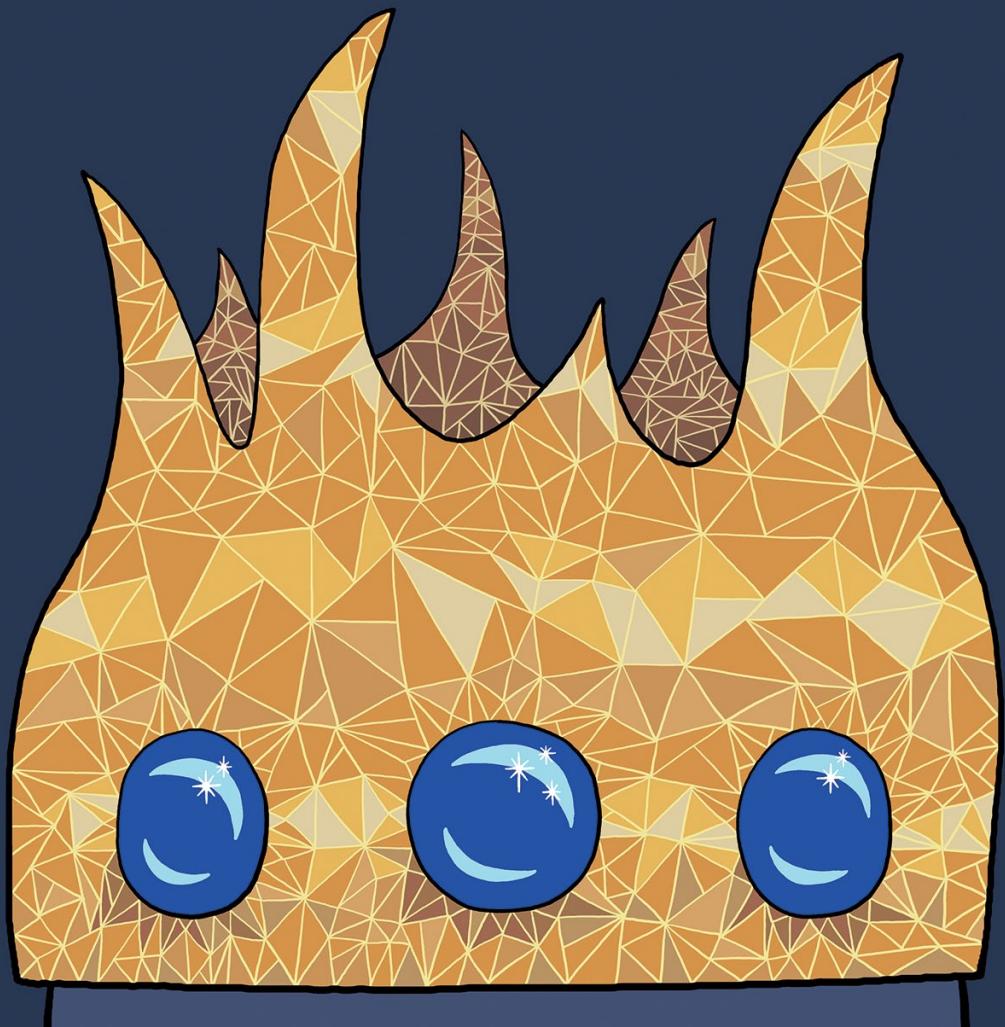


#5



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

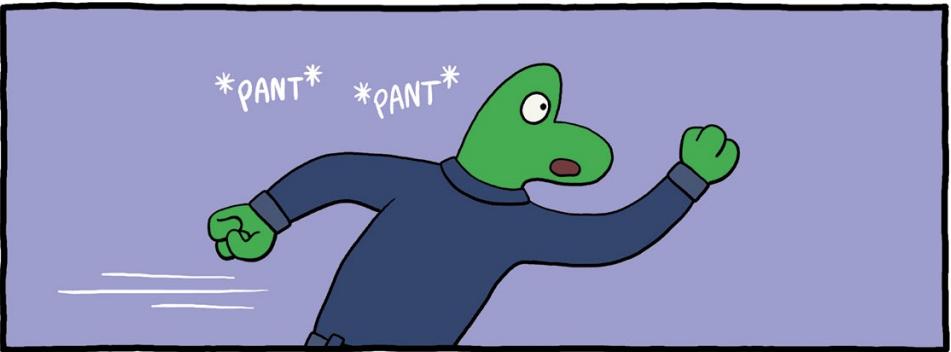
harvesting rare blue seaweed—an endangered plant species that is an integral part of the lake's ecosystem. Mr. Finlopia had a high-tech security system installed around the lake in an attempt to stop the poachers, but someone has been shutting it off!

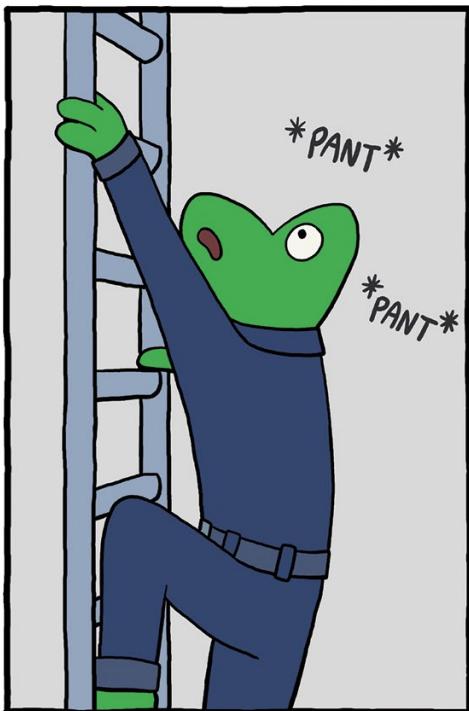
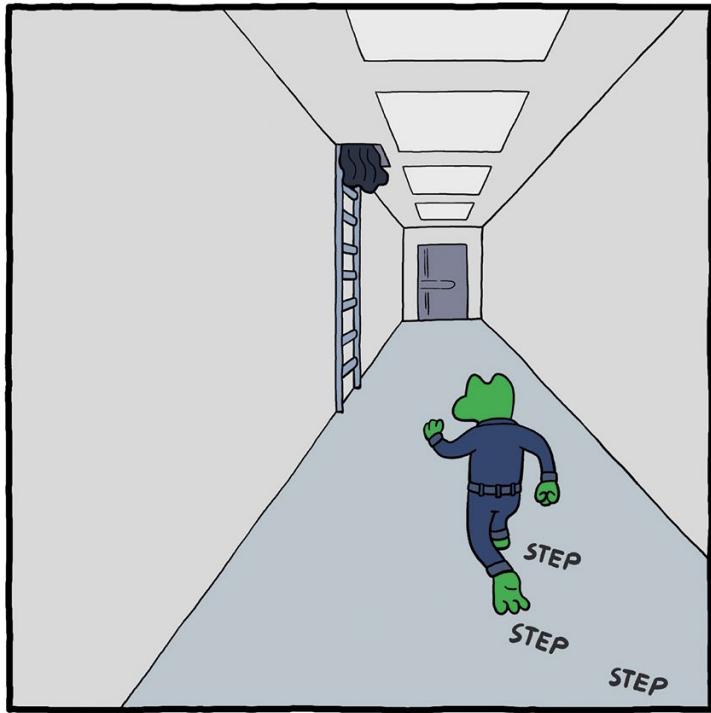
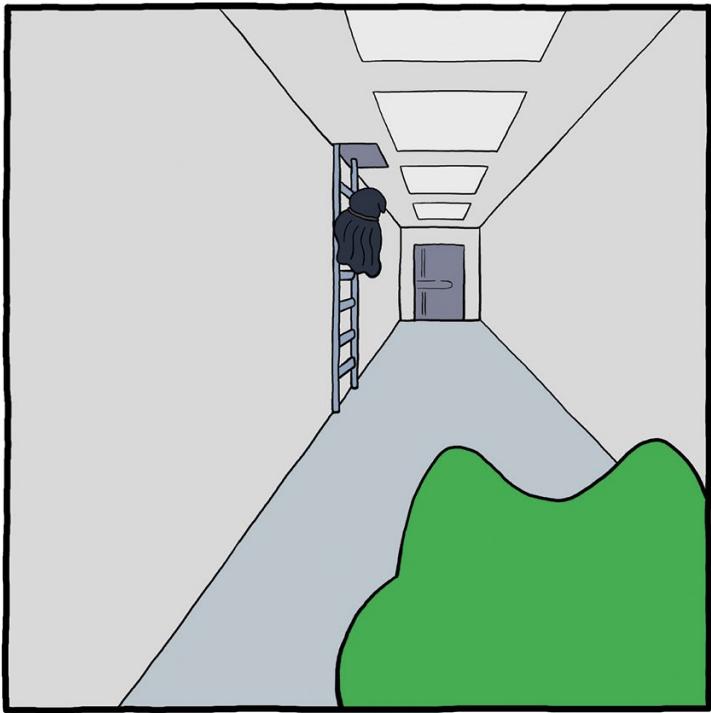
After deciding to investigate the situation, Willy and Froggy found several clues that led them to "The Pyramid". It is here where Willy learned from High Priestess Blueguana—self-proclaimed "major player" in the illegal rare blue seaweed trade—that it is someone in the

Finlopia family who has been shutting off the lake's security system!

Is this traitor to the Finlopia family the mysterious, cloaked figure that Froggy encountered in the tunnels underneath The Pyramid? If so, can Froggy catch them and find out who they are? Can Willy and Froggy save the lake's ecosystem—and Mr. Finlopia's job?

Let's find out...



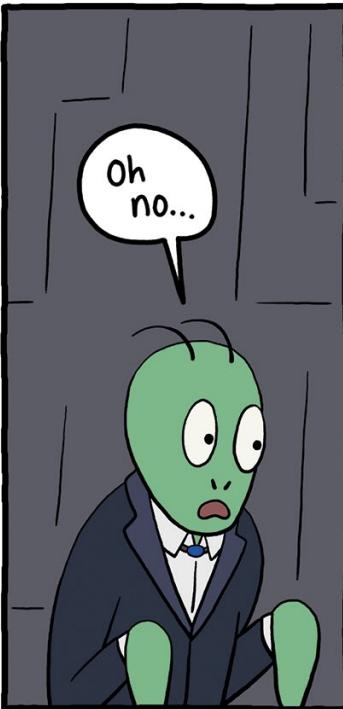
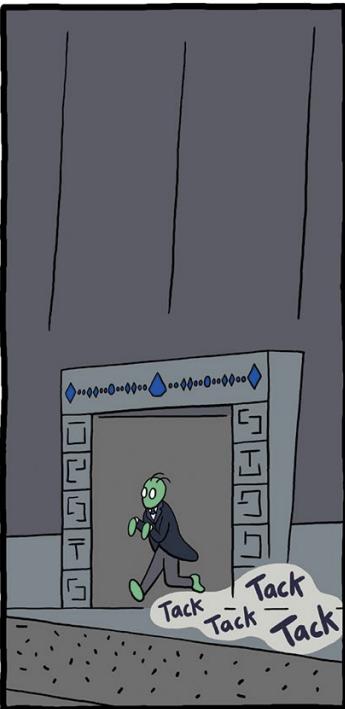
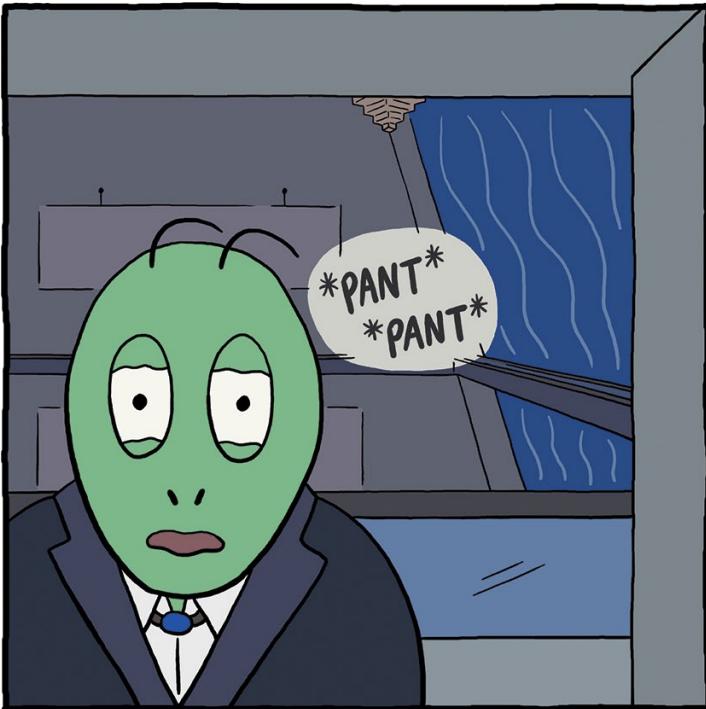




Wow, that was exciting!
Every story needs a good
chase scene.

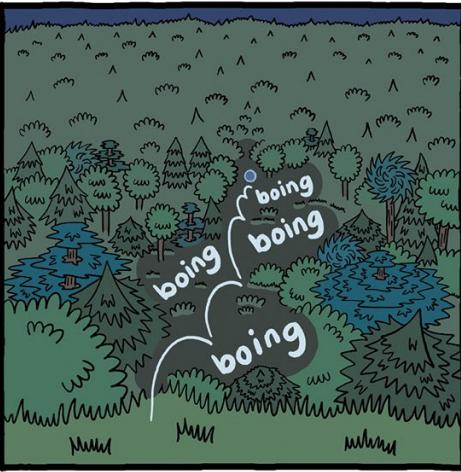


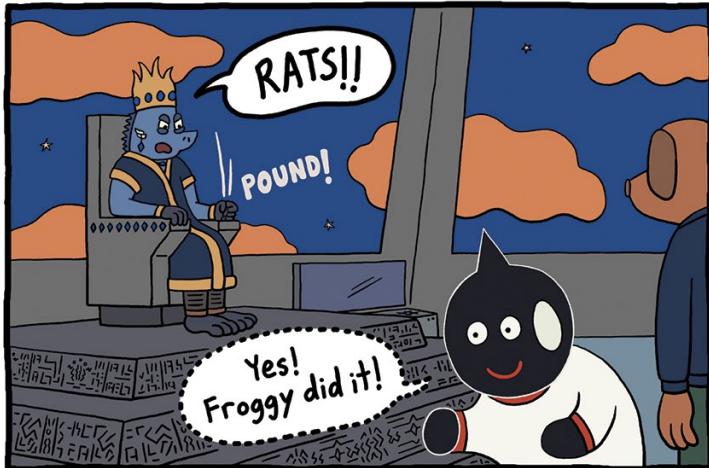
Grassy is
on his way to catch Froggy,
but... what's that sound?

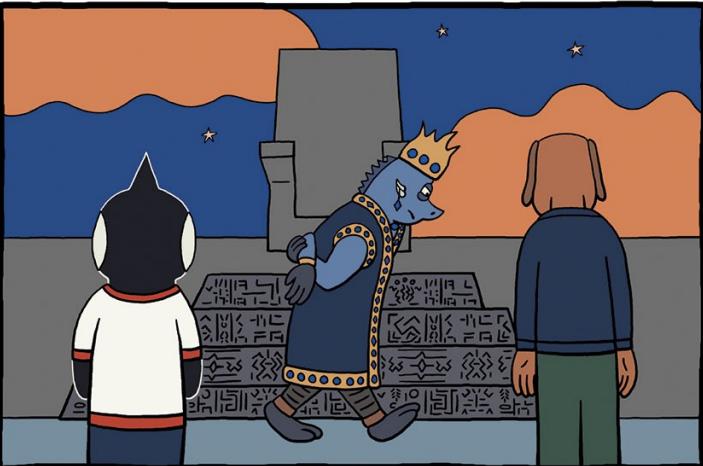


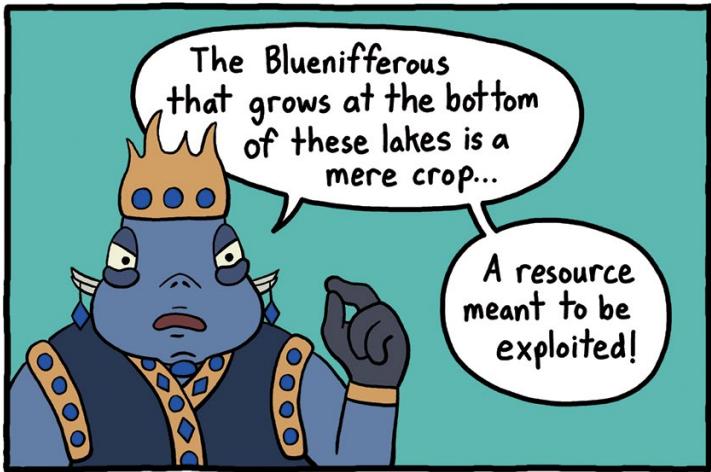
The Bluepetania Police Service has arrived!













Just as my people superimposed spiritual meaning onto the aesthetic beauty created by a plant, your culture has superimposed its moral code onto the world as if it were natural law.

You fight so hard to protect these lakes because you believe that you are fighting in the name of the planet...



...but this planet doesn't care whether its atoms are in the form of a vibrant ecosystem, or a processed consumer product that I can sell on the black market.



No! It will keep revolving all the same... and when the time comes for its orbit to be enveloped by our aging, expanding sun, there will be no record that these lakes had EVER existed!!



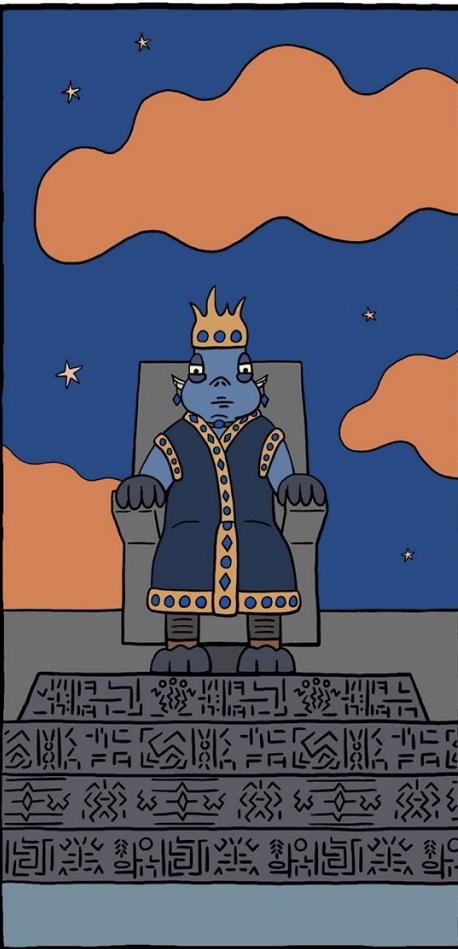
So, mark my words, I will return.



...And when I do, you and the entire Galactic Union will know that it is my natural right to do so!



... You will look deep inside yourselves and come to the ACCURATE conclusion that I am just a rational person acting in a rational manner.



... Because there is no "good" or "evil" in this universe, only an unrelenting, cold emptiness.

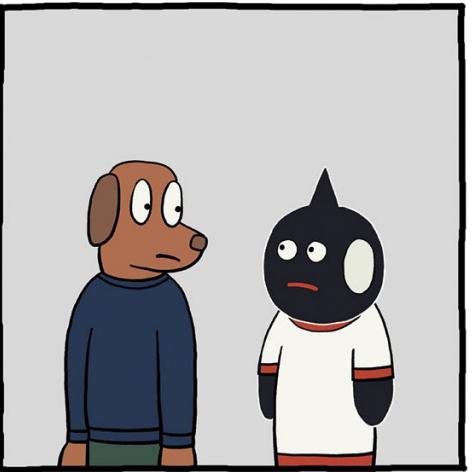
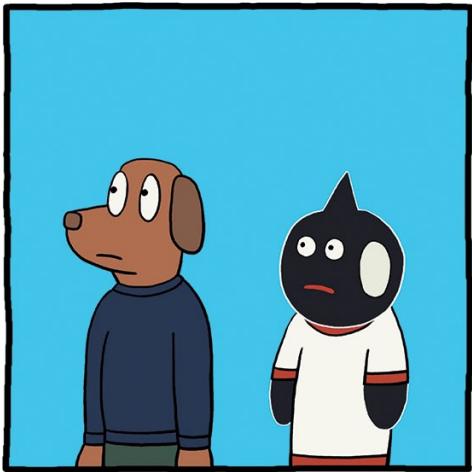


... An emptiness that has haunted my people for the past 500 years.



Now, get out of here before I change my mind about letting you live!





No! They're
getting
away!!

FSSSHH!

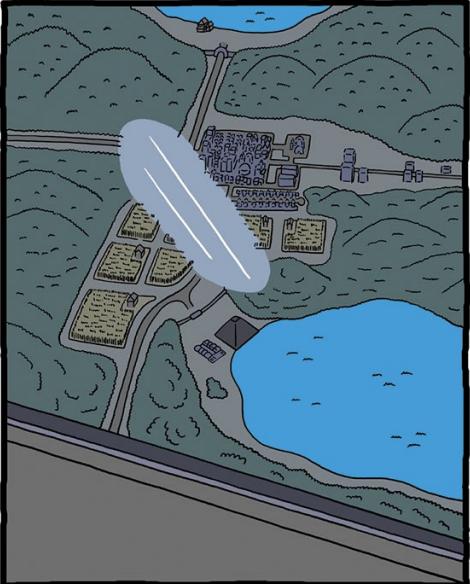
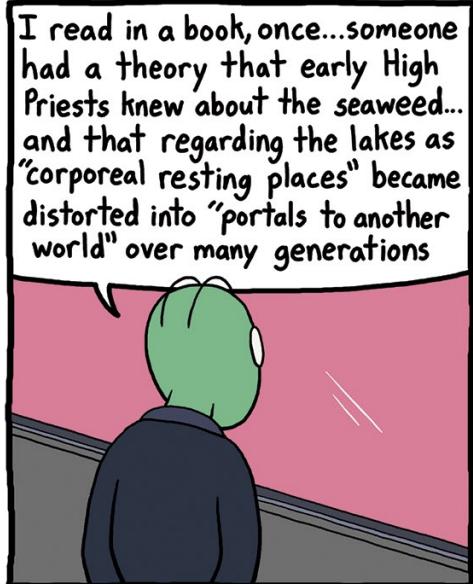
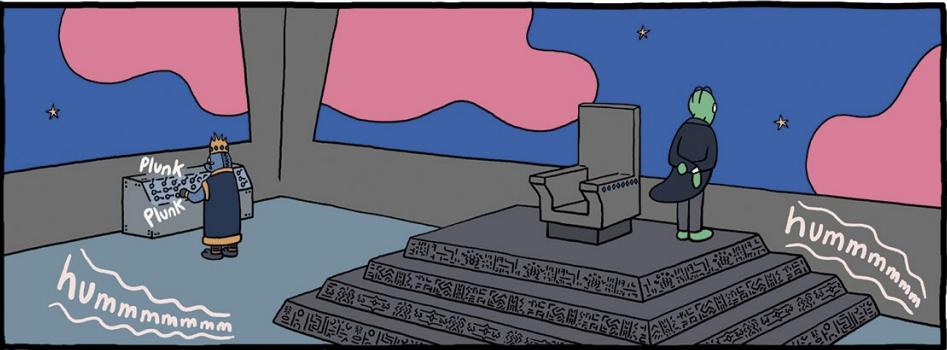
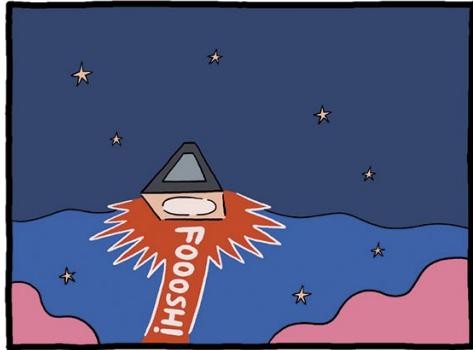
SSSSSH!

((RUMBLE))

((RUMBLE))

Fwoosh

NEUPETTE MALL







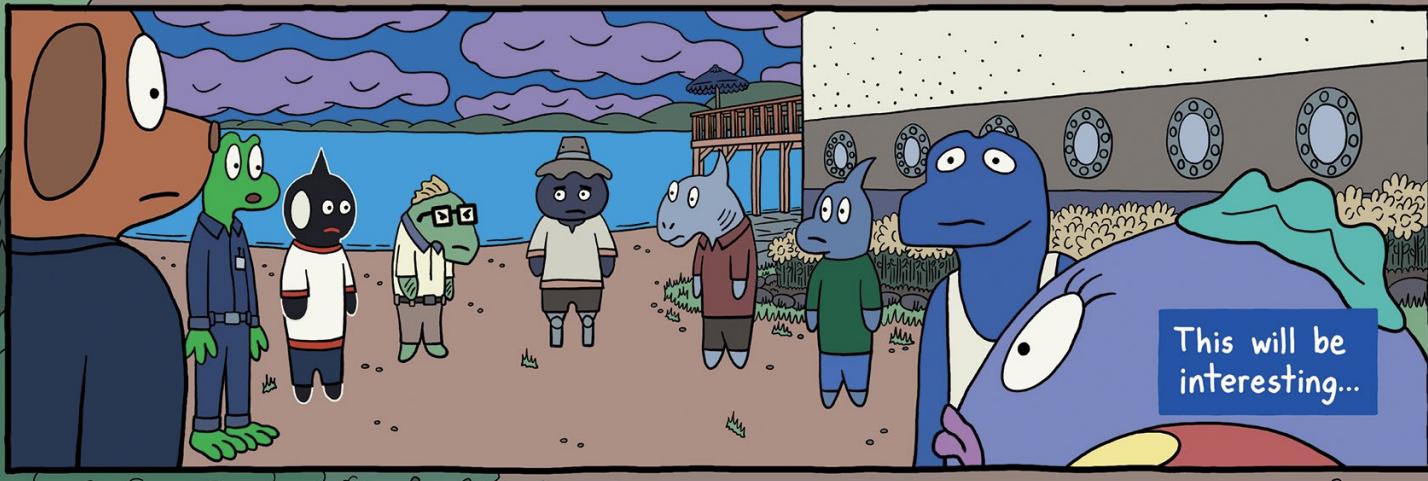
Can this thing go
any faster?! We need
to get back to the
house **QUICKLY!!**

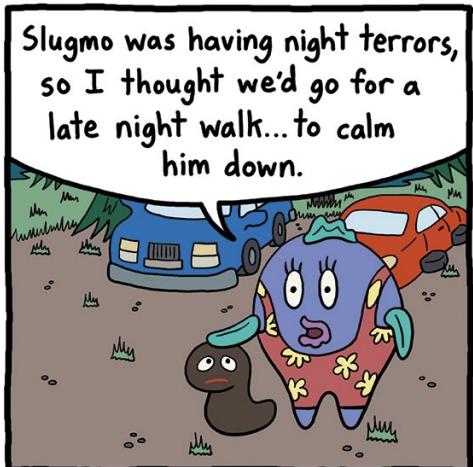
Wow, this is exciting! Okay, let's recap: we know someone in the Finlopia household is helping the seaweed thieves by turning off the lake's security system. That person was seen leaving the pyramid, minutes ago. If our friends can get back to the Finlopia house quickly, they can see who's NOT there, and assume THAT'S who was in the black cloak!



Well, I'll be... It looks like everyone is arriving back to the house at the same time!

If EVERYONE'S awake and out of bed, how are our detectives supposed to find out who the culprit is?





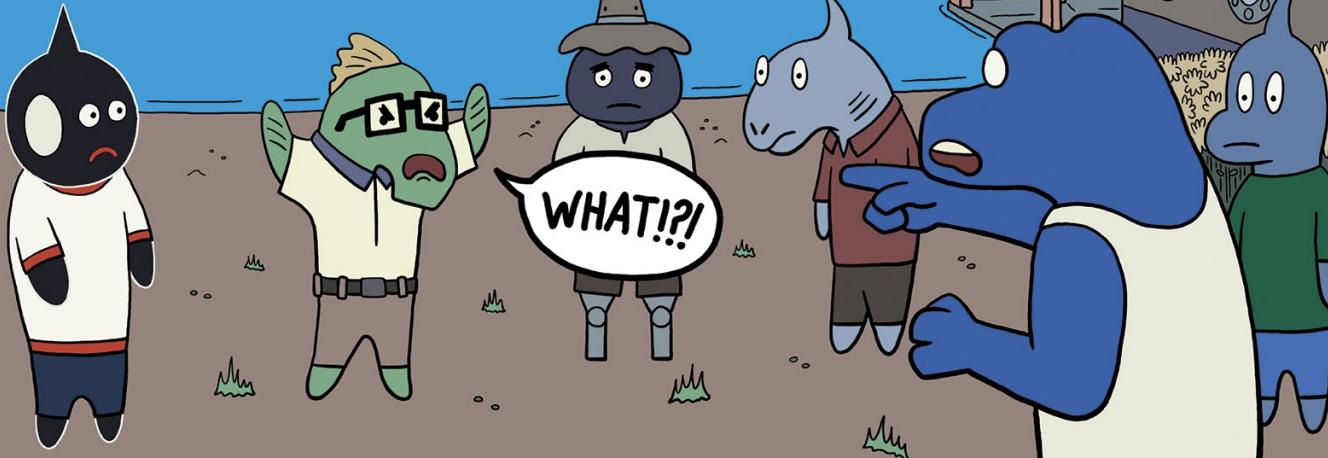


So, everyone's got an excuse, huh?



What about you?!
Why are YOU awake
so early?!

WHAT!?!?



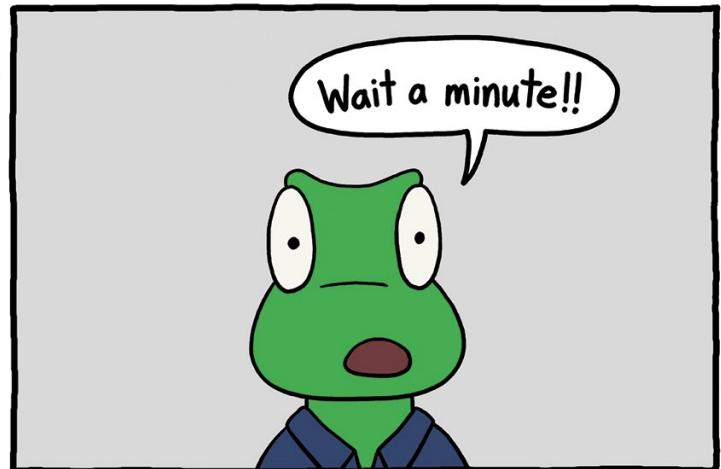
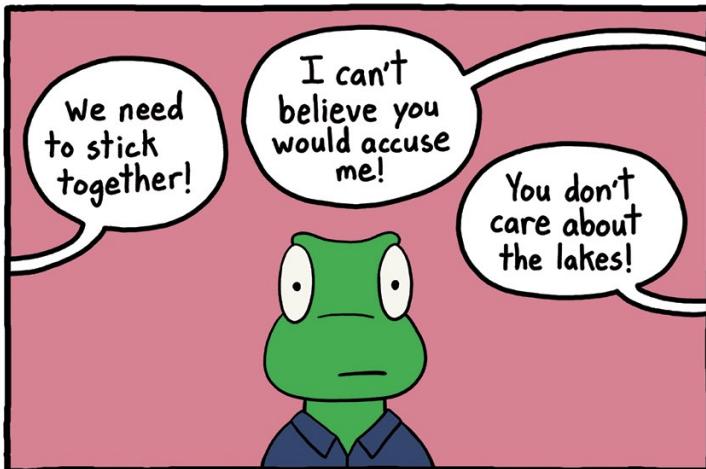
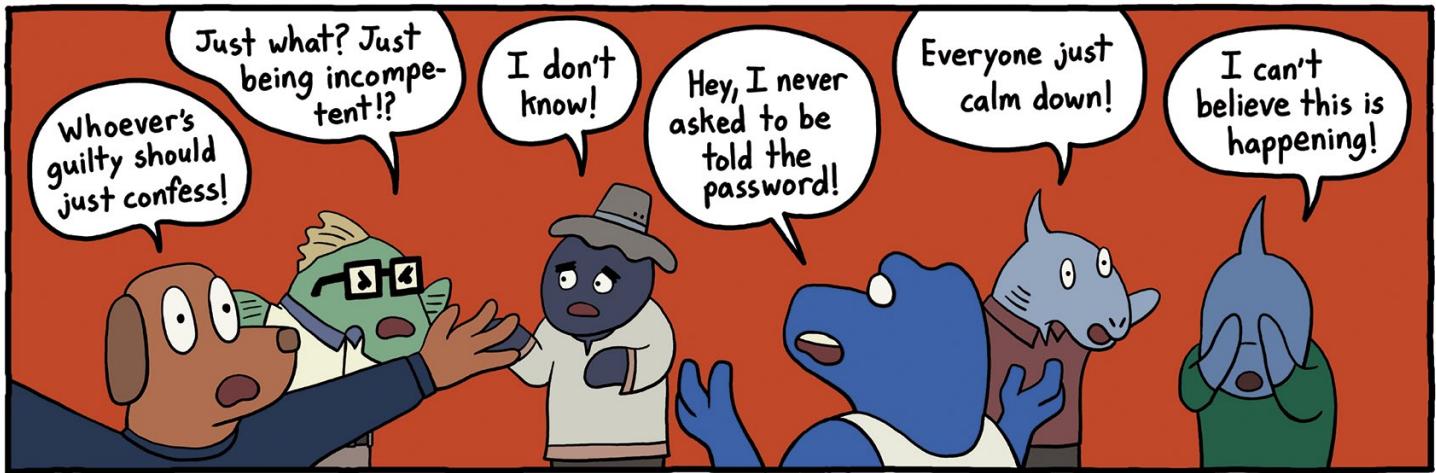
Why, you—!! I was in the security room trying to stop the thieves!!



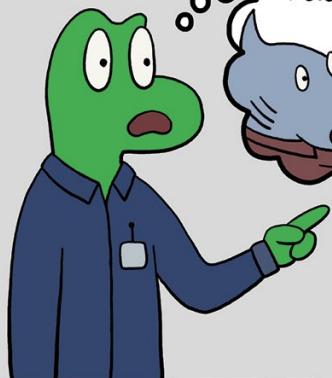
Why did you even tell all these people the password, anyway? Were you trying to cover up your tracks by making sure there were lots of suspects?

I was just...



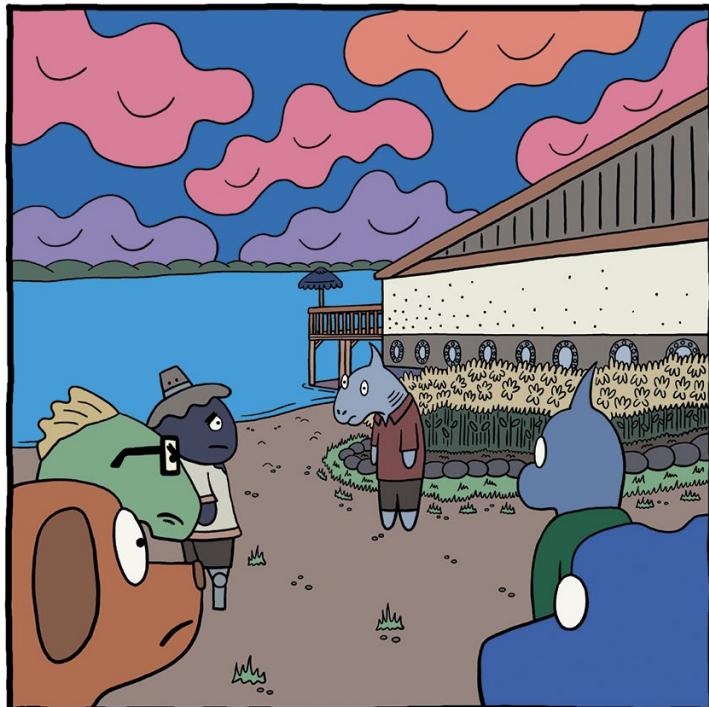


Sharker, you told us that lake samples need to be activated by direct sunlight before they can be recorded. If that's so, why would you be out so early in the morning, before sunrise?



You need to hold the vial up to the sun for ~30sec*

*See page 59



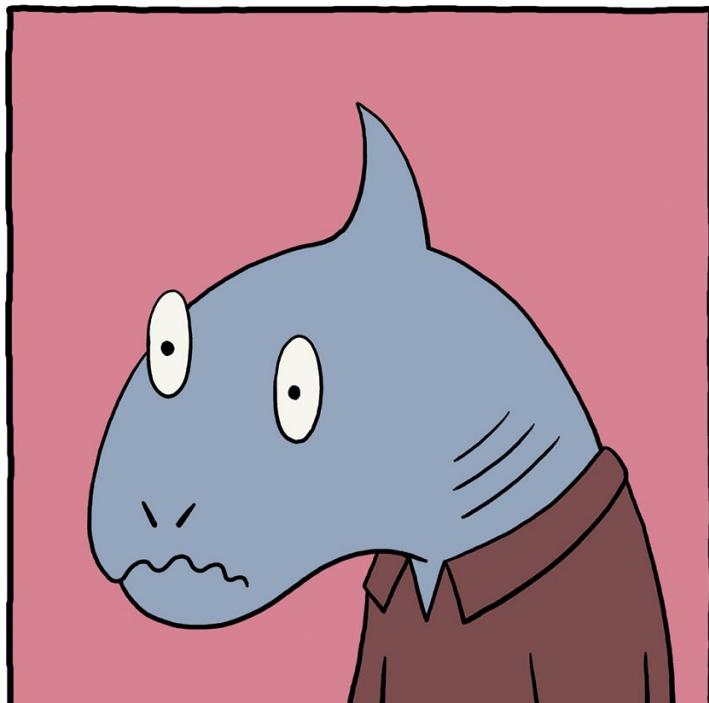
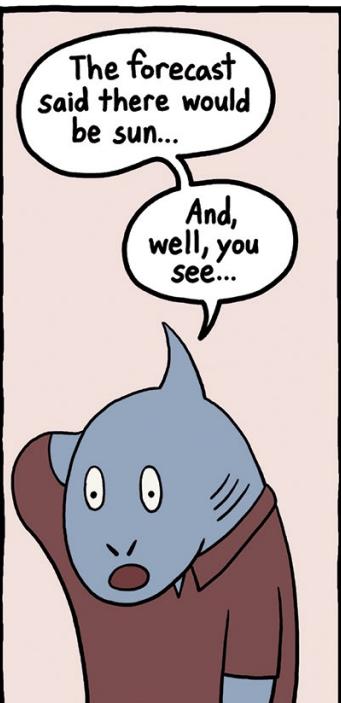
Huh?
I was just...

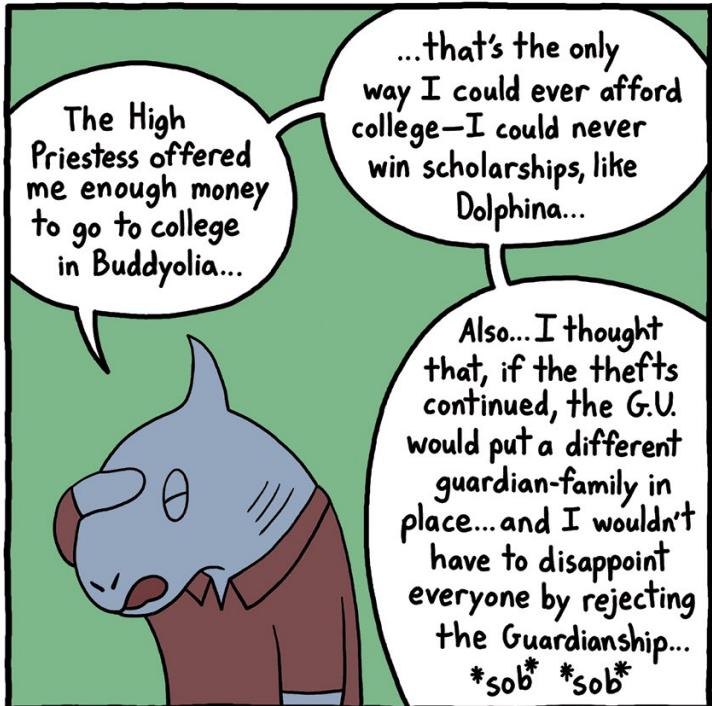
So, yesterday
I forgot to...

Sometimes,
even in the
morning...

The forecast
said there would
be sun...

And,
well, you
see...





The Galactic Union is going to have our heads for this—we're done!!

A legacy 5 generations in making-down the drain, just like that!!

You think I chose to guard this lake because I LIKED doing it!?

IT WAS MY DUTY!!

I blame you for this too, son! The way you raised these kids... no honour, no respect for tradition... I could SENSE our family falling apart!

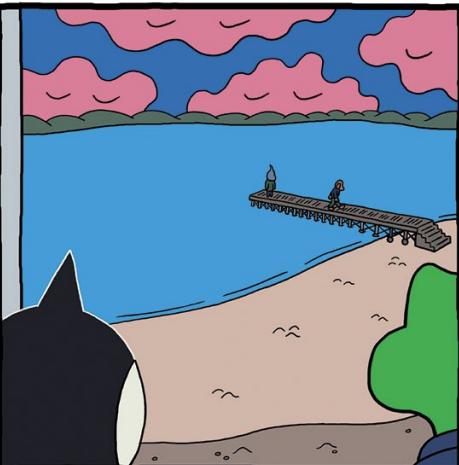
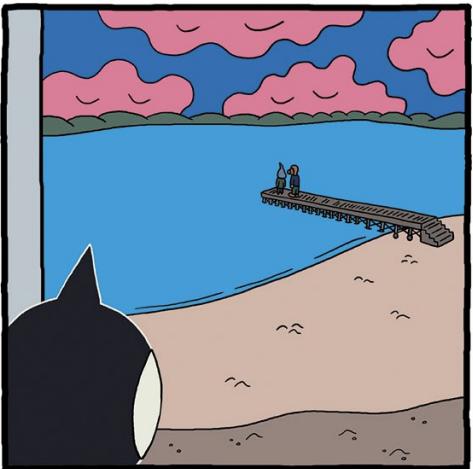
Letting Dolphina go away for college?? You should have known the consequences that would have for our family! A legacy can only be built if kids grow up knowing their role!

boohoo hooo

Dolphina!
Are you alright?!

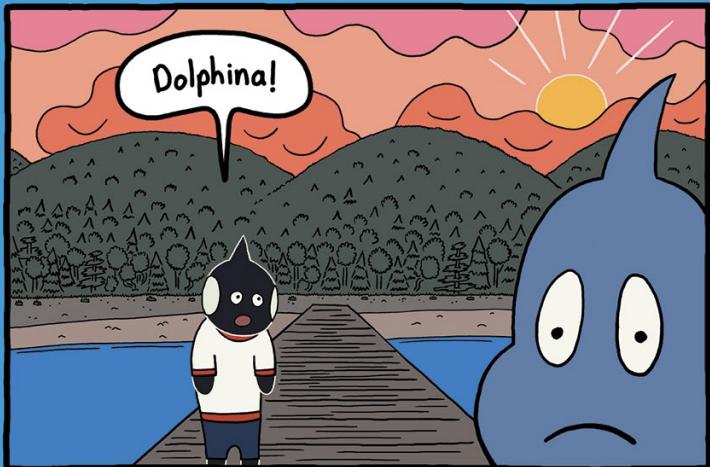
No, wait!

I didn't mean it like that!

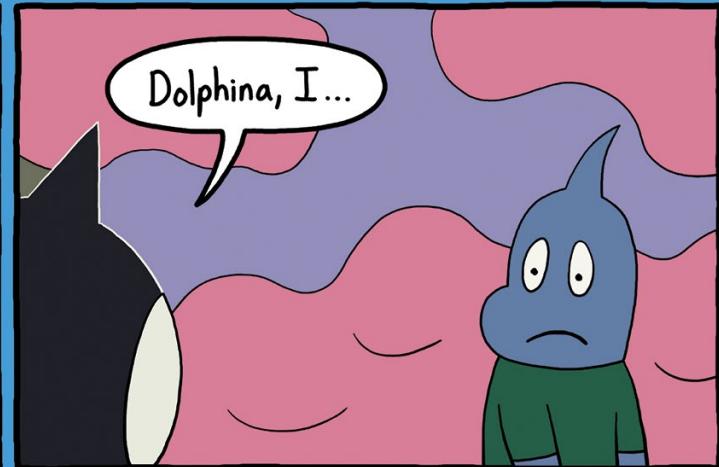




Dolphina!



Dolphina!



Dolphina, I...



I... maybe this isn't a great time for me to say this...or, maybe it is? I dunno... but...



I like you...I like you a lot. And...I just want you to be happy...and I thought...



...maybe you felt the same way, about me?



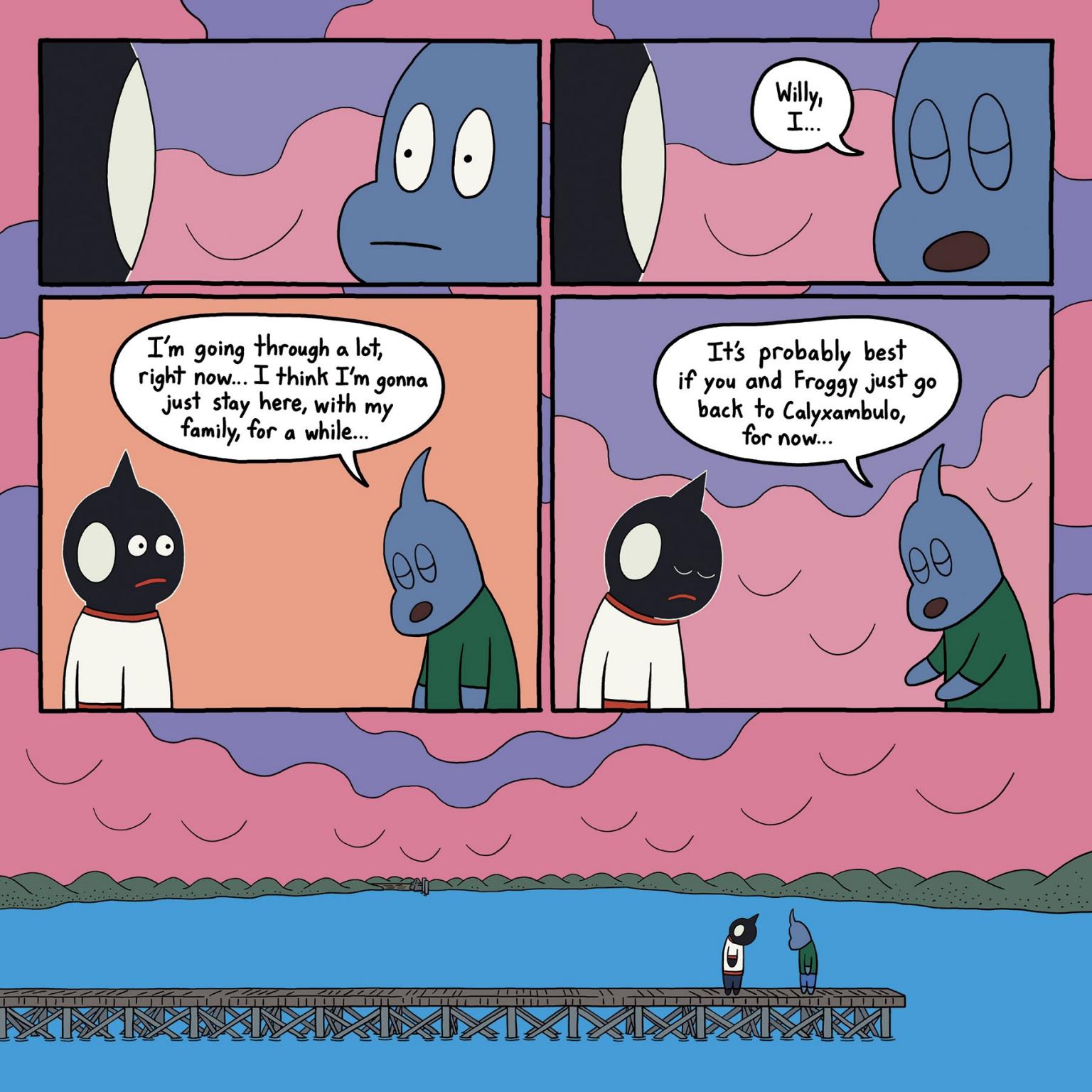
Willy,
I...



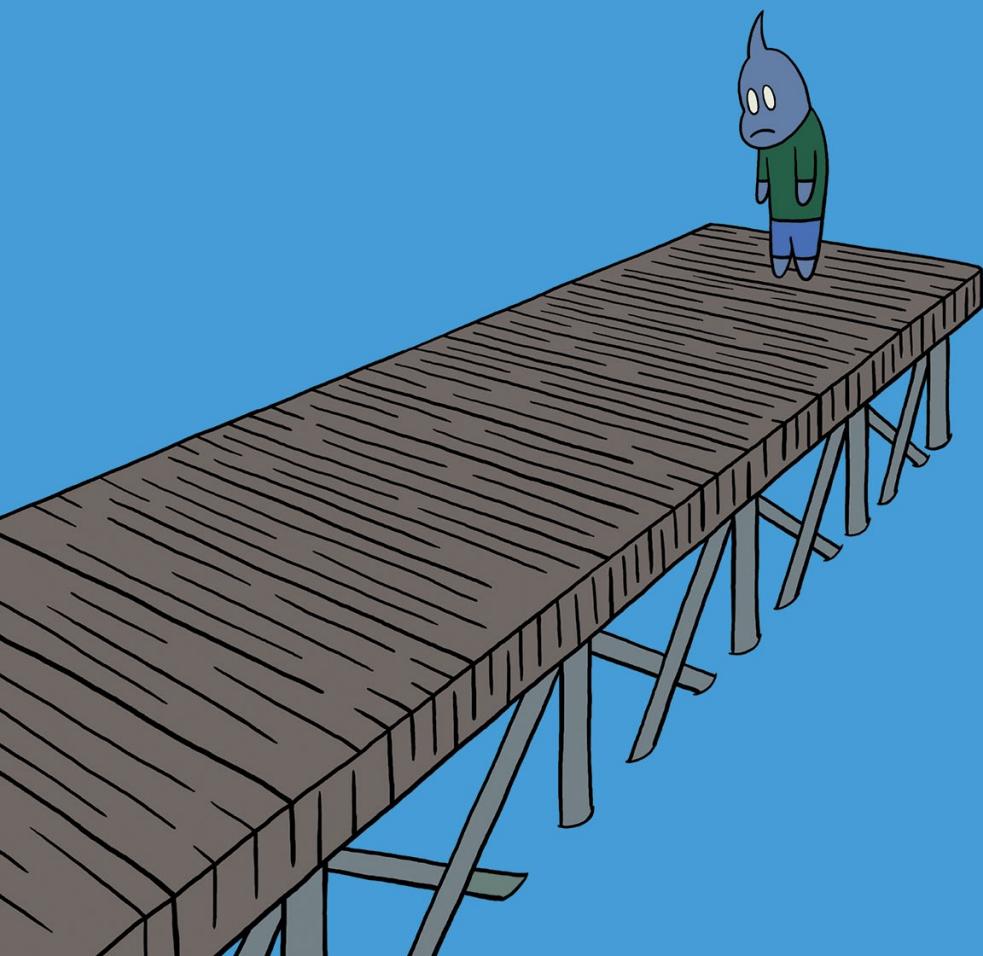
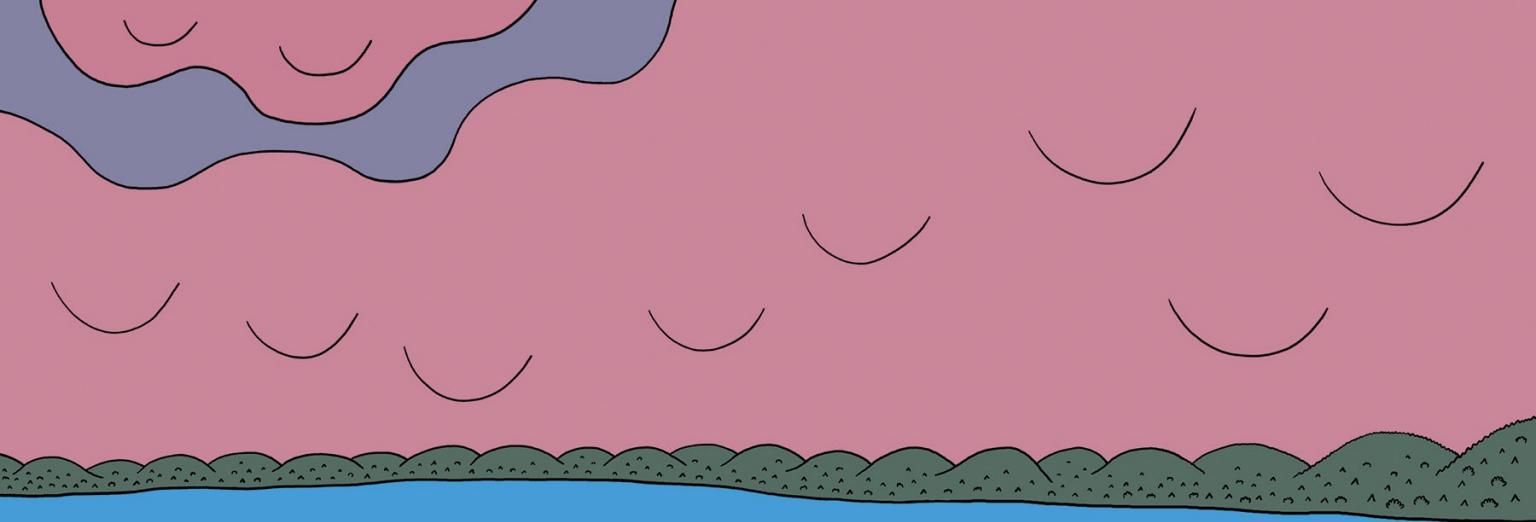
I'm going through a lot,
right now... I think I'm gonna
just stay here, with my
family, for a while...



It's probably best
if you and Froggy just go
back to Calyxambulo,
for now...







A few hours later, Willy and Froggy are on a balloon-o-copter ride to Bluetown Space Station, to catch a ship back to Buddyville, Buddyolia:



Oh my gosh... that was an amazing first experience on another planet!



We did it! We solved the mystery! Can you believe it?! I mean... the High Priestess got away... but what can you do?



I was so disappointed about not getting into explorer school, but who cares about that, now?! Now I've got real-life explorer experience!

This is what exploring is all about! ... Going to a strange, new land, finding your way around, solving problems, saving the day...

woohooo!



What are you talking about?! This weekend was horrible!!

I don't care about solving a stupid mystery, I care about Dolphina!

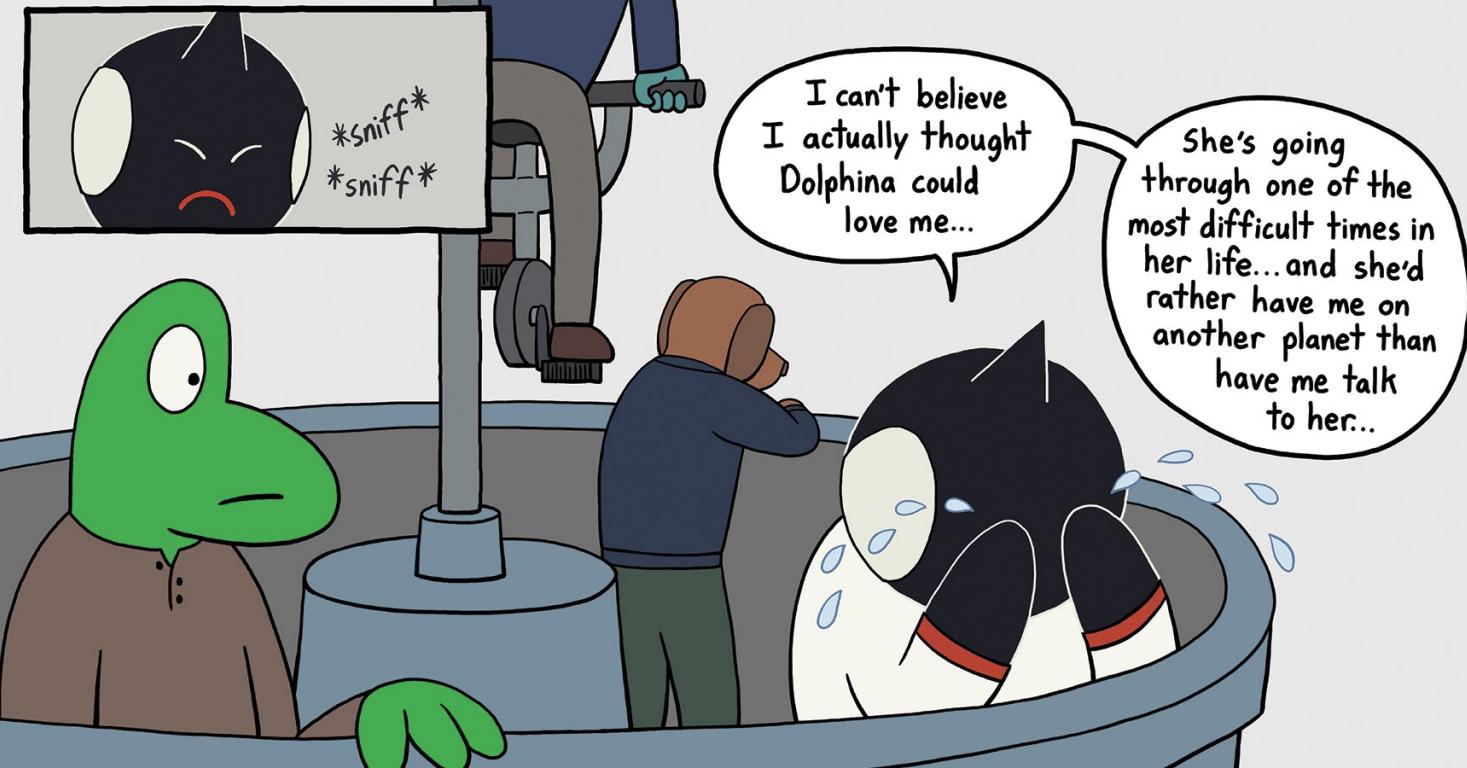


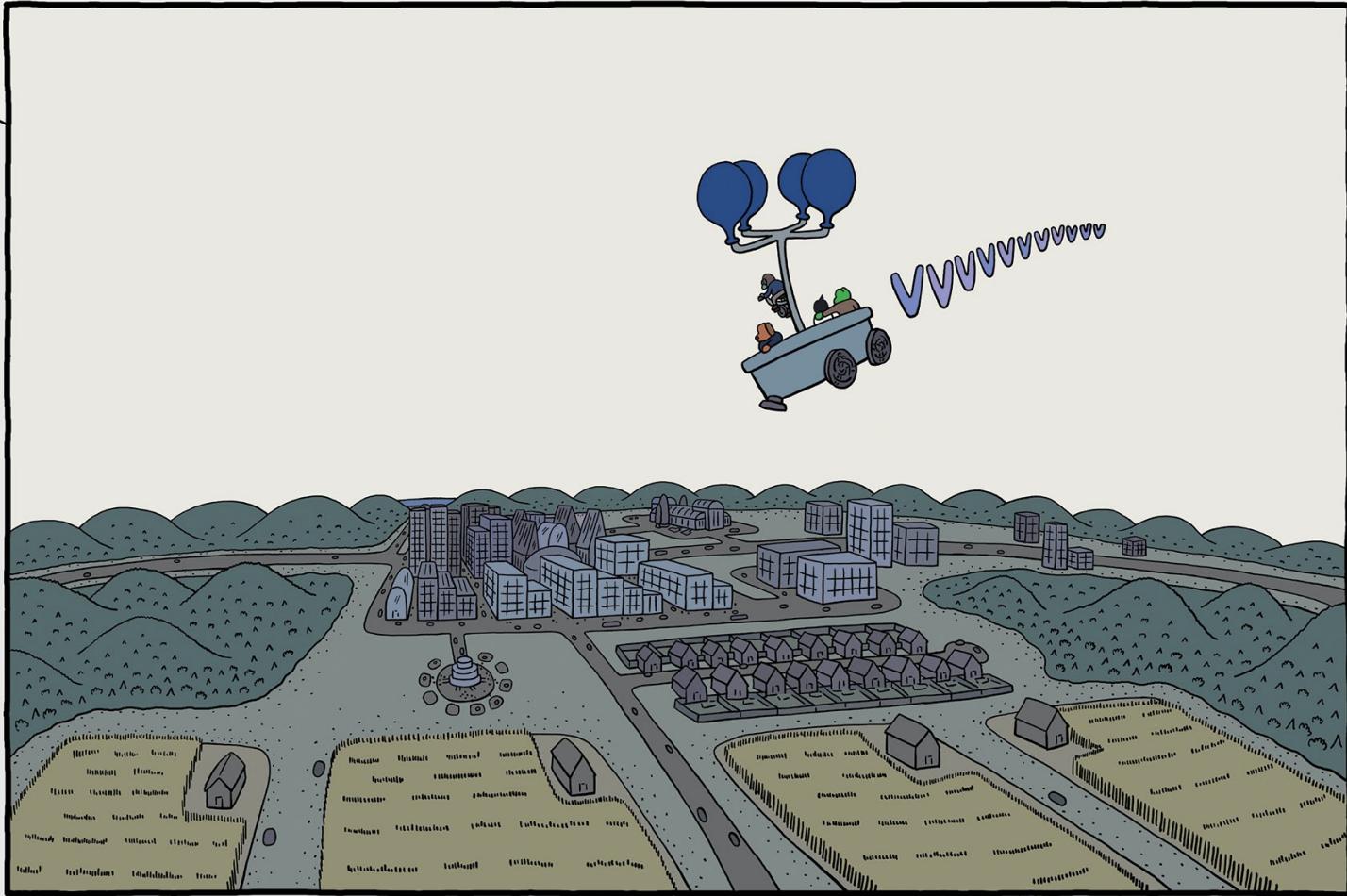
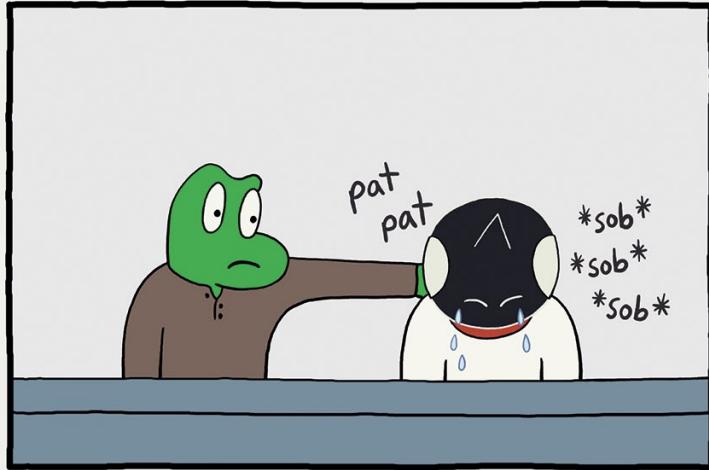
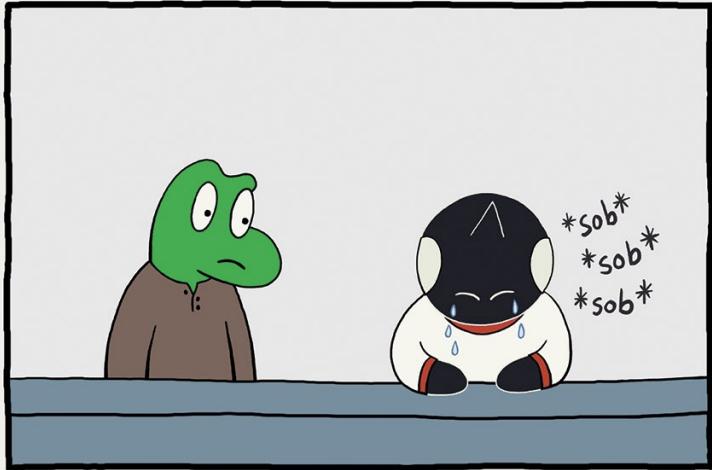
You wouldn't know what it's like to care about someone. You only care about yourself!

All you want to do is live out this childish "explorer" fantasy. Don't you understand that the type of "explorer" you want to be doesn't even exist anymore?!

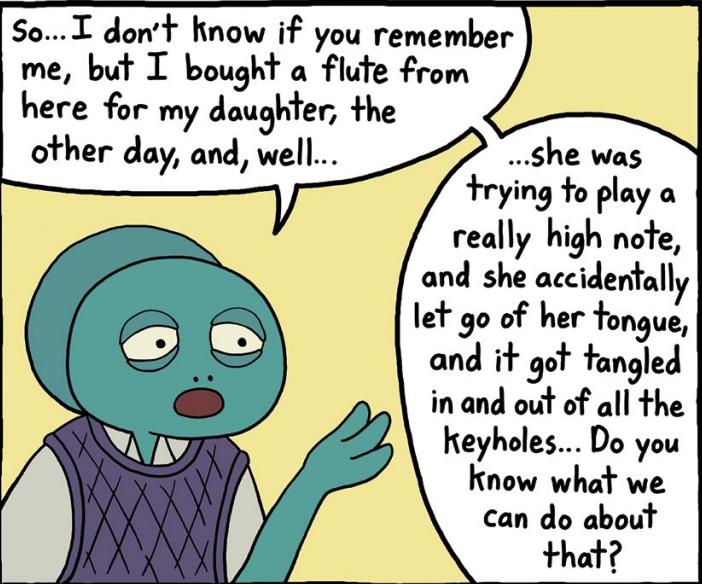
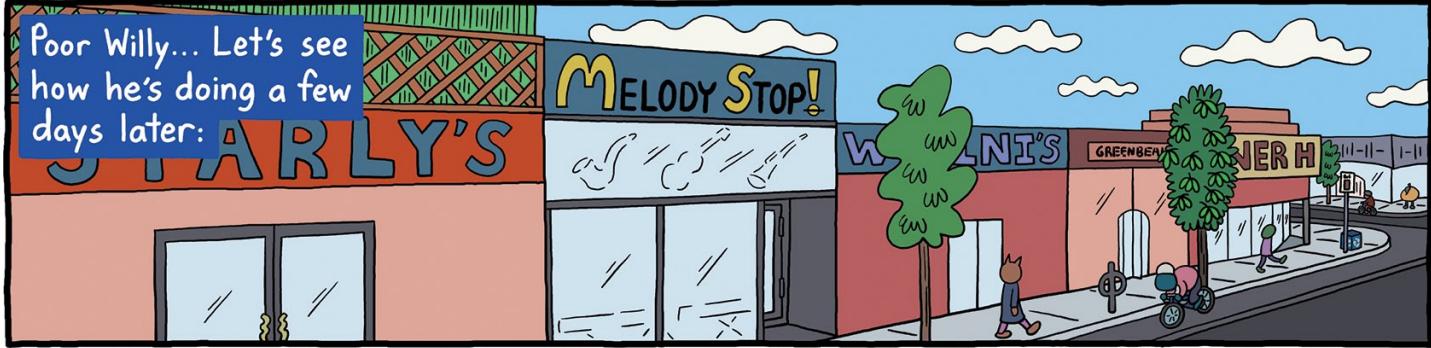
Explorers haven't done any actual footwork for years! All of the planets within reach have been discovered, and mapped and indexed in every way possible!

All explorers do is sit at desks and read information they get from space probes that have exited the solar system!





Poor Willy... Let's see how he's doing a few days later:



I told her to come, so you could look at it, but she's too embarrassed to leave the house.



...To be honest, I've never heard of that happening before.



Maybe try using oil to get it loose? And if that doesn't work, you can unscrew it into as many pieces as you can.



I have a tiny screwdriver you can borrow...



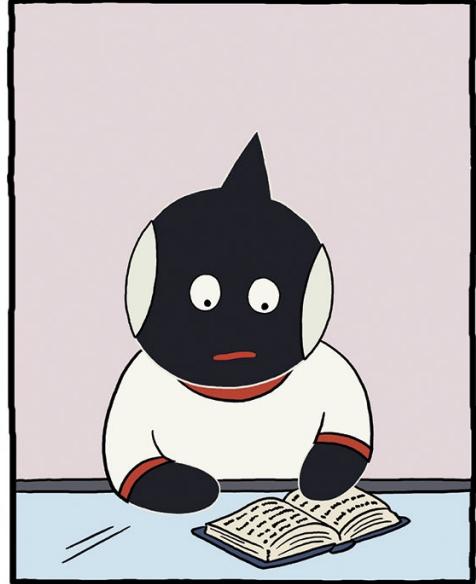
There you go!



Alright, thanks. Hopefully this works!

Yeah, and don't worry if you accidentally break something... I should be able to repair it.

Thanks a lot!



((Ding))
((Ding))

Hi, Willy

Hi

Listen, about
Bluepetania-



Yeah, I wanted to talk
about that...



I'd really like for us to continue being
friends. I kind of want to just... forget
last week even happened, hehe...

Yeah,
I agree.

I thought a lot about what happened over the past few days, and, you know... I really wasn't myself, during that trip.



Me neither

How did everything turn out? I never heard...

Well, the Galactic Union let my dad remain Lake Guardian, but he's under probation for the next 5 years. A G.U. rep will check on him, once a week.

Hmmmm...



And Sharker has to complete 5 years of full-time ecosystem-supporting community service. I think he's actually looking forward to it.

That's good...



He seemed like a nice enough person who just made a bad decision.

Yeah...

Did they catch the High Priestess?



No...

Oh well...



Well, I should get back to the bicycle shop. See you at lunch Friday, with the rest of the gang?

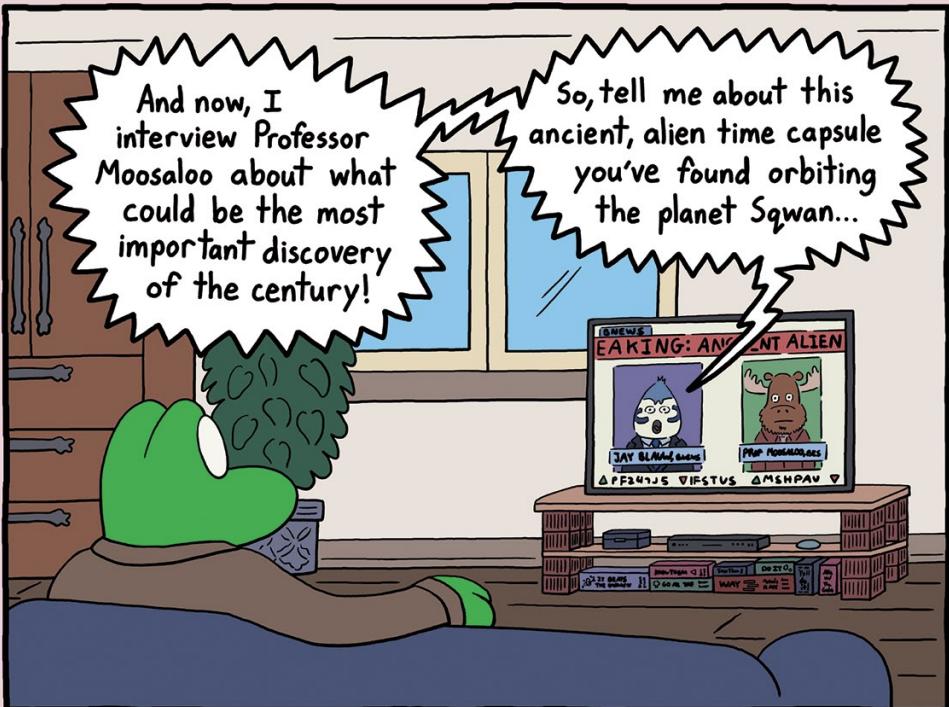
Yeah, for sure. See you then!



It looks like Willy is stepping outside for some fresh air...

That's a great thing
to do when there's a
beautiful day outside!!

Back at Willy and Froggy's home:

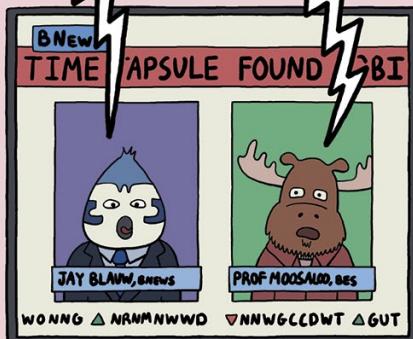


Well, it turns out that the satellite we've found is not a time capsule. What it appears to be is a hub of recorded customer service phone calls from some sort of... ancient corporation.

...So, it's just a bunch of saved customer service calls? From an extinct race?

Well, yes...

hmmm....



There's actually A LOT
that can be learned about
a culture through a discov-
ery as seemingly insig-
nificant as-

Awww, whatever...
...Boring!! Back to
you, Aardvika.



Hey Froggy!

Oh, hey!

Listen, I've been thinking about
our trip to Bluepetania... I'm
sorry I blew up at you. I was
going through a lot at the time.
I was really disappointed with
how things turned out with
Dolphina and everything, and-

Oh, don't worry
about it!

Thanks for
understanding!

Oh, by the way...
I picked something
up for you on the
way home...

?

It's a pamphlet for an explorer school opening up in Erigudem.* You should apply!

Haha,
thanks buddy!

It seems like Willy is starting to cheer up! He's off to tend his garden—something he loves to do:

slide

*a neighbouring city

Hello, plants!
How are you all
doing?

I haven't seen you for
a while... I hope that kid from
next door watered you, like
he said he would...

What about you, Planty Jr? How was your first week in the garden?

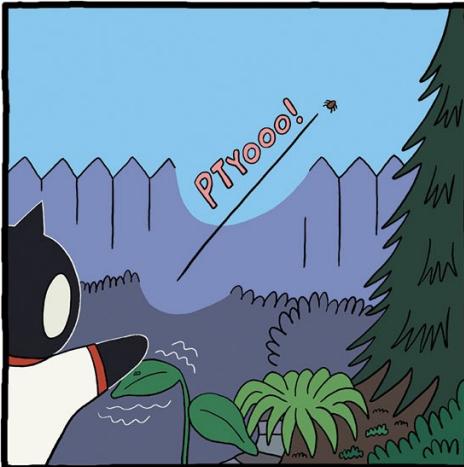


Looks like you've got some bug bites...

Hey you!
Stop that!!



PYOOO!



Sorry, I forgot to tell you there are bugs outside...

...I guess I forgot to tell you about a lot of things outside...



Well, besides a few bites,
you look nice and healthy!



Well, that's our story!



I hope you enjoyed it!

Remember when Froggy was chasing that guy—who we didn't know was Sharker at the time—through those underwater corridors? That was so cool!



Anyway, I hope we can go on another adventure soon.

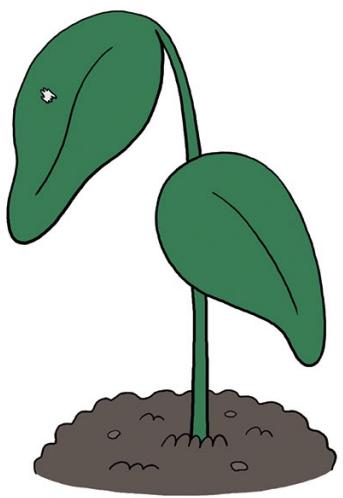
Until next time...



I was given the banjo
The paddle was given to you
So paddle around
As I play a sweet sound
Then we'll lay down in the blue*



*Bluepetie folk song



Amaru
2017-2023

The end.

**For more comics, visit:
www.willyandfroggy.com**