

Three Shadows



Cyril Pedrosa

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Translated by Edward Gauvin

:01

First Second
NEW YORK & LONDON

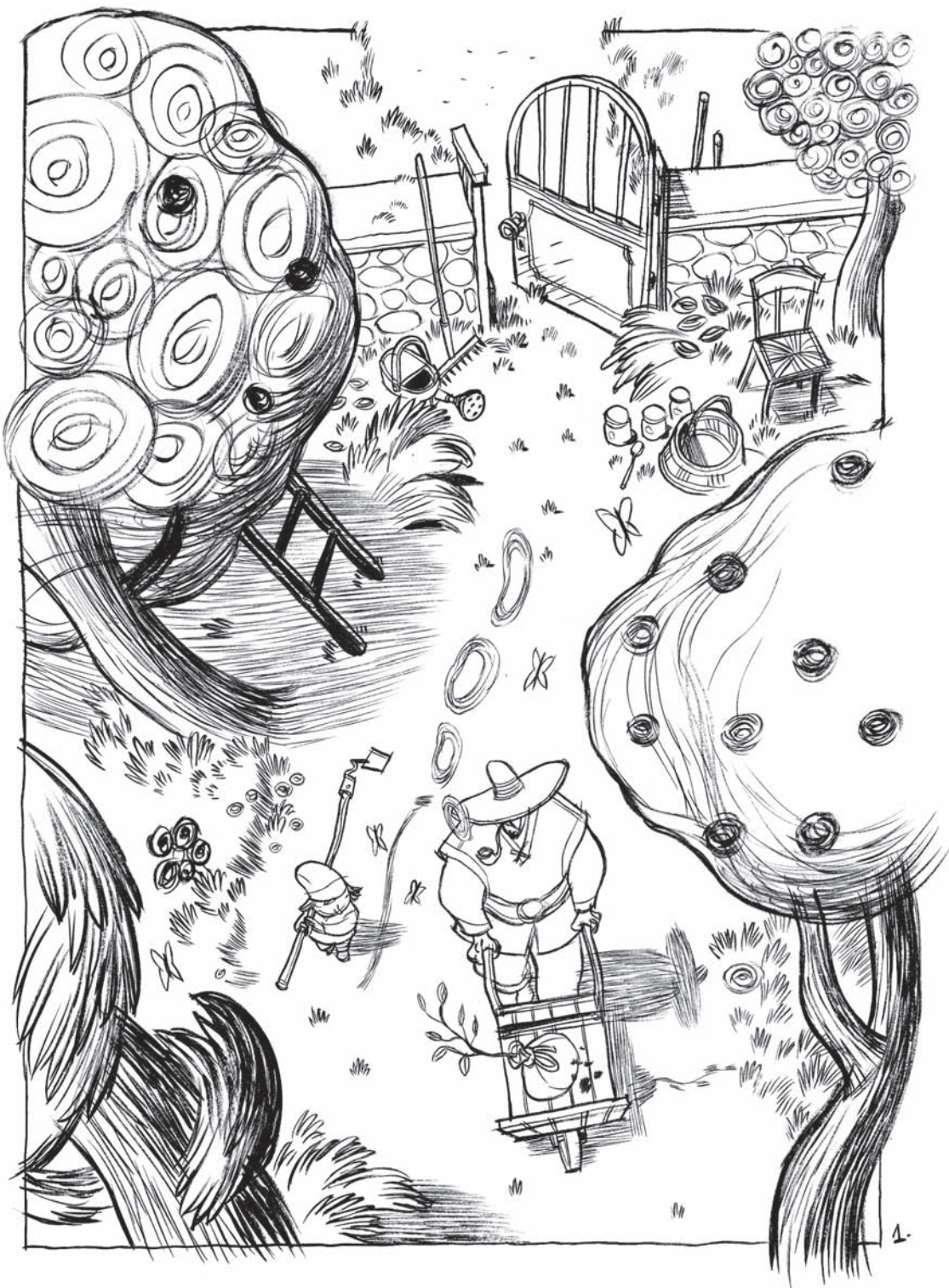
You're thirteen weeks old.
Cold shock, as never wished before:

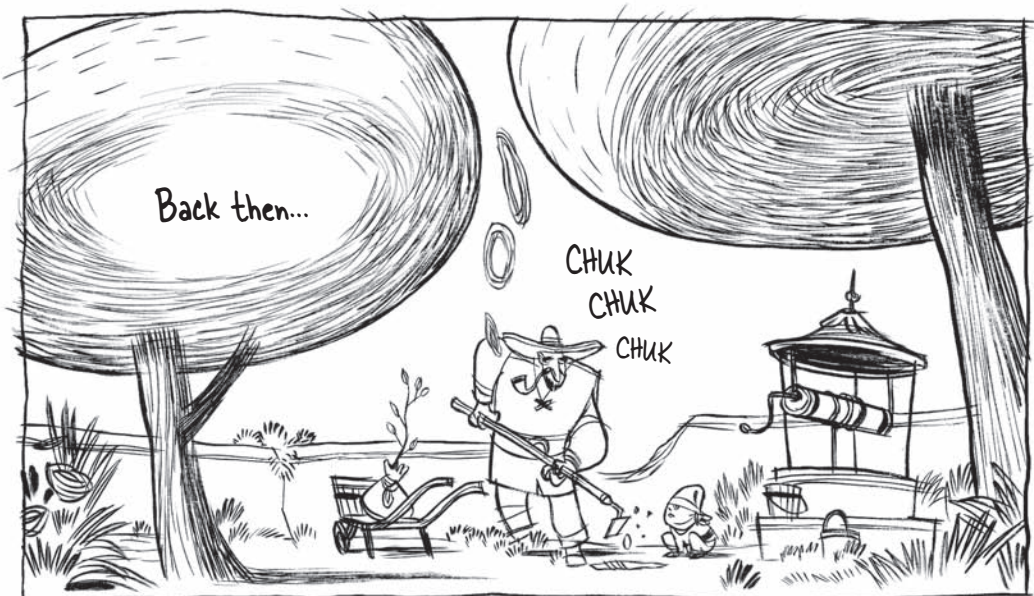
to die and be buried, close
under the packed earth,

safe for an eternal instant
from my constant, fevered fear that

you'd die. Relief
warming my veins,

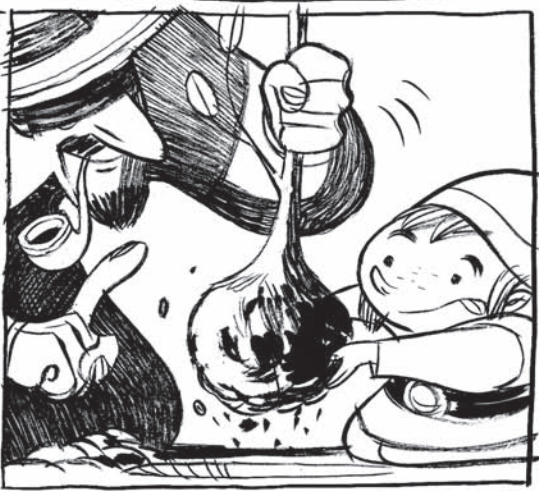
and you relieved forever
of my looming, teary watch.



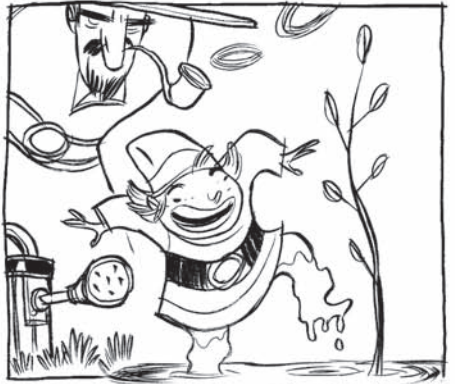
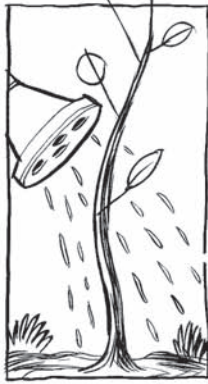


Back then...

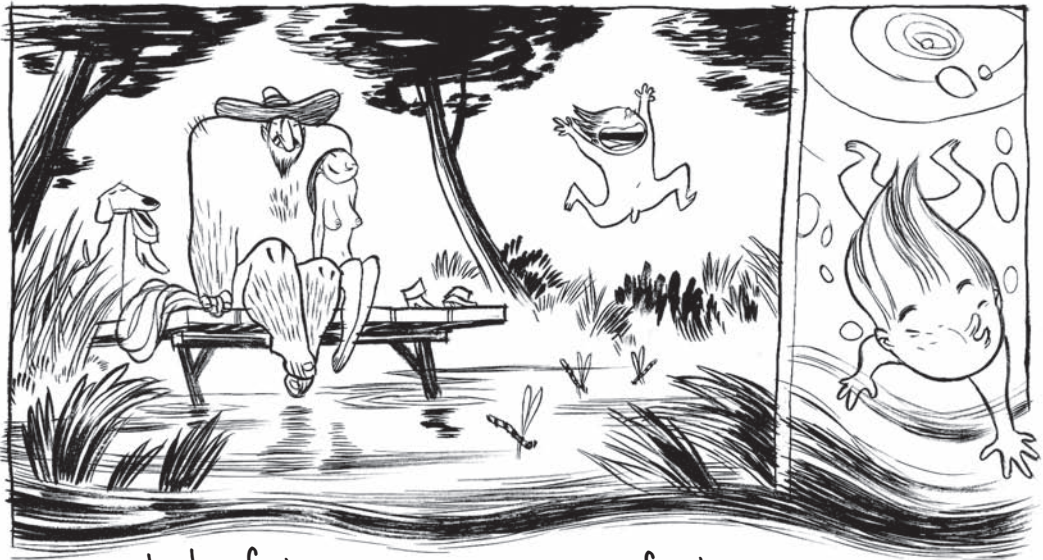
CHUK
CHUK
CHUK



...Life was simple
and sweet.



Everything was simple and sweet...



The taste of cherries, the cool shade, the fresh smell of the river...



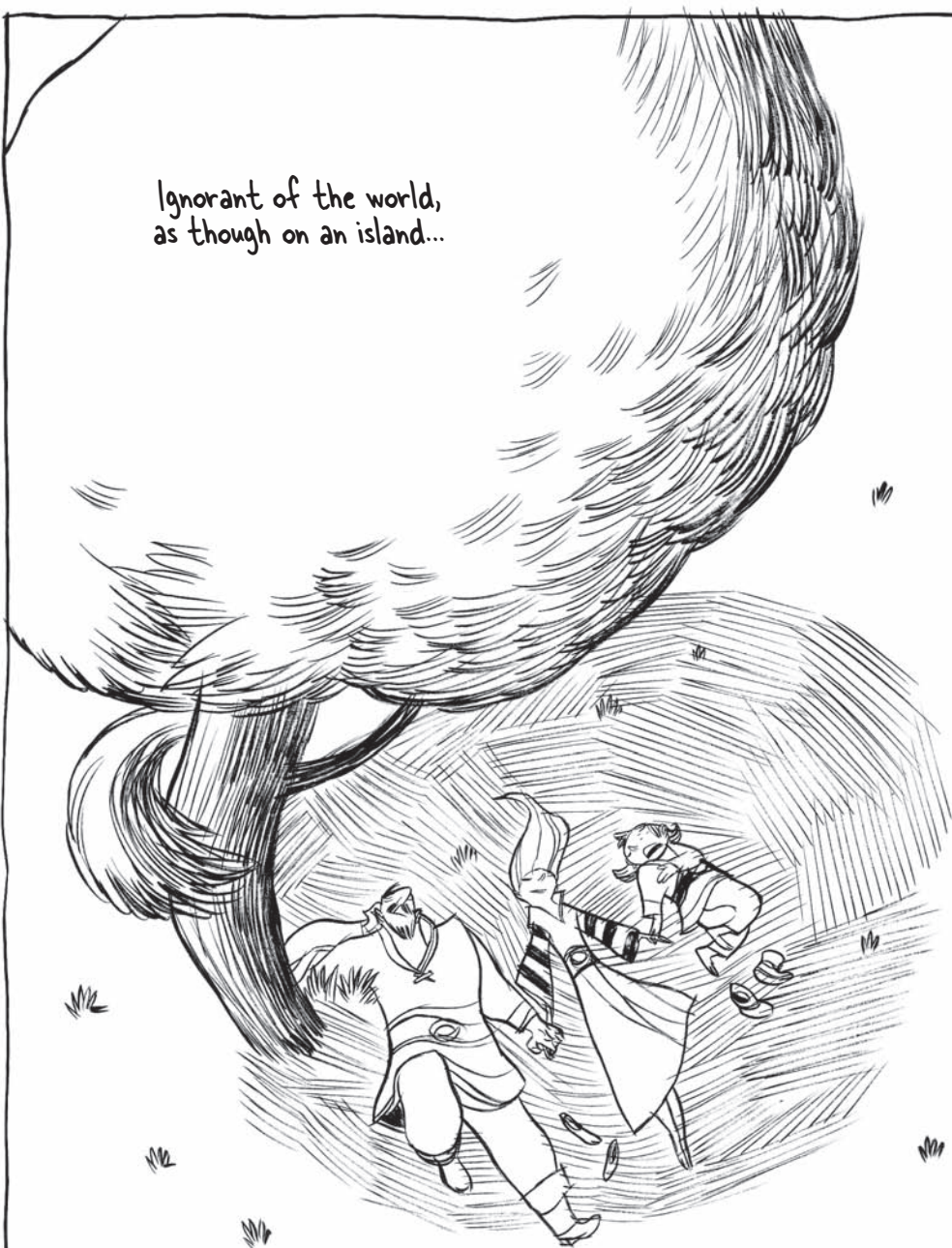
That was how
we lived, in a vale
among the hills...



...sheltered from
storms...

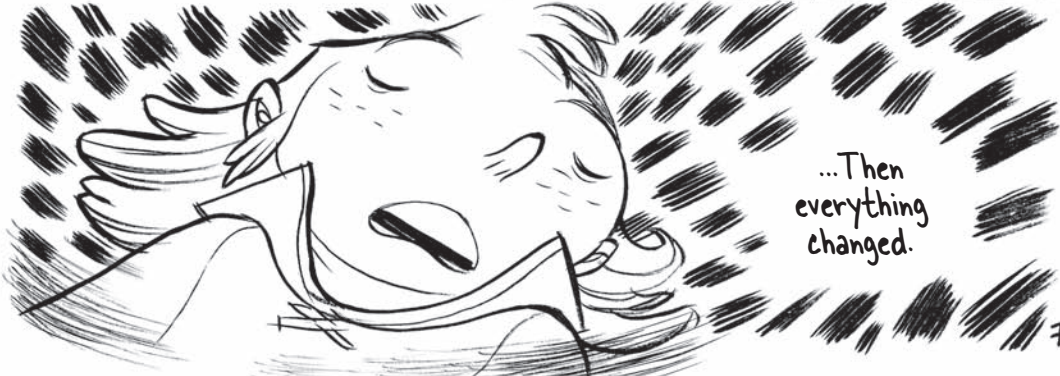


Ignorant of the world,
as though on an island...

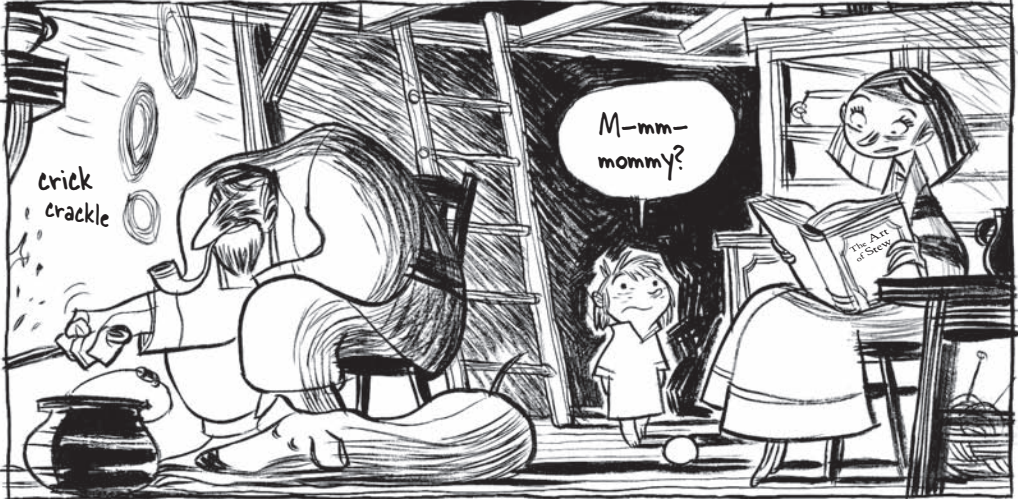


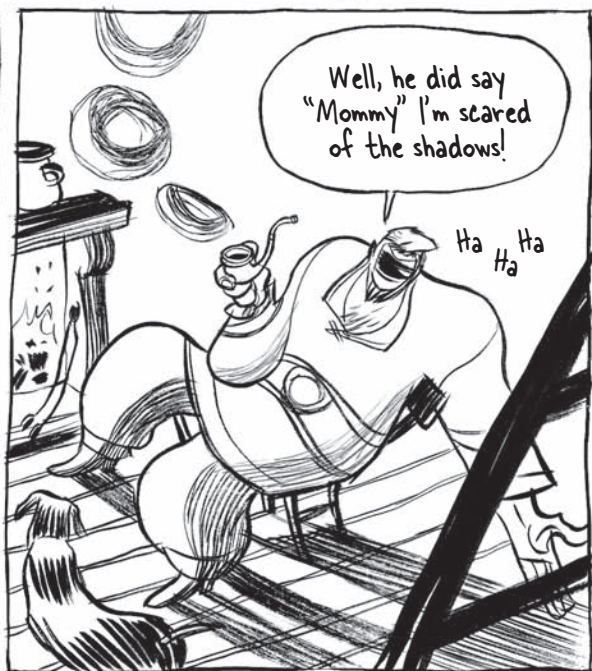
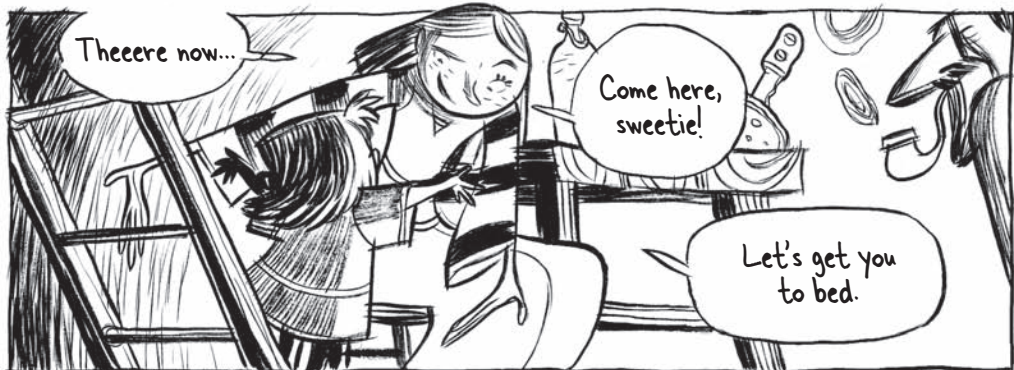
...Peaceful and
untroubled.

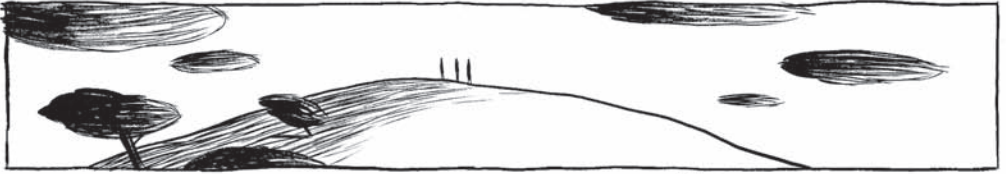
And then...



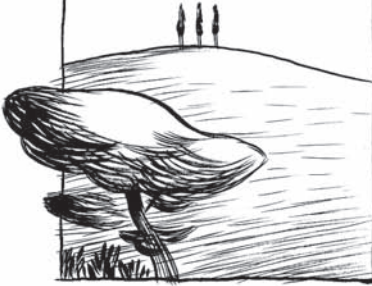
...Then
everything
changed.



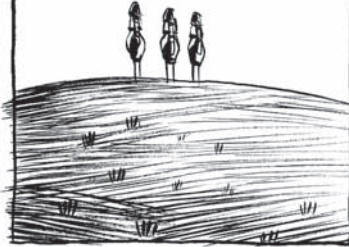




You must've been having a nightmare.



It's nothing.



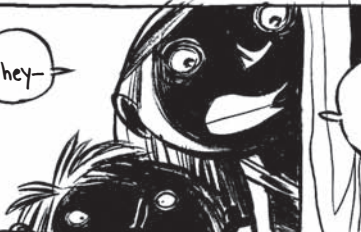
Clearly, they're...



...trees.



They-



They're moving!

Okay then!

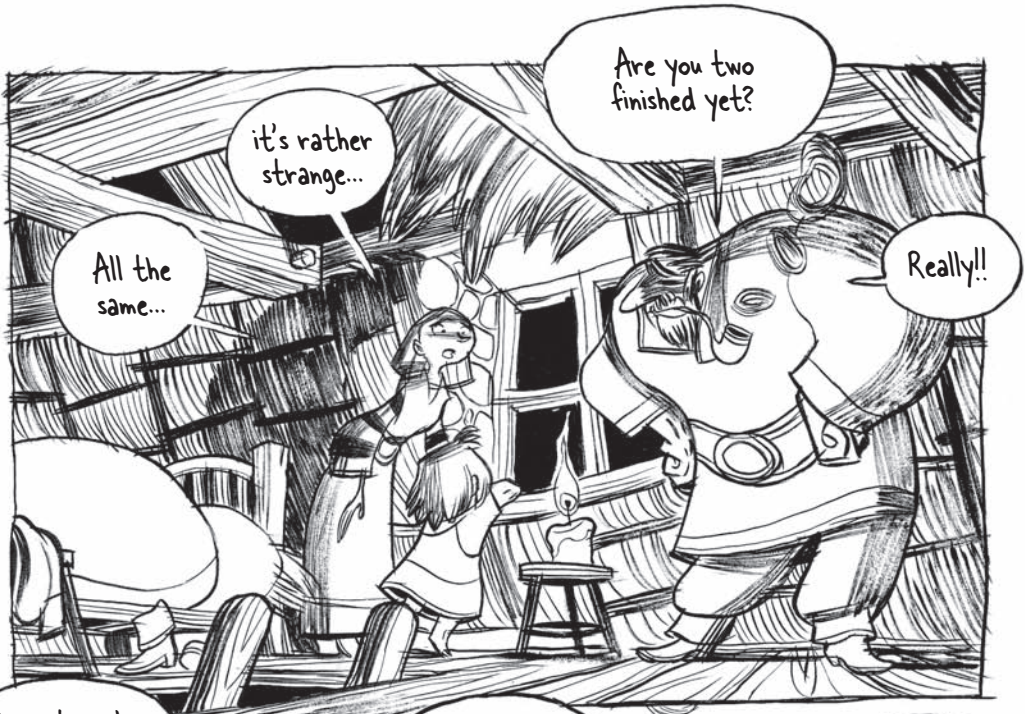


So there are horsemen on the hill!

So what??

Daddy...

...I'm scared of horsemen.



Are you two finished yet?

it's rather strange...

All the same...

Really!!



Some travelers pass by on the hill...

...while we're safe and snug at home!



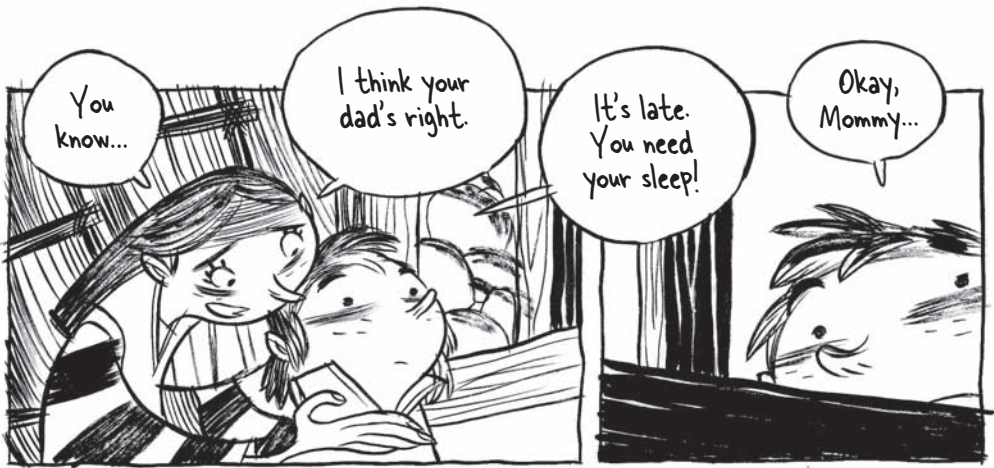
I don't see what's so...

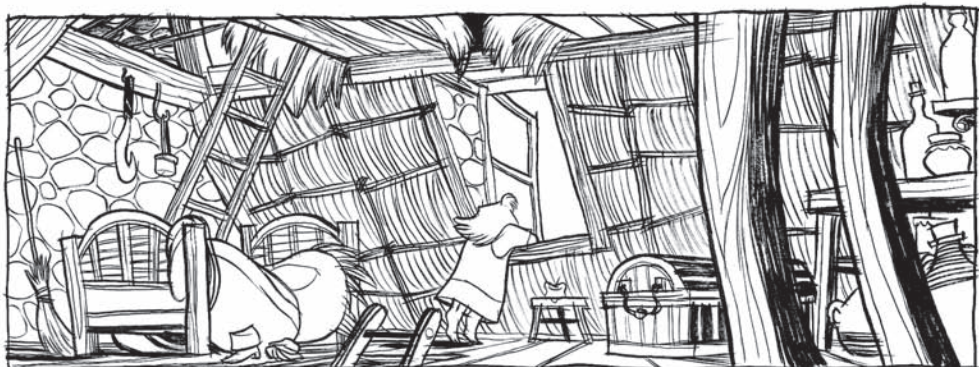
"strange"!



Well.

Back to bed, then?

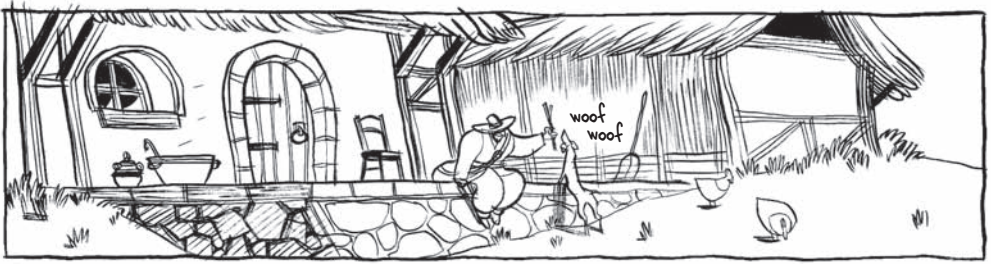


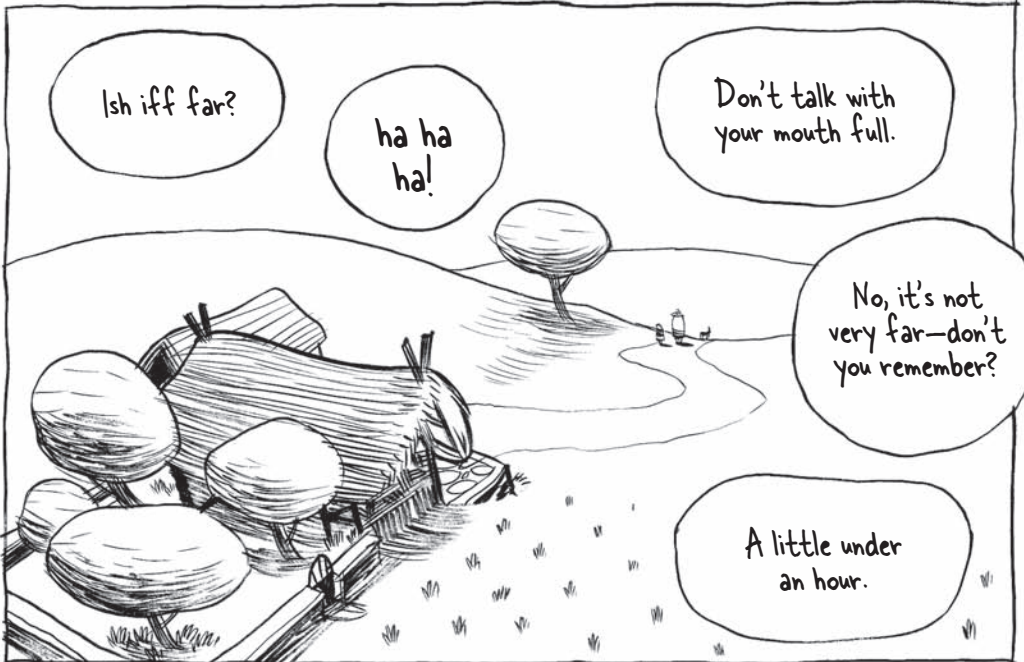
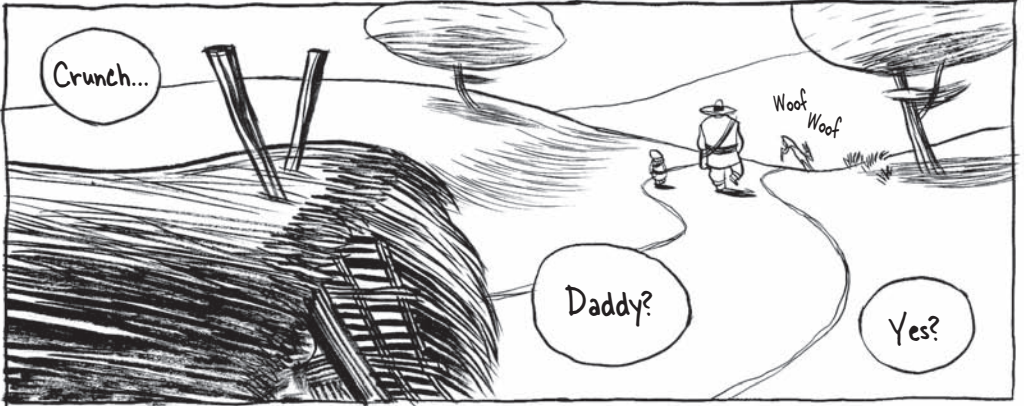


Joachim!!

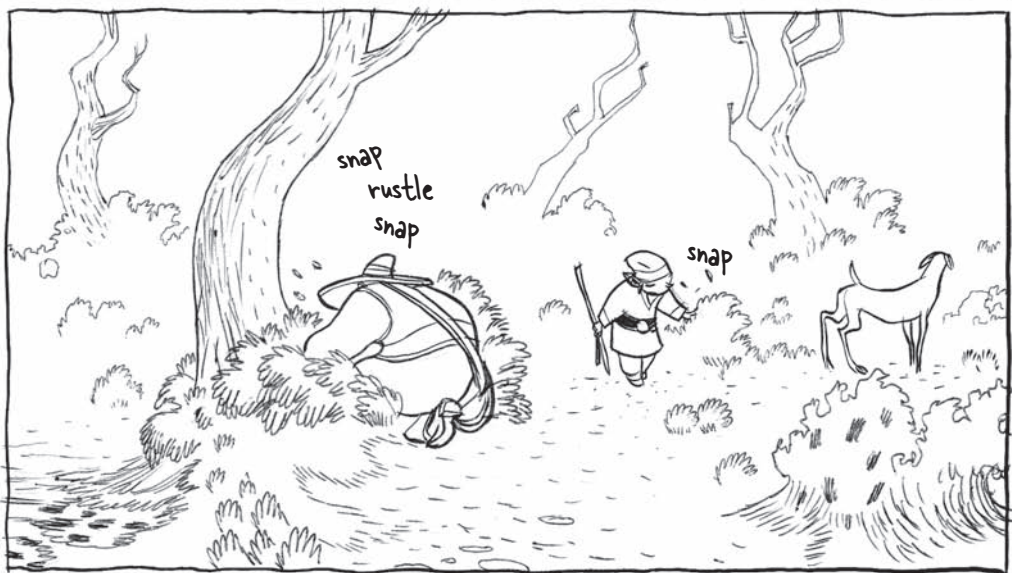
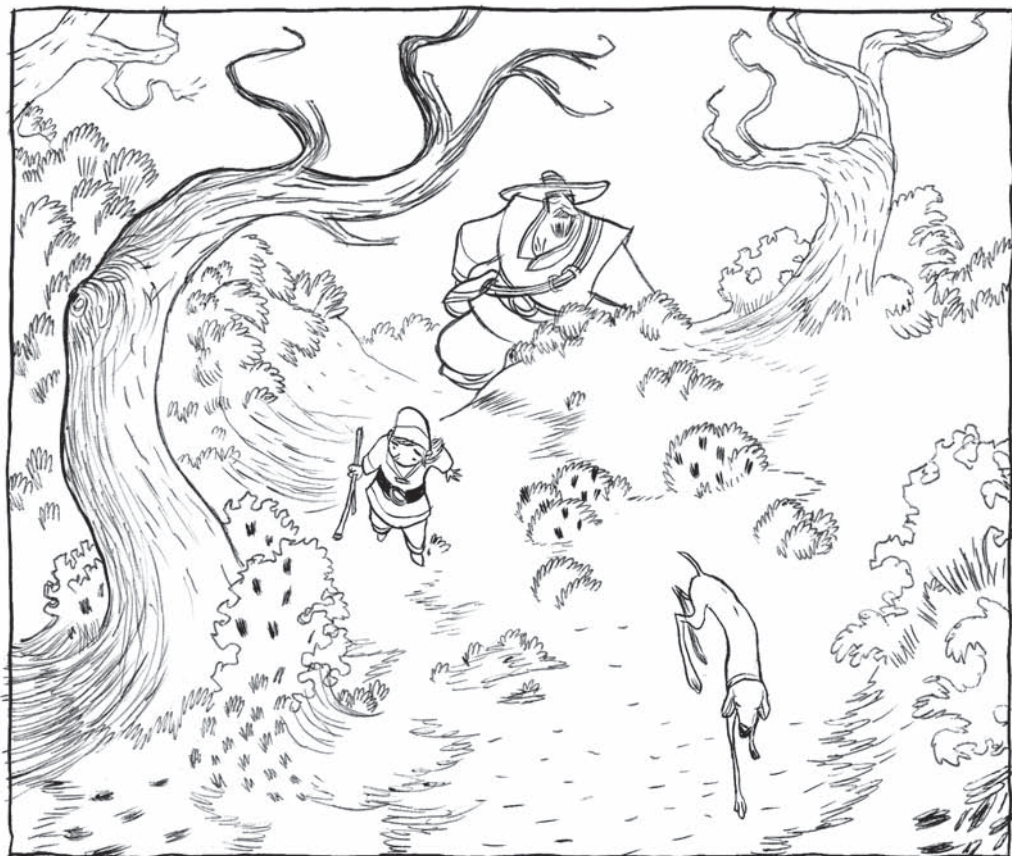
Hurry up, your father's waiting!

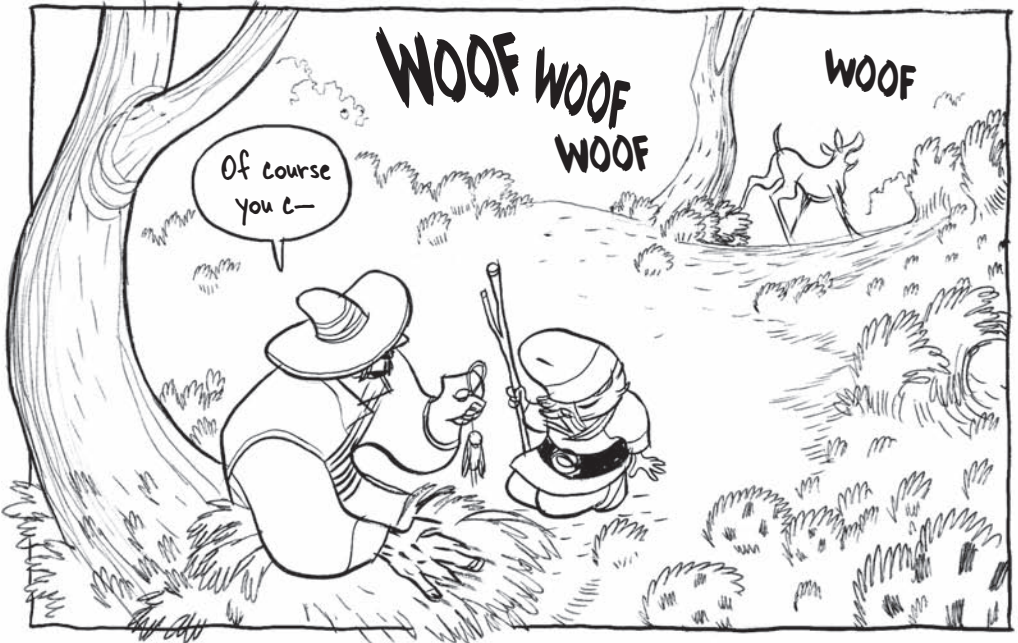
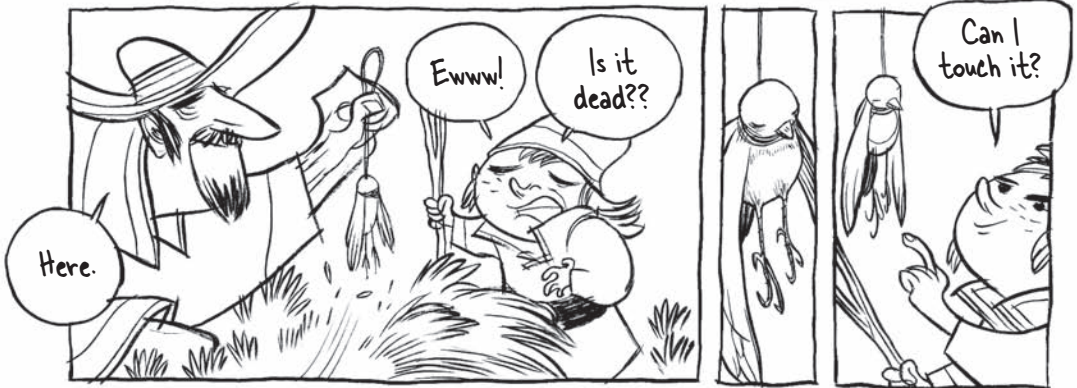
Comiiiiing!

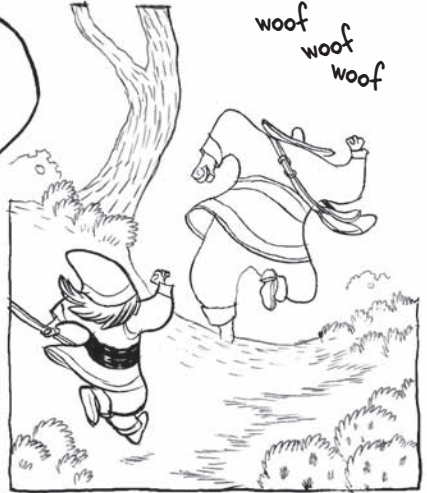
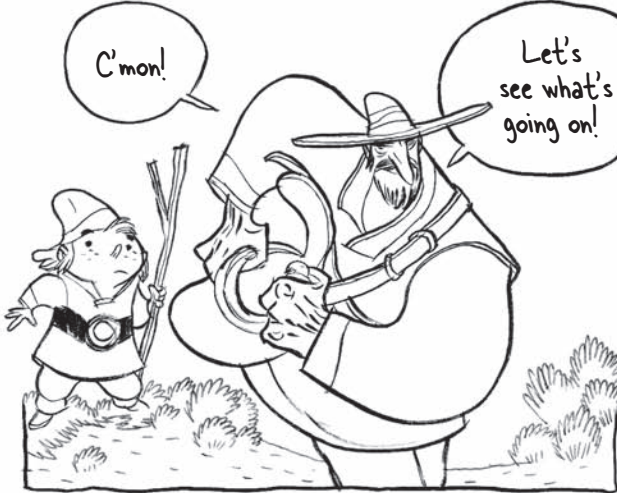


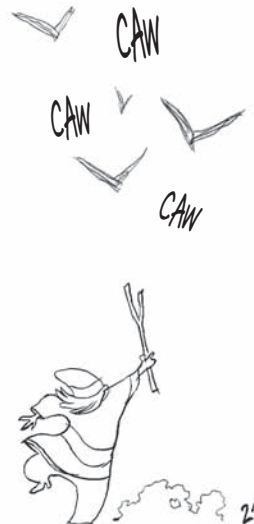
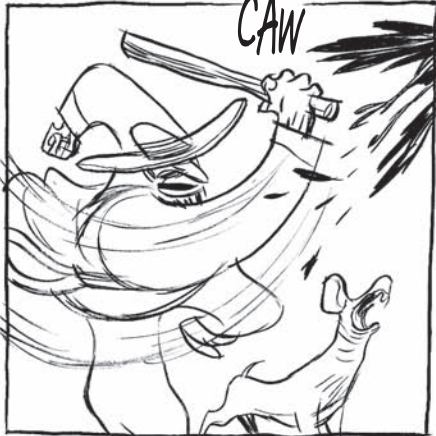


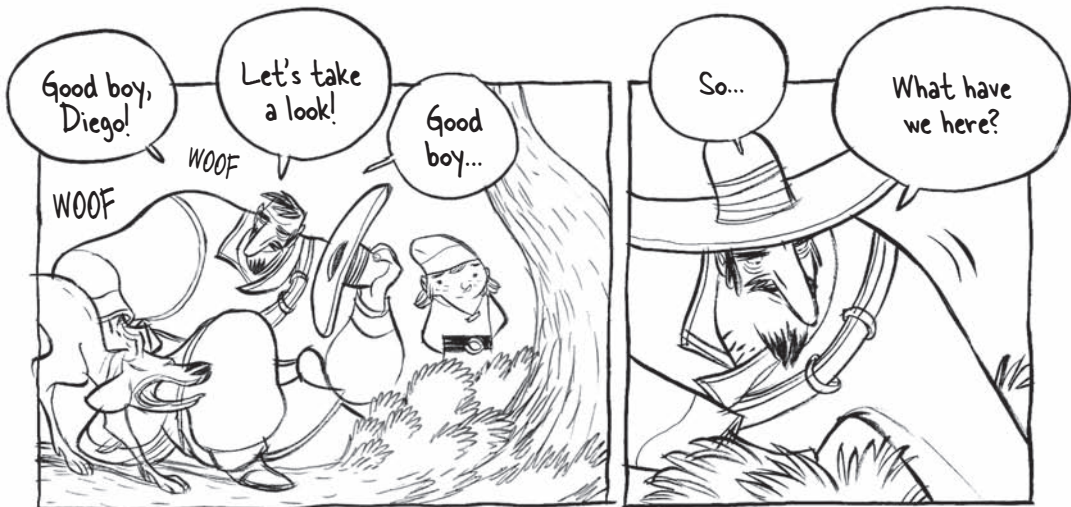


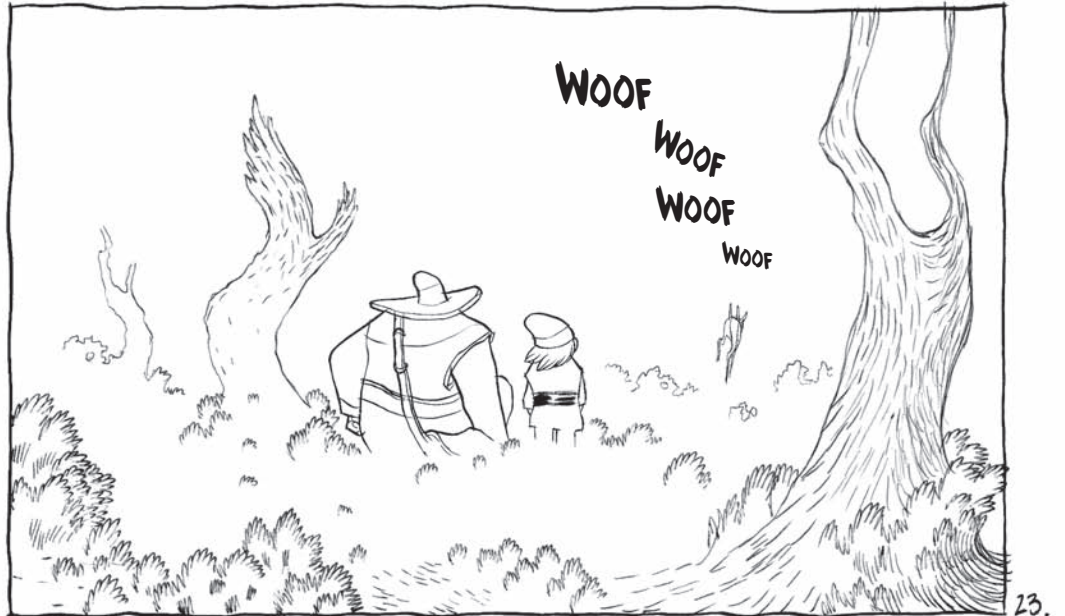














DIIIIEEEEEGOOO!

Diego...

We've gotta go after him!



Hm...

The fog's set in quickly.



Can't see a thing now.

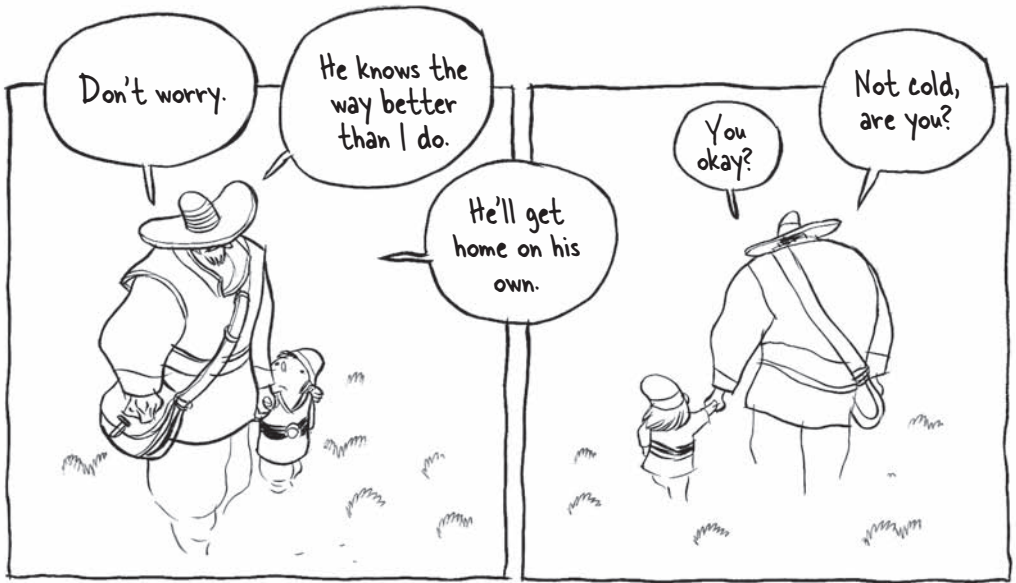


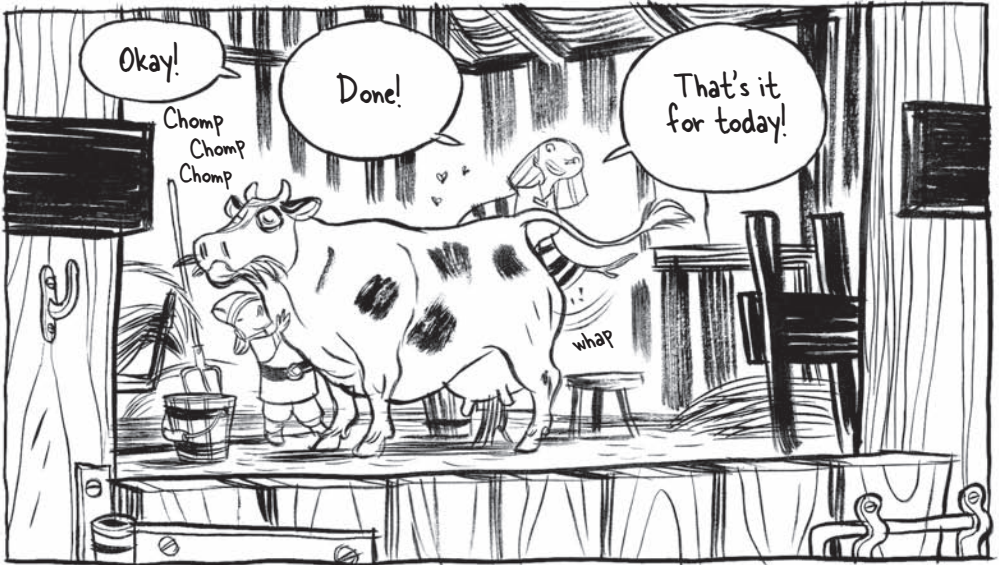
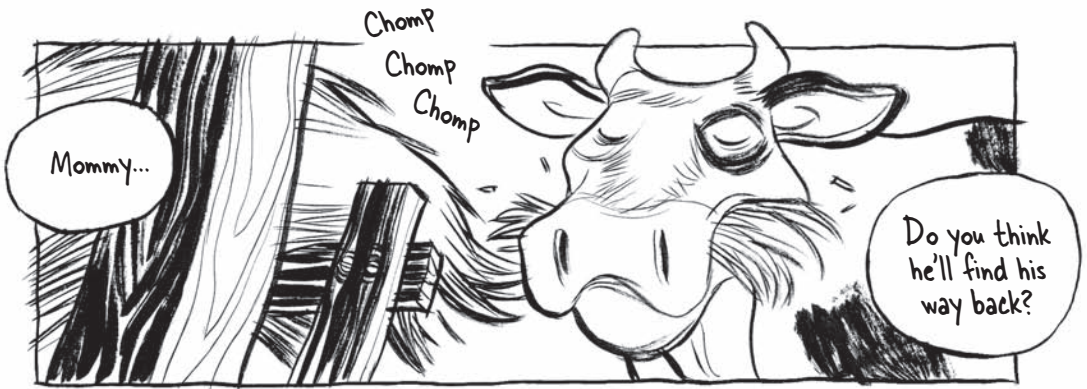
Oh well.

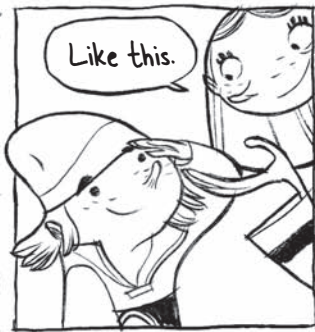
We'd better head back.

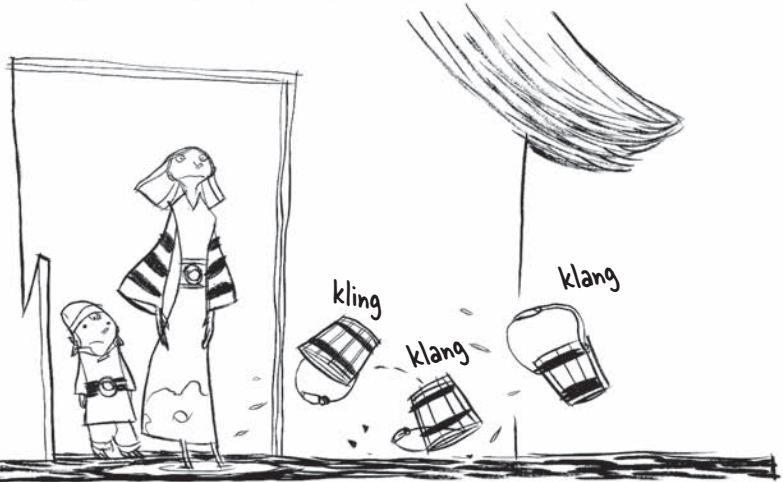
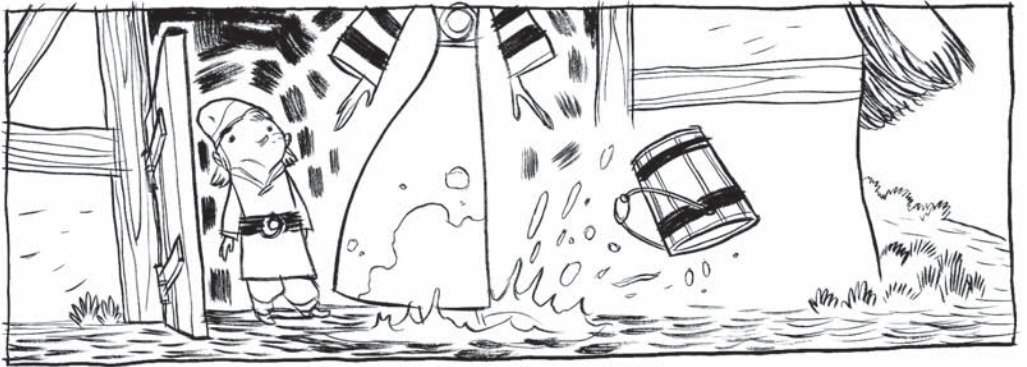
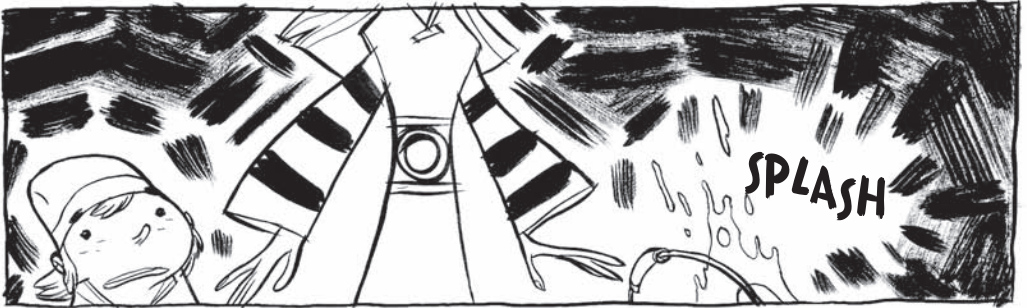
Poor Diego.

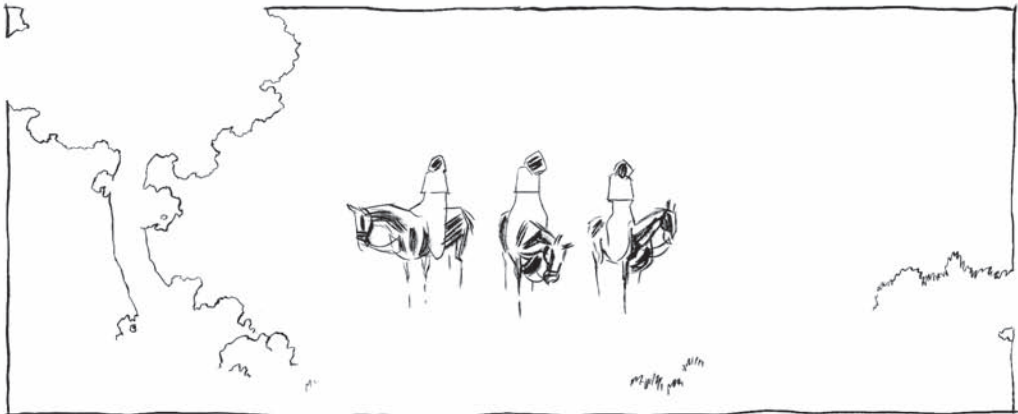
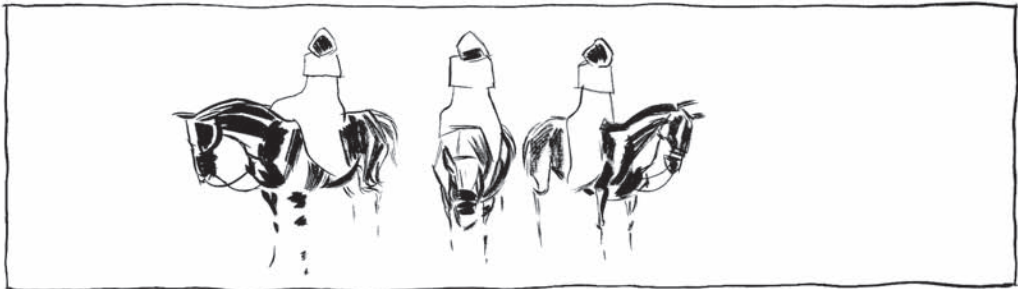
What's gonna happen to him?

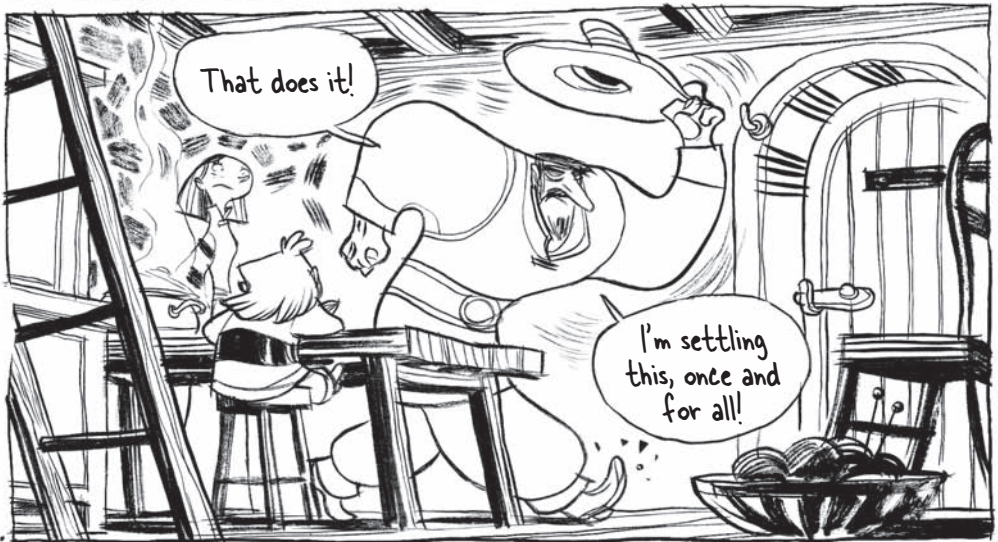
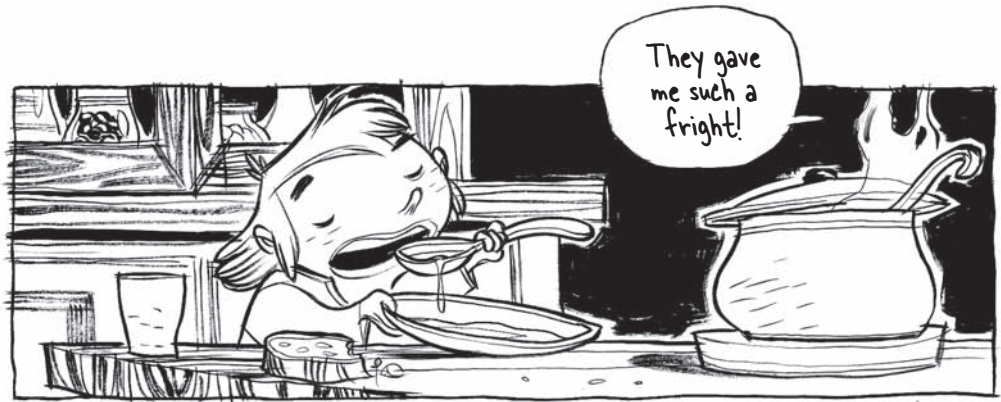


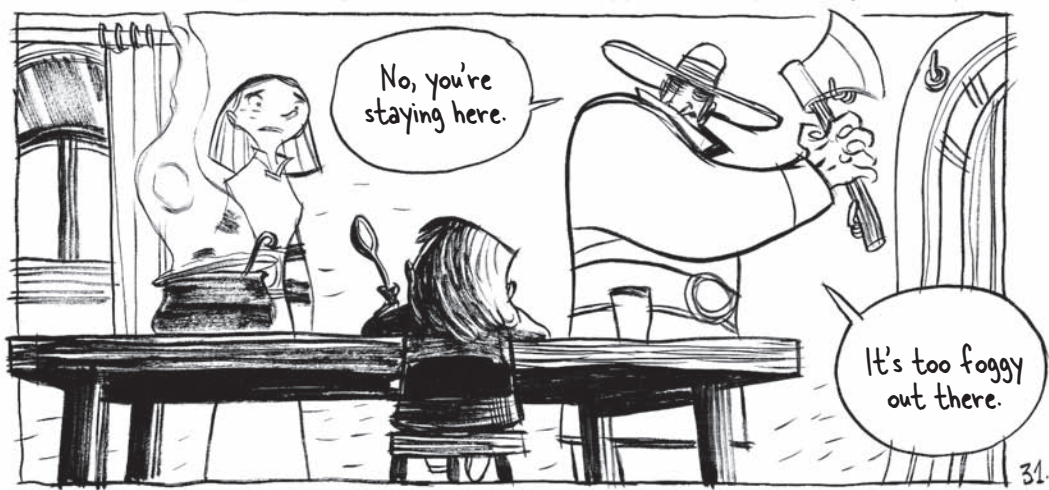
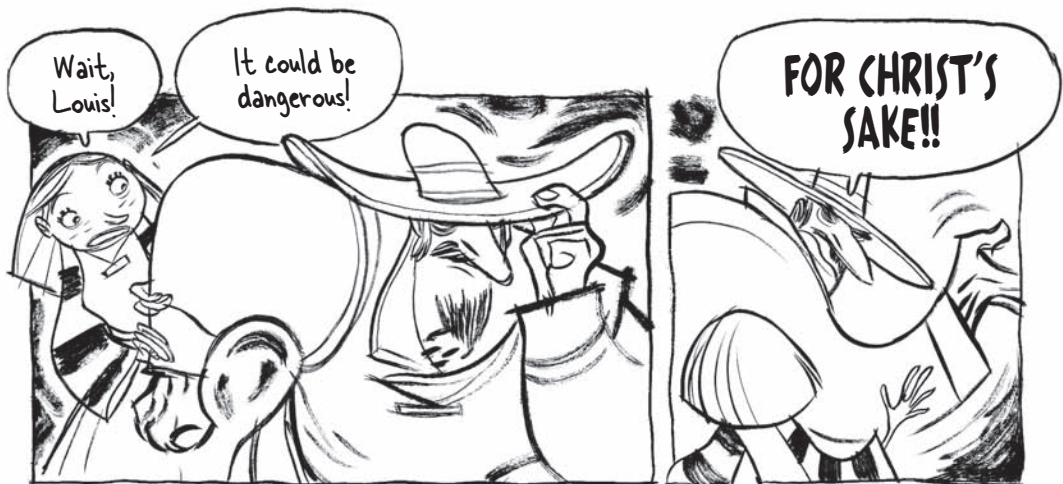


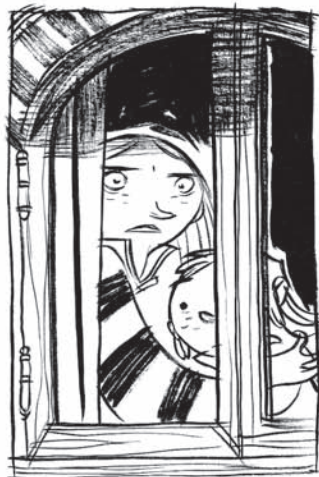
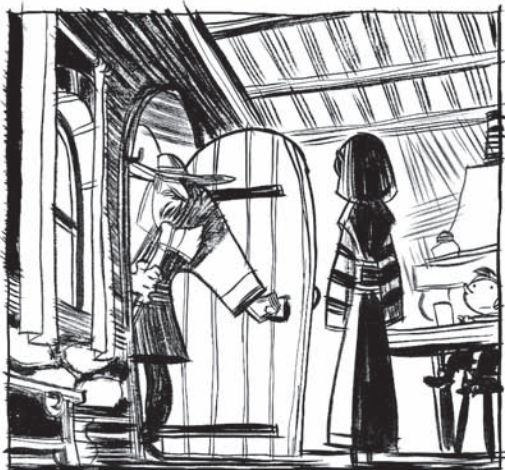


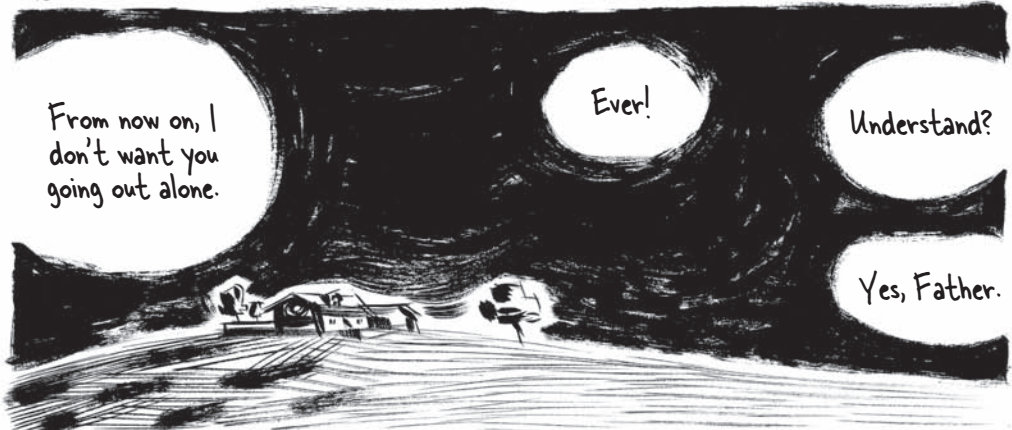
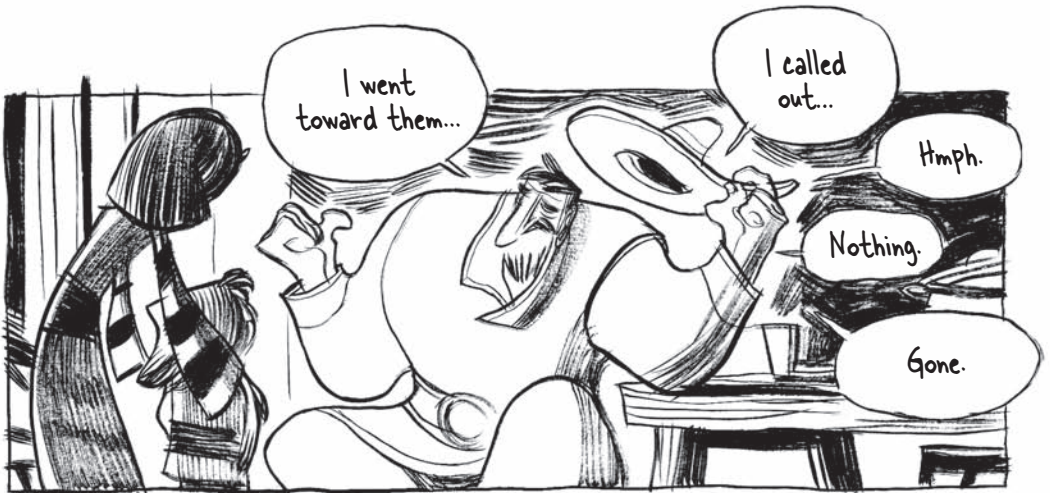






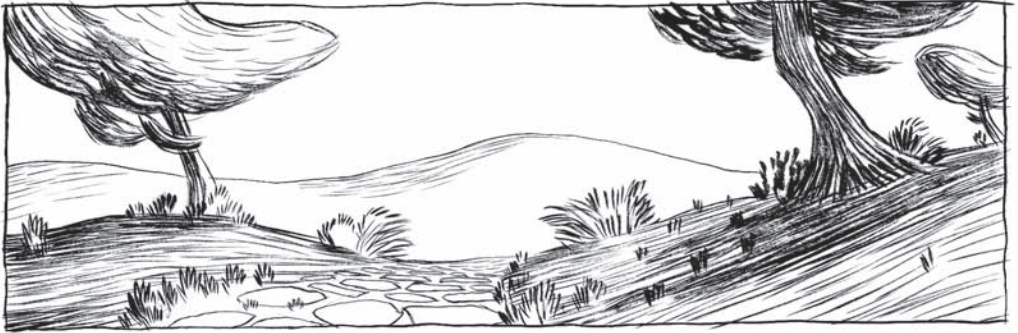






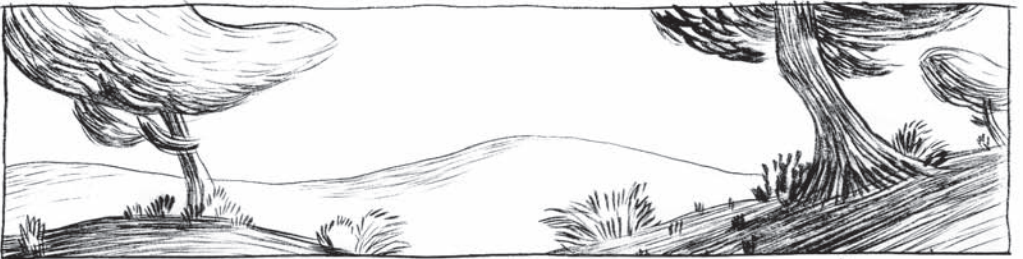
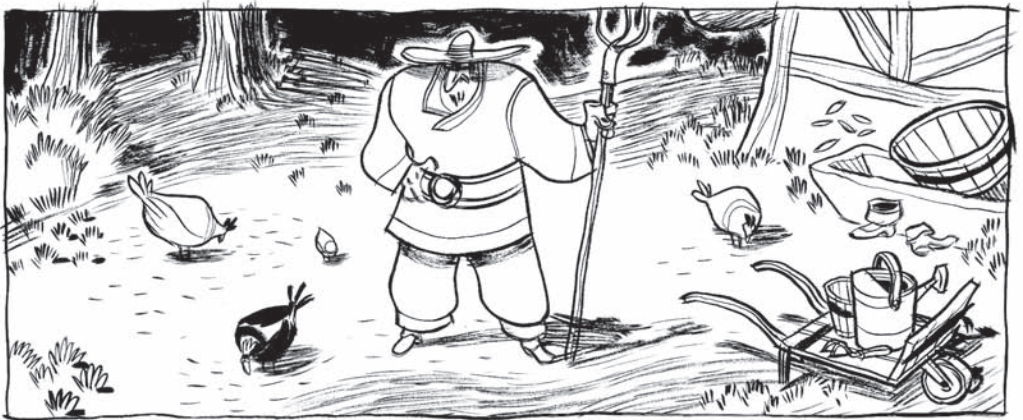


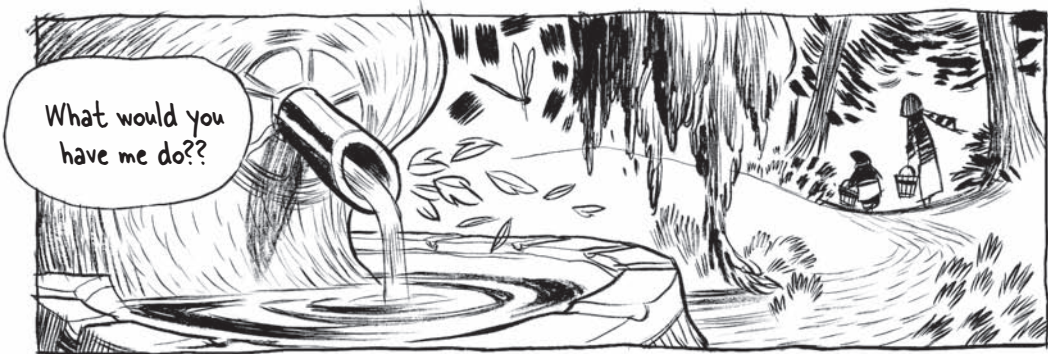
Louis...



...We can't go on like this!







What would you have me do??



I don't know what they want.



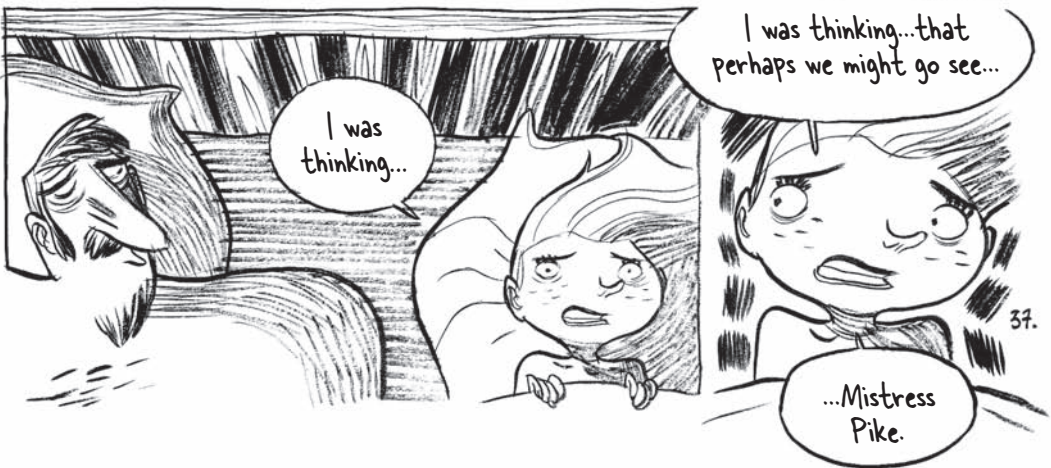
They're like...

...eels.



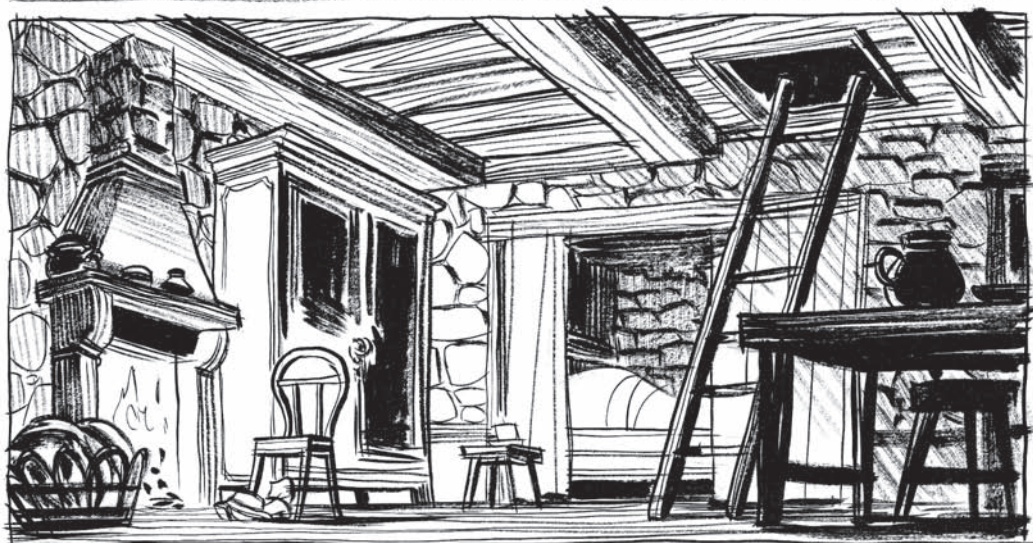
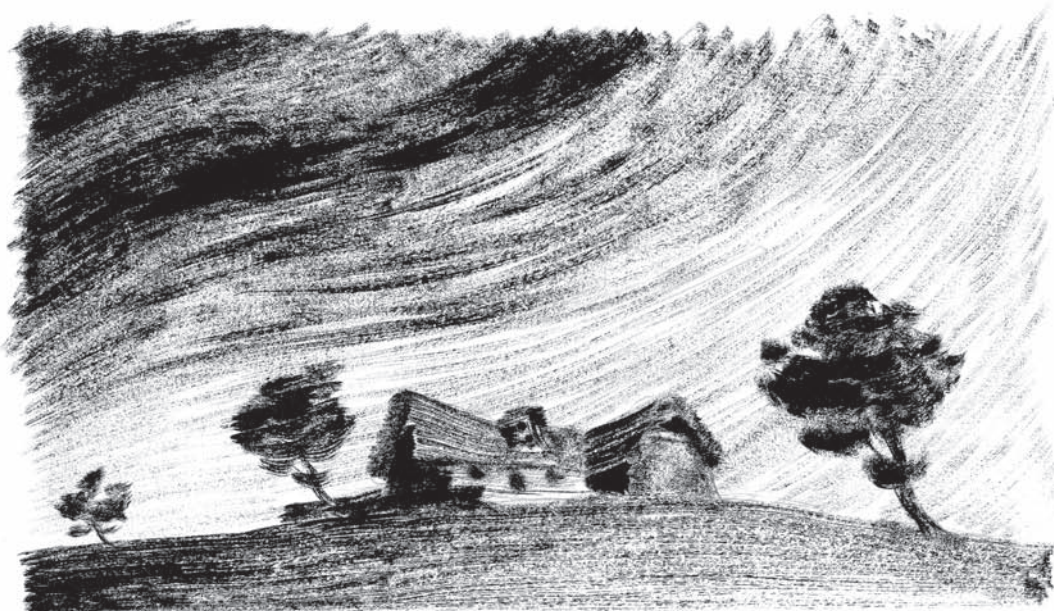
The minute you tighten your grip—

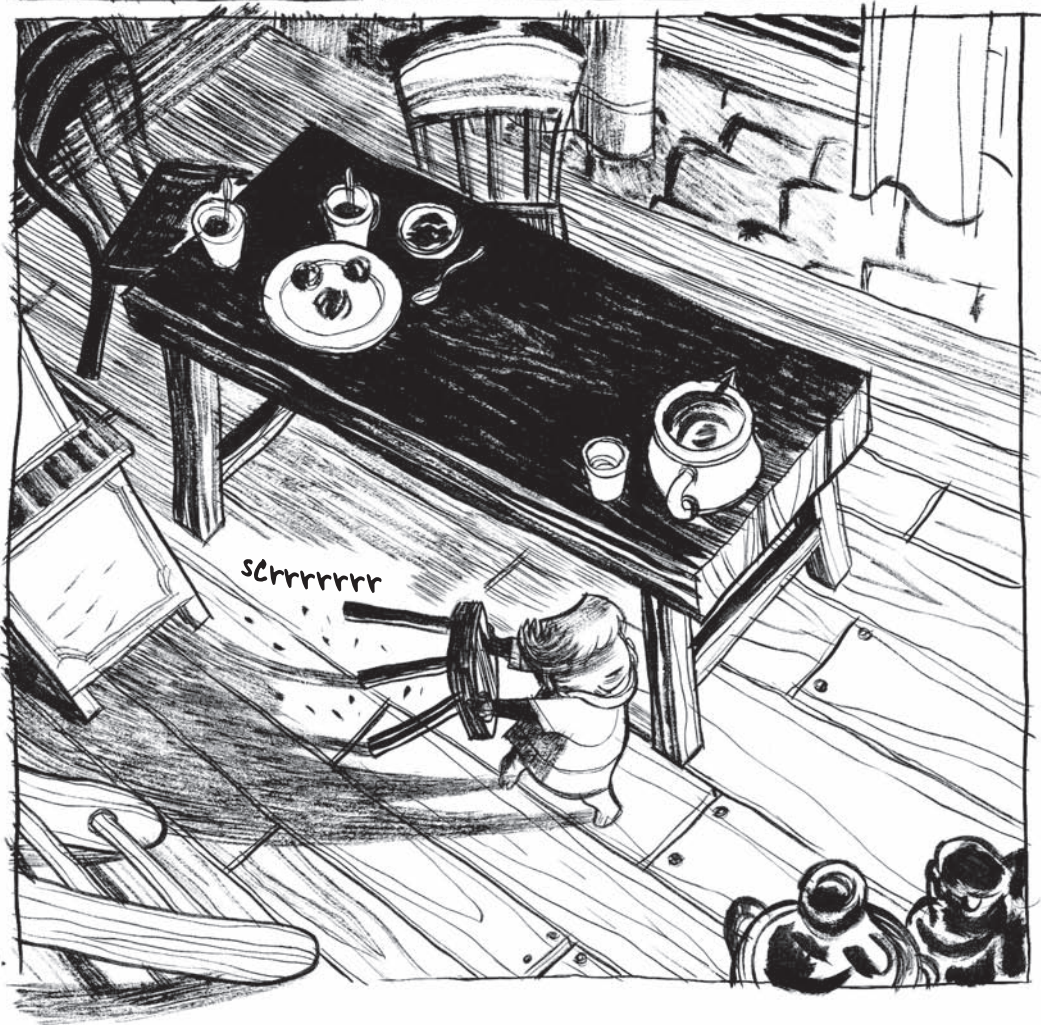
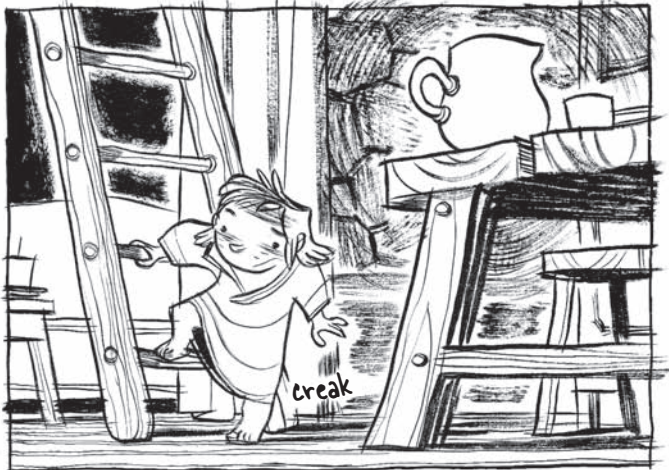
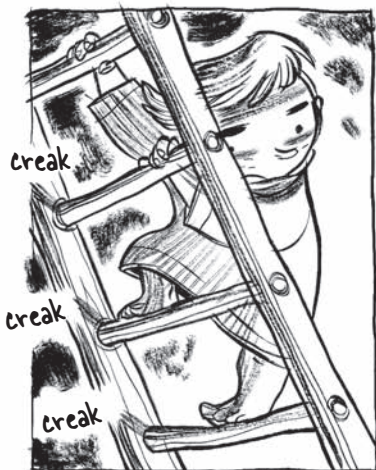
—they slip away!

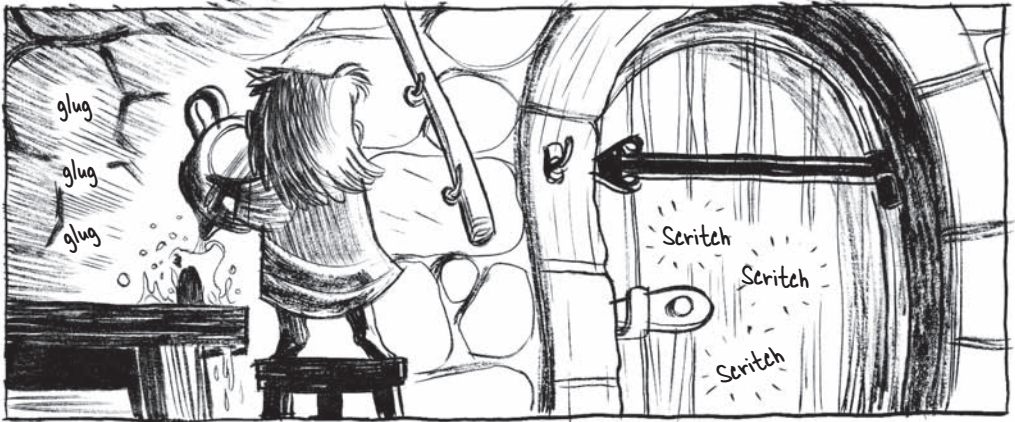


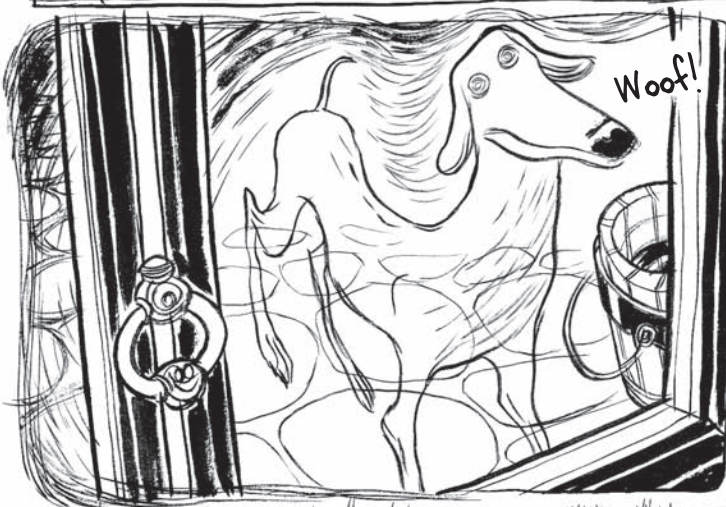
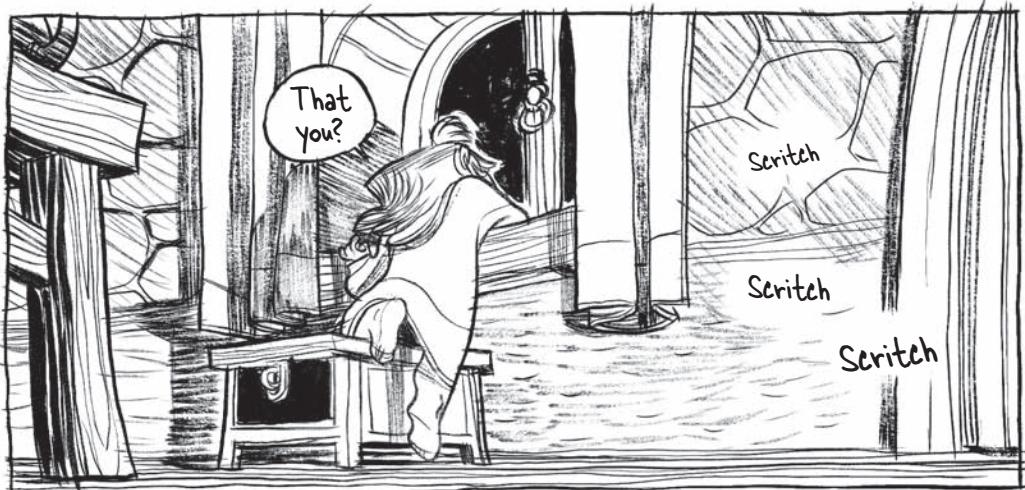
THAT OLD PIKE HAG?









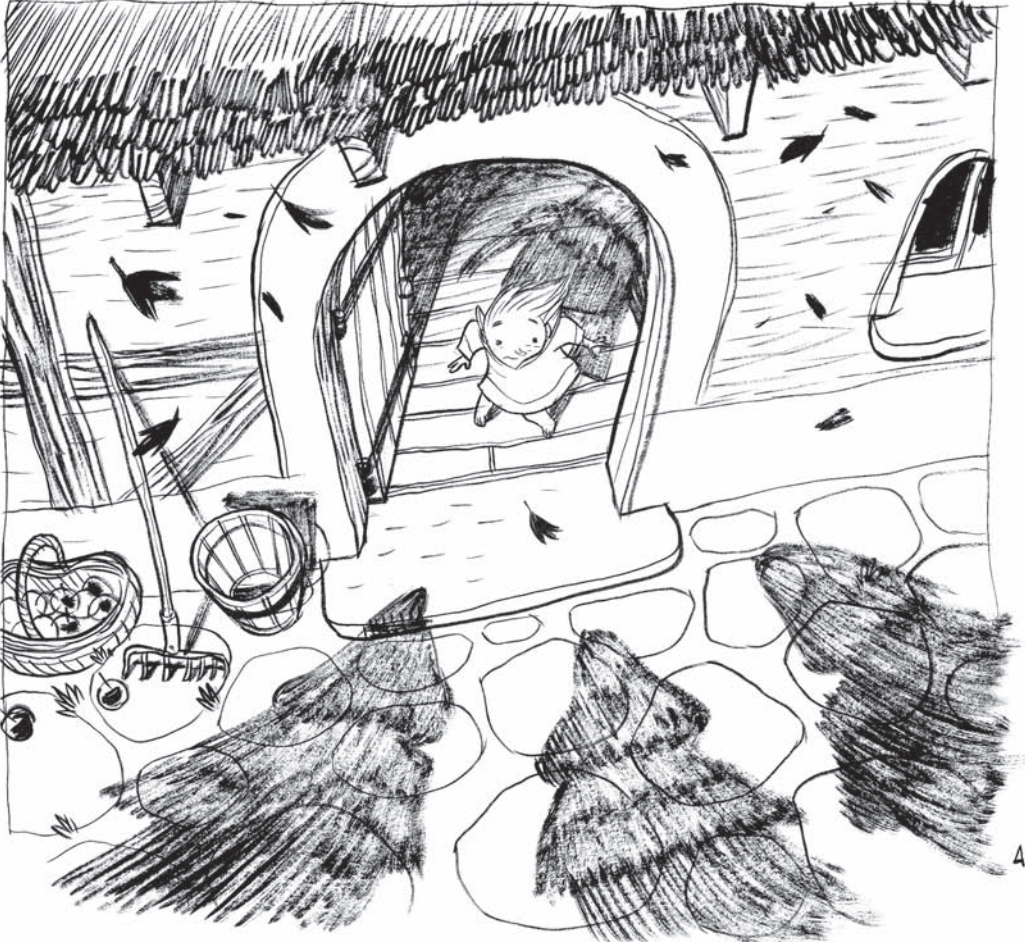


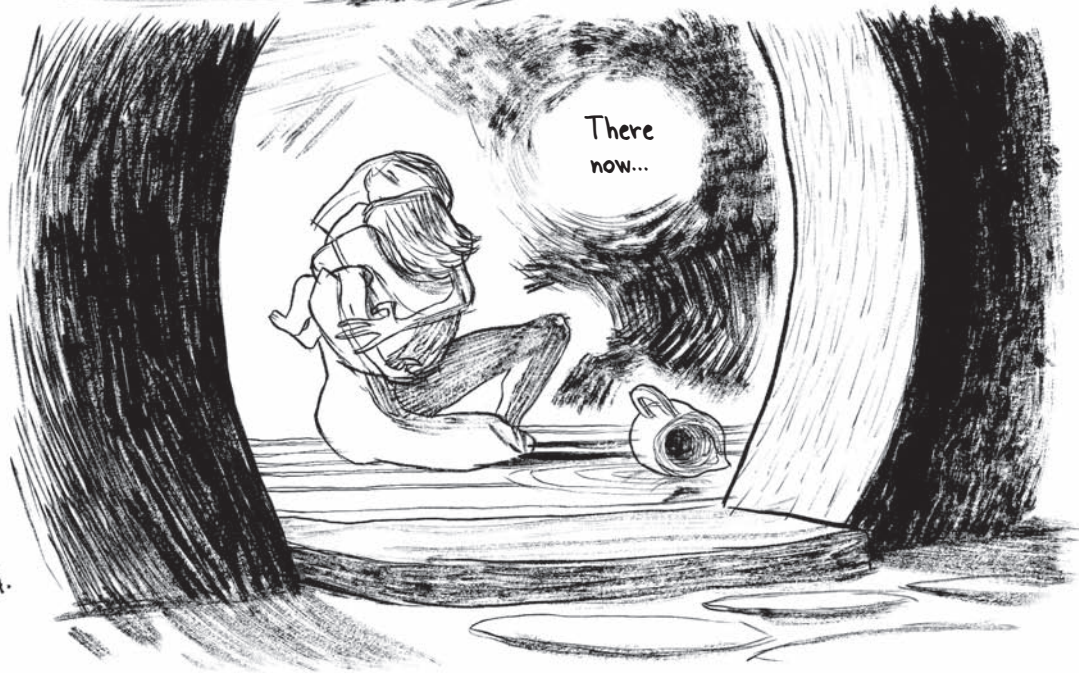
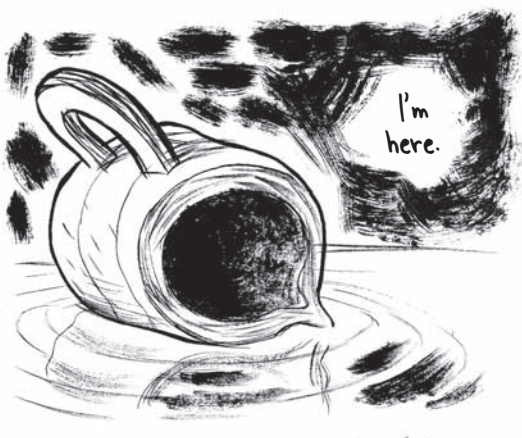
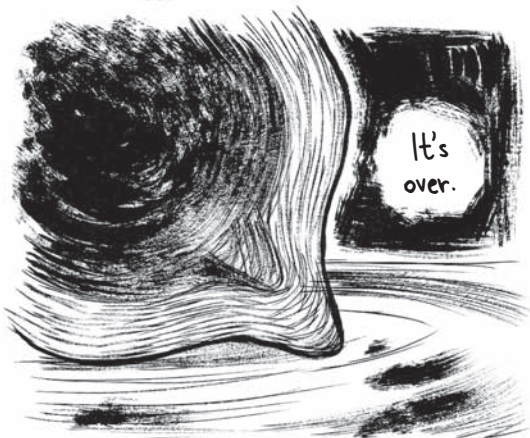
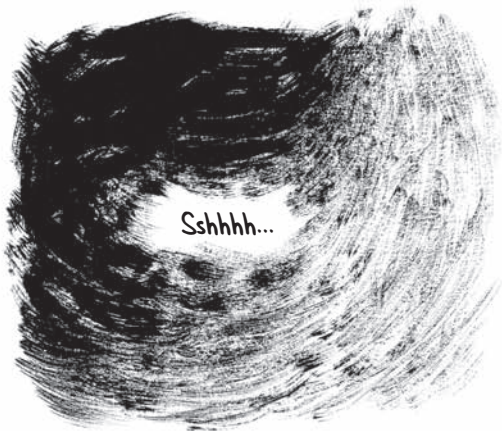
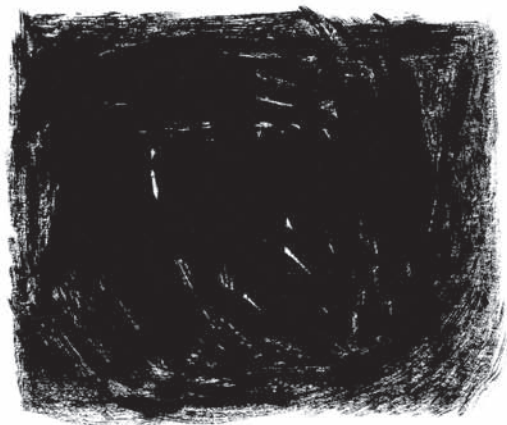
Click!

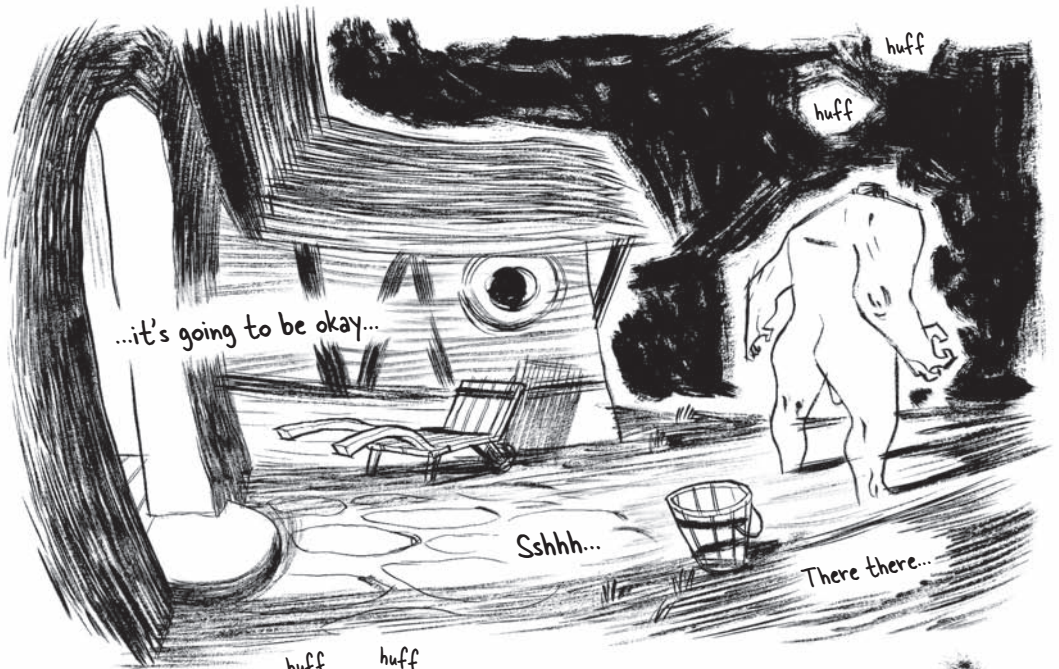
C'm'ere,
bo—

Woof
Woof

WHAM!



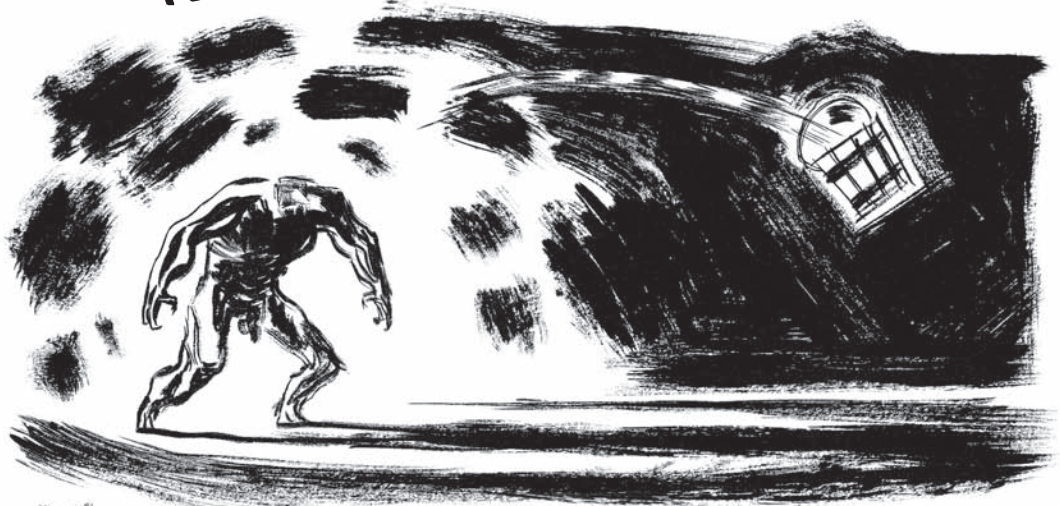




GET OUT OF HERE,
YOU—



KLING

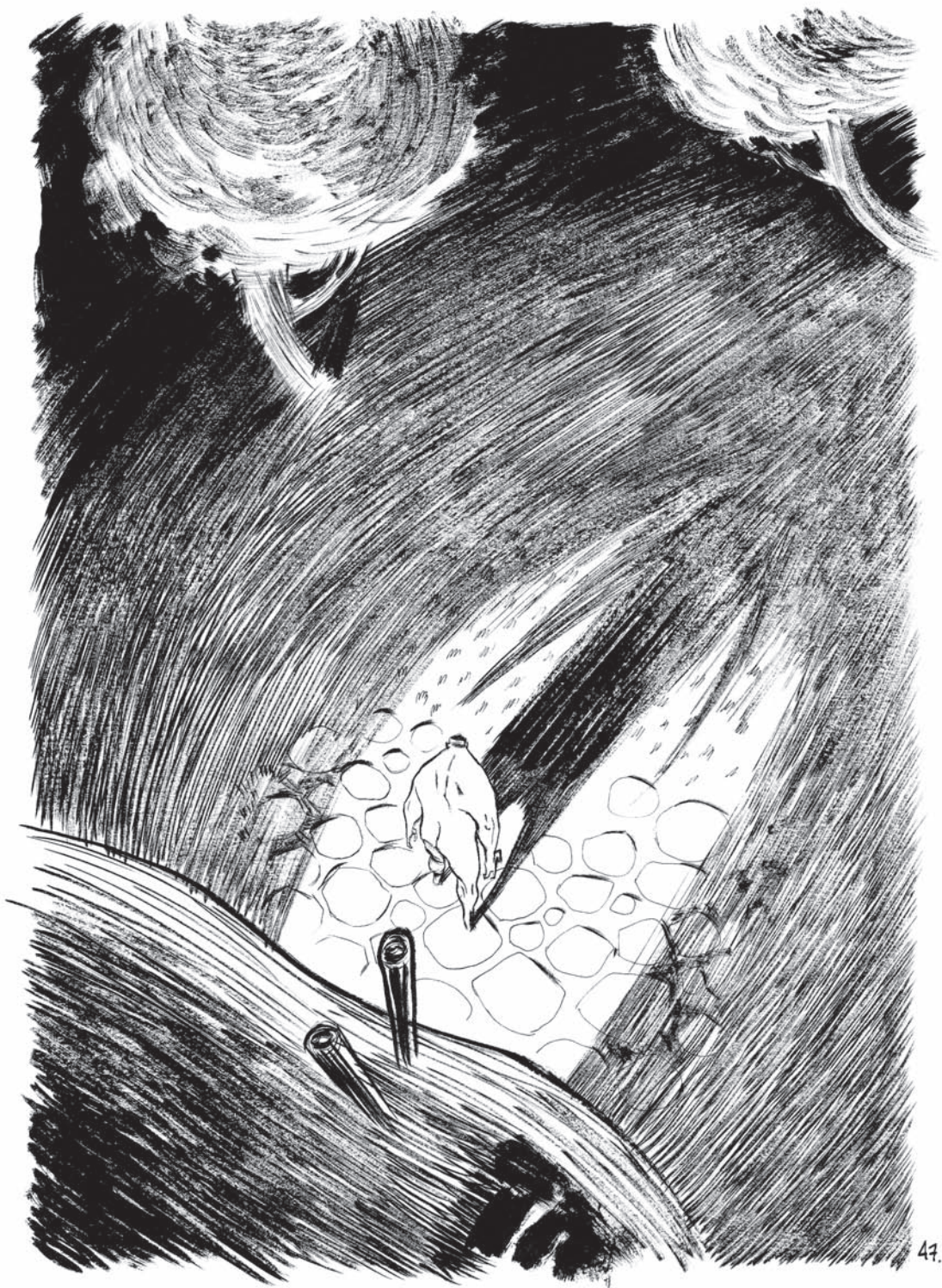


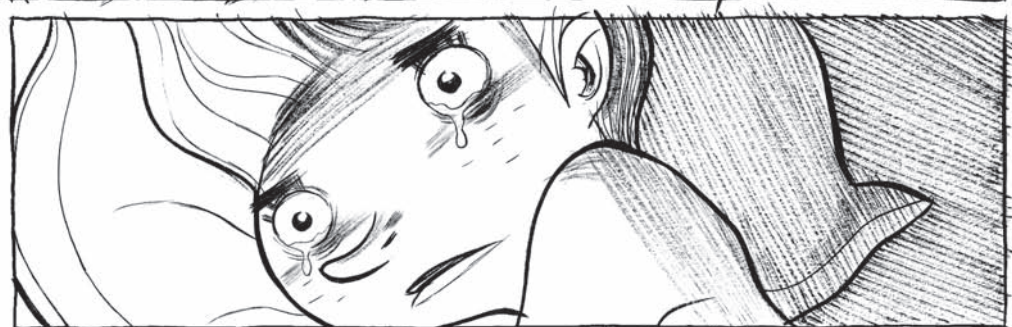
kling

kling

klang

klang







woof

woof

woof

woof woof

WOOF WOOF

Mom
Dad

Daddie
Mom
Momm





clip clop
clip clop



Crrrrrr



HEEE HAAAW!



Easy,
Mabel...

Easy...

clip clop
clip clop



Louis,

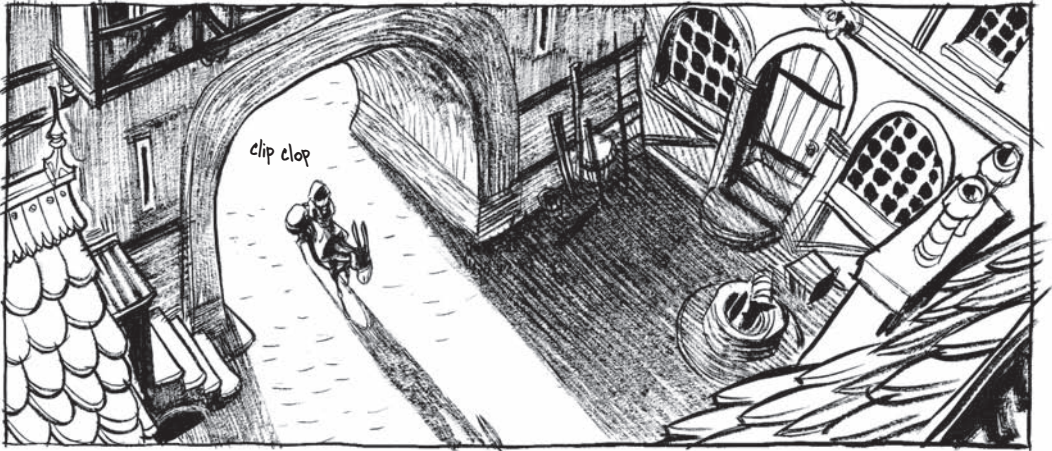
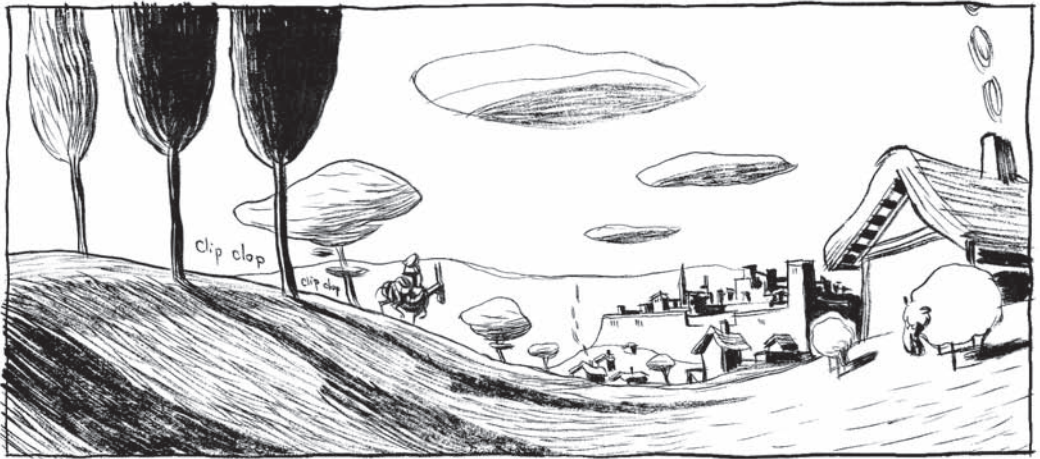
Fear and anger won't
protect Joachim.

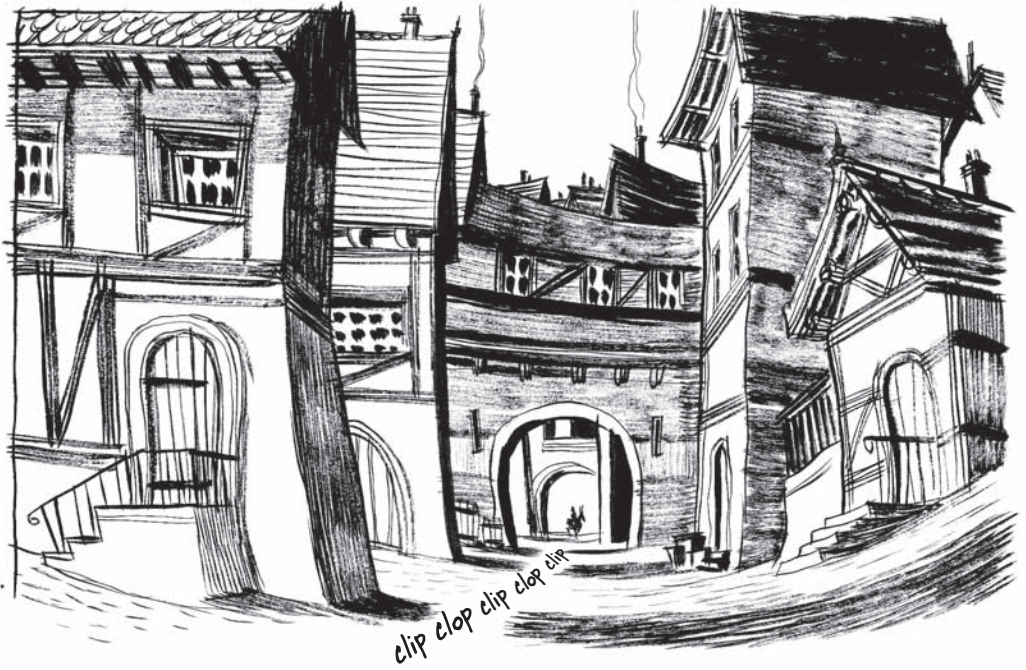
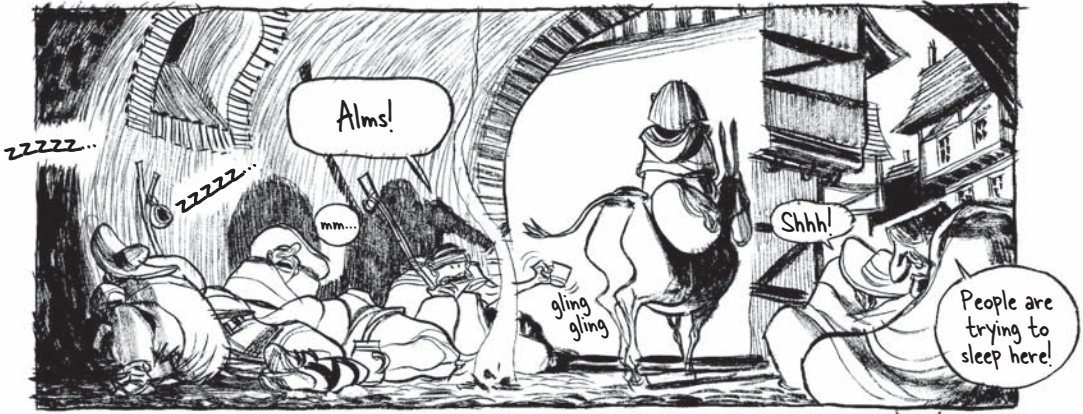
We need to know.

I'll be back tomorrow.

I love you.

Lise







And you?

You can talk to flies?

Yes, I can!

I mean...

...almost...

Let's say I understand fly...



...but I can't speak it.



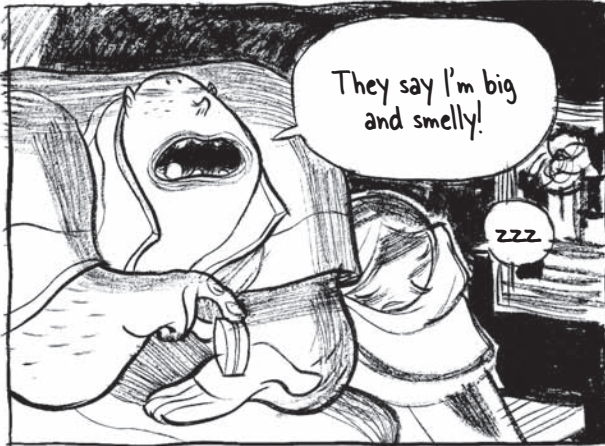
Can I tell you a secret?



Actually...

Flies aren't very nice to me.

zzz



They say I'm big and smelly!

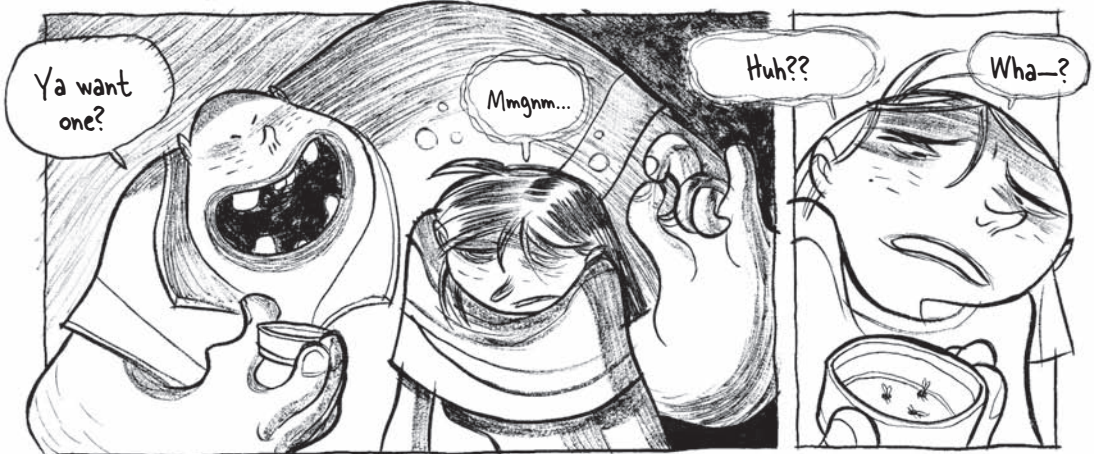
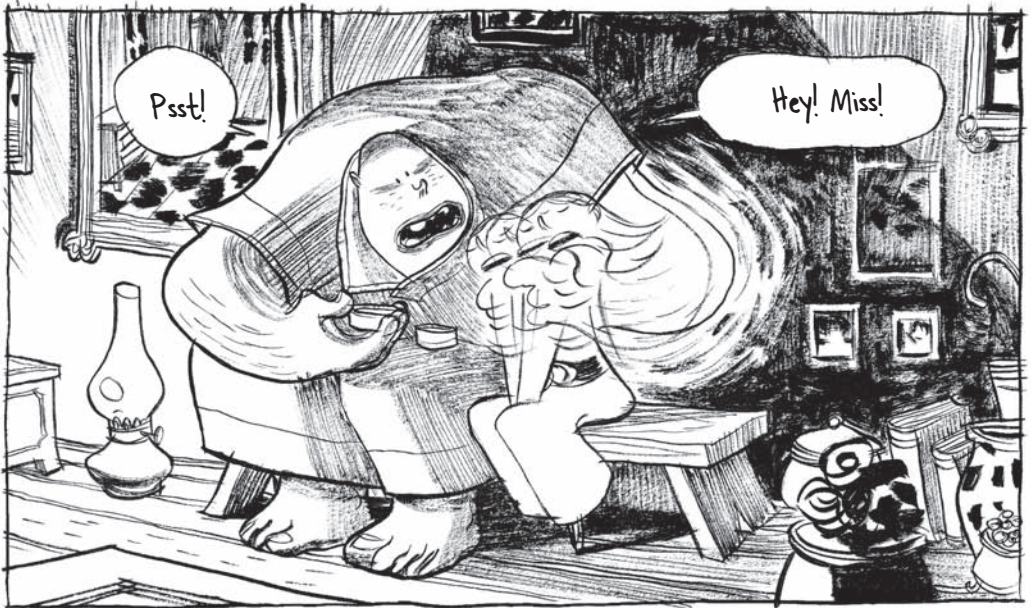
zzz

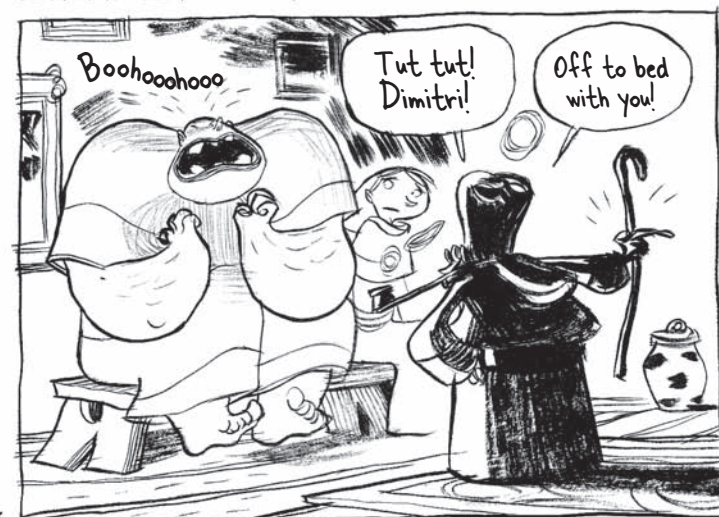
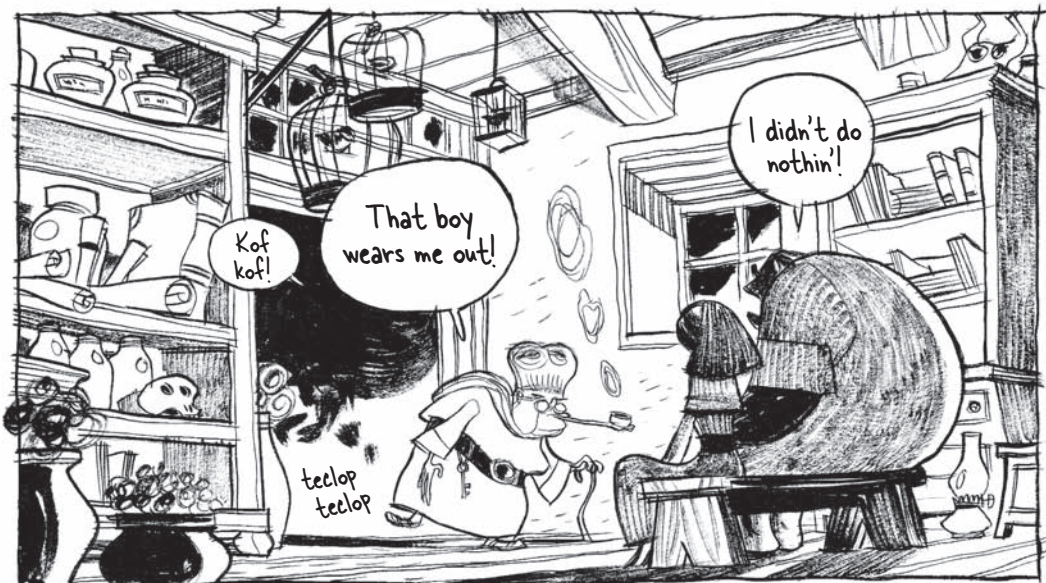


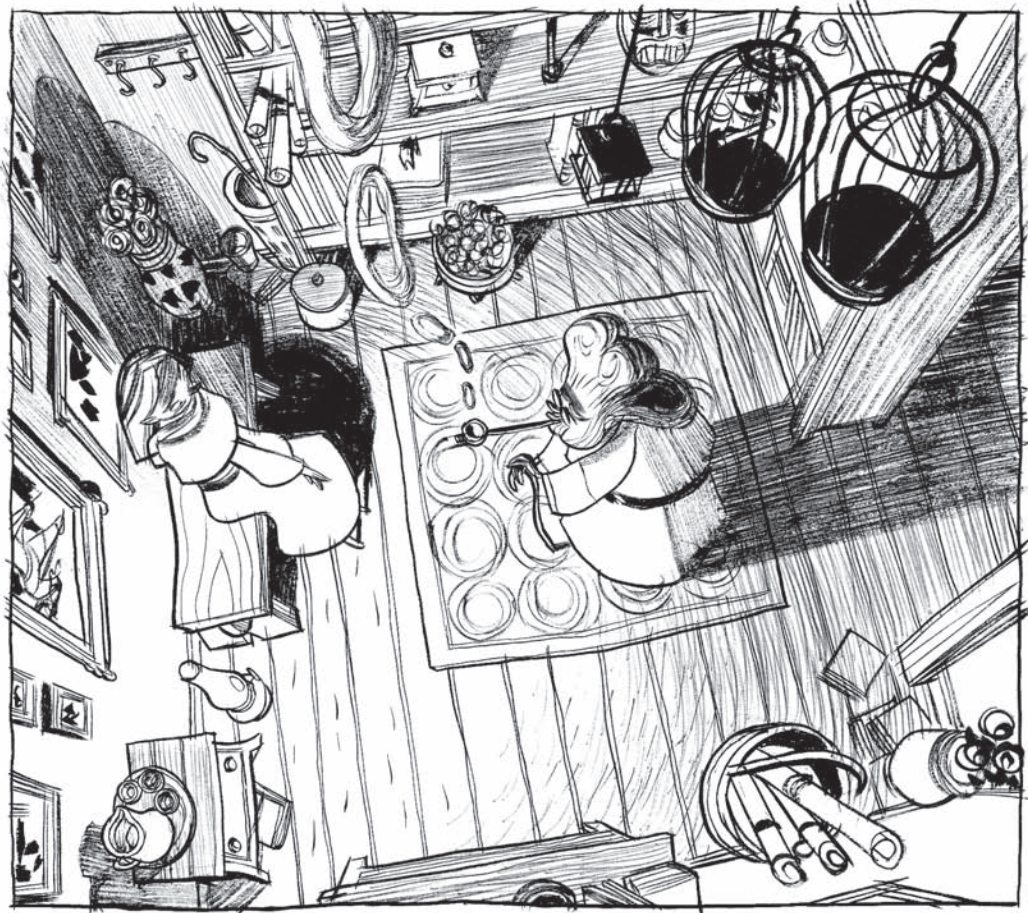
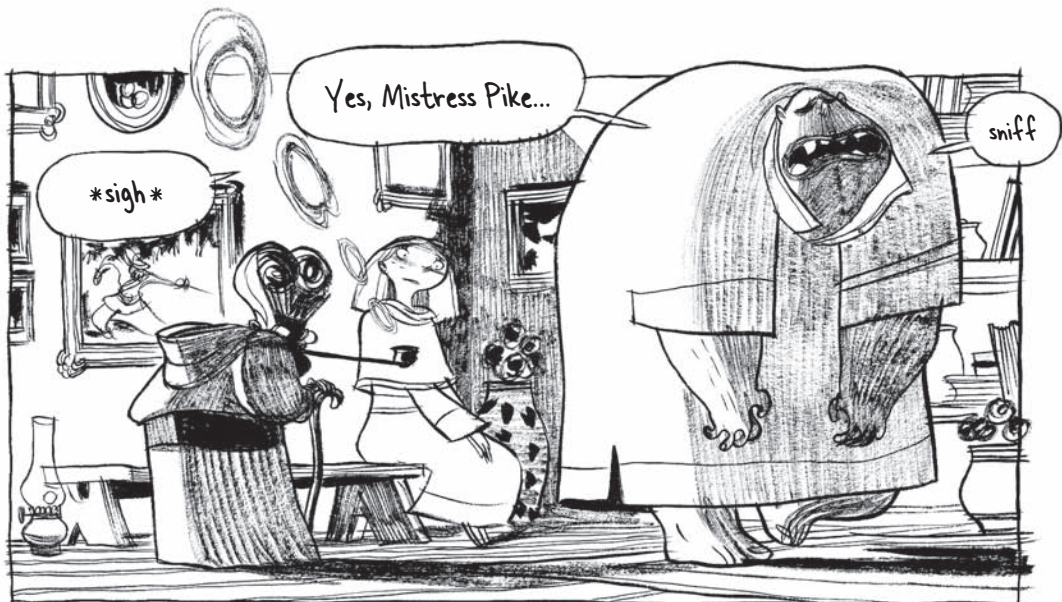
So, to get back at them...



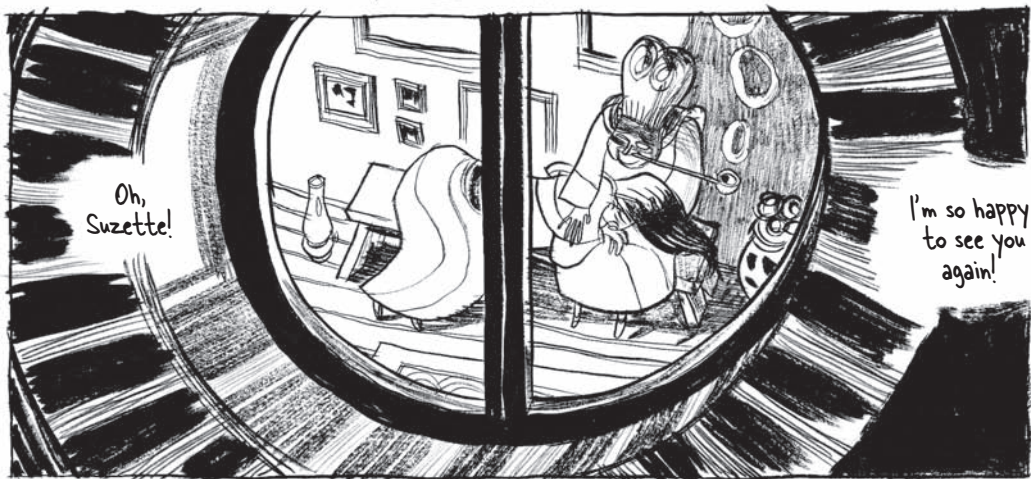
...I eat 'em!





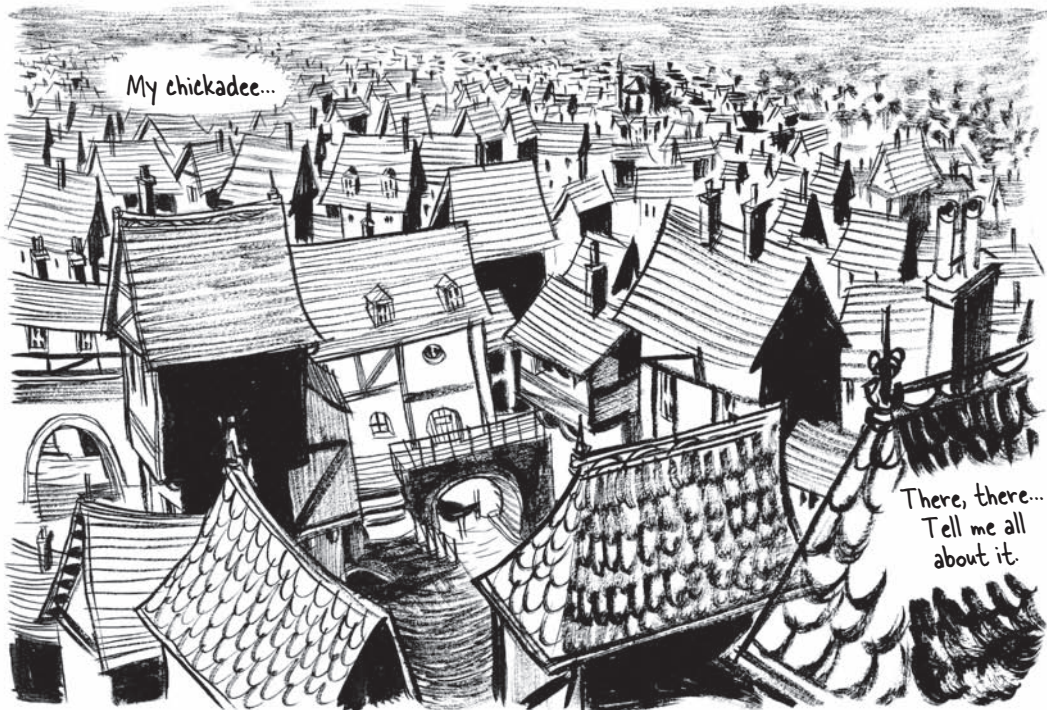






Oh,
Suzette!

I'm so happy
to see you
again!



My chickadee...

There, there...
Tell me all
about it.



Smoke?

No, thanks.

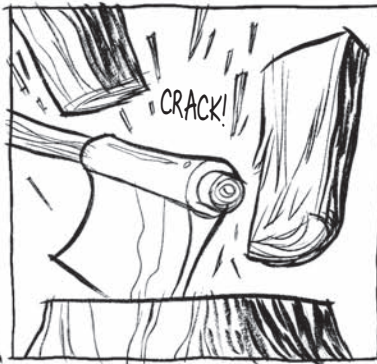
Pufff...

Helps get me through the day.

zzzz



Heh heh... Pufffff...



CRACK!



An old lady's aches and pains...



Sometimes I wish it were all over...

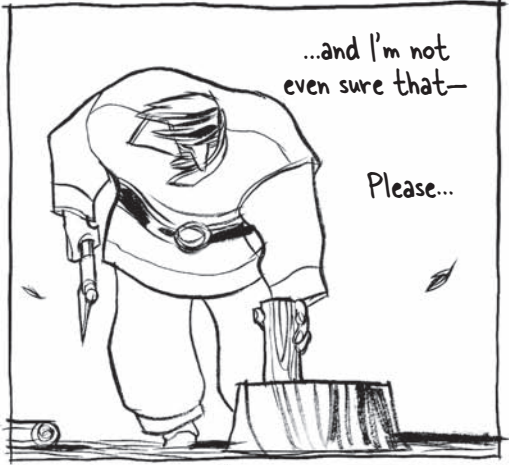
Uh... Suzette?

Oh, pardon me, I'm rambling.

My chickadee... None of this is good news.



Now, I may be mistaken...



...and I'm not even sure that—

Please...



I came to find out...



Hmf. Well. As you wish.



I believe these "things" have come for Joachim.

CRACK



Joachim? My God, what can—

Nothing. We can do nothing.

I—I don't understand...Joachim?! But why?

Take this journal. I've underlined a passage that will provide some answers.

But listen well, my chickadee: don't try to fight these "shadows"...it's no use.

Make the most of each moment...

...with Joachim...

...so long as he's with you...

I have to go.

Yes, of course.

Go back to them.



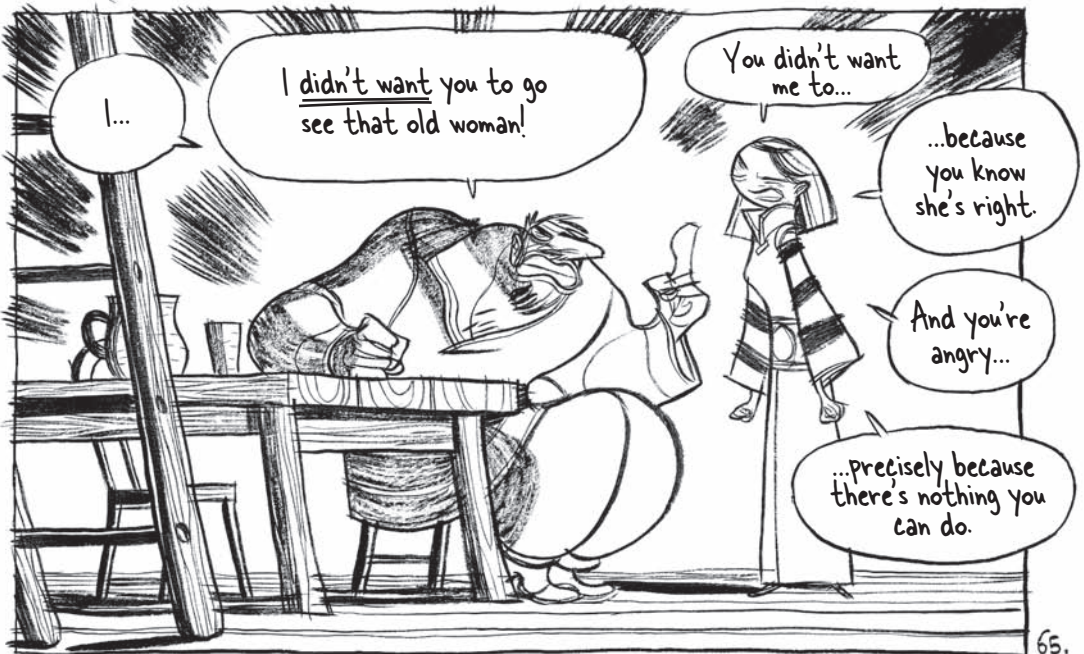
Did that crazy old bat put that in your head?



Good God!

I didn't want—

Don't shout. You'll wake Joachim.



I...

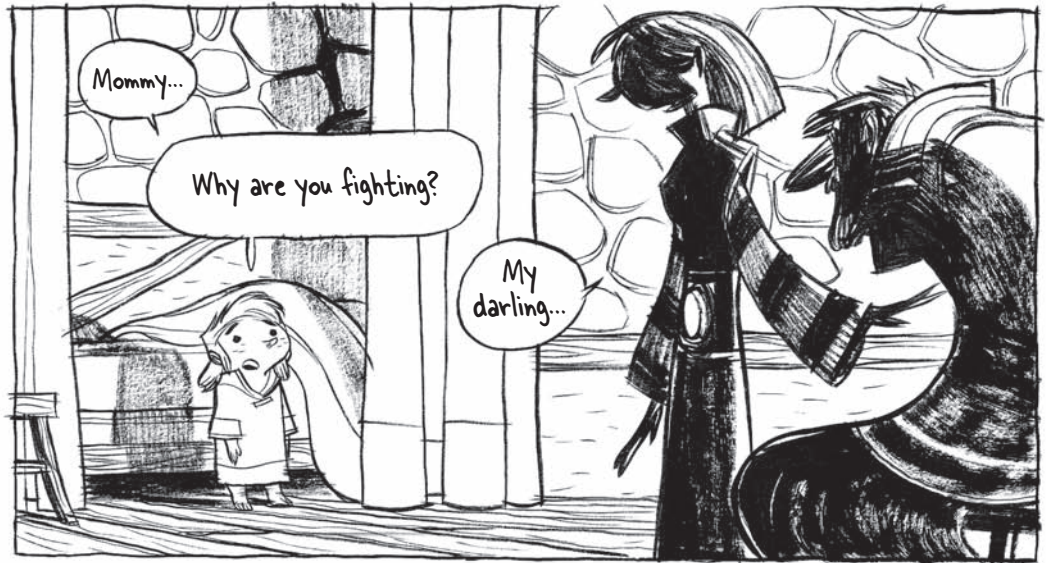
I didn't want you to go see that old woman!

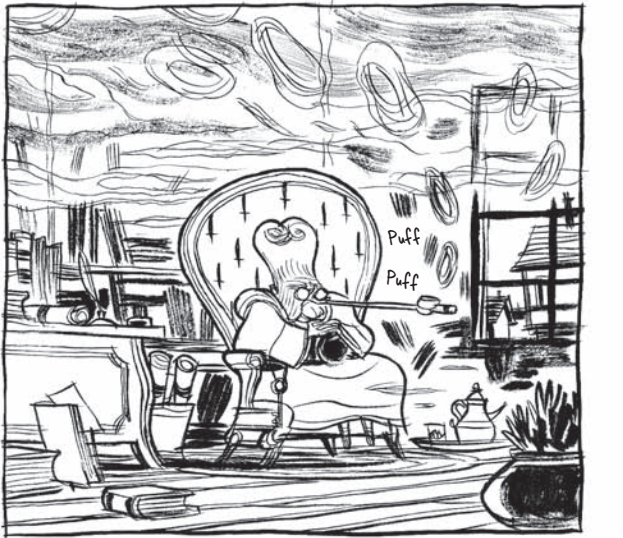
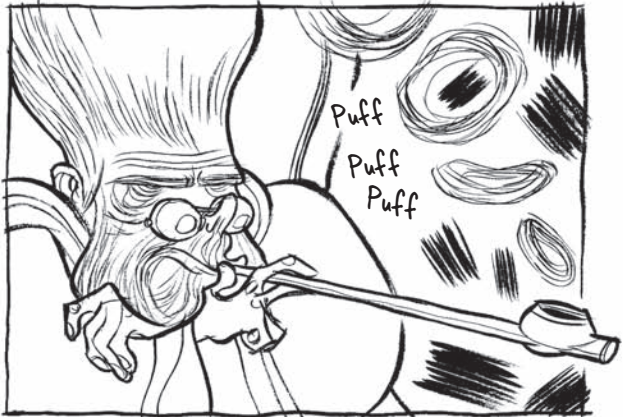
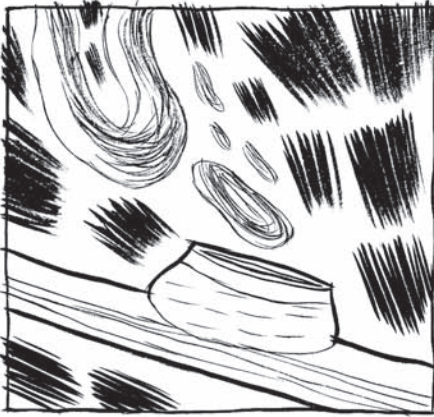
You didn't want me to...

...because you know she's right.

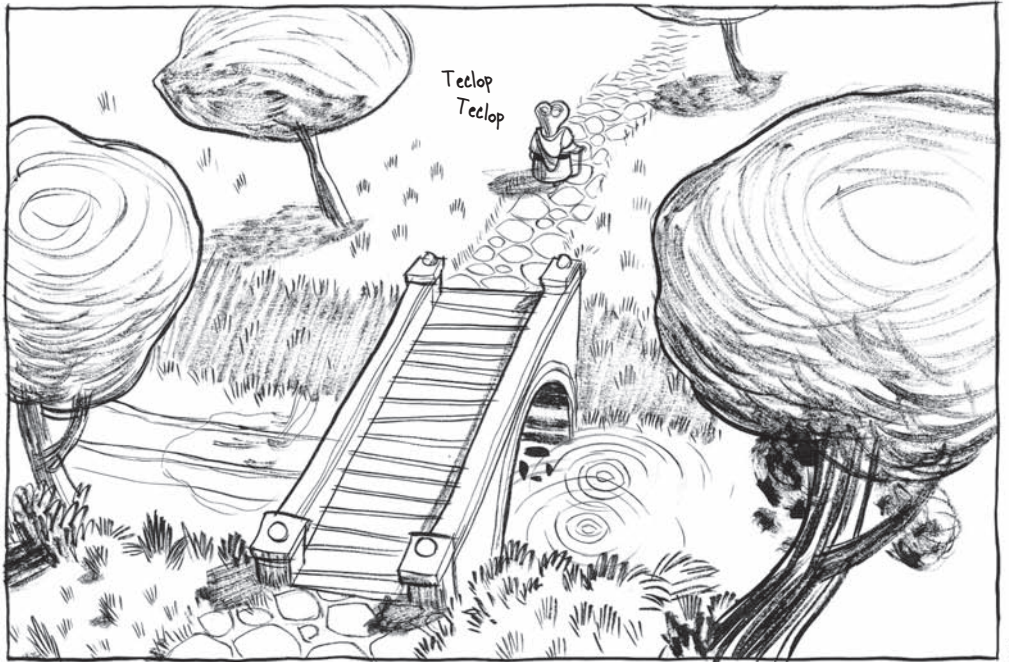
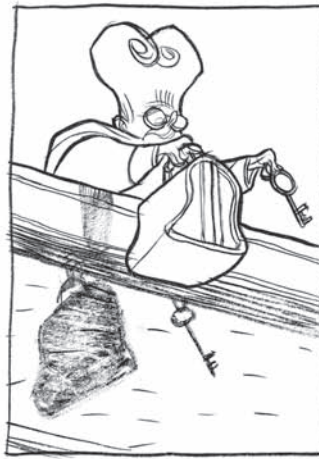
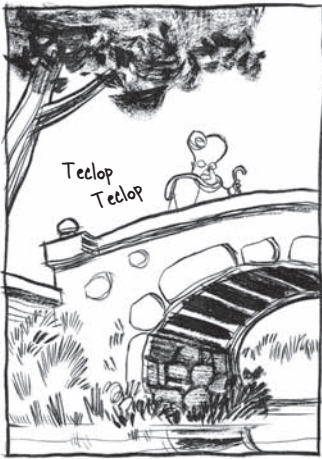
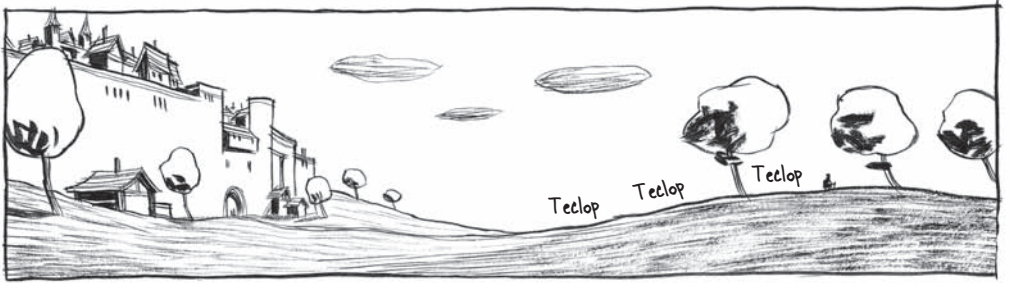
And you're angry...

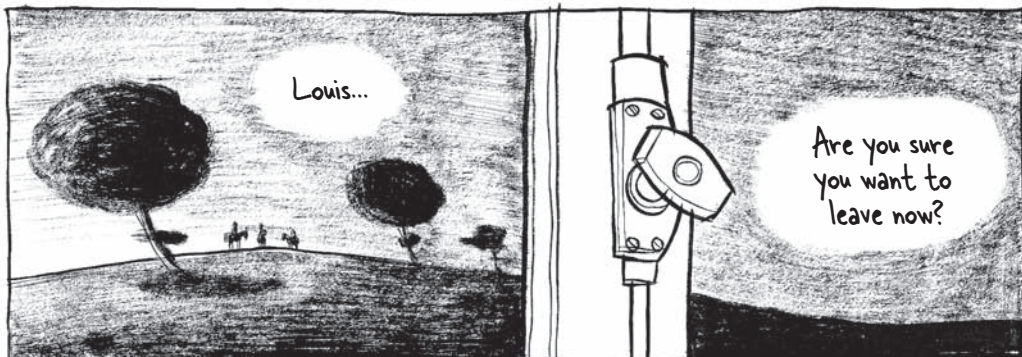
...precisely because there's nothing you can do.

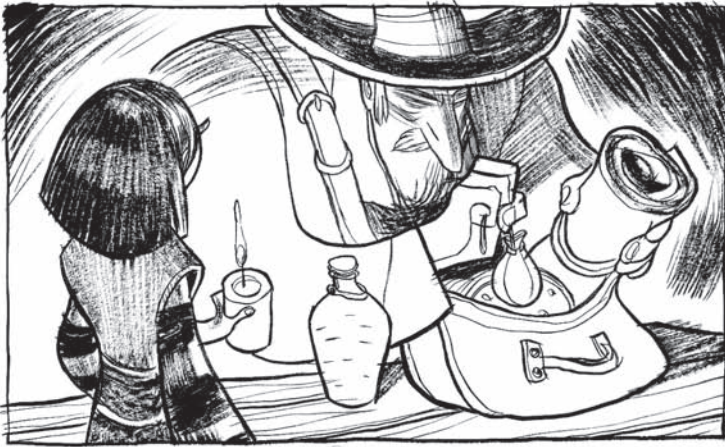


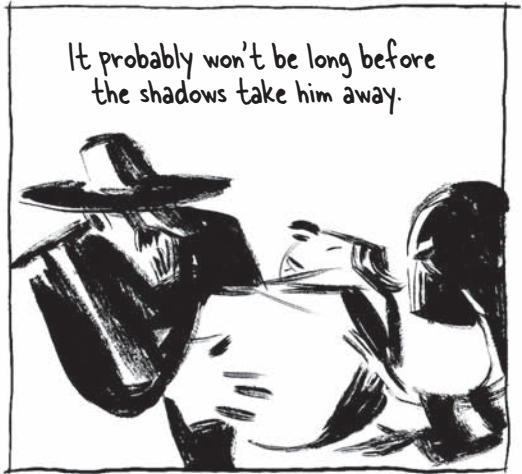








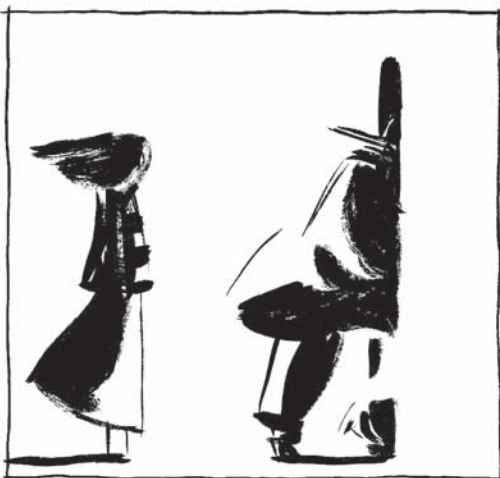




So that when he leaves
you, your heart...



...will be at peace.

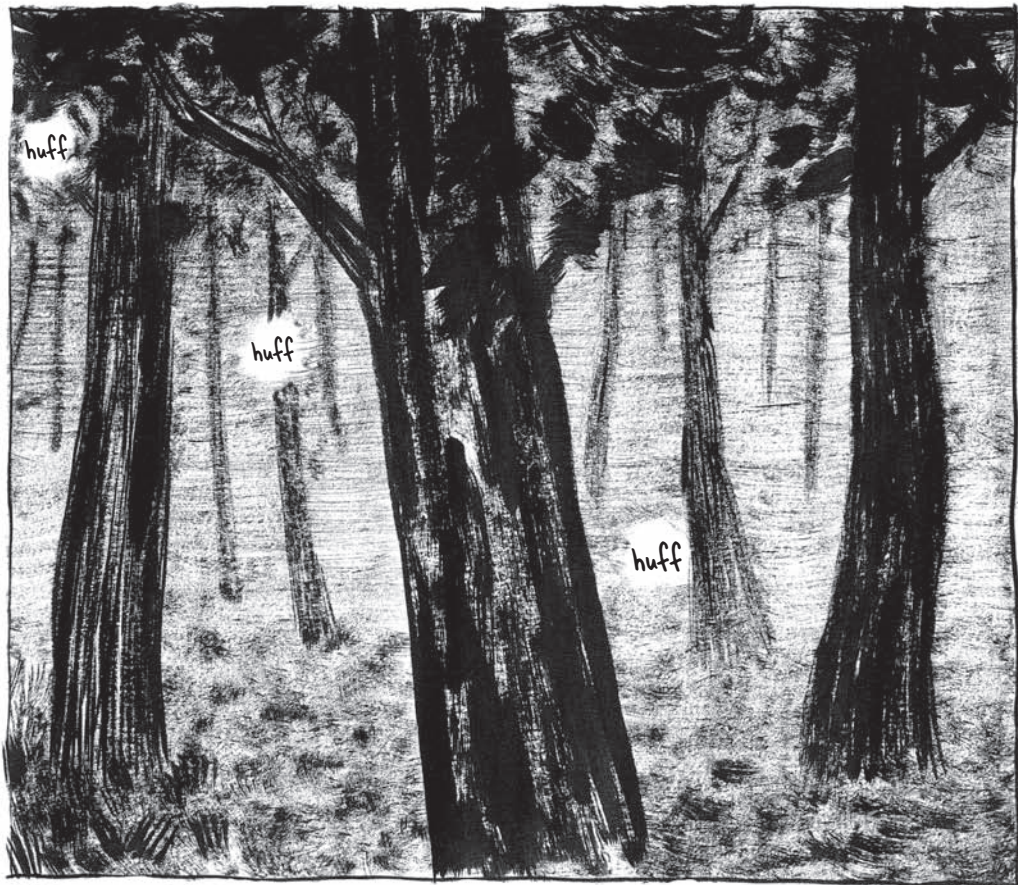


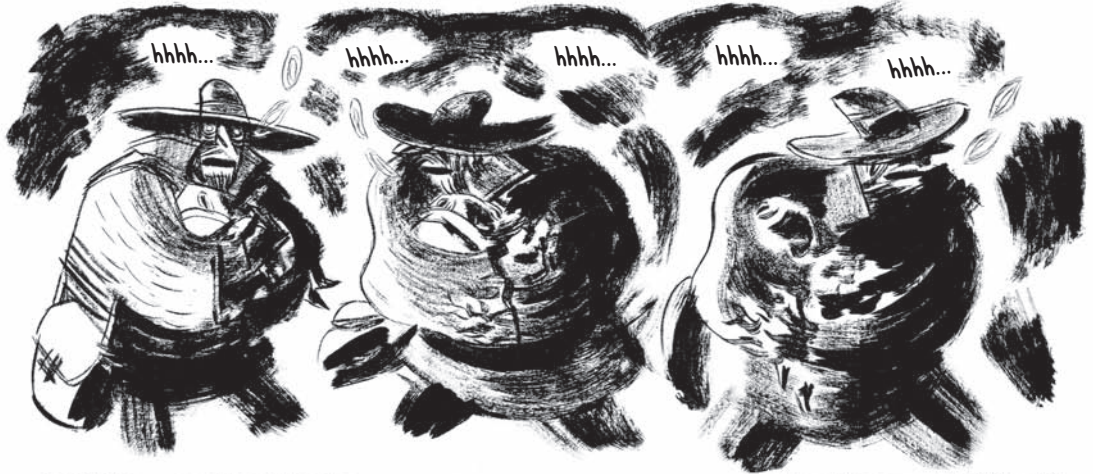
I shall lose a son.



I hope we won't lose
each other too.









Tuesday, September 2
 had the air like smoke. within a few miles it
 had almost vanished so much for you - how, the
 atmosphere - Oh yes, enjoyed the spirit, perhaps
 how strong, with the birds, that the sun was at
 low in the sky.
 M. with 50 people -
 with the sun with the
 from the

Tuesday, September 2
 Slept poorly. Dreamt of
 the three shadows again...
 A dream with such truth,
 such memories, and such
 precise details that it
 terrified me...





I spilled a bowl of
boiling water.



I screamed.



I cried.



...My arm
was covered in
blisters.



This pain...



...that
won't stop.



Mother slept beside me...



She saw nothing.

Yet the shadows were there...

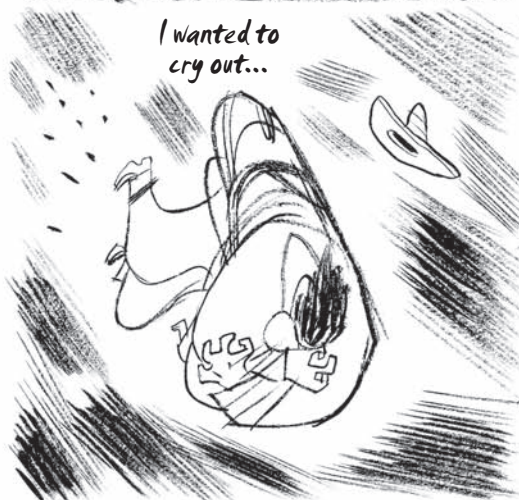


...waiting...



...sitting by the bedside

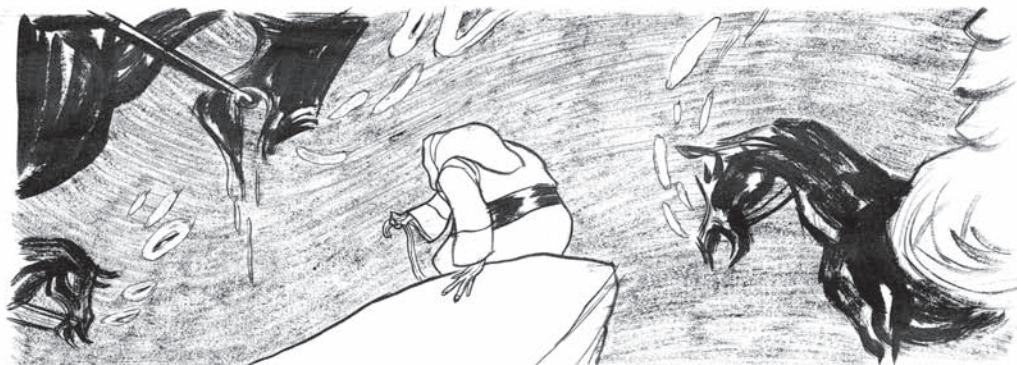
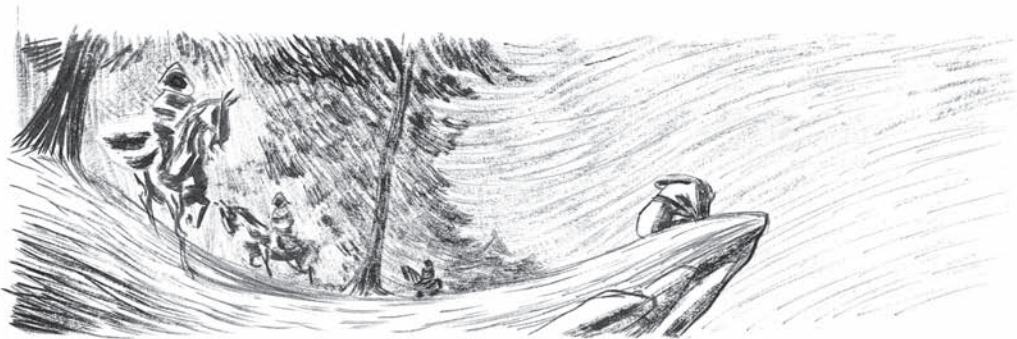
like three vultures on a branch.

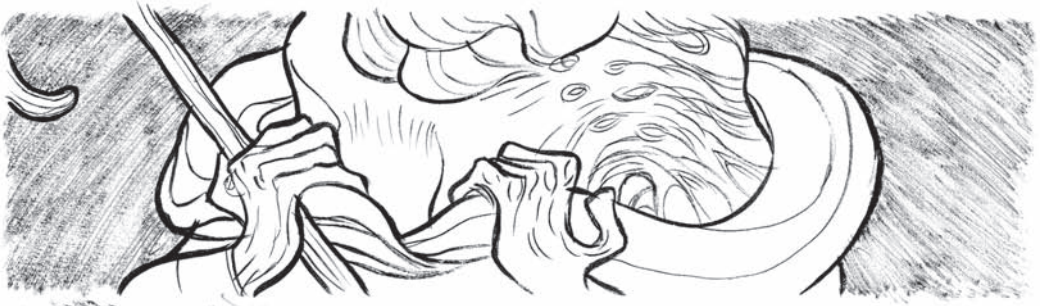


I wanted to cry out...

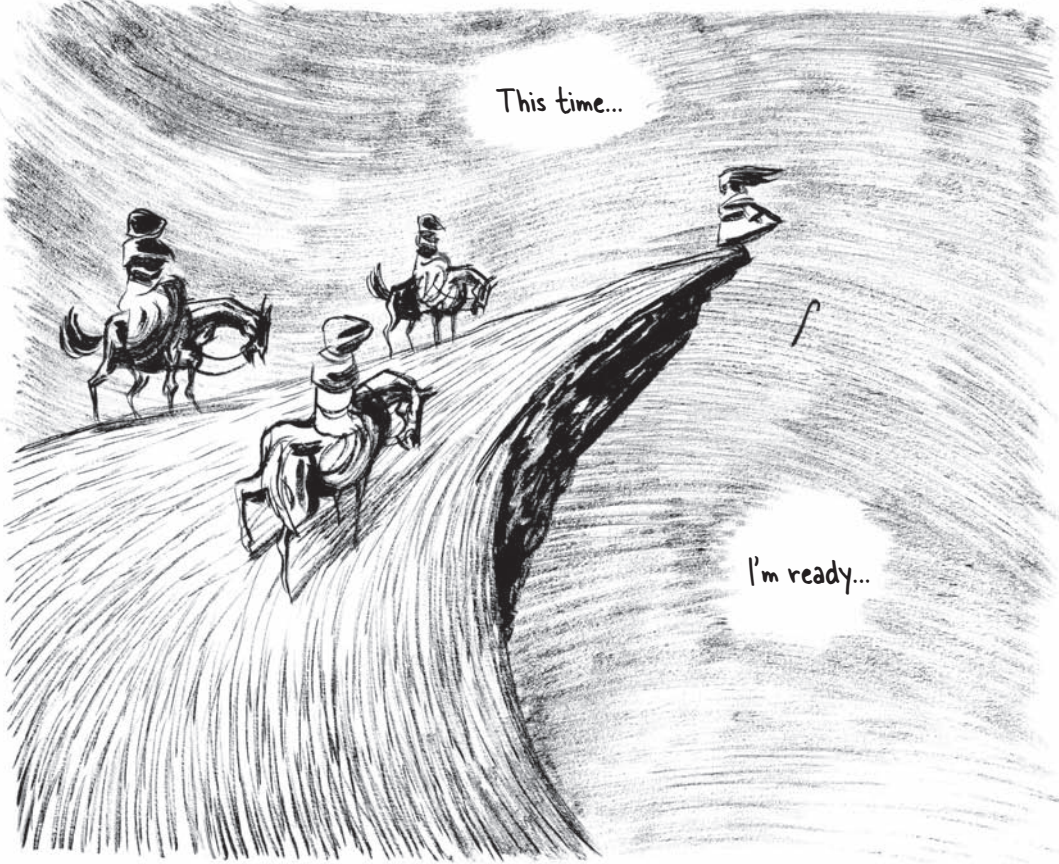


...but I couldn't.





This time...



I'm ready...



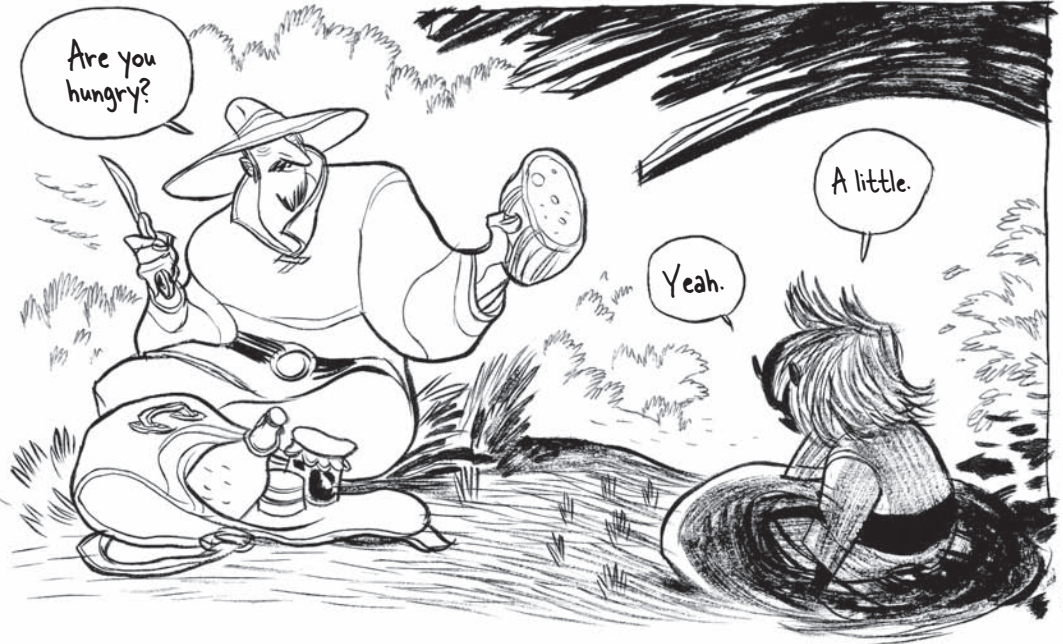
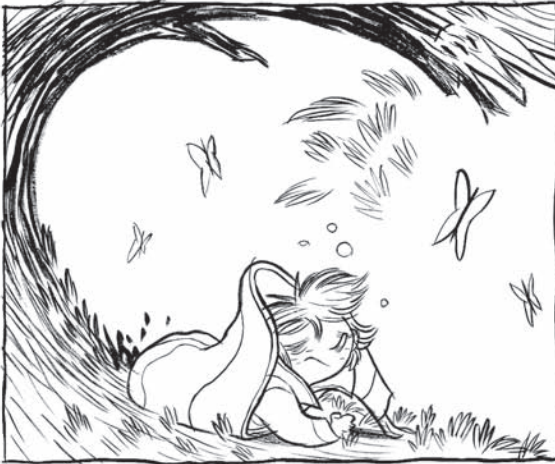
hhh

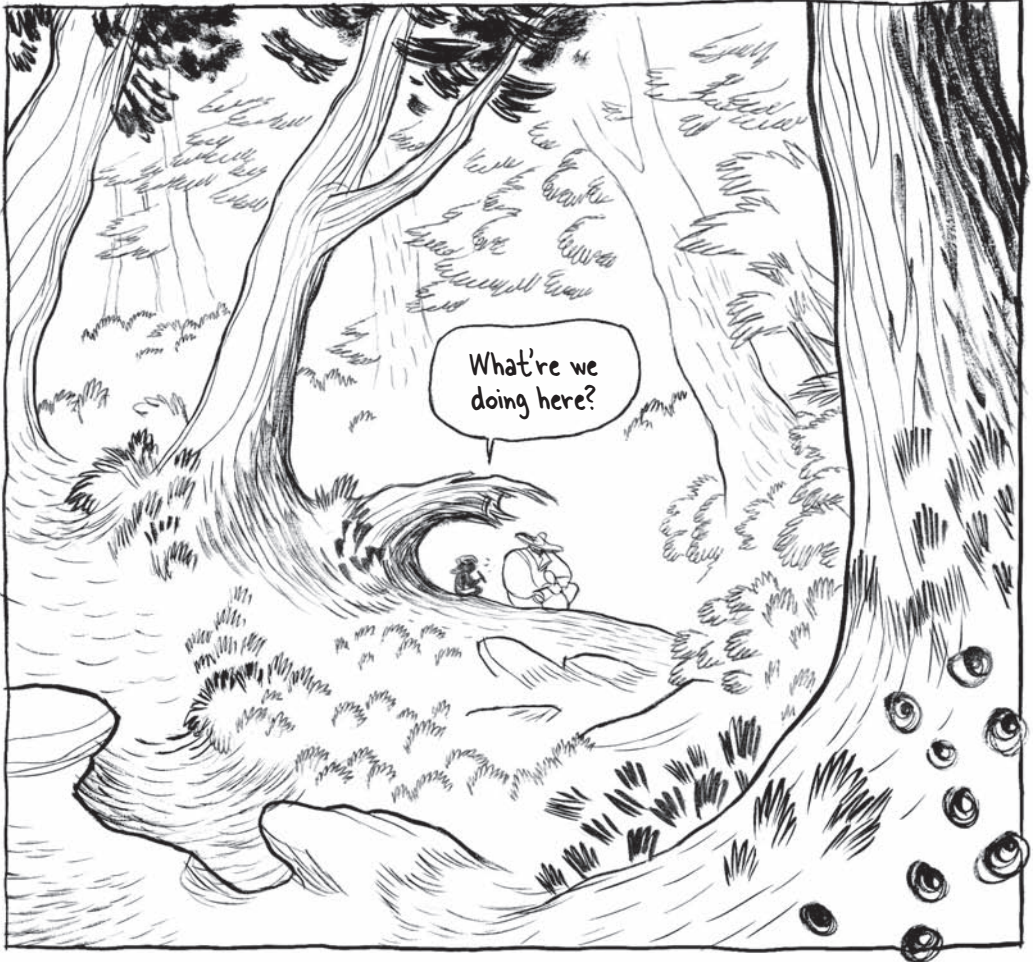
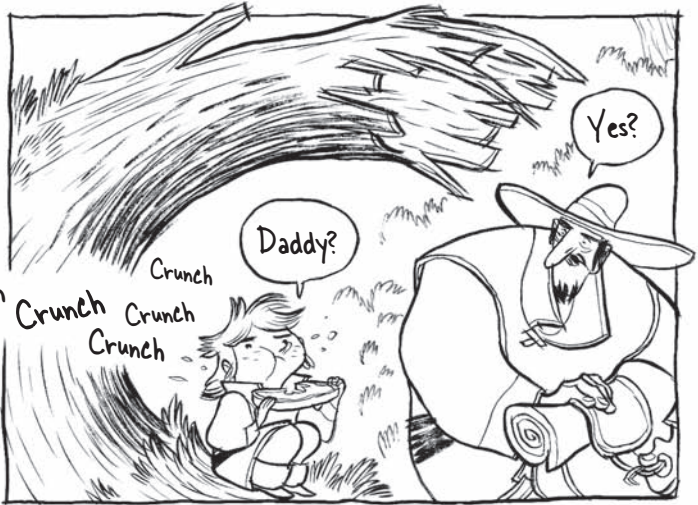
hhh

hhh

hhh









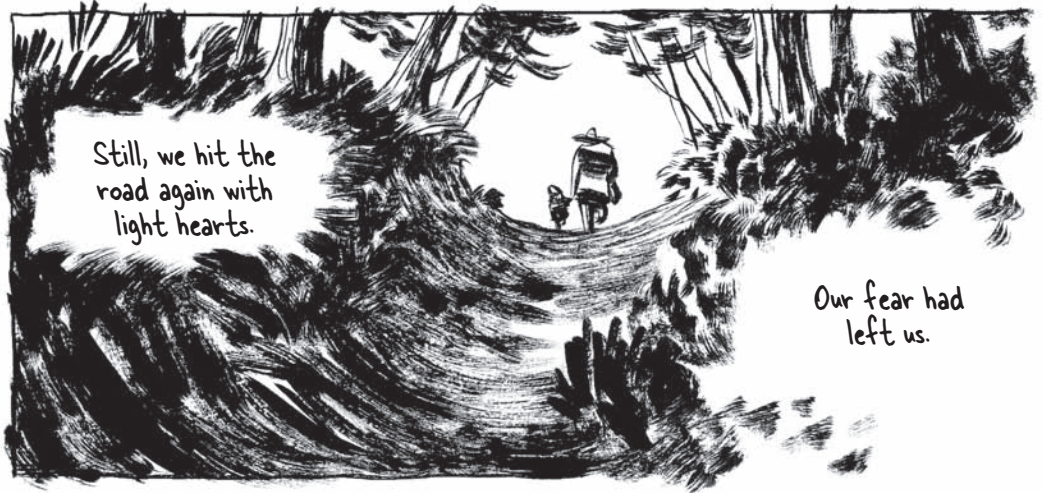
I know I could
have lied...

...but I didn't.



Joachim
listened closely.

I have no doubt he
perfectly understood
the stakes of our
journey.



Still, we hit the
road again with
light hearts.

Our fear had
left us.

After walking for a
day, I knew why.

Perhaps it wouldn't last,
but for now the shadows
had stopped trailing us.





Tomorrow we'll head west,
toward the river.

Then
what?



Then we'll cross the river,
and keep heading west.

That's where your
grandfather's from.



We'll be safe
there.



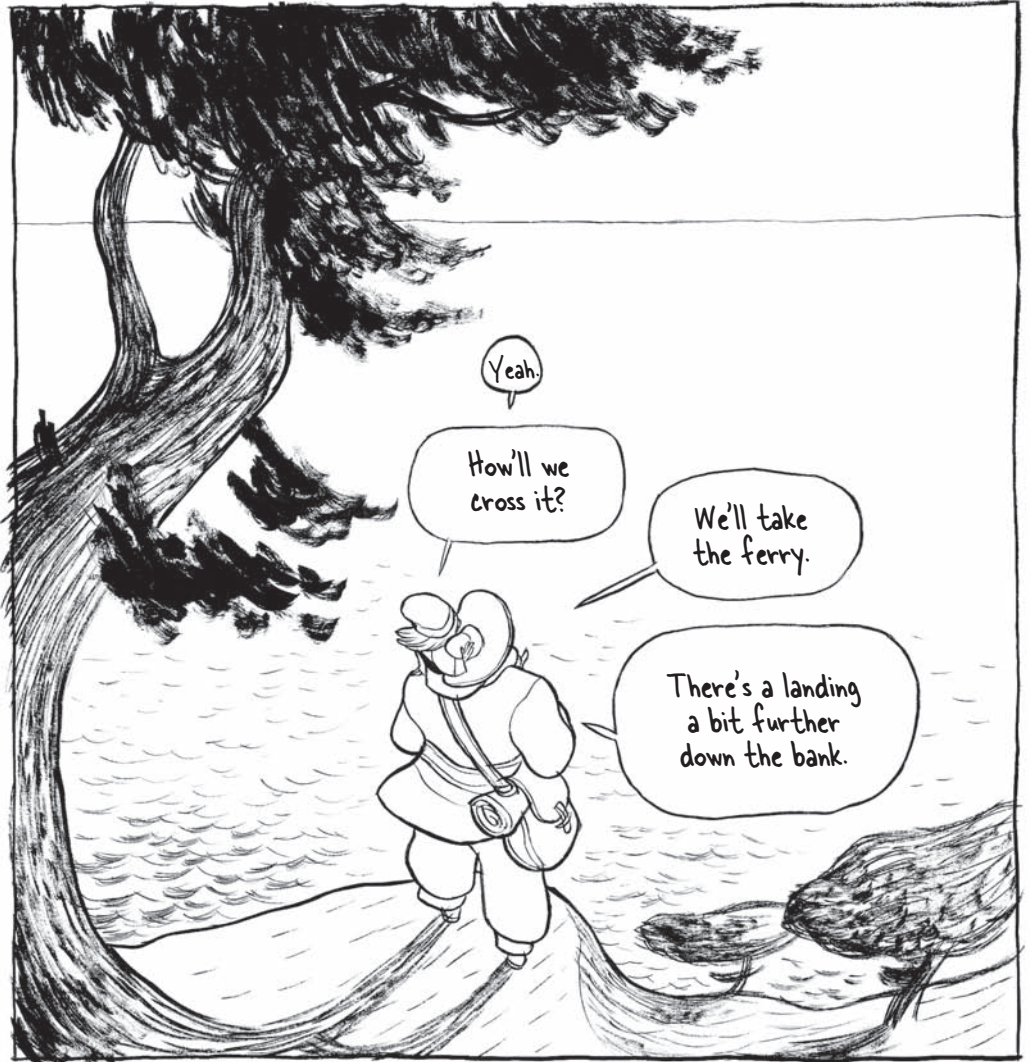
Oh
good...

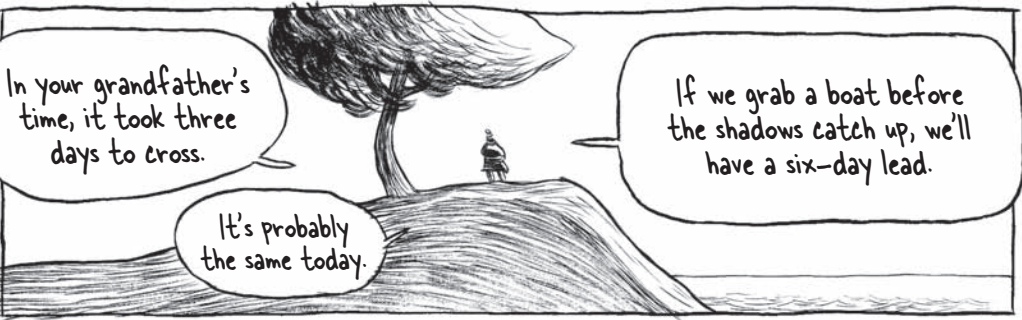
What's it like
across the
river?



I don't
know.

I've never
been.






In your grandfather's time, it took three days to cross.

It's probably the same today.

If we grab a boat before the shadows catch up, we'll have a six-day lead.



And be out of their reach!


Daddy—

I'm a little tired.

I know. We'll sleep on the boat, kiddo.



Ready?



Holding on tight?

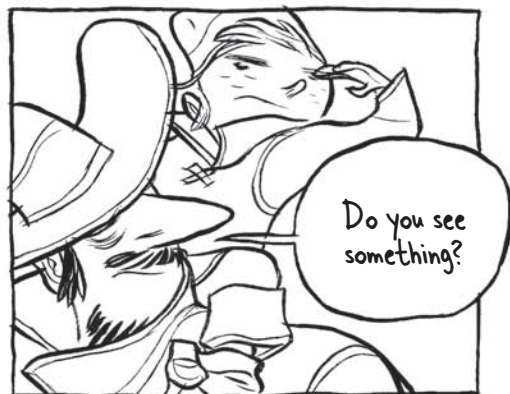
Yeah!

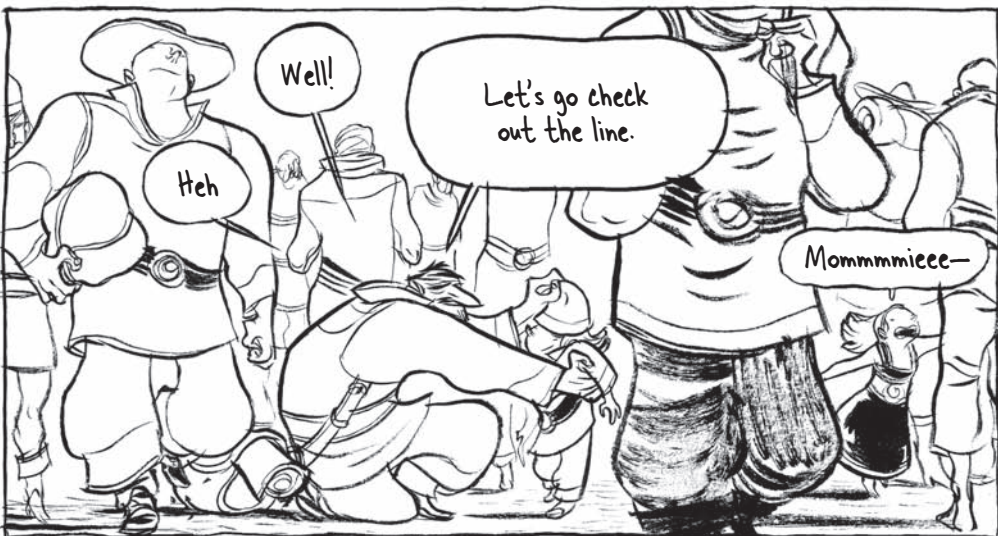
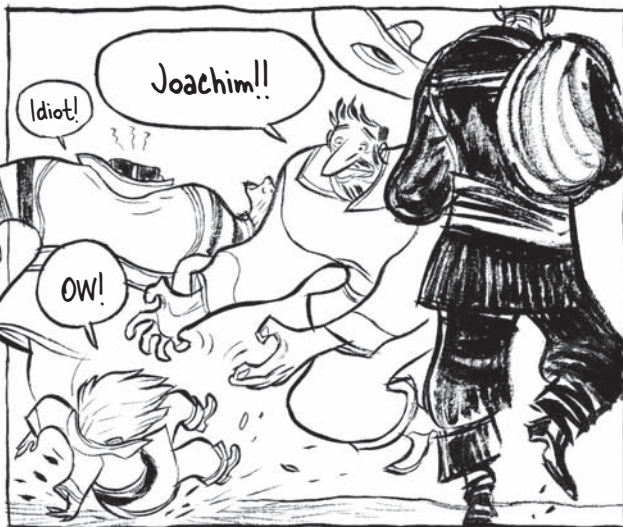


Let's go!

YAHOOOO
ha ha ha









Mommnnieeee—

Mommy, where are yooou?



Hmm.



Let's tie ourselves together, okay?

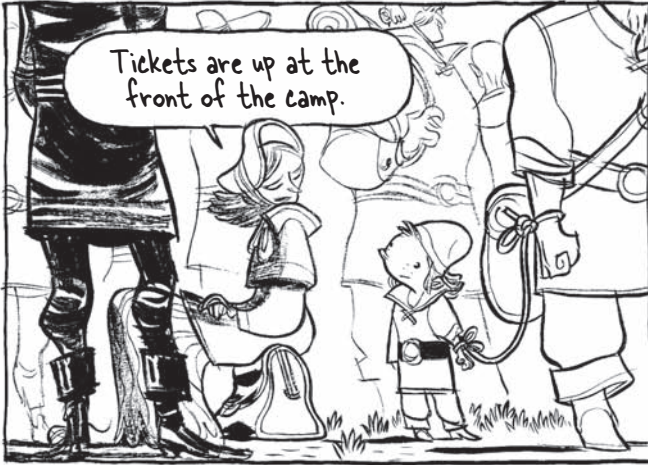
That way, we'll be sure not to lose each other.

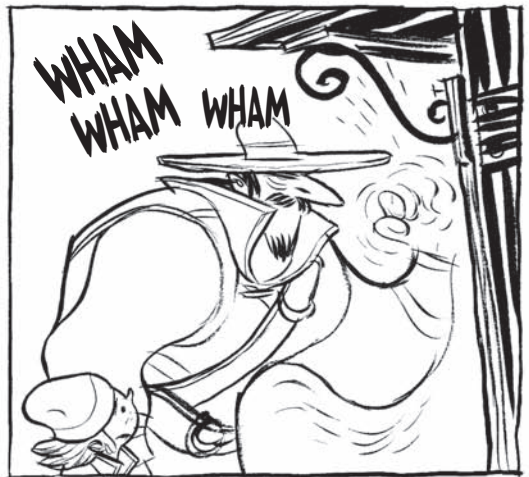
Okay, Dad.

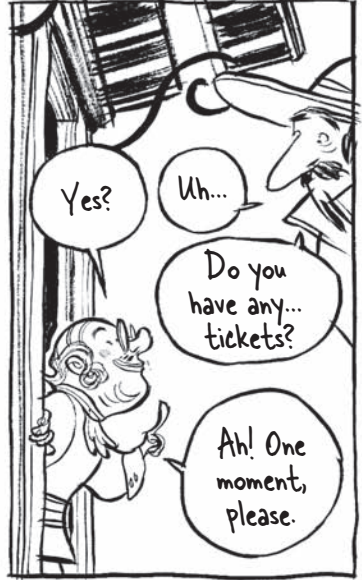


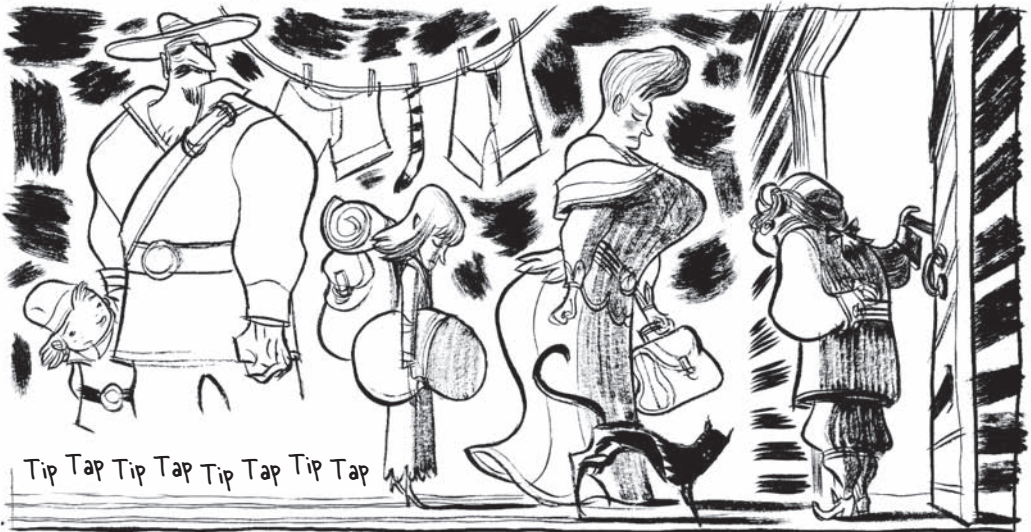














Wait here,
my sweet.



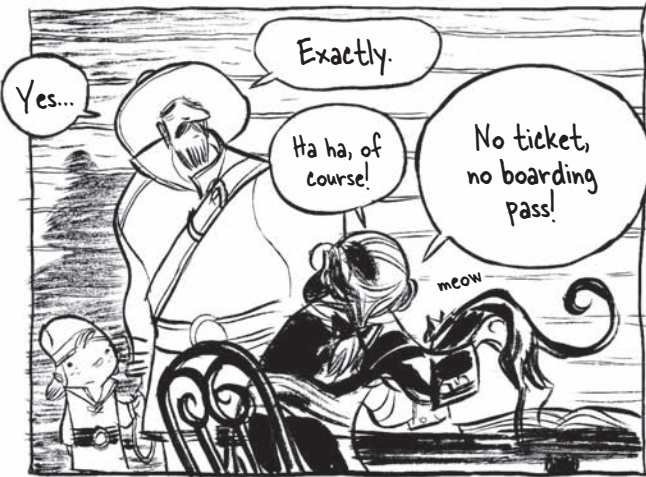
WHAM!

So...



You're here
for...tickets?

Is that it?



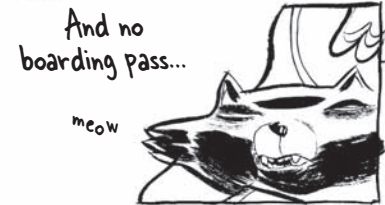
Yes...

Exactly.

Ha ha, of
course!

No ticket,
no boarding
pass!

meow



And no
boarding pass...

meow



...no
crossing!

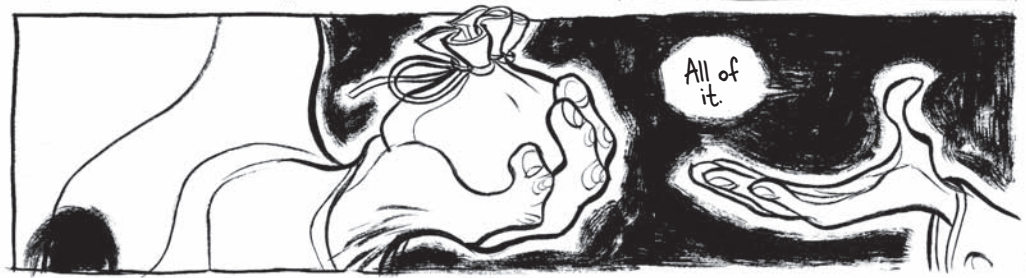
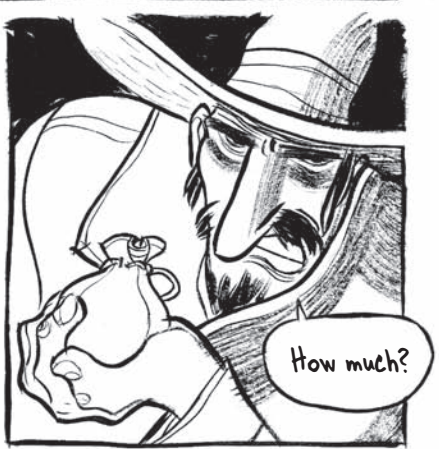
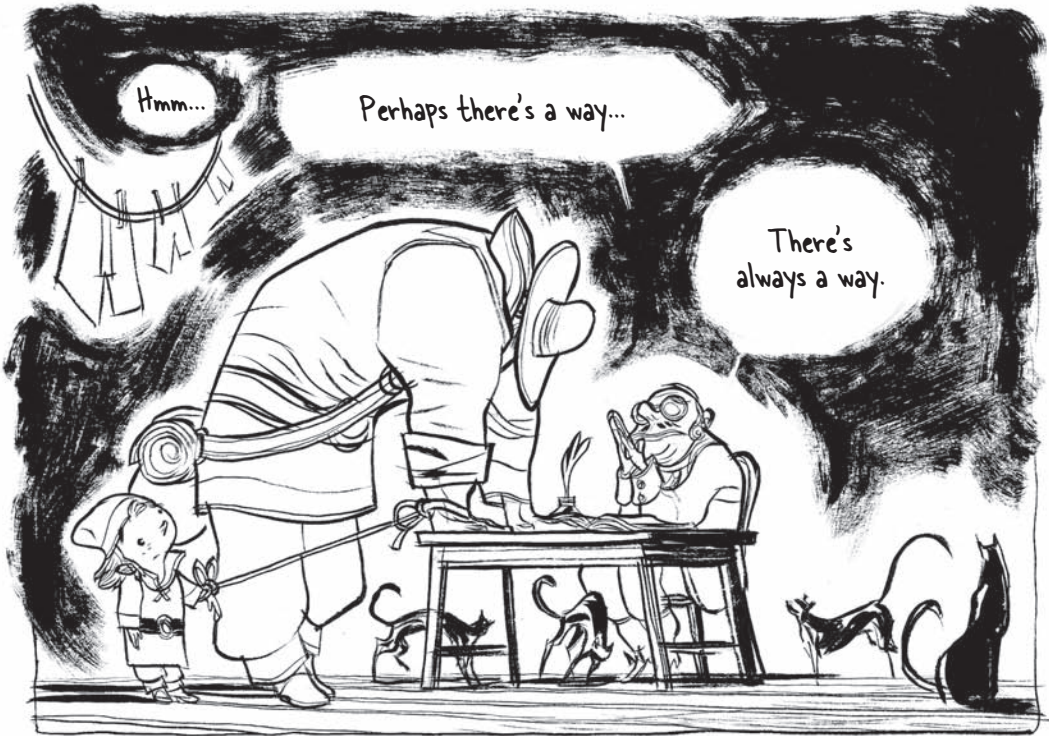
Ha ha!

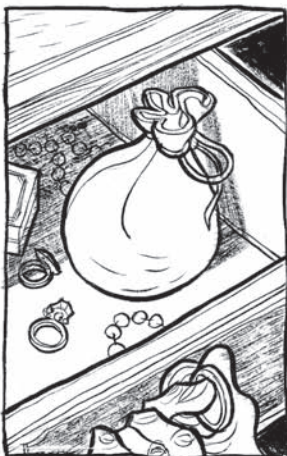


Yes...

We all
know how
it works.

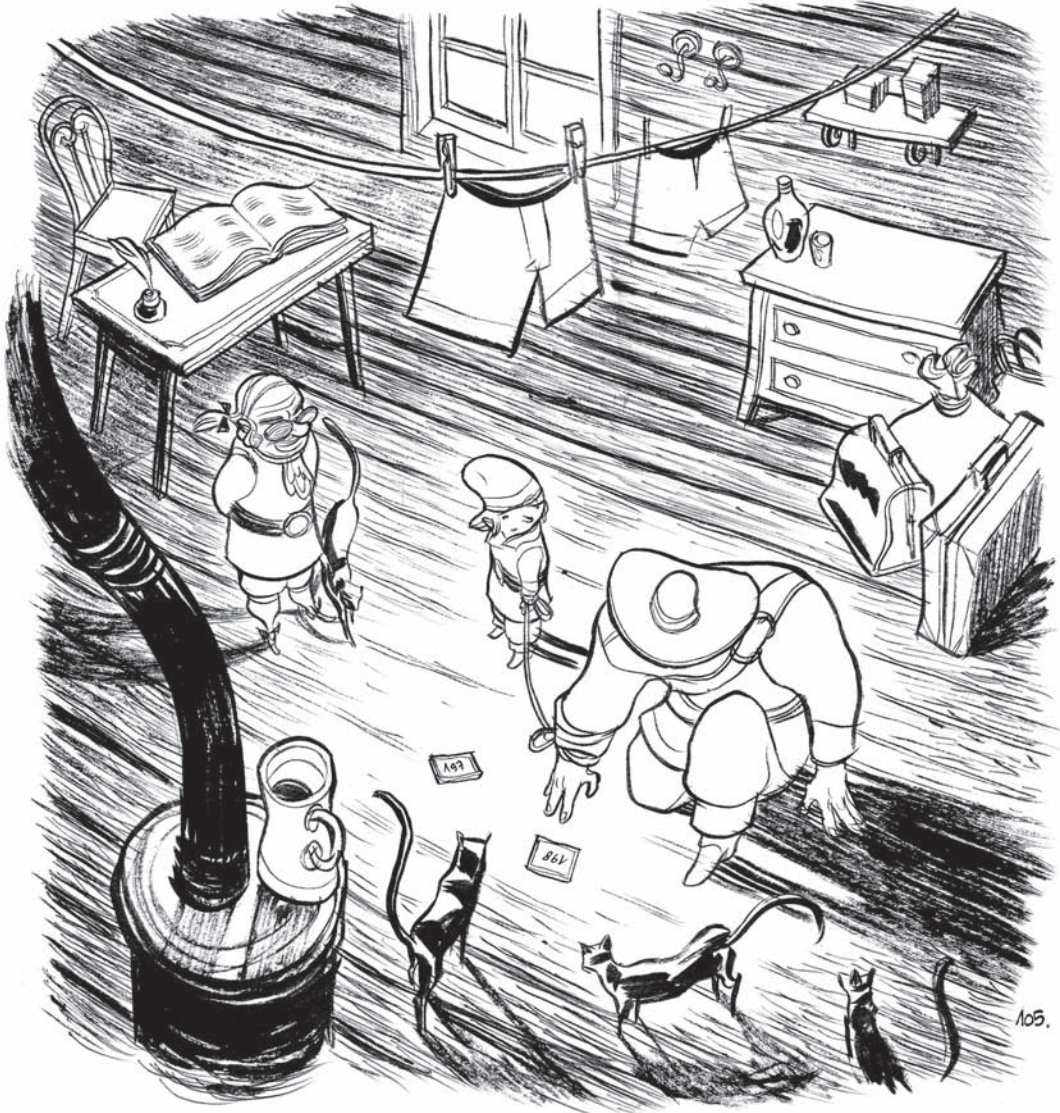


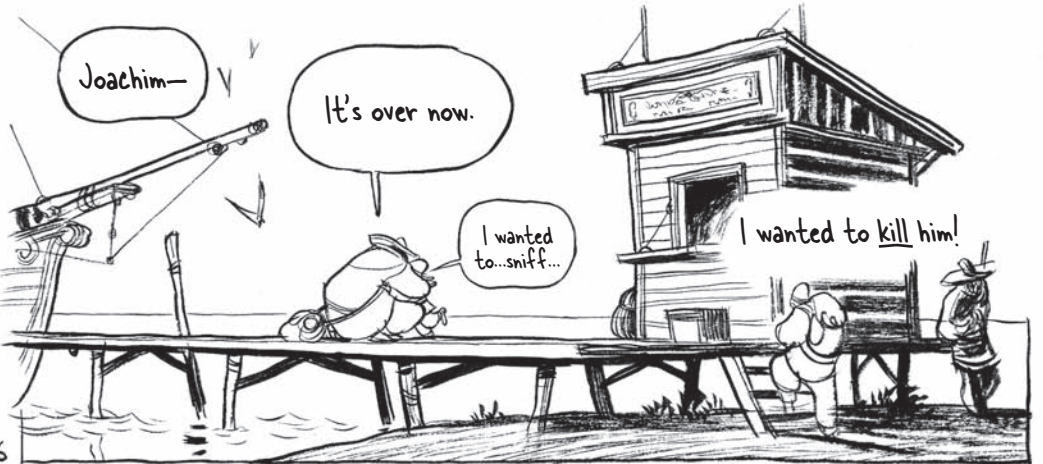
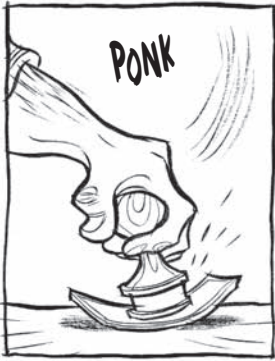




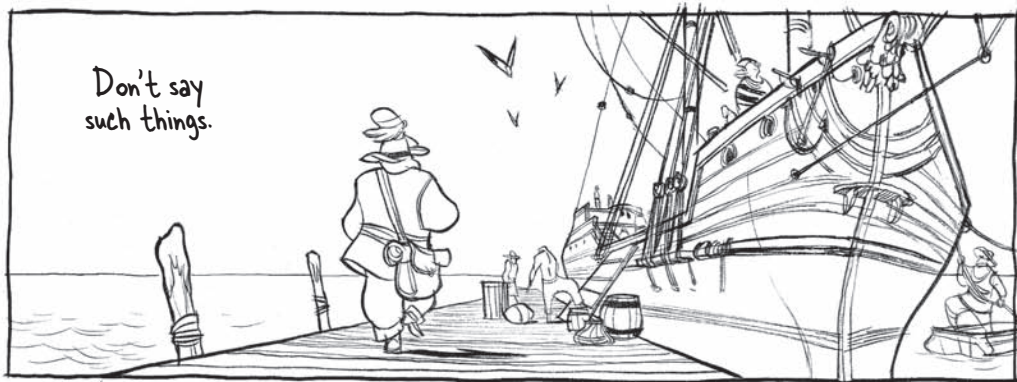
Go on—

Now beat it.

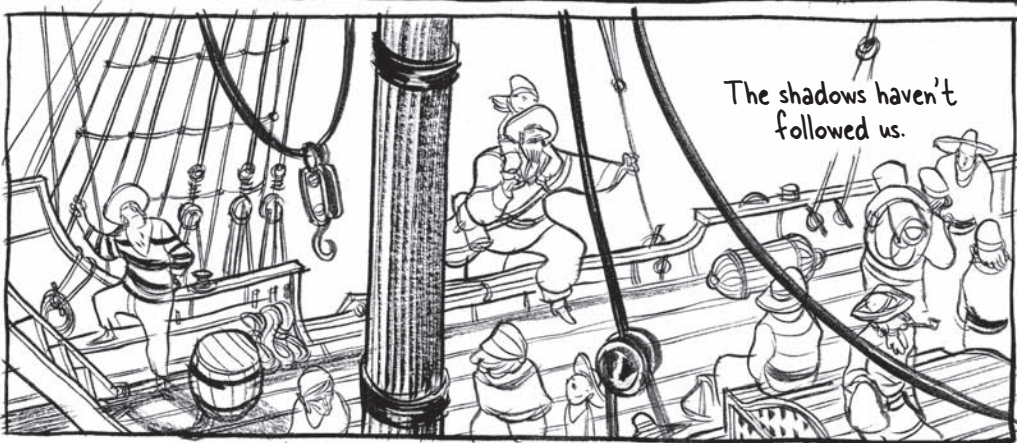




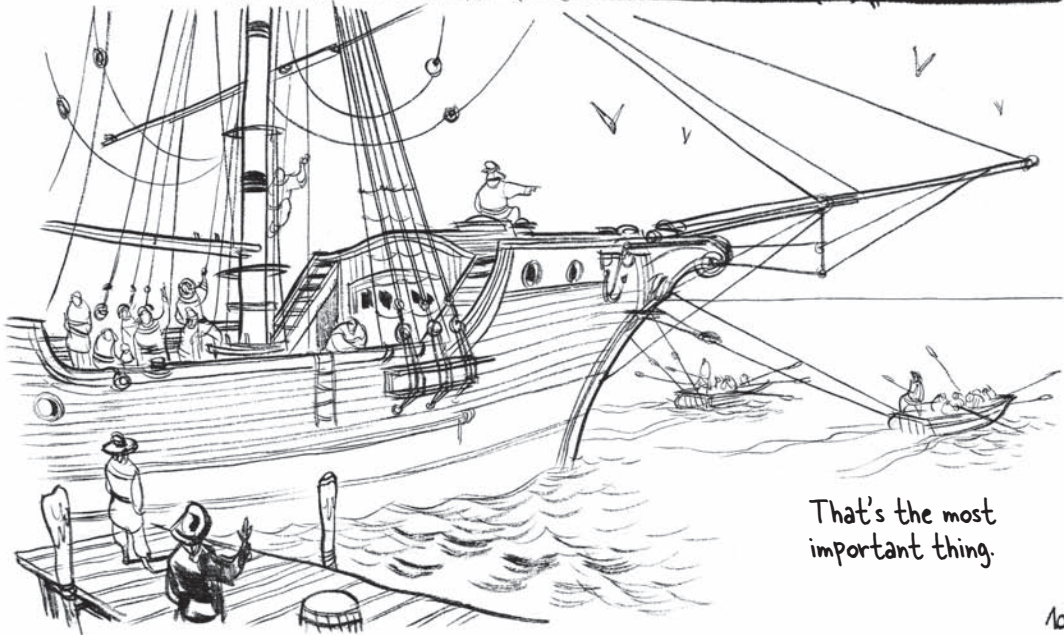
Don't say
such things.

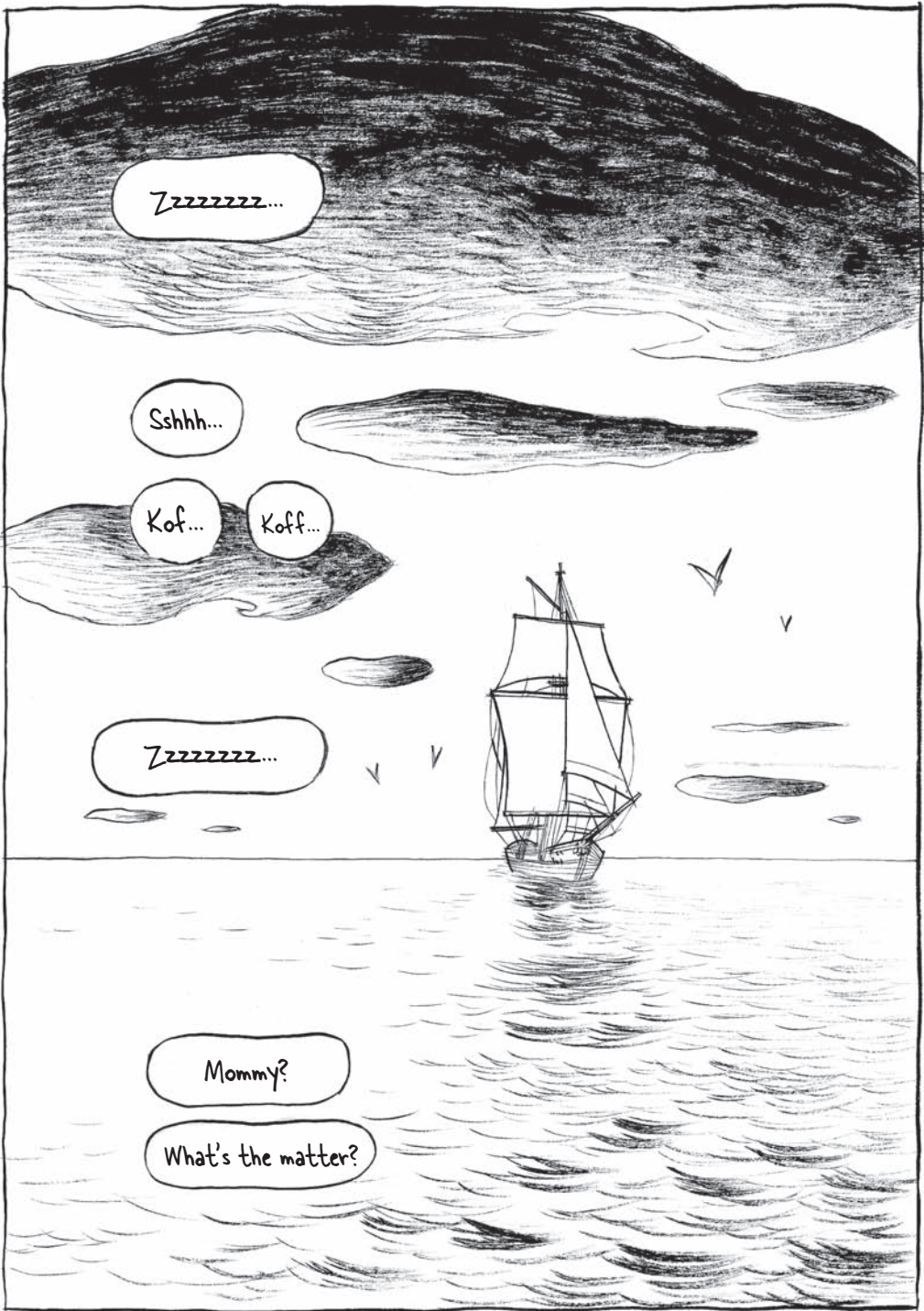


The shadows haven't
followed us.



That's the most
important thing.





Zzzzzzzz...

Sshhh...

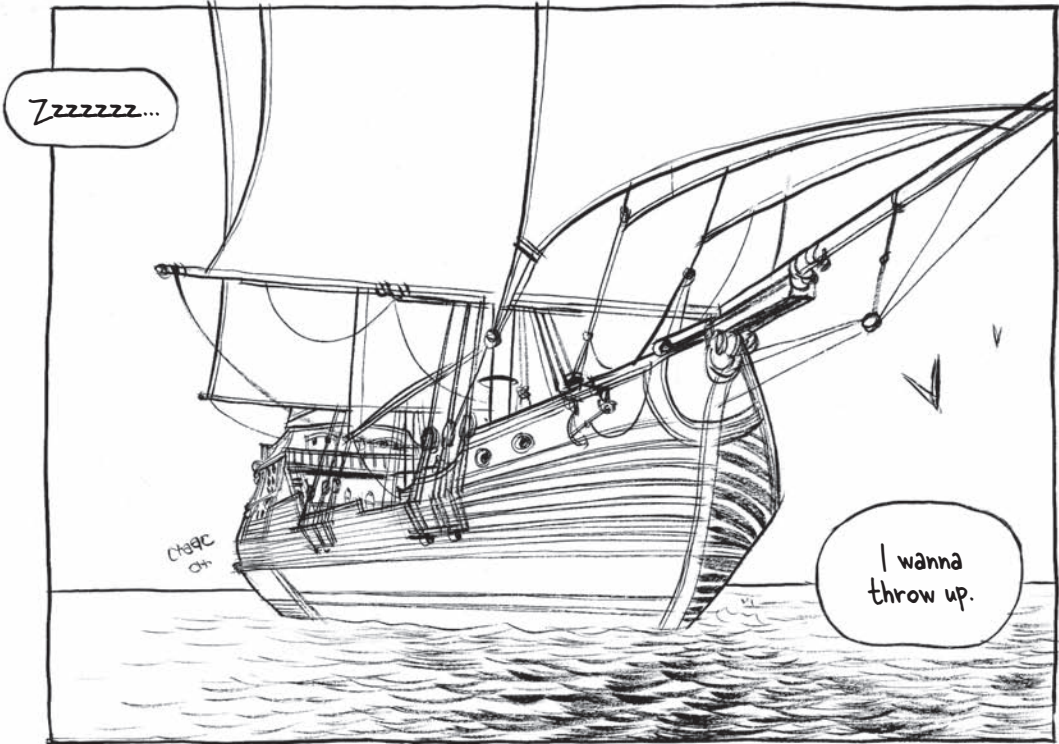
Kof...

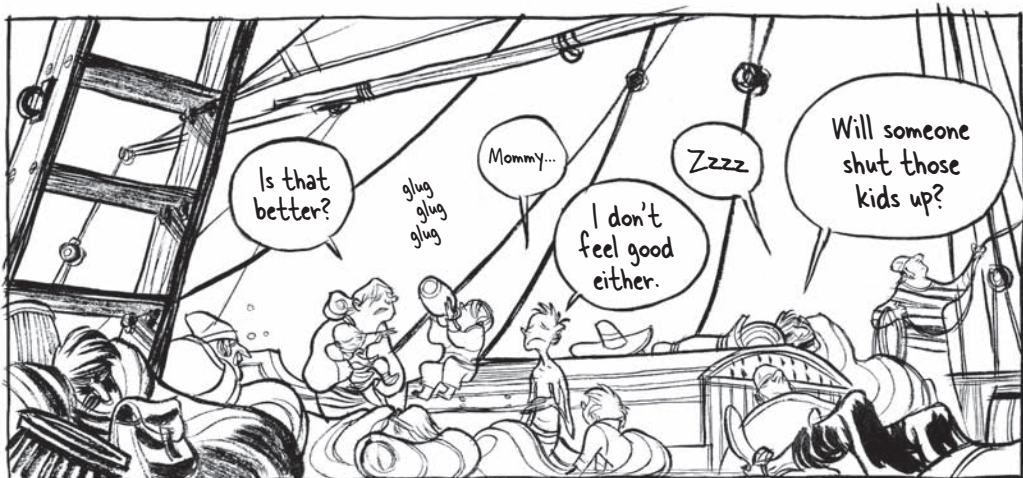
Koff...

Zzzzzzzz...

Mommy?

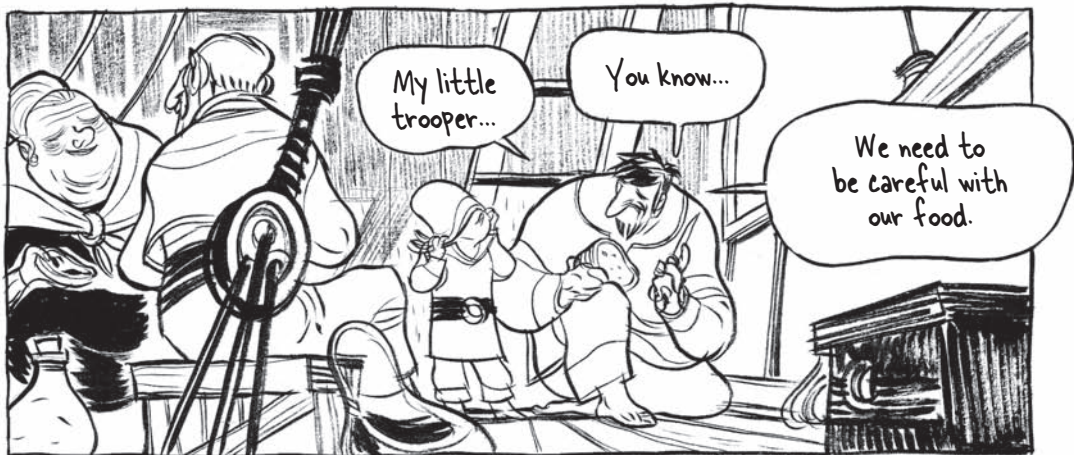
What's the matter?



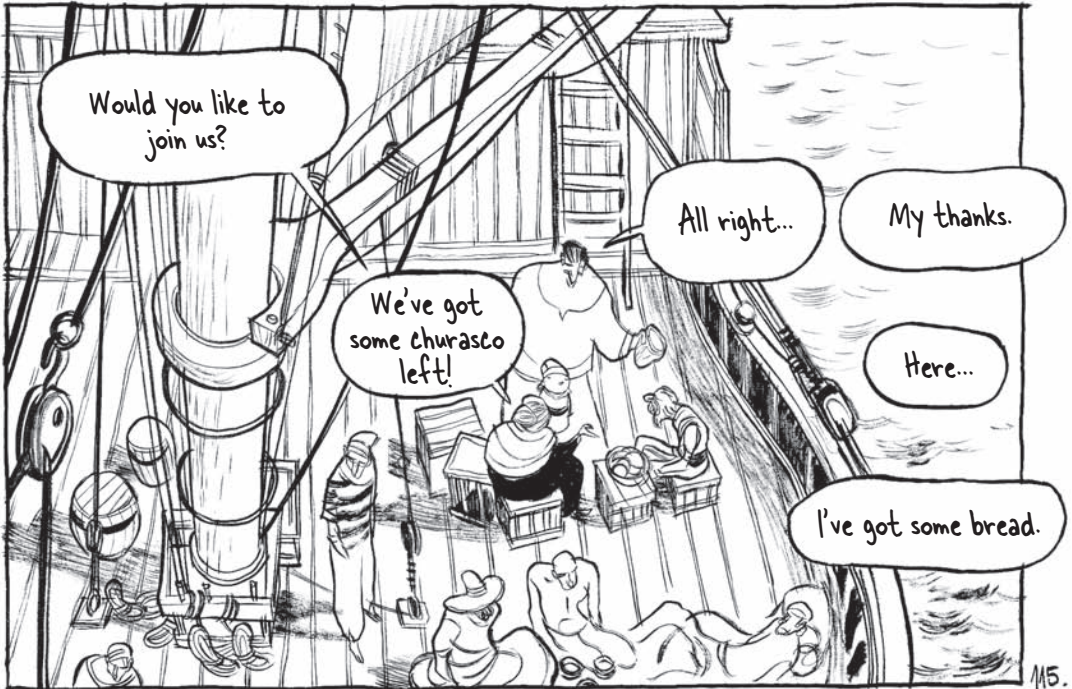














Dad?

What did that man say to you earlier? I couldn't understand.



Heh heh—

That you were as small as a bleakfish—

—but ate enough for three sea bass!



Well I don't see what's so funny about that...

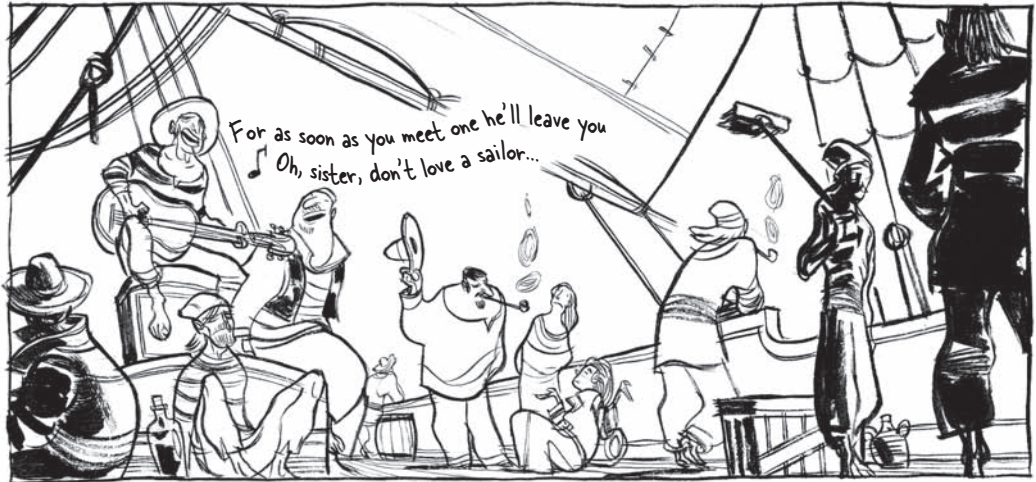
It's a saying they have around here.

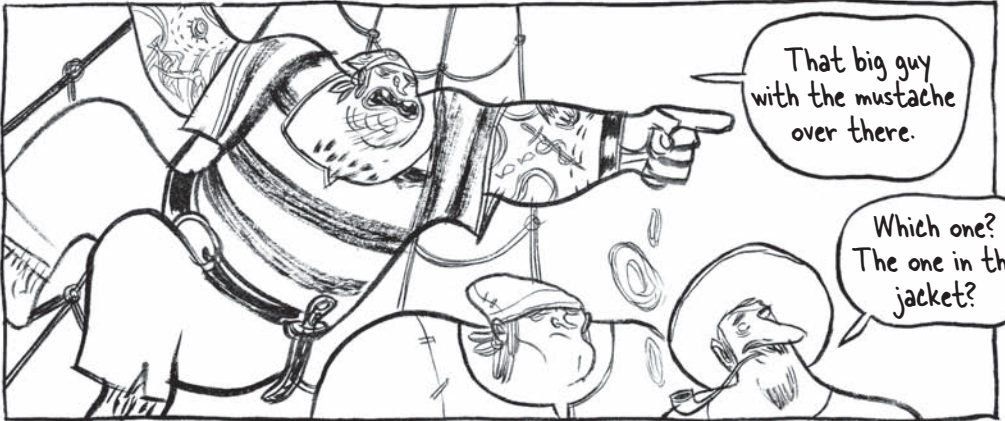
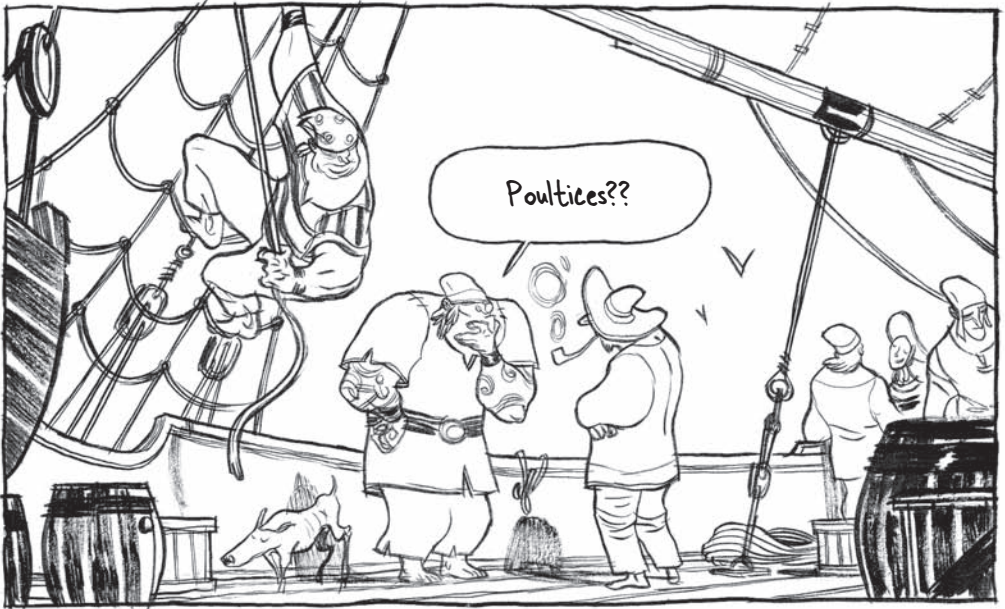


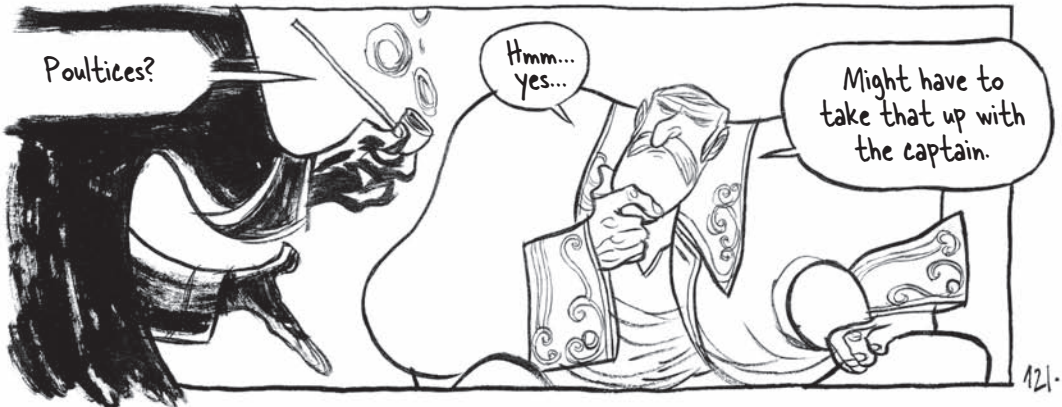
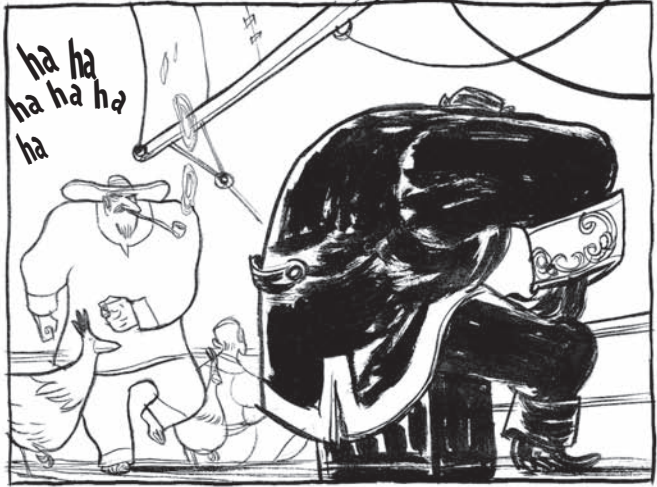
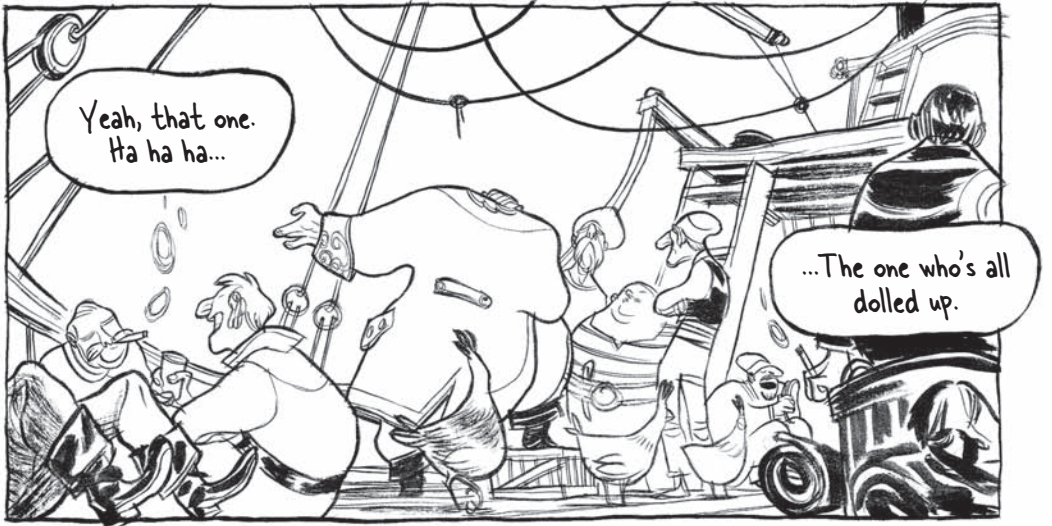
Your grandfather used to say it too.













It's for a sick old man.

We just need to warm up some bandages!

Right, I get it.



But all special requests go through the captain.



Oh don't make that face at me.



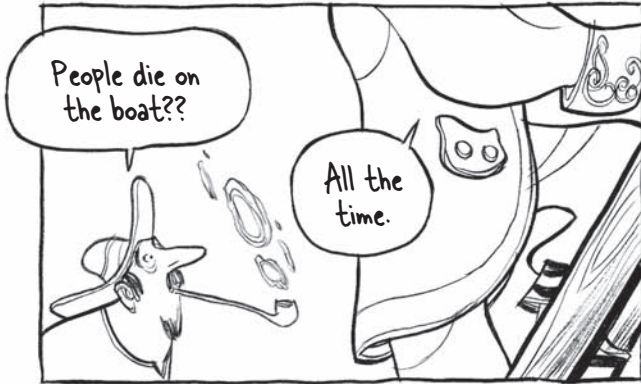
I'll take you to his cabin.

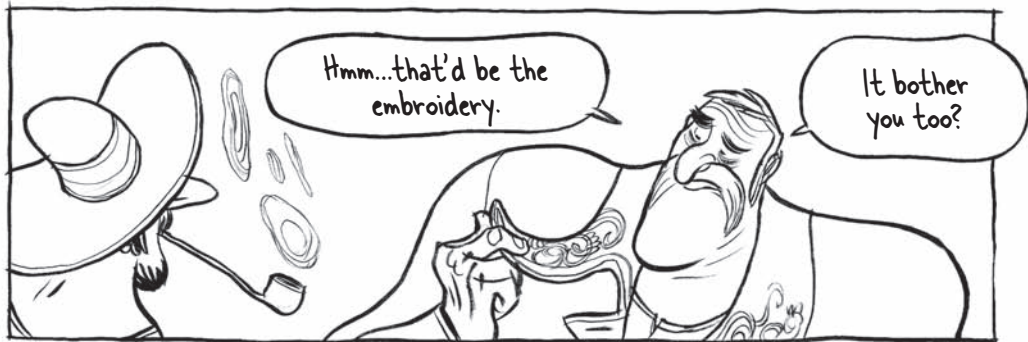
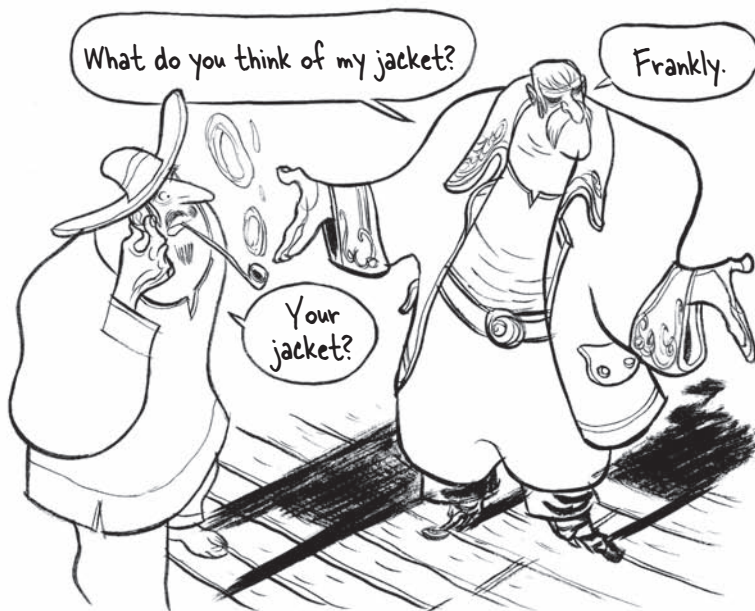


Hope the wind picks up. It's making everyone sick.

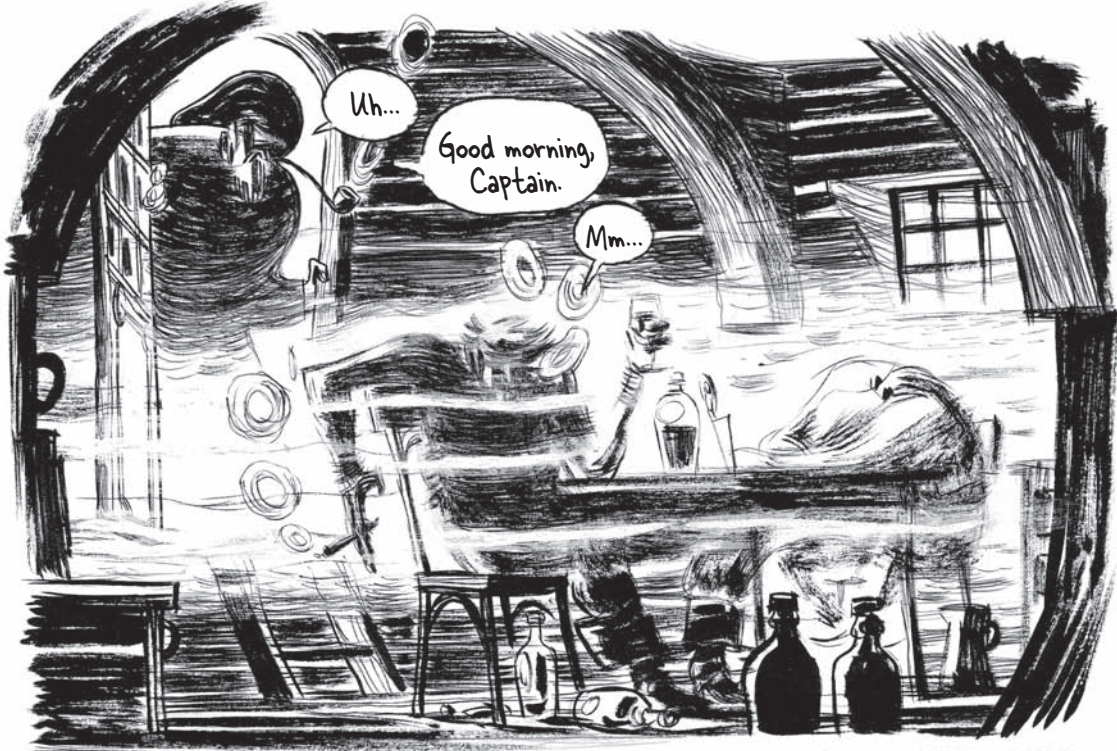
I'm not complaining.

At least no one's died yet.









Uh...

Good morning, Captain.

Mm...



I...

I wanted to ask you a favor...

Anytime.

Smack



Might I...

Why... it's—

ha
ha
ha



Had ya, didn't I?

Zzzzzz

ha ha
ha ha



So, just like that...

...you wanted to see the captain?

Um...well, I mean...

Yes.



Well, my friend, looks like you're gonna have to come back later.

Here!



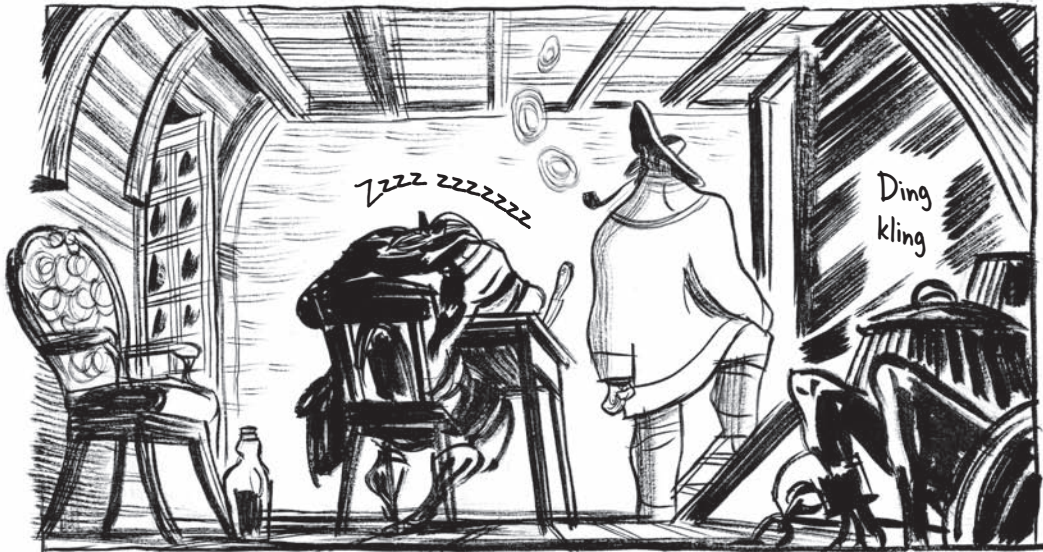
The only captain on board's sleeping like a baby!

Zzzz

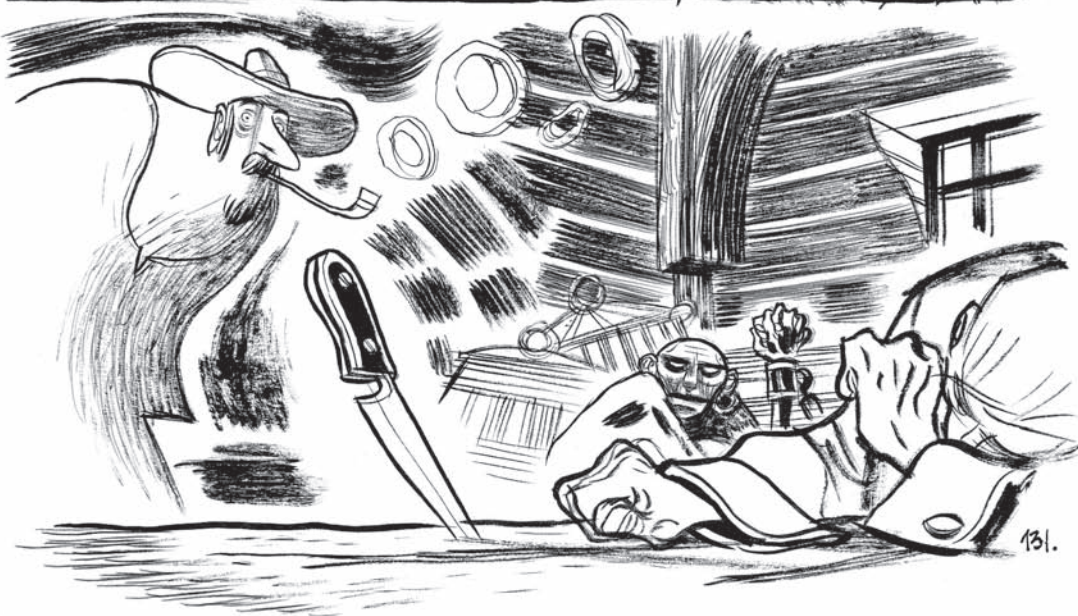
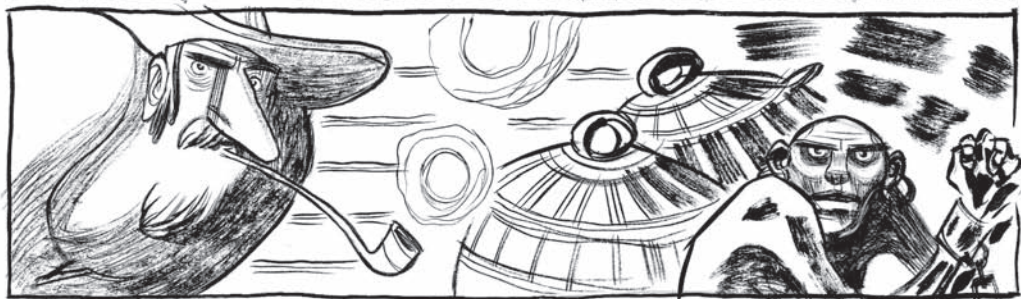
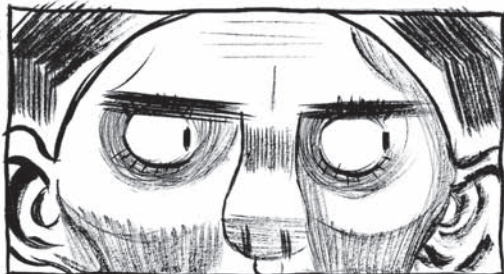
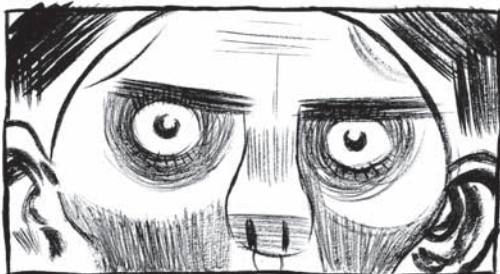
Zzzz

ha ha
ha ha











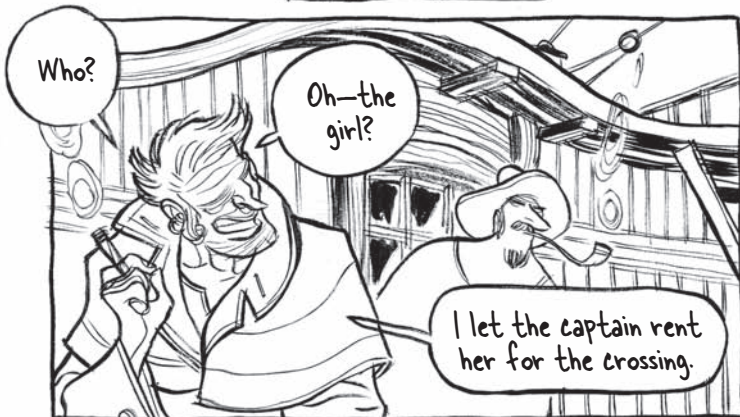




Mmmm....

Still no wind, eh?

Does she stay chained up...all the time?



Who?

Oh—the girl?

I let the captain rent her for the crossing.



In exchange for a good cabin.



Don't look at me like that.

She cooks and cleans, that's all.

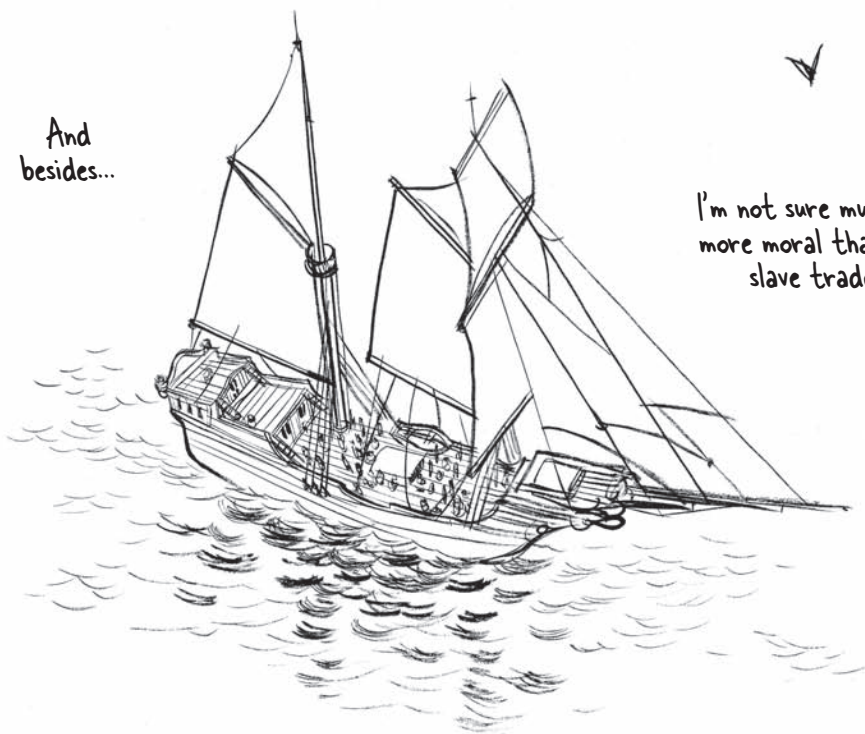


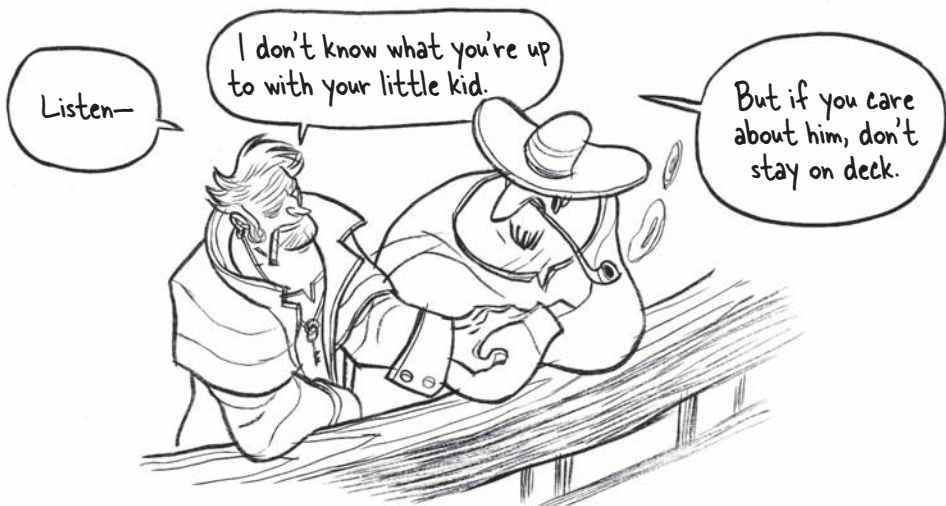
If he touches her—

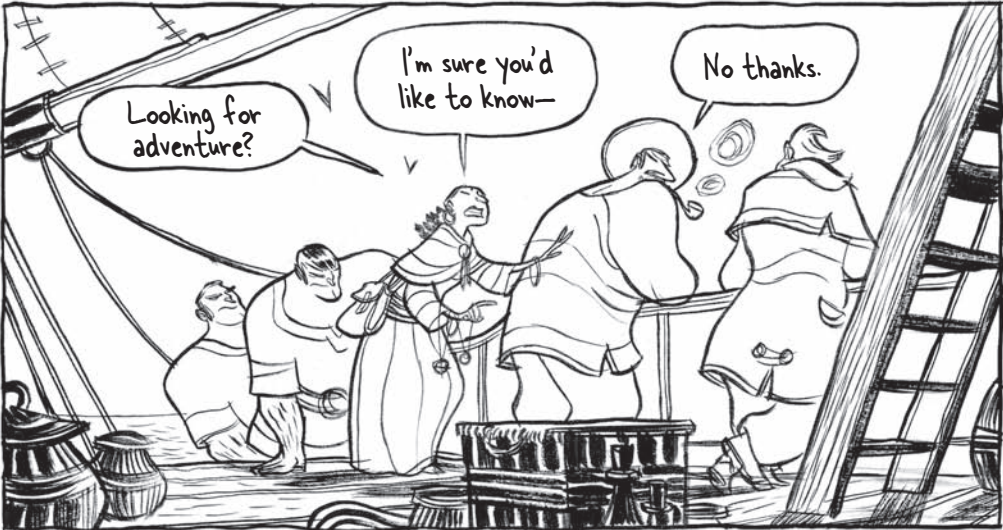
I'll kill him.



And besides...









LEAVE US BE, BITCH!



Well?

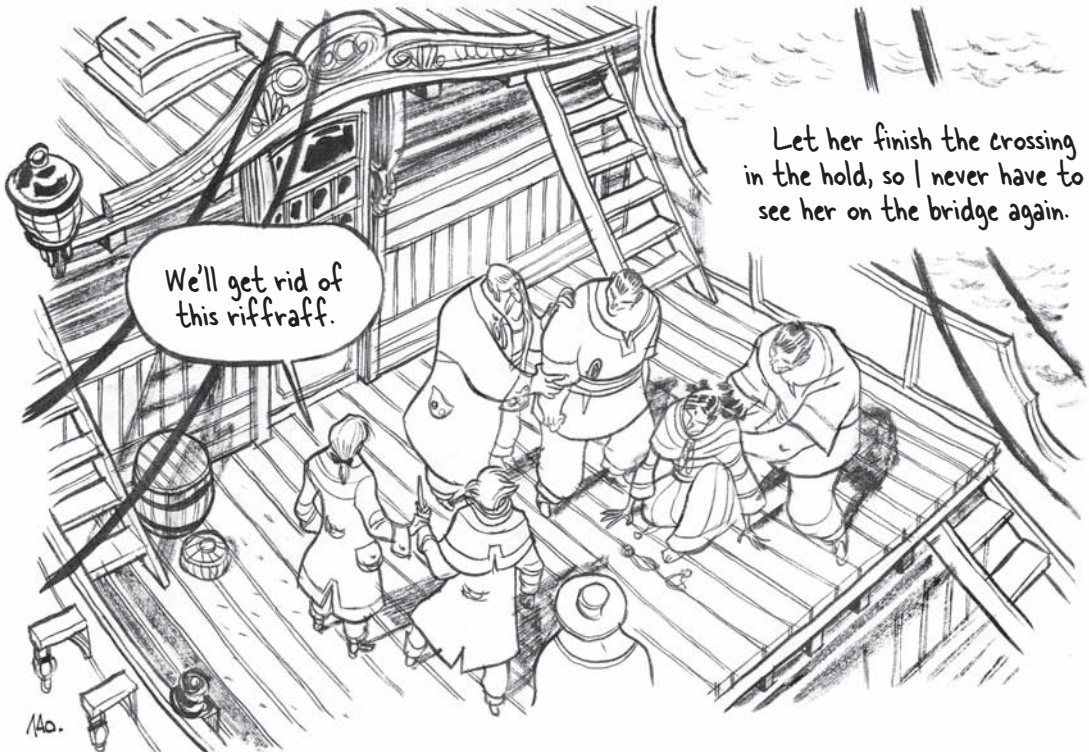
C'mon!

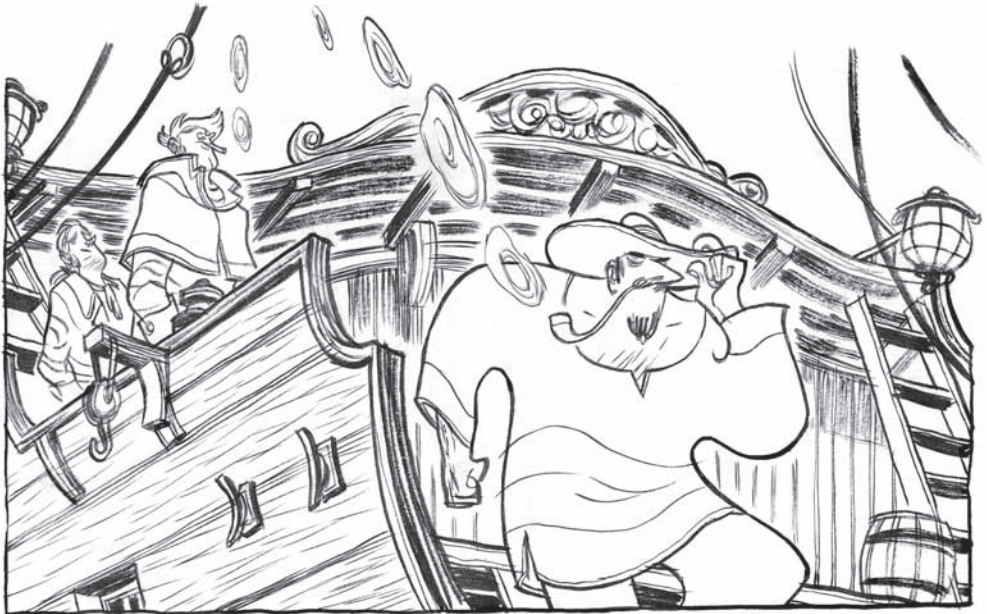


Come and
get some!

STOP!



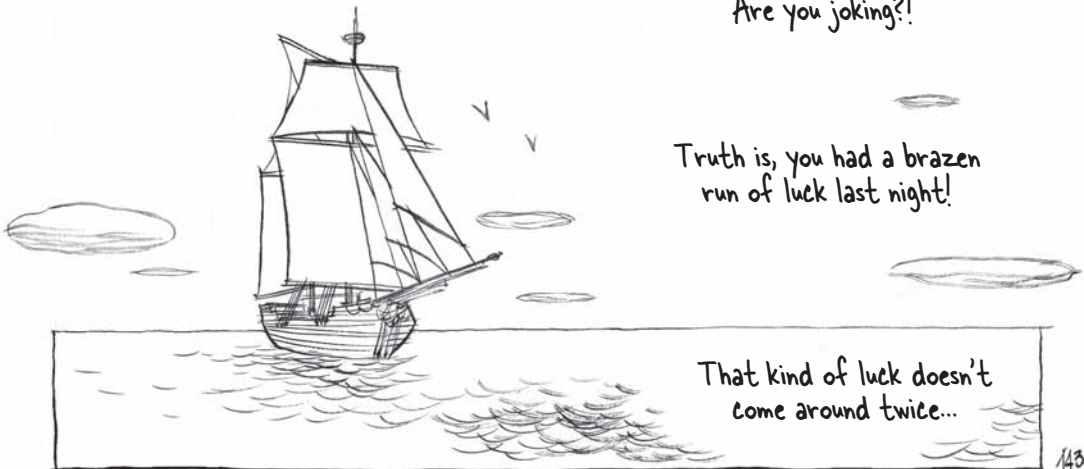


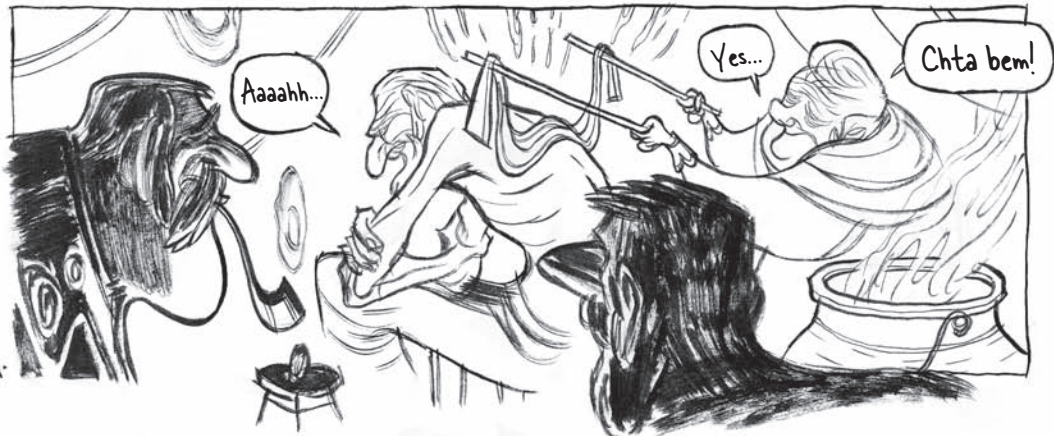
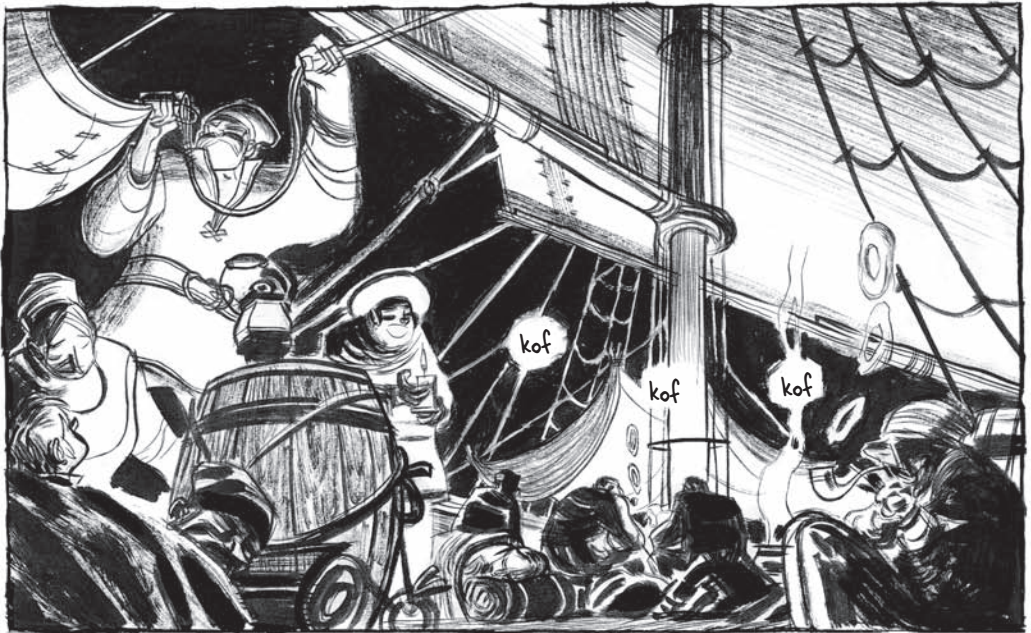




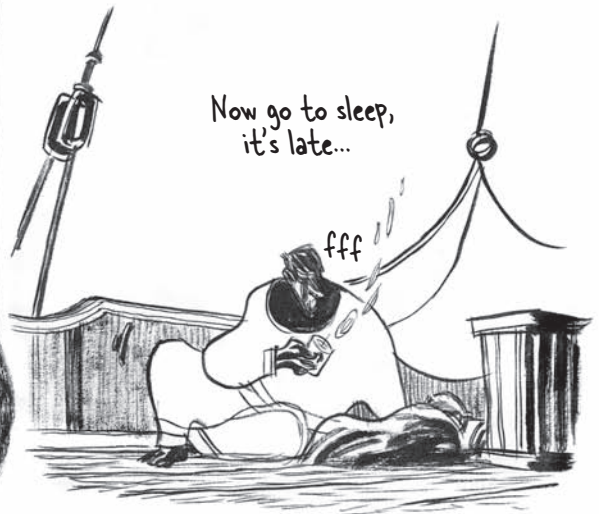
Anyway, I'm not done cheating you at cards...ha ha ha!

Are you joking?!













HIC

ha ha ha

Bravo! Hats off, my little captain!



When your luck has turned, it's time to stop!



Back to my quarters now!

hie!

G'night, Manfred!

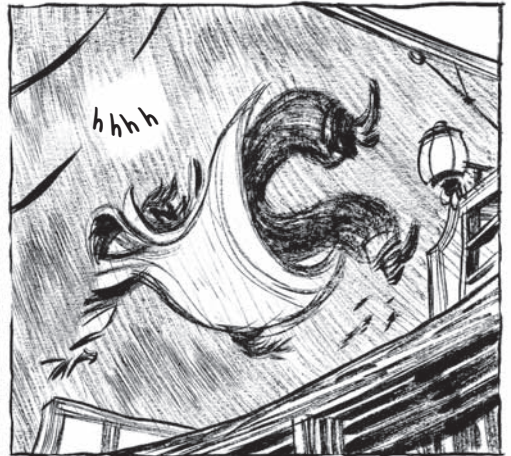


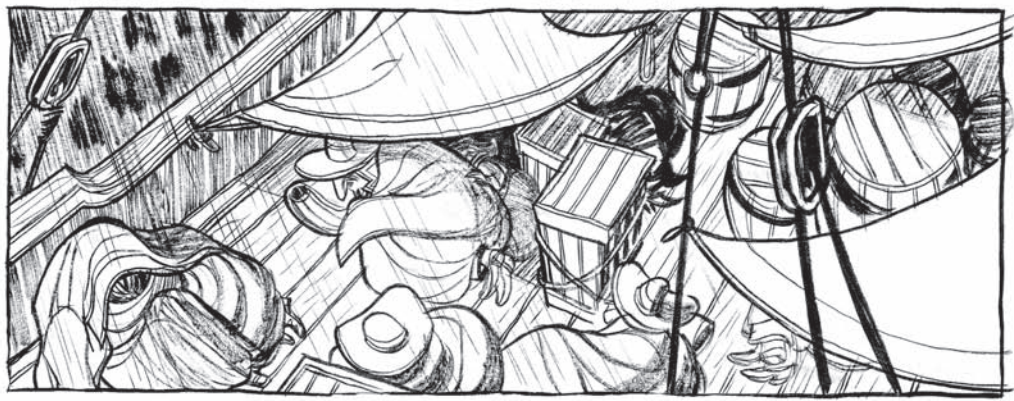
Good niight

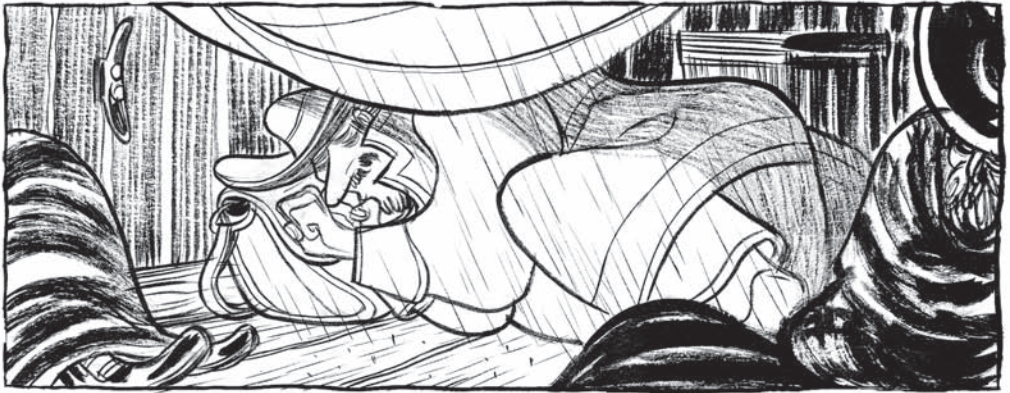
sweet captaaaain!

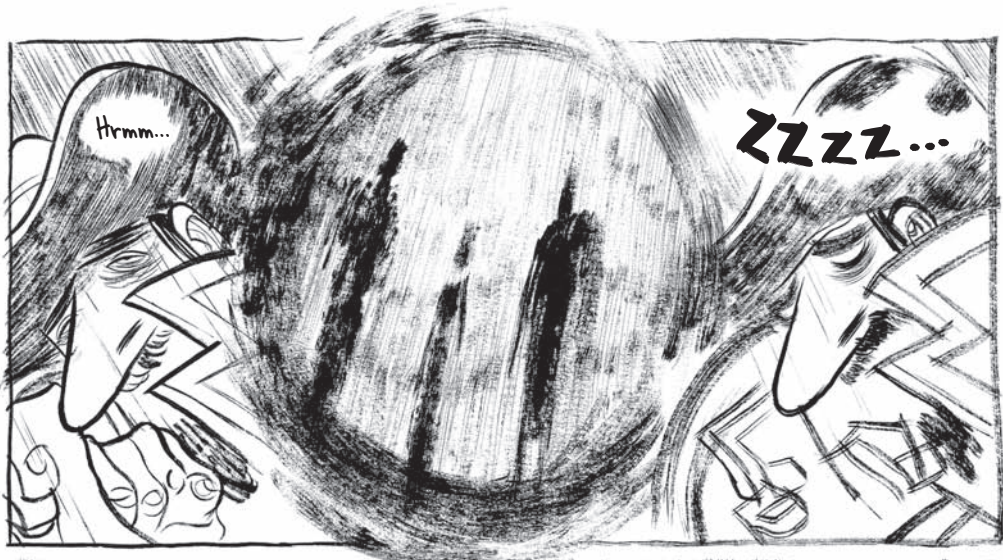


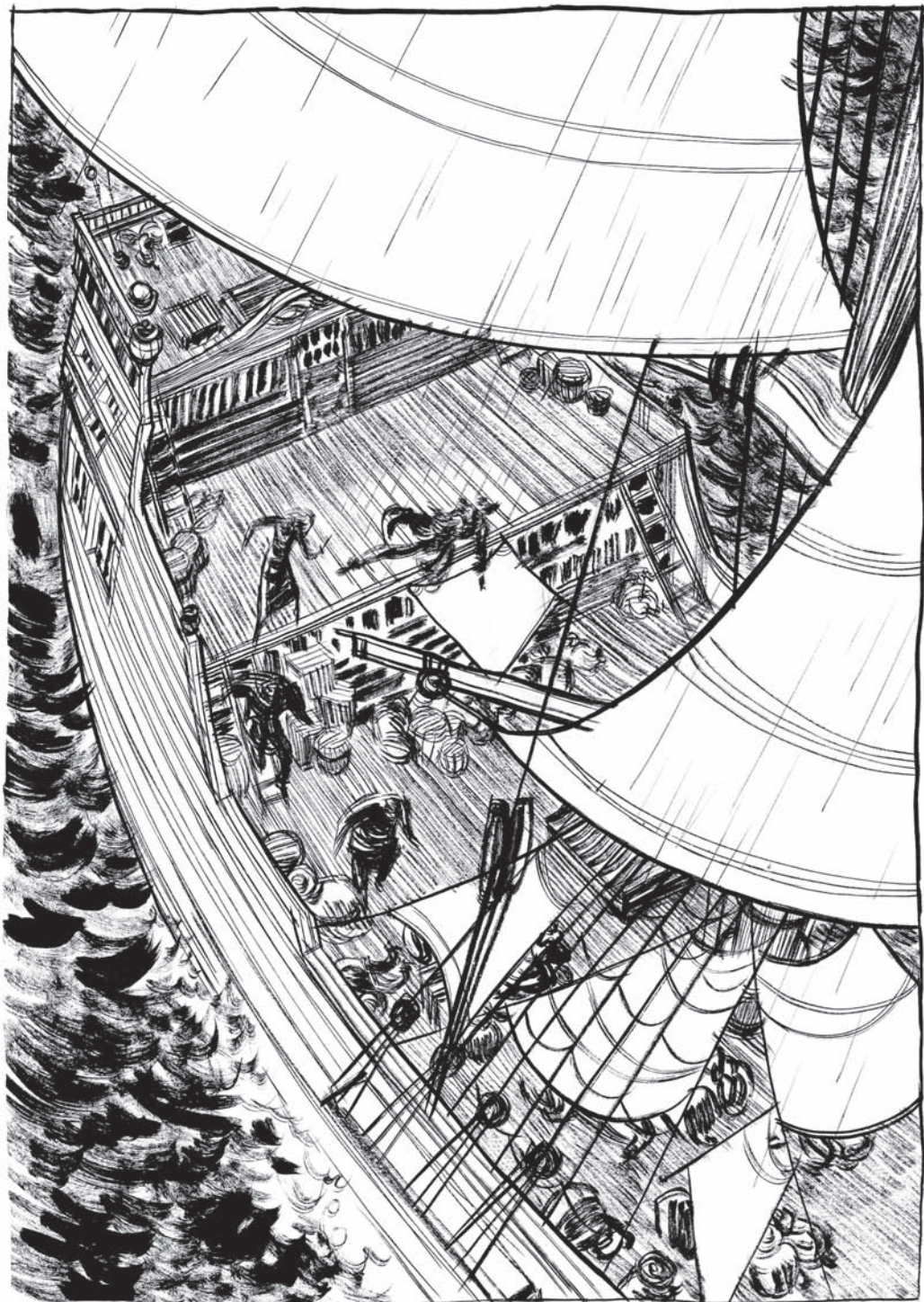
hee hee hie!















Those behind this crime will be put in irons and handed over to the port authority...

Daddy! I can't see anything!

Good.

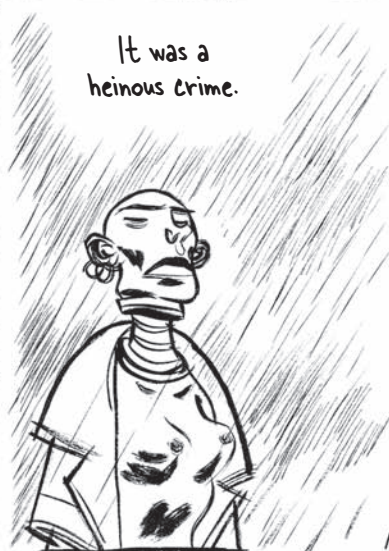


And swiftly hanged from a short rope!



Thanks to this young woman, who knew the victim—

We know that several valuable items were stolen from him.



It was a heinous crime.

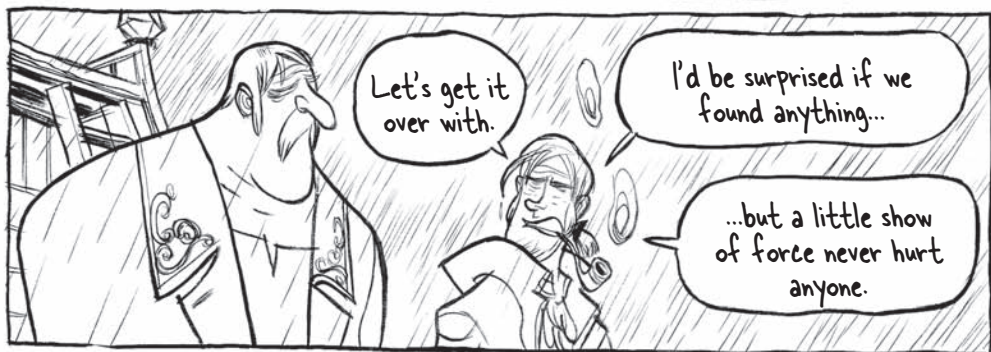
I ask your cooperation in emptying your bags and pockets before the crew.



Let's get it over with.

I'd be surprised if we found anything...

...but a little show of force never hurt anyone.





This way,
please...

Single file, or we'll
never finish...

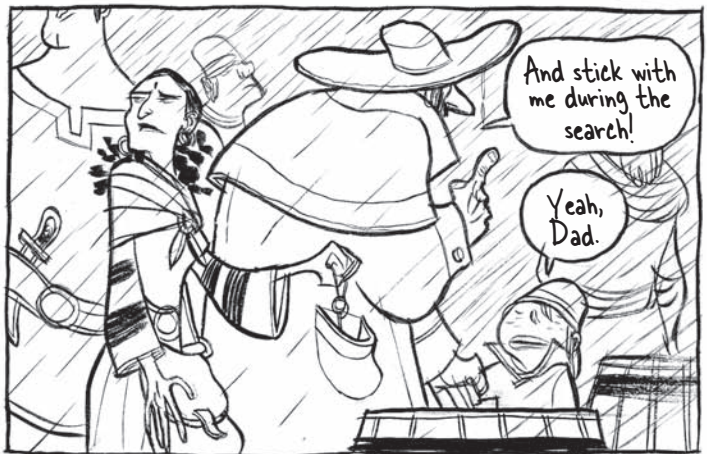
No, this way!



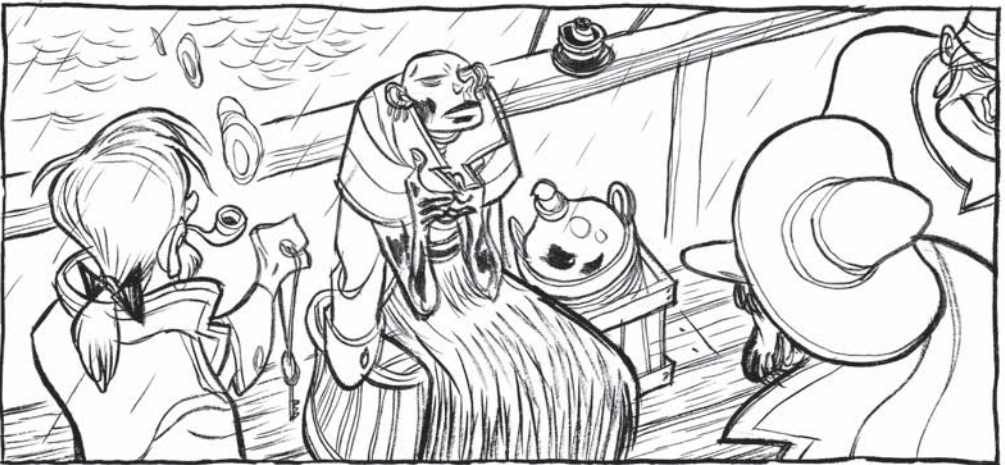
You'll have to
empty your
pockets, Miss.

Whose bag
is this?

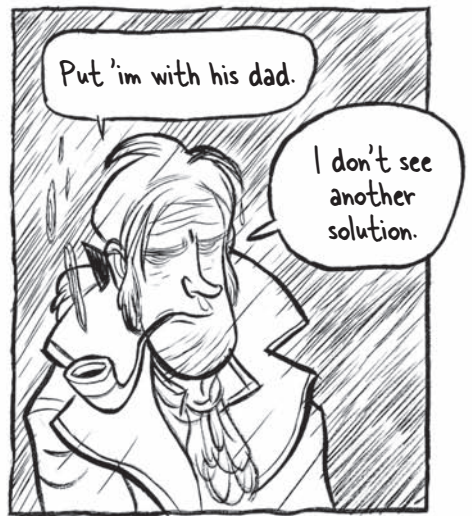
Yes, I distill it
myself...













I won't let you hang that child!

What is it now?

Who are you? His grandmother?



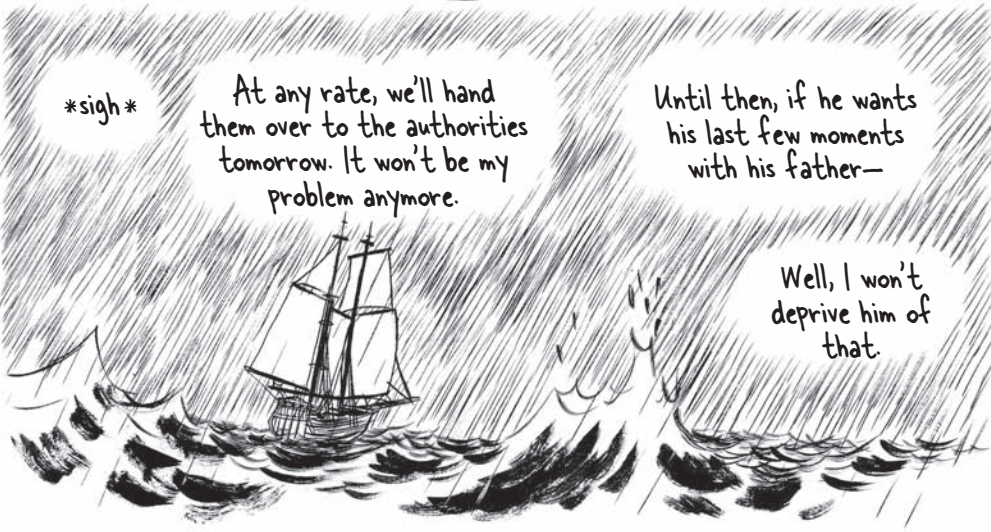
My little Joachinho...

Do you know this woman, kid?

Do you want to stay with her?



I want my daaaddie!



sigh

At any rate, we'll hand them over to the authorities tomorrow. It won't be my problem anymore.

Until then, if he wants his last few moments with his father—

Well, I won't deprive him of that.



SAINTS ALIVE!



What the hell
are you doing
there??



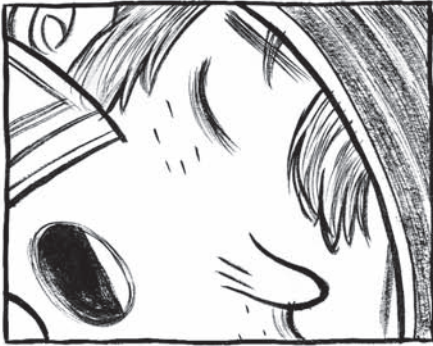
I said:

Everyone in the
rigging!!



Might I remind you all that we
have a ship to bring into port!

It's going
to be a long
night...

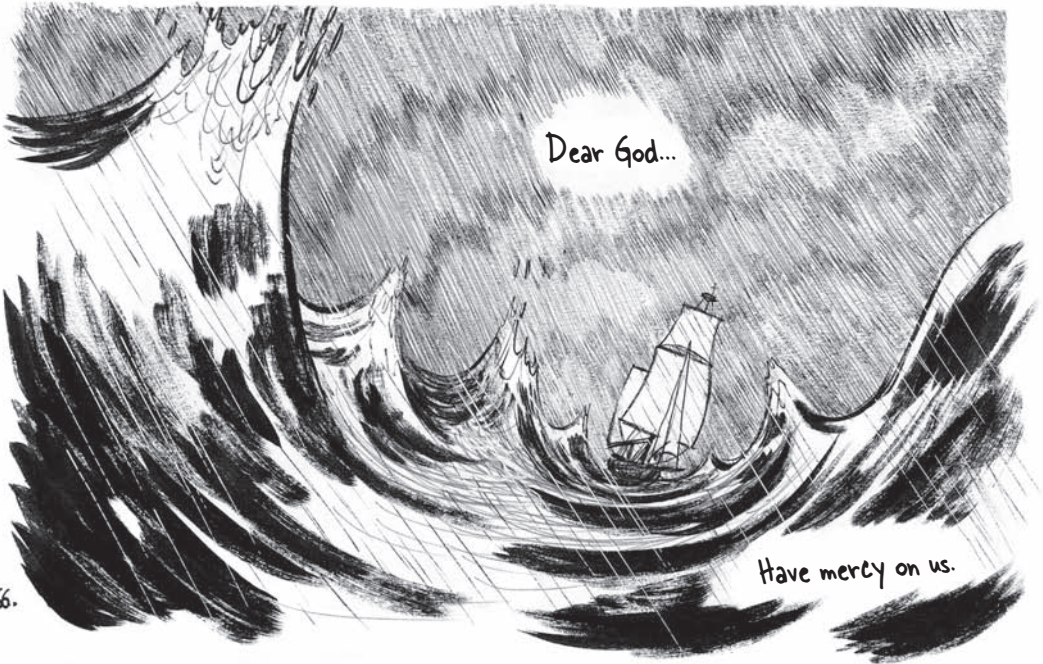




They're here.



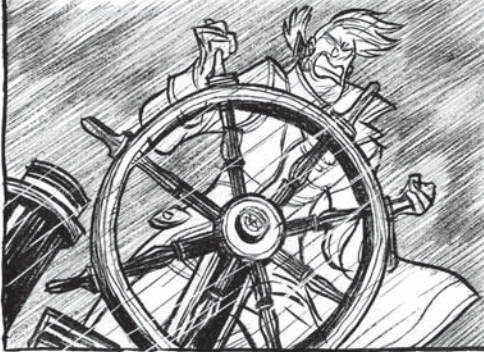
They've found us.



Dear God...

Have mercy on us.

Reduce all sails, by Christ!



FASTER!!



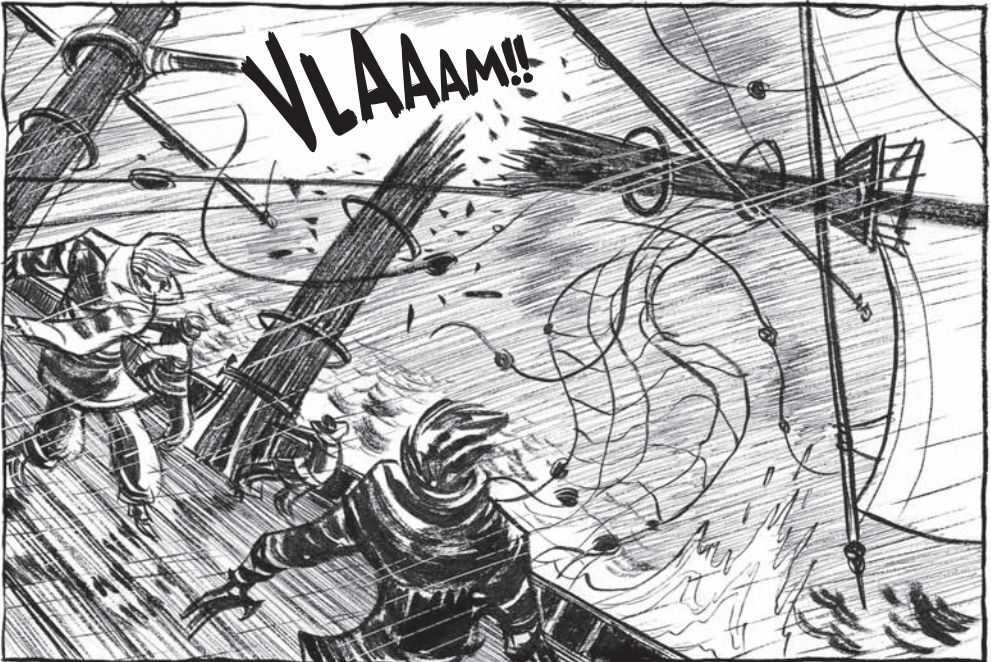
Creeea

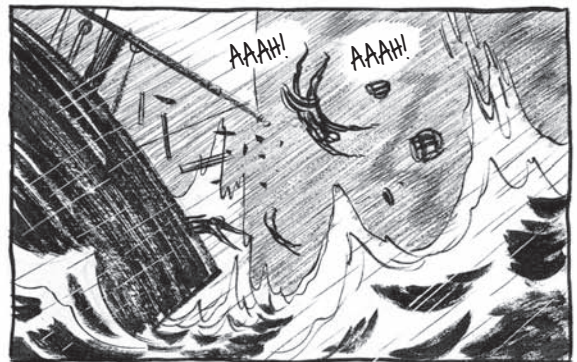
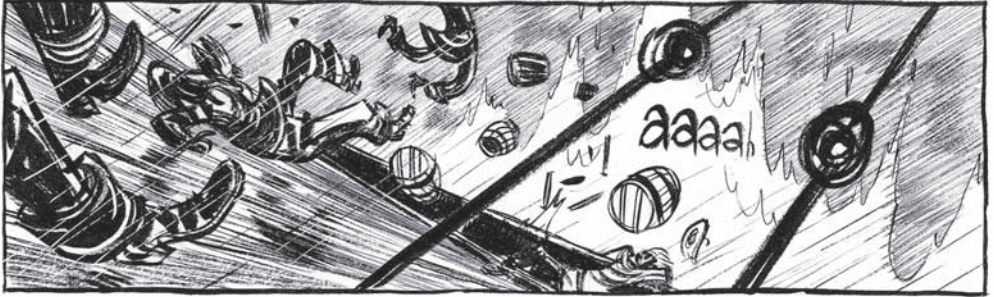


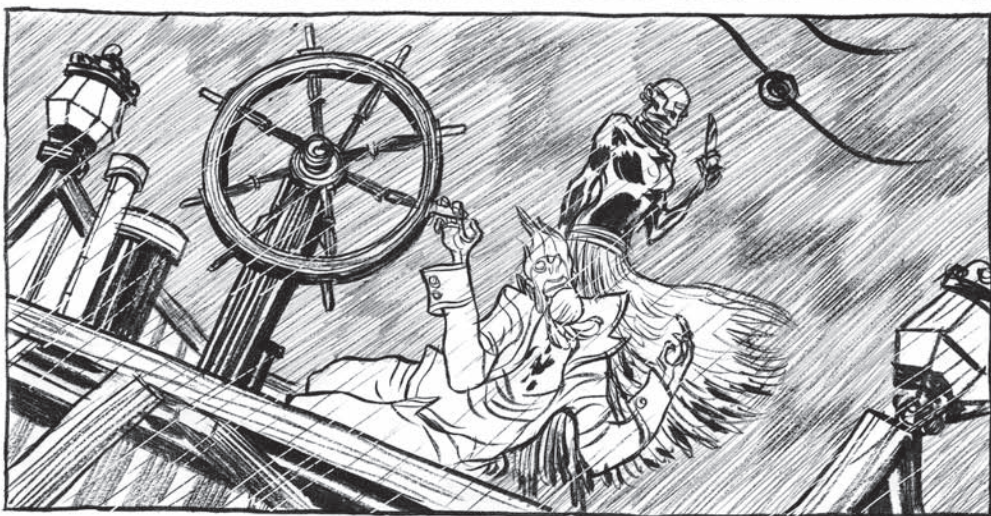
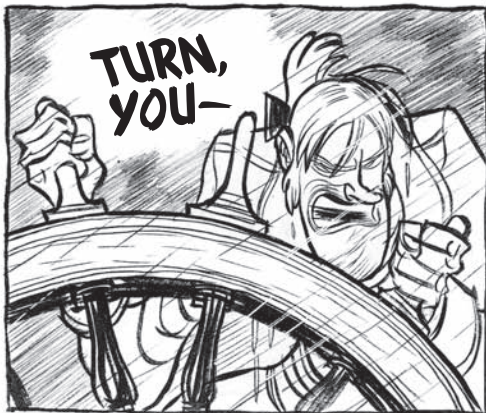
KRACK

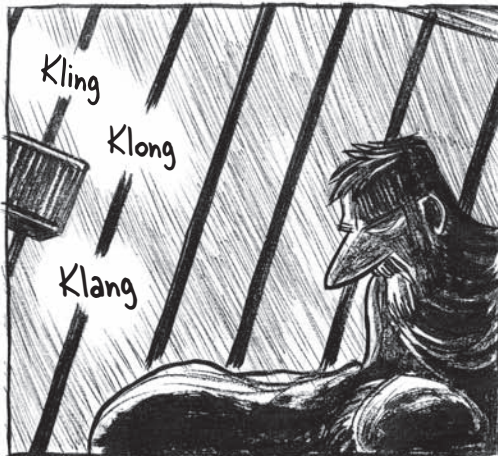
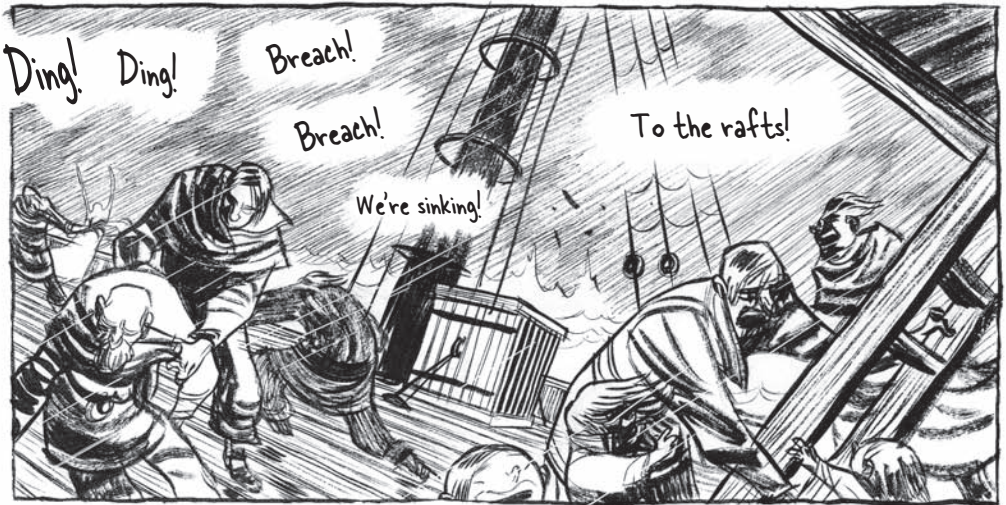
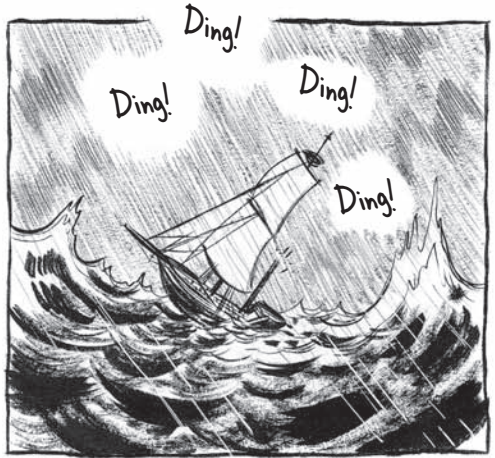


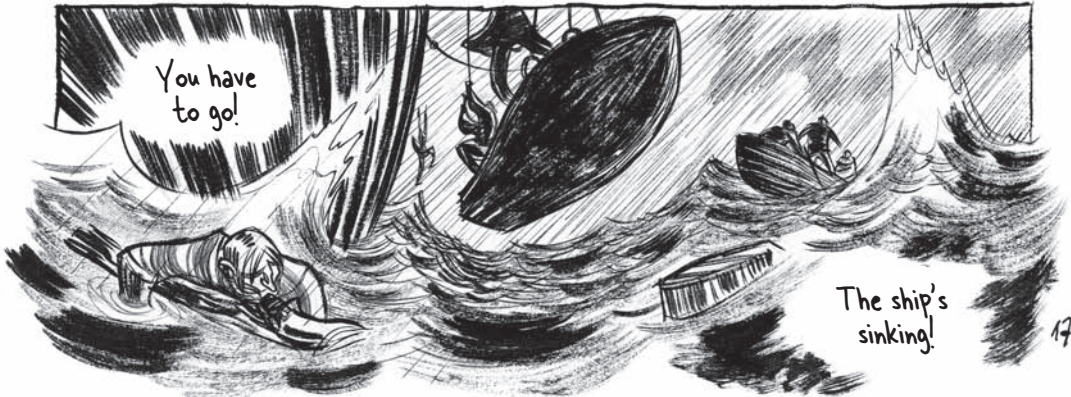
VLAAAM!!

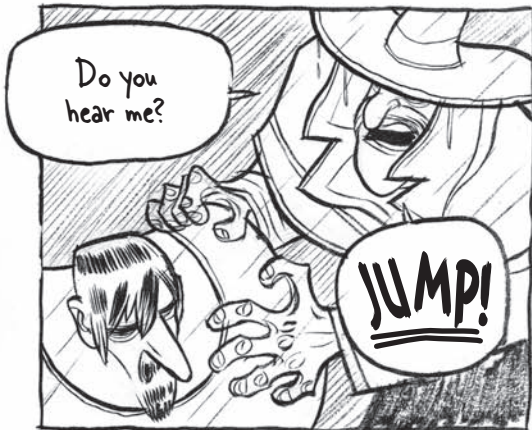














The water's not that cold.

Hang on to a plank—

And you'll reach land.



Did you hear, Joachim?
We have to jump.

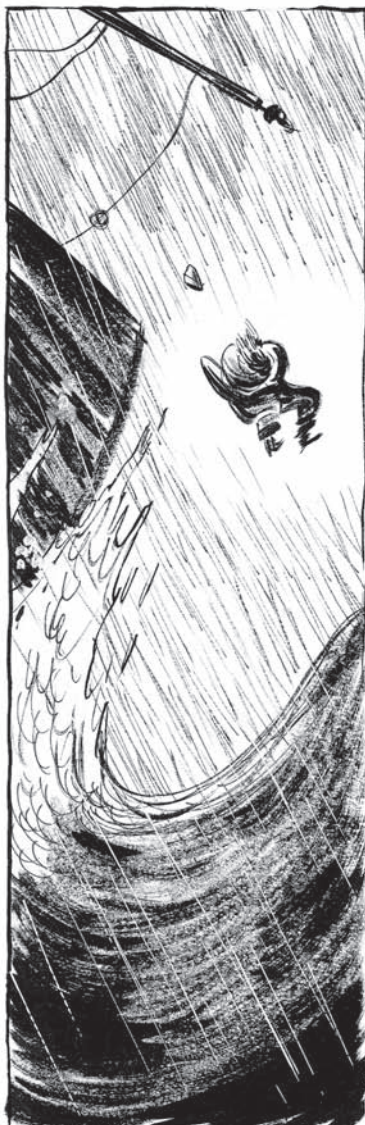
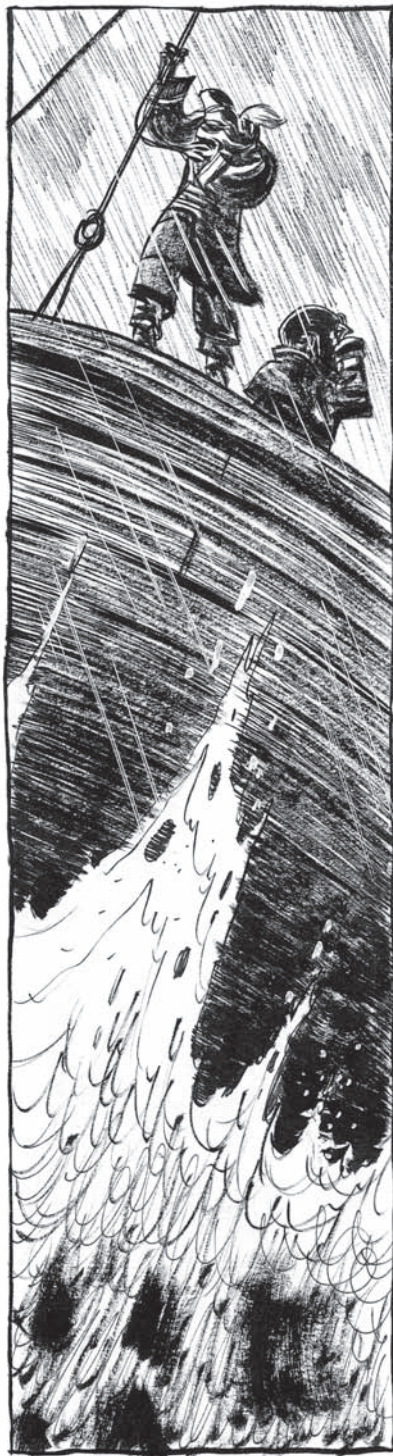
I'm scared.

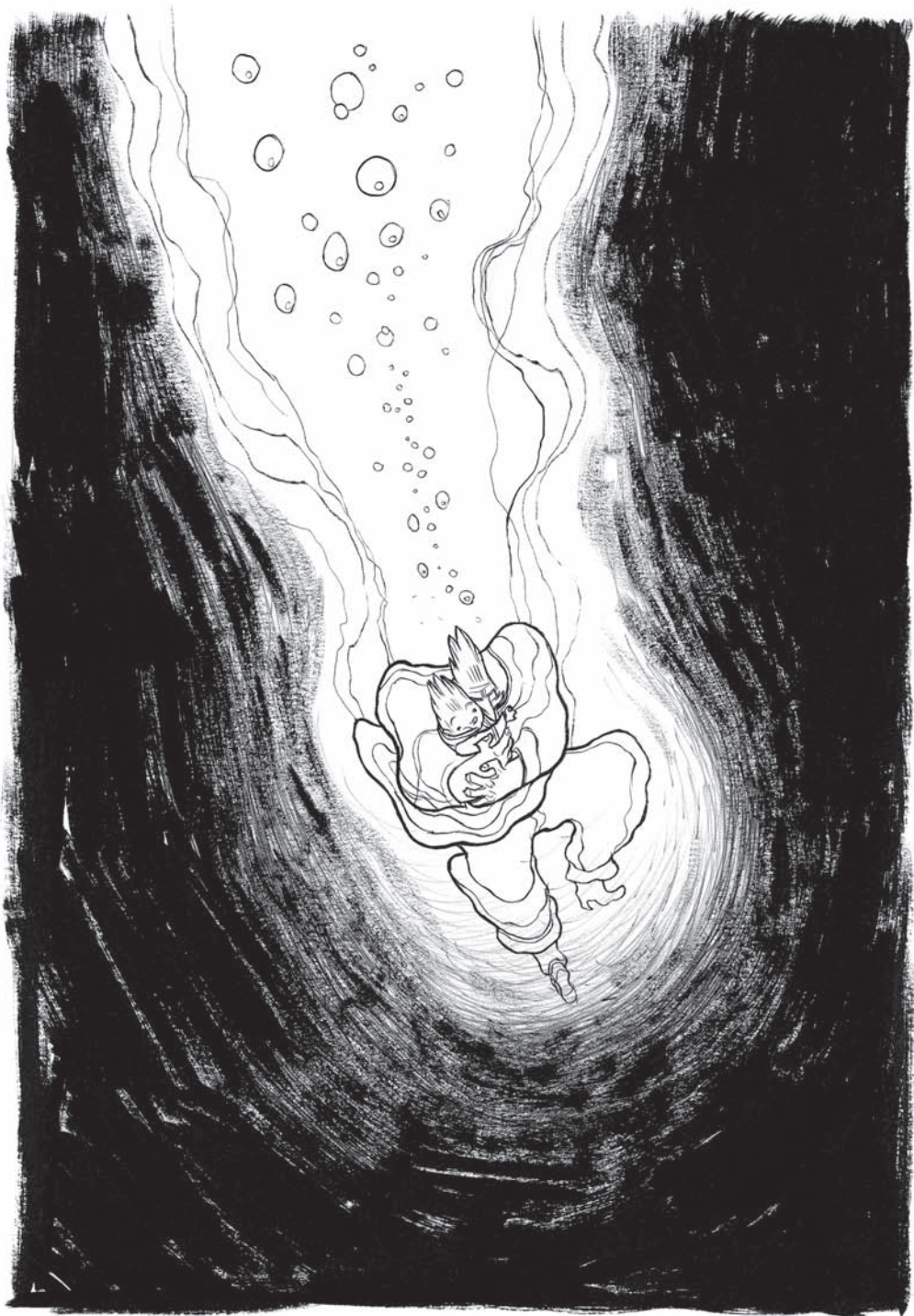


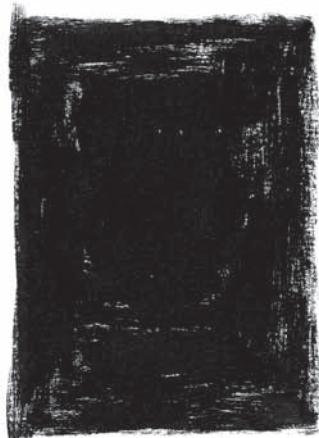
It'll be okay.

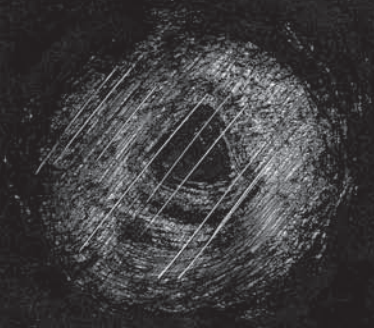
It'll be just like when we jump into the pond, remember? Don't let go of my hand, all right?

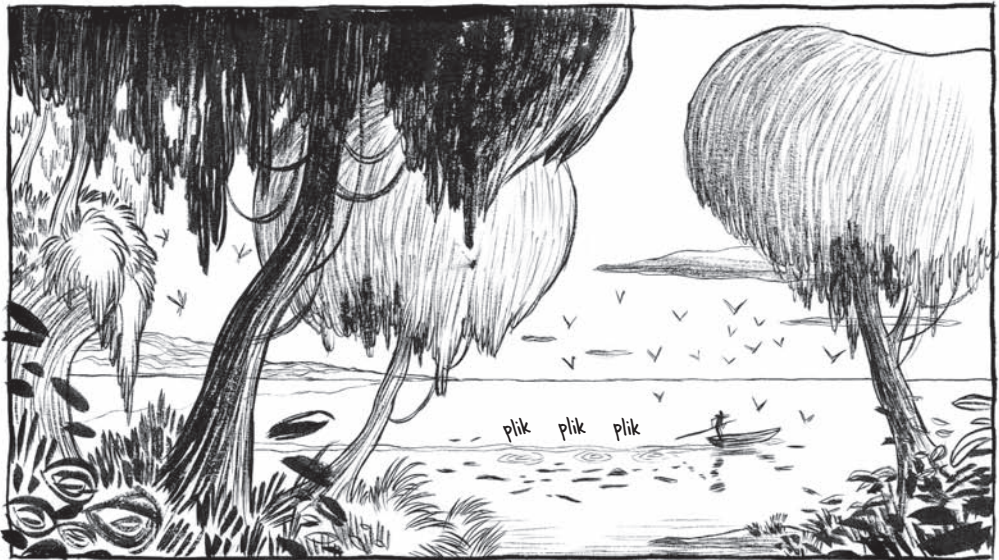
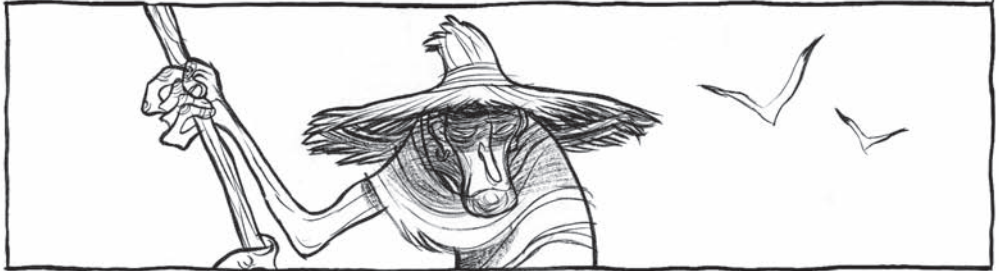
sniff...
Yes, Daddy...

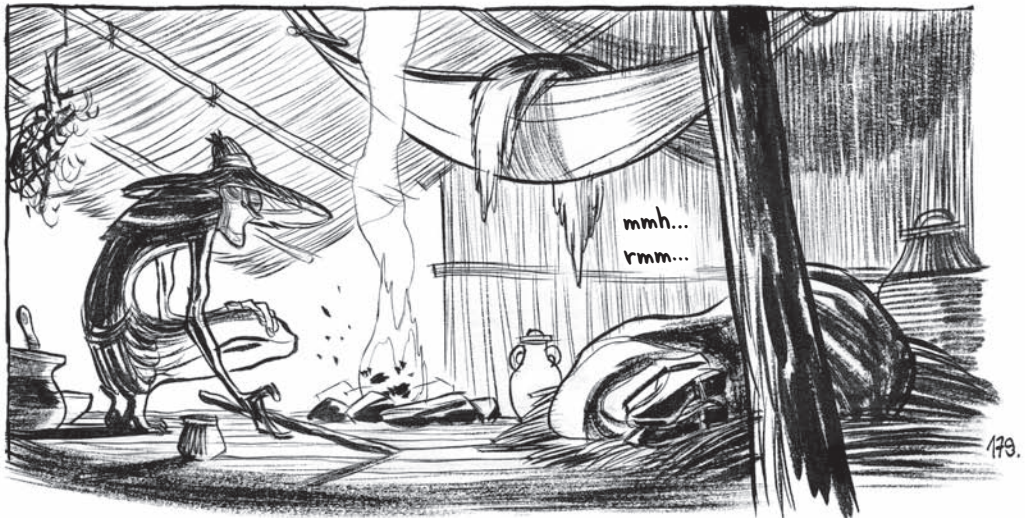
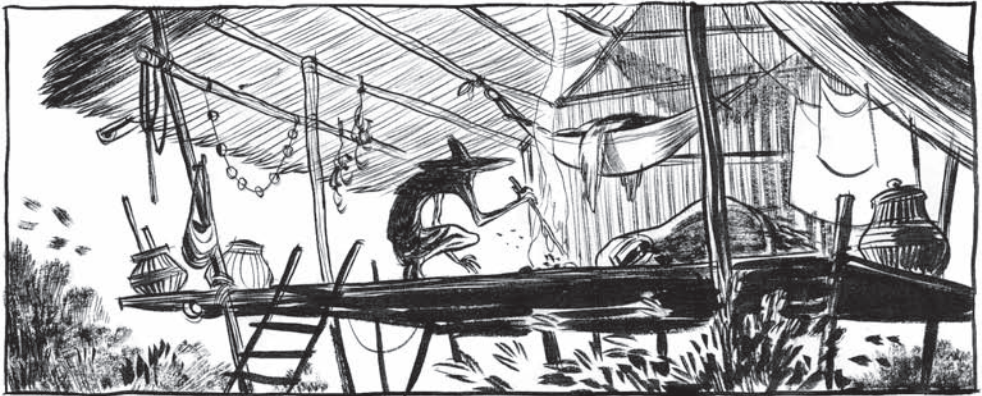




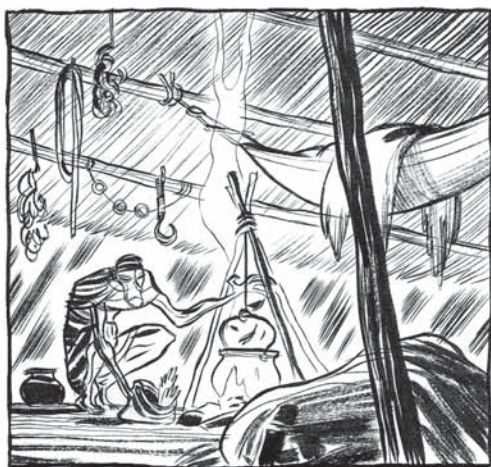
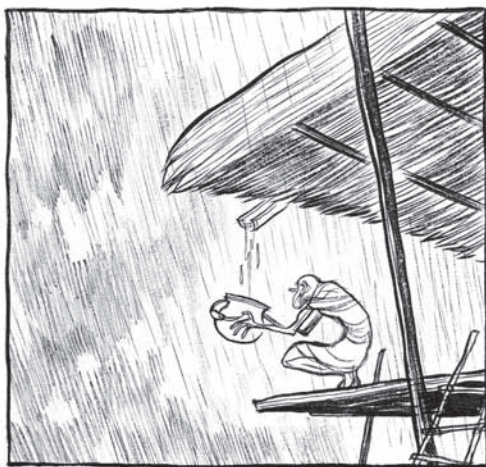
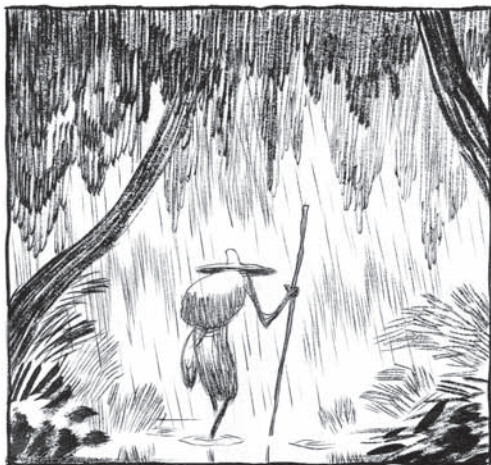
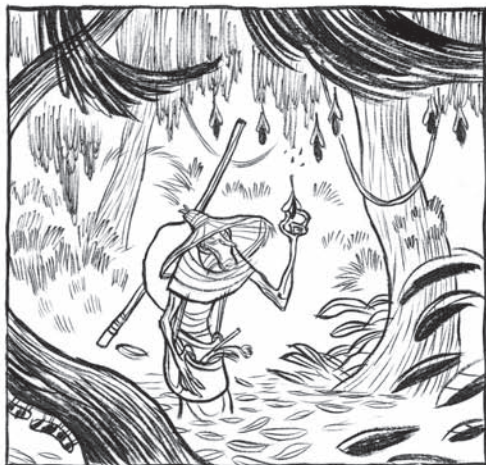




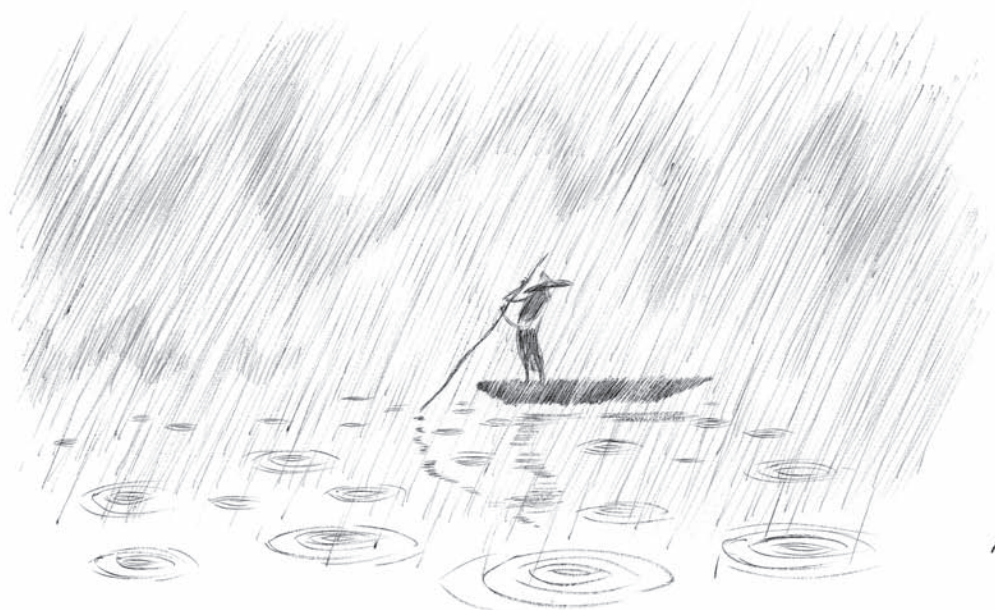
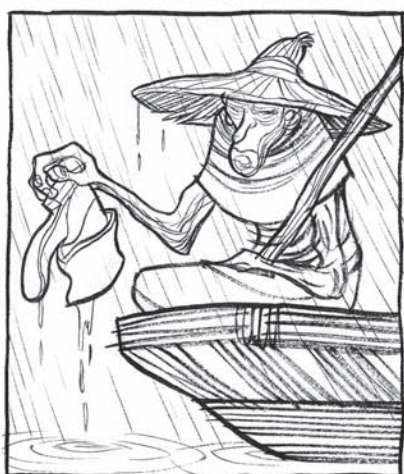
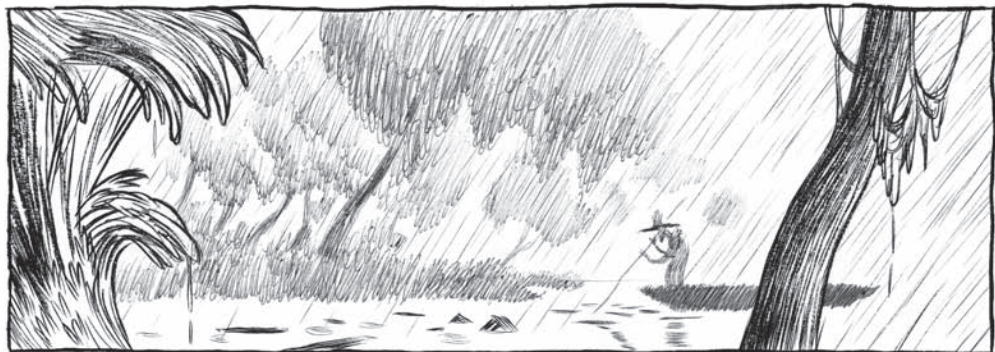








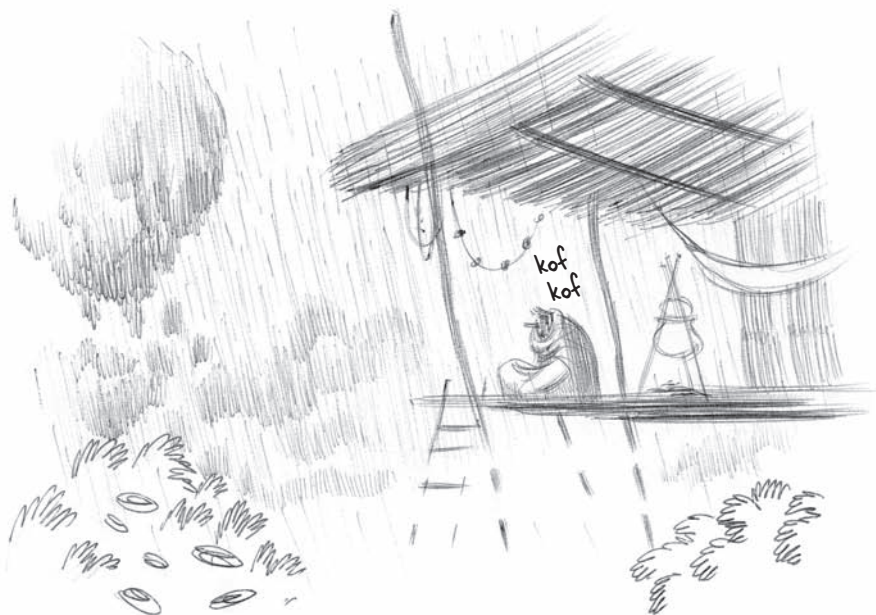
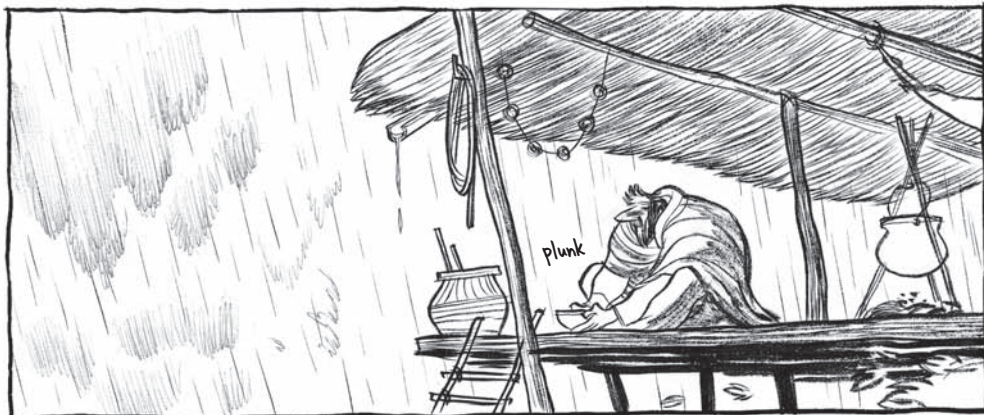






Go back to sleep.







How's the boy?

So?

Much better.

The fever's broken, but he's still tired.



Good.

I wanted to say...



For Joachim and myself...
I know that without you...



Sluurp

You owe me nothing.



I went back to the river this morning.

And-?



I found nothing.

That can't be—



KOF
KOF
KOF
KOF

Tut tut—you shouldn't have sat up.

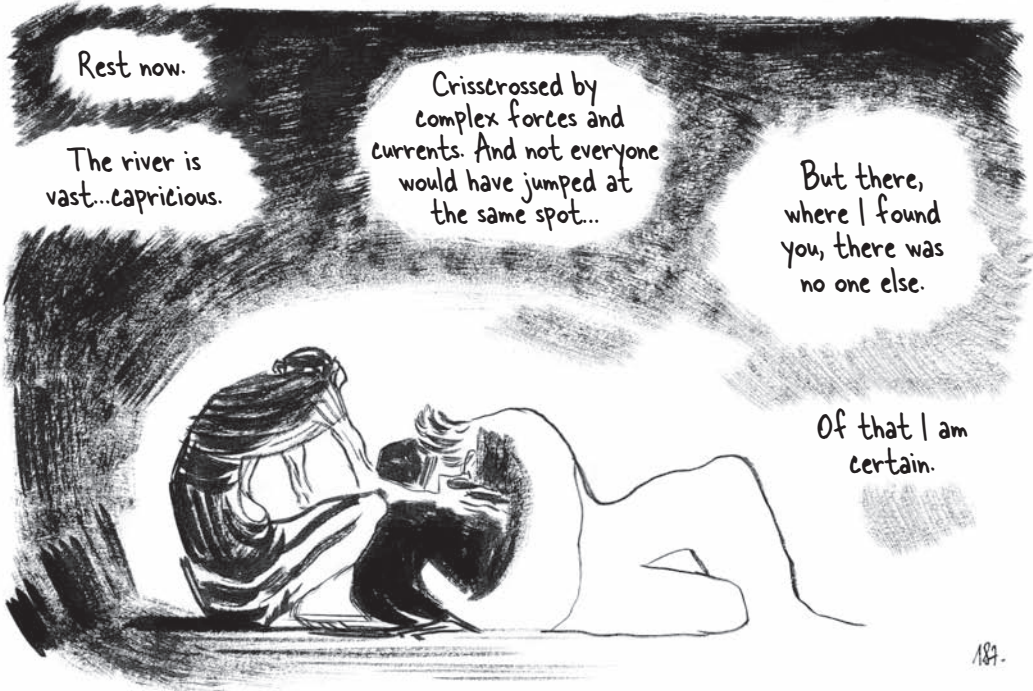
You still need sleep.



kof
kof
kof

There must've been a hundred passengers...

They couldn't all have—kof kof



Rest now.

The river is vast...capricious.

Crisscrossed by complex forces and currents. And not everyone would have jumped at the same spot...

But there, where I found you, there was no one else.

Of that I am certain.





Those...
"things"
followed us.

They killed the slave trader.

Then the
captain...

...then all the
passengers.



See here, the storm—

No.



They're
shadows.

They're
here.

They're
stalking us.



Come now...Look
around you.

Where are the
ghosts you speak of?



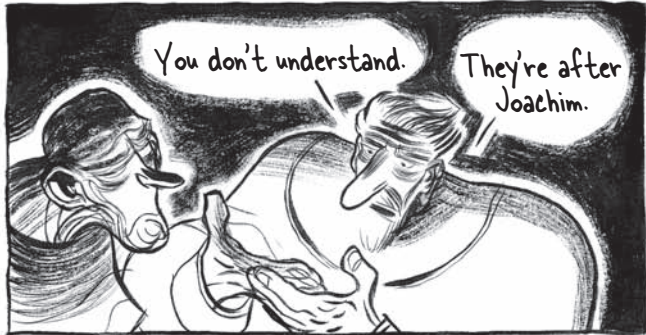
You yourself
see there
are none.

And anyway, who
would come all the
way here?



I'm an old man now.

I have nothing anymore. I am of interest to no one.



You don't understand.

They're after Joachim.



There's nothing to be done.

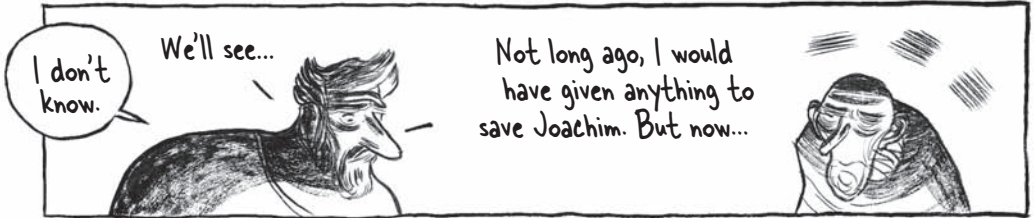


All that time wasted, running away. We fled in vain.

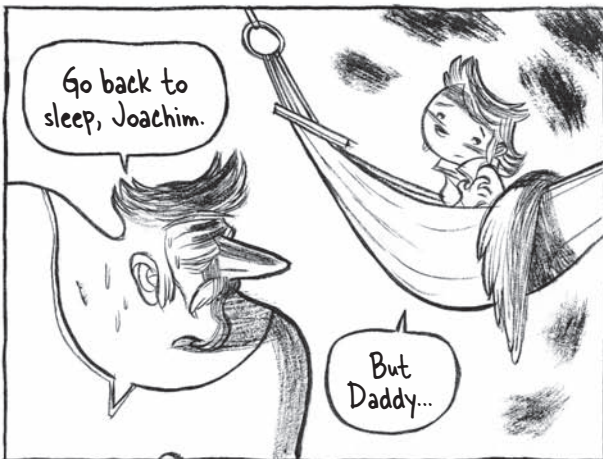
Look at this fire, this warmth...

...my sleeping son...

I now know just how precious such moments are...







You say that...I could save Joachim?



You would have the strength and power to do so—I promise.



No.

It can't be...



No one can do that.



Don't you even want to try?

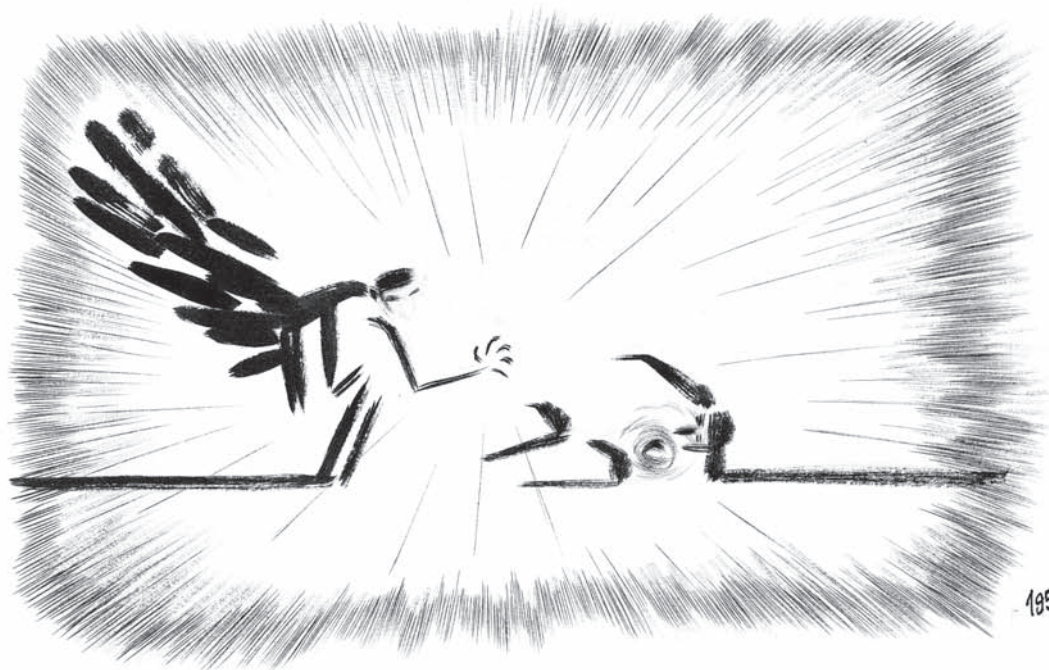
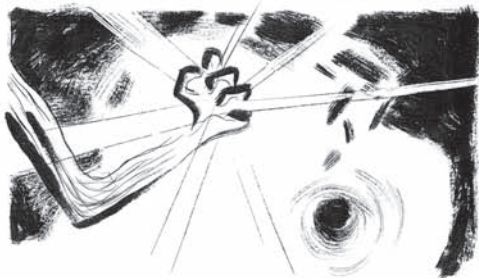
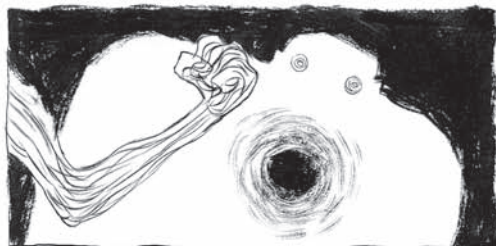
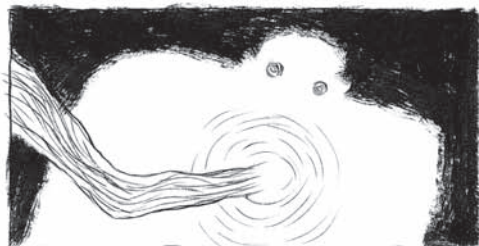


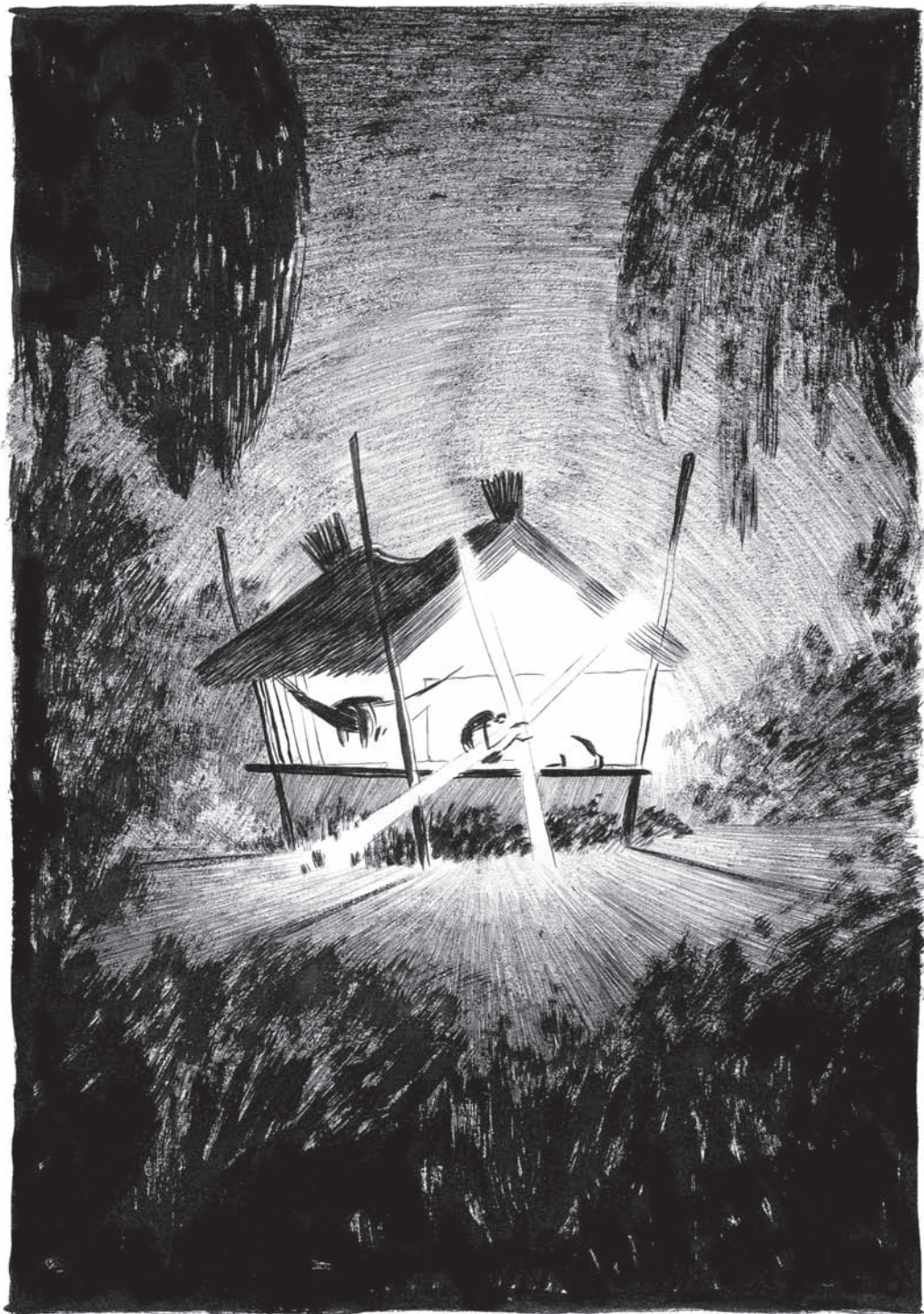
Very well.

Go ahead.

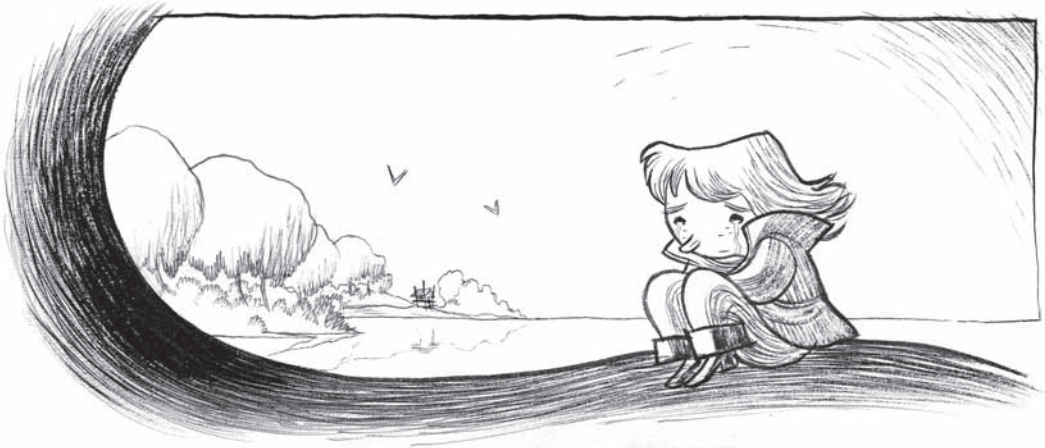
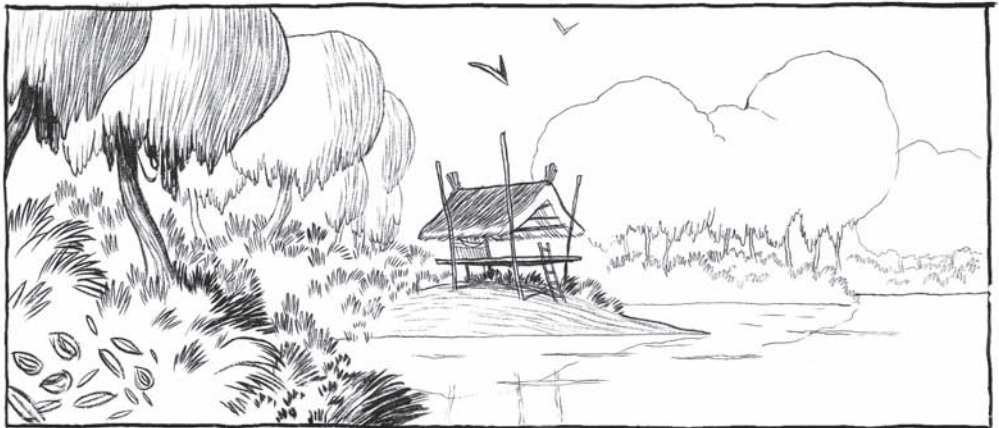
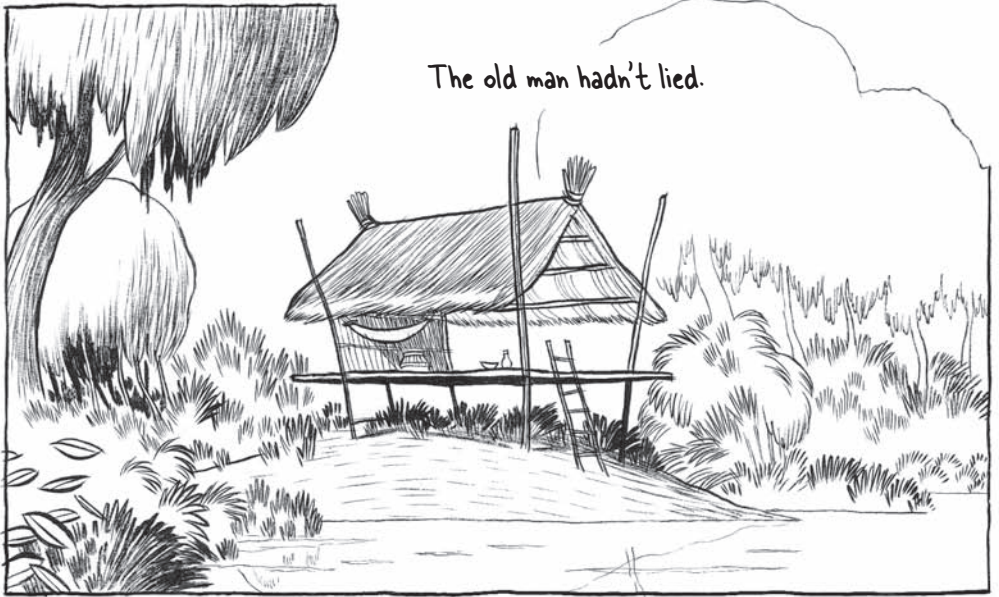
I'm ready.

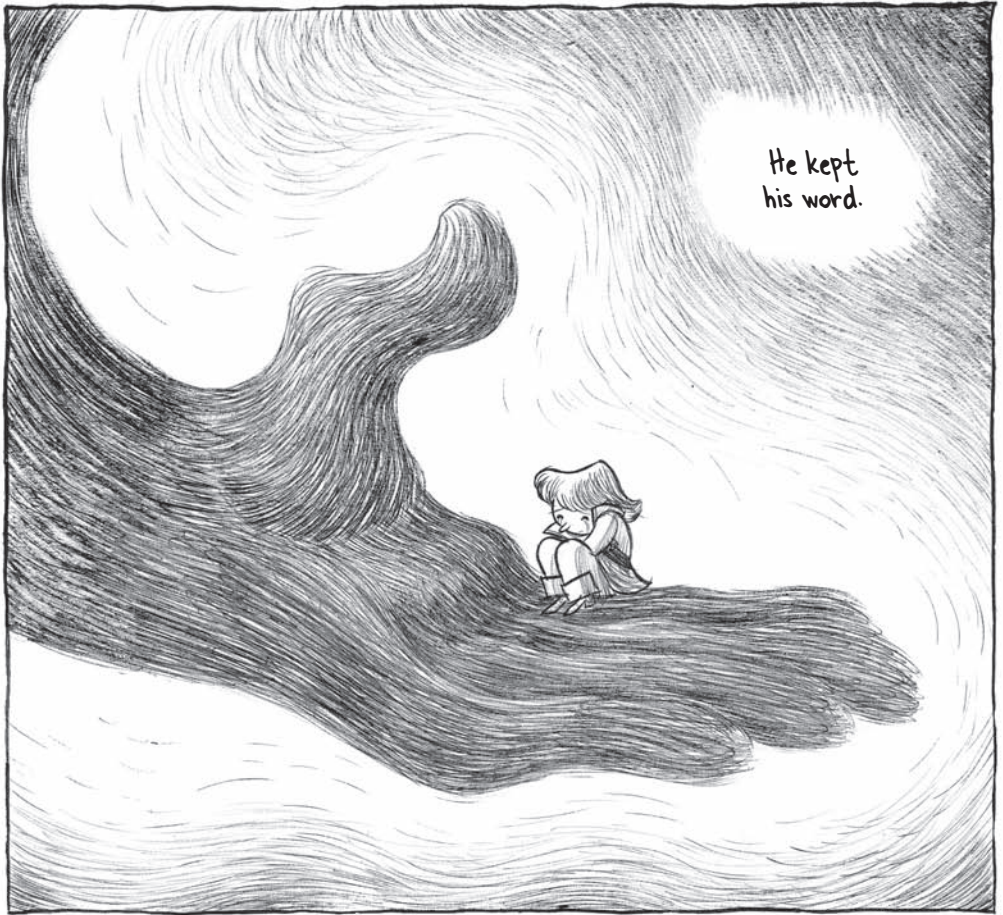






The old man hadn't lied.

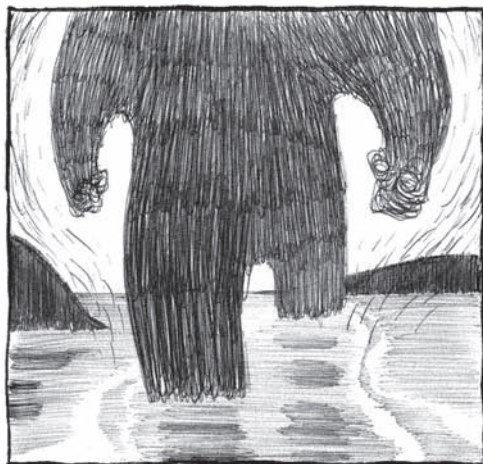




With Joachim hidden in my fist...

And my fist in
my pocket...

Who could
come and take
him?





Douse flames.

Bite dogs.

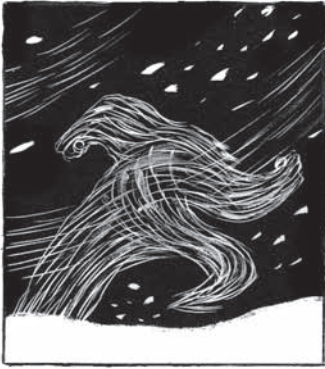
Break bones.

Bare my teeth.

Kill their masters.



And run...



How long has it been now?

Days...months,
perhaps.

I can remember nothing.

Nothing but this
exhaustion.

Endless.

Catch my breath.



And keep
moving.



Quickly.



My breath...



A moment



Just a
moment...



Daddy.



Listen to me—please.



I can't live hidden
away any longer.



There's no room for me
to grow inside your fist.



It's boring here.

Please let me out.

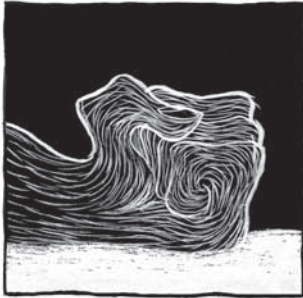
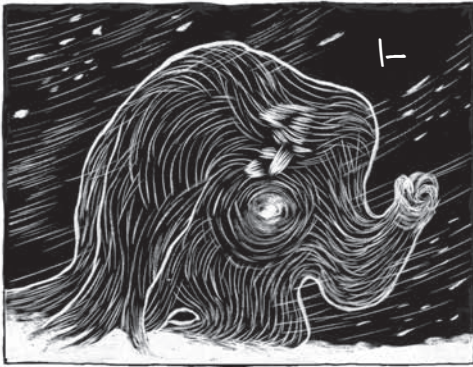


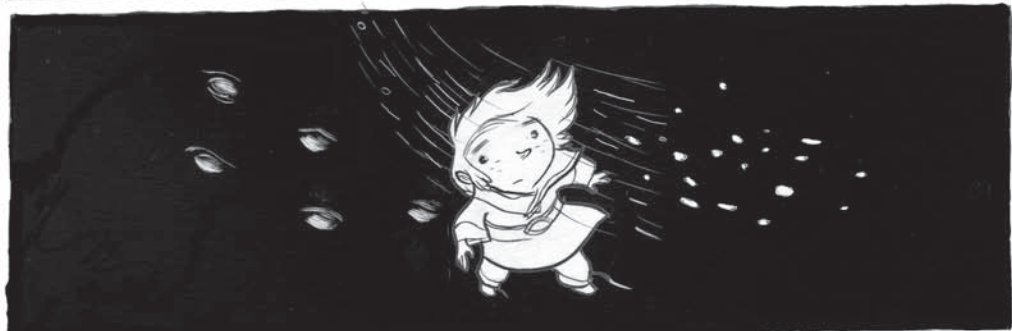
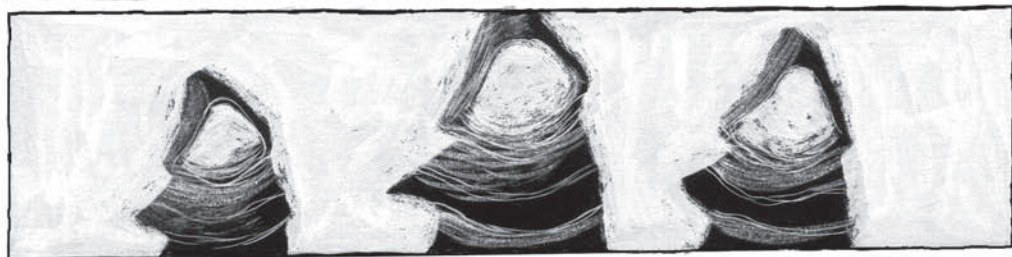
I'm not afraid of the
shadows anymore.

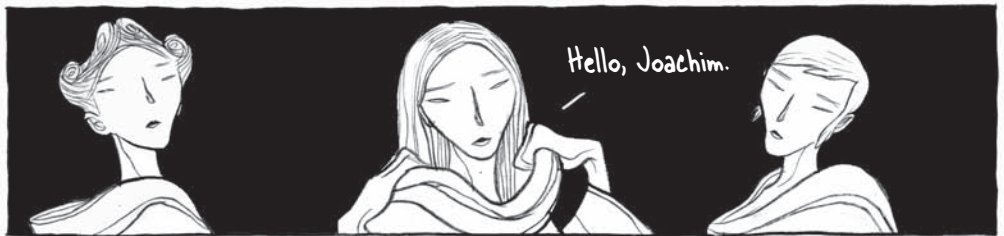
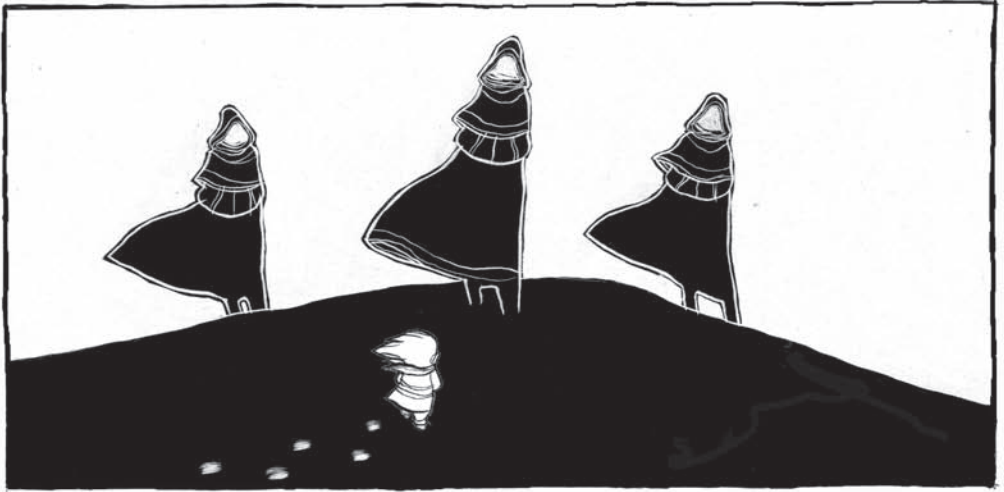


Joachim...













Joachim.

You must come with us. Now.



Yes. I understand.



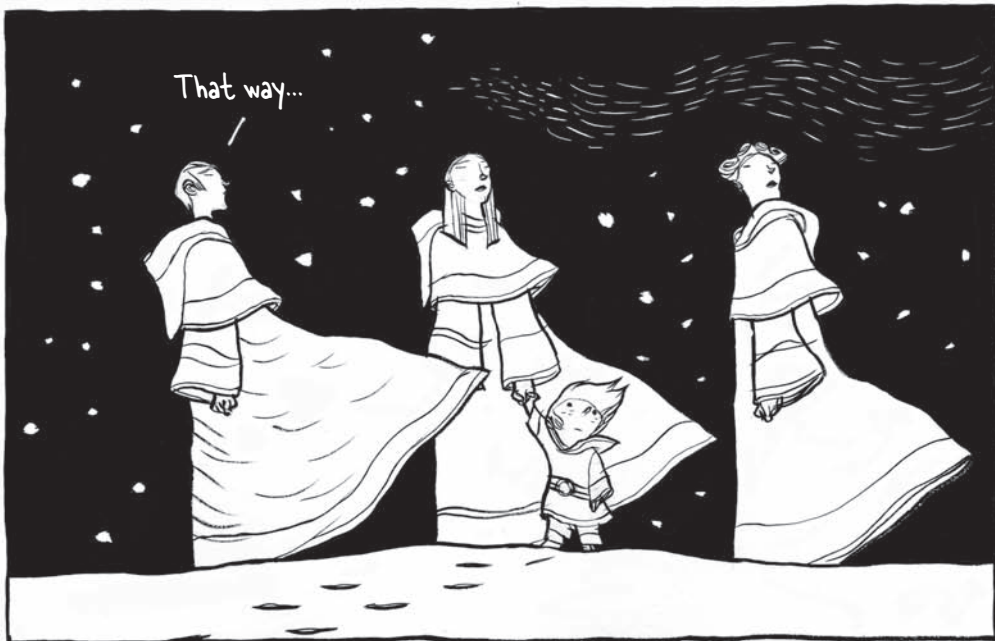
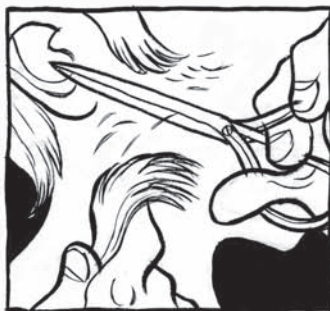
But I'm worried about leaving my dad here like this.



We did not come for him.

Not today.

It's time we were on our way.



That way...

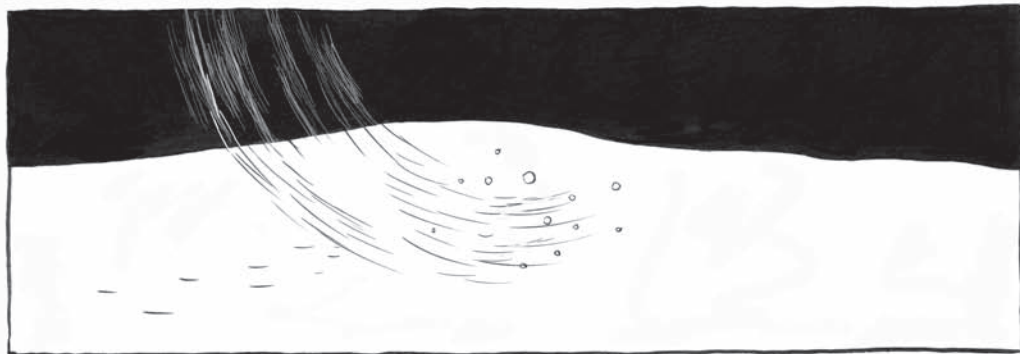
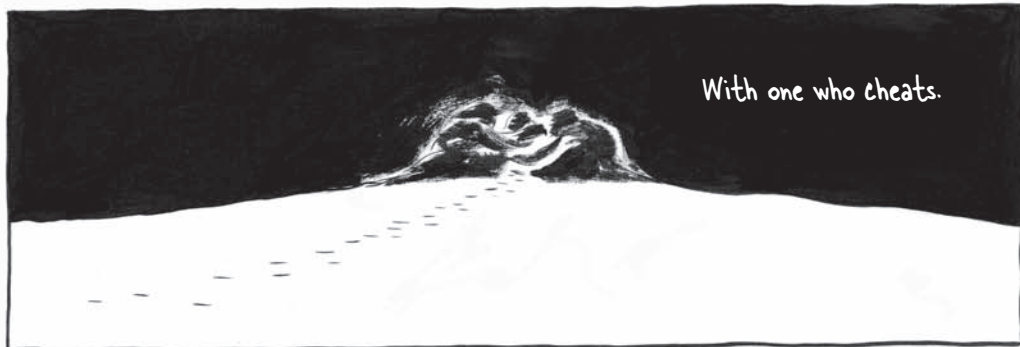
Are we leaving right now?



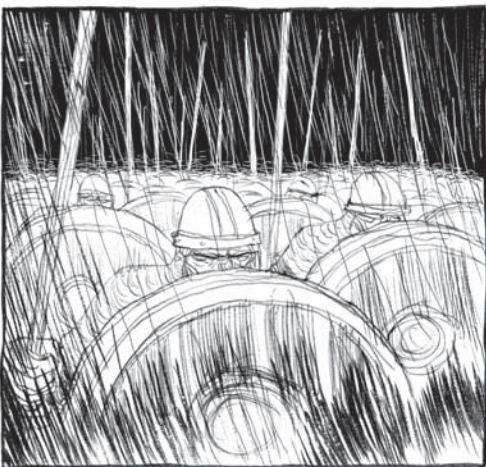
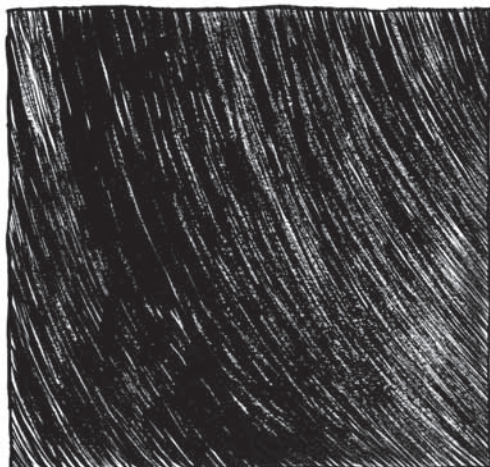
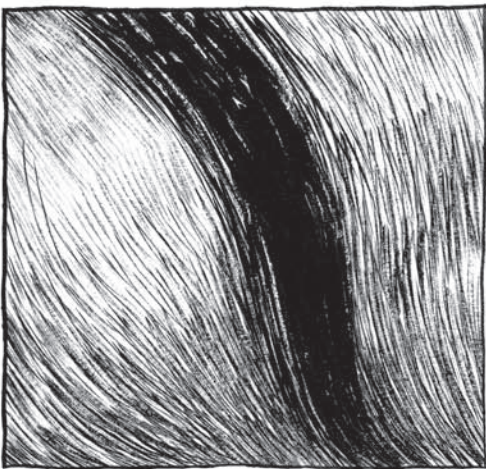
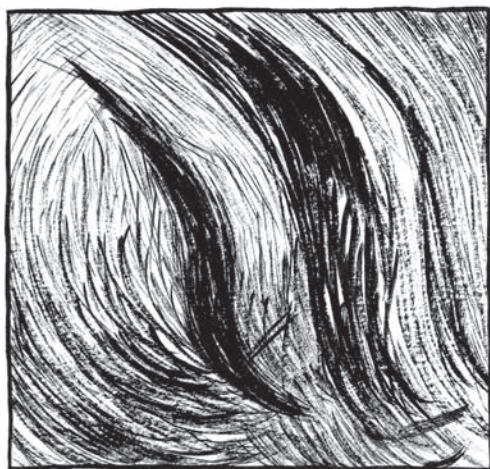
First, an appointment.

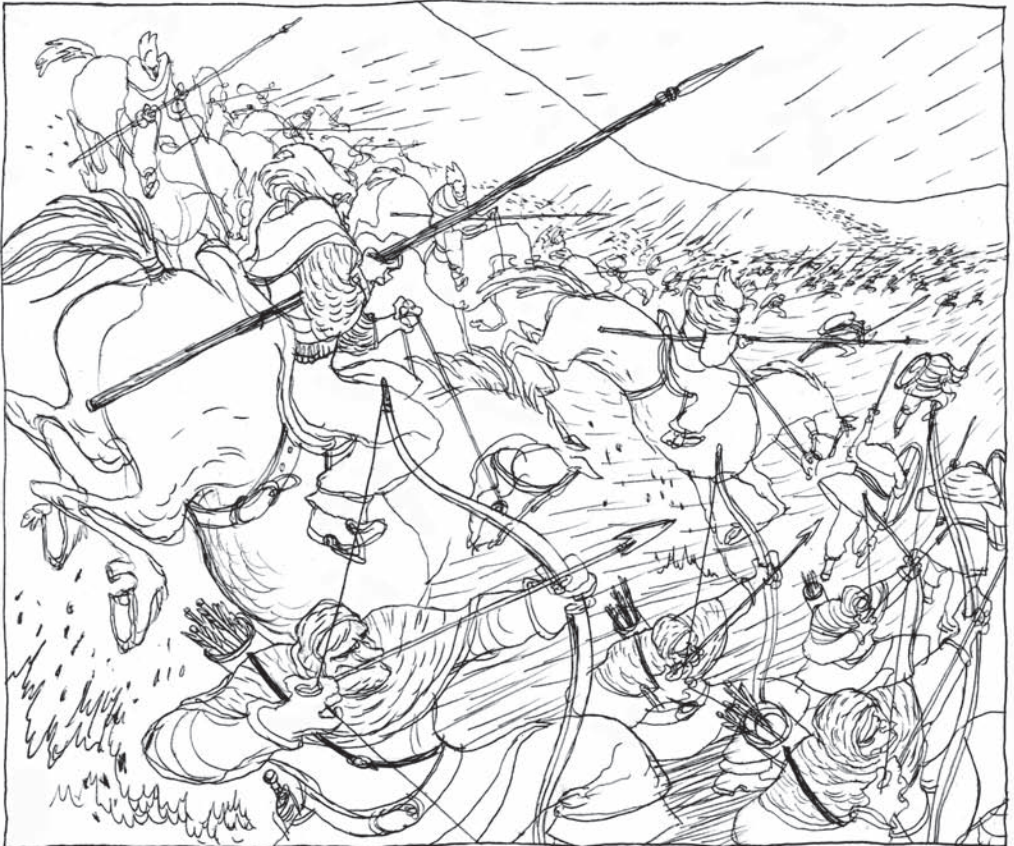
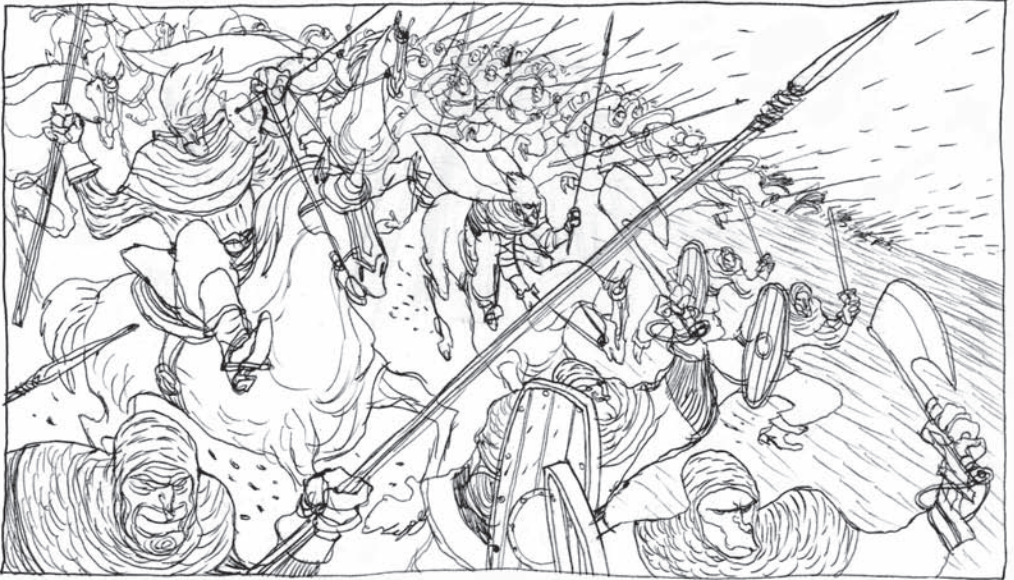


With one who cheats.

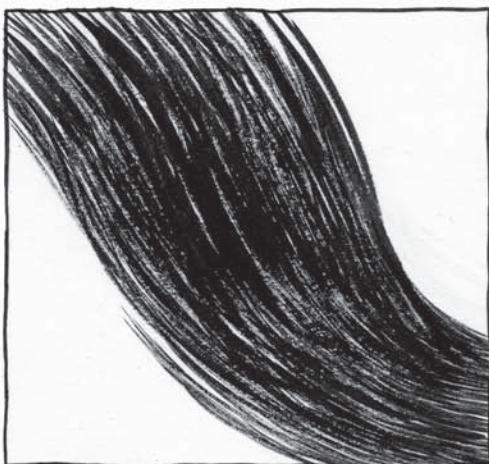
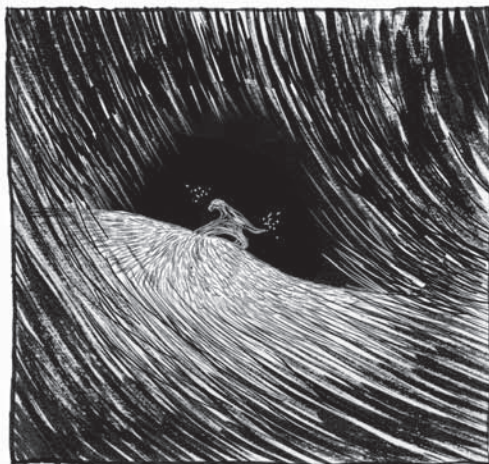
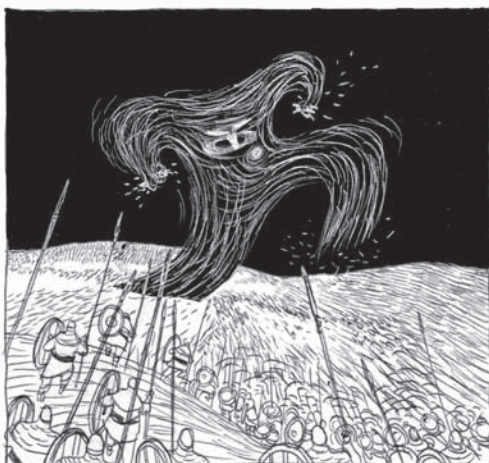
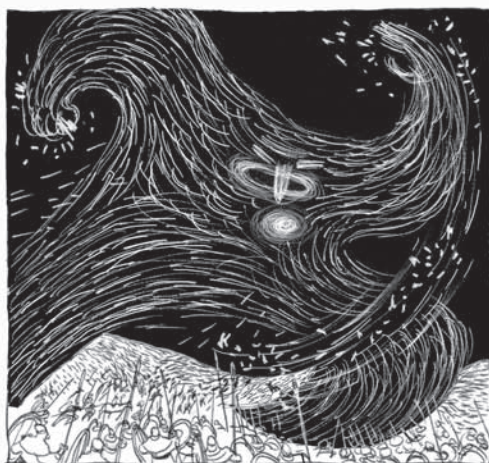


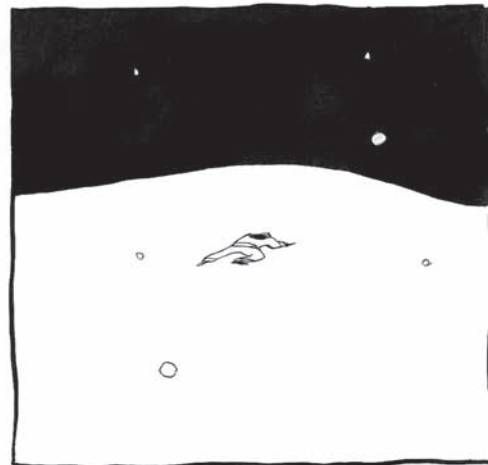


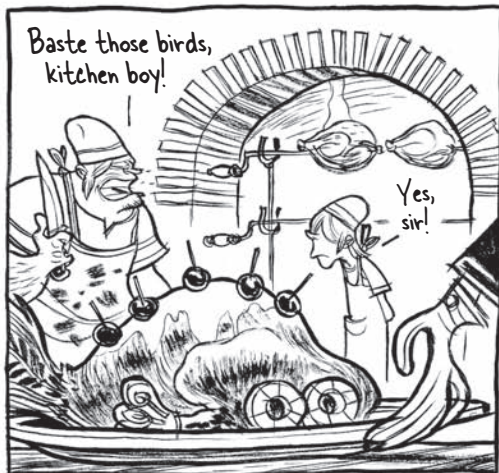






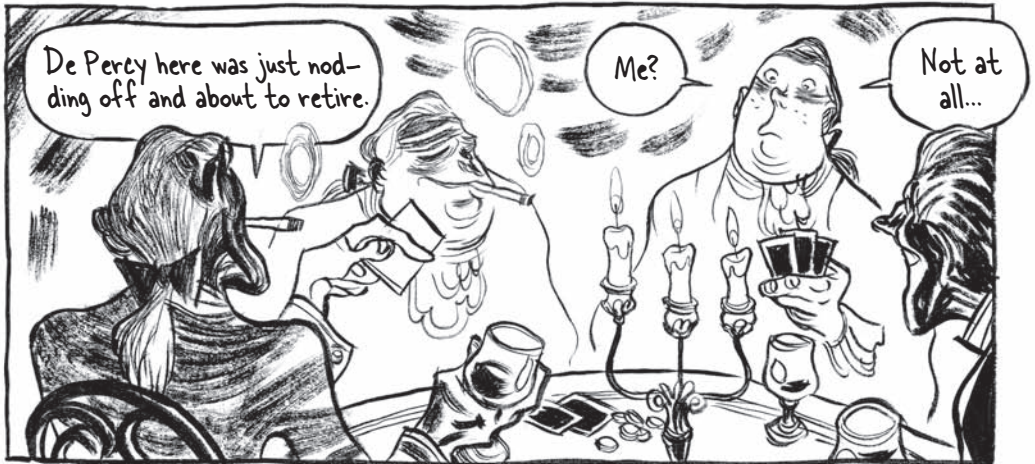


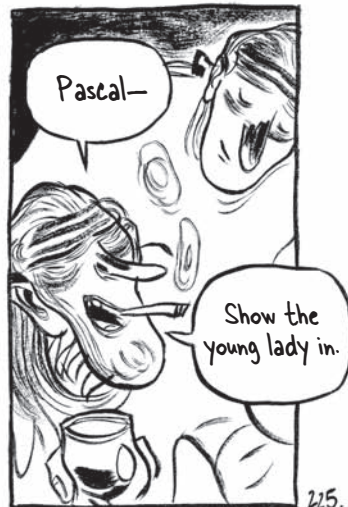


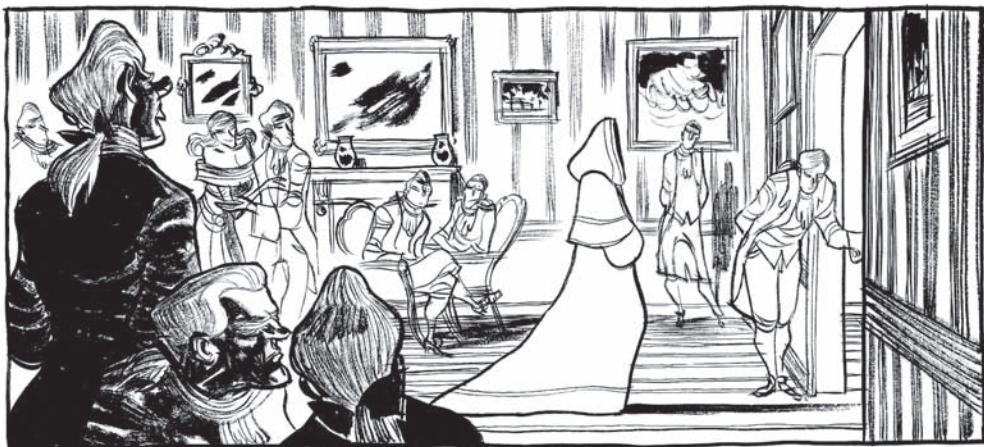














My dear Baron, I have a confession to make.

These little monetary bets bore me terribly.

What the devil would you play for?

Then, my dear...



Hmm...

Let's see...

A kiss, perhaps?



Oh!!

What cheek!

A single round of "king's rummy" against you.

Ha ha!

Splendid!



Baron, here's a little lamb just waiting to be fleeced!

Ha ha!

And if I lose?



You will give me an object of my choice.



So be it.

But you shall have to come over and get it yourself.

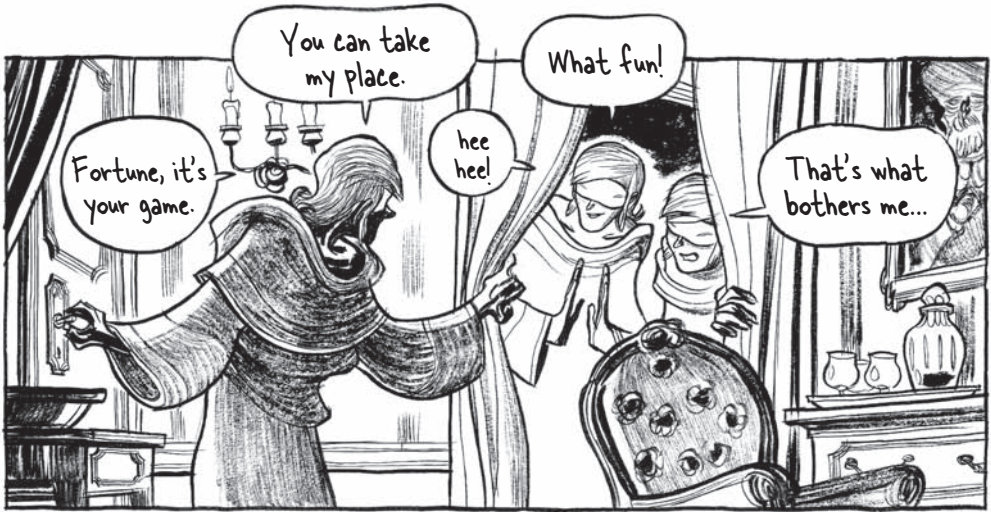


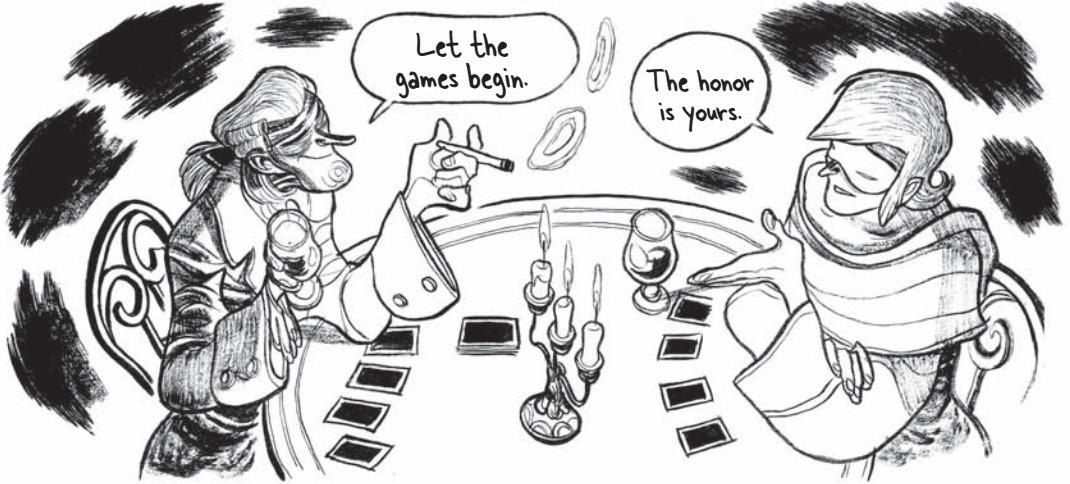
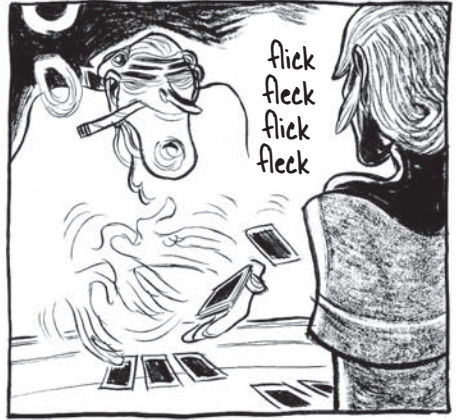
My friends—

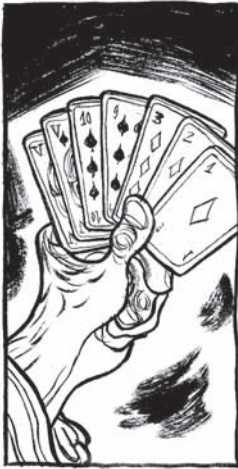
I must ask you to leave us.

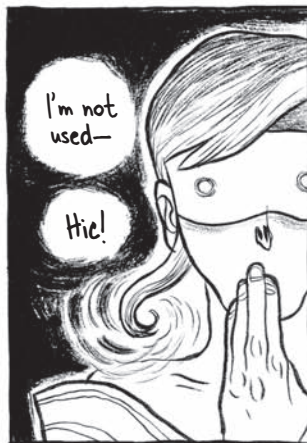
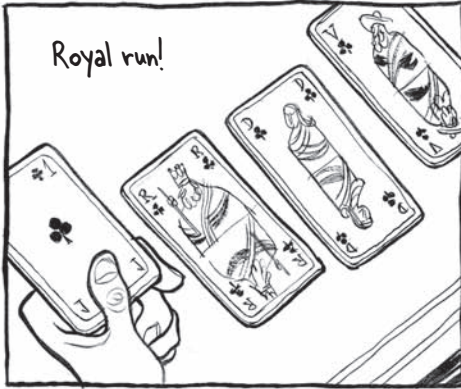
Oh, Baron!



















If you want it—

You have to come and get it!



hahahaha



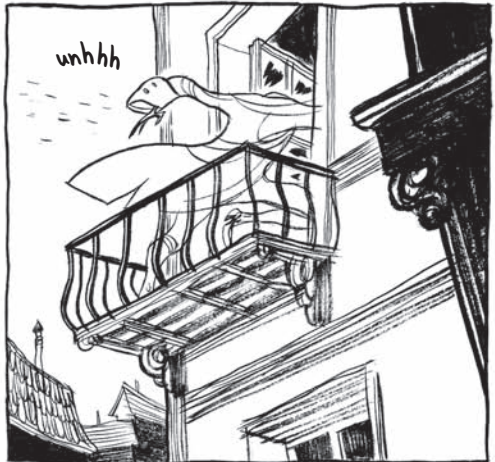
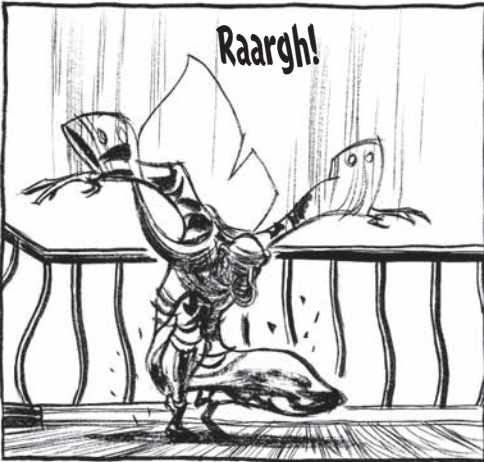
KRAASH

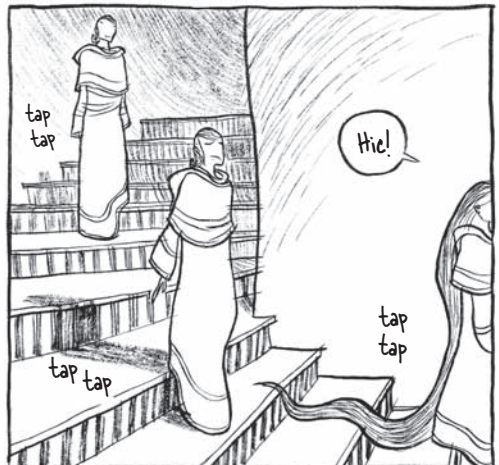
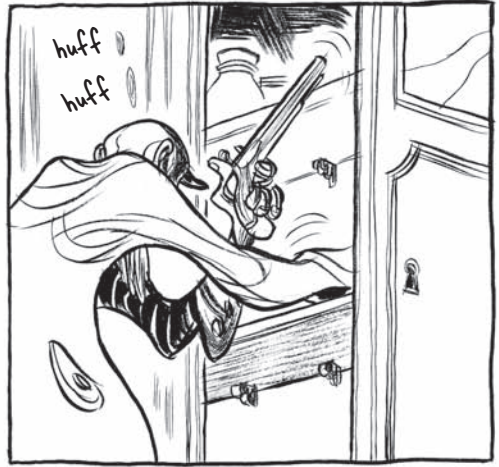


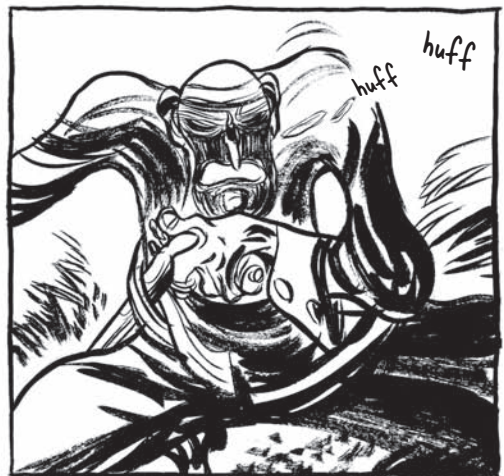
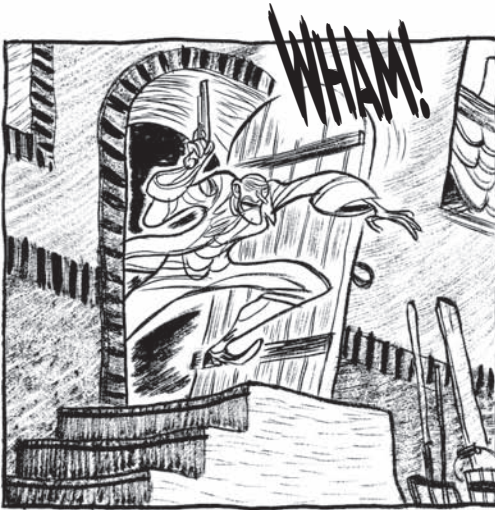
Hmph!

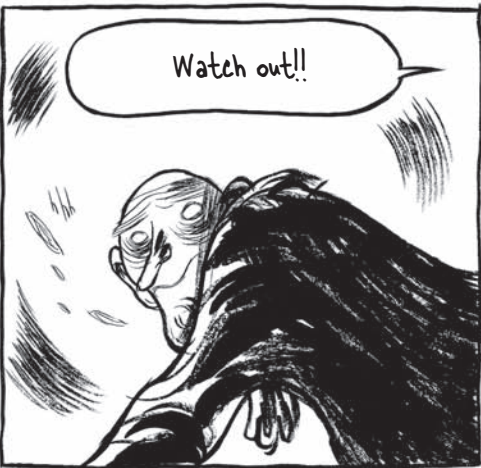
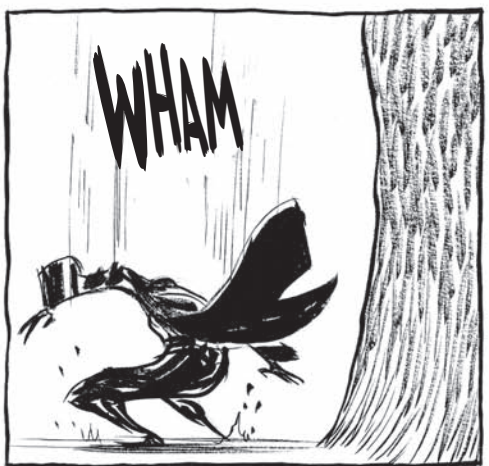
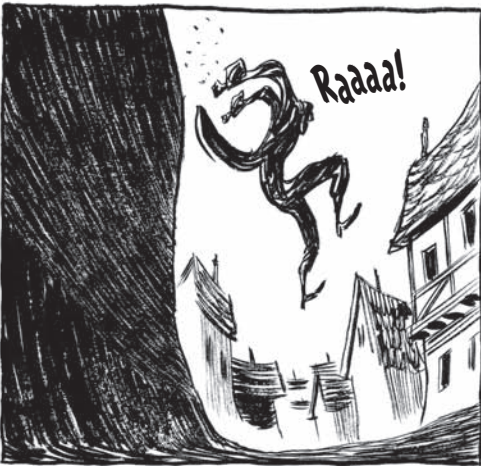
What a waste of time!

Hie!

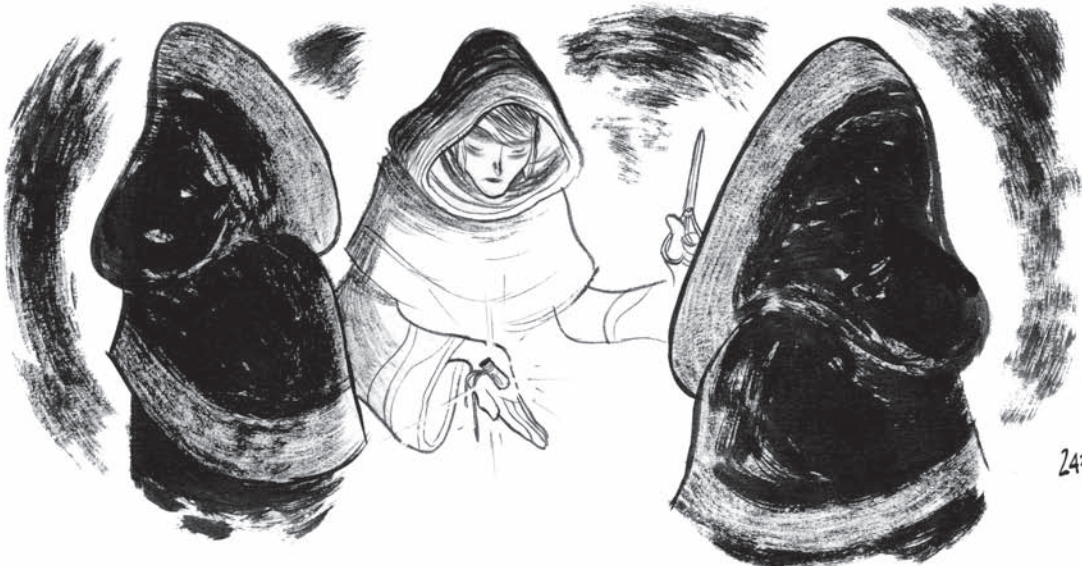
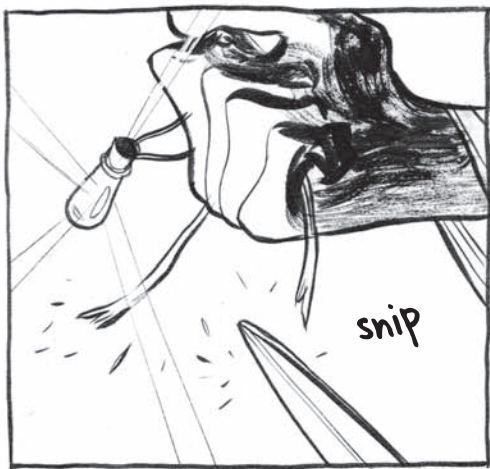
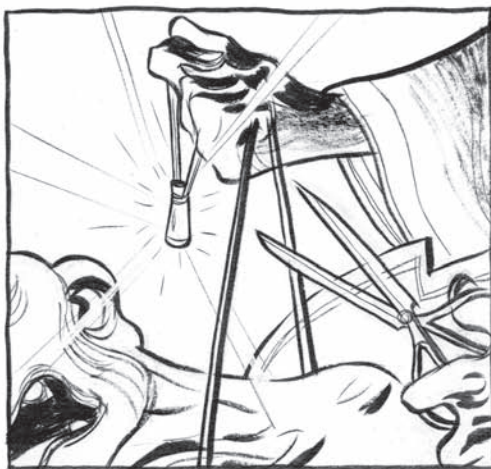










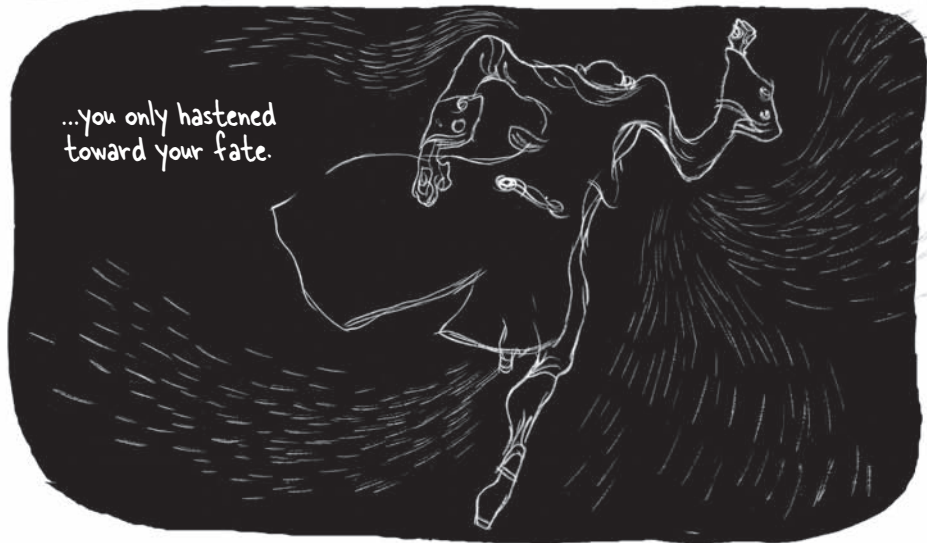




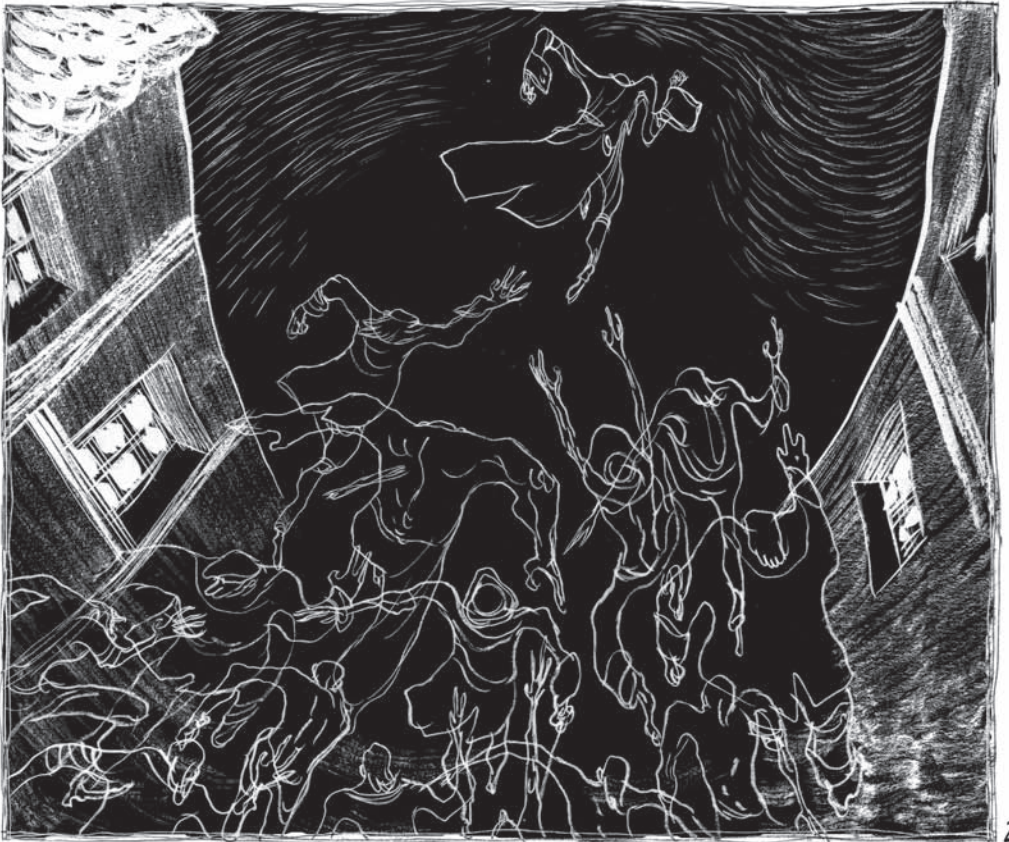
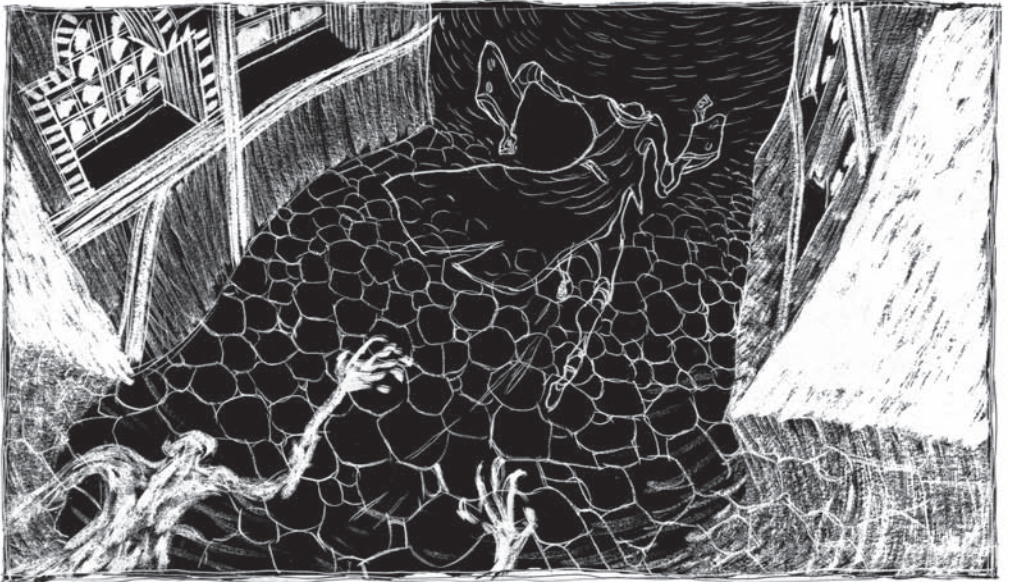
You had thought to escape yourself.



In reality...



...you only hastened toward your fate.





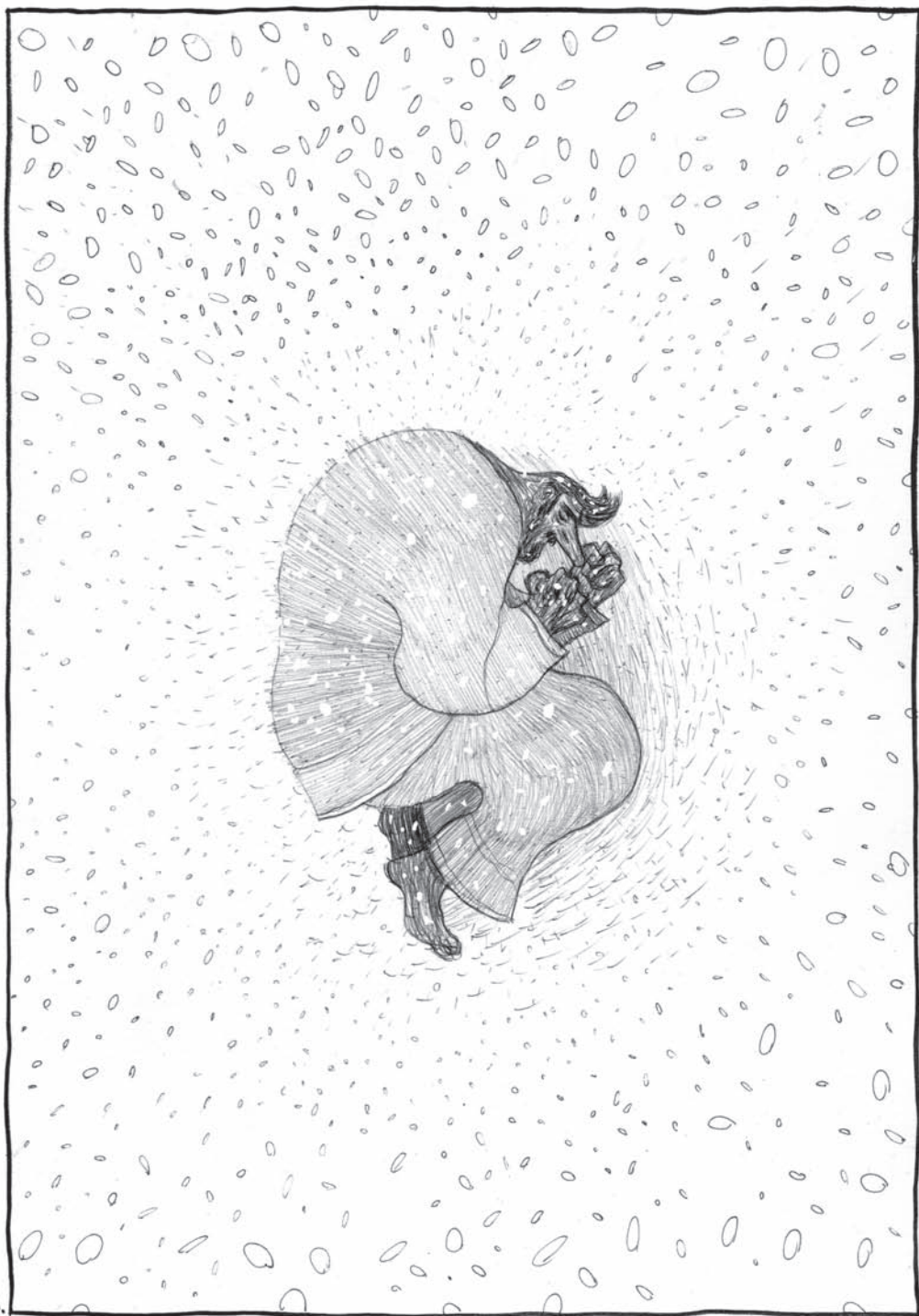
Henceforth...

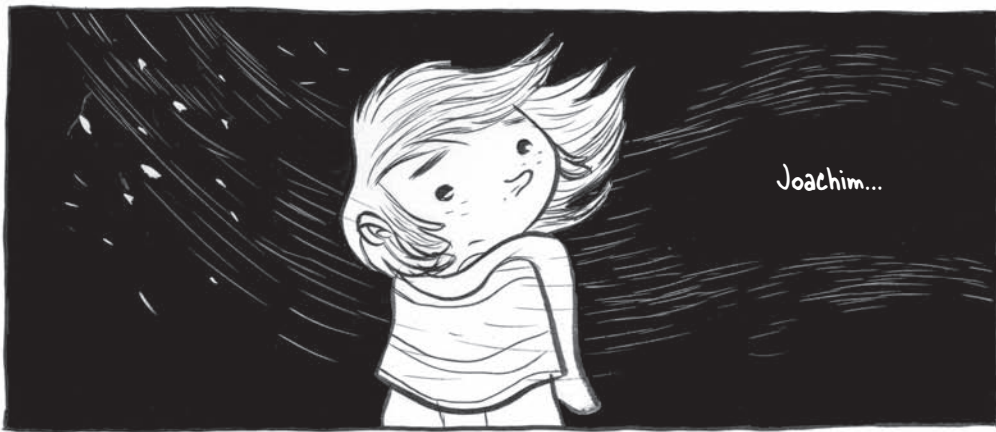
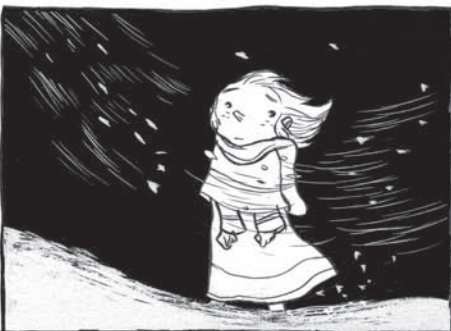
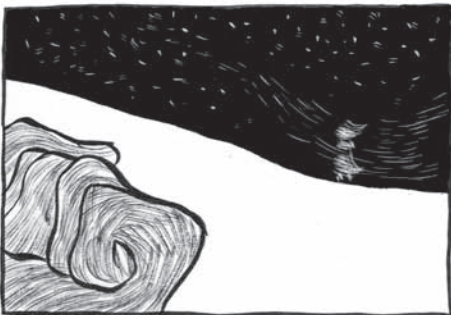


...you shall have all
eternity...



...to pay the price for
this stolen life.



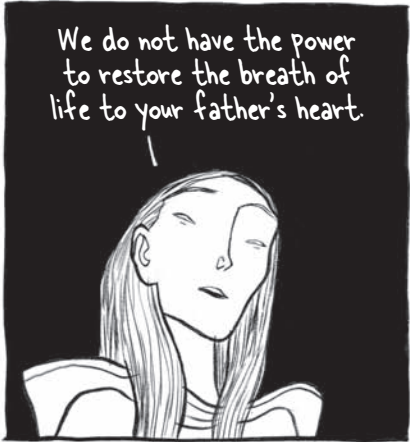




What a funny idea.

I thought you'd never come back!

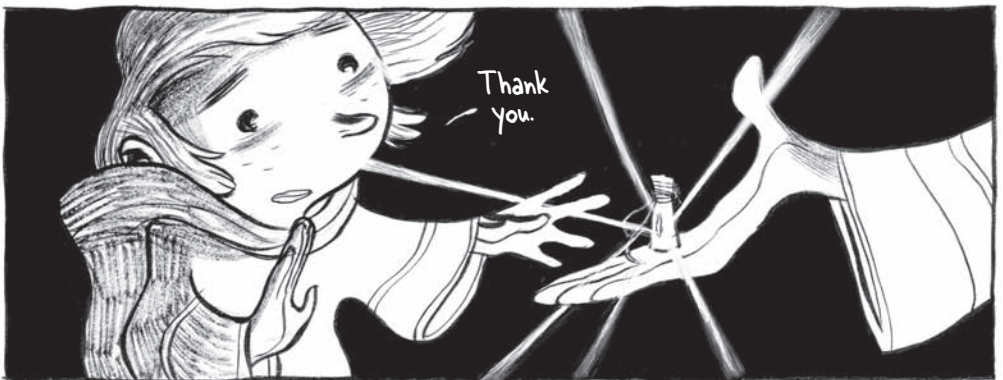
There remains one last task before us.



We do not have the power to restore the breath of life to your father's heart.



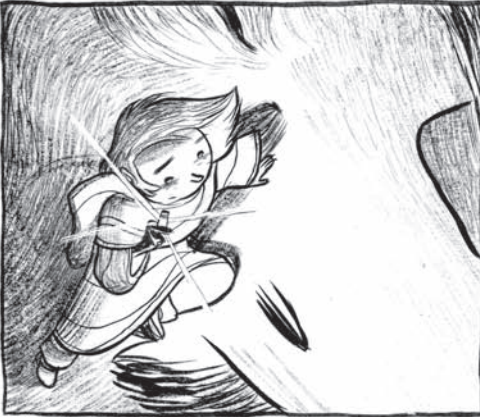
Only you can do so, before leaving.



Thank you.

Do not thank us.

We decide nothing.



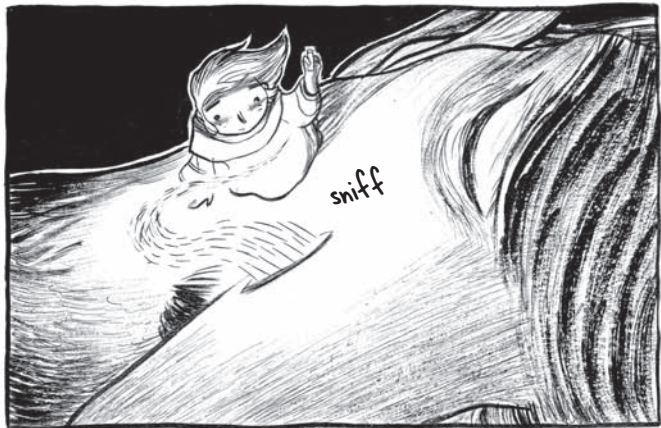
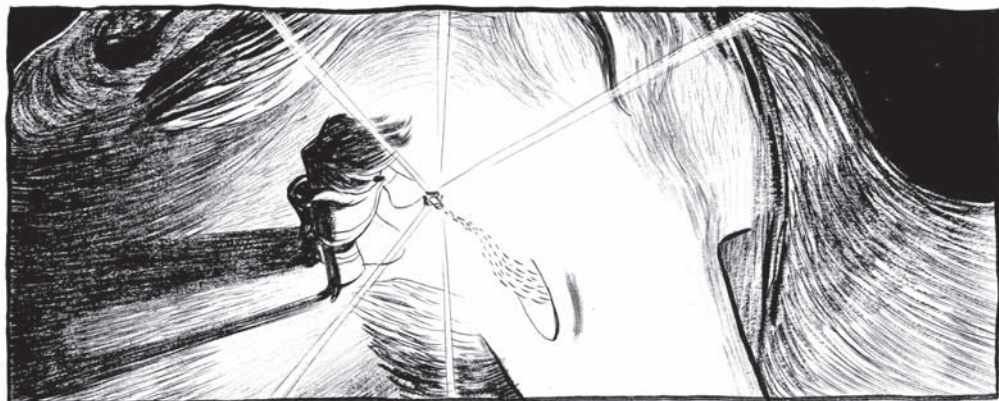
It is so.

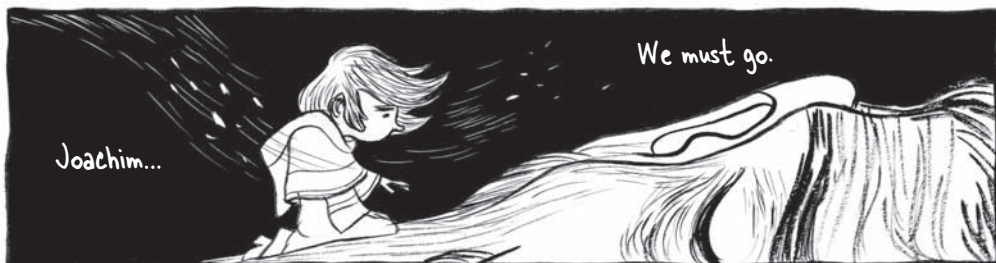
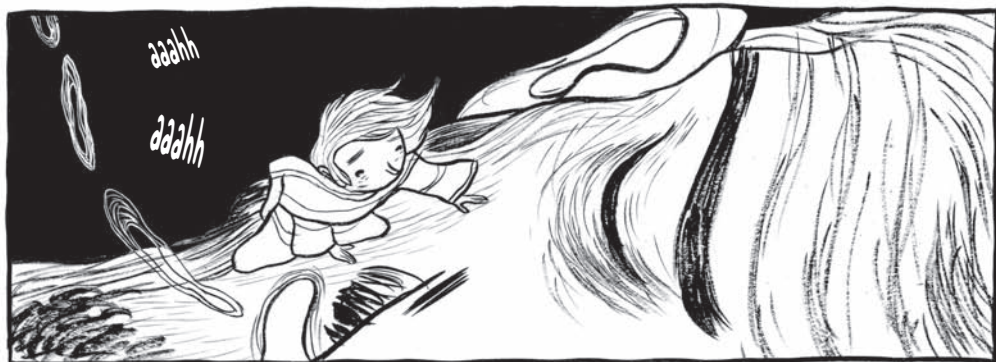


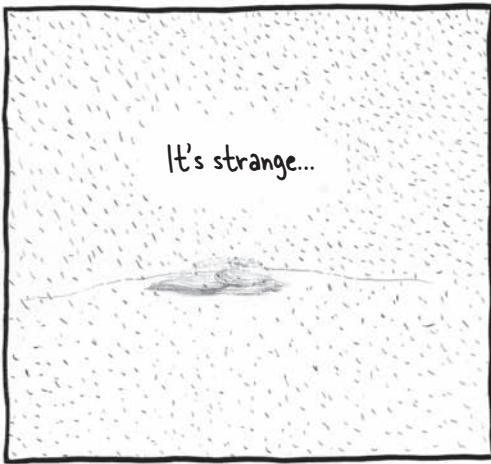
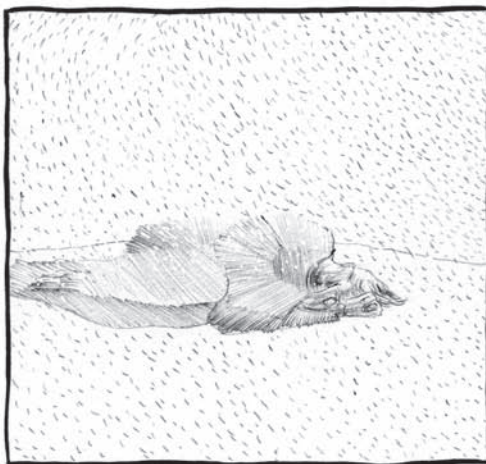
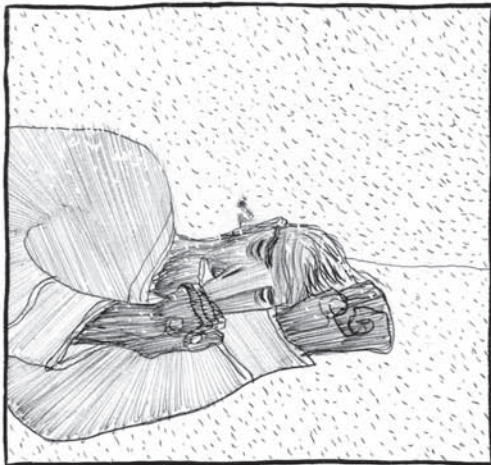
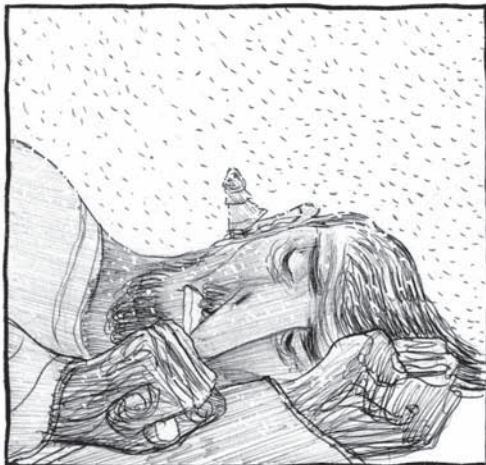
When his day
comes...



...we shall
return for
your father.





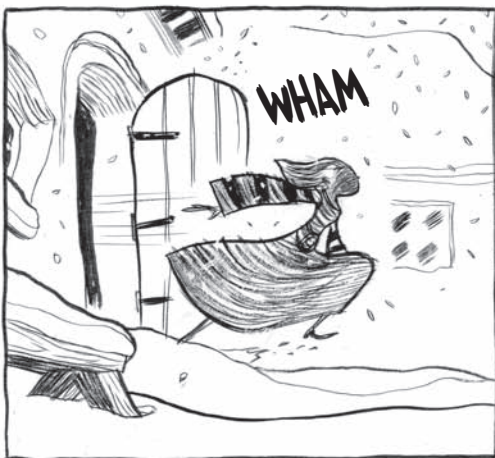


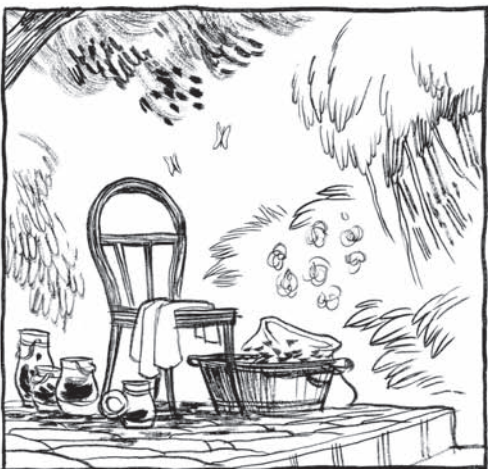
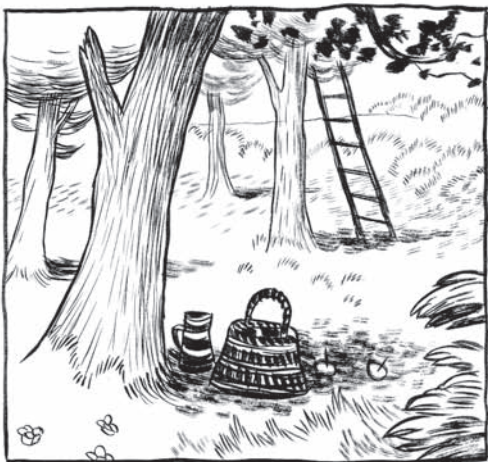
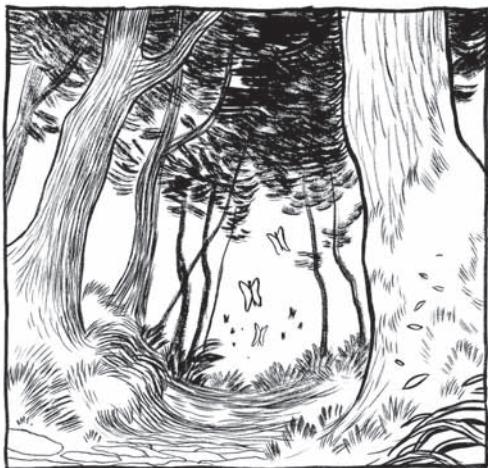
Apart from this
one desire...

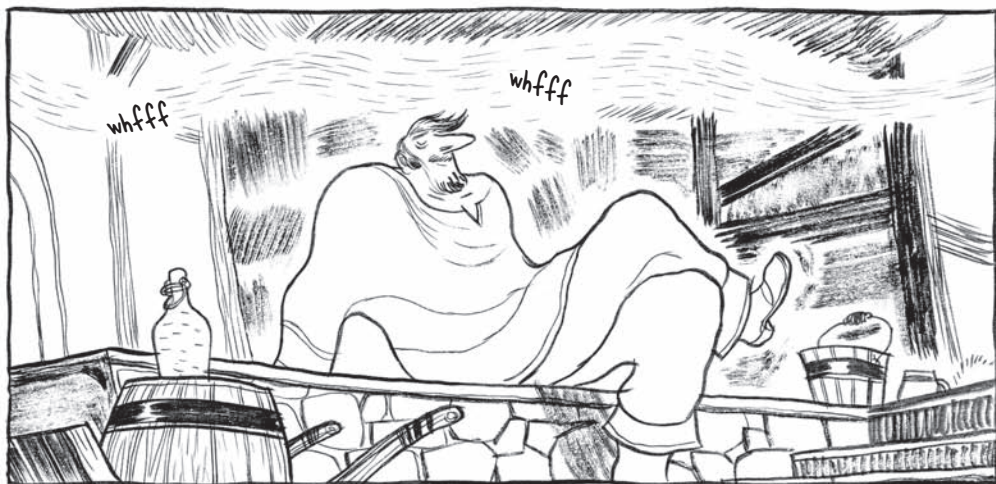
A vital spark that drove
me onward through long
months of marching.

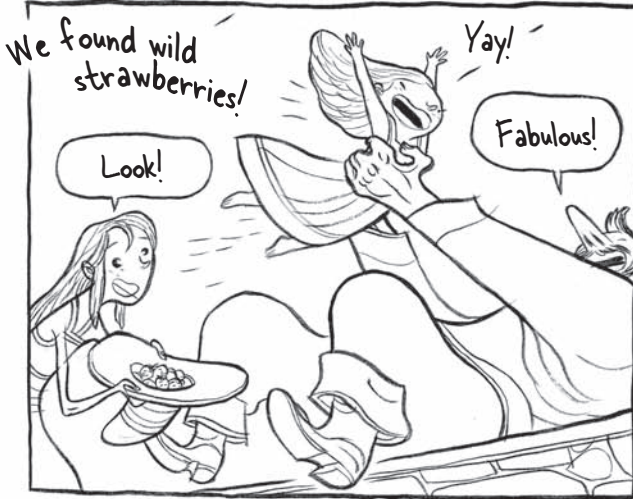
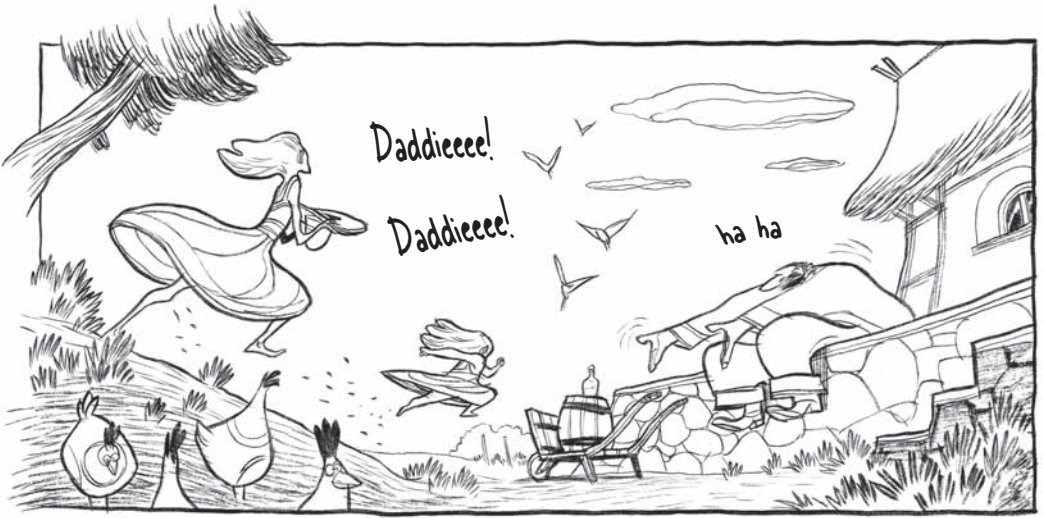
Seeing Lise
once more.

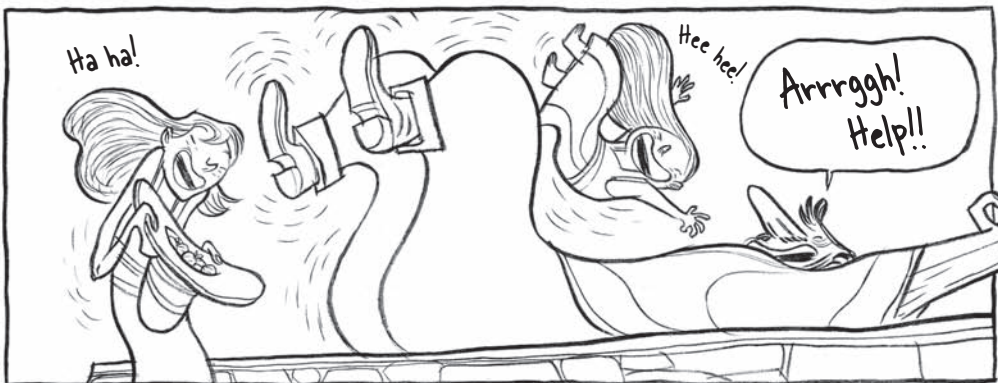
WHAM











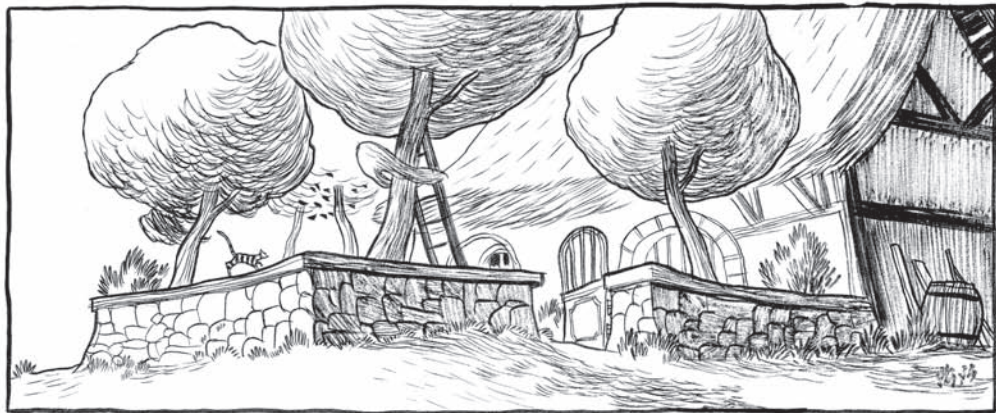




Oh yes, that'd be great.

We have to make the most of the summer.



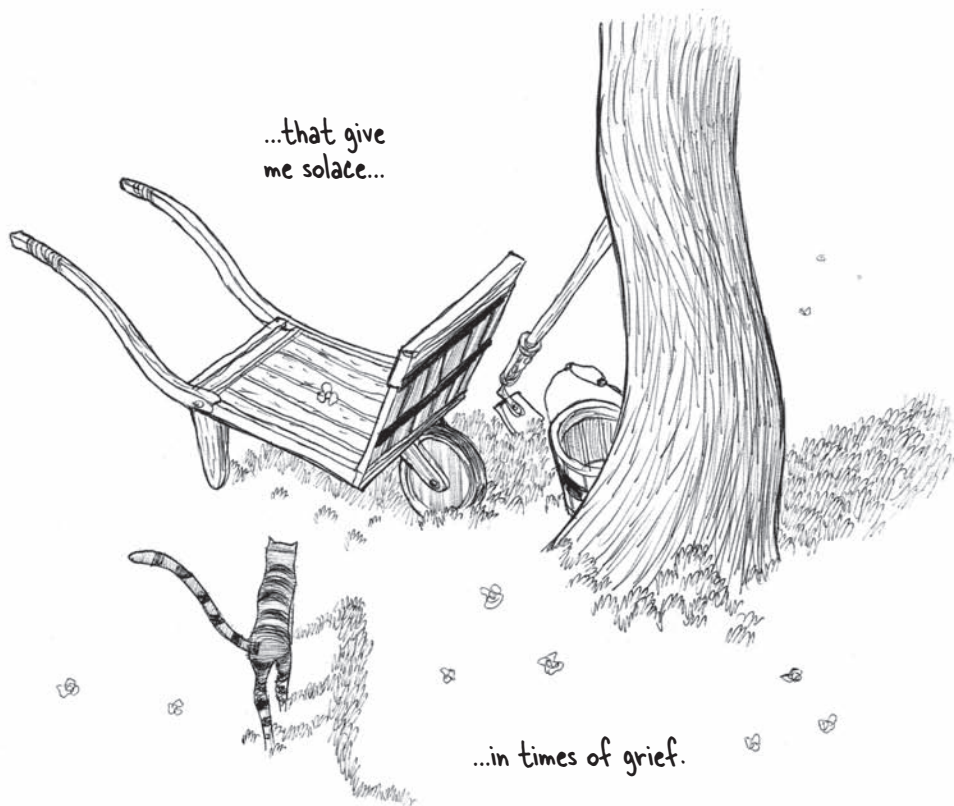




A dear friend returned to
me from the faraway lands
of the East and brought
back a strange poem.

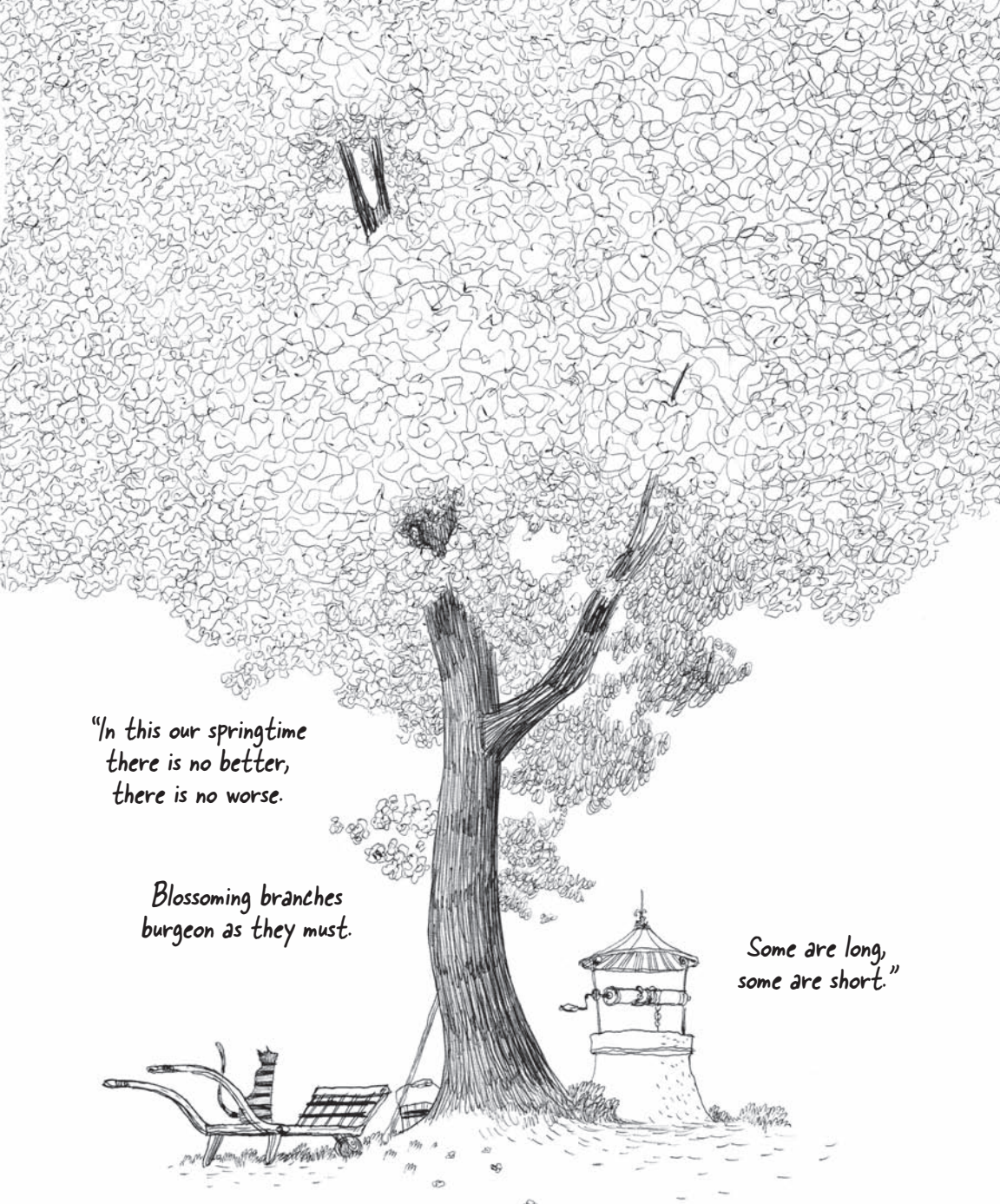


Three lines...



...that give
me solace...

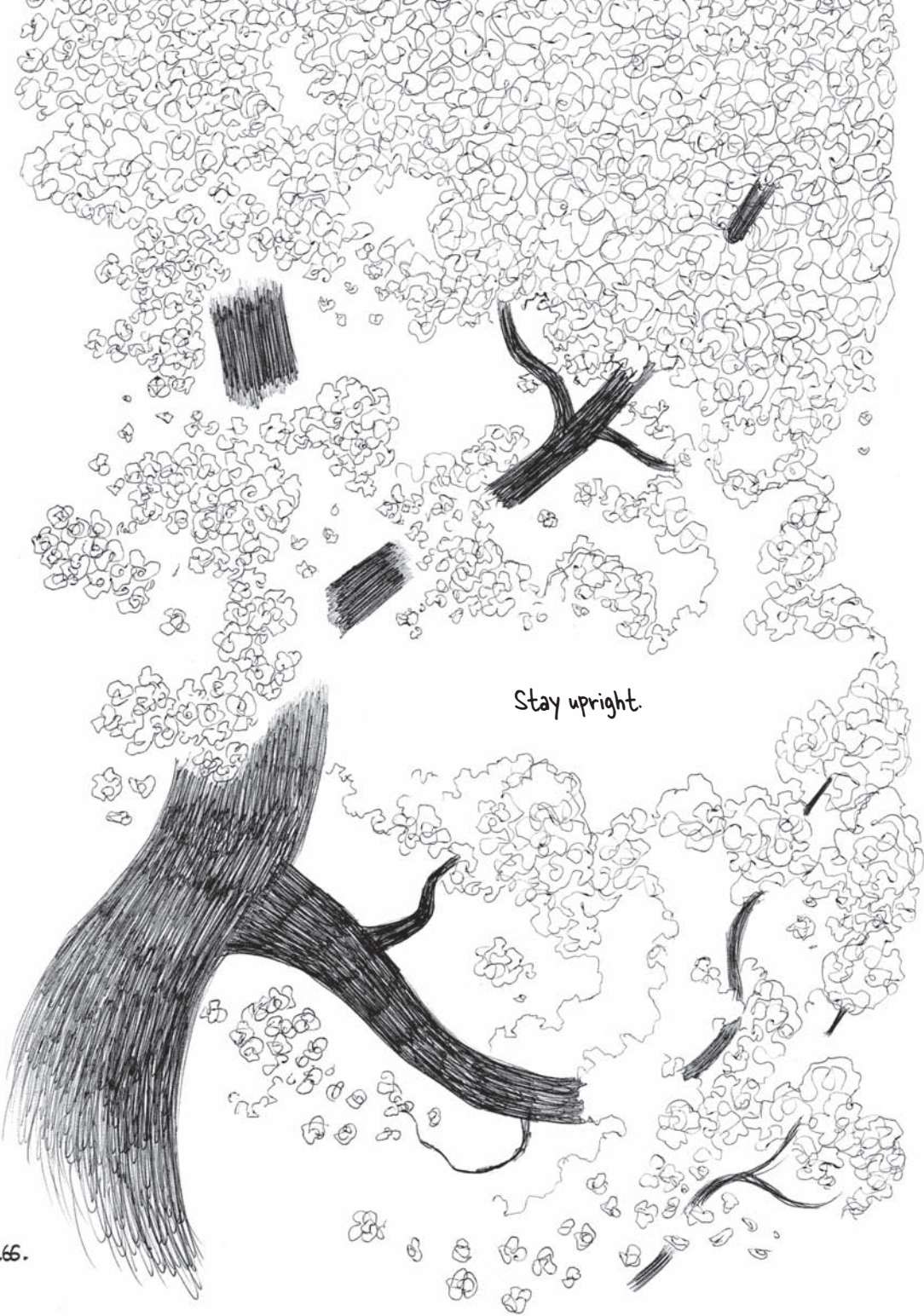
...in times of grief.



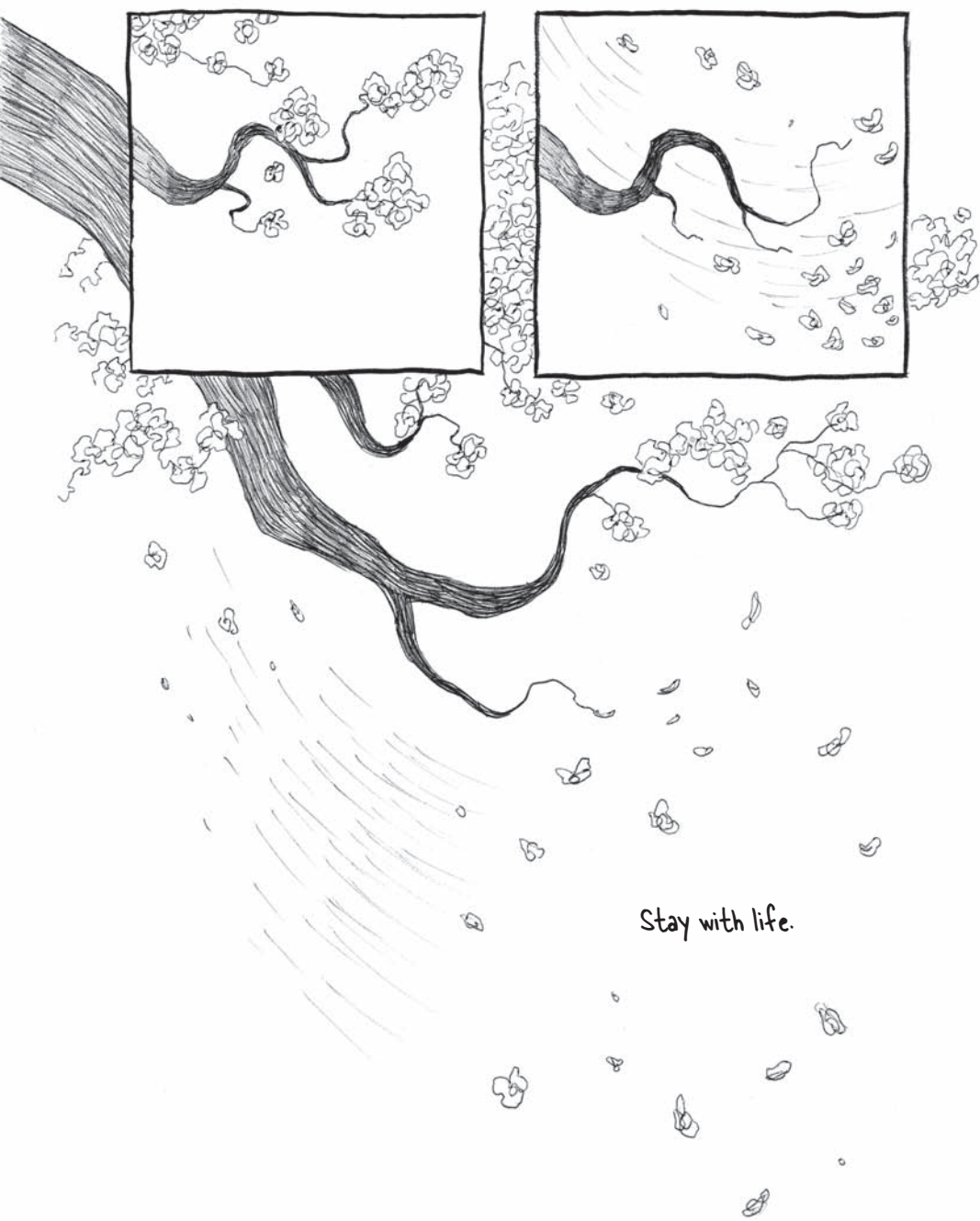
*"In this our springtime
there is no better,
there is no worse.*

*Blossoming branches
burgeon as they must.*

*Some are long,
some are short."*



Stay upright.



Stay with life.





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