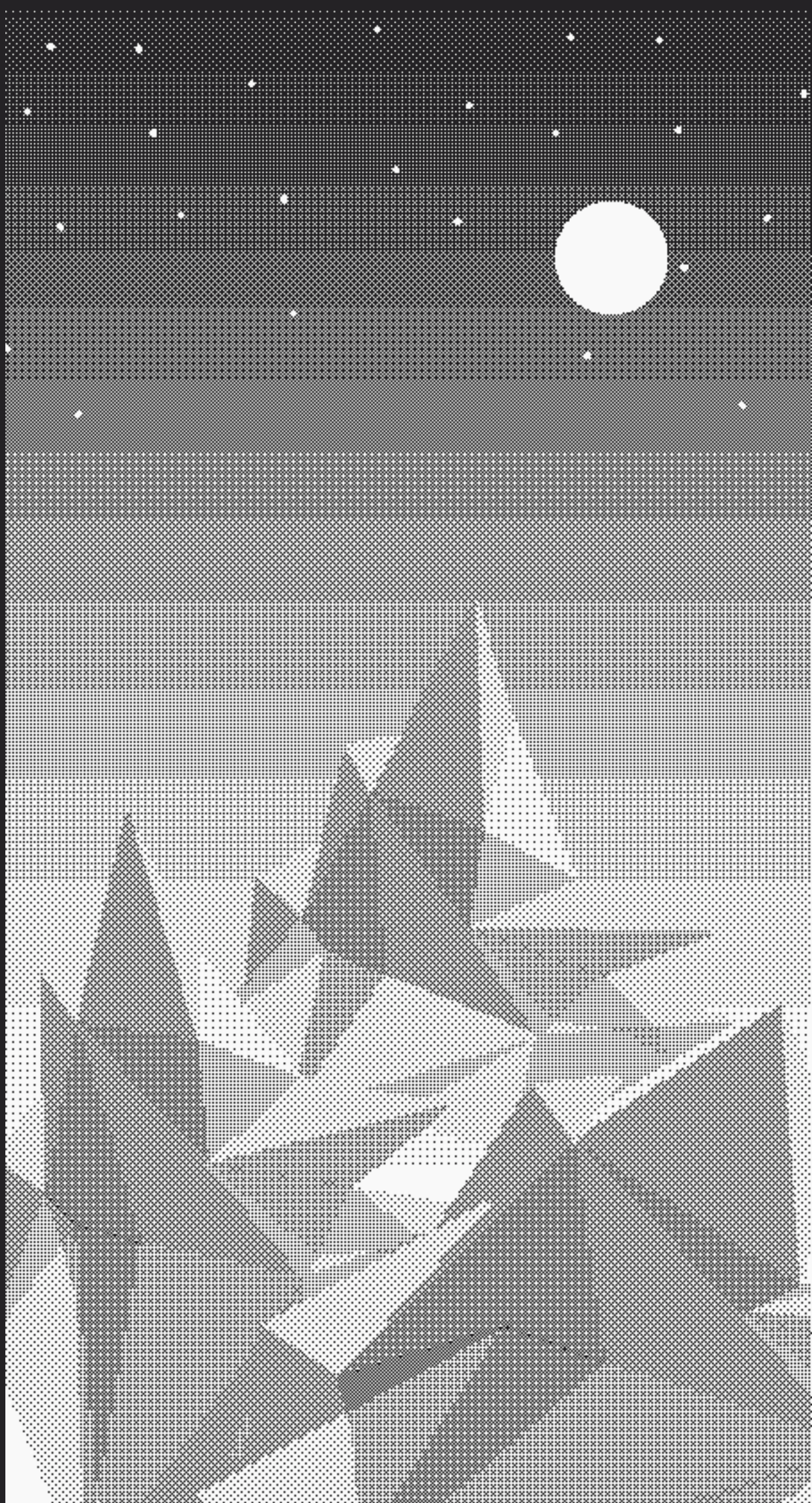
NORMAL



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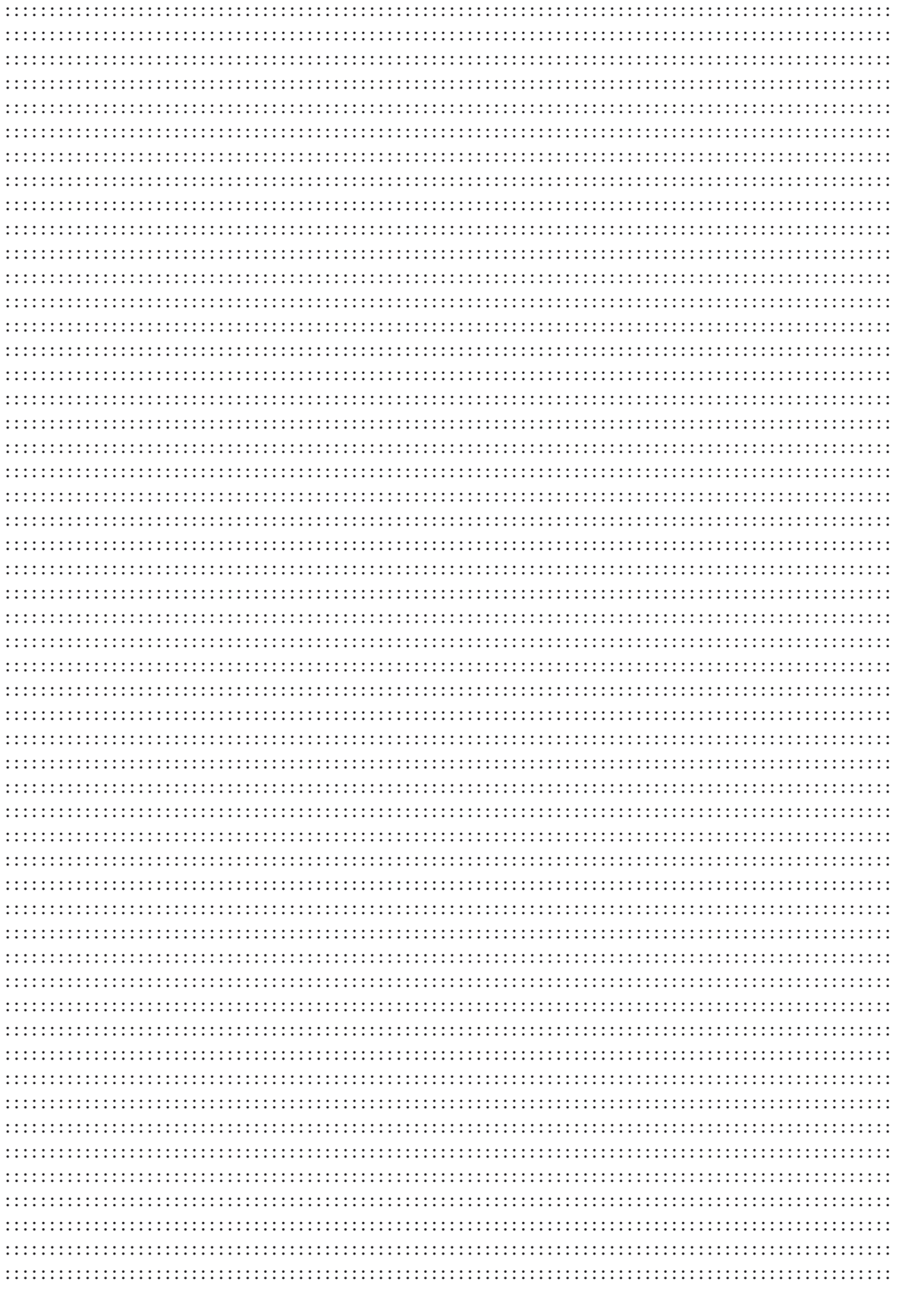
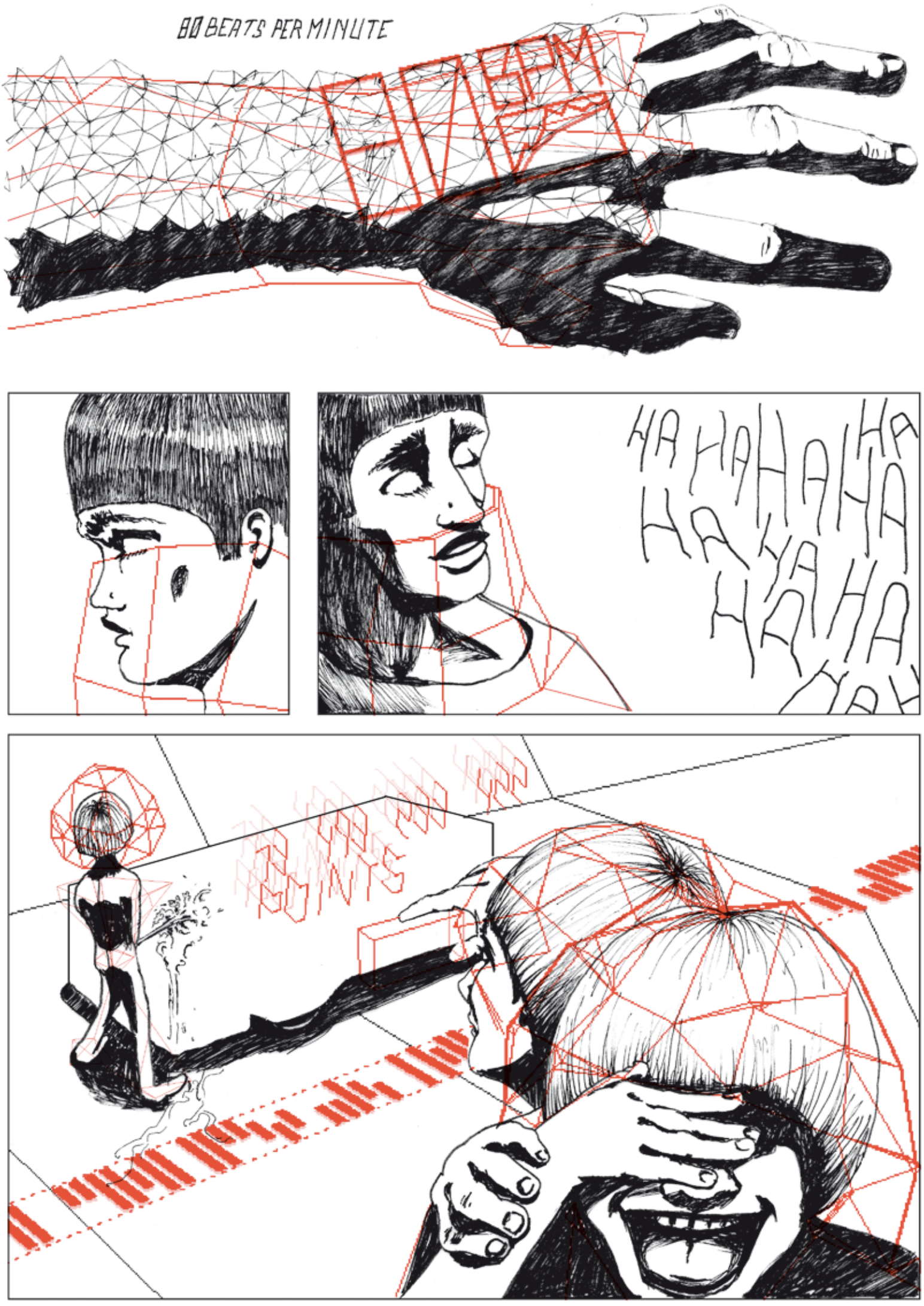
2013

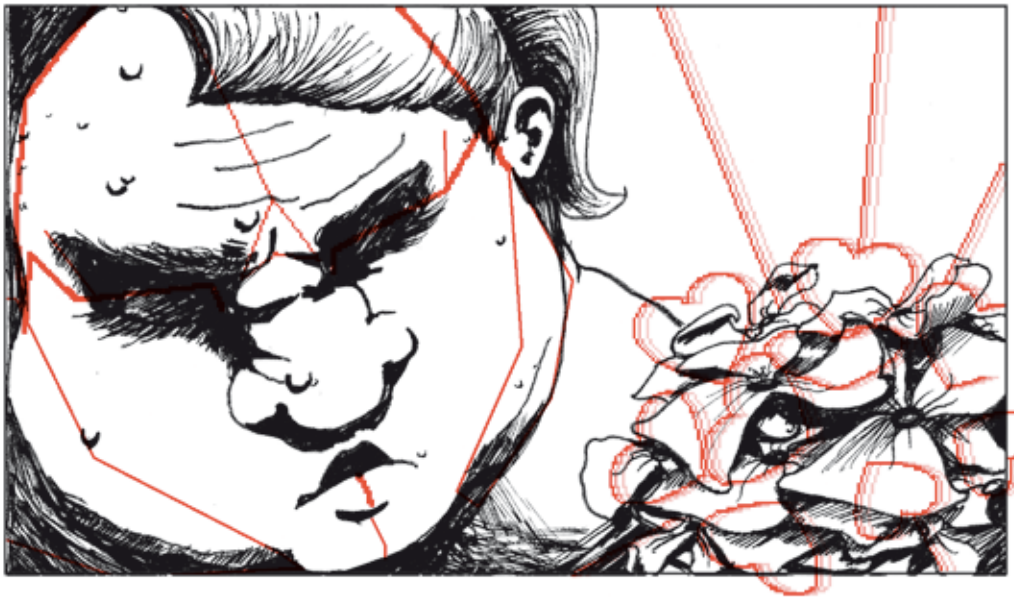
N O R M A L	000
S T O R Y	Aurelien R. Michon
G R A P H I C S	Cedric Flazinski
C U S T O M A P P S	Made with Processing
M A D E	in Paris
B E T W E E N	June 2012 & January 2013
P U B L I S H E D	by self



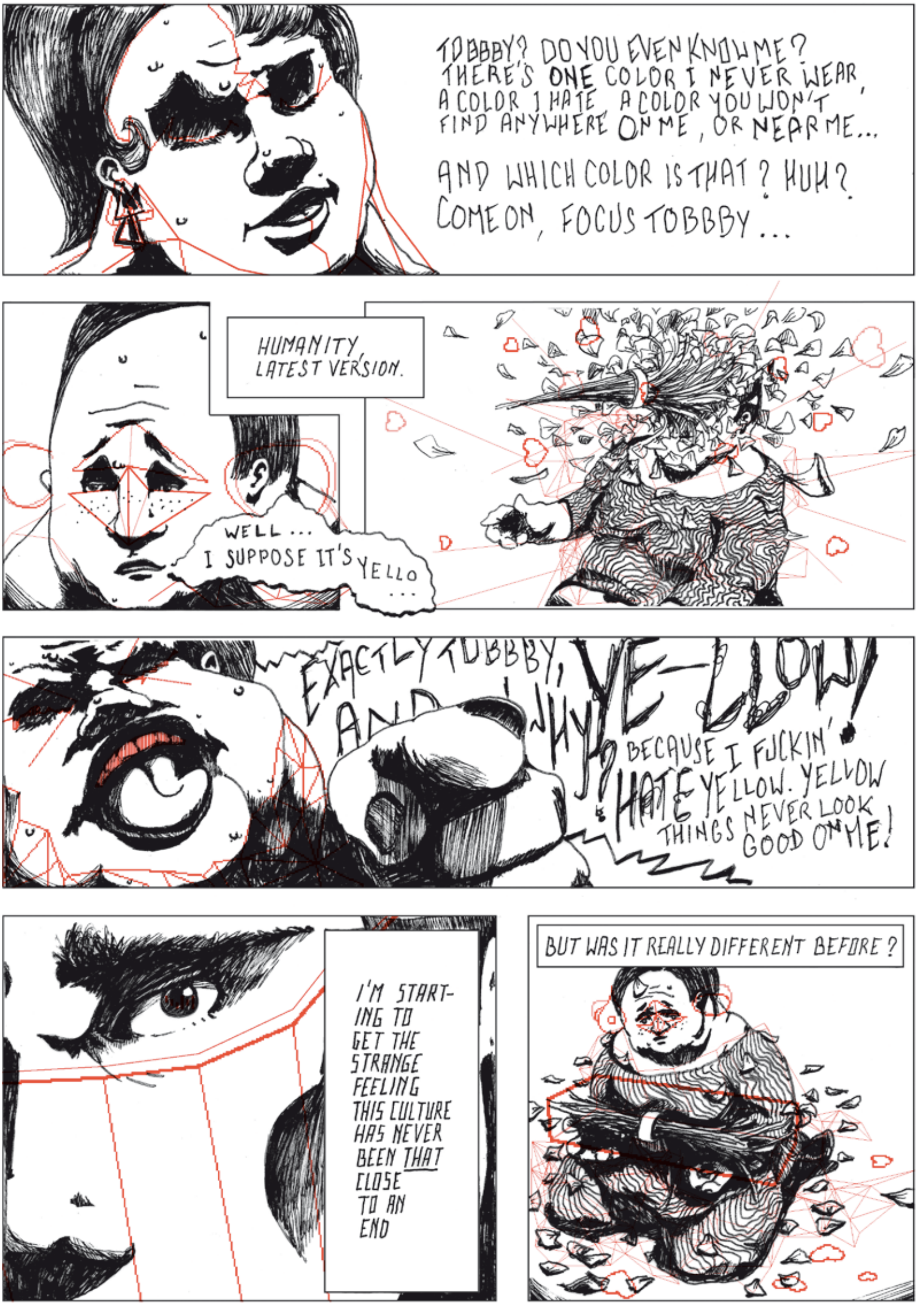
From the outside, the Culture stands as a majestic tree of synthetic concrete rising from the ground and up into the sky, tearing scarce clouds apart in its endless ascent. The crops surrounding the root of the tree-shaped city are optimally organized in circles, saving space and labor to the fully automated machines taking care of them, whereas the Culture itself is an anarchic and twisted edifice sculpted off chaos by the burning energies of city life. If you stare at it for a while, you can see it transform before your eyes, bit by bit, as old constructions vanish while new ones arise, leaving only vestiges of past architectural whims in strata of ancient history.


80 BEATS PER MINUTE
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

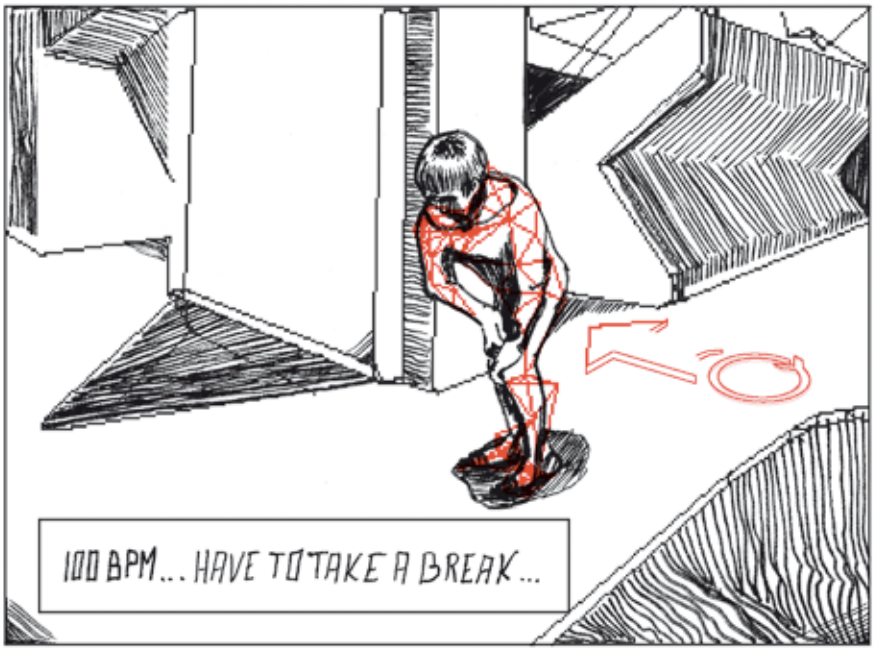
AT DAWN, THE CULTURE LOOKS LIKE A HUGE TRASH BIN, STARRING PEOPLE AS GARBAGE. THIS ABUNDANCE OF EVERYTHING TURNED THEM INTO 5-YEAR-OLDS, PLAYING WITH EVER-CHANGING TOYS. NO-ONE'S HERE TO TELL THEM WHAT TO DO WITH THEIR PATHETIC LITTLE LIVES.



ARE YOU KIDDIN' ME, TOBBY?! WHO THE FUCK DO YOU THINK I AM?

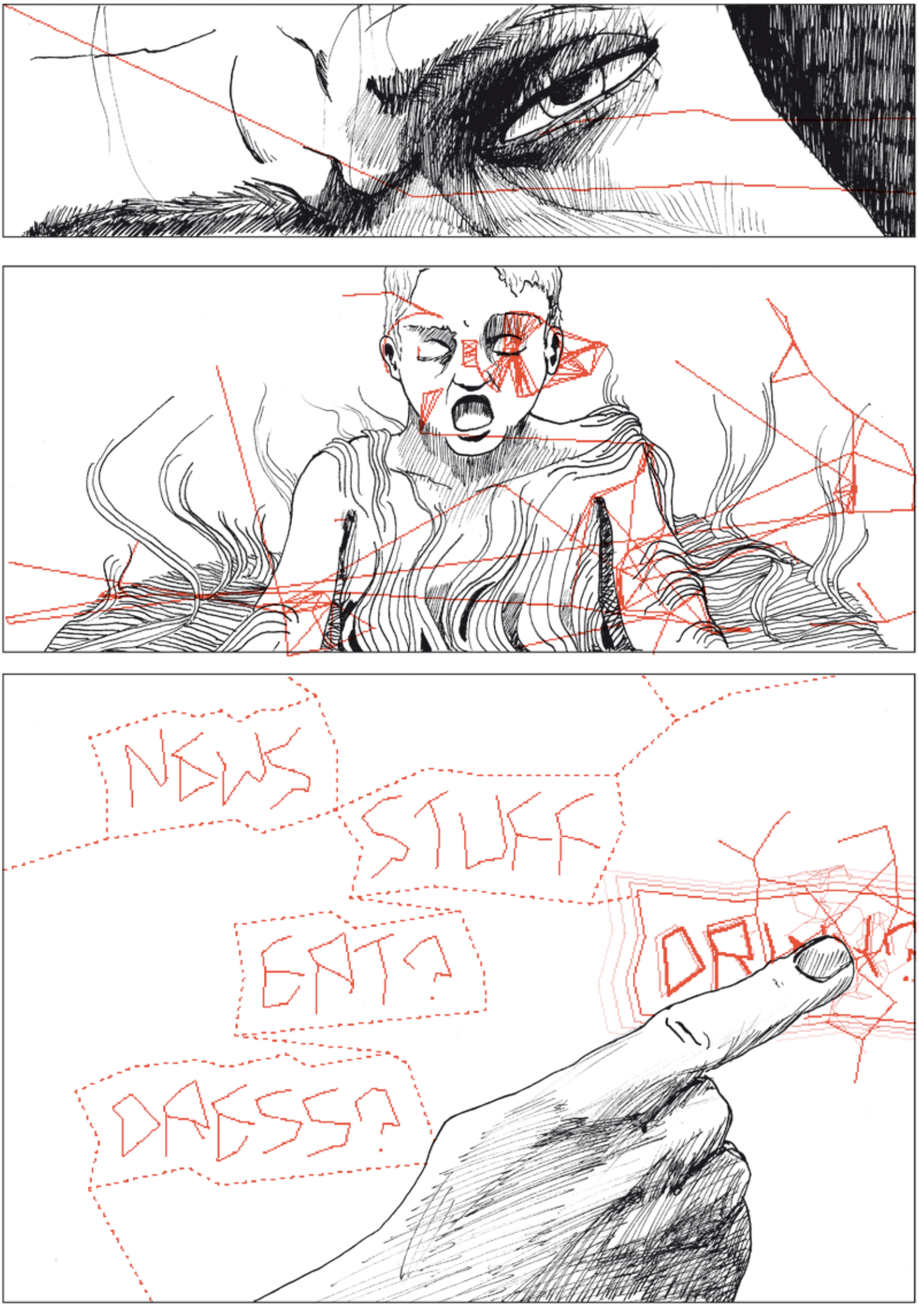

TOBBBY? DO YOU EVEN KNOW ME?
THERE'S ONE COLOR I NEVER WEAR,
A COLOR I HATE A COLOR YOU WON'T
FIND ANYWHERE ON ME, OR NEAR ME...
AND WHICH COLOR IS THAT? HUH?
COME ON, FOCUS TOBBBY...
HUMANITY
LATEST VERSION.
WELL...
I SUPPOSE IT'S YELLO...
EXACTLY TUBBBY,
AND WHY?
YE-LLOW!
BECAUSE I FUCKIN'
HATE YELLOW. YELLOW
THINGS NEVER LOOK
GOOD ON ME!
I'M START-
ING TO
GET THE
STRANGE
FEELING
THIS CULTURE
HAS NEVER
BEEN THAT
CLOSE
TO AN
END
BUT WAS IT REALLY DIFFERENT BEFORE?

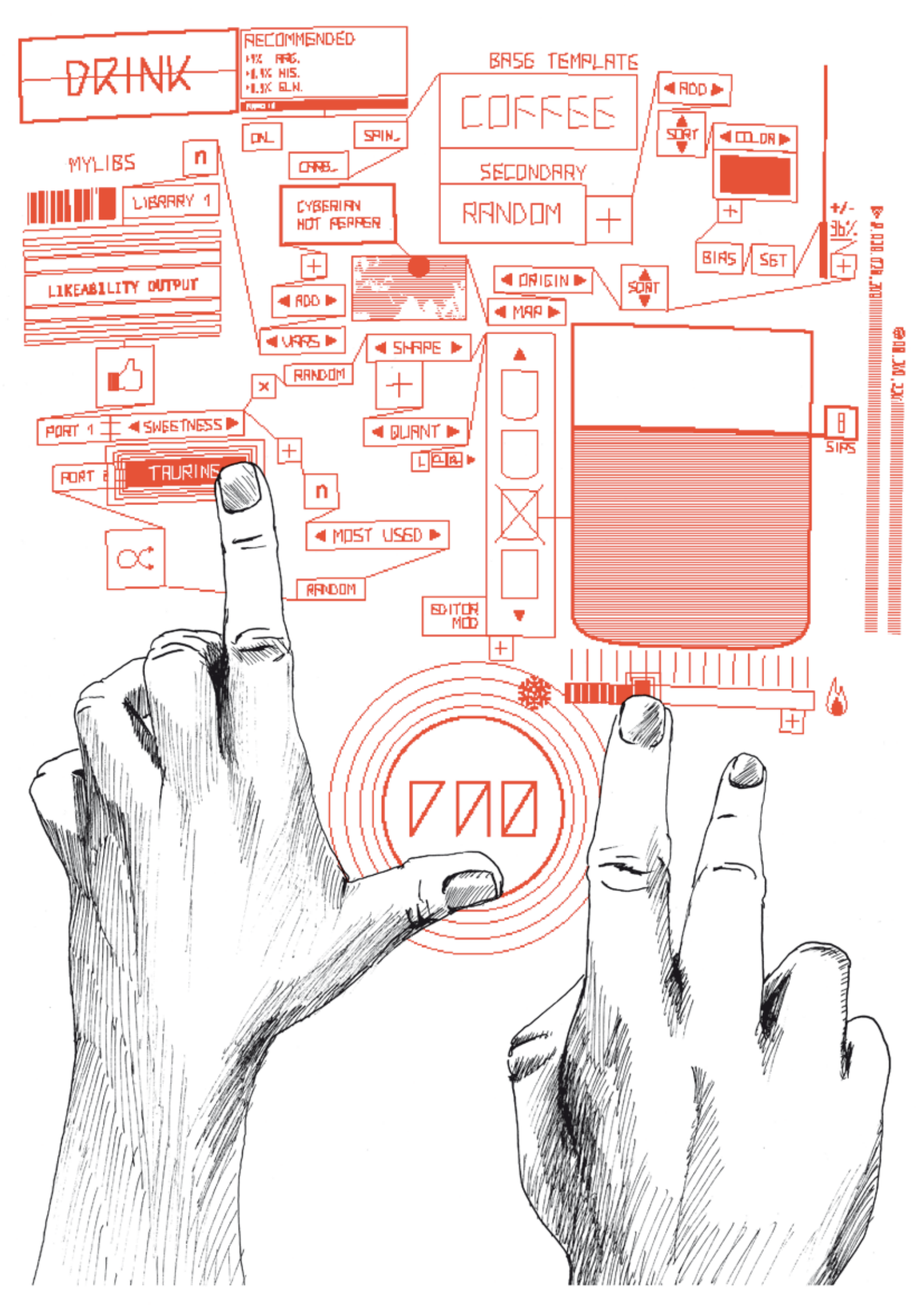
I CAN IMAGINE THAT TOMORROW EVERYONE WILL KNOW ABOUT TOBBBY ... EVERY LIVING ASSHOLE WILL SEE THIS IMAGE OF POOR TOBBBY... TOBBBY THE UNLUCKY, WHO JUST PICKED THE WRONG COLOR...

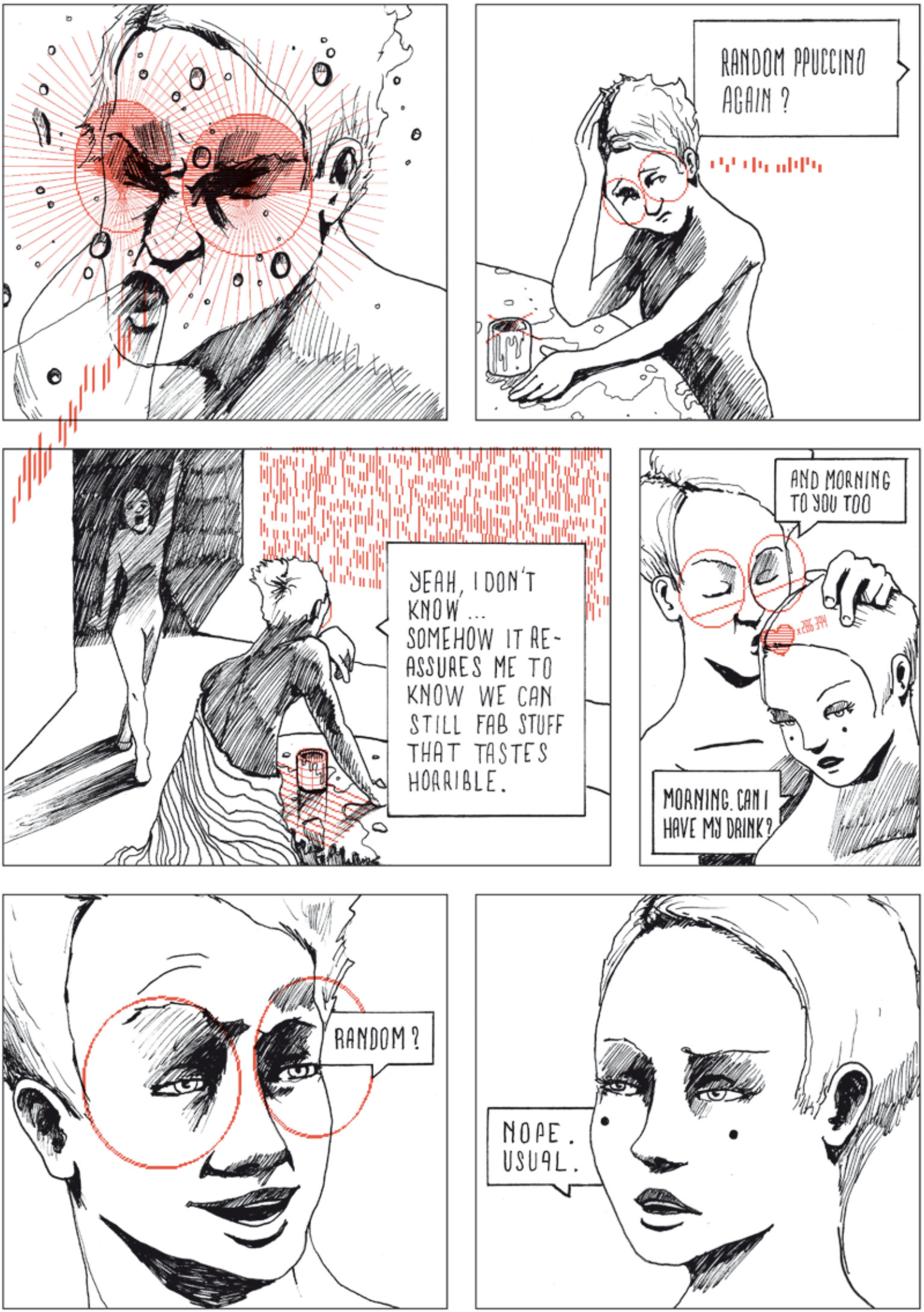


Each day, the Machine — the omnipresent neural network unifying all human knowledge and experience, and in charge of the upkeep of the Culture — provides everyone with a portion of automatically synthesized and cultivated raw materials, commonly referred to as Materia. Through a permanent biological monitoring and numerous behavioral scans of the population, the Machine can estimate easily and with great accuracy how much one needs to survive, be in good health, and never feel the lack of anything. Because, clearly, the Machine's primary function is to maintain all citizens in a very comfortable state of abundance.

In exchange for a share of their generously allocated resources, frenz can fulfill all of their material desires — from basic needs such as food and shelter to the most trivial things — with the help of ubiquitous printers capable of near-molecular assembling. Coupled with contextual fabrication interfaces, these let you customize your creations at will: you can select templates created by other users, modify them just enough to satisfy your need for personalization, mix templates into new ones, or even start from scratch, coding what you need from the very core.

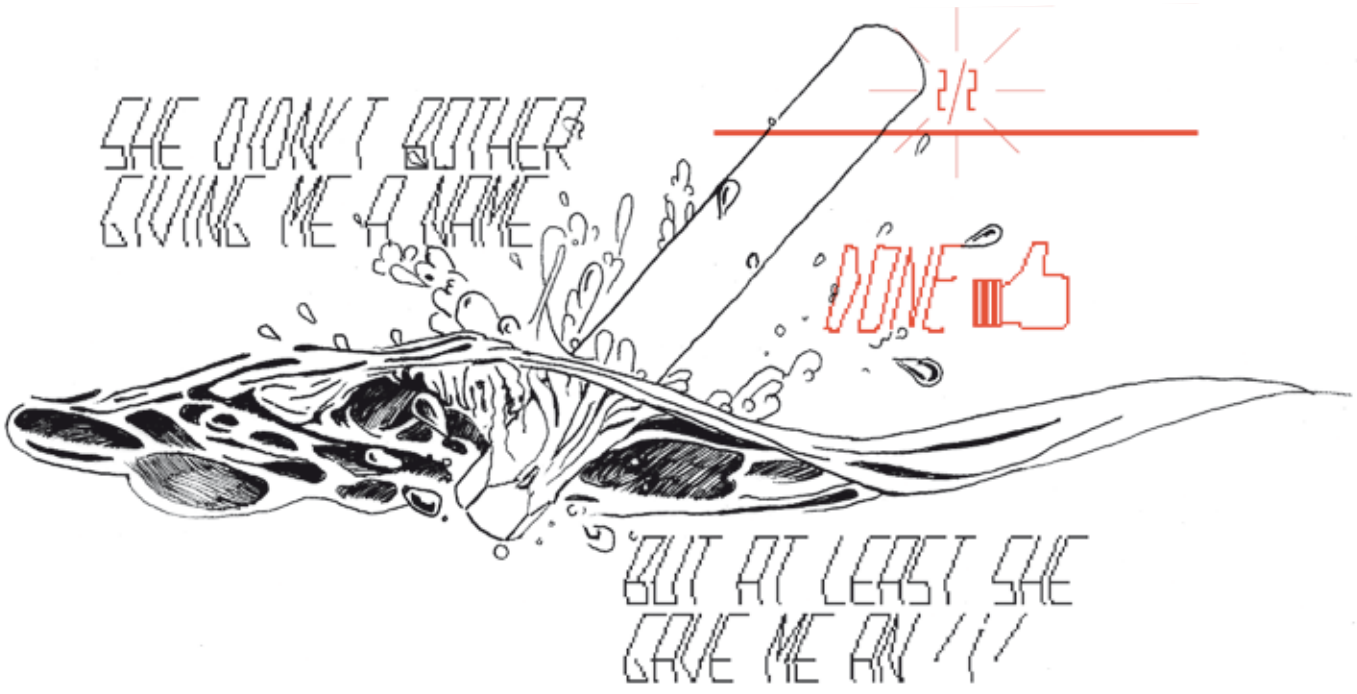

NEWS
STUFF
EATS
DRINKS
DRESS?


DRINK
RECOMMENDED
BASE TEMPLATE
COFFEE
SECONDARY
RANDOM
ADD
SORT
COLOR
BIAS
SET
MYLIBS
LIBRARY 1
LIKEABILITY OUTPUT
CYBERIAN HOT REPAIR
ADD
VARS
ORIGIN
MAP
SHAPE
RANDOM
QUANT
SWEETNESS
TAURINE
MOST USED
RANDOM
EDITOR MODE
SIRS
700

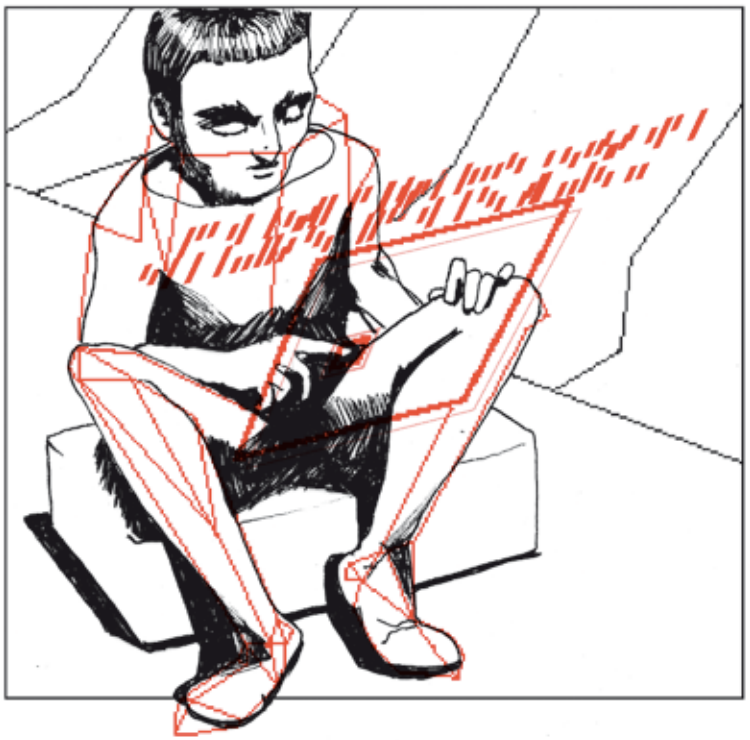

RANDOM PPUCCINO AGAIN ?
YEAH, I DON'T KNOW ... SOMEHOW IT RE-ASSURES ME TO KNOW WE CAN STILL FAB STUFF THAT TASTES HORRIBLE.
AND MORNING TO YOU TOO
MORNING. CAN I HAVE MY DRINK?
RANDOM ?
NOPE. USUAL.

Provided you are equipped with the mandatory non-invasive eye implant — the ‘i’ — you will see countless decorations, messages, announcements, and infographics manifest in a digital layer covering every square centimeter of your vision. What used to be called augmented reality is now irreversibly integrated to frenz’ lives, both as a navigation tool and as a means of esthetic expression. The display is of mediocre quality, but lo-def is a small price to pay in exchange for an ultrafast and permanent flow of information. And you should trust frenz who claim you have to be born here to endure such a massive data input without throwing up. Even for them, it can get nauseous at times, although the ‘i’ offers many ways to handle and filter this visual load.

Nevertheless, it is safe to say that if one were to suppress it, people would be completely lost in the Culture: you won’t find your way without an ‘i’.

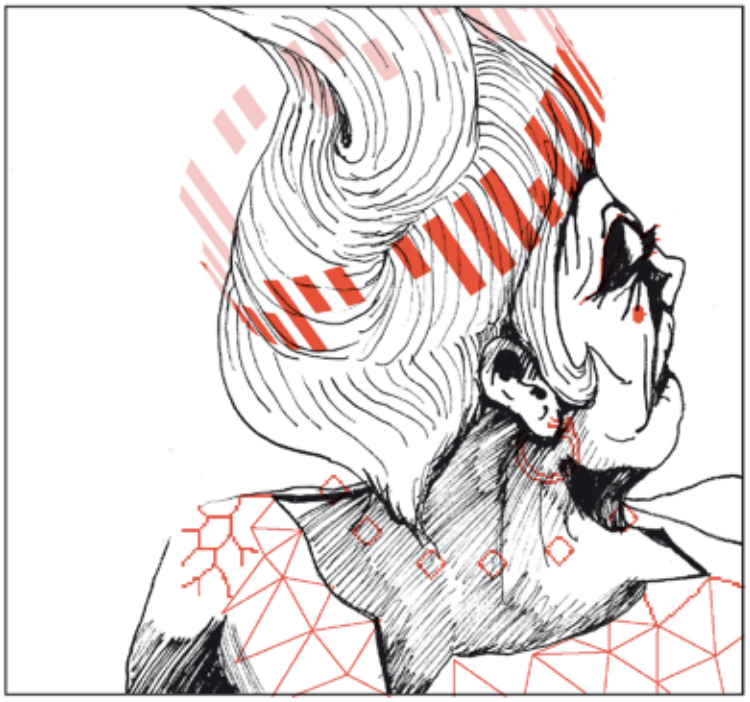

SHE DIDN'T BOTHER
GIVING ME A NAME
2/2
DONE
BUT AT LEAST SHE
GAVE ME AN "I"

MY MOTHER NEVER TAUGHT ME ANYTHING. SHE DIDN'T CARE ABOUT ME AT ALL. SHE DIDN'T EVEN INSTALL THE EDUCATIONAL APPLICATIONS YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO GIVE A NORMAL KID. I ONLY HAD THE DEFAULT FOOD FABRICATION AND SHELTER INTERFACES.



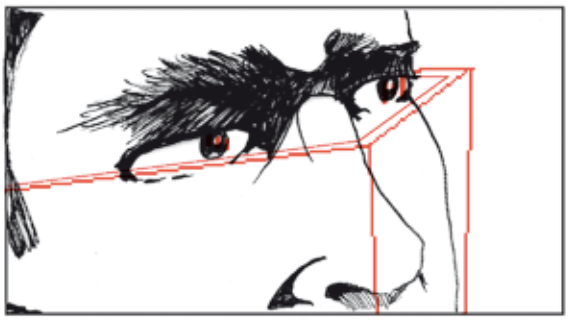
IT ALL SEEMED SO SIMPLE FOR THE OTHER FRENZ. THEY WERE MANIPULATING THIS EXTRA LAYER TO REALITY WITH SUCH EASE.

EVERYTHING WAS SO NATURAL FOR THEM.



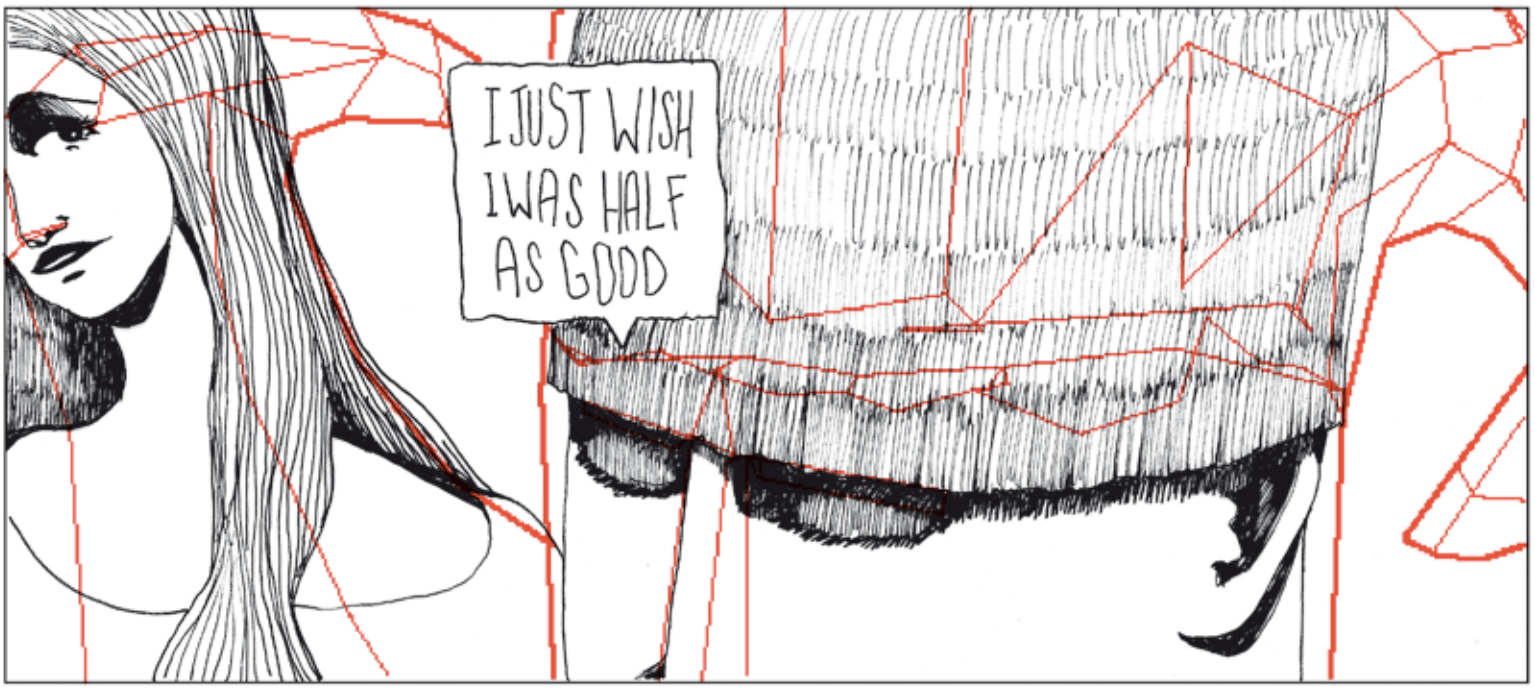
ME, I HAD TO LEARN THROUGH OBSERVATION

SPYING ON THEM



TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT PEOPLE TALKED ABOUT IN THEIR DAILY PIMS AND ORDERS, I FINALLY LEARNED THE BASICS OF RAPID LANGUAGE.

BUT WHAT I DEVELOPED WAS A PARTICULAR HATRED TOWARDS FRENZ AND THEIR WORLD OF DELUSIONS.



There is no leader in the Culture, nor is there any kind of government, even if some ideological gatherings still take place here and there. All administrative decisions are calculated through the Machine, according to statistical deductions garnered from people's opinions. This mathematical take on self-management can seem strange at first sight, but because it is highly permissive and maintains the essential feeling that nothing is ever forbidden, most frenz consider themselves satisfied, and keep a certain trust and faith in the system. One just has to understand that the Machine is not an ill-intended super-intelligent computer, but the result of a real-time connection between all human brains: it is a giant agora for thought, managing the Culture in a seemingly ultra-democratic manner. No decision is ever static, and any citizen's voice can influence the global debate in its own way, so no one ever feels the need to suppress the system as a whole. Instead, it is considered as a code for programming your own system, collectively, with all your fellow-citizens. Frenz consider the Machine as an established force, a figure to their society that cannot be contested without questioning the whole Culture. It can never *go wrong*, as it bears no other idea than the logical average of everyone's opinion. As a political system, the Machine succeeds where every other has failed, neutralizing all aspirations for revolution.

The Machine gathers all the data it needs through the very way frenz exchange information: Rapid Language. If spoken language is still practiced for direct social interaction, frenz mostly communicate in this simplified form favoring the quick encoding of opinions. In fact, expressing your opinion could be considered your only civic duty in the Culture: it is through never-ending debates about everything that this society evolves and progresses.

Here, privacy is unthinkable — all conversations and transmissions are public and accessible to anyone at all time. But even if you could be tempted to call this a transparent system, make no mistake: having such shells of data surround anything and anyone is far from being transparent. Frenz always end up scratching more than they can see.

THAT WAS A GOOD TALK YOU GAVE BACK THERE
DON'T TRY TOO HARD TO BE NICE. I KNOW YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN A SINGLE WORD I SAID
YOUR DREAMS ARE FROM ANOTHER TIME, NEPSEN. BUT WHO AM I TO JUDGE?
BESIDES I'M NOT HERE FOR A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE FUTURE OF MANKIND
4 SIPS
WE HAVE OTHER PROBLEMS. WE NEED TO DEAL WITH THE KID TONIGHT
COME ON! NOT HIM AGAIN! HE MAKES ME SICK!
DID YOU KNOW MEN USED TO FIGHT FOR THEIR FOOD?
FOR FOOD

Perhaps you now have the feeling that the Culture is nothing but a giant amusement park for overgrown children, and there is some truth in that indeed. Everything here is built around entertainment, and personal augmentations as well as public displays constantly glorify mass distraction. Of course, it could be argued that such immoderate hedonism has a negative impact on global human progress, but you have to understand no frenz would ever complain about that. Dreams of brighter tomorrows have all faded under the blinding light of this perfect present.

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N O R M A L S

IS A PARIS-BASED BLEND OF ANTICIPATORY DESIGNS AND NARRATIVES DEVOTED TO CELEBRATING THE FUTURE NETWORKED 'ME-FEST' AND ITS SERVERS FULL OF CUTE CAT VIDEOS, THROUGH ONE BIG STORYLINE. AS OF FEBRUARY 2012, THE GROUP IS ACTIVE BUILDING AN ORIGINAL PUBLICATION SERIES, AS WELL AS PROTOTYPING ITS FICTION FOR REAL.

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This document is a preview of N O R M A L S 0 0 1 + 0 0 2 + 0 0 3 a super deluxe designer sci-fi series which features the 3 first episodes of a graphic novel, a collection of short fictions, and a design research journal.

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