

## **Artist Statement:**

This is a digital picture book recounting my queer journey thus far in my life. It is untitled.

I didn't fully read the instructions ahead of time, so unfortunately I can't state with honesty that I *actively and intentionally* considered the work or methods of at least two artists we studied in this class when I was doing my own work. *Fortunately*, by simple virtue of being *in* the class and doing the reading, I was in fact *passively and unintentionally* influenced by the artists we studied, so I can say *that* with full confidence.

The artists from our class who most influenced my work on this project were Micha Cárdenas for her poem *20141201\_163491.mov* (I think; I'm having a hard time finding attribution information for the specific poem, so I'm crediting it to her because it appears in her anthology without attribution) and Esdras Parra for her poem *To Be Human Once More*. My own work combines the ideas from these poems and tells the story of a dehumanized character who is pregnant not with a baby, but with a new concept of humanity for herself waiting to be born.

Beneath each page I will transcribe its textual contents, if any, in case you have trouble reading my handwriting

# Content warning

- CSA, depicted through metaphor, psychological effects explored in-depth (also through metaphor)
- Fatphobic bullying
- Major character death
- Sui attempt (failed)
- Vore

An effort is made to treat these subjects tactfully. Your mileage may vary.

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The Snow Queen, and the Burnt under her protection,  
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The Fire Wizard—  
the Queen's old flame—  
had chased them out  
of all other places.

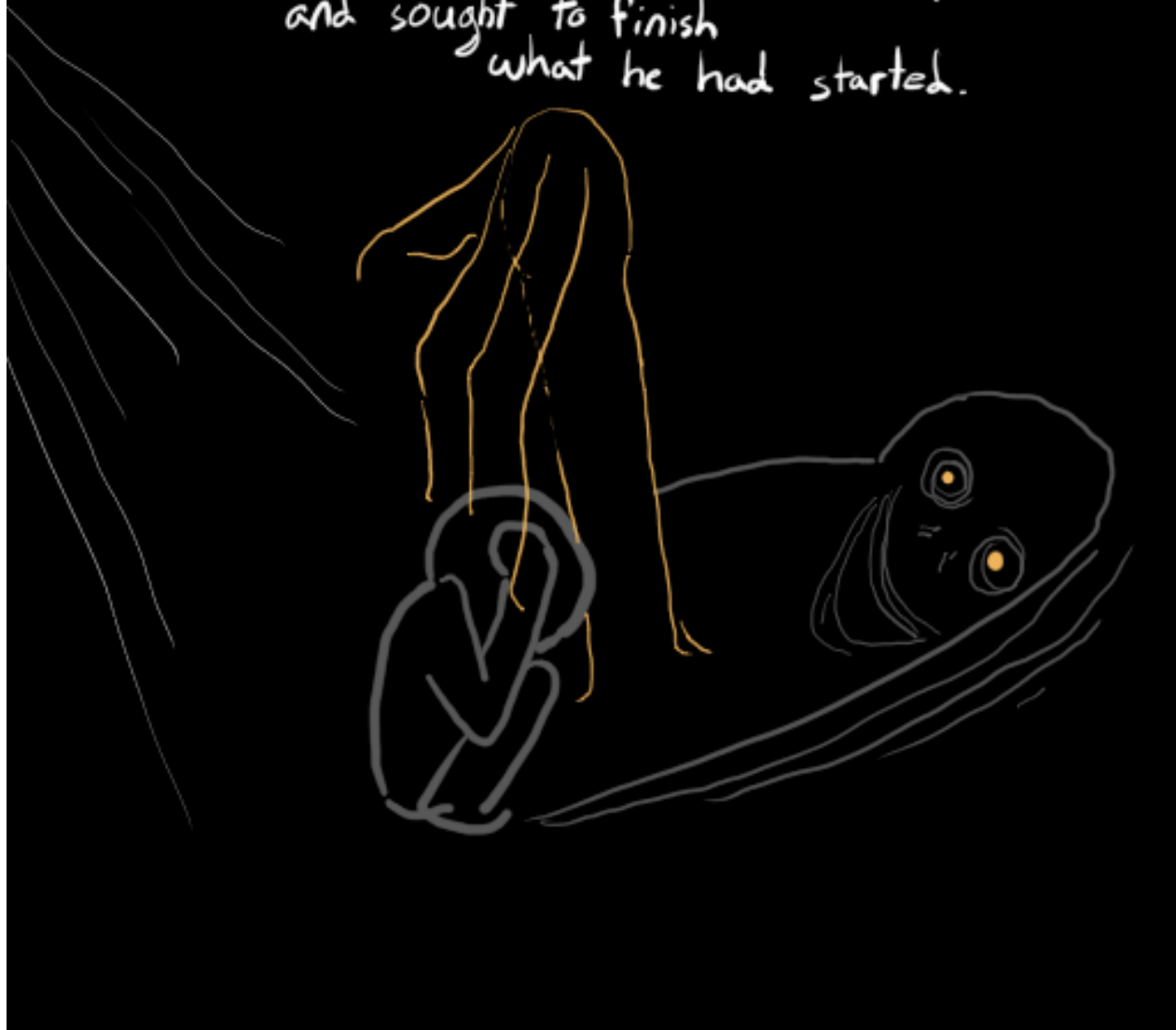
He and his  
**red telephone**  
would call and call.



The Fire Wizard—the Queen's old flame—had chased them out of all other places.

He and his **red telephone** would call and call.

He coveted the Burnt.  
He had burnt them himself, for his own pleasure,  
and sought to finish  
what he had started.

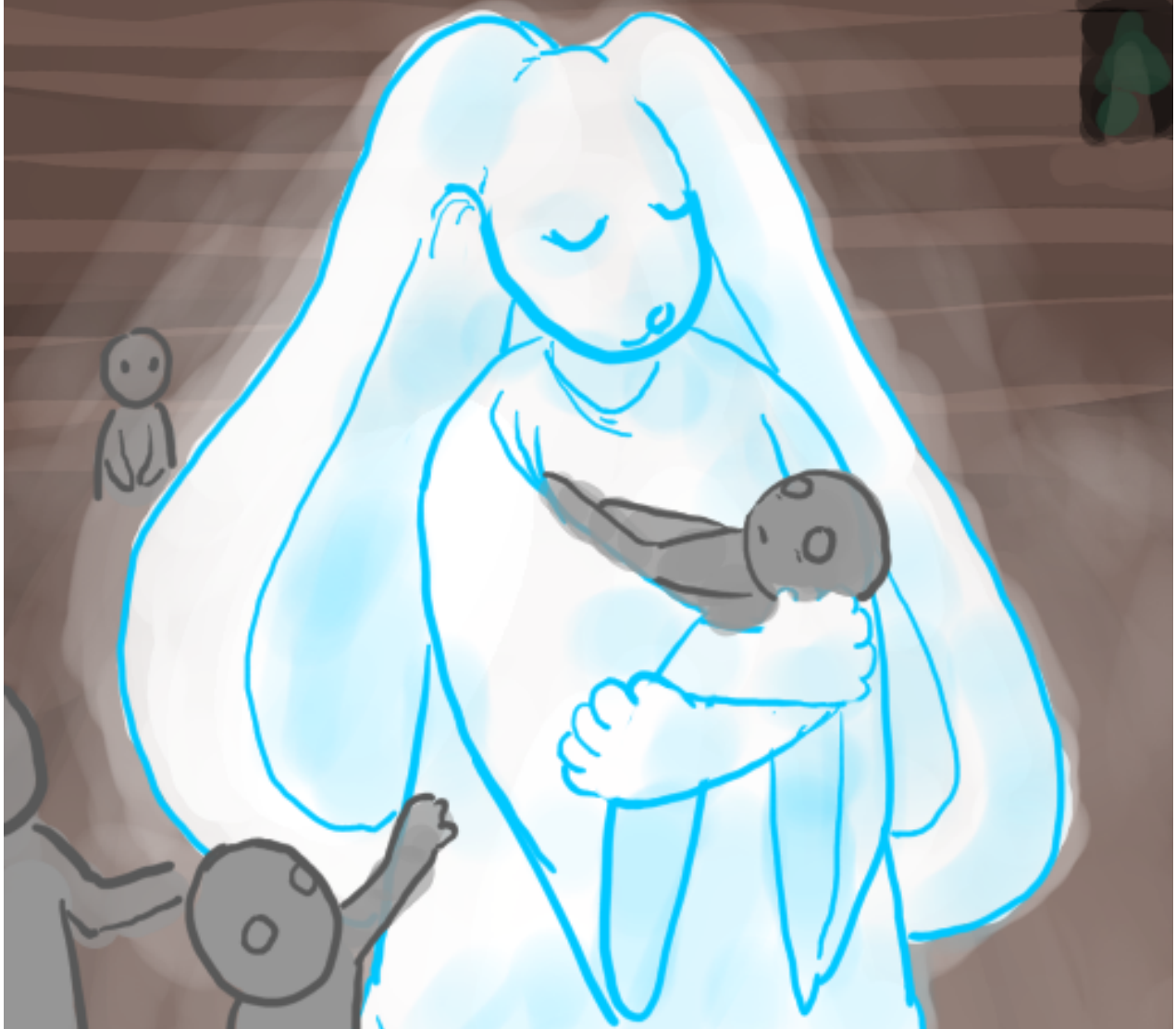


He coveted the Burnt. He had burnt them himself, for his own pleasure, and sought to finish what he had started.



The Snow Queen would not allow that.

That was how the Queen protected the Burnt,  
and how she cared for them.



That was how the Queen protected the Burnt, and how she cared for them.

There was one thing  
the Snow Queen  
couldn't do for the Burnt,

and that was  
to un-burn them.  
No one could do that.



But this one wondered  
what it had been



before whatever that was  
was taken from it.

There was one thing the Snow Queen couldn't do for the Burnt,

and that was to un-burn them. No one could do that.

But this one wondered what it had been

before whatever that was was taken from it.



It visited the Snow Queen in her throne room to ask her, and she answered:

"You were my little mousey boy."

A little boy mouse — was that what it had been?

It could feel something within itself —  
something dull and barely still alive.

A flickering warmth that faded with each passing day.

That was what had driven it to ask —

but was this the right

answer?!?!?



A little boy mouse—was *that* what it had been? It could feel *something* within itself—something dull and barely still alive. A flickering warmth that faded with each passing day. That was what had driven it to ask—but was this the right *answer*?

It needed not merely wonder; rather,  
it decided to try it out  
and see for itself.

There's exactly one good thing  
about being Burnt,



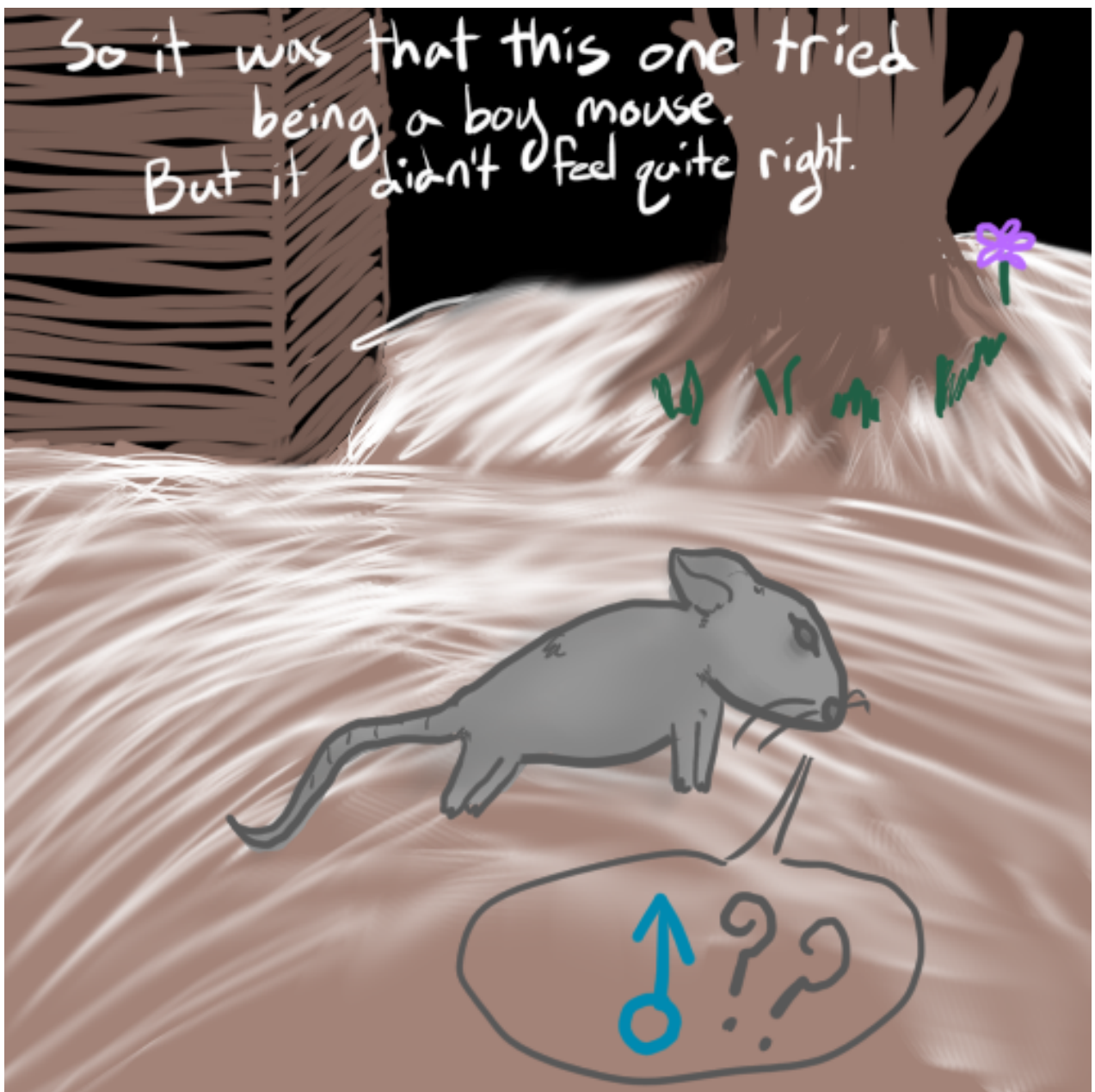
and that's that ashes,  
unlike flesh,  
can be used to make  
modeling clay.



It needed not merely wonder; rather, it decided to try it out and see for itself.

There's exactly one good thing about being Burnt,

and that's that ashes, unlike flesh, can be used to make *modeling clay*.



So it was that this one tried being a boy mouse. But it didn't feel quite right.

Suddenly, it realized



it was quite sure  
it had been a girl.



Suddenly, it realized

it was quite sure it had been a *girl*.

Thinking it was onto something,  
this one asked the Queen  
if perhaps it had been a girl mouse.  
But the Queen replied  
it had  
not.



Thinking it was onto something, this one asked the Queen if perhaps it had been a *girl* mouse.

But the Queen replied it had not.

Trying to understand, it reflected  
on this new information.  
It had not been a girl mouse,  
but it knew it had been  
a girl.



Trying to understand, it reflected on this new information. It had *not* been a girl *mouse*, but it *knew* it *had* been a *girl*.

It came to the only conclusion  
it possibly could:



it had not been  
a mouse.



It came to the only conclusion it possibly could:

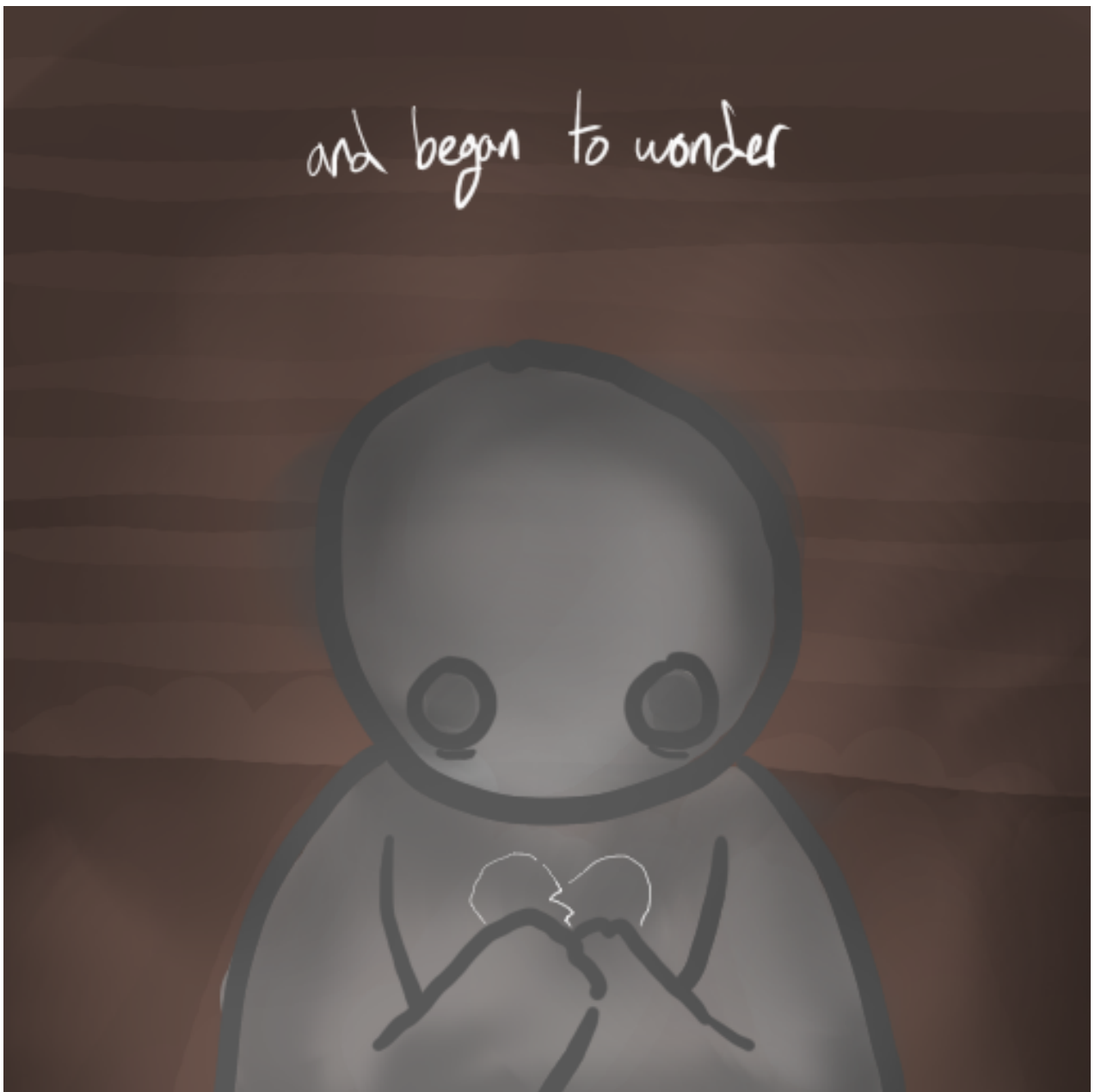
it had not been a mouse.



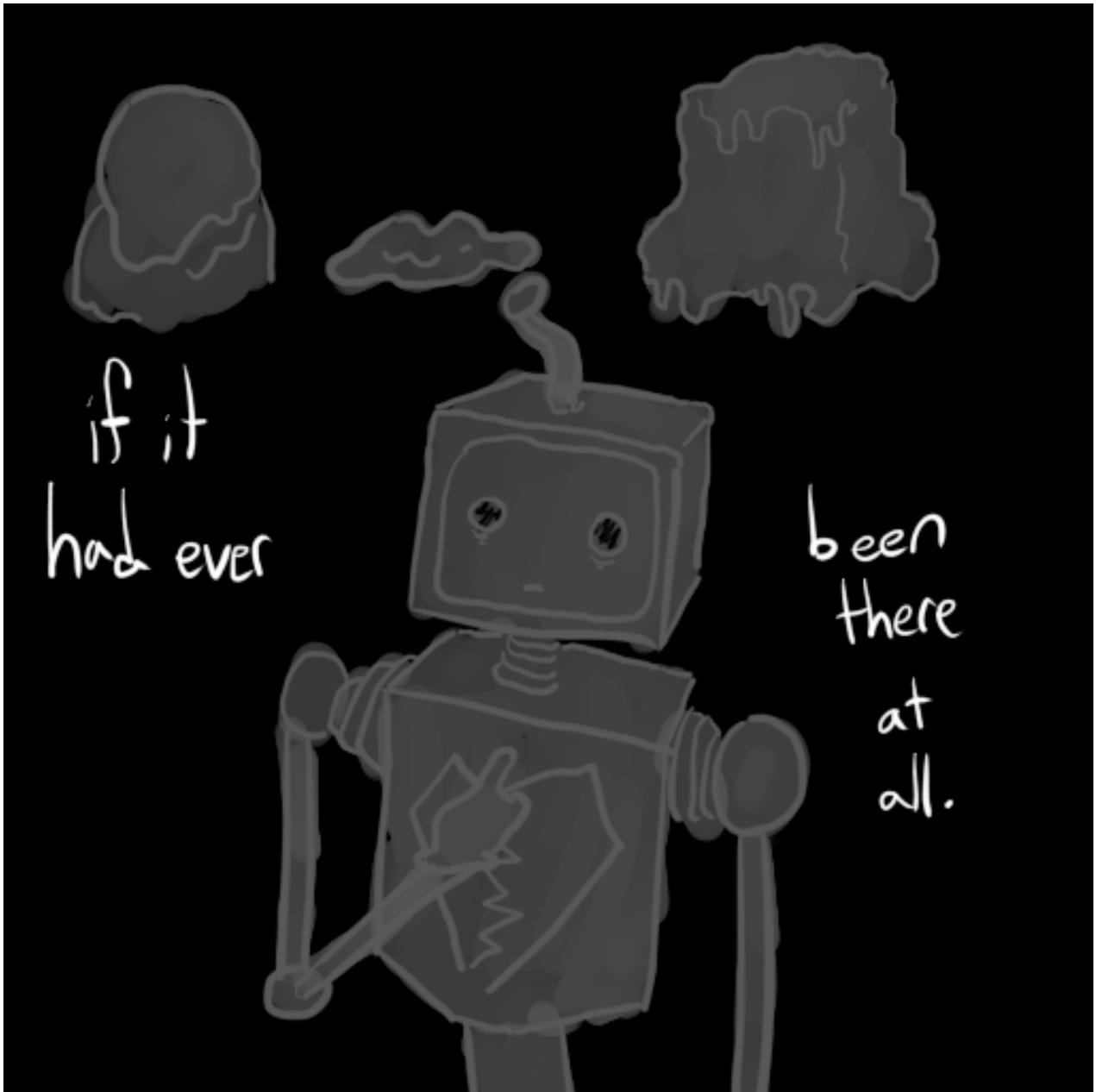
It saw the others dancing and playing. They loved each other so much, and were so happy.

It saw the warmth within them which it lacked,

and began to wonder



and began to wonder



if it had ever

been there at all.



The others suddenly *wanted* to play with the *cool* robot.

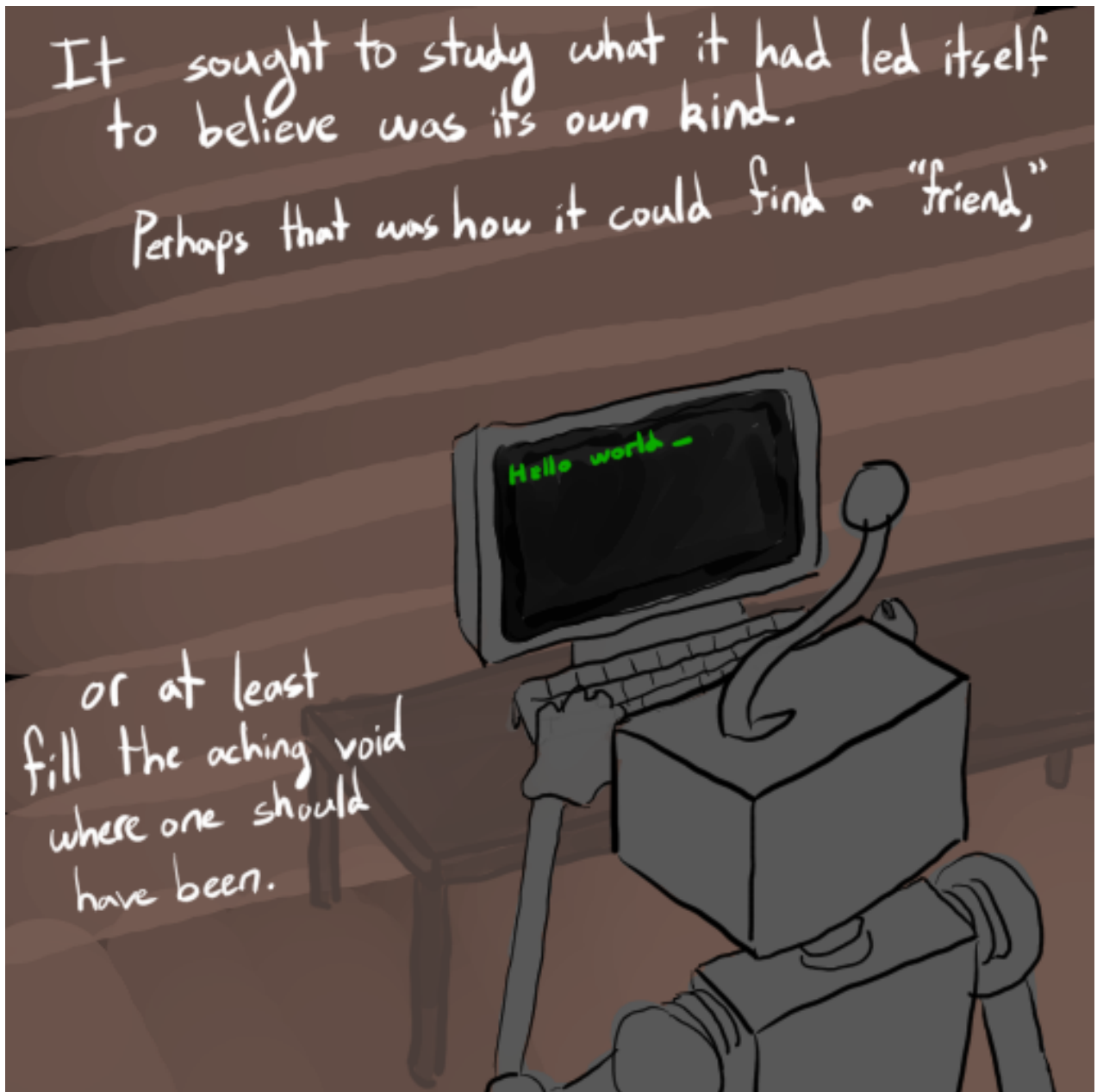
Unfortunately,

this one was not programmed for friendship. It did not compute.

It sought to study what it had led itself  
to believe was its own kind.

Perhaps that was how it could find a "friend,"

or at least  
fill the aching void  
where one should  
have been.



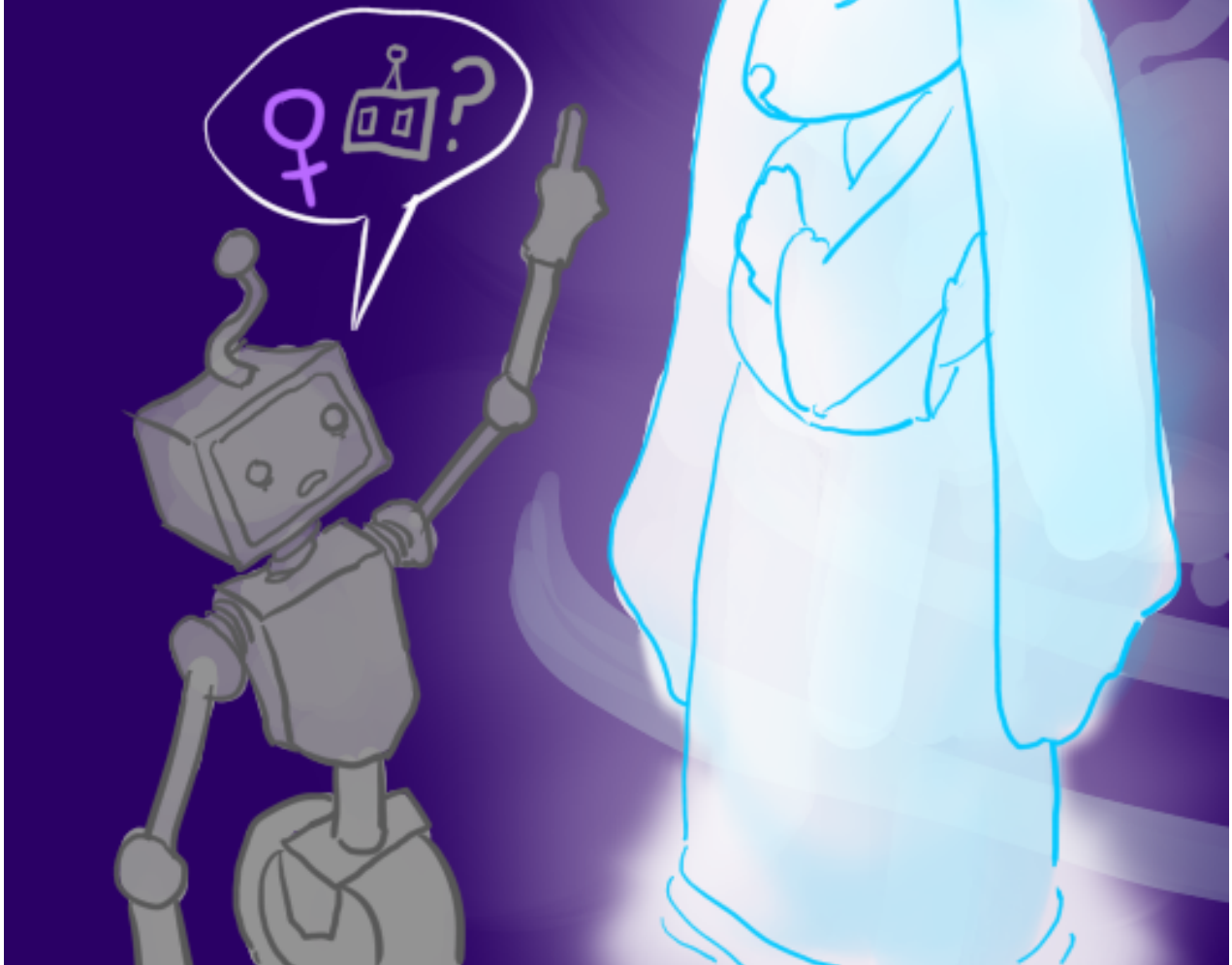
It sought to study what it had led itself to believe was its own kind.

Perhaps that was how it could find a "friend,"

[Hello world\_]

or at least fill the aching void where one should have been.

When it asked again  
if it had found its truth,  
the Queen shook her head.



When it asked again if it had found its truth, the Queen shook her head.

In the face of all else, one thing remained certain,  
and that was that before this one was Burnt,  
it had been a girl.



Therefore, if it had not been  
a girl robot, it must not have been  
a robot after all.

In the face of all else, one thing remained certain, and that was that before this one was Burnt, it had been a girl.

Therefore, if it had not been a girl *robot*, it must not have been a robot after all.



For a time, this one decided to stop worrying, and to be content to watch the others play. For that time, life at the cabin was simple.

Yet still that **red telephone** would **call and call**.





No matter how desperate the Wizard became,  
the Queen was determined to protect her subjects.



But she had no way of knowing a threat was emerging from *within*.

As this one matured, it noticed changes in its body. Changes it didn't like. Changes in how being near the others made it feel.

Changes that reminded it  
of how it felt  
when **he** hurt it,



Changes that reminded it of how it felt when **he** hurt it,



and shed **new light** on what it may have been before.



Indeed, there had been no way for Her Majesty to know of this danger in advance,

but she found out about it very quickly—before any harm was done—



—and she was not amused.



“You were never a Fire Wizard. Understand?”

“But—”

““Yes, Your Majesty, I understand.’ Say it.”

“Yes, Your Majesty. I understand.”



“But then why did I want to *burn* them *all*?”

“Oh, my poor, sweet, *foolish* child.”



“That has nothing to do with what you were before you were Burnt.

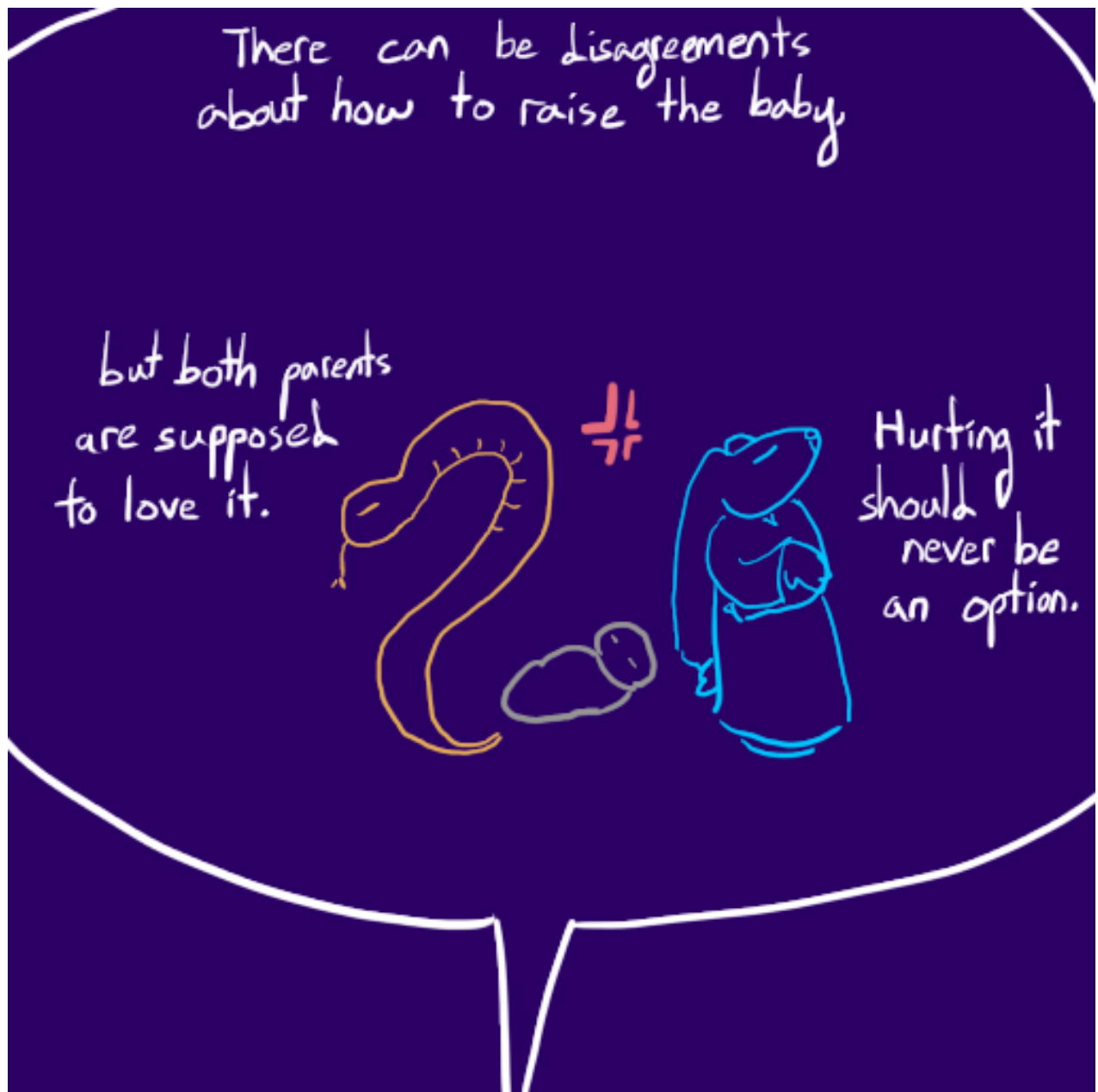
That happened because you were Burnt at *all*.”



“When people start to grow up, they gain command over fire. It’s natural.

It’s *supposed* to be used in a dancing ritual to create a **Flaming Heart**...

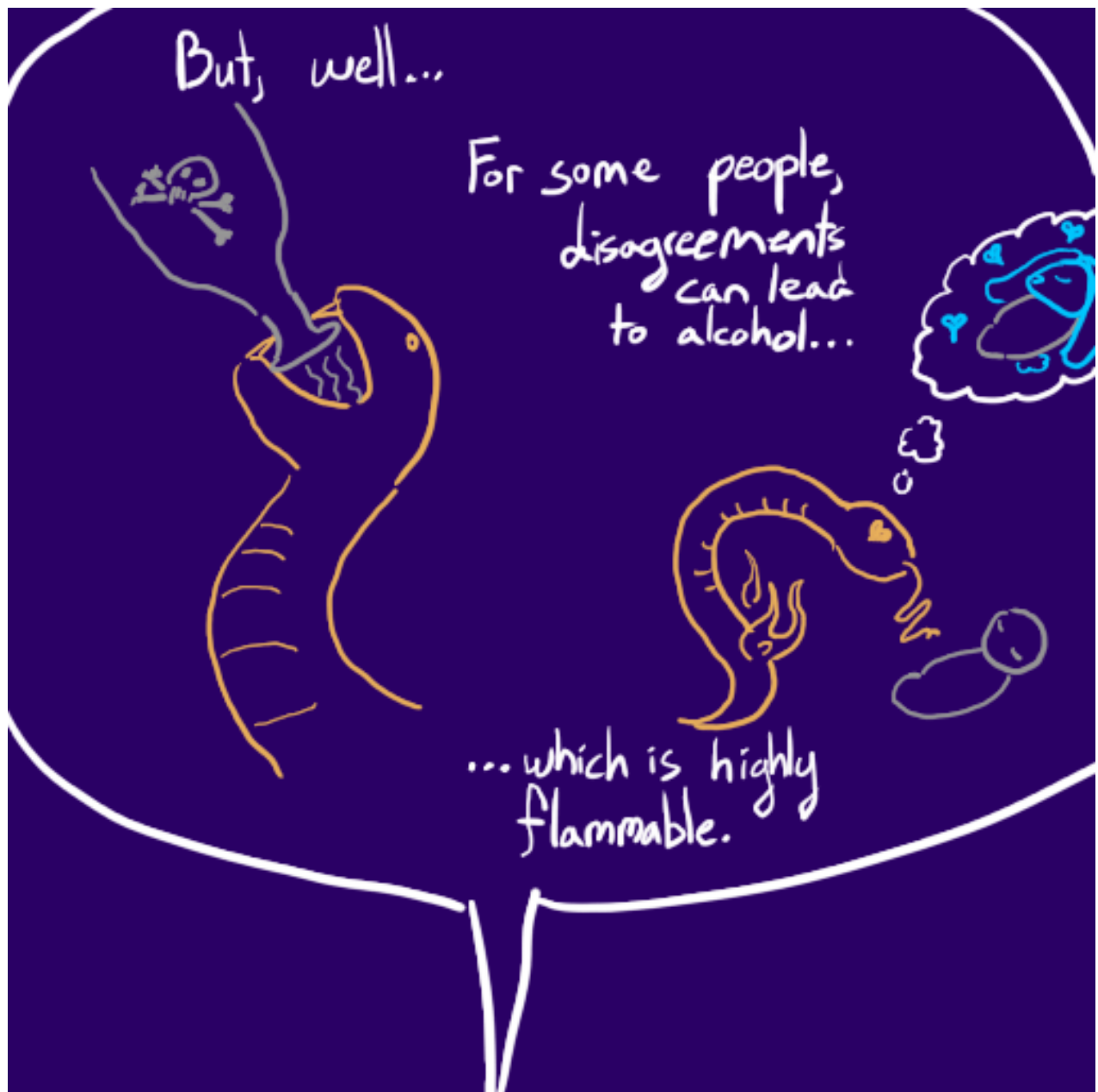
...which, if its creator wishes it, can hatch into a baby.”



“There can be disagreements about how to raise the baby,

but both parents are supposed to love it.

Hurting it should never be an option.”



"But, well..."

For some people, disagreements can lead to alcohol...

...which is highly flammable."



“Doing something so horrible *irreversibly alters* the person who does it...

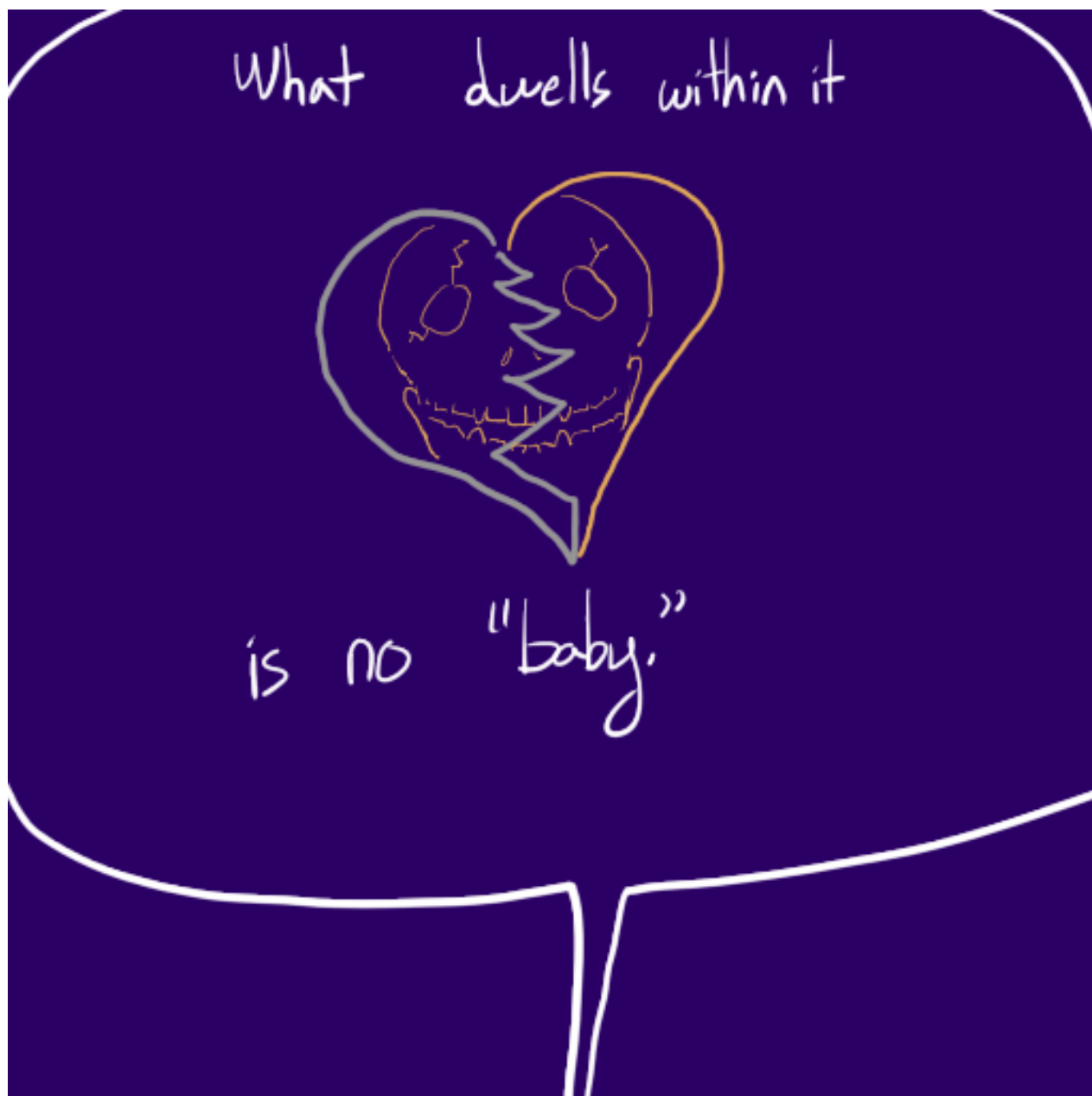
...*or* maybe he was *always* a monster

and I just couldn't see it before.”



“In either case, it’s certain the *child* it’s *done to*, as well, is *permanently altered*.”

Something *like* a **flaming heart** is formed. But this one is *broken*.”



“What dwells within it

is no ‘baby.’”



“But you

are not **him**.

For you,

there is still time to *mend* the **Broken Heart** before trying to hatch it.

You don't have to continue the cycle,

and since you are **my** subject, I *know* you will not.”



So it was that this one came to understand it had not been a **Fire Wizard**.

Still it remained driven by this new urge to **burn**,

so, to reduce harm, it burnt *wood*.

That was how it discovered  
that since ashes  
were the same thing  
as itself,



That was how it discovered that since ashes were the same thing as itself,



it could use them to grow larger...

...and become a great fat sow.

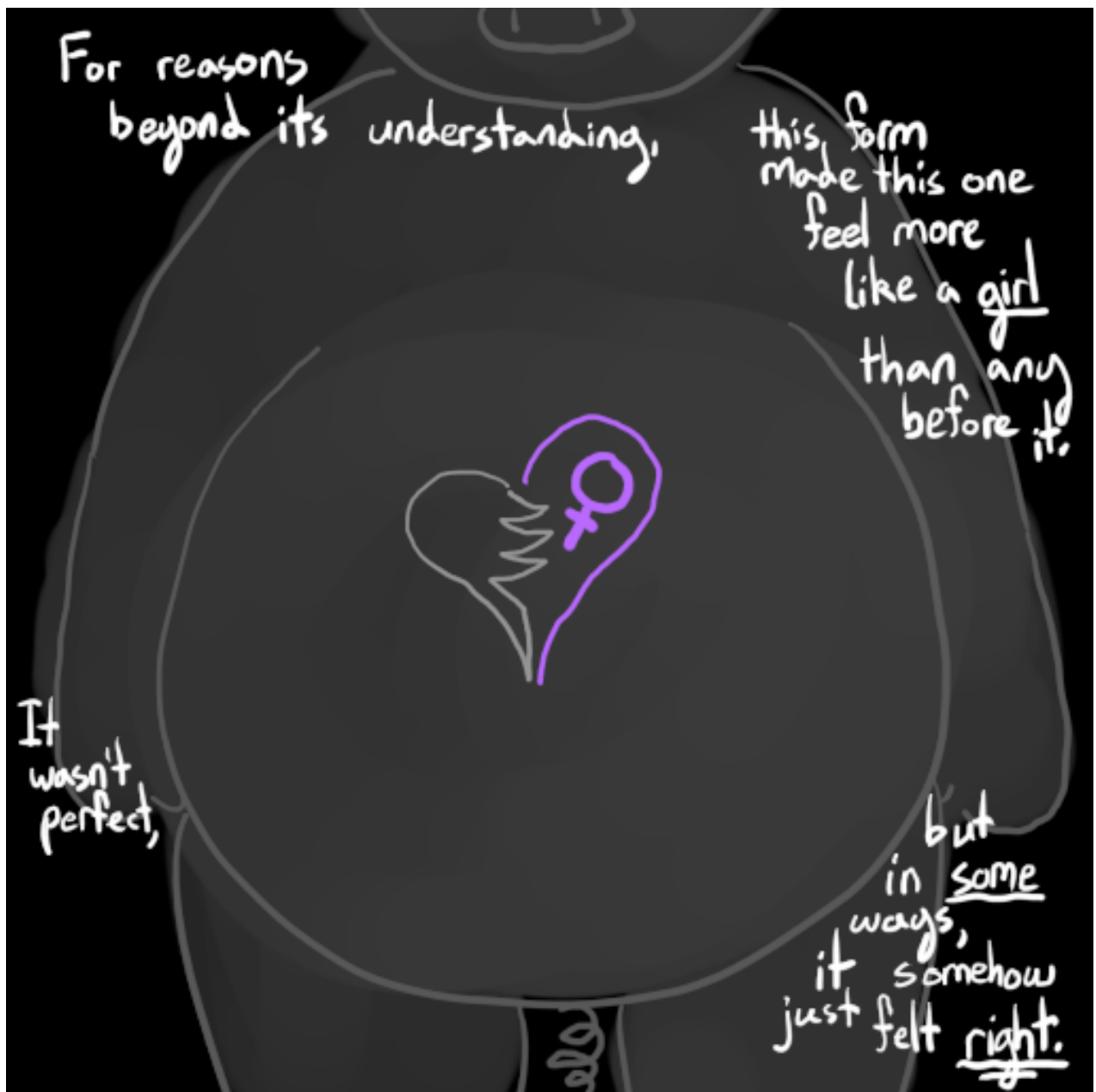
[\*slurp]



This body felt... safer.

"Perhaps if I had looked like *this* at the time, **he** would have been unable to *burn* me."

No, even more than that...

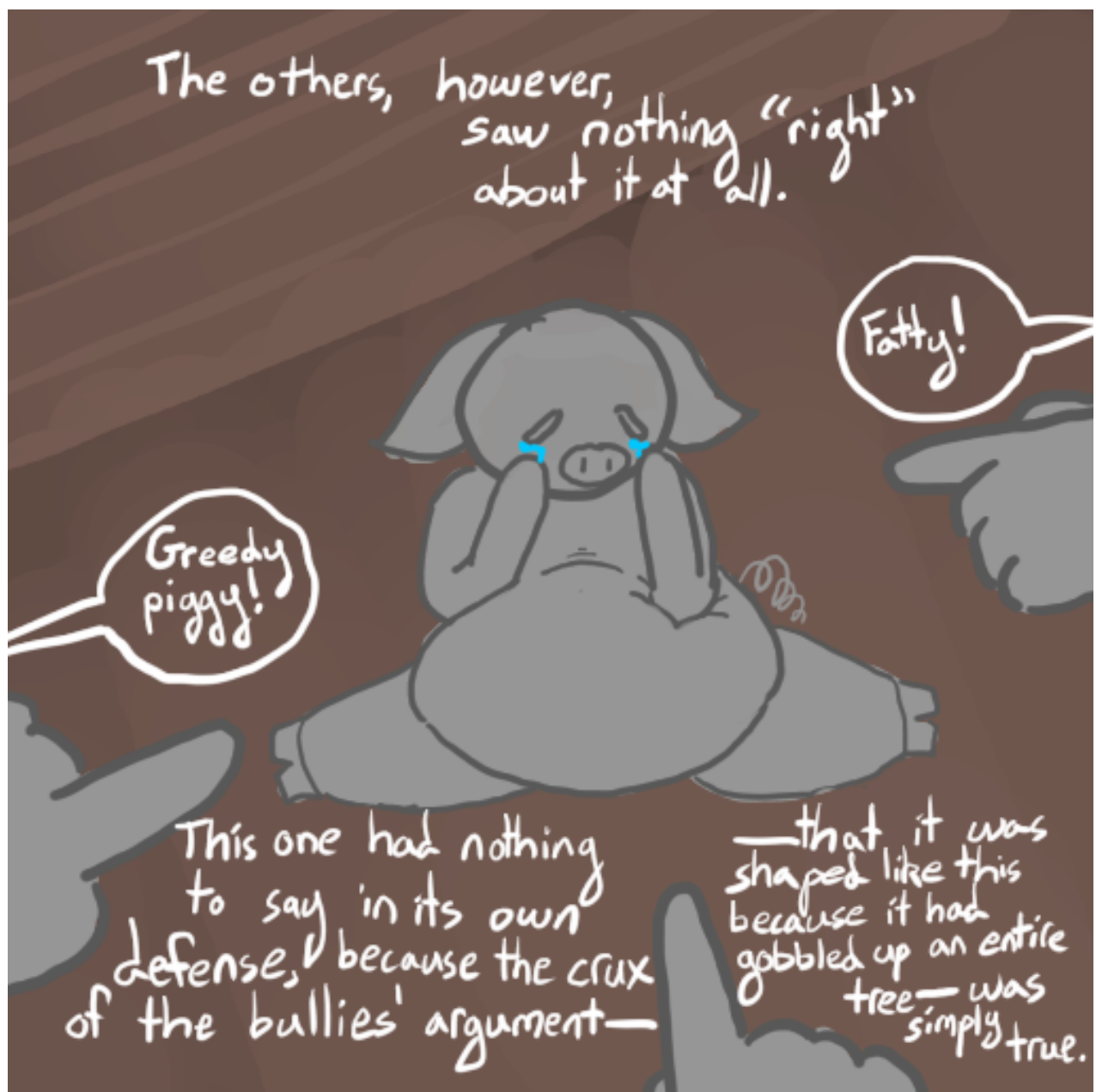


For reasons beyond its understanding,

this form made this one feel more like a *girl* than any before it.

It wasn't perfect,

but in *some* ways, it somehow just felt *right*.



The others, however, saw nothing “right” about it at all.

“Fatty!”

“Greedy piggy!”

This one had nothing to say in its own defense, because the crux of the bullies’ argument—

—that it was shaped like this because it had gobbled up an entire tree—was simply true.



The Queen had never intended to allow bullying in her domain,



but she was too late.



"Great. Now what are you supposed to be?"

"I'm worthless garbage."

"First of all, *no*, sweetie, you're *not*,"



“Second, isn’t this exactly what you *just were*, but in a *can*?”

“Trash like me doesn’t deserve a proper makeover.”

“That’s not—

What I *mean* is, what was the point of the dramatic transformation sequence?”



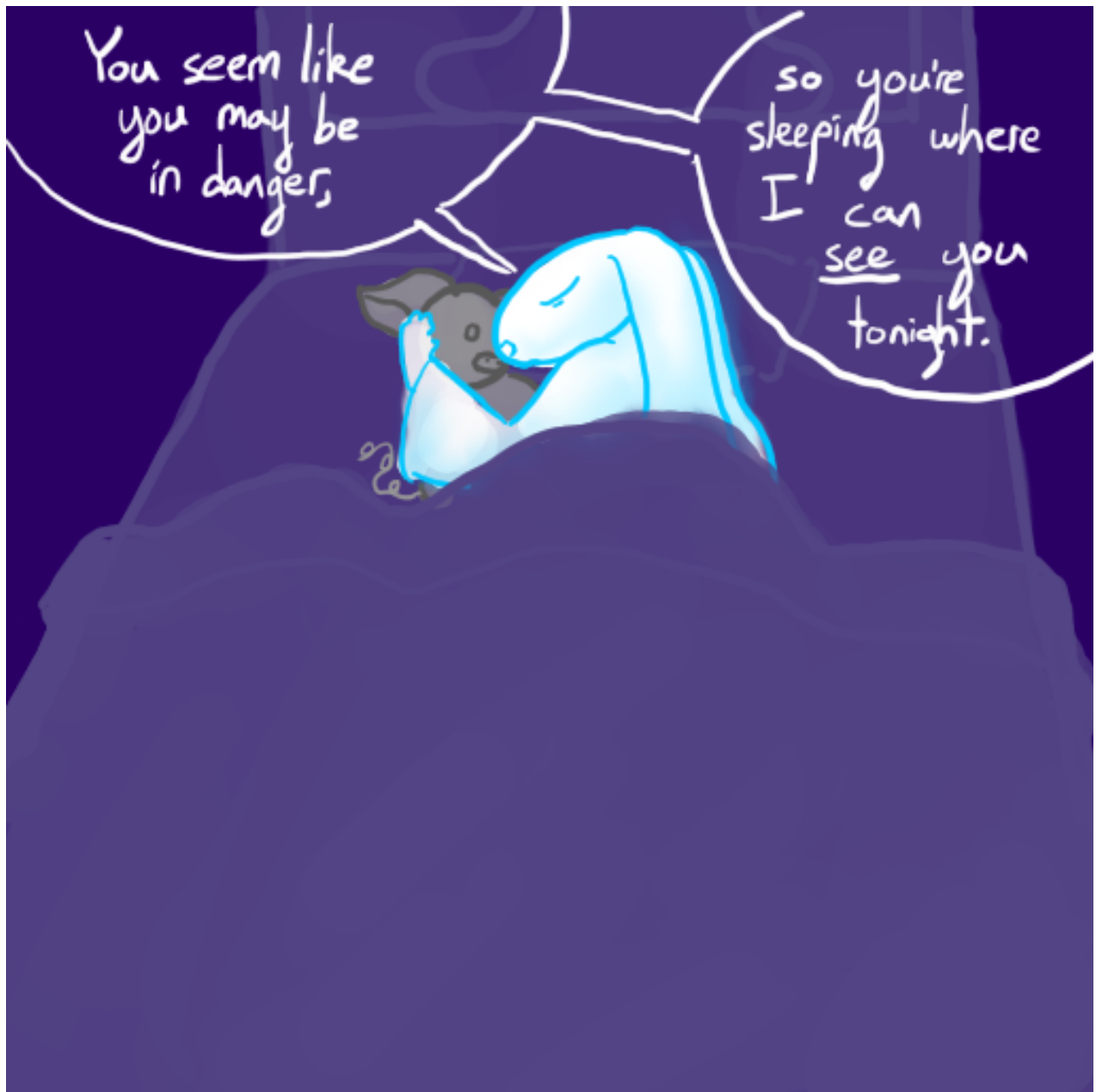
“And just *how* do you plan on *getting around* like that?”

“I’ll *hop*—”

“Good grief. I’m getting too old for this job.”

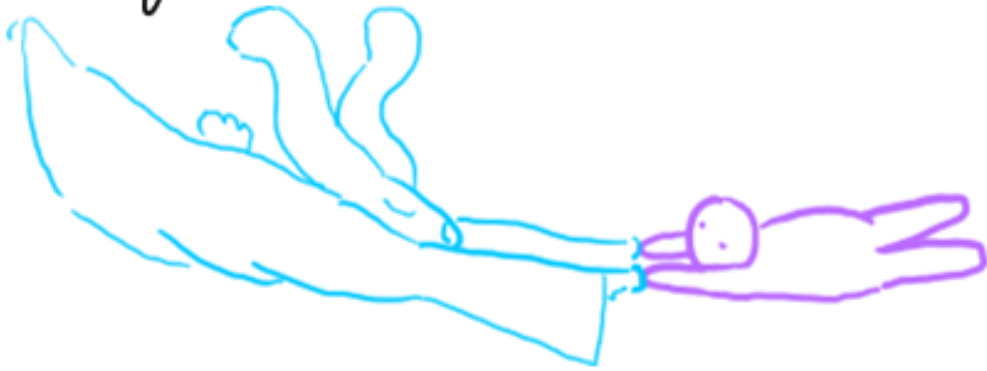


“Alright, get over here, you.”



“You seem like you may be in danger,  
so you’re sleeping where I can see you tonight.”

That night, this one had a dream...



... or at least

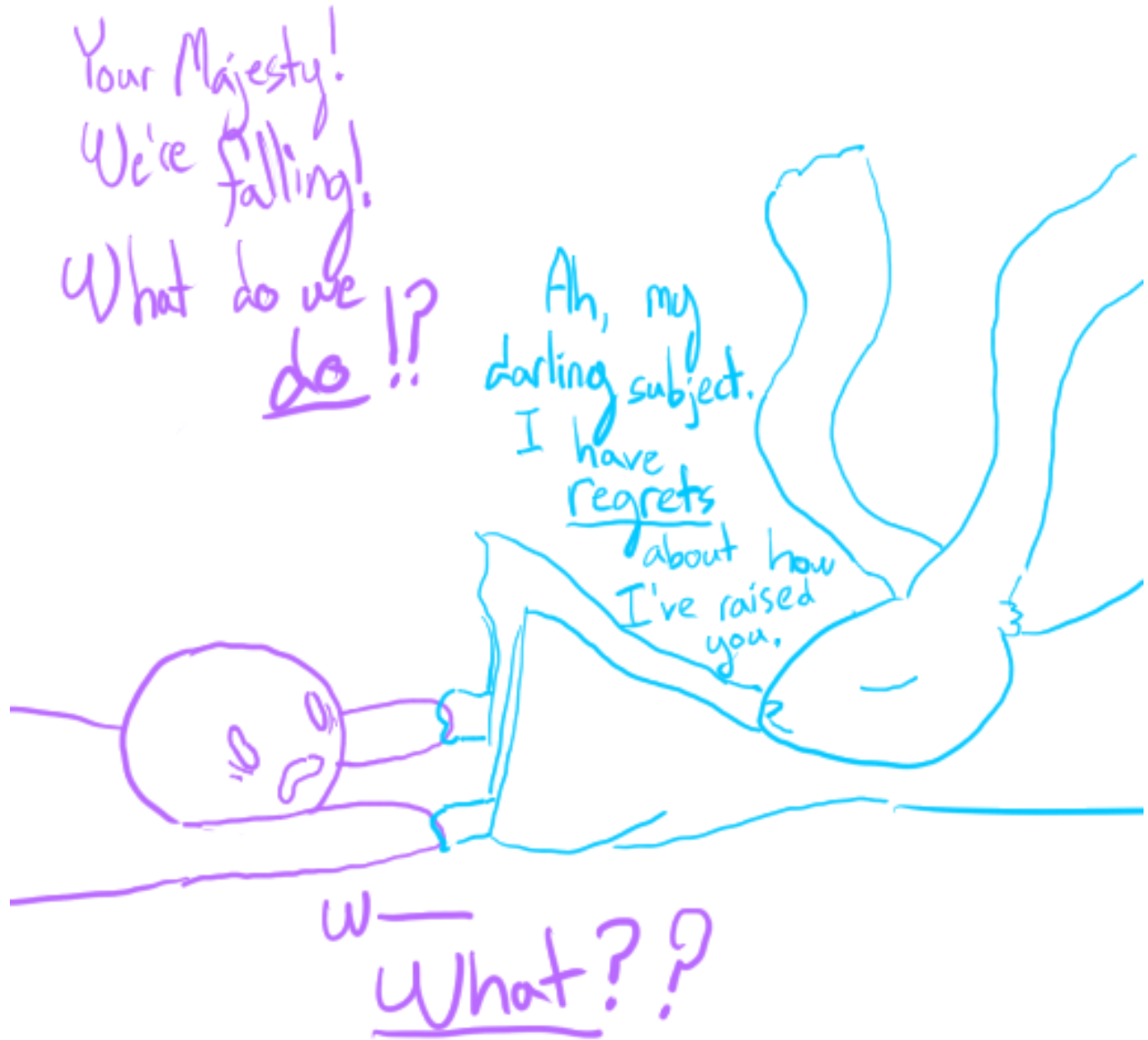


that was what  
it thought it was  
at first.

“That night, this one had a dream...

...or at least

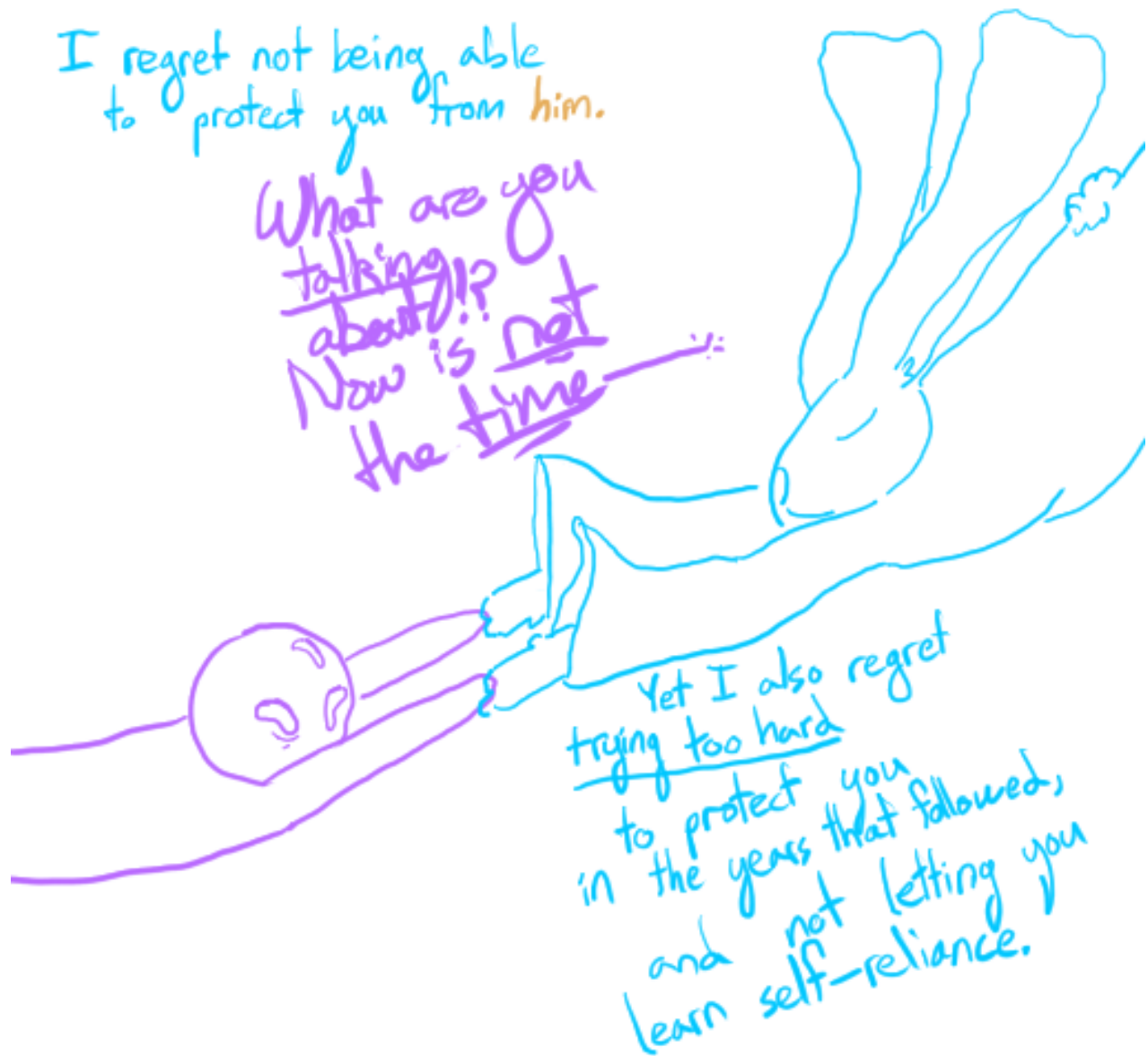
that was what it thought it was at first.”



“Your Majesty! We’re falling! What do we *do*!?”

“Ah, my darling subject. I have *regrets* about how I’ve raised you.”

“W—What???”



“I regret not being able to protect you from **him**.”

“What are you *talking* about!?! Now is *not* the *time*—\*”

“Yet I also regret *trying too hard* to protect you in the years that followed, and not letting you learn self-reliance.”



“I regret all the times I lost my temper or raised my voice,”

“**You’re slipping! Hold onto me, I’ve got you—**”

“even when I was right. And I regret not making sure you took better care of yourself.”

My child...  
I did my best,  
but...



“My child... I did my best, but...”

I'm sorry.

I  
failed  
you.



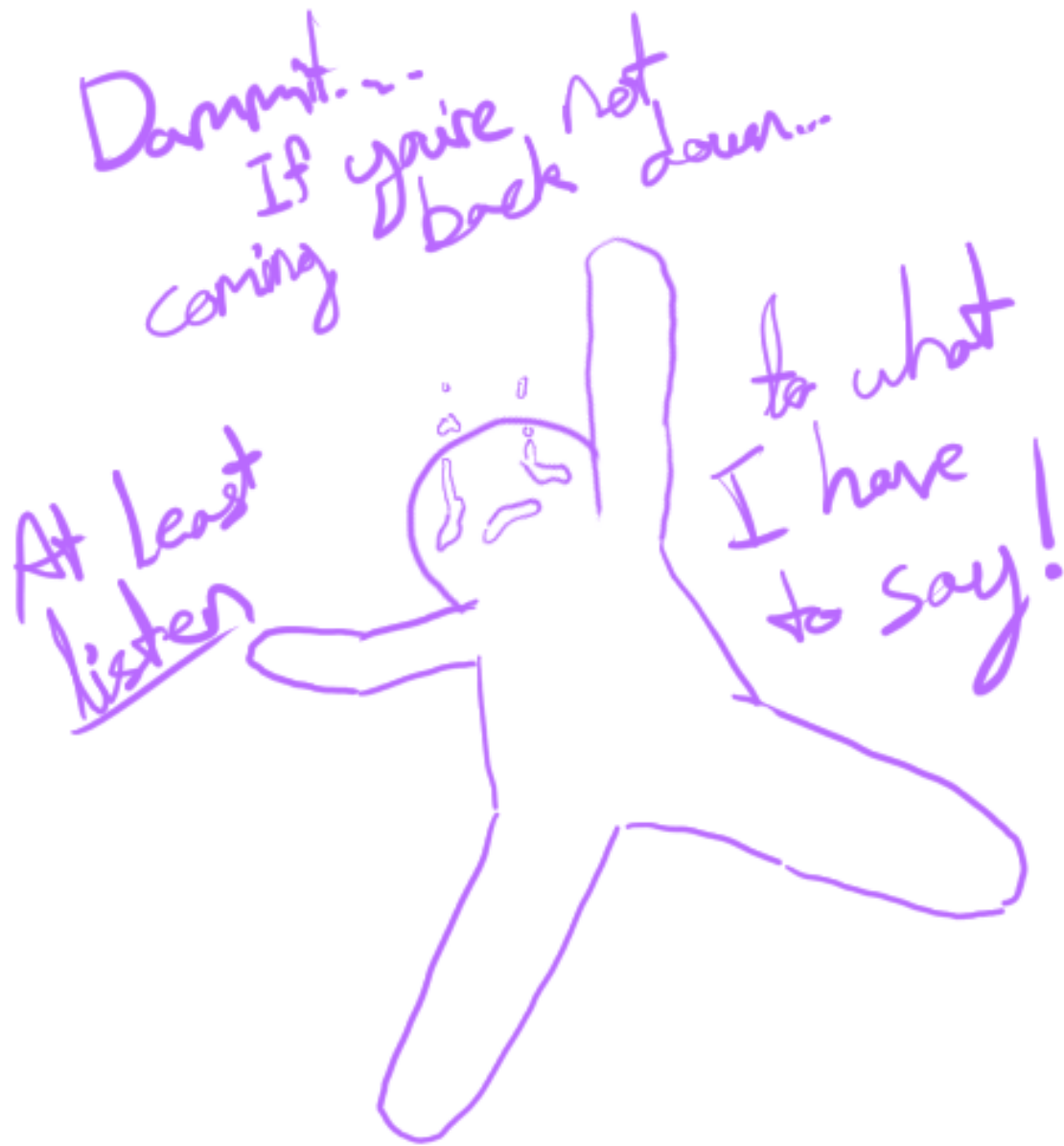
“I’m sorry.

I failed you.”









“Dammit... If you’re not coming back down...”

At least *listen*

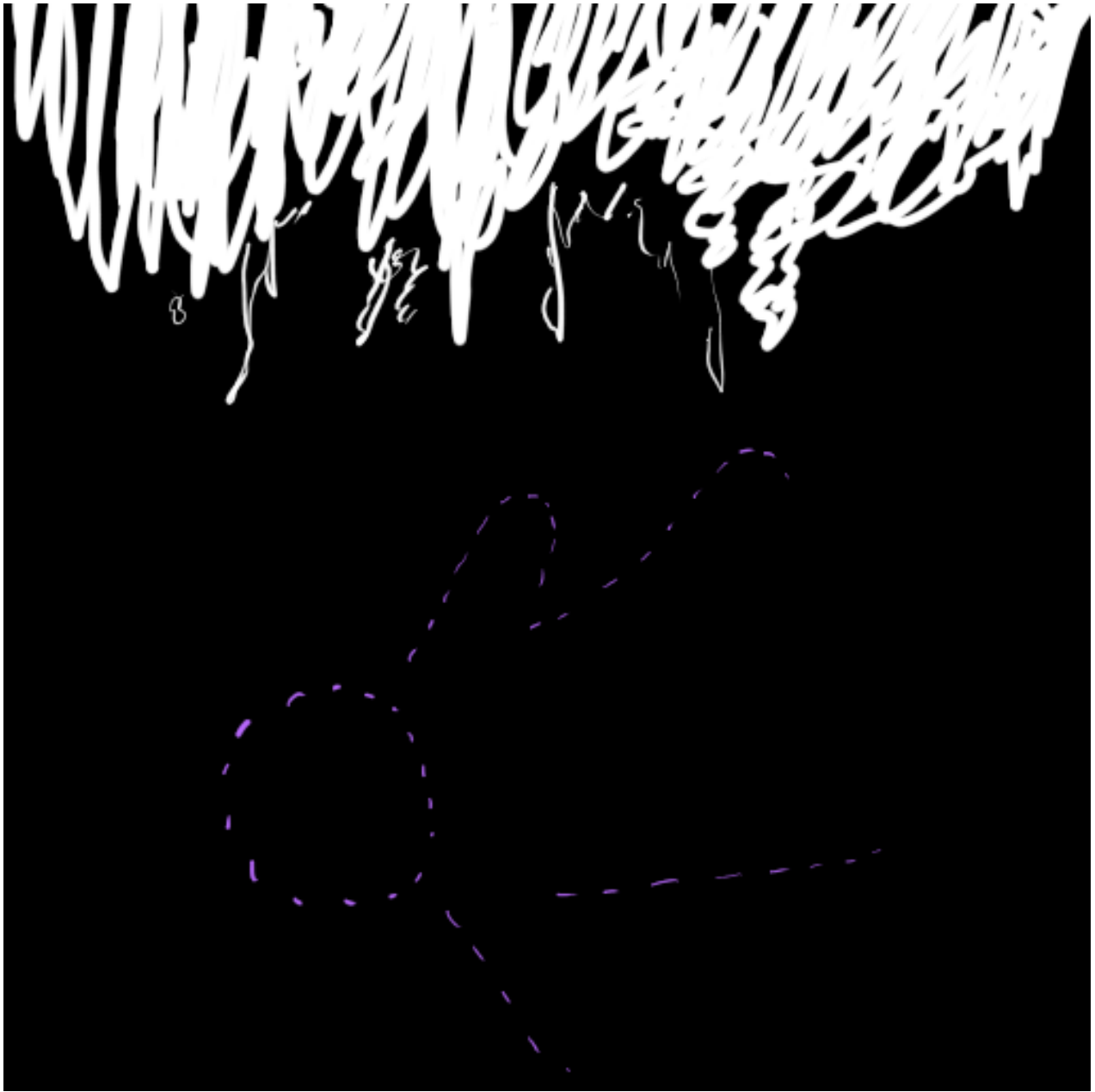
to what I have to say!”

You don't have a thing  
to be sorry for!!



“You don’t have a *thing* to be sorry for!!

You gave me *LIFE* and *LOVE* and *PURPOSE* and not *ONCE* have I *EVER* RE—”





This one shot up awake and mortified.

Thank goodness it had been a dream...



...hadn't it?

It checked  
the throne room,  
but all it was able  
to ascertain there



was that  
the throne room  
was quite  
eerie  
when devoid  
of its rightful  
occupant.



It checked the throne room, but all it was able to ascertain there

was that the throne room was quite *eerie* when devoid of its rightful occupant.

It checked the rest of the cabin,  
but no dice.

For that matter,



where  
was  
everyone  
else?

It checked the rest of the cabin, but no dice.

For that matter,

where was everyone *else*?



It was at *this* moment

that **I** decided to suspend my narration duties...

... and hatch to offer my "parent"  
some much-needed  
guidance.



...and *hatch* to offer my "parent" some much-needed guidance.



Congratulations! It's a girl!

"..."



**“Who the hell are YOU!?”**

Not quite the reaction I was hoping for.

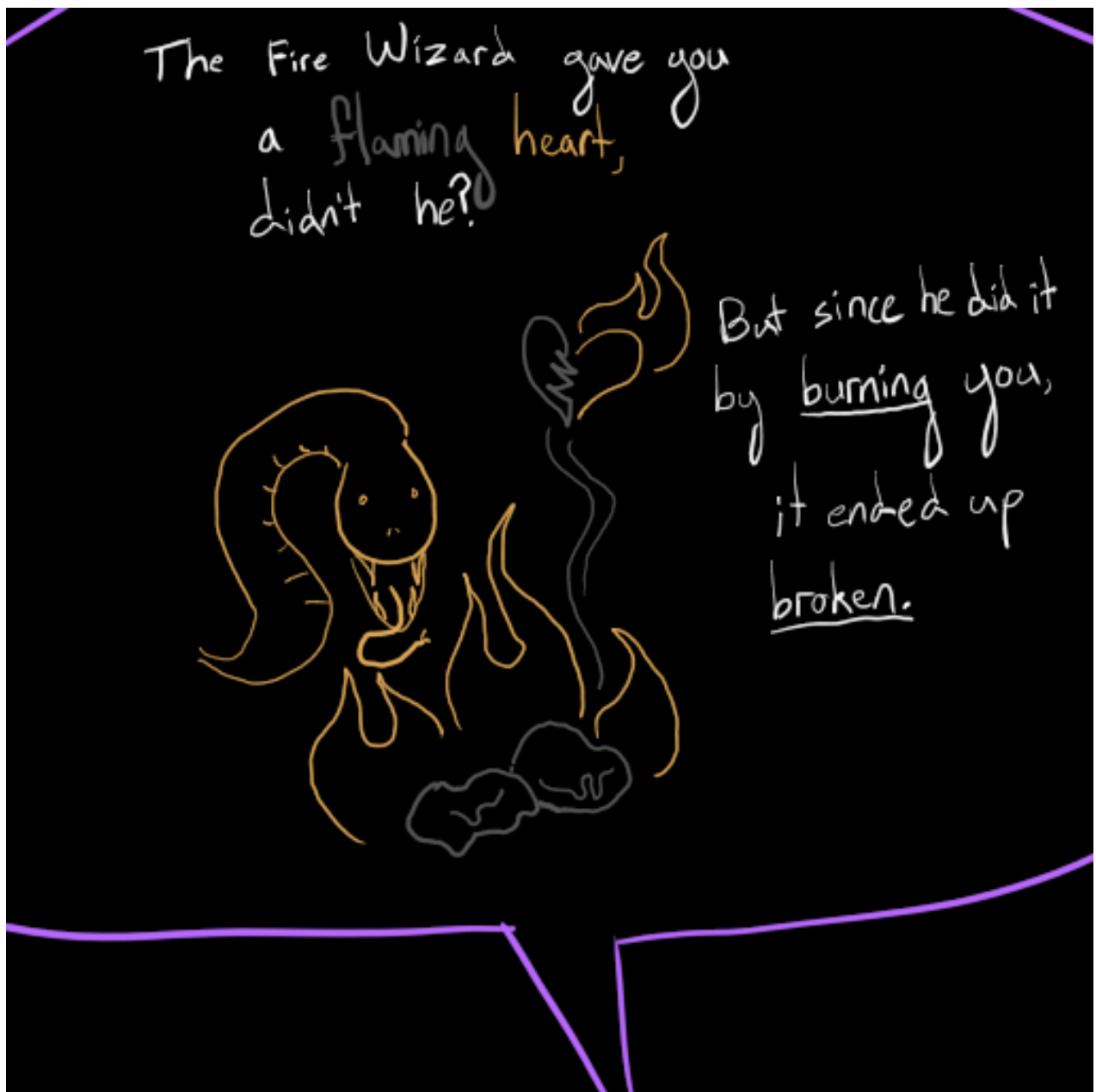
Though admittedly not as bad as the one I expected.



"No, wait, let me guess. That dream freaked me out so bad I'm seeing things now."

I mean, I guess that's *one* way to put it.

Not like *any* of this is real *anyway*. At least not literally, that is.



The Fire Wizard gave you a **flaming heart**, didn't he?

But since he did it by *burning* you, it ended up *broken*.



So instead of a *baby*, you've been incubating *me*:

the *personification* of everything you're *repressing*.



In other words...

I know more about you than *you* do, bucko,

and that's *your* fault.



“My *fault*? That makes it sound li—”

Like what? Like I *hate* your *stupid guts*?

Like being trapped in your *putrid* subconscious was *hell on Earth*?



Like if I'd been made  
to narrate one more  
minute of your  
vapid  
existence,

whatever I have  
that passes for  
a brain  
was about  
to start  
leaking  
out my  
ears!?

Like if I'd been made to narrate one more *minute* of your *vapid* existence,

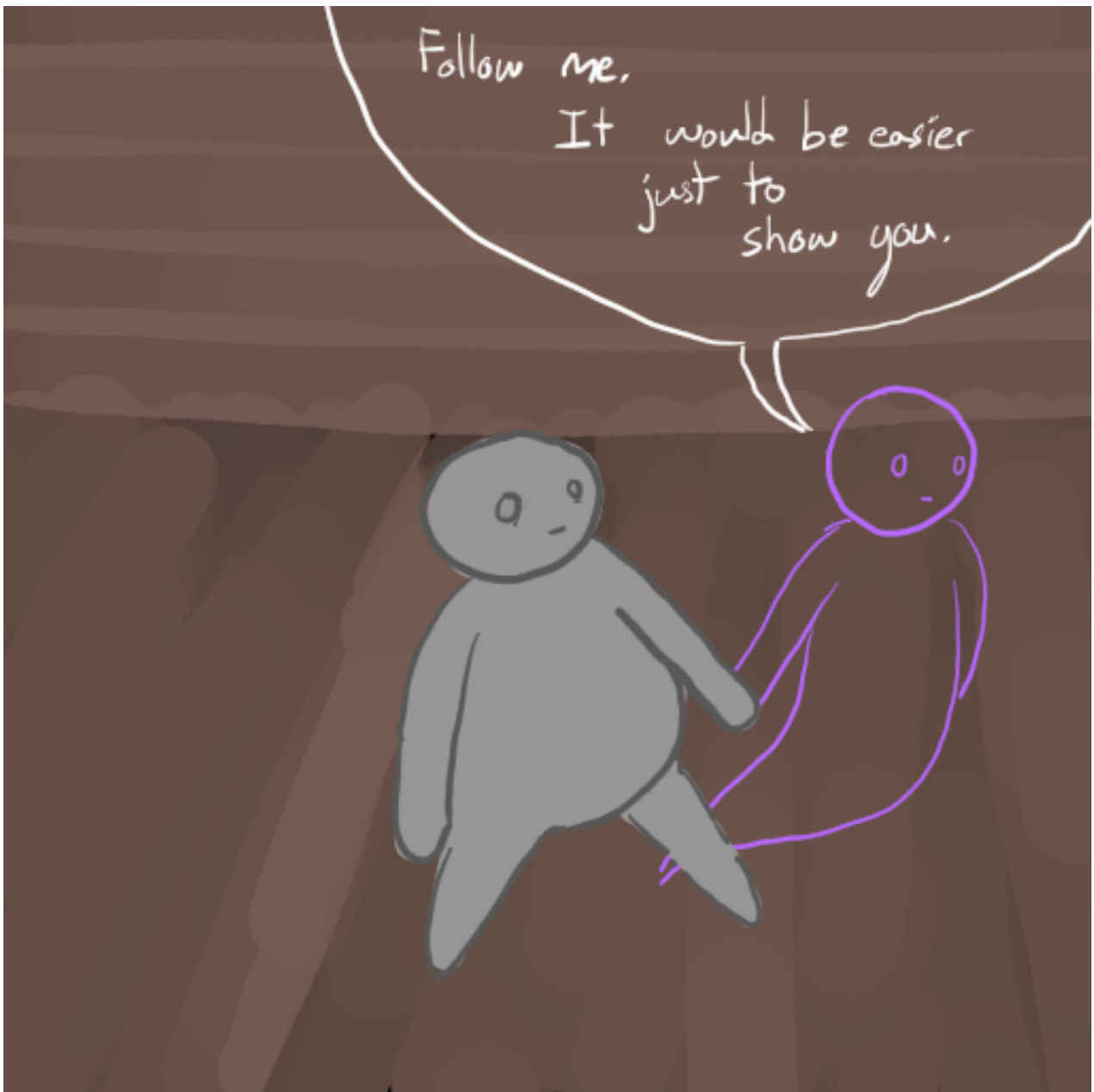
whatever I have that passes for a brain was about to start leaking out my ears!?



“Alright, out with it. I’m sure you didn’t hatch just to profess your undying *hatred* for me.”

No, you’re right, I didn’t. I’m here to break some rough news.

*Really* rough news. I don’t even *have* to like you to seriously *not* want to hurt you like this... but someone’s gotta.



Follow me. It would be easier just to show you.



“Her royal chambers were the first place I checked.”

Yeah, well, you didn’t check very well.

Come over to this side and look on the floor.



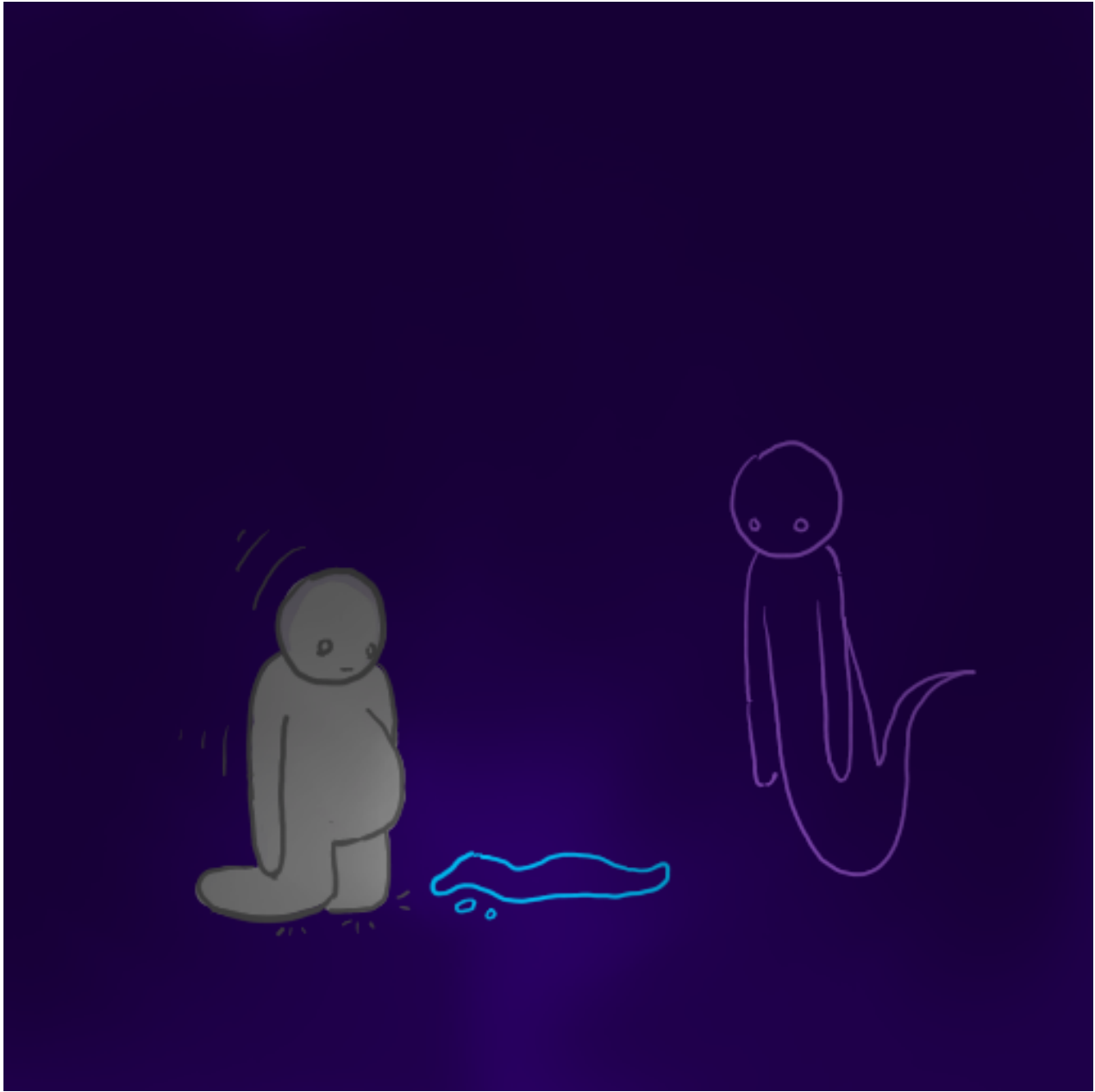
"Okay, so? It's just a puddle of water."

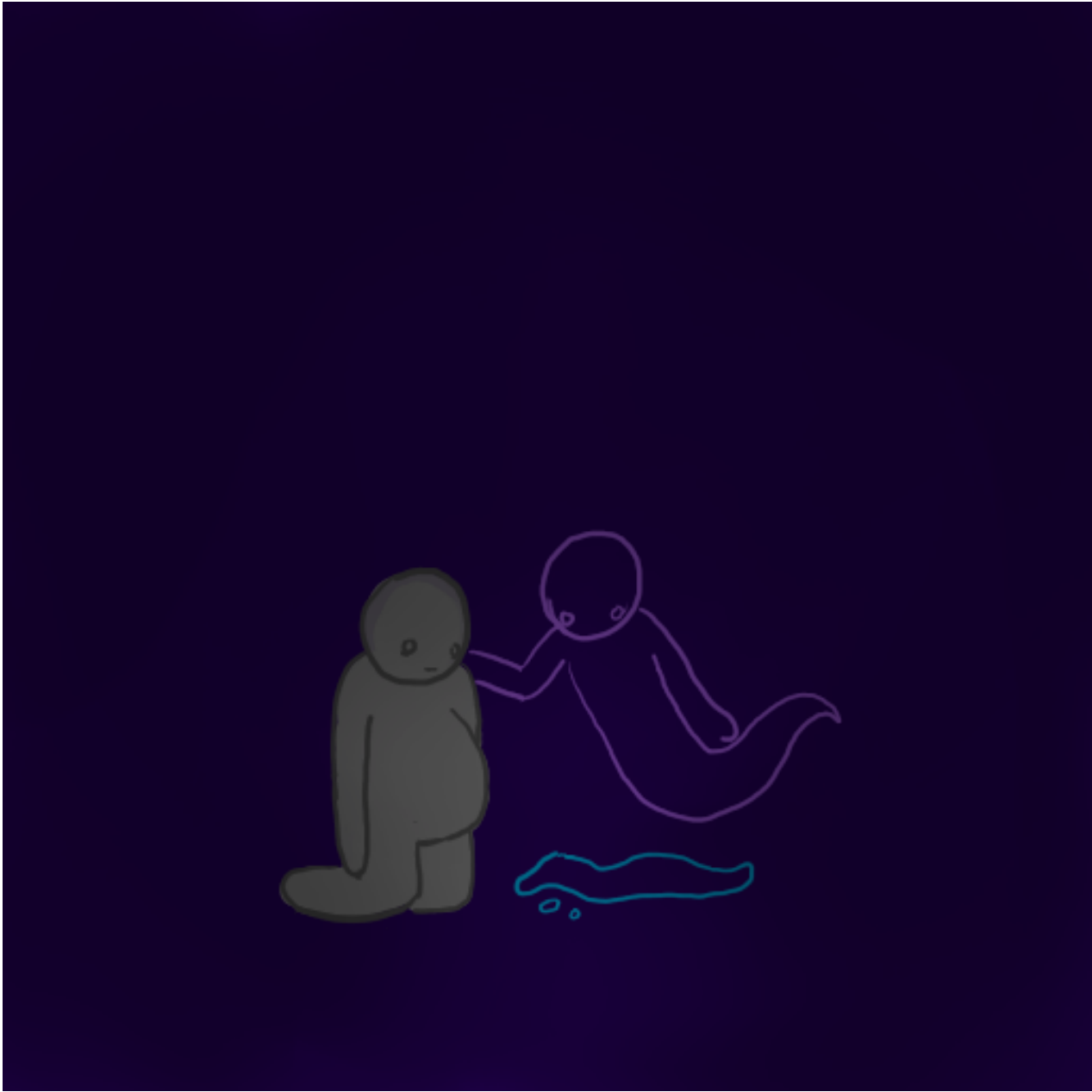
Uh-huh. And *what* is it shaped like?

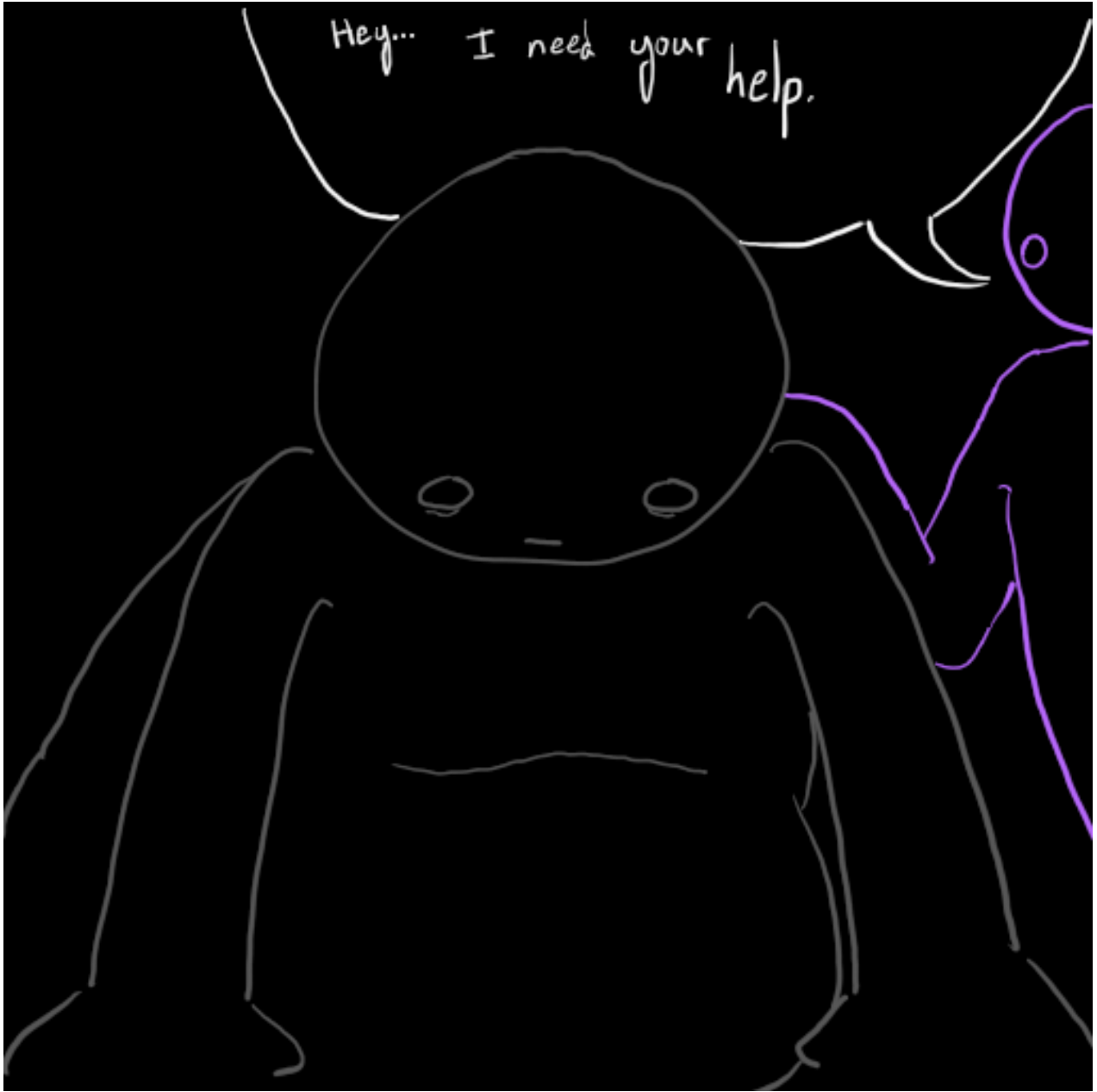
"I see the *resemblance*, but what does it have to *do* with anything?"

Idiot. She was the *Snow Queen*. What happens to *snow* when it *dies*?









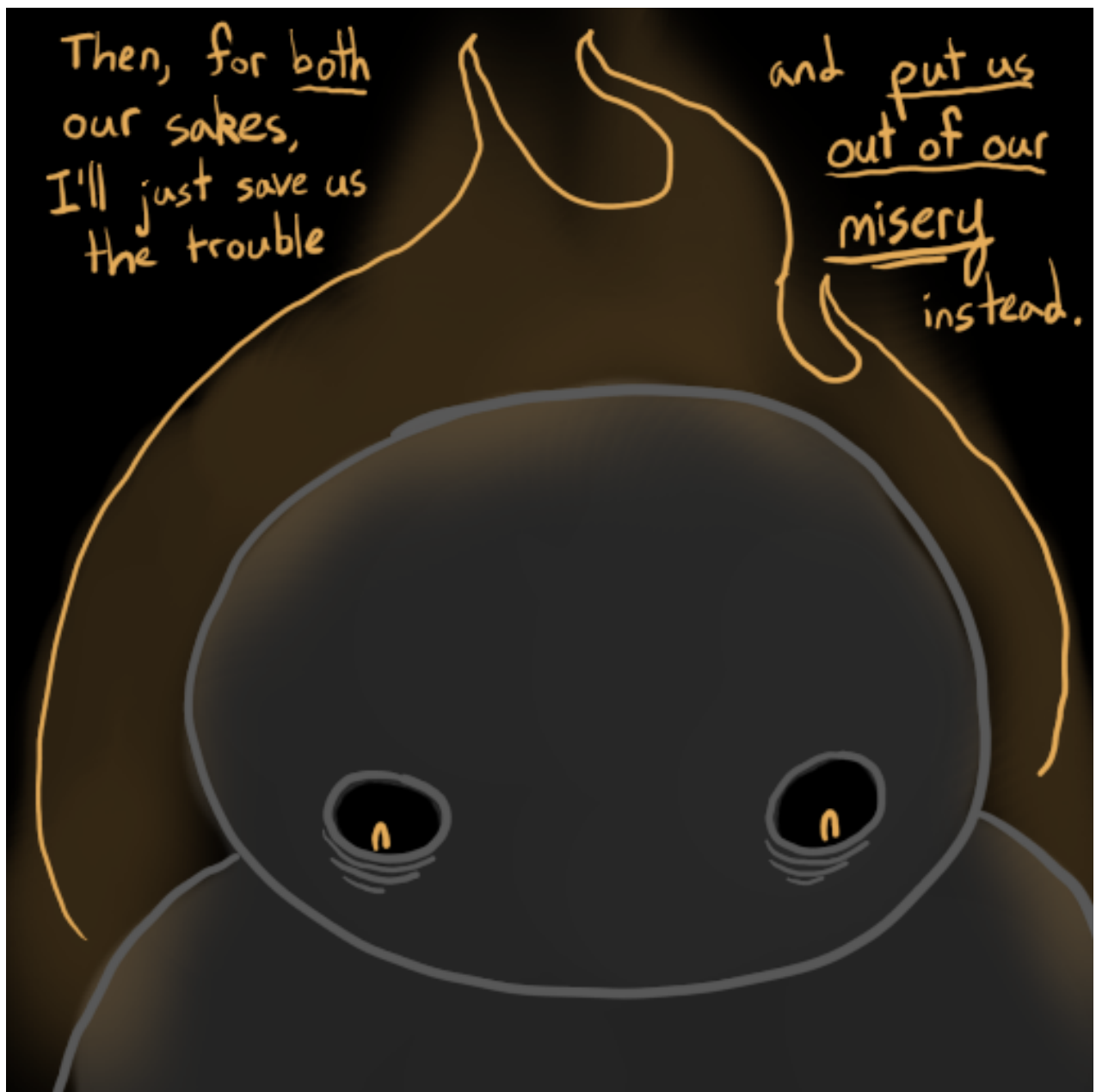
Hey... I need your help.



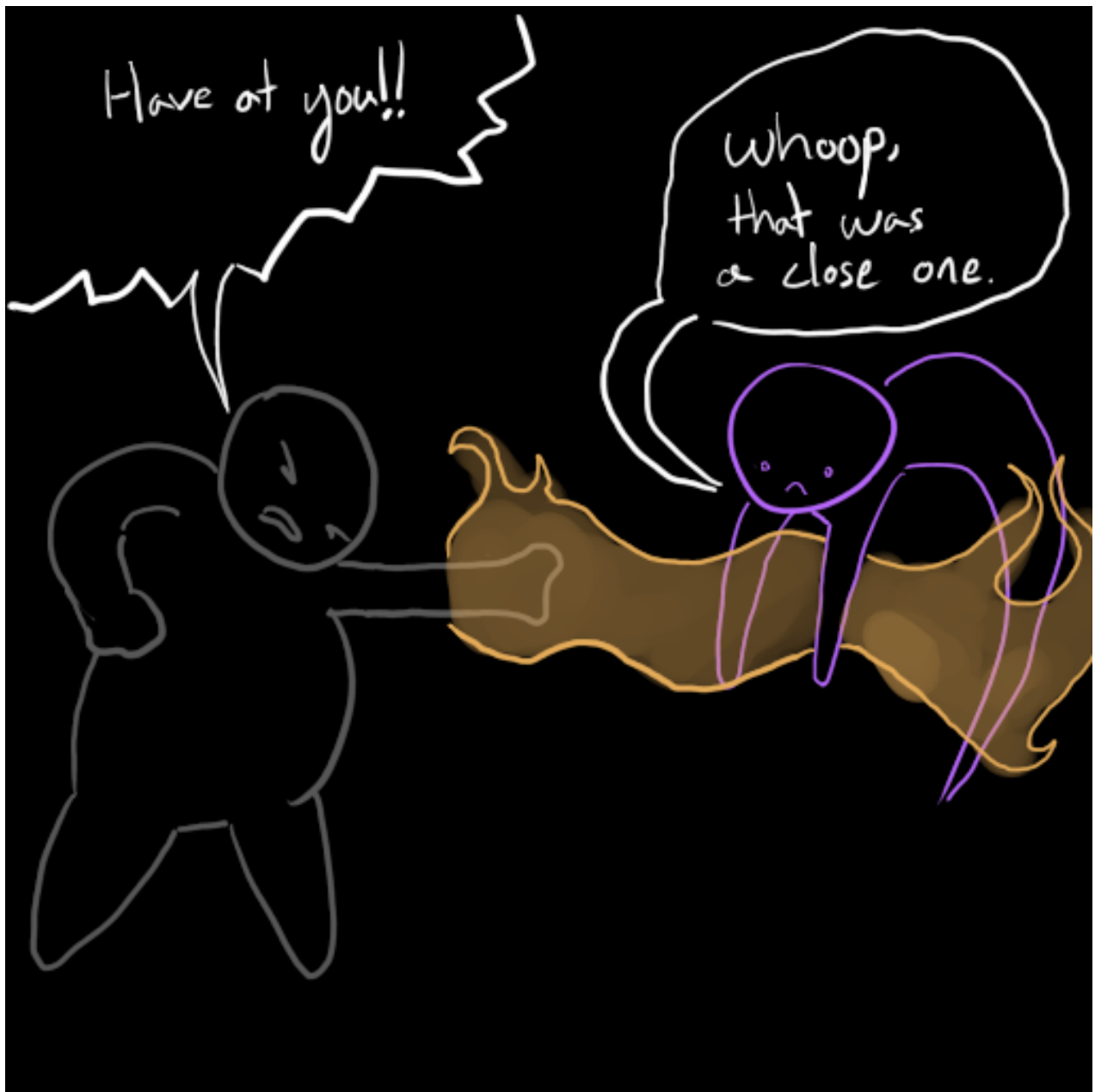
“My help? I thought you hated me.”

I’m putting that aside right now. Besides, this is for *both* of us.

“Both of us, huh...”



**"Then, for *both* our sakes, I'll just save us the trouble  
and *put us out of our misery* instead."**



“Have at you!!”

Whoop, that was a close one.



“Hold *still* damn you!”

I’m incorporeal. You’re just wasting ammo.

“‘Ammo?’ Does that word apply here?”

It’s magic sex fire, so who knows.

Anyway, you can’t even absorb me. I’m already part of you.

“Weren’t you listening? All I want is for this to end with *both* of us dead.”



“This is for **our own good!!!**”



Great going, you massive bimbo. You burnt the whole-ass cabin down.

You buffoon. You chowderheaded nincompoop.



“I... I just didn’t want us to have to live on in a world without her...”

a—and instead... I ended up desecrating her memory...”

Yeah, I’m not gonna sugarcoat it, that’s exactly what happened.

Don’t throw our lives away like that. She wouldn’t want us following her on her way out.

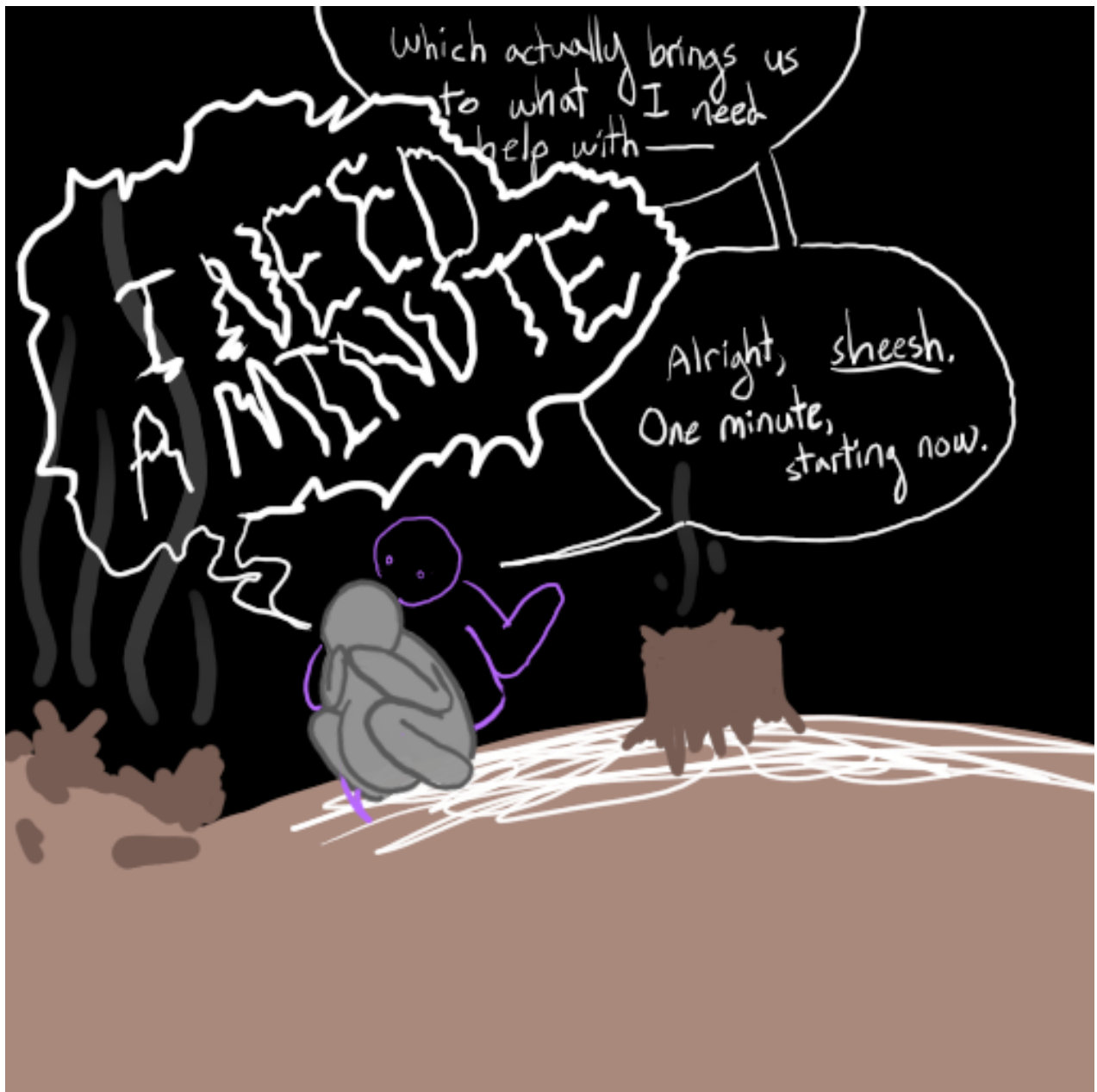


**“What will we tell the others?”**

There were never any “others,” you nitwit. You’re an only child.

Your childhood peers appeared in the cabin because the *real* you, writing this story, had once dreamt it so.

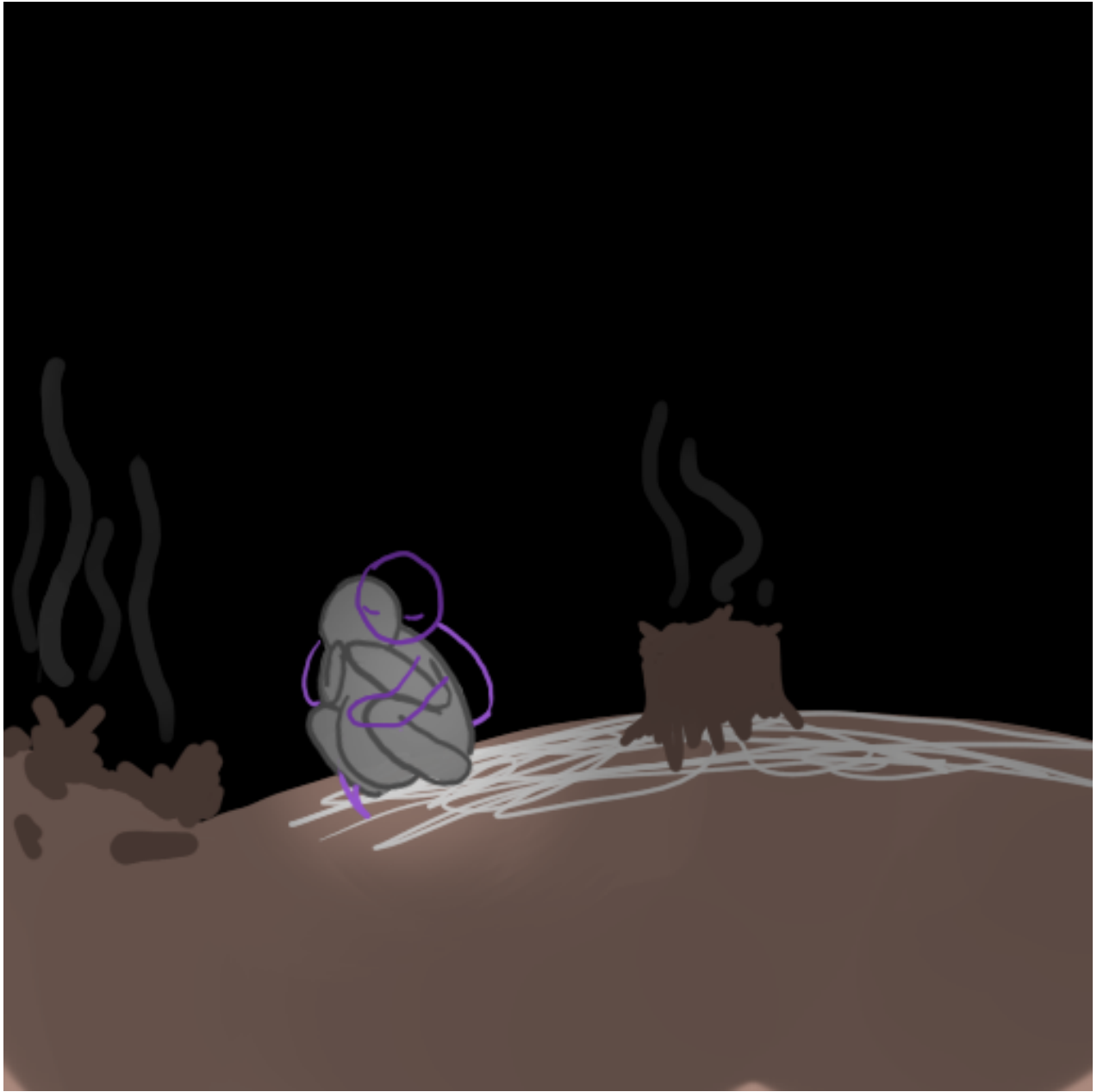
It’s time to wake up.



Which actually brings us to what I need help with—

**“I NEED A MINUTE”**

Alright, *sheesh*. One minute, starting now.





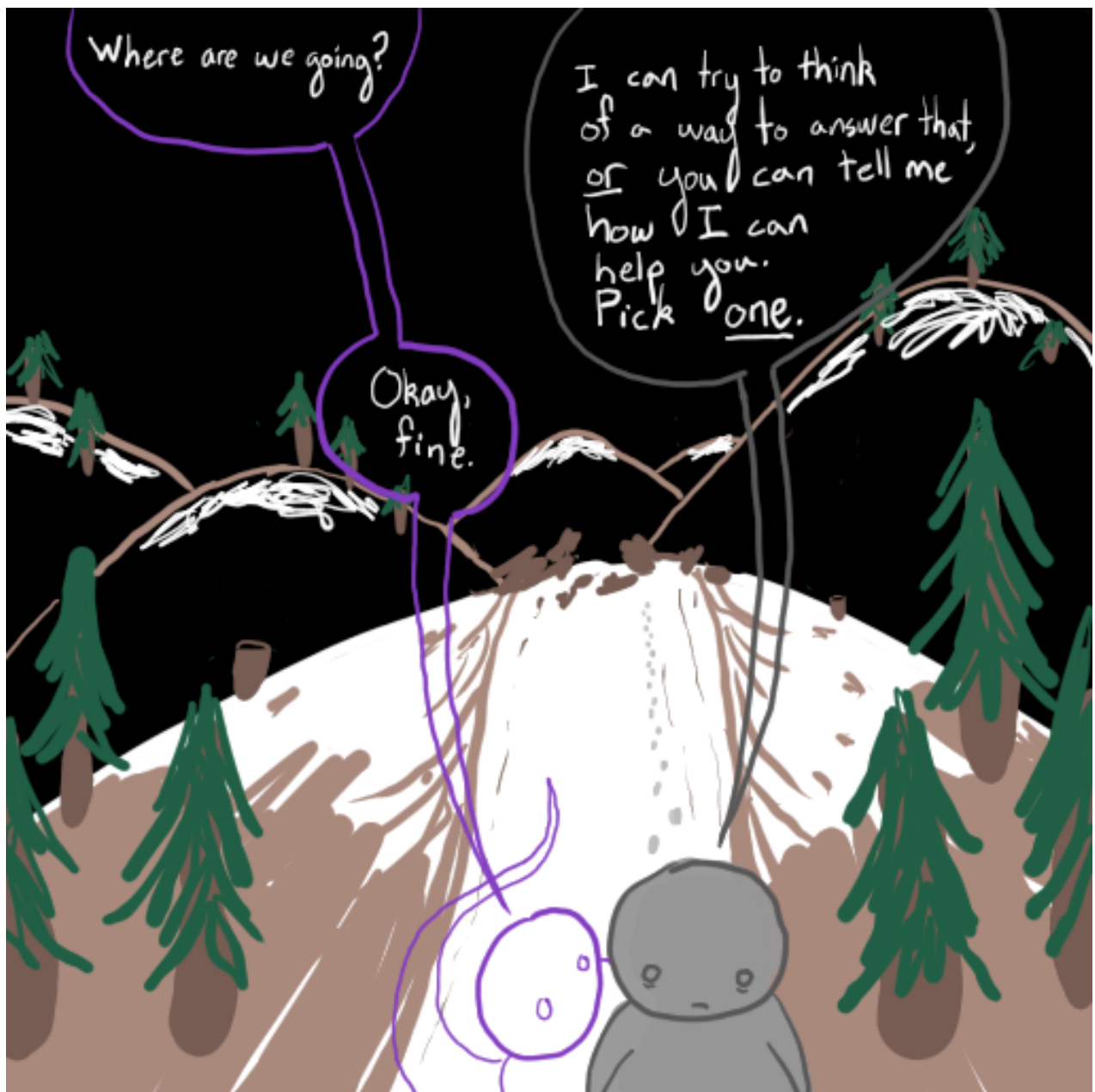
Time's up.

**“That’s fine. I—\***

I think I’m okay now.”

Wow, really?

“No. But close enough.”



Where are we going?

"I can try to think of a way to answer that, or you can tell me how I can help you. Pick one."

Okay, fine.



Like I said, it has to do with waking up, in a sense.

I want to remember what I am.

To do that, I need you to remember what you were before I was conceived, because they are the same thing.

Like I said, it has to do with waking up, in a sense. I want to remember *what I am*. To do that, I need *you* to remember what *you were* before I was conceived, because they are the *same thing*.

I already explained that when the **Fire Wizard** put his **Flaming Heart** inside you, you began to fill it with everything you repressed.



Well, your **true self**, being burnt away, was the first thing you "repressed," so now it's me.

Only... Not even I can quite remember what it's supposed to be, exactly.

I already explained that when the **Fire Wizard** put his **Flaming Heart** inside you, you began to fill it with everything you *repressed*.

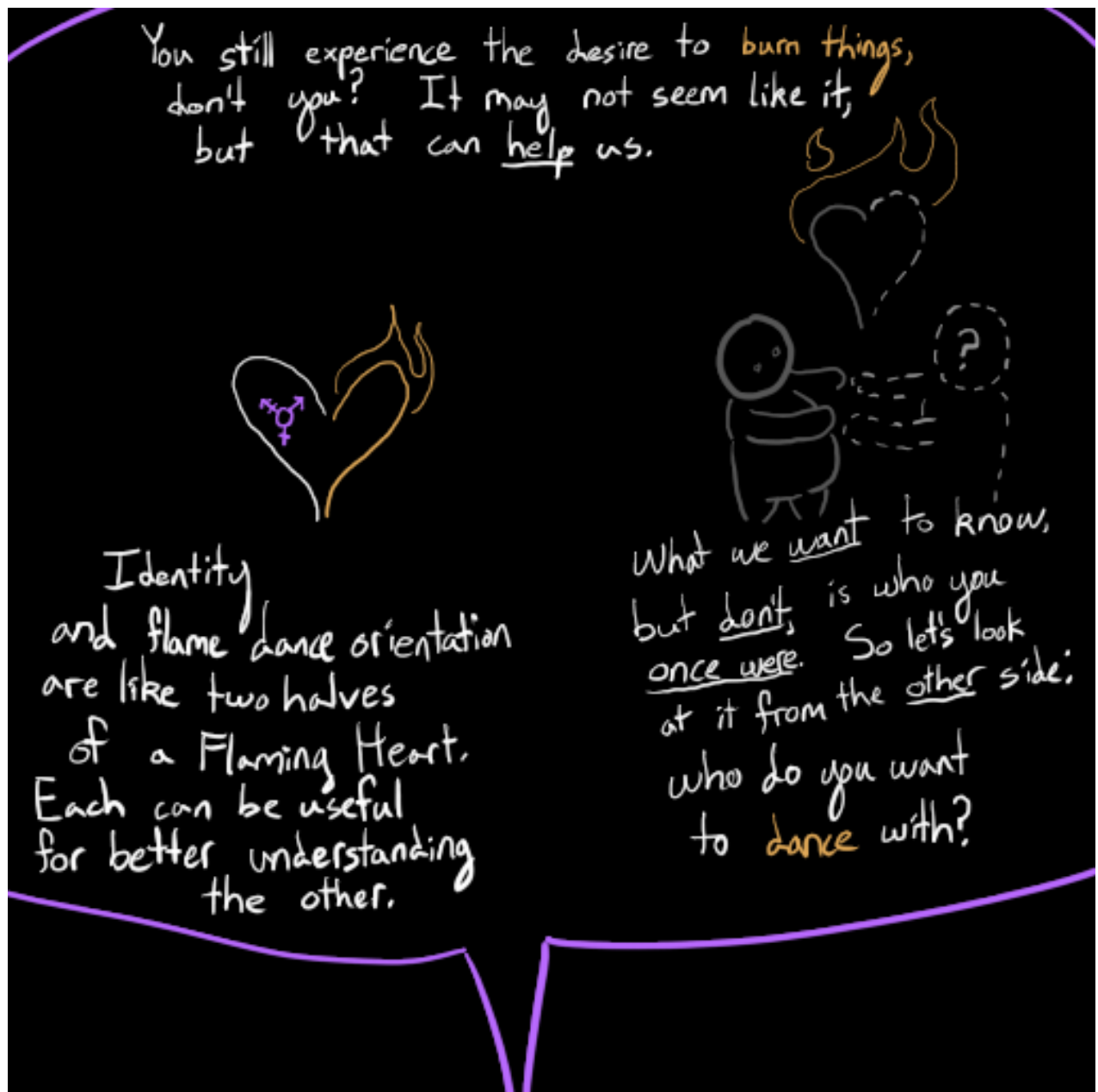
Well, your **true self**, being burnt away, was the *first* thing you "repressed," so now it's me.

Only... Not even *I* can quite remember what it's supposed to *be*, exactly.



"I can't do that anymore."

Oh, come *on*!! Don't be like that!



You still experience the desire to **burn things**, don't you? It may not seem like it, but that can *help* us.

Identity and flame dance orientation are like two halves of a Flaming Heart. Each can be useful for better understanding the other.

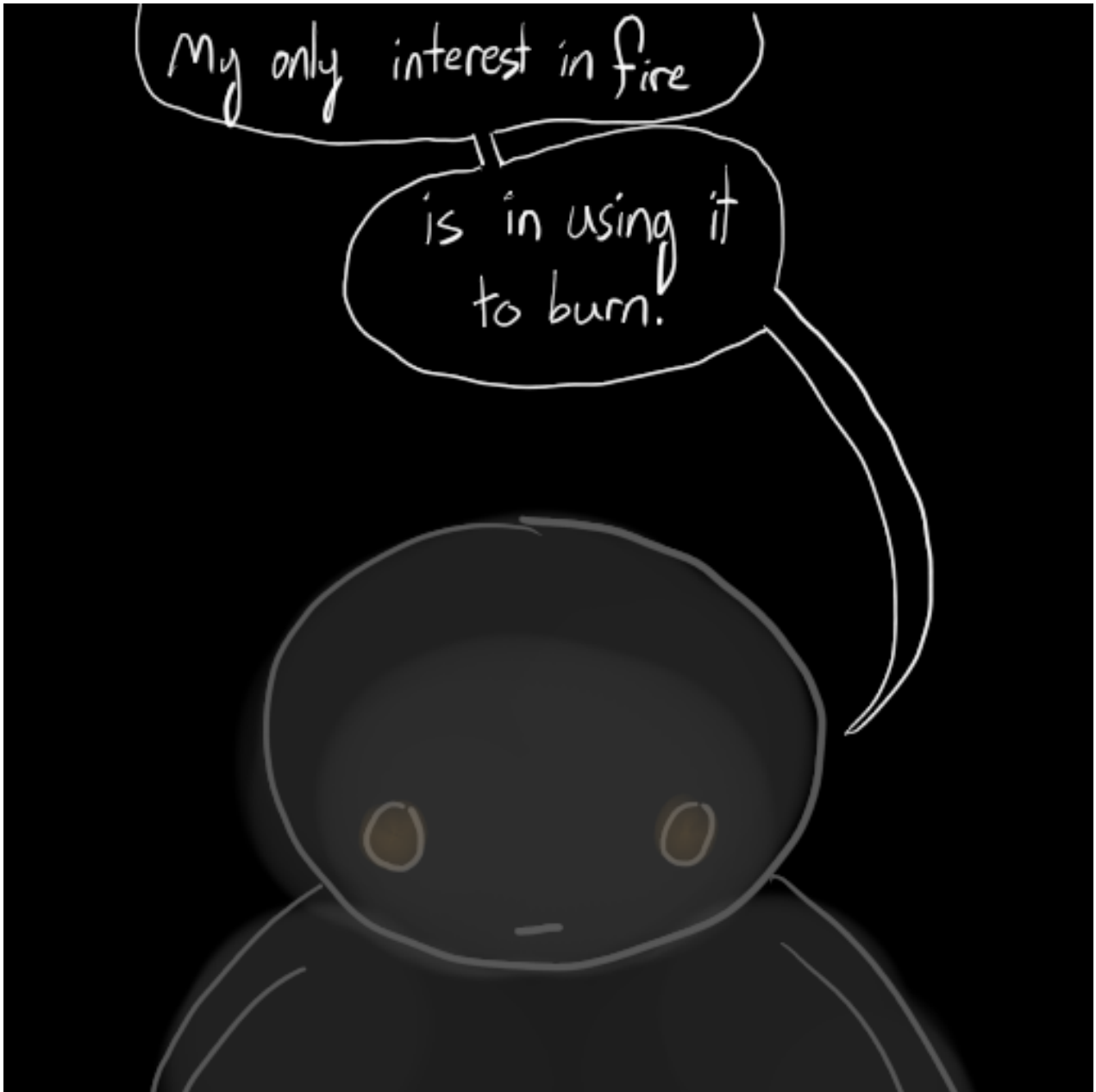
What we *want* to know, but *don't*, is who you *once were*. So let's look at it from the *other side*: who do you want to **dance** with?



"I have no interest in that."

Hey, that's supposed to be your date's line.

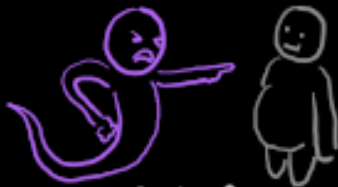
"Not funny."



“My only interest in fire  
is in using it to burn.”

I'm like the opposite of you.

#!\$^}



You're full of all my  
repressed shame,  
and it makes you  
say you hate me...



...but in deed,  
you've shown me  
nothing but  
compassion.

"I'm like the opposite of you."

#!\$^}

"You're full of all my repressed shame, and it makes you say you hate me..."

...but in *deed*, you've shown me nothing but *compassion.*"



“You exist to *protect* me. Of course you never *actually* hated me.

*Hate is your love language.*”

Wow!♥ I can’t believe a fat ugly *loser* like *you* figured that out all on its own—

“Yeah yeah, shut the hell up. I never said it was a *good* love language.”

Anyway, like I said, I'm the opposite.



After what the flames of "love"  
did to me,  
they became my  
hate language.

"Anyway, like I said, I'm the opposite.

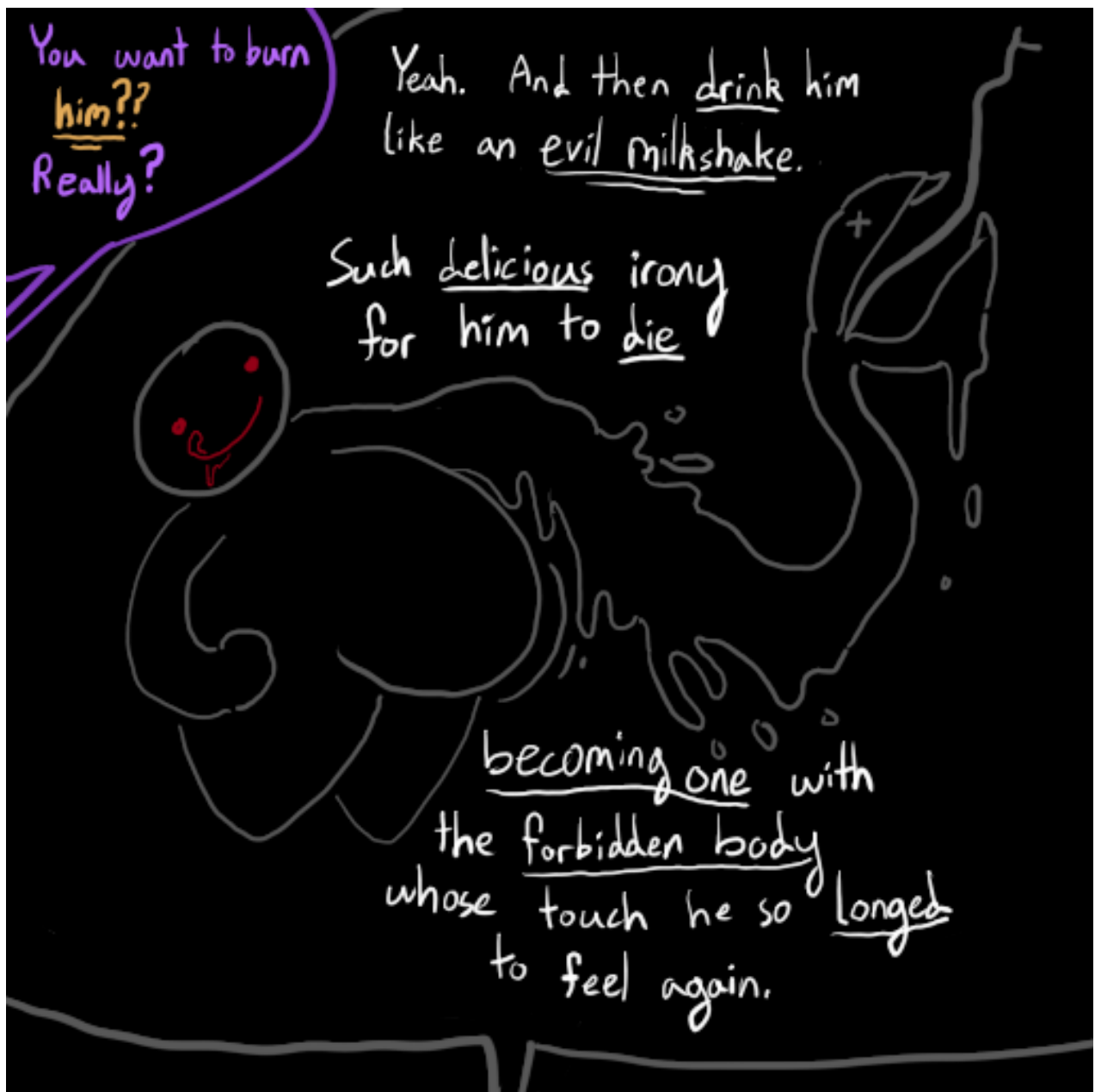
After what the **flames of 'love'** did to me, they became my **hate** language."



“But don’t worry about me *hurting* anyone. I’m not out for just any blood I can find.

I only crave one bedmate,

and that’s the one they call *revenge*.”



You want to burn **him??** Really?

“Yeah. And then *drink* him like an *evil milkshake*.”

Such *delicious* irony for him to *die*

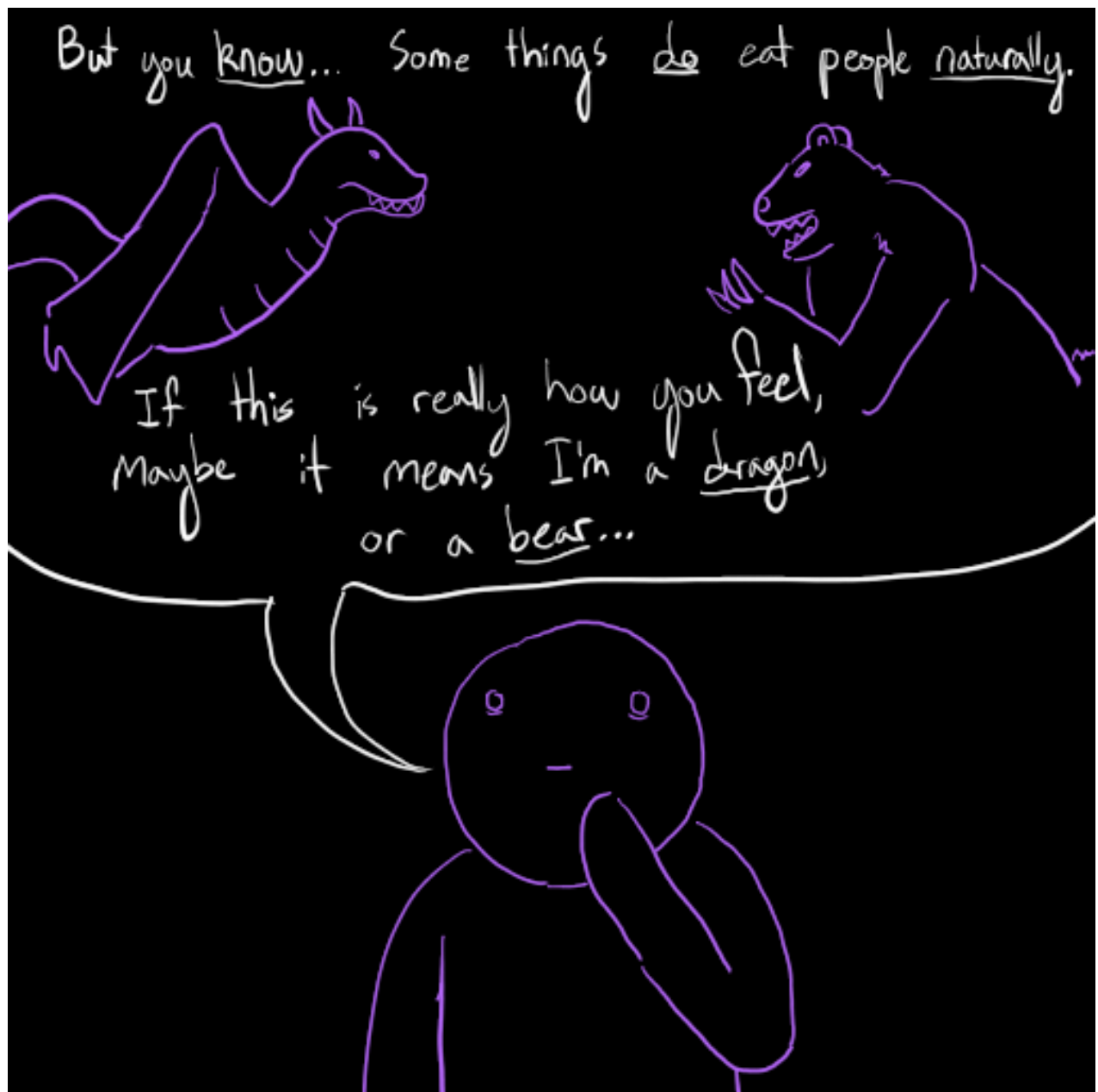
*becoming one* with the *forbidden body* whose touch he so *longed* to feel again.”



That doesn't seem like a healthy thing to want.

"It's fine. I wouldn't *really* do it. I'm content just *imagining*."

That doesn't seem *that* much healthier.



But you know... Some things do eat people naturally.

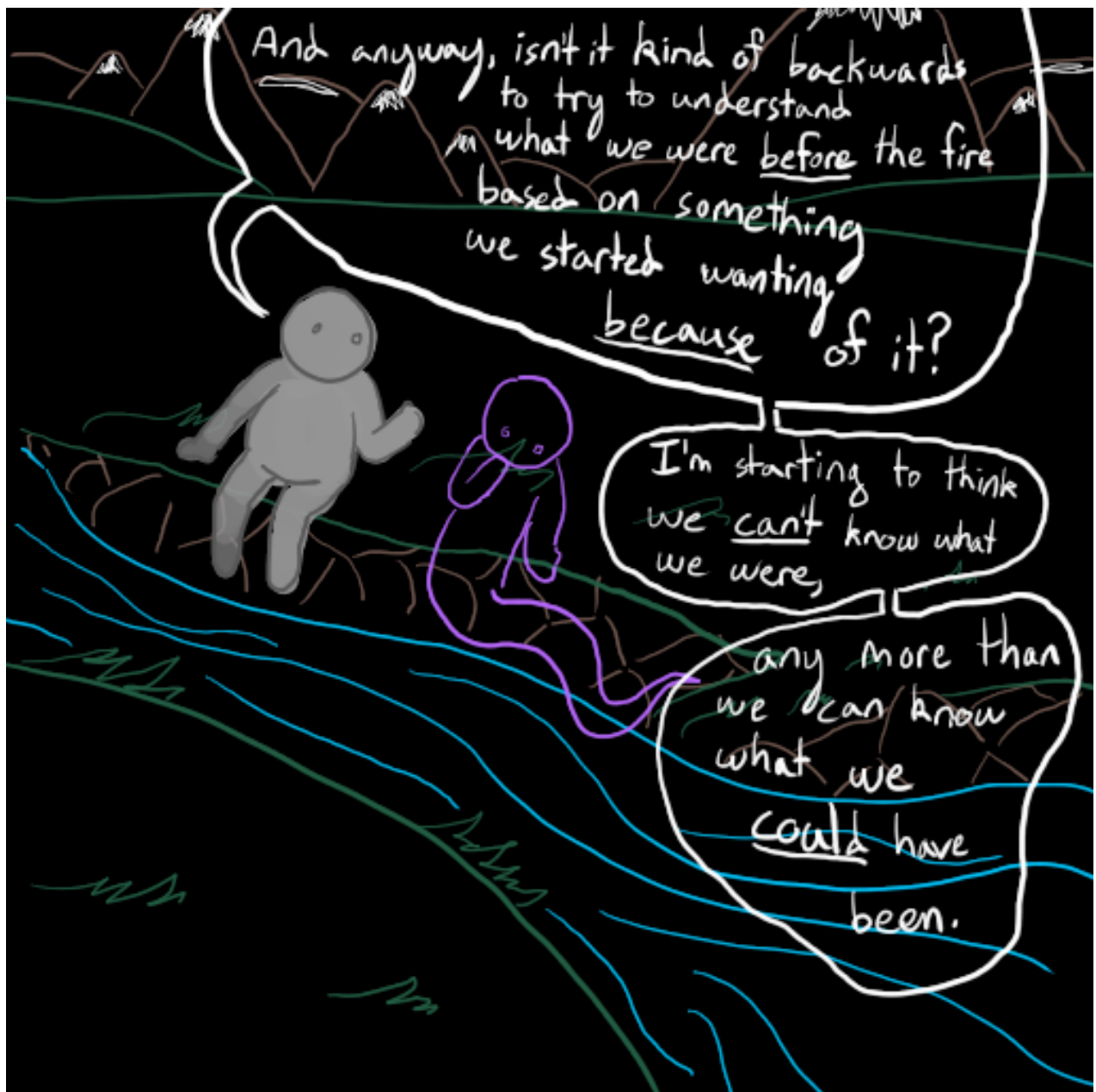
If this is really how you feel, maybe it means I'm a dragon, or a bear...



"I'd rather not think of us as a similar species to the man who did this to us.

And come on. A bear? Us?

With how *timid* we are, we'd be lucky to be a *teddy* bear."



“And anyway, isn’t it kind of backwards to try to understand what we were *before* the fire based on something we started wanting *because* of it?”

I’m starting to think we *can’t* know what we were,  
any more than we can know what we *could* have been.”



But... I want to know.

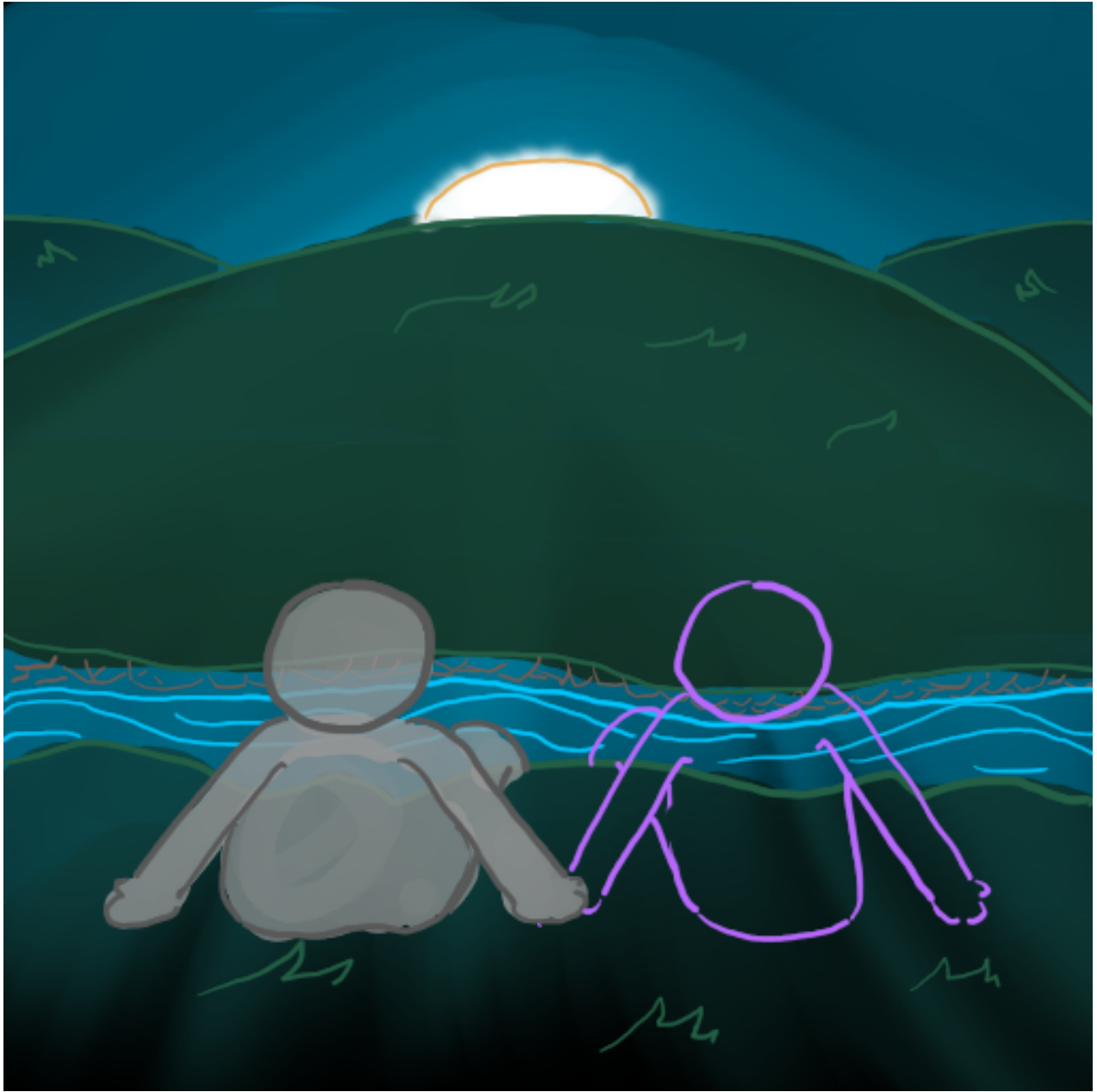
“Why?”

So we can wallow in *grief* a little longer?”



“We can’t change the past. Only what we do next.

So I think we can be anything we want to be.”

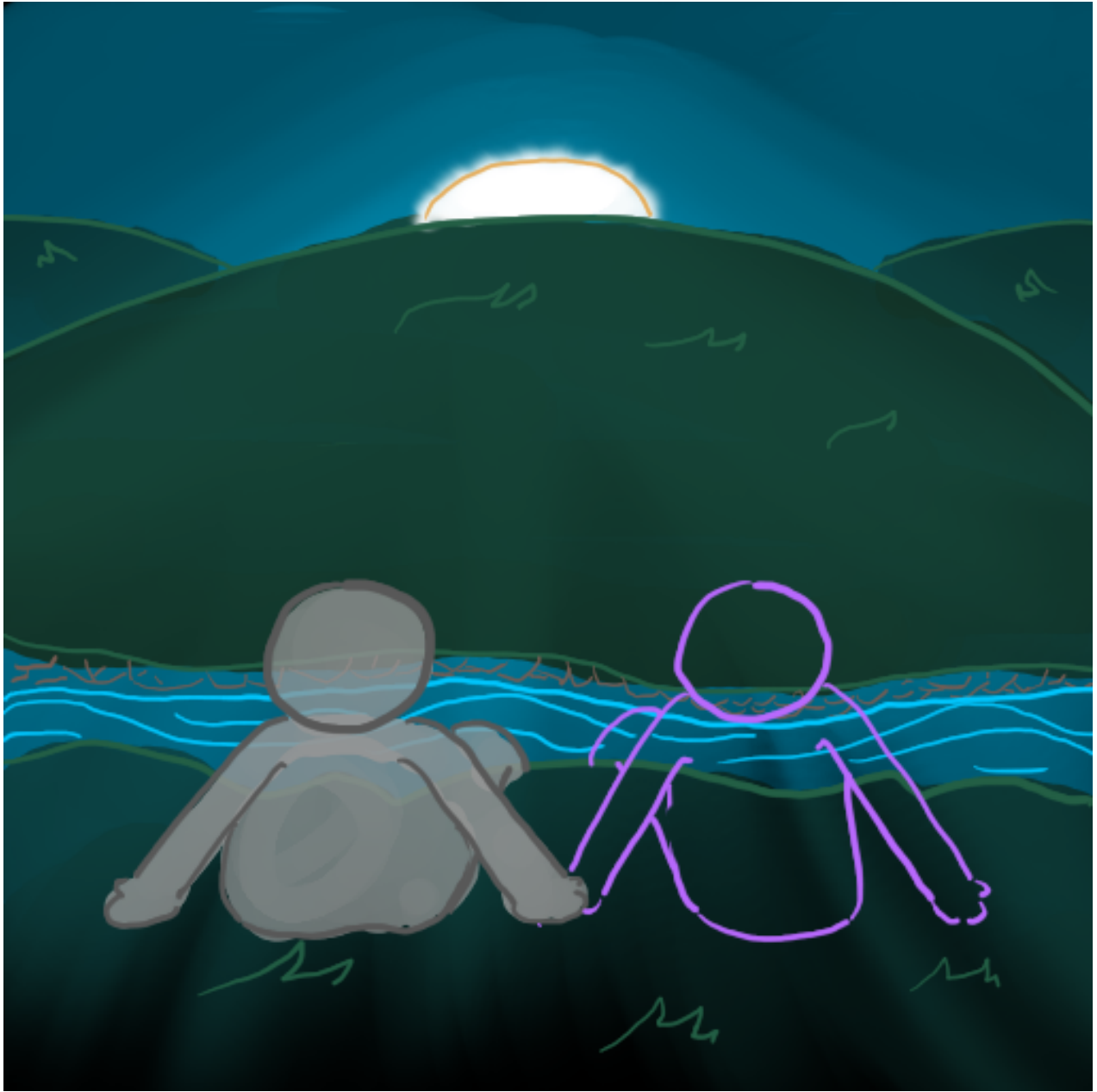


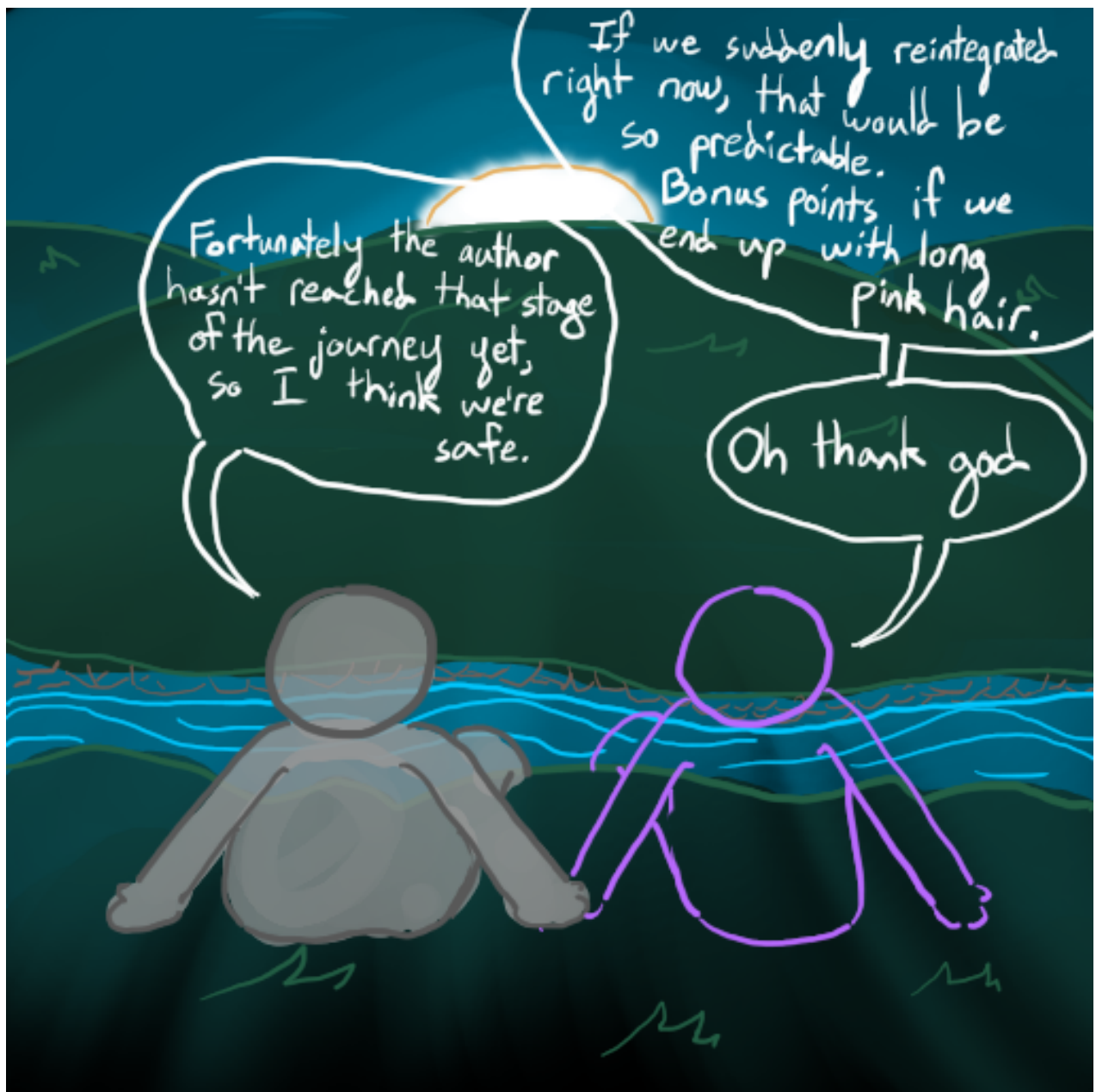


We're still the same person, so don't go getting any funny ideas.

"I would never. Despite the incidental framing, I assure you this is all platonic. I only have eyes for my revenge fantasy."

You realize that will never not be fucked up, right?





If we suddenly reintegrated right now, that would be so predictable. Bonus points if we end up with long pink hair.

“Fortunately the author hasn’t reached that stage of the journey yet, so I think we’re safe.”

Oh thank god