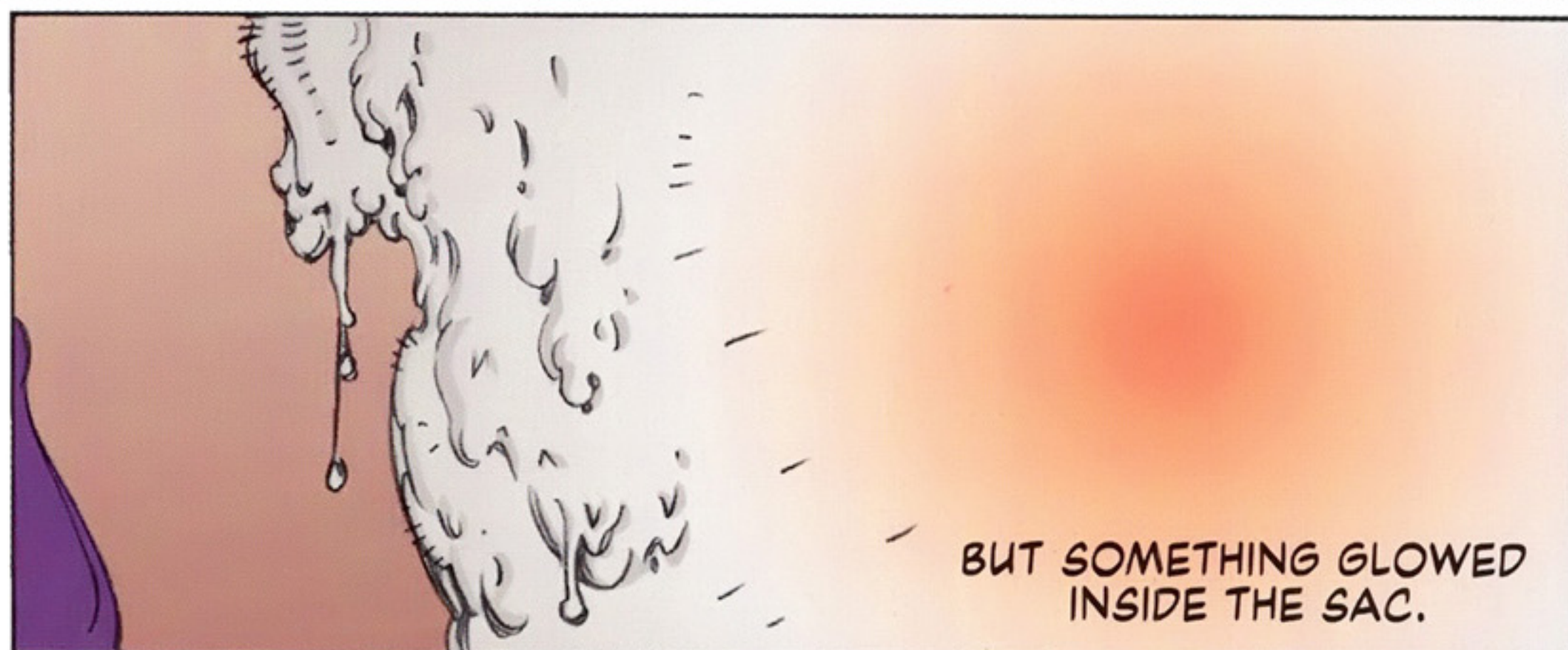


THERE WAS SOMETHING UP ON THE BACK WALL BEHIND THE RUINED
STAGE. IT WAS GRAYISH WHITE, TWICE THE SIZE OF CORALINE HER-
SELF, AND IT WAS STUCK TO THE WALL LIKE A SLUG.





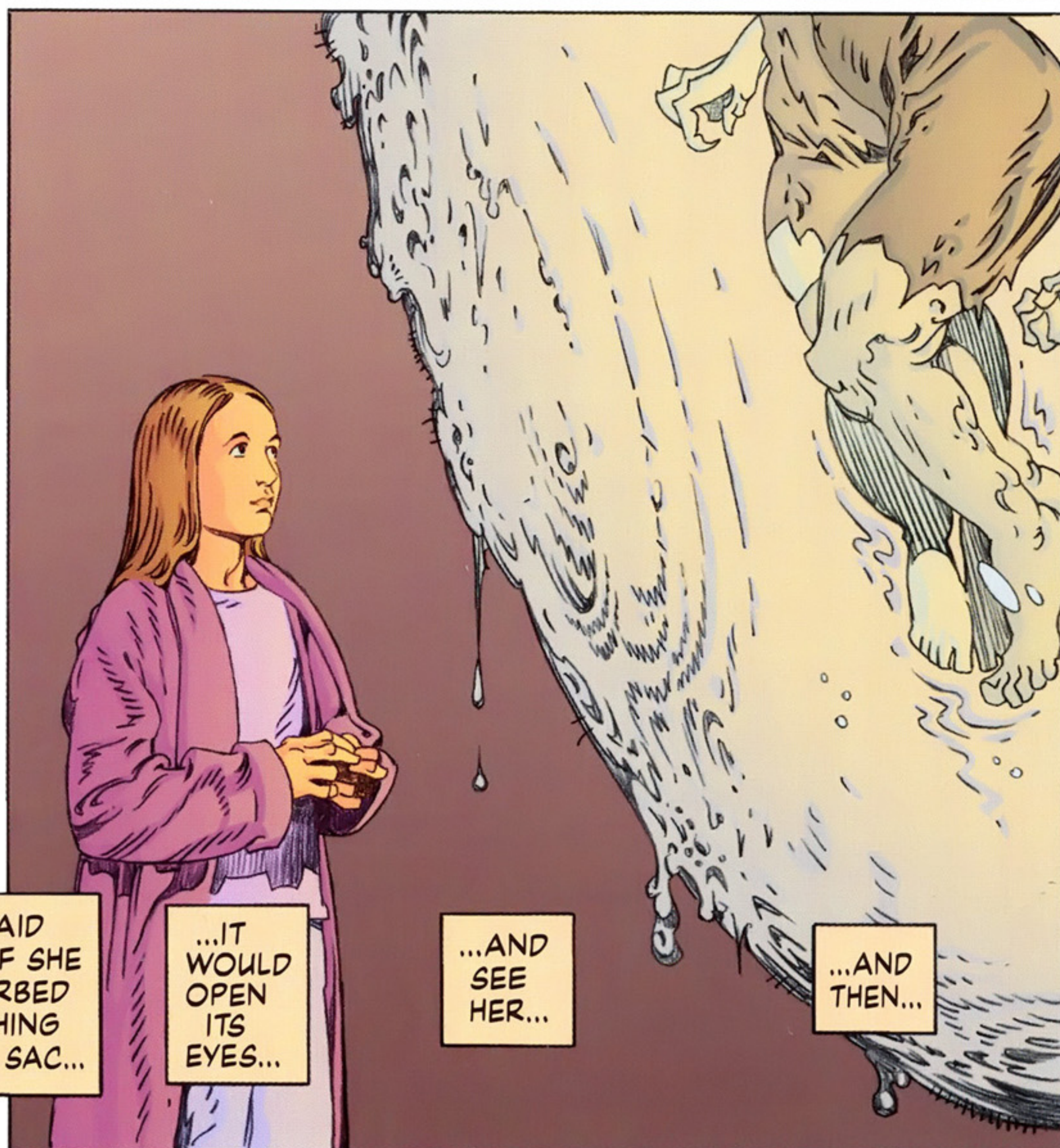
PERHAPS
THERE ARE NO
SOULS HIDDEN
IN HERE. PERHAPS
I CAN JUST LEAVE
AND GO SOME-
WHERE
ELSE.



BUT SOMETHING GLOWED
INSIDE THE SAC.



CORALINE
TRIED TO
MAKE AS
LITTLE NOISE
AS SHE
COULD...

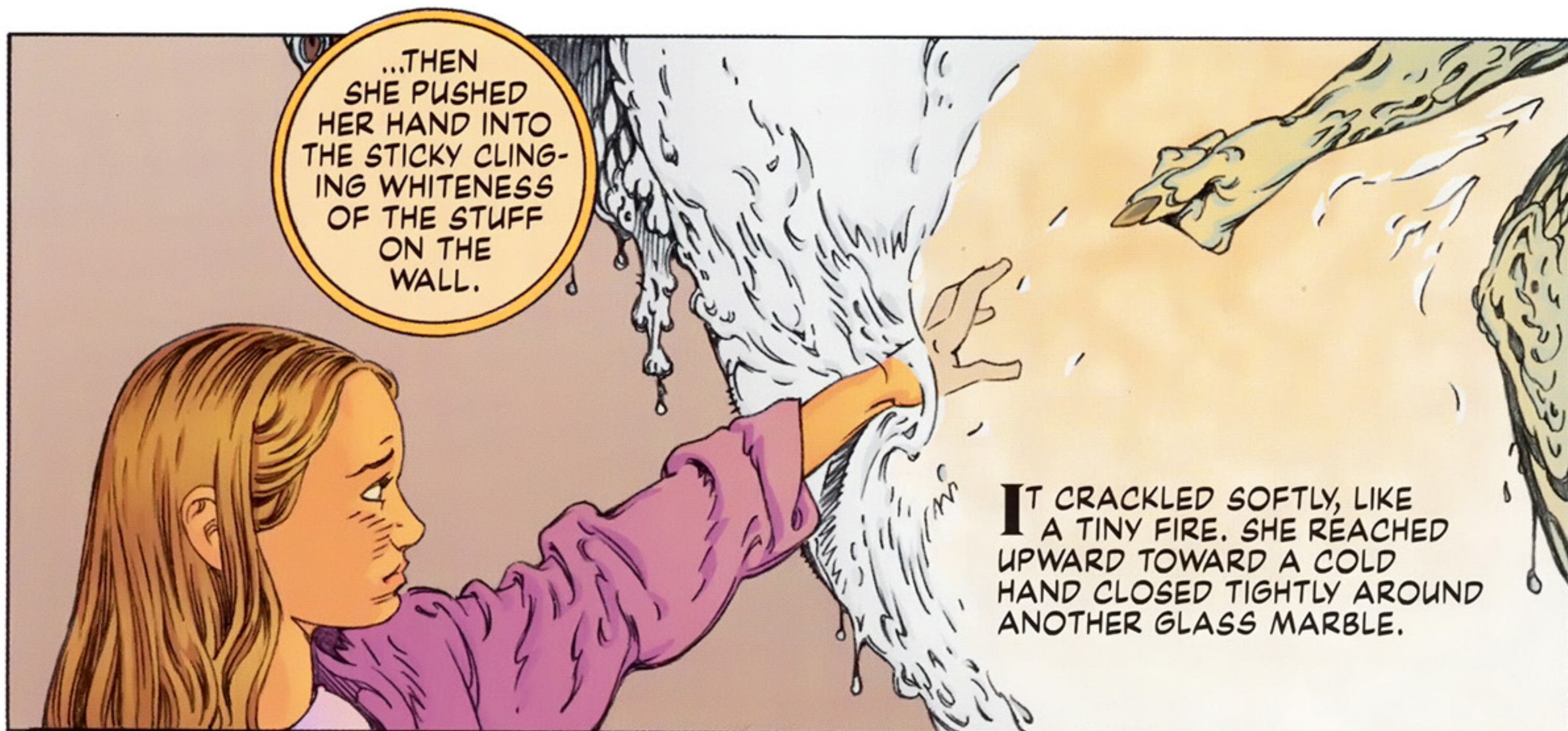


...AFRAID
THAT IF SHE
DISTURBED
THE THING
IN THE SAC...

...IT
WOULD
OPEN
ITS
EYES...

...AND
SEE
HER...

...AND
THEN...



...THEN SHE PUSHED HER HAND INTO THE STICKY CLINGING WHITENESS OF THE STUFF ON THE WALL.

IT CRACKLED SOFTLY, LIKE A TINY FIRE. SHE REACHED UPWARD TOWARD A COLD HAND CLOSED TIGHTLY AROUND ANOTHER GLASS MARBLE.



CORALINE TUGGED AT IT.

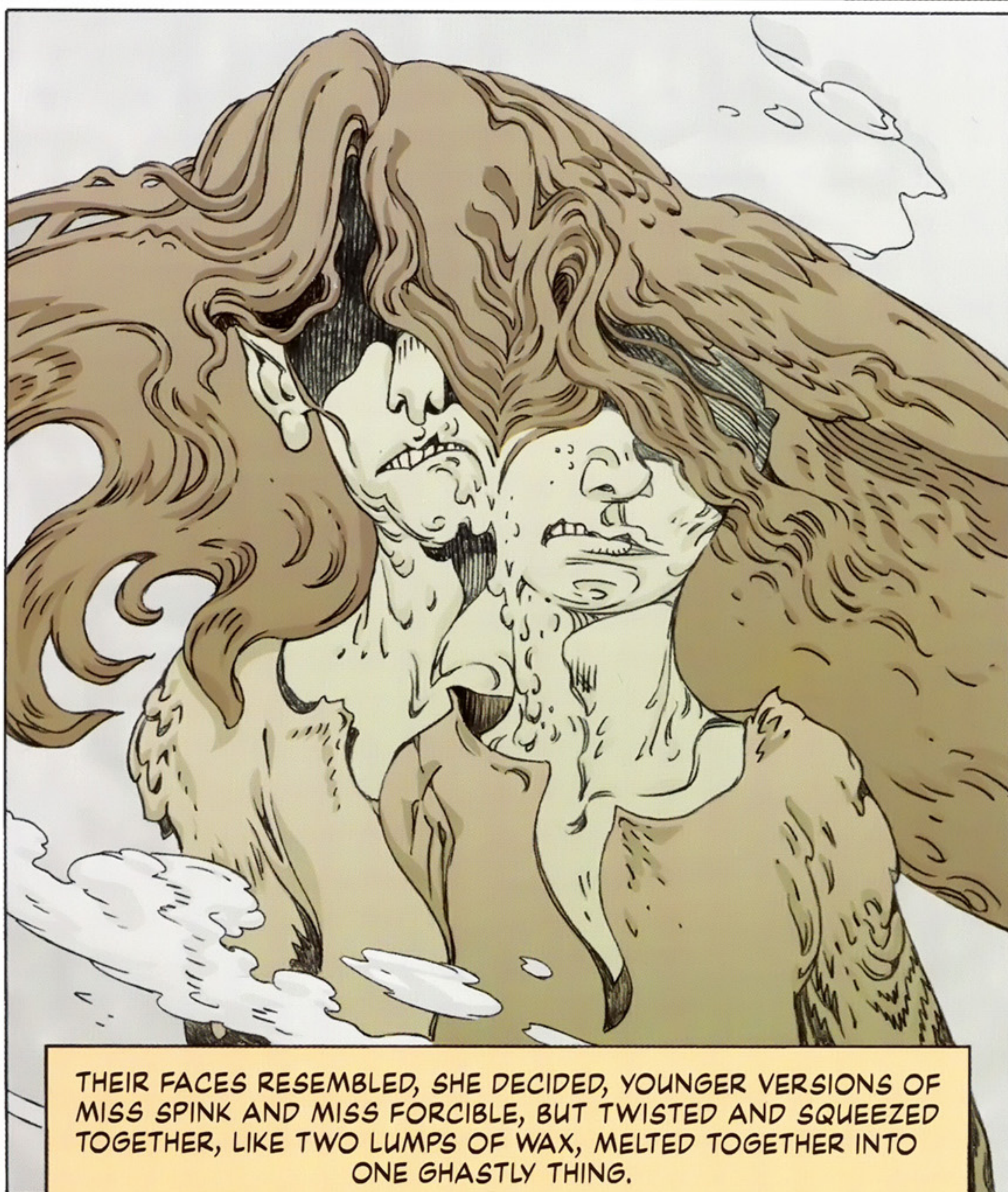


AT FIRST, NOTHING HAPPENED. THEN, ONE BY ONE THE FINGERS LOOSENEED THEIR GRIP...



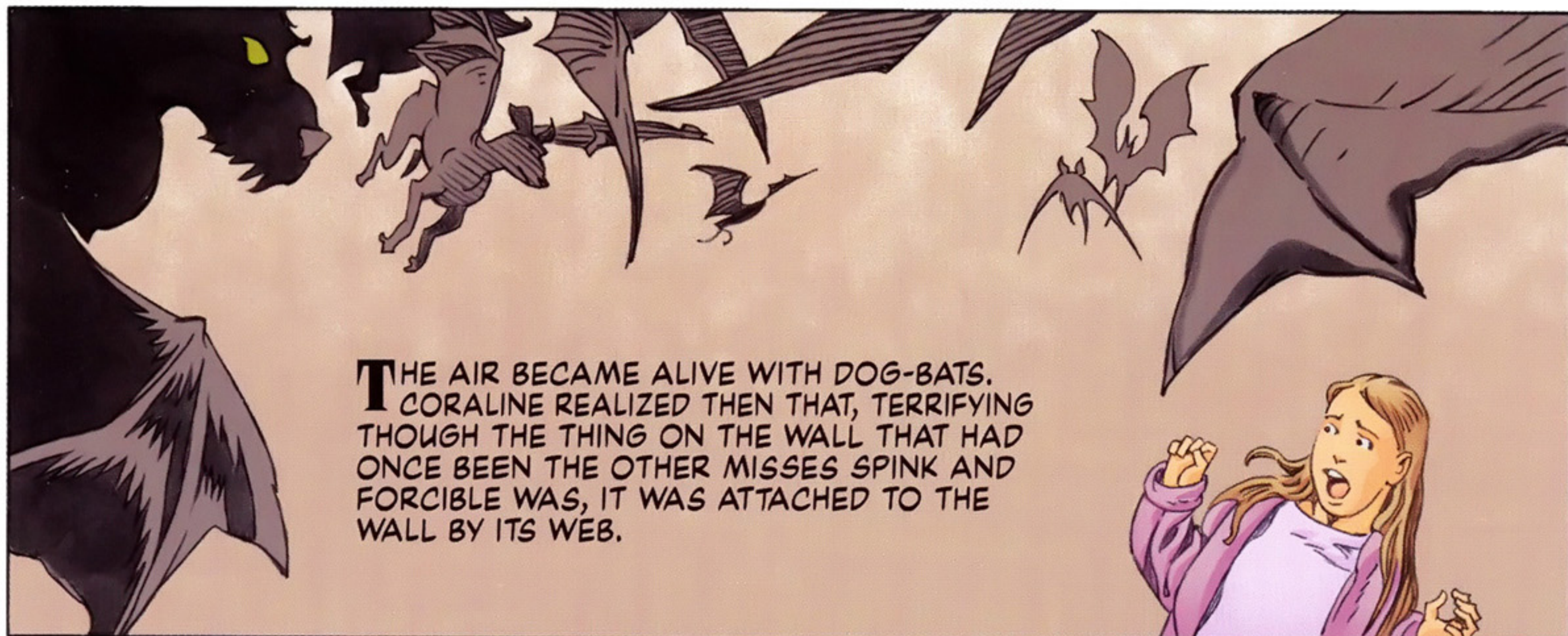
...AND THE MARBLE SLIPPED INTO HER HAND.

SHE PULLED HER ARM BACK THROUGH THE STICKY WEBBING, RELIEVED THAT THE THING'S EYES HAD NOT OPENED.

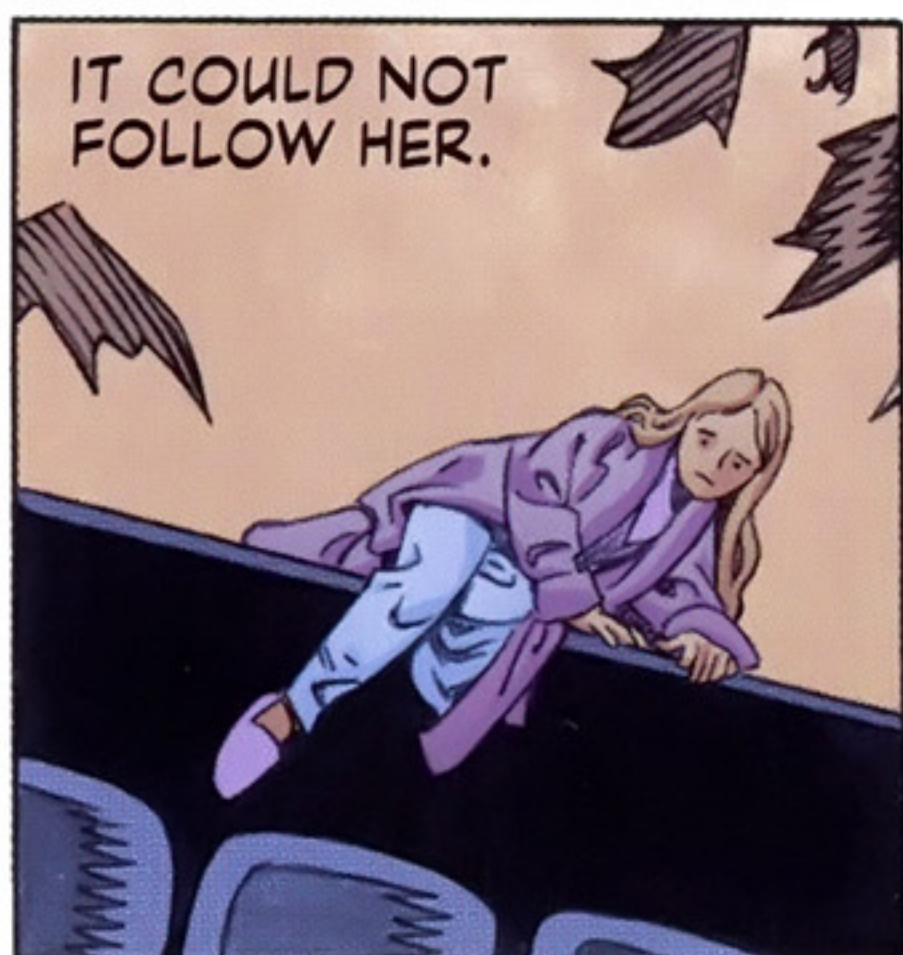


THEIR FACES RESEMBLED, SHE DECIDED, YOUNGER VERSIONS OF MISS SPINK AND MISS FORCIBLE, BUT TWISTED AND SQUEEZED TOGETHER, LIKE TWO LUMPS OF WAX, MELTED TOGETHER INTO ONE GHASTLY THING.





THE AIR BECAME ALIVE WITH DOG-BATS. CORALINE REALIZED THEN THAT, TERRIFYING THOUGH THE THING ON THE WALL THAT HAD ONCE BEEN THE OTHER MISSES SPINK AND FORCIBLE WAS, IT WAS ATTACHED TO THE WALL BY ITS WEB.



IT COULD NOT FOLLOW HER.



FLEE, MISS! FLEE NOW! YOU HAVE TWO OF US!

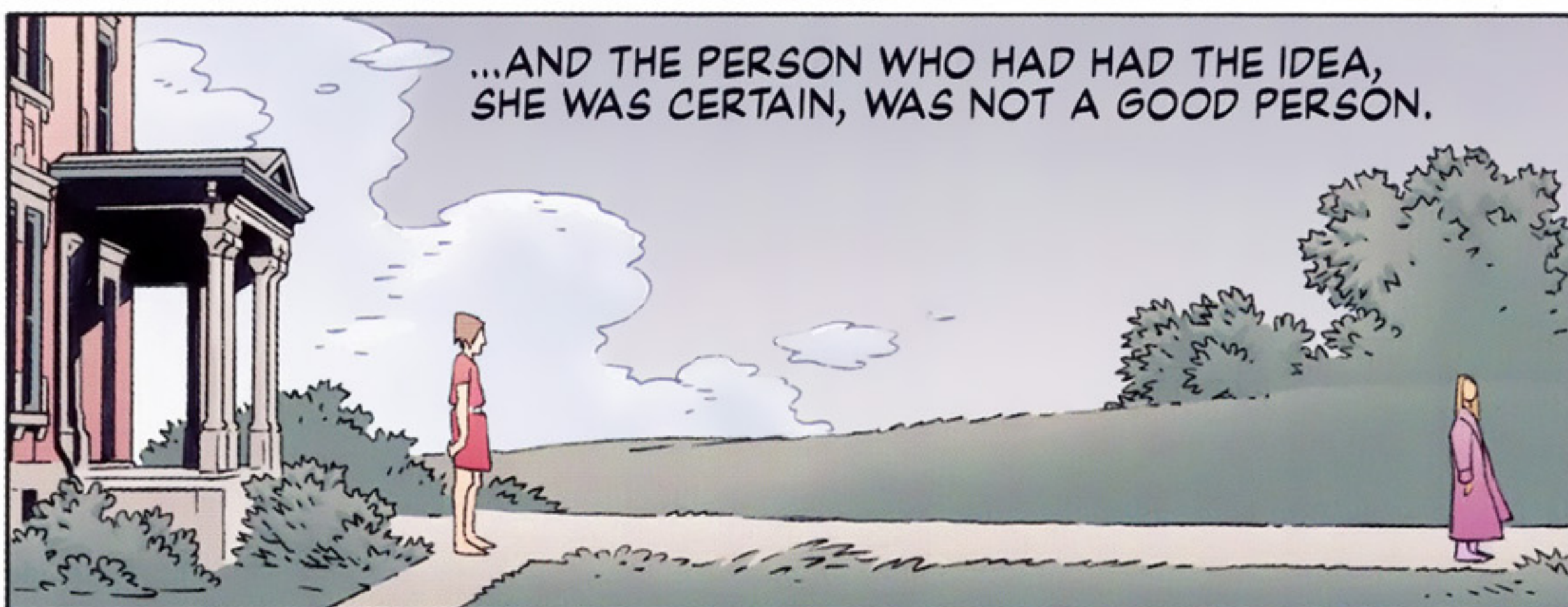
FLEE THIS PLACE WHILE YOUR BLOOD STILL FLOWS!



CORALINE DROPPED THE MARBLE IN HER POCKET AND RAN FOR THE DOOR.



OUTSIDE, THE WORLD HAD BECOME A FORMLESS, SWIRLING MIST WITH NO SHAPES OR SHADOWS BEHIND IT, WHILE THE HOUSE ITSELF SEEMED TO BE CROUCHING AND STARING DOWN AT HER, AS IF IT WERE NOT REALLY A HOUSE BUT ONLY THE **IDEA** OF A HOUSE...



...AND THE PERSON WHO HAD HAD THE IDEA, SHE WAS CERTAIN, WAS NOT A GOOD PERSON.



I GOT TWO.

ONE SOUL STILL TO GO.



WELL, I JUST THOUGHT YOU'D WANT TO KNOW



THANK YOU, CORALINE. YOU KNOW THAT I LOVE YOU.

DESPITE HERSELF, CORALINE NODDED.
IT WAS TRUE.

AS A MISER
LOVES MONEY,
OR A DRAGON
LOVES ITS
GOLD.

I DON'T
WANT YOUR
LOVE. I DON'T
WANT ANY-
THING FROM
YOU.

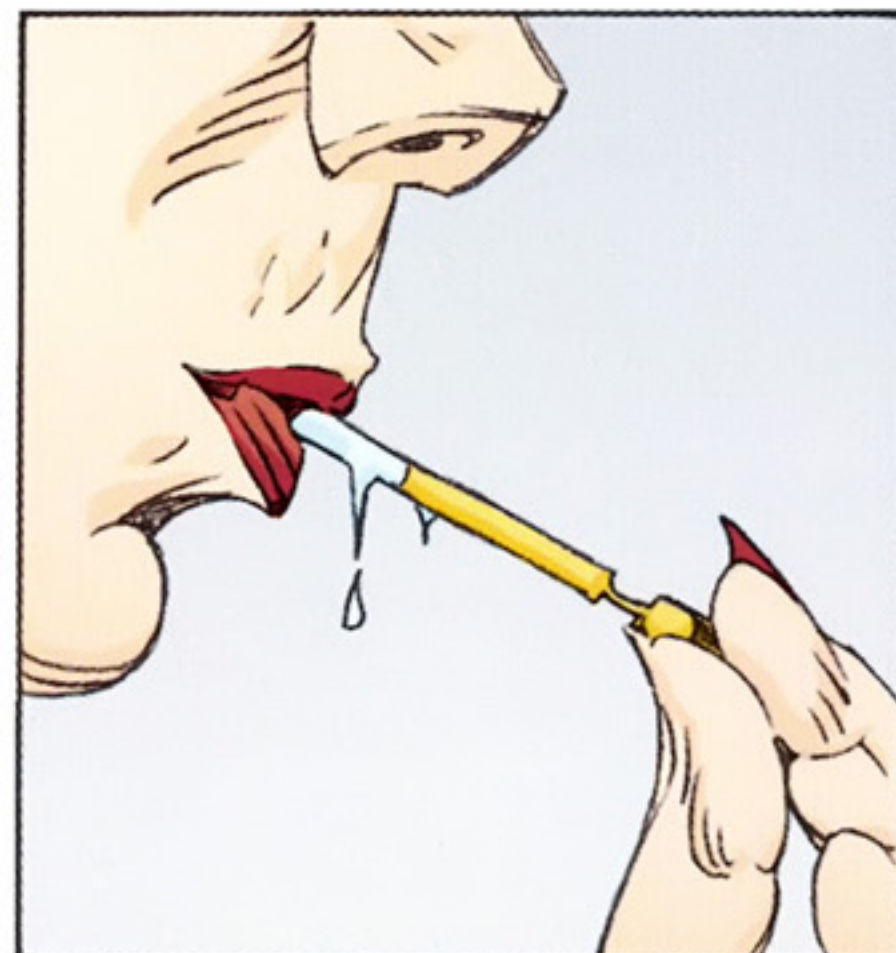
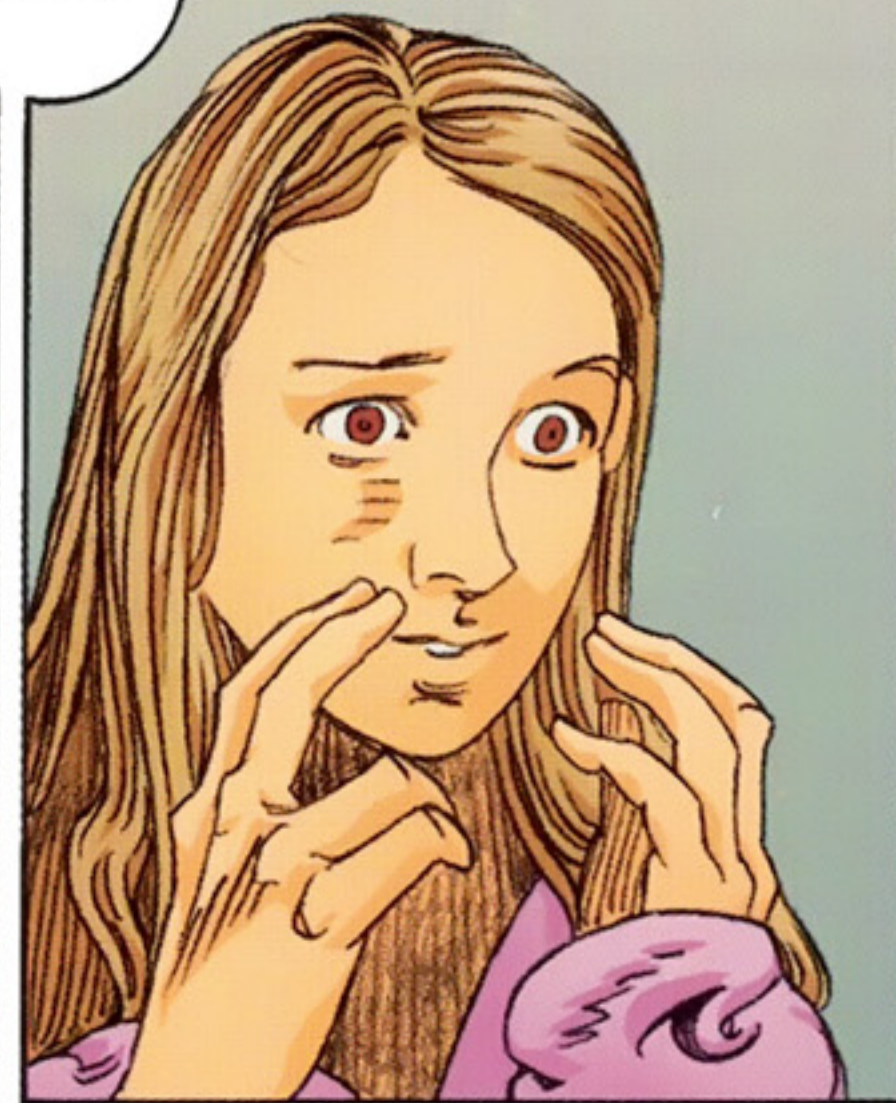
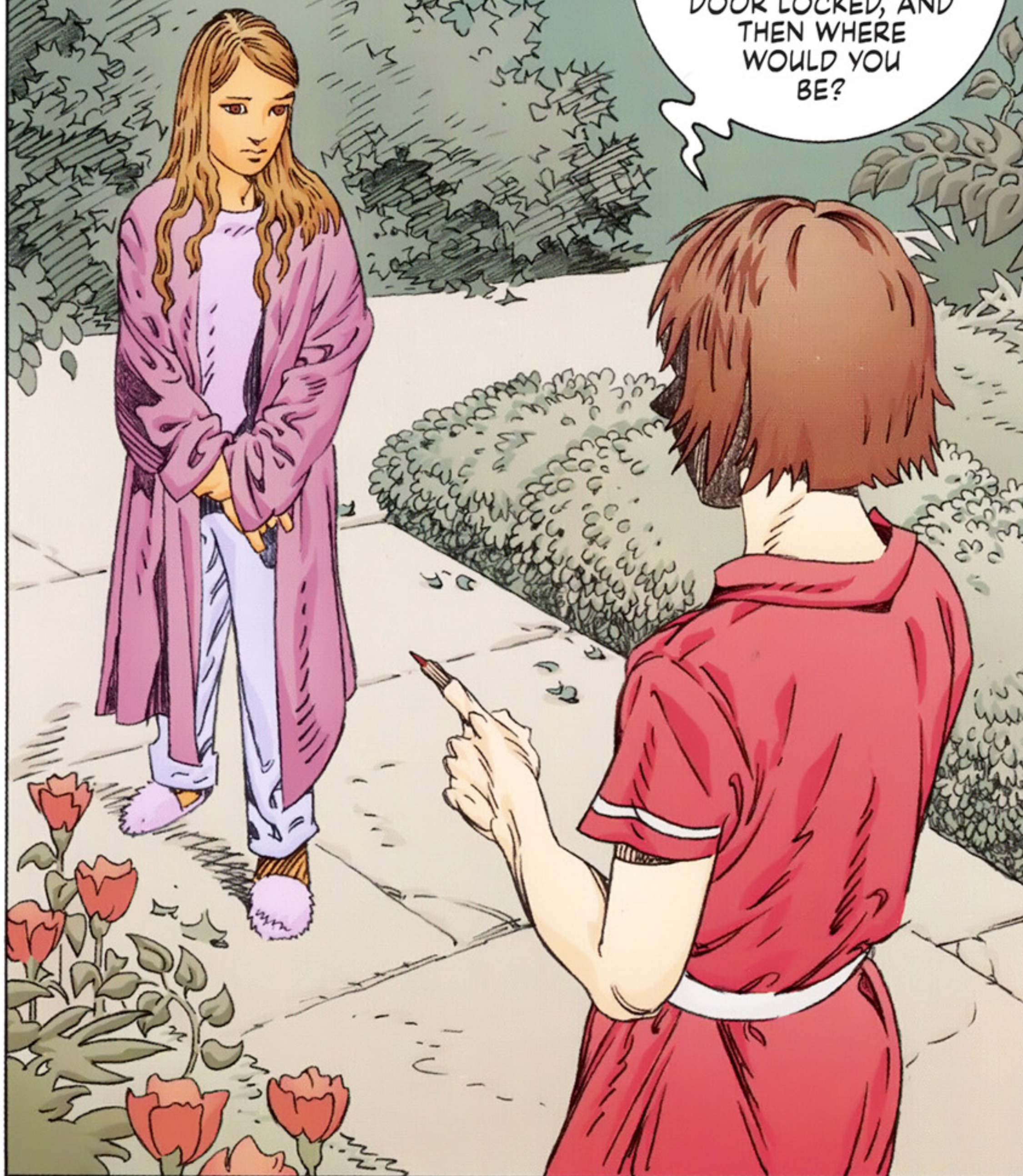
NOT
EVEN A
LITTLE
HINT?

I'M
DOING
FINE ON
MY OWN.

YES.
BUT IF YOU
WANTED TO GET
INTO THE FLAT IN
THE FRONT—THE EMPTY
ONE—TO LOOK AROUND,
YOU WOULD FIND THE
DOOR LOCKED, AND
THEN WHERE
WOULD YOU
BE?

OH...

...IS
THERE A
KEY?

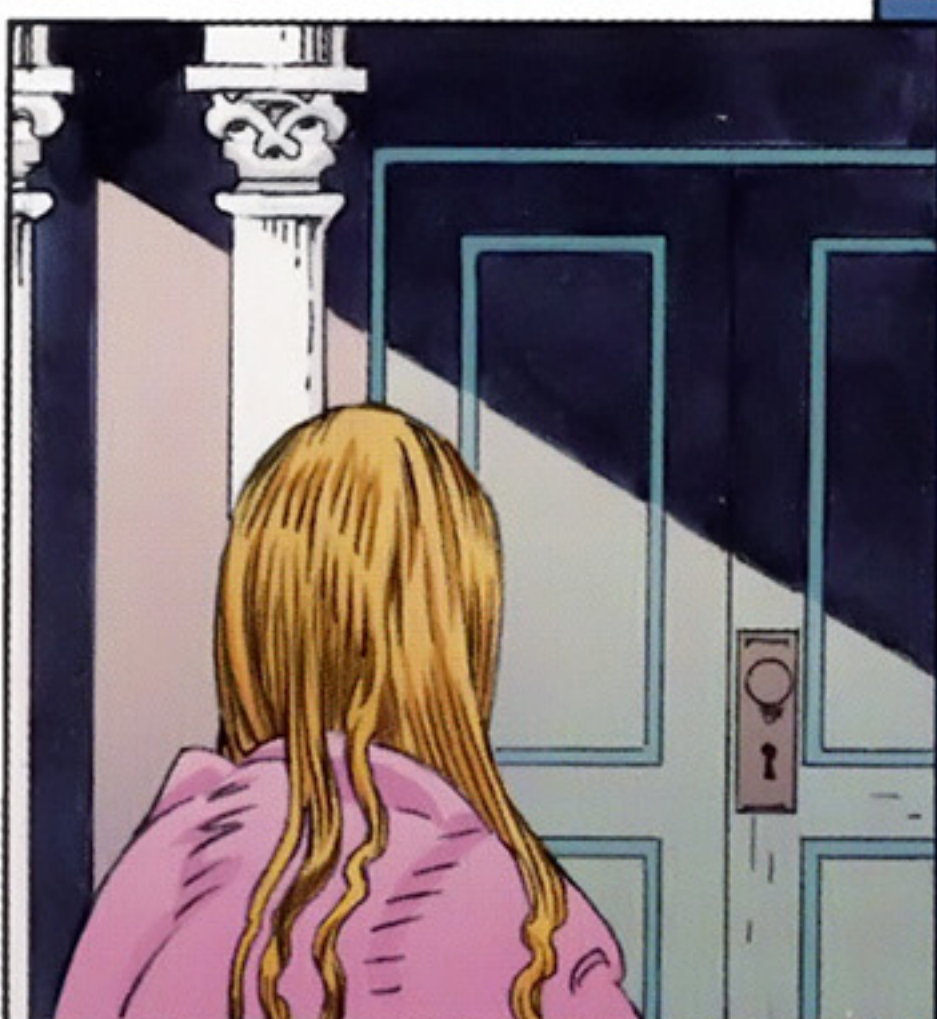


EEEEW.



A CHILL WIND BLEW ABOUT THEM, AND CORALINE SHIVERED AND LOOKED AWAY.

WHEN SHE LOOKED BACK SHE WAS ALONE.

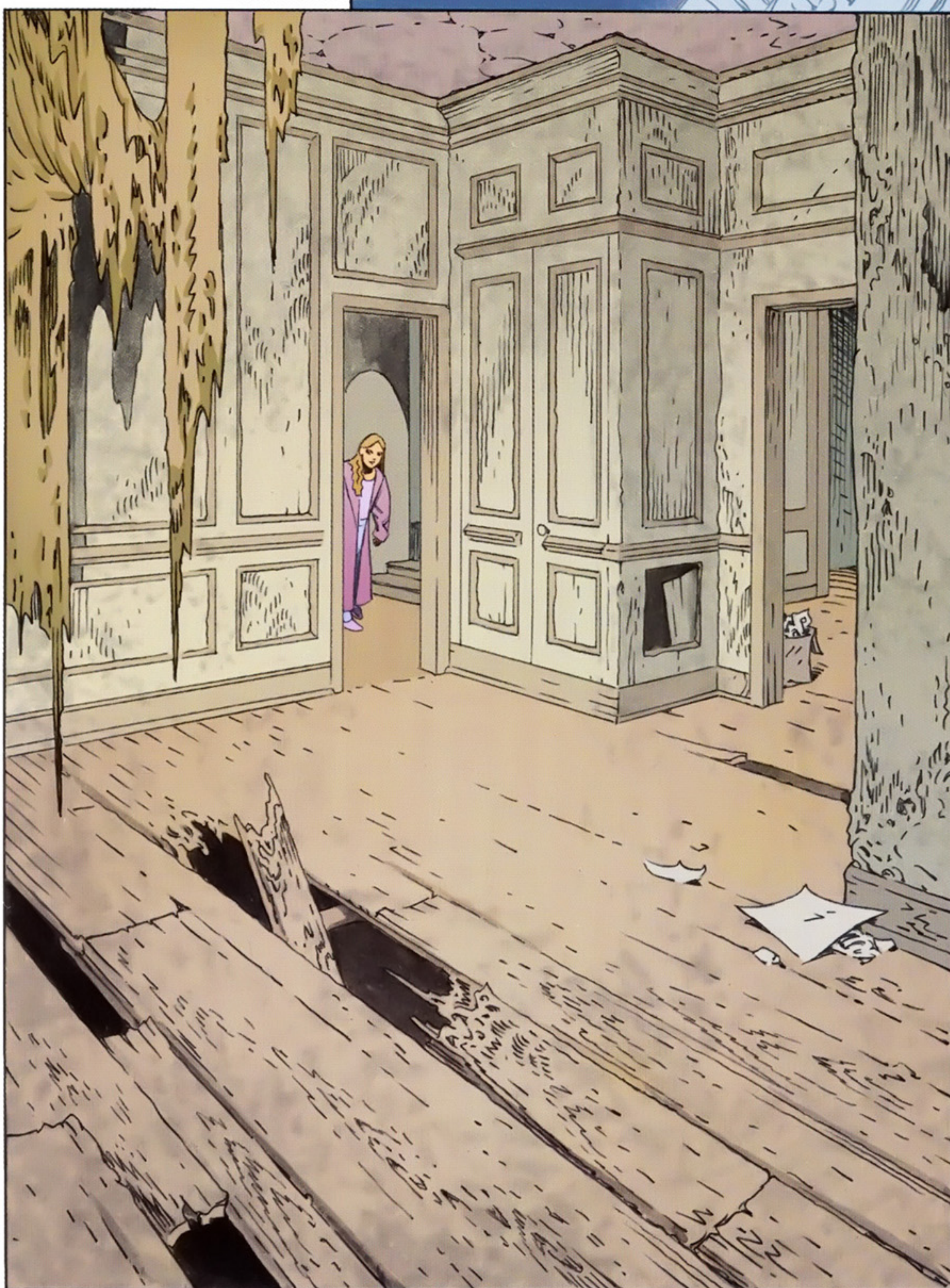


SHE DOES NOT MEAN YOU WELL. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT SHE WOULD HELP YOU. IT MUST BE A TRICK.



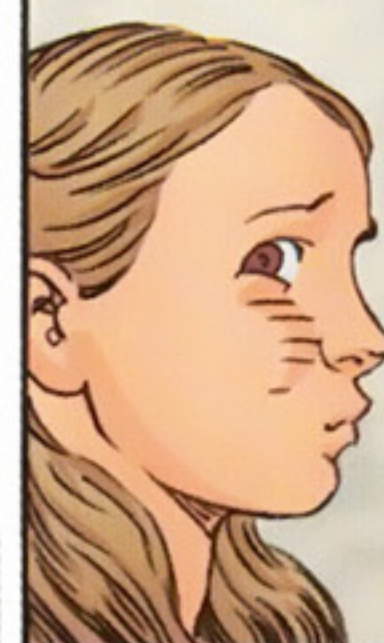
YES, YOU'RE RIGHT, I EXPECT.

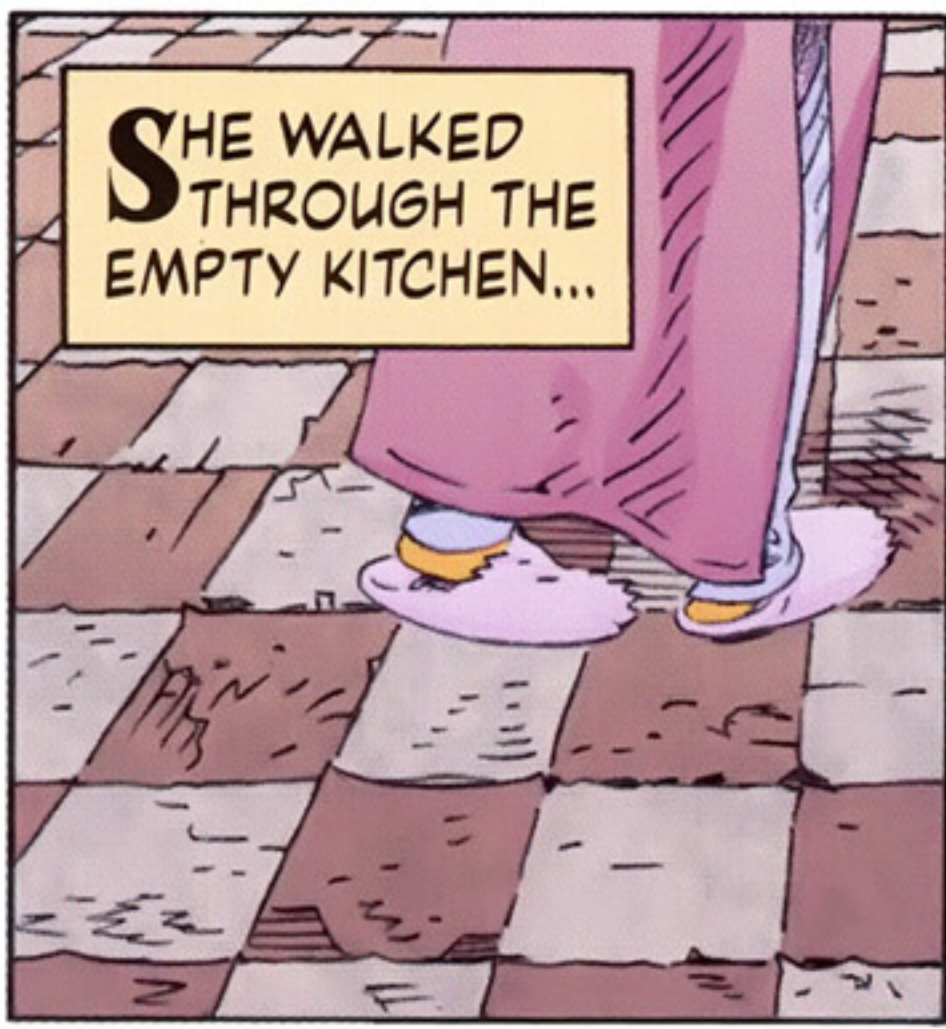
CLICK



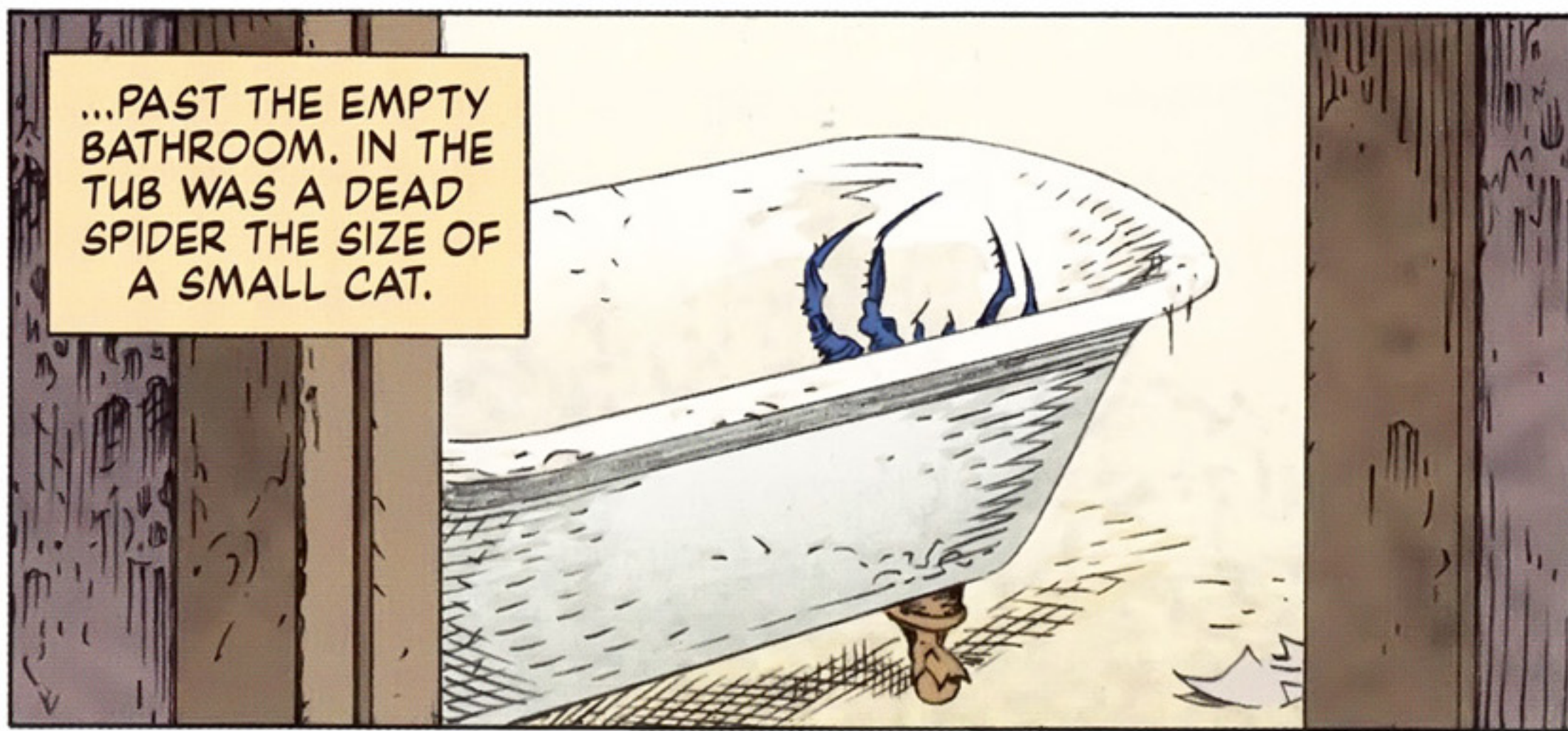
THE FLAT WAS SO SILENT THAT CORALINE IMAGINED SHE COULD HEAR THE MOTES OF DUST DRIFTING THROUGH THE AIR...

...SO SHE BEGAN TO WHISTLE.

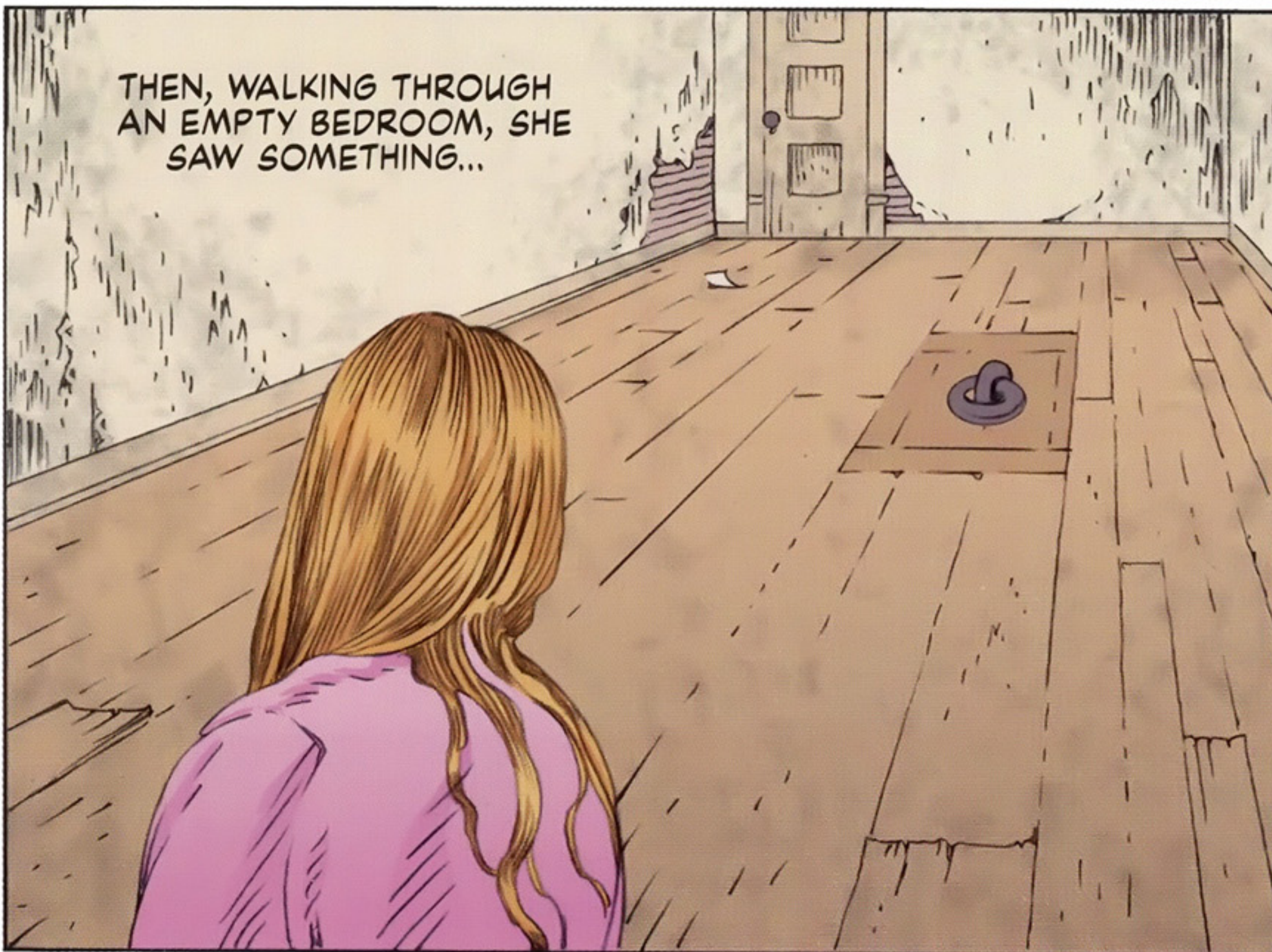




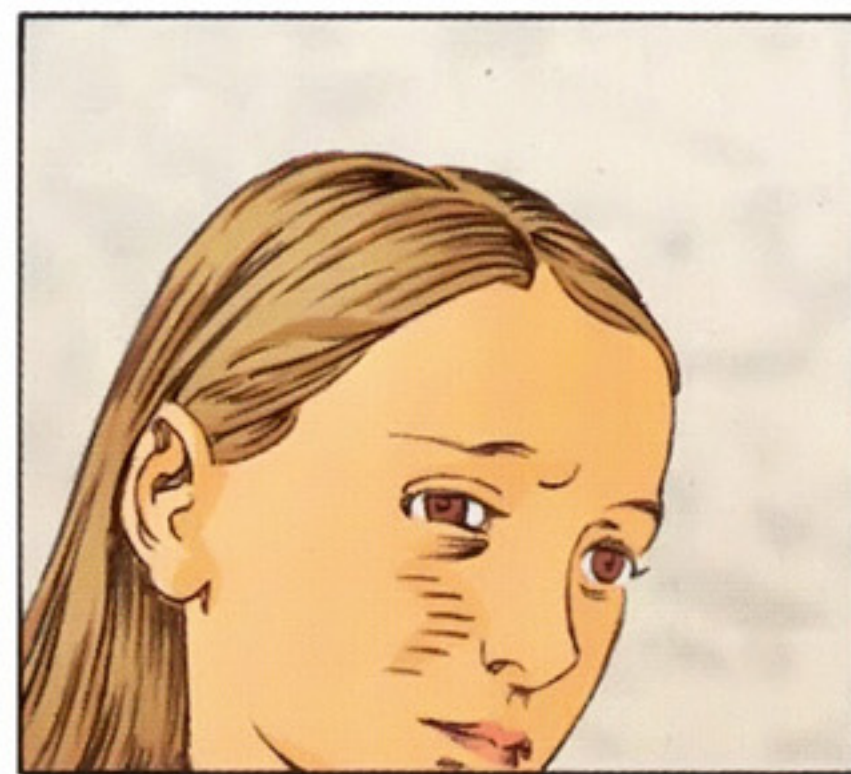
SHE WALKED THROUGH THE EMPTY KITCHEN...



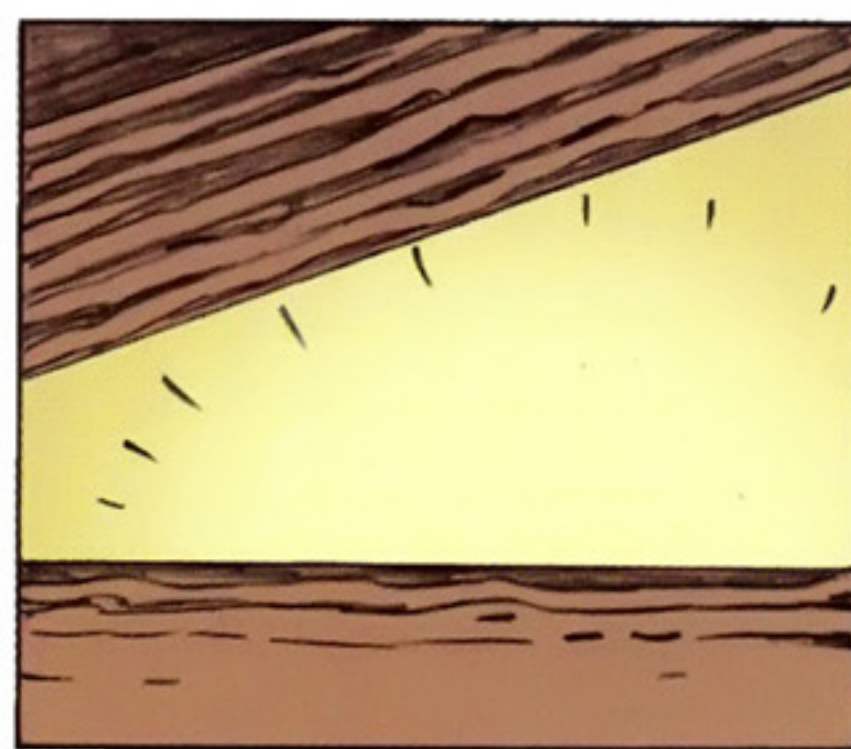
...PAST THE EMPTY BATHROOM. IN THE TUB WAS A DEAD SPIDER THE SIZE OF A SMALL CAT.



THEN, WALKING THROUGH AN EMPTY BEDROOM, SHE SAW SOMETHING...



A TRAP-DOOR?!

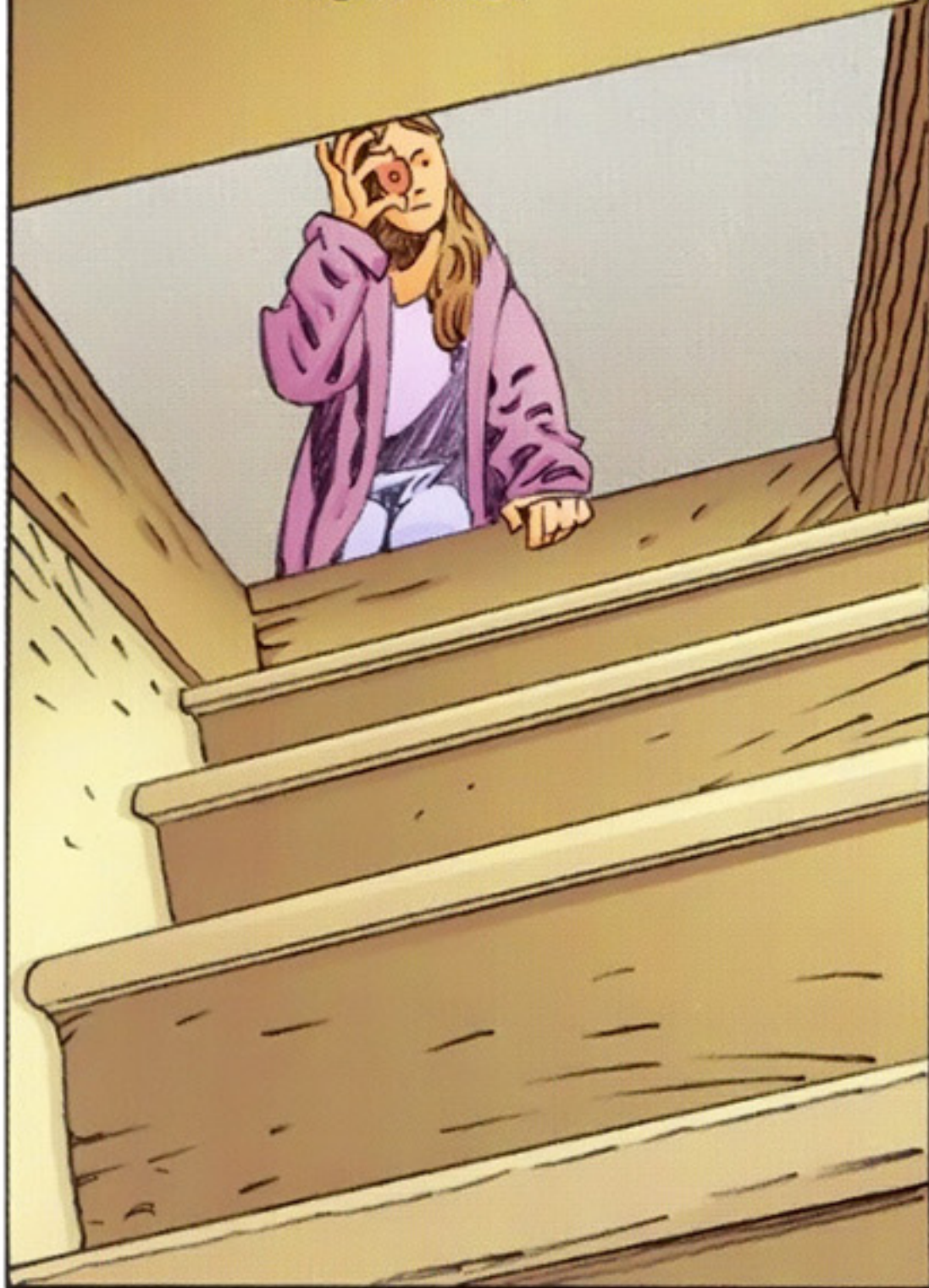


UP THROUGH THE HOLE CAME THE SMELL OF DAMP CLAY, AND SOMETHING ELSE.

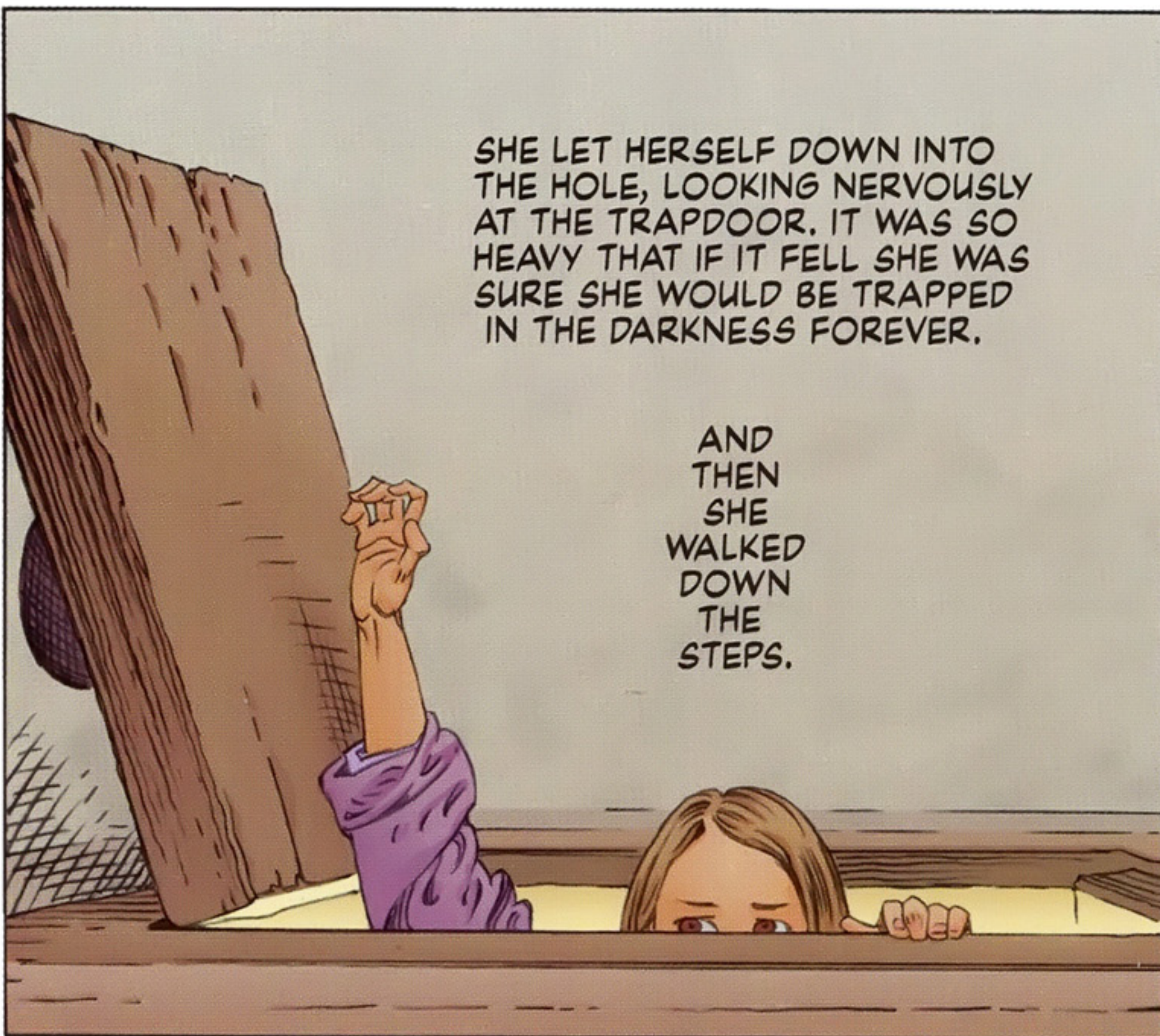


SOUR VINEGAR.

CORALINE LOOKED AT THE CELLAR THROUGH THE STONE WITH THE HOLE IN IT BUT SAW NOTHING.



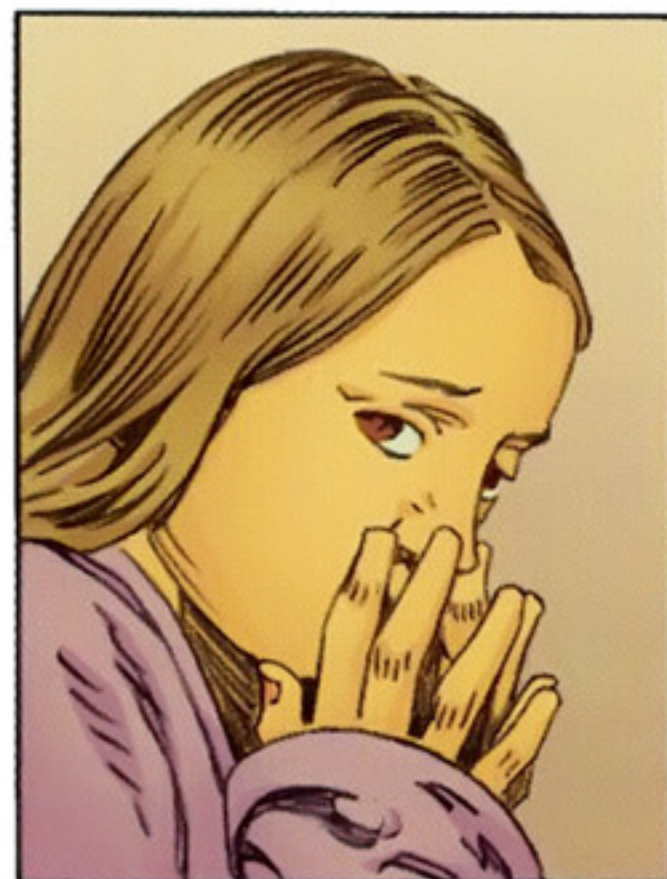
SHE LET HERSELF DOWN INTO THE HOLE, LOOKING NERVOUSLY AT THE TRAPDOOR. IT WAS SO HEAVY THAT IF IT FELL SHE WAS SURE SHE WOULD BE TRAPPED IN THE DARKNESS FOREVER.



AND THEN SHE WALKED DOWN THE STEPS.

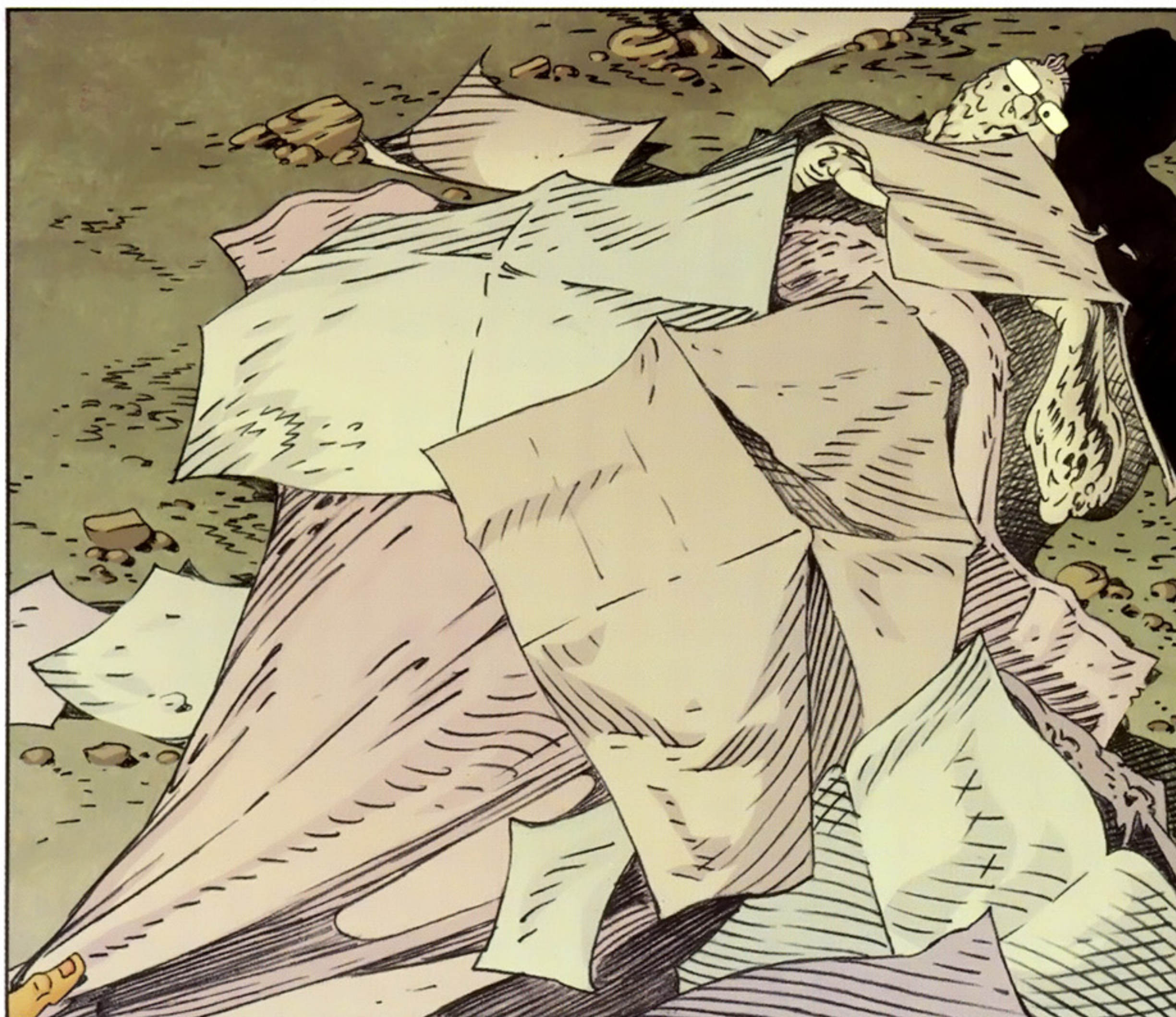
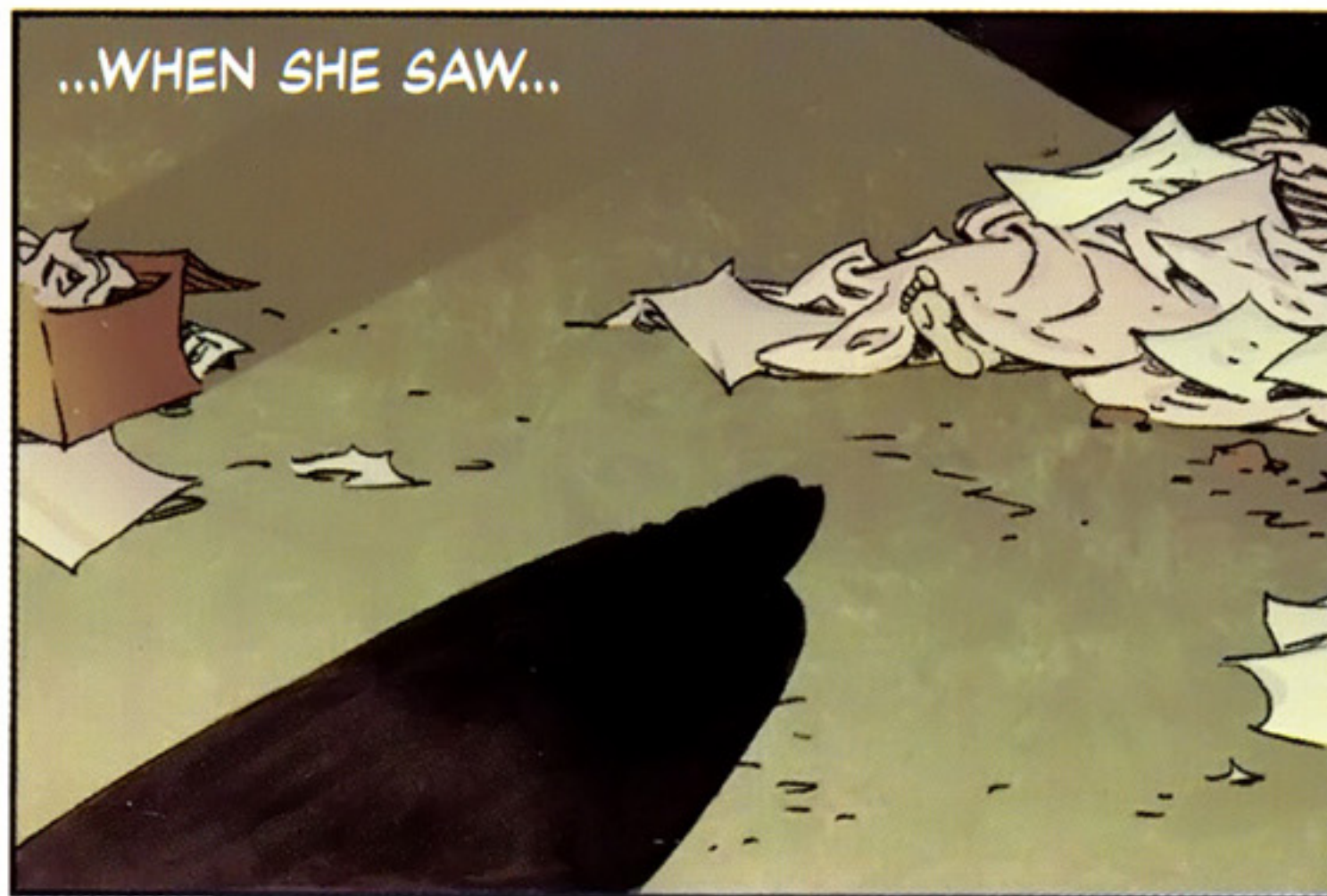


THE BAD SMELL WAS WORSE NOW.



SHE WAS READY TO TURN
AND LEAVE...

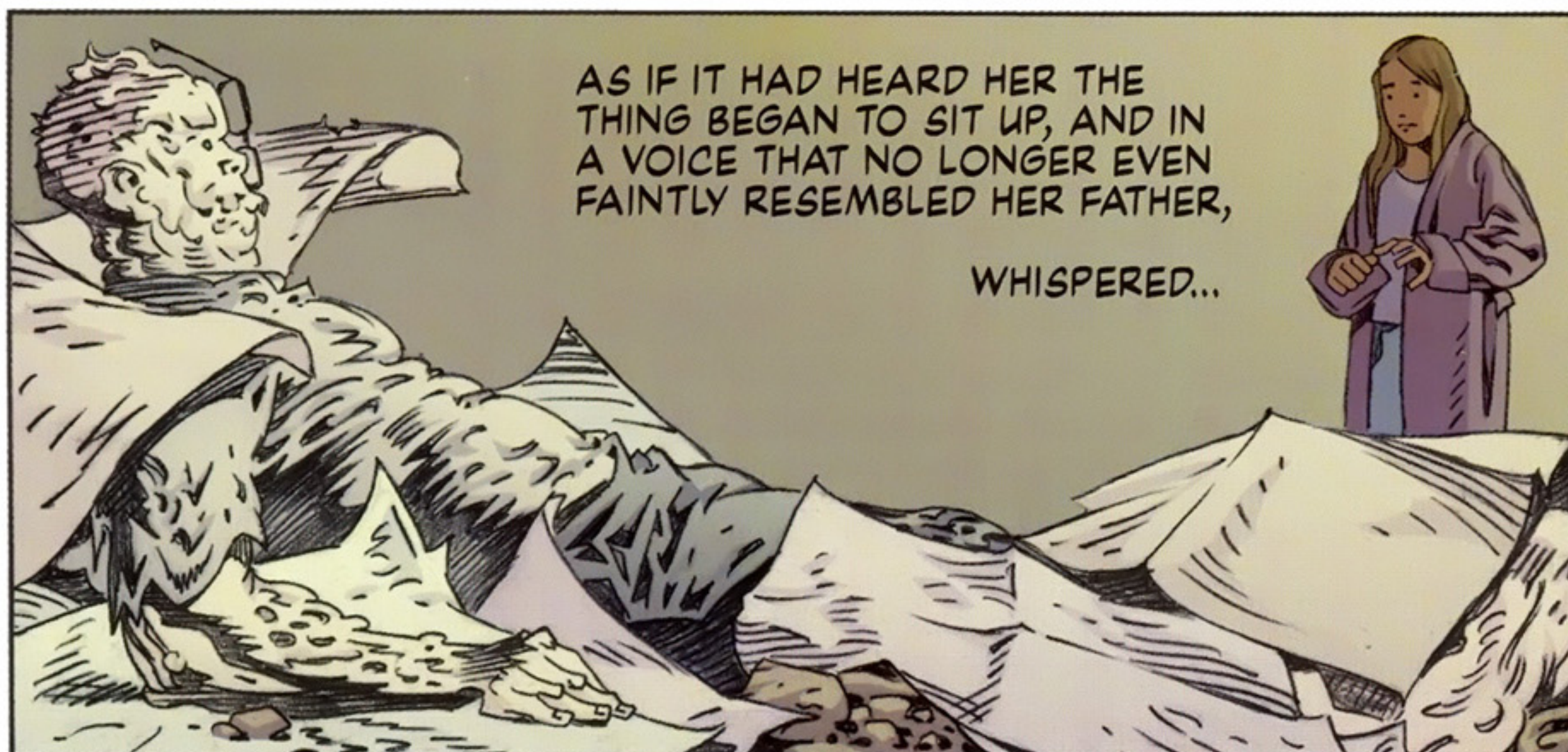
...WHEN SHE SAW...



!GGK.



AS IF IT HAD HEARD HER THE
THING BEGAN TO SIT UP, AND IN
A VOICE THAT NO LONGER EVEN
FAINTLY RESEMBLED HER FATHER,
WHISPERED...



CORALINE THOUGHT THE THING LOOKED MONSTROUS BUT ALSO...

MISERABLE.

WELL...

...AT LEAST YOU DIDN'T JUMP OUT AT ME.

I'M LOOKING FOR MY PARENTS, OR A STOLEN SOUL FROM ONE OF THE OTHER CHILDREN. ARE THEY DOWN HERE?

THERE IS NOTHING DOWN HERE. NOTHING BUT DUST AND DAMP AND FORGETTING.

POOR THING. I BET SHE MADE YOU COME DOWN HERE AS A PUNISHMENT FOR TELLING ME TOO MUCH.

THE THING HESITATED, THEN IT NODDED.

I'M SO SORRY.

SHE'S NOT BEST PLEASED. NOT PLEASED AT ALL. YOU'VE PUT HER **QUITE** OUT OF SORTS.

AND WHEN SHE GETS OUT OF SORTS SHE TAKES IT OUT ON EVERYBODY ELSE. IT'S HER WAY.

POOR THING. YOU'RE JUST A THING SHE MADE AND THREW AWAY.

THE THING NODDED,
AND AS IT DID...



...THE LEFT
BUTTON EYE
FELL OFF.



THE THING LOOKED AROUND VACANTLY WITH ITS ONE
EYE AS IF IT HAD LOST HER.

RUN, CHILD. SHE WANTS
ME TO KEEP YOU HERE
FOREVER, SO THAT YOU CAN
NEVER FINISH THE GAME
AND SHE WILL
WIN.

SHE IS
PUSHING ME
SO HARD TO HURT
YOU. I CANNOT
FIGHT HER.



YOU
CAN!
BE
BRAVE!



ALAS...



...I
CAN-
NOT.

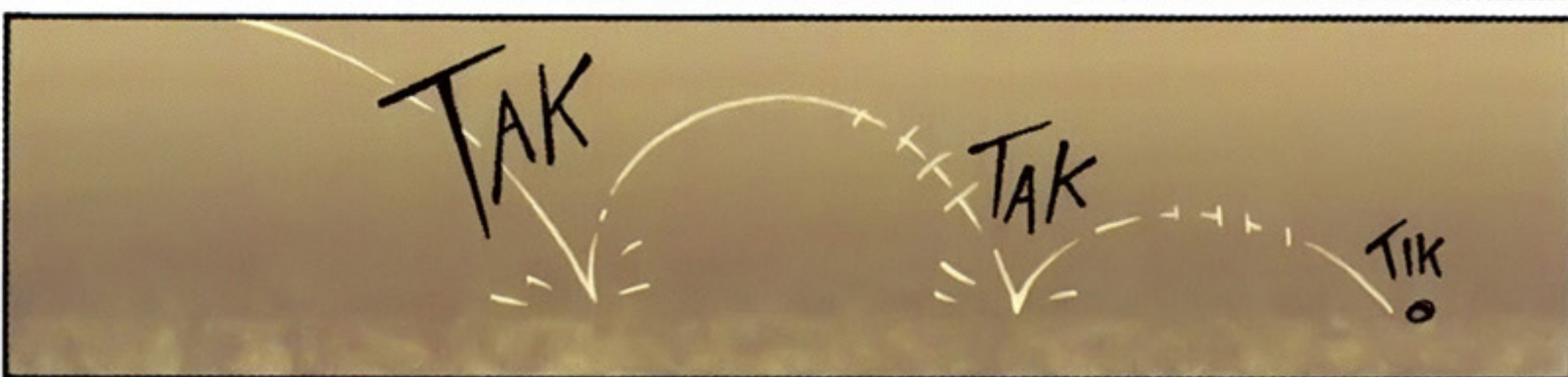


AND IT LUNGED
TOWARD HER, ITS
TOOTHLESS MOUTH
WIDE OPEN.

CORALINE HAD A SINGLE HEARTBEAT IN WHICH TO REACT. SHE COULD ONLY THINK OF TWO THINGS TO DO. EITHER SHE COULD SCREAM AND TRY TO RUN AWAY, AND BE CHASED AROUND A BADLY LIT CELLAR BY THE HUGE GRUB THING, BE CHASED UNTIL IT CAUGHT HER. OR SHE COULD DO SOMETHING ELSE.



SO SHE DID SOMETHING ELSE.



MY EYYYEE!



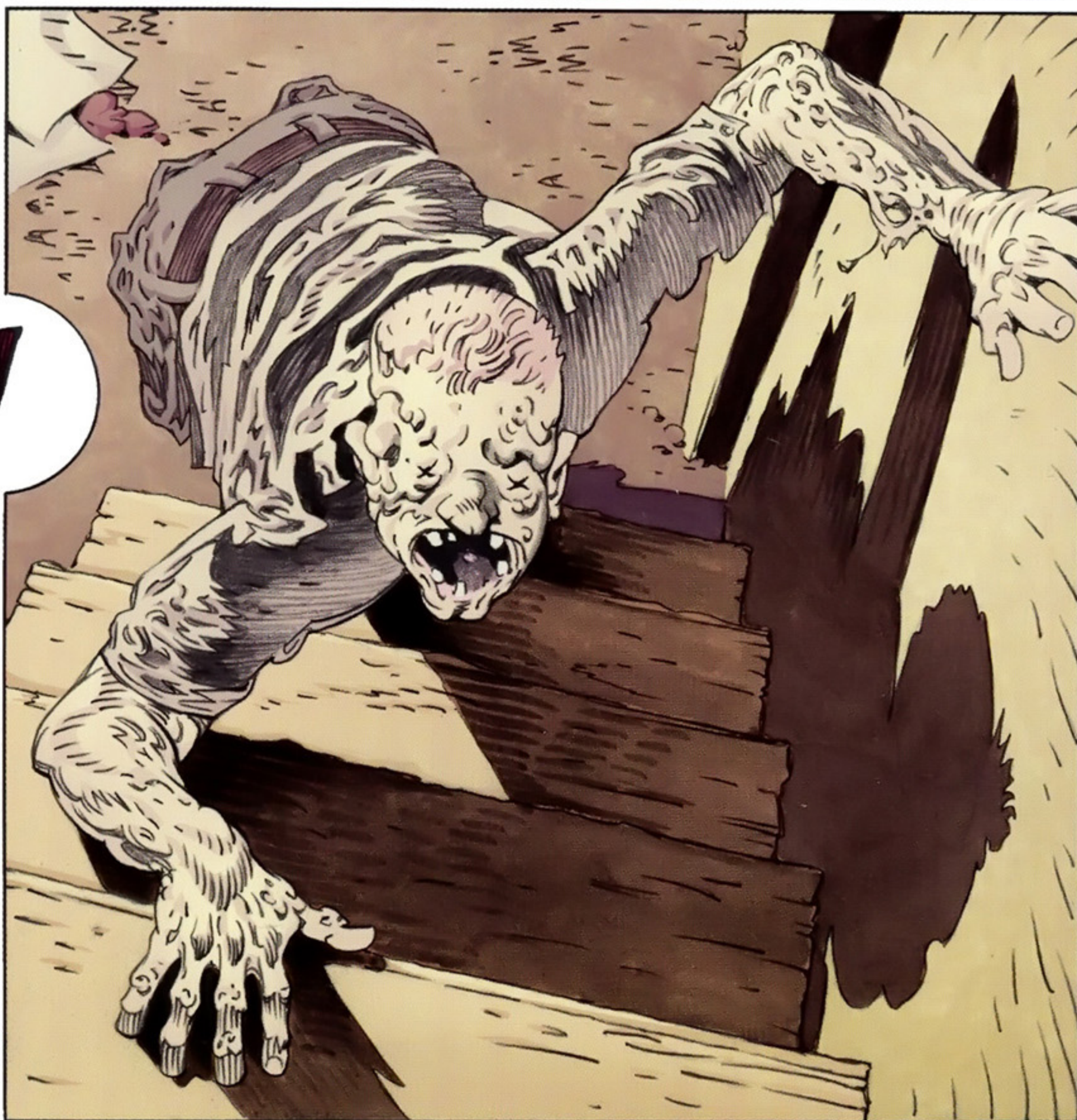
ALL IN A RUSH, THE THING SWEEPED TOWARD THE PLACE WHERE CORALINE HAD BEEN STANDING.

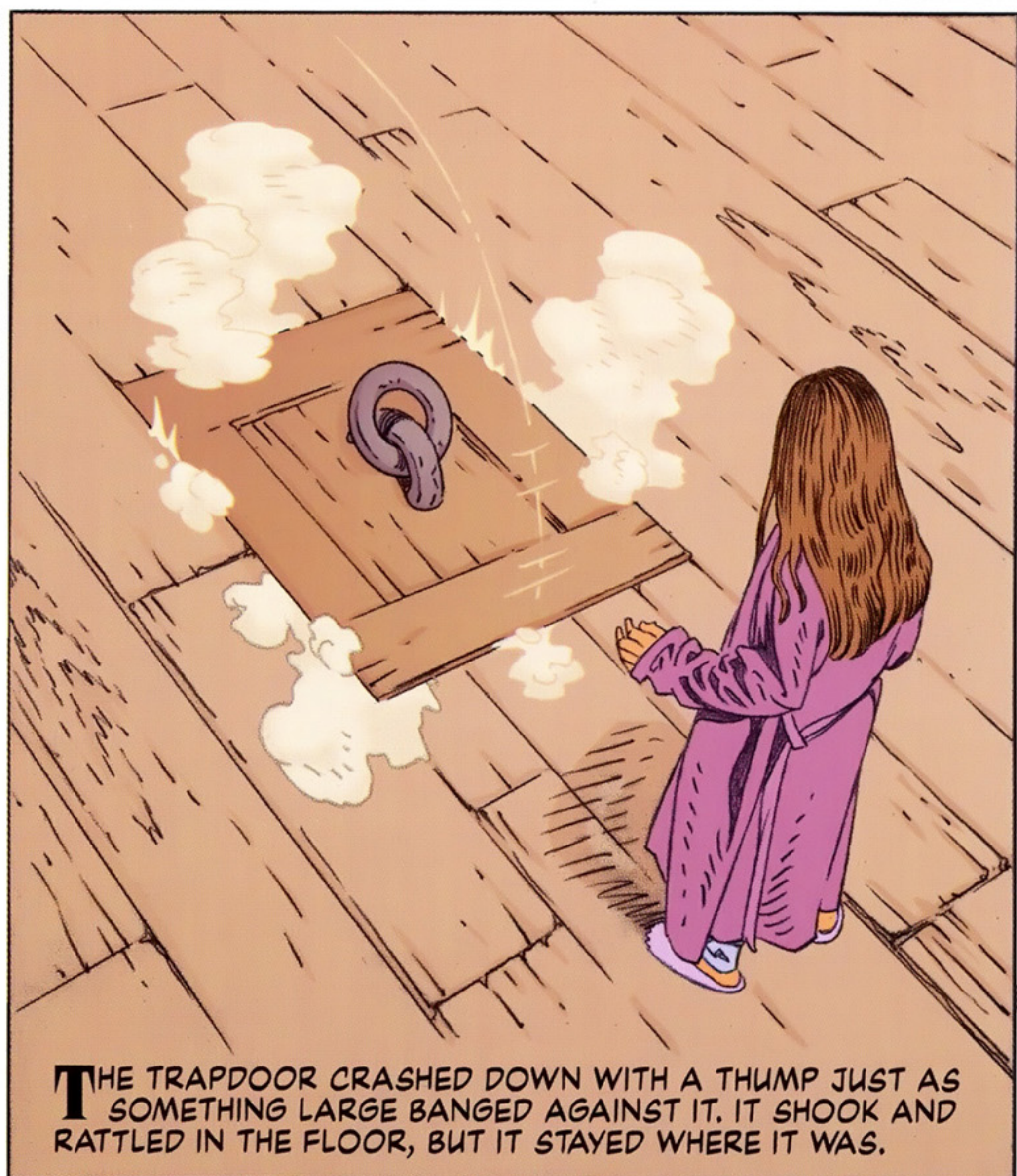
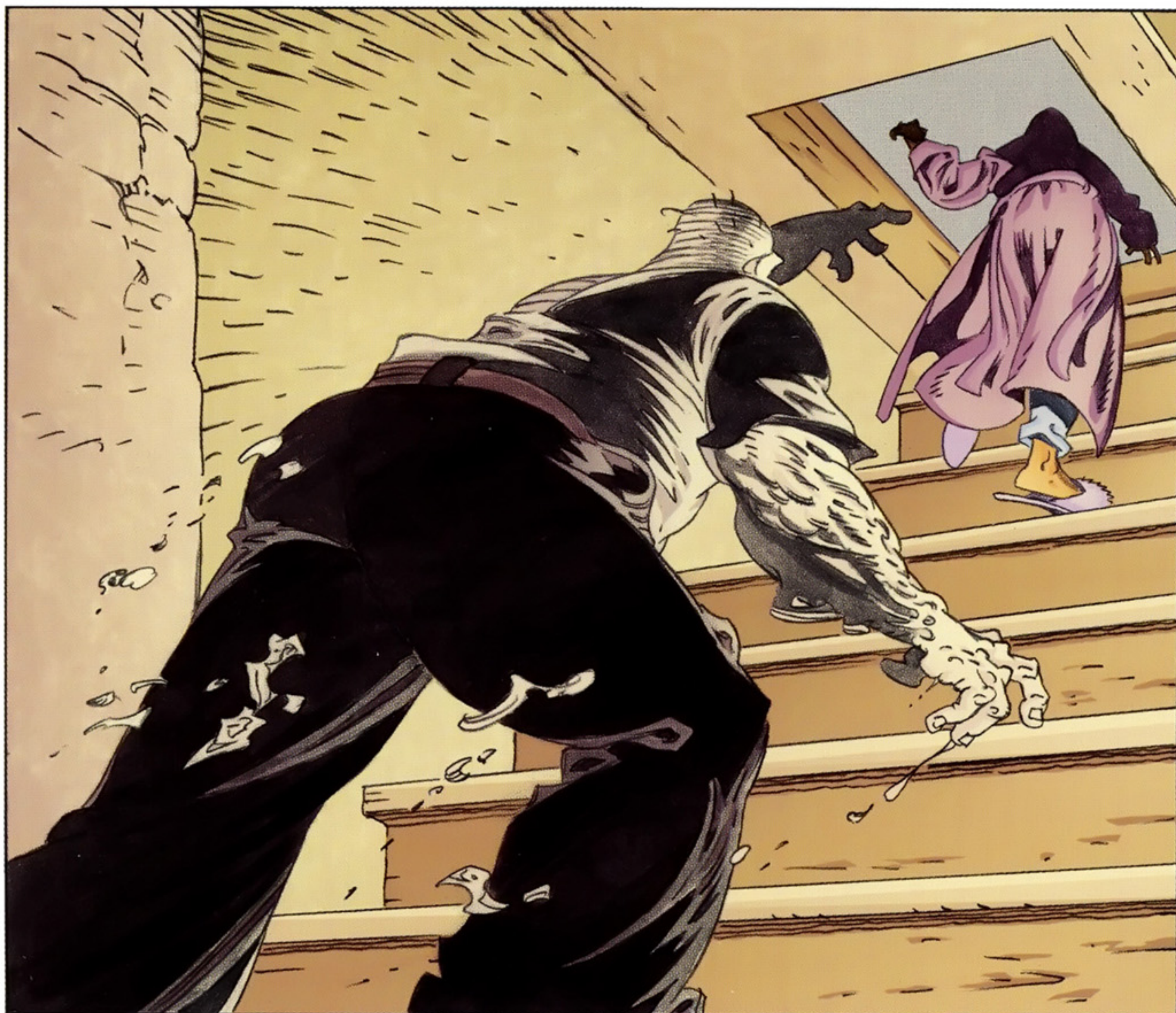
BUT CORALINE WAS ALREADY TIPTOEING AS QUIETLY AS SHE COULD UP THE STEPS.



QUIET. QUIET.

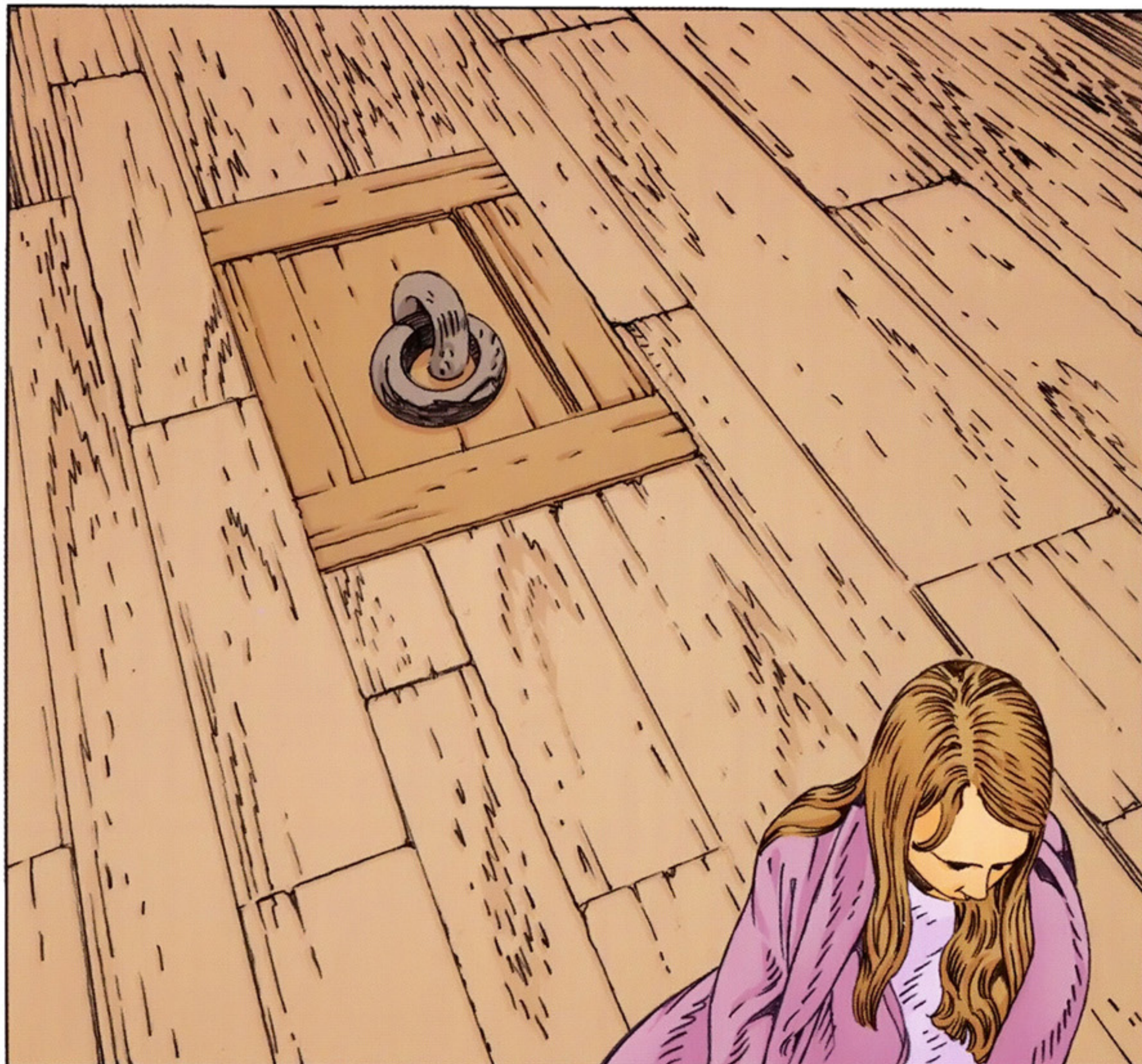
QUIET.



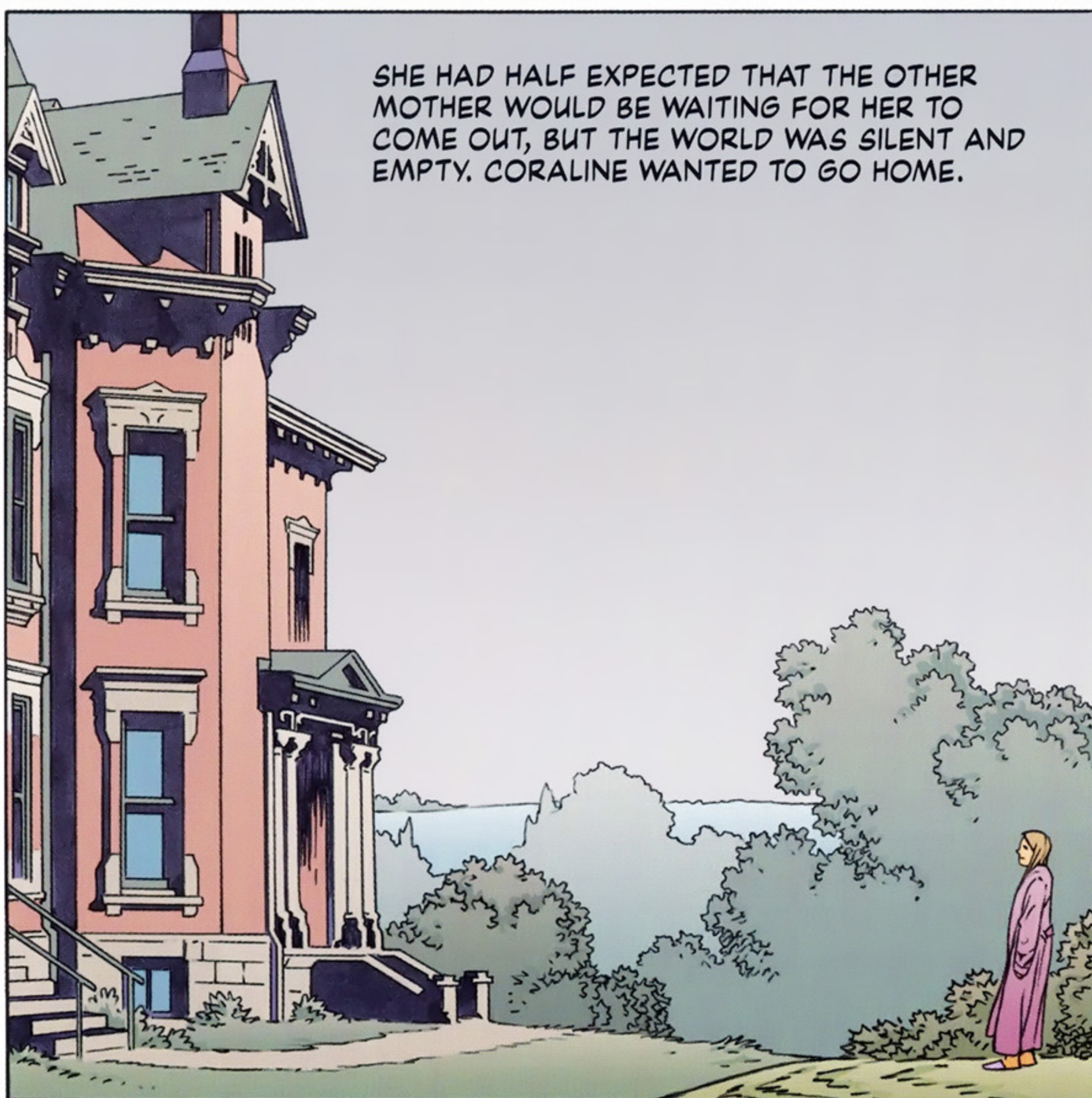


THE TRAPDOOR CRASHED DOWN WITH A THUMP JUST AS SOMETHING LARGE BANGED AGAINST IT. IT SHOOK AND RATTLED IN THE FLOOR, BUT IT STAYED WHERE IT WAS.

CORALINE TOOK A DEEP BREATH AND WALKED OUT OF THE FLAT AS FAST AS SHE COULD, WITHOUT ACTUALLY RUNNING.



SHE HAD HALF EXPECTED THAT THE OTHER MOTHER WOULD BE WAITING FOR HER TO COME OUT, BUT THE WORLD WAS SILENT AND EMPTY. CORALINE WANTED TO GO HOME.



SHE TOLD HERSELF...

I'M
BRAVE.

AND SHE ALMOST
BELIEVED IT.



IT WAS TIME TO VISIT THE TOPMOST FLAT, WHERE, IN HER WORLD, THE CRAZY OLD MAN UPSTAIRS LIVED.

SHE HAD GONE UP THERE ONCE WITH HER REAL MOTHER COLLECTING FOR CHARITY.

THEY HAD STOOD IN THE DOORWAY WAITING FOR THE CRAZY OLD MAN. THE FLAT HAD SMELLED OF STRANGE FOODS AND PIPE TOBACCO AND ODD, SHARP CHEESY-SMELLING THINGS CORALINE COULD NOT NAME.

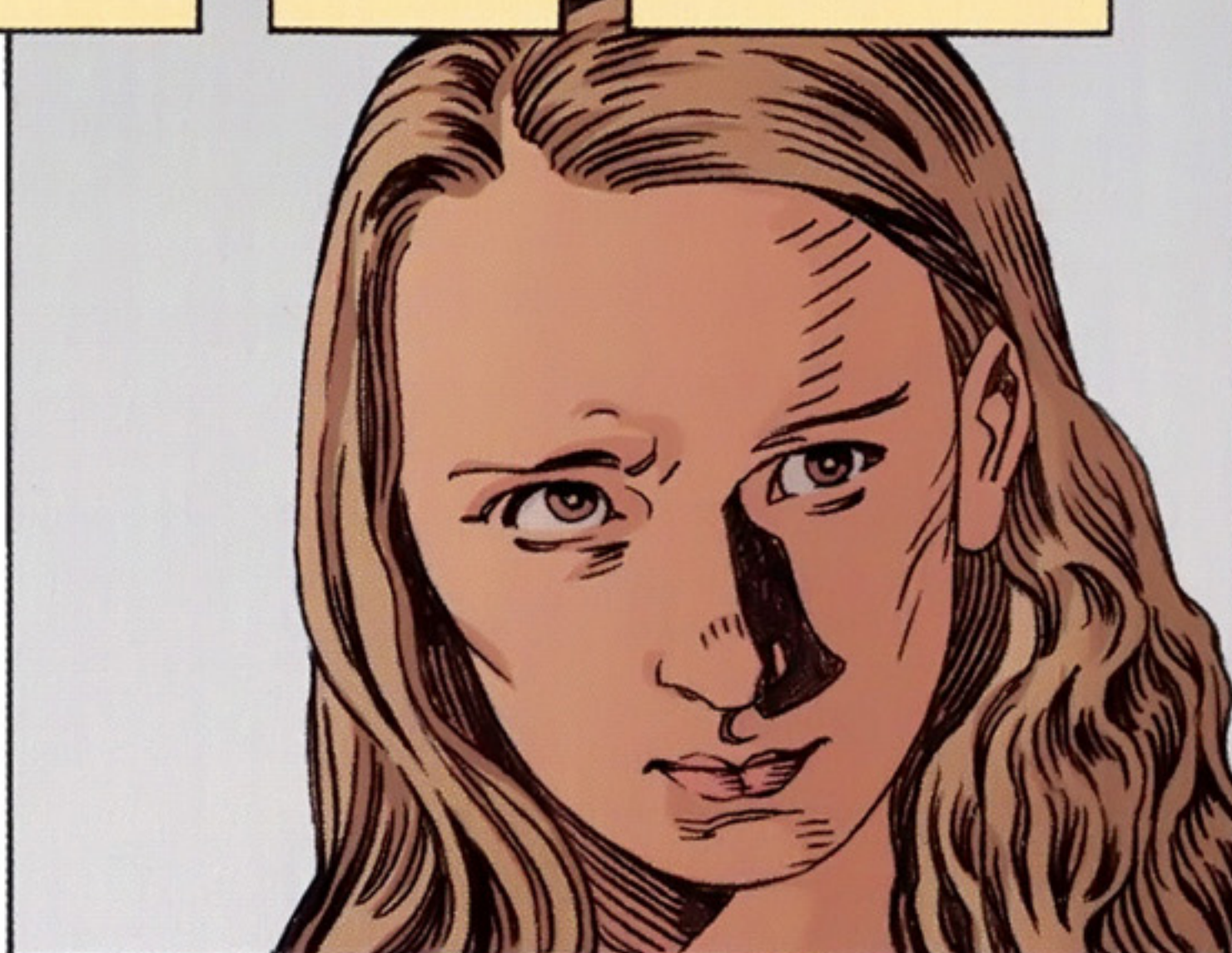
SHE HAD NOT WANTED TO GO ANY FARTHER INSIDE THAN THAT.

I'M AN EXPLORER!

SHE SPOKE OUT LOUD, BUT HER WORDS SOUNDED MUFFLED AND DEAD ON THE MISTY AIR.

SHE HAD MADE IT OUT OF THE CELLAR, HADN'T SHE?

BUT IF THERE WAS ONE THING THAT CORALINE WAS CERTAIN OF, IT WAS THAT THIS FLAT WOULD BE WORSE.



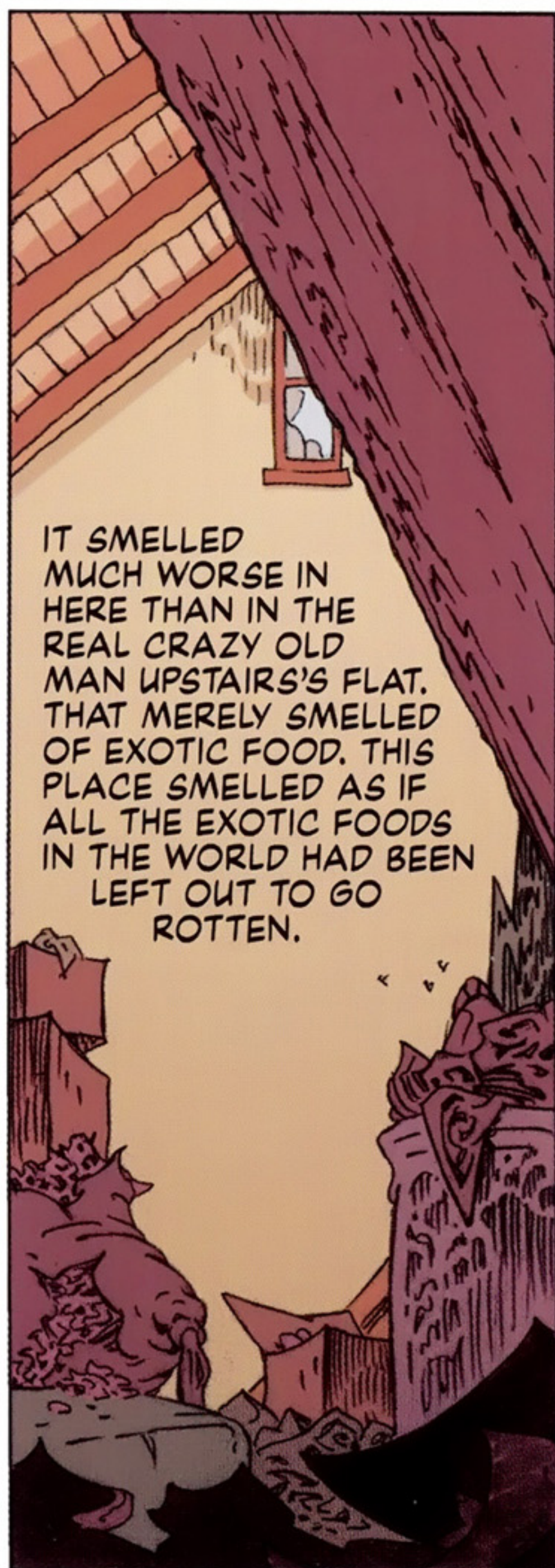


WE HAVE EYES AND
WE HAVE NERVESES

WE HAVE TAILS
WE HAVE TEETH

YOU'LL ALL GET
WHAT YOU DESERVESES

WHEN WE RISE
FROM UNDERNEATH.

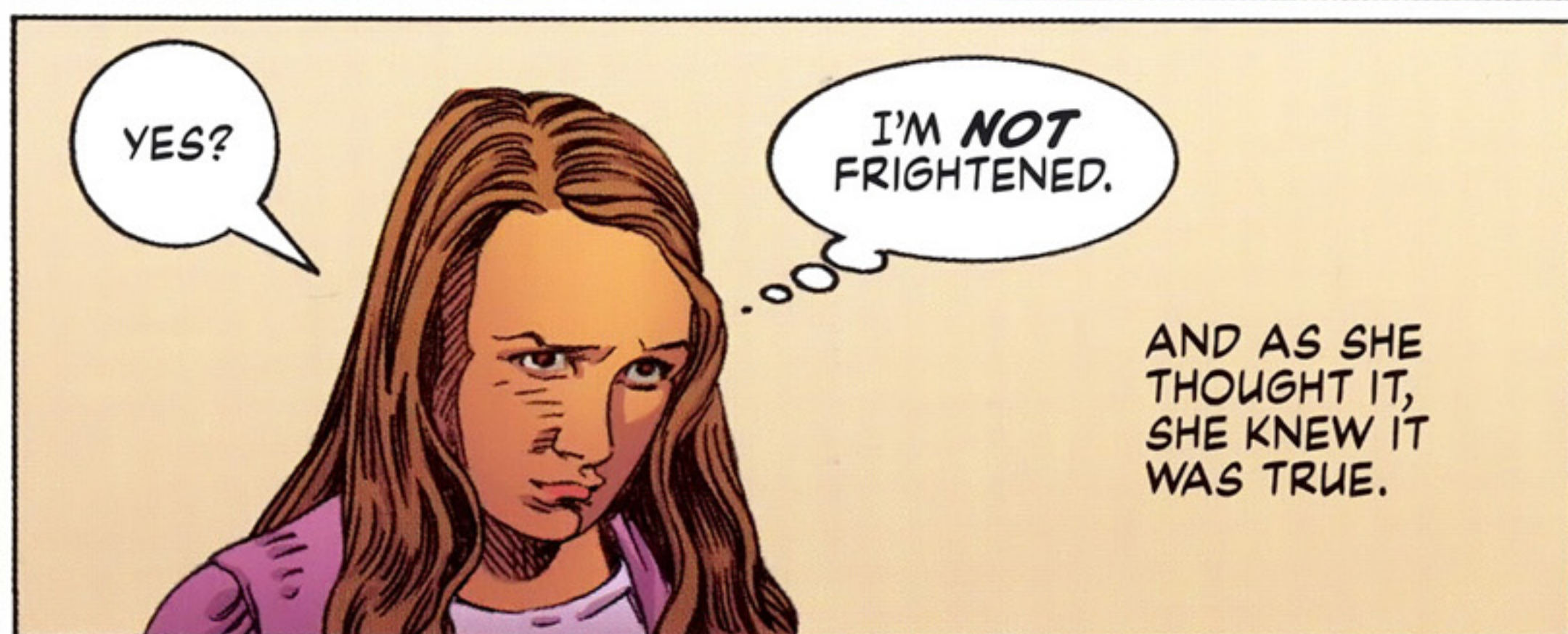


IT SMELLED
MUCH WORSE IN
HERE THAN IN THE
REAL CRAZY OLD
MAN UPSTAIRS'S FLAT.
THAT MERELY SMELLED
OF EXOTIC FOOD. THIS
PLACE SMELLED AS IF
ALL THE EXOTIC FOODS
IN THE WORLD HAD BEEN
LEFT OUT TO GO
ROTTEN.



UGH!

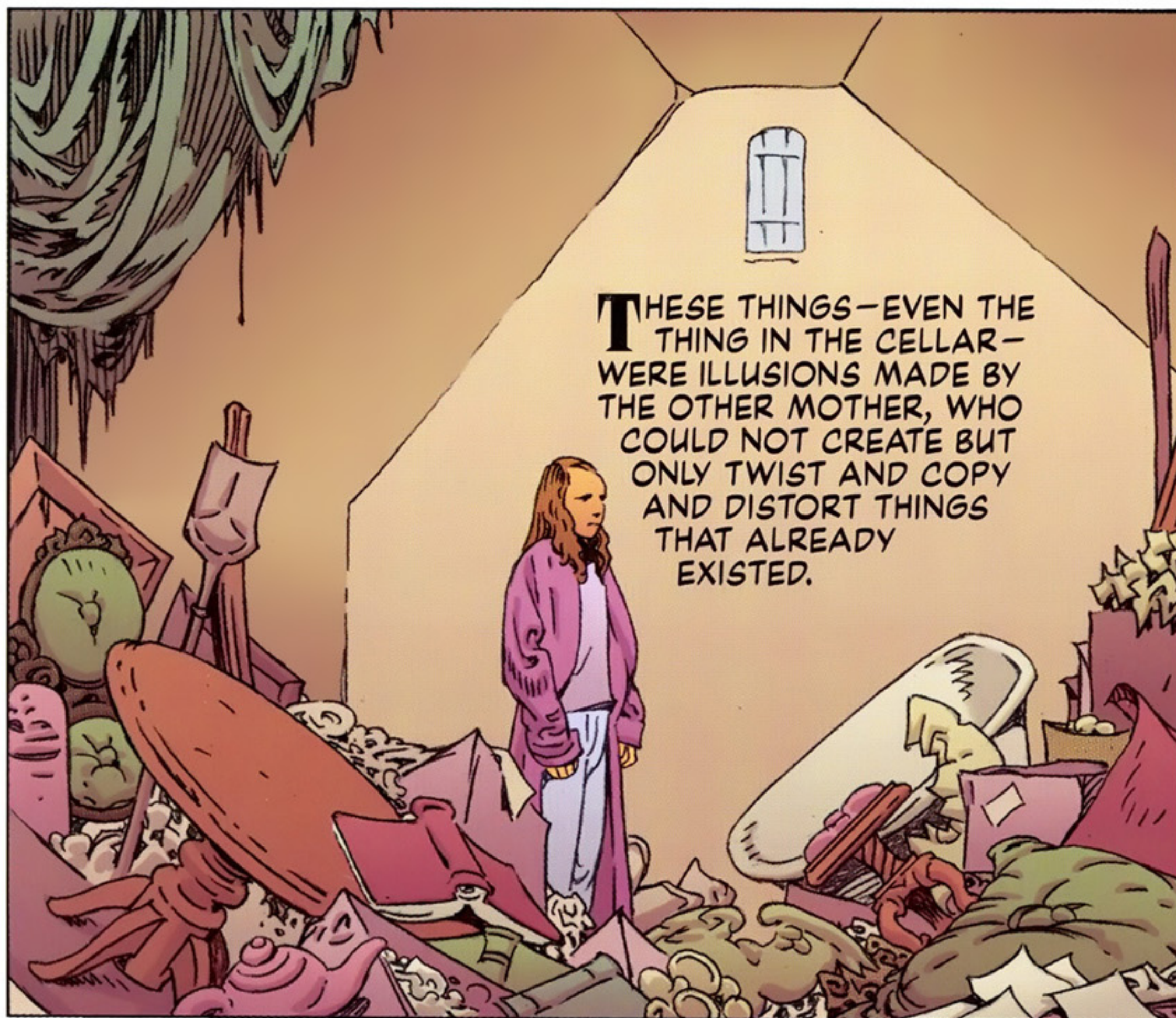
LITTLE
GIRL...



YES?

I'M **NOT**
FRIGHTENED.

AND AS SHE
THOUGHT IT,
SHE KNEW IT
WAS TRUE.



THESE THINGS—EVEN THE THING IN THE CELLAR—WERE ILLUSIONS MADE BY THE OTHER MOTHER, WHO COULD NOT CREATE BUT ONLY TWIST AND COPY AND DISTORT THINGS THAT ALREADY EXISTED.

THEN SHE REMEMBERED THE SNOW GLOBE THE OTHER MOTHER HAD PLACED ON THE MANTELPIECE, AND SHE WONDERED...

WHY?

FOR THE MANTELPIECE IN CORALINE'S WORLD WAS QUITE BARE.

AND AS SOON AS SHE HAD ASKED HERSELF THE QUESTION, SHE KNEW THE ANSWER.

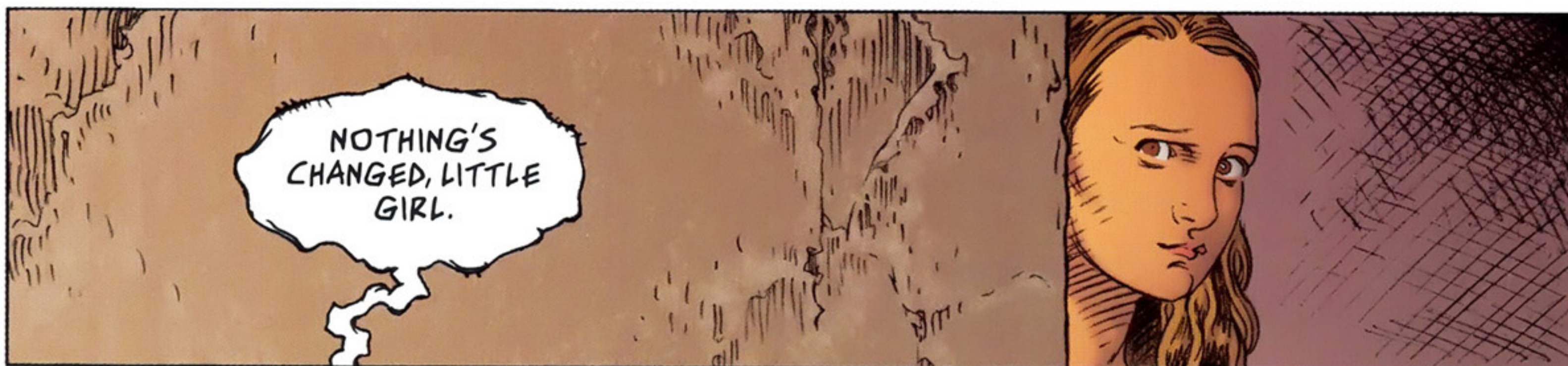
THEN THE VOICE CAME AGAIN, AND HER TRAIN OF THOUGHT WAS INTERRUPTED.

COME
HERE,
LITTLE
GIRL.

IT WAS A
RUSTLING
VOICE.
SCRATCHY
AND DRY
LIKE
SOME
KIND OF
ENORMOUS
DEAD
INSECT.

WHICH
WAS SILLY.
HOW COULD
A DEAD
THING,
ESPECIALLY
A DEAD
INSECT,
HAVE A
VOICE?

I KNOW
WHAT YOU
WANT, LITTLE
GIRL.



NOTHING'S
CHANGED, LITTLE
GIRL.

AND
WHAT IF YOU
DO EVERYTHING
YOU SWARE YOU
WOULD?

WHAT
THEN?

YOU'LL GO HOME.
YOU'LL BE BORED. YOU'LL BE
IGNORED. NO ONE WILL LISTEN
TO YOU. NOT REALLY
LISTEN TO YOU.

YOU'RE TOO CLEVER
AND TOO QUIET FOR
THEM TO UNDERSTAND.
THEY DON'T EVEN GET
YOUR NAME RIGHT.

STAY
HERE
WITH
US.

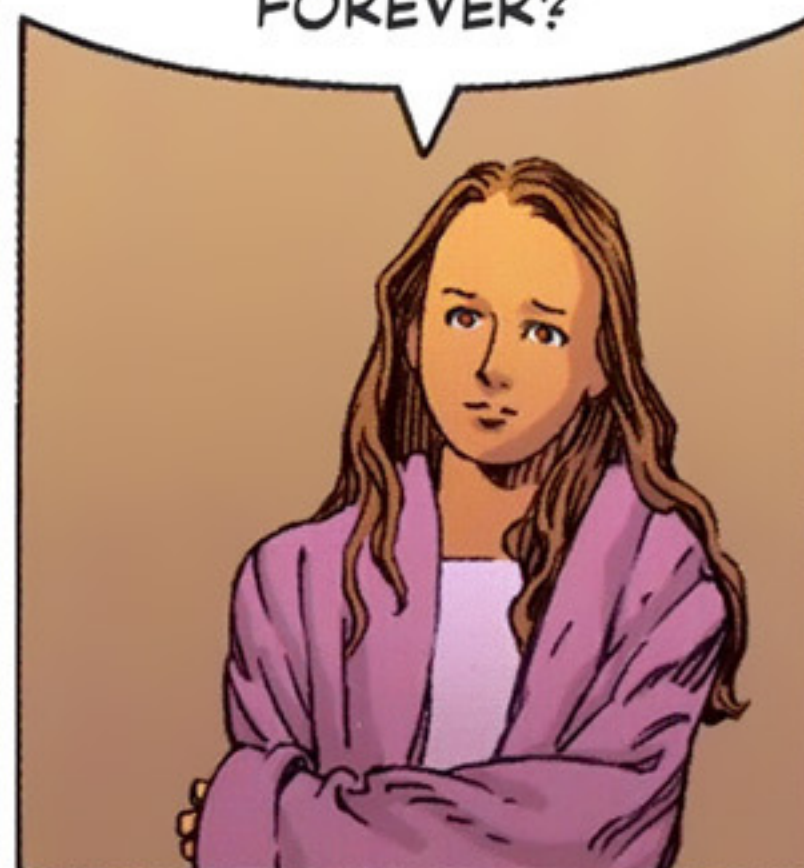


WE WILL
LISTEN TO
YOU AND PLAY
WITH YOU
AND LAUGH
WITH YOU.

YOUR OTHER MOTHER
WILL BUILD WHOLE WORLDS
FOR YOU TO EXPLORE,
AND TEAR THEM DOWN
EVERY NIGHT WHEN
YOU ARE DONE.

EVERY
DAY WILL BE
BETTER AND
BRIGHTER THAN
THE ONE THAT
WENT BEFORE.

AND WILL THERE BE
GRAY, WET DAYS WHERE
I JUST DON'T KNOW
WHAT TO DO AND THE
DAY DRAGS ON
FOREVER?



NEVER!



AND WILL THERE BE
AWFUL MEALS, WITH FOOD
MADE FROM RECIPES, WITH
GARLIC AND TARRAGON
AND BROAD BEANS IN?



EVERY
MEAL WILL
BE A THING
OF JOY.



AND
COULD I
HAVE DAY-GLO
GREEN GLOVES TO
WEAR, AND YELLOW
WELLINGTON
BOOTS IN THE
SHAPE OF
FROGS?

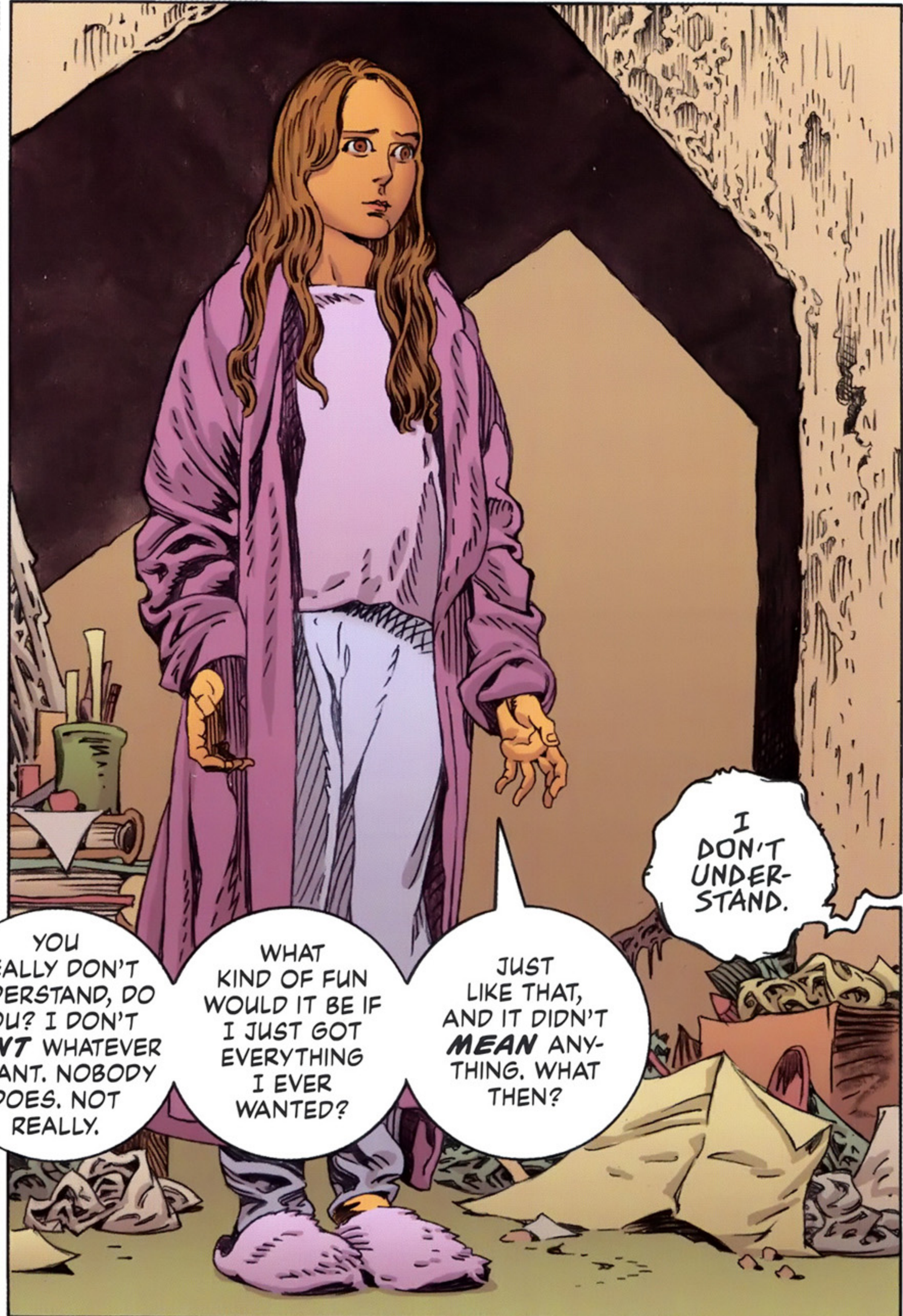
FROGS,

DUCKS,

RHINOS,

OCTO-
PUSES,

WHAT-
EVER YOU
DESIRE.



YOU
REALLY DON'T
UNDERSTAND, DO
YOU? I DON'T
WANT WHATEVER
I WANT. NOBODY
DOES. NOT
REALLY.

WHAT
KIND OF FUN
WOULD IT BE IF
I JUST GOT
EVERYTHING
I EVER
WANTED?

JUST
LIKE THAT,
AND IT DIDN'T
MEAN ANY-
THING. WHAT
THEN?

I
DON'T
UNDER-
STAND.



OF COURSE YOU DON'T
UNDERSTAND. YOU'RE JUST A BAD
COPY SHE MADE OF THE CRAZY
OLD MAN UPSTAIRS.

NOT
EVEN
THAT
ANY-
MORE.

THERE WAS A GLOW COMING FROM
THE RAINCOAT OF THE MAN, AT
ABOUT CHEST HEIGHT. IT TWINKLED AND
SHONE BLUE-WHITE AS ANY STAR.

CORALINE WISHED
SHE HAD
A STICK
OR SOME-
THING
TO POKE
HIM
WITH.
SHE
HAD NO
WISH
TO GET
ANY
CLOSER
TO THE
SHADOWY
MAN AT
THE END
OF THE
ROOM.

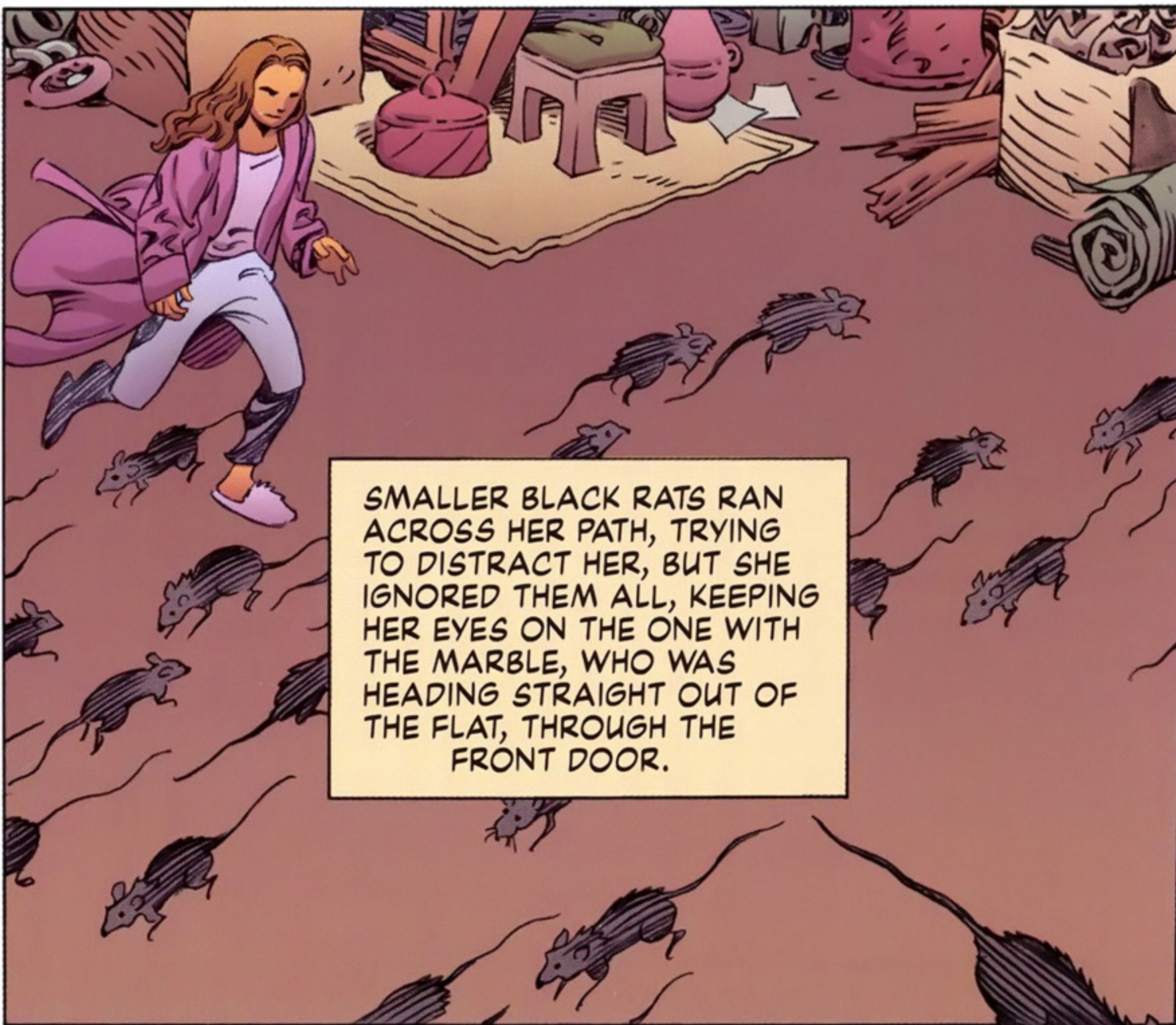
SHE
TOOK
A STEP
CLOSER...

...AND HE
FELL APART.

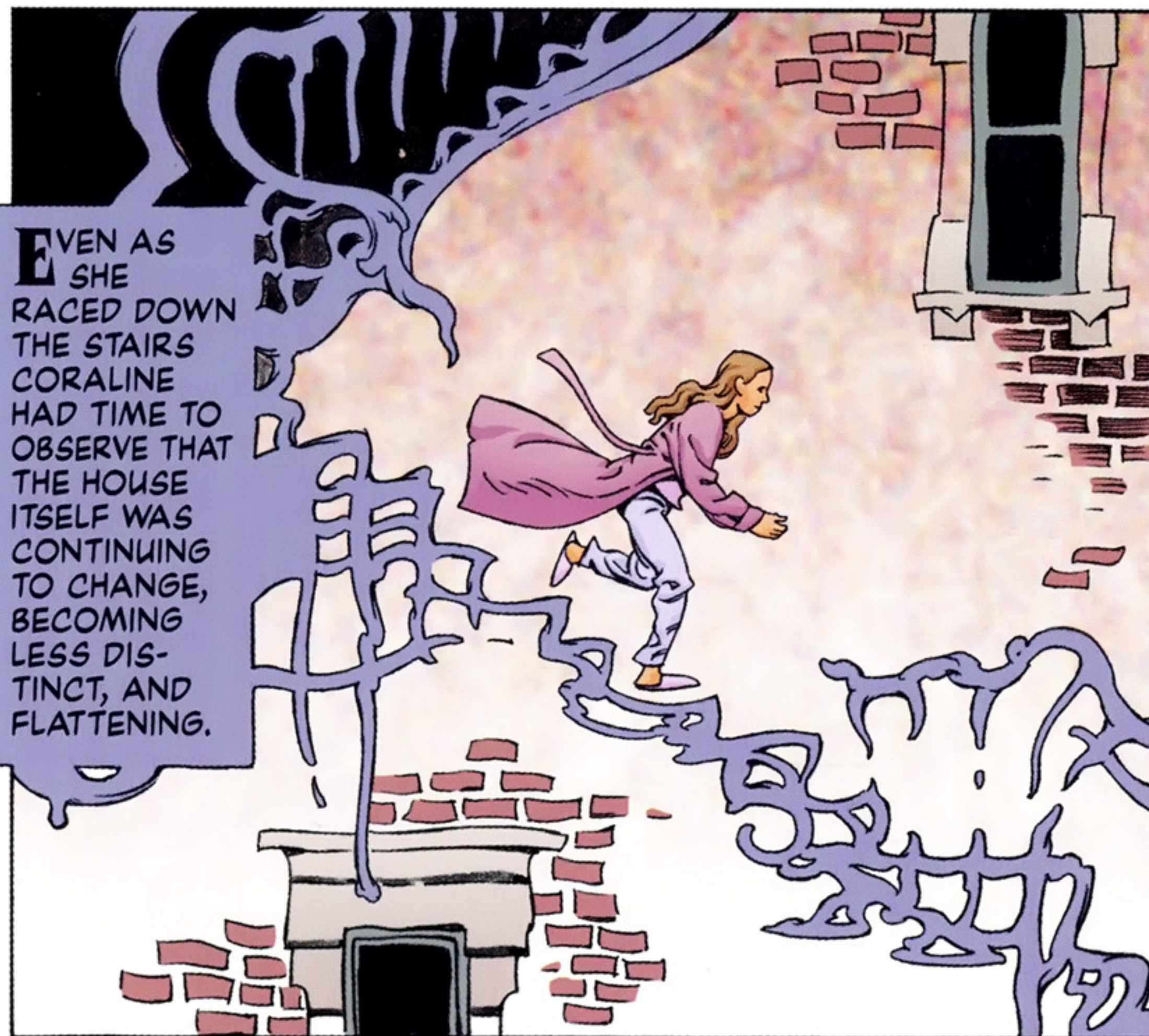


SOMETHING TWINKLED
IN THE FAR CORNER...

...AND IT WAS BEING
CARRIED IN THE
FOREPAWS OF THE
LARGEST BLACK RAT.



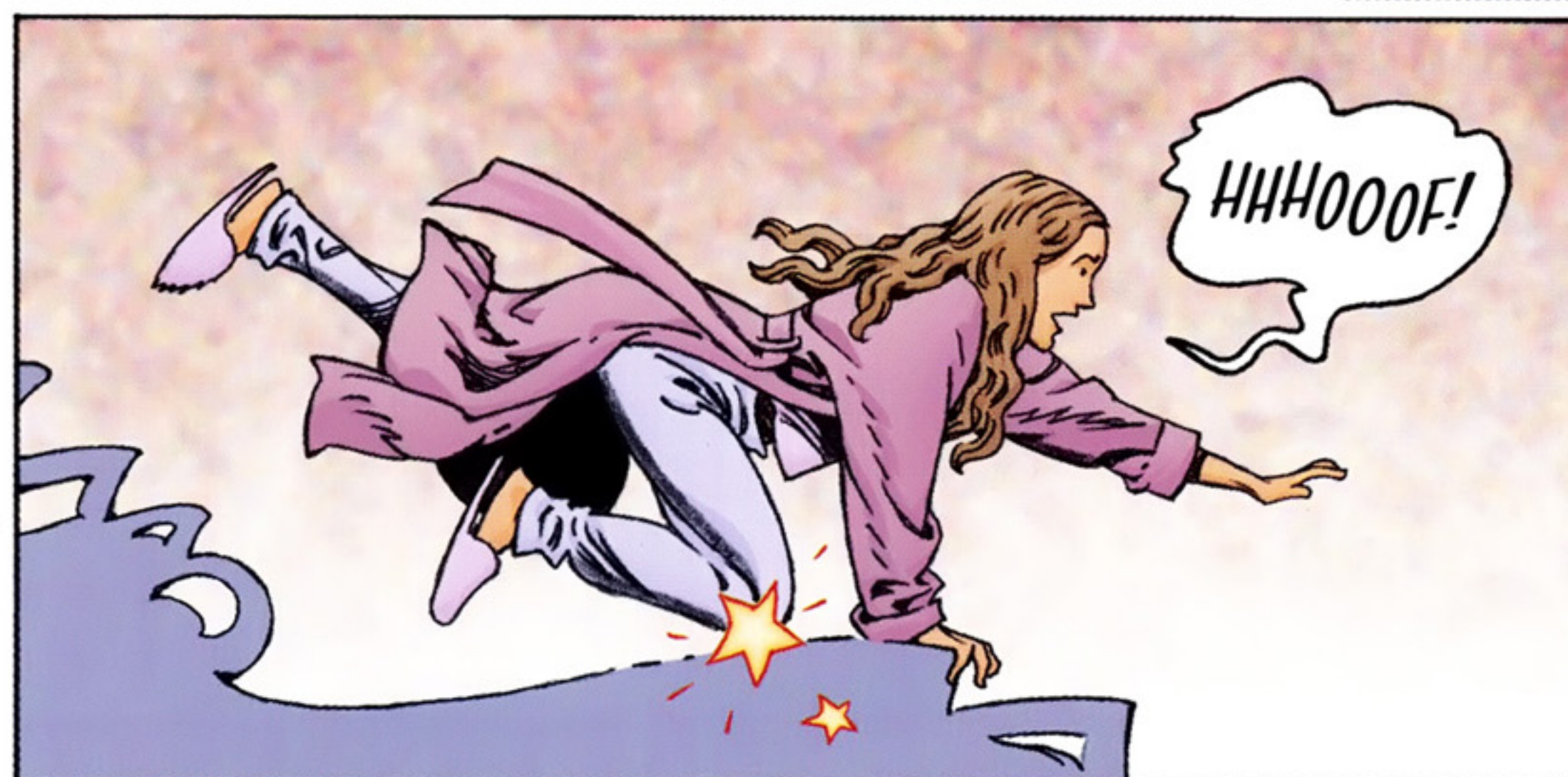
SMALLER BLACK RATS RAN
ACROSS HER PATH, TRYING
TO DISTRACT HER, BUT SHE
IGNORED THEM ALL, KEEPING
HER EYES ON THE ONE WITH
THE MARBLE, WHO WAS
HEADING STRAIGHT OUT OF
THE FLAT, THROUGH THE
FRONT DOOR.



EVEN AS SHE RACED DOWN THE STAIRS CORALINE HAD TIME TO OBSERVE THAT THE HOUSE ITSELF WAS CONTINUING TO CHANGE, BECOMING LESS DISTINCT, AND FLATTENING.



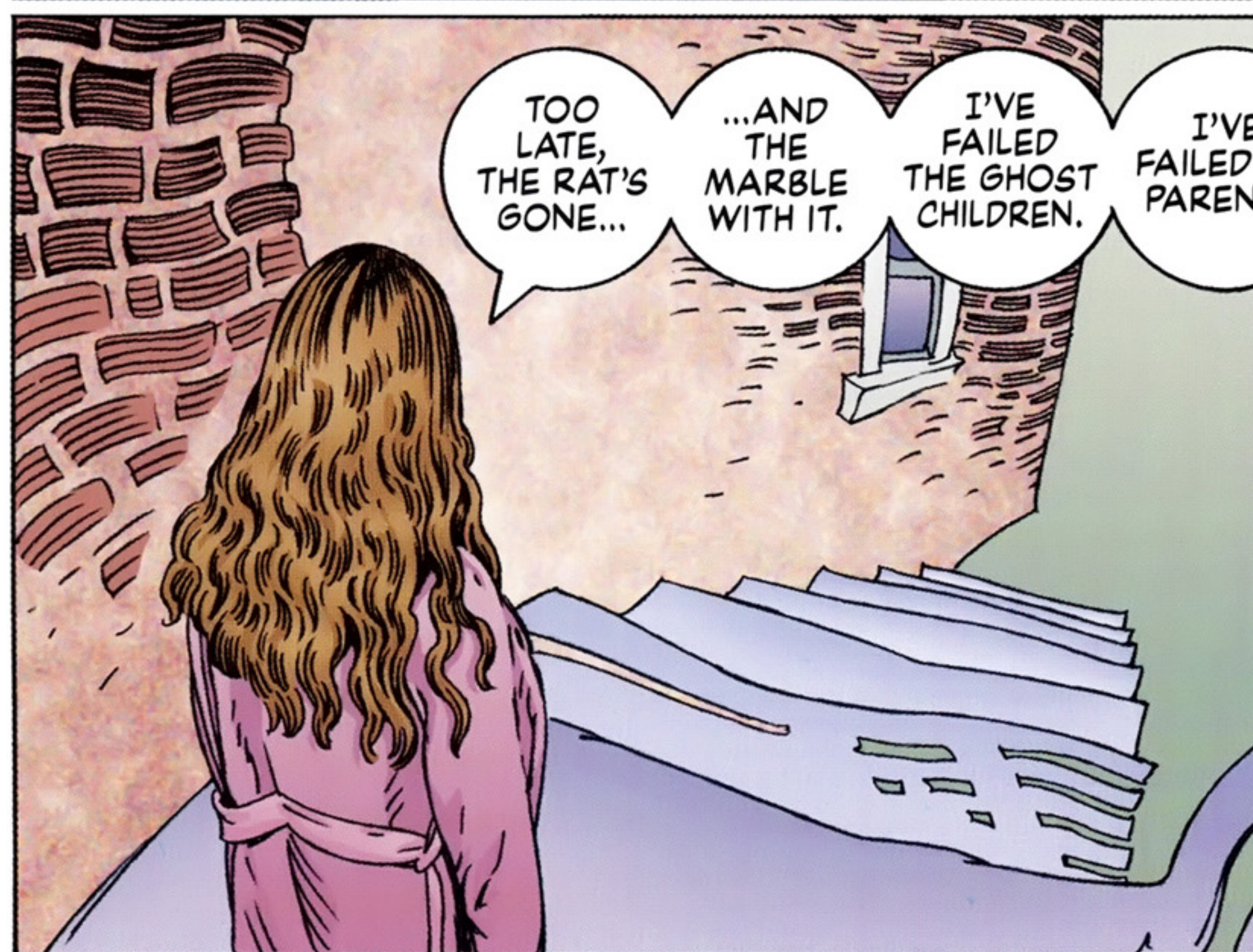
OH!



HHHOOOF!



OWWW!



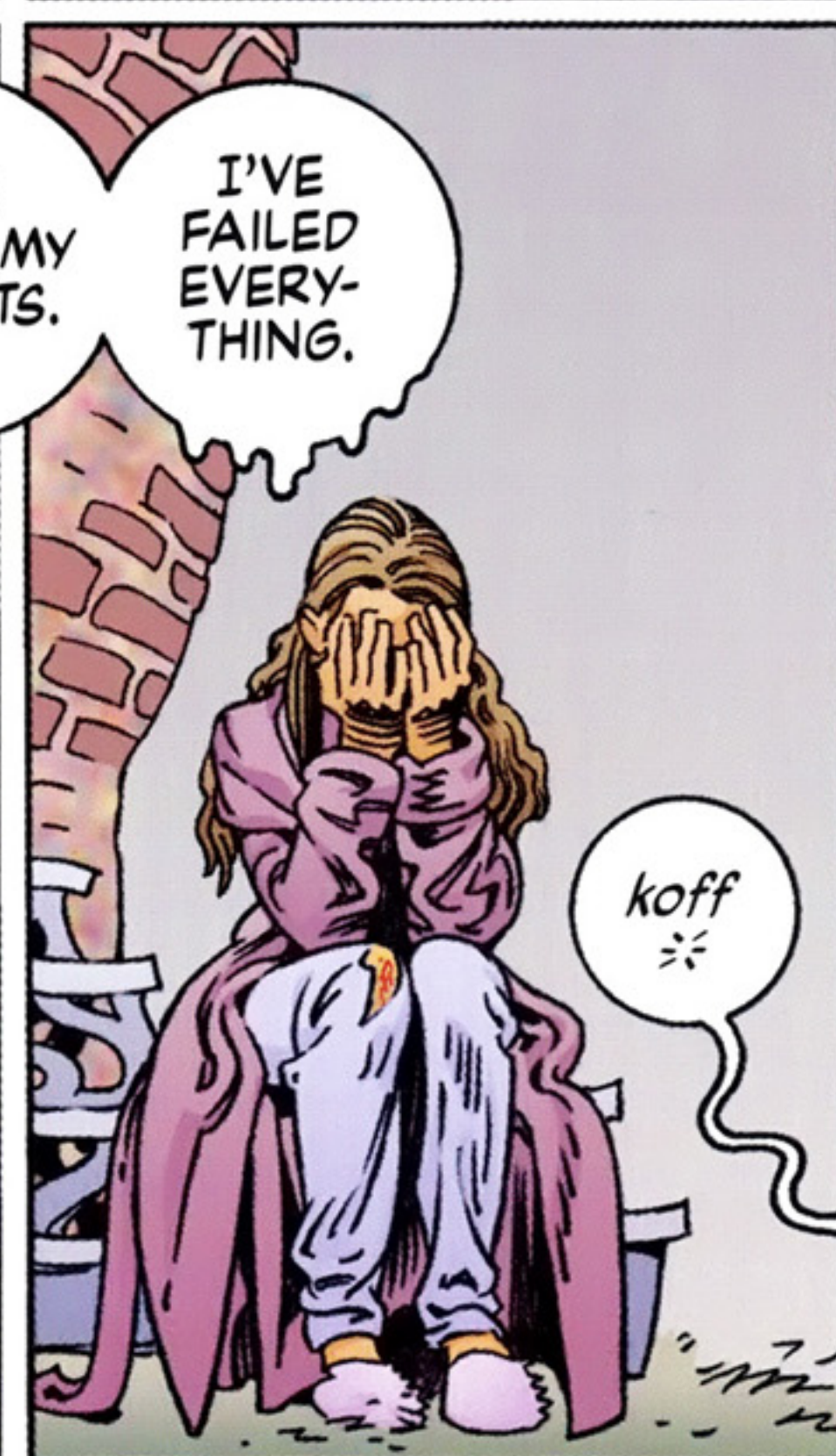
TOO LATE, THE RAT'S GONE...

...AND THE MARBLE WITH IT.

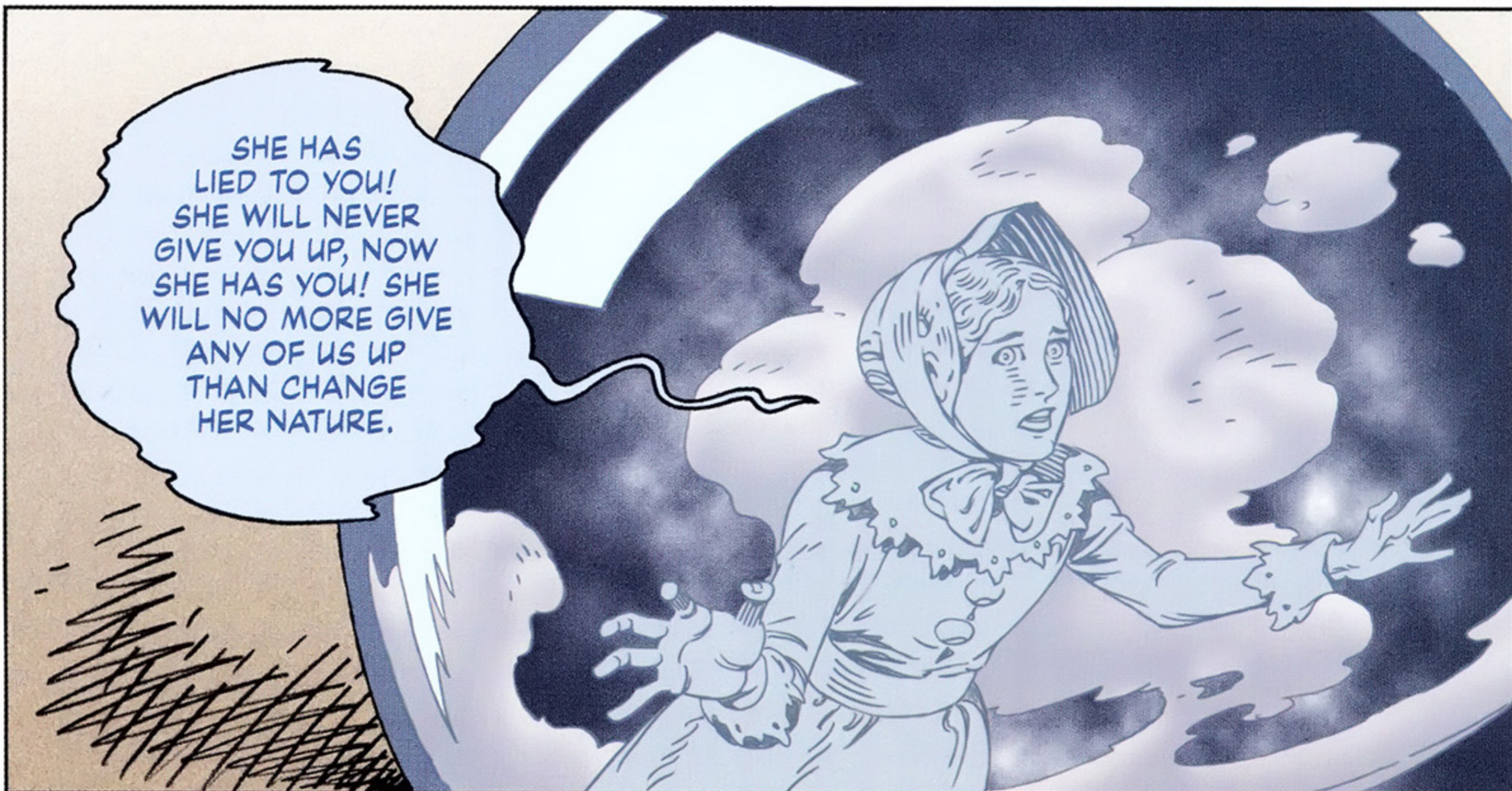
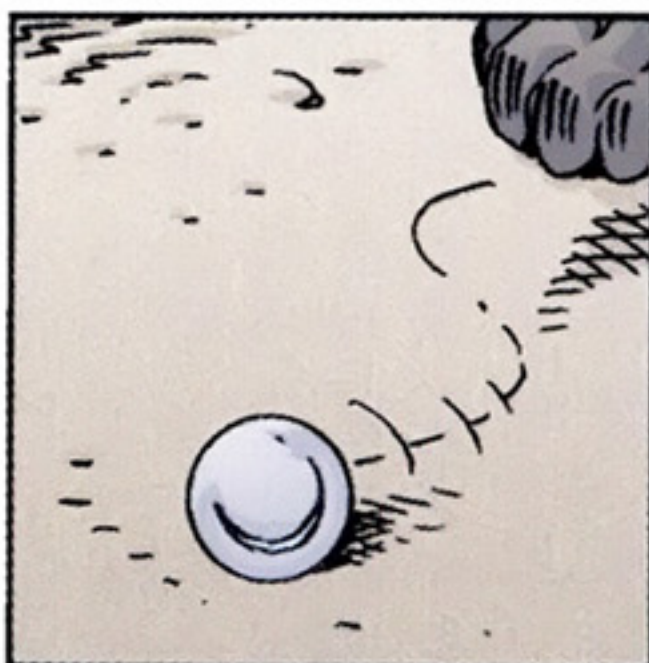
I'VE FAILED THE GHOST CHILDREN.

I'VE FAILED MY PARENTS.

I'VE FAILED EVERYTHING.



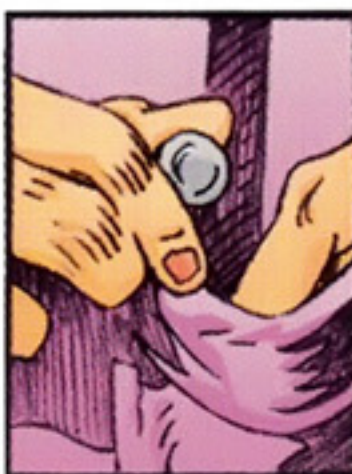
koff



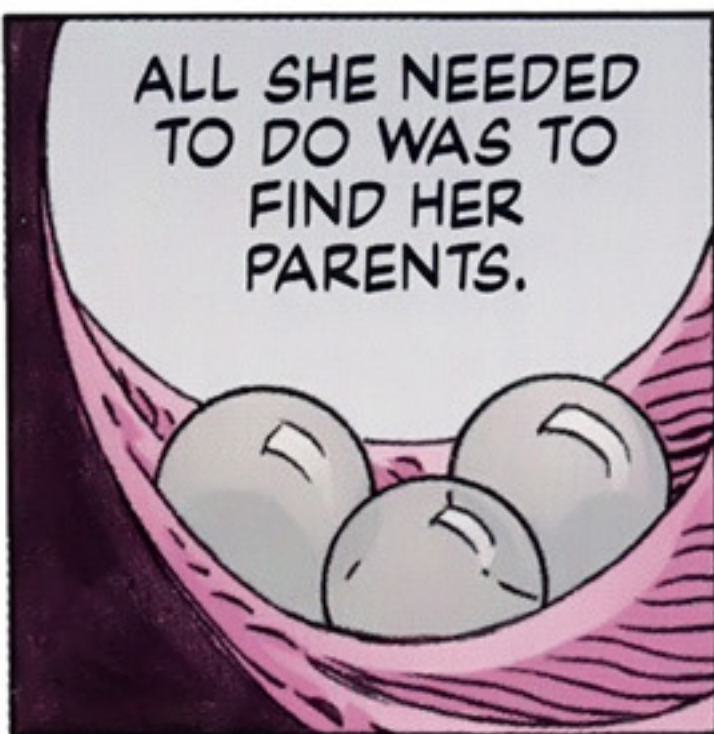
THE HAIRS ON THE BACK OF CORALINE'S NECK PRICKLED. SHE KNEW THAT THE GIRL'S VOICE TOLD THE TRUTH.



SHE HAD ALL THREE MARBLES, NOW.



ALL SHE NEEDED TO DO WAS TO FIND HER PARENTS.

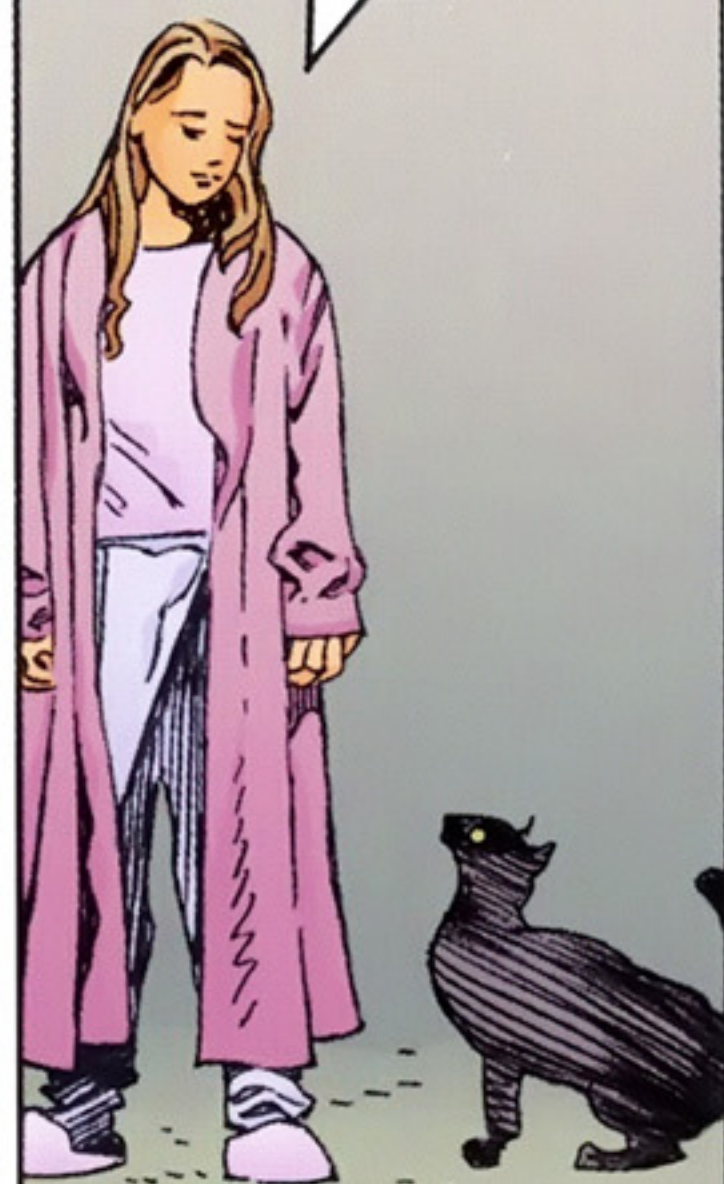


AND, CORALINE REALIZED WITH SURPRISE, SHE KNEW EXACTLY WHERE HER PARENTS WERE. AFTER ALL, THE MANTELPIECE IN THE DRAWING ROOM AT HOME WAS QUITE EMPTY.

BUT KNOWING THAT, SHE KNEW SOMETHING ELSE AS WELL...



THE OTHER MOTHER. SHE PLANS TO BREAK HER PROMISE. SHE WON'T LET US GO.



I WOULDN'T PUT IT PAST HER.

LIKE I SAID, THERE'S NO GUARANTEE SHE'LL PLAY FAIR.

HULLO... DID YOU SEE **THAT?**



WHAT?



LOOK BEHIND YOU.



THE HOUSE HAD
FLATTENED OUT
EVEN MORE. NOW
IT SEEMED NO
MORE THAN A
CRUDE SCRIBBLE
OF A HOUSE.

WHAT-
EVER'S
HAPPENING,
THANK YOU
FOR HELPING
WITH THE
RAT.

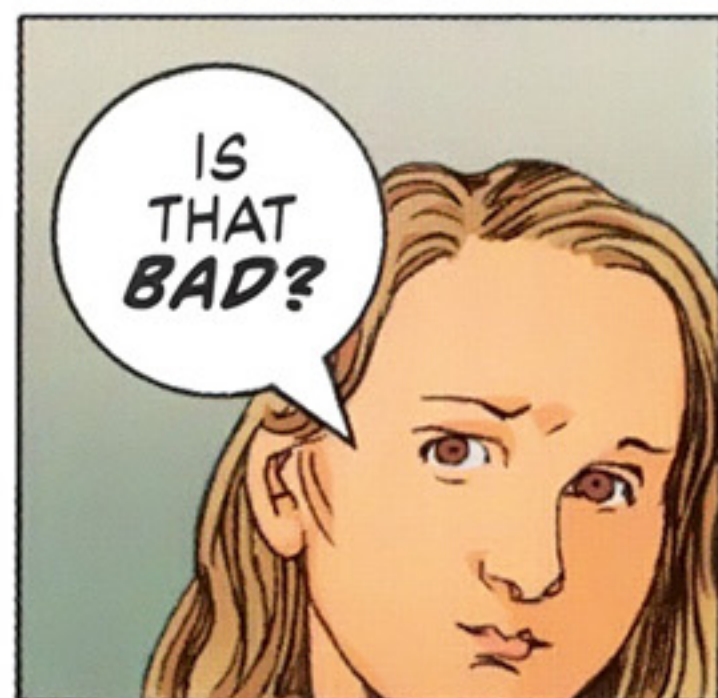
I
SUPPOSE I'M
ALMOST THERE,
AREN'T I? SO YOU
GO OFF INTO THE
MIST, OR WHERE-
EVER YOU GO, AND
I'LL SEE YOU
AT HOME.

IF
SHE LETS
ME GO
HOME.



WHAT'S
WRONG?

THEY'VE **GONE**.
THEY AREN'T HERE
ANYMORE. THE WAYS
IN AND OUT OF THIS
PLACE. THEY JUST
WENT FLAT.



IS
THAT
BAD?

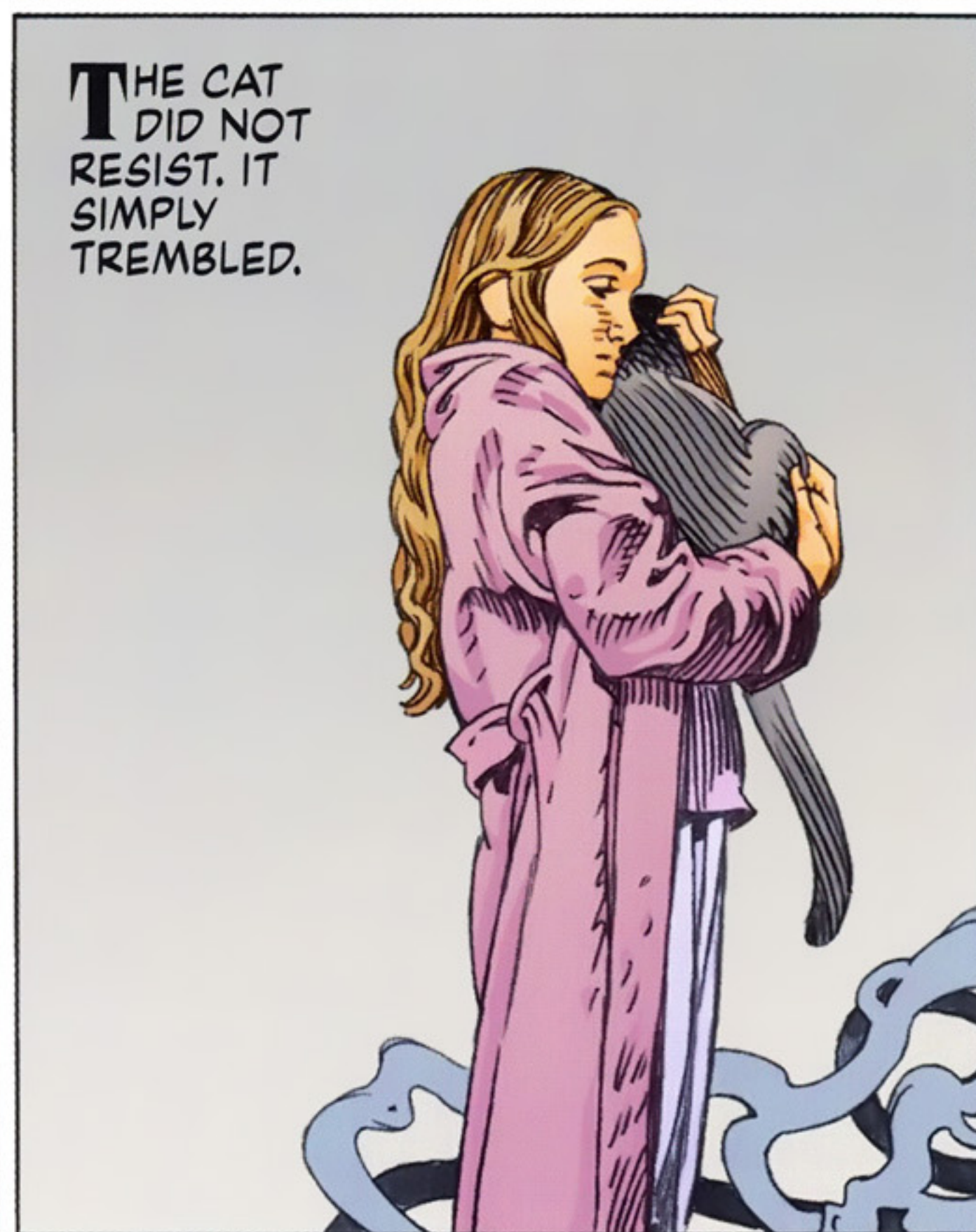
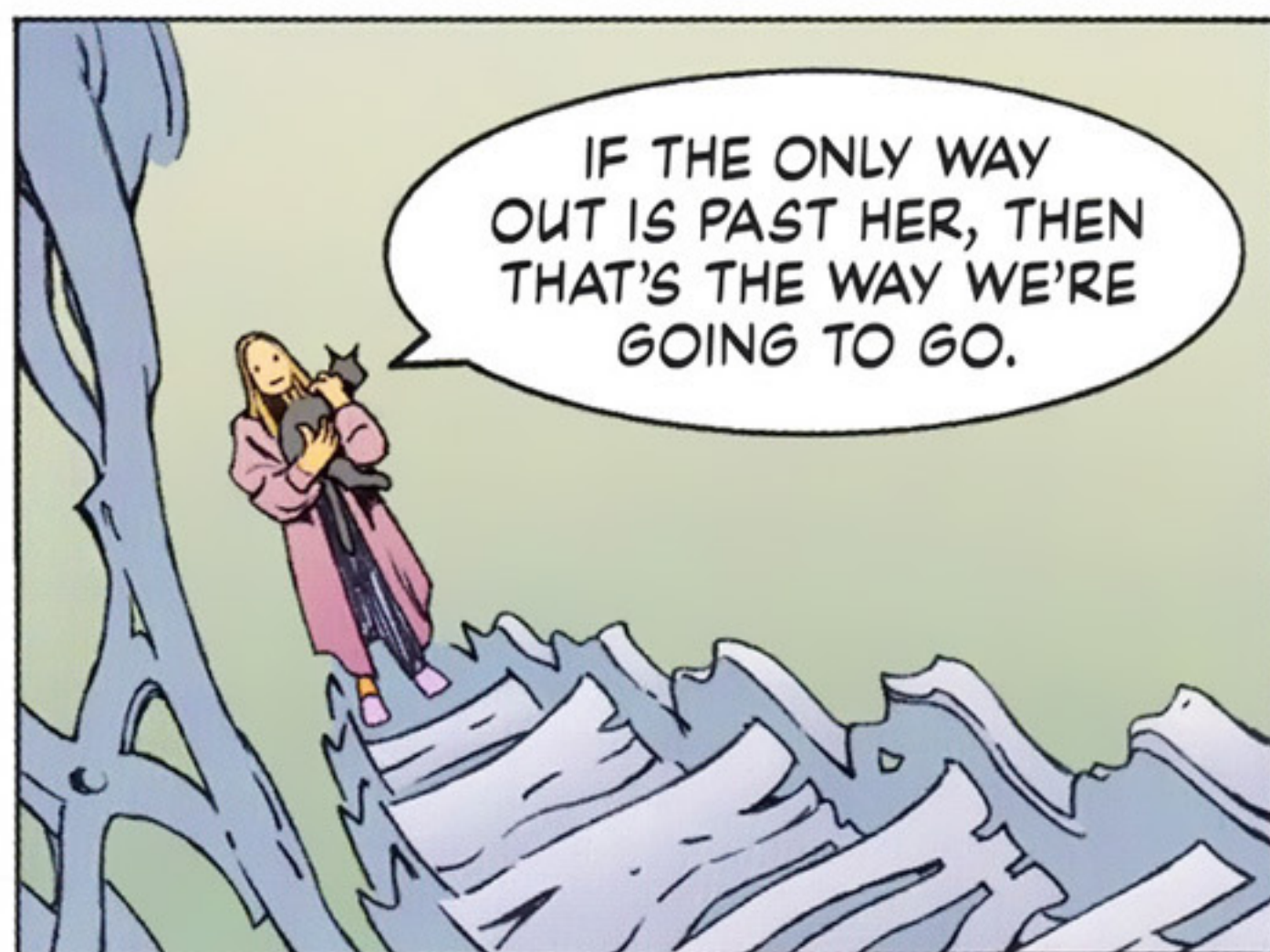
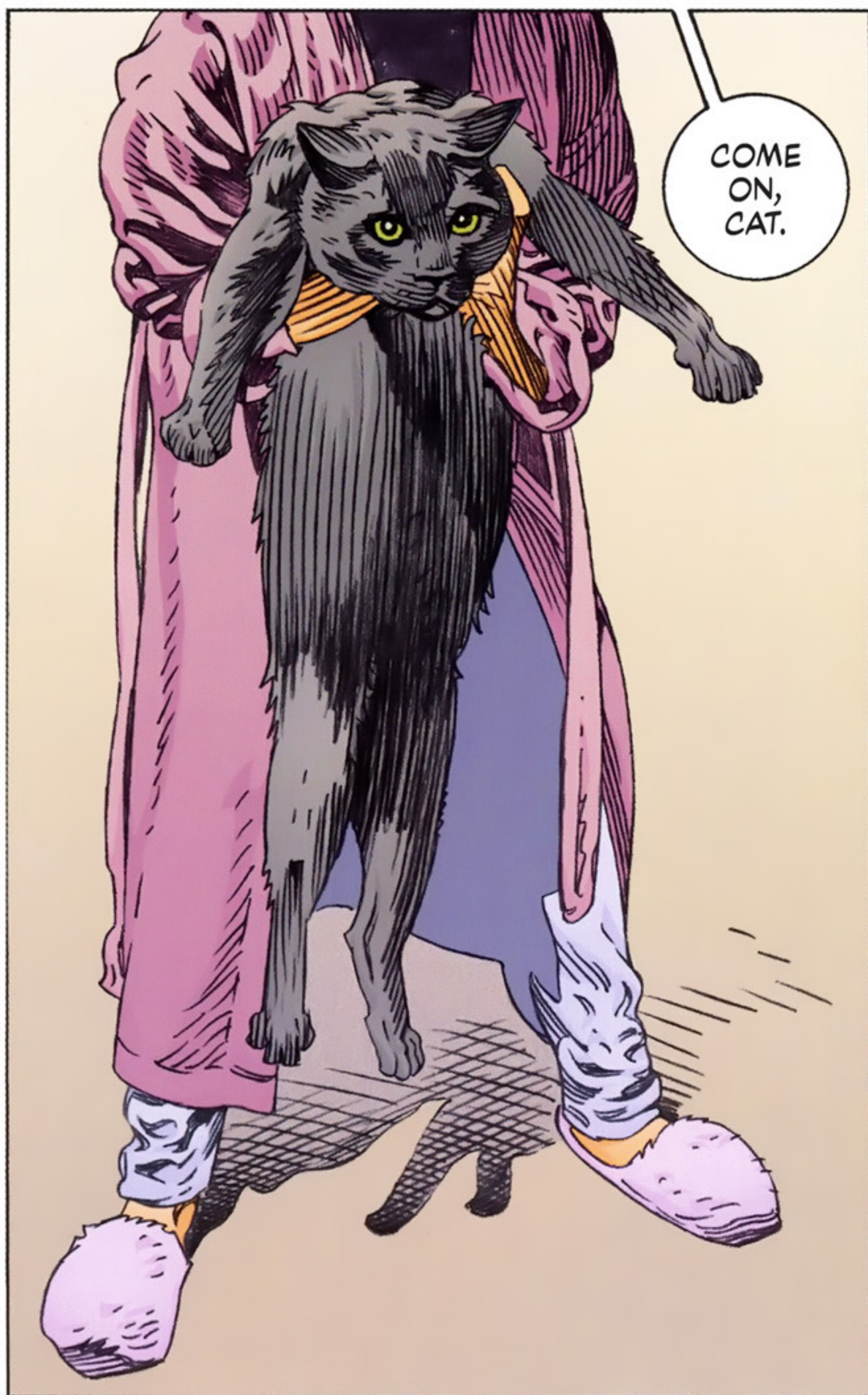
THE CAT
MADE A LOW
GROWLING
NOISE IN THE
BACK OF ITS
THROAT AND
BEGAN TO
WALK BACK-
WARD
STIFFLY,
ONE STEP
AT A
TIME.



IT WAS TREMBLING
LIKE A DEAD LEAF
IN A STORM.

YOU'LL
BE FINE.
I'LL TAKE
YOU
HOME.

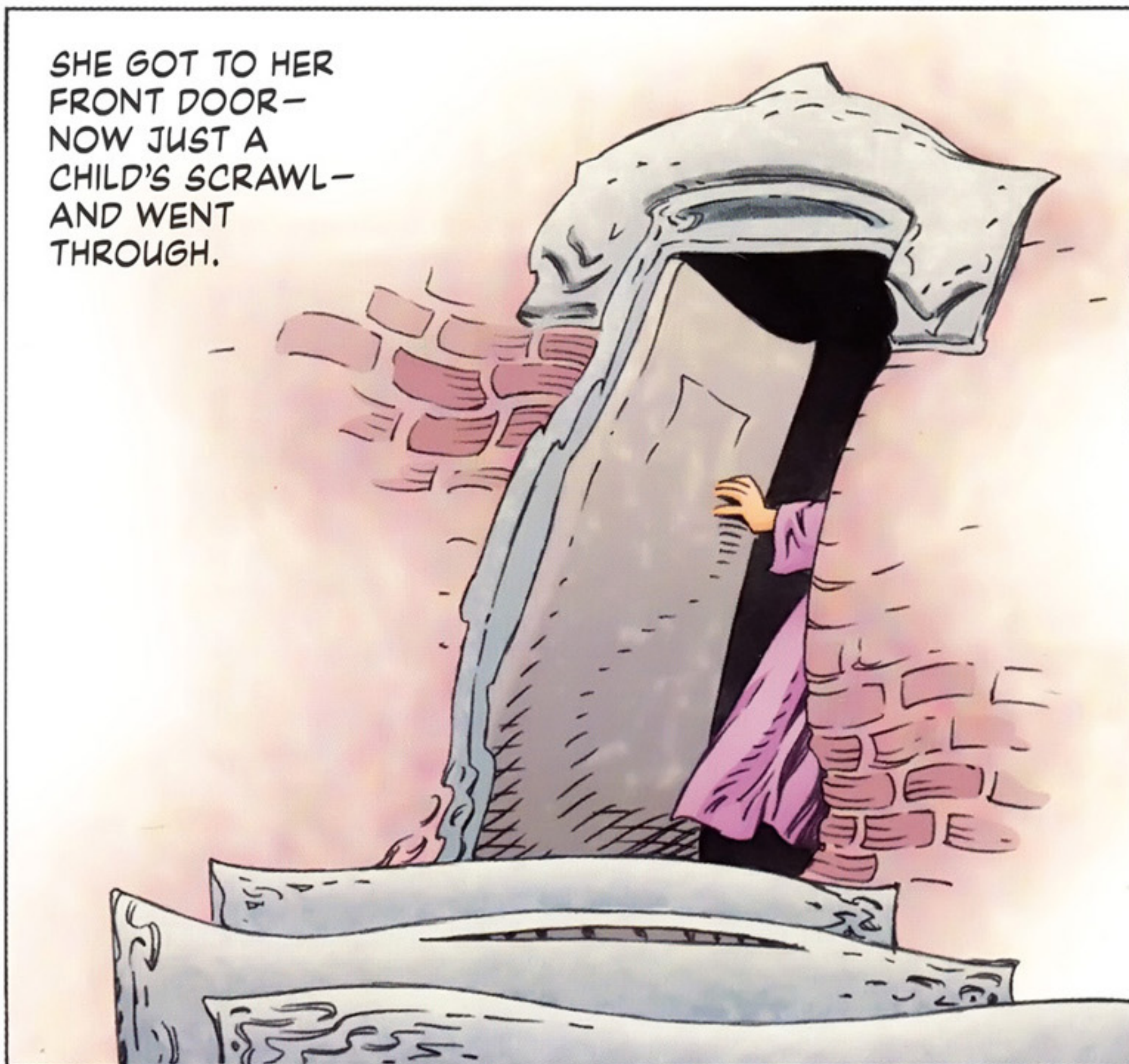




CORALINE WALKED UP THE STAIRS ONE AT A TIME, AWARE OF THE MARBLES CLICKING IN HER POCKET, THE STONE WITH A HOLE IN IT, AND THE CAT PRESSING ITSELF AGAINST HER.



SHE GOT TO HER FRONT DOOR—NOW JUST A CHILD'S SCRAWL—AND WENT THROUGH.



INSIDE, THE FLAT
HAD NOT YET
TRANSFORMED
INTO AN EMPTY
DRAWING. IT STILL
HAD DEPTH...

...AND SHADOWS.

SO YOU'RE BACK.

AND YOU
BROUGHT
VERMIN
WITH YOU.

NO. I
BROUGHT A
FRIEND.

YOU
KNOW
I LOVE
YOU.

YOU
HAVE A
VERY FUNNY
WAY OF
SHOWING
IT.

AND SHE TURNED
INTO THE DRAWING
ROOM...

...PRETENDING THAT SHE COULDN'T
FEEL THE OTHER MOTHER'S BLANK
BLACK EYES ON HER BACK.



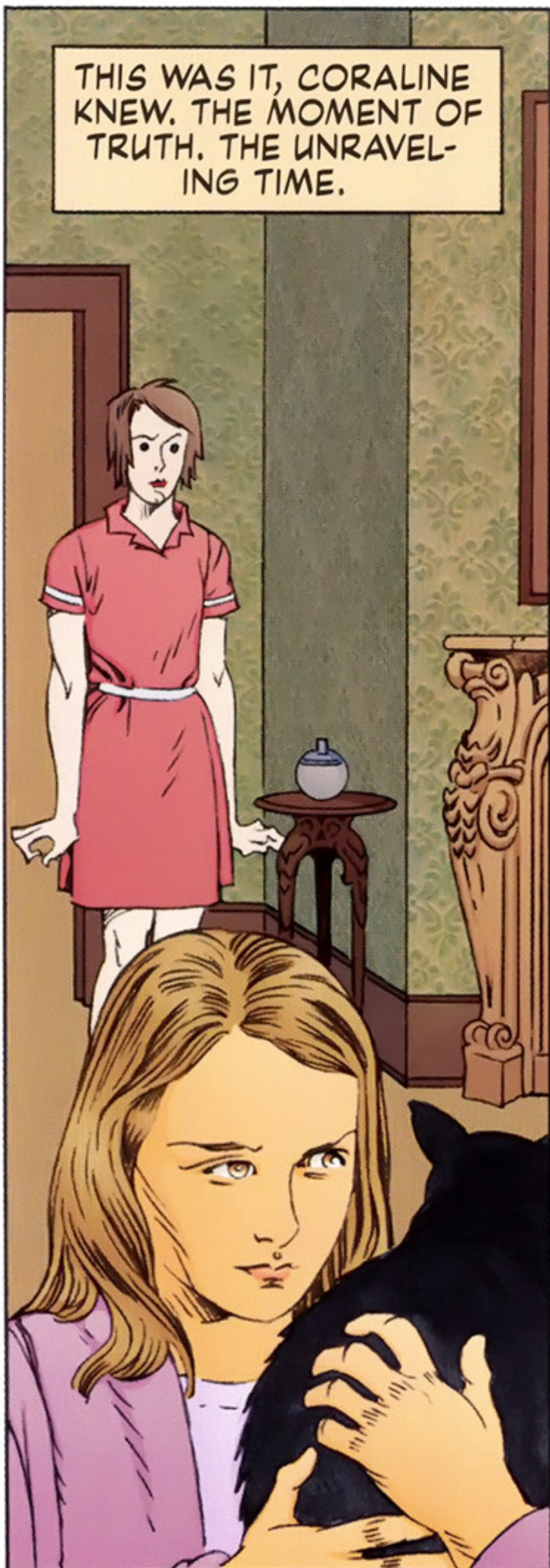
HER GRAND-MOTHER'S FORMAL FURNITURE WAS STILL THERE...



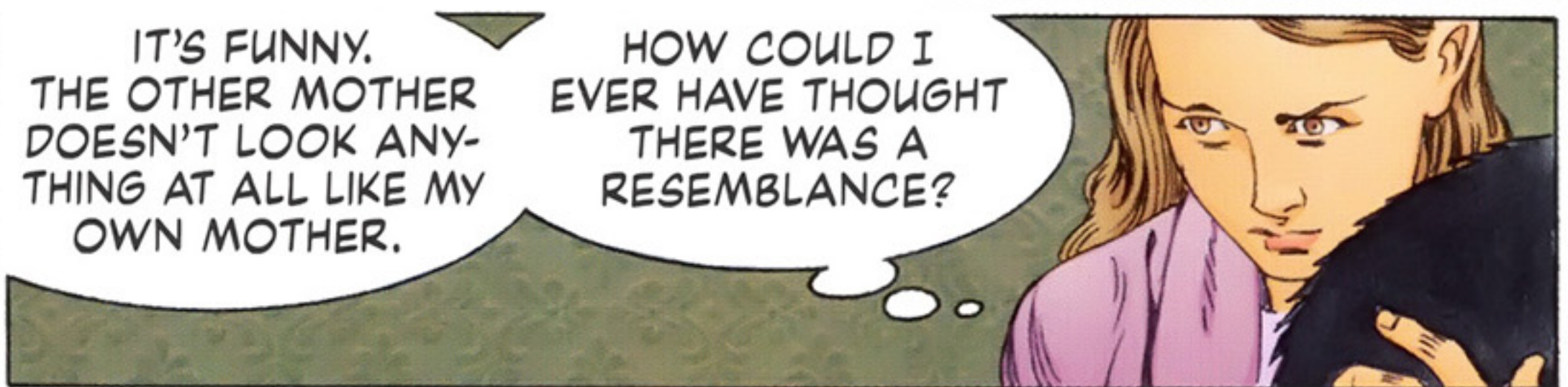
...AND AT THE END OF THE ROOM STOOD THE WOODEN DOOR THAT HAD ONCE, IN ANOTHER PLACE, OPENED ONTO A PLAIN BRICK WALL.



THE WINDOW SHOWED NOTHING BUT MIST.



THIS WAS IT, CORALINE KNEW. THE MOMENT OF TRUTH. THE UNRAVELING TIME.

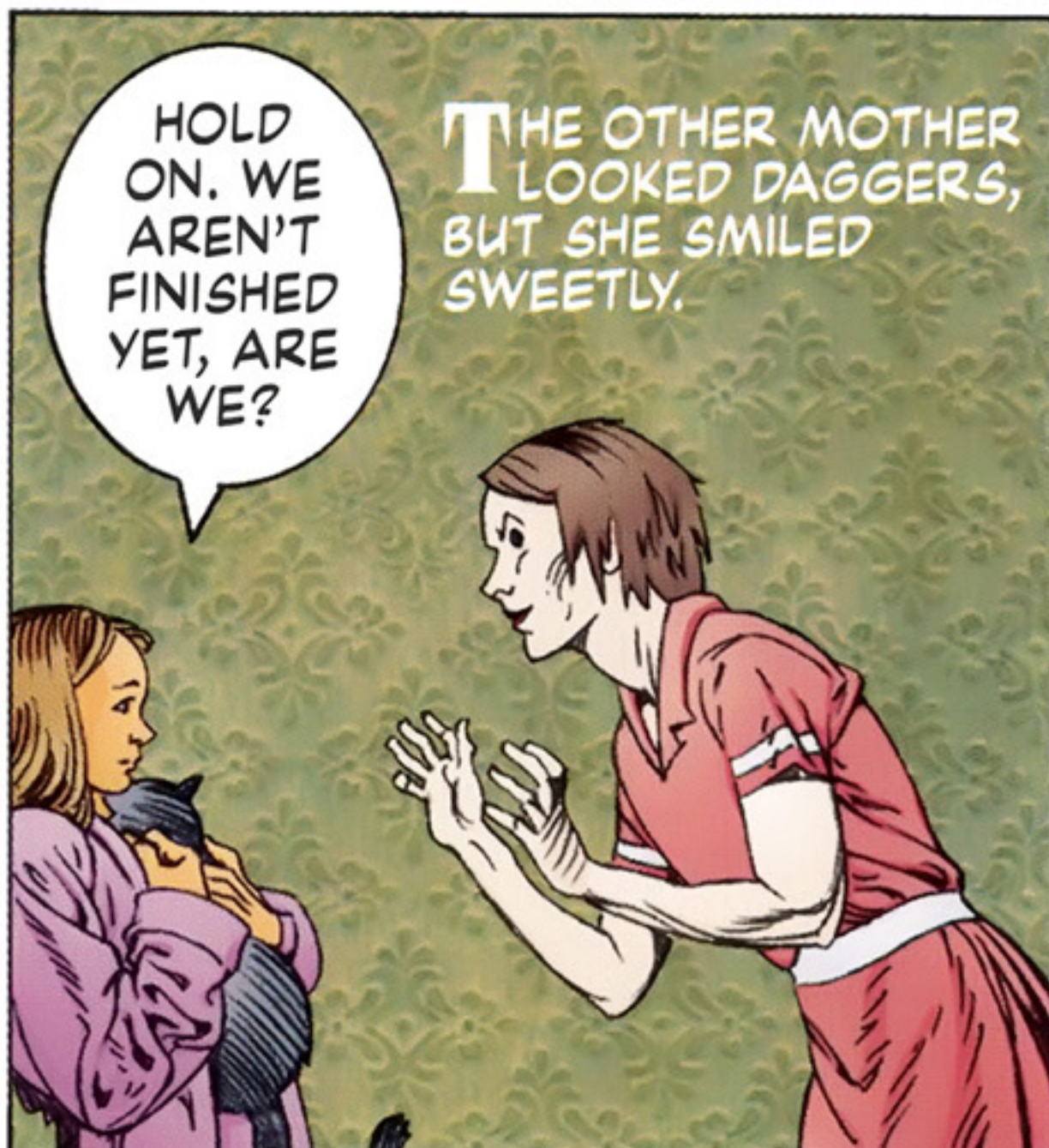
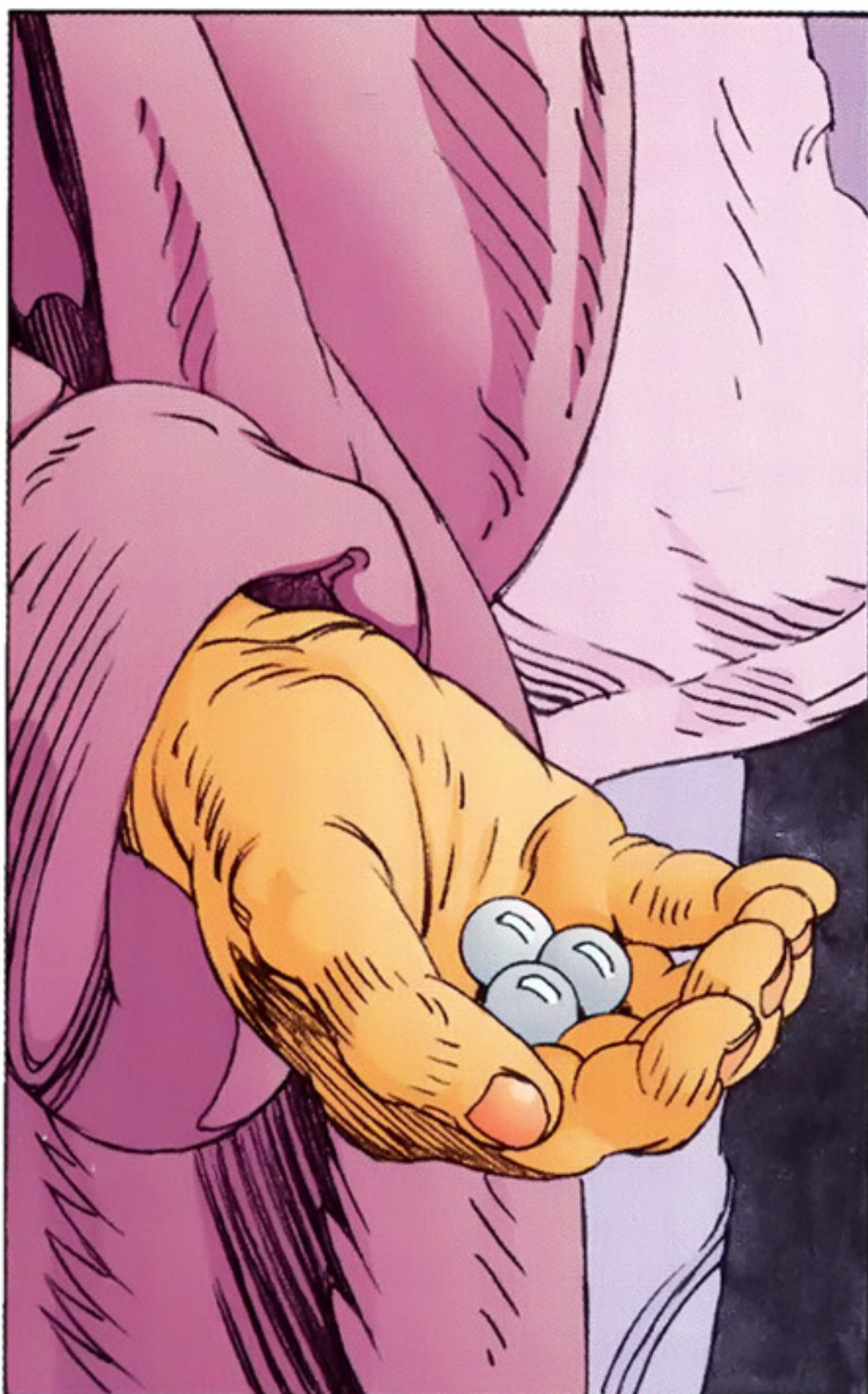


IT'S FUNNY. THE OTHER MOTHER DOESN'T LOOK ANYTHING AT ALL LIKE MY OWN MOTHER.

HOW COULD I EVER HAVE THOUGHT THERE WAS A RESEMBLANCE?



WELL? WHERE ARE THEY?



HOLD ON. WE AREN'T FINISHED YET, ARE WE?

THE OTHER MOTHER LOOKED DAGGERS, BUT SHE SMILED SWEETLY.



NO. I SUPPOSE NOT. YOU STILL NEED TO FIND YOUR PARENTS, DON'T YOU?

YES.

I MUST NOT LOOK AT THE MANTELPIECE.

I MUST NOT EVEN THINK ABOUT IT.

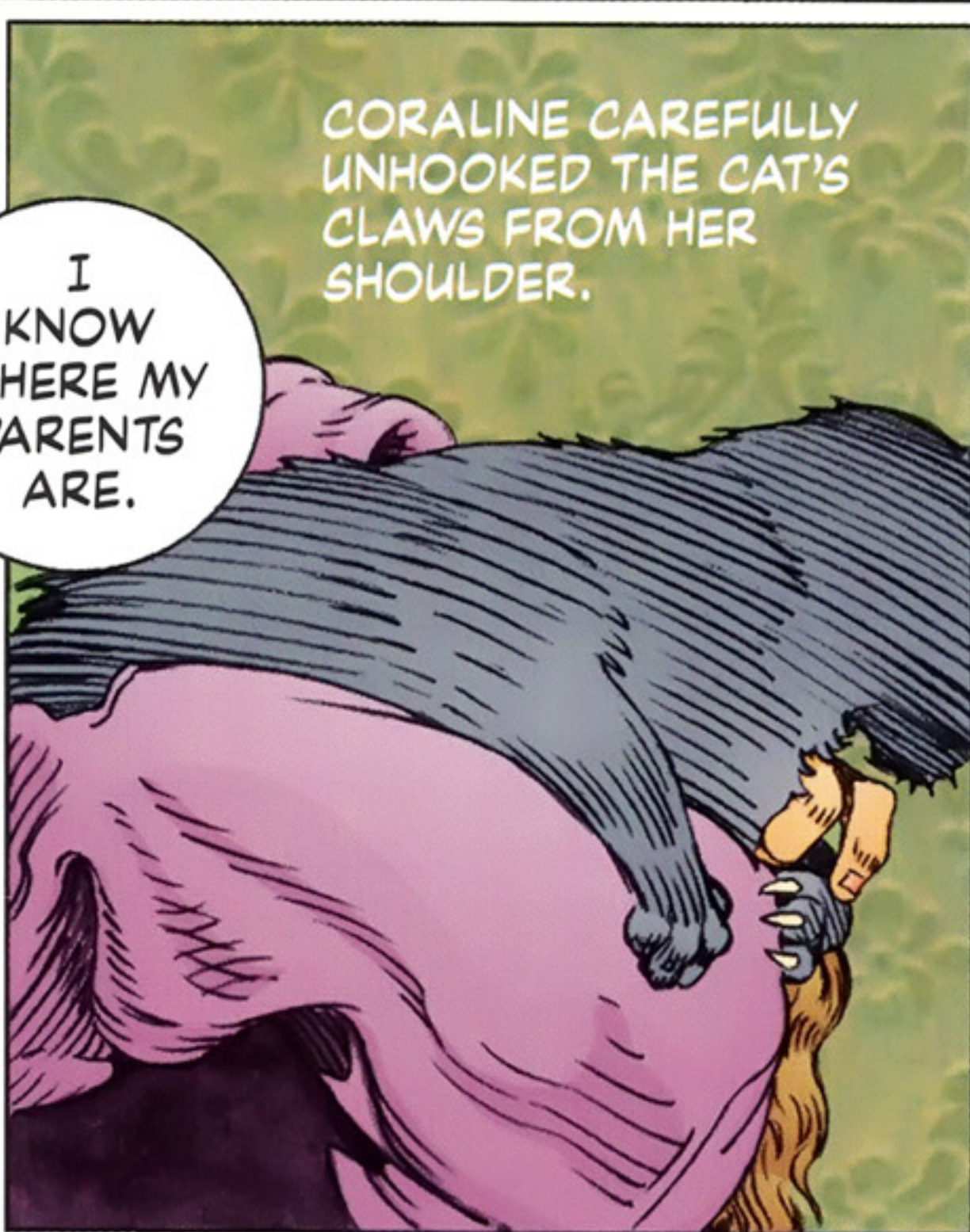


PRODUCE THEM! WELL?

WOULD YOU LIKE TO LOOK IN THE CELLAR AGAIN? I HAVE SOME OTHER INTERESTING THINGS HIDDEN DOWN THERE, YOU KNOW.

NO.

I KNOW WHERE MY PARENTS ARE.



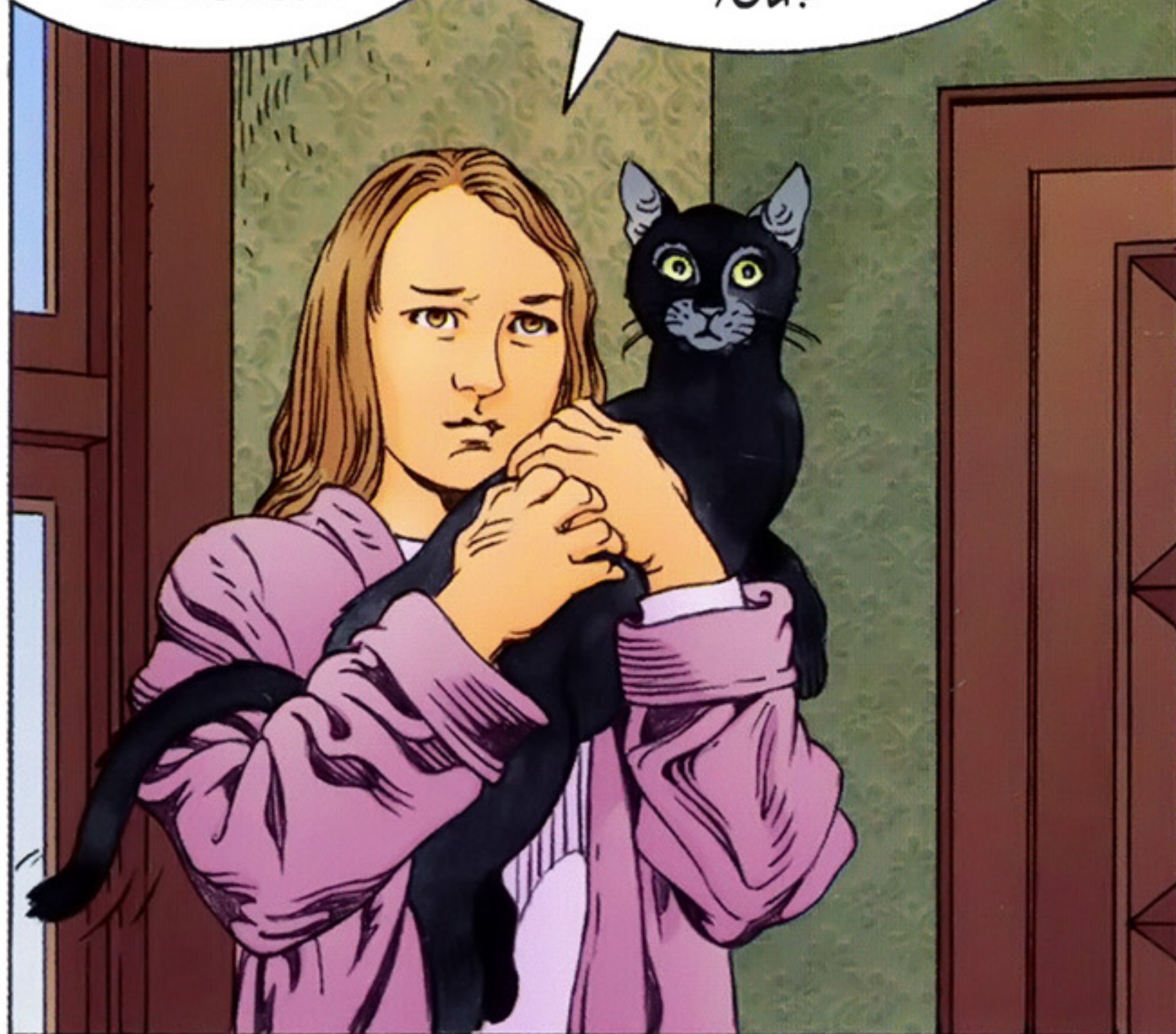
CORALINE CAREFULLY UNHOOKED THE CAT'S CLAWS FROM HER SHOULDER.



WHERE?

IT STANDS TO REASON. I'VE LOOKED EVERYWHERE YOU'D HIDE THEM. THEY AREN'T IN THE HOUSE.

SO I KNOW WHERE THEY HAVE TO BE. YOU'VE HIDDEN THEM IN THE PASSAGEWAY BETWEEN THE HOUSES, HAVEN'T YOU?



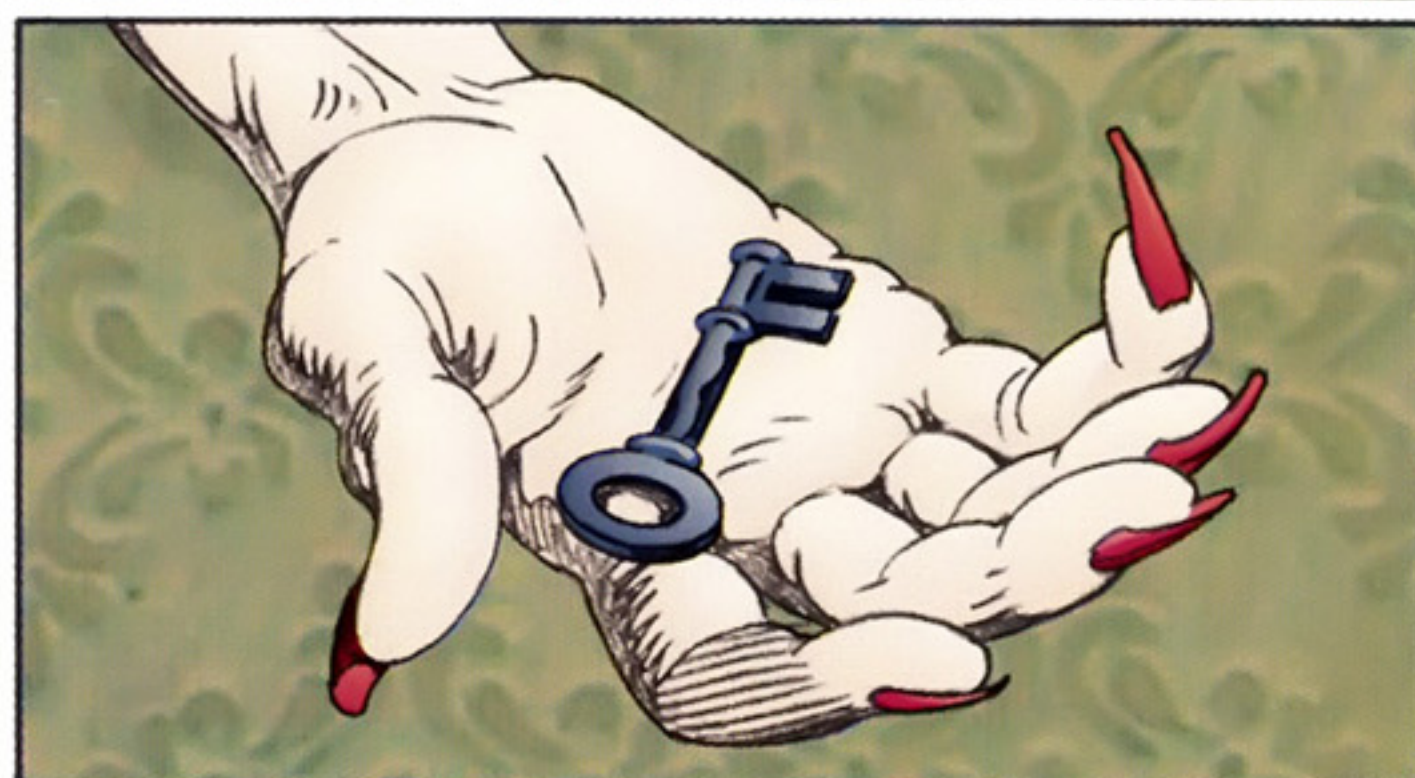
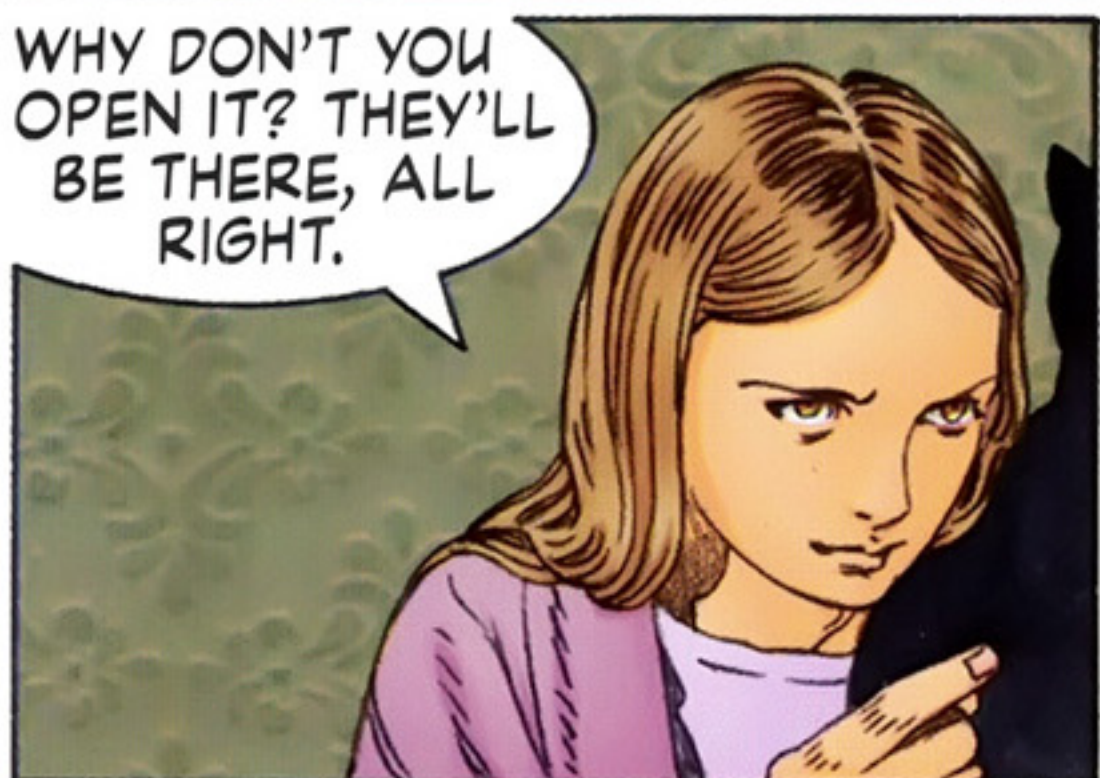
THEY ARE BEHIND THAT DOOR, AREN'T THEY?



OH, THEY ARE, ARE THEY?



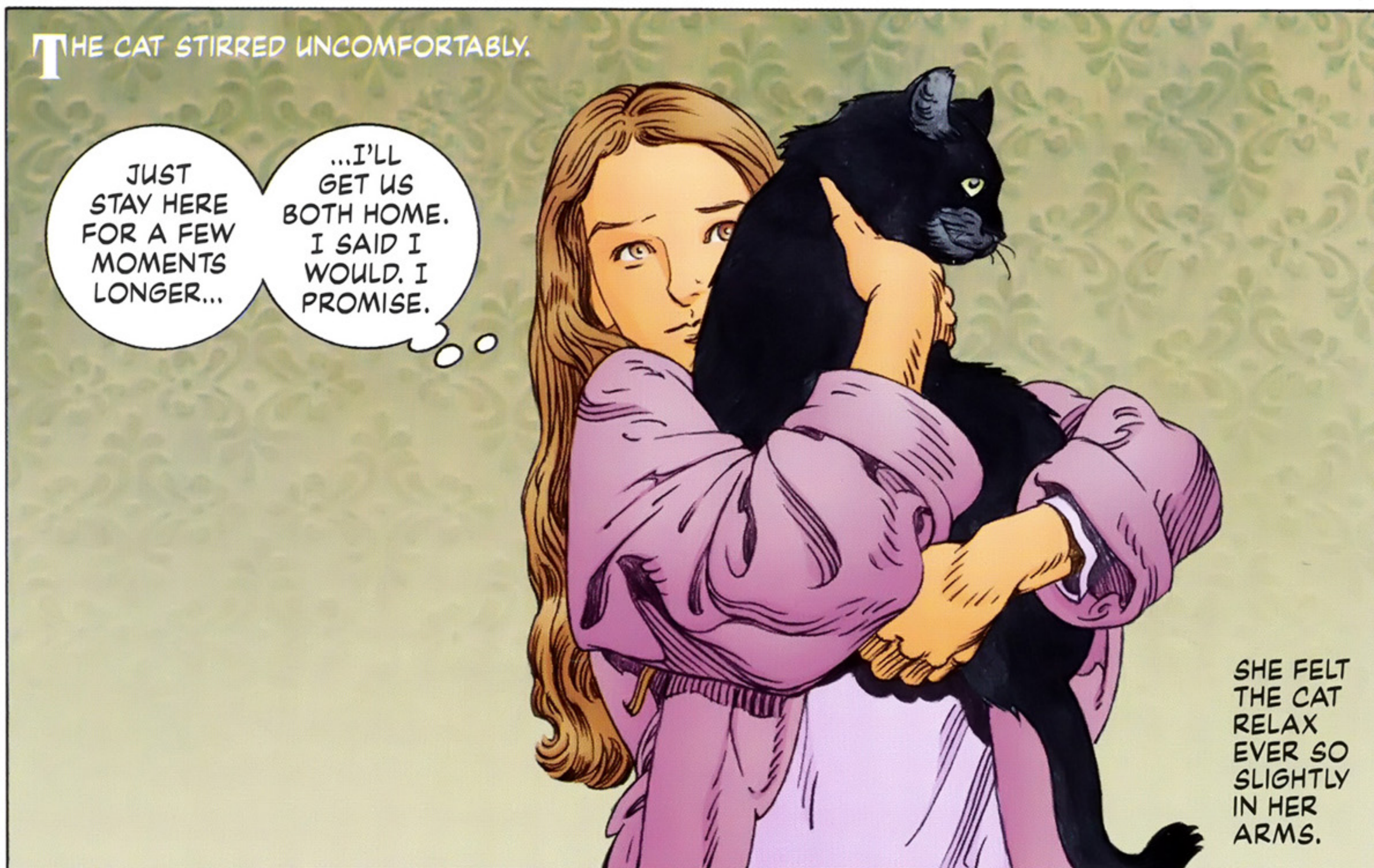
WHY DON'T YOU OPEN IT? THEY'LL BE THERE, ALL RIGHT.



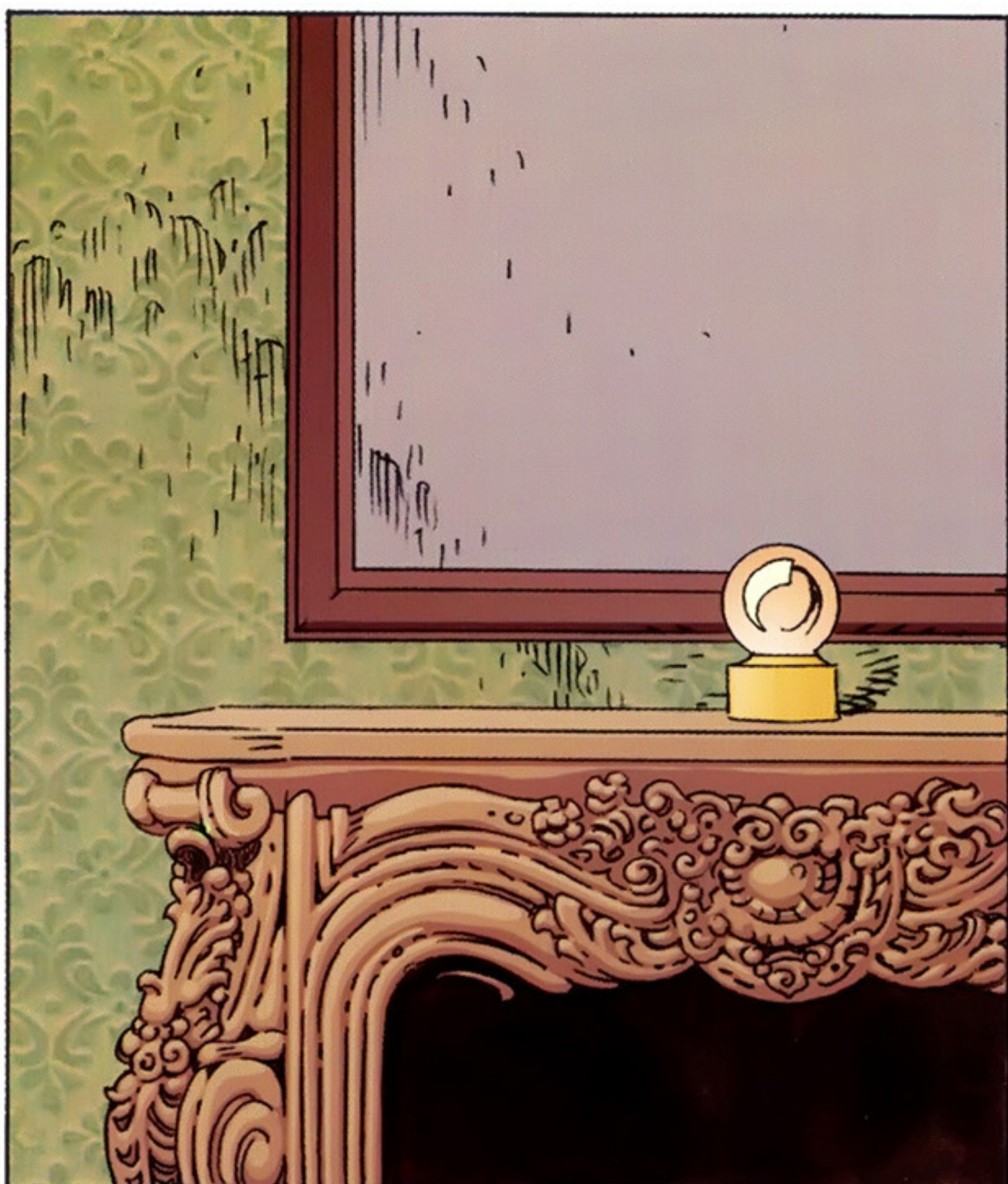
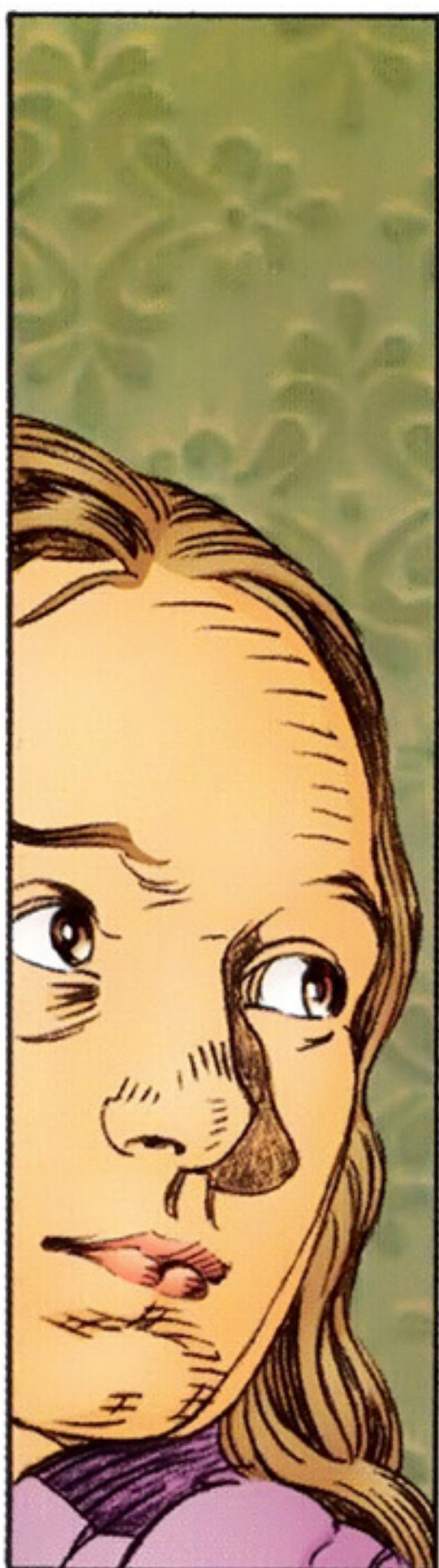
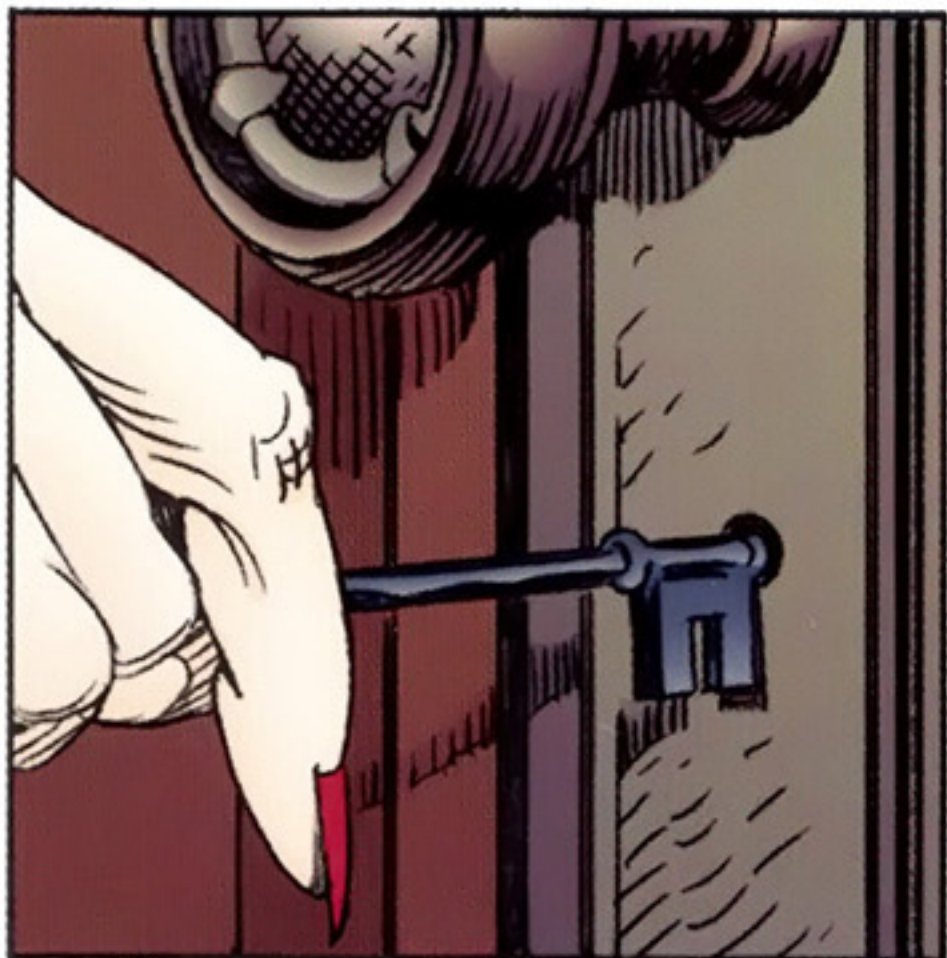
THE CAT STIRRED UNCOMFORTABLY.

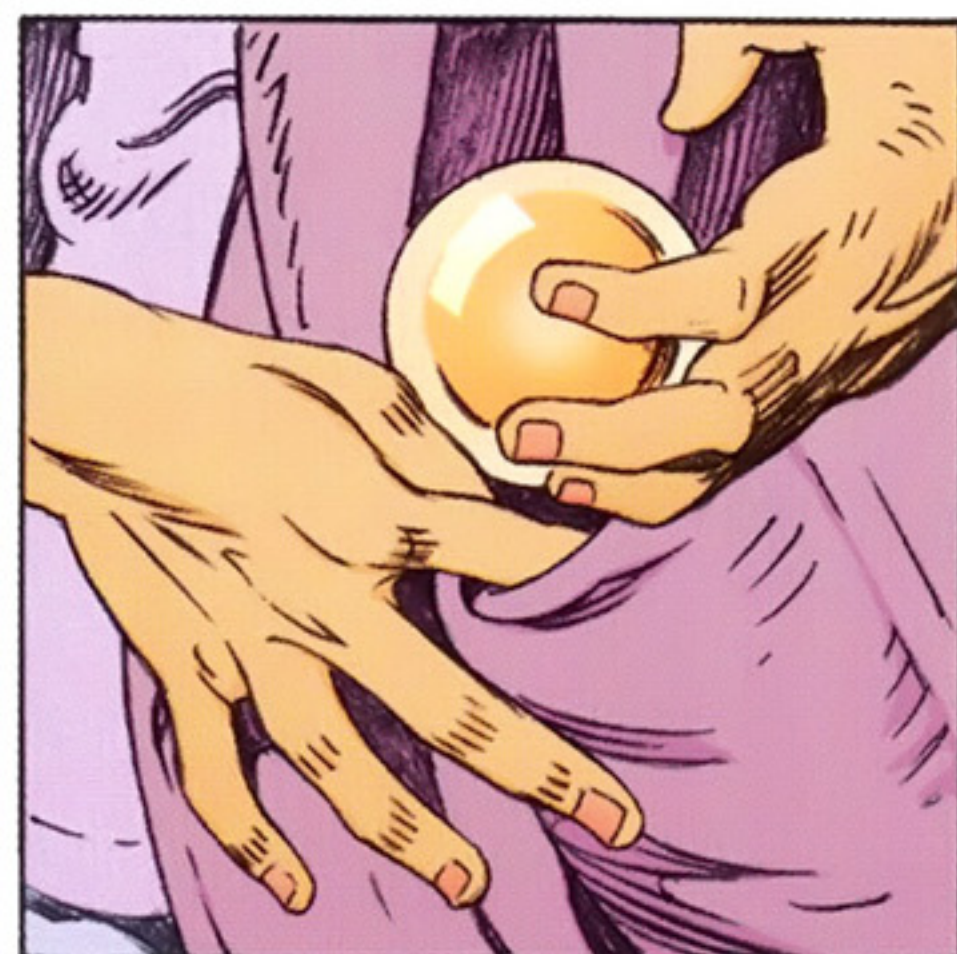
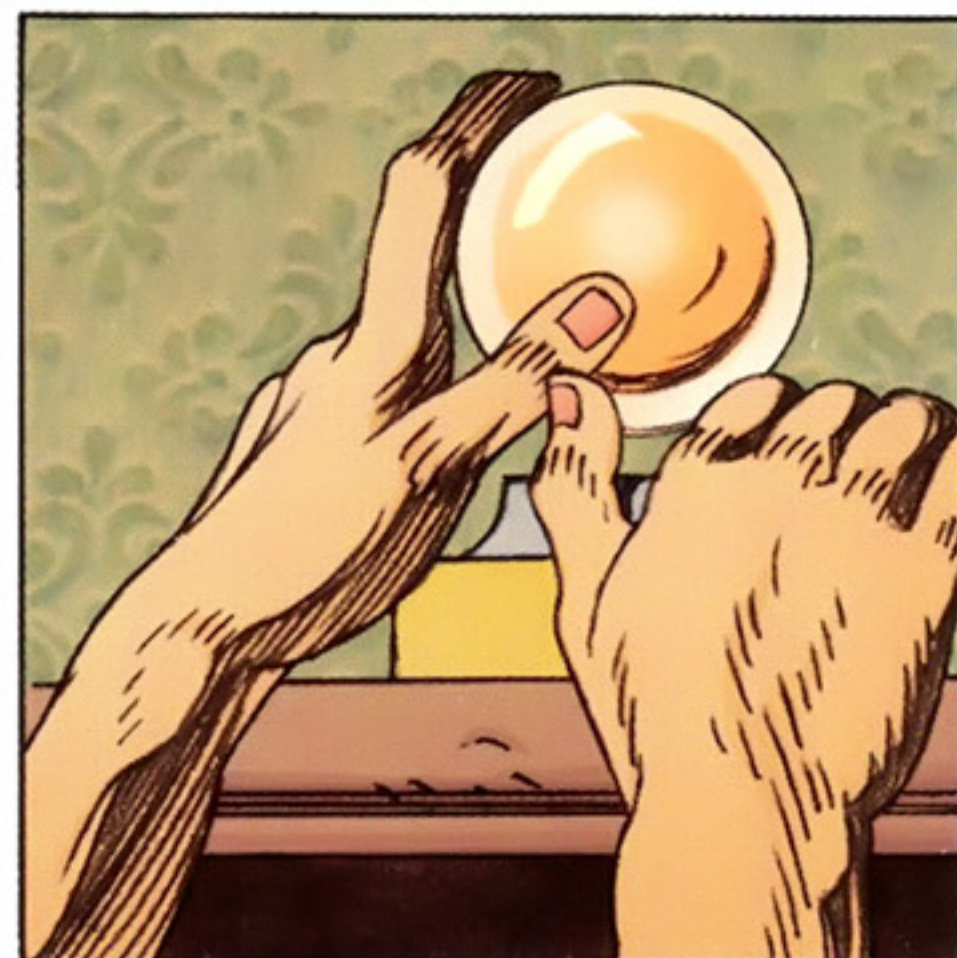
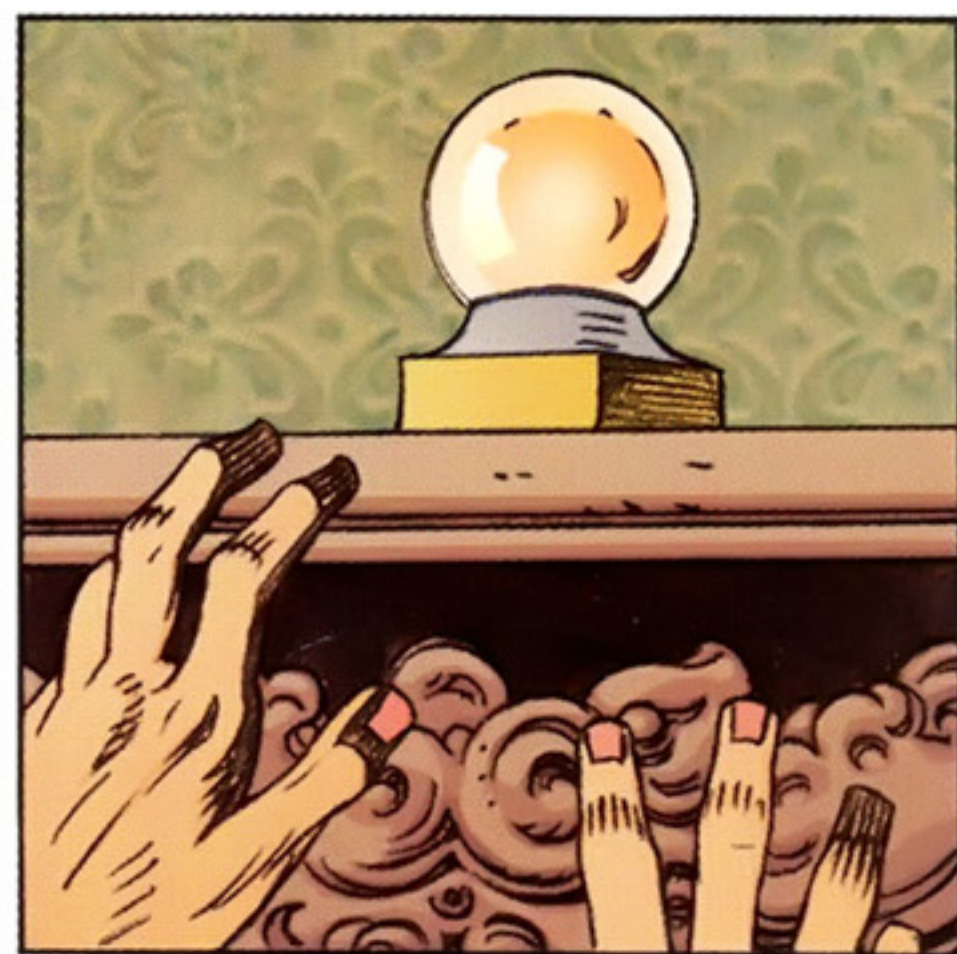
JUST STAY HERE FOR A FEW MOMENTS LONGER...

...I'LL GET US BOTH HOME. I SAID I WOULD. I PROMISE.



SHE FELT THE CAT RELAX EVER SO SLIGHTLY IN HER ARMS.





THE CAT SLASHED THE OTHER MOTHER'S CHEEK. BLOOD RAN FROM THE CUTS—NOT RED BLOOD, BUT A DEEP, TARRY BLACK STUFF.



THE CAT HISSED AND GAVE ONE LAST SCALPEL-SHARP SWIPE AT THE OTHER MOTHER'S FACE.



QUICKLY!



IT WAS COLDER IN THE CORRIDOR AND THE CAT HESITATED...



...THEN...

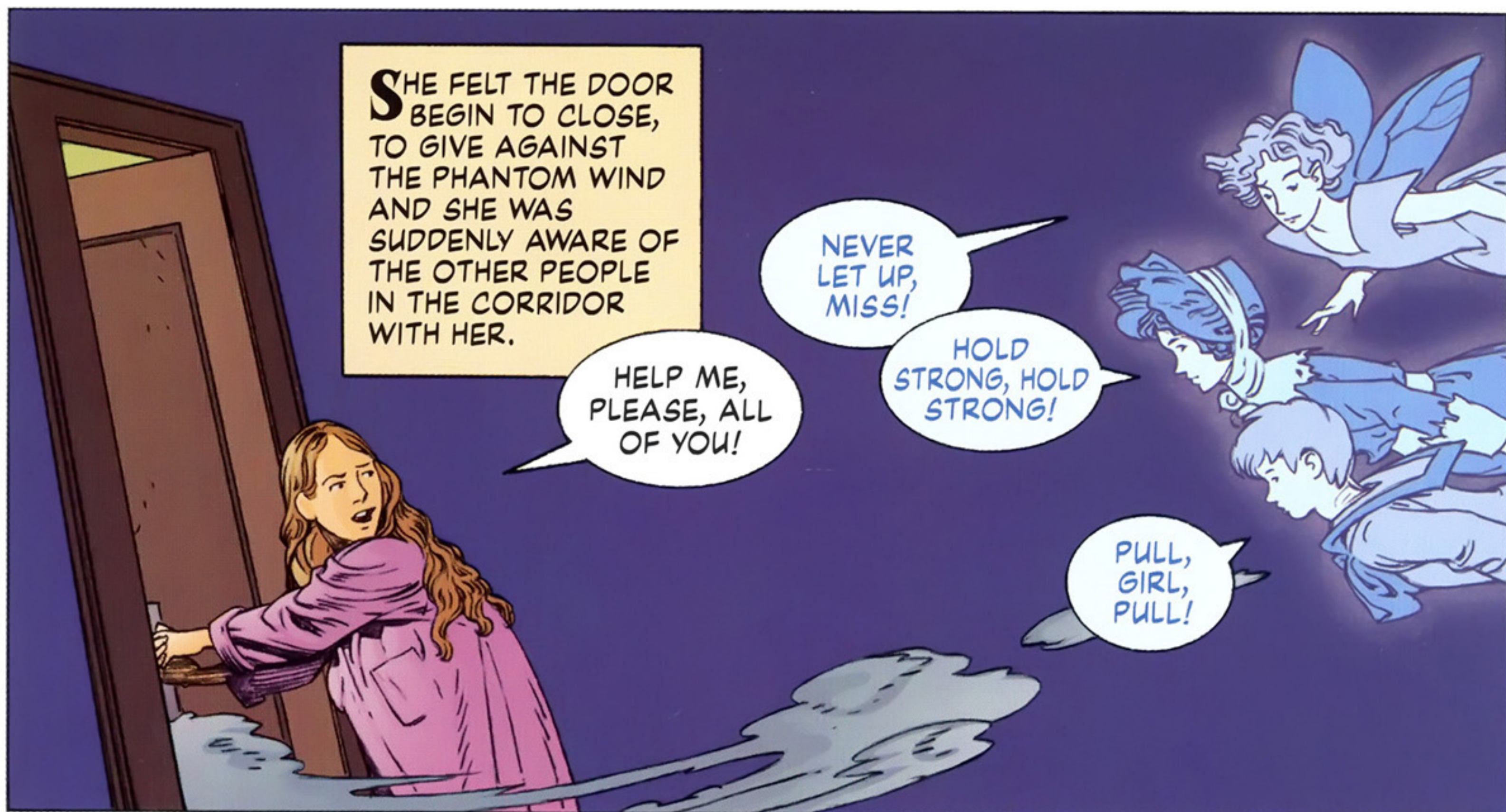
...IT RAN TO CORALINE.



SHUT!

COME ON,
PLEASE!

CORALINE BEGAN TO PULL THE DOOR CLOSED. IT WAS HEAVIER THAN SHE IMAGINED A DOOR COULD BE, AND PULLING IT CLOSED WAS LIKE TRYING TO CLOSE A DOOR AGAINST A HIGH WIND. AND THEN SHE FELT SOMETHING STARTING TO PULL AGAINST HER.



AND THEN A VOICE THAT SOUNDED LIKE HER MOTHER'S—HER **REAL**, WONDERFUL, MADDENING, INFURIATING, GLORIOUS MOTHER—JUST SAID...



...AND THAT WAS ENOUGH.





THEY MOVED THROUGH HER, THEN;
GHOST HANDS LENT HER STRENGTH
THAT SHE NO LONGER POSSESSED.

THERE WAS A FINAL MOMENT
OF RESISTANCE, AS IF SOME-
THING WERE CAUGHT IN THE
DOOR, AND THEN, WITH A
CRASH...



...THE DOOR BANGED CLOSED.

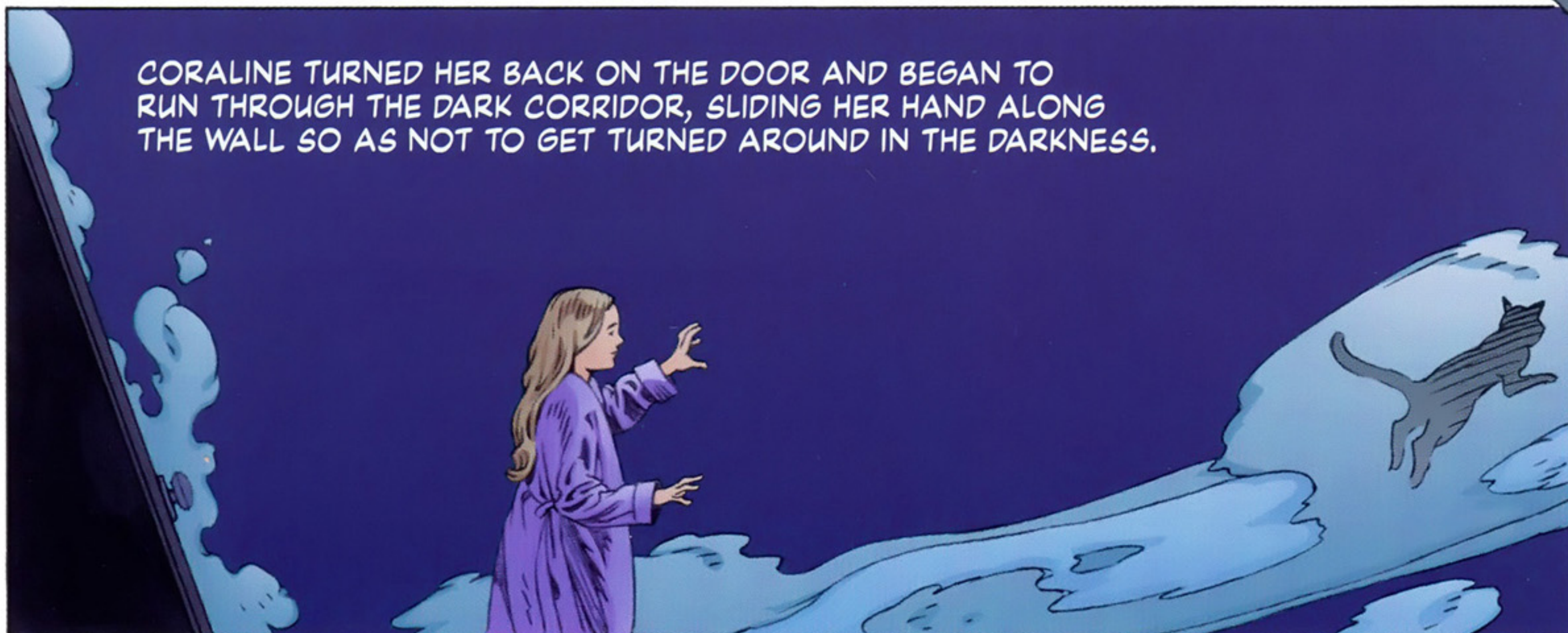


SOMETHING
DROPPED FROM
CORALINE'S HEAD
HEIGHT TO THE
FLOOR. IT LANDED
WITH A SORT OF
SCUTTling
THUMP.

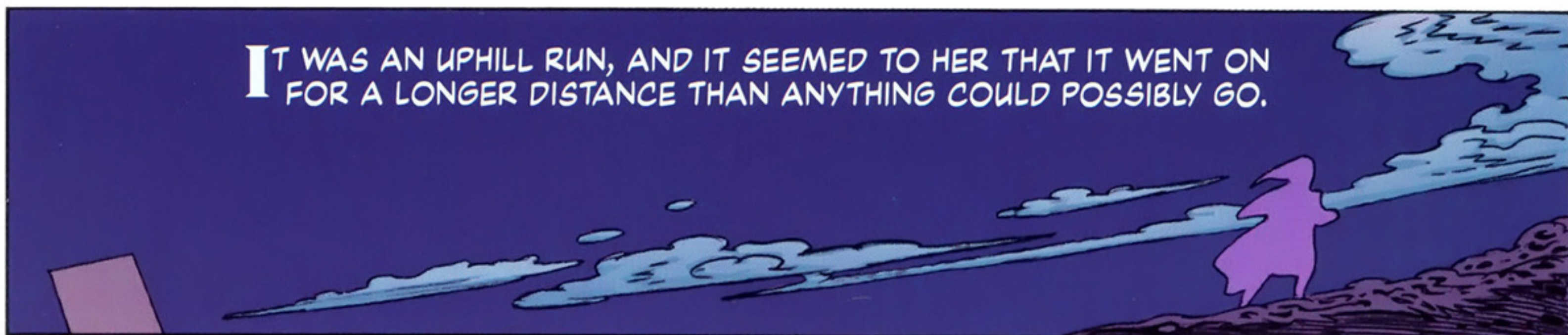


COME ON!
THIS IS NOT A GOOD
PLACE TO BE IN!
QUICKLY!

CORALINE TURNED HER BACK ON THE DOOR AND BEGAN TO
RUN THROUGH THE DARK CORRIDOR, SLIDING HER HAND ALONG
THE WALL SO AS NOT TO GET TURNED AROUND IN THE DARKNESS.



IT WAS AN UPHILL RUN, AND IT SEEMED TO HER THAT IT WENT ON FOR A LONGER DISTANCE THAN ANYTHING COULD POSSIBLY GO.



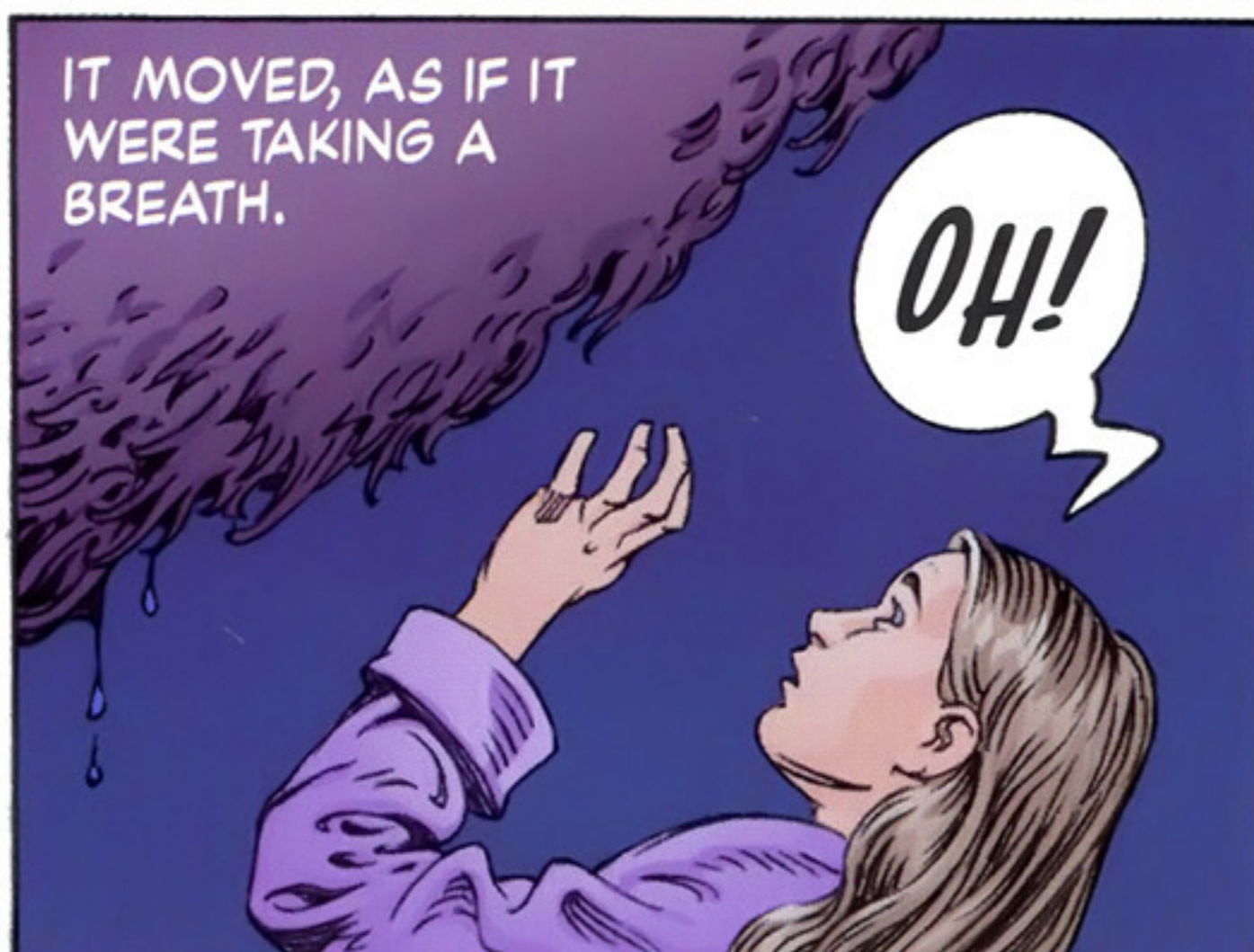
THE WALL SHE WAS TOUCHING FELT WARM AND YIELDING NOW...



...AS IF IT WERE COVERED IN A FINE DOWNY FUR.



IT MOVED, AS IF IT WERE TAKING A BREATH.



WINDS HOWLED IN THE DARK AND, FEARING SHE WOULD BUMP INTO SOMETHING, SHE REACHED OUT FOR THE WALL ONCE MORE.



IT FELT HOT AND WET...



...AS IF SHE HAD PUT HER HAND INTO SOMEBODY'S MOUTH.



AS HER EYES ADJUSTED TO THE DARK SHE COULD SEE, AS FAINTLY GLOWING PATCHES, TWO ADULTS AND THREE CHILDREN.

SHE COULD HEAR THE CAT, TOO, PADDING IN THE DARK IN FRONT OF HER.



AND THERE WAS
SOMETHING ELSE...

...SCUTTling
BETWEEN HER
FEET.

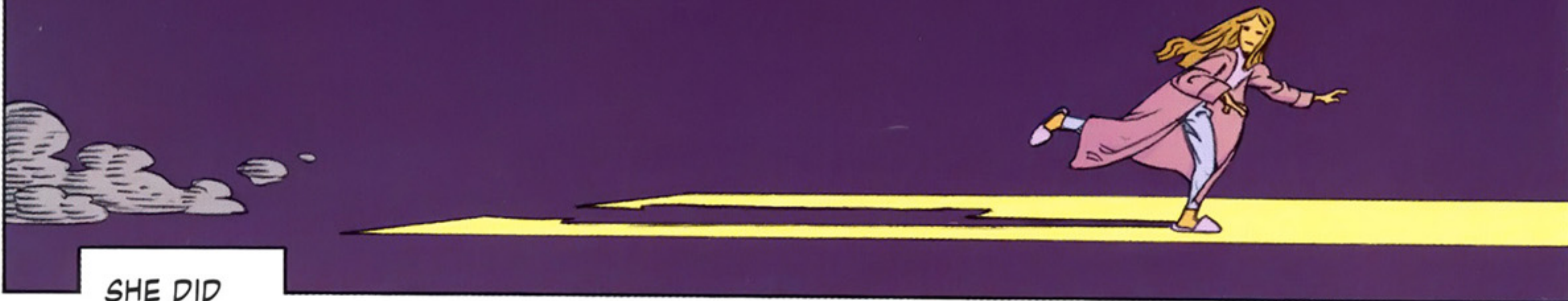
SHE CAUGHT HERSELF BEFORE
SHE WENT DOWN.

SHE KNEW THAT
IF SHE FELL IN
THAT CORRIDOR
SHE MIGHT NEVER
GET UP AGAIN.

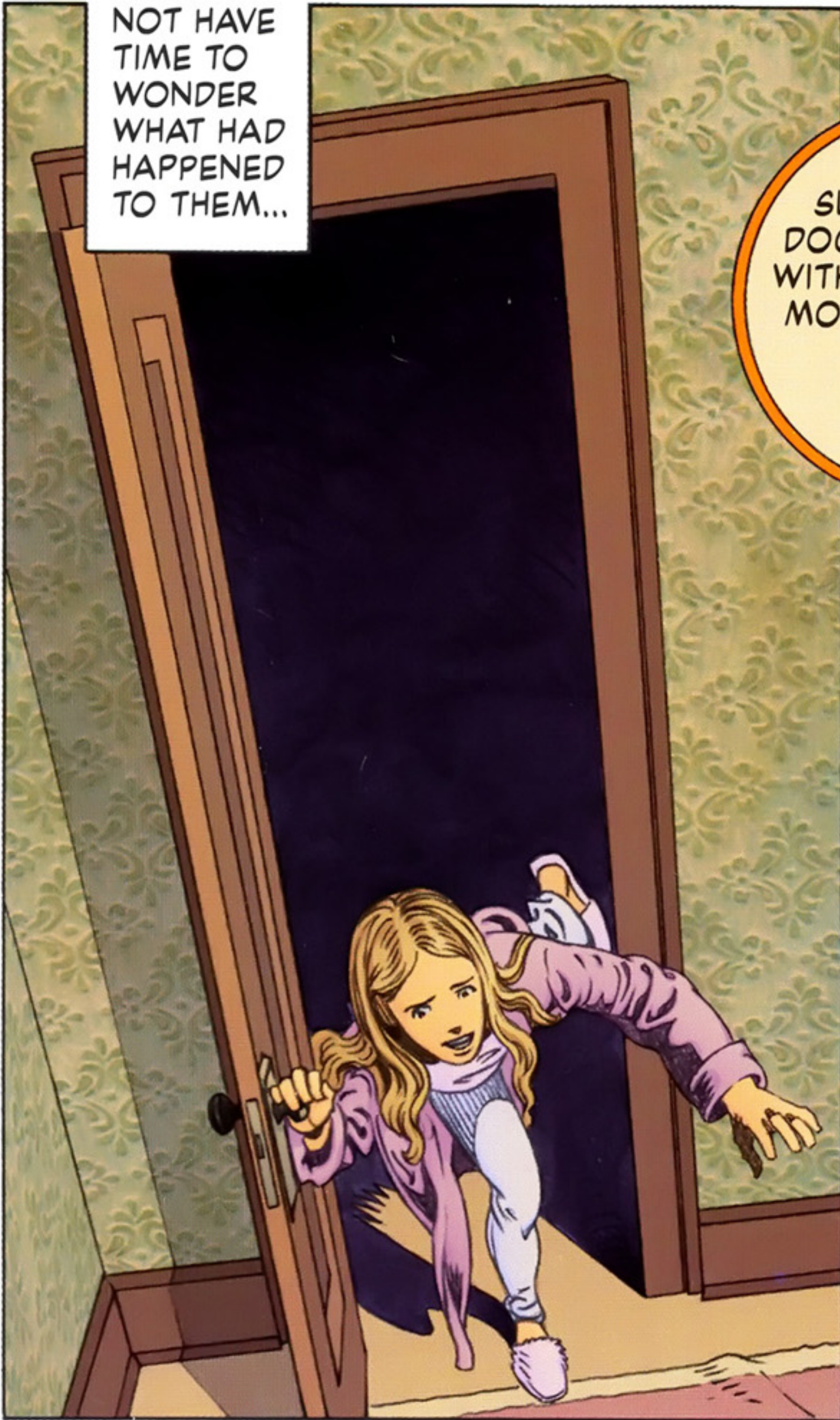
WHATEVER THAT CORRIDOR WAS WAS OLDER BY
FAR THAN THE OTHER MOTHER. IT WAS DEEP,
AND SLOW, AND IT KNEW THAT SHE WAS THERE...

ALMOST
THERE...

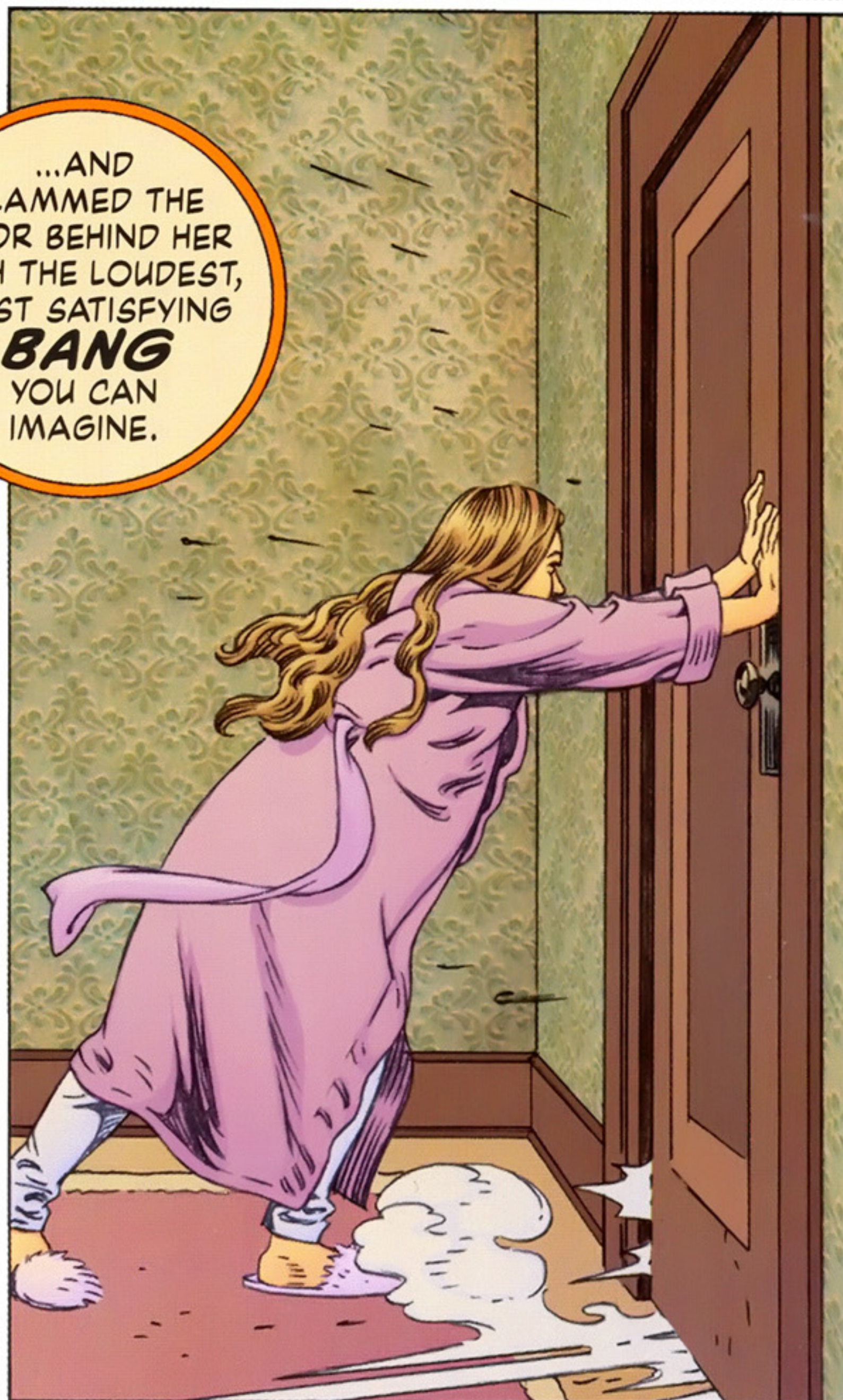
BUT IN THE LIGHT SHE DISCOVERED THAT THE
WRAITHS HAD GONE, AND SHE WAS ALONE.

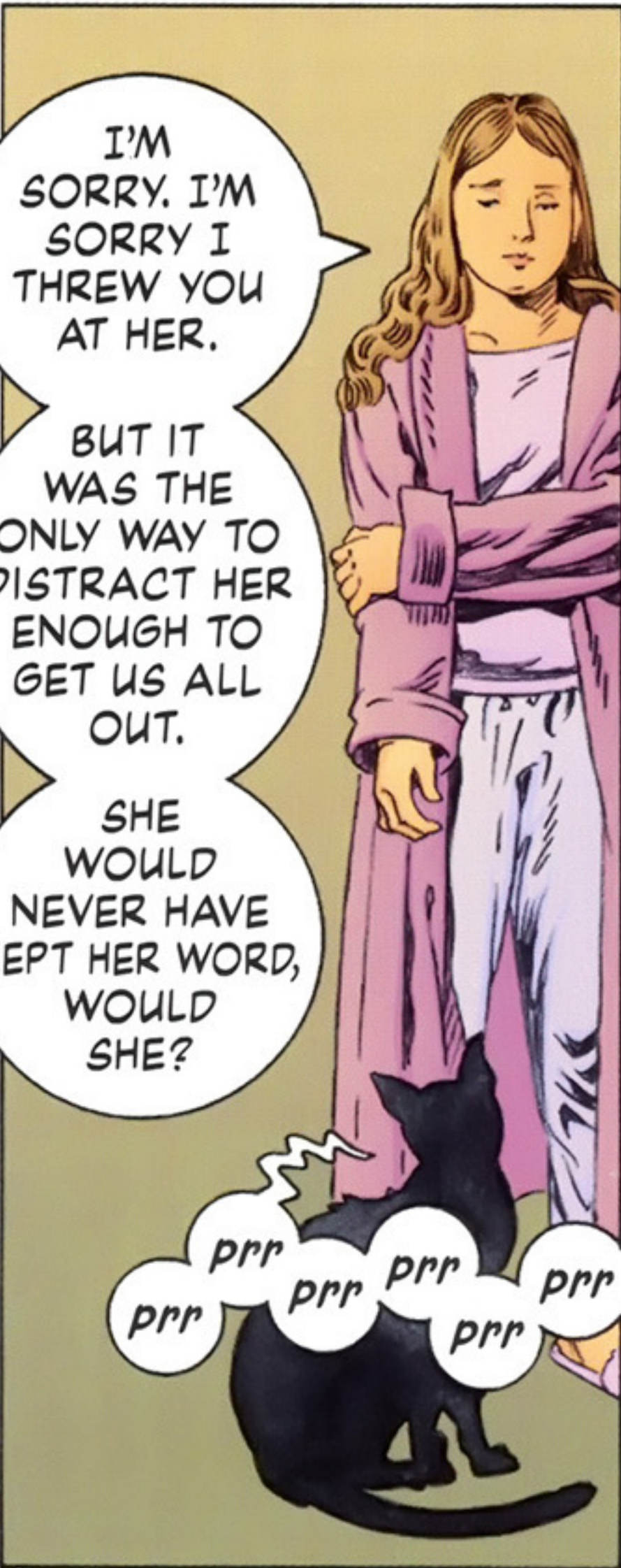


SHE DID
NOT HAVE
TIME TO
WONDER
WHAT HAD
HAPPENED
TO THEM...



...AND
SLAMMED THE
DOOR BEHIND HER
WITH THE LOUDEST,
MOST SATISFYING
BANG
YOU CAN
IMAGINE.





I'M SORRY. I'M SORRY I THREW YOU AT HER.

BUT IT WAS THE ONLY WAY TO DISTRACT HER ENOUGH TO GET US ALL OUT.

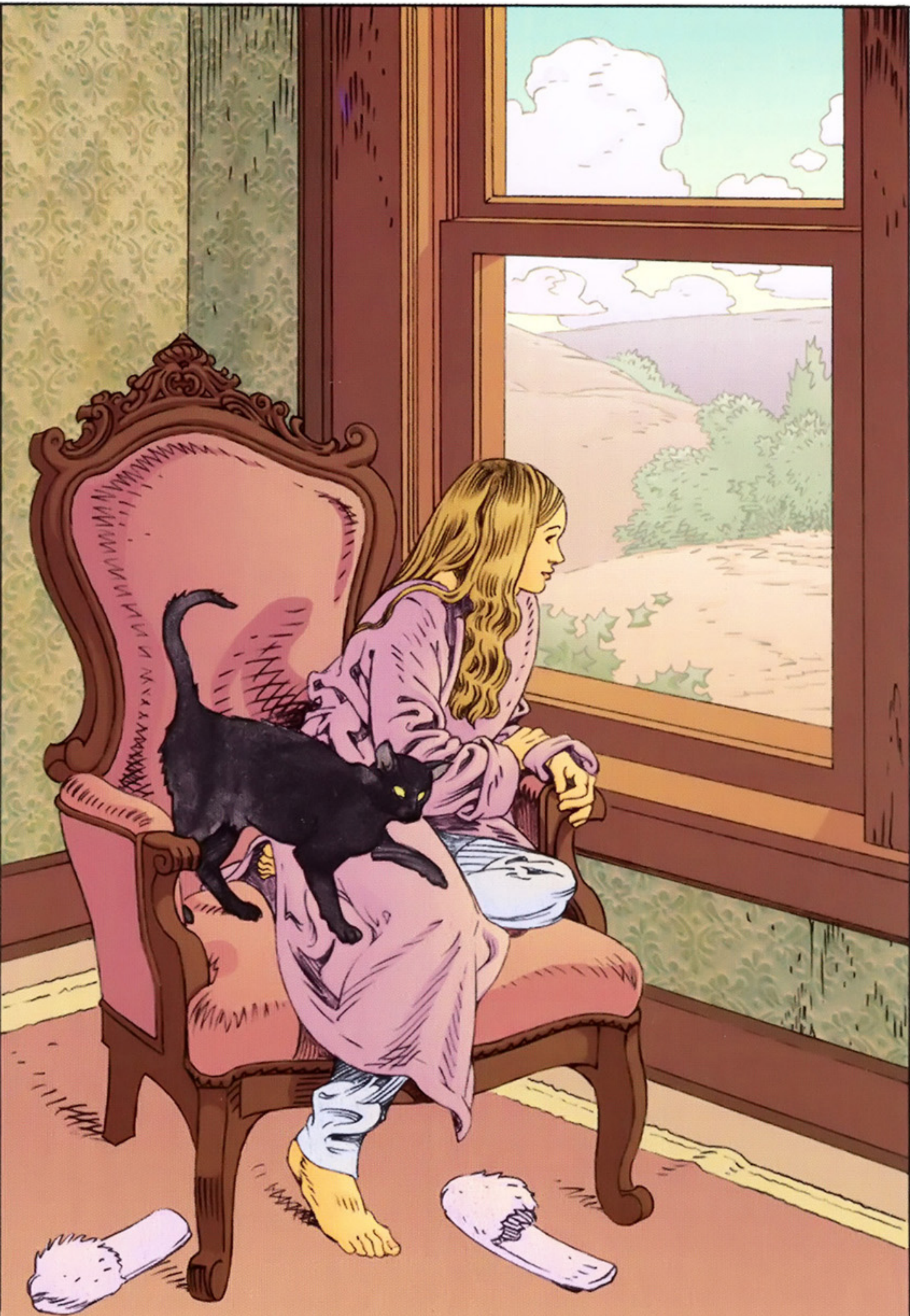
SHE WOULD NEVER HAVE KEPT HER WORD, WOULD SHE?

prrr prrr prrr prrr

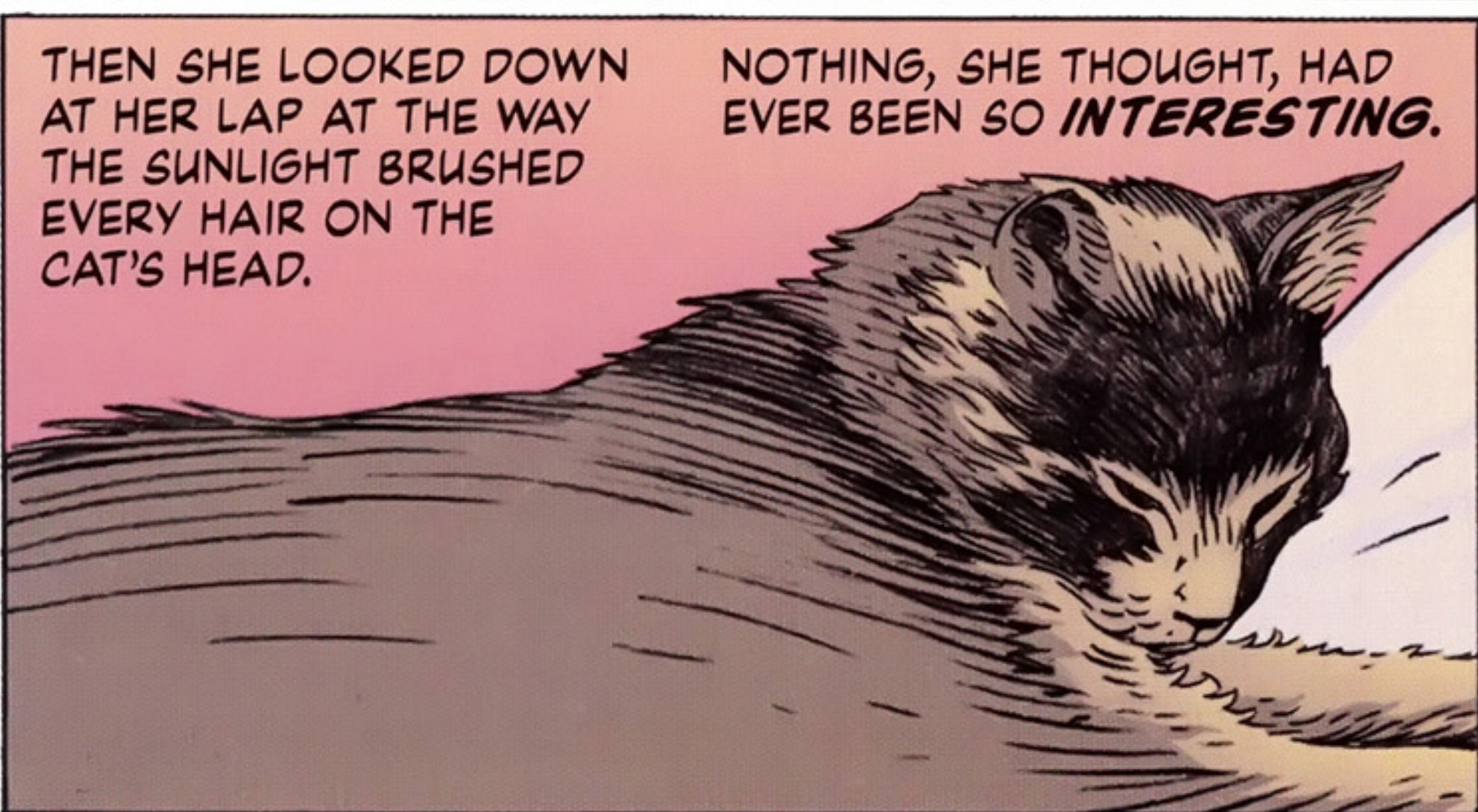


THEN WE'RE FRIENDS?

prrrprrrprrrprrrprrr



THE LIGHT THAT CAME THROUGH THE WINDOW WAS REAL GOLDEN LATE-AFTERNOON DAYLIGHT, NOT A WHITE MIST. THE ROBIN'S-EGG BLUE SKY HAD NEVER SEEMED SO **SKY**, THE WORLD HAD NEVER SEEMED SO **WORLD**.



THEN SHE LOOKED DOWN AT HER LAP AT THE WAY THE SUNLIGHT BRUSHED EVERY HAIR ON THE CAT'S HEAD.

NOTHING, SHE THOUGHT, HAD EVER BEEN SO **INTERESTING**.



AND, CAUGHT UP IN THE INTERESTINGNESS OF THE WORLD, CORALINE BARELY NOTICED WHEN SHE FELL INTO A DEEP AND DREAMLESS SLEEP.

CORALINE?
DARLING, WHAT A
FUNNY PLACE TO
FALL ASLEEP. AND
REALLY, THIS ROOM
IS ONLY FOR BEST. WE
LOOKED ALL OVER
THE HOUSE FOR
YOU.

I'M
SORRY.
I FELL
ASLEEP.

I CAN
SEE THAT. AND
WHEREVER DID THE
CAT COME FROM? HE
WAS WAITING BY THE
FRONT DOOR. SHOT
OUT LIKE A
BULLET WHEN I
CAME IN.

PROB-
ABLY HAD
THINGS TO
DO.

THEN SHE
HUGGED
HER MOTHER
SO TIGHTLY
HER ARMS
BEGAN TO
ACHE.

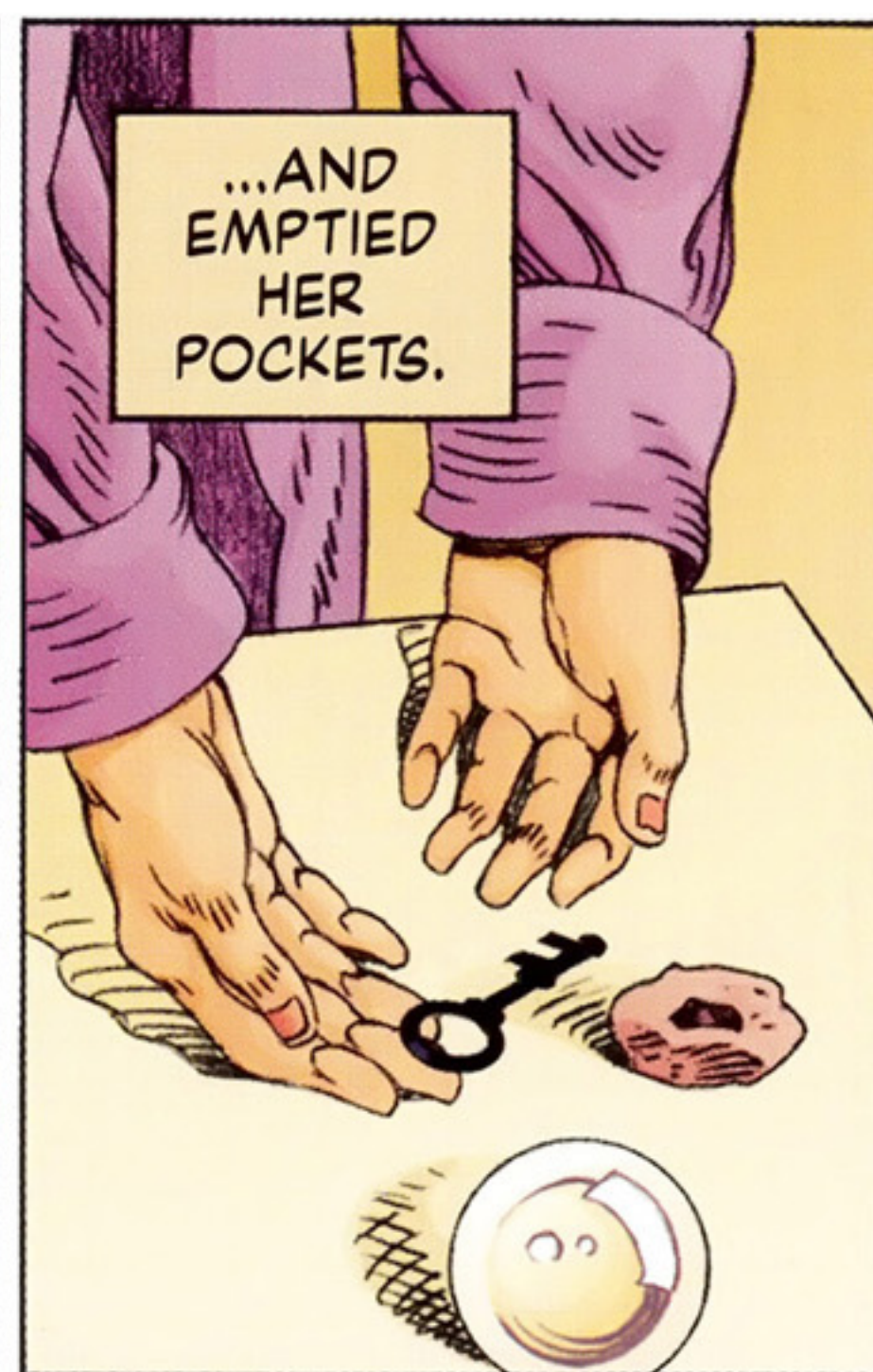
DINNER IN FIFTEEN
MINUTES. DON'T FORGET
TO WASH YOUR HANDS. AND
JUST **LOOK** AT THOSE
PAJAMA BOTTOMS. WHAT
DID YOU DO TO YOUR
POOR KNEE?

I TRIPPED.

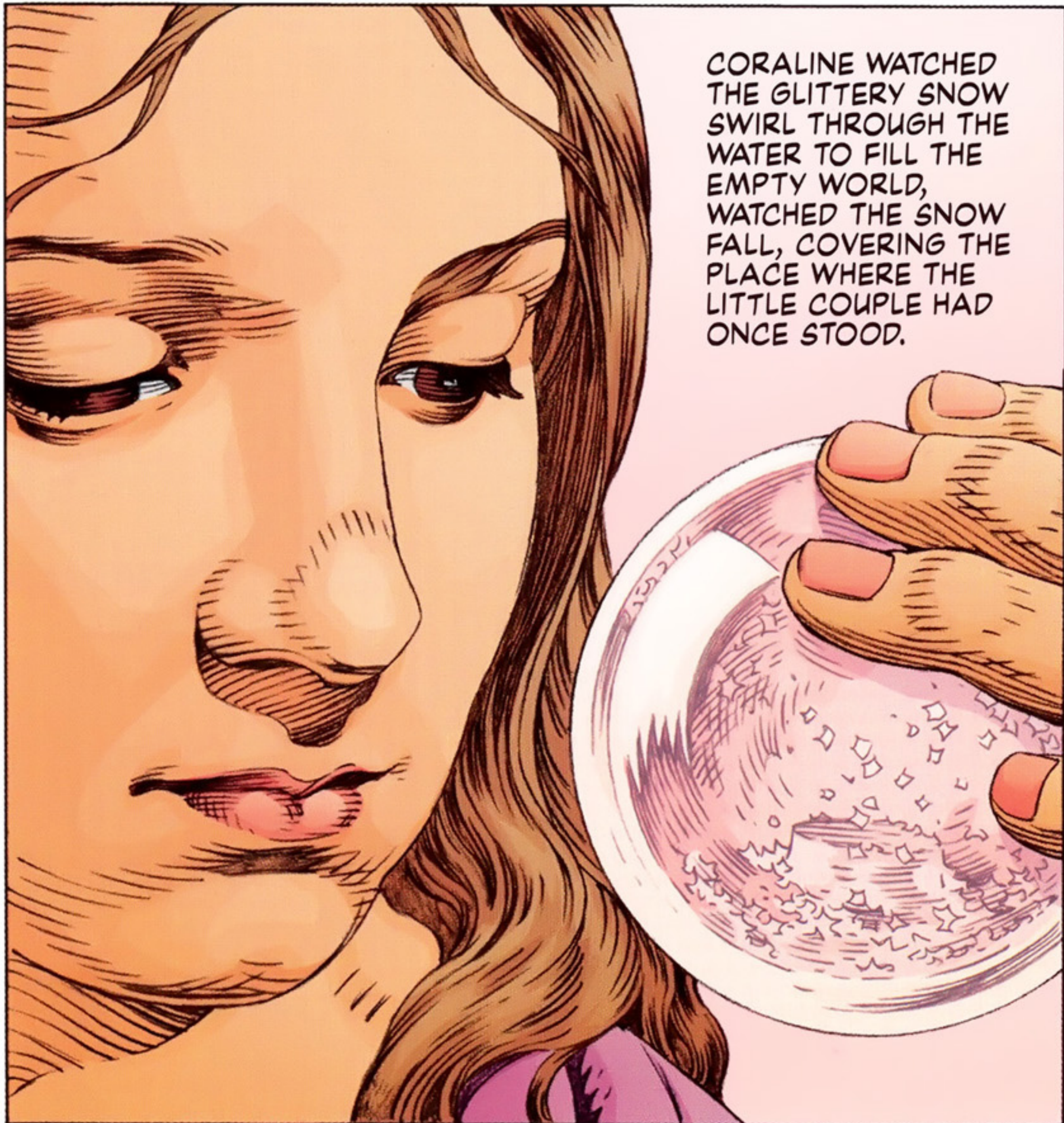
AND SHE WENT INTO THE
BATHROOM TO CLEAN HER
CUTS AND SCRAPES.



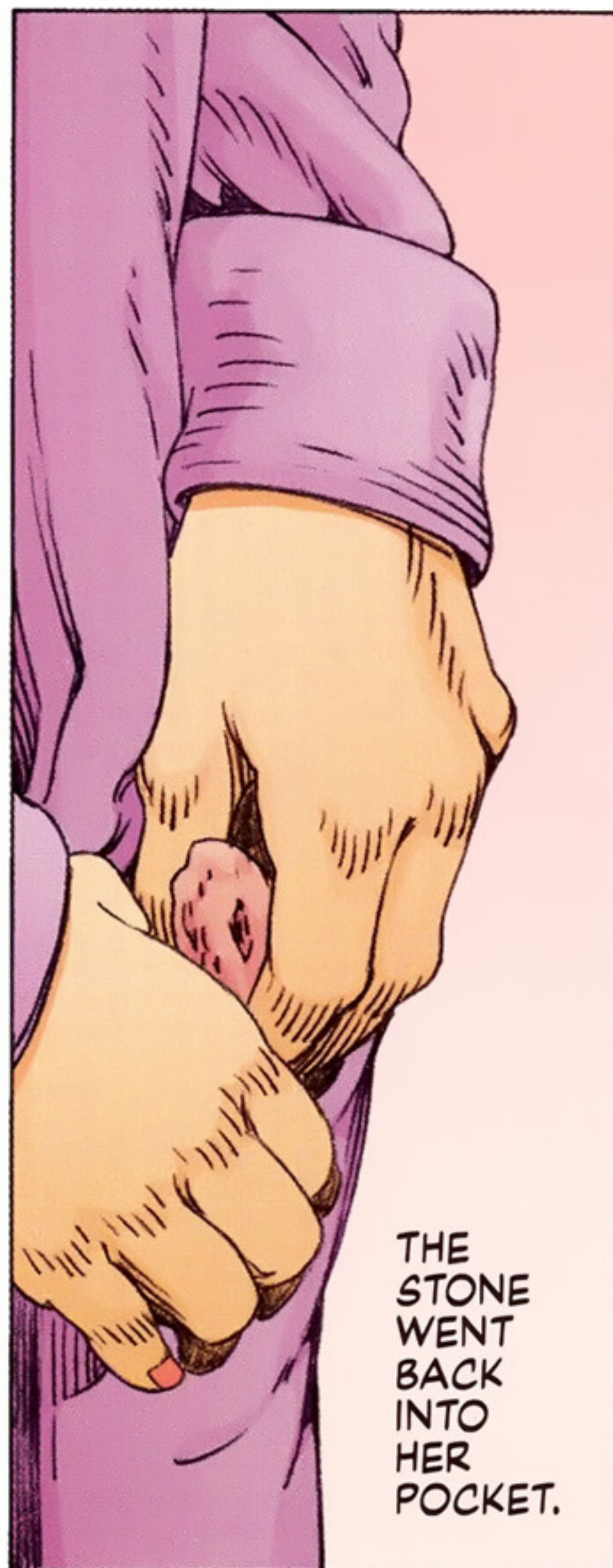
SHE WENT INTO
HER BEDROOM—
HER REAL BEDROOM,
HER TRUE BEDROOM...



...AND
EMPTIED
HER
POCKETS.

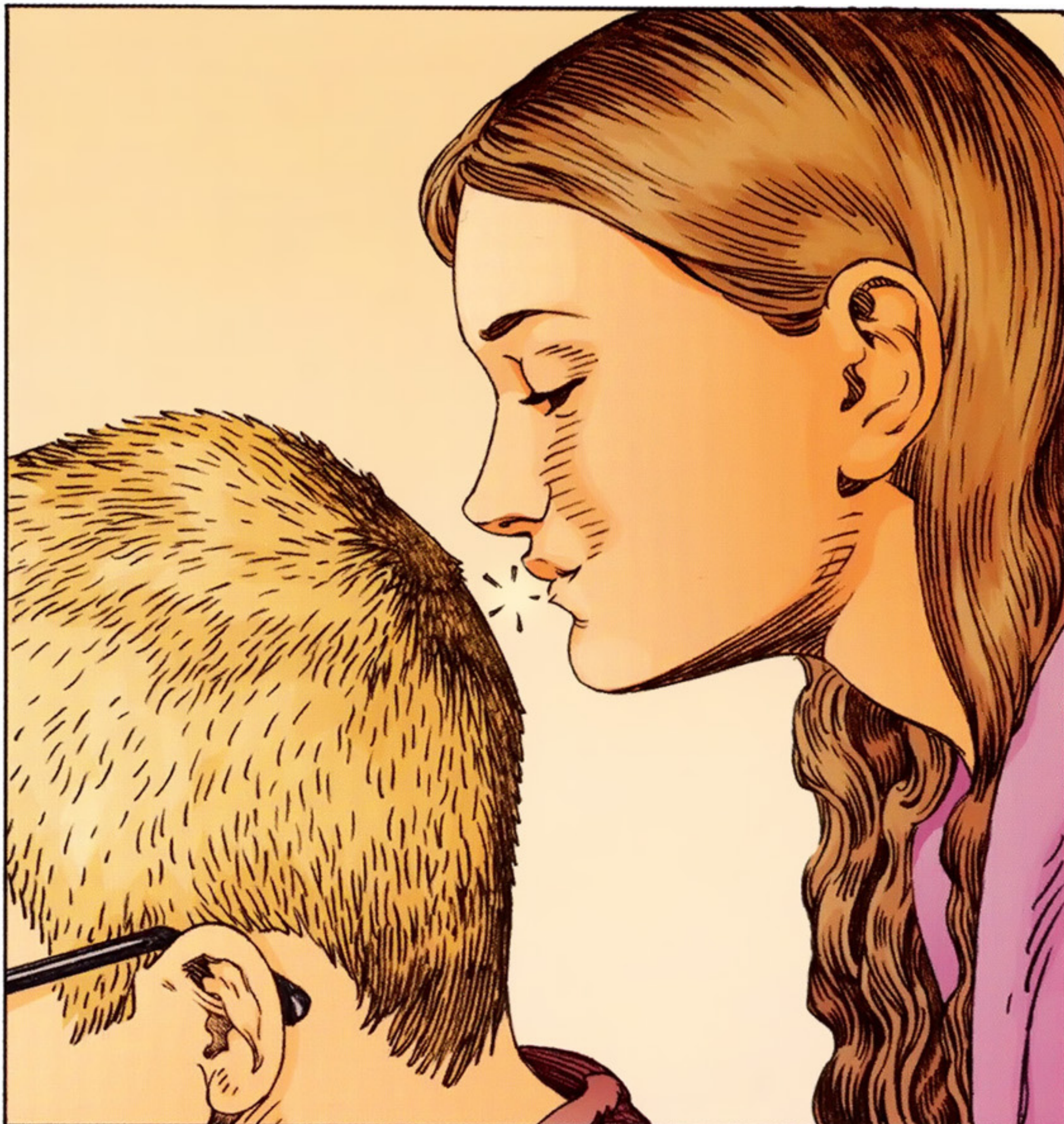


CORALINE WATCHED
THE GLITTERY SNOW
SWIRL THROUGH THE
WATER TO FILL THE
EMPTY WORLD,
WATCHED THE SNOW
FALL, COVERING THE
PLACE WHERE THE
LITTLE COUPLE HAD
ONCE STOOD.



THE
STONE
WENT
BACK
INTO
HER
POCKET.

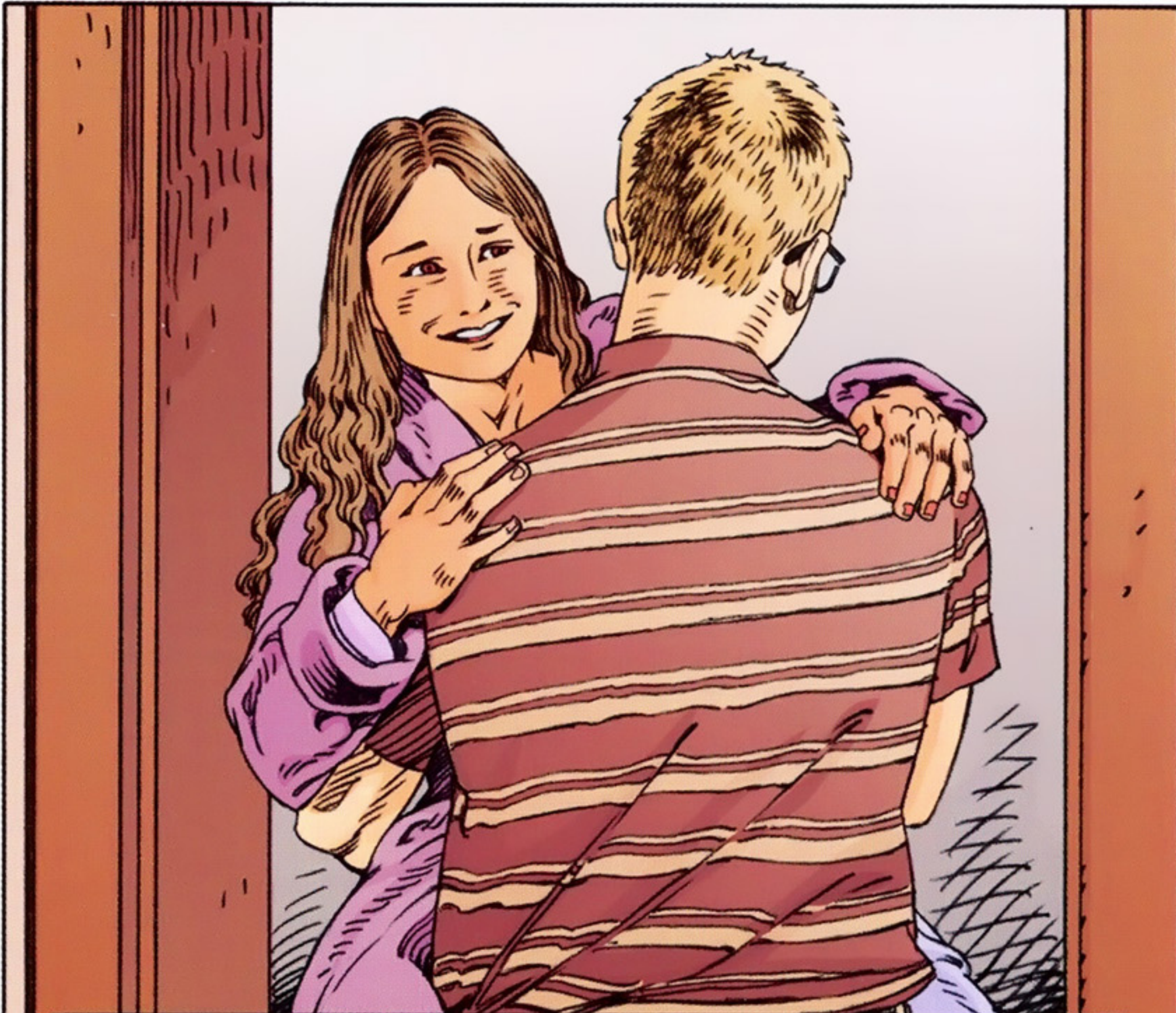
SHE WALKED TO HER FATHER'S STUDY. HE HAD HIS BACK TO HER, BUT SHE KNEW, JUST ON SEEING HIM, THAT HIS EYES, WHEN HE TURNED AROUND, WOULD BE HER FATHER'S KIND GRAY EYES.



HULLO.
WHAT
WAS THAT
FOR?



NOTHING.
I JUST MISS
YOU SOME-
TIMES.



THEN, FOR NO REASON AT ALL, HE PICKED CORALINE UP, WHICH HE HAD NOT DONE FOR SUCH A LONG TIME, NOT SINCE HE HAD STARTED POINTING OUT TO HER SHE WAS MUCH TOO OLD TO BE CARRIED, AND HE CARRIED HER INTO THE KITCHEN.

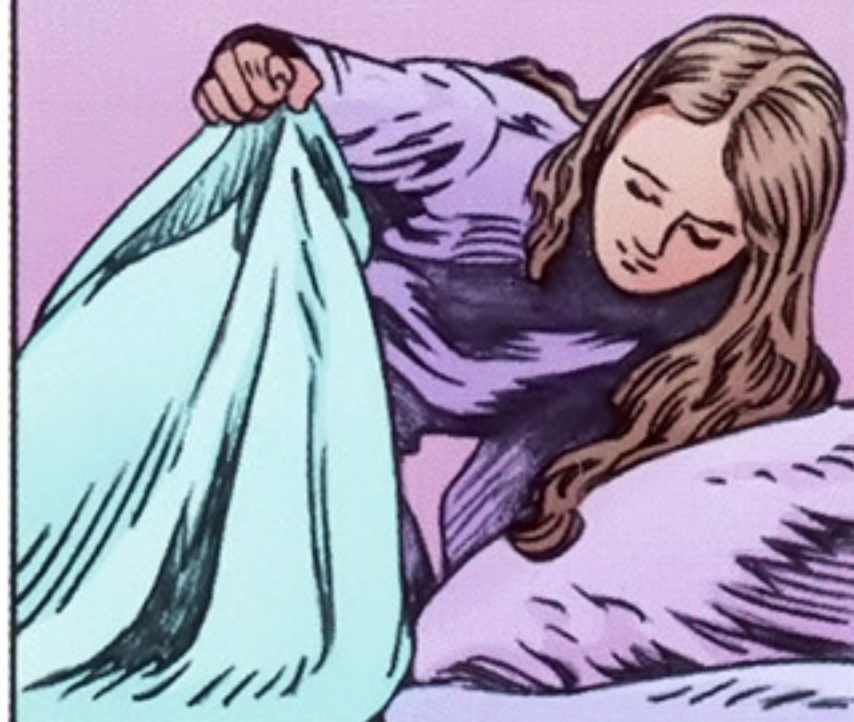
DINNER THAT NIGHT WAS PIZZA, HOMEMADE BY HER FATHER. IT HAD SLICES OF GREEN PEPPER ON IT AND, OF ALL THINGS, PINEAPPLE CHUNKS. CORALINE ATE THE ENTIRE SLICE SHE WAS GIVEN.

WELL...

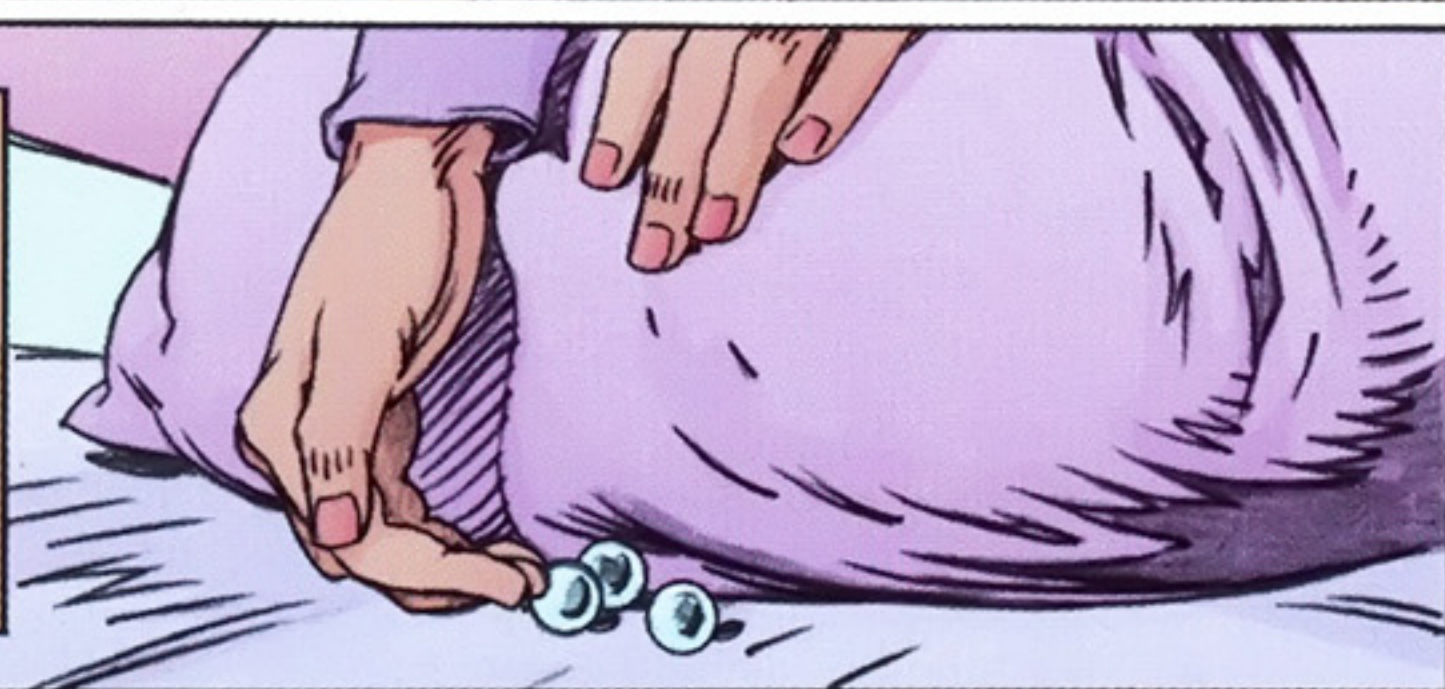
...SHE ATE EVERY-
THING EXCEPT FOR
THE PINEAPPLE
CHUNKS.



AND SOON ENOUGH IT
WAS BEDTIME.



CORALINE KEPT THE
KEY AROUND HER
NECK, BUT SHE PUT
THE GRAY MARBLES
BENEATH HER PILLOW;
AND IN BED THAT
NIGHT...



...SHE DREAMED A DREAM.



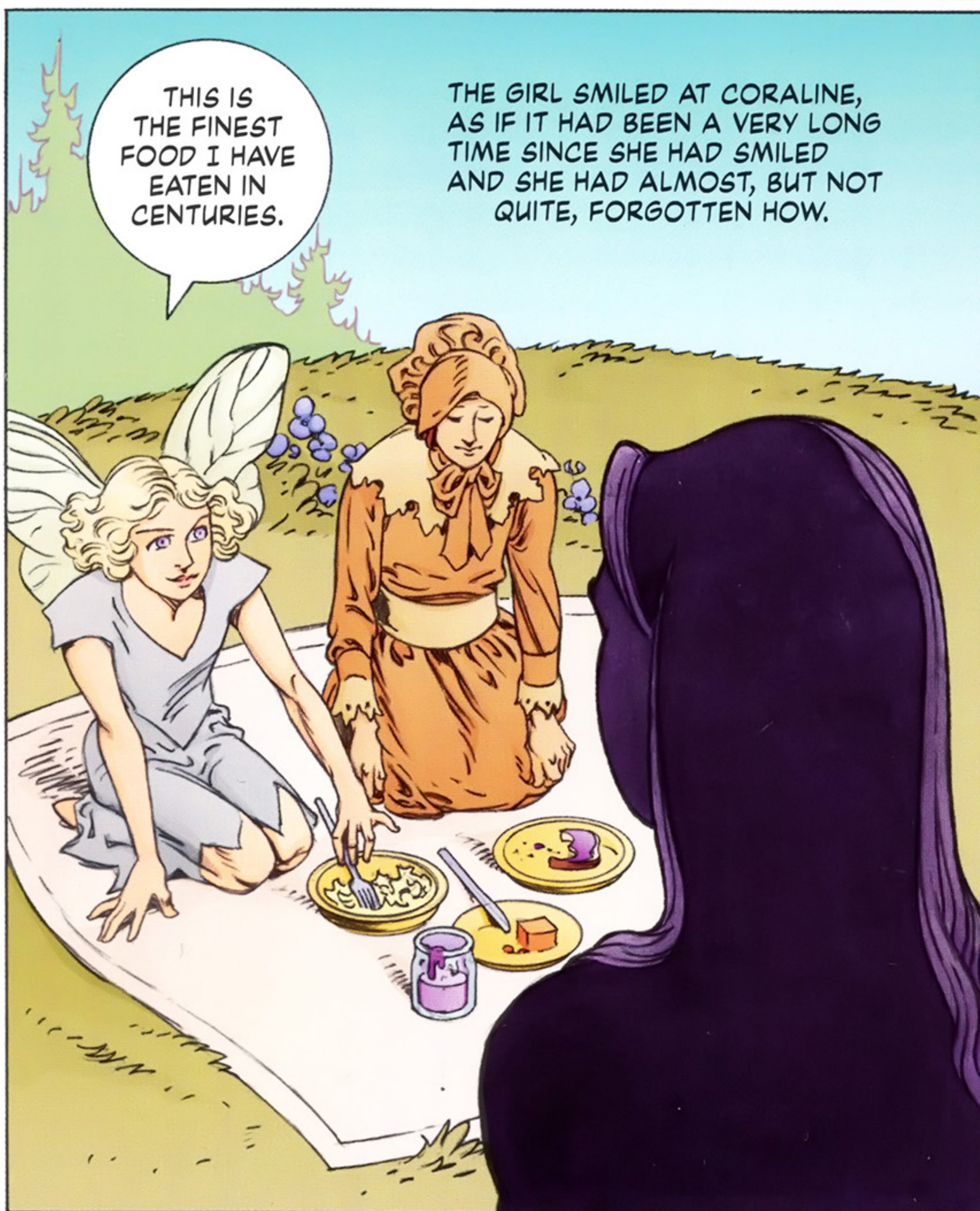
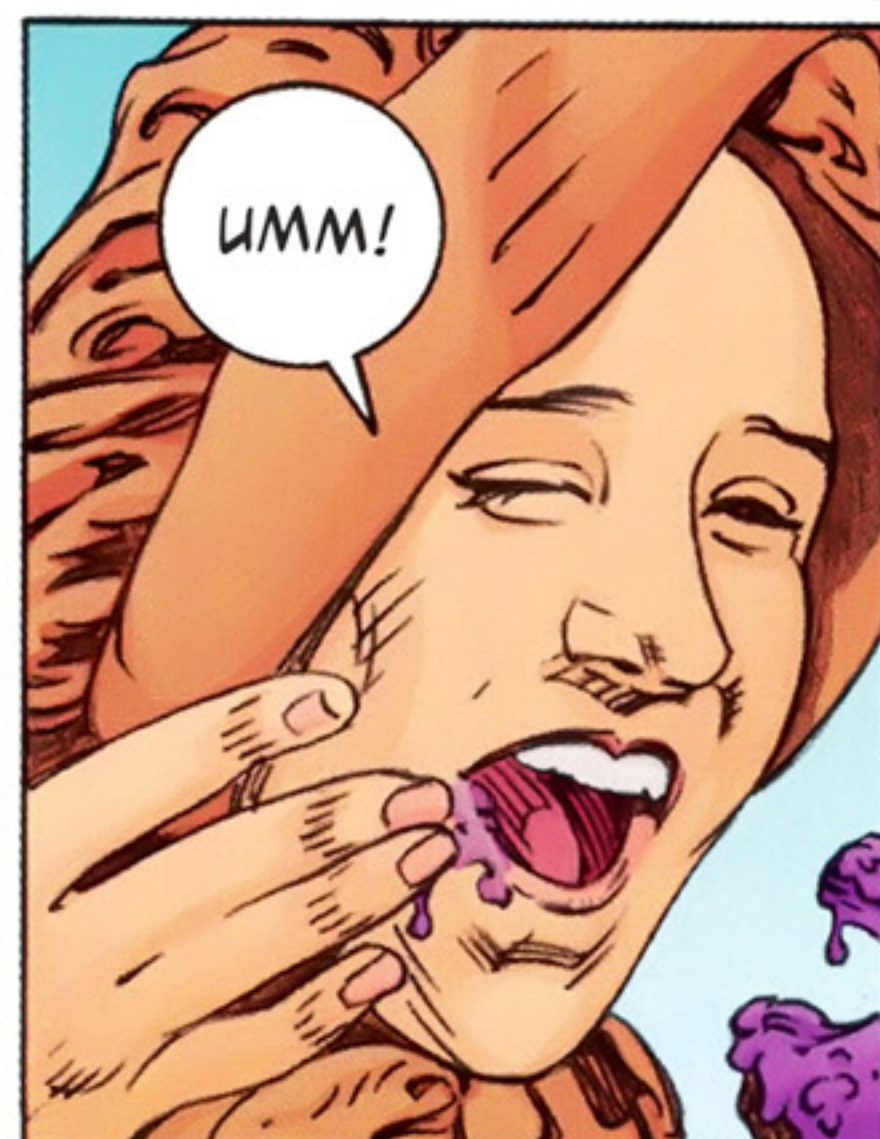
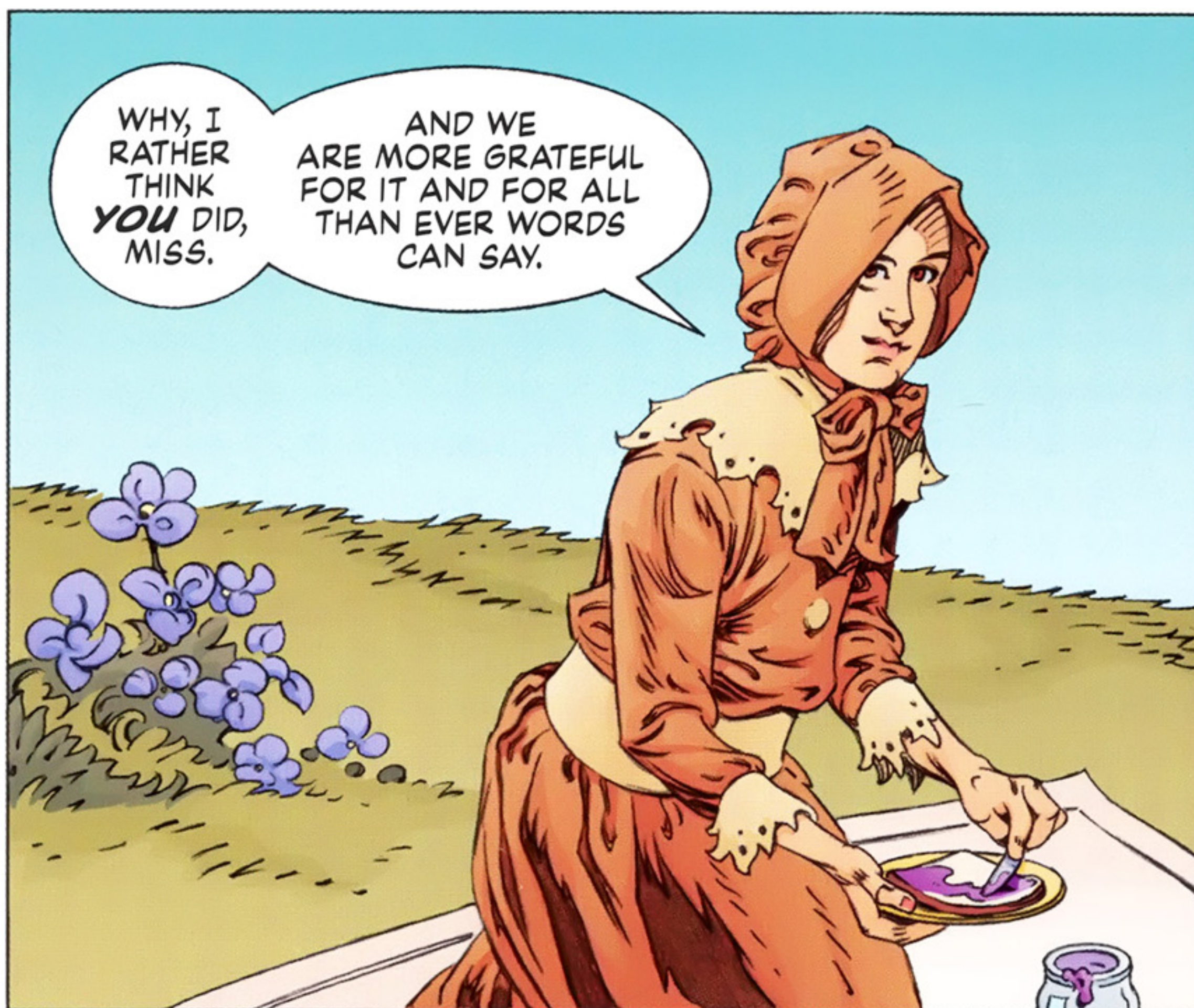
THIS
IS THE FINEST OF
PIC-NICS, LADY.



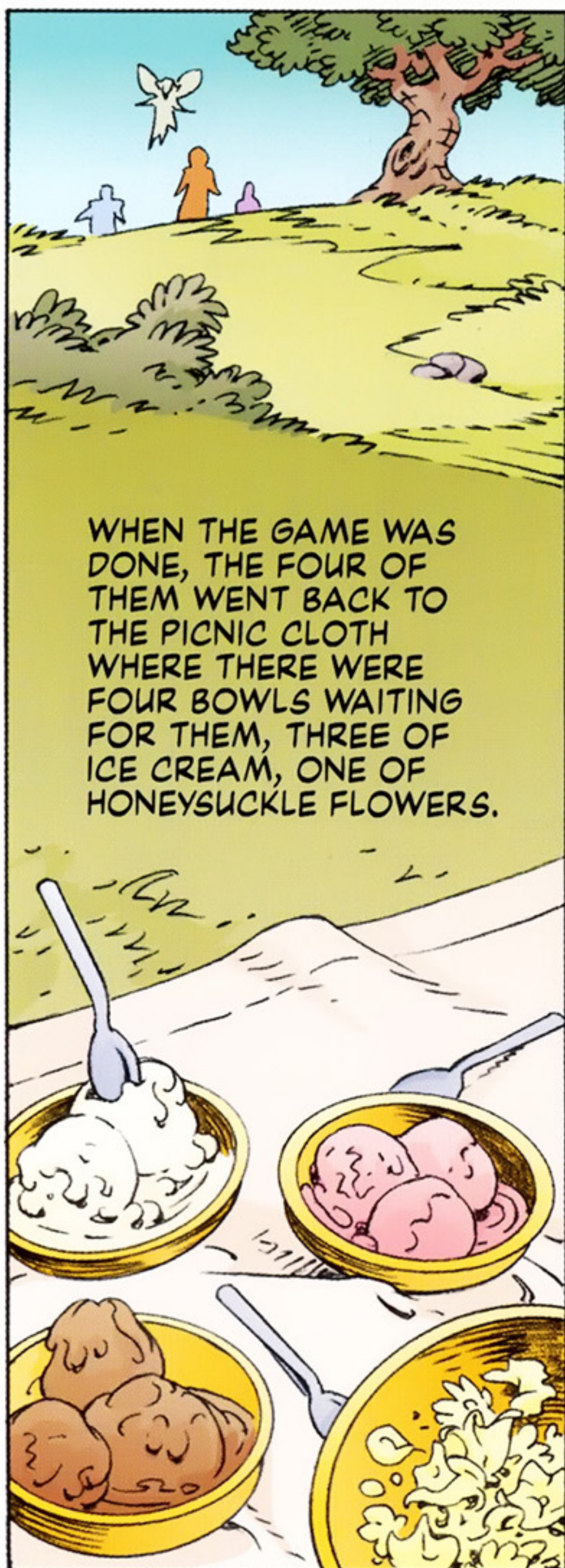
YES.
I THINK
IT IS.

I
WONDER
WHO
ORGANIZED
IT?





AND THEN, IN THE WAY OF DREAMS, THE PICNIC WAS DONE AND THEY WERE PLAYING IN THE MEADOW, RUNNING AND SHOUTING AND TOSSING A GLITTERING BALL FROM ONE TO ANOTHER. CORALINE KNEW IT WAS A DREAM THEN, BECAUSE NONE OF THEM EVER GOT TIRED OR WINDED OR OUT OF BREATH.



WHEN THE GAME WAS DONE, THE FOUR OF THEM WENT BACK TO THE PICNIC CLOTH WHERE THERE WERE FOUR BOWLS WAITING FOR THEM, THREE OF ICE CREAM, ONE OF HONEYSUCKLE FLOWERS.



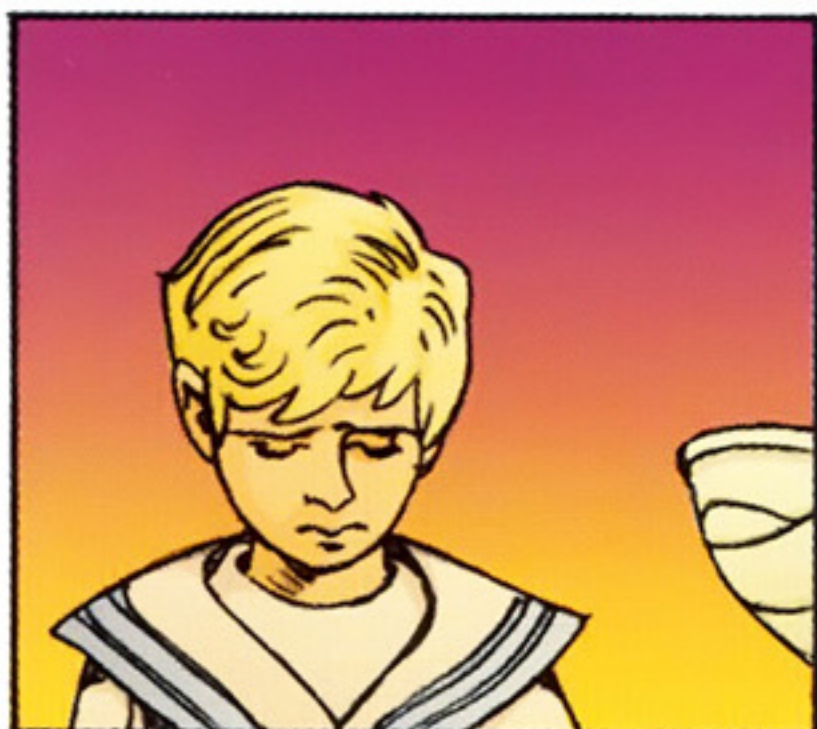
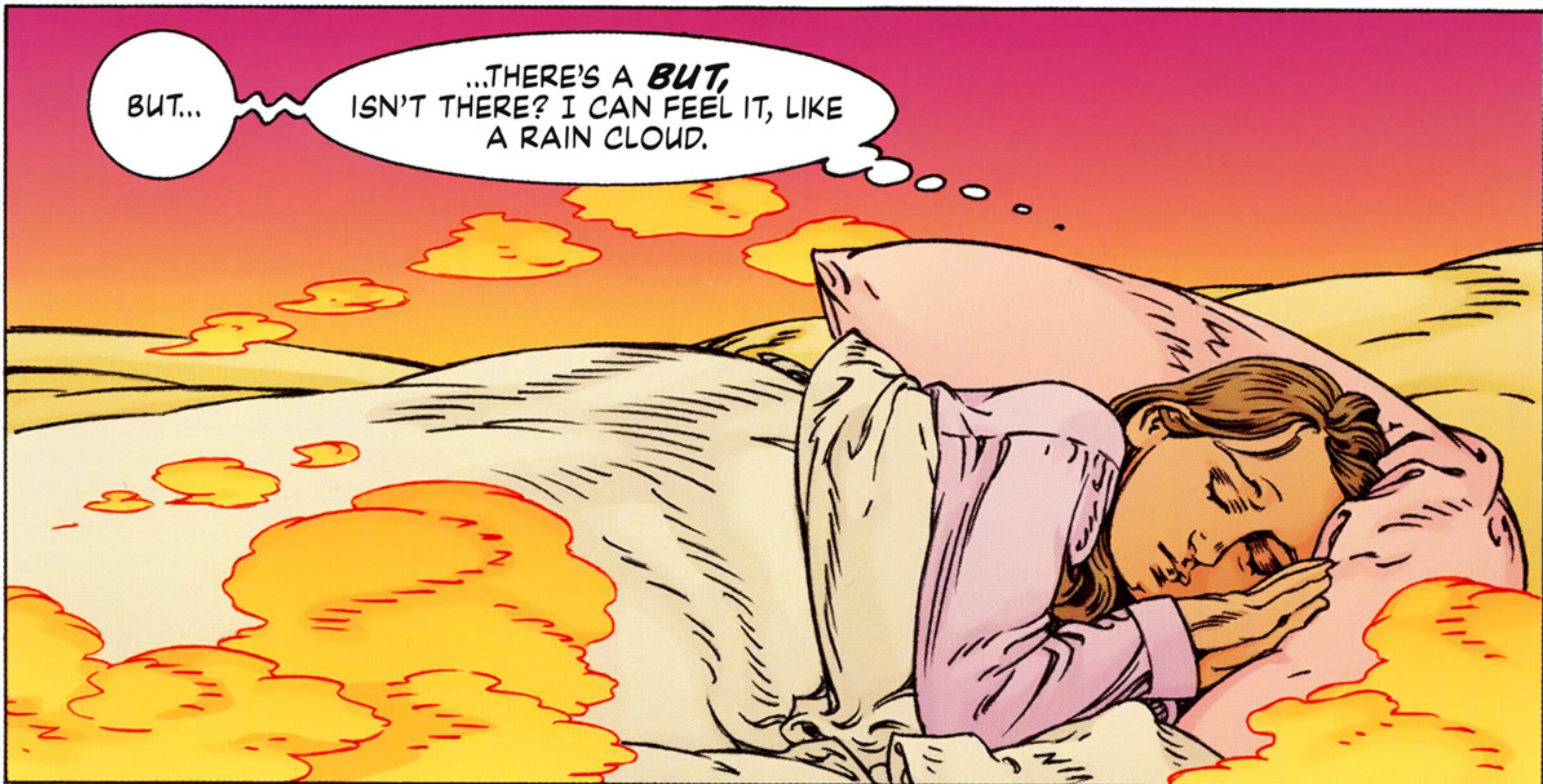
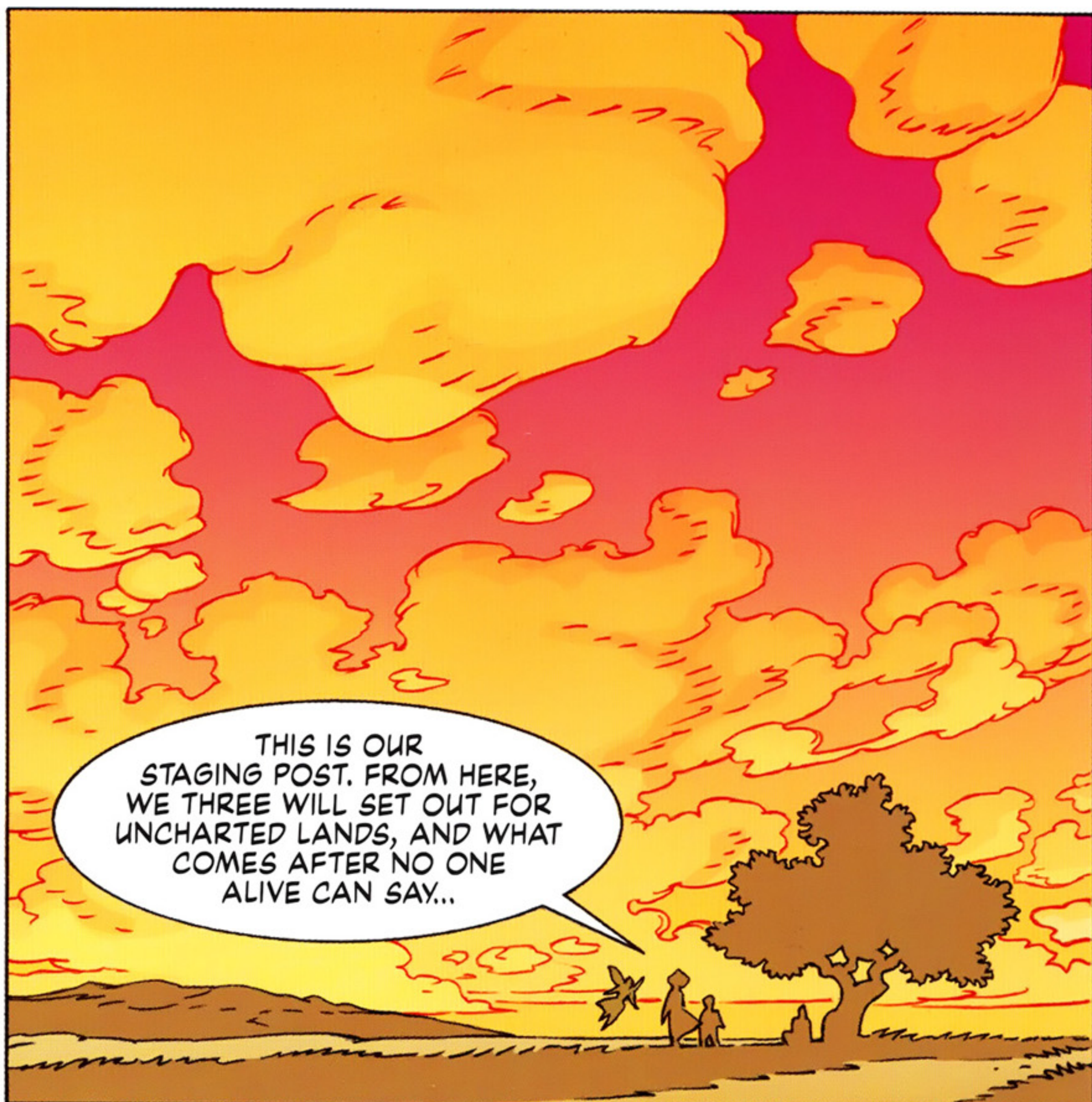
THANK YOU FOR COMING TO MY PARTY, IF IT *IS* MINE.

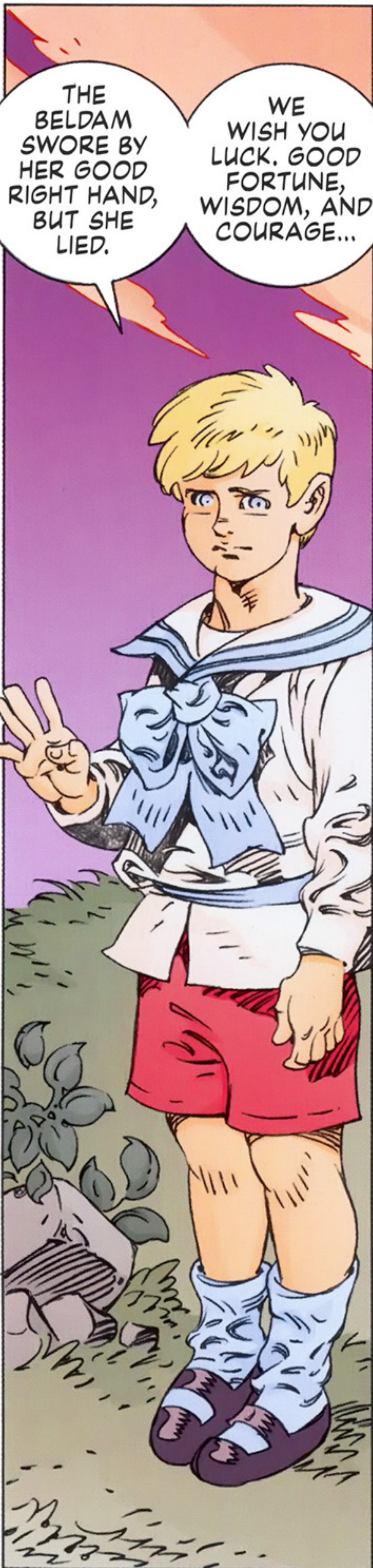


THE PLEASURE IS OURS, CORALINE JONES. IF THERE WERE BUT SOMETHING WE COULD DO FOR YOU TO THANK YOU AND TO REWARD YOU.

AYE.

IT'S A VERY FINE THING YOU DID FOR US, MISS.





THE BELDAM SWORE BY HER GOOD RIGHT HAND, BUT SHE LIED.

WE WISH YOU LUCK. GOOD FORTUNE, WISDOM, AND COURAGE...

...ALTHOUGH YOU HAVE ALREADY SHOWN THAT YOU HAVE ALL THREE OF THOSE BLESSINGS...

...AND IN ABUNDANCE.



SHE HATES YOU!

SHE HASN'T LOST ANYTHING FOR SO LONG.

BE WISE. BE BRAVE.

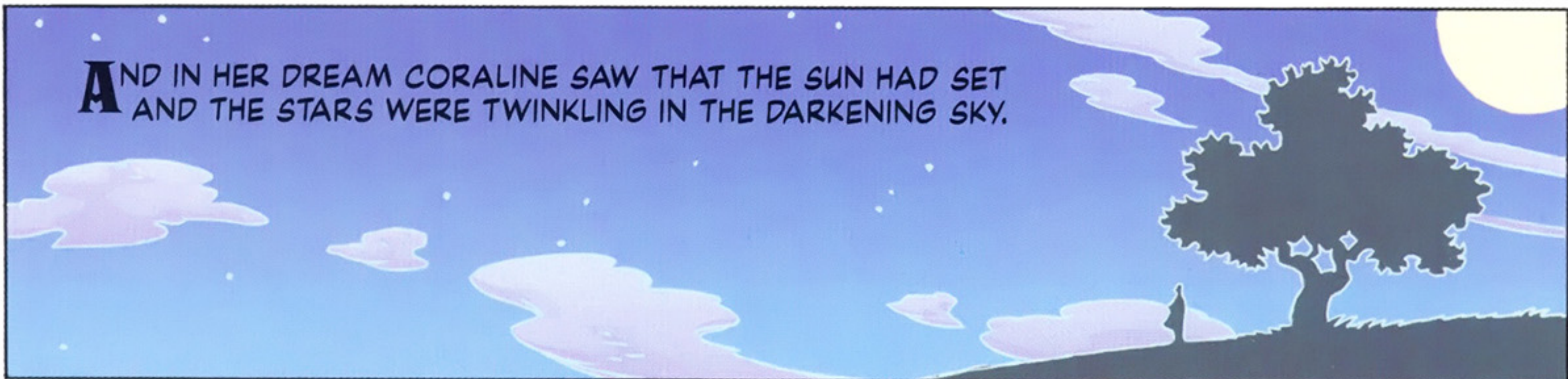
BE TRICKY!



BUT IT'S NOT **FAIR**. IT SHOULD BE OVER.

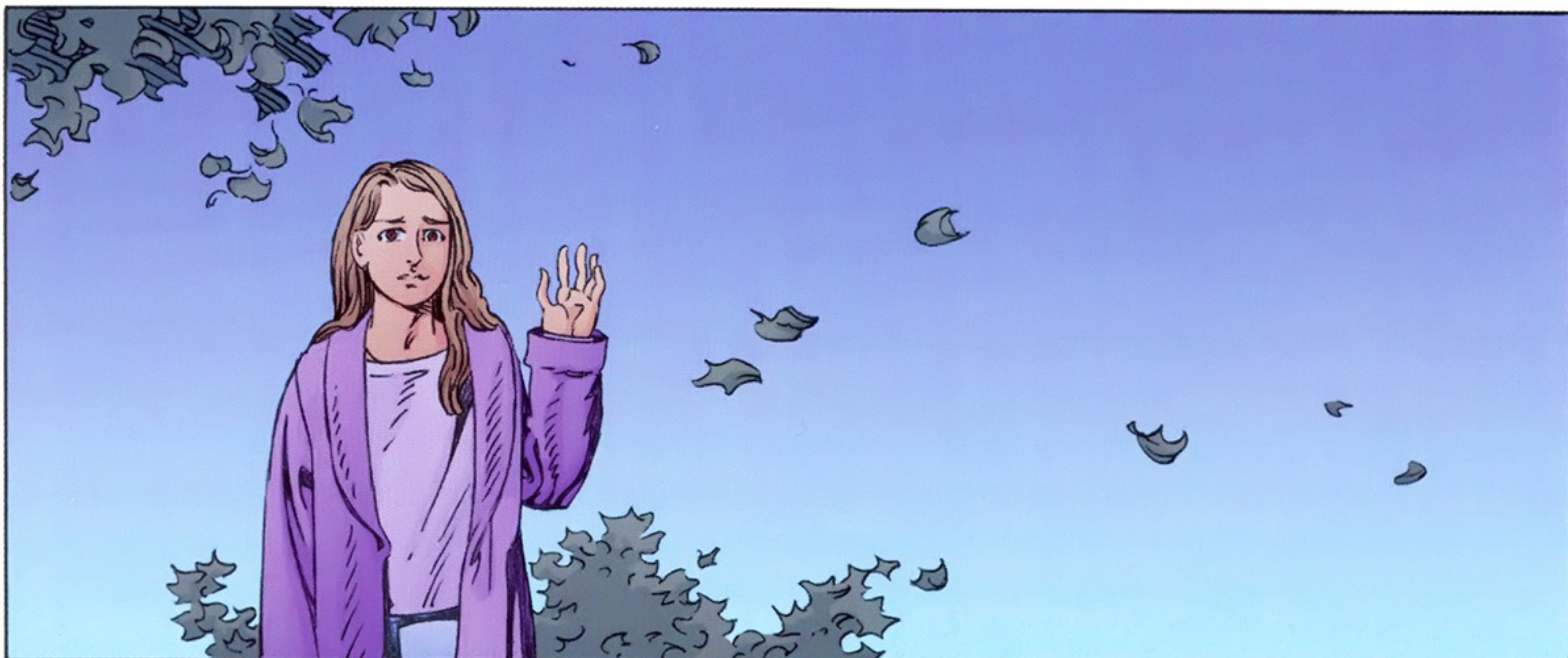
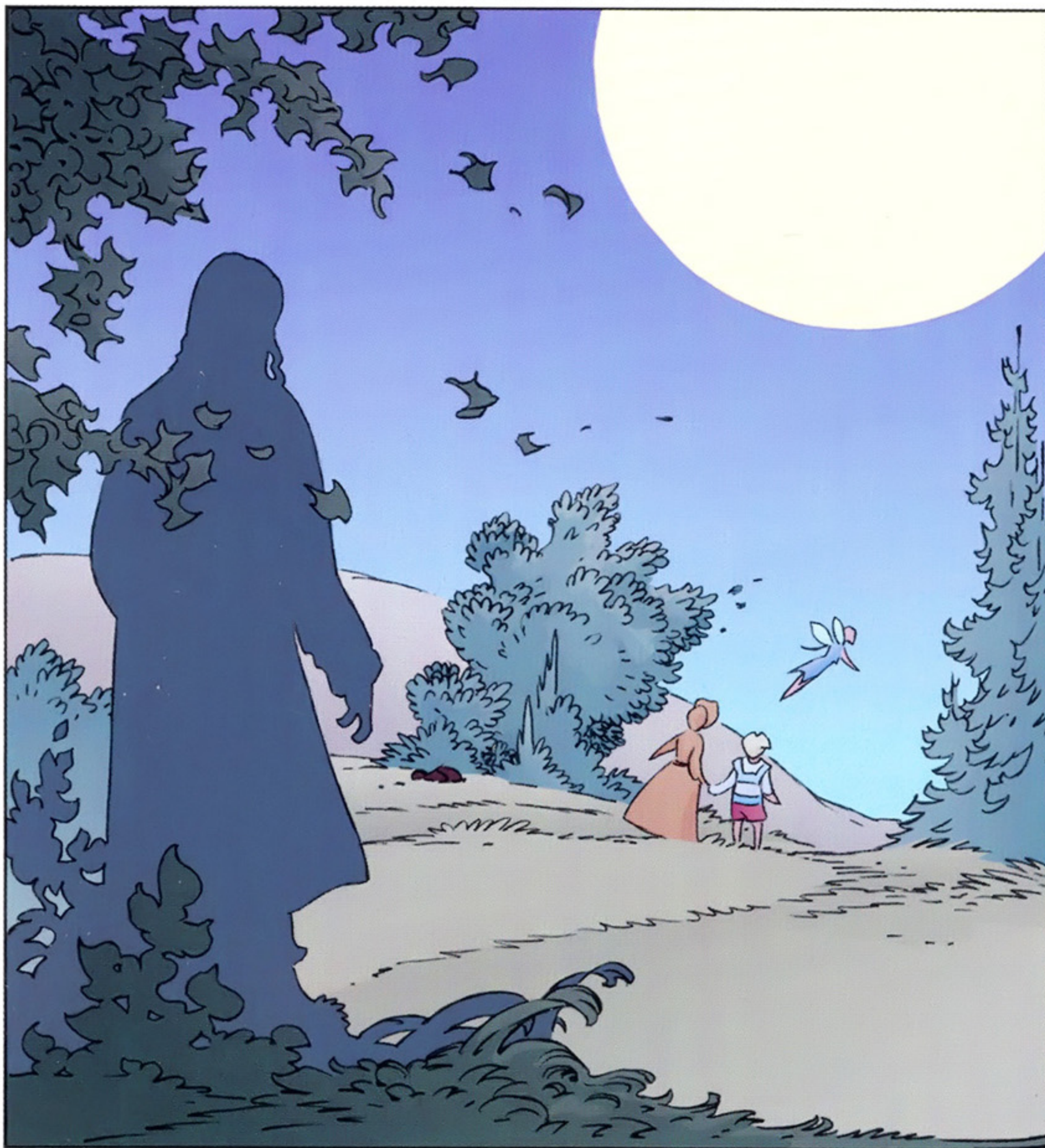


TAKE COMFORT IN THIS. TH'ART ALIVE. THOU LIVEST.

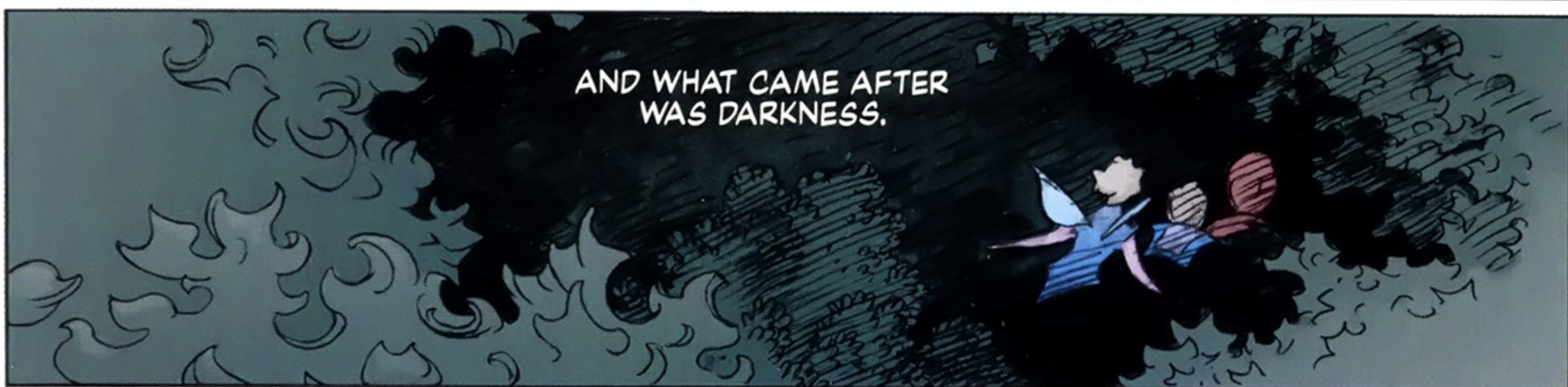


AND IN HER DREAM CORALINE SAW THAT THE SUN HAD SET AND THE STARS WERE TWINKLING IN THE DARKENING SKY.

CORALINE STOOD IN THE MEADOW, AND SHE WATCHED AS THE THREE CHILDREN WENT AWAY FROM HER ACROSS THE GRASS.

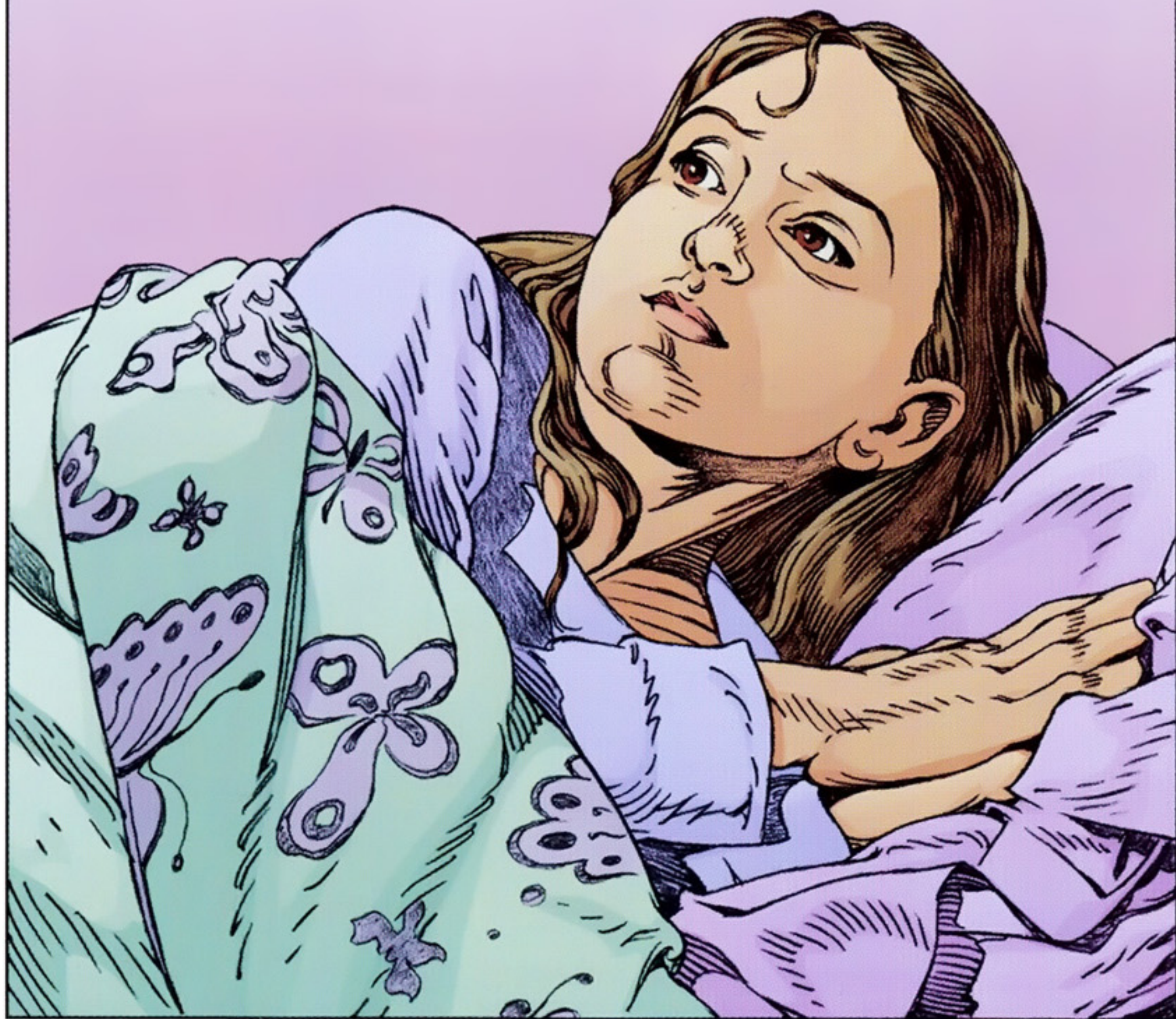


AND WHAT CAME AFTER
WAS DARKNESS.



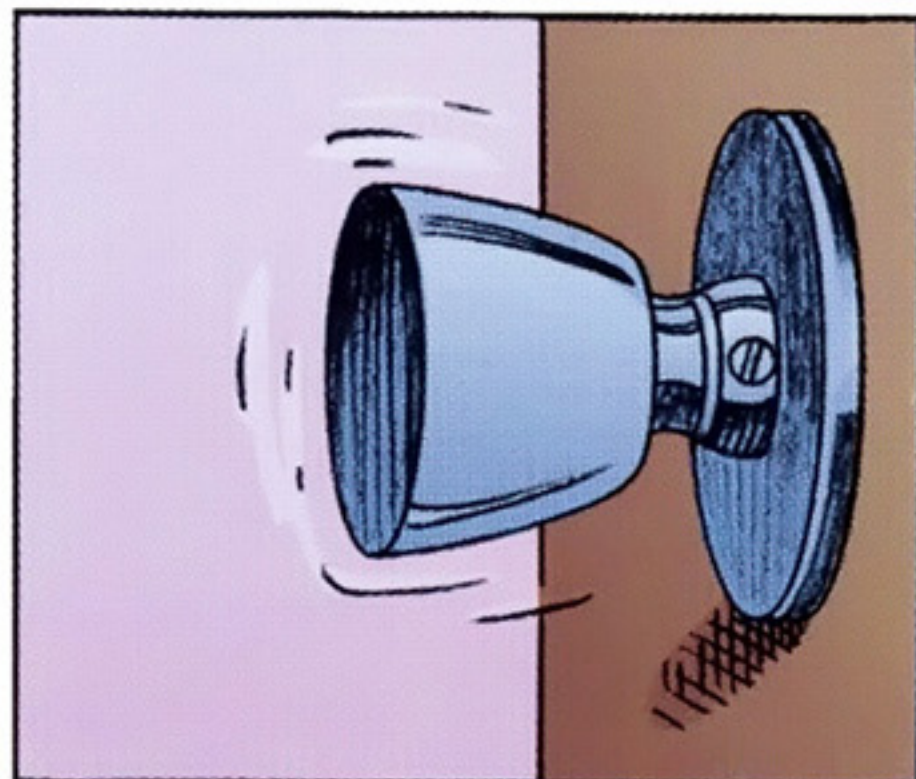
CORALINE WOKE IN THE EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING, CONVINCED SHE HAD HEARD SOMETHING MOVING, BUT UNSURE WHAT IT WAS.

SHE WAITED.



SOMETHING MADE A RUSTLING NOISE OUTSIDE HER BEDROOM DOOR.

IS
IT A
RAT?



GO
AWAY!

GO
AWAY OR
YOU'LL BE
SORRY!



THERE WAS A PAUSE.
THEN THE WHATEVER
IT WAS SCUTTLED AWAY
DOWN THE HALL.

THERE WAS SOMETHING ODD
AND IRREGULAR ABOUT ITS
FOOTSTEPS, IF THEY **WERE**
FOOTSTEPS. CORALINE FOUND
HERSELF WONDERING IF IT
WAS PERHAPS A RAT WITH
AN EXTRA LEG.

IT
ISN'T
OVER
YET, IS
IT?





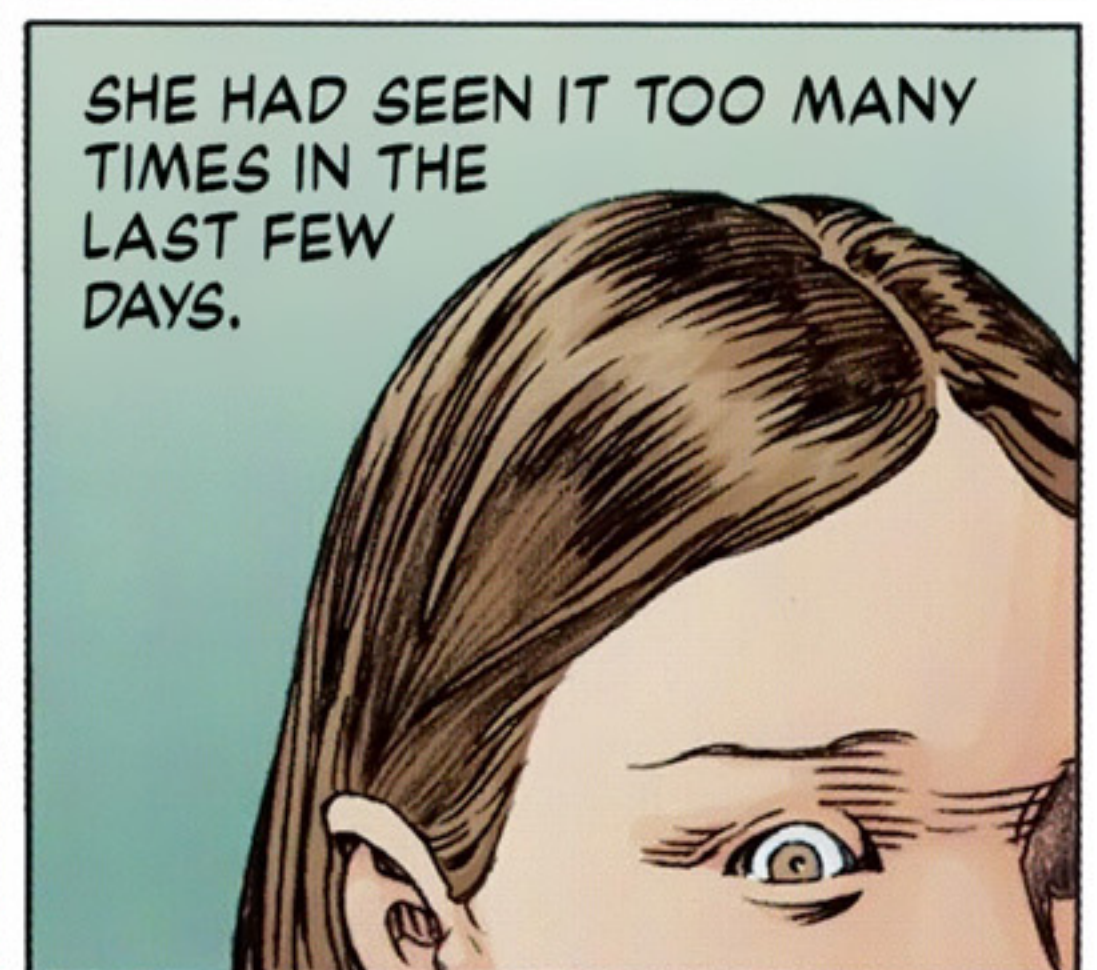
SUDDENLY, SOMETHING DETACHED ITSELF FROM BENEATH THE BENCH AND MADE A MAD SCRABBLING DASH FOR THE DOOR.



EVEN AS IT CLICKED AND SCUTTLED PAST HER AND OUT OF THE HOUSE, SHE KNEW WHAT IT WAS AND WHAT IT WAS AFTER.

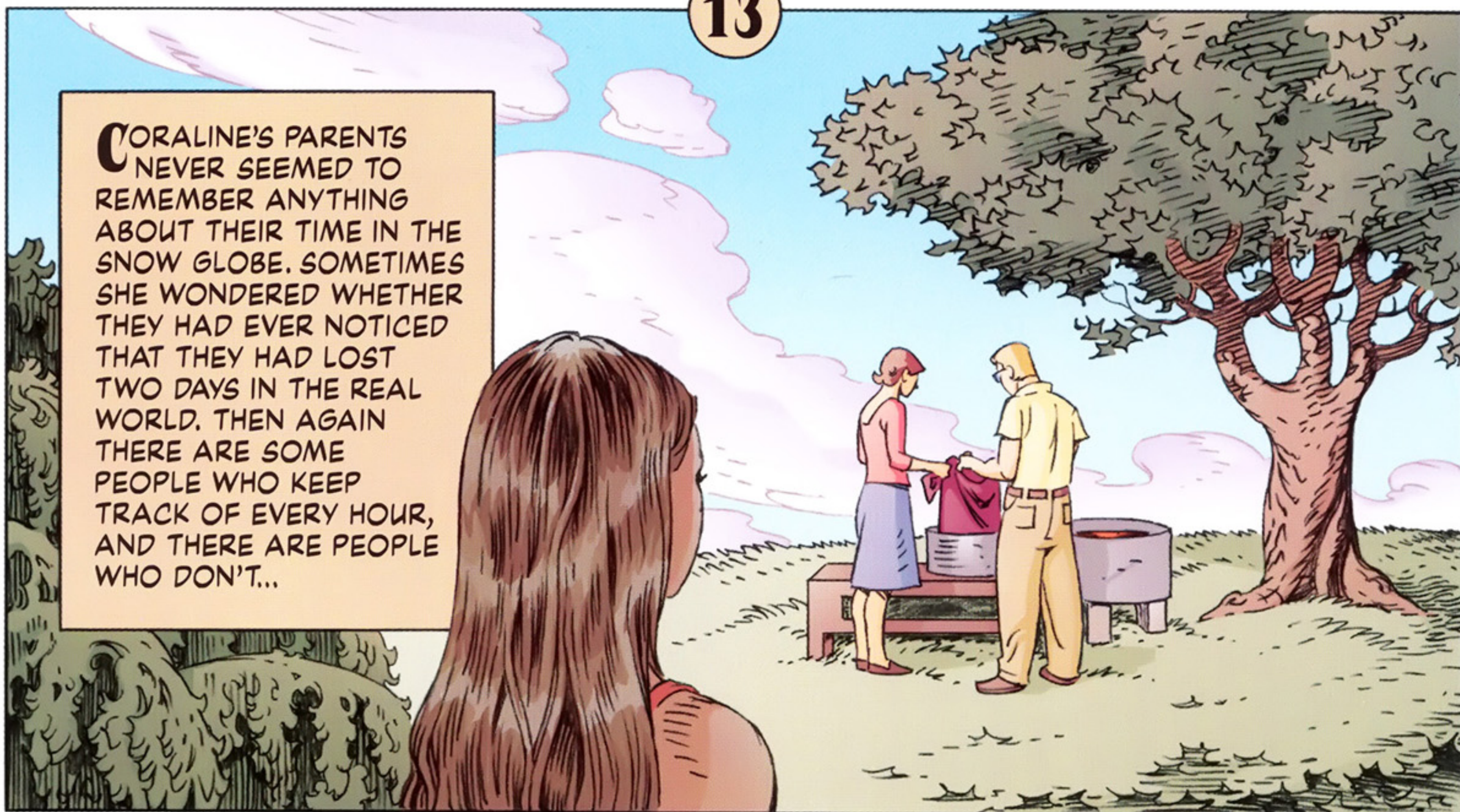


SHE HAD SEEN IT TOO MANY TIMES IN THE LAST FEW DAYS.





CORALINE'S PARENTS NEVER SEEMED TO REMEMBER ANYTHING ABOUT THEIR TIME IN THE SNOW GLOBE. SOMETIMES SHE WONDERED WHETHER THEY HAD EVER NOTICED THAT THEY HAD LOST TWO DAYS IN THE REAL WORLD. THEN AGAIN THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE WHO KEEP TRACK OF EVERY HOUR, AND THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO DON'T...



...AND CORALINE'S PARENTS WERE SOLIDLY IN THE SECOND CAMP.



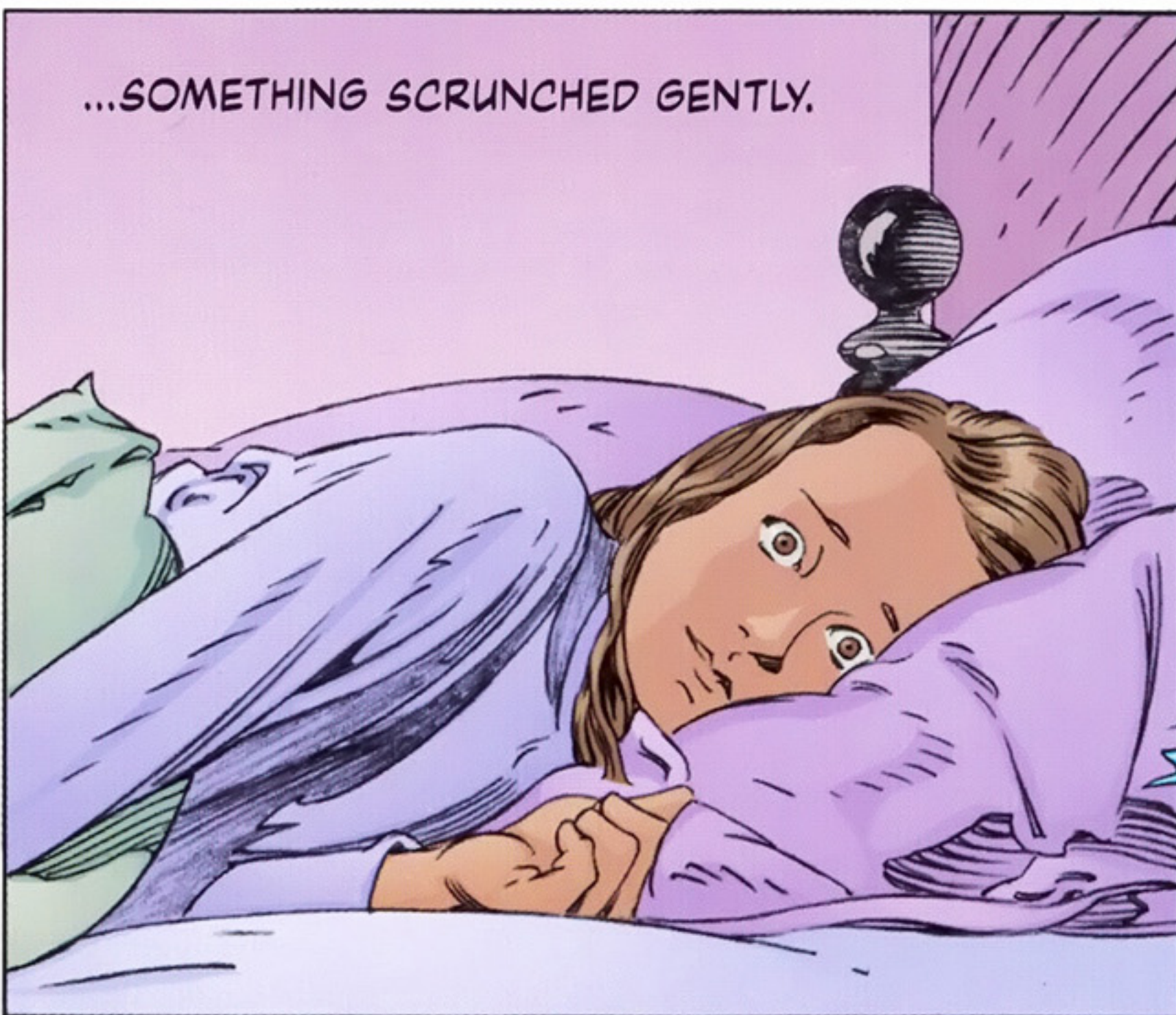
CORALINE HAD PLACED THE MARBLES BENEATH HER PILLOW THAT FIRST NIGHT HOME.

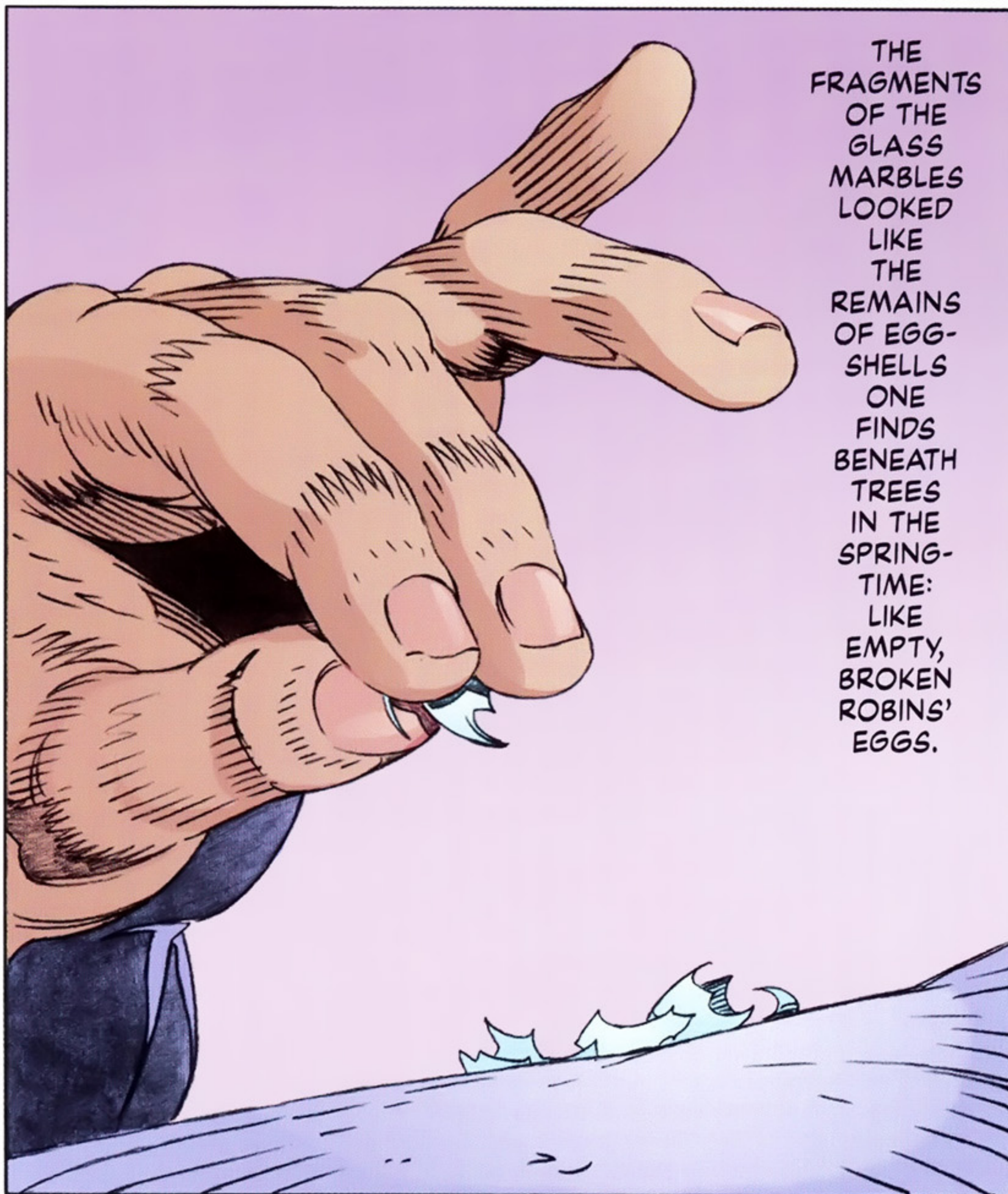


SHE WENT BACK TO BED AFTER SHE SAW THE OTHER MOTHER'S HAND, AND AS SHE RESTED HER HEAD BACK ON THAT PILLOW...



...SOMETHING SCRUNCHED GENTLY.

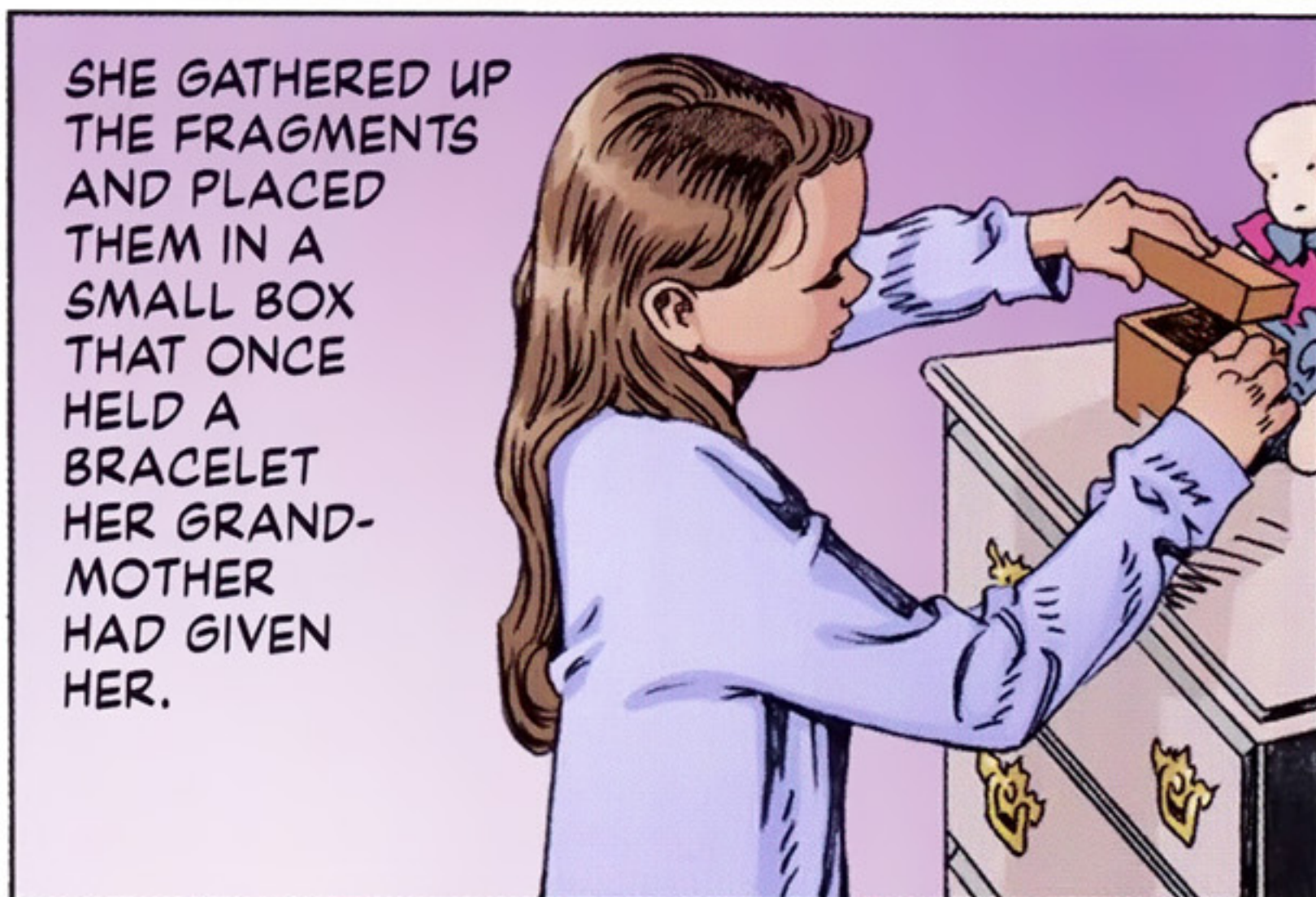




THE FRAGMENTS OF THE GLASS MARBLES LOOKED LIKE THE REMAINS OF EGG-SHELLS ONE FINDS BENEATH TREES IN THE SPRING-TIME: LIKE EMPTY, BROKEN ROBINS' EGGS.



WHATEVER HAD BEEN IN THE GLASS SPHERES HAD GONE.



SHE GATHERED UP THE FRAGMENTS AND PLACED THEM IN A SMALL BOX THAT ONCE HELD A BRACELET HER GRAND-MOTHER HAD GIVEN HER.



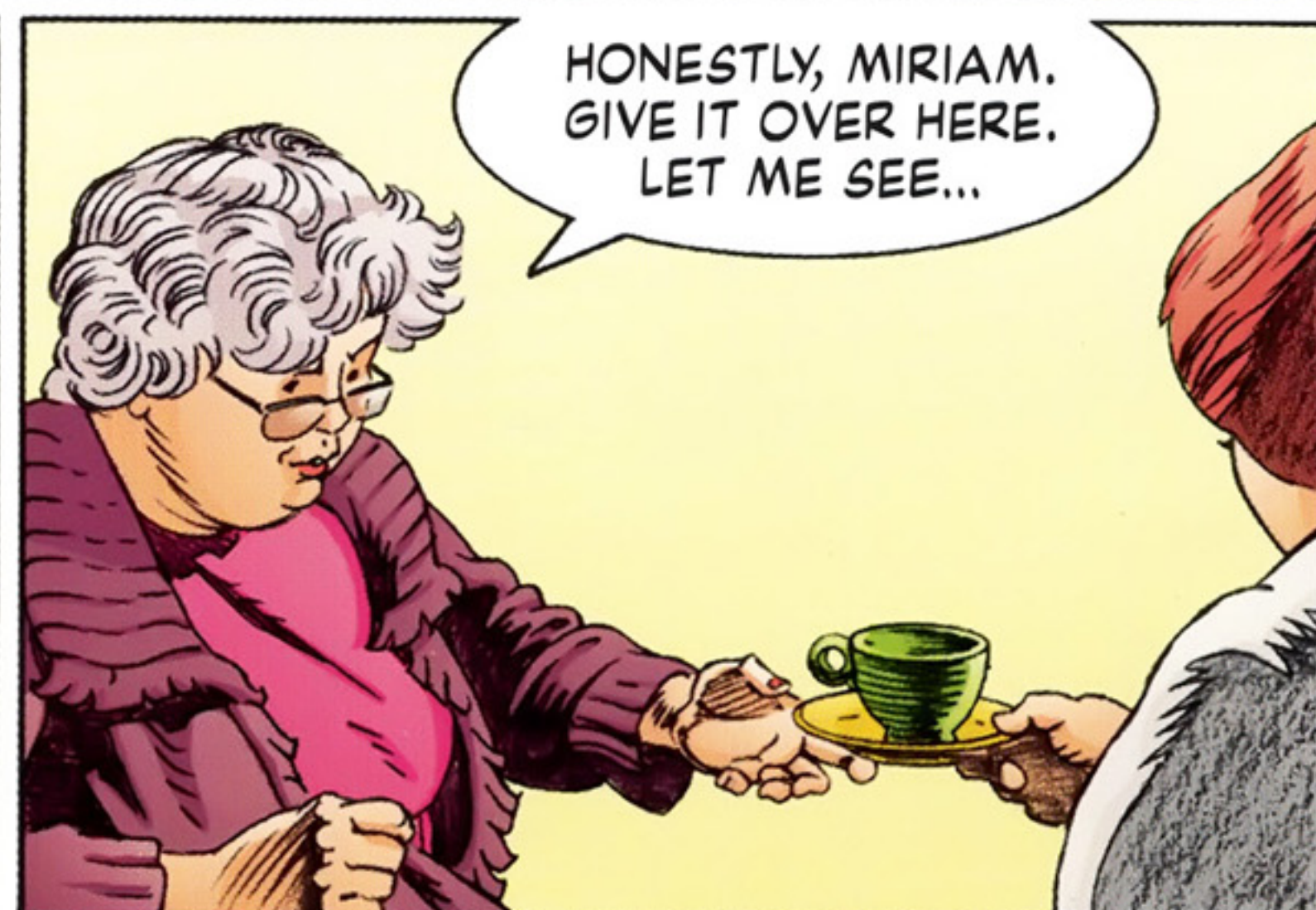
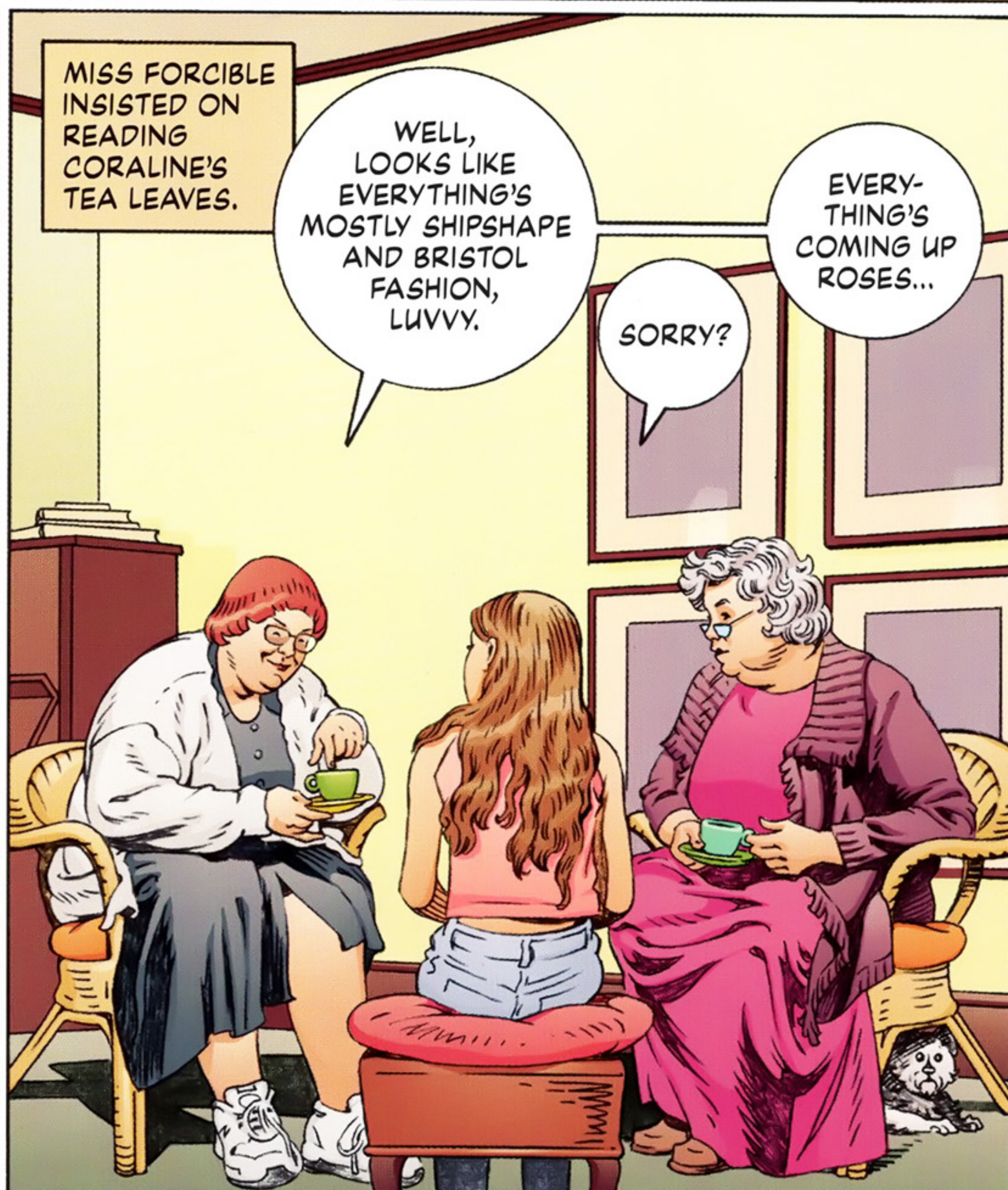
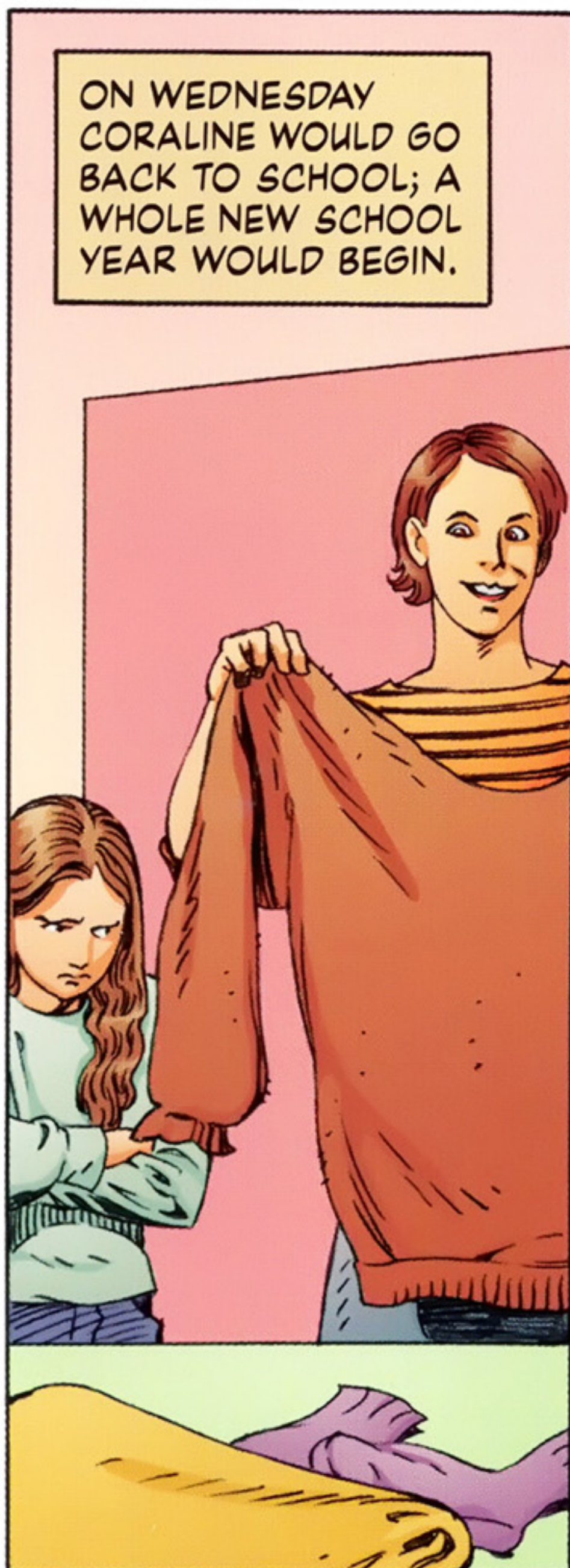
THE BRACELET WAS LONG LOST...

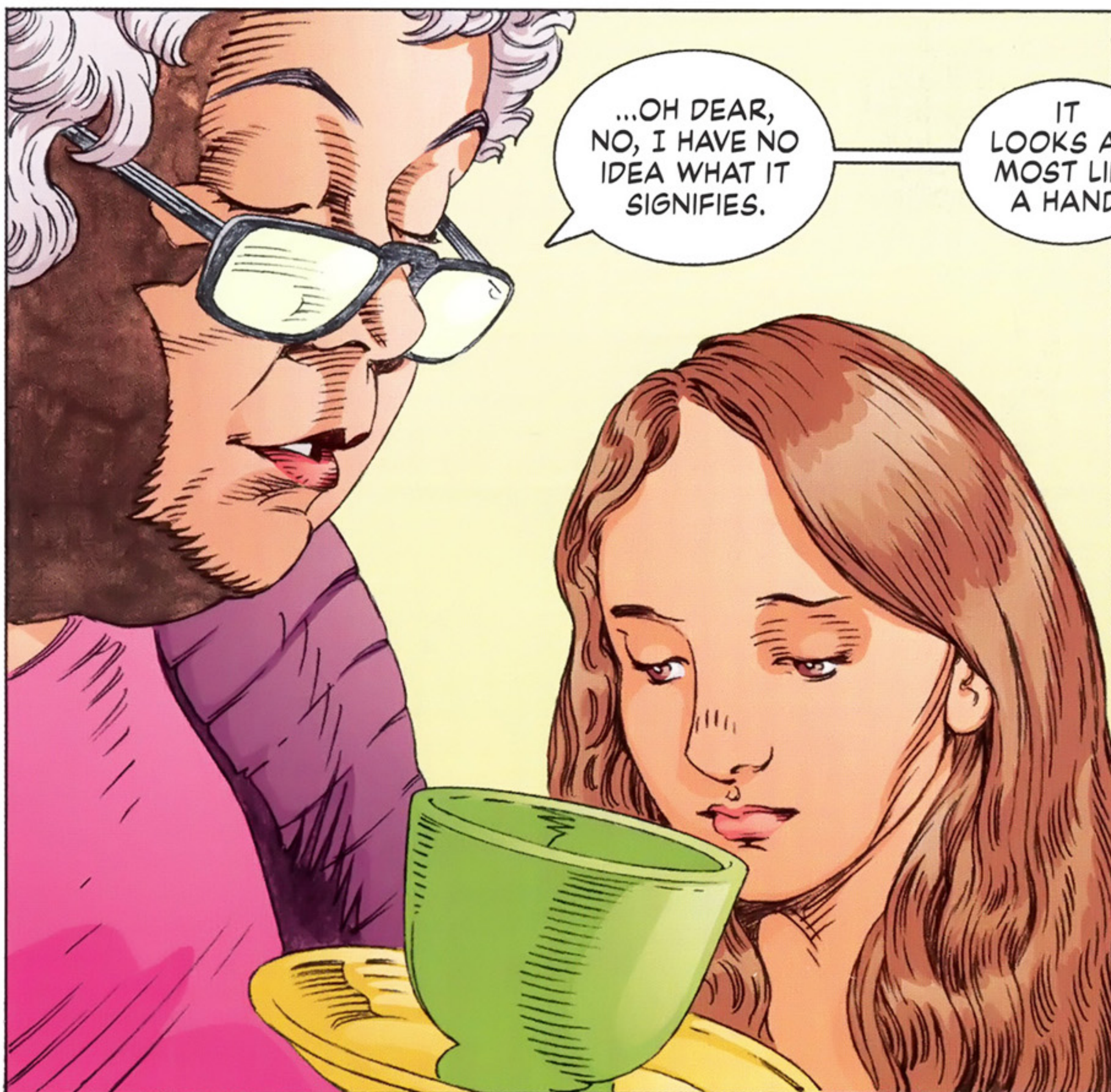


...BUT THE BOX REMAINED.

MISS SPINK AND MISS FORCIBLE CAME BACK FROM VISITING MISS SPINK'S NIECE, AND CORALINE WENT DOWN TO THEIR FLAT FOR TEA.

IT WAS A MONDAY.



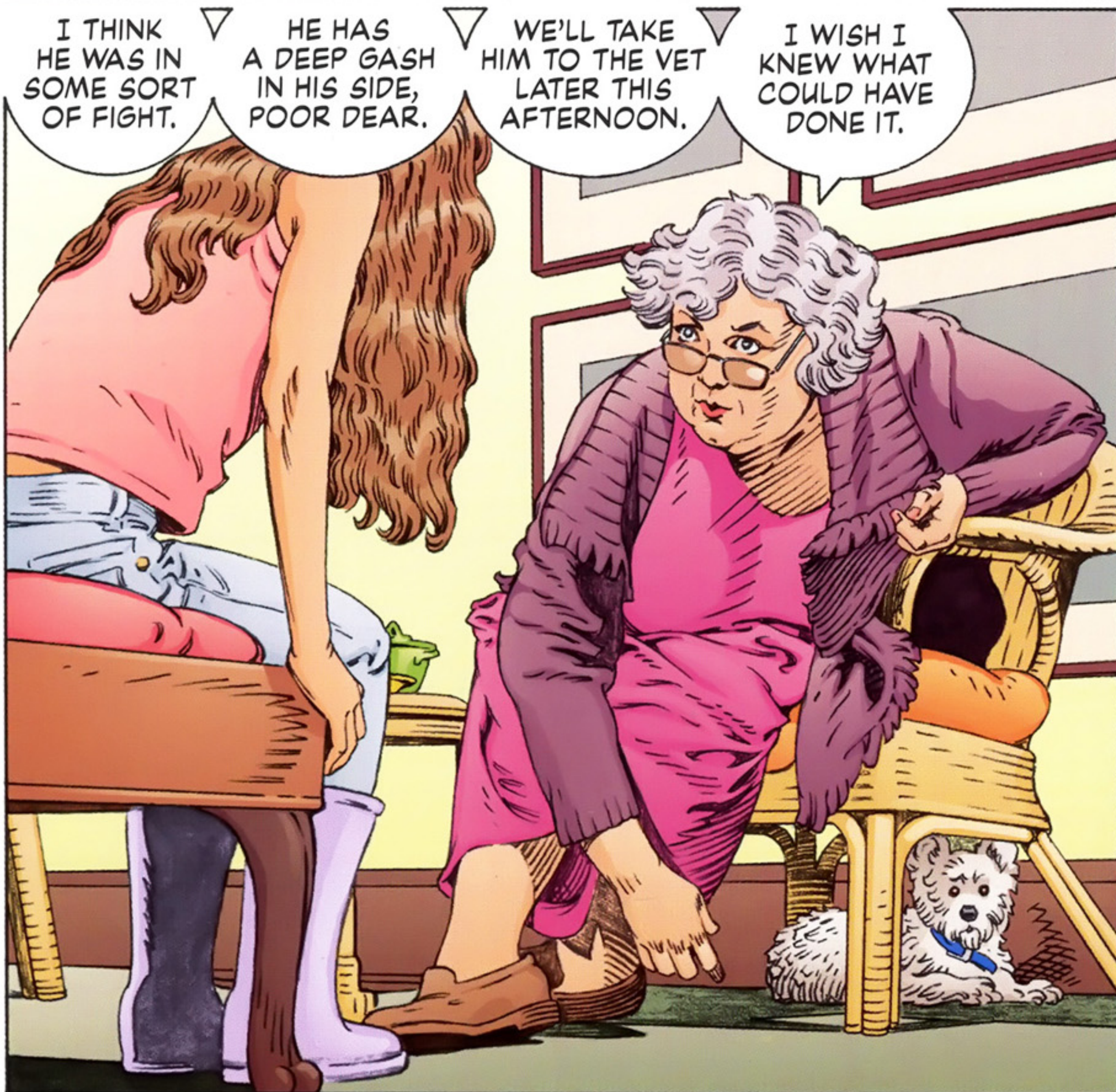


...OH DEAR,
NO, I HAVE NO
IDEA WHAT IT
SIGNIFIES.

IT
LOOKS AL-
MOST LIKE
A HAND.



HAMISH THE SCOTTIE
DOG WAS HIDING AND
WOULDN'T COME OUT.



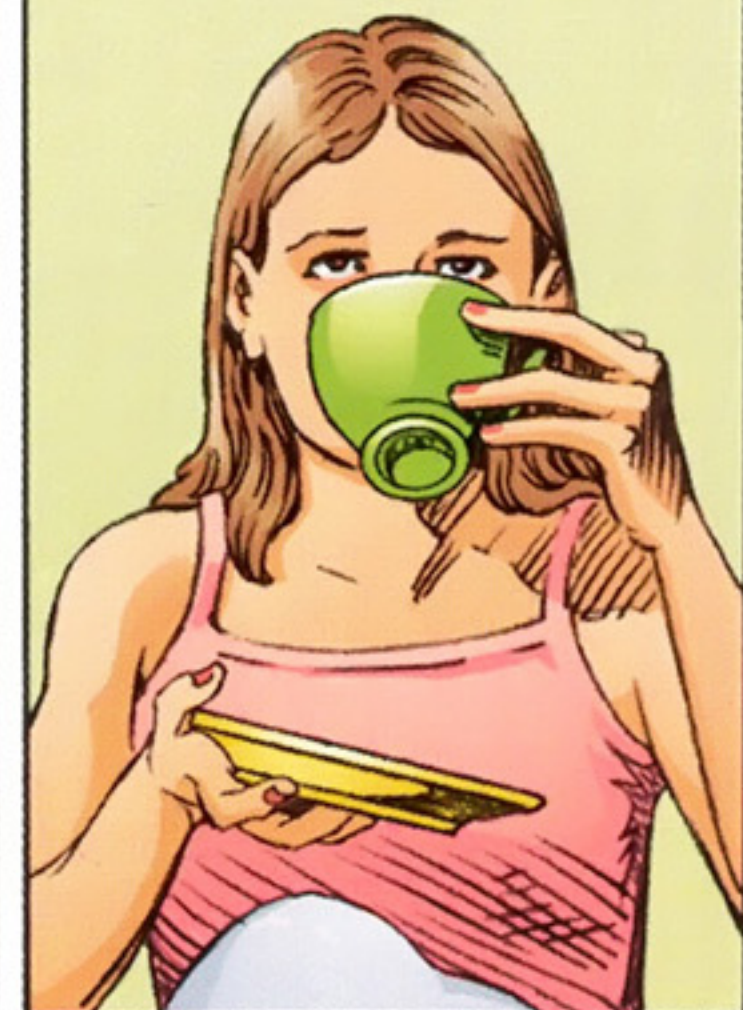
I THINK
HE WAS IN
SOME SORT
OF FIGHT.

HE HAS
A DEEP GASH
IN HIS SIDE,
POOR DEAR.

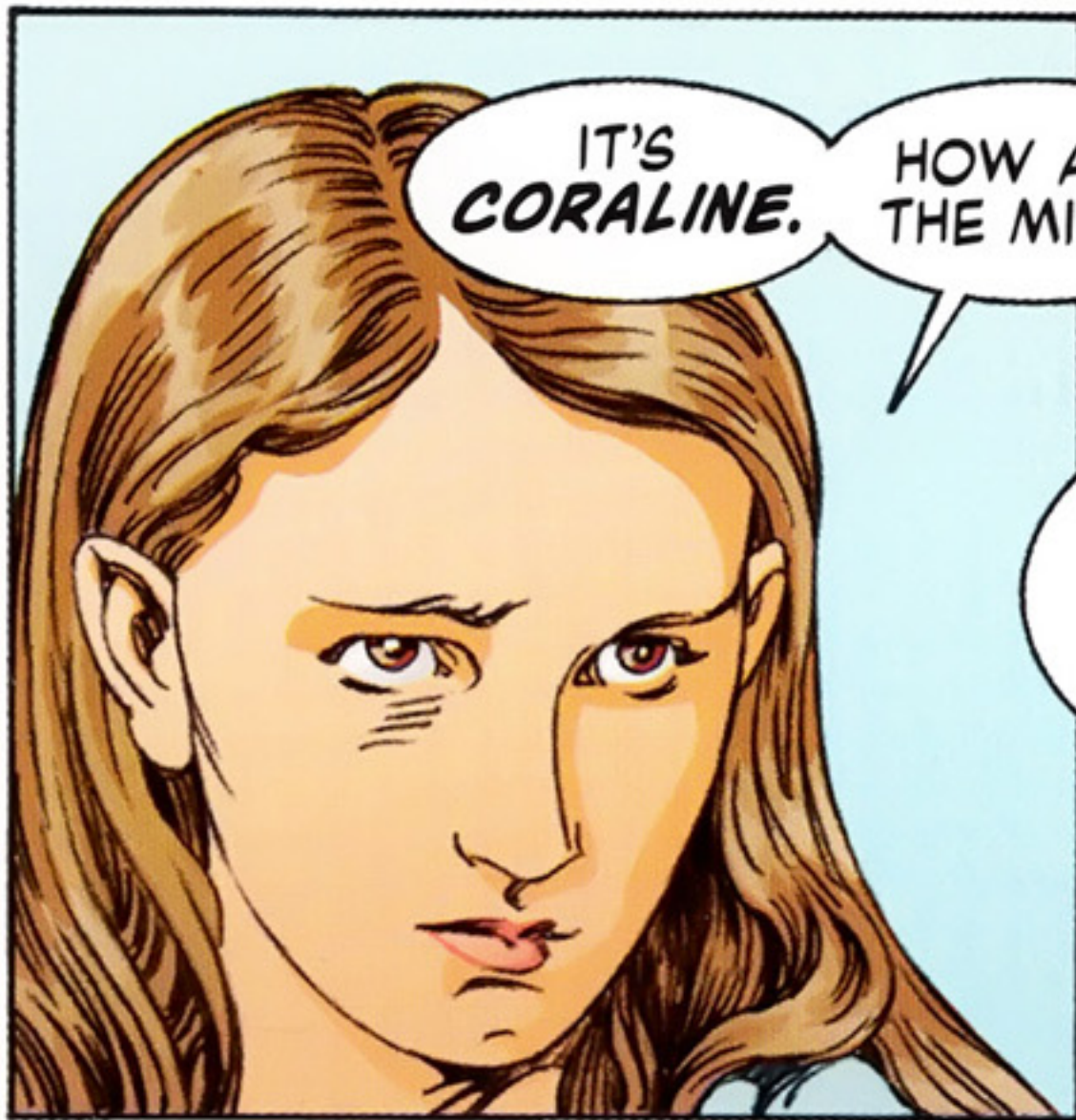
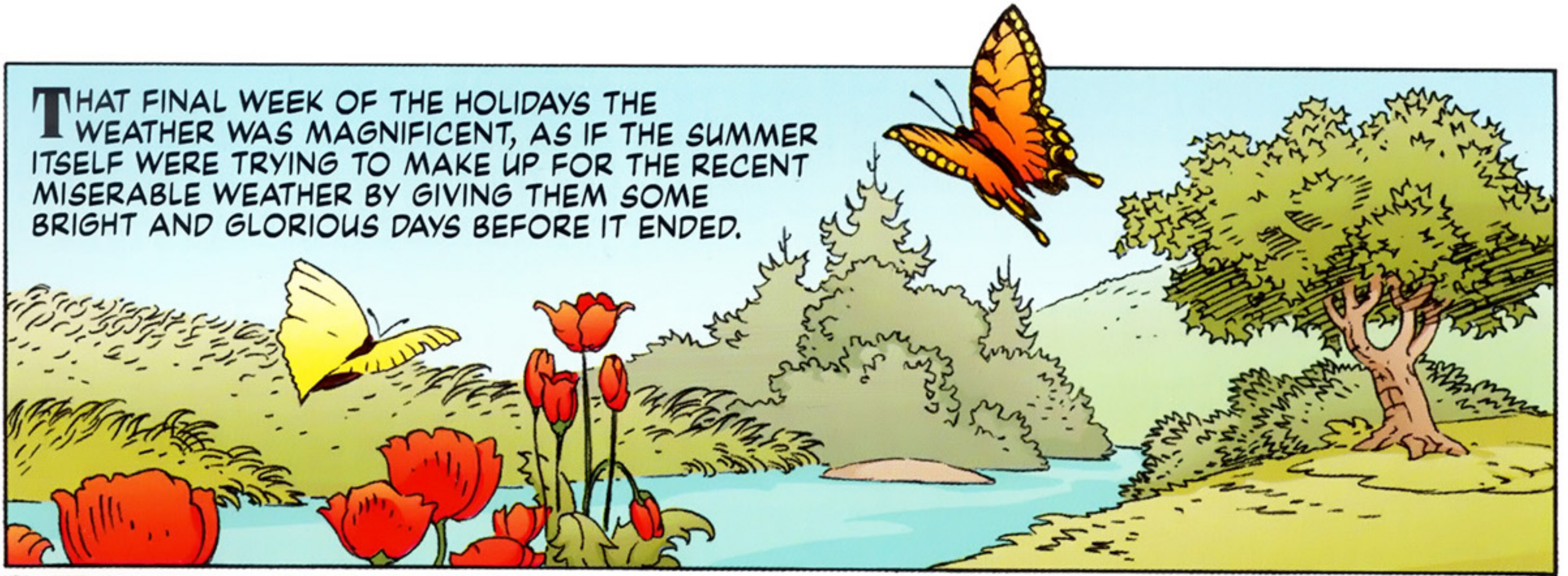
WE'LL TAKE
HIM TO THE VET
LATER THIS
AFTERNOON.

I WISH I
KNEW WHAT
COULD HAVE
DONE IT.

SOME-
THING,
CORALINE
KNEW,
WOULD
HAVE
TO BE
DONE.



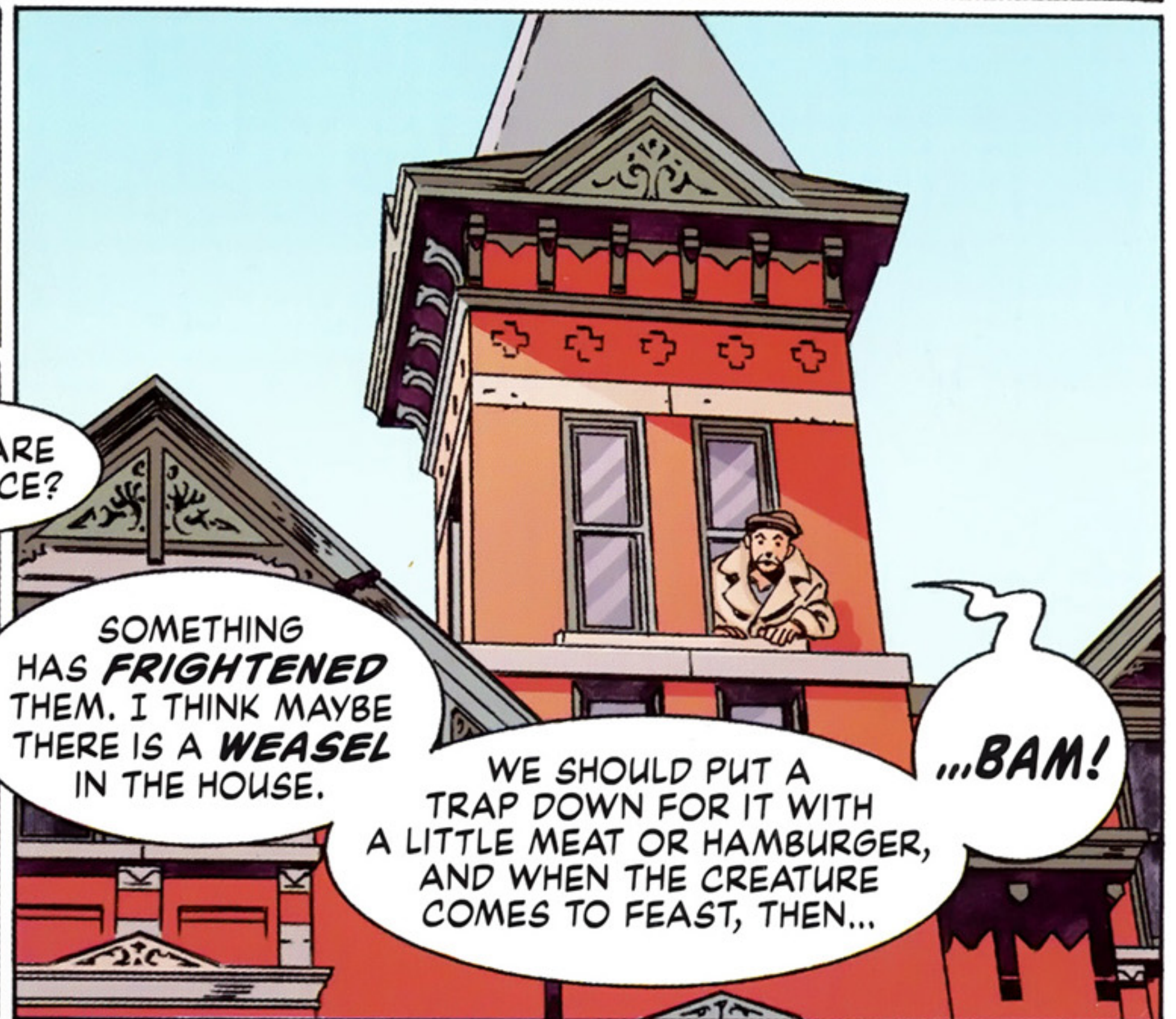
THAT FINAL WEEK OF THE HOLIDAYS THE WEATHER WAS MAGNIFICENT, AS IF THE SUMMER ITSELF WERE TRYING TO MAKE UP FOR THE RECENT MISERABLE WEATHER BY GIVING THEM SOME BRIGHT AND GLORIOUS DAYS BEFORE IT ENDED.



IT'S **CORALINE.**

HOW ARE THE MICE?

SOMETHING HAS **FRIGHTENED** THEM. I THINK MAYBE THERE IS A **WEASEL** IN THE HOUSE.



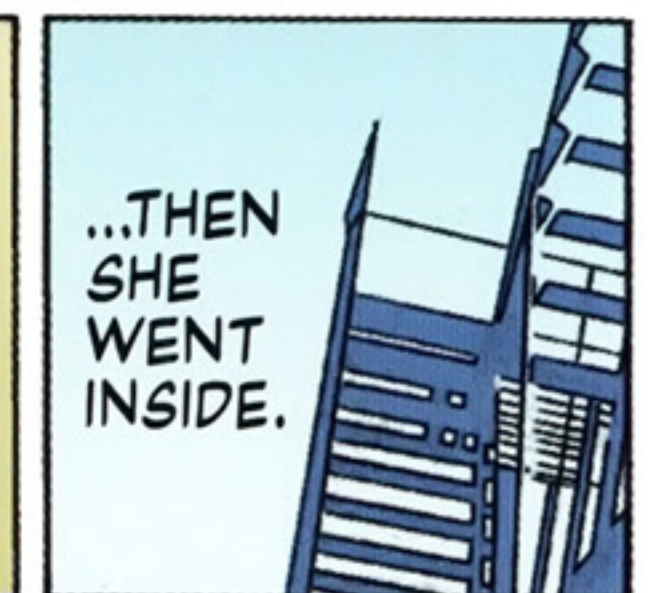
...**BAM!**

I DON'T THINK IT WANTS **MEAT.**

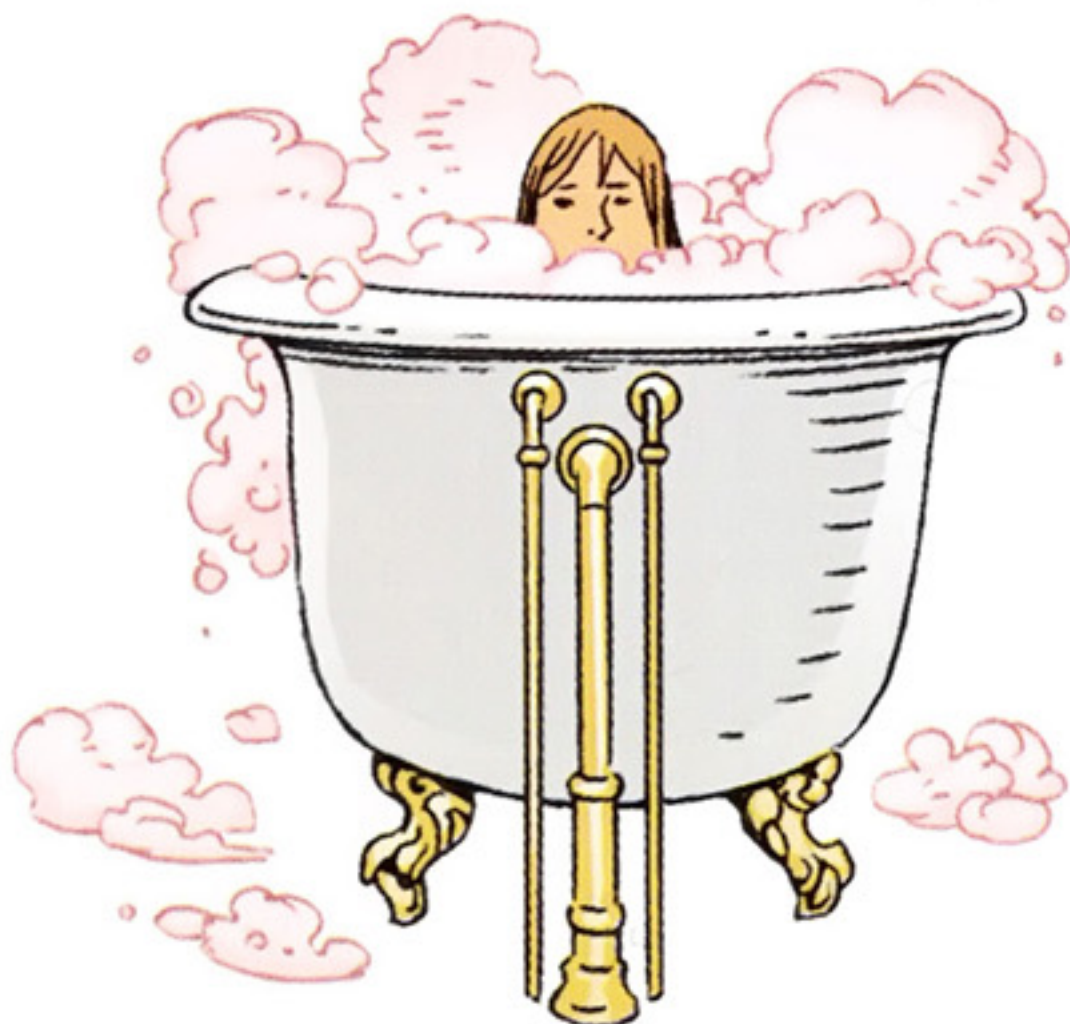


SHE TOUCHED THE BLACK KEY THAT HUNG AROUND HER NECK...

...THEN SHE WENT INSIDE.



SHE BATHED HERSELF BUT KEPT THE KEY AROUND HER NECK. SHE NEVER TOOK IT OFF ANYMORE.



THAT NIGHT SOMETHING SCRATCHED AT HER WINDOW AFTER SHE WENT TO BED.





A WHITE HAND WITH CRIMSON FINGER-NAILS LEAPT FROM THE WINDOW LEDGE ONTO A DRAINPIPE...

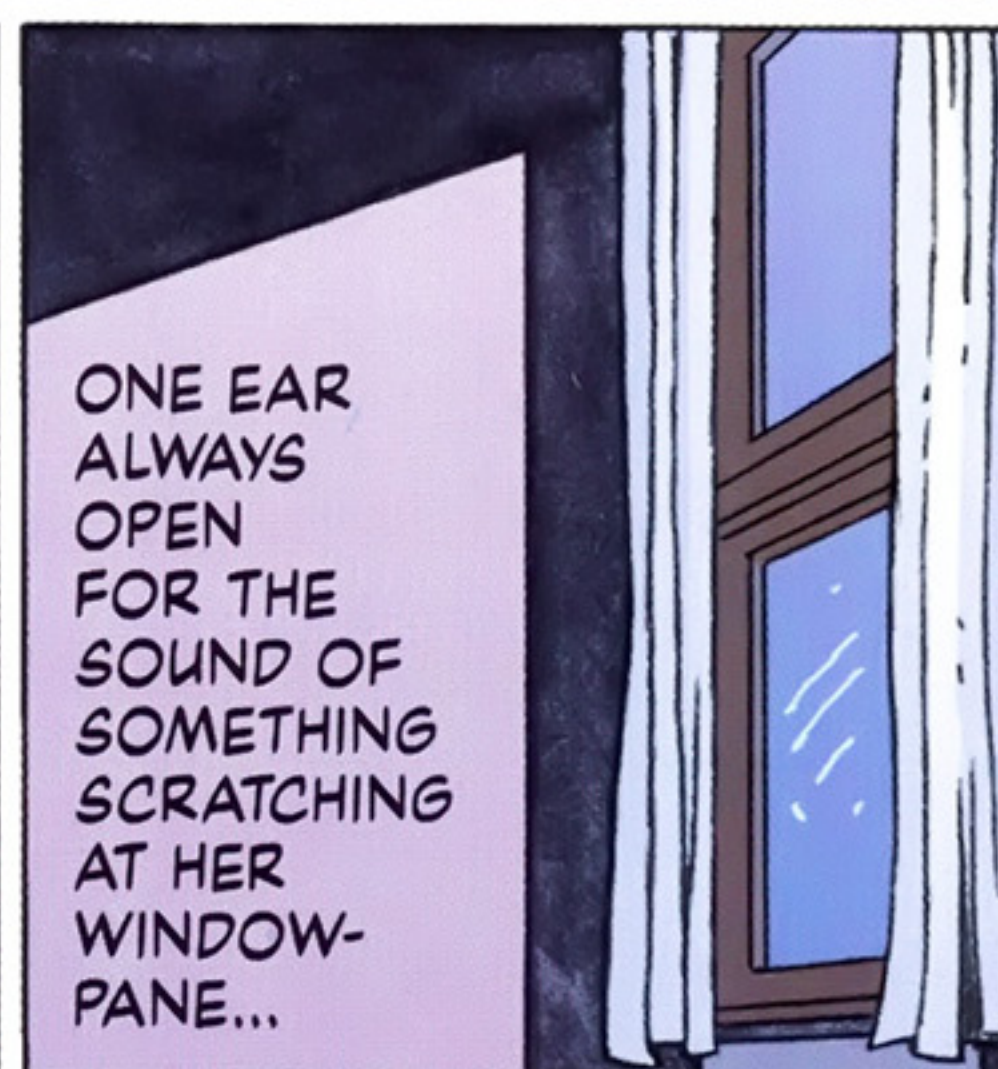
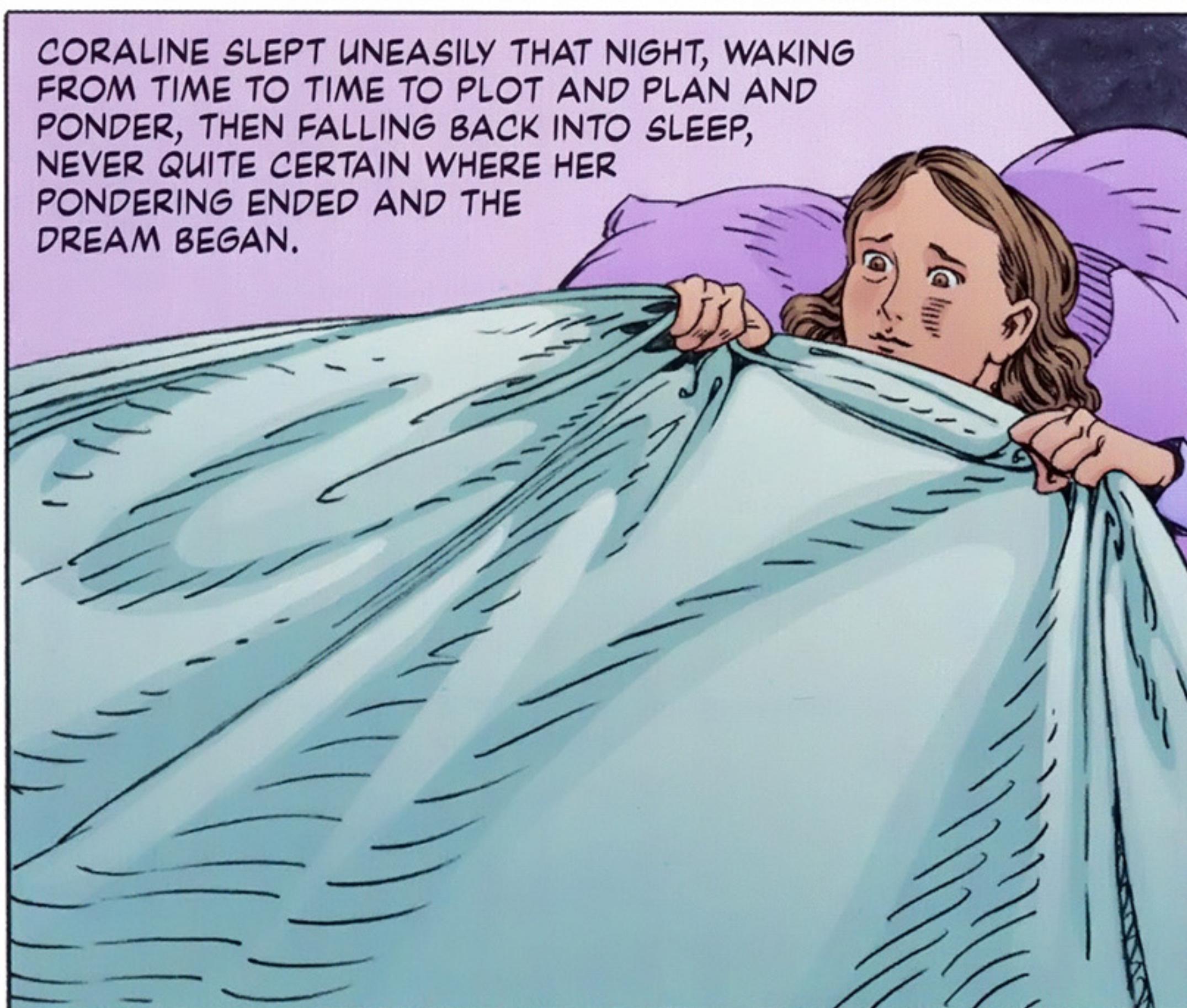


...AND WAS IMMEDIATELY OUT OF SIGHT.



THERE WERE DEEP GOUGES IN THE GLASS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WINDOW.

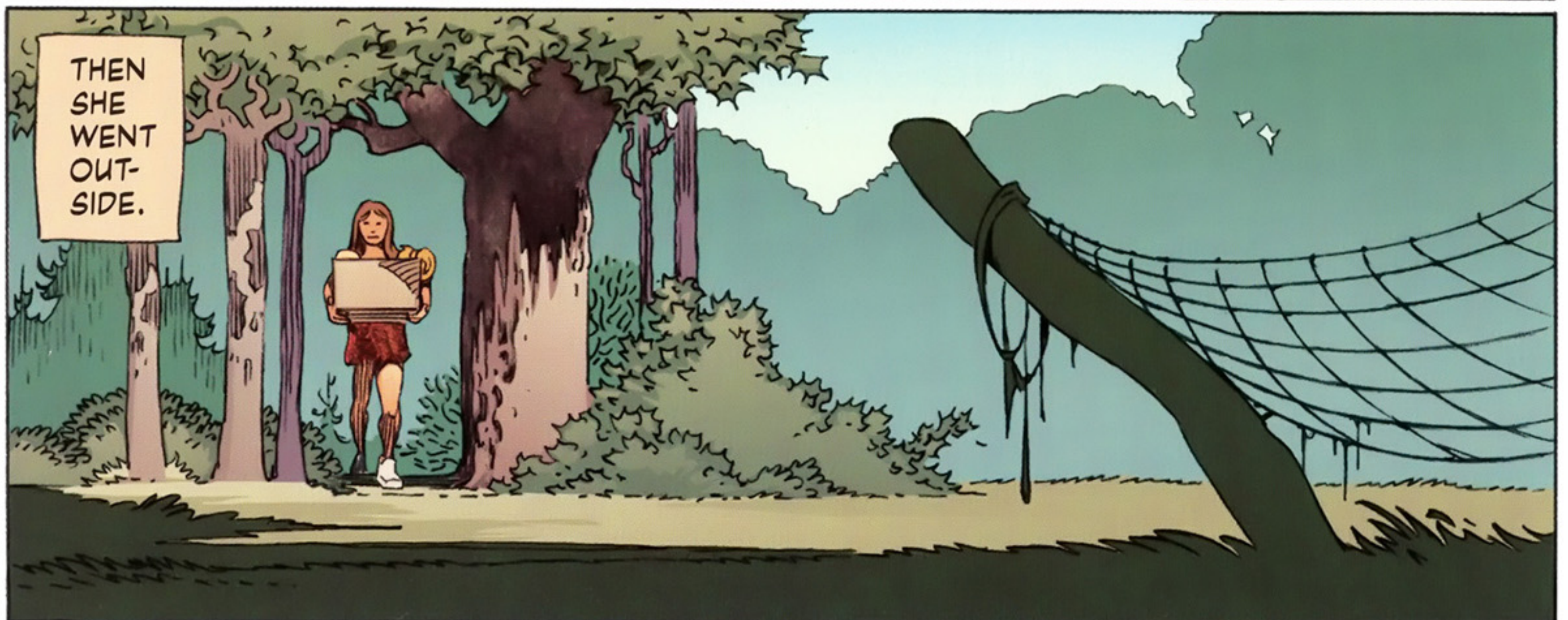
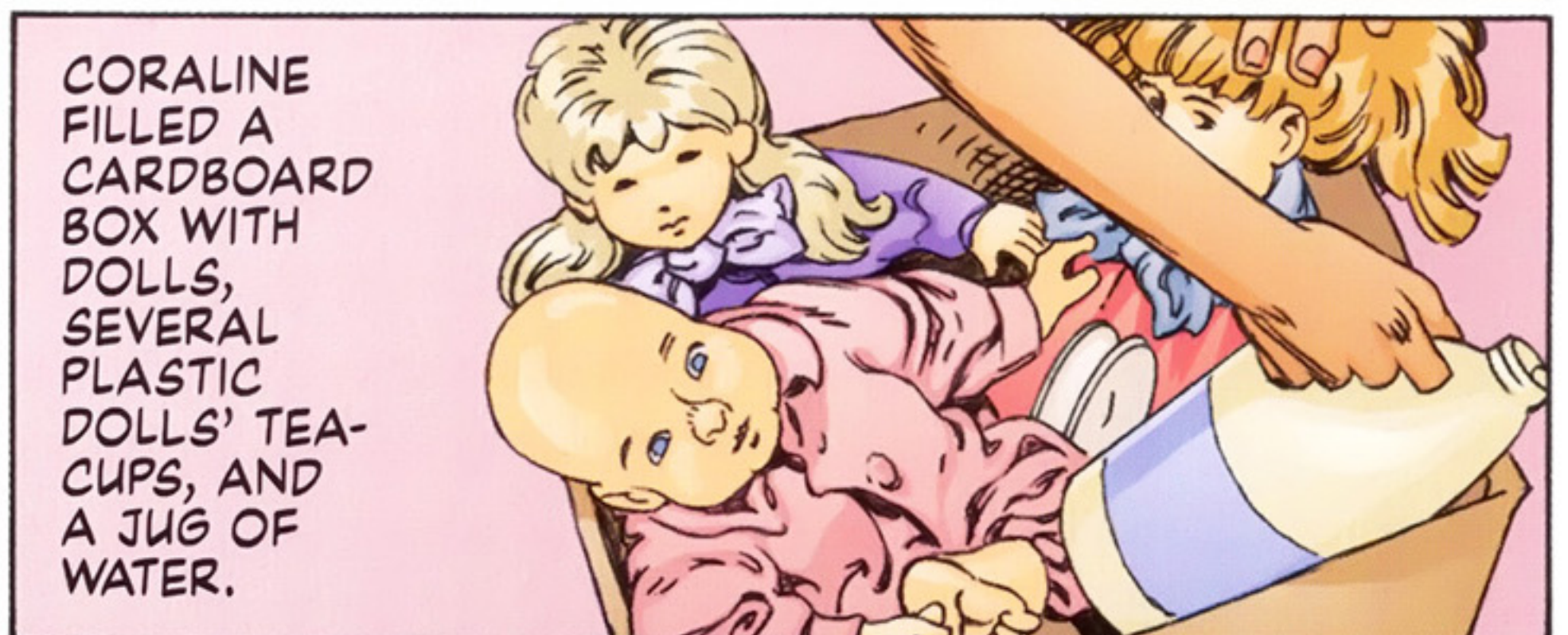
CORALINE SLEPT UNEASILY THAT NIGHT, WAKING FROM TIME TO TIME TO PLOT AND PLAN AND PONDER, THEN FALLING BACK INTO SLEEP, NEVER QUITE CERTAIN WHERE HER PONDERING ENDED AND THE DREAM BEGAN.



ONE EAR ALWAYS OPEN FOR THE SOUND OF SOMETHING SCRATCHING AT HER WINDOW-PANE...

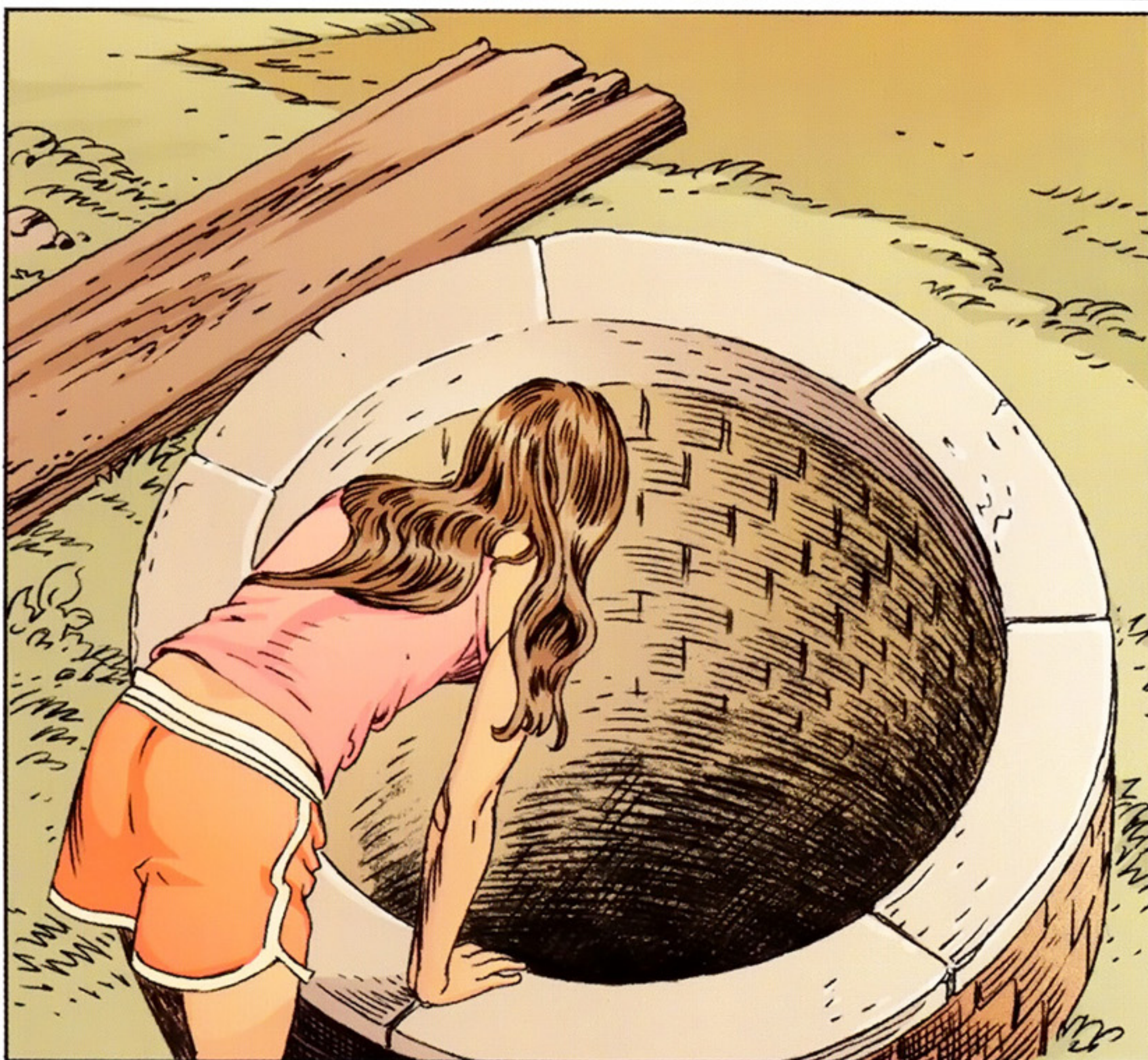


...OR AT HER BED-ROOM DOOR.





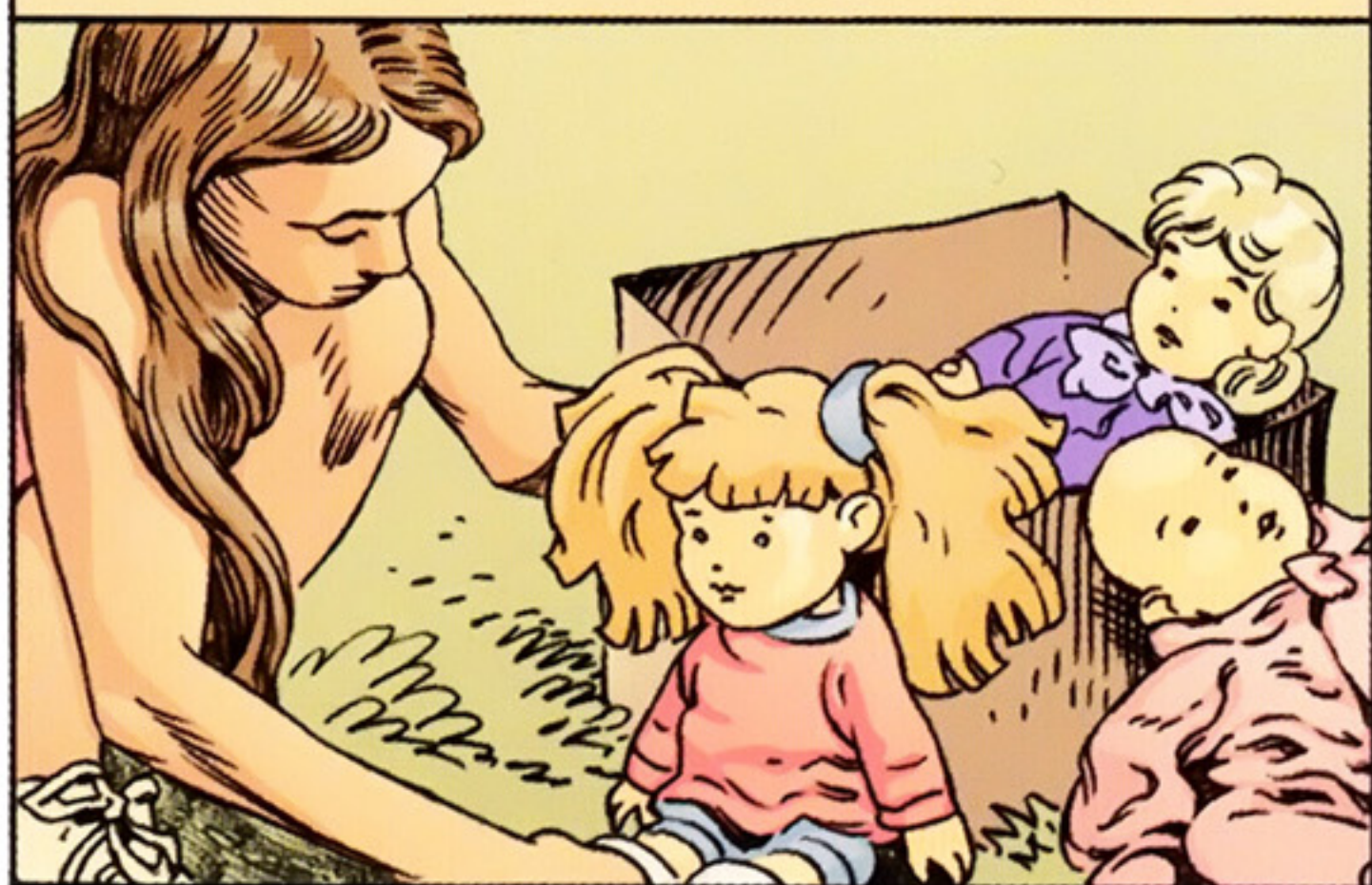
THE PLANKS COVERING THE WELL WERE ASTONISHINGLY HEAVY—ALMOST TOO HEAVY FOR A GIRL TO LIFT, BUT SHE MANAGED. SHE DIDN'T HAVE ANY CHOICE.



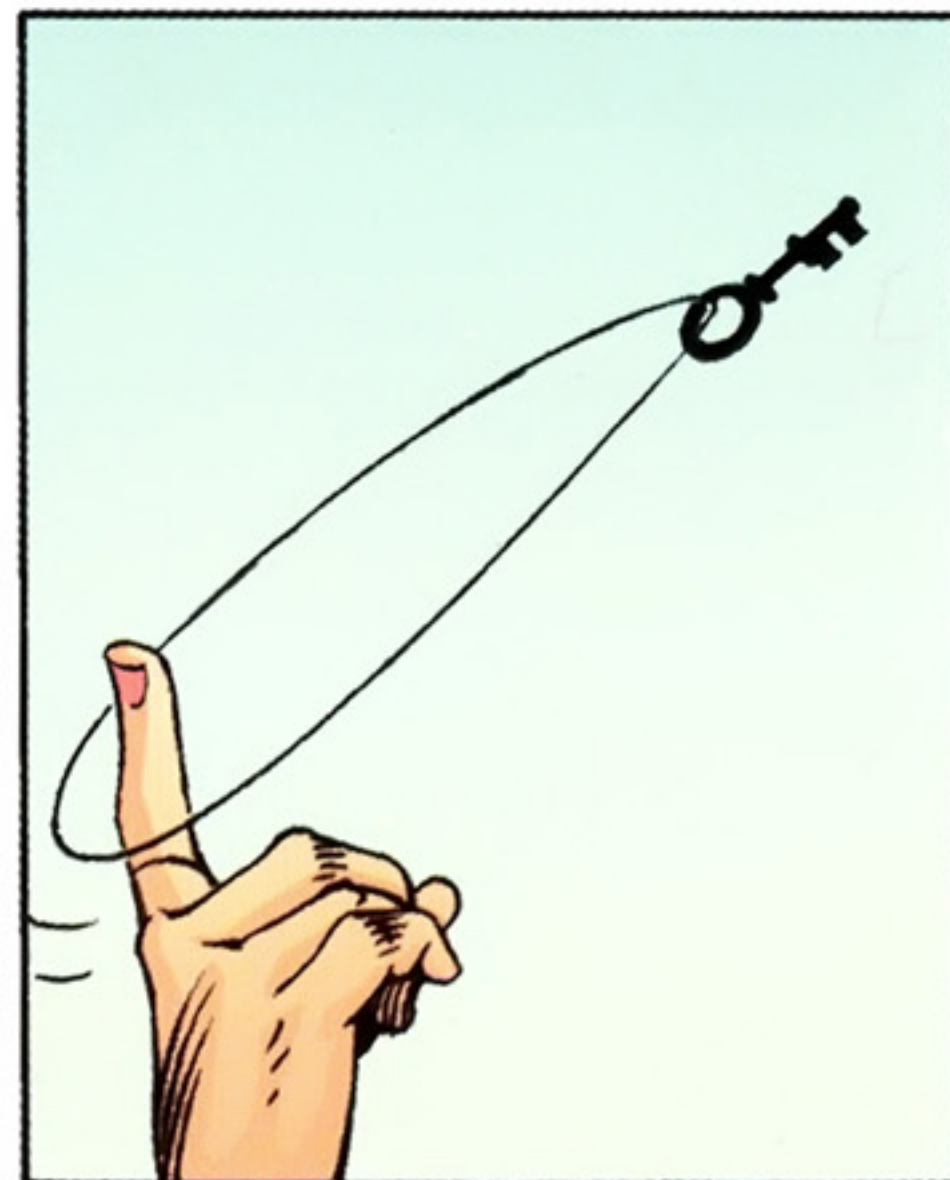
SHE CAREFULLY LAID THE TABLECLOTH ACROSS THE TOP OF THE WELL. SHE PLACED DOLL CUPS AROUND IT AND WEIGHED EACH CUP DOWN WITH WATER FROM THE JUG.



SHE PUT A DOLL IN THE GRASS BESIDE EACH CUP, MAKING IT LOOK AS MUCH LIKE A DOLLS' TEA PARTY AS SHE COULD



THEN SHE RE-TRACED HER STEPS.



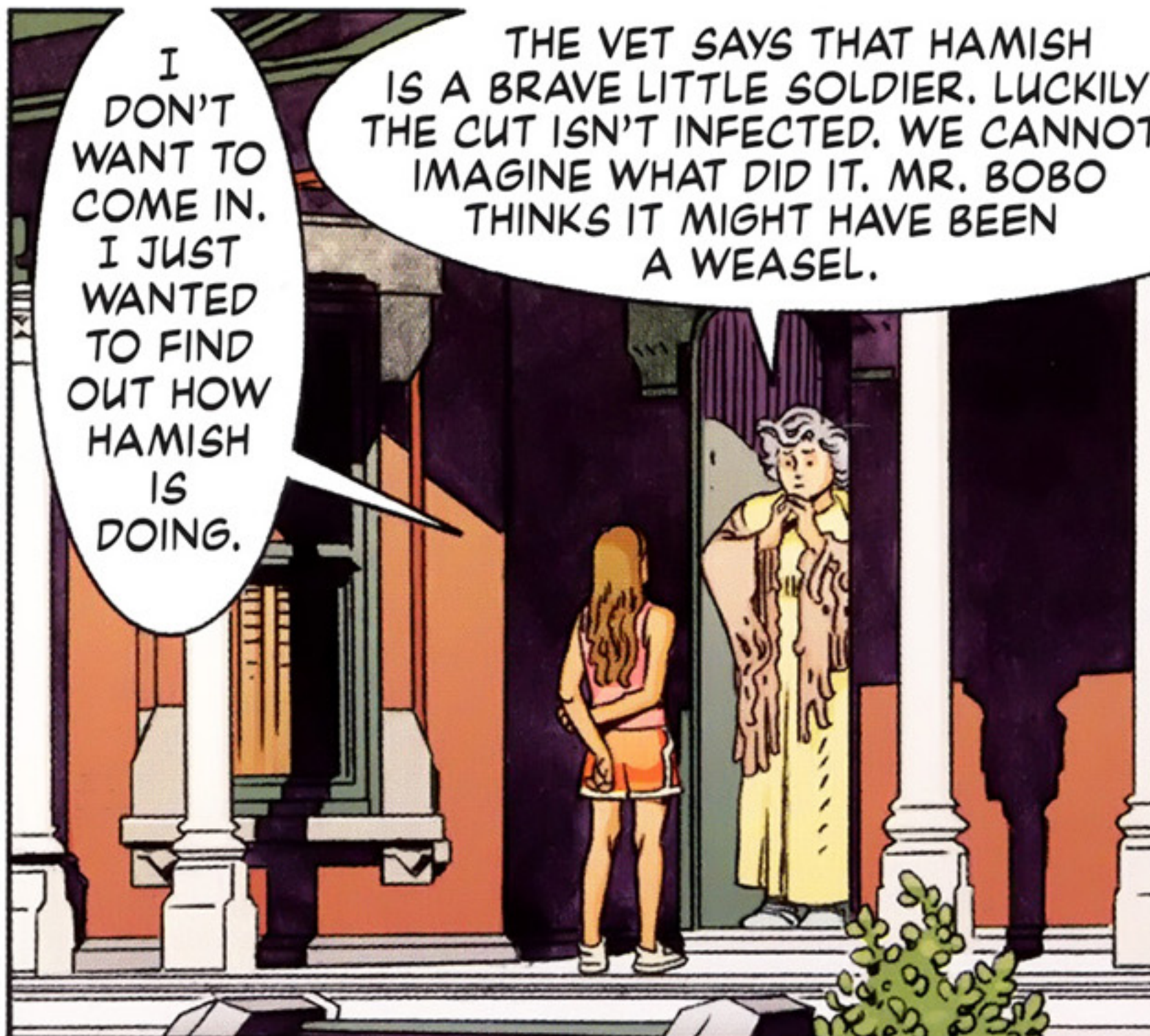


HELLO,
DEAR.



I
DON'T
WANT TO
COME IN.
I JUST
WANTED
TO FIND
OUT HOW
HAMISH
IS
DOING.

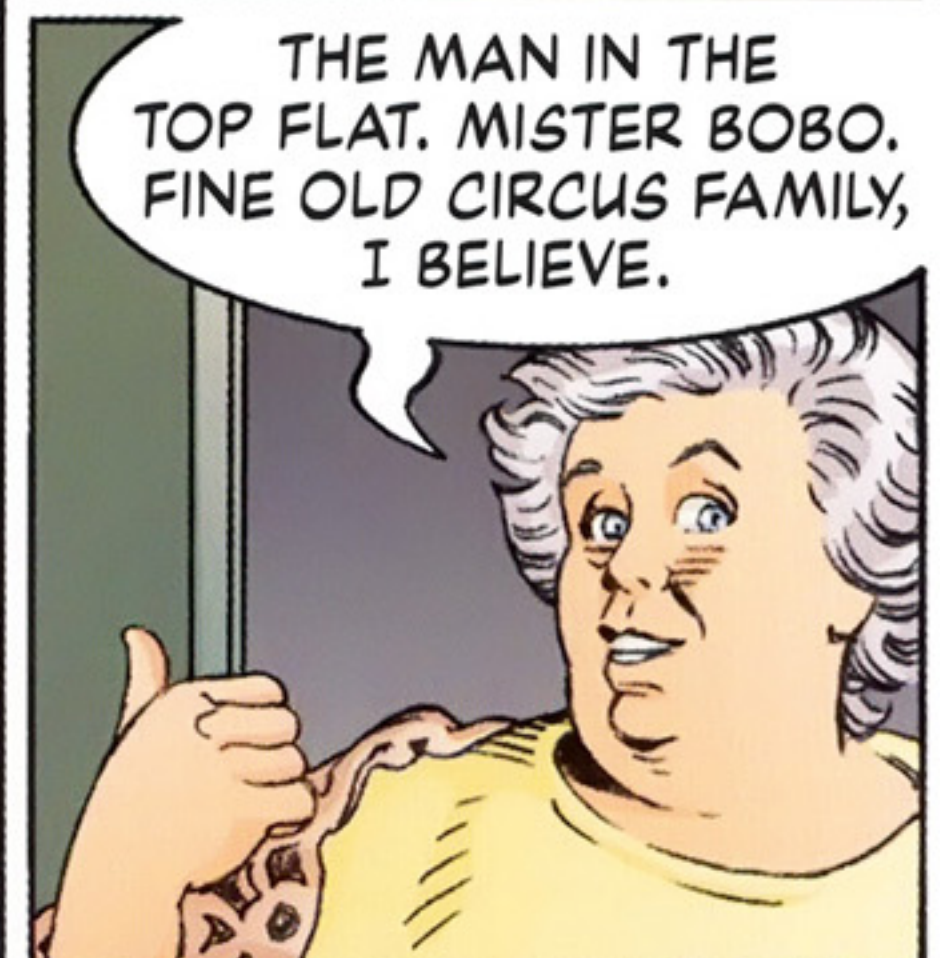
THE VET SAYS THAT HAMISH
IS A BRAVE LITTLE SOLDIER. LUCKILY
THE CUT ISN'T INFECTED. WE CANNOT
IMAGINE WHAT DID IT. MR. BOBO
THINKS IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN
A WEASEL.



MISTER
BOBO?



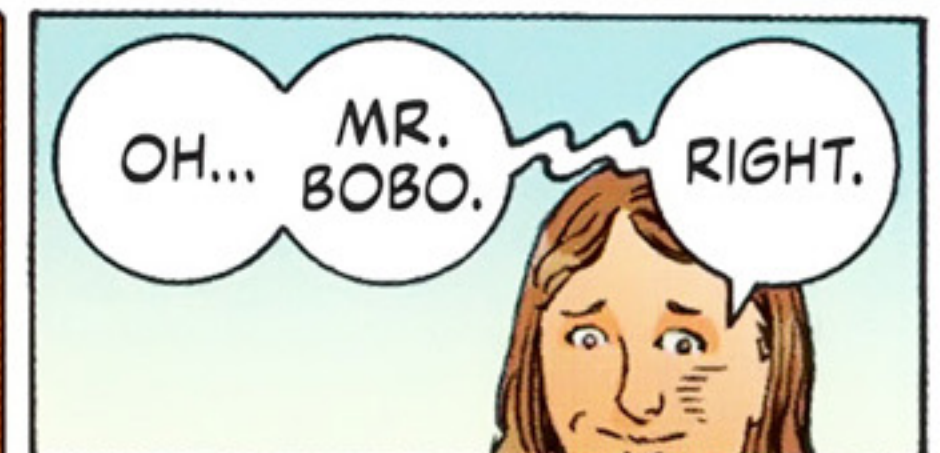
THE MAN IN THE
TOP FLAT. MISTER BOBO.
FINE OLD CIRCUS FAMILY,
I BELIEVE.



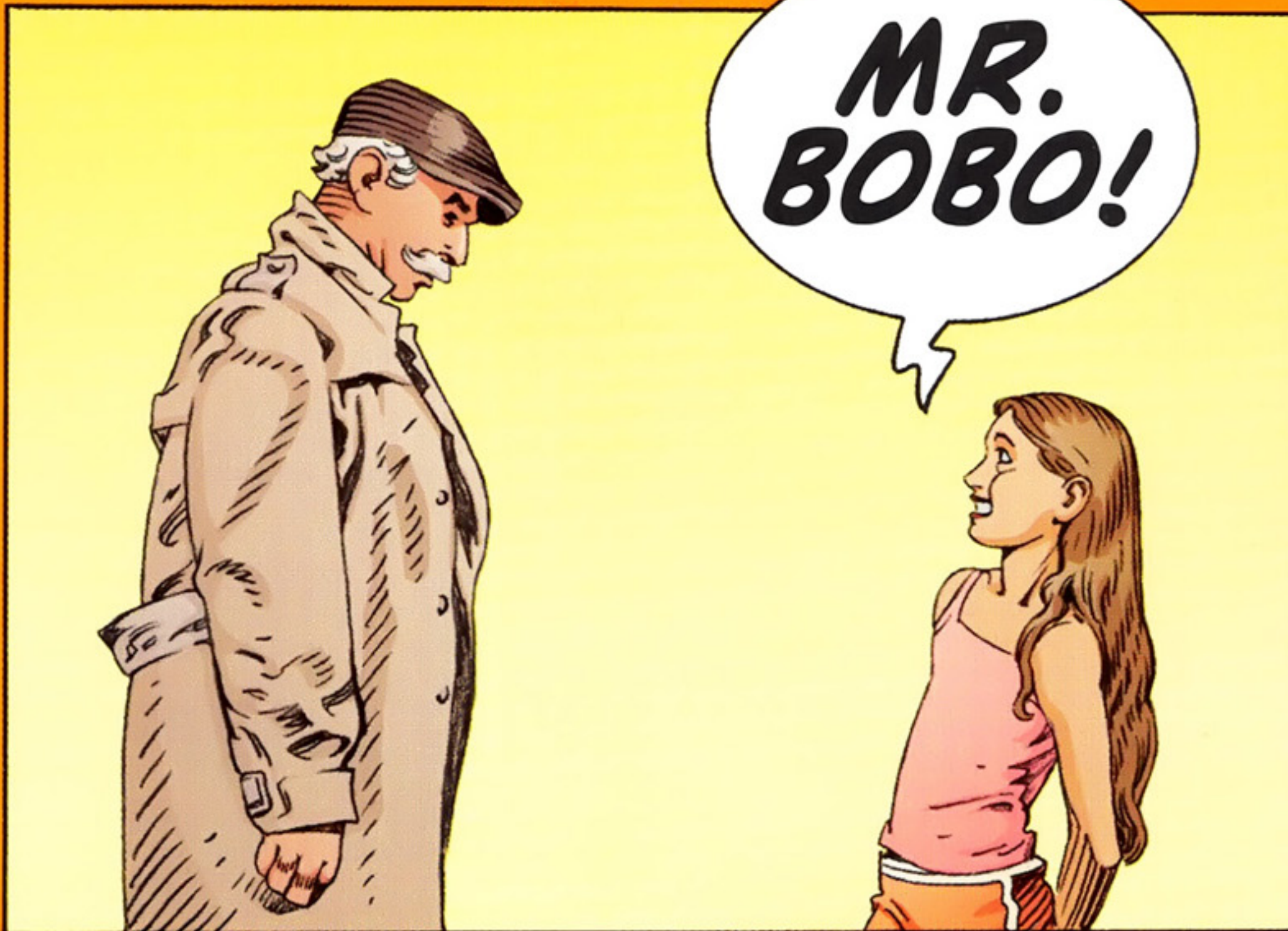
IT HAD NEVER OCCURRED TO CORALINE THAT THE CRAZY OLD MAN
UPSTAIRS ACTUALLY HAD A NAME. IF SHE'D KNOWN HIS NAME WAS
MR. BOBO SHE WOULD HAVE SAID IT EVERY CHANCE SHE GOT.
HOW OFTEN DO YOU GET TO SAY ALOUD A NAME LIKE...

OH... MR.
BOBO.

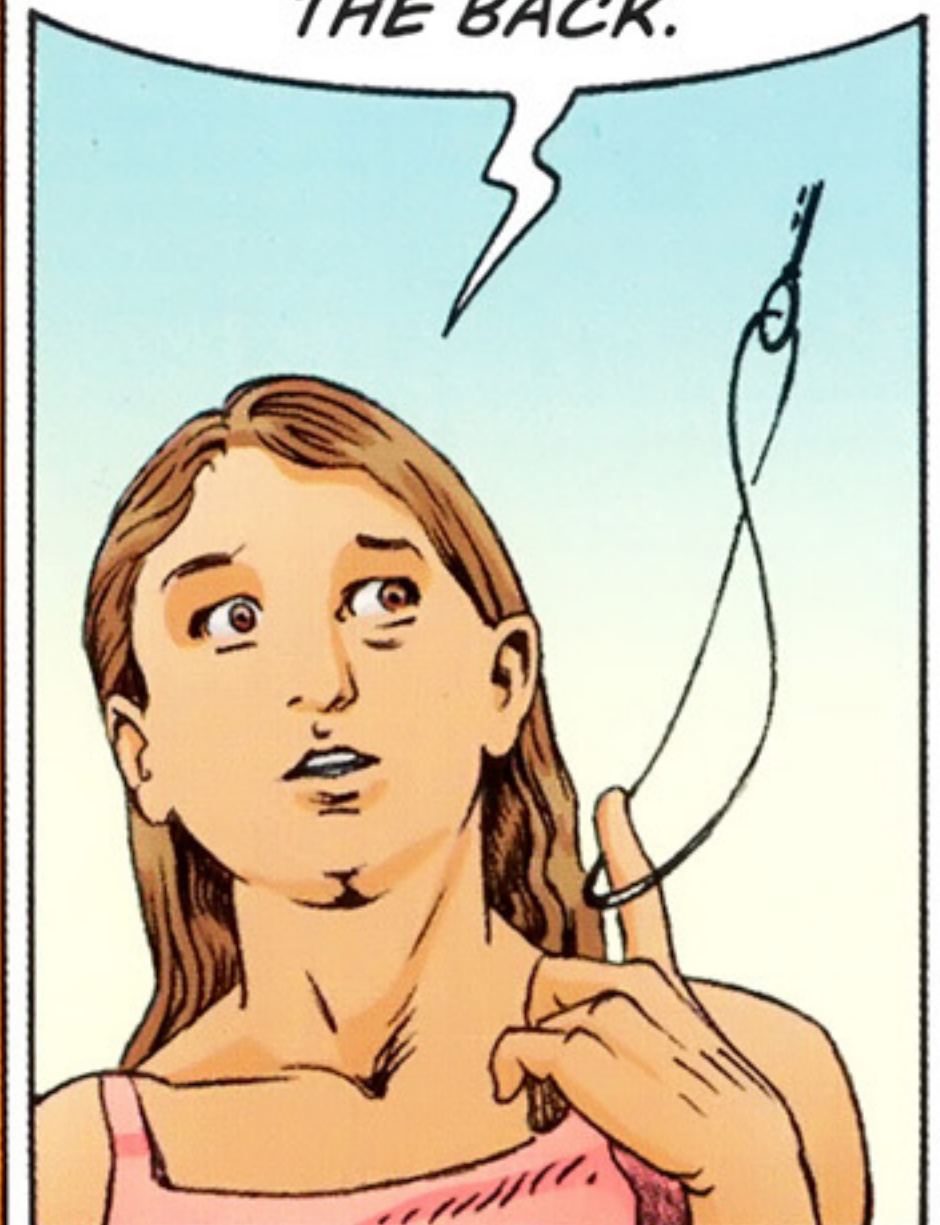
RIGHT.



**MR.
BOBO!**



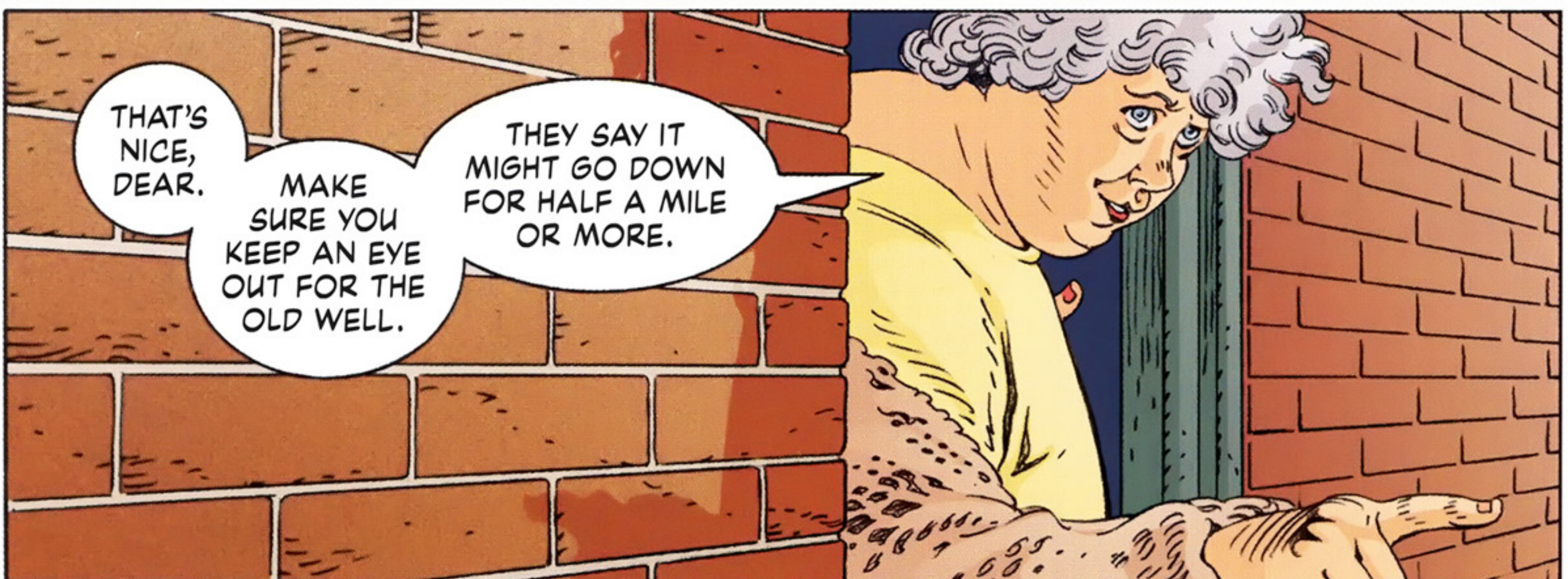
WELL, I'M GOING TO GO
AND PLAY WITH MY DOLLS
NOW, OVER BY THE OLD
TENNIS COURT, ROUND
THE BACK.



THAT'S
NICE,
DEAR.

MAKE
SURE YOU
KEEP AN EYE
OUT FOR THE
OLD WELL.

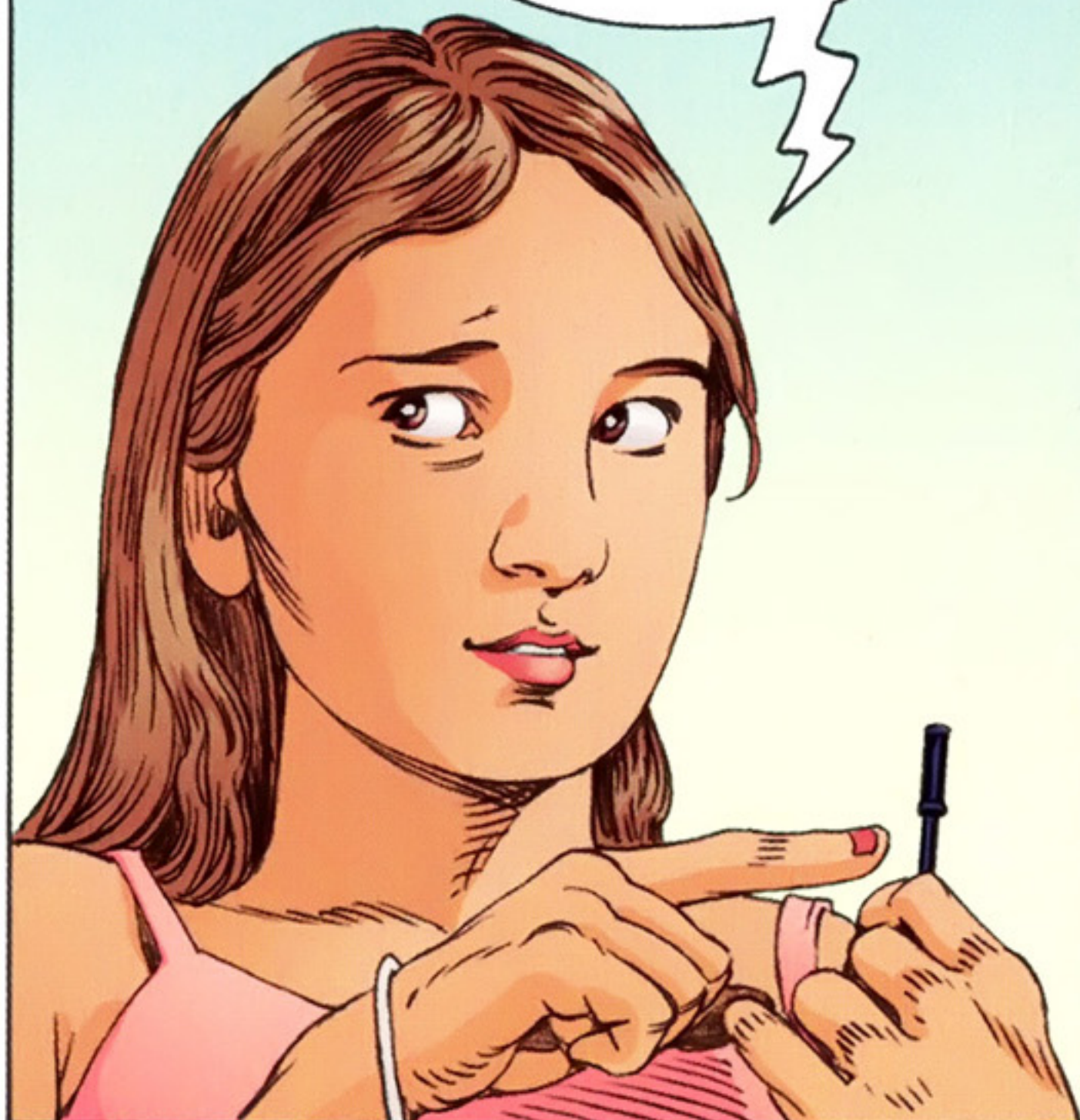
THEY SAY IT
MIGHT GO DOWN
FOR HALF A MILE
OR MORE.



CORALINE HOPED THE HAND HAD NOT HEARD THIS LAST, AND SHE CHANGED THE SUBJECT.

THIS KEY?

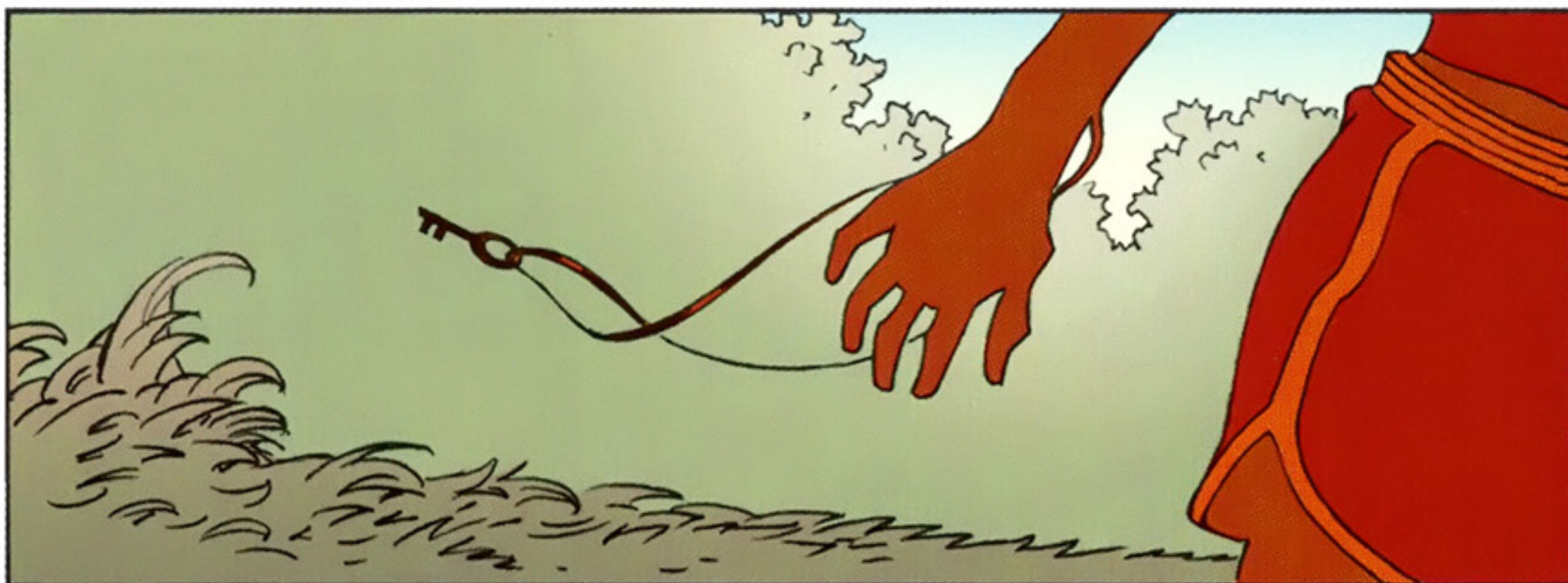
OH, IT'S JUST SOME OLD KEY FROM OUR HOUSE. IT'S PART OF MY GAME. THAT'S WHY I'M CARRYING IT AROUND ON THIS PIECE OF STRING.



WELL, GOOD-BYE NOW.



WHAT AN EXTRA-ORDINARY CHILD.



SHE TRIED TO WHISTLE BUT NOTHING HAPPENED, SO SHE SANG A SONG HER FATHER HAD MADE UP FOR HER WHEN SHE WAS A BABY.

IT WENT...

OH—MY
TWITCHY WITCHY GIRL
I THINK YOU ARE SO NICE,
I GIVE YOU BOWLS OF PORRIDGE
AND I GIVE YOU BOWLS OF
ICE

CREAM.

I GIVE
YOU LOTS OF KISSES,
AND I GIVE YOU LOTS OF HUGS,
BUT I NEVER GIVE YOU SANDWICHES
WITH BUGS

IN.



THAT WAS WHAT SHE SANG AS SHE SAUNTERED THROUGH THE WOODS, AND HER VOICE HARDLY TREMBLED AT ALL.

NOW WAS THE HARDEST PART.

HELLO DOLLS, IT'S TEA-TIME!

I BROUGHT THE LUCKY KEY TO MAKE SURE WE HAVE A GOOD PICNIC.

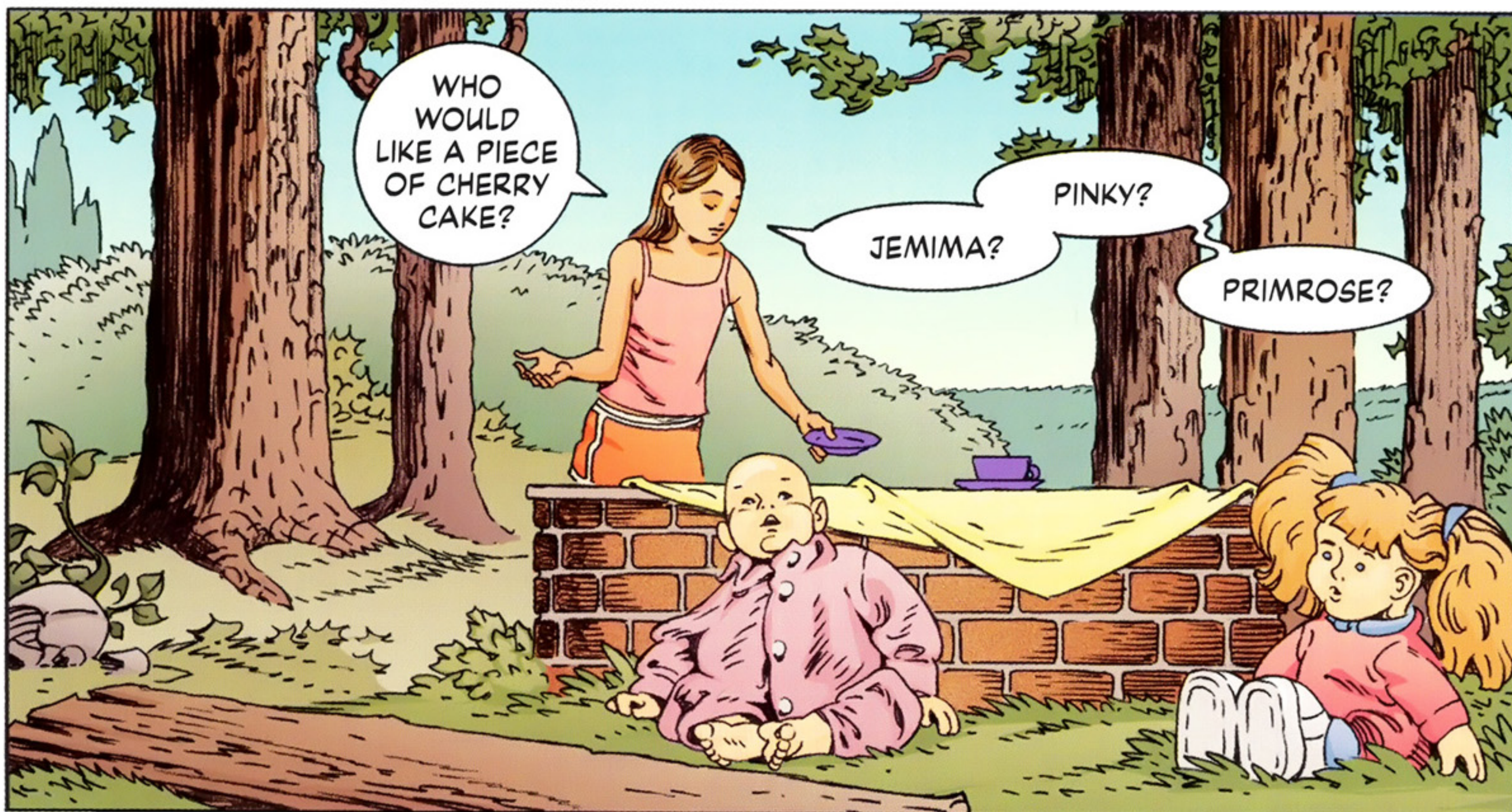
THEN, CAREFULLY AS SHE COULD, SHE LEANED OVER AND, GENTLY, PLACED THE KEY ON THE TABLE-CLOTH.

SHE HELD HER BREATH, HOPING THAT THE CUPS OF WATER AT THE EDGE OF THE WELL WOULD WEIGH THE CLOTH DOWN, LETTING IT TAKE THE WEIGHT OF THE KEY WITHOUT COLLAPSING INTO THE WELL.

THEN...

...SHE LET GO OF THE STRING.

NOW IT WAS ALL UP TO THE HAND.



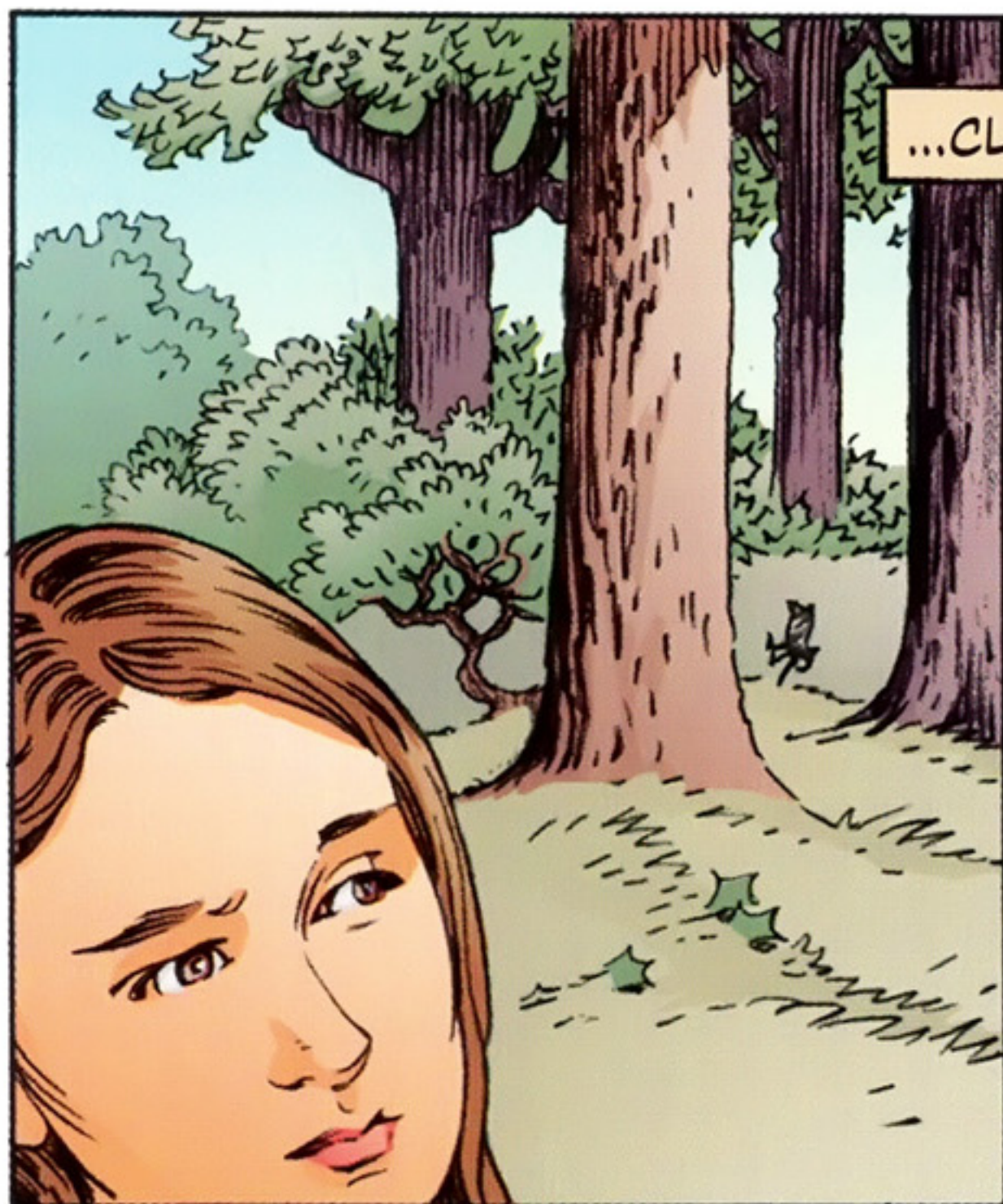
WHO
WOULD
LIKE A PIECE
OF CHERRY
CAKE?

JEMIMA?

PINKY?

PRIMROSE?

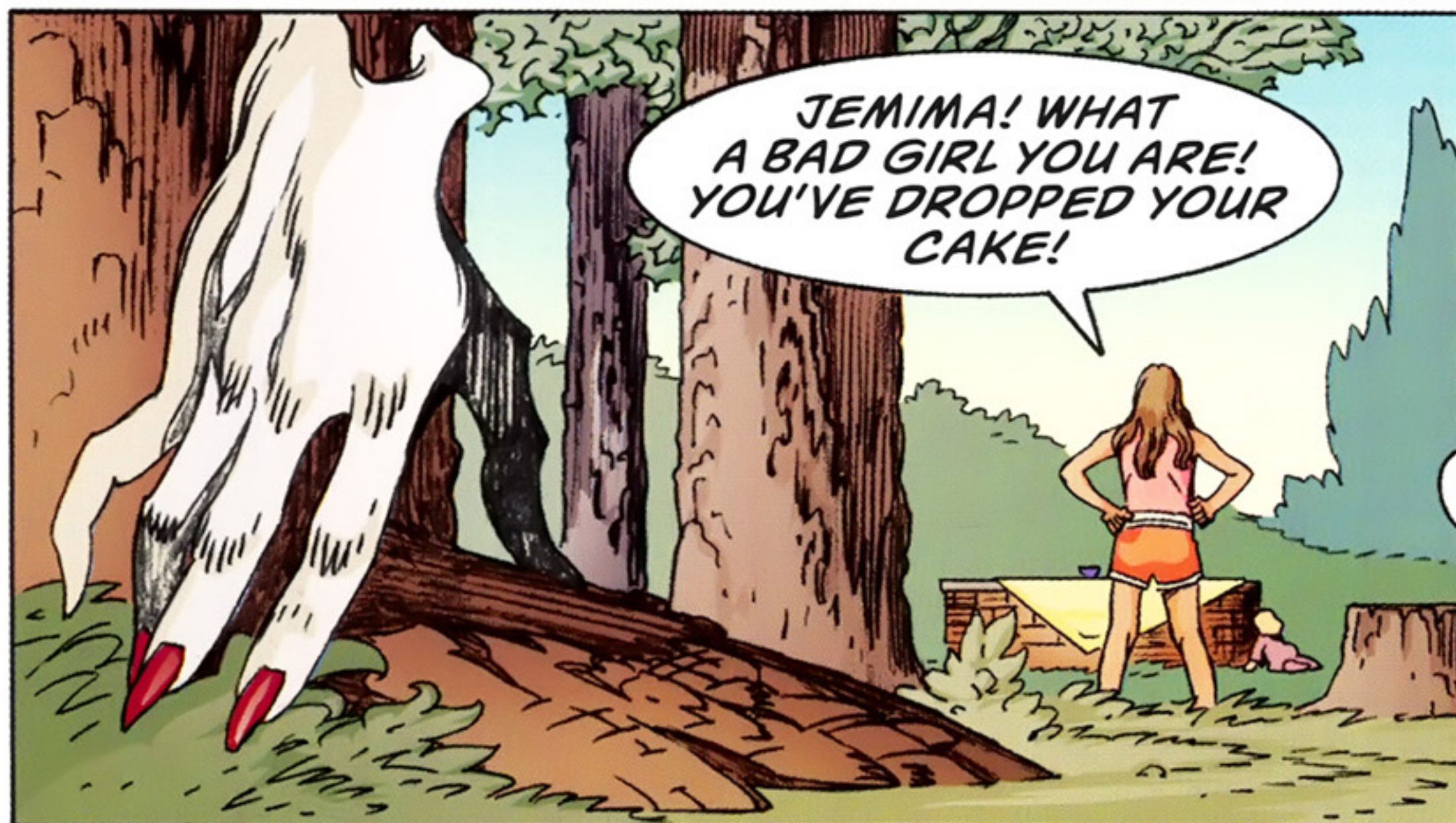
FROM OUT OF THE CORNER OF HER
EYE SHE SAW SOMETHING BONE
WHITE SCAMPER FROM ONE TREE
TRUNK TO ANOTHER...



...CLOSER...

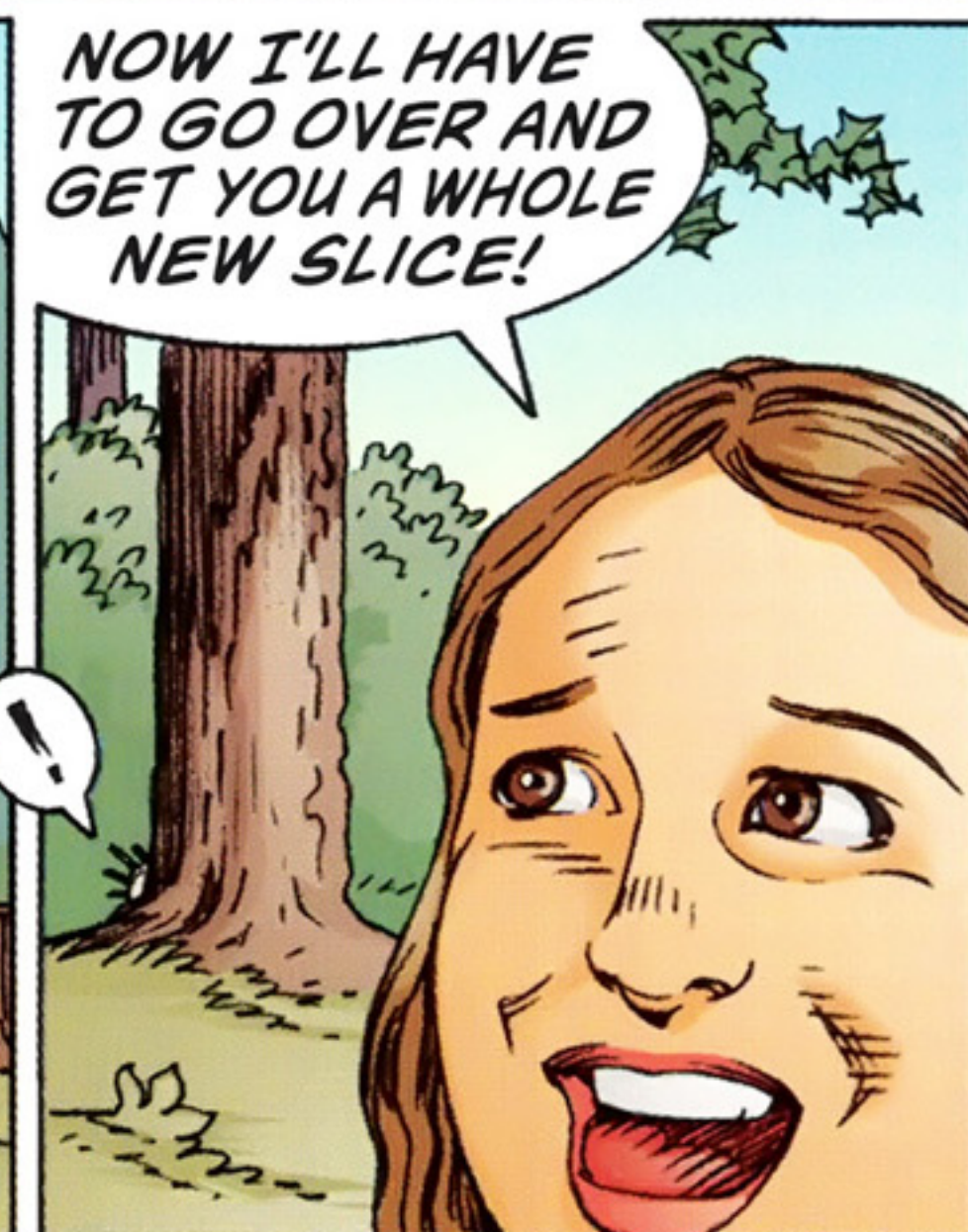


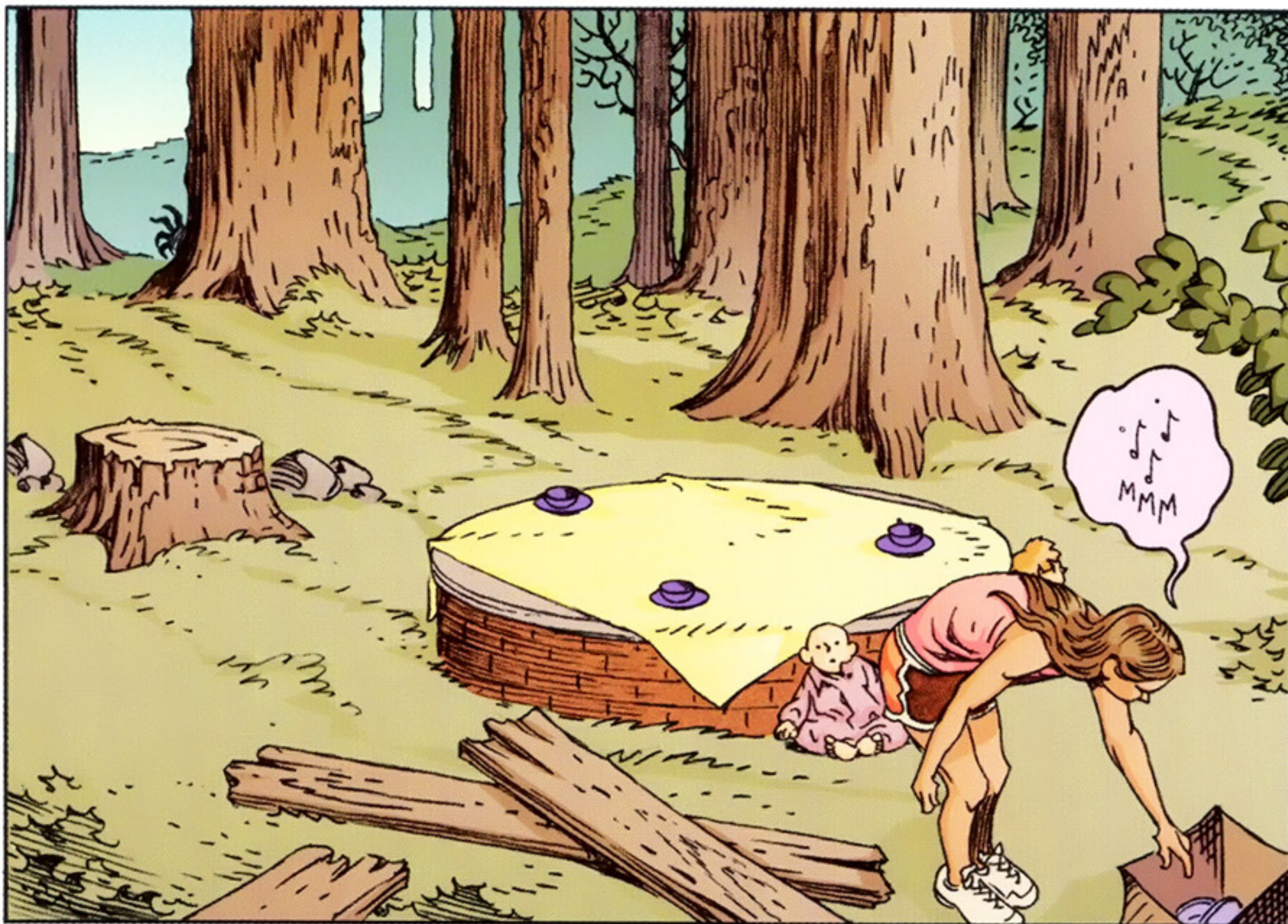
...AND CLOSER.



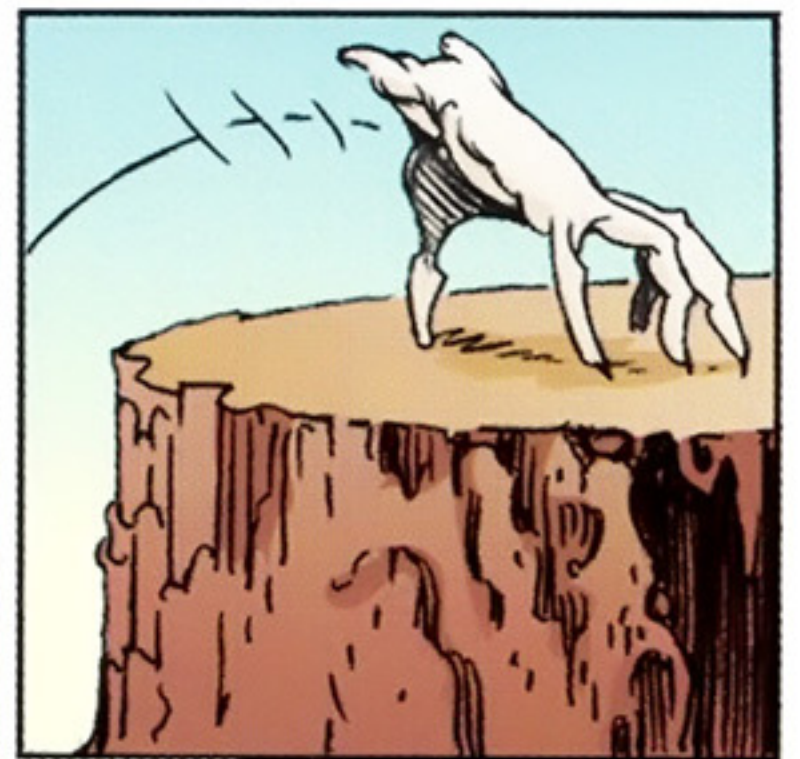
JEMIMA! WHAT
A BAD GIRL YOU ARE!
YOU'VE DROPPED YOUR
CAKE!

NOW I'LL HAVE
TO GO OVER AND
GET YOU A WHOLE
NEW SLICE!





AND THEN IN A SKITTERING RUSH, IT CAME.



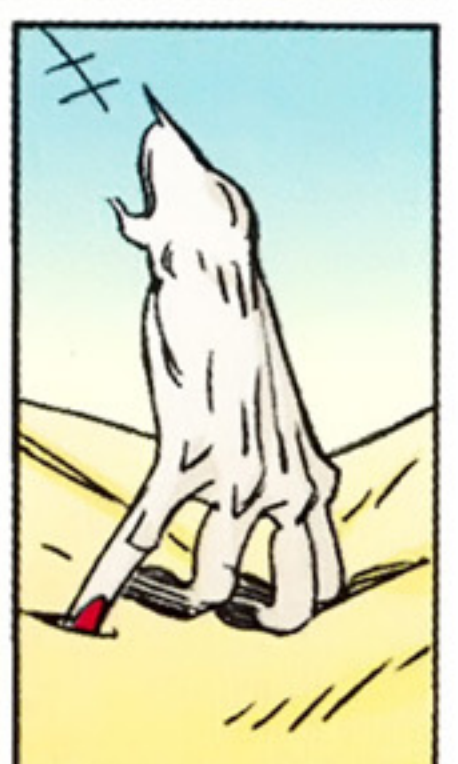
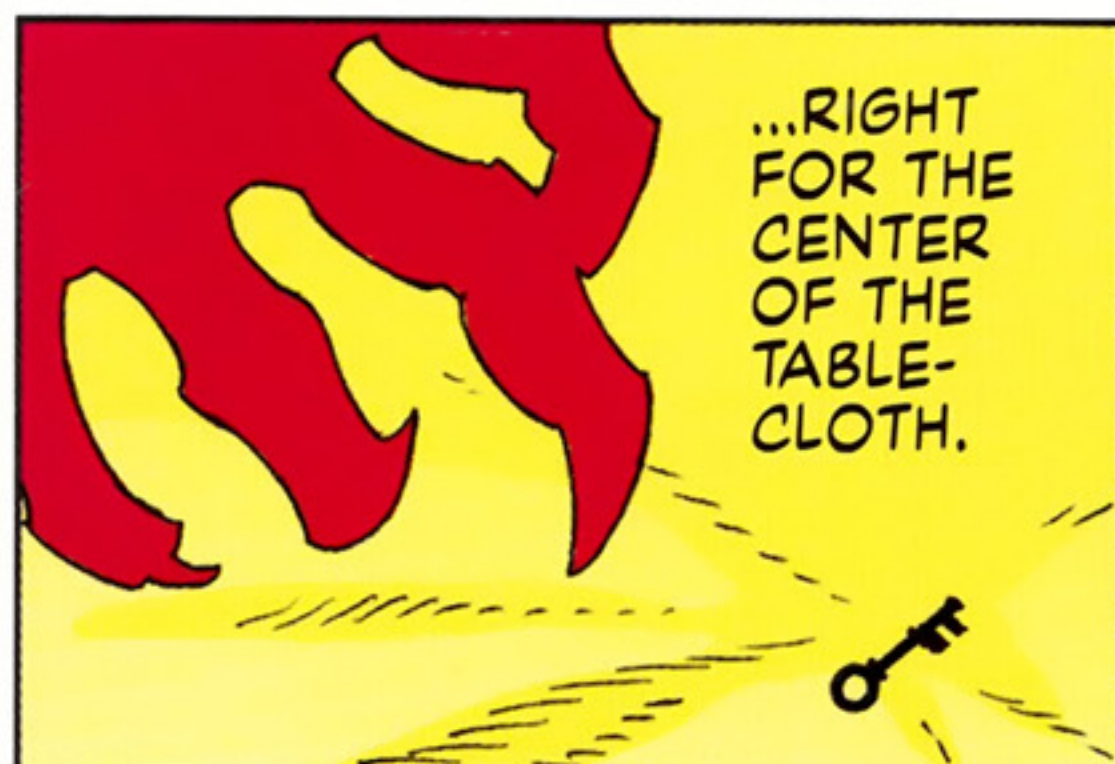
IT STOOD FOR A MOMENT, LIKE A CRAB TASTING THE AIR...

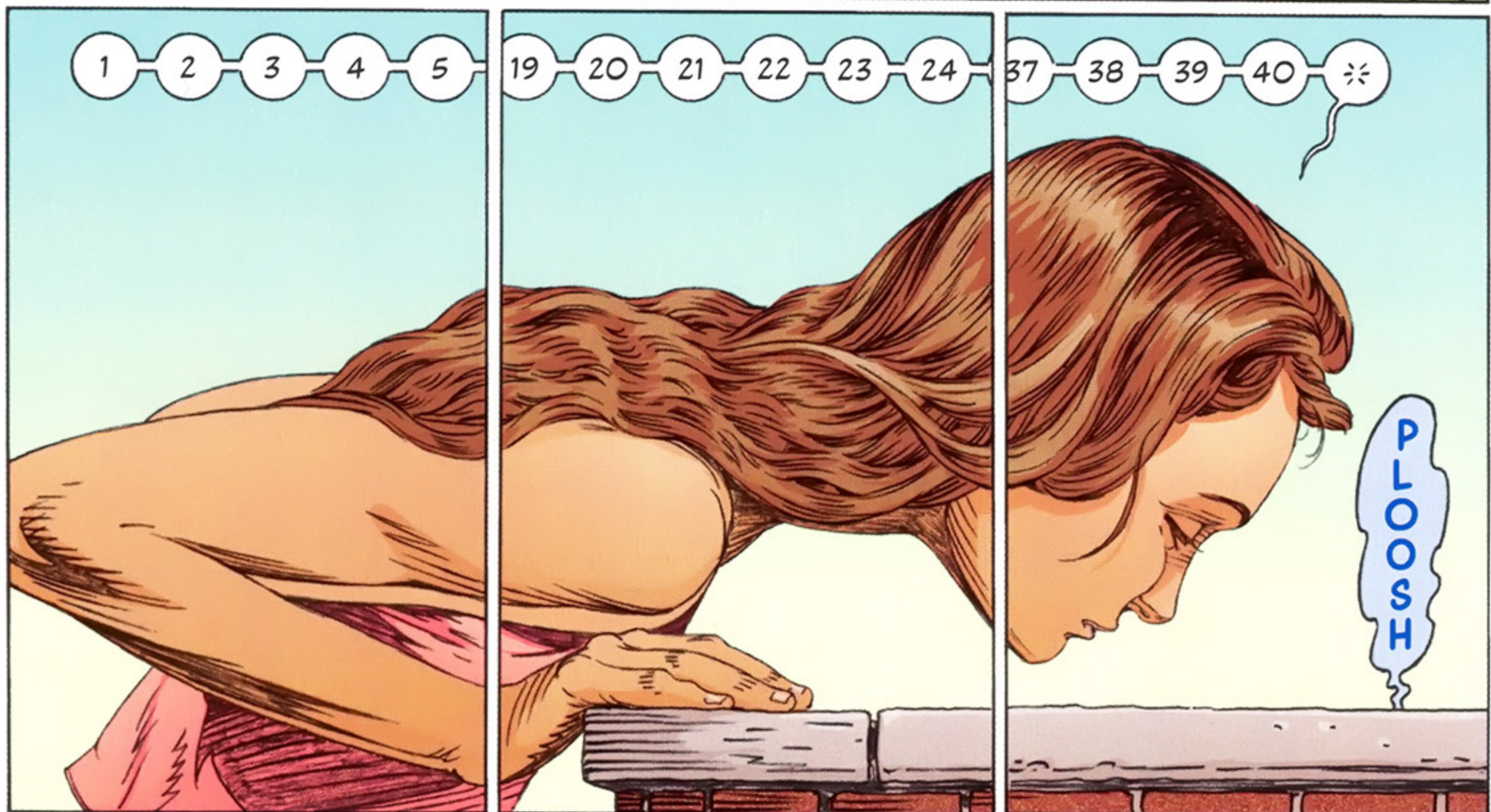
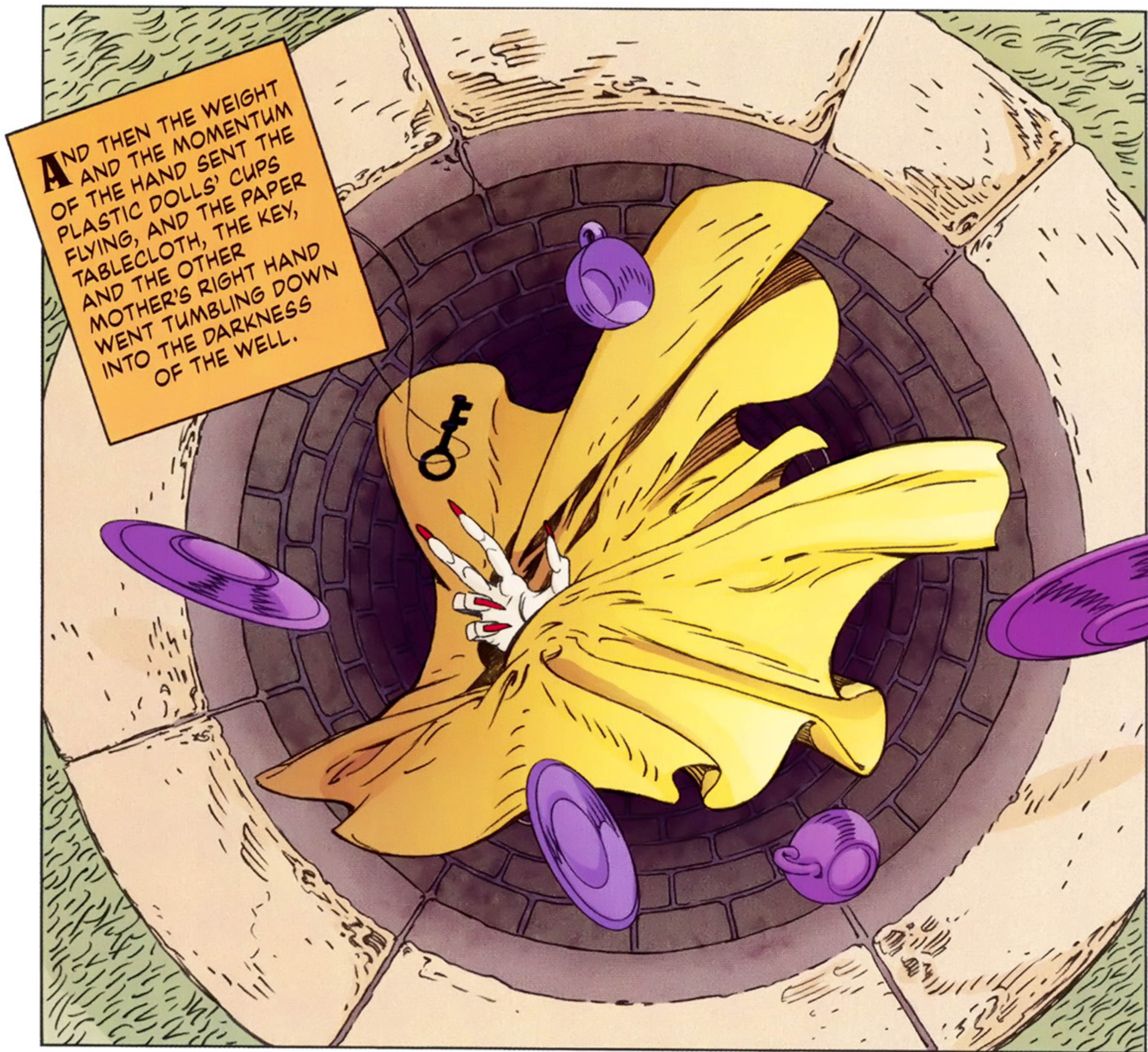


...AND THEN IT MADE ONE TRIUMPHANT, NAIL-CLACKING LEAP...



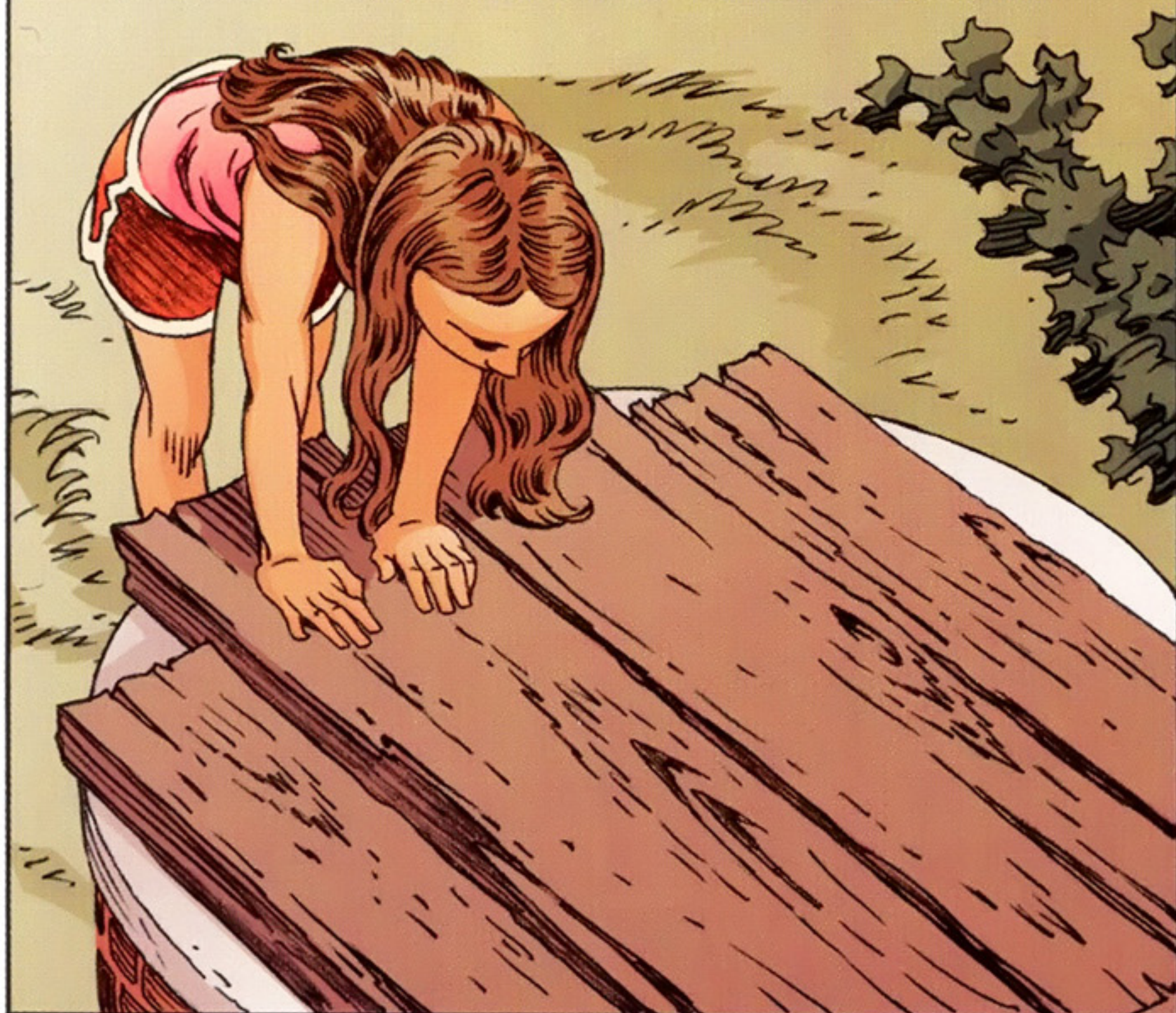
...RIGHT FOR THE CENTER OF THE TABLE-CLOTH.



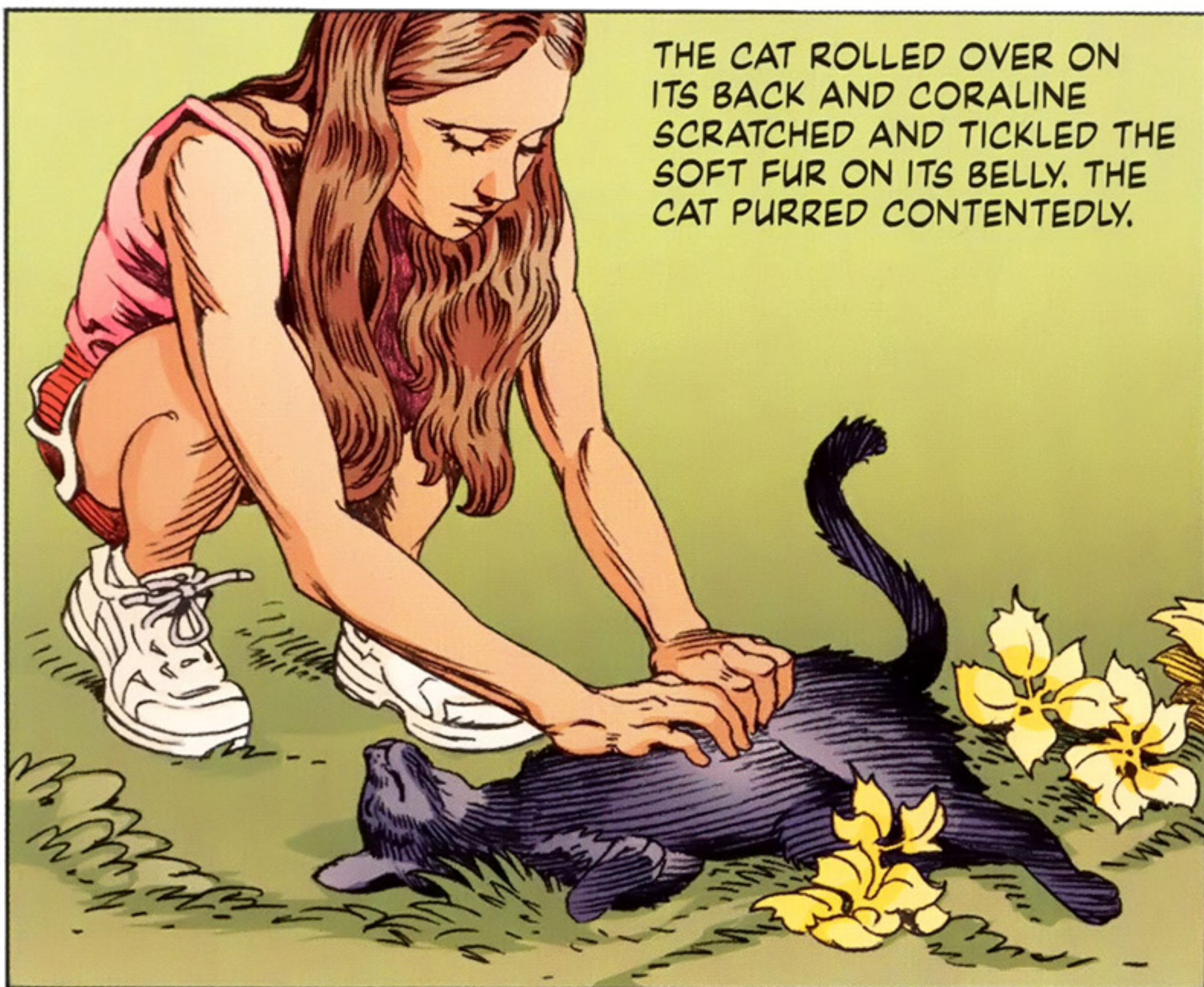
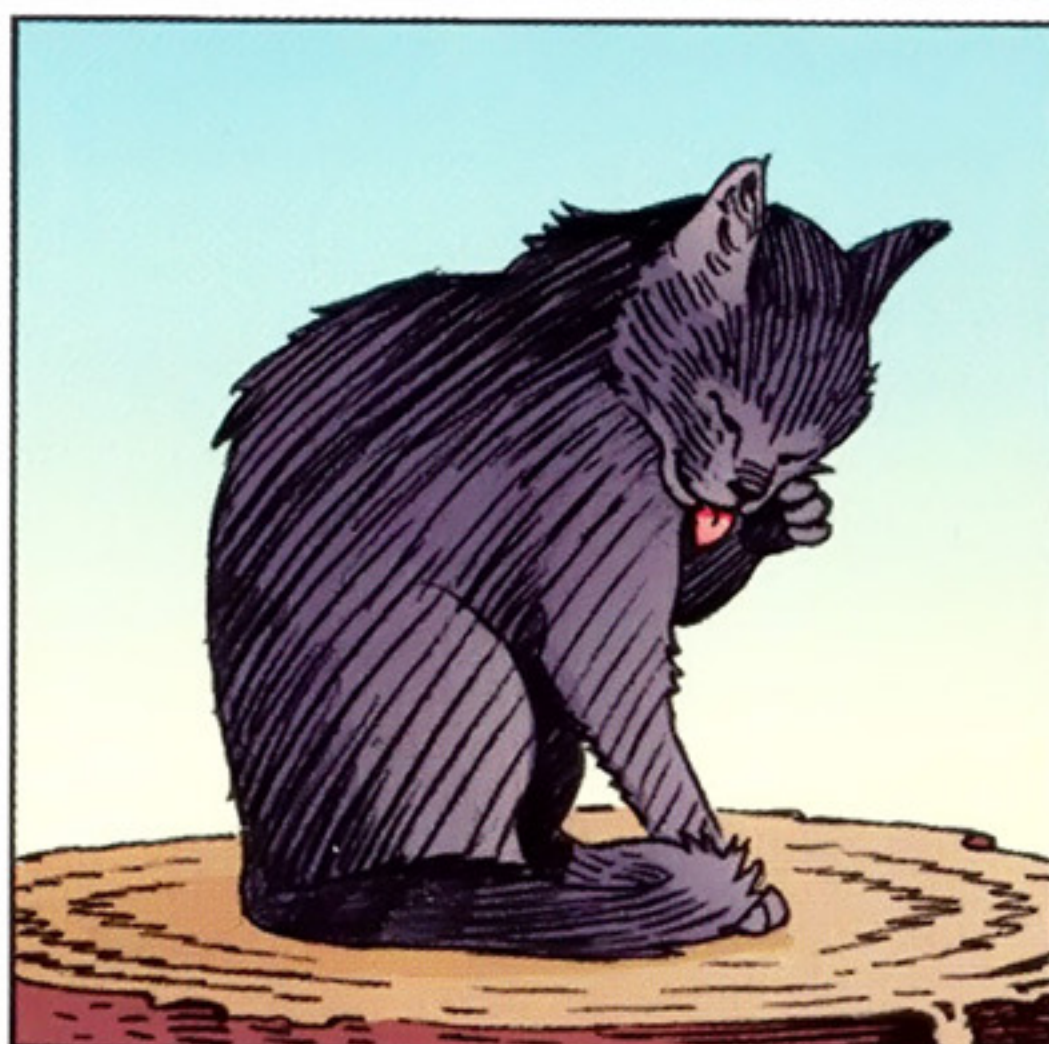


SHE HAULED THE HEAVY PLANKS BACK ONTO THE WELL, COVERING IT AS CAREFULLY AS SHE COULD. SHE DIDN'T WANT ANYTHING TO FALL IN.

SHE DIDN'T WANT ANYTHING TO EVER GET OUT.



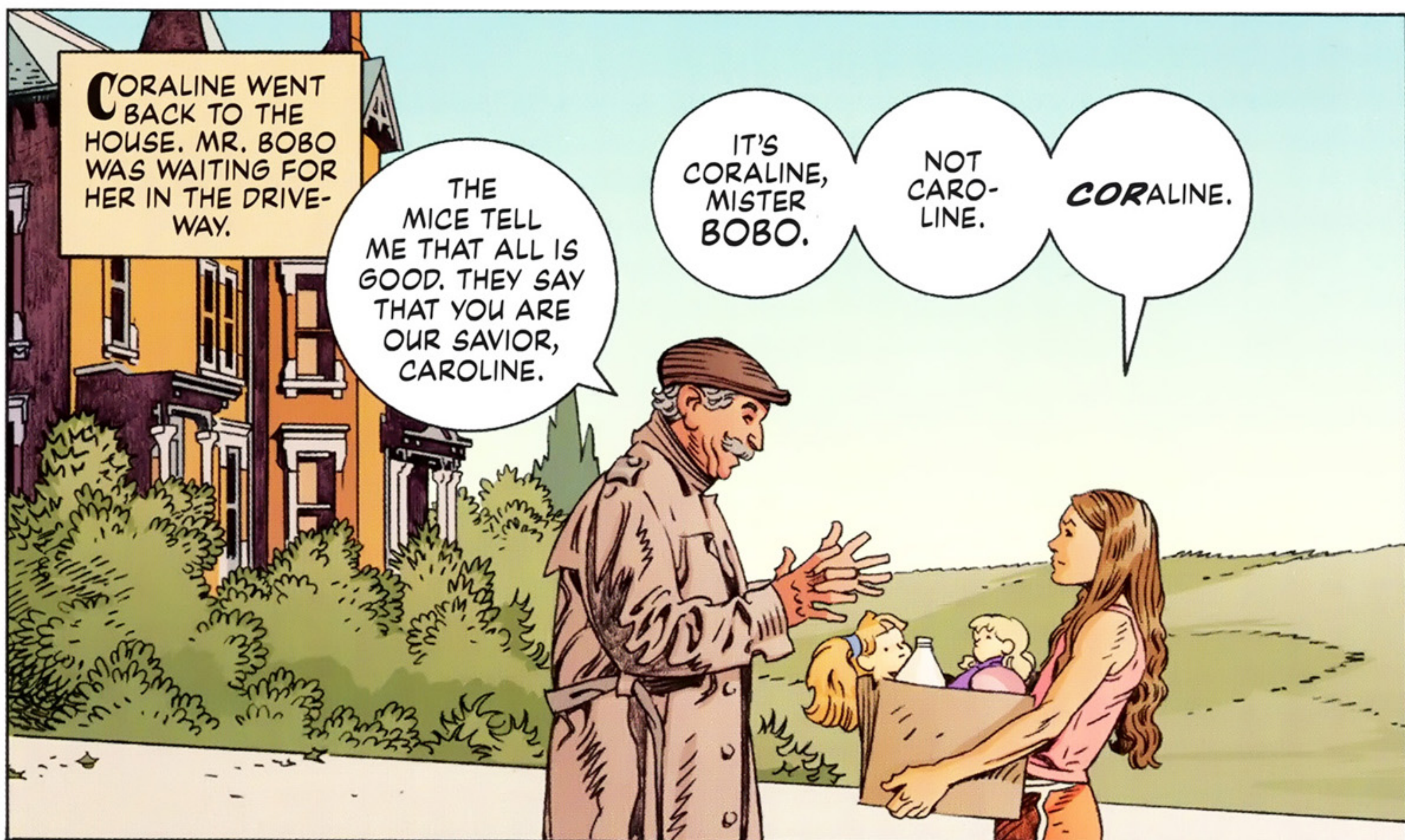
AS SHE WAS COLLECTING HER DOLLS, SOMETHING CAUGHT HER EYE.



THE CAT ROLLED OVER ON ITS BACK AND CORALINE SCRATCHED AND TICKLED THE SOFT FUR ON ITS BELLY. THE CAT PURRED CONTENTEDLY.

THEN IT ROLLED OVER AND WALKED BACK TOWARD THE TENNIS COURT, LIKE A TINY PATCH OF MIDNIGHT IN THE MIDDAY SUN.





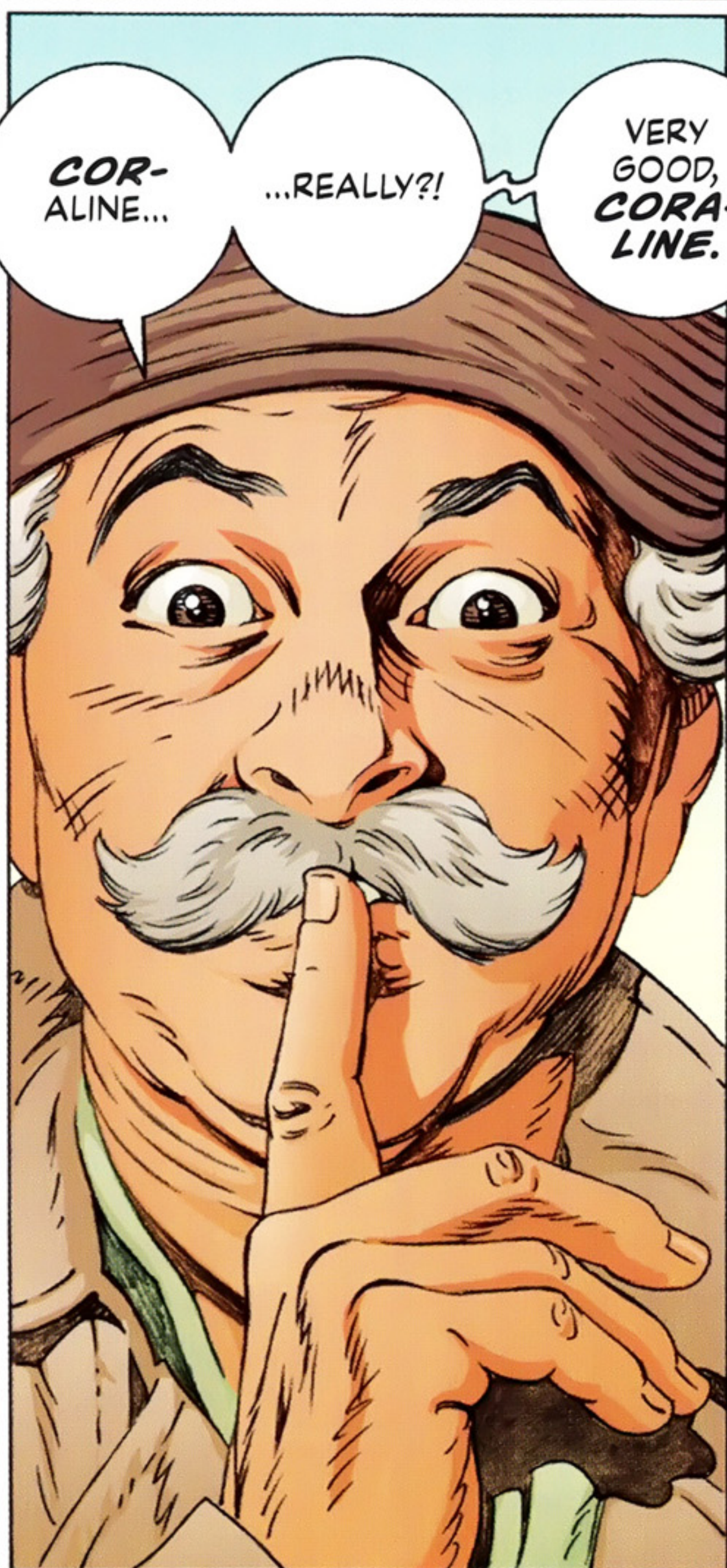
CORALINE WENT BACK TO THE HOUSE. MR. BOBO WAS WAITING FOR HER IN THE DRIVEWAY.

THE MICE TELL ME THAT ALL IS GOOD. THEY SAY THAT YOU ARE OUR SAVIOR, CAROLINE.

IT'S CORALINE, MISTER BOBO.

NOT CAROLINE.

CORALINE.



COR-
ALINE...

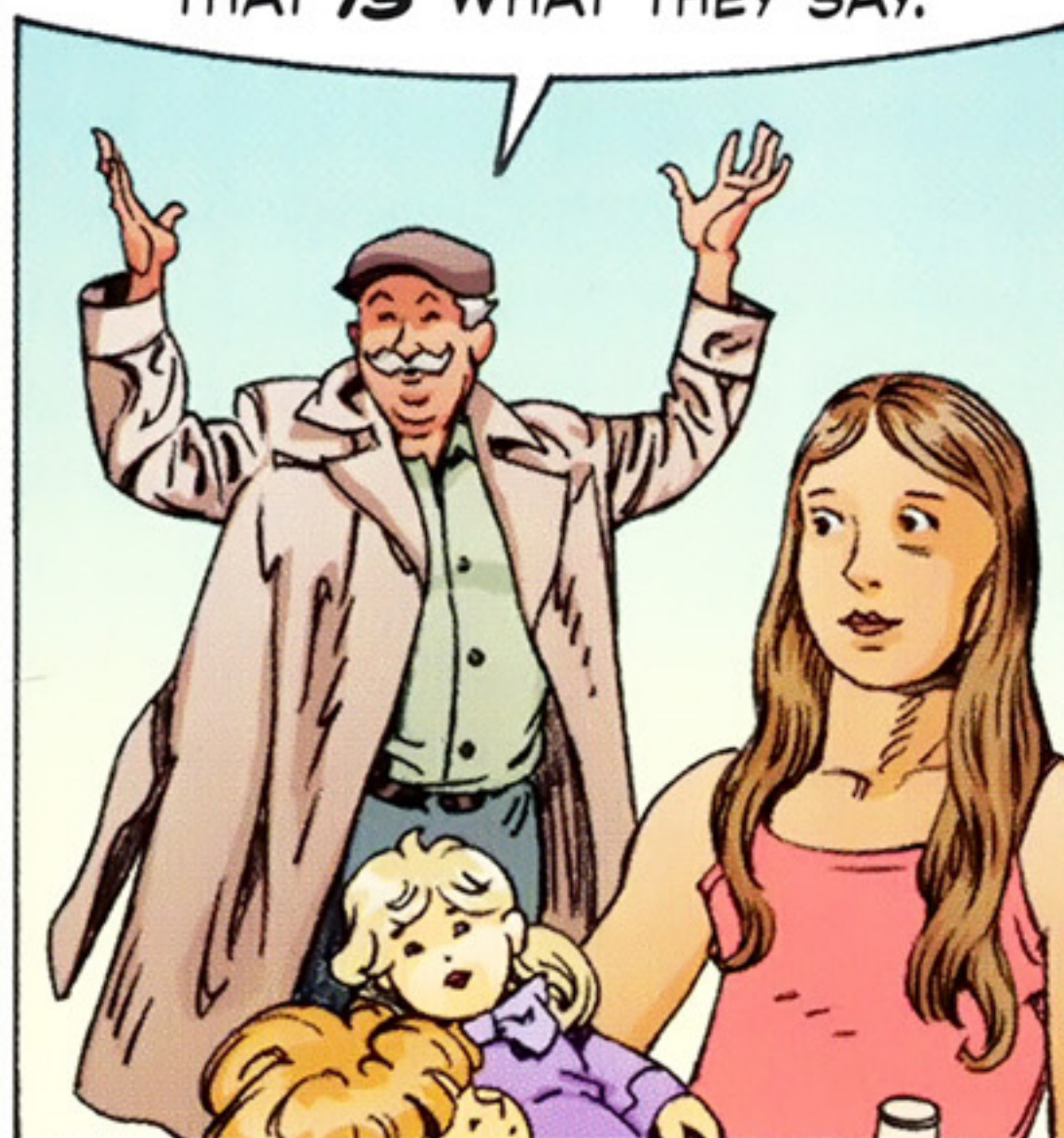
...REALLY?!

VERY GOOD,
CORA-
LINE.



THE MICE SAY THAT I MUST TELL YOU THAT AS SOON AS THEY ARE READY TO PERFORM IN PUBLIC, YOU WILL COME UP AND WATCH THEM.

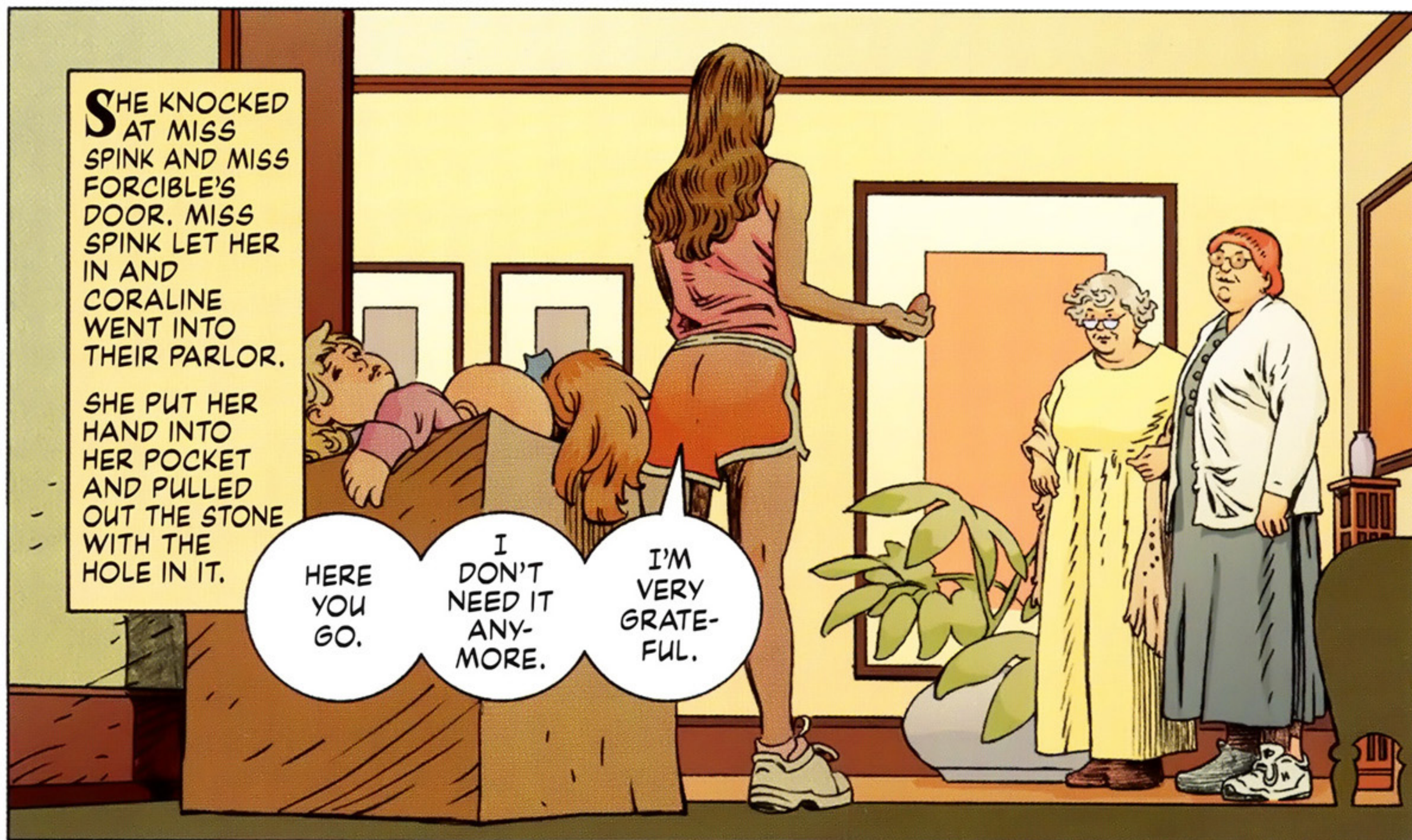
YOU WILL BE THEIR FIRST AUDIENCE, AND THEY WILL PLAY TUMPTY UMPY AND TOODLE OODLE, AND DO A THOUSAND TRICKS. THAT **IS** WHAT THEY SAY.



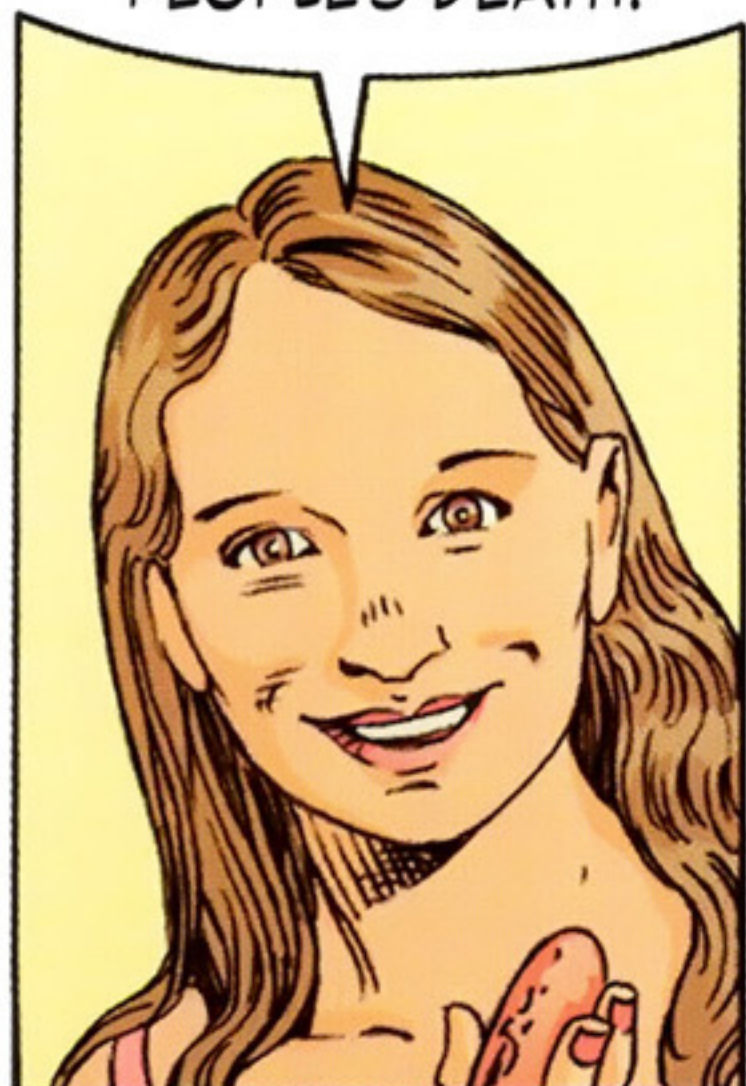
I WOULD LIKE THAT VERY MUCH...



...WHEN THEY'RE READY.



I THINK IT MAY HAVE SAVED MY LIFE, AND SAVED SOME OTHER PEOPLE'S DEATH.



SHE GAVE THEM BOTH TIGHT HUGS, ALTHOUGH HER ARMS BARELY STRETCHED AROUND MISS SPINK, AND MISS FORCIBLE SMELLED LIKE THE RAW GARLIC SHE HAD BEEN CUTTING.



WHAT AN EXTRA-ORDINARY CHILD.



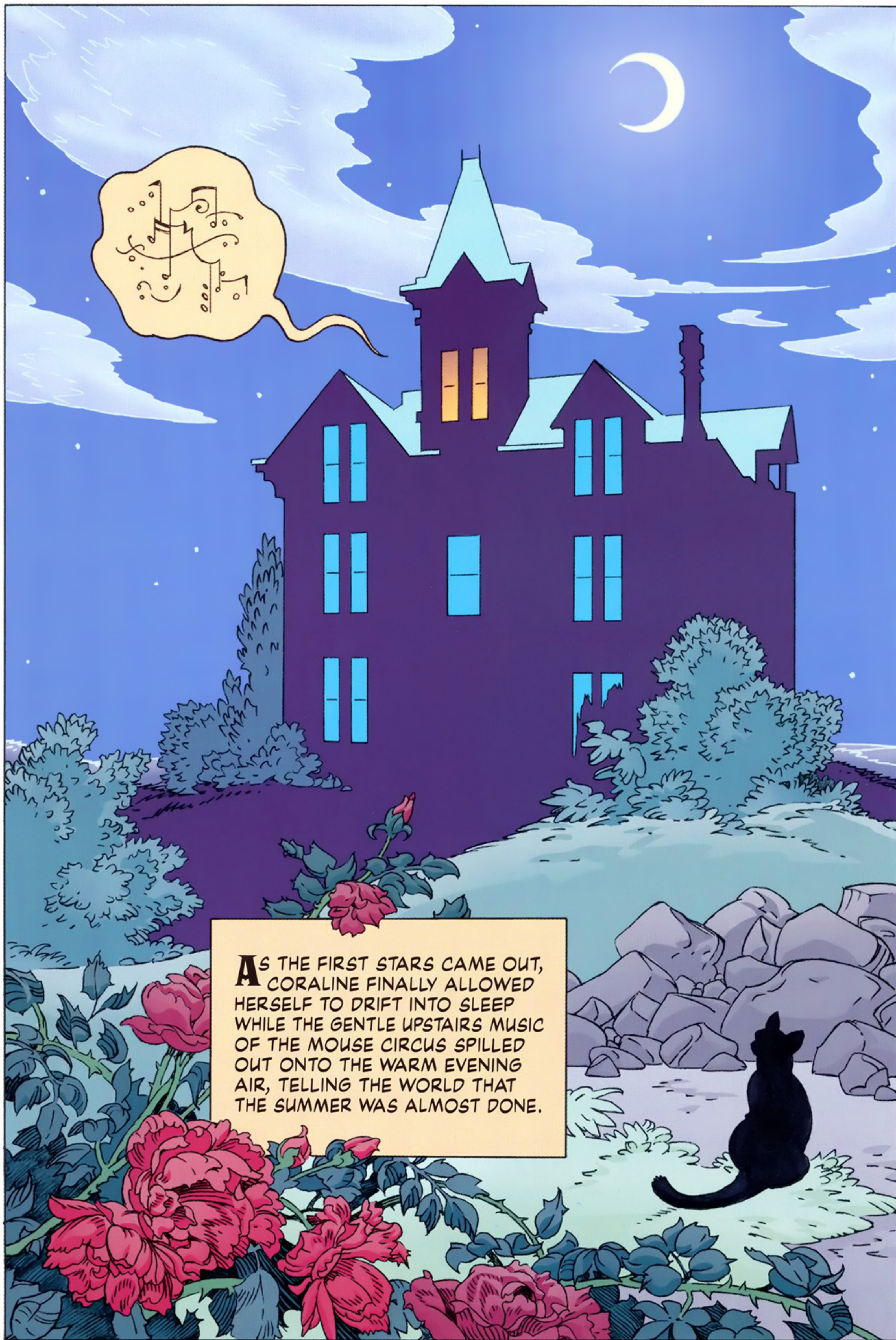
THAT NIGHT CORALINE LAY IN BED. NOW THAT THE HAND WAS GONE SHE HAD OPENED HER WINDOW WIDE. HER NEW SCHOOL CLOTHES WERE LAID OUT CAREFULLY ON HER CHAIR.

NORMALLY, CORALINE WAS NERVOUS BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF TERM BUT, SHE REALIZED...

THERE'S NOTHING LEFT ABOUT SCHOOL THAT CAN SCARE ME ANY-MORE.

SHE FANCIED SHE COULD HEAR SWEET MUSIC ON THE NIGHT AIR—THE KIND OF MUSIC THAT CAN ONLY BE PLAYED ON THE TINIEST SILVER INSTRUMENTS.

SHE IMAGINED THAT SHE WAS BACK AGAIN IN HER DREAM WITH THE THREE CHILDREN.



AS THE FIRST STARS CAME OUT, CORALINE FINALLY ALLOWED HERSELF TO DRIFT INTO SLEEP WHILE THE GENTLE UPSTAIRS MUSIC OF THE MOUSE CIRCUS SPILLED OUT ONTO THE WARM EVENING AIR, TELLING THE WORLD THAT THE SUMMER WAS ALMOST DONE.





Sigit Estrada

NEIL GAIMAN is the author of several books for children, including the *New York Times* bestseller *CORALINE*; the collection of short stories for young readers *M IS FOR MAGIC*; *INTERWORLD*, co-authored with Michael Reaves; and the picture books *THE WOLVES IN THE WALLS* and *THE DAY I SWAPPED MY DAD FOR TWO GOLDFISH*, illustrated by Dave McKean, and *THE DANGEROUS ALPHABET*, illustrated by Gris Grimly. He wrote the script for the film *MirrorMask* and is also the author of nationally bestselling, critically acclaimed, and award-winning novels and short stories for adults, as well as the *Sandman* series of graphic novels, and other graphic novels. Among his many awards are the World Fantasy Award, the Hugo Award, the Nebula Award, and the Bram Stoker Award. Originally from England, Gaiman now lives in the United States. Visit him online at www.mousecircus.com.

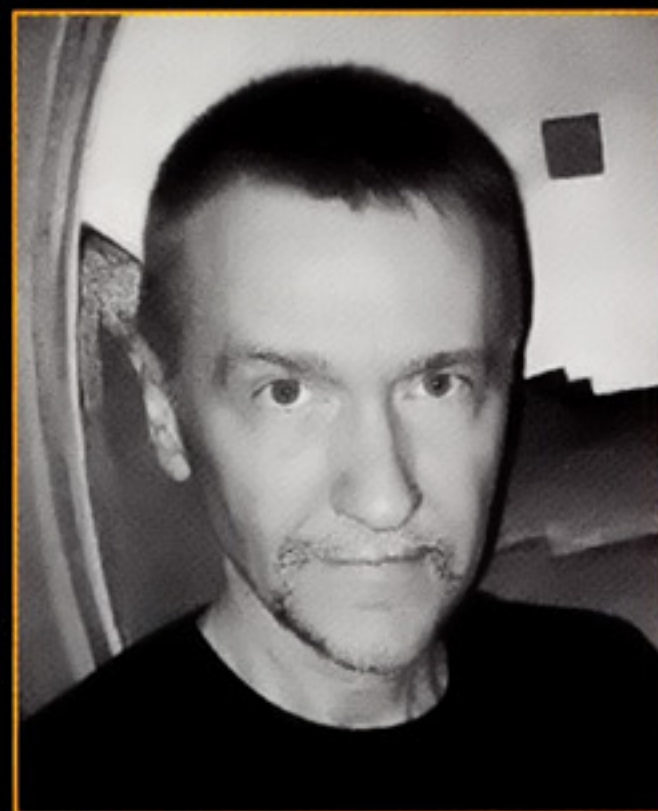


Photo by Wayne Harold

P. CRAIG RUSSELL lives in Kent, Ohio, and has spent thirty-five years producing comic books, illustrations, and graphic novels. His work ranges from such mainstream titles as *Batman*, *Star Wars*, and *Conan* to a series of adaptations of classic operas (*The Magic Flute*, *Salome*, *Pagliacci*, *The Ring of the Nibelung*, etc.), a *Jungle Book* series, and an ongoing series adapting the complete fairy tales of Oscar Wilde. *CORALINE* is his fifth collaboration with Neil Gaiman. He is currently at work adapting Gaiman's *THE DREAM HUNTERS*.

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Jacket design by Christopher Stengel

CORALINE DISCOVERED THE DOOR
A LITTLE AFTER THEY MOVED
INTO THE HOUSE.

"Not since Narnia has the simple act of opening a door unlocked such a fantastic journey. Walk through the door and you'll believe in love, magic, and the power of good over evil."
—*USA Today*

"This is a marvelously strange and scary book."
—Philip Pullman, author of *THE GOLDEN COMPASS*

"This book will send a shiver down your spine, out through your shoes, and into a taxi to the airport. It has the delicate horror of the finest fairy tales, and it is a masterpiece."
—Terry Pratchett



GAIMAN / RUSSELL

CORALINE

NEIL GAIMAN

THE GRAPHIC NOVEL ADAPTATION OF THE MAGICAL NATIONAL BESTSELLER

CORALINE



Adapted & Illustrated by P. Craig Russell
winner of the Harvey and Eisner Awards

THE DAY AFTER
THEY MOVED IN,
CORALINE WENT
EXPLORING.



When Coraline steps through a door in her family's new house, she finds another house strangely similar to her own (only better). At first, things seem marvelous. The food is better than at home, and the toy box is filled with fluttering wind-up angels and dinosaur skulls that crawl and rattle their teeth.

But there's another mother there and another father, and they want her to stay and be their little girl. They want to *change* her and never let her go.

Coraline will have to fight with all her wit and all the tools she can find if she is to save herself and return to her ordinary life.

Acclaimed artist P. Craig Russell brings Neil Gaiman's enchanting, nationally bestselling children's book *CORALINE* to new life in this gorgeously illustrated graphic novel adaptation.

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