Family Portraits

A Collection of Stories about Queer People in New Zealand

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was sought and granted by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee.

Ethics approval number 11/193

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Abstract

Family Portraits is a graphic novel that explores a diverse range of queer stories in Aotearoa. I move beyond traditional coming out narratives and explore how age, history, gender, and ethnicity shape our experiences of ourselves.

The varying protagonists in each vignette illustrate the diversity of the queer community, and the diverse experiences that we have. The novel attempts to peel back the concept of being 'queer' and to examine individuals' investments and overlaps with the 'queer community' and other communities they belong to.

Each vignette is told using different graphic storytelling devices, comic styles, and genres. The intention is to provoke a response from the reader and to explore how graphic storytelling devices can be used to add to the story itself.

The novel includes my own story as a queer-identified transman. In using my own voice as a narrator I aim to take readers on a journey that interweaves the story of me, a queer transman who was(n't) a lesbian, with short stories of queer people I have interviewed. I examine the burden of creating queer media, and how the stories of others shape and affirm my own (whether through connections or differences).

Exegesis

Introduction

My portfolio presents a graphic novel that explores a range of queer[1] stories in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The novel interweaves my own story as a queer-identified transman[2], with vignettes of other queer individuals in New Zealand. Using my own voice as a narrator I aim to take readers on a journey that intertwines the story of me, a queer transman who was(n't) a lesbian, with short stories of queer people I have interviewed.

I move beyond traditional coming out narratives and explore how age, history, gender, and ethnicity shape our experiences of ourselves, and how we live in the world. I examine the burden of creating queer media, and how the stories of others shape and affirm my own, (whether through connections or differences).

The varying protagonists in each vignette illustrate the diversity of the queer community, and the diverse experiences that we have. The meta-narrative is structured in a way that aims to resist a concrete and definitive expression of the queer community. Instead, the novel attempts to peel back the concept of being 'queer' and to examine individuals' investments and overlaps with the 'queer community' and other communities they belong to.

Each vignette is told using different graphic storytelling devices, comic styles, and genres. The intention is to provoke a response from the reader and to explore how graphic storytelling devices can be used to add to the story itself.

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[1] Queer, in this context, is an umbrella term used to describe non-straight sexualities and gender/sex diversities. It is inclusive of, but not limited to, gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, takataapui, fa'afafine, intersex, and asexual.

[2] In this context I use the term transman to describe myself as a person who was assigned female at birth, but identifies and lives as a male.

Methodology

The kaupapa of my project was to create a graphic novel with a number of short stories to reflect the diversity of the queer community. In order to do this I interviewed six participants and used the material gathered from those interviews to construct comic narratives.

Participants

My qualitative/ethnographic approach consisted of semi-formal interviews with six participants between March and October 2011.

Recruitment

The recruitment process was oriented by both convenience and purpose. A convenience/opportunistic recruitment method involves participants who are readily available, and who have lived the experience the research investigates. In this the selection criteria for those interviewed was as follows:

- Living in New Zealand
- Queer Identified (self identification)
- Willing and available to undertake an interview
- Connect with the diverse range of stories that I wish to tell

Through purposeful recruitment I aimed to address a greater diversity of participants. My project calls for a diverse range of stories of queer-identified New Zealanders; across age ranges, ethnicities, religions and identities.

I used a snowball technique to find partcipants. After each interview I asked participants to recommend other people who might be available. In keeping with my long-standing involvement with queer communities, I attended various groups and events to connect with possible participants. The participants chosen reflect a range of identities and stories.

Selection

Participants who met the research criteria were provided with an information sheet about the project and given time to consider whether to take part in the voluntary interview.

Interview Process

Interviews were tape recorded, unless requested otherwise, and in one case the interview was conducted via email. In cases where interviews were not recorded I took extensive written notes. Parts of the interviews were transcribed and used to construct short comic stories. Events or themes were extended from the interviews to create a more fictional narrative.

The interviews involved an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning included discussion of the participants' identities and how their sexual orientation and/or gender/sex identities related to their experiences in the world. The potential questions outlined in the information sheet highlight the themes of the interviews. These questions were:

- What words do you use to describe your sexuality and gender/sex identity?
- What has been your journey to discovering and embracing your identity?
- What role do other identities (i.e. race, religion, gender, culture, age, family) play on your queer/rainbow/LGBT[3] identity?
- Are there any particular stories that feel important in describing your sexuality or gender/sex identity?

Drawing on narrative enquiry techniques I remained open to the particular possibilities for storytelling within each interview. Narrative enquiry, as described by Margaret Olson (2009), is "shaped by evolving interactions among individuals, is an unfolding story in which the researcher must balance his or her research purpose and intentions with the unique narratives of other research participants" (p. 349).

Most participants came prepared with a particular story they were eager to share, and so each participant largely drove the interview content. In addition to the guiding narrative, we discussed themes that arose during the interview. Using the Maori concept of

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[3] LGBT is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender – words were substituted for each individual, as not everyone identifies with the term Queer.

Tuakana and Teina (which can be translated to mean "big brother", "little brother") we both shared our experiences, highlighting the reciprocal exchange of knowledge and ideas.

Data Analysis and Graphic Construction

Following the interviews, I examined my records and notes to determine which narratives (within each interview) were most interesting for my purposes. I considered the themes of different narratives in relation to:

- Stylistic Choices
- Story Construction
- The meta-narrative, and autobiographical narratives

I then drafted a script and began to sketch out possible character designs, in order to determine which comic style and graphic devices would be most effective. I took care to ensure the privacy of participants. Dates, ages, names and locations were changed in various comics.

My own position was extremely important in this stage of the process. I created 'bookends' to the main comic vignettes, which explored my own reactions and reflections in response to the themes from the interviews. These bookends delved into both my experiences as a researcher (what it means to me to tell others' stories), and my experiences as a queer person.

Participant Feedback

In most cases, I sent the script (outlining the main dialogue for the narrative) to participants for feedback. In some cases this was not appropriate, as the script was an incomplete draft without the visual aid of comic art. All participants received copies of the complete draft (script with comic art) for their feedback and approval. In some cases participants saw multiple drafts. Participants were asked to contribute to the editing process, and have the final say as to whether the story was submitted into the portfolio. All participants approved their comic for submission into the portfolio.

Theory/Content

Part A: (Auto)Ethnographies

I employ an ethnographic/autoethnographic methodology, using qualitative research from interviews. Ethnographic approaches take into account the social or situational contexts of the research, with autoethnographies situating the social context and personal experiences of the researcher squarely within the research.

I have used ethnography and autoethnography in a strategic way. I adopt an interdisciplinary approach to counter, or at the very least acknowledge, some of the drawbacks of this type of approach.

hooks[4] (1990) highlights one of the key drawbacks of ethnography, which are illustrated in her parody of a researcher:

> *"No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way… a way that has become mine… I am still the coloniser, the speaking subject, and you are not at the centre of my talk."* (p. 341)

hooks demonstrates how uncritical autoethnography risks great power-imbalances. When the position of the researcher is not taken into account the participant becomes the 'other'. This reproduces power dynamics such as 'coloniser' and 'colonised', 'normal' and 'freak', 'us' and 'them'. A strategic and critical deployment of ethnography highlights the researchers own investments and subjectivity within the research.

An ethnographic approach often incorporates dialogue with participants. According to Keddy (1996), who adopts a grounded feminist methodology, the dialogue between researcher and participant should be "interactive, empowering, reflective, transformative, non-hierarchal, non-static and evolving" (p. 449). In this way the interview process is built on mutual respect and knowledge sharing. The researcher may come with a series of open-ended questions, but the interview is driven by a mutual engagement with the topic. This allows for a more free-flowing dialogue that enables the researcher to identify his or her investments in the project, as well as for the participant to have a certain amount of power in constructing the dialogue.

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[4] hooks refuses to capitalise her name in an effort to direct attention at her ideas, rather than her identity.

To highlight the political agenda of my research I have adopted a transformative paradigm approach, which contains "an action agenda for reform" (Mackenzie, 2006, p. 3). Here the researcher acknowledges that their work is aiming to create social or political change, and they are using their research accordingly.

Part B: Queer Theory

What is Queer?

"Queer" involves "the open mess of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances, resonances, lapses and excess of meaning [that occur] when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically" (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 8)

Throughout this project I use the term queer in a variety of ways: queer as an umbrella term that describes sexuality and gender/sex diversity, queer as a political tool, and queer as an academic discourse (as in queer theory).

As an umbrella term, queer recognises a spectrum of sexualities (beyond the fixed categories gay, bisexual or straight), as well as a spectrum of gender/sex identities (resisting the binary of male/female or man/woman). This creates space for a variety of identities and labels, for example: asexual, bisexual, pansexual, omnisexual, trans, intersex, and questioning. It also allows one to acknowledge that there are many different ways of being within these identities. Queer moves beyond fixed categories and highlights fluidity, incoherence and un-knowing.

As a political tool, queer often resists definition; it is a word that refuses finite categorisation, or consistent coherence. Queer is used as a reactionary tool against structuralism and modernity; it operates to deconstruct the gender/sex binary, and seeks to highlight the heterosexism[5] and cissexism[6] of our society.

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[5] Heterosexism is the assumption that all people are heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior and more desirable than homosexuality, bisexuality, pansexual, or asexual.
[6] Cissexism is the assumption that all people are cisgendered and that being cisgender is superior and more desirable than being transgender, transsexual or intersex.

Queer theory challenges binaries such as heterosexual/homosexual and male/female in an academic context. Queer theory deconstructs fixed definitions of gender/sex and sexual identities, in favour of more fluid and multiple approaches.[7]

Queer media representations:

"How we are seen determines in part how we are treated; how we treat others is based on how we see them; such seeing comes from representation" (Dyer, 2002, p. 1)

There is extensive research exploring the long history of media (particularly, Hollywood Cinema) stereotyping queer people in a negative way. The work of academics such as Russo (1981), Weiss (1992), and Dyer (1984) outline the common stereotypes of gay and lesbians portrayed in the media. These representations are often demeaning, and result in "othering", or presenting queer people as violent or unstable. [8]

Dyer suggests that the problem arises from the attempts of a heterosexual society to define homosexuals in terms "that inevitably fall short of the 'ideal' of heterosexuality" (1984, p. 31). Weiss supports this critique of heteronormativity in her discussion of lesbian representation, stating that stereotypical representations "may be seen as indicators of ideological contradictions within a film between the promotion of dominant heterosexual values and the attempt to at once represent and repress lesbian desire" (1992, p. 64).

Currently, mainstream media does not have a good track record of working to present a positive, holistic representation of queer people. According to Dyer and Weiss this may be a result of working from a place that values heterosexuality (and cisgenderism) over homosexuality (and transgenderism). I suggest that if we come from a place of valuing queerness, if we work using queer as a political tool, then our representations will be more positive.

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[7] Plummer describes how a Queer methodology involves a research *practice* as opposed to *paradigm*. In this way queer methodologies seek to challenge existing representations of gender/sex identities and sexualities, to create more complex representations (Plummer, 2005, p. 366).

[8] There are many ways that queer people have been conceptualised as being in a lesser position than their heterosexual counterparts. In Vito Russo's seminal work *The Celluloid Closet* (1991), he details the various ways gays and lesbians have been represented in film. These representations include stock characters of the effeminate man (the 'sissy') and the masculine woman (the 'dyke'). Russo also notes that homosexual characters are largely relegated to the background.

Queers on Queers: Telling our own stories

Mainstream media works to maintain the hegemonic ideals and current power structures, and therefore representations of queer people inevitably fall short.

One way to work towards valuing queerness is to have queer people telling their own stories.[9] When one claims their subjective positions, and works from a place that actively uses queer as a political tool, then one is more likely to succeed in creating media that values the position of queer. If we claim an identity as our own, such as non-straight sexualities, or non-cisgendered genders, then we are less likely to create distance, to devalue, and to 'other' queer sexualities and genders.

Leslie Feinberg (1996) calls upon trans and gender variant individuals to work within their own framework to shape their own stories. Zhe[10] states: "It is time for us to write as experts on our own histories. For too long our light has been refracted through other people's prisms." In writing *Transgender Warriors* zhe explicitly states hir position and intention: "My goal in this book is to fashion history, politics, and theory into a steel weapon with which to defend a very oppressed segment of the population" (xii).

Similarly, Plummer (1995) encourages people to tell their own stories, noting that this can be an important and empowering experience. He is particularly interested in stories about our sexual orientations, and positions these within a wider context of human society as a society of storytellers:

> *"The ceaseless nature of story telling in all its forms in all societies has come to be increasingly recognized. We are, it seems,* homo narrans*: humankind the narrators and story tellers. Society itself may be seen as a textured but seamless web of stories emerging everywhere through interaction: holding people together, pulling people apart, making societies work" (p. 5)*

Part C: Graphic Novels and Graphic Storytelling

Comics scholarship is an emerging field, and one that is still developing a variety of strands and discourses. Comics can be analysed through formal analysis[11], as an art

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[9] This is not to say that heterosexual people cannot tell stories that value queer people, or that queer people will inevitably value Queerness simply because of their sexual orientation or gender/sex identity. It is obviously more complex than that.

[10] I use the non-gendered pronouns 'zhe' and 'hir' to describe Leslie Feinberg to affirm 'hir' non-binary gender

[11] By this I mean looking towards a formative definition of comics – What is a comic precisely? Where do the boundaries lie? How does one construct a comic?

form, and in terms of narrative literature. While these three approaches have obvious overlaps, their focuses result in significantly different academic discussions.

In this project I do not aim to engage in a formal analysis of comics.[12] My work clearly fits within standard comic definitions, and does not seek to push the boundaries of this definition.[13]

I am, however, interested in the exploration of comics as art, and as narrative literature. I am interested in exploring the narrative history of comics; this includes the tendency of comics towards autobiographies, comics as a product of interviews and conversations, and an ideological analysis of comics as a place where minority and queer stories can be told. I am also interested in exploring comics as an art form; this includes the visual and aesthetic value of comics, and how artistic choices create meaning above and beyond the words they are partnered with.

Autobiographic History:

"I always felt like there was something inherently autobiographical about cartooning, and that's why there was so much of it…I does feel like it demands people to write autobiographies." Alison Bechdel (Emmert, 2007, 37)

The particular genre of comics I am exploring here are those that exist outside of the mainstream super-hero genre[14]. These comics have been referred to as independent comics, alternative comics, underground comics, and commix. Generally these comics are written, drawn and lettered by the artists themselves.

This comic genre has a long history of telling biographical and autobiographical tales. This is seen in the works of Marjane Satrapi, Robert Crumb, Joe Sacco, Harvey Pekar, Julie Doucet, Debbie Dreschler, and Art Speigelman.

As handcrafted artwork, comics are particularly well suited for autobiography – or, as Lynda Barry terms it – an "autobifictionalography" (Matheson, 2002, pg. 1). The artist/writer/creator literally frames the story – they are responsible for literally

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[12] The work of Scott McCloud, Will Eisner, Thierry Groensteen and many others more than cover this topic.

[13] McCloud's (1994) standard definition of comics is; "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (p. 9).

[14] I use Leonard Rifas' (2004) definition of mainstream comics: "created by teams of full-time professionals (a writer, a penciller [sic], an inker, a leterrer [sic] and a collorist [sic]) working for commercial publishers" (p. 24)

marking the page, for designing the characters and artwork style, for positioning the images within the frames[15].

Barry's "autobifictionalography" recognises the subjectivity of the author, who has literally framed the story, making choices about what to include, what to leave out, and how to present the story. There is an intimacy with the author, as there is a visceral connection that details their personal work on the page.

Biography and Interviews

Comics have not just been used to tell the author's own stories, but also the stories of others. Joe Sacco and Art Spiegelmen demonstrate the use of interviews as the basis of comic storytelling. Joe Sacco is an investigative journalist and comic book writer. His work includes *Safe Area Gorzade: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1995-1996* (2000), and *Palestine* (2001). Drawing on his journalistic background, Sacco conducts interviews and recreates historic events in comic form.

While Sacco's approach tries to be more objective, Spielgelmen's work, particularly in *Maus I* (1989) *and II* (1991), allows much more for the subjective presence of the author. The *Maus* series are the autobiographical tale of Spiegelman interviewing his father, and then recreating his father's experience of the holocaust.

As a site for Queer Storytelling

From my perspective as a queer comic artist, the use of graphic media in storytelling within and beyond queer communities is particularly interesting, and web-comics are emerging as a popular storytelling medium.

In recent years the critical and financial success of Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* (2006) has shown that there is a market for telling queer stories in graphic novels. Her novel has become a prominent example of mainstream success[16] not only for a graphic novel, but also for a graphic novel that explores queer identities.

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[15] Chute (2010) describes how comics lend itself to autobiographies through the fact that "the same hand is both writing and drawing the narrative… leads to a sense of the form as diaristic; the is an intimacy to reading handwritten marks on the printed page, an intimacy that works in tandem with the sometimes visceral effects of presenting "private" images." (P. 10)

[16] *Fun Home* was named "Book of the Year" by *Time* magazine, "#1 non-fiction book" by Entertainment Weekly, and one of the top 10 books for 2006 by *The London Times* and *New York Times Magazine*. (Emmert, 2007, p. 36)

Other major names in independent comics that deal with homosexuality and gender/sex diversity include: Diana DiMassa (*Hothead Paisan: Homicidal Lesbian Terrorist*, 1999*)*, Howard Cruse (*Stuck Rubber Baby*, 1996), and Joey Allison Sayers (*Just So You Know*, 2009 and 2010).

Comics as a Queer art form

 "Comics convey several productive tensions in it's basic structure. The words and images entwine, but never synthesize. The frames – which we may understand as boxes of time – present a narrative, but that narrative is threaded through with absence, with the rich, white spaces of what is called the gutter." (Chute, 2010, pp. 5-6)

The nature of comics as an art-form is queer. To begin with, there is a lot of debate surrounding what actually constitutes a comic (Chute, 2010, p. 7). As a genre, comics resist definition in a way that is analogous to queer.

Chute (2010) describes the medium as "an elliptical form" (p. 7); comics combine words and images, offer narrative as well as visual art, and make meaning through both frames and gutters.[17] Furthermore, Chute (2010) notes that comics mix "conventional 'high' and 'mass' elements; they are handmade but mass-produced, as well as often read as 'low-brow' while adopting 'high art' avant-garde techniques (pp. 10-11). This mixture is akin to postmodern queer theory.

Comics are a unique, sometimes contradictory medium, that Chute (2010) designates a "hybrid" form of art and media (p. 10). This hybridity can be seen "as a challenge to the structure of binary classification that opposes a set of terms, privileging one" (Chute, 2010, p. 11). In their resistance to tightly held classifications, comic art again proves analogous to queer politics.

Comics, Style and Intertextuality

The stylistic choices a comic artist makes have huge effects on how the reader interprets the work. Style "usually describes surface details like line quality, a way of drawing faces, or one's use of dialogue." (McCloud, 2006, p. 212). Comics can incorporate a huge range of styles of artwork, from the rigidly realistic to the incredibly abstract.

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[17] Gutters are the space *between* the panels. For more information on gutters see Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* (1994 pp. 60-93)

McCloud (1994) explains that the choice of art style has an immediate effect on the reception of the comic. He suggests "comics harness the power of cartoons to command viewer involvement and identification – and realism to capture the beauty and complexity of the visible world." (1994, p. 204)

In addition to affecting readership, stylistic choices can signify a lot about the artist's outlook, passions, priorities, as well as the times and places they have come from (McCloud, 2006, p. 213). In *Understanding Comics*, McCloud explores the styles of comic artists, breaking down his analysis of the "pictorial vocabulary" (range of artists style), along a triple axis:
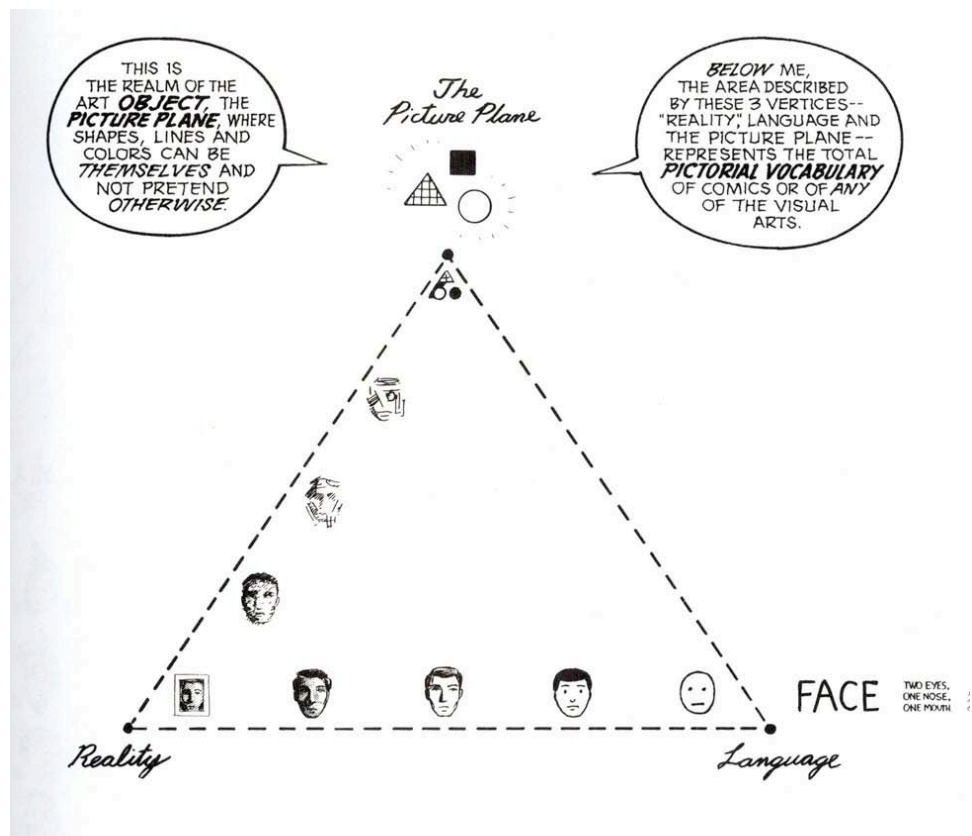

Fig 3.C.1: The Picture Plane (McCloud, 1994, p. 51)

Like written literature or films, adopting different styles (particularly styles that are significant to a particular artist or genre), locate the comic in a particular way. The reader can identify the work within a context, and can read more into the image than more just the words. The style can illustrate genre and character-types, as well as an artist's politics, historical context, country of origin, mental state and more.

Commentary

In constructing my portfolio, *Family Portraits*, I incorporated ethnography and autoethnography. I use queer as a theoretical framework and queer as a political tool, speaking from my own perspective, in a way that values queerness, difference and connectedness. I also purposefully adopted various storytelling techniques and artistic styles to influence the reader.

Part A: Queer Communities, Individuals, and 'Our' Stories

Storytelling as a Political Tool

I came to this project from the context of having completed a dissertation about the film *Monster* (Jenkins, 2003). My dissertation explored *Monster* within the context of the common tropes adopted by mainstream media to represent queer women. My central argument was that mainstream media often propagates the idea that if you embody too much difference (if you are non-white, non-male, non-middle/upper class, non-straight, non-hegemonically gendered, non-able-bodied, etc.) then you're deemed to be unstable or violent (either towards yourself or to others).[18]

Family Portraits is anchored by a commitment to resisting those tropes. I wanted to create stories that celebrated difference, and celebrated queer identities in particular. I use my comic as a political tool to resist the notion that queer identities, whether fluid or stable, result in trauma, chaos or violence. In doing so it felt important to use real stories from existing individuals, and to explore their multiple identities (religious views, cultures, races, politics, historical contexts), so as not to fall into the trap of creating merely two-dimensional representations.

Of course, some of the stories in the project involve violence and trauma. This trauma is explored particularly in the comic "Little Bear" (pp. 76-78) and "On Sadness" (pp. 80-83). In the comic "Little Bear", for example, I explore my own grief and trauma around

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[18] This was highlighted within the context of *The L Word* (Chaiken, 2004), wherein the characters are permissible and not (wholly) unstable. This is due to the fact that they're mostly white, they're very rich (and are avid consumers to boot) and they are all mostly hegemonically gendered (even the so-called 'butch' one is laughably femme). They are essentially the women in *Sex and the City* (Star, 1998), only they sleep with each other, not Mr. Big.

a friend's suicide. In "On Sadness" I address the hurt and trauma that I experienced as a result of homophobia. My overall aim was not to ignore trauma all together, but to explore it in a way that valued individuals and our experiences. I have tried to do this by incorporating trauma into queer individuals experiences, as opposed to the mainstream media's tendency to equate queerness or difference with violence and instability.

Fig 4.A.1 Page 1 of "Little Bear" – Sam is crying over the suicide of his friend (p. 77)
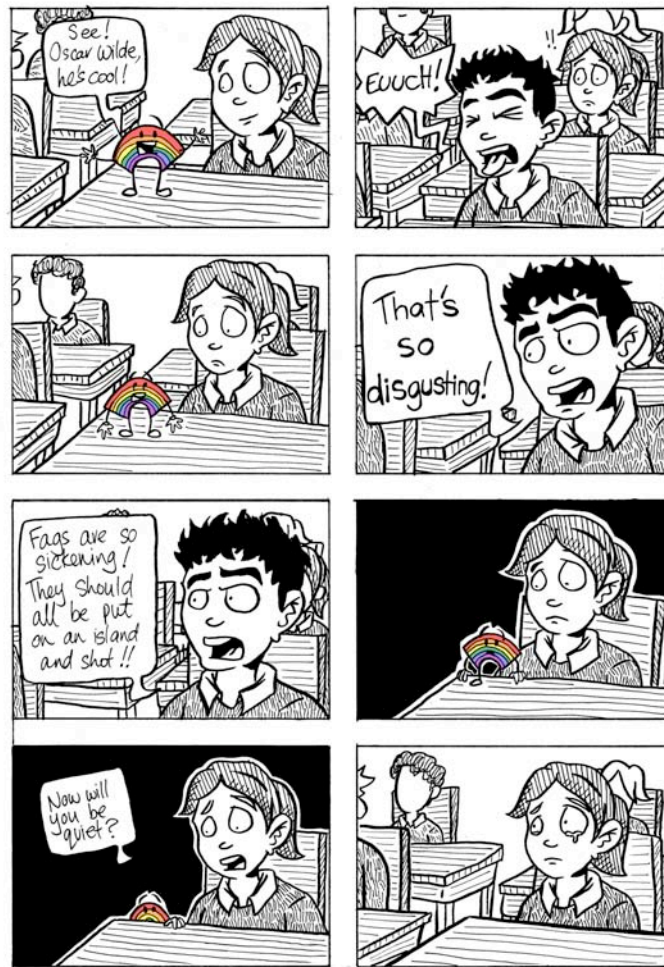
Fig 4.A.2. Page 3 of "On Sadness" – A violent homophobic remark leaves Sam (then Sarah) in tears. While trauma and violence is present in the novel it is not a product of simply being queer (p. 83).

My Story as a Reaction to and Reflection of Others

Throughout the novel I interweave my own narrative with others. My story (the segments that are largely subtitled "Sam's Story") incorporates my role as the storyteller and guide, and as a queer individual.

The "Sam's Story" portions of the novel are spread throughout the text to offer both reflections and refractions of the interview stories. Reflections because the themes of the interview stories are reflected in my own narratives.[19] In contrast, I use the term refraction to denote my attempt to offer counter-narratives to the interview stories. One of the reasons why I chose to incorporate my own narrative into the project was to disrupt the idea that there is one way to be queer.

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[19] For example, I offer my experiences of a religious upbringing to mirror the religious storyline of Pete's in "The Love Boat" (pp. 27-54).

The Queer Meta-Narrative

The overall narrative of my graphic novel attempts to deconstruct the notion of fixed, coherent identities. In this way the project adopts a queer meta-narrative. The project begins with "Queer 101" (pp. 5-12); a comic built to coherently describe and label queer identities through articulating concepts surrounding gender, sex and sexuality. This comic adopts an educational style; it attempts to explain and define the term queer and all that that encompasses.
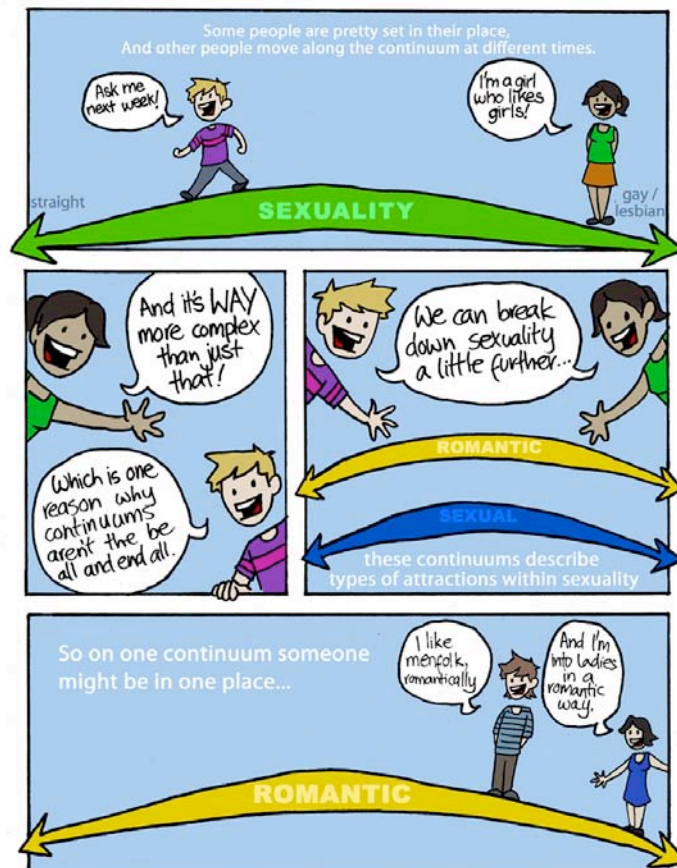
neat Fig 4.A.3 Page 2 of "Queer 101" – *Queer 101* breaks queer identities into labels. (p. 7)

As the graphic novel progresses I problematise these fixed labels by developing characters with complex and multiple identities. For example, the individual stories within the novel have narratives that include characters' religious identities, genders, cultures, and historical contexts.

As the characters become increasingly complex, so to do the narrative structures and depictions of identity. "My Name is…" (pp. 125-132) and "A Poultry Tail" (pp. 146-149) are two of the most incoherent displays of identity in the novel. "My Name is…"

is the story of Rewi, a tangata ira tane[20]. The story begins with Rewi as a child; he is depicted as a boy. However, as the story progresses it is revealed that Rewi was born female, and as such grew up as a girl. The reader has been seeing Rewi as he sees himself, as a young boy, not as a young girl. This is done deliberately to play with the readers' expectations.

Fig 4.A.4. A panel from Pg 7 of "My Name Is" – At the conclusion of the comic Rewi describes himself as growing up as a little girl but is depicted as a little boy (p. 149).

The final comic "A Poultry Tail" comes after the conclusion, and is told through the eyes of a small child. The child watches a bird enter his/her yard and he/she attempts to figure out if the bird is a rooster or a chicken. It is never expressed whether the animal is a rooster or not, or if it is both. This reinforces the incoherent and fluid nature of queer, and values resisting definition.
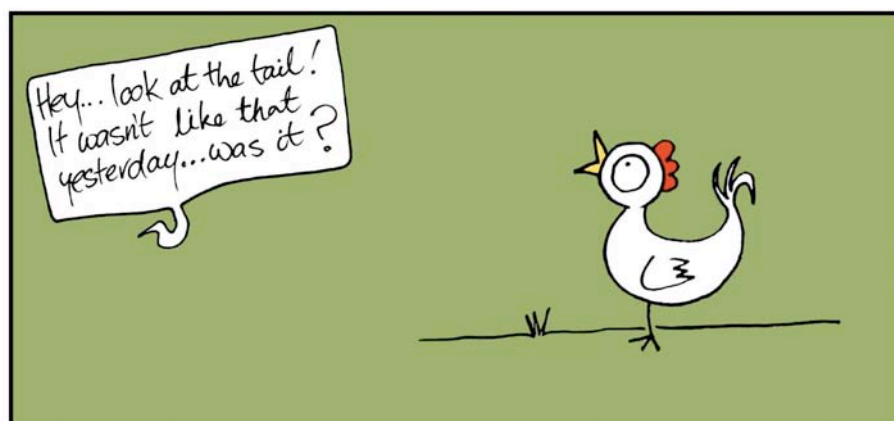
Fig 4.A.5. The final panel of "A Poultry Tail" – The novel ends with a bird growing tail feathers; making it inconclusive if the bird is a rooster or chicken (or both, or neither) (p. 149).

[20] Tangata ira tane is a maori word used to describe transmen.

Part B: From Biography to Autobifictionography

Ethical storytelling

The original proposal for this project was to interview a number of queer-identified people from Aotearoa and tell their stories in comic form. As the novel progressed I struggled with the ethical implications of this and began to weave my own story in between my interview subjects' stories.

My ethical concerns were a response to two things: bell hooks' critique of ethnography, and my experience of physically drawing and creating the comics themselves.

As noted earlier, hooks' (1990) critique of ethnography demonstrates the danger of a researcher as uninvolved and unfeeling, and the participants as vessels from which to extract information. As I engaged in the interviews I became very aware of this critique and tried to be transparent with the participants about my own investments in the project. I also became increasingly aware of the connections and differences between my experiences and the experiences of my participants. This awareness was extremely beneficial in engaging with the participants; by offering my own experiences I was able to help the participants feel more comfortable opening up.

As the interviews involved both myself and the participants sharing our stories, I decided that it was important to include my story in the project. It felt unethical to ask my participants to share so much, and then not to reveal my own self in the same way.

This decision became clearer as I adapted the participants' interviews into comics. I reflected on Chute's (2011) arguments regarding the comic artists' physical construction of a comic; the artist literally frames the story. In this way it became apparent that I was immutably intertwined with these stories. I had the choice of styles, of character design, of narrative construction, of what felt important to include or not; I therefore felt a responsibility as a co-creator of these stories.

I then began to construct comics that portrayed me as a central character. I did so in response to ethical quandaries I was facing; I did so to address the fear that I was

operating as an 'uninvolved, unfeeling researcher', to honour the fact that I played an integral role in the stories that came out within the interviews, and to own that I physically constructed the comics.

This comes out, strongly in "The Love Boat and Re/Draw" (pp. 27-32). In this section I begin with a rough draft of "The Love Boat". After two pages the comic has scribble marks across it, and I transition to a comic featuring me as the protagonist. The comic then transitions once more to a story of my own experiences with religion, and how that presents a block to my writing of "The Love Boat". This storytelling highlights both my role as the physical creator of the story and the choices I make in terms of what to include, as well as my role as a queer person, with his own experiences of identity.
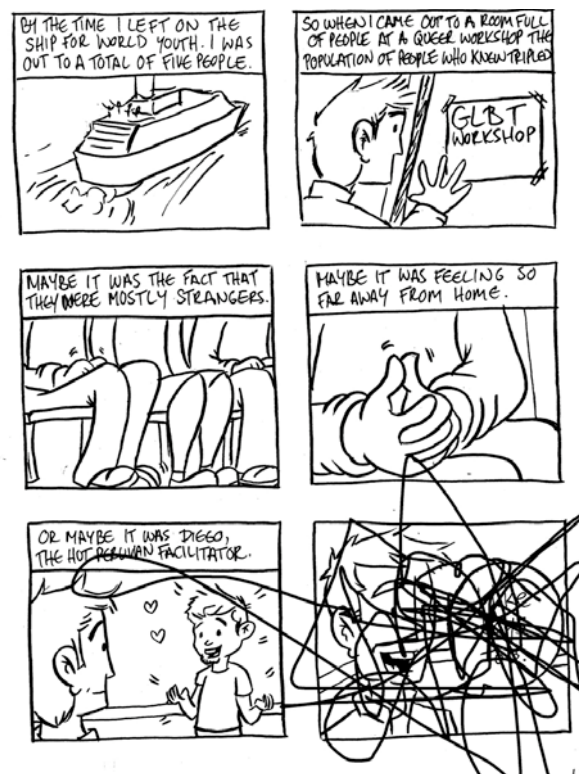
fig 4.B.1 Page 2 of "The Love Boat" – the comic is in rough, clearly first draft form and features a large scribble mark in the last panel to show the artists mark (p. 29).

fig 4.B.2 Page 3 of "The Love Boat" – Showing a transition from Peter's story to Sam as author, detailing his experience of having a difficult time constructing the comic (p. 30).

Fig 4.B.3 Page 4 of "The Love Boat" – Again the comic transitions from Sam as author to Sam as a queer person (p. 31).

Engaging with Privilege

In creating queer comics (or positive queer media representations) I became increasingly aware of how power and privilege structure our lives. The acknowledgement and exploration of privilege became an important consideration for me. My privilege exists on multiple levels. As a storyteller I have the privilege of deeming what is important to tell, and how to tell a story. As a person I embody a number of privileged positions; I am able-bodied, white, educated, and have a certain amount of male privilege.

I explored privilege in the comic "Pakeha Boy". While this comic is not present in the portfolio it illustrates clearly my ongoing concern to make my own privileges visible, and my commitment to creating queer positive media.

Fig 4.B.4. Page 1 of "Pakeha Boy" – An examination of privilege (not featured in the graphic novel).

Fig 4.B.5 Page 2 of "Pakeha Boy" – An examination of privilege (not featured in the graphic novel).

Autobiofictionalography

I began with the intention to adopt a journalistic approach – to interview participants and to retell their stories in comic form. As the project continued I shifted from this biographic or ethnographic approach towards a more subjective approach. I borrow the term "autobiofictionalography" from Lynda Barry (Matheson, 2002, p. 1) as it describes both my subjective influence on the project, as well as the fictional elements I incorporated into the stories.

The stories told in this project are based upon themes, experiences and ideas from participant interviews, and from my own experiences. Some of the stories are largely based on fact (with names and places changed to meet ethical requirements), while others have more fictional elements.

A key example of this "autobiofictionalographic" approach is the rainbow character in the "Sam's Story" comics. The rainbow clearly is a metaphor to explain the emergence of my queer identity. I used this character to provide a mouthpiece for the pride I feel about queerness, to counter to the fear and anxiety that Sam (or, Sarah, as I was then named) felt.

Fig 4.B.6 Page 3 of "Falling in Love" – Sam/Sarah has conversations with a rainbow. This is a key example of autobiofictionalography (p. 23)

Part C: Comic art and intertextuality

I adopted a variety styles throughout the comic to help create meaning. I was very interested in exploring how style impacts meaning, and in creating a queer aesthetic.

Role of Narrator

I have drawn myself as a major character in the novel. My role is to provide a guide through the comic, and to weave an alternative narrative into the overall story, highlighting the uniqueness and connectedness of our experiences.

I have created two different styles in the comics that are about me as narrator and queer person: a simple colored style, and a denser black and white style. I use a simple colored style to portray myself as the comic creator and guide. It is the same style I use in my web-comic series *Rooster Tails* (Orchard, 2010).

Fig 4.C.1 A panel from "Introduction" – An example of the comic creator/guide style. (p. 15)

I use the second style, which is a dense, mostly black and white style, with lots of hatching, to illustrate an historical reflection of my narrative of coming out as queer. I have tried to create a rougher aesthetic that is more obviously stylized. This highlights the fact that it was a pen-drawn and adds a diary-like aesthetic. It also emphasizes the minimal use of colour, which is important because this minimalisation is only challenged by the character of the rainbow, whose bright colours highlight the fictional element of the comic.

Fig 4.C.2 A panel from "I'm a Boy" – An example of the Sam's queer narrative style, including the fictional rainbow character. (p. 121)

Stylistic Choices

The comics that were based on interview material we also created with specific styles in mind. The graphic novel begins with "Queer 101" (pp. 5-12). This comic adopts a very simple style, with characters that use simple lines and iconic features. It is based upon

Scott McCloud's educational comics *Making Comics* (1993) and *Understanding Comics* (2006), with direct audience address, simple characters, and definitions.

In order to shift the reader delicately into the next interview comic, I selected a simple, minimal approach for "The Love Boat Attempt Two" (pp. 34-54). Again this involved clear lines and icon-based character design. It also involved a monochromatic colour palette (for the most part) to maintain the minimalism.

Fig 4.C.3 A panel from "The Love Boat Attempt Two" – An example of the simple style in depicting Peter. (p. 49)

The next interview comic, "I'm Not a Tom" (pp. 56-70) combines a number of styles. I borrowed from Ant Sang's *Dharma Punks* (2003), Bryan Lee O'Malley's *Scott Pilgrim* (2004) and the general tropes of underground 90s comics (McCloud, 1994, p. 55). I wanted to depict an edgier comic, and exploit the politically left sentiments of the characters. For these purposes the underground 90s comic style seemed most appropriate. This style involved thick lines, often created with an ink-brush, and lots of detail. Ant Sang's (2003) style was particularly inspirational as he addresses similar themes of race and leftist/anarchist politics in his work. In order to bring a little bit of lightness to this comic I borrowed some storytelling techniques from the *Scott Pilgrim* series. This allowed me to introduce the characters quickly and to use humour, as well as incorporating elements of music and gaming into the narrative.

Fig 4.C.4 A panel from "I'm not a Tom" – An example of the stylised black and white style, with *Scott Pilgrim* type character introduction. (p. 57)

The comic "One Day" (pp. 85-103) is directly influenced by the comics of Will Eisner. The historical context of the story necessitated a more classic, older style. I aimes to achieve an Eisner-inspired watercolour style in the ethereal smoky elements present in the first few pages. This comic, similar to many of Eisner's, oscillates between a heavy use of 'Voice of God' narration and minimal dialogue. At times the work becomes almost entirely image-driven.
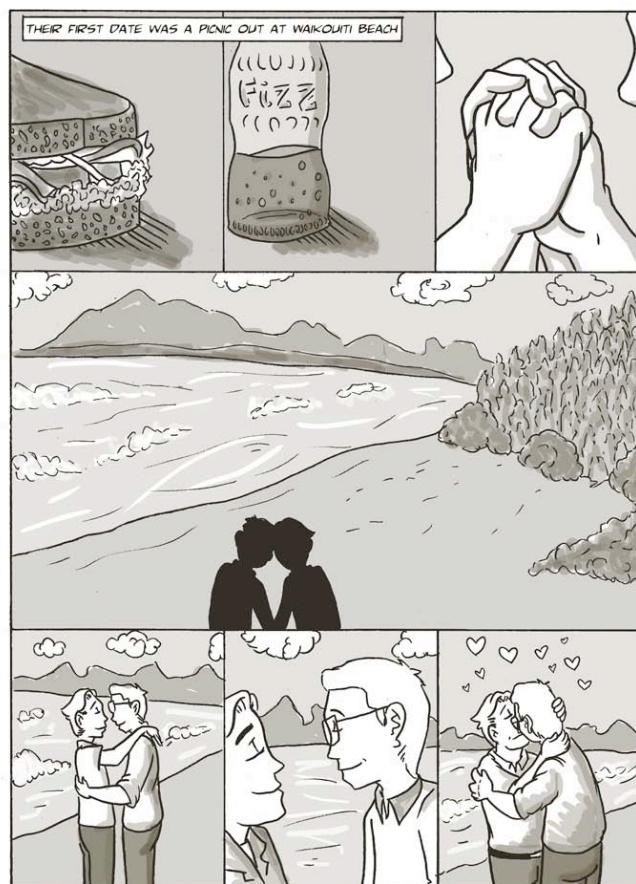
Fig 4.C.5 Page 12 from "One Day" – An example of a image-driven segment of the comic (p. 97)

The action-driven comic "The Escape" (pp. 112-116) needed an action-based style. The work of Jack Kirby was highly appropriate for this, as his comic work often revolved around superhero comics of *Captain America*, *The Fantastic Four*, and *Thor*. Kirby's comics combine "a powerful design sense" (McCloud, 1994 p. 55) with muscular characters, and high impact action-based frames. I adopted similar techniques for the "The Escape" comic in order to duplicate the energy levels, and create a link between the uniformed roller derby players, and superheroes.
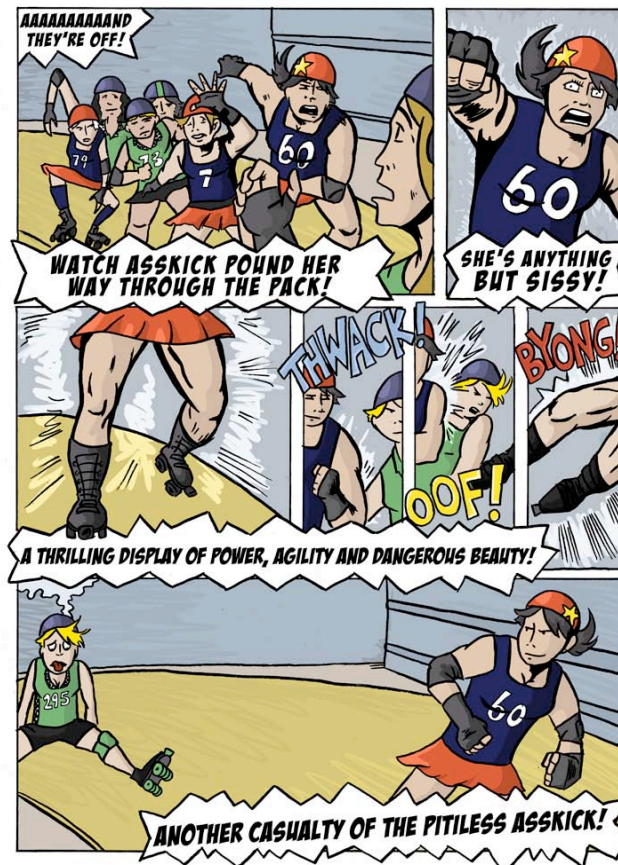
Fig 4.C.6 Page 2 from "The Escape" – An example of the action-oriented comic and muscular bodies (p. 114)

As the narratives got more complex, I preferred more simple styles. "My name is…" (pp. 125-132) adopts the very simple strip-comic style of Bill Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes* (2005) comics. "My Name is…" begins with a boy and his imaginary friend, and so the link between that and *Calvin and Hobbes* felt incredibly strong. The simple style also allowed for the story to be told in a simple way, which was especially important considering that the narrative was so complex. The 'reveal' of Rewi being female-born at the climax of the comic is reminiscent of the reveals that occur in *Calvin and Hobbes*, when we are reminded that Hobbes is merely a toy.

Similarly, "A Poultry Tail" (pp.146-149) is constructed as a simple story in a simple style, but actually involves a somewhat complex and value-laden narrative. I wanted to end with a simple, fable-like tale, and so adopted tropes from Children's graphic literature; the story is intended to be read as a picture book, with clearly defined illustrations, and short simple words.

Conclusion

My graphic novel attempts to explore and break down elements of identity, particularly queer identities, within New Zealand. I use my own story as a reflection and refraction of the stories that emerged from my interviews with participants. I adopt a queer structure to the novel as a whole, by deconstructing queer and refusing to create a monolithic experience of the queer community in New Zealand. I include my own story throughout as an attempt at ethical storytelling. I also adopt various styles in order to create visual meaning beyond simply the words of the comics.

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Portfolio

FAMILY PORTRAITS

A collection of stories about queer people in Aotearoa

Contents

QUEER 101
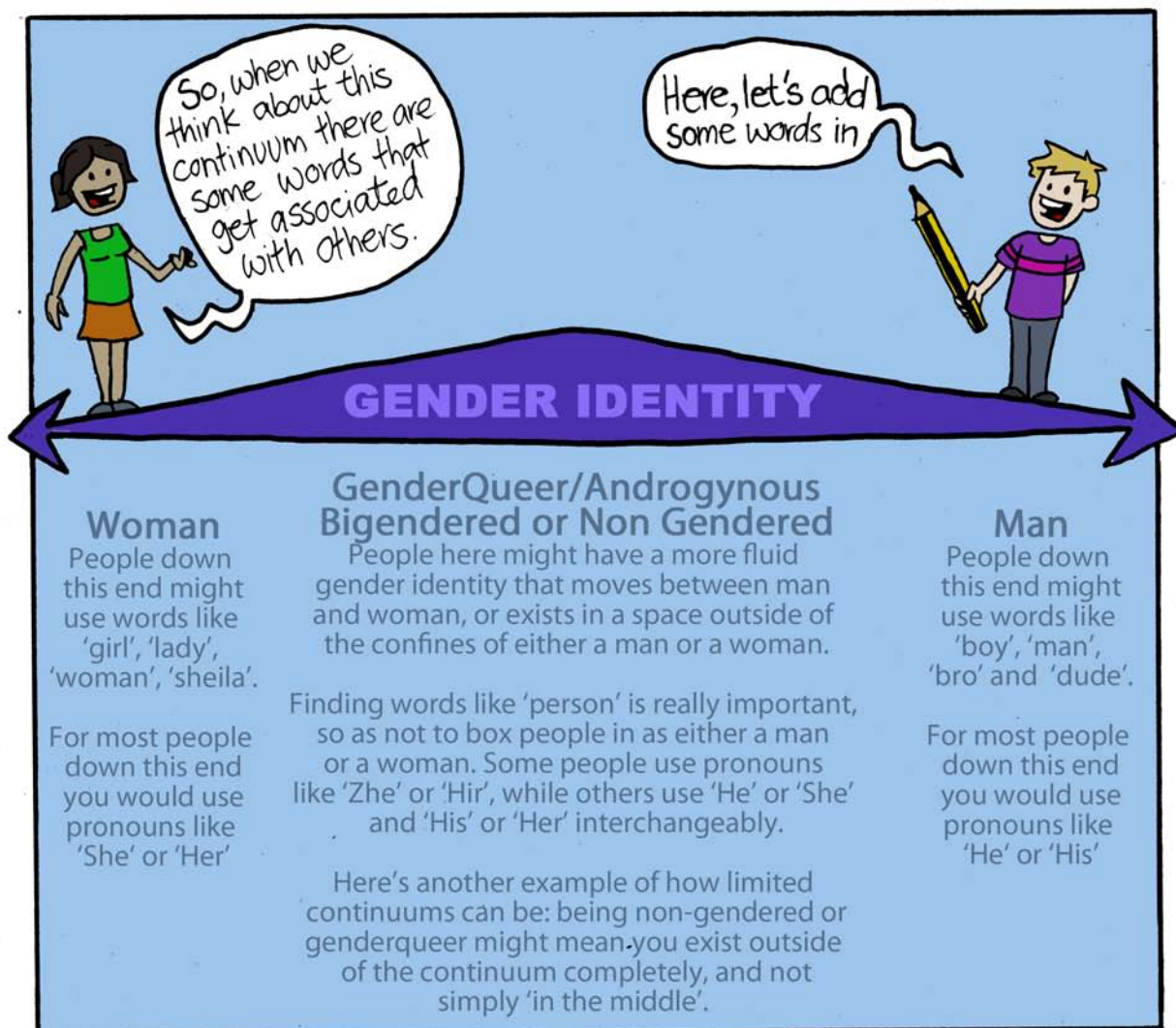
A super simple comic guide to gender, sex and sexuality
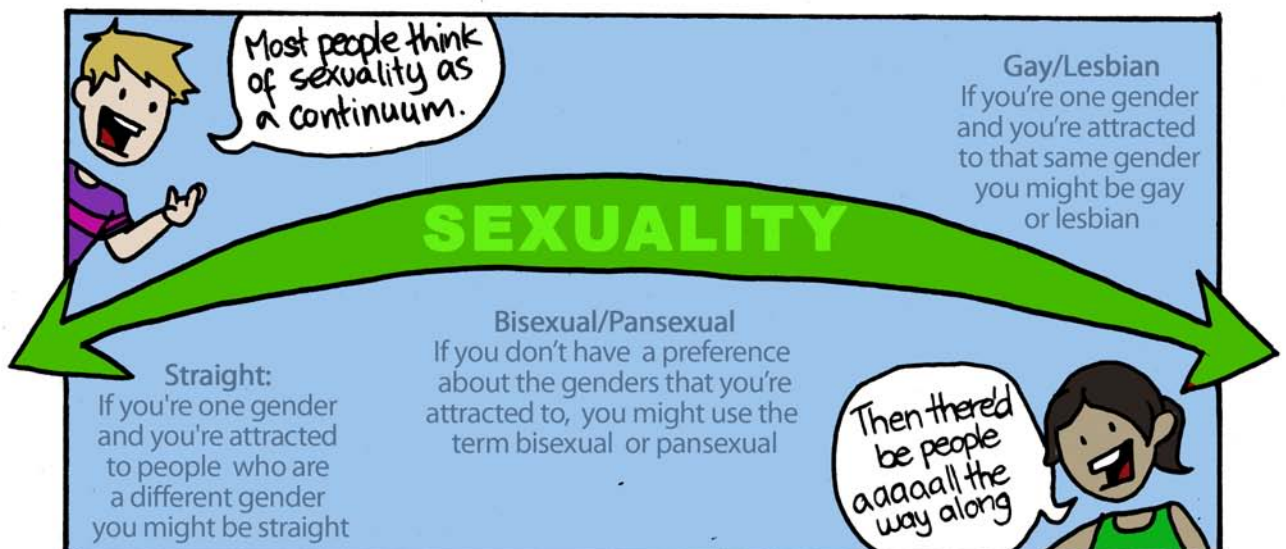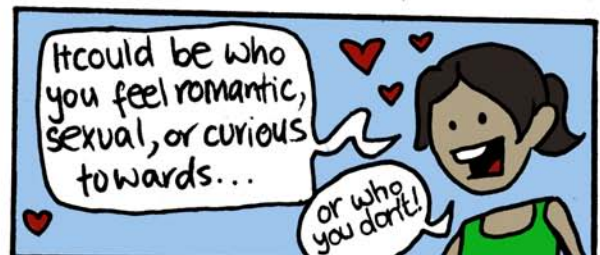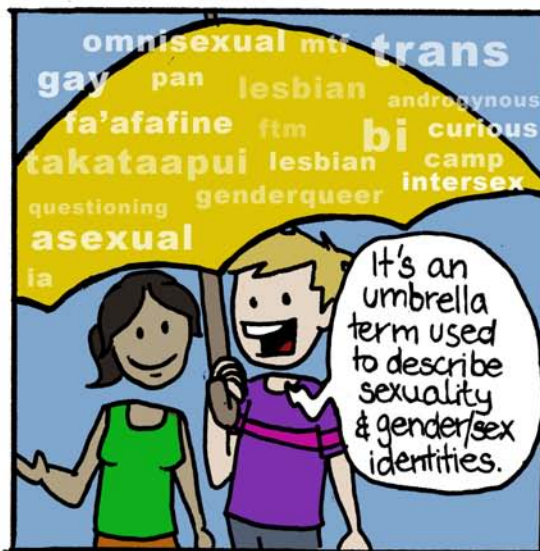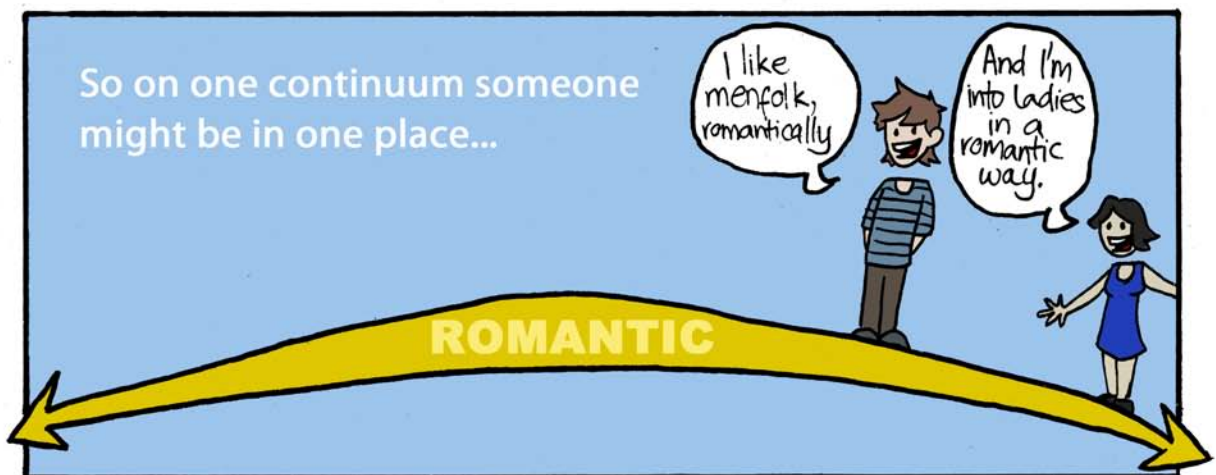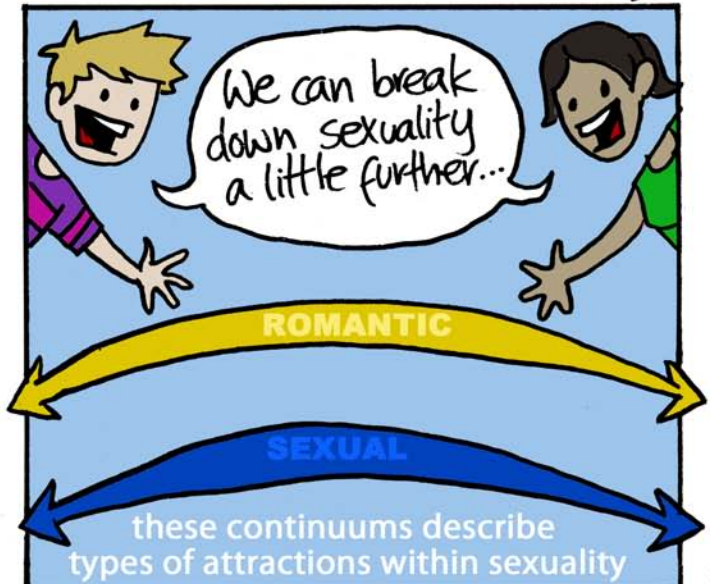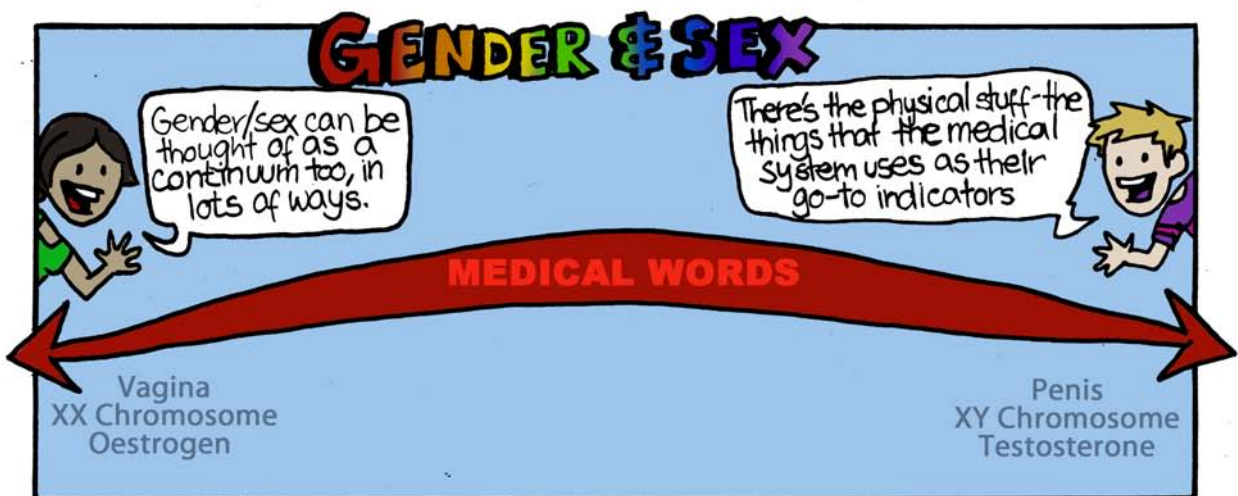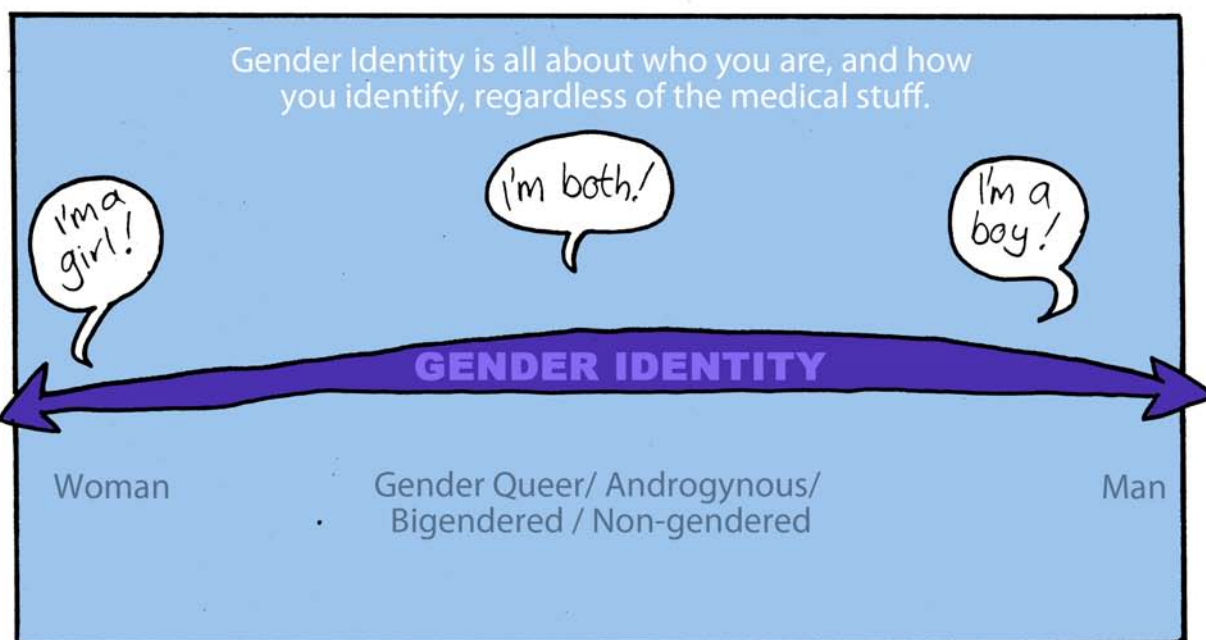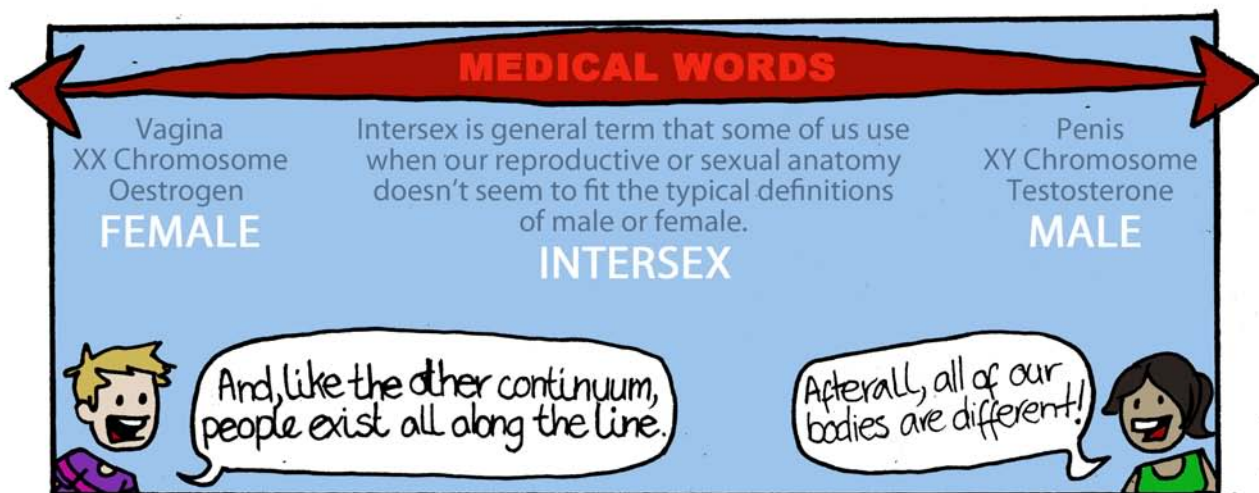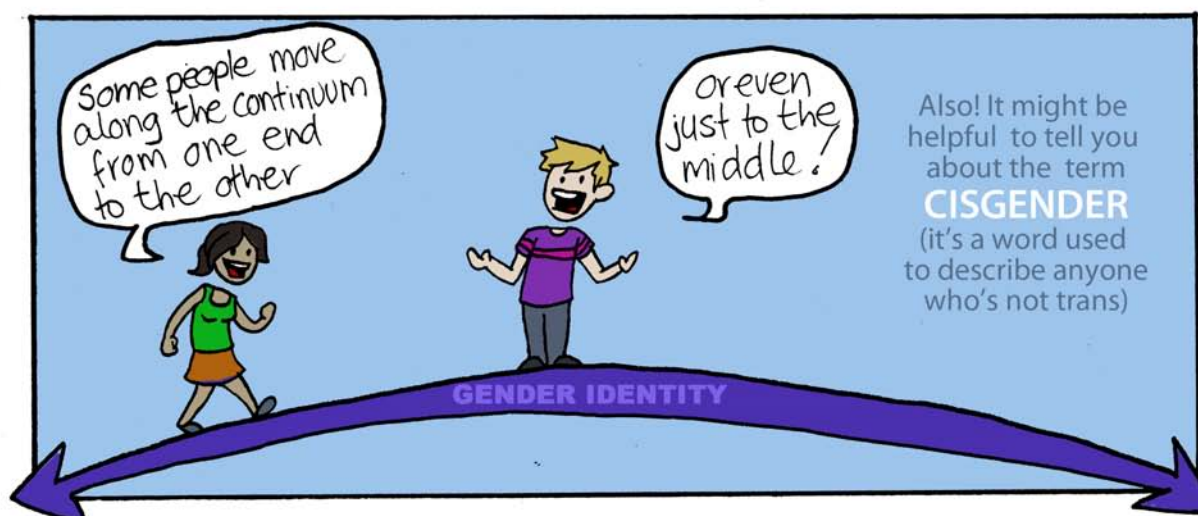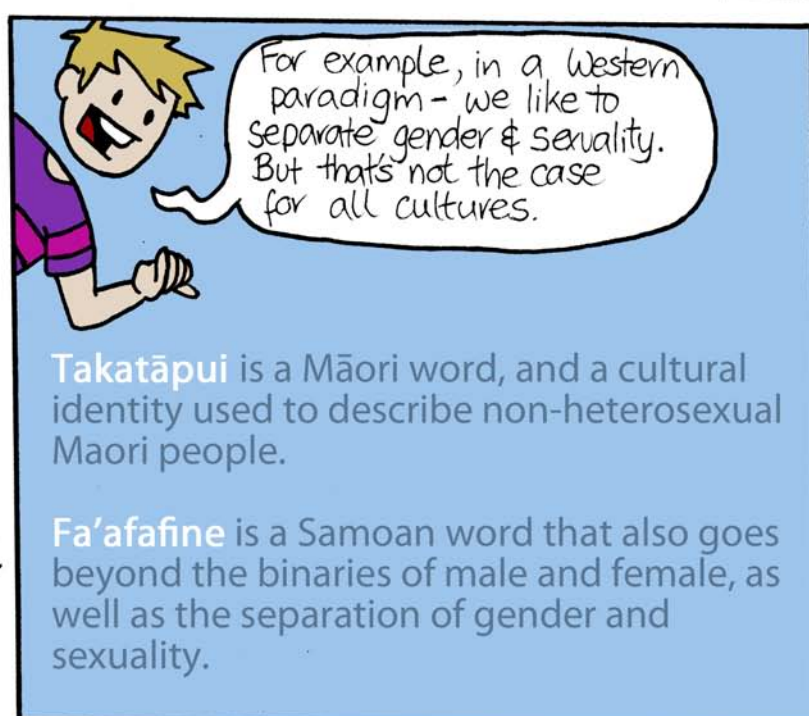
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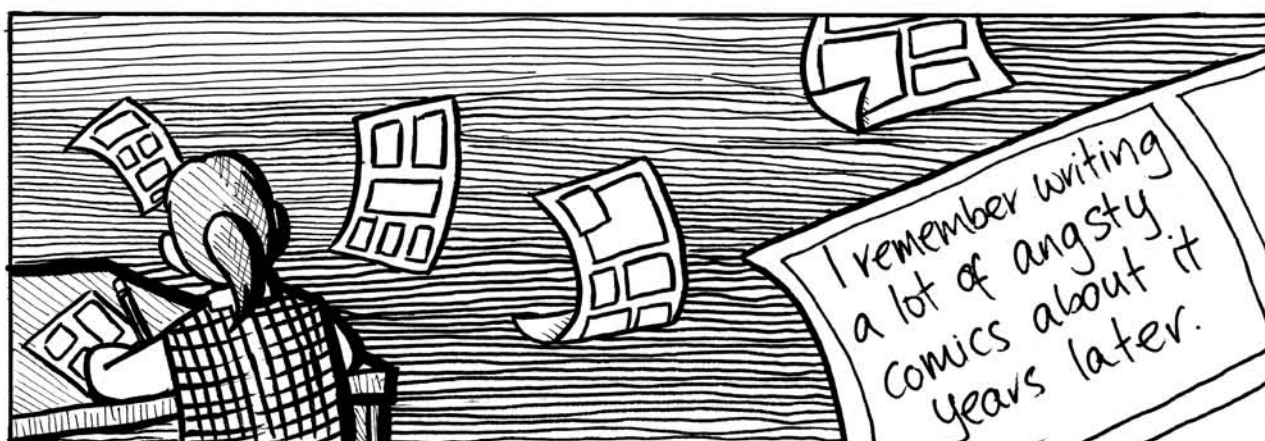# Introduction
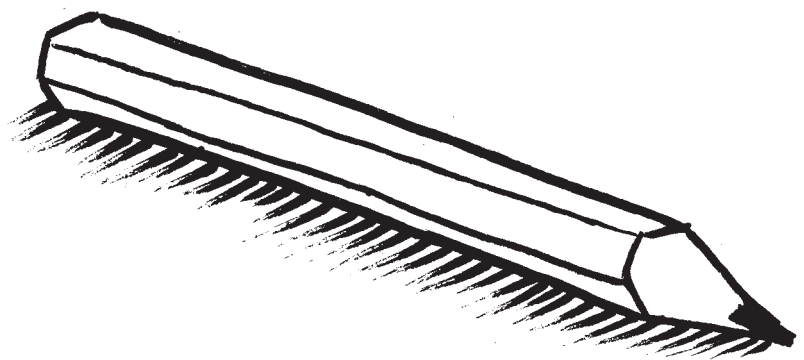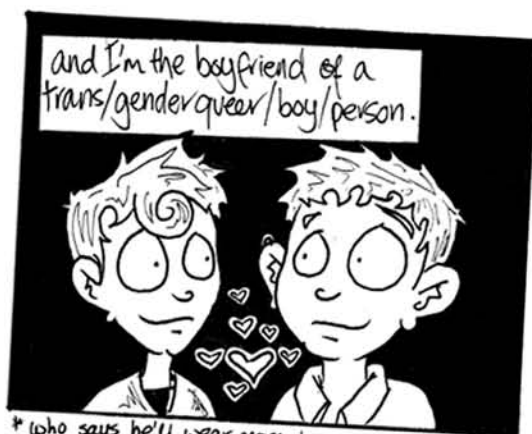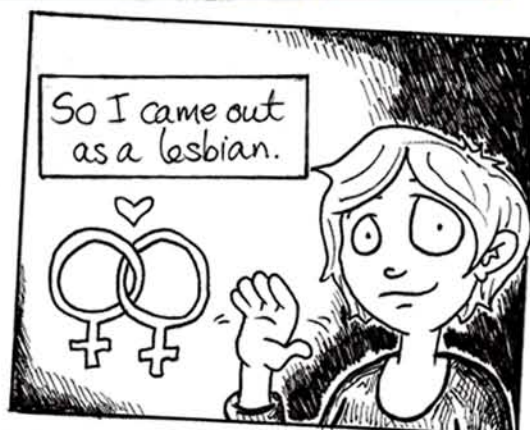
Falling in Love
Sam's Story

It was weird because my love for her grew slowly and silently over time.

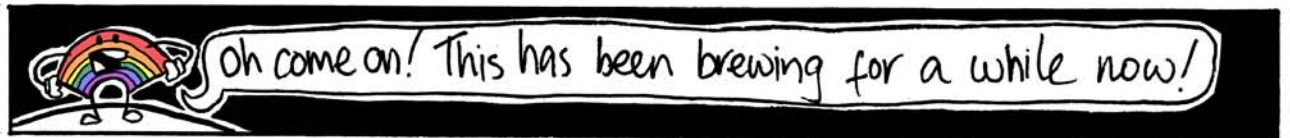I had no idea it was there until one day I was walking and it struck me.

dodee dodo deedo

like a shot through my heart.

It was as though my feeling had decided to pop into my consciousness...

hi!

...that it was tired of being buried...

ok. I get your point.

Why do I feel so awful about it then?

Why does she make me feel this way?

Why do I find her so amazing?

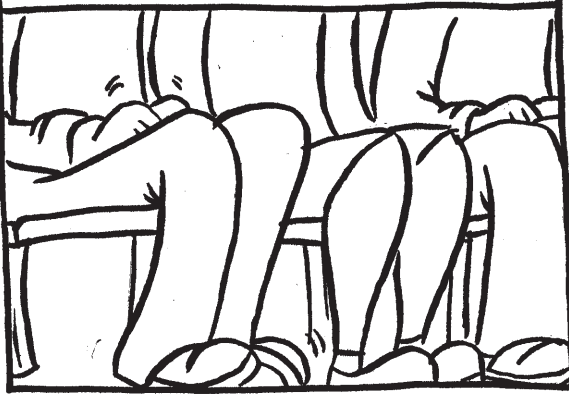Why am I so ashamed?

Why am I different?

Maybe it's just that I can see how amazing she is... if people could see her through my eyes they'd understand.

It's not weird or perverse at all.

It's just love.

sigh

It's not fair.

The Love Boat
Peter's Story

Title

I CAME OUT TO MY SISTER WHEN I WAS TWELVE

I like boys.

You're too young to know. Talk to me when you're fifteen.

SO I DID.

I still like boys.

oh. ok.

I DIDN'T REALLY TELL ANYONE ELSE. I WAS AN OAMARU FARM BOY — AND IT SEEMED LIKE MORE TROUBLE THAN IT WAS WORTH.

Ooh check her out!

Hot!

Yeh.

I'D BEEN CHOSEN TO RERESENT NEWZEALAND. ME & 300 OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE FOR A MONTH ON A SHIP

Panel 1: BY THE TIME I LEFT ON THE SHIP FOR WORLD YOUTH. I WAS OUT TO A TOTAL OF FIVE PEOPLE.
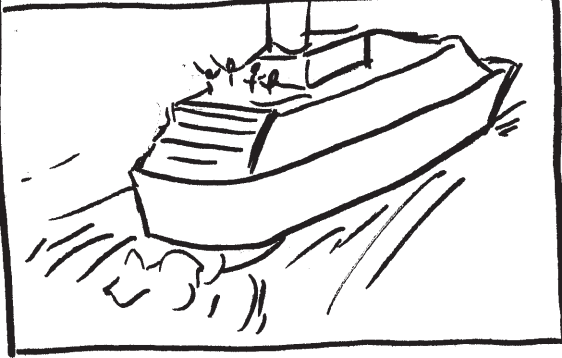
Panel 2: SO WHEN I CAME OUT TO A ROOM FULL OF PEOPLE AT A QUEER WORKSHOP THE POPULATION OF PEOPLE WHO KNEW TRIPLED

GLBT WORKSHOP

Panel 3: MAYBE IT WAS THE FACT THAT THEY WERE MOSTLY STRANGERS.

Panel 4: MAYBE IT WAS FEELING SO FAR AWAY FROM HOME.

Panel 5: OR MAYBE IT WAS DIEGO, THE HOT PERUVIAN FACILITATOR.

I grew up catholic. I couldn't reconcile being queer & christian.

It didn't work for me.

There were years of pain trying to reconcile the two.

And then the ache of having to give one away, and deal with the grief.

I remember the feeling of losing a sanctuary.

Churches shifted from safe havens to houses of anxiety.

Ideas that seemed fixed. True. Unquestionable.

Suddenly got thrown into chaos.

The Love Boat

Peter's Story

(attempt number two)

You know, it'd be ok if you...

I TRIED TO DISENGAGE FROM IT.

Sigh

AT THE SAME TIME I STARTED ENGAGING MORE WITH GOD.

HE BECAME MORE AND MORE CONCRETE — SOMEONE I HAD A PERSONAL CONNECTION TO.

SOMEONE I HAD A CHOICE TO CONNECT WITH, NOT JUST BY A ROUTINE I FELL INTO.

THEN, AT 19 I WAS CHOSEN TO REPRESENT NZ ON THE 21st SHIP FOR WORLD YOUTH.

Congratulations! You're going to Japan!!
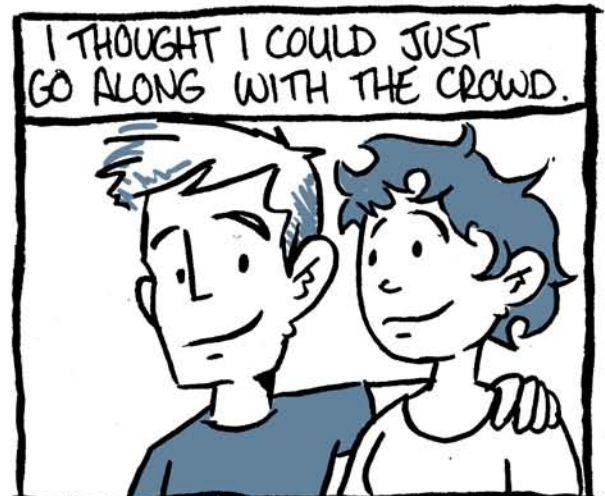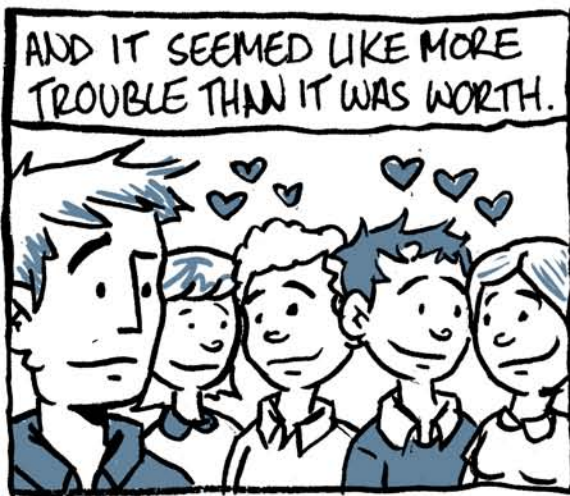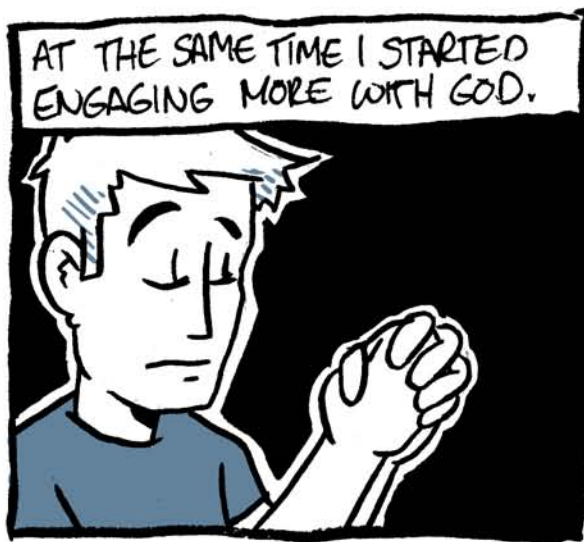
BY THE TIME I LEFT ON THE SHIP I WAS OUT TO ABOUT FIVE PEOPLE IN THE WHOLE WORLD
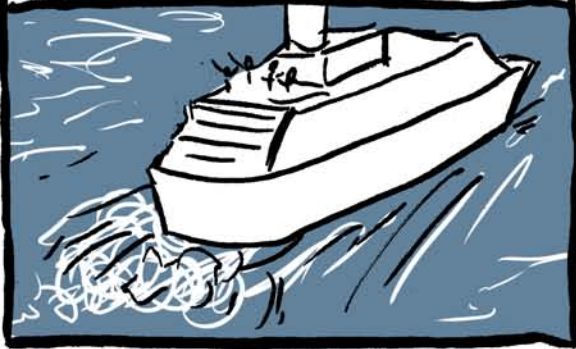
SO WHEN I CAME OUT TO A ROOM FULL OF PEOPLE AT A WORKSHOP, THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO KNEW TRIPLED.

GLBT WORKSHOP

MAYBE IT WAS THE FACT THAT THEY WERE MOSTLY STRANGERS.
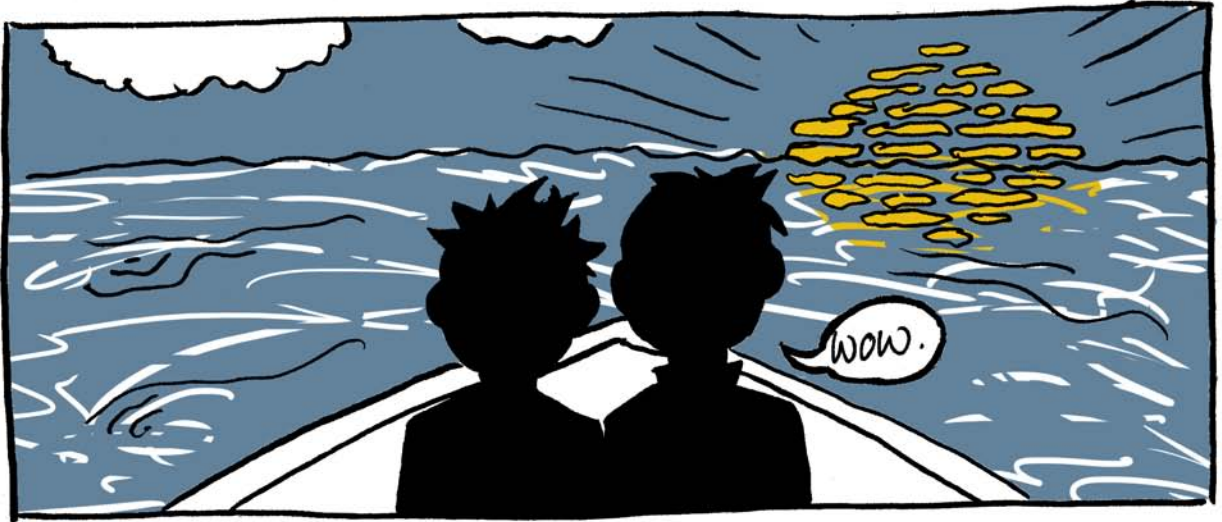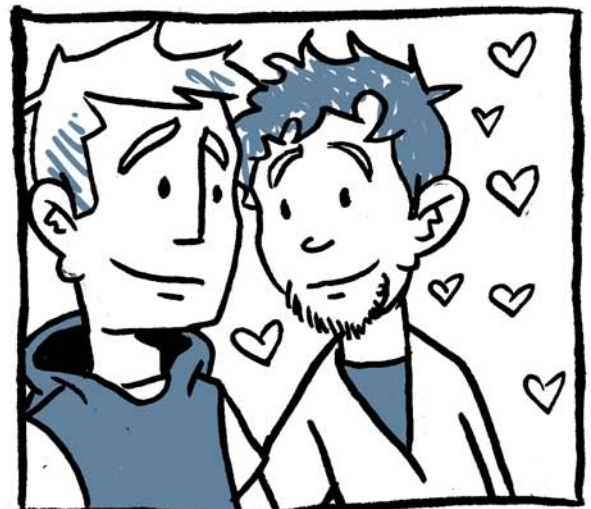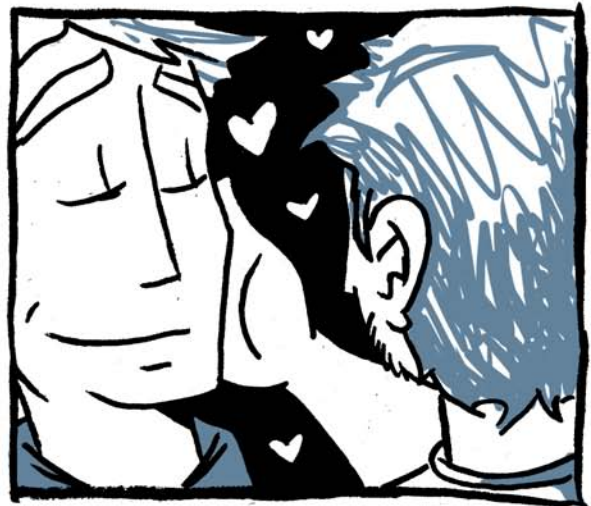
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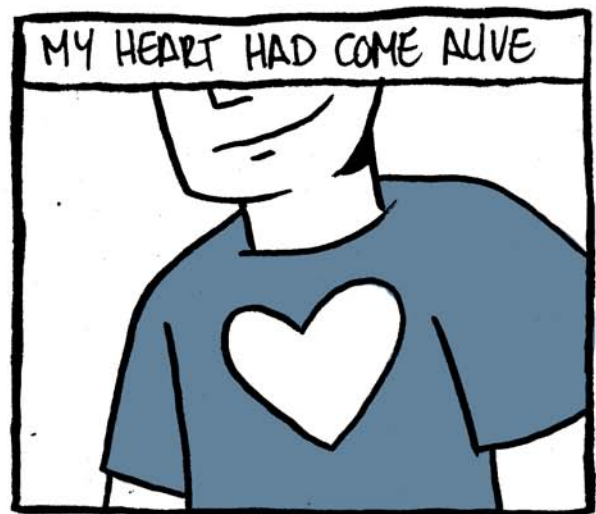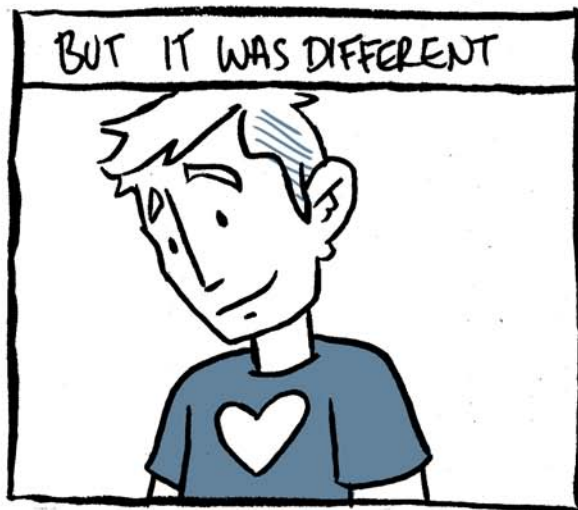
OR MAYBE IT WAS DIEGO, THE HOT PERUVIAN FACILITATOR.

I like boys too.

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I SEARCHED FOR WHAT GOD HAD TO SAY ABOUT IT.

THE BIBLE

I WAS SCARED ABOUT WHAT I'D FIND.

INSTEAD, I DISCOVERED BEAUTIFUL PASSAGES ABOUT LOVE.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud... it always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."
1 Corinthians 13:4-8

THAT LOVE WAS A GIFT.

"Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned."
Song of Solomon 8:6-7

A GIFT TO BE EMBRACED AND NOT WASTED.

"Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God."
1 John 4:7

IT WAS ODD TO SEE SUCH A DISCONNECT FROM WHAT I'D BEEN TOLD.

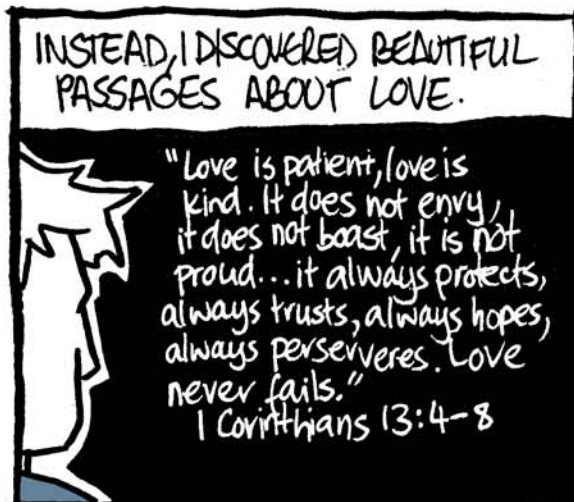Dear Peter, I'm not really like this—but I feel like homosexuality is wrong a good person, but God does no doing with homosexual do not

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I'm Not a Tom

Tracey's Story

heey...

hey.

heh.

BACK IN THE PRESENT....

Well that's irrelevant now that you've made her obsessed with meeting my mum!!

I can't let her meet my mum...

Well that's not MY fault!!

It's not my fault that society bows to the monogamous, patriarchal nuclear family model that impels us to connect with our biological family and holds the "meet my parents" moment as a cornerstone to any successful relationship.

And it's not my fault that your mum's kinda homophobic.

No She's not.

She calls me 'Sir'.

She's trying to be polite. She thinks you're a TOM.

TOM: A THAI WORD THAT OFTEN REFERS TO A BUTCH WOMAN WHO IS ATTRACTED TO FEMME WOMEN, AND CONSIDERS HERSELF TO BE A MAN OR MAN-LIKE.

I was a bit of a shit about the whole thing, actually.

Aww mum! We're soooo embarrassing!

Do we have to eat that again? It makes the whole house stink!!

WHY can't we just be normal?

I even stopped admitting I was Thai after a while.

I love your olive skin! Are you Italian?

Ah, si— Yes!!

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My Family

Sam's Story

73

When I first started writing this I thought that I could just tell other people's stories.

I thought it'd be easy to sit and listen to their stories and then to draw them.

But it felt wrong to put their stories on display without showing mine.

Me. Sam. Who used to be Sarah.

Me. Who maybe wasn't ever a lesbian—but sometimes called himself that because it was simpler.

Who is white. Australian. And who moved around a lot, Eventually settling in New Zealand.

Who's not sure that he can make sense of other people's stories without owning his own.

Or maybe I'm just a self-obsessed navel gazer.

Little Bear

A comic for my friend

On Sadness

Sam's Story

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One Day
William and Albert's Story

YOU'LL FIND HIM ONE DAY

HIS SLOW, STEADY VOICE PUFFED OUT OF HIM, LIKE THE SMOKE FROM HIS PIPE. WILLIAM FELT IT SWIRL AROUND HIM, WRAPPING HIM IN HOPE.

I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER BE THAT LUCKY

BUT THE SEED OF HOPE HAD BEEN PLANTED

Could I?
Could I be like them?

EDWARD SHARED STORIES OF A COUPLE HE KNEW. HE SHARED LETTERS THEY'D SENT HIM. HE CREATED A PICTURE OF THEIR LIVES. IT WAS VIVID.

THEY HAD TRAVELLED, AND SEEN THE WORLD.

THEY HAD SET UP THEIR HOUSE, JUST OUTSIDE OF AUCKLAND

LIVING TOGETHER AS A COUPLE

THEY LOVED.

EDWARD'S WORDS SLIPPED INSIDE WILLIAM'S
HEART THAT NIGHT, AND SET UP HOUSE. THEY
WEREN'T GOING ANYWHERE. HIS WORDS OF HOPE.

WILLIAM HAD NEVER HEARD SUCH HOPE BEFORE.

BACK THEN YOU COULDN'T HAVE READ ABOUT
IT ANY BOOK. THERE WERE NO STORIES
FOR MEN LIKE THEM. AND IT CERTAINLY WASN'T VISIBLE.
THEIR WORLD WAS SHROUDED IN SECRECY.
THEY HAD A SECRET LANGUAGE, AND SECRET CODES.

BUT EDWARD'S WORDS PROVIDED WILLIAM
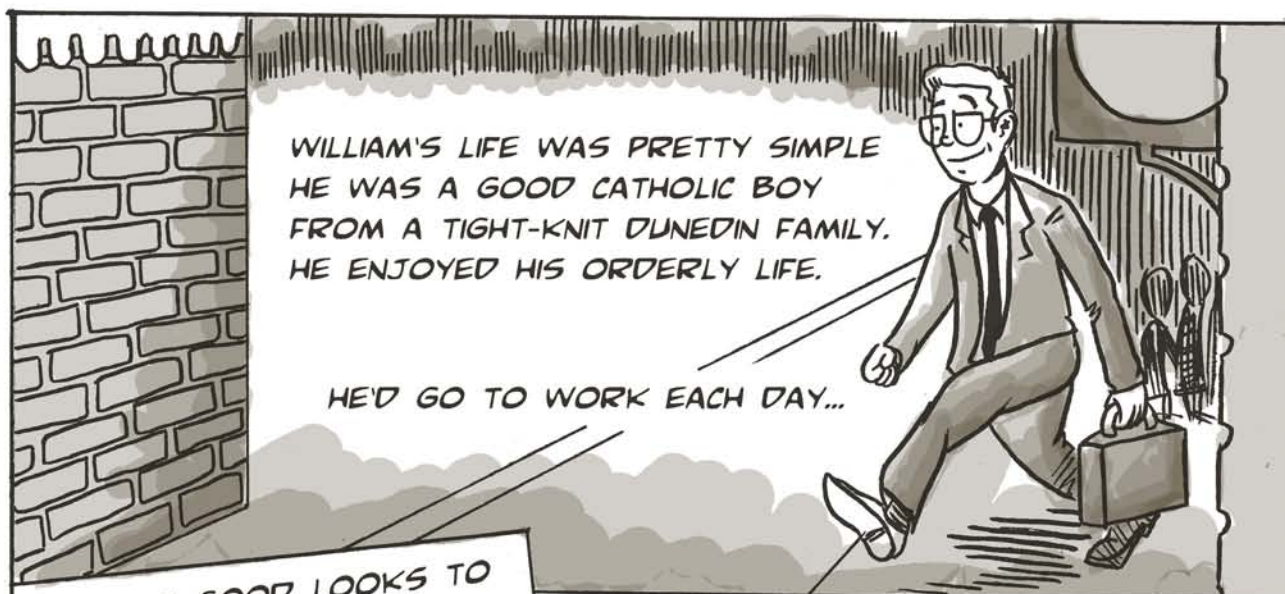WITH A TEMPLATE FOR HOW HIS LIFE COULD BE.

EDWARD AND WILLIAM HAD A RITUAL
OF MEETING EVERY SUNDAY FOR
AFTERNOON TEA. THEY'D TALK FOR HOURS.

"I COULD TELL YOU WERE FAMILY
FROM THE MOMENT I SAW YOU."
EDWARD WOULD OFTEN SAY

HE HAD USHERED WILLIAM INTO HIS WORLD,
LETTING HIM KNOW THERE WERE OTHER
MEN LIKE THEM.

"CAMP" WAS THE WORD HE USED.

WILLIAM'S LIFE WAS PRETTY SIMPLE HE WAS A GOOD CATHOLIC BOY FROM A TIGHT-KNIT DUNEDIN FAMILY. HE ENJOYED HIS ORDERLY LIFE.

HE'D GO TO WORK EACH DAY...

USING HIS GOOD LOOKS TO SELL HOUSEWARES TO NEWLY MARRIED HOUSEWIVES.

OCCASIONALLY HIS GOOD LOOKS WOULD WORK ON THEIR HUSBANDS AS WELL

THEN, EACH EVENING HE'D TRAVEL THE SAME ROUTE BACK HOME, WHERE HE'D RETIRE TO THE BASEMENT OF HIS PARENT'S HOME.

ALBERT, ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS THE REAL-LIFE OBJECT OF MANY MENS' FANTASIES HE SPENT FAR TOO MANY NIGHTS RUNNING FROM THEIR AFFECTIONS. HE HAD TO SHOO THEM AWAY
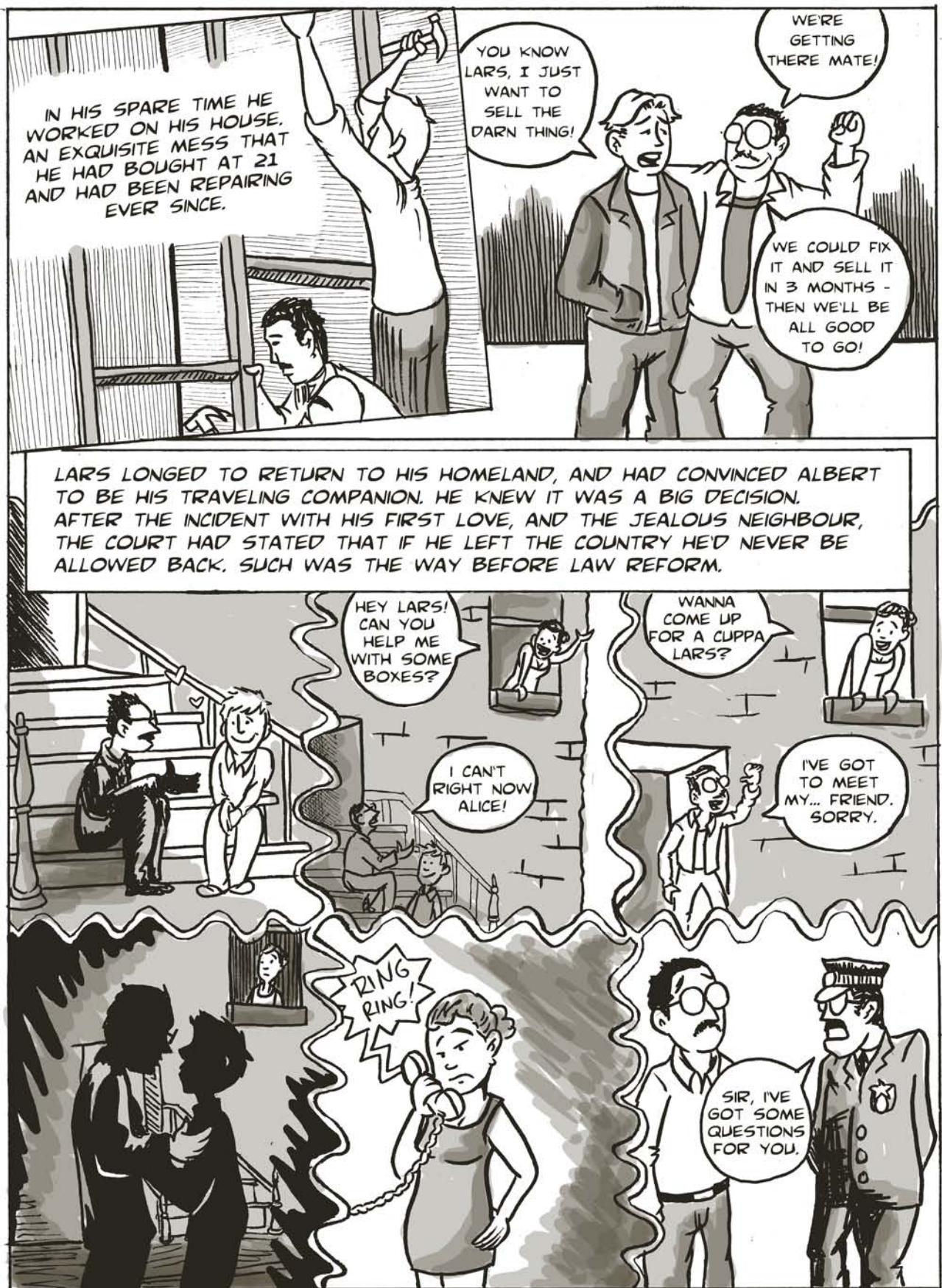
GOTTA GO! SORRY!

HE WORKED IN TELEVISION AND EVERY DAY HELD A NEW CHALLENGE

IN THE EVENINGS HE'D FIND THE BEST PARTIES, AND THE LATEST SCENES.

IN HIS SPARE TIME HE WORKED ON HIS HOUSE. AN EXQUISITE MESS THAT HE HAD BOUGHT AT 21 AND HAD BEEN REPAIRING EVER SINCE.

YOU KNOW LARS, I JUST WANT TO SELL THE DARN THING!

WE'RE GETTING THERE MATE!

WE COULD FIX IT AND SELL IT IN 3 MONTHS - THEN WE'LL BE ALL GOOD TO GO!

LARS LONGED TO RETURN TO HIS HOMELAND, AND HAD CONVINCED ALBERT TO BE HIS TRAVELING COMPANION. HE KNEW IT WAS A BIG DECISION. AFTER THE INCIDENT WITH HIS FIRST LOVE, AND THE JEALOUS NEIGHBOUR, THE COURT HAD STATED THAT IF HE LEFT THE COUNTRY HE'D NEVER BE ALLOWED BACK, SUCH WAS THE WAY BEFORE LAW REFORM.

HEY LARS! CAN YOU HELP ME WITH SOME BOXES?

I CAN'T RIGHT NOW ALICE!

WANNA COME UP FOR A CUPPA LARS?

I'VE GOT TO MEET MY... FRIEND. SORRY.

RING RING!

SIR, I'VE GOT SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU.

93

94
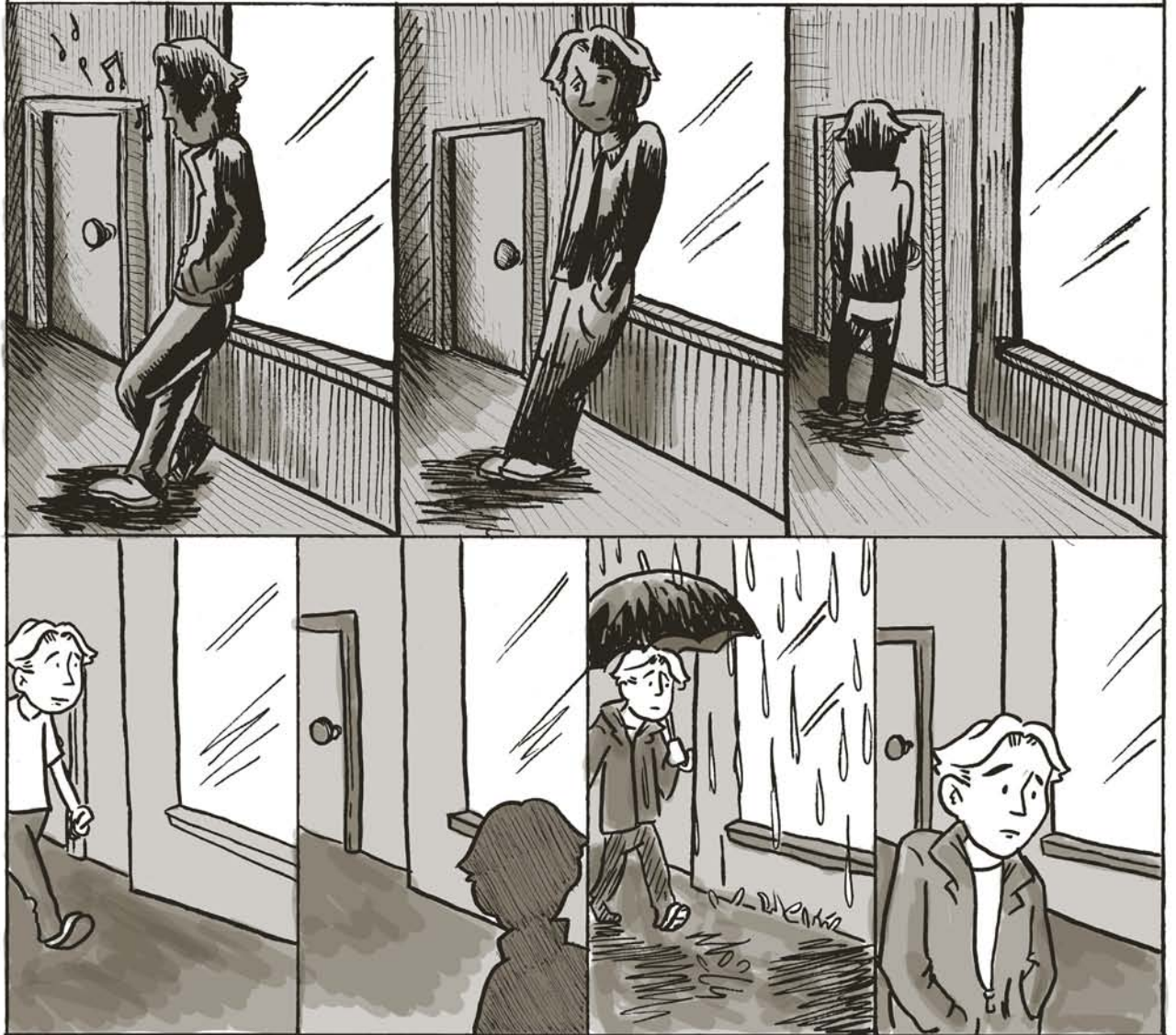
THEIR FIRST DATE WAS A PICNIC OUT AT WAIKOUITI BEACH

FIZZ

WILLIAM
MOVED IN
SIX MONTHS
LATER.
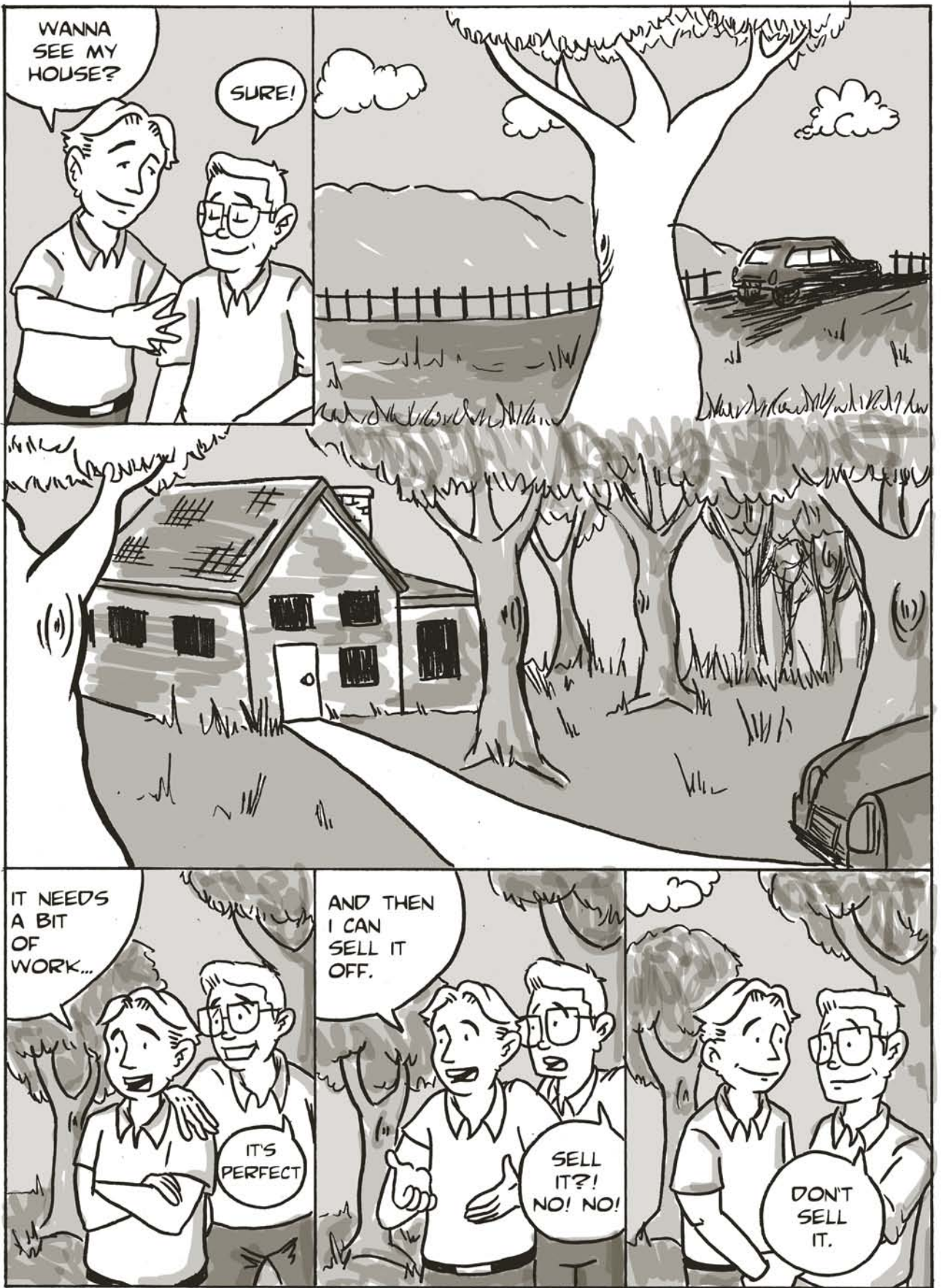
IN THEIR 42 YEARS TOGETHER, THUS FAR, ALBERT AND WILLIAM HAVE MADE A LIFE TOGETHER...

LIVING TOGETHER, JUST OUTSIDE OF DUNEDIN...

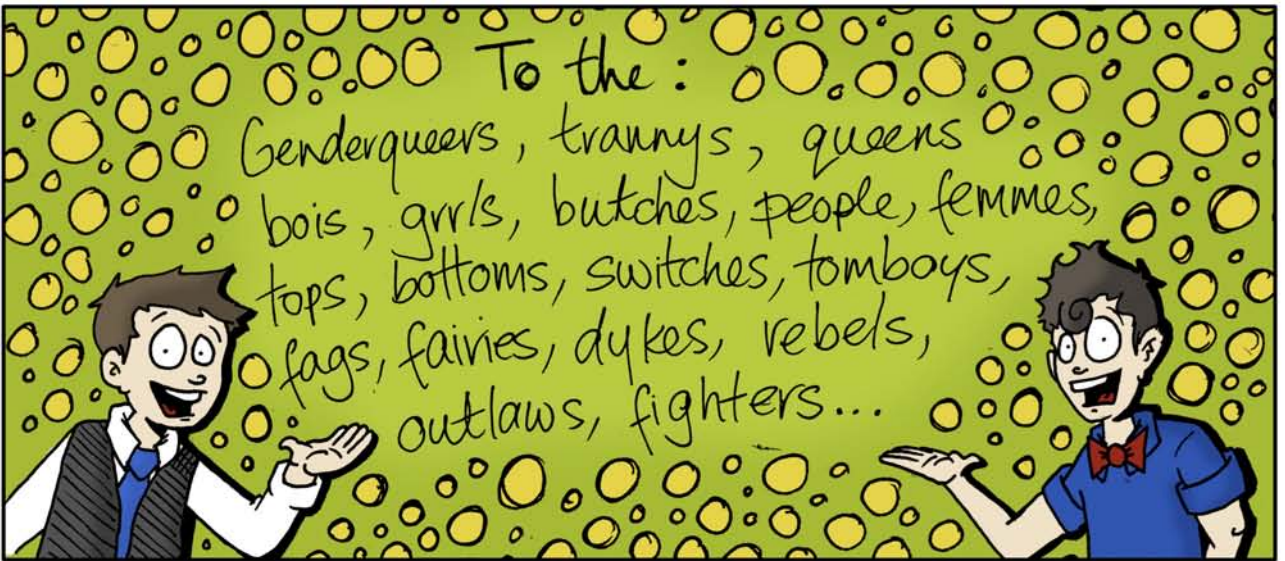TRAVELLING THE WORLD,

BEING IN LOVE.

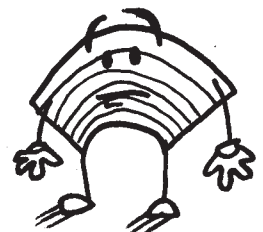# Queen's Honours
A brief intermission

Staring

Sam's Story

The Escape
Sissy Asskick's Story

PUT YOUR HANDS TOGETHER FOR THE FEROCIOUS MASCARA MASSACRE!

AAAND TONIGHT THEIR DANGEROUS OPPONENTS FROM THE MIGHTY SOUTH: THE DOUBLE D ALL STARS!

THE ONE TO WATCH IS NUMBER 60: THE AMAZING SISSY ASSKICK!
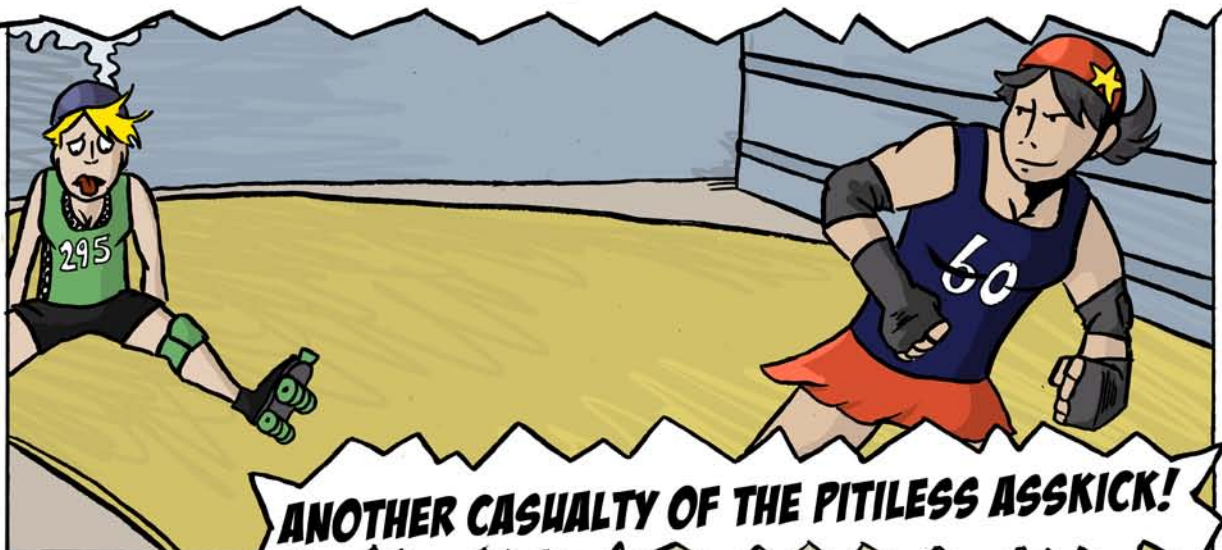
FWEEEEET!!!

FWEET FWEEEEET!!!

I'm a Boy
Sam's Story

click

When it comes to comics I can be pretty sexist.

I'm way more likely to pick up a book written by a woman, and I usually enjoy them more.

There's something quite powerful about reading something that's literally been framed by a woman.

Orr... maybe there's just something subversive about stories that aren't about or framed by white, cisgendered, heterosexual, upper/middle-class able-bodied men. Since so much is created by, and about just this type of person.

All this makes my position somewhat complicated as I embark on my transition from female to male.

I'm a white, middle-class able-bodied man.

2/3rds there.

What does that do to the stories I tell?

Am I even allowed to tell women's stories any more?

How about stories with non-white protagonists?

Or differently abled people?

If I'm the one with the power to frame these stories then what are the ramifications?

How do I avoid "othering" people?

What if I'm too ignorant to realise my own sexism/racism/classism/ableism?

What if I can't redress it even if I do recognise it?

Being a dude was something that came to me after a series of incidents...

I'd long since embraced my friend the rainbow...

finally!

I'd like you to meet... my girlfriend!

Hi!

BUT STILL, SOMETHING WASN'T QUITE RIGHT...

So lovely to see two womyn in love!

Womyn?! But I like wo-MAN...

You're so butch Sarah!

Butch? Are you kidding?

There's something you should know...

Rainbow...what's going on with me? I think I like boys too...but in a kinda gay way. I'm so confused...

Hmm...you might not like this but...

Sarah—meet Joe & Matt...

They're transboys.
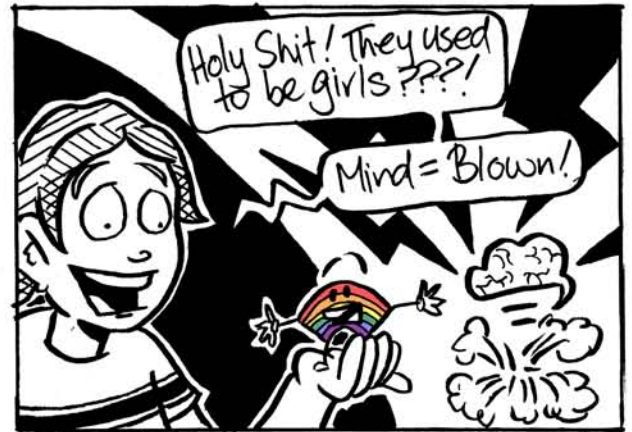
My Name is...
Rewi's Story

PART ONE

MY CHILDHOOD CONSTANTLY ECHOES THROUGH MY MIND...

IT'S 1968, AN EARLY SUMMER EVENING WITH BEETLES AND CICADAS STILL BUSILY CAPTURING WHAT AUDIENCE THEY CAN IN THEIR EXTREMELY SHORT LIVES.
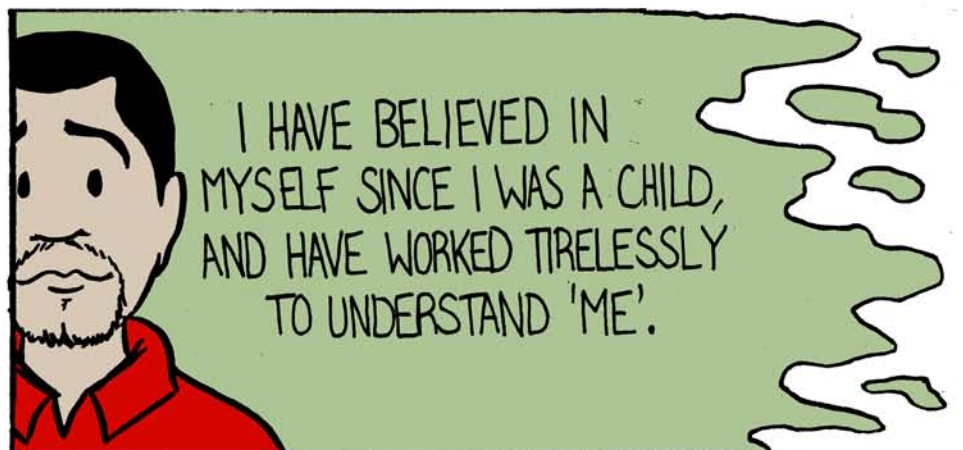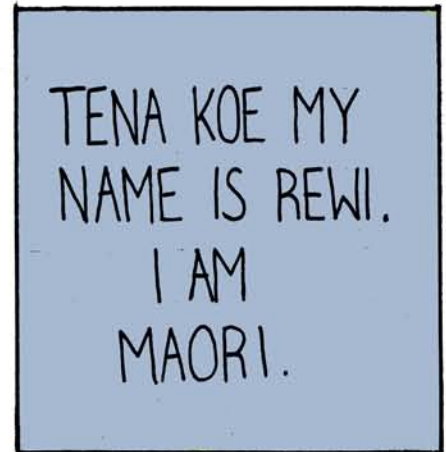
I AM A RUNTY FIVE YEAR OLD, RUNNING AROUND LIKE AN ERRATIC PUPPY WITH MY MAKE-BELIEVE FRIEND WHO IS CHASING ME.
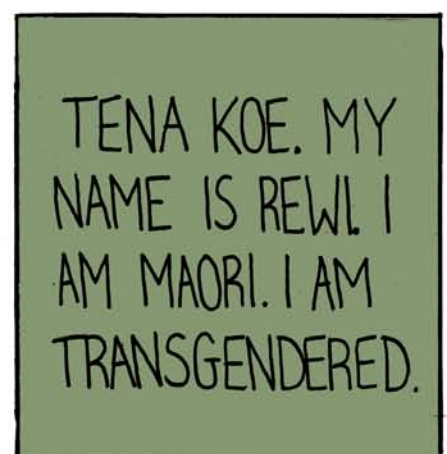
WO-OAH!

OOF!

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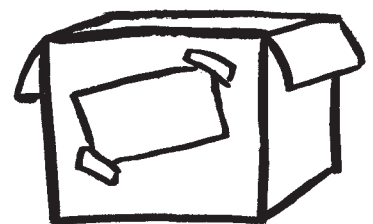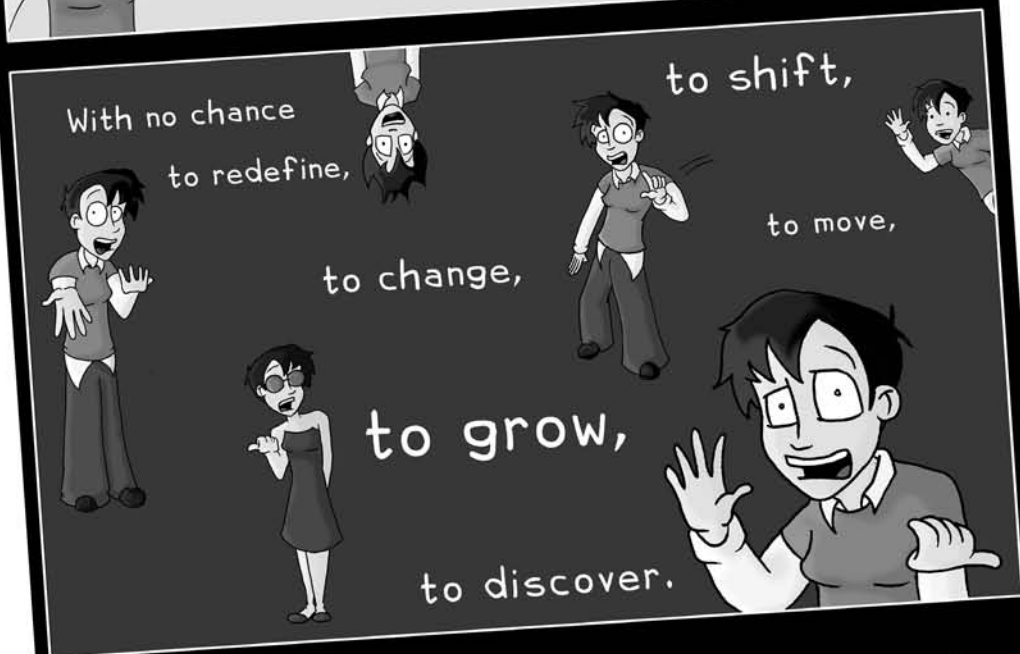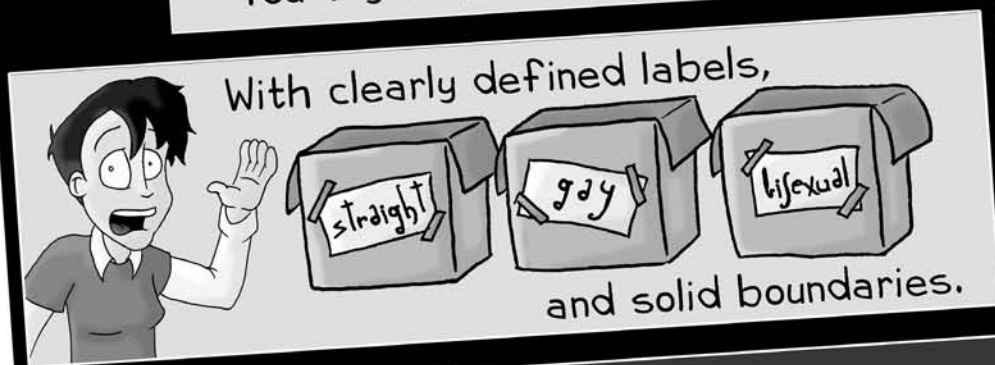I SOMETIMES WONDER IF MY GRANDMA HAD BEEN IN THE ARMY TOO. SHE WAS SO BOSSY AND PURPOSEFUL.

EAT.

BREAKFAST AT THE READY, 7·30 AM SHARP: PORRIDGE, FRY BREAD, AND A CUP OF HOT TEA. ALL PREPARED ON THE OL' COAL RANGE

ONE QUESTION THAT KEEPS COMING BACK TO ME — WHY DO SOME CHILDREN TRAIN TO BE WARRIORS AND OTHERS DO NOT?

ALL FINISHED! SEE YA!!

THE ELDERS (NGA KAUMATUA) OBSERVE US CHILDREN (TAMARIKI). IT IS APPARENT TO THEM WHICH CHILDREN ARE WARRIORS, GARDENERS, HEALERS, FOOD GATHERERS, SPEAKERS, SINGERS, LEADERS, ETC.

HMMM.....

OOOOH....

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YER FOUR, RIGHT?

FOUR AND A HALF!

SO WHO'S THE PIE FOR, KID?

UMM...

FOR YOU!

MOST IMPORTANTLY, WE BECOME VALUED MEMBERS OF THE TRIBE.

OH YEAH, I LIKE MUG PIE TOO. YEH, I'LL HAVE SOME, KID.

TO BE HANDED DOWN THE KNOWLEDGE FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT IS AN AWESOME CONCEPT OF A PEOPLE WHO UNDERSTAND FAMILY (WHANAUNGATANGA) AND SUPPORT (MANAAKITANGA)

TENA KOE MY NAME IS REWI. I AM MAORI.

PART THREE

I HAVE BELIEVED IN MYSELF SINCE I WAS A CHILD, AND HAVE WORKED TIRELESSLY TO UNDERSTAND 'ME'.

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Trans/sexual
Sam's Story

To label, or not to label?

I remember writing a comic about labels and sexuality about 5 years ago...

Eep! Ignore the chest bumps please!!

Heterosexual. Homosexual. Bisexual. Transexual. Pansexual. Asexual. Gay. Omnisexual. Autosexual.

Heterosexual. Homosexual. Bisexual. Transexual. Pansexual. Asexual. Gay. Omnisexual. Autosexual. Monosexual. Transgender. Intersex. Takata'pui. Fa'afafine. Queer. Lesbian. Homo. Bent. Sodomite. Straight. Dyke. Fetishist. Queen. Polyamorous. Bi. Faggot. Poof. Butt Pirate. Minge Monkey. Lezzie. Carpetmuncher. Sapphist. Muff Diver. Fairy. Trannie. Bufftie. Fruit. Fudgepacker. Rectum Ranger. Pansy. Brokeback. Gender Bender. Camp.
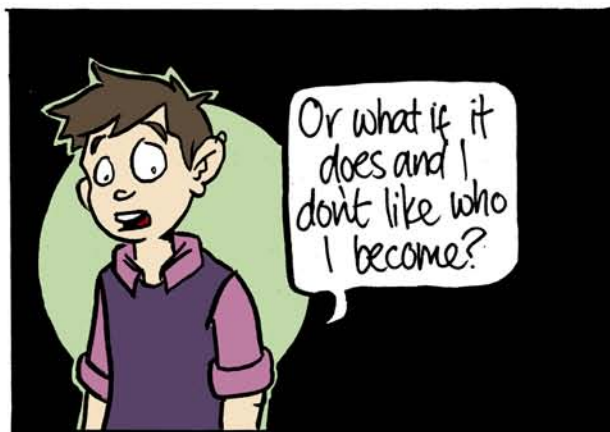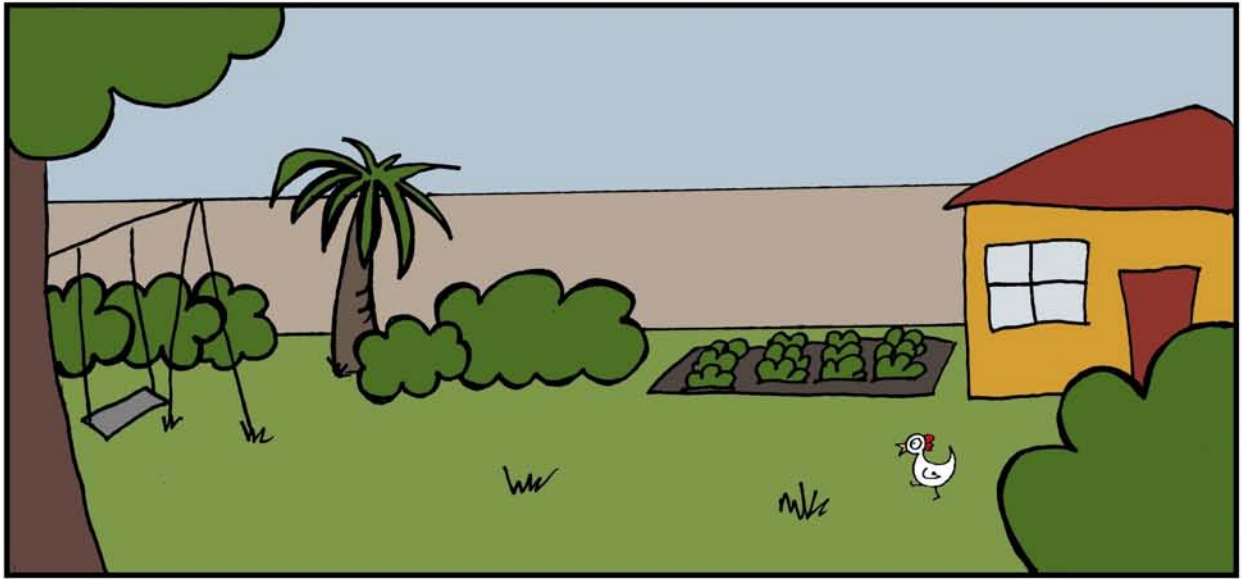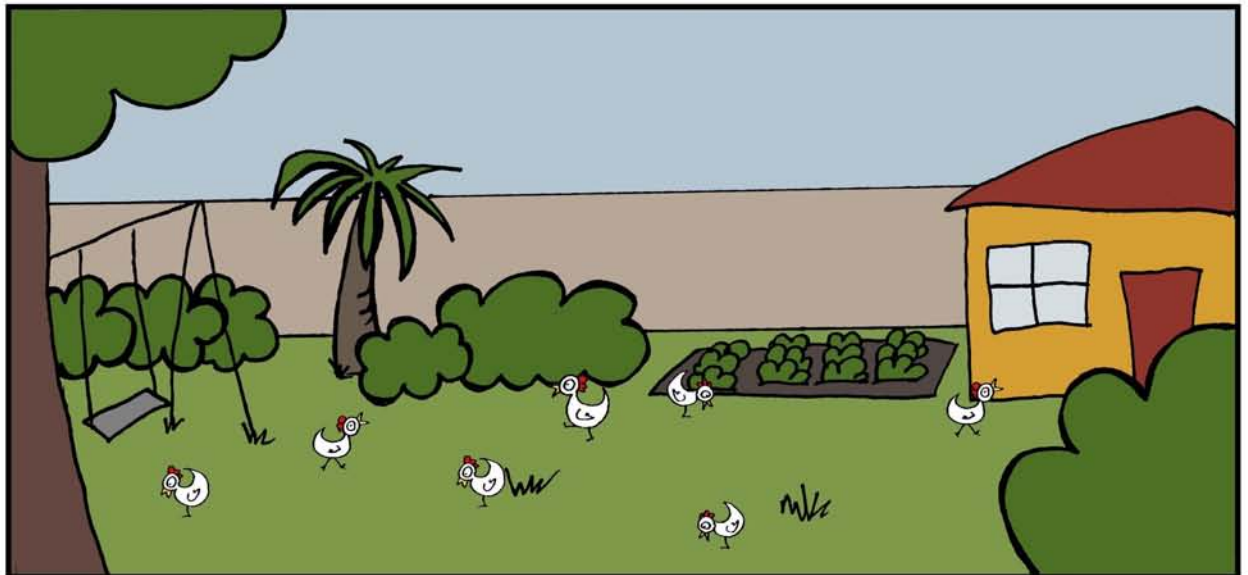
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Conclusion

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A Poultry Tail
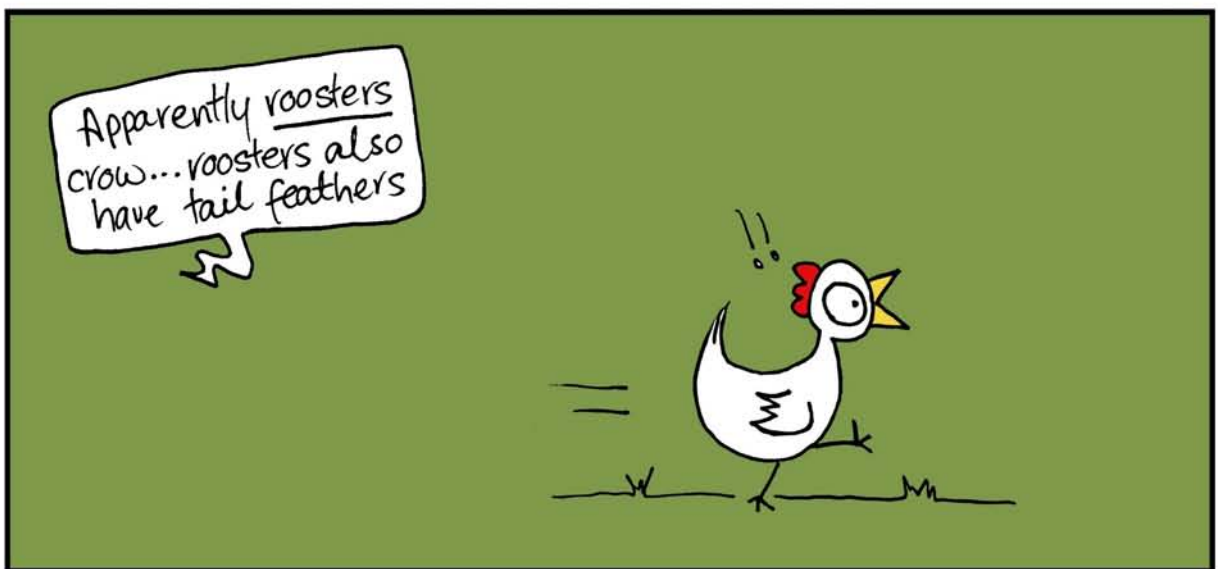## An extra little comic

A CHICKEN WANDERED INTO OUR YARD ONE DAY.
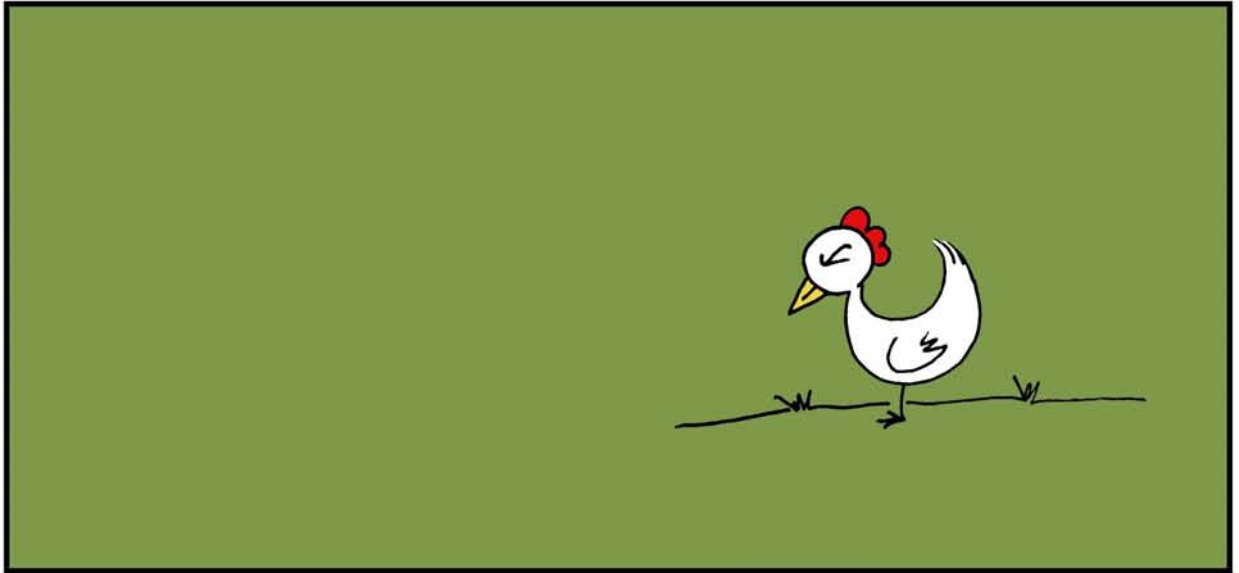IT DECIDED OUR GRASS WAS JUST THE RIGHT
LEVEL OF SOFTNESS, I GUESS.

WE WATCHED IT DISCOVER THE CLUB-HOUSE
AND THE SWINGSET. WE WATCHED IT EXAMINE
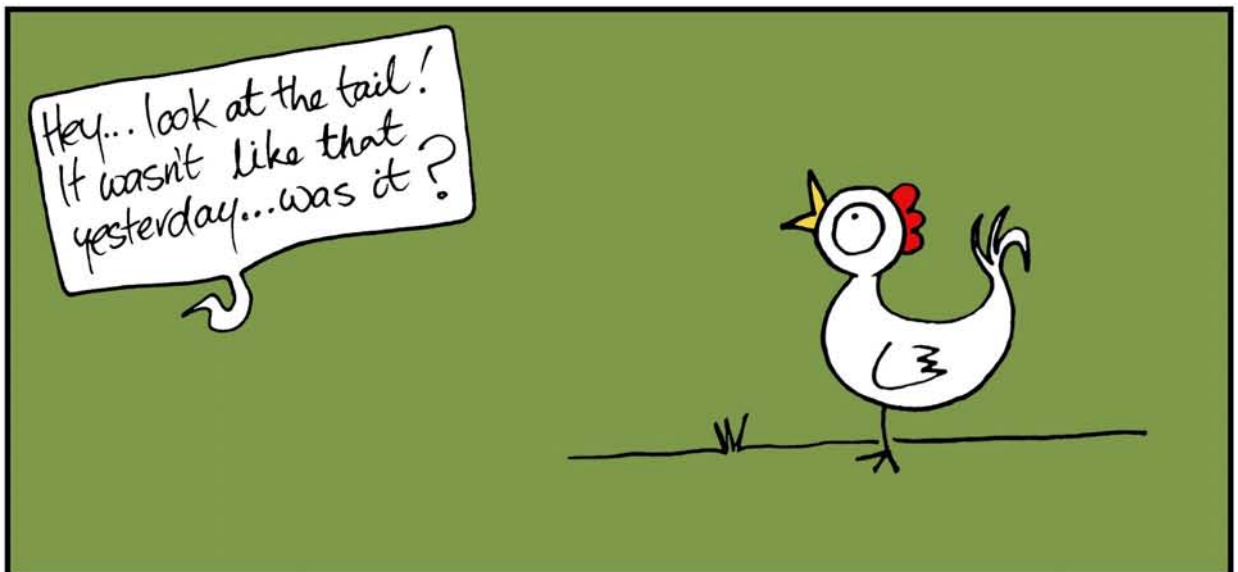THE CABBAGE TREE DOWN THE BACK.

I LIKED SEEING IT WHEN I LOOKED OUT MY WINDOW. IT WAS SO CURIOUS. IT MADE ME HAPPY TO THINK THAT IT CHOSE OUR YARD.

SOMETIMES WE'D TRY TO APPROACH IT. BUT IT WAS TOO SHY. IT DIDN'T LIKE TO BE TOUCHED, I GUESS.

STILL, I LIKED WATCHING IT GROW.

Hey... look at the tail!
It wasn't like that
yesterday...was it?

I LIKED WATCHING IT CHANGE.
I LIKED WATCHING IT DISCOVER.
I LIKED WATCHING IT BE.