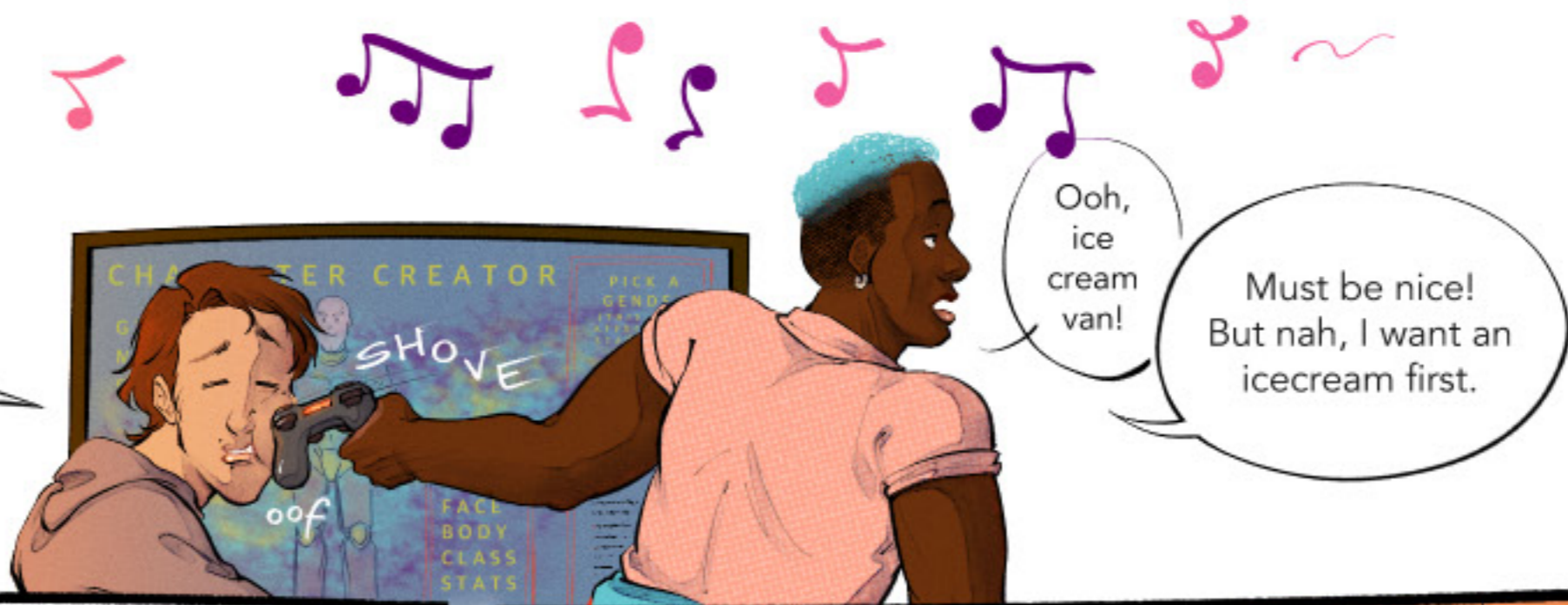


Can we just--
make a character--?
I don't suffer gender so
I don't normally think so
hard about this stuff.



Ooh,
ice
cream
van!

Must be nice!
But nah, I want an
icecream first.



Look, I'm sorry, it's just -
people have been fighting
for lesbians and gays for
longer than gender identity,
it's not my fault I don't
know as much about
that stuff yet--

Trans people
have been in the fight
since **FOREVER**,
why does everyone
conveniently forget--

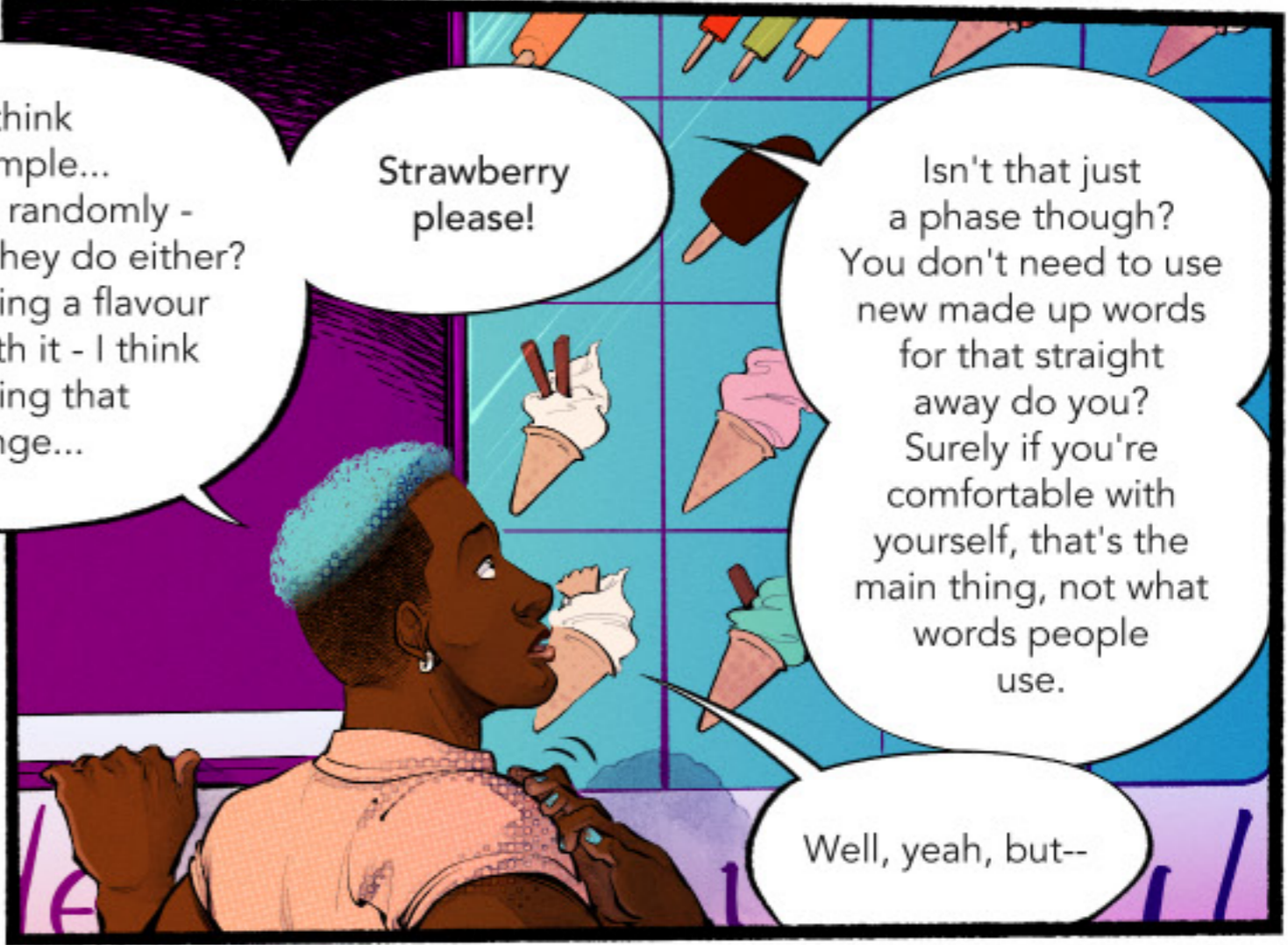


SHHH!
You know I support you.
I just think it's silly there's loads
of people who can't decide
like you have.
I don't wake up feeling like
wearing a skirt and fancy being
a girl today - it's stupid that
they can just change their
gender day to day.



Scoop of
mint choc
please!

I don't think
it's that simple...
I didn't decide randomly -
and I don't think they do either?
It's not like picking a flavour
and sticking with it - I think
it's something that
can change...



Strawberry
please!

Isn't that just
a phase though?
You don't need to use
new made up words
for that straight
away do you?
Surely if you're
comfortable with
yourself, that's the
main thing, not what
words people
use.

Well, yeah, but--



AHEM. There may be
new words,
but we've been
here for **years**.



People have been experimenting with
gender for centuries. Look at drag, look at
butch and femme lesbian culture.

Just because
we're not using the new
words, like non-binary,
gender fluid, gender queer,
doesn't mean those things
only started in the last
five or ten years.

So...
what are **you**,
then?





I don't know!
And that's fine too.

Nonbinary then?

You're trying to put me in a box that makes **YOU** more comfortable, now.



But you're not a man, you're not a woman, so you must be in the middle!

You're thinking too straight! Hehehe.

Look at all these flavours - mint and strawberry aren't at either end, and a flake isn't dead center between them! There's a whole spectrum, and some are similar or close to each other, some are completely different, but they don't all fit along a neat line from male to female, blue to pink.

I'm not the **purple** you think I am.



Okay but what were you **BORN** as? Male or female?

Wrong again!



What do you mean, 'wrong'?

There aren't just male and female sexes, either, you know. Sheesh. Don't make me point at all the different icecream **SHAPES** now...

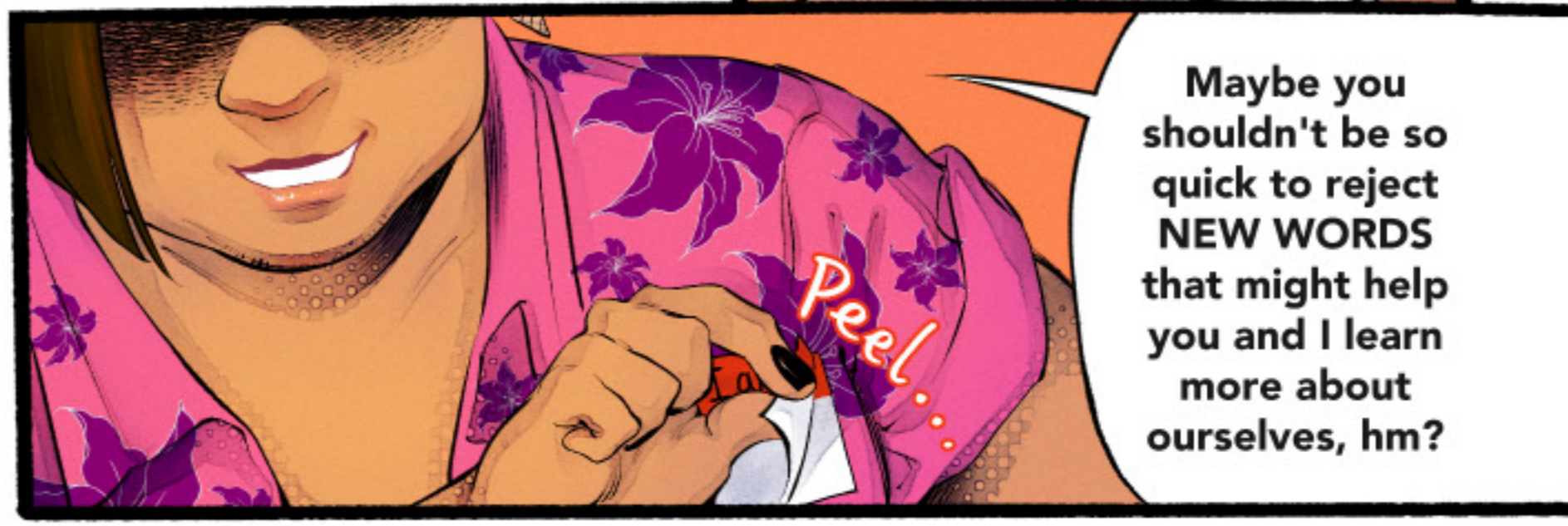


You know, some doctors see newborn babies or teenagers with parts that don't match up to their ideas of what they should look like - intersex people, in other words - so they **ALTER** them. Because they decided there are only two sexes, you see, and you have to **FIT**. But what if you **DON'T**?

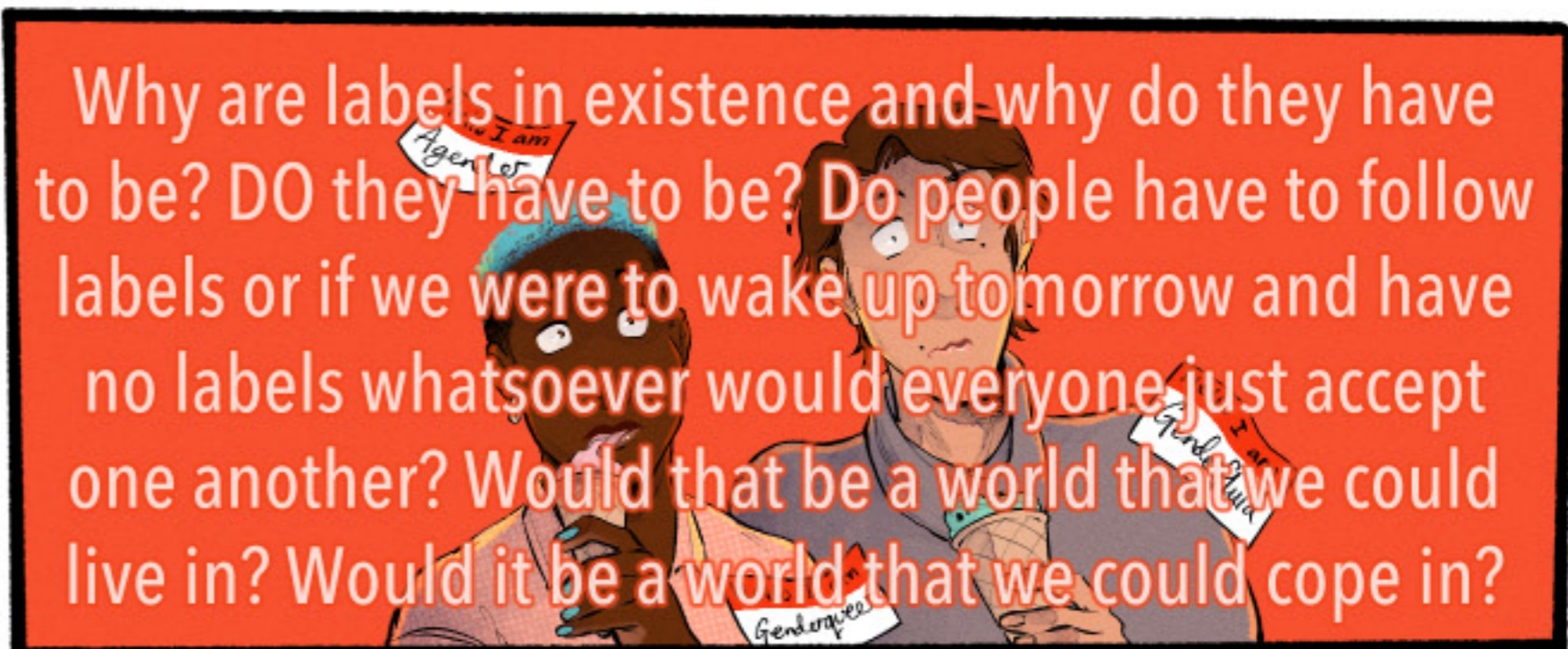
I've never even heard of intersex people... is that what you are then?

Not sure yet!

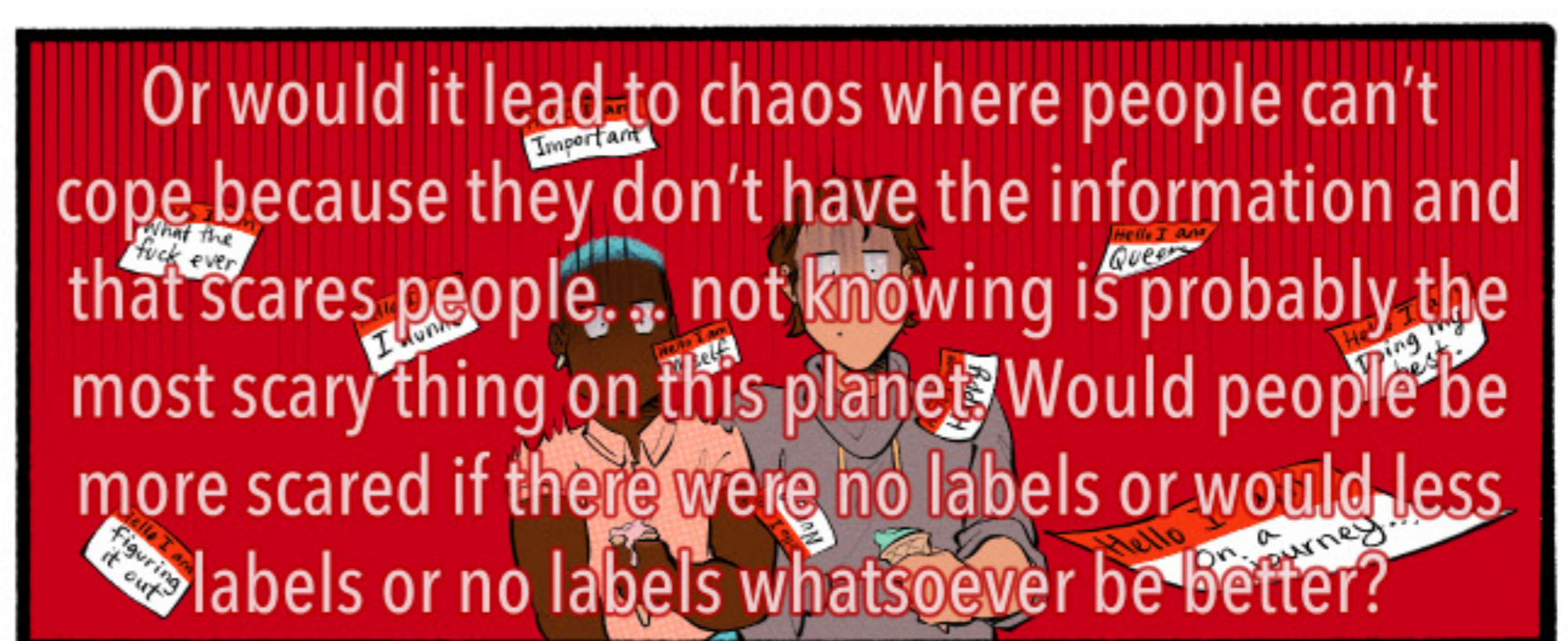
Ugh, how are we supposed to *understand* you if you don't tell us what you **are**?



Maybe you shouldn't be so quick to reject **NEW WORDS** that might help you and I learn more about ourselves, hm?



Why are labels in existence and why do they have to be? **DO** they have to be? Do people have to follow labels or if we were to wake up tomorrow and have no labels whatsoever would everyone just accept one another? Would that be a world that we could live in? Would it be a world that we could cope in?



Or would it lead to chaos where people can't cope because they don't have the information and that scares people. **not knowing** is probably the most scary thing on this planet. Would people be more scared if there were no labels or would **less labels** or no labels whatsoever be better?

Who knows?

SHUT!

Chapter 2:
How is gender
Experienced?



LOCK ON!!!

THREAT LEVEL: MINIMAL

Sigh.

You're being paranoiid. It's only gonna be a problem if you make it a problem... you're perfectly safe.

THREAT: PASSED

Am I Sasha?

I walk places a lot and people are always looking - they say things, they whistle, they do things - I always feel like I'm being attacked because I'm a woman. I know it sounds stupid...

Don't you just get flattered by it?

Wh-- no! It's not a compliment, I'm being objectified!

I guess you're right - I do hate when I finish pole dancing and guys continue to look at me like a piece of meat. But I feel like I HAVE to look good - if I come out without make-up, I feel rubbish.

Well yeah because if you don't wear make-up you look ill, if you have short hair and don't wear skirts, you MUST be a lesbian. Why do we have to use up all our energy doing ourselves up just to have value as a person? I barely have energy as it is...

I have to at least look a **LITTLE** bit like a woman to get by, I suppose.

Oh for sure. And I don't... hate being feminine. When I finished school and grew my hair again, I did start wearing make-up and experimenting - I actually kind of enjoy it!



But when you're in school and you have to go buy the 'right' kind of skirt and sit in a 'ladylike' way... forcing me to be feminine doesn't feel good.

At least the boys only had to wear the head covering!

Yeah, I mean, it wasn't fine for me to shave my long hair off unless I said it was for charity. But boys have it hard too! At least we CAN wear trousers. If a man wears a dress, everyone will stare.



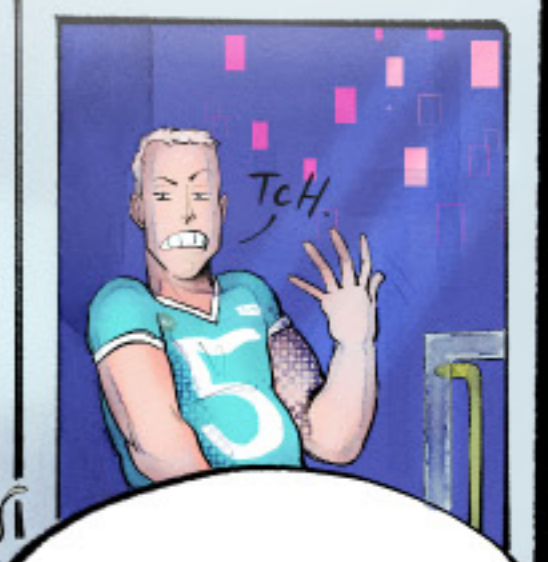
And people do nice things for you when you're a woman, like holding the door open and giving you lifts! My guy friends don't get that.



Yeah but think of the pressure on men to be masculine, then! They've gotta lose their virginity fast, they get shamed if they don't, it's so damaging.



It's not surprising some become incels - it's easy to blame not having any sex on us instead of their own toxic masculinity.



I still think we have it worse. They can have opinions, they can walk down the street without being assaulted, they can do whatever they want. I can be a primary school teacher, sure, but can I work in advanced STEM? No! I've gotta listen to them talking down to me or telling me to--



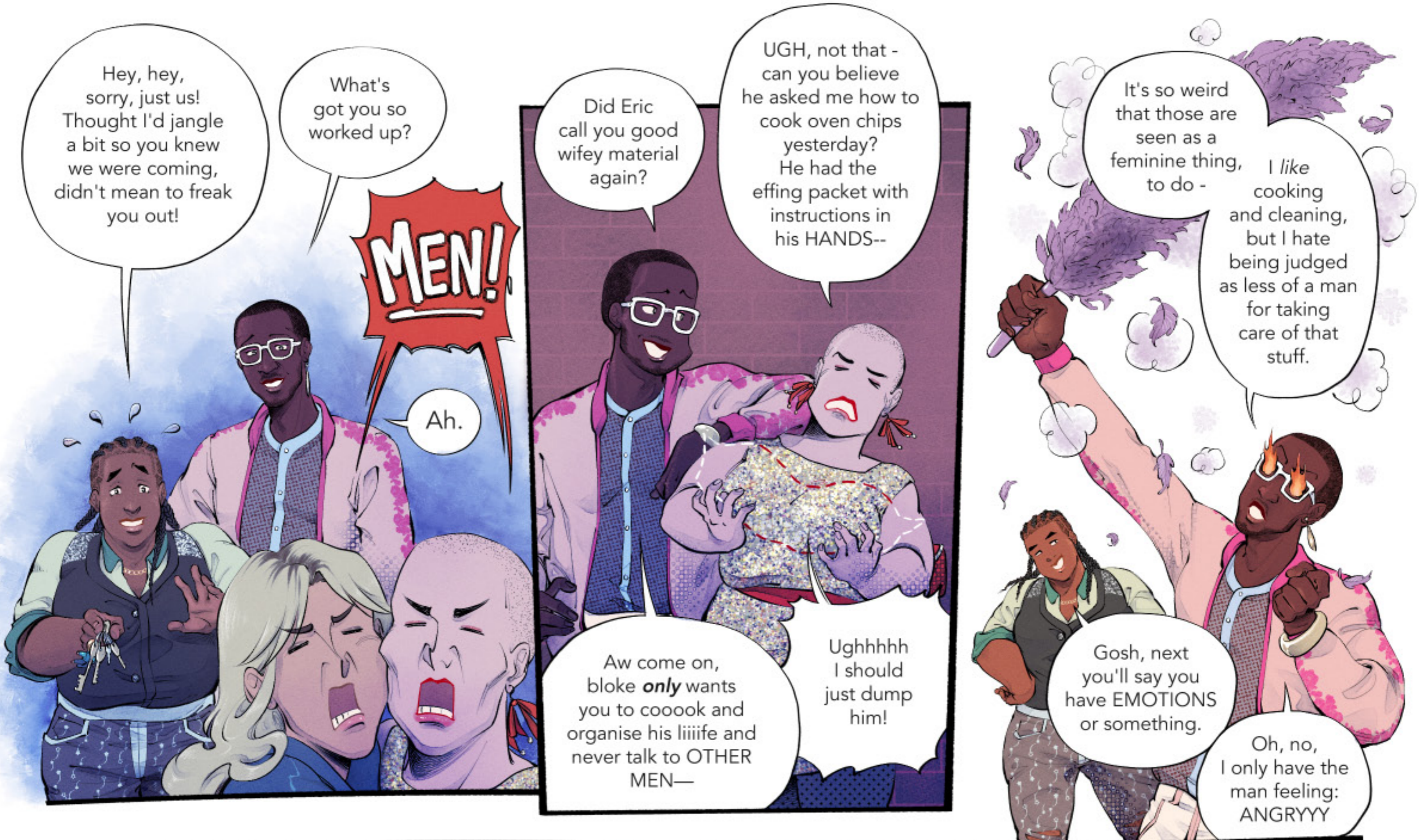
SHUT UP!



Just because I'm not sitting there looking pretty and smiling and laughing at their jokes - I want to have smart conversations as an EQUAL! Why does everyone have to focus so much on looks and clothes and--



Uh, maybe we should walk a little faster--



Hey, hey, sorry, just us! Thought I'd jangle a bit so you knew we were coming, didn't mean to freak you out!

What's got you so worked up?

MEN!

Ah.

Did Eric call you good wifey material again?

UGH, not that - can you believe he asked me how to cook oven chips yesterday? He had the effing packet with instructions in his HANDS--

It's so weird that those are seen as a feminine thing, to do -

I like cooking and cleaning, but I hate being judged as less of a man for taking care of that stuff.

Aw come on, bloke **only** wants you to coook and organise his liiiiife and never talk to OTHER MEN--

Ughhhhh I should just dump him!

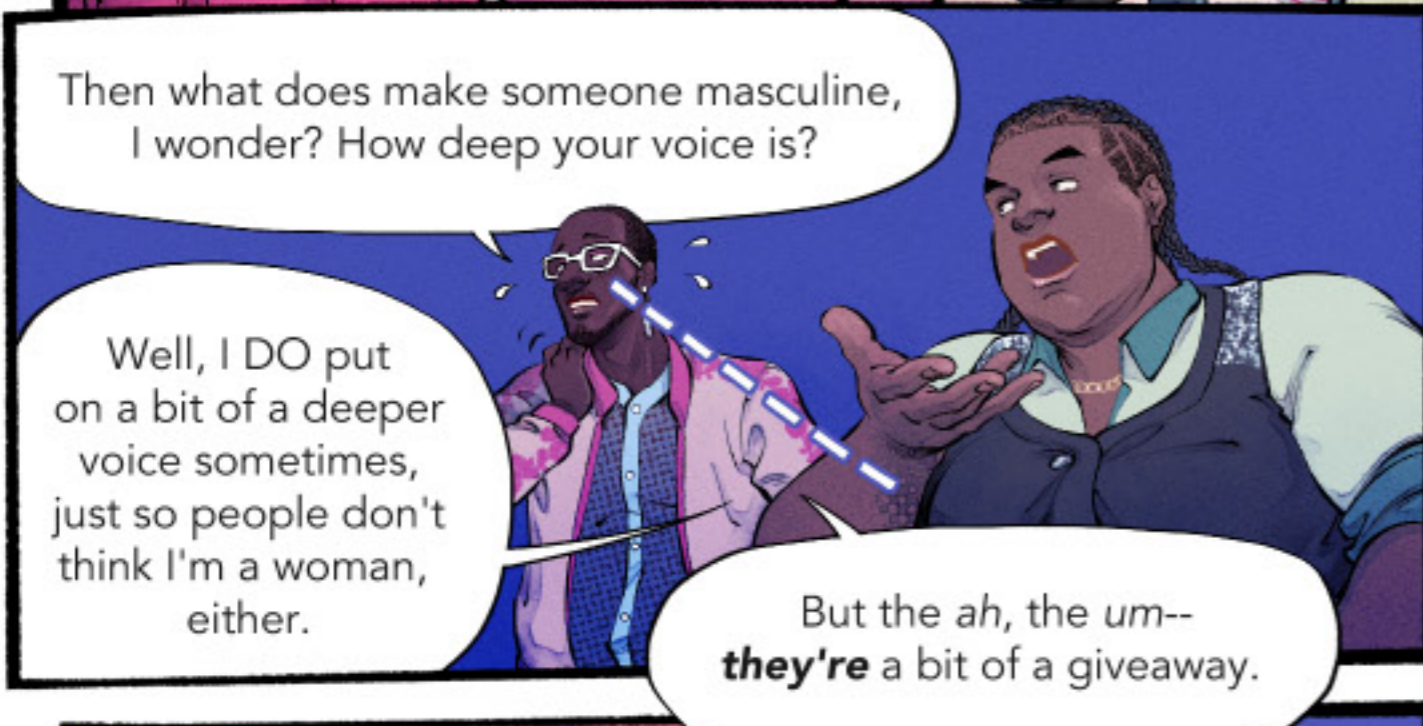
Gosh, next you'll say you have EMOTIONS or something.

Oh, no, I only have the man feeling: ANGRYYY



It's so dumb. Why are we separated like this? Like if you wanna stay at home and I want to be a scientist, why is that a big deal? Why can't we just wear what we want and do what we like?

Tell me about it. I get all my clothes in the men's aisles, I never shop in the women's one, it's just more comfortable for me. But that doesn't make me a man!



Then what does make someone masculine, I wonder? How deep your voice is?

Well, I DO put on a bit of a deeper voice sometimes, just so people don't think I'm a woman, either.

But the ah, the um-- they're a bit of a giveaway.

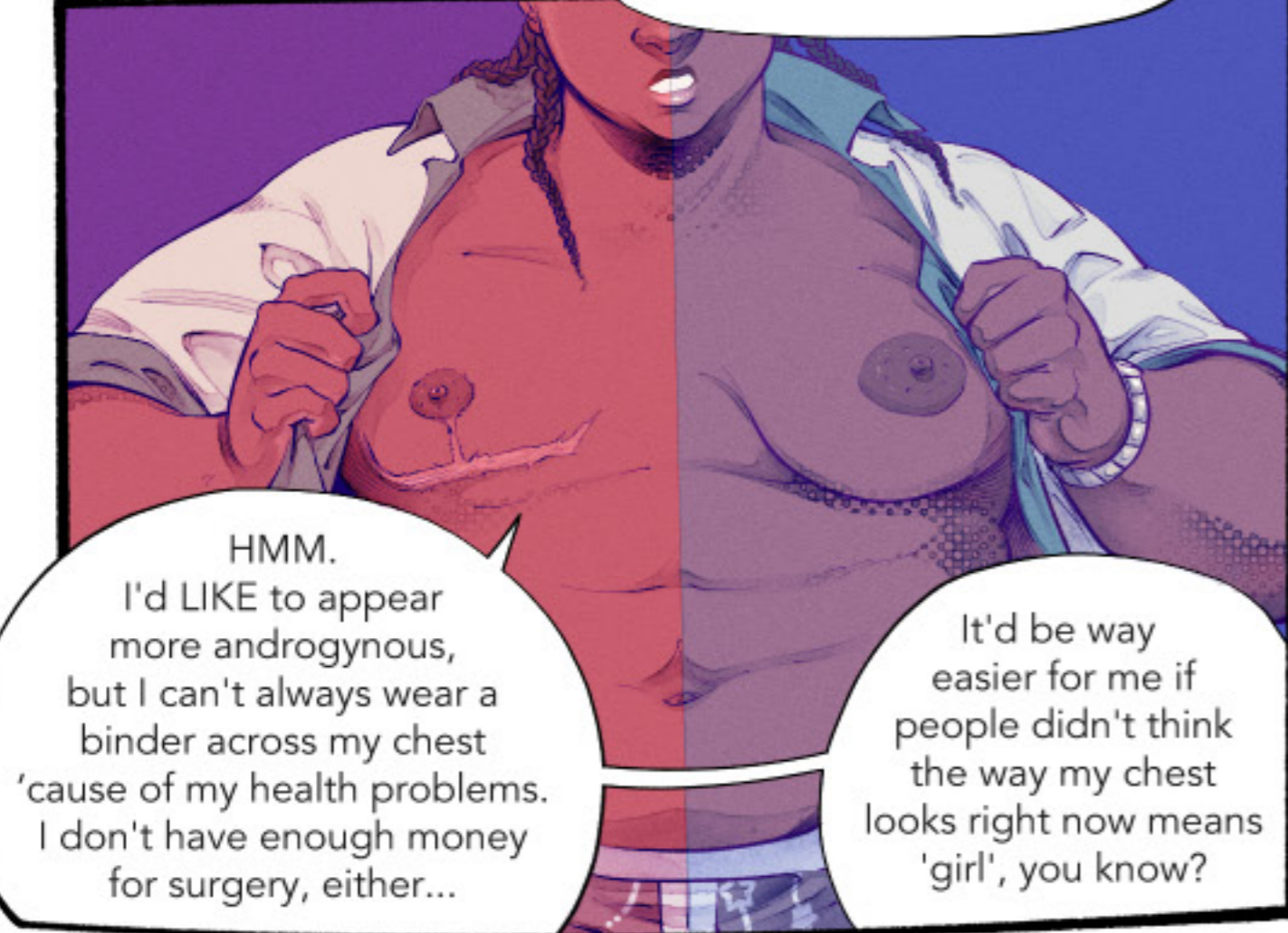


I suppose instead of being your real self comfortably, you're doing your best to blend in? I was kinda the same before I came out - like I didn't wear such bright clothes, I guess? I didn't want to be noticed.

Yeah, just - just don't perceive me!

I don't wanna be seen today, thank you!

HAHAHAHAHA



HMM. I'd LIKE to appear more androgynous, but I can't always wear a binder across my chest 'cause of my health problems. I don't have enough money for surgery, either...

It'd be way easier for me if people didn't think the way my chest looks right now means 'girl', you know?



Let's just forget about all that and go have a nice time, eh?

Ah, ladies, come in! Free entry for **you three...** got enough here for a gang bang!



Ah-haa... one sec.



You alright, River?

Yeah-- yeah. I just-- I'm not TRYING to take up womens space, y'know, but it happens anyway. It hurts, not passing because I don't have my binder.

Every time it happens I think about how hard it is for everyone like me to be spotted.



I have enough trouble as it is trying to match my gender expression with my gender identity... sometimes I like wearing the binder, and some trousers with a cool waistcoat - but then other days I'll just get that urge to wear a flowy skirt and my high boots and I wonder if I'm just a big faker...

You're not. It's fine for you to dress however you want! **Clothes don't HAVE genders!**

But people still look at me and decide man or woman, there's no other option for them - Ha, you know, I get more euphoria when they can't figure me out and have to ask which I am!

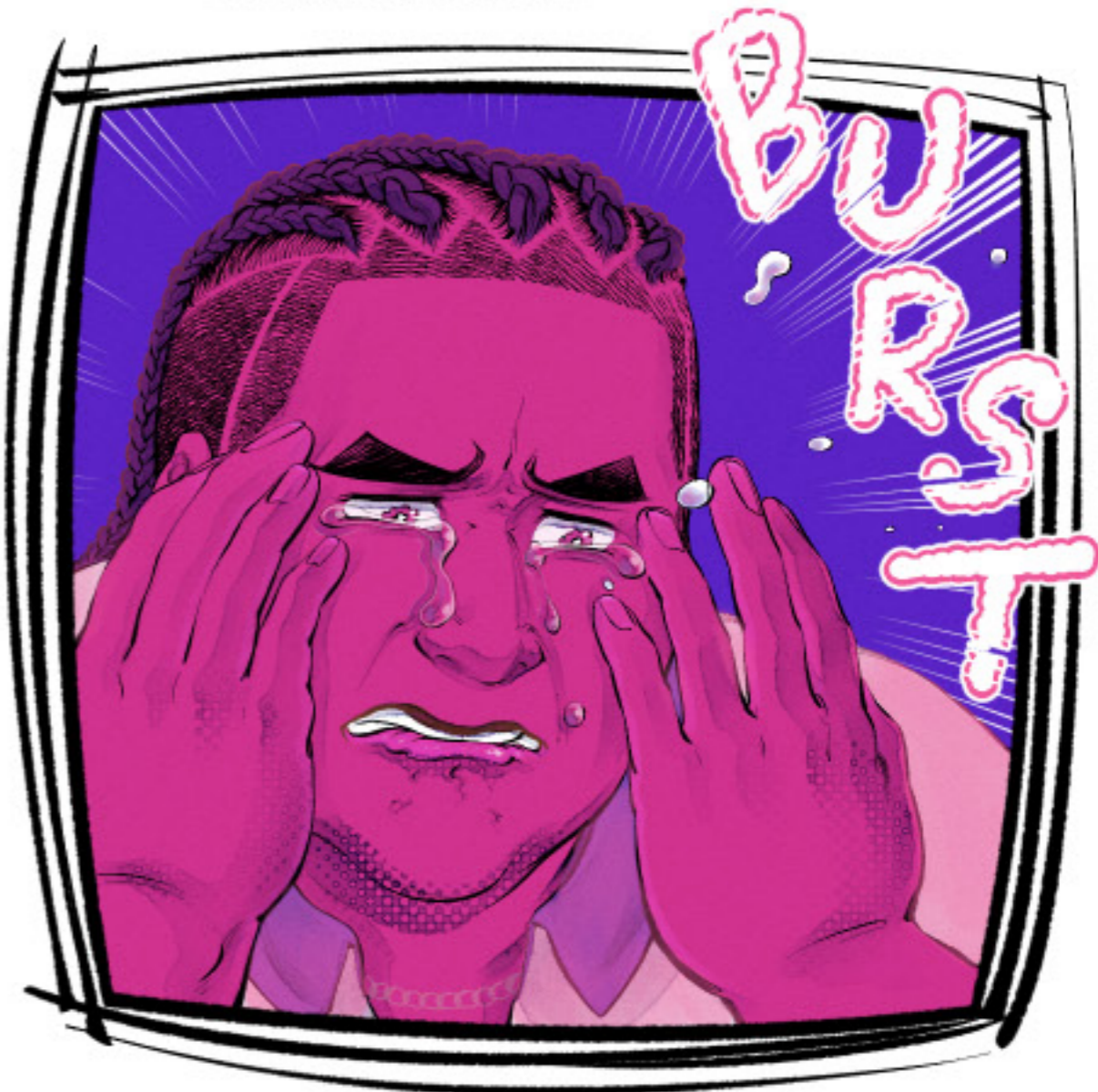


HEY!!

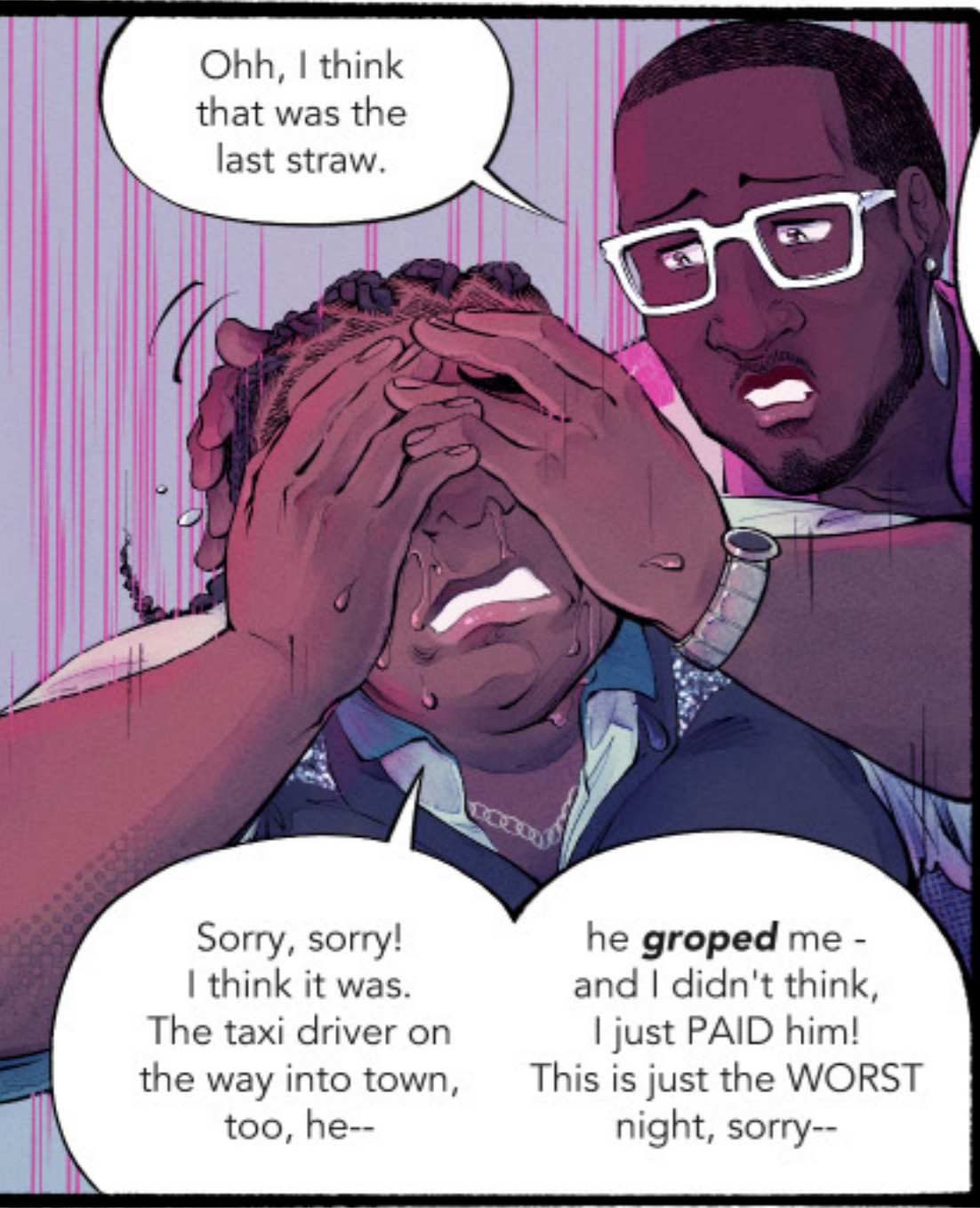
Would you shut UP?!

oh for fucks sake, man—

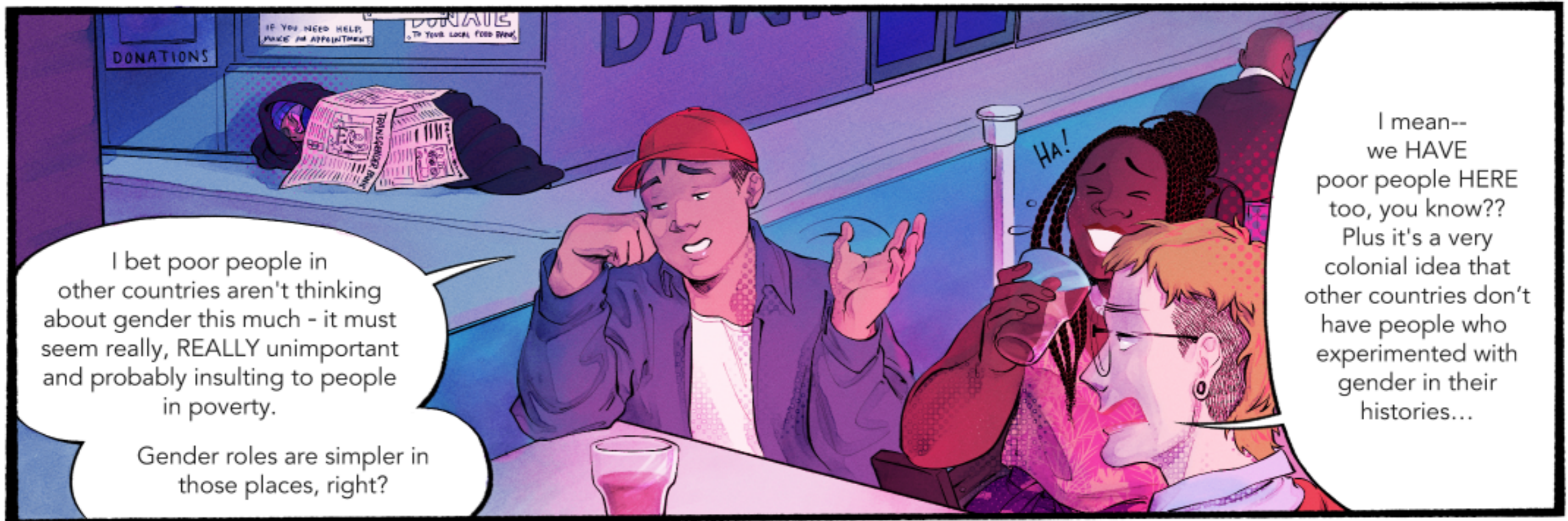
You been sitting on sweets, love? Cause you've got a sweet arse!



BURST



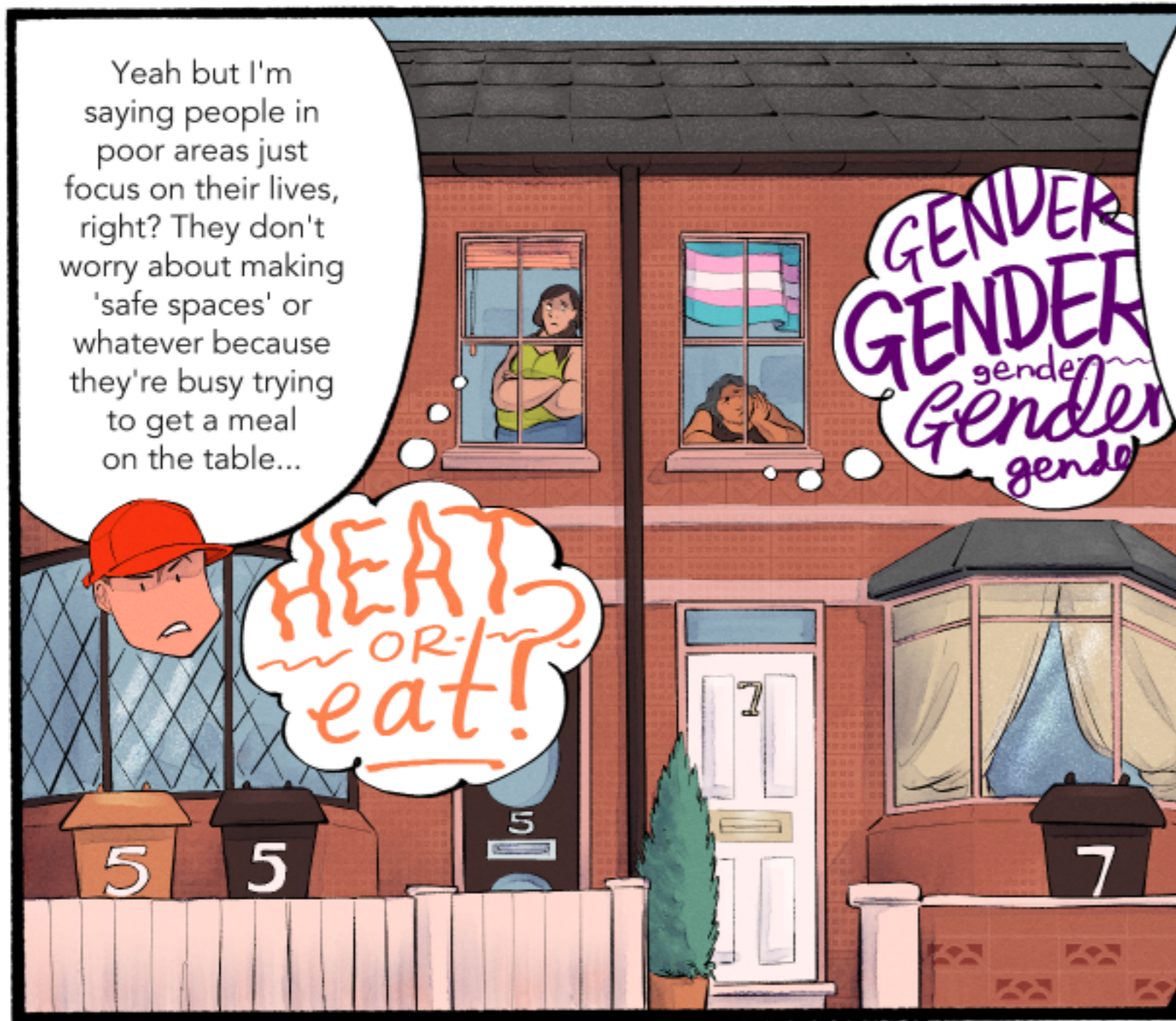




I bet poor people in other countries aren't thinking about gender this much - it must seem really, REALLY unimportant and probably insulting to people in poverty.

Gender roles are simpler in those places, right?

I mean-- we HAVE poor people HERE too, you know?? Plus it's a very colonial idea that other countries don't have people who experimented with gender in their histories...



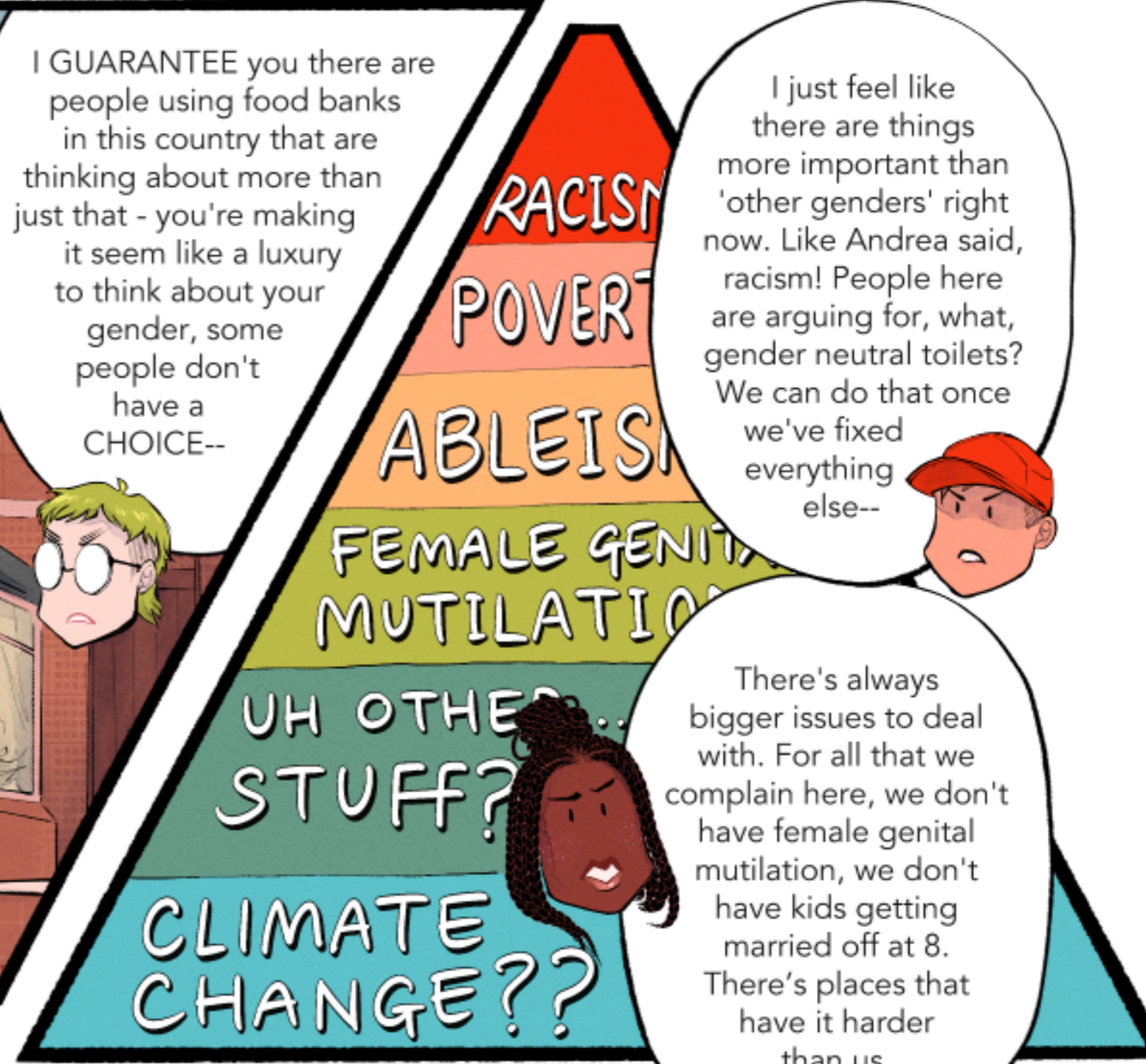
Yeah but I'm saying people in poor areas just focus on their lives, right? They don't worry about making 'safe spaces' or whatever because they're busy trying to get a meal on the table...

HEAT OR eat?

GENDER GENDER gender gender

I GUARANTEE you there are people using food banks in this country that are thinking about more than just that - you're making it seem like a luxury to think about your gender, some people don't have a CHOICE--

I just feel like there are things more important than 'other genders' right now. Like Andrea said, racism! People here are arguing for, what, gender neutral toilets? We can do that once we've fixed everything else--



... GENDER, I GUESS.

There's always bigger issues to deal with. For all that we complain here, we don't have female genital mutilation, we don't have kids getting married off at 8. There's places that have it harder than us.



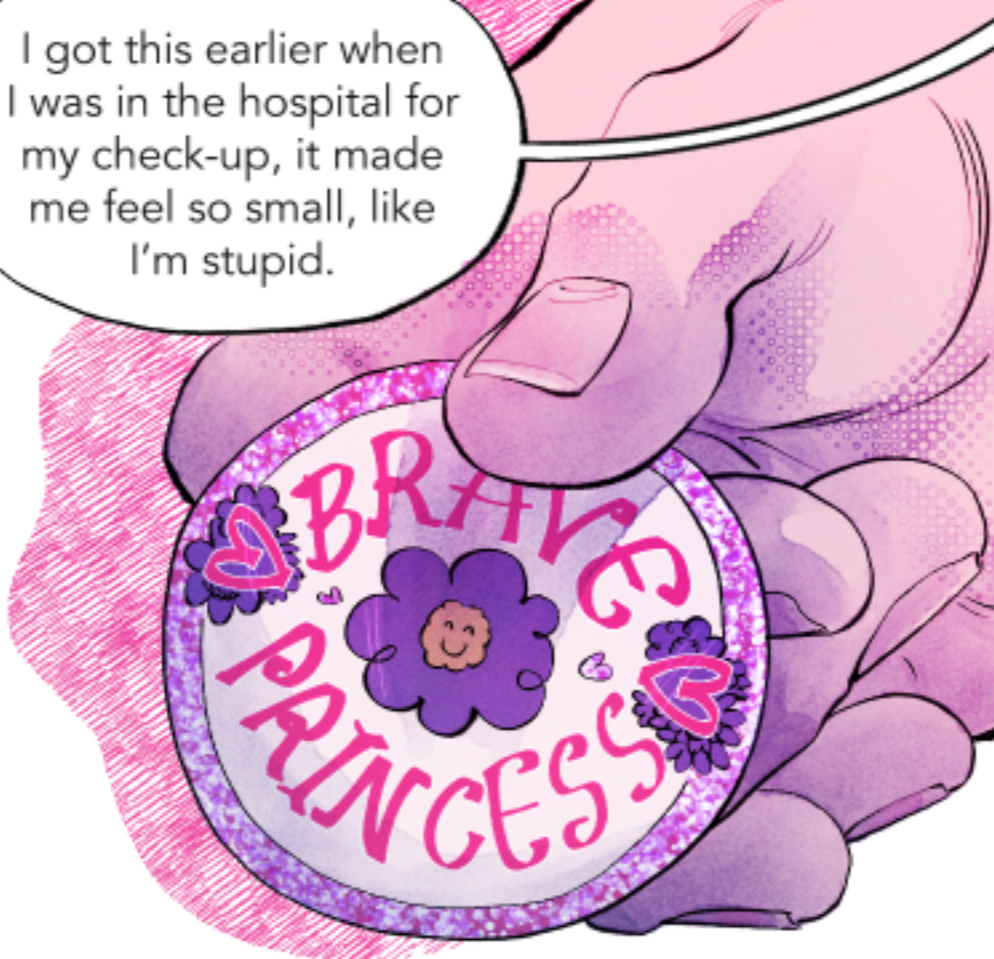
You really think we can rank one issue as more important than another?! That's stupid - it's like only putting out one fire even though there's fires all around us - eventually we'll get burned by the ones we left to get worse! We have to try to put them all out, together!

Why are you getting so upset?



Sorry, I'm just annoyed, okay? Gender IS a big deal, and it's at the front of a lot of people's minds, they can't just... ignore it, like you can.

I got this earlier when I was in the hospital for my check-up, it made me feel so small, like I'm stupid.



They do like to make you feel like a big baby when you're disabled... sorry.

Well, you ARE a girl though, is it so bad they call you a princess?



Harriet?

As if being *autistic* wasn't **enough!** I don't think I **AM** a girl. And I've been trying so hard to bring it up, but you don't think gender is a big deal so I guess I should just **drop it!**



You're not trans, Harriet. You're just confused - you said it yourself, you're autistic--

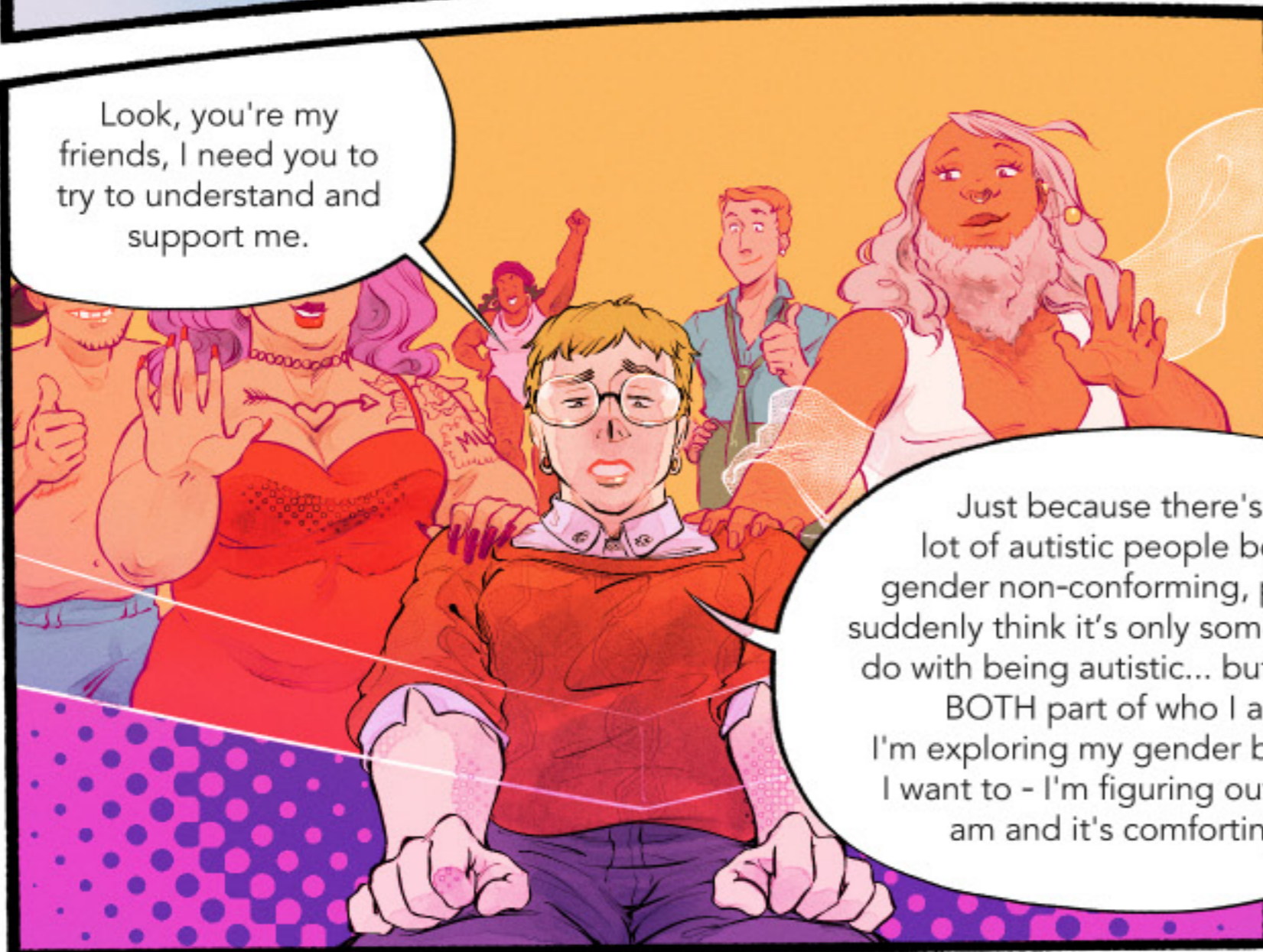
So, what, I can't know myself well enough to explore my gender identity? Andrea you **JUST** said you hated being treated like a child because of your disability, I'm asking you to respect that I know myself, and I'm... I think I'm a man.



You... think?

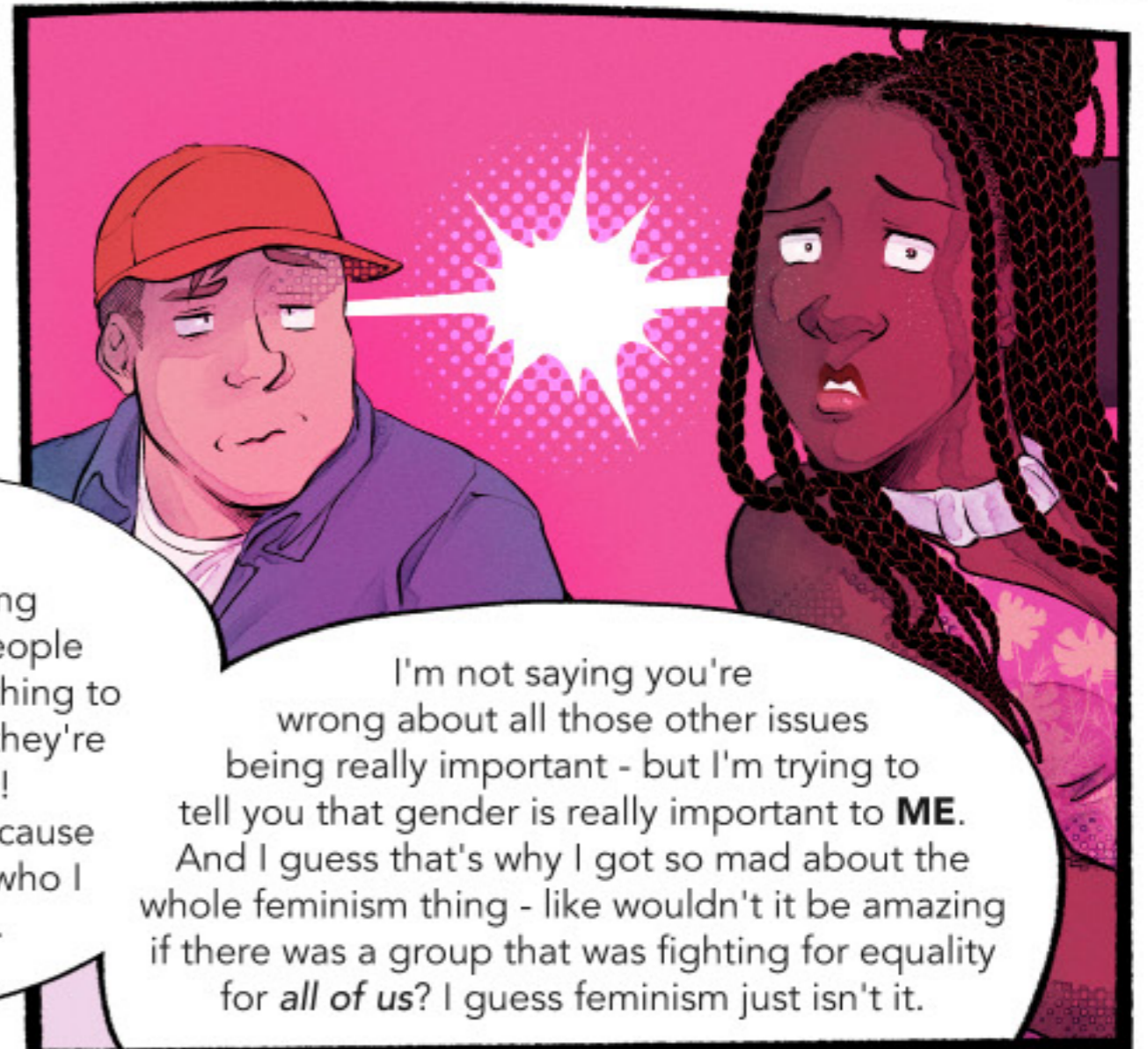
Well, I've--

I've been trying it out, but as I explore I could end up learning I'm more something else. I dunno, it's like autism, isn't it? There's a range of ways people are - and I guess people don't understand **EITHER**, huh.

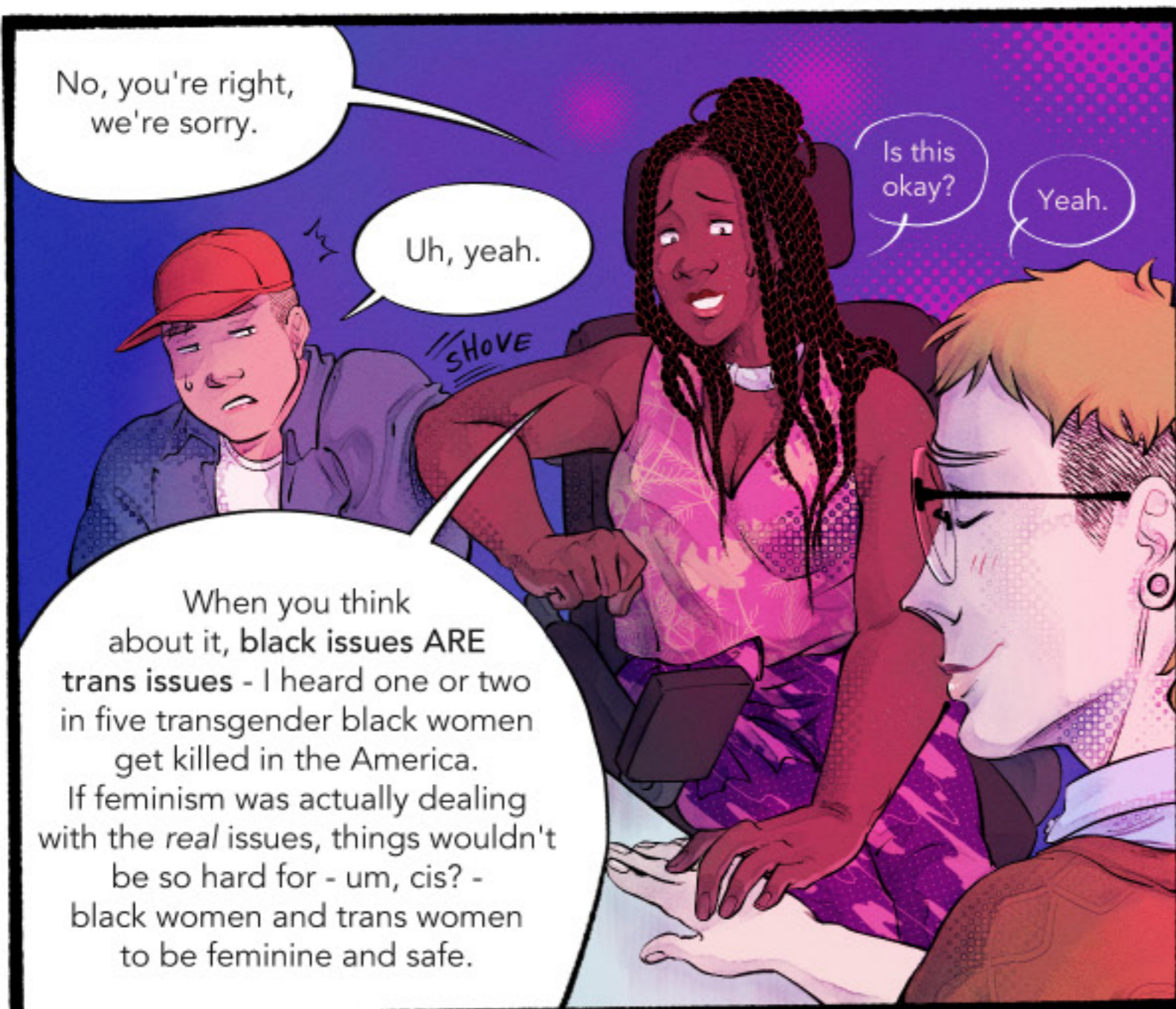


Look, you're my friends, I need you to try to understand and support me.

Just because there's a lot of autistic people being gender non-conforming, people suddenly think it's only something to do with being autistic... but they're **BOTH** part of who I am! I'm exploring my gender because I want to - I'm figuring out who I am and it's comforting.



I'm not saying you're wrong about all those other issues being really important - but I'm trying to tell you that gender is really important to **ME**. And I guess that's why I got so mad about the whole feminism thing - like wouldn't it be amazing if there was a group that was fighting for equality for *all of us*? I guess feminism just isn't it.



No, you're right, we're sorry.

Uh, yeah.

Is this okay?

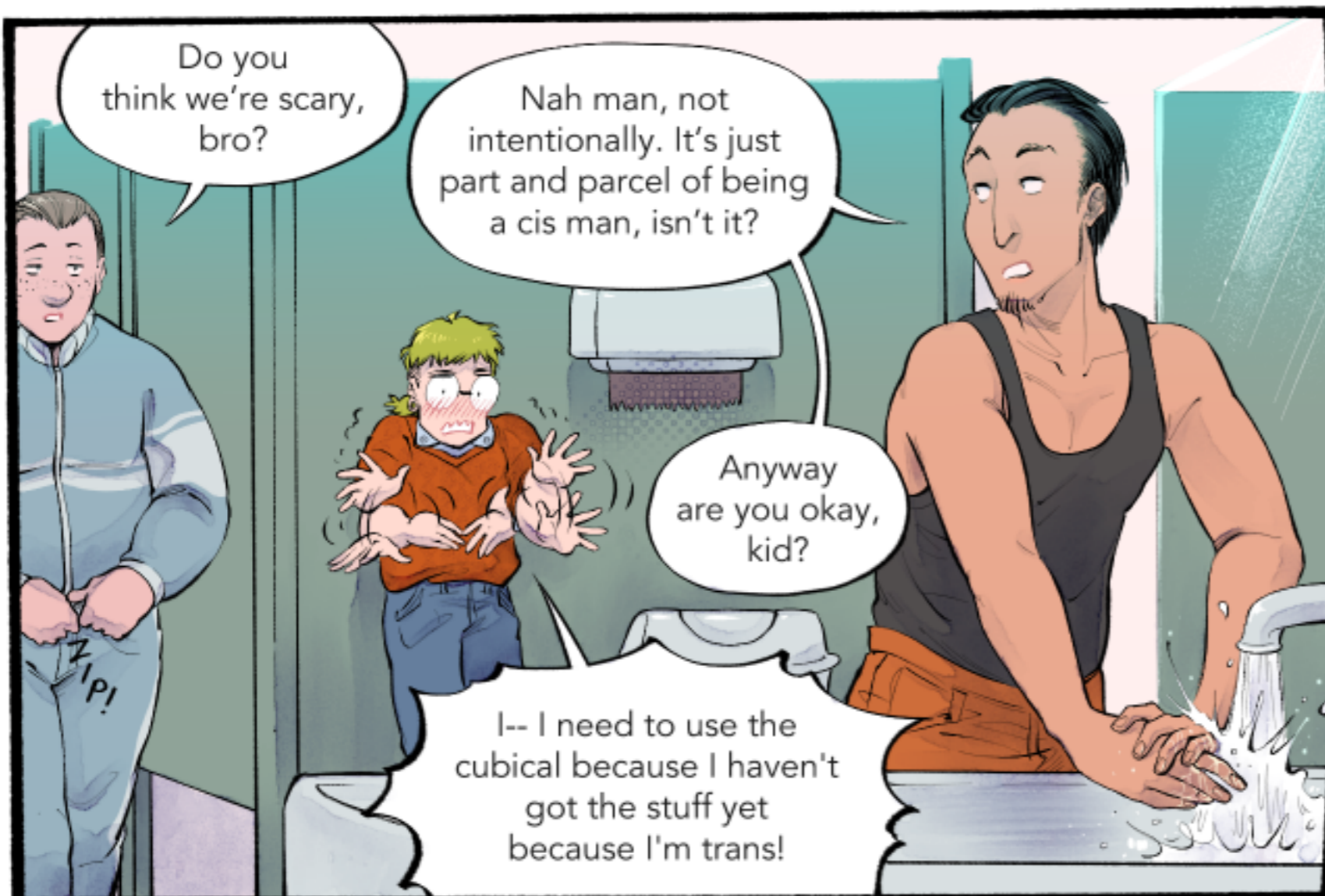
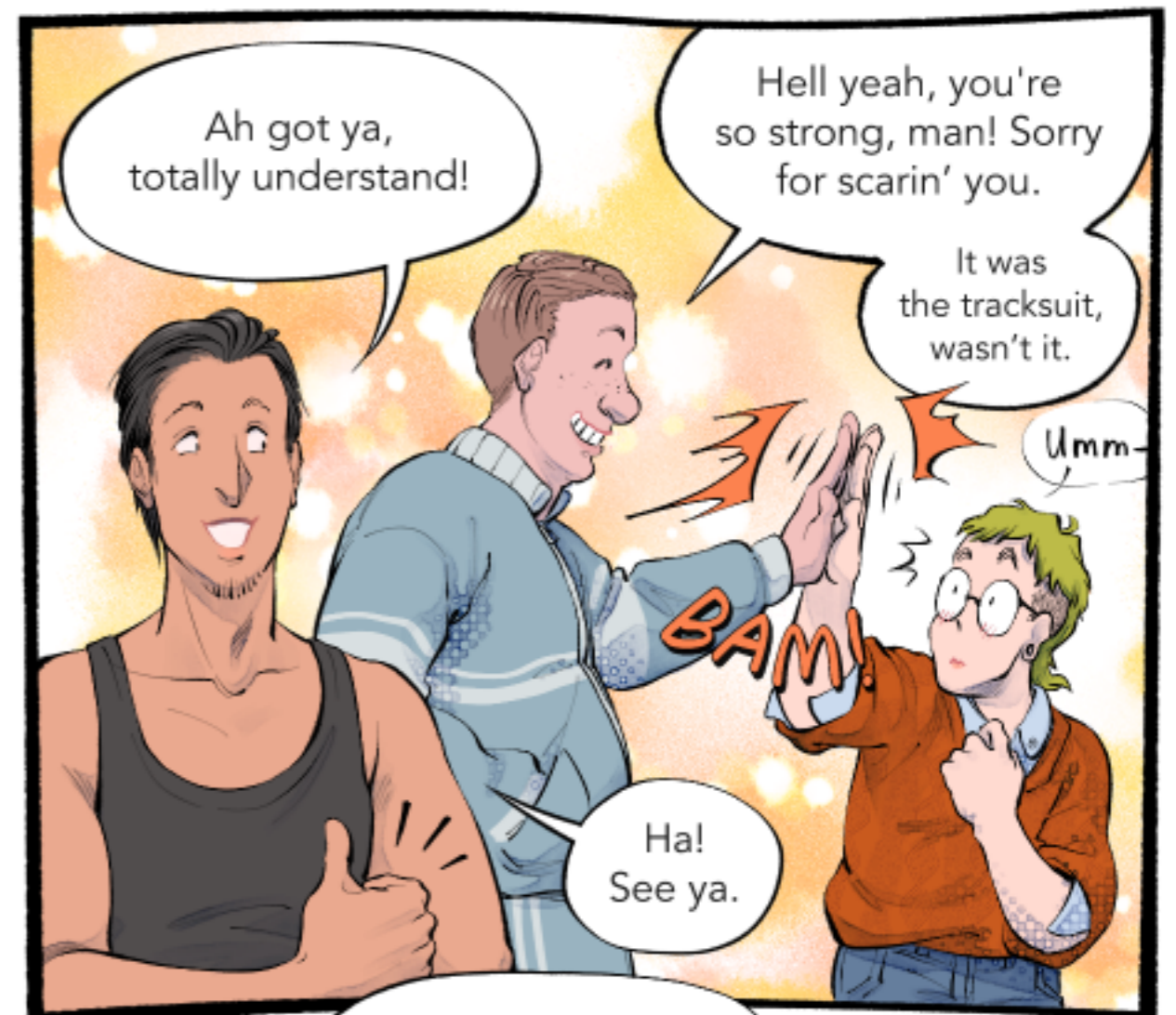
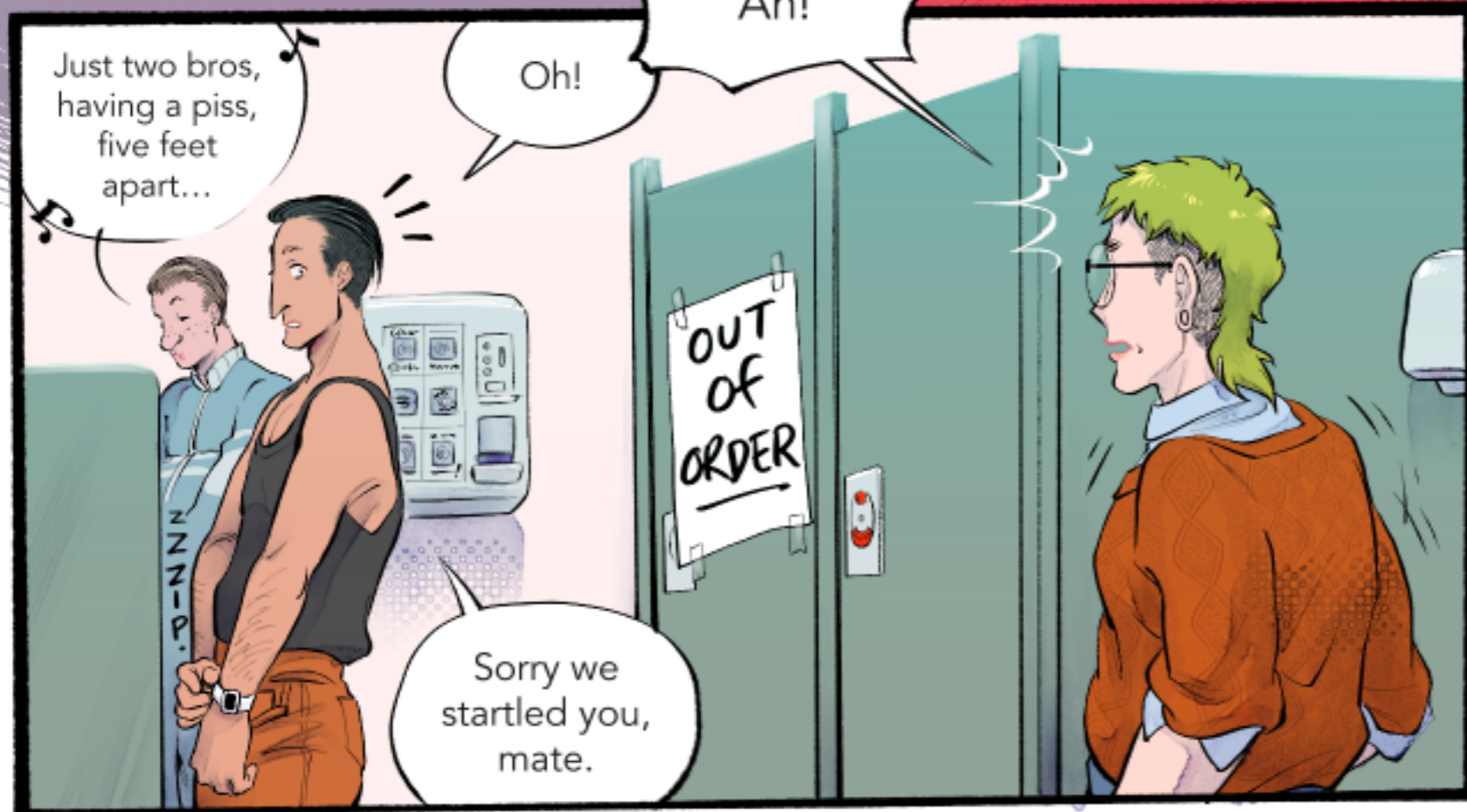
Yeah.

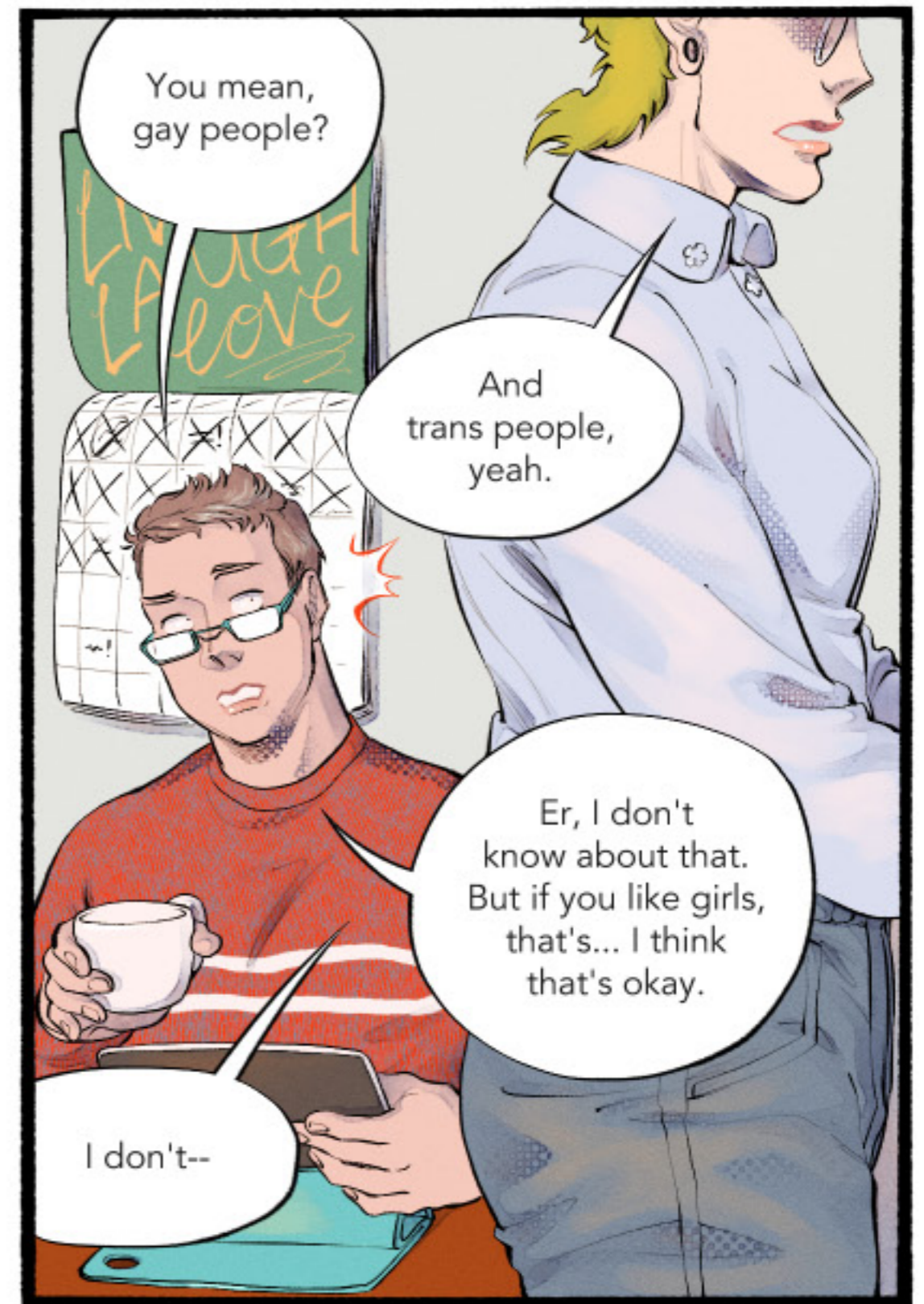
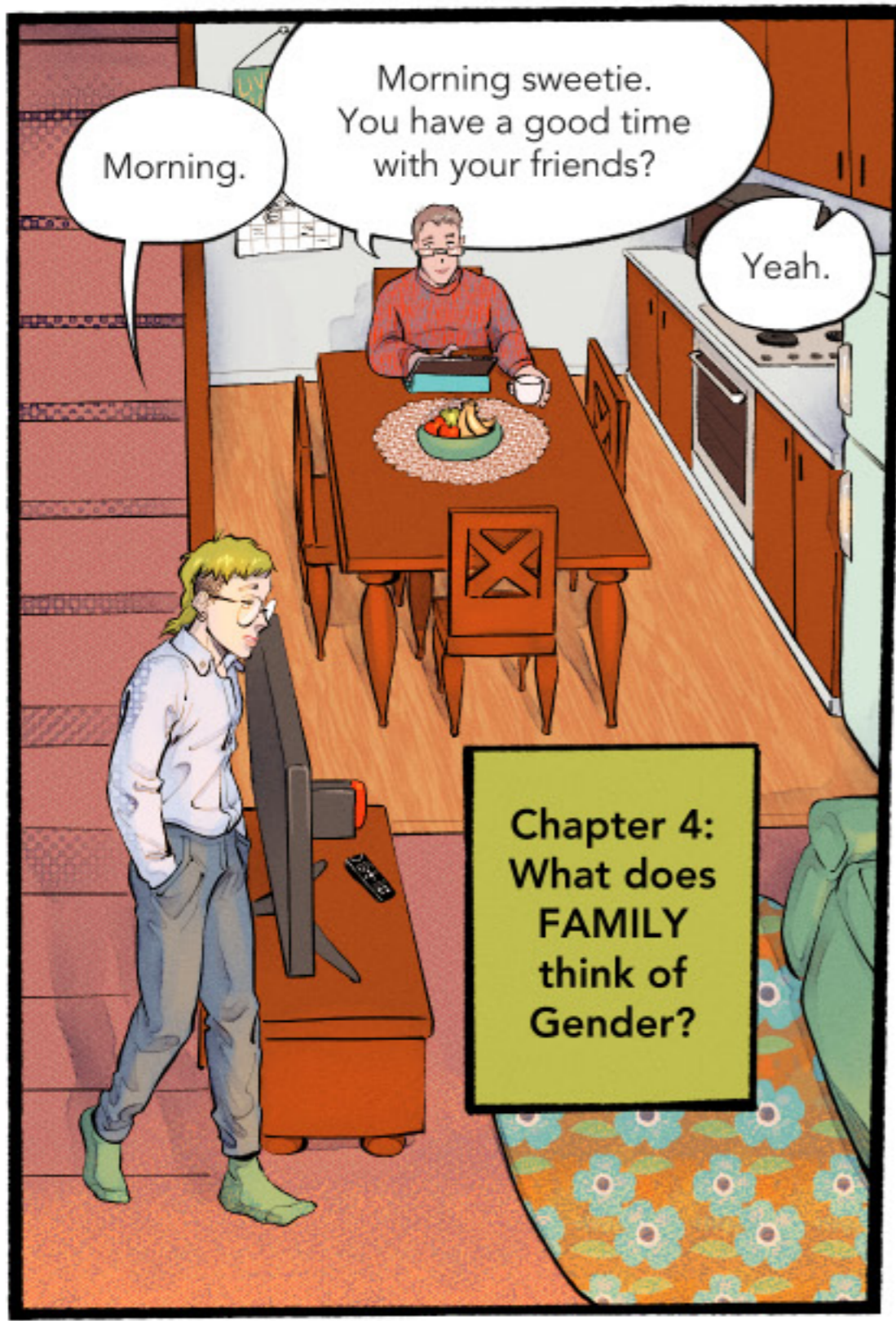
When you think about it, **black issues ARE trans issues** - I heard one or two in five transgender black women get killed in the America. If feminism was actually dealing with the *real* issues, things wouldn't be so hard for - um, cis? - black women and trans women to be feminine and safe.



Yeah, it's intersectional - all these issues have crossover and we can't solve one without solving the others.

I don't really want to mix gender and mental health, but it's an easy comparison because they both need to be talked about more...







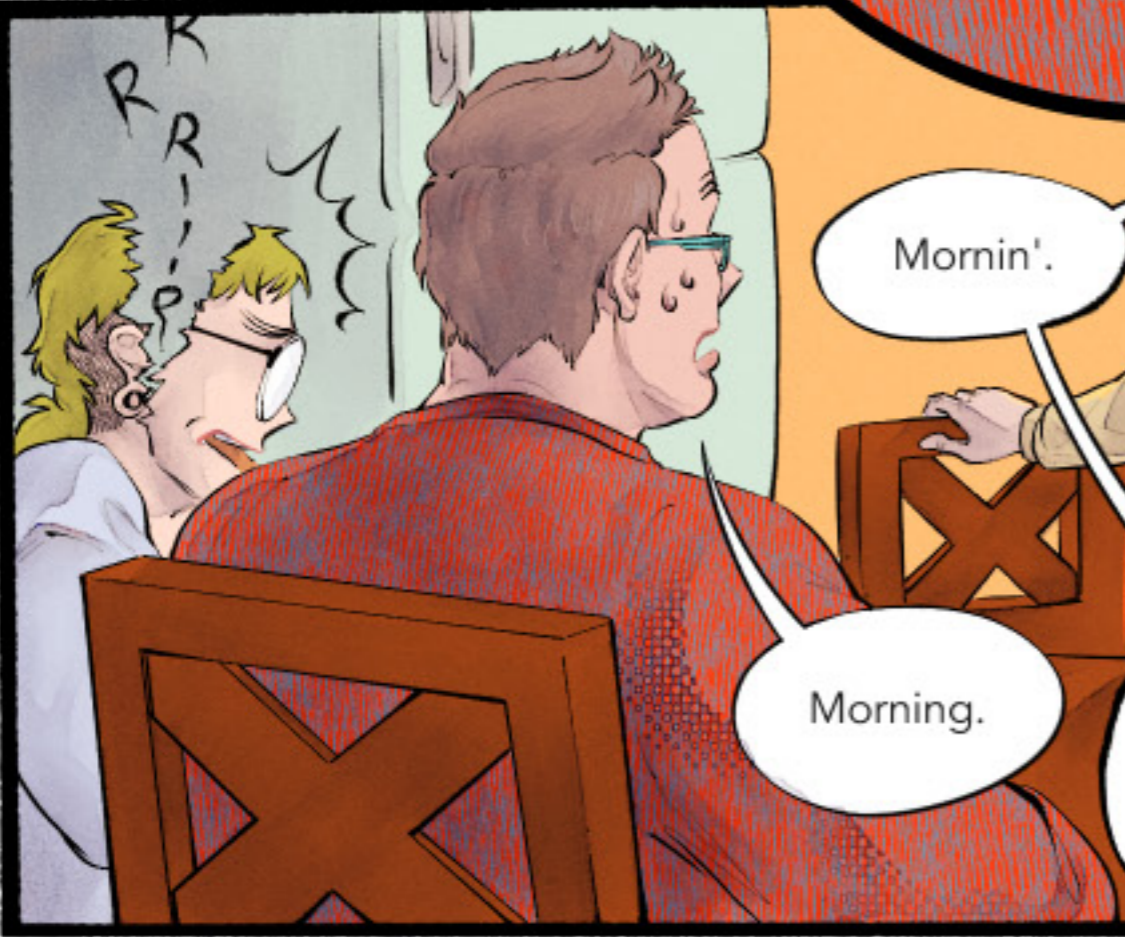
Would it also be fine if... if I was trans - you know, a **boy**?

.....

I...

yeah, okay, that's... fine.

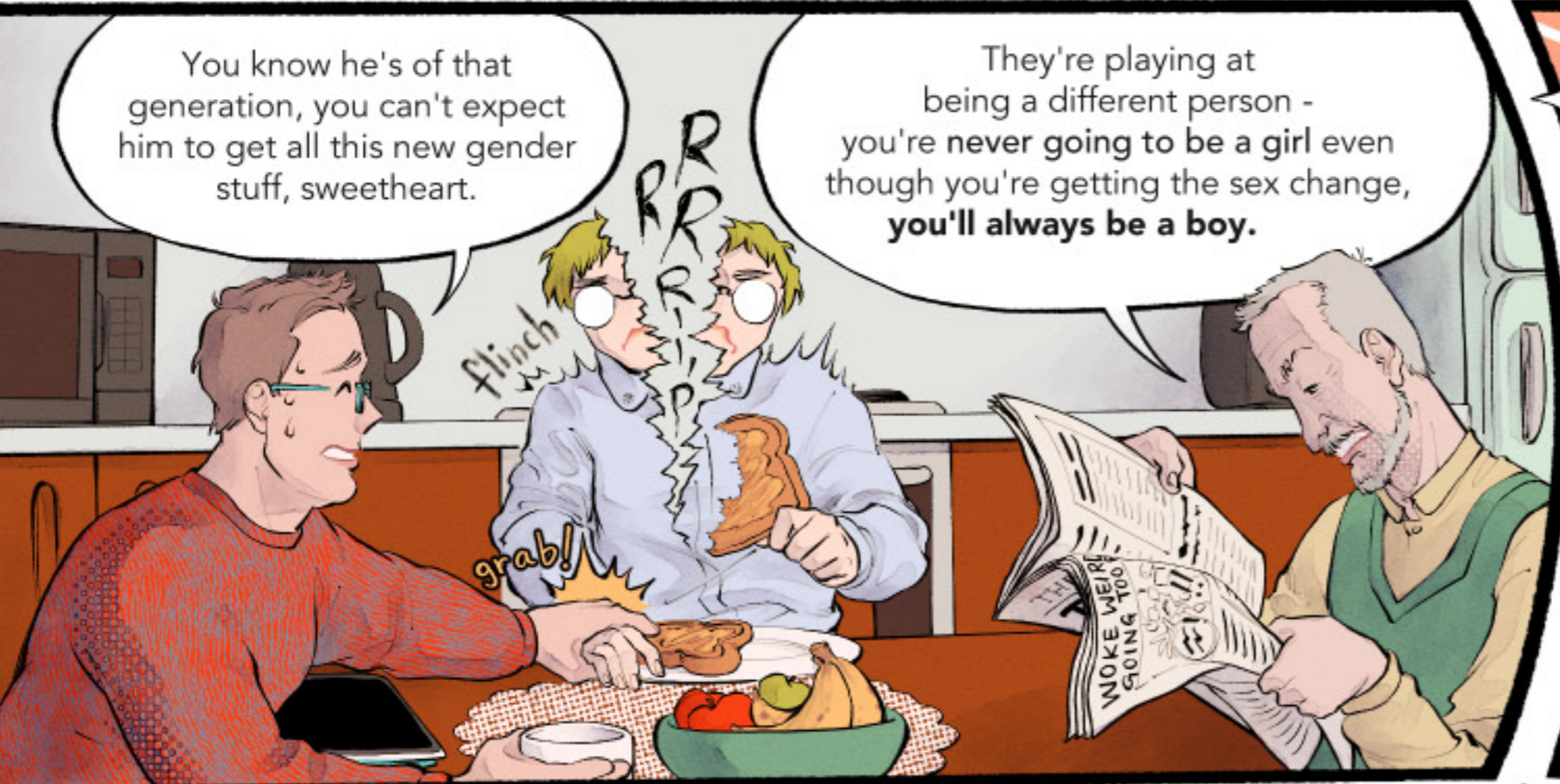
Just don't attempt to do anything to change your body, yet.



Mornin'.

Morning.

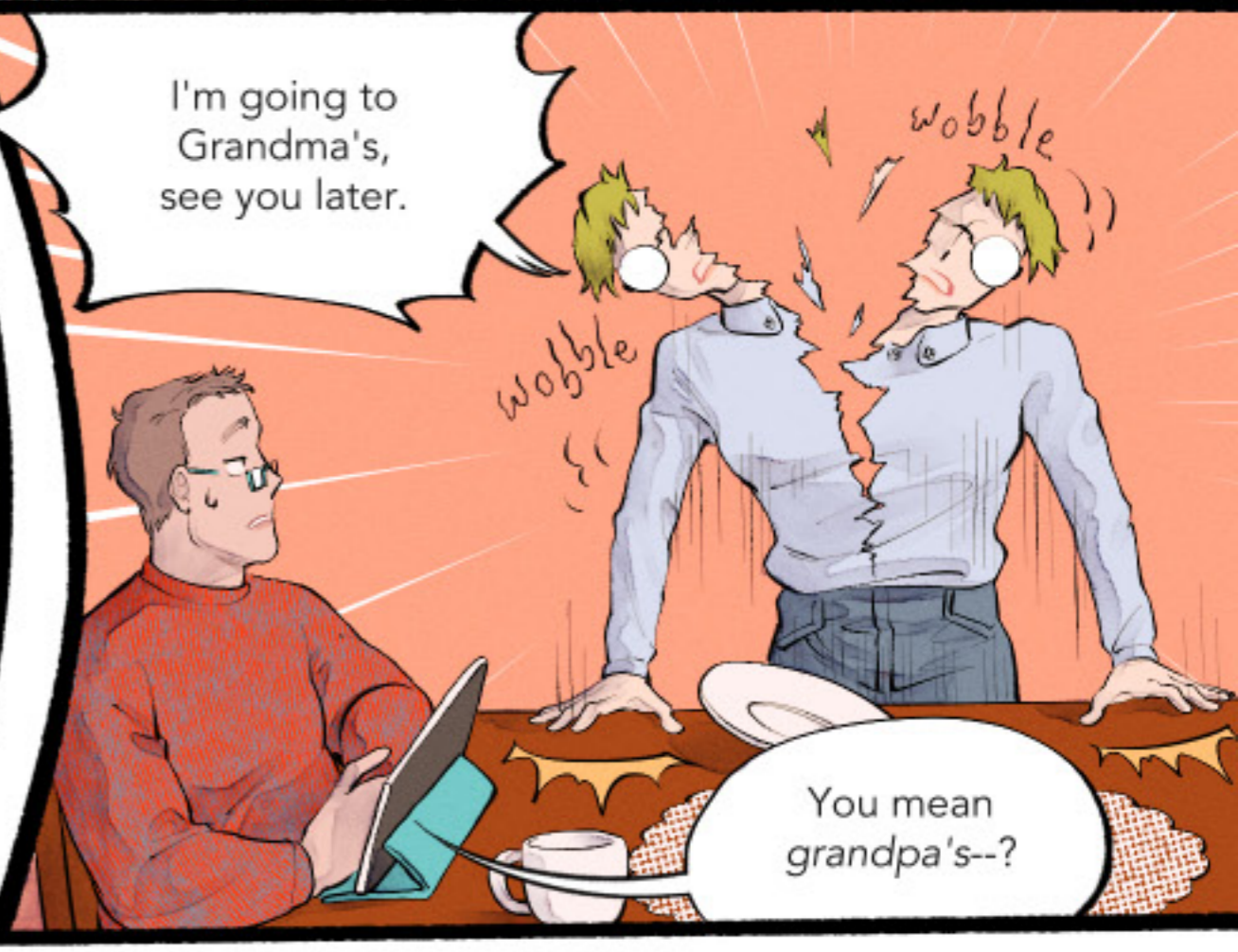
You see all this rubbish about **boys wanting to be girls** and all that? I understand people wanting the same-sex marriage and all that but this is getting **ridiculous**, isn't it? It's not right - not very **British** at all, if you ask me.



You know he's of that generation, you can't expect him to get all this new gender stuff, sweetheart.

They're playing at being a different person - you're never going to be a girl even though you're getting the sex change, **you'll always be a boy.**

flinch grab!



I'm going to Grandma's, see you later.

wobble

You mean grandpa's--?

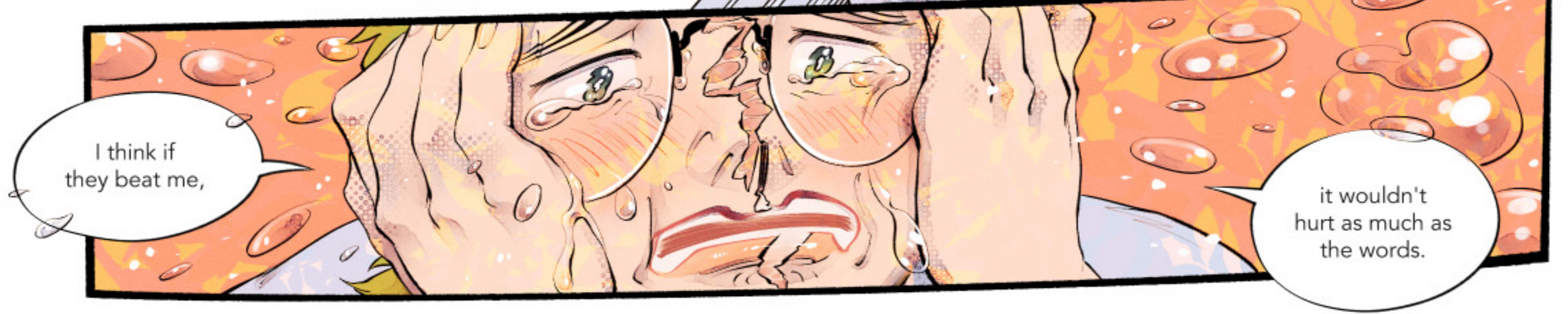


Why do I have to be one person at home and my real self at Grandma's - I'm not pretending to be someone else, I'm trying to be **myself!**

It's my **family** that are tearing me in two, not **me.**

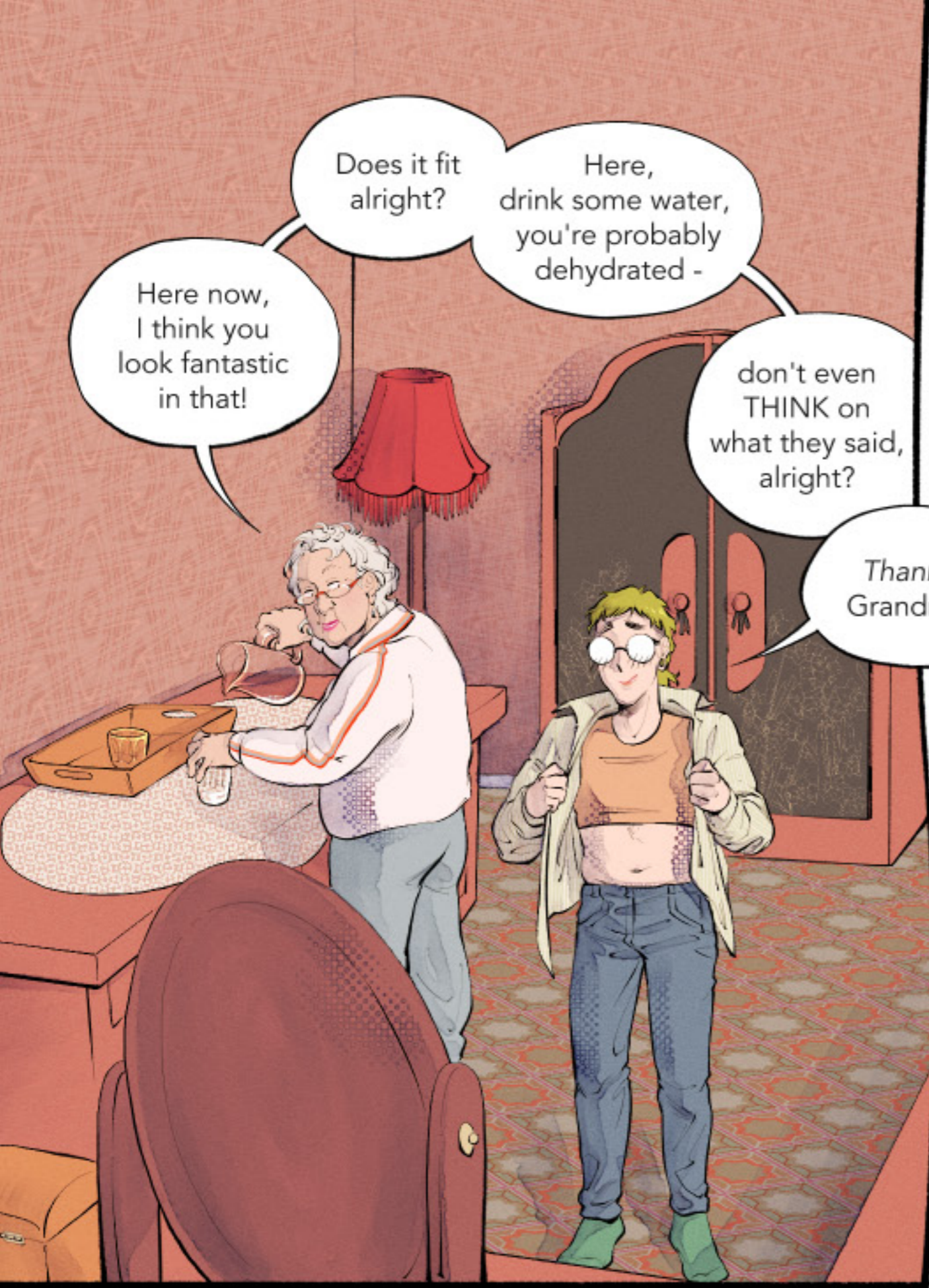
SQUASH

SQUASH



I think if they beat me,

it wouldn't hurt as much as the words.



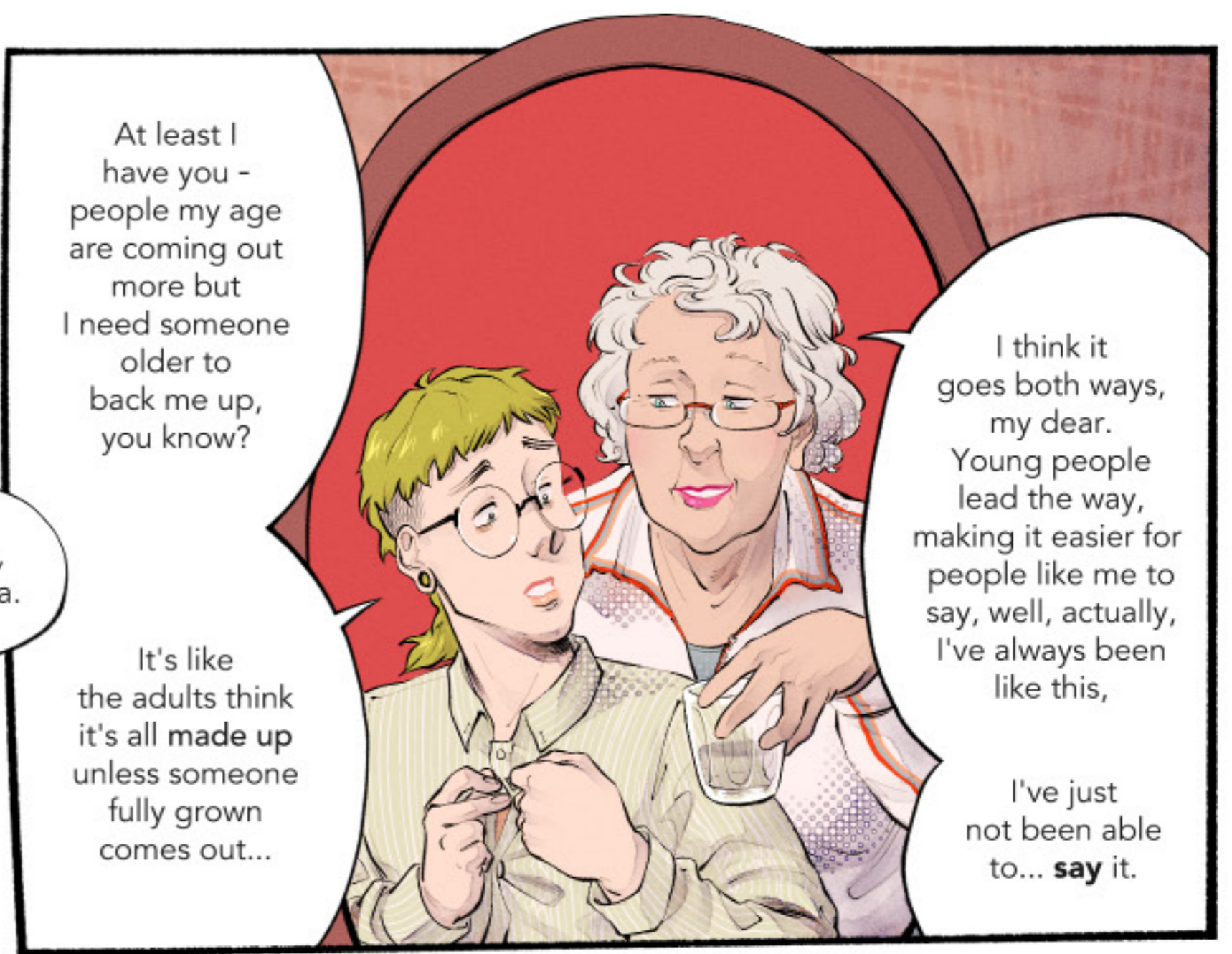
Does it fit alright?

Here, drink some water, you're probably dehydrated -

Here now, I think you look fantastic in that!

don't even THINK on what they said, alright?

Thanks, Grandma.



At least I have you - people my age are coming out more but I need someone older to back me up, you know?

It's like the adults think it's all made up unless someone fully grown comes out...

I think it goes both ways, my dear. Young people lead the way, making it easier for people like me to say, well, actually, I've always been like this,

I've just not been able to... say it.



I don't think we're all trailblazers. I've already met plenty who are more closed-minded. I guess it's because older people who aren't okay with it are still pushing their ideas on their kids...



Alright, I'm heading out!

You're not going to see that **Harry** boy, are you?

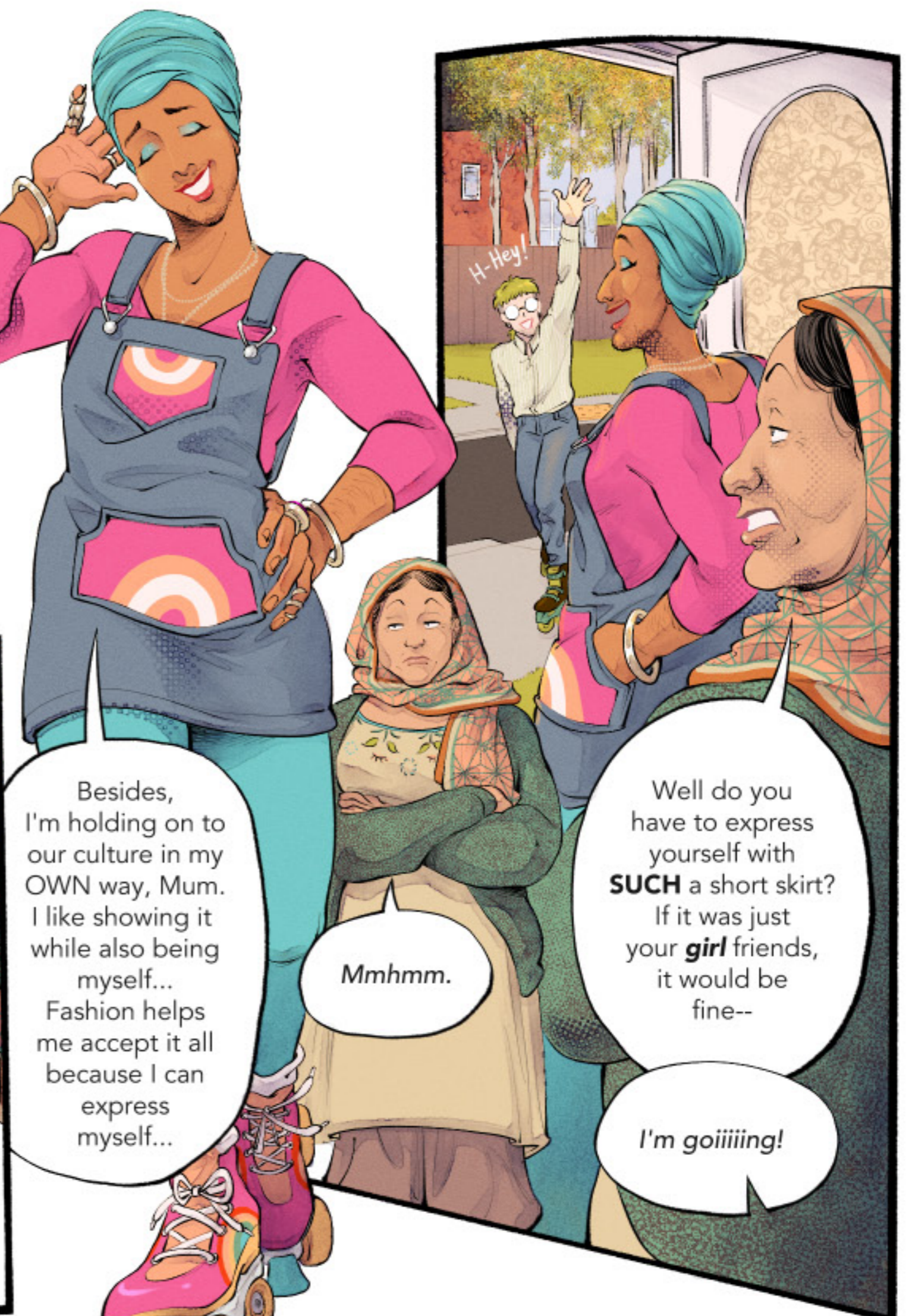


Uh, yeah? We're just gonna skate! I gotta go--

Why can't you spend time with a nice **Indian** boy, Neena? I don't want you to lose your roots, your culture--

Geez we've been over this, he's just my friend, I'm not going to *marry* him!

I should hope **NOT!**



Besides, I'm holding on to our culture in my **OWN** way, Mum. I like showing it while also being myself... Fashion helps me accept it all because I can express myself...

Mhmm.

Well do you have to express yourself with **SUCH** a short skirt? If it was just your **girl** friends, it would be fine--

I'm goiiiiing!



Sorry it didn't go well, Harry.

It's okay, I didn't... I shouldn't have expected better.

Yes, you should.

Just because they don't understand it, doesn't mean they shouldn't TRY.



The information is just not out there enough for them, though.

Yeah, but YOU'RE doing your best to learn! Like you didn't know non-binary and all that stuff, right? But you learned!

Well yeah, I wouldn't want to hurt anyone by staying ignorant. But I think anyone can do that, you know, educate themselves?

They just don't WANT to. They want to stick to what they know - bloody religious people.



What's religion got to do with it?

My parents taught me it doesn't matter what gender you are - I'm lucky that I don't have an issue, I feel like the gender I am, but it's fine with them if I don't like traditional feminine things, so I don't have that struggle inside me.

That IS lucky. My mum really pushed against me playing with "girl toys" and putting on dresses. She was "worried what that would mean later down the line". Didn't stop me of course, just made me miserable.

What can I say - there's enough hate in the UK towards us as Muslims, so I think my parents didn't want any MORE hate inside the house! They treat everyone equally as best they can.



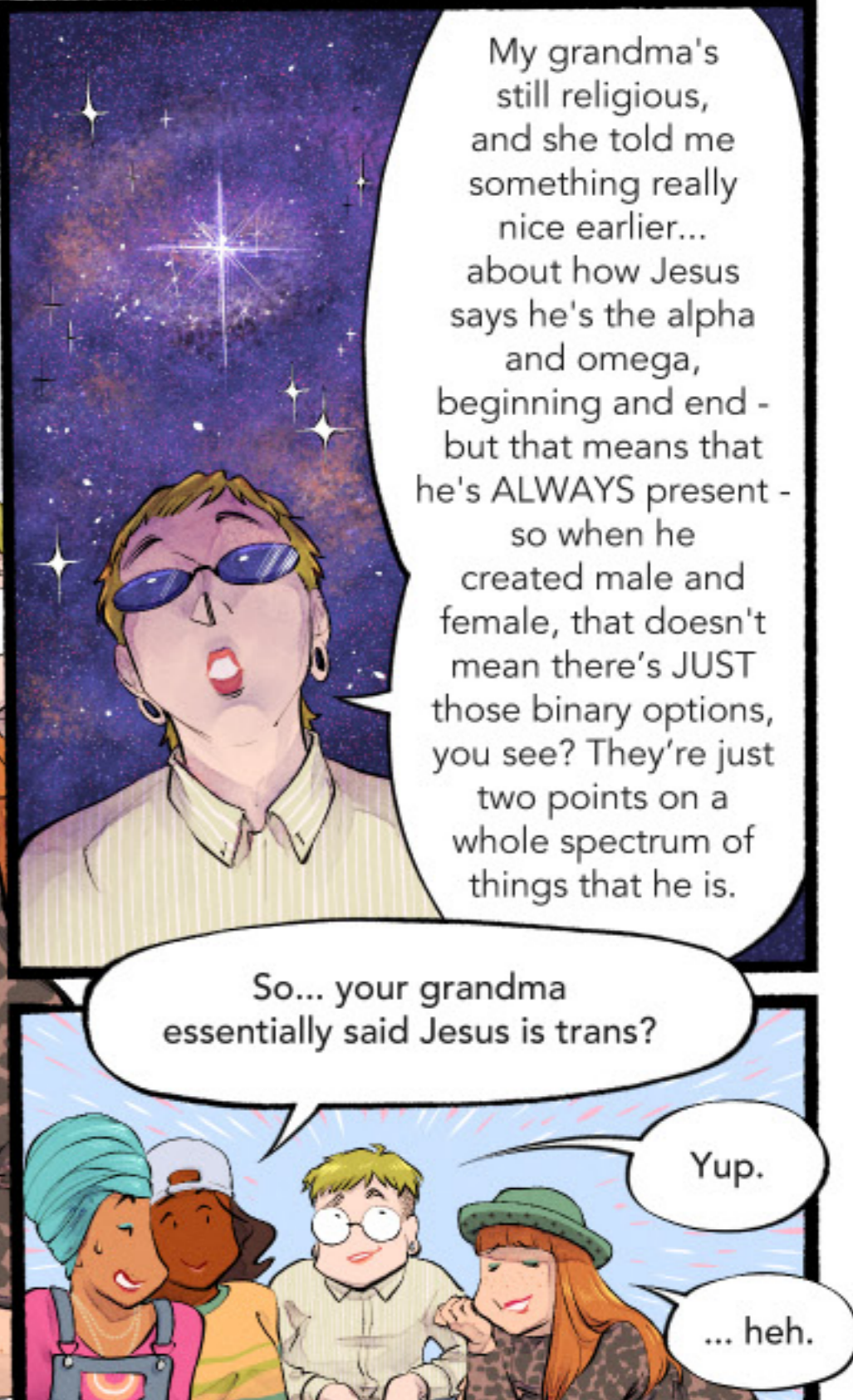
Wish Church of England people were that nice. It's why I'm an atheist, I don't believe in anything. You frown on me, I frown on you!

That doesn't mean religion itself is inherently bad though, Samantha.



Then why do I have to hide who I am from my extreeemely religious extended family whenever they come over?!

Well, isn't that them doing it **badly**, rather than the faith itself being bad? Like, aren't all our faiths about just... being kind to each other?



My grandma's still religious, and she told me something really nice earlier... about how Jesus says he's the alpha and omega, beginning and end - but that means that he's ALWAYS present - so when he created male and female, that doesn't mean there's JUST those binary options, you see? They're just two points on a whole spectrum of things that he is.

So... your grandma essentially said Jesus is trans?

Yup.

... heh.

Yeah I guess we never talked about LGBT stuff huh...

OTHER' OPTIONS
TRANS
GAY
LESBIAN

We were never taught to question those ideas of male and female! But if we were taught about trans, gay, et cetera, I wouldn't have felt so... WRONG, for so long!

It'd be nice if they ALSO taught us about hetero, cis and stuff like you told me - if they only teach us about the 'different' things, that still makes you seem weird.

MANY POSSIBILITIES!!
CIS
TRANS
GAY
LESBIAN
ASEXUAL

Oh, yeah, good point! Anything to not be seen as abnormal... it's pretty damaging being seen as the different one all the time.

Although... I don't imagine children younger than us have the maturity to understand that stuff, do you? Like... I wasn't when WE did the class on dicks, we just COVERED the sheet in them...

I just think if we were taught about gender diversity from that young, respect for each other would come more naturally to us later on!

be open minded
EQUITY TALK MONDAY 3:30pm

LGBT CLUB
JOIN UP AFTER

TEACHER CONFERENCE 2016

Let's Respect each other!

IF YOU OR YOUR FRIENDS ARE BEING BULLIED BECAUSE OF YOUR SEXUALITY, GENDER, OR OTHERWISE THAT'S NOT OKAY

I think teachers are afraid of saying the **wrong** thing, though. Like, remember when you tried to start that LGBT club and they said no? You'll never get them teaching these subjects, they don't even use your right pronouns yet--

That's why you need the RIGHT teachers!

Bring in people - not just one person - who have experiences of this. People who are open minded, and can SHOW us that it's okay to be who you are, in lots of different ways.

You don't want to shove it down kids throats, though--

I'm just talking about a couple more lessons, Leo. Look, we're gonna find out ANYWAY, right? I did, just went online...

Yeah as soon as you came out, I looked that stuff up. I'm learning most of it from you though...

Right, so wouldn't it be safer for us if we learnt it in school? From a teacher who can do it right?

I mean - you seem fine?

Sure, because there's lots of good people out there, on Youtube, and Insta, you know, just being themselves - and telling me:

Hey, you're perfectly fine as you are!

But here comes the recommended videos and the comments, reminding me that not everyone agrees.

I guess I can identify as an Apache attack helicopter or whatever then, if we're just out here making stuff up! Ooh did I hurt your feelings by manspreading in front of you--



Look I'm just concerned about our CHILDREN being influenced by trends on the internet--

Okay, fair, that would get anyone down - but what about those trans and non-binary celebs on Insta you mentioned?

Can't you just ignore the hateful guys and look at them?



And don't get me started on all the hate you see on Twitter.

Yikes!



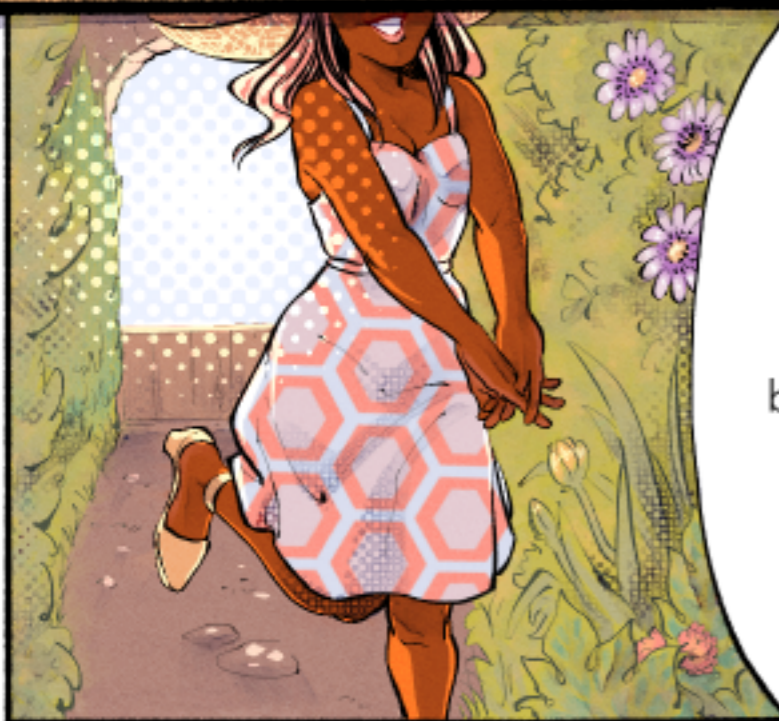
The point is, the second you step away from your phone, or tv, and interact with the real world as a gender nonconforming person? You're fucked.

Just because there are kind people on the internet in our small supportive circles, doesn't mean you can suddenly walk down the street without being attacked.



I've had stuff thrown at me, been chased...

Well that has its own problems... Places like Insta, and Facebook, have people being beautiful and proud, but that creates its own pressure to look beautiful in the RIGHT way.



Liked by jadedlyco, transrightsblog and 971 others

flowergoil27 Went out wearing a dress for the first time - felt truly myself among these lovely flowers... more

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Engulundboi is that drag lol
wontwishtbish You'll never be a real women
Jared_Jokes I can see your 5 o'clock shadow



And then you scroll down and see comments from people like your racist uncle you see once a year and realise if they're not good enough, YOU'LL never be good enough either...

So... more people knowing about you doesn't mean they 'get' you?

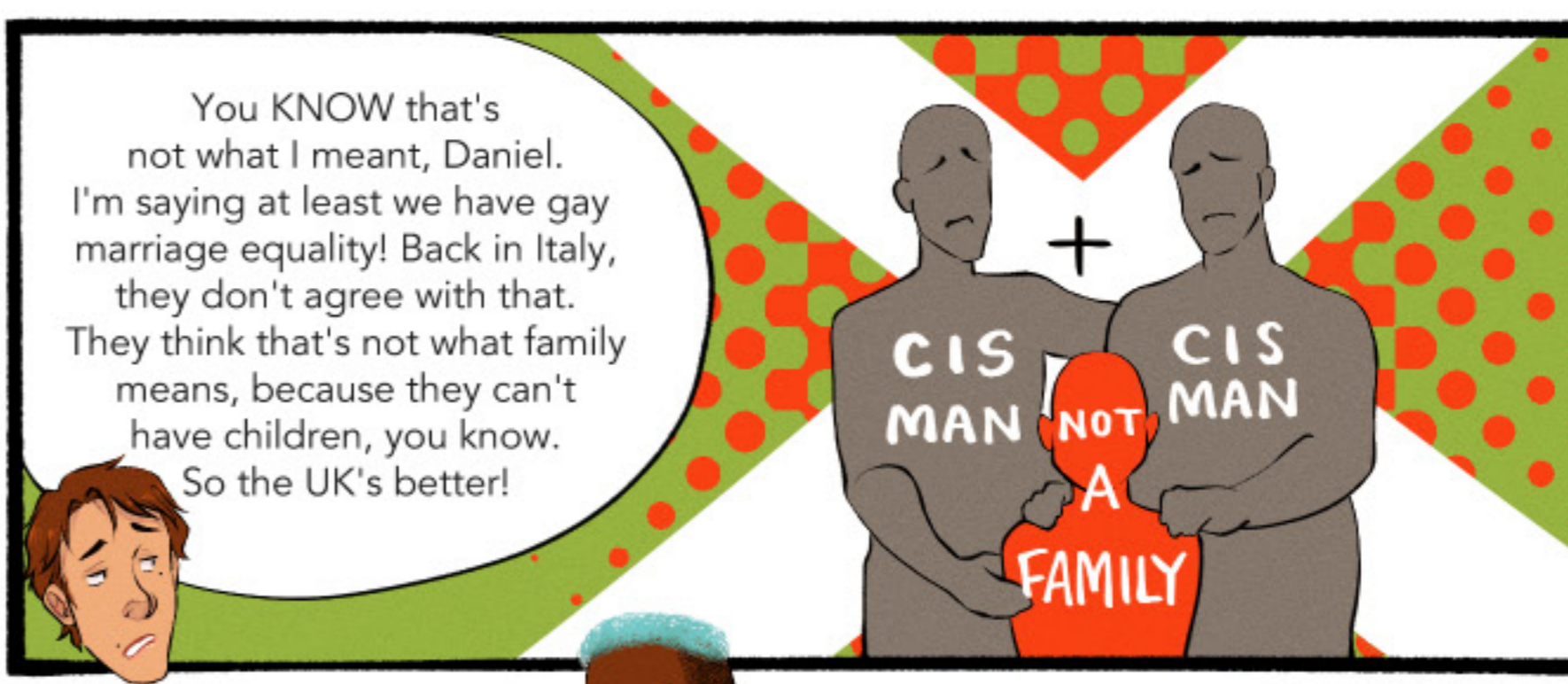
Yeah.



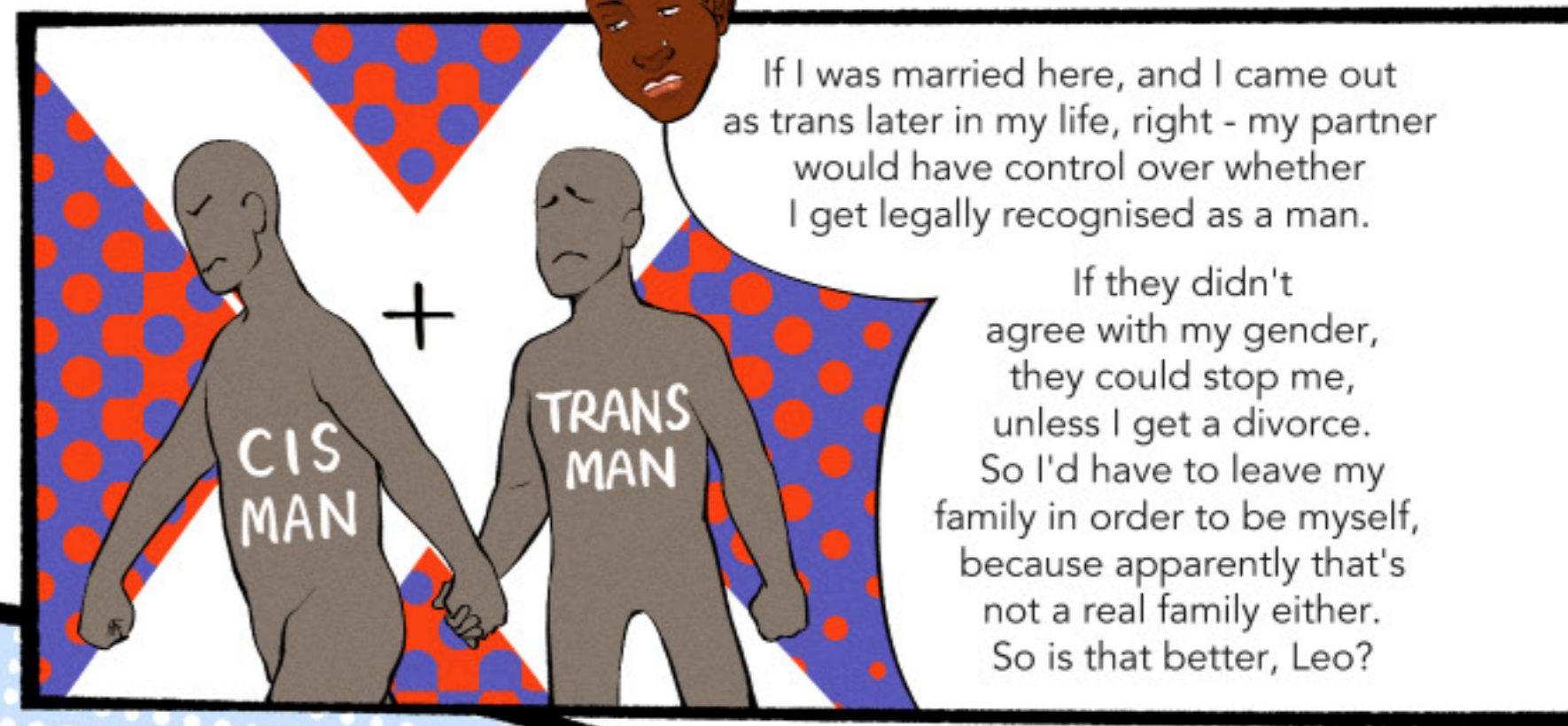


At least it's better here in the UK, though? Like if you were somewhere with less accepting people and laws, they'd think you were a lesbian or something and kill you.

So, what? Better alive and **miserable**, than DEAD?

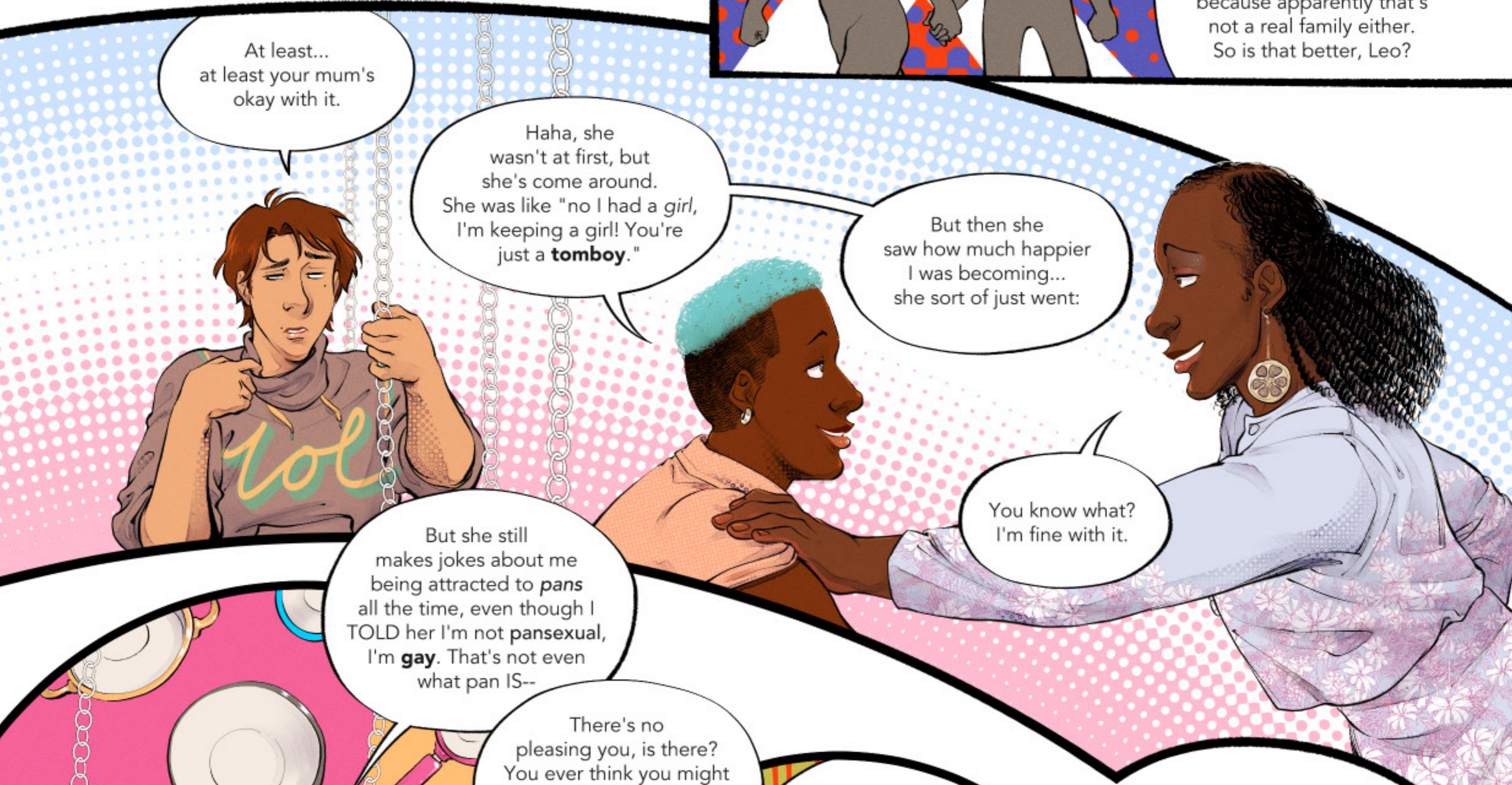


You **KNOW** that's not what I meant, Daniel. I'm saying at least we have gay marriage equality! Back in Italy, they don't agree with that. They think that's not what family means, because they can't have children, you know. So the UK's better!



If I was married here, and I came out as trans later in my life, right - my partner would have control over whether I get legally recognised as a man.

If they didn't agree with my gender, they could stop me, unless I get a divorce. So I'd have to leave my family in order to be myself, because apparently that's not a real family either. So is that better, Leo?



At least... at least your mum's okay with it.

Haha, she wasn't at first, but she's come around. She was like "no I had a girl, I'm keeping a girl! You're just a **tomboy**."

But then she saw how much happier I was becoming... she sort of just went:

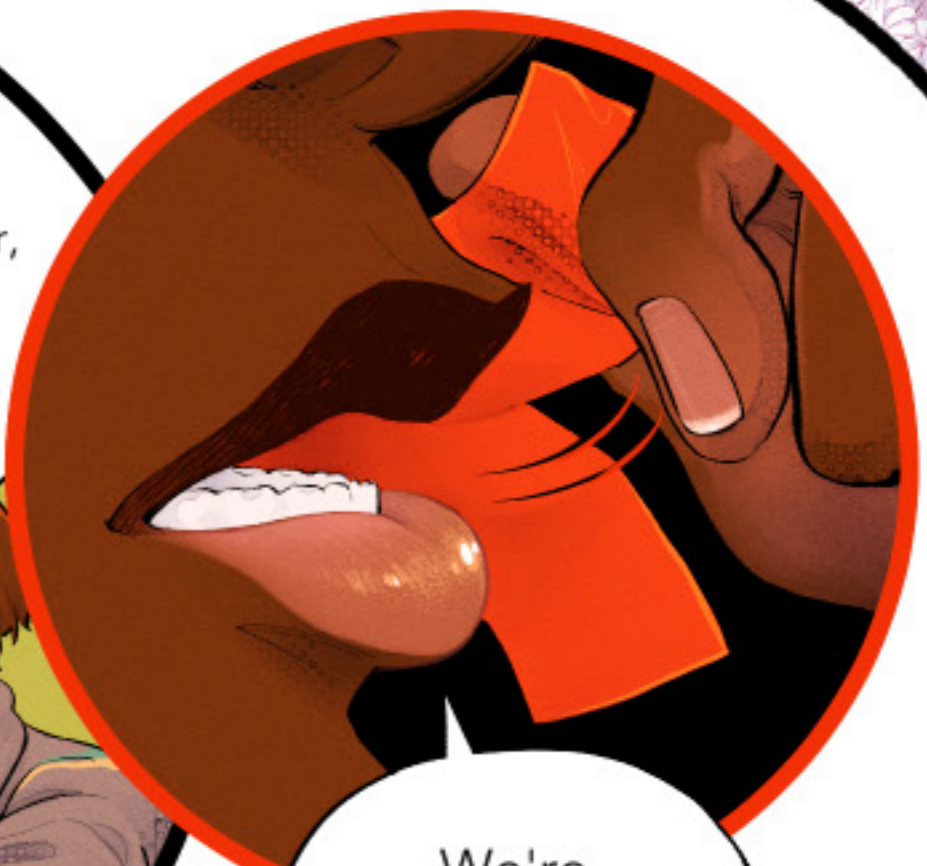
You know what? I'm fine with it.

But she still makes jokes about me being attracted to **pans** all the time, even though I TOLD her I'm not pansexual, I'm **gay**. That's not even what pan IS--

There's no pleasing you, is there? You ever think you might be... look don't take this the wrong way, but a bit too... **sensitive**?

I'm not soft, man, it's just--

People think we're offended easily, but we're just recognising that those things aren't funny - we'd rather be kind to each other, which is somehow a bad thing to them? And they think we're against free speech, but we're **NOT** -



We're against **HATE** speech, and they don't know the **difference**.