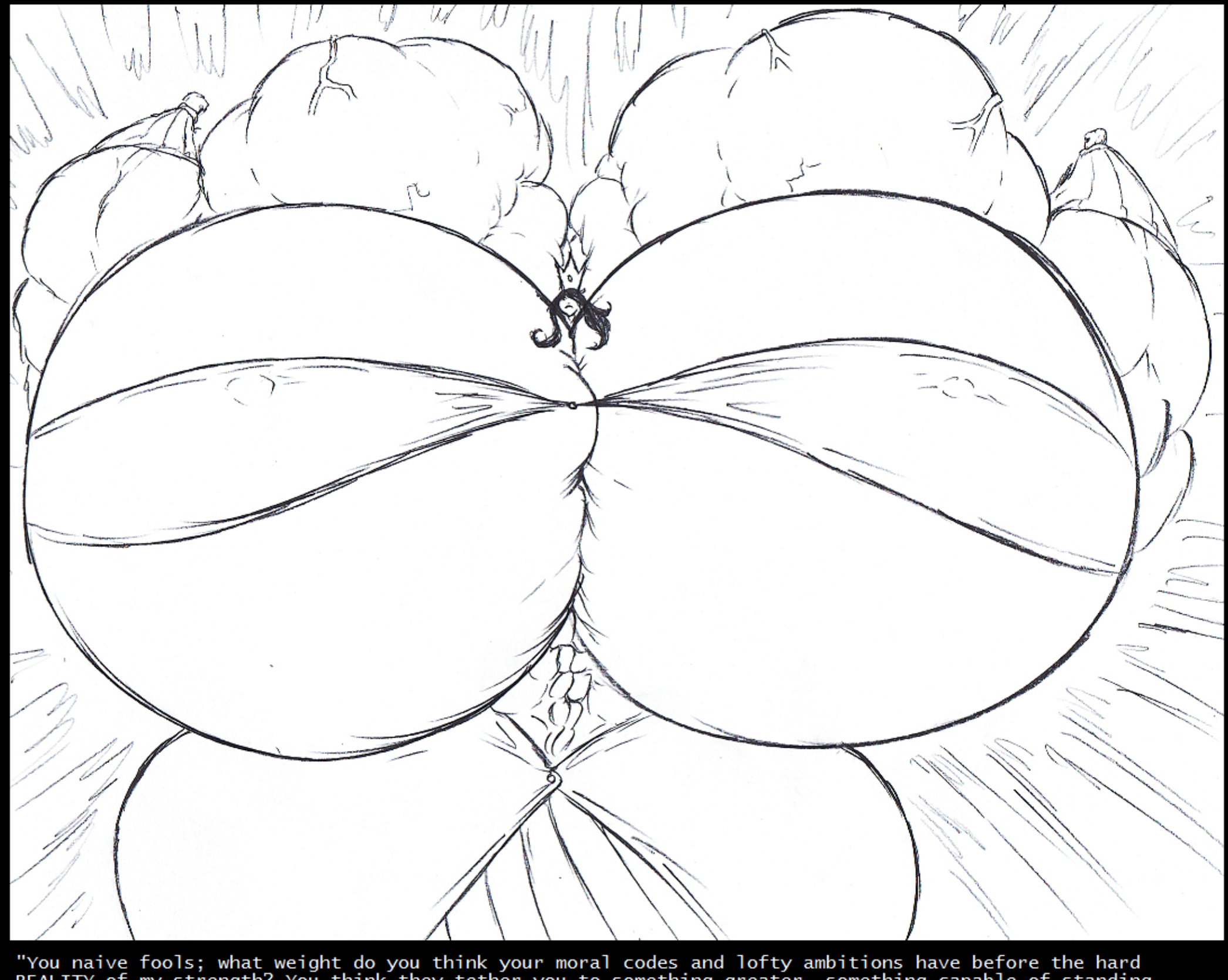
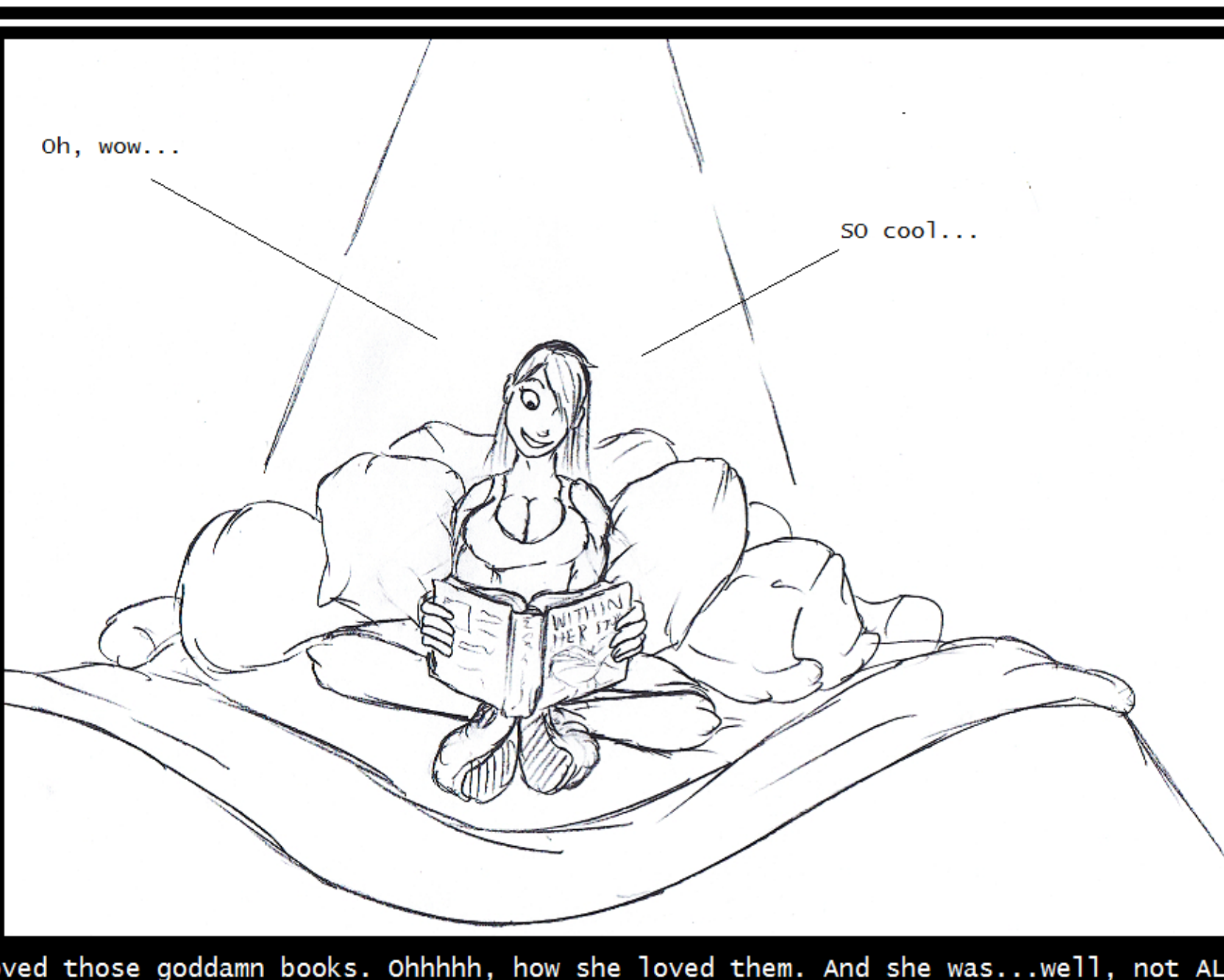


"You naive fools; what weight do you think your moral codes and lofty ambitions have before the hard REALITY of my strength? You think they tether you to something greater, something capable of standing steady in the storm, but you lie to yourselves. Accept the truth of what I am and what I can do. And know that you are all just motes of dust, to be scattered by my powers, and forgotten with my next breath."


Oh, wow...
SO cool...
WITHIN HER ST

Pearl loved those goddamn books. Ohhhhh, how she loved them. And she was...well, not ALONE in her fandom, but close to it. The book series had eluded mainstream success in large part due to what many critics considered to be the author's obvious and distracting fixation with inordinately large, muscular women, most readily symbolized by the series' chief antagonist, Queen Crasheaux.

But Pearl didn't see anything wrong with Queen Crasheaux's characterization. On the contrary, Pearl considered her to be the most engaging and charismatic villain in all of fiction.

She...she may have been giving Crasheaux a BIT too much credit with that judgment, but as she would tell you...either in person at conventions, or on any given online forum, or in line at the grocery store if you were a complete stranger waiting for her to, please, just slide her card in the machine and move on and let you start checking out...Crasheaux was her absolute FAVORITE character in anything, and she would happily recite the many reasons why. She could quote some of her favorite of Crasheaux's monologues, she could paraphrase parts of the essays she had written explaining why Crasheaux's motivations and inner life had profound literary depth, and if she really felt close to you, she would share some of the Queen Crasheaux fanart and fanfiction she'd made.

It was an obsession, yes, but she was most charming enough about it that most people found it perfectly pleasant, if a bit bewildering. Except the people in line at the grocery store, they wanted her to shut the hell up about it. But everyone else! Everyone else around her accepted her tendency to completely nerd out over this obscure character from this obscure book series.

But then, one time, she got a little carried away.

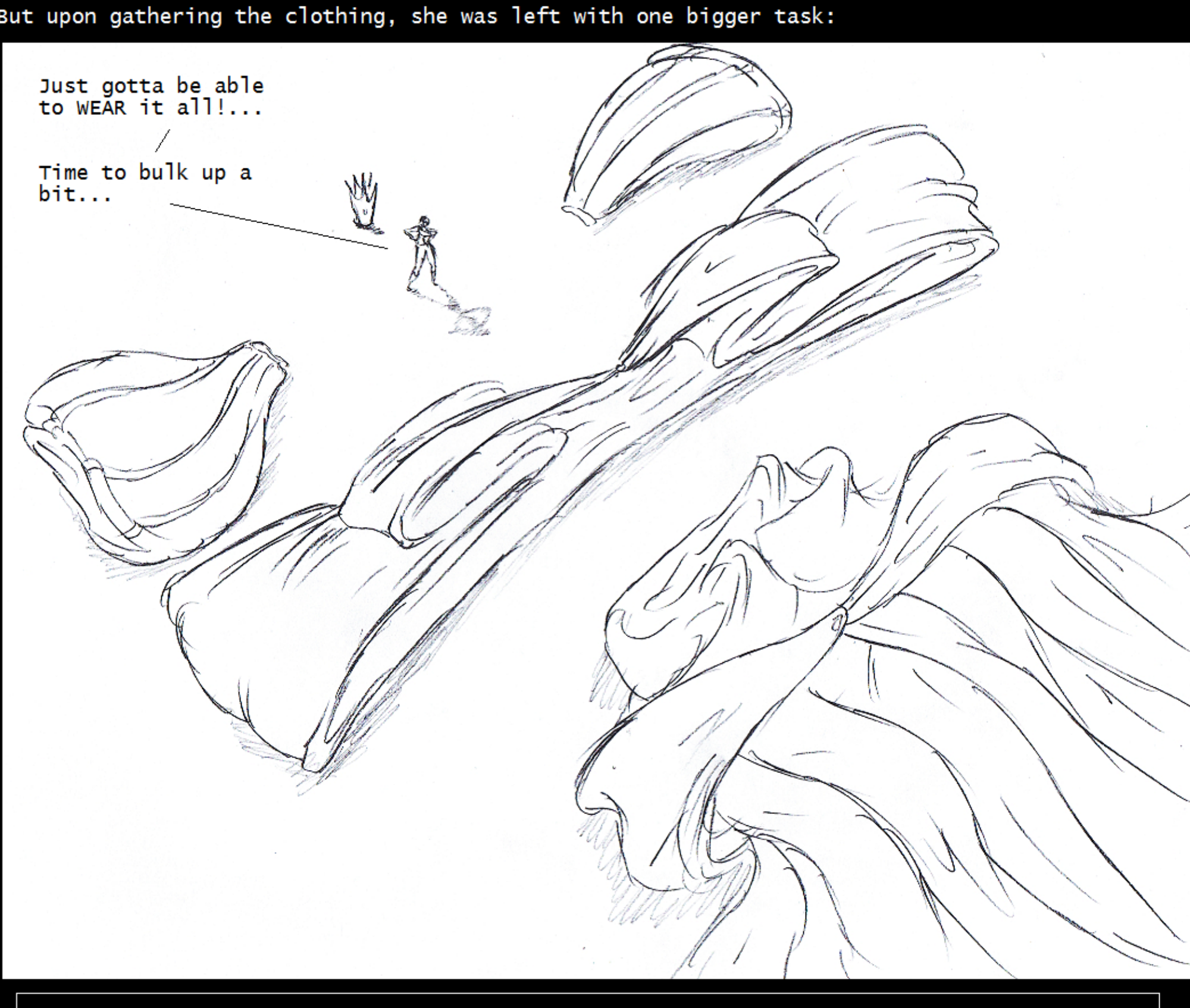
It all began so simply! No ominous thunderclouds, no air of something irrevocable and consequential having been done, no creaking sounds of Pandora's Box being opened! It's just, well, someone was throwing a big costume party close to Halloween, and they invited Pearl.

But then Pearl saw this invitation as an opportunity. A reason to finally get off her butt and Make It Happen. The costume she'd considered making and perfecting for so many conventions, but always found an excuse not to go through with. But this time...this time, she would do it.

She would throw the full brunt of her enthusiasm into making it happen:
The Perfect Queen Crasheaux costume.

So intensely stored up was her passion for this, that it took her no time at all to put together the costume itself, daunting a prospect though that alone might have seemed to some. It was done to the exact specifications of the character's dimensions, as described...in very deep detail, several times...in the books. It was as authentic as Pearl could make it, in size and appearance and texture, short of actually finding a way to enchant it with Dark Magic.

But upon gathering the clothing, she was left with one bigger task:


Just gotta be able to WEAR it all!...
Time to bulk up a bit...

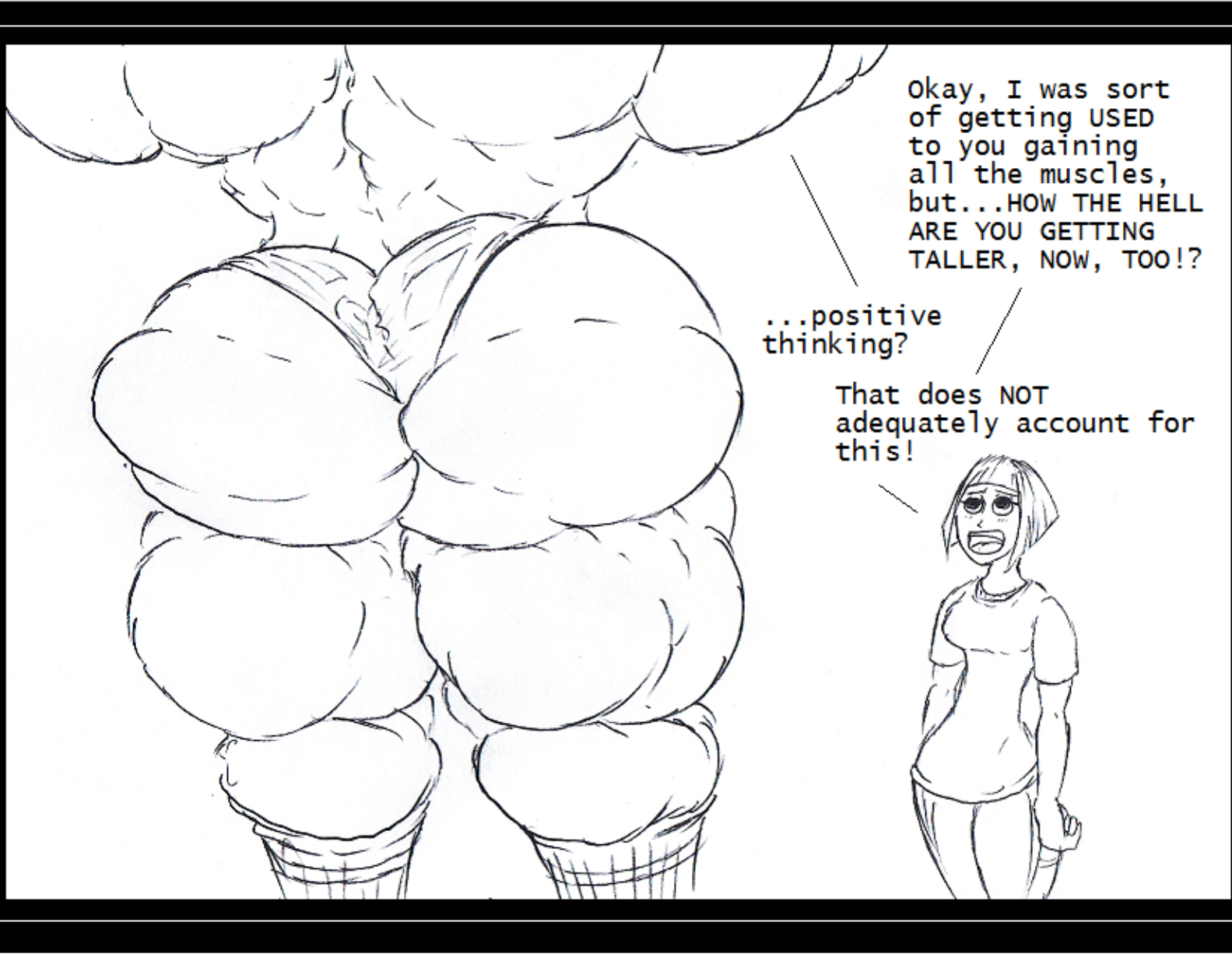
Hey, Pearl, how's the workout go-o-ho-HOLY SHIT! How did...you're so...YOU JUST STARTED TODAY!!!
Yeah, pretty good start, right? I know that at this rate I won't make it to the proper size in time, but I feel I can keep building momentum! Positive thinking, y'know?
...you don't seem to fully appreciate that the amount of muscle you've put on so far is LITERALLY impossible...
Apparently it isn't! Not to be rude.

"No, no, you're quite right, this...this calls a LOT of things into question, things which I think the rest of the world kinda took for granted, about what sort of results to expect... and, uh, setting muscle SIZE aside for the moment...your strength, um...exactly how much weight are you lifting right now?"

"Not sure! I didn't really keep count, I just piled on as many of the big plate things as I could, and went at it, hard as I could!"

"...alright, so obviously this approach is working for you, but PLEASE, if you become famous from this, and I think you will, do NOT write a how-to book advocating that approach to lifting weights."

Alright, early day three, and I've already gotten too buff to fit into any of my clothes!...feels like a good milestone on my way to fitting into Queen Crasheaux's!...


Okay, I was sort of getting USED to you gaining all the muscles, but...HOW THE HELL ARE YOU GETTING TALLER, NOW, TOO!?
...positive thinking?
That does NOT adequately account for this!

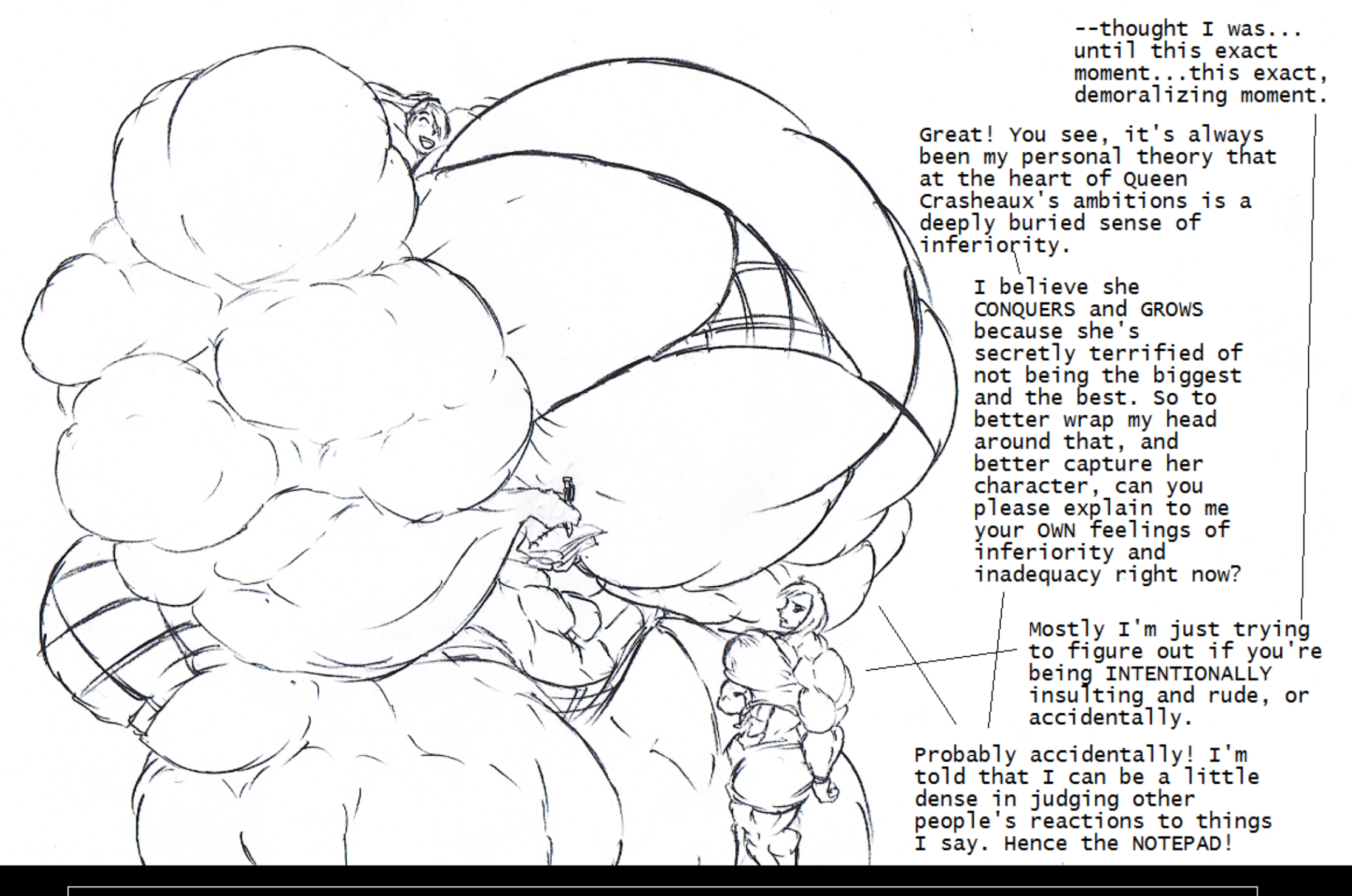
Alright, my pecs are coming along nicely, but they're coming along so nicely I can't REALLY see my abs past them...so tell me, how ARE my abs doing? Are they looking good? Are they looking, you know, in-character?

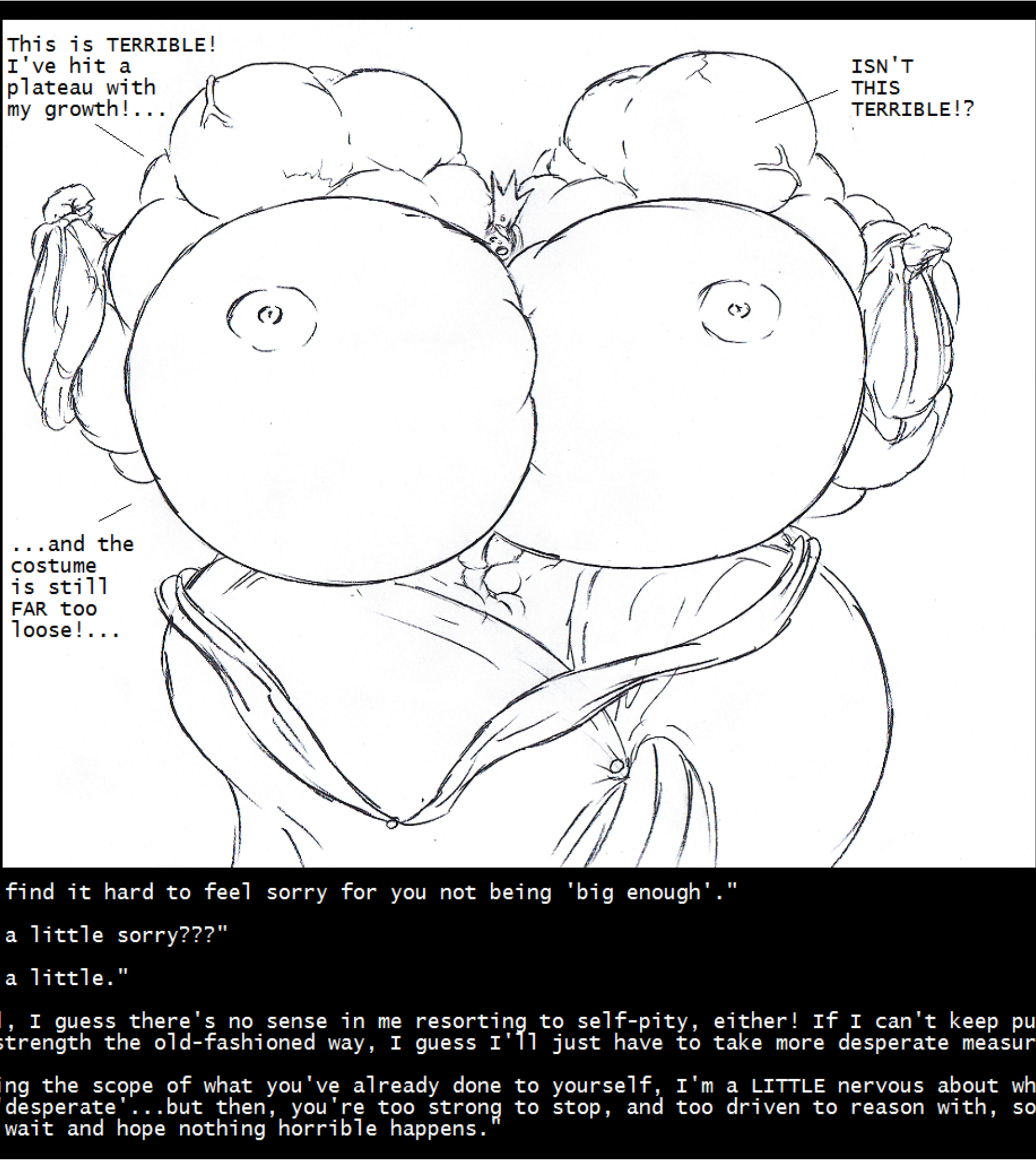
"I don't know, how ARE Queen Crasheaux's abs supposed to look, character-wise?"

"They should look HAUGHTY!"

"...yyyyyyeah, I guess those abs are pretty haughty."

Excuse me, ma'am? Are you 'Moore Massive', famous for being the most muscular woman in the world?
Why, yes, I--


--thought I was... until this exact moment...this exact, demoralizing moment.
Great! You see, it's always been my personal theory that at the heart of Queen Crasheaux's ambitions is a deeply buried sense of inferiority.
I believe she CONQUERS and GROWS because she's secretly terrified of not being the biggest and the best. So to better wrap my head around that, and better capture her character, can you please explain to me your OWN feelings of inferiority and inadequacy right now?
Mostly I'm just trying to figure out if you're being INTENTIONALLY insulting and rude, or accidentally.
Probably accidentally! I'm told that I can be a little dense in judging other people's reactions to things I say. Hence the NOTEPAD!


This is TERRIBLE! I've hit a plateau with my growth!...
ISN'T THIS TERRIBLE!?
...and the costume is still FAR too loose!...

"Pearl, I find it hard to feel sorry for you not being 'big enough'."

"Not even a little sorry???"

"Not even a little."

"Oh...well, I guess there's no sense in me resorting to self-pity, either! If I can't keep putting on size and strength the old-fashioned way, I guess I'll just have to take more desperate measures!"

"Considering the scope of what you've already done to yourself, I'm a LITTLE nervous about what you'd consider 'desperate'...but then, you're too strong to stop, and too driven to reason with, so I suppose I'll just wait and hope nothing horrible happens."

THE NEXT DAY:

"SOMETHING HORRIBLE IS HAPPENING!"

"(sigh) Alright, what is it?"

"Oops! First, you're not driving right now, are you? I always like to make sure of that when I call someone. Driving while talking on the phone can be dangerous! So--"

"VERY REASONABLE CONCERN, but no, I'm not driving, now please, WHY DID YOU CALL? WHAT IS HAPPENING?"

"Well, with me only getting to about 60% of the size I needed--"

"...and becoming the most powerful living thing on the planet in the process, as if that wasn't enough to satisfy you..."

"--I decided to use this experimental muscle-building drug that had all SORTS of warning labels on it! Which I did not read before taking them. I was in a hurry! But now, while waiting for them to kick in, hey, I had some time to kill, so for some light reading, I DID read the labels. And, well..."

"Well what!?"

"...see, I kinda calculated things, and considering my apparently natural gift for building muscle, and the apparently 'exponential' effect of the drug, and the fact that I took the whole bottle of the drug which was apparently supposed to last for ten years, so as to 'avoid exploding from abrupt muscle growth'...label's words, not mine...well...I don't think I'll EXPLODE, I'm sort of invincible, but I'm pretty sure I'm about to become so muscular that I'll engulf the entire solar system."

"WHAT!? Are you serious?...shit, I know how impossible your growth has been even before you added super-drugs to the mix, of course you're serious...oh, GOD!...this is horrible!"

"I KNOW! I'm gonna end up WAY too big for the costume!"

"....what."

"I'm going from not big enough to completely overshooting the mark! It's a disaster!"

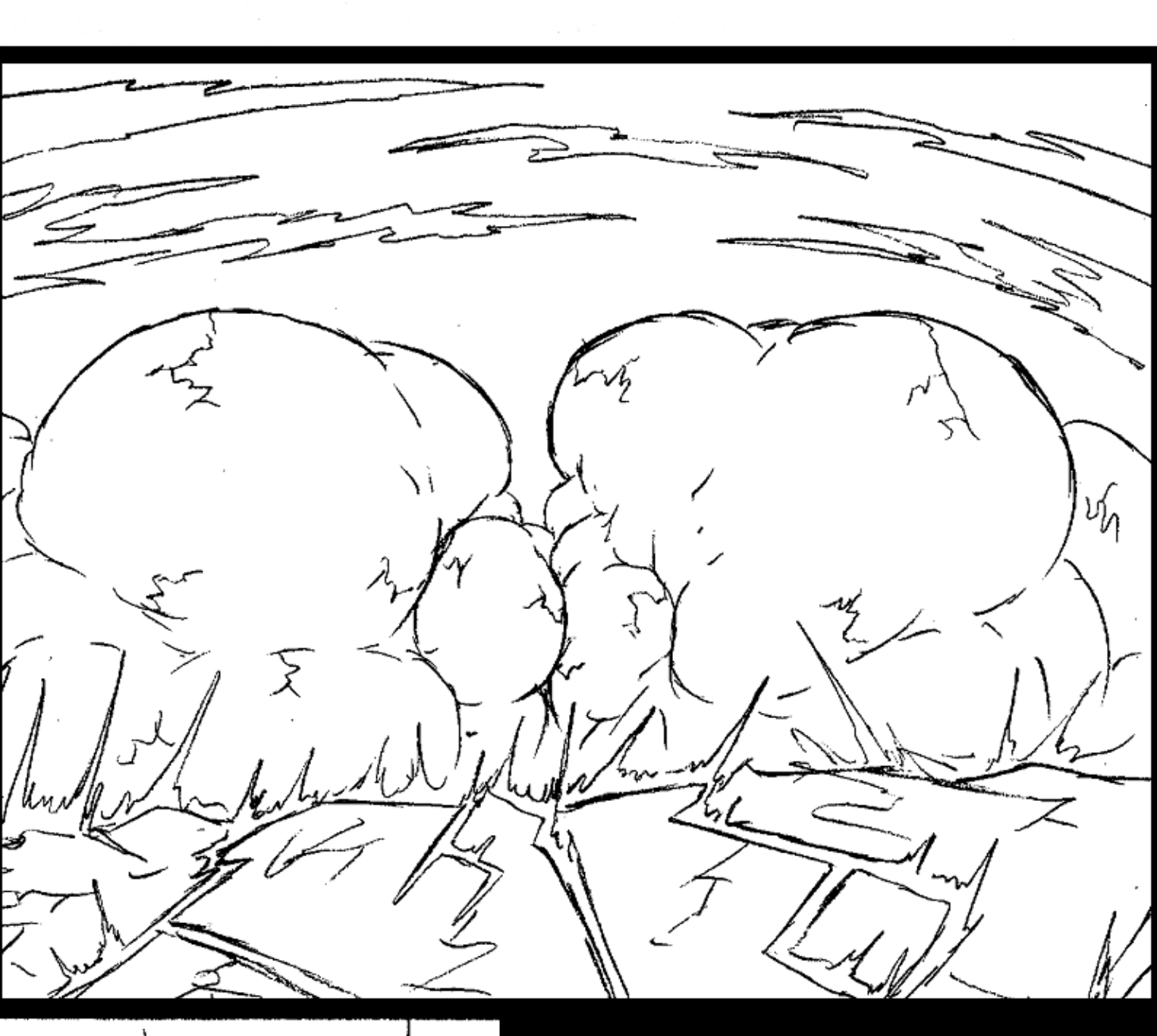
"...THAT IS NOT WHY THIS IS A DISASTER! THIS--"

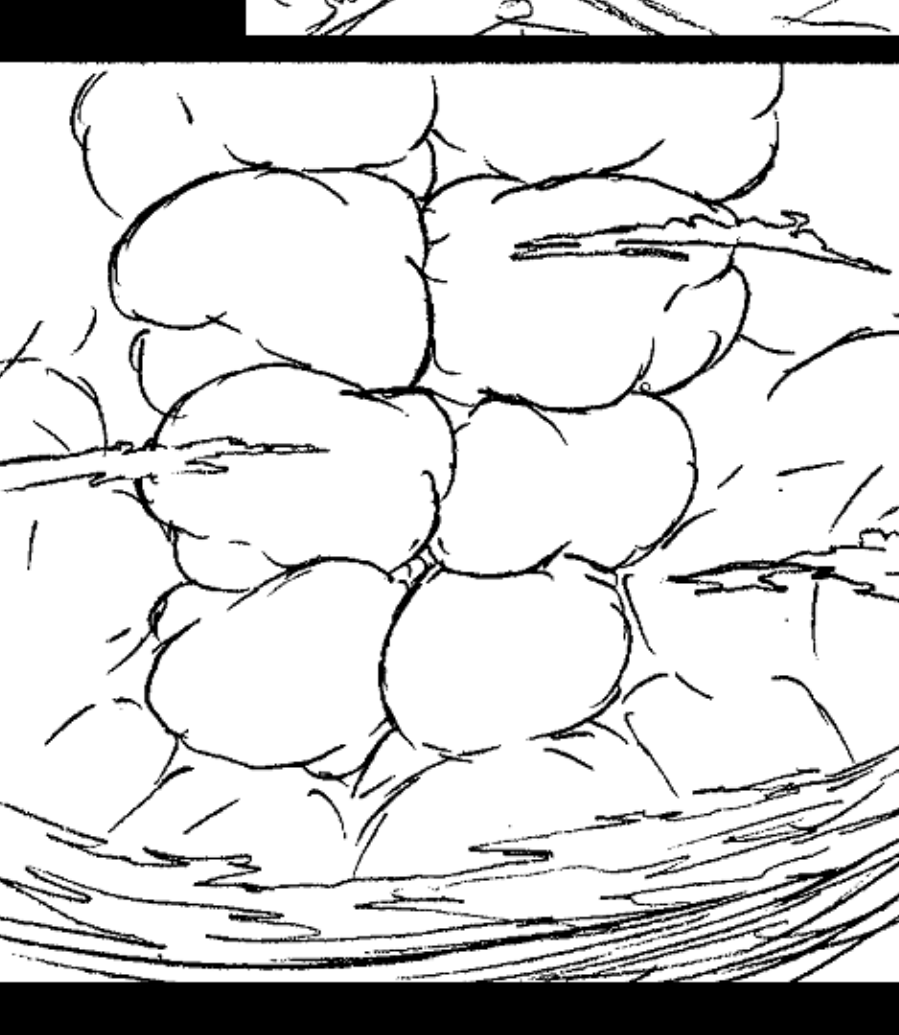
"Oh, sorry, hold on! I just got an e-mail from my 'Queen Crasheaux' fan newsletter!...I'm one of only four members, very exclusive...OH! OH, WOW! THIS IS AMAZING! THIS IS WONDERFUL! THIS IS PERFECT!"

"I'm hoping you just found out that you're not about to engulf the solar system, but I should know better."

"DETAILS HAVE JUST BEEN RELEASED ABOUT THE NEXT BOOK IN THE SERIES! Apparently, Queen Crasheaux finally gets hold of the Diamond Core...which is a REALLY big deal, narratively...and with it, finally achieves her dark dream of goddesshood! She ends up 'larger than whole worlds'! So instead of me dropping the ball, I've actually ended up ahead of the curve! I couldn't have planned this better if I had WANTED to! So, the fact that I'm about to outgrow the solar system..."

TOTALLY fine, after all! What a relief! Alright, I'll hang up now, thanks for bearing with me during my little freak-out!
What!? NO! This is NOT fine, you--





"Are you...are you still on the phone?"

"Yes. Yes, I am."

"Wow!...I CAN'T BELIEVE I STILL GET A CELL-PHONE SIGNAL FROM OUT HERE!"

"That is not the most--actually, that is pretty weird."

"Yup! Anyway, is everyone still alright on earth?"

"I THINK so...you caused plenty of damage to your immediate area, and there were tremors and storms globally, but honestly, the sheer RATE of your growth saved us. You were sort of gone, grown clear off the planet, before your size could crush or wreak too much havoc."

"THAT'S good!..."

"...you better not say that you're only glad because you still want people left to admire your costume."

"Totally wasn't gonna say that! Really, I'm glad everyone's alright! I even had the foresight to go to the middle of nowhere once I realized how potent the drug was. See? I was very responsible."

"No you were not. But still, glad you didn't cause the apocalypse."

"Me too! Even if that would have been SUCH a Queen Crasheaux thing to do."

"Right. Anyway, speaking of Queen Crasheaux...I know you've been focused on getting all these other, ahem, details, right, but...doesn't she have black hair? Like, isn't that a VERY frequently stated and iconic part of her appearance, her 'raven hair'? So...were you ever planning on dying your hair, or anything like that?...to actually look remotely like her in ways besides being enormous?..."

"Wow, yeah, uh...thaaaaat probably would have been easier to do back when I still fit on earth..."

"Earth, hell, how are you going to fit in the house having the costume party?"

"...huh...yeah, I guess I sorta lost sight of some of the smaller but crucial priorities of this plan..."

"I think you might have, yes."

"...buuuuuut, you know who ELSE oftens loses sight of some of the smaller but crucial priorities of a plan? QUEEN CRASHEAUX! I'VE STILL GOT IT!"

"Great."

"And I know you can't see it, but I AM wearing the crown! I bet if you got some telescope photography of my face and submitted it to the costume CONTEST at the party, I may get second or third place! I know not first...I won't be there in person, and I'm otherwise naked and costume-less EXCEPT for the crown, but the crown looks great, and I REALLY feel like my commitment to this costume is enough to earn me a spot. Here's hoping, anyway!"

"...you are a cosmic-sized muscle-goddess, and probably the single most powerful force in the universe now...and your highest ambition of conquest is 'maybe second or third place' at a costume contest."

"Yup! What's your point?"

"Just that, authentic muscle size aside, I think you're quite different from Queen Crasheaux. And that's a very good thing."

There once were two great powers at play amongst the macrocosm. One, possessed of a limitless strength, and the other, possessed of an all-consuming hunger.

Rightly recognizing that all of creation was not space enough for two such as themselves, they battled, and in so doing, so destroyed and took from and reduced each other that all that remained were the merest mortal fragment of each. And a conciousness and form grew upon one of those lost fragments, layer by layer, into something all its own.

Like a Pearl.

And though that Pearl didn't know around what it had formed, or what true nature lay dormant within it, it may have found, in some silly stories, a fictional figure that spoke to that hidden core of it, hard and eternal as a diamond, and the core spoke back, empowering the Pearl, aiding it in achieving it's surface desire, which also fulfilled the inner, darker desires of the core, the desires for a return to greatness.

But the Pearl, having grown so thick and so strong, has really only buried that vicious core more deeply and more securely. It innocently admired the power and ruthlessness of a fictional character, while unknowingly acting as the perfect sentinel to ensure that such a true figure never awakens.

The Pearl would never know what it was doing, or know why it felt so strangely, nostalgically drawn to the idea of Queen Crasheaux.

But the Pearl was a savior, all the same.

...although, another such pearl may be out there somewhere. And it may not be strong enough to keep its hidden nature sealed away.

But that is another story, for another time. And this story, is at an end. For now...

EPILOGUE:

She got second place in the contest.

"WOOHOO! I KNEW this crown would blow their minds!"