

POKÉMON  
REBIRTH  
ALTERED PATHS

# Chapters

- 1. Success is its Own Reward**
- 2. Chain of Command**
- 3. What a Difference a Day Makes**
- 4. The Rest of Who I am**
- 5. An Extended Family**
- 6. When Life Comes Undone**
- 7. A Muted Heart**

Mr. Giovanni has asked me to inform you that he has a special mission for you, and you alone.

Exclusively ours?

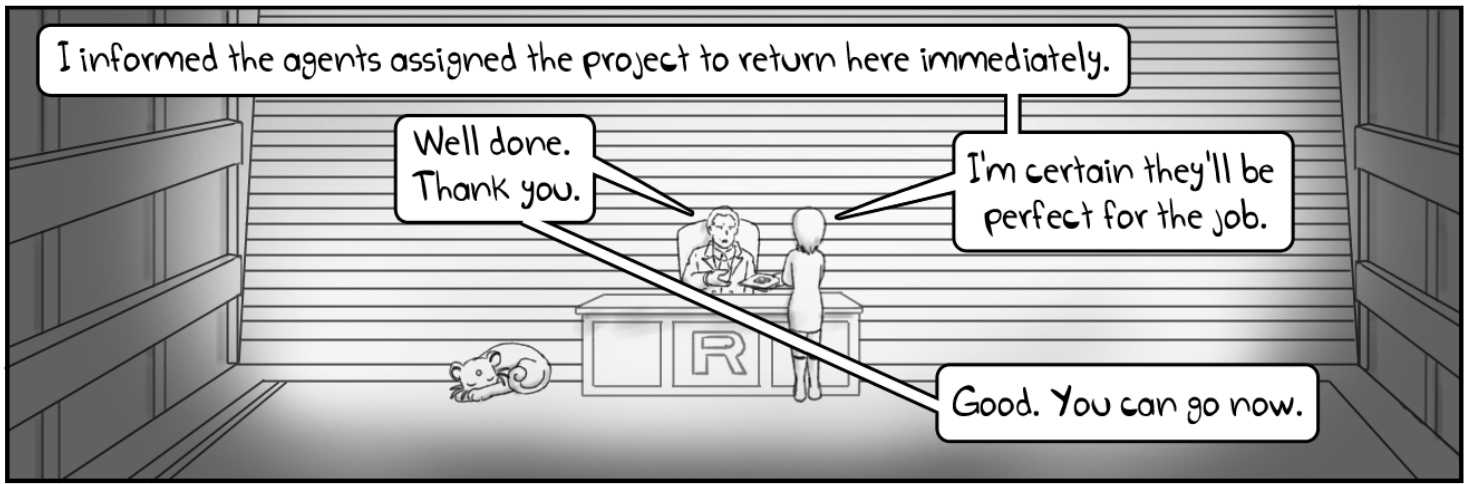
An order from the top down?

Some drop...

We'll fill you in on the details here at headquarters.  
I suggest you come quickly.

Like lightning!





I informed the agents assigned the project to return here immediately.

Well done.  
Thank you.

I'm certain they'll be  
perfect for the job.

Good. You can go now.



I could have sent other  
operatives out for this  
final stage of the mission

...but these three...



...they know my target's  
every quirk, strength  
and weakness.

They have studied  
his behavioural  
patterns for a  
good six years,  
after all.



They are determined and loyal  
to the point of blindness...

...and they won't put  
up as much  
resistance should  
other things be  
required of them.



They are, indeed, perfect for the job.



# CHAPTER ONE

Success is its Own Reward

Team Leader James. I see you and your accomplices finally arrived.

We got here as fast as we could, sir.

Yes. Indeed.

And boy am I jetlagged..

I have been studying the reports you sent me during your time in Sinnoh...

There is a noticeable trend of improvement.

Really? You think we-?

I do believe my quarry is finally ready for drafting.

Oh. Him..

I thought those reports we filed on defeating Hunter Jaye and Team Galactic would have done something to raise the boss' appreciation of us.

Well we did kind of exaggerate in a few areas...

Can't pull da wool over his eyes, dat's fer sure.

I am going to initiate the final test.

Wap!

From this point on, you three are now Elite rank agents.

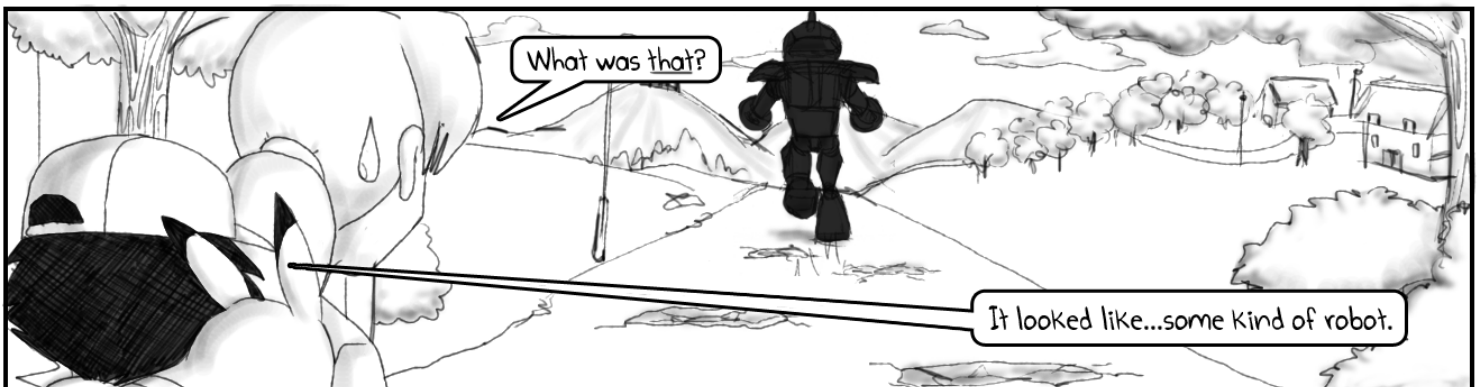
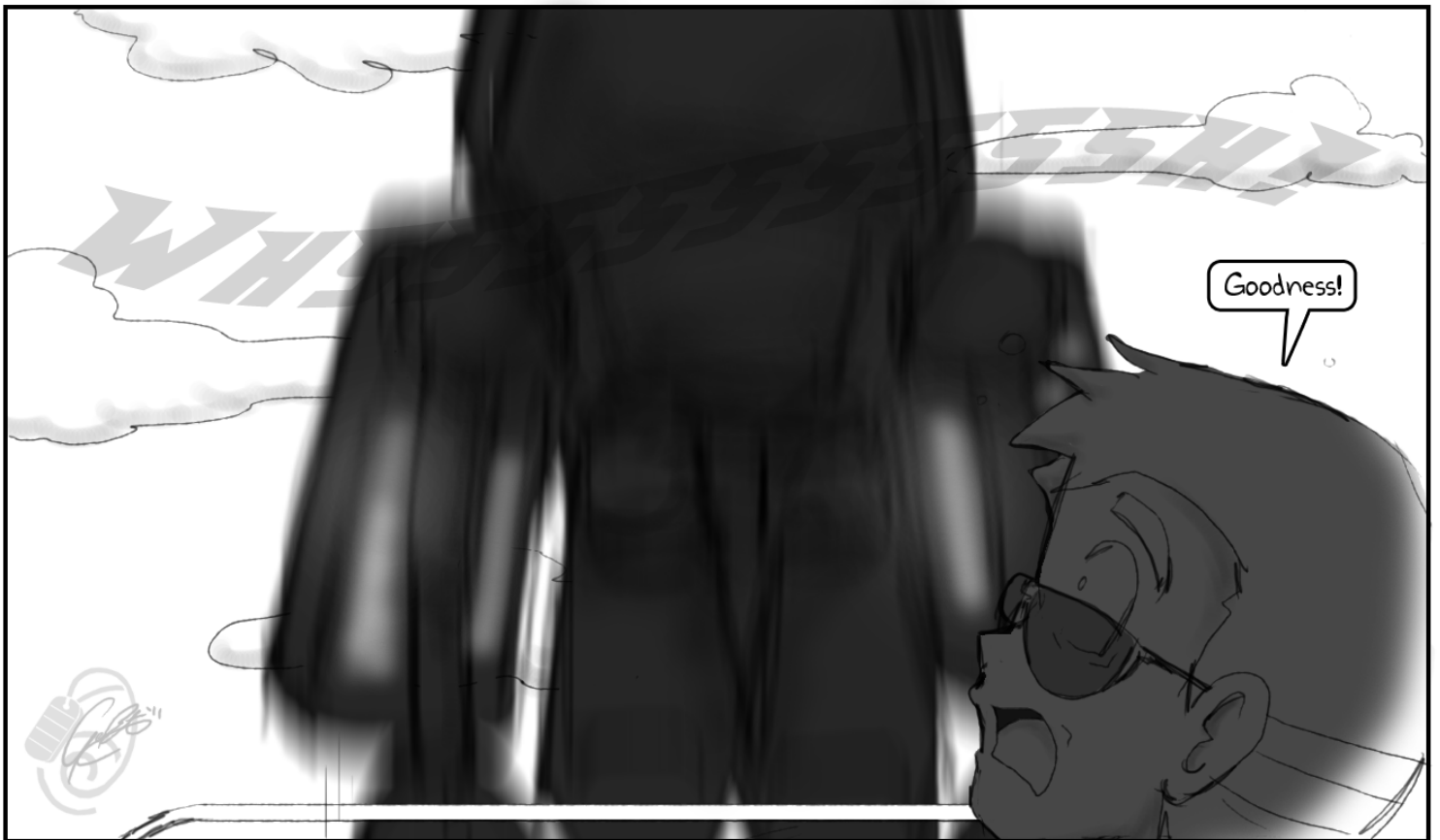
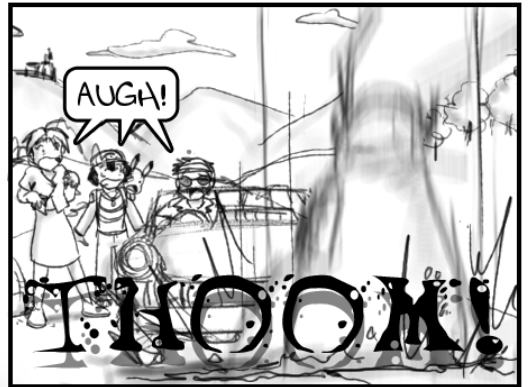
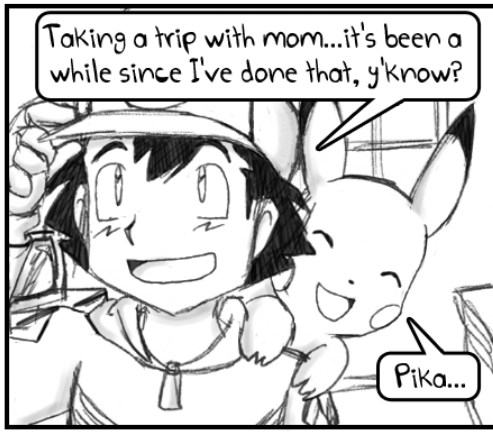
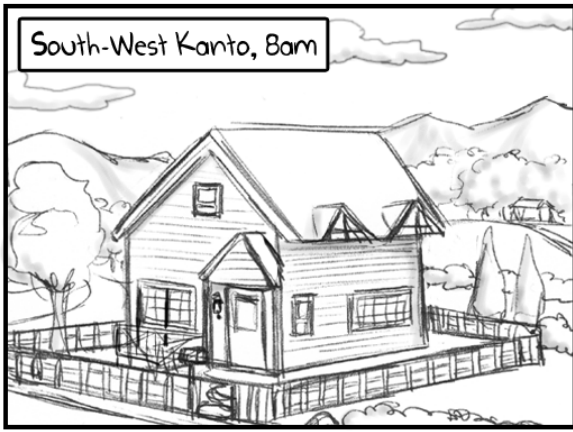
You...you mean...

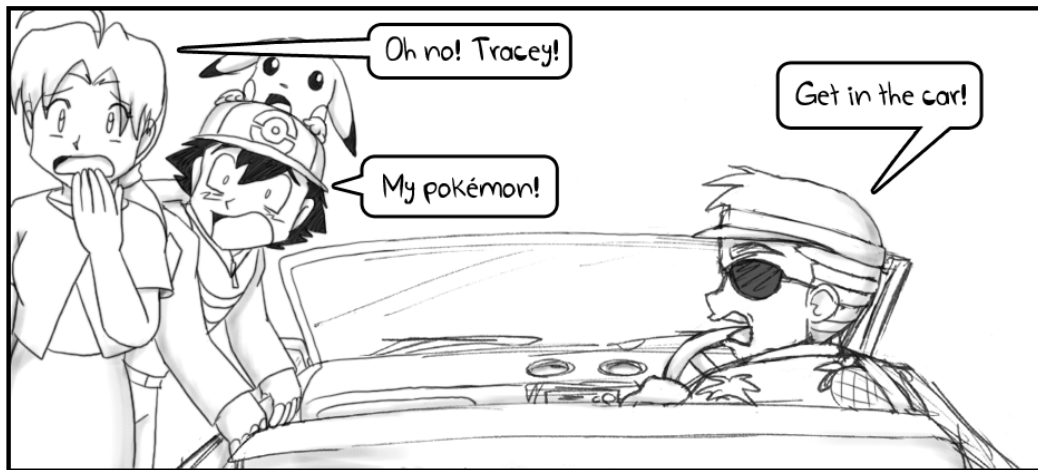
...we've been promoted?

The use of Class A equipment is imperative to the success of this mission.

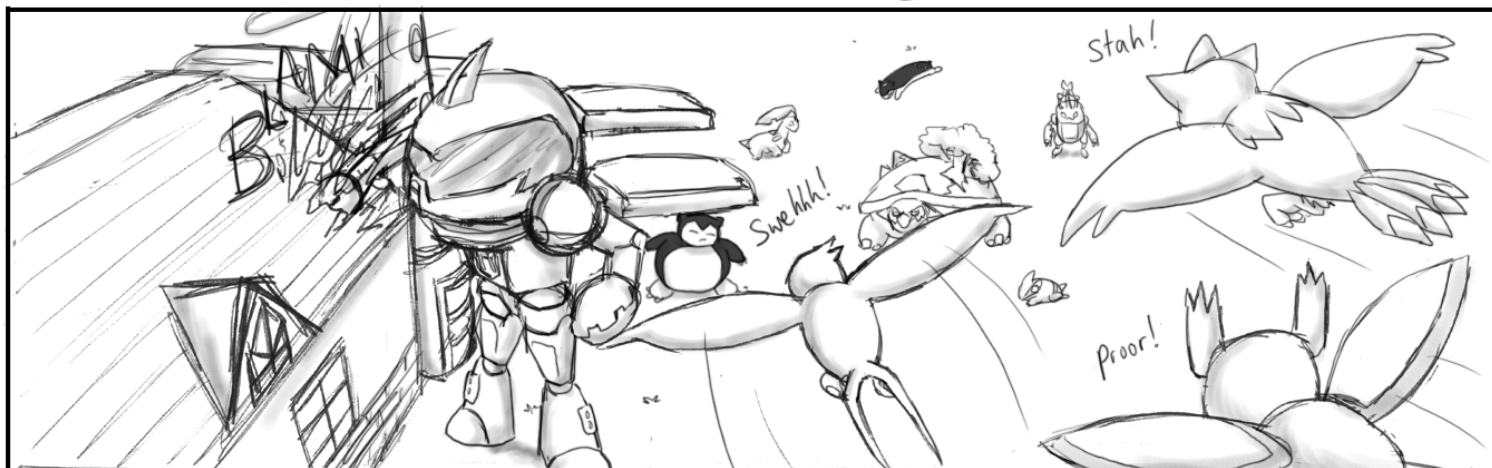
Report to administration for your upgraded ID cards, then take the machine listed on that brief to the appropriate co-ordinates.

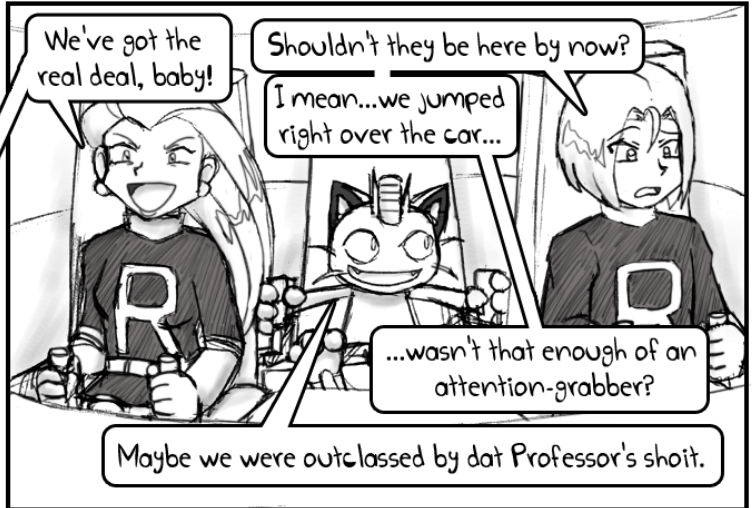
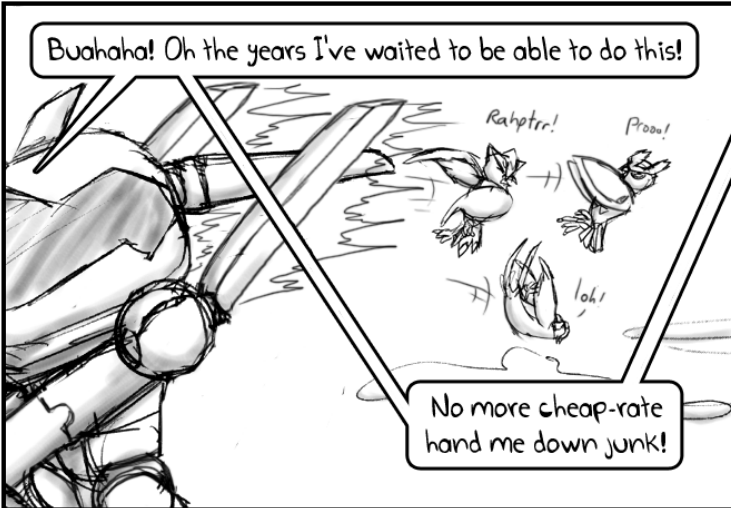
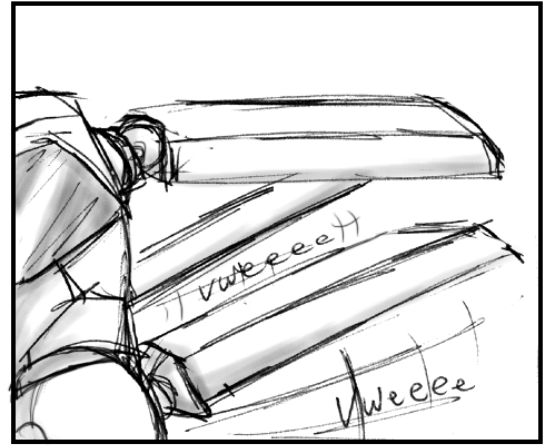
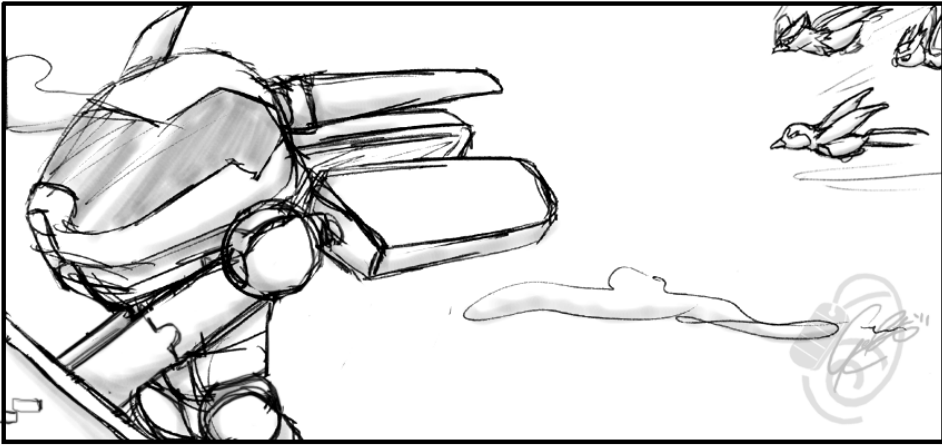
It is time he experienced what a true threat is like.





...they had to choose today!





Buahaha! Oh the years I've waited to be able to do this!

We've got the real deal, baby!

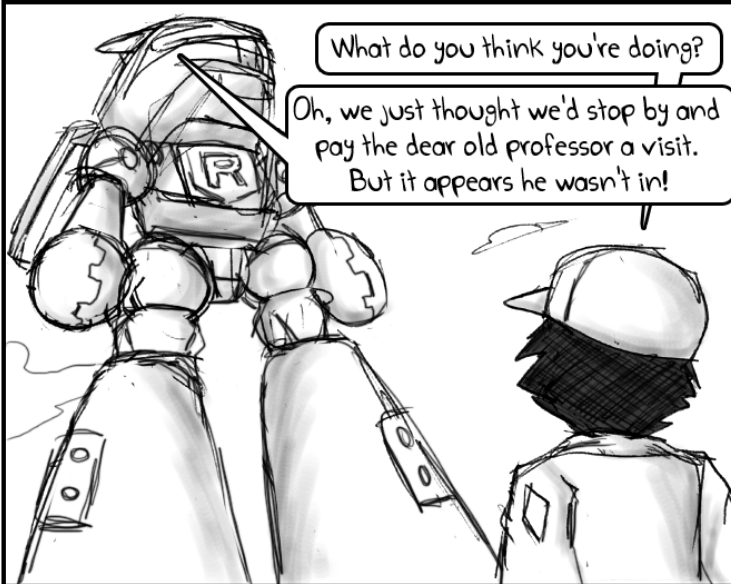
Shouldn't they be here by now?

I mean...we jumped right over the car...

No more cheap-rate hand me down junk!

...wasn't that enough of an attention-grabber?

Maybe we were outclassed by dat Professor's shoit.



What do you think you're doing?

Team Rocket!

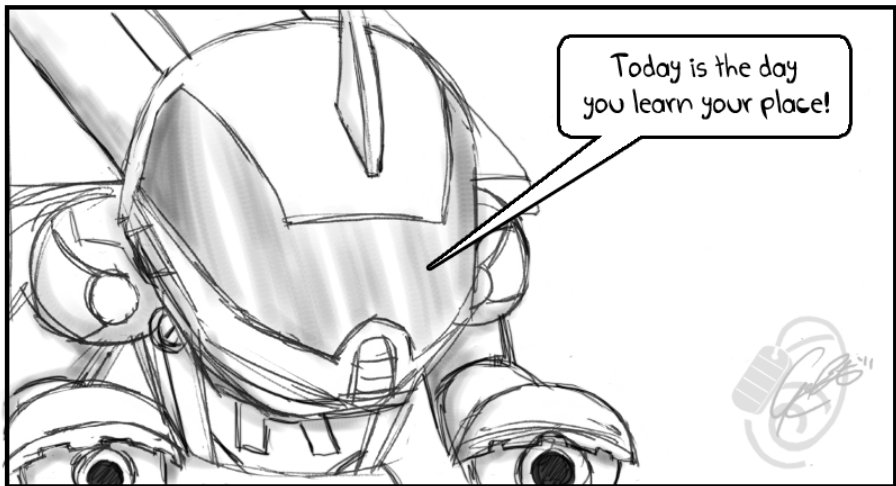
Team Rocket?

One of you is enough, thanks.

Oh, we just thought we'd stop by and pay the dear old professor a visit. But it appears he wasn't in!



But don't worry, twerp. We're not going to take up your 'precious time' by delaying the inevitable.



Today is the day you learn your place!

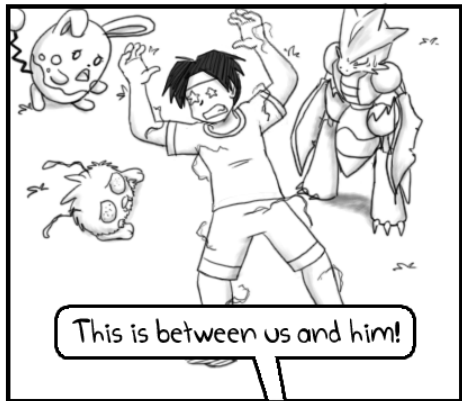


Now wait a second, you-!

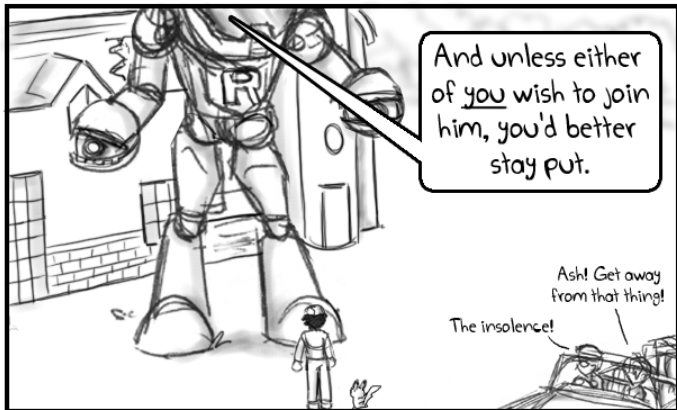


Stay out of this, lab lackey!

FZZSHHK!

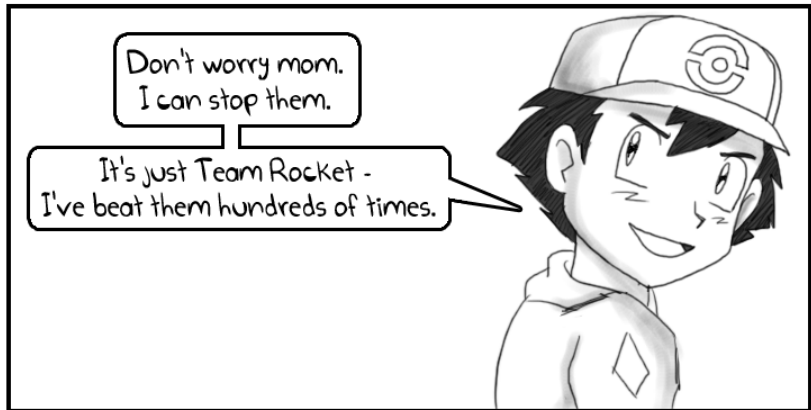


This is between us and him!



And unless either of you wish to join him, you'd better stay put.

Ash! Get away from that thing!  
The insolence!



Don't worry mom. I can stop them.

It's just Team Rocket - I've beat them hundreds of times.

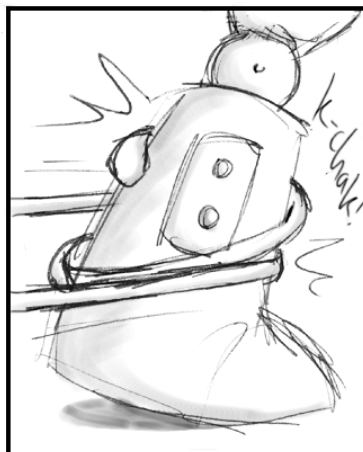
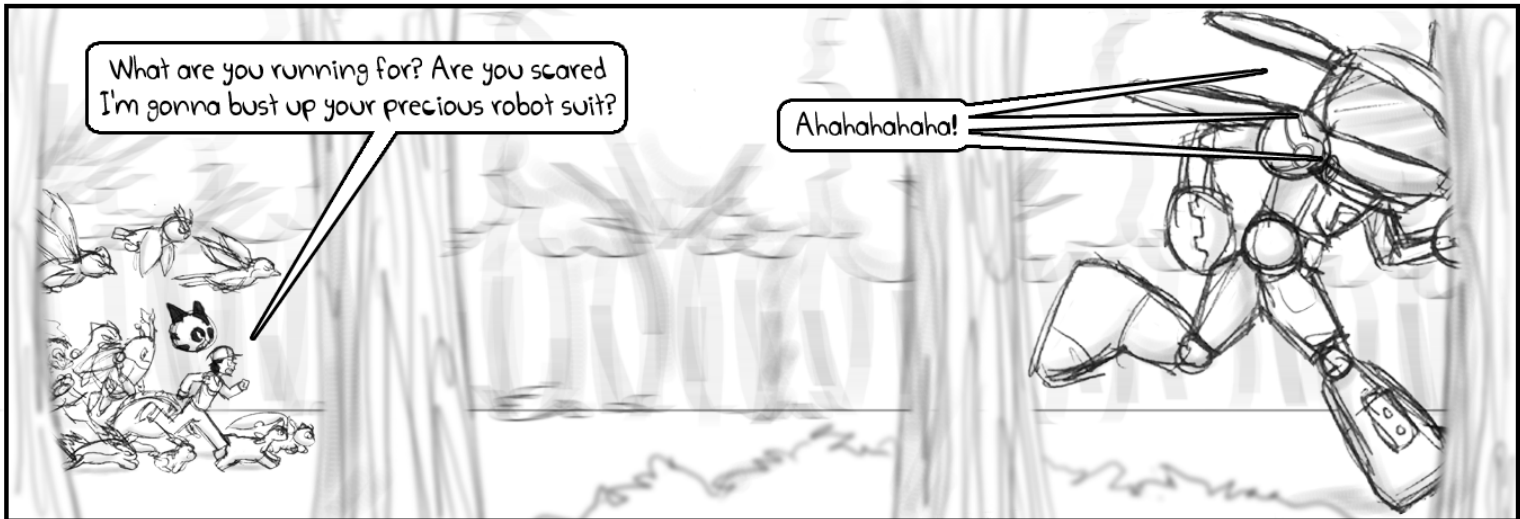
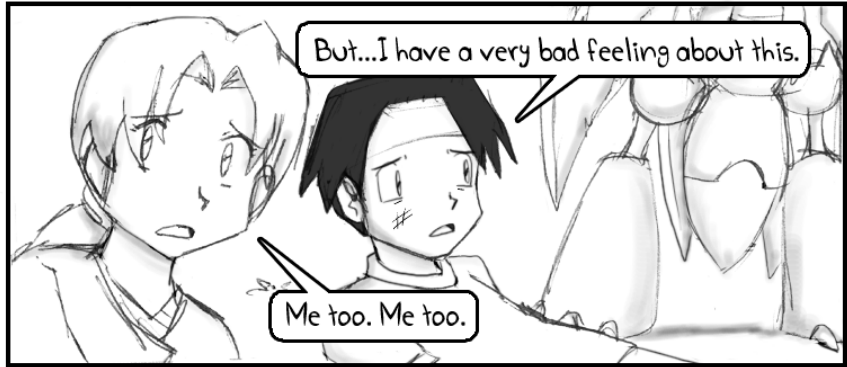
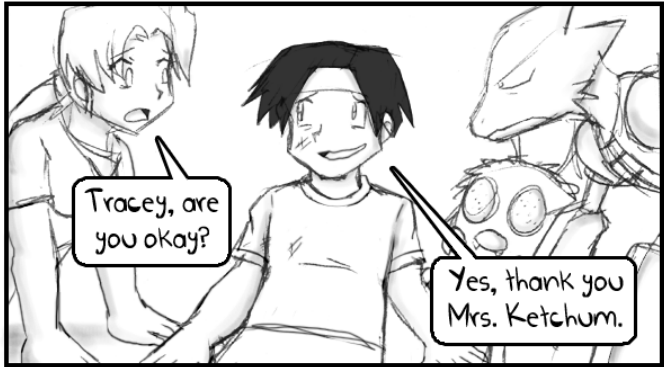


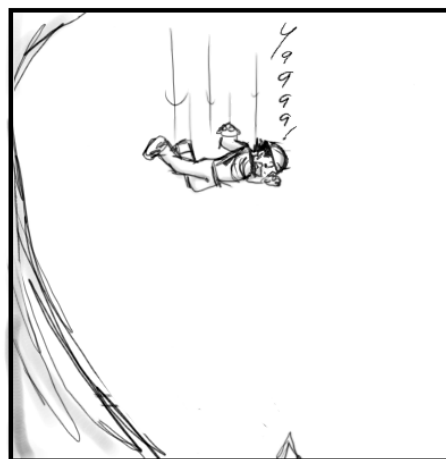
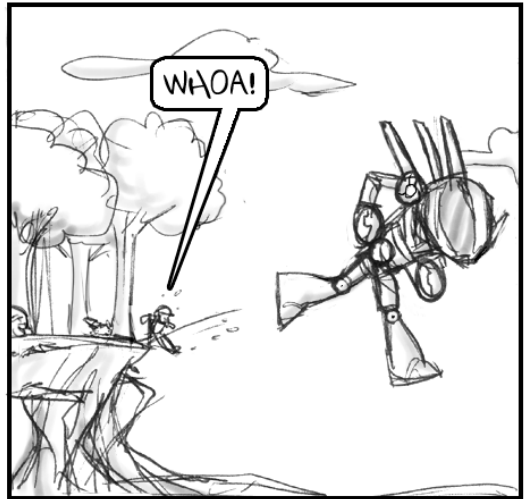
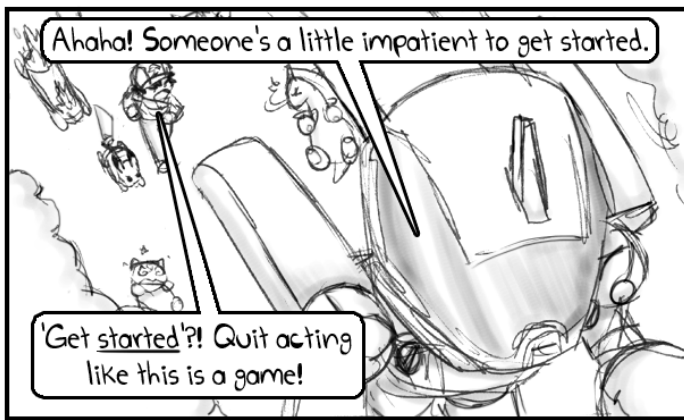
Bweehheehheehheehheeh...



Catch us if you caaan~!

Come on, guys! Let's go!







I'm done with playing around!



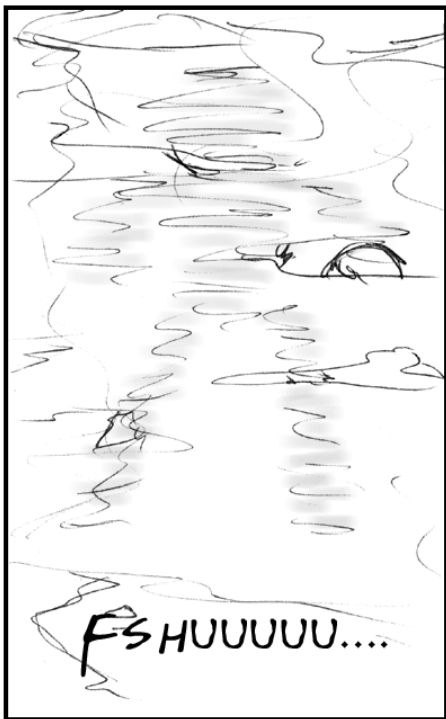
Everyone - give it all you've got! Don't let up!

Aii!

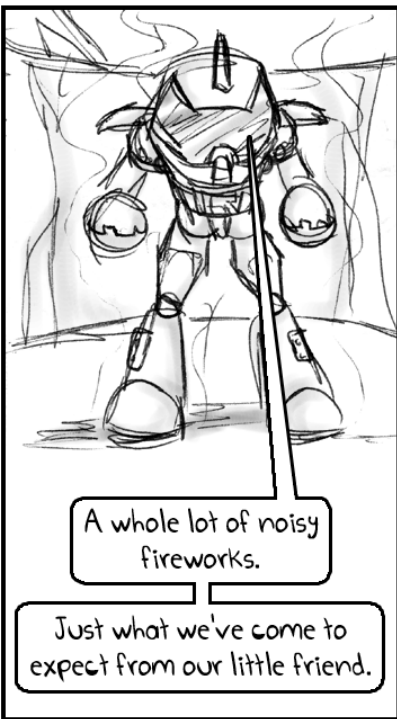
Baw!

lan-what!

**BLAM!**



FS HUUUUU....

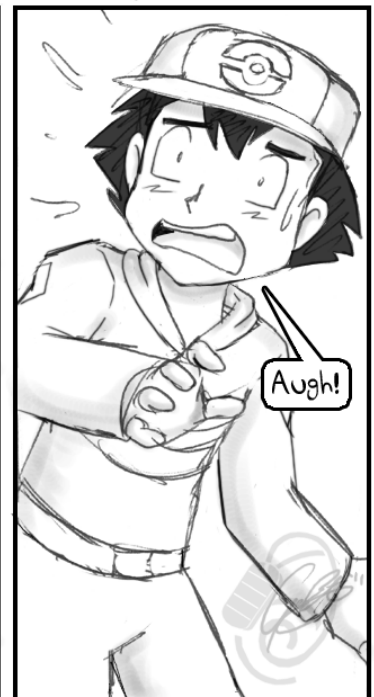
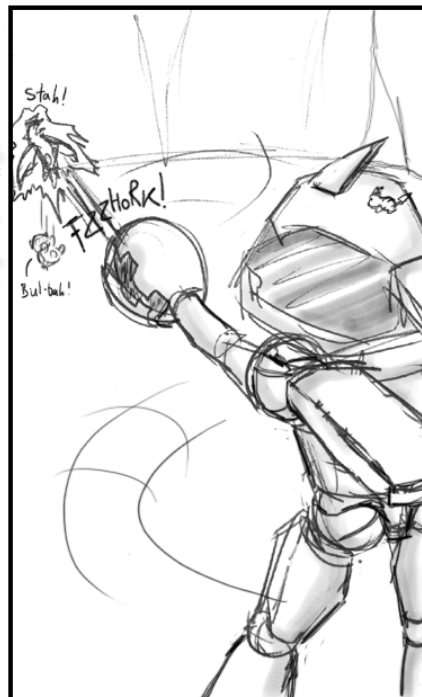
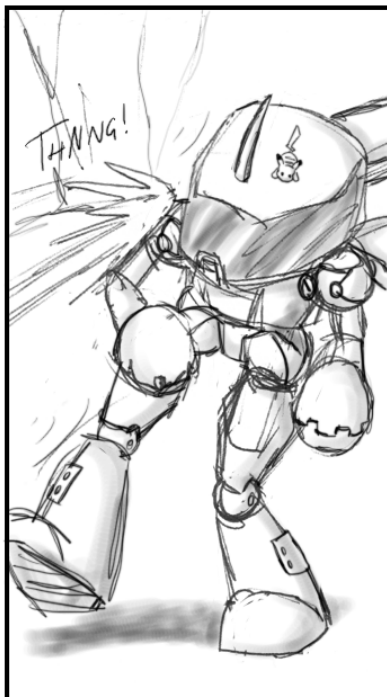
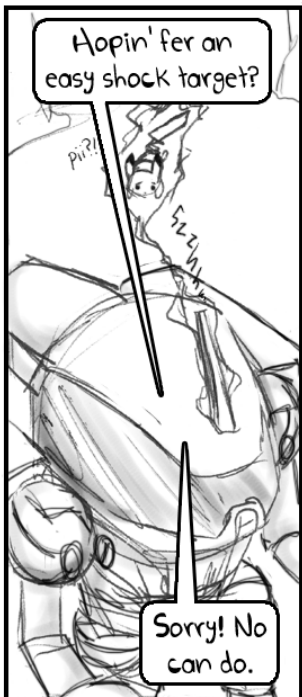
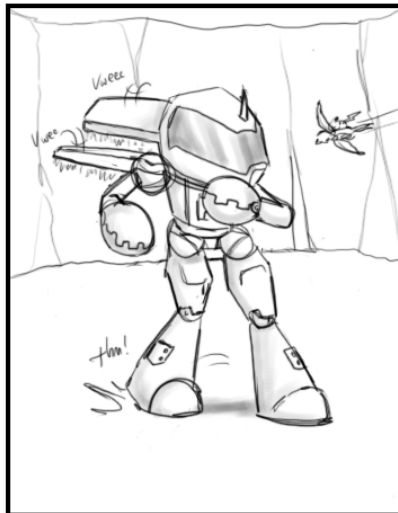
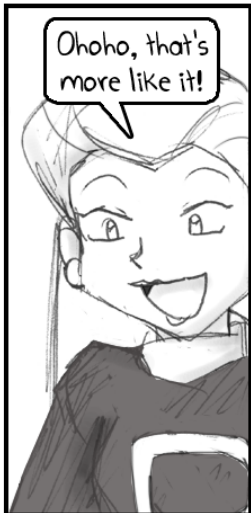
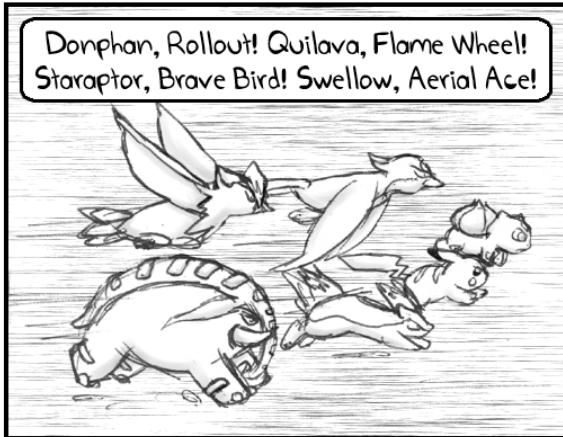


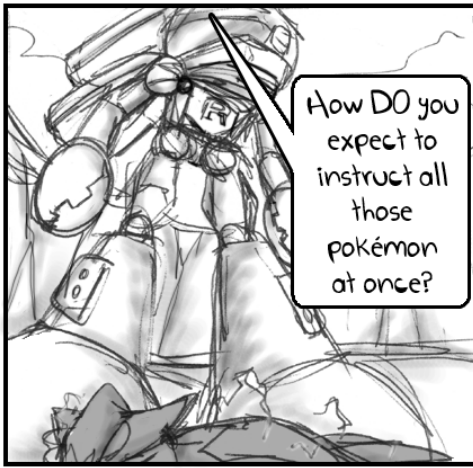
A whole lot of noisy fireworks.

Just what we've come to expect from our little friend.



What? How?

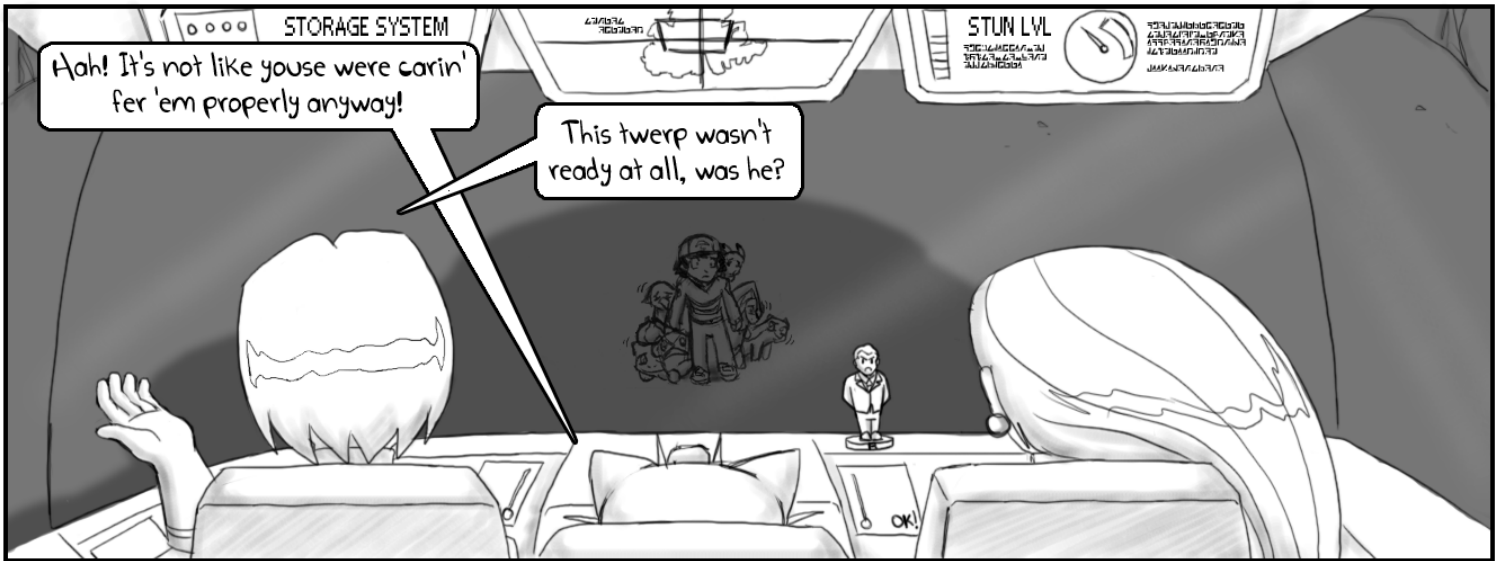
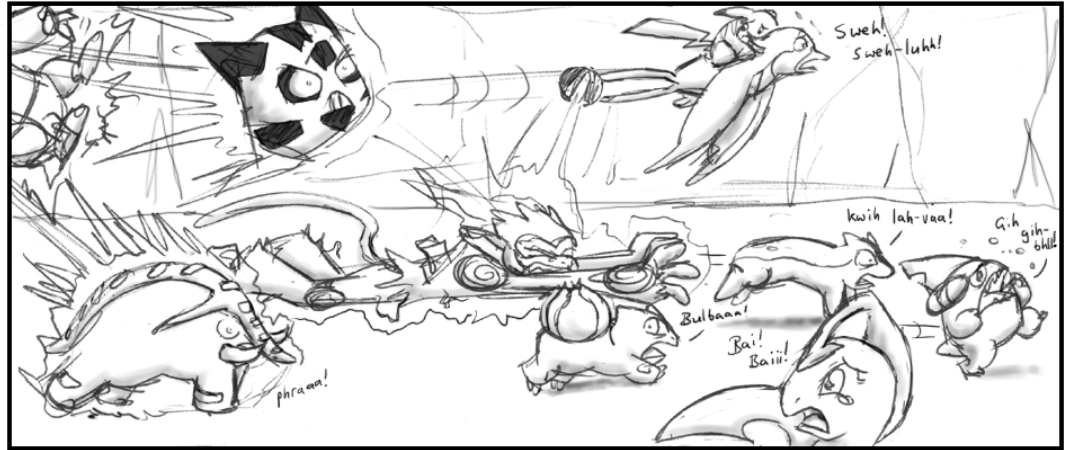
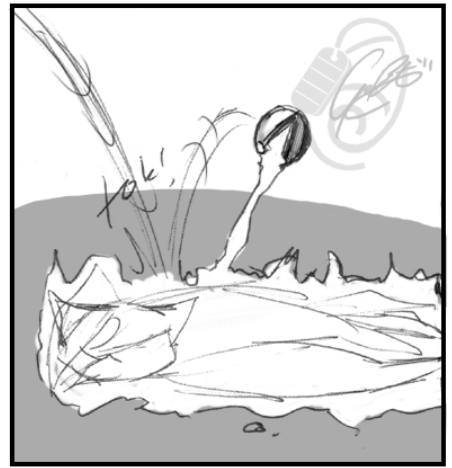
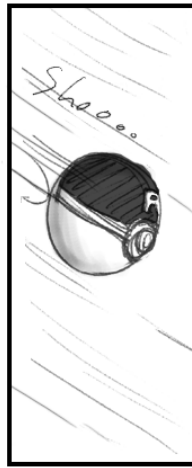




How DO you expect to instruct all those pokémon at once?



Here, let us take a few of them off your hands!

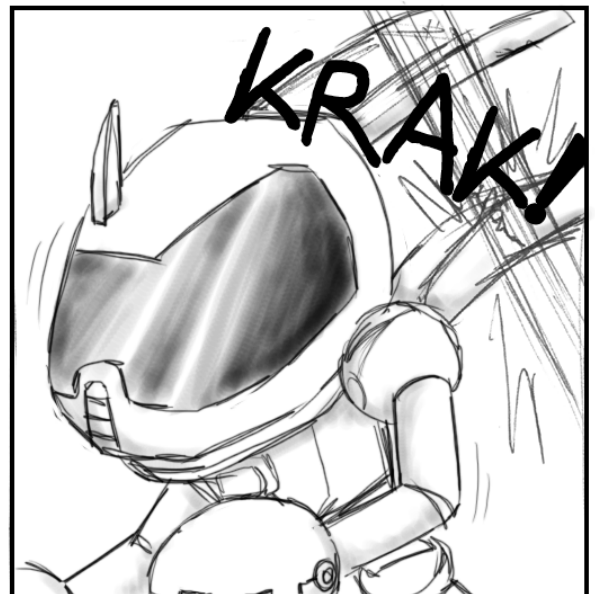


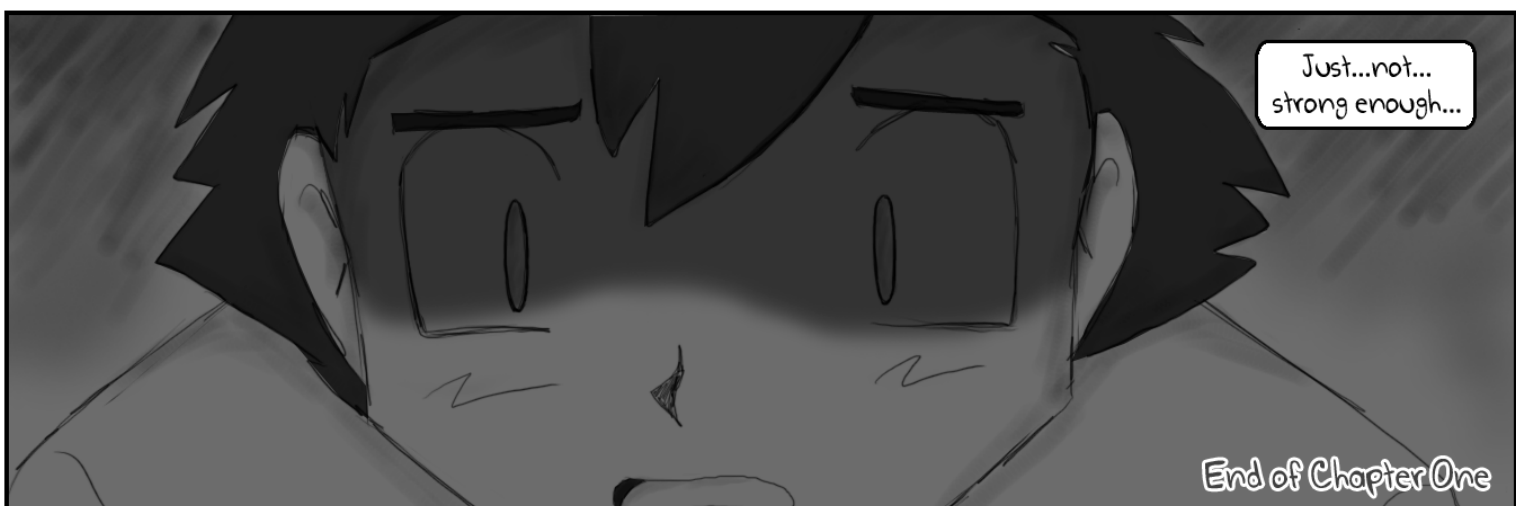
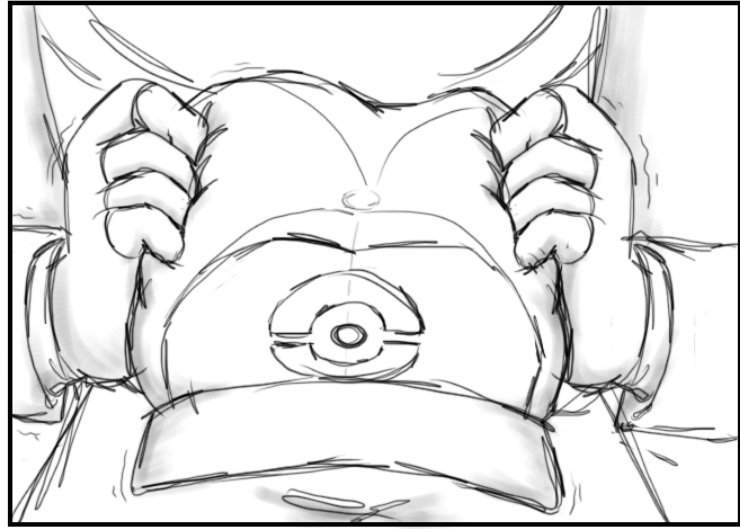
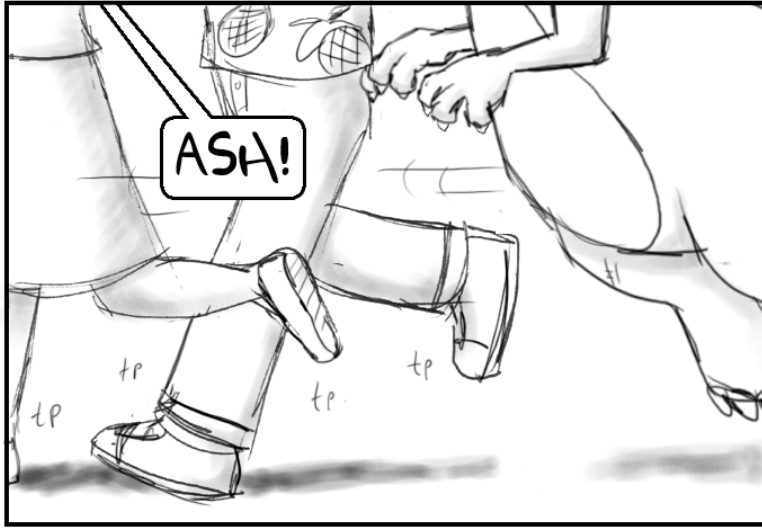
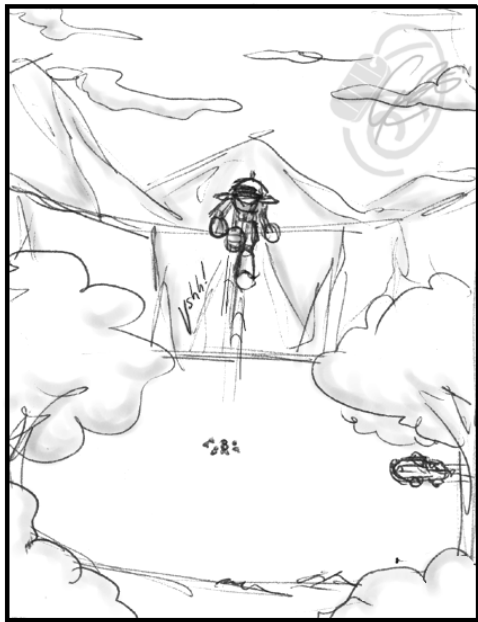
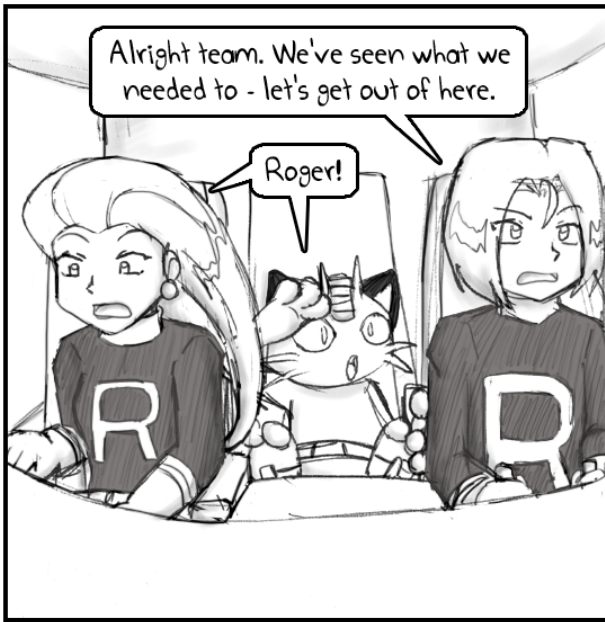
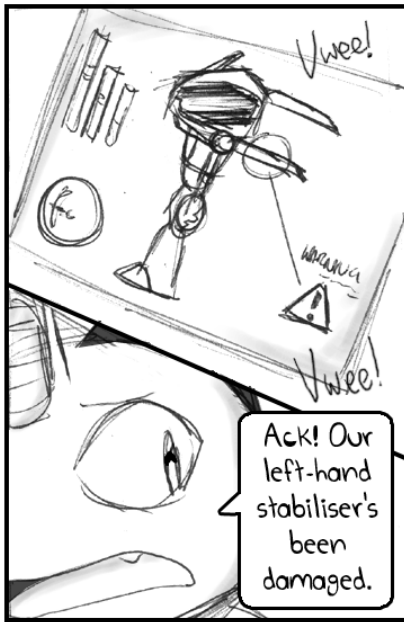
STORAGE SYSTEM  
Hah! It's not like you were carin' fer 'em properly anyway!

STUN LVL  
This twerp wasn't ready at all, was he?



I'd say his pokémon could do with a better trainer, don't you?



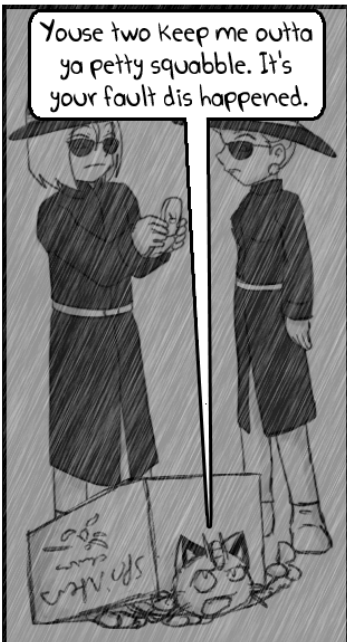


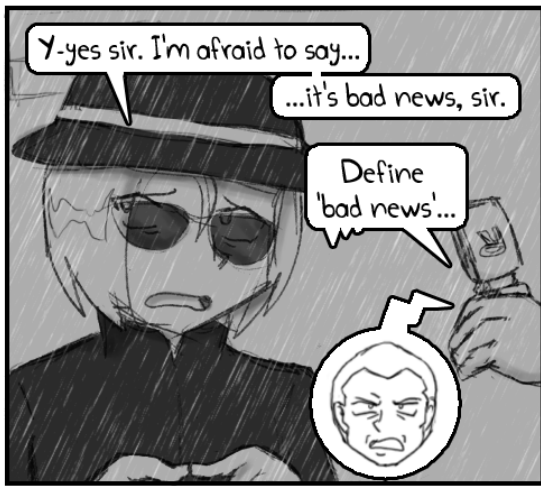
End of Chapter One

# CHAPTER TWO

## Chain of Command

East Johto, One Month Later...





Y-yes sir. I'm afraid to say...

...it's bad news, sir.

Define 'bad news'...



...we lost him, sir.

WHAT?



We continued to follow him after that test, like you asked. But two days ago, in a forest just north-east of here, the twer-uh, boy had this massive argument with his friends and just... disappeared.

But it's nothing we can't handle, sir. Just give us some time and-



No!

Gleep!

No more time! You three have had more than your fair share of chances, and you repay me with your utter ineptitude!



Consider yourself removed from this assignment, and from Active Duty until further notice!



Well dat coulda gone betta.

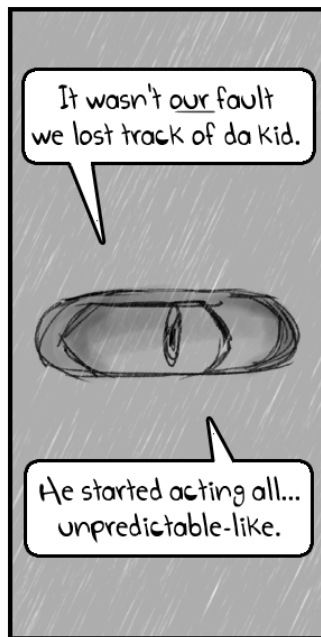


Y'think?

Augh!



All the suffering we've been put through while chasing after that twerp and his abominably overcharged yellow rat, for what? To have the boss yell in our ears and consign us to measly errands within HQ!



It wasn't our fault we lost track of da Kid.

He started acting all... unpredictable-like.



Not that the boss is going to listen to reason now.

I don't get why he was so intent on having us pursue the twerp anyway.

I don't think we could ever work out that stuffshirt's agenda.

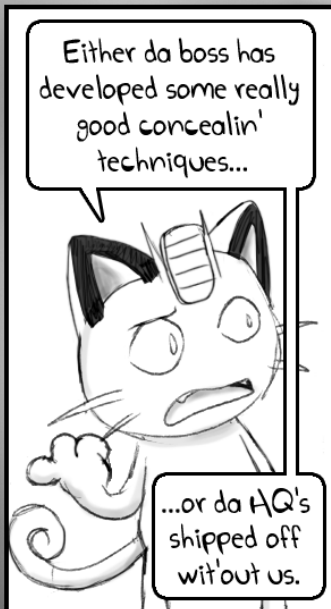
So now what?

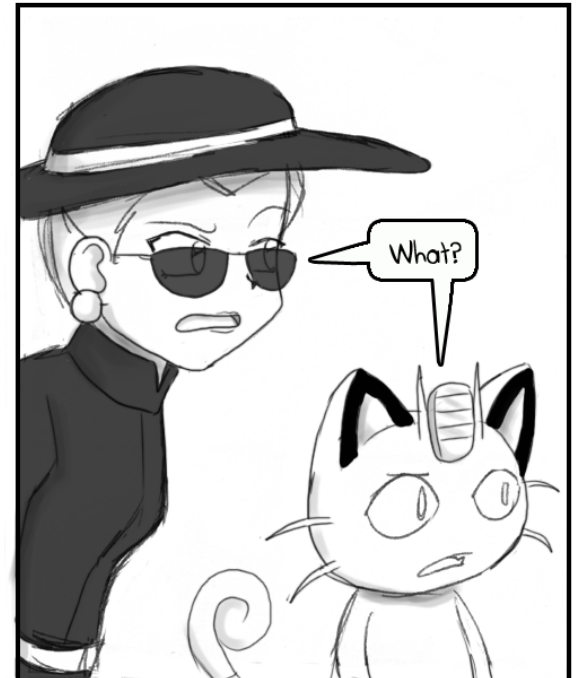
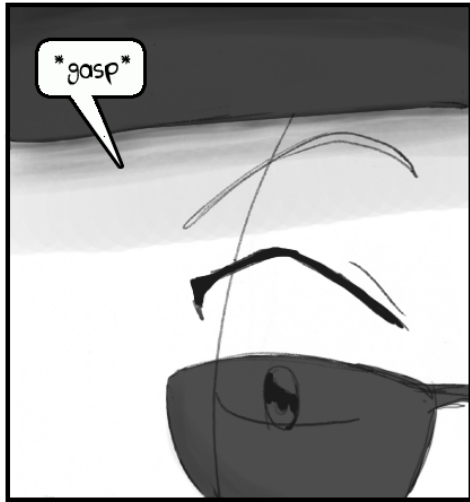
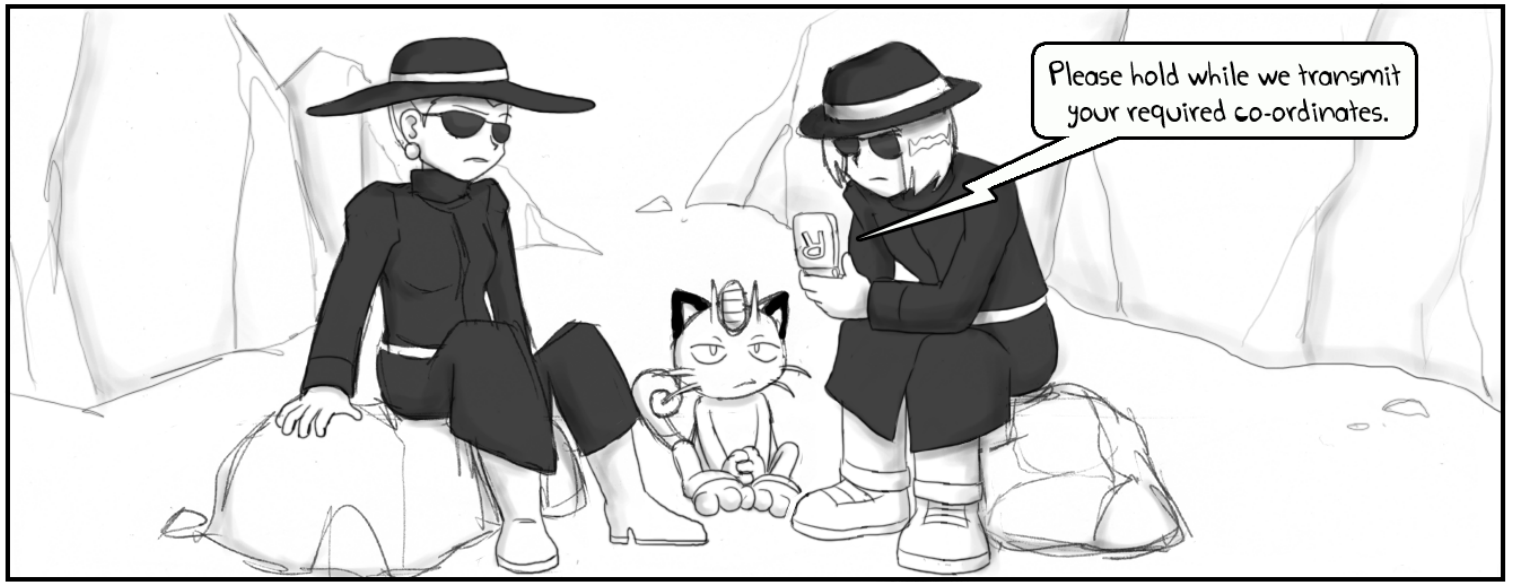


You heard the man. We're off AD.

Its back to headquarters for whatever comes next.









Once you arrive in Totto...



...go to the Nashgri City branch of 'Happy Burger'.

Make sure you are being served by 'Robin'.



Ask him for a 'Big Whammo Combo with an oblivious discount'.



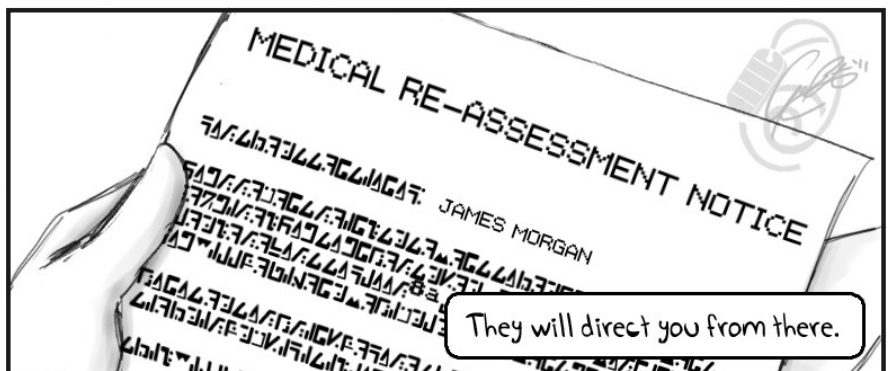
You will receive a set of psywave blockers.



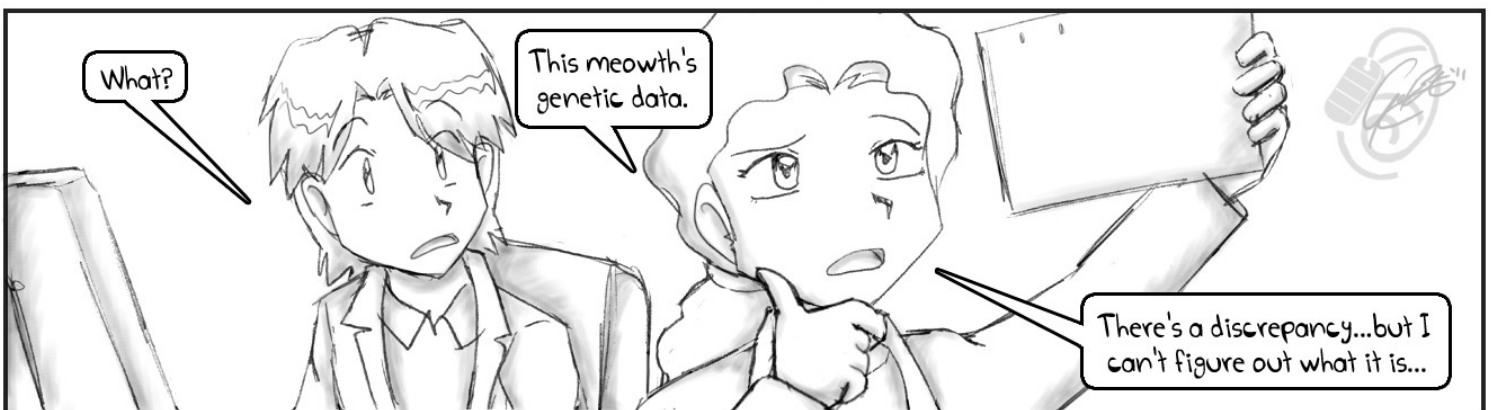
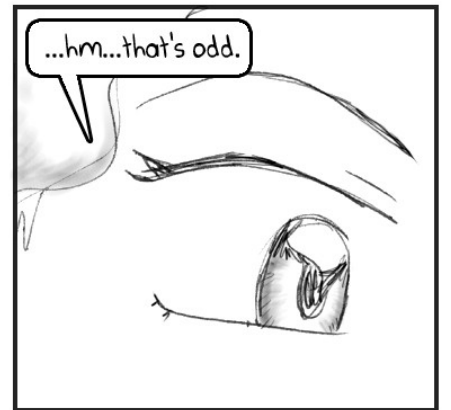
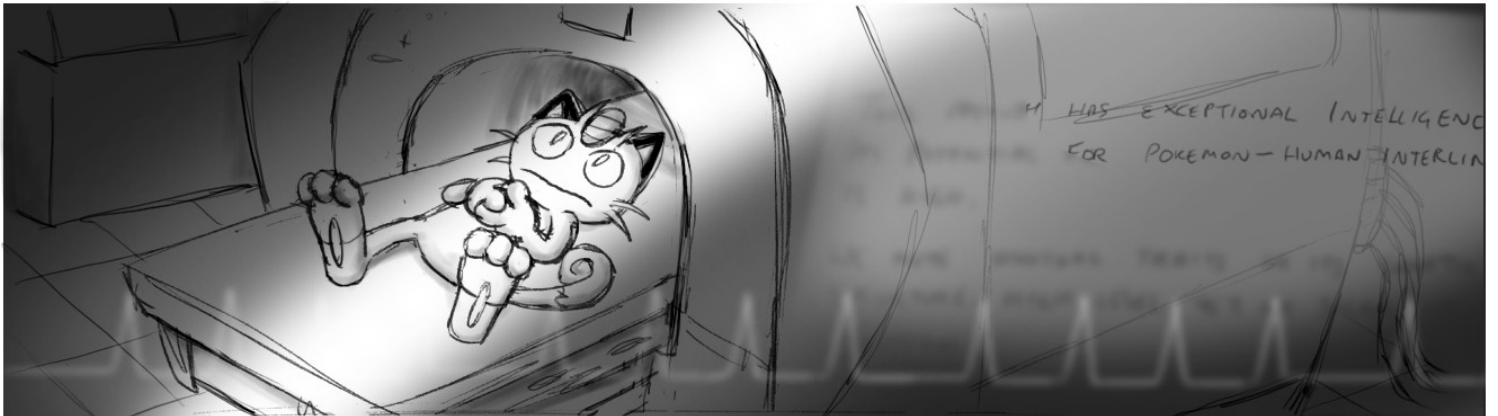
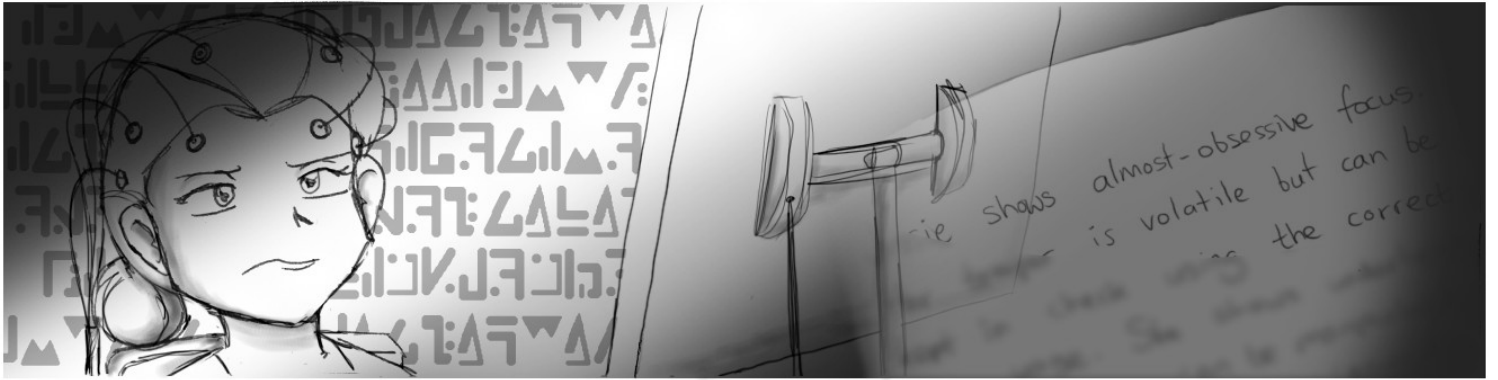
It is imperative that you are wearing them upon entry to our location.

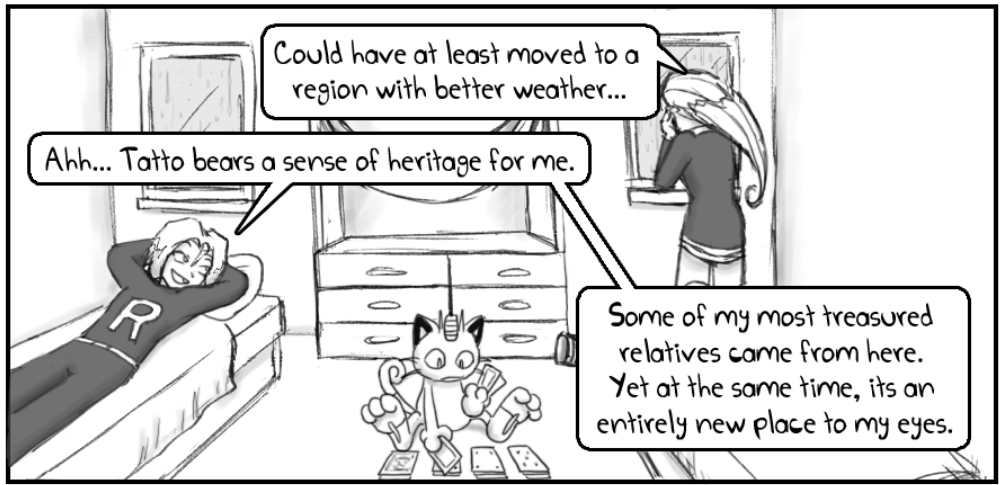


Upon entering headquarters, report to administration.



They will direct you from there.





Could have at least moved to a region with better weather...

Ahh... Totto bears a sense of heritage for me.

Some of my most treasured relatives came from here. Yet at the same time, its an entirely new place to my eyes.



Fresh opportunities await us, Jess!



Jimmy's right. Dat mission was gettin' pretty stale. It's time to embrace da next step on our journey to da top.



bar-bar!



Dibs on da doorknob!

Oh no you don't!



That door is mine!

Mya?!



BWAM!

YAOU!



every time..

Eat fibres, Meowth!

Ackpht! Get off, ya big lug!



k-chik

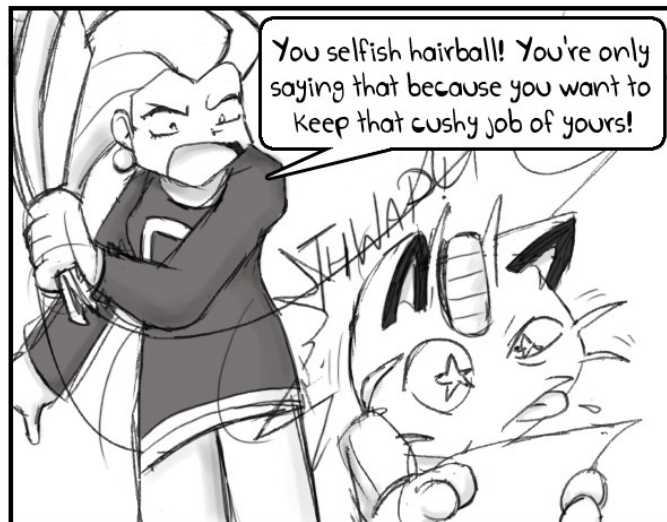
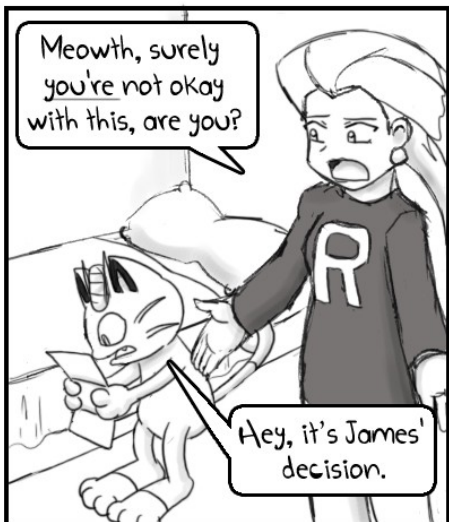
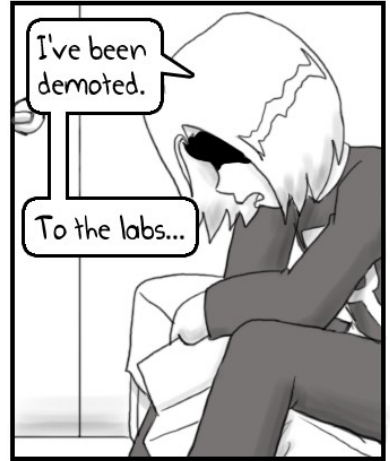
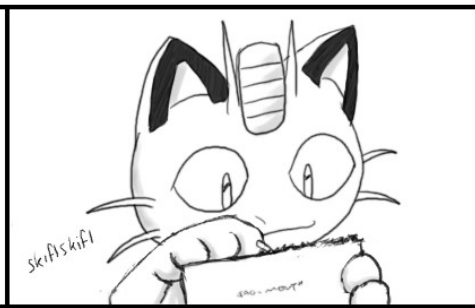


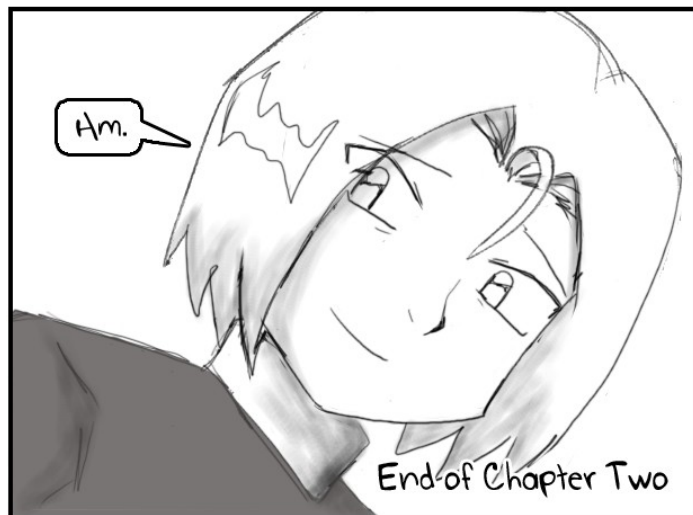
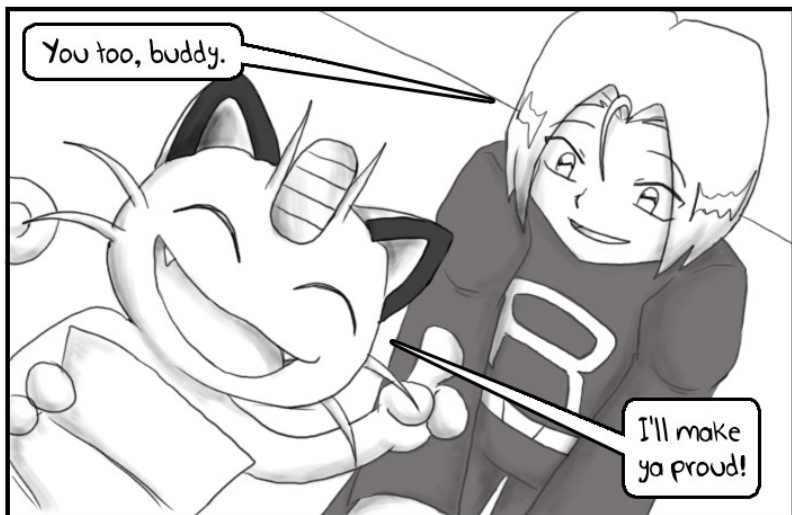
A95

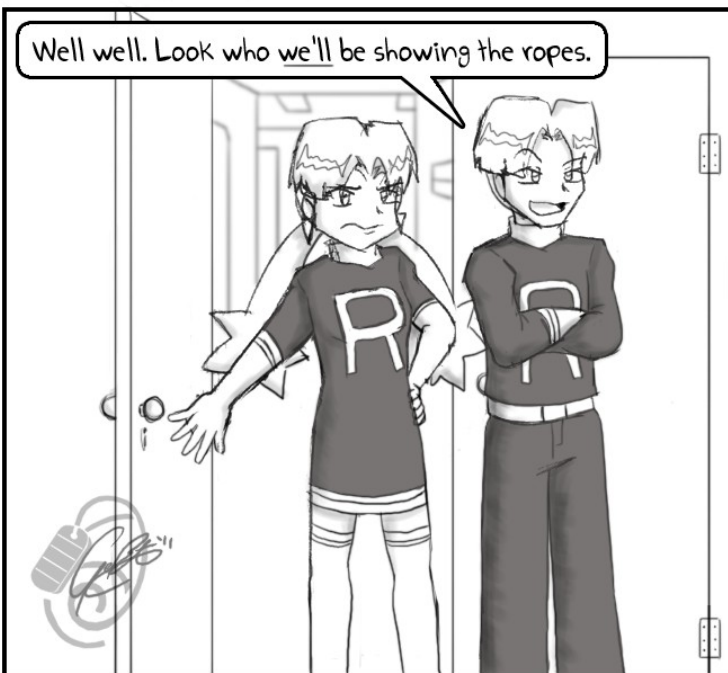
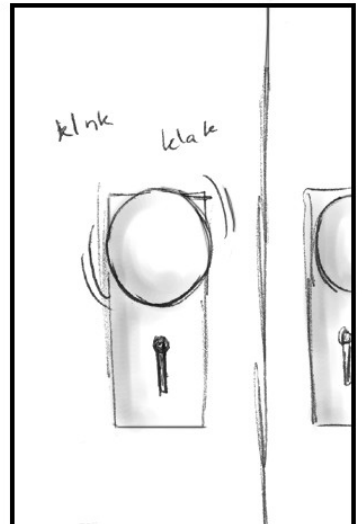
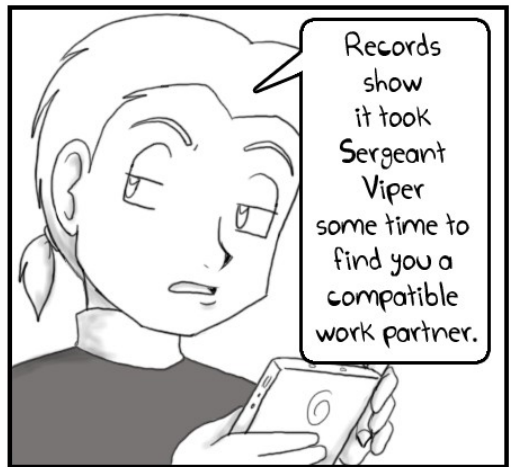
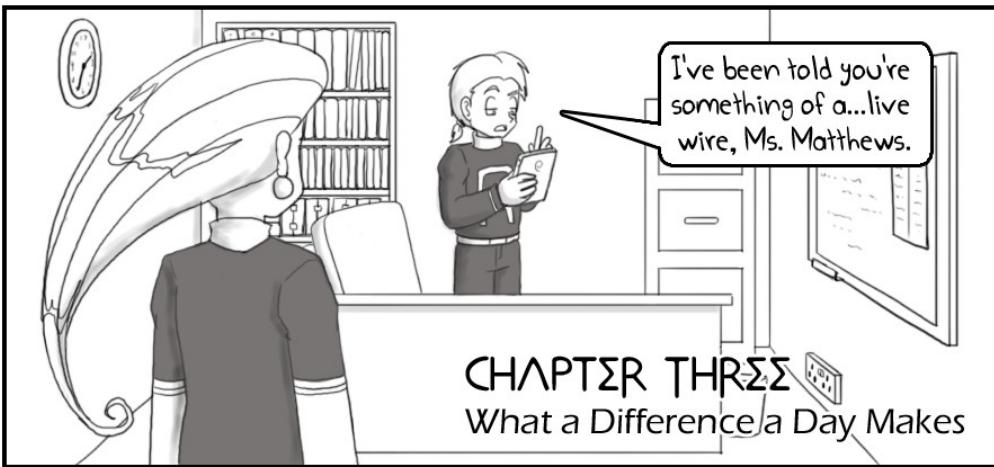


Mail for you.

gr-







Attention all personnel. Incoming transport. Please clear the docking area.



Attention all personnel. Incoming transport. Please clear the docking area.

Pick up the pace, you miserable wumples!



Professor Bohrgram wants these specimens today, not next week!

Well?

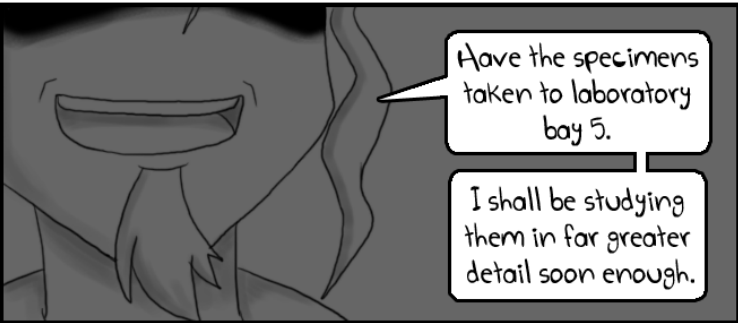
Second and third stage evolutions from any species obtainable were gathered as requested, sir.

Excellent work, Agent Brogan.



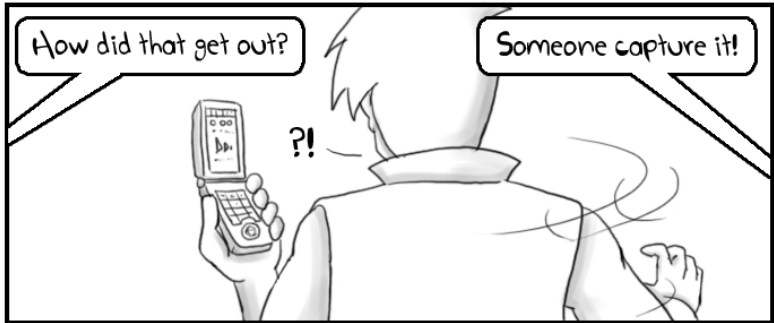
Have the specimens taken to laboratory bay 5.

I shall be studying them in far greater detail soon enough.



How did that get out?

Someone capture it!



What was tha-?

What's going on here?

We were rolling the trolleys through, then this haunter appeared out of nowhere!

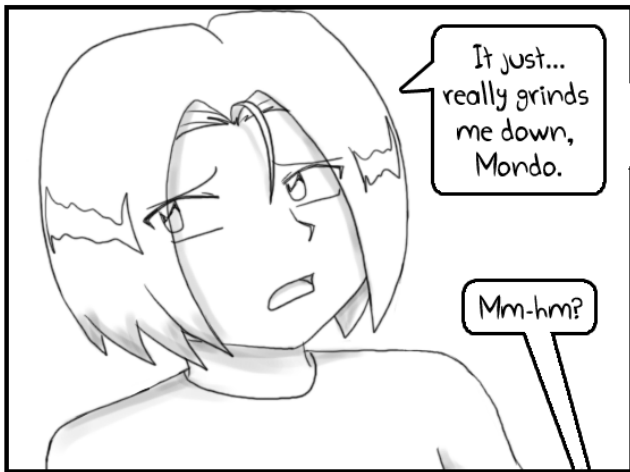
None of the Pokéballs seem to be damaged, so we don't think its the one we snagged...



But it still poses a threat to Team Rocket's affairs...

I want this rogue pokémon tracked down and neutralised, NOW!





It just... really grinds me down, Mondo.

Mm-hm?



I can't seem to do right for doing wrong with her!

Did she honestly think I wanted to end up down here? To split our team up?



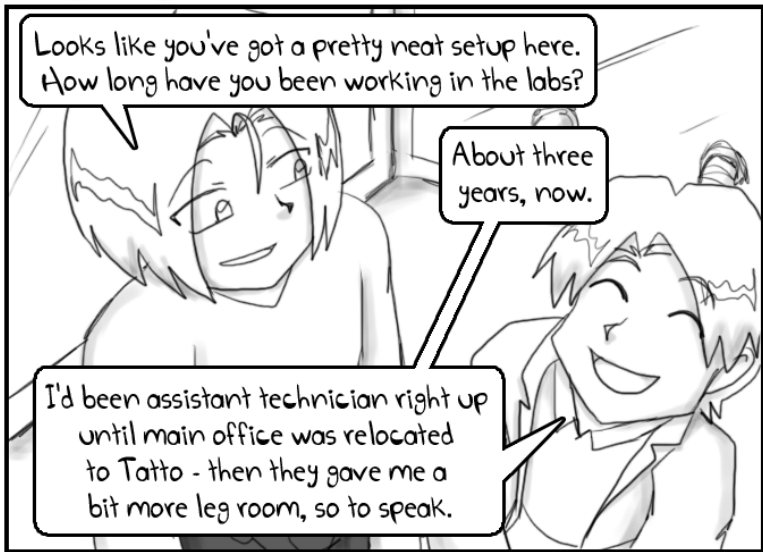
Jessie is one to jump to some strange conclusions at times...

If she had protested about my fate, I... ..



...I just couldn't bear to see what happened to other compassionates happen to her...or Meowth.

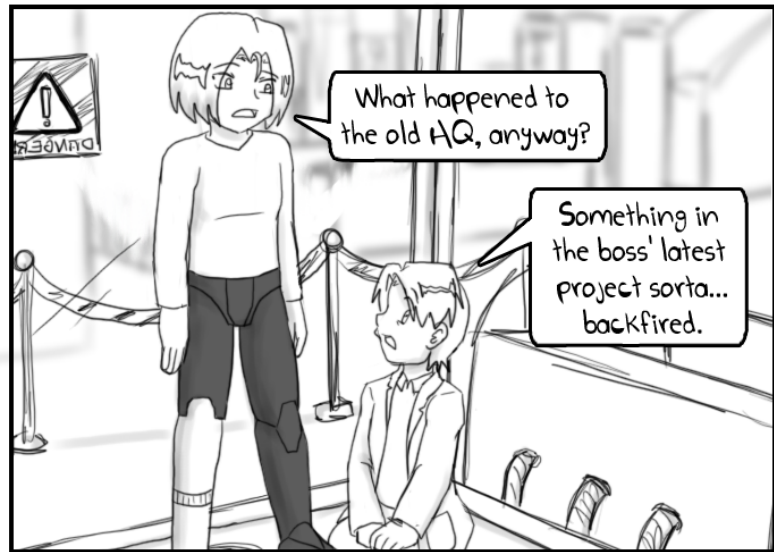
I know, James. I know...



Looks like you've got a pretty neat setup here. How long have you been working in the labs?

About three years, now.

I'd been assistant technician right up until main office was relocated to Totto - then they gave me a bit more leg room, so to speak.

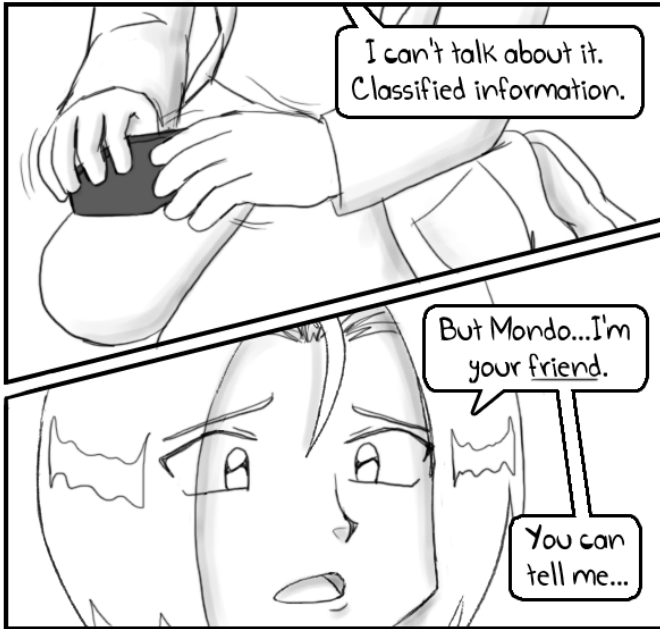


What happened to the old AQ, anyway?

Something in the boss' latest project sorta... backfired.



'Backfired'?



I can't talk about it. Classified information.

But Mondo...I'm your friend.

You can tell me...



I'm sorry, James.

So...are you enjoying being a technician?

It's pretty thrilling!

The work is certainly more unpredictable than what I used to do in the old B Rank.

"Old B Rank"?

Oh yeah. You wouldn't have known about that, would you?

Well...the boss diverted his resources into capture and development for Project Rebirth.

The B Rank lost its purpose after that, and it was phased out.

And where did everyone go?

Most of the Intermediates were demoted to grunt duties.

Then there were a rare few who actually got a step up the ladder. For instance...

Rose got shifted to the medical bay and, well, you can see what happened to me!

thd!  
thd!

Keep it moving! Professor Bohrgam hasn't got all day!

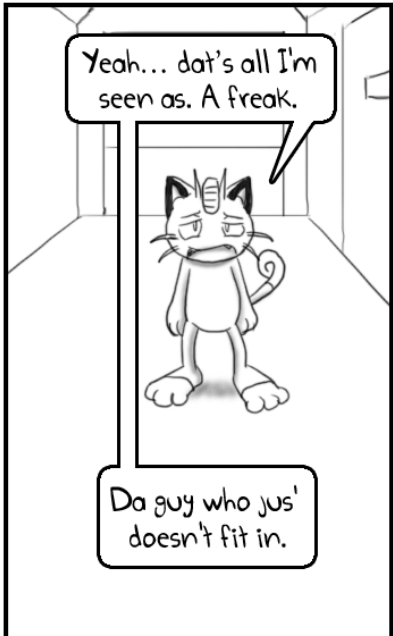
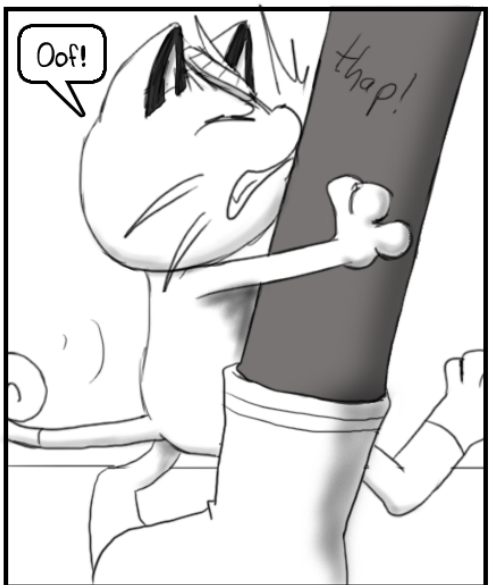
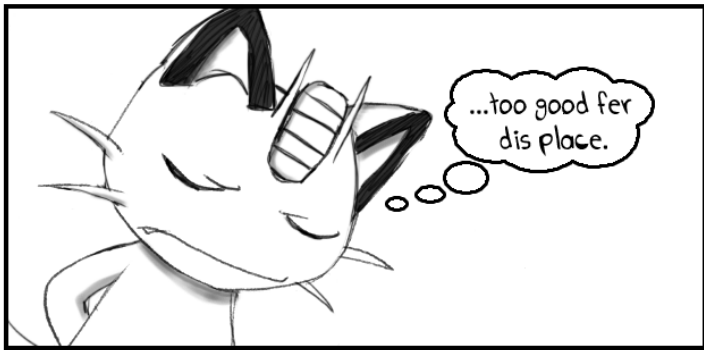
I've seen faster slakoths than you lot!

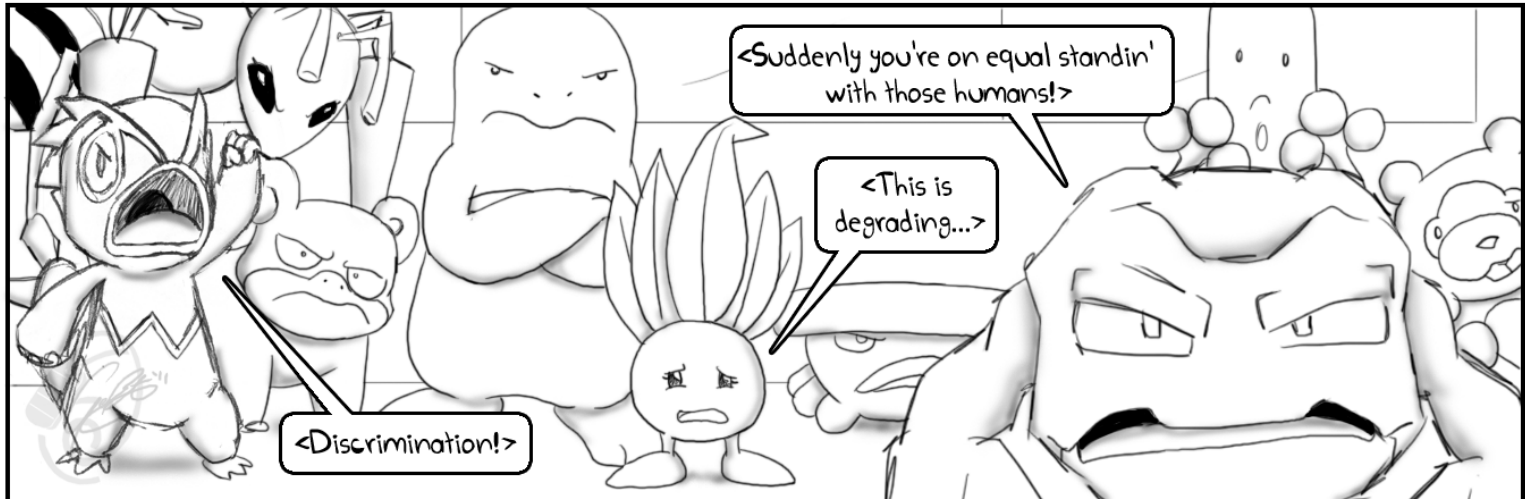
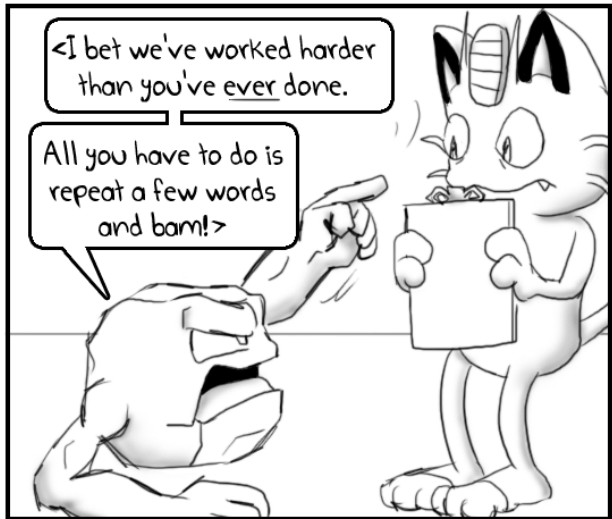
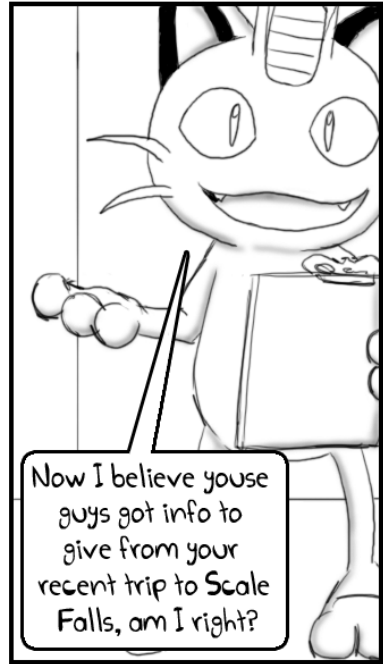
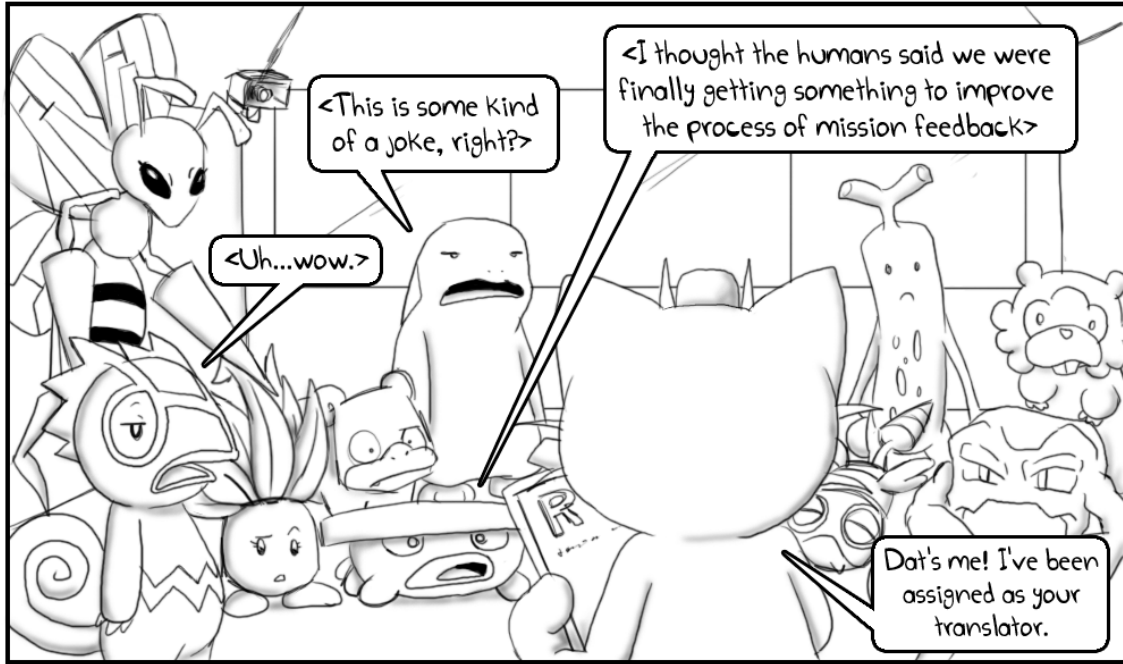
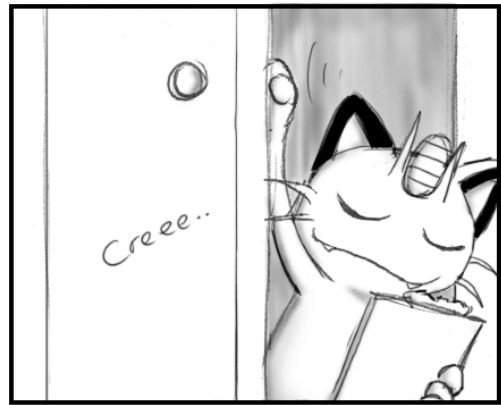
James...this is going to sound really terrible of me but, I'd suggest you try to 'lose' your pokémon.

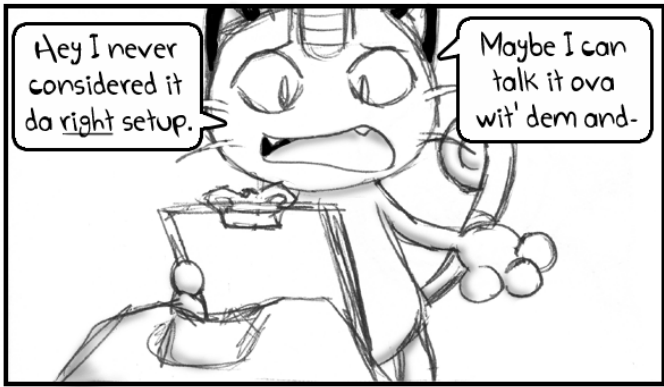
What?!

I'm serious. You're not on Active Duty any more, so you need to get your pokémon to safety.

If the biologists here get their hands on them...I can't guarantee they'll survive.







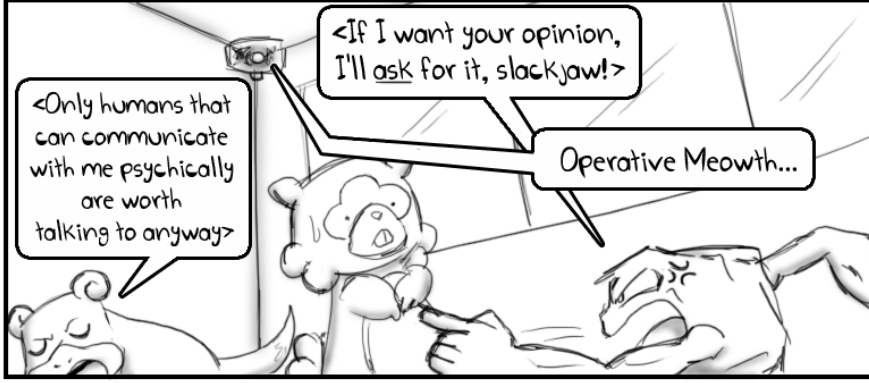
<Hey I never considered it da right setup.>

Maybe I can talk it ova wit' dem and-



<Forget it! I'm not taking any help from some meowth-shaped chatot!>

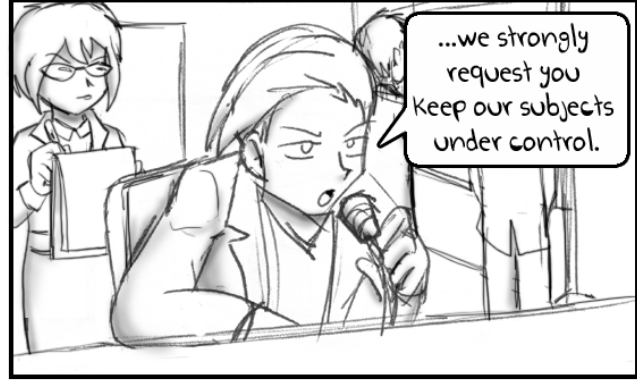
<Hey, c'mon Jey - that's uncalled for>



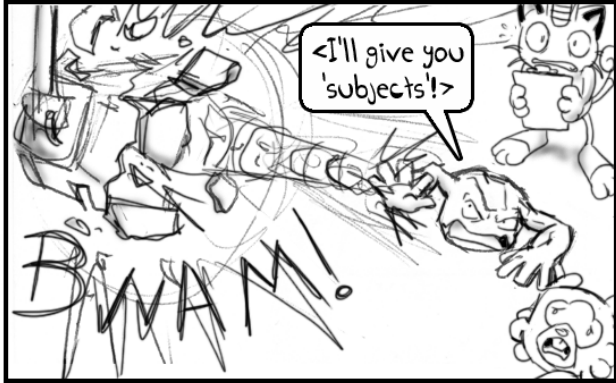
<If I want your opinion, I'll ask for it, slackjaw!>

Operative Meowth...

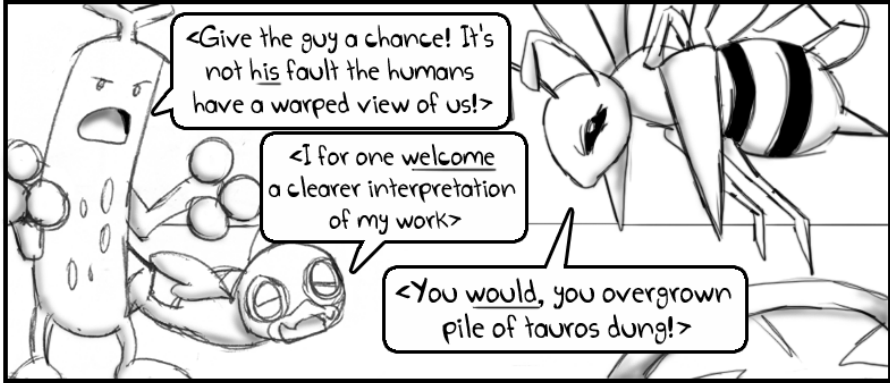
<Only humans that can communicate with me pschically are worth talking to anyway>



...we strongly request you keep our subjects under control.



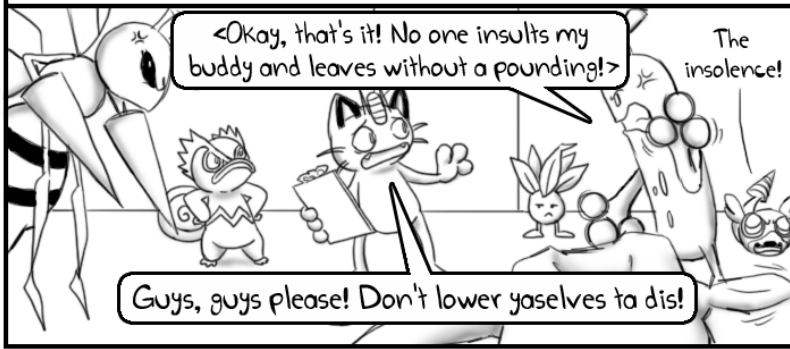
<I'll give you 'subjects'!>



<Give the guy a chance! It's not his fault the humans have a warped view of us!>

<I for one welcome a clearer interpretation of my work>

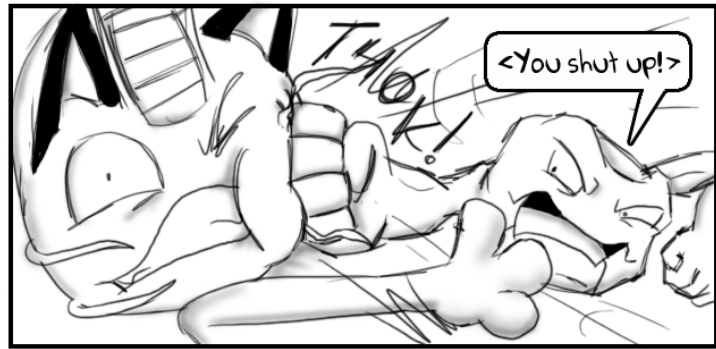
<You would, you overgrown pile of tauros dung!>



<Okay, that's it! No one insults my buddy and leaves without a pounding!>

The insolence!

Guys, guys please! Don't lower yaselves to dis!



<You shut up!>



Ugh!

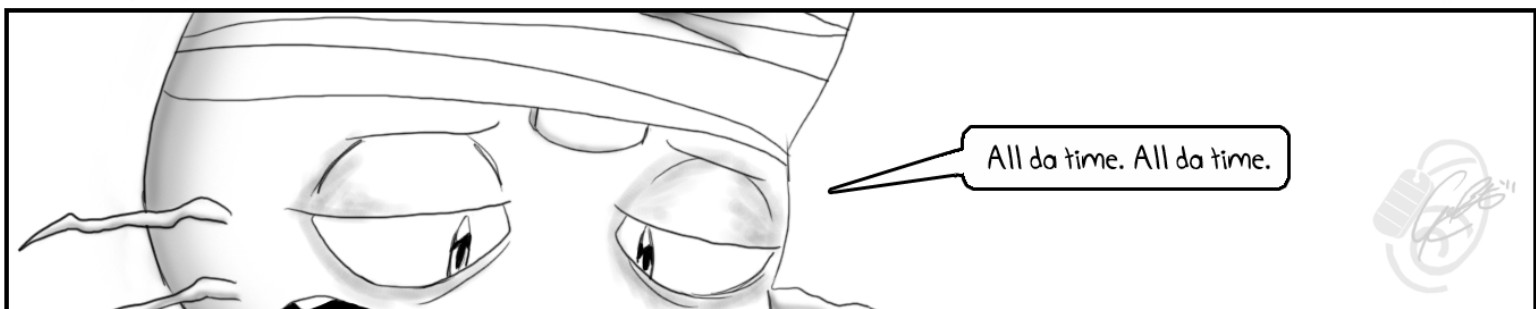
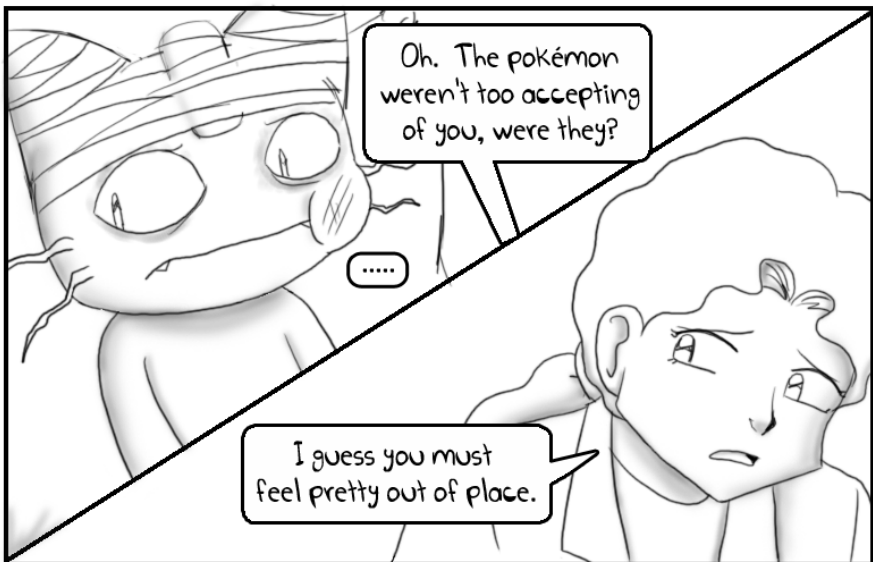
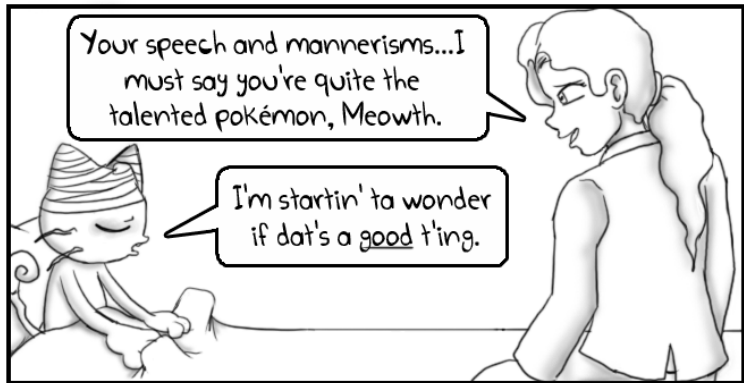
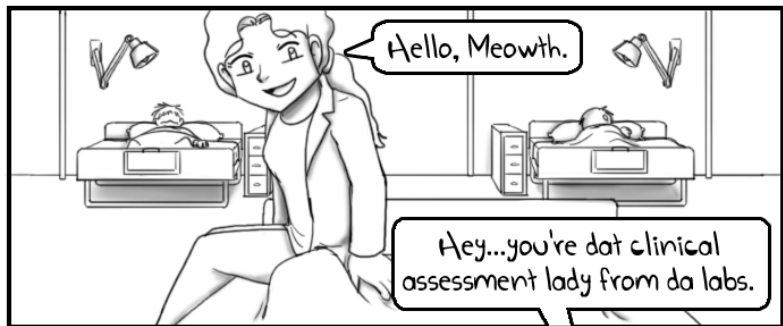
SHAKKI!



<You and your temper, Jey...>

<Aaaahhhh...now you've done it. They're gonna be so mad at us>

<Someone get a medic!>





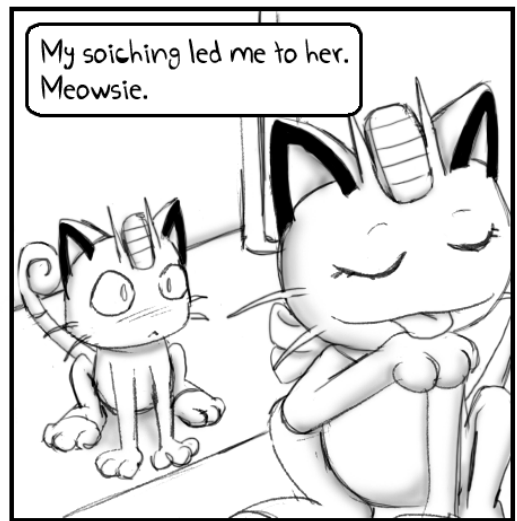
Has it always felt that way for you?

Pretty much. Even before I could do all da t'ings I do now.

I knew somet'ing was different about me from day one.



As a kitten I was always tryin' to understand da woild in ways no udda pokémon around me did.



My soiching led me to her. Meowsie.



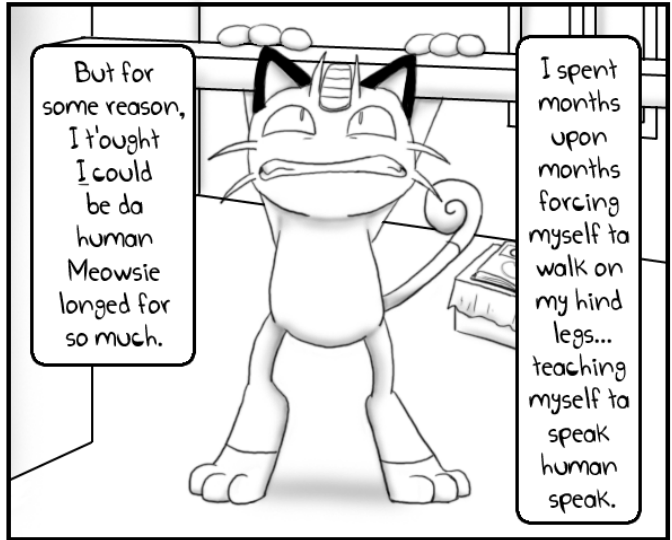
Aeh...I was besotted wit' her at foist...

...but all she wanted was a human ta cater to her every whim.



I coulda walked away at dat point, but I didn't.

Maybe it was da fact I was in love - maybe it was more dan dat.

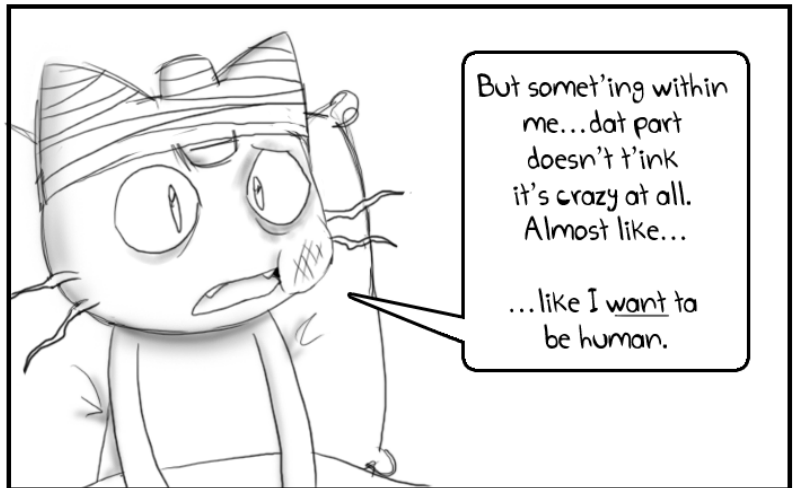


But for some reason, I t'ought I could be da human Meowsie longed for so much.

I spent months upon months forcing myself ta walk on my hind legs... teaching myself ta speak human speak.



...she called me a freak back den... and maybe I am. No udda pokémon would have ever tried ta do what I did. Dey woulda simply dismissed da t'ought as a moment o' craziness.



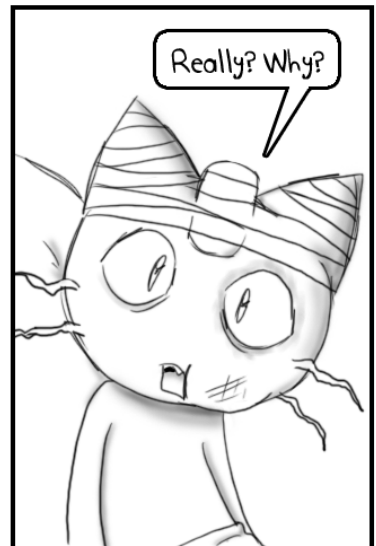
But somet'ing within me... dat part doesn't t'ink it's crazy at all. Almost like...

...like I want ta be human.

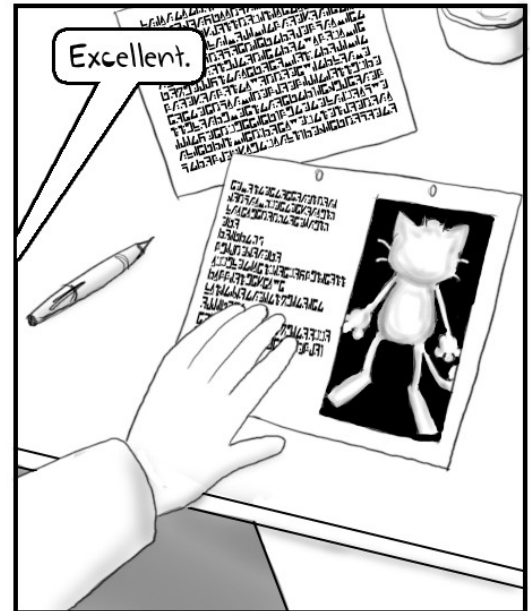
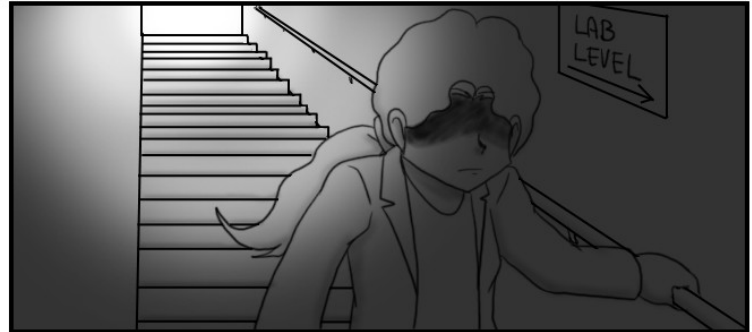
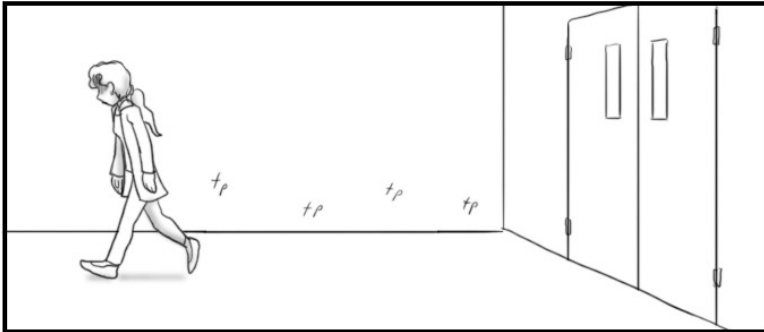
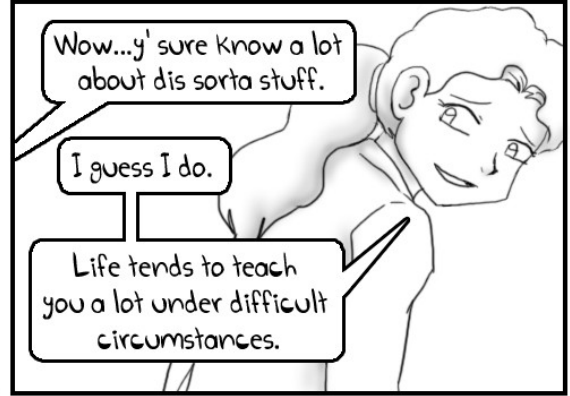
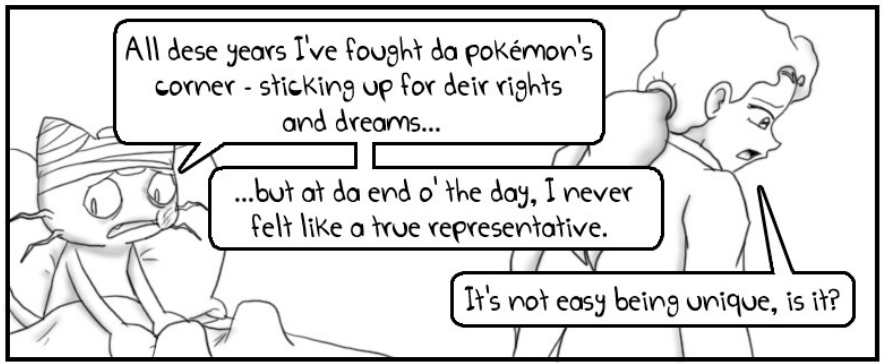


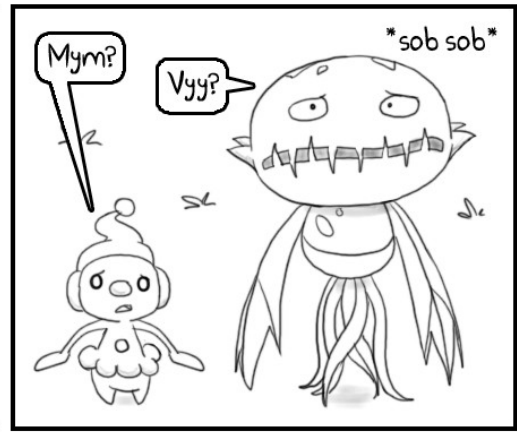
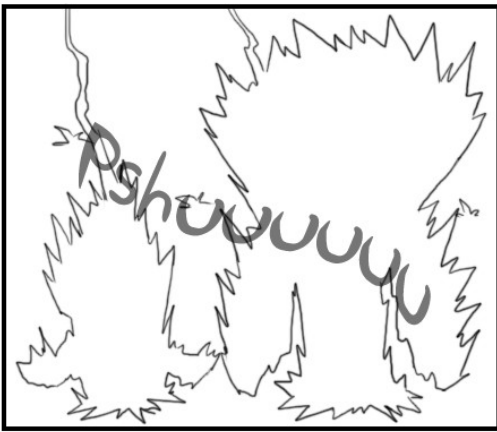
Well even with the best intentions, successfully teaching yourself ta speak in a language I understand should have been impossible.

Yet, having looked at the results of your assessment, I'm not surprised you managed it.



Really? Why?





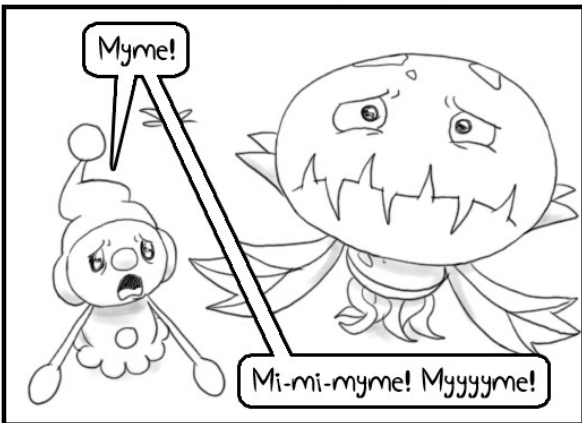
Carnivine...Mimey...I'm afraid our time together has come to an end.



I'm working in Team Rocket labs now - that's no place for pokémon like you to be.

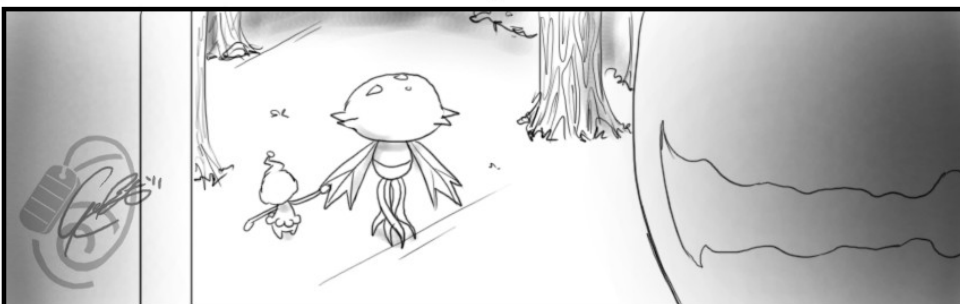
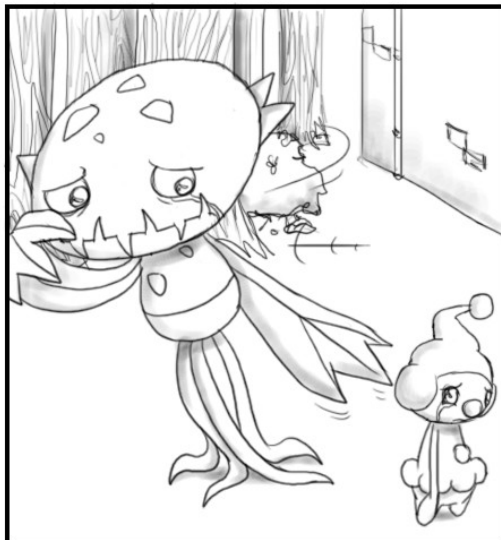
If I don't let you go, the scientists here might snatch you away from me - use you in their horrible experiments, or worse...

### CHAPTER FOUR The Rest of Who I am

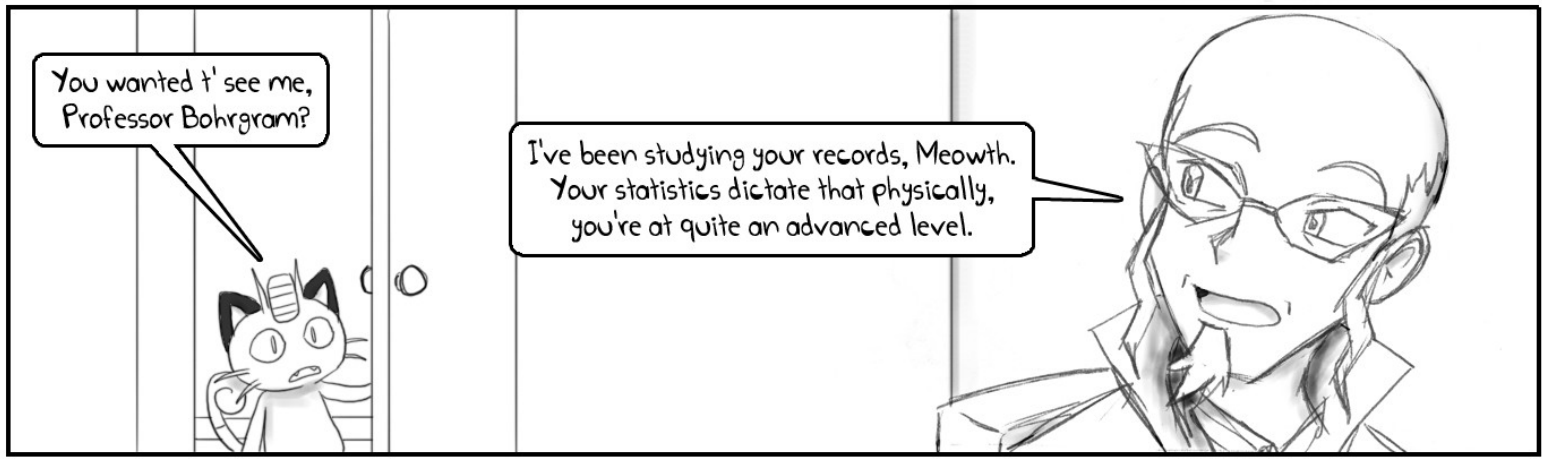


Please, you two! Just go - get as far away from here as possible.

If I'm not going to make it, I don't want you to have to suffer the consequences of my stupid decisions.

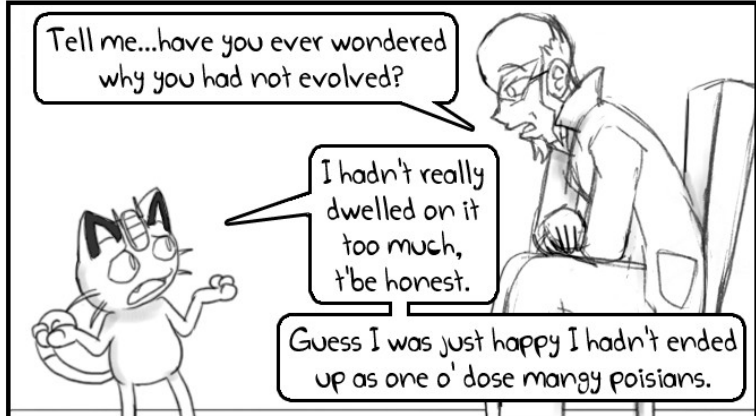


I'll...miss you guys.



You wanted t' see me, Professor Bohrgram?

I've been studying your records, Meowth. Your statistics dictate that physically, you're at quite an advanced level.



Tell me...have you ever wondered why you had not evolved?

I hadn't really dwelled on it too much, t'be honest.

Guess I was just happy I hadn't ended up as one o' dose mangy poisions.



Even if you had wanted to be a persian, it wouldn't have been possible.

It appears that there exists no genetic code within you pertaining to that species.

The space occupied by your evolution data holds...something different.



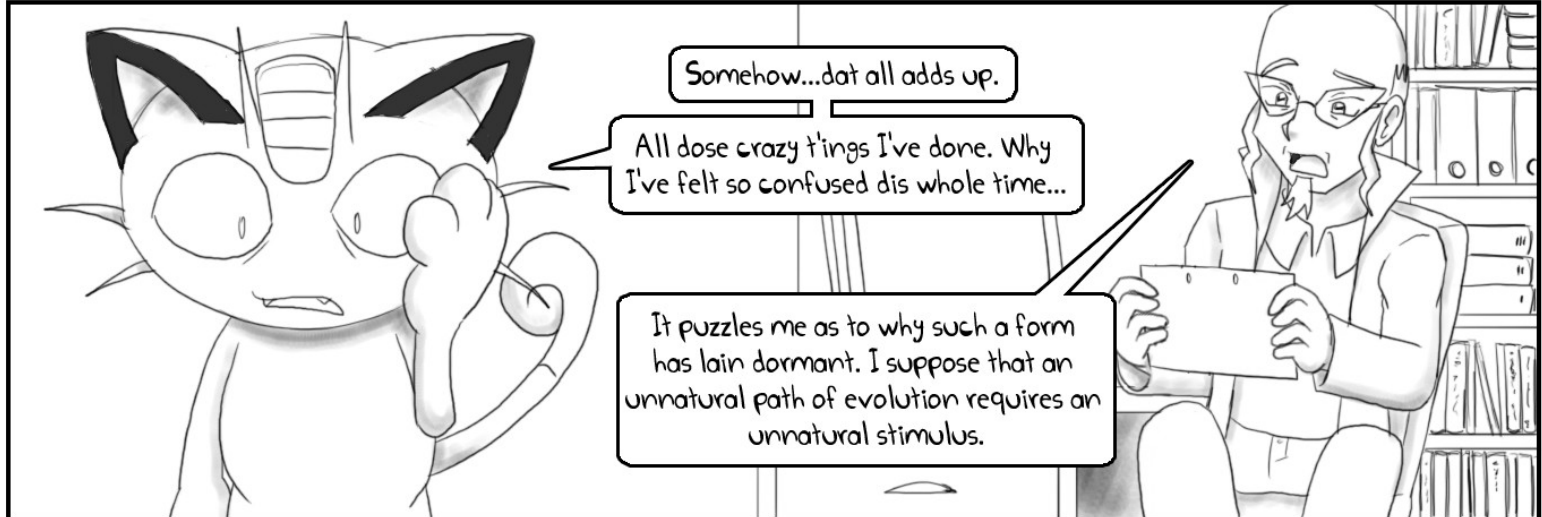
Certainly not a form a meowth is expected to take.

An' dat form would be...?



A human.

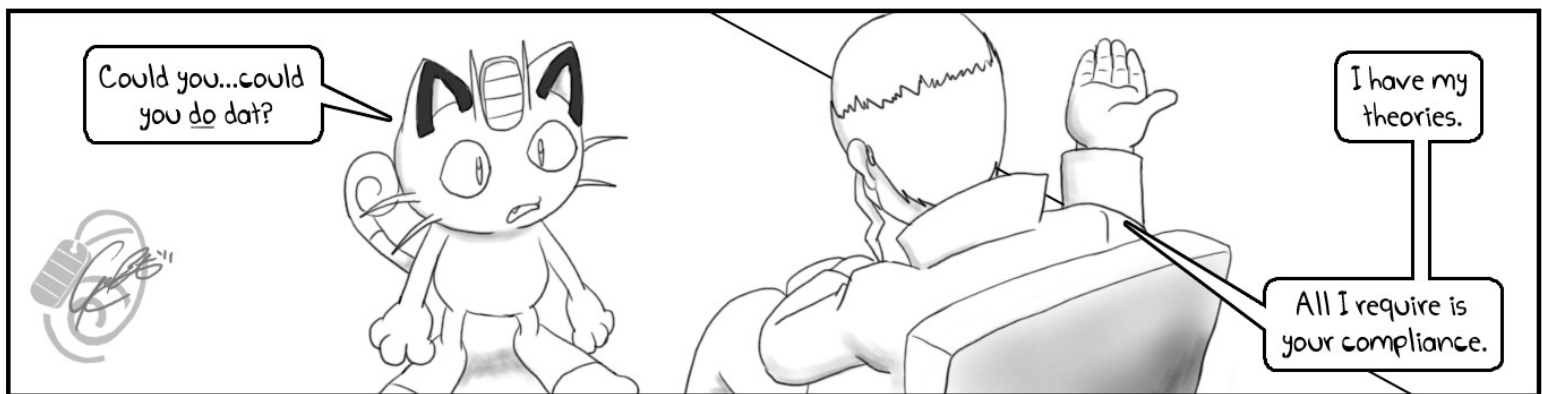
Ack...



Somehow...dat all adds up.

All dose crazy t'ings I've done. Why I've felt so confused dis whole time...

It puzzles me as to why such a form has lain dormant. I suppose that an unnatural path of evolution requires an unnatural stimulus.

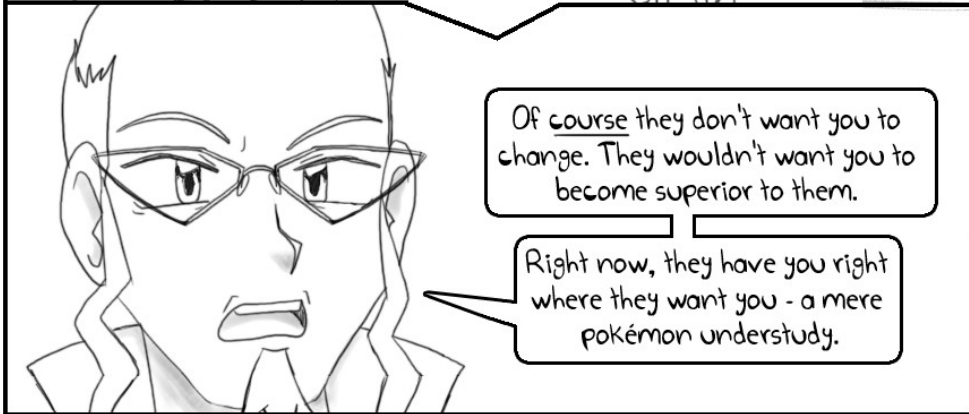
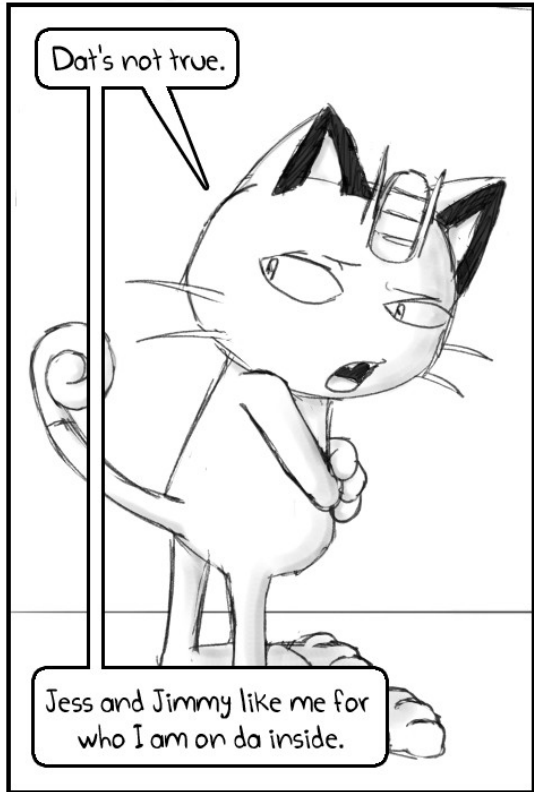
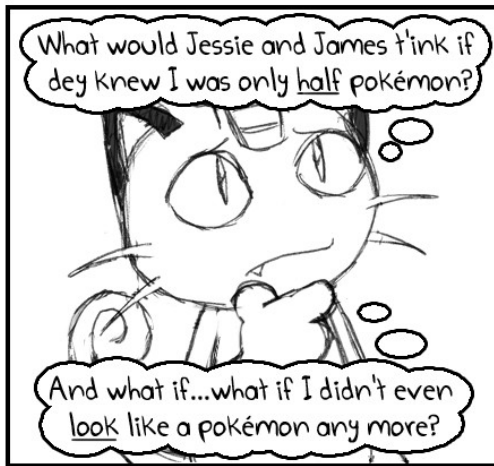


Could you...could you do dat?

I have my theories.

All I require is your compliance.

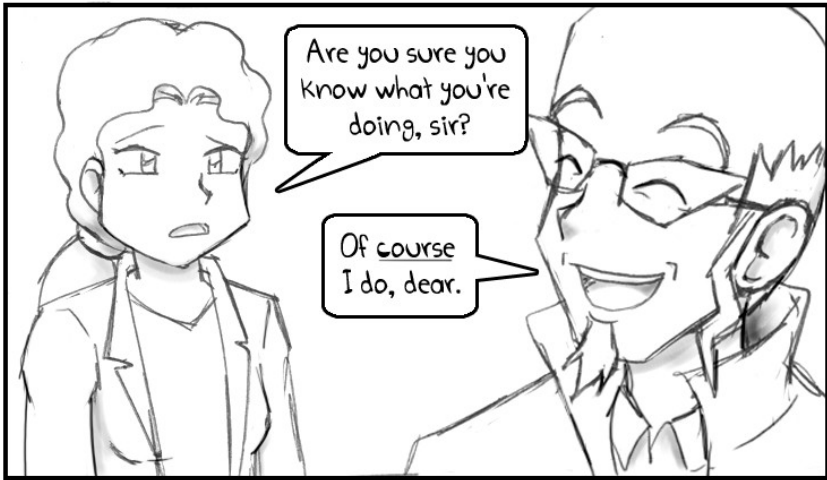
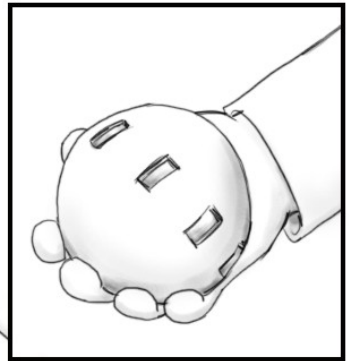
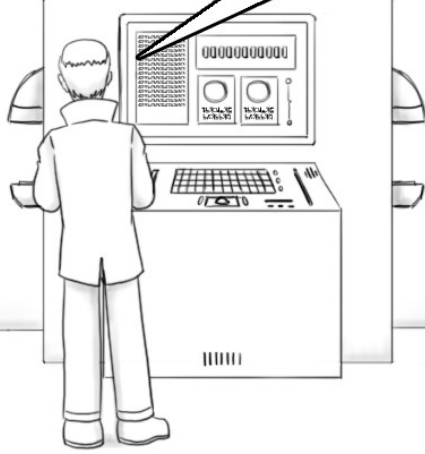






There.

If my theories are correct - processing this device through a cyber-transfer protocol shall initiate the specimen's dormant evolution sequence.

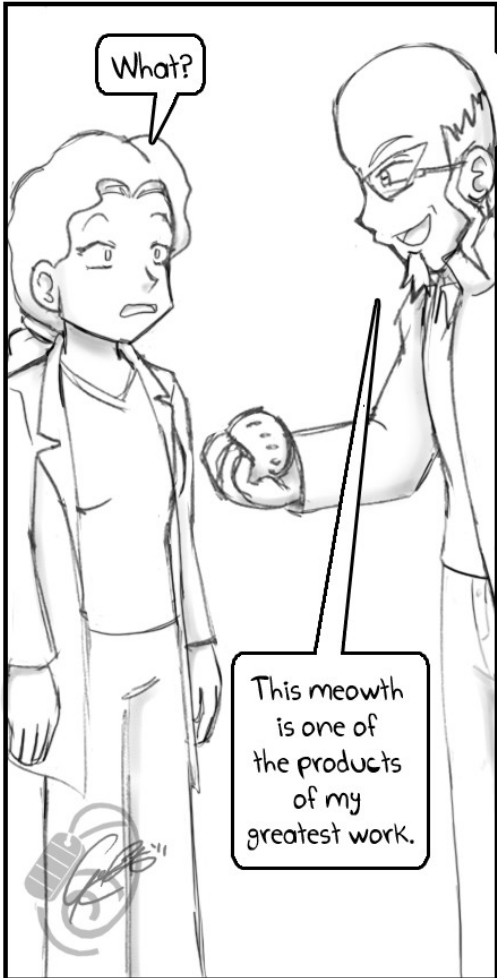


Are you sure you know what you're doing, sir?

Of course I do, dear.

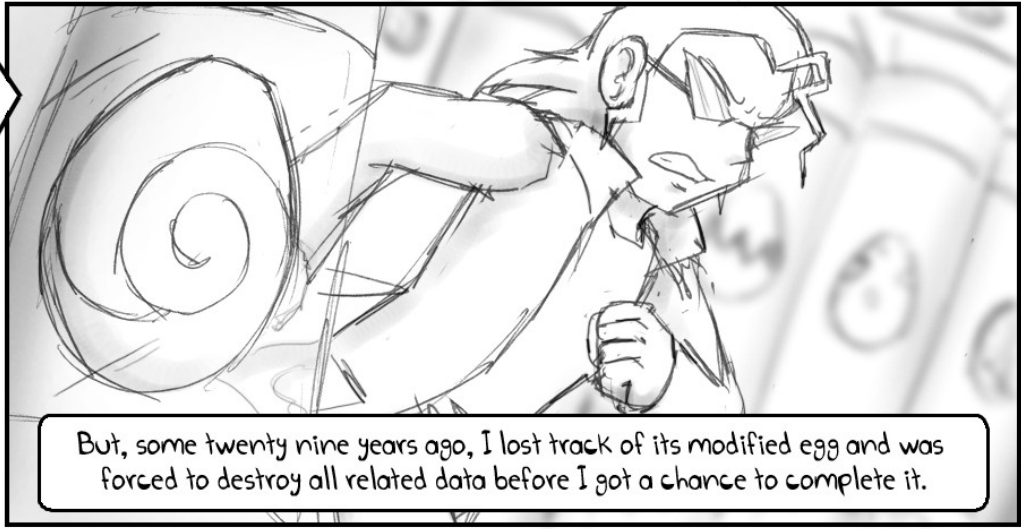


I'm simply finishing what I started.



What?

This meowth is one of the products of my greatest work.



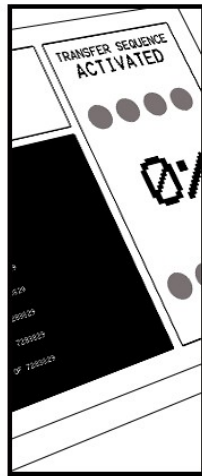
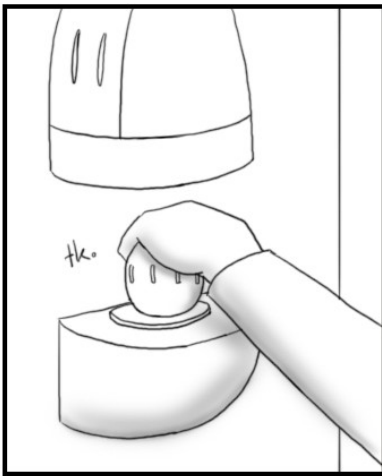
But, some twenty nine years ago, I lost track of its modified egg and was forced to destroy all related data before I got a chance to complete it.



Once the meowth's programming is finalized, I will have all the evidence I need that my theories are valid and functional.



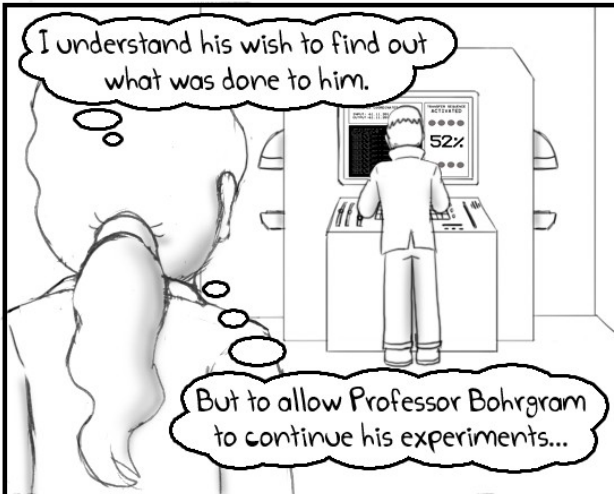
I will be the first man to have altered the course of life itself!



Poor Meowth. To have his body tampered with even before he was born.

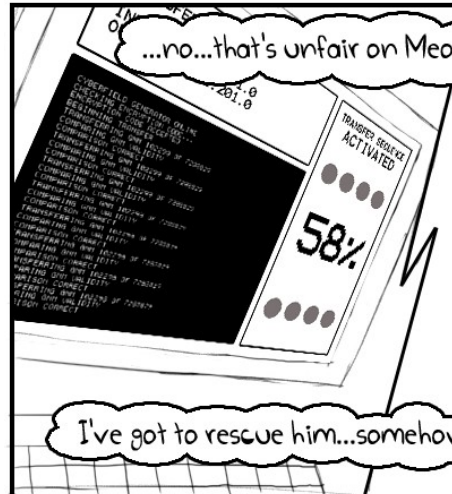


No wonder he has been so perplexed.



I understand his wish to find out what was done to him.

But to allow Professor Bohrgam to continue his experiments...



...no...that's unfair on Meowth.

I've got to rescue him...somehow.

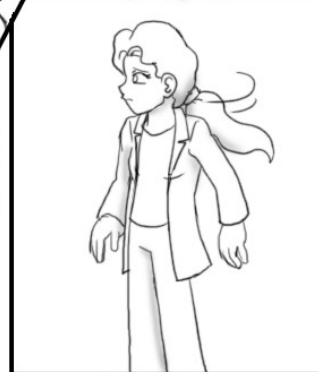
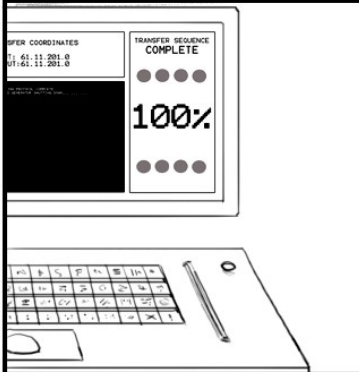
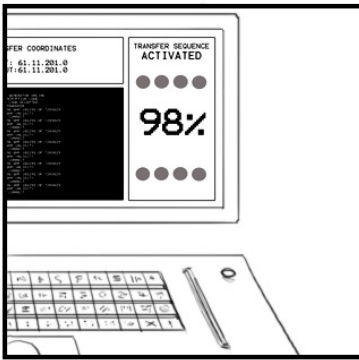


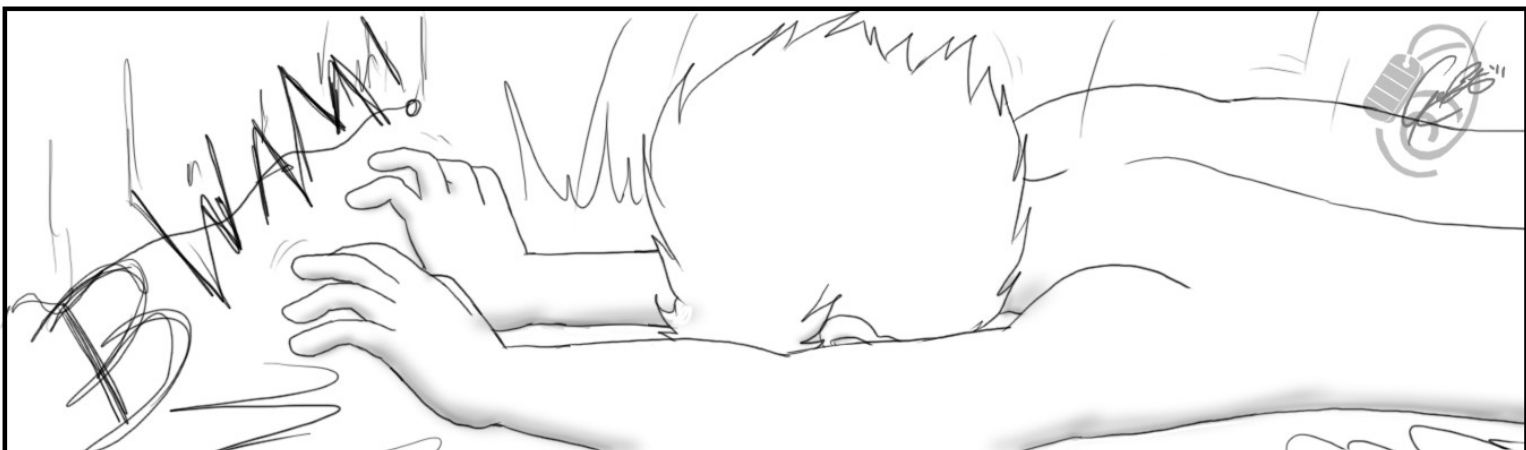
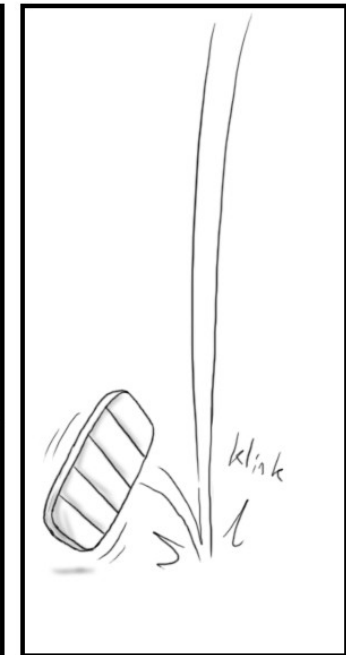
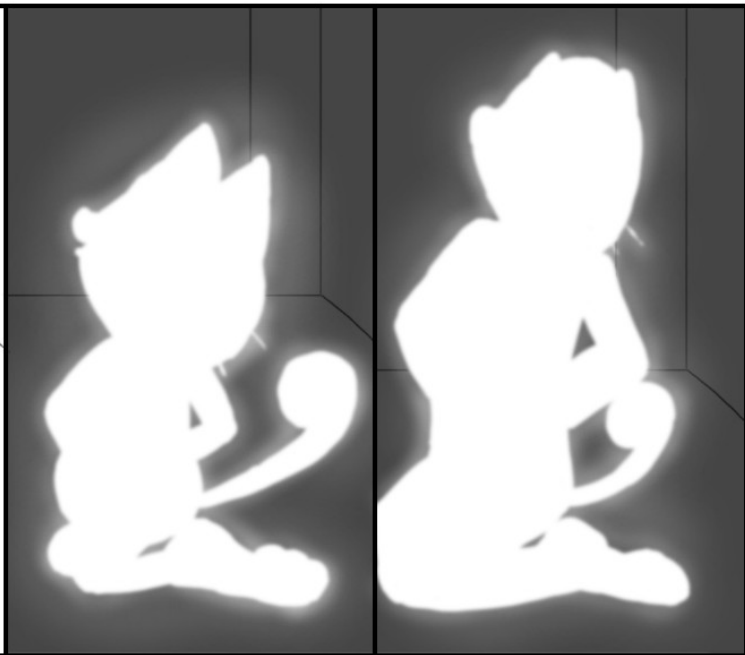
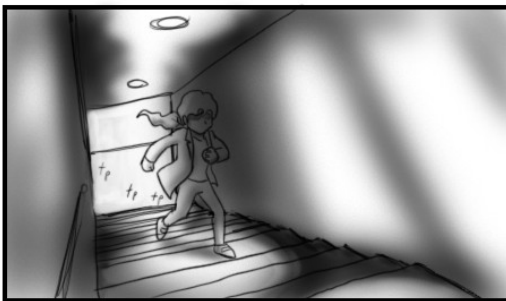
Get that haunter!

Don't let it near the machines!



No! I can't let that creature meddle with my efforts!





Meowth?

Meowth, can you hear me?

Uuwuf...my head...

Skr.

Maaaaaahhh...

Meowth?  
Who's "Meowth"?

Auh?

Please, Meowth.  
Try to calm down...

My...my  
charm.  
It's gone.

Do you see any  
meowths here?  
Cuz I sure didn't!

E-heehheehheh-!

What've I done? I can't live like  
dis! I can't live wit' out my charm!

...I don't know who  
I am any more...

E-heh...eh...

Auh?

You're...you.



Your body might have changed, but your mind...your being remains the same.

My me-ness kinda caught me off guard...

...I'm starting to t'ink dis wasn't such a great idea.

You weren't forced into accepting the professor's offer, were you?

You made the decision from the feelings in your own heart, didn't you?

You shouldn't doubt yourself so. A choice is a choice.

No...

Uh huh.

In this confusing world with its conflicts of opinion, sometimes the best person to listen to is yourself.

Buh-but what if da screwy science dat altered my body did something to my heart as well?

You're just in shock from the sudden change, that's all.

You'll feel more used to it soon enough.

Ahhhhh....



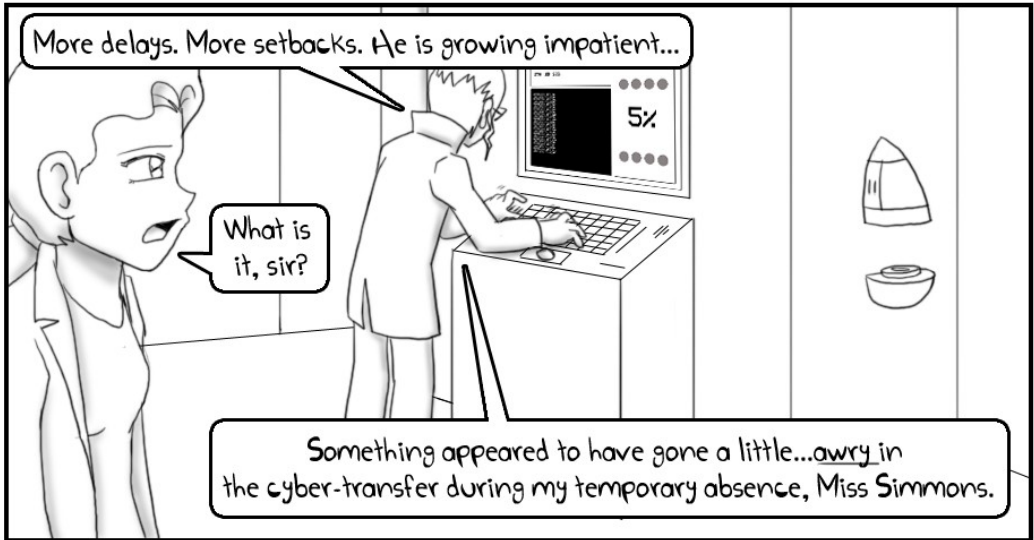


This is the last place I want to come back to after what I did, but...if I don't, it will just make things look even more suspicious.

Even so, it is only a matter of time before Professor Bohrgam finds out.



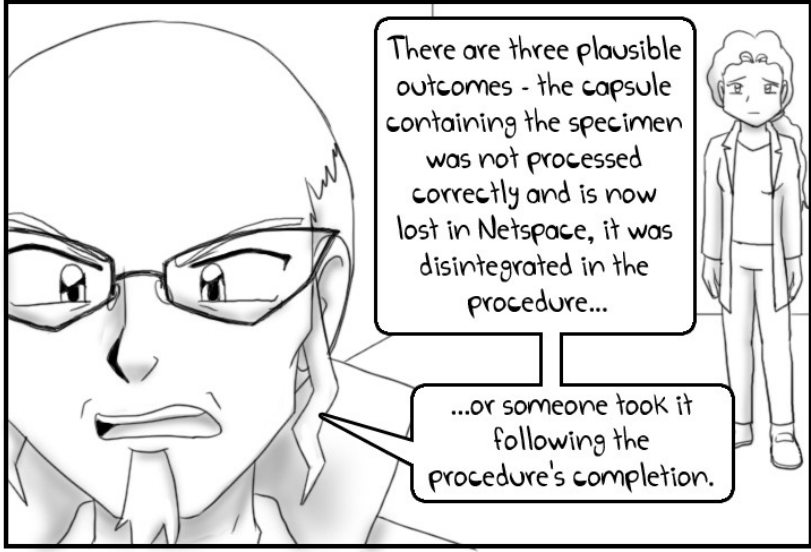
And when he does...  
...then what will I do?



More delays. More setbacks. He is growing impatient...

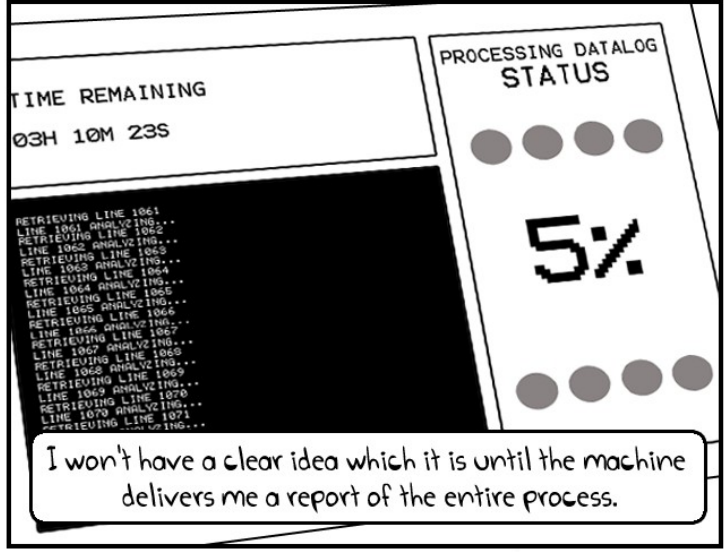
What is it, sir?

Something appeared to have gone a little...awry in the cyber-transfer during my temporary absence, Miss Simmons.



There are three plausible outcomes - the capsule containing the specimen was not processed correctly and is now lost in Netspace, it was disintegrated in the procedure...

...or someone took it following the procedure's completion.



TIME REMAINING  
03H 10M 23S

PROCESSING DATALOG STATUS

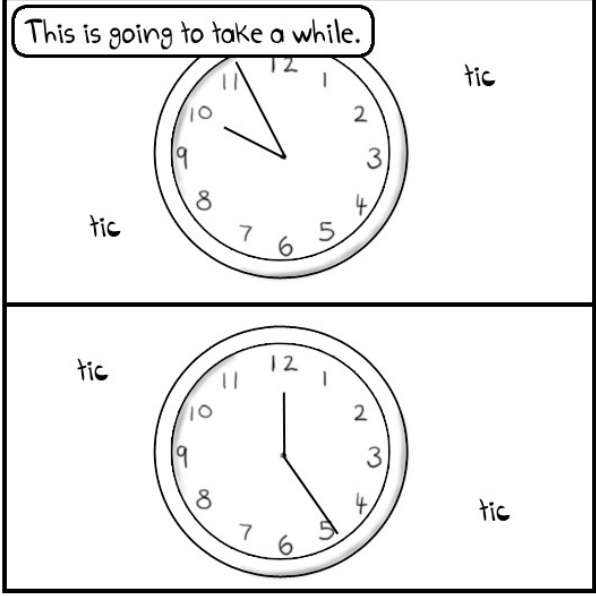
5%

I won't have a clear idea which it is until the machine delivers me a report of the entire process.



Anything...I can do for you in the meantime?

Yes. Fetch me a coffee and make it extra black.

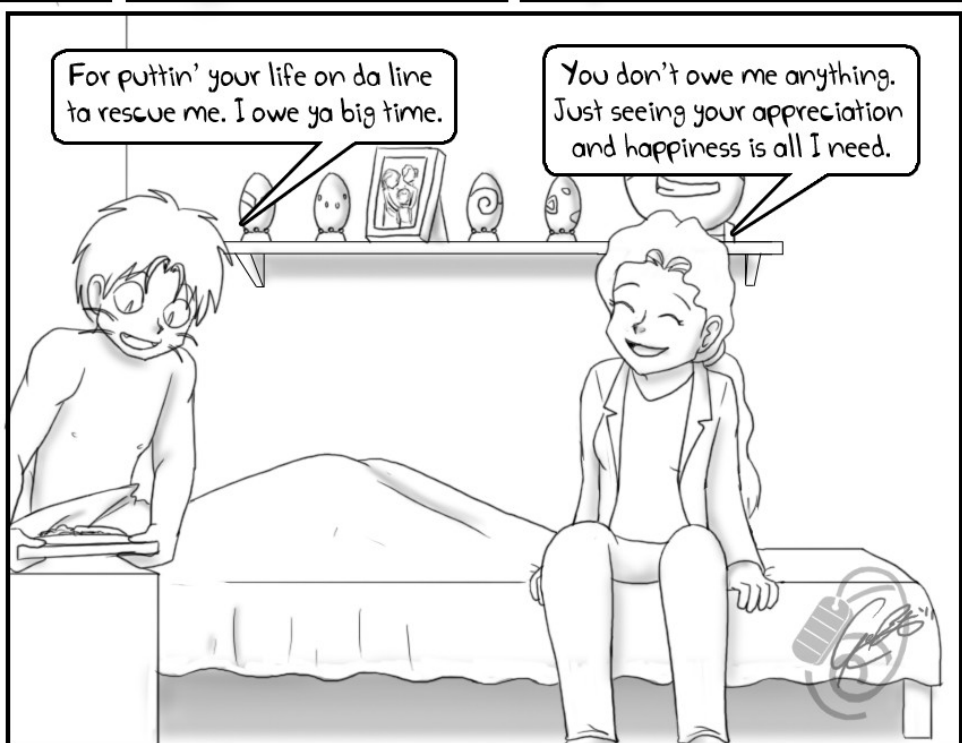
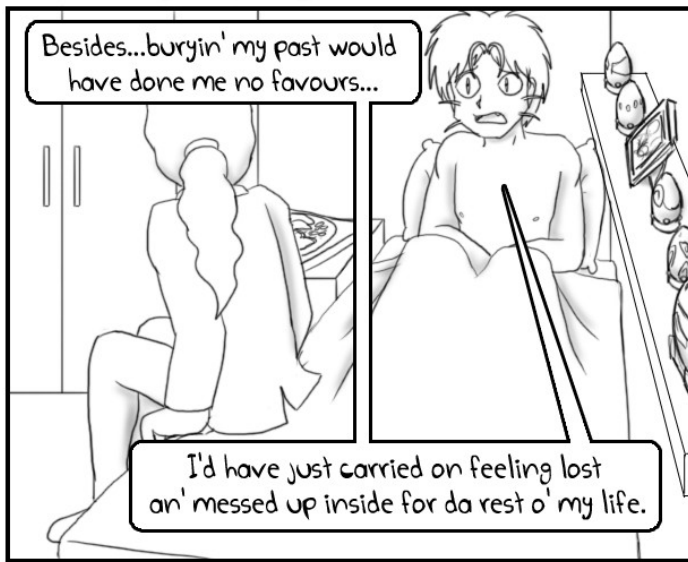
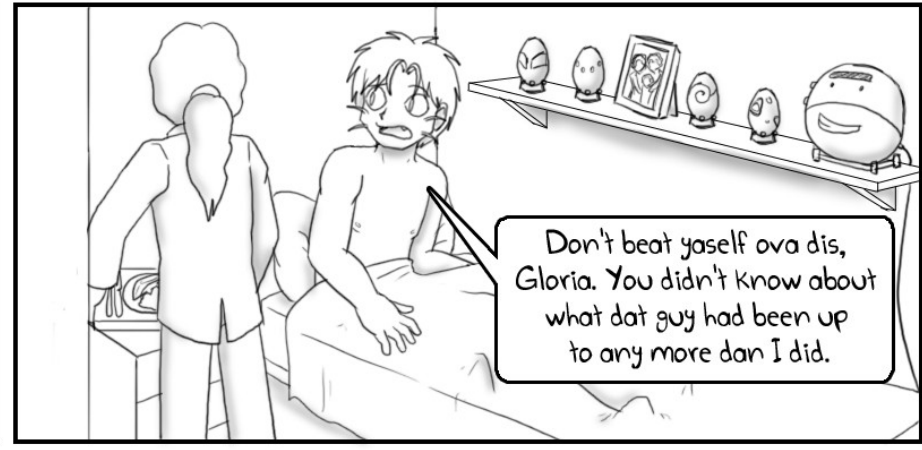
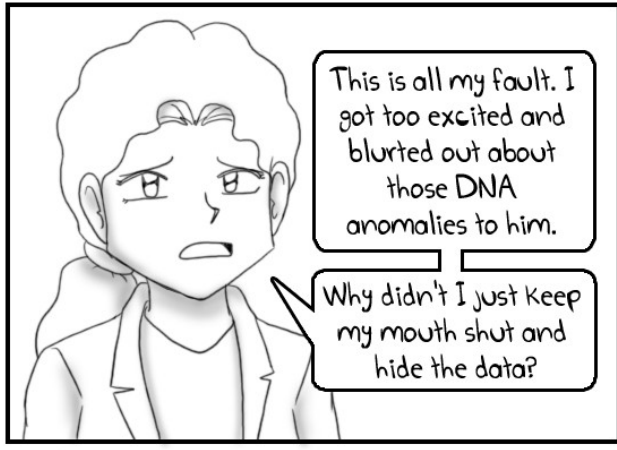
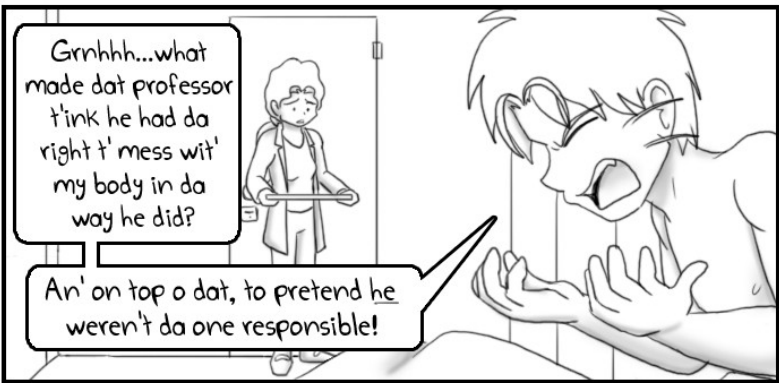
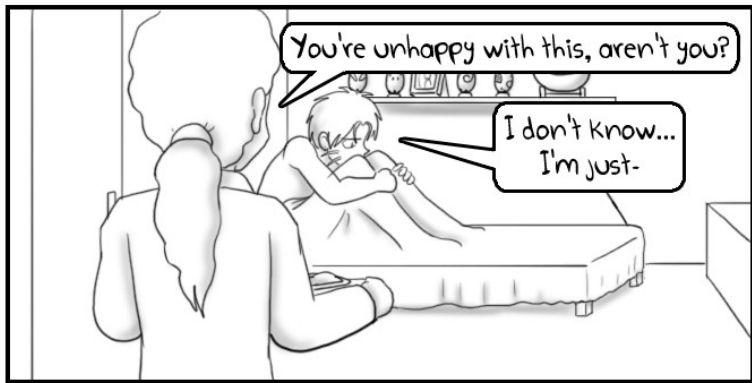


This is going to take a while.



Finally managed to get a break.

I brought you some-





# CHAPTER FIVE

## An Extended Family

I did attempt to get some anaesthetic, but the risk of arousing suspicion was too great.

I'll try to make this as quick as possible, but if you do feel the need to release the tension...

...then its best you bite the edge of the blanket.

Aeh, what kinda wimp does she take me for?

I've had more dan my share o' painful experiences to last a li-

**-IEEYAGH!**

\*snkt\*

shff

Whoa...

Guess I weren't as prepared fer dat as I t'ought.

Oh! I'm so sorry!

Mghrrgh!

takka-takka-takka  
tak-tak tak  
tak tak-tak!

?!

Ahh, he's here.

W-who's here?

M-Meowth?

Dat's right!

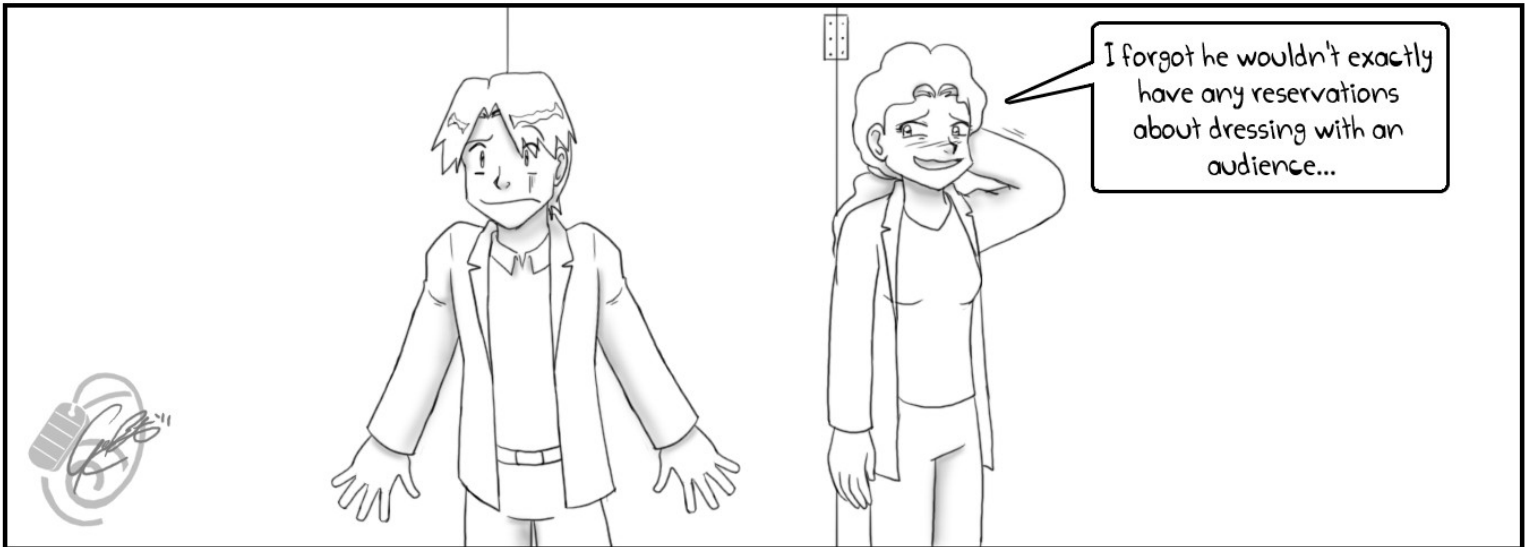
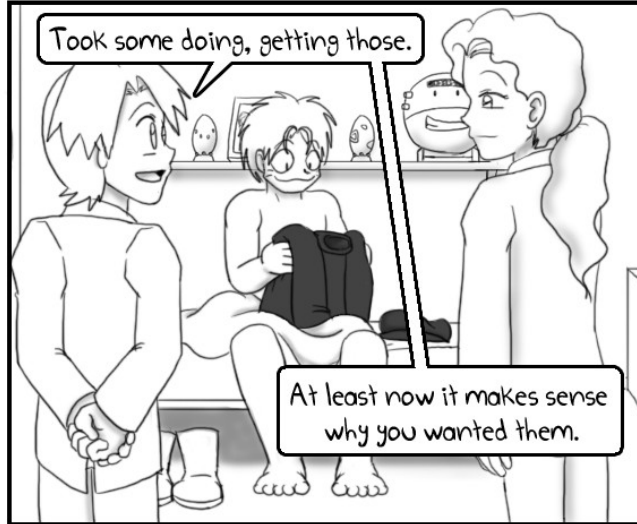
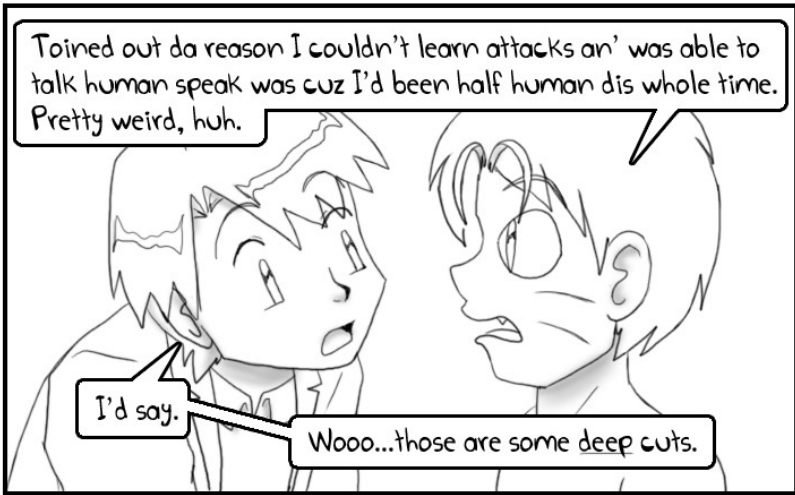
You look..

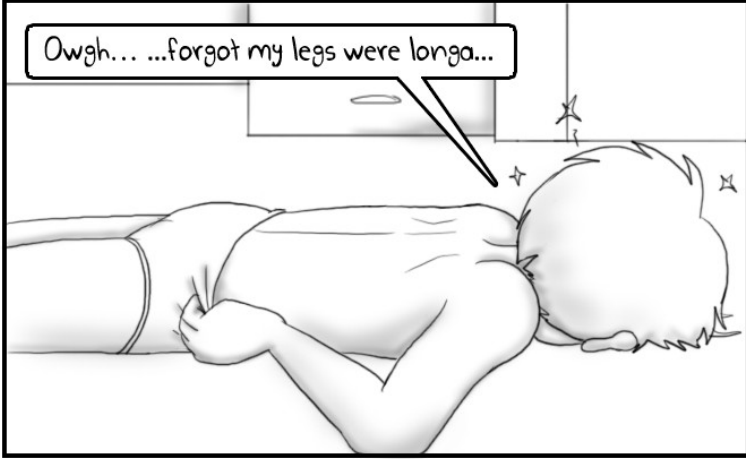
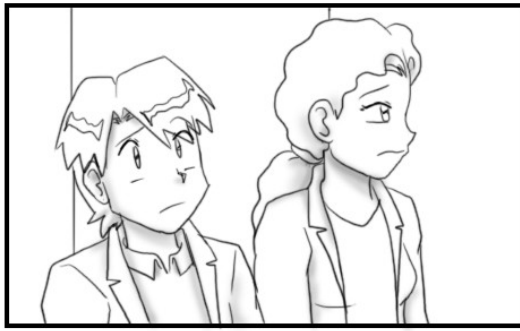
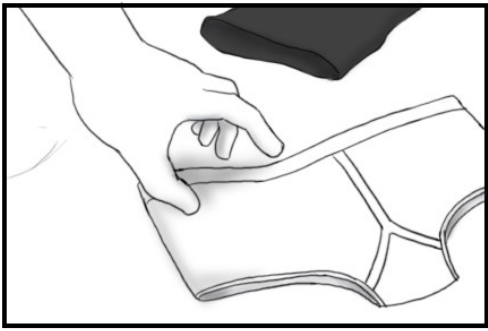
Awesome!

Well if it ain't my old pal, Mondo!

Talk about a reunion unda kooky circumstances, eh?

Different, to be sure, but awesome! Whatever happened?





Owgh... ..forgot my legs were longa...



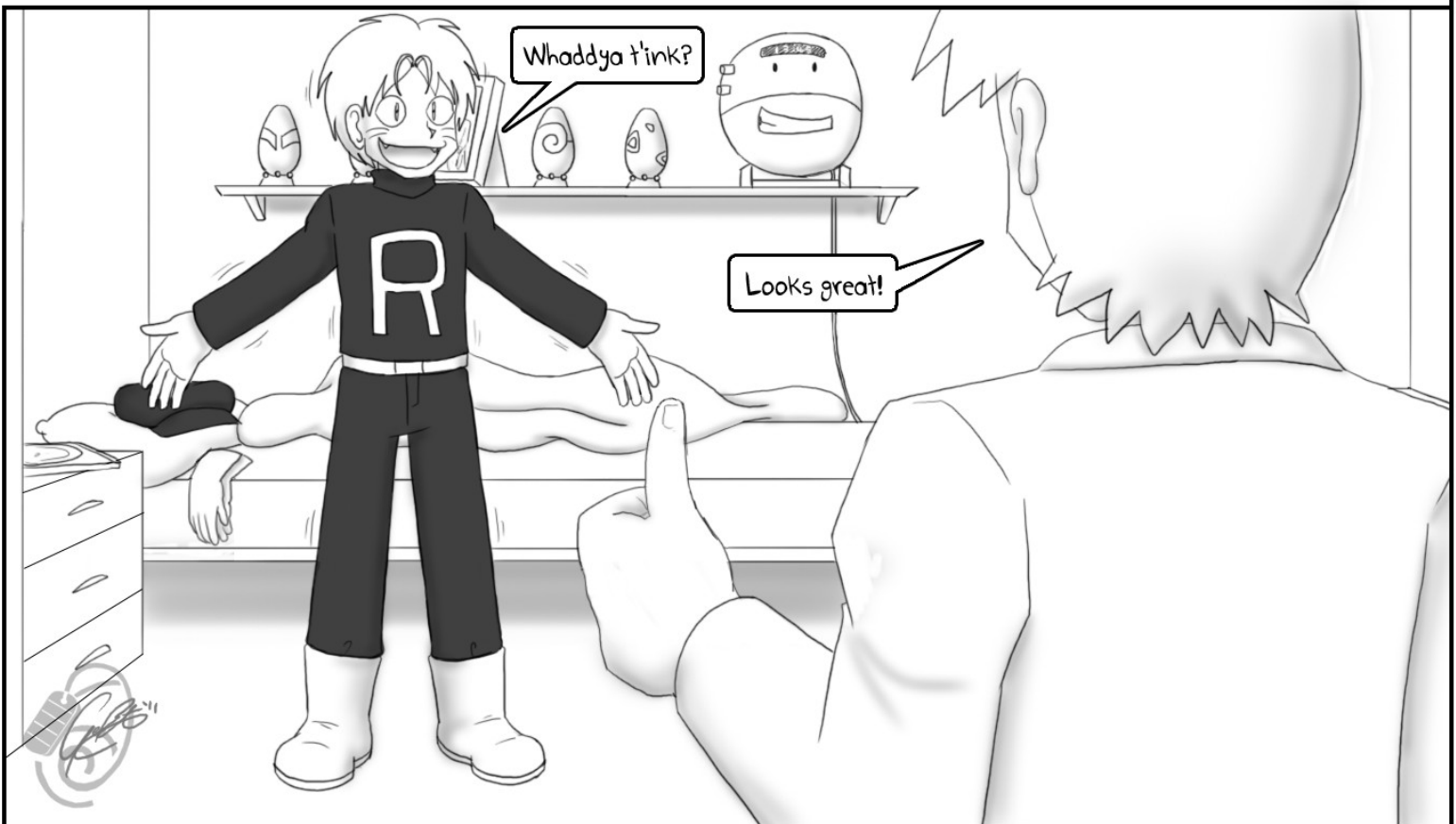
Are you ok? That sounded like a bad fall...have you hurt anything?

Jus' my pride.



Can we come back in yet?

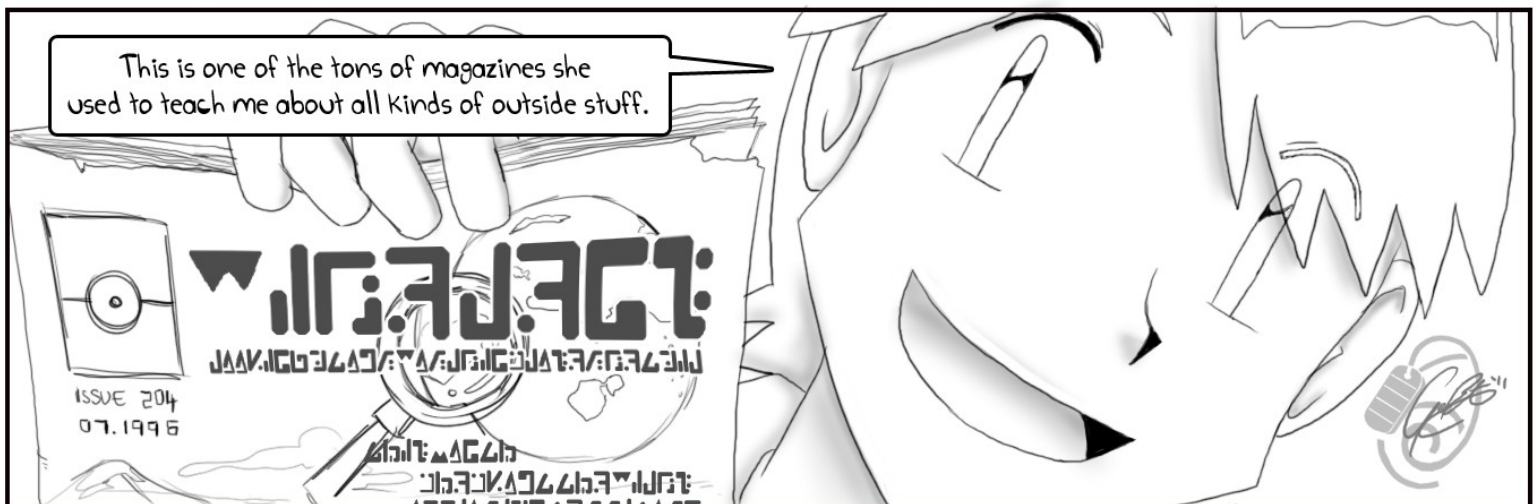
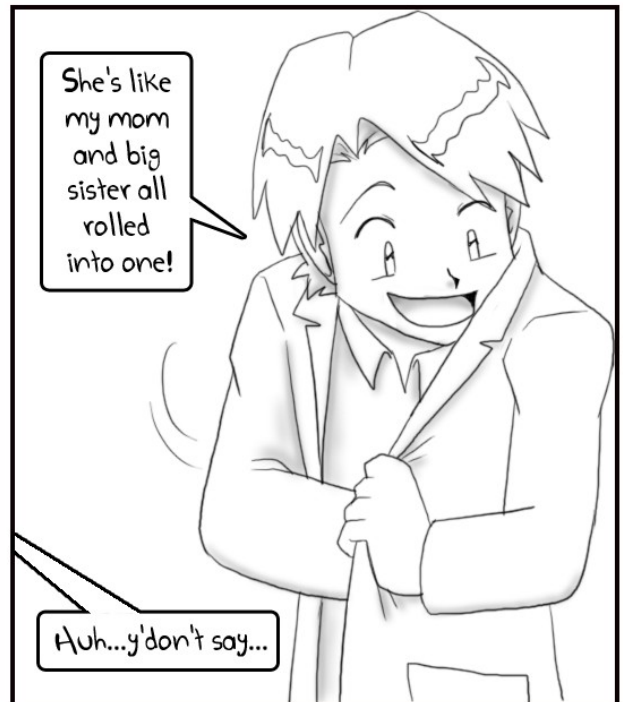
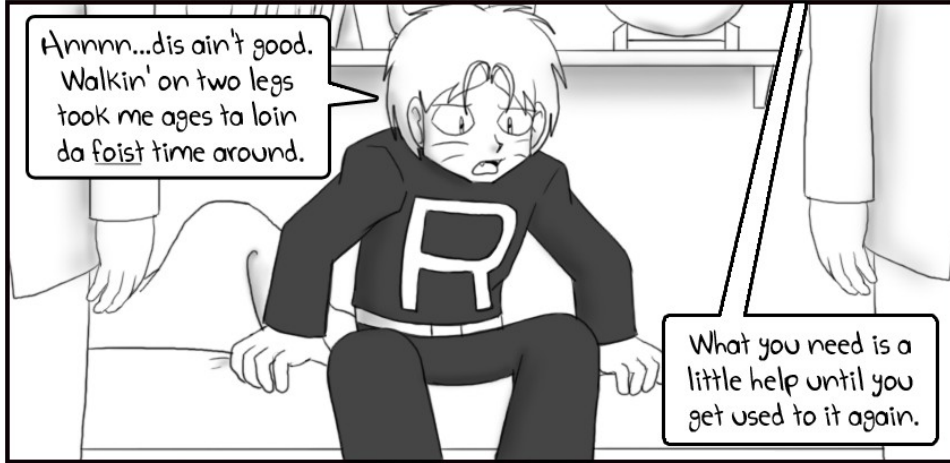
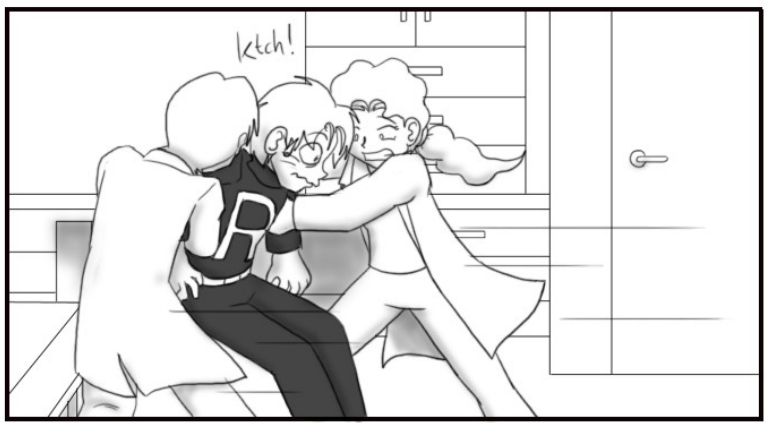
Yeah, go ahead.

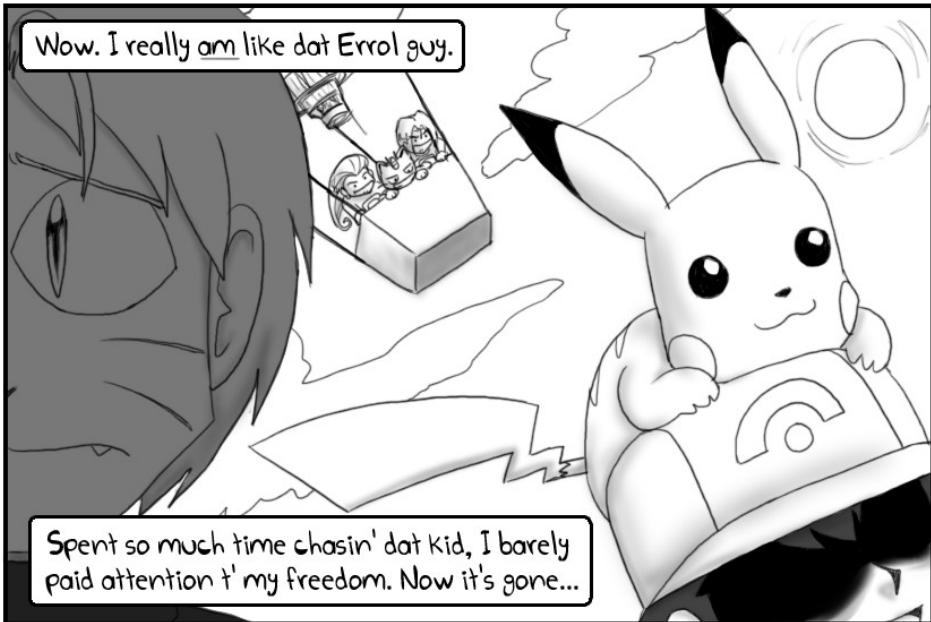


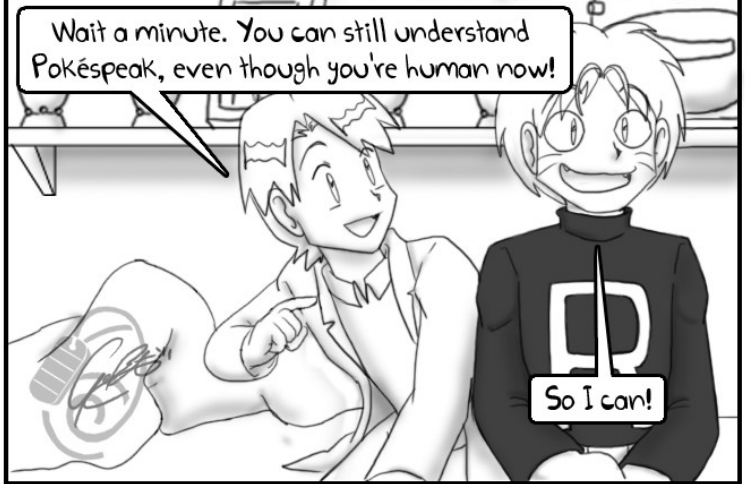
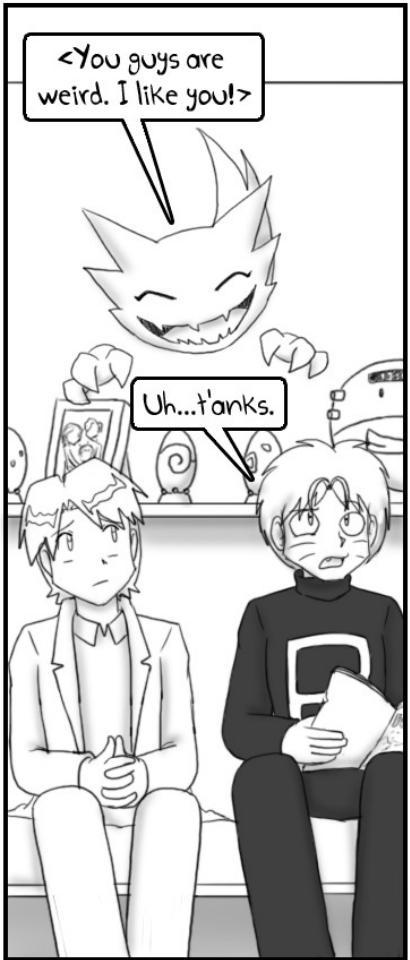
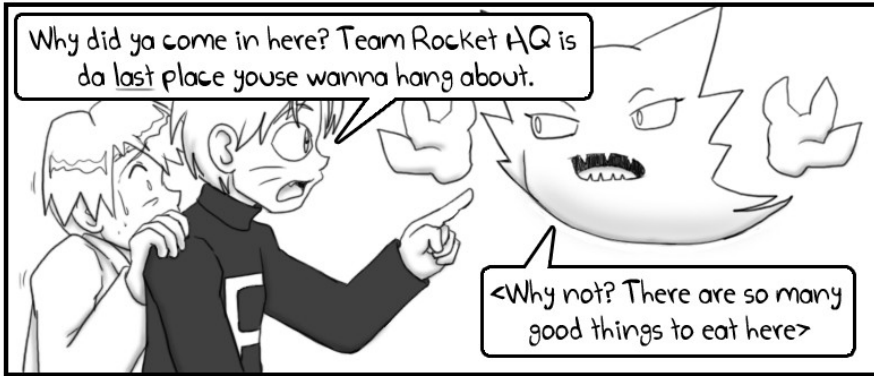
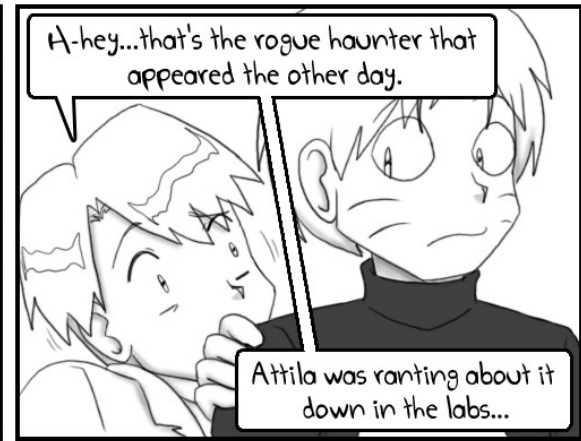
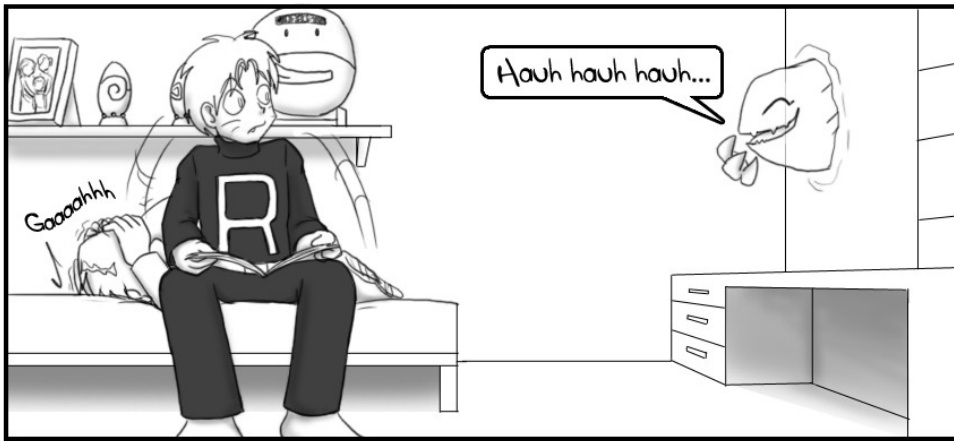
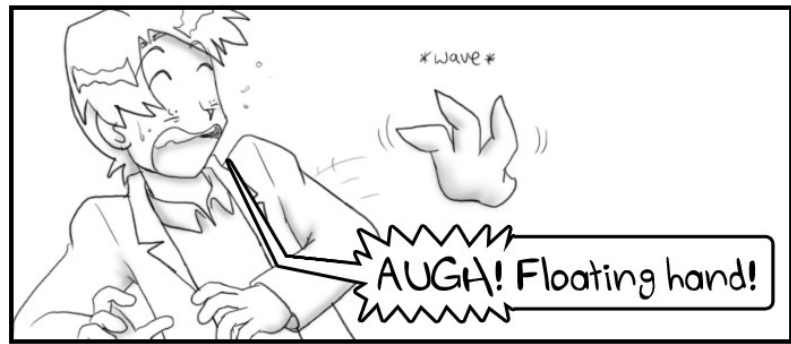
Whaddya t'ink?

Looks great!











<The name's Amu! I come from->



<Oooo...something even more delicious is outside>



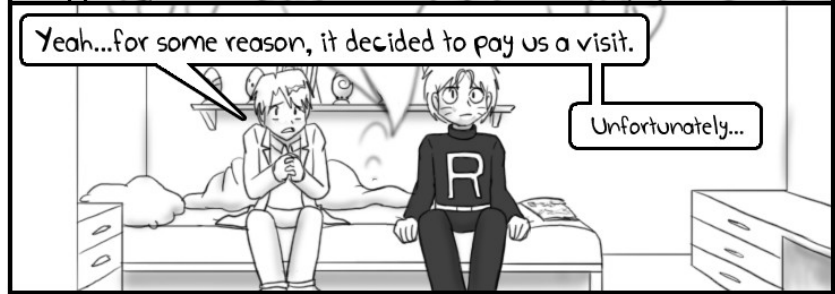
I'm back!



Oh!



Isn't this that haunter the whole science department has been put on alert over?



Yeah...for some reason, it decided to pay us a visit.

Unfortunately...



Amu, dis is Gloria.



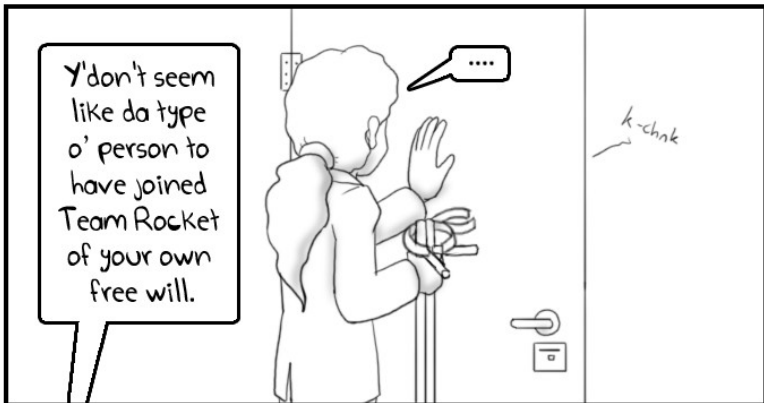
Gloria must be harbourin' somet'ing pretty deep for Amu to find her more appealin' dan Mondo.



Hehee! I never expected a ghost type to be so affectionate.



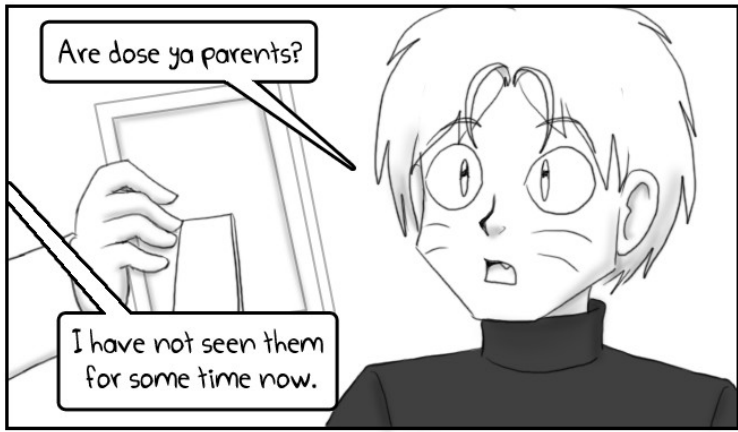
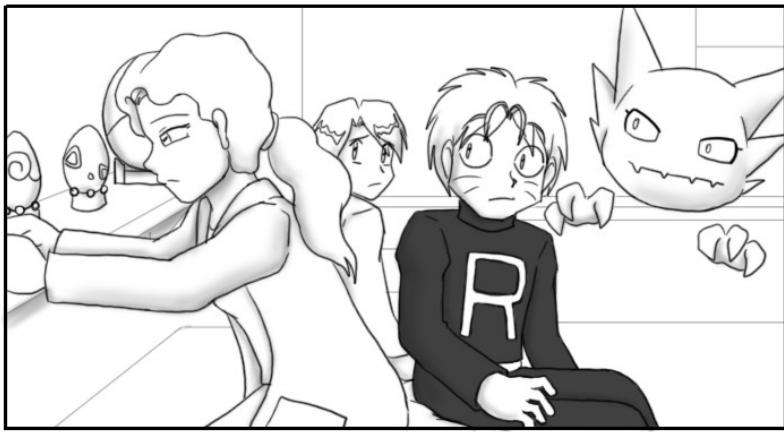
Gloria...how'd you get here?



Y'don't seem like da type o' person to have joined Team Rocket of your own free will.



...you're right. I'm not.



Are dose ya parents?

I have not seen them for some time now.



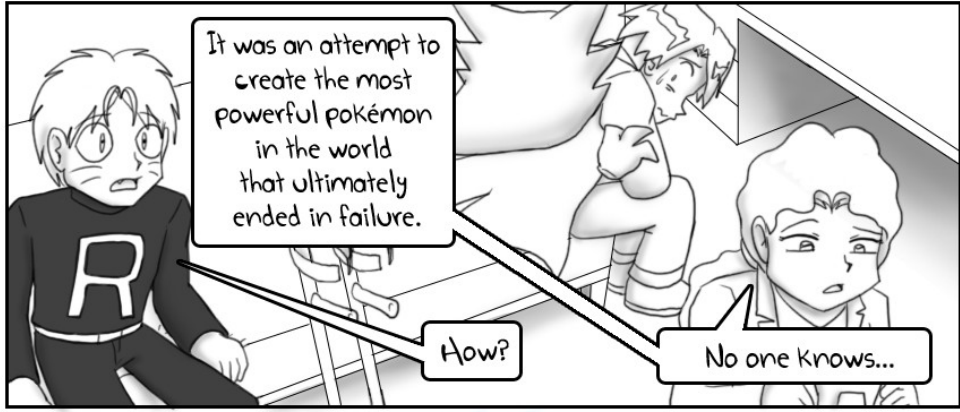
My father was a very clever man, so much so that the leader of Team Rocket saw him as a potential co-founder of Project Optima.

When my father refused...



...they kidnapped me in order to force his hand.

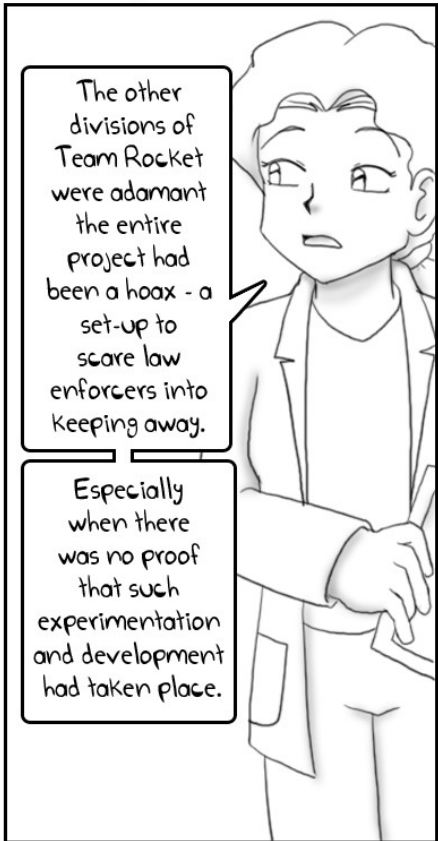
Project Optima?



It was an attempt to create the most powerful pokémon in the world that ultimately ended in failure.

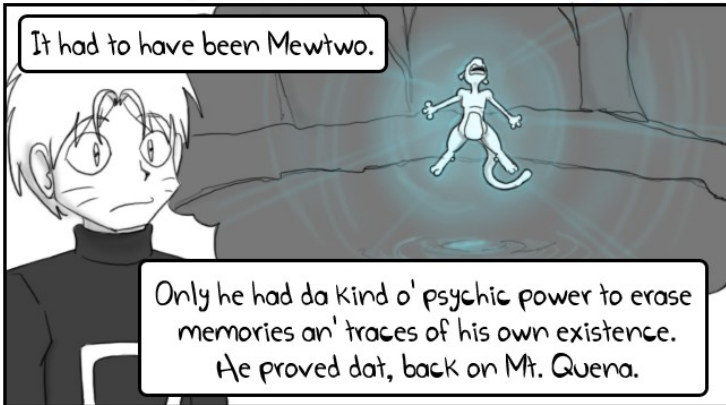
How?

No one knows...



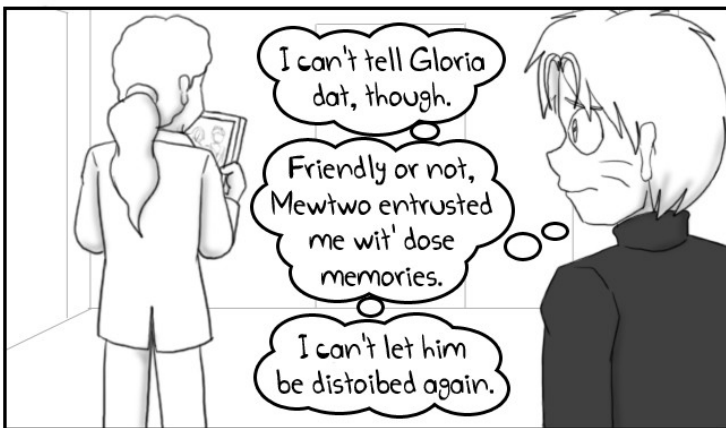
The other divisions of Team Rocket were adamant the entire project had been a hoax - a set-up to scare law enforcers into keeping away.

Especially when there was no proof that such experimentation and development had taken place.



It had to have been Mewtwo.

Only he had da kind o' psychic power to erase memories an' traces of his own existence. He proved dat, back on Mt. Quena.



I can't tell Gloria dat, though.

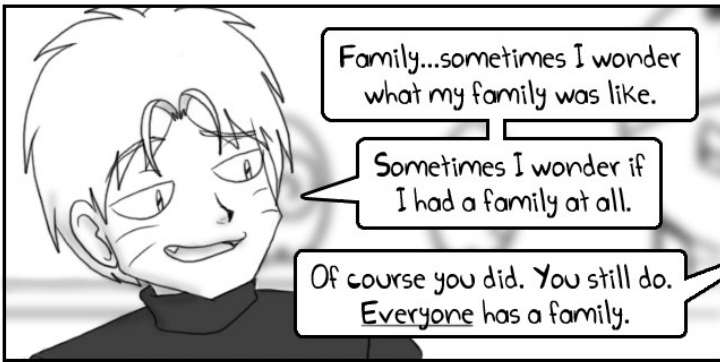
Friendly or not, Mewtwo entrusted me wit' dose memories.

I can't let him be distoibed again.



That was almost 20 years ago.

I doubt my family would recognize me now.



Family...sometimes I wonder what my family was like.

Sometimes I wonder if I had a family at all.

Of course you did. You still do. Everyone has a family.



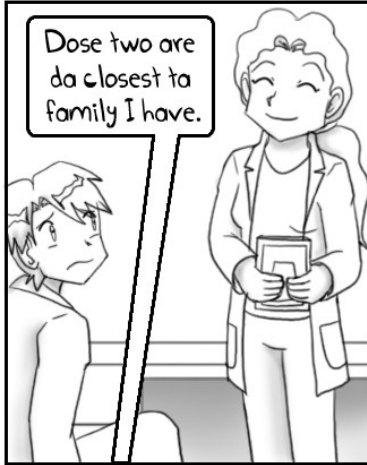
Dey do?

Yes. Whether they be your birth parents, your siblings or closest friends.



Those who you can rely on in times of need, those who care about you the most... they are your family.

Den I guess Jess an' Jim would be da guys in question.



Dose two are da closest to family I have.



Gloria...he can't-

Oh! Oh...



Um...I...this is a difficult thing to say, but...I really don't think you should tell any one else about your past identity.



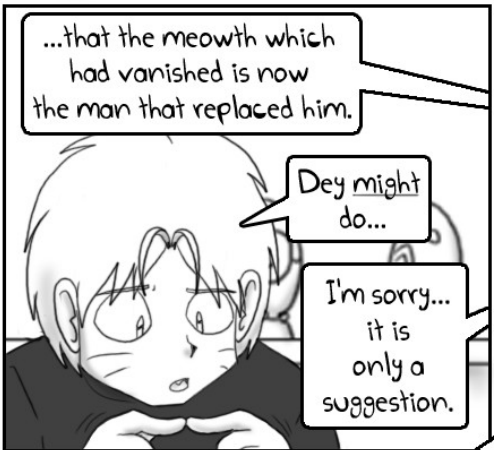
It's just- it makes it more likely that Professor Bohrgam will find you.

Not if Jessie and James knew it needed to be kept secret.

But what if they accidentally blurted it out? Then what would you do?



Besides which, if you spent half as much time with them now as you used to - people would eventually end up putting two and two together...



...that the meowth which had vanished is now the man that replaced him.

Dey might do...

I'm sorry... it is only a suggestion.



Why do ya care about me so much?

Everyone needs someone to care about them.

And...well...as I think of Mondo as a brother, I've come to think of you as a cousin of sorts.



I'm just concerned about you being discovered by the wrong Kind of people.

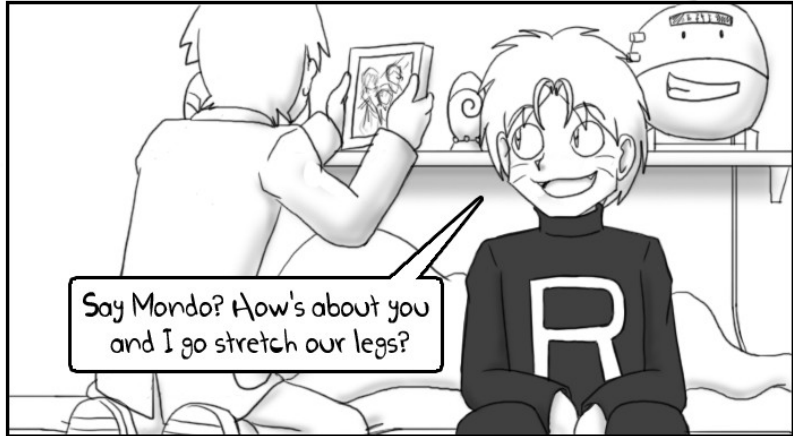
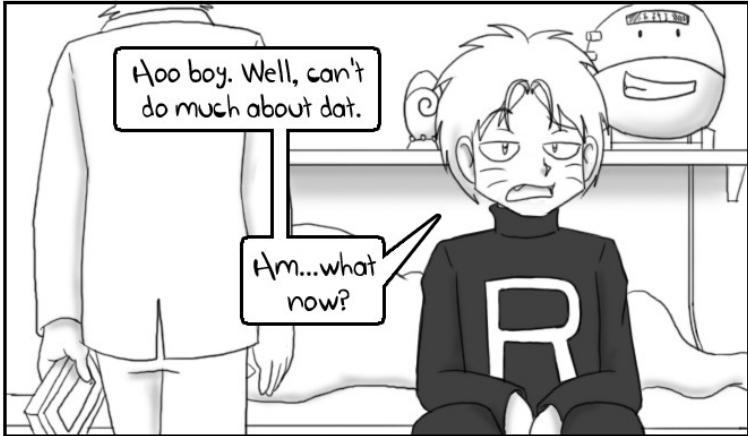
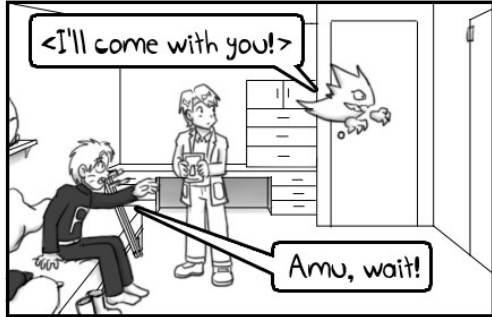
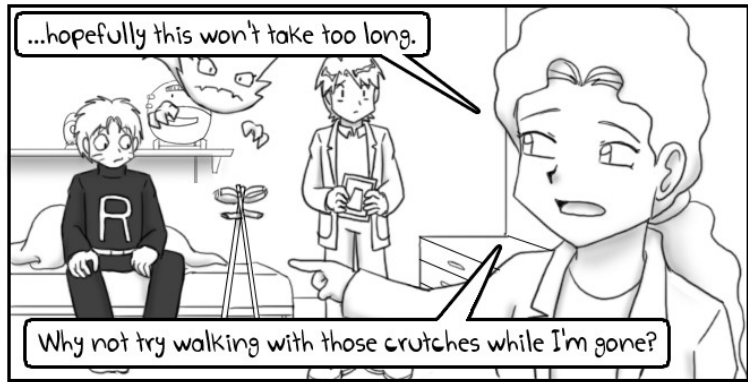
...Gloria?



Would... ..would you like to become part of our family too?



It'd be my pleasure.



End of Chapter Five

# CHAPTER SIX

## When Life Comes Undone

I'm a man. I'm all man.

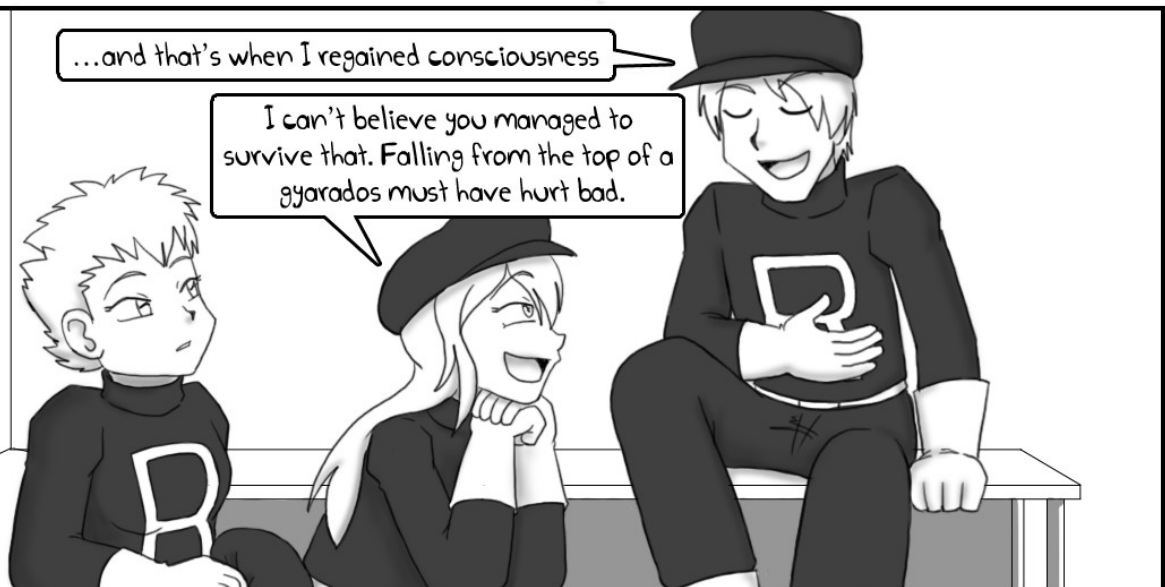
No more grey areas.



MEAT  
IN FILLETS  
ST VEG  
GREY GOOP  
LEFTOVERS  
PUDDING

...and that's when I regained consciousness

I can't believe you managed to survive that. Falling from the top of a gyarados must have hurt bad.





I'm made o' steel, me.

Pah! You call that an incredible feat, Grant? I've suffered worse things than falling down.



It wasn't just 'falling down', Penn!

I hit rocks from a height of 21 foot!



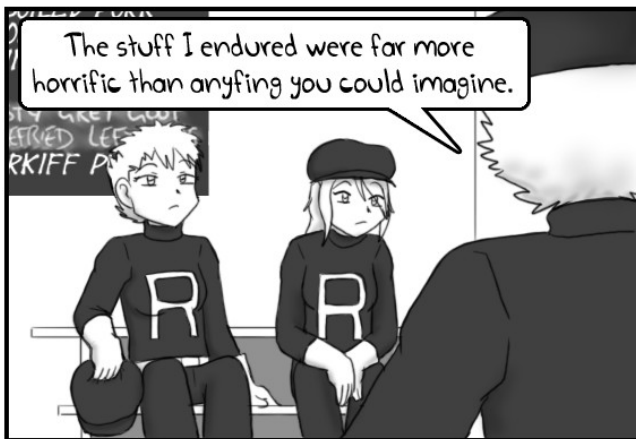
Well I was tossed into the air and then trampled upon by several bouffalant during a stampede.



You should have seen the puncture wounds I received from that little escapade. I couldn't move for weeks.



Maybe... it's time to put da amateurs in deir place, hm?

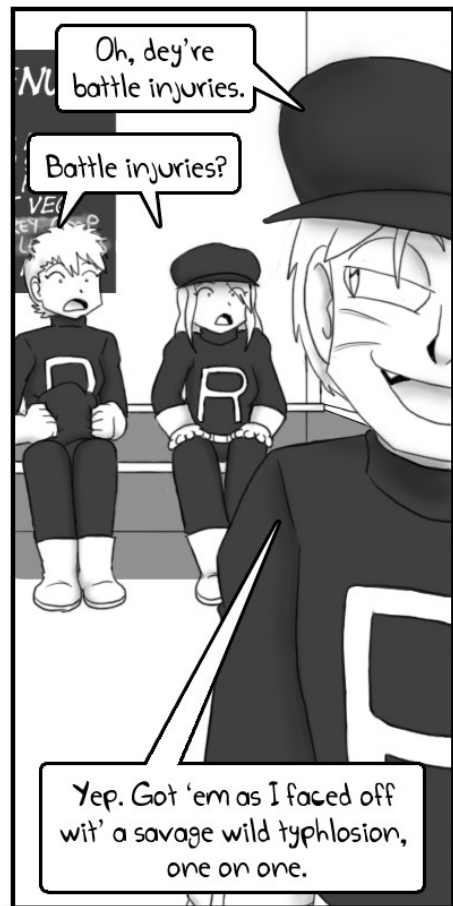


The stuff I endured were far more horrific than anything you could imagine.



How on earth did you end up on crutches?

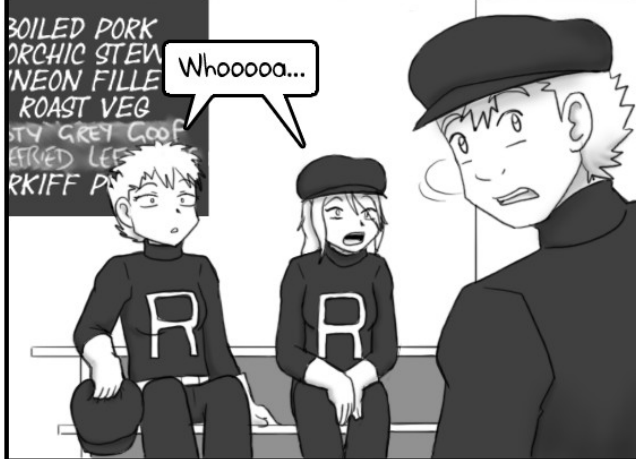
And get those scars across your face like that?



Oh, dey're battle injuries.

Battle injuries?

Yep. Got 'em as I faced off wit' a savage wild typhlosion, one on one.



Whoooooa...

BOILED PORK  
ORCHIC STEW  
NEON FILLE  
ROAST VEG  
STY GREY GOOF  
ETRED LEE  
RKIFF P



Now...were you burned?

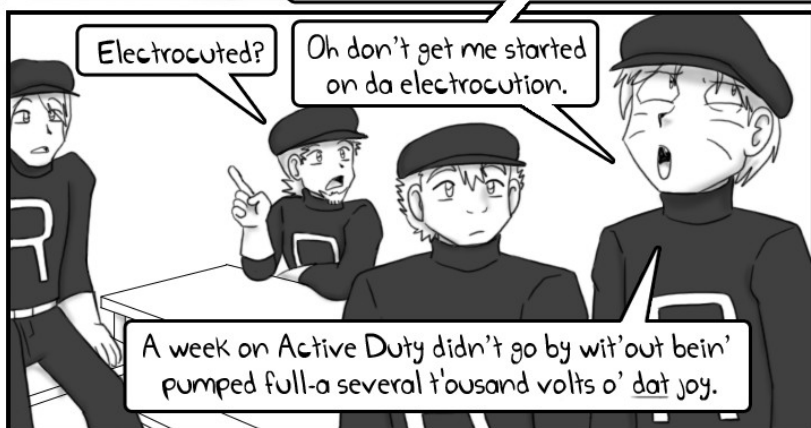
You bet I was! But still, it ain't nothin' I'm not used ta.

I been boined many a time, so I guess my skin's become pretty resilient to it ova da years.

Besides dat, I been frozen a lot too. An' vine-whipped, sand-blasted, mind-zapped, tossed against walls...



...squished by heavy stuff, thrown into da air before landin' in places several miles away...



Electrocuted?

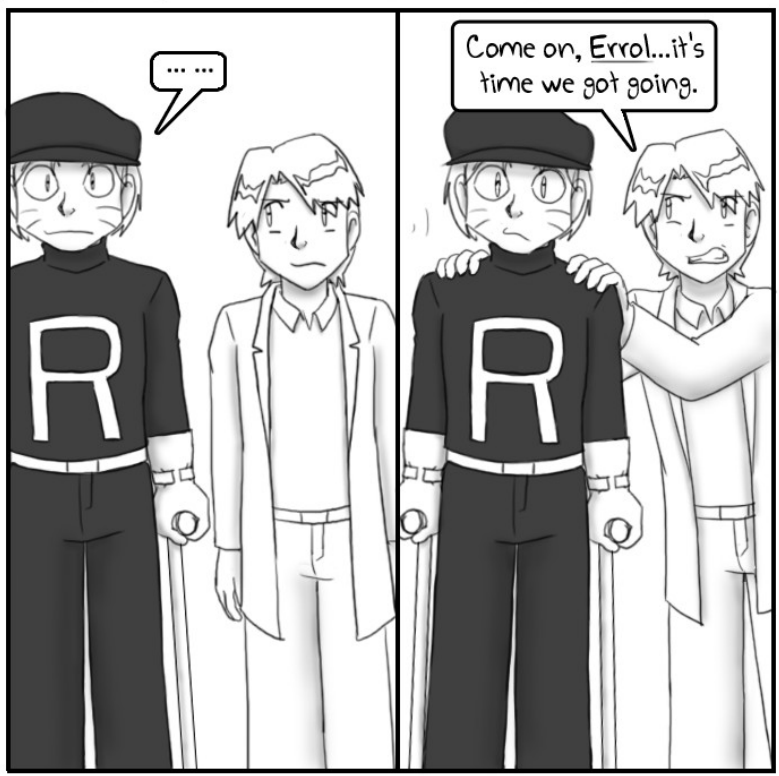
Oh don't get me started on da electrocution.

A week on Active Duty didn't go by wit'out bein' pumped full-a several t'ousand volts o' dat joy.



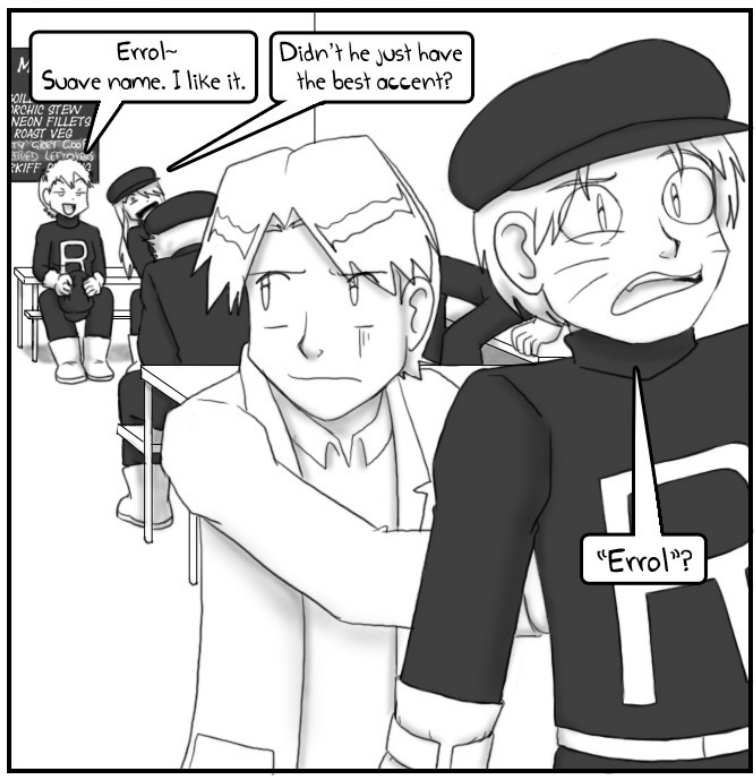
You sure are an amazing guy, pulling through all that.

What's your name?



...

Come on, Errol...it's time we got going.



Errol- Suave name. I like it.

Didn't he just have the best accent?

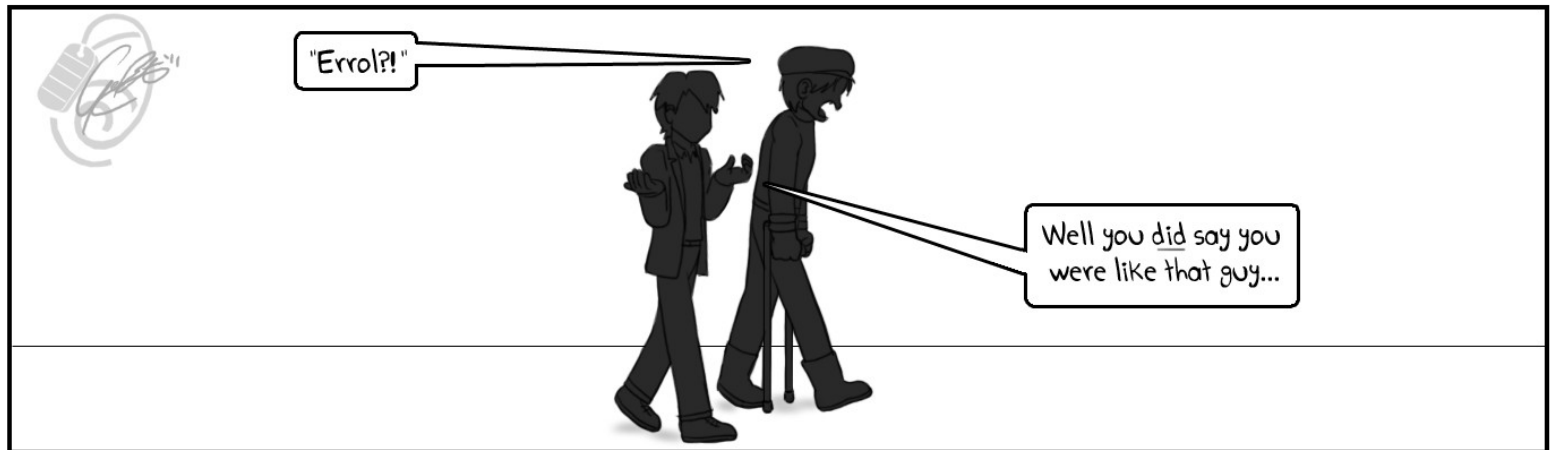
"Errol"?



There goes one awesome guy.

What were you saying, Matt? Before you got interrupted. Something about enduring horrific things?

Actually, they weren't all that bad, now I fink of it...



"Errro!?!"

Well you did say you were like that guy...

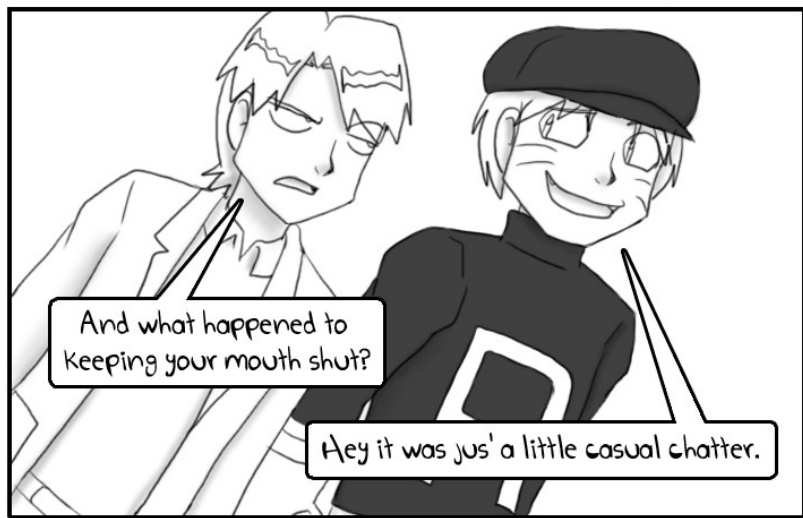


Did you have any better suggestions?



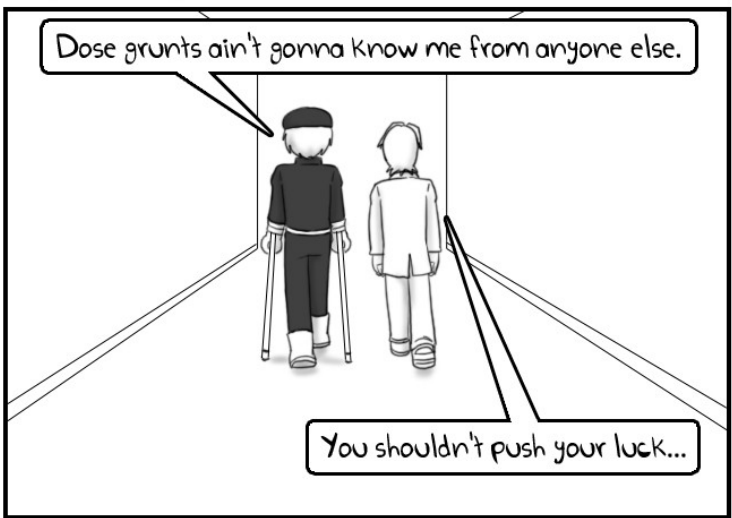
No...

...I guess any new name's gonna take some time to get used to.



And what happened to keeping your mouth shut?

Aey it was jus' a little casual chatter.



Dose grunts ain't gonna know me from anyone else.

You shouldn't push your luck...

The machine's procedure completed without fault, Miss Simmons. Someone took the capsule from the lab while I was absent.

Now you were the last person I'd expected to have acted in such a flagrantly insubordinate way...

...but, sadly, the evidence is unmistakable.

You were the only other person present during my work.

The only other person aware of my activities.

And there have been reports of missing resources.

An operative's uniform, a surgical blade...

...care to tell me why you needed these?

I see. Your silence does little to bolster your innocence, Miss Simmons.

You do realise that if you do not comply willingly with information..

...that I will be forced to have it extracted from you.

Yes sir.

Then why do you not tell me where you took my life's work?

Because that meowth is not just some product of your work.

He is a creature with feelings, and he deserves to be left in peace - not used as a target for your twisted theories.

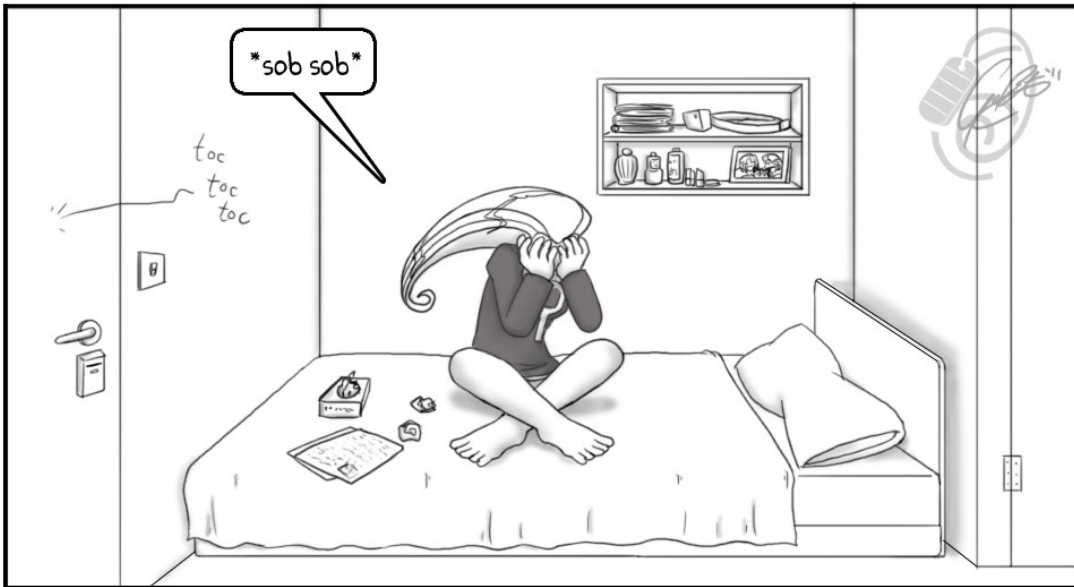
Ughh-h-h-h...

...your intelligence may be a great asset to Team Rocket...

...but your sentimentality is an equally great hindrance.

I must see this dealt with. But before that...

...I must have my work back.



\*sob sob\*

toc  
toc  
toc



Hey Jessie, its me. I need to talk.

Leave me alone, you deserter!



What's wrong?

What's wrong?  
What's **WRONG**?

Everything about  
this is wrong!

I didn't want to be an Elite by myself! If that wasn't horrible enough, the admin is forcing me to be babysat by Cassidy and her annoying partner!



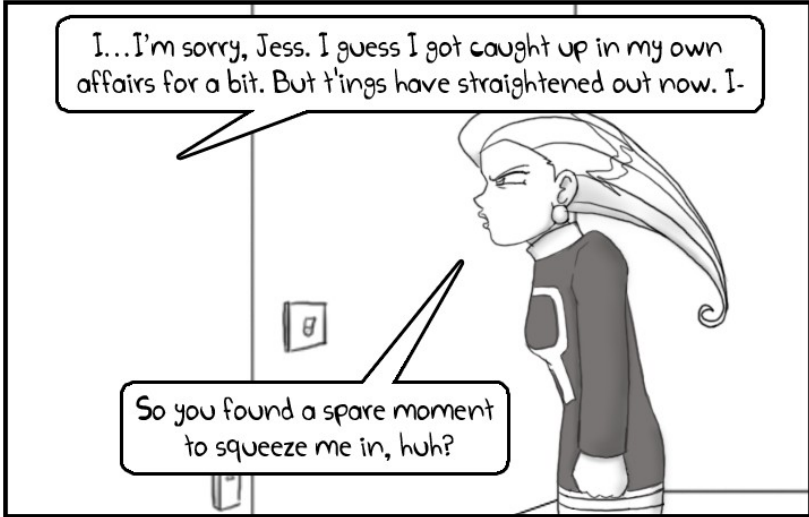
This is the pit of  
humiliation!

I feel so degraded...



And was a little bit of  
communication too much to ask?

A 'hello', 'I'm doing fine', 'things  
are going great and I totally haven't  
forgotten about my dotting friends'...  
anything would have been nice!

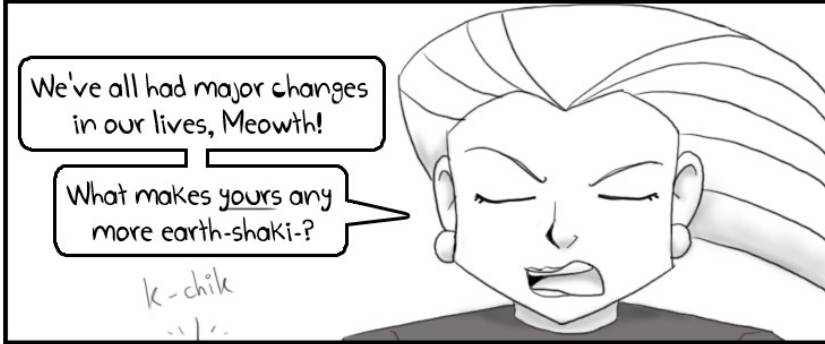


I...I'm sorry, Jess. I guess I got caught up in my own  
affairs for a bit. But t'ings have straightened out now. I-

So you found a spare moment  
to squeeze me in, huh?



Hey don't be like dat. It wasn't just any old happenin',  
Jessie. Dere's been a major change in my life.



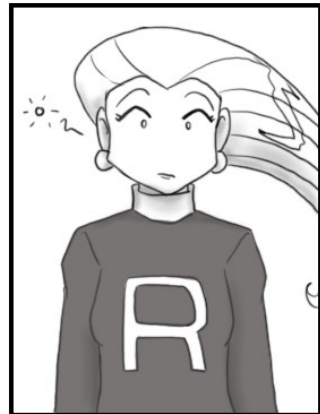
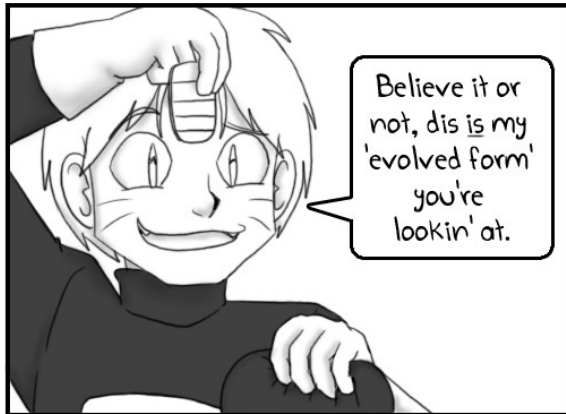
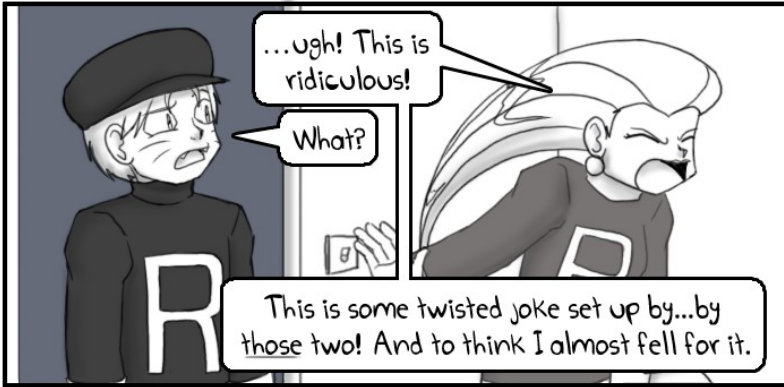
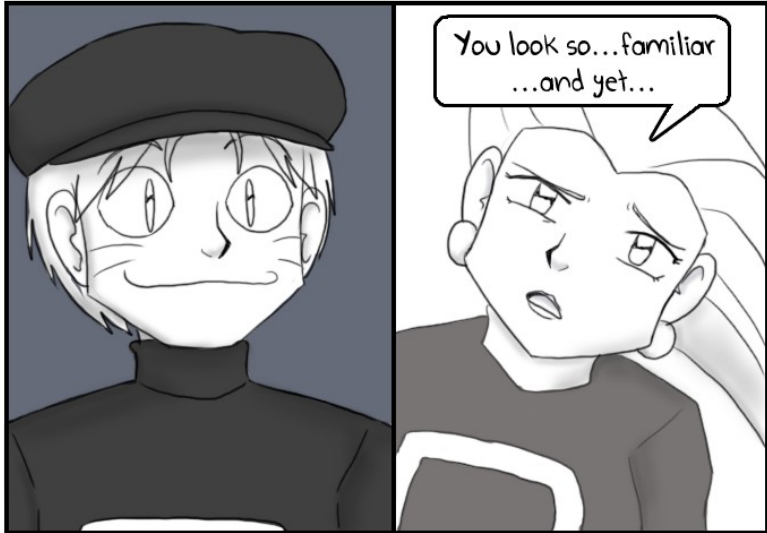
We've all had major changes  
in our lives, Meowth!

What makes yours any  
more earth-shaki-?

k-chik



Ih...ih...



Aaugh! Why must everything in my life suddenly have to fall apart?

Can't one thing stay the same?

Dere's no reason to take it out on me!

Besides, I still t'ink da same way.  
I still feel da same way.

I may look human now, but  
I ain't any different in da head!

Meowth was never concerned  
with his appearance.

It's not true. I jus'  
never spoke about it.

What good does  
insecurity do ya in  
Team Rocket?

I finally get myself, Jessie!  
Why can'cha be happy about dat?

How can I be happy? The pokémon I knew is gone!

Da pokémon you knew was never really dere!

How could you have known who I  
was if I didn't?

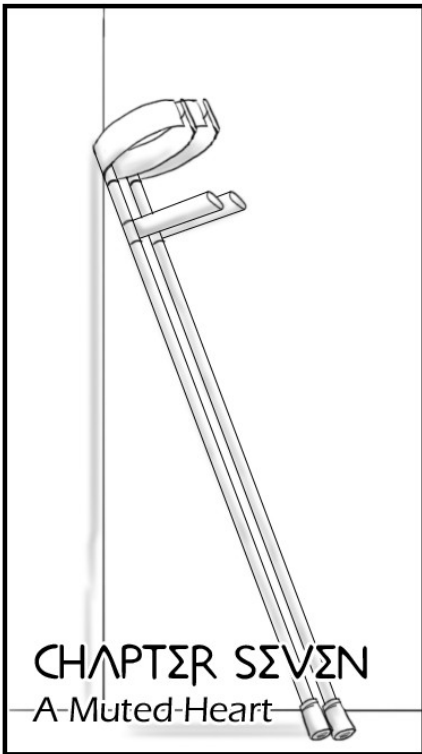
You're delusional.

Whatever twisted  
lab experiments they  
did to you must have  
screwed with your mind.

You don't understand  
how it felt to be da  
way I was...







CHAPTER SEVEN  
A Muted Heart



How could Jessie do dat to me?

I t'ought we were friends!



M-maybe James would be more understandin'. I could try tellin' him...

...but I don't even know where he is.



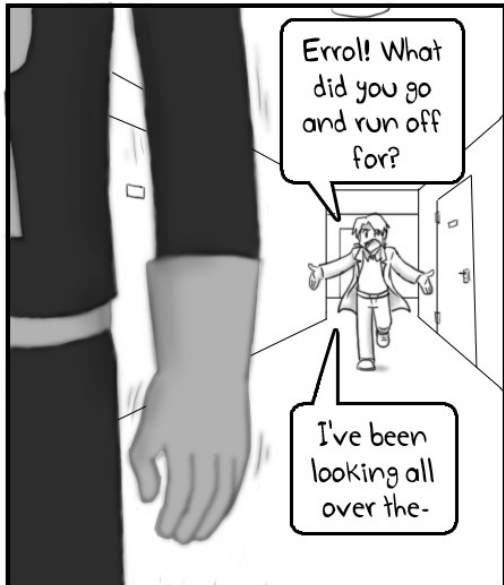
And even if I did... he'd just be mad at me too.

I let myself be experimented on, somethin' he was forced into doing.



An' after what he sacrificed to make sure I didn't get da same punishment he did.

Jimmy would neva forgive me.

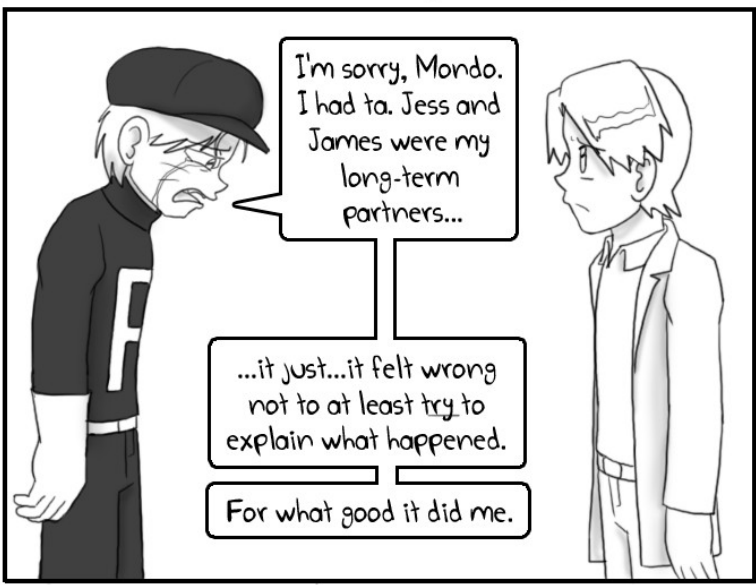


Errol! What did you go and run off for?

I've been looking all over the-



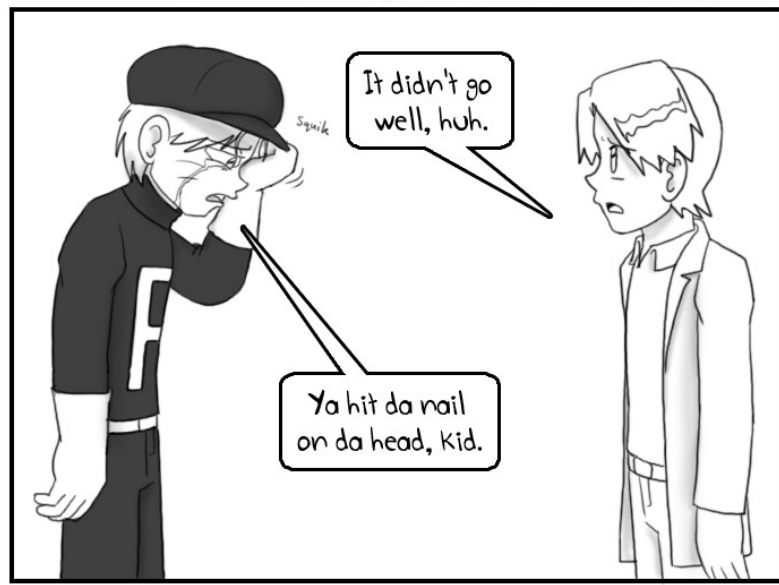
Wait. You didn't...



I'm sorry, Mondo. I had ta. Jess and James were my long-term partners...

...it just...it felt wrong not to at least try to explain what happened.

For what good it did me.



It didn't go well, huh.

Ya hit da nail on da head, Kid.

I feel messed up. Part of me is glad to have found myself, but da other part regrets it.

I guess I'm wonderin' dat maybe it woulda been better to feel at odds wit' myself, if it kept me my friends.

Da pain o' da unknown  
couldn't have hoit more  
dan da pain of rejection  
wit' in me right now.

"A boulder cast  
into a lake  
forges great  
waves."

What?

It's something  
I read in one  
of the  
magazines  
Gloria shared  
with me.

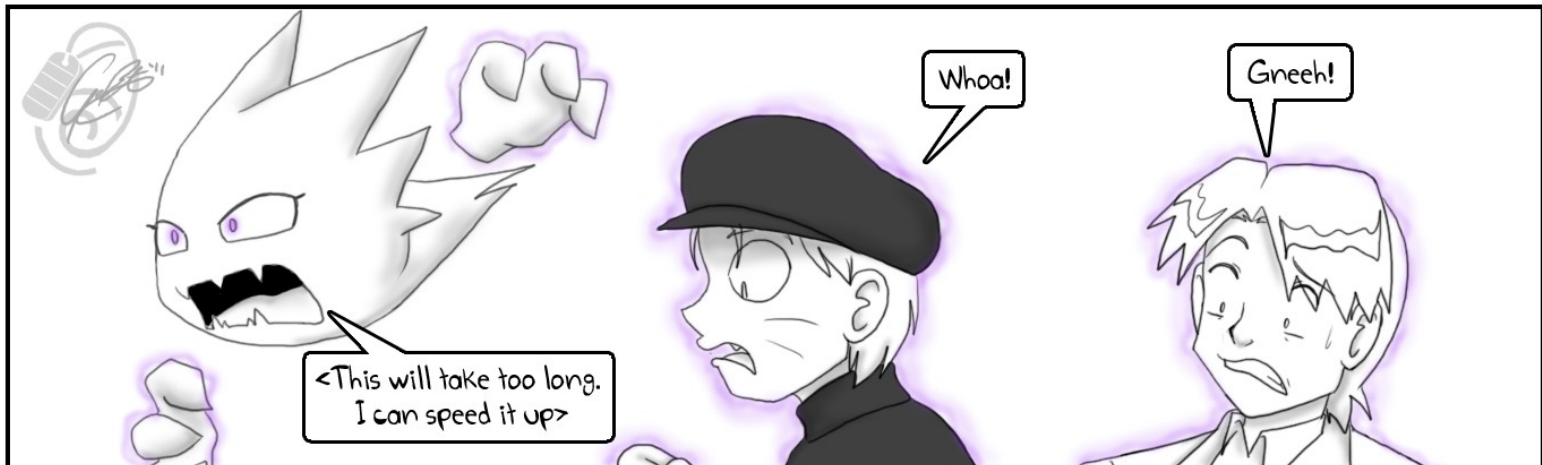
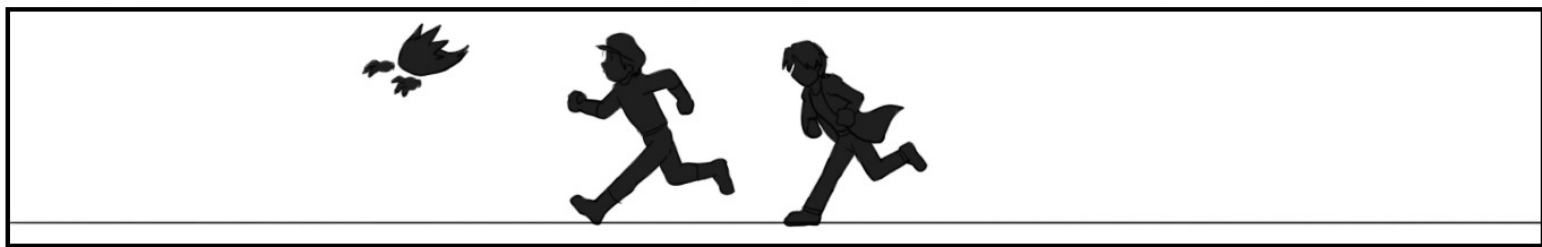
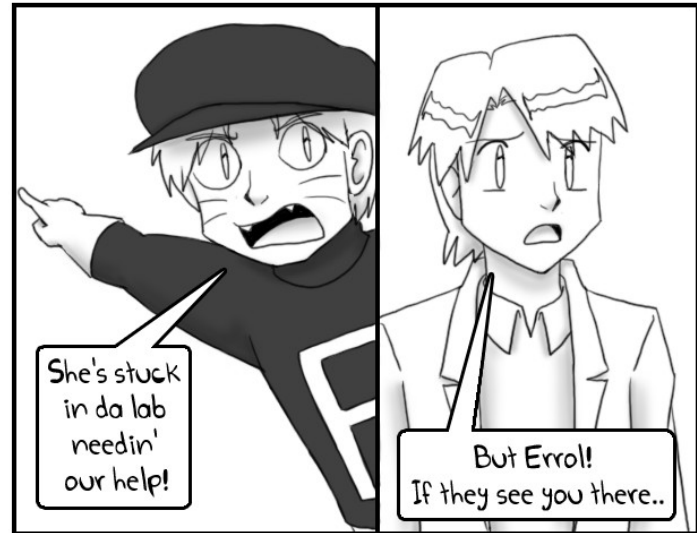
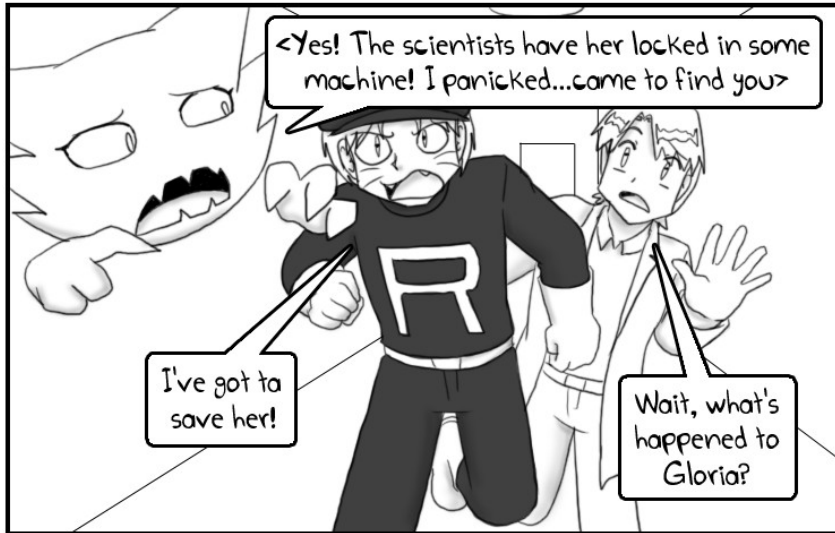
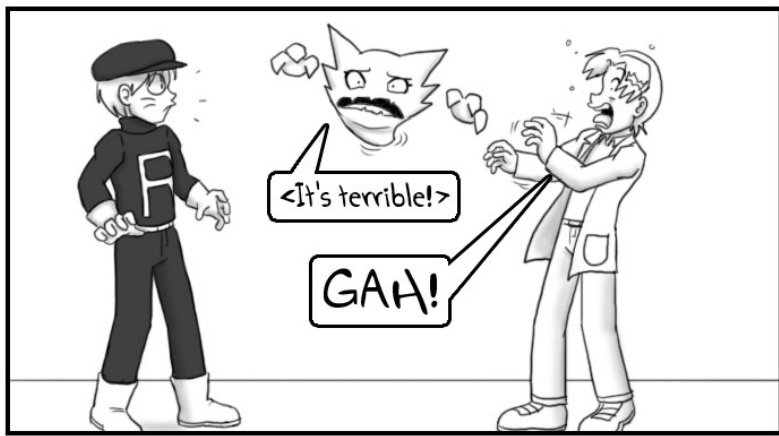
Substantial changes in one's life cause pretty big  
repercussions for everyone they are connected with.

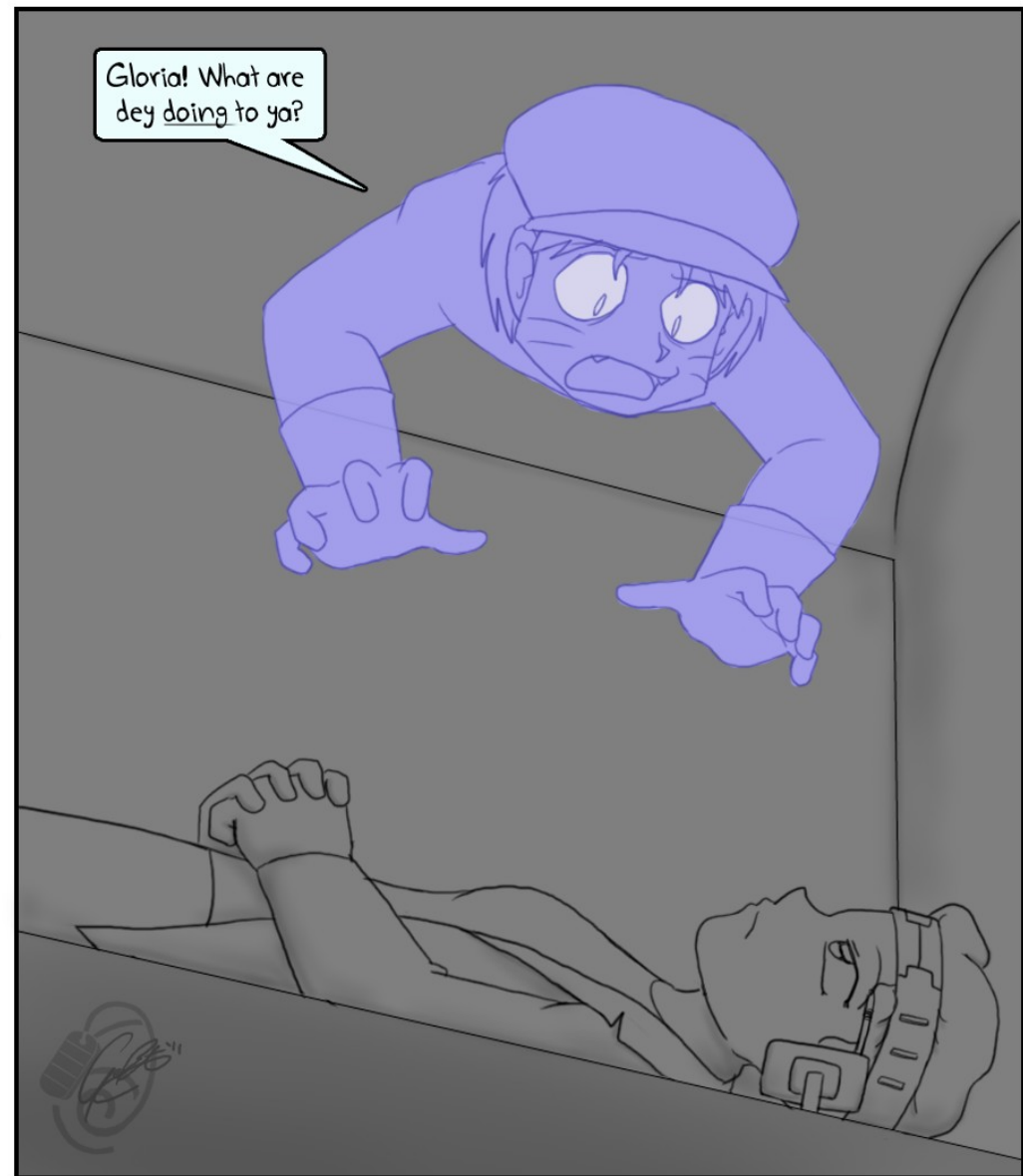
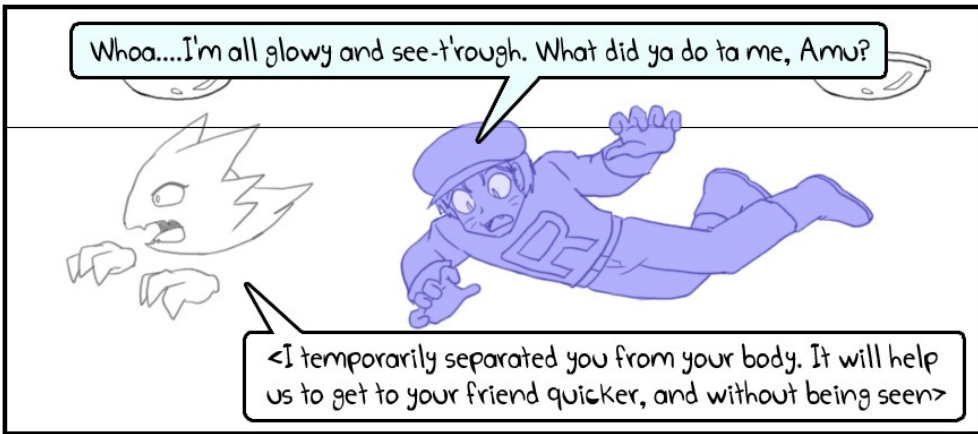
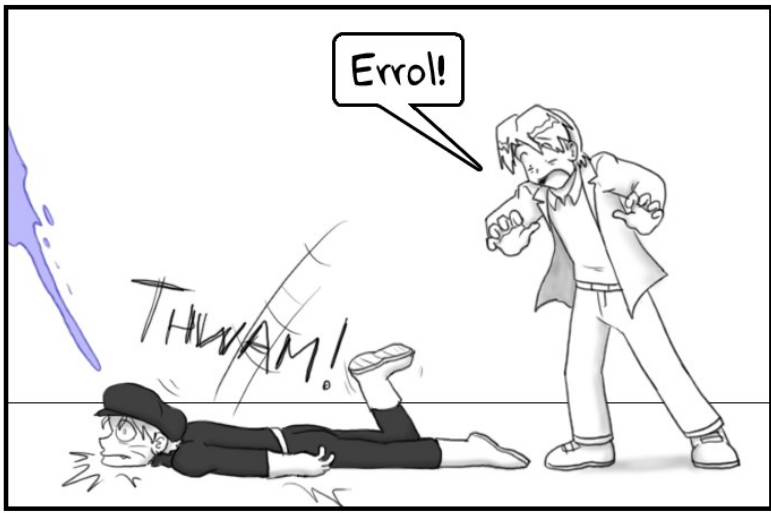
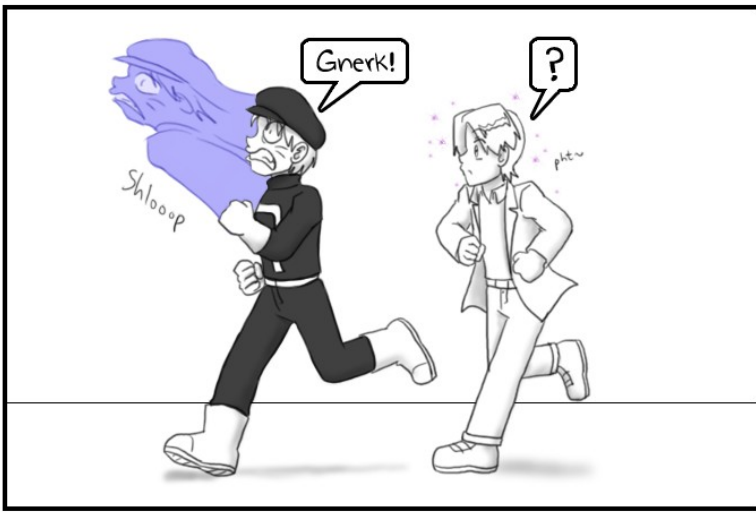
Sometimes...you need  
to wait a bit for the  
'waves' to calm down.

Hmm...

...Gloria sure was a good  
mentor to you.









Oh Amu, I was hoping you'd find me. Listen...I need help.



The people here are trying to find information about Meowth by taking memories from my brain by force.

Please... you've got to use Dream Eater



...remove my memories of Meowth before its too late.

<"Meowth"??>

**NO!**

I beg you! Meowth will be discovered if the scientists get those memories from me!



<Is she talking about you??>

Yes, but...dere's got to be anudda way!

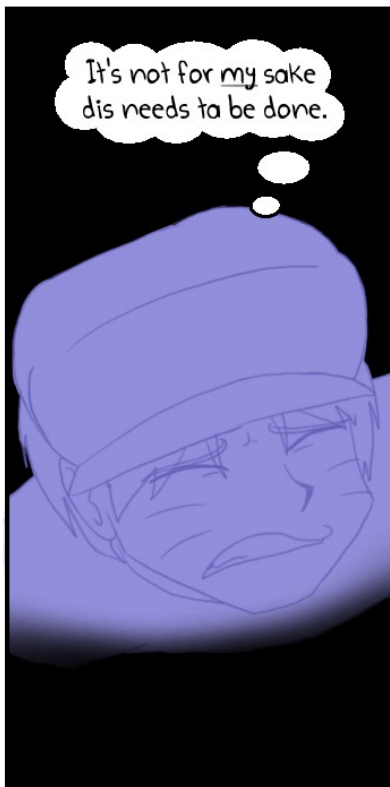


I'll get you out, Gloria! I'll get you out, den we'll get outta here! You, me an' Mondo - we'll start a new, betta life!

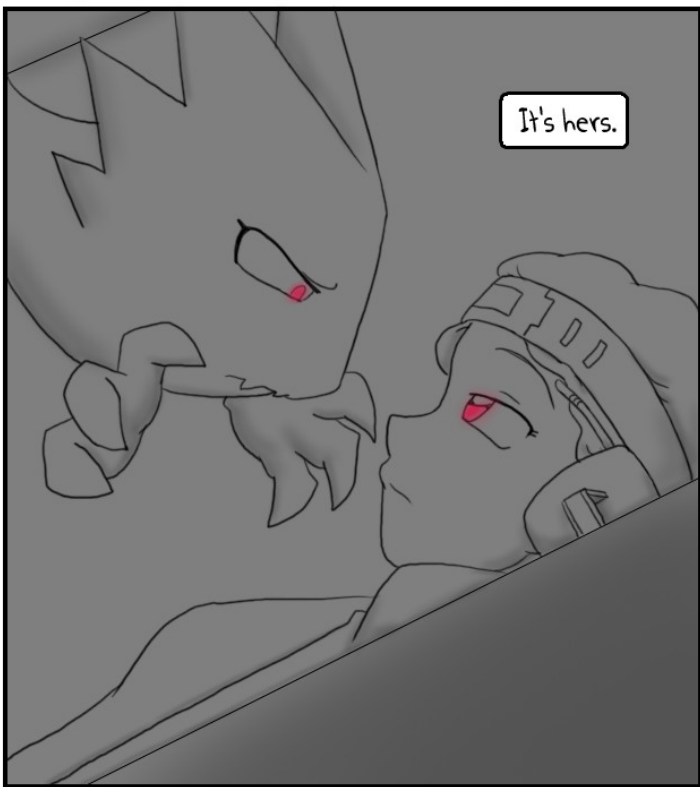
<She can't hear you, Errol...>



Oh who am I kiddin'. Even if I could get Gloria out, dat Professor Bohrgram would track her down all ova again.



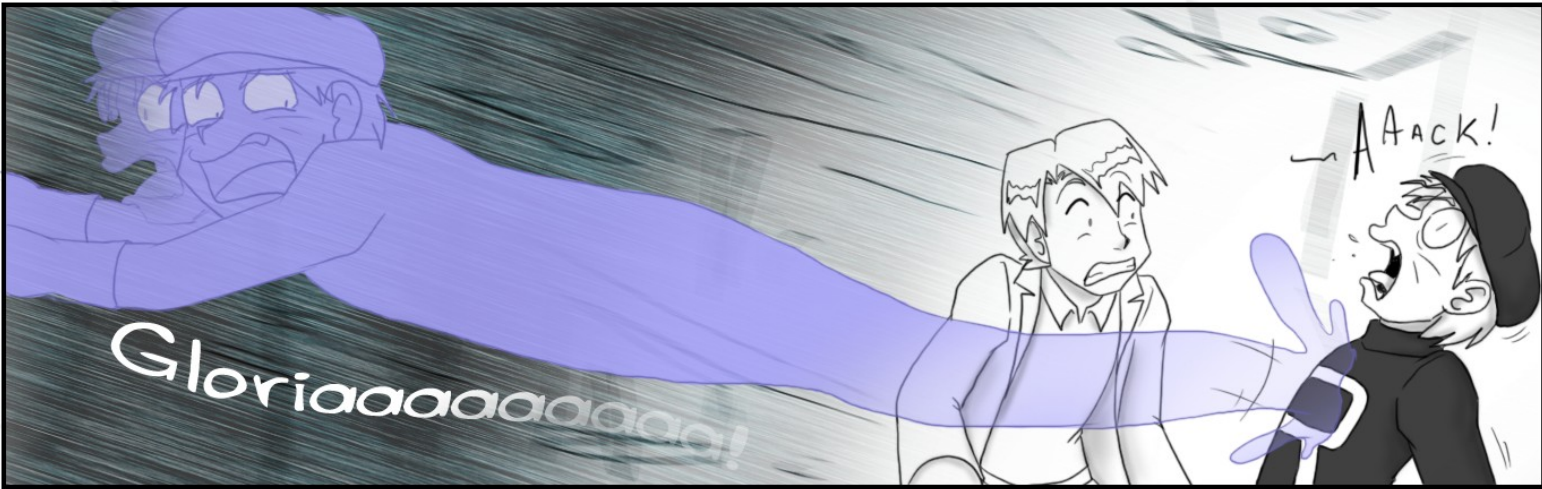
It's not for my sake dis needs to be done.



It's hers.

Thank you...giving Meowth that second chance...

...I don't regret it for one moment...



I'm picking up an energy surge inside the cerebral analysis machine. I think...I think something else is in there besides Dr. Simmons!

Initiate emergency shut down!

I can't! The procedure's already started. If I shut down now...

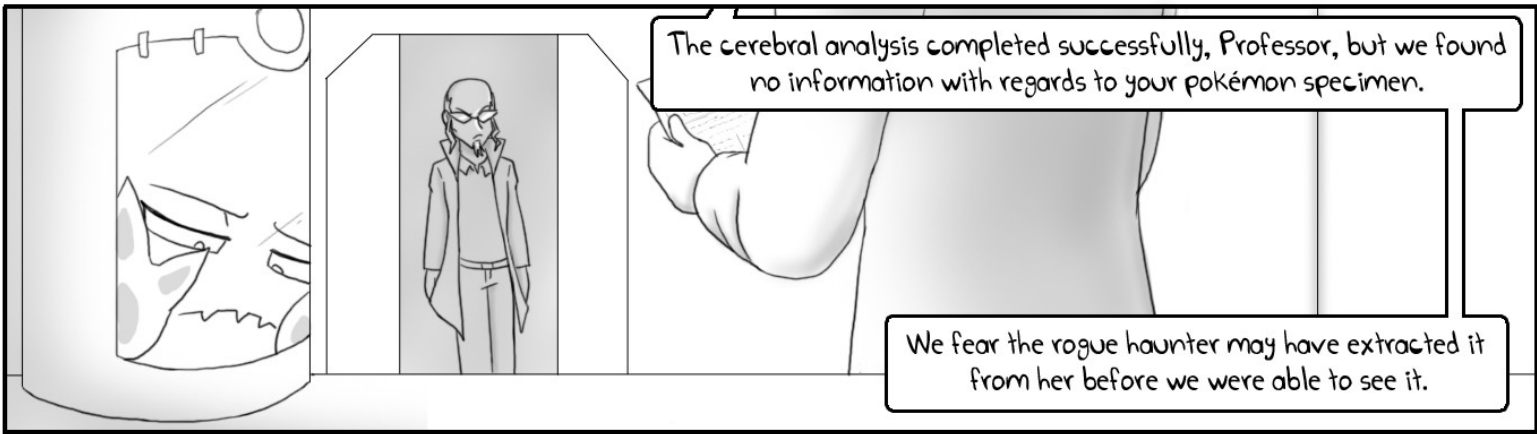
...chances are the data we're searching for will be corrupted in the process!

Hauh...

Taiighh!  
FZSHAK!

Got'cha, you little creepy pest!

Hauhuh!



The cerebral analysis completed successfully, Professor, but we found no information with regards to your pokémon specimen.

We fear the rogue haunter may have extracted it from her before we were able to see it.



Can we remove it from this ether?

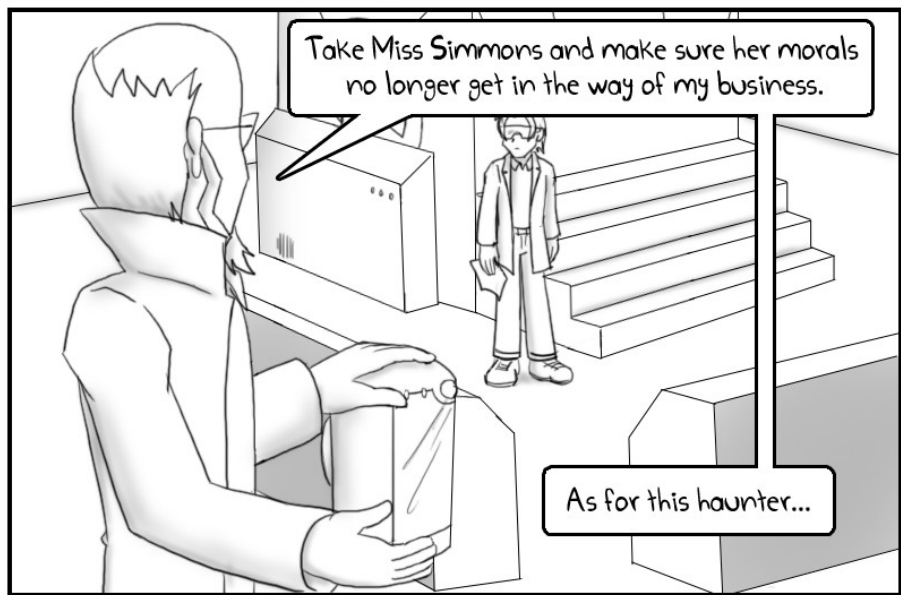
Unfortunately not, sir.

The memory data would have been converted into energy during the extraction.



It's useless to us now.

Clever. That woman's intelligence certainly precedes her.



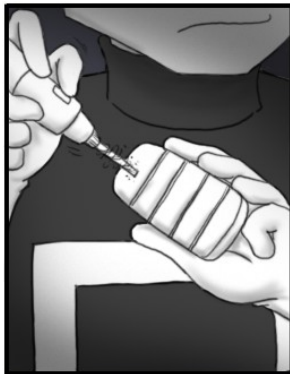
Take Miss Simmons and make sure her morals no longer get in the way of my business.

As for this haunter...



...I have special plans for you.

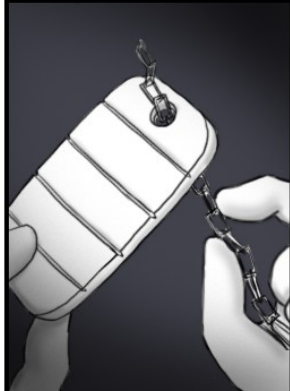




Maybe Jessie, James and I had owed dat twoip more dan we realised.



Afta all, it was dat mission trackin' him which kept us togedda fer so long.



Sure, we'd had our tiffs in da past.



Our temporary break-ups.



But nuttin' like dis.



I've neva felt more apart from my two best buddies dan I do right now.

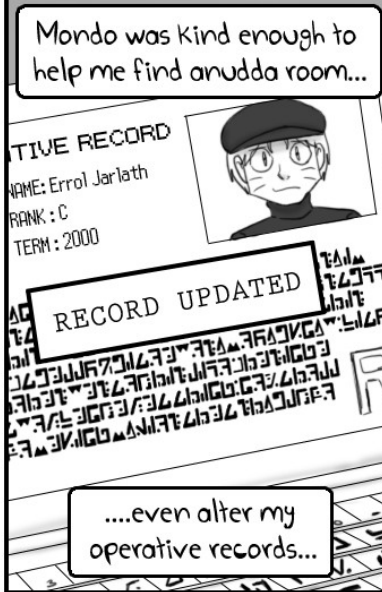


And Gloria. Poor, selfless Gloria.



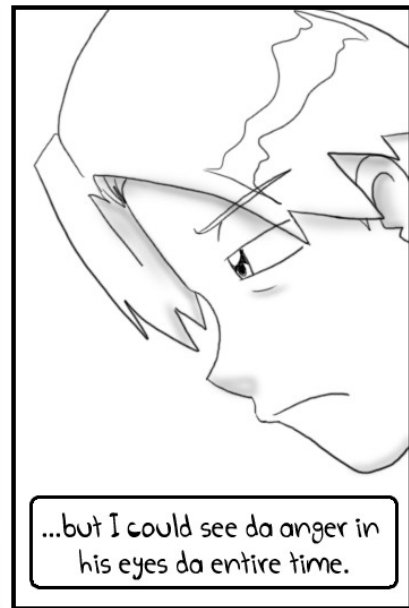
Brought here against her will, unlike me, who joined Team Rocket by choice.

She didn't desoive what she got.



Mondo was kind enough to help me find anudda room...

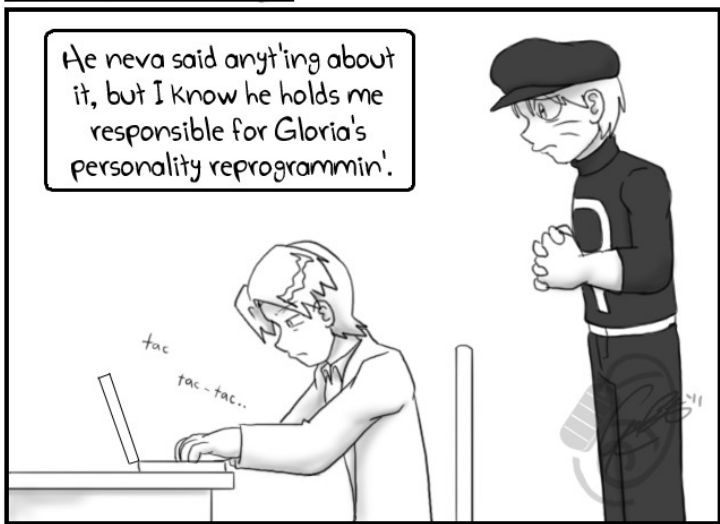
....even alter my operative records...



...but I could see da anger in his eyes da entire time.



He neva said anyt'ing about it, but I know he holds me responsible for Gloria's personality reprogrammin'.



I don't blame him.



I hold myself responsible too.



My identity may be whole now, but my heart...

...my confidence...

...my family is shattered.

I feel so very alone.

After everything that's happened...

...I think it'd just be best I stay  
silent from now on.



The End

# AUTHOR NOTES

**00-001** : Here is a reprisal of the dialogue spoken during the last episode of the Sinnoh arc. It is supposed to be a little vague, but if you've seen the episode "Altered Paths" kicks off from, you'll have no trouble matching the voices to their owners.

**00-002** : Giovanni may not say much out loud, but he certainly cogitates a great deal. What could he be plotting?

**01-001** : Unknown by the rest of Team Rocket's operatives, Jessie, James and Meowth have been involved in a unique mission for the past five years. One they've tried to get out of, since it tends to be rather painful. But what's this? Finally getting the promotion they've longed for?

**01-002** : While this page is reference to events that happen during the first episode of season 5, with the slam of a giant foot, it is also the point where the animé continuity splits from the Rebirth one. Ash's outfit here is slightly based off the one he wore in the Unova arcs, with a differing colour scheme.

**01-003** : If you're wondering where a chunk of Ash's pokémon are, they've since been relocated to various places. Torkoal works at Ash's Uncle Marty's fish bar, and all his water type pokémon hang out at Cerulean Gym – because it's fun there and they get to battle challengers now and then.

**01-004** : I figured it was possible to make Team Rocket threatening without giving them a complete personality overhaul. All they needed was better equipment and less mistake-making. If any of you are curious, the mecha was designed by Tim Dixon. Also the last three panels are a sort of fun-poke at the instances where one member of the 'twerps' will repeat exactly what another just said moments previously.

**01-006** : Delia's mother sense is tingling. And so is Tracey's long-buried Rocket sense.

**01-007** : Leading Ash to a more secluded area was part of the brief – as to whether making him angry in the process was as well, I can't really say.

The trio weren't trying to kill Ash...they just knew they could get away with pulling stunts like that on him because of his inexplicable powers of good fortune.

**01-008** : Eagle-eyed readers will have noticed that the area of the cockpit the speech bubble is pointing at has been dictating who is speaking. Though if you're particularly familiar with seasons 1-8 of the animé, you'll probably be able to tell who it is from the content and style of their dialogue.

**01-009** : The biggest problem with strategy is that the pokémon tend to have to wait around for their trainer's instructions. The events of panels 8-13 happen quite rapidly.

**01-011** : Losing in a Gym match or tournament is one thing, but this is one loss Ash has not experienced before. He isn't taking it so well. Anyone remember Samuel's charmeleon? He's still around – age has made him a touch slow, mind, so he doesn't battle all that much.

**02-001** : The outfits Jessie and James are wearing are a nod to the first Unova season of the animé. And if anyone's curious, the box Meowth is hiding under reads 'Sprinters Chips'.

**02-007** : One of the segments preserved from the original version of Altered Paths was James and Meowth competing to answer the door.

**02-008** : It may not have seemed like it with Jessie's force and bossiness, but indeed James was designated team leader of their trio.

**02-009** : Jessie may have harped on about working alone in the past, but that was only because she knew she couldn't get hurt that way. Faced with separation from the only people she really clicked with since leaving Pokémon Medical School, she panics.

**03-001** : By 'compatibility', he means 'complete brainwashed subservience'.

**03-005** : Outside HQ, general reaction to Meowth and his abilities was often astonishment, amazement and intrigue. Inside HQ, it's a whole different story.

**03-007** : Imagine the dunsparce sounding very posh – it's entertaining.

**04-002** : I know Meowth said way back in the archives of the Pokémon animé that he'd spent so much energy learning how to walk and talk human language that there was nothing left for evolving, but that always seemed rather off to me. If a pokémon in the animeverse only had one chance at evolving, Piplup would have never required an Everstone.

**04-004** : Basically he's putting Meowth through a machine that simulates a pokémon tradeover.

**04-008** : If you look closely at Gloria's shelf, you'll see she likes collecting the Ocian equivalent of Fabergé eggs. She'd like to be a Pokémon Breeder, you see.

**04-010** : A small homage to [pettyartist](#)'s Nuzlocke fan comics in the form of Gloria's rather oversized alarm clock here. I wonder where she got that from..

**05-004** : The title of the magazine is "Wide Lens" – a reference to the game item.

**05-005** : Mr. Persefois' design was modelled on a kricketune. The word 'persefois' was something I heard in one of my dreams and I really wanted to use it somewhere.

**05-008** : Gloria's father is the man with the strong European-ish accent you can see in silhouette accompanying Dr. Fuji in the 'Birth of Mewtwo' prologue (part of the first movie that was cut and later dubbed)

**06-001** : [Philippa Gissing](#), [makie-chu](#) and [giratinium](#) contributed the designs for Celia, Larissa and Grant on the bottom panel, respectively.

**07-004** : The 'soul' extraction done to Errol here is the same ability a haunter employed on Ash and Pikachu in the season 1 anime episode, "The Tower of Terror."

**07-006** : The scientist's 'creepy pest' remark is a passing reference to 'creepypasta', which tends to include a lot of ghostly type goings on.

**07-008** : This page represents at least a few days passage of time, possibly more than that. The tools Errol uses to make his charm wearable again were probably handled during a session educating grunt rankers on how to repair various things like their own weapons/gadgets/vehicles. Possibly even educating them on how to dismantle things, too.

**07-009** : Where could Errol be sitting? That, my friends, is a question that will be answered in Ultimatum.

This concludes 'Altered Paths' 2011 revision!

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