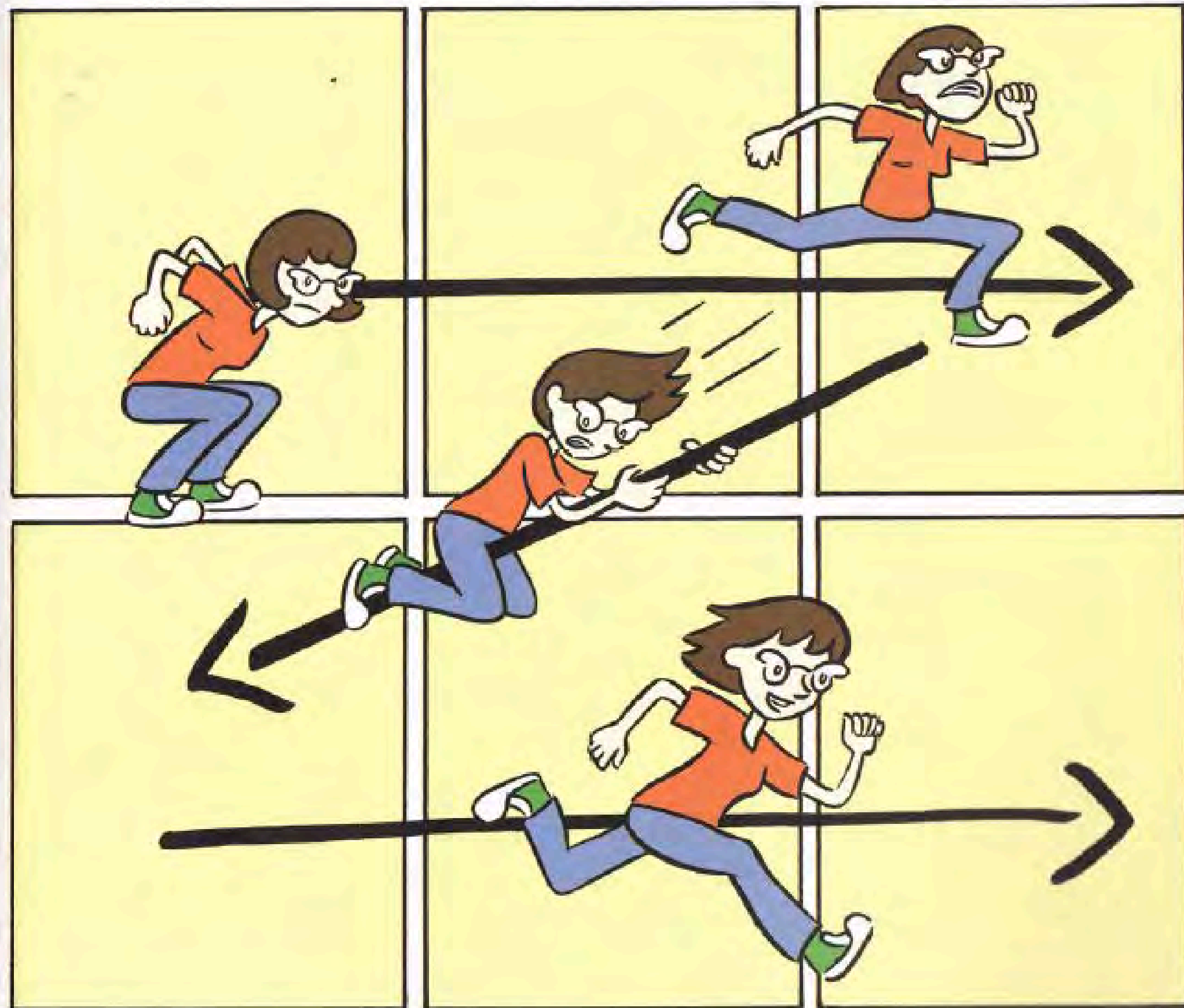


# Page and Panel Composition

**Professor Sara Gómez Woolley**

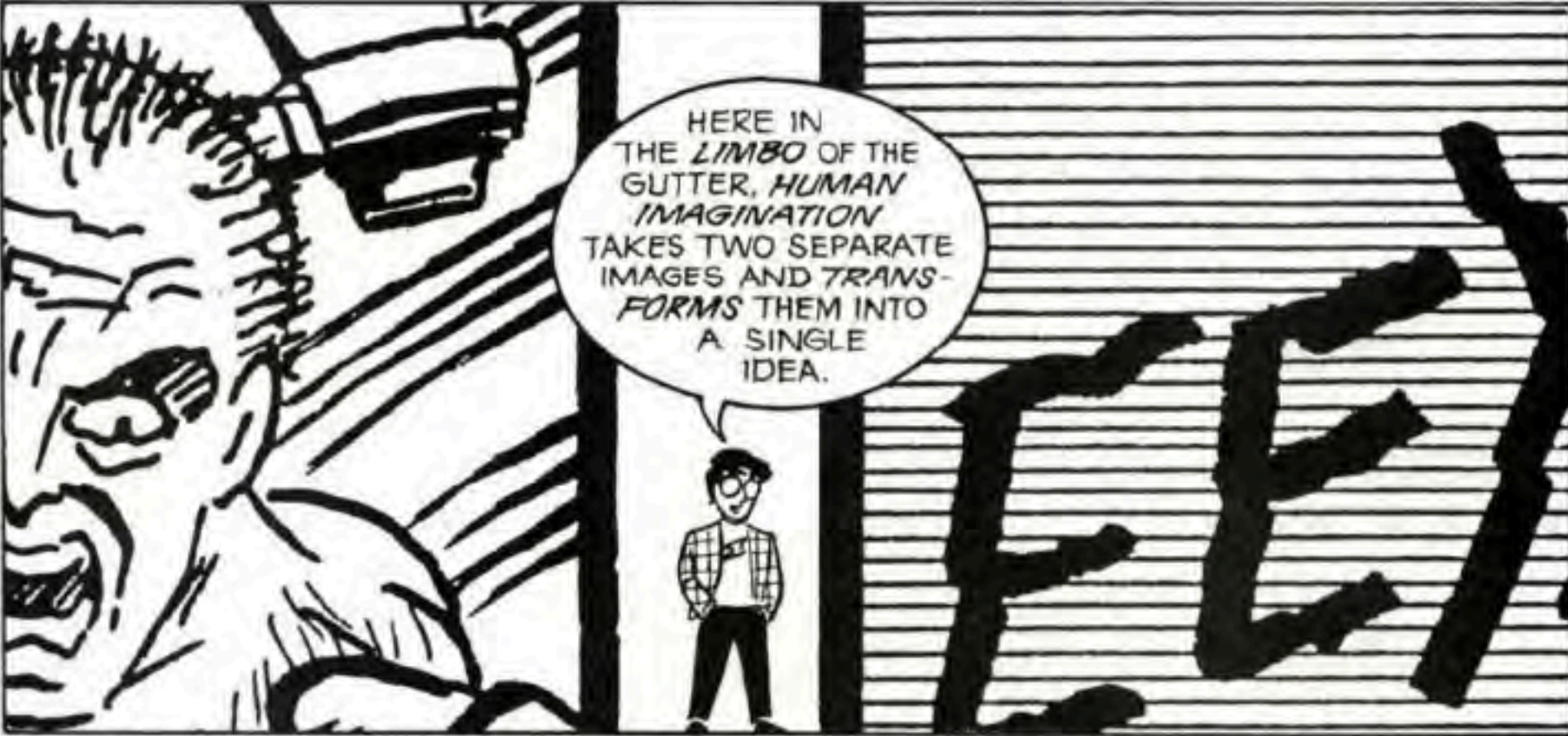


**Comics Building Blocks!**

**How to read and write comics!**



# Between the Panels: a.k.a. "The Gutter"







I MAY HAVE DRAWN AN *AXE* BEING *RAISED* IN THIS EXAMPLE, BUT I'M NOT THE ONE WHO LET IT *DROP* OR DECIDED HOW *HARD* THE BLOW, OR *WHO* SCREAMED, OR *WHY*.



THAT, DEAR READER, WAS YOUR *SPECIAL CRIME*, EACH OF YOU COMMITTING IT IN YOUR OWN *STYLE*.



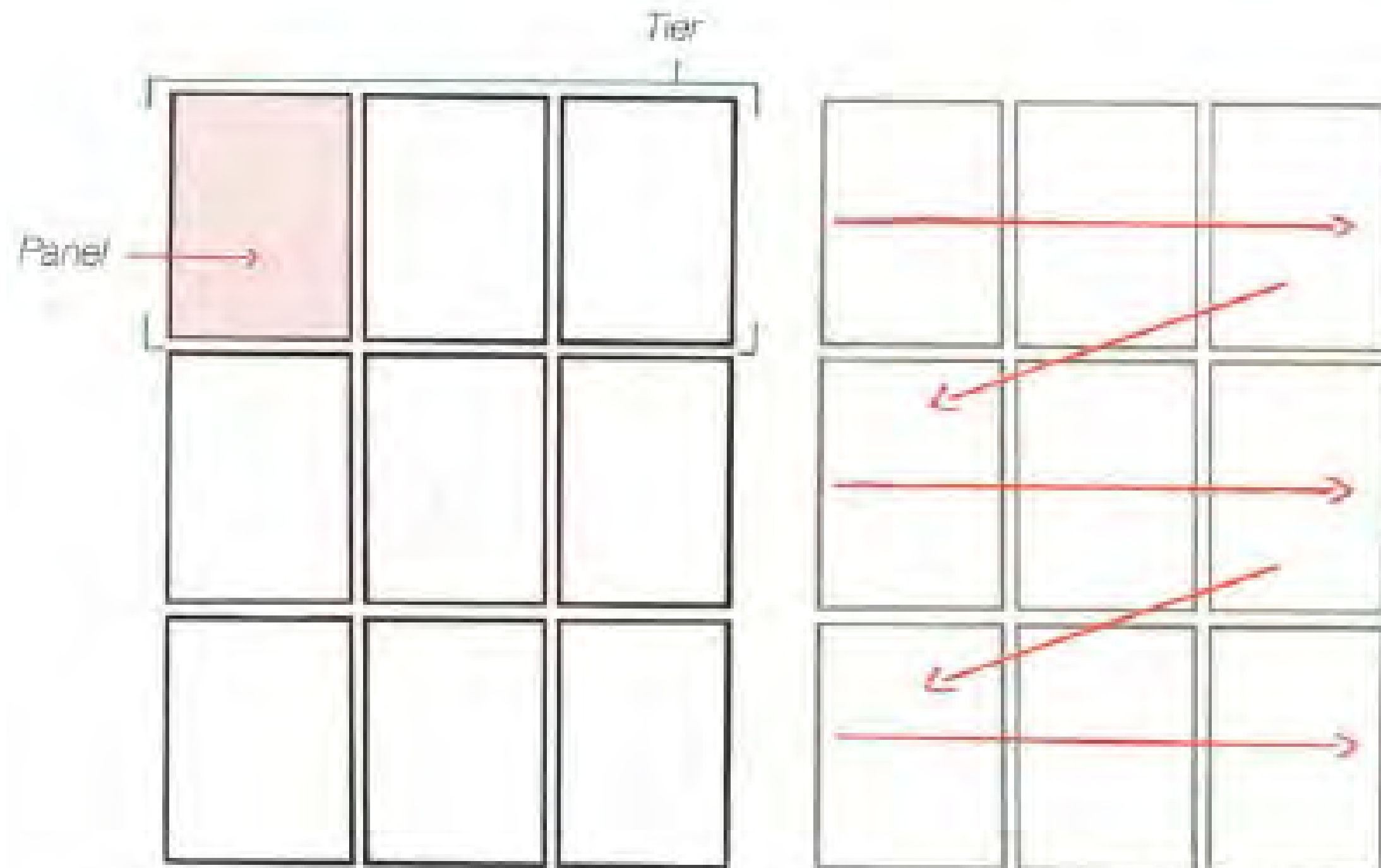
# How does the reader's mind participates in storytelling?

Closure : Observing the PARTS,  
but perciving the WHOLE.



	<b>1.</b> <i>MOMENT-TO-MOMENT</i>		<b>4.</b> <i>SCENE-TO-SCENE</i>
	<b>2.</b> <i>ACTION-TO-ACTION</i>		<b>5.</b> <i>ASPECT-TO-ASPECT</i>
	<b>3.</b> <i>SUBJECT-TO-SUBJECT</i>		<b>6.</b> <i>NON-SEQUITUR</i>

# The natural way to read, a.k.a.: Directional Flow



Most comic book pages are made up of panels and tiers.

The rule of directional flow: left to right, top to bottom

Panel  
Gutter  
Closure  
Sequence

Tier  
Page  
Directional Flow  
"Z Formation"



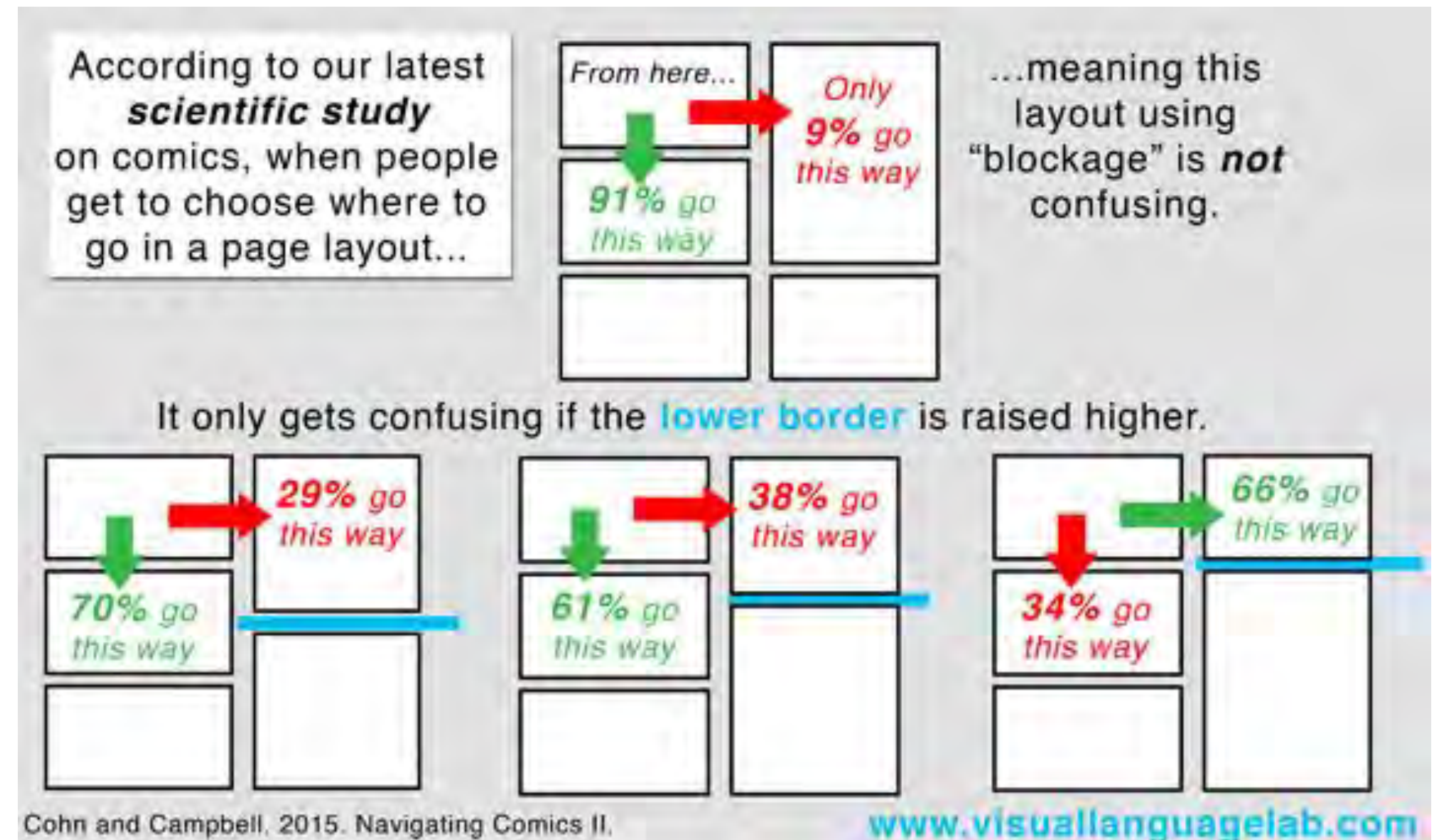
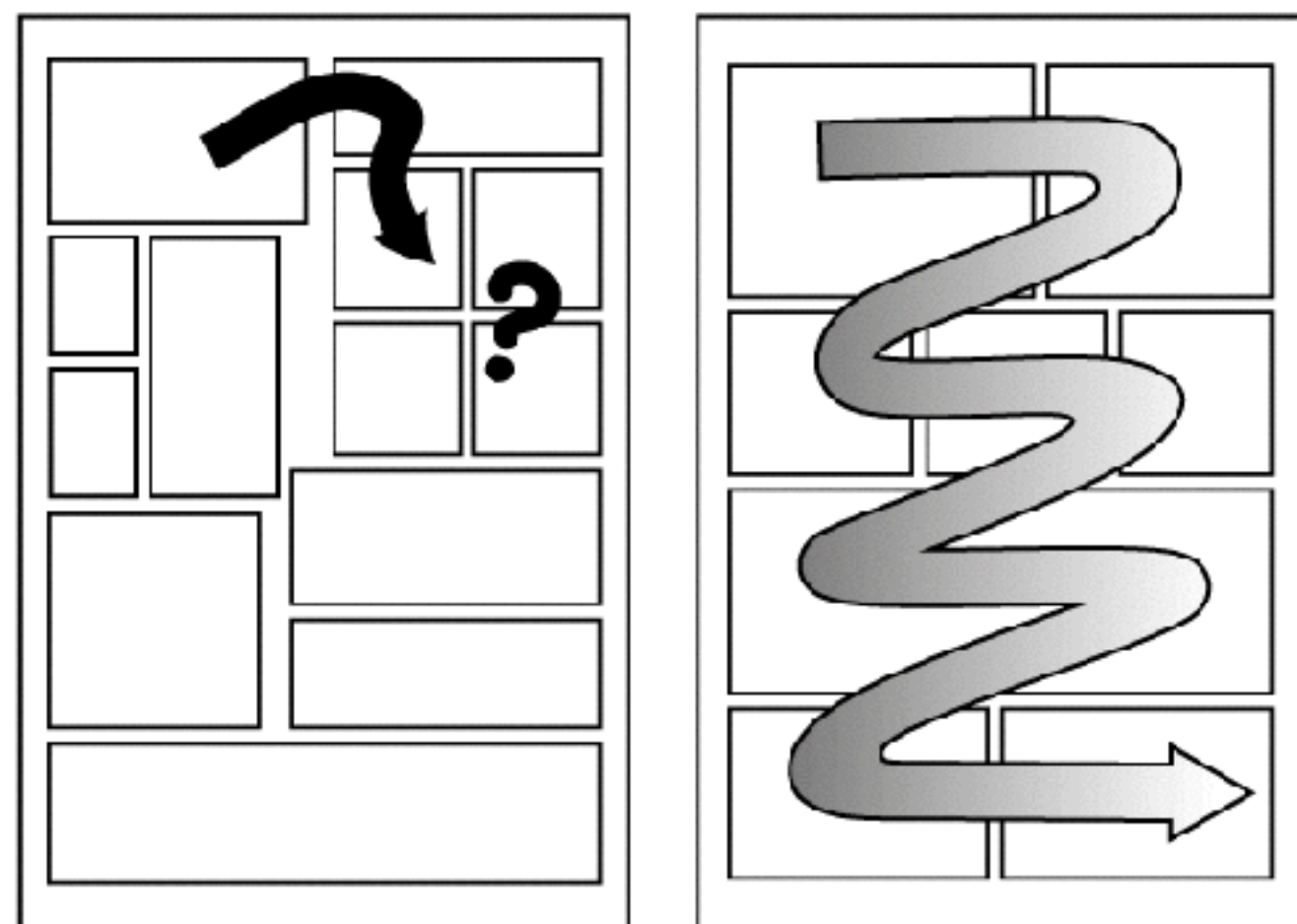
You should also maintain a left-to-right flow within your panels.

*TIP: The rule of directional flow is NOT to be broken lightly. It can be JARRING to read prose in one direction and images in the other.*



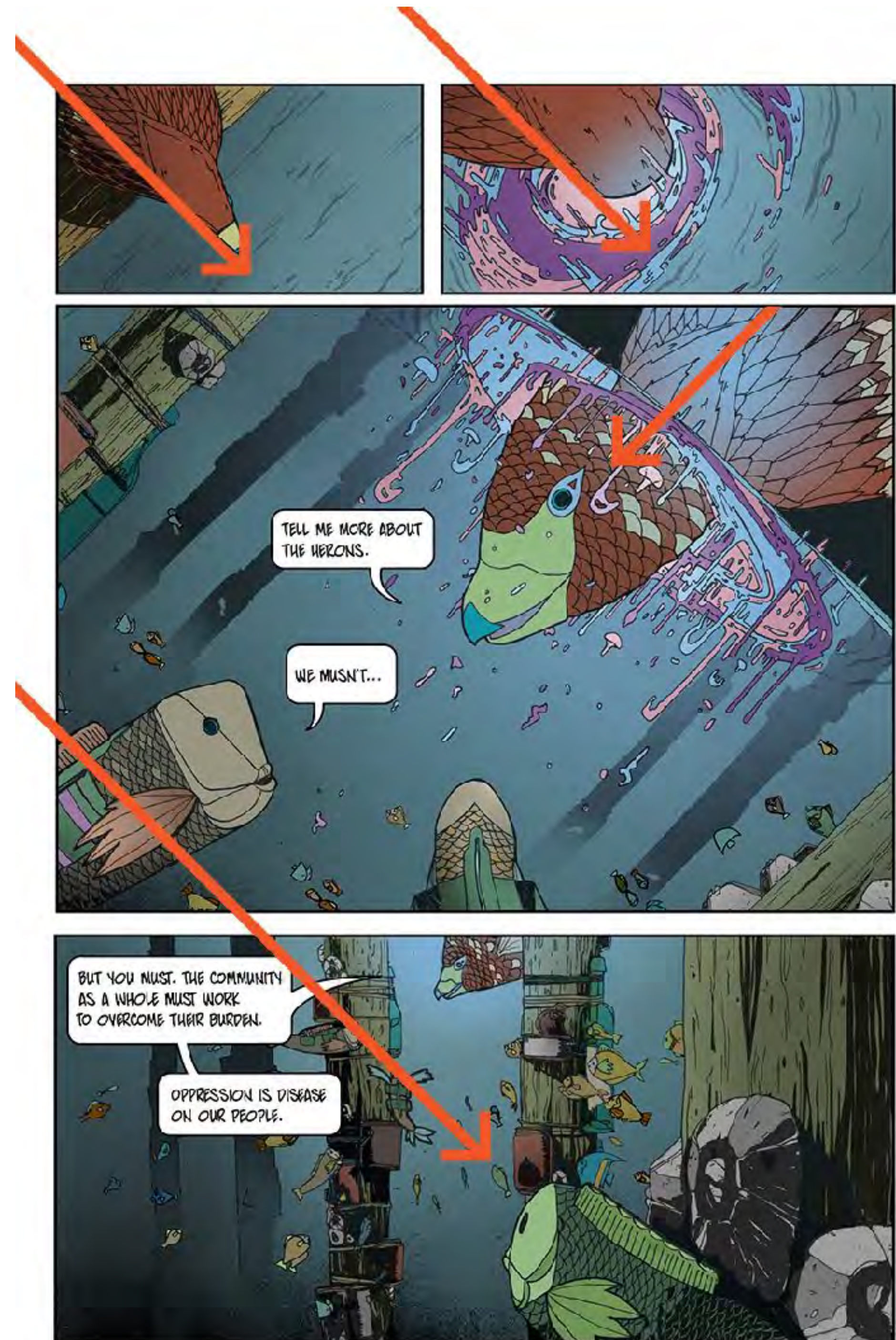
# Directional Flow & Reading Order

- Follow the natural reading order of your audience (western vs eastern)
- If you disrupt this flow you will confuse and thus lose readers





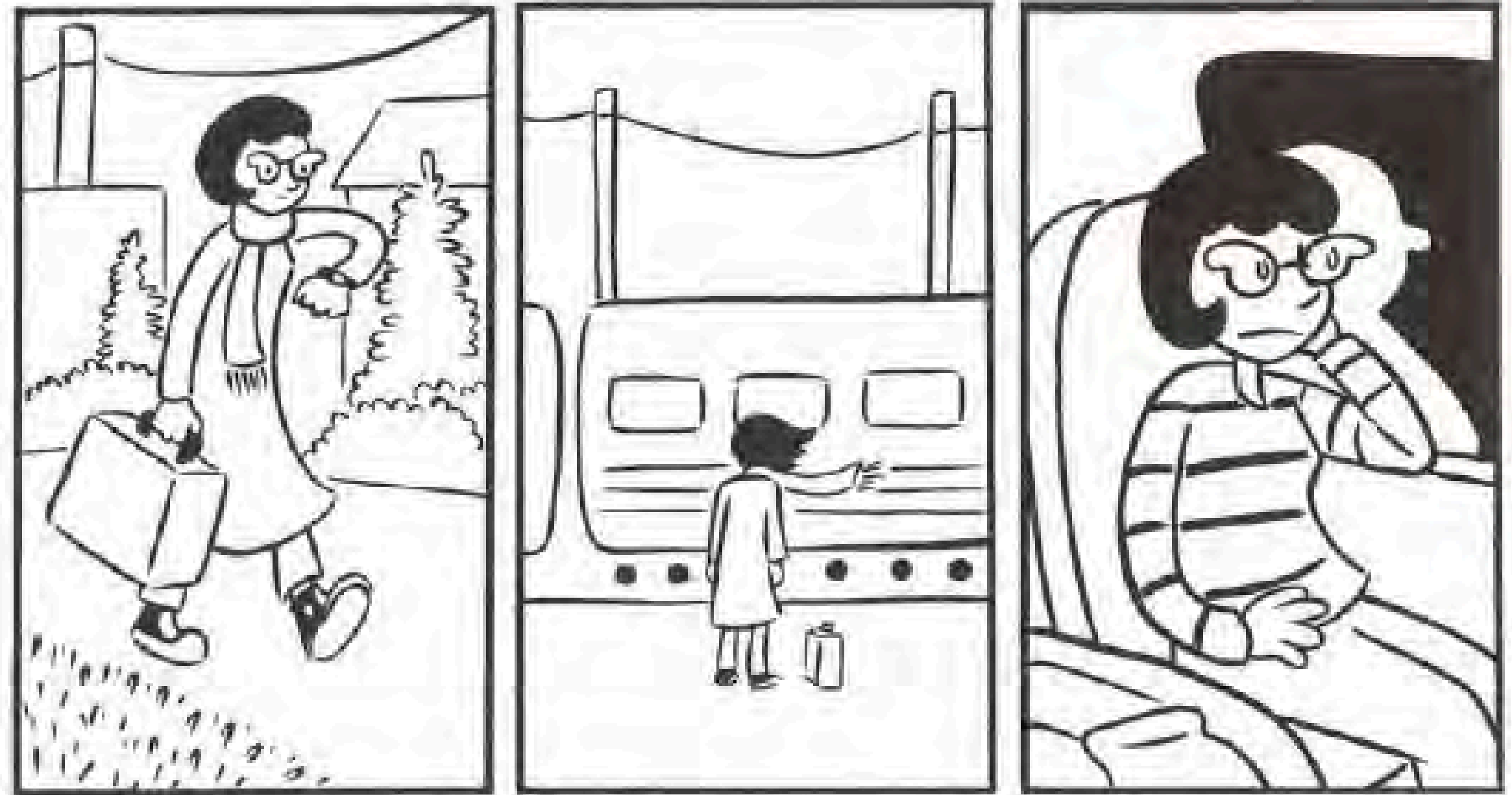
- Use the elements on the page to lead the reader through your composition





## How Panel Choices Effect Reading:

In this sample comic by Robyn Chapman, consider how choice of panel effects HOW we read the story being told.



*Each of these panels are the exact same size, making for a succinct and evenly paced tempo. If we play with the size and composition of our panels, we can stretch or shrink time to fit the story we're trying to tell.*

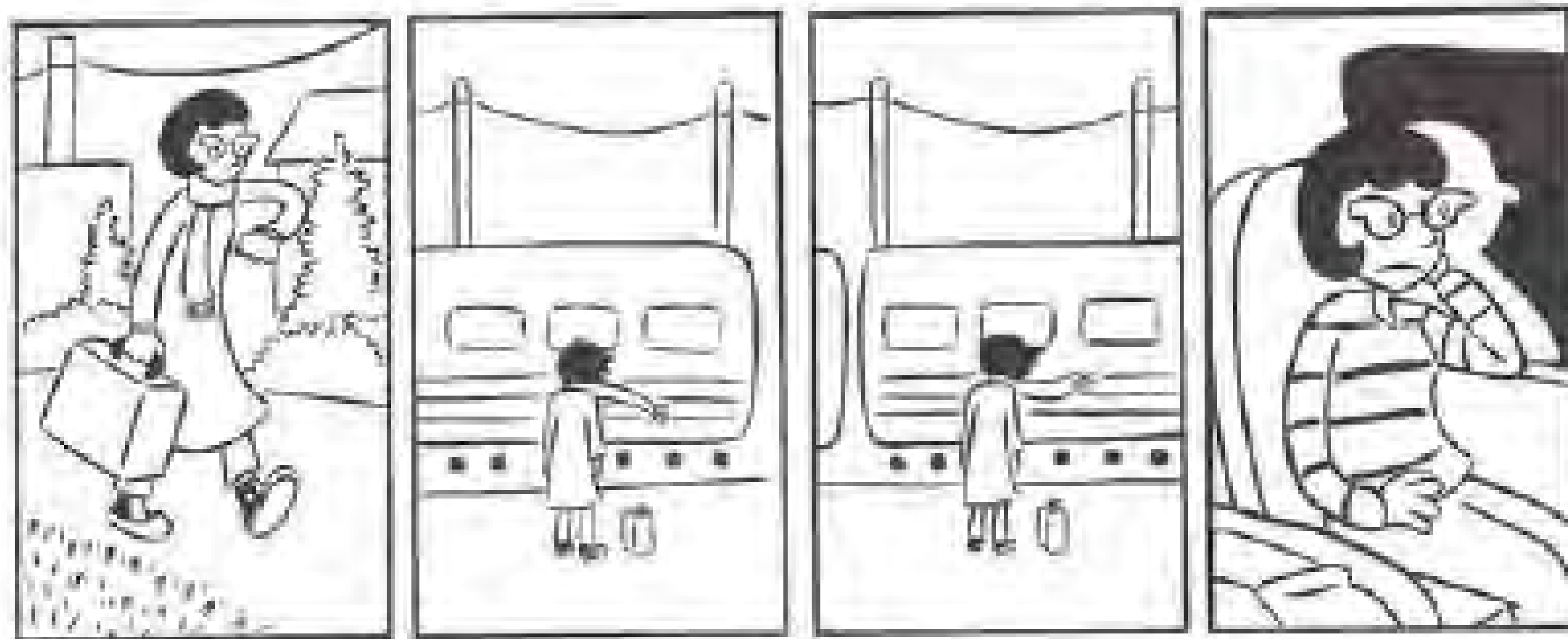
## What happens when one panel is drawn bigger?



One way to create a longer pause in the reading experience is to draw certain panels bigger. A big panel tells the reader, "Look at this, this is important." It's not uncommon to create a panel that takes up a whole tier, or even a whole page (the latter is sometimes called a splash panel).



## What happens when one panel is repeated?



Repeating a panel will stretch a moment out. In some cases, this means copying and then pasting an identical panel onto your page (this works best when there is absolutely no change or movement in the panel). In other cases, you will have to redraw the panel, keeping the basic design but adding some small changes. This sort of panel repetition gives the comic a slow-motion effect.

**What happens when one panel is border-less and drawn to the edge of the page ?**

**A.K.A. a "Bleed"**



You can even draw a panel so large that it's not contained within its border. An image that extends to the edge of a page is called a bleed. Bleeds are particularly useful when you want the reader to examine the environment you've drawn. Your world feels more open when it extends to the very edge of the paper.



## What happens when one panel is silent?



Another way to make the reader linger on a panel is to make that panel silent. Text automatically imposes a certain reading pace on a panel (we read the text, we move on). A silent panel has a timeless quality that invites the reader to drink it in.



- You can vary gutter size and use borderless or “open” panels
- Use center panels as an anchor for each page



- Your panel borders don't have to be straight lines and right angles, but if you are going to mix it up do it for a specific reason that adds to the narrative and understanding of the plot





- Larger panels can slow the reader down

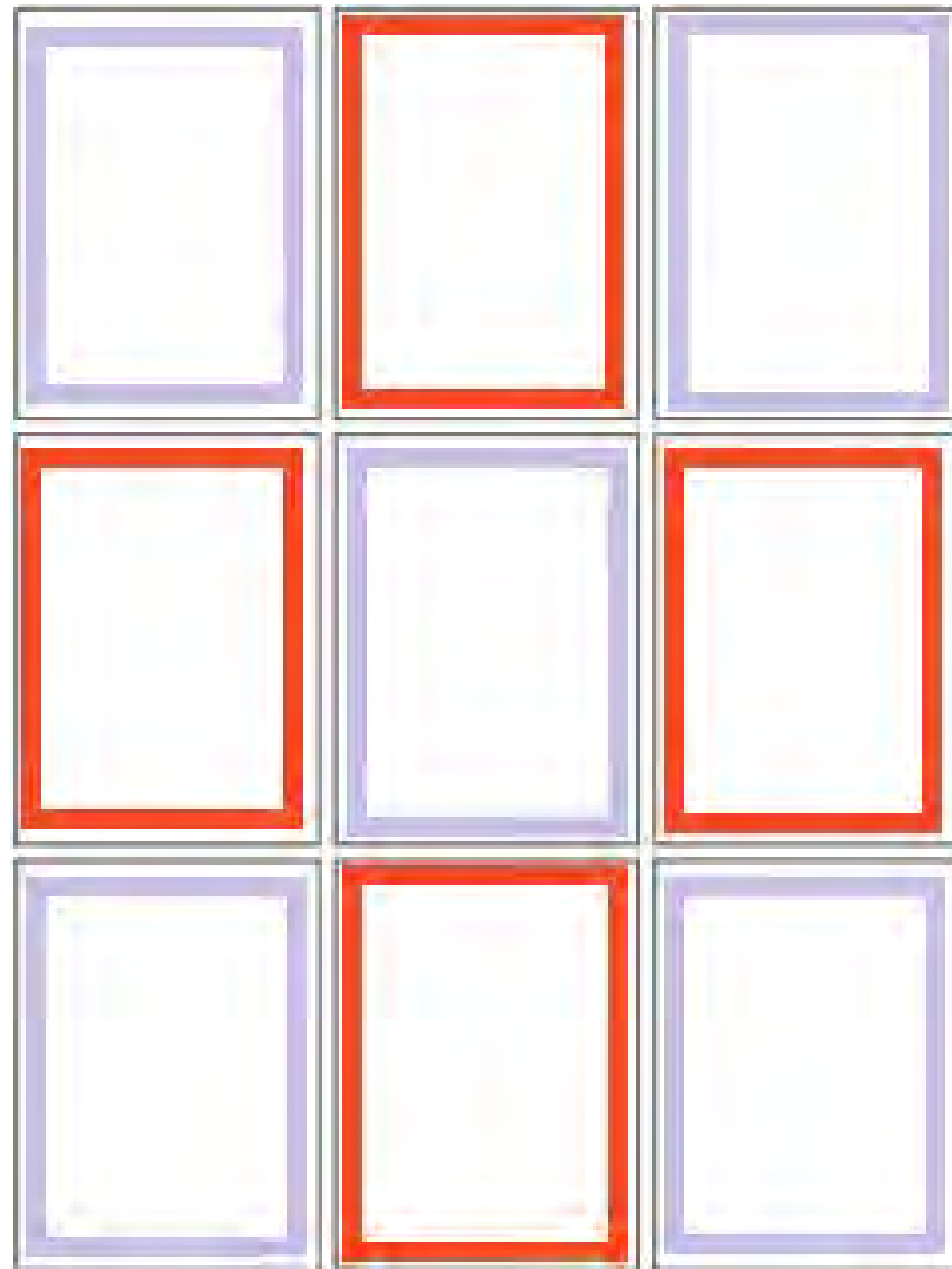
- Narrow panels help build tension



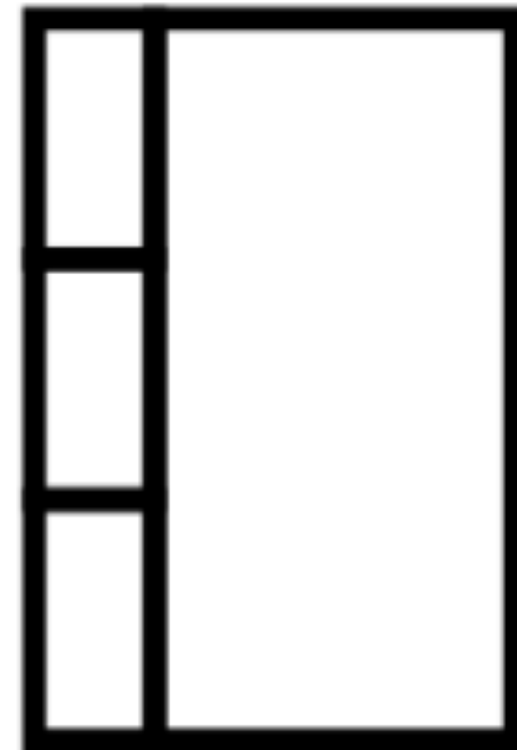
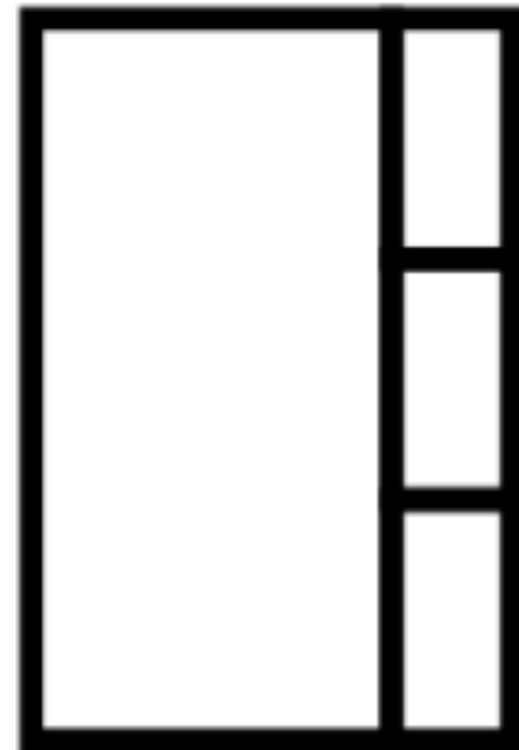
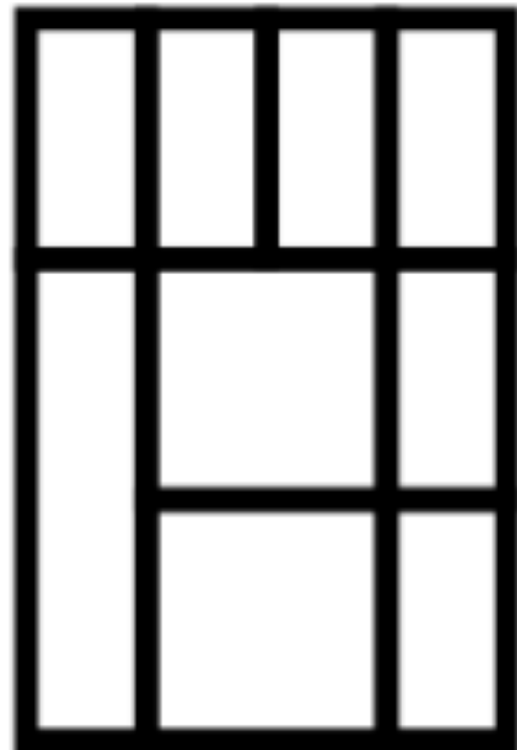
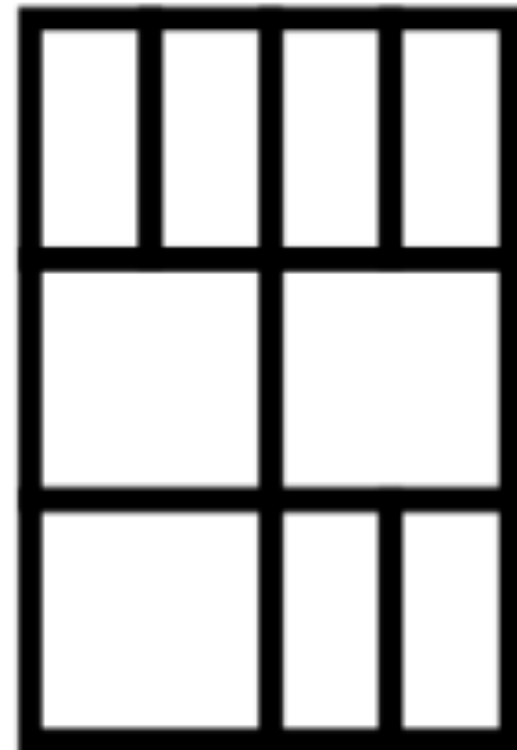
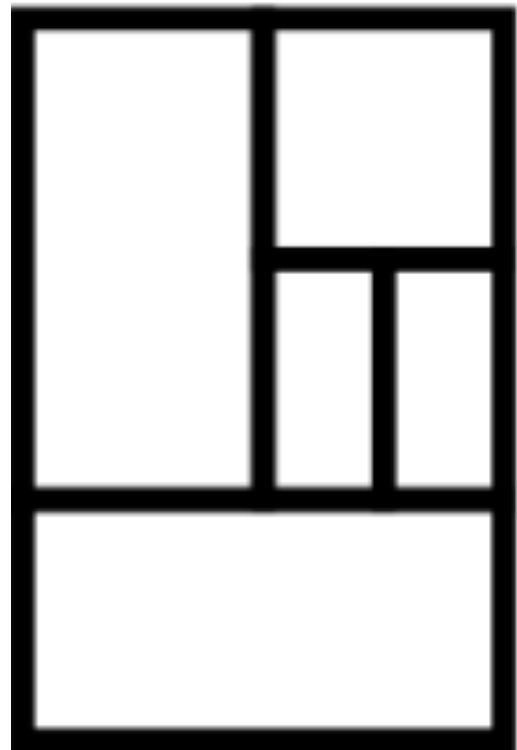
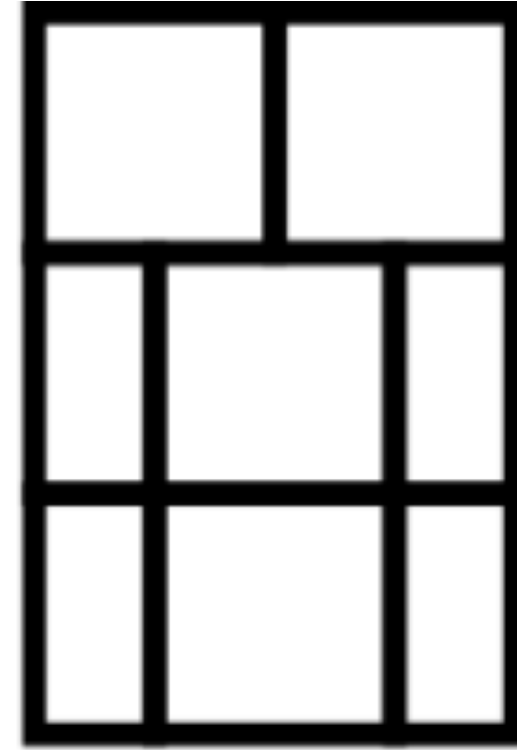
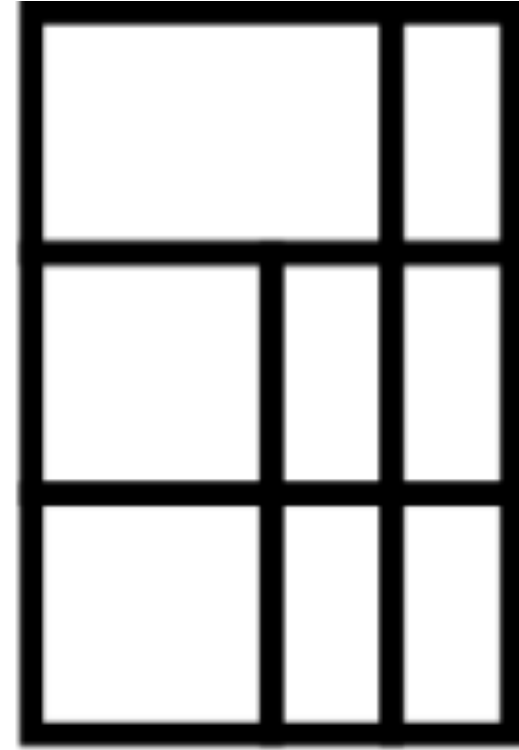
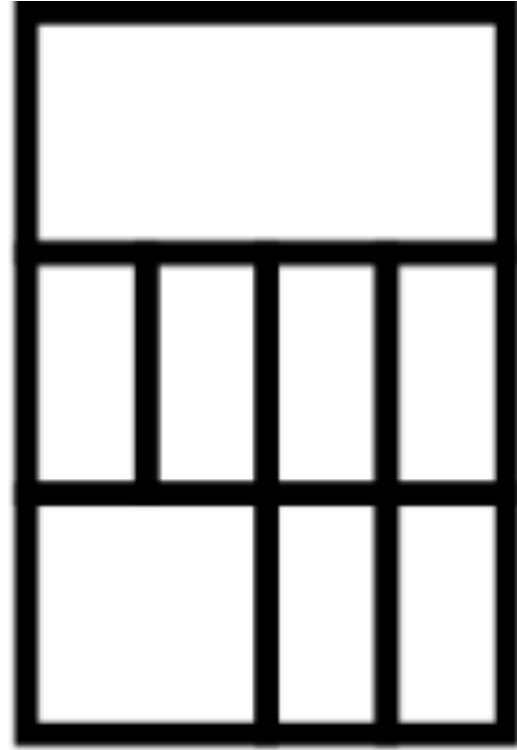
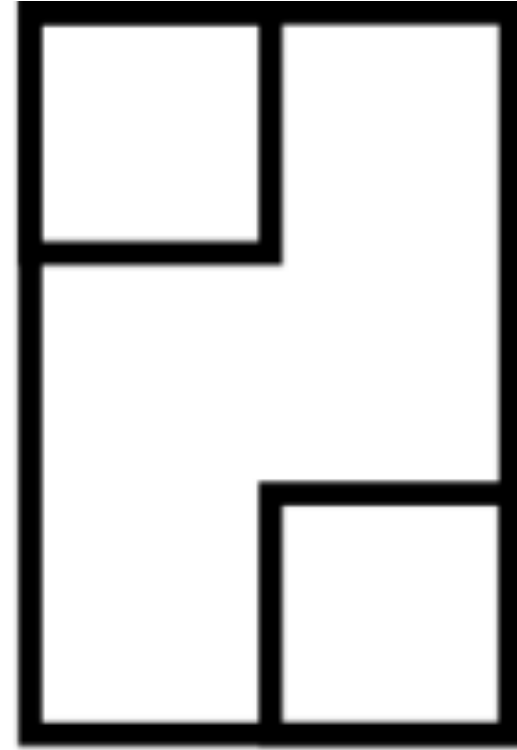
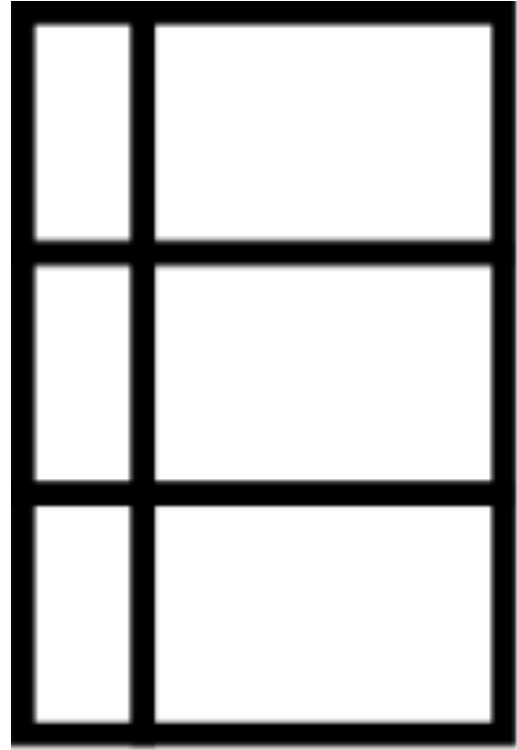


# Page Layout Basics:

- The 9 Panel Grid







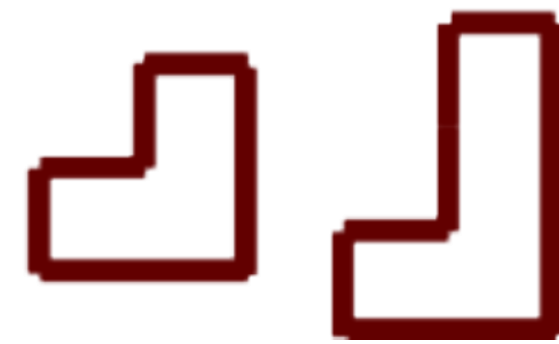
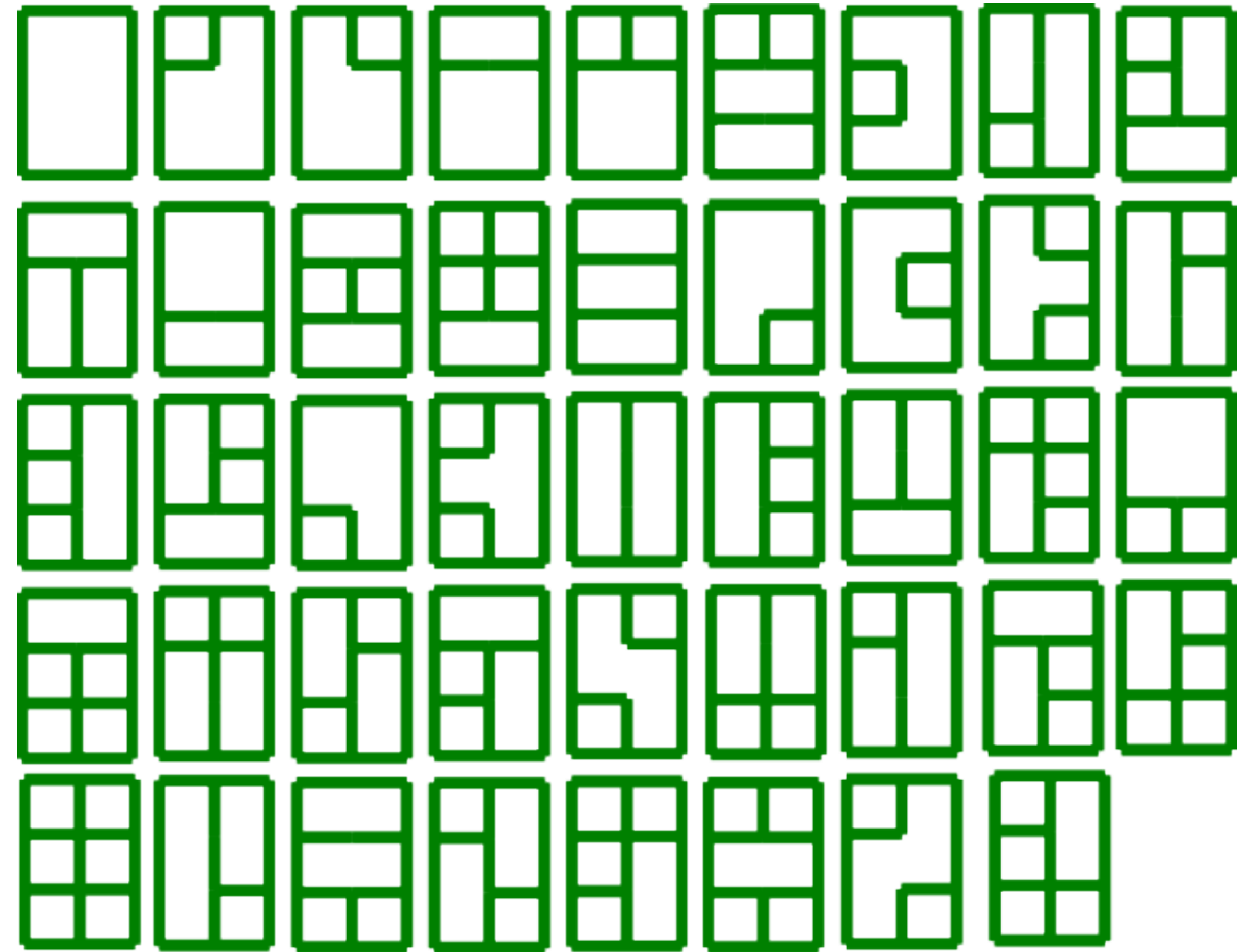
**Making  
Comics  
Scott  
McCloud**

Just the Panels - Start With a Six or Nine Panel Grid

# A study in panel borders:

Inspired by this [awesome post about making comics quickly](#), I took a look at some comics I own to get some sense of different kinds of panel design choices.

- All 2x3 panel layouts 2: The Cull
- So I decided to have a half-honest go at culling the 74 panels from the 2x3 grid down to
- **Step 1:** throw out all those “boomerang” panels because it’s relatively unlikely that they’ll work at all. POSSIBLE, but probably awkward unless you’re pretty clever.
- **Step 2:** throw out the pages that only make sense if you’re looking at “aside” panels. I can see a number of reasons these might work nicely in the right case, buuuuut, in a 2x3 grid they’ll be kind of big and awkward aside panels.
- **Step 3:** in the least objective of all the culling steps, I’ve thrown out all the layouts which are potentially confusing for left-to-right reading. A LOT of artists use exactly these layouts on a regular basis, BUT, if you’re ME, you get irritated by having to design the flow of artwork to guide readers to the correct next panel.
- This drops the total layout count to 18, which is small enough that a set of all 18 wouldn’t be a totally daunting challenge just to have some ready-made panels. As before, note that the design choices are *arbitrary* in a lot of ways, and they *limit what you can do next*, but enforcing rules like this also makes it easier and faster to make choices: this is arguably the core point of this [awesome post that is awesome](#).



**(To heck with these guys)**



# Start with an idea

## And turn that idea into a Script or Rough draft

- **ELEVATOR PITCH:** A quick, punchy paragraph – the grabber – to command attention.
- **Introduction** – a general overview of the project
- **Outline** – A synopsis of what happens in the story, scene by scene
- **Characters** – Main characters and villains, include sketches/portraits if possible!
- **Format and Delivery** – How many pages? Size? Full-color or B&W?

*Manhunter #1* - script by Marc Andreyko

Page One-

Caption: "Downtown Los Angeles. 3 a.m."

We are in the dirty, dingy downtown of L.A. Homeless people sleep on the sidewalks and in the doorways of once-glorious art deco buildings now filthy and rundown. Some huddle around fire barrels; others watch warily as policecars and crime scene tape surround an overturned "Metahuman Transport Vehicle".

2 40-ish MALE DETECTIVES pull up to the scene and exit their unmarked car. (the 'tecs are of the "Law and Order" variety – burly, weathered guys).

Det 1(Wayne): Jesus! Shouldn't this stuff be happenin' in Gotham or Keystone?

Det 2(Davis): Aw, c'mon. At least it's not another freakin' high-speed freeway chase.

The detectives cross the tape and see a civilian car that crashed head-on into the flipped transport vehicle. In the front seat of the car, a sheet covers the body of the dead driver.

Det 1: Yeah? Well, so far, it looks *exactly* like a freeway chase.

A UNIFORMED COP (Tommy) calls the detectives towards the back of the transport.

Cop: Wayne, Davis, over here.

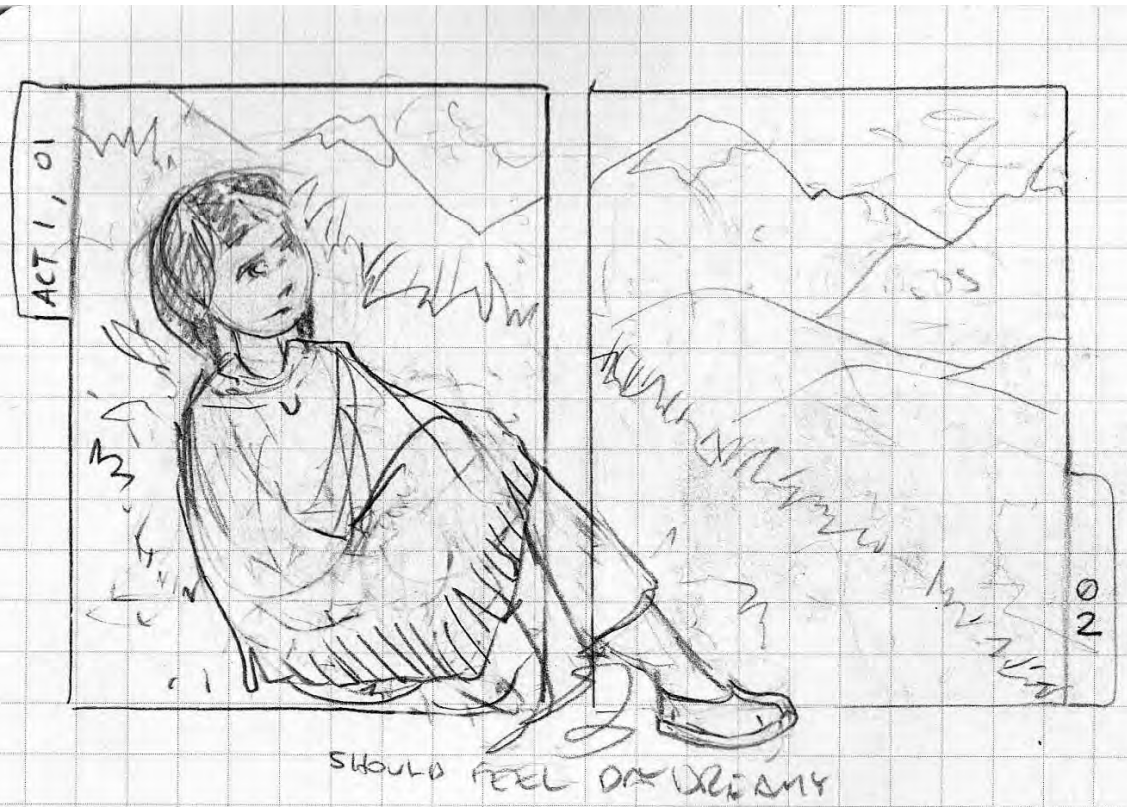
They cross to the transport and their eyes widen as they look inside (but we don't see inside yet).

Davis: Christ on a crutch.

# Give yourself instructions on what to draw:

- Characters - who, how many, what do they look like, facial expressions
- Setting - where; locations and spaces, establishing shots
- Key Items - Objects that are part of the plot.
- Mood - atmosphere, lighting, stylistic choices
- Camera angles - how are the panels framed, What is the Point of View
- Dialogue & Captions, Prose Sections - Consider Page Real Estate
- NEXT STEP(*or SAME STEP!*): Panel Layout - Thumbnails!





← DO THUMBS / BUT NARRATIVE FIRST

★ ON THIS PAGE SPECIFY US A MEMOIR. "MY NAME WAS ESPERANCIITA AND THIS IS THE STORY OF HOW I CAME TO ACQUIRE A NEW ONE."

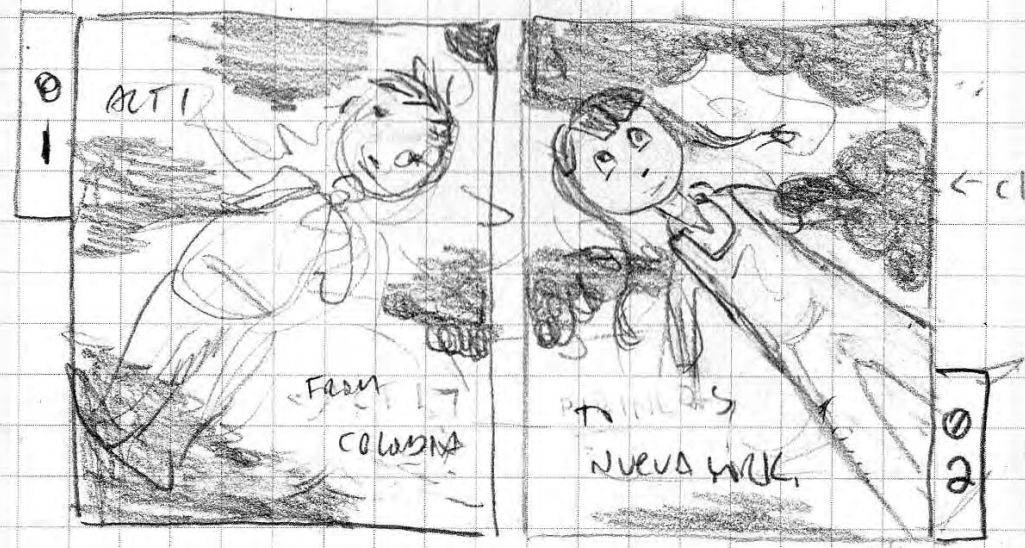
SHOULD FEEL ORAL/REALITY

01 WATERCOLOR, COLORED PENCIL PORTRAIT OF ESPERANCIITA DAY DREAMING, look at Floyd's illustrations

02 CHAPTER HEADING: ACT 1, Los Pirineos

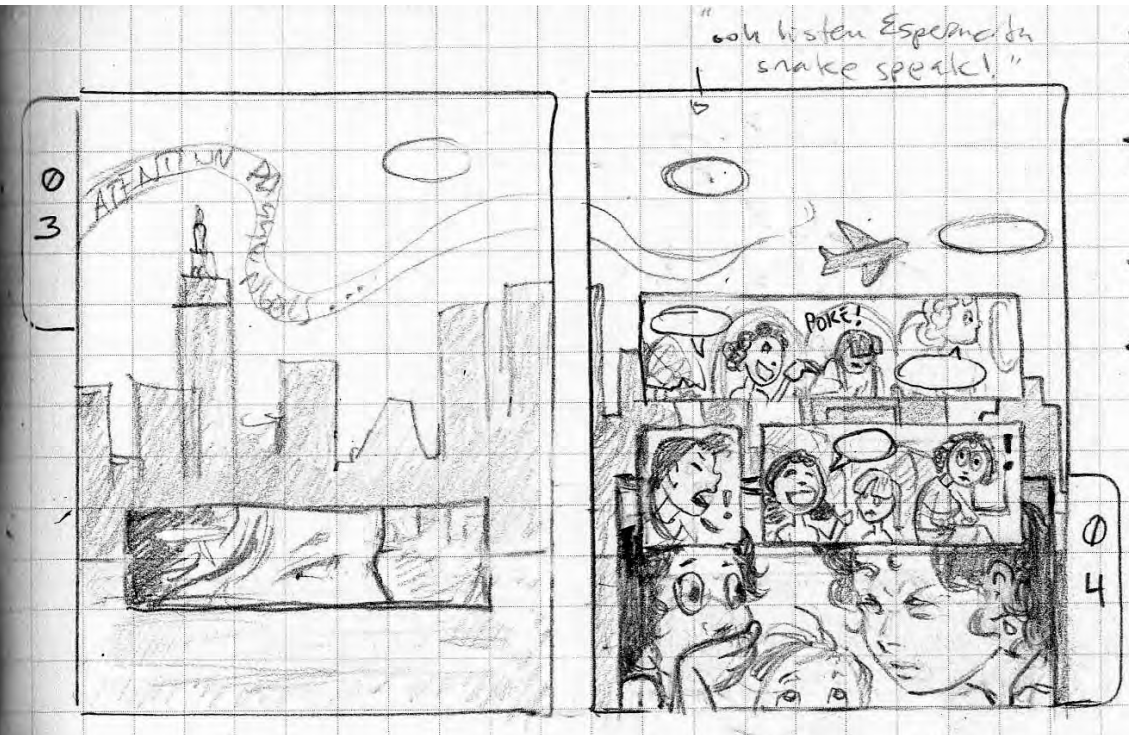
should we lose the "Los" → explain this in the text?

OR ABOVE SHOT OF ESPERANCIITA + GUILLERMO WITH PASSING CLOUD SHADOWS



← cloud shadows → FANTASY SHADOW SHAPES?

Lettering: can we make our own font from Esperancita's real writing? ♥  
 LET'S GIVE HER THOUGHTS + NARRATIVE A REAL VISUAL IDENTITY



★ ASK NOM TO REVIST THIS. new dialogue? no booze.  
 ★ use panels 2-4 to introduce S. speak.  
 ★ BOTTOM PANEL MAKE A "STOP IT" NOT FINISH.  
 ← SHOW AVIANCA STEWARDESS OUTST FOR TIME PERIOD.  
 ← FLIP PANEL 2. maybe if Esperancita still sleeping because she's a baby.  
 ← DESIGN CLOTHES - ASK NOM.  
 For inset panel? "I can not!" "only a baby would have so so scared of those soldiers in Jamaica."

03 CAPTION: New York city, 1952

HANDWRONTYPE OF SPANISH LANGUAGE (will be written in English but is there for contrast.) IN FLIGHT LANDING ANNOUNCEMENT.

PANEL 1: SPREAD

MAMI: Mijitas were landing -

04 MAMI: wake up. (MEISI: OOH LISTEN! SNAKE SPEAK!) ← (from?)

MEISI: MAMI, ESPERANCIITA DRANK THE "ORANGE JUICE" IN JAMAICA. MAMI, IM AWAKE. ESPERANCIITA IS STILL ASLEEP BECAUSE SHE'S A BABY.

PANEL 2:

MEISI: I THINK SHE'S DEAD. MAMI: "MEISI STOP TEASING, IT WAS A LONG TRIP."

PANEL 3: E: STOP IT MEISI! IM AWAKE! IM NOT A BABY!

cries when they are scared. I saw you cry. ONLY A BABY WOULD HAVE GOTTEN SO SCARED OF THE SOLDIERS IN JAMAICA.

PANEL 4: MEISI: MAMI, WE ARE SO LUCKY THEY DIDNT TAKE US OFF THE PLANE IN KING STON! (oblivious)

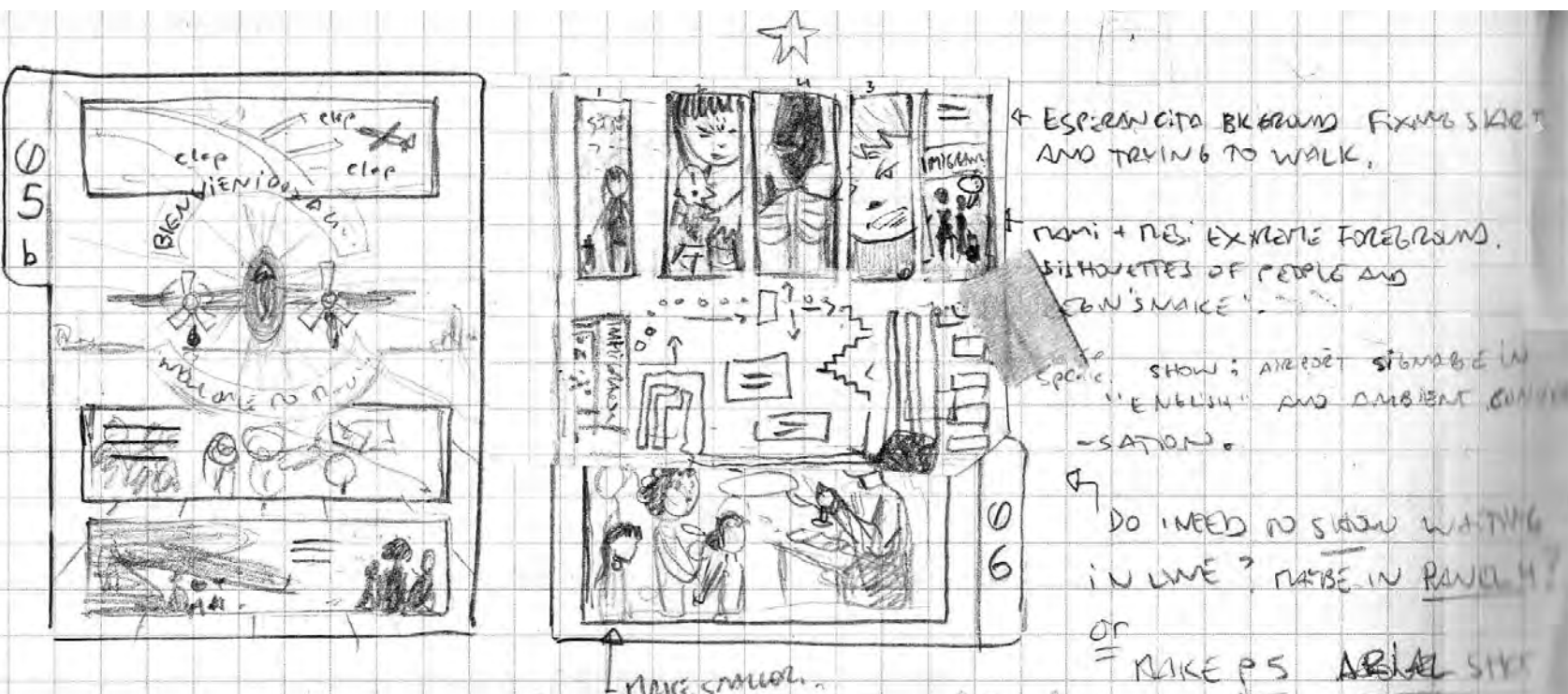
PANEL 5:

ESPERANCIITA ALMOST CRIED. MEISI: I THOUGHT WE WERE DONE FO-

MAMI: (dismayed) ¡Niña, shhh! ¡Basta! THEY JUST OVER BOOKED THOSE THREE SEATS. THEY WERE NOT LOOKING FOR US.

ESPERANCIITA: (thinks) -THIS TIME.





← ESPERANITA BEGINS FIXING SKIRT AND TRYING TO WALK.  
 Mami + NEI: EXTREME FOREGRUNDS. SILHOUETTES OF PEOPLE AND "ENGLISH" AND AMBIENT SOUND - SATION.  
 DO I NEED TO SHOW WAITING IN LINE? PLACE IN PANEL 6 OR MAKE P5 ARIAL SHOT.

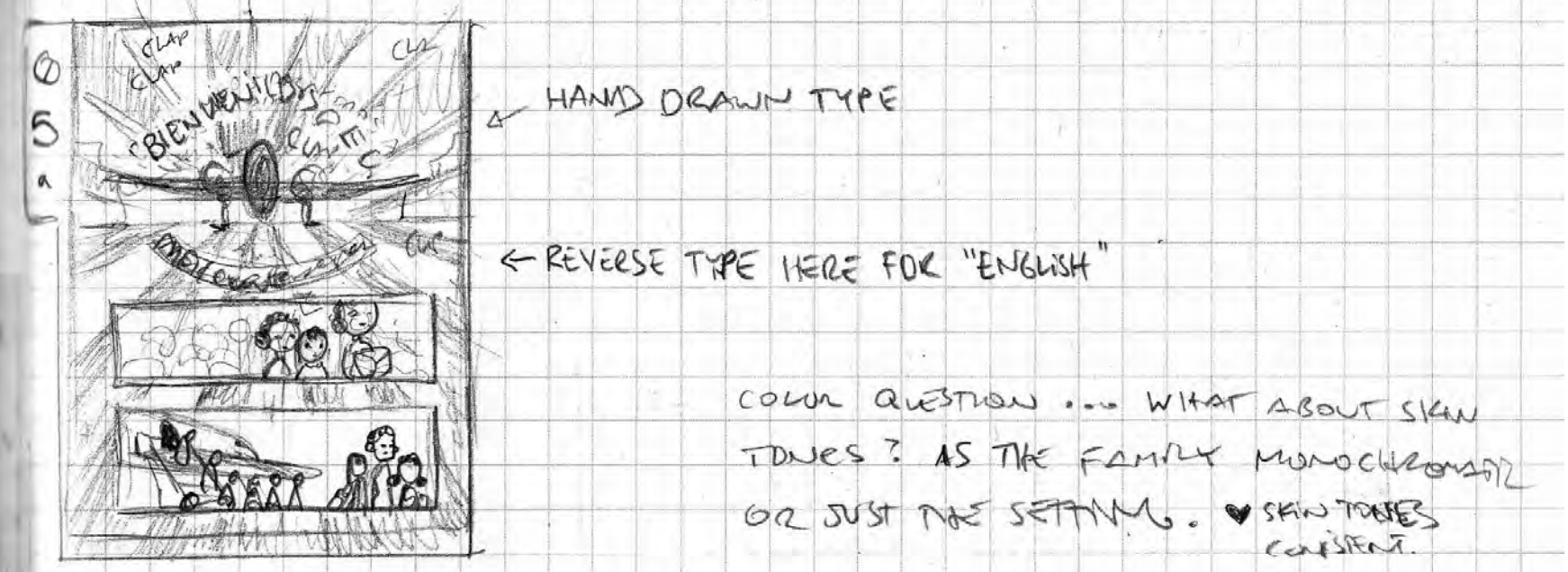
"snake speak" caption box?

06: P5: Mami Nesita and I called English "snake speak". The day Mami took us to the Embassy to get our Papers, we were surrounded by people speaking English for the first time. It just sounded like hissing to us. (etc.) (mom shakl write ☆)

we pretended to speak like snakes the whole way home with Mami.  
 now again i couldn't read a thing.

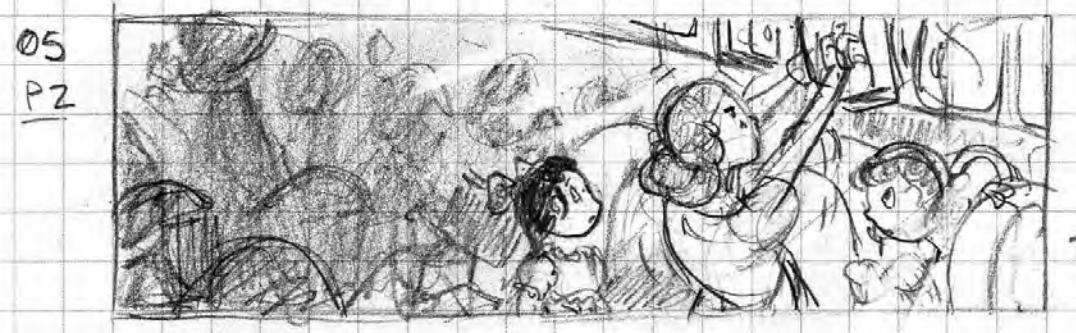
05 P1: "CLAP-CLAP" (ARIAL SHOT OF WOLFWILD)  
 P2: HAND DRAWN TYPE "WELCOME TO THE USA" SHOW LETTERS REVERSED.  
 P3: CAPTIONS: "When our plane was stopped in Jamaica to refuel it was held on the ground. Soldiers boarded to search for those 3 extra passengers. (I think I held my breath the whole time. I was so worried that they would never let us leave." -

06 P1 CAPTION: "Now I worried they would never let us stay." "WE WOULD BE TURNED AWAY BY THE AMERICANOS."  
 P2 "AND IT WOULD BE ALL MY FAULT. I COULD STILL HEAR GUILLERMO:"  
 P3 Guillermo: Esperanita, They only let healthy people into Los Estados Unidos. When the americanos see your knees - (Memory of Guillermo. He is in color)  
 P4 G: "They are going to send you right back!" (DO WE NEED 3 MORE PANEL FOR THIS)  
 Mami: Keep up! ¡¡¡¡¡¡¡¡

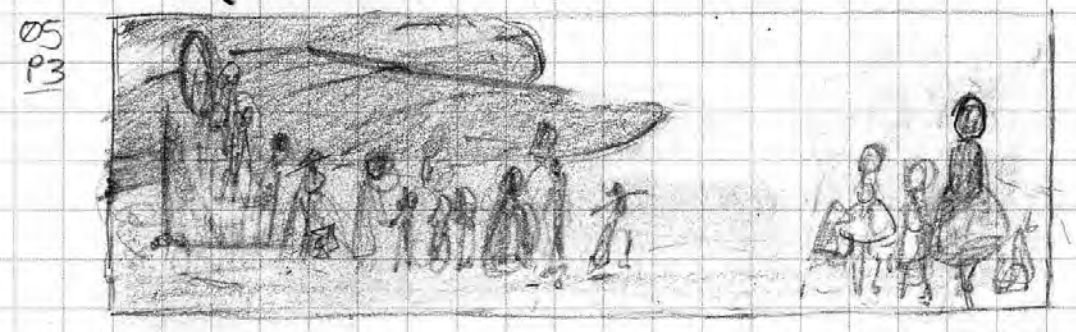


← HAND DRAWN TYPE  
 ← REVERSE TYPE HERE FOR "ENGLISH"

COLOR QUESTION... WHAT ABOUT SKIN TONES? AS THE FAMILY MONOCHROMATIC OR JUST THE SETTING. ♥ SKIN TONES CONSISTENT.



← THE FAMILY IS OVER DRESSED, THEY WEAR THEIR BEST CLOTHES + DRESSES FOR THE PLANE.



← OTHER PEOPLE ARE SILHOUETTES OF VALUE? TRY TO SIMPLIFY.

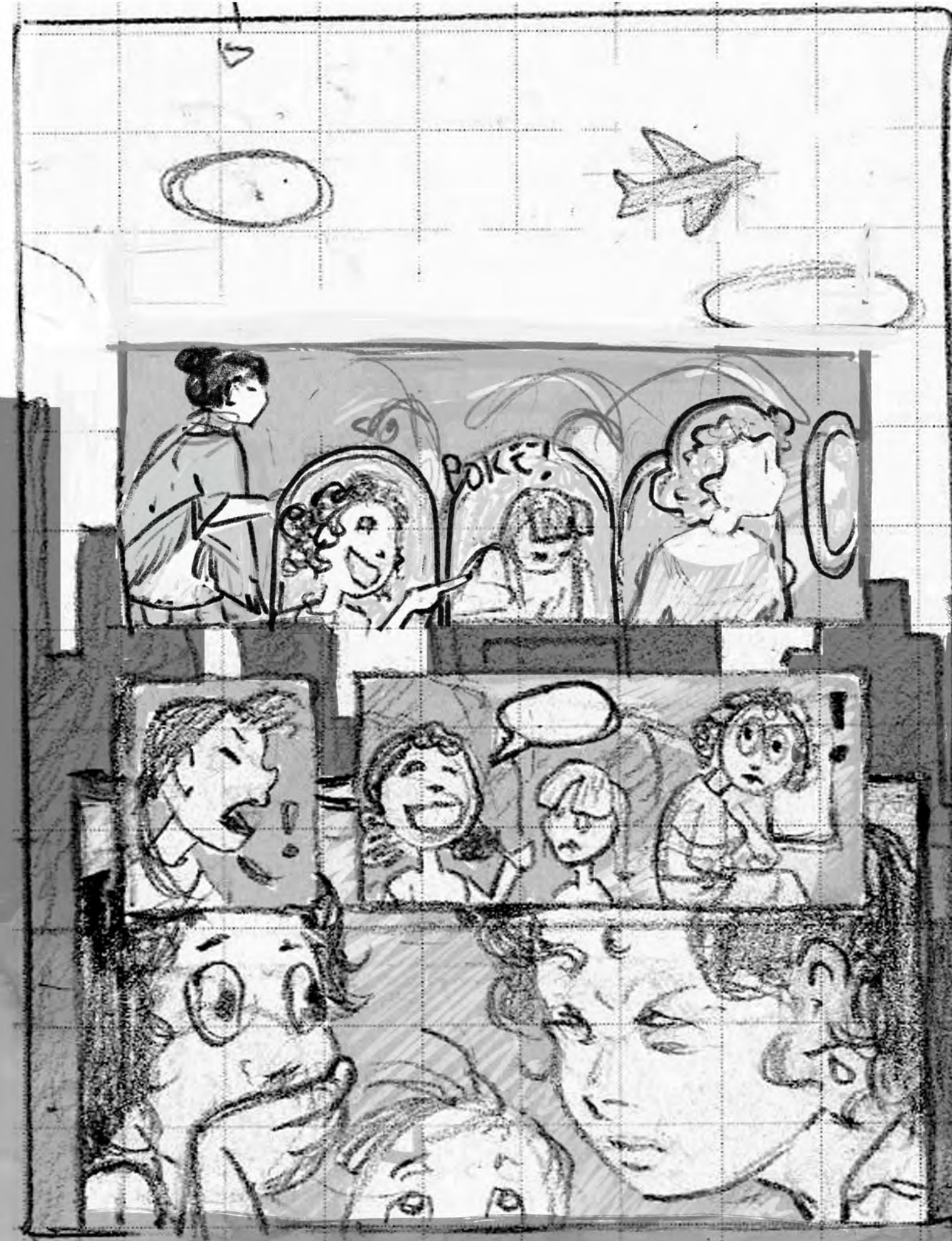
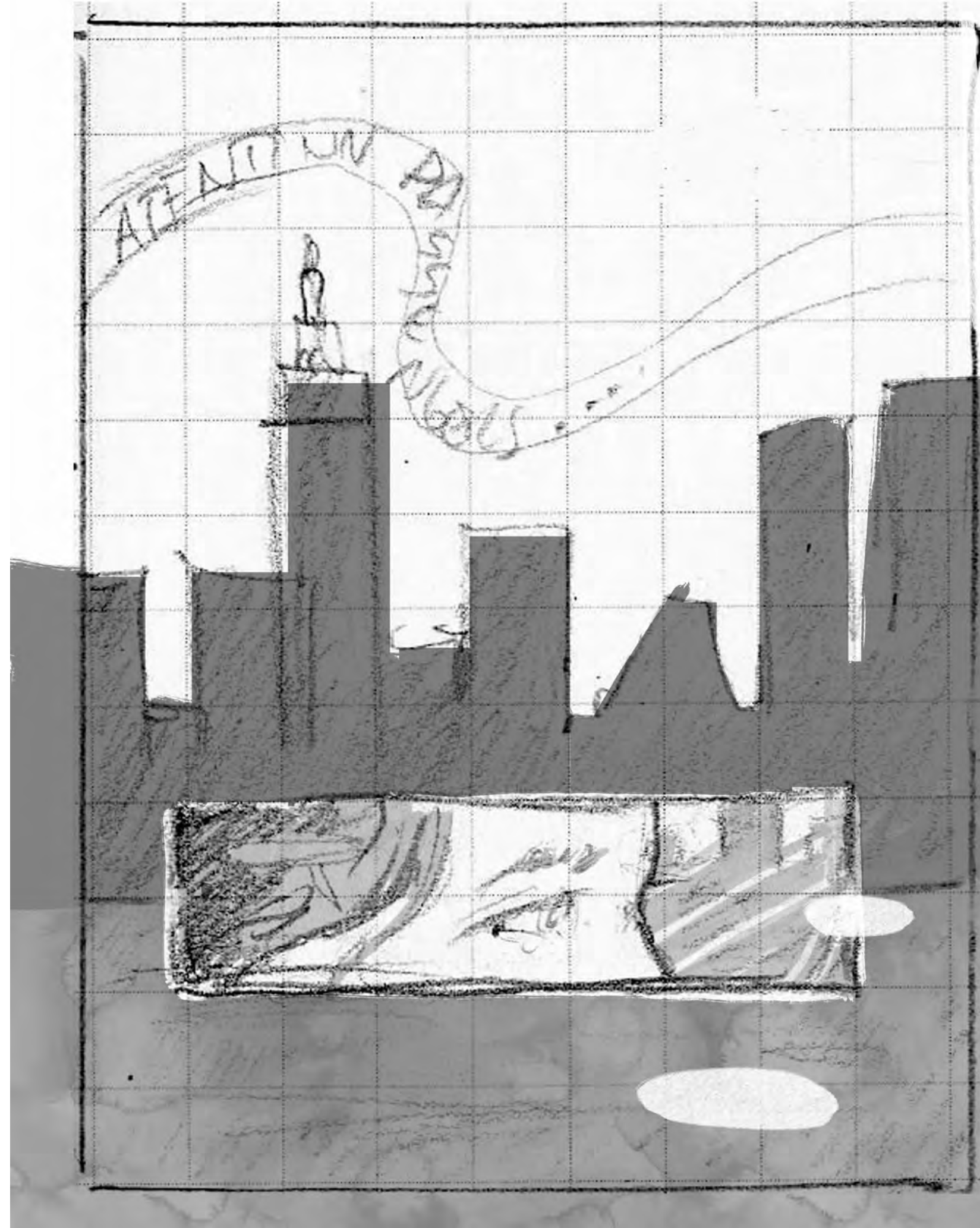
INTERIOR TYPE FOR MONOLOGUE GOES RIGHT ON TOP NO CAPTION BOX, KEEP BACK GROUNDS SIMPLE/ CINEMATIC. VALUES + BLEEDS.



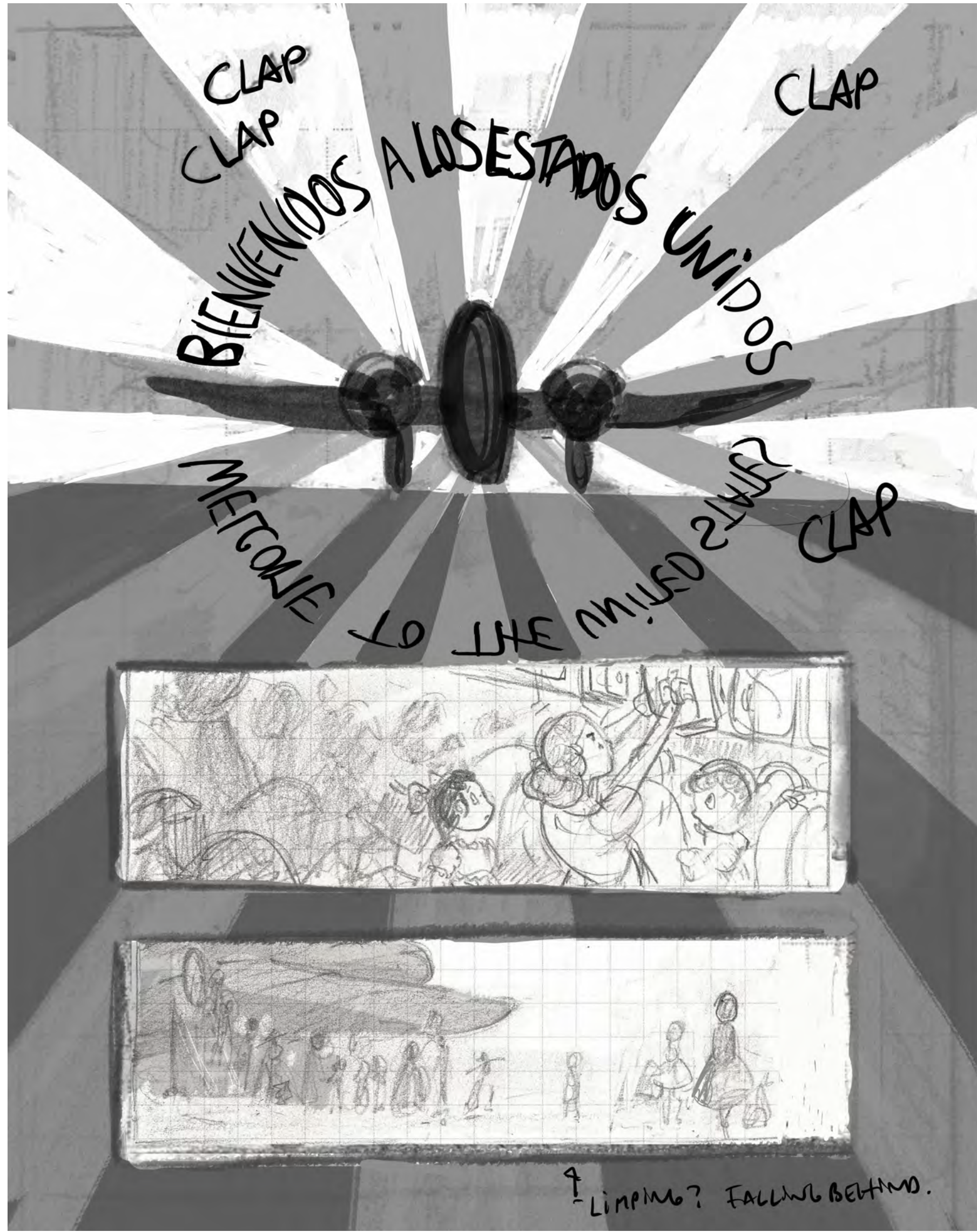
Hand lettered mirror writing!

06 CONTINUED:  
 P5 (SHOW THE FAMILY ON A LONG LINE FOR IMMIGRATION. THERE'S BITS OF VISIBLE SIGNAGE, AND BUBBLES OF NONSENSE SPEECH.) CAPTION: (SEE ← LEFT)  
 P6 (MAMI IS STANDING IN FRONT OF A THICK LOOKING IMMIGRATION OFFICER. THE GIRLS ARE WITH HER. NEISI SMILING SWEETLY. ESPERANITA TESSING WITH HER SKIRT, TRYING TO HIDE HER KNEES. OFFICER: (GREET'S IN ENGLISH) (REVERSE LETTERS) MARINA MALDONADO DE GOMEZ? MAMI: JES, ES ME. OFFICER: (UNBELIEVABLE QUESTION IN ENGLISH).















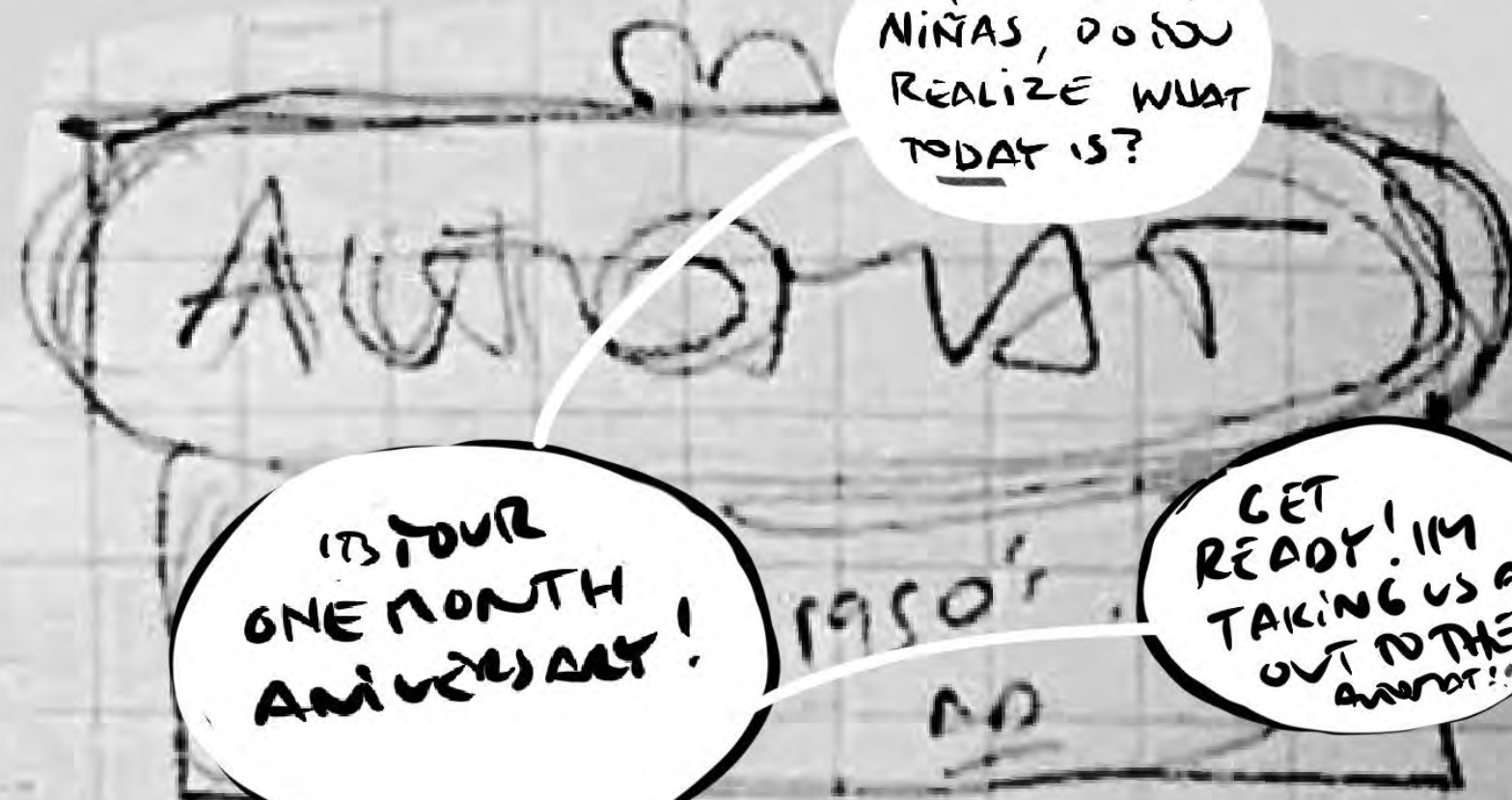




SUMMARY:

I HATE ENGLISH! I HATE ENGLISH!  
I HATE ENGLISH! I'D BARELY LEARNED HOW  
TO READ IN SPANISH, BEFORE THEY SHIPPED  
ME OVER HERE! MAFI SAID ITS BECAUSE IM DUMB,  
BUT MAMI SAID I JUST MISSED A LOT OF SCHOOL.  
ANYWAY, HERE I AM ILLITERATE ALL OVER  
AGAIN. OK, SO WHY DO I HATE ENGLISH  
EXTRA TODAY? IM GLAD YOU ASKED.

TODAY MA SARITA DECIDED WE ALL DESERVED  
A TREAT ...



\* I FIND AN ADVERTISEMENT IN THE PAPER



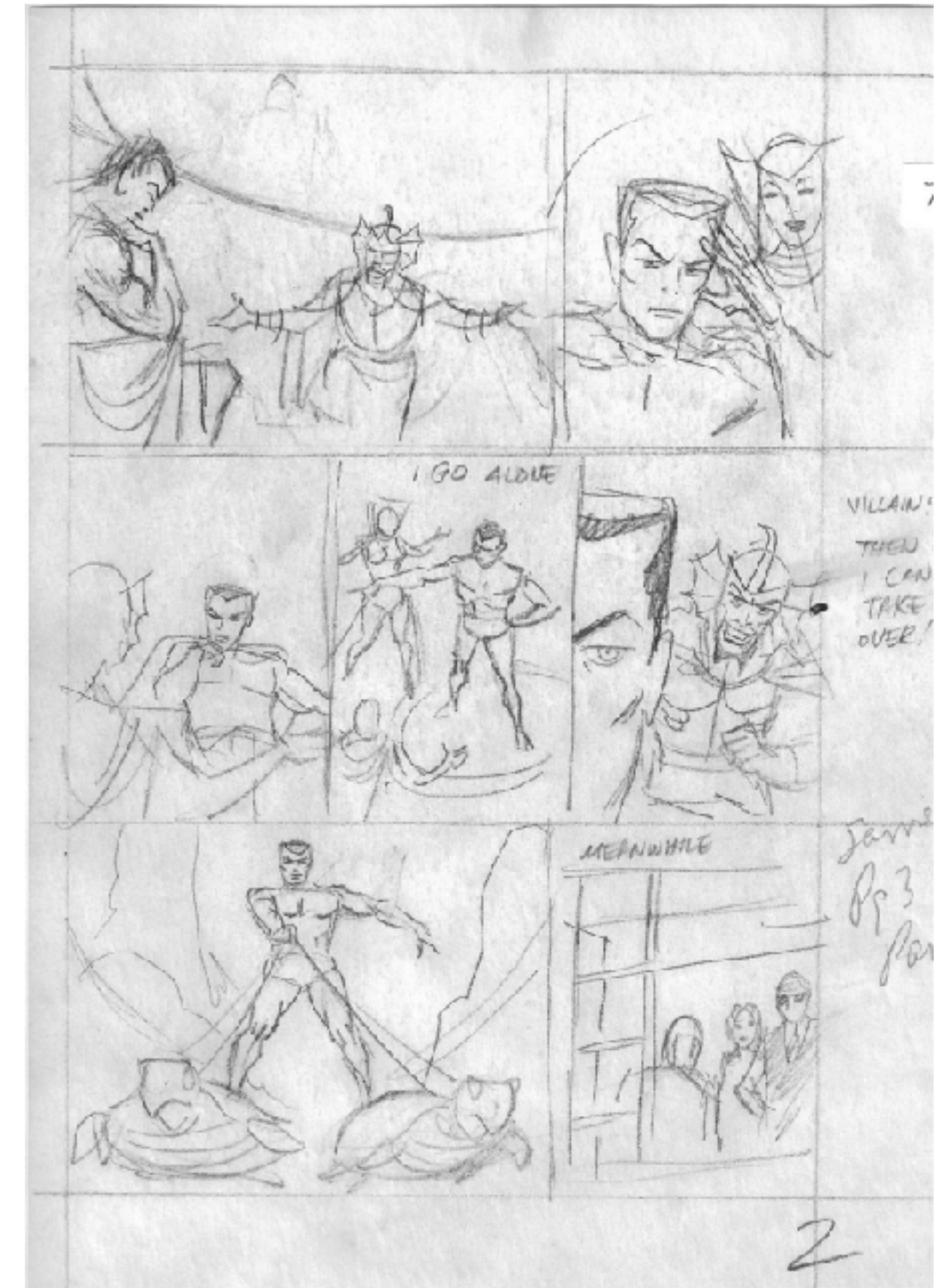




# Thumbnails

## The first thing you do when you start to visualize your story

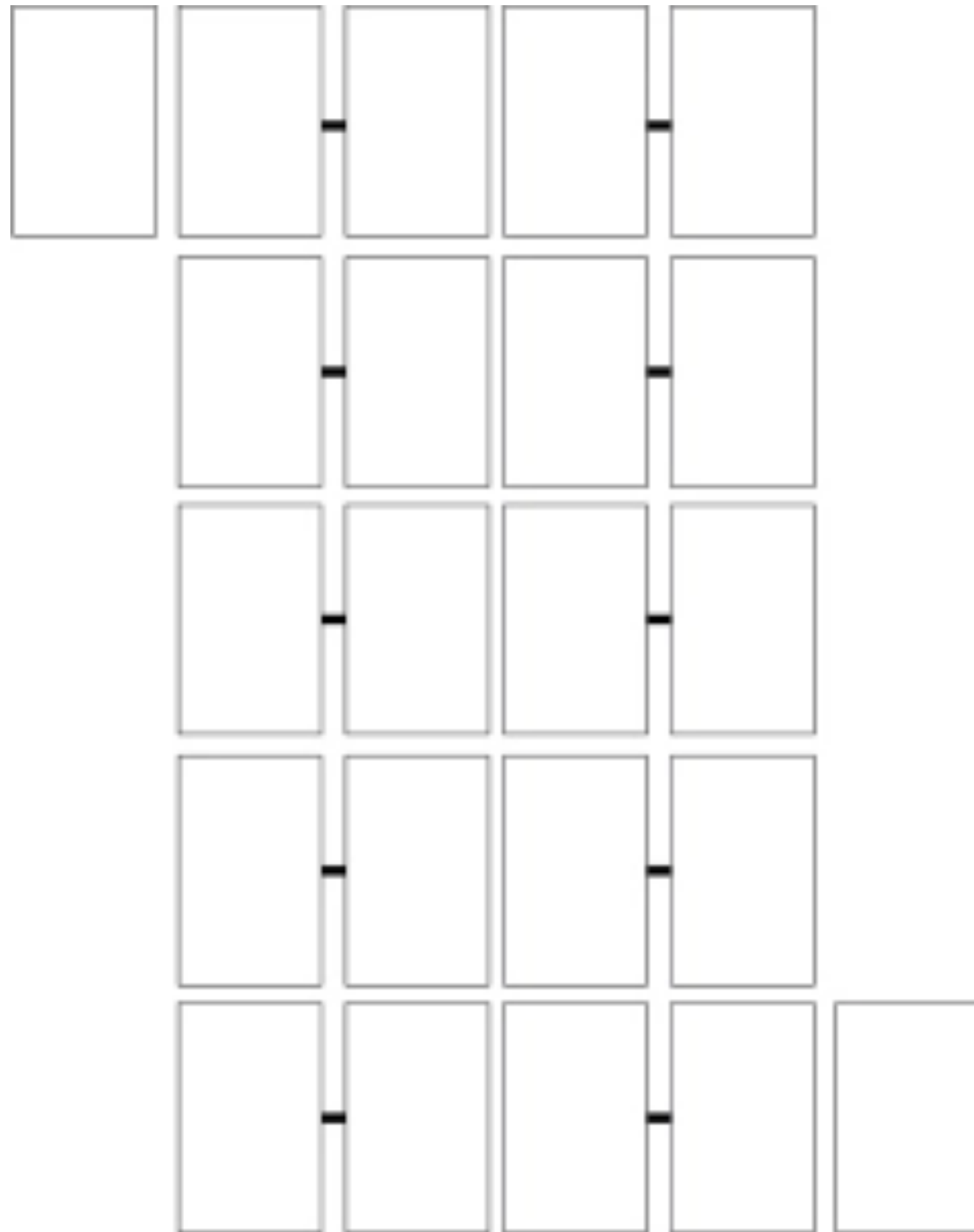
- Start with really rough page-sized thumbnails
- Then fleshed out thumbnails
- Avoid doing storyboard style thumbnails or panel-by-panel thumbnails because those are different media – you can't use a fiction novel to lay out a comic book. Storyboards and panel-by-panel don't take into account the visual narrative flow of the comic page because they break it up very differently
- Storyboards are linear and need to show A LOT more than a narrative illustrated story. In comics the action can be compressed and the reader fills in the blanks.





# Thumbnails!

Work out all the problems **BEFORE** you start your final pencils





# Rough Schedule

WEEK 3: PITCH

WEEK 5: STORY OUTLINE

WEEK 6: PRESENTATION \*remote class"

WEEK 7&8: LAYOUTS & THUMBNAILS

WEEK 9&10: TIGHT SKETCHES & ROUGH TEXT (Test For Clarity)

WEEK 11-13: FINAL ART (ink, color , traditional, or digital)

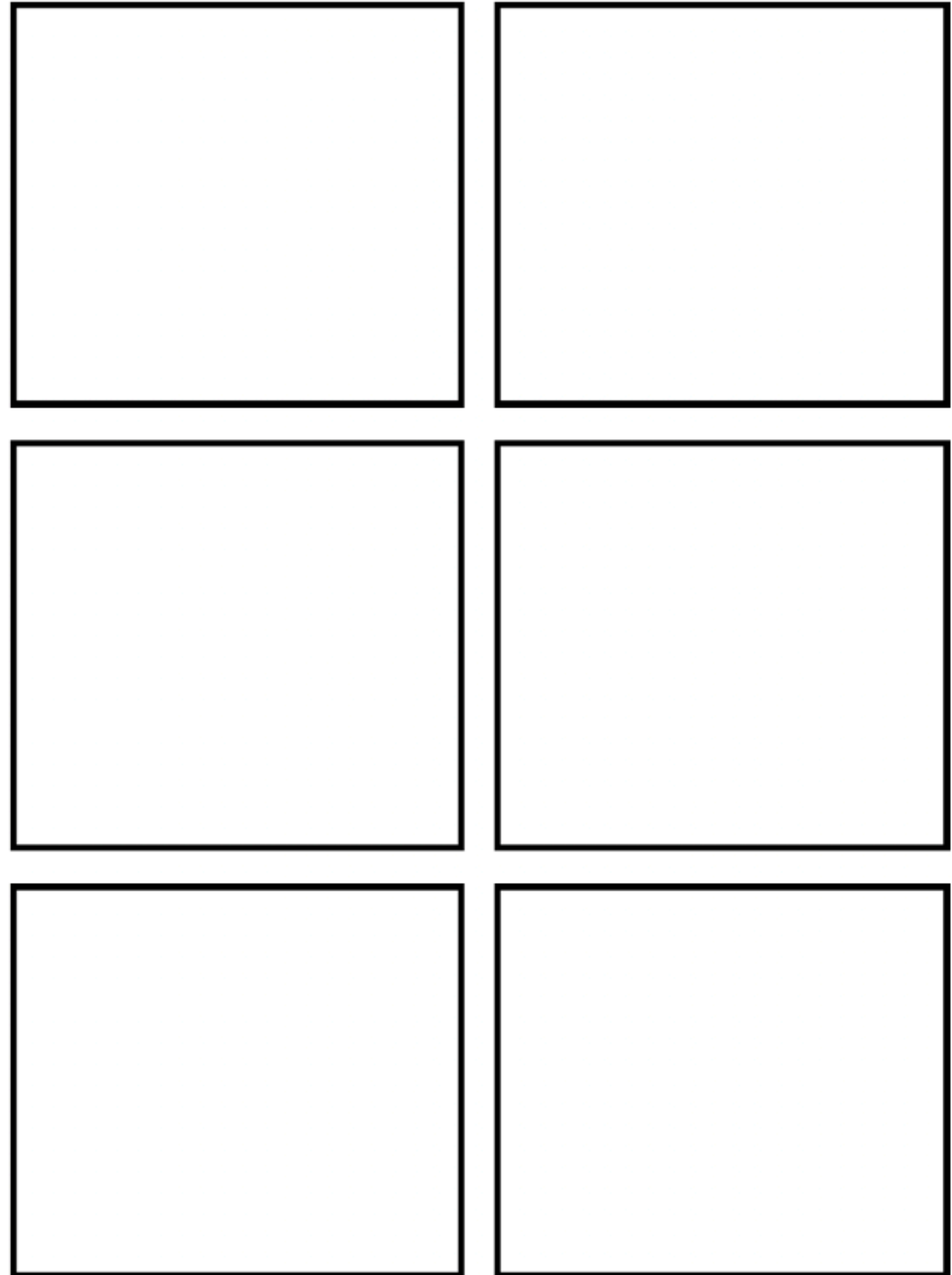
WEEK 14 : LETTERING

WEEK 15: \*\* A COMIC IS BORN! HUZZAH! \*\*



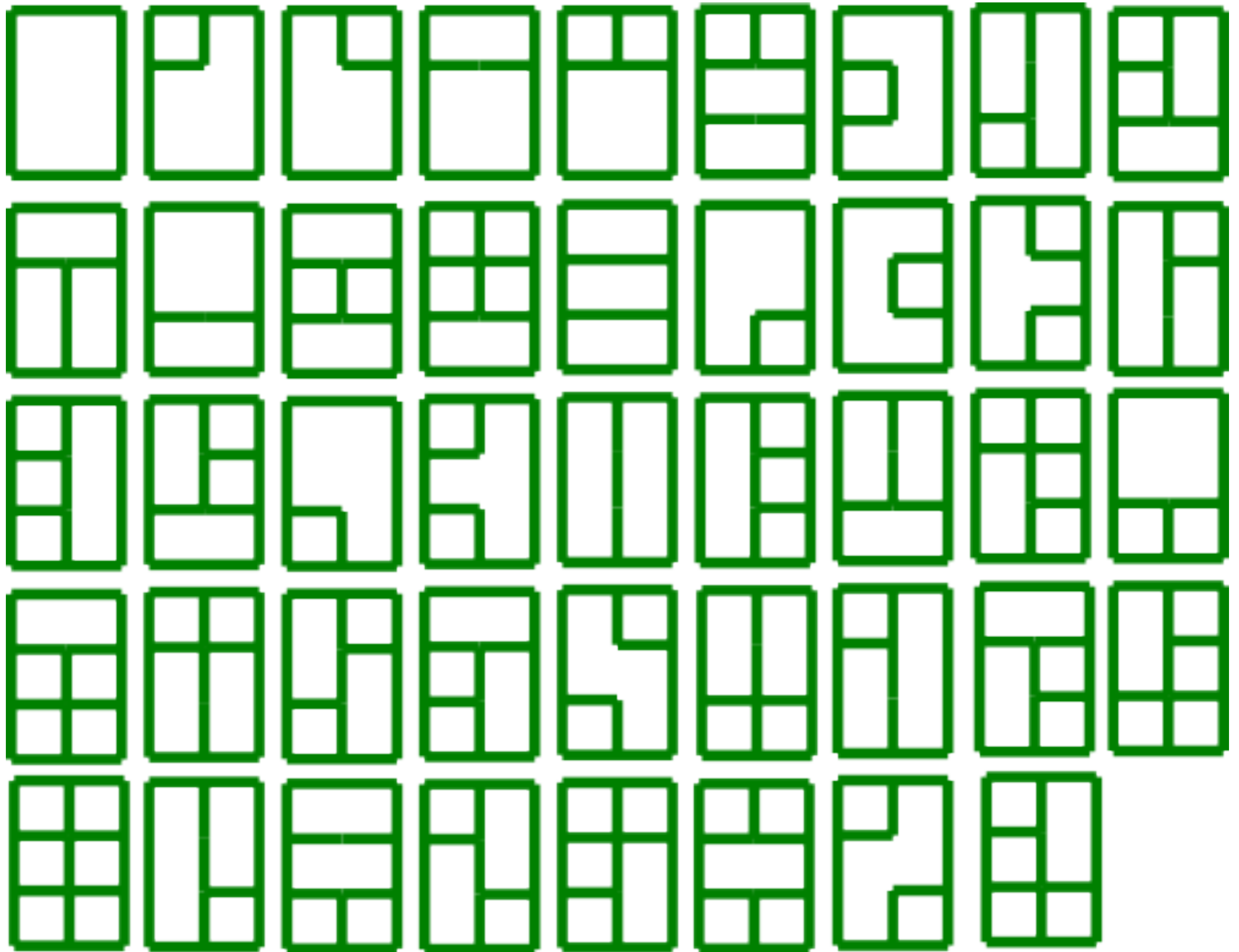
# Multi-Panel Template (PSD)

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/  
cuo506mmihv0uwi/  
panelblanks.psd?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/cuo506mmihv0uwi/panelblanks.psd?dl=0)





SIX PANEL  
LAYOUTS





# WALLY WOOD'S 22 PANELS THAT ALWAYS WORK !!

OR SOME INTERESTING WAYS TO GET SOME VARIETY INTO THOSE BORING PANELS WHERE SOME DUMB WRITER HAS A BUNCH OF LAME CHARACTERS SITTING AROUND AND TALKING FOR PAGE AFTER PAGE!





# A POWERS STUDY OF WALLY WOOD'S

Wally Wood's "22 Panels That Always Work" was a rough guide by Wood to help artist during pages of heavy character dialogue. It has been a classic guide for artists both established and newbies in the industry.

# "22 PANELS THAT ALWAYS WORK"

Unfortunately, the only copy available is a copy of a copy floating around, parts of it barely legible. As I was studying this page again, I decided to do this homage to Wally's greatness. We all thank you, Wally, wherever you are.

— Michael Avon Oeming





# The Wicked and the Divine



SUPER-MAN

KieronGillen/Assorted Mysterious Artists

Hi

Super-man is, of course, a very different and legally separate character to Superman. Clearly, if you, the artist, choose to interpret the visuals in a manner akin to the famed father of superheroics, it is beyond my control. You artists are mysterious elfin creatures, whose raw creativity I would not dream to curtail.

Anyway! This is one page, five panels. I was playing with a few other rough ideas, some striking an elegiac poetic mood, some speaking to the fundamental morality of the character, and some just being really angry satire... but I figured that dumb is best. This is quite dumb, but hopefully includes a few fun things to play with, and should work with a different effect in many different styles. Which, I guess, is the point, right?

I tend to write heavy, but in this case I'm going to write a little looser. I always say that I'm very pro seeing your interpretation of the script rather than any attempt at holy writ.... and in this case, that's obviously doubly true. Add panels, details, whatever. Do what you do. Can't wait to see it.

Kieron





PAGE 1

1.1

Tight on a construction worker, sitting in a mechanical digger. What kind? For the sake of the story, doesn't matter - something heavy duty. Indulge your inner 5 year old who loved diggers.

Pick something from here, basically...

[http://www.cat.com/en\\_US/products/new/equipment.html](http://www.cat.com/en_US/products/new/equipment.html)

It's probably tight enough that we can't see much of what's surrounding them. All we can see is that the worker is in distress. They're screaming, panicked. Something very wrong is happening, clearly.

Only strange thing - we may see some foliage leaking into the page.

Can be a silent panel or we can have a HELLLLLP! dialogue here. I think it'd work silent.

NO DIALOGUE

1.2

And we pull out, revealing the situation. The digger and driver are resting in the top branches of an enormous animated tree. Think Treebeard from Lord of the Rings having a really bad day, rampaging through the streets of our classical super-man urban metropolis.

And Super-Man is flying in, clearly on the way to rescuing the worker from this predicament.

If you want the back story, I see that a construction company has basically started cutting down some trees in a forest, not knowing there's some manner of Tree people there. And now the trees are angry and on the rampage. If you want you can have other trees and saplings causing havoc, but clearly isn't essential. One big mean tree is all we need.

I'd say this is the largest image on the page.

NO DIALOGUE

1.3

Super-man carrying the digger away from the tree, safely. The angry Tree reaching out with knotted branch fingers after them, failing to pull them from the sky.

NO DIALOGUE

1.4

And the Digger has been placed on the ground, the driver waving as

Super-man flies away in the background.

Key thing - We can see the digger's branding. It is a CAT digger.

(If you want, it's possible that you could frame panel 1.3 so we have the branding prominently enough in it. If so, you could lose this panel and regain space on the rest of the page. As long as it's clear it's a CAT digger, that's fine.)

NO DIALOGUE

1.5

And we hard-cut elsewhere. We're in the metropolis' premier newspaper, in the editor's office. His star reporter has been pitching a story, and been told no. She looks outraged, and is clearly about to launch into a defence of the story. The Editor is cutting in, dismissively. The reporter probably looks a lot like Lois Lane and the editor probably looks a lot like Perry White. Probably.

REPORTER: BUT! IT WAS SENSATIONAL! HE--

EDITOR: SUPER-MAN SAVES CAT FROM TREE IS JUST NOT NEWS.

NOTE: Feel free to add your twitter handle and the #artcred at the bottom of the page.

//end//





@stephenbyrne86 #artcred



#ARTCRED

@KIERONGILLEN - @NELLUCNH03





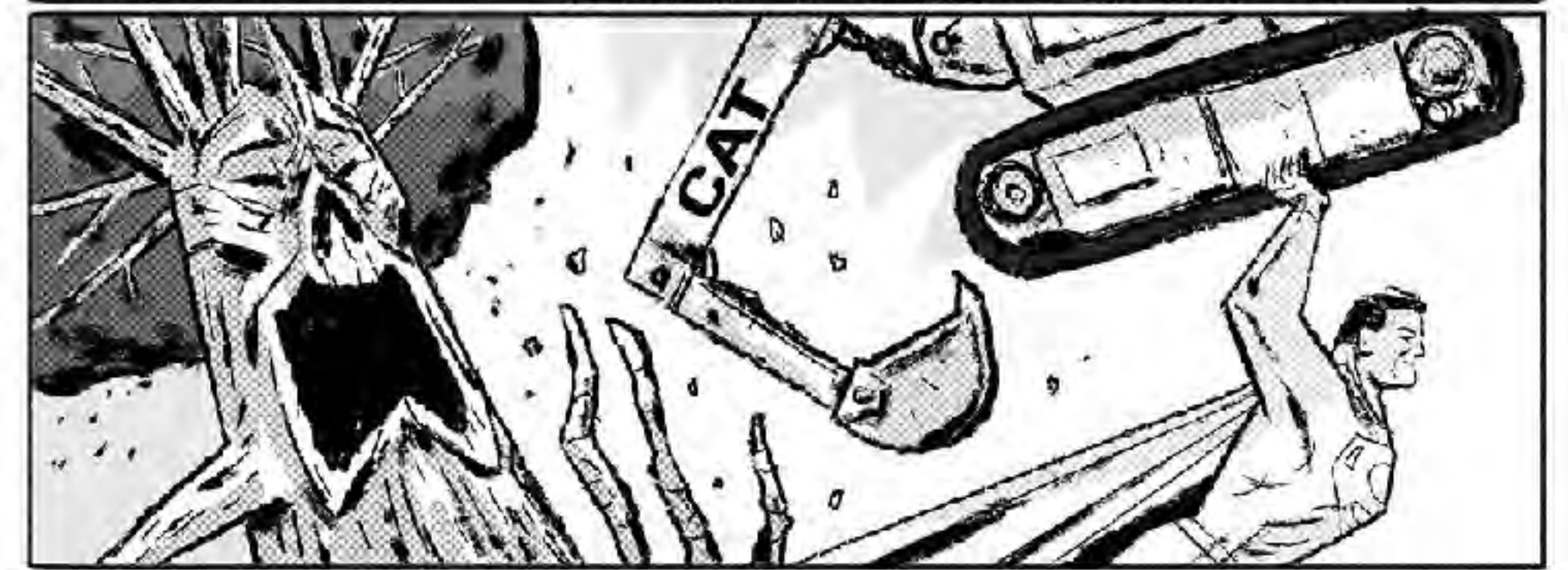
#ARTCRED

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@KierorGillen #ARTCRED  
@FavouriteCrayon

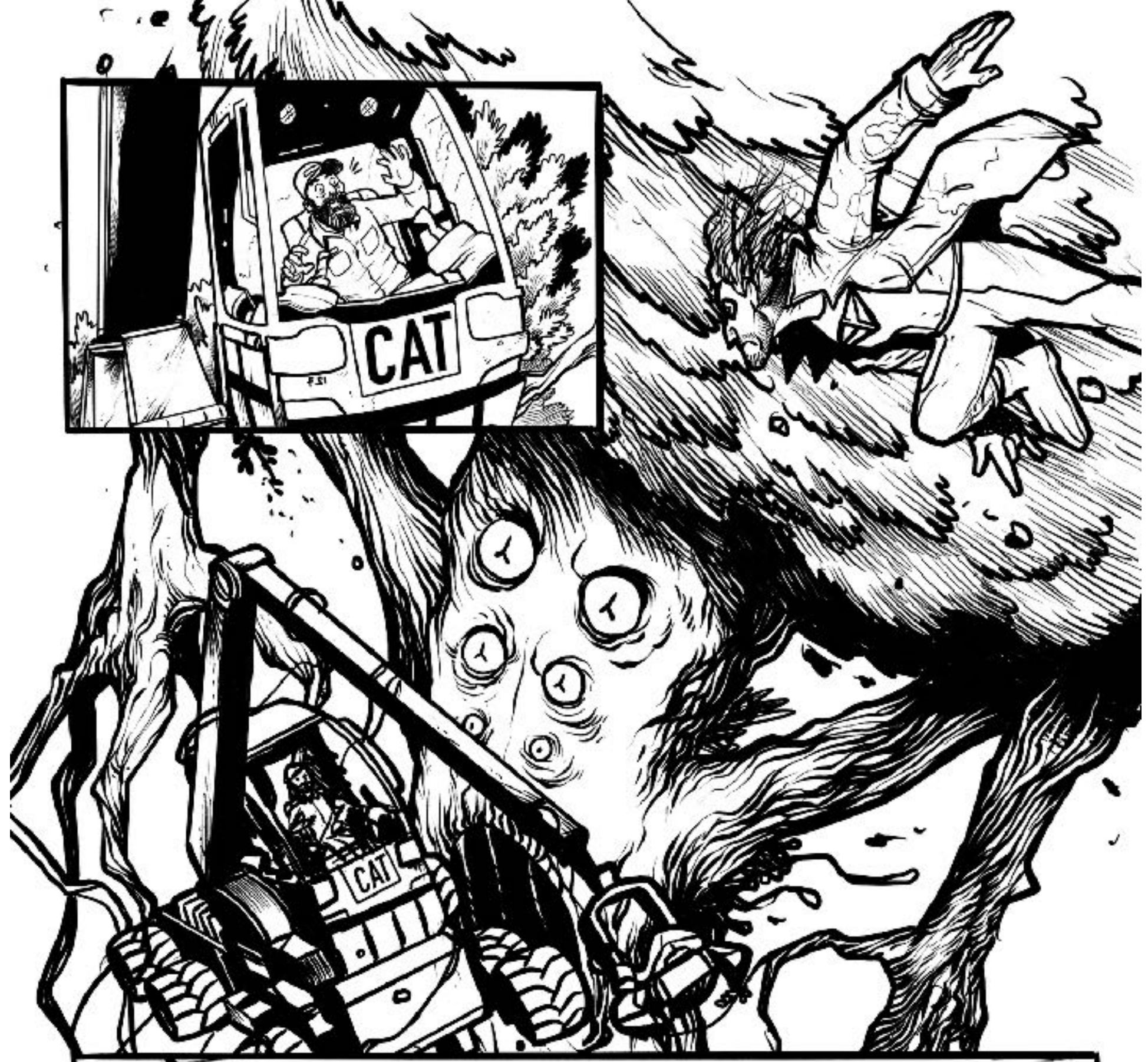








SUPER-MAN | ART BY CHRIS WISLORING | TWITTER/INSTAGRAM: @CHRISWISLORING



BUT IT WAS SENSATIONAL! HE --

SUPERMAN SAVES CAT FROM TREE IS JUST NOT NEWS





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"SUPER-MAN SAVES CAT FROM TREE" IS JUST NOT NEWS.

# SUPER-MAN

WRITTEN BY KIERON GILLEN  
ART BY ALEX BERTRAM-POWELL



BUT! IT WAS SENSATIONAL! HE--

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