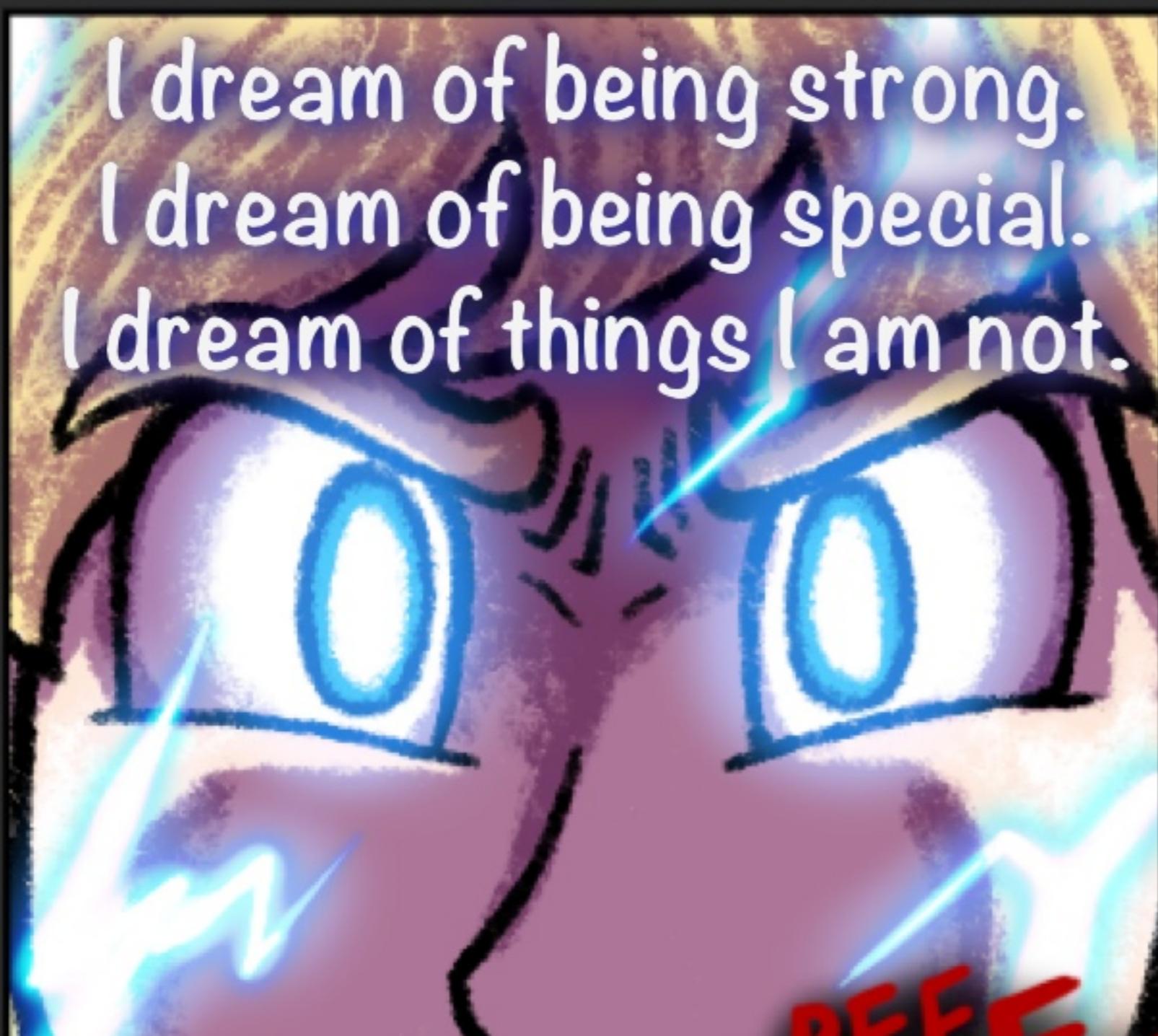




I have strange dreams.



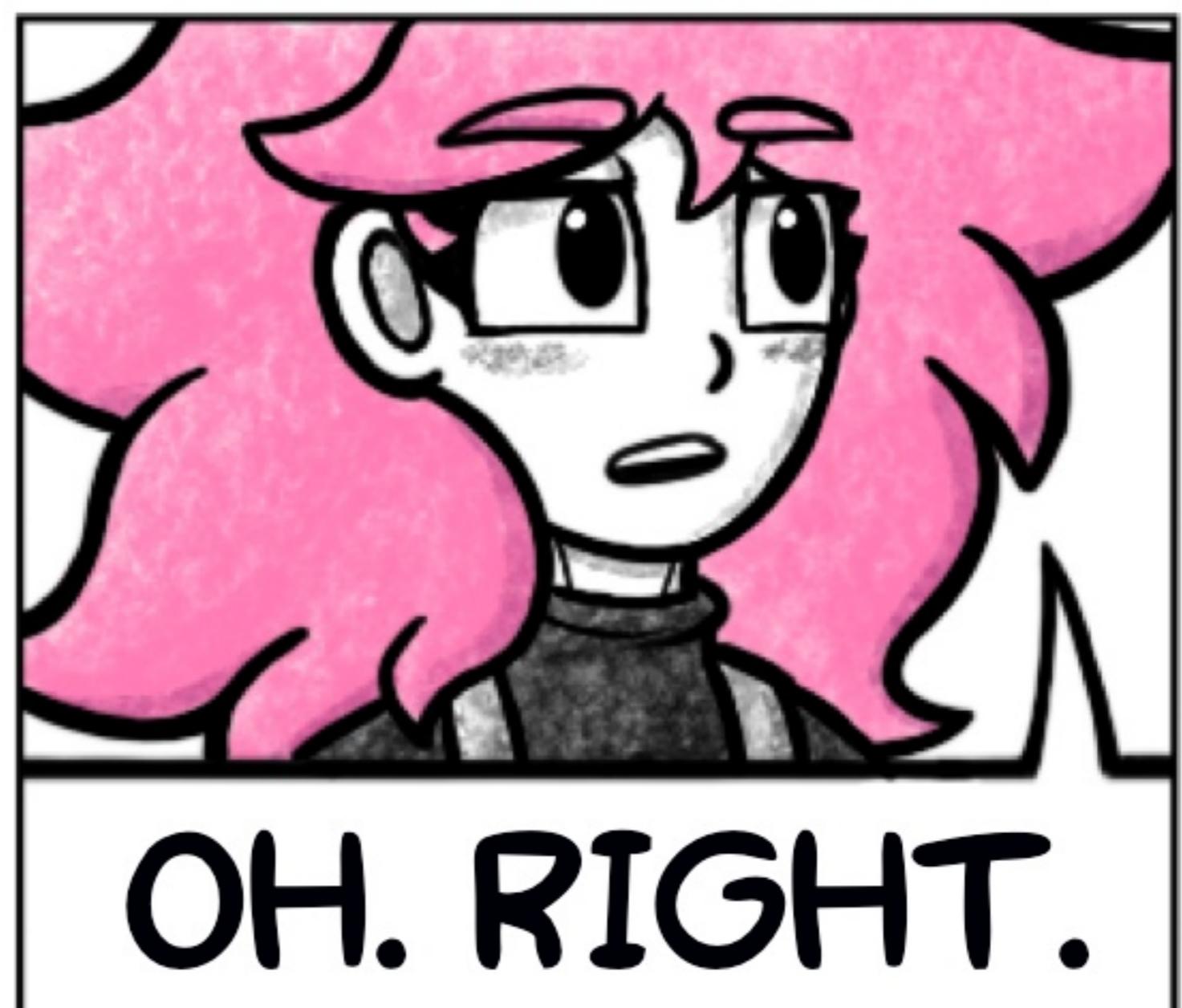
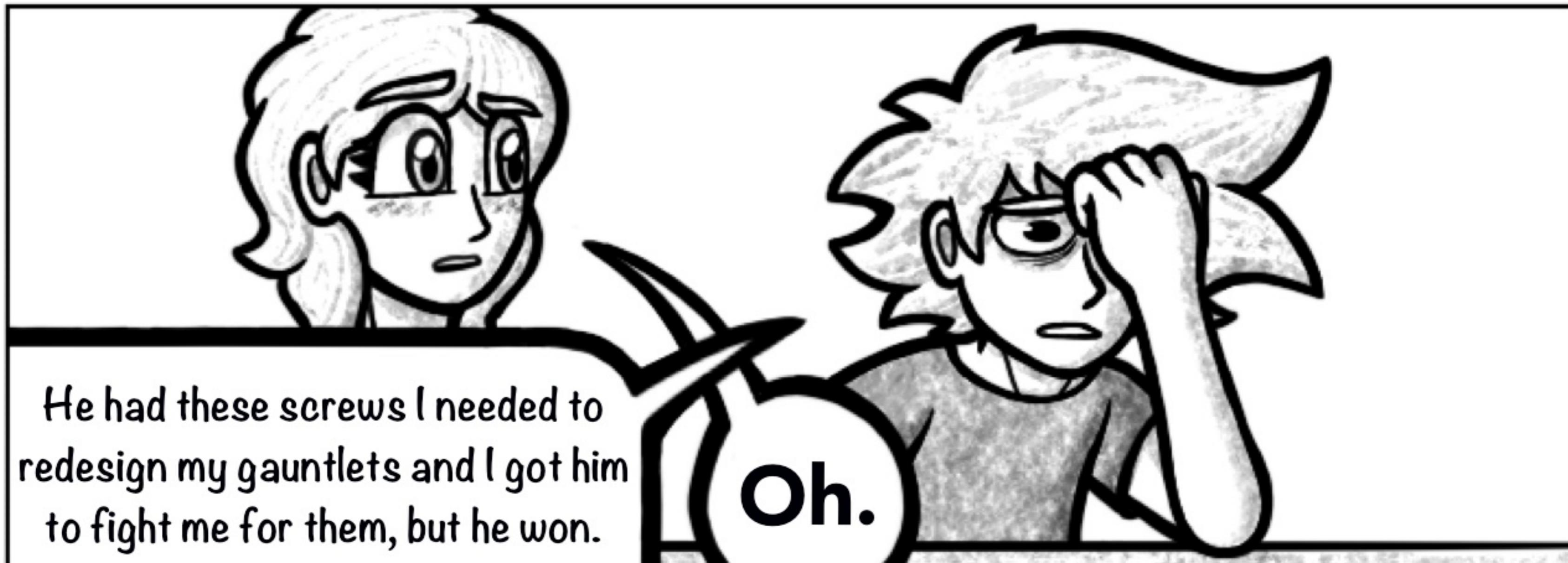
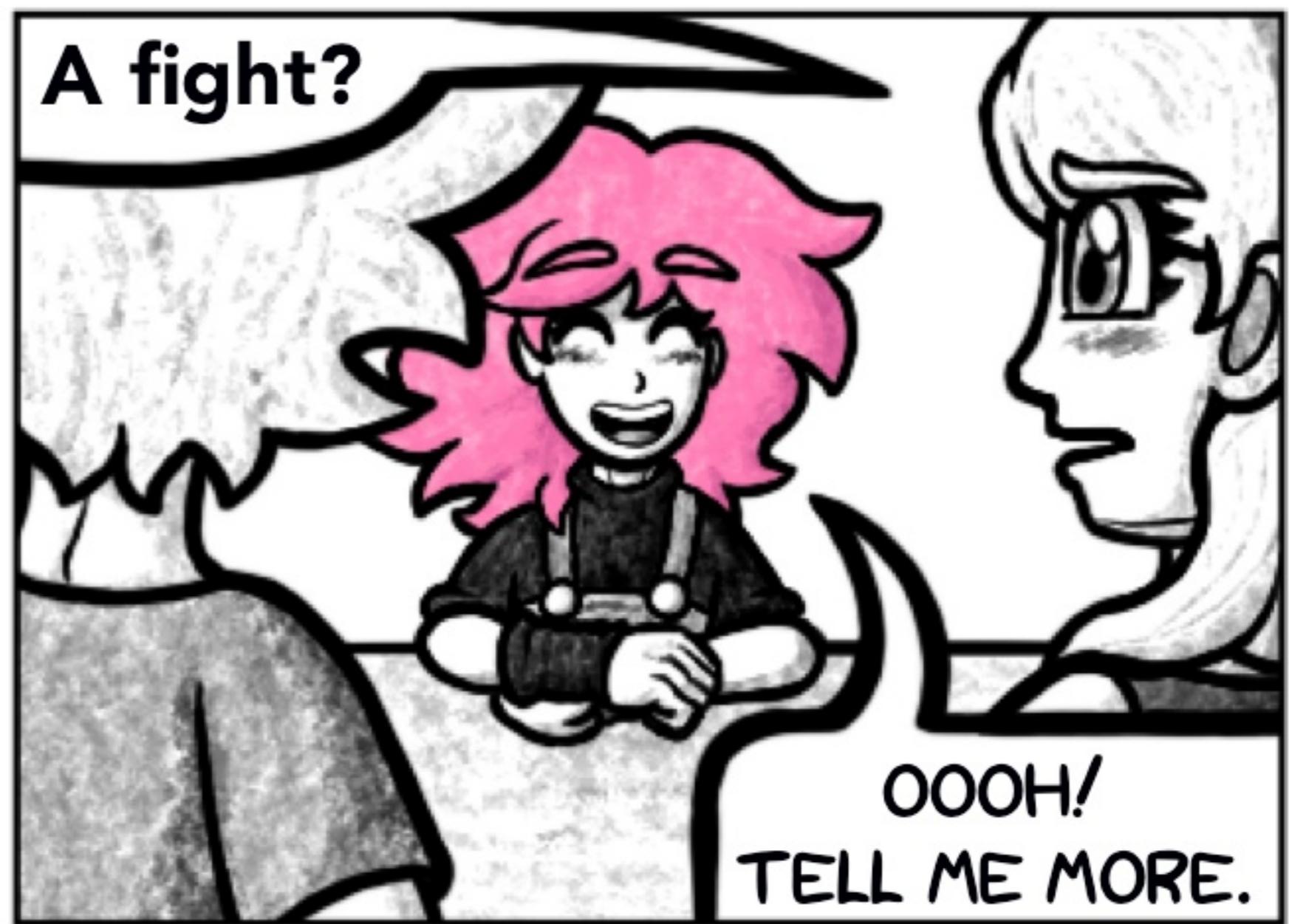
I dream of being special.
I dream of things I am not.

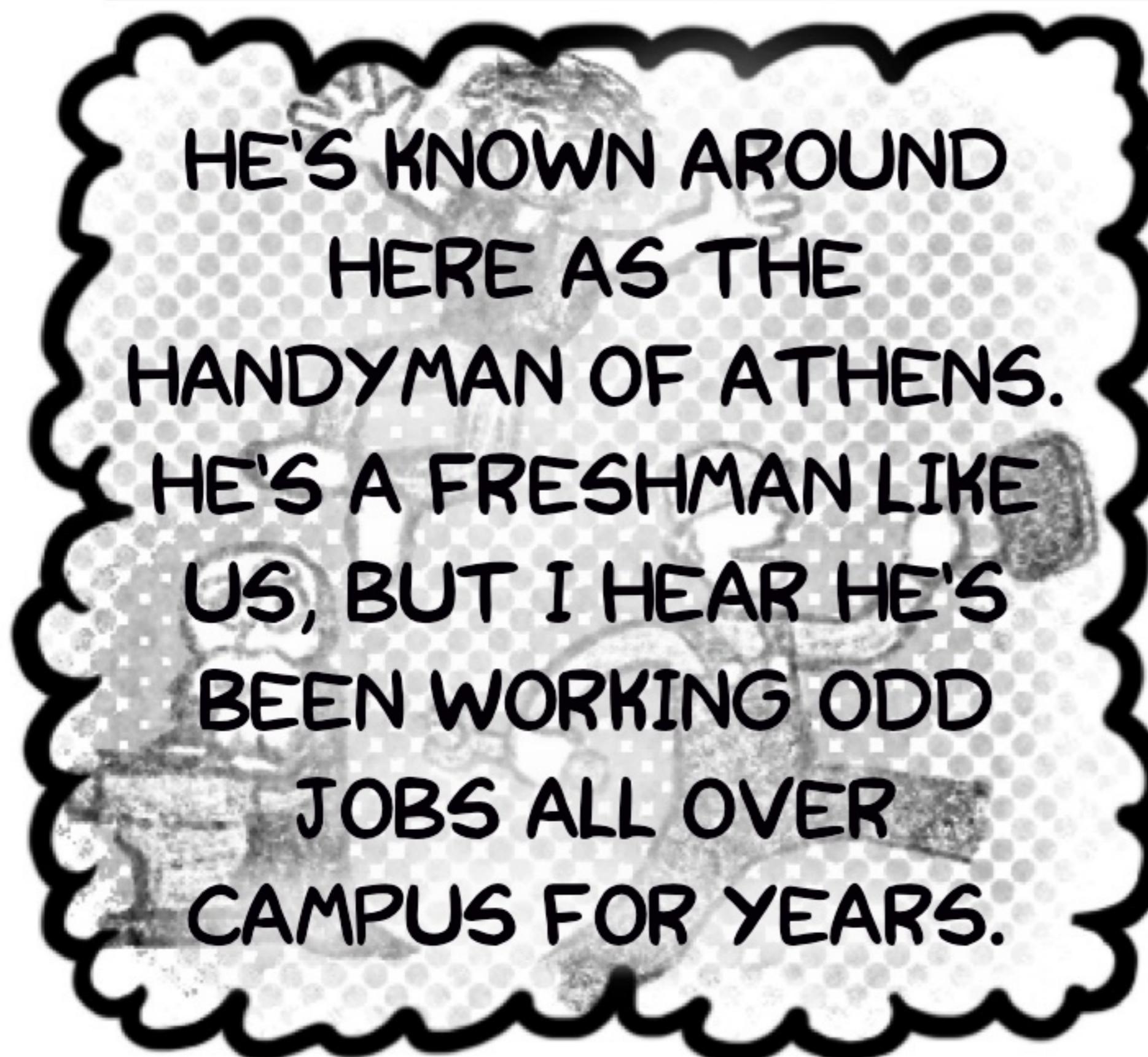
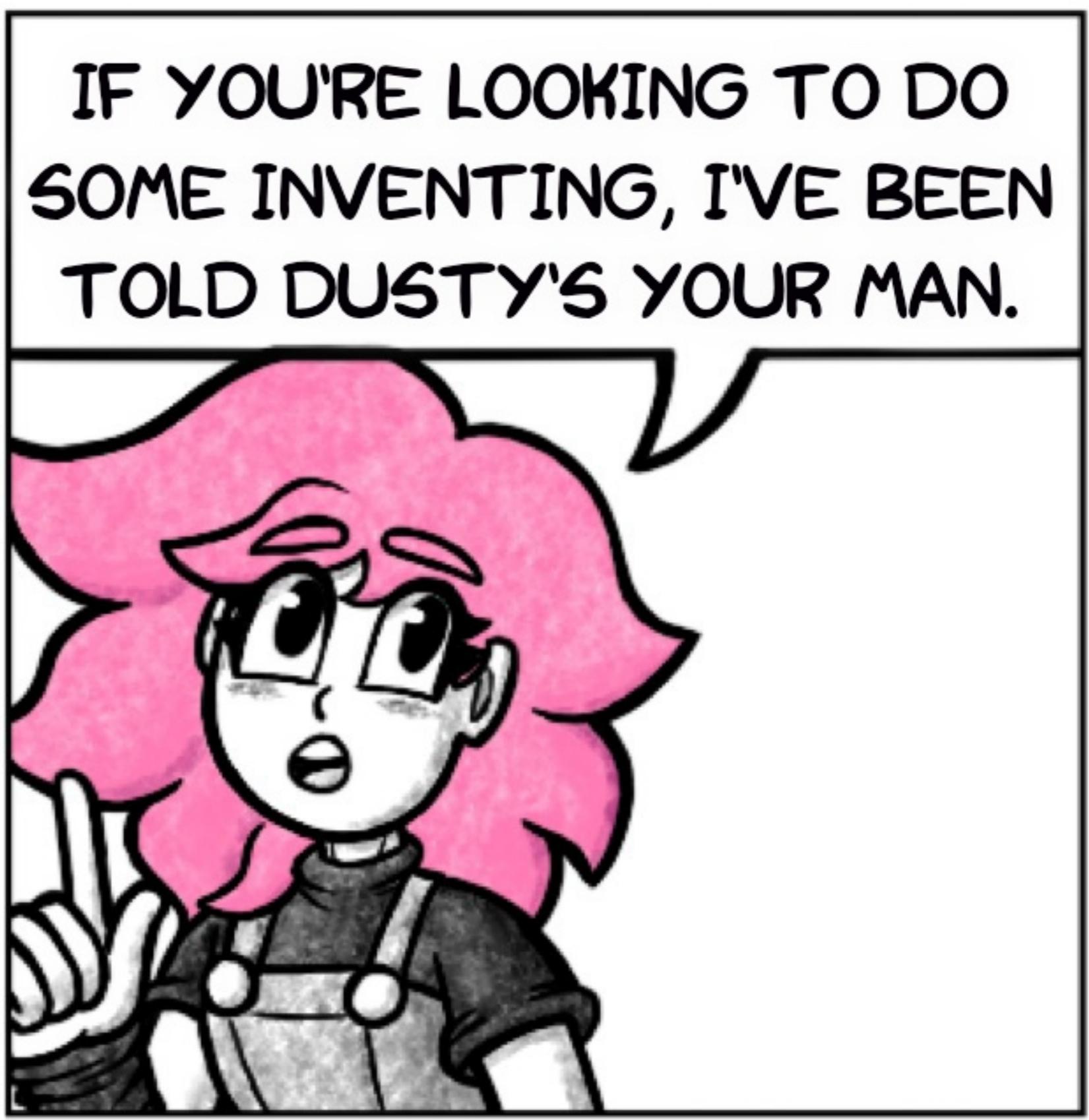
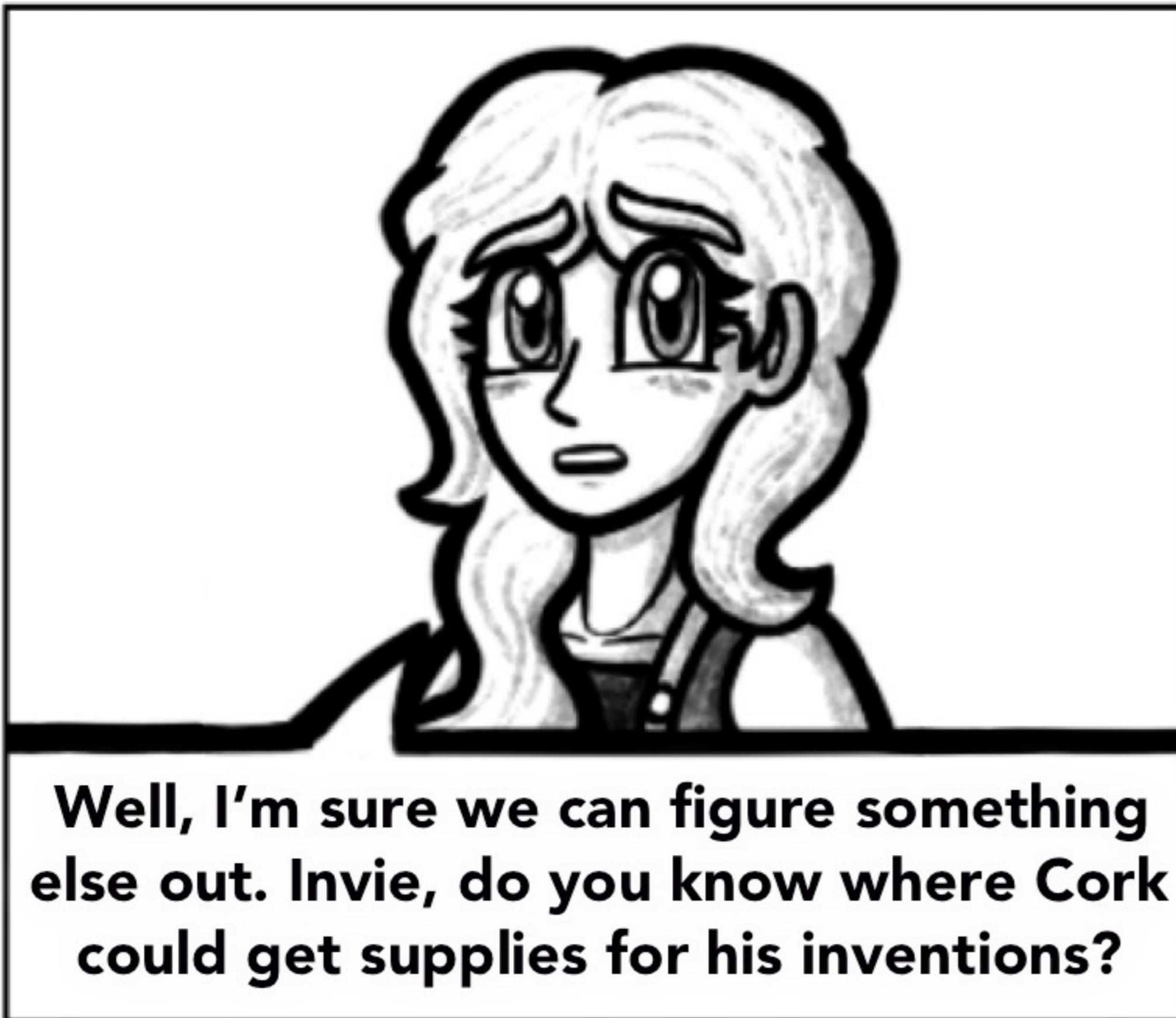
It's a beautiful Tuesday morning here in Northeast Altaria. We're expecting some light clouds with a high of 65 degrees and...













Then I can still fix my gauntlets!

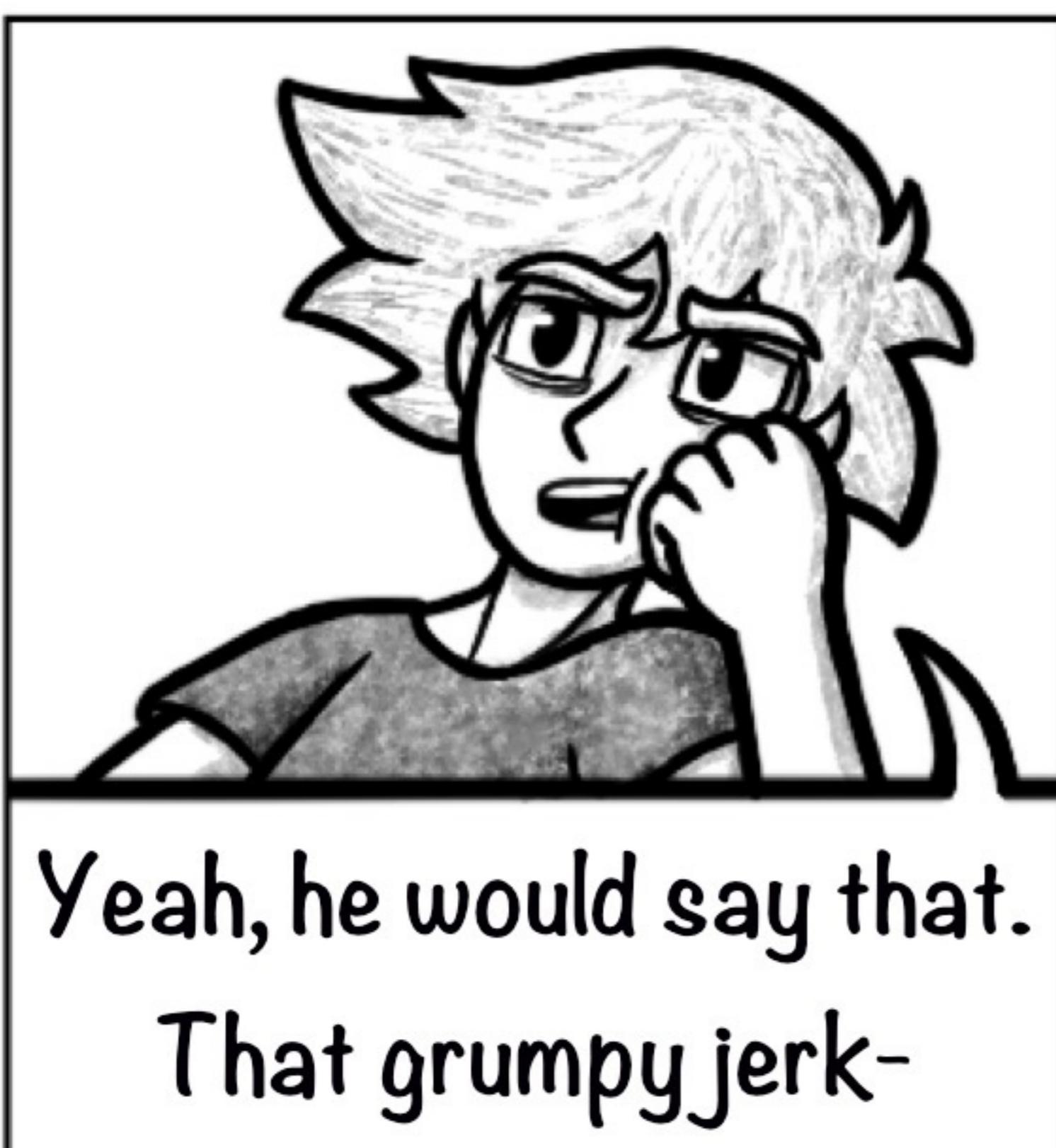


So long as you don't
get into a fight
with this guy too.



Hey! Archie's a special case! I won't go picking fights anymore, but that guy... he just knows how to tick me off.

You know, he said
the exact same
thing about you.

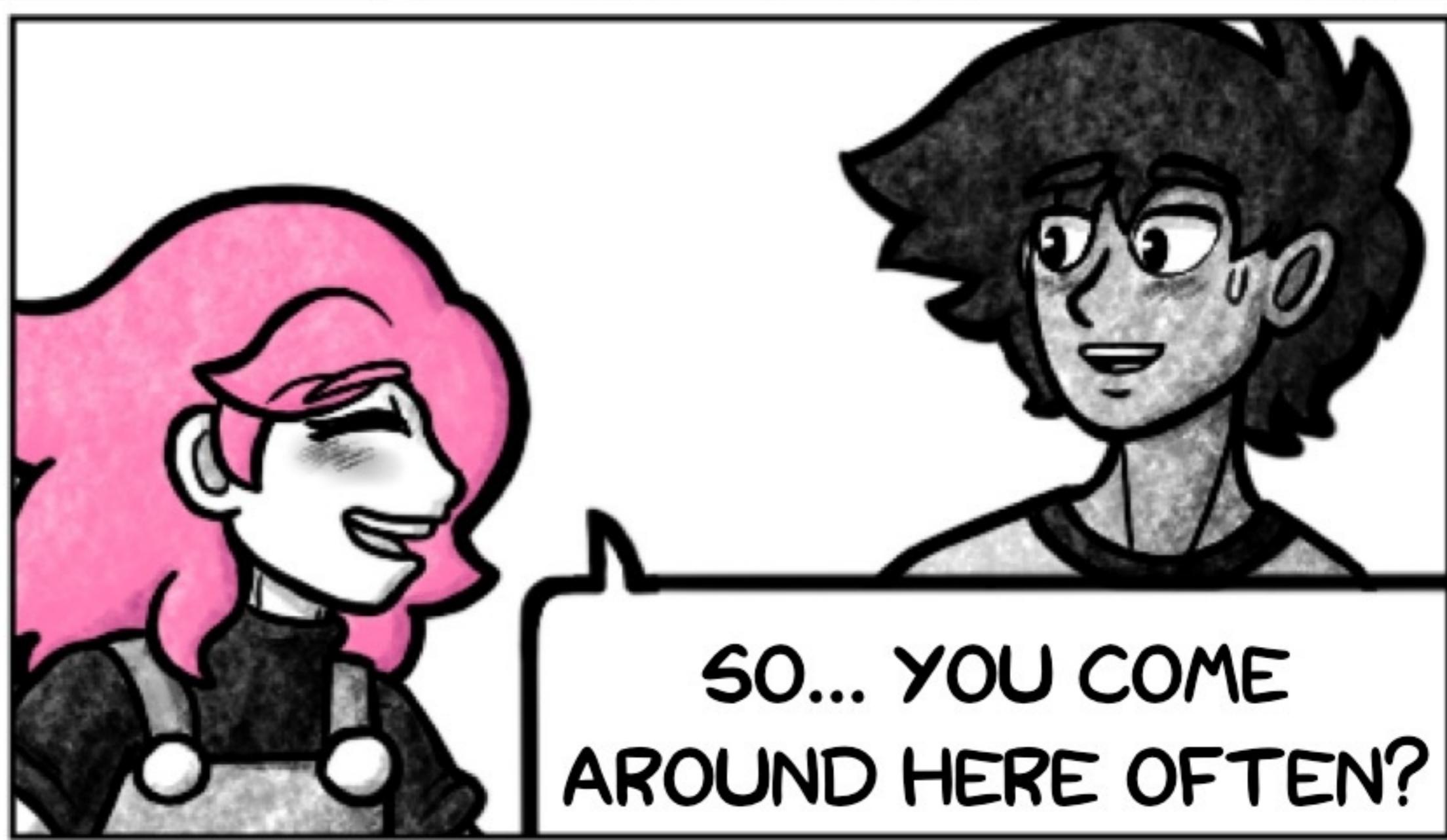


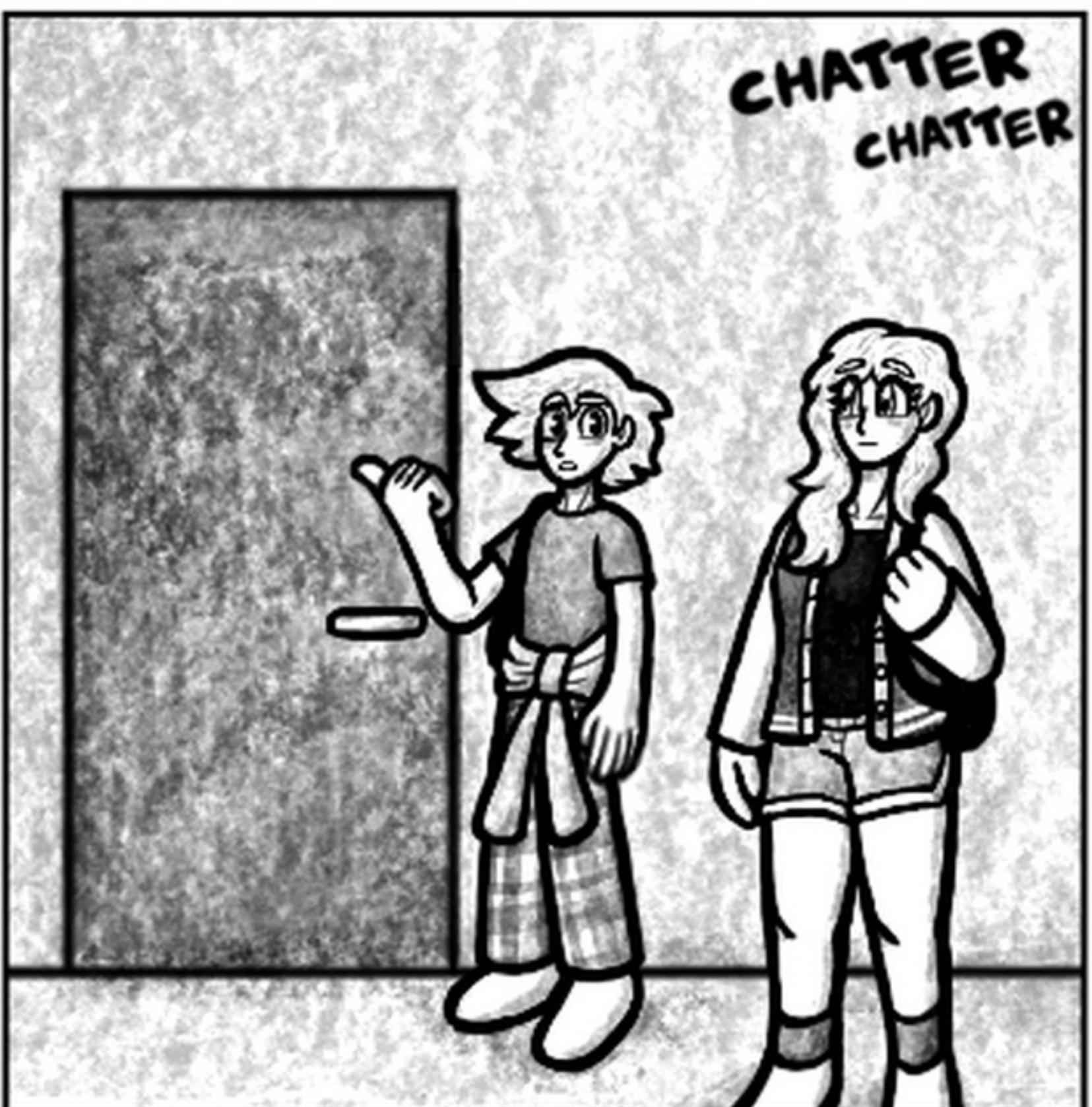
Yeah, he would say that.
That grumpy jerk-



Paco?!

Hey, Cork.





I hear our wrestling team does practice down here. Over that way they've got the mats set up.

Hmm.

Hey, Cork?

Yeah?

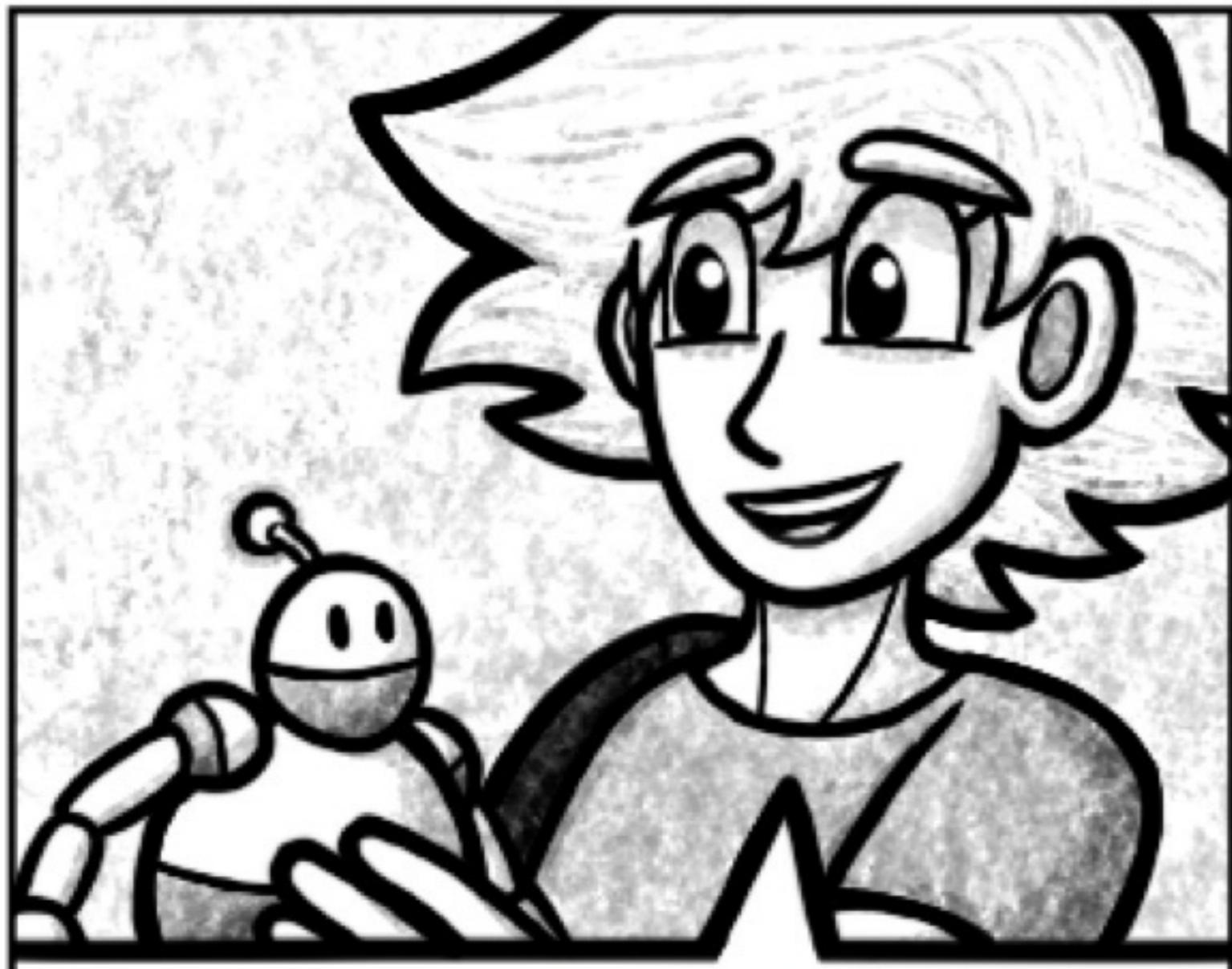
Are you sure
we're allowed to
be down here?

No. Honestly,
I probably
shouldn't have
asked you to
tag along.

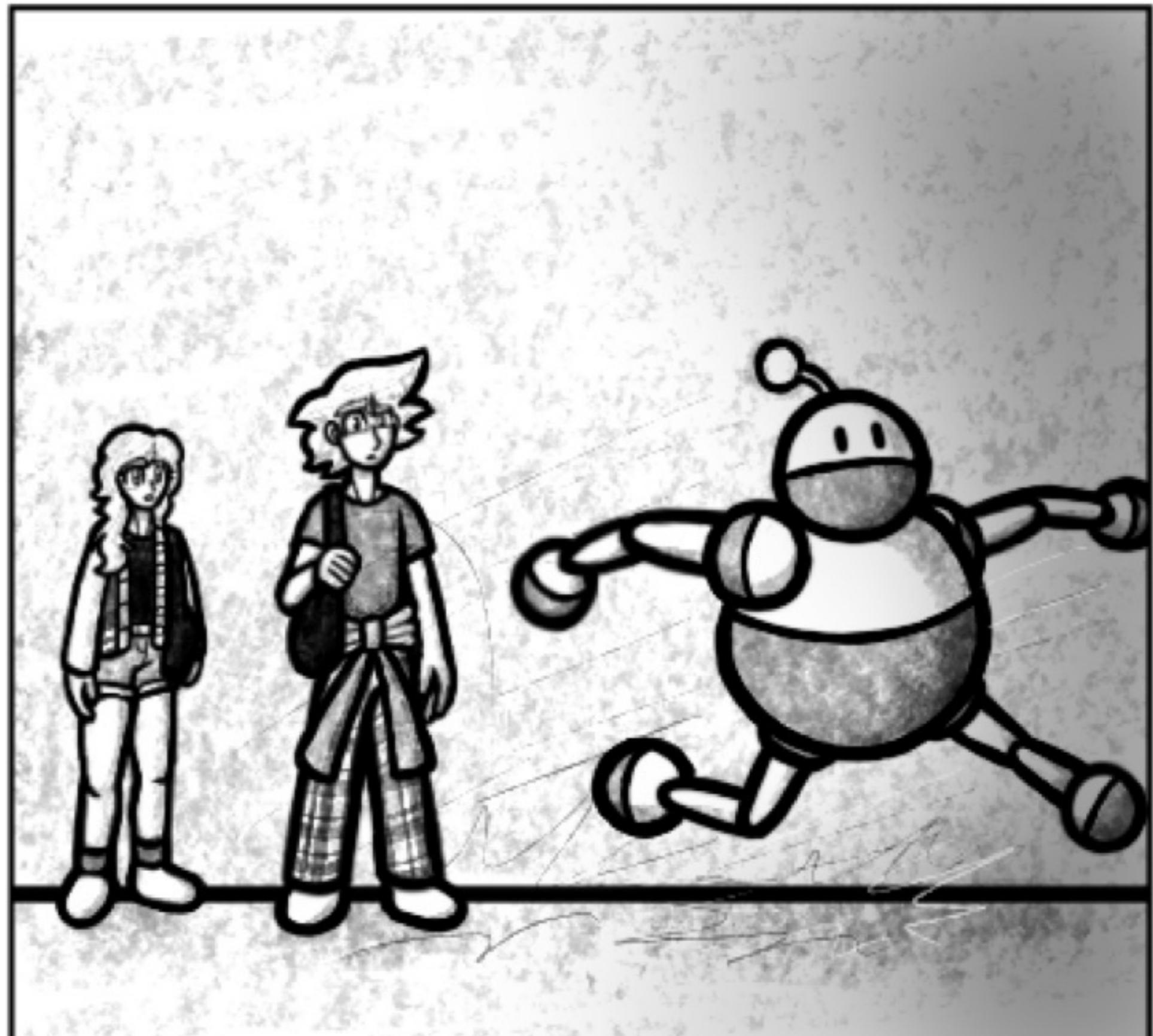
I'm more than willing to get in some trouble if that's what it takes to prove myself as a mechanic, but that's my burden. If you want to go so you don't risk it, I'll totally understand—

Cork,
I'm not
going
anywhere.

...Thanks.
It might
be a little
selfish of me,
but I was
kinda hoping
you'd say that.



Y'hear that, Wink?
Lila's going on an
adventure with us!



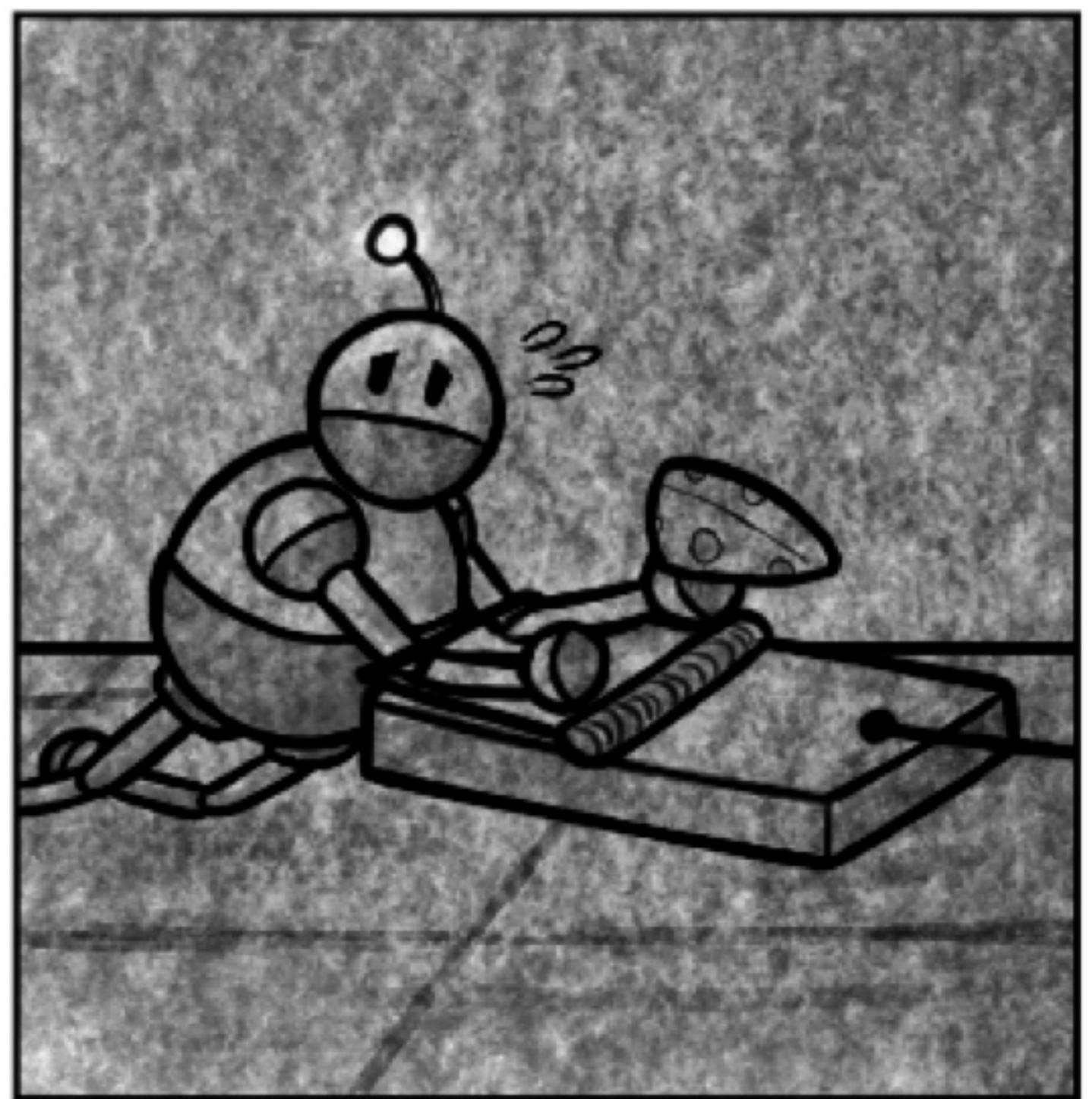
What was
that?



I don't know.



Wink? You okay?



Dude, you can't
even eat. What was
your plan here?



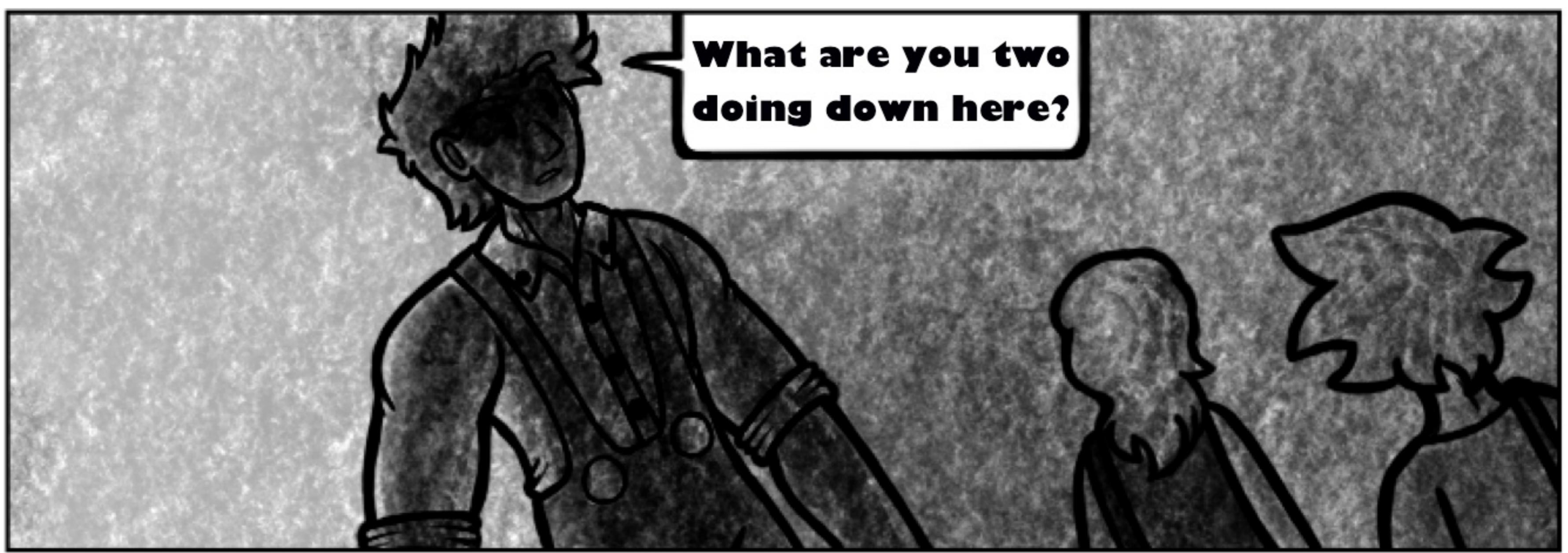
Oh. Well, I've been meaning
to remodel your limbs anyways.

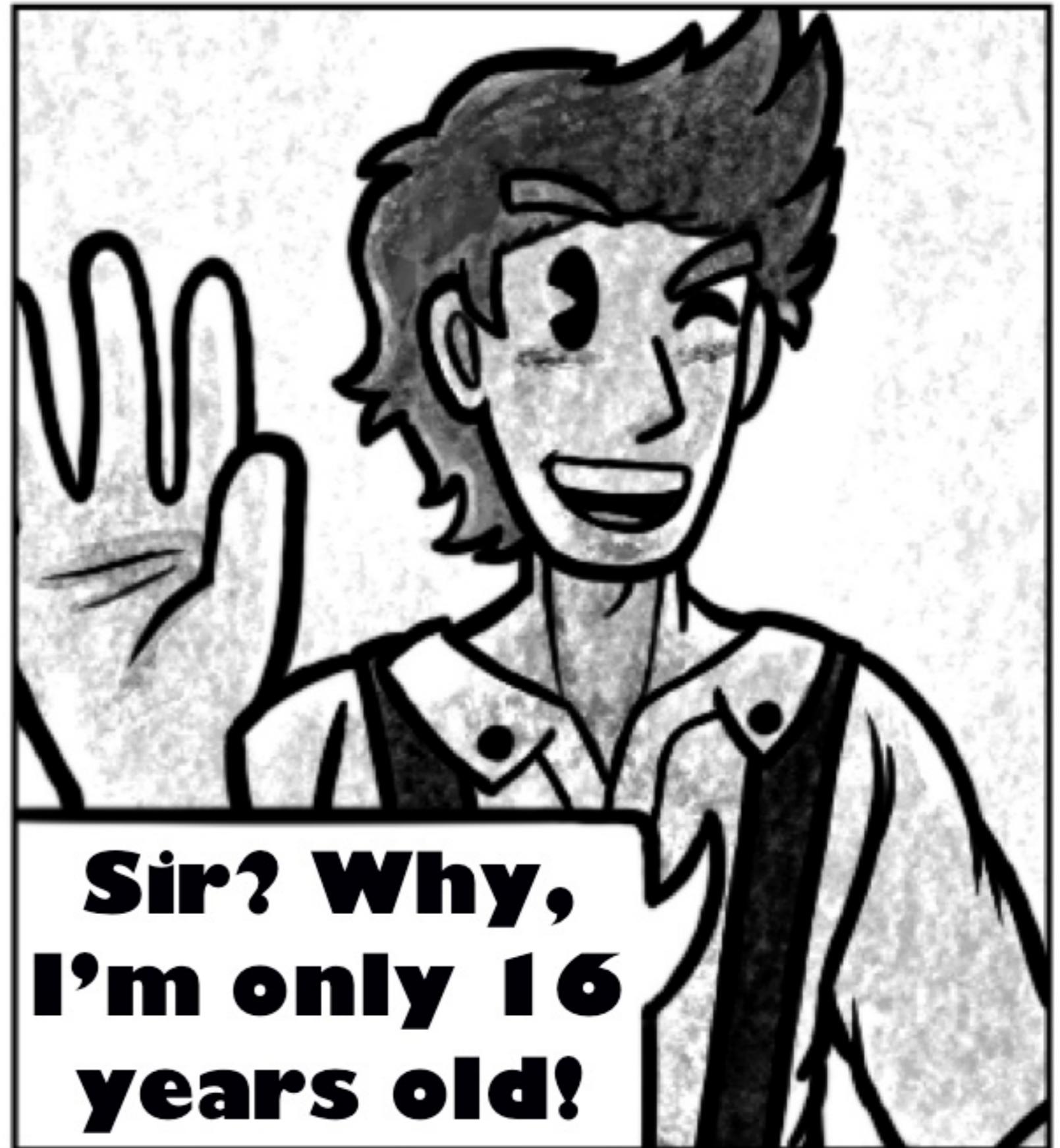
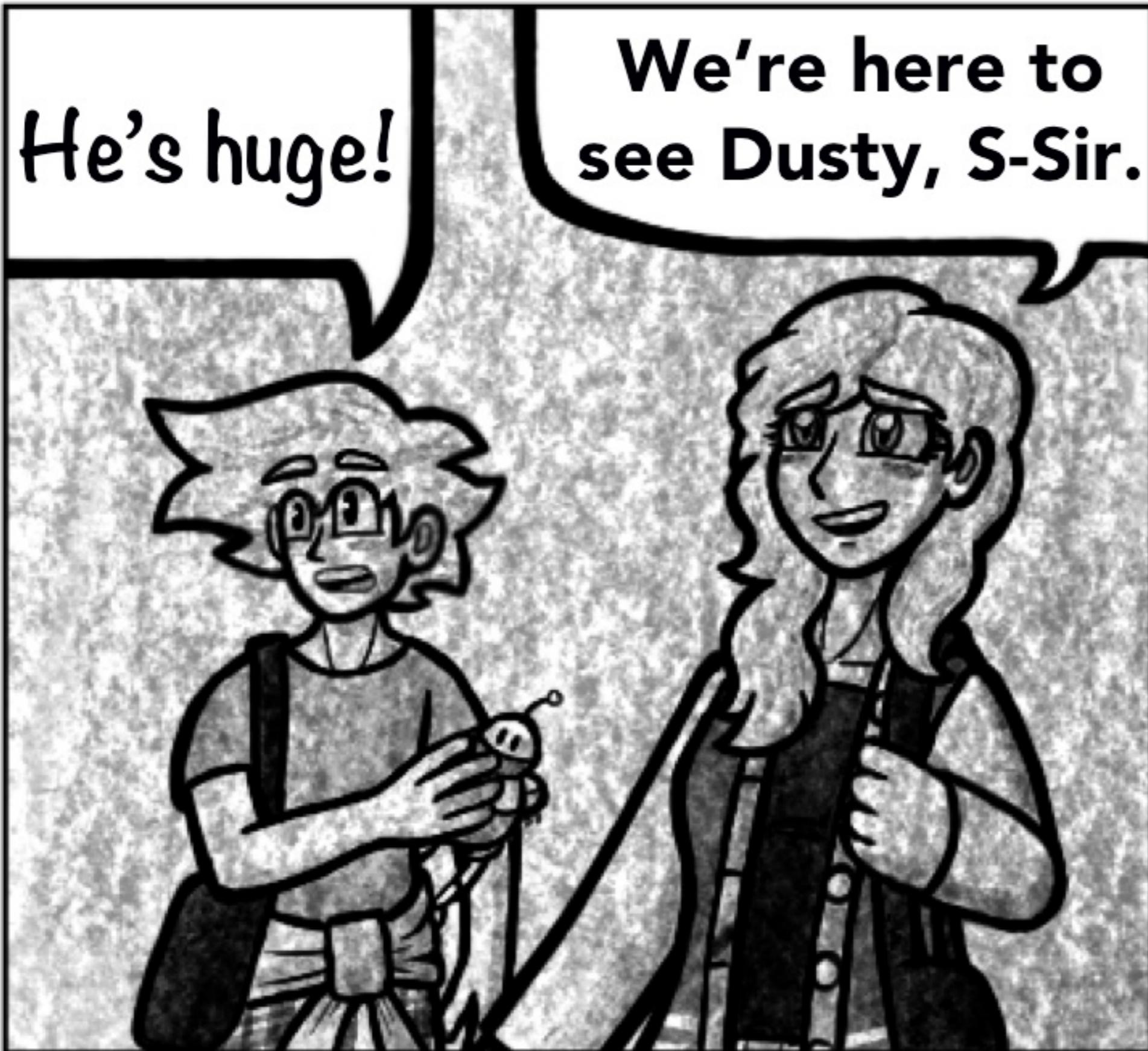


Hey!

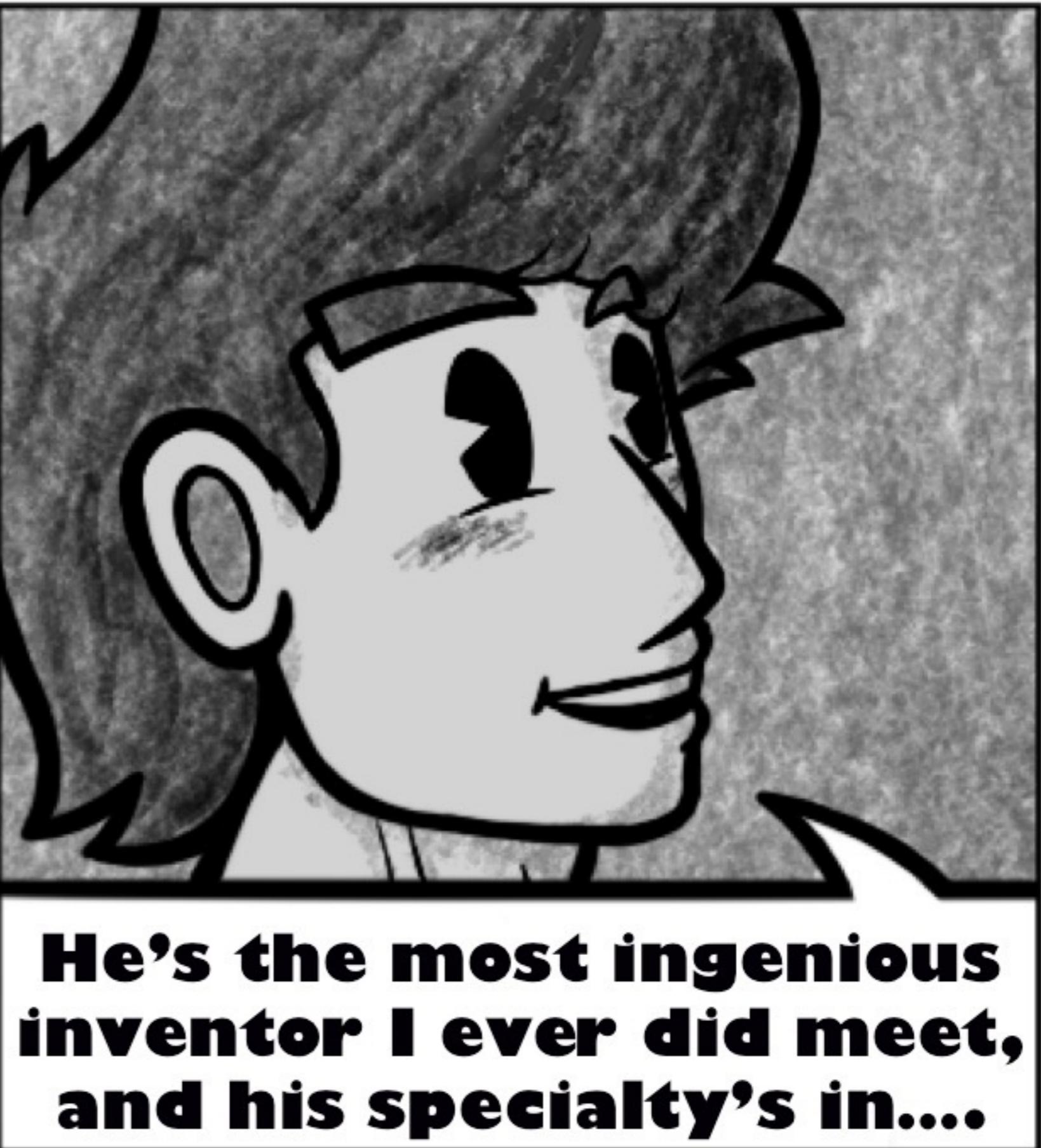


**What are you two
doing down here?**

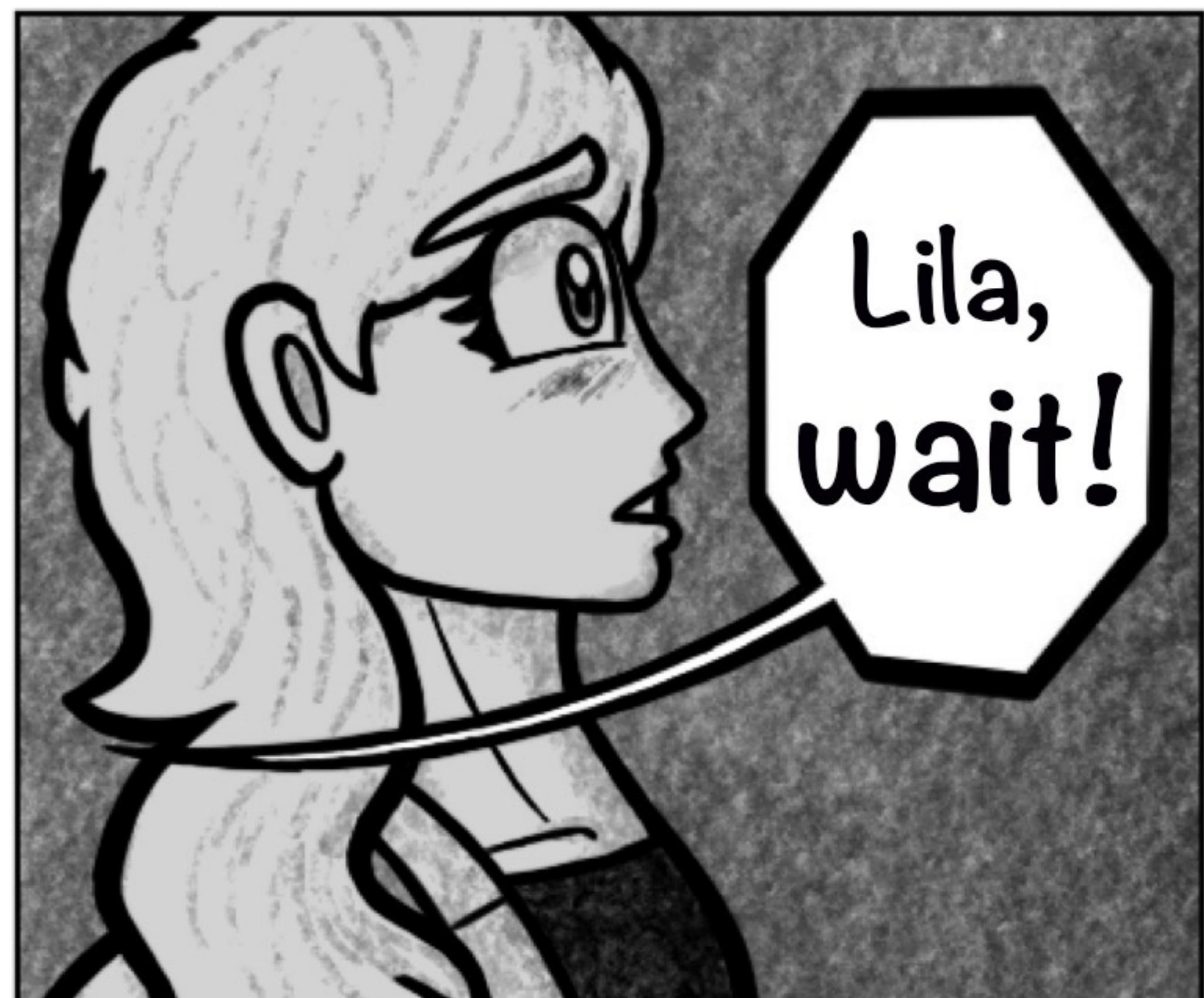




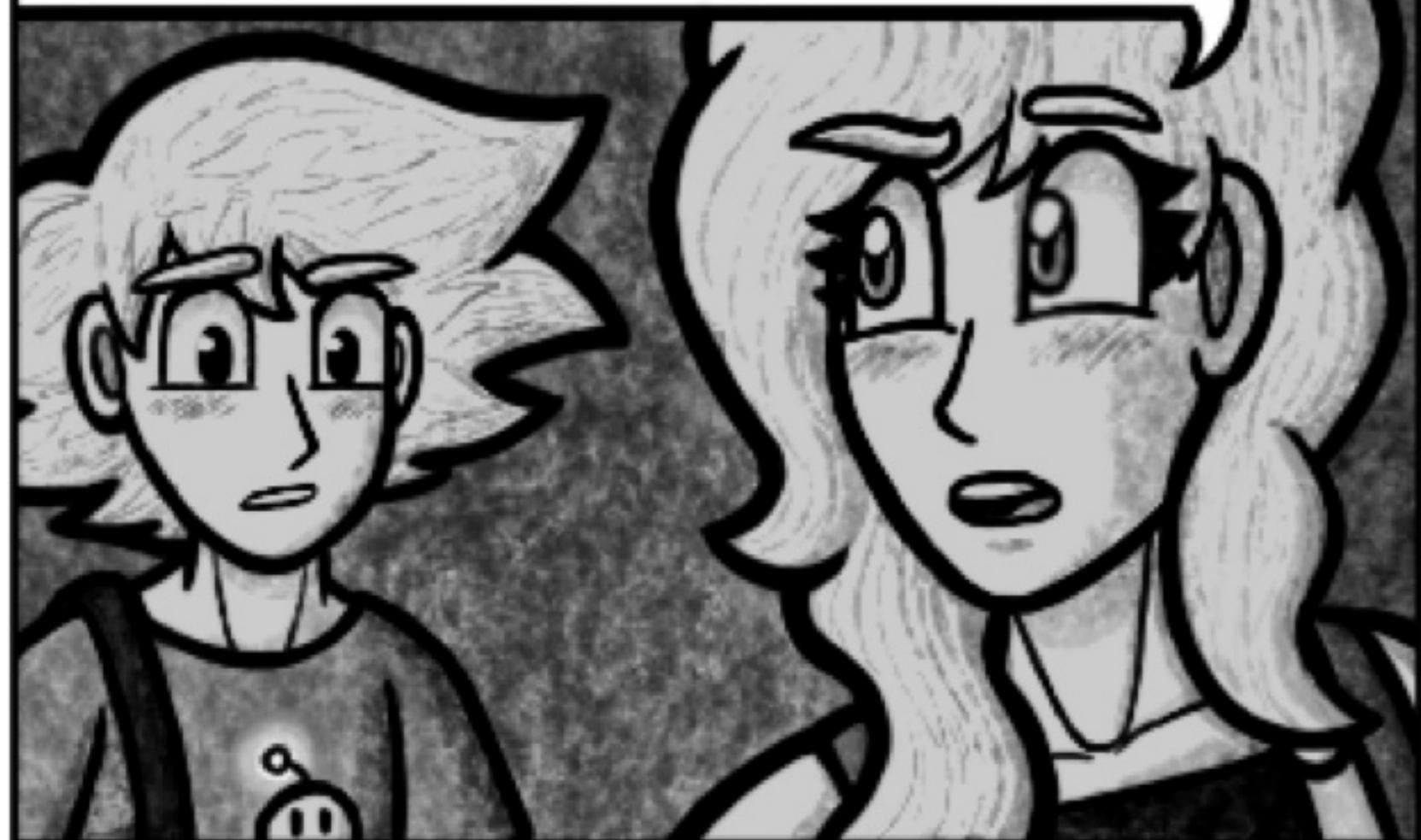
I work for Dusty. I carry the heavy materials, draw the diagrams, keep stuff organized. He's the real mastermind behind it all.



He's the most ingenious inventor I ever did meet, and his specialty's in....



Aagh! What?!
What is it?



There's a tripwire
down there. Looks like
it's connected to a net.



Ahh,
darn.
Almost
had 'em.

**We got
some
clever
visitors
here,
Dusty!**



There's
nobody
in that
room.



**These two
are sharp!
They must
be truly
worthy of
Dusty's
presence.**

**Very well. Follow
me to his true
location, which
lies hidden from
the outside world.**



Here we are.



Hey, man. These two showed up looking for you. They outsmarted the net trap room.

Hmm? Oh, that's cool.



How goes it, surface dwellers? What brings you to my lair of entrapment?

SWIVEL





Yeah. You're from the surface world, and I'm from down in my dungeon of traps. I have trapped tiles along the way here, too, but they took a while to rig so there are only three.



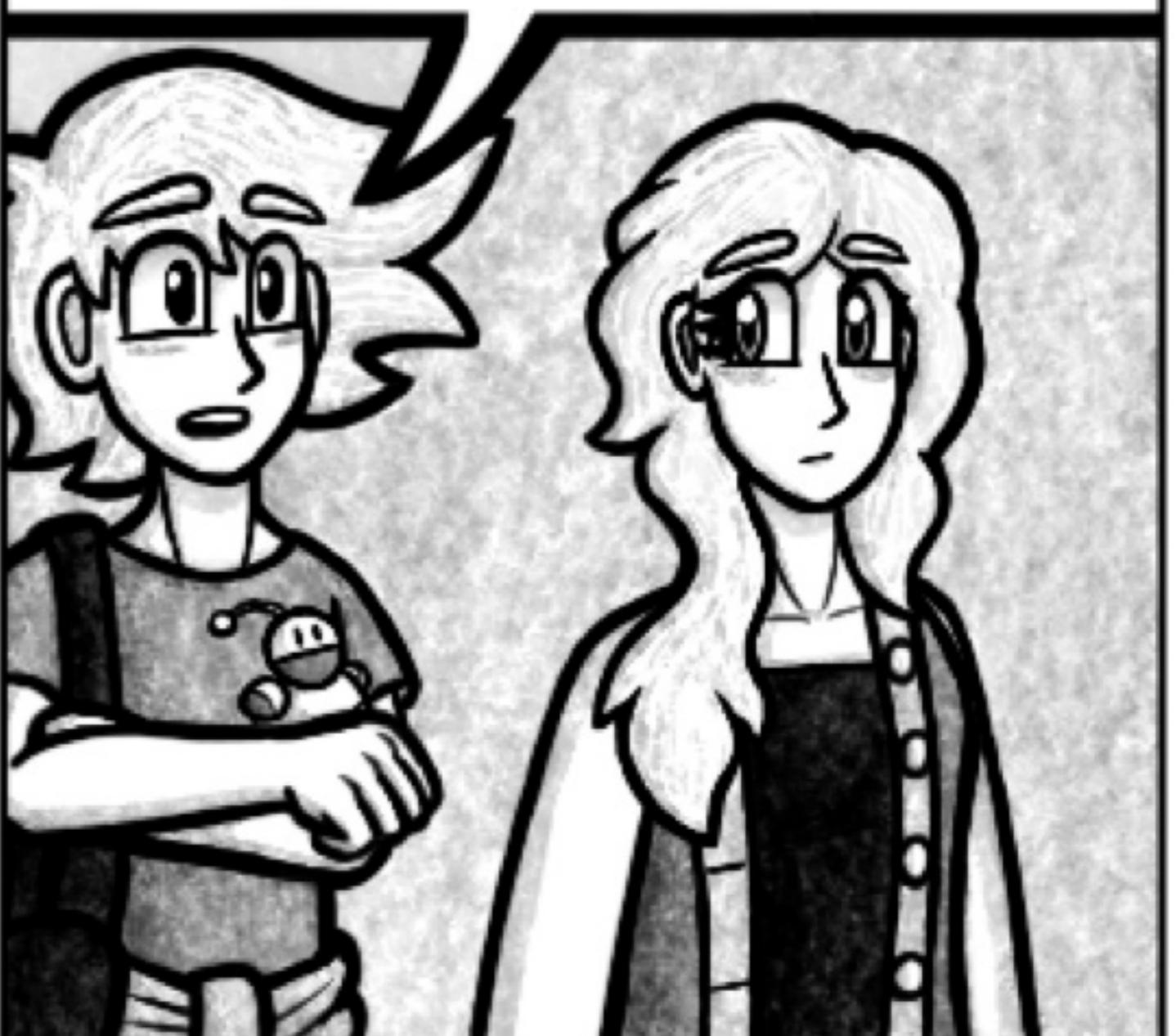
And we put them in places you probably wouldn't end up walking in because we didn't want to have to memorize where they were.



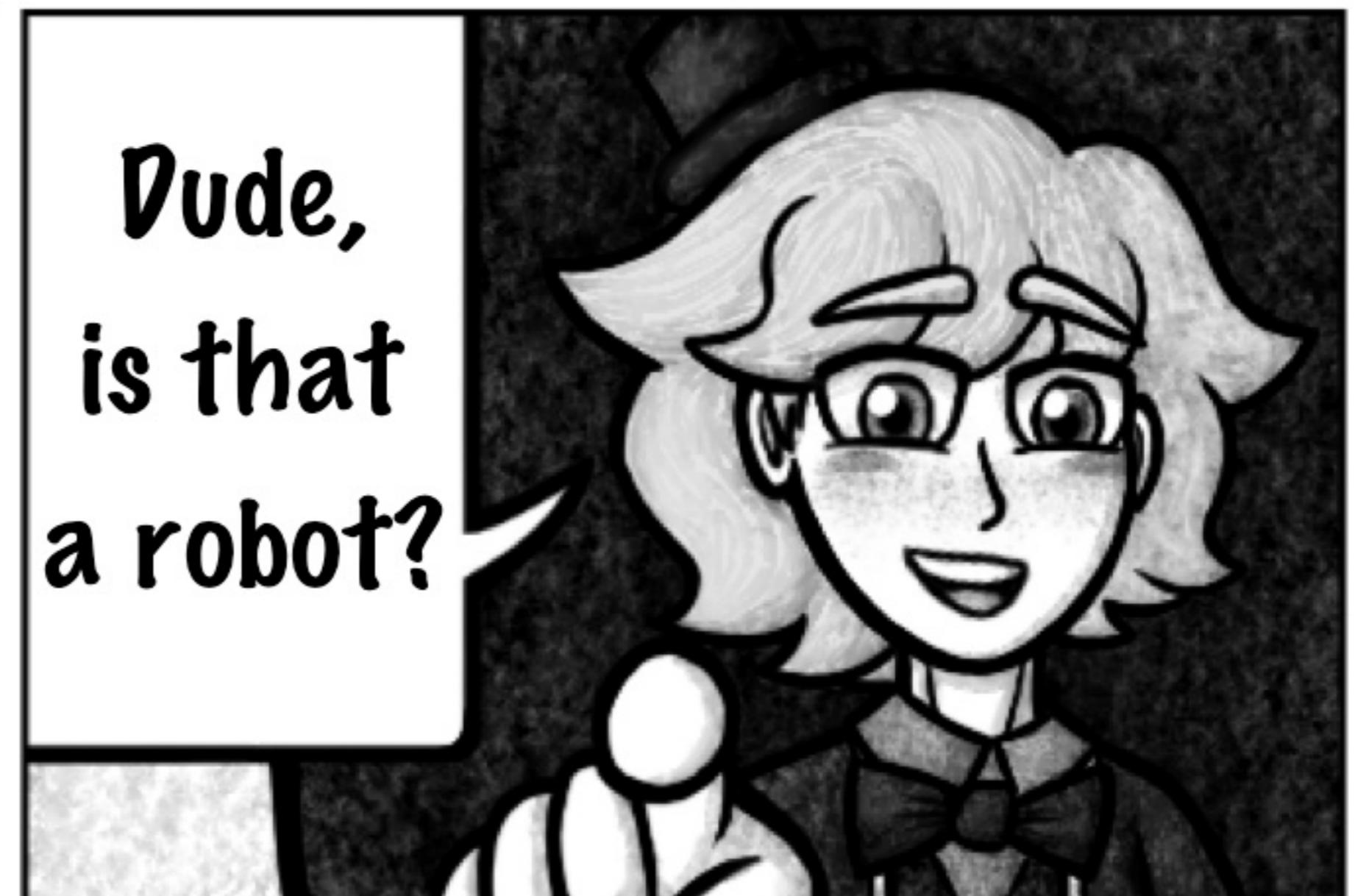
Oh.
Okay.



Well, I'm Cork Shrewd, and this is Lila Vanderbilt. We're here because I have an invention I'm working on and I was told you might have some Conglomero screws I could use?



Dude,
is that
a robot?



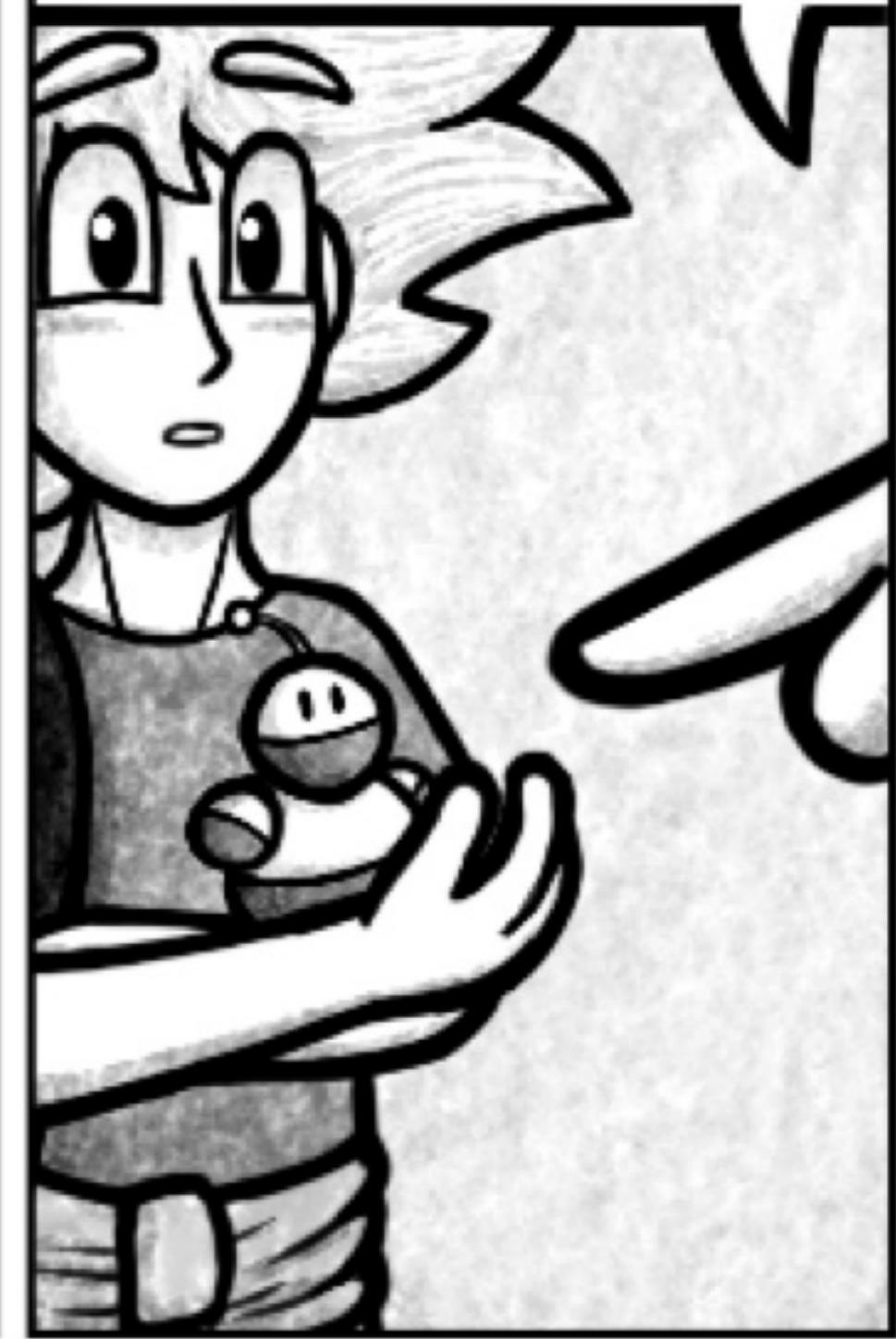
Hmm? Oh, yeah.
He's a robot I built.
Do you have the screws?



Yeah. I've got plenty.
It's fine. Take as
many as you want.



Is the little
guy okay?



Well, his arms kinda
got ripped off in one of
the mousetraps you
left down here.



Sorry.... We
actually do have
a rodent problem.



It's fine. I'll rebuild his
arms and probably
remodel the legs
too, while I'm at it.



That's carbon fiber
on the body, right?



Uh, yeah. Spent my birthday
money on it. My mom wasn't
too happy about it, but it
makes Wink super durable.



His name's Wink,
huh? I like him!



Hey, Dave! We've got carbon fiber, yeah?

Oh. His name's Dave.

We can definitely make some new limbs for Wink, too.



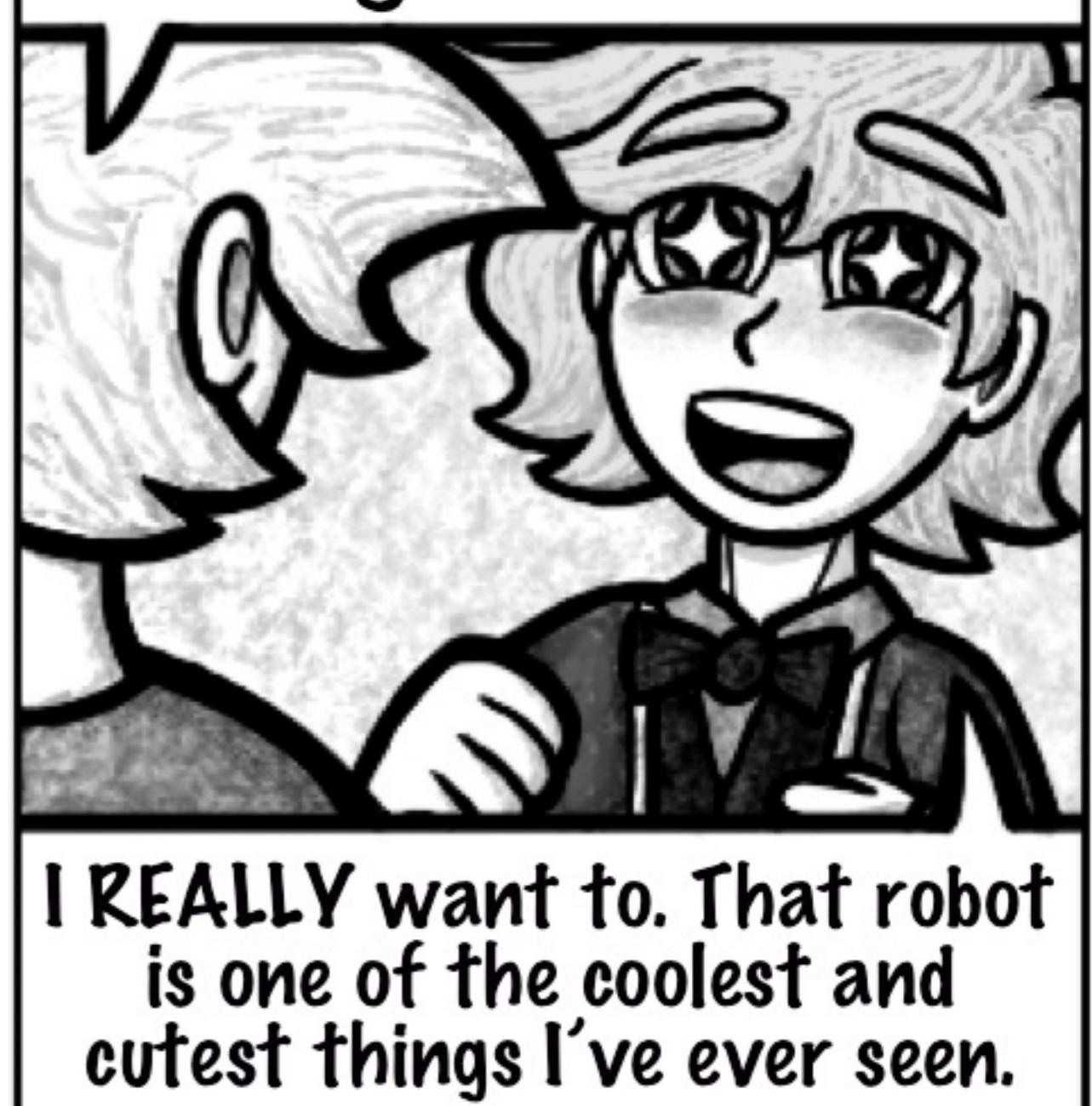
Oh, wow. You don't have to do all that—



No, I insist! It was my trap that tore the poor little guy's arms off, so it's only fair that I help make him some new ones.



Well, if you really want to—

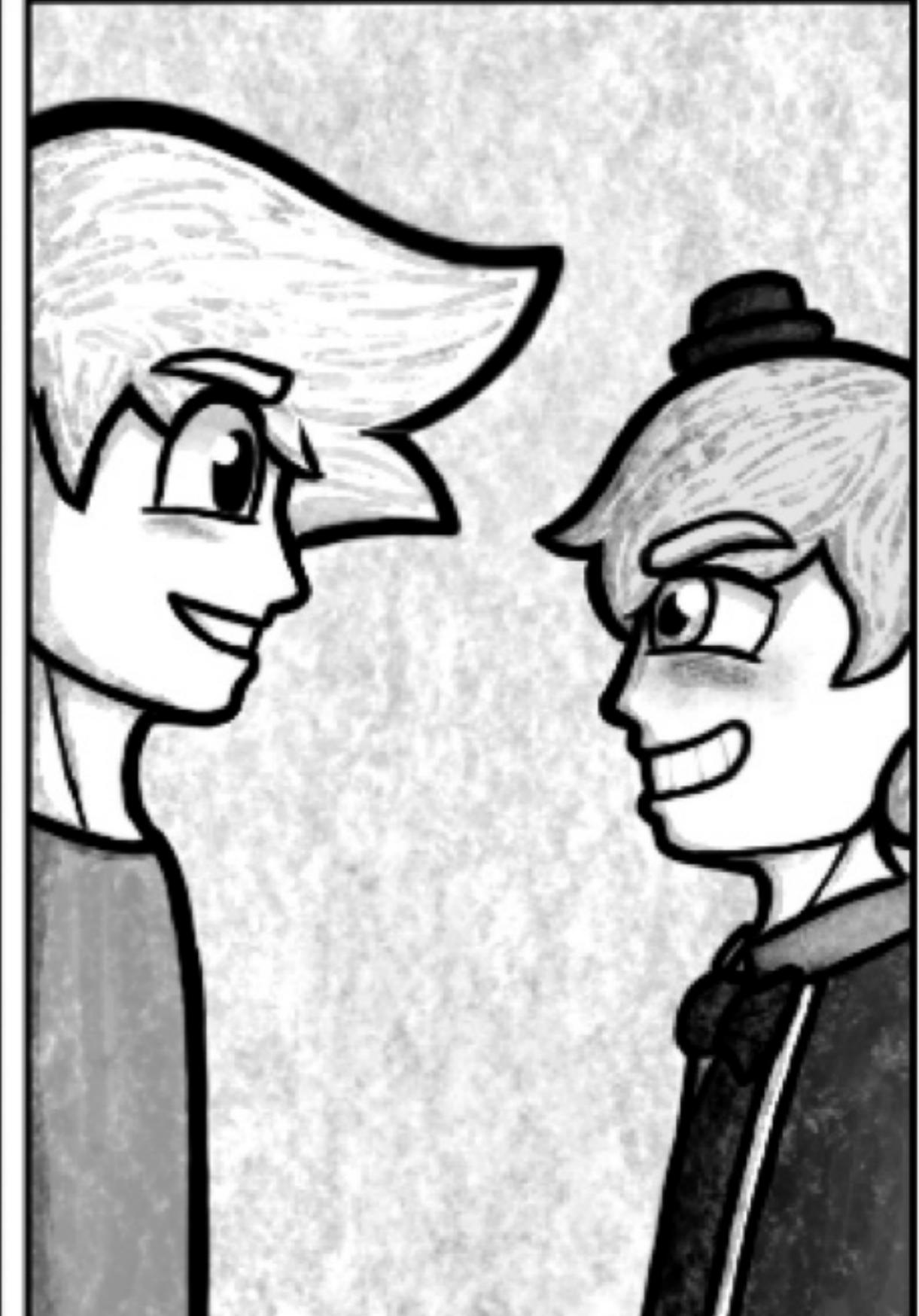


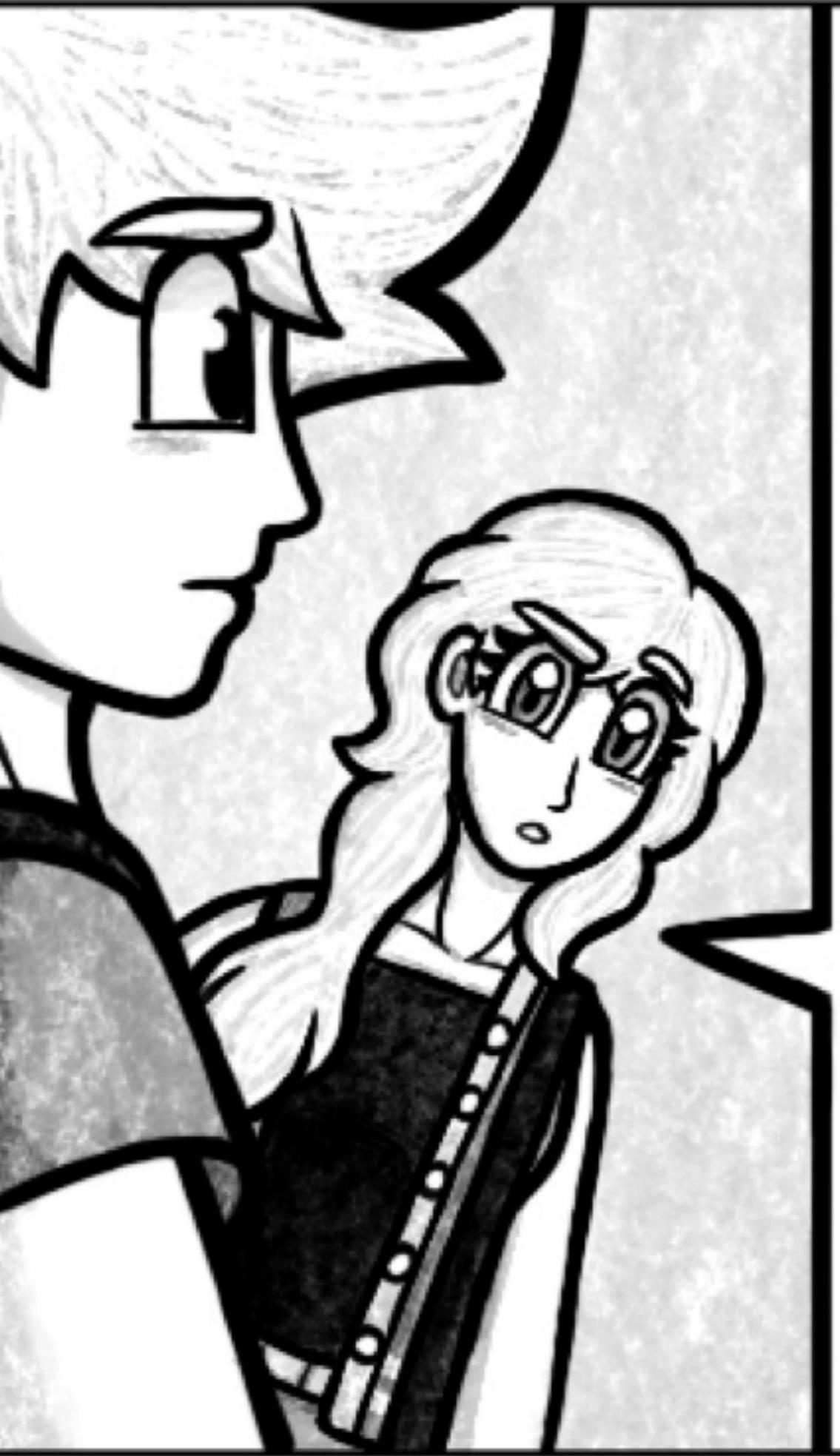
I REALLY want to. That robot is one of the coolest and cutest things I've ever seen.

On one condition. You gotta help me with my gauntlets, too.

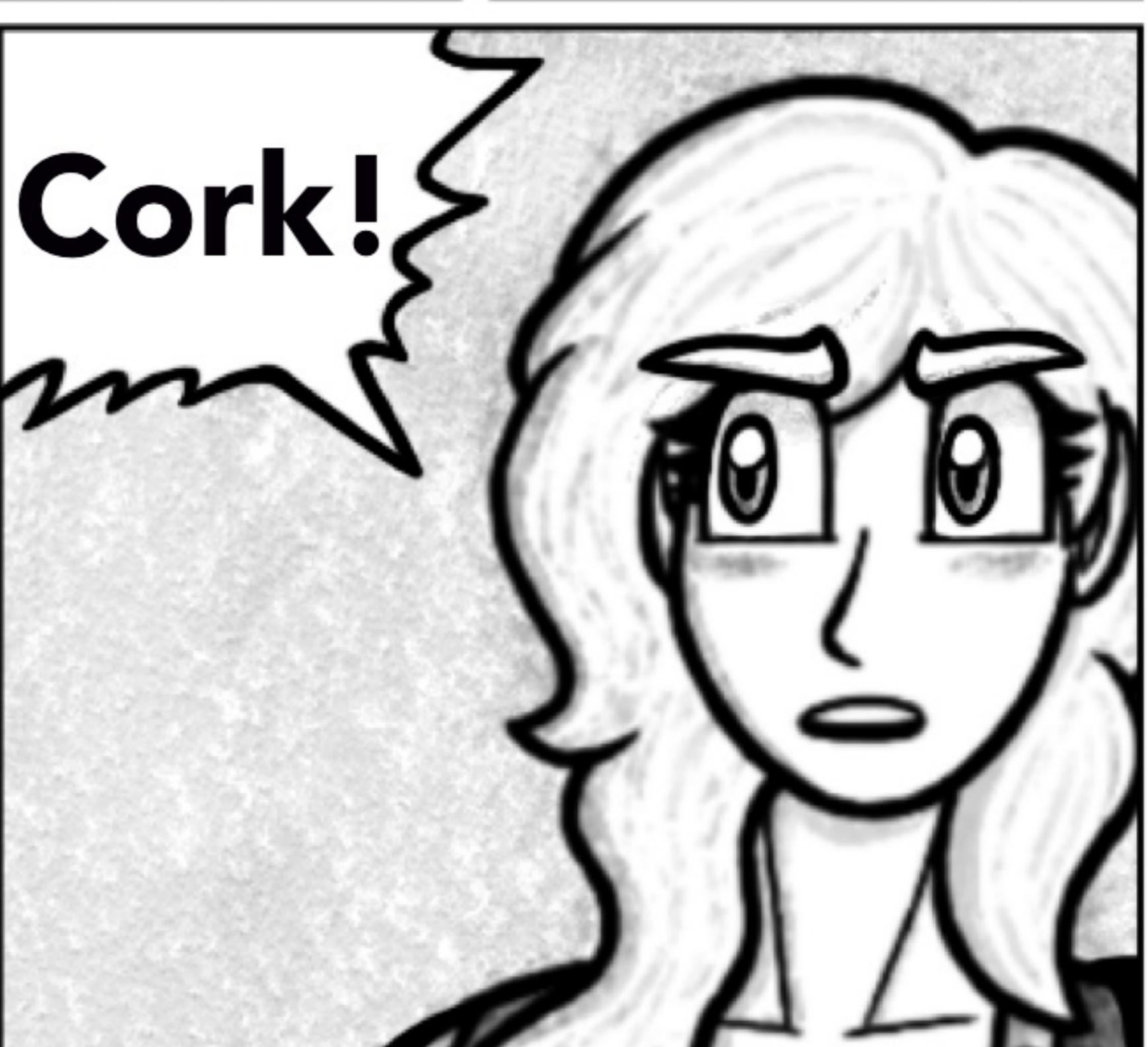


You're making gauntlets?! Dude, I'm so in!





**Uh...
do you
guys
mean
right
now? You
know
we still
have
classes,
Cork.**



Okay, hear me out.

You said you were going to take your studies seriously here at ATHENS!

I am! If I don't do this, if I can't put something substantial together before Archie finishes whatever he's been up to, then the last spot on that field trip is as good as his.

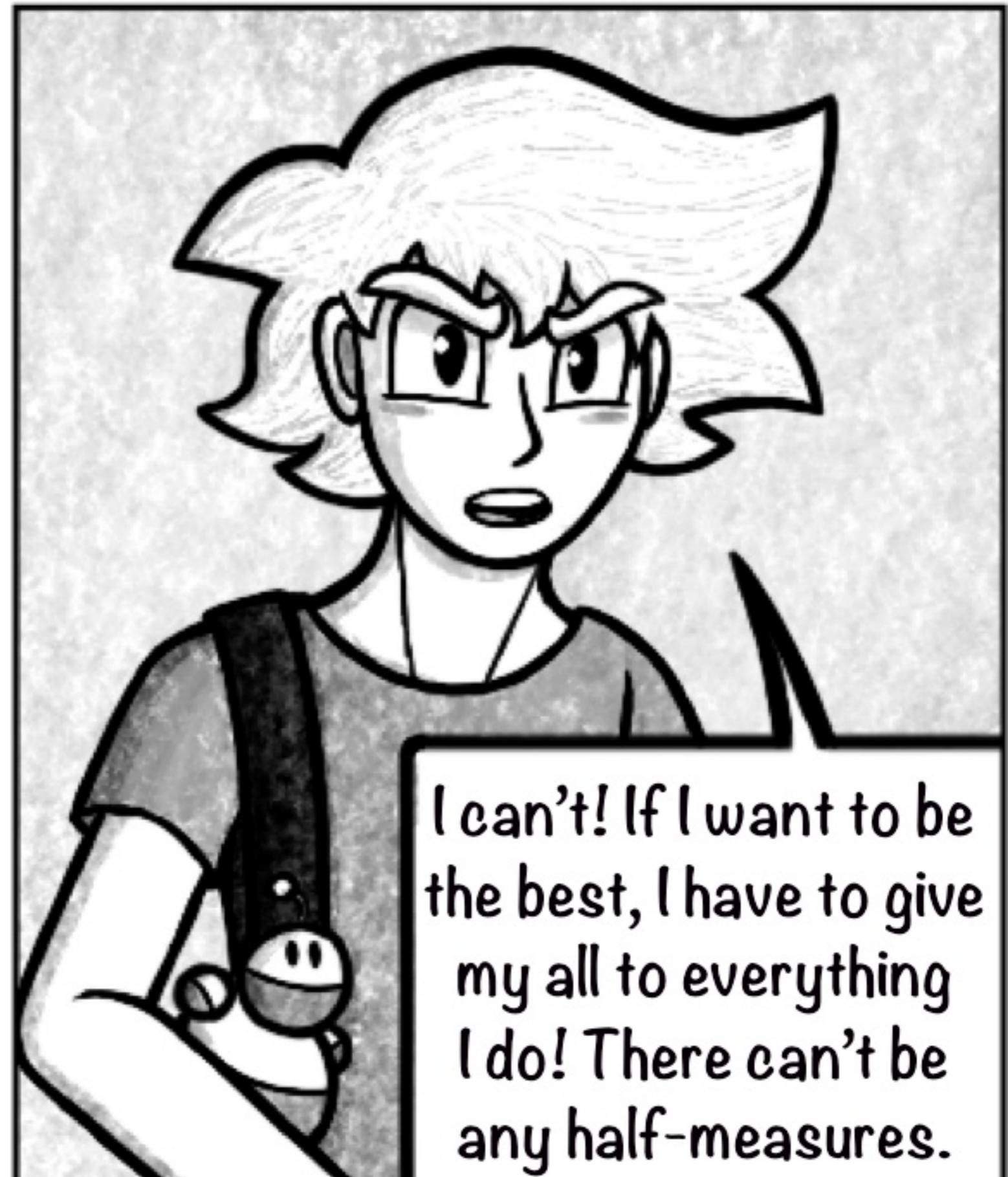


But skipping class... is all this really necessary? Do you really have to go on this field trip that badly?

When I decided I wanted to be the world's greatest mechanic, I gave up any chance of accepting complacency or the ordinary. If this alumnus is so exclusive that only three of us are allowed to meet him, I have to be one of those three.



You did this with the rock paper scissors tournament too, Cork. You can't keep putting everything on the line for whatever new short term goal pops up! You have to pick your battles.



I can't! If I want to be the best, I have to give my all to everything I do! There can't be any half-measures.

**Why? Why do you
always have to go
overboard with
everything like this?**



**Because I can't be the
guy who looks back
and wonders what
could have been!**



**...I can handle failing. Or
at least, I'm trying to
learn how to handle it.
In order to do that, I'm
gonna have to fail a lot.**



**But I can't just not try. Fixing Wink
alone is gonna take a good four or
five hours even with two extra sets
of hands. Redesigning the gauntlets
is gonna take even longer, I'm sure.**



**I can't risk waiting around while
that spot's open for the taking. I
have to do everything I can now,
that way I'll have no regrets later.**



**I'm sorry.
You can go
back to
class if
you want.**

SIGH

**You're not getting rid of
me that easily, Shrewd. I
told you I wasn't going
anywhere, didn't I?**

