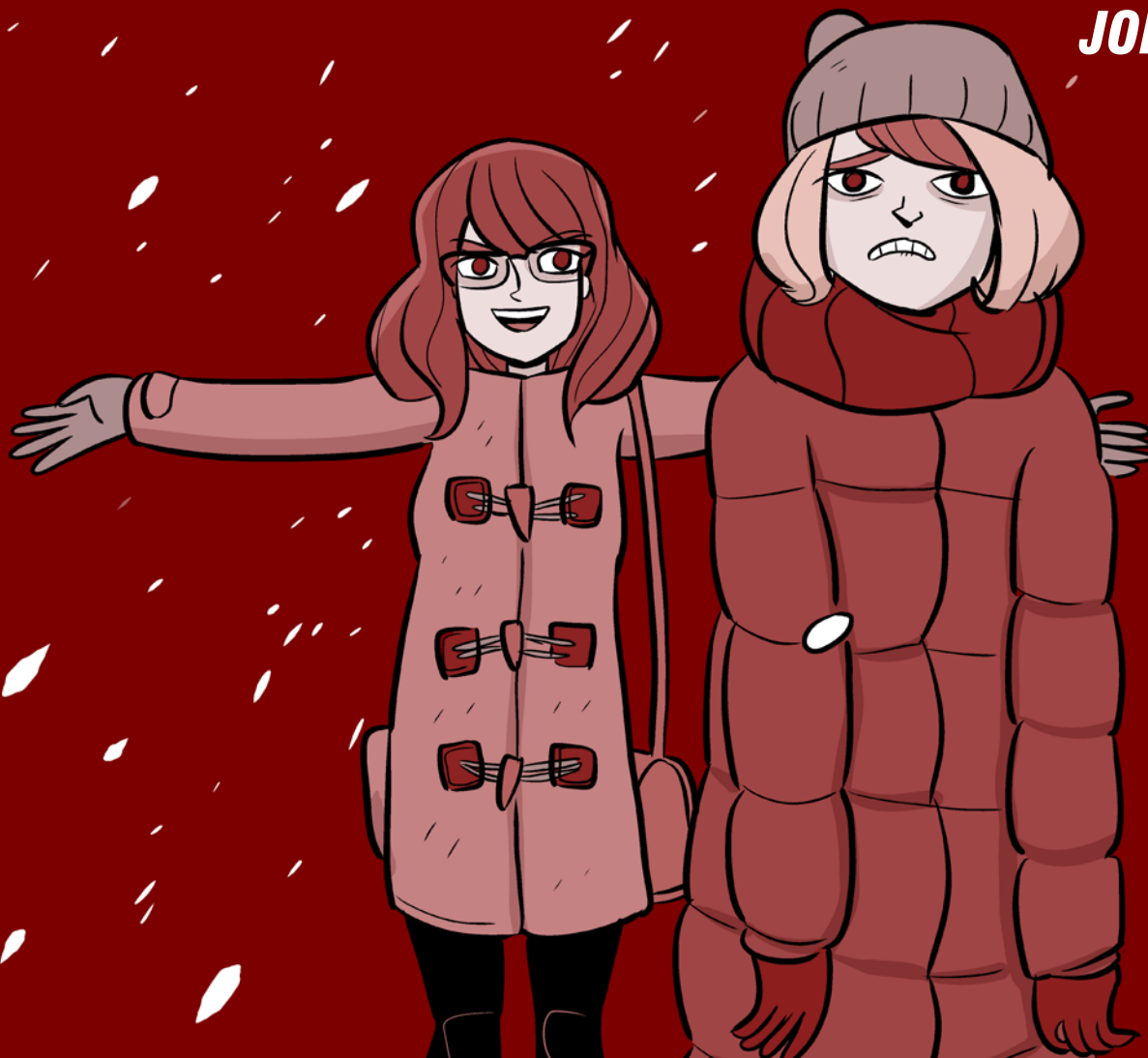


BOBBINS

A MAGICAL PINK BEING

JOHN ALLISON



1

2013/14

patreon.com/scarygoround

***These comics were originally published at
scarygoround.com from 11/11/2013 to 22/2/2014***

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Of all my comics, this is absolutely the last one you should be reading.

Now, that is not to say that it is the worst. Ask me privately, and I'll tell you which one that is. I think the Bobbins series that ran from 2013 to 2017, sometimes in a trickle, sometimes as what I feel self-conscious in referring to as a "gush", contains some of my best work. I think, like everything I've done, it shows a line of progression in art and writing. It informs, and is informed by, other work I did at the time.

But Bobbins (2013-2017) breaks a self-imposed rule. It leans hard on continuity, the continuity of the family of comics I've been making since 1998. If you don't know the relationships between the characters, I don't know what it is. If you haven't read certain stories, I'm certain it doesn't make sense. There are broad strokes, and lots of jokes, but it invites a kind of obsessive engagement that I'm increasingly suspicious of as the driver of story.

The day you meet someone new, you are subject the sum of all the events that lead them to where they are today, but you will never be expected to play catch up. As you get to know them better, maybe you'll ask, but unless you're embarking on a deep, lifelong relationship with that person, you'll never know where the bodies are buried. You just jump in the middle, and the human experience lets you rub along, for better or worse.

My rule, since I began writing *Bad Machinery* in 2009, has been to start each story as if the reader were someone who had just arrived, and give them plenty of threads that they can easily pick up. These comics don't do that. They're part of a conversation that starts halfway through. Comics is a field that rewards deep continuity - the laugh of recognition, the recalled character brought back at a pivotal moment. I'm increasingly of the belief that stories built mostly on callbacks are cheap material, empty calories, a hit that can only diminish. I try to say something new if I can.

So why, do you ask, do these strips exist, so reliant on exactly these cheap tricks? Honestly? I was just trying to tidy things up.

The first of these stories, the one contained in this book, was my first attempt to sew up messy continuity. When I rolled over from *Scary Go Round* to *Bad Machinery*, I kept a few characters, like Ryan and Amy, as B-players - links to the past. In doing so, their lives continued, on-panel, which meant that all the old characters, most of whom had been mothballed, has parallel, continuing lives.

After four years of sitting on my hands, I felt it would be safe to explore how they were getting on, while giving Ryan, Amy, and Erin Winters (another carry-over) a little time in the foreground. I was running four large *Bad Machinery* pages a week on my website, so I tucked the first few of these Bobbins comics in on Fridays (titled, initially, "Bobbins Now!")

Then, just prior to Christmas, in a gap between stories, I tried out a week's-worth of comics. The drug of having fun with all my old friends somehow meant that that week lasted until February - the story that fills this book.

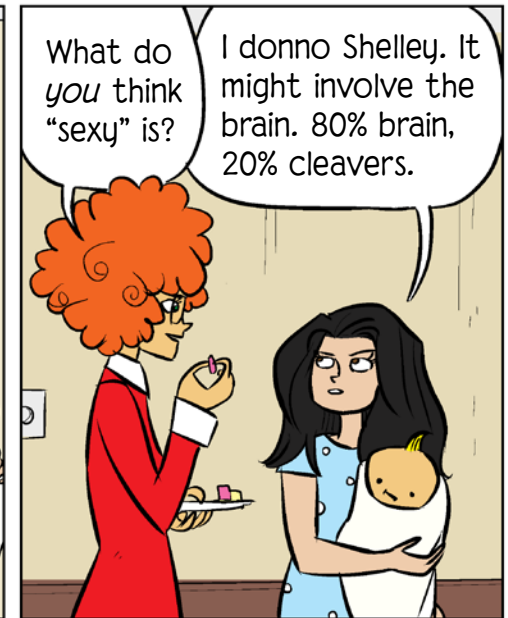
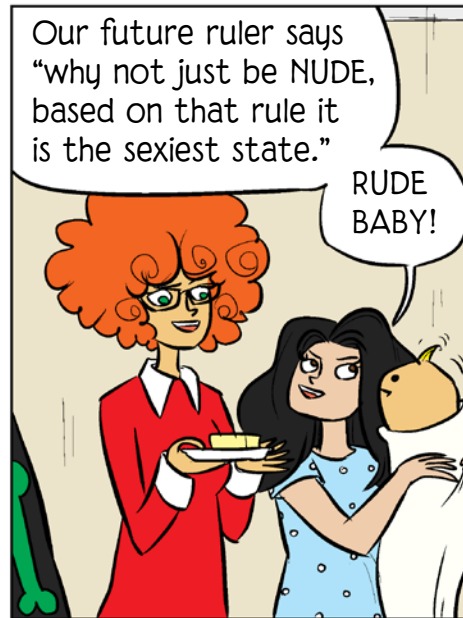
I told myself that this was a story for the fans - and it is - but it's also for me. I've written in other places about the seductiveness of getting more and more fractal with the worlds you create, building wing upon wing of your mansion. The challenge is to balance this world-building with the basic logic upon which you founded your stories.

The questions I kept trying to ask myself were, is this funny, does this make sense, does it damage what I did before? I forced the newspaper strip format on it to leave no room for exposition - I had to make sense in a short space. Quite why I felt the need to add Sunday-style pages is lost to me now but it seemed to allow for a release of narrative pressure, a little stretch out, one out of seven days.

The lie I told myself was that this little side-project was tying up the old world of the characters in a nice neat bow. It didn't. I slipped. I let cliffhangers and intrigue point the way to more of this nonsense. I did it knowing what I was doing. It took me four years to dig my way out.

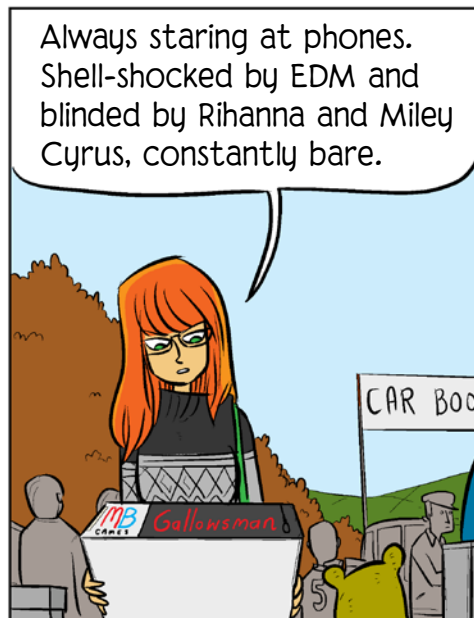
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MURDER SHE WRITES by John Allison



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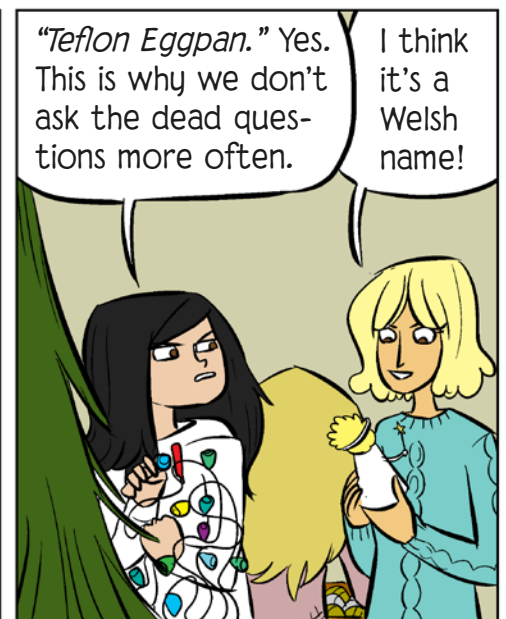
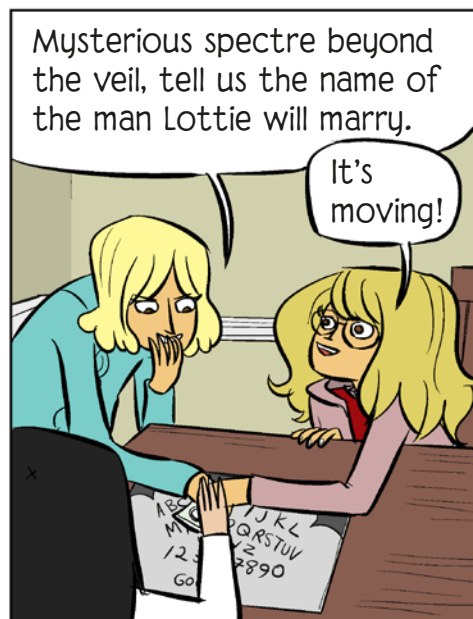
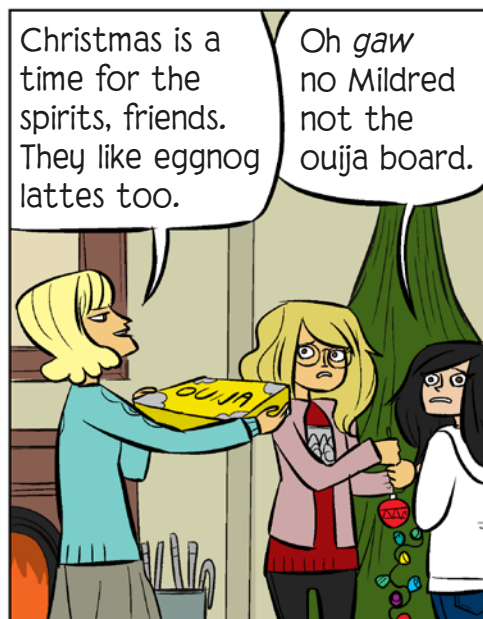
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Murder She Writes was a standalone book I did with Charlotte and Shelley. Its comic strip spin off remains one page long.

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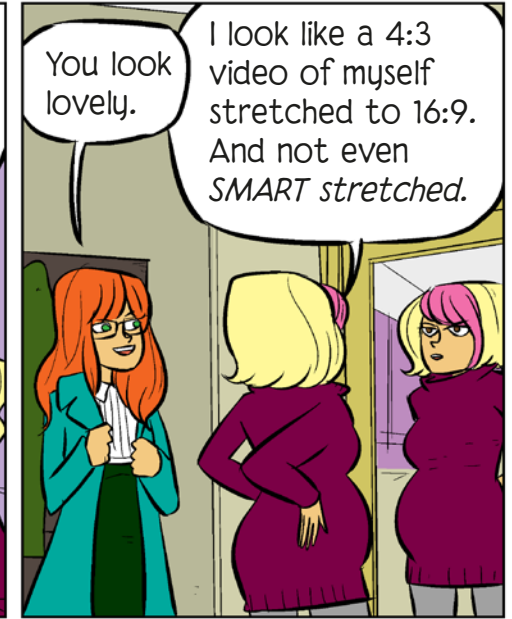
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Bobbins ran contiguously (nice) with Bad Machinery, occasionally they would merge into one.

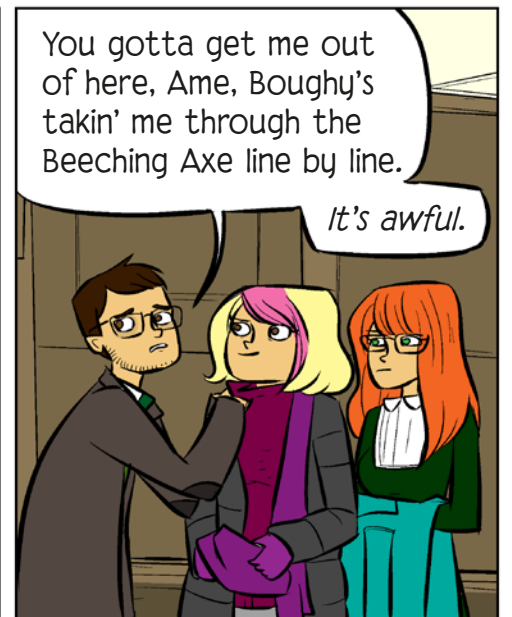
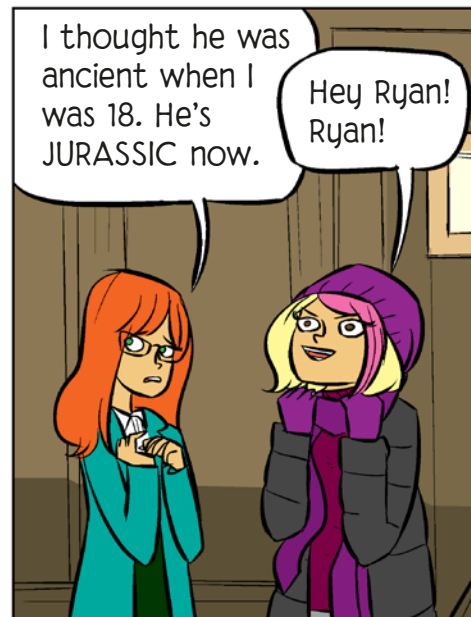
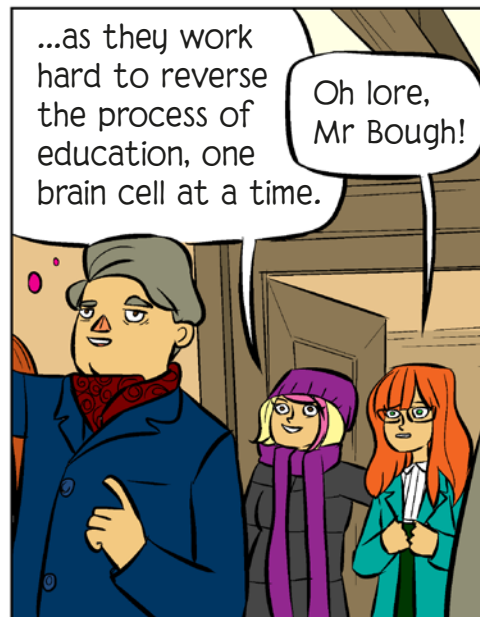
THE REUNION

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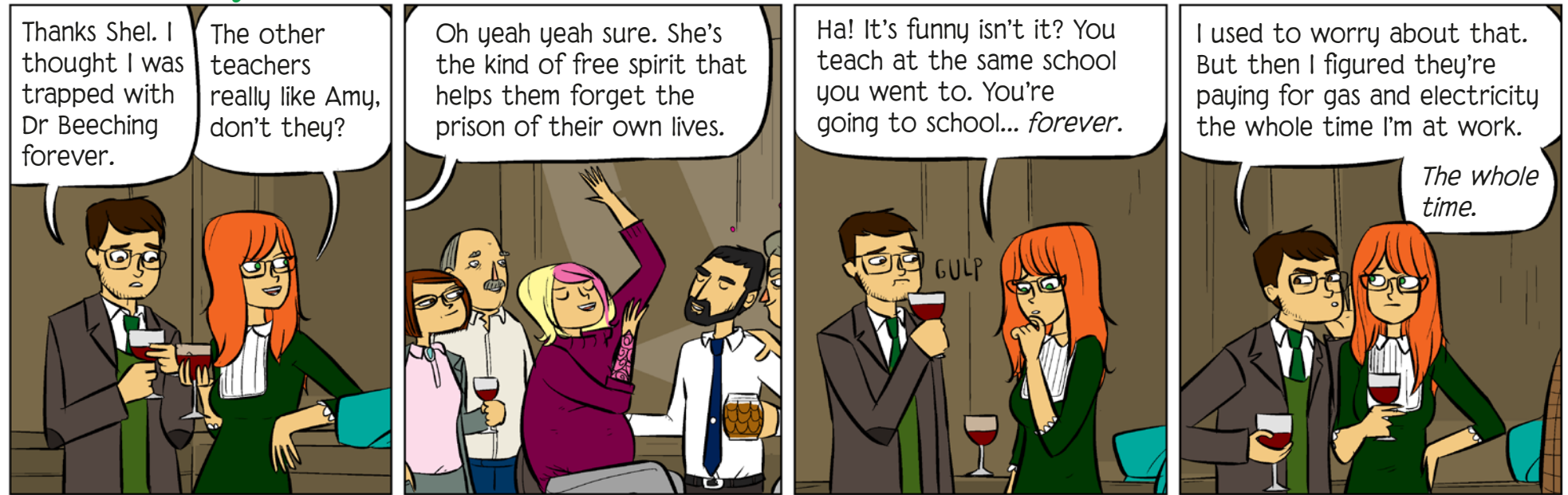
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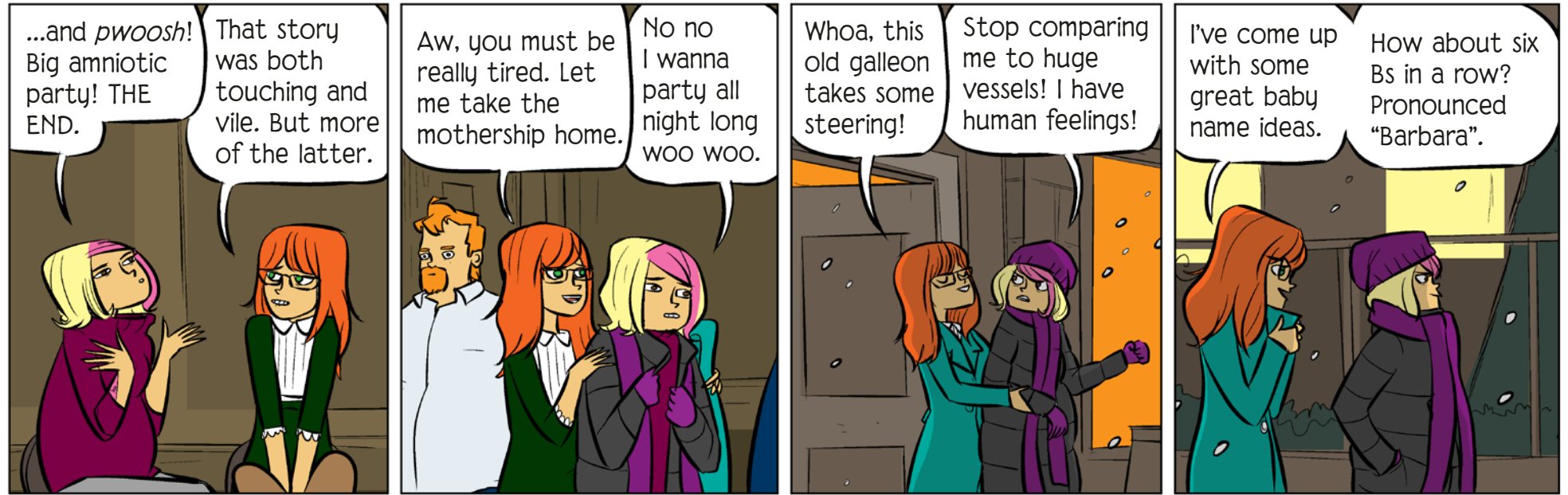
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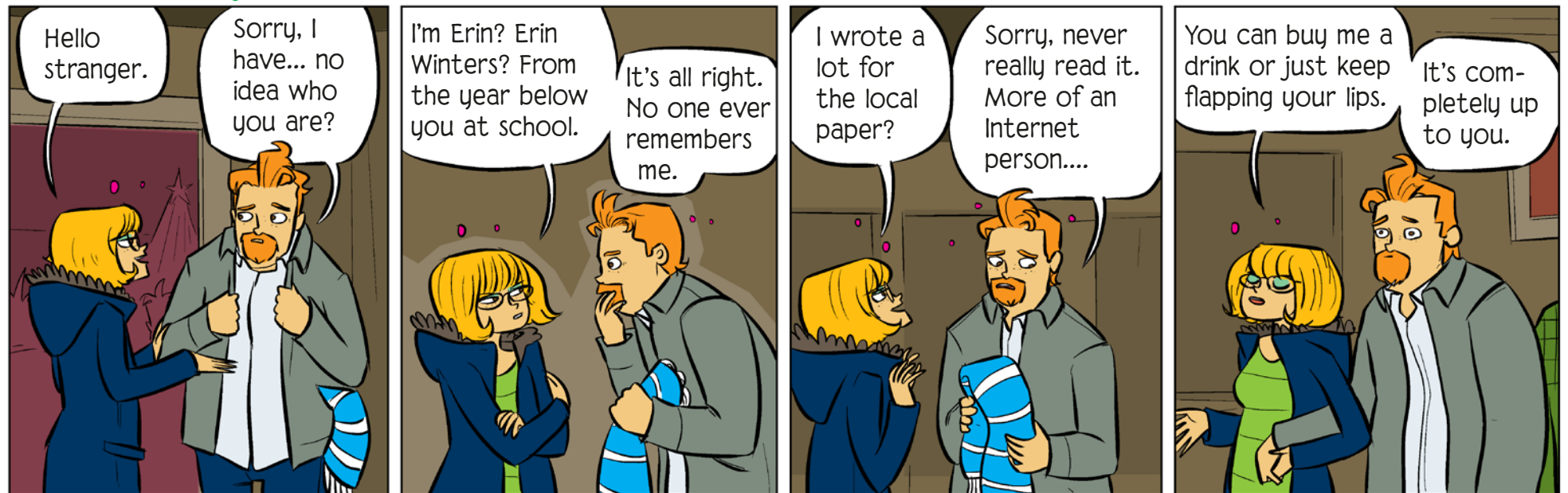
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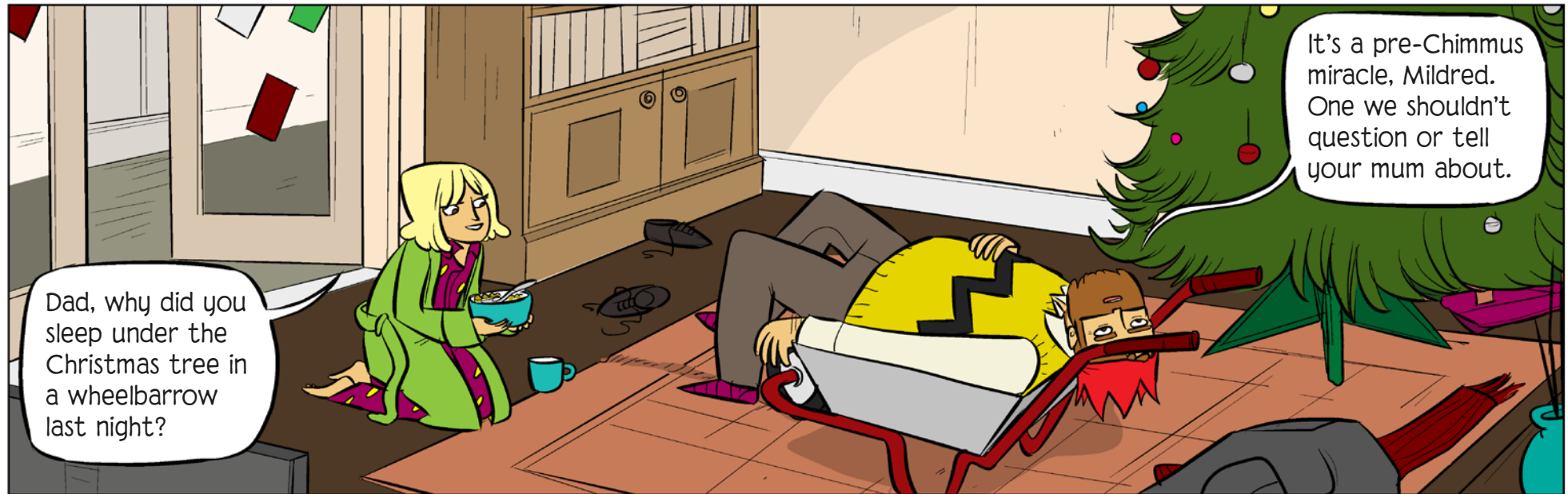
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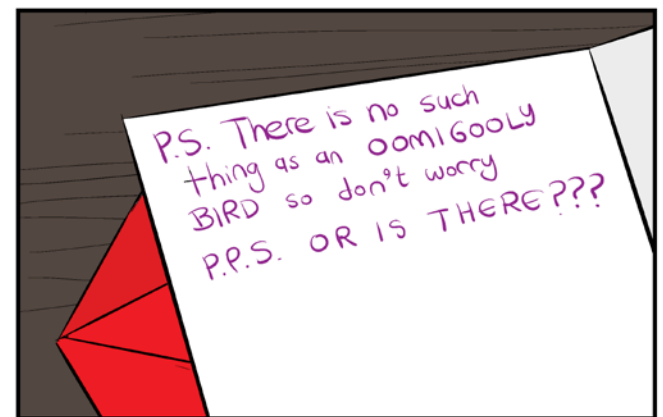
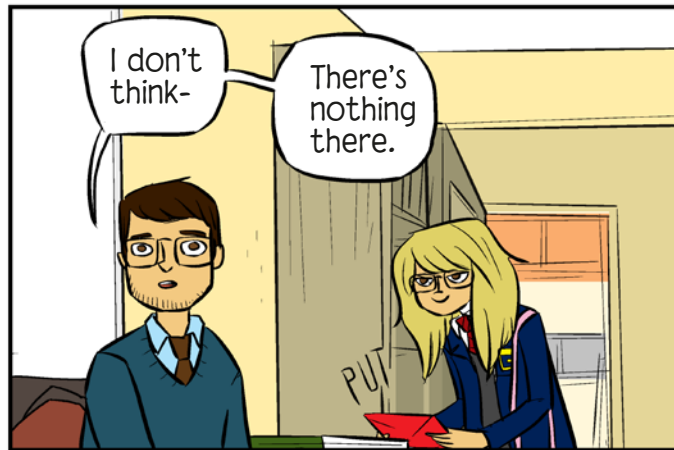
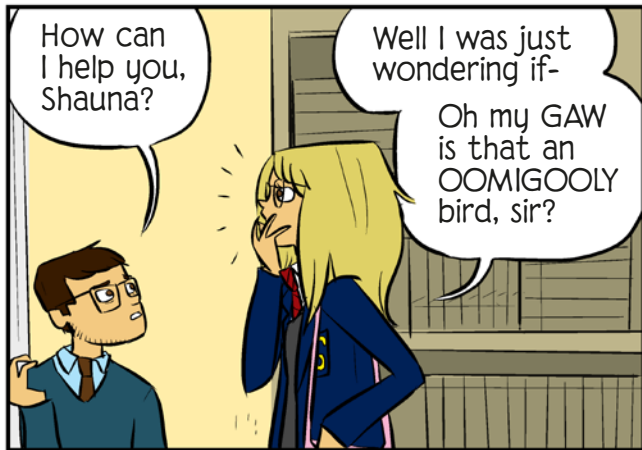
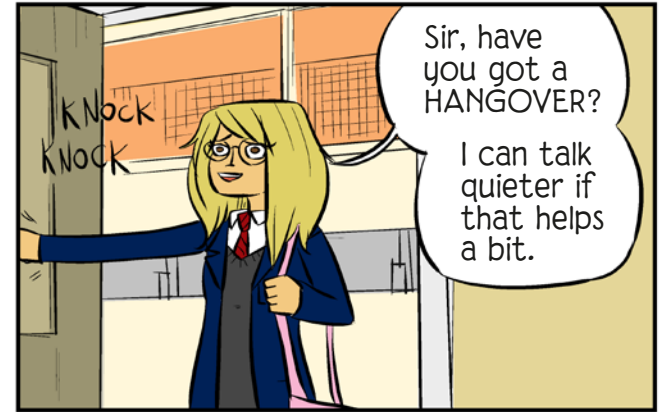
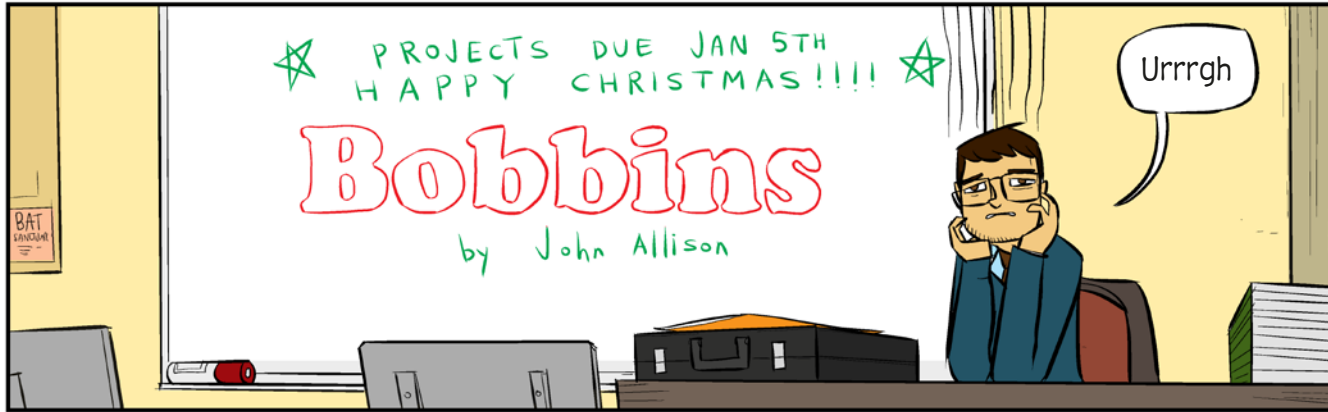
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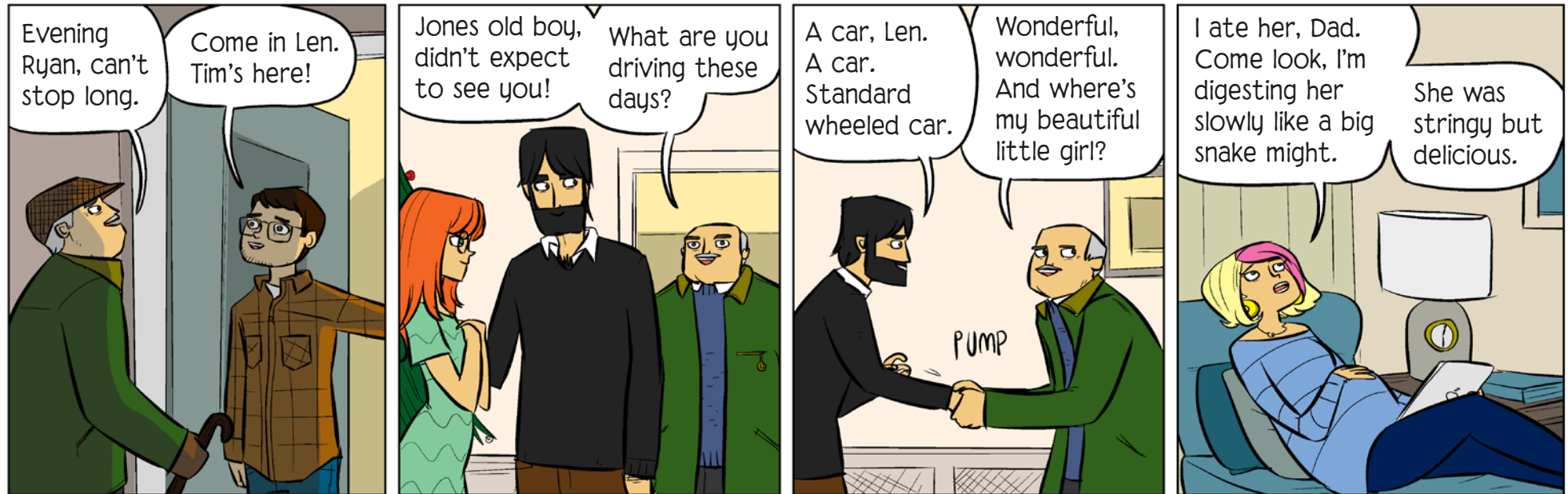
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Mildred's father Neil featured in these early episodes, ultimately meaning that Mildred was the sole *Bad Machinery* character who could regularly straddle both series. She shows up repeatedly, showcasing an increasingly dangerous brand of mischief that feeds back into her parent series.

She always has one foot in the adult world in a way that the other mystery kids do not.

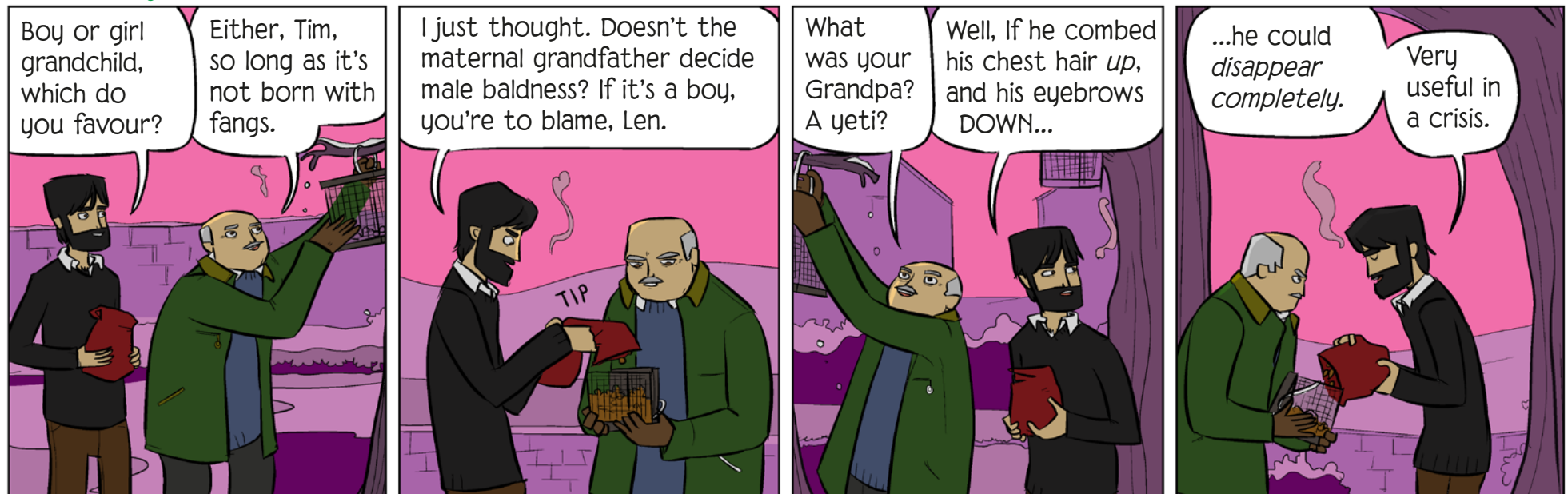


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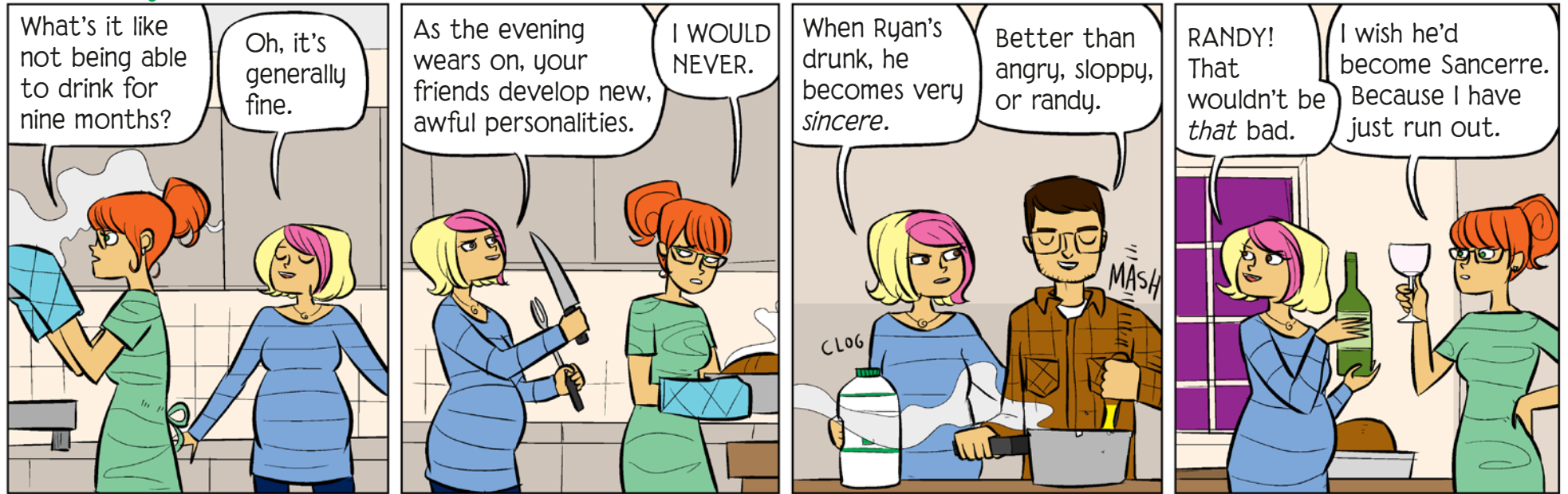
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Len Pickering is one of my oldest characters. But this is the first comic where he is just plain old.

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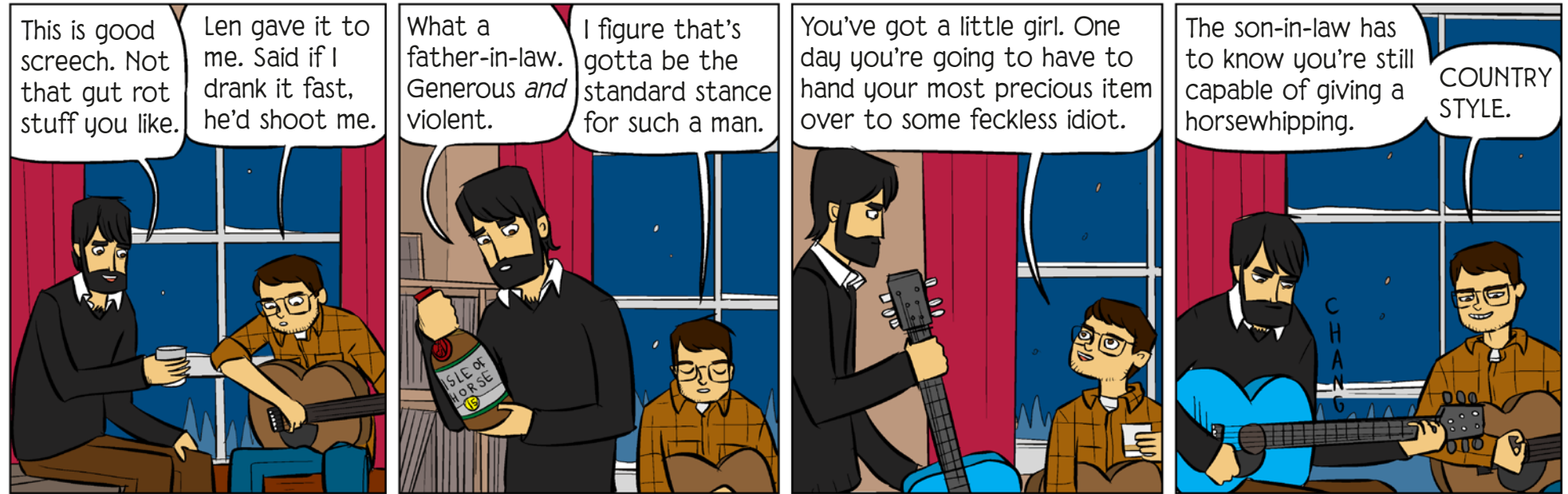
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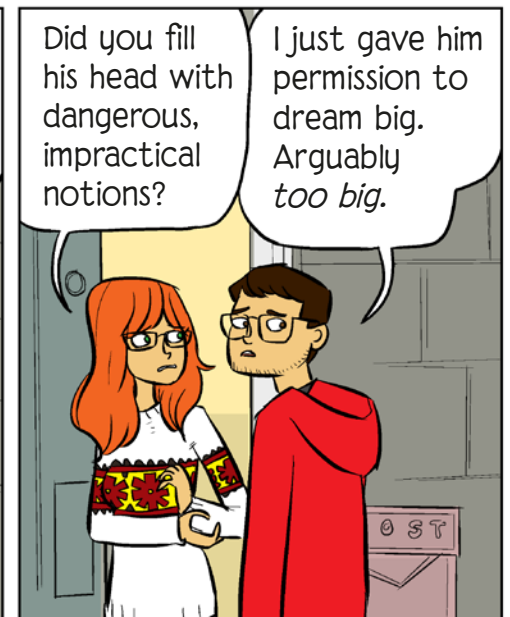
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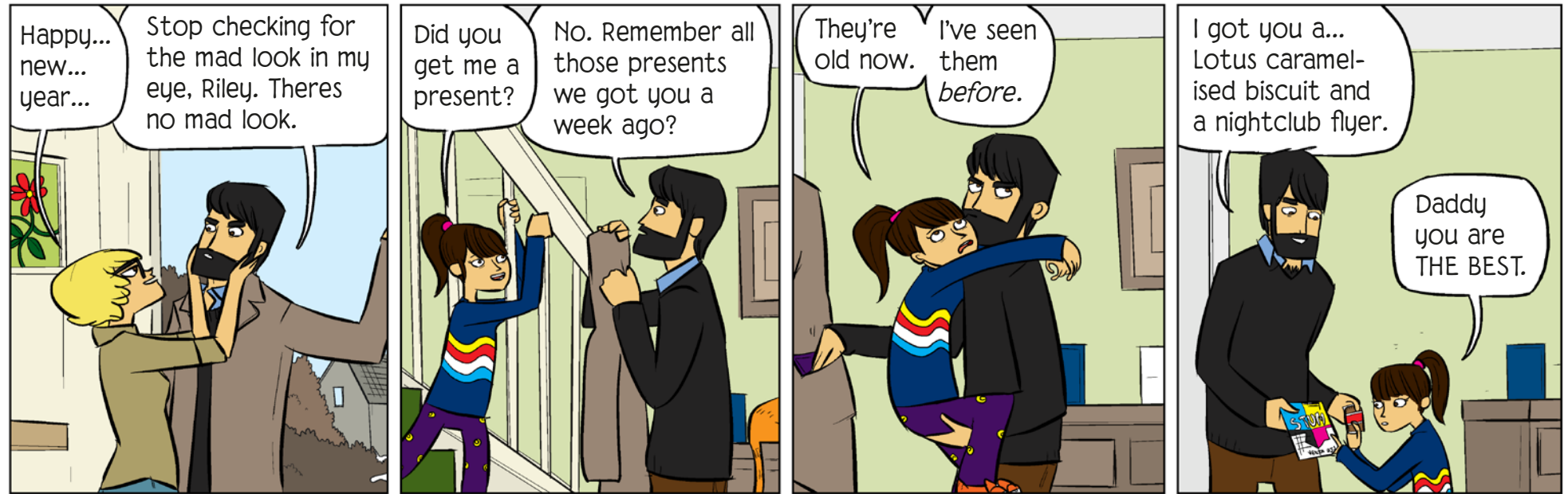
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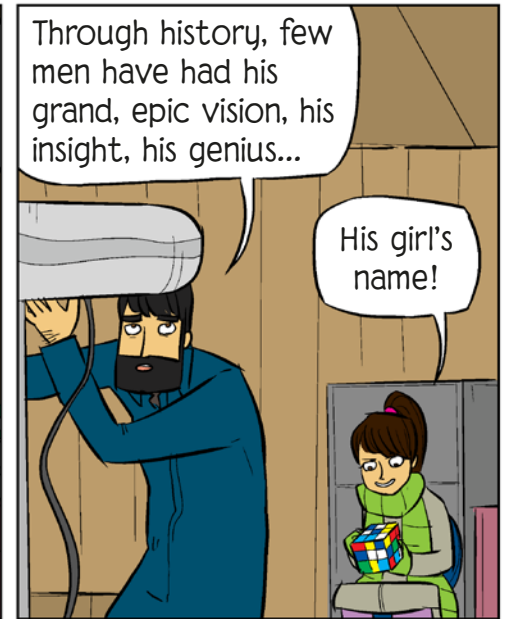
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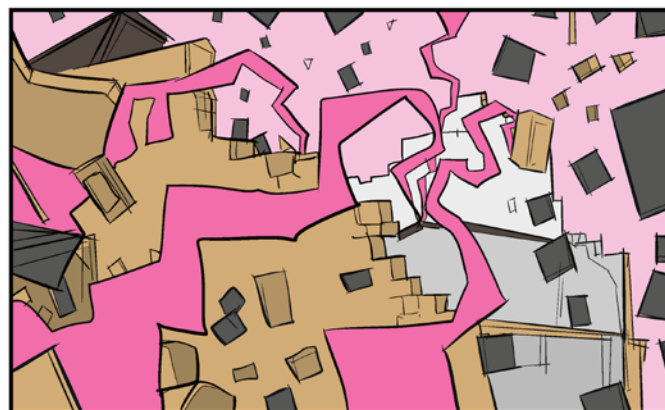
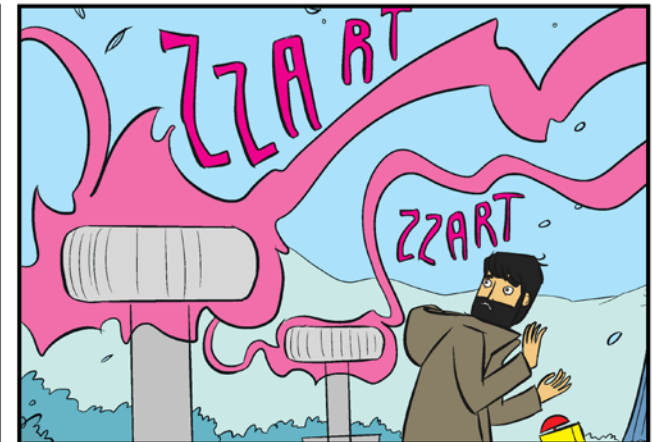


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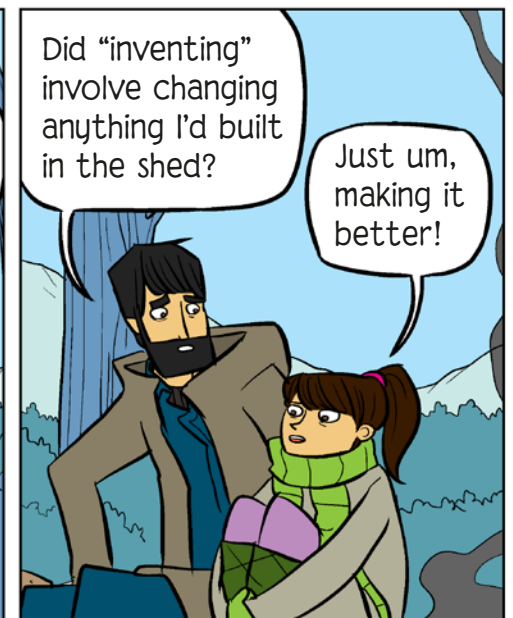
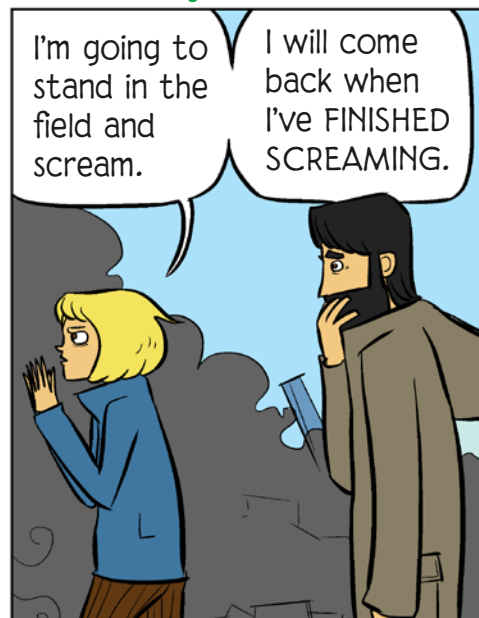


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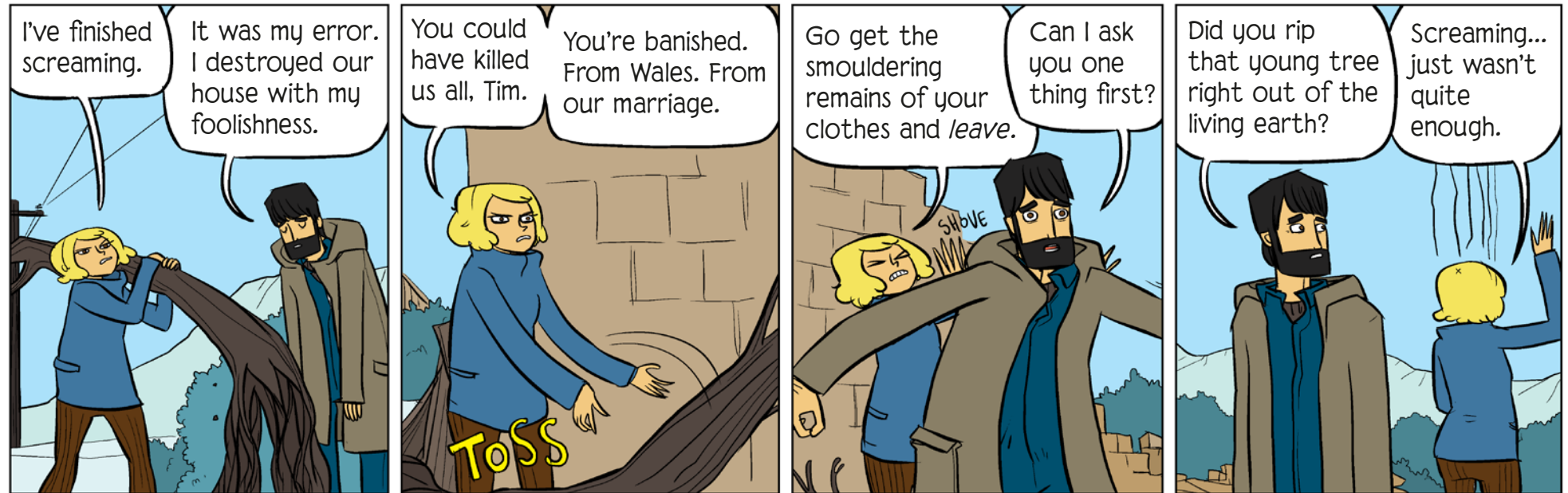
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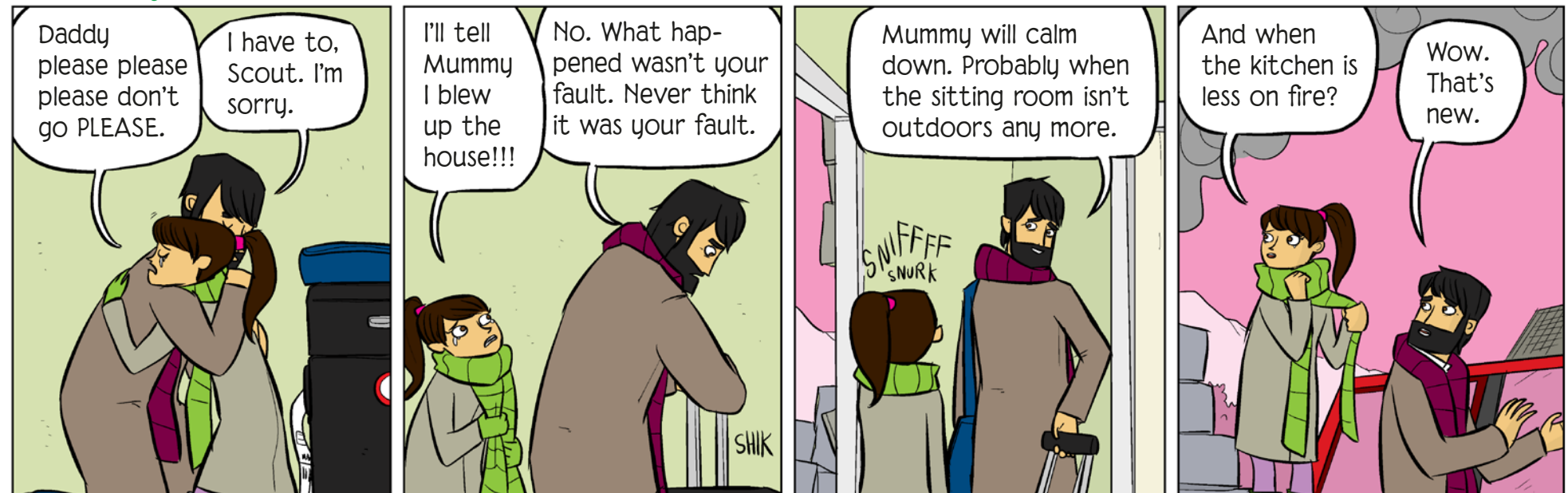
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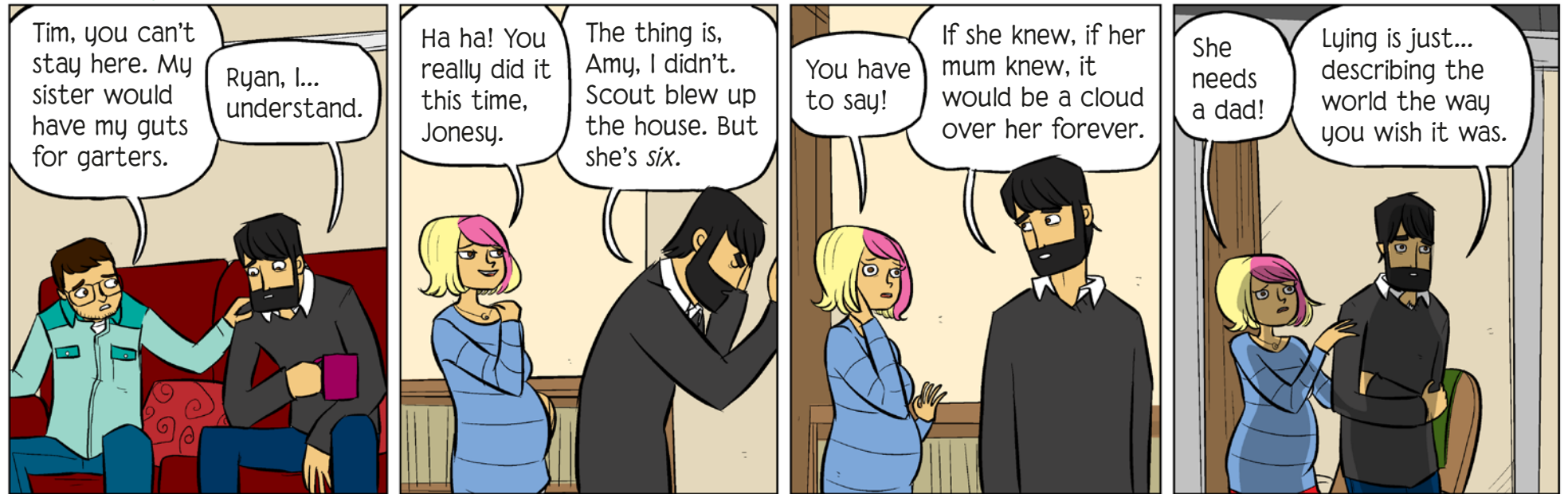
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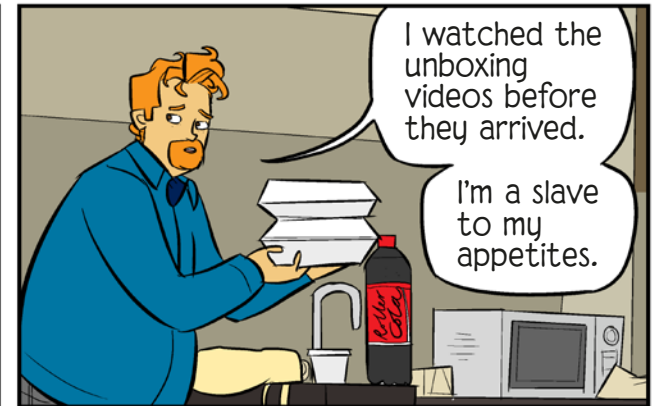


Nice place, Eustace. Bit musky. Maybe lacks a woman's touch.

What's with all the unopened electronics?

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by John Allison



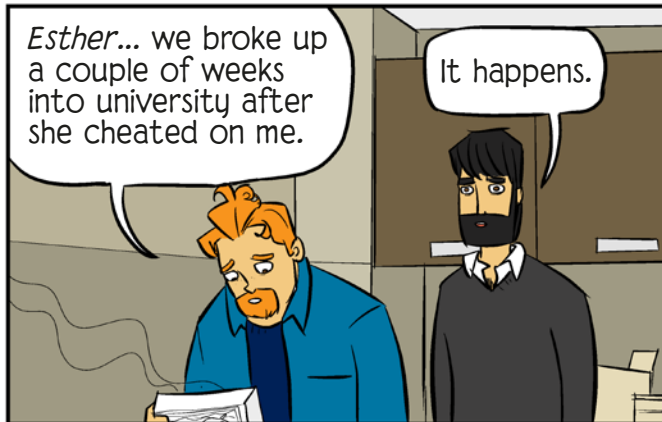
I watched the unboxing videos before they arrived.

I'm a slave to my appetites.



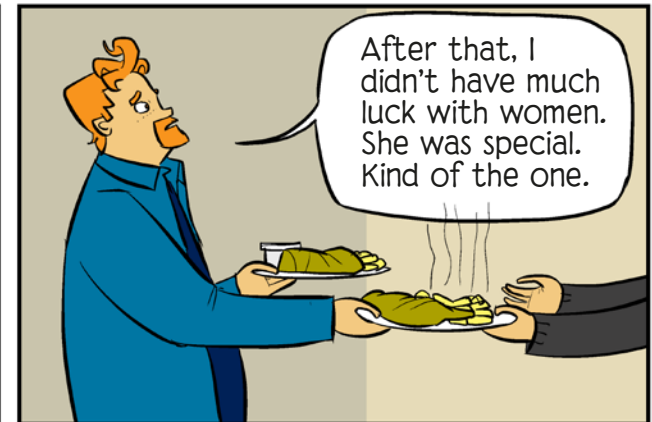
What happened to you, friend?

I saw you marrying that Esther girl. She seemed like one for the ages.

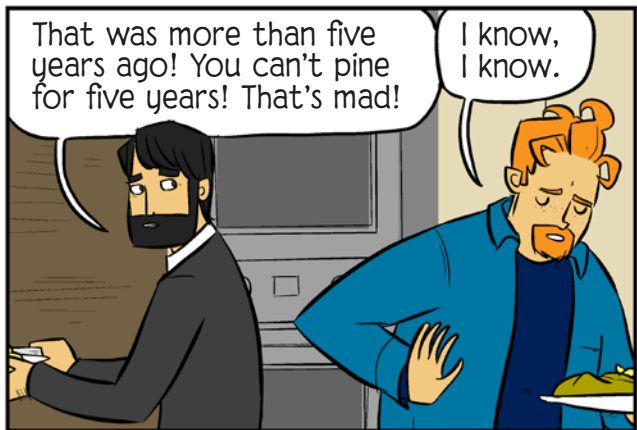


Esther... we broke up a couple of weeks into university after she cheated on me.

It happens.



After that, I didn't have much luck with women. She was special. Kind of the one.

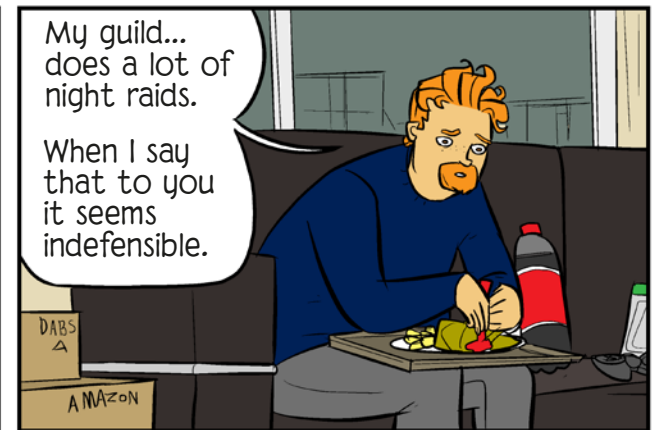


That was more than five years ago! You can't pine for five years! That's mad!

I know, I know.



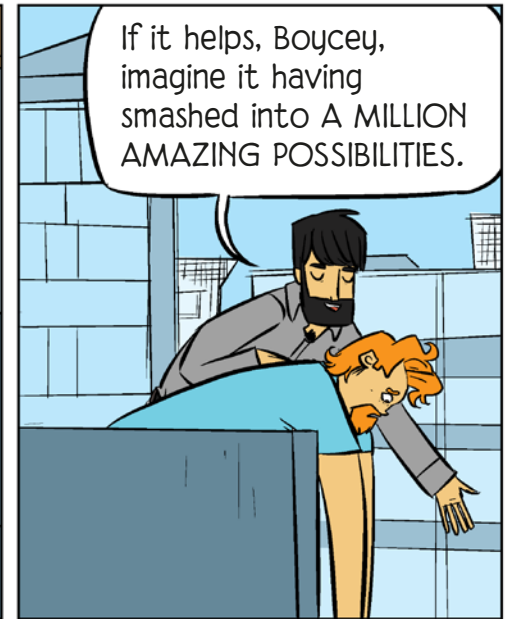
This fridge contains the most significant collection of energy drinks in the Western world.



My guild... does a lot of night raids.

When I say that to you it seems indefensible.

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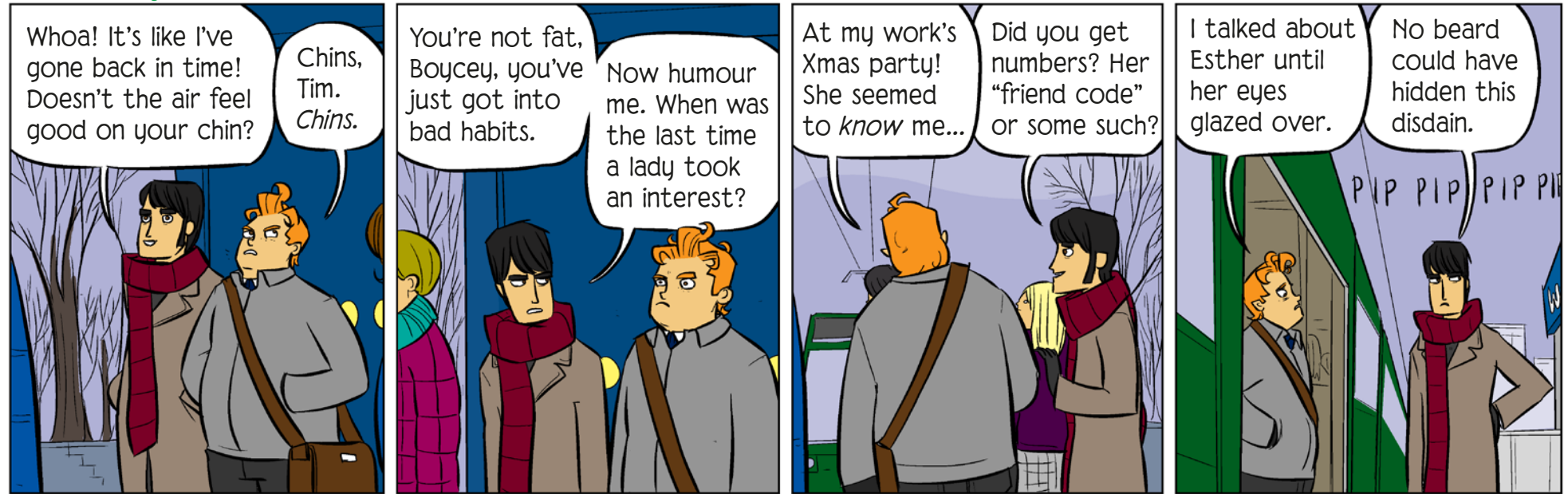
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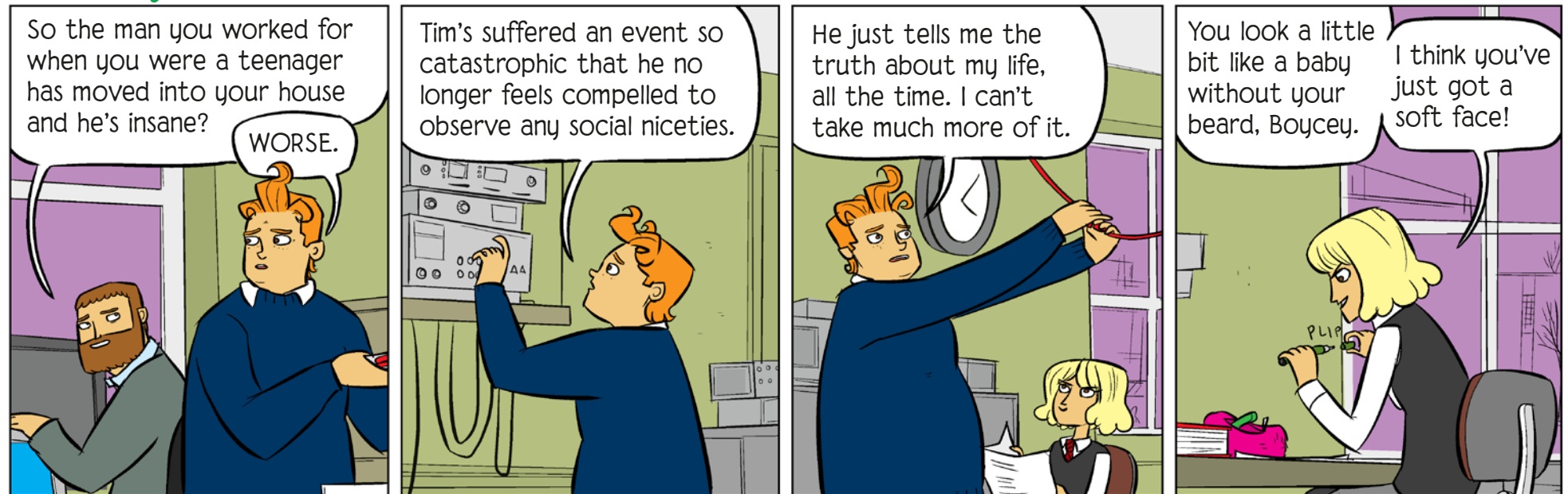
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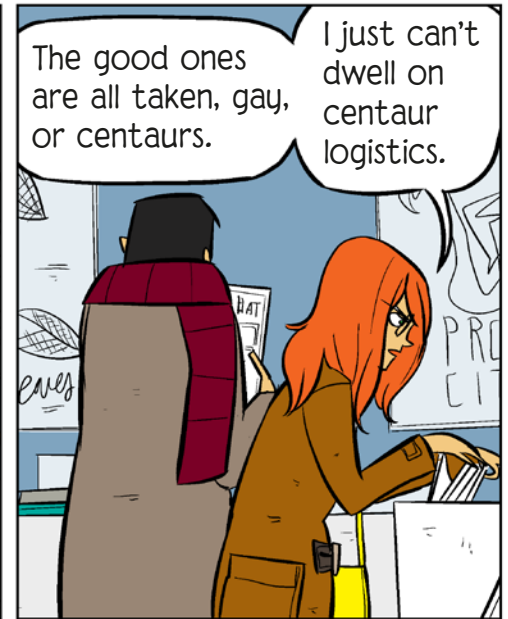
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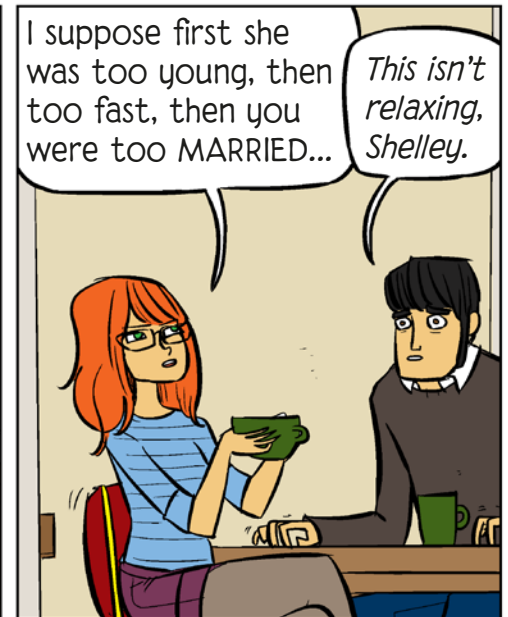
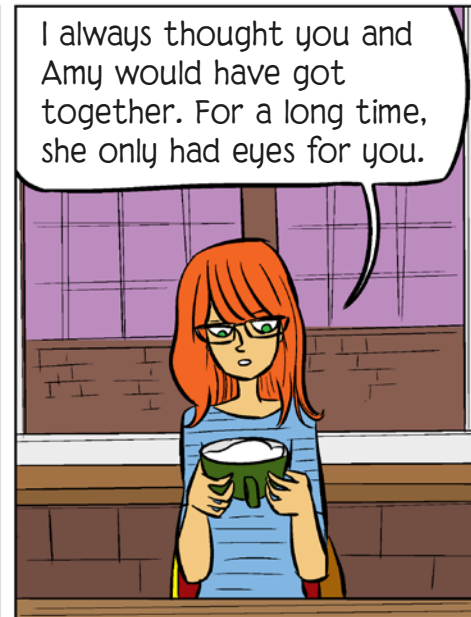
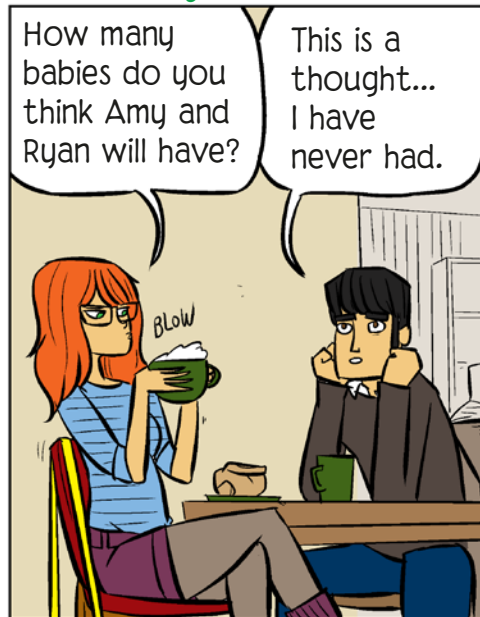
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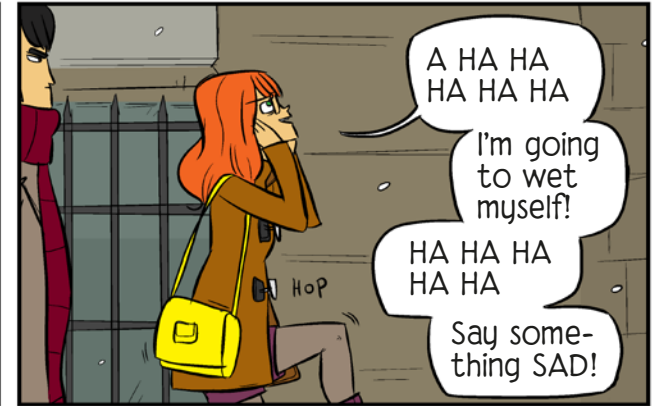


I like how you never consider me as your ideal husband.

We've known each other since we were 13.

Don't laugh!

Hahahah! TIM! You and me! Ah ha ha ha! HA! HA HA!

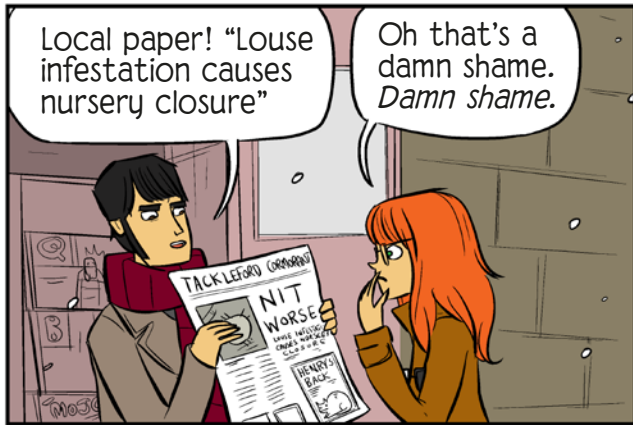


A HA HA HA HA HA HA

I'm going to wet myself!

HA HA HA HA HA

Say something SAD!



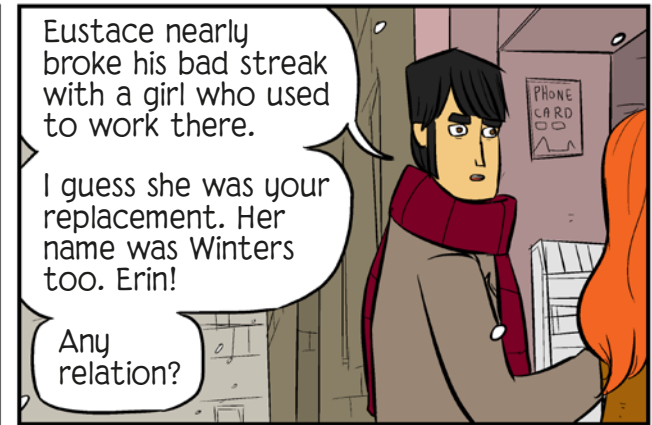
Local paper! "Louse infestation causes nursery closure"

Oh that's a damn shame. Damn shame.



This paper. They sacked me so many times.

Not that they weren't justified. I was quite naughty.



Eustace nearly broke his bad streak with a girl who used to work there.

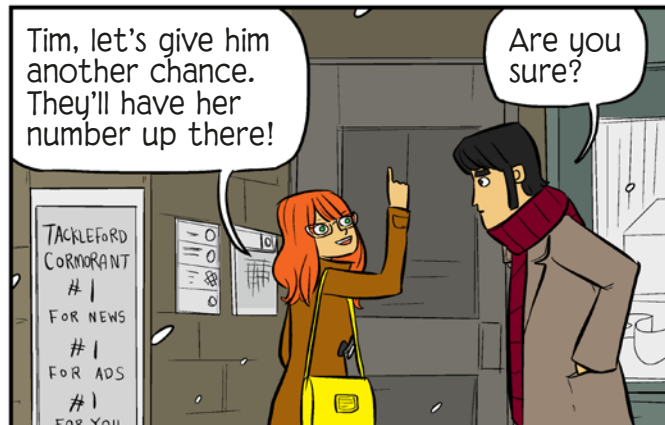
I guess she was your replacement. Her name was Winters too. Erin!

Any relation?



Maybe distant! I don't know! How did he blow it?

I think he bored her to death. He's a sorry drunk.



Tim, let's give him another chance. They'll have her number up there!

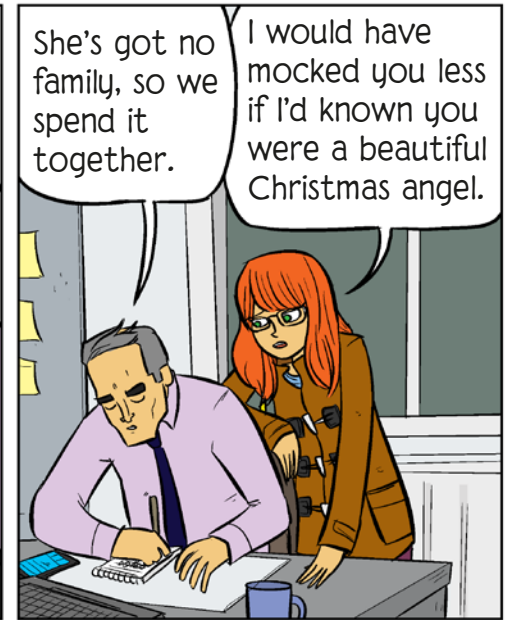
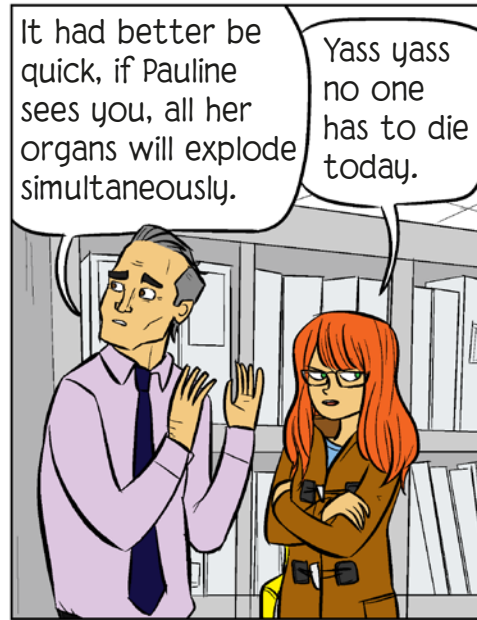
Are you sure?



I have to warn you, this could be dangerous.

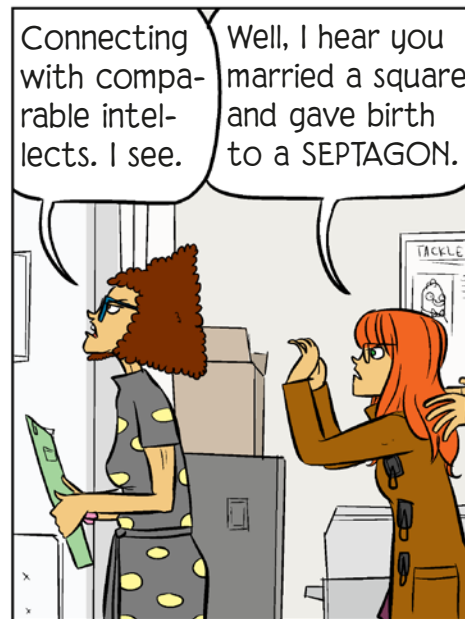
If you get fired when you don't work somewhere, I think you VANISH.

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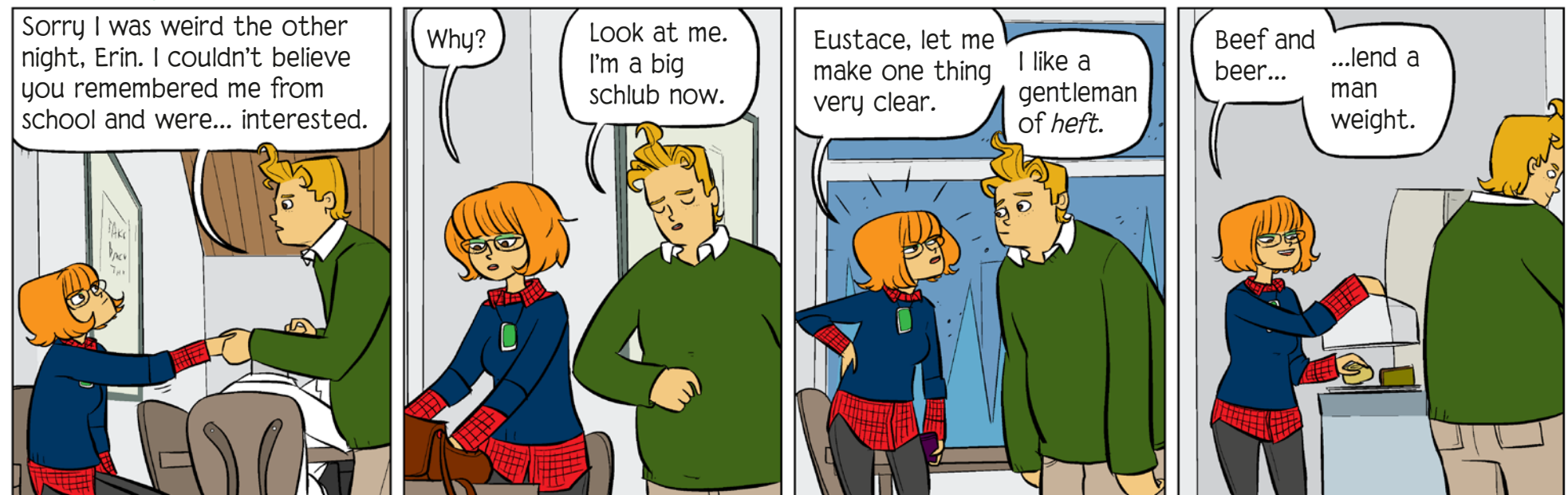
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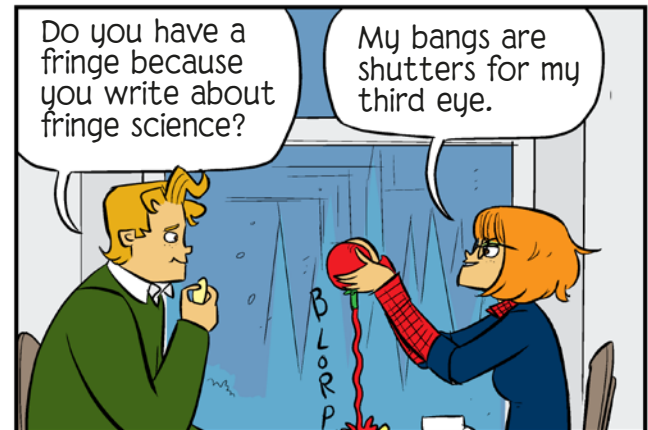
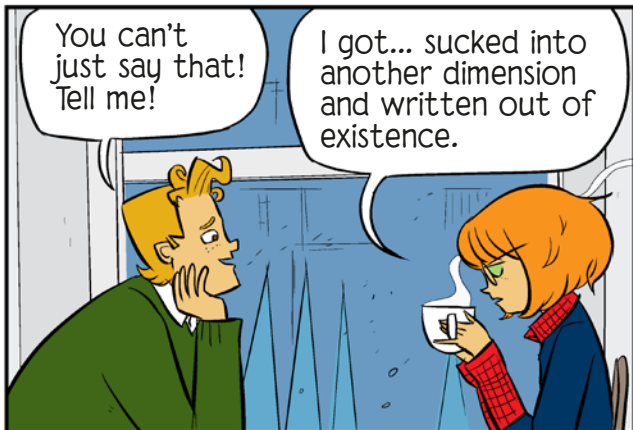
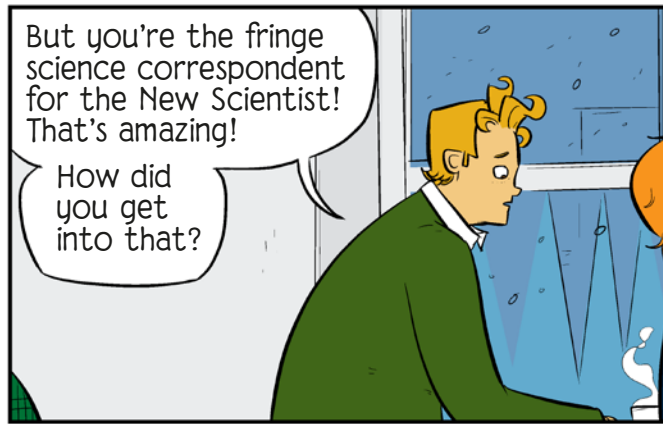
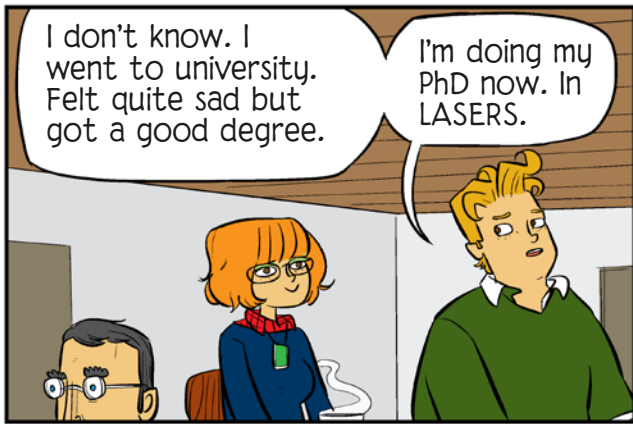
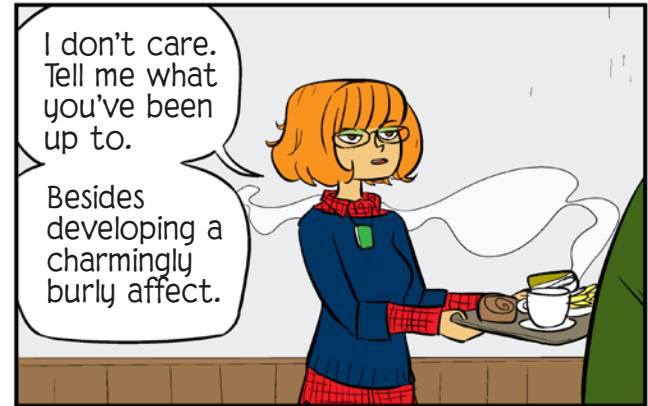


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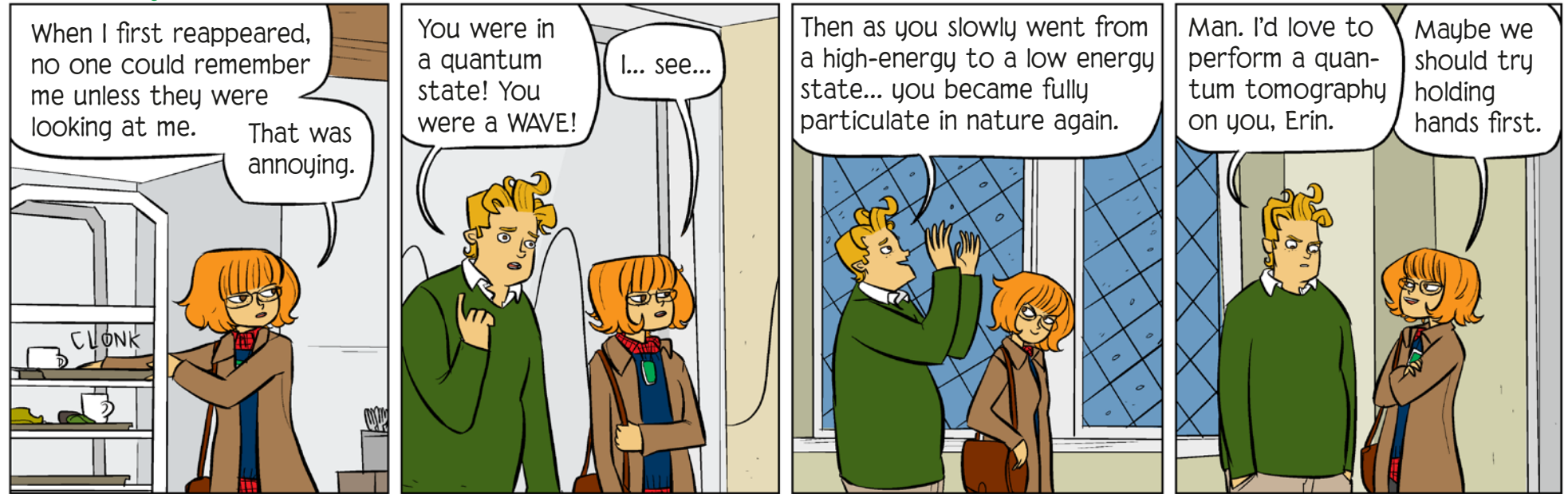
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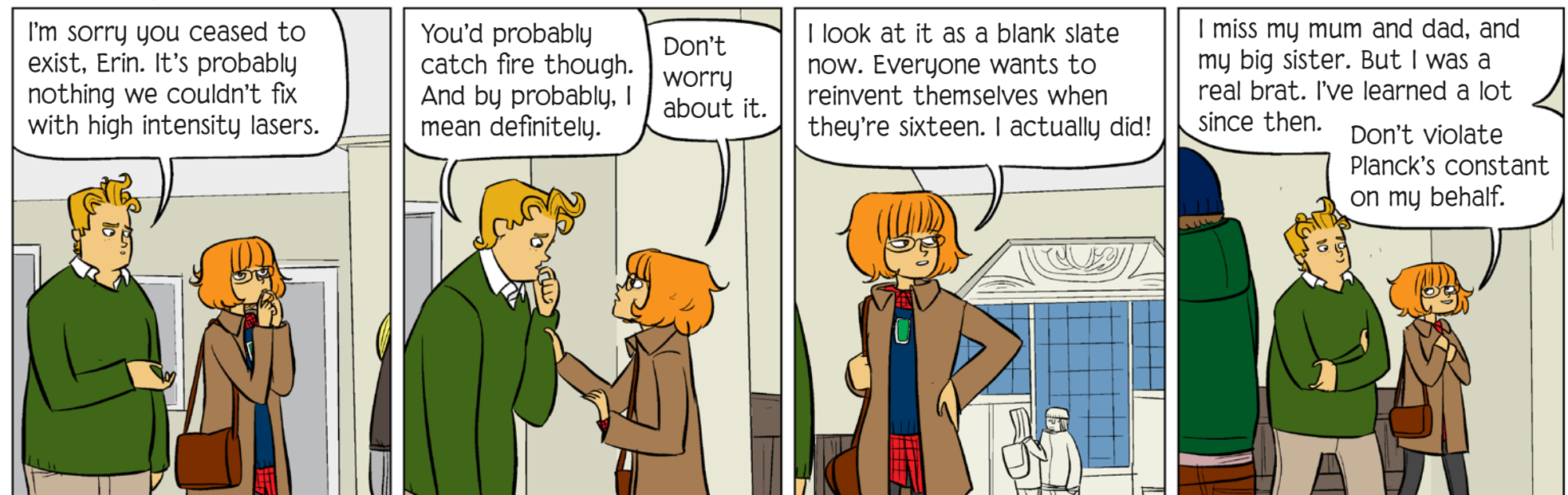


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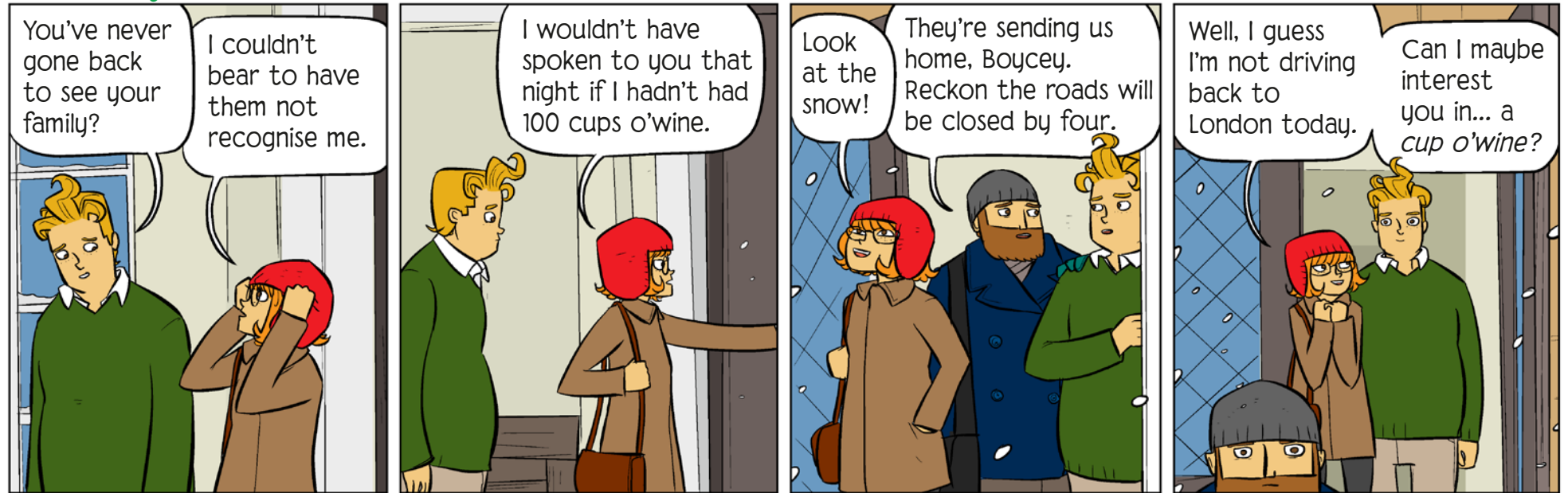
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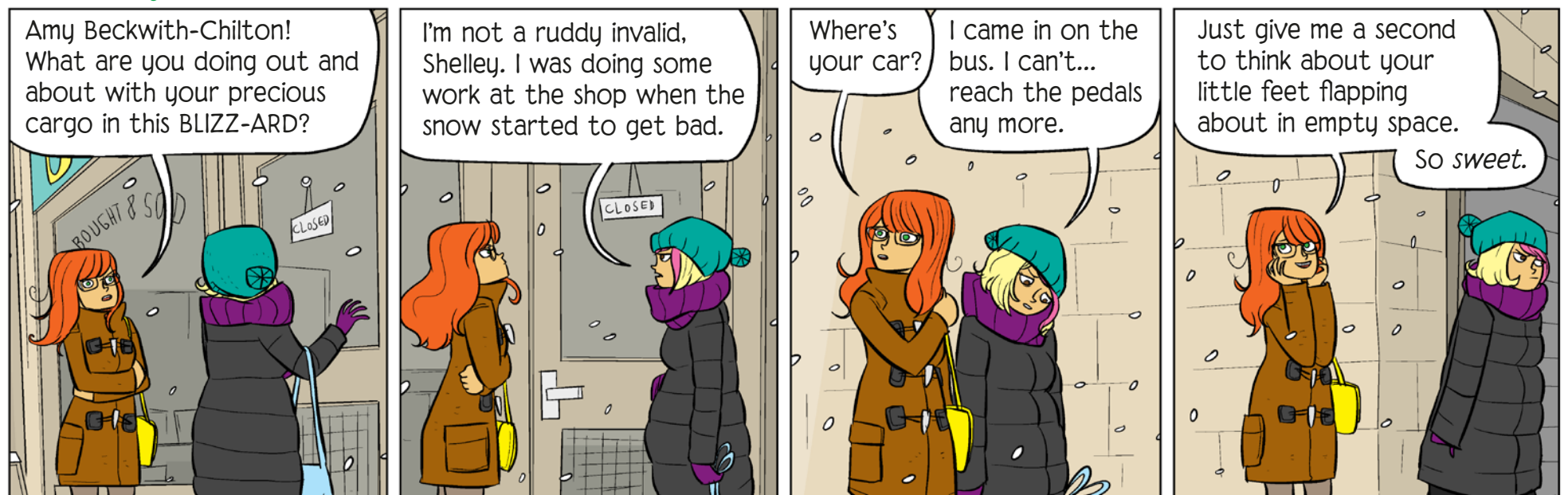
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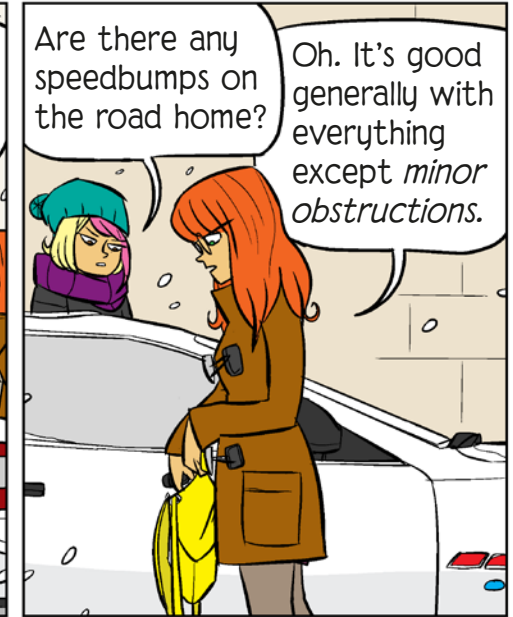
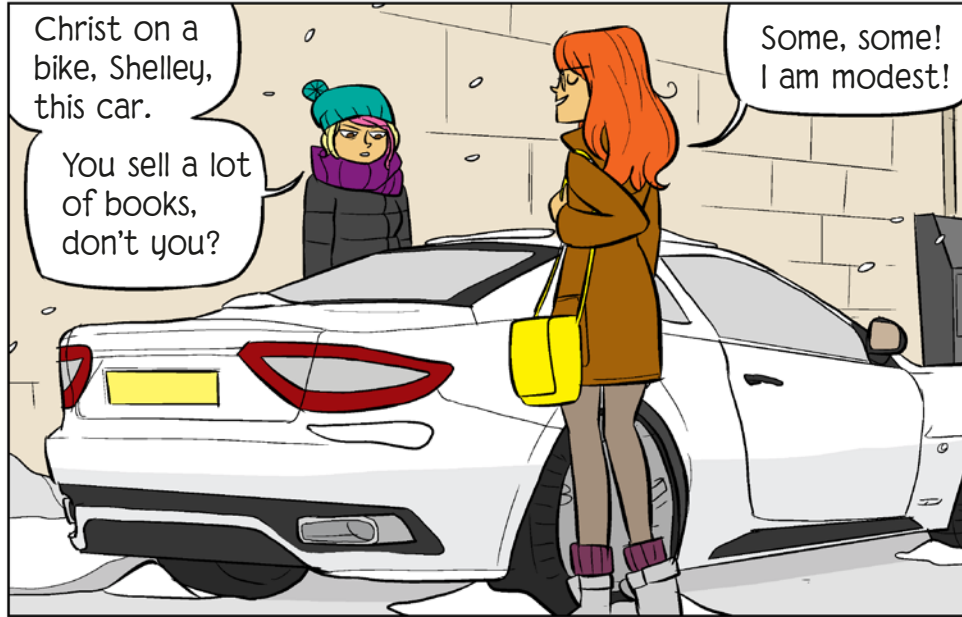
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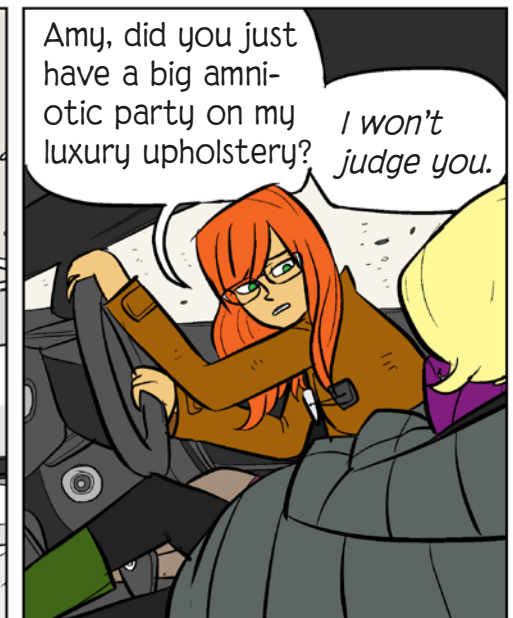
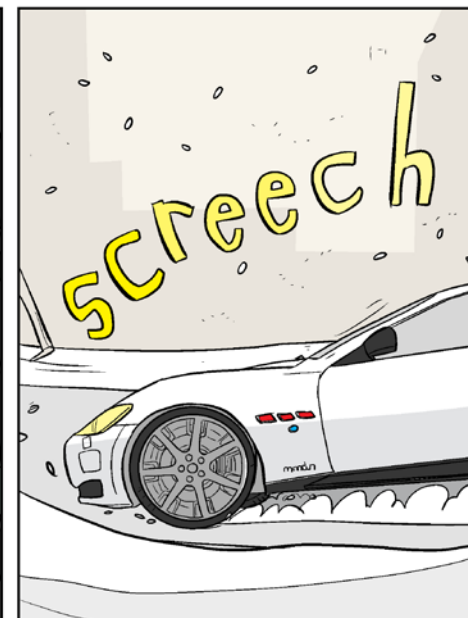
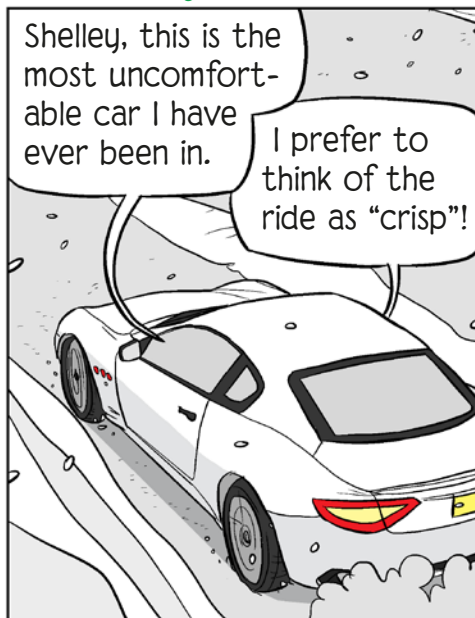
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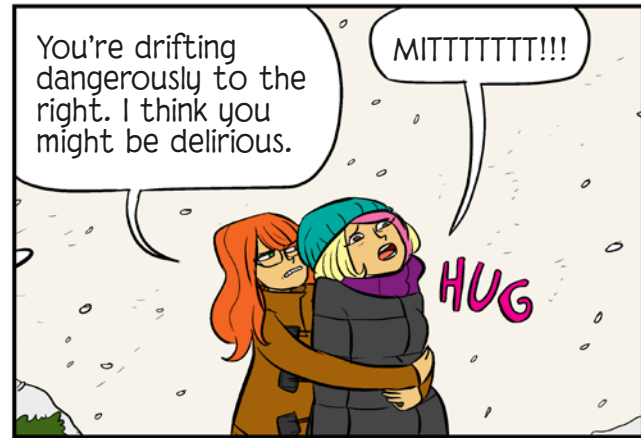
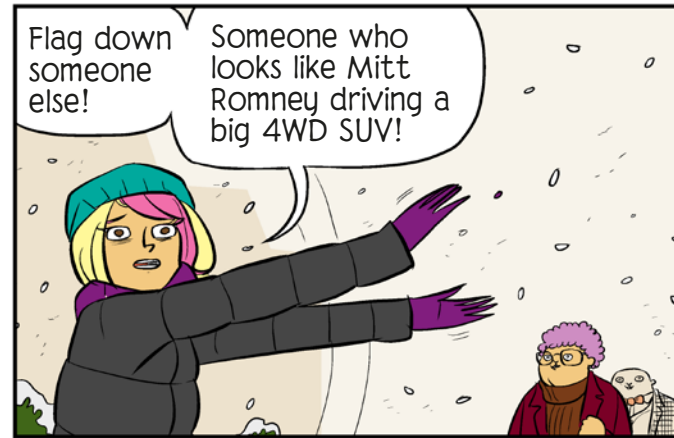
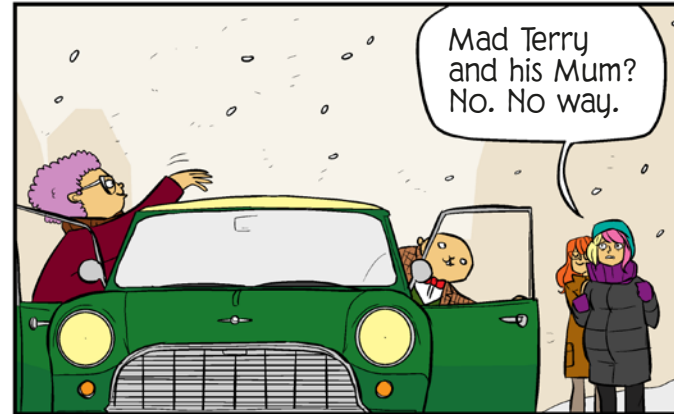
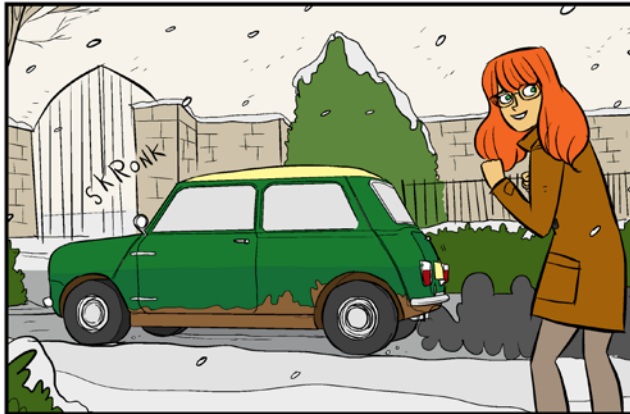
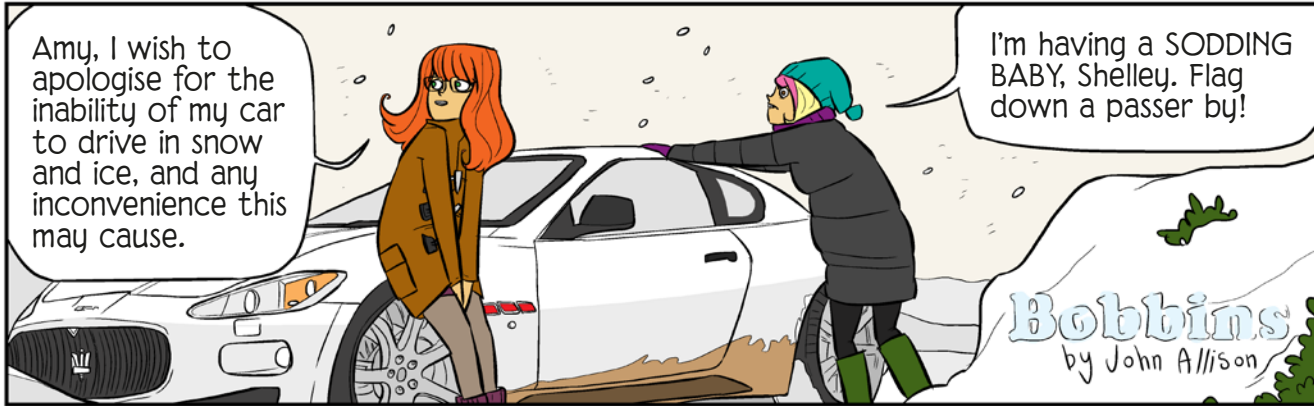


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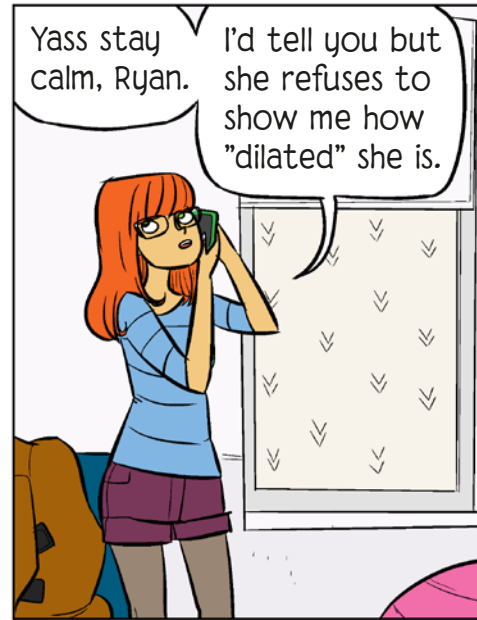
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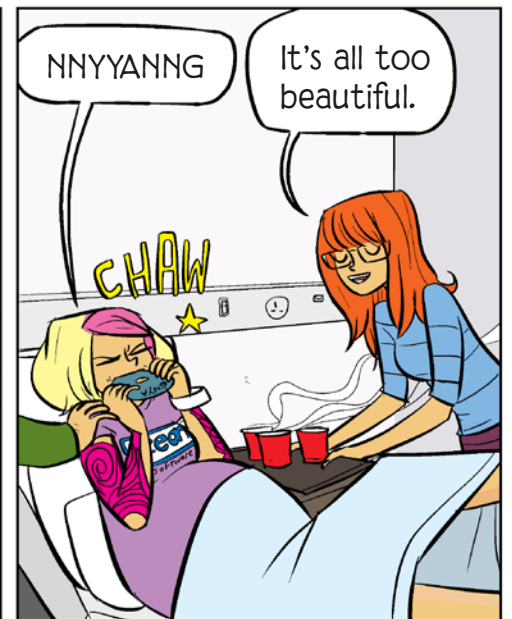
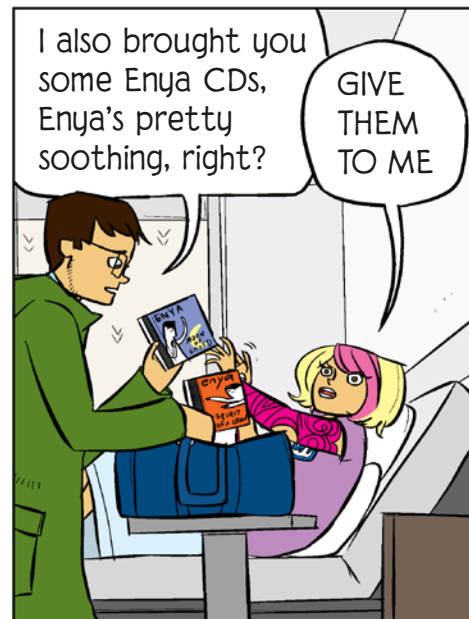
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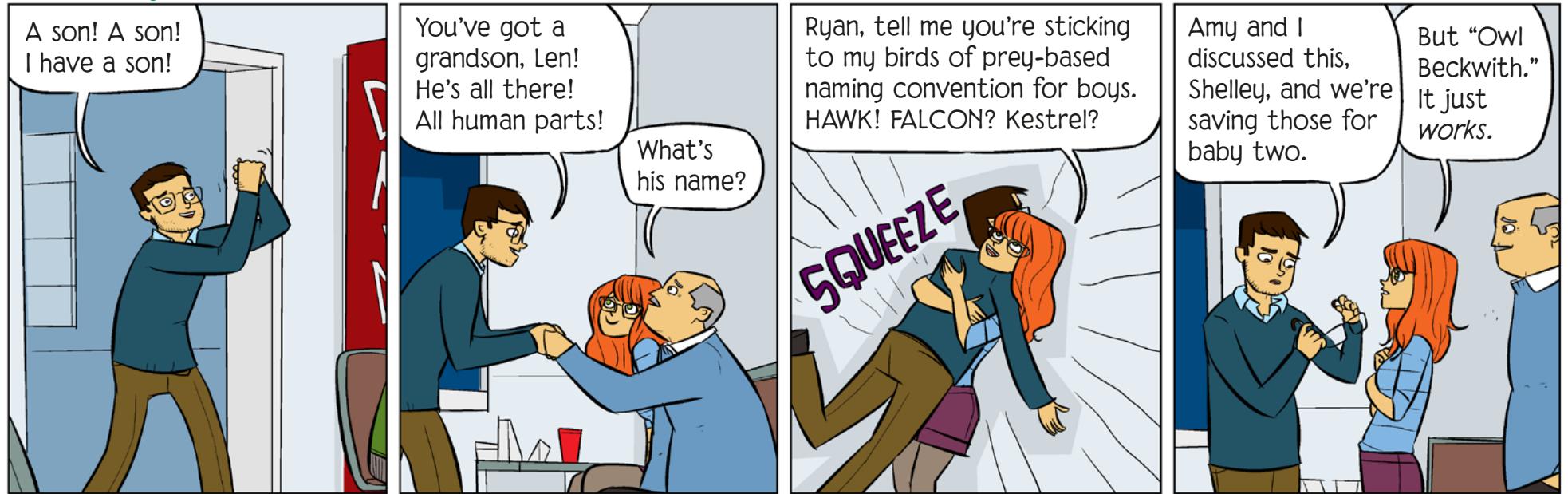
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Hey Ryan. I wasn't sure if it was "cool" to drop by.

Aw no, it's fine, Tim.

But I thought you might be glad of a clean shirt. So I bought you one.

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"World's greatest lover."

Yeah, that's a real nice garment.



I'm glad you're here, man, you're my best friend.

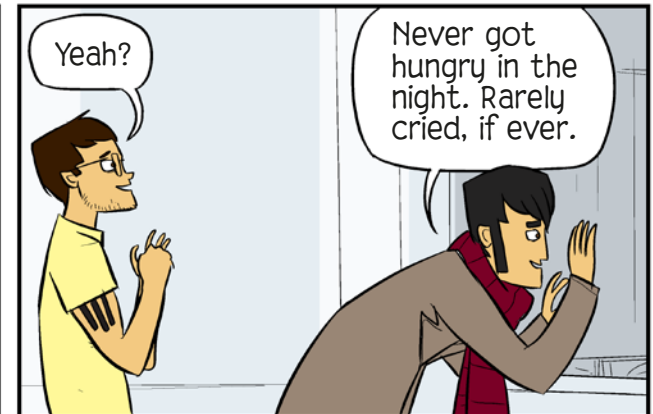
You've guided me through some key dilemmas.

My sister don't need to know.



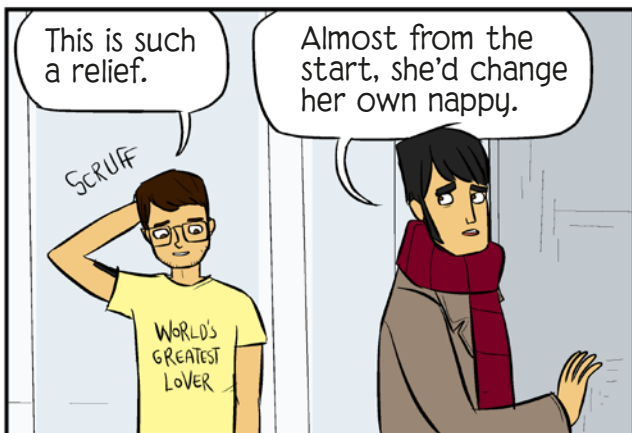
You know, everything they tell you about babies is scare stories.

Scout just slept all the time, all night long.



Yeah?

Never got hungry in the night. Rarely cried, if ever.



This is such a relief.

SCRUFF

Almost from the start, she'd change her own nappy.



She couldn't reach the bin so she'd just double-bag 'em and leave them by the back door.

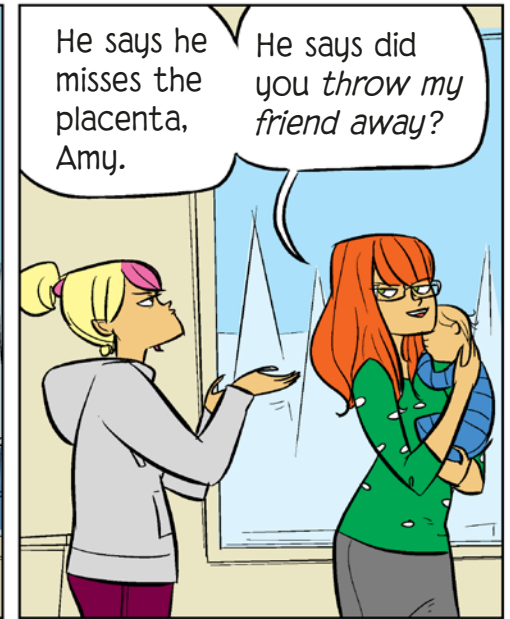
I see, I see. This is a cruel joke.



Within a couple of months she could make rudimentary sandwiches.

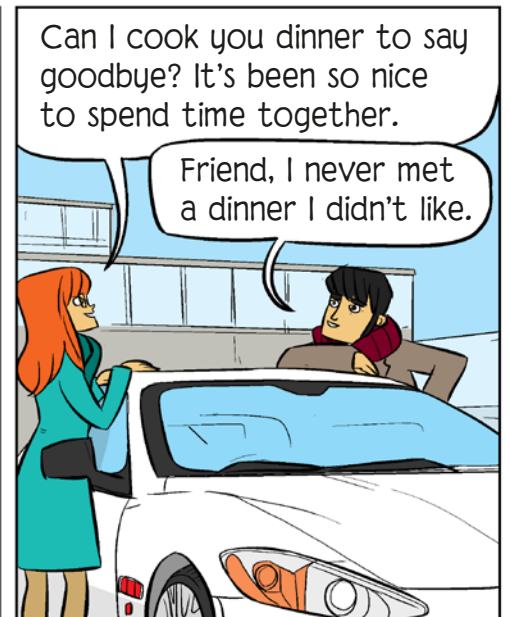
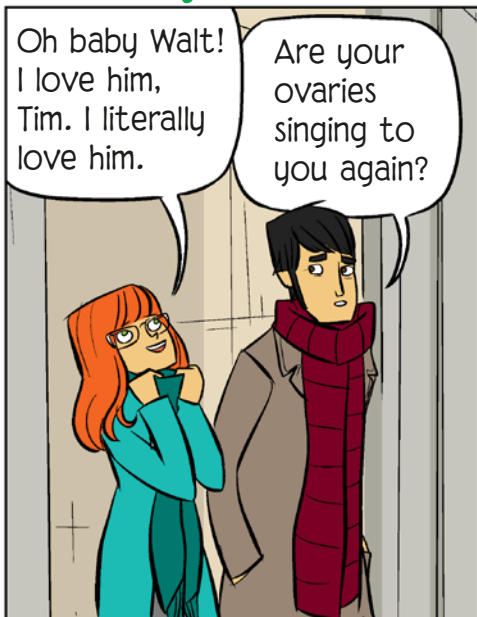
Not deli-quality, but servicable.

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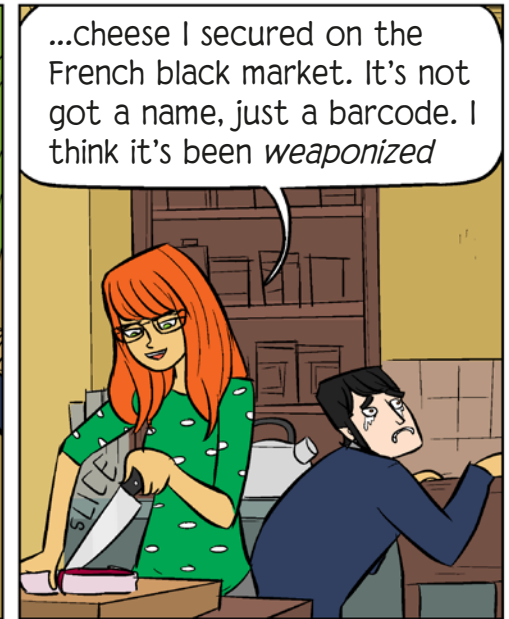
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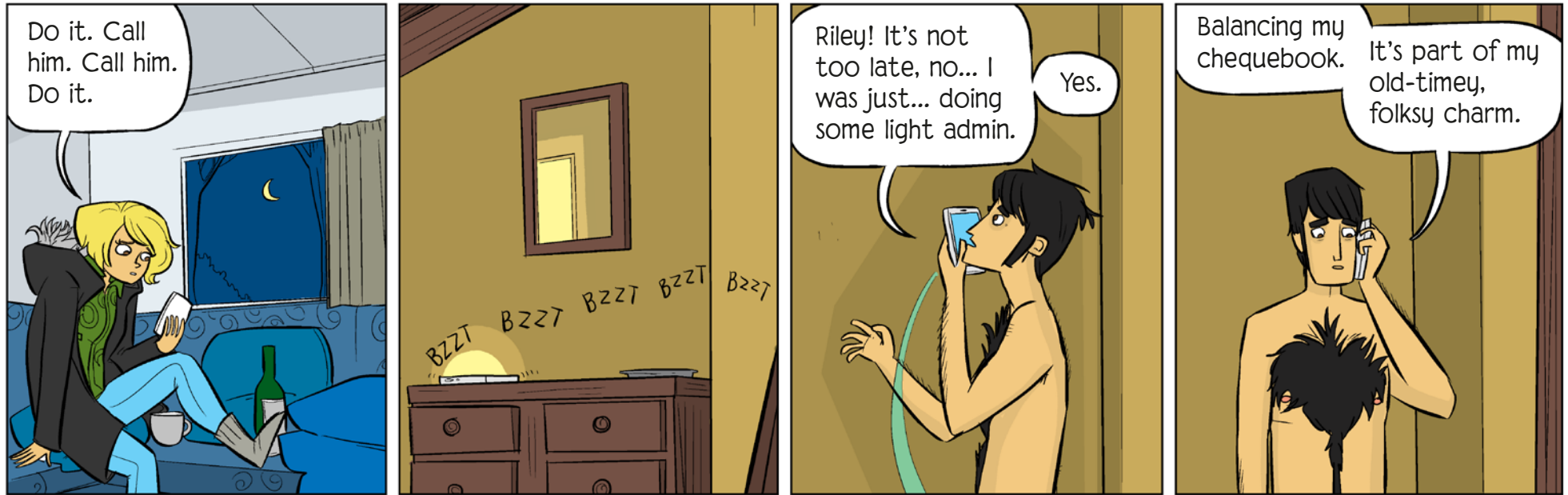
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This last strip was cooked up on a whim, drawn in about an hour, and caused me story problems it tooks years to solve. Oh well!

WE CONTINUE:

***BOBBINS 2014/15:
INTO THE WOODS***

BOBBINS: END OF THE ROAD

***BOBBINS 2017:
HARD YARDS***

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