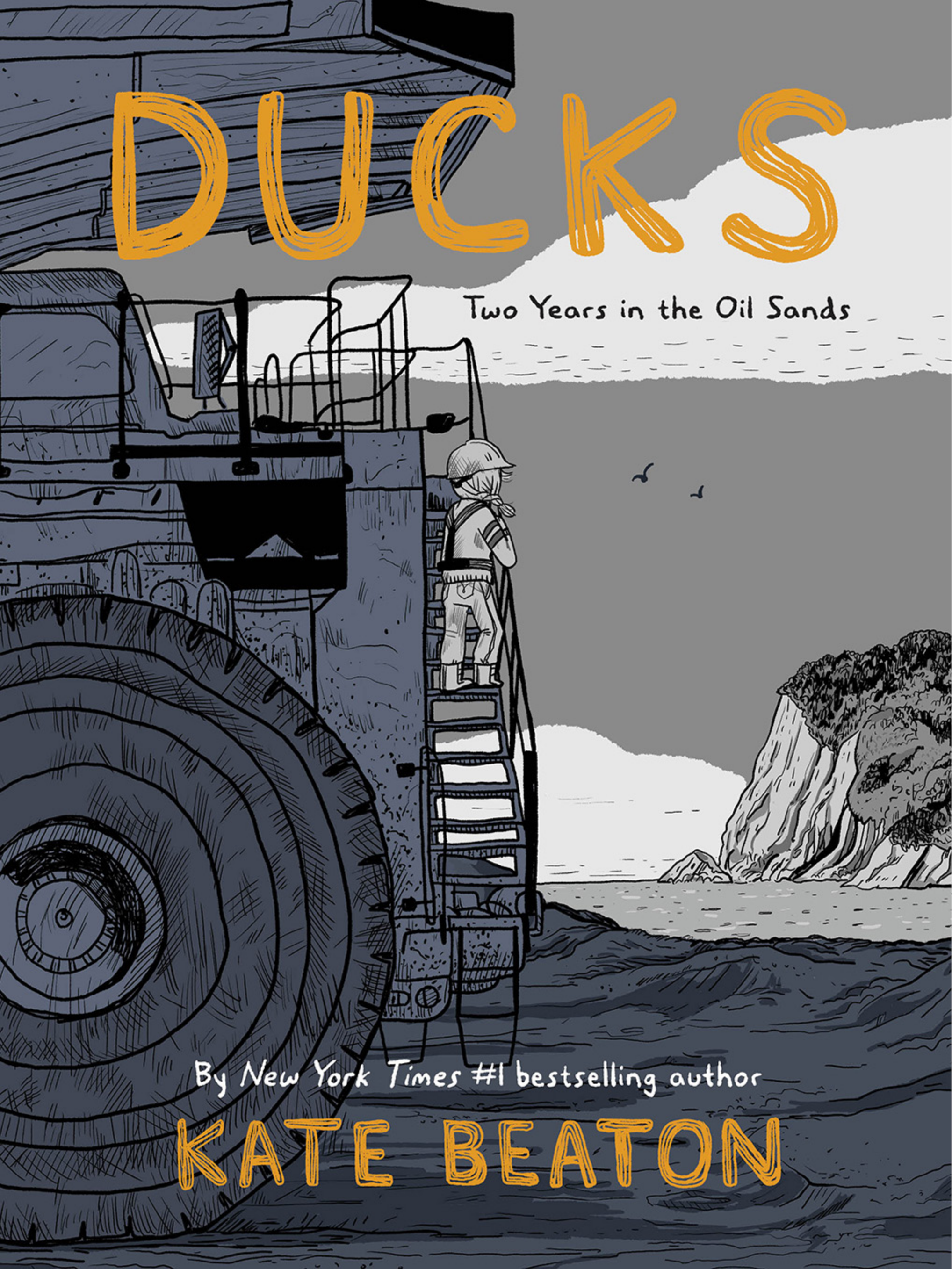


A detailed illustration of an oil sands processing plant. In the foreground, a large, circular, dark-colored rotating drum is visible. To its right, a worker wearing a hard hat and safety harness stands on a vertical ladder, looking out over the facility. The background shows more industrial structures, a body of water, and a rocky shoreline under a cloudy sky. The title 'DUCKS' is written in large, orange, hand-drawn letters at the top.

DUCKS

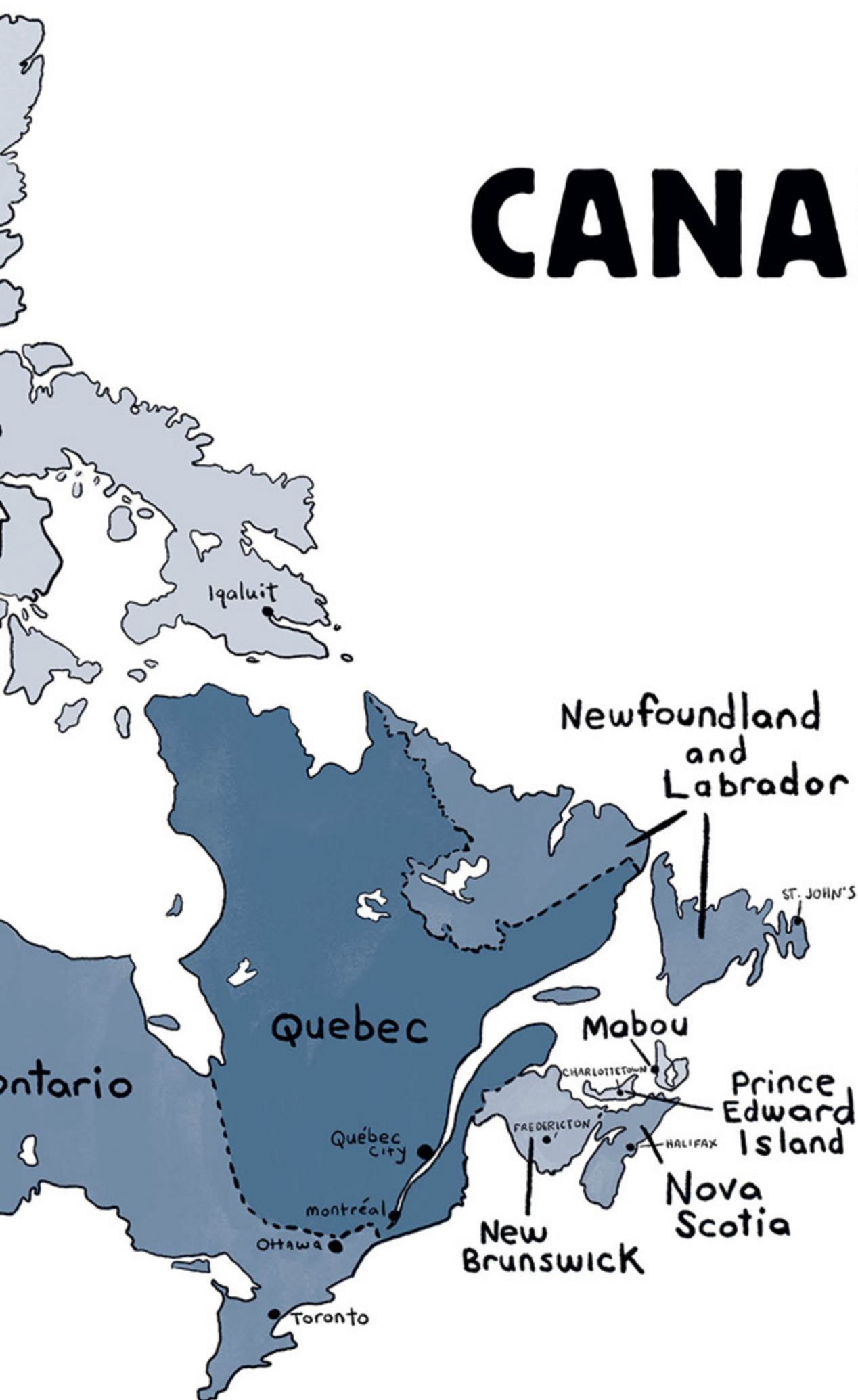
Two Years in the Oil Sands

By New York Times #1 bestselling author

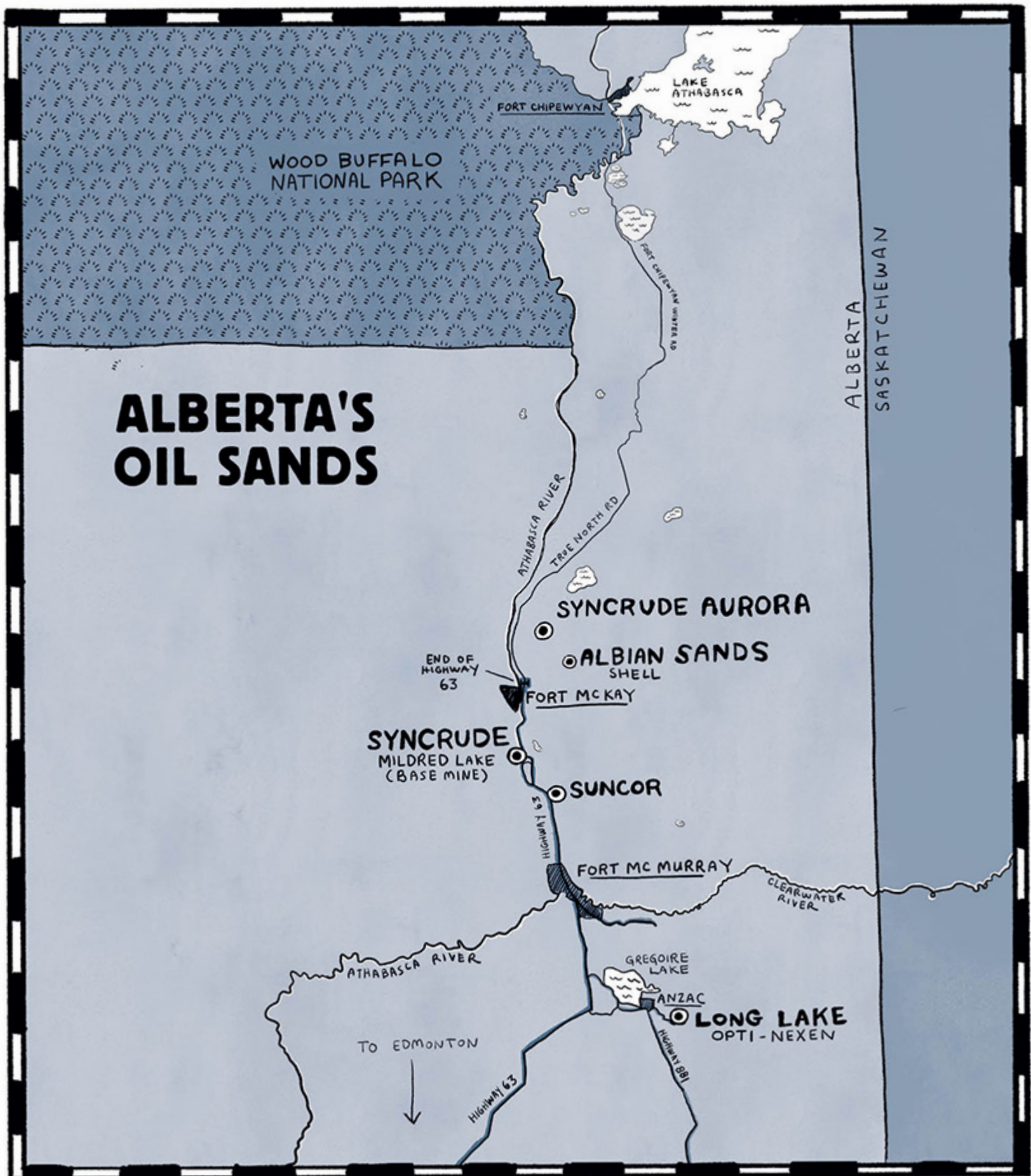
KATE BEATON



CANADA







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“The Island” lyrics on page 11 by Kenzie MacNeil. “I’ll Be There Christmas Eve” lyrics on page 94 by Ron Hynes. “Crazy Bitch” lyrics on page 166 by Keith Nelson, Josh Todd & Buckcherry. “Ridin” lyrics on page 236 by Oscar Salinas, Juan Salinas, Krayzie Bone & Chamillionaire. “Peter’s Dream” lyrics on pages 244–245 by Lennie Gallant. “An Innis Aigh” lyrics on page 254 by Angus Y. MacLellan. “Coal Town Road” lyrics on page 292 by Allister MacGillivray.

“Effects of the Tar Sands: Fort Mackay, Alberta” Interview on pages 358–360 copyright © 2007, 2022 Celina Harpe, used with permission and edited for space.

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DUCKS

Two Years in the Oil Sands

KATE BEATON

Drawn & Quarterly

THIS STORY STARTS IN 2005.
I AM TWENTY-ONE YEARS OLD.



THIS IS ME AT TWENTY-ONE.
I'M MUCH OLDER NOW, AND
THREE DIMENSIONAL.



I HAVE JUST GRADUATED FROM
UNIVERSITY WITH AN ARTS DEGREE,
PAID FOR WITH STUDENT LOANS.



I'M FROM CAPE BRETON,
A BEAUTIFUL ISLAND OFF THE
EAST COAST OF CANADA, IN THE
PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA.



CAPE BRETON USED TO EXPORT FISH,
COAL, AND STEEL; BUT IN 2005,
ITS MAIN EXPORT IS PEOPLE.

IT'S NOT A UNIQUE STORY
IN ATLANTIC CANADA.



NOR IS IT A NEW ONE. EVERY
CAPE BRETON FAMILY HAS HAD ITS
SHARE OF EMPTY CHAIRS AROUND
THE TABLE, FOR A HUNDRED YEARS.



FATHERS, SIBLINGS, COUSINS; GONE
TO THE "BOSTON STATES," GONE
TO ONTARIO, GONE TO ALBERTA—
GONE TO BE CHEAP LABOUR WHERE
BOOMING INDUSTRIES DEMANDED IT.



THE ONLY MESSAGE WE GOT ABOUT A
BETTER FUTURE WAS THAT WE HAD
TO LEAVE HOME TO HAVE ONE.

WE DID NOT QUESTION IT, BECAUSE
THIS IS THE HAVE-NOT REGION OF A
HAVE-NOT PROVINCE, AND IT HAS NOT
BOOMED HERE IN GENERATIONS.



I NEED TO TELL YOU THIS—
THERE IS NO KNOWING CAPE BRETON
WITHOUT KNOWING HOW DEEPLY
INGRAINED TWO DIAMETRICALLY
OPPOSED EXPERIENCES ARE:



A DEEP LOVE FOR HOME, AND THE
KNOWLEDGE OF HOW FREQUENTLY
WE HAVE TO LEAVE IT TO FIND
WORK SOMEWHERE ELSE.



THIS PUSH AND PULL DEFINES US. IT'S
ALL OVER OUR MUSIC, OUR LITERATURE,
OUR ART, AND OUR UNDERSTANDING
OF OUR PLACE IN THE WORLD.



TO "HAVE-NOT" IS A MENTAL STATE
AS WELL AS AN ECONOMIC ONE.



AND IF THE BETTER FUTURE IS ELSEWHERE, THE PRESENT IS FULL OF NEWS CONFERENCES WHERE IMPORTANT MEN CRUSH LOCAL INDUSTRIES LIKE A CIGARETTE UNDER A SHOE, WHILE PEOPLE WITH ACCENTS LIKE MY OWN DESPERATELY DEMAND TO KNOW HOW THEY WILL LIVE NOW.

TELL US THE TRUTH!

I WANT TO HEAR ABOUT MY LIVELIHOOD!



I WON'T LET YOU DESTROY MY LIFE AND THE LIVES OF MY CHILDREN!

YOU'RE A LIAR!

WE'RE HERE AND WE'RE NOT GOING AWAY! WE'RE NOT "GOIN' DOWN THE ROAD!"

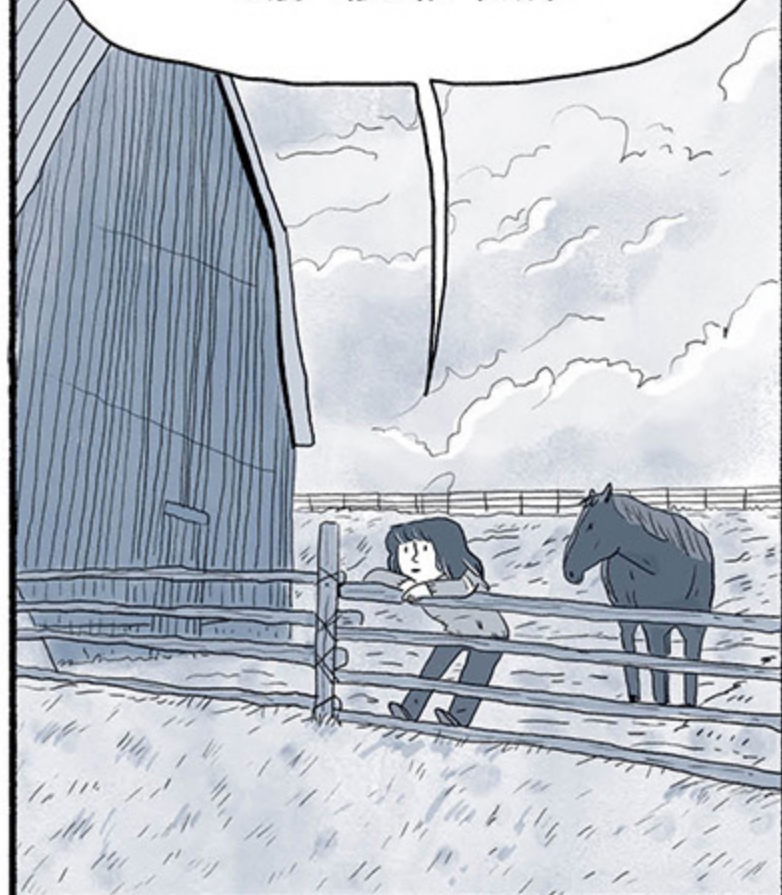
YOU CAN'T CHANGE IT.

I KNOW THIS IS HARD.



CBC
January 14, 2000

I LEARN THAT I CAN HAVE OPPORTUNITY OR I CAN HAVE HOME. I CANNOT HAVE BOTH, AND EITHER WILL ALWAYS HURT.



I LEARN, BY TWENTY-ONE, THAT ANY JOB IS A GOOD JOB. EVEN A BAD JOB IS A GOOD JOB; YOU'RE LUCKY TO HAVE IT.



IN 2005, THE PLACE TO GO TO FIND
THE GOOD JOB, THE GOOD MONEY, THE
BETTER LIFE, IS THE OIL SANDS OF
NORTHERN ALBERTA.

EVERYONE IS GOING.

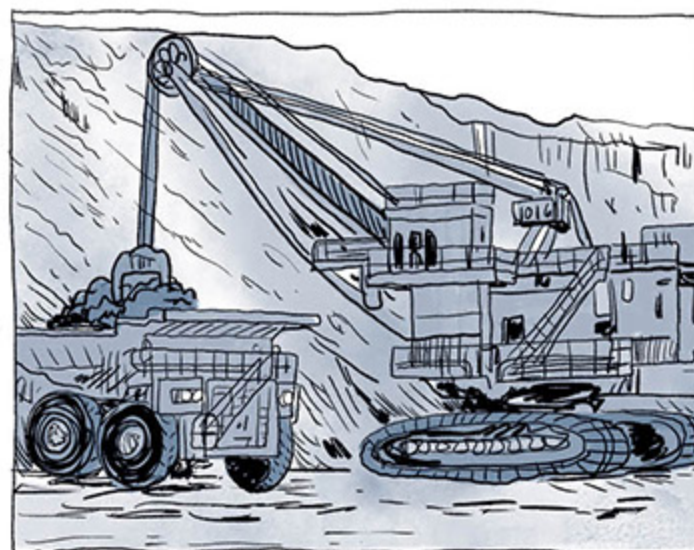


Jennifer T.
Associate

Fort McMurray
smell of oil
air over the
River Mine,
pit the size of
blocks. Fed
hydraulic she
dumptrucks o
sticky sand t
eventually be
crude oil.
"That smell?
drocarbons, s
Jones, chief o
ficer at Albia
Energy Inc.
like money."
Lots of mone
Canada has b
energy power
separating pe
from sand. O
also called ta
found across
berta, 385 ki
northeast of
The Associa

IT'S BOOMING THERE. OIL IS WORTH
MORE THAN EVER. THOUSANDS OF JOBS.
NO END TO THE MONEY. IT'S THE
BEST AND FASTEST WAY OUT OF
A DEBILITATING STUDENT DEBT.
AND I AM EAGER TO SEVER THAT
WEIGHTED ANCHOR.

The smell of money



A giant shovel drops a load of raw oil sands into a heavy-hauler-pickup truck at the Suncor Millennium Mine.

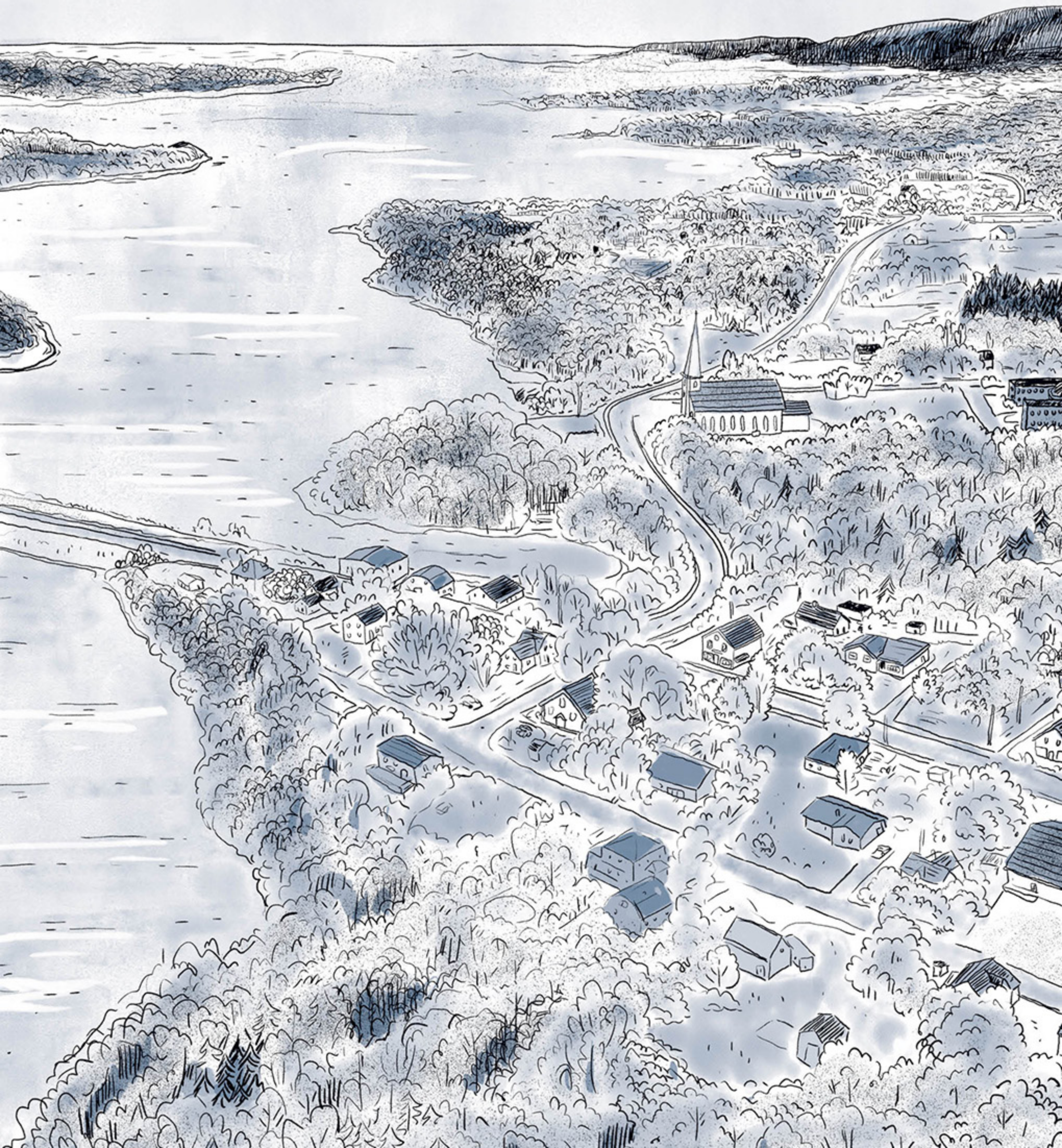
IT IS TIME FOR ANOTHER EMPTY
CHAIR AROUND THE TABLE.



IT IS TIME
TO GO.



CAPE BRETON



FAMILY



NEIL BEATON
MEAT CUTTER
MABOU GROCERY STORE



KATIE BEATON
RECENT ARTS GRADUATE
MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY



MARION BEATON
FINANCIAL SERVICES REPRESENTATIVE
EAST COAST CREDIT UNION



BECKY BEATON
RECENT SCIENCE GRADUATE
ST FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY

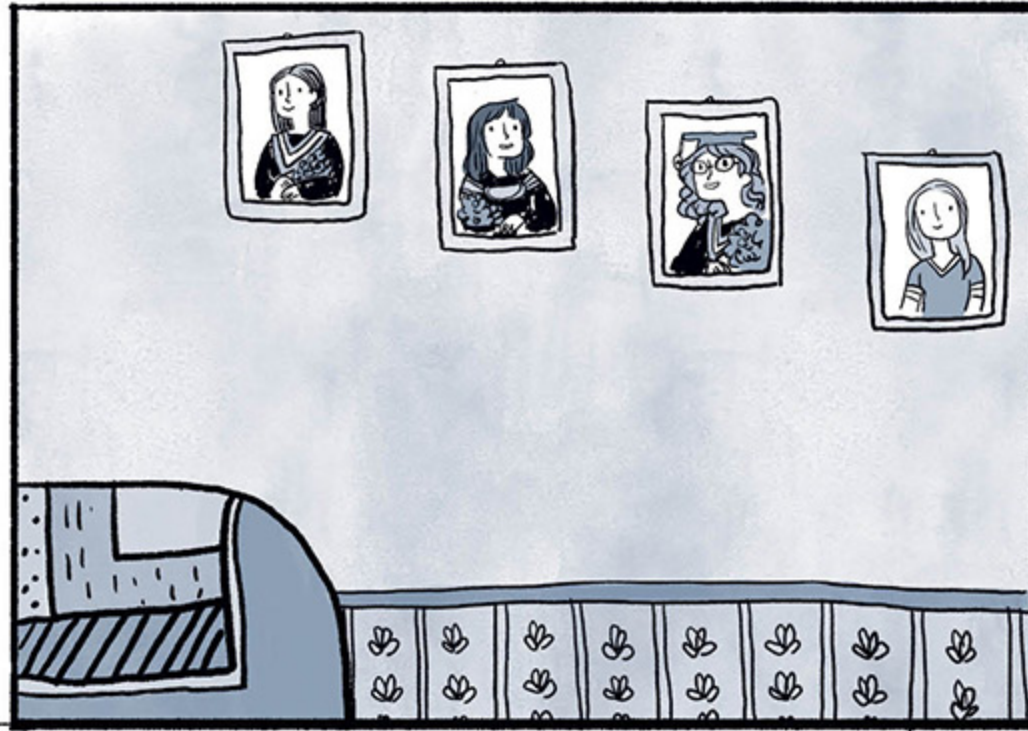


LAUREEN BEATON
GRADE ELEVEN
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT



MAURA BEATON
IN HER THIRD YEAR AT
ST FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY





Home
Employment
 Unemployment
 Industries
 Construction
 Cost of Living
 Location
 Population
 Services
 Business
 Before You Pack

Labour Market News

Funded by Alberta Human Resources and Employment

Direct Employment

The oilsands companies provide direct employment for a workforce with trade, engineering, technological, management and administrative skills.

Oilsands plants operate year-round, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Buses transport workers from communities to oilsands surface mine and plant sites.

Indirect Employment

Oilsands companies also provide indirect employment opportunities through suppliers or contractors. Contract workers may work at the oilsands plants or another location.

Construction work is contracted or sub-contracted to construction companies. Camp facilities may be available to non-residents when the construction sites are located outside of Fort McMurray. Length of employment will vary with the number, timing, location and type of contract. Contract workers may be required to provide their own transportation to the place of work.

Some of the engineering work is done in Edmonton and Calgary. Large modules are often constructed in the Edmonton area and transported to Fort McMurray.

Spin-off Employment

Employment

[Home] [Summary] [Lists] [Contact Us]

Last modified
15 Dec 2004

- Compulsory Certification Trades
- Occupations
- Skills Required
- Safety
- Major Employers
- Union Lists
- Employer Web Sites
- Wage and Salary Information



Around Town

My Community Forum Index >> Mymcmurray Com

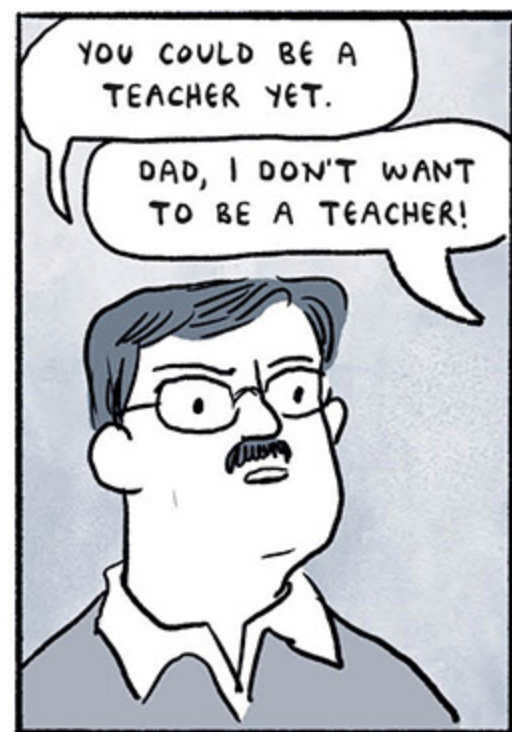
Topics

Announcement	
!	Announcement: Posting Messages on this E
Topics	
!	Safety Tips
!	Anyone know?
	ROOM WANTED TO RENT
	Room 4 rent! Avail May 1
	Do you need a new job?
	Party Time!
!	Deaths in McMurray
	Furnished Basement Suite for Rent
	Fort Chip Medical Crisis
!	Jobs?
	camper for sale













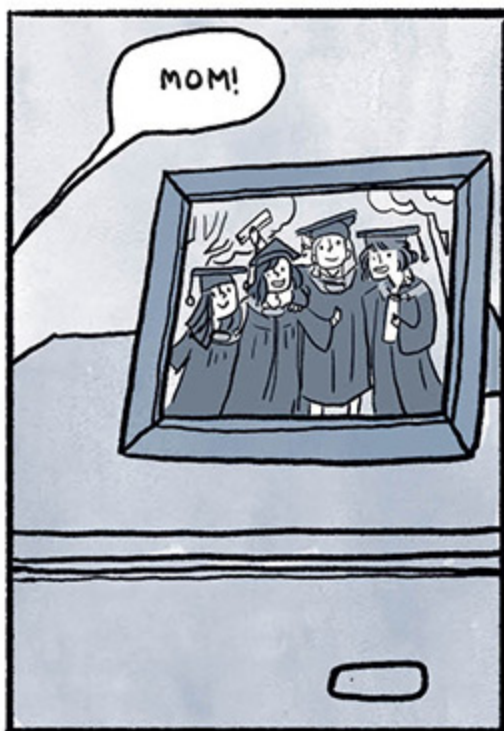
NO, I DIDN'T! GRAD SCHOOL IS DIFFERENT.



I WISH I COULD TELL YOU.

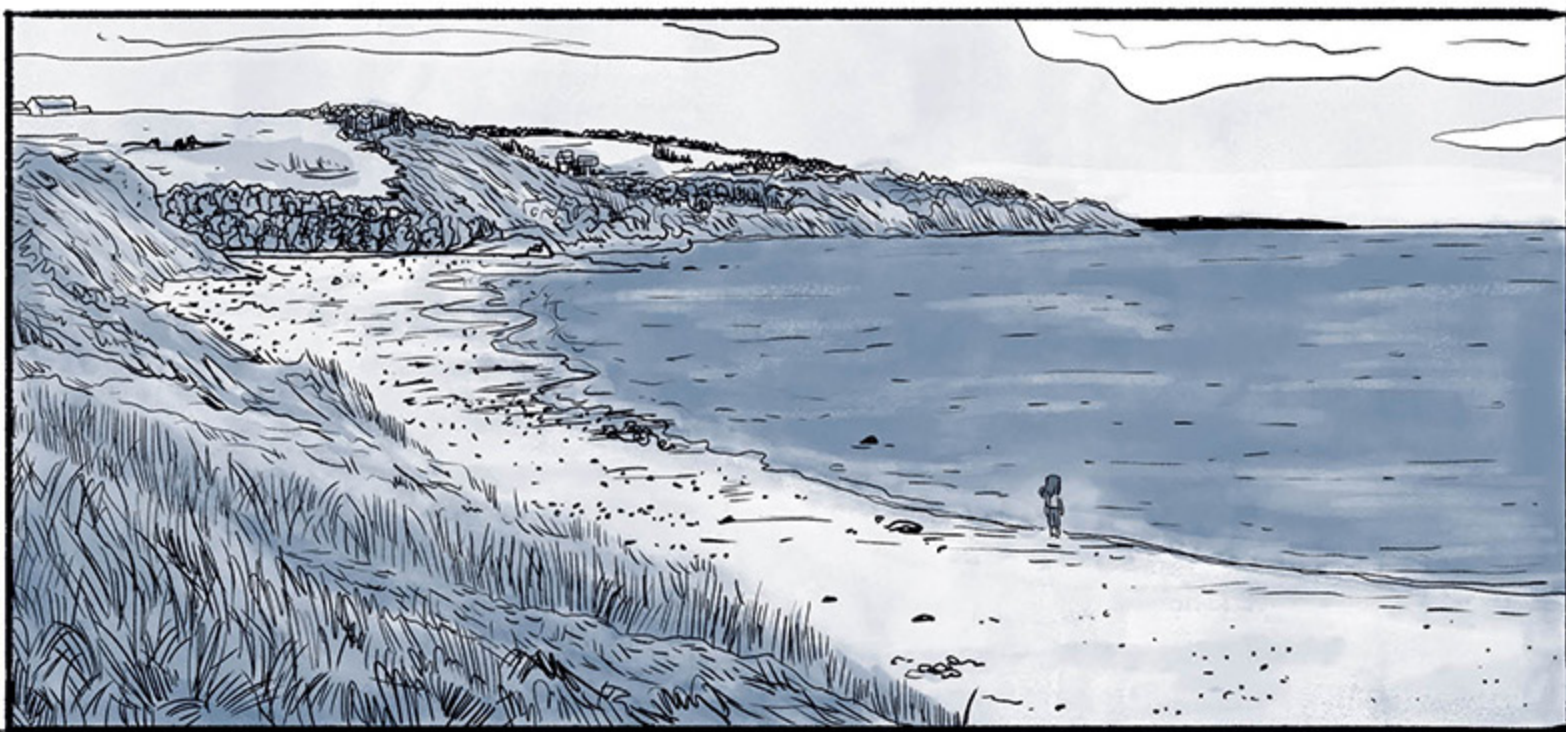
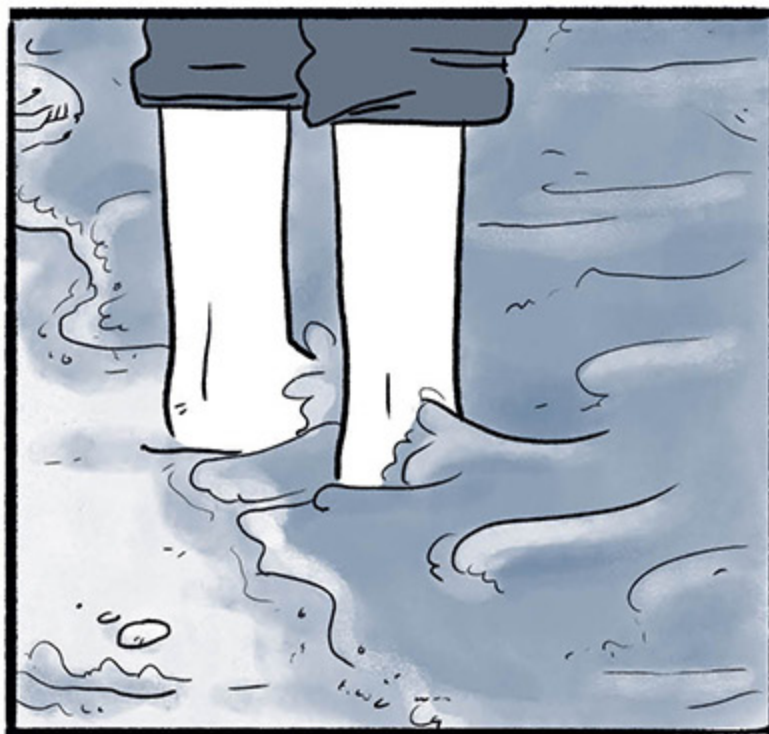




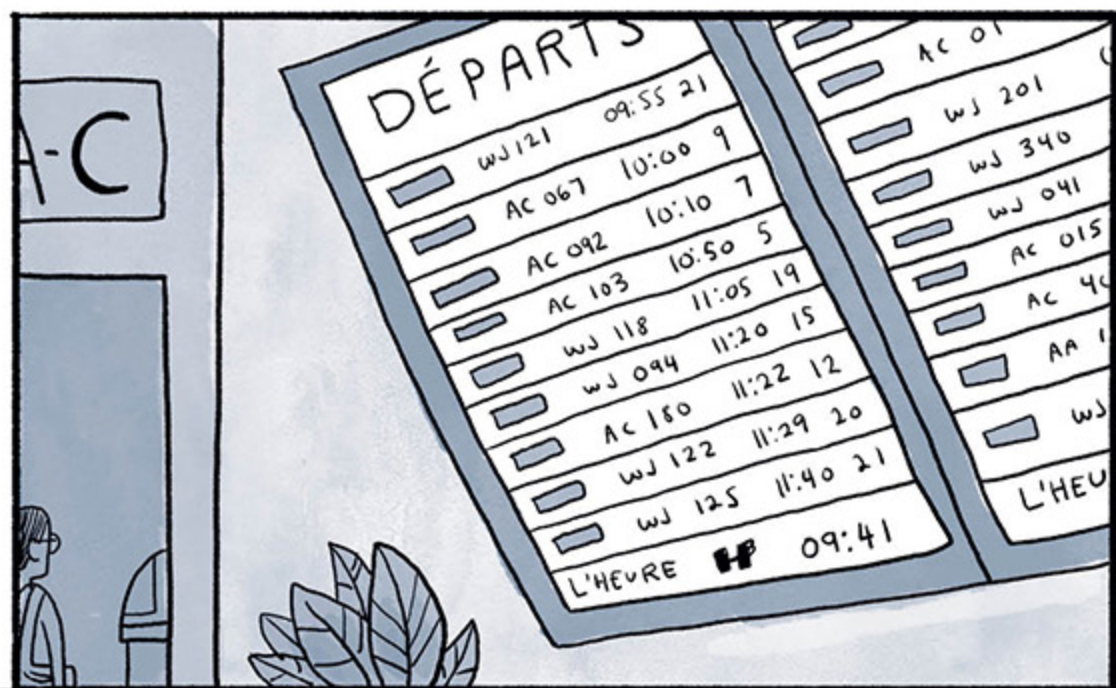












I WISH YOU WERE LITTLE AGAIN!
A MOTHER SHOULD HAVE TIME WITH HER
CHILDREN—THERE WAS NEVER ANY
TIME WITH WORK AND—



WE ARE PROUD OF
EVERYTHING YOU DID
FOR US!



WE TURNED OUT
OKAY, RIGHT?
I'LL BE OKAY.

PLEASE
DON'T WORRY
SO MUCH.



OF COURSE I WORRY,
KATIE, YOUR LIVES ARE
SO PRECIOUS TO ME.



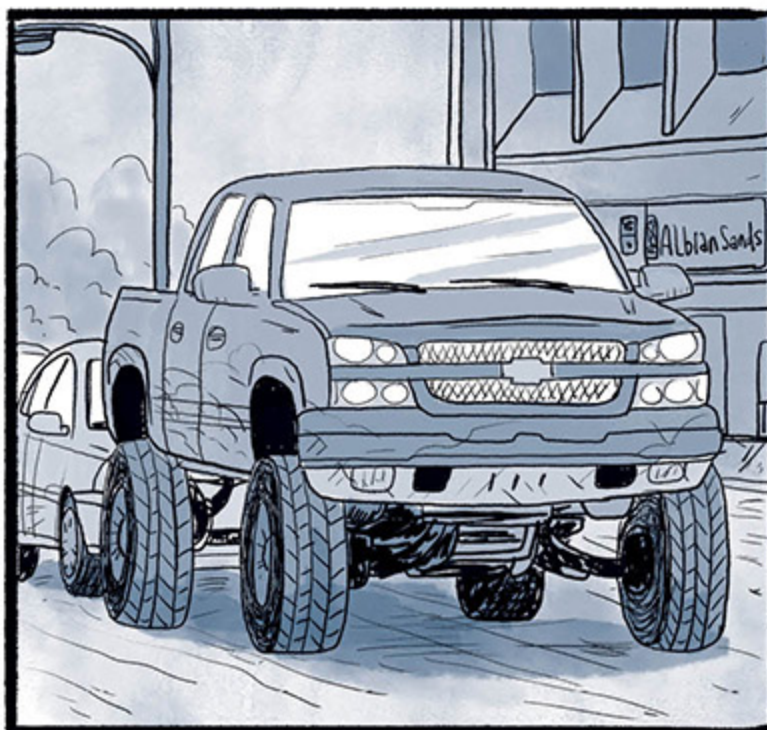
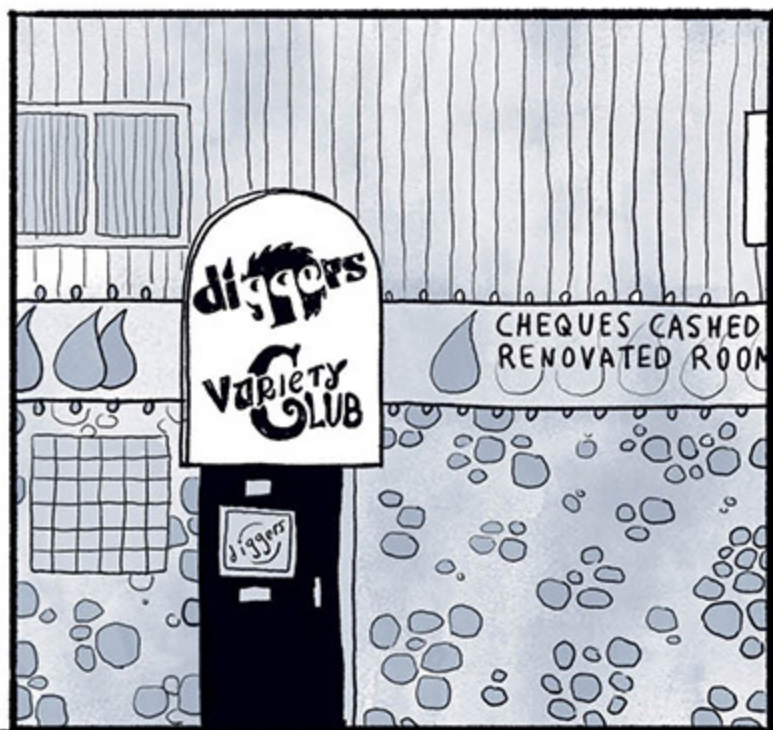
WHEN YOU CALL,
YOU CAN CALL COLLECT.
IT WON'T COST YOU.



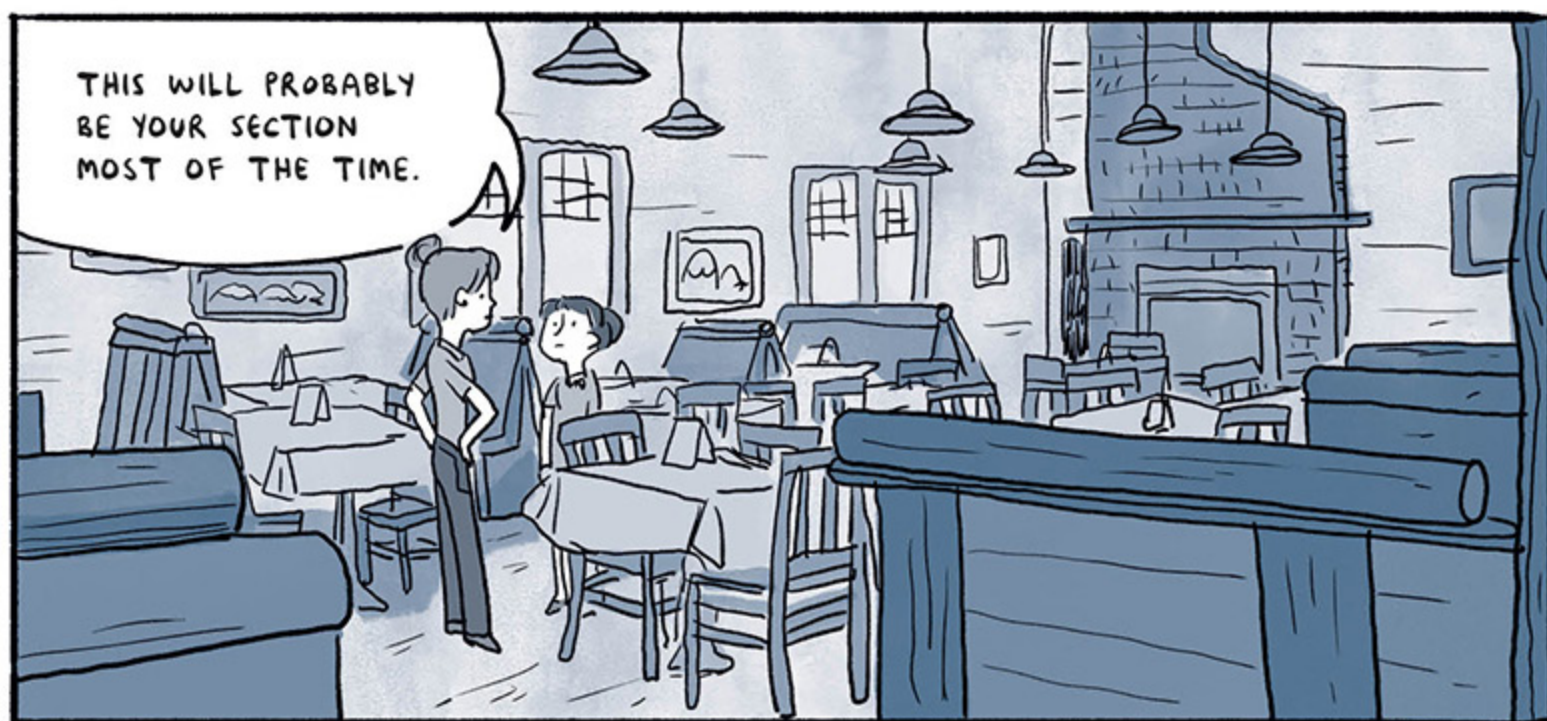
NO ONE DOES THAT
ANYMORE EITHER.

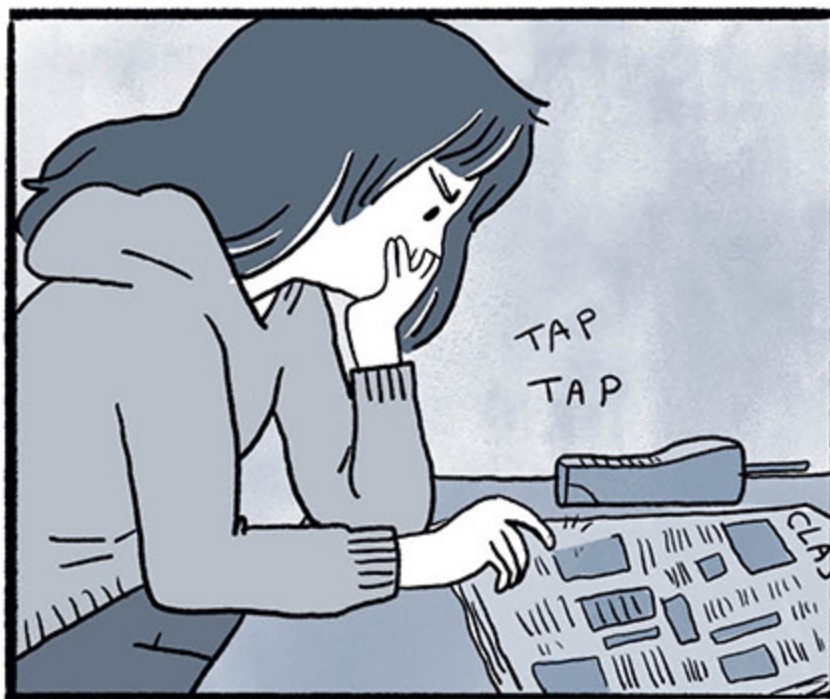








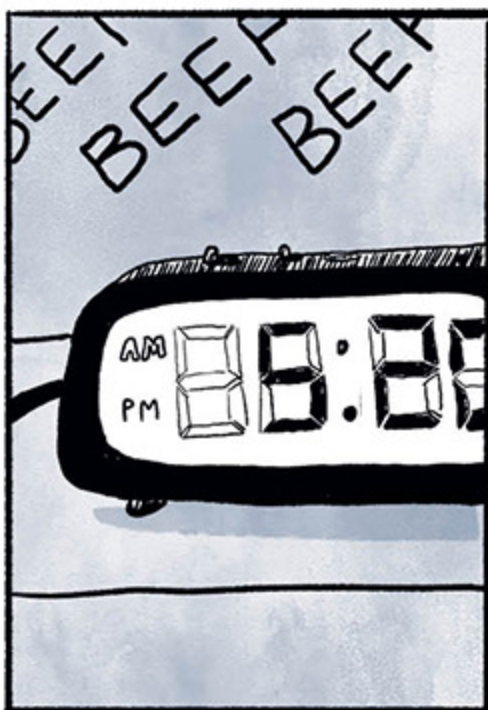










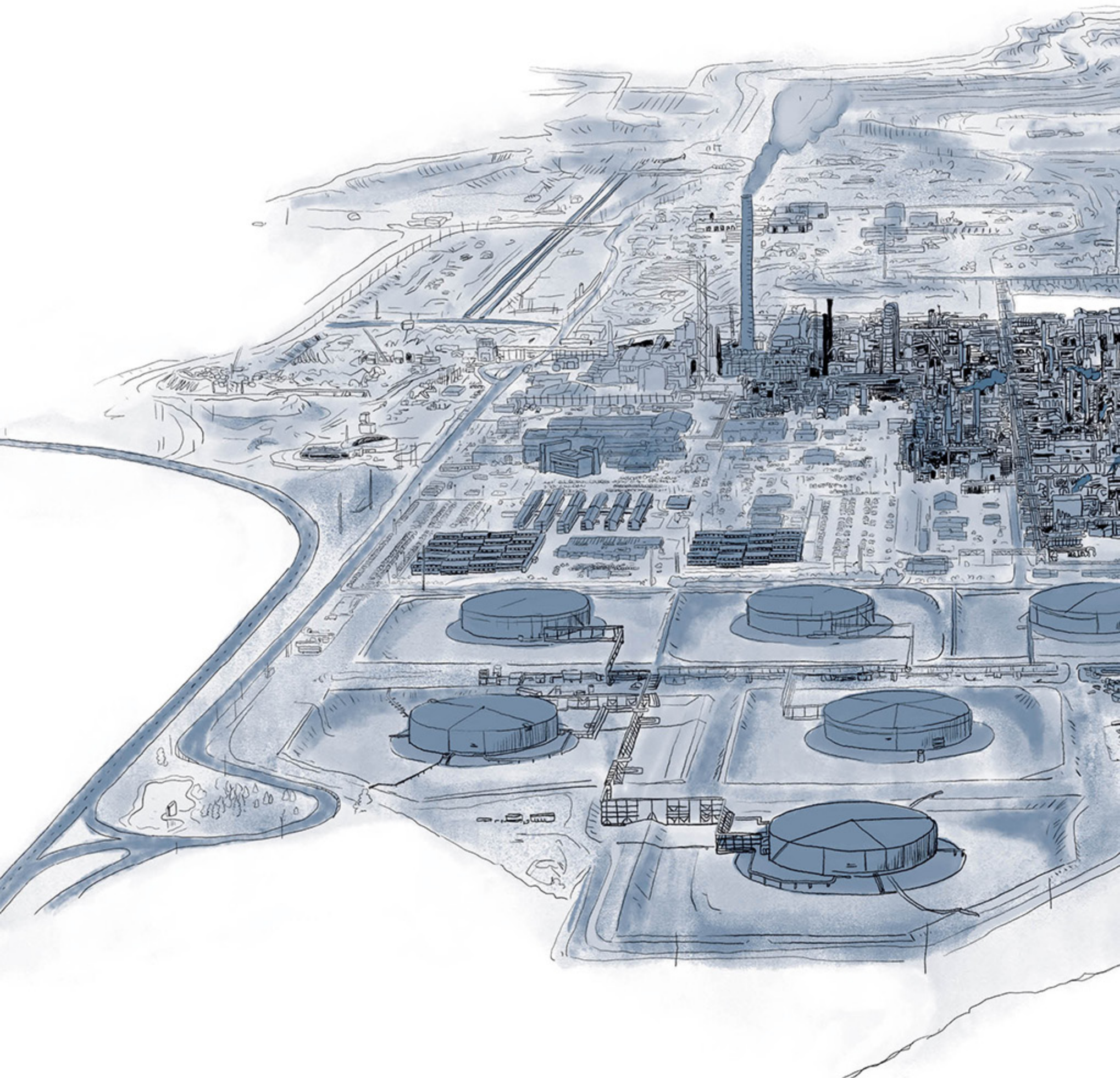


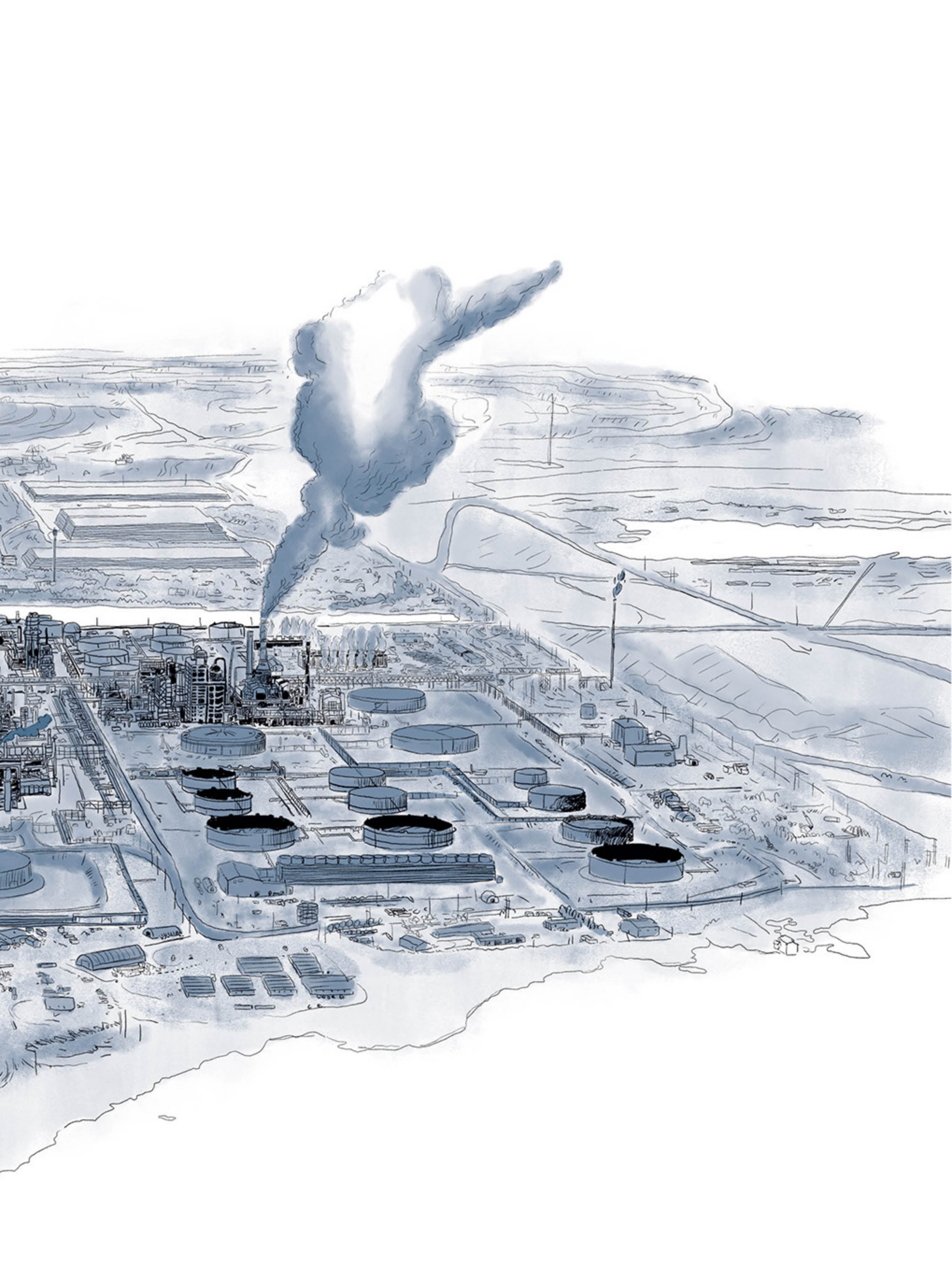




SYNCRUDE

MILDRED LAKE





SYNCRUDE

BASE MINE



KATIE
TOOL CRIB ATTENDANT
NOVA SCOTIA



LAURA
WAREHOUSE SUPERVISOR
SASKATCHEWAN



DARLENE
TOOL CRIB ATTENDANT
NEWFOUNDLAND



KEN
WAREHOUSE SUPERVISOR
ONTARIO



RADAR
DRIVER
NEWFOUNDLAND



ARCHIE
NOVA SCOTIA



LILY
NOVA SCOTIA



WORKPLACE HAZARDS ARE
EVERYWHERE BUT SAFETY IS
OUR PRIMARY CONCERN!



ROBERT WAS WORKING
NIGHT SHIFTS WHEN
IT HAPPENED.

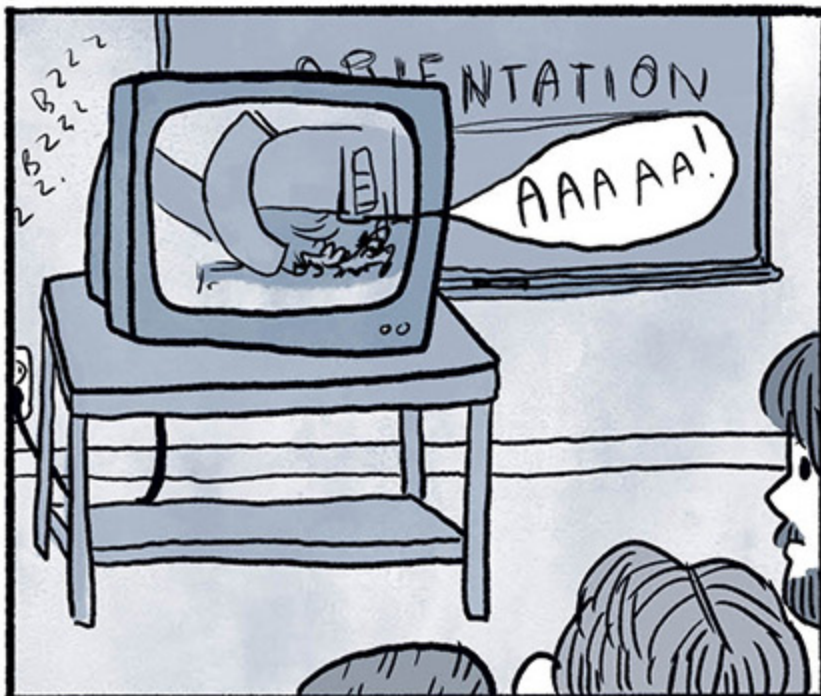
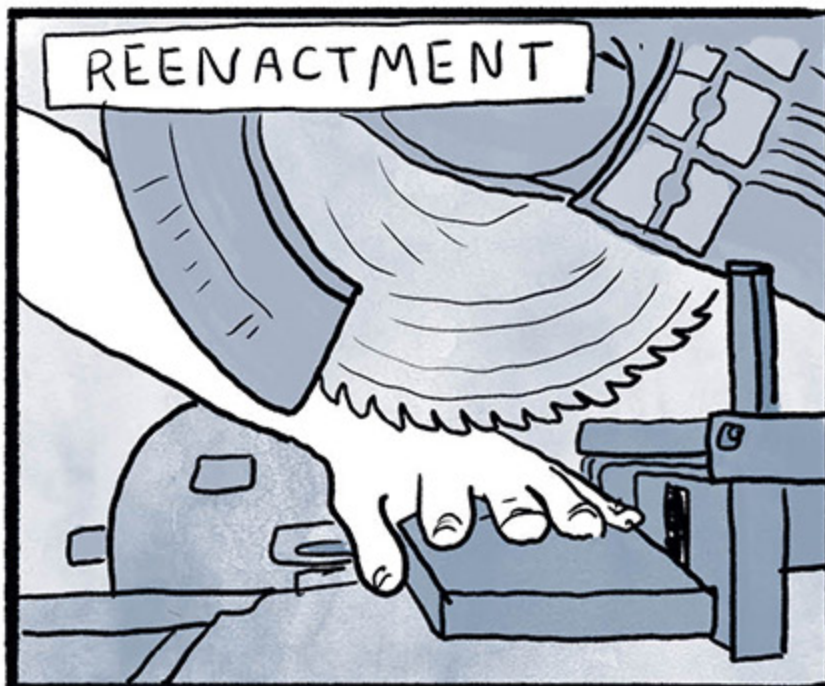


WELL, I WAS WORKING THE SAW...

AND THE
GUARD WAS
JAMMED
BUT NO ONE
CHECKED IT.



REENACTMENT







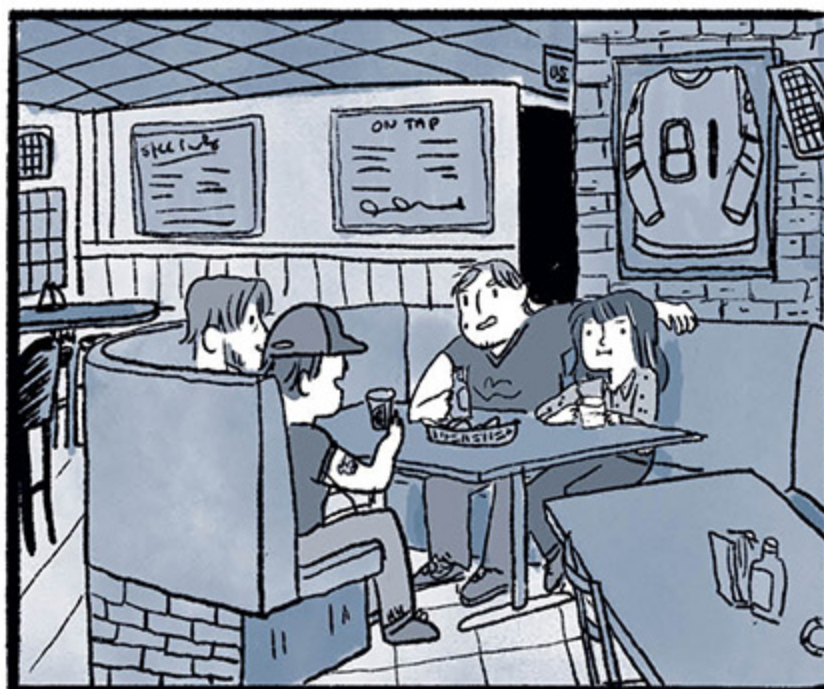




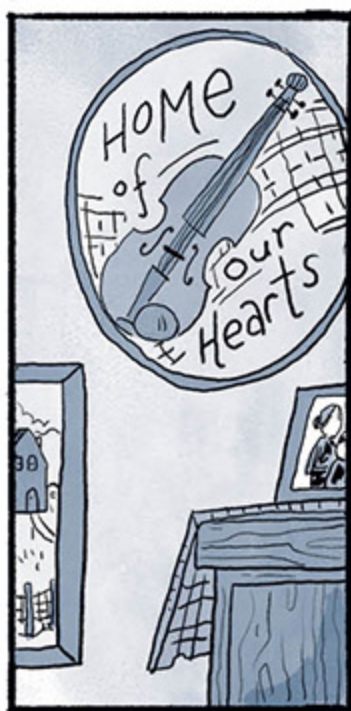












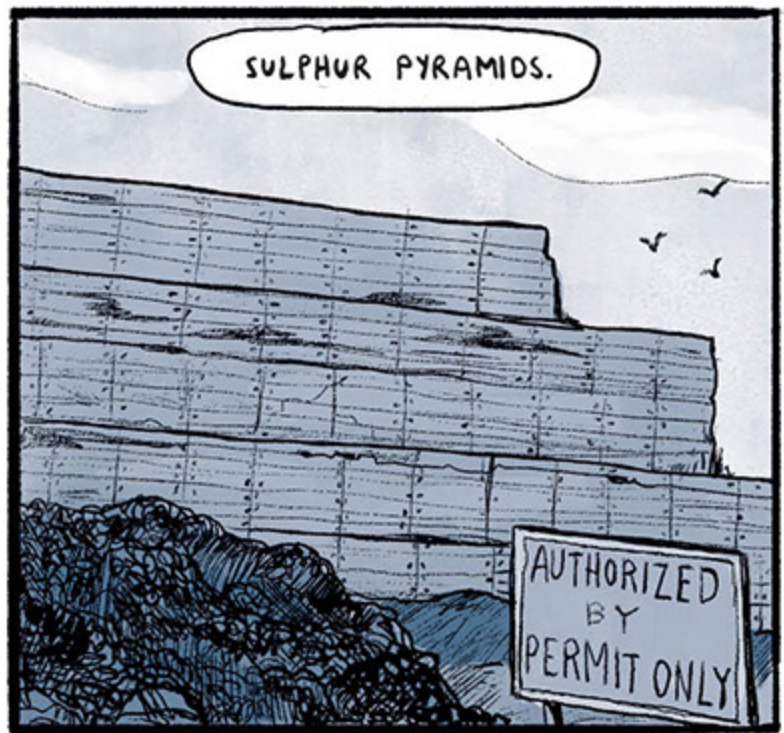








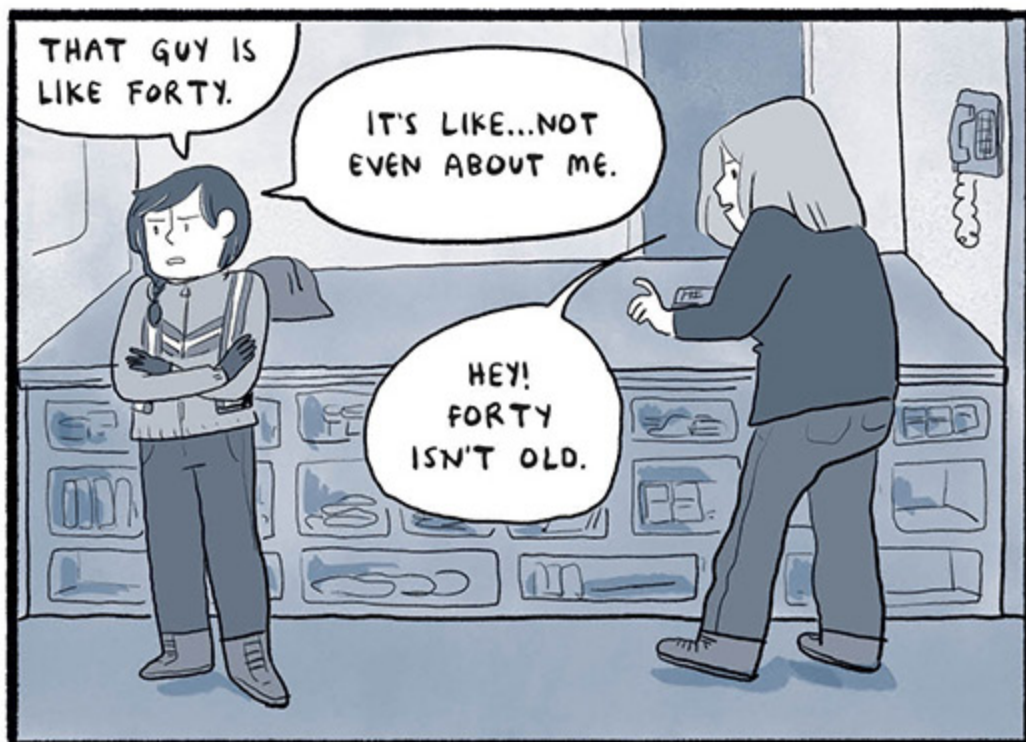




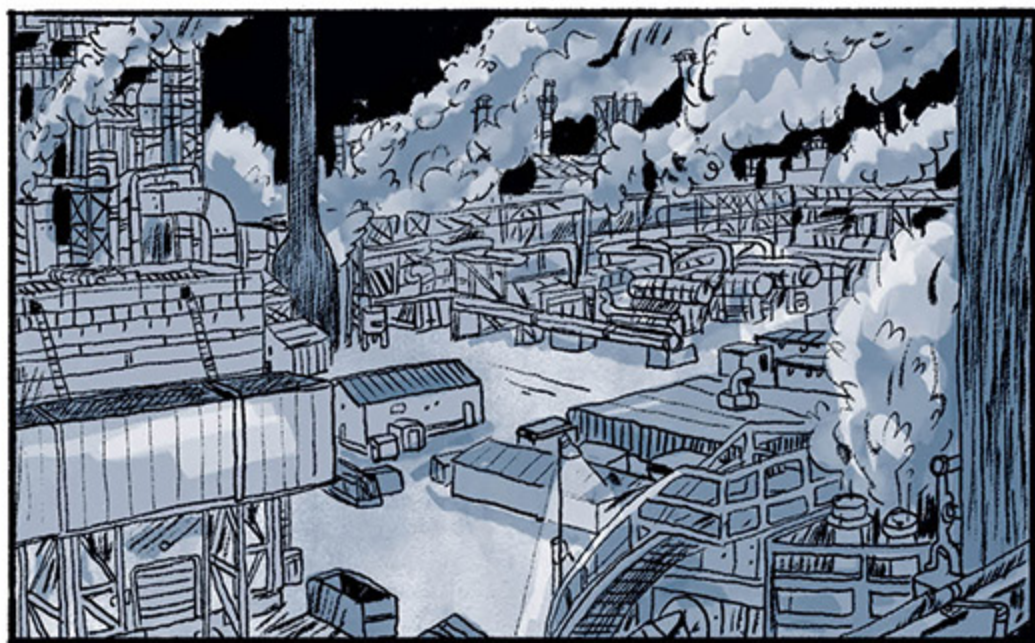








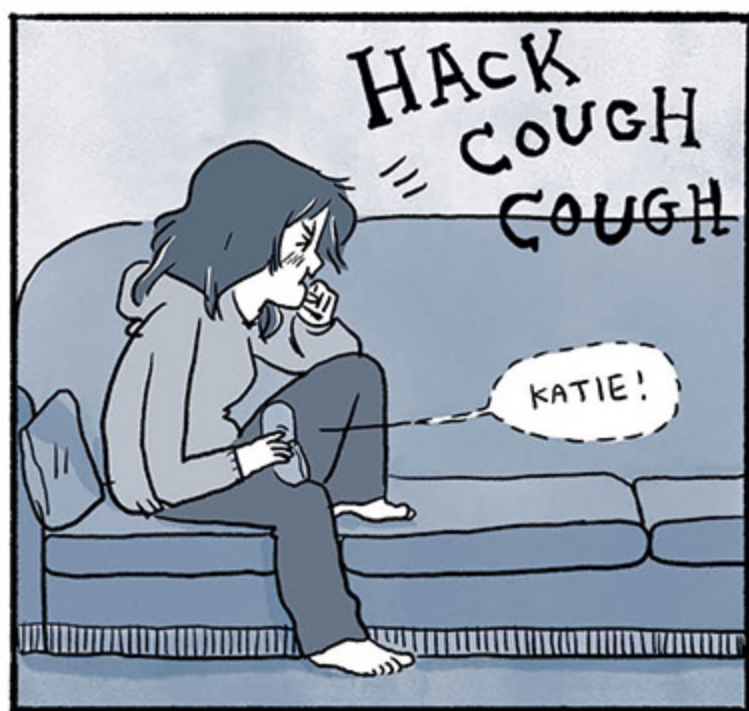


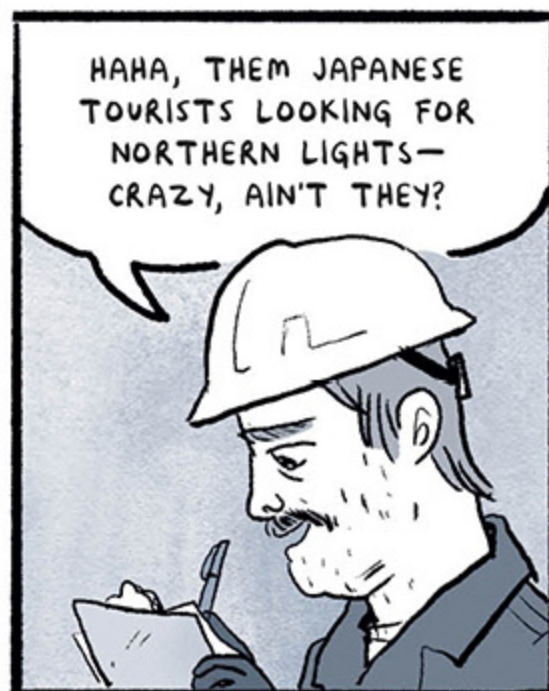
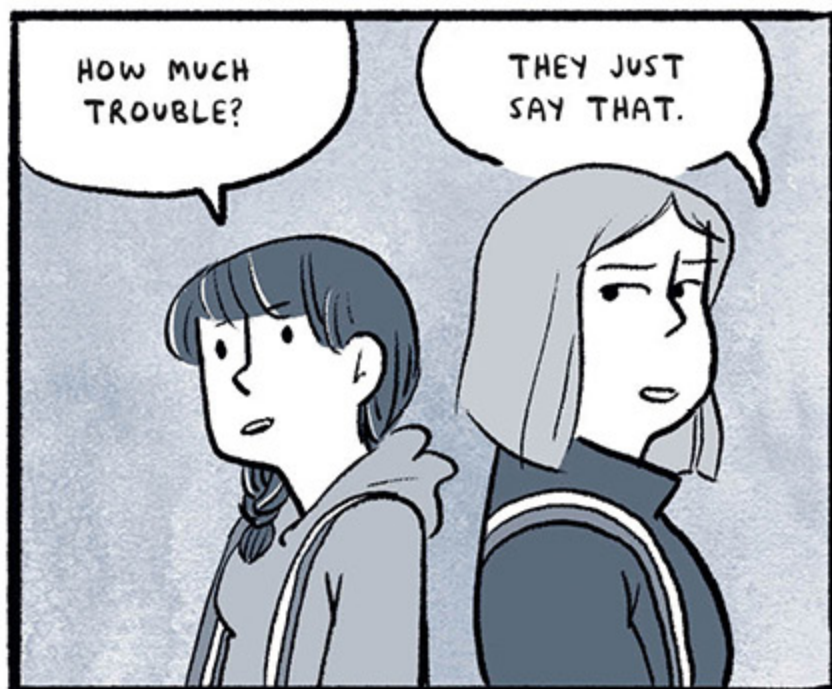
















HELLOO—OO—
AH! IT'S YOU WE HAVE
TONIGHT, I SEE YOU
BACK THERE!



YEAH IT'S ME—
JUST A SEC.

SEEN THAT
FOX OUTSIDE.



OH? SO, YOU NEED
ANYTHING?

CHRIST,
NO.



JUST WANT TO BE
WARM FOR A MINUTE—
GOT ANY COFFEE ON?

NAH—
WE'RE
OUT,
SORRY.

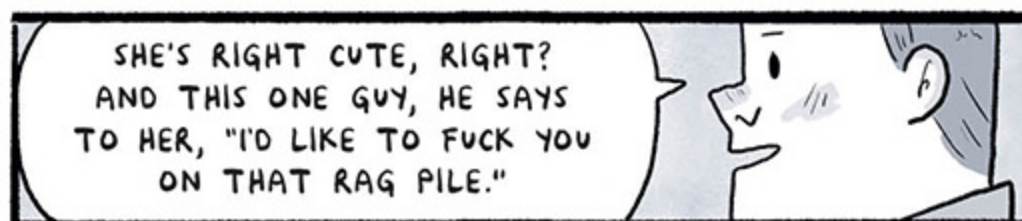


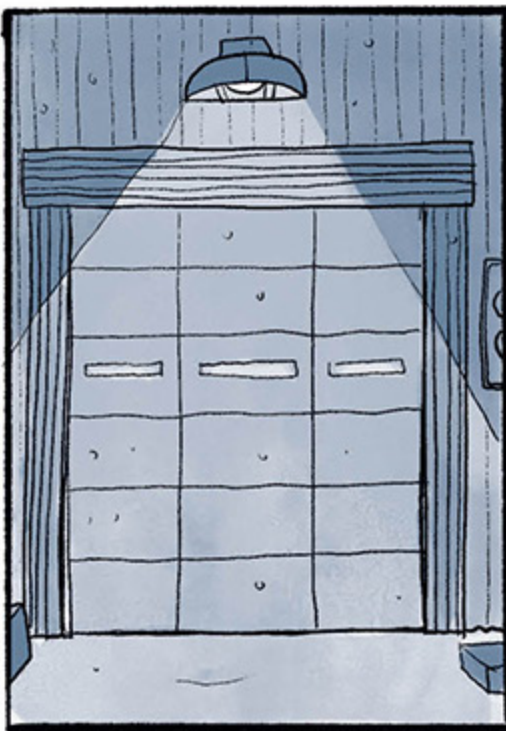
PFFOOOO—CAN'T
GET A BREAK.



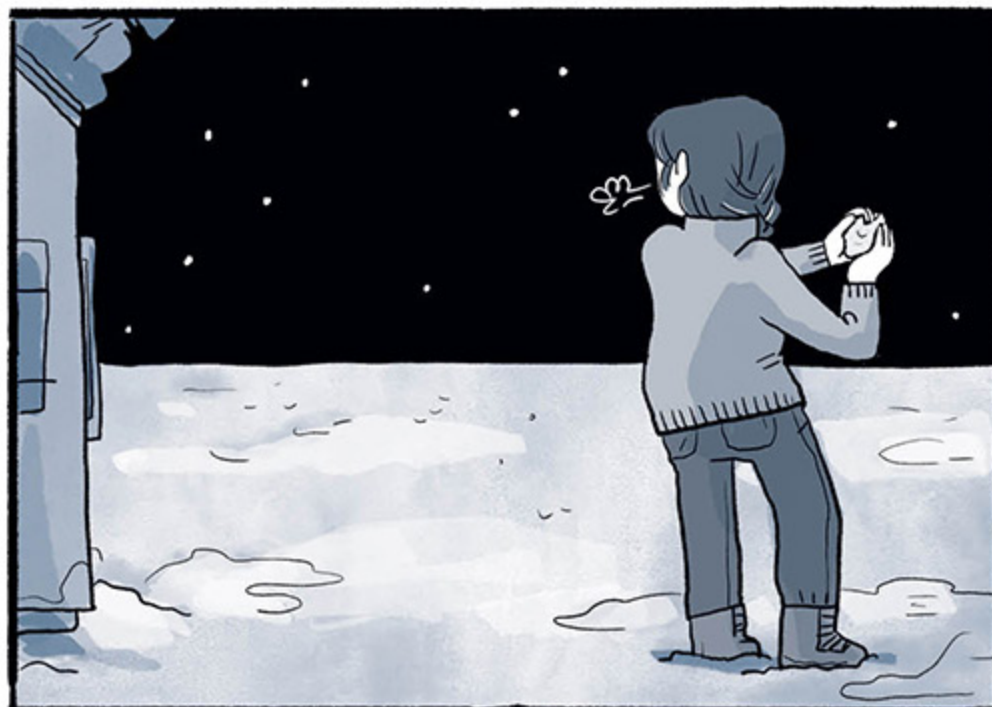
HOW ABOUT ONE OF
THOSE NICE HARD HATS.
IT'S NIGHT SHIFT—NO
ONE WILL KNOW.







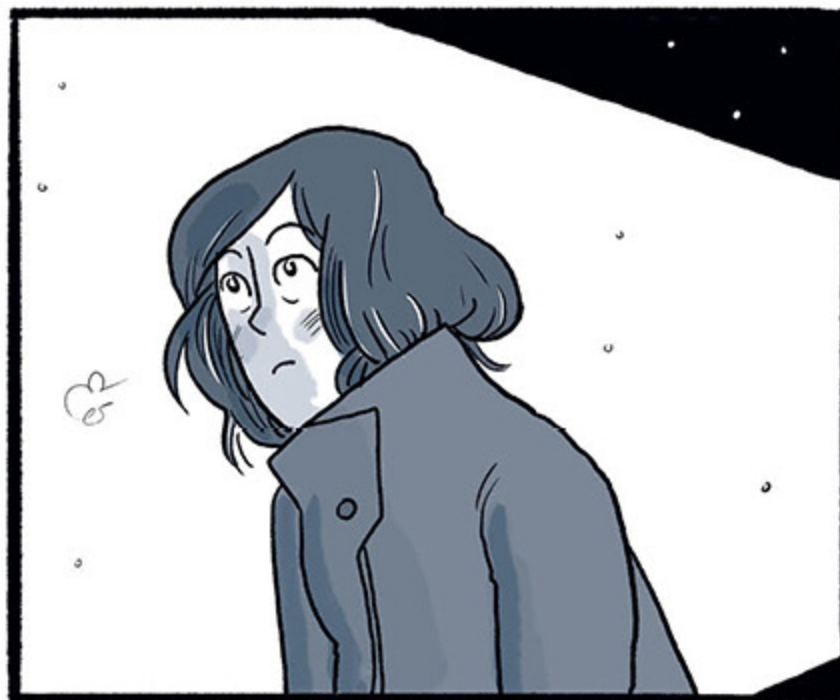
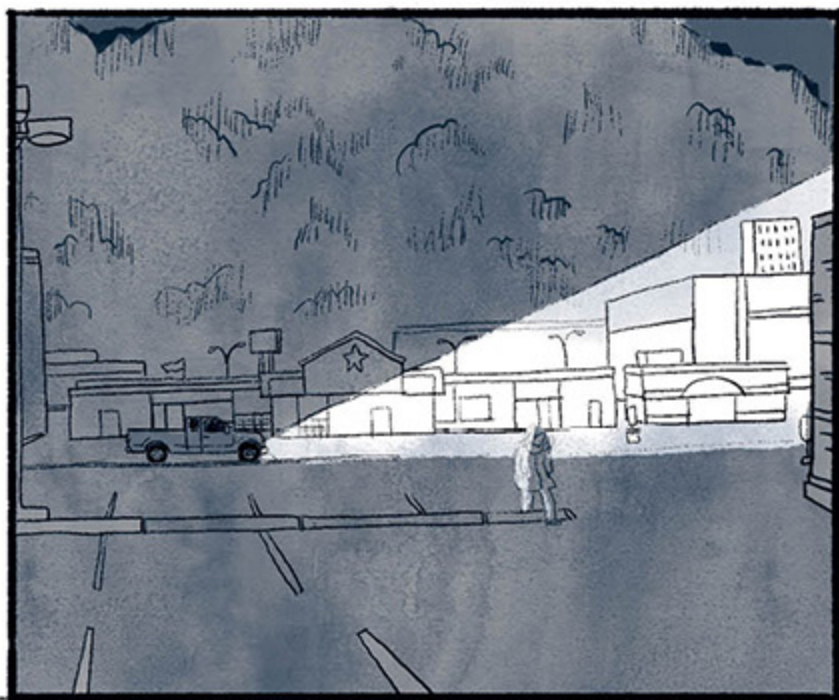


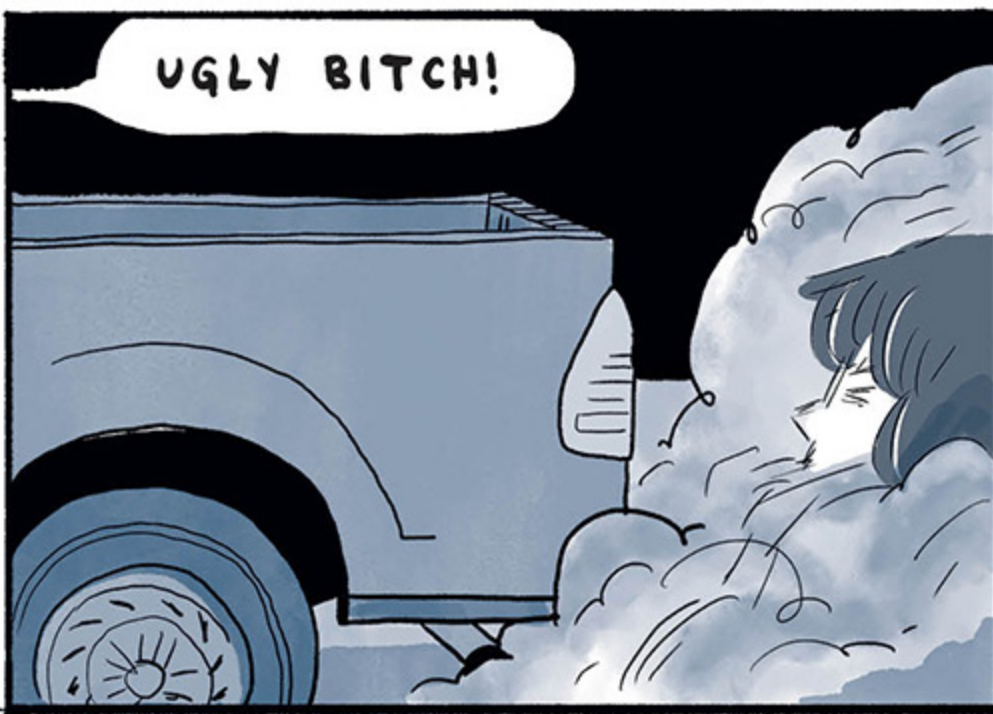




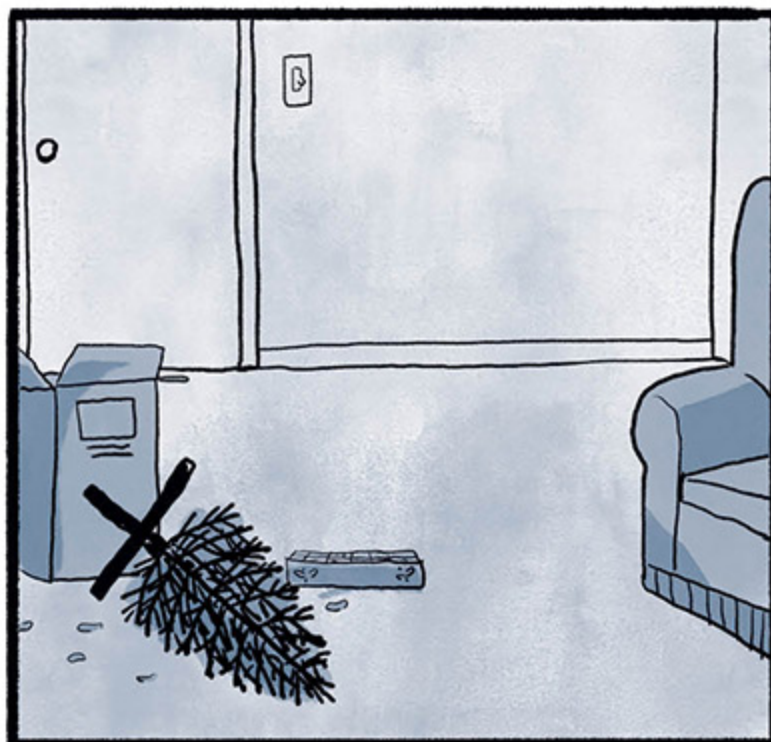
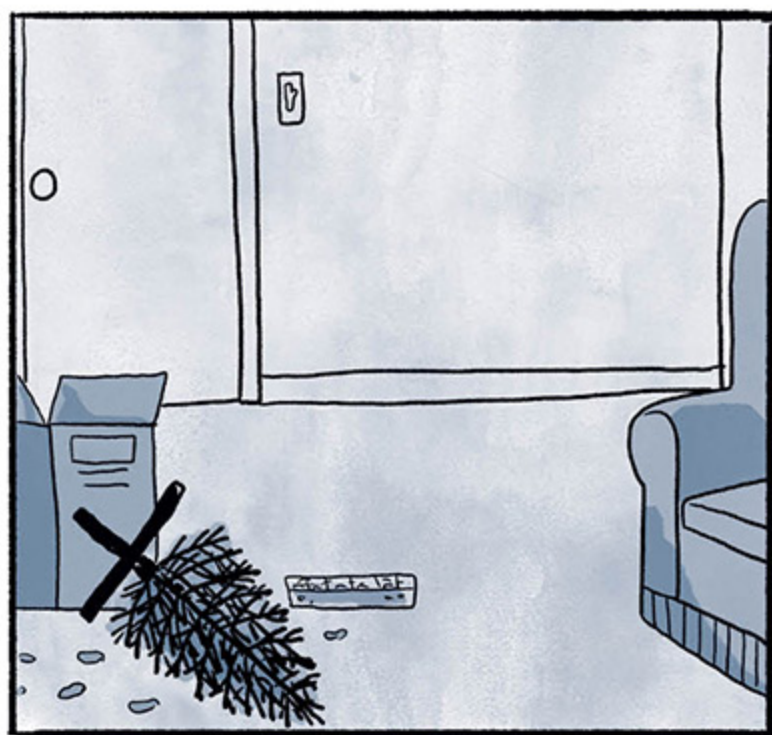




















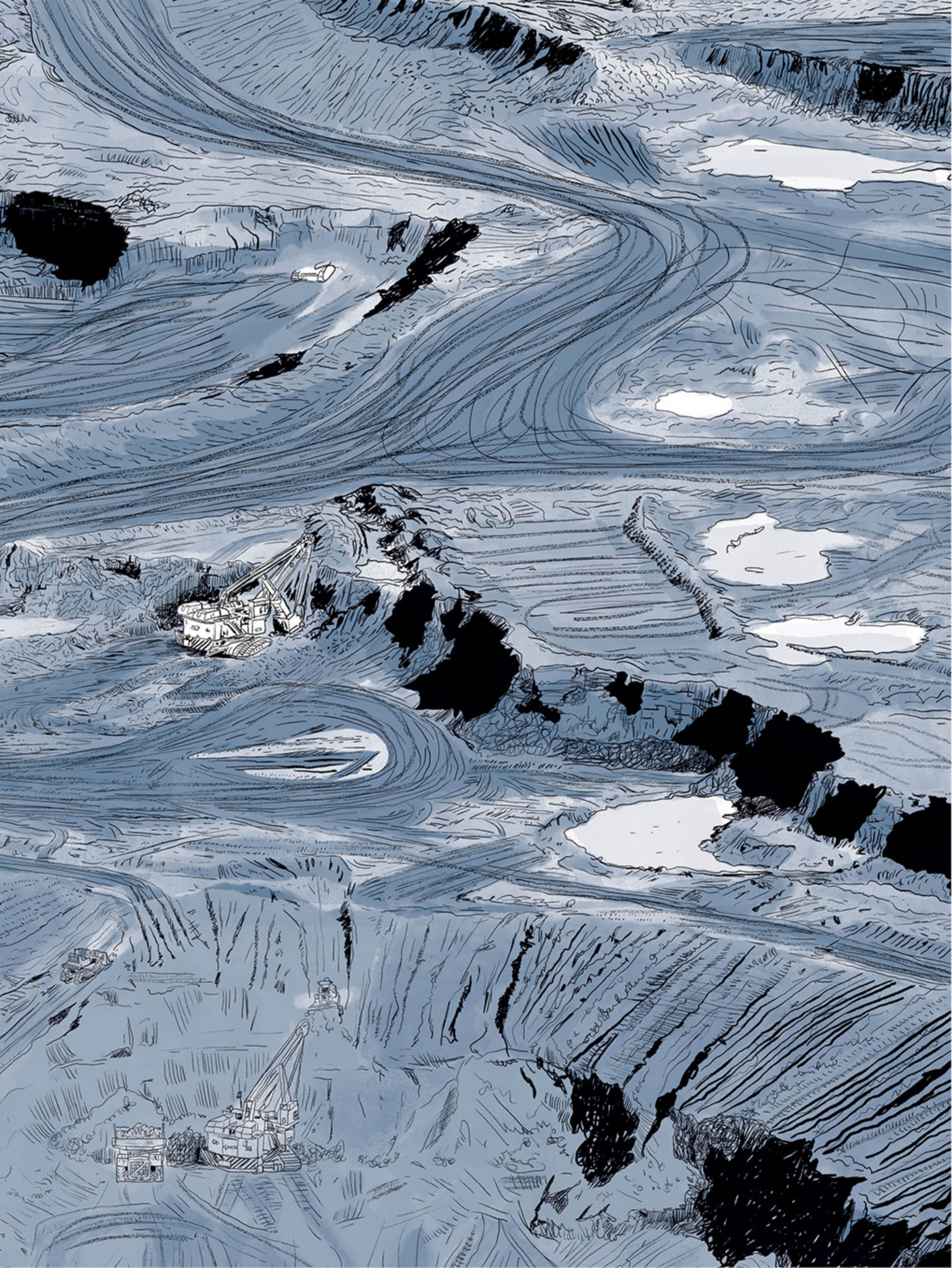








SYNCRUDE AURORA



SYNCRUDE

AURORA



KATIE
TOOL CRIB ATTENDANT
NOVA SCOTIA



CARMEN
TOOL CRIB ATTENDANT
ALBERTA



AMBROSE
MECHANIC FOREMAN
NEWFOUNDLAND



BRENT
MECHANIC
NEWFOUNDLAND



TYLER
MECHANIC
NEWFOUNDLAND



CHUCK
MECHANIC
NEWFOUNDLAND



SHANE
"THE BABY"
MECHANIC
NEWFOUNDLAND

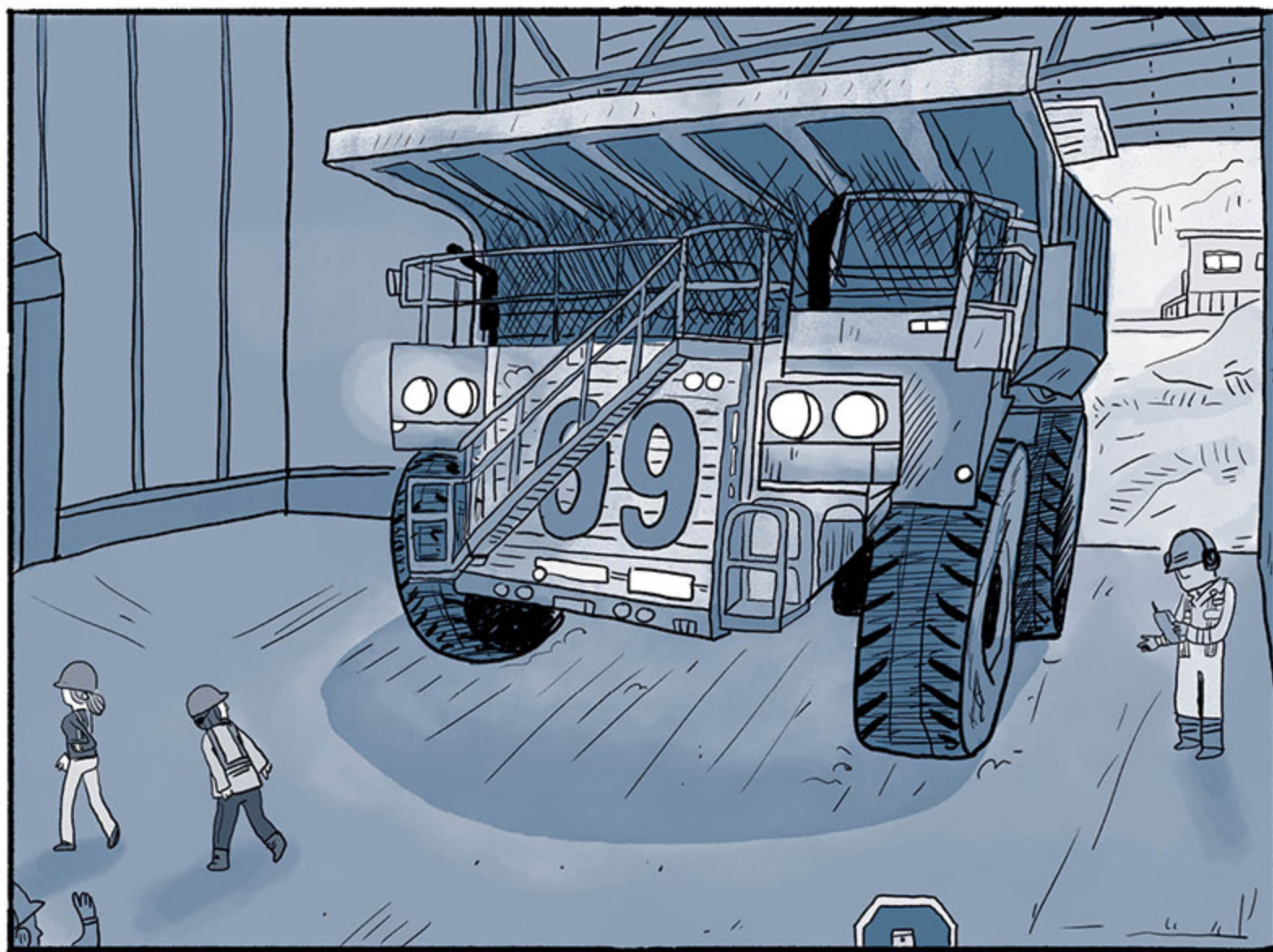


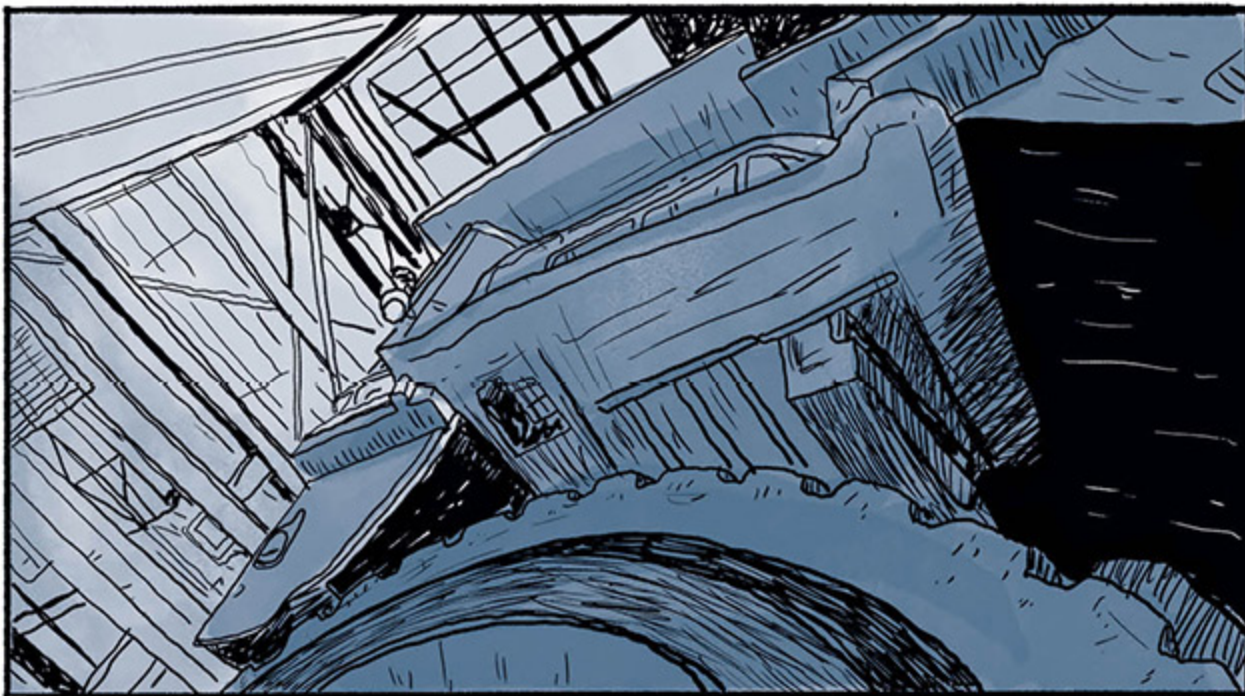
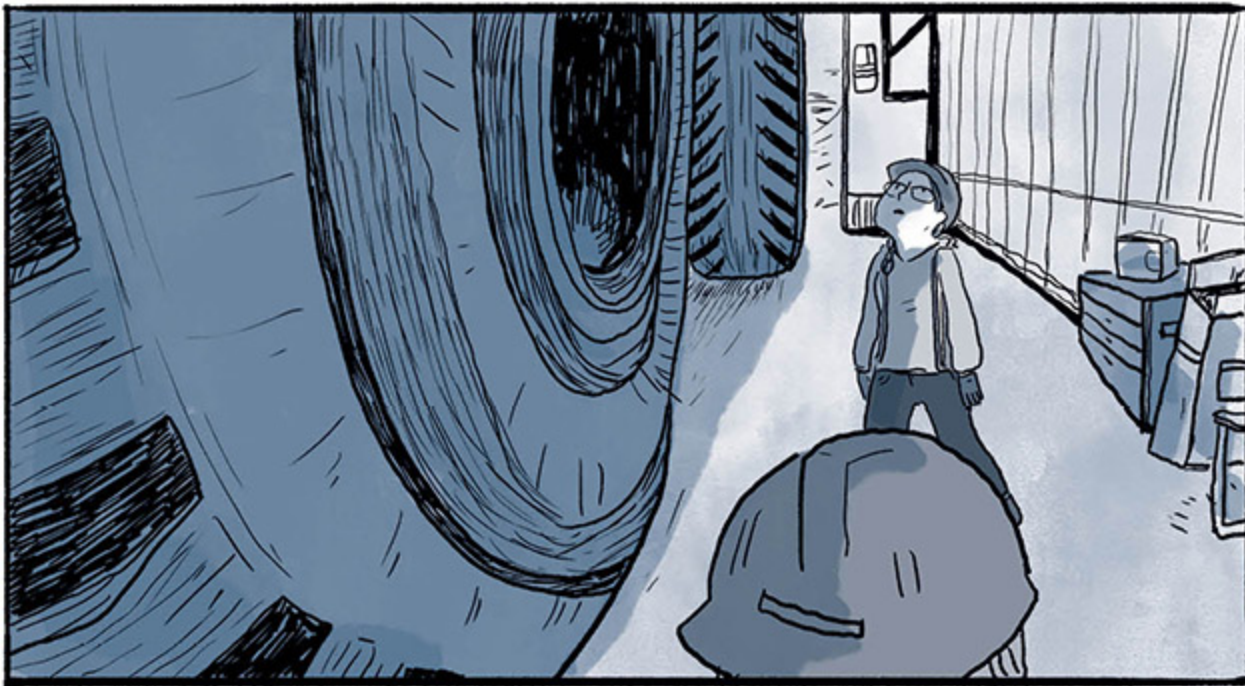
JODI
TOOL CRIB ATTENDANT
ALBERTA



ROSIE
TOOL CRIB ATTENDANT
ALBERTA



















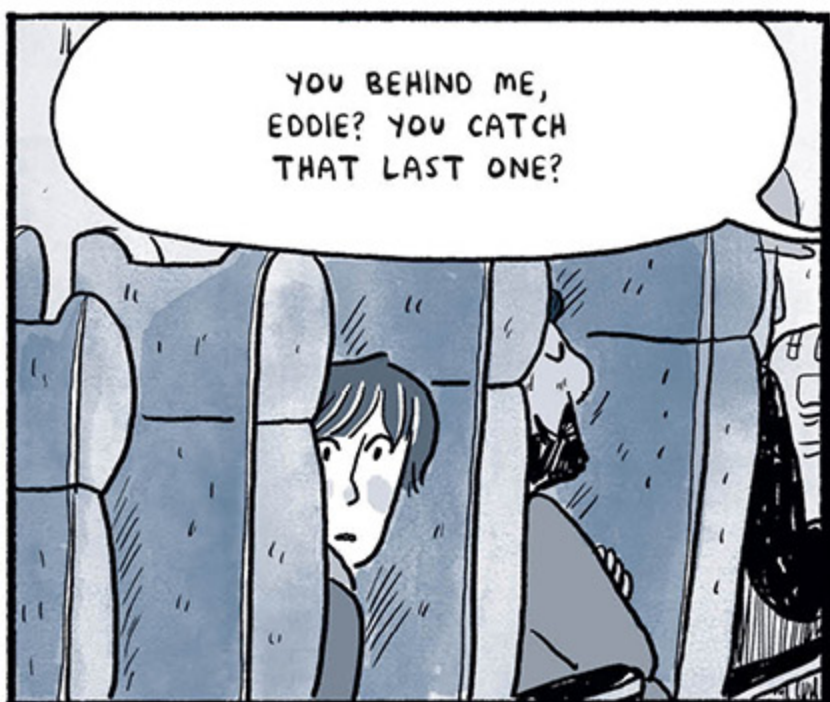








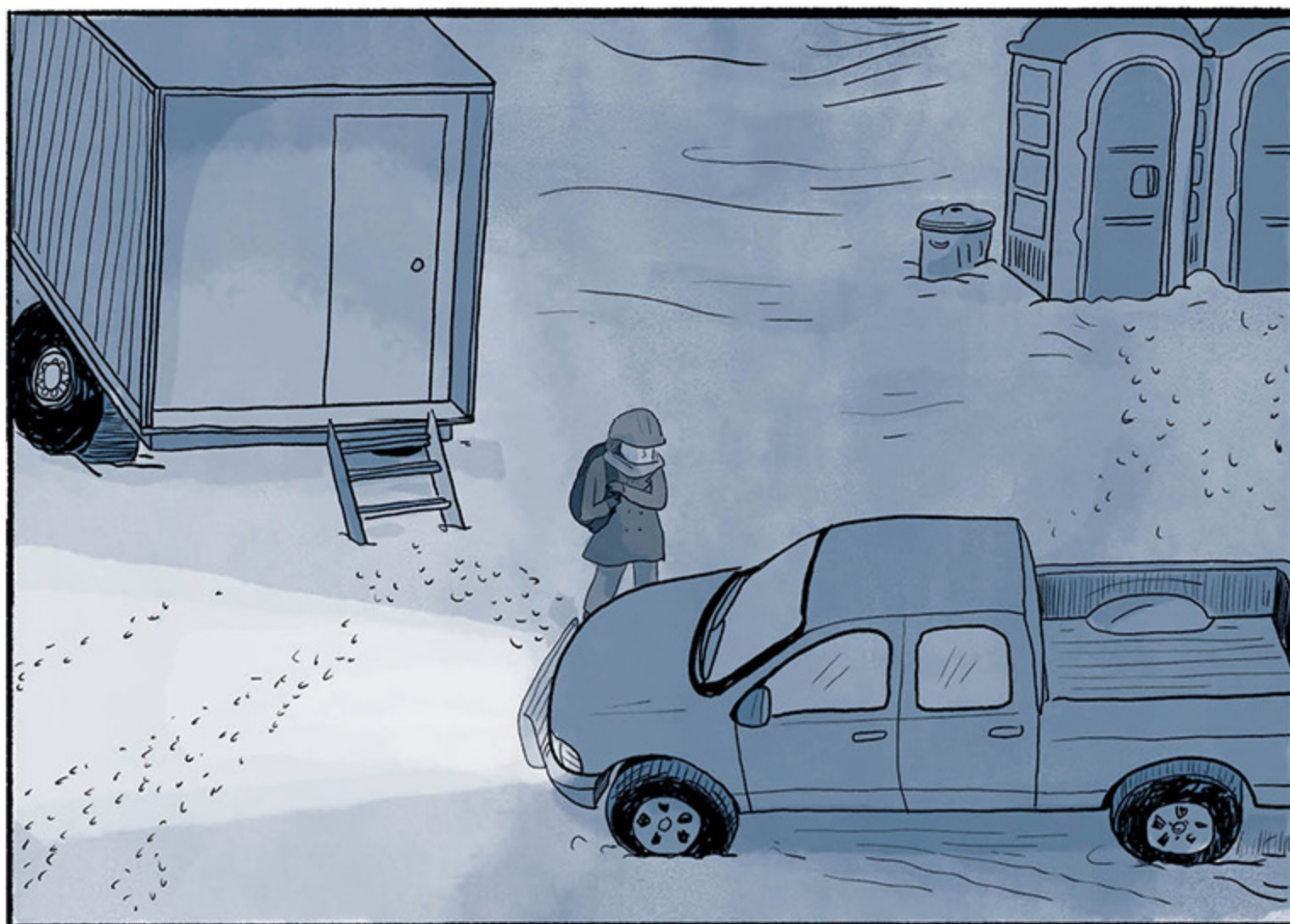


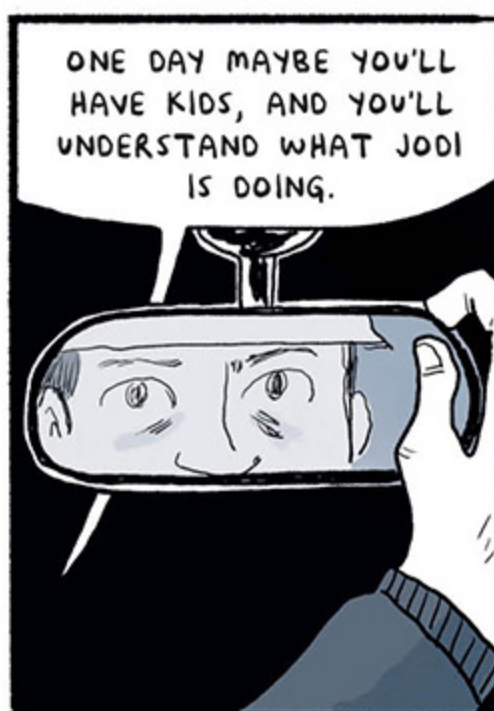








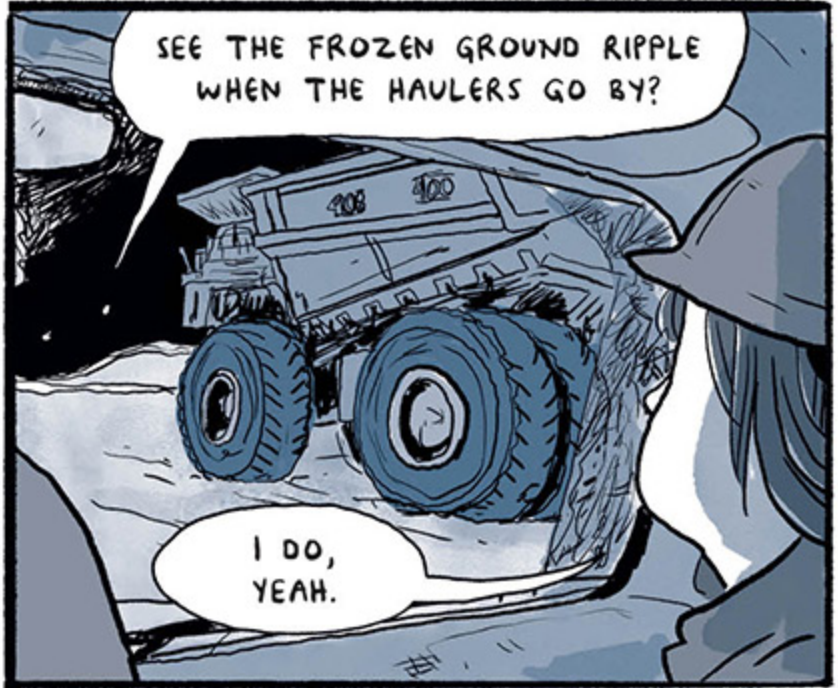












SEE THE FROZEN GROUND RIPPLE
WHEN THE HAULERS GO BY?

I DO,
YEAH.



LOOK AT THIS FOOL!
IF YOU'RE EVER DRIVING,
YOU STAY WELL BEHIND THEM,
HEAR? YOU CAN SEE THEM,
BUT THEY CAN'T SEE YOU.



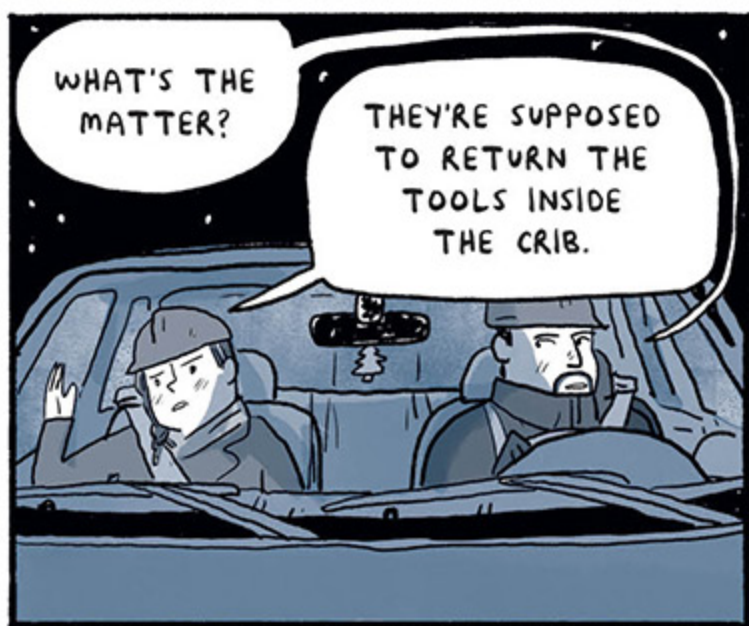
WHY DON'T YOU
HAVE A PROPER
WINTER COAT
ANYWAY?

THIS IS THE ONLY
ONE I OWN.



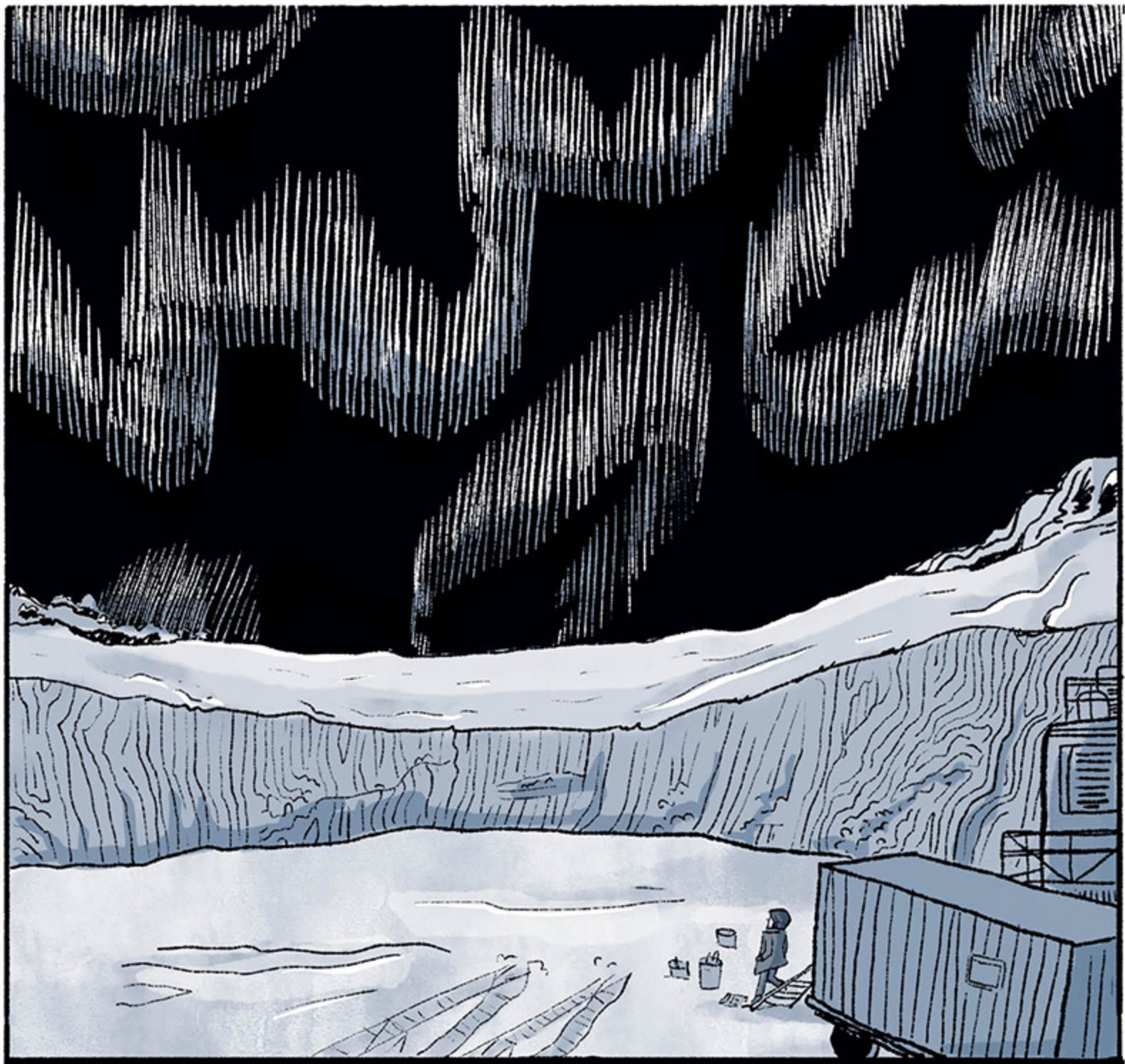
YOU KNOWS YOU
MAKE MONEY NOW,
DON'T YA?

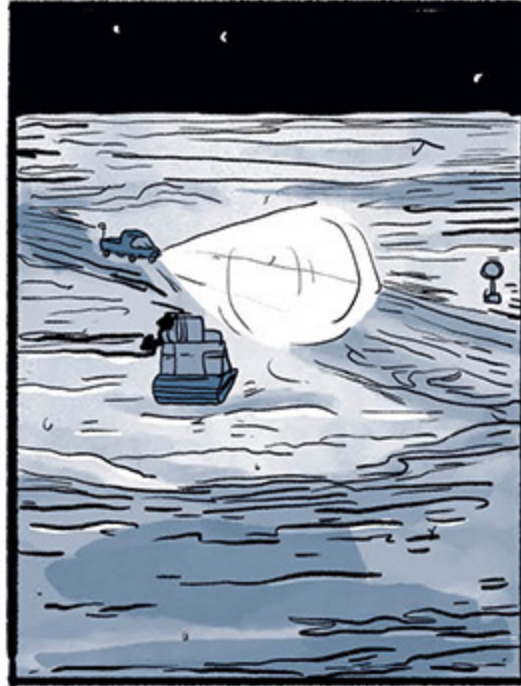
















FIND MY PEOPLE? DO YOU
KNOW WHAT SUCKS?



IF I'M THE ONLY
WOMAN, THEN EVERYONE
ELSE IS THE B'YS.

AND I'M
NOT.



I DON'T WANT
SHANE TO THINK
HE LIKES ME. I JUST
WANT TO BE WITH
THE B'YS!



WELL YOU AIN'T WITH
THE B'YS, MY DUCKY.

AH YOU KNOW
WHAT I MEAN!



I WANT MY PEOPLE.

MY PEOPLE
DON'T WANT ME.



HERE'S YOUR CROSS-
SHIFT BUS NOW.

I'M SORRY,
AMBROSE.

IT'S OKAY.



IF YOU GET TO THAT
CAMP AND DECIDE YOU
STILL WANT A GO AT
THE HEAVY HAULERS HERE,
YOU CAN, ALRIGHT?



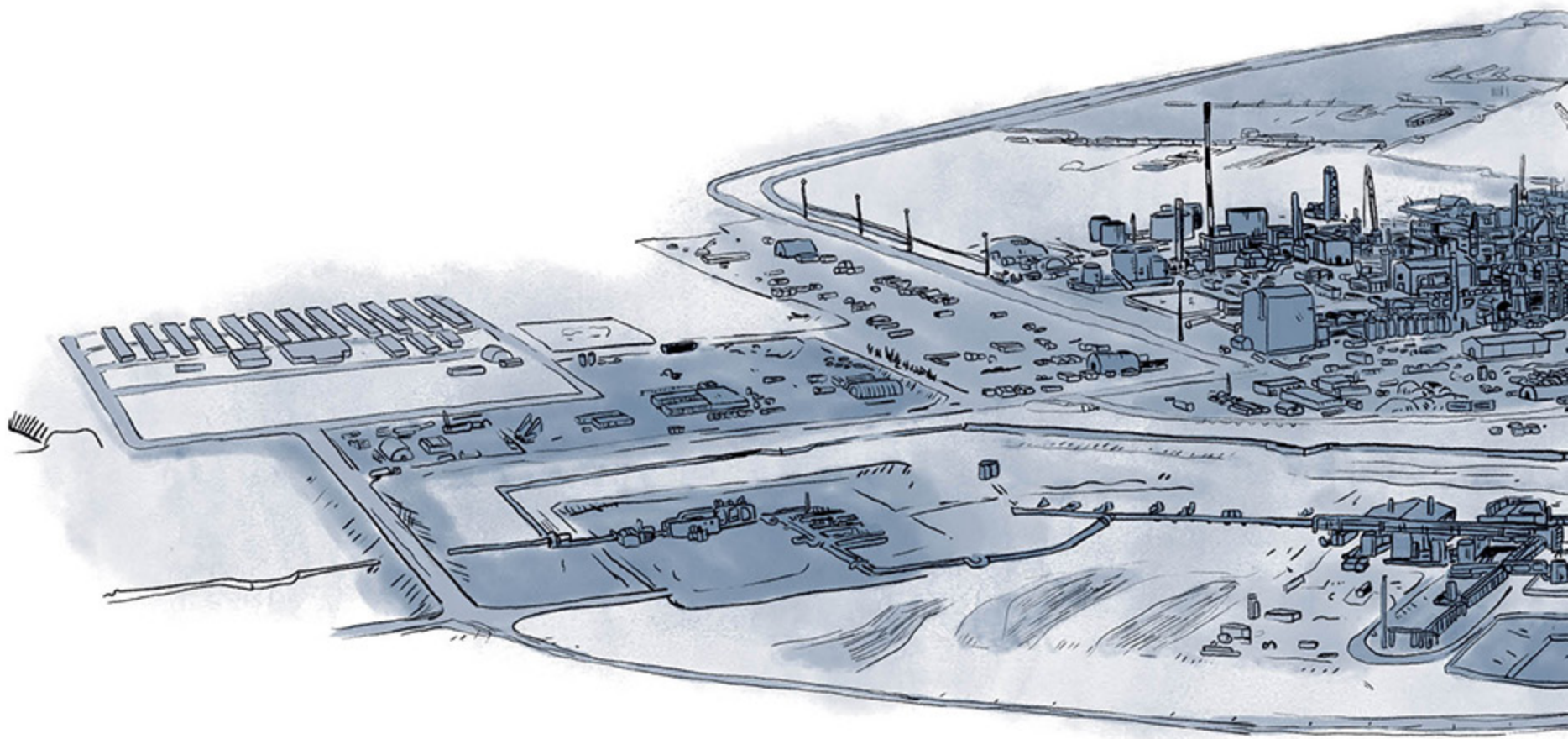
I DON'T KNOW,
WHAT IF YOU'RE BACK
IN NEWFOUNDLAND?

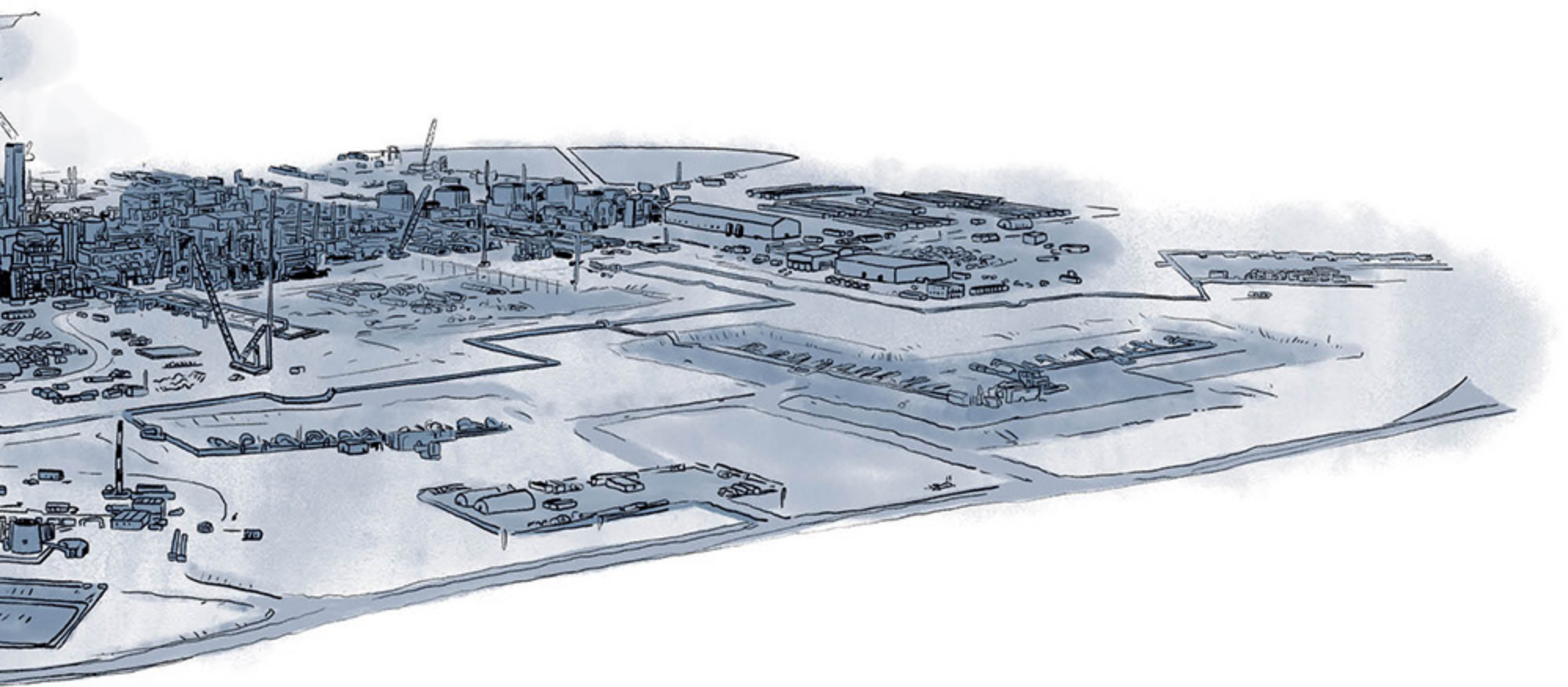


I'LL BE HERE.



LONG LAKE OPTI-NEXEN





LONG LAKE



KATIE
TOOL CRIB ATTENDANT
NOVA SCOTIA



LEON
TOOL CRIB LEAD HAND
ALBERTA



MIKE
MECHANIC
BRITISH COLUMBIA



DAMIAN
TOOL CRIB ATTENDANT
ALBERTA



ANGUS
SWAMPER
NOVA SCOTIA



DOUGIE
TOOL CRIB ATTENDANT
NOVA SCOTIA



BRIAN
MECHANIC
BRITISH COLUMBIA



RUSSELL
WAREHOUSE FOREMAN
NEWFOUNDLAND



TRISH
ADMIN
SASKATCHEWAN



JOE
EQUIPMENT COORDINATOR
NOVA SCOTIA

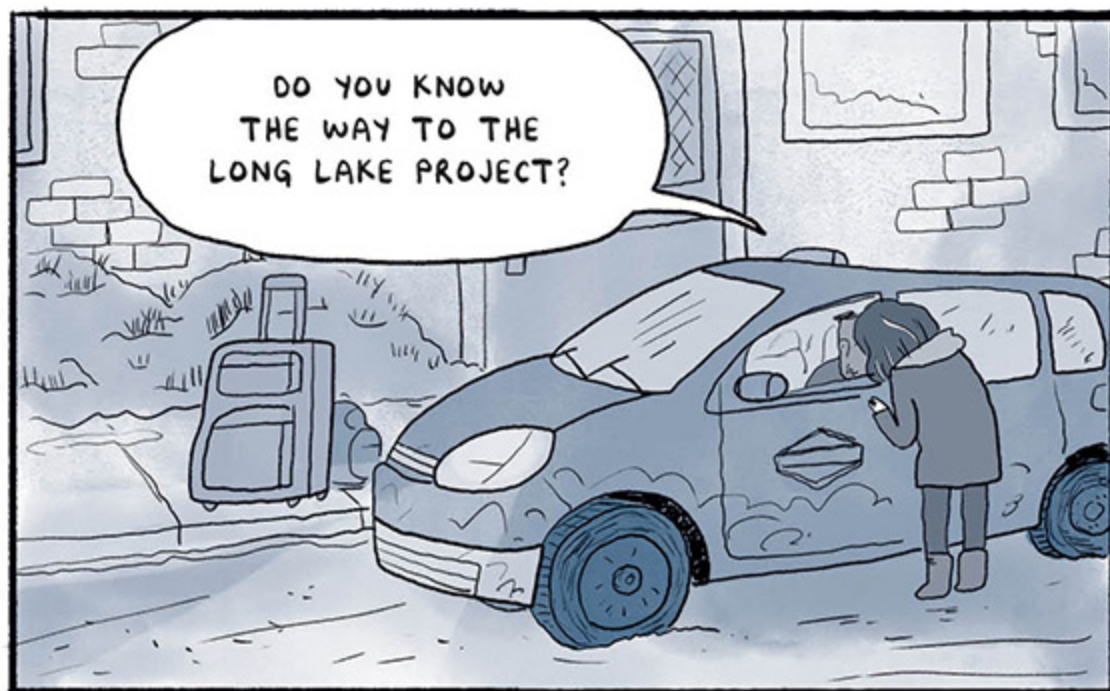


LINDSAY
ADMIN
ONTARIO

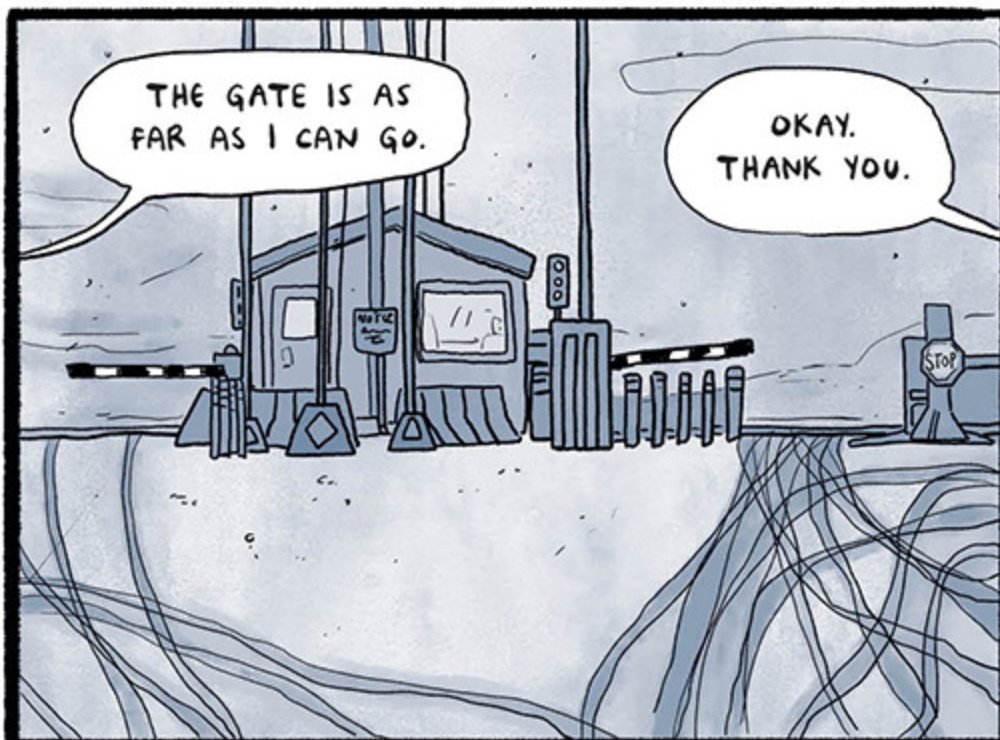


BECKY
ADMIN
NOVA SCOTIA

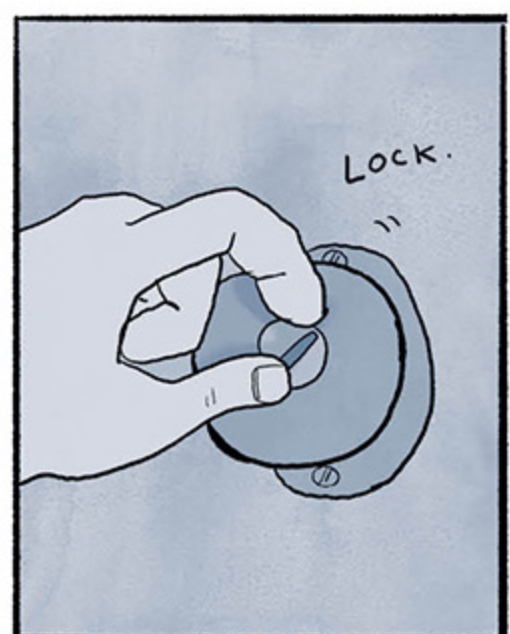








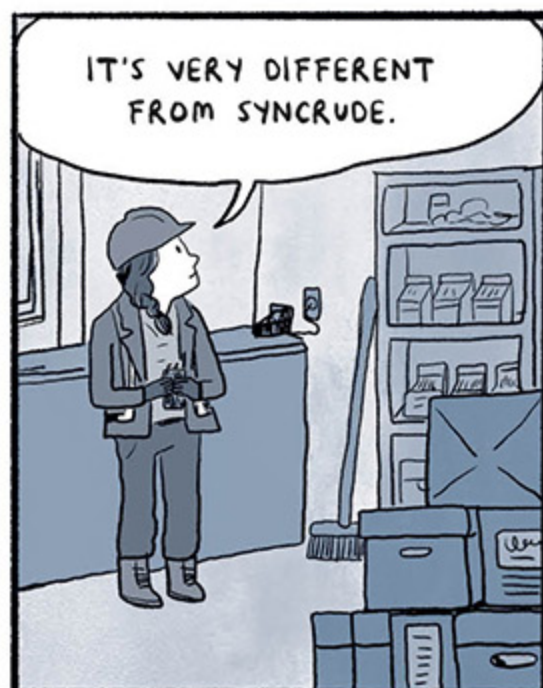




















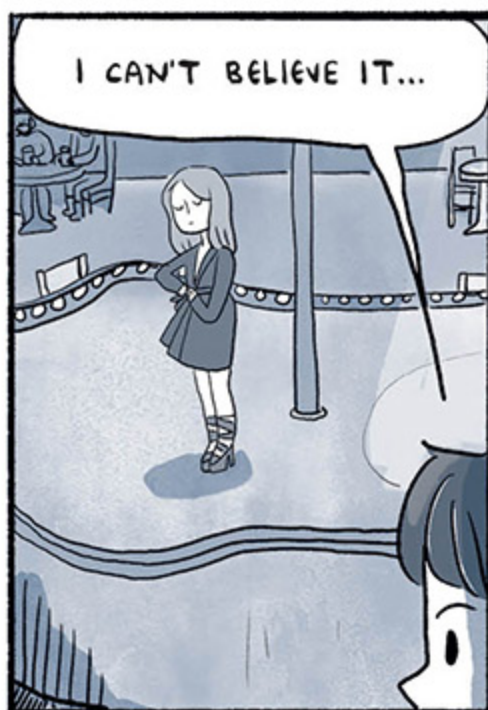






















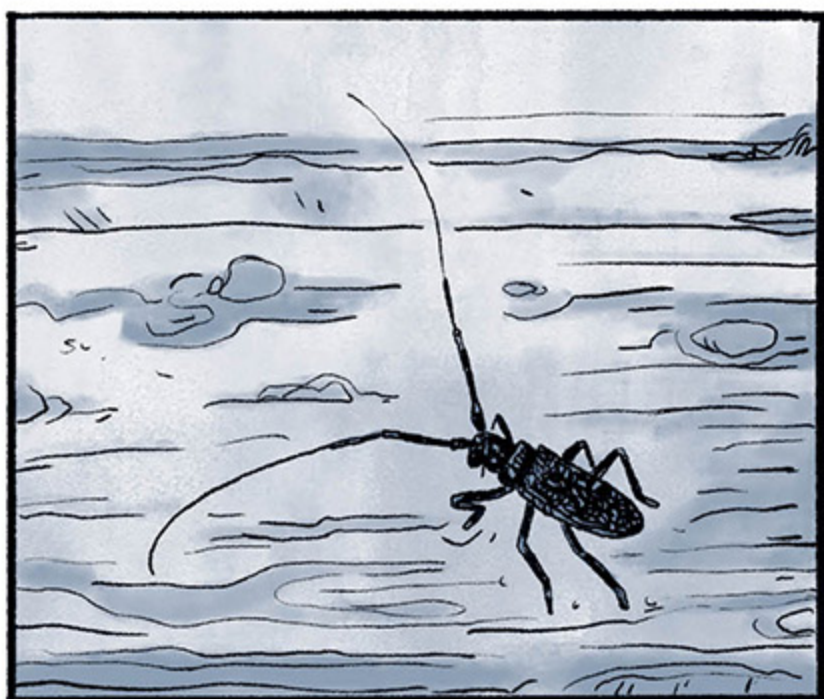
















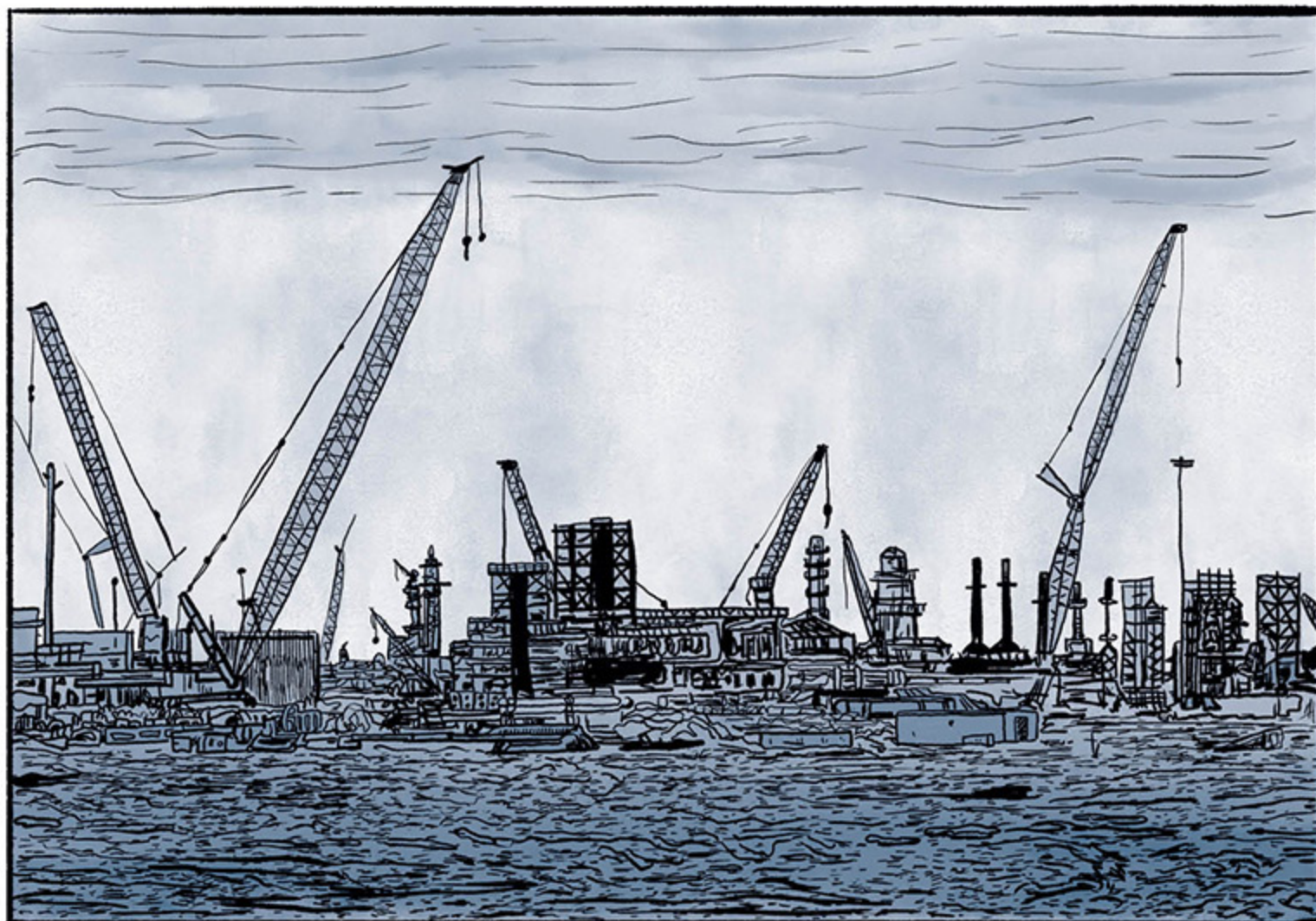




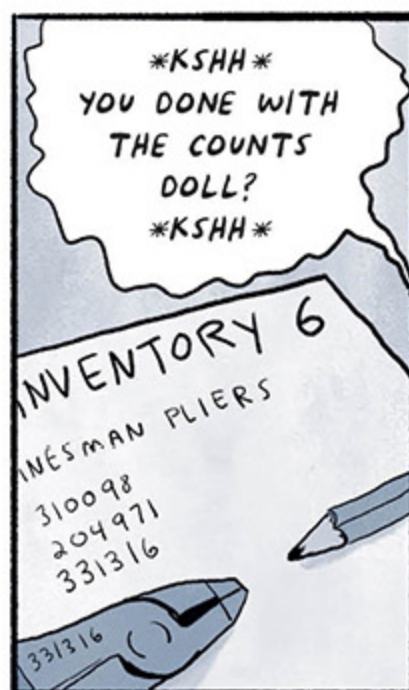


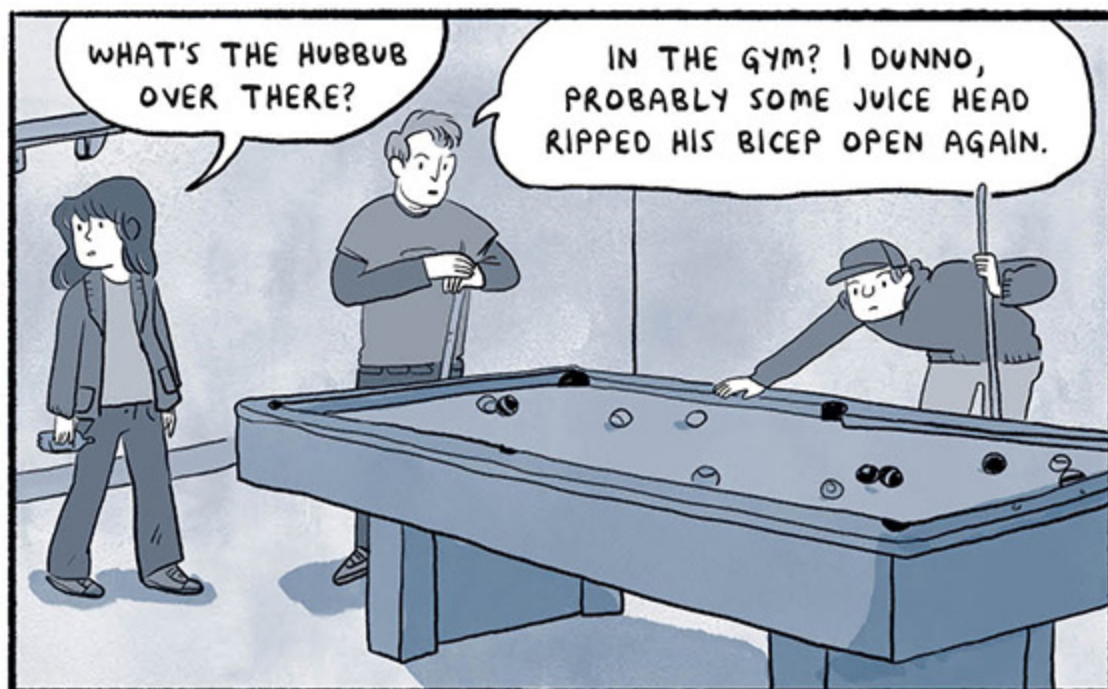














HEY! HEY!



YOU FUCKING ANYONE?



NO.



YOU WANT A BEER?



HE SAID WHAT!



I KNOW, RIGHT? AT LEAST HE CUT TO THE POINT.



WELL, DO YOU WANT A BEER? JASE GOT ME SOME FROM TOWN!



REAALLLY. HOW'S THAT GOING THEN?

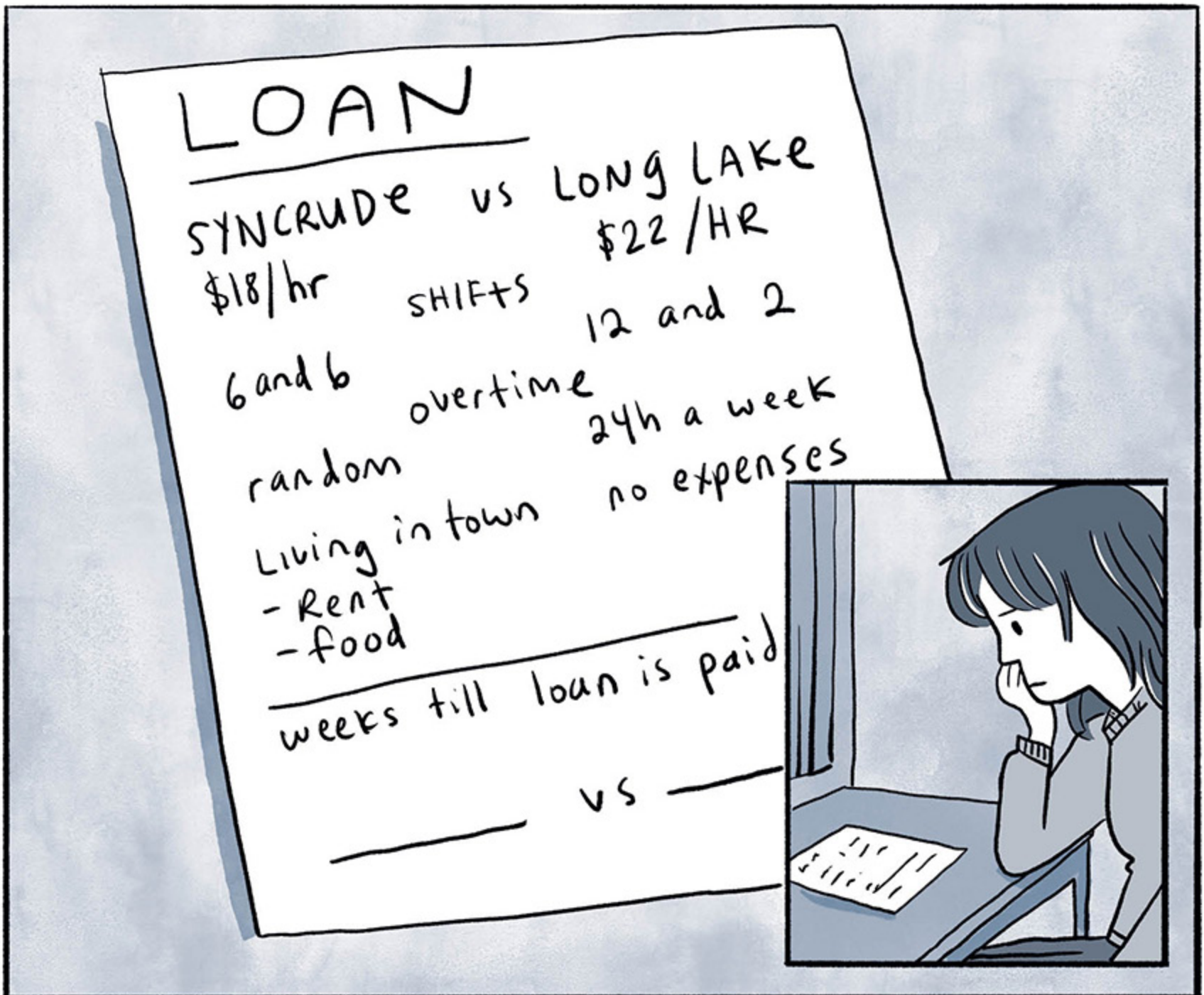
I LOVE HIMMM

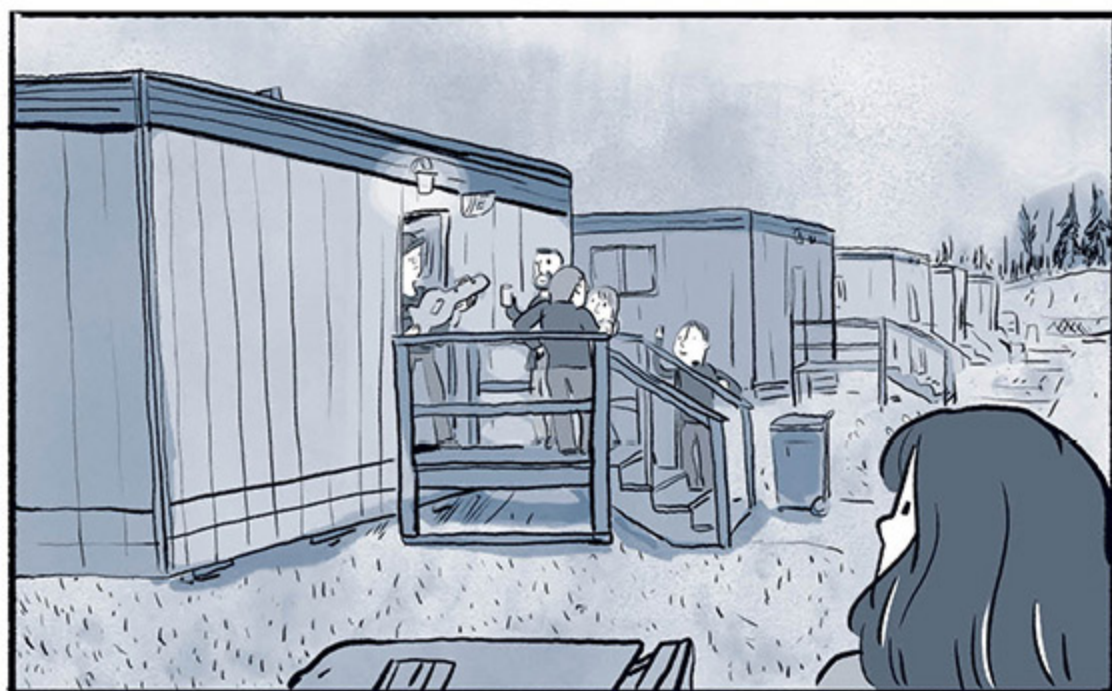






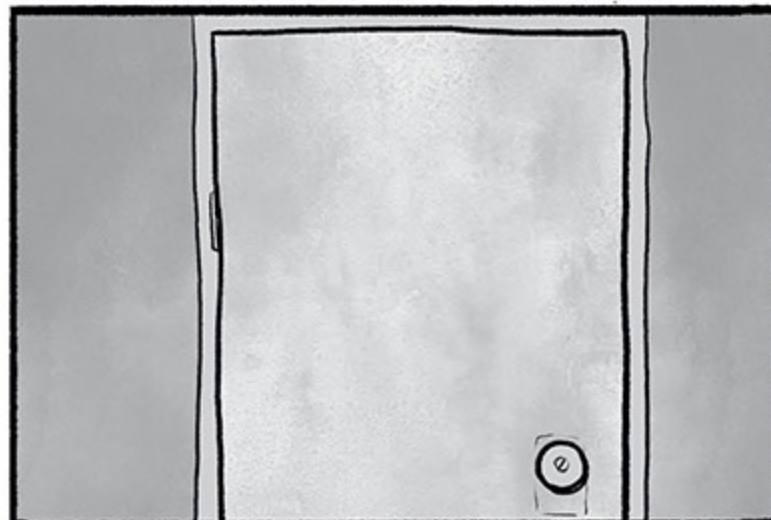














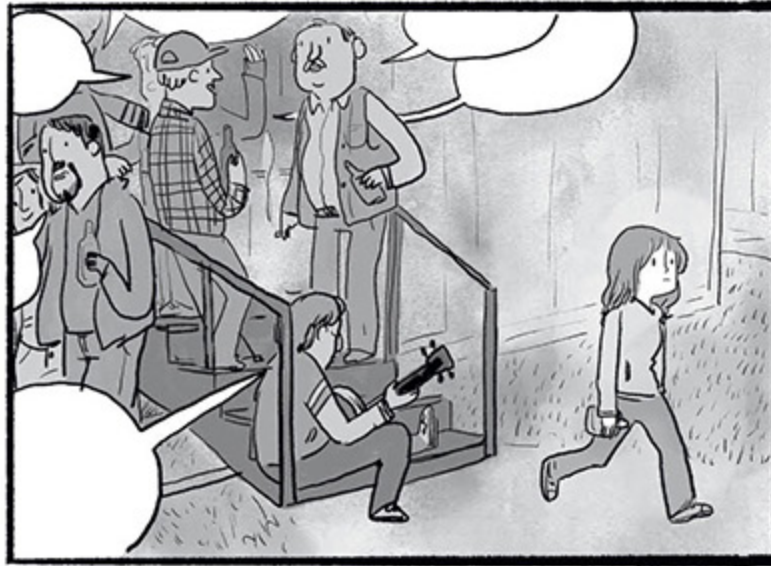
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[REDACTED]

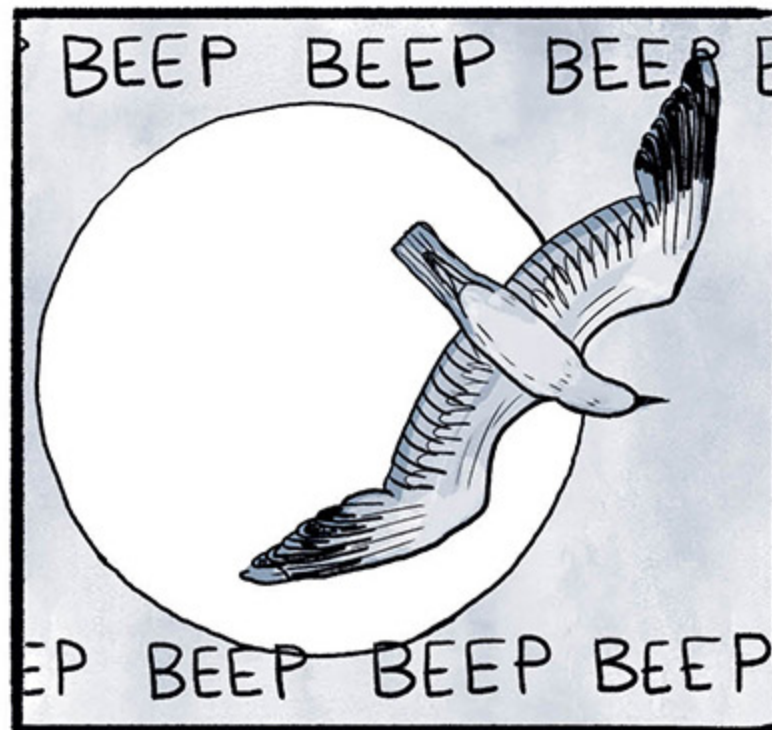
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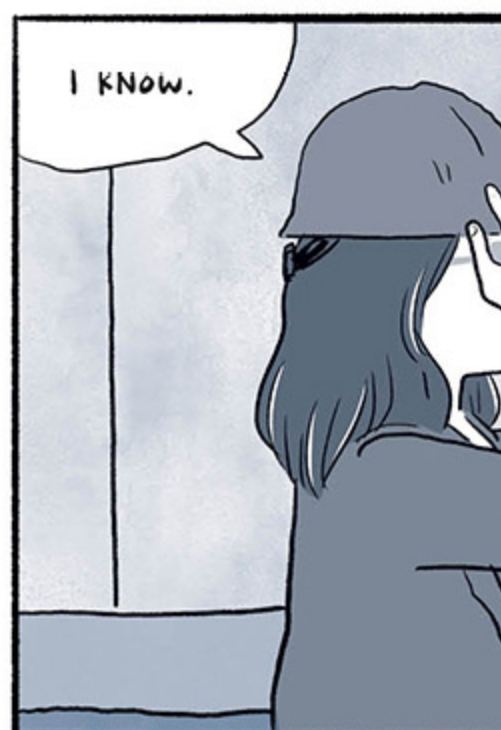
[REDACTED]













LEON, DO YOU THINK
YOU'RE DIFFERENT SINCE
YOU CAME HERE?



DO YOU THINK PEOPLE
ARE DIFFERENT AT HOME
THAN THEY ARE HERE?



'COURSE
THEY ARE.

THIS IS A
RAT CAGE.



THEN,
ARE THEY
DIFFERENT
FOREVER?

WHAT ARE
YOU GETTING
AT?



PEOPLE DO THINGS HERE THEY
WOULDN'T DO AT HOME.

PEOPLE ARE BORED
AND CRAZY.



BUT IS THAT WHO
THEY REALLY ARE?



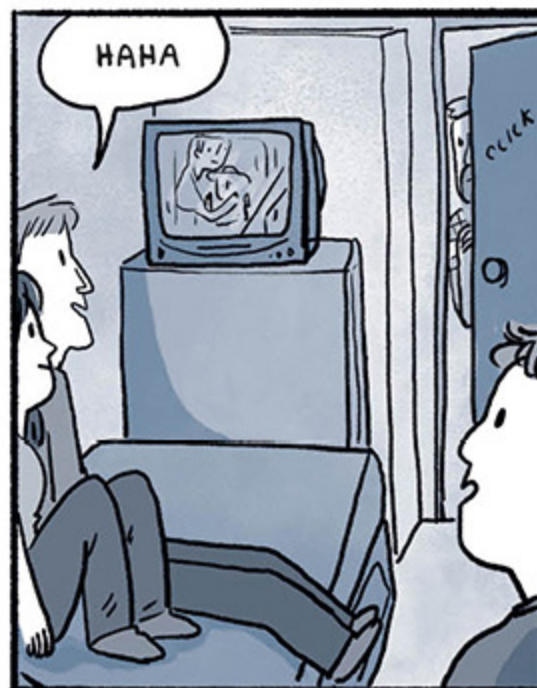
OR ARE THEY WHO
THEY ARE AT HOME?

WHAT I
THINK
IS...



WHATEVER
YOU TOOK IN
SCHOOL...

THEY
CHARGED YOU
TOO MUCH
FOR IT.

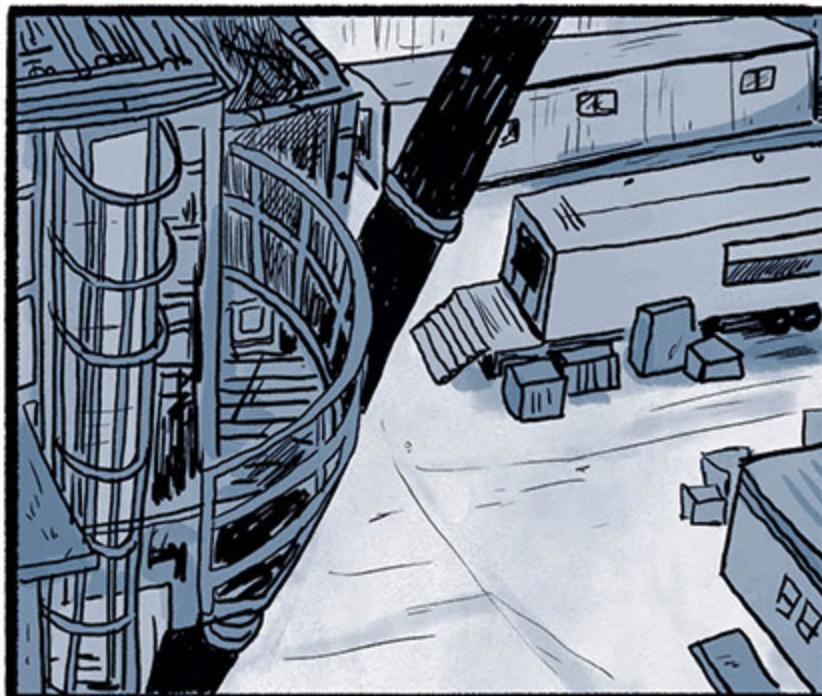












YOU'RE BACK! IT'S NOT
THE OLD FELLA TODAY!



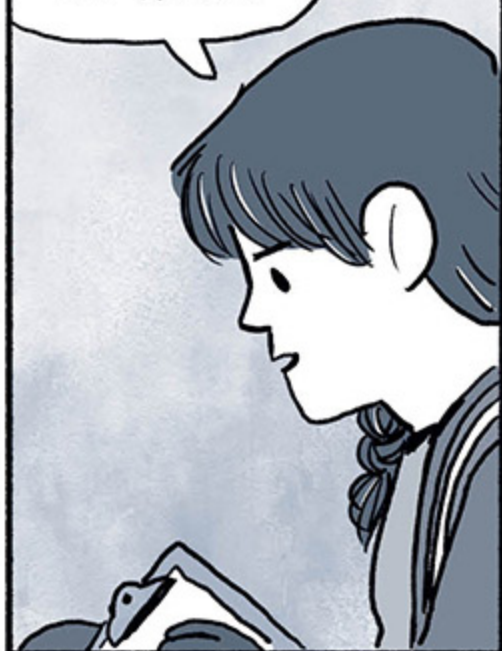
YEAH,
I'M BACK.



ARE YOU GOING TO
COME PARTY WITH
US YET?



NO THANKS.



SHE ALWAYS
SAYS NO,
B'Y.

AW COME
ON.



WE'RE GOING TO TOWN
NEXT WEEKEND TO A
BUDDY'S HOUSE, BEST
KIND, JIGG'S DINNER.



I HAVE ONE NIGHT OFF
NEXT WEEKEND.



IT...WOULD BE NICE TO
LEAVE CAMP...TO GET
OUT OF HERE.

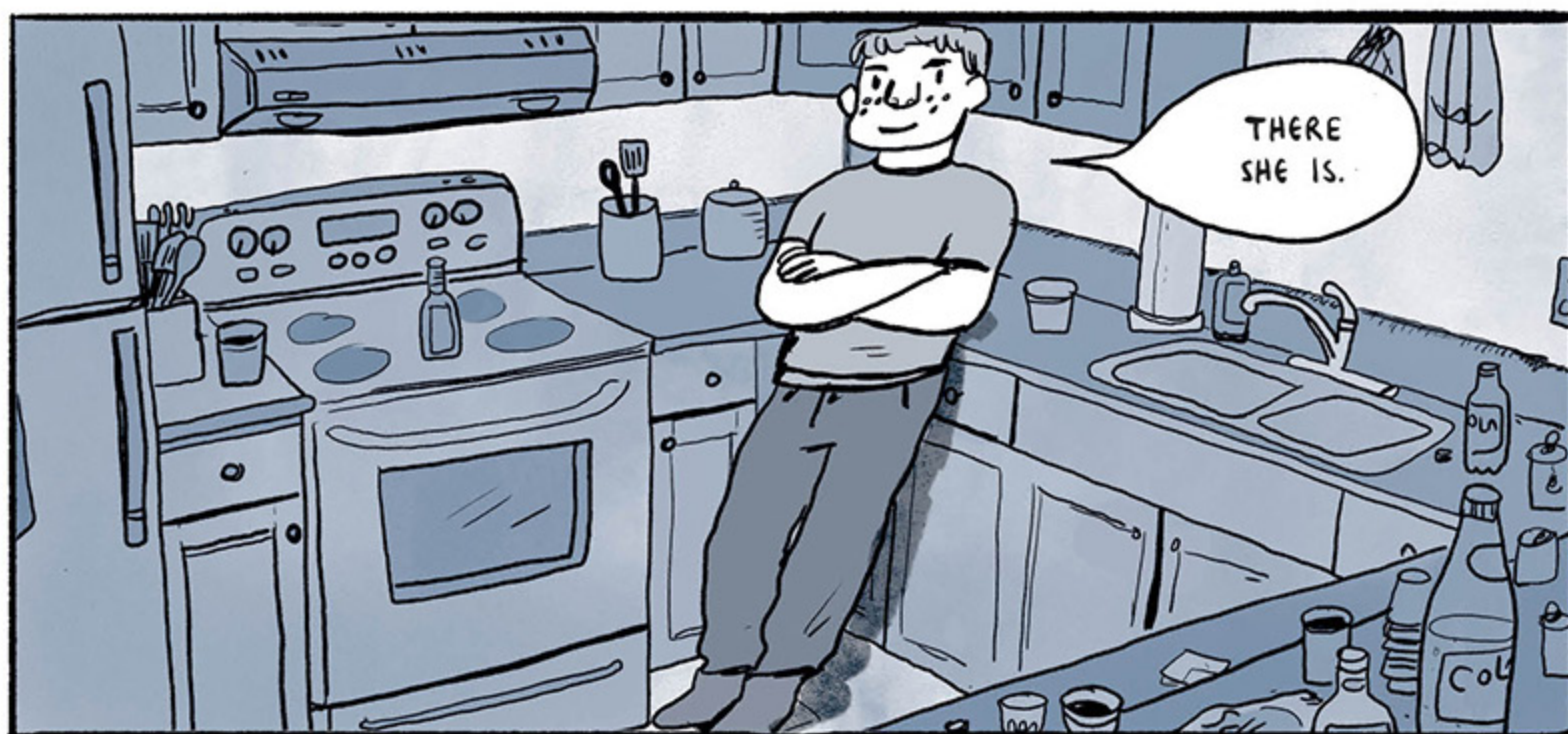


SHE'S
COMING!



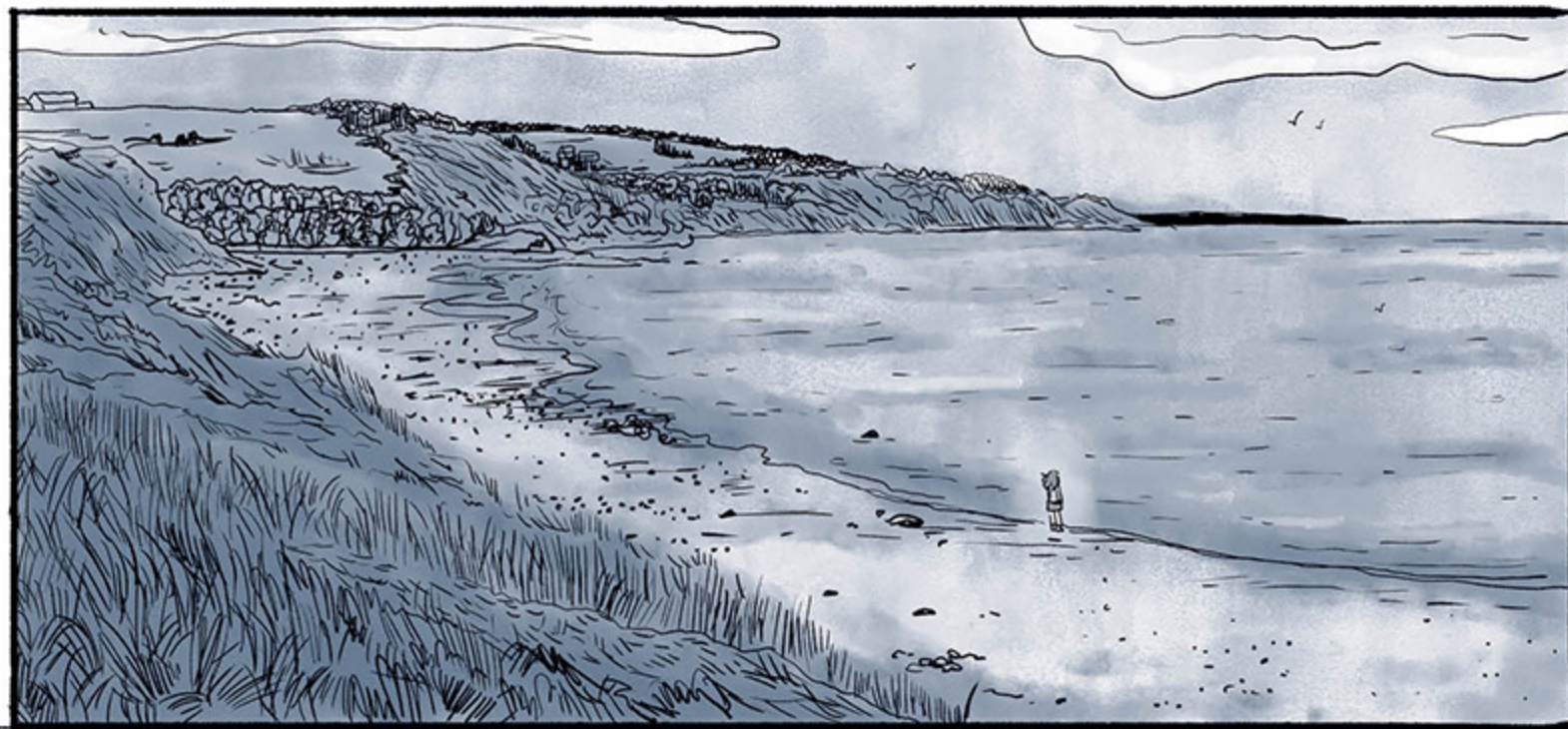






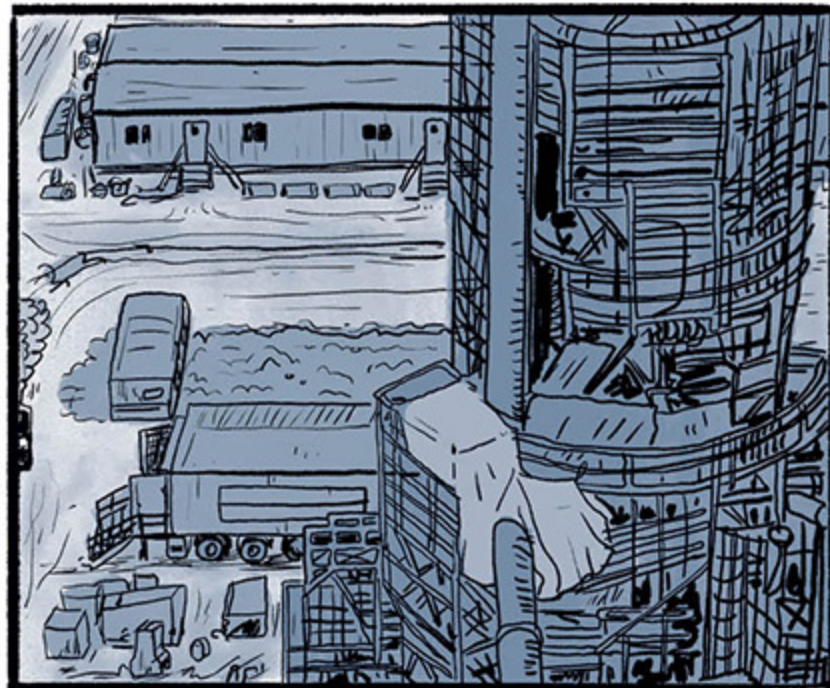
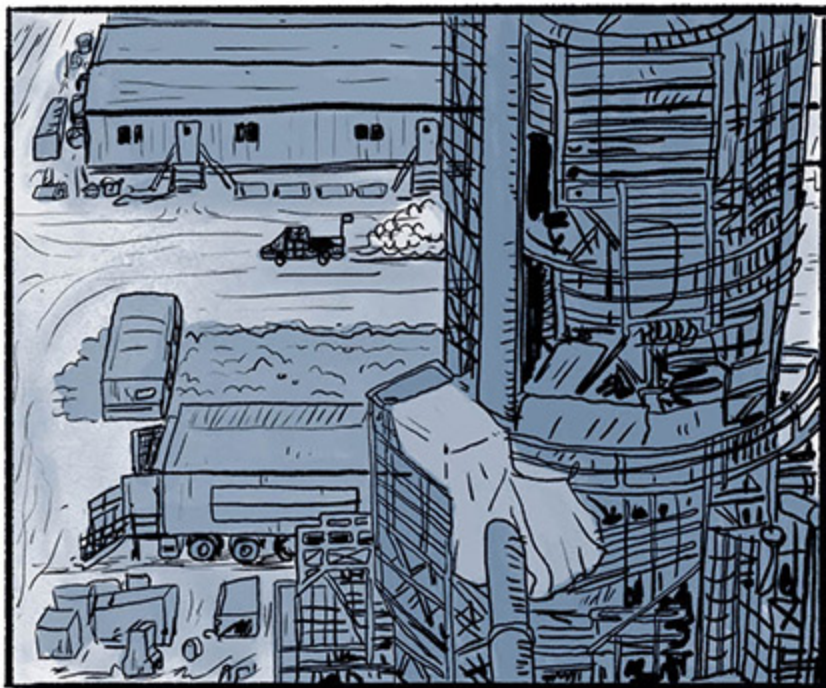






ONE MONTH LATER

























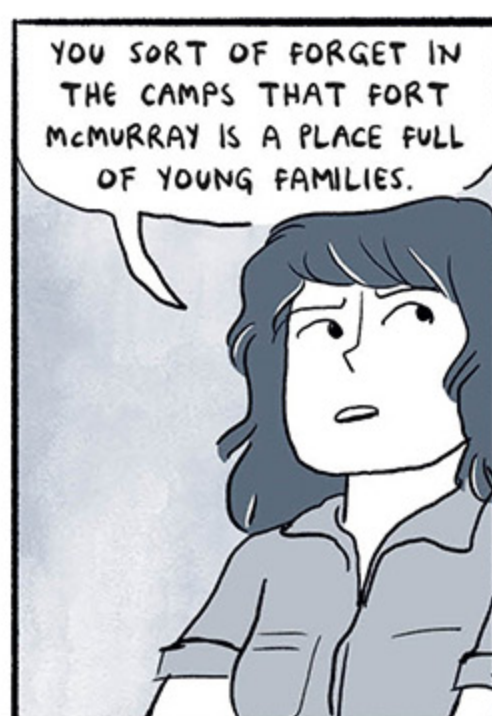








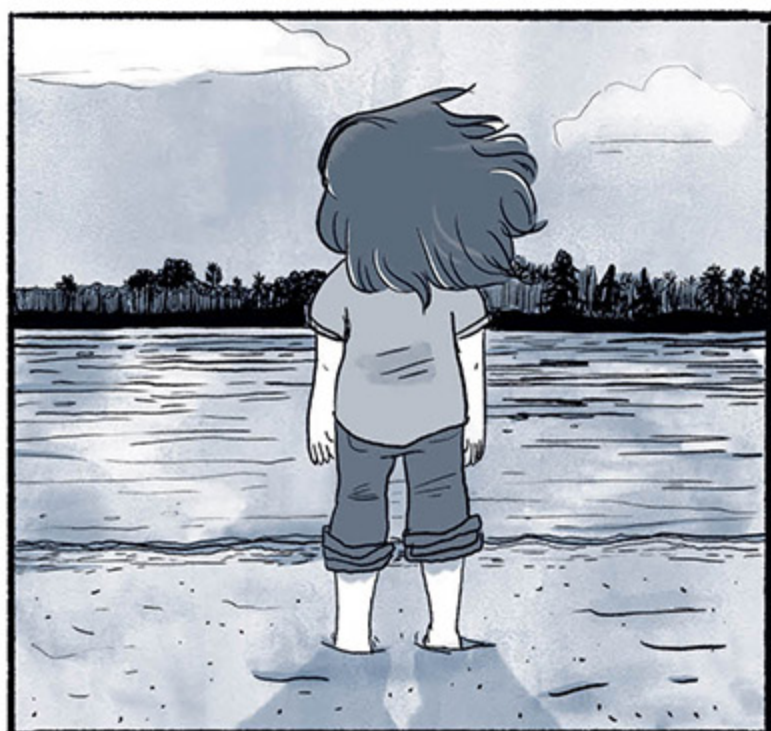




♫
tryin to catch
me ridin dirty
tryin to catch
me ridin dirty
♫







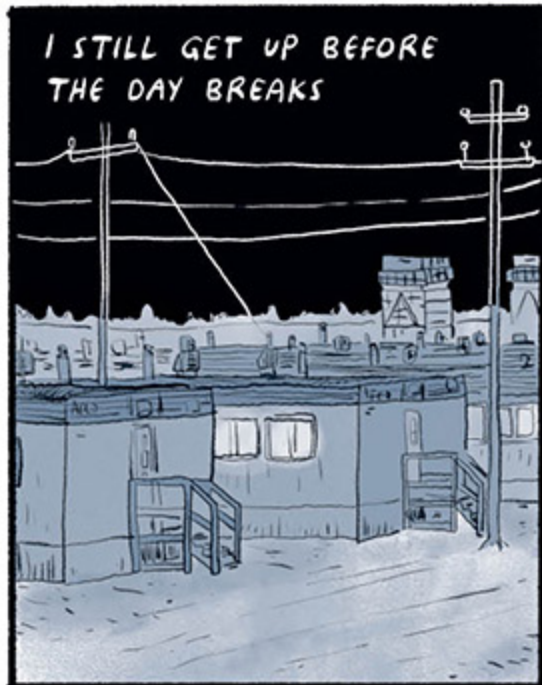












WHERE AM I GOING
TO GO NOW?

WHAT
ABOUT
THIS BOAT
I OWN?



WHAT ABOUT
THIS OLD PIANO?

WHAT ABOUT MY
FATHER'S BONES?



LAST NIGHT
I DREAMED
THAT I WAS
SAILING...

LAST NIGHT
I DREAMED
THAT I WAS
SAILING...

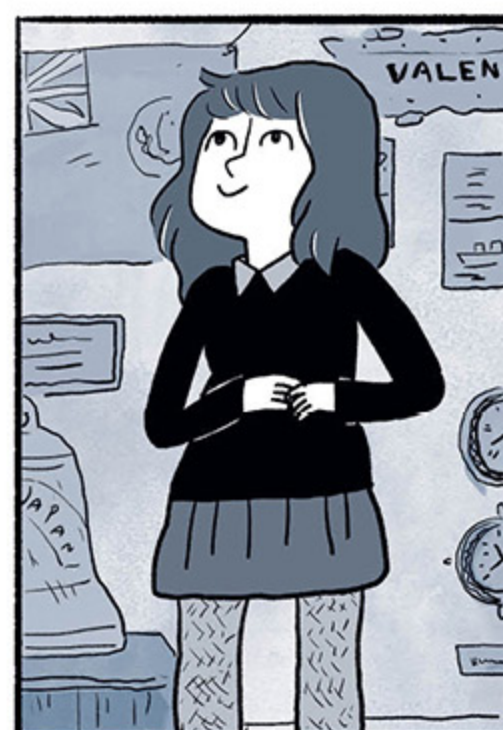












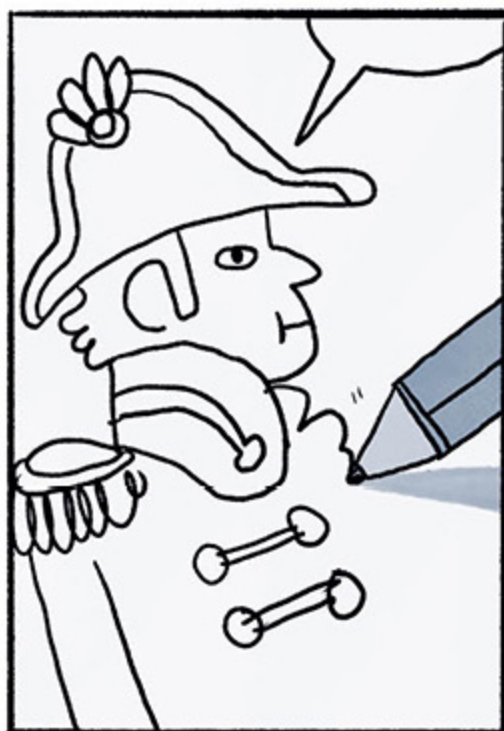


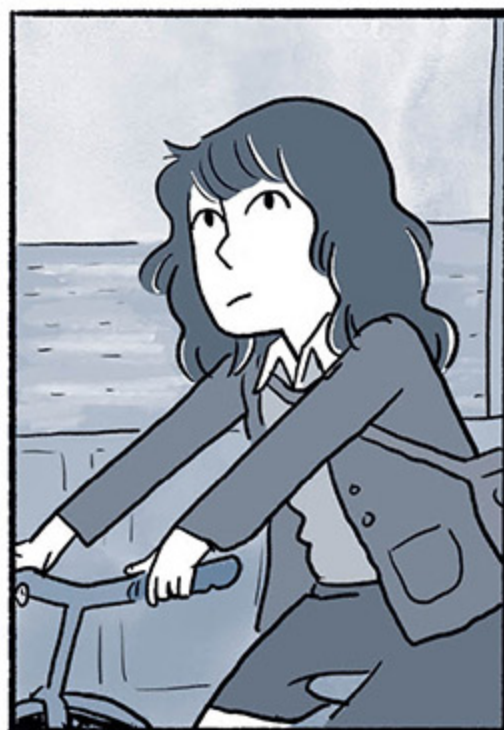




















WE CANNOT
GIVE ANY
REPRIEVE FROM
STUDENT LOAN
PAYMENTS.

OKAY.
RIGHT.



IT'S JUST...



I'M WORKING TWO JOBS
HERE. ONE IS IN A MUSEUM,
LIKE I STUDIED FOR, BUT,
THEY CAN'T GIVE ME
FULL-TIME HOURS.



SO I'M A MAID TOO
WHEN I'M NOT HERE AND
I STILL CAN'T...

IT IS
TOUGH.



THERE WAS A SIX-MONTH
GRACE PERIOD AFTER YOU
GRADUATED WHERE YOU
ACCRUED NO INTEREST
AND DIDN'T HAVE TO MAKE
PAYMENTS. AFTER THAT
I'M AFRAID WE CAN'T
HELP YOU.



BUT I JUST PAID HALF
OF IT LAST YEAR. I GAVE
YOU ALL MY MONEY.

I SEE
THAT,
GOOD FOR
YOU.



BUT I COULDN'T
KEEP IT UP.

THAT'S TOO
BAD. YOU WERE
DOING GREAT
WITH THAT
OTHER JOB.

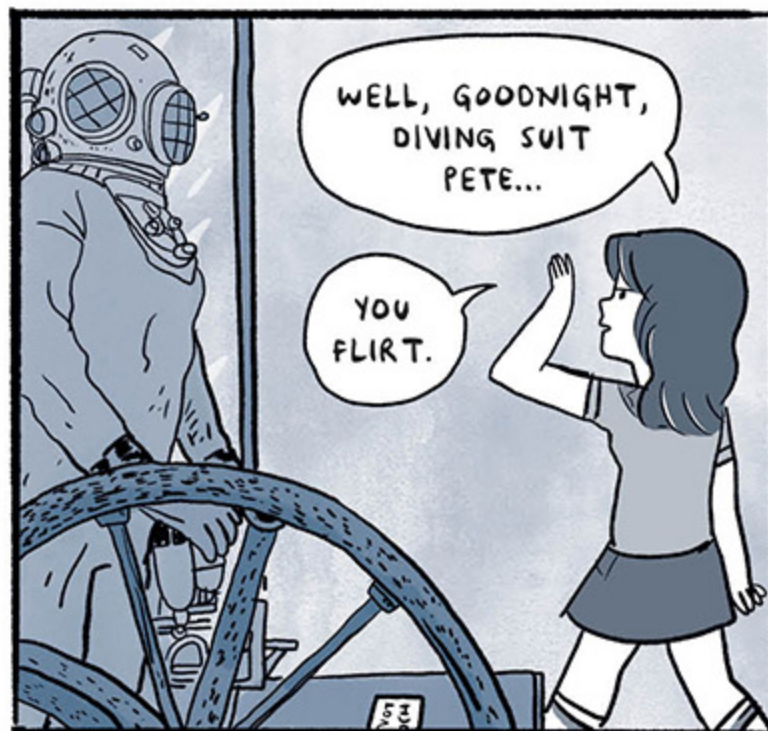
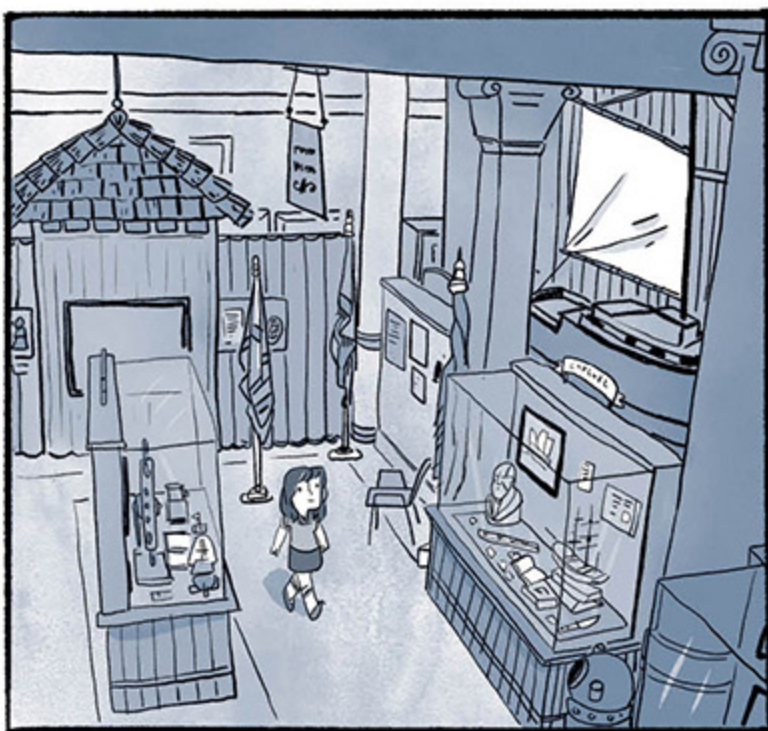


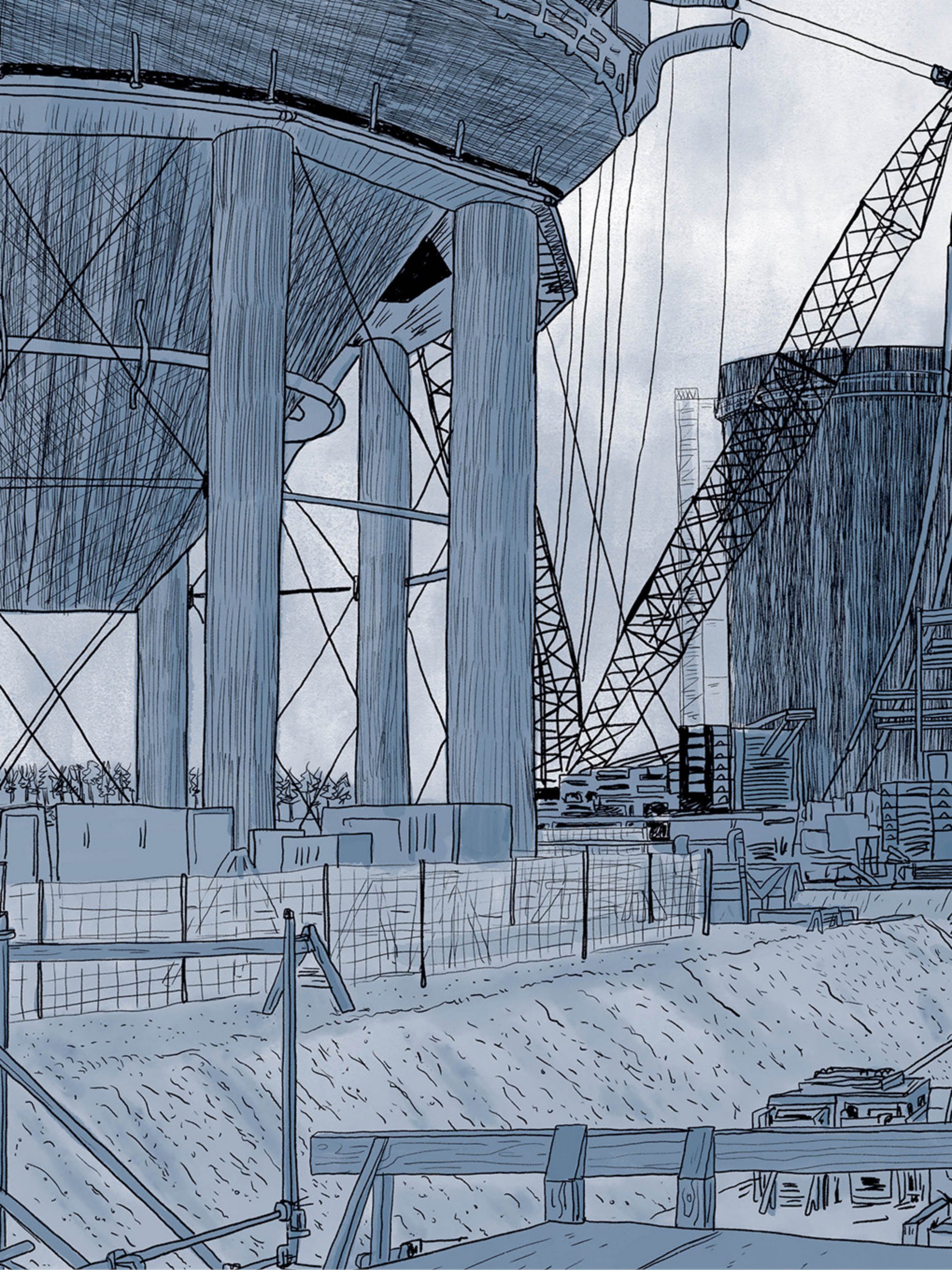
I KNOW.











SHELL

ALBIAN SANDS



ALBIAN SANDS



KATIE
WAREHOUSE OFFICE
NOVA SCOTIA



LINDSAY
TRAVEL COORDINATOR
ONTARIO



BECKY
QC TECHNICAL ASSISTANT
NOVA SCOTIA



RYAN
WAREHOUSE FOREMAN
BRITISH COLUMBIA



EMILY
WAREHOUSE OFFICE
NEWFOUNDLAND



DOUGIE
TOOL CRIB LEAD HAND
NOVA SCOTIA



HATIM
QC WELD MAPPING
ALBERTA



DAMIAN
TOOL CRIB ATTENDANT
ALBERTA



PAT
TOOL CRIB ATTENDANT
NEWFOUNDLAND



DAVY
CRANE OPERATOR
NOVA SCOTIA



JOE
EQUIPMENT
COORDINATOR
NOVA SCOTIA



NORMAN
MECHANIC
ALBERTA



JOHN
FIELD LIASON
SUPERINTENDENT
NOVA SCOTIA



GARY
PROJECT MANAGER
ALBERTA











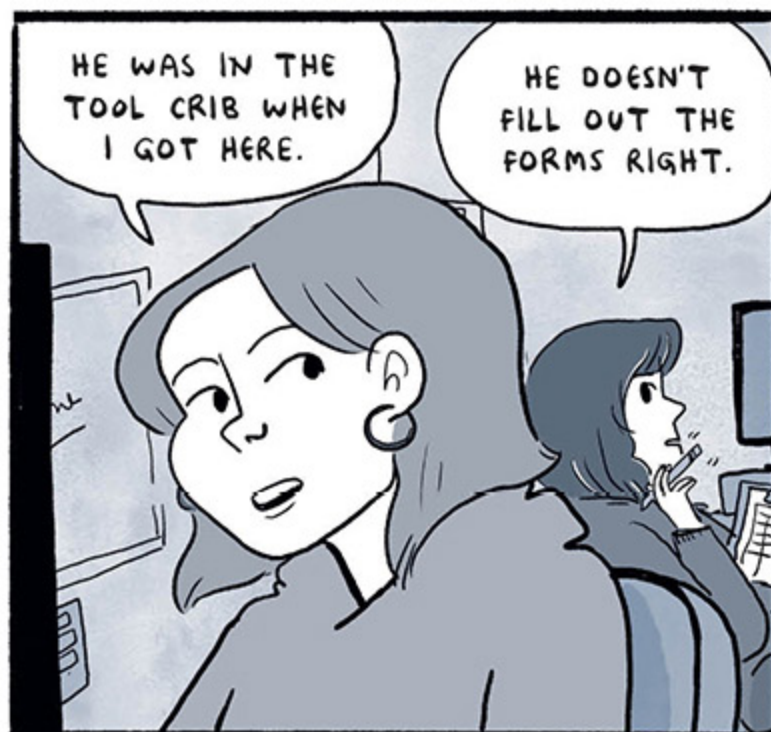














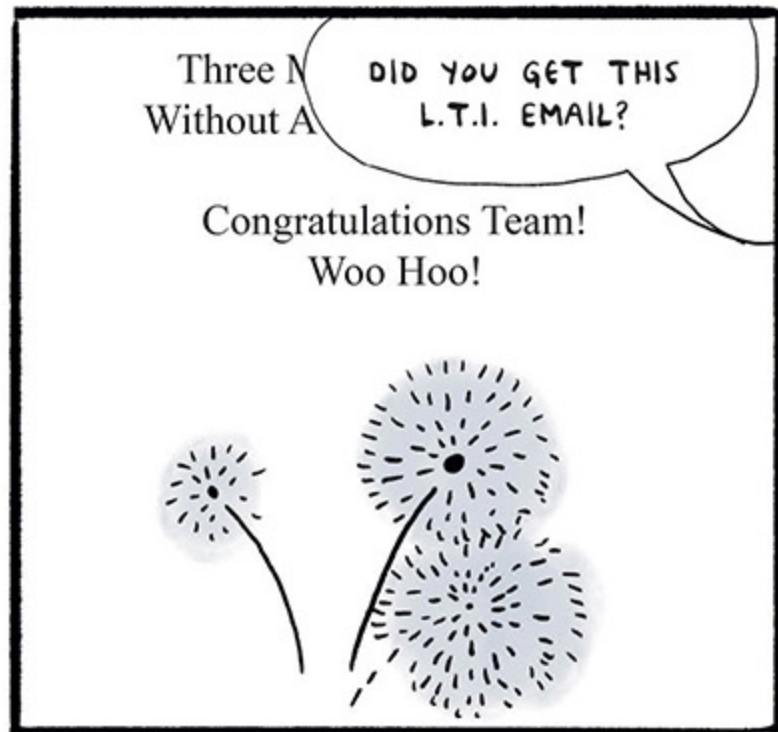










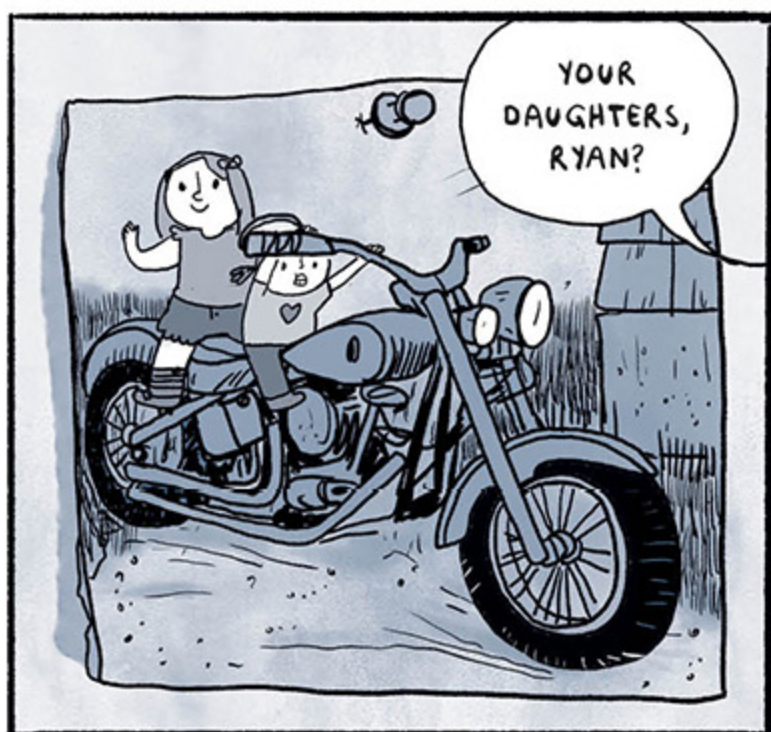
















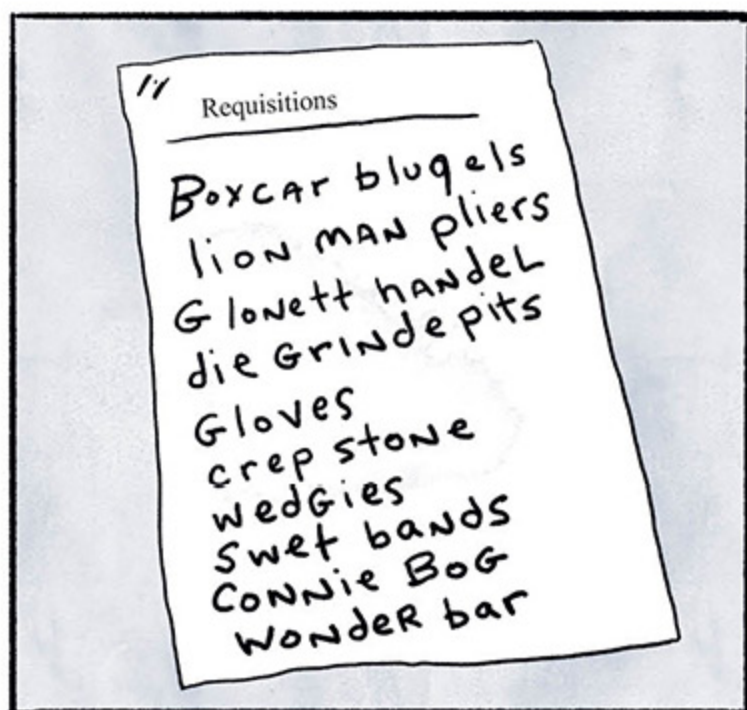










































SUNshine Girl























The New York Times

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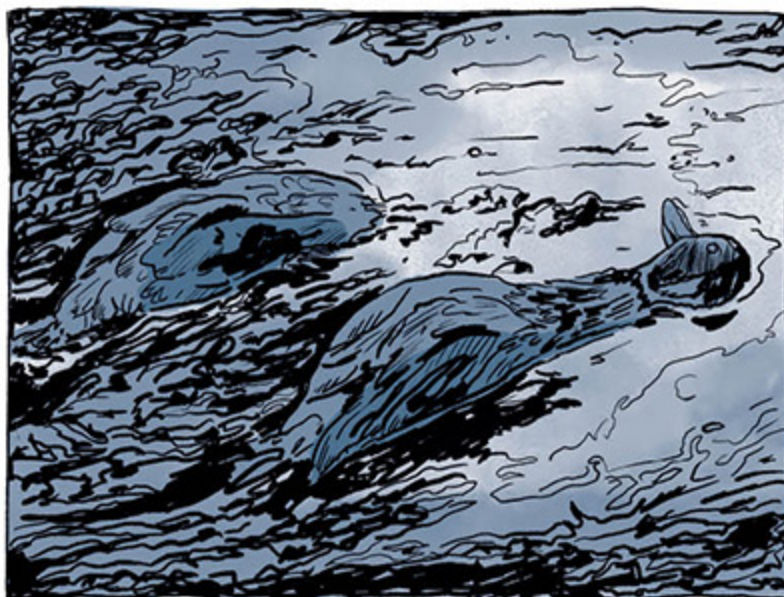
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Canadians Investigate Death of Ducks at Oil-Sands Project

By Ian Austen

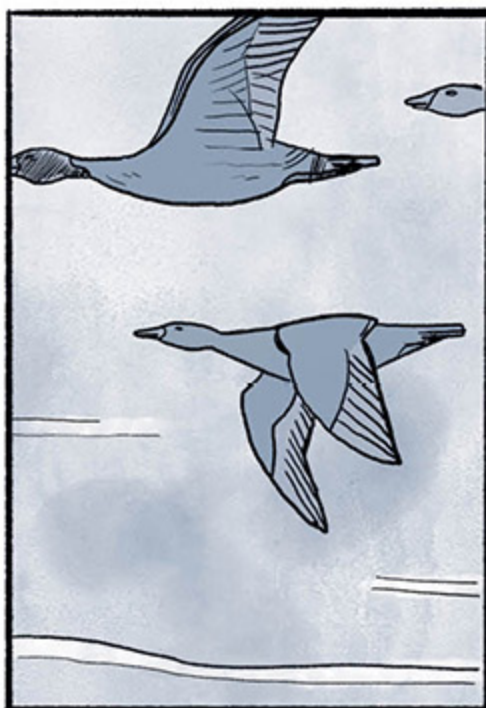


Todd Powell/Alberta Fish and Wildlife

OTTAWA — Canadian federal and provincial government officials were conducting an investigation Wednesday into Syncrude Canada, a large oil-sands project operator, after hundreds of migrating ducks that landed in a company tailings pond died.

Water used to separate and process the oil-bearing tar in oil-sands deposits ends up in large ponds and becomes a toxic sludge. Alberta officials said Tuesday that Syncrude had failed to operate noisemakers to frighten away birds. The company also appears not to have notified the province's government about the birds' arrival on Monday.

An anonymous tip eventually alerted officials that about 500 birds were in the pond.

























April 18, 2008

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Man Dead in Highway 63 head on

by Chuck Chiang

A head-on crash this morning between two vehicles killed a motorist travelling north-bound on Highway 63, near the Suncor Energy exit north of Fort McMurray, police said. The fatality is the fourth this year on the the highway north of the city.

The collision happened at about 1:15 a.m., police said, when the victim's Ford Taurus collided with a southbound tanker semi-truck, two kilometres north of Suncor Energy. The impact sent both vehicles into roadside ditches, with the tanker catching fire, said Const. Martin Gaudet with Fort McMurray RCMP.

The highway was completely closed to traffic for almost five hours, reopening this morning at about 6 a.m.

Six major collisions have happened on Highway 63 north of Fort McMurray since Jan. 1, including a pick-up truck collision that killed two in February.

Also in February, motorists escaped serious injuries after a 12-vehicle pile-up near the Syncrude exit.

Another collision in March killed the driver of a semi truck, who rear-ended another semi stopped due to congestion.

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Calgary man killed in head-on crash near Fort McMurray

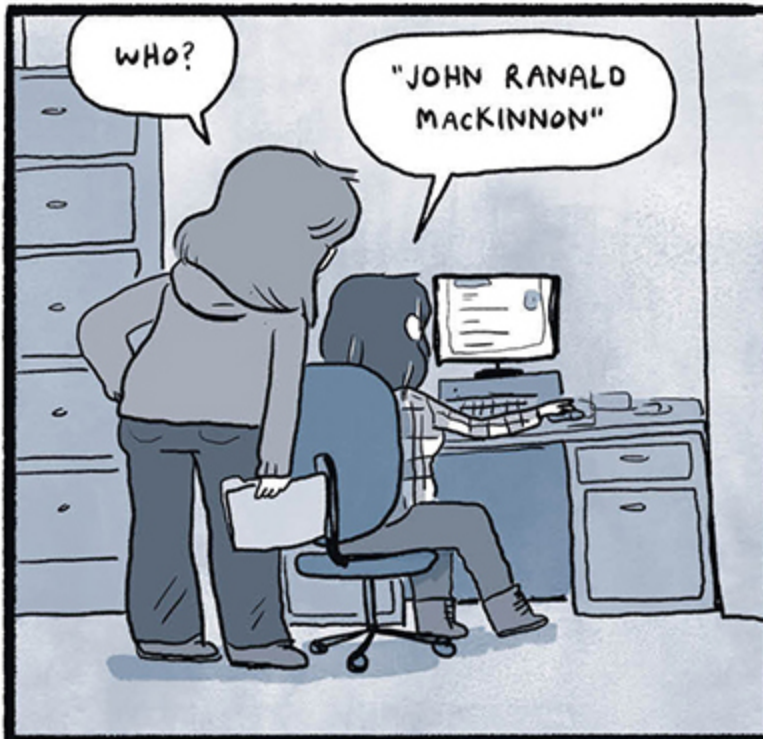
Last Updated: April 2008 Comments 0

A 23-year-old Calgary man died Friday morning when his car collided head-on with a tanker truck on Highway 63 north of Fort McMurray.

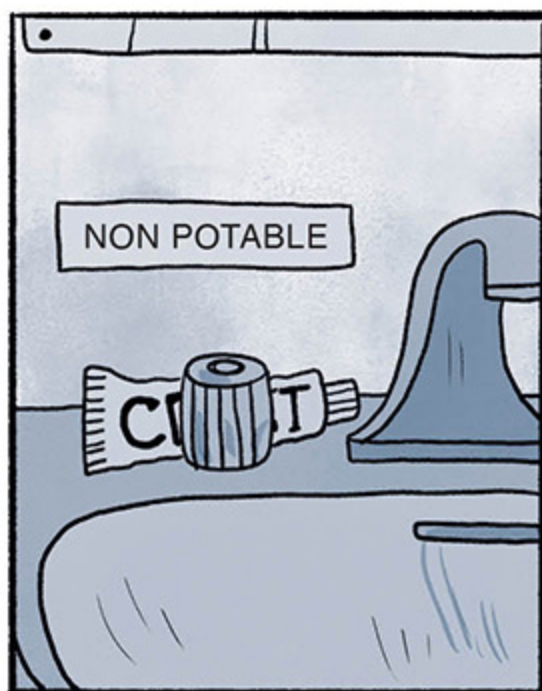
John Ranald MacKinnon was killed after being thrown from his vehicle in the crash, which occurred shortly after 1 a.m., RCMP said.

The driver of the tanker truck escaped serious injury.

The highway, which links the Edmonton area to the oil sands plants north of Fort McMurray, has become infamous because of the high number of injuries and deaths on the narrow but busy roadway.





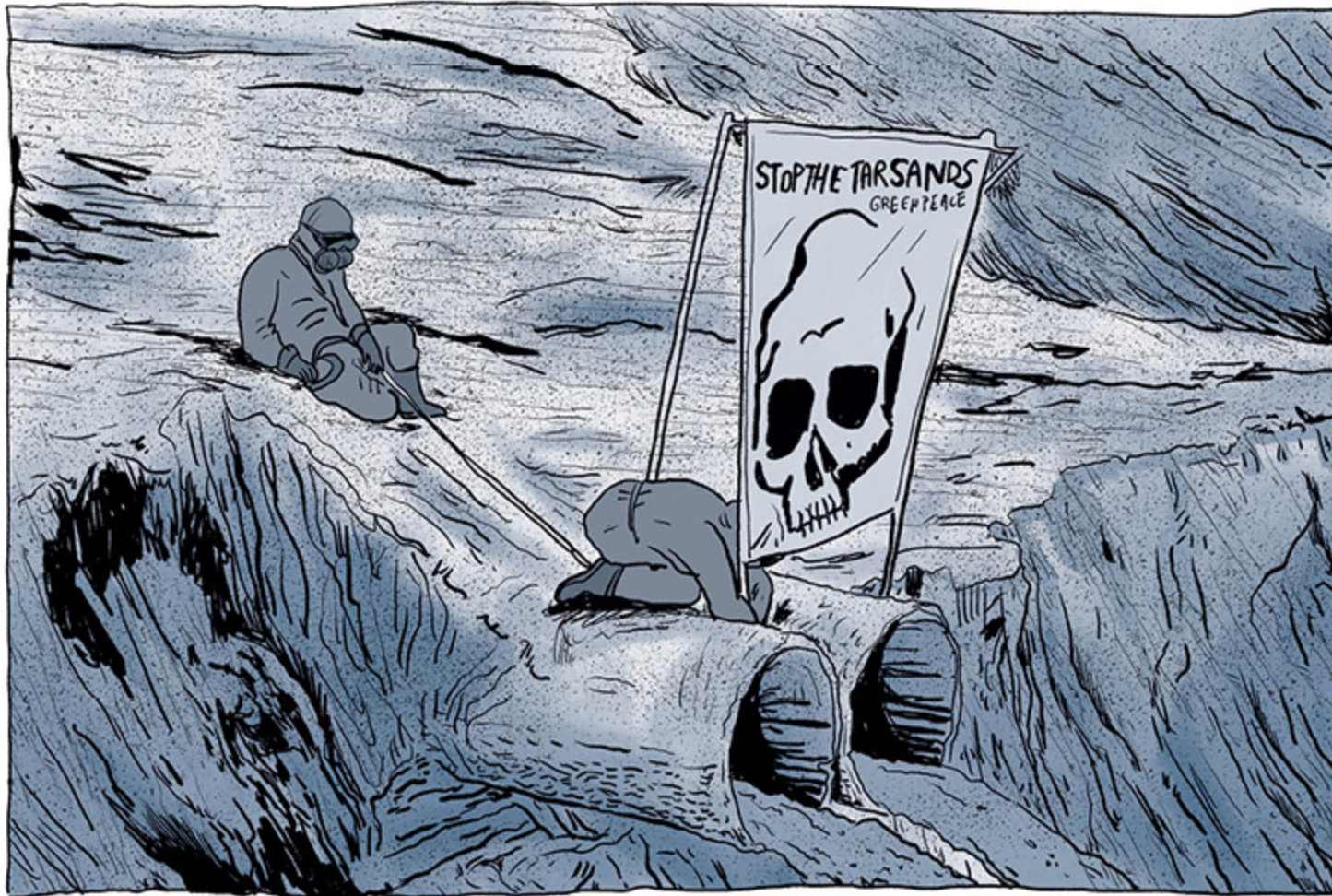






Edmonton

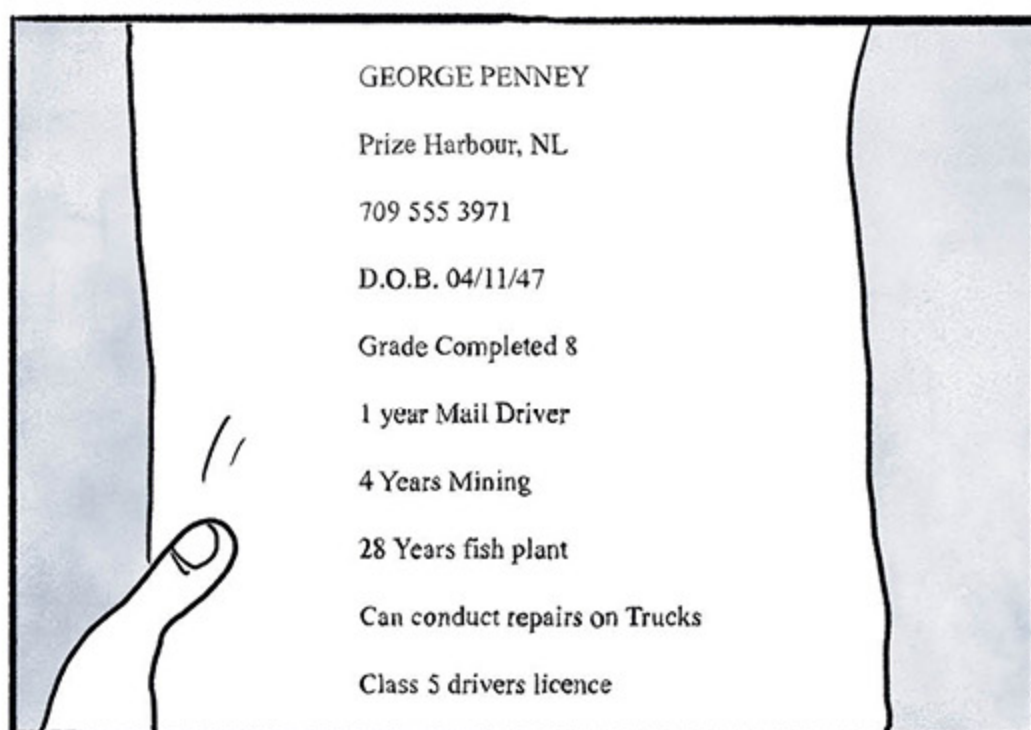
11 charged in Greenpeace oil sands protest

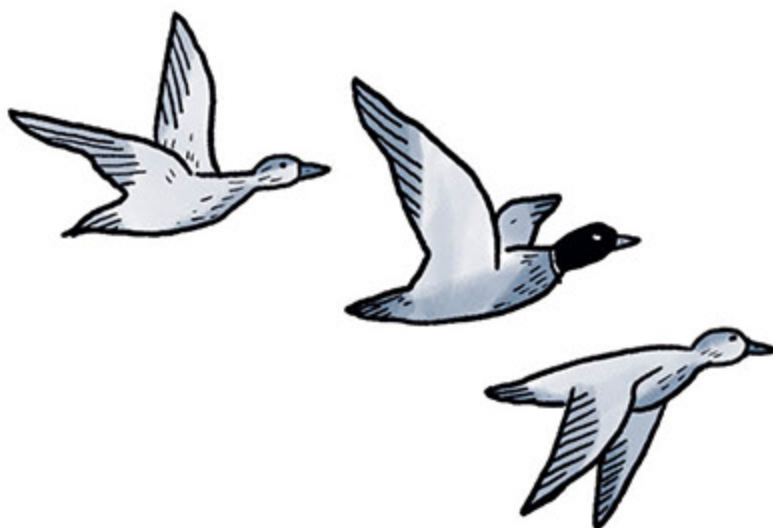
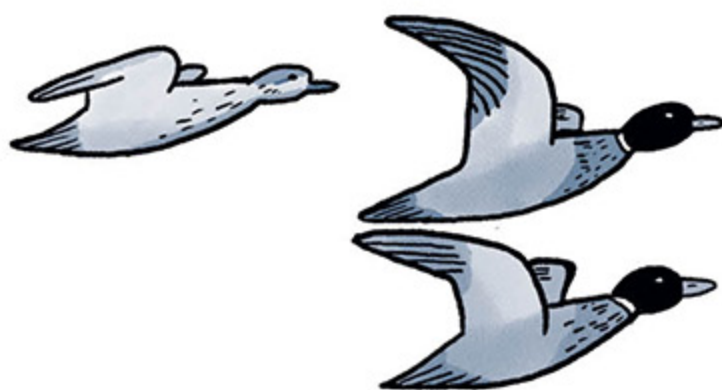
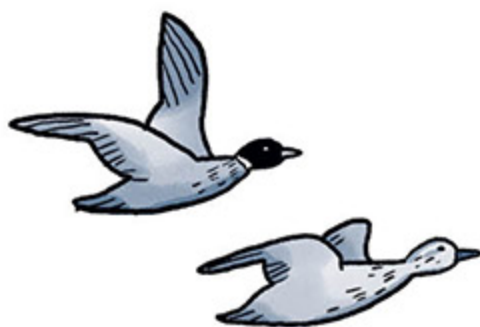
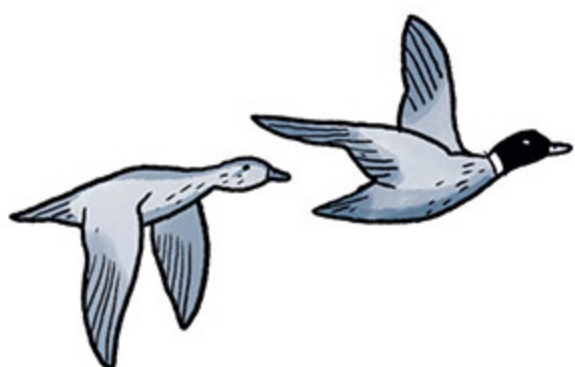


The Greenpeace activists were trying to block a pipeline dumping tailings waste into one of Syncrude's giant tailings ponds.

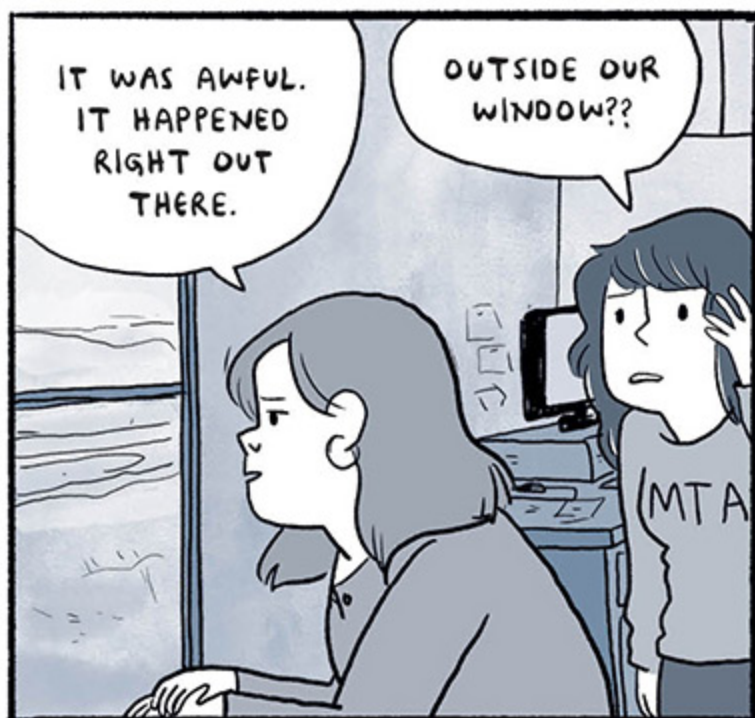


























POLLUTION IS DOING SOMETHING TO OUR PEOPLE, FOR ALL THESE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE DYING AT A YOUNG AGE OF CANCER.

YOUNG PEOPLE.

WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT THE TAILING PONDS ARE LEAKING, I THOUGHT, OH MY GOD, THIS IS REALLY CRUCIAL—THE PEOPLE ARE DYING LIKE FLIES OVER IN FORT CHIP FROM CANCER TOO.

DOWNRIVER THE ATHABASCA IS WHERE THEY TAKE THEIR WATER FROM. SO THEY CONSUME THAT WATER AND I'M SURE THAT'S WHERE THOSE PEOPLE ARE DYING OF CANCER.

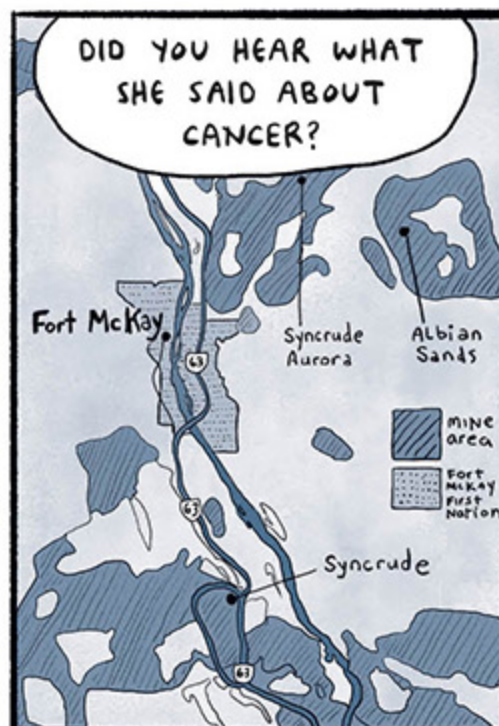
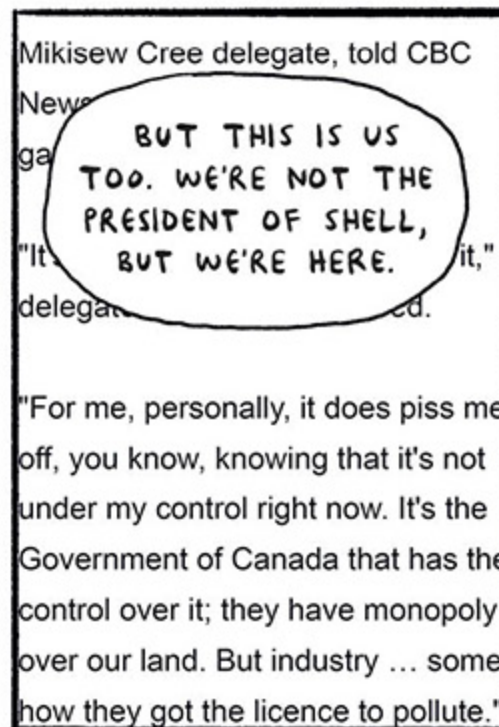
HOW MUCH TOXINS ARE GOING INTO ATHABASCA RIVER? "WELL THIS VERY LITTLE, VERY, VERY, LITTLE, JUST A TINY BIT, JUST A LITTLE BIT." AND THAT'S ALL THAT THEY SAY TO US.

THEY DON'T EVEN WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT. WE GOT LIKE, THIRTY PLANTS AROUND HERE, SURROUNDING US.

SYNCRUDE AND SUNCOR, THEY ARE THE WORST ONES.

HOW ARE WE GOING TO LIVE, YOU KNOW, AFTER THEY TAKE ALL THE OIL OUT OF THE SPACE, WHAT IS IT GOING TO LOOK LIKE?



















Comments

Submitted by Anonymous

That woman truly has no concept of what camp life is like, I lived in an ATCO trailer camp for almost 25 of my thirty years in construction. Don't always complain about how bad things are because you have no idea how good we really have it here. It is easy to make your room nice with even just a few small things to add to your room, a special plug in night lite or some small things that remind you of home. Your life is what you make of it, Go take a pill and chill out!



Submitted by Anonymous

very interesting article, not to say where not pigs, i am guilty myself of the color of ur panties conversation, what can i say, by the end of turnaround its been a while, sorry for the bad example, but when you and your buddies are hungry, you talk about food. I think i just wanted to respectfully say take it easy on some of us guys in camp, yah we can get rude and usually dont no how to talk to you, but were just lonely, and besides wanting to see what kind of nipples you have, as creepy as it can sometime seem, really just want some female affection, lots of true points from your



Submitted by Anonymous

It is people like you who discourage young female workers with your negative voice from even entering the industry.

Submitted by Charles

Hello to all,

I'm considering work in a camp. I just started researching this topic and would like to know if there is a way to find out more about good vs bad companies/camps?

Thanks,

Charles.



Submitted by Anonymous

I have had the odd discouraging word but get a grip if you can't take the heat then give it right back to where it came from, women have to know how to stand up for themselves and need to be able to fight for what they want. I have never been intimidated when working in industrial construction, as a matter of fact most of the men are caring and will listen to a women more readily than they will listen to their fellow men.



Submitted by Anonymous

I really dislike people like you who have nothing good to say about fort McMurray. I lived there for 7 years and my family still does. It has brought so many opportunities for my family and I. If you have not lived there and truly got to experience all the good things about fort mcmurray, then I pity you. Fort McMurray is a wonderful place and it's definately not an ugly place to live.







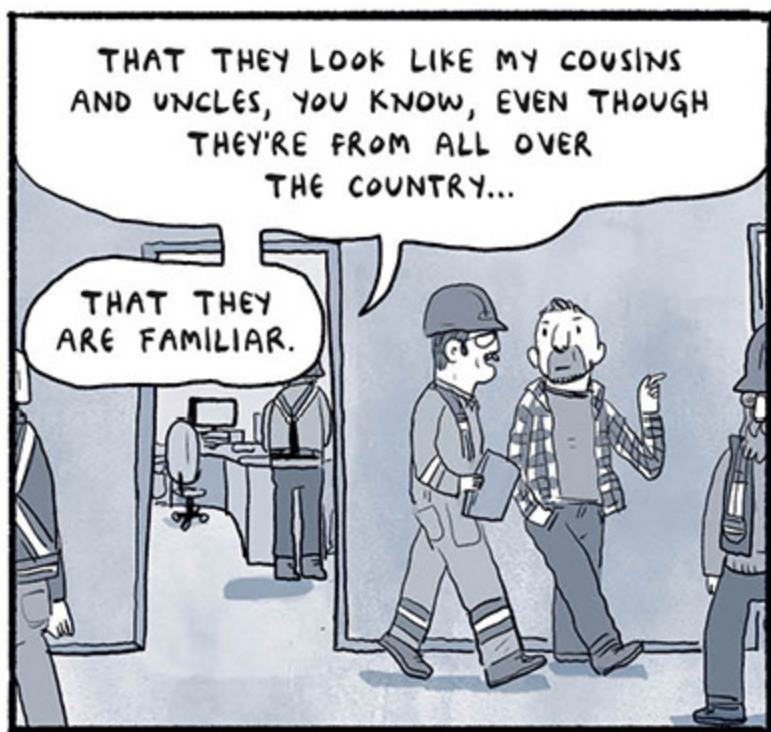
hatim: I just saw you walk past my office...soo,
me: i like the photocopier
hatim: and Im sure the photocopier likes you too
hatim: -----> hey there is kate
hatim: <-----there is she is again
me: busy day
hatim: yeah I can see
hatim: you might want to try dying your hair like a reddish brown
hatim: Im talking about your gmail picture
hatim: you'd be walking around the village, and all the guys would be like
"yooooo, kate, what's the hizzaps, baby...I want me some of DAT"
hatim: hmmm...yeah, I think that would look good
me: indeed
hatim: The Middle Ages called...they want their vernacular back























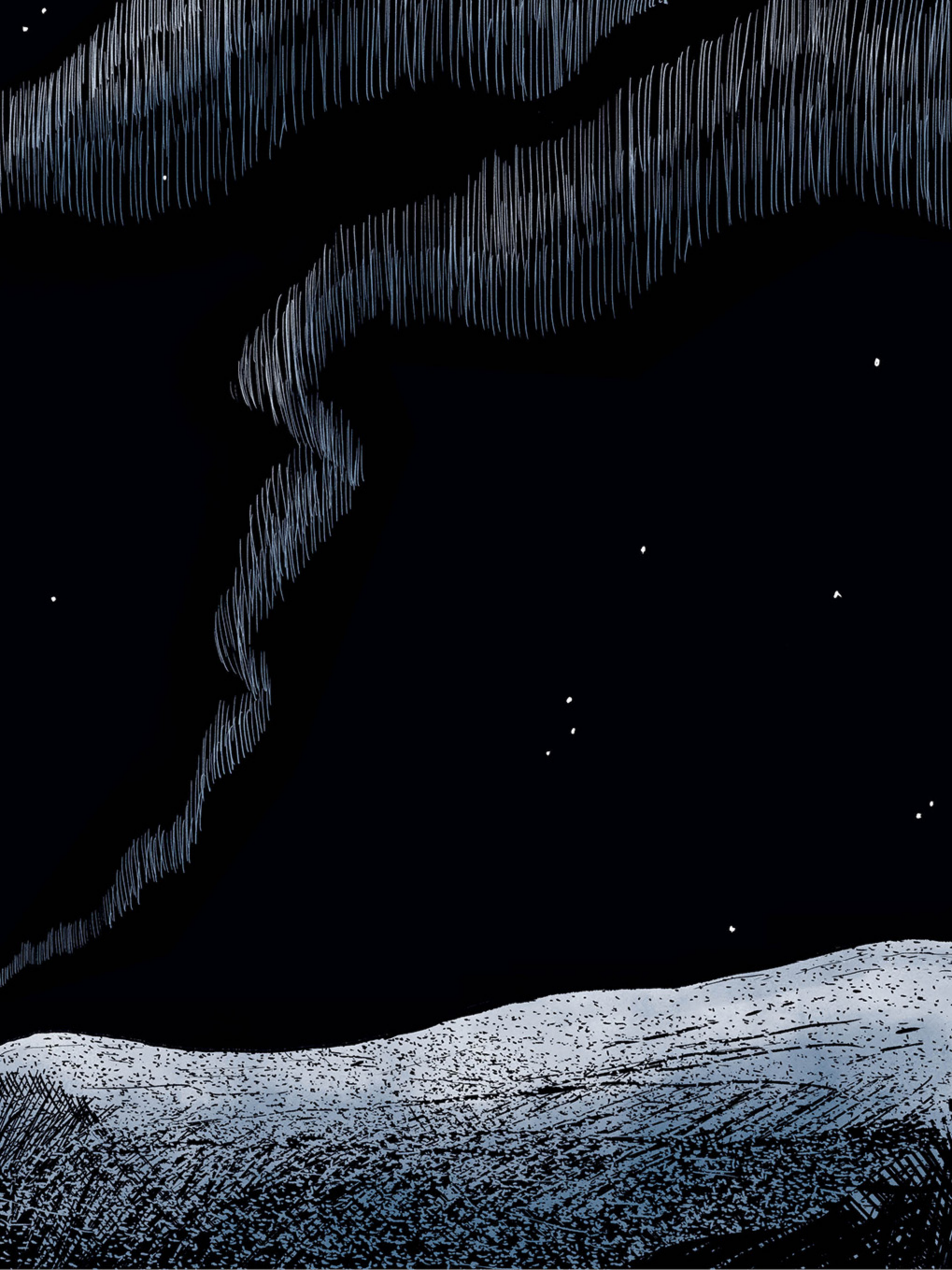






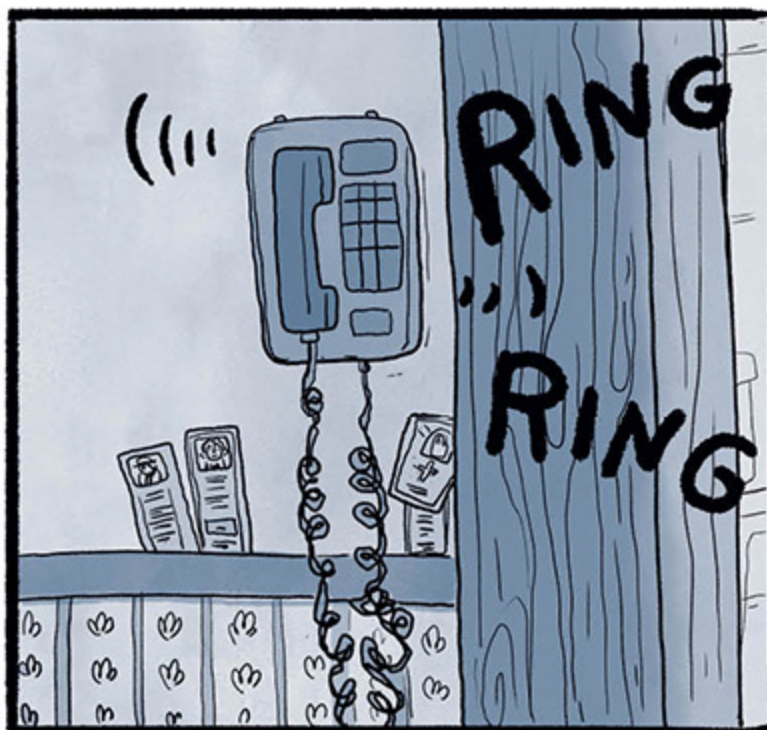


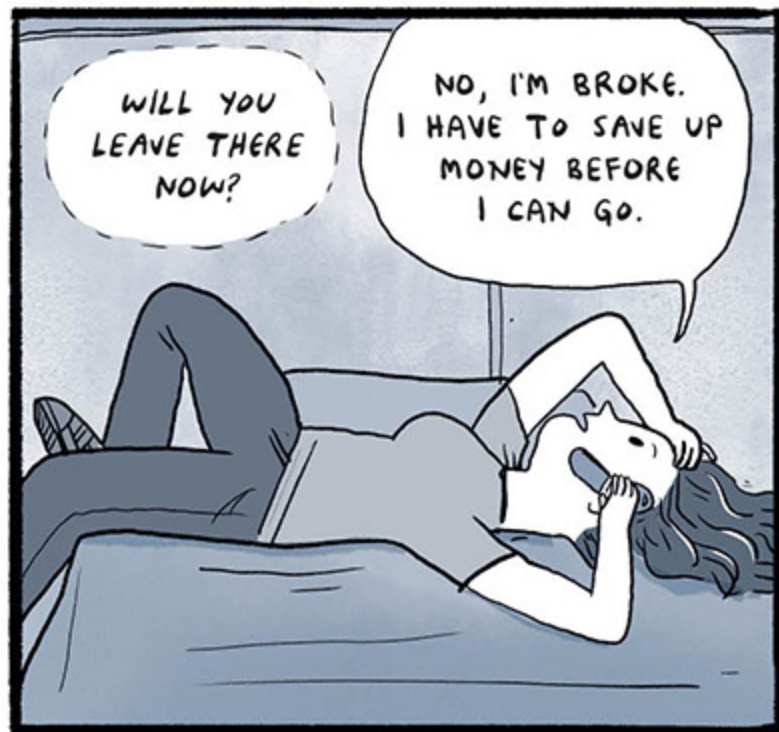






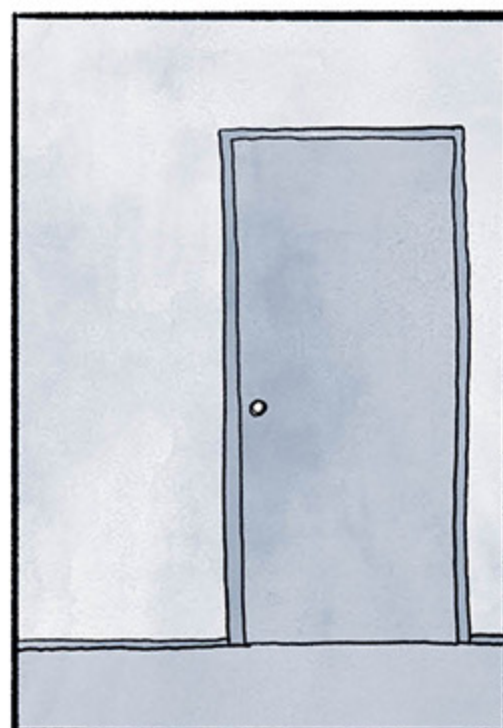
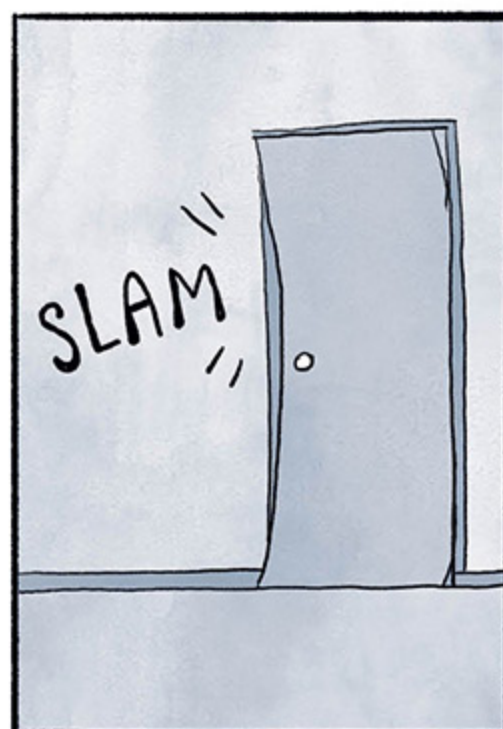


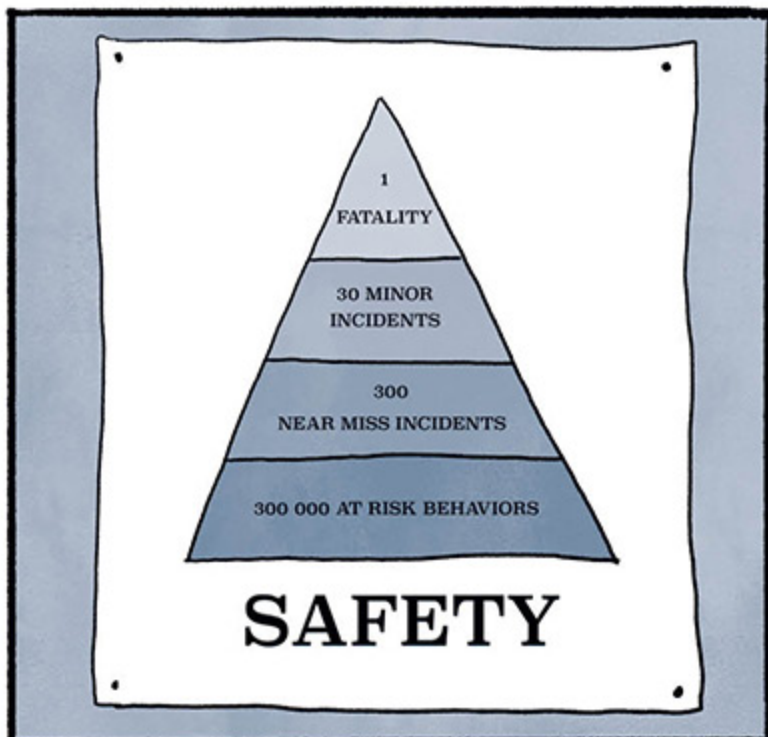


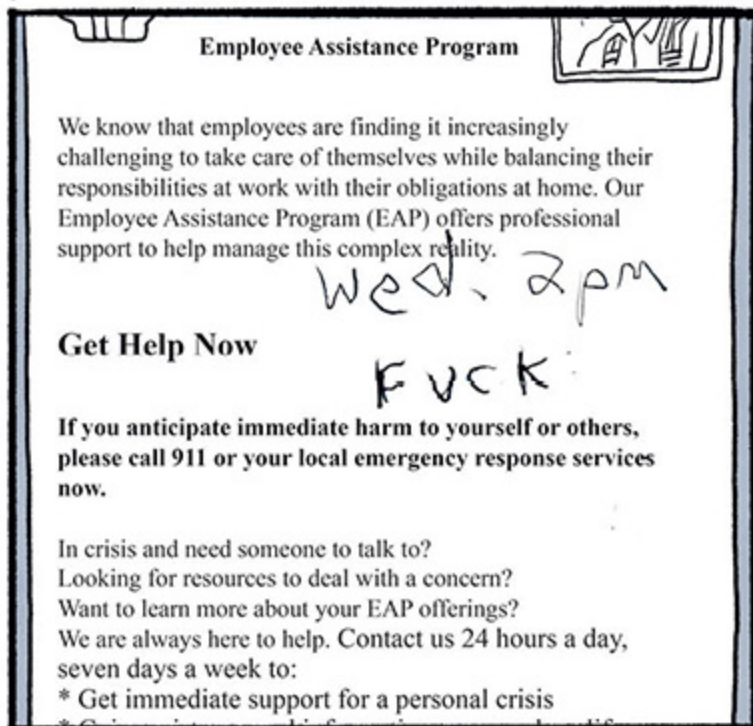
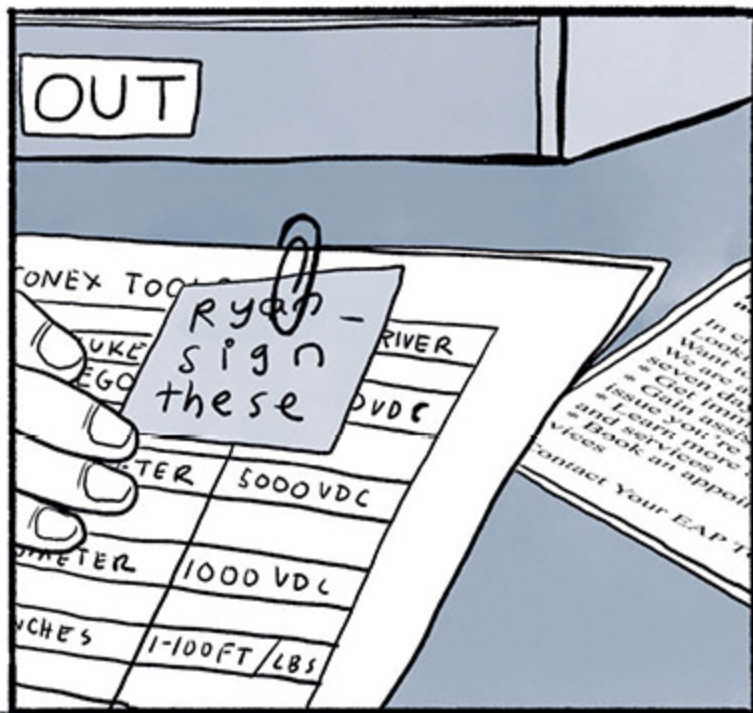










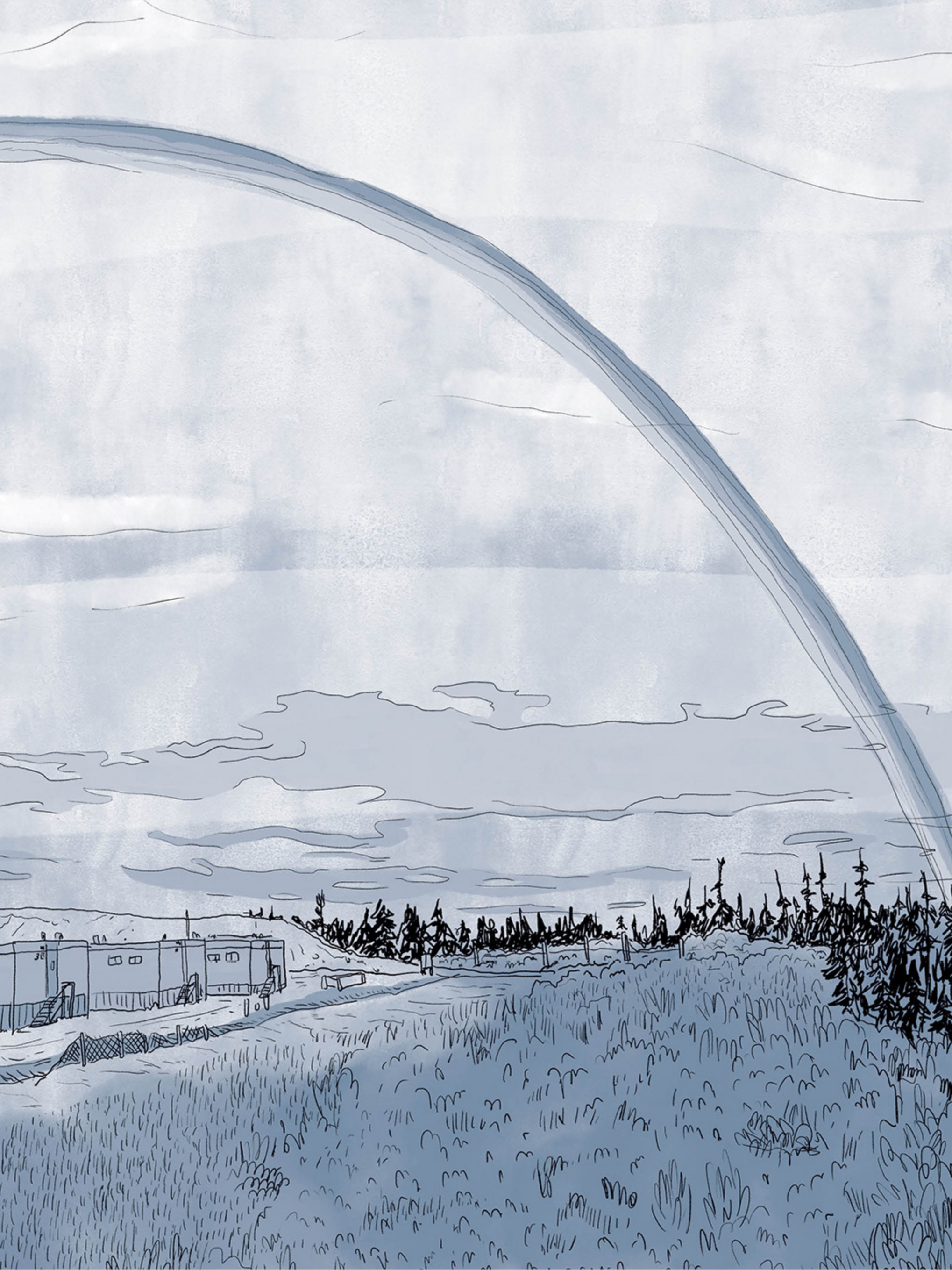














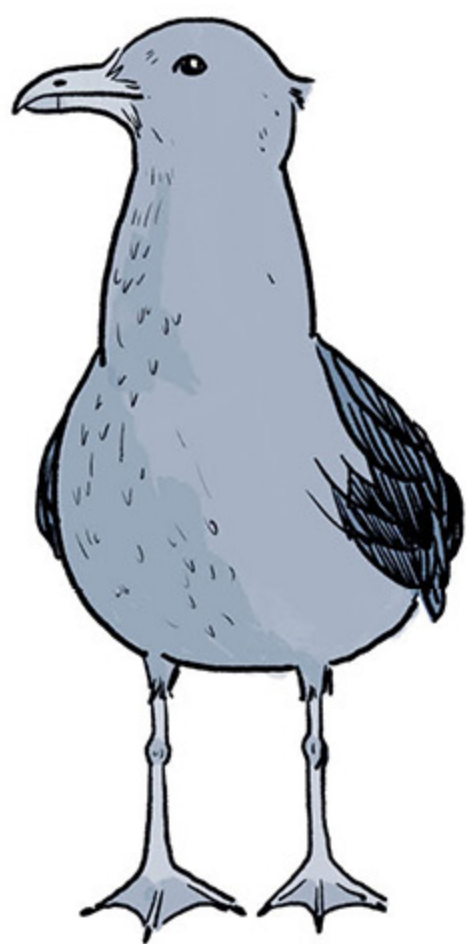


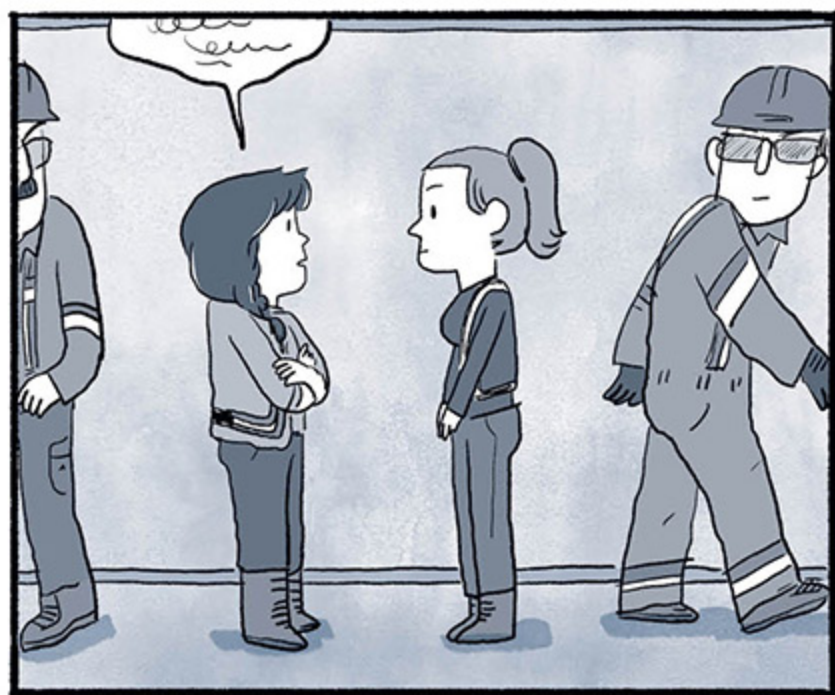




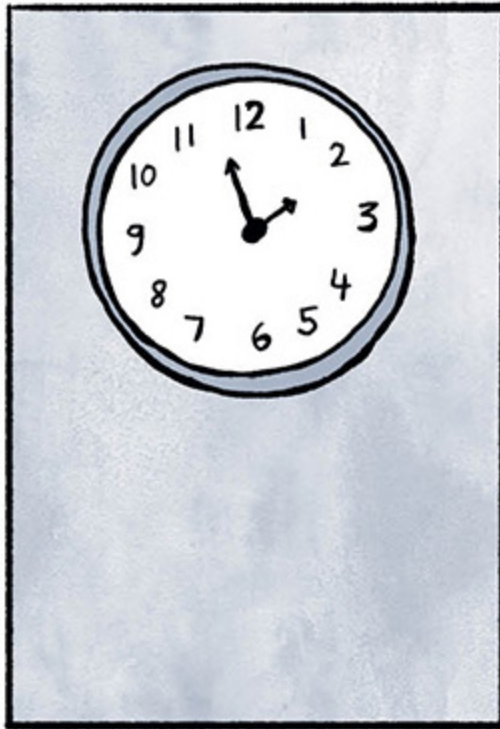












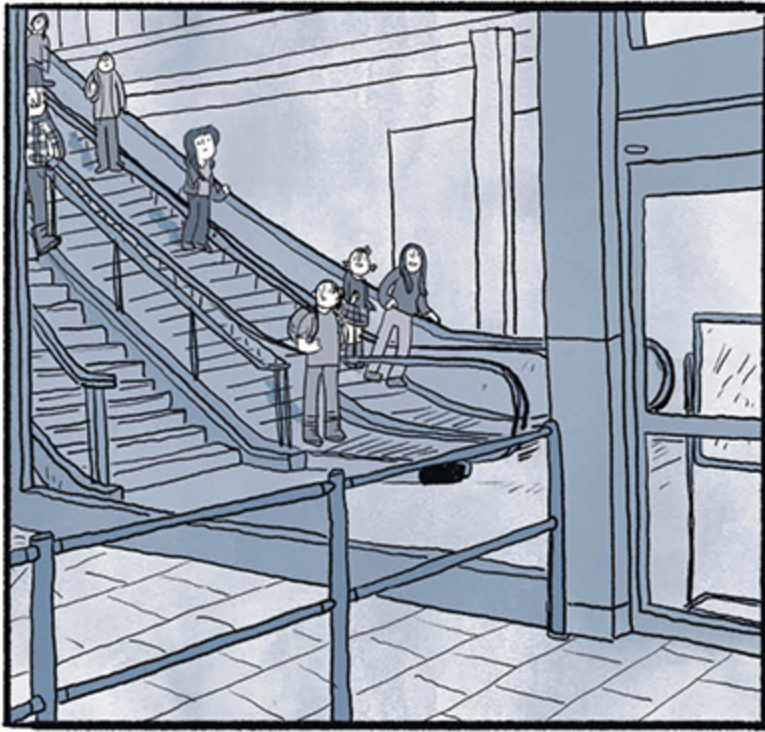
















YEAH, THE TRAIL CUTS
RIGHT 'LONG SIDE.

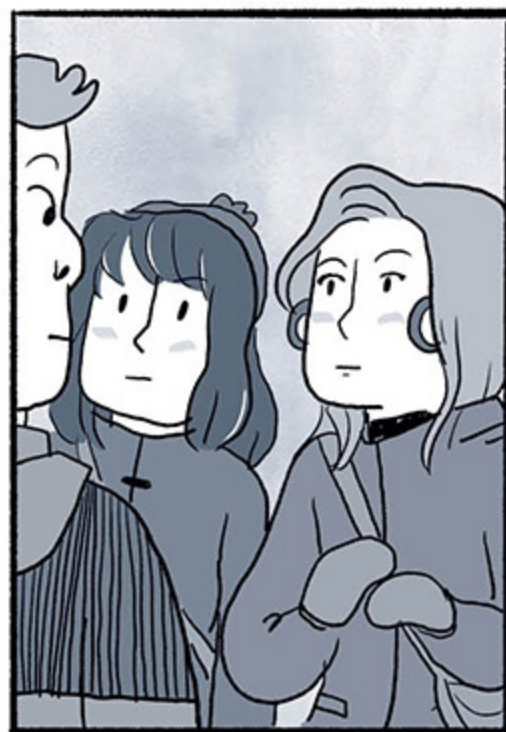














AFTERWORD

Everyone's oil sands are different, and these were mine.

I was there for two years between 2005 and 2008, working for a number of different companies, at a number of different sites, and living in both sprawling temporary work camps and in the city of Fort McMurray. There is often a tendency to want to characterize the Northern Alberta oil sands as either entirely good or entirely bad—the jobs and profits vs. the climate rattling destruction. But, over my time there, I learned you can have both good and bad at the same time in the same place, and the oil sands defy any easy characterization.

My experiences were very much coloured by their place in time—a time just on the doorstep of ubiquitous smartphones and social media, but not there yet. We were still largely unconnected compared to now. It was also a time of unprecedented population growth, relative radio silence on climate change, and record high oil prices, accompanied by an optimistic belief that the well on oil and money would never run dry. And of course, my experiences are heavily marked by my being a woman in a workforce that was so overwhelmingly male.

This was also a time when discussion surrounding the mental health of workers—especially itinerant male workers in a hypermasculine environment like the oil sands work camps—barely existed. Camp life fosters a certain unique set of mental health challenges in an environment that is probably the least suited to contend with them. The boredom, isolation, loneliness, and depression add up for many—and for some, are too much to bear. Few resources existed on site, and in reality, they were nothing more than lip service. Instead, the industry prized itself on having millions of hours without lost time incidents while hiding away the human wreckage. Anecdotally, in researching for this book, I rarely found this topic researched or reported on, and for an industry as large and far reaching as the oil sands, I found that very alarming. The humanity of camp workers is often lost in the popular image we have constructed about who goes there and why. I hope this book pokes another needed hole in that image.

I am wary of the sensationalization of my narrative because it contains sexual violence. The sad fact is, however, that sexual assault of every kind is far too common everywhere to be sensational. This doesn't mean I am not deeply and negatively affected by it. I will always be affected by it. But I guarantee you that neither of the men who raped me consider what they did to be rape, if they consider it at all. I know the name of one of them; he is a father now with a woman who was his girlfriend when he raped me. I was nothing in his life but a short release from the boredom and loneliness endemic in camp life, but he was a major trauma in mine.

I have seen many people quick to become defensive against the suggestion that gendered violence exists in places like the oil sands. They may either work there and are proud of the work they do and the livelihoods they support with it, or they know and love men there, and are insulted by the insinuation of being lumped in with anything to do with something as abhorrent as sexual assault. Fort McMurray, a city of young families looking to the future, has little patience for outsiders with accusations of old Wild West stereotypes.

But work camps are a uniquely capsuled-off society, a liminal space, and analogue for so many other male-dominated spaces. Gendered violence does happen when men outnumber women by as much as fifty to one, as they can in the camps or work sites. Of course it does. Of course this happens when men are in isolation for long stretches of time, away from their families and relationships and communities, and completely resocialized in a camp and work environment like that of the oil sands. It does not matter how many decent people are there. I knew plenty of those.

This is all particularly and profoundly true for Indigenous women and girls in Canada, who are far more likely to be the victims of sexual violence around places like remote work camps.

In 2005, despite all my education, I knew very little about this. Indigenous rights and the legacy of colonial violence were not in the news, not in any textbooks, not given a voice or the time of day. Thankfully, this is beginning to change. But, that doesn't change my past self's relative ignorance of these things. And because this is my memoir, I can only tell you about my oil sands, where my world was very small and very white.

So I'm extremely grateful to Celina Harpe, an elder from the Cree community of Fort McKay, for giving me permission to use her words and her likeness in

this book. Listening to her speak on a YouTube video in 2008 was a sword that cut through my ignorance and my coddled perception of myself and my participation in an industry that towered over her existence.

The oil sands operate on stolen lands. Their pollution, work camps, and ever-growing settler populations continue to have serious social, economic, cultural, environmental, and health consequences for the Indigenous communities in the region. I urge everyone to work to further listen and understand the history and ongoing issues facing the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Chipewyan Prairie First Nation, Fort McKay First Nation, Fort McMurray No. 468 First Nation, Mikisew Cree First Nation, as well as the Métis communities in Northern Alberta.

Thank you to everyone I contacted, some whom I have not spoken to since I left Fort Mac, some I had never spoken to at all, for your time and thoughtful consideration of the time we spent together so long ago. Most names have been changed for privacy, except in special cases.

Thank you to everyone who supported me in making this book. I am sorry I couldn't fit everyone in, I wish I could have. Thank you especially to Lindsay Bird, who helped me reconstruct shared memories, and allowed me to tell her story as well. Thank you Morgan, my husband; my parents, Marion and Neil; my sisters, Becky, Maura, and Lauren. Thank you to Becky's former coworkers in the oil sands, who were the first ones to pool some money together and send it when she got cancer. I will never forget that. I started this book before Becky died, and I wish she was here to see it, because she was always going to be a big part of it. She was the first person I told about making it. Thank you to my publisher and editors who worked diligently with me and were very patient. Thank you to the whole team at Drawn & Quarterly: Peggy, Tracy, Julia, Shirley, Megan, Lucia, Tom, Alison, Rebecca, Kaiya, Trynne, and Francine. It was a group effort to get this book finished, and I could not have done it without you. Thank you Seth, my agent, and thank you to the many friends who supported and encouraged me in the many years it took to make this book. I love you all.

Kate

January 24, 2022

Mabou, Cape Breton



KATE BEATON was born and raised in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada. After graduating from Mount Allison University with a double degree in History and Anthropology, she moved to Alberta in search of work that would allow her to pay down her student loans. During the years she spent out West, Beaton began creating webcomics under the name *Hark! A Vagrant*, quickly drawing a substantial following around the world.

The collections of her landmark strip *Hark! A Vagrant* and *Step Aside, Pops* each spent several months on the *New York Times* graphic novel bestseller list, as well as appearing on best of the year lists from *Time*, *The Washington Post*, *Vulture*, *NPR Books*, and winning the Eisner, Ignatz, Harvey, and Doug Wright Awards. She has also published the picture books *King Baby* and *The Princess and the Pony*.

Beaton lives in Cape Breton with her family.