

SALT MAGIC

HOPE LARSON * REBECCA MOCK



MARGARET FERGUSON BOOKS
HOLIDAY HOUSE • NEW YORK



Margaret Ferguson Books

Text copyright © 2021 by Hope Larson

Illustrations copyright © 2021 by Rebecca Mock

All rights reserved

HOLIDAY HOUSE is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

Printed and bound in June 2021 at C&C Offset, Shenzhen, China.

The artwork was drawn digitally with charcoal-style and ink wash-style brushes for the
line art, and watercolor-style brush for the colors.

www.holidayhouse.com

First Edition

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Larson, Hope, author. | Mock, Rebecca, illustrator.

Title: Salt magic / by Hope Larson ; illustrated by Rebecca Mock.

Description: First edition. | New York : Margaret Ferguson Books, [2021]

Audience: Ages 10 to 14. | Audience: Grades 7-9. | Summary:

Twelve-year-old Vonceil Taggart, willing to risk everything to set
things right, leaves her family's Oklahoma farm in 1919 seeking the salt
witch who cast a spell that turned their spring to saltwater.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020036302 | ISBN 9780823446209 (hardcover)

Subjects: LCSH: Graphic novels. | CYAC: Graphic novels. | Adventure and
adventurers—Fiction. | Witches—Fiction. | Blessing and
cursing—Fiction. | Farm life—Oklahoma—Fiction.

Oklahoma—History—20th century—Fiction.

Classification: LCC PZ77.L37 Sal 2021 | DDC 741.5/973—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020036302>

ISBN: 978-0-8234-4620-9 (hardcover)

ISBN: 978-0-8234-5050-3 (paperback)

For P.J.H. —H.L.

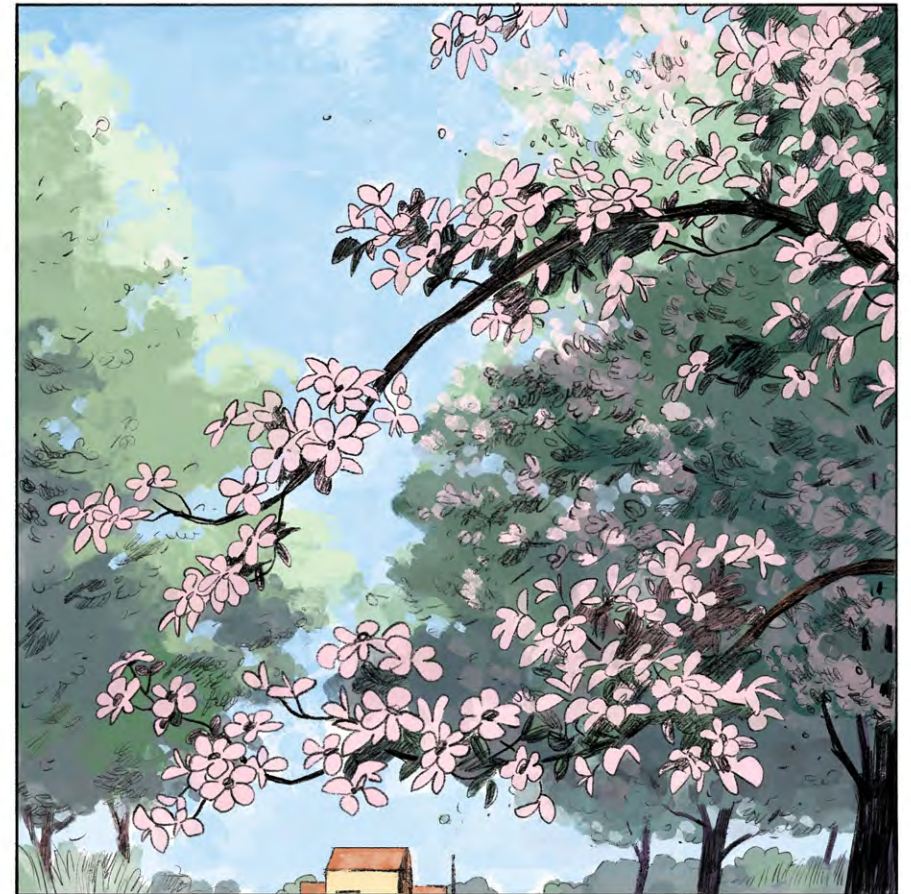
*For Kate, Lauren, Susan, Christina, Taylor,
Kevin, Laurel, and Amy —R.M.*

CONTENTS

<i>Chapter One:</i>	<i>Homecoming</i>	7
<i>Chapter Two:</i>	<i>Old Dell</i>	25
<i>Chapter Three:</i>	<i>The Lady in White</i>	37
<i>Chapter Four:</i>	<i>Salt Water</i>	53
<i>Chapter Five:</i>	<i>A Sacrificial Pawn</i>	73
<i>Chapter Six:</i>	<i>The Lady of Sere</i>	89
<i>Chapter Seven:</i>	<i>Scavengers</i>	123
<i>Chapter Eight:</i>	<i>Rocky Candy</i>	141
<i>Chapter Nine:</i>	<i>Hospitality</i>	153
<i>Chapter Ten:</i>	<i>The Magic of Tears</i>	173
<i>Chapter Eleven:</i>	<i>An Uninvited Guest</i>	201
<i>Chapter Twelve:</i>	<i>About Time</i>	221
	<i>Epilogue</i>	227

Chapter One

Homecoming





Lots of stories end with a kiss.
Let's take care of ours up front.



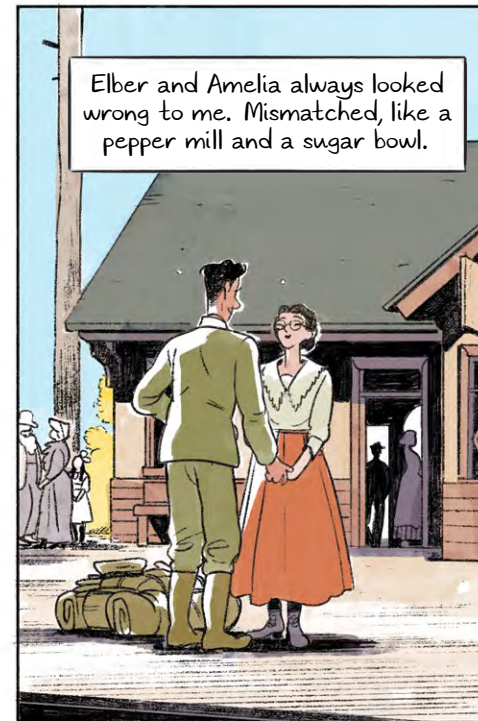
That's my brother, Elber, and his girl, Amelia.
It's 1919, and Elber's just come home from
the war to Gypsum, Oklahoma.

Would you
look at them,
Vonceil?

Yes,
Mama. They're
a picture.



Didn't say it was a nice one.



Elber and Amelia always looked
wrong to me. Mismatched, like a
pepper mill and a sugar bowl.



When Elber got shot
in the trenches in France,
I prayed he'd meet a pretty,
brave nurse at the hospital
there and fall for her instead.

Please, Mama.
Amelia's said hello.
Can't we please—

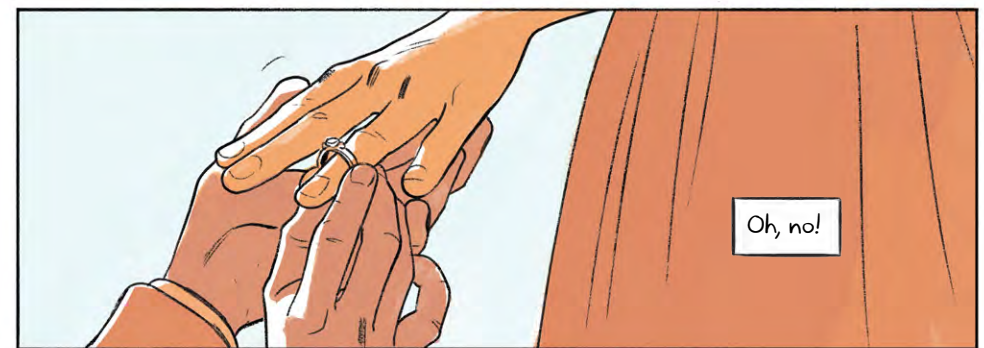
Shush!



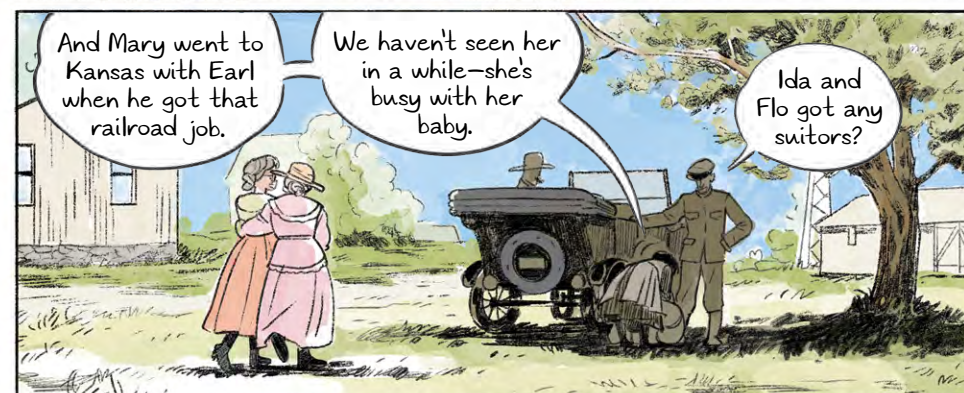
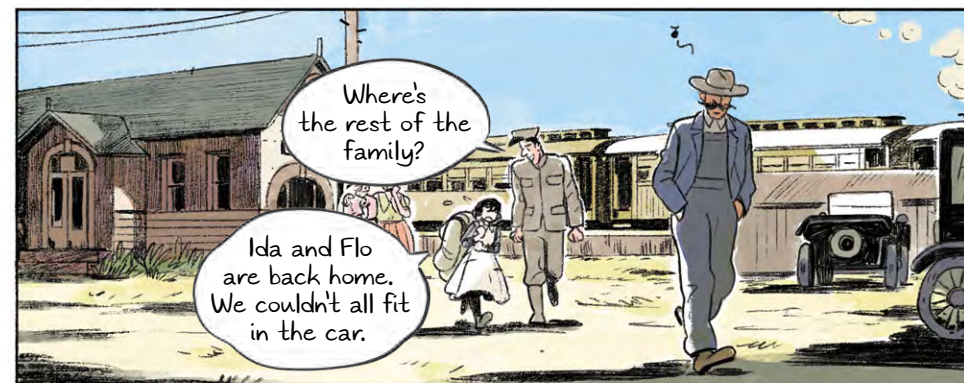
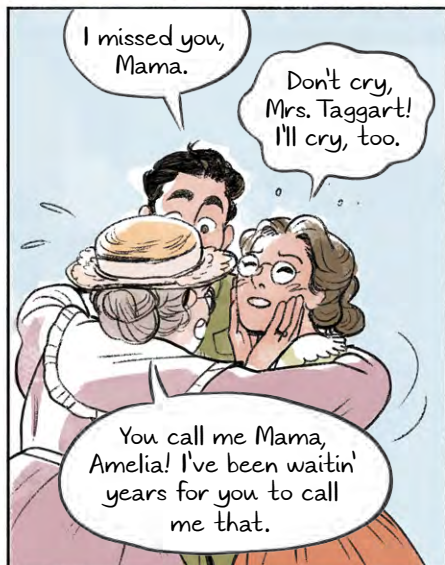
But Amelia stuck to
him like a sand burr.

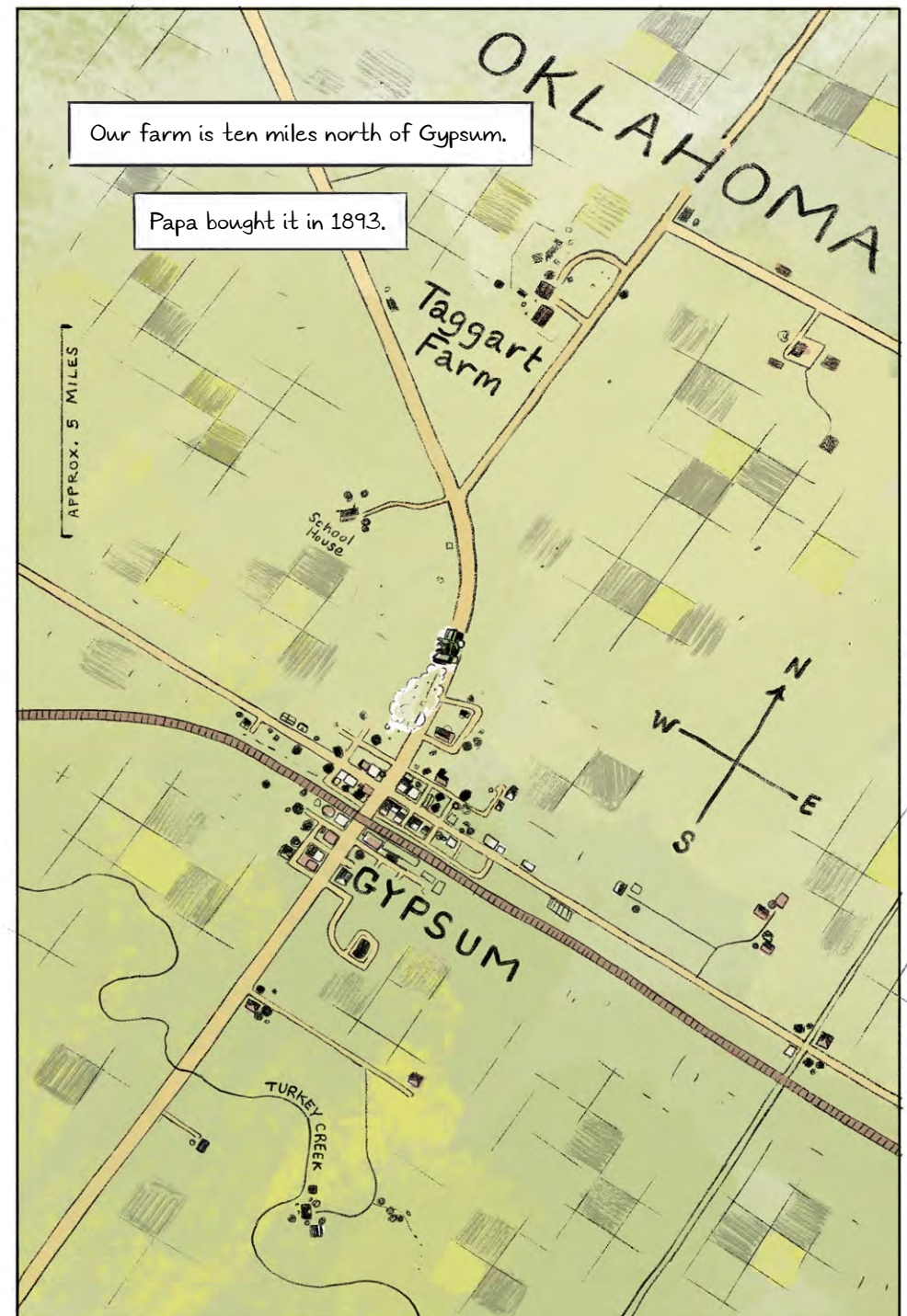
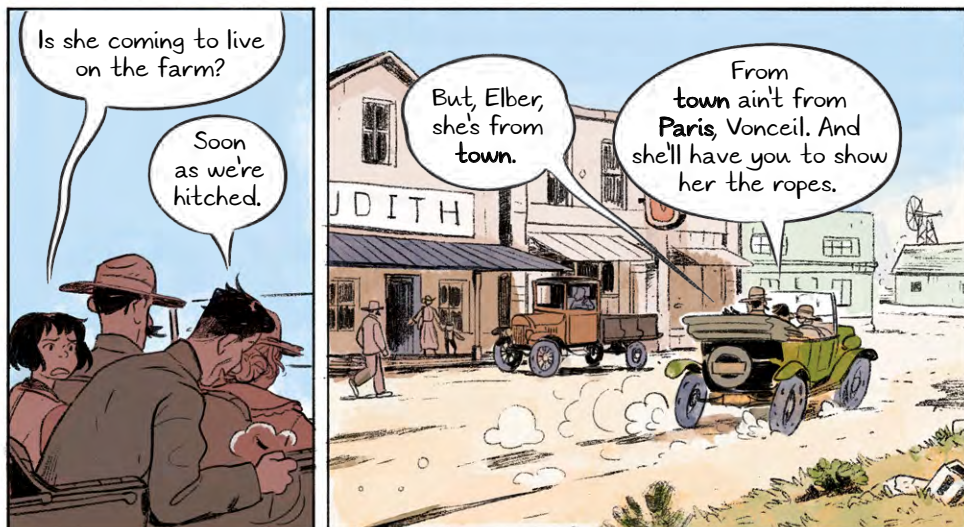


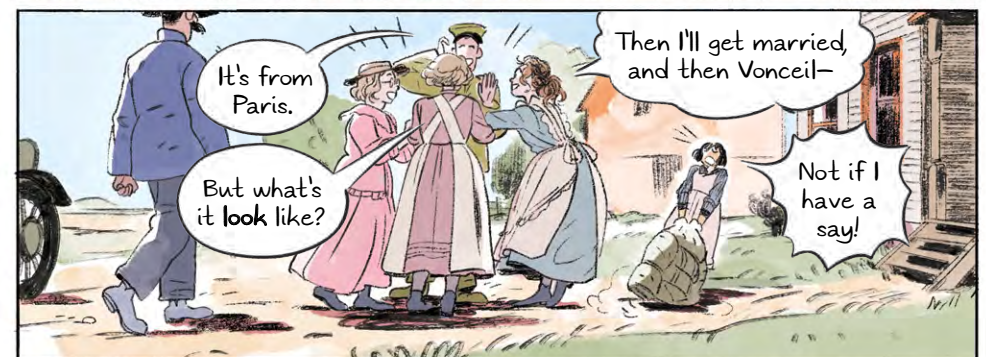
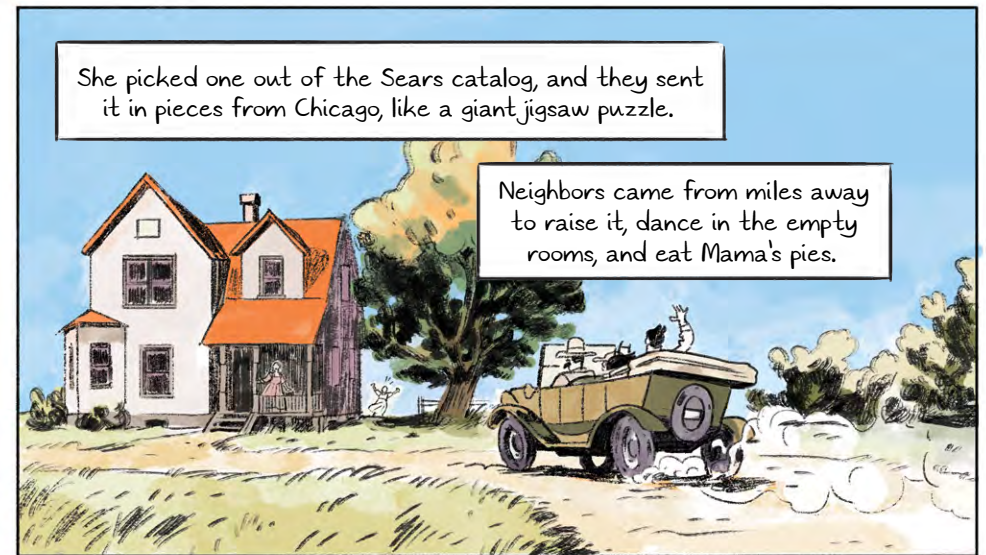
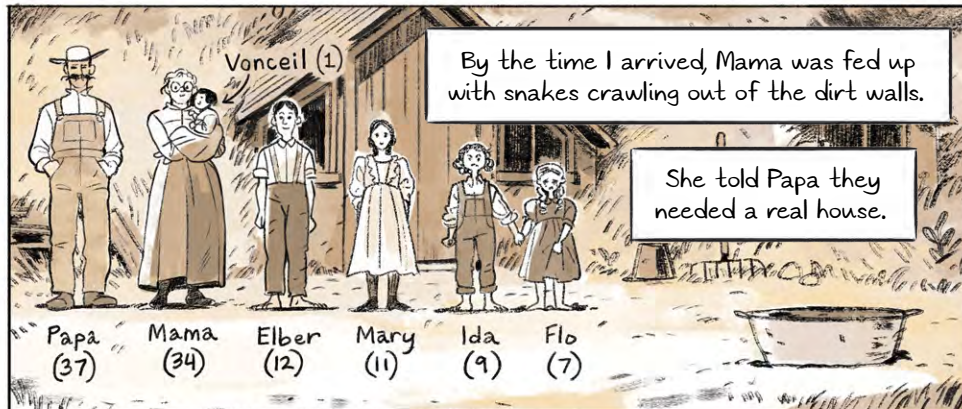
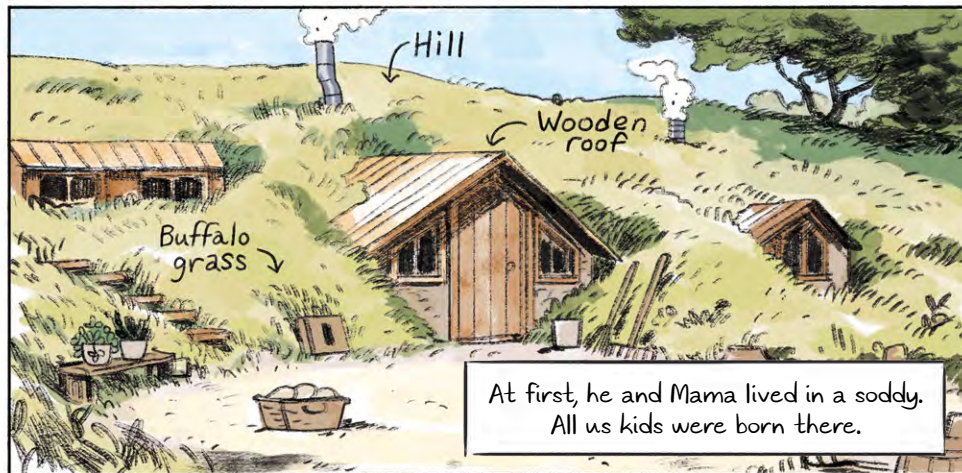
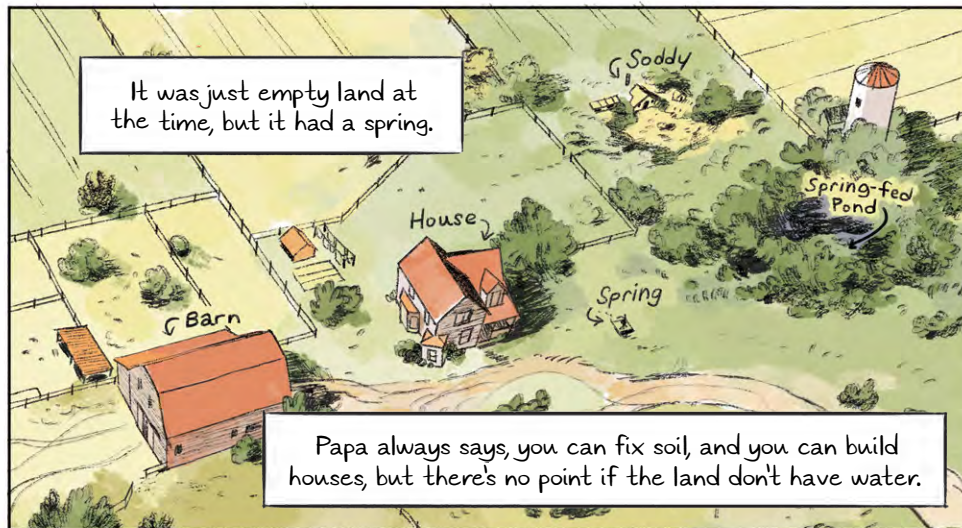
Is that—?!

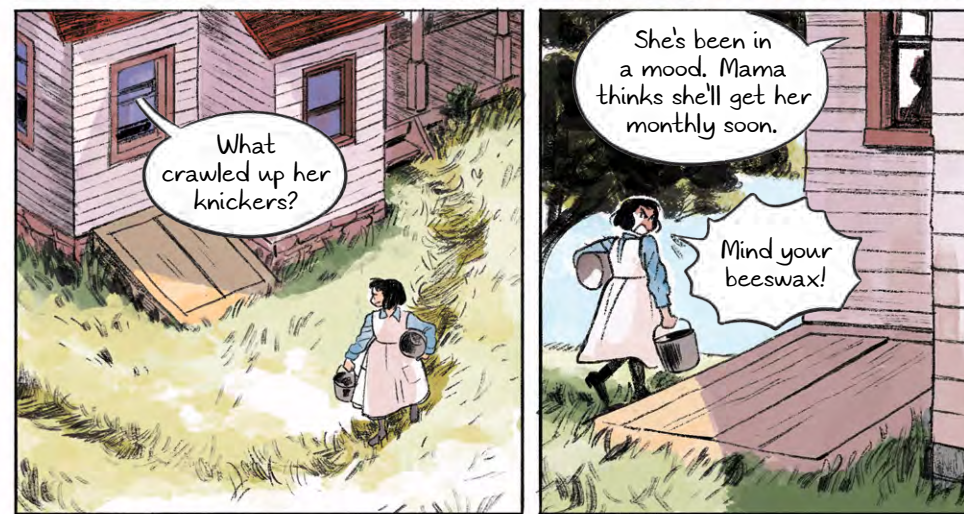
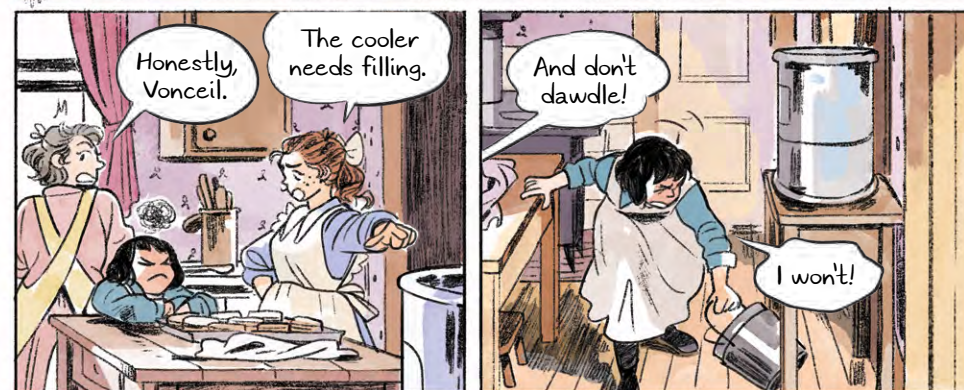
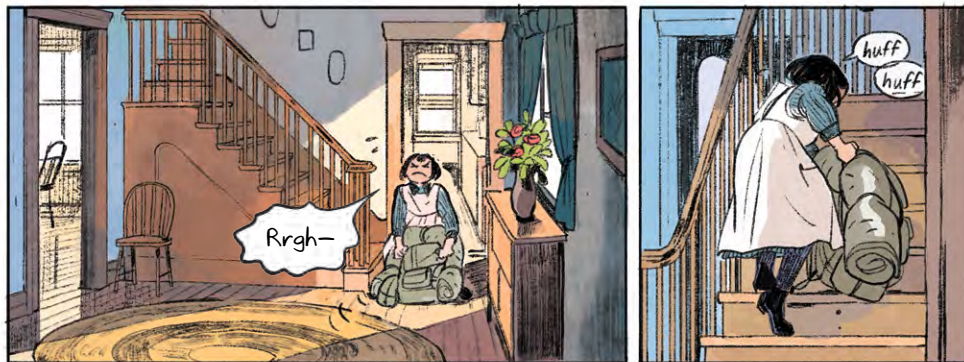


Oh, no!







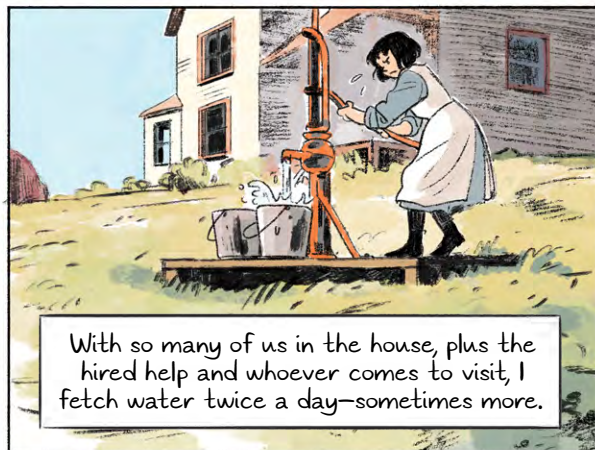




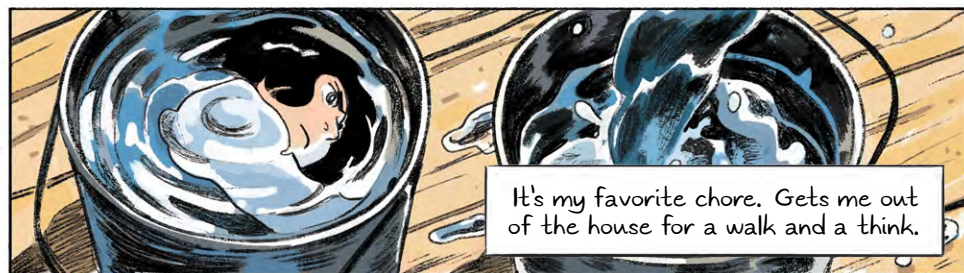
Of all us kids, Elber and I are the most alike. We look alike, think alike . . .



Mama says we would've been twins if I hadn't wandered off and showed up eleven years late.



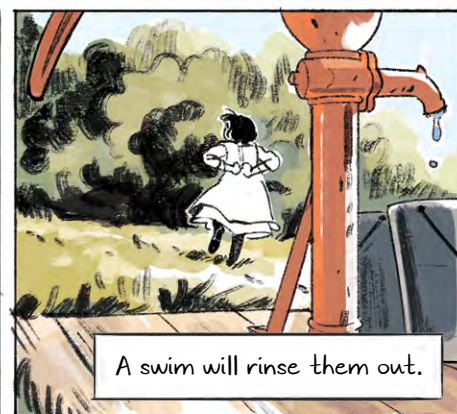
With so many of us in the house, plus the hired help and whoever comes to visit, I fetch water twice a day—sometimes more.



It's my favorite chore. Gets me out of the house for a walk and a think.



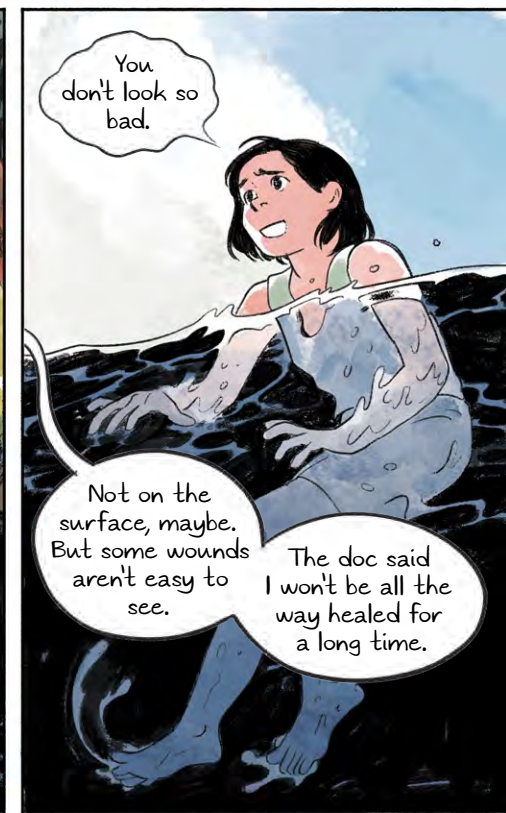
All my thoughts are ugly today.

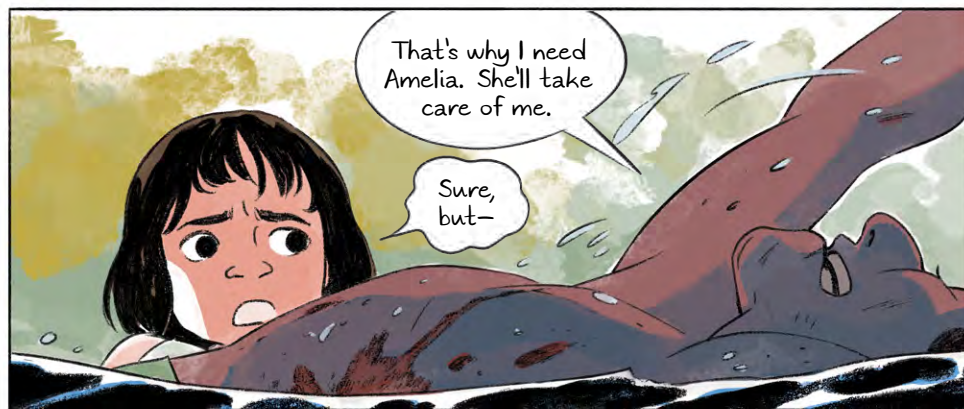


A swim will rinse them out.



Hey there.





That's why I need Amelia. She'll take care of me.

Sure, but—



Amelia's a good woman, Vonceil.



I just thought you'd meet someone overseas. Someone sophisticated.

You think I could bring a girl like that back here?



You could've stayed in Europe.



And do what? Be some French lady's pet?

I don't know! But I could've come to live with you.



Now I'll never get away from here.

Why not? Mary did.



I don't mean Kansas. I mean farther.

I know.



I know you feel too big for this place.

But when you get out of here, you'll see how small you are in the world.

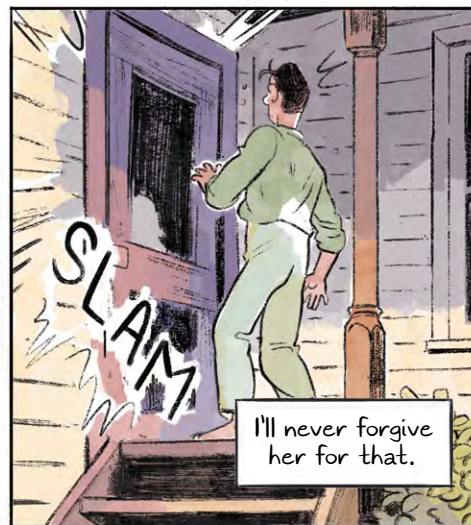
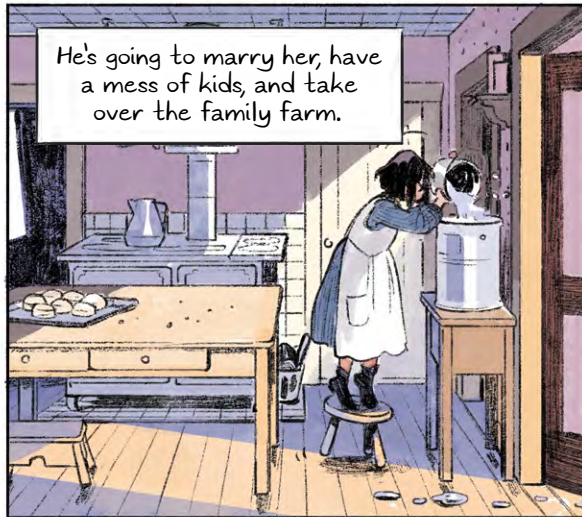
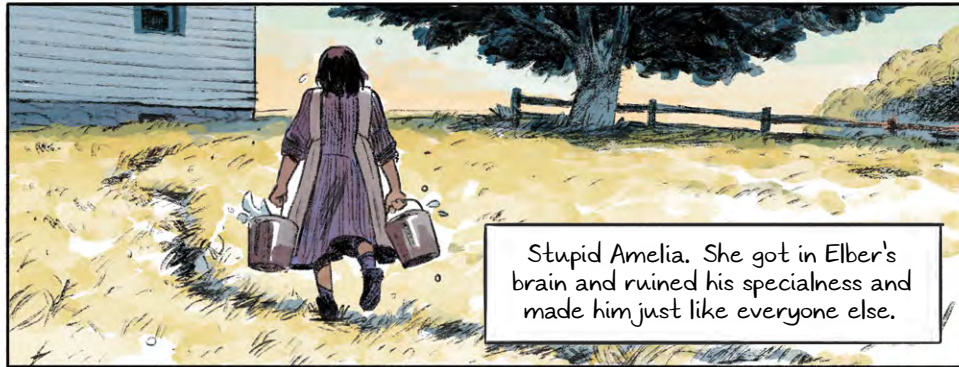


Don't treat me like a kid. You never used to.

True.



But I was a kid, then, too.



Chapter Two

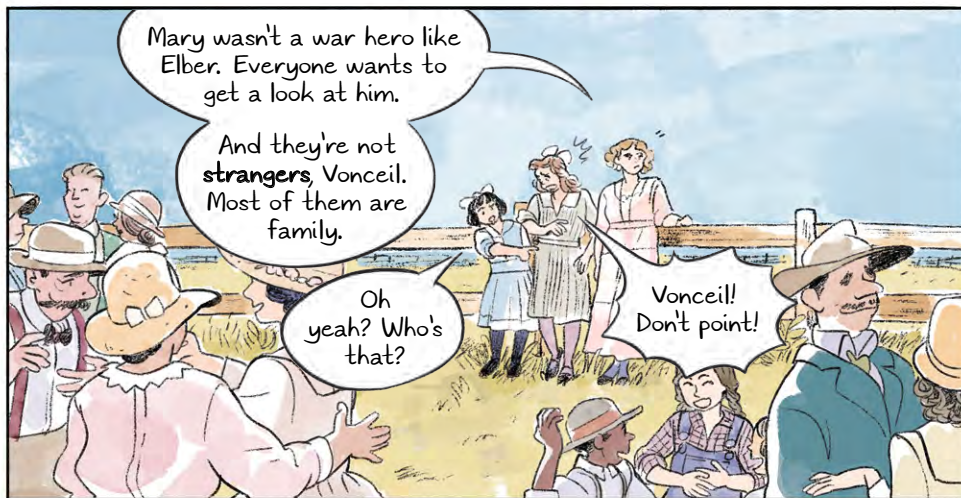
Old Dell





They set the date so quick, you'd think there was a baby on the way.

I've never seen so many strangers in one place. There weren't this many people at Mary's wedding.



Mary wasn't a war hero like Elber. Everyone wants to get a look at him.

And they're not strangers, Vonceil. Most of them are family.

Oh yeah? Who's that?

Vonceil! Don't point!



Second Cousin Patience. She makes the prize-winning blueberry jam. See? Her fingers are blue.



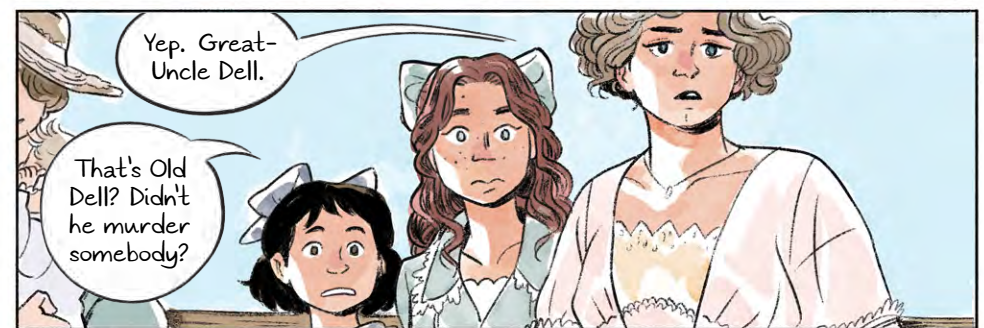
And him?

Cousin Sandy from Garfield County. He got that limp in the Tulsa rodeo in 1916.



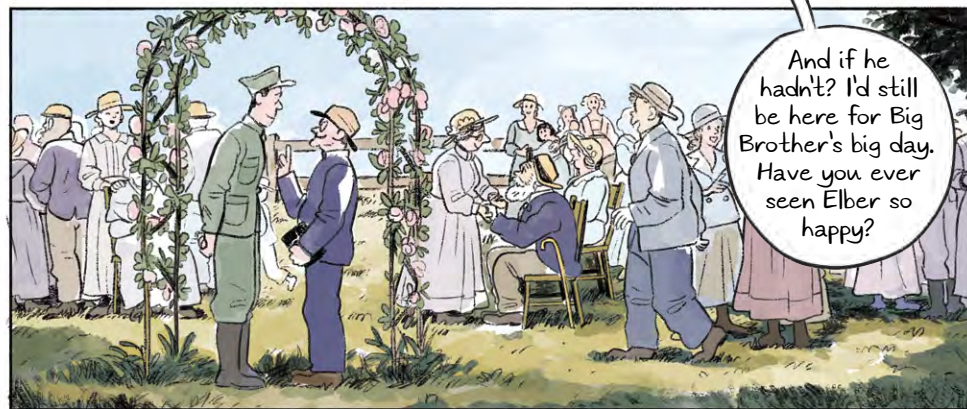
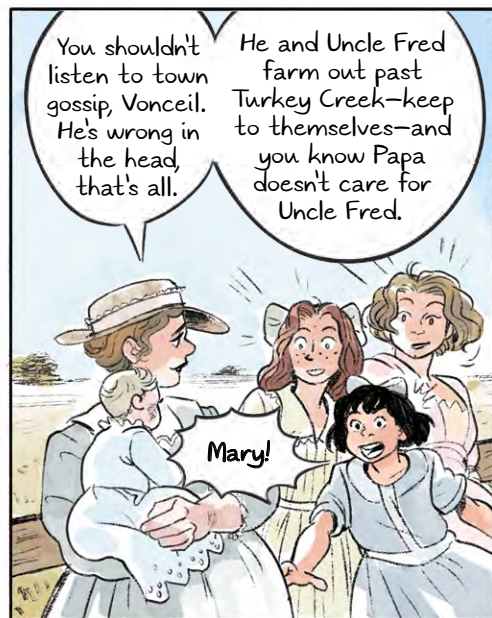
How 'bout him?

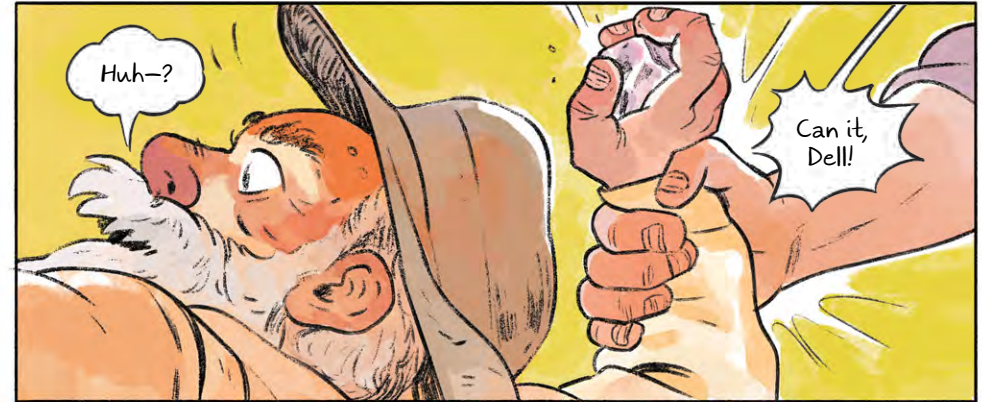
I've never met him, but something tells me that's—



Yep. Great-Uncle Dell.

That's Old Dell? Didn't he murder somebody?





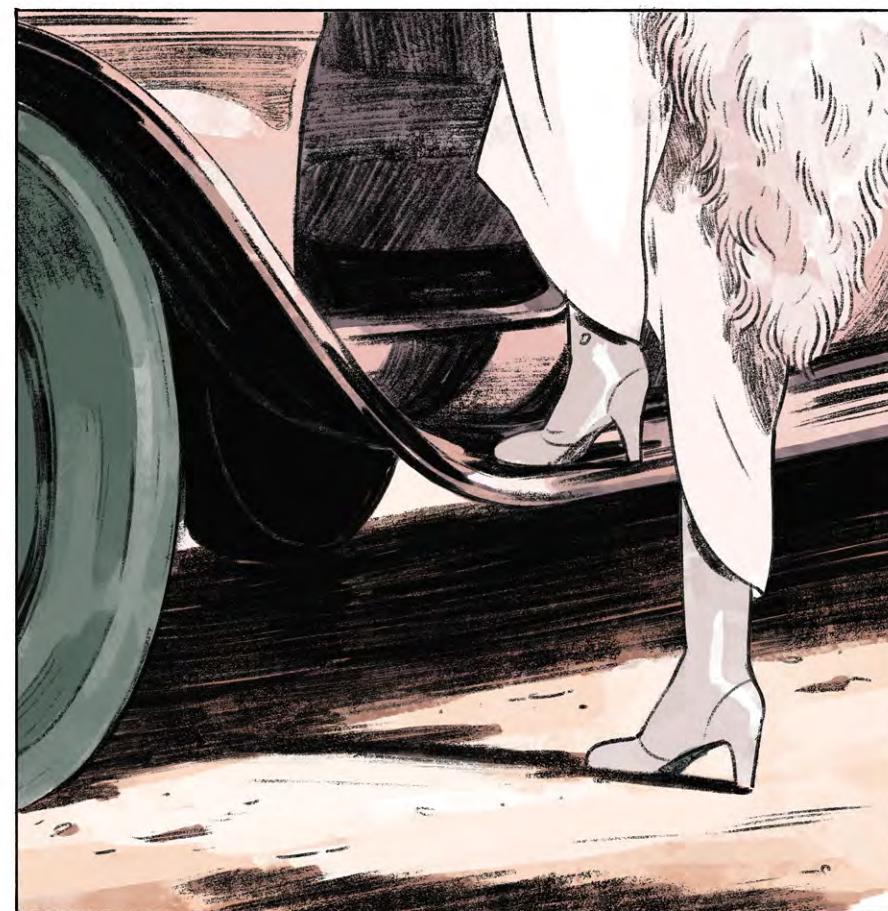






Chapter Three

The Lady in White





For now, Elber and Amelia live in the soddy.



I can see it from my bedroom window.



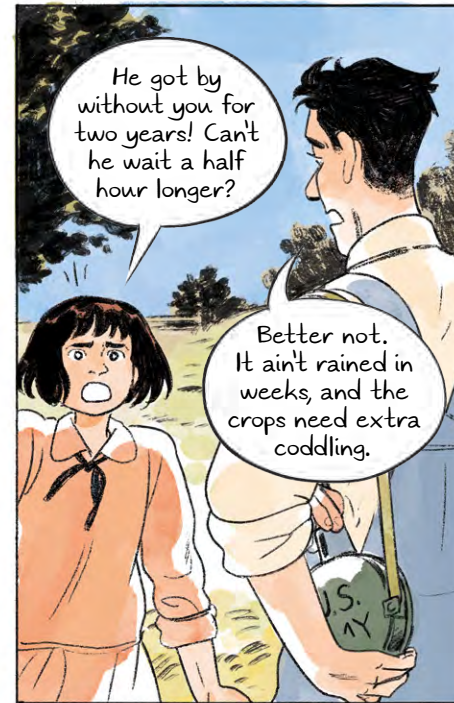
There are still snakes in the walls, like when we lived there, and sometimes they visit Amelia.

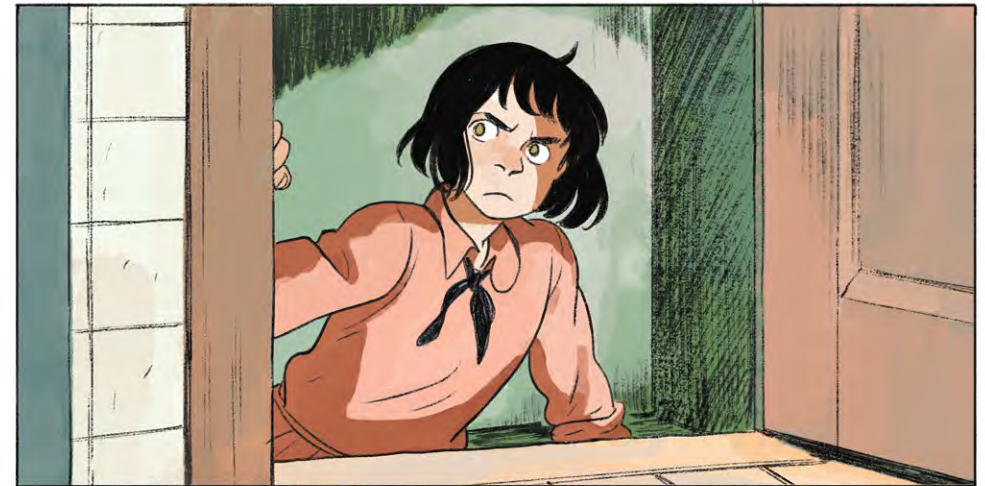
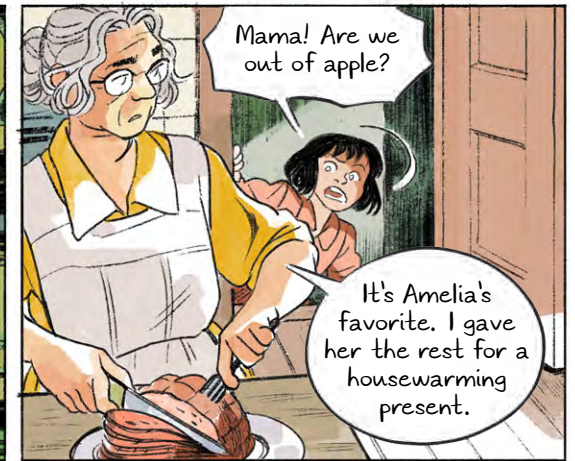
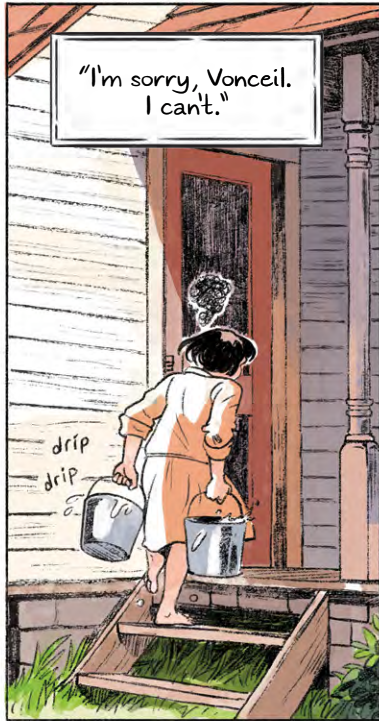


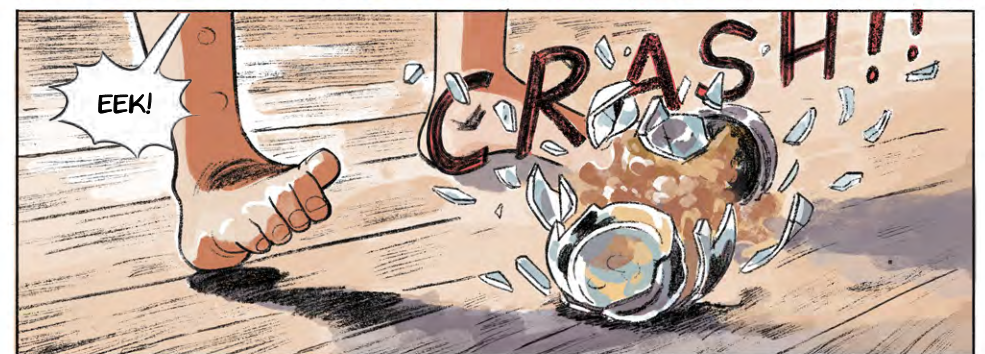
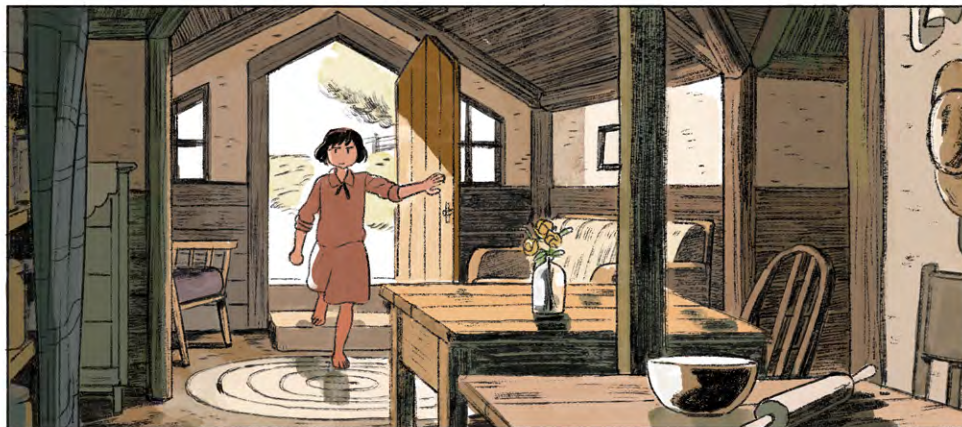
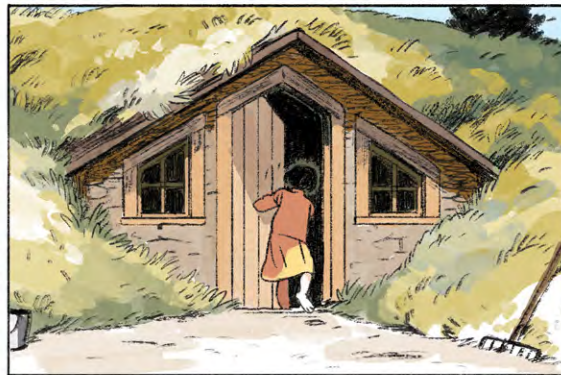
I might've helped one or two down the chimney.



VONCEIL!
Cooler's low!









I just wanted one jar—

I'd have given you one, if you'd asked.



But you can't come in my house whenever you please and take what doesn't belong to you.

Okay.



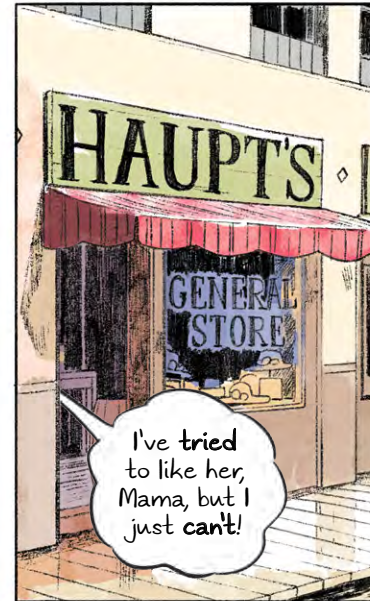
Go home. I'll clean this up.



Oh—and Vonceil?



I know about the snakes.



I've tried to like her, Mama, but I just can't!



Then you'll have to pretend, my darling.

Sigh.



Anna!

Pauline!

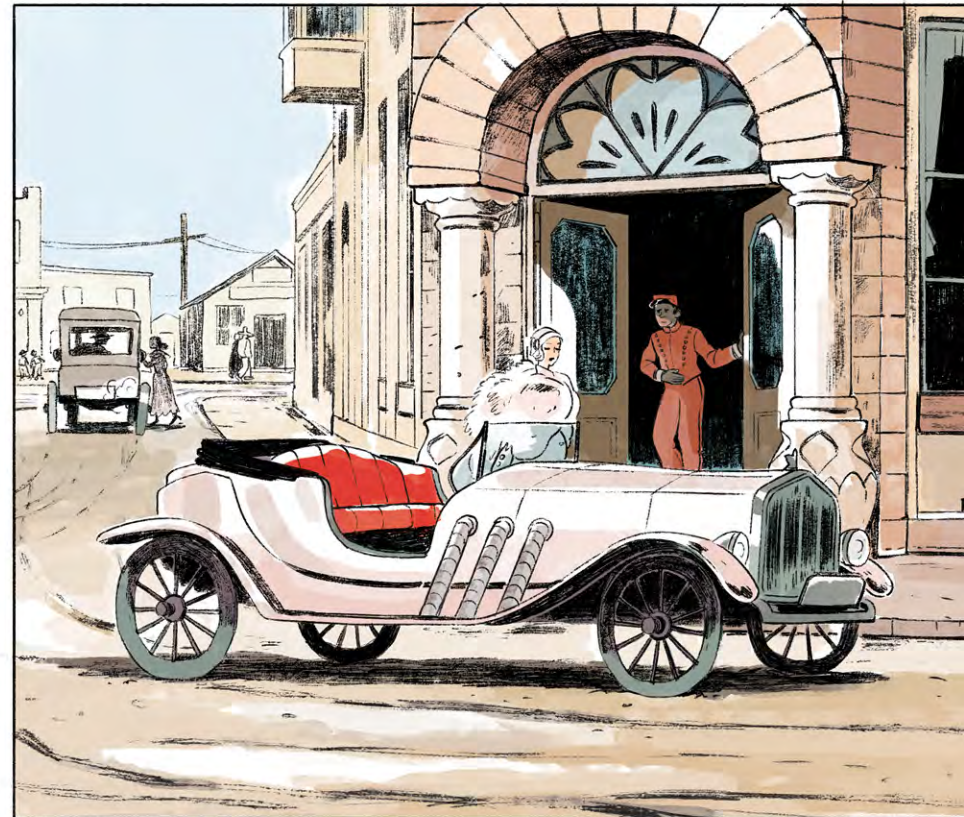
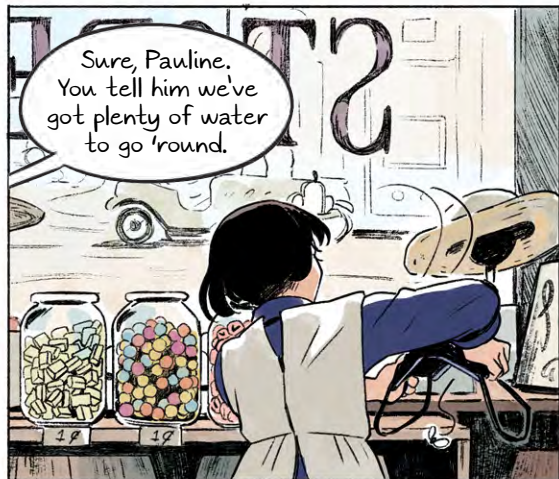


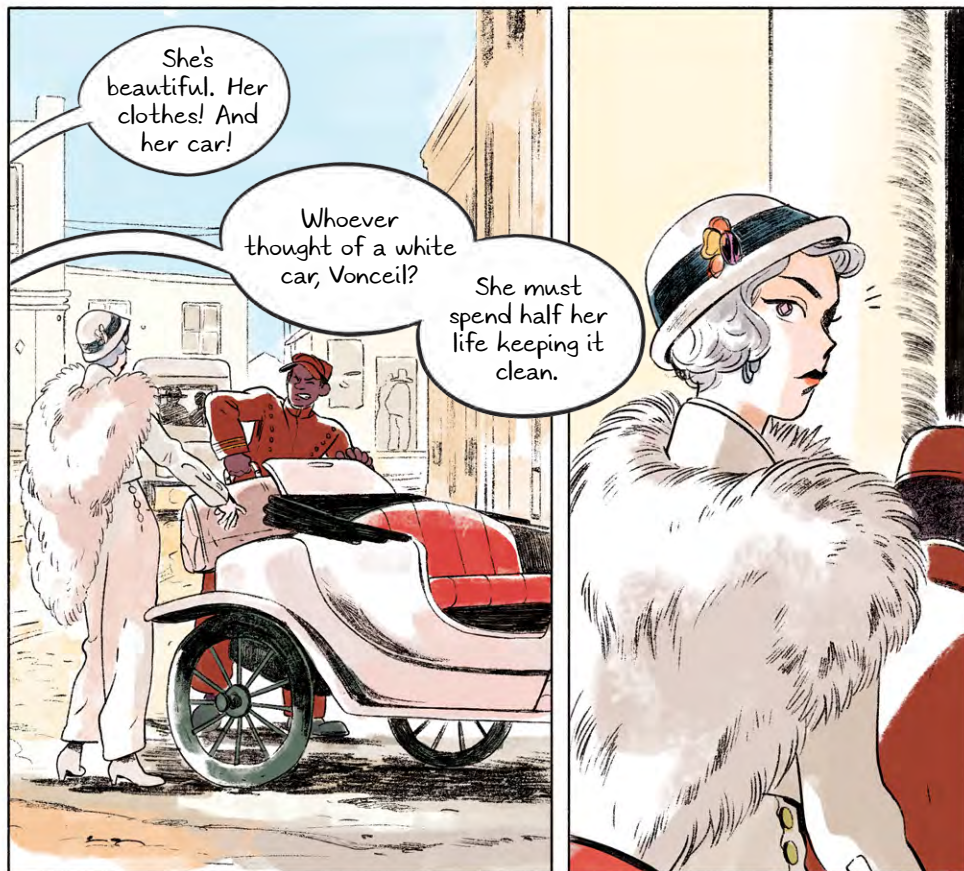
What's the news out your way?

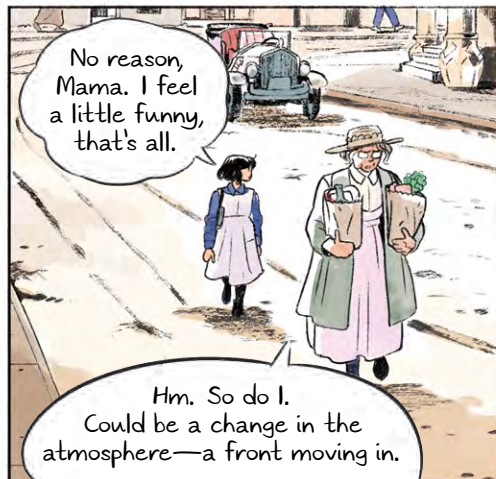
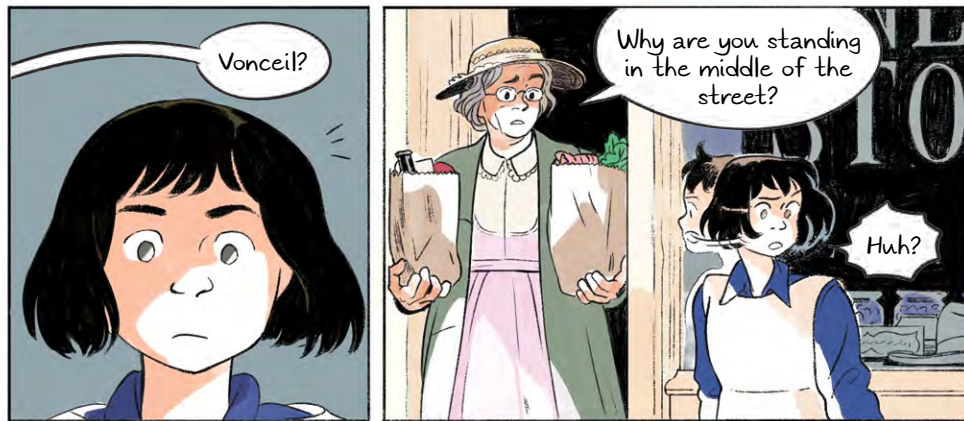
Same as the news everywhere. There ain't any rain, an' Pete's awful worried we'll lose this year's harvest.



Why don't you come get water from our spring? We've got enough to share.



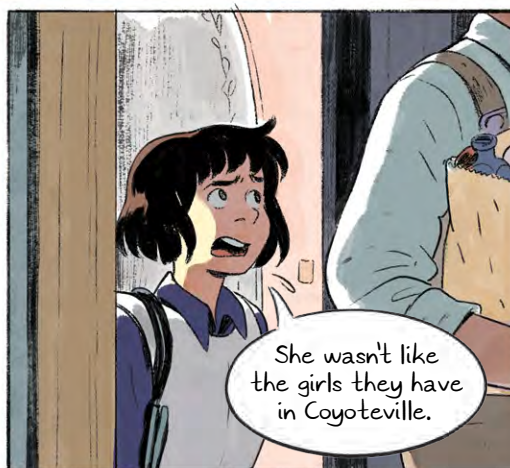
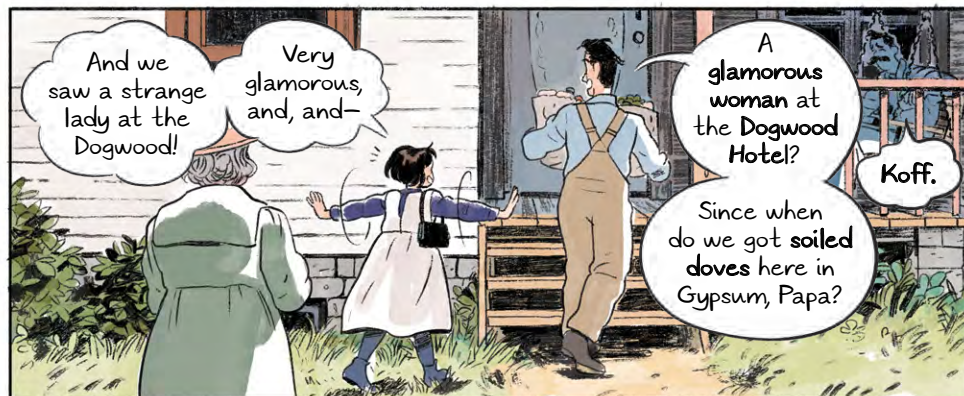
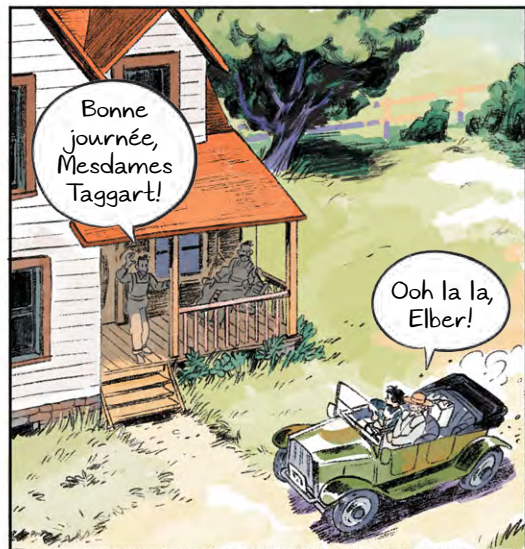


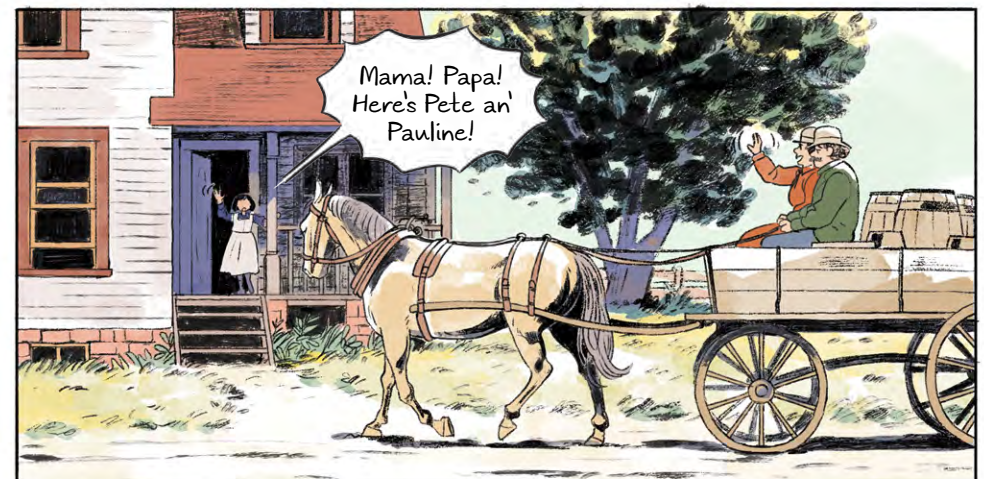
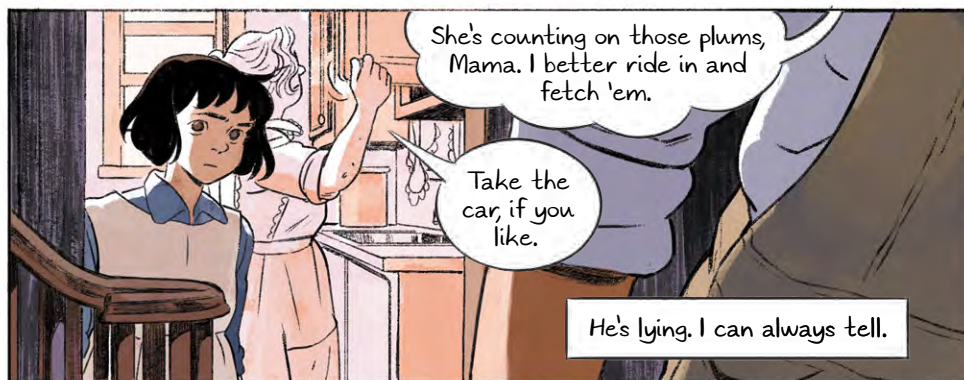


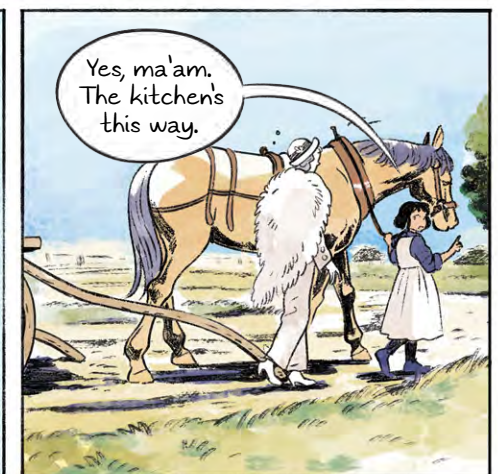
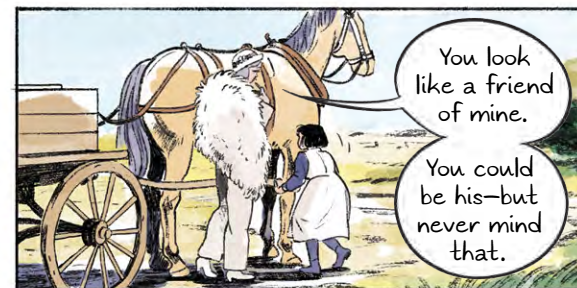
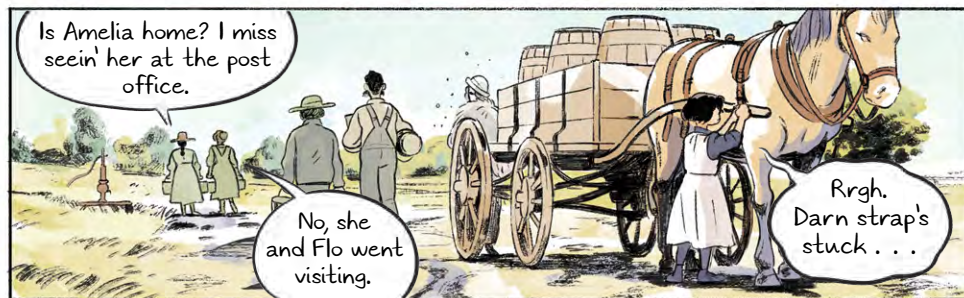
Chapter Four

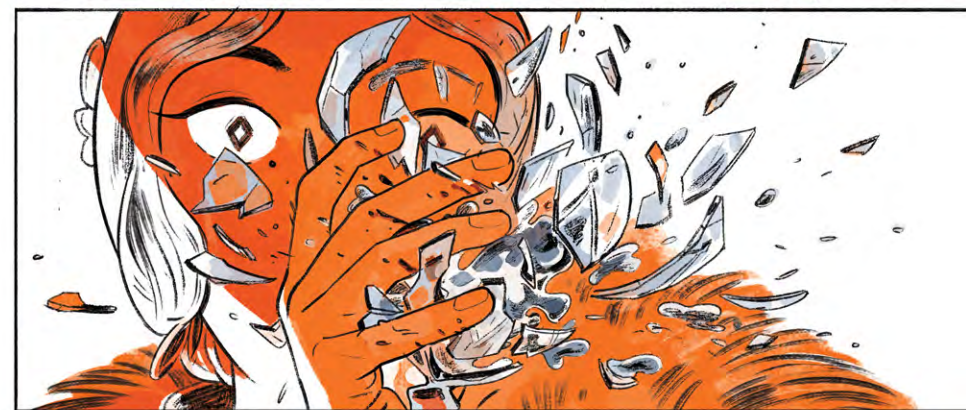
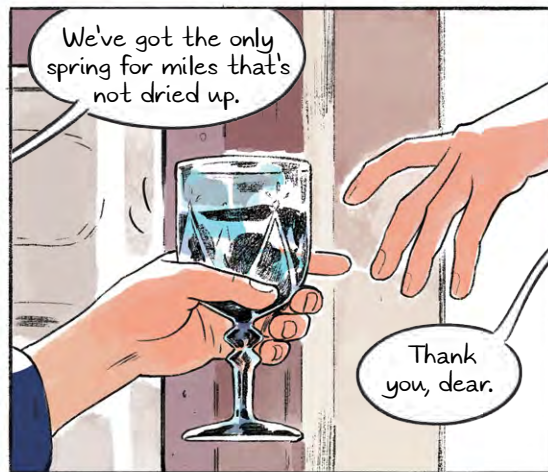
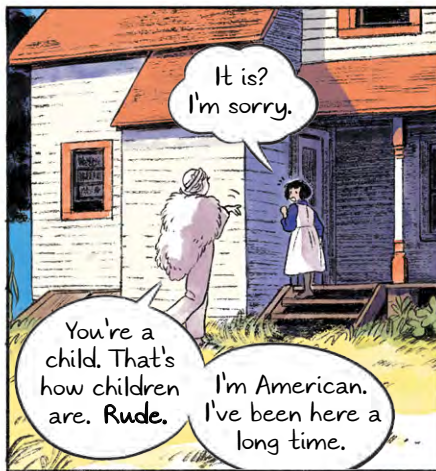
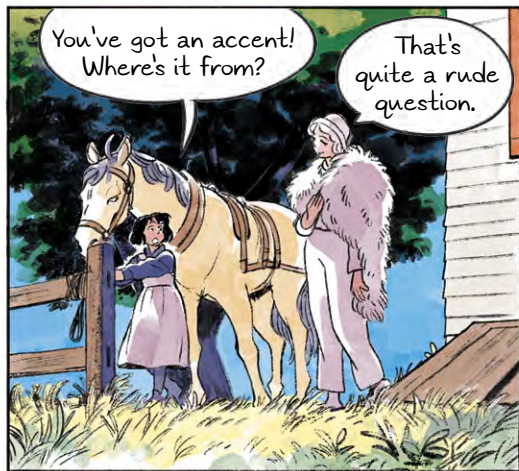
Salt Water

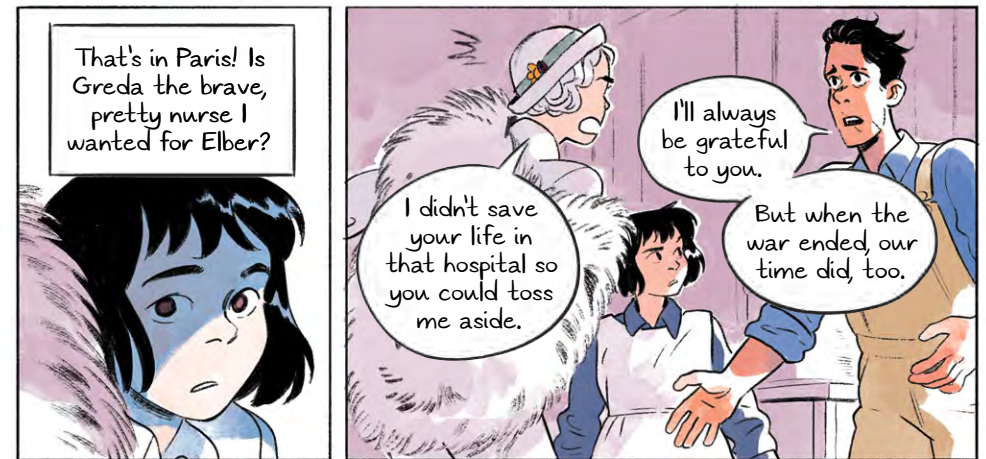
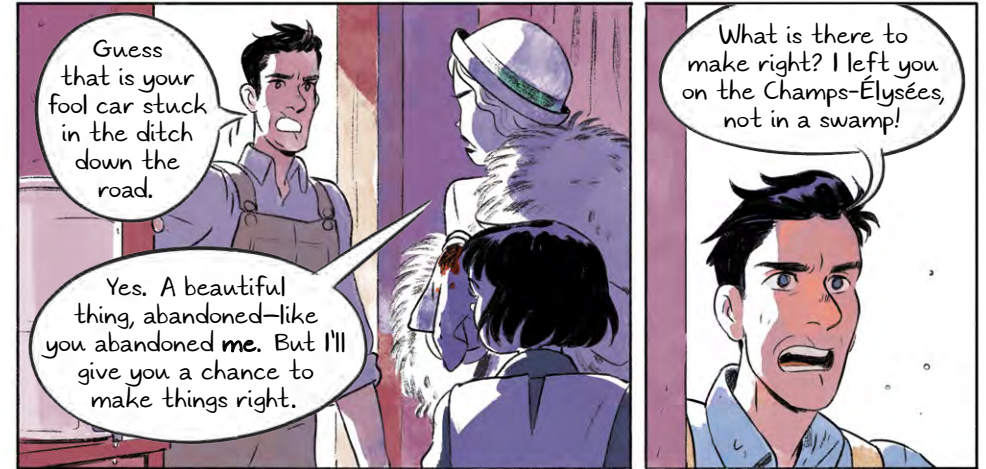
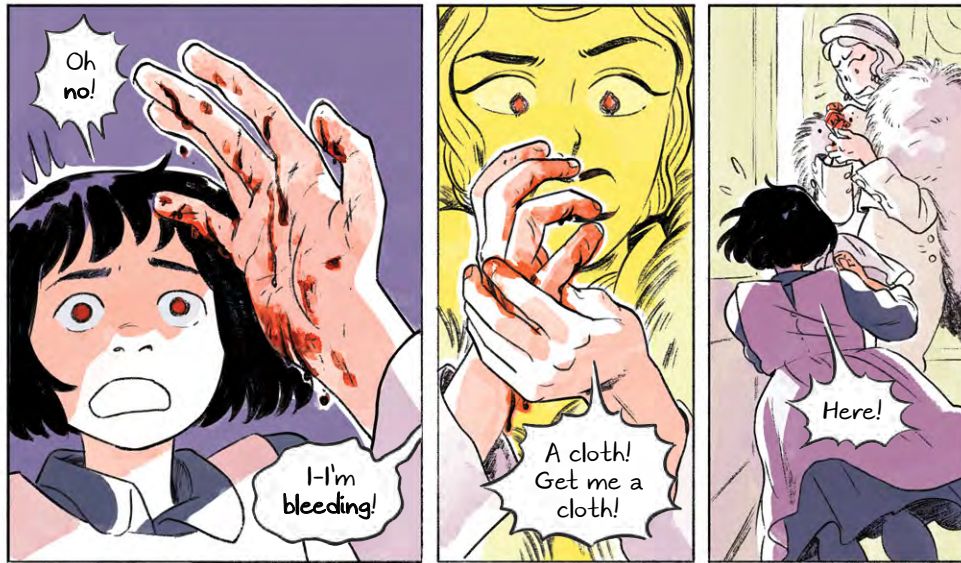


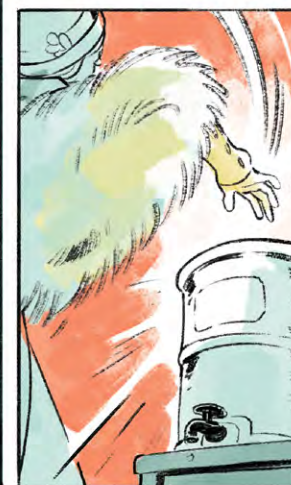


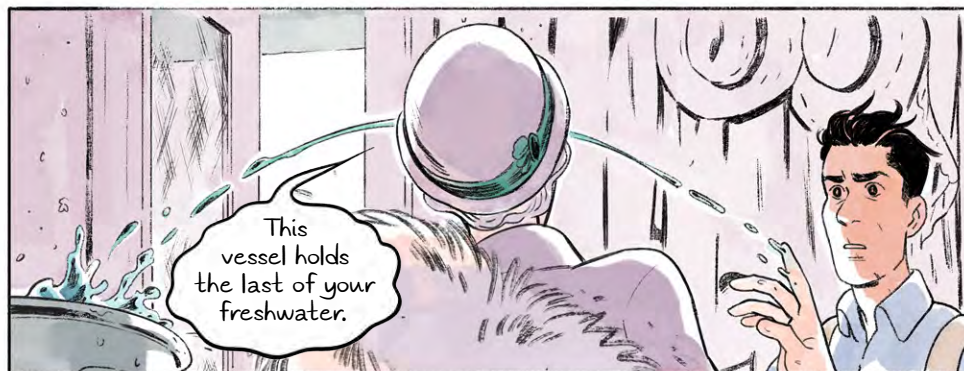
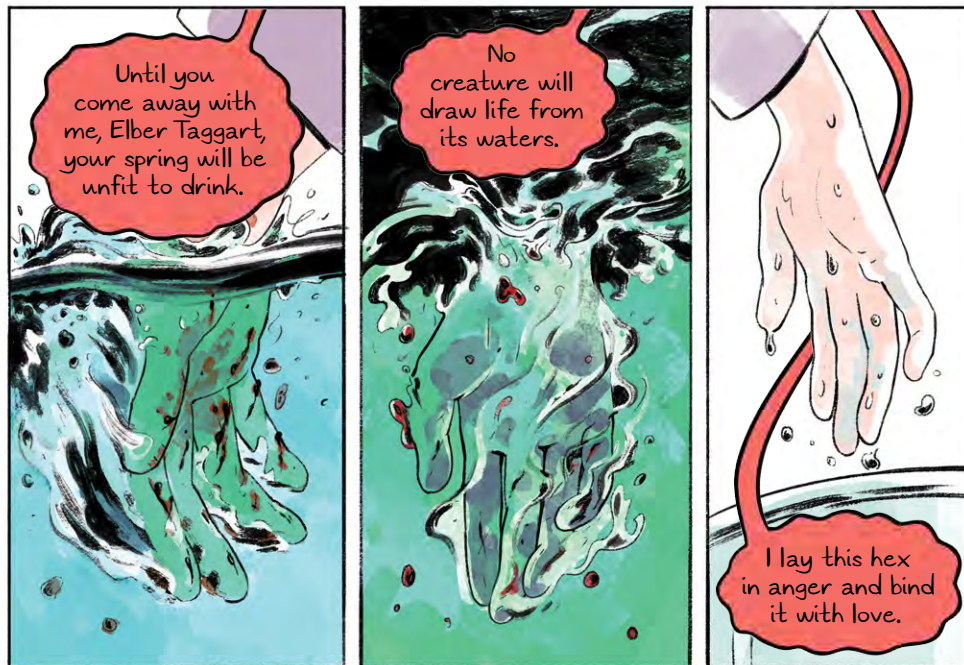


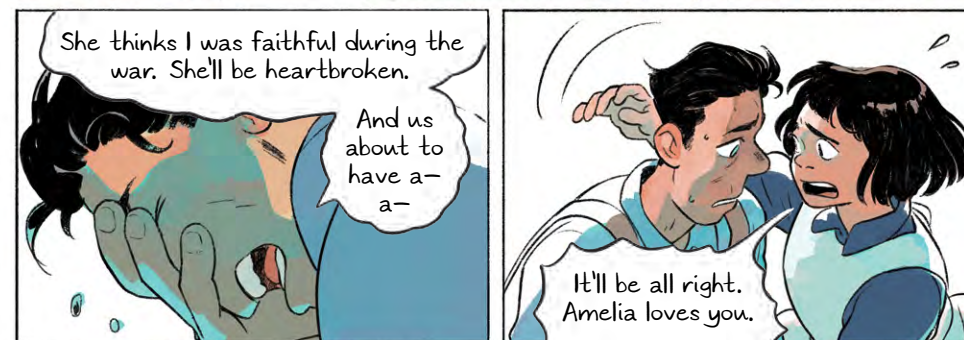
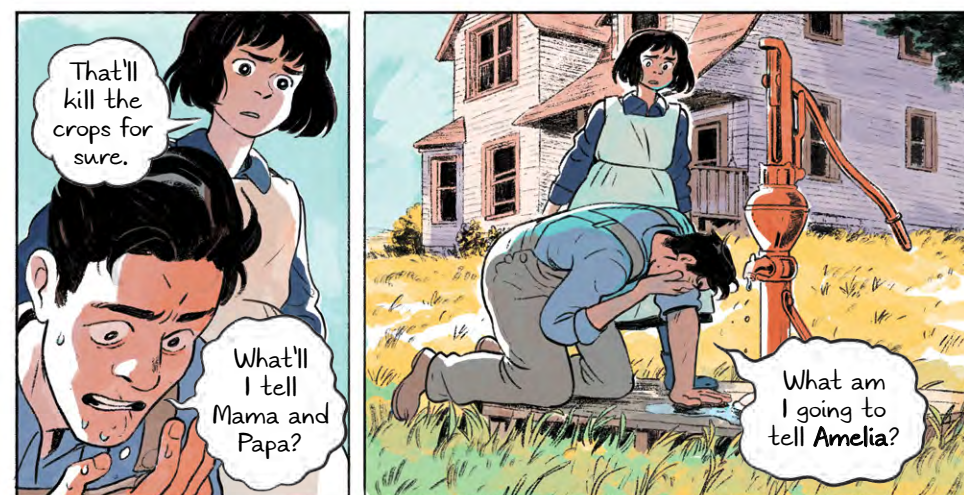
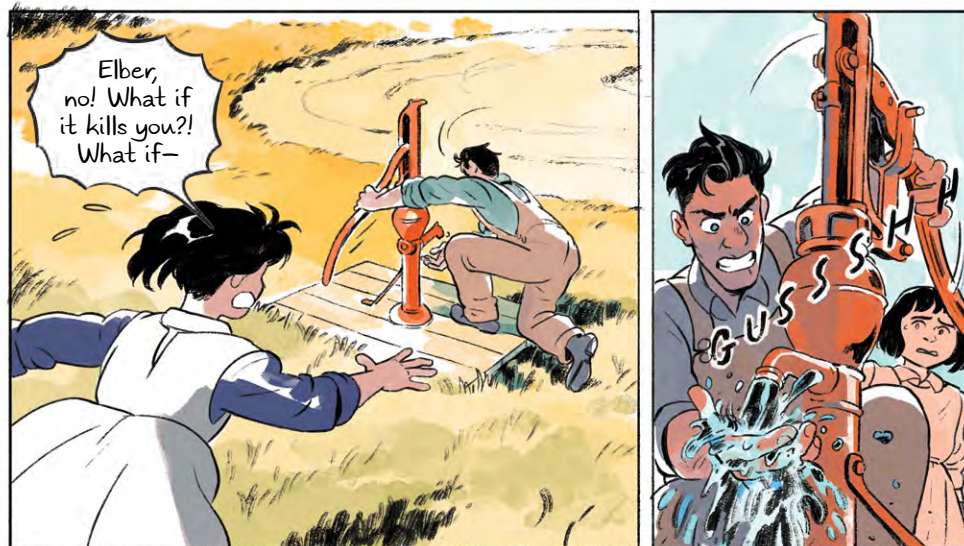














I never loved Greda!
It was always
Amelia!

I only
meant that—



I've never seen
him like this.

I've
got to find
Amelia!



I have
to tell
her—



trrp!



ELBER!



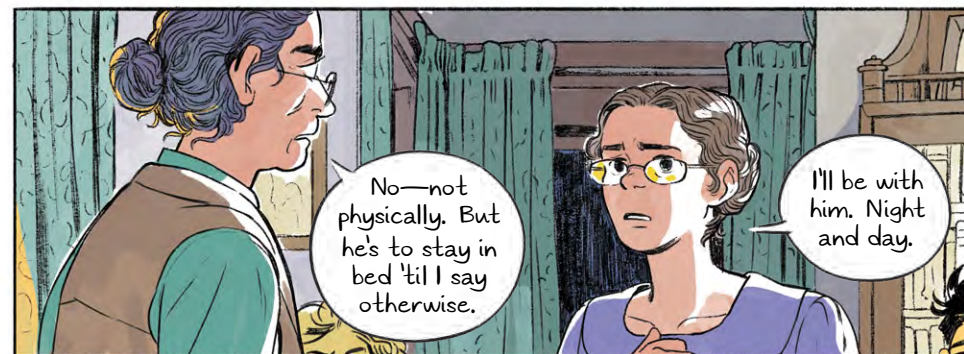
How is he,
Doc?



He's had a
shock.

I gave him
something to help
him sleep.

Is—is
he in pain?



No—not
physically. But
he's to stay in
bed 'til I say
otherwise.

I'll be with
him. Night
and day.



If there's
any change,
call me at
once.

Good night,
Mrs. Taggart.



This is all my fault.



Chapter Five

A Sacrificial Pawn

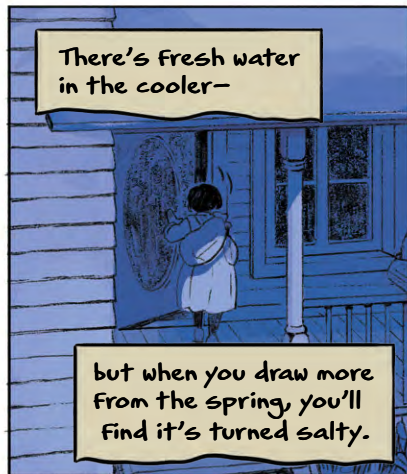




Dear Mama, Papa, Elber,
Flo, Ida, and Amelia,

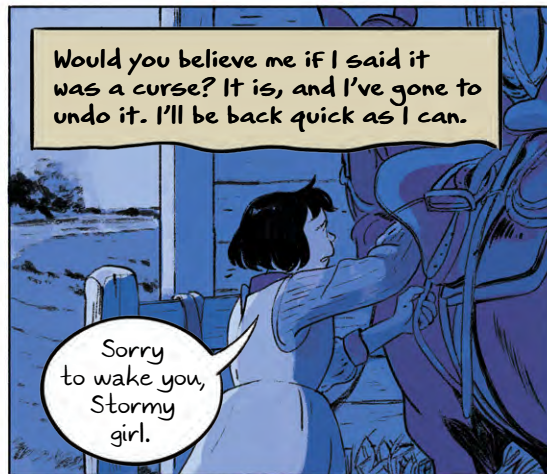


When you wake
up, I'll be gone.



There's fresh water
in the cooler—

but when you draw more
from the spring, you'll
find it's turned salty.



Would you believe me if I said it
was a curse? It is, and I've gone to
undo it. I'll be back quick as I can.

Sorry
to wake you,
Stormy
girl.



Don't worry about me. Worry about Elber.
Very truly,
Vonceil



Can't believe
I'm doing this.



Huh. Greda's
car is gone. It
wasn't in the
ditch like Elber
said, and it ain't
here, either.



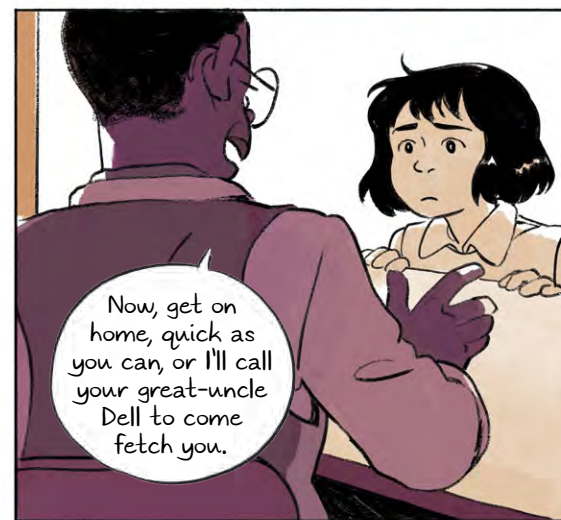
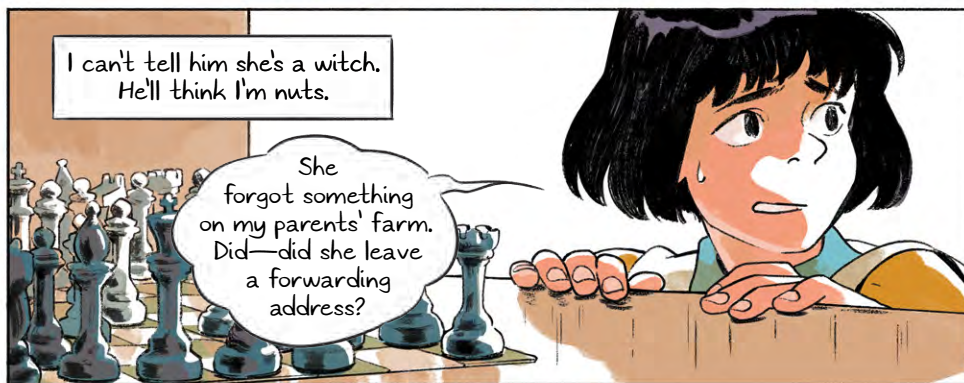
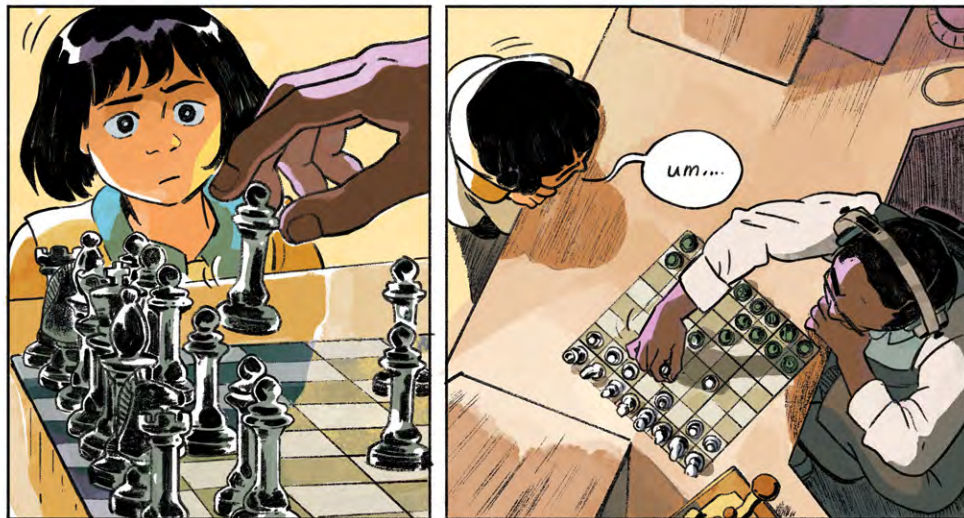
She must've gone on
to Sere, wherever
that is—but maybe the
hotel has her address.



Hmph.

Knight
to c5.

Hello?





At the wedding, he
called Amelia a witch.
A white witch.



Greda's a witch
who wears white.



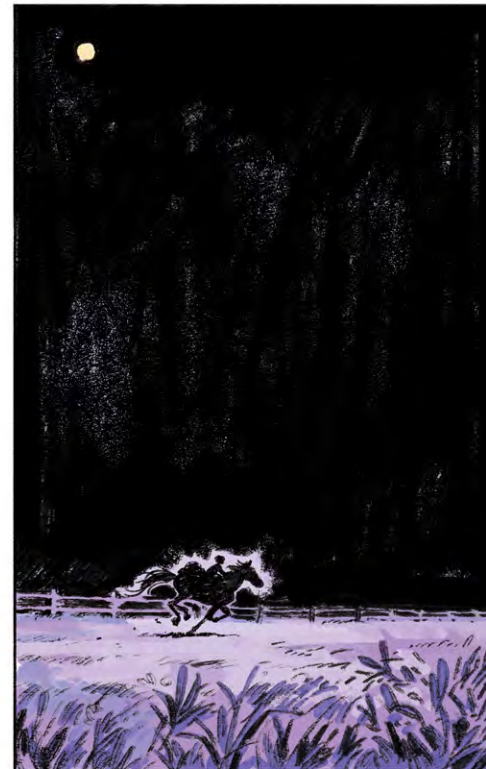
Maybe Old Dell's not
so crazy after all.



Maybe his
white witch
and Greda
are related.



And maybe he knows
how I can get to Sere.



Fifteen miles to Dell's farm.
I'll be there by two a.m.





This ... this
can't be Old
Dell's farm.

But it has to be. It's a straight shot
from town, and there's no other
farm on Turkey Creek.

Gulp.

Don't worry, Stormy.
That's a cow up
there, not a horse.



The state of this place! If Papa
could see it, he'd swallow his tongue.



Doesn't look like anyone's doing much farming.
If I didn't know better, I'd say it was abandoned.



Brrrr

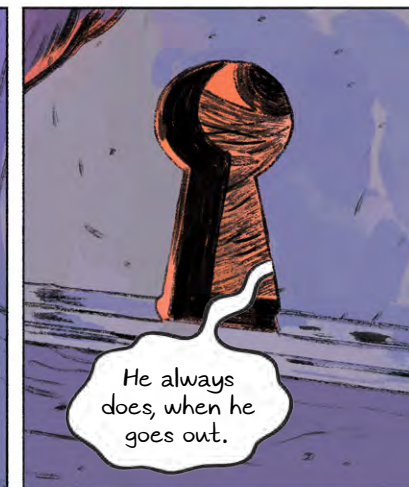
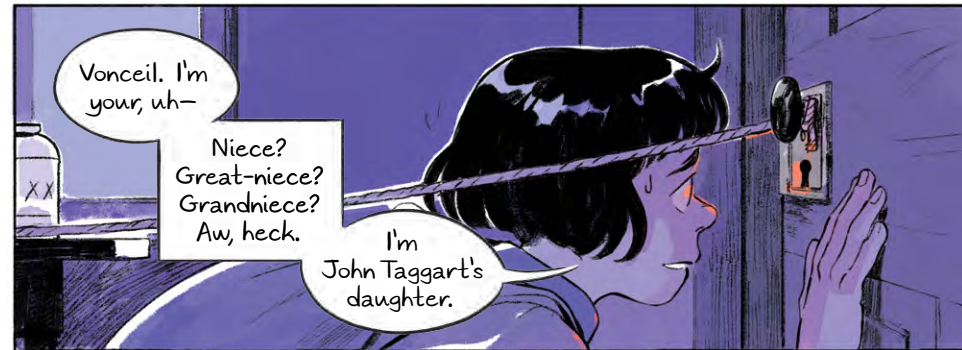
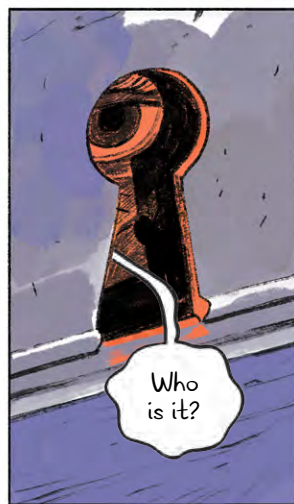
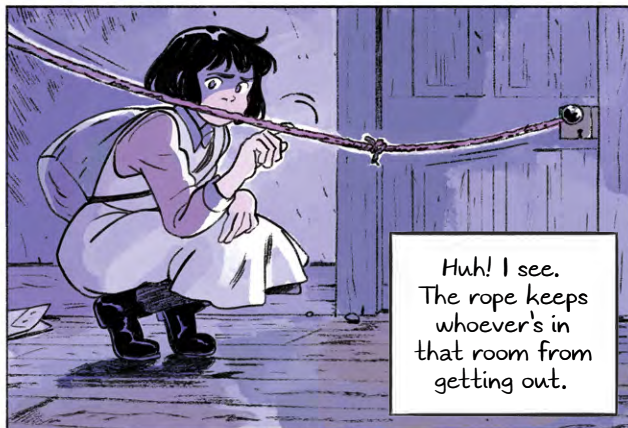


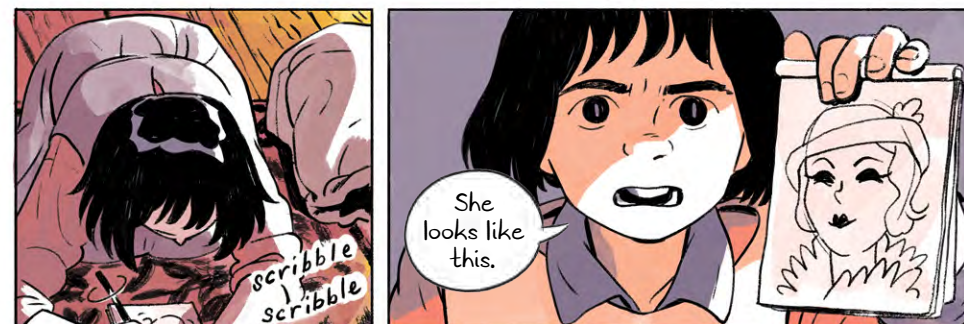
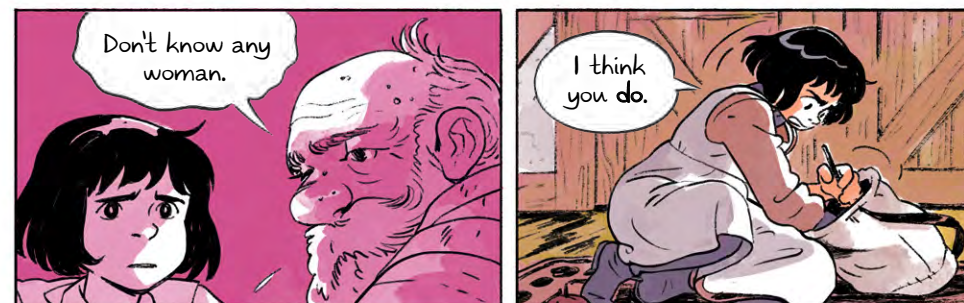
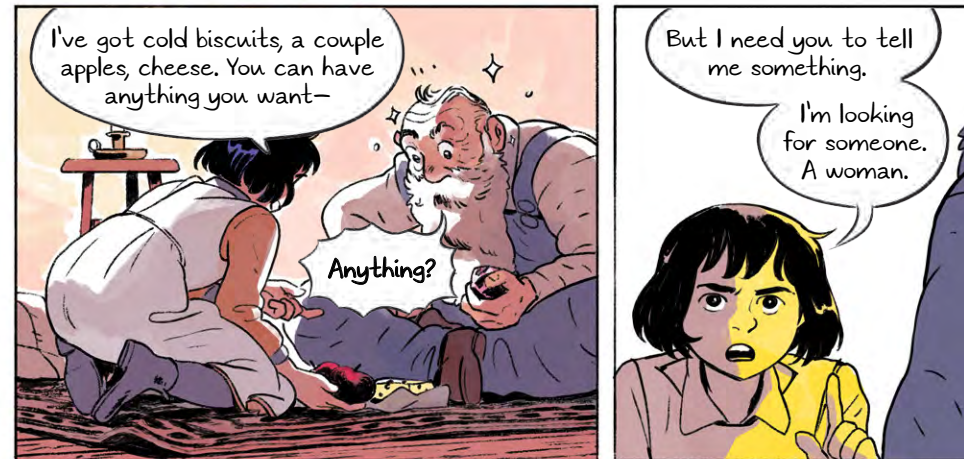
Oh!

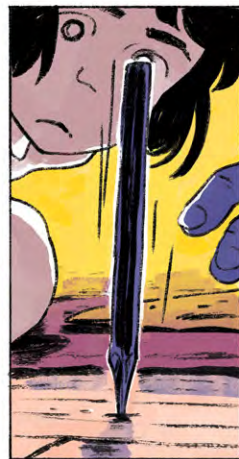
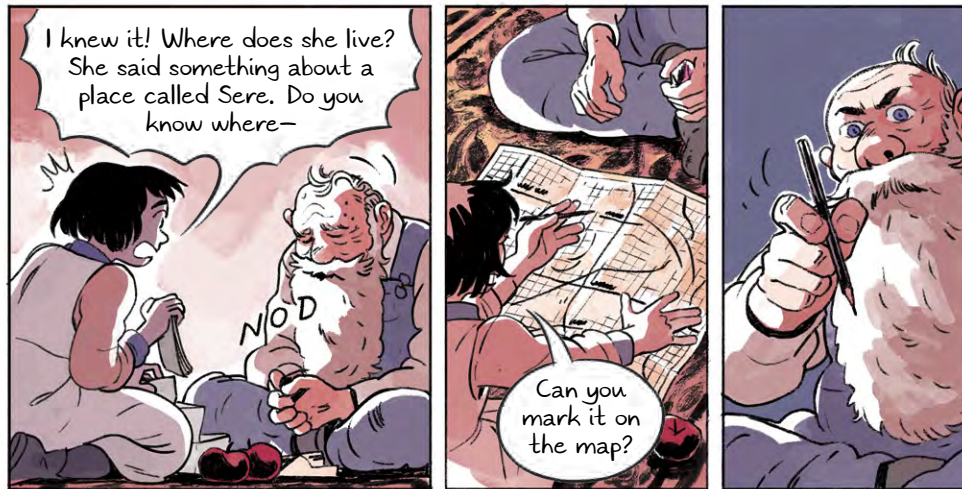


A light!
Someone's
up.



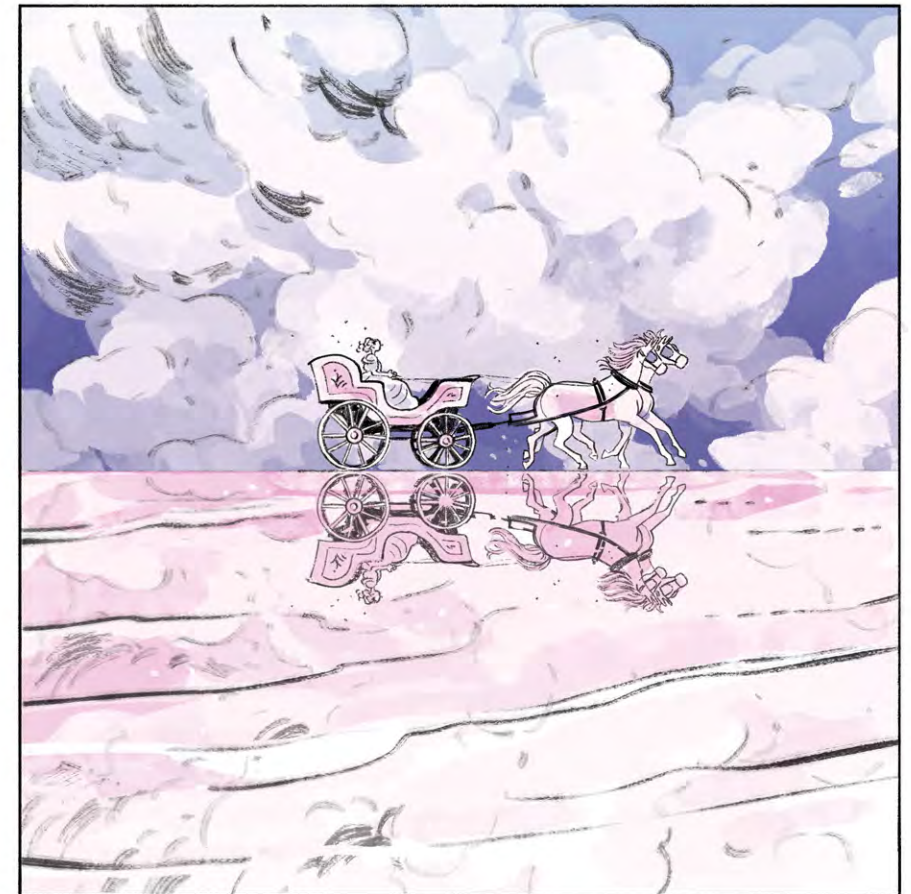


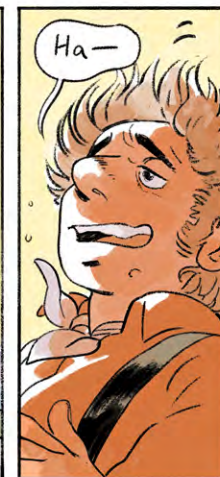
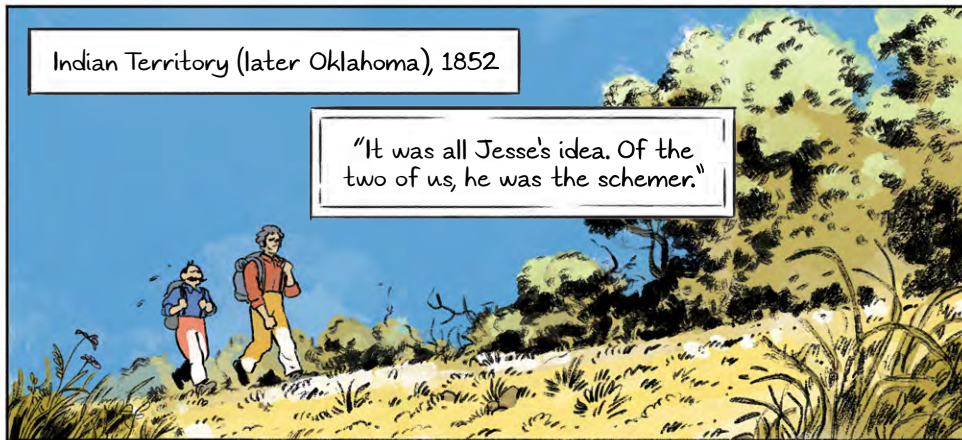


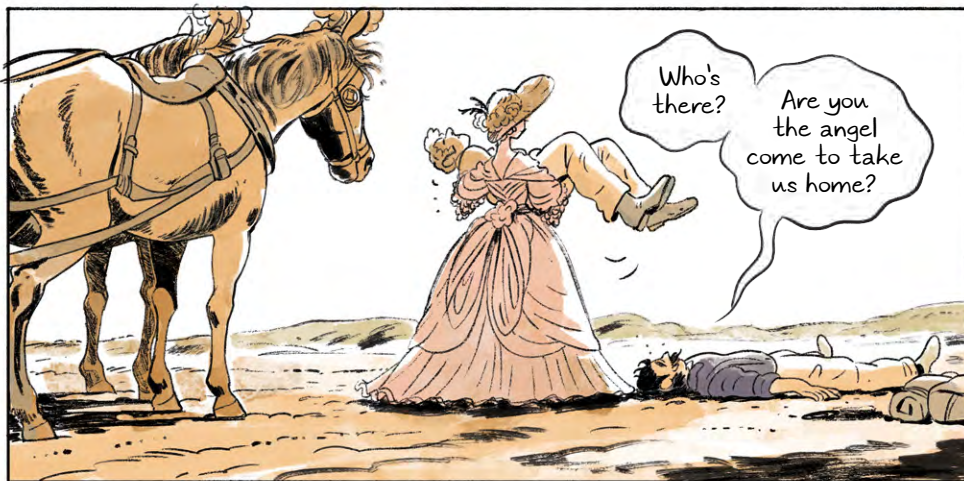


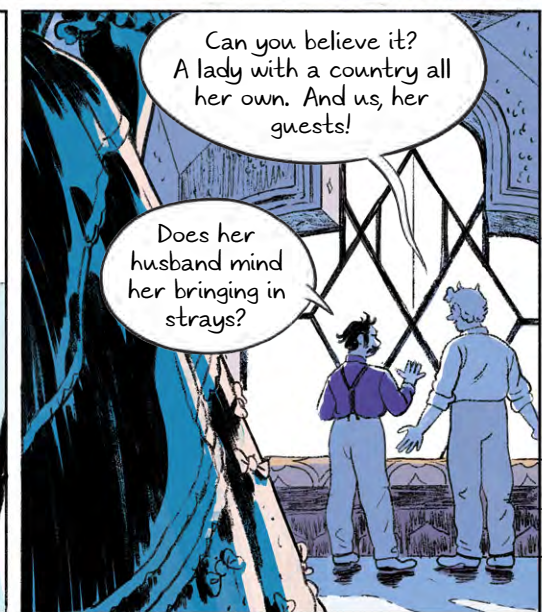
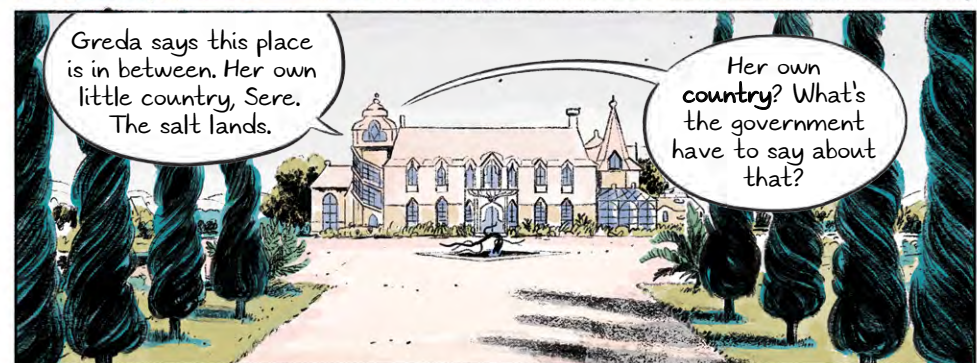
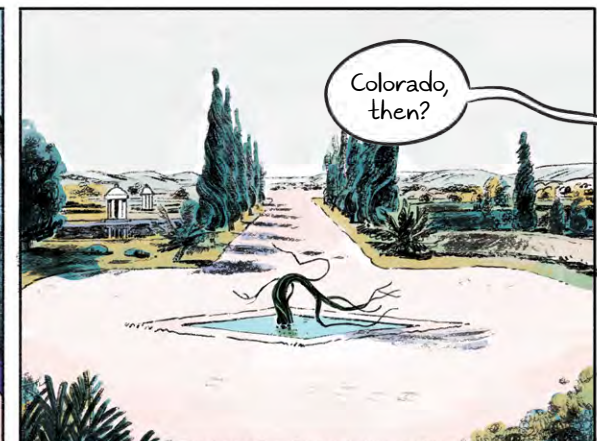
Chapter Six

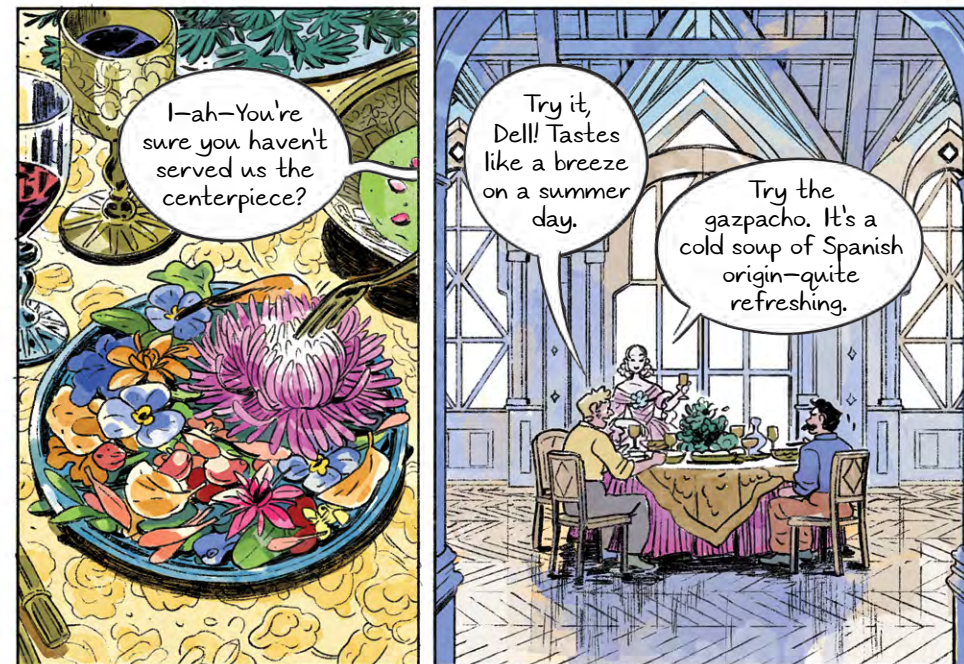
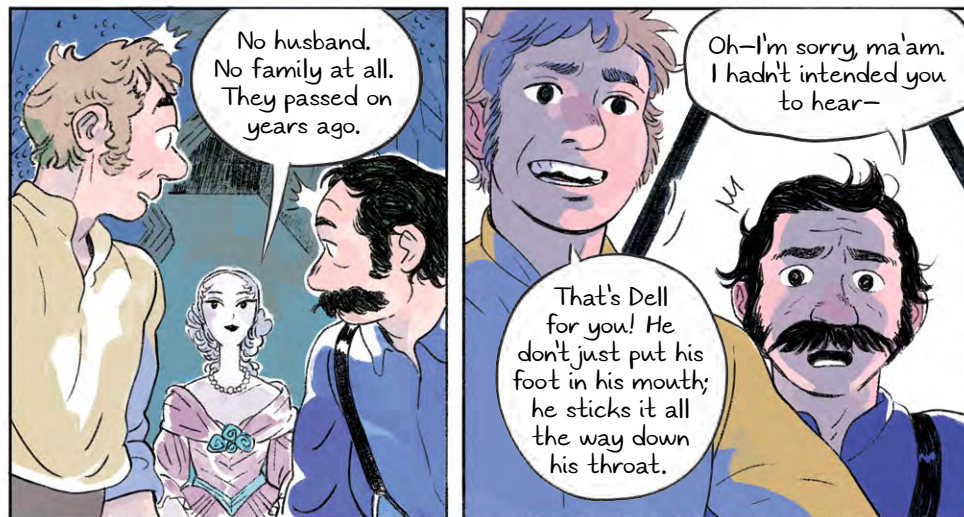
The Lady of Sere

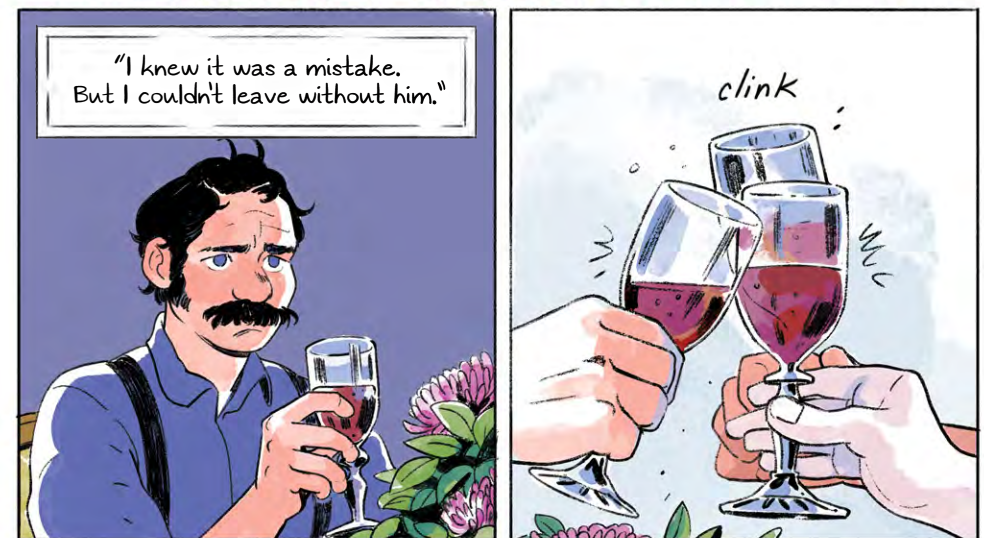
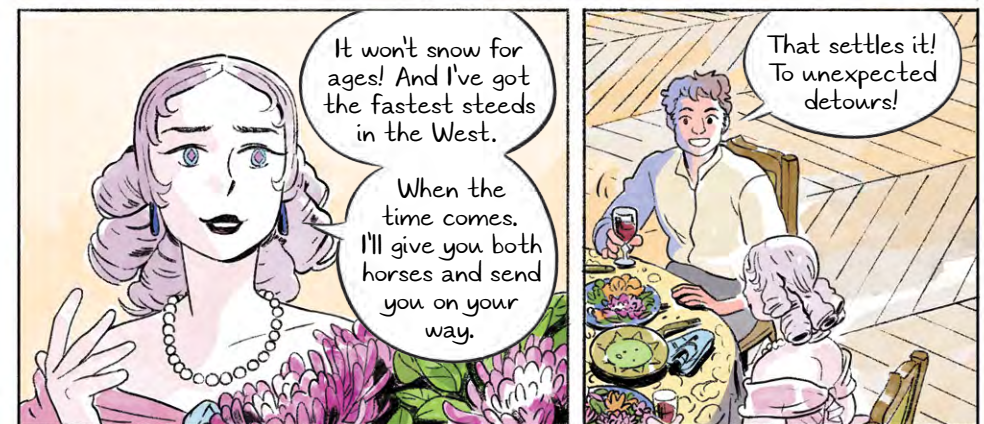
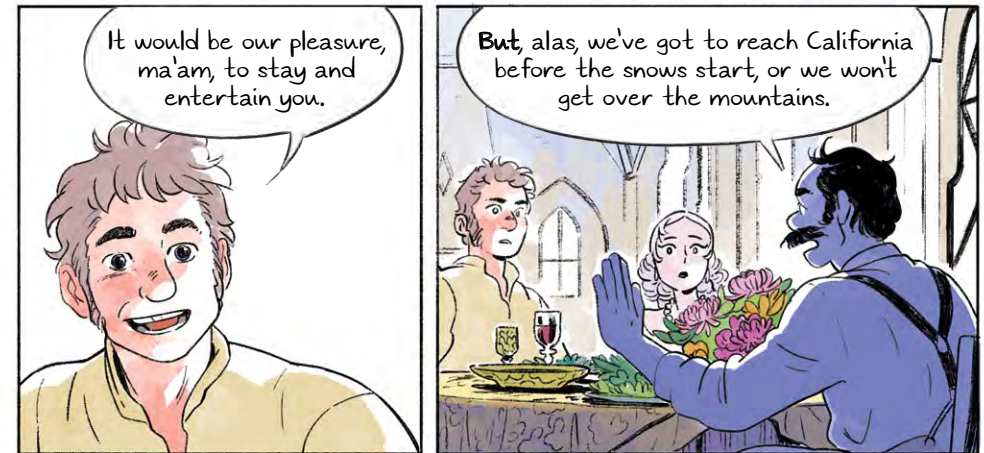
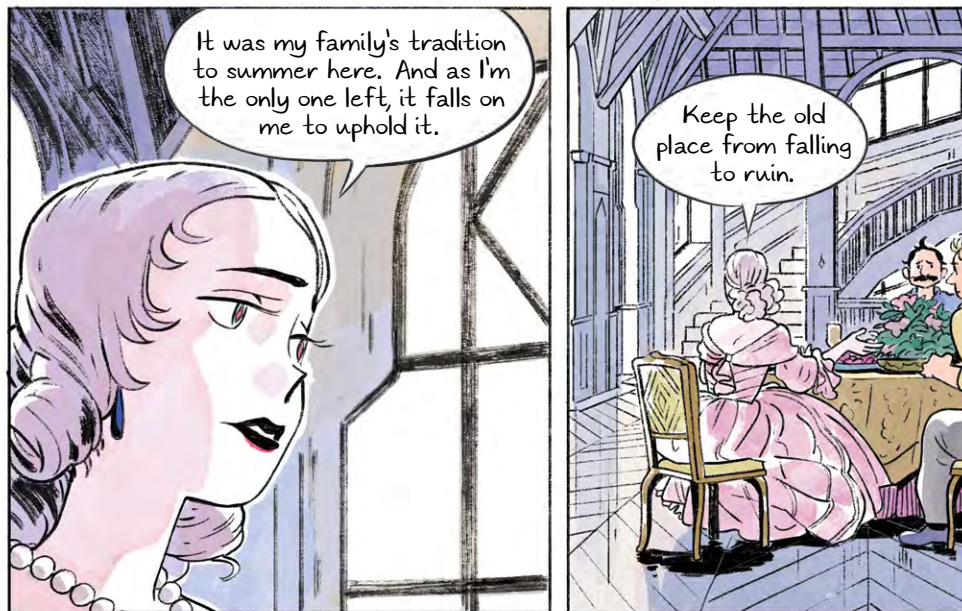
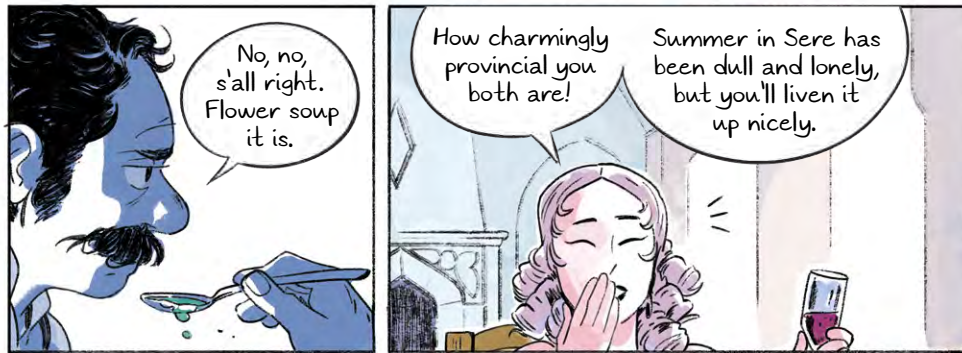


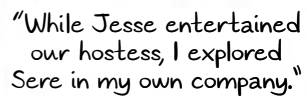




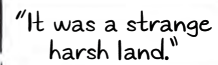
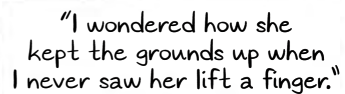






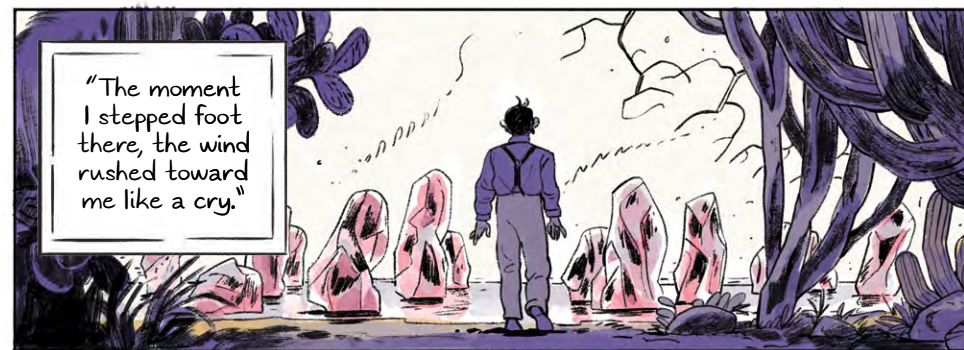


"I had no choice—there was no one there but us three. Odd, I thought, that Greda didn't keep a servant."





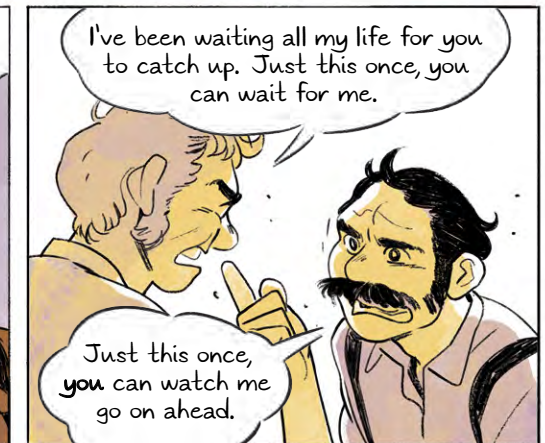
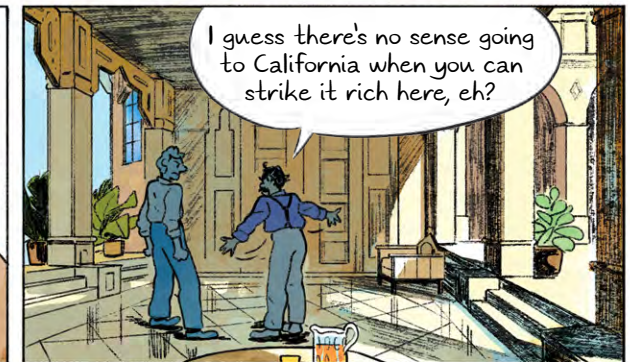
"But nothing troubled me more about Sere than the field."



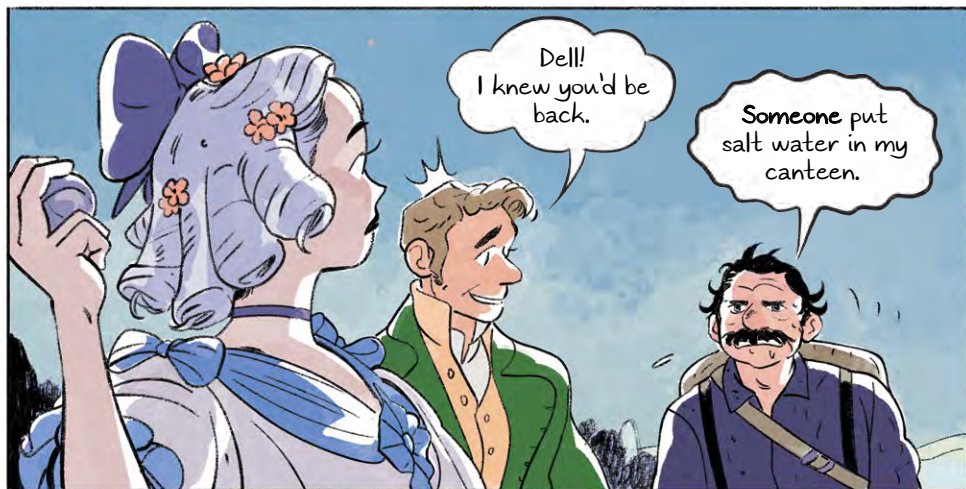
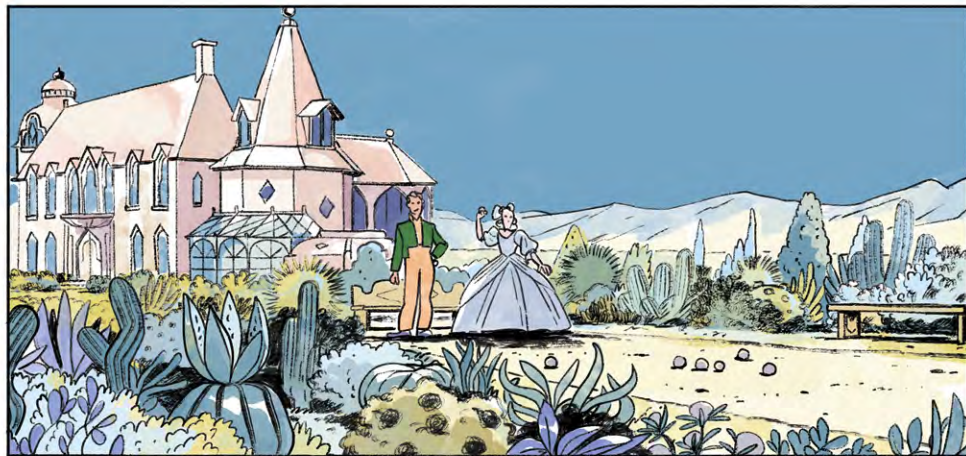
"The moment I stepped foot there, the wind rushed toward me like a cry."

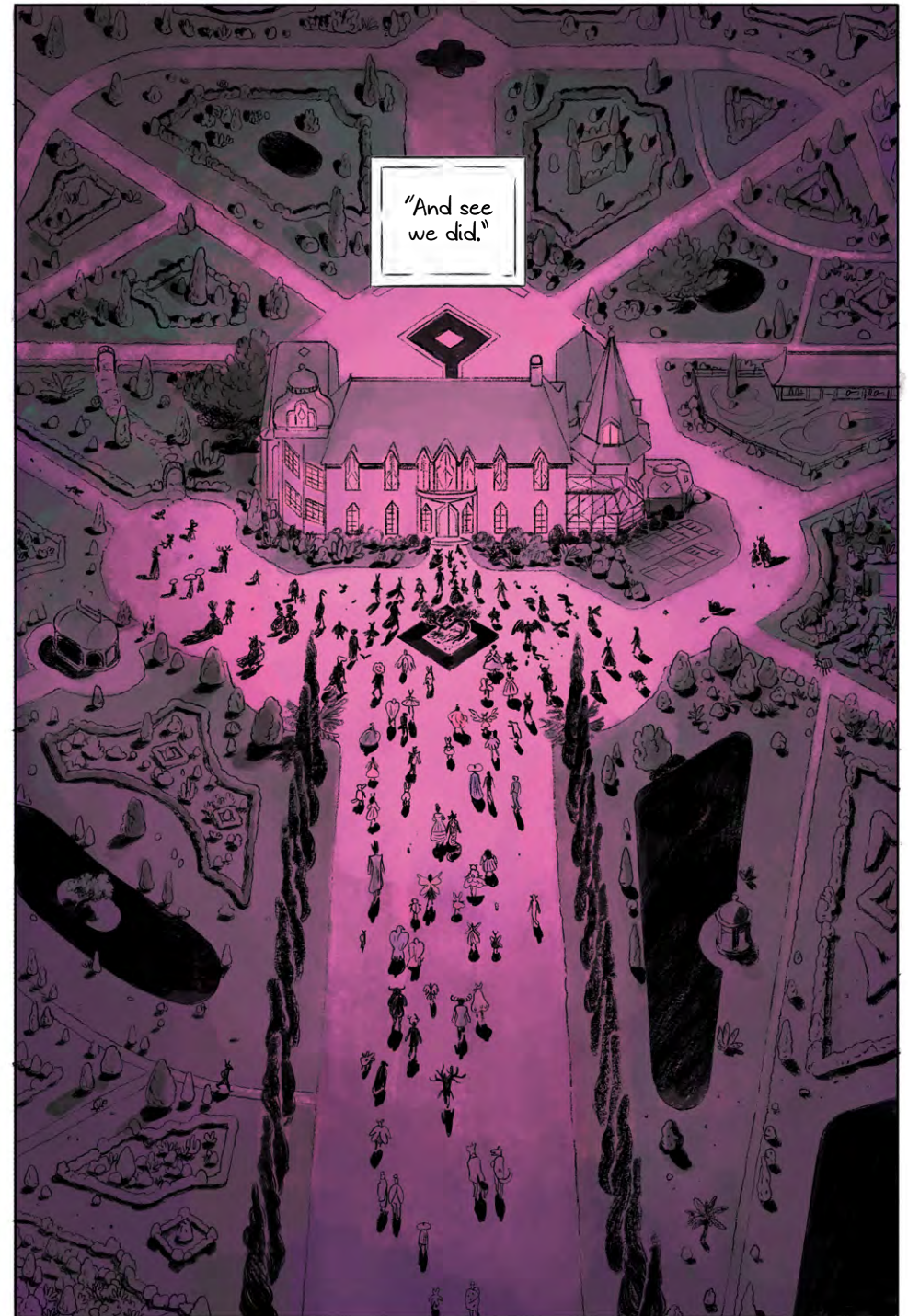


"It said, Run."

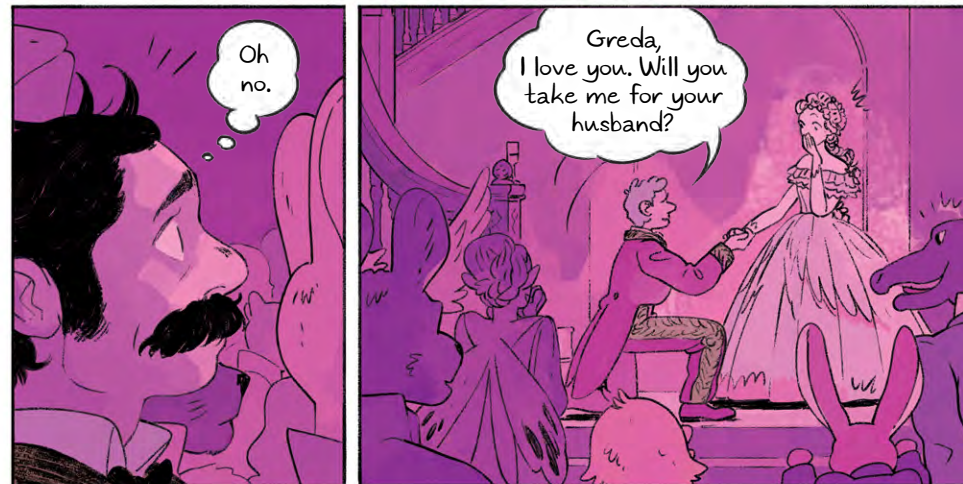
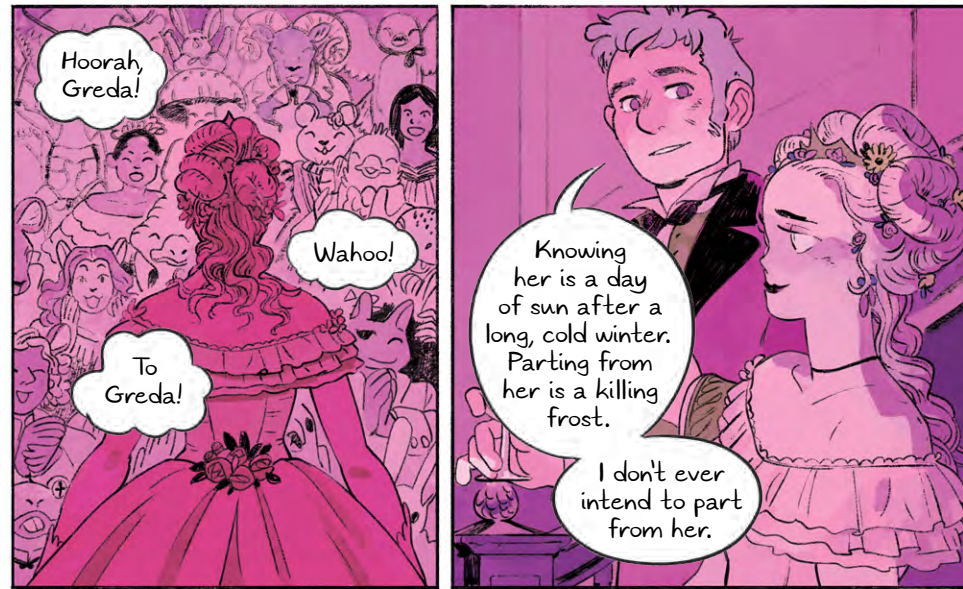


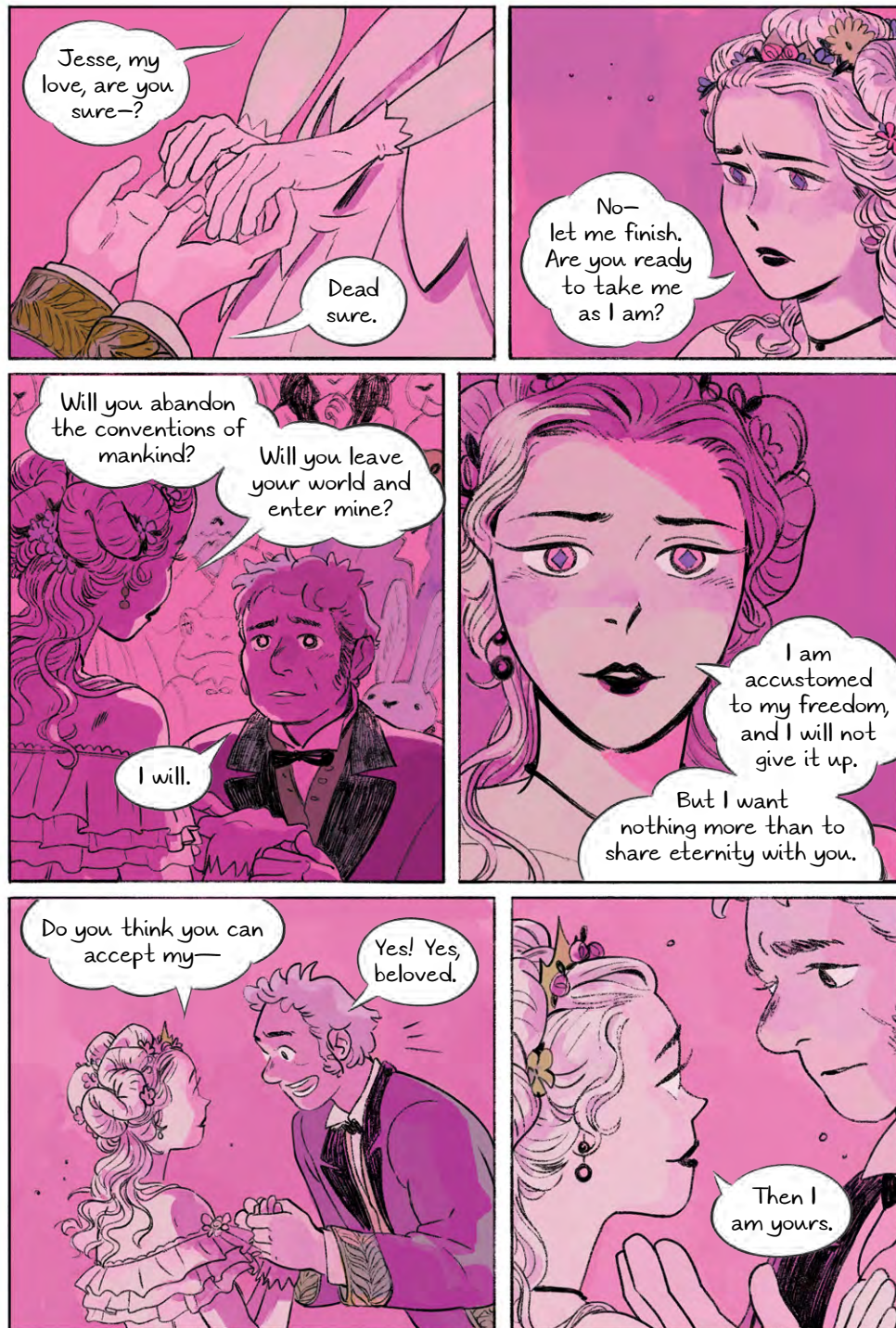














"My head was spinning. I stood in the yard and looked up at the moon."



"The moon—another lady in white who quickens men's blood and drives them mad."



"I felt sick with betrayal. I'd followed Jesse, and he'd abandoned me."



"Then, suddenly, I understood. I wasn't angry with Jesse, or even Greda."

"I was repulsed by my own cowardice."



"Jesse was a fickle navigator, but without him . . ."



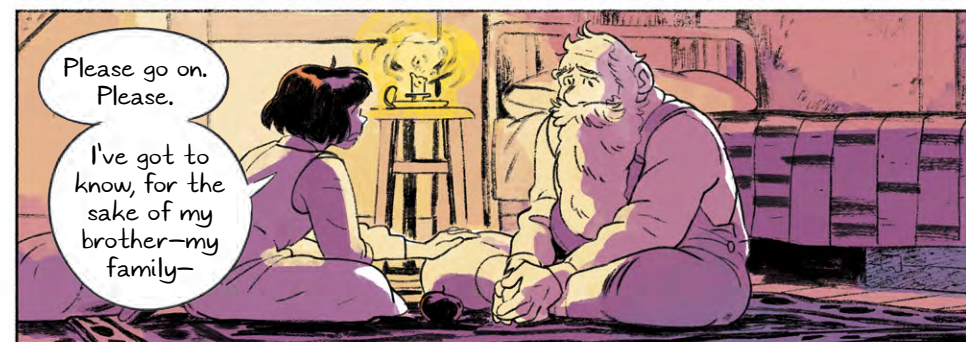
"Without him, the path and the consequences were mine alone."



"In the morning, I would go to California. But first, I would congratulate my brother on his engagement."



"I still wonder if he saw me, or if he was smiling at his reflection."

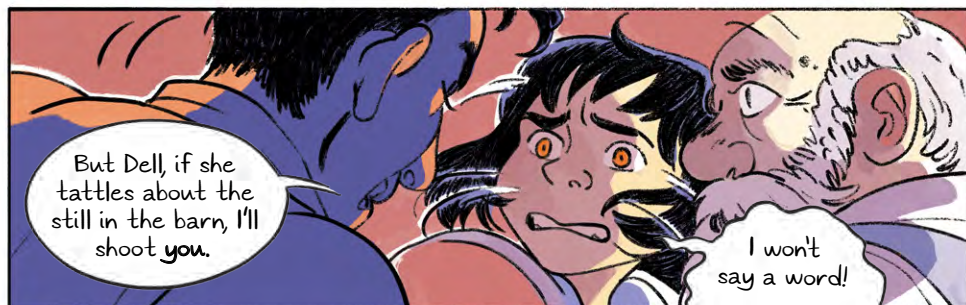


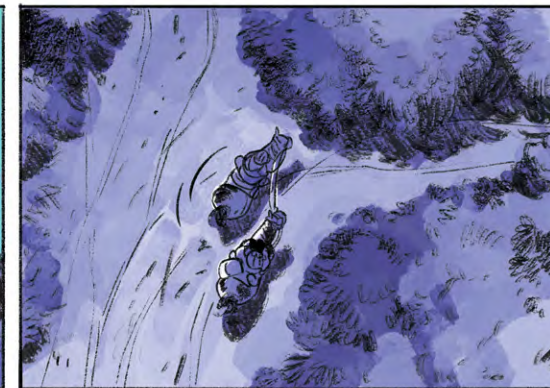


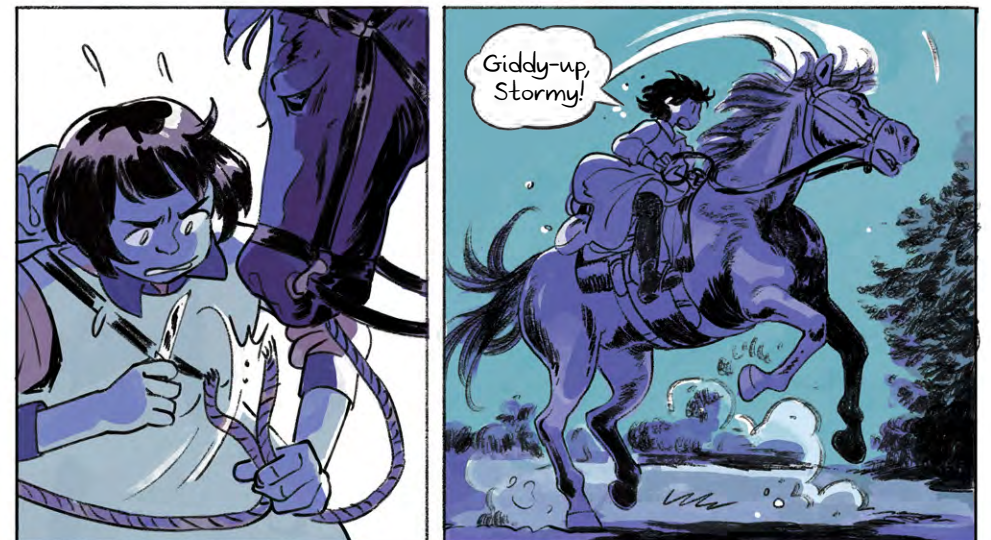
Chapter Seven

Scavengers





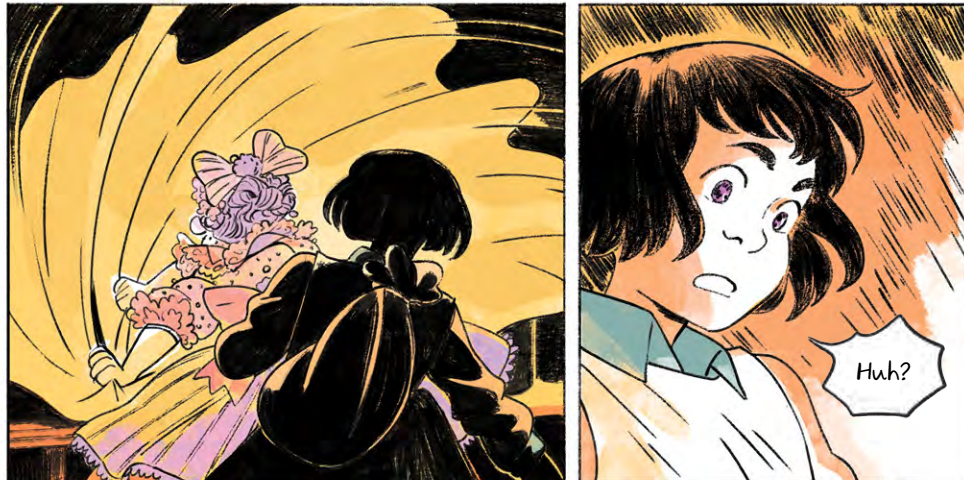


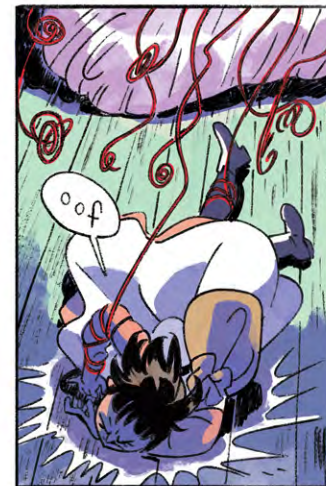
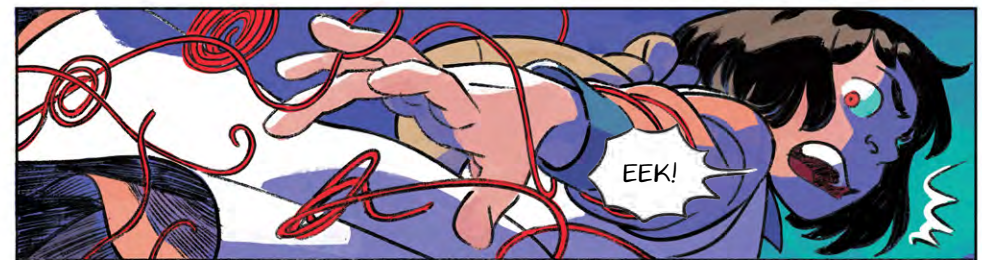
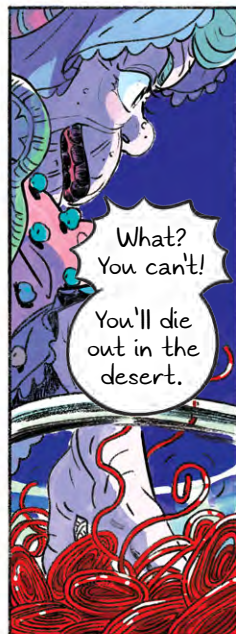








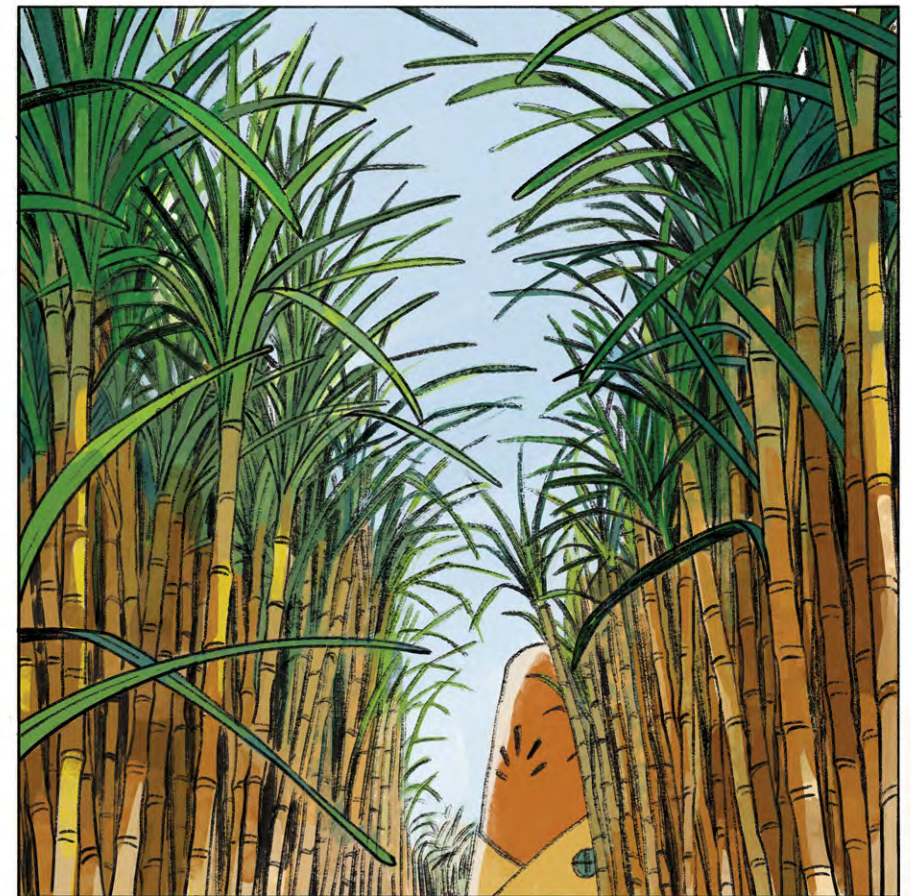


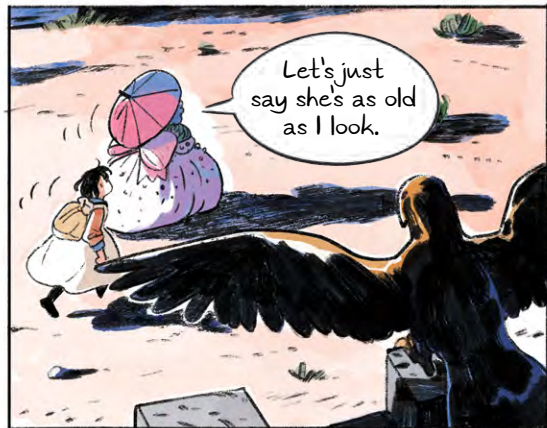


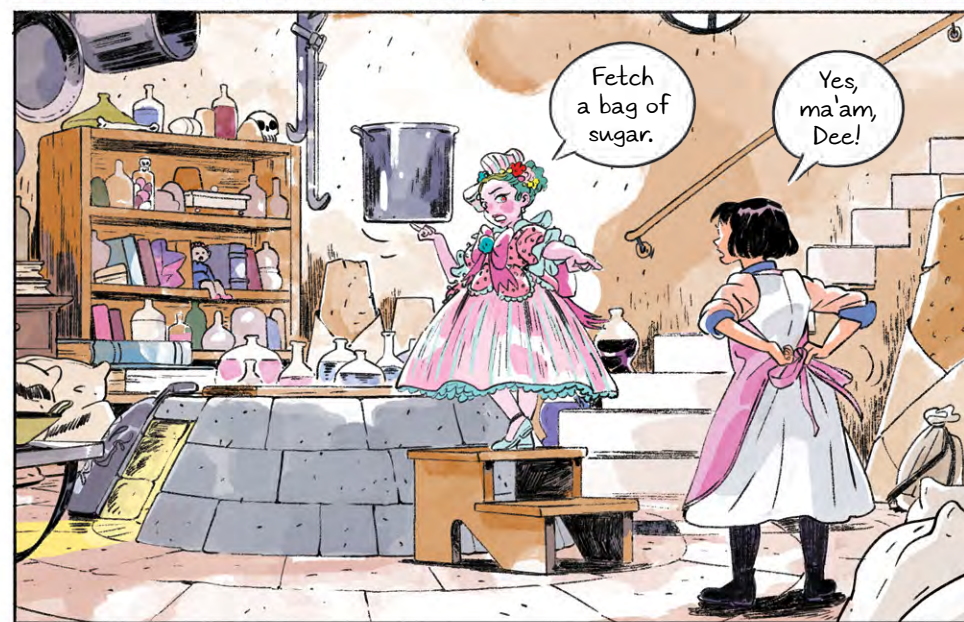
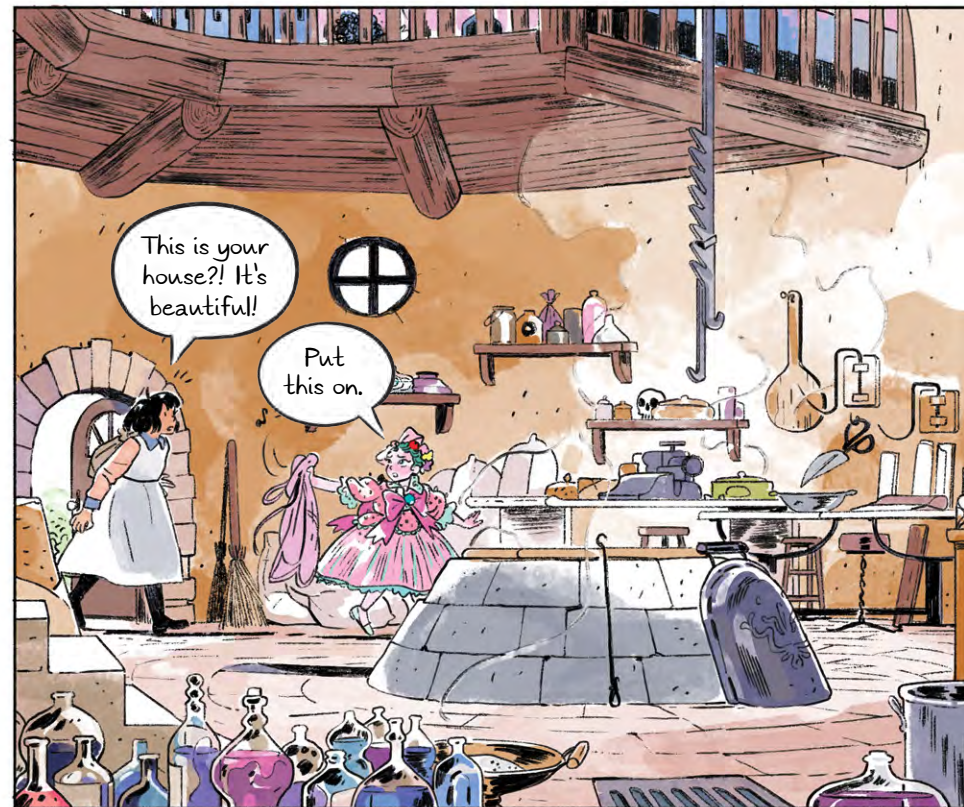


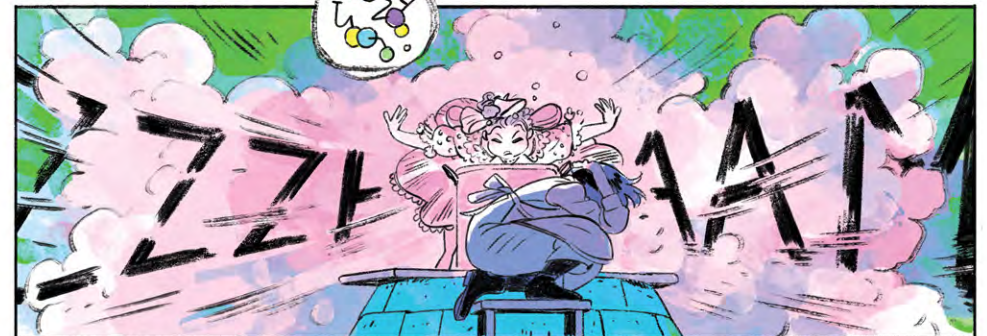
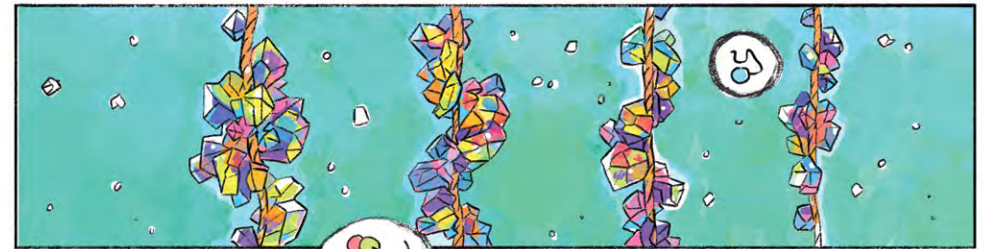
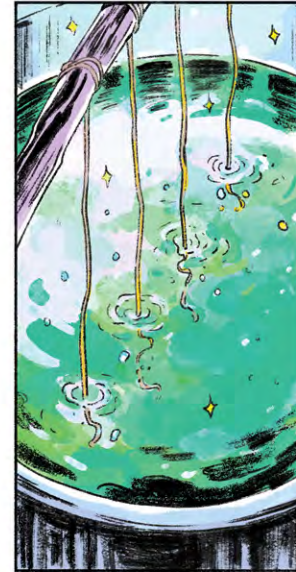
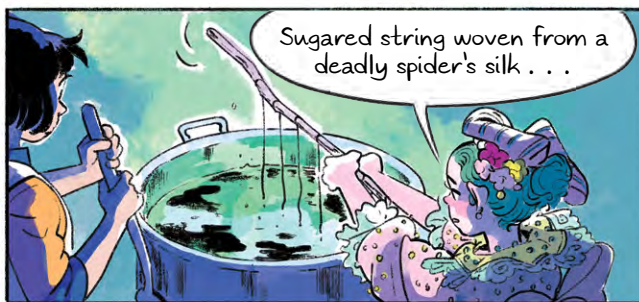
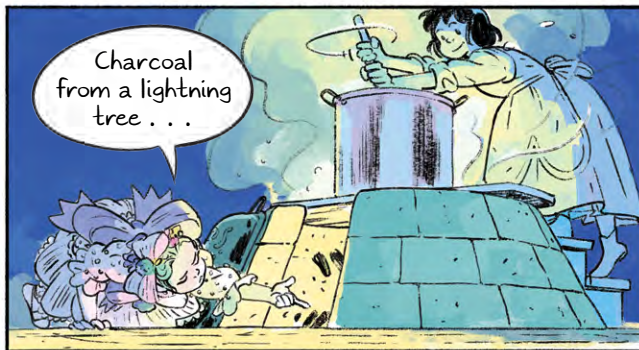
Chapter Eight

Rock Candy

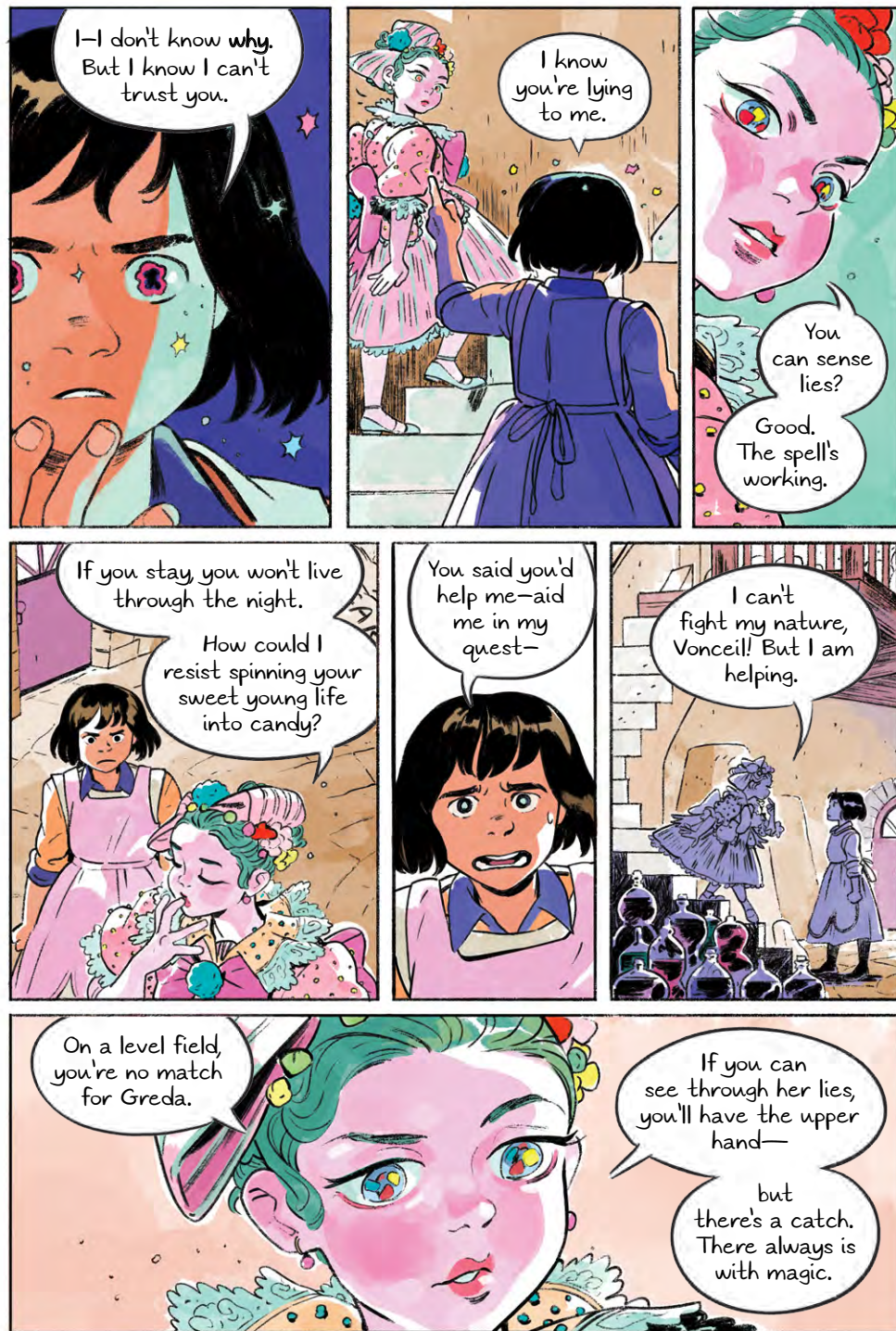














It might not be so bad, telling the truth. I don't lie much.



Ugh! I can even tell when I'm lying to myself.



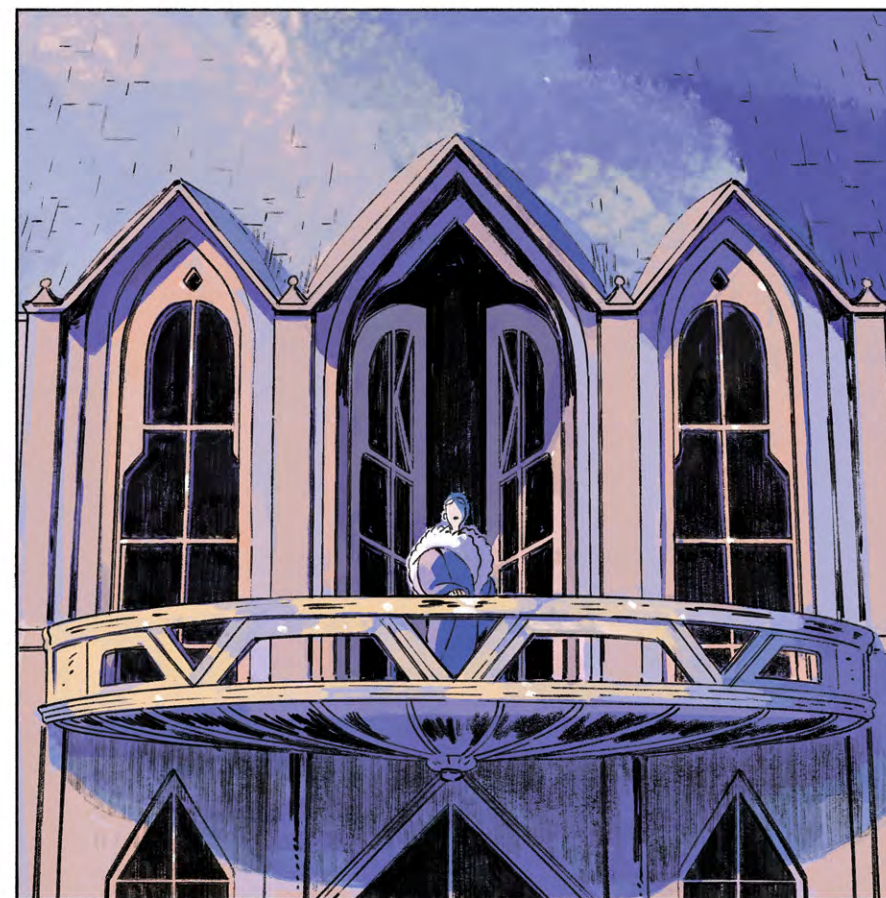
Get ready, Greda. I'm tired and I'm scared, but I'd rather die than let you get away with this.

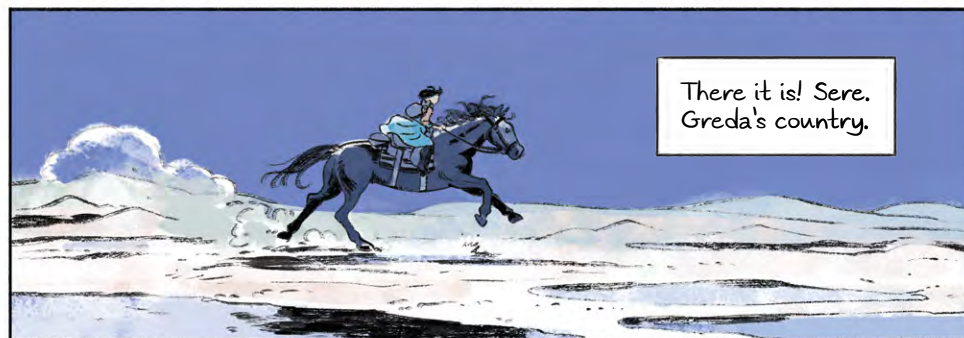
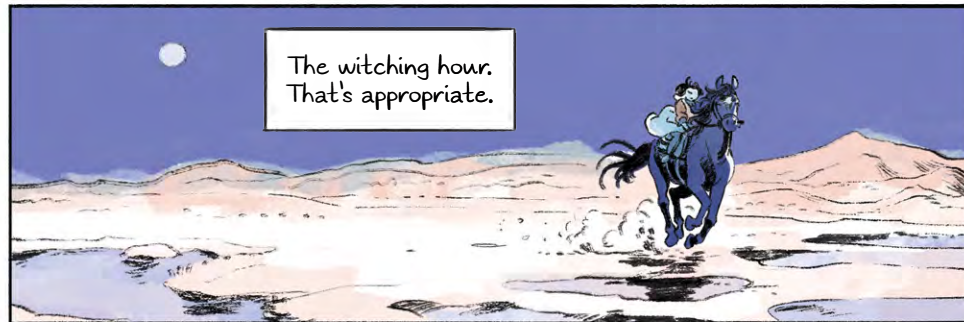
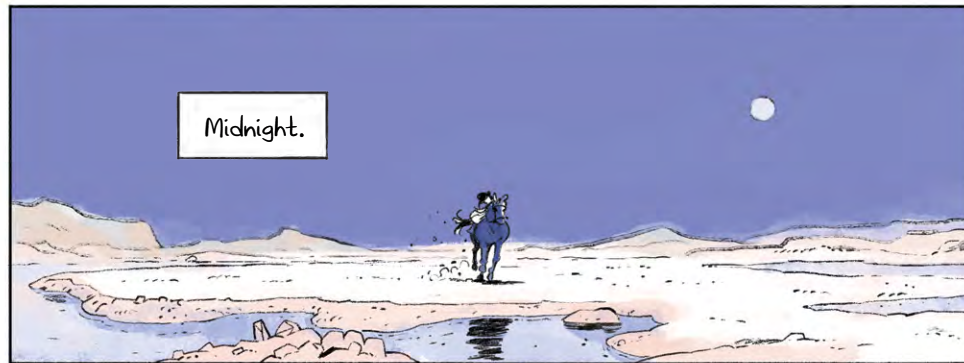


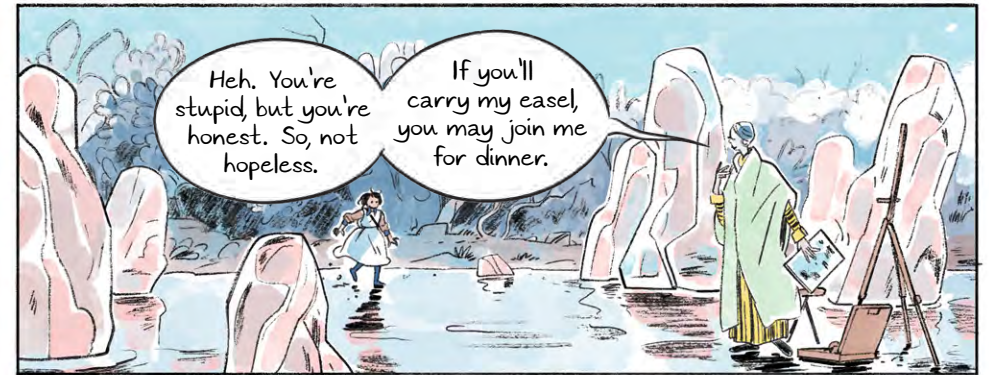
And that's the truth.

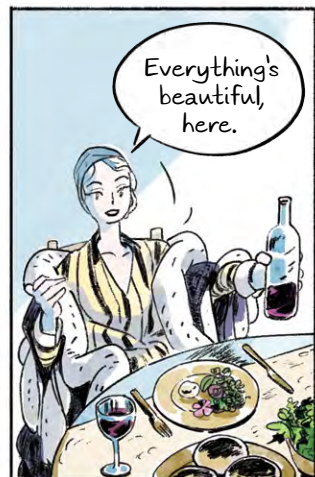
Chapter Nine

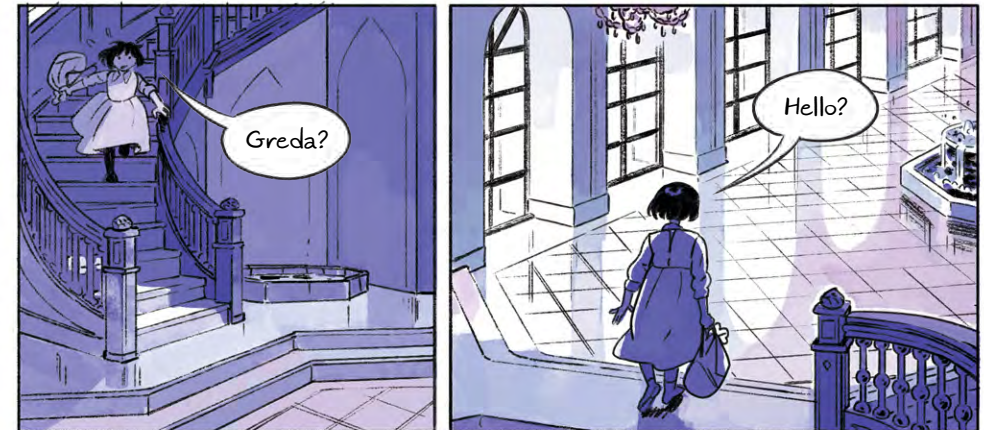
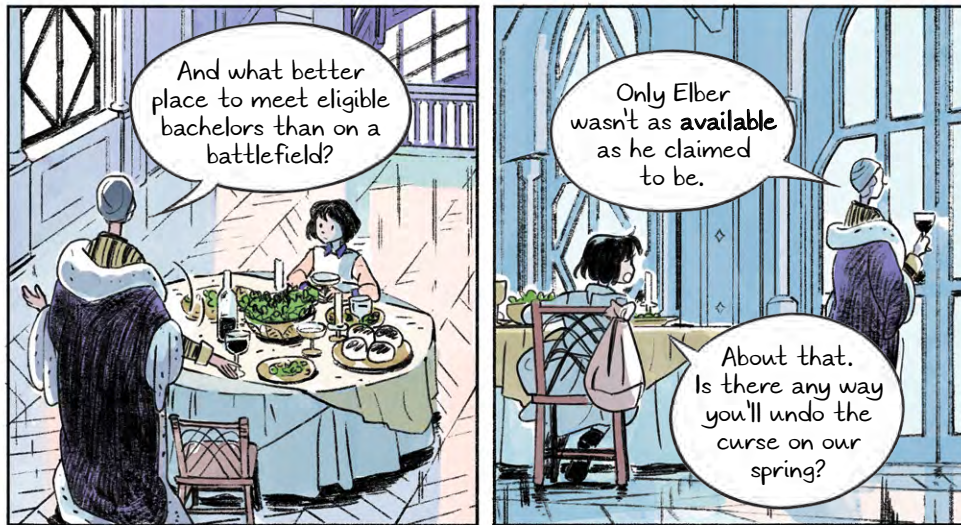
Hospitality



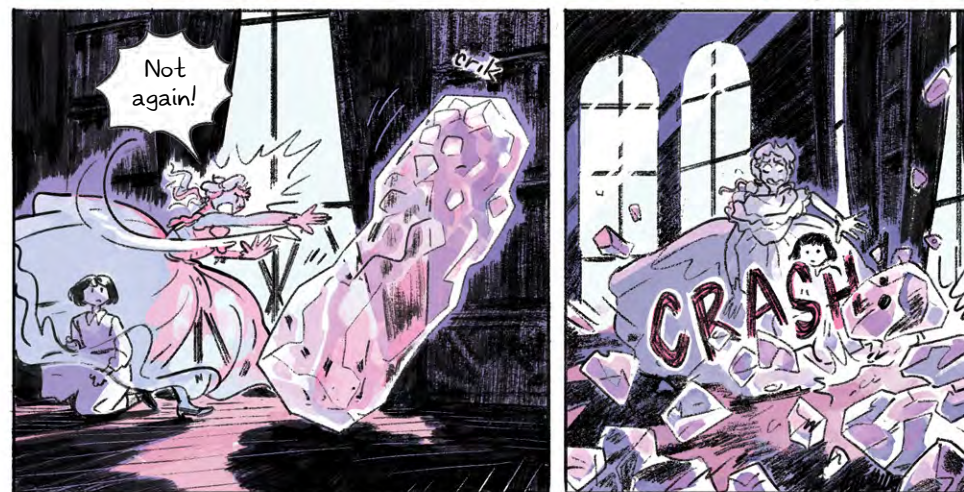


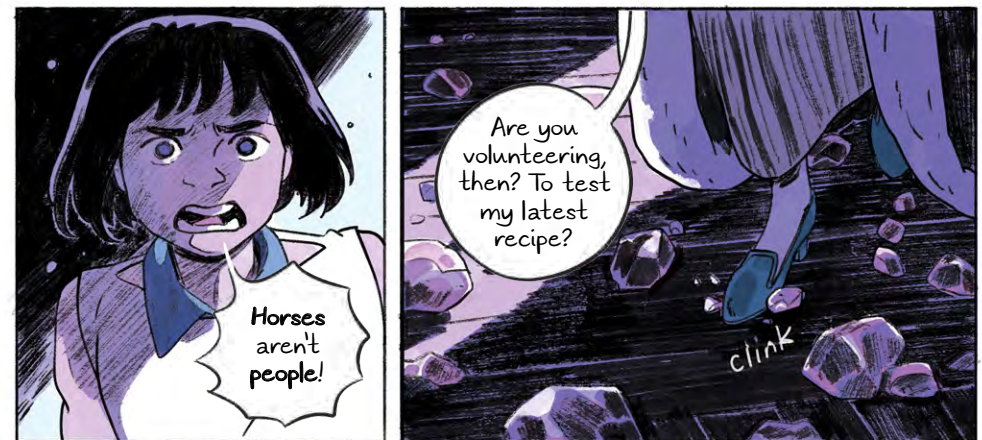
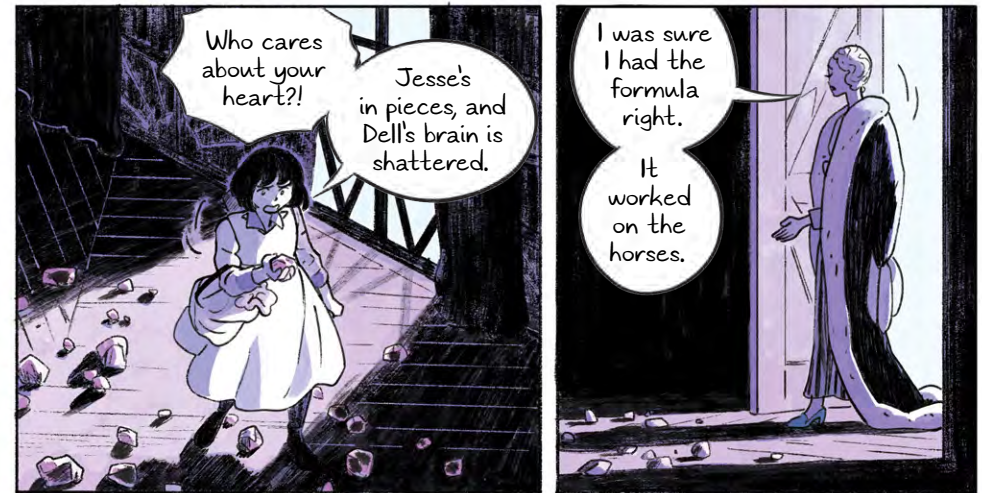
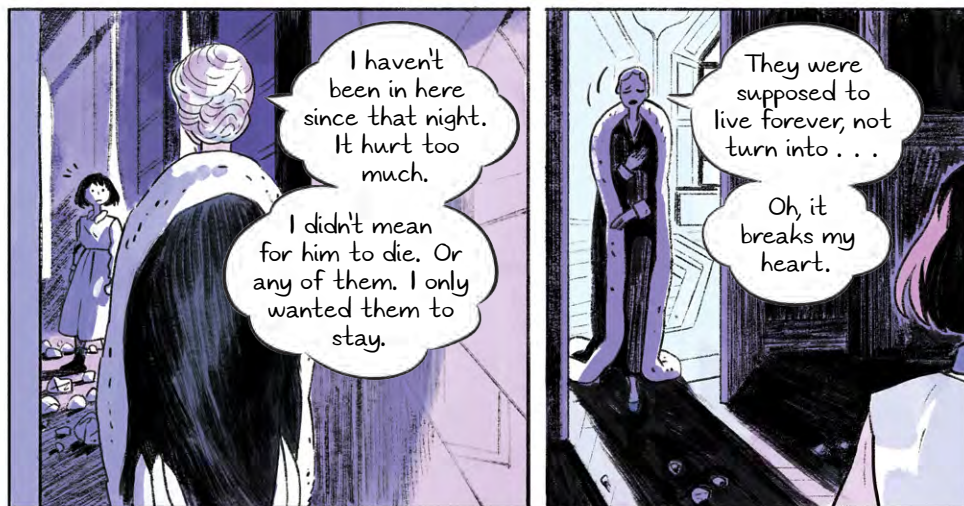


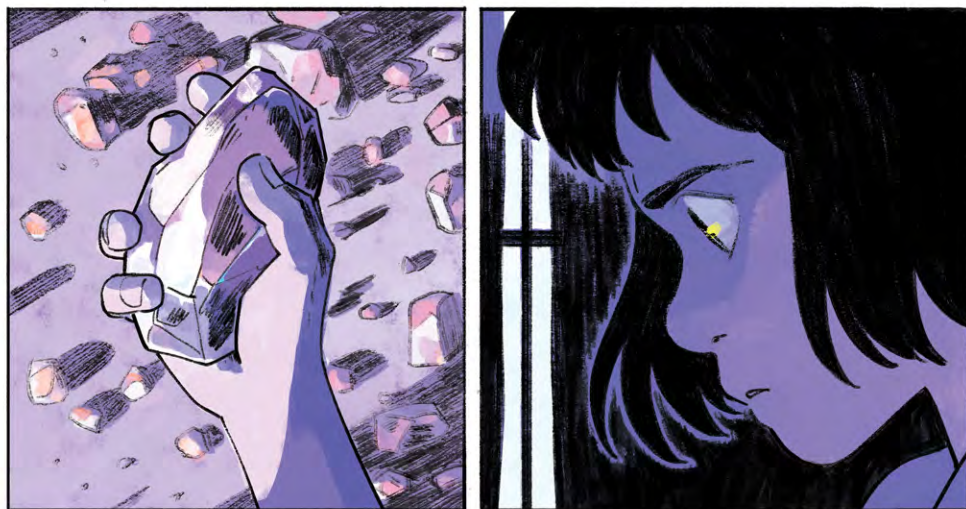


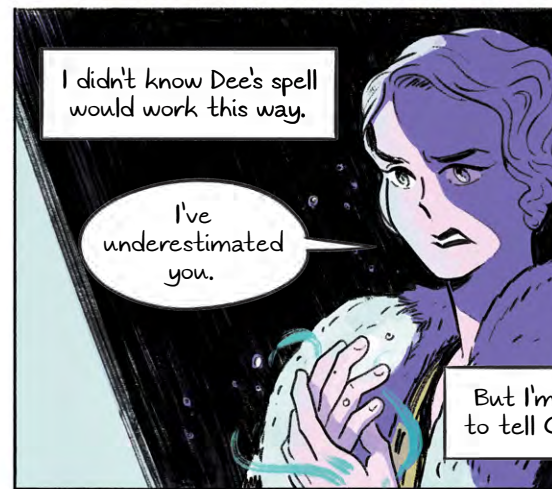
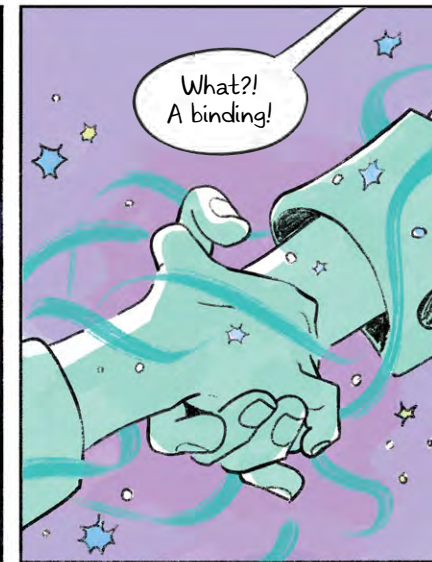
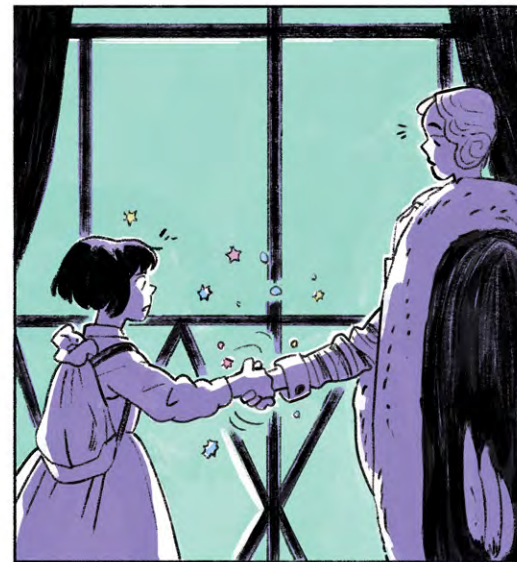
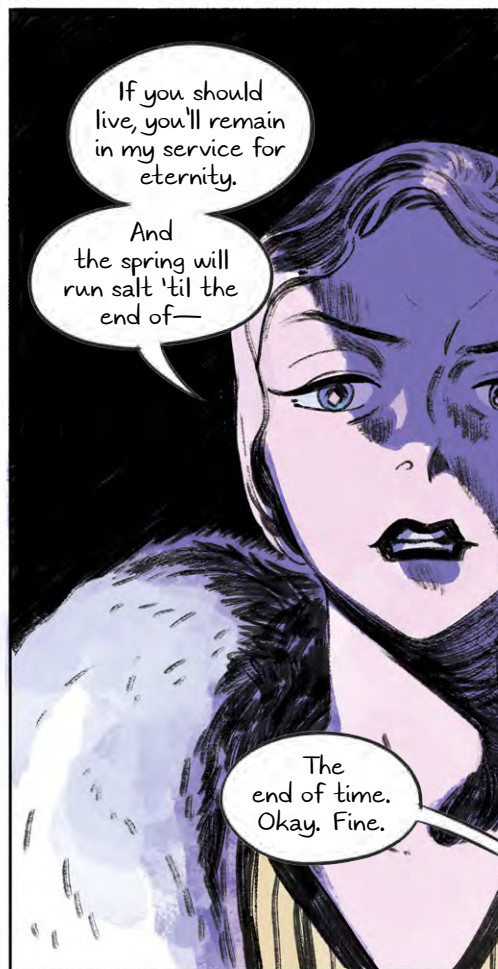










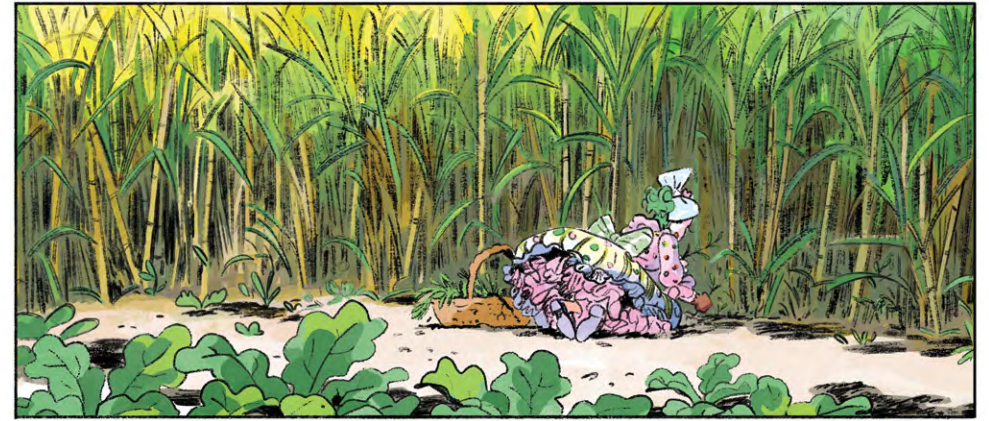
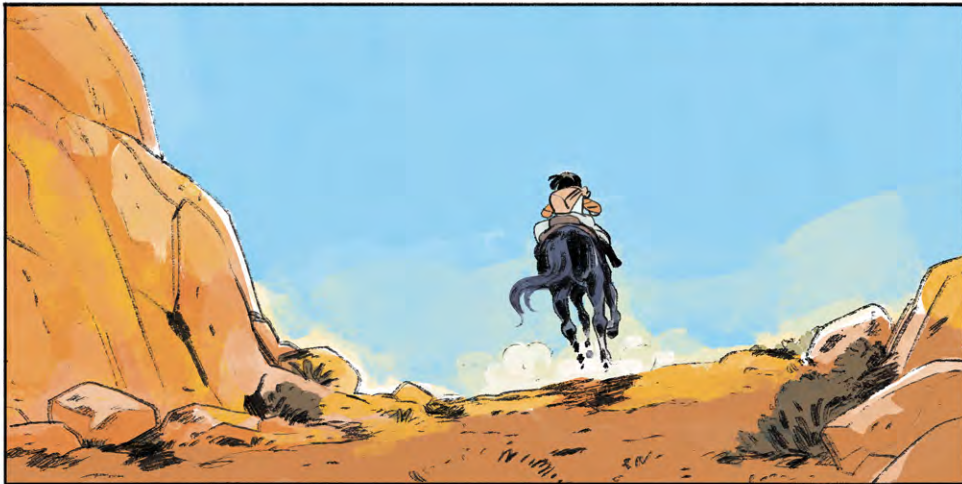




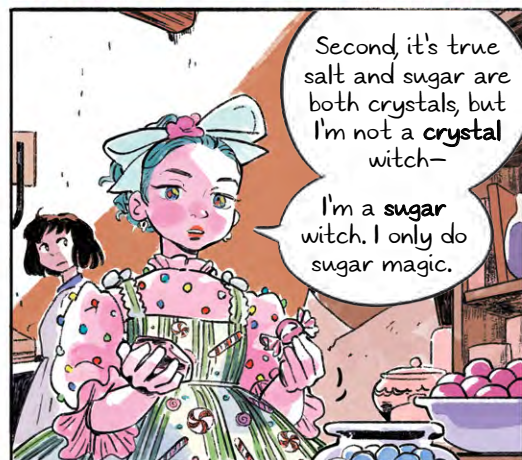
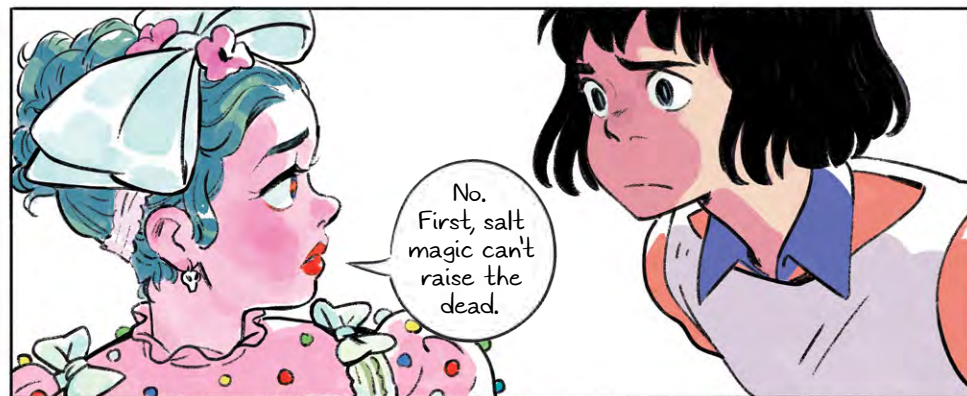
Chapter Ten

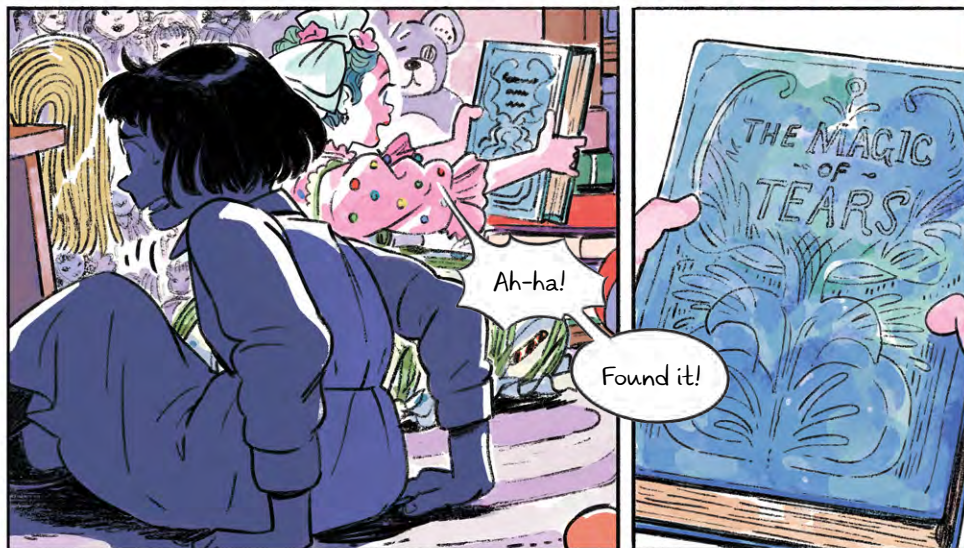
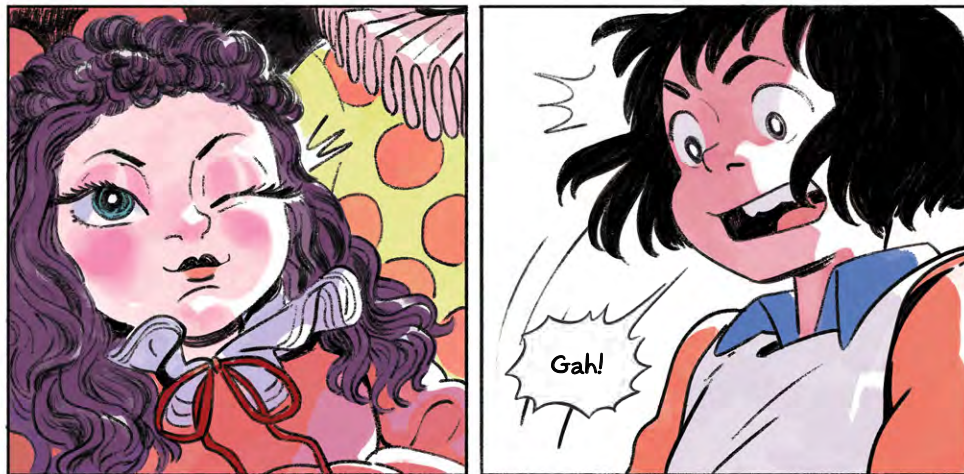
The Magic of Tears



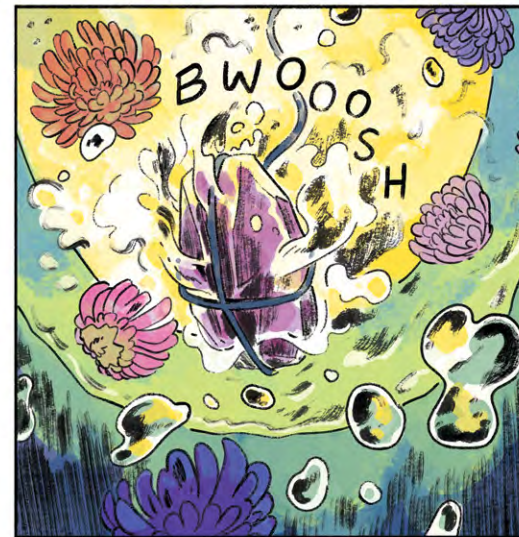
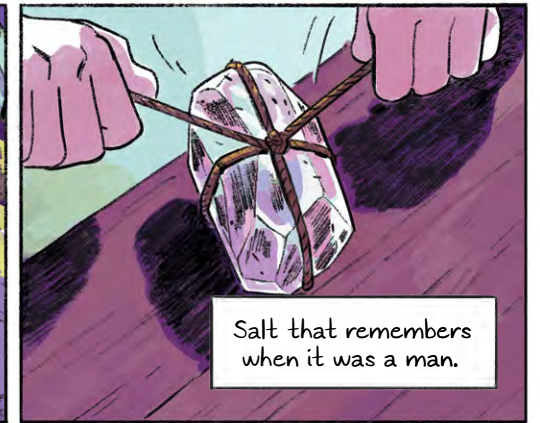
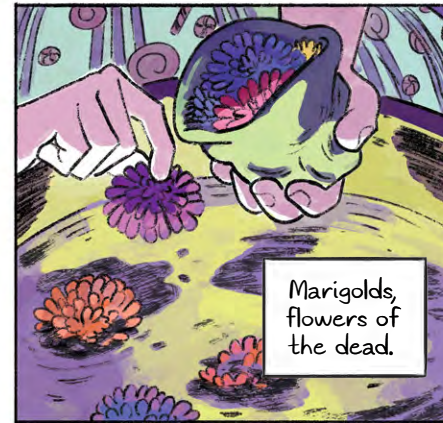
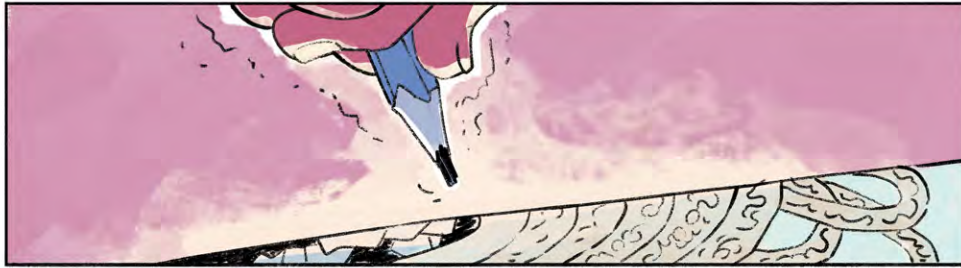








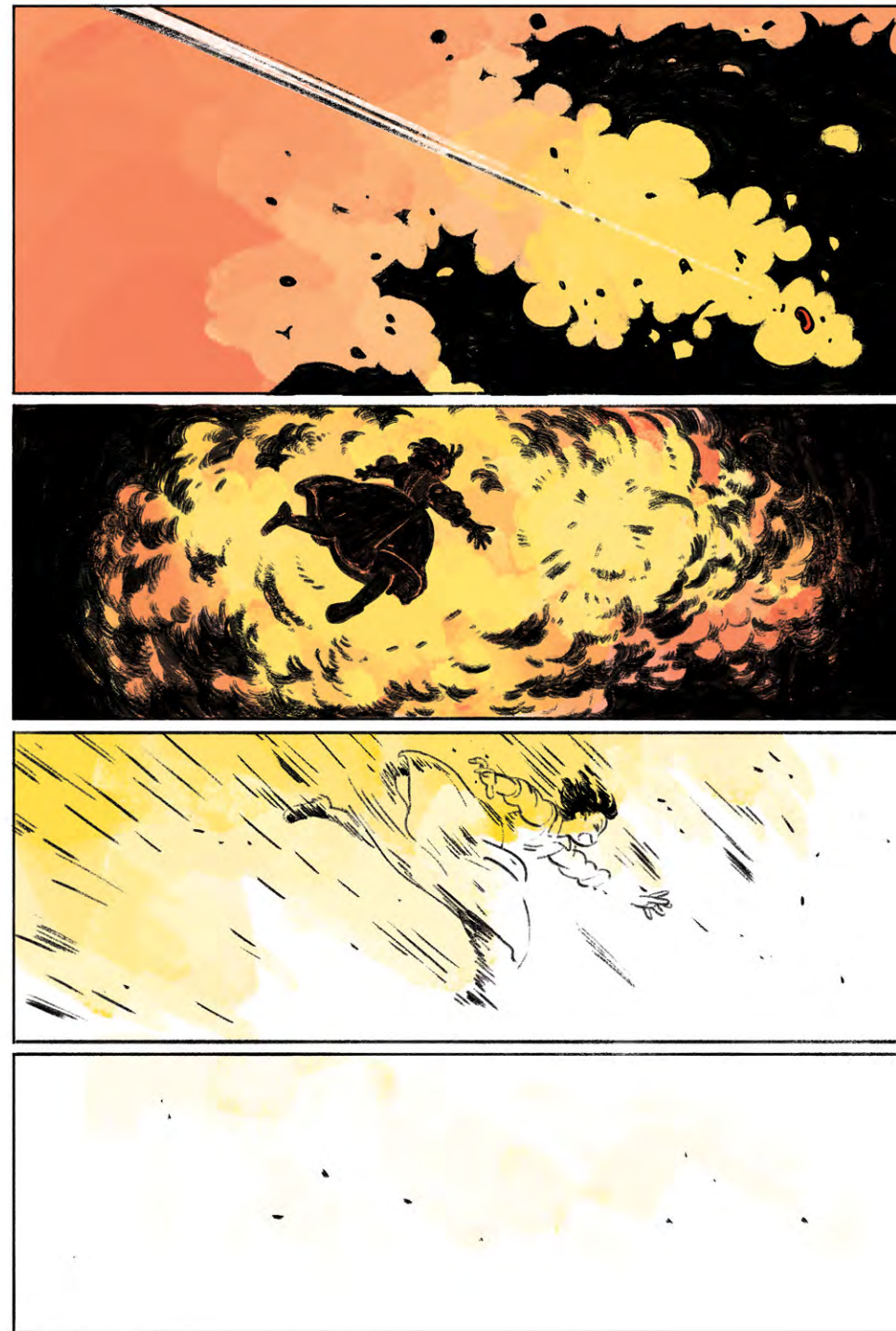




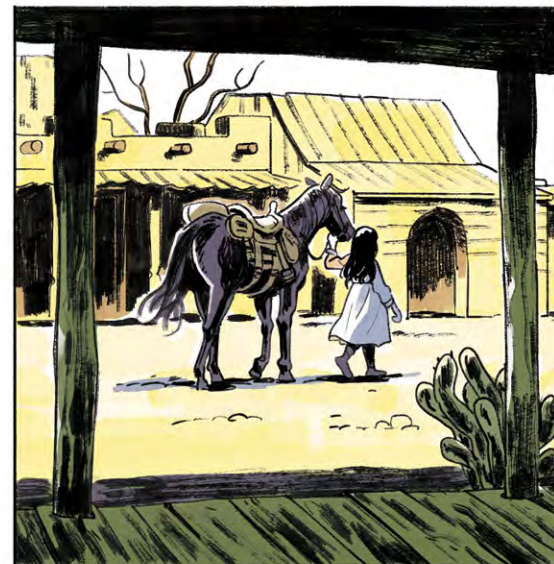
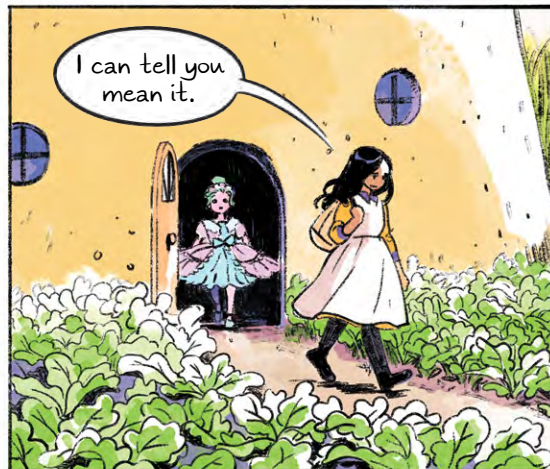


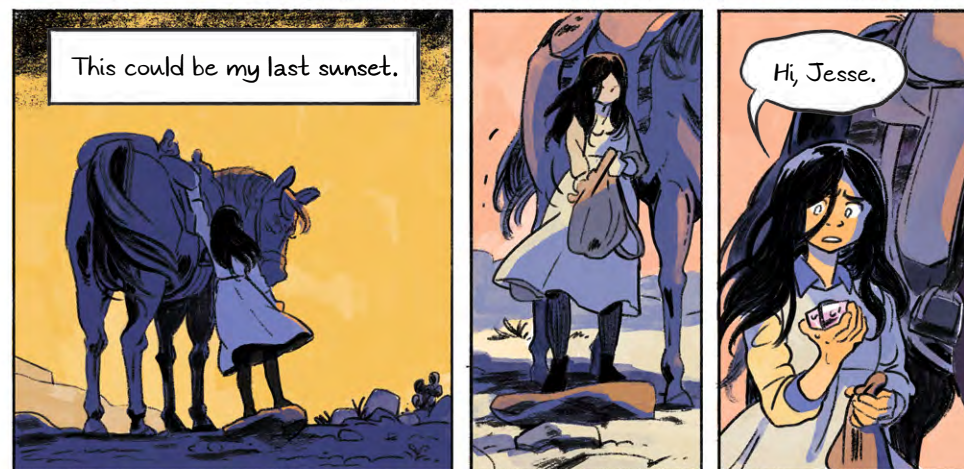
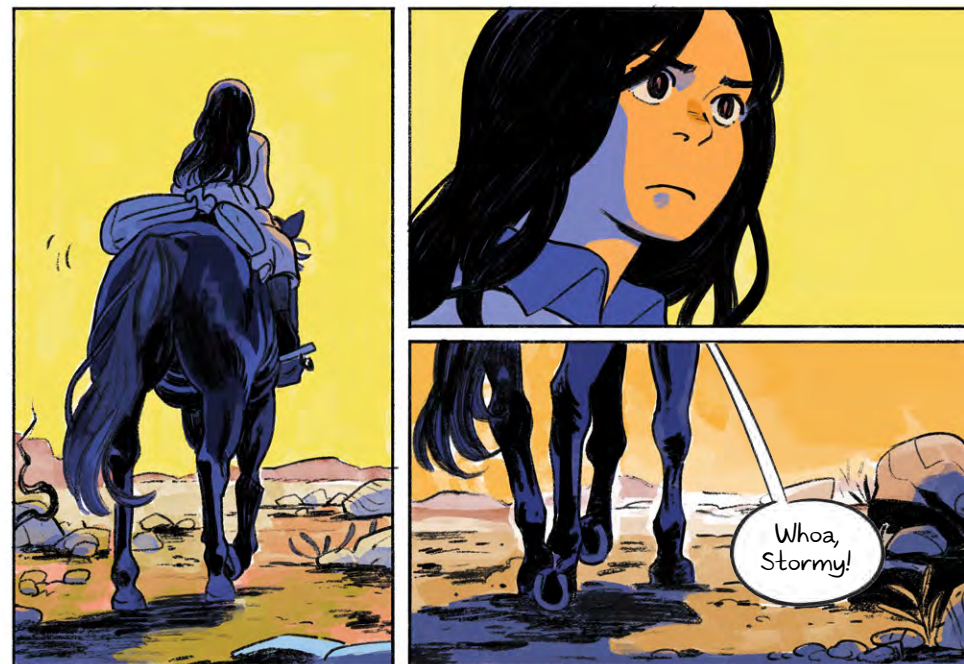


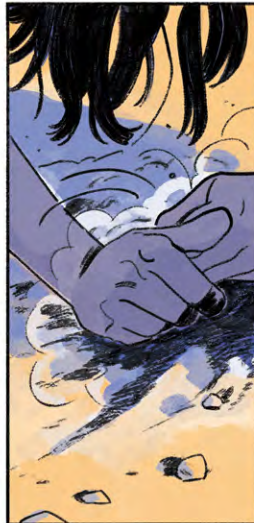






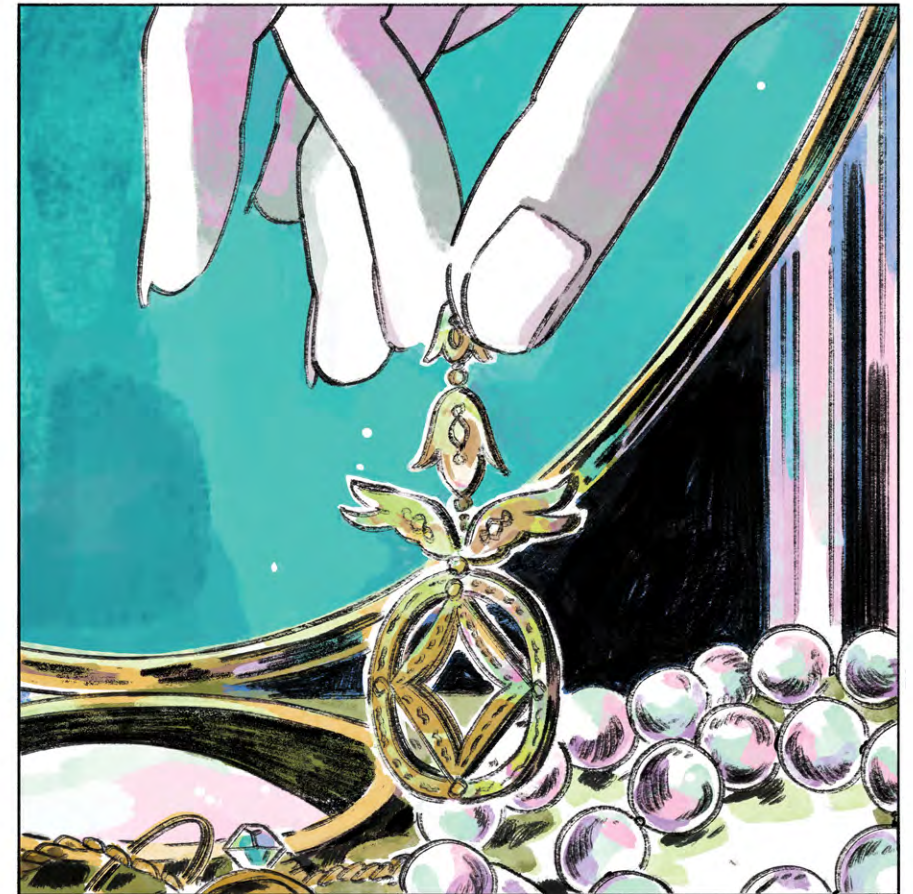


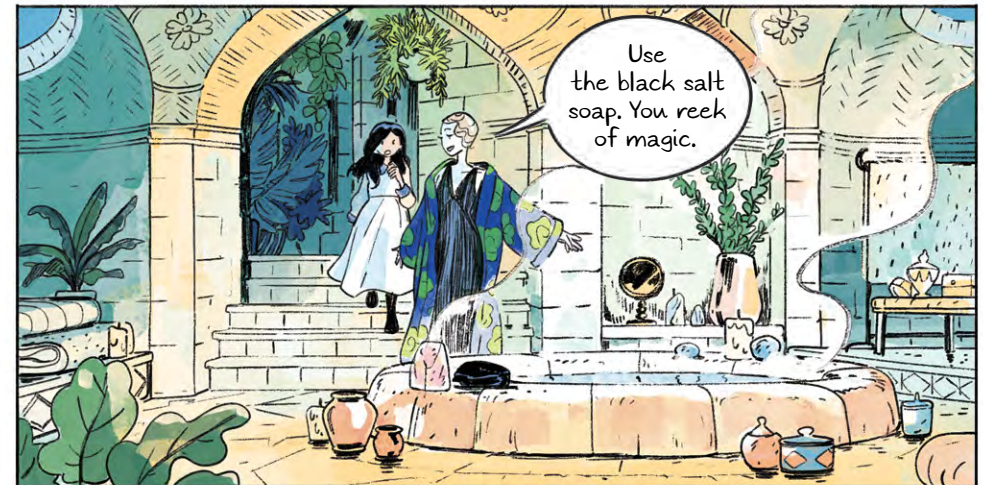
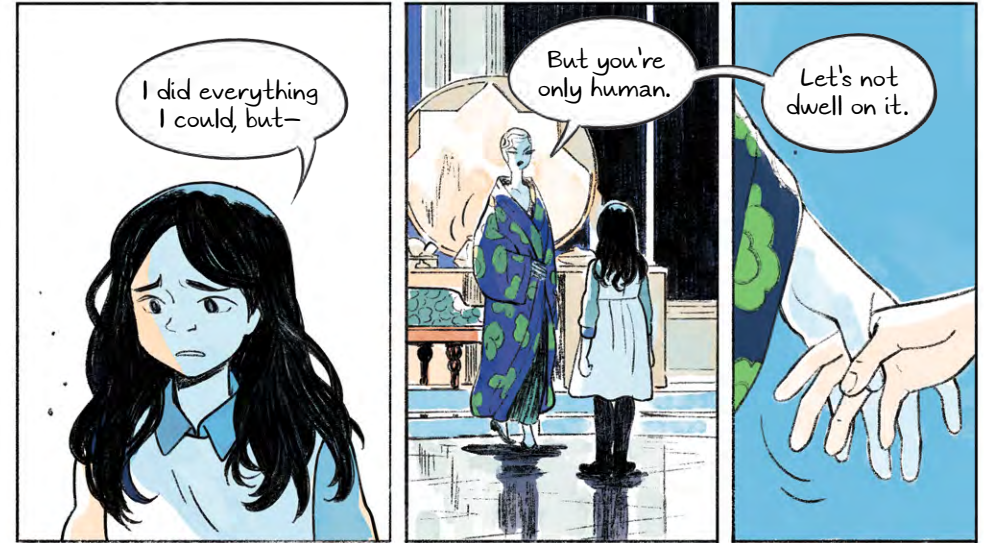
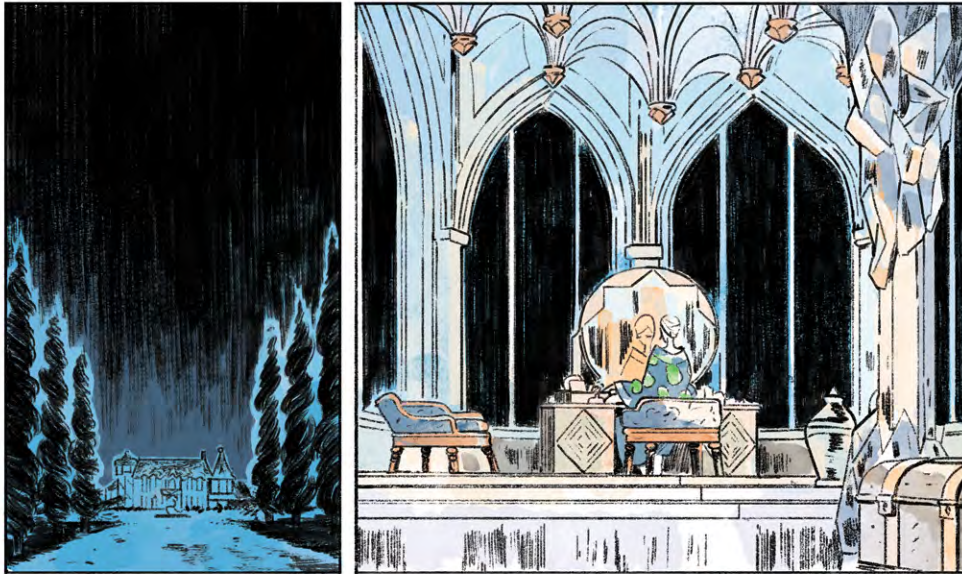


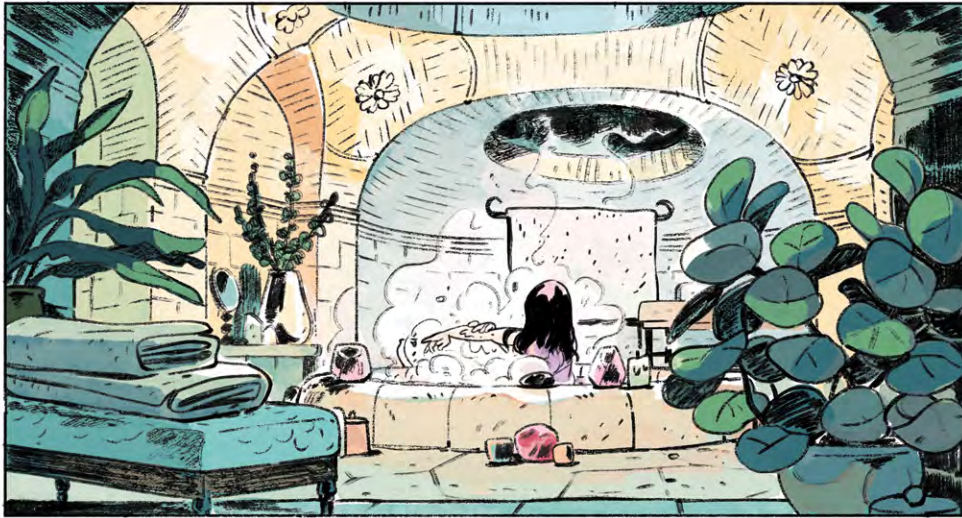


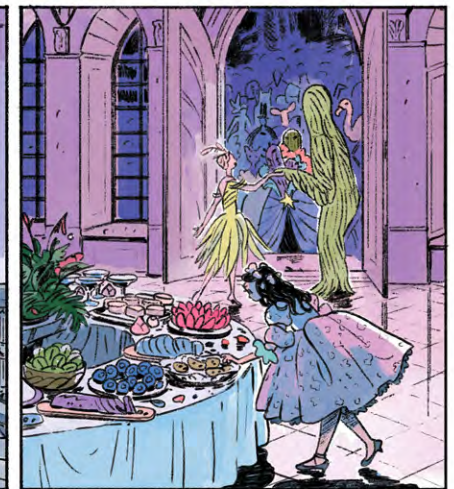
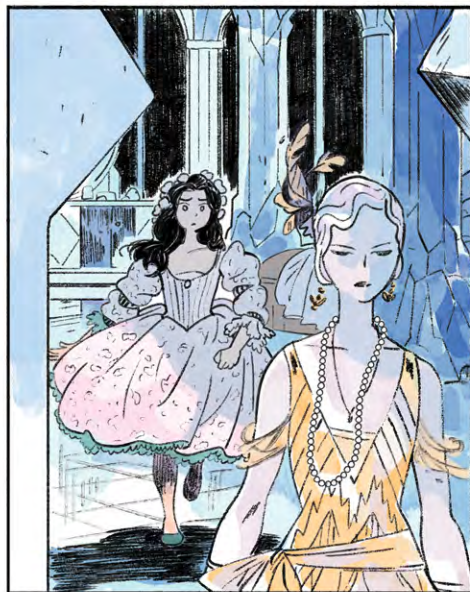
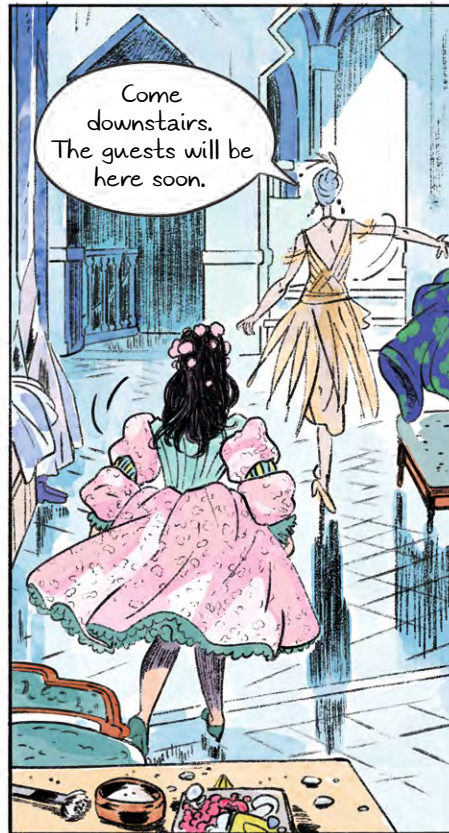
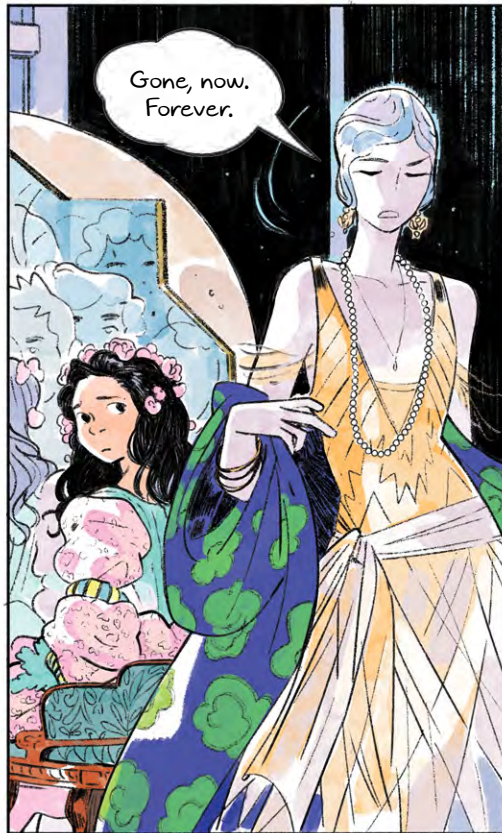
Chapter Eleven

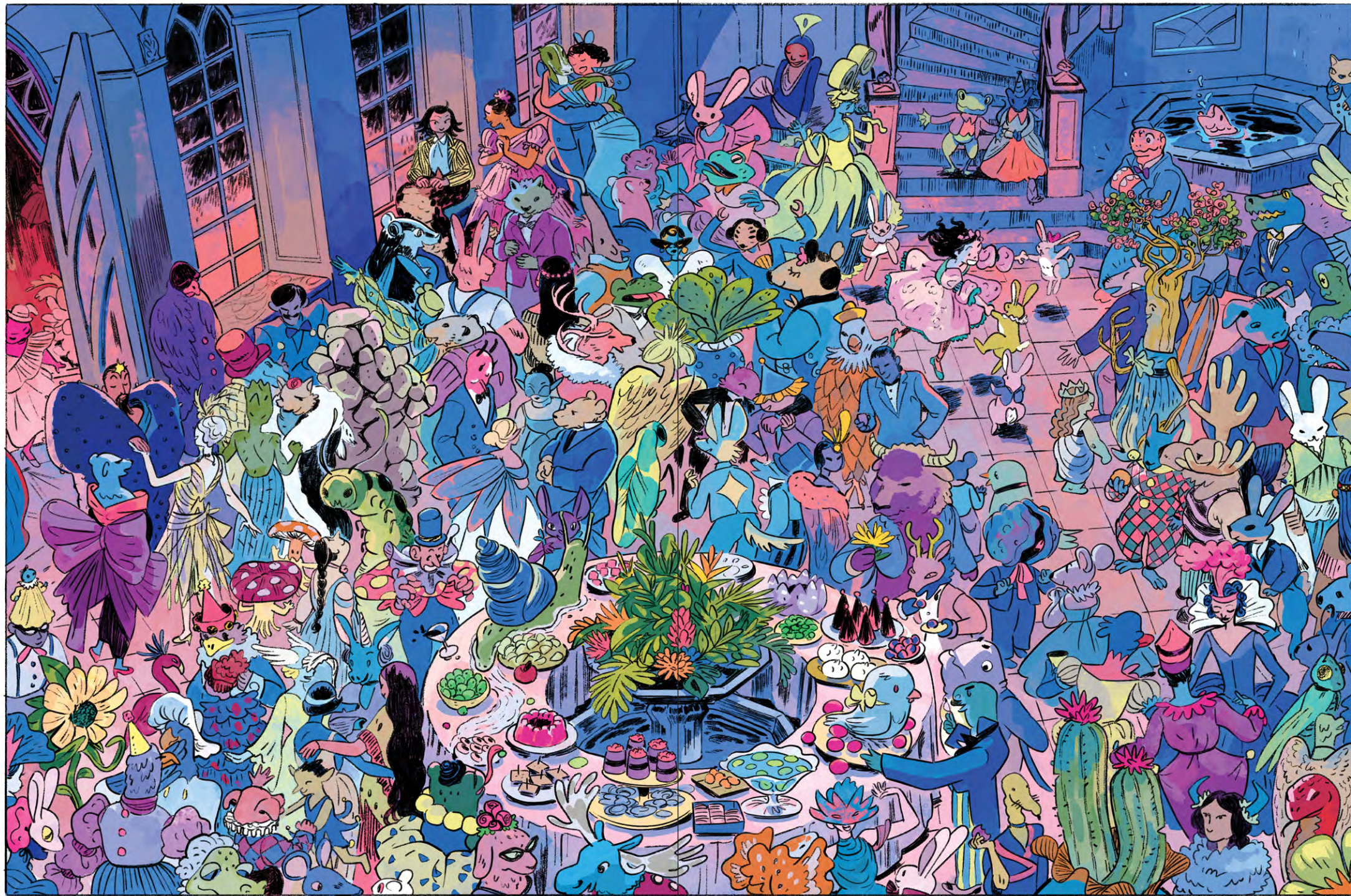
An Uninvited Guest

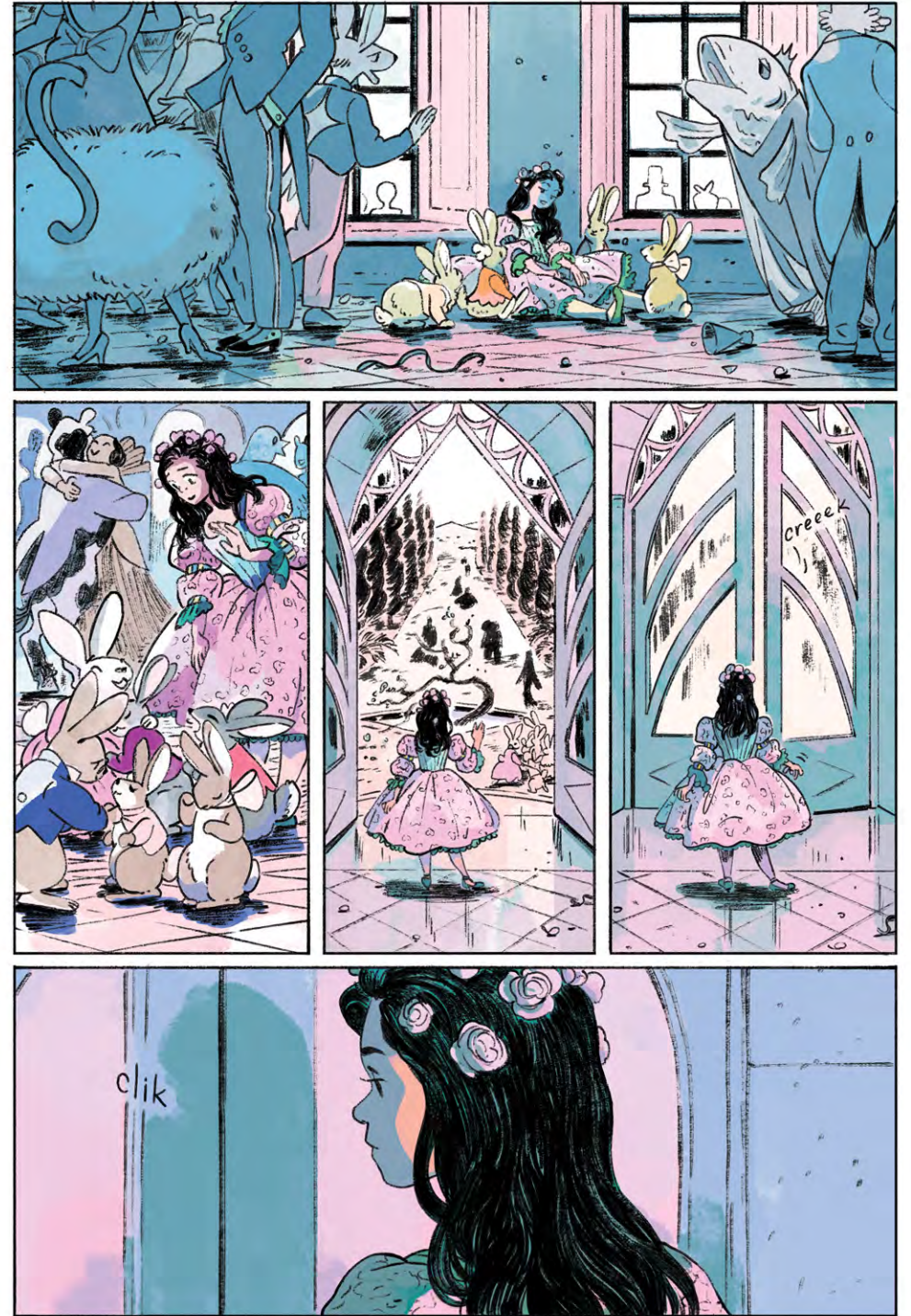




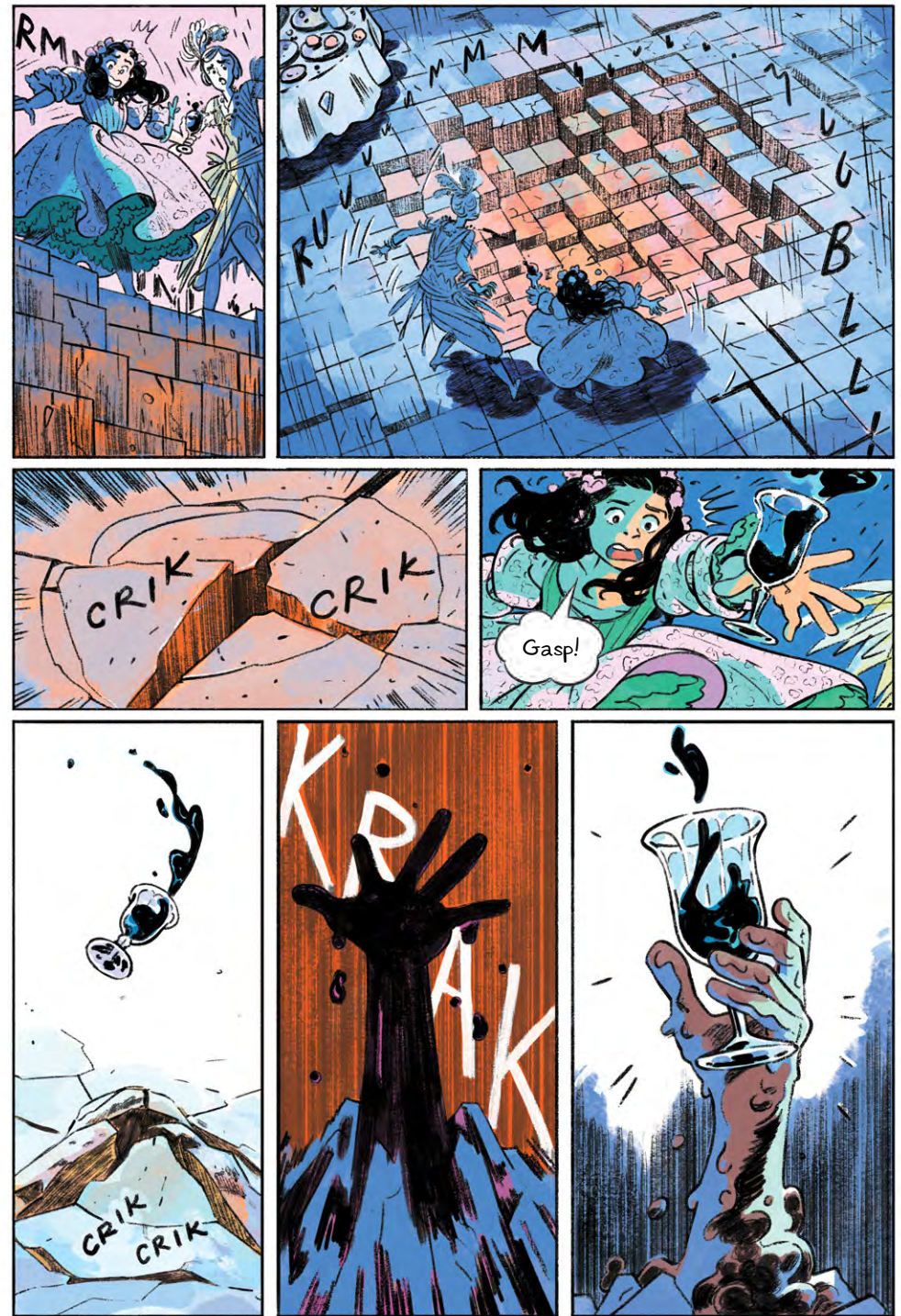




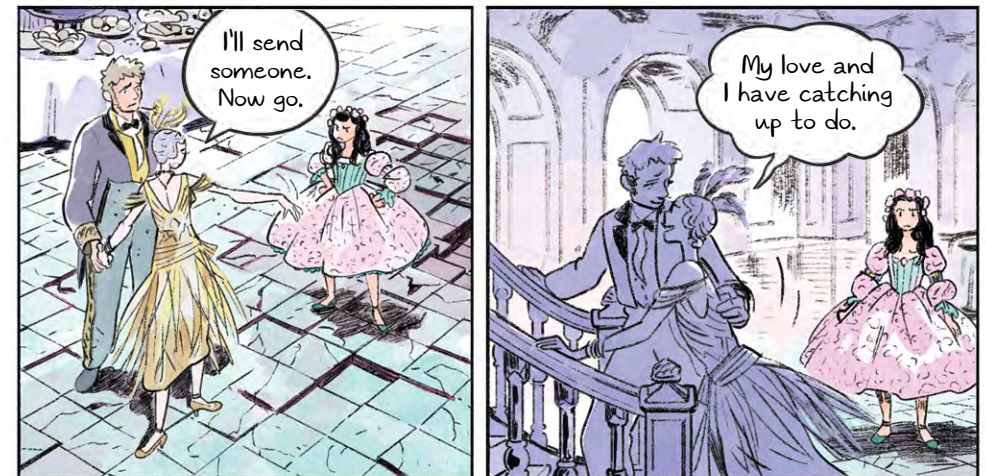
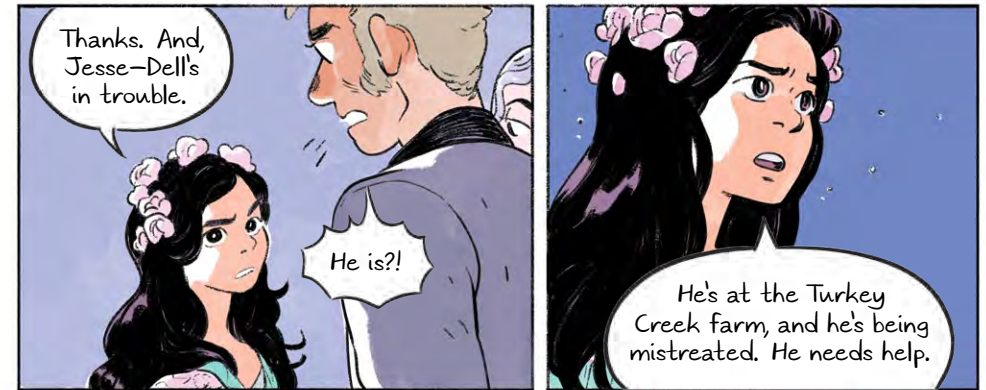
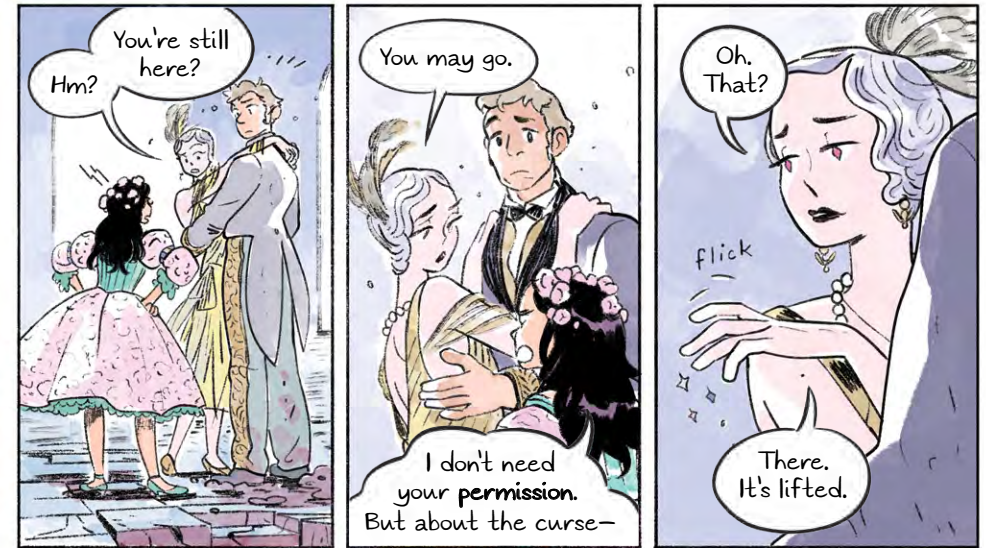
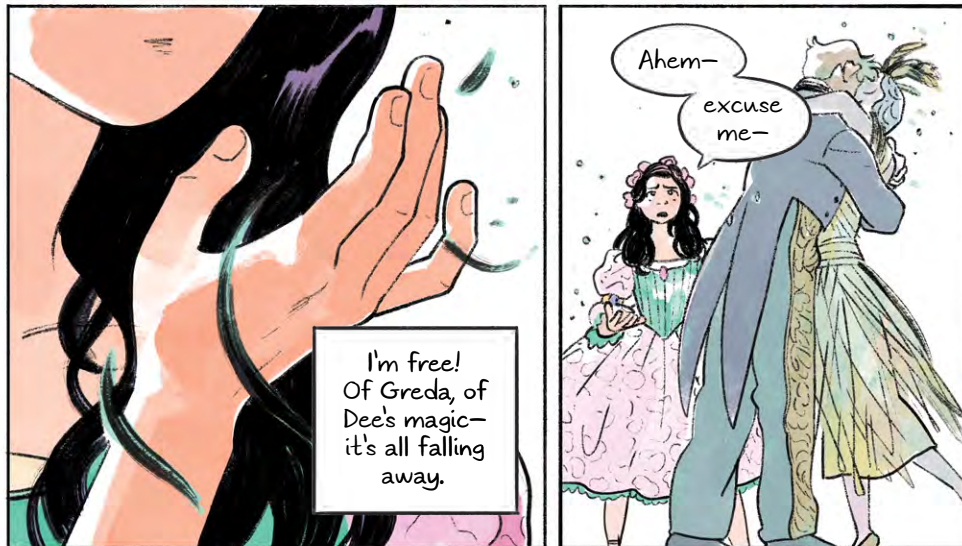
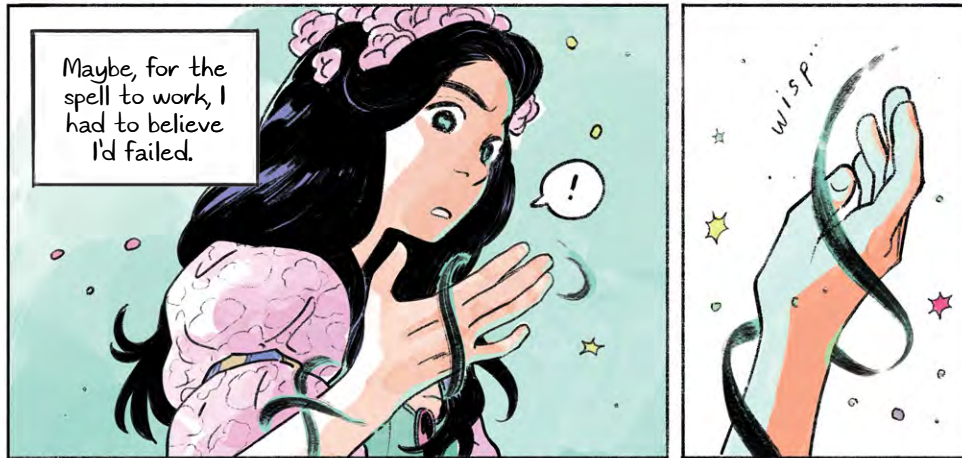
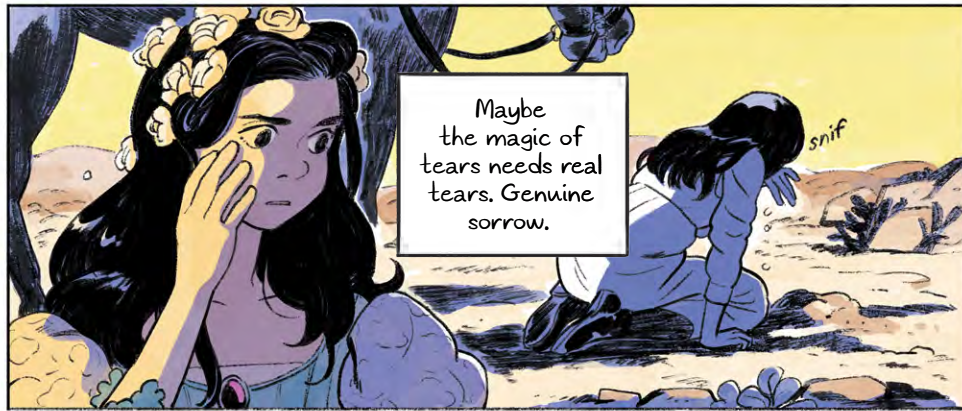


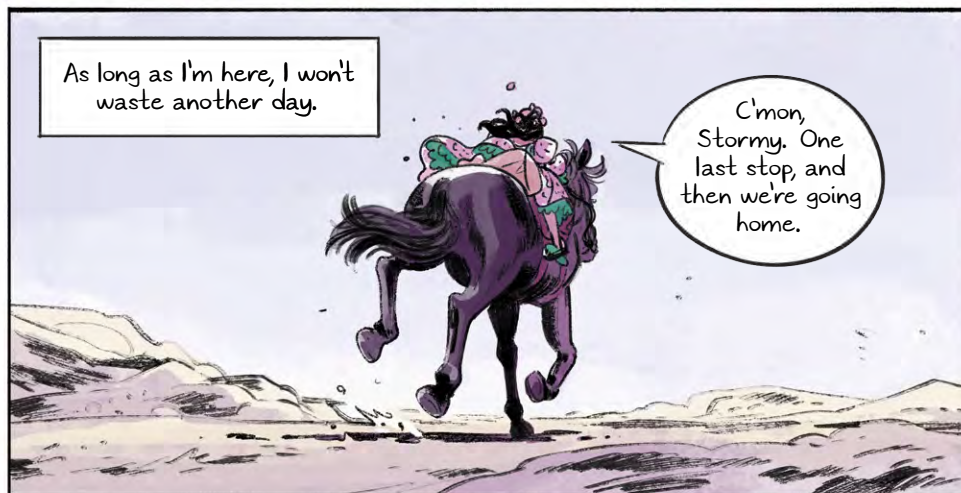
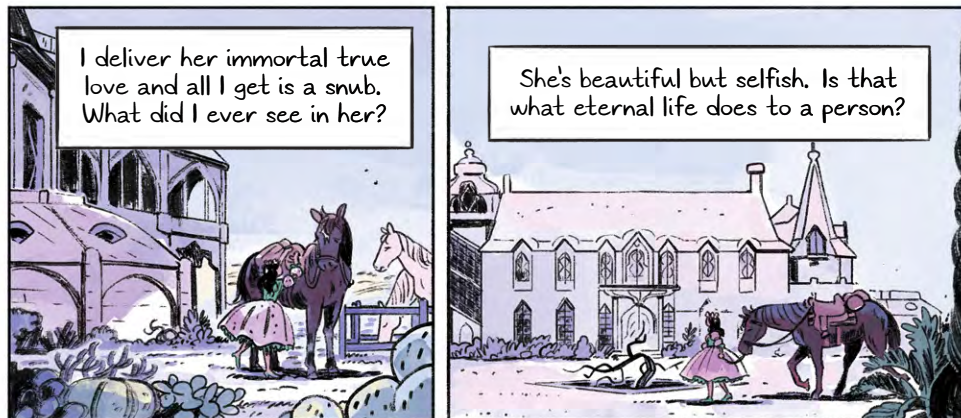








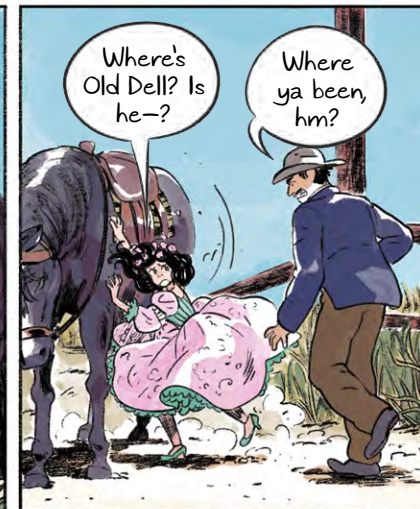
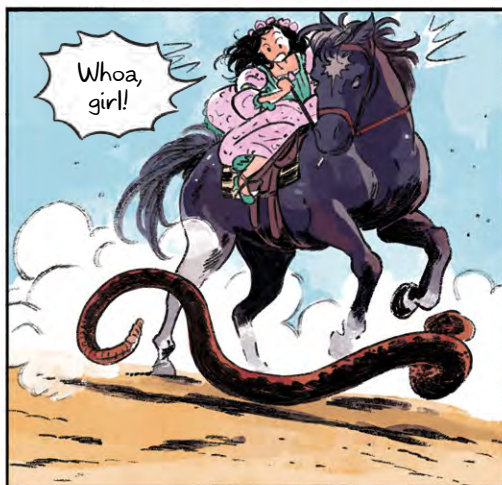
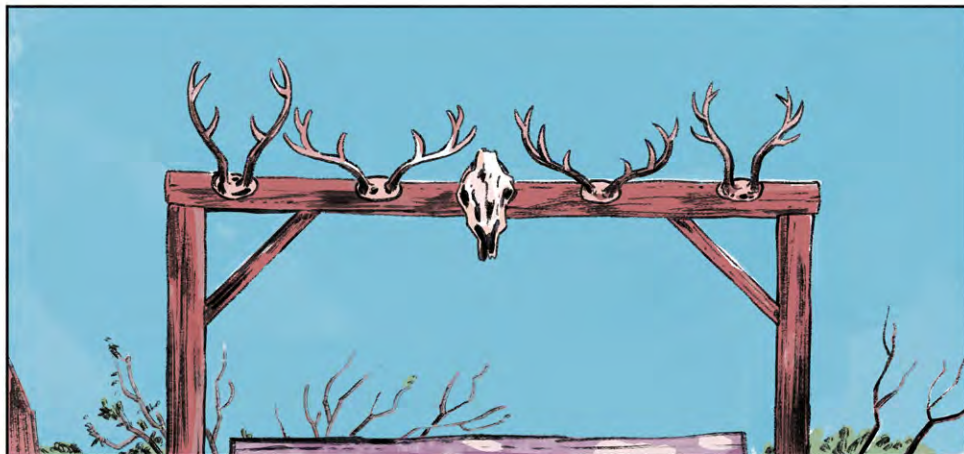


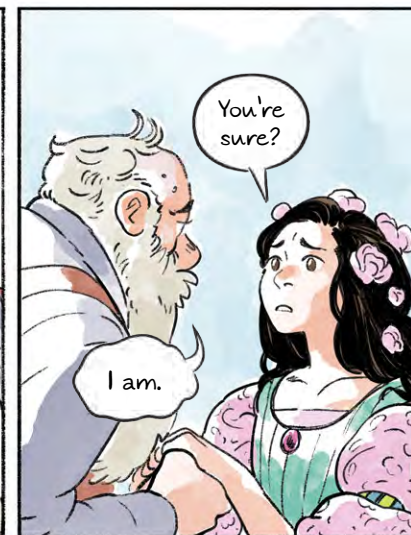
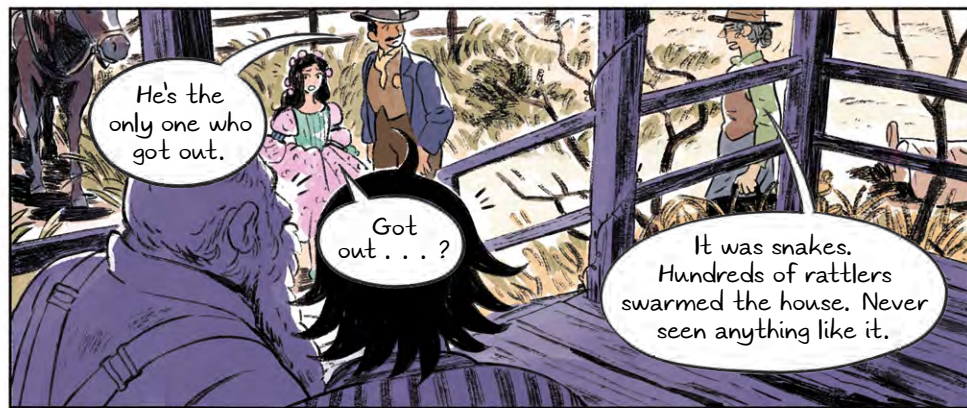


Chapter Twelve

About Time



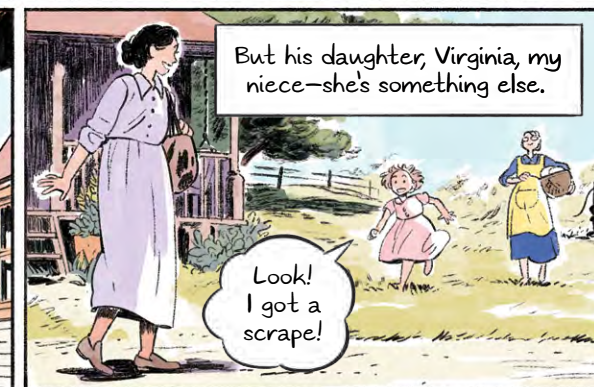
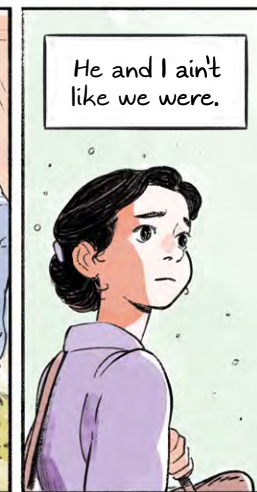
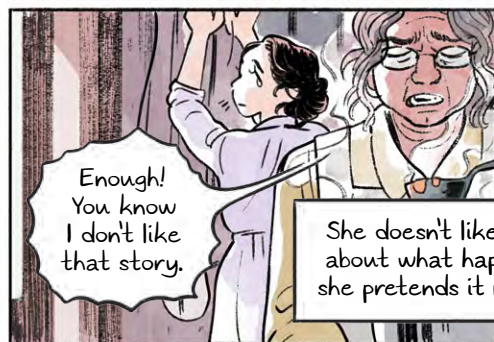
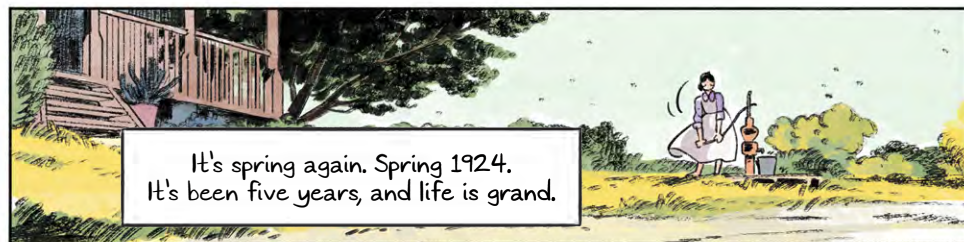


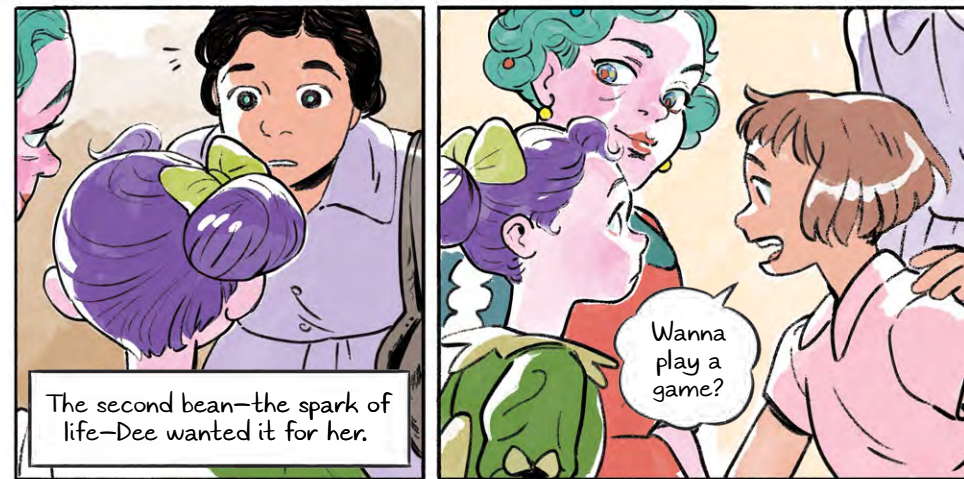
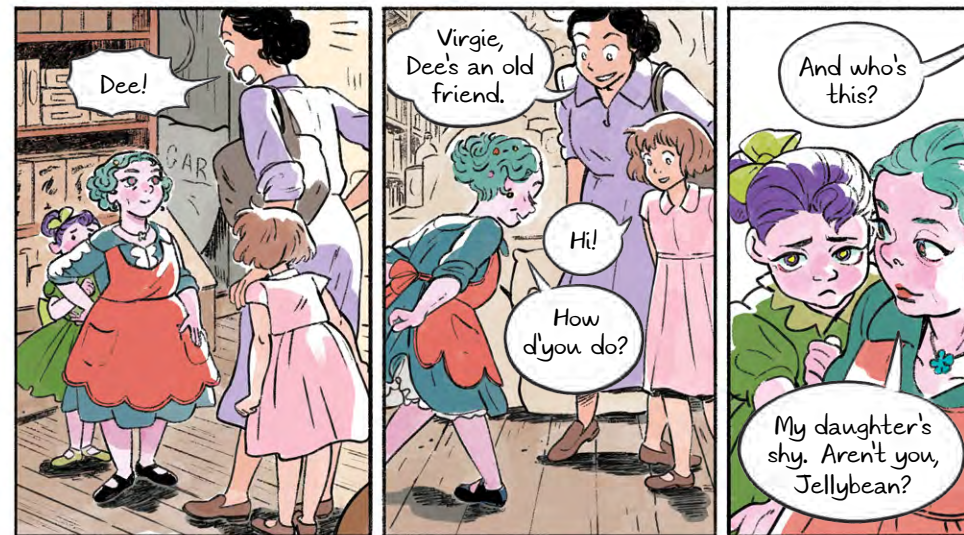
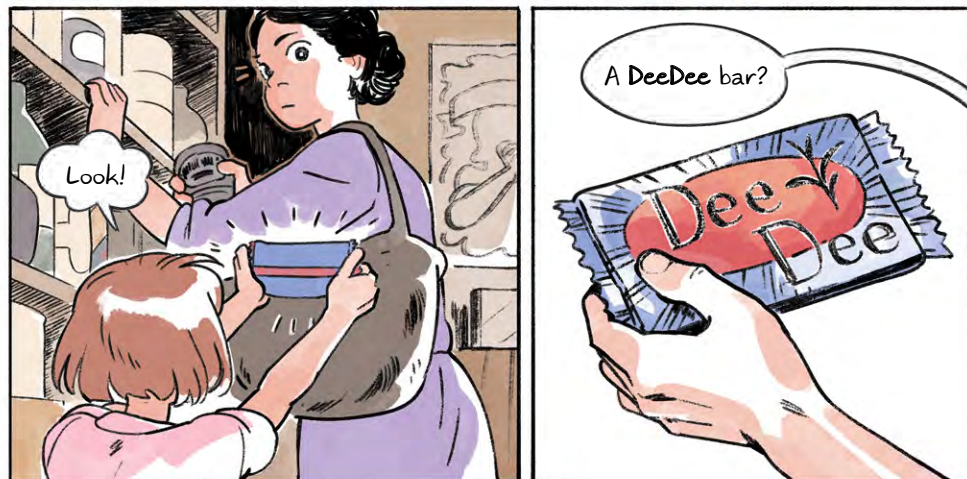




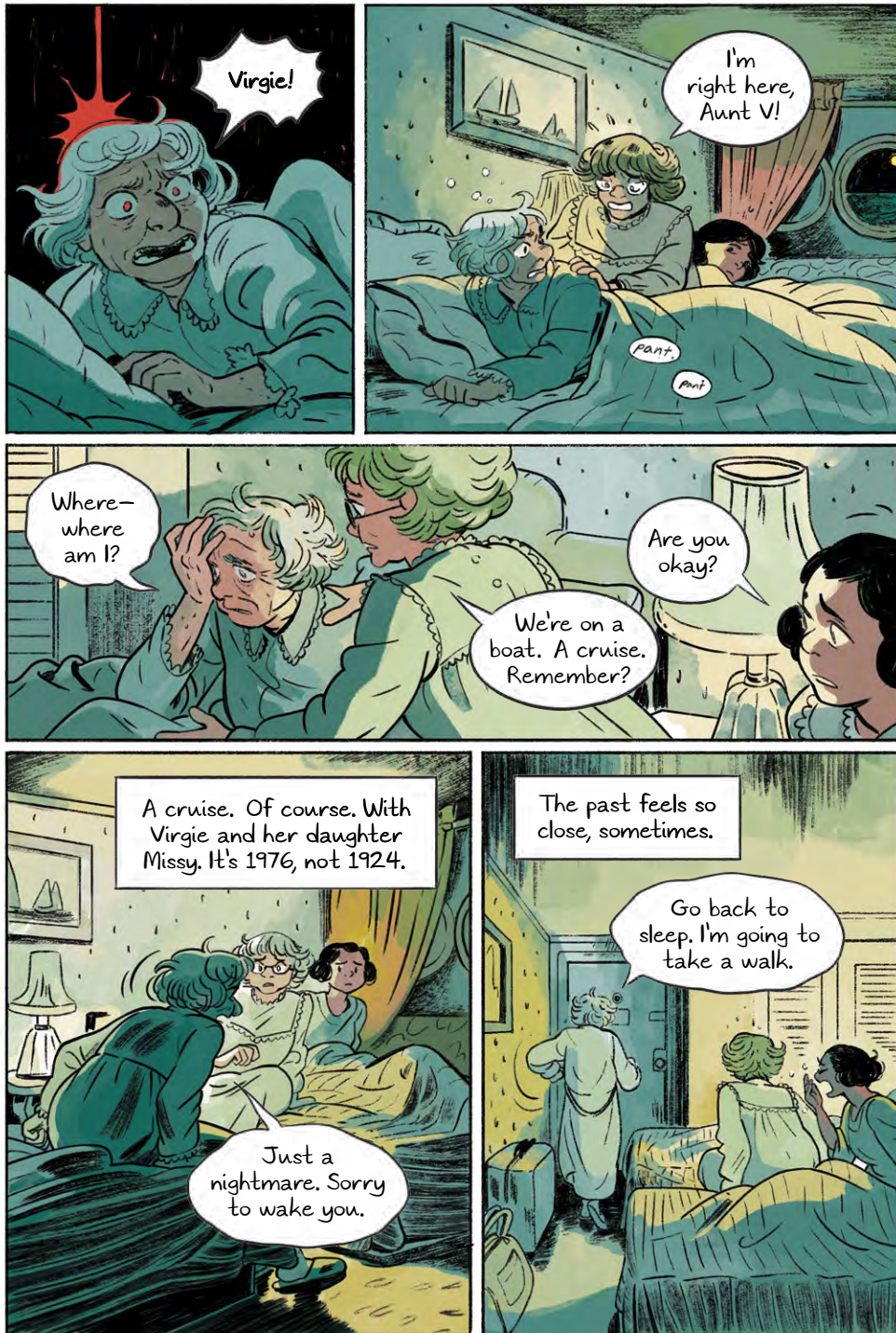
Epilogue



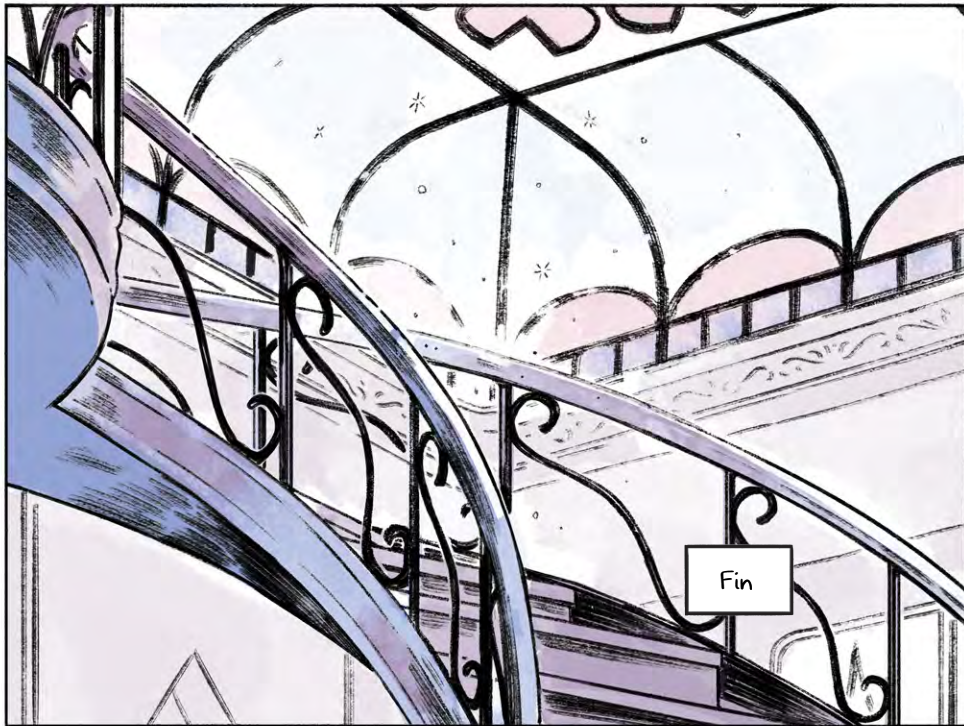












Fin

