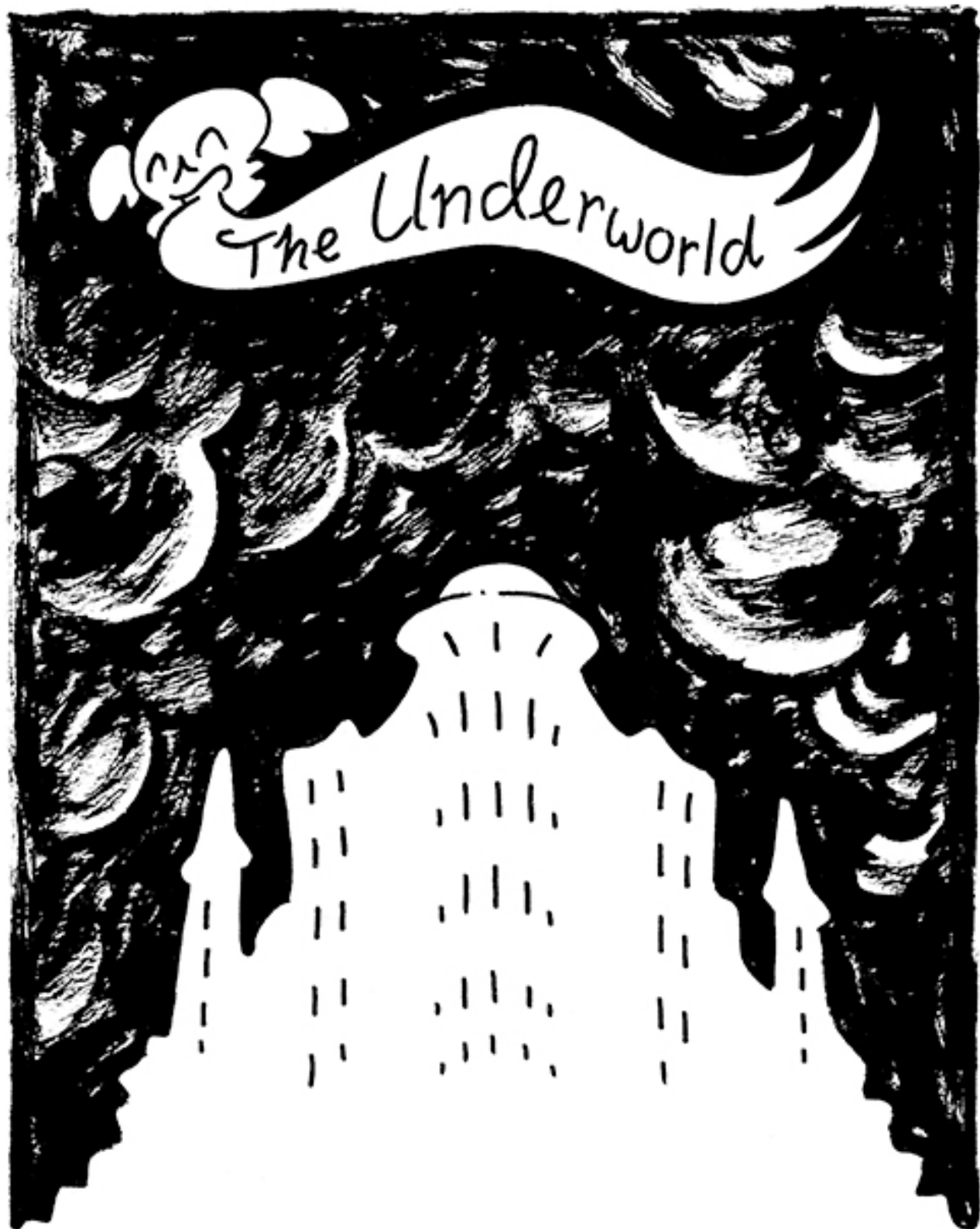
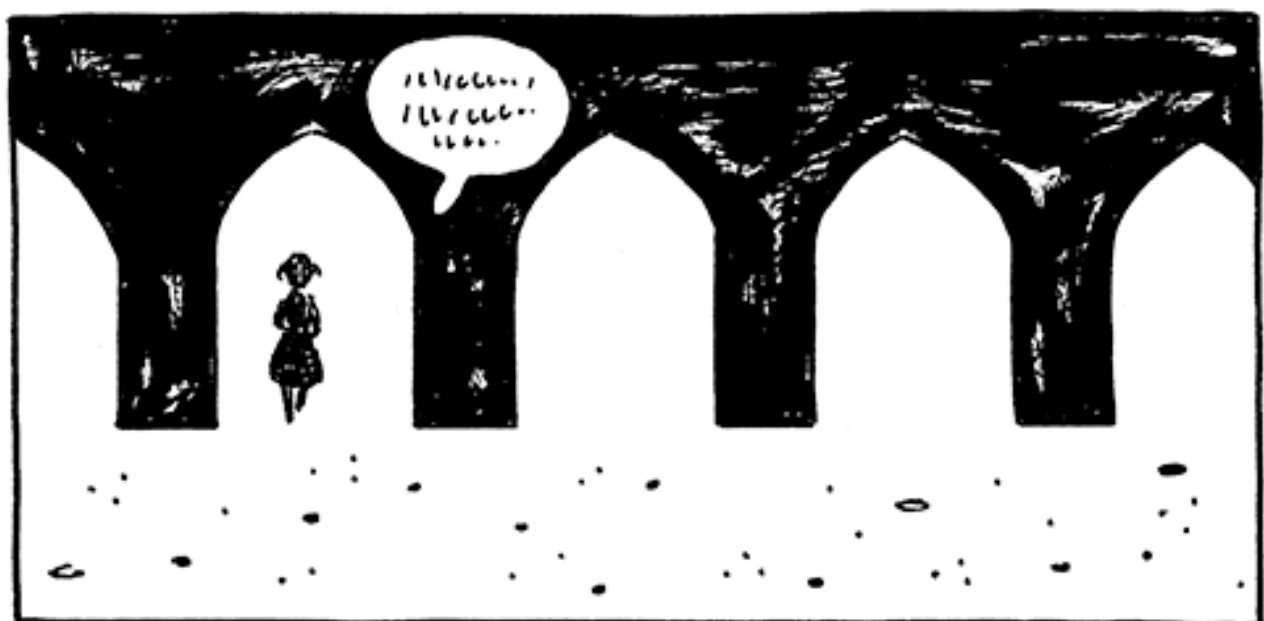
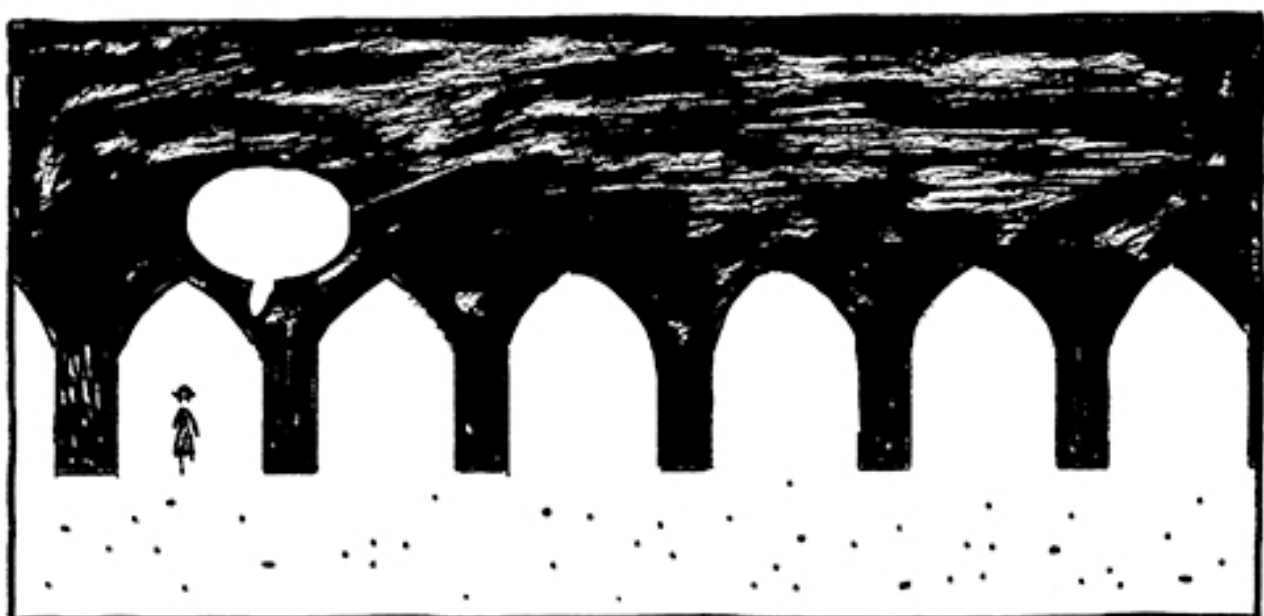
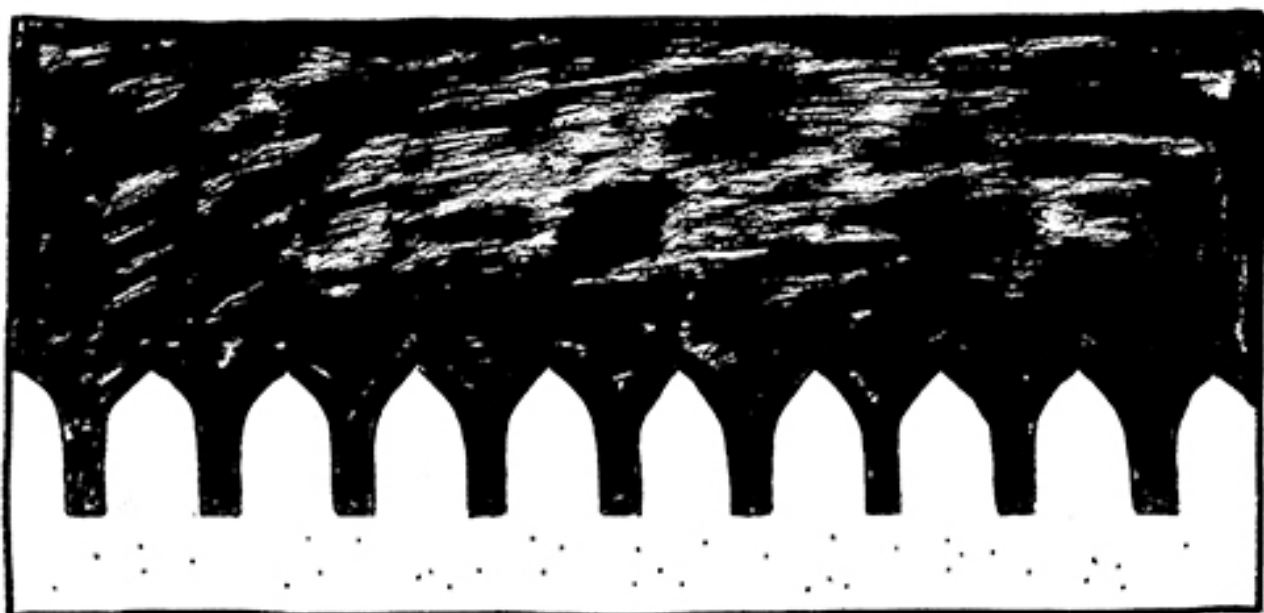
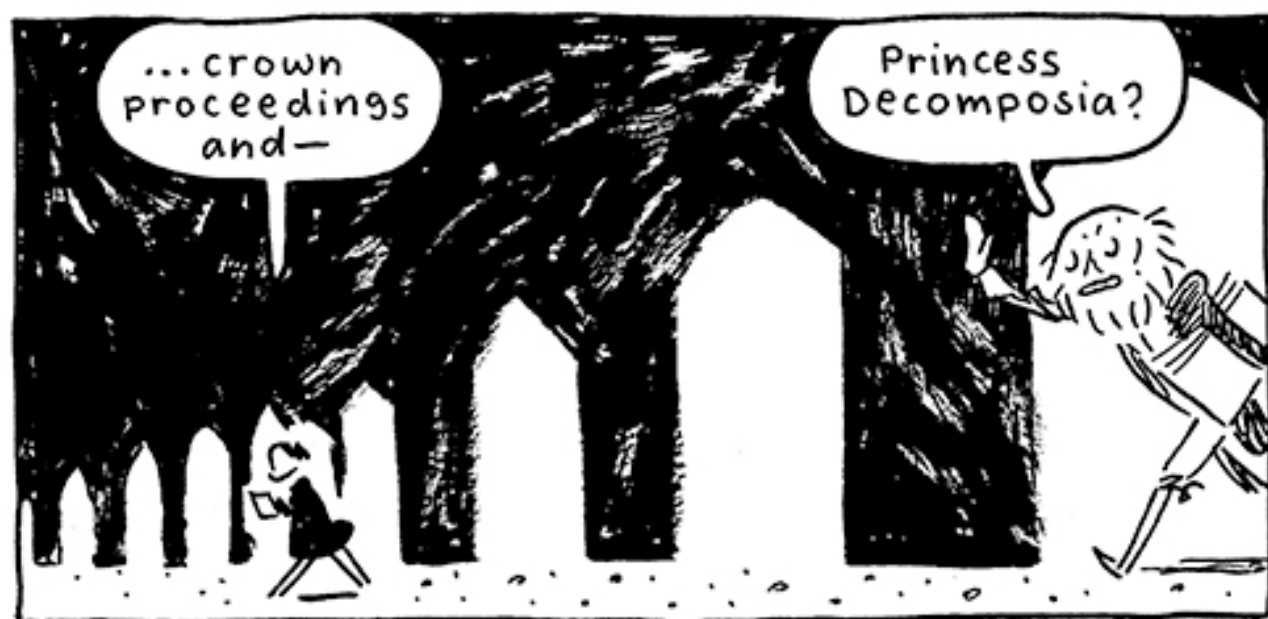


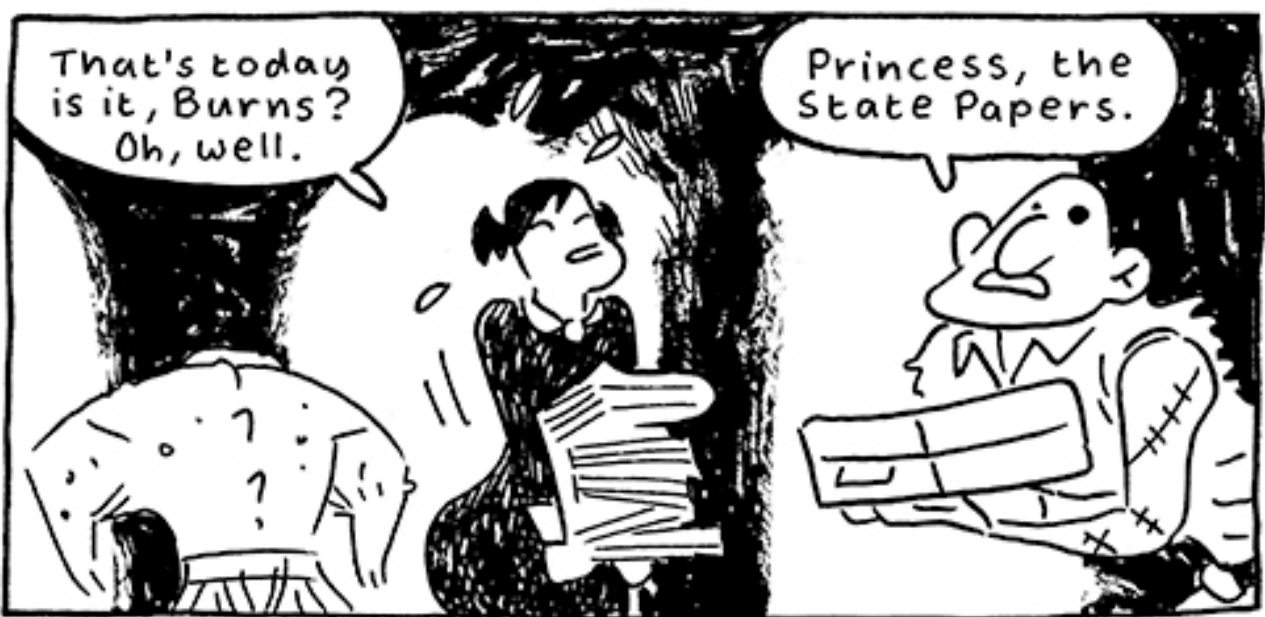
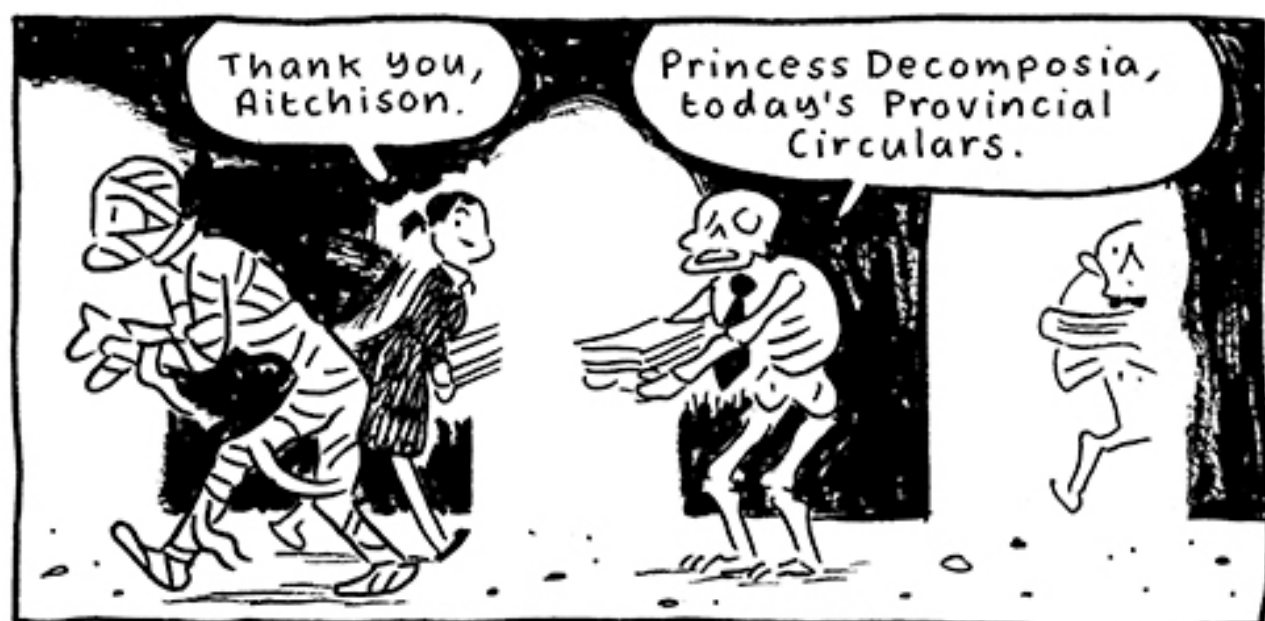


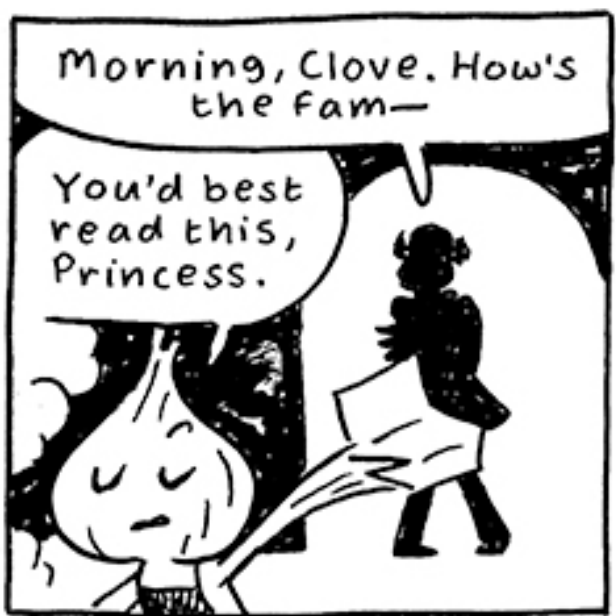
The Underworld



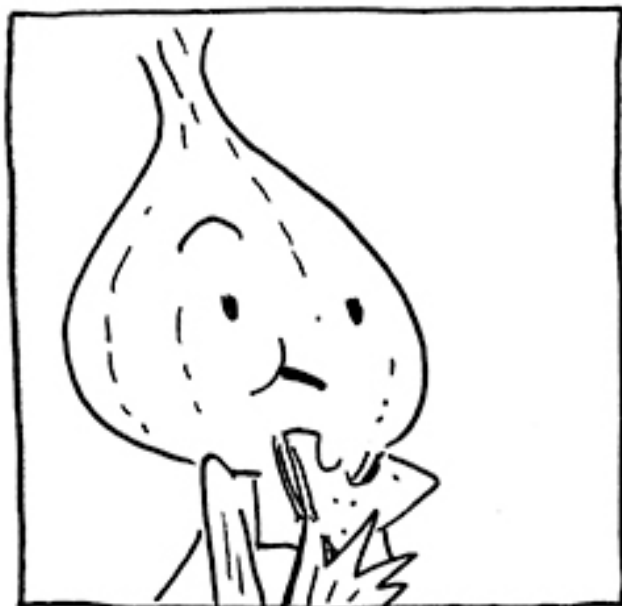


















And the Lycanthrope delegation, our relations with them could certainly be improved.



I'm really quite exhausted, my dear. It's been a demanding morning.



Dead Thursday's coming up and we'll need to make arrangements if you're to—



I'm Feeling rather chill and my hip... oooh.



Might a walk around the—



No, my dear. I had a terribly disturbed night and my head is pounding.









As ... as I'm sure you know, the King wishes to restore the warm understanding between our peoples.



It is hard to know what the King wants from one year to the next. I very much doubt the Yōkai are treated in such a manner.



The King shows no preference in his illness. He sends his regrets that his poor health has denied him the pleasure of your company.



Am I to understand that the King's failing powers will necessitate a permanent hand over of responsibilities in the near future?

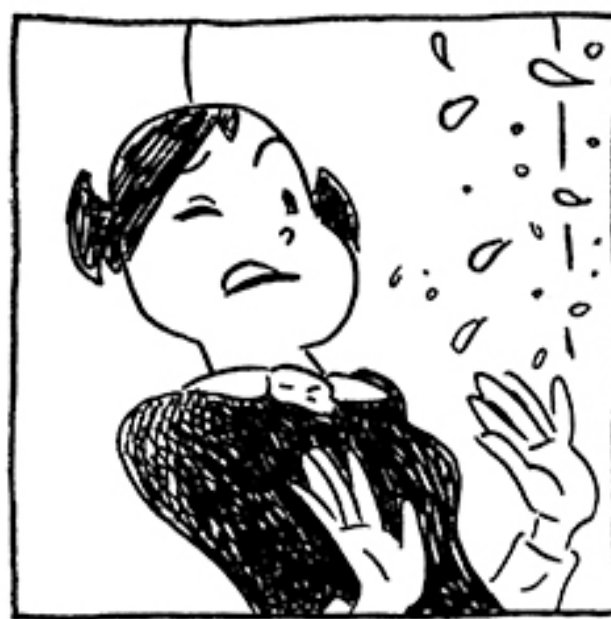


That is very much not the case.



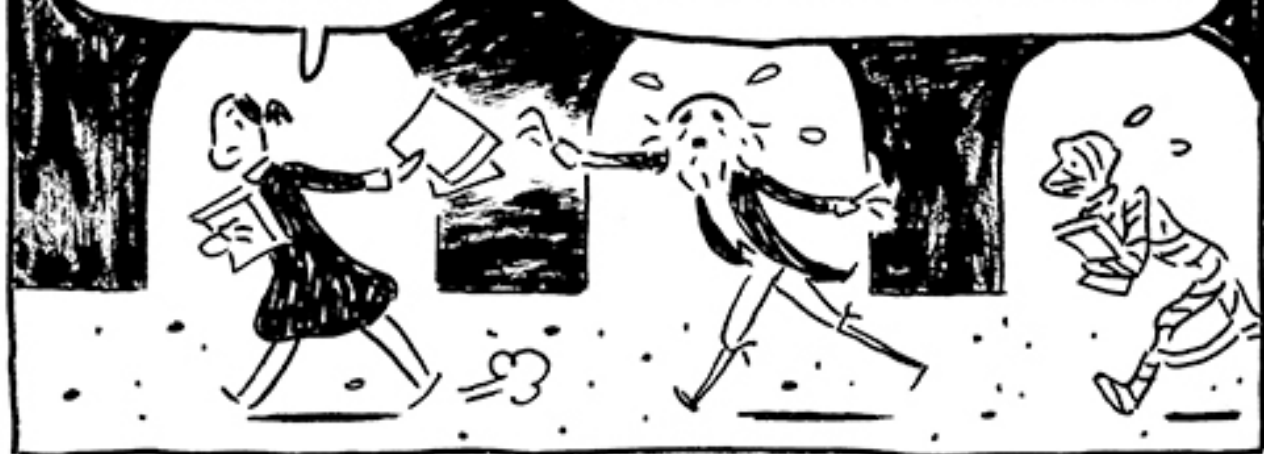






Success?
It was almost
a disaster!

Can you please give
these to the Private
Secretary, Braithwaite?



Fortunately the
delegate enjoyed his
dinner, even if I
couldn't stomach it.

Princess?



Clove, just the person
I'm looking for. Do you
think you could
rustle up a sand-



The candidates for
the chef's job are
waiting to be
interviewed.



Oh yes, I'd
forgotten.





The king has very specific dietary requirements. Do you specialise in any particular culinary style?



BRAINSSSS



Of course.



Hy ... hygiene is ... naturally a ... concern.



I see that you served the Dauphin in your first life and among your many years of experience you've run the night service at the Catafalque.





Sorry, I'm feeling
a bit light-headed.



You'd better sit
down.

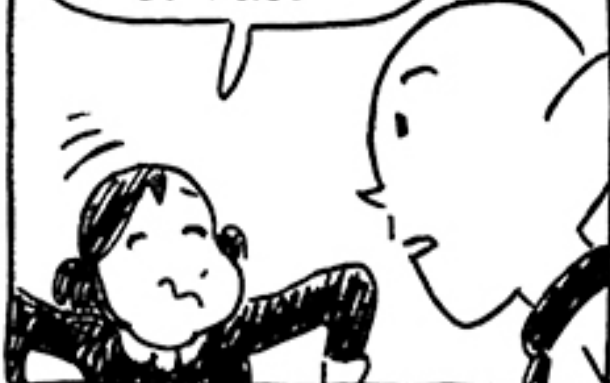


Thank you. I don't
know what's the
matter with me.



Have you eaten at all
today?

As a matter
of fact—



Don't tell me, you've
been too busy?



The day has sort of
run away from me.

I'll
send for
tea.





I'd see it all the time
at the bakery,
people scurrying
about their business
on an empty stomach.



I always made sure my
customers left with a
freshly baked treat to
keep them going
through the day.



You should
never skip a
meal.

Good
work
is done
on good
food.



Good
work on
good
food?

That's
my
advice.



I certainly feel much
better.

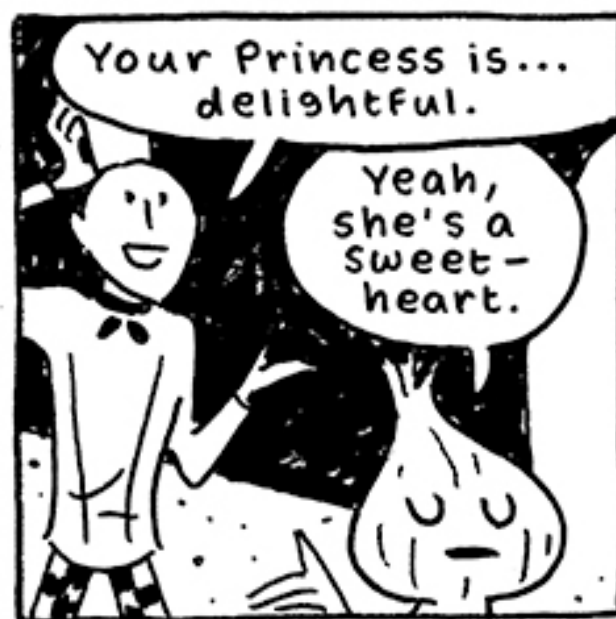
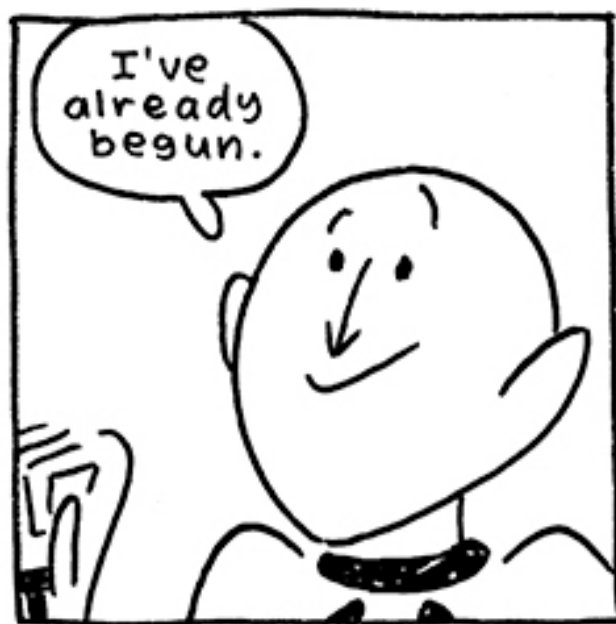
Macaroon?



I'm
tempted.

Go
on.













But he's King! Isn't he enjoying banquets and feasts of a thousand courses?



HAH!

But I came here to bake, to experiment.



Rose hip tea's making a comeback.

Put that on your menu.



"Just add boiling water."



An omelette? A simple, humble omelette?



The egg?

A symbol of life?

Not gonna work.





















That's certainly
cleared the cobwebs!

Cocoa?

Ahhhhhh.

As you're here we
may as well discuss
tomorrow's menu.
We have the Yōkai
arriving and I
wondered what your
thoughts were about
dinner.

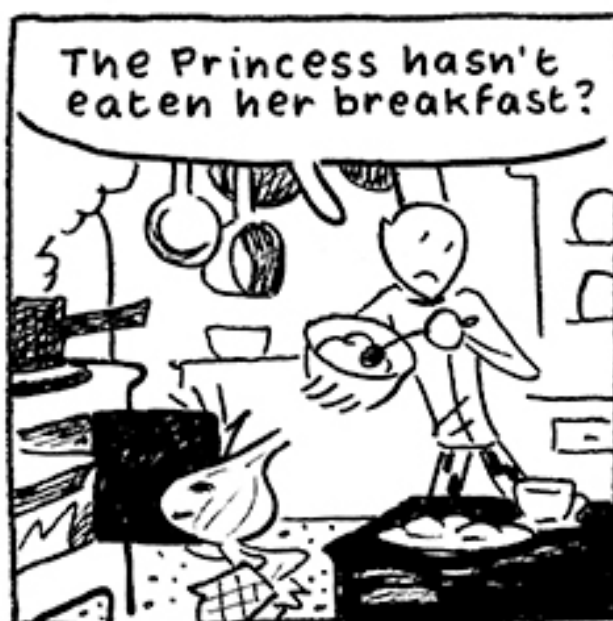
I get to choose?

I was thinking
sushi, but then
isn't that what
they'll expect.

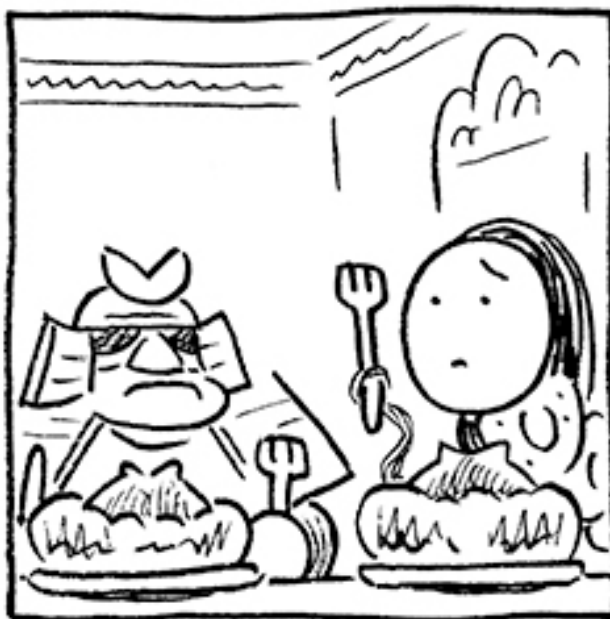
We have a mountain
of boiled carrots.
We could accompany
those with Toad in
the Hole and a good
gravy?

Isn't that rather ...
traditional?

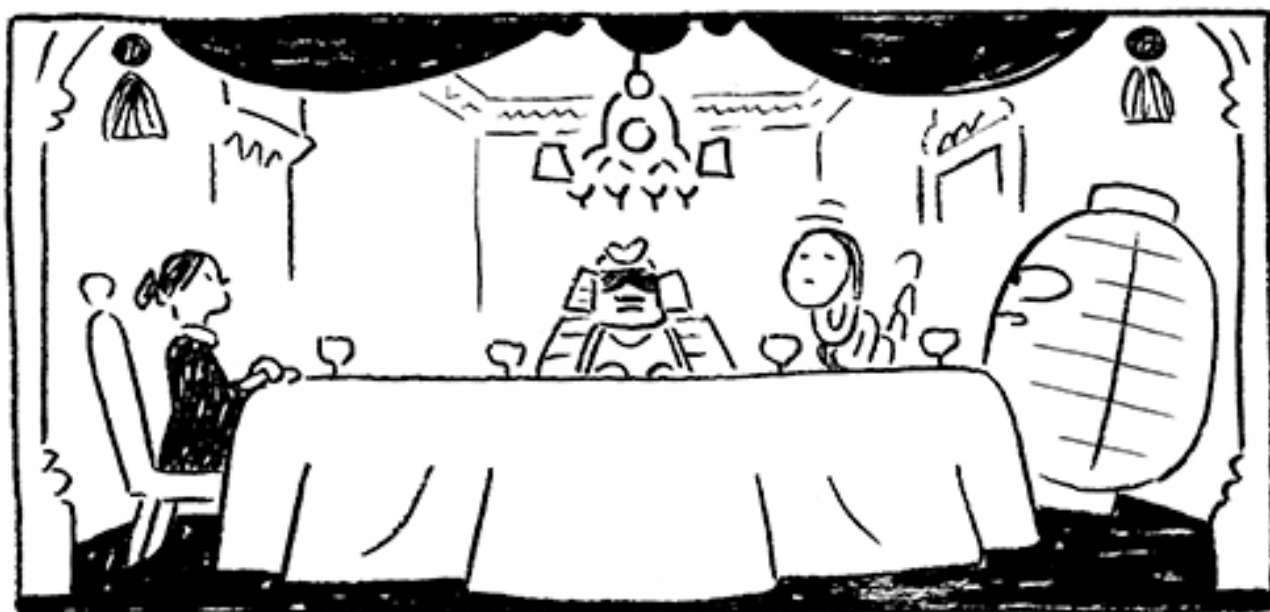
Not with
my special
twist.











And how is
the weather in your
realm at this phase
of the moon?

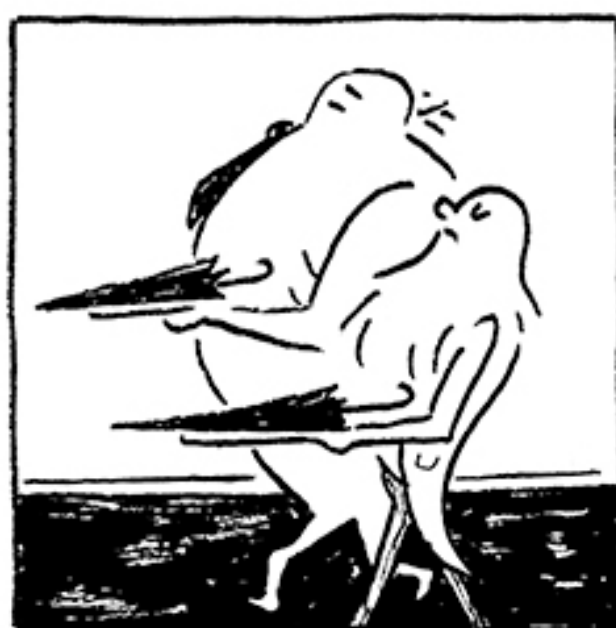


Miserable.

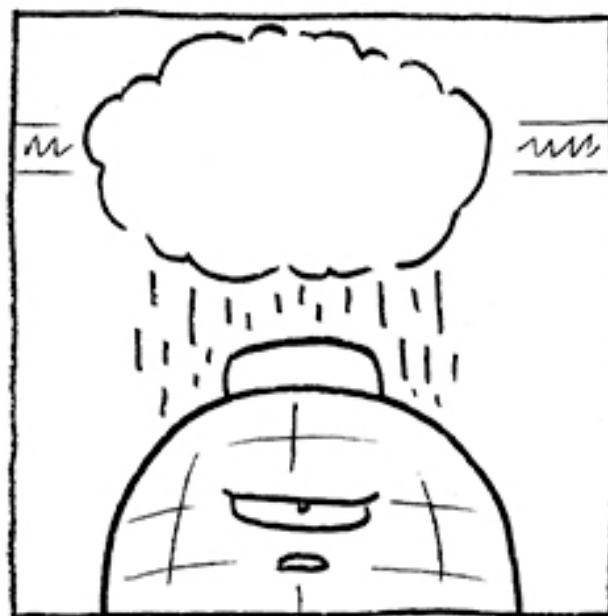
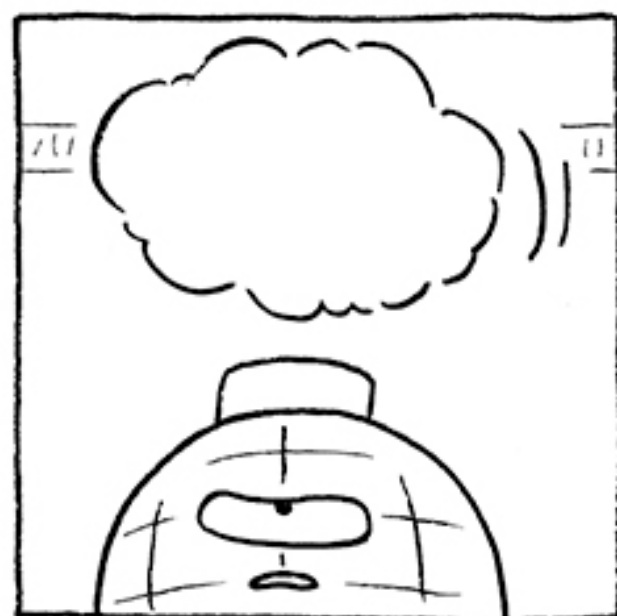
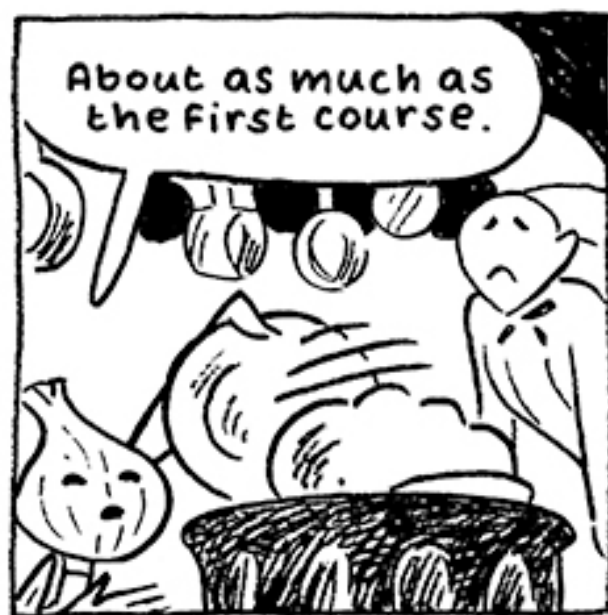


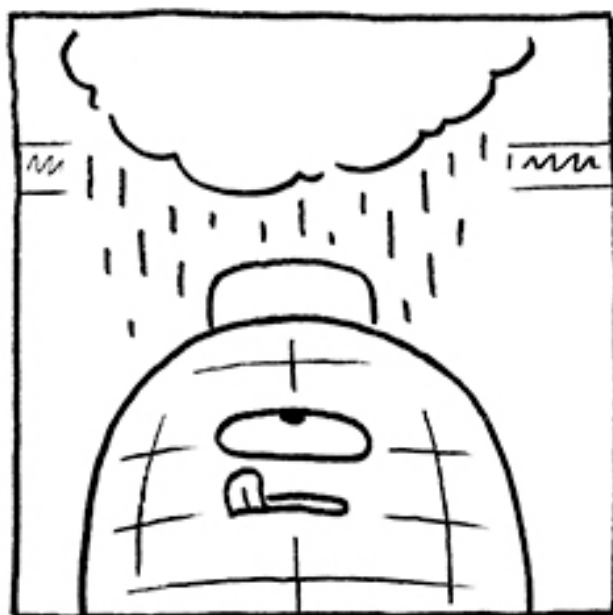
Good.

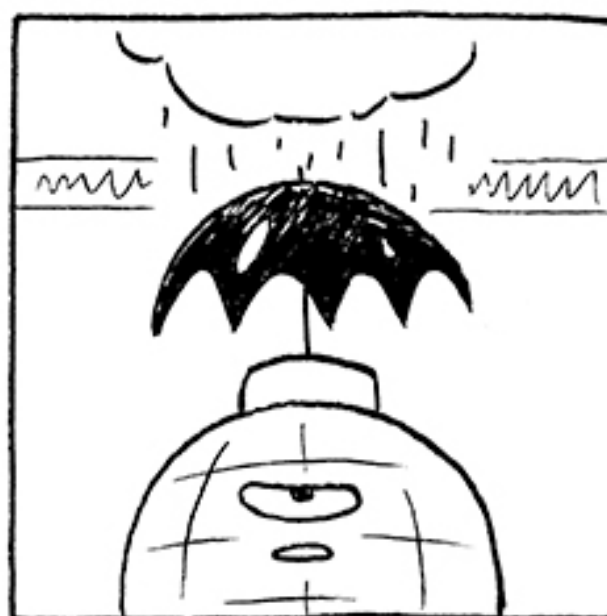
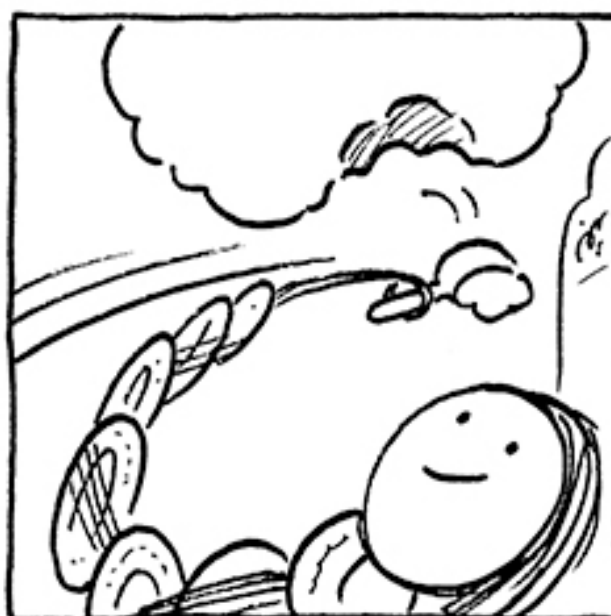
Very
good.

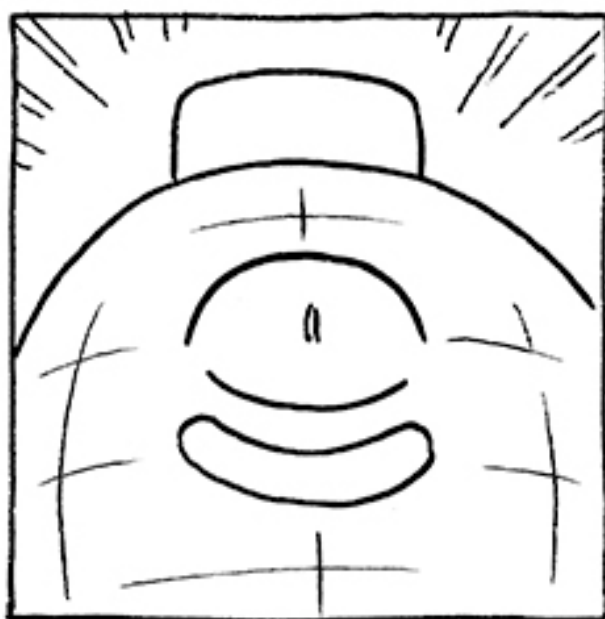
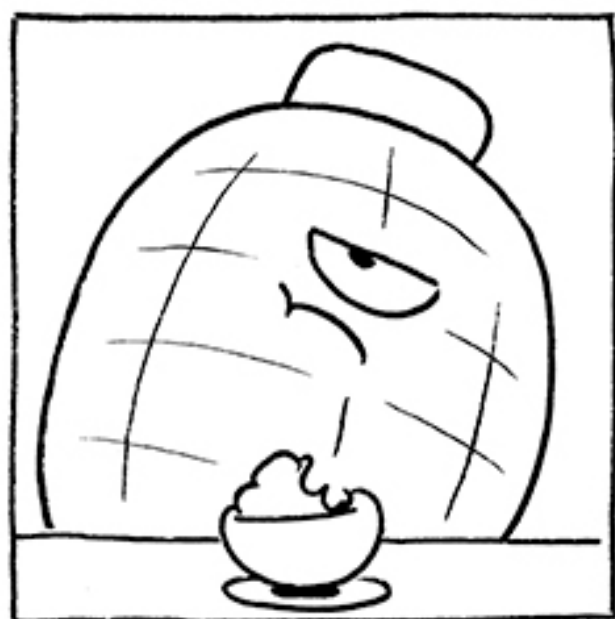
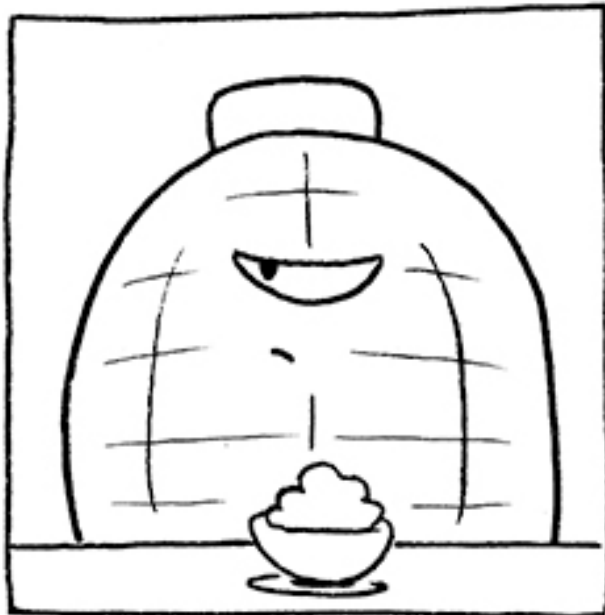
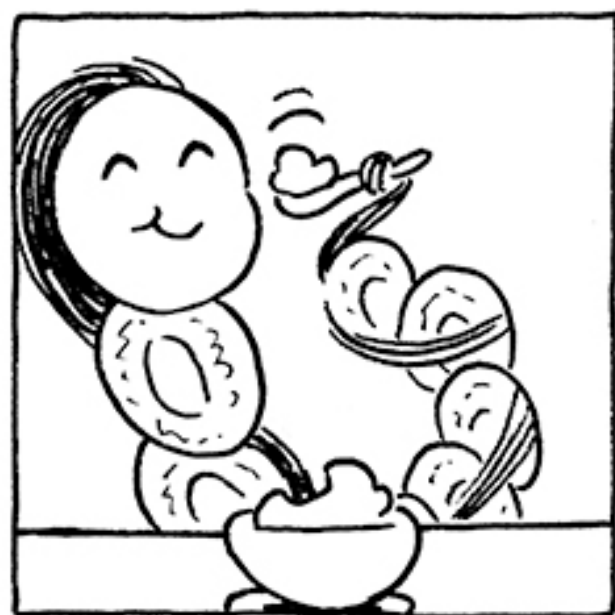
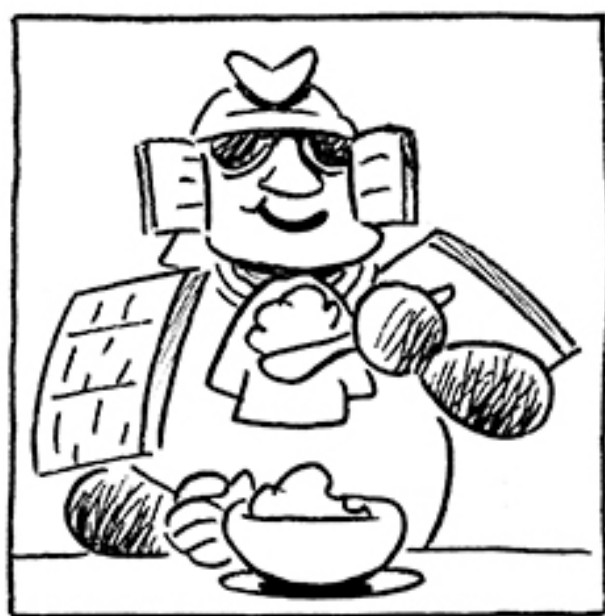














They didn't want to show it, but I think they were enchanted by your lemon drizzle.



When we returned to discussions after dinner they were quite reasonable.



And the drizzle wasn't too sweet?



Perfection! Although I may need to wash my hair.

More tea, Princess?



Please call me Decomposia. Dee for short.



Oh goodness, I almost forgot my father's supper.



At once, Prin—

Relax, chef.

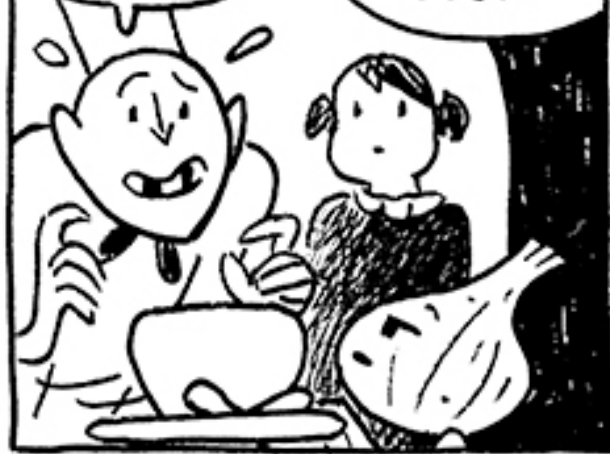


While you were enjoying your little chat I was working.



Do you think...

...I hate to see...



...just a hint of black pepper or a sprig of parsley?



You want me to be here all night going back and forth making bowls of soup?









And how are you feeling?



I suffered a shooting pain down my right arm, a cramp in my lower back and a general... lightheadedness.



Perhaps if you got up and—



It was my suddenly sitting up that caused my dizziness in the first place.



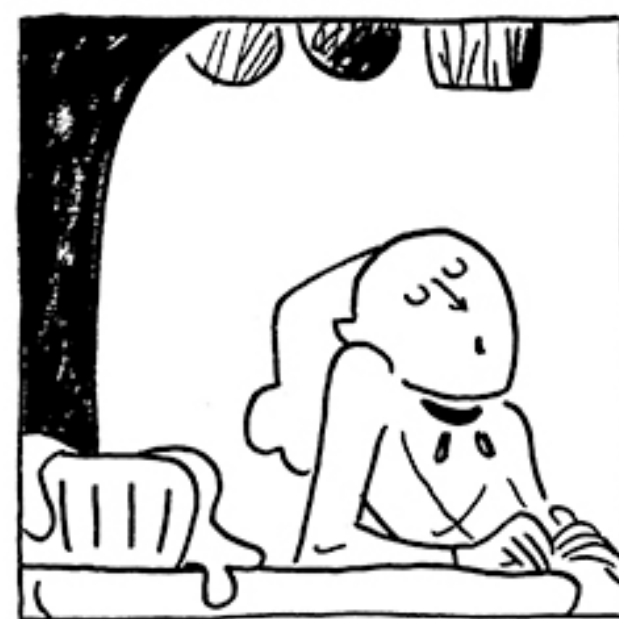
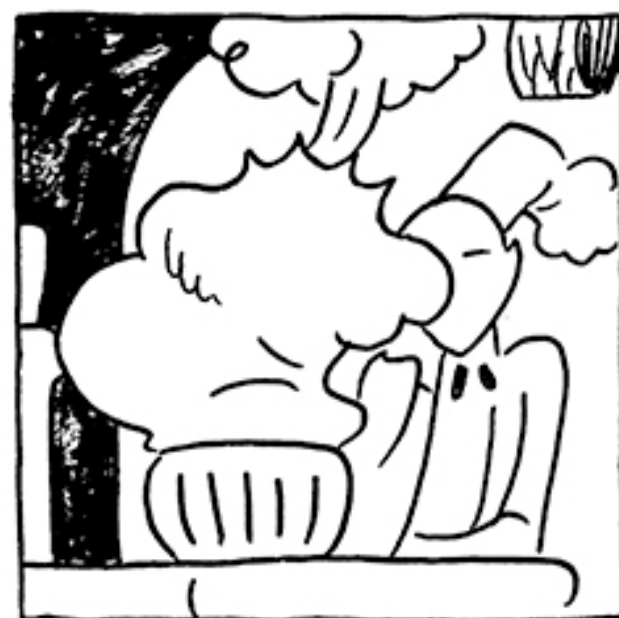
I'm sorry, my dear, I'm afraid I've lost my appetite.















Just when I think
I've cleared my
desk, CLUNK, down
comes another pile
of papers.



You need a holiday.

Then I'd
never be able
to catch up.



A day
off,
then?

Not
possible.



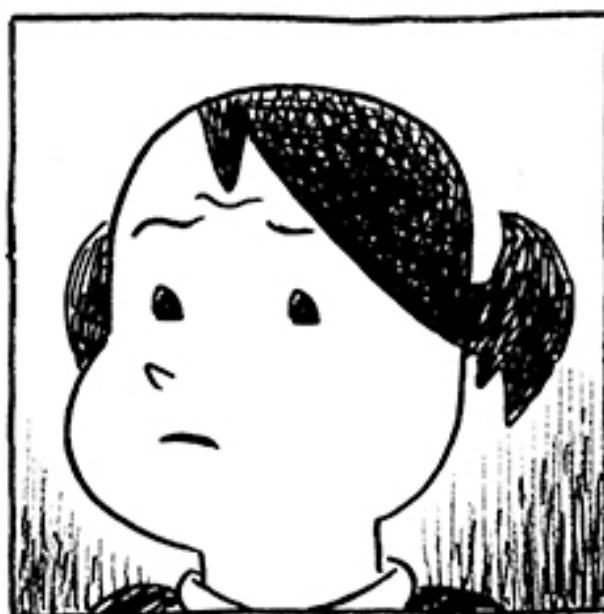
If it was, what
would you do?

Erm...m...



I honestly
don't know.

Isn't that
sad?



You could read a book,
take a night trip to
the Dead Sea or —



You know what
I'd do, given the
chance?



I wouldn't plan
anything.



I'd take the day
as it came and do
whatever I felt like
without a schedule
in sight.

That would
be ... bliss.



You do deserve
some time off,
you know?



But who'd
look after
Father, and
anyways...





I know you're
always lurking
around somewhere.



Skulker, find the
Princess. She never
leaves me when I
am unwell.



And Skulker?



Fetch me a glass of
water while you're
at it.



It wouldn't mean neglecting your duties.



But I do think you can ask more of those around you.

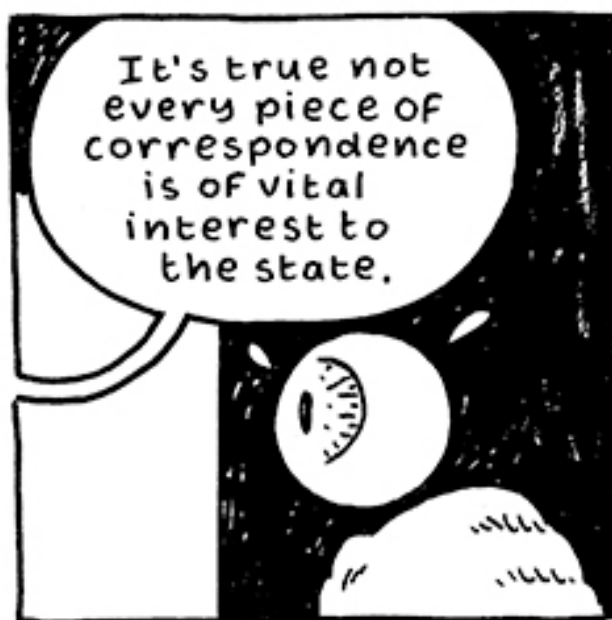
I'm not sure I can do that.



Instead of answering all your letters personally, answer one or two and have an official deal with the rest.



It's true not every piece of correspondence is of vital interest to the state.



And instead of reading every single document, have an official read and summarise them for you, picking out the ones of most importance.



Yes.

Perhaps.

As long as I'm kept informed.





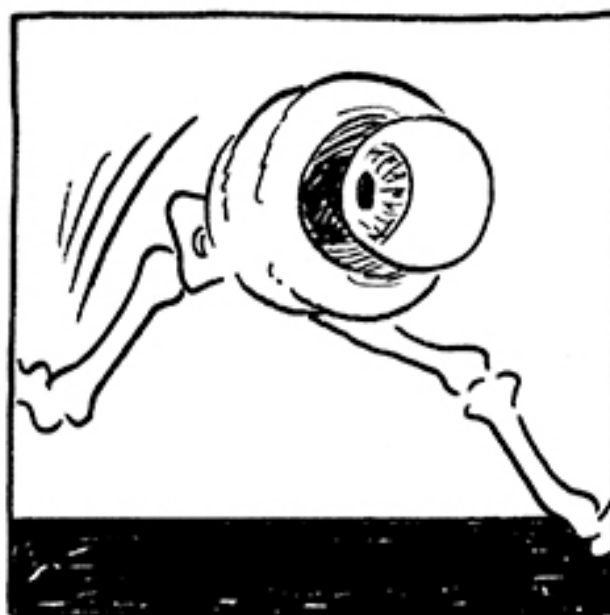
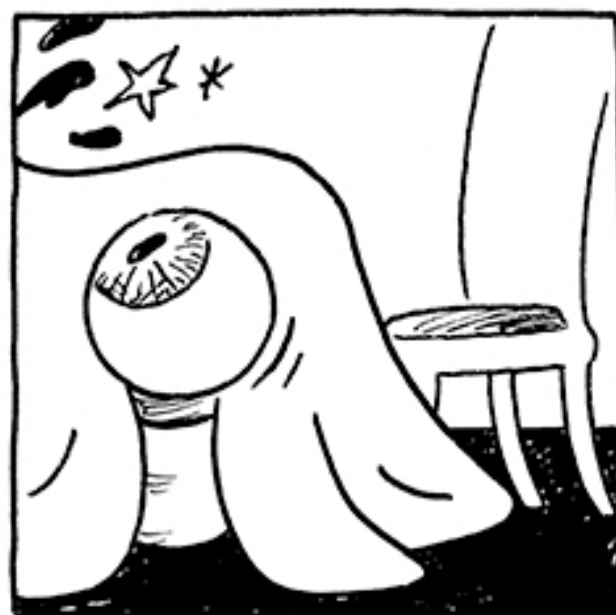








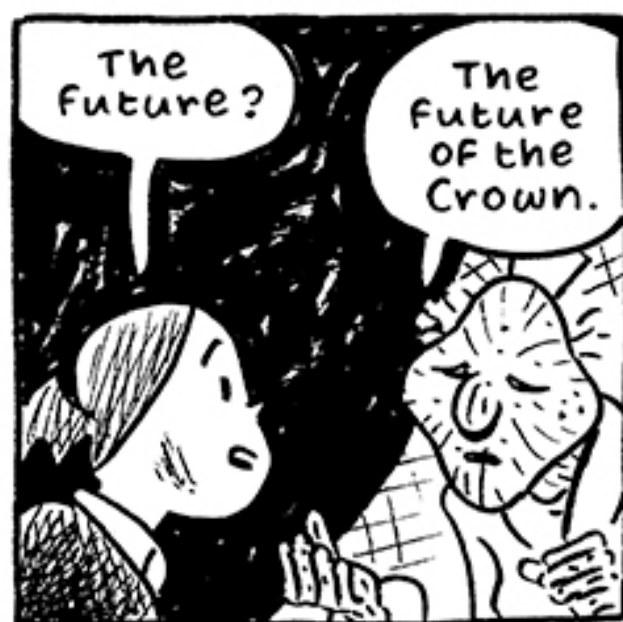
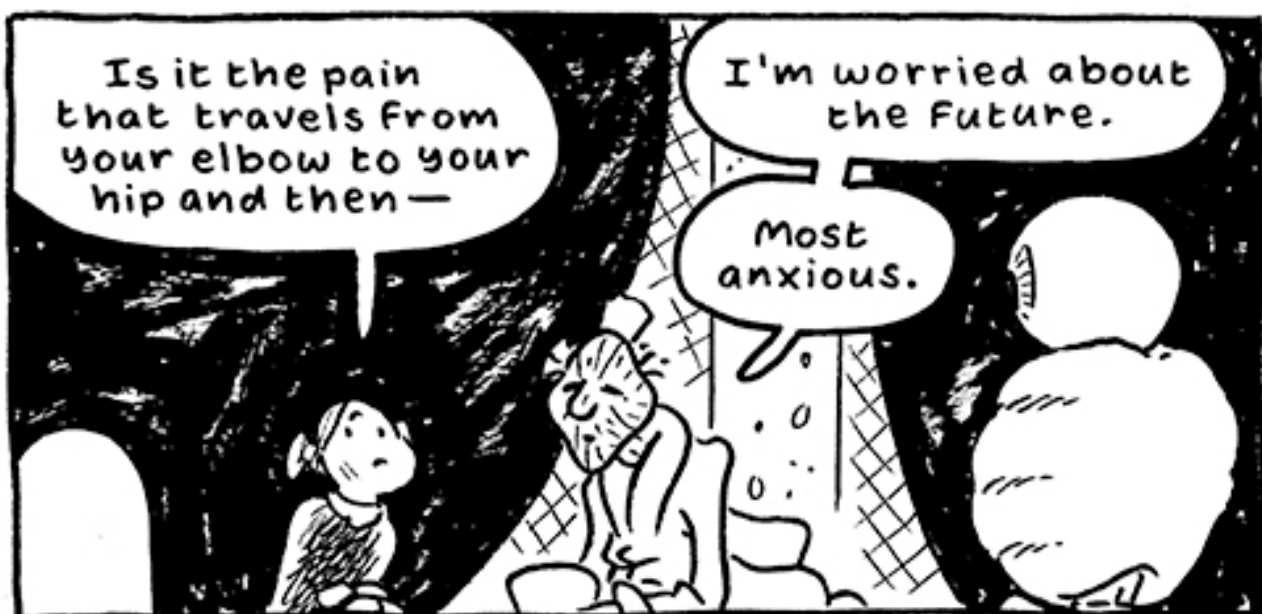














"Reports"?



Disturbing reports.



Concerning the running of palace affairs.

Father, you shouldn't trouble yourself with—



I was forced to trouble myself due to the serious nature of the concerns.



Any problems should come directly to me.

You know my health is not what it should be.



If you would only eat, I'm sure your constitution would—

If you truly cared
for my wellbeing you
would not act in a
way that causes
me such distress.



Distress?

Father,
I would
never do
anything
like that.



I don't know what
these "reports" are
but they're clearly
untrue or ...
malicious.



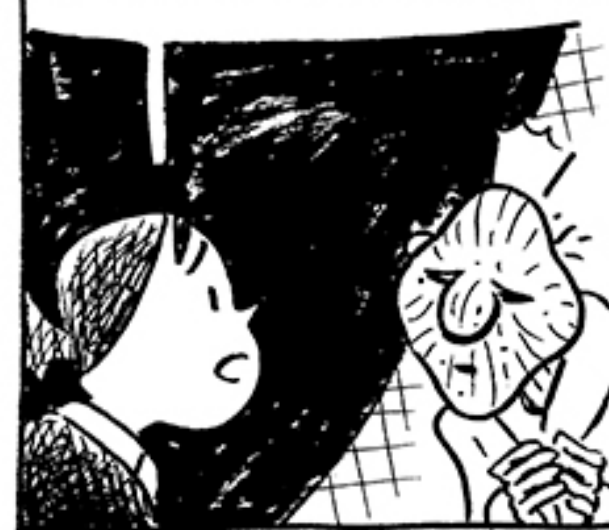
I ... I honestly
can't think of a
single thing I've
done that could
possibly upset
you.



Unauthorised changes
to palace protocols.



I don't understand.



Royal mail answered
by private secretaries,
state papers passed
on to palace staff
unread, and all without
my permission or
approval.



Father, I sit here
everyday wanting
to discuss state
matters with you
and you never—



The use of
inappropriate
language to
describe important
members of the
armed forces.



No... I mean, I
don't think—

Describing the
Zombie General
as, I quote,
"boring"?



Perhaps that was
a little unkind,
but hardly
treas—

You
don't
deny
it.

Then there's
the matter
of feeding rich,
unhealthy and
decadent
foodstuffs to
diplomatic
parties and
foreign
delegations.



The new menus have been a huge success. We're on better terms with the Yōkai than ever before.



I lead by example.

What a king eats is good enough for staff and visitors.



Puddings are not only harmful, they represent a frivolousness and, frankly, unmanliness to those in whom we inspire respect.



The Zombie General had seconds.

And thirds.



Most grievously of all, this party food, if I can describe it as such, makes my own meals appear meagre, mean and faddish.



Father, no one thinks any such thing.

Even if they did, what would it matter?



The people should
revere their King,
not mock his choice
OF Foodstuffs.

I can't
see how—

And most seriously,
most provokingly,
you have been over
familiar with the
staff.

Allowing
them to refer
to you by your
first name and
not your
title.

They
aren't
staff.

They're
my
friends.

A Princess
does not have
friends.

she has
subjects.

Subjects?

But that's
just...

...wrong.

My dear, I'm speaking
to you as a loving
father, not a
tyrant.



What happens, for
instance, if you have
to remove one of
your "Friends" from
their position?



You
mean fire
them?

Yes.

Can you
take their
job from
them and
employ a
person
better
suited?



But I won't
have to.

Of
course
you
will.



It's much easier to
get rid of staff than
it is to lose a friend.

It's for
your own
good.



No.

I don't
see it that
way.



Staff understand
boundaries while
Friends...

Friends
what?

This Count Spatula
Fellow.

Yes?

He's over
Familiar.

He's the only one
who speaks to me like
I'm a person.

Precisely!

He's seen an
opportunity
and siezed
it.

He's a
lothario.

All
Vampires
are.

I've yet to
meet one who
isn't a gigolo,
with an easy
manner and
toothy smile.

Gigolo?

You
don't know
the Count,
do you?

It's clear from my reports that you have placed yourself in a...

...perilous position.

That's ridiculous!

My dear, can't you understand that I don't want to see you hurt.

I'm trying to protect you.

From what?

From people who might actually care about me?

From...

...From predators.

Predators?

The Count's nothing like that.

I'd hoped to shield you from harm but I can see I've left it too late.

He's already bewitched you.

I don't know where you've got the idea that I've had my head turn—

I understand that you've taken on a lot of responsibilities while I've been confined to bed.

It's been a lot to take on and naturally you have relied upon the ... emotional support of those around you.

I can see the value of your having some time away to view the situation more clearly.

But—

And considering my current state of health I propose that you represent the Crown on the Thursday of the Dead.













As long as he's off
the premises by
morning, all shall
be forgiven.



Oh, and, Decomposia?

Yes,
Father?



Could I trouble
you for a cup of
rosehip tea?

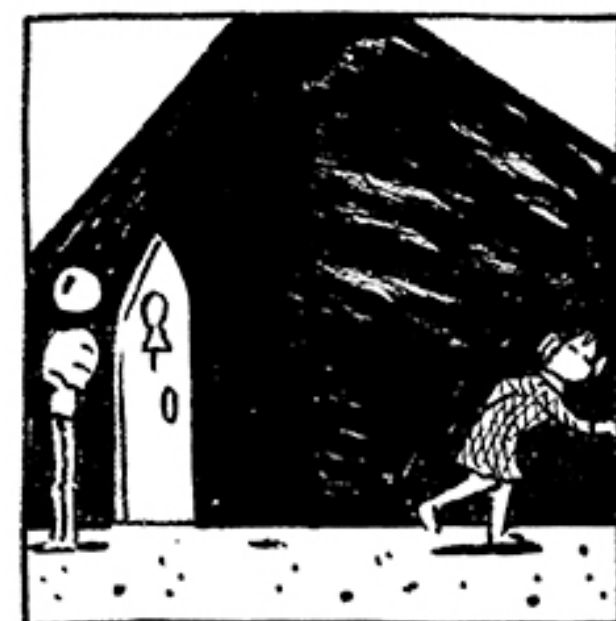
All this
unpleasantness
has upset my
stomach.



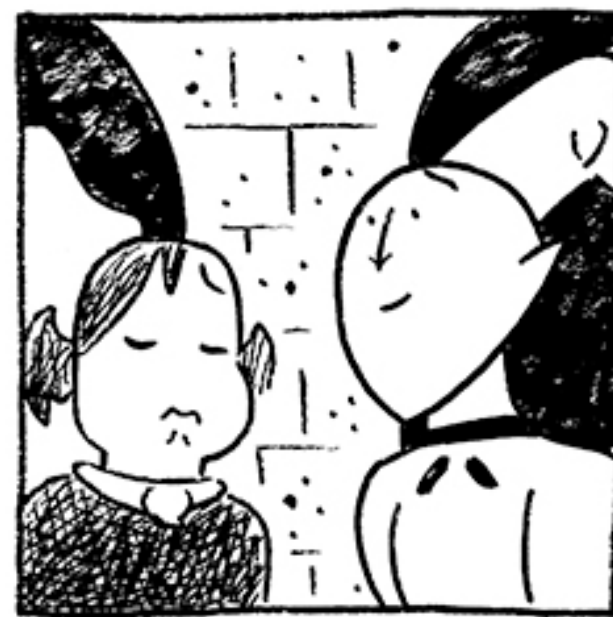
Thank
you.





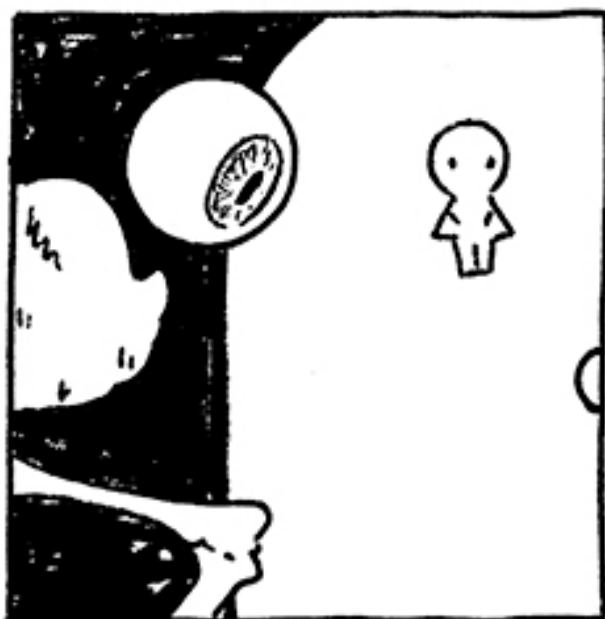
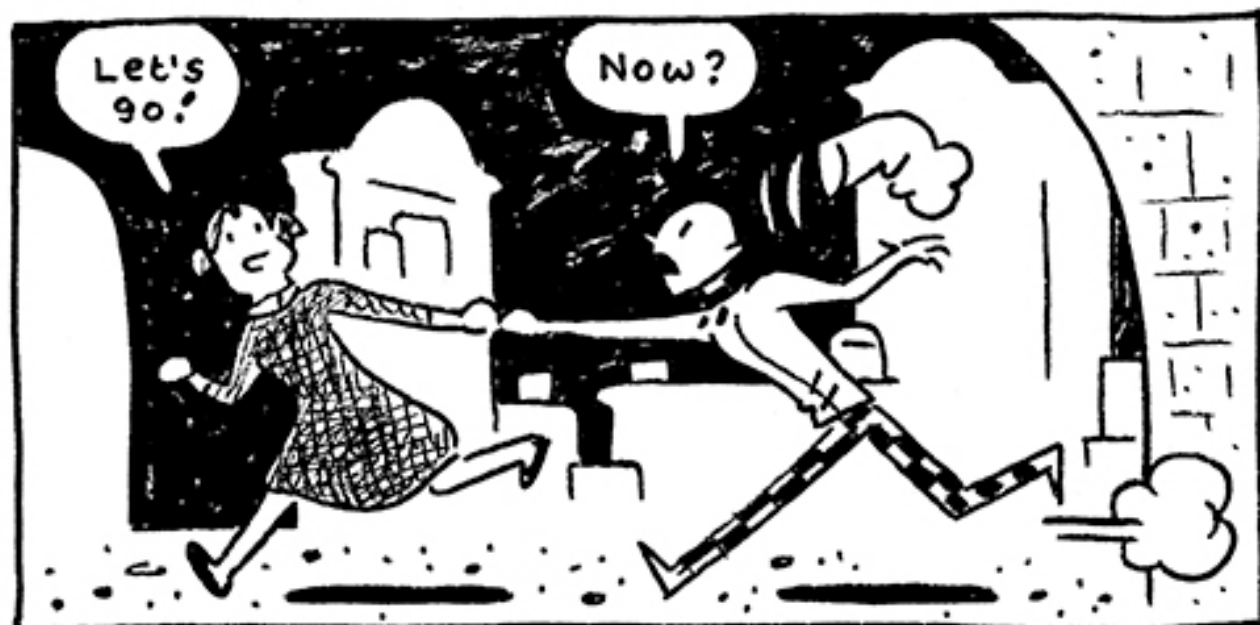


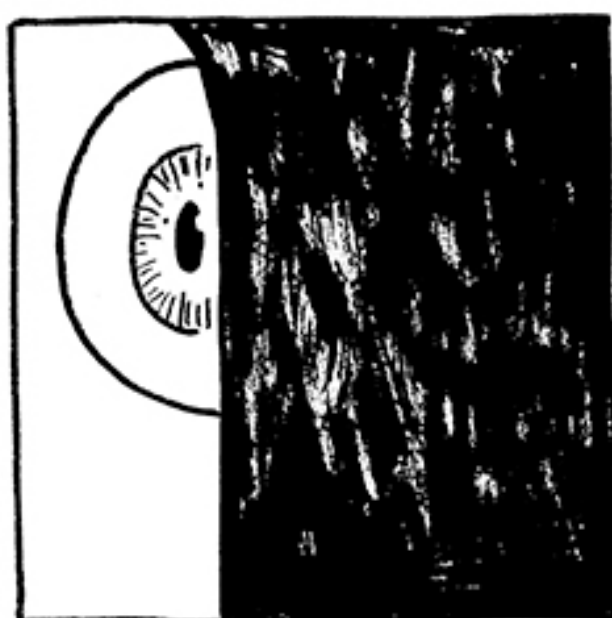
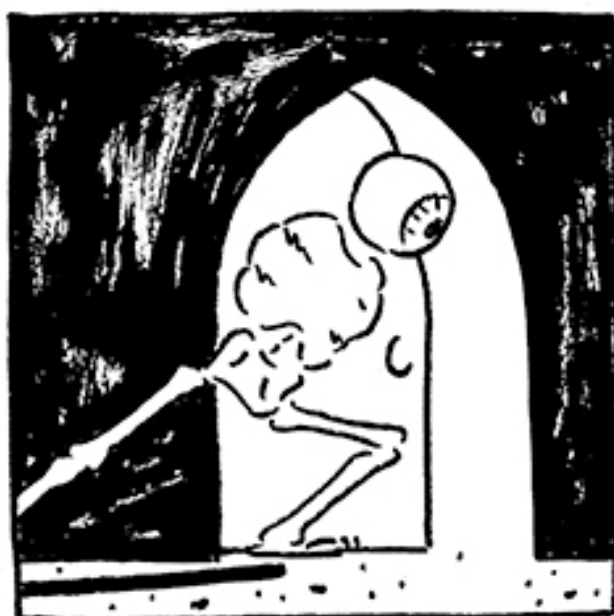




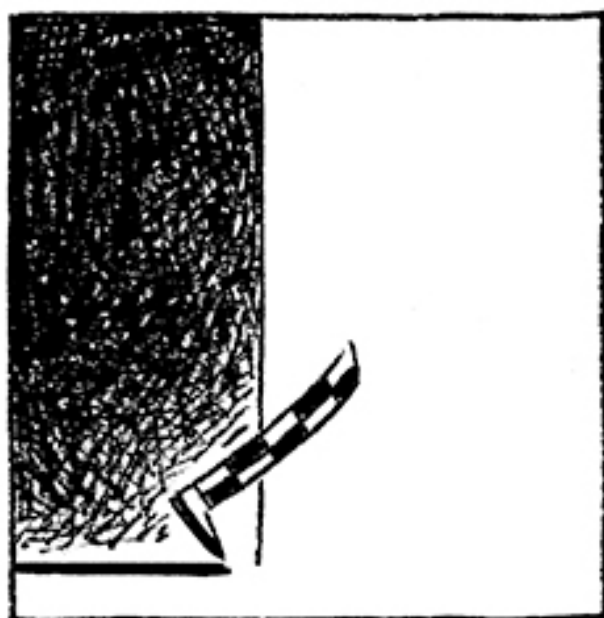
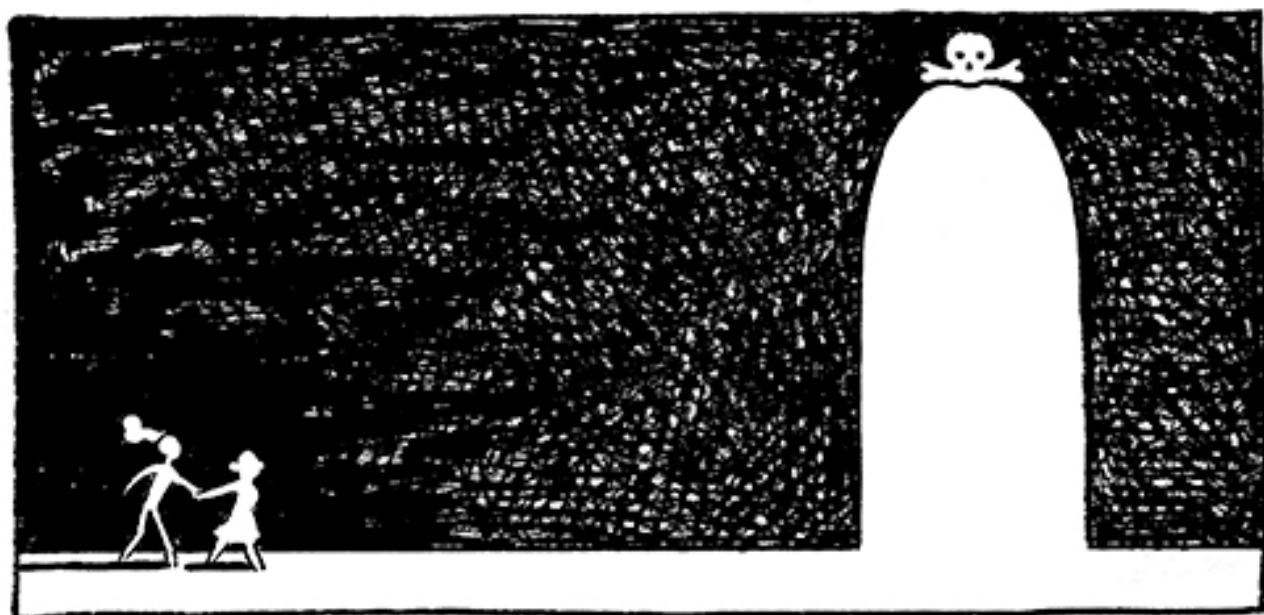




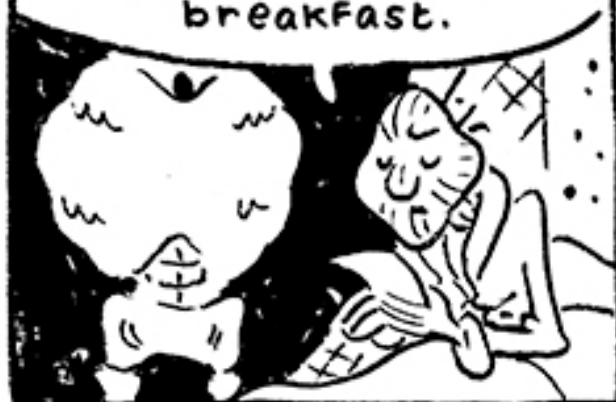




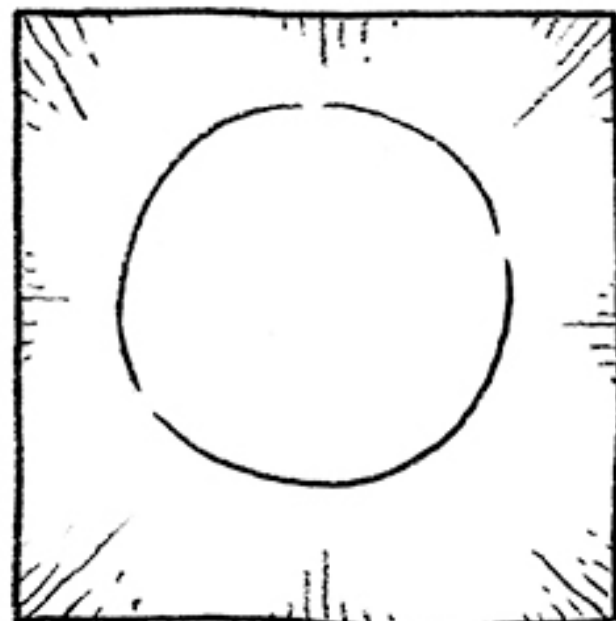




What do you mean,
she's gone? Princesses
do not disappear,
certainly not before
breakfast.



And what about the
cook, has he packed
and gone yet?



Bright,
isn't
it?





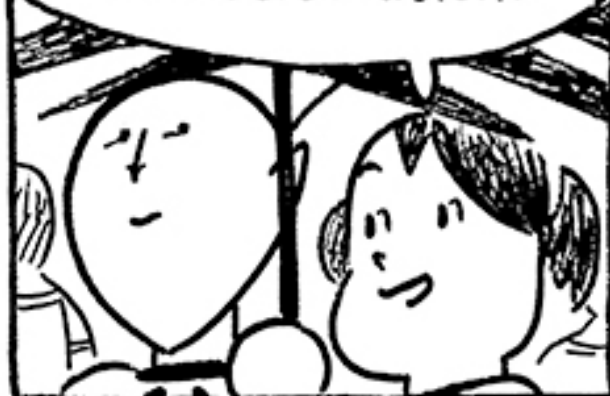
The children are
given chocolate?



It's also called
Sweet Thursday.
They hand out
treats to the little
ones.



The tradition was
to visit tombs and
graves, now it's more
of a celebration.



You should smile,
then, if it's a
celebration.



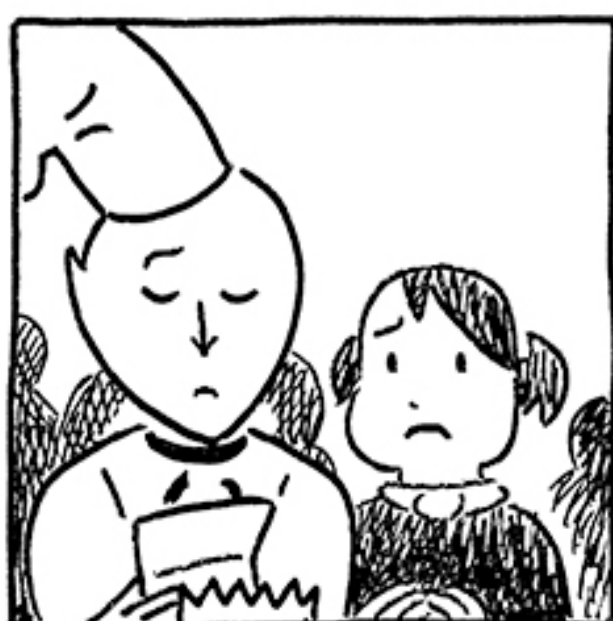
Sorry.

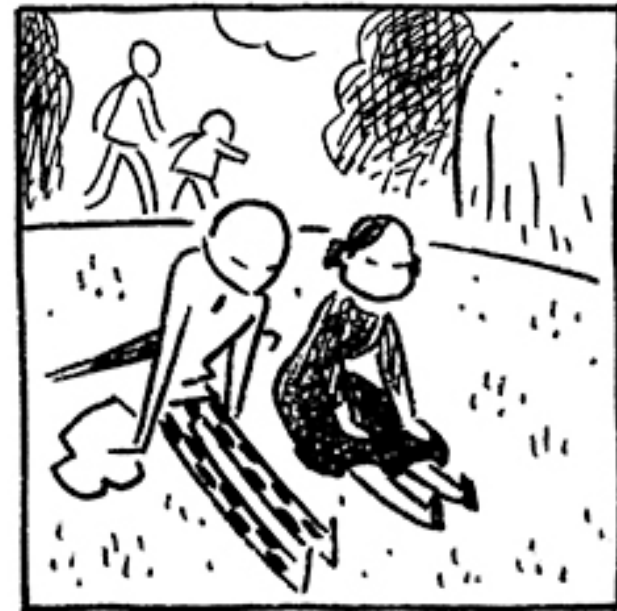
You said the King
doesn't know I'm
here?



It's our
secret.

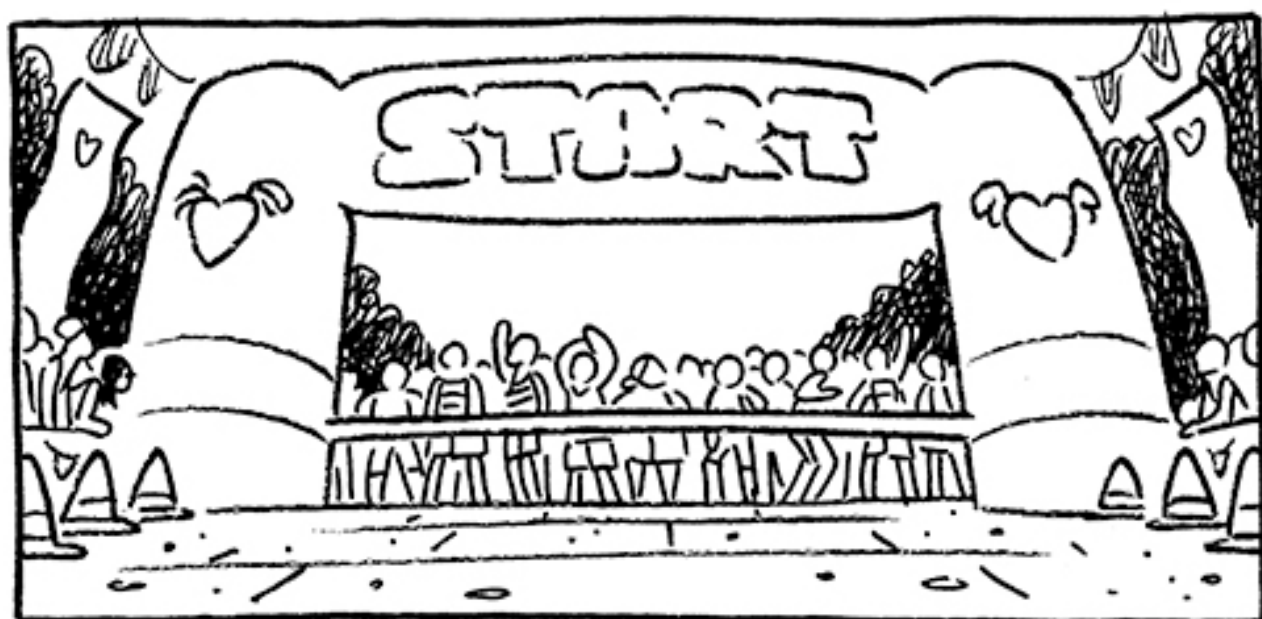




























It's not the Count
who had me fooled,
it's you.



Come now, you're
forgetting yourself.

That's
no way to
address your
King.



my
king?

MY
KING?



You're nothing
but a selfish old
fraud.



Selfish?

Old?

General, help
the Princess
into the
carriage.

Stay
out of
this.









We're supposed to pass unnoticed among the living.

You've scared them to death.



What are you going to do?

As king.

The one who makes the tough decisions.



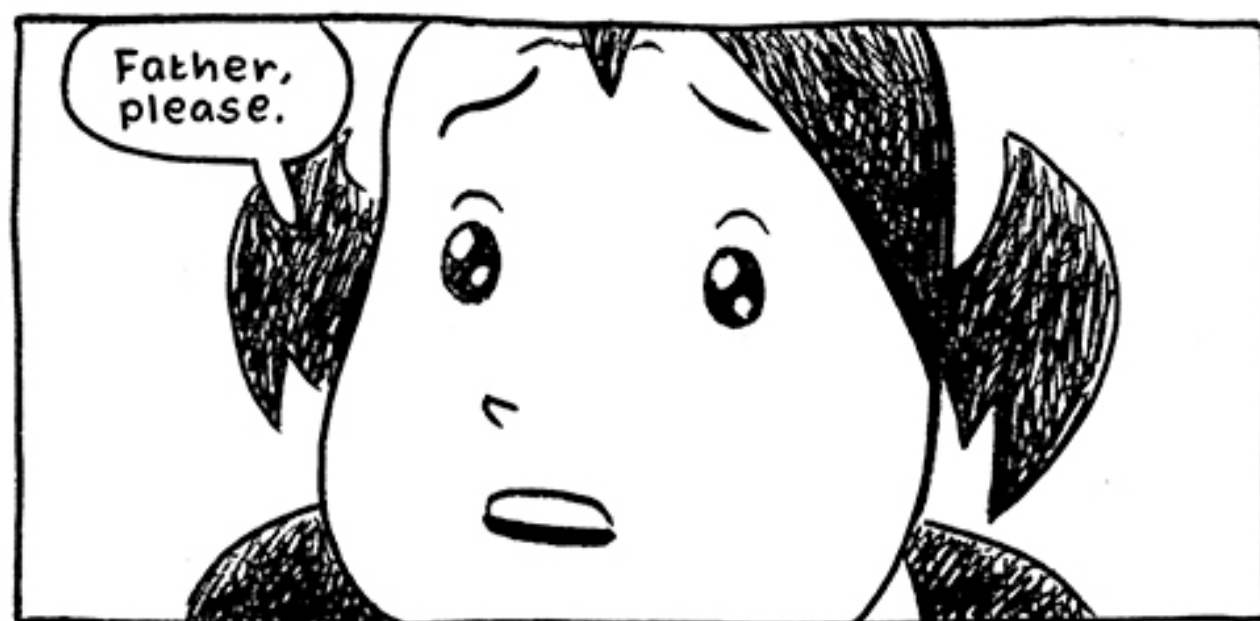
What are you going to do to make it right?



I...

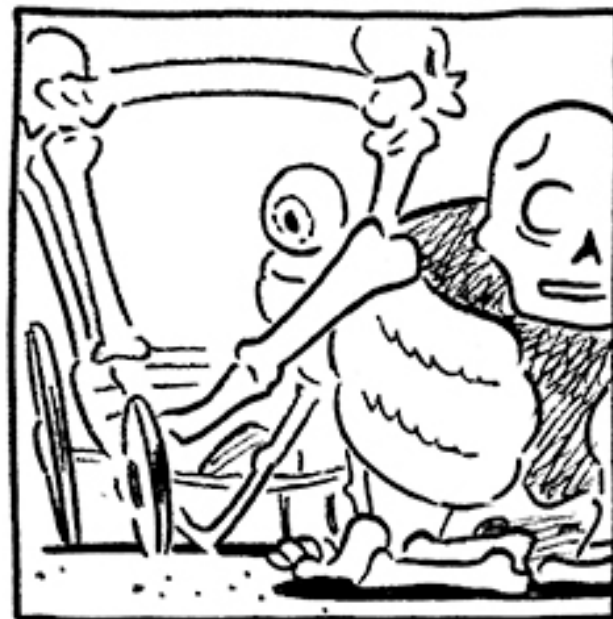
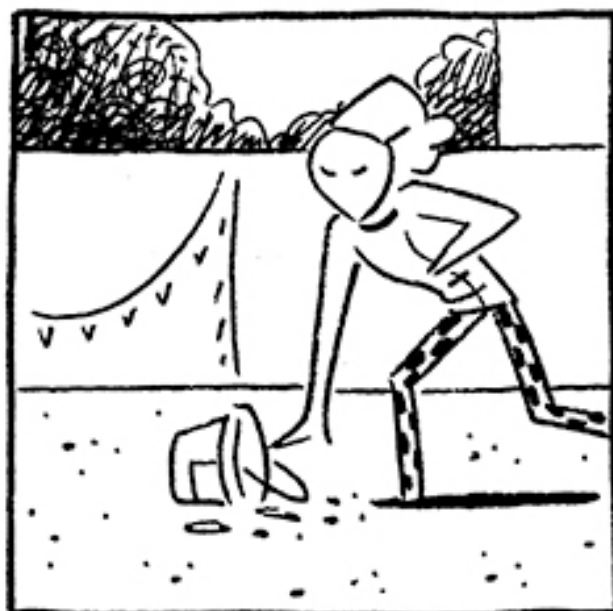
...I don't—

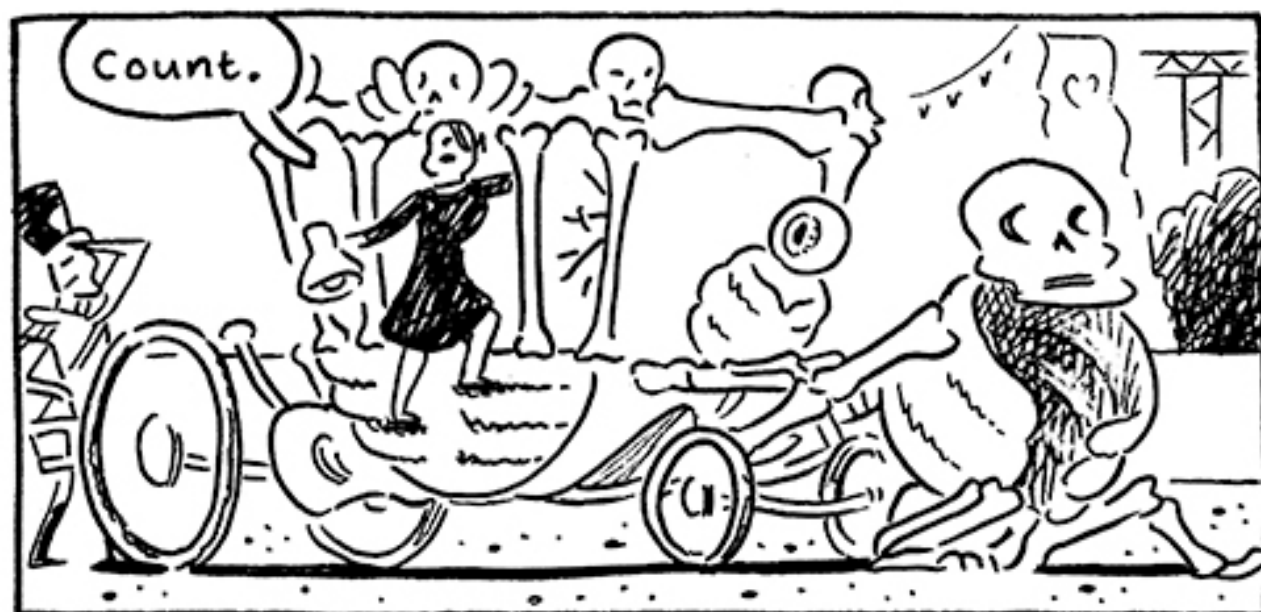












she doesn't despise
you. She's just ...
disappointed.



It looked more like
disgust.

I
don't blame
her.



There is something
you can try.

What?



Carry a bucket?



A King does not—

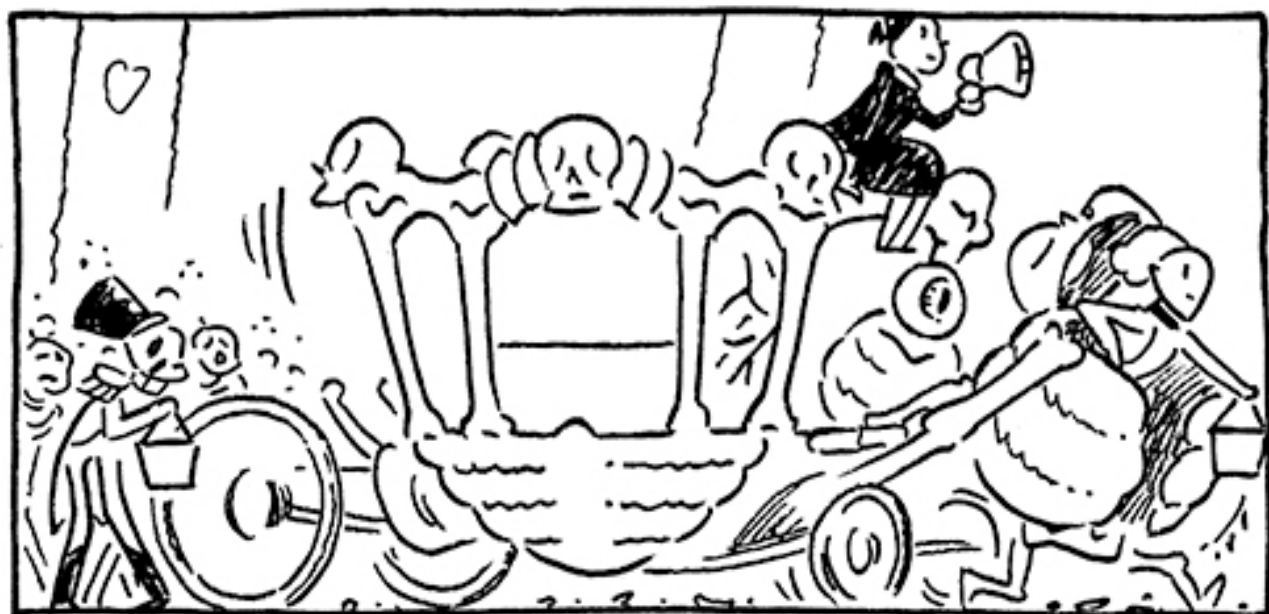


Would a
father?

For the
sake of his
daughter?







**MAKE A
DONATION.**



**MAKE A
DONATION
AND TAKE A
RIDE ON THE
CHARITY
CHARIOT.**



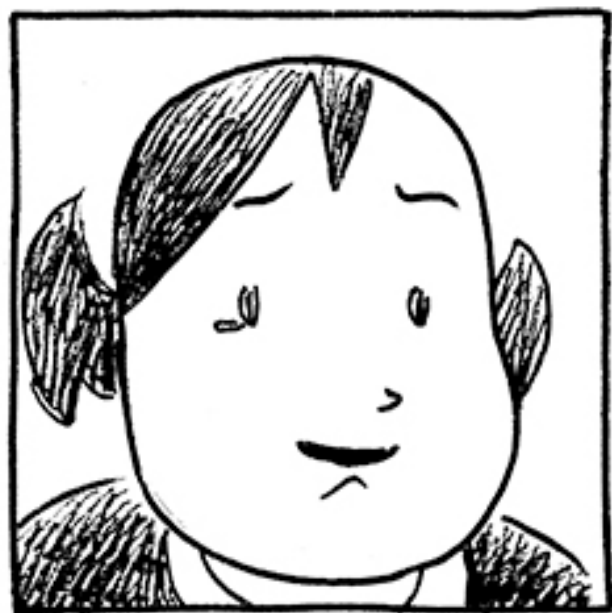
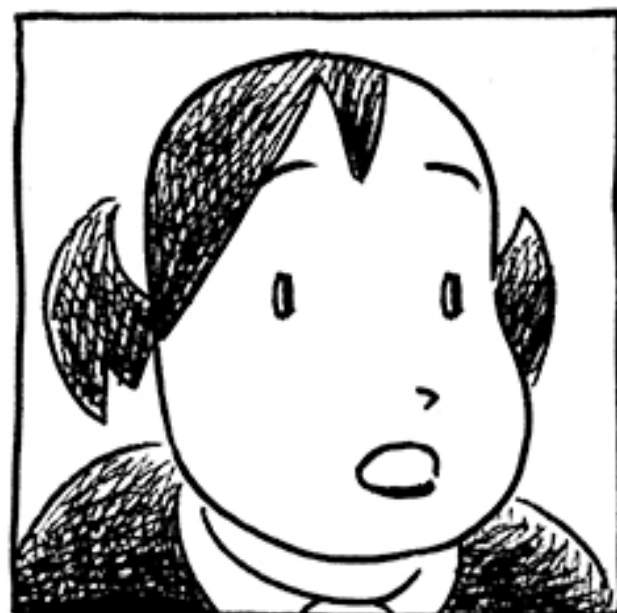
**ALL MONEY
RAISED GOES TO
THE KING WULFRUN
HOSPITAL.**



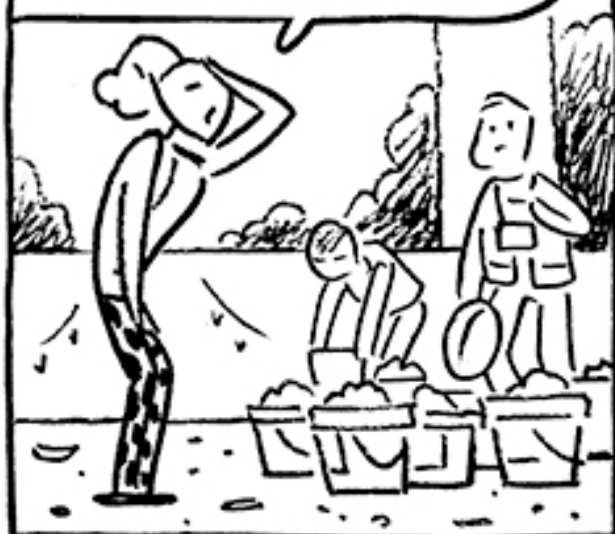
**ALL ABOARD
THE CHARITY
CHARIOT.**







That's the last one.



Need a
lift?



Did you see your
dad?

collecting
money?
Yeah.



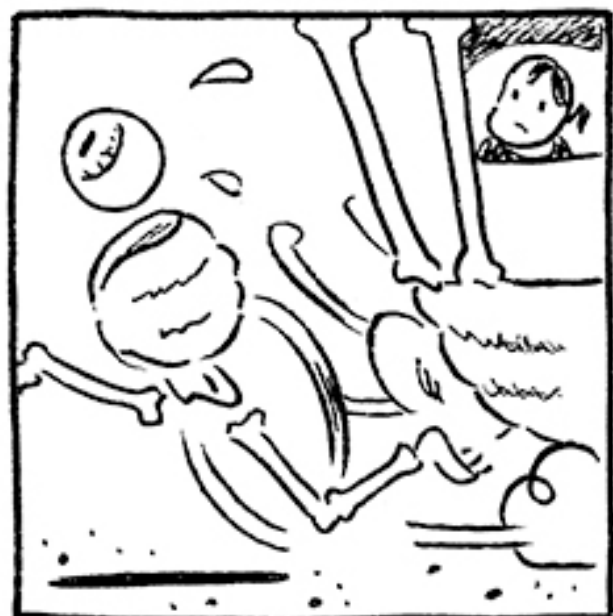
Not that I'm going
to let him off
that easily.



Sir?













I know you've
done a better job of
caring for Decomposia
than I have.



I wouldn't say—

No, well. I've
made efforts
but they don't
seem to be
enough.



They
don't?

I can't
blame
her for ...
well, you
know
why.



But I would like
to know if I'm ever
going to be
forgiven.



I
see.

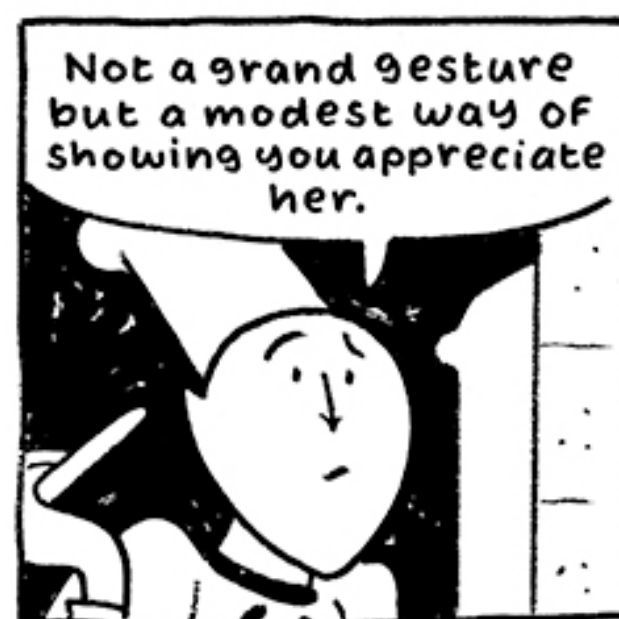
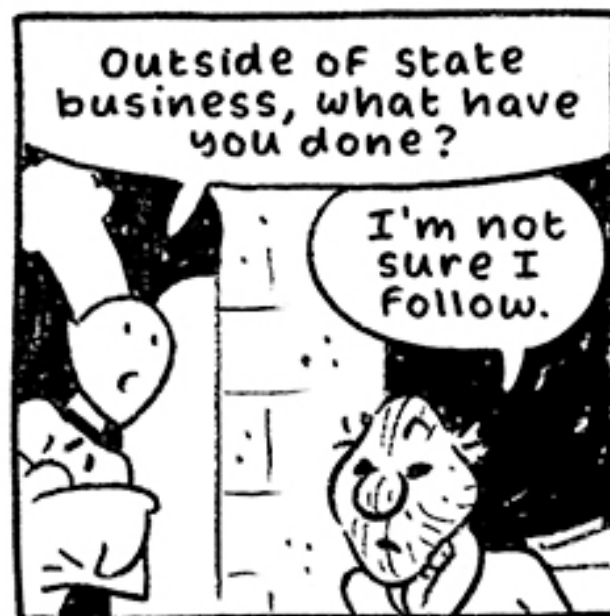
Am I
on the
right
track,
Count?



You're asking
me?

Yes.
She talks
to you,
she...











And these are the pastries your count has made?

Try one.



No, thank you.

Go on.



All right, then.



What do you think?

Hmm.



They're not as good as my kippers.

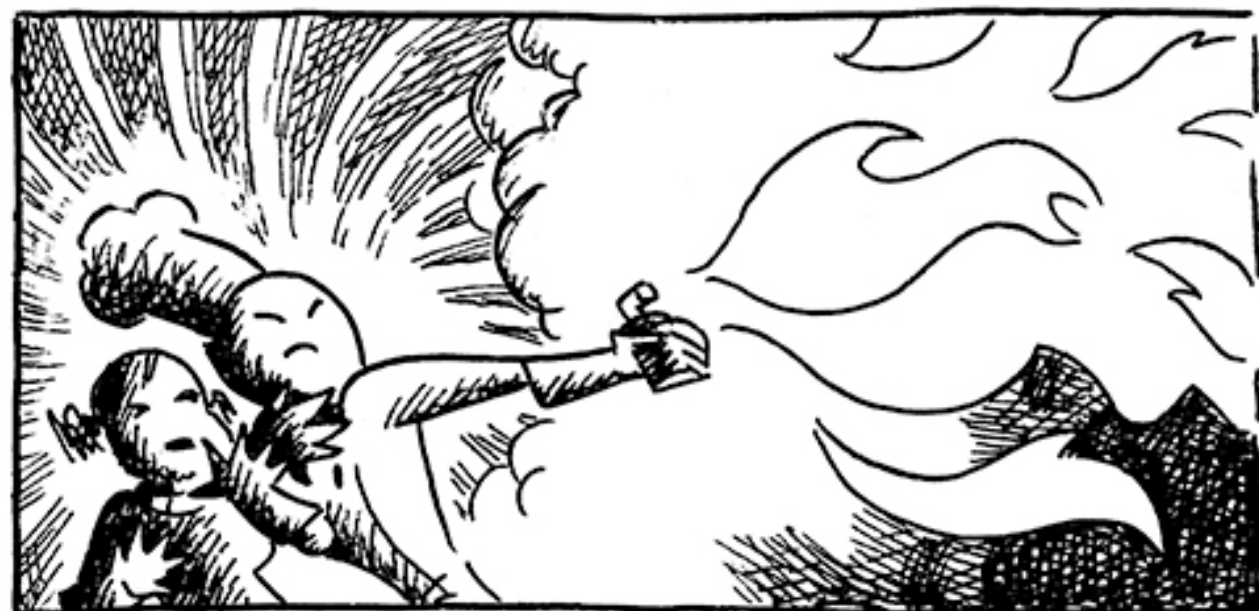












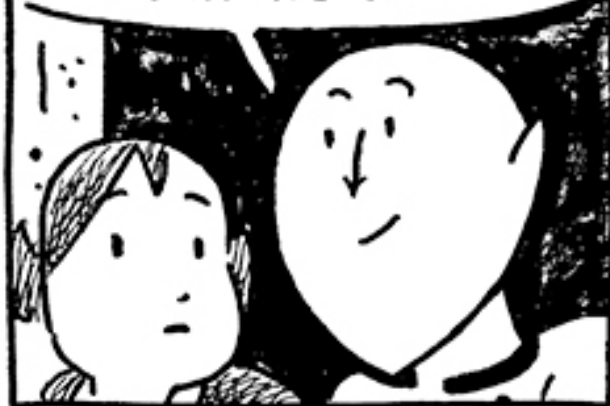




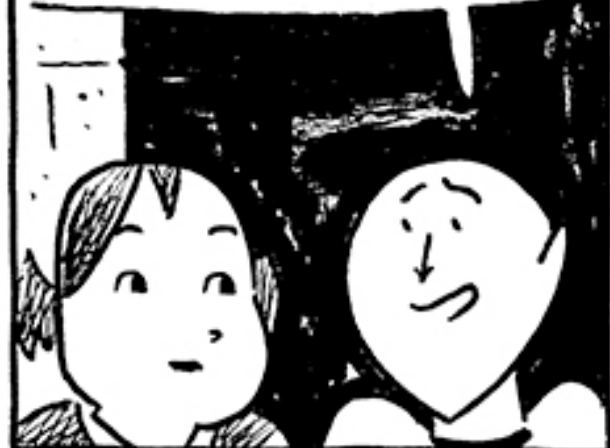




I know that a complication or difficulty won't stop me liking you.



I won't be scared off that easily.



I'll just try my best.

And trying your best will be enough?



I have no idea.

What do you want me to say?



You won't let me down?

I don't know.

I might.

