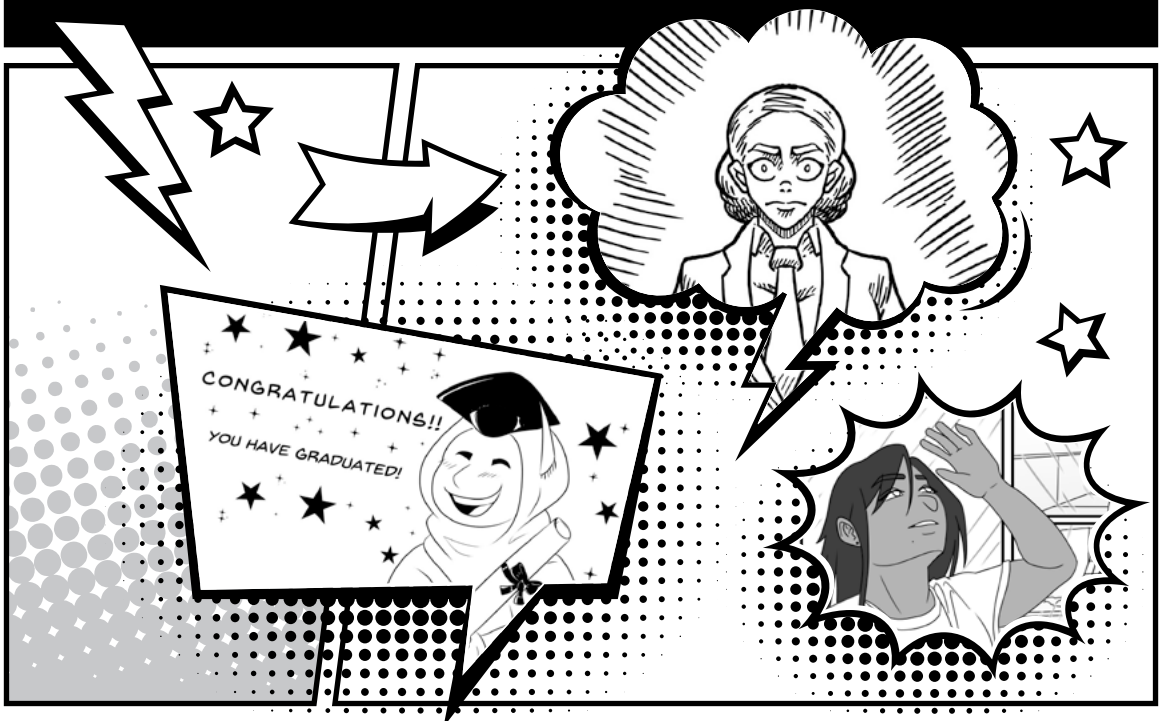


CULTURE SHOCKED!



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VISUAL IMPRESSIONS OF INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS



This comic was originally published by University of Limerick Arts Office, Student Affairs Division as an accompaniment to the *CULTURE SHOCKED! – Visual Impressions of Intercultural Encounters* exhibition held in the Bourn Vincent Gallery, University of Limerick, from 23rd March to 30th June 2023.

Graphic Design: Alan O'Shea.



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CULTURE SHOCKED!

Visual Impressions of Intercultural Encounters

This comic contains fifty original illustrations celebrating the cultural diversity of the University of Limerick (UL). It came to life with the participation of current students, staff and alumni. Over the last twelve months or so, individuals of all backgrounds responded to an open call inviting them to share personal anecdotes of cultural misunderstandings or 'critical incidents' as we call them in the field of cross-cultural communication, i.e. observations of challenges that are commonly experienced when we interact with cultures other than our own. Following a mindful selection and some editing, five illustrators turned the testimonies into light-hearted artworks.

'Culture Shock' is a term coined by anthropologist Dr Kalervo Oberg to describe the loss of points of reference when confronted with unfamiliar ways of doing things and the adjustments we make in order to cope. It felt adequate to use a variation of the term to depict the various feelings of confusion communicated to the team for the purpose of the project. We have all experienced this to some degree – either as new incoming students arriving in Ireland or indeed Limerick for the first time, going on CoOp (Cooperative Education Programme) or on a Study-Abroad exchange, and increasingly in our everyday lives.

In my role as University Teacher in the School of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics, I see immense value in examining these critical incidents with my students. They offer us opportunities to reflect on our behaviours and attitudes. We are not always conscious that our 'norms'

are the product of our upbringing, our socialisation, and our habituation to a particular culture. These include the words we speak, the manner in which we greet individuals, the way we dress, our non-verbal cues (think gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact), our relationship with time, and the beliefs that guide our everyday life. The study of cultural misunderstandings can be an effective pedagogical tool in transforming attitudes towards otherness, developing empathy, and being better prepared for future intercultural encounters.

The anecdotes portrayed in the comic illustrate various levels of cultures. Some represent differences noted between entire countries or world regions. Such is the case in THE BILL where two visitors from Northern America wait for a bill that never comes after a meal in an Italian restaurant because they are not accustomed to ask for it. Other stories are more localised; they highlight variations that are observable in smaller communities. LIFE AND DEATH illustrates a superstition from the West of Ireland that may be unknown to a number of Irish individuals, including people from this very part of the country.

Given the context of the project, we also chose to illustrate some elements particular to UL's culture. Some of these are self-explanatory while others are likely to be incomprehensible to 'outsiders'. Here are some pointers for those who need them.

The university campus is big, very big: 367 acres of land crossed by the River Shannon. Many enjoy its stunning views

Continued on next page

and rich wildlife especially when using 'The Living Bridge - An Droichead Beo', a unique design by Wilkinson Eyre Architects that mirrors the river with its flowing lines. THE LIVING BRIDGE describes how some people are taken aback by its movement and feel dizzy when many people step on it at the same time.

Because of the size of the university grounds, it can be challenging to make it to class in time in the allocated 10 minute-gap between lectures. It is not uncommon to arrive late and/or out of breath, as if you just had a workout as we see in GET YOUR STEPS IN.

UL has many recognisable landmarks thanks to some bold architectural choices such as an inclined glass structure at the front of the Main Building locally known as the *ski slope* that appears in TOLERANCE TO COLD and SCATTERED SHOWERS. The same MAIN BUILDING is a testament to 1970s Brutalist architecture but is also infamous for its complex floor level system. Many have lost their way in its intricate and labyrinthine corridors as forewarned by ENTER IF YOU DARE.

There are also many distinctive outdoor sculptures scattered throughout the campus. The most famous one is probably 'Together and Apart', a cast iron figure by Antony Gormley, that features in BROWN THOMAS, SCATTERED SHOWERS, and SACRED STATUE. Various nicknames *Rusty Man* or *Brown Thomas* it reportedly caused some confusion when a meet-up was scheduled at the Limerick *Brown Thomas* department store. Another iconic sculpture 'Geometric Forms' by

Alexandra Wejchert is located outside the Robert Schuman Building. Some eagle-eyed viewers may spot the structure in SCATTERED SHOWERS.

Lastly, many people in the university have achieved legendary status. Some are mentioned or represented in the illustrations like Richie, the local aerobics' instructor in GET YOUR STEPS IN. The heart-warming service staff in the library café known as the *Pink Ladies* because of their bright and colourful uniform feature in their own THE PINK LADIES. The ordinary Samaritan (nearly anyone working or studying in UL) who helps you find your way when you are utterly lost or holds the door open for you even if you are twenty feet away is the star of THE SPIRIT OF KINDNESS.

I hope you enjoy the stories in this comic and that they encourage you to appreciate the differences and similarities that we all carry and share.

N.B. While the essence of the stories has been maintained, some testimonies have been shortened and others expanded to keep a clear narrative and bring out the humour in the situations depicted. All characters have been created to showcase our community's diversity and are not representative of the actual individuals who shared the anecdotes.

Dr Florence Le Baron-Earle
Culture Shocked! Project Leader
March 2023



Lakeisha Lazo

[About Lakeisha >](#)

What is your name?

My name is Lakeisha Lazo.

What is your occupation?

I'm currently a 4th year Computer Systems student and I work with the ICT Learning Centre on the side.

Describe yourself in 5 words.

Creative, introverted, independent, approachable and... tired.

How would you define your art?

I have a semi-realistic art style that primarily draws inspiration from web comics and graphic novels.

Who are your favourite artists?

Ross Tran, Karina Farek, Spencer Wan and Rinotuna.

What are three things you cannot live without?

D&D, food and coffee, my three essentials!

What is your secret talent?

I can solve a Rubik's cube in about 2 minutes!

What is your motto in life?

It is what it is :)

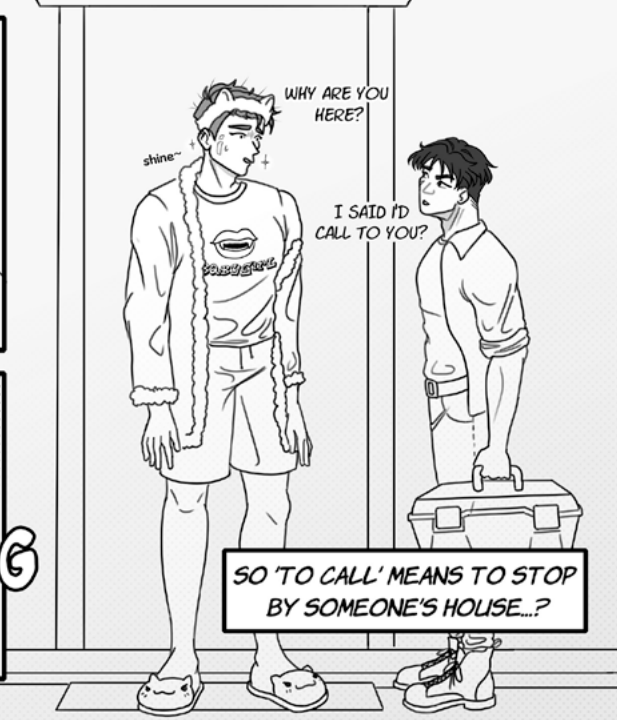
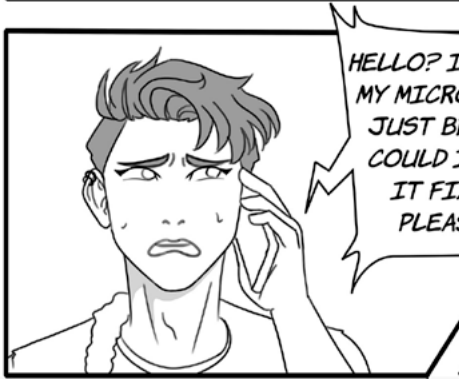
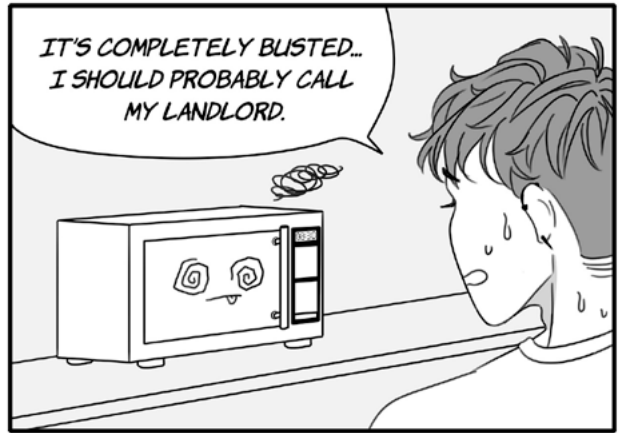
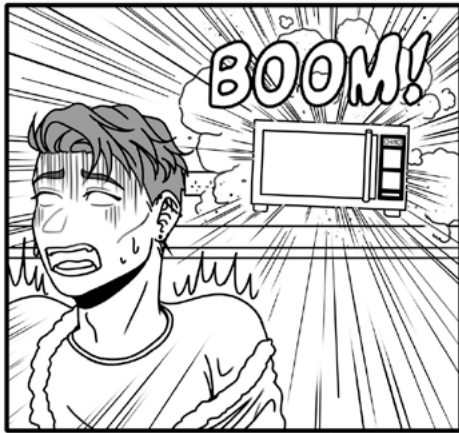
Which anecdote did you enjoy drawing the most and why?

I was really fond of working on the PUT A RING ON IT anecdote the most! It allowed for really dramatic expressions and one fun fact I really liked about this story is that the couple actually got married in the future so he really did give her a ring in the end.

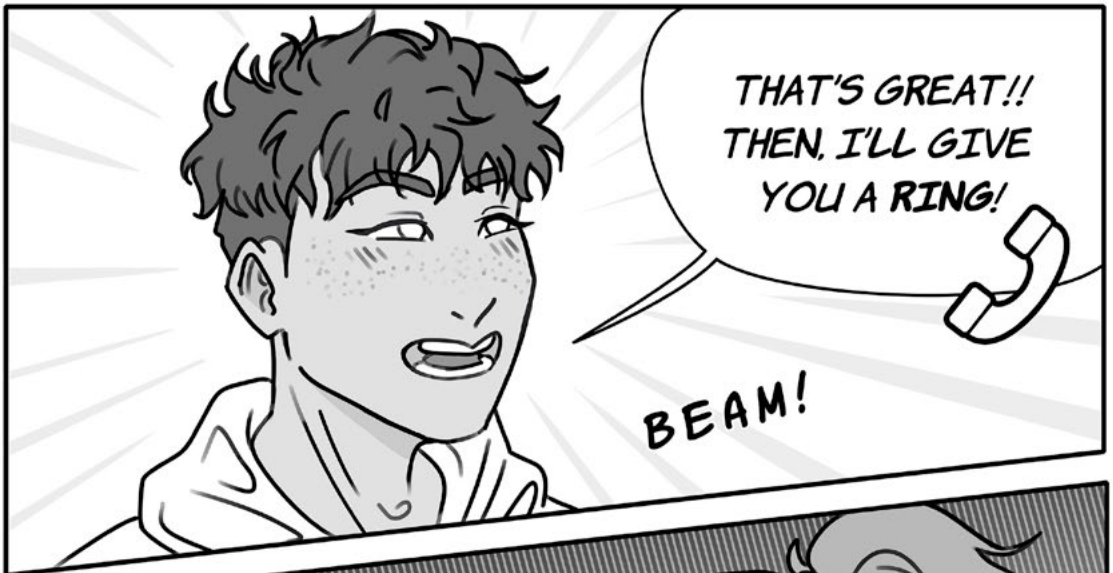
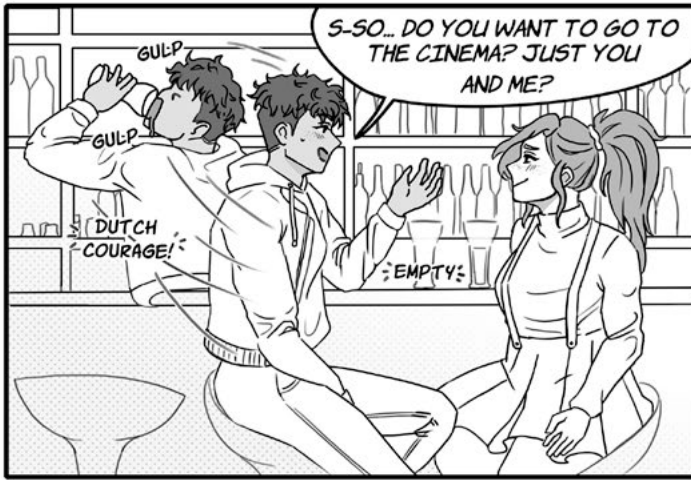
Do you have a personal intercultural encounter to share?

Whenever I meet someone entirely new, without fail, they either suspect or outright ask whether I'm American. I'm not! I moved from the Philippines to Ireland when I was 5 years old. English is the second language I learnt through reading, watching shows and school, all in Ireland. I just somehow never developed an accent!

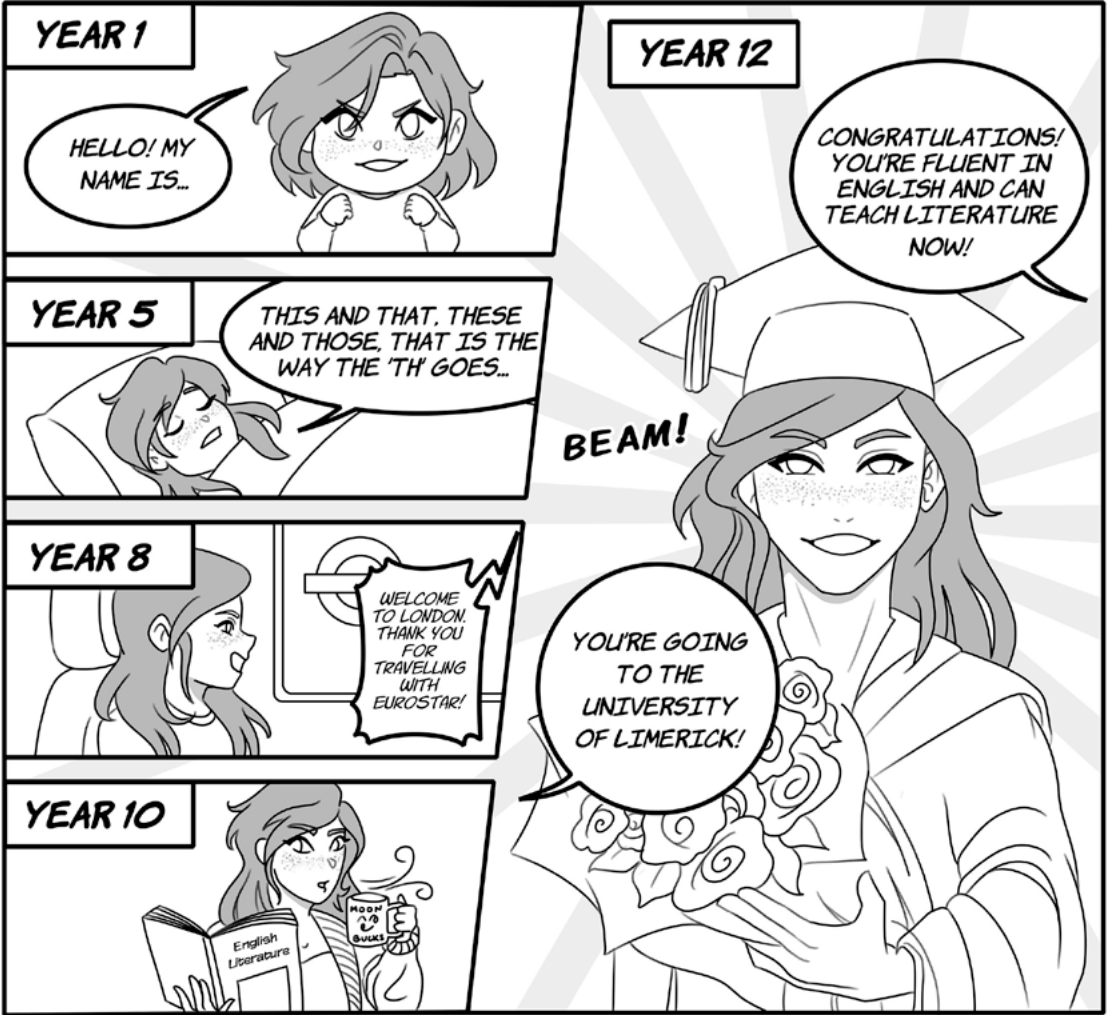
I'LL CALL LATER



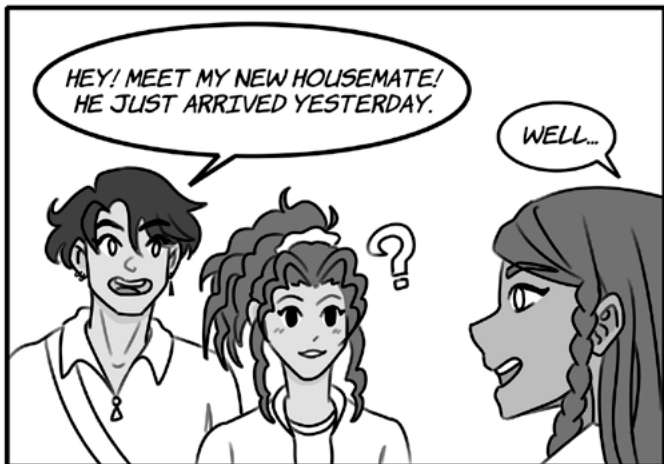
PUT A RING ON IT



HIBERNO-ENGLISH



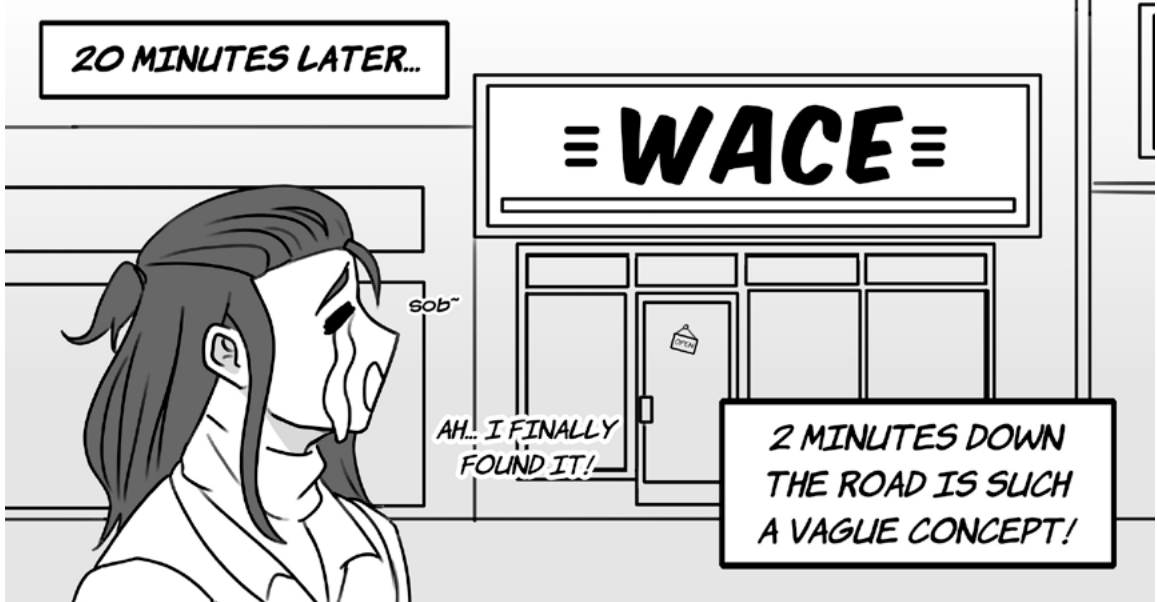
ANY CRAIC?



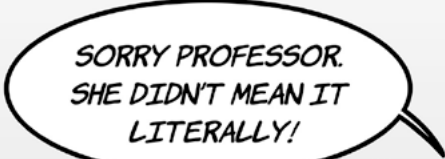
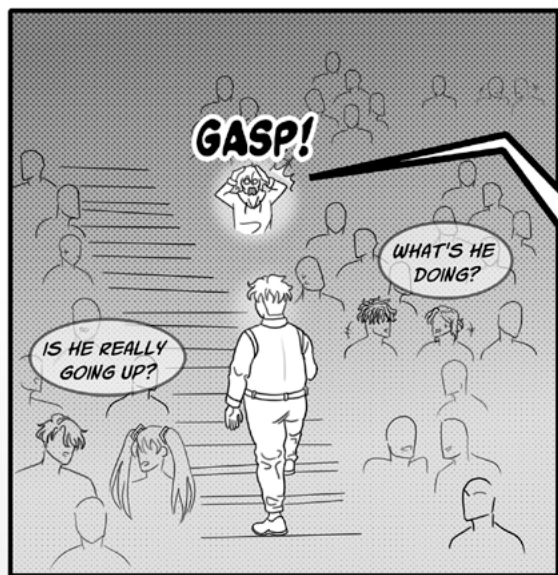
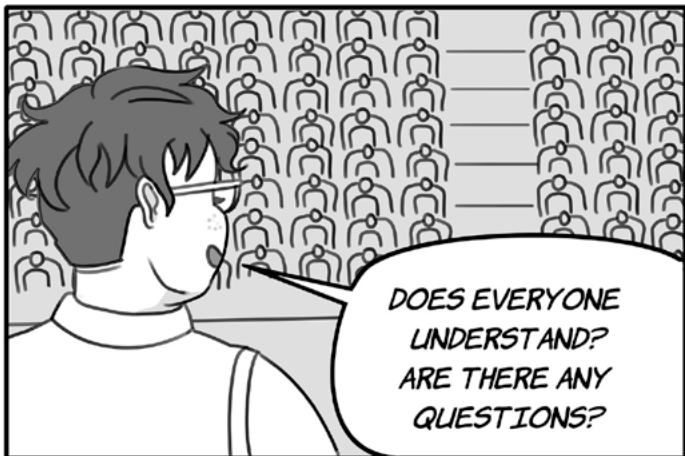
TWO MINUTES



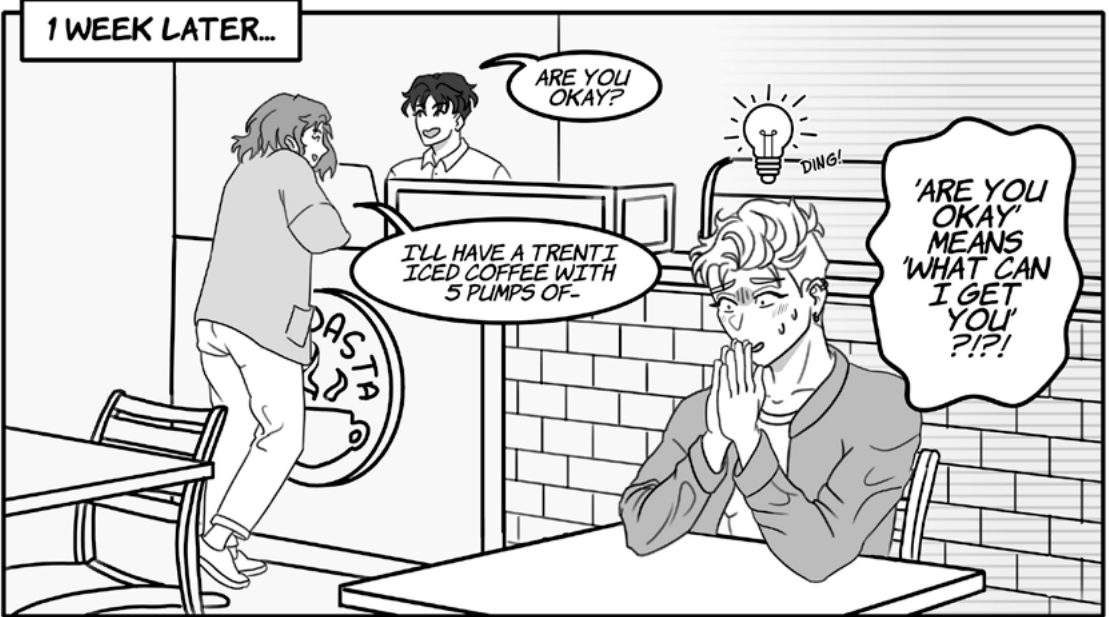
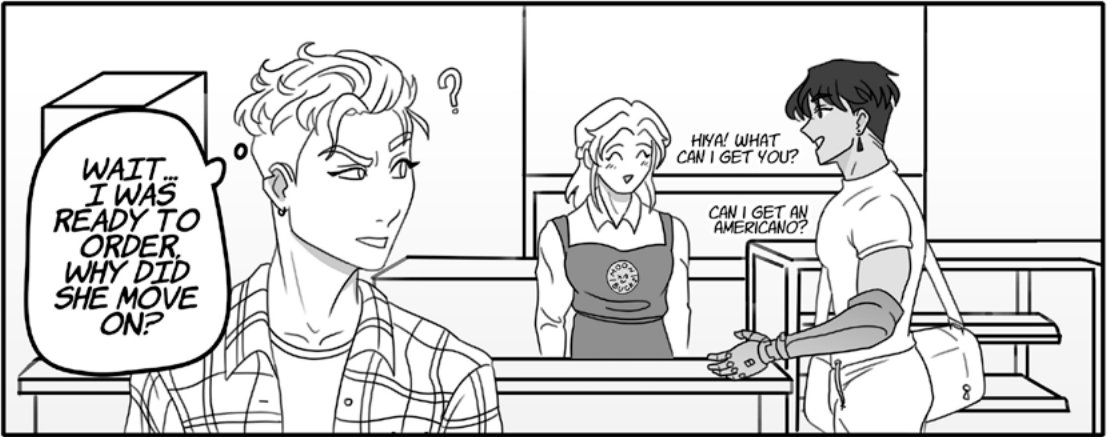
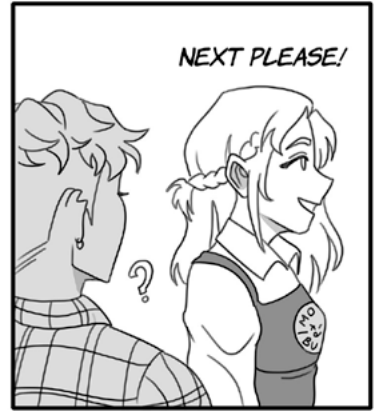
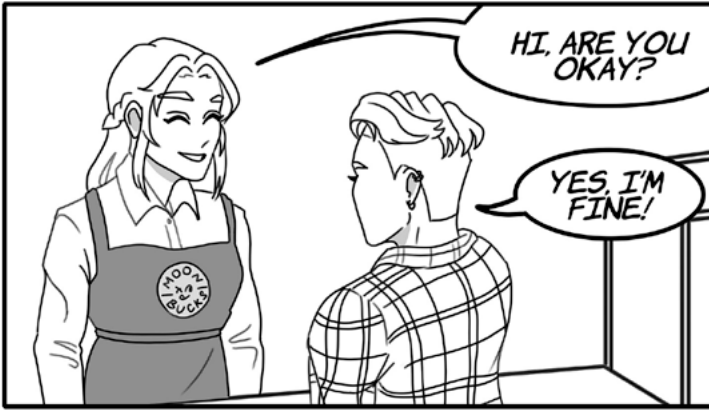
20 MINUTES LATER...



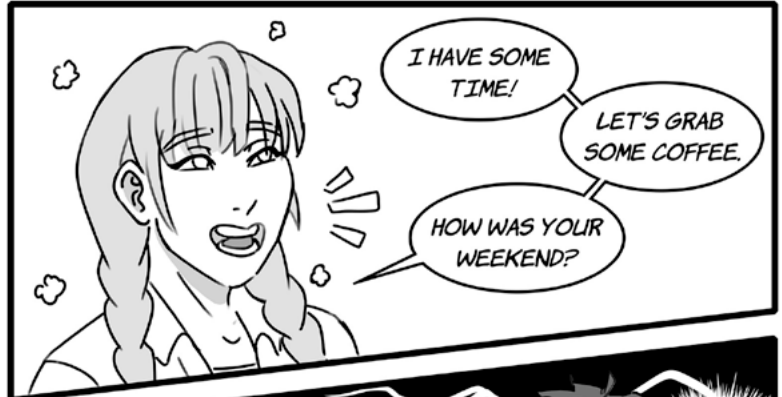
C'MERE TO ME



ARE YOU OKAY?



I SHOULD LET YOU GO



SCATTERED SHOWERS



OH, IT'S RAINING...



I DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD STILL BE POURING.



APPARENTLY IT'S GOING TO BE LASHING ALL DAY.



IT'S PELTING SO HARD, WE'RE GOING TO LOOK LIKE A PAIR OF DROWNED RATS.



IT SURE IS A GRAND SOFT DAY, ISN'T IT?

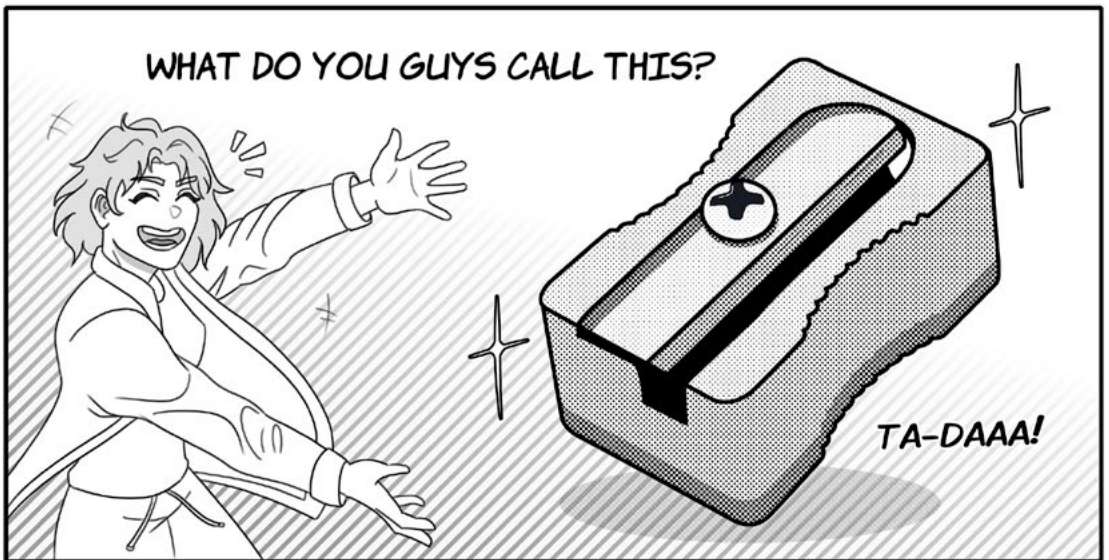
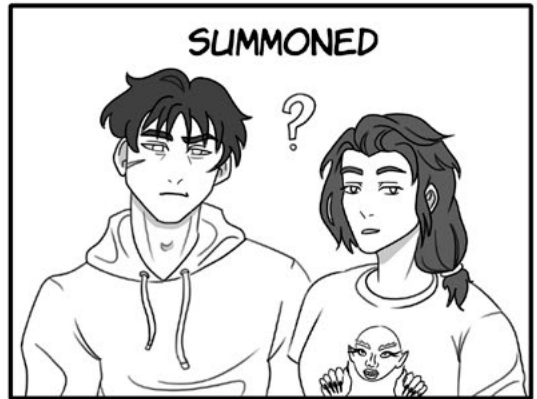
PFFT.

WHAT IS IT?



THERE'S JUST SO MANY WAYS TO SAY IT'S RAINING!

WHAT DO YOU CALL THIS?





Megan Brophy

[About Megan >](#)

What is your name?

Megan Brophy

What is your occupation?

I work as a Freelance Artist and Designer.

Describe yourself in 5 words.

Passionate, Enthusiastic, Creative, Intuitive, Idealist.

How would you define your art?

I really enjoy drawing characters who look like people you'd meet in real life. I love to capture different expressions and tell stories through art!

Who are your favourite artists?

Frida Kahlo. Kékéflipnote. James Gourney.

What are three things you cannot live without?

Flipnote Studio for the Nintendo DSI, family, tea (not revealing which brand to avoid a fight).

What is your secret talent?

I make a mean stir fry, quicker and tastier than any takeaway.

What is your motto in life?

"The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago.
The second best time is now."

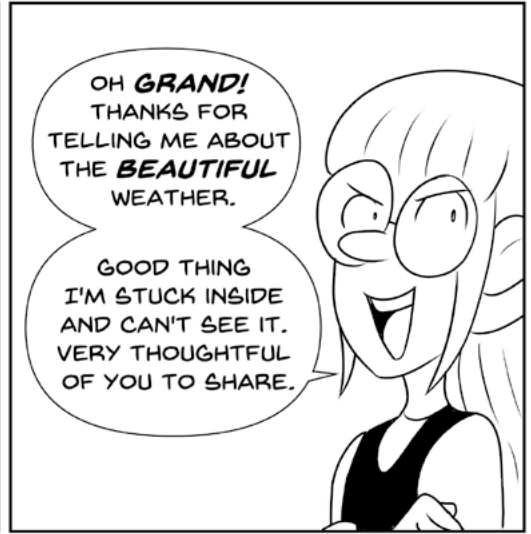
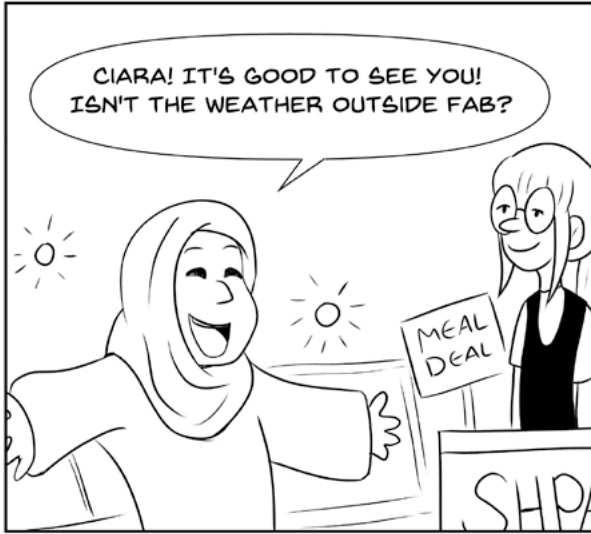
Which anecdote did you enjoy drawing the most and why?

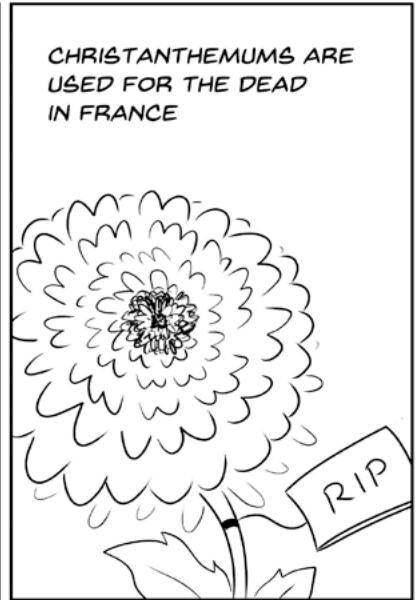
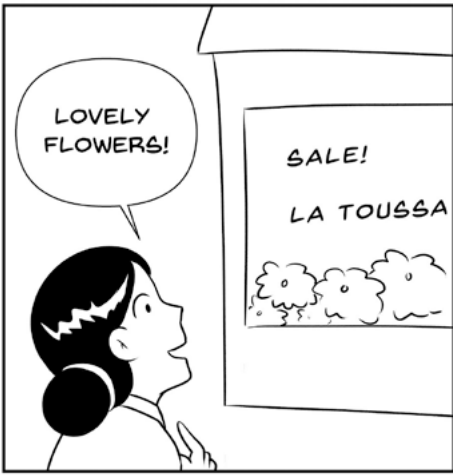
My favourite anecdote to draw was BATHROOM HAZARDS. I had a tonne of fun with the composition, and making the comparisons look dramatic. When I draw perspective in a cartoony style, I like to freehand all my lines. I think a lack of perfectly straight lines gives a playful look to an indoor environment.

Do you have a personal intercultural encounter to share?

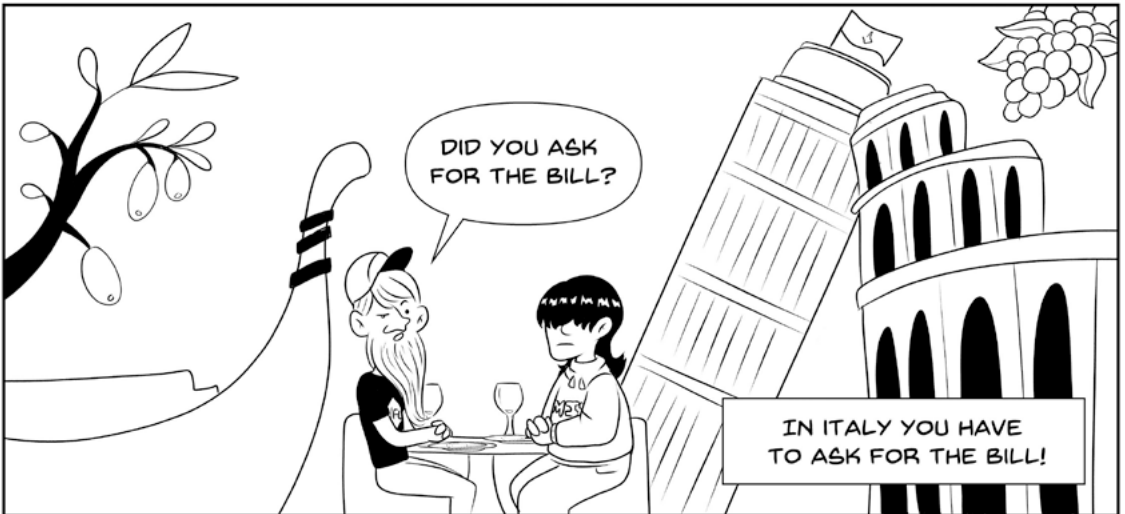
I lived in Slovenia for a month, and I was told I come off as very enthusiastic and friendly. My friends there would slag me for always nodding when I made eye contact with someone. I didn't realize this was an Irish thing! When we watched The Young Offenders together, everyone found it hilarious that their body language was the same as mine! I have never felt so validated by a movie before!

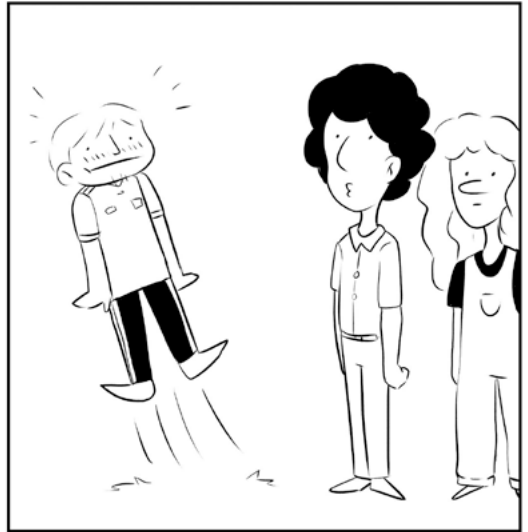
SLAGGING



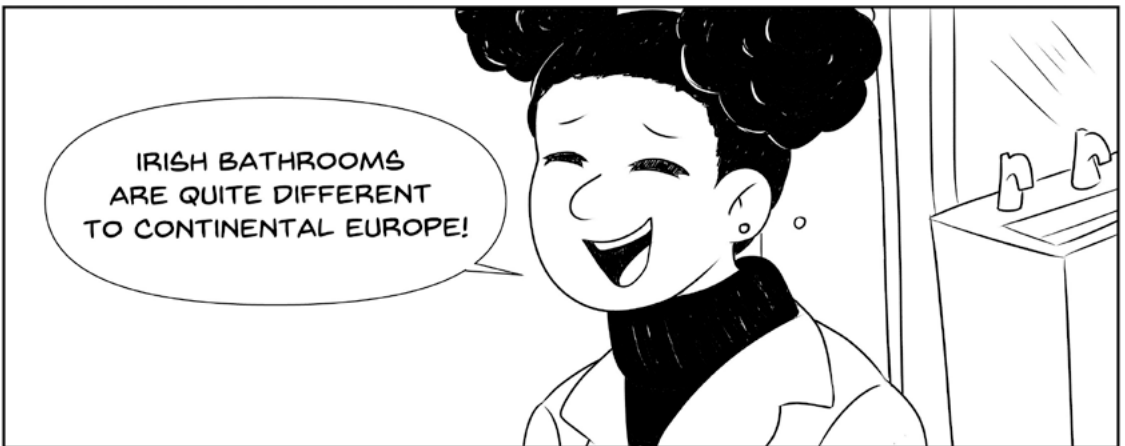
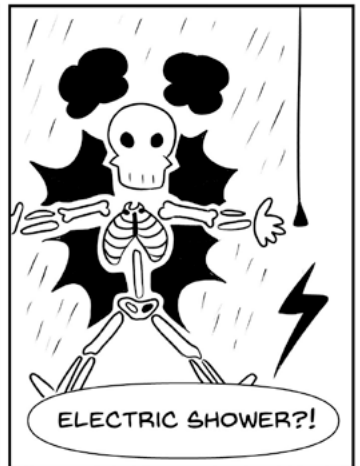
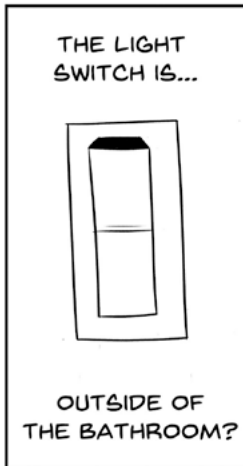
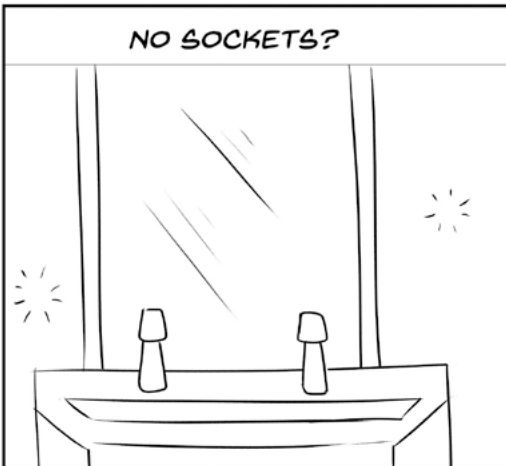
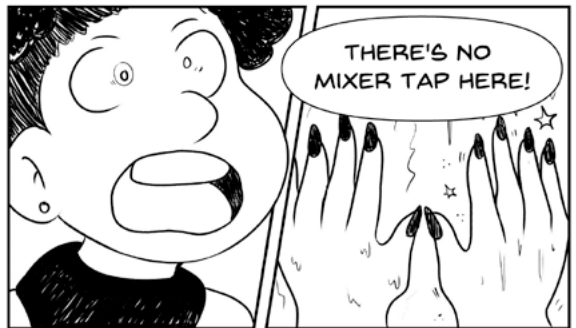


THE BILL

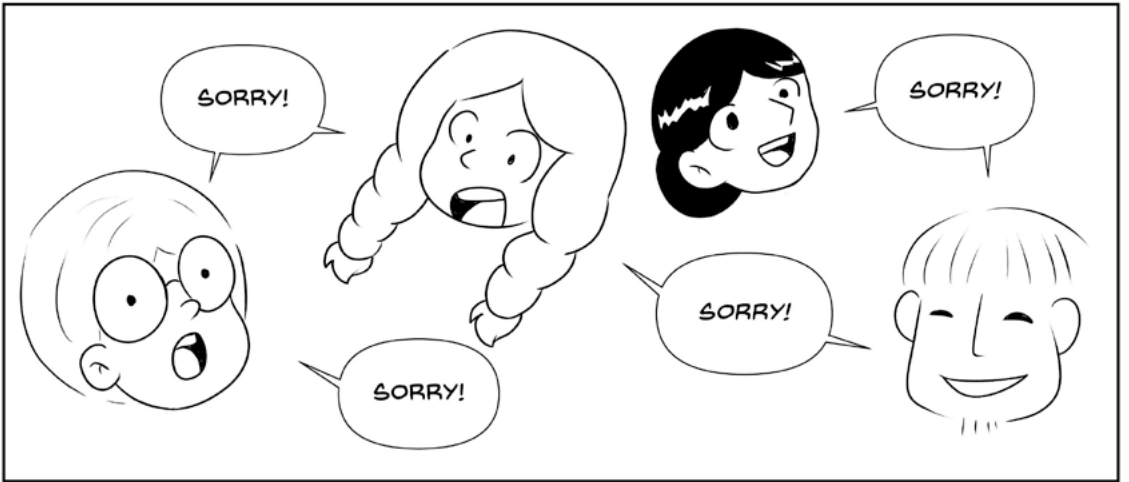
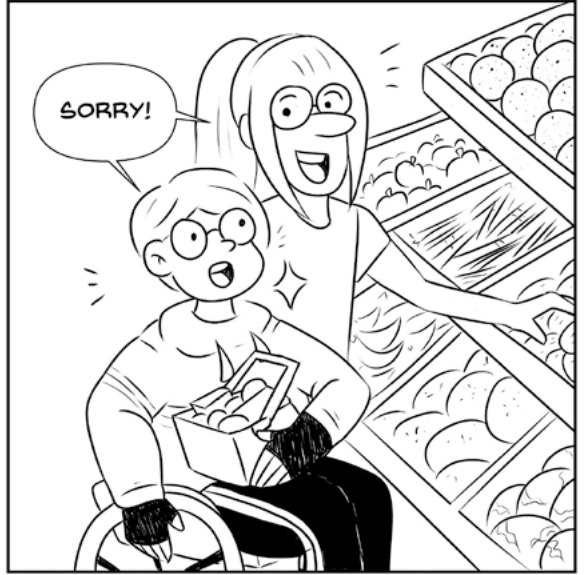
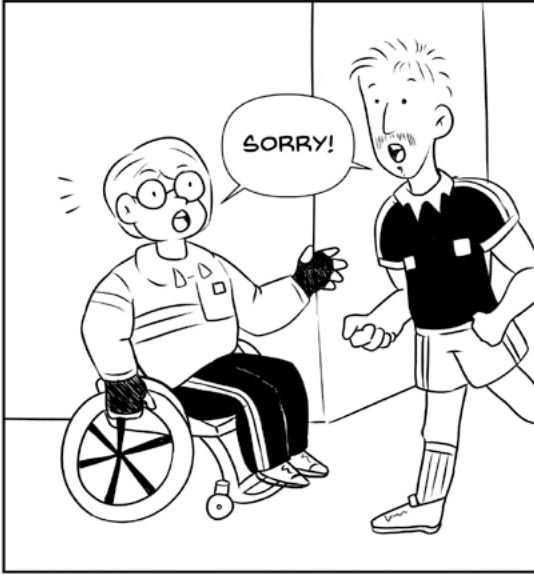




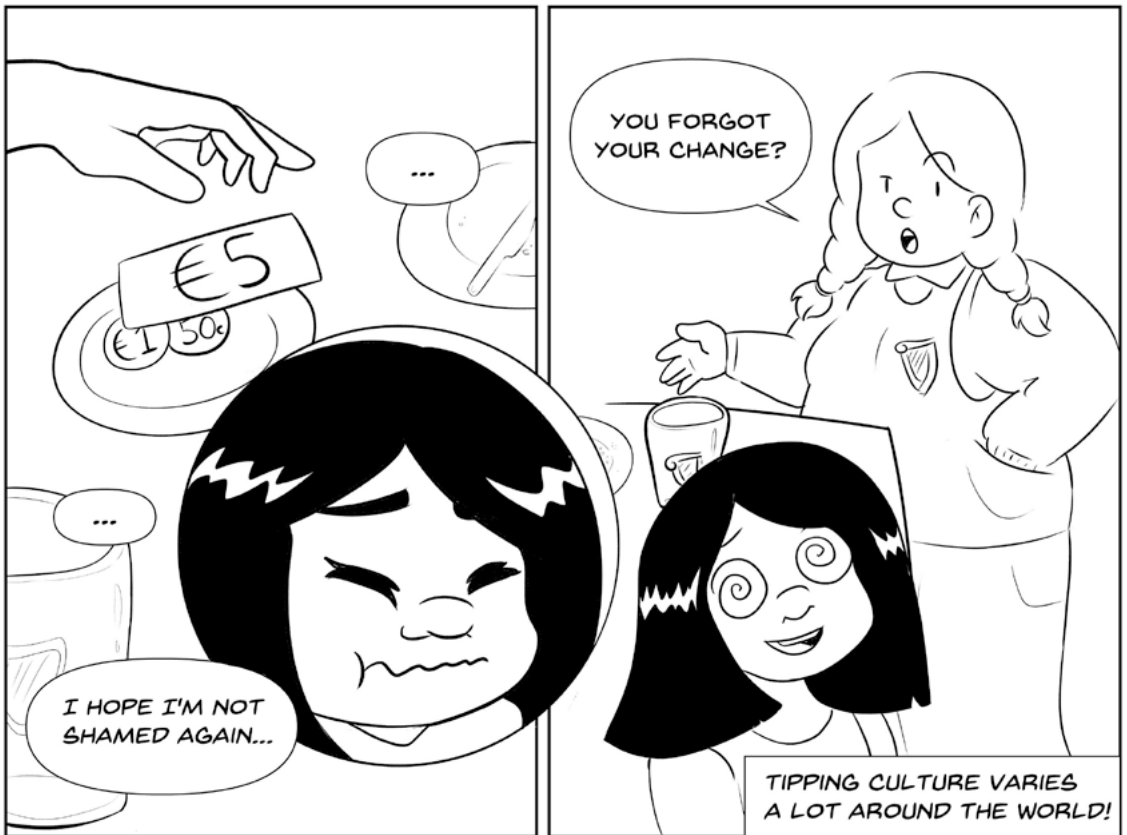
BATHROOM HAZARDS



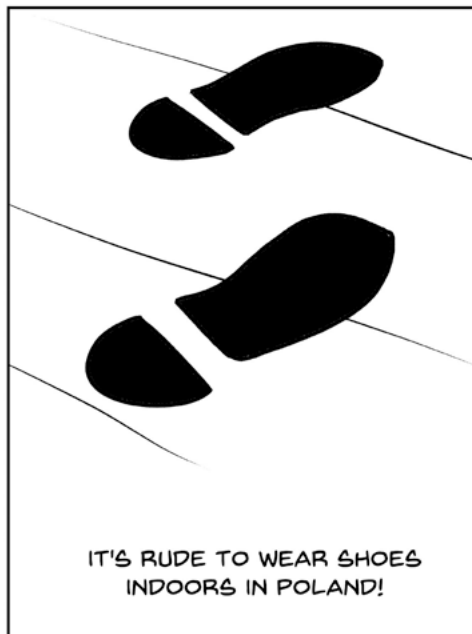
SORRY



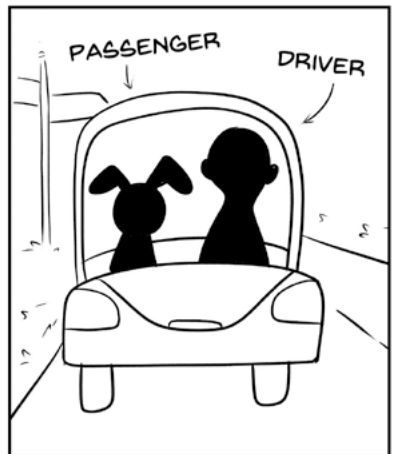
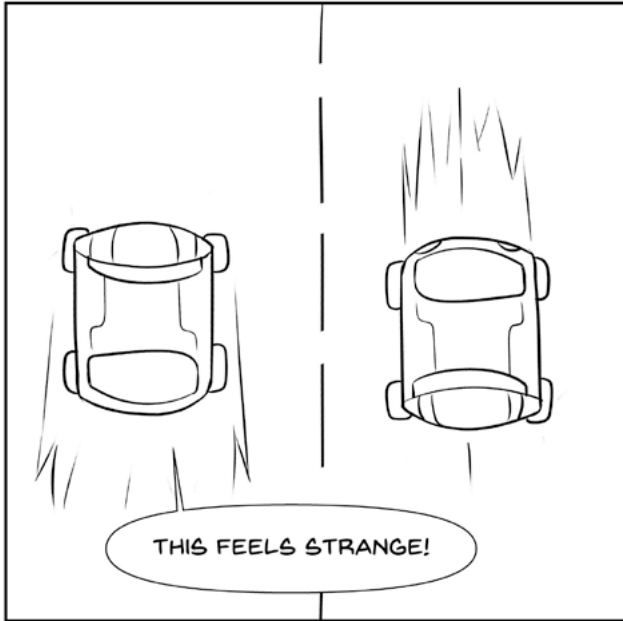
TO TIP OR NOT TO TIP?



SHOES OFF!



WRONG WAY

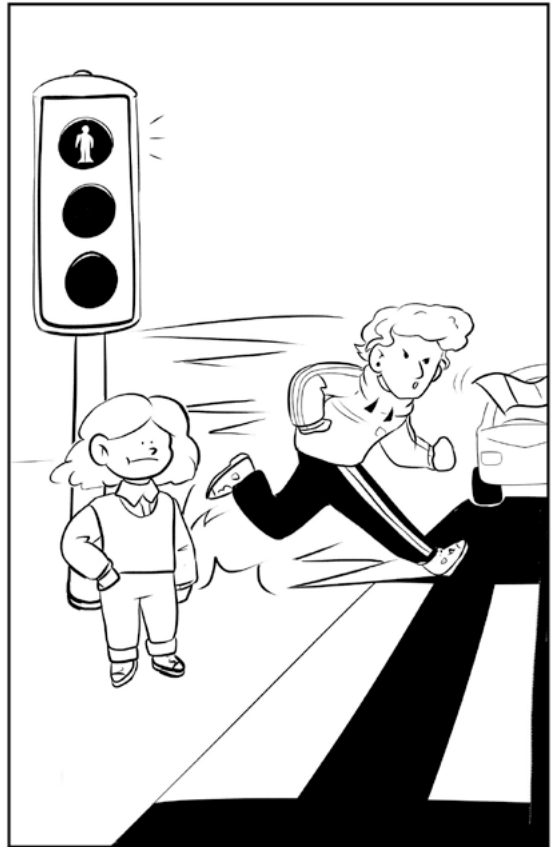
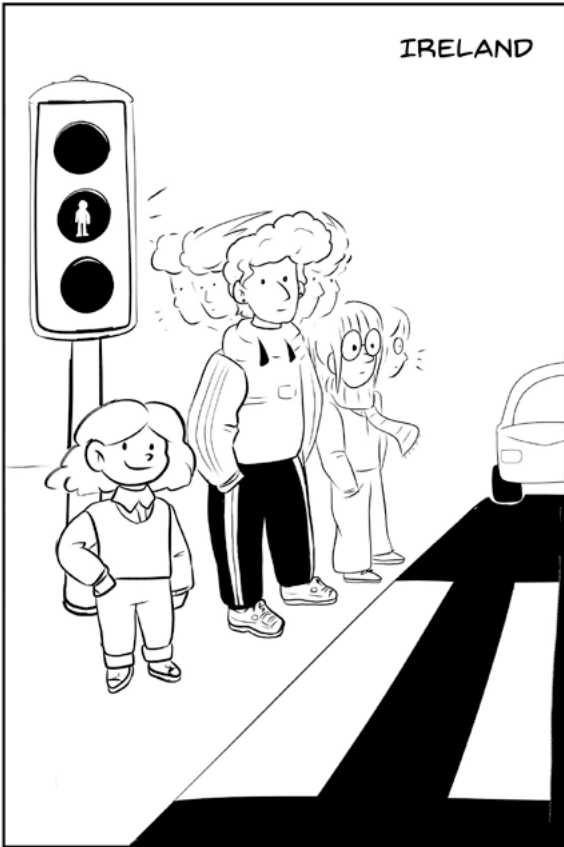


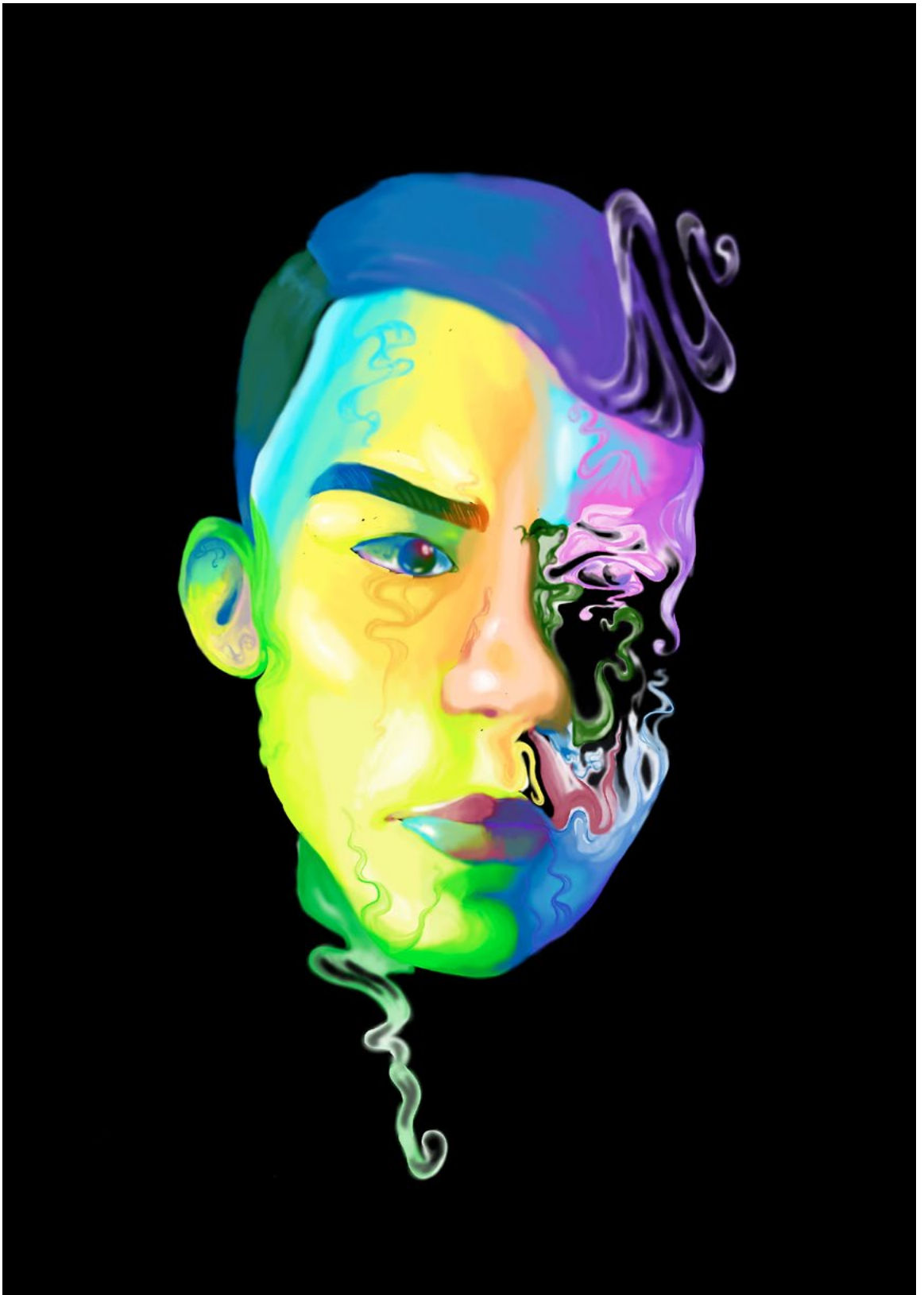
CHANGING IT

GERMANY



IRELAND





Thomas Cunningham

[About Thomas >](#)

What is your name?

Tommie Cunningham

What is your occupation?

I am studying to be a Graphics and Architectural Technology Teacher at second level, but I also teach music and do commissioned art in my spare time.

Describe yourself in 5 words.

Artistic, funny, caring, social and a menace :)

How would you define your art?

My art is ever changing and blossoms in my boredom of the mundane.

Who are your favourite artists?

Van Gogh. Monet. Michaelangelo. Katherina Rupit (kimnx). Iljin. Caravaggio. Theobanoth. Really my tastes are diverse and I love all art.

What are three things you cannot live without?

Barry's tea, green grapes and pizza.

What is your secret talent?

For some reason my spine bends back like the exorcist which makes me an absolute PRO at limbo.

What is your motto in life?

Everything that happens leads me to where I need to be.

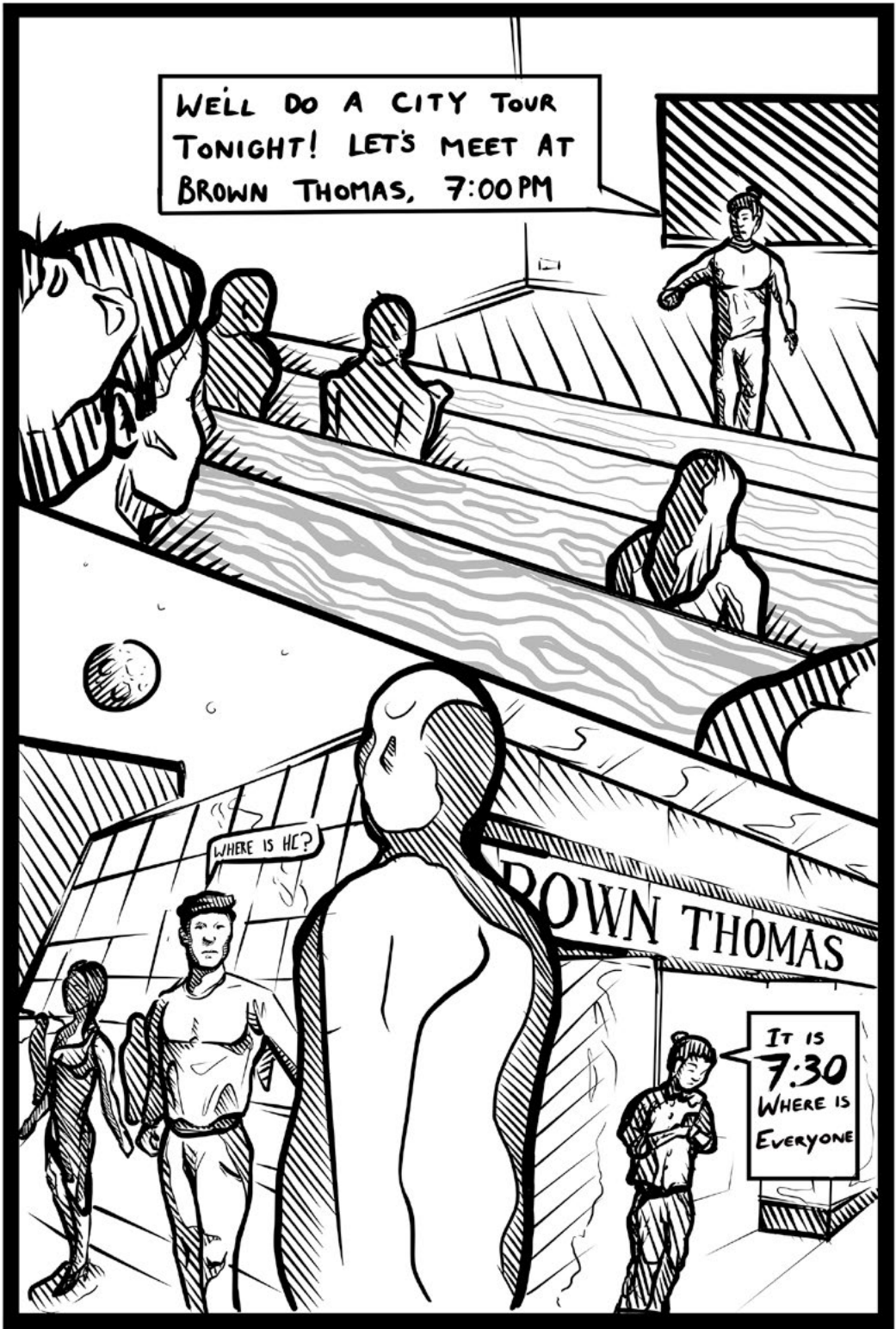
Which anecdote did you enjoy drawing the most and why?

I absolutely loved drawing the ENTER IF YOU DARE because it was so fun and let me use some of my graphics skills.

Do you have a personal intercultural encounter to share?

When I was in secondary school, me and my band got the chance to stay with families in France for a week for a festival. Only one person in the family could speak English so when he wasn't there there was a massive language barrier which we all overcame by gestures and using our shared words and playing games where we would try pronouncing the other language's words or what certain words meant. It was a great experience and living with the family helped improve both our understandings of other cultures and languages (except for Donegal, I'll never get my head around that language)!

BROWN THOMAS





THE SPIRIT OF KINDNESS



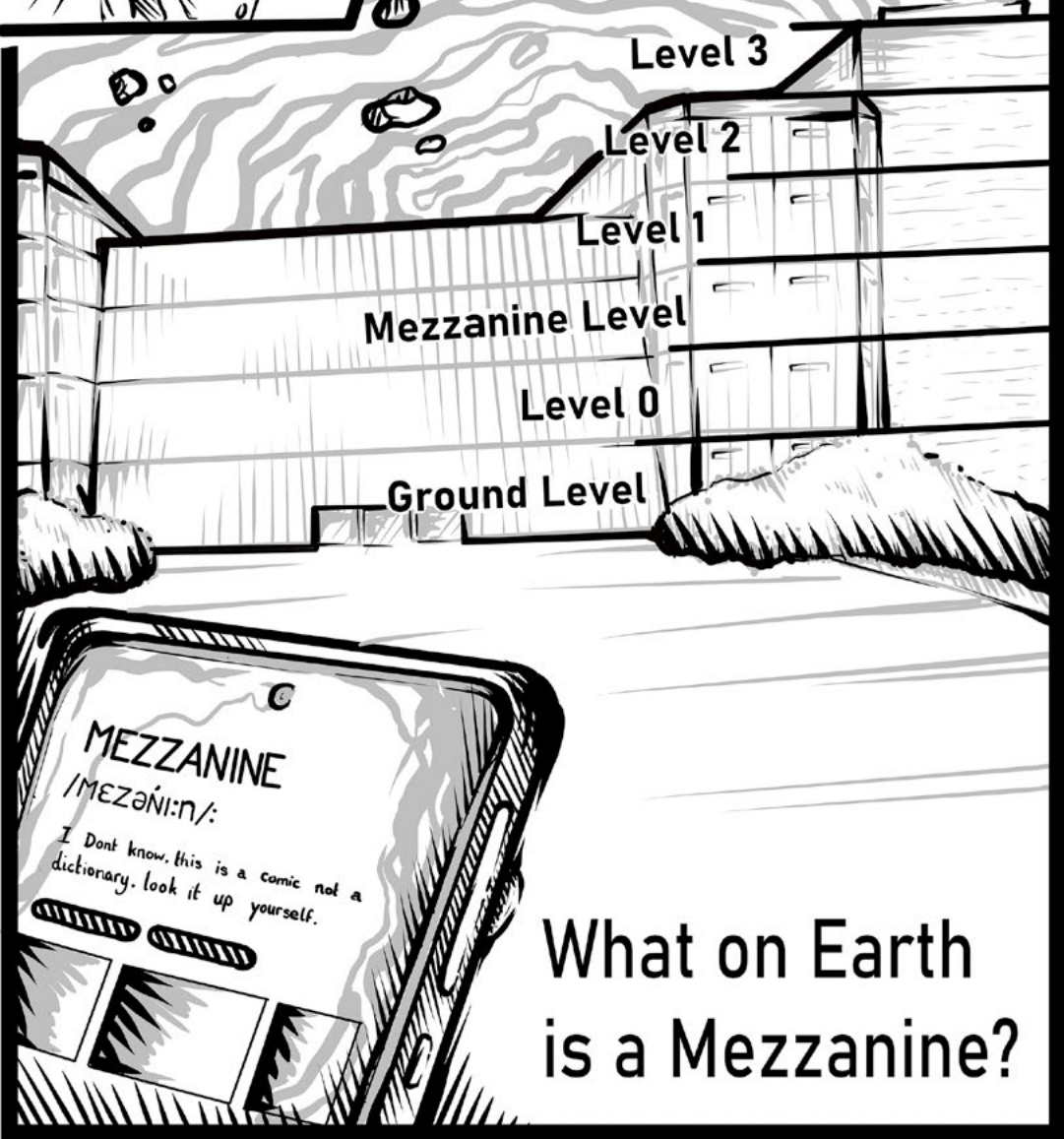
ENTER IF YOU DARE



MAIN BUILDING



This Building is so confusing



WHERE IS EVERYONE?

STUDENT VILLAGES DURING THE WEEK



STUDENT VILLAGES AT THE WEEKEND

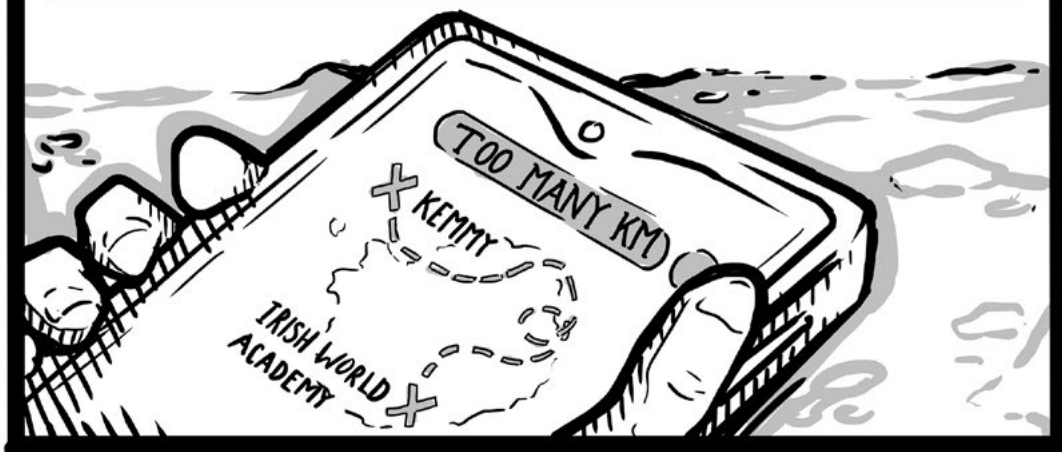


GET YOUR STEPS IN

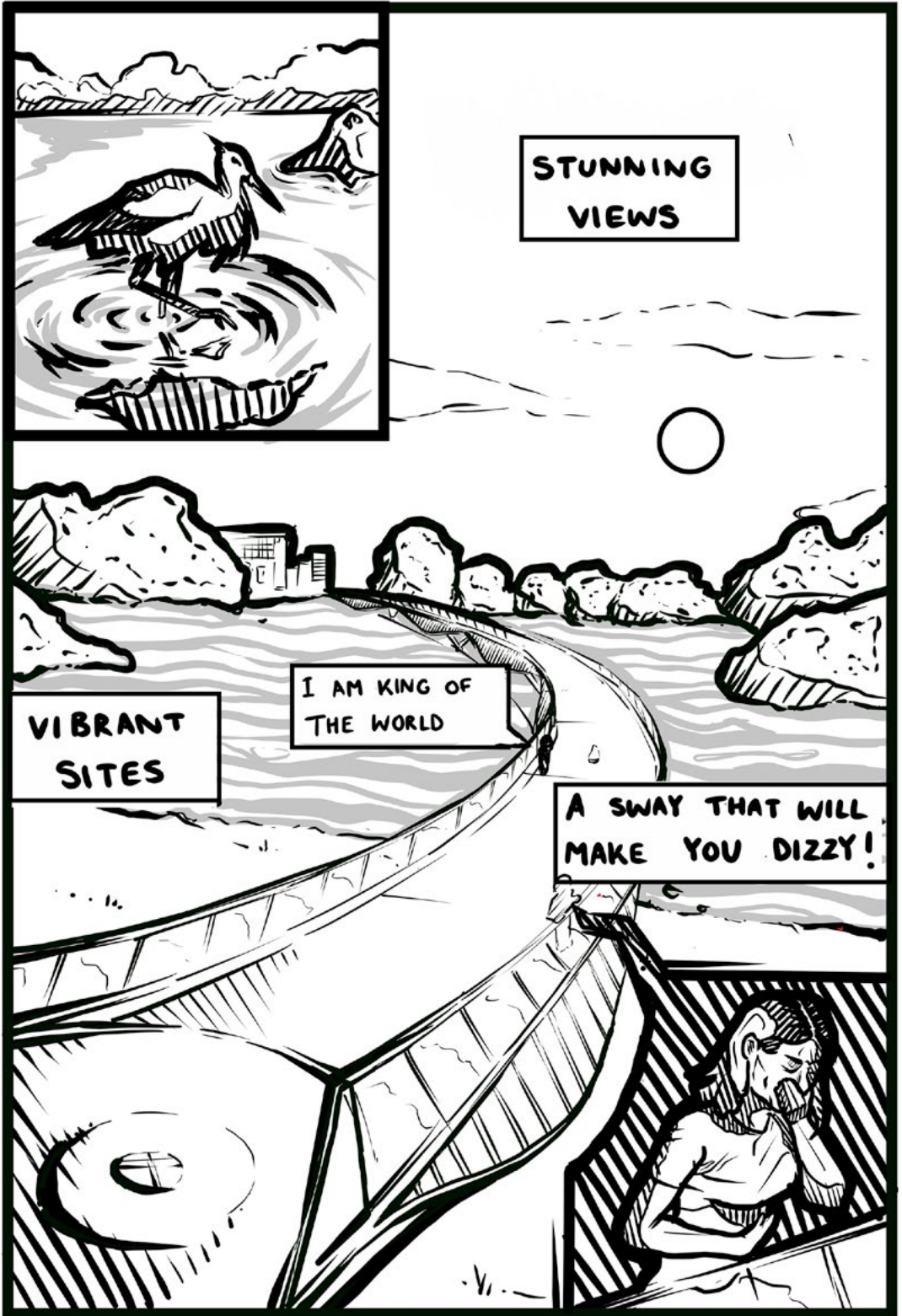


WERE YOU IN THE GYM DOING RICHIE'S AEROBIC CLASS?

NO! I WAS JUST IN KEMMY AND I HAD TO RUN TO MAKE IT ON TIME!



THE LIVING BRIDGE



A DAY AT THE RACES



CHOOSE YOUR STYLE

CHOOSE YOUR STYLE™

UL EDITION



THE
JACKET

THE
SLAY

THE
GAA FAN

THE
ONE WHO DIDN'T
GET THE MEMO
ABOUT CASUAL
WEAR





Julie Alquier

[About Julie >](#)

What is your name?

My name is Julie Alquier.

What is your occupation?

I'm a freelance artist.

Describe yourself in 5 words.

I am passionate, dreamer, discreet, ambitious and perfectionist!

How would you define your art?

I would define my art as a ray of sunshine!

Who are your favourite artists?

My favorite artists are Katsura Hoshino (Author of D.Gray-Man), s0s2 (Creator of The Little Trashmaid) and Ilya Kuvshinov for her art style!

What are three things you cannot live without?

I can't live without my iPad, Doughnuts and Brown Thomas for sure.

What is your secret talent?

I can make my stomach talk.

What is your motto in life?

Sunshine 4ever!

Which anecdote did you enjoy drawing the most and why?

I particularly enjoyed drawing the SACRED STATUE anecdote as this is exactly what happened to my friend! In contrast, I think that touching Brown Thomas has brought me luck in finding work at UL as an illustrator... Thank you Brown Thomas!

Do you have a personal intercultural encounter to share?

When I arrived in Ireland I was very surprised by the pedestrian crossings. You really don't have much time to cross and with the "beep beep" speeding up I always feel like it's a matter of life and death!

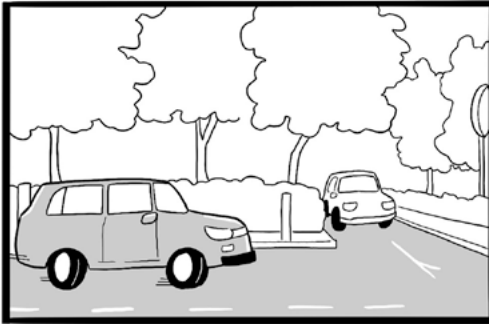
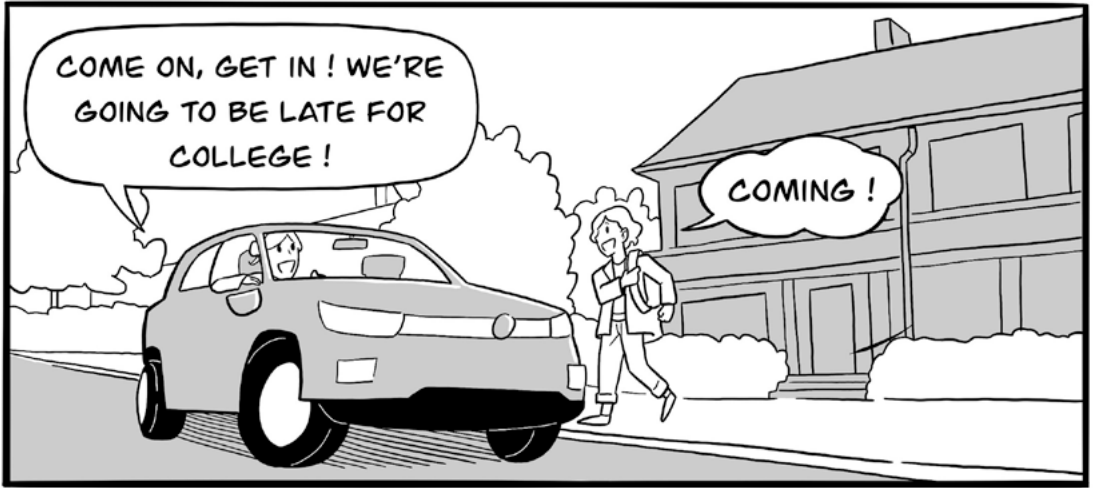
YES OR NO



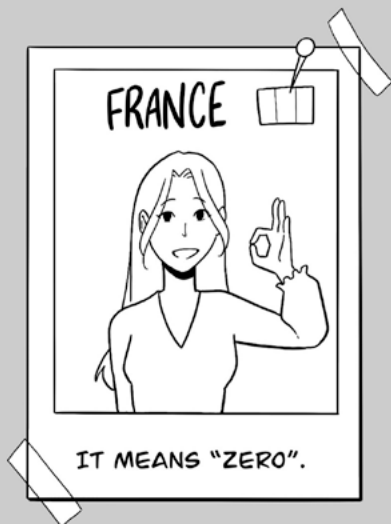
DID YOU KNOW THAT IN ALBANIA AND BULGARIA NODDING YOUR HEAD MEANS « NO » AND SHAKING YOUR HEAD MEANS « YES »? HOW IS IT IN YOUR CULTURE ?



YIELD

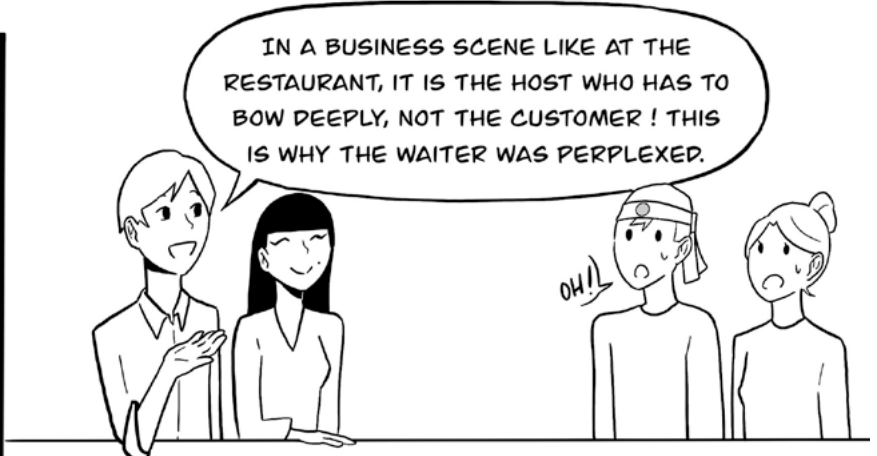


AROUND ↗ THE WORLD!

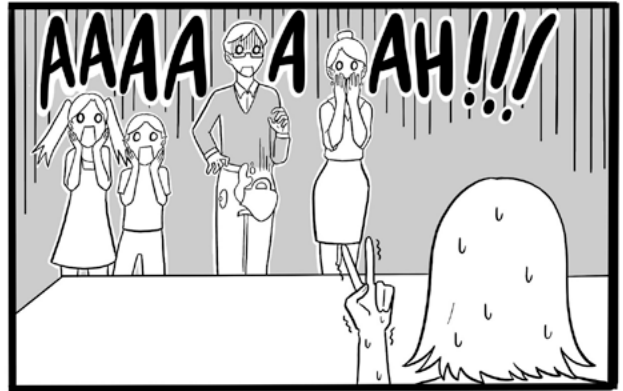


IN RECENT YEARS, THE SIGN HAS BEEN USED BY ALT-RIGHT SUPPORTERS TO SYMBOLISE WHITE SUPREMACY.

KON'NICHIIWA



TWO SUGARS

A man in a suit and glasses is speaking. He is holding up two fingers. To his left is a quiver of arrows. To his right is a hand making the two-finger gesture. A large speech bubble contains the following text:

THE TWO FINGERS IS AN INSULT. IT MEANS F*** YOU! IT ORIGINATES FROM THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR. THE FRENCH WOULD CUT OFF THE TWO FINGERS OF BRITISH ARCHERS SO THAT THEY COULDN'T DRAW THEIR BOW-STRING. IN RESPONSE, THE ENGLISH TAUNTED THEIR FOES BY HOLDING UP THEIR FINGERS.

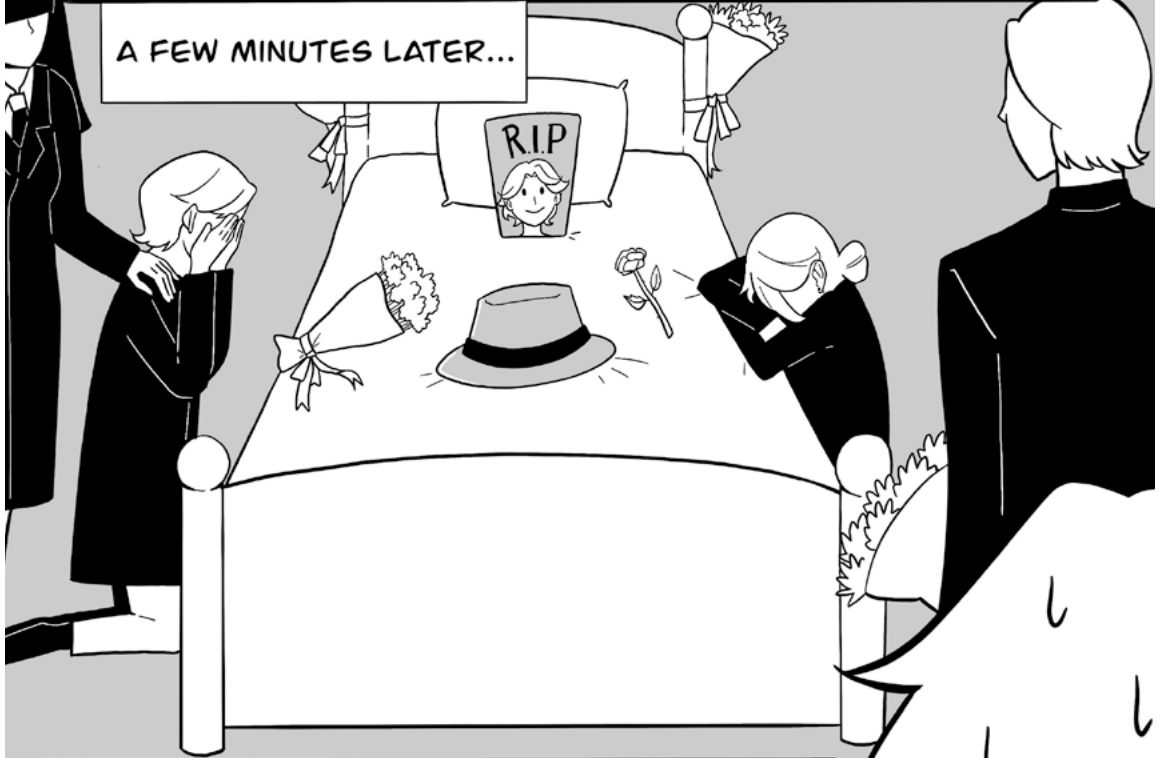
IF YOU WANT TO SAY 'TWO' YOU NEED TO FORM A V SIGN WITH THE PALM AWAY FROM YOU. IF YOU SEE YOUR OWN NAILS, YOU ARE IN THE CLEAR. THIS GESTURE CAN ALSO MEAN 'VICTORY' OR 'PEACE'.

A large black peace symbol is located at the bottom right of the text area.

HAT AND MISFORTUNE

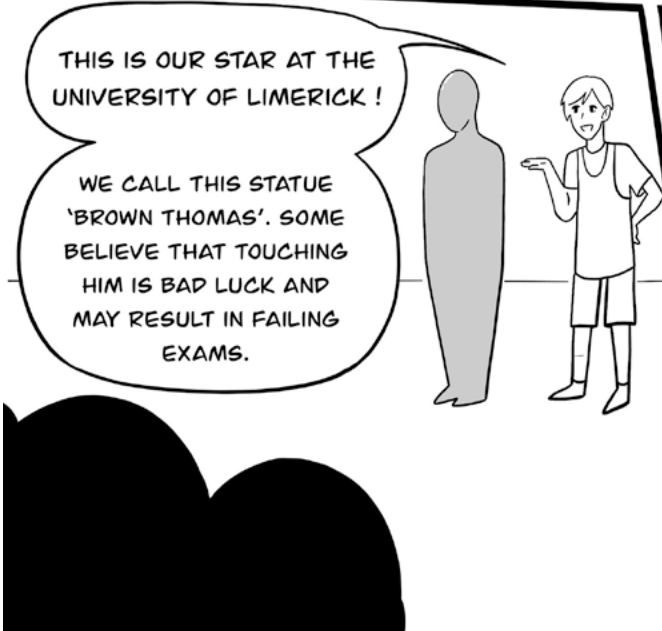
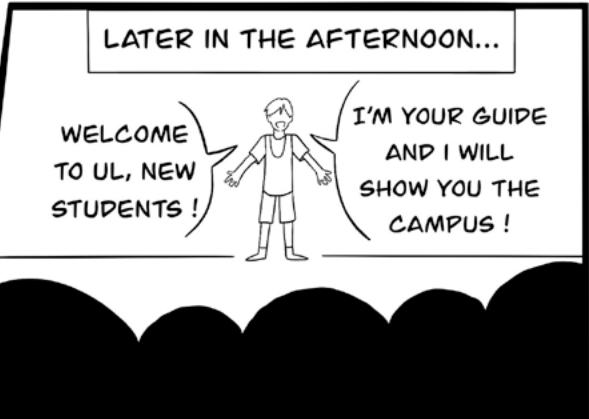


A FEW MINUTES LATER...

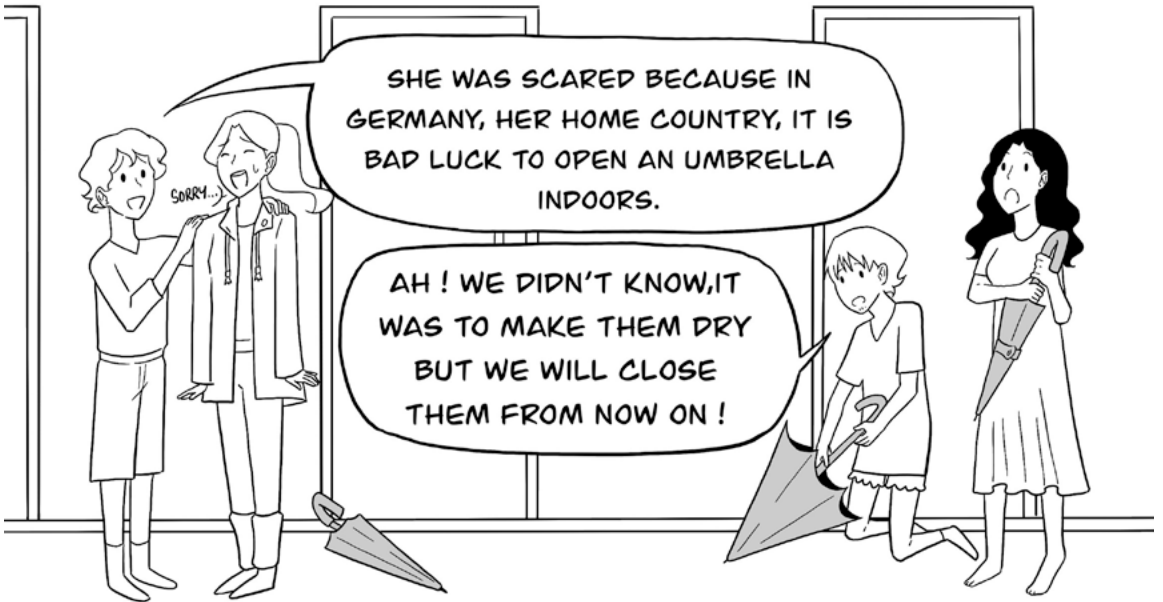
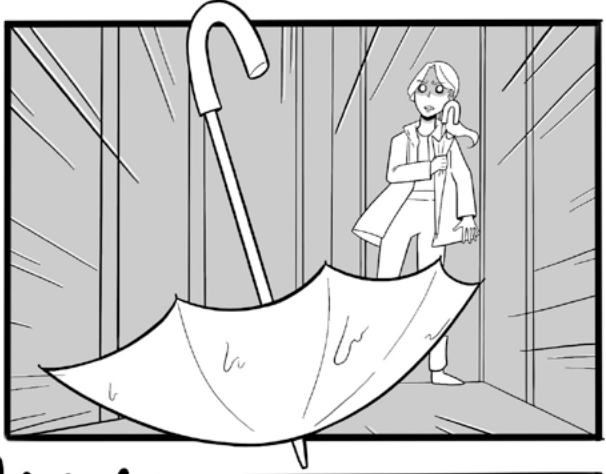


NEVER PUT A HAT ON A BED ! ITALIANS WILL NEVER PLACE THEIR HAT ON A BED FOR FEAR OF MISFORTUNE. THIS ACTION IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LAST RITES PERFORMED BY PRIESTS VISITING SOMEONE ON THEIR DEATH BED.

SACRED STATUE

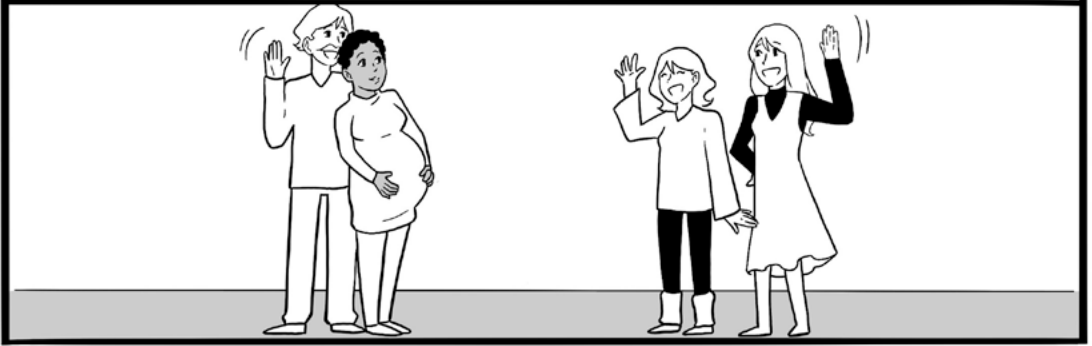


BAD LUCK



LIFE AND DEATH

WHEN I WAS PREGNANT, MY HUSBAND AND I WENT TO IRELAND TO VISIT MY SISTERS-IN-LAW.



AFTER TAKING A WALK ALONG THE COAST, THEY WANTED TO PASS BY THE CEMETERY TO SEE THE GRAVE OF MY PARENTS-IN-LAW.



SUDDENLY THEY ALL WHISPERED TO ME TO GO WAIT IN THE PUB ACROSS THE STREET



I WAS A BIT CONFUSED AND DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY THEY DIDN'T WANT TO BRING ME ALONG



MY BOYFRIEND THEN TOLD ME THAT THEY DIDN'T WANT ME TO COME BECAUSE YOU SHOULDN'T 'MIX' NEW LIFE WITH THE DEAD.



BODY TALK



IF YOU SCRATCH YOUR LEFT EYEBROW,
IT MEANS SOME PEOPLE ARE TALKING
BEHIND YOUR BACK



IF YOUR RIGHT HAND IS TICKLING, YOU
WILL RECEIVE MONEY, BUT IF IT'S YOUR
LEFT HAND, YOU SHOULD GIVE MONEY.



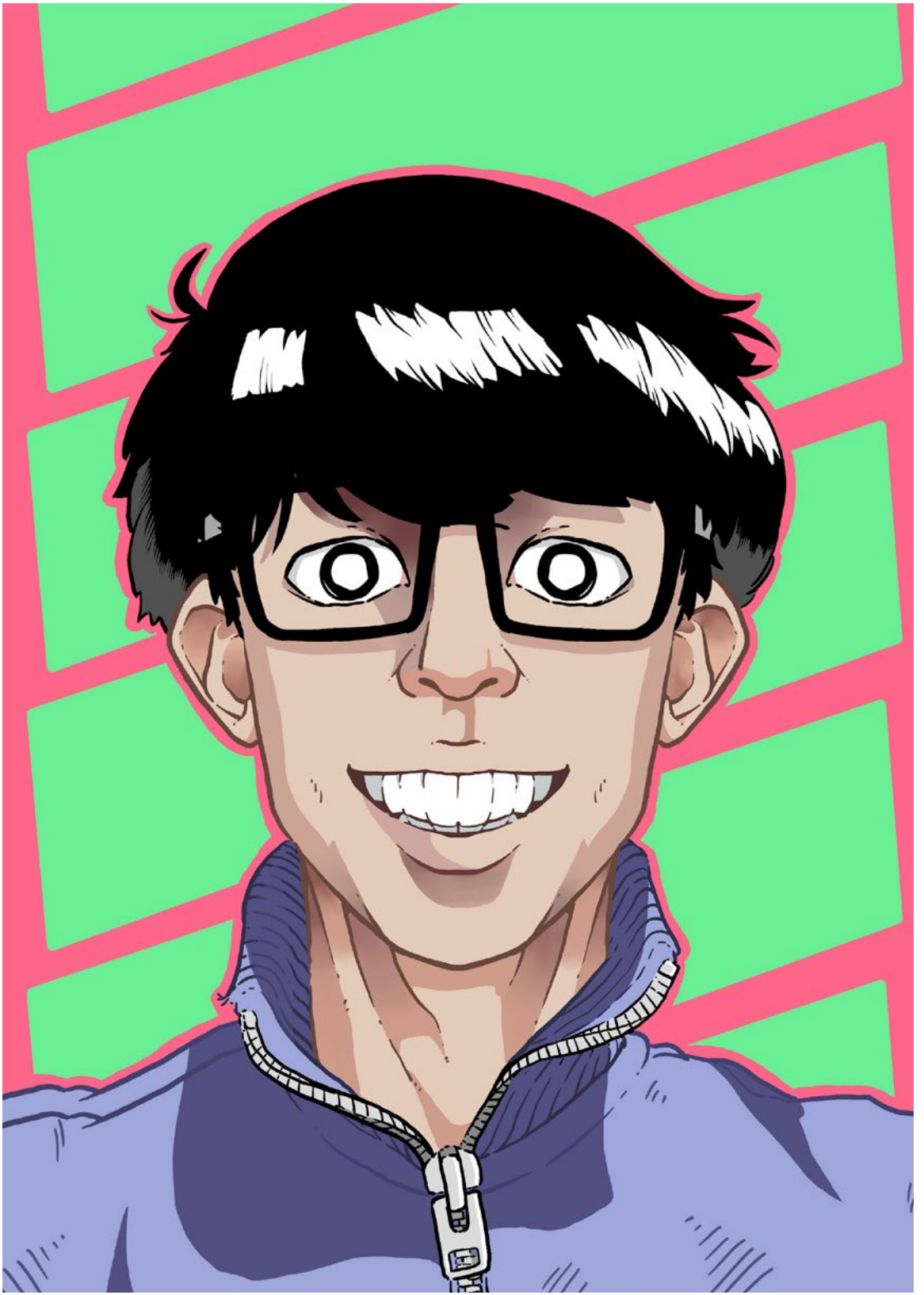
IF YOU FIND ONE OF YOUR LASHES ON
YOUR FACE, THAT MEANS YOU WILL
RECEIVE VISITORS AT YOUR HOUSE



IF YOUR EYES KEEP TWITCHING,
THAT MEANS YOU WILL TRAVEL
VERY SOON



IF YOU WALK BAREFOOT,
YOUR FEET WILL GET
BIGGER



Edison Cai

[About Edison >](#)

What is your name?

My name is Edison Cai, but many people call me Eddie. Nice to meet you!

What is your occupation?

I am a third year Computer Systems student.

Describe yourself in 5 words.

Just your normal, average guy.

How would you define your art?

I'd like to think that my art is dynamic. Whether it be through facial expressions or action lines, I try to add movement and emotion to my art.

Who are your favourite artists?

Since I'm a big fan of manga, it's natural that many of my favourite artists are manga authors! Some of my top artists would be Eiichiro Oda with his organic brushstrokes, Nobuyuki Fukumoto with his crazy visual metaphors, Kentaro Miura with his insane amount of detail, Hirohiko Araki with his unique aesthetics and posing, etc. Other than manga artists, I'm also a fan of Salvador Dali's works because of their bizarre nature. I'm not exactly sure why, but "The Disintegration of the Persistence of Memory" speaks to me. Maybe it's because I'm getting slight Lovecraftian horror vibes from it?

What are three things you cannot live without?

A purpose, genuine human connections, and my brain. I'm pretty sure I would die if I don't have my brain.

What is your secret talent?

Learning! I particularly enjoy studying foreign languages and learning about different cultures.

What is your motto in life?

Many small things make a big thing!

Which anecdote did you enjoy drawing the most and why?

For me, I enjoyed drawing THE NUNS the most because I got the chance to draw a variety of things such as people and buildings. I had to draw many people to portray a bustling school setting, which gave me the opportunity to stretch my creative muscles and introduce diversity by making every character unique with different backgrounds. I was also able to add extra details here and there. Hopefully, you'll enjoy discovering these details as much as I did when I created them!

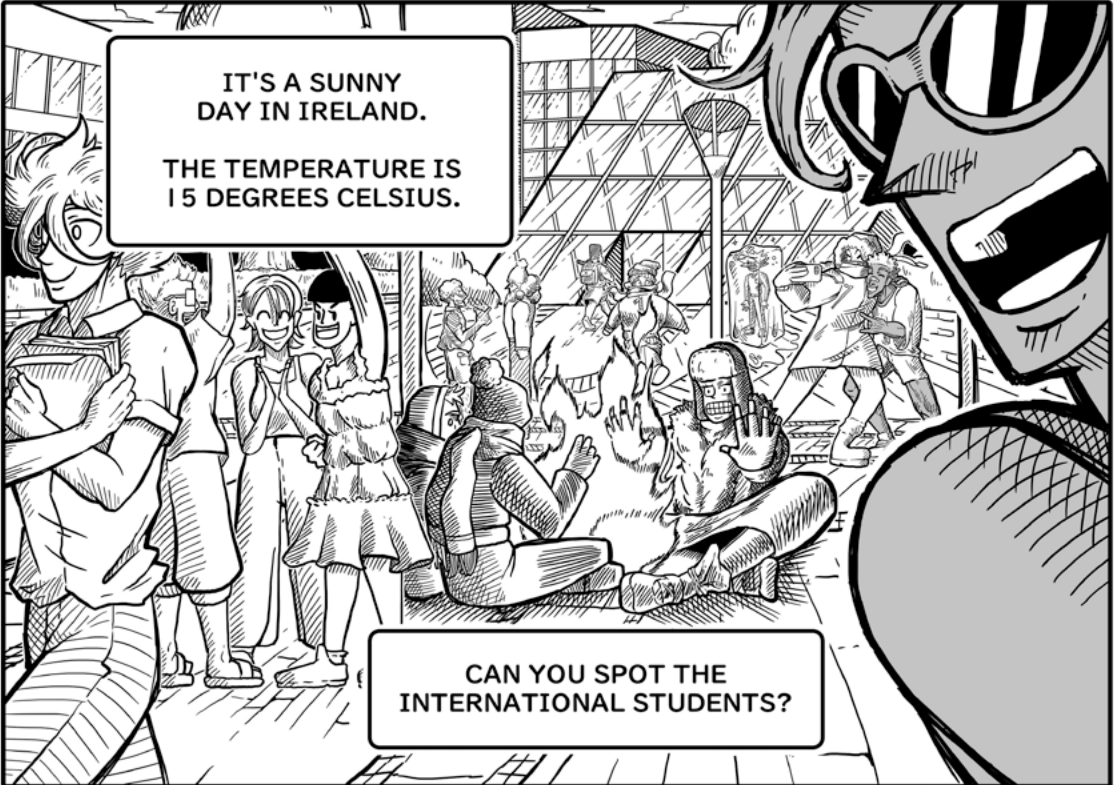
Do you have a personal intercultural encounter to share?

Since my parents were Chinese immigrants, I don't look like your typical Irish person. However, since I was born and raised in Ireland, I have inevitably picked up some Irish mannerisms along the way. I always find Irish people's reactions amusing when I hit them with something like "Wellll, what's the shtory?" or "How she cuttin'?" for the first time. Irish people are already pretty friendly, but I found that after saying phrases like these, they'll almost treat you as family or a friend of old. It's pretty cool!

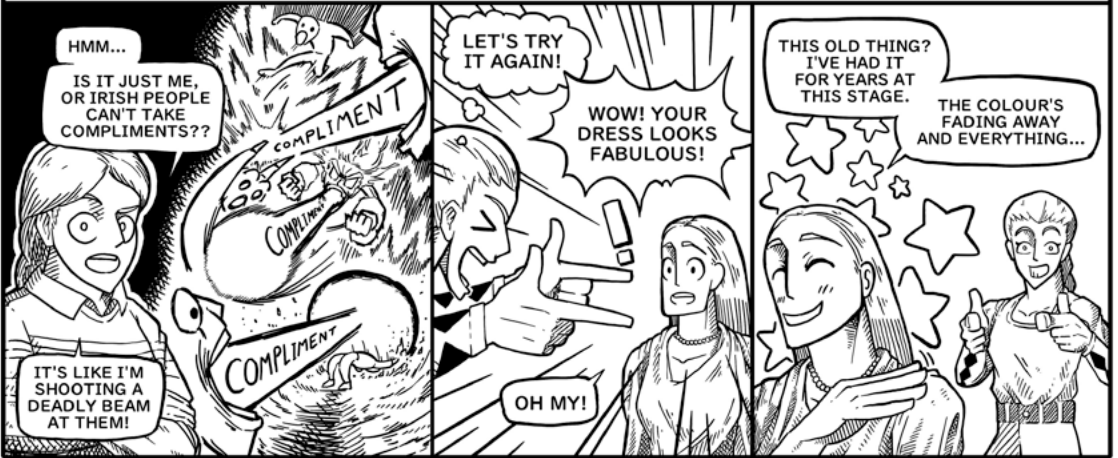
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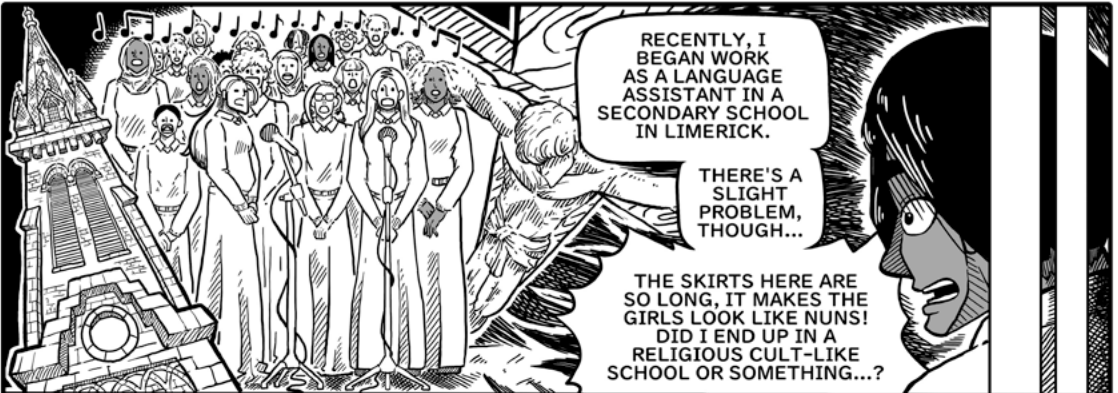
TOLERANCE TO COLD



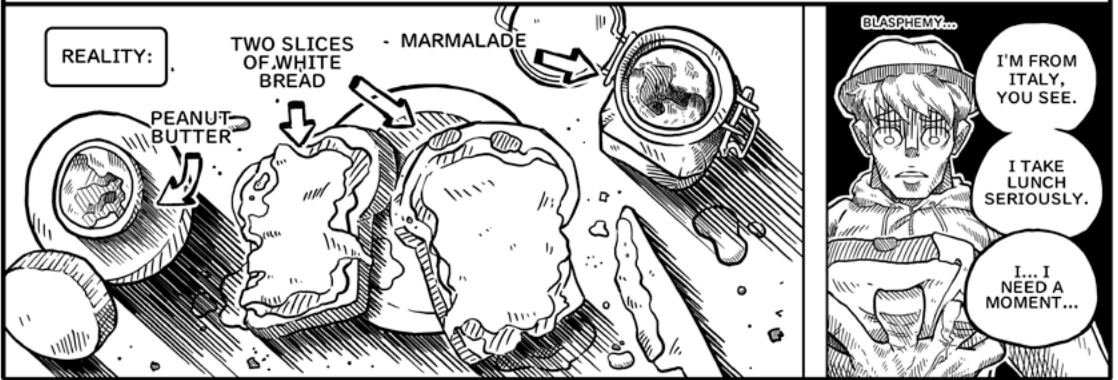
PENNEYS



THE NUNS



CULINARY BLASPHEMY



SETTLE DOWN



BANANA CRISP SANDWICH

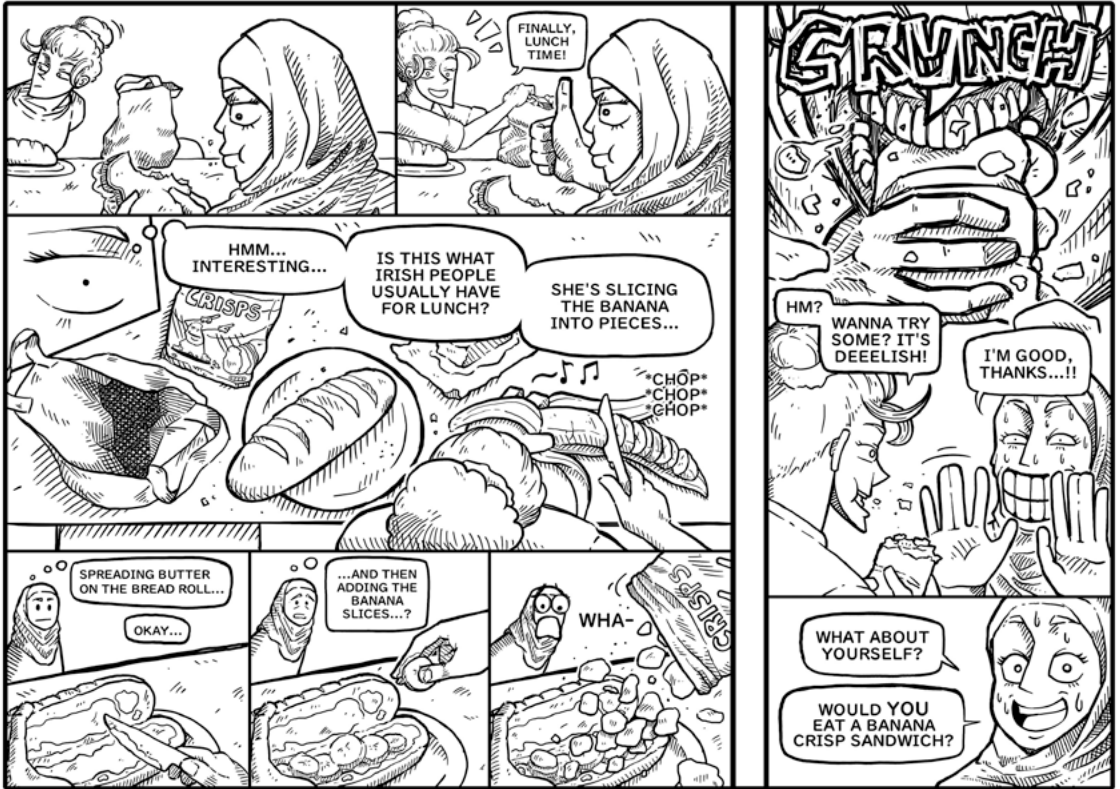
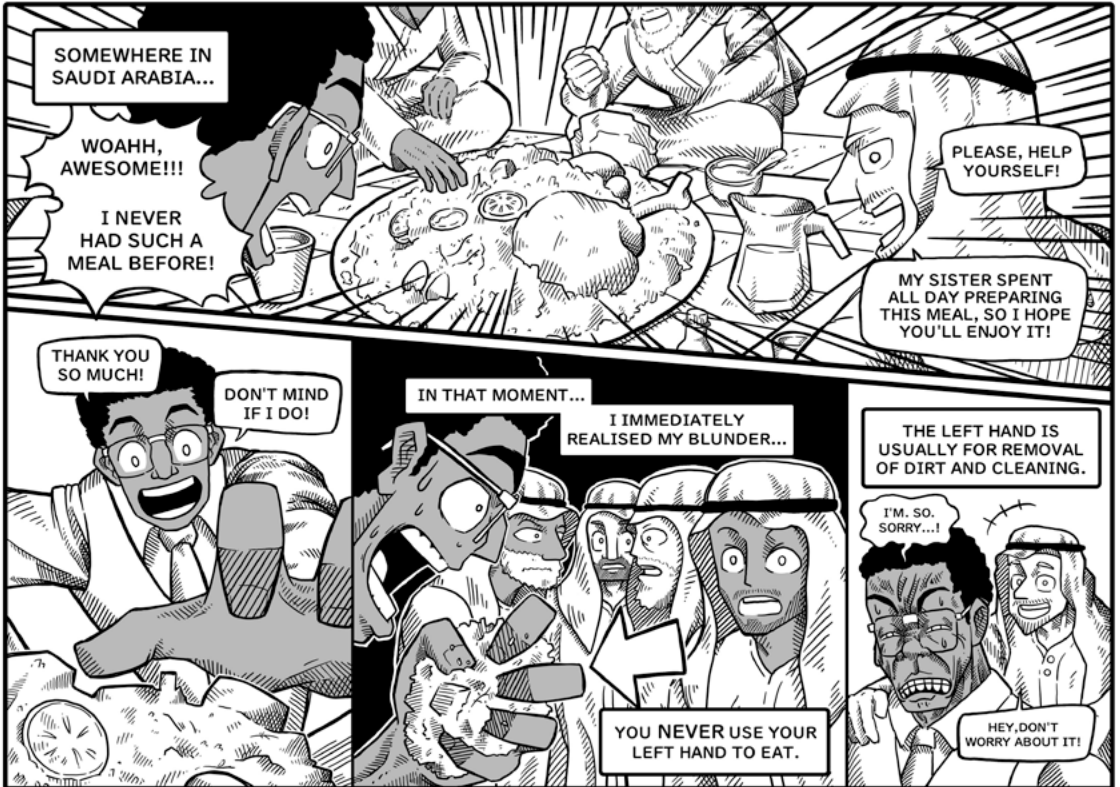


TABLE MANNERS



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