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Treading, Not Running

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TREADING, not RUNNING

By Tori A. Rielly





Dedicated to
David F. Walker:
Thank you for a
year of wonderful
motivation, story
consultation,
and life advice.

Treading, not Running

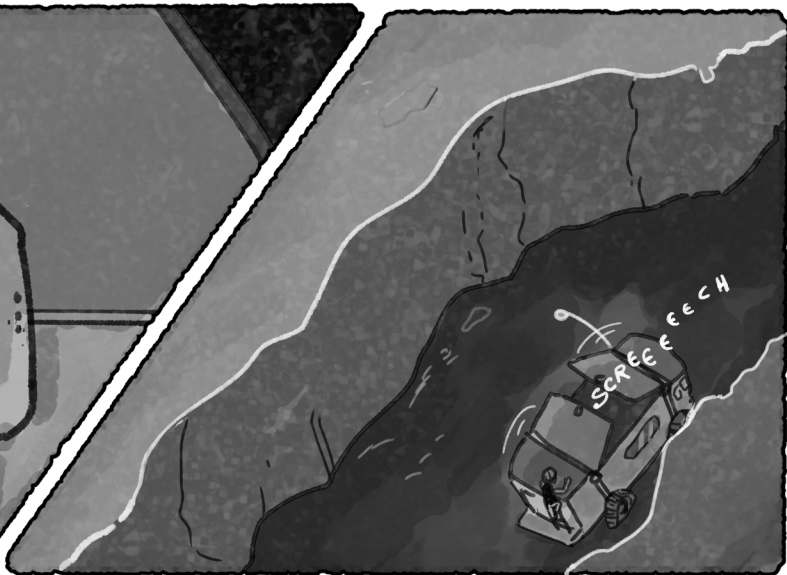
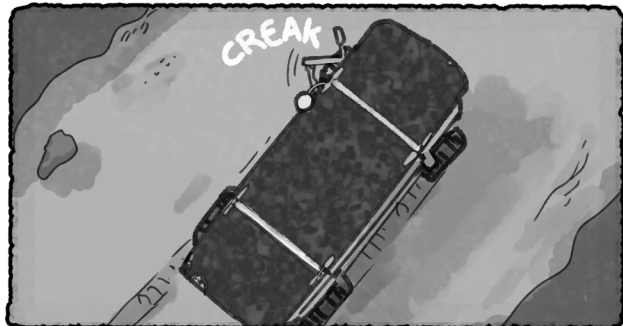
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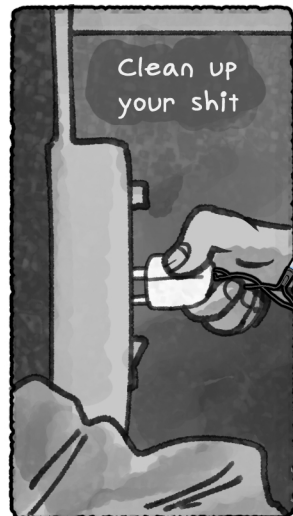
Contact:
tori.rielly@gmail.com



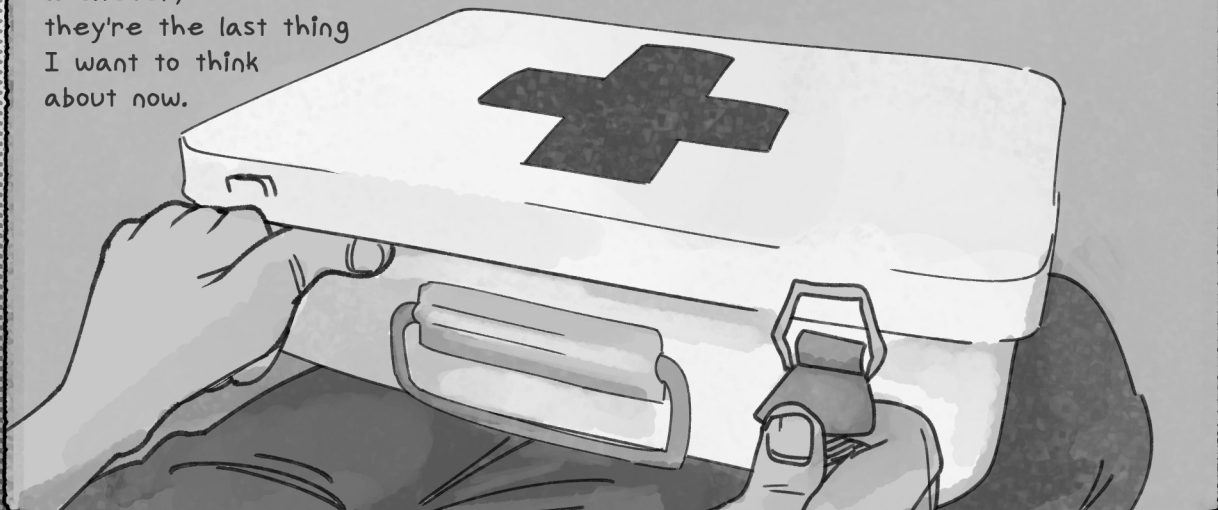








whatever,
they're the last thing
I want to think
about now.



It's been a long
day of running.



and I'm going



to take



a goddamn

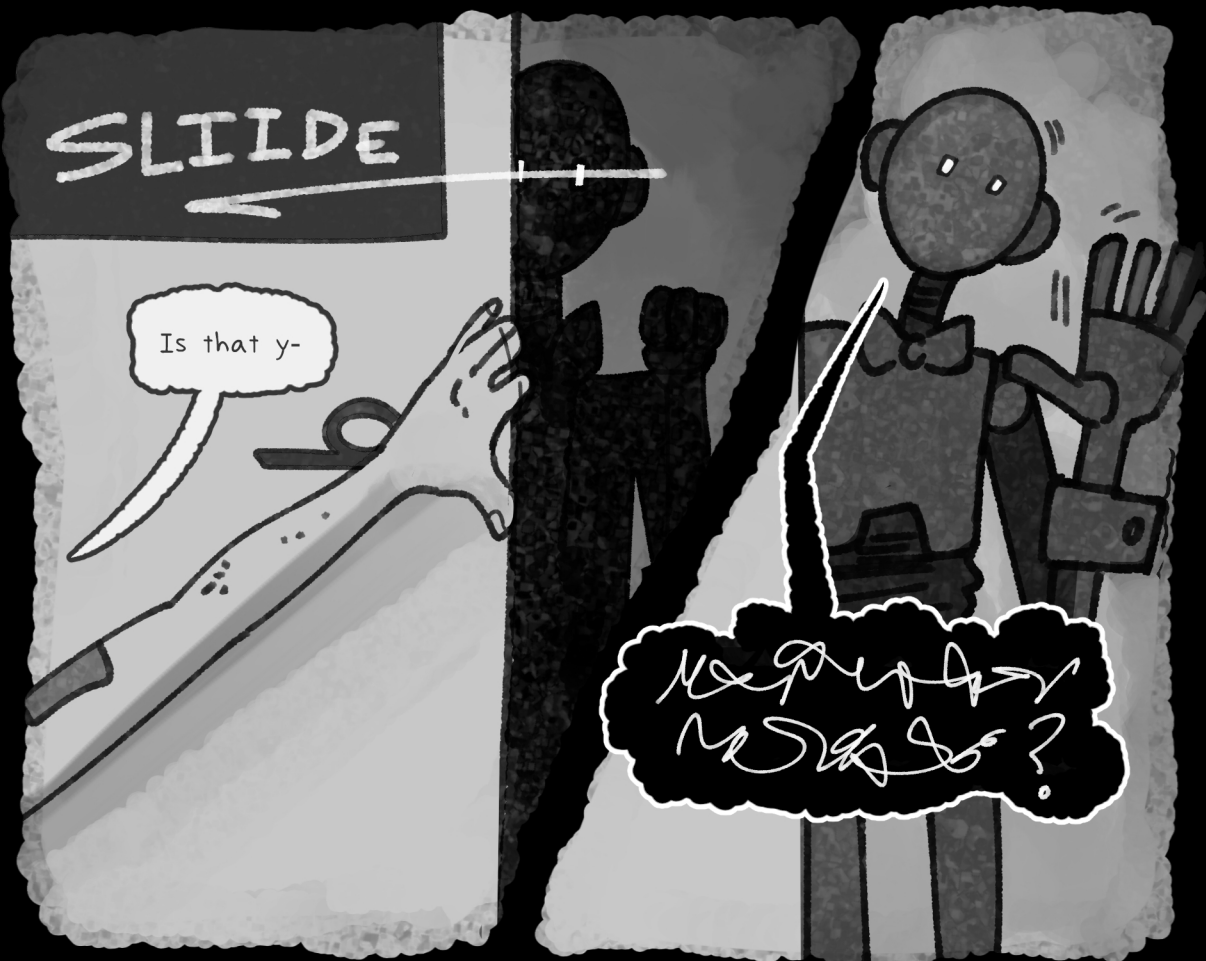


break.



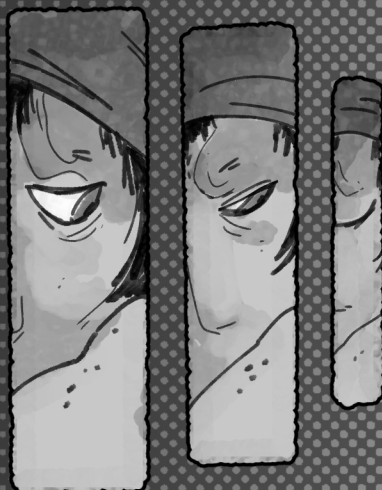




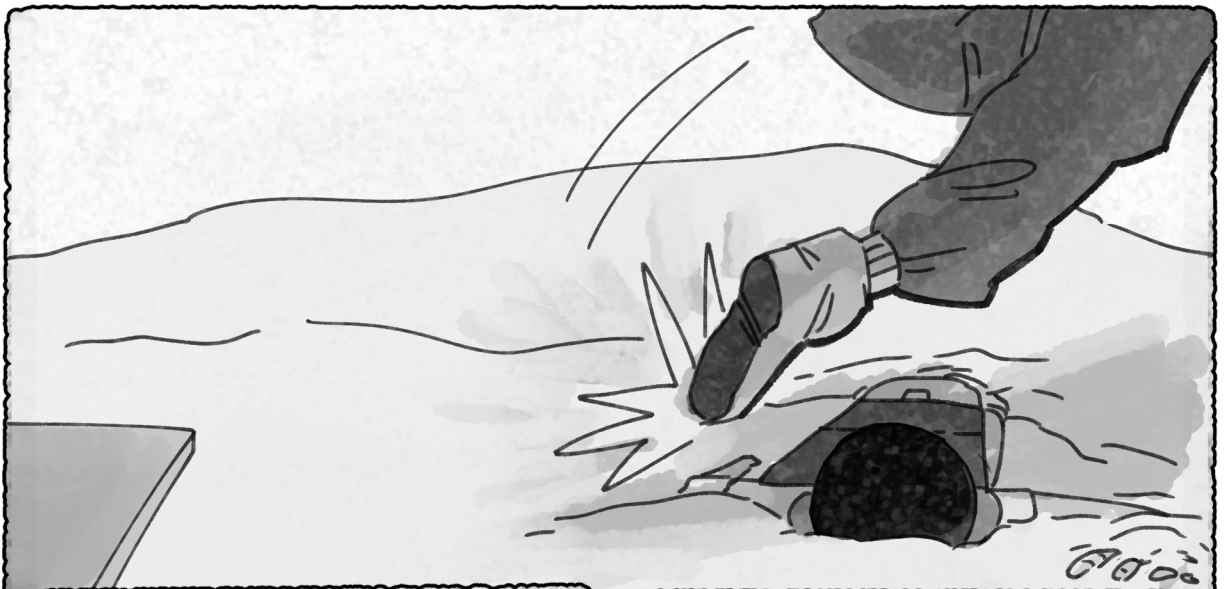








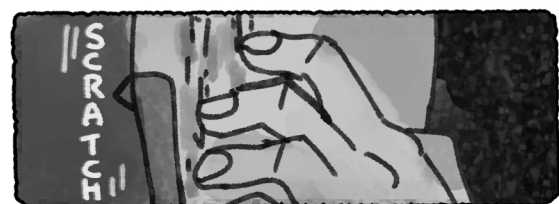
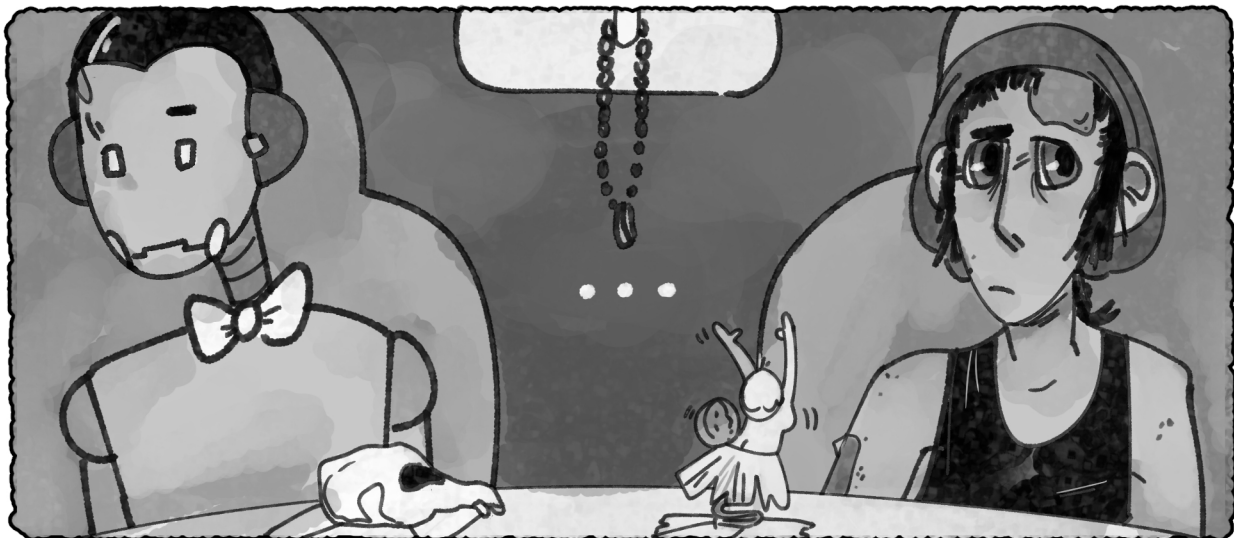













I sense that
this is awkward.

Would you like
me to play music?

No, I'm taking
a break



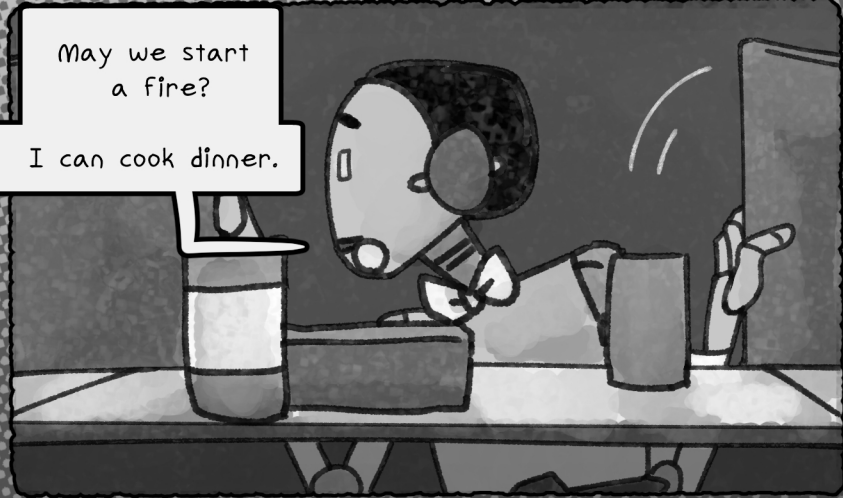


I am equipped with a simple therapy module if you would like to talk about it.

Come on Rattie, you've been working all morning.

Let's do something fun!





May we start
a fire?

I can cook dinner.



Fine.



Ugh, Ilka makes this
look so easy...



Here.



Thanks.



Hm- hmm hmm



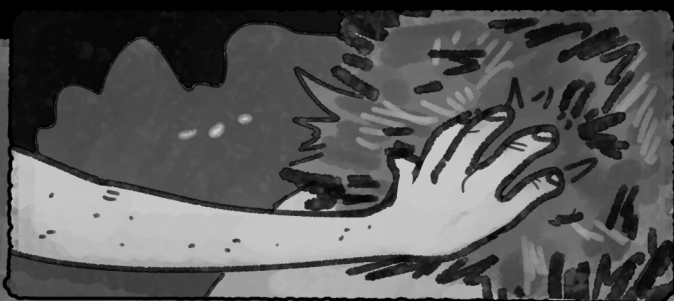
Add, what's taking so long?
The children need their snack.

...

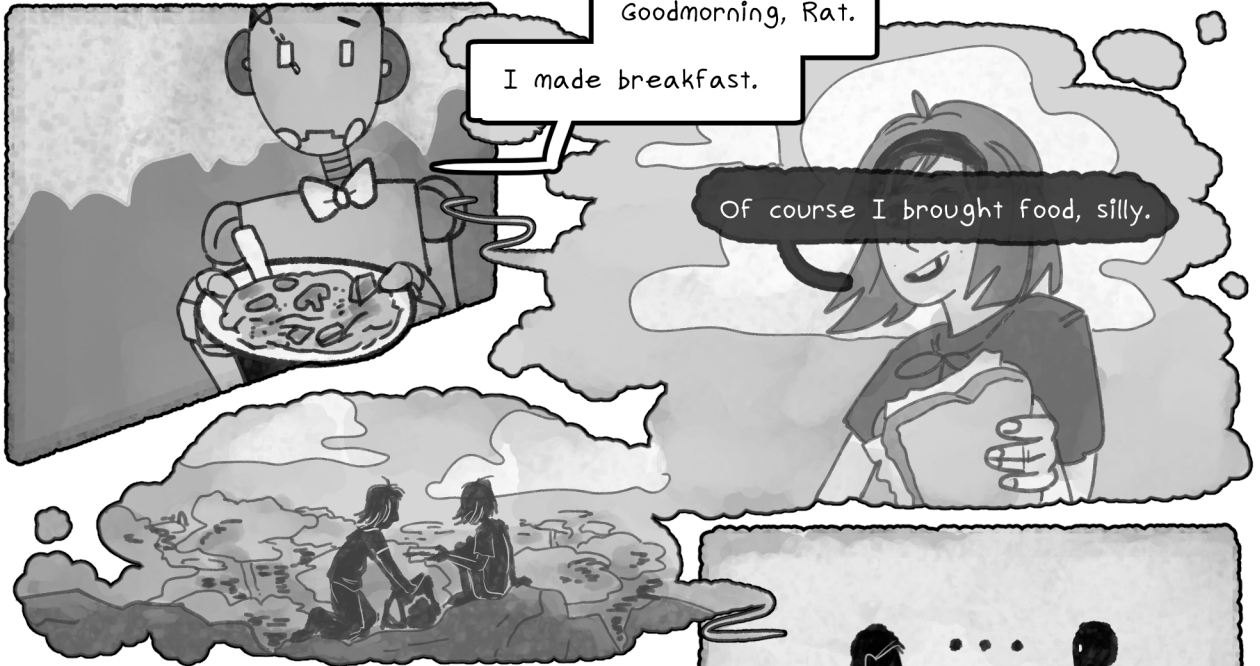
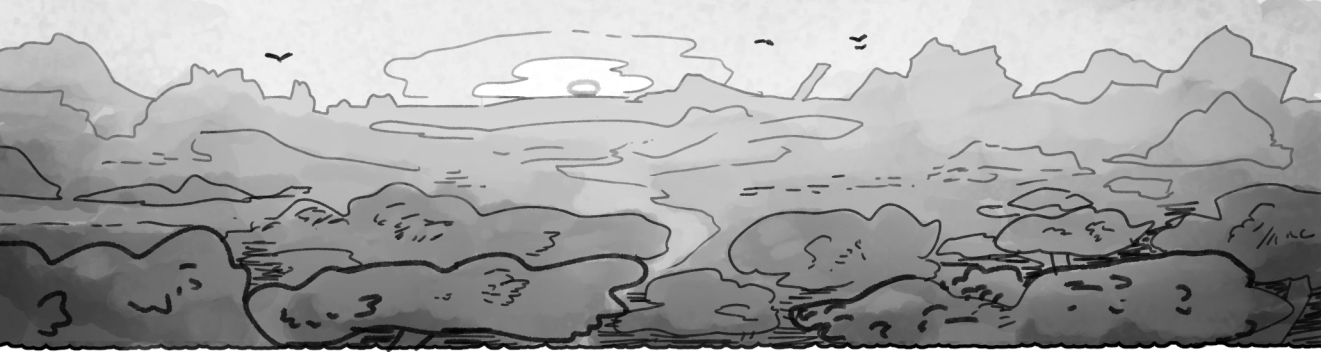












Goodmorning, Rat.

I made breakfast.

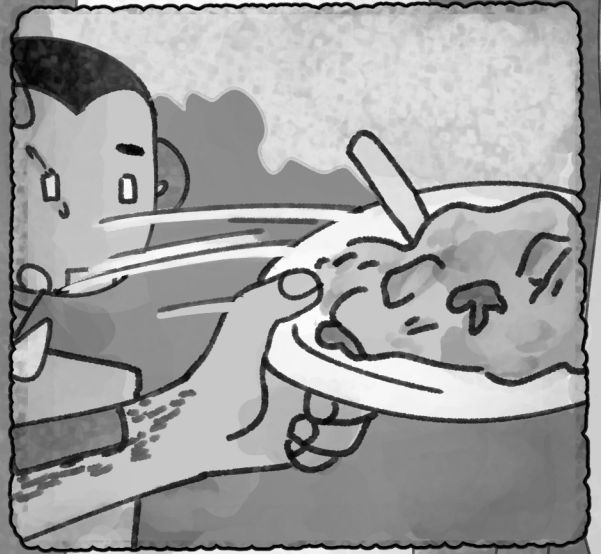
Of course I brought food, silly.



I didn't ask!

Oh-







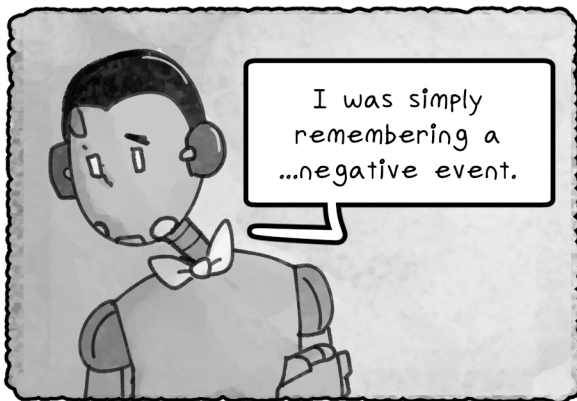
Now I know why
Ilka sent me to
the back when we
crossed the Waste.

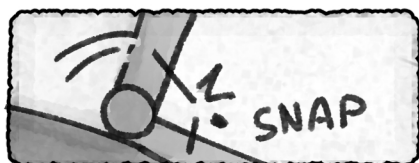
Ugh.



It's kinda late
for that guy.

...I'm aware.







G-get that away from me.

I followed dad here one night.

Isn't it cool!

It's kinda spooky down here.



around don't go in stop stop turn around please don't go in there what are

stop stop please stop don't leave go away turn around please don't leave go out stop

stop stop stop stop don't think don't look what are you doing why are you here w

turn around don't go in stop stop turn around please don't go in there where's the

ing stop stop stop please stop don't leave go away turn around leave get out stop

stop stop stop stop don't think don't look what are you doing why are you here w

re we doing here stop stop please turn around stop walking don't take another step

ow what happens you know what happens you know this place don't think about it

around don't go in stop stop turn around please don't go in there get out stop

stop stop stop stop please don't leave go away turn around leave get out stop

stop stop stop stop please don't leave go away turn around leave get out stop

are we doing here stop stop please turn around stop walking don't take another step

know what happens you know what happens you know this place don't think about it

around don't go in stop stop turn around please don't go in there get out stop

stop stop stop stop please don't leave go away turn around leave get out stop

stop stop stop stop please don't leave go away turn around leave get out stop

re we doing here stop stop please turn around stop walking don't take another step

ow what happens you know what happens you know this place don't think about it

around don't go in stop stop turn around please don't go in there get out stop

stop stop stop stop please don't leave go away turn around leave get out stop

stop stop stop stop please don't leave go away turn around leave get out stop

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stop stop stop stop please don't leave go away turn around leave get out stop

ow what happens you know what happens you know this place don't think about it





I recall the sensation
of helplessness.

Thinking that you are
to blame for something
horrible and unexpected.

It is not pleasant.



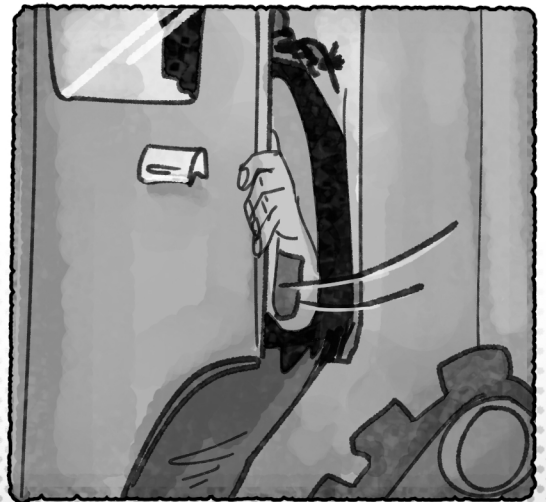
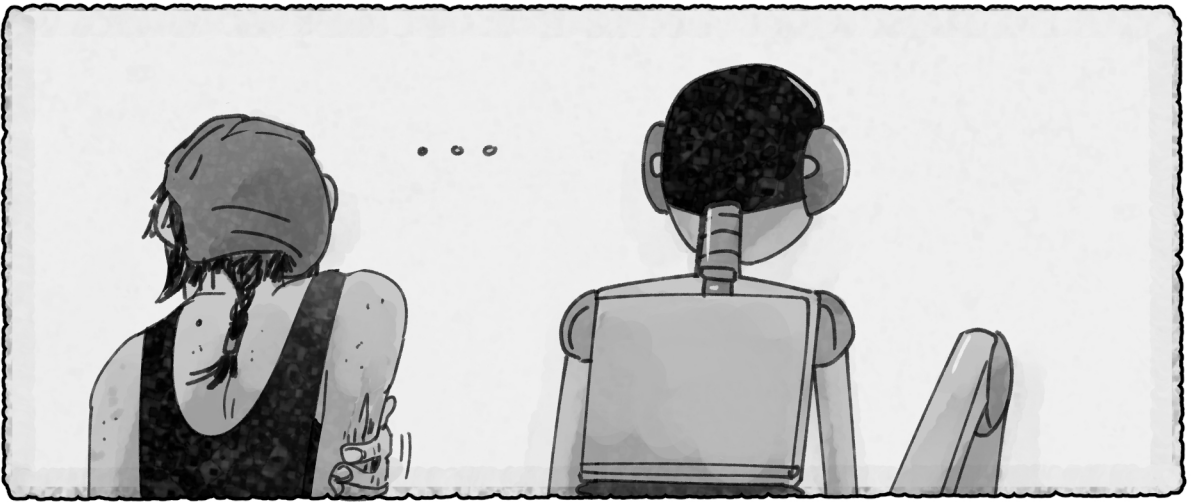
My family
was attacked
on a vacation.

I could not do anything
but count the bodies.

One was missing.

but...

I have been unable to search.





The Waste is supposed to be scary.

and I'm supposed to be hurting.

But I guess I feel... okay.

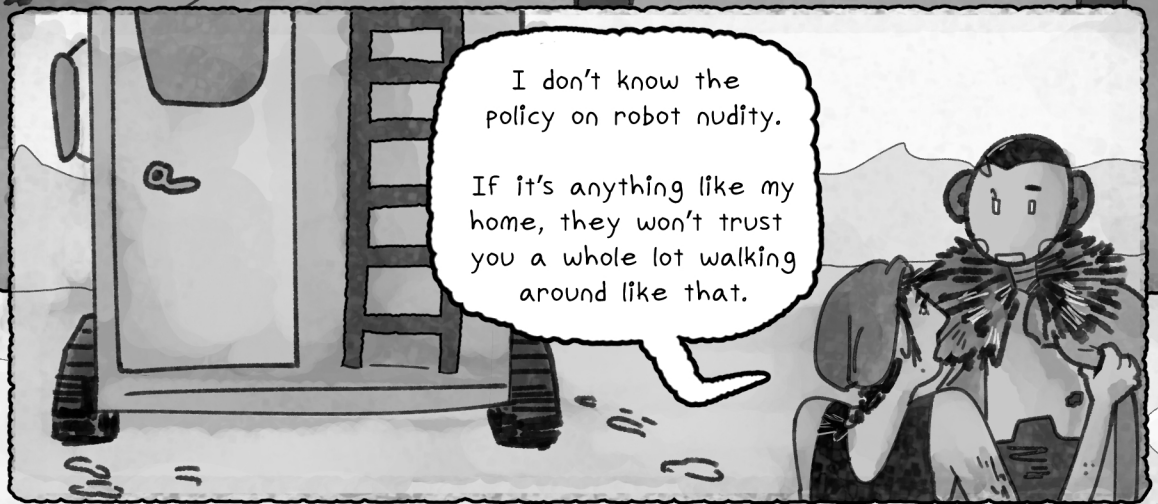
I should make it to the Mall today.

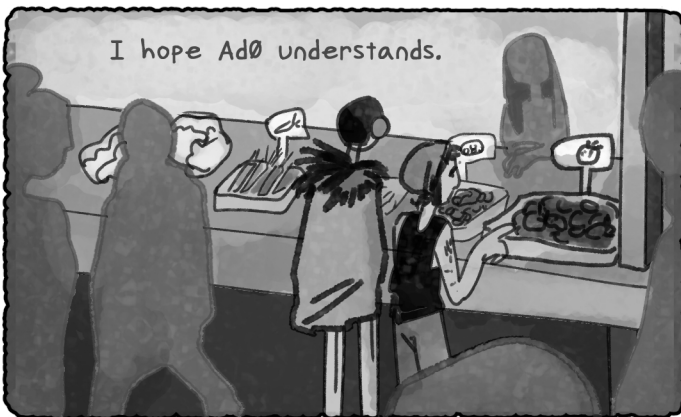
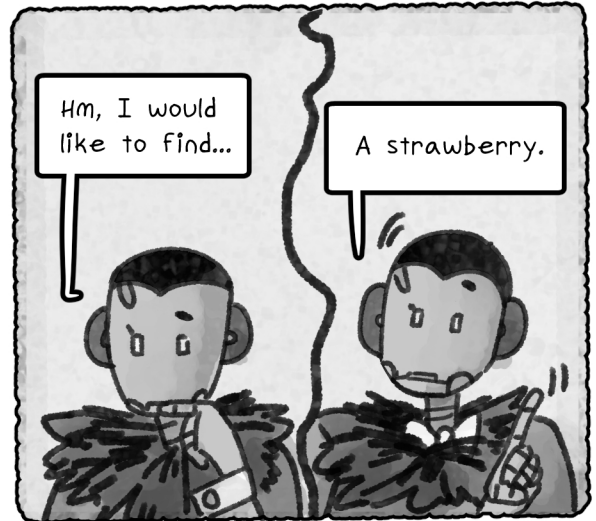
Even with this...

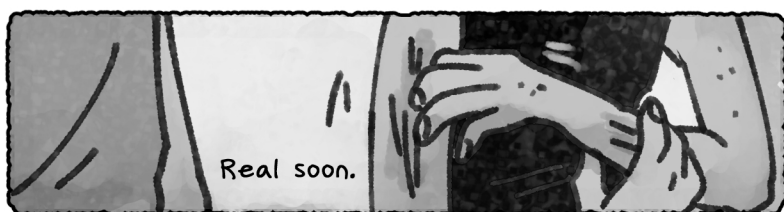
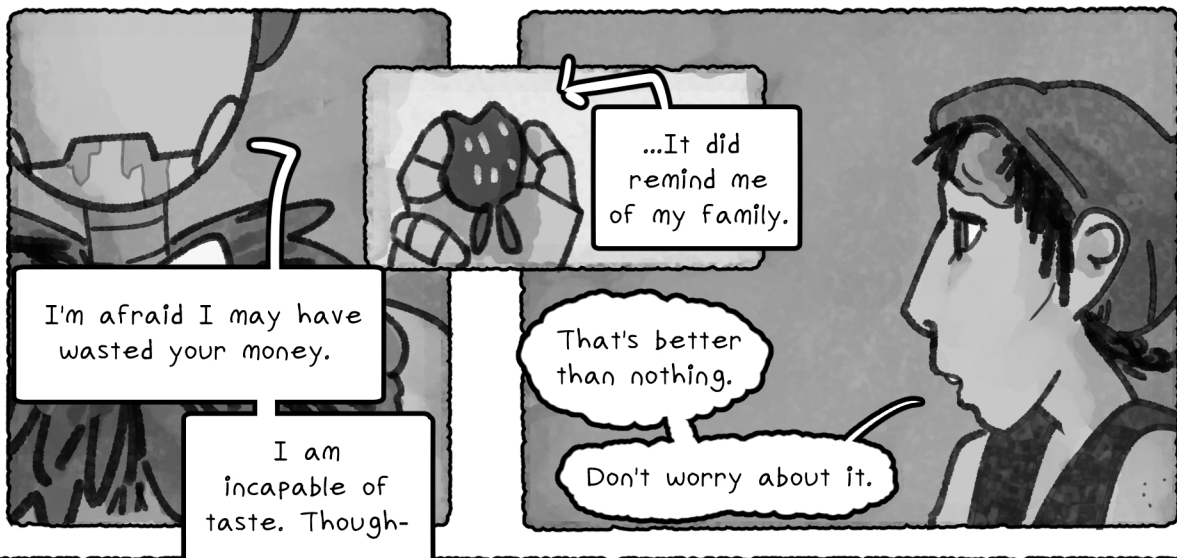
Ilka is going to kill me.

Another reason
not to turn
around.













Is he...
looking for me?



What a goddamn liar.

I can't
deal with
him right
now.

Is everything
alright?

Yeah.

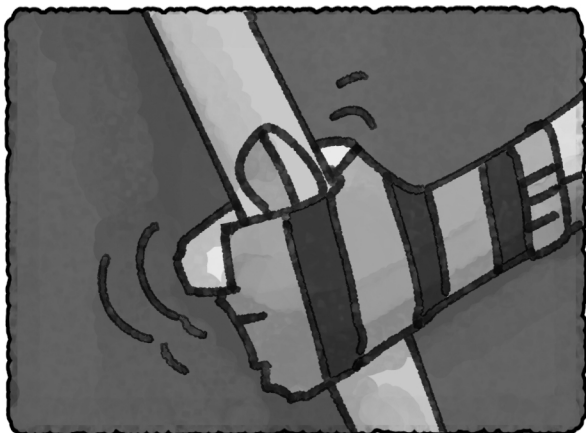
I just
thought of
something I
wanted to do.



I have to.

PAT





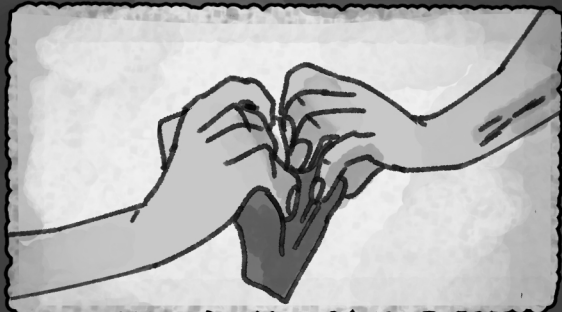
oh no oh no oh no oh why am I so fucking stupid



Rat!



why why why why why why why why



Rat.

May we talk first, please.



Were you trying to sell me?





I need the sun to shine
or I will be unable to move.

You need water and food
and a certain amount of sleep
to function well.

But you do not need this.

Do you want it?

...

I don't want it.

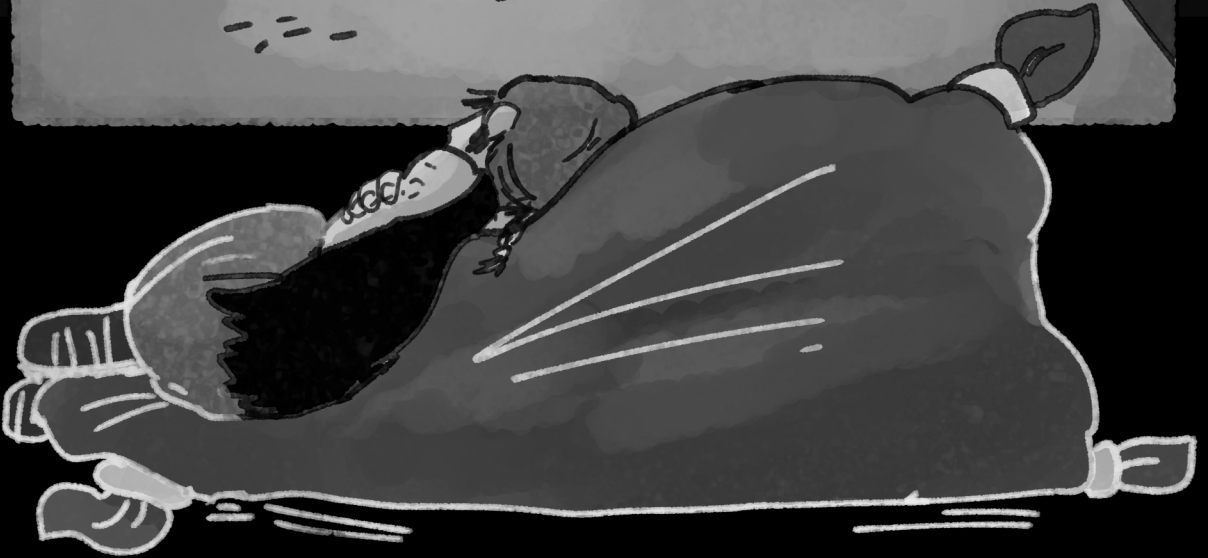
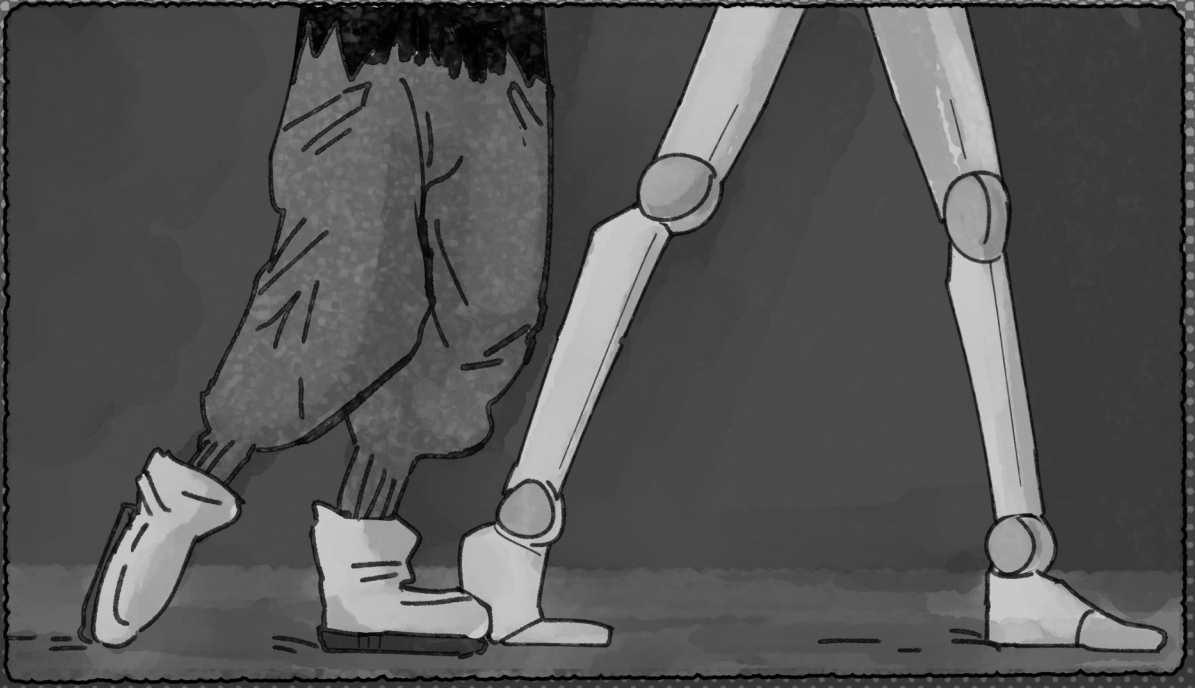


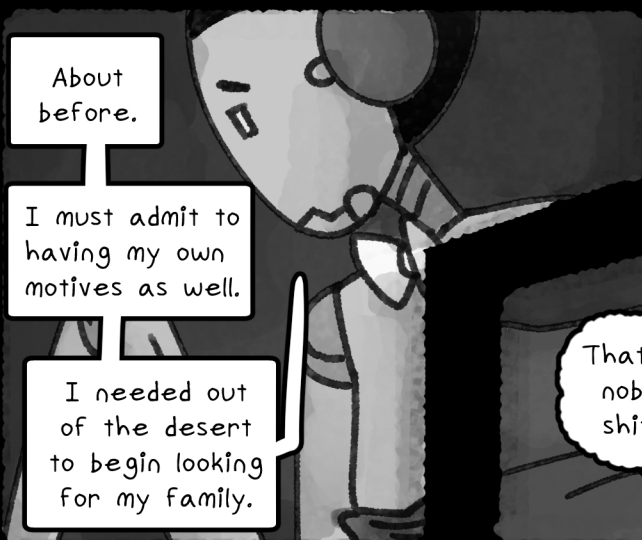


It hurts.

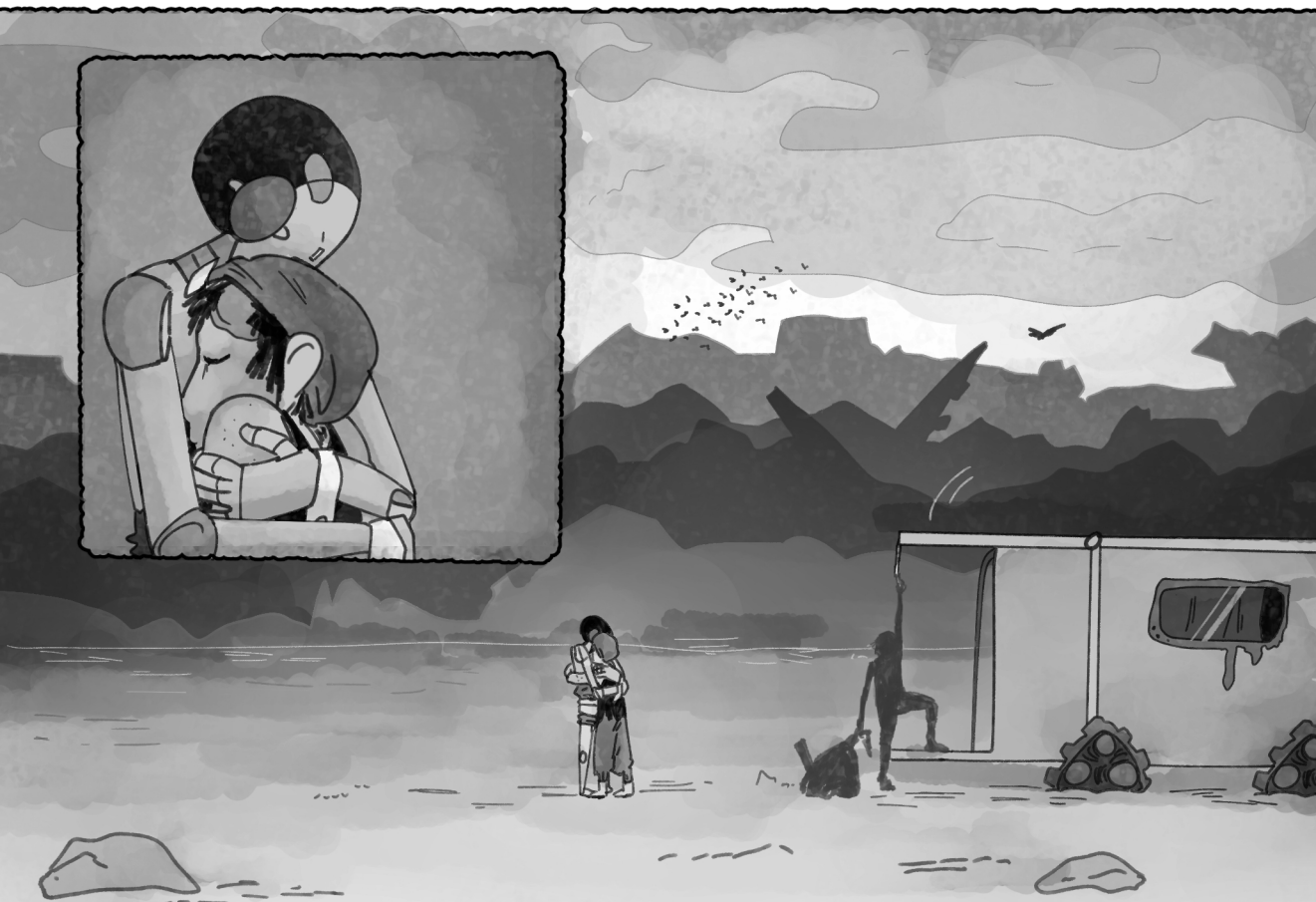
How much I miss home.













How you holding up, kiddo?

It's been awful quiet.



Okay.

I'm just thinking.

...About Marnie.

Oh shit.

Did that robot really give you her-



Yeah.

You never talk about her, I thought you must have forgotten.

Never.

Ilka asked me to keep a lid on it. You know how she is with emotions.



Oh, I know.

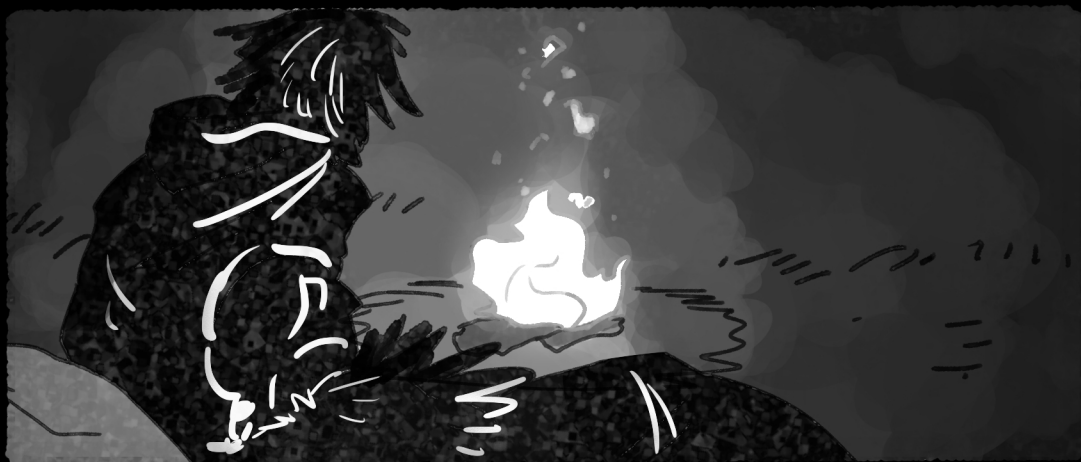
Hah.

No, I still think of Marnie every day.

I want to ask if he blames me.
But I'm scared of the answer.

So do I.







Possum Head is acting
weird this morning.



It takes me a while
to realize why.



Hey kid.



My eyes are tired,
you want to bring us
home?

Sure.



He's trying to be a dad again.

I'm not his kid, and he has no
idea what to do with me.

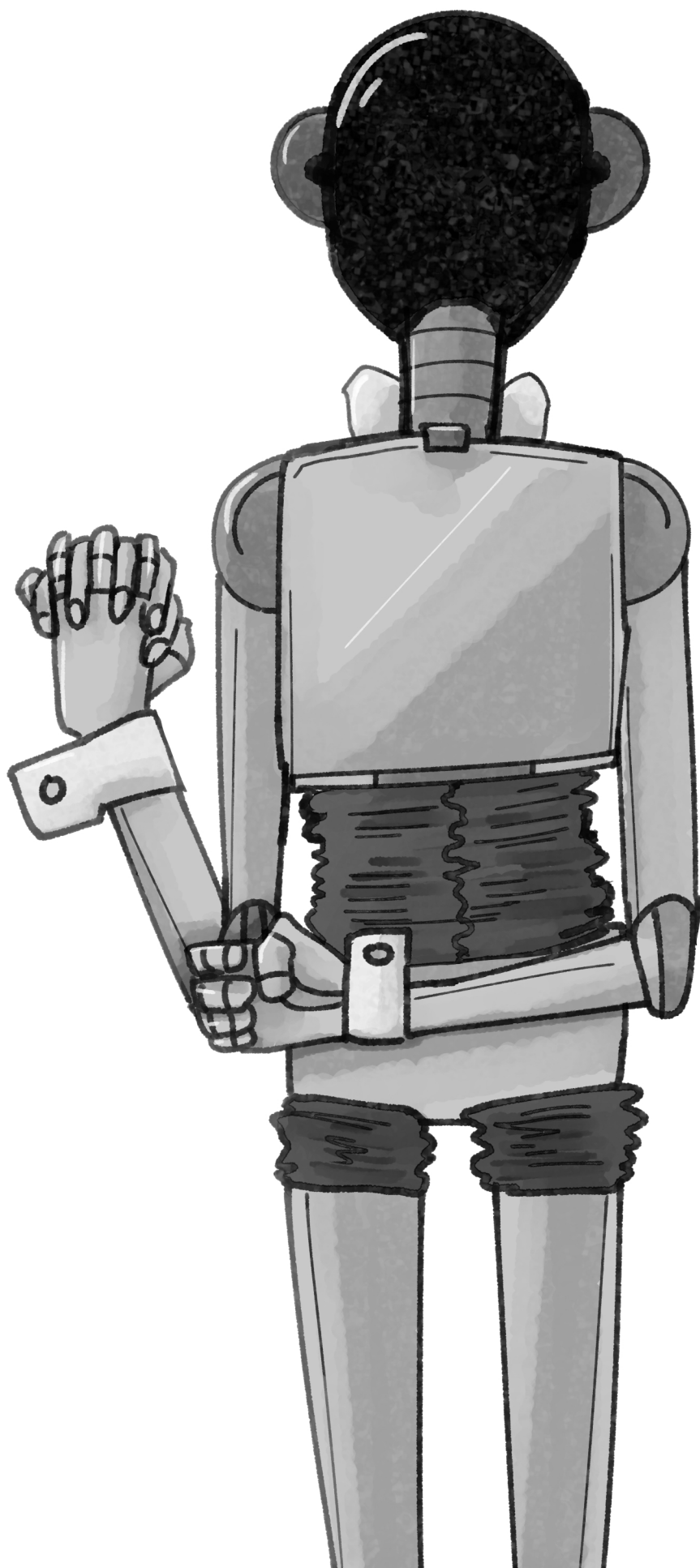
But he's trying.













Thank you.

Find more stories at
www.toriarie.com

Rat has 2,085 miles to sort out their
reservations about trading a lost robot for drugs.

Things don't go as planned.

