

Courtney Crumrin

ISSUE ONE

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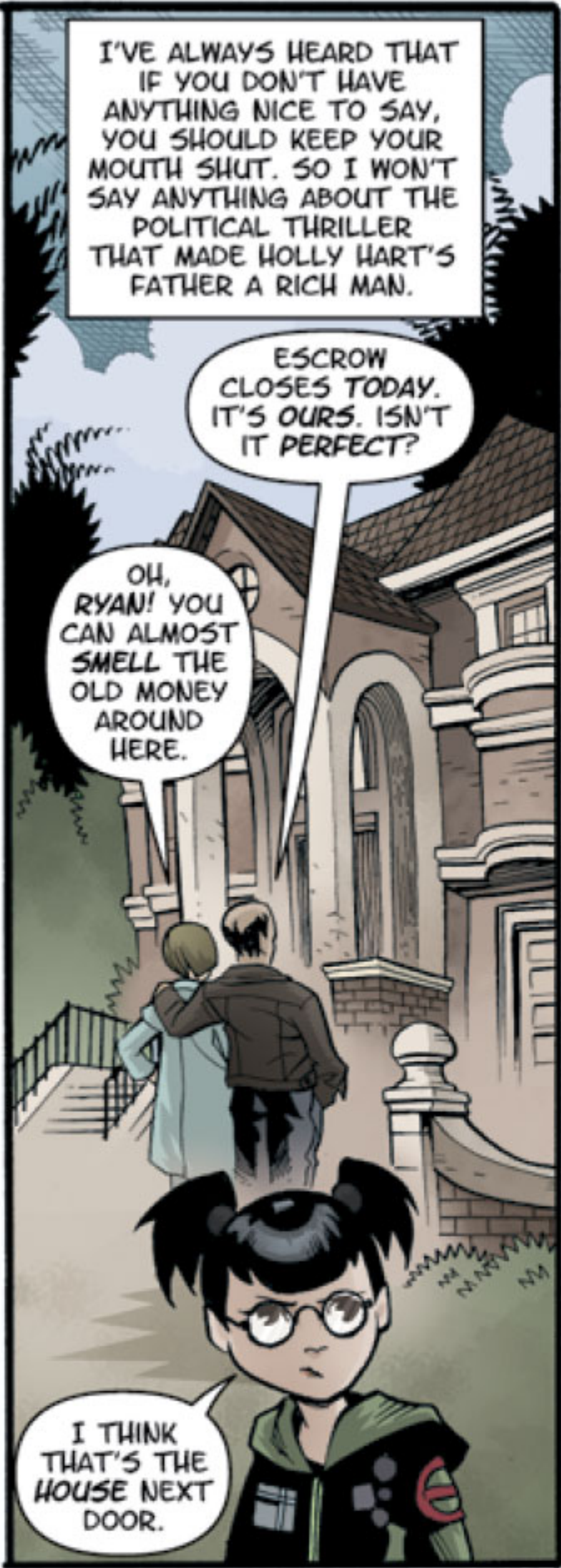
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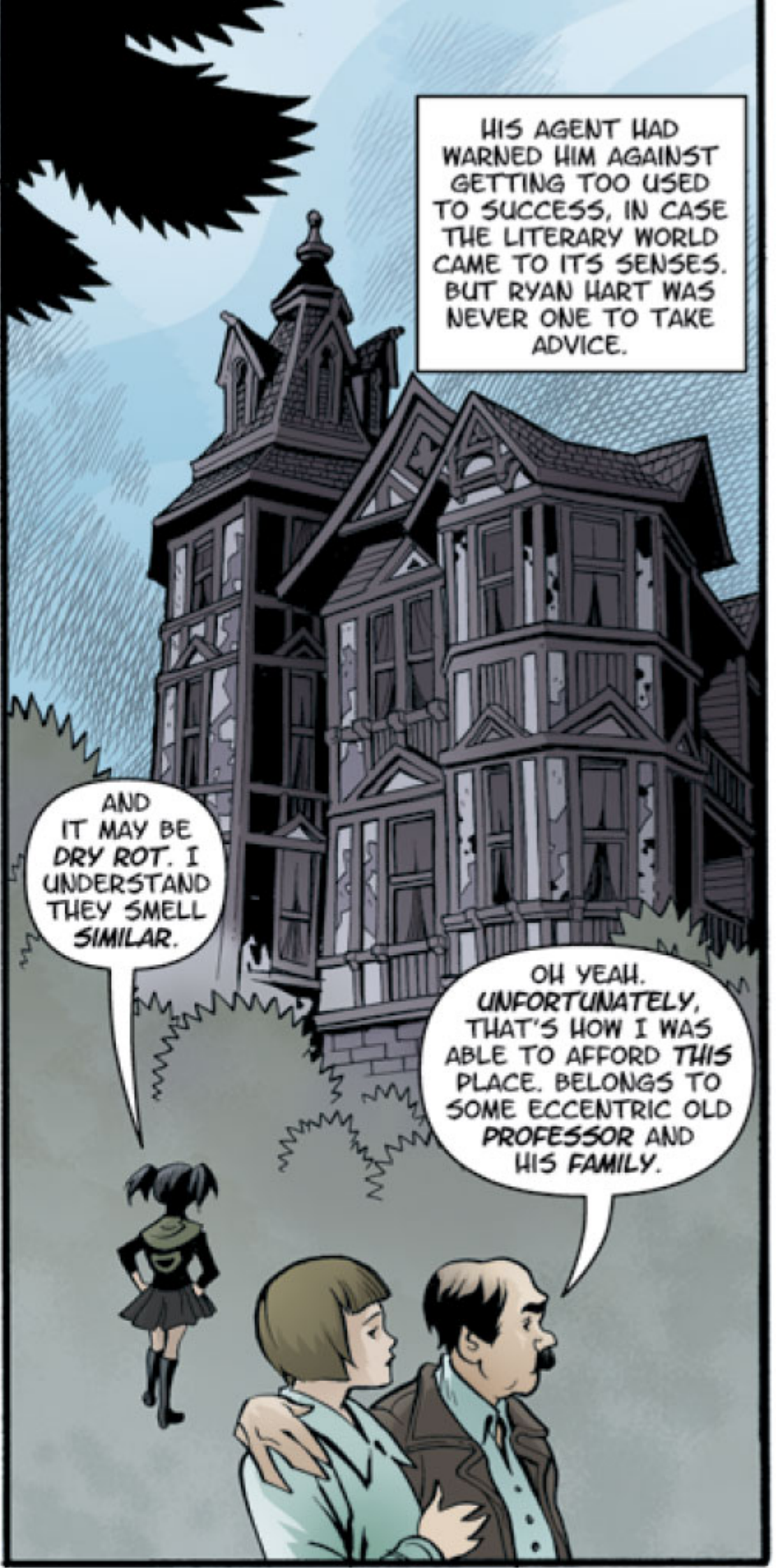


I'VE ALWAYS HEARD THAT IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANYTHING NICE TO SAY, YOU SHOULD KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT. SO I WON'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THE POLITICAL THRILLER THAT MADE HOLLY HART'S FATHER A RICH MAN.

ESCROW CLOSES TODAY. IT'S OURS. ISN'T IT PERFECT?

OH, RYAN! YOU CAN ALMOST SMELL THE OLD MONEY AROUND HERE.

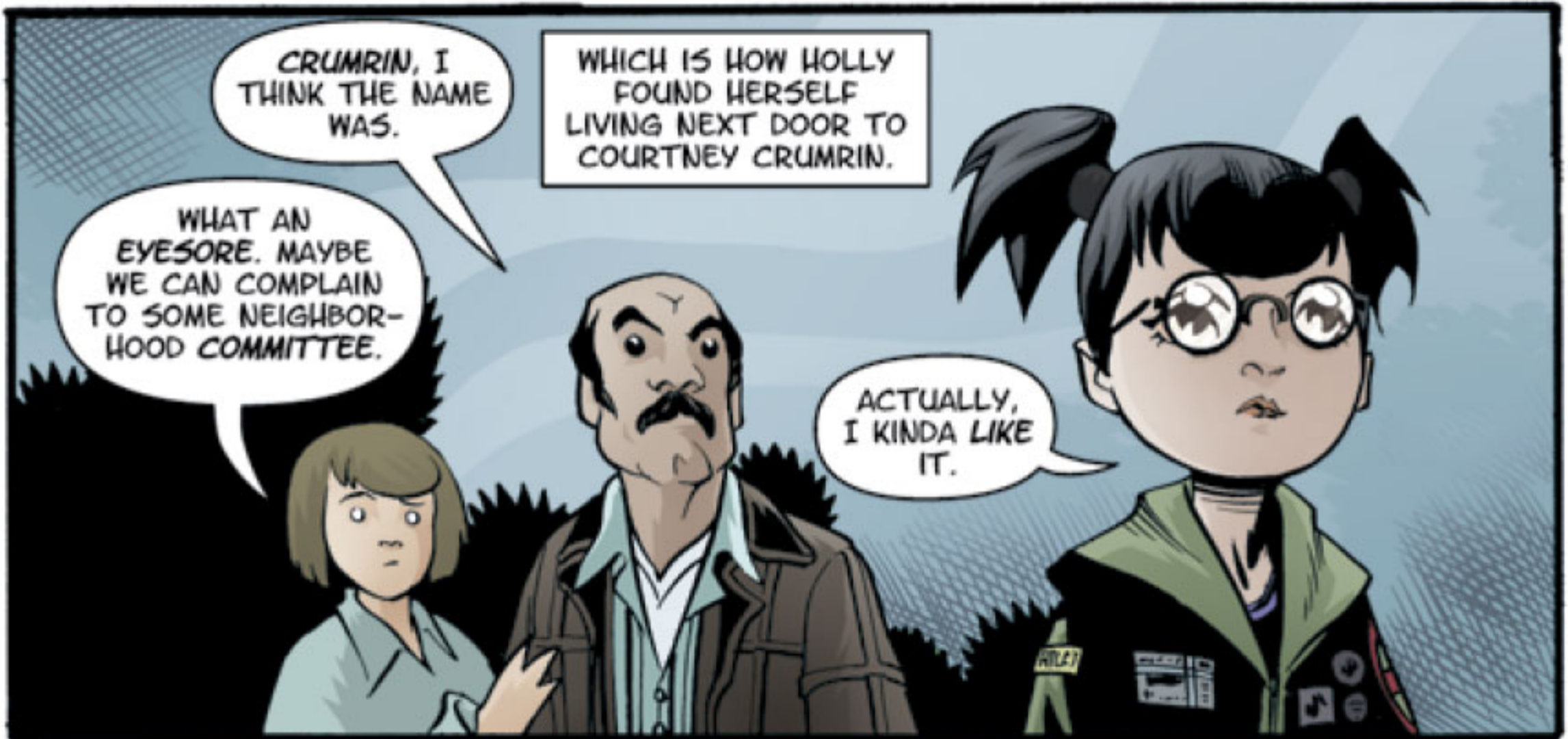
I THINK THAT'S THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR.



HIS AGENT HAD WARNED HIM AGAINST GETTING TOO USED TO SUCCESS, IN CASE THE LITERARY WORLD CAME TO ITS SENSES. BUT RYAN HART WAS NEVER ONE TO TAKE ADVICE.

AND IT MAY BE DRY ROT. I UNDERSTAND THEY SMELL SIMILAR.

OH YEAH. UNFORTUNATELY, THAT'S HOW I WAS ABLE TO AFFORD THIS PLACE. BELONGS TO SOME ECCENTRIC OLD PROFESSOR AND HIS FAMILY.



CRUMRIN, I THINK THE NAME WAS.

WHICH IS HOW HOLLY FOUND HERSELF LIVING NEXT DOOR TO COURTNEY CRUMRIN.

WHAT AN EYESORE. MAYBE WE CAN COMPLAIN TO SOME NEIGHBORHOOD COMMITTEE.

ACTUALLY, I KINDA LIKE IT.

ORDINARILY, THE "TWEEN" POPULATION OF HILLSBOROUGH WERE READY ENOUGH TO ACCEPT A NEW ADDITION TO THEIR CADRE, ESPECIALLY IF HER FATHER'S LATEST BOOK WAS BEING DEVELOPED FOR A FEATURE FILM WITH LOTS OF EXPENSIVE EXPLOSIONS.

LOOK AT THOSE CLOTHES.

LOOKS LIKE SHE MADE THEM HERSELF. WHAT IS SHE, A REFUGEE OR SOMETHING?

FROM GLOOM-LAND, MAYBE. YOU'D THINK SHE'S NEVER HEARD OF, LIKE, COLOR.

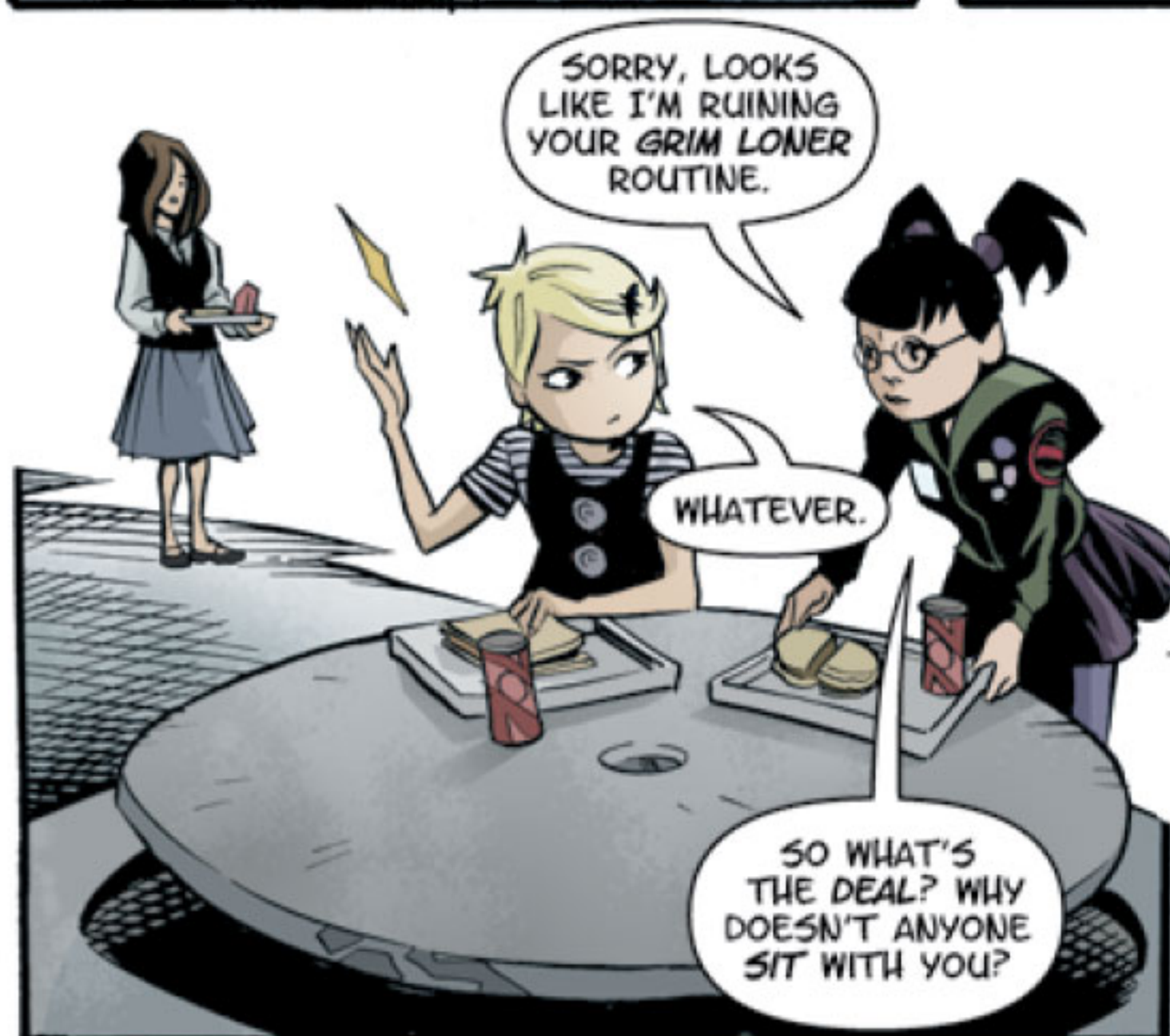
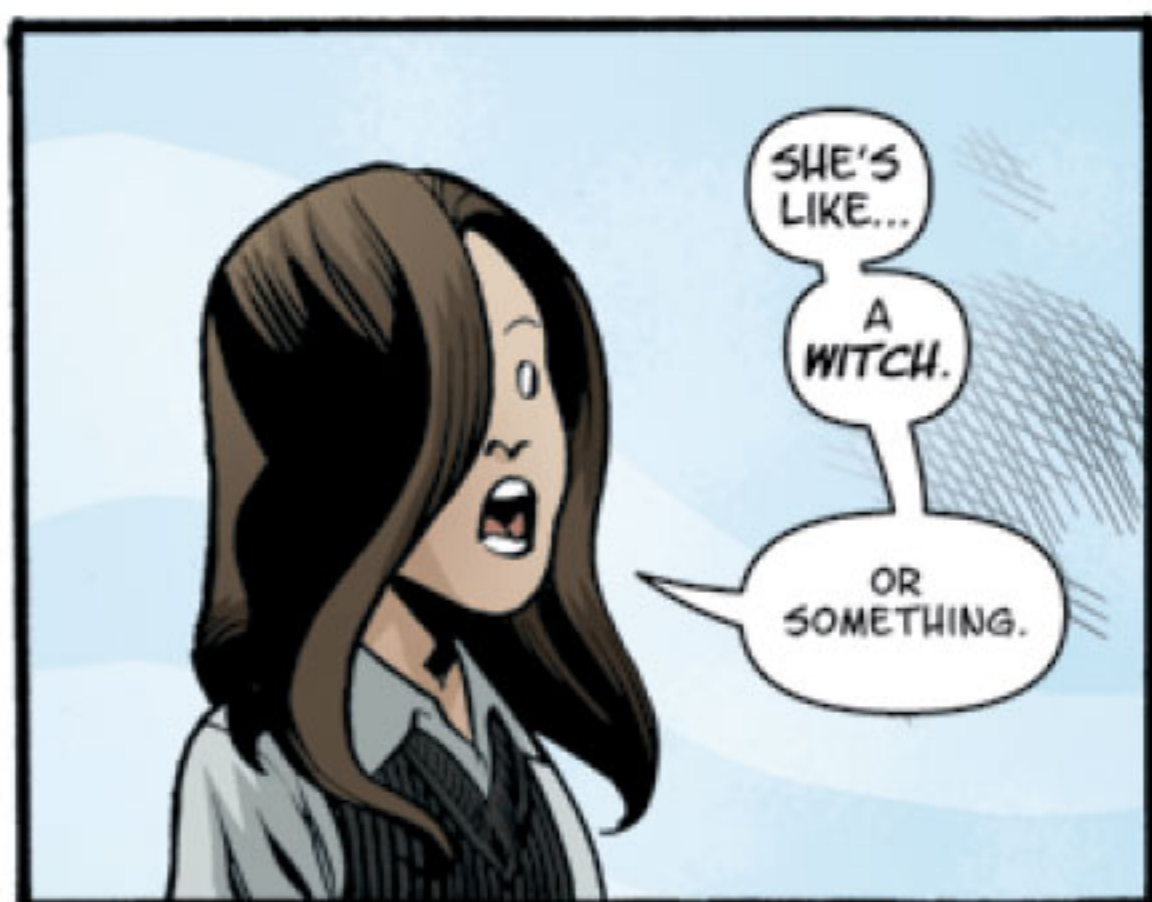
BUT HOLLY KNEW SHE WAS THE SORT OF PERSON WHO INEVITABLY FELL INTO THE CATEGORY MARKED "OUTSIDER".

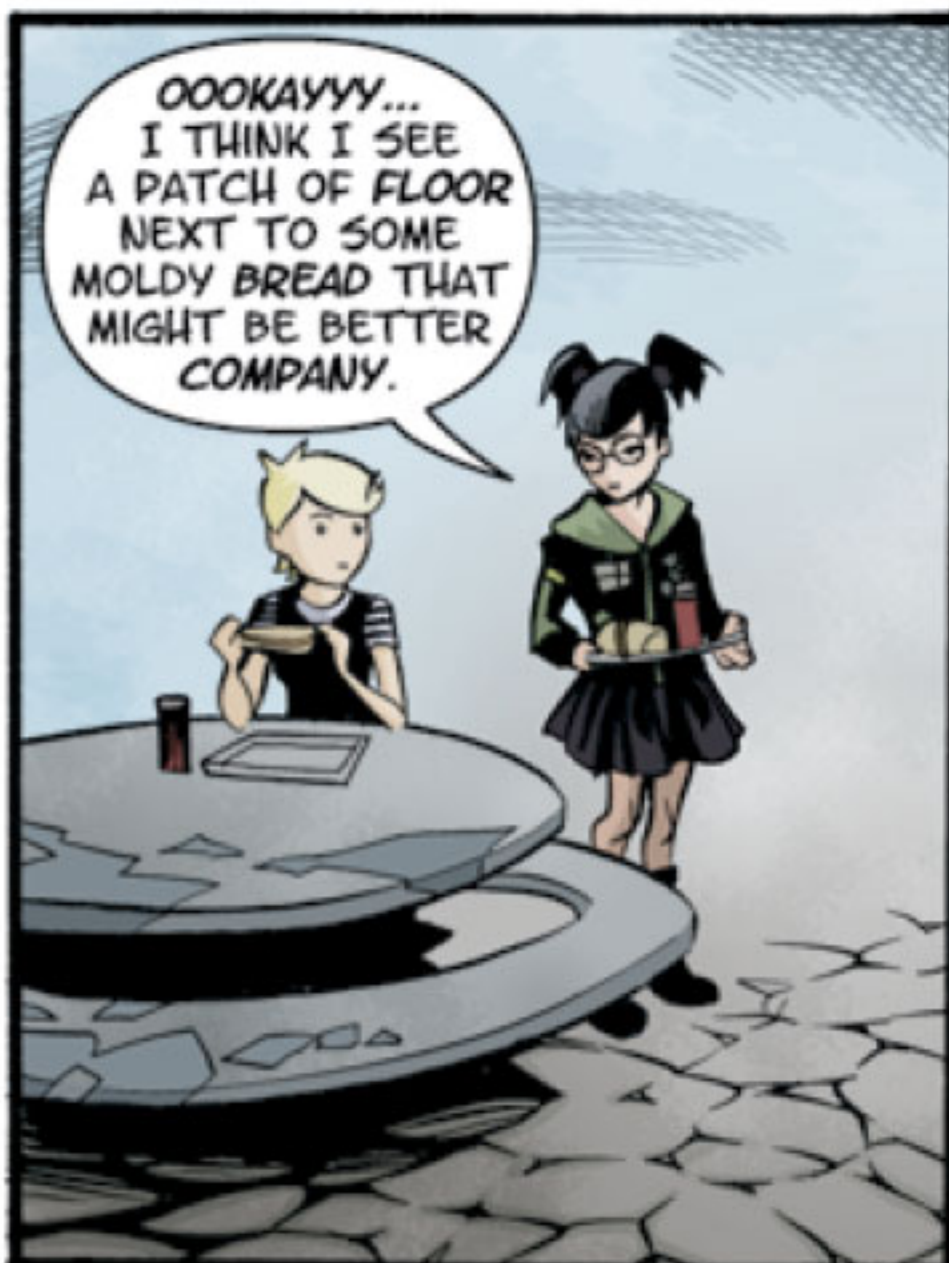
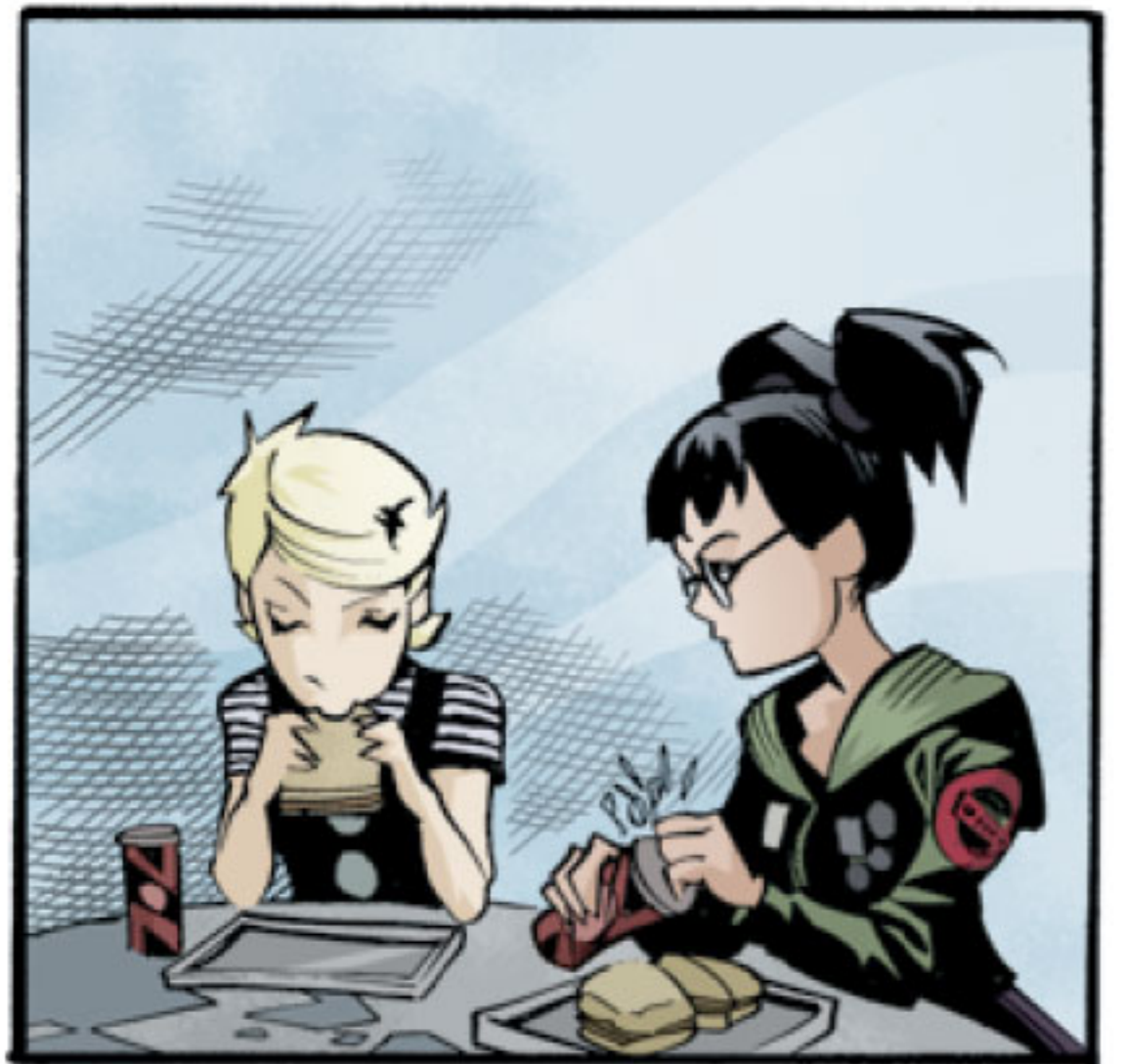
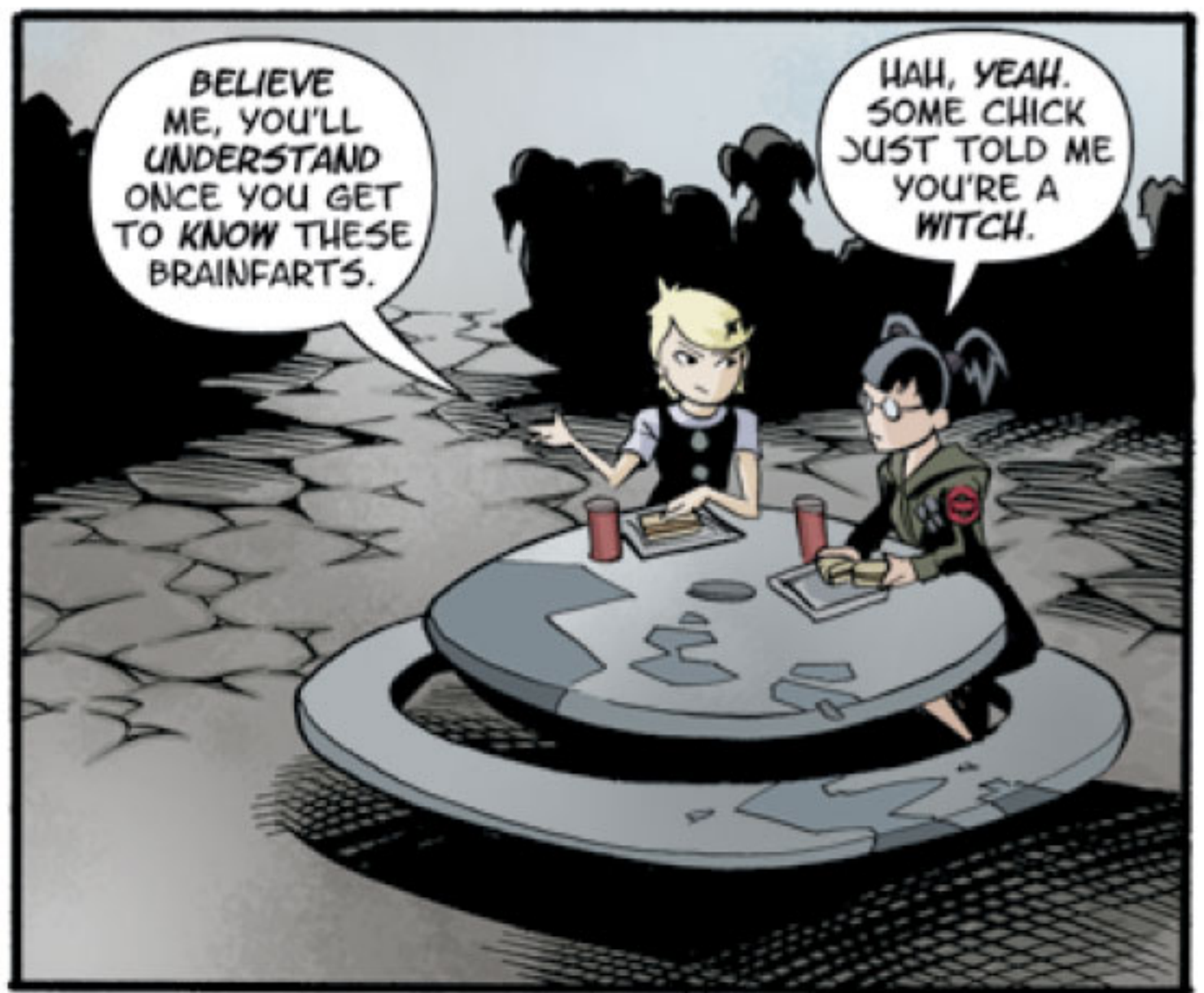
SO SHE HARDLY FOUND HER RECEPTION SURPRISING.

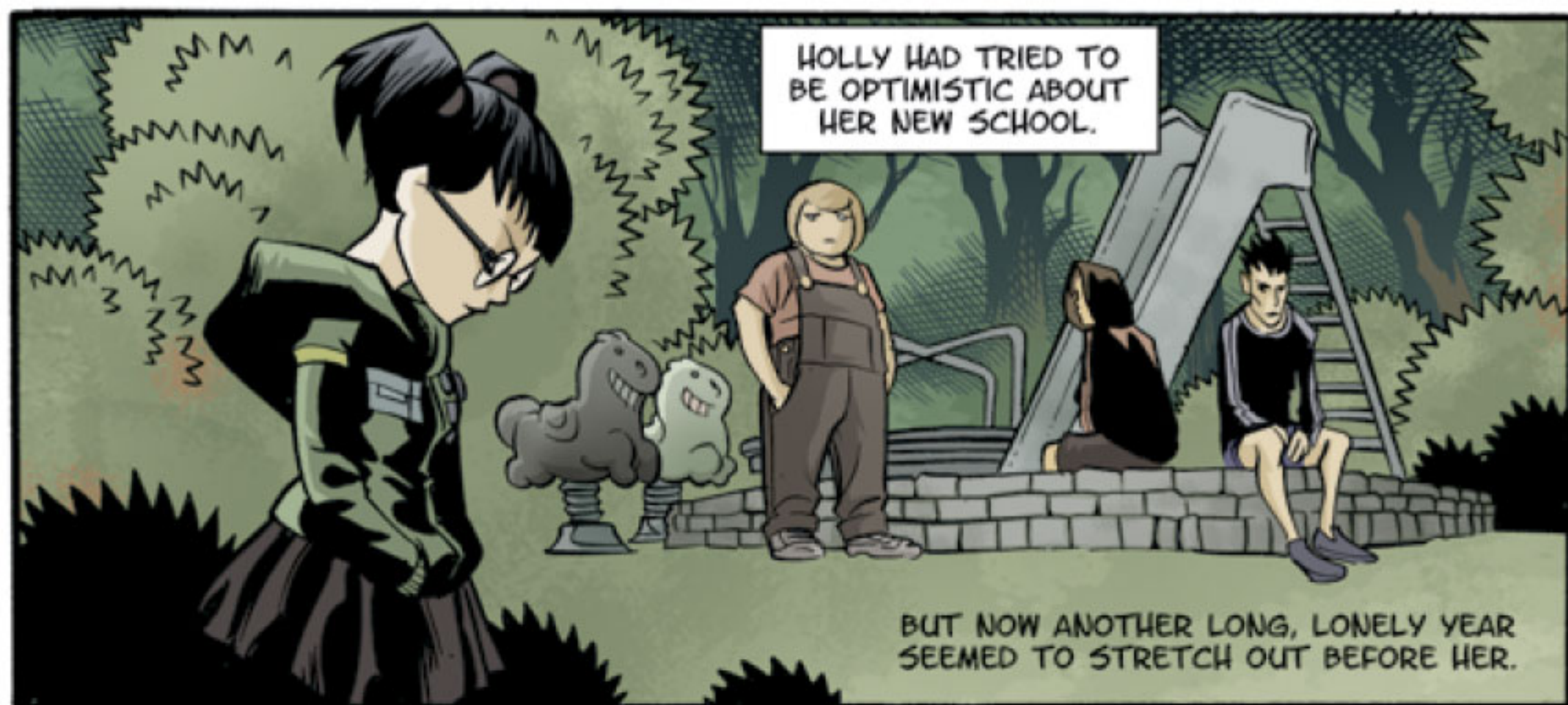
FINE, SHOW ME THE WAY TO THE LOSER TABLE. I KNOW MY PLACE.

BINGO.

I WOULDN'T SIT THERE.

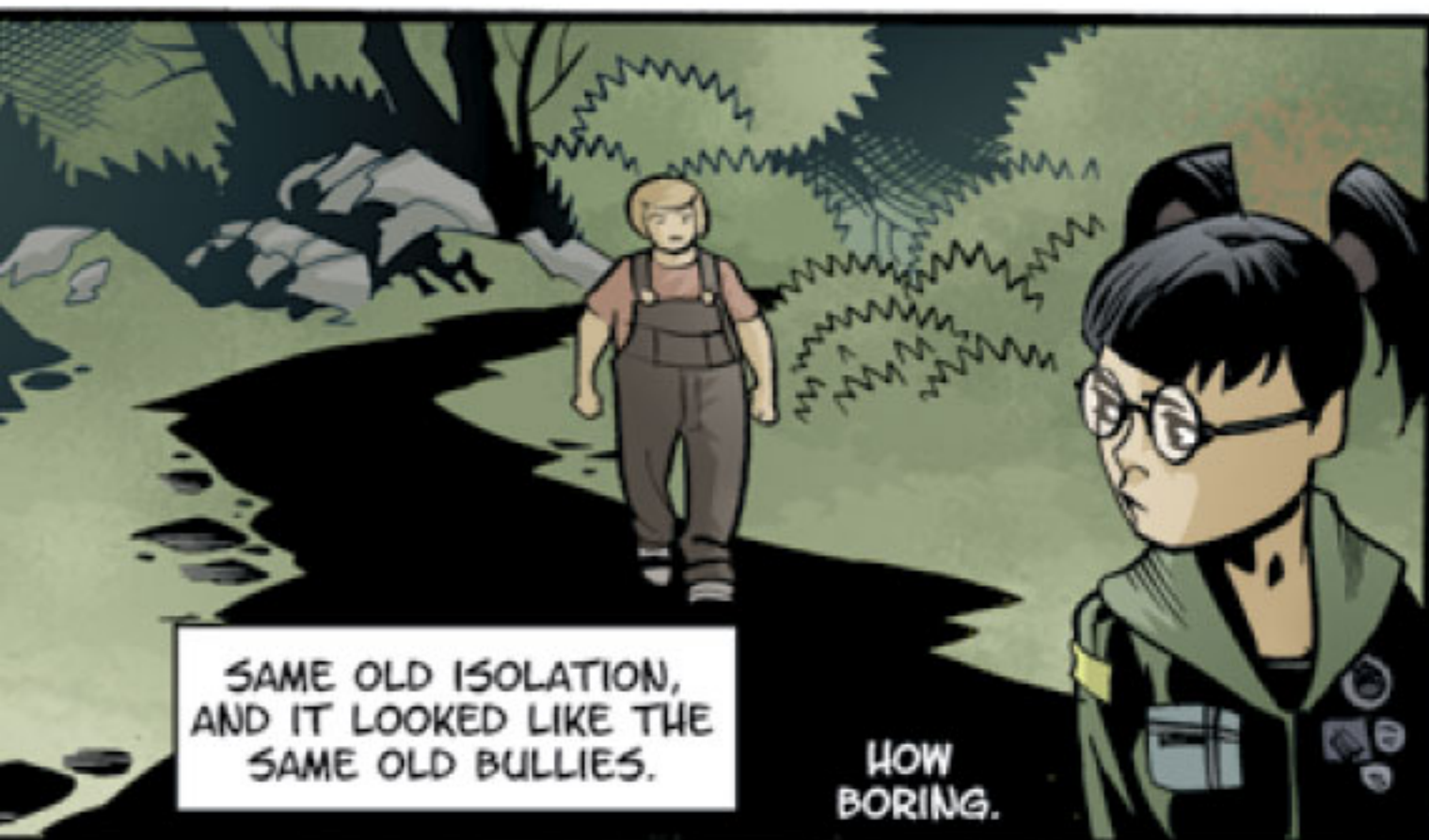






HOLLY HAD TRIED TO BE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT HER NEW SCHOOL.

BUT NOW ANOTHER LONG, LONELY YEAR SEEMED TO STRETCH OUT BEFORE HER.



SAME OLD ISOLATION, AND IT LOOKED LIKE THE SAME OLD BULLIES.

HOW BORING.



SHE FOUND HERSELF WISHING FOR SOMETHING, ANYTHING, NEW.

WE DON'T GO IN THE WOODS. NO ONE DOES.



WHY, WHAT'S IN THERE?

I DON'T KNOW.

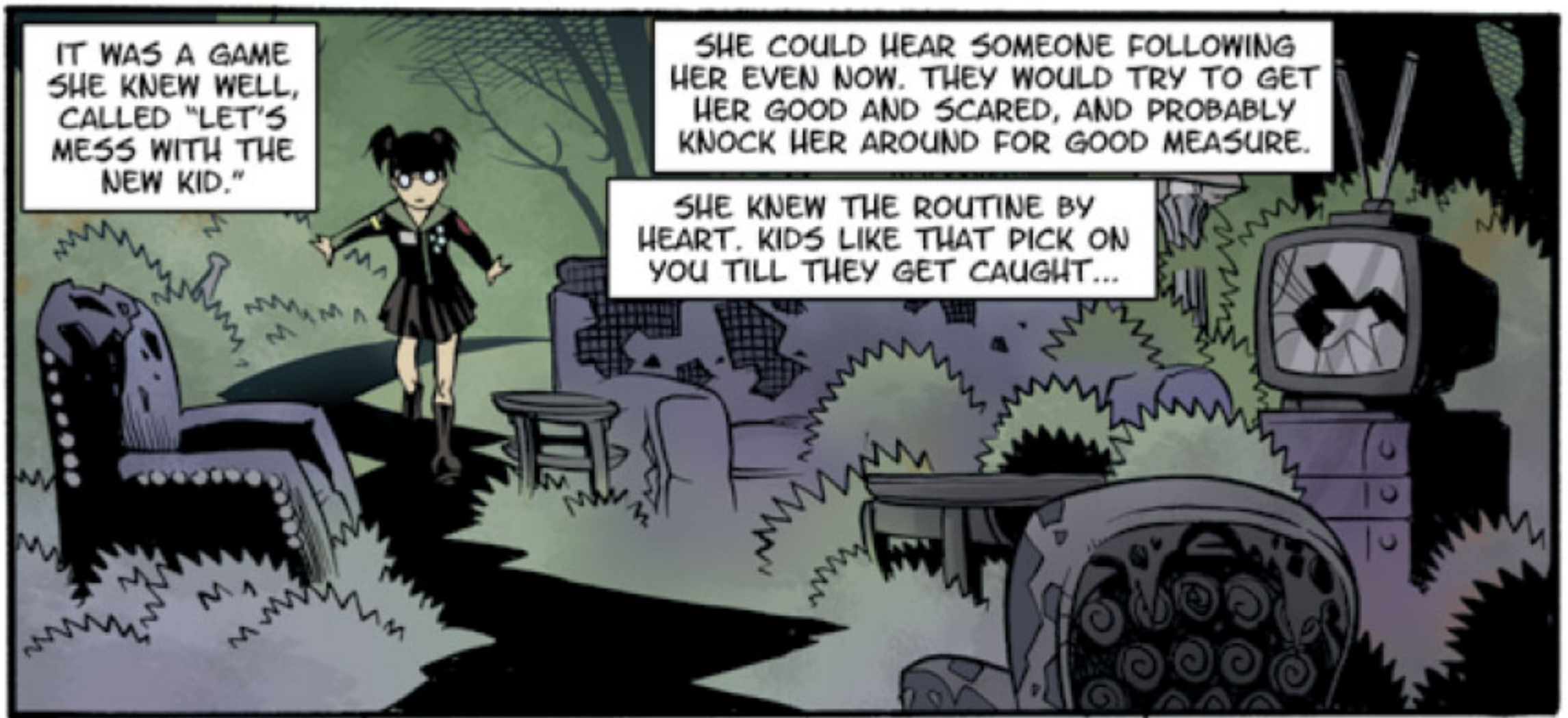


BUT THAT KID WENT IN ONCE AND NEVER CAME OUT.



THAT'S YOUR STORY?

A COMATOSE CHIMP COULD DO BETTER.



IT WAS A GAME SHE KNEW WELL, CALLED "LET'S MESS WITH THE NEW KID."

SHE COULD HEAR SOMEONE FOLLOWING HER EVEN NOW. THEY WOULD TRY TO GET HER GOOD AND SCARED, AND PROBABLY KNOCK HER AROUND FOR GOOD MEASURE.

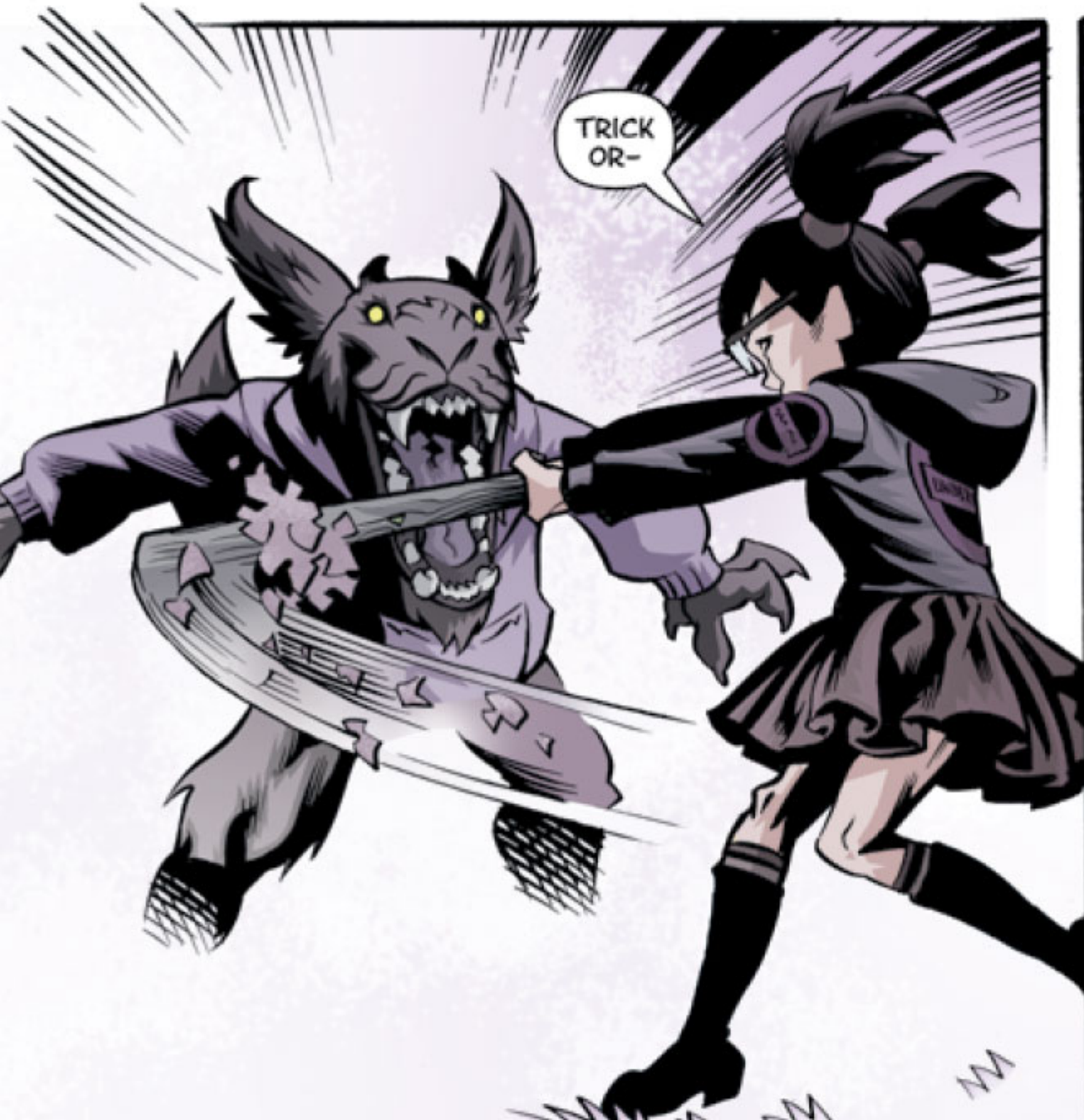
SHE KNEW THE ROUTINE BY HEART. KIDS LIKE THAT PICK ON YOU TILL THEY GET CAUGHT...



...OR TILL YOU TEACH THEM A HARD LESSON.



ALRIGHT, FARM GIRL, LET'S DO THIS.



TRICK OR-



-TREAT...?

CRUNCH

