

THAT



John Allison

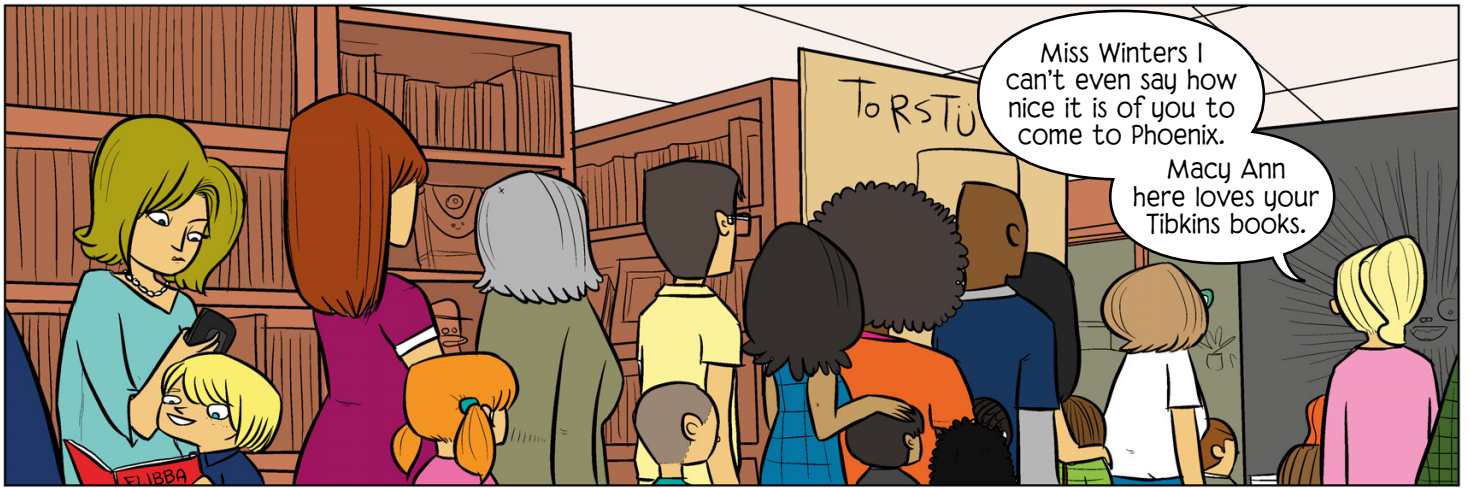
THAT

Written & drawn by John Allison
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Miss Winters I can't even say how nice it is of you to come to Phoenix. Macy Ann here loves your Tibkins books.



"To Macy Ann, stay in school... while appropriate... love Shelley."



So how do you like our United States?

Oh I like them! Freedom, the eagle, the pie etc.



But it's so HOT. I MELT when I go outside.

What were the first settlers thinking of?

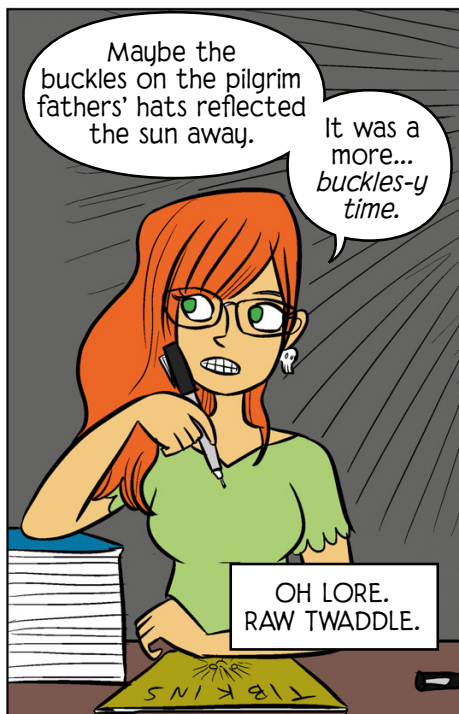


They arrived on the east coast in July and thought...

...let's just keep populating the new world until we find a bit that isn't INSANELY HOT?



Then winter arrived and they thought, well, it's freezing but I suppose it averages out?



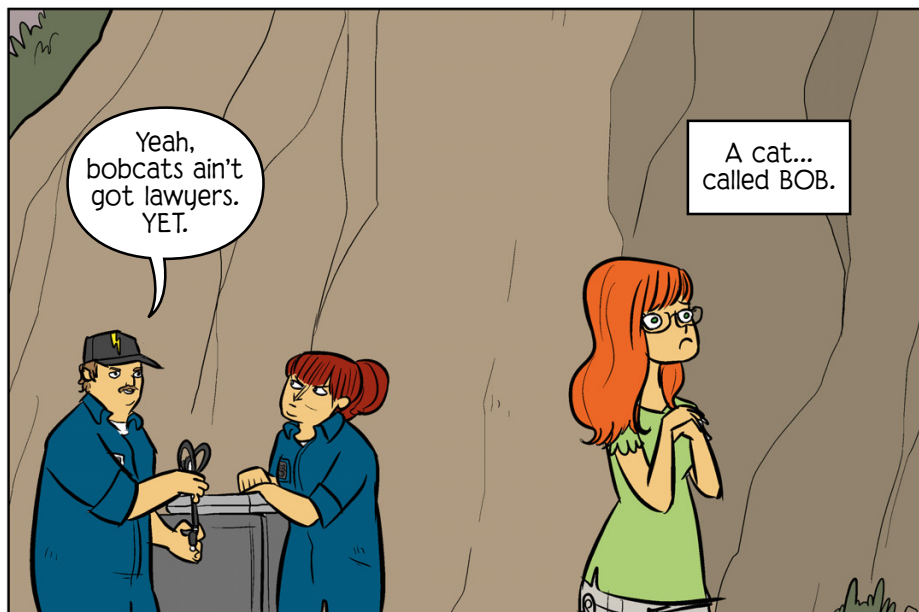
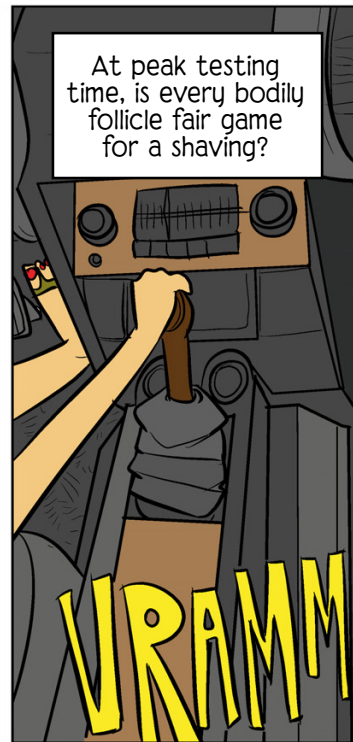
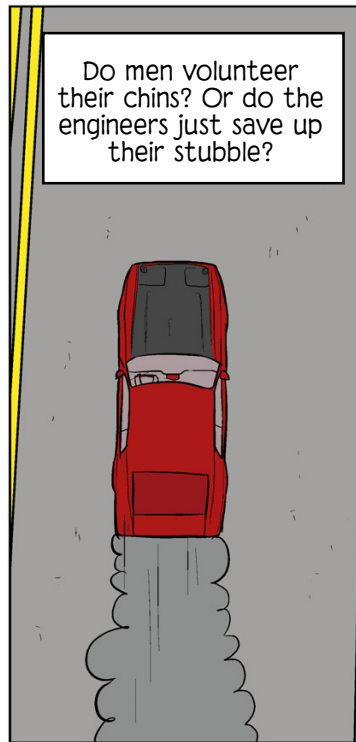
Maybe the buckles on the pilgrim fathers' hats reflected the sun away.

It was a more... buckles-y time.

OH LORE. RAW TWADDLE.



I just love your accent. Everything you say sounds so sophisticated.



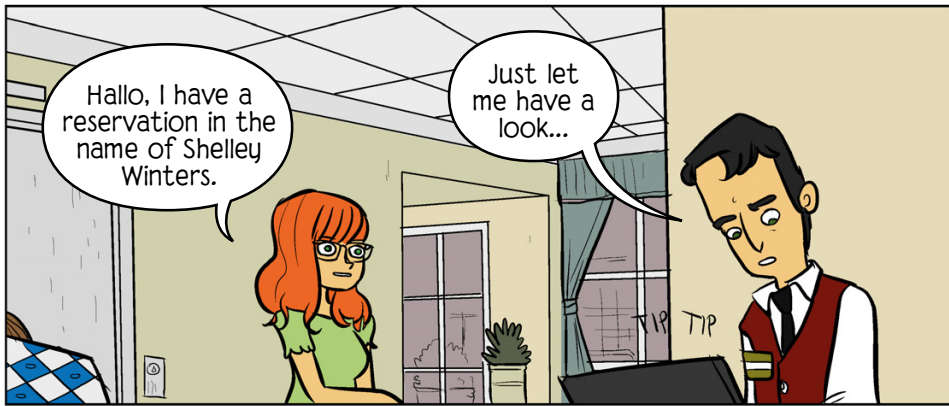
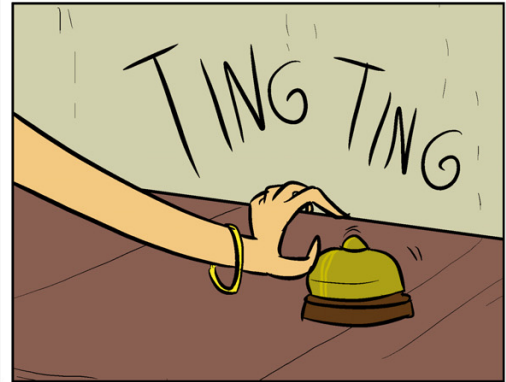


Heaven, AZ!
The town so
good they
named it once.

But after
something
really nice.



Ooh, a LEMON
FESTIVAL! How
CITRIC!



Hallo, I have a
reservation in the
name of Shelley
Winters.

Just let
me have a
look...



Here you
go, 4B.

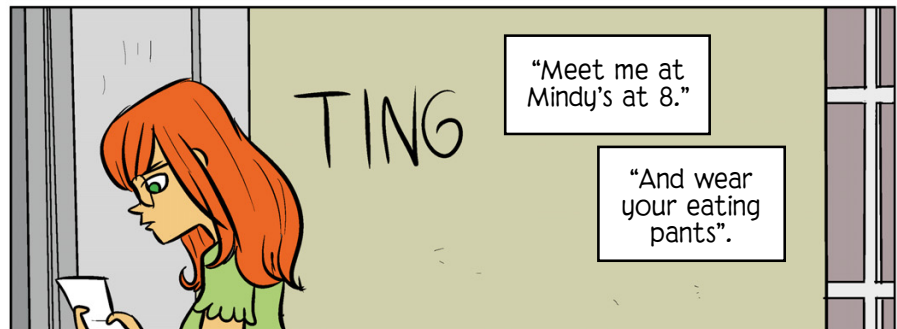


Are you here
for the lemon
festival?

No, I'm an
author, I'm doing a
signing at Waxman
Books.



Oh, the writer!
Henry Waxman left
a note for you.



"Meet me at
Mindy's at 8."

"And wear
your eating
pants".



Any problems on the line?

Like they said at the office... ..nothing'd cause brown outs.



I thought you said it was my mustache drove you wild.

See, that's why I married you, Earl. Strong sense of priorities.



I guess one of us is going up there then.

I'll do it if you rub my back when we get in.



What in the hell

You should see these cables, Margene!



I can't imagine what could damage wires like



Honey what did I tell you about not finishin'...



...sentences

EARL?



WHOMP

EARL?

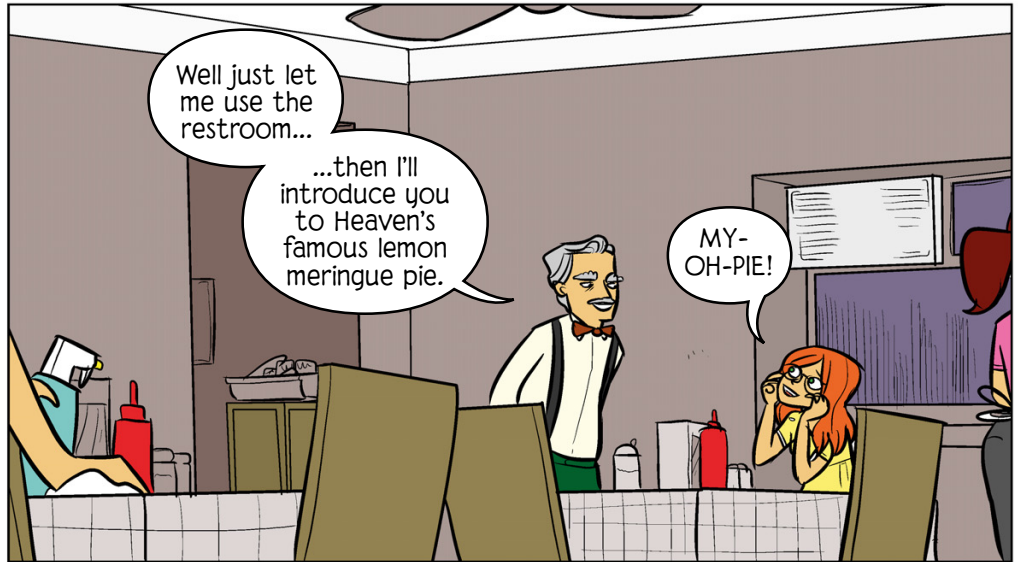


AAAAA

PLIP



Henry that was quite a dinner.



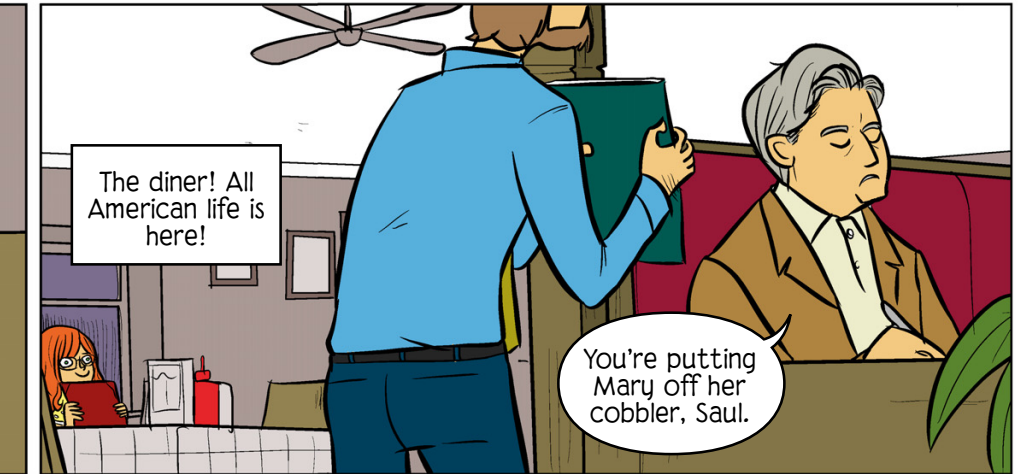
Well just let me use the restroom...

...then I'll introduce you to Heaven's famous lemon meringue pie.

MY-OH-PIE!



How am I going to fit in PIE?



The diner! All American life is here!

You're putting Mary off her cobbler, Saul.



Don, you've got to listen...

It's an election year, and voters don't want to hear that the mayor's cancelling the Lemon Festival...



Because some pencil-neck from the university is worried about CHIGGERS and NO-SEE-UMS.

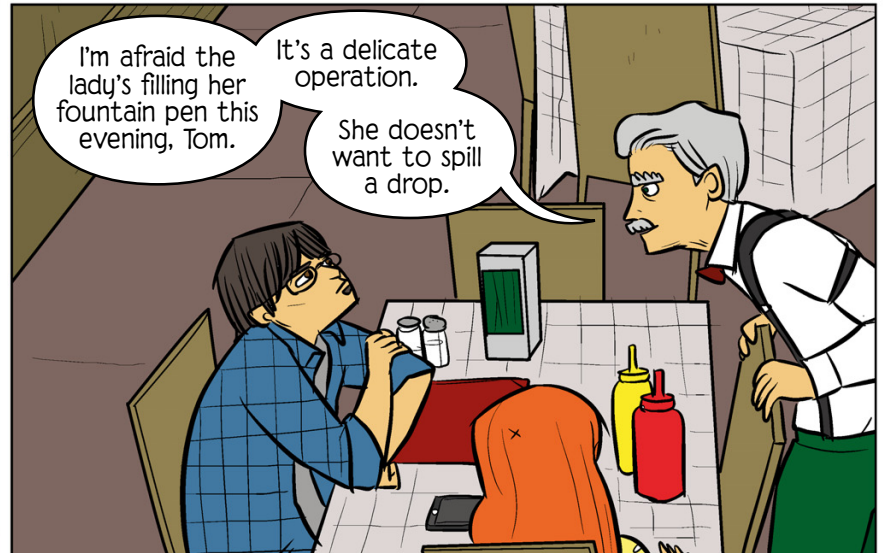
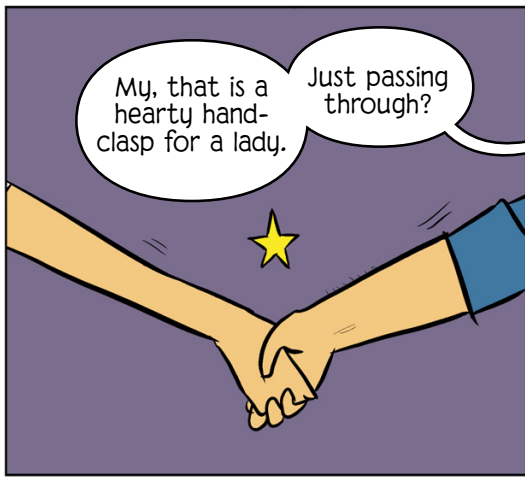
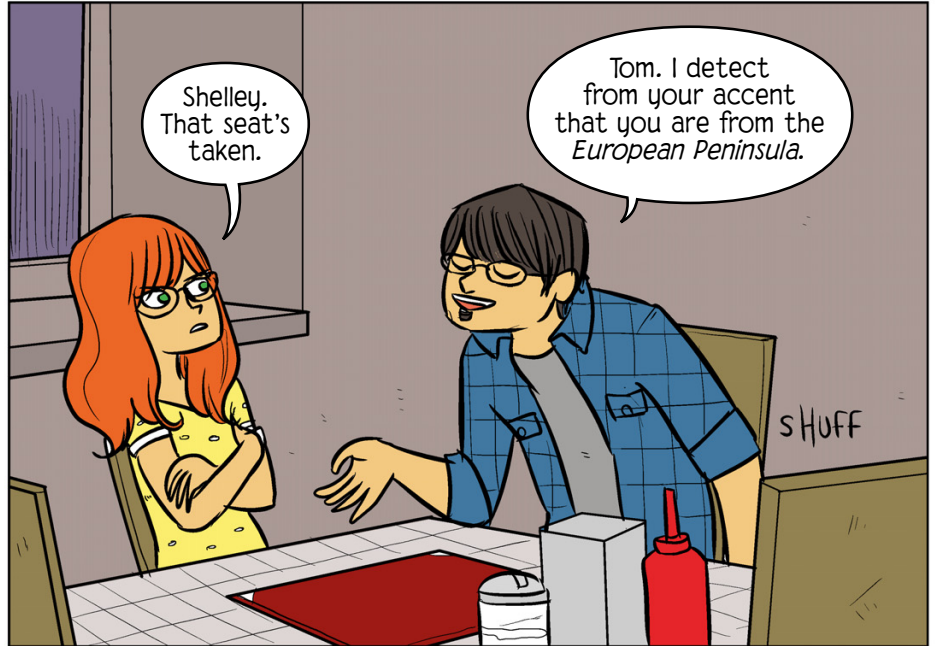
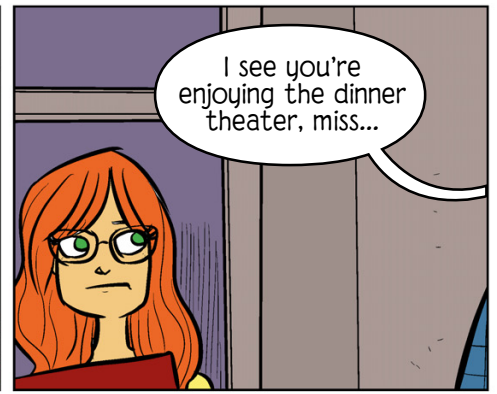


Please Don, just look at this report...

Saul, by the look in my wife's eye, I'd better sit back down to dessert.



The woman has an appetite for everything but interruption.





I love this town, Henry!

Calling a place "Heaven" is a very American thing to do.

If you did the same thing in England, you'd get some funny looks.

Heaven is what it is.

I can't imagine living anywhere else.



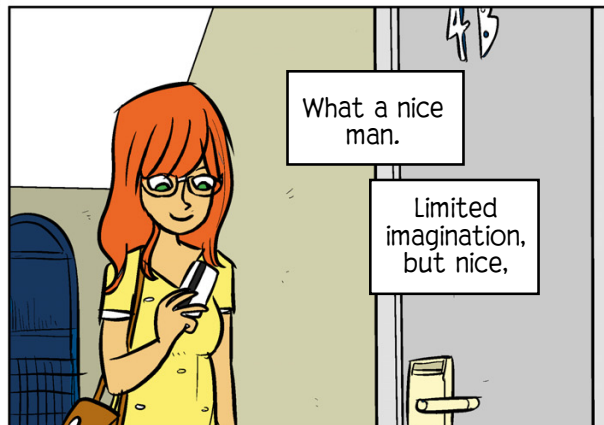
Thanks for walking me to the hotel! See you tomorrow morning!

Good night, Shelley!



SNIFF

There really is no place like it.



What a nice man.

Limited imagination, but nice,



RUMMAGE





Hallo, I'm here for my signing!



Oh Shelley, sorry, we've not set up for you yet.

Henry didn't show up to open the store this morning.



It's not the first time. Sleeping in's one of his specialist areas.



No answer, Jane.



There's a line forming already.

Oh god, that author picture, oh no!

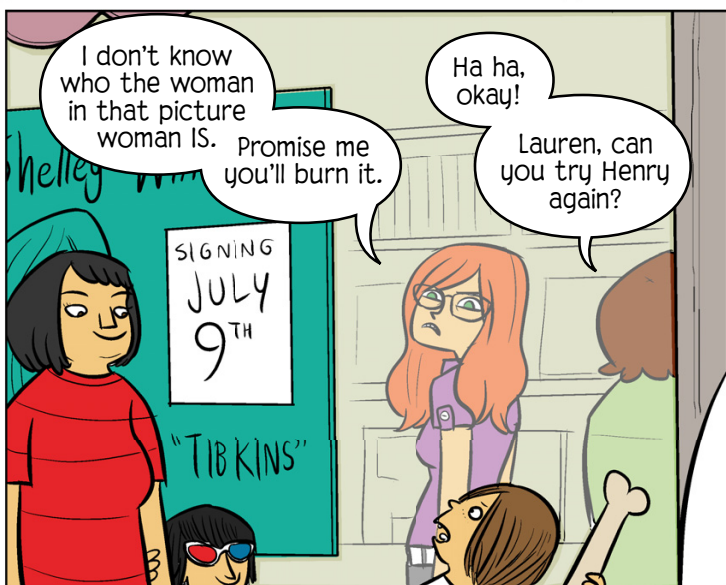
EVERYWHERE I GO!



My agent Barry told me to "go big" so I tried to channel four separate, sexy emotions.

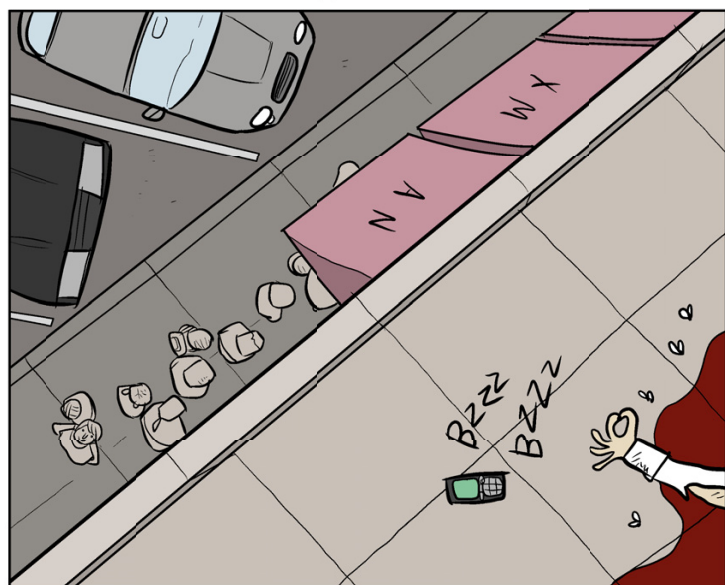


We've had a few requests from people who want it after today.



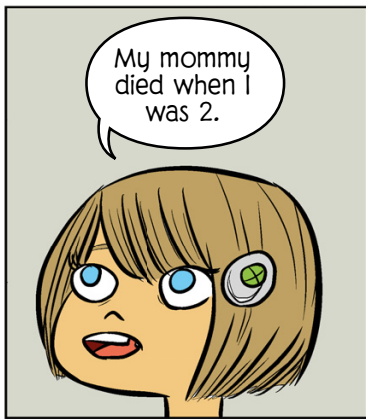
I don't know who the woman in that picture woman is. Promise me you'll burn it.

Ha ha, okay! Lauren, can you try Henry again?





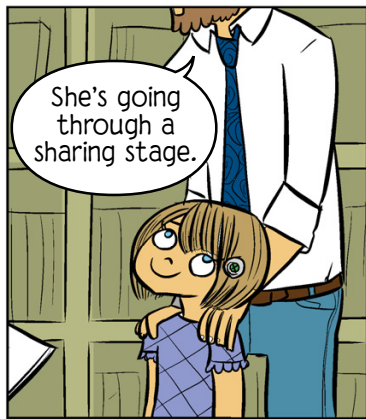
MARIPOSA! That's a pretty name. What does it mean?



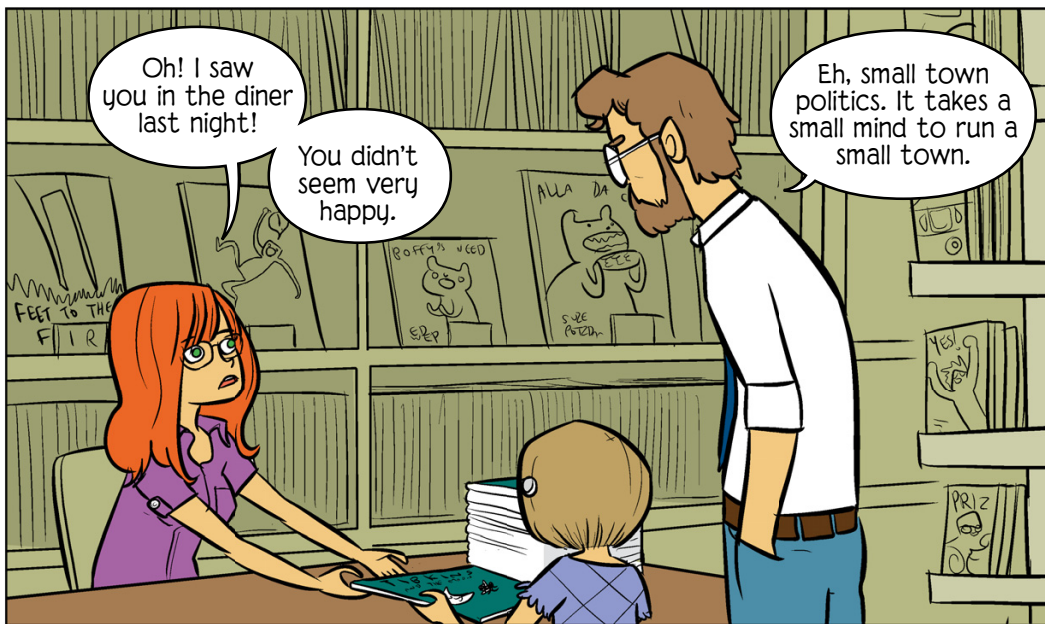
My mommy died when I was 2.



Is that... a literal translation?



She's going through a sharing stage.



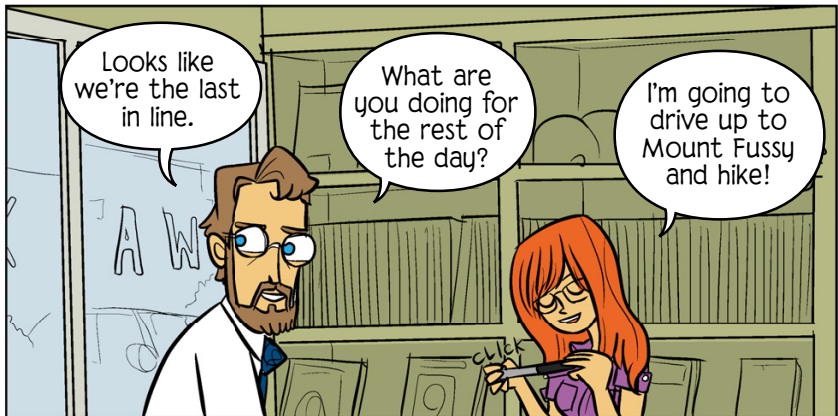
Oh! I saw you in the diner last night!

You didn't seem very happy.

Eh, small town politics. It takes a small mind to run a small town.



I'm Saul Fenster. Mari can't get enough of your books.



Looks like we're the last in line.

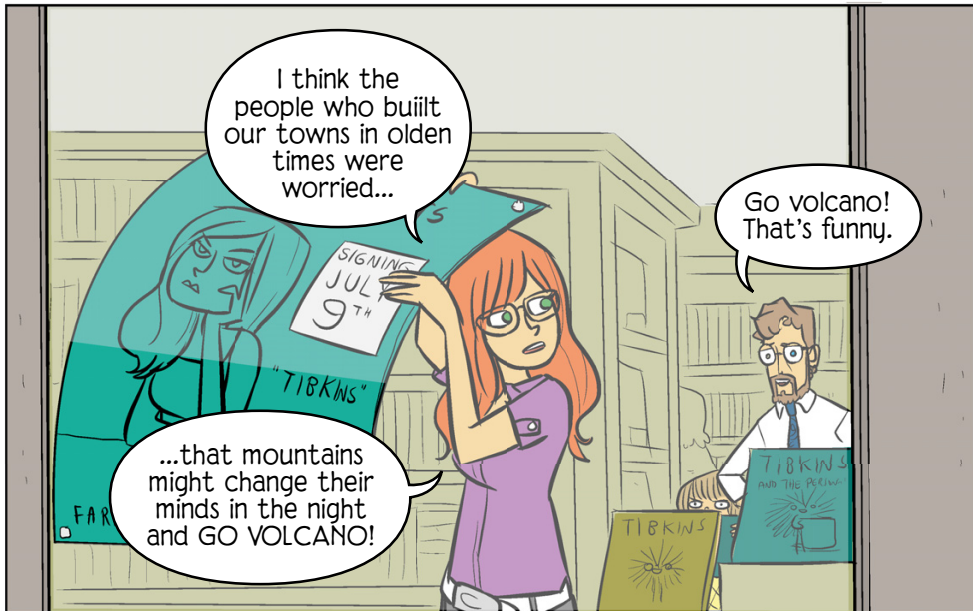
What are you doing for the rest of the day?

I'm going to drive up to Mount Fussy and hike!



Do you have mountains in the UK?

We have mountains but not *local* mountains.



I think the people who built our towns in olden times were worried...

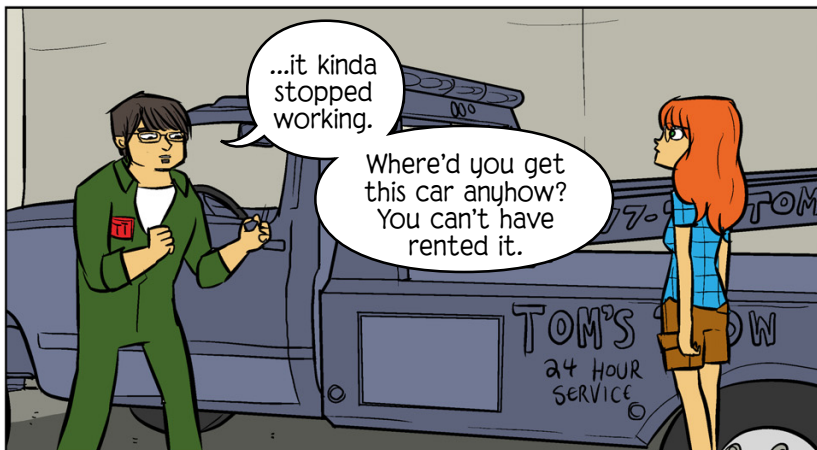
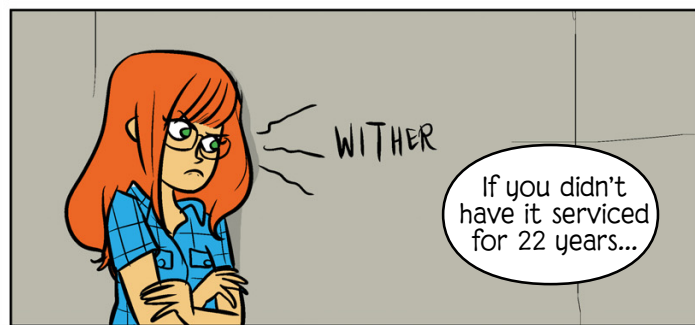
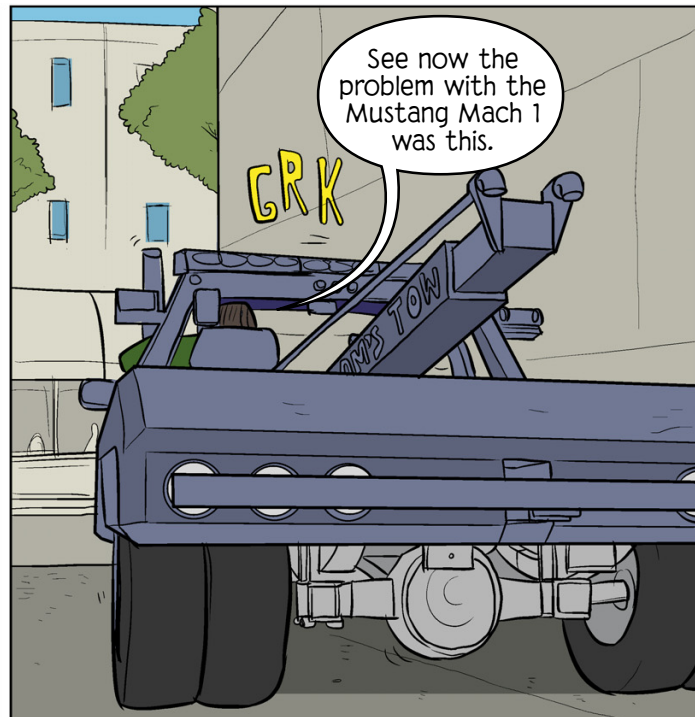
...that mountains might change their minds in the night and GO VOLCANO!

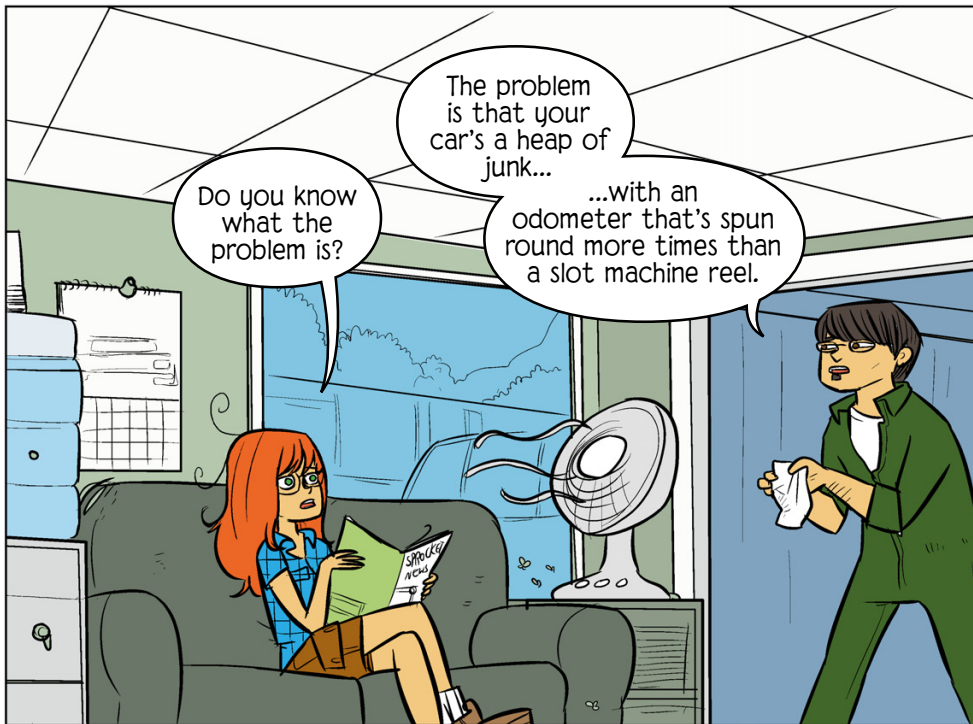
Go volcano! That's funny.



I DON'T WANT A NEW MOMMY

AN' 'SPECIALLY NOT ONE WITH RED HAIR







You can see it from here. A big, stupid LEMON.

I hate this town.



The day we finish school, we're leaving.

"Heaven".
What a joke.

You know it used to be called "Kevin"?

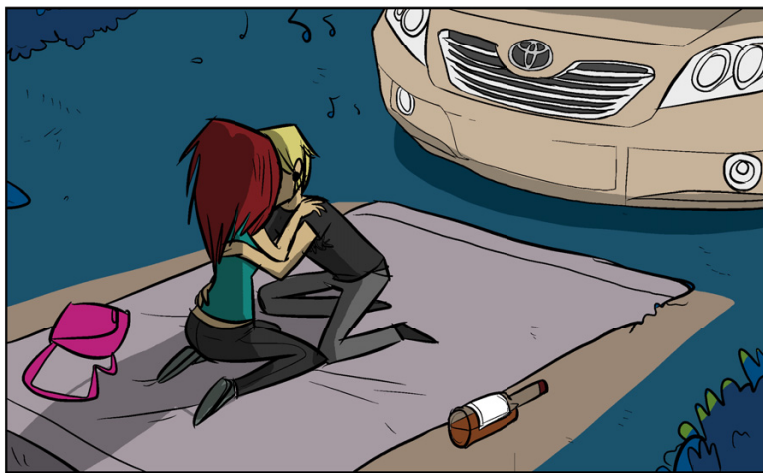
Like calling a town "Walter".



Hey, look what my old lady didn't notice was missing.



Well now damn, I was thirsty.



What's that?

Just bats, baby.



I'm scared, I need more COMFORTING.

Oh, great scared face! Let me take a picture.





The Lemon Festival is amazing, mum, amazing!

I have to go, it's noisy, lemon crazy Americans everywhere

Yass I'm eating plenty of fibre, mum! Bye!



Don, I'm telling you, people shouldn't be out here...

...just look at these larval samples...



Good EVENING Mrs Butler, you know I think it IS the best festival since '87.

Citrus pest levels are off the chart, people need to be INDOORS.



Saul, does the town appear to be over-run with weevils? Does it?

You work too hard. Loosen your tie. Have a slice of lemon meringue pie...



...and stop bothering me.



Don't blame me when all hell breaks loose!



See how many people vote for you when they're covered with...

...with...



Hello! Don't let me interrupt your shouting!

It is awfully loud, isn't it?



Ladies and gentlemen, it is with great pleasure that I crown Miss Lemon Festival 2012 and-



CHONK

Oh mother of pearl!

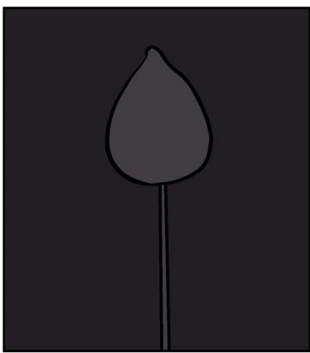


Ladies and gentlemen are we going to let a brown-out spoil our fun?



NO!!!!!!

Tom, fire up the generator!



See, Mariposa, in England we'd all just have gone home at that point.

America is a wonderful land.

Umm I was just wondering

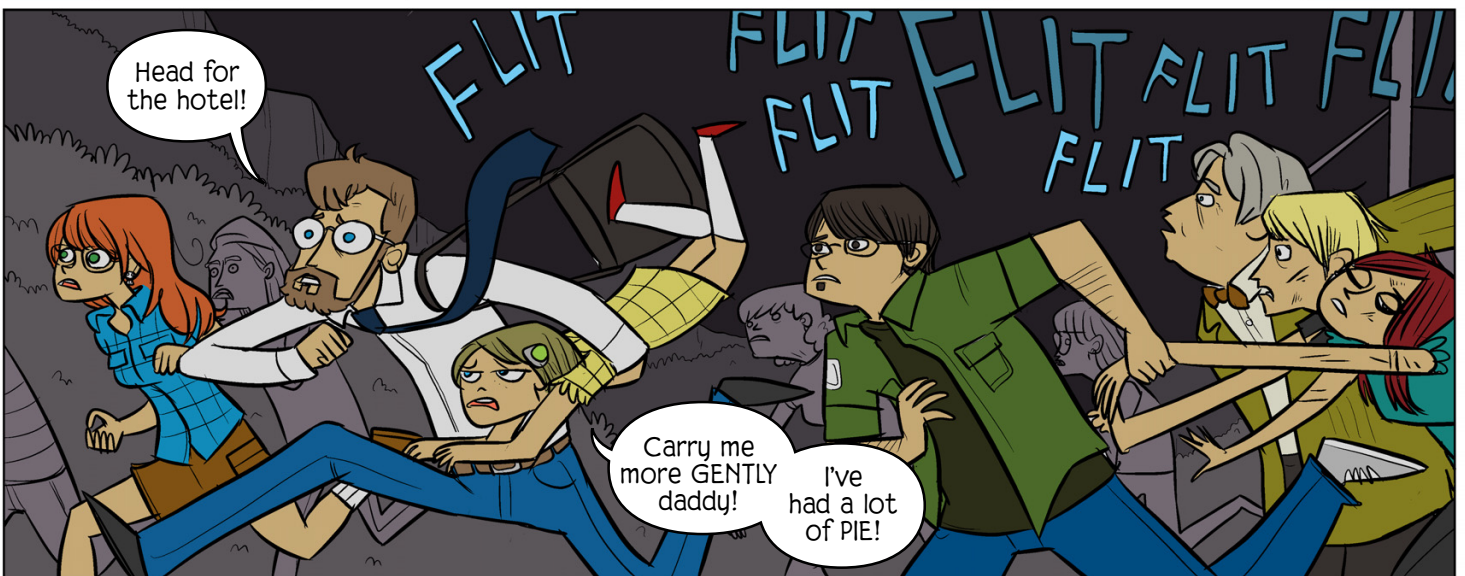
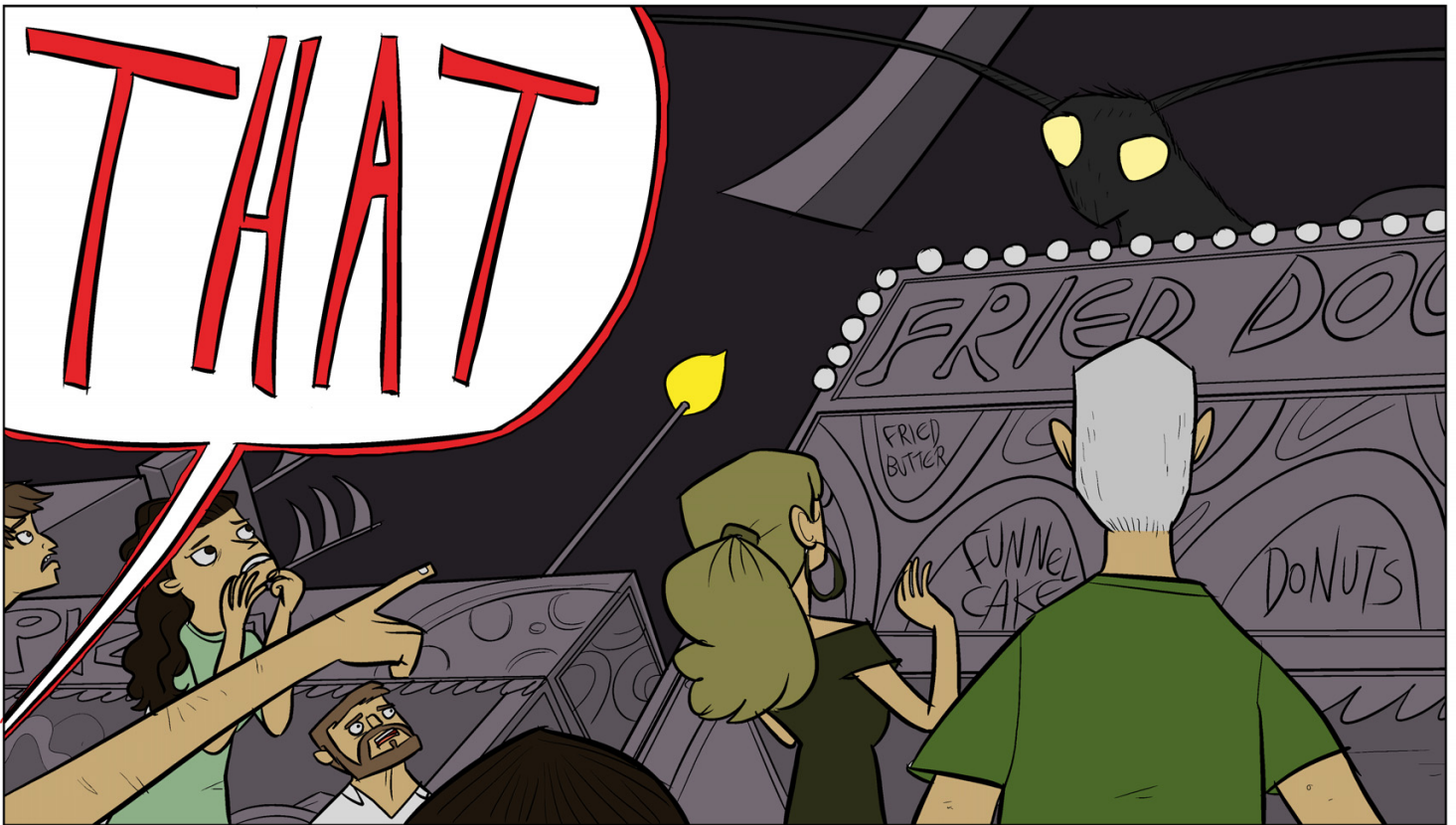


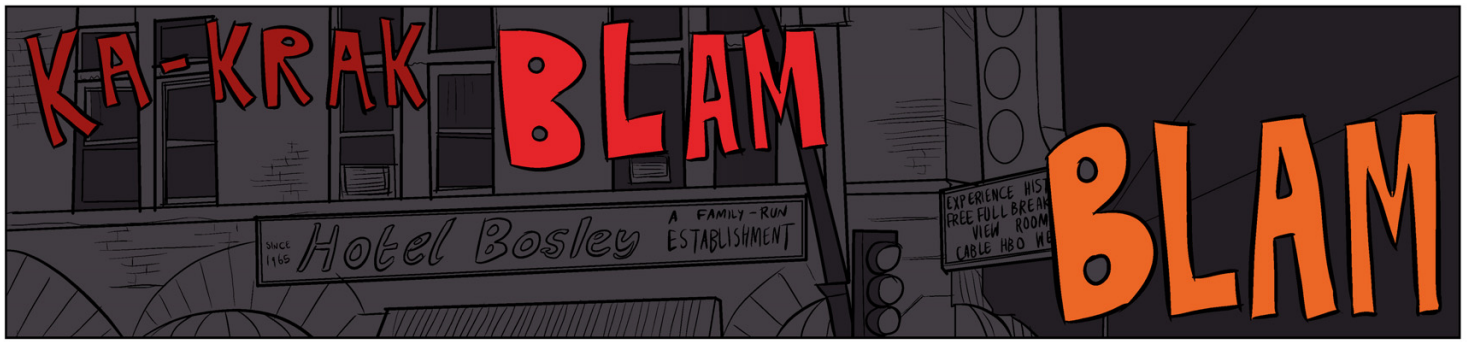
Why is that man carrying that lady? And why are they both bleeding?

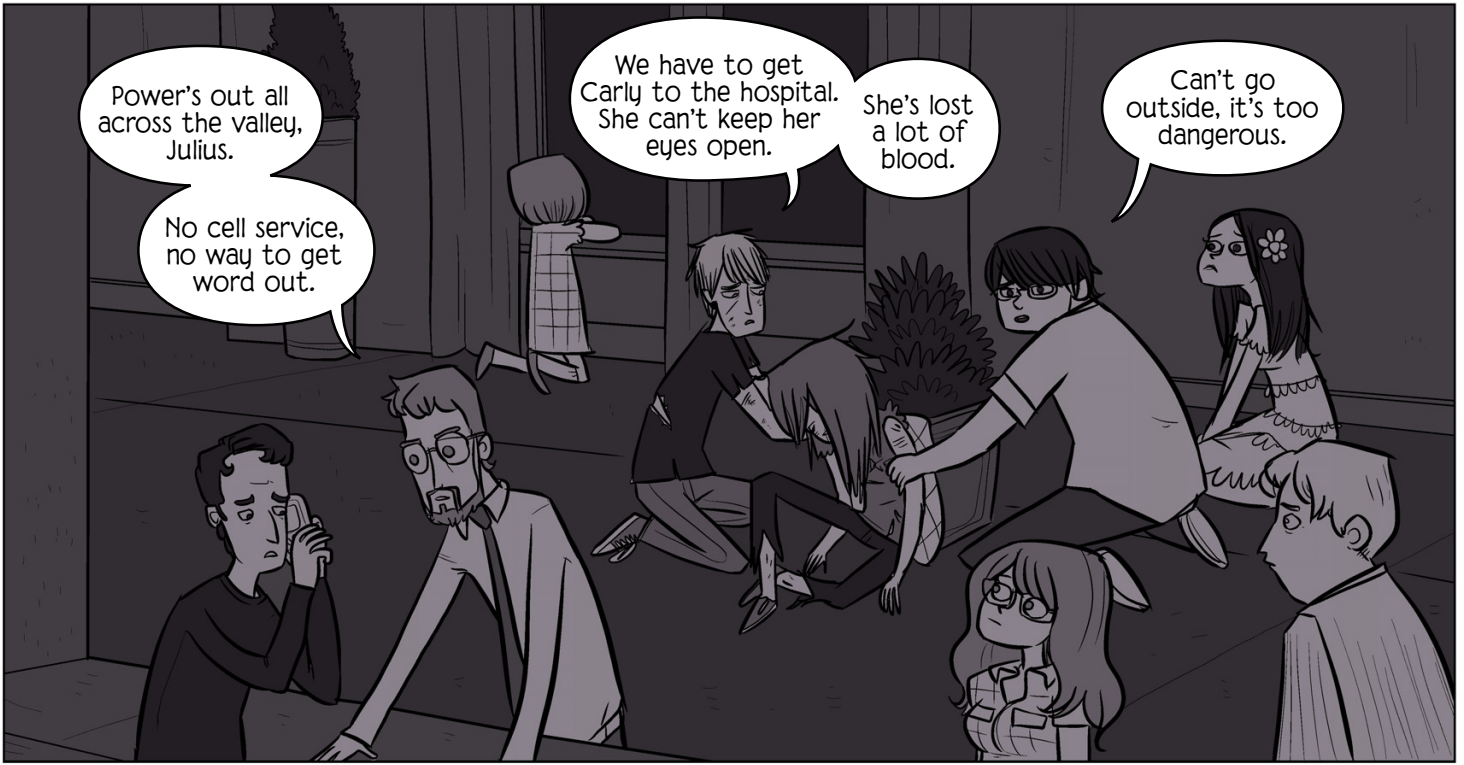


L-lemon Festival tr-tr-tradition?









Power's out all across the valley, Julius.

No cell service, no way to get word out.

We have to get Carly to the hospital. She can't keep her eyes open.

She's lost a lot of blood.

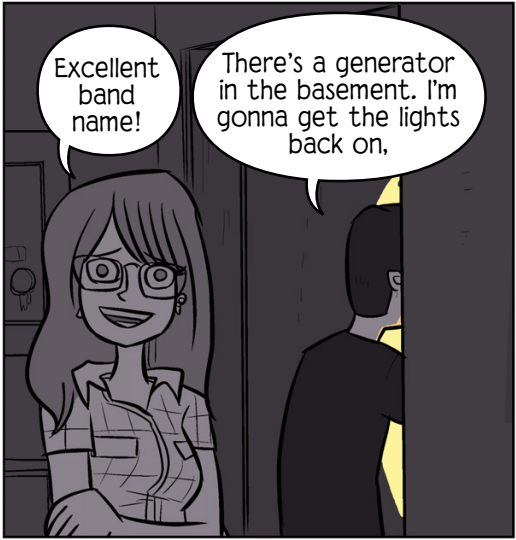
Can't go outside, it's too dangerous.



We don't know that there's anything else out there.

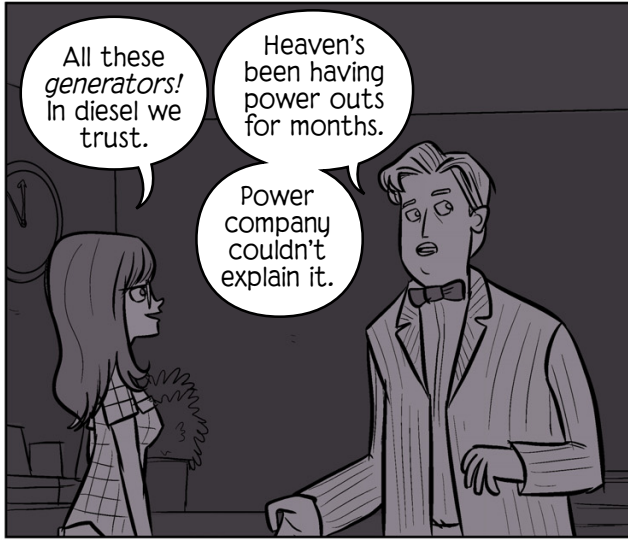
All someone has to do is drive to the next town and get help.

Do you want to try it? Because I don't want to end up MANGLED BY INSECTS.



Excellent band name!

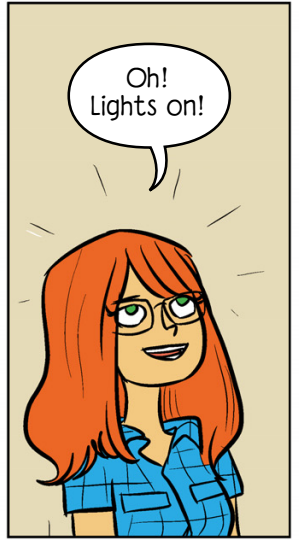
There's a generator in the basement. I'm gonna get the lights back on,



All these generators! In diesel we trust.

Heaven's been having power outs for months.

Power company couldn't explain it.



Oh! Lights on!

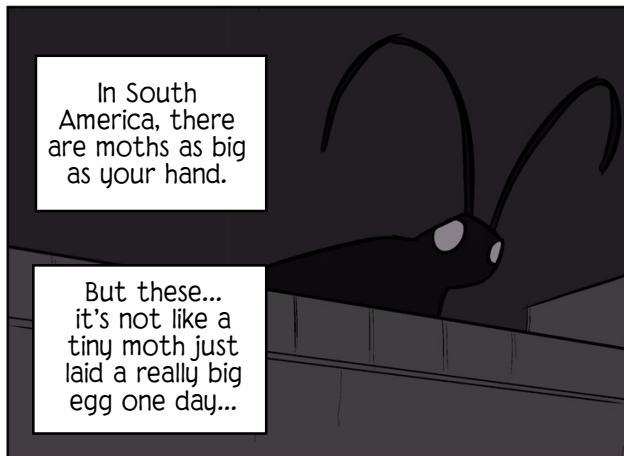
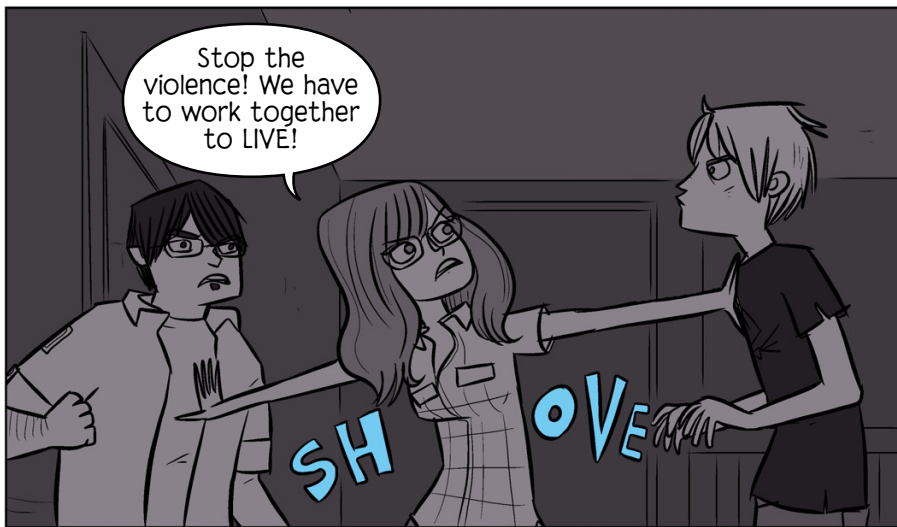
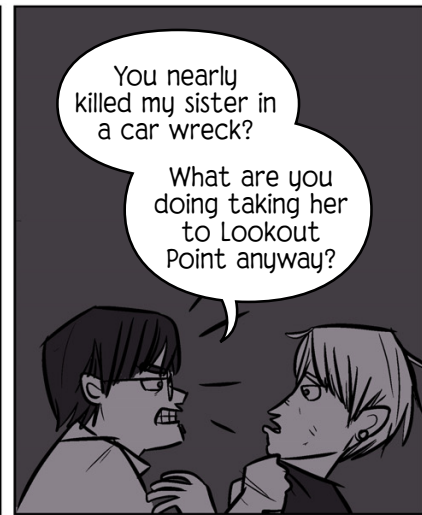


CLOG CLOG CLOG



Please can we we turn the lights off again?

They've made things all MOTHY.



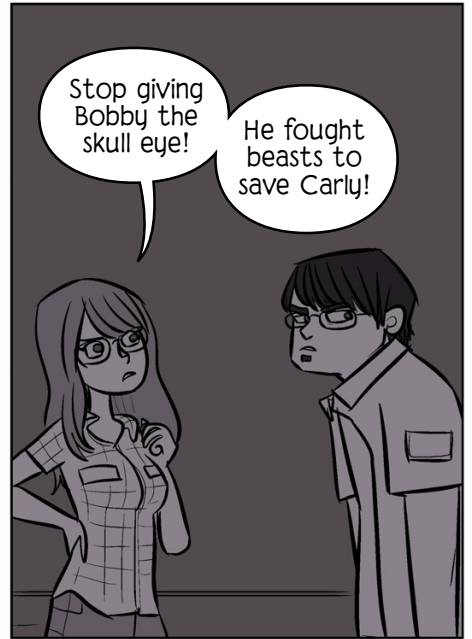


That's... that's a lovely I-I-lemon suit... um...

Julius. I checked you into your room, remember?



Oh yes, yes. Before my life became an INSECTOID LIVING HELL.

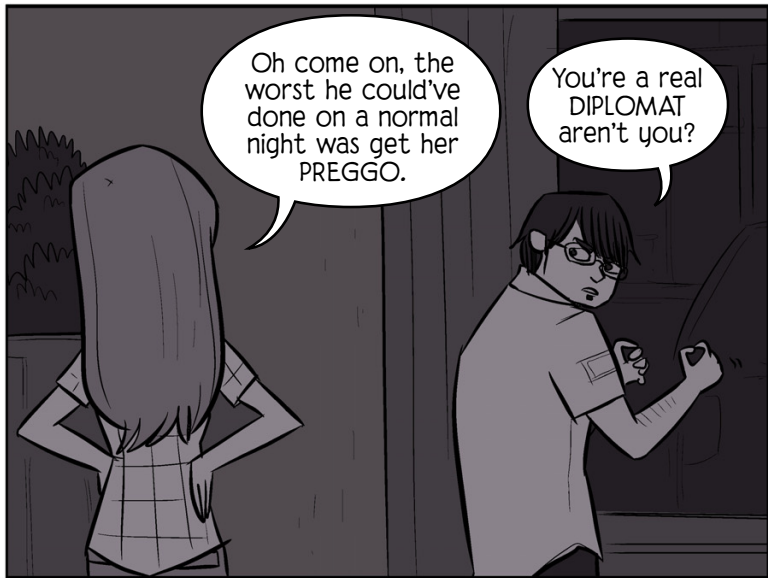


Stop giving Bobby the skull eye!

He fought beasts to save Carly!



That little pissant. She coulda DIED.

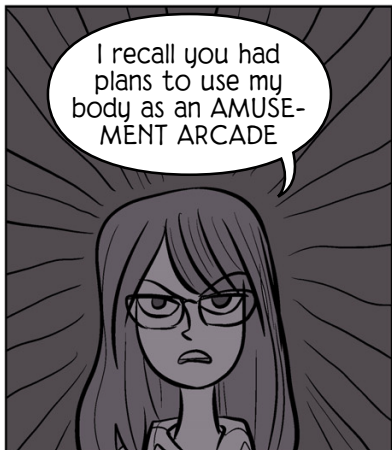


Oh come on, the worst he could've done on a normal night was get her PREGGO.

You're a real DIPLOMAT aren't you?



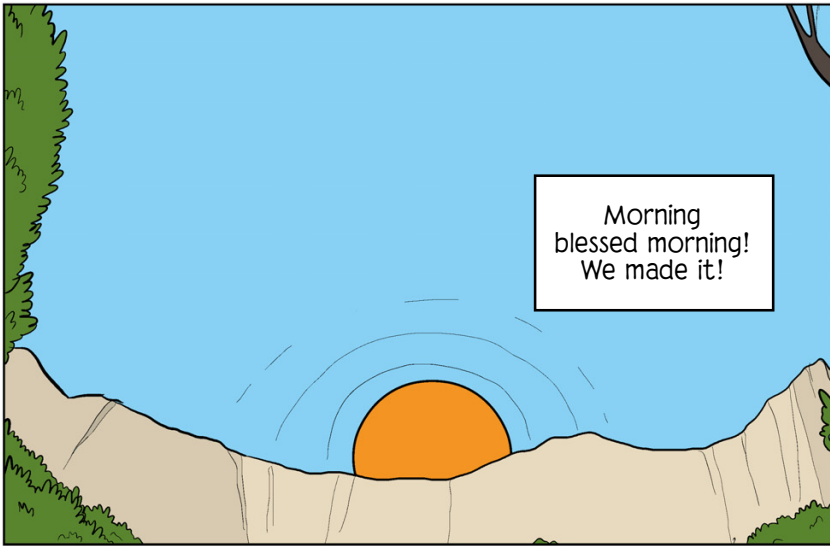
Tom, you run a DOUBLE STANDARD!



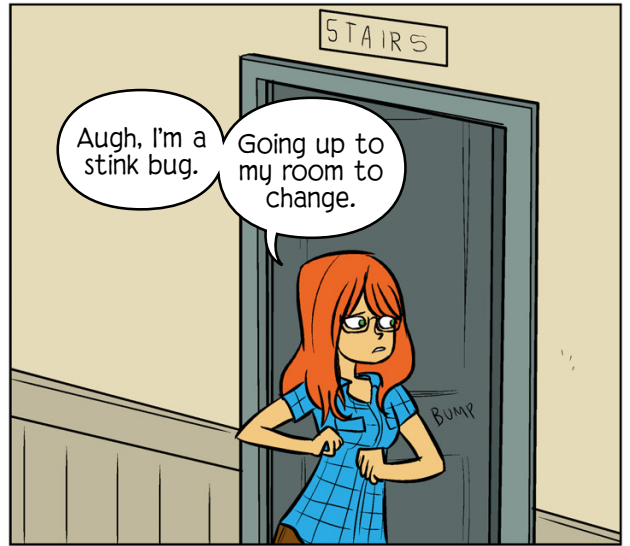
I recall you had plans to use my body as an AMUSEMENT ARCADE



You're either FOR romance...
...OR AGAINST IT!



Morning blessed morning! We made it!



Augh, I'm a stink bug.

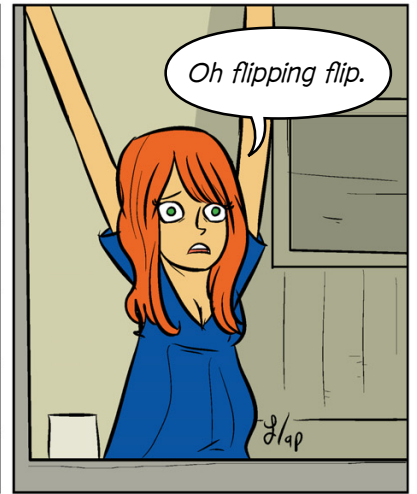
Going up to my room to change.



Which is best for danger? T-shirt and shorts or dress?

I suppose danger situations carry a strong risk of people seeing your underpants.

Leaps, falls, sexy peril time "encounters".
DRESS IT IS!



Oh flipping flip.

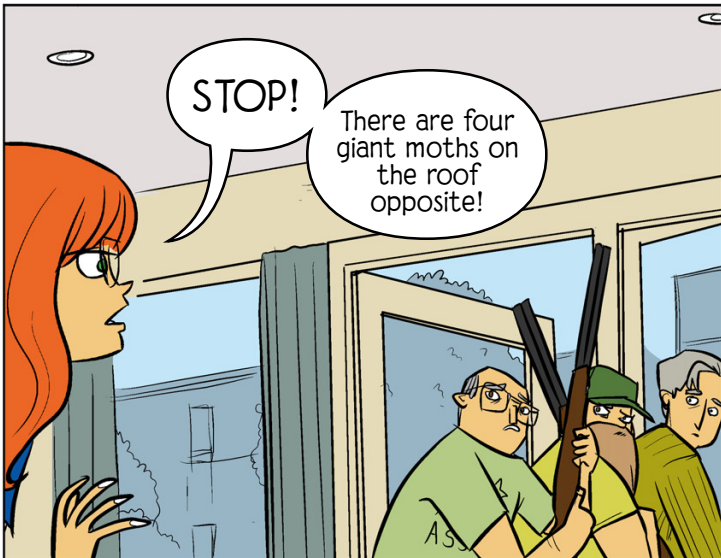


What do you reckon? Should we make a break for it?

I don't see any moths. Are they nocturnal?

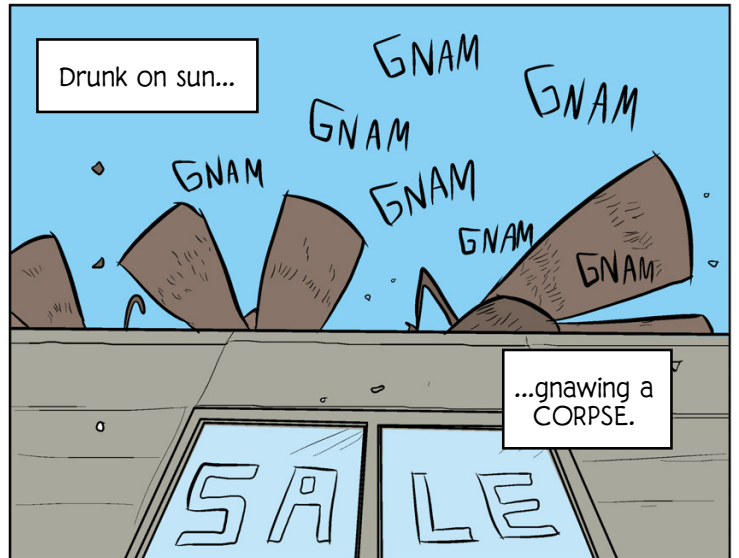
Moths don't care whether it's night or day. They just MOTH.

Do moths have nests?



STOP!

There are four giant moths on the roof opposite!



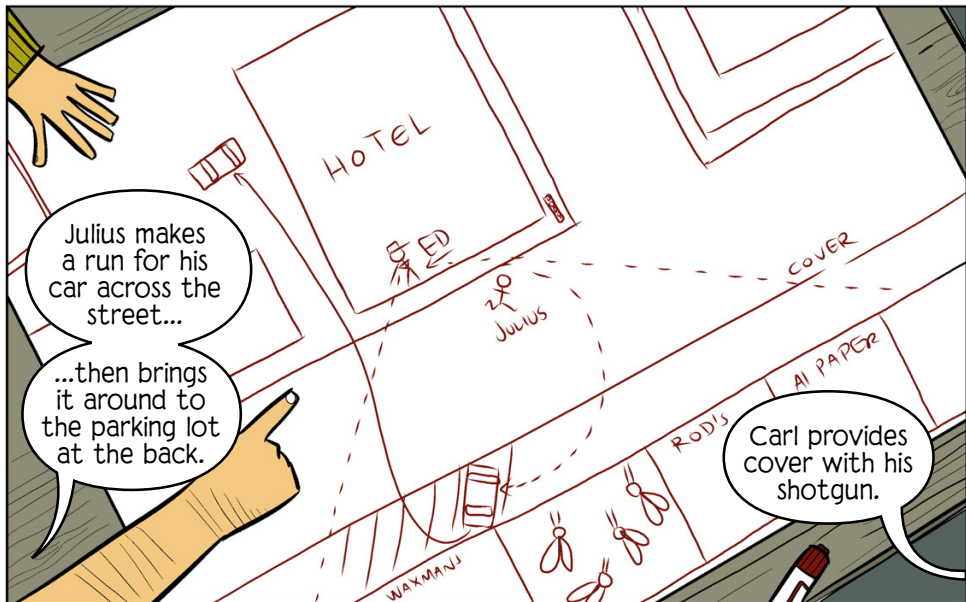
Drunk on sun...

...gnawing a CORPSE.



I think she's going to be okay. But we have to get out of here.

Okay, here's the plan.



Julius makes a run for his car across the street...

...then brings it around to the parking lot at the back.

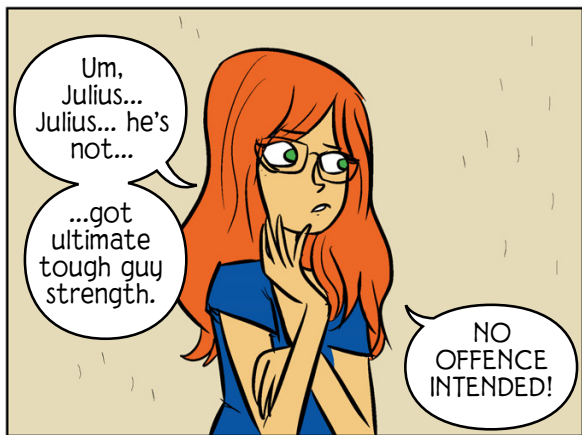
Carl provides cover with his shotgun.



I don't see why I can't "provide cover."



Ed, no offence intended but you couldn't hit a barn door from three yards away.



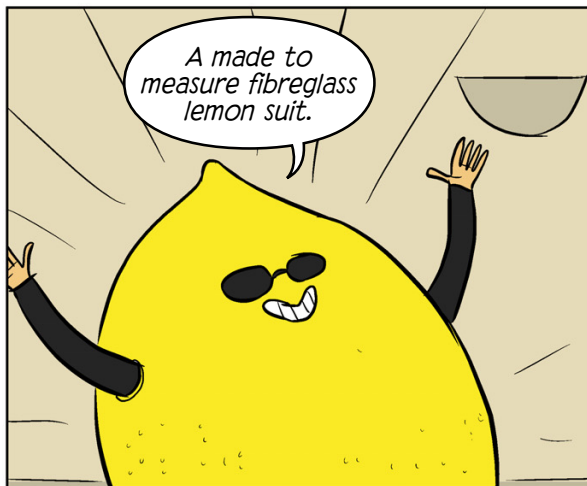
Um, Julius... Julius... he's not...

...got ultimate tough guy strength.

NO OFFENCE INTENDED!



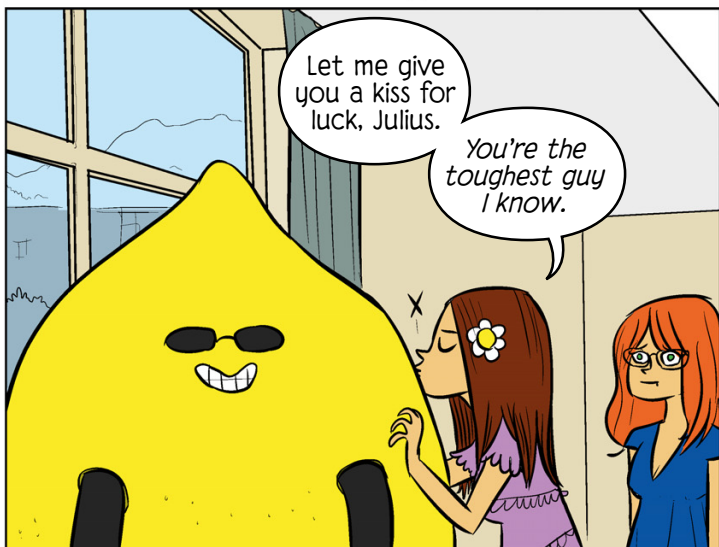
I've got something the others haven't.



A made to measure fibreglass lemon suit.

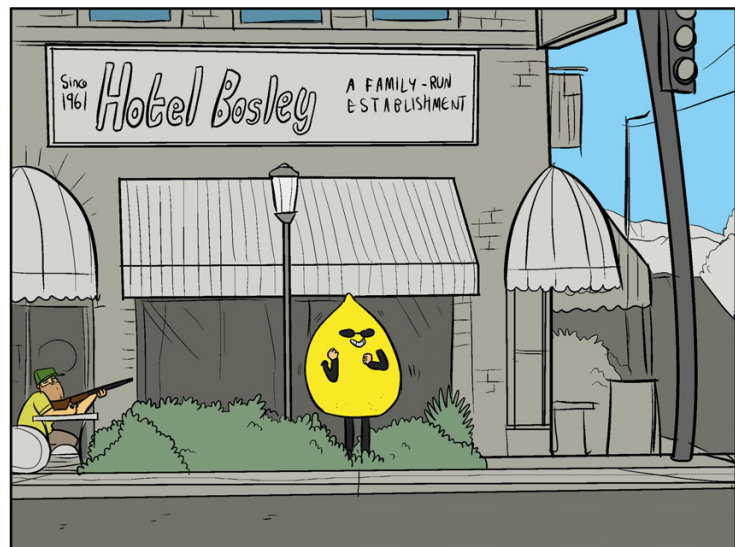


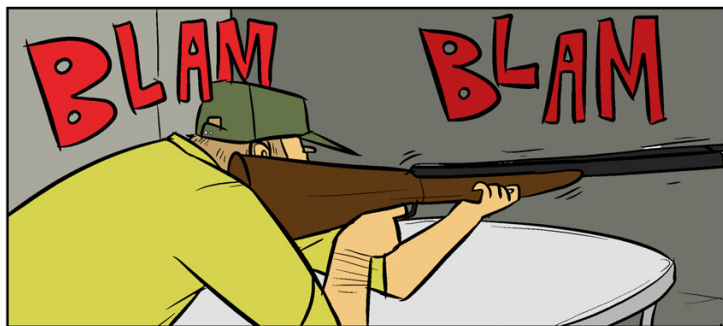
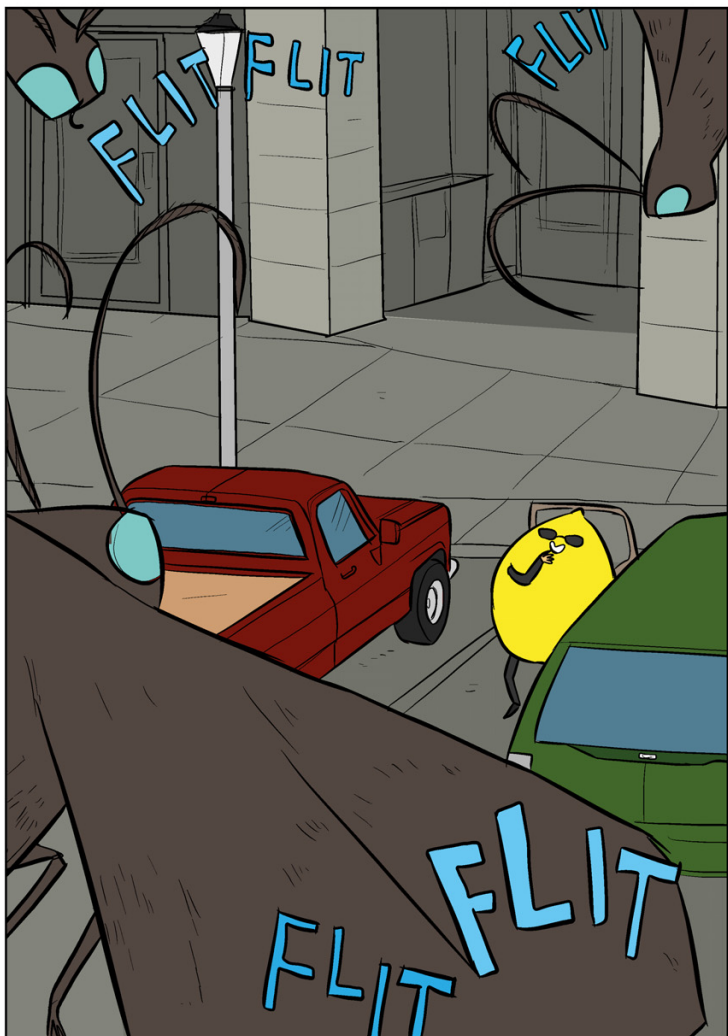
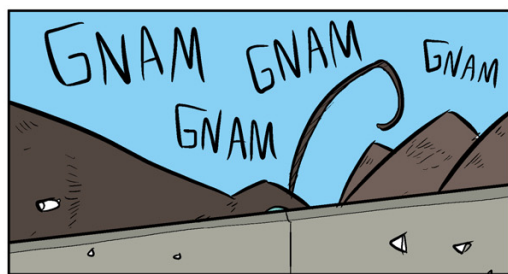
Yes that could be protective maybe...

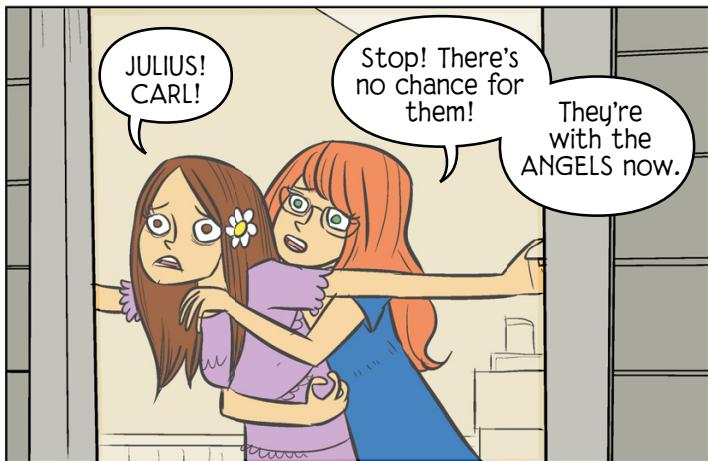


Let me give you a kiss for luck, Julius.

You're the toughest guy I know.







JULIUS!
CARL!

Stop! There's
no chance for
them!

They're
with the
ANGELS now.

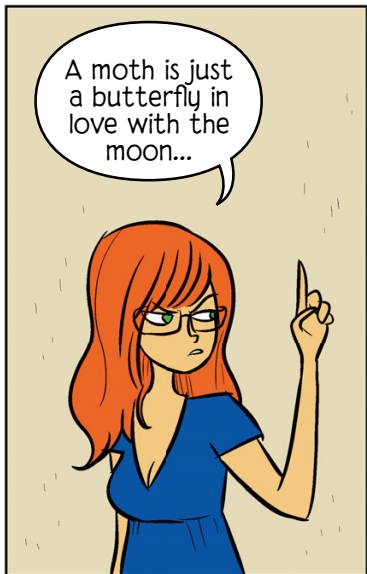


Well, that's
it, we're dead.

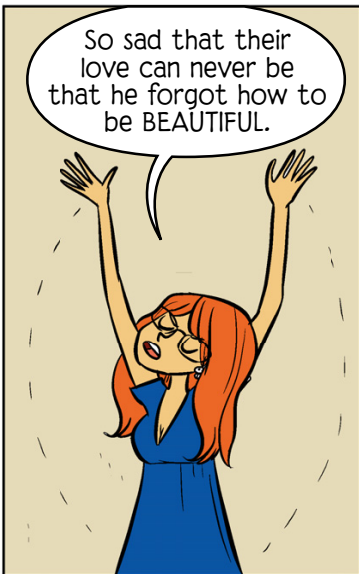
That is not
the Tom I
know!



The Tom who
believed we could
become intimate based
on a three minute
conversation.



A moth is just
a butterfly in
love with the
moon...



So sad that their
love can never be
that he forgot how to
be BEAUTIFUL.



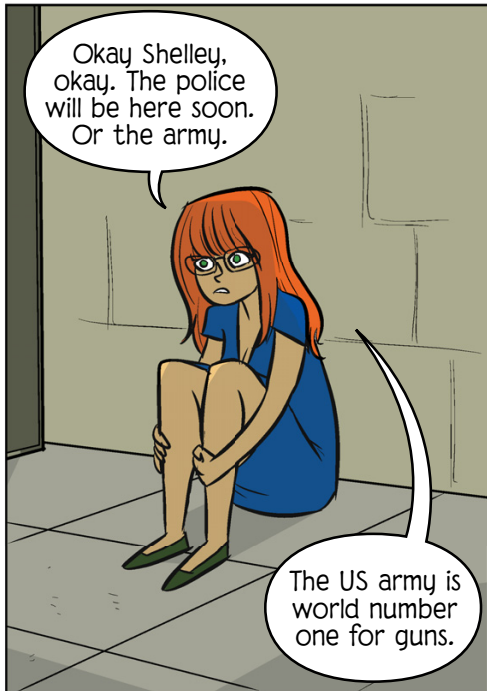
Now, excuse me
while I come up with
an AMAZING PLAN.



She just shut
herself in the
janitorial supply
closet.



Crazy British
girl! lost her mind.
We'll all go that
way eventually.



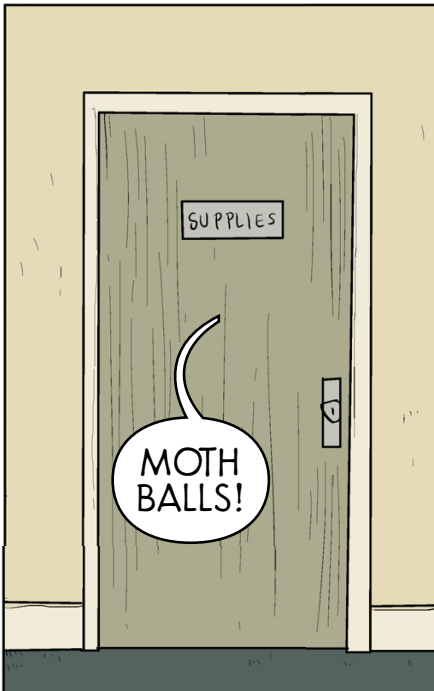
Okay Shelley,
okay. The police
will be here soon.
Or the army.

The US army is
world number
one for guns.



But what if
the moths
come in for us?
What if
there are lots
more of them?

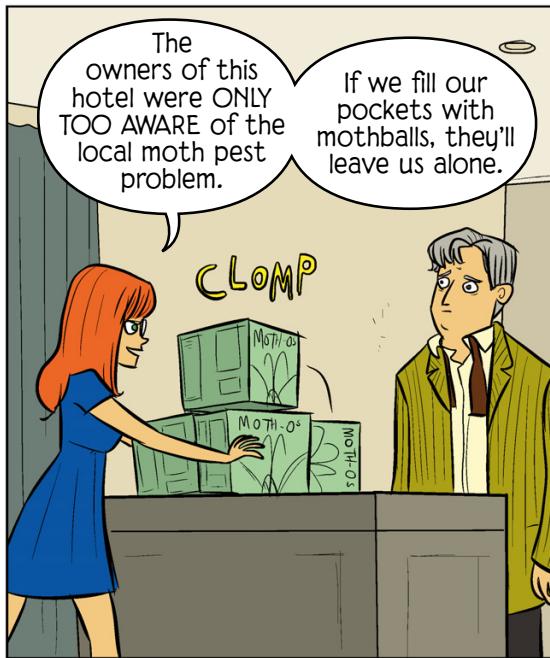
Balls
balls balls!



MOTH
BALLS!



I have an amazing plan!



The owners of this hotel were ONLY TOO AWARE of the local moth pest problem.

If we fill our pockets with mothballs, they'll leave us alone.



Did they buy these in bulk twenty years ago?

Naphthalene is a carcinogen.



But Saul, it's OUR carcinogen.

What do we do once we're out there?

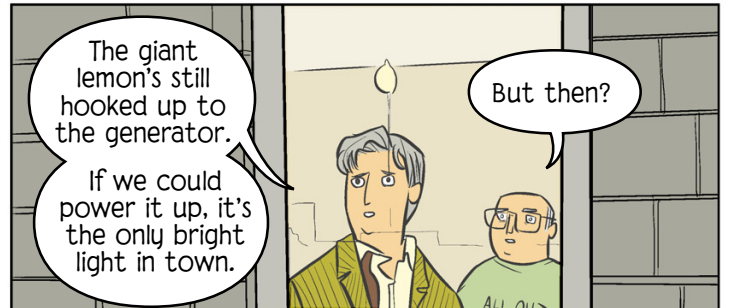
We can't run, there are four moths outside but there could be dozens more.



We need to lure them into one central location and BLOW 'EM UP.

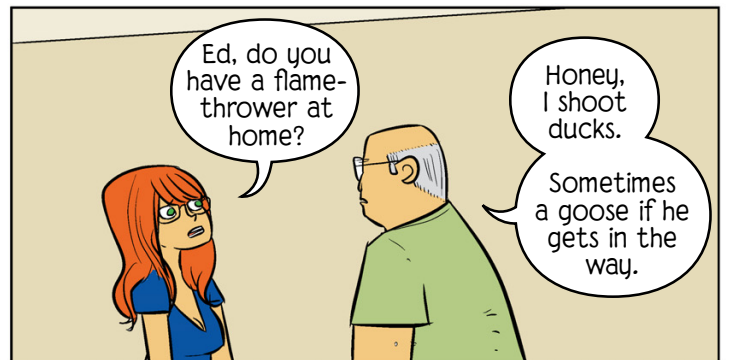


But I only write children's books so I don't know how to do blowing up.



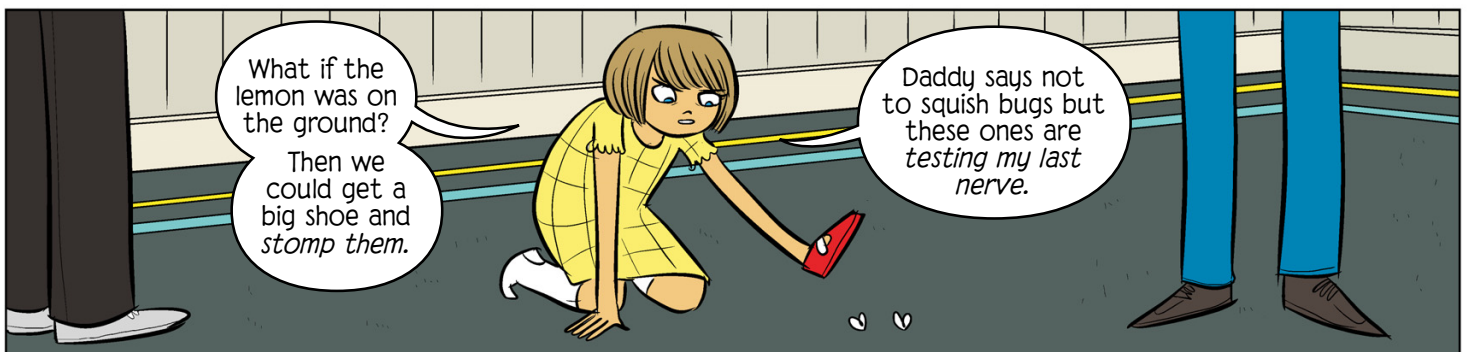
The giant lemon's still hooked up to the generator. If we could power it up, it's the only bright light in town.

But then?



Ed, do you have a flame-thrower at home?

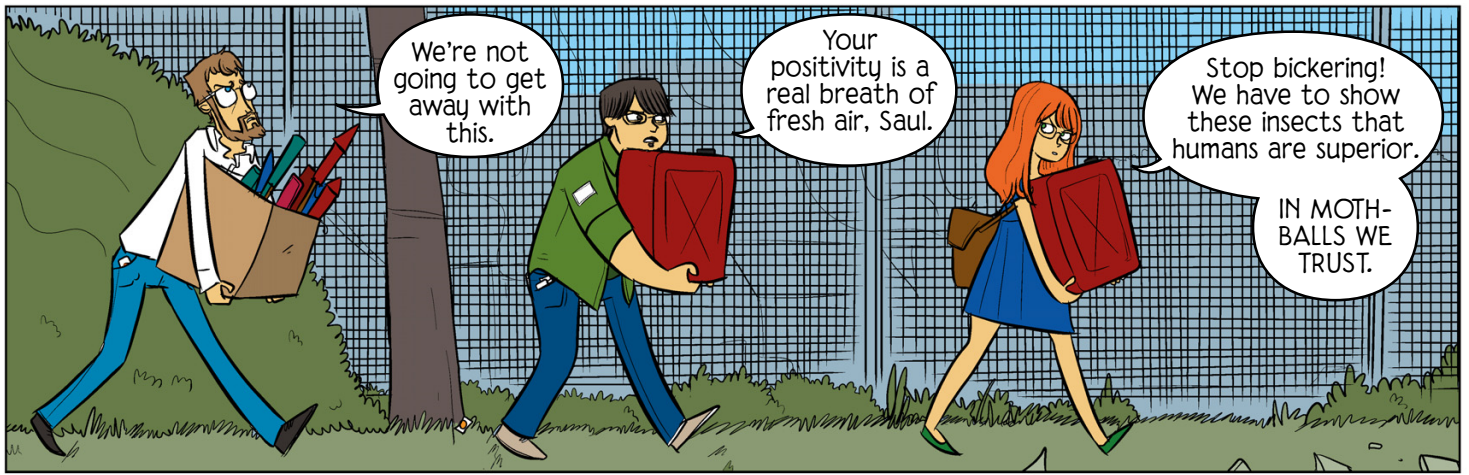
Honey, I shoot ducks. Sometimes a goose if he gets in the way.



What if the lemon was on the ground? Then we could get a big shoe and stomp them.

Daddy says not to squish bugs but these ones are testing my last nerve.



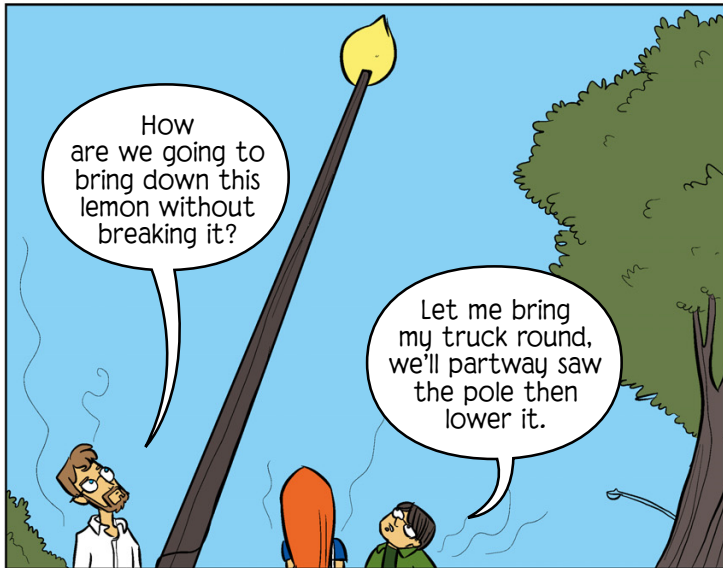


We're not going to get away with this.

Your positivity is a real breath of fresh air, Saul.

Stop bickering! We have to show these insects that humans are superior.

IN MOTH-BALLS WE TRUST.



How are we going to bring down this lemon without breaking it?

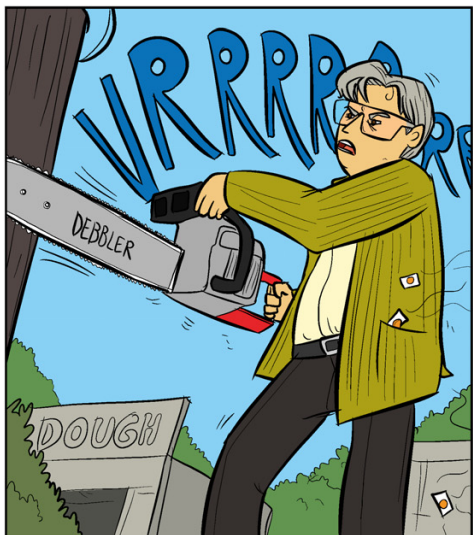
Let me bring my truck round, we'll partway saw the pole then lower it.



The mayor's here!

He's probably got cold feet about us sawing down the municipal fruit.

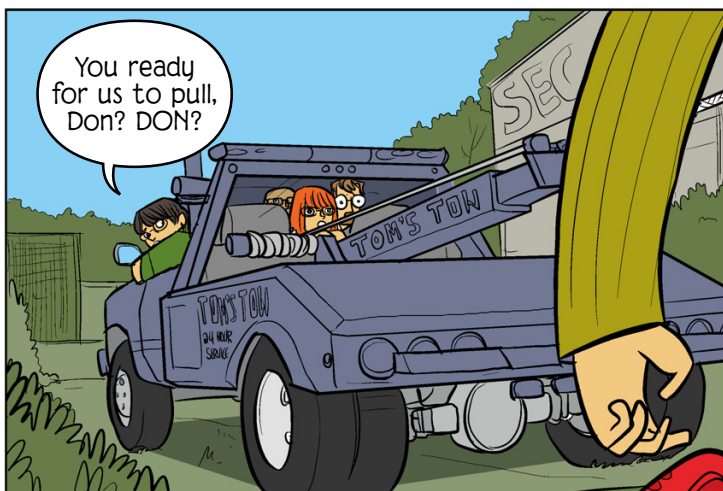
Thought I might lend a hand.



For a jumped-up civic blowhard, Don is an artist with that saw



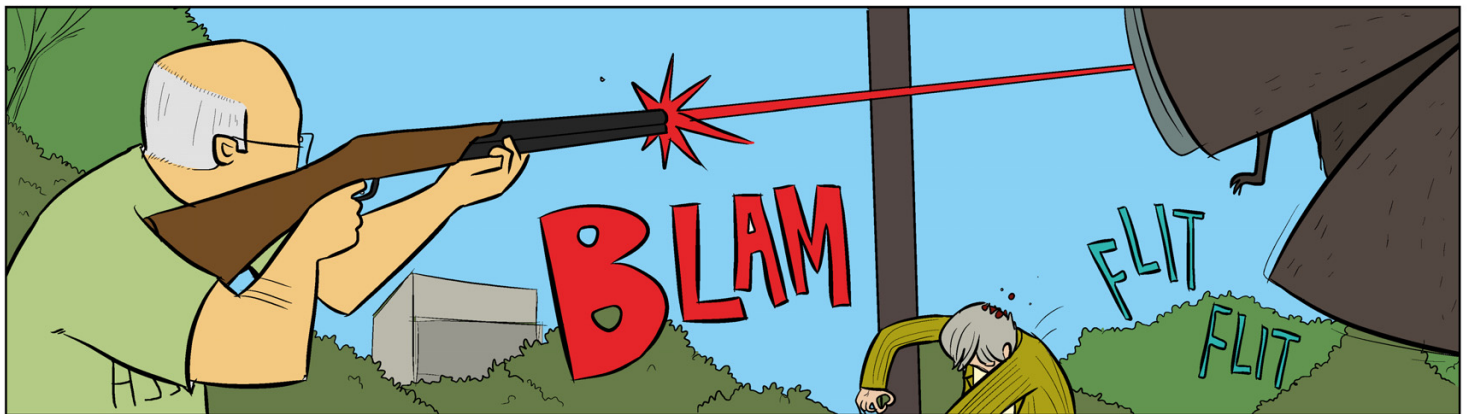
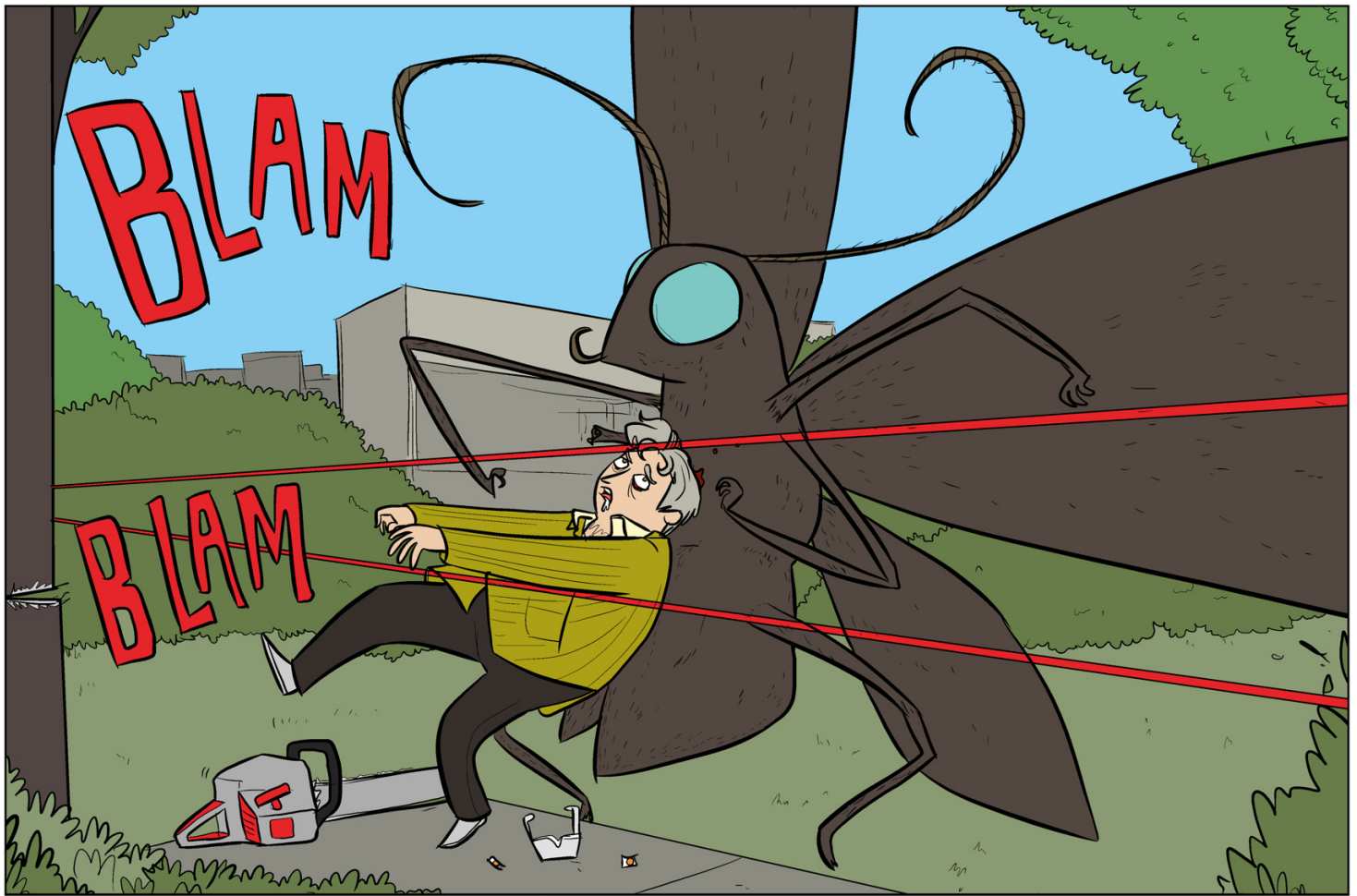
RUIN MY FESTIVAL, WOULD YOU, MOTHS?



You ready for us to pull, Don? DON?



SLUP SLUP SLUP



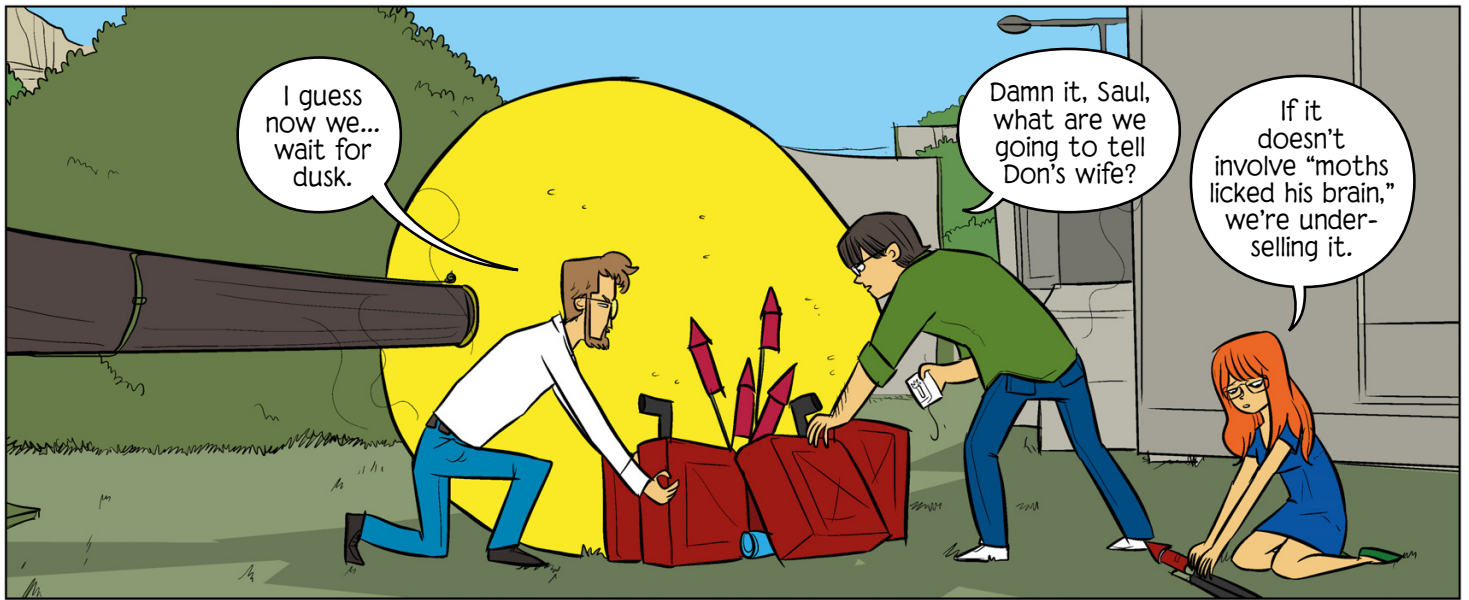
Oh GAW

This isn't great.



Ed, what you have to do...

...is make the bullet go into the moth.



I guess now we... wait for dusk.

Damn it, Saul, what are we going to tell Don's wife?

If it doesn't involve "moths licked his brain," we're under-selling it.



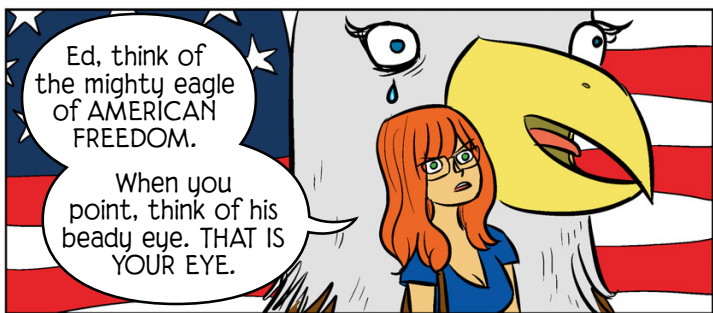
Ed, do you think you can do your part, for Carl?

I... I dunno!



Listen, you don't even have to pull the trigger
All you have to do is light the rocket fuse and point.

I'll t-try but I'm SCARED! What if it doesn't work?



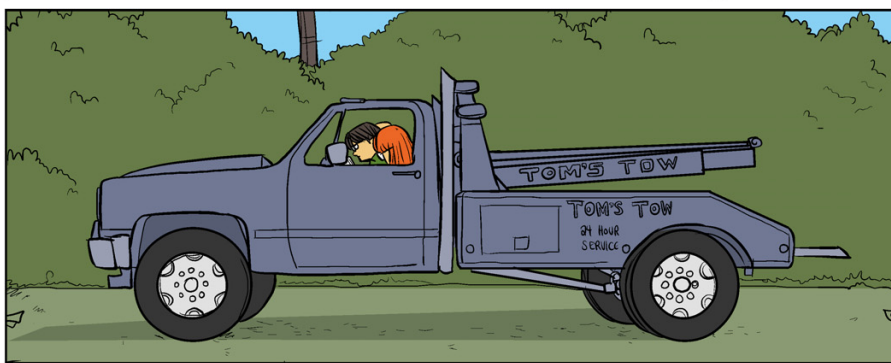
Ed, think of the mighty eagle of AMERICAN FREEDOM.

When you point, think of his beady eye. THAT IS YOUR EYE.

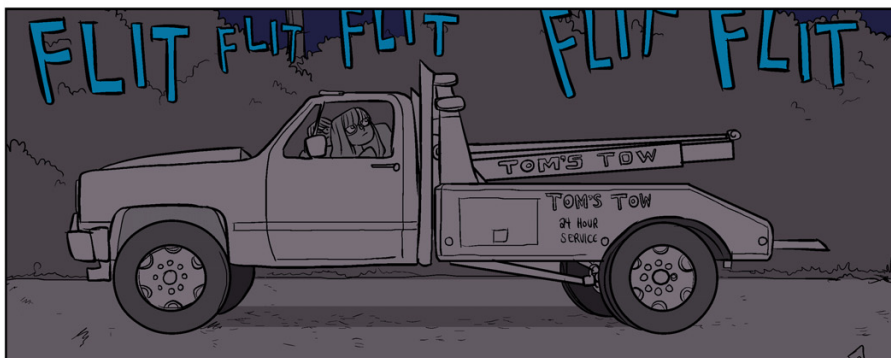


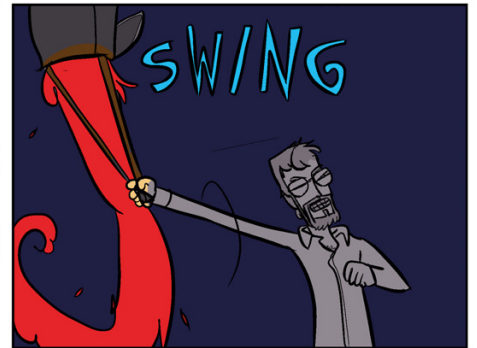
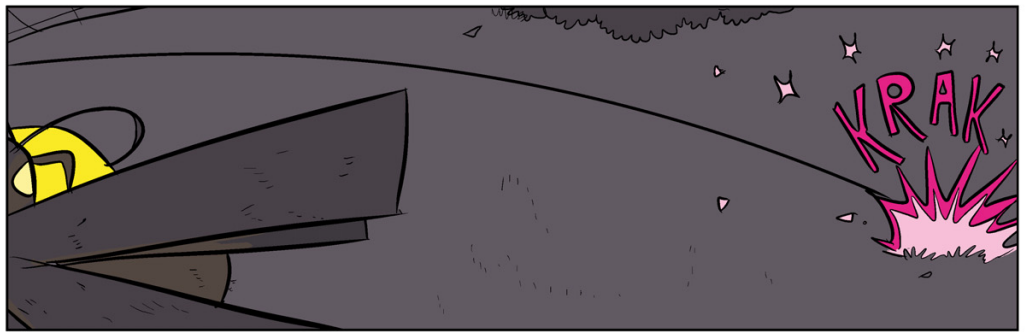
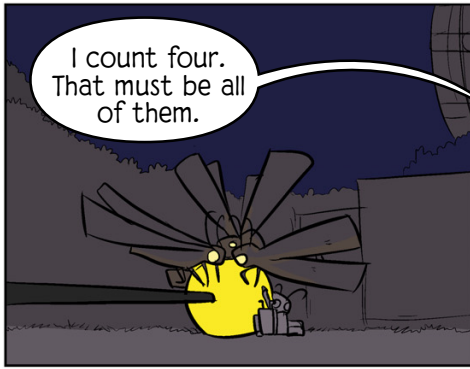
His beak is saying, go on Ed, shoot as accurately as a top CIA assassin.

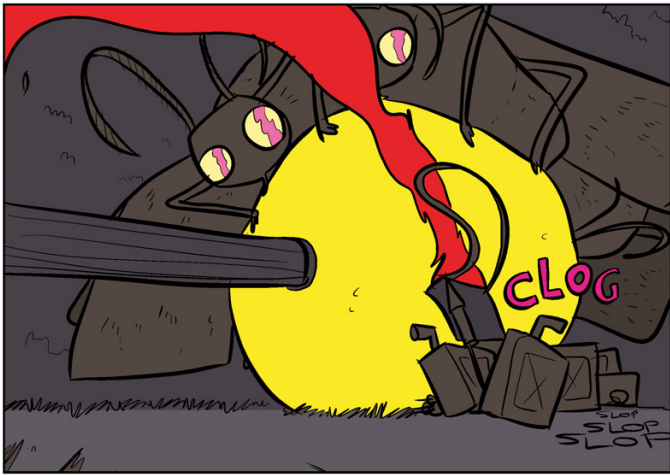
Okay...

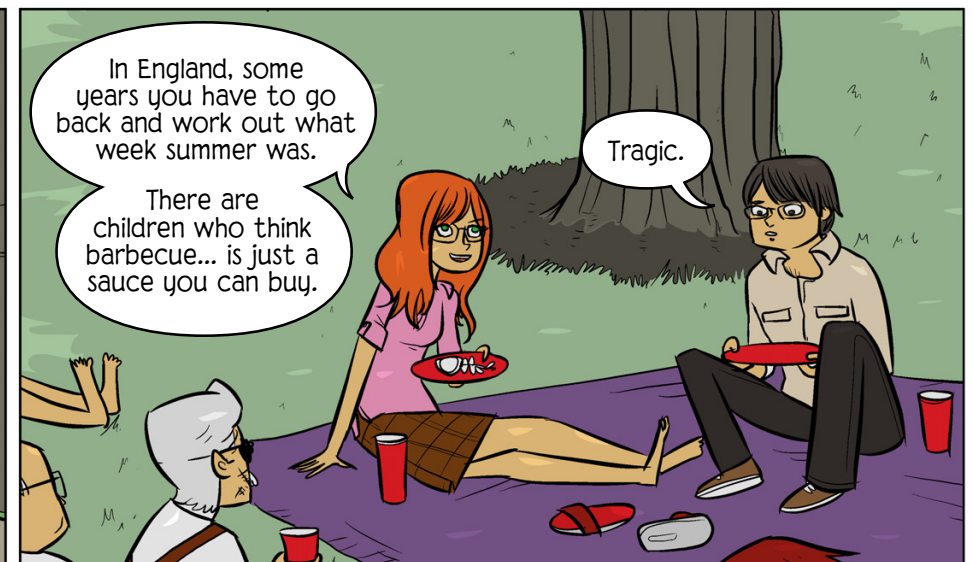
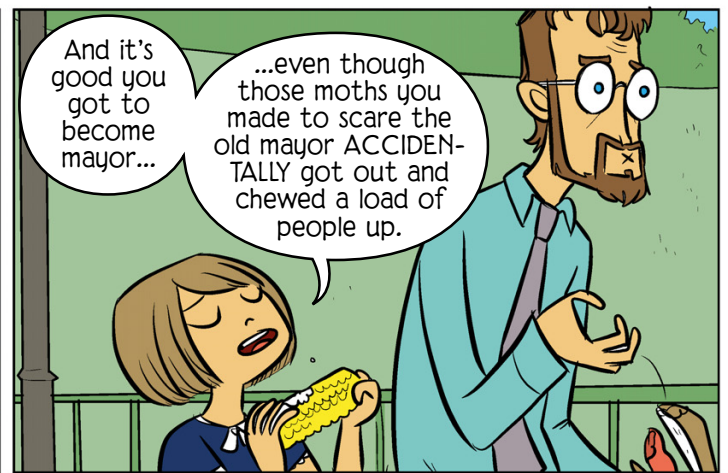
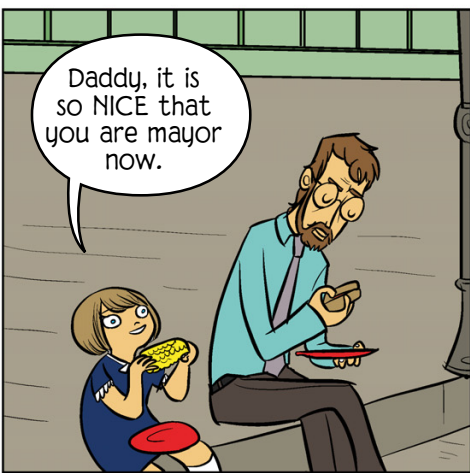
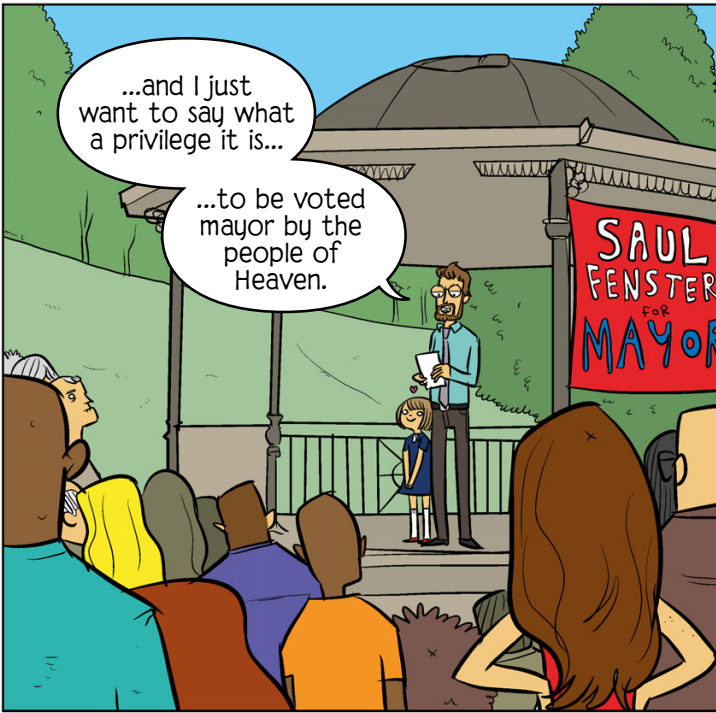


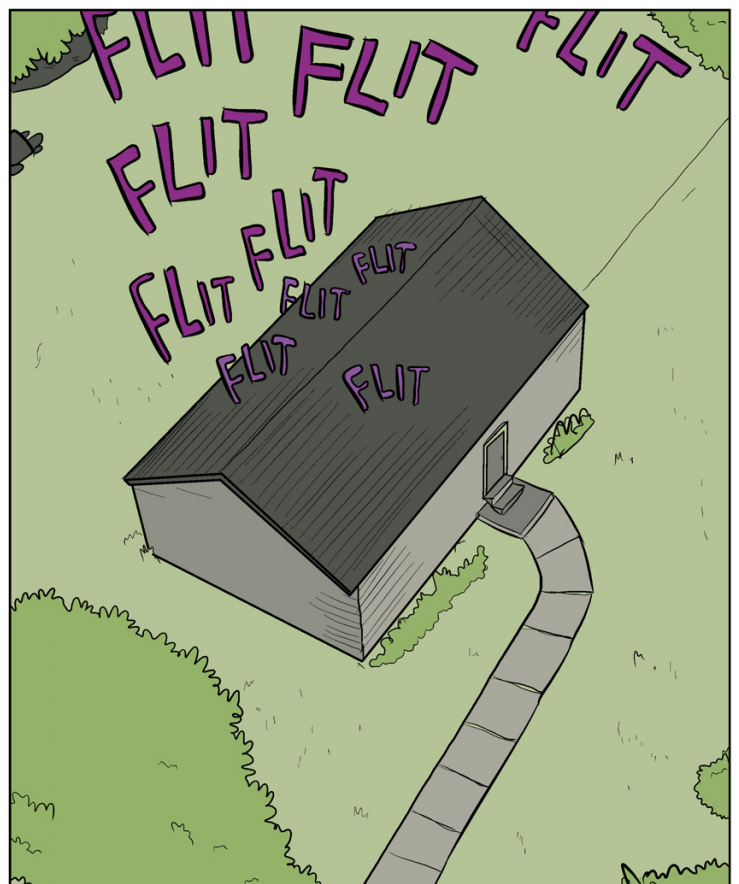
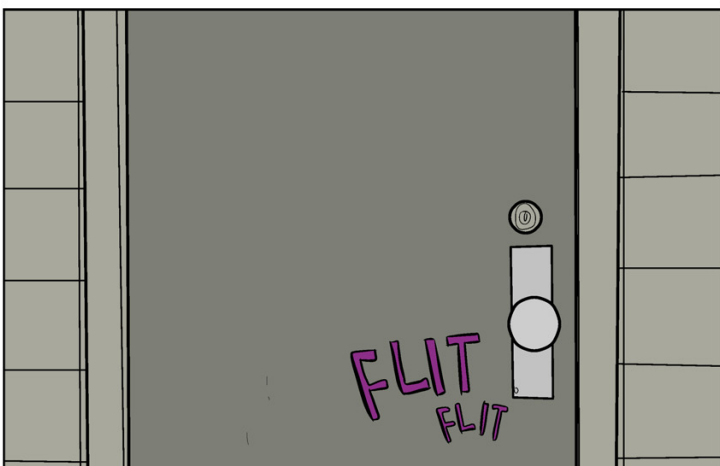
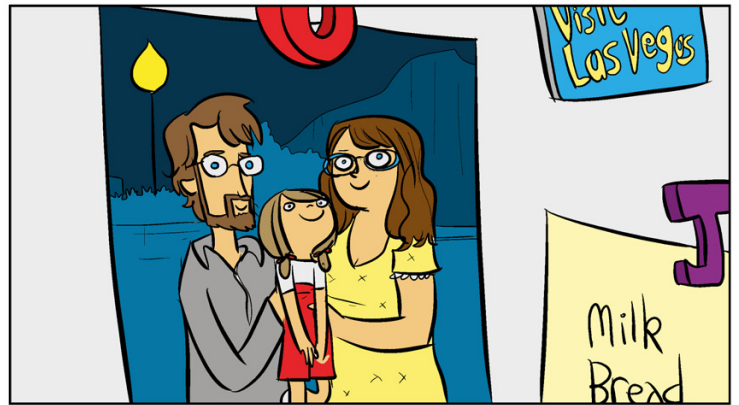
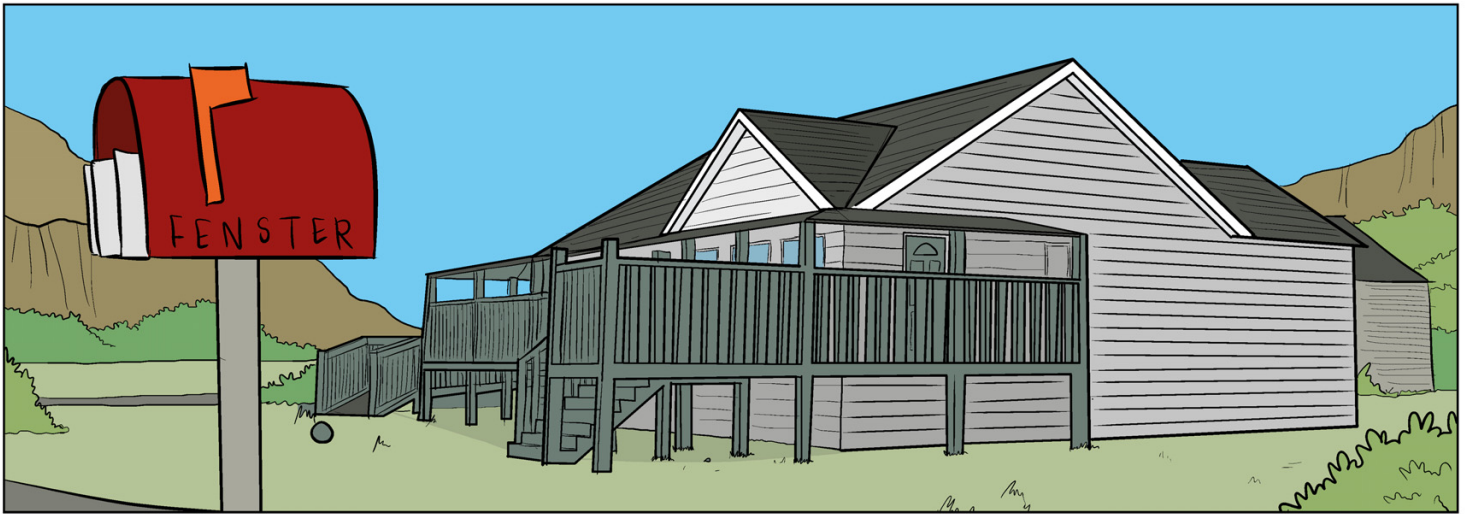
GO TIME.













OTHER BOOKS

Scary Go Round series:
Looks Brains & Everything
Blame The Sky
Skellington
The Retribution Index
Great Aches
Ahoy Hoy!
Peloton
Recklessly Yours

Scareodeleria
Heavy Metal Hearts & Flowers
Girlspy
Ghosts
Giant Days
Murder She Writes

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Allison is the creator of the comics Scary Go Round and Bad Machinery. Since 1998 he has essayed a series of stories, while making absolutely no attempt to deny that he “made them up”. Perhaps it is this grotesque lack of shame that has allowed him to chisel out a living since 2003 doing just that.

MANY THANKS

Thank you to Severin Piehl, who contributed many helpful suggestions to improve the story when I revised it for this book.