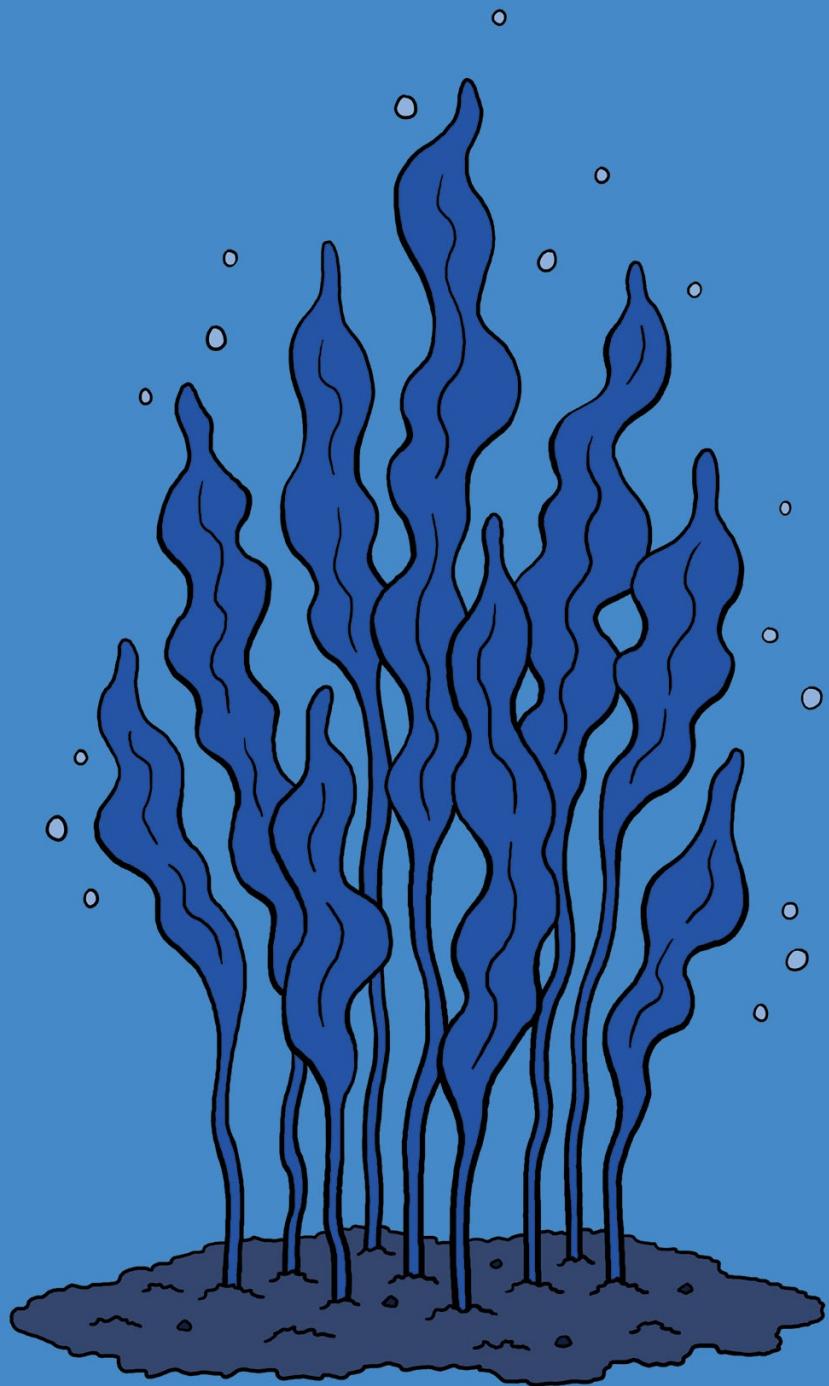


#4



Previously...

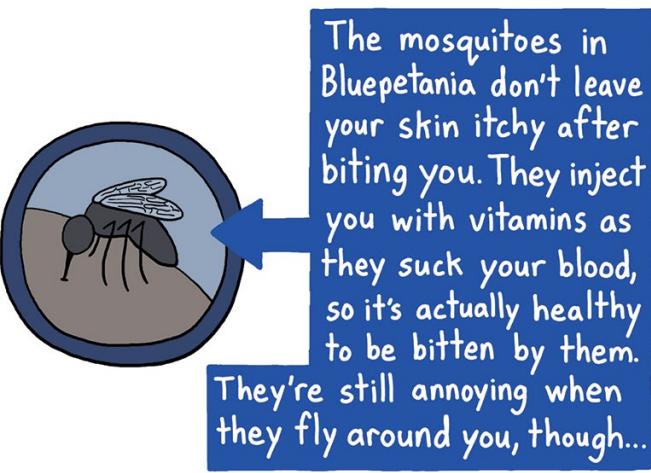
Willy and Froggy arrived in Blupetania, where they are spending a week at Dolphina's family's lakeside home. The Finlopia residence is usually a relaxing place to take a vacation, but in recent years it has become clouded with tension due to a problem with poachers.

As Guardian of the Lake, it's Mr. Finlopia's responsibility to stop poachers from illegally harvesting rare blue seaweed—an endangered plant species that is an integral part of the lake's ecosystem. Mr. Finlopia installed a high-tech security system around the lake in an attempt to stop the poachers, but someone has been shutting it off!

After doing some detective work, Willy has developed a strong hunch that the culprit is Dolphina's mysterious boyfriend, Dogminder. There isn't quite enough evidence to pin the crime on Dogminder, but Willy and Froggy believe they can find some by sneaking into an off-limits section of a local shopping mall/tourist attraction called "The Pyramid".

Can Willy and Froggy prove that Dogminder is the one who is helping the poachers? Will they be able to save the lake's ecosystem?

Let's find out...



The mosquitoes in Bluepetania don't leave your skin itchy after biting you. They inject you with vitamins as they suck your blood, so it's actually healthy to be bitten by them. They're still annoying when they fly around you, though....



hmmmm...

Is that the caretaking staff's storage shed?

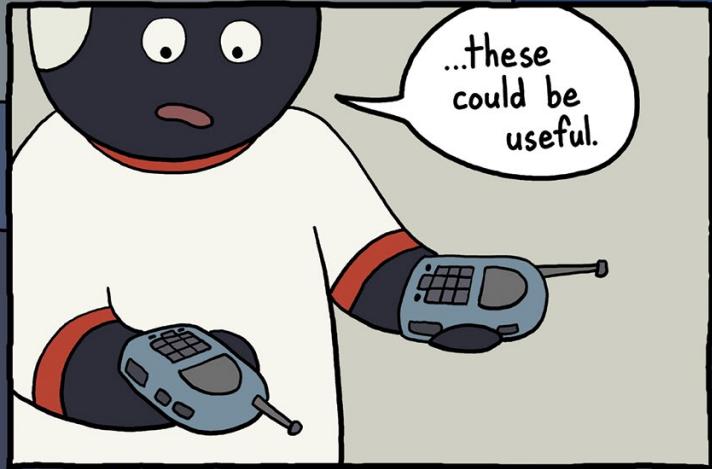
Yeah, it looks like it.

When I used to work at the music store in Buddyville Mall, the caretaking staff would be in the building at all sorts of strange hours, and no one seemed to question them.

We should see if we can disguise ourselves as caretakers.

I think it's worth a shot...





I can't believe we're sneaking into a closed mall to catch a thief. This is so....

...exciting!

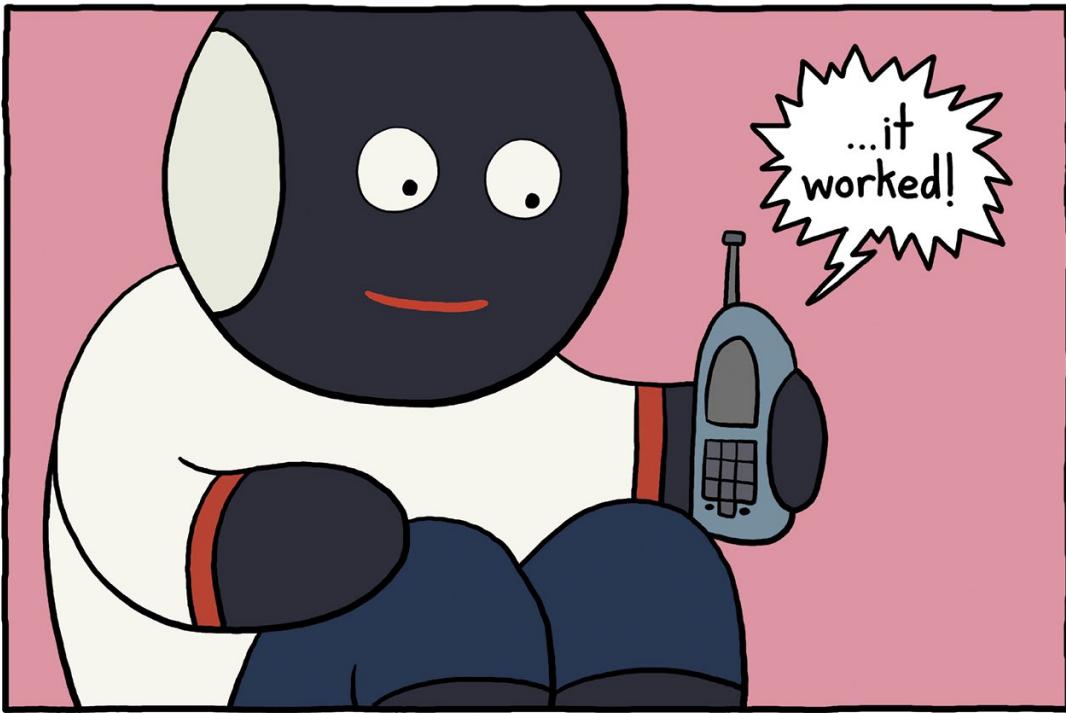
I know!! I hope we find some evidence.

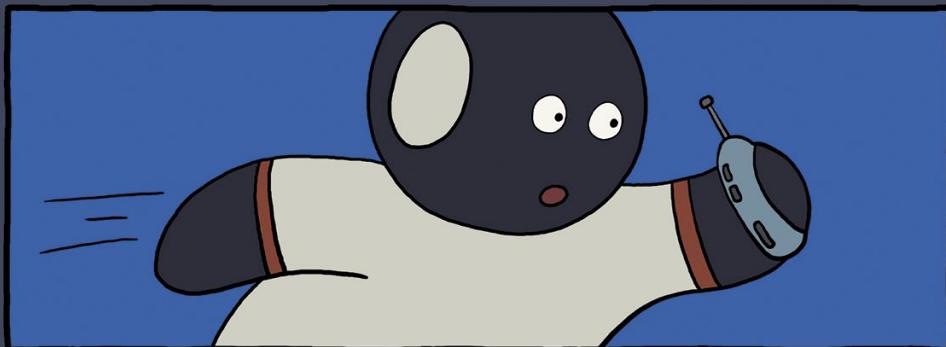
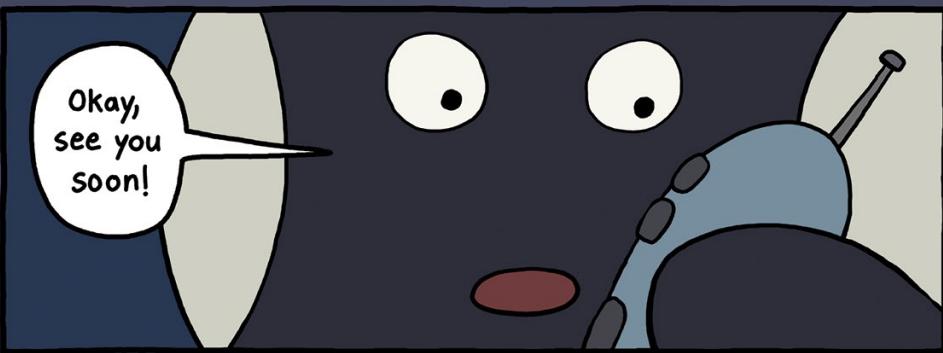
Me too!

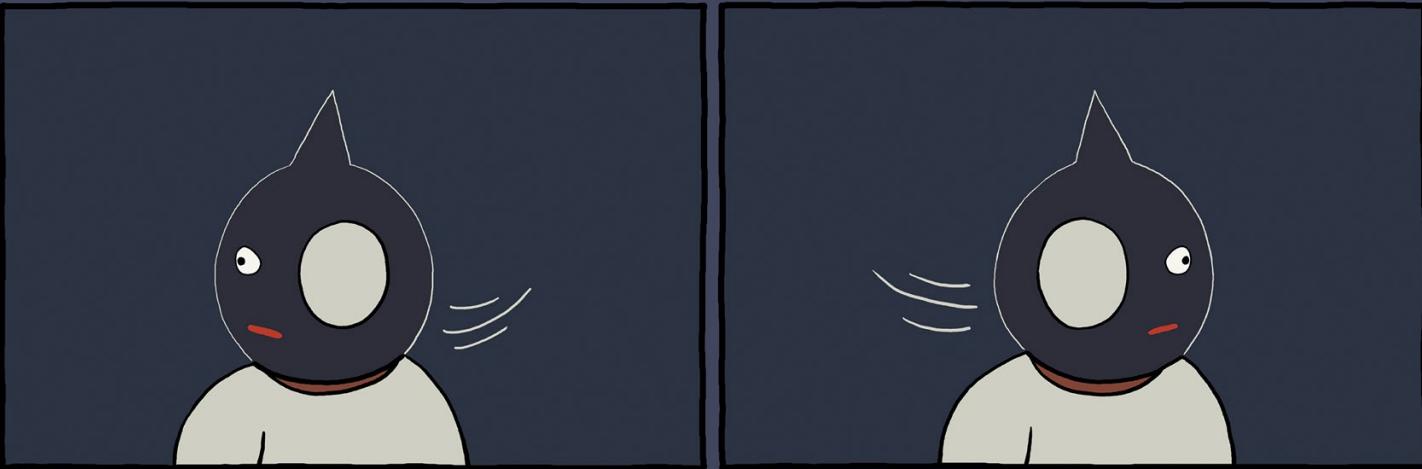
Alright,
let's do this!











Bluepetie Mall Security. Here's my badge.

Oh... well, I'll take your word for it, but I don't really know what an official Bluepetie Mall Security badge looks like...

That's a good point.

What're you doing around here so late at night?

O, haha...yeah.... I was just...

...looking for something I dropped here, earlier... but I should get going now...

Sorry, but I need to bring anyone caught trespassing after dark to see my boss for questioning.

I-I wasn't even inside the building! Wouldn't it be easier if I just left?

No can do. We need to go speak with the boss.

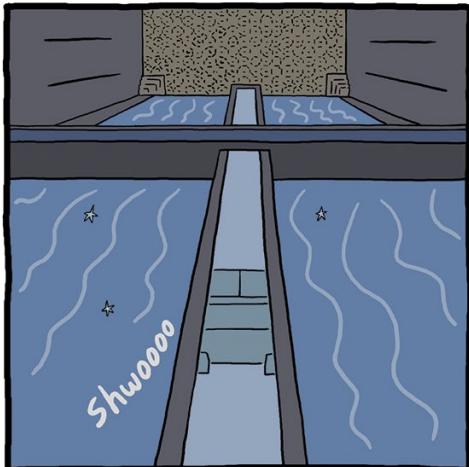
rustle
rustle

Are you, by any chance,
currently staying at the
Finlopia residence?

Ummmm, yeah...
Why do you ask?

I caught your friend, too... just a minute ago.
He's in the boss's office,
right now.

Oh
man....



My boss will come speak with you two in a
minute. You can stay in the holding cell until
then.

Alright...

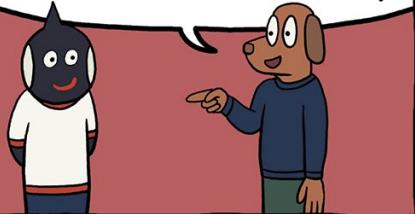


Well, Froggy,
we tried-

SLAM!



Really?! I knew there was something strange about you and your friend, but I had no idea you two were trying to catch the seaweed thieves!



How did you find out that the security system control panel is in the basement of the pyramid? It took me a year to figure that out!



We found a hideout that we thought belonged to the thieves, and there was a map of the pyramid in there.



Oh...that bunker on the south side of the lake?



Yah

I was using that place as a base for my investigation. I didn't want Dolphina to know I was doing this.



Did you guys find any leads to who was stealing the seaweed?

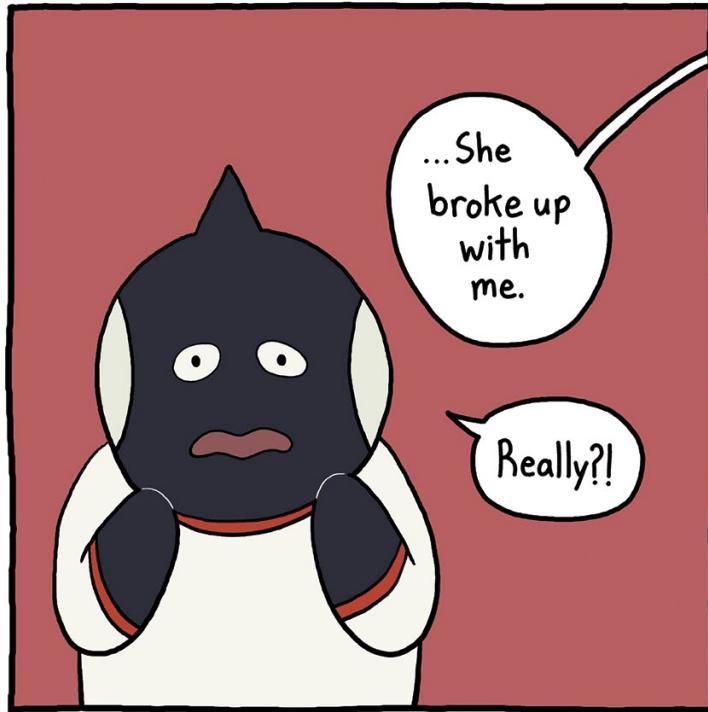
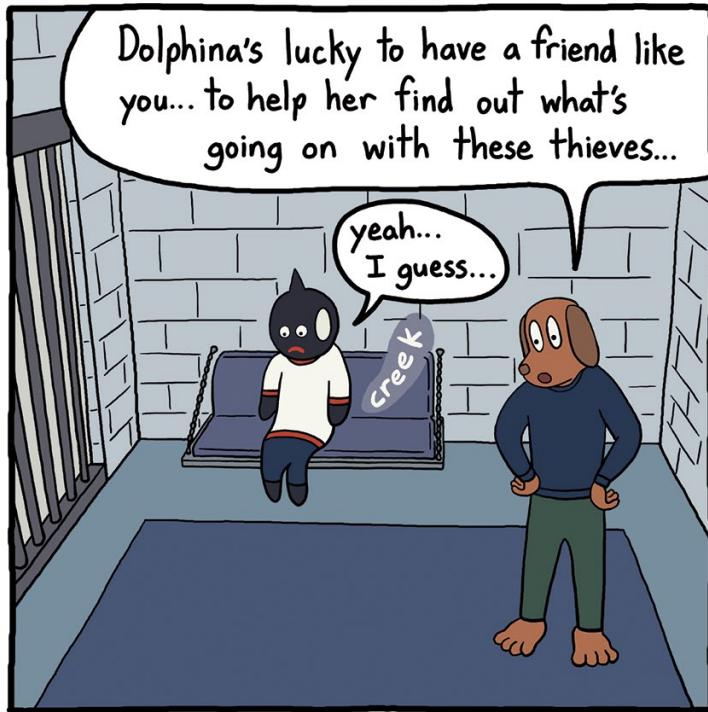


Umm...no.
Did you?

Not really... I had a hunch it was Grandpa Barry—that he was trying to teach his son a lesson for being a bad Lake

Guardian—but I didn't have any evidence to prove it.





I was hoping that...if I could stop the seaweed thief, it would make everything go back to normal again, for Dolphina...

...and then maybe she'd want to get back together with me...

Alright, the boss is ready to see you two!





High Priestess Blueguana

-spiritual leader of the Bluepetie faith
-general manager of Bluepetie Mall

Hello, ma'am. I know we were caught trespassing, but we're not the bad guys, I swear! We were only investigating the seaweed thefts!



hmmmm...

Well, that's very noble of you, but the Galactic Union has already placed the Finlopia family in charge of protecting this lake...

...If they feel they need any help, they will let the proper authorities know.

But Mr. Finlopia CAN'T ask the Galactic Union for help!



He had already lost a lot of seaweed, before he begged the Galactic Union to provide him with those security fences...



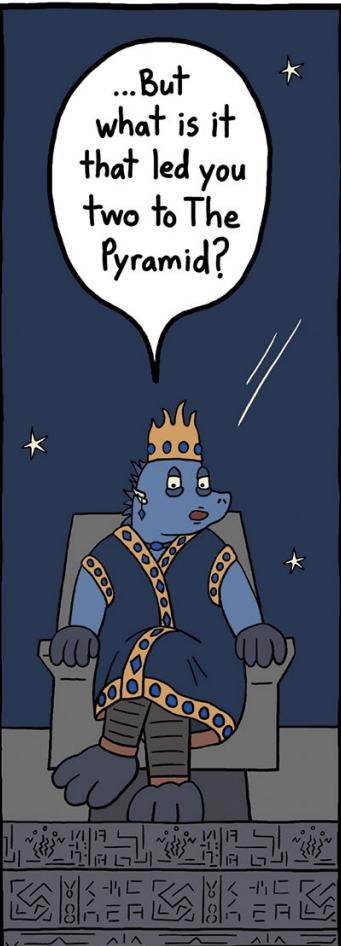
If the G.U. find out that people are STILL stealing the seaweed, they'll assume Mr. Finlopia is corrupt or incompetent and replace him!

Hah! So that's why you decided to turn to vigilantism!

...But what is it that led you two to The Pyramid?

I found blueprints for a room located underneath the maze in this mall, and we think it's where the controls to the security fences are located.

mhm....



Yes, I know about that room. You're correct, that is where the security system controls are located.



Well, it's peak harvesting season **RIGHT NOW!** shouldn't you have security guarding that room at a time like this!?



I know the location of the control room, and that it shares The Pyramid's power source, but I don't have access to it...



Mr. Finlopia, who is Lake Guardian, is in charge of that room.

I don't get it—you seem so ...unconcerned with all of this.



Isn't this lake supposed to be really important to you and all of your ancestors?



Protecting it would be his responsibility, not mine...



I mean, I'm pretty sure that's what it said on that plaque near the mall entrance...



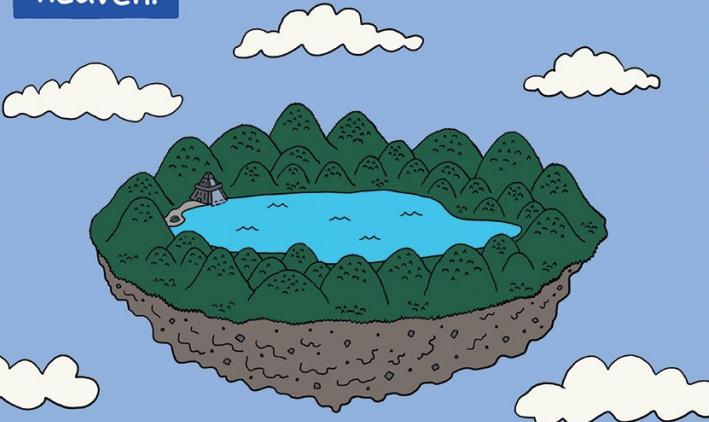


The blue dragon is seated on his throne, looking towards the three characters in the foreground. A large speech bubble originates from him.

Just how well
do you know your
Bluepetie history?



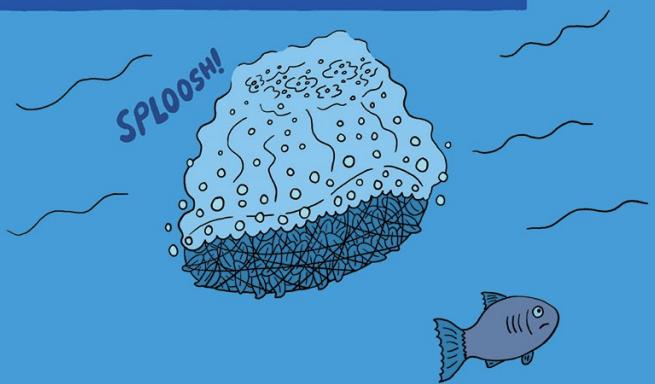
My people used to worship these lakes. We believed that the reason they glowed with such immense beauty was because they were portals to heaven.



Whenever one of our people died, we would wrap them in leaves, take them to the center of the lake, and drop them into the water. If the body was far from a lake at the time of death, it would be recovered, so that this ceremony could be performed.



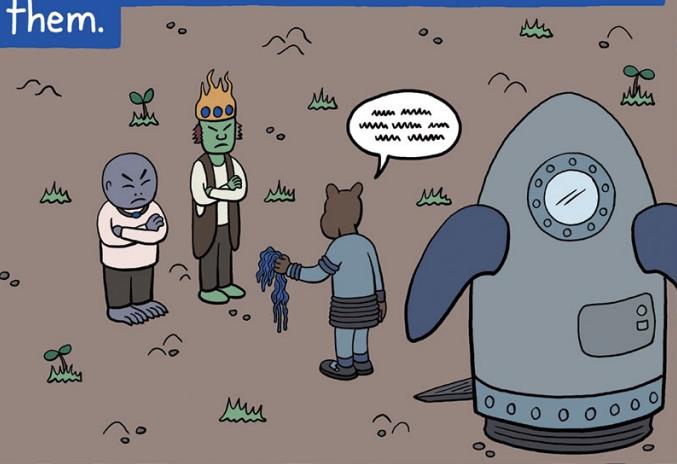
This act of dropping bodies into the water was our gift to the lakes. Our offering of the body, to the lake, was reciprocated by the lake allowing the soul to pass on into heaven...



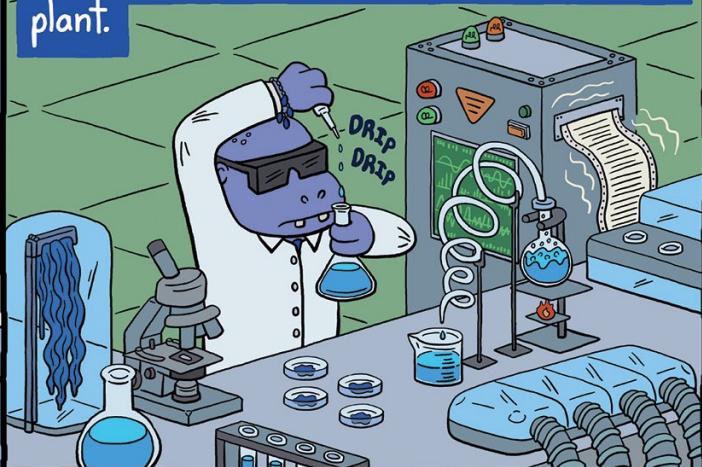
...or so we believed.



When explorers from Calyxambulo came to our land, they told us that the lakes glowed so beautifully because of a rare, blue seaweed that grew inside them.



At first, no one believed this, but after extensive empirical testing, we had to admit that it was true.... For centuries, our people had been worshiping a mere plant.



This new information was devastating. Most of our people, filled with shame, left Bluepetania to live in other regions of the planet.



There was a group of obstinate supporters who remained faithful, but with every generation, less and less of our people were devoted to these lakes.



I am the last remaining Bluepetie cleric.

Perhaps I would have been a great spiritual leader, had things played out differently...

The conservation measures put in place to protect these lakes are a lame attempt by the Galactic Union to appease the Bluepetie people!

We believed that these lakes were gateways between this world and heaven...

We never cared about how pretty they looked!

The discovery of the Rare Blue seaweed has made a mockery of the Bluepetie faith!

The least the Galactic Union can do for the Bluepetie people is allow us to cultivate this plant, so that we can gain some corporeal wealth, in lieu of the spiritual kingdom we were promised.

Gasp!

So you're behind the illegal seaweed harvest!

Yes, Grassy and I are major players in the underground Rare Blue seaweed trade.

Grassy
-security guard at Bluepetie Mall
-his mom was High Priestess Mantis
-hobbies: reading, hand-crafting violins, and selling aquatic contraband

Every year, during Environment Week, we harvest as much ripe seaweed as we can from the corrupt Lake Guarians.

So there IS corruption in the Finlophia family!!

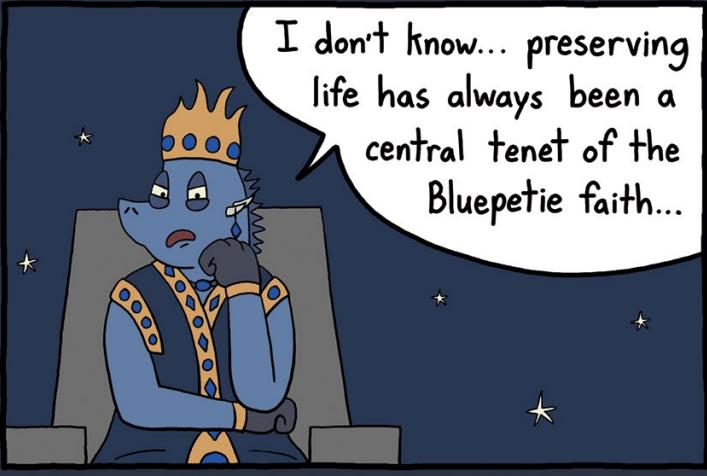
Yes.

There is a member of the Finlophia family who turns the lake's security system off, and then our divers gather the seaweed.

It's a very profitable operation, and I won't have you two ruin it for us!!

Wait... If you don't want us to ruin everything for you, why are you telling us all of this?

Yeah! You're not gonnakill us.... are you?



I don't know... preserving life has always been a central tenet of the Bluepetie faith...



...but what do our beliefs even matter anymore?



Kkrrr....
Willy....
are you close?...
I'm at the door...

Froggy, I got caught by a security guard. I'm in the High Priestess's office right now!

oh man

HMOOSH!

Who is that?!

It's.... my friend...

I thought he was your friend!

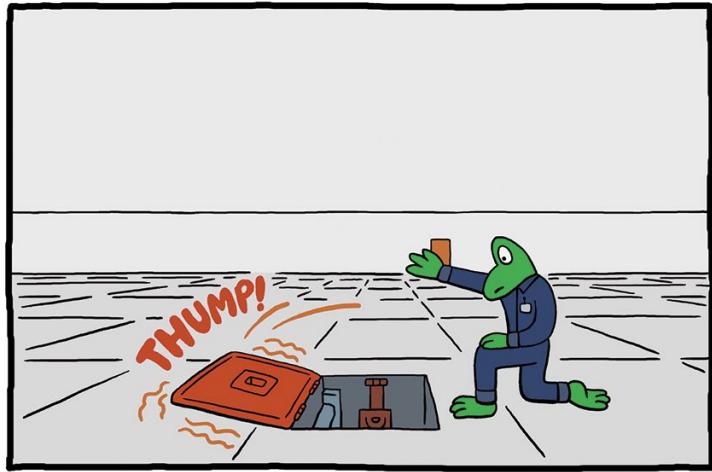
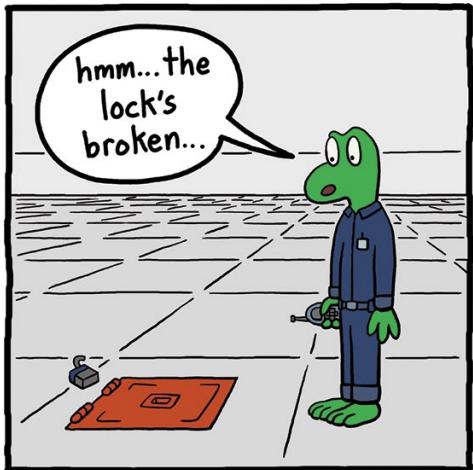
Grassy, go find his friend!!



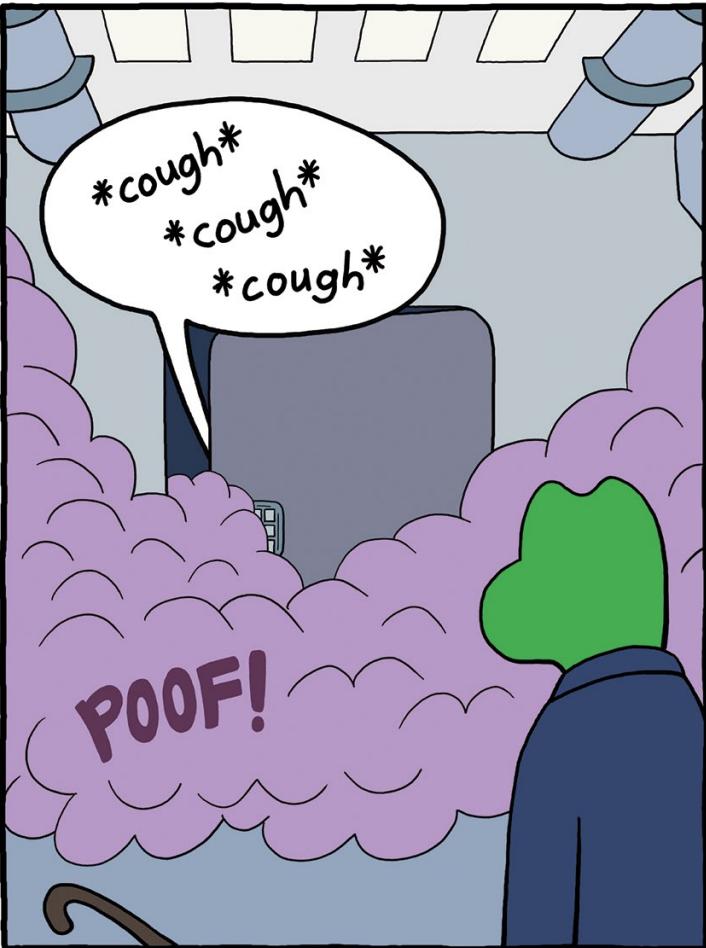
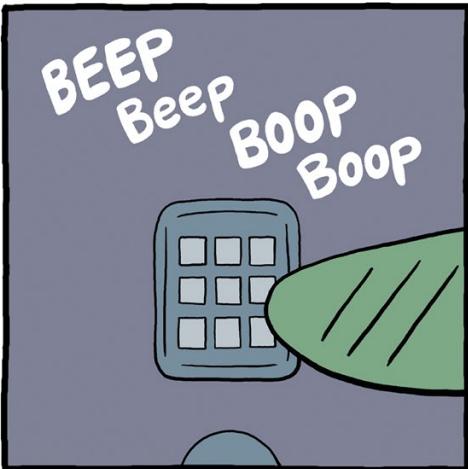
...Make sure he doesn't cause any trouble...

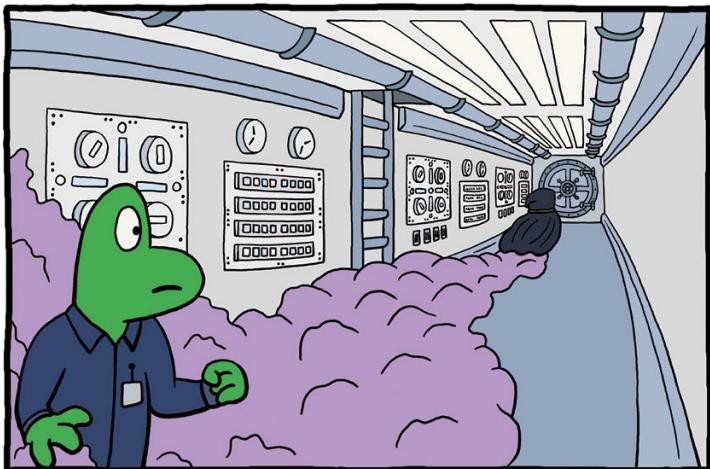
Give me that walkie talkie!

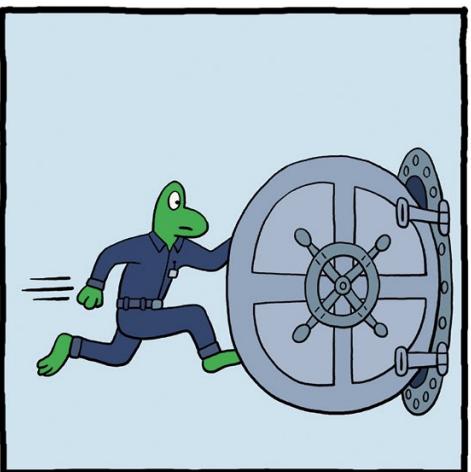
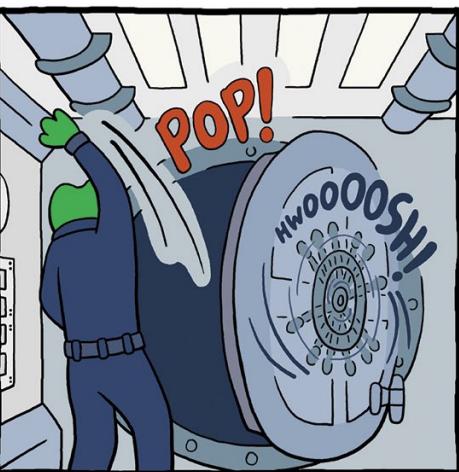
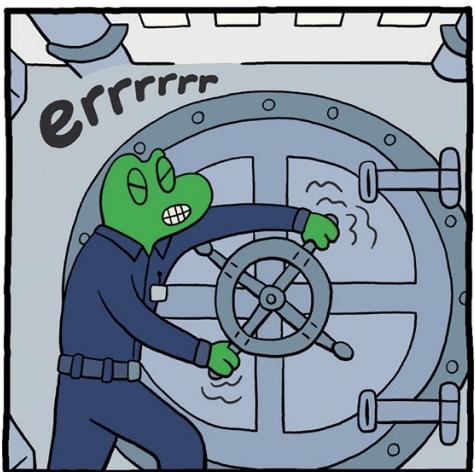
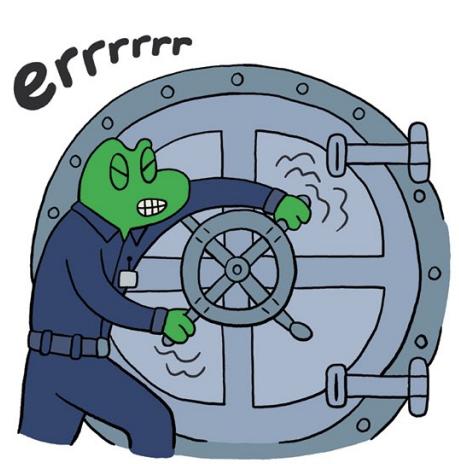
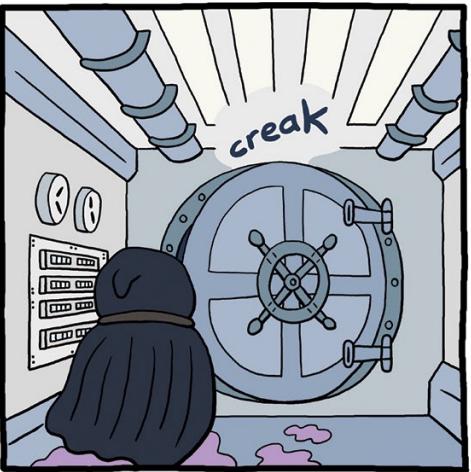
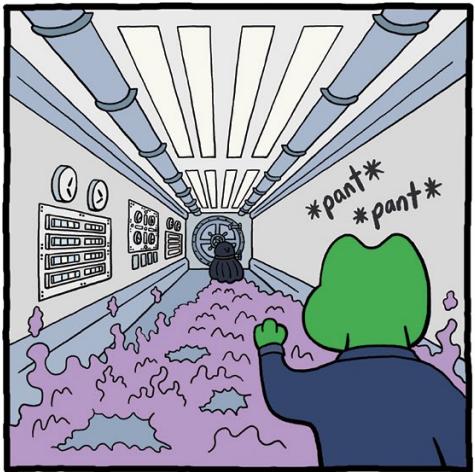
















They're
harvesting the
seaweed right
now!!

To be continued...

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