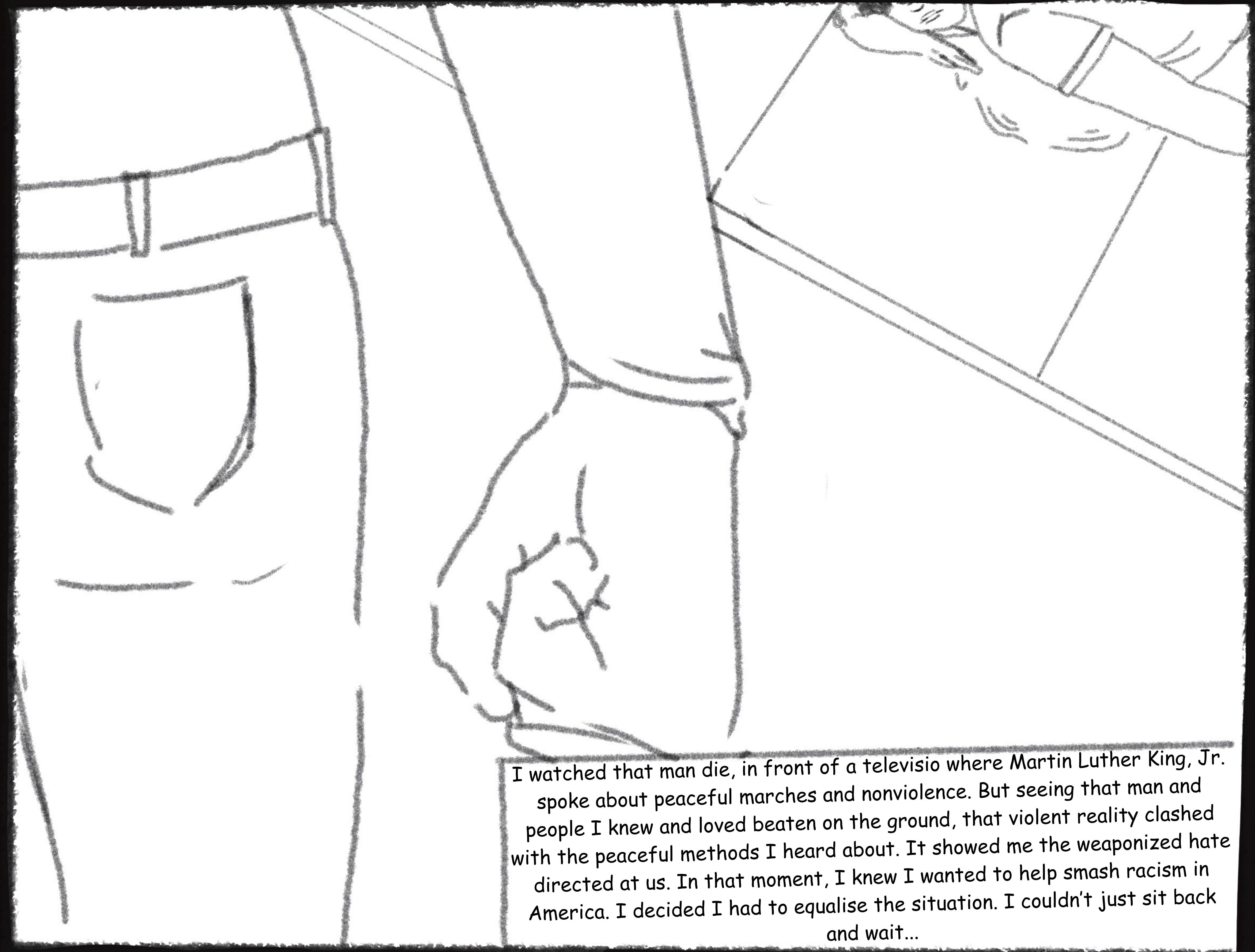
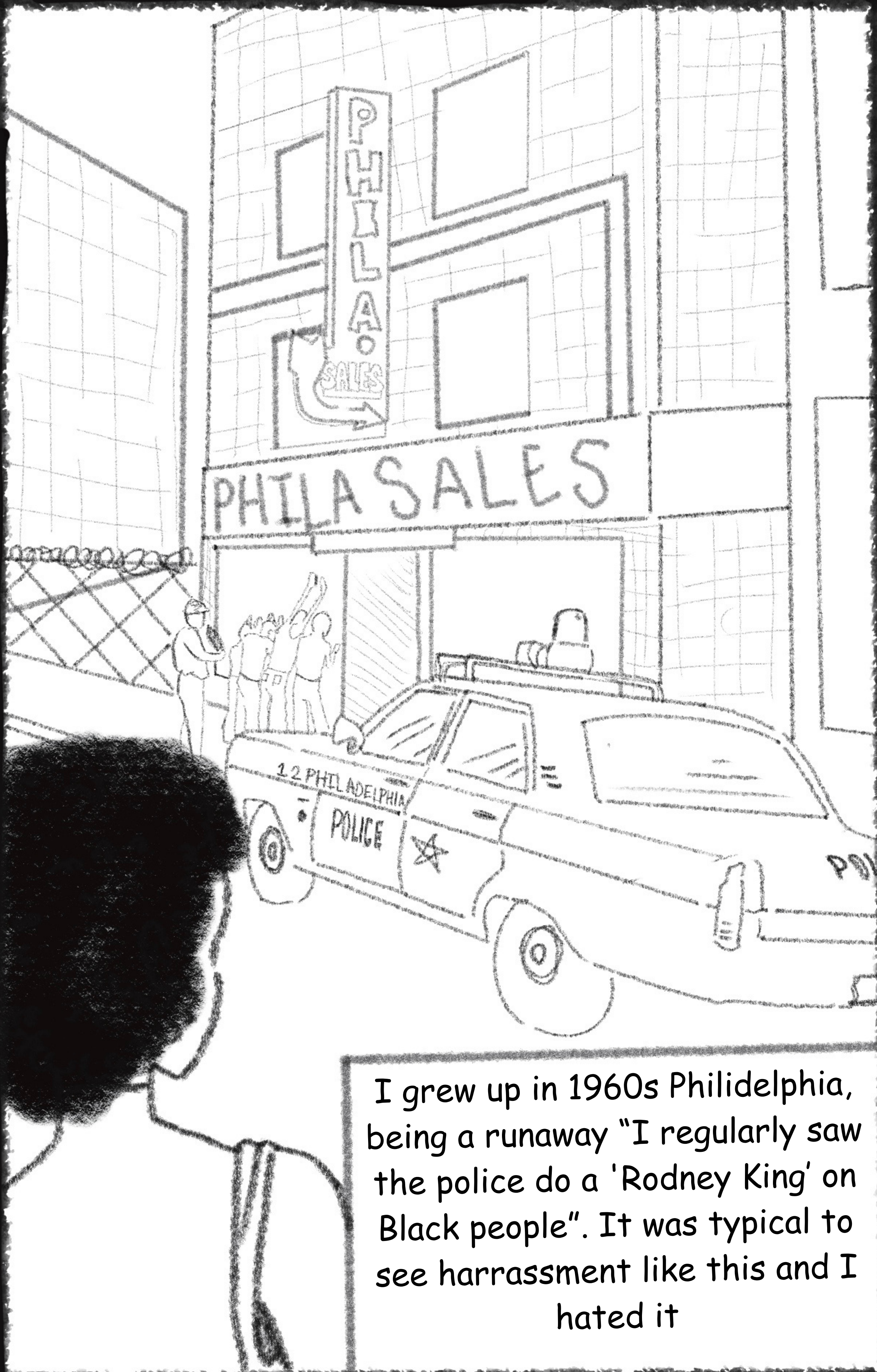


## Trigger Warning

This comic contains depictions of sexual harrassment and police brutality.  
Take time to care for yourself as needed.



I came to school feeling disgusted after what I'd seen that morning. I felt utterly powerless to stop the evil I was witnessing...and that evil didn't stop at school



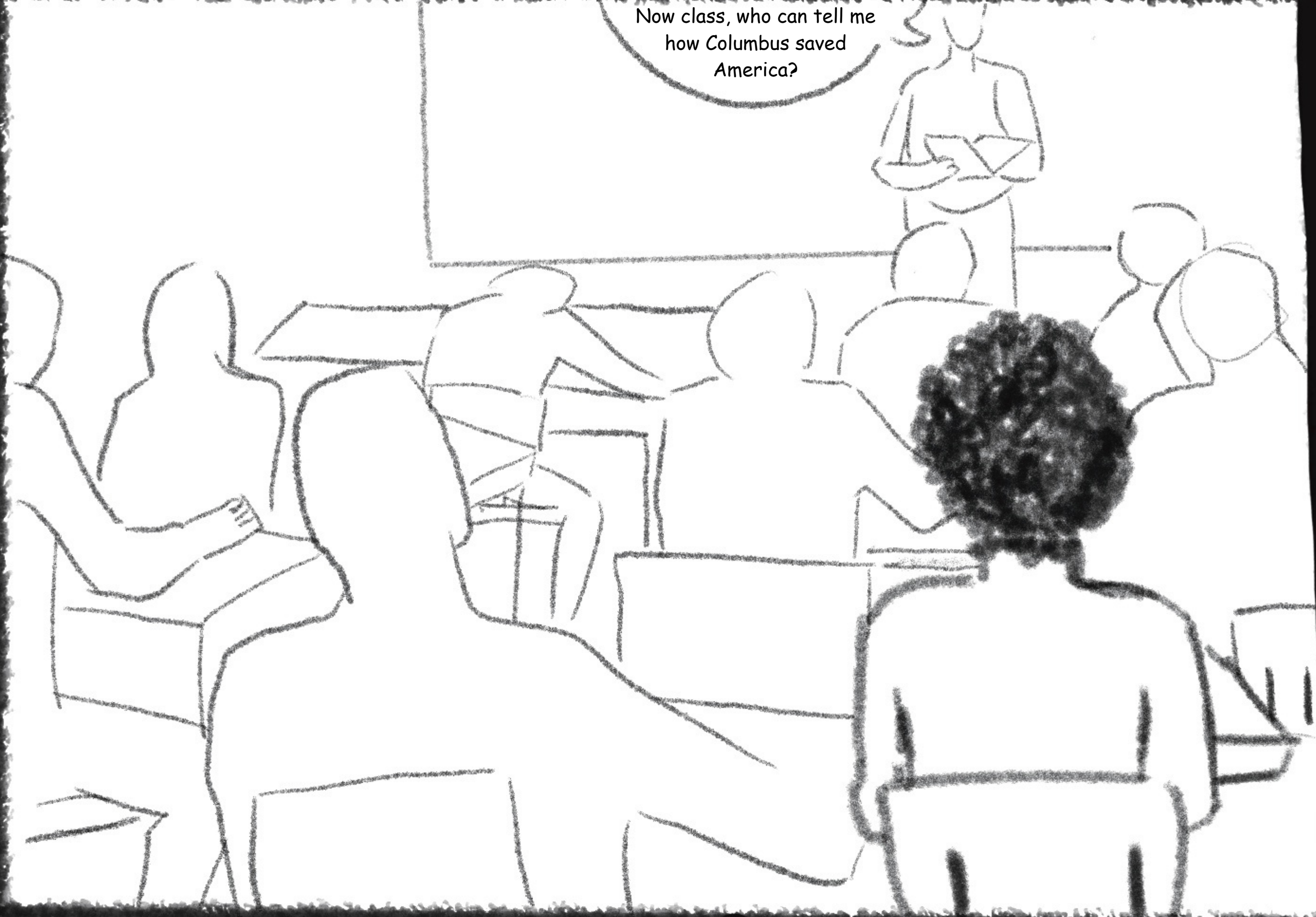
I hated school-every lesson seemed to worship white achievements, as if Black people had never shaped the world.



Sitting through those classes, I felt invisible, starved for stories that looked like mine, for any hint of Black pride or progress.

In 1492  
Columbus sailed  
the ocean blue  
he took 3 ships  
with him too.  
Called about his crew  
Nagly, Strong, and  
Ruiz was he

Now class, who can tell me how Columbus saved America?

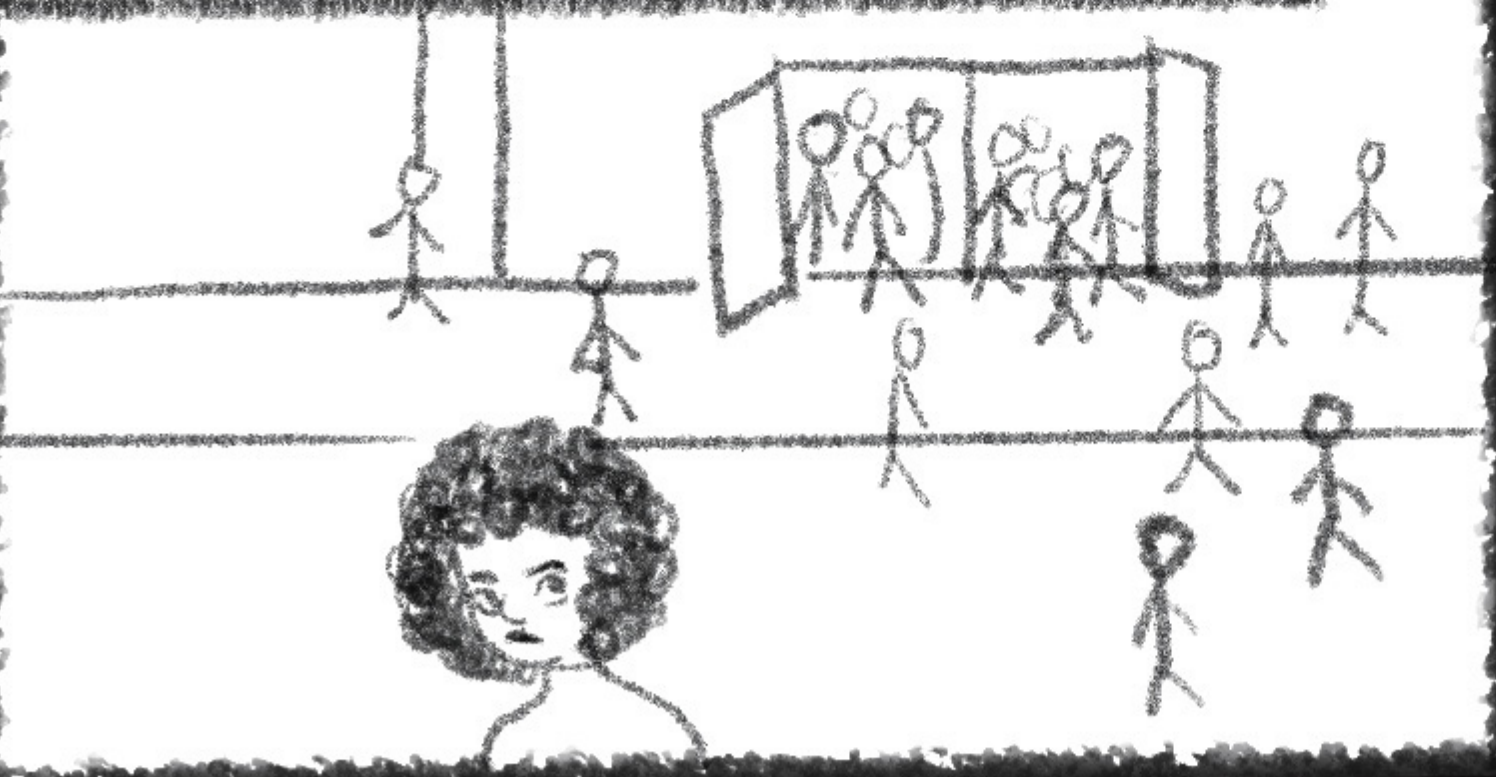


Everything around me felt incomplete. The white students I sat in class with either couldn't fathom what I saw each day or just didn't care. I didn't know how people could just not care - because I cared so deeply



Even at home, the elders rarely spoke of Black achievement. In my own community, our greatness was just as invisible as it was in the classroom.

After school, I worked a secretary job where I watched firsthand how white women, who went on and on about equality and their rights, treated me



Every day, a white woman I worked with named Janis would collect money for the office to have refreshments, she'd announce it when we all got in and walk around to collect it



Okay, Ladies! Don't forget to put out your share of the refreshments money!

Of course Janis, Here's mine!

But when I put my money out, she'd skip over it..

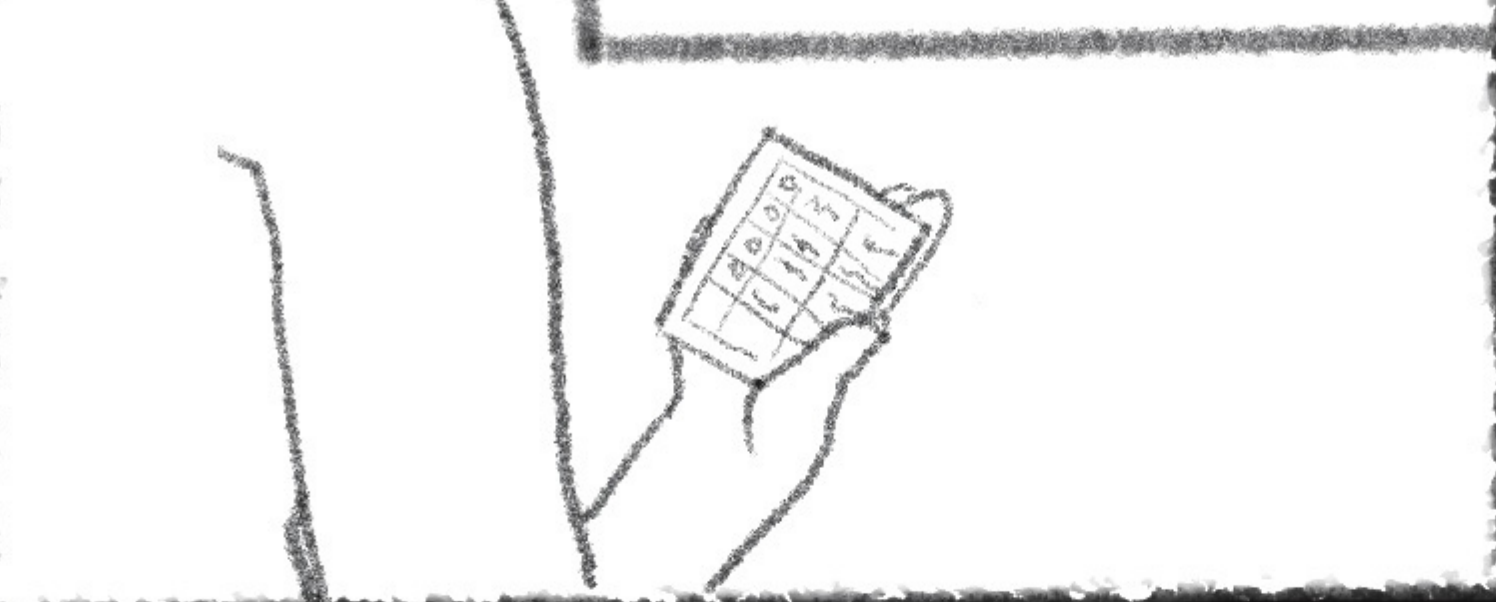


and the next day...

and the next day...

until I asked her outright...

I punched in that day feeling especially fed up with my white coworkers after what I had seen walking to school that morning

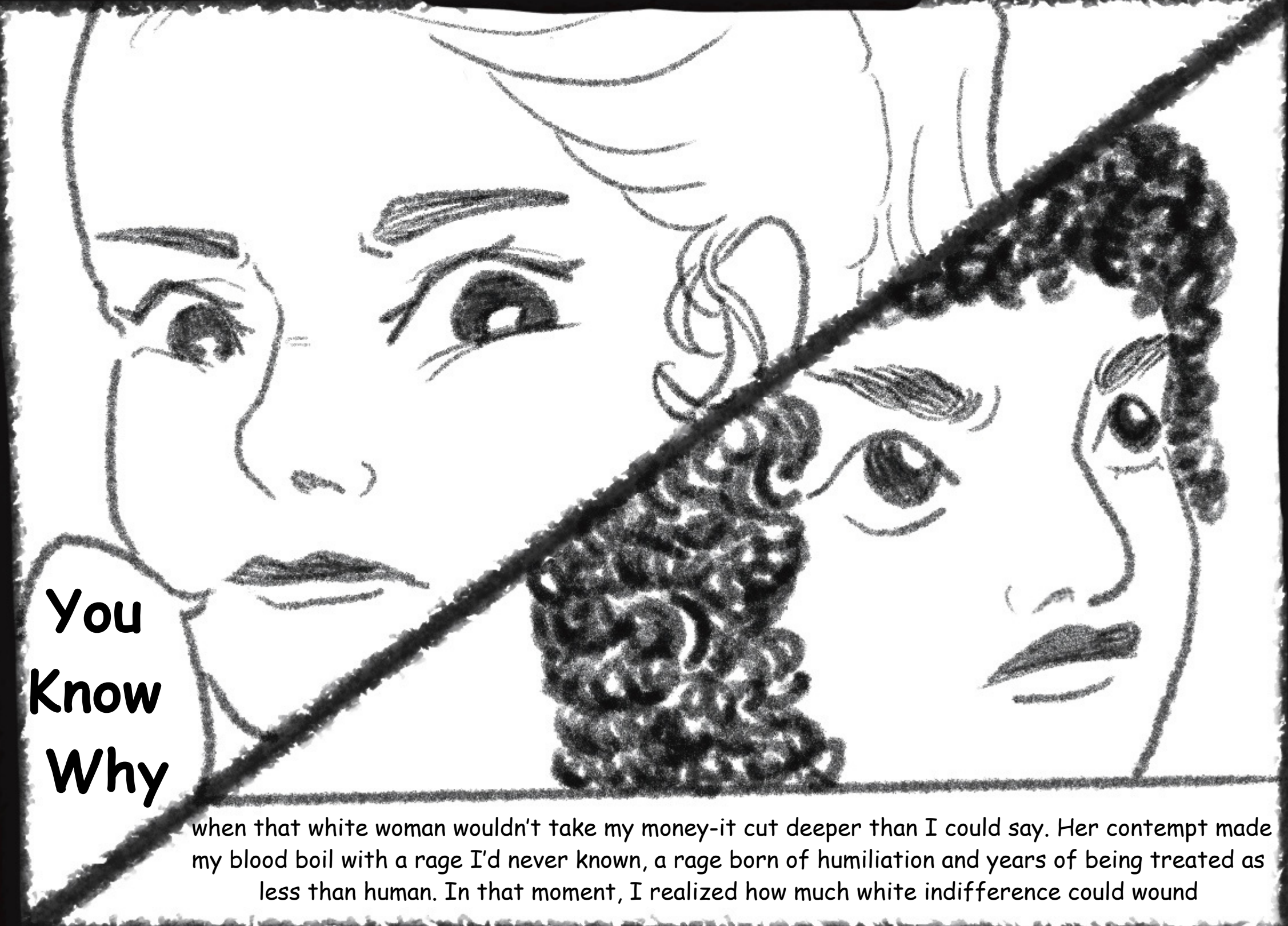


Why is it that you never touch my money for refreshments? You know it's good, we work the same job!

Well... I think...

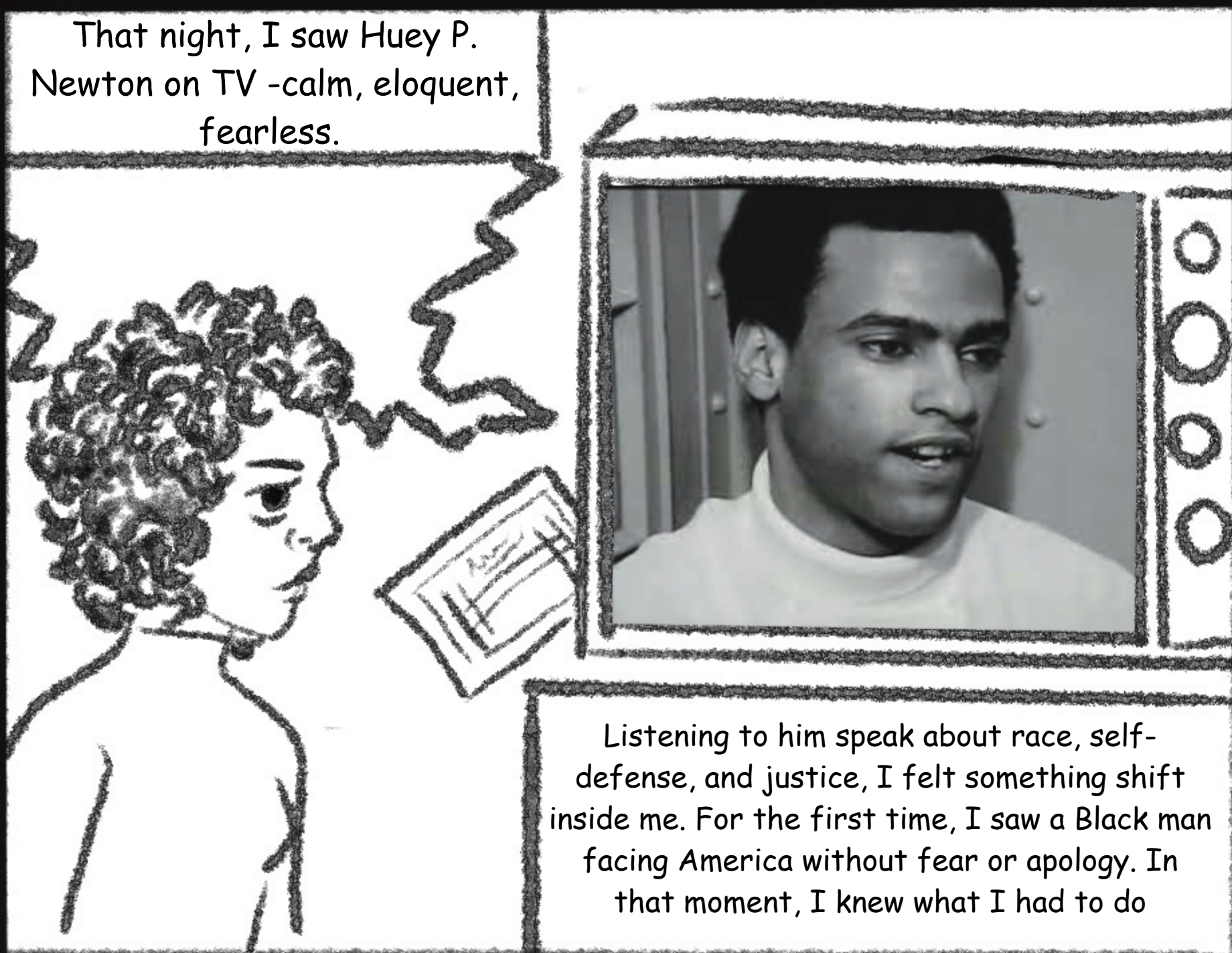


You Know Why



when that white woman wouldn't take my money-it cut deeper than I could say. Her contempt made my blood boil with a rage I'd never known, a rage born of humiliation and years of being treated as less than human. In that moment, I realized how much white indifference could wound

That night, I saw Huey P. Newton on TV -calm, eloquent, fearless.



Listening to him speak about race, self-defense, and justice, I felt something shift inside me. For the first time, I saw a Black man facing America without fear or apology. In that moment, I knew what I had to do

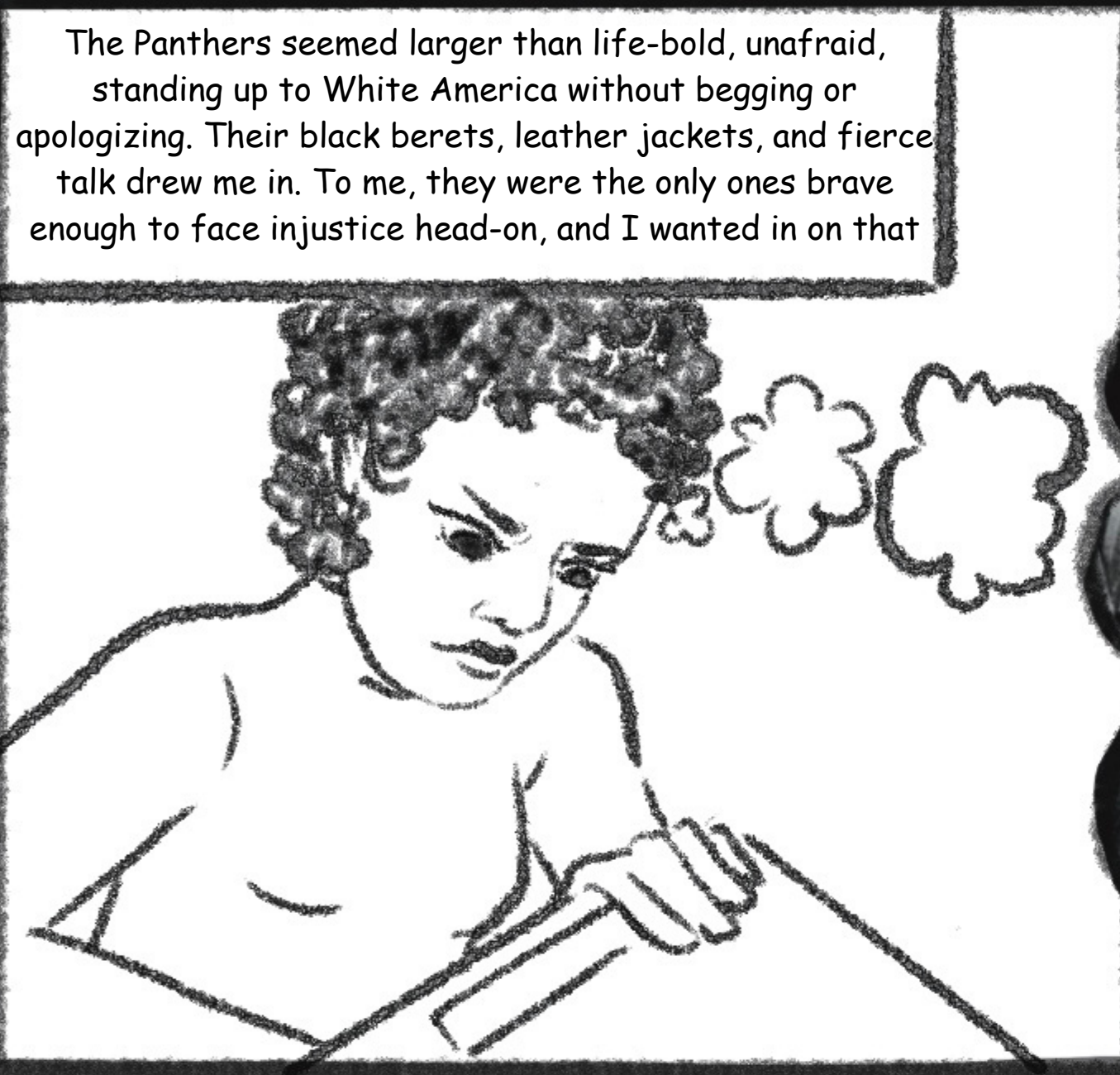
I had some family in San Francisco, and wanted desperately to join the Black Panthers...

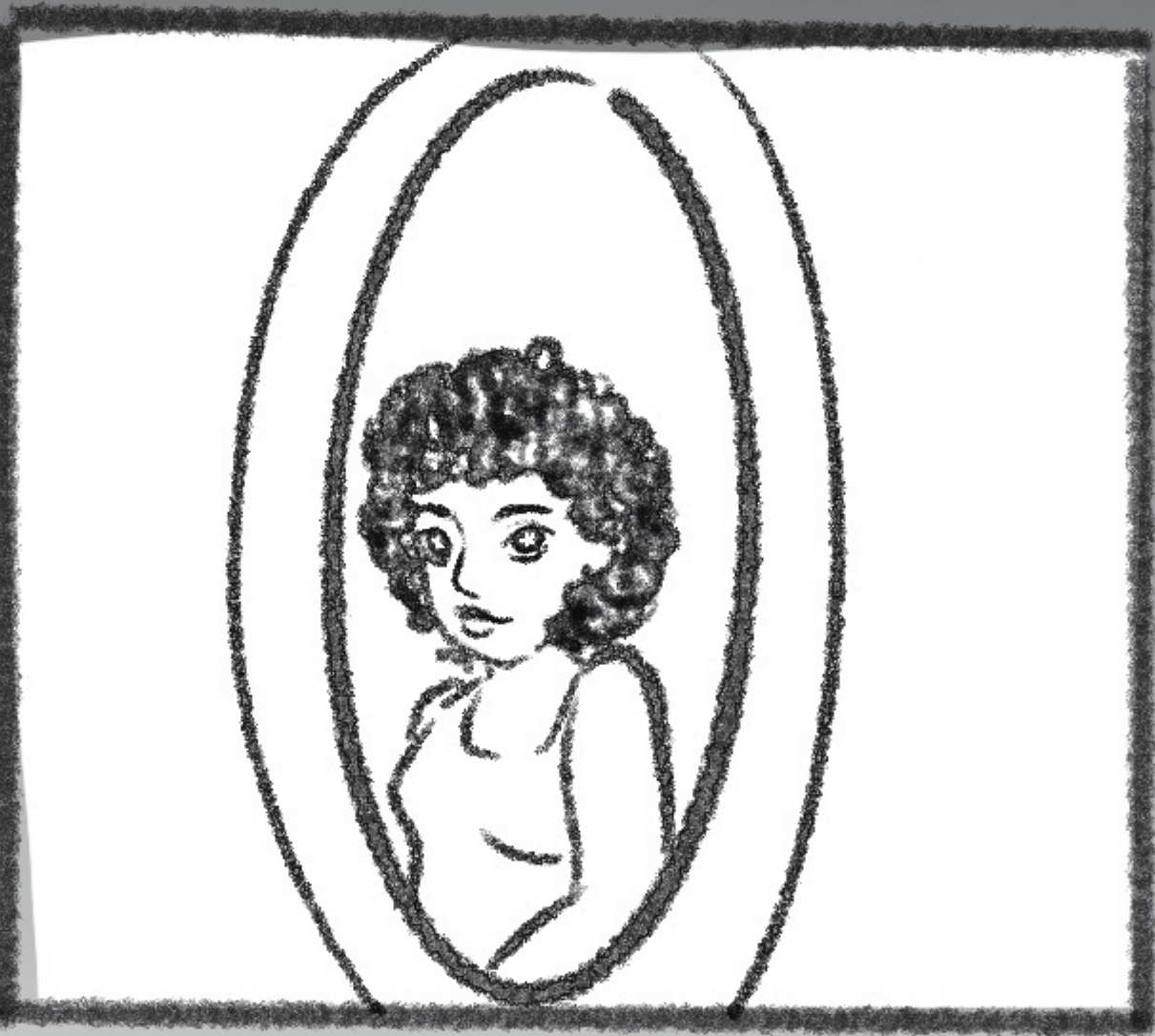
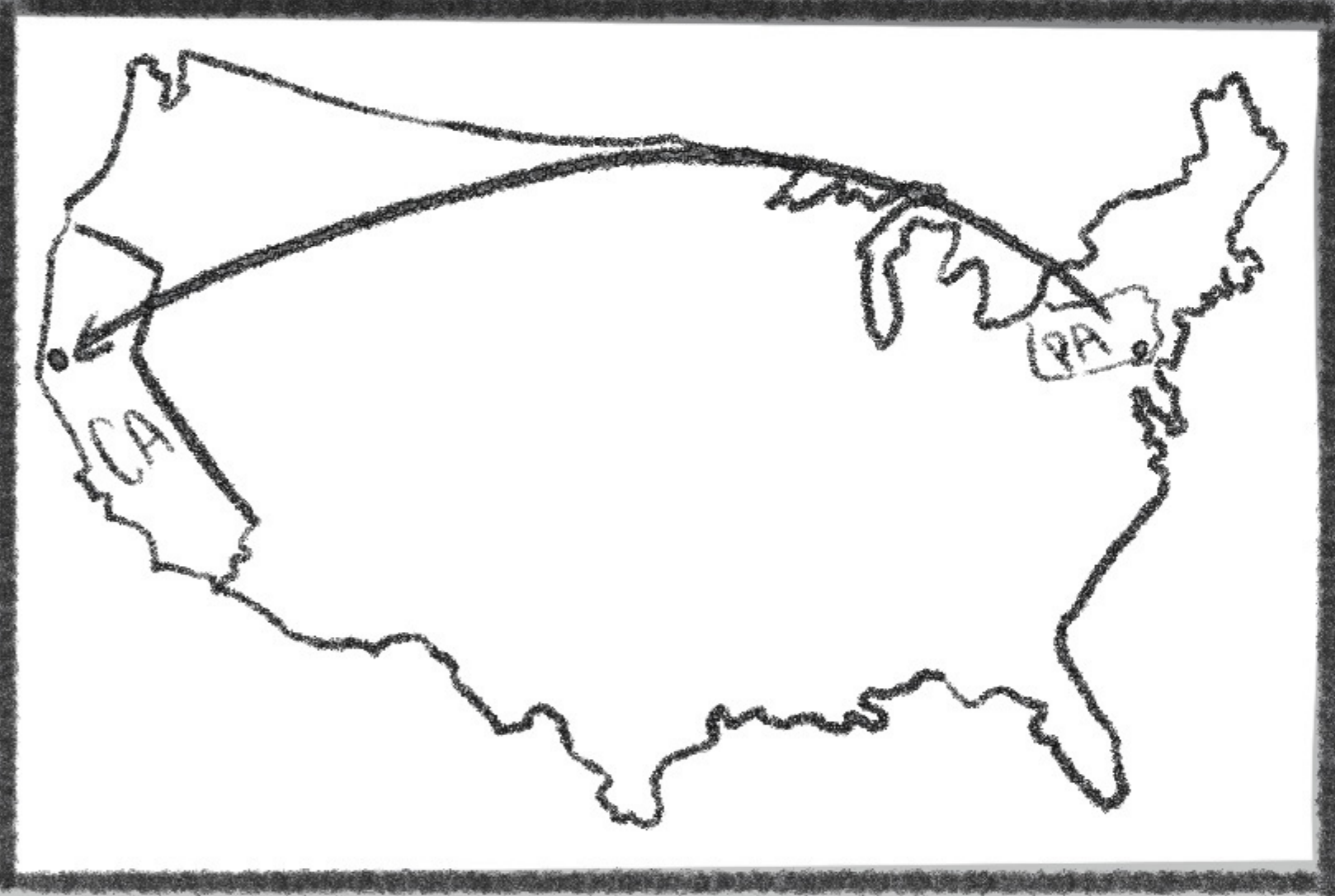


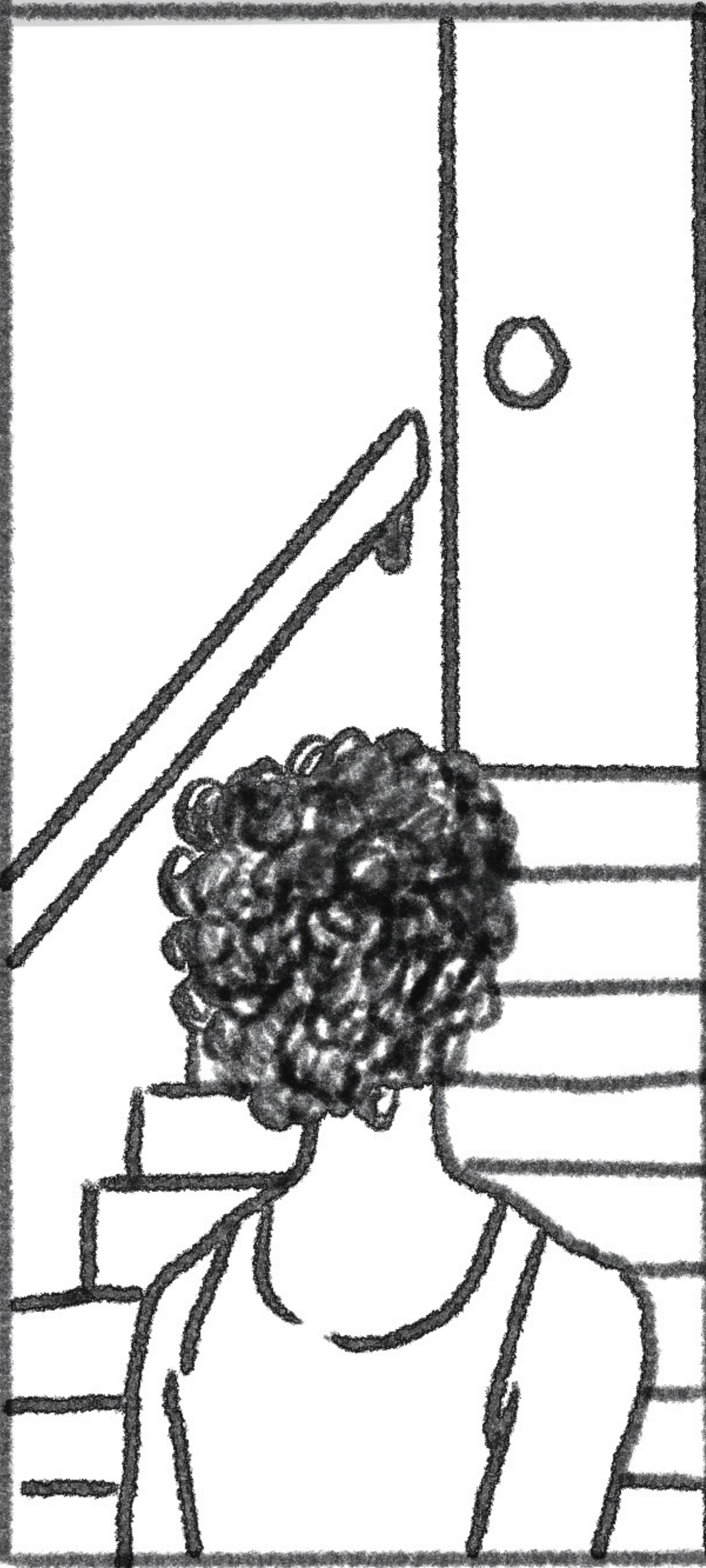
So I decided I'd move to Oakland and become one...I wanted the chance to actually make a difference...



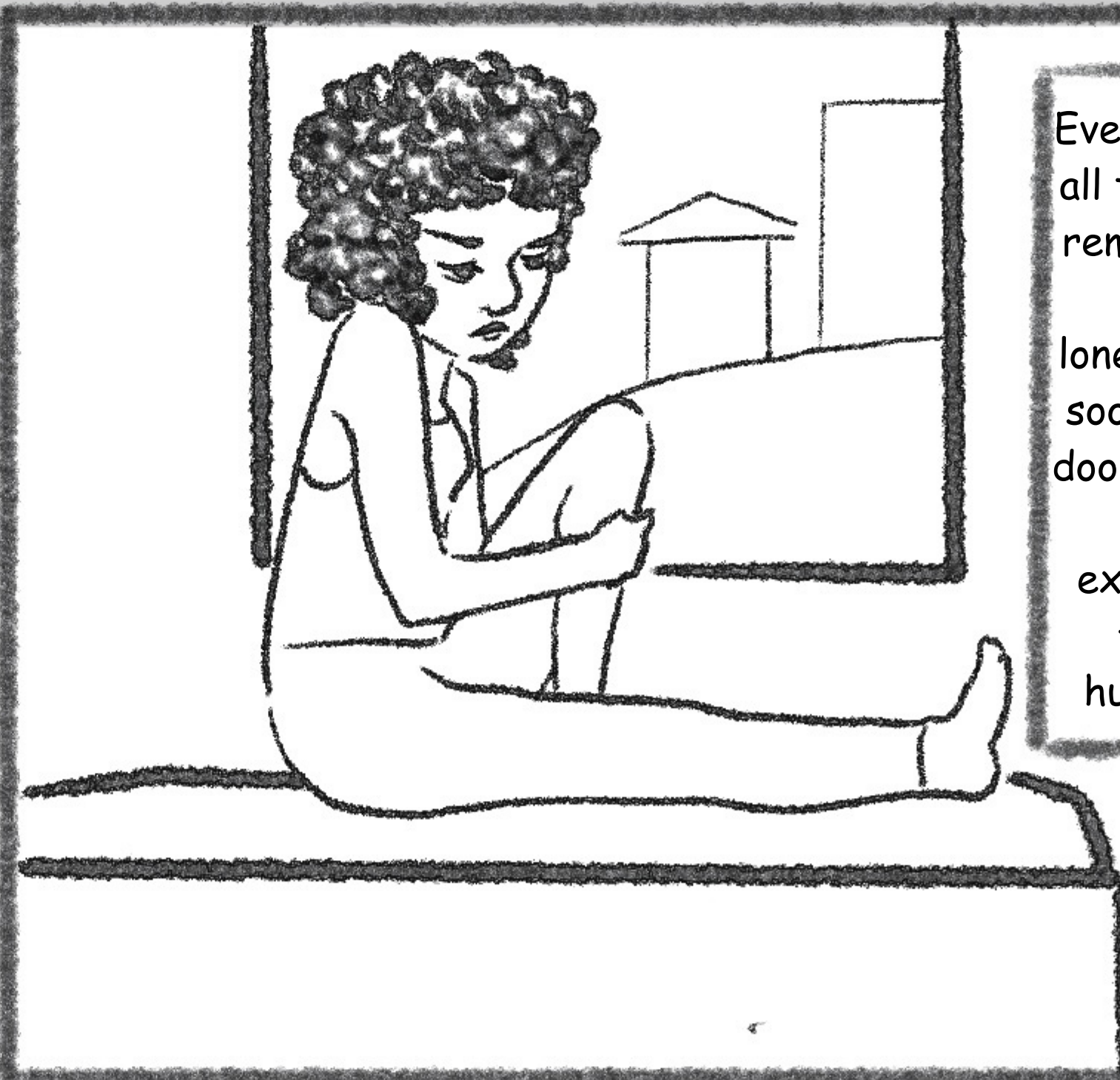
The Panthers seemed larger than life-bold, unafraid, standing up to White America without begging or apologizing. Their black berets, leather jackets, and fierce talk drew me in. To me, they were the only ones brave enough to face injustice head-on, and I wanted in on that







Arriving in Oakland, I was filled with a mix of hope and uncertainty. The city had an energy that I loved. It felt like change was possible here, and Black voices could rise above white ones more here than in Philly. It was the beginning of something new, though I didn't yet know how deeply it would change me.



Even in Oakland, with all the excitement, I remembered I was a runaway, and loneliness crept in as soon as I closed the door behind me. I sat on the bed, excitement fading, feeling the old hunger stir inside.



I brought a deep hatred of white people to Oakland, but I carried something inside me too - a drug addiction that weighed on me like a dark cloud. I could gain some agency by joining the Panthers, but this would take more to overcome

15 CENTS !!

GET YOUR PANTHER PAPERS HERE!!

A few days after moving, I walked down my street and saw a few Black Panthers selling their newspaper - In that moment, it felt like a sign I couldn't ignore. This was where I belonged.

JOIN THE PANTHERS

1048 PERALTA  
Oakland

Standing in the headquarters, I felt a surge of nervous excitement.

You can have a seat, hun

Thx

Jennings!

Nice meeting you, sister. I'm Captain Davis.

So what brings you here? Why do you want to join the panthers?

"I want to kill all the white people."

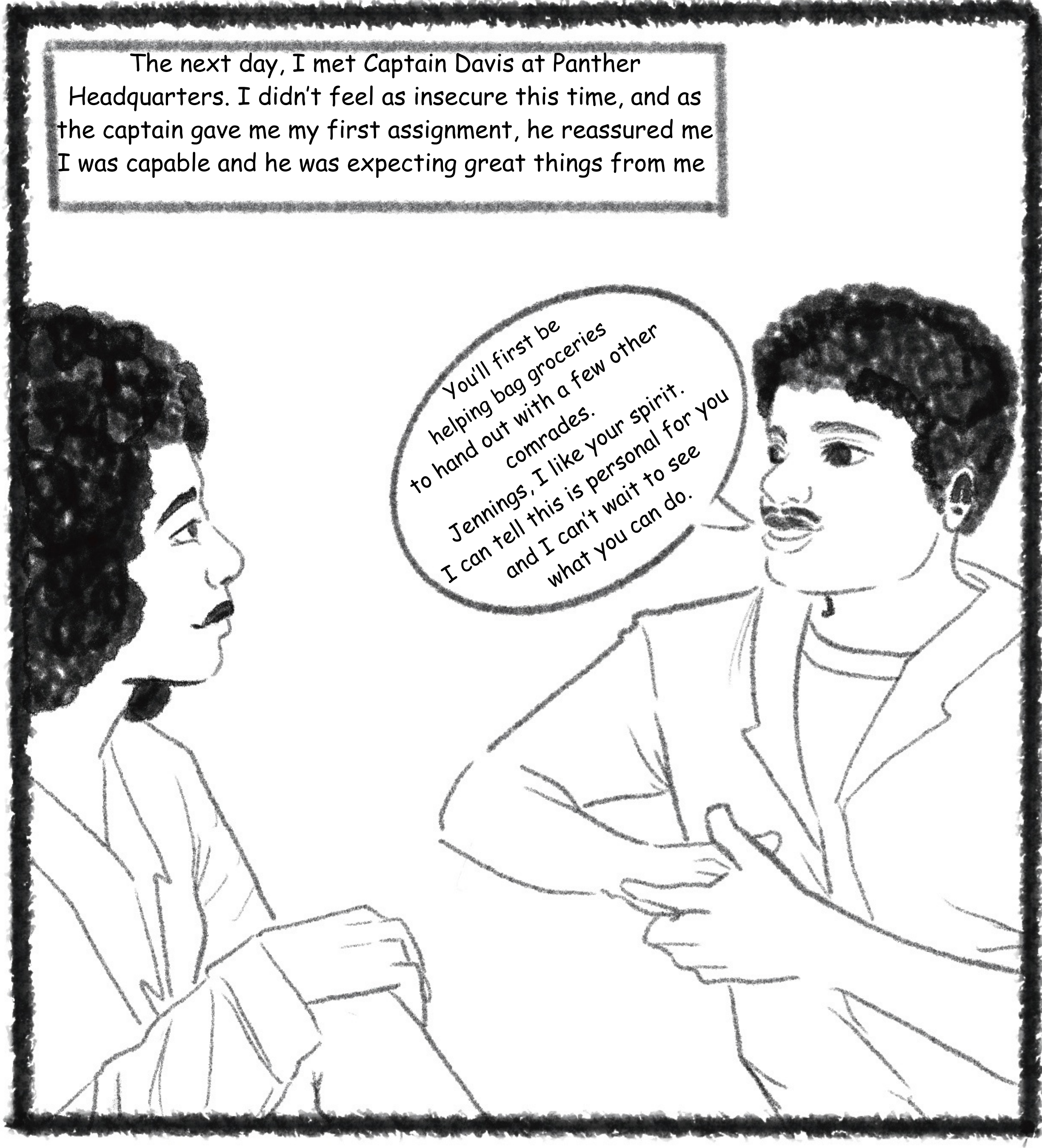
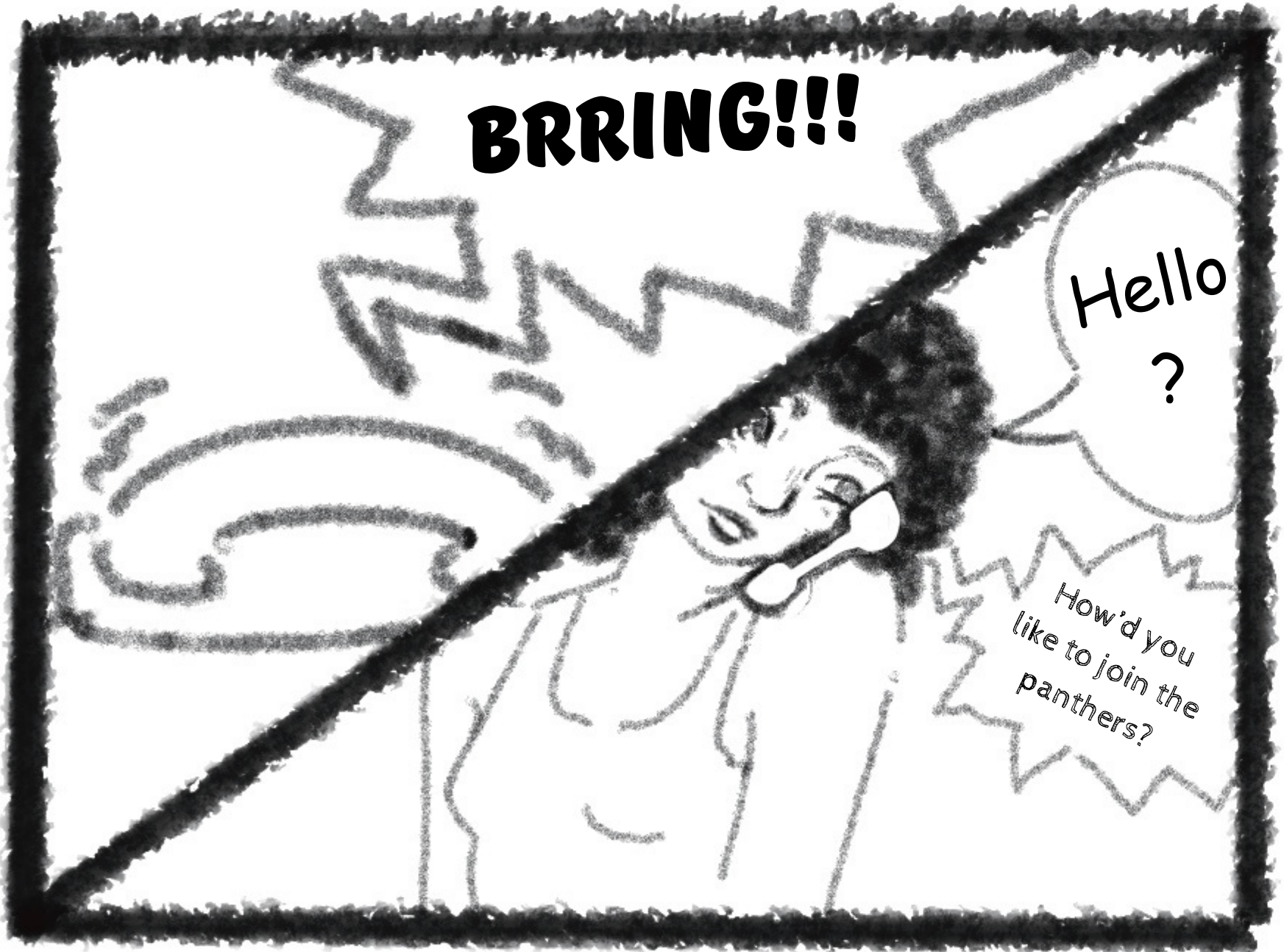
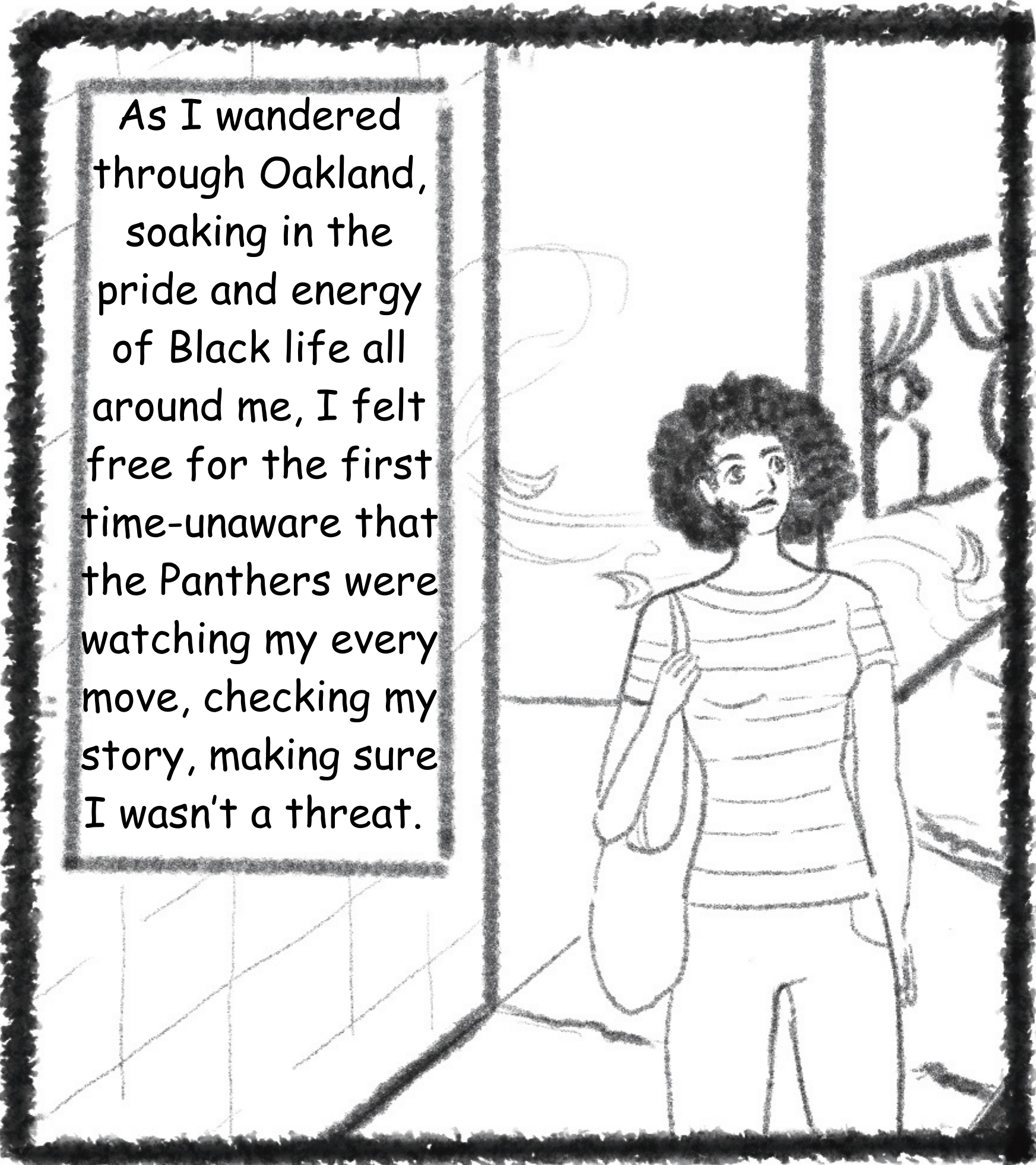
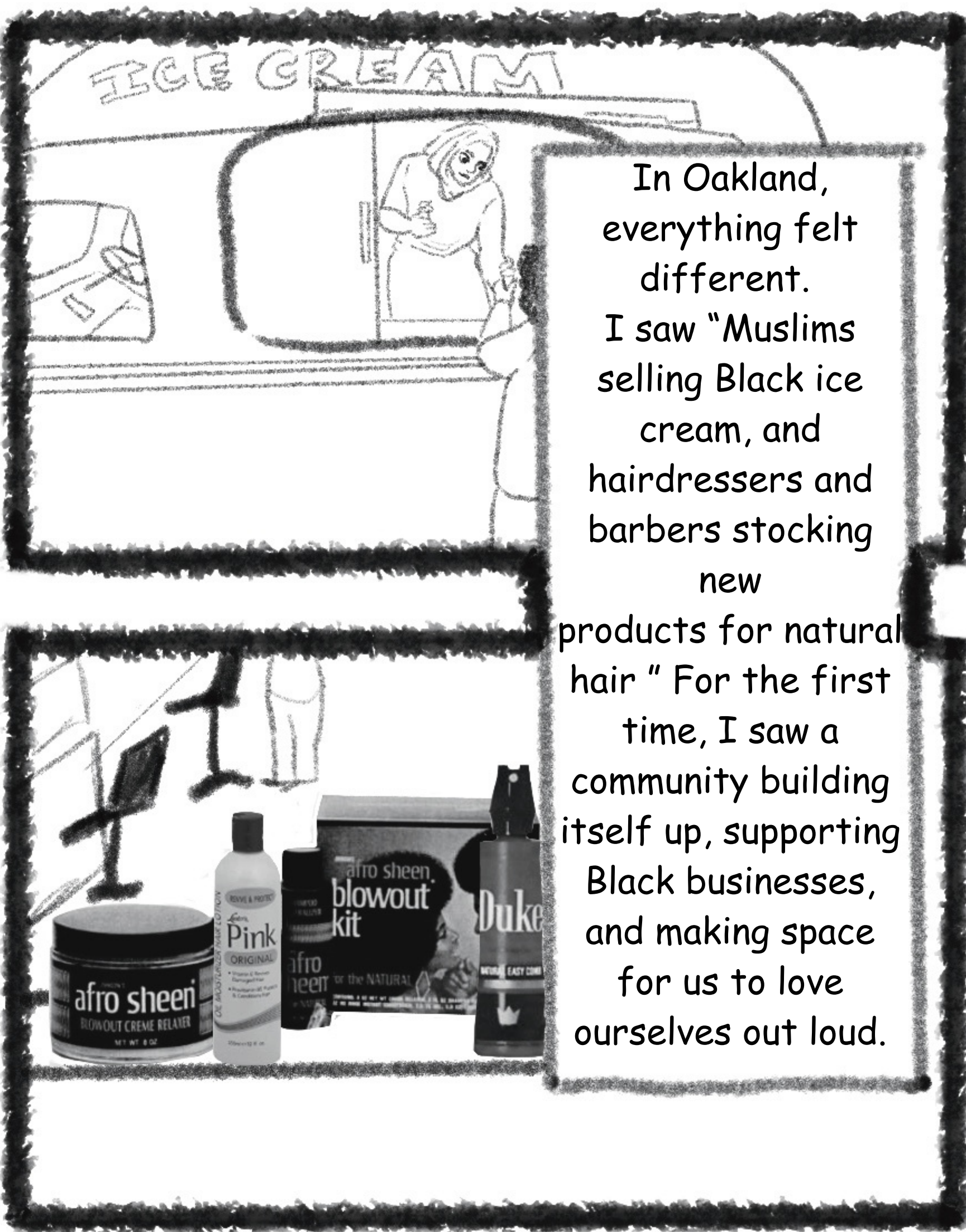
We'll be in touch

Thank you very much, sir

As I stepped out of the office, my bold words faded, replaced by a wave of insecurity. Suddenly, I was painfully aware of my clothes, my hair, and how out of place I felt-wondering if I truly belonged among these fierce, focused faces.



As I stepped out of Panther headquarters, the city felt unfamiliar and vast, my nerves still recuperating from the encounter inside. But as I wandered Oakland's streets, something began to shift. This place was nothing like Philly, where the weight of white stares and police batons pressed down on every corner, where school taught me to revere only white faces and my own community's greatness was never discussed.





Day by day, I found myself falling in love with what I did in Oakland. There was a purpose in every task, from bagging free groceries to handing out free breakfast to children...

to planning newsletters late into the night with my brothers and sisters. I felt needed, seen, and proud. It was like I was finally building something that mattered.



One day, after I had come home, the captain knocked on my door and asked if he could speak to me alone.

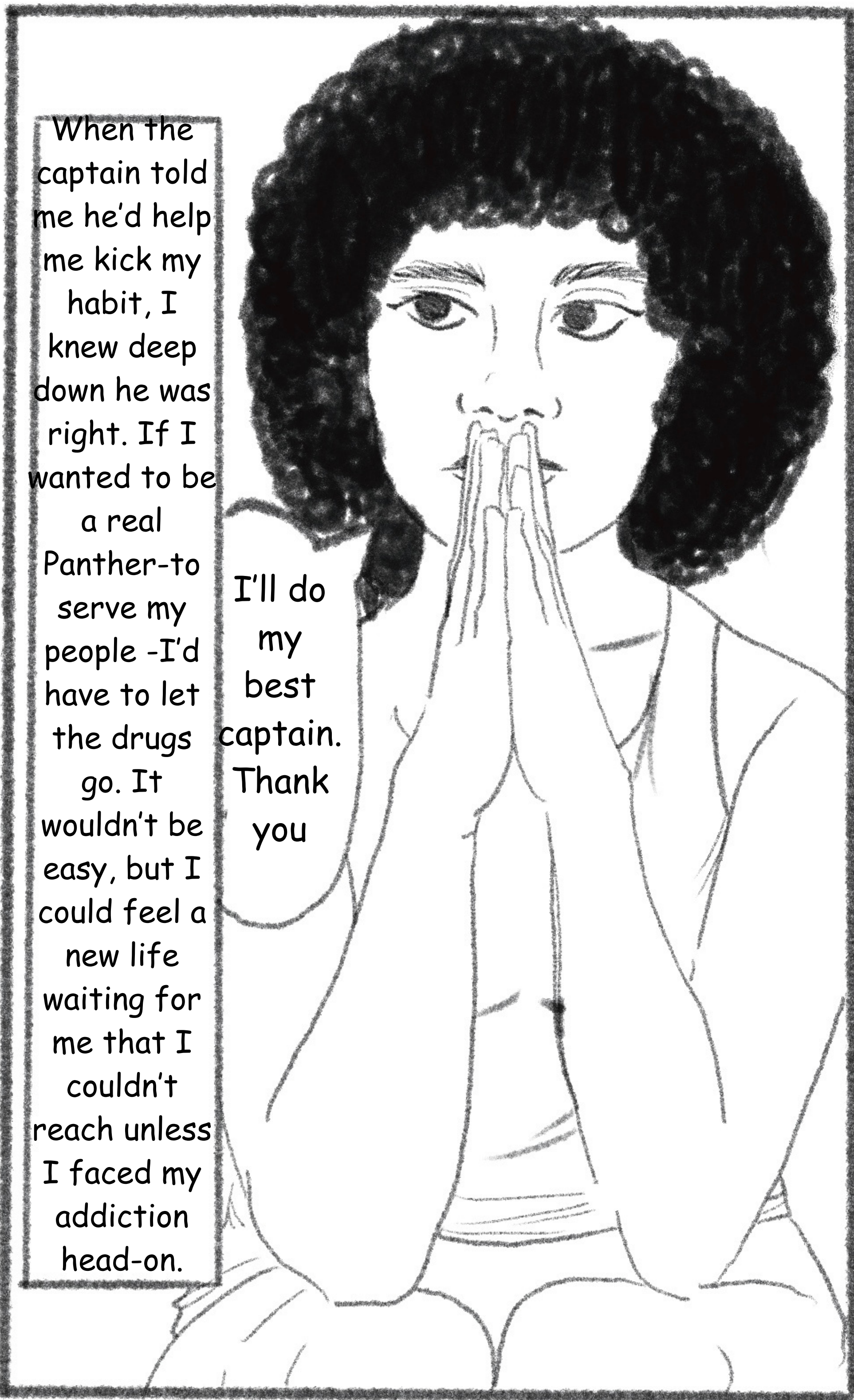
Jennings, something has come to my attention that we need to discuss.

...Okay, sir. We can talk on my couch



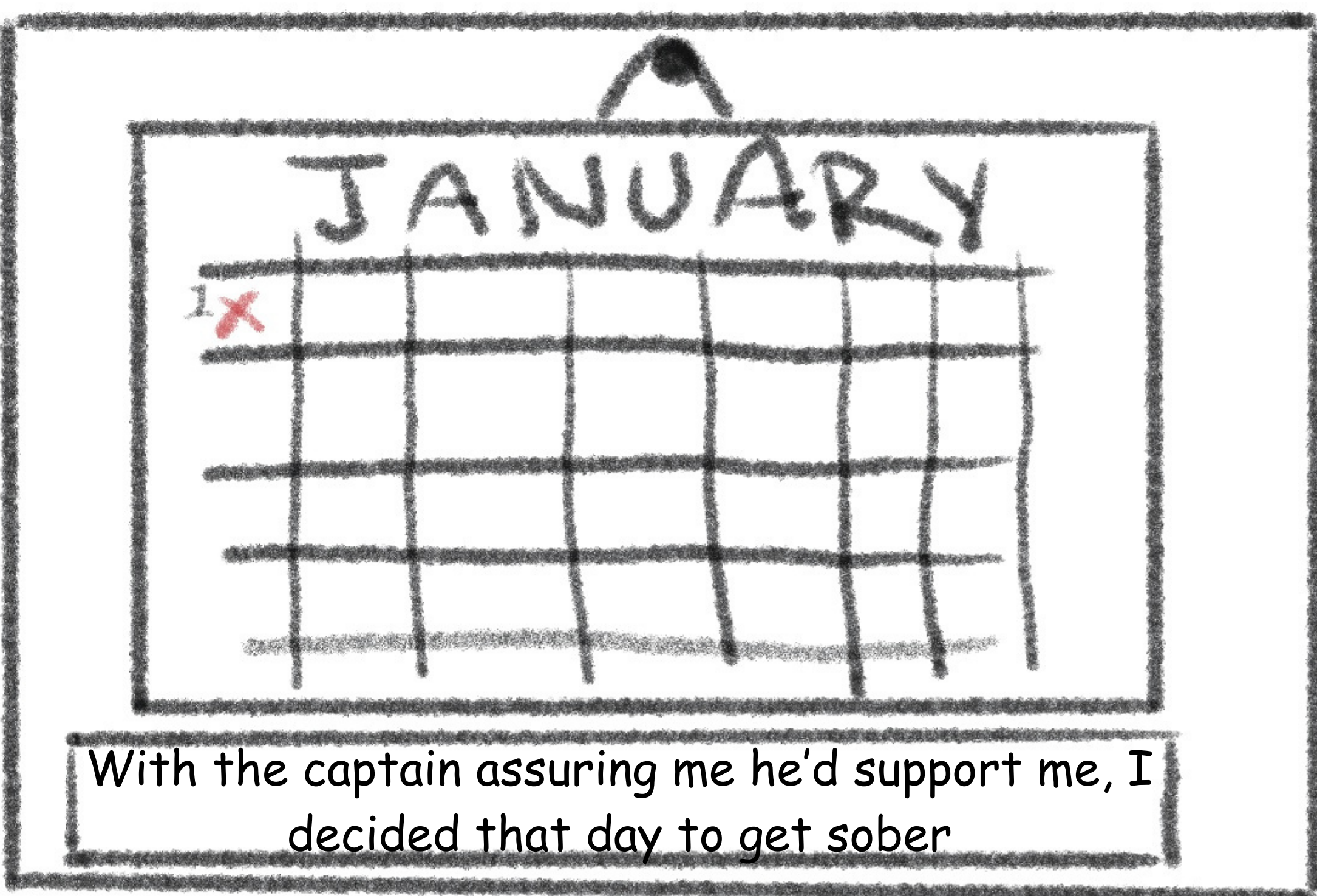
Oh.

Jennings, I like you... But I know about the drugs and you've got to quit if you want to stay

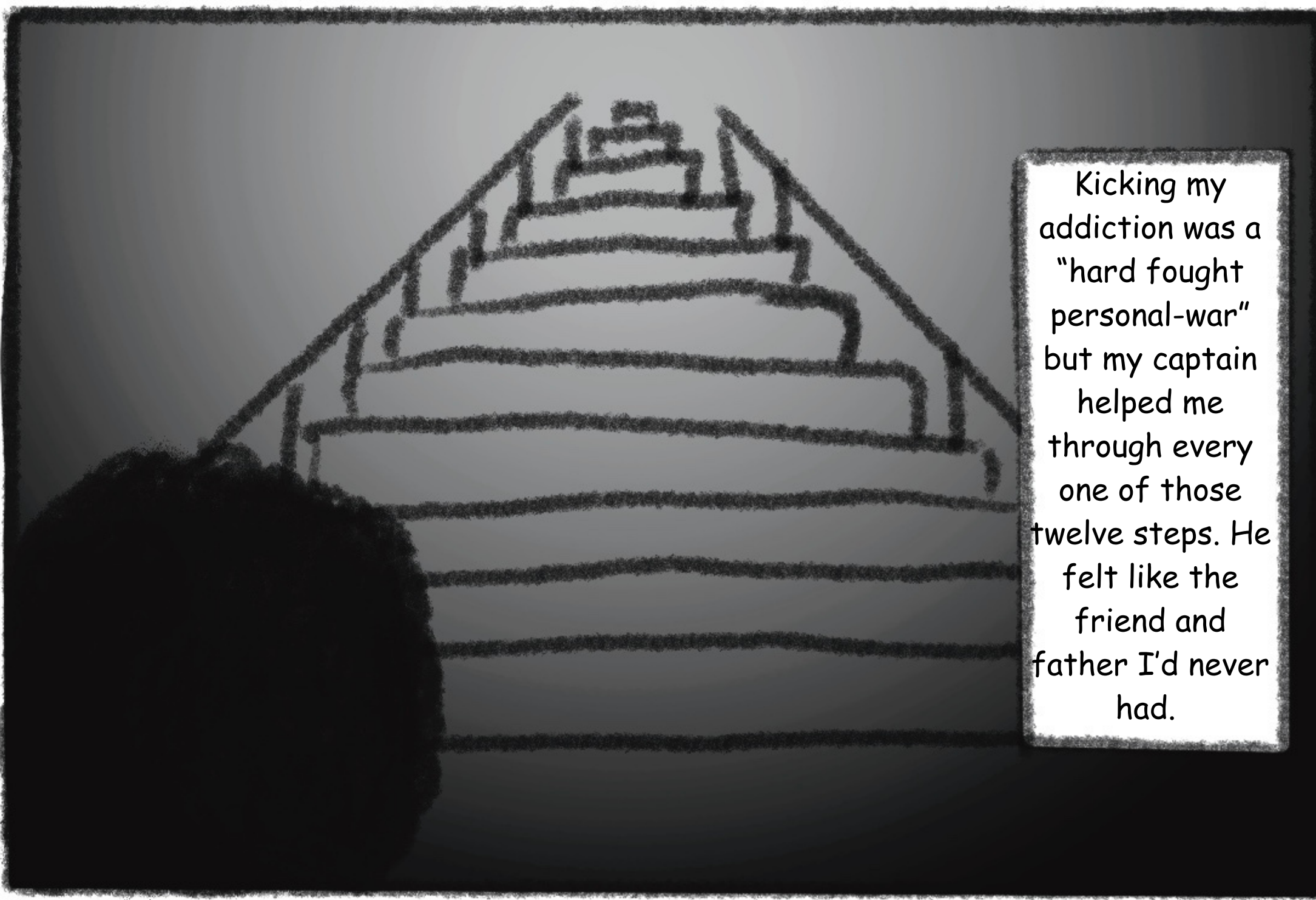


When the captain told me he'd help me kick my habit, I knew deep down he was right. If I wanted to be a real Panther-to serve my people -I'd have to let the drugs go. It wouldn't be easy, but I could feel a new life waiting for me that I couldn't reach unless I faced my addiction head-on.

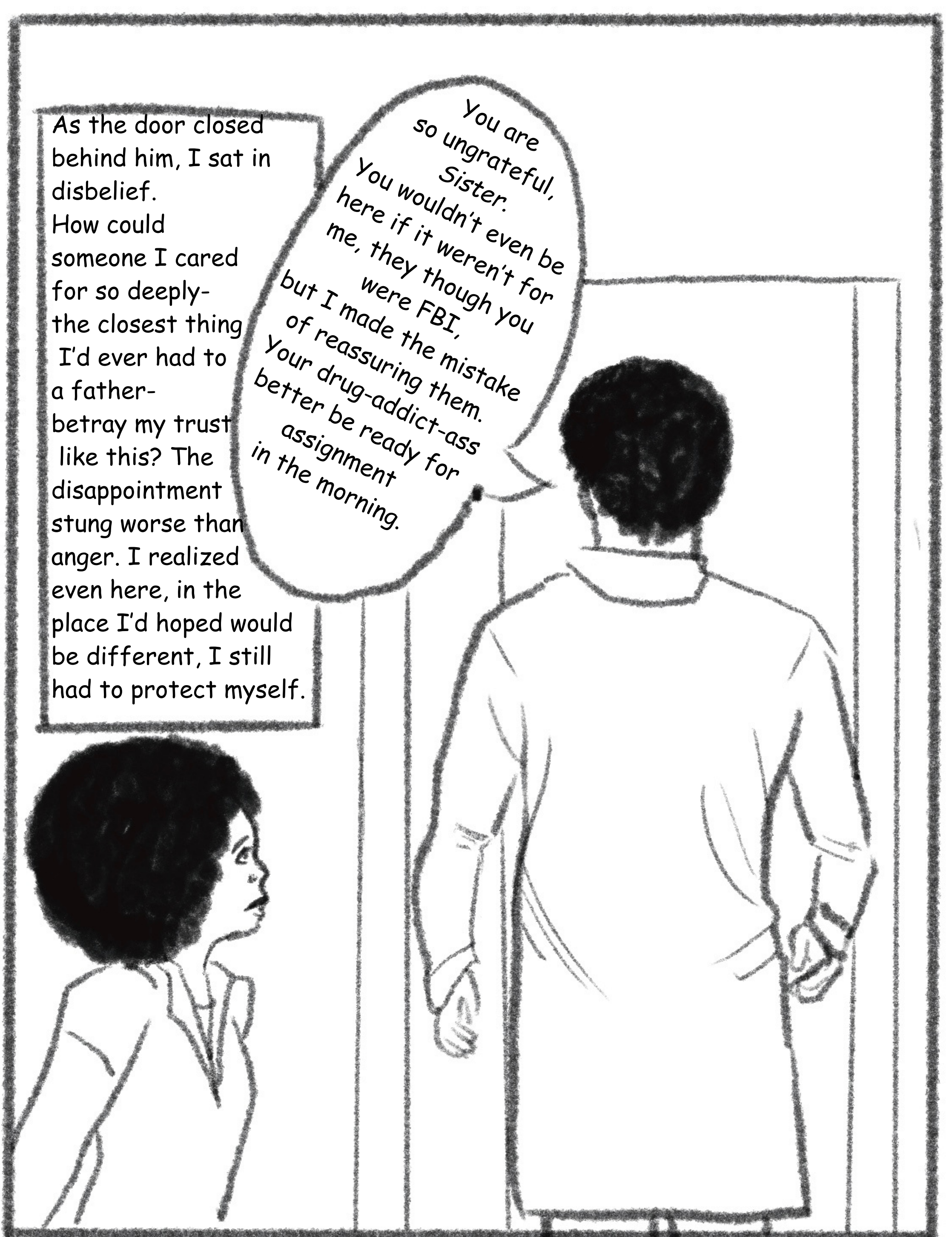
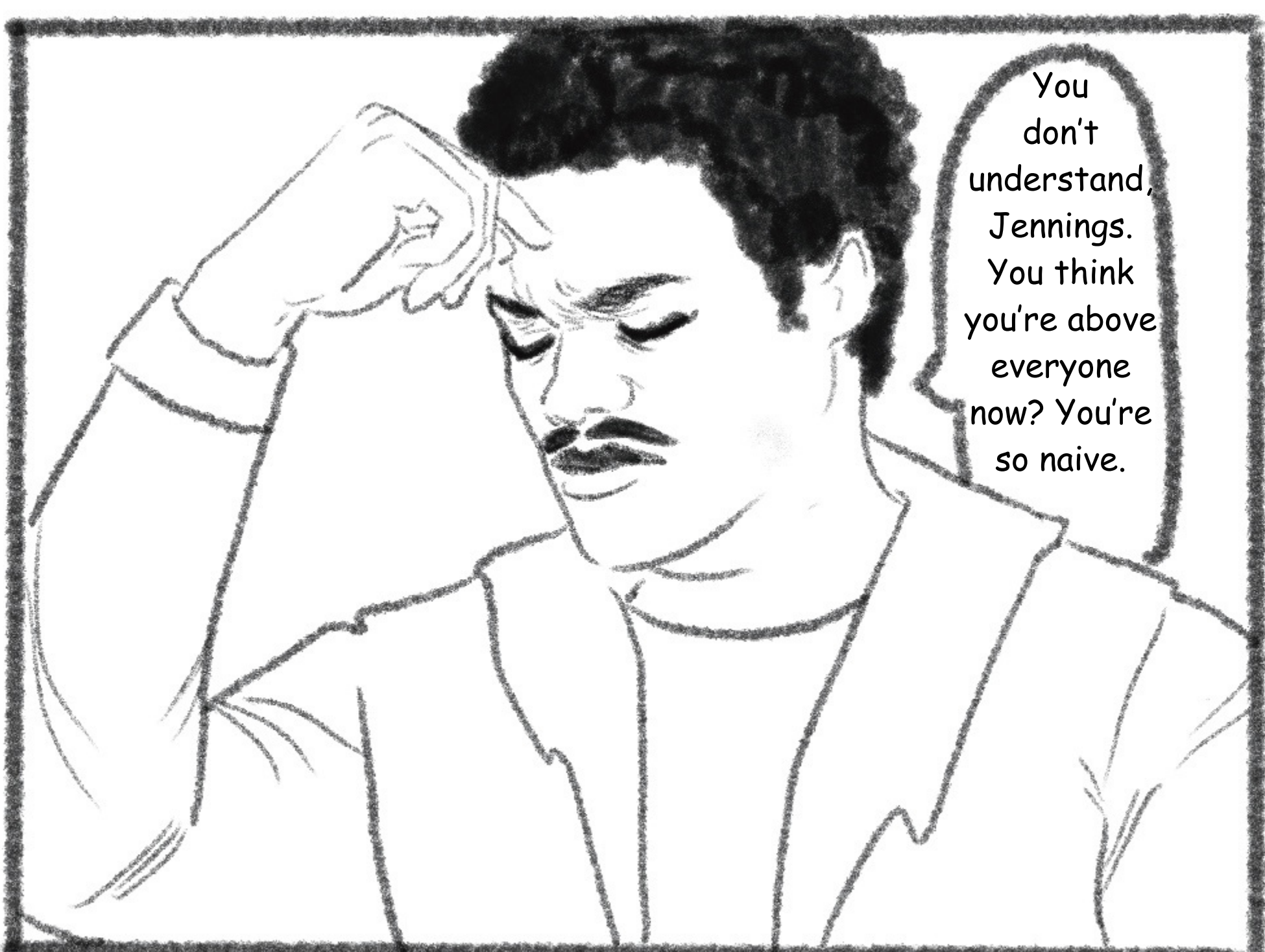
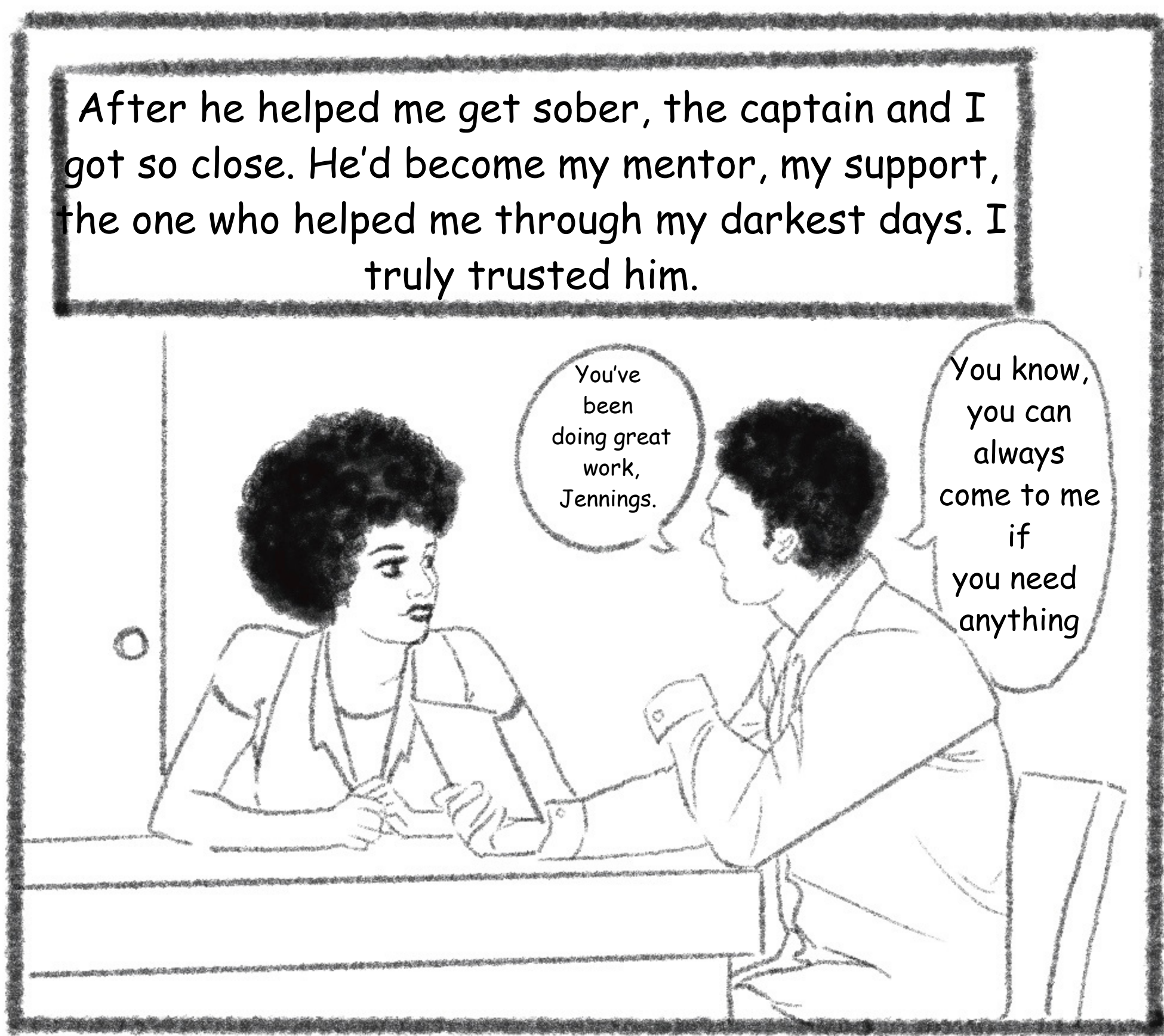
I'll do my best captain. Thank you

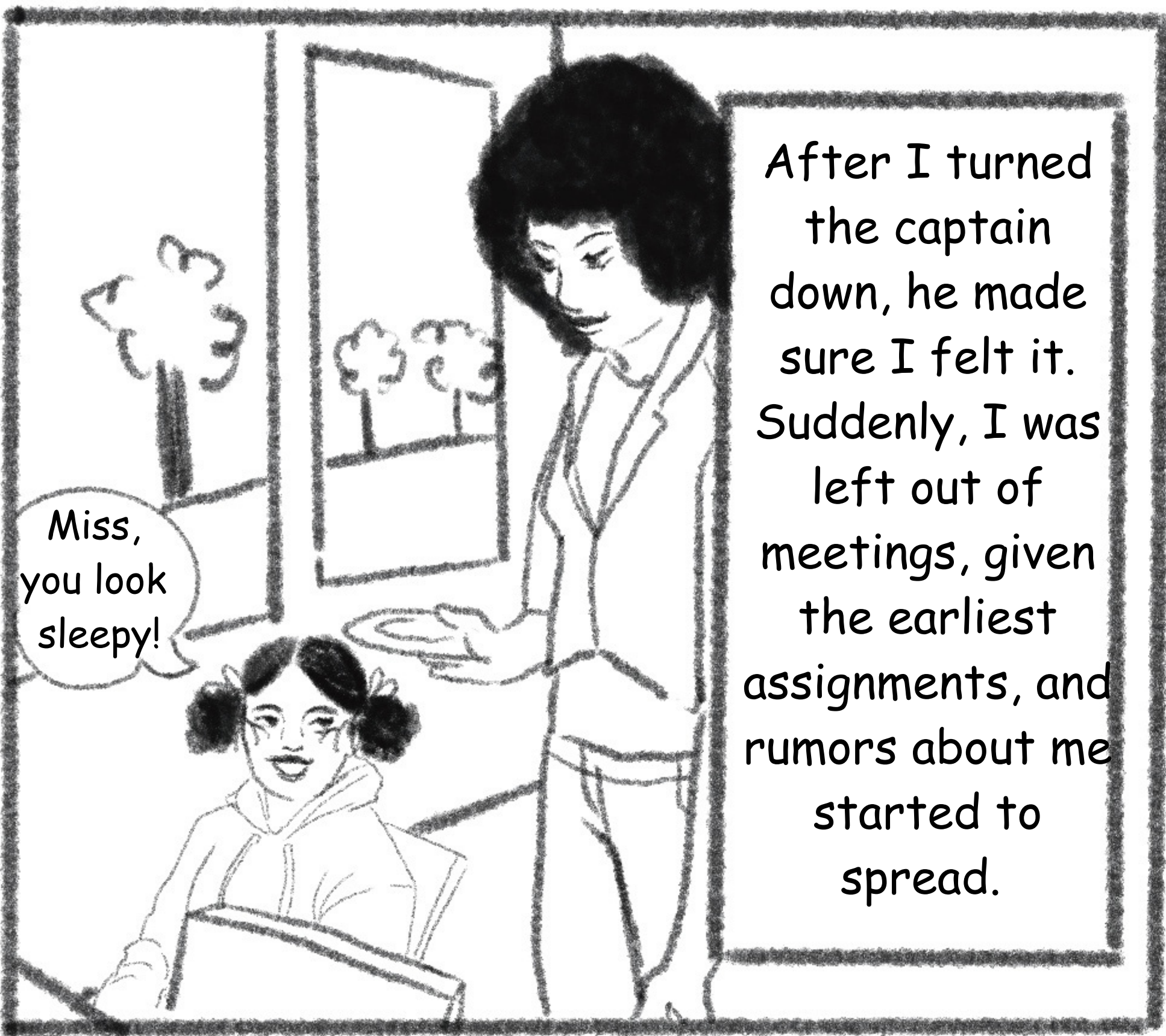


With the captain assuring me he'd support me, I decided that day to get sober

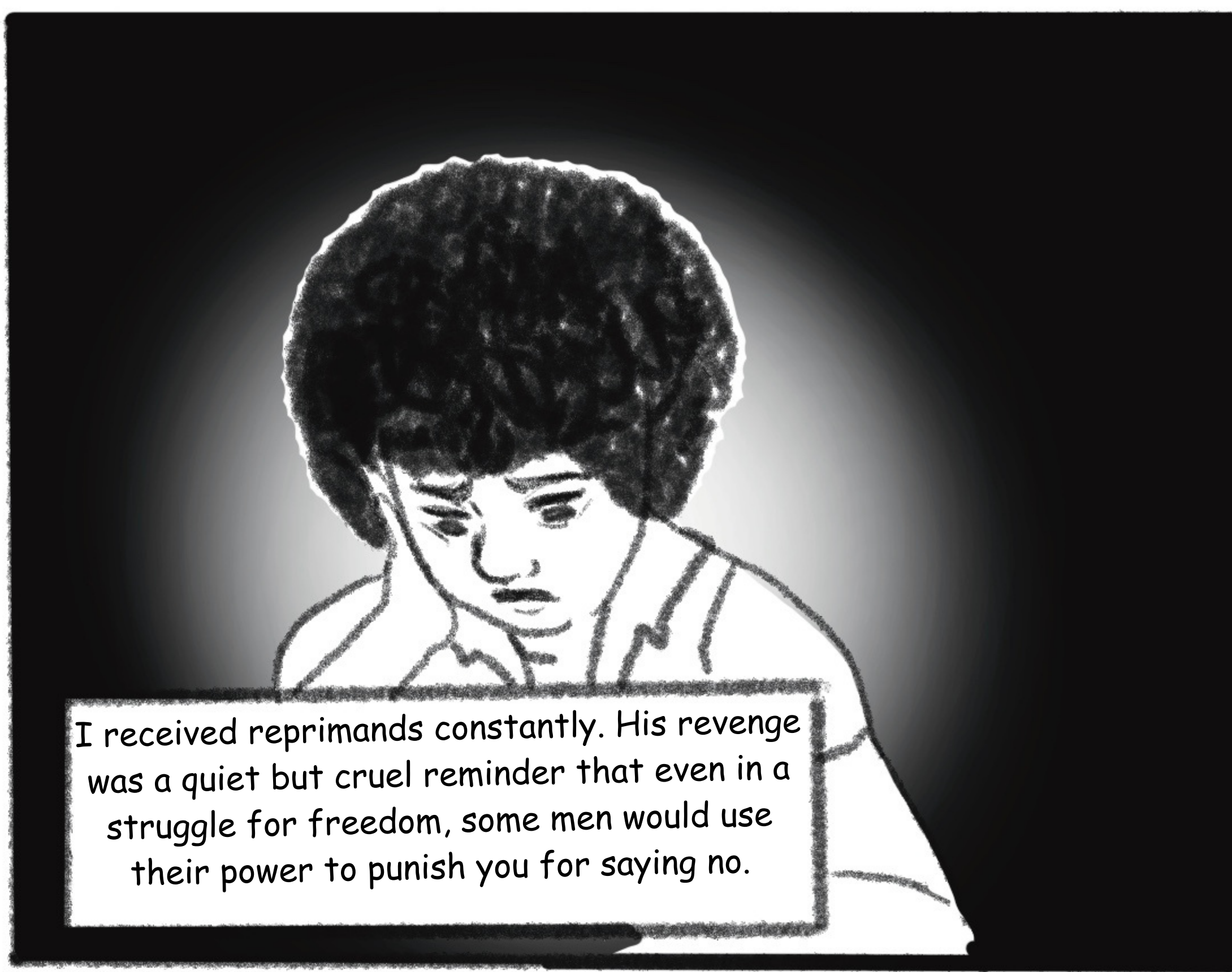


Kicking my addiction was a "hard fought personal-war" but my captain helped me through every one of those twelve steps. He felt like the friend and father I'd never had.





After I turned the captain down, he made sure I felt it. Suddenly, I was left out of meetings, given the earliest assignments, and rumors about me started to spread.



I received reprimands constantly. His revenge was a quiet but cruel reminder that even in a struggle for freedom, some men would use their power to punish you for saying no.

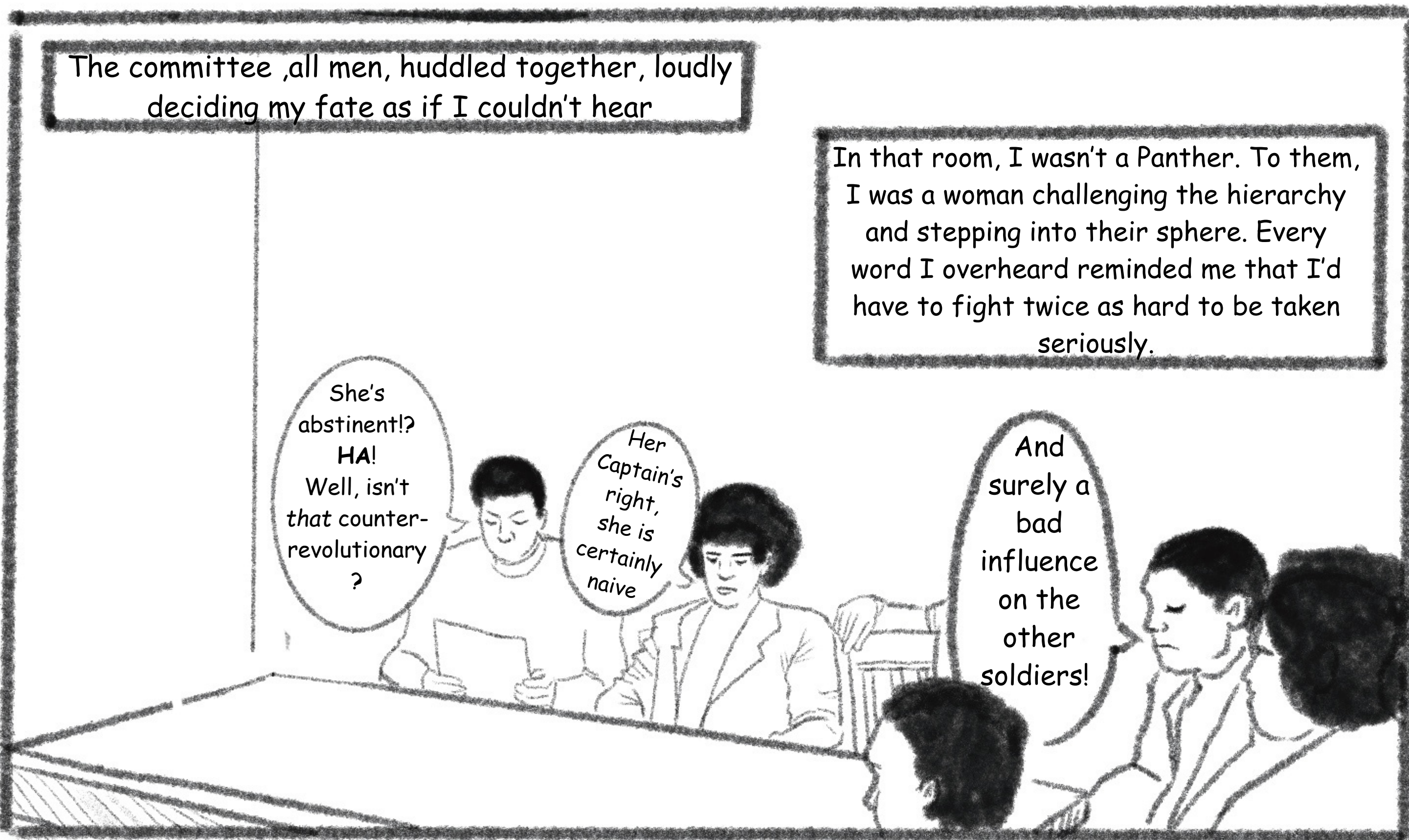


I'm fine, just tired of running around like a dog just because I didn't sleep with the Captain



Look, Regina, if this keeps going on, you should really go to the central committee. Maybe they'll transfer the Captain

Thank you Bill, I think I just might.



The committee, all men, huddled together, loudly deciding my fate as if I couldn't hear

In that room, I wasn't a Panther. To them, I was a woman challenging the hierarchy and stepping into their sphere. Every word I overheard reminded me that I'd have to fight twice as hard to be taken seriously.

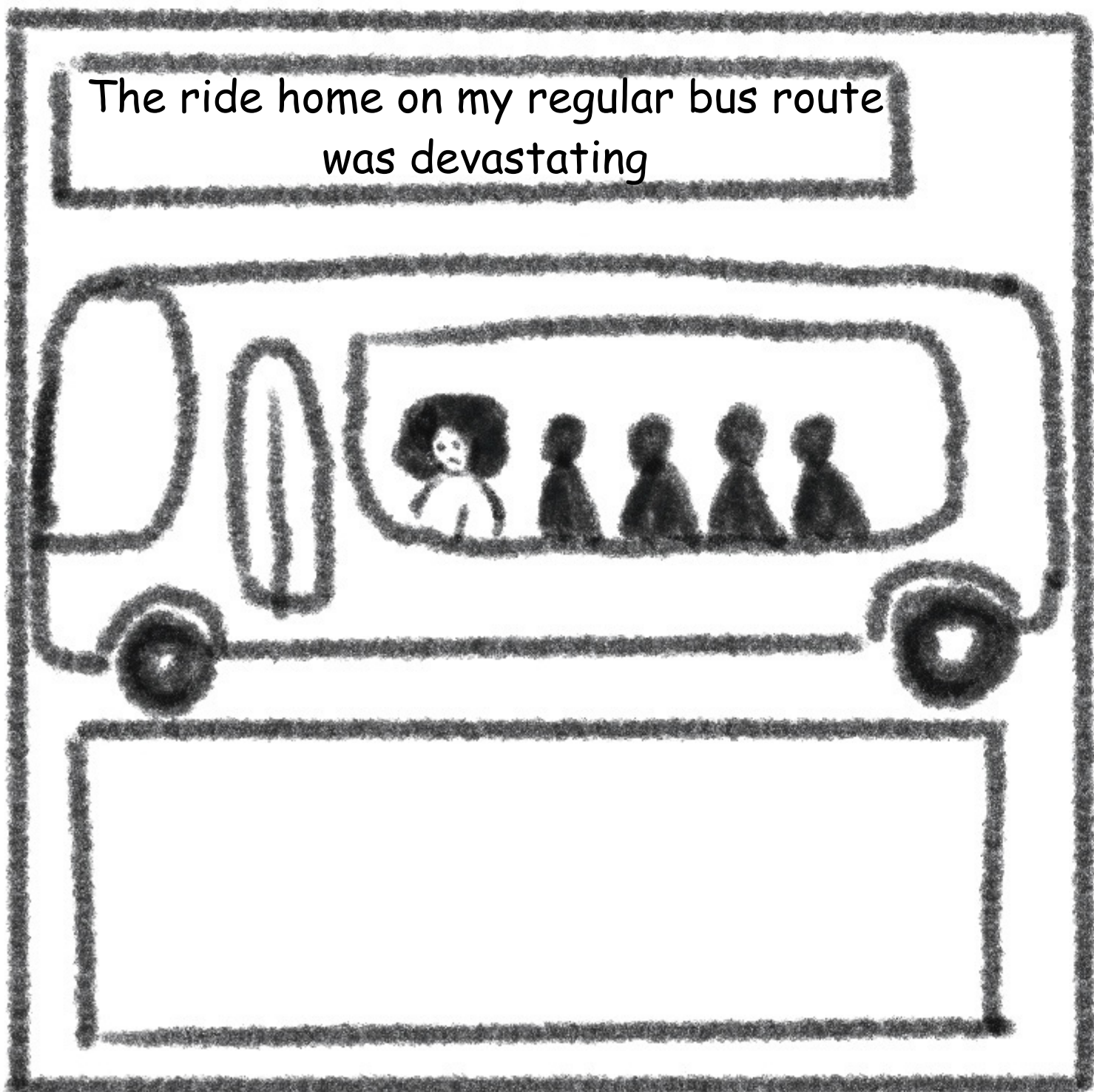
She's abstinent!? HA! Well, isn't that counter-revolutionary?

Her Captain's right, she is certainly naive

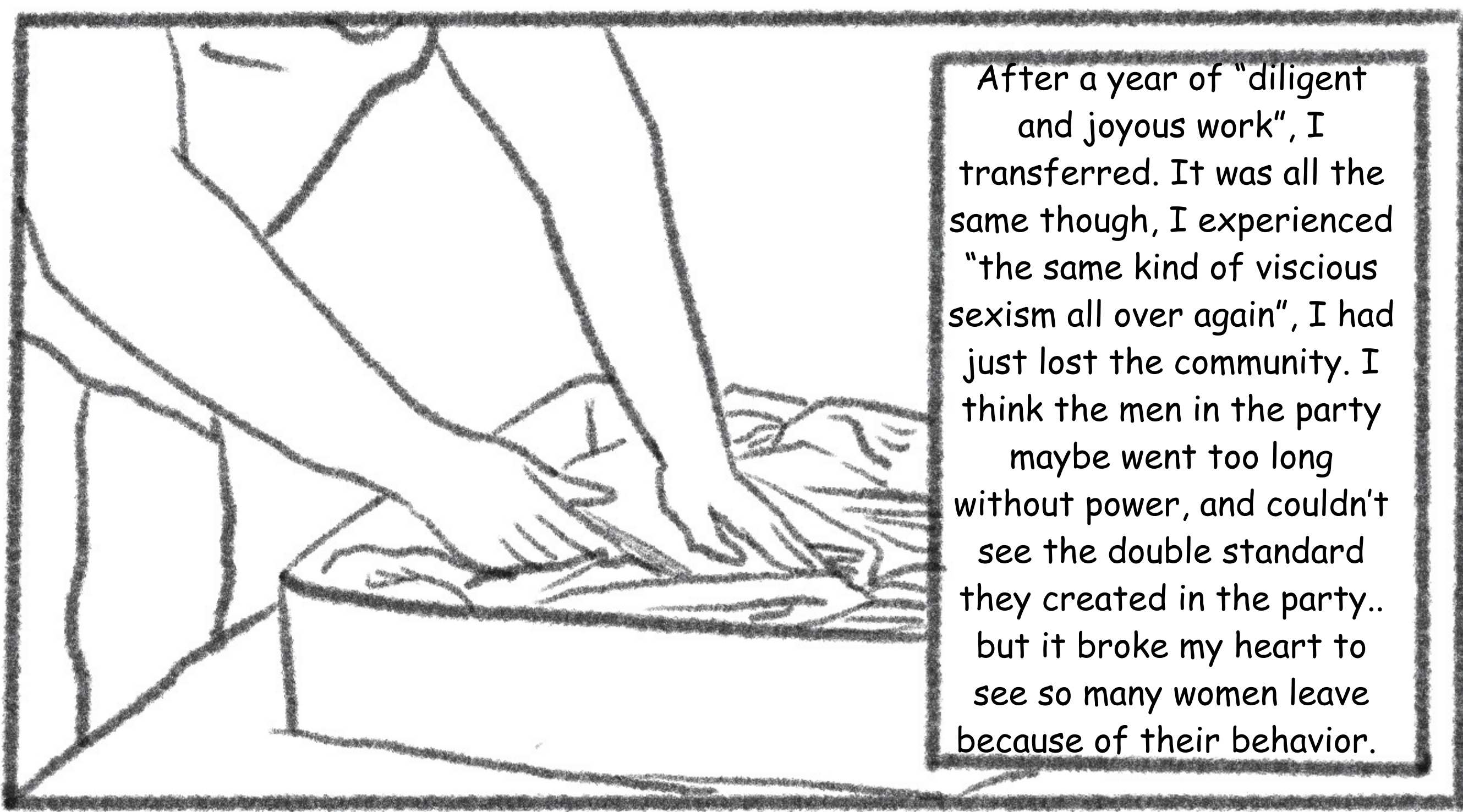
And surely a bad influence on the other soldiers!



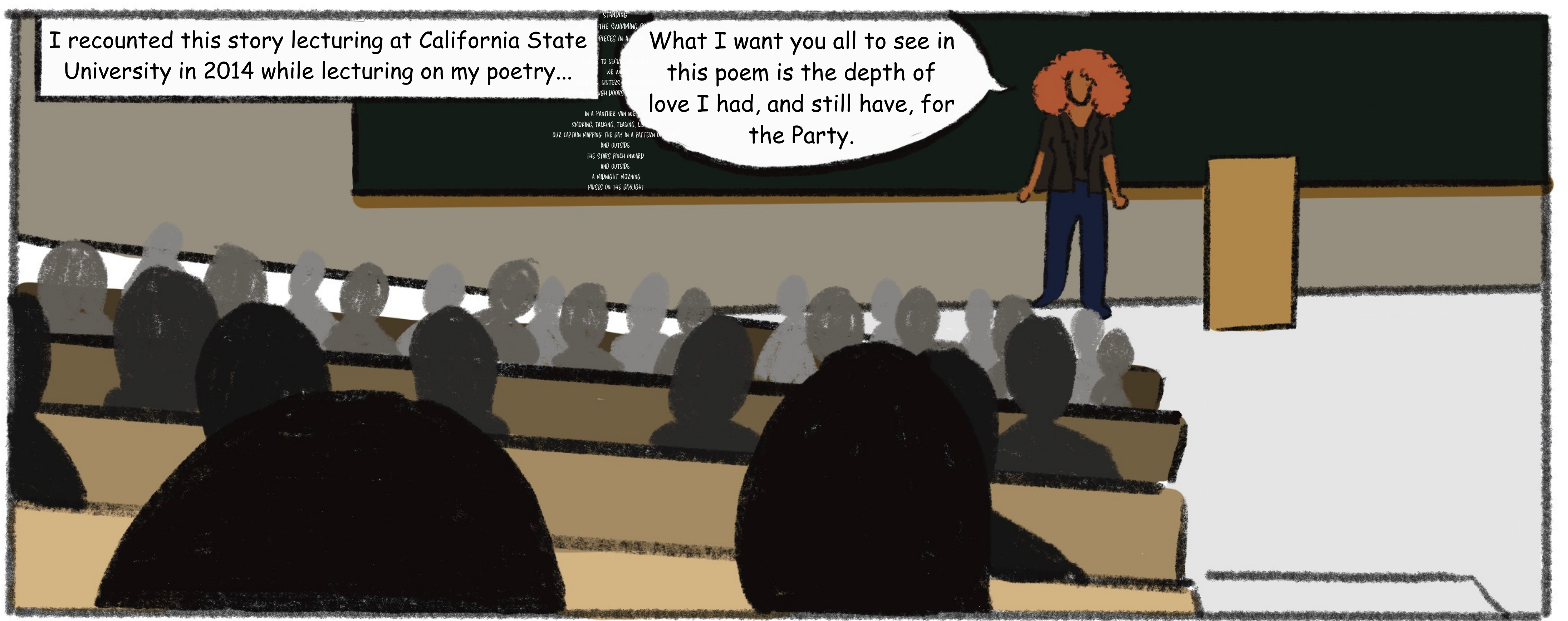
The captain recommended we transfer her, I think that's sufficient



The ride home on my regular bus route was devastating



After a year of "diligent and joyous work", I transferred. It was all the same though, I experienced "the same kind of vicious sexism all over again", I had just lost the community. I think the men in the party maybe went too long without power, and couldn't see the double standard they created in the party.. but it broke my heart to see so many women leave because of their behavior.



ROUTINE  
 IN A BLACKBERRY MORNING  
 A BULLET RESTS IN EACH CHAMBER  
 IN A MORNING OF CHILLED EXPECTATION  
 I SHOWER AND JUMP INTO LEVI'S AND COMBAT BOOTS  
 IN A MIRROR PROVIDING MEMORY  
 I FORK MY BIG, BLACK BUSH  
 PANTHERS IN THE BEDROOM,  
 LIVING ROOM, BATHROOM, GROWL, LAUGH, SCOWL  
 COUNT WEAPONS AND CLEANSE BODIES  
  
 IN THE SEEDLING OF A BLACKBERRY MORNING  
 WE PREPARE FOR THE KNOCK  
 OF PANTHERS  
 STANDING  
 AROUND THE SWIMMING POOL  
 STANDING LIKE PIECES IN A GAME OF CHESS  
  
 I MOVE TO SECURE MY PLACE  
 WE WALK  
 UNSMILING, SISTERS AND BROTHERS  
 BURSTING THROUGH DOORS OF DAMAGED GLASS  
  
 IN A PANTHER VAN WE RIDE  
 SMOKING, TALKING, TEASING, LISTENING  
 OUR CAPTAIN MAPPING THE DAY IN A PATTERN OF PLANS  
 AND OUTSIDE  
 THE STARS PINCH INWARD  
 AND OUTSIDE  
 A MIDNIGHT MORNING  
 MUSES ON THE DAYLIGHT

Even now, I carry such a deep love for the Party and my brothers and sisters who stood by me. Many men truly supported me, but some thought fighting racism, police brutality, government infiltration, and poverty were bigger battles than confronting sexism. Some women, worn down by double standards and harassment, chose to leave; others, like me, stayed, hoping to make change from within.

Looking back, I see now that our fight was always intersectional -Black women standing at the crossroads of race and gender, working so hard to avoid erasure from sexism and racism. My experience and those I know from other women in the party taught me that our liberation must center us all. My story is not just survival, but a testament: we were and always will be keystones of revolution - and our voices, our poems, will not be silenced