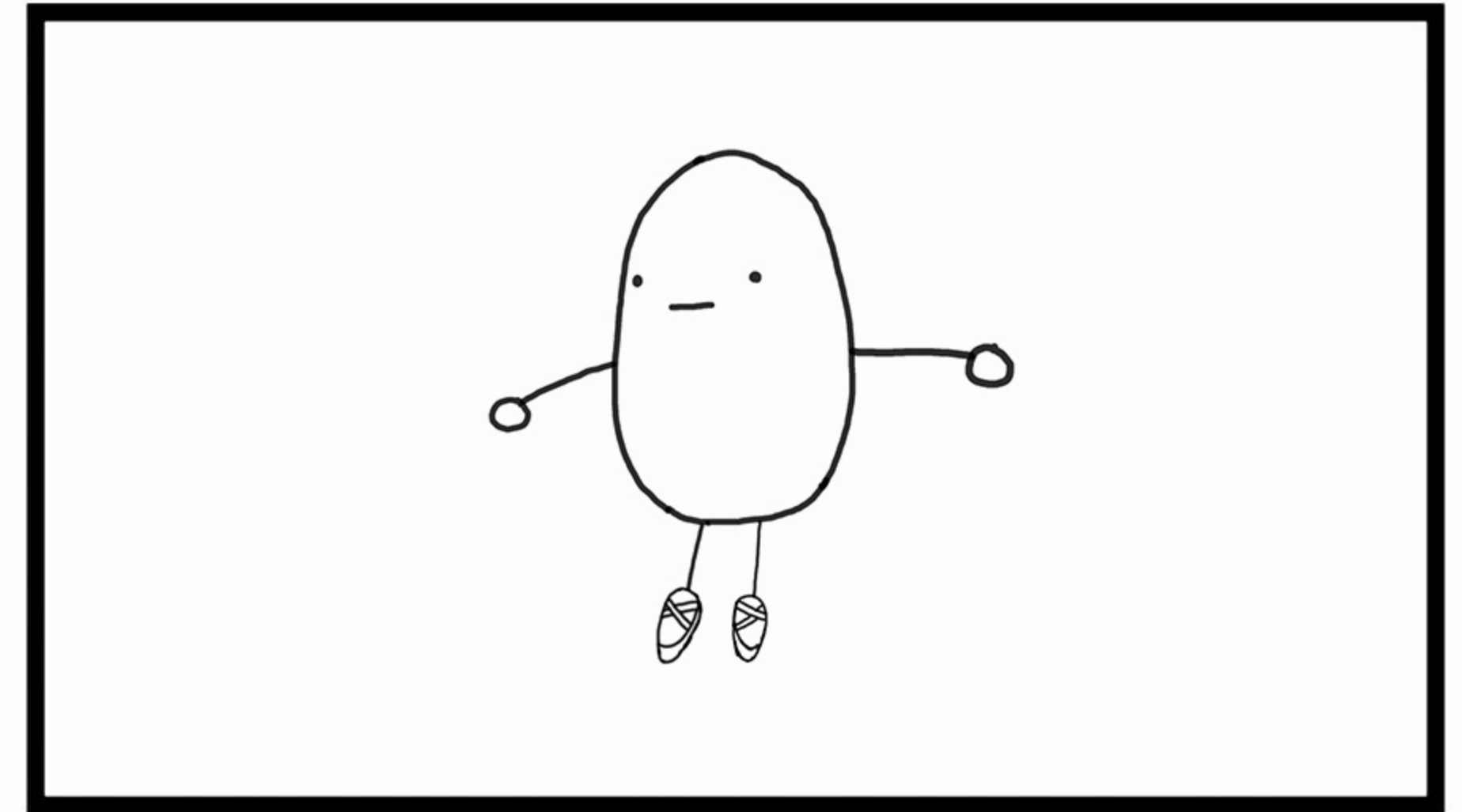
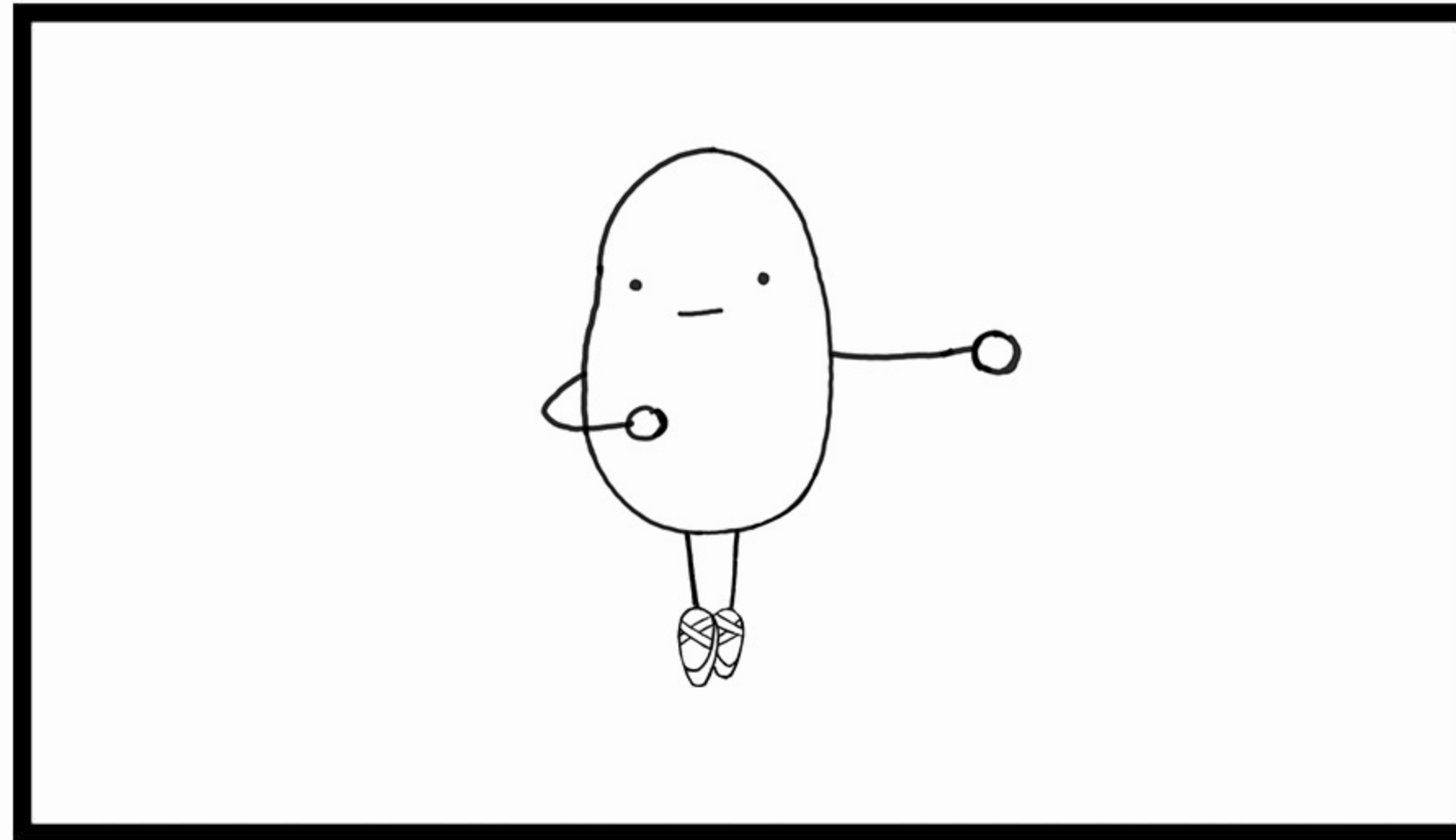
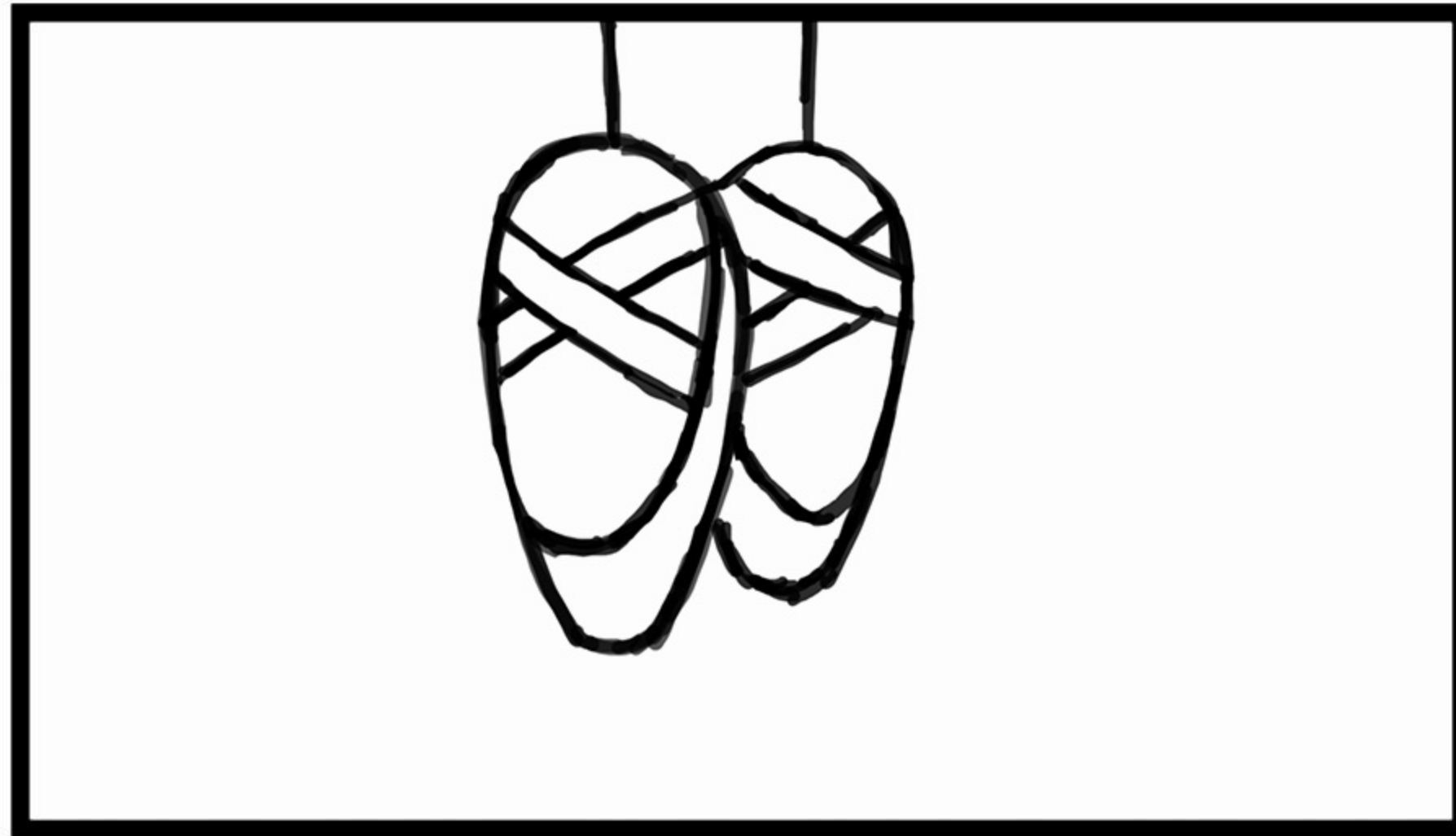


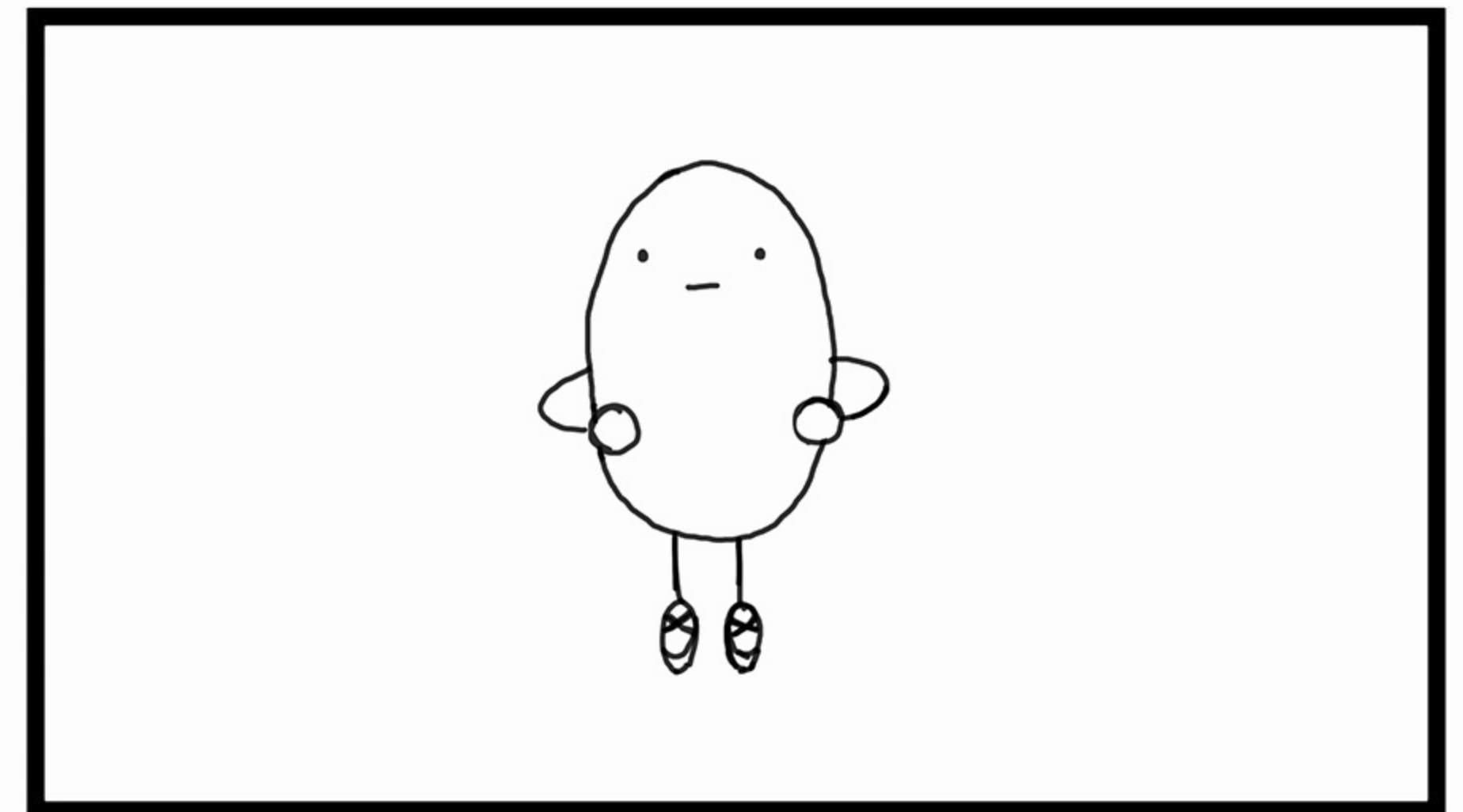
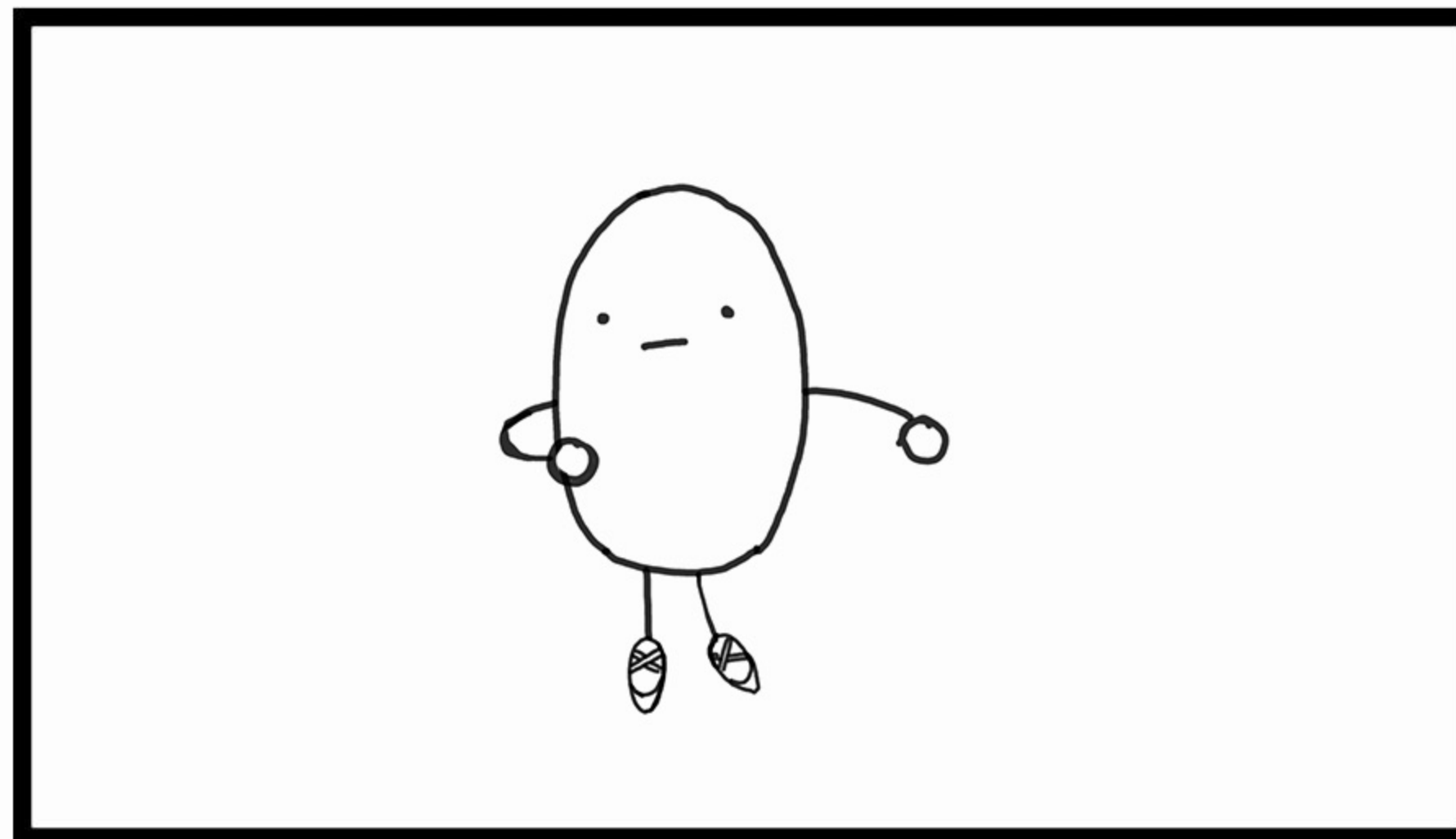
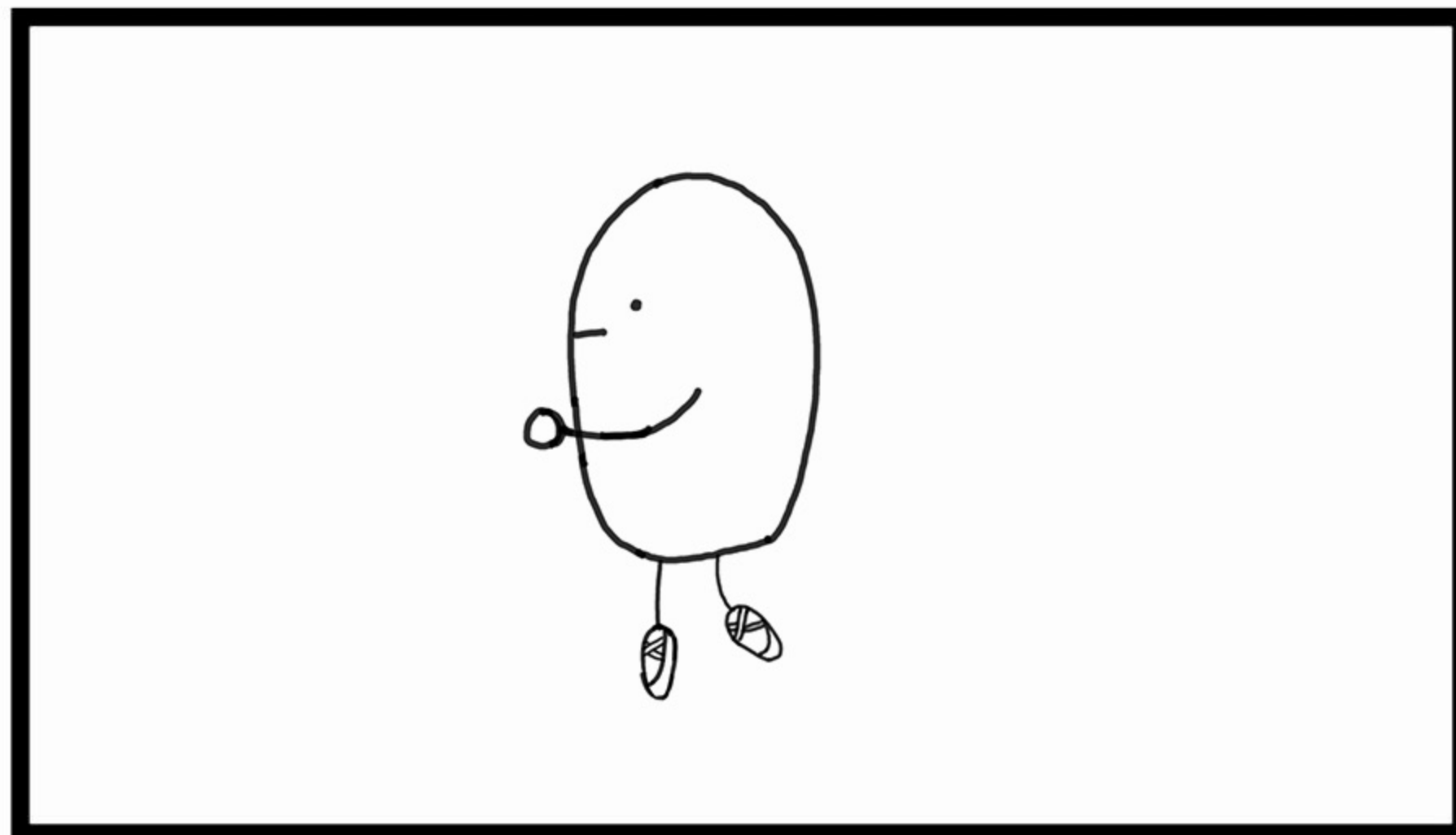
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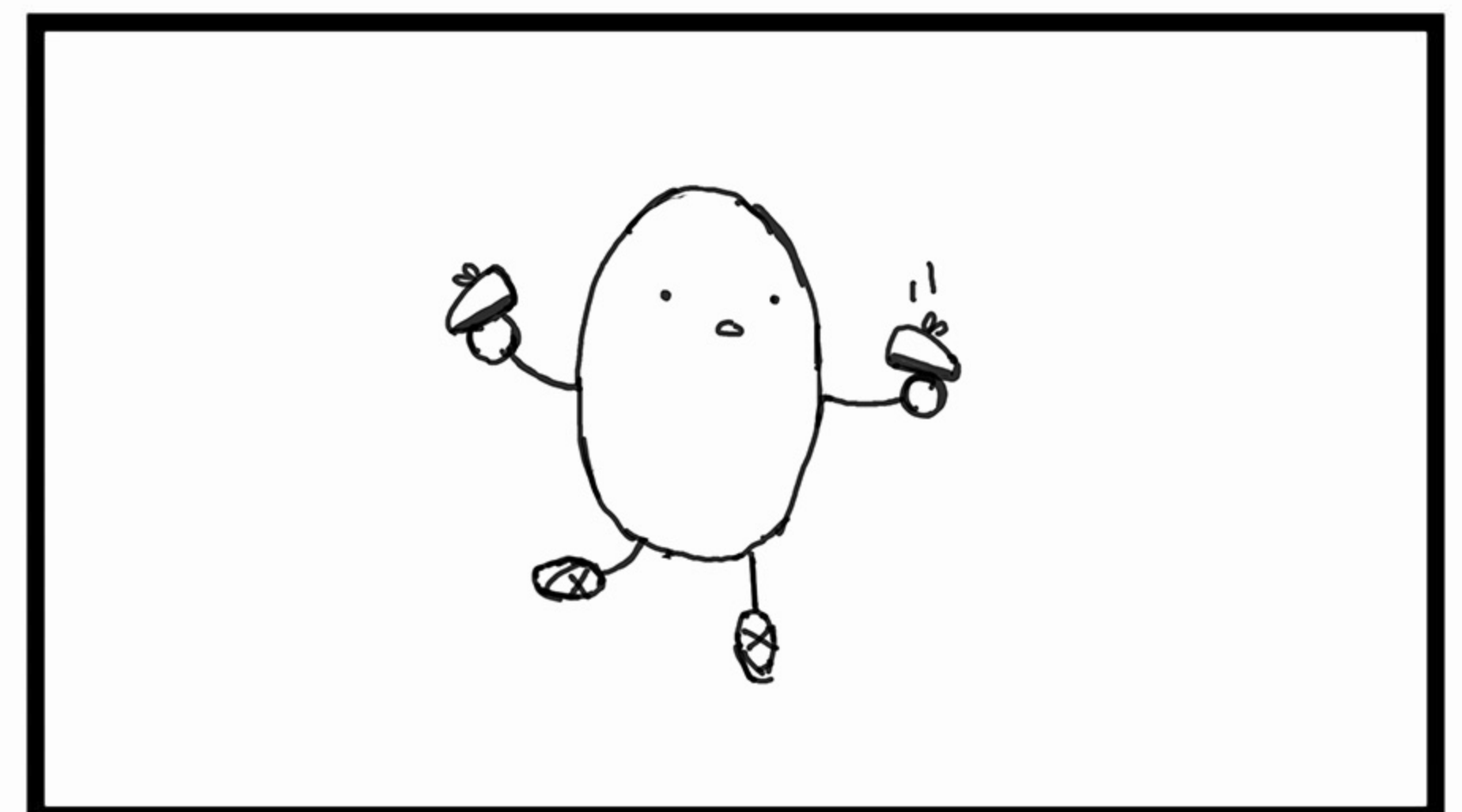
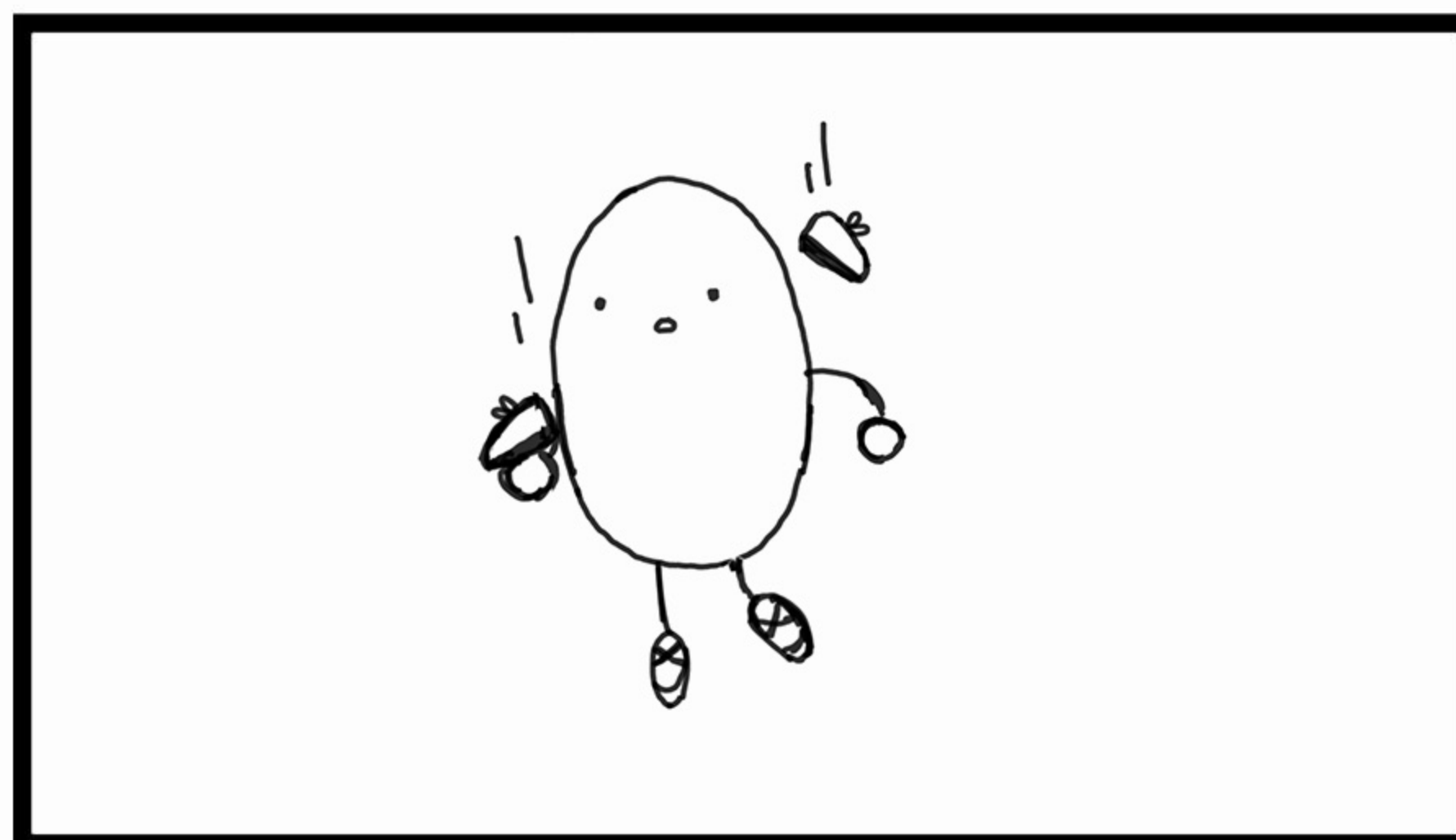
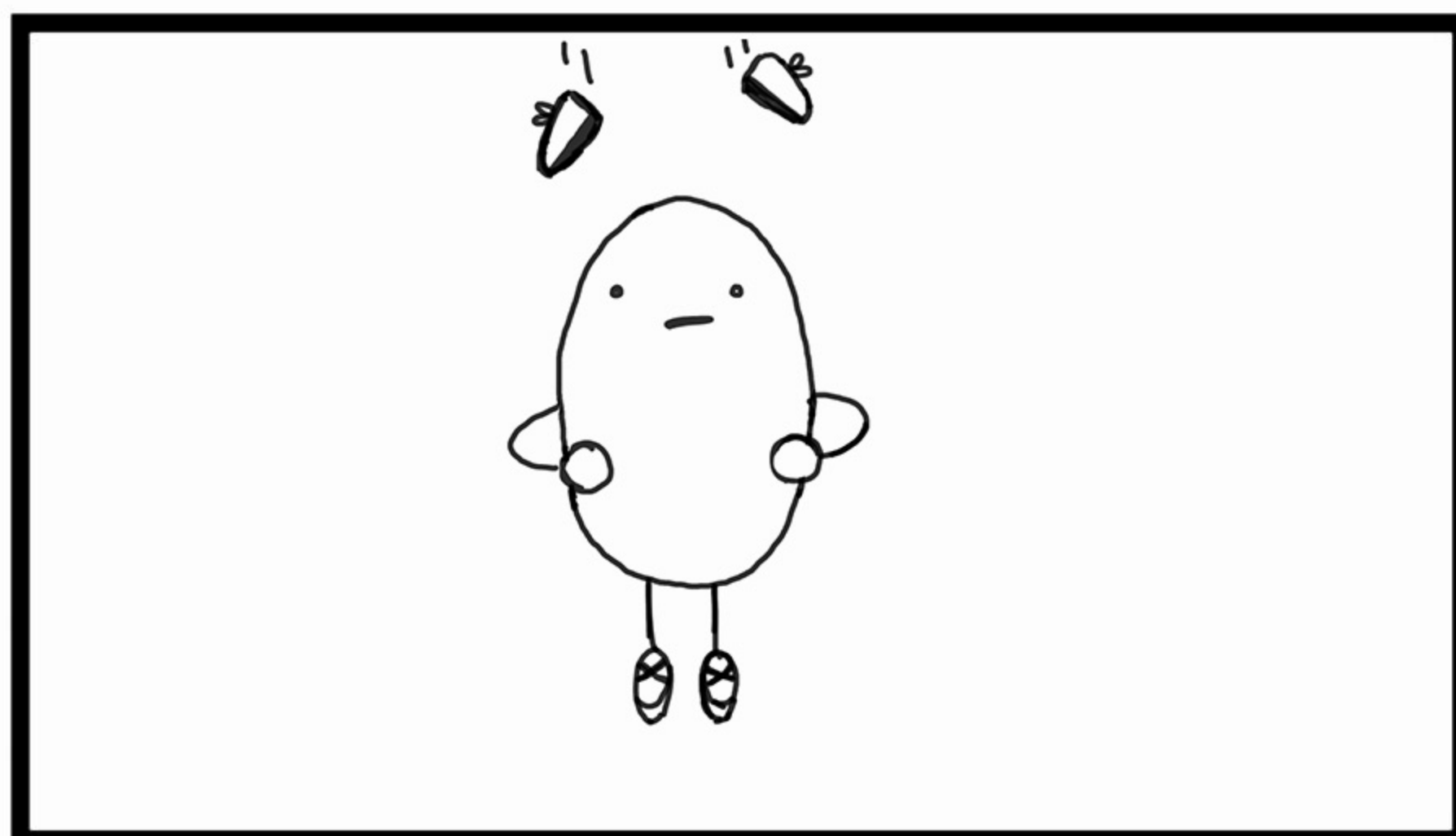
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I do ballet.



I've been doing that since I was eight years old.

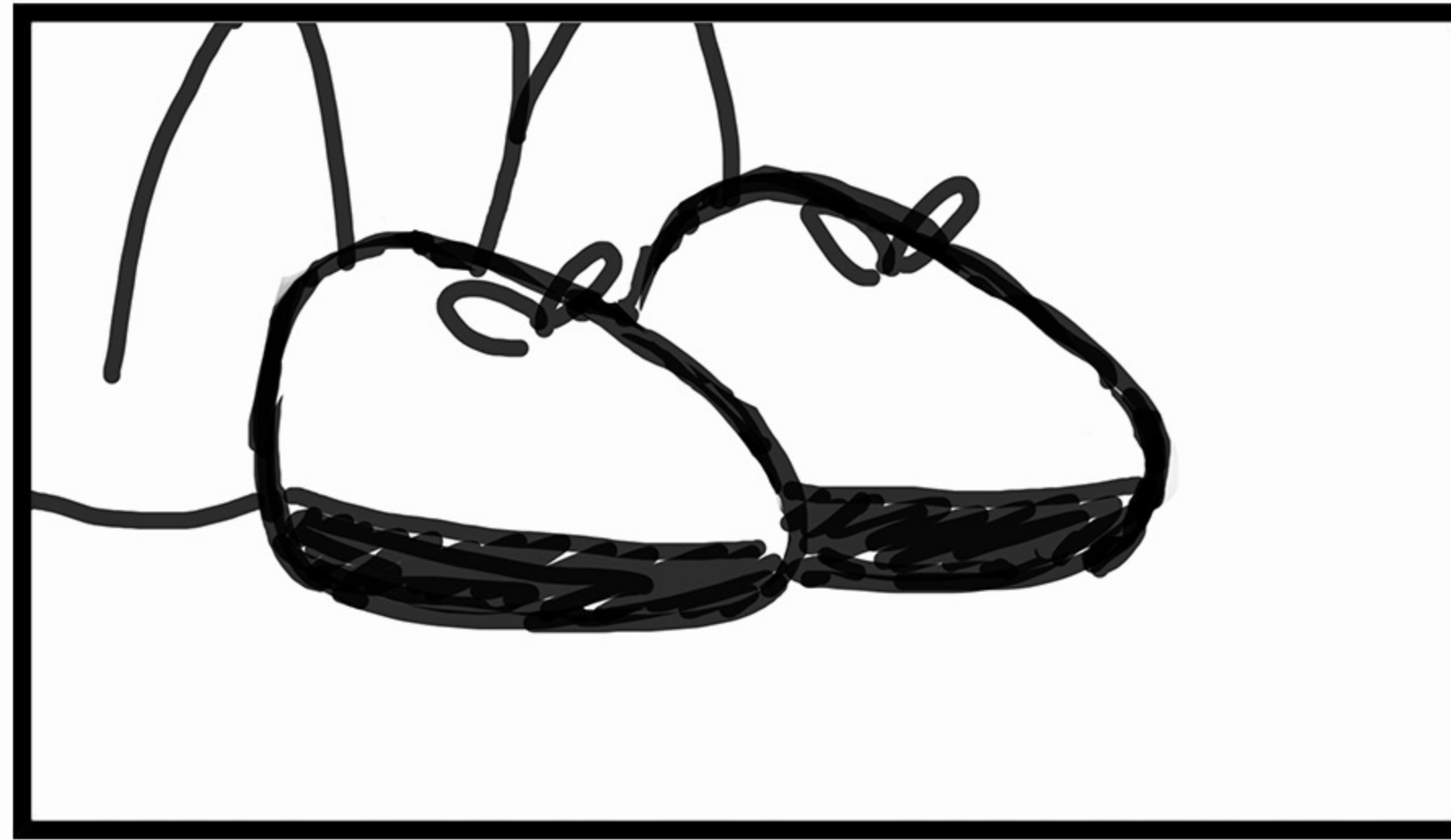


And with cross country, it's become a crazy mix, to be honest.

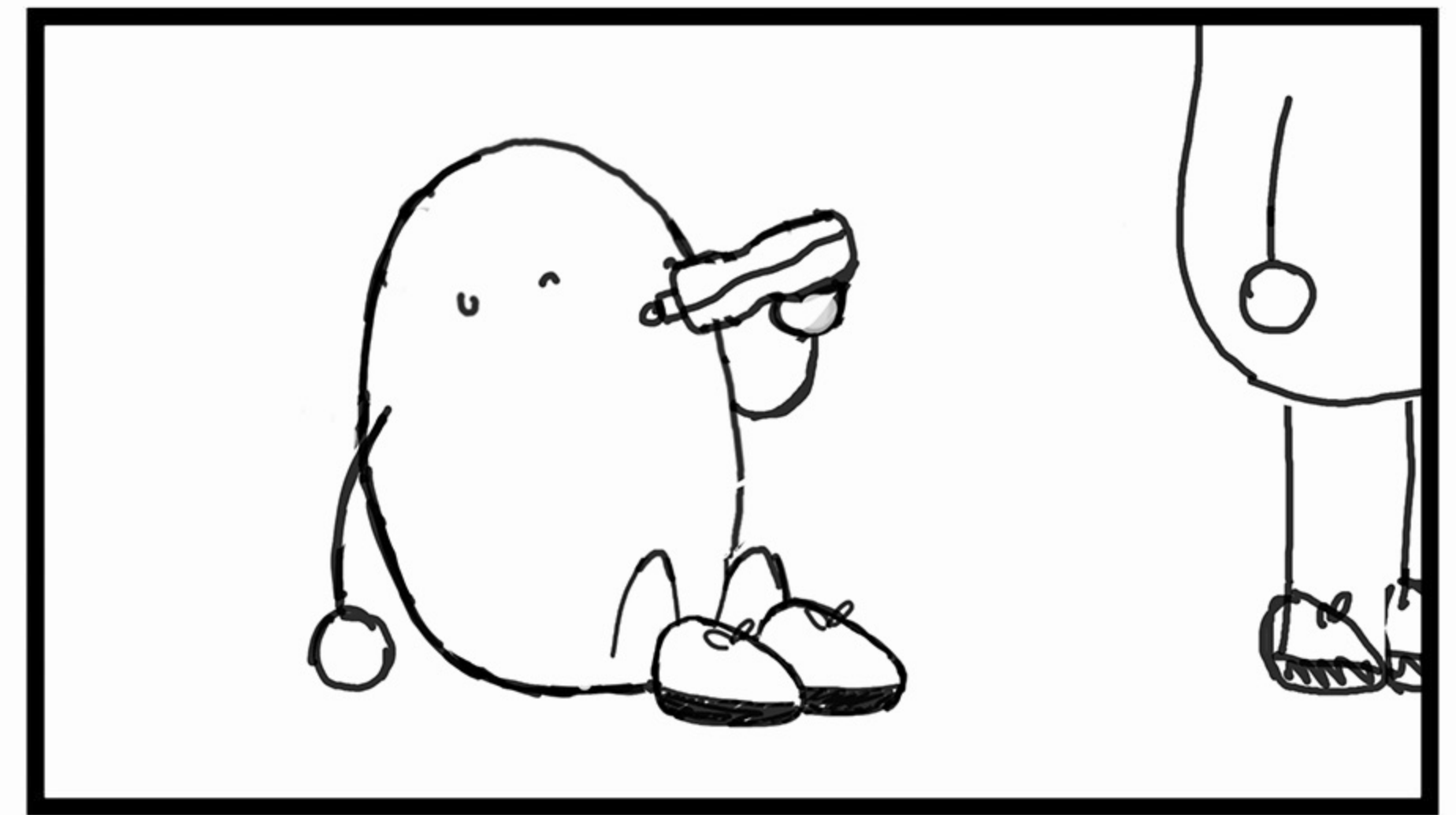
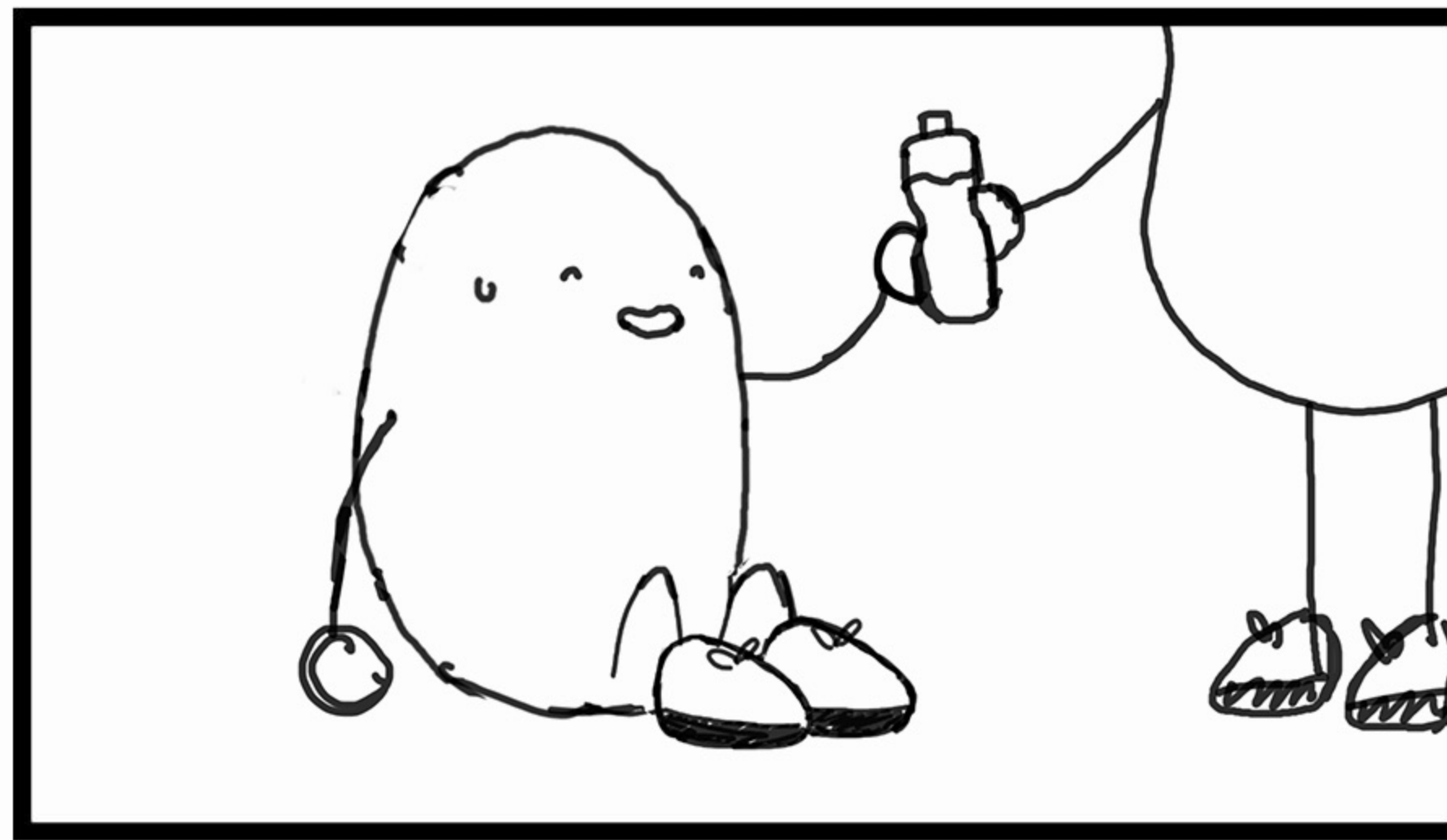
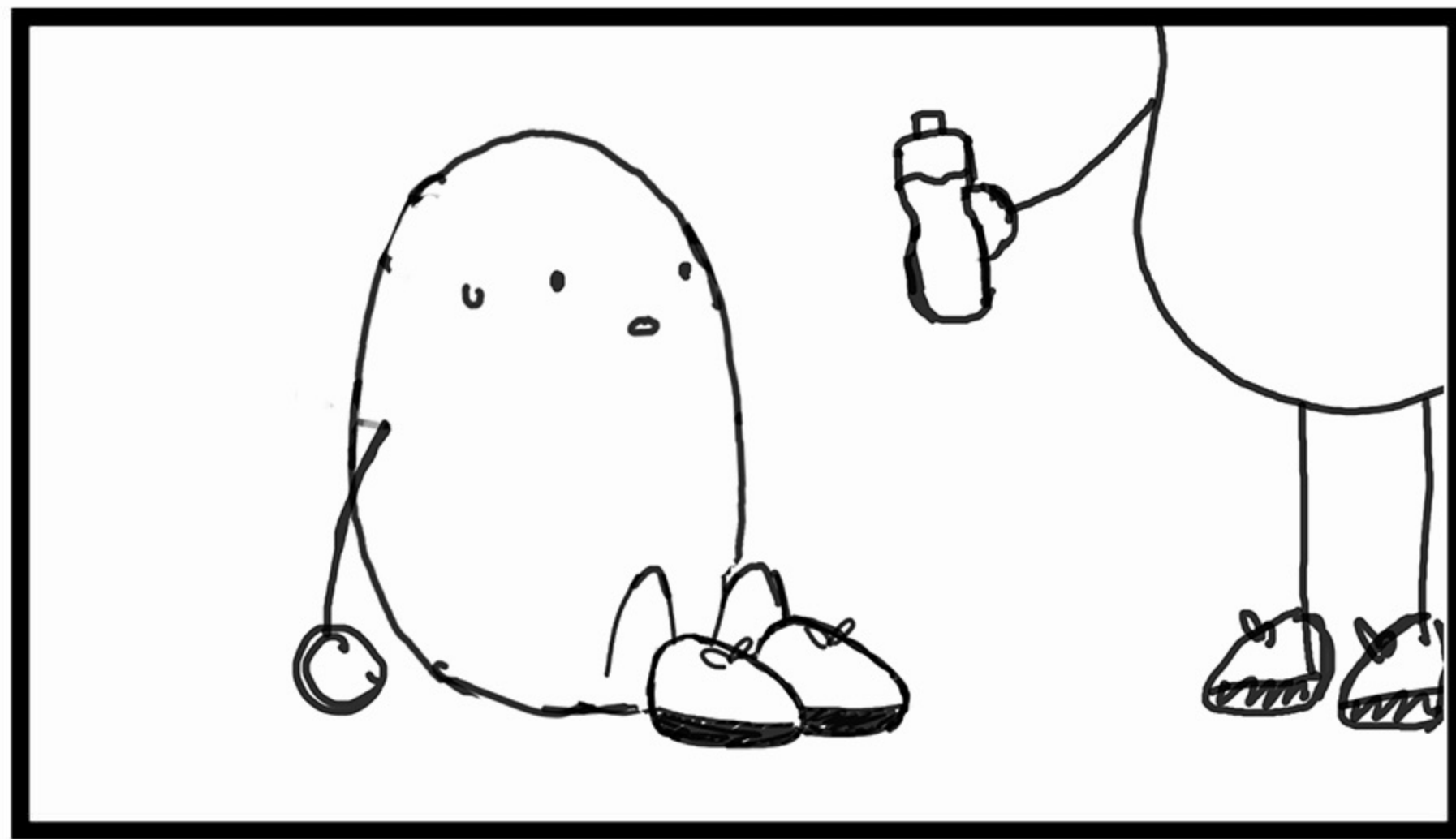
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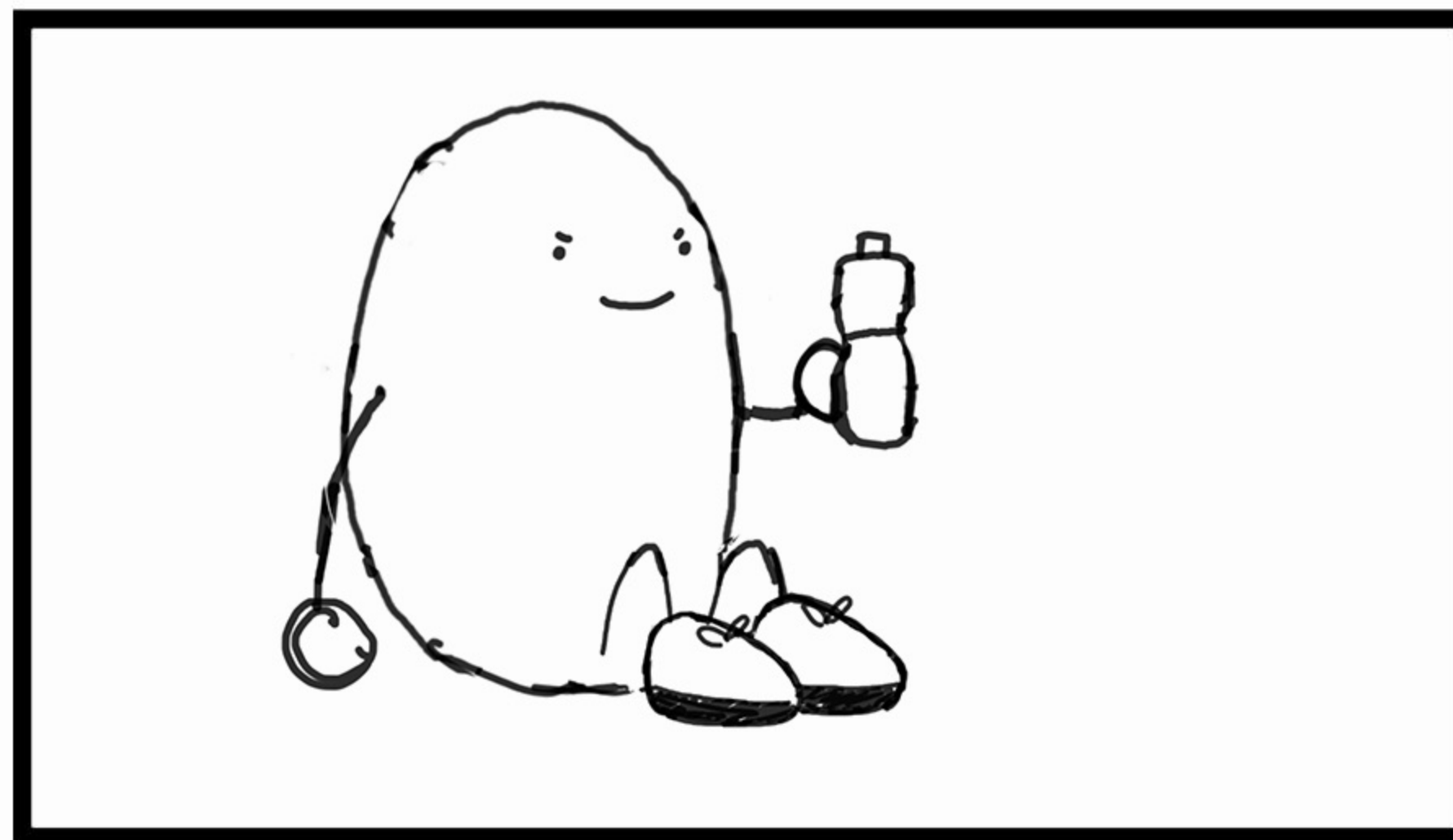
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I started cross country my sophomore year.



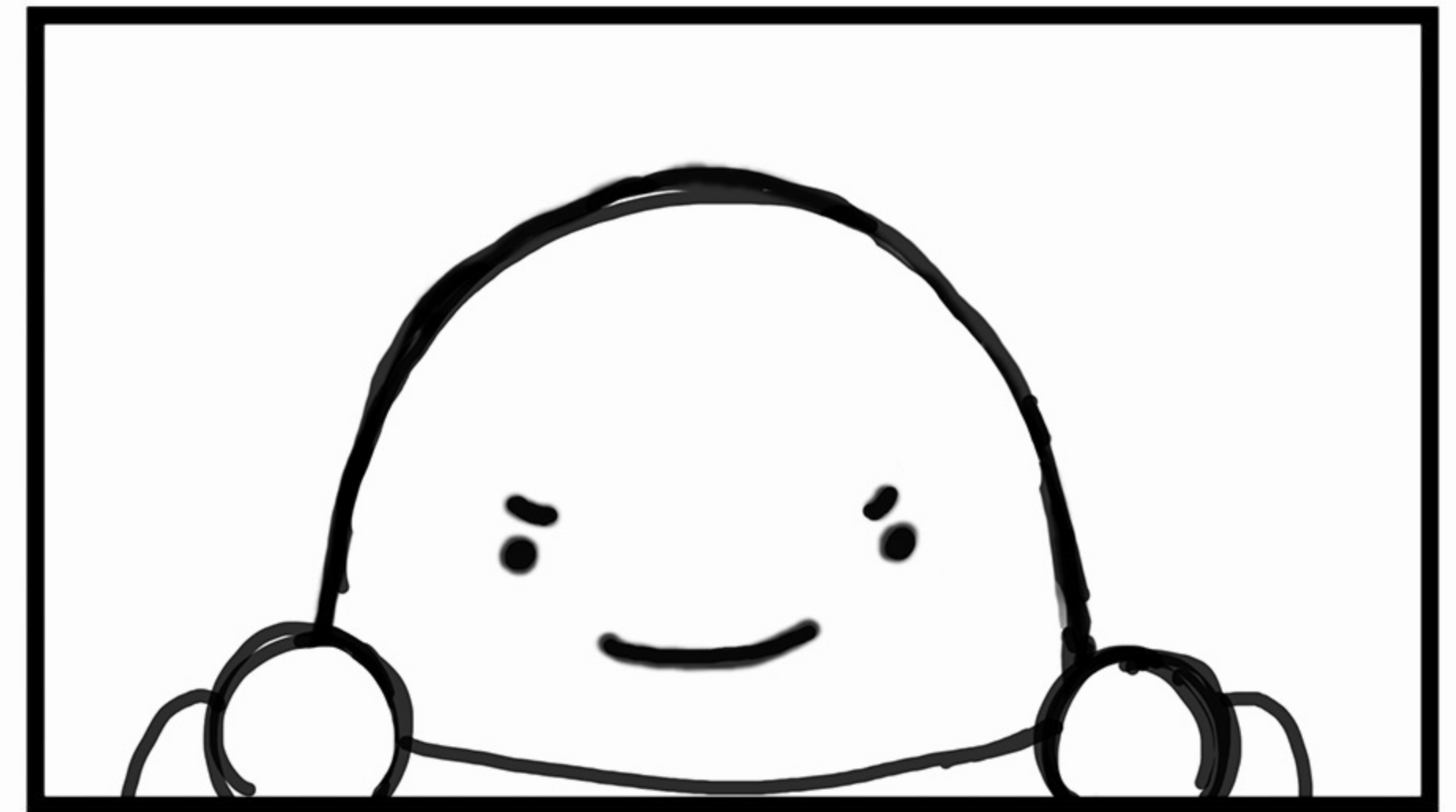
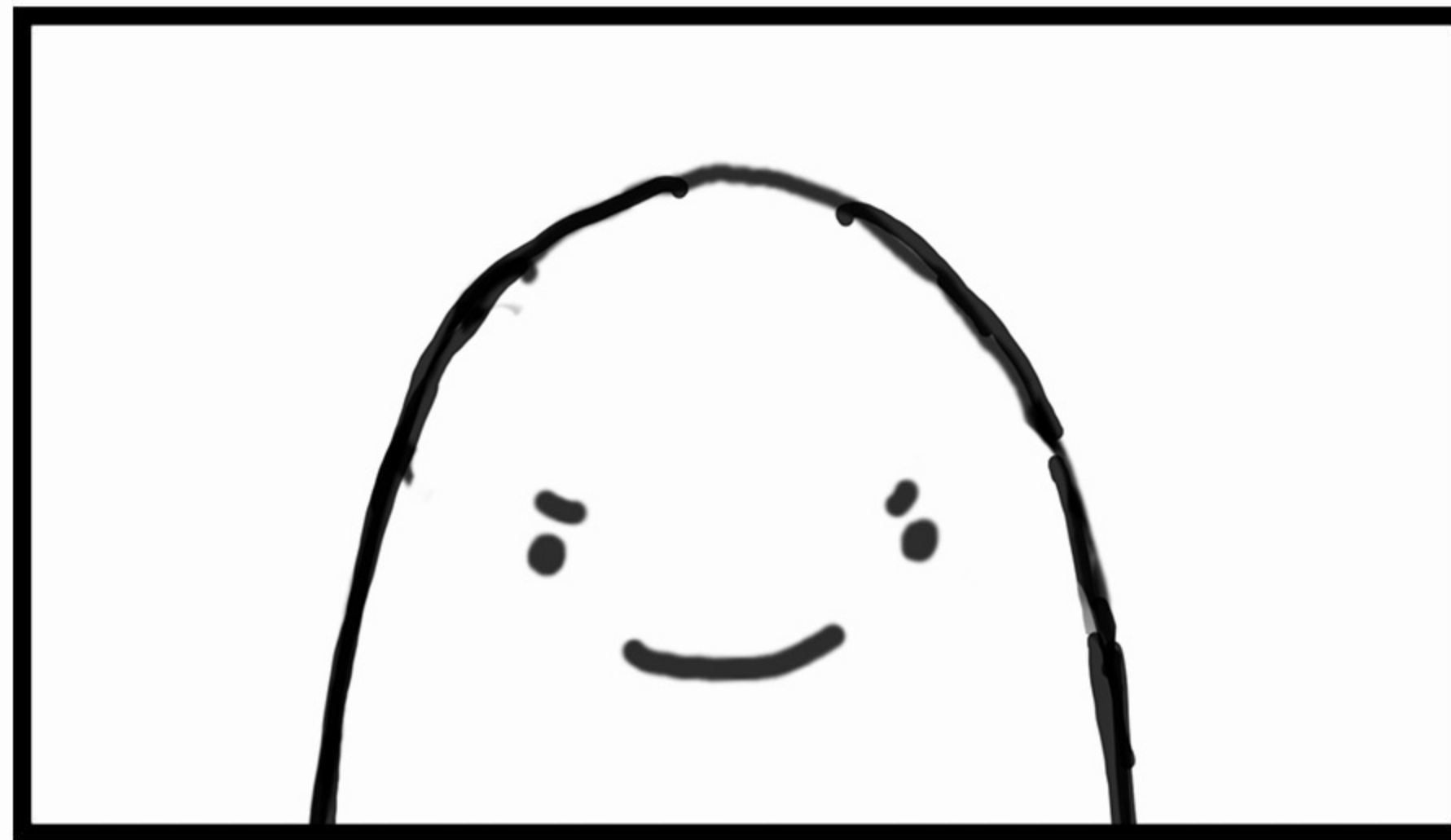
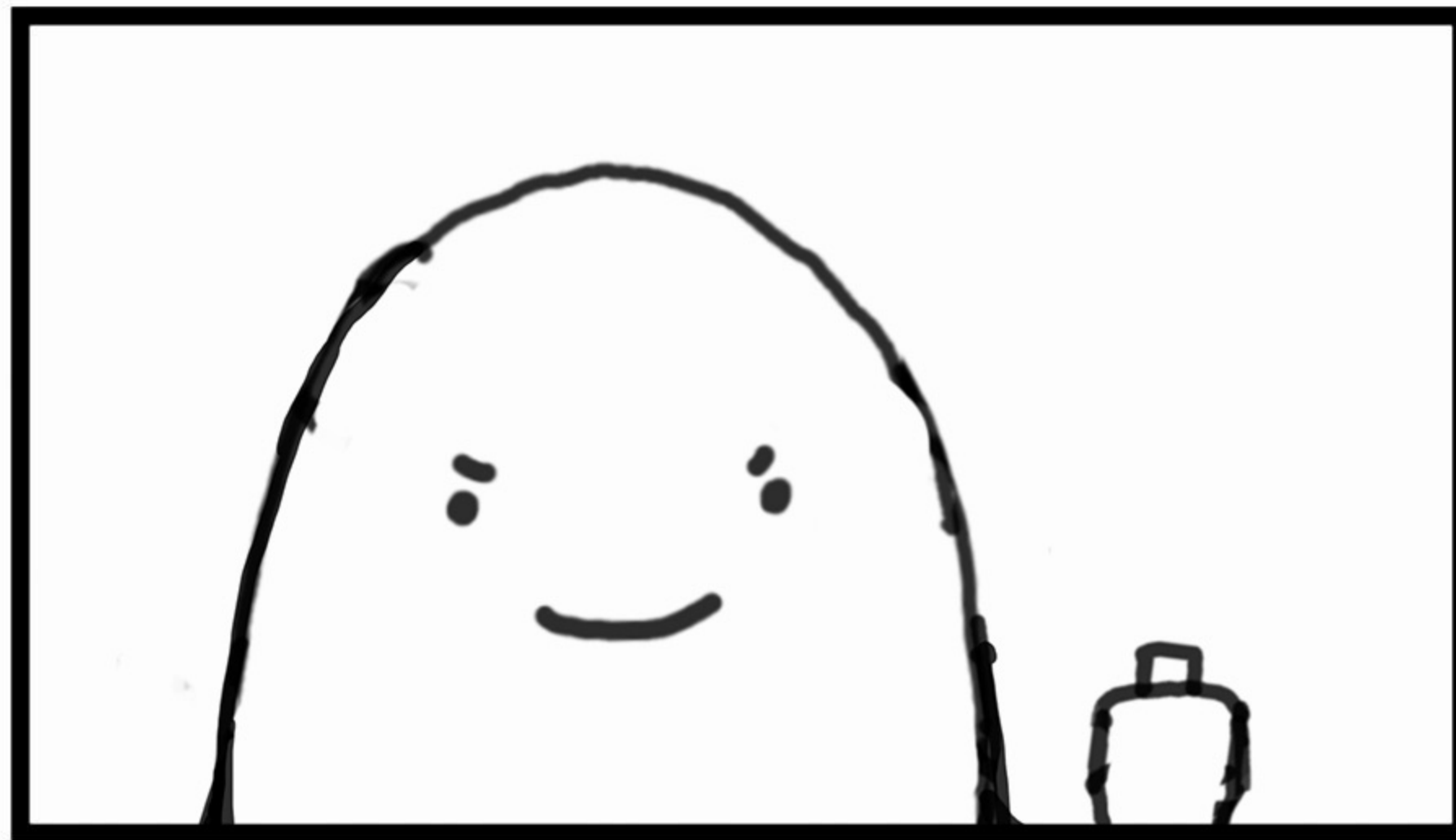
As, like someone who does cross-country, like junior varsity recreational, it's very, very much chill.



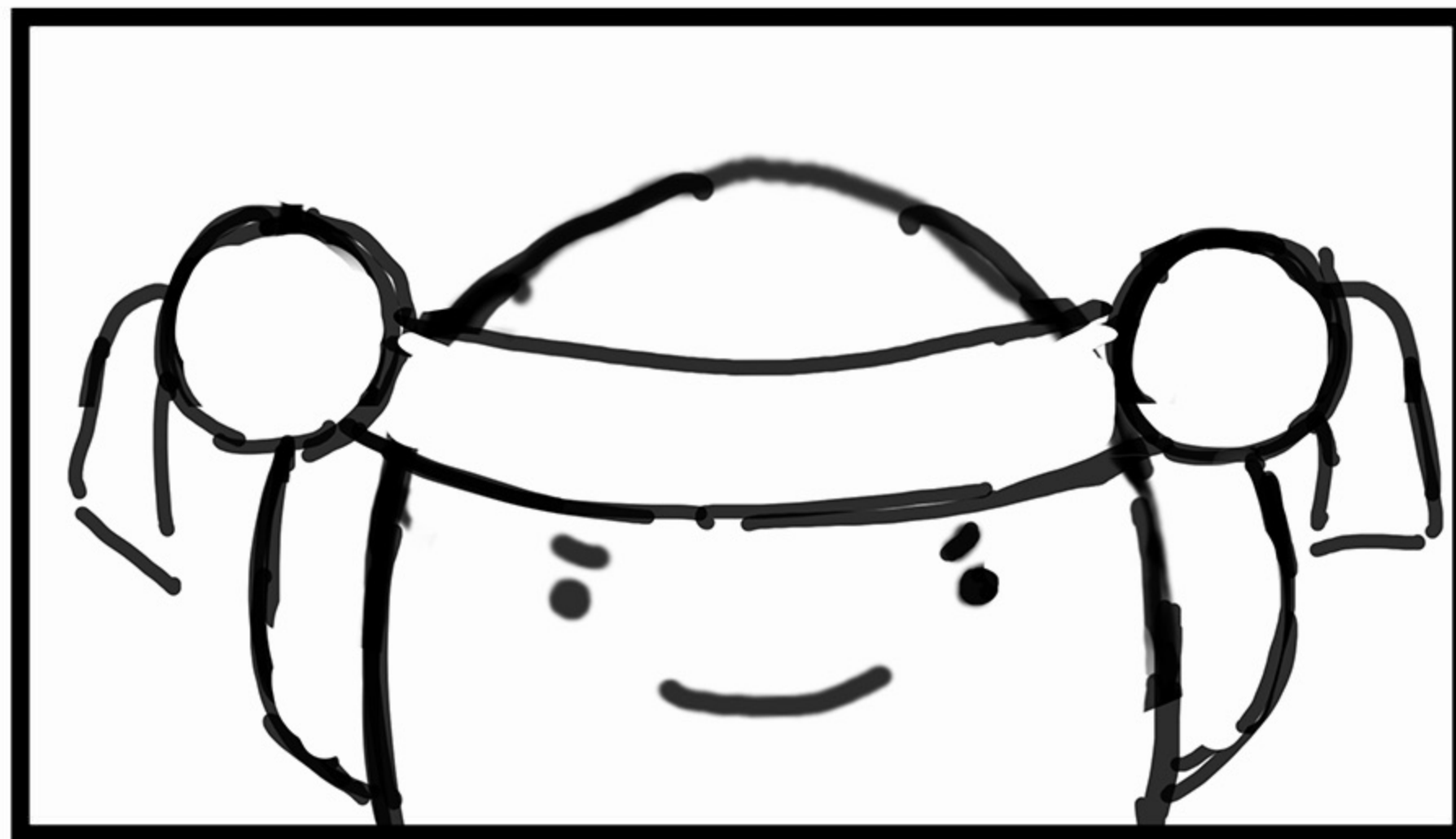
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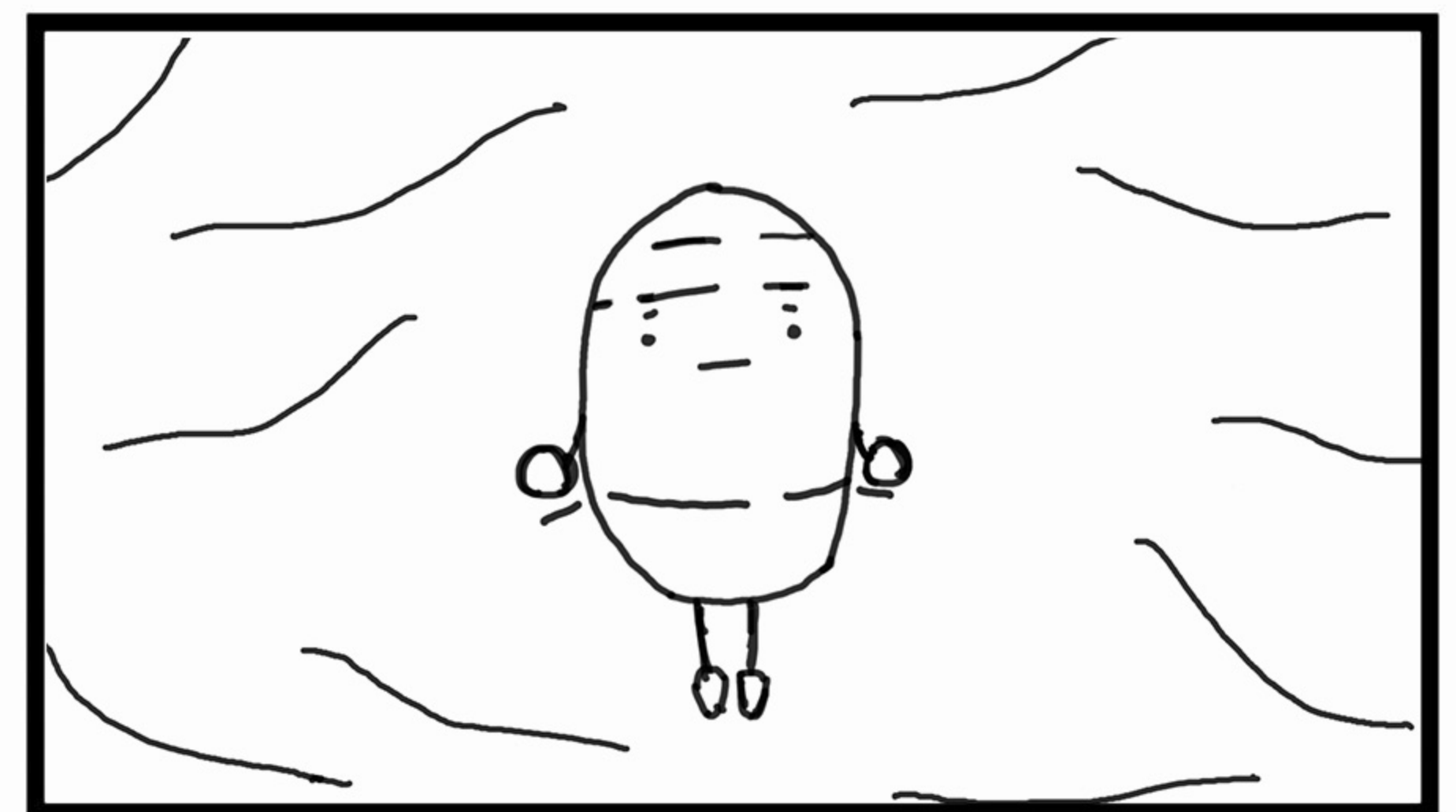
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Like the only pressure would really come from yourself on you to, like,



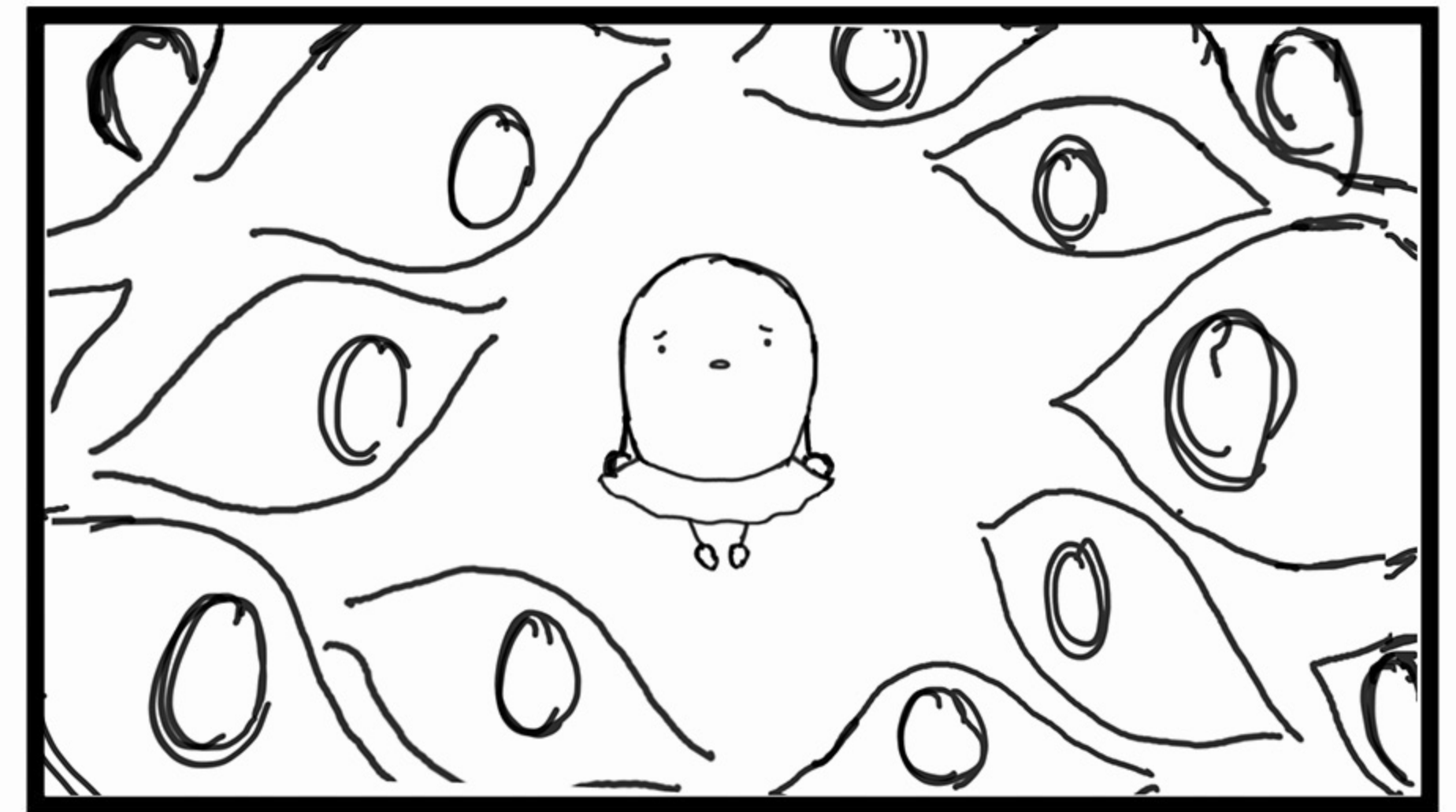
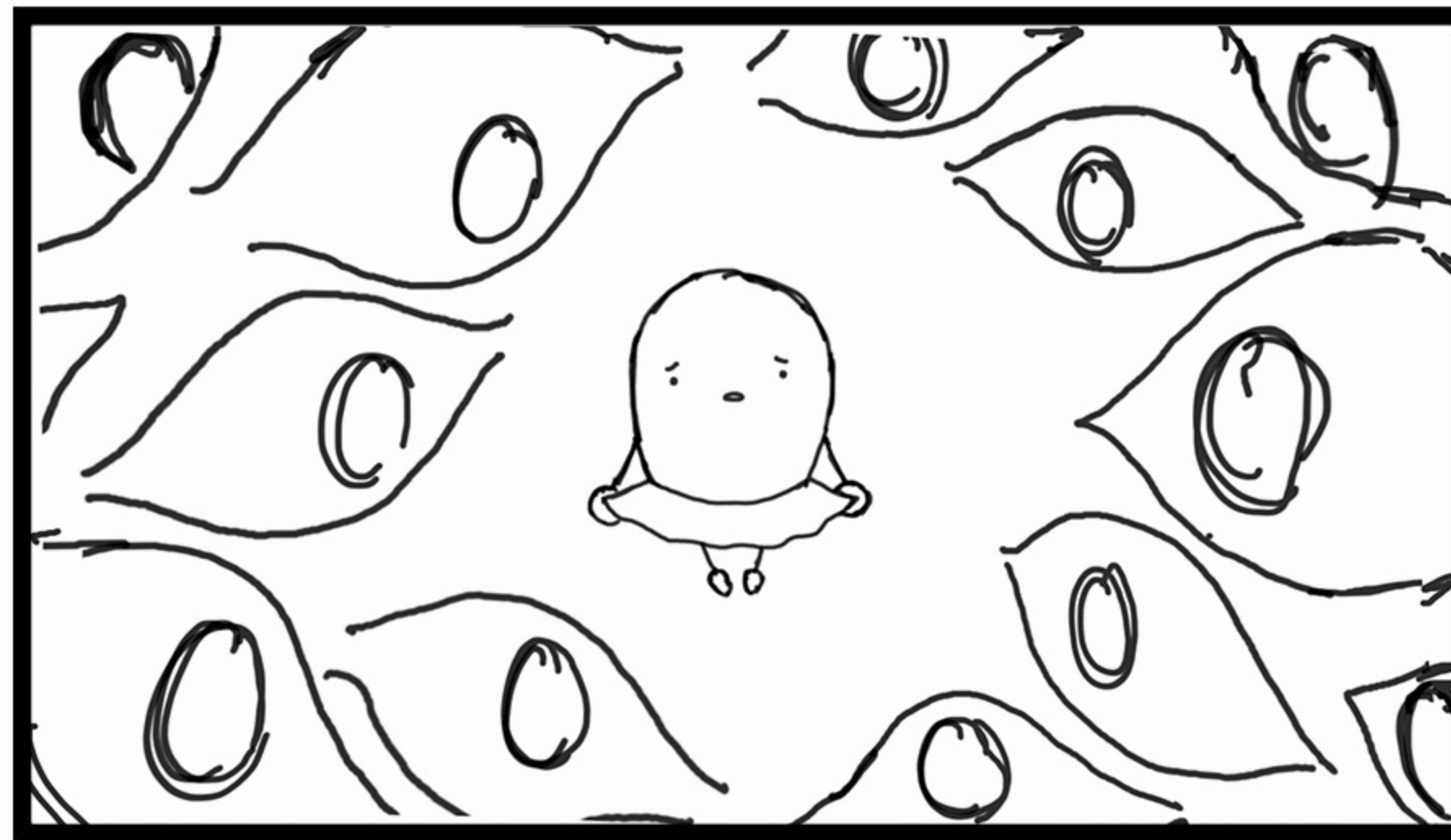
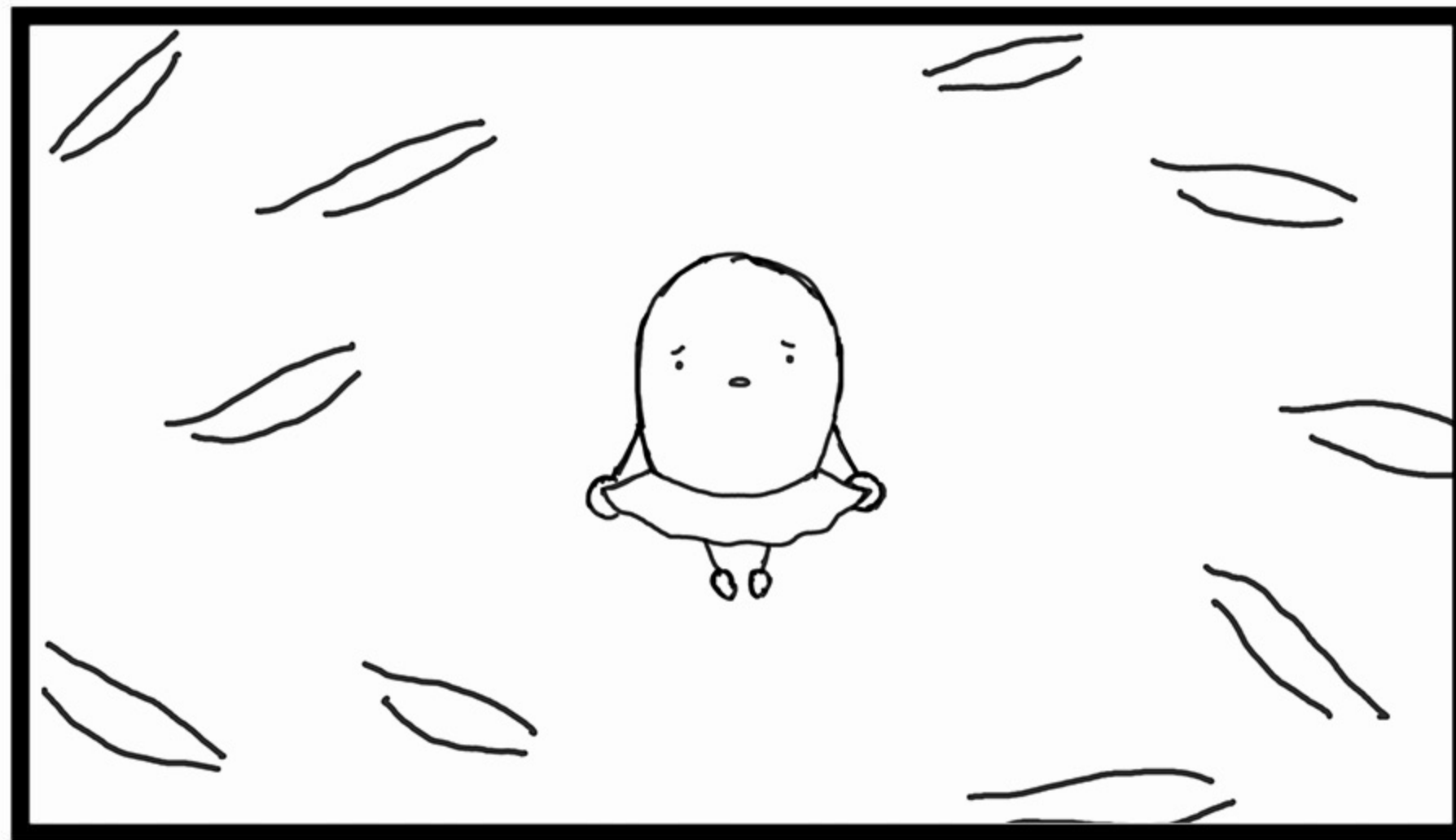
push your limits and get a new personal record,



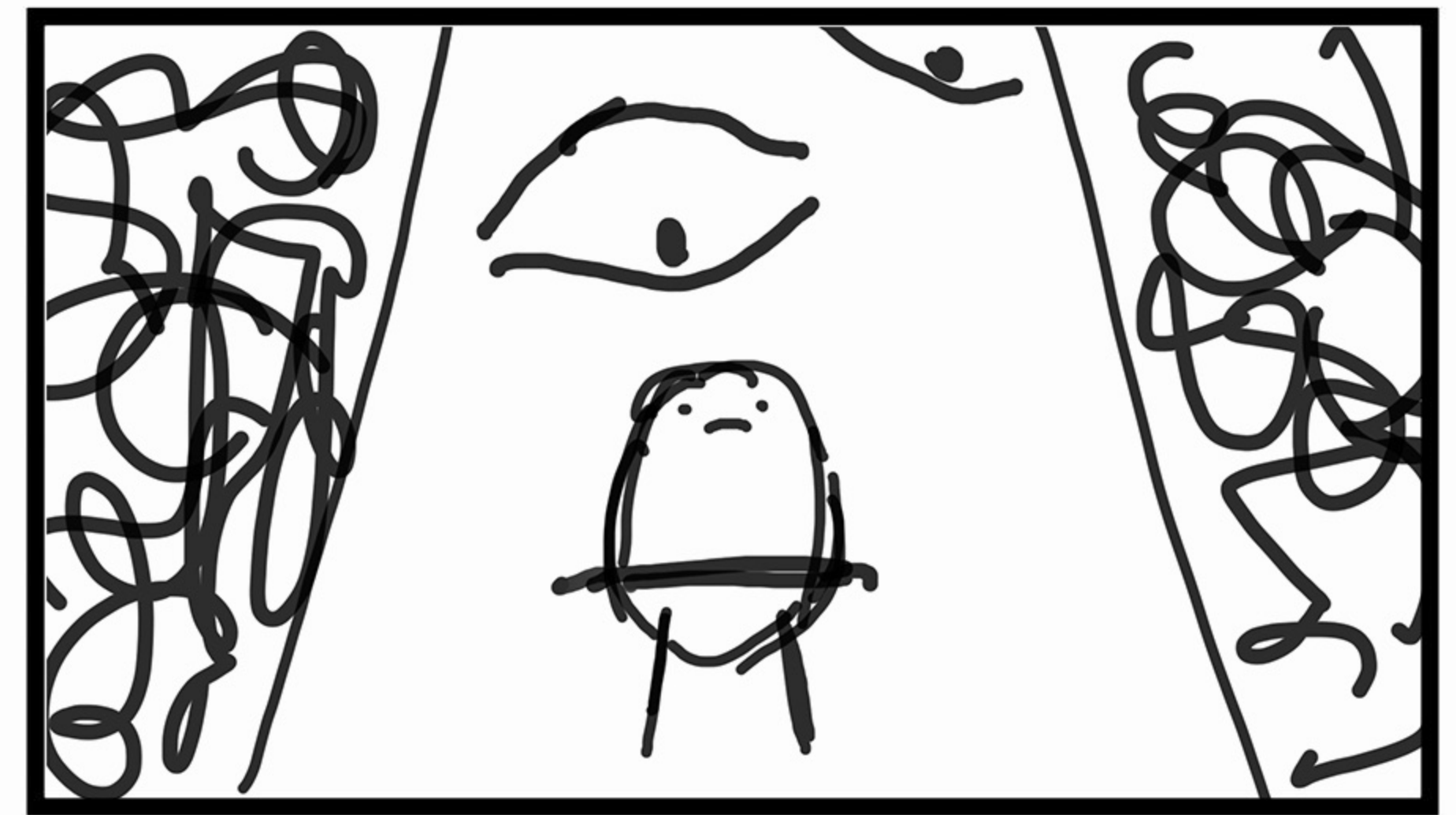
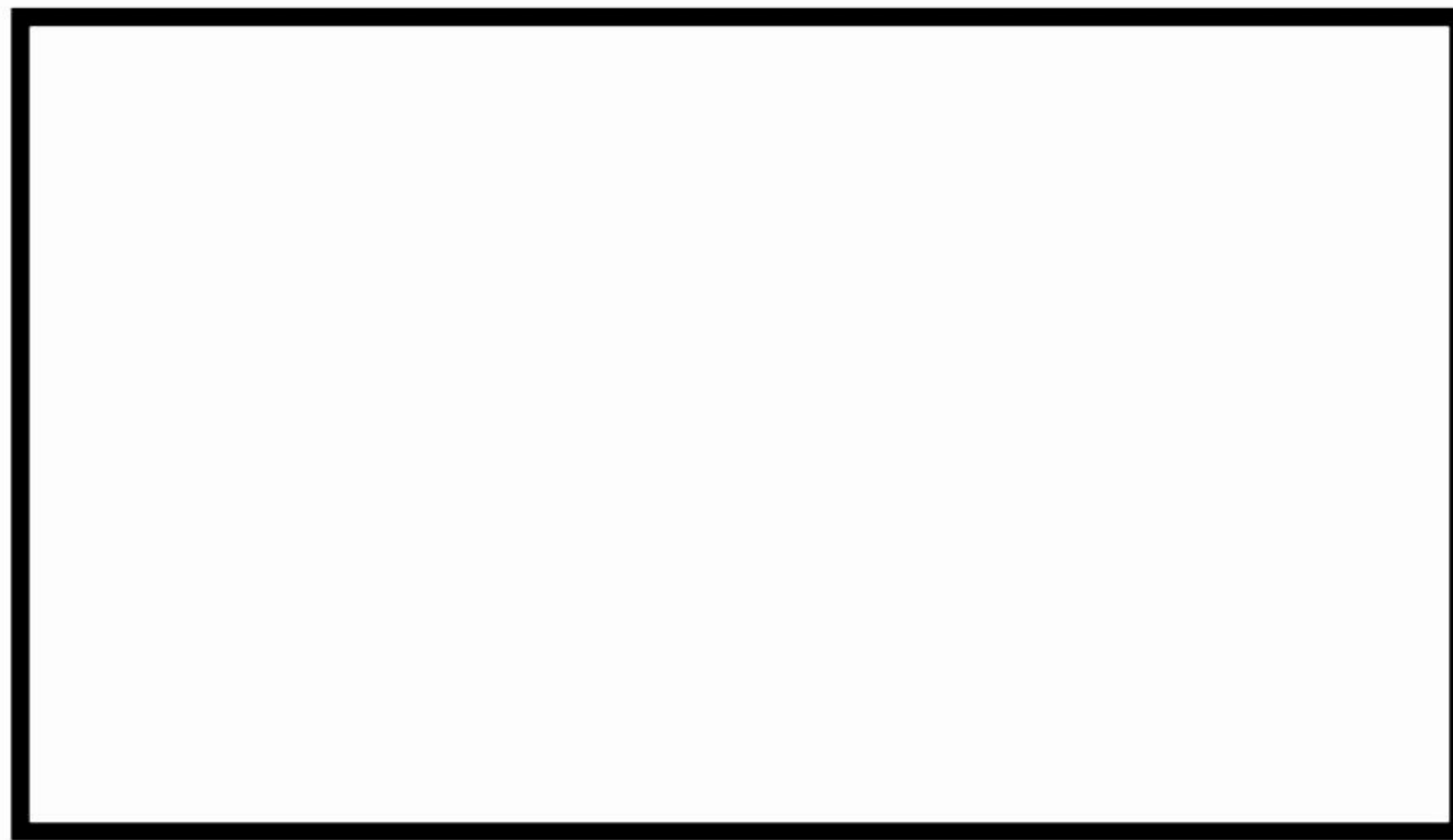
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whereas in ballet it comes from, like, everyone around you,



and also the fact that you're staring up at mirrors 24/7,

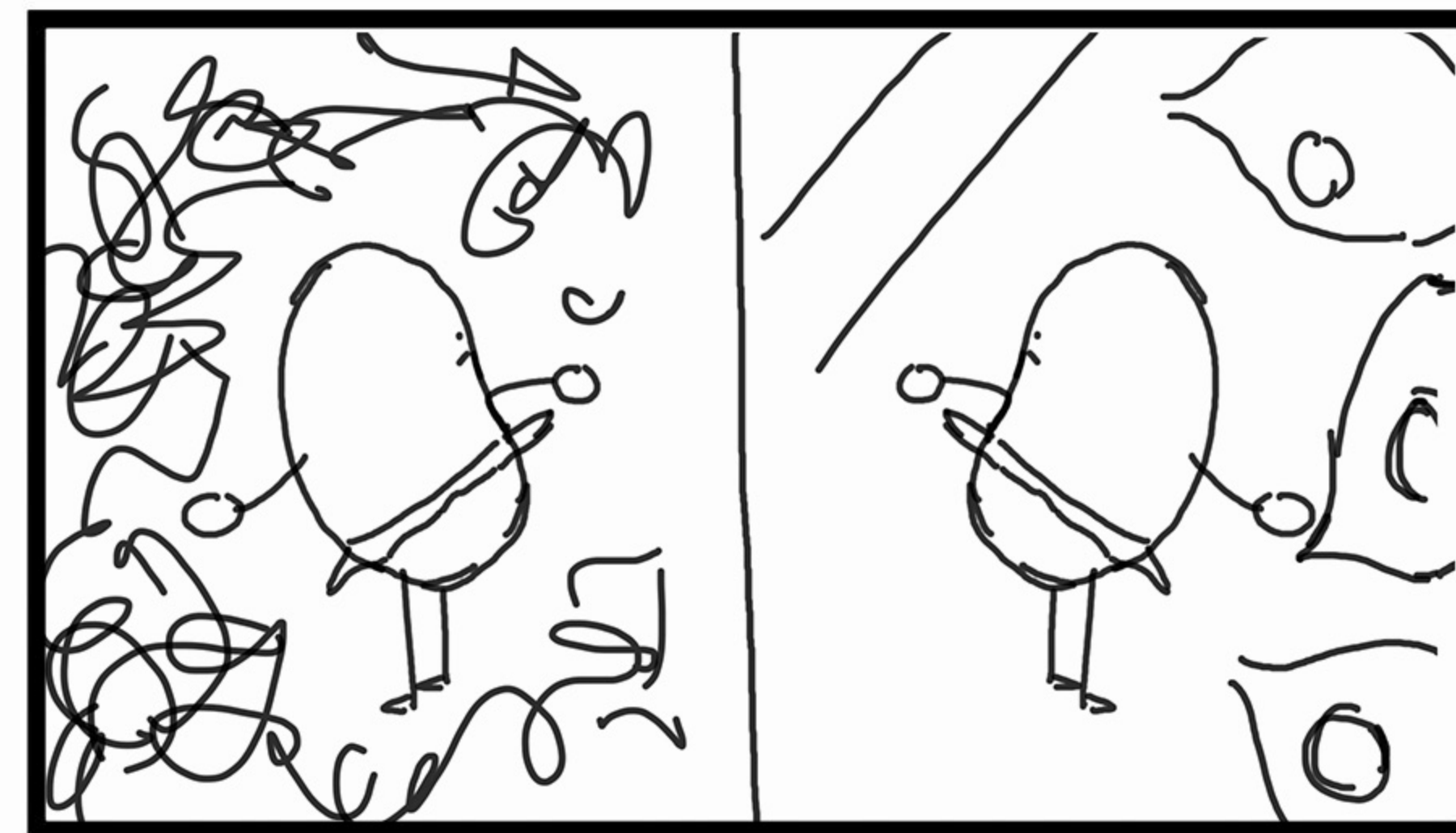
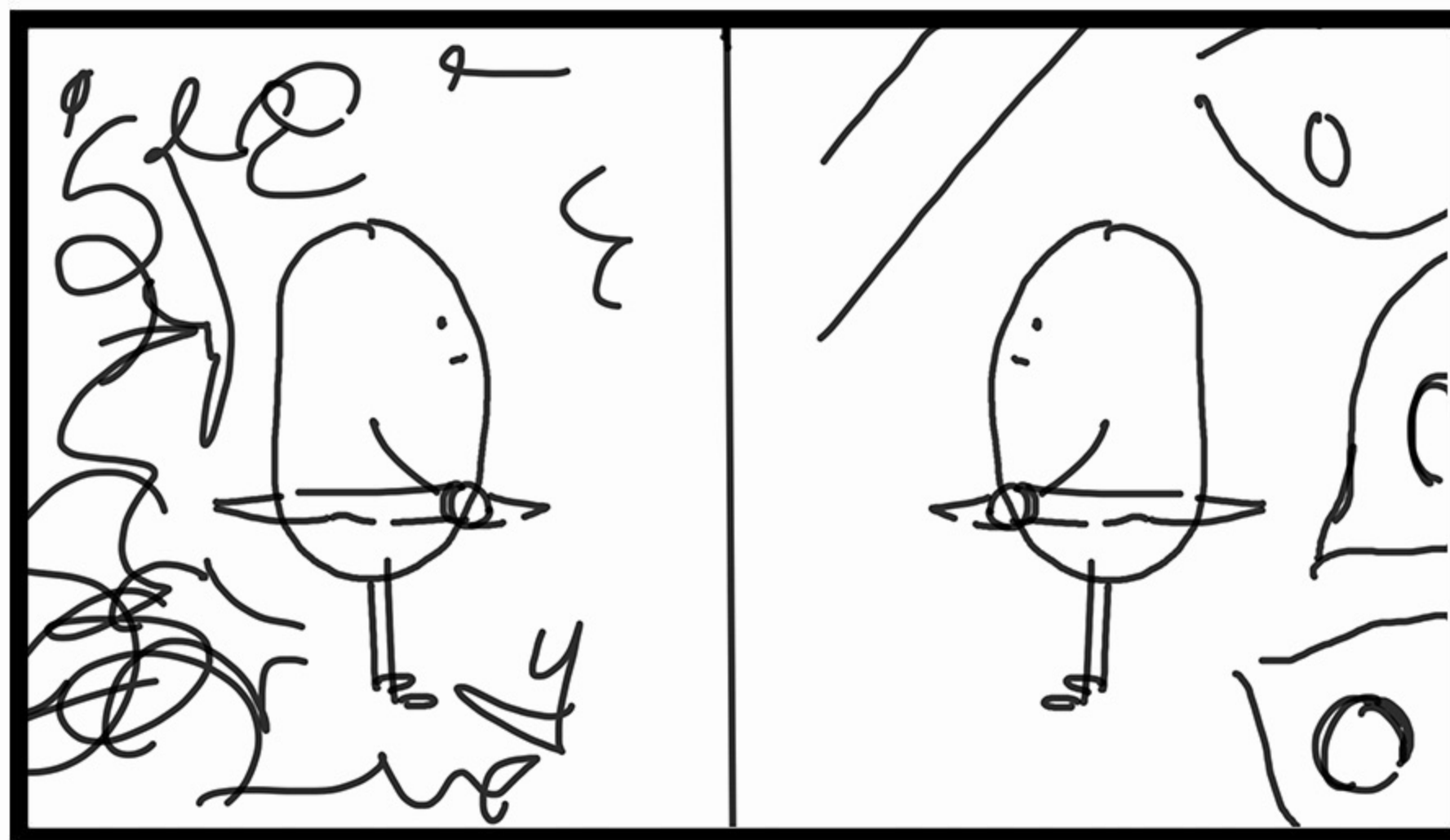


that it also takes like a huge like mental impact.

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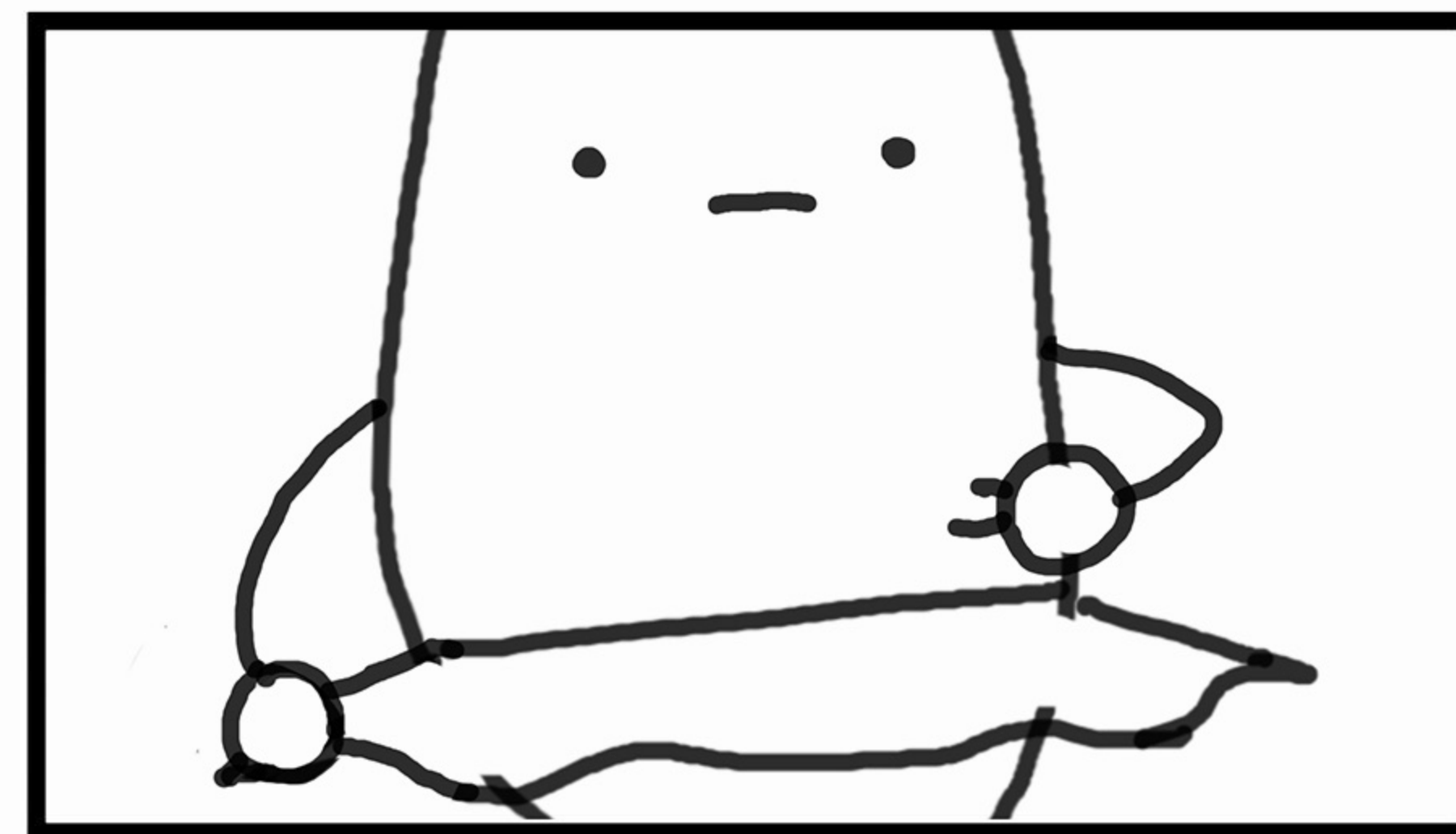
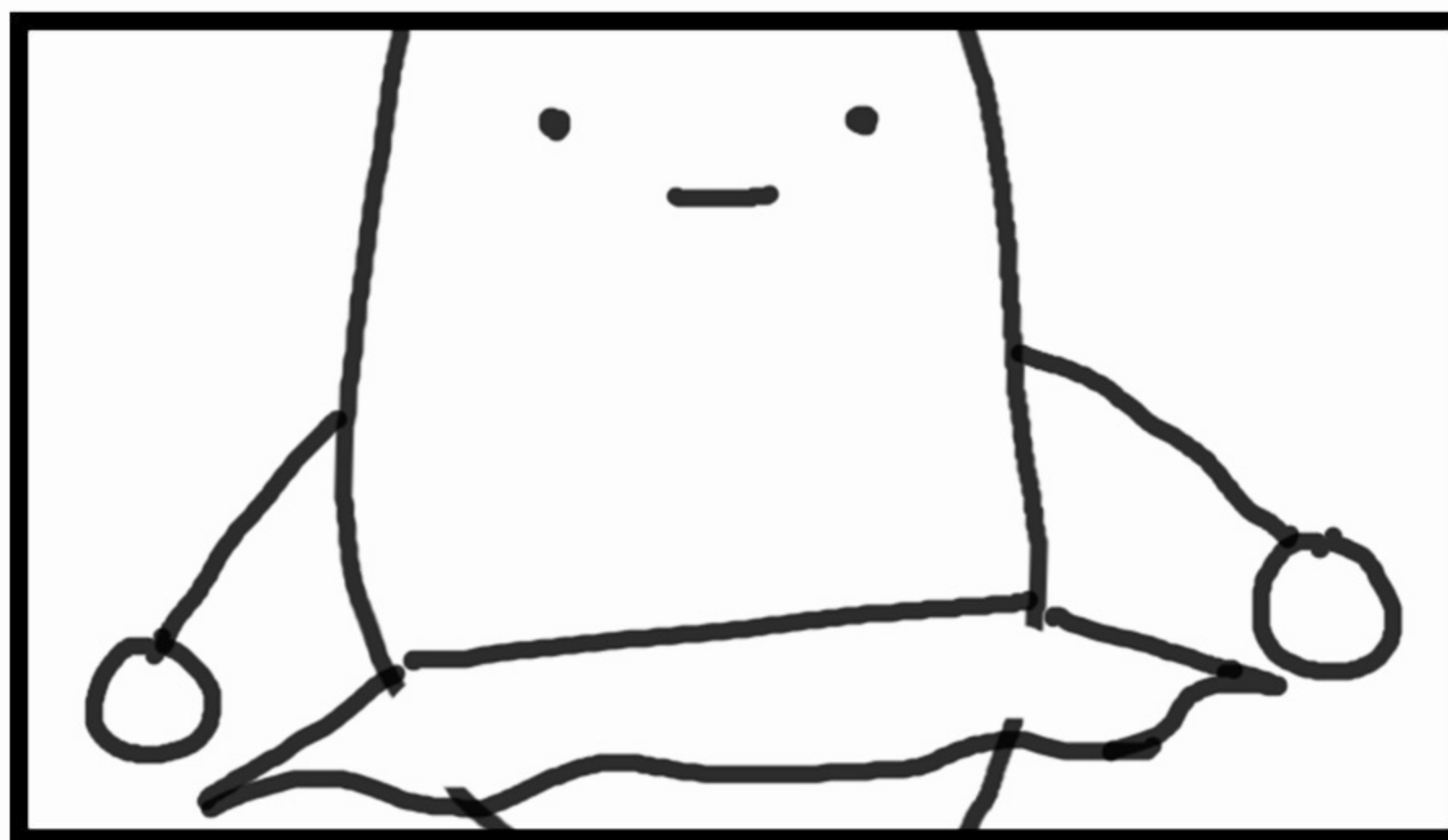
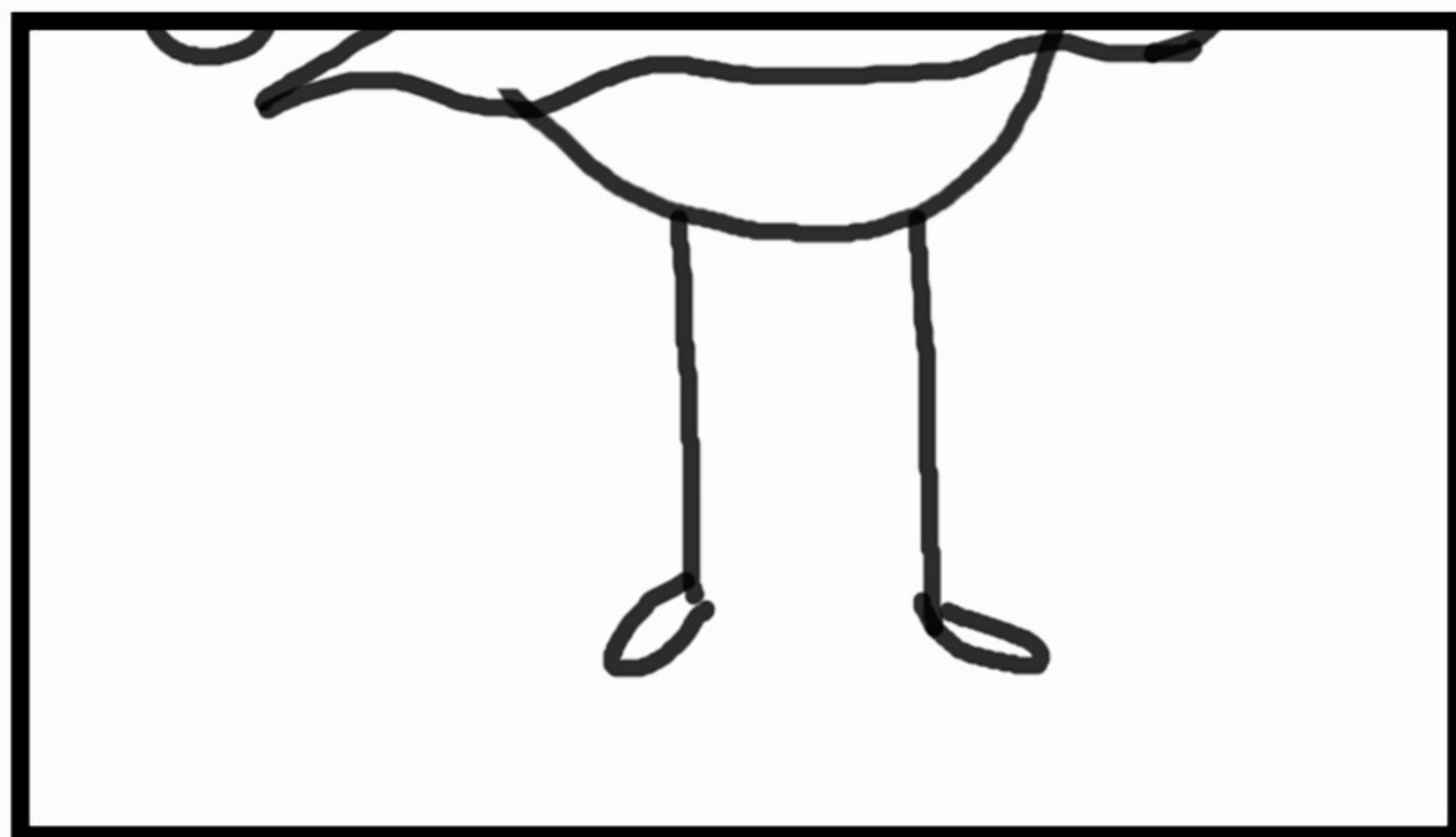
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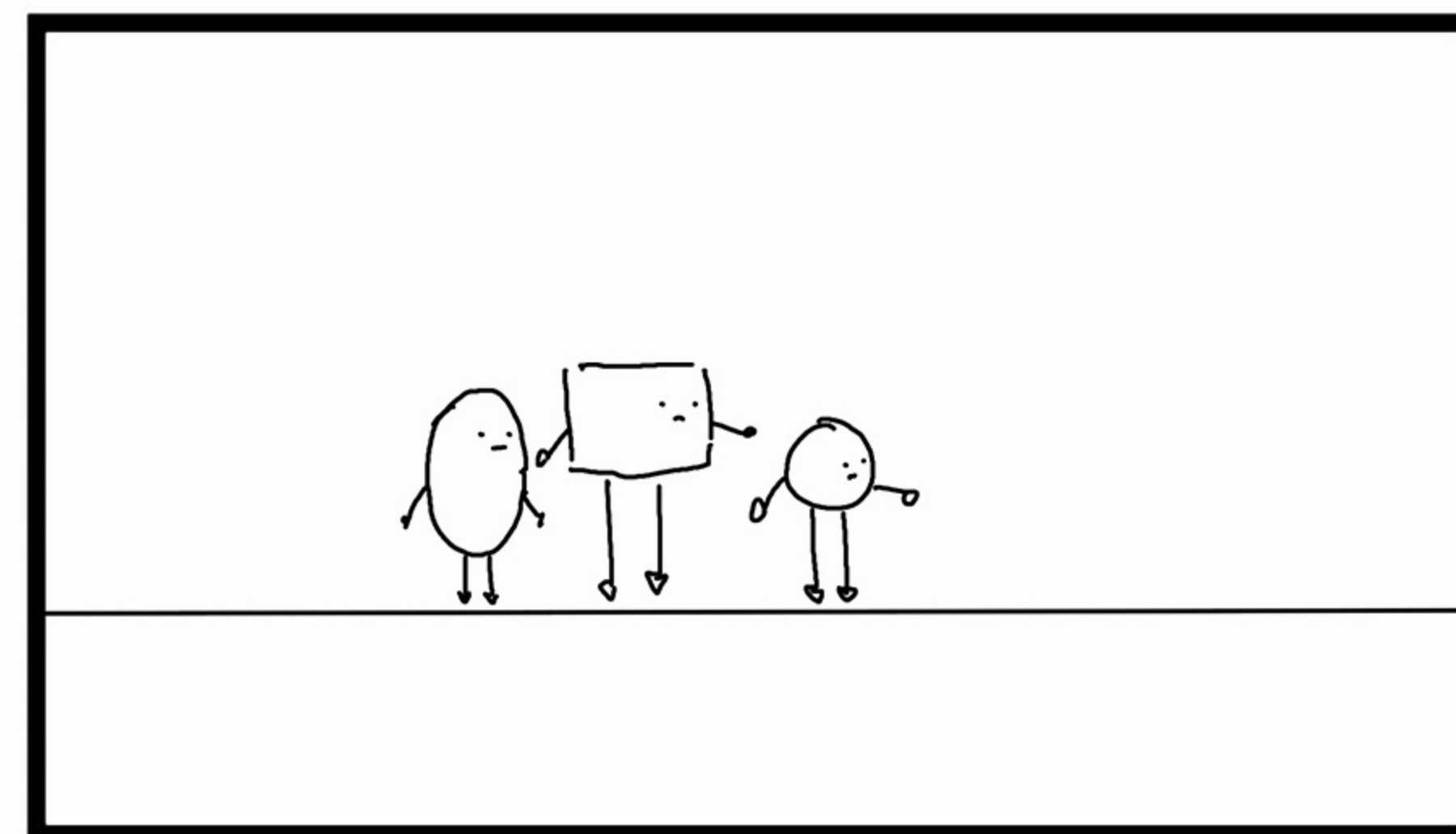


Especially like if you grow up in that environment,

if you grow up being in front of the mirror,



looking at your body all the time and really analyzing it.

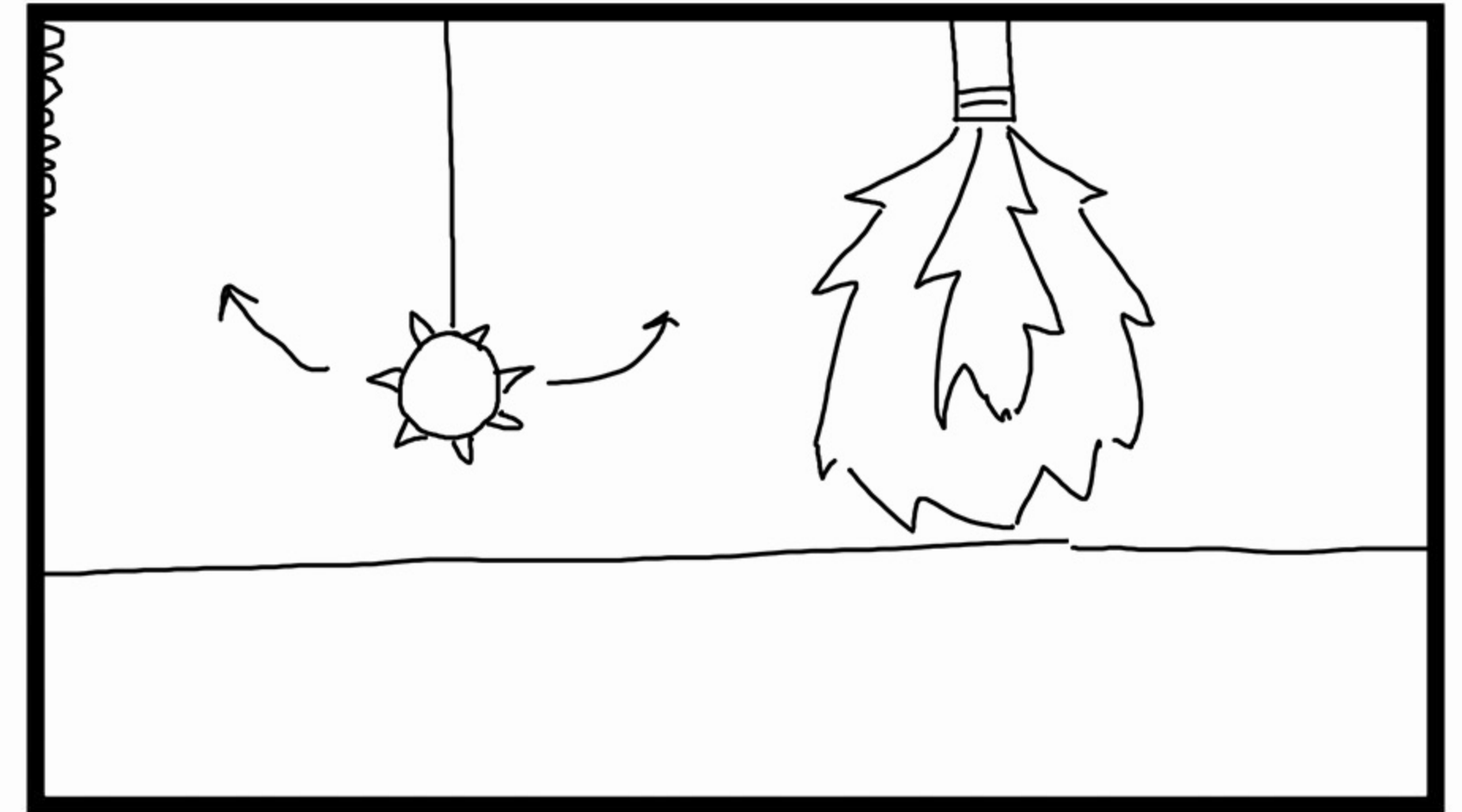
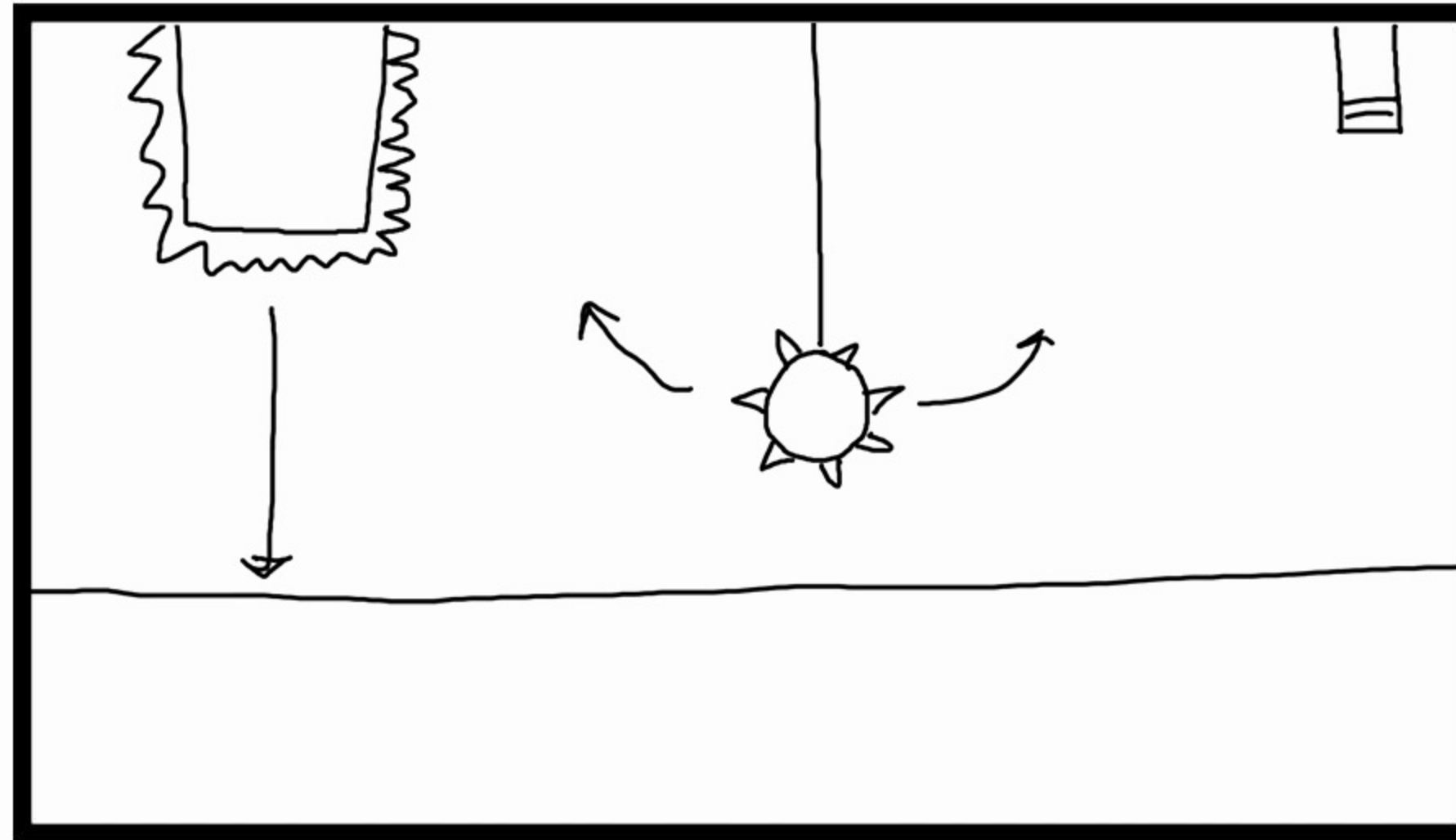
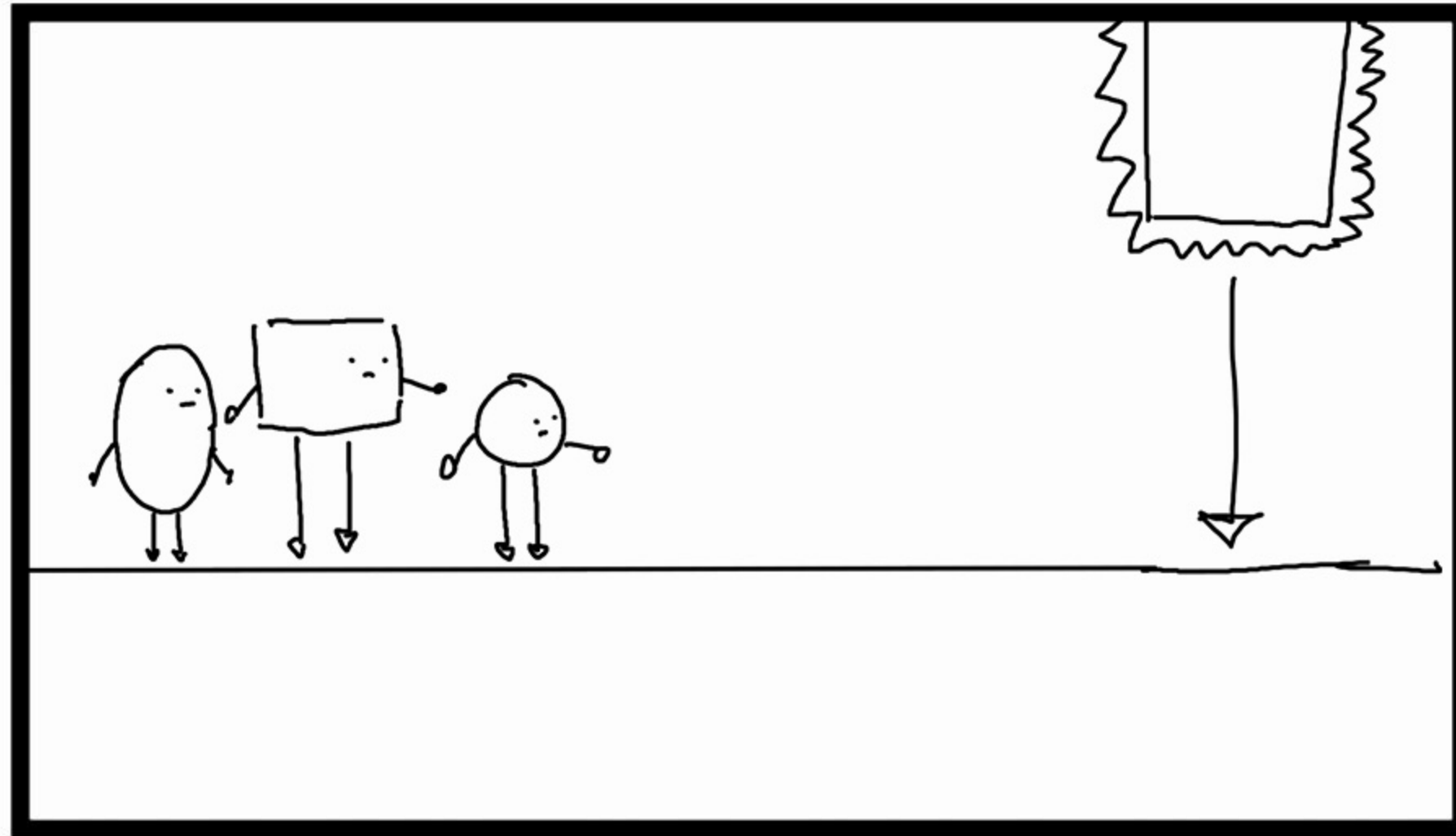


In ballet, to be honest, it's a lot more competitive, I would say.

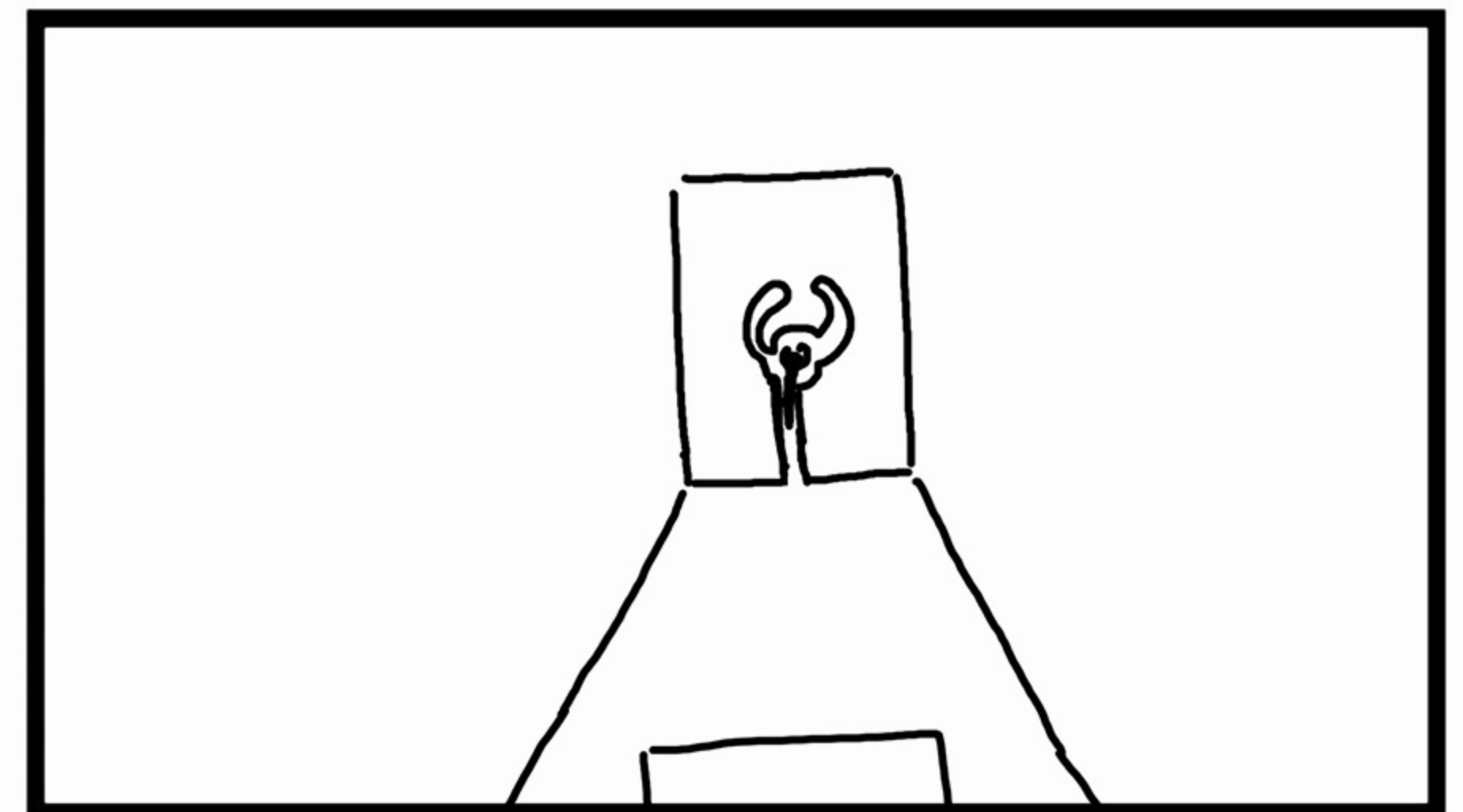
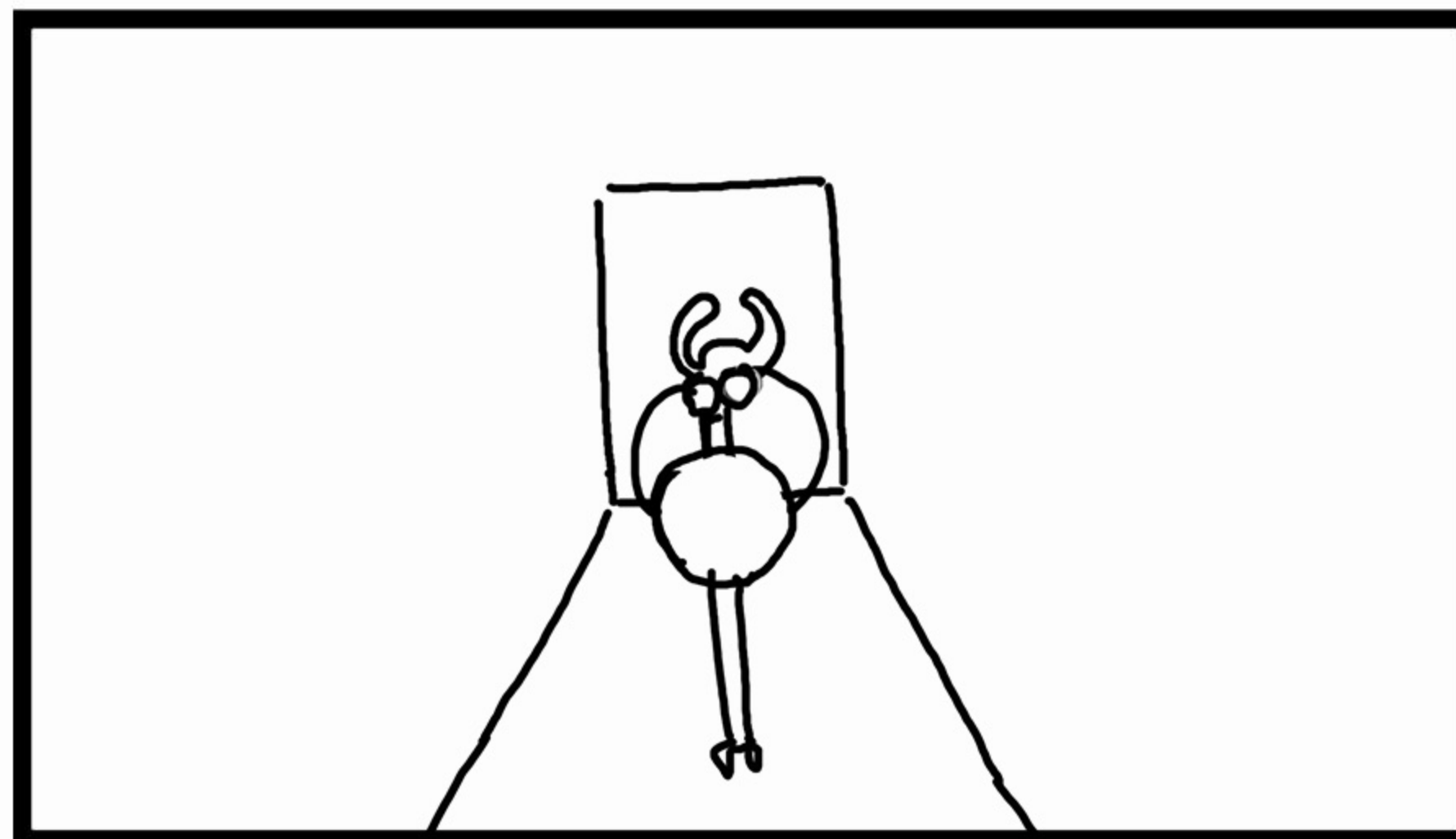
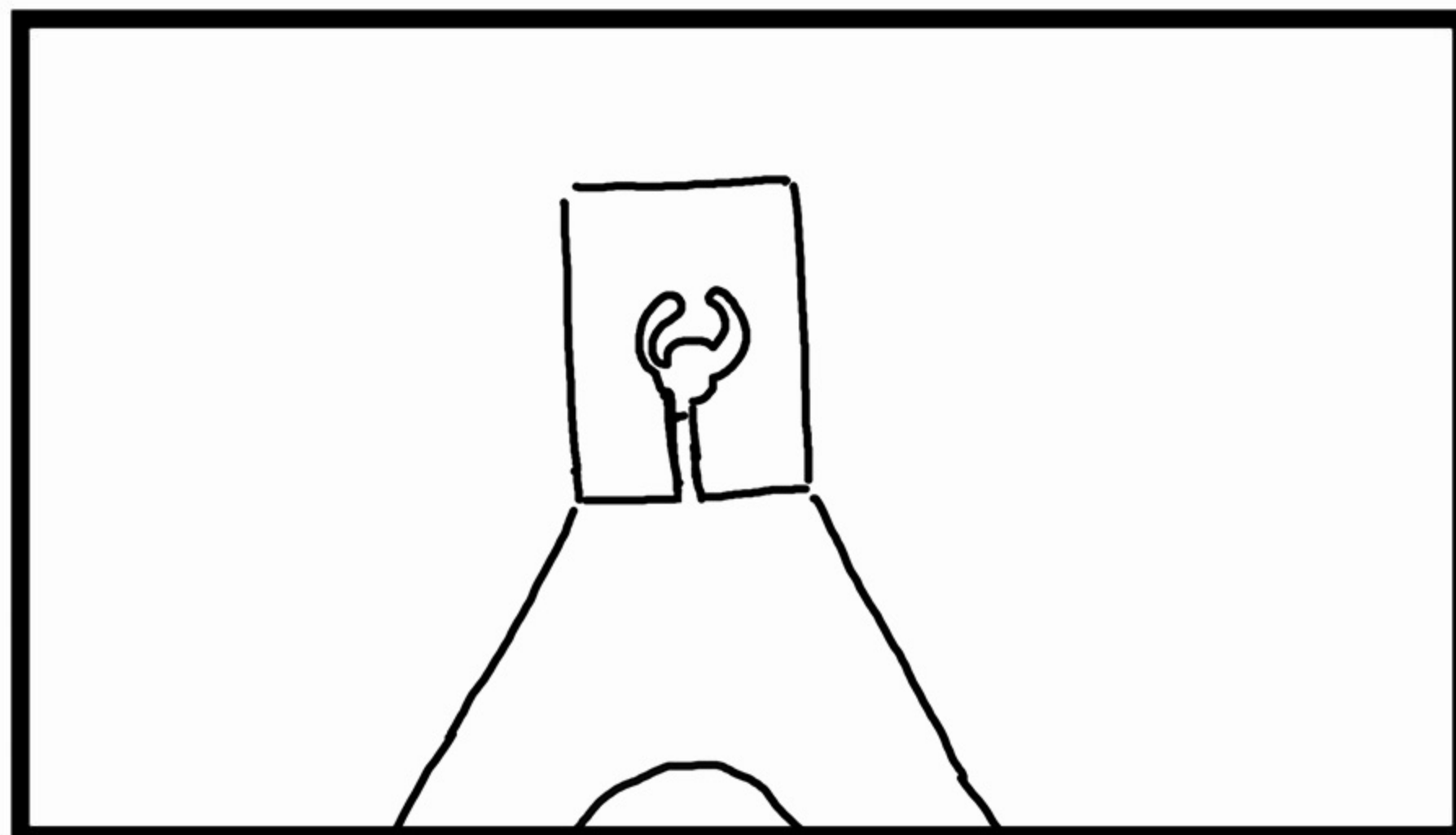
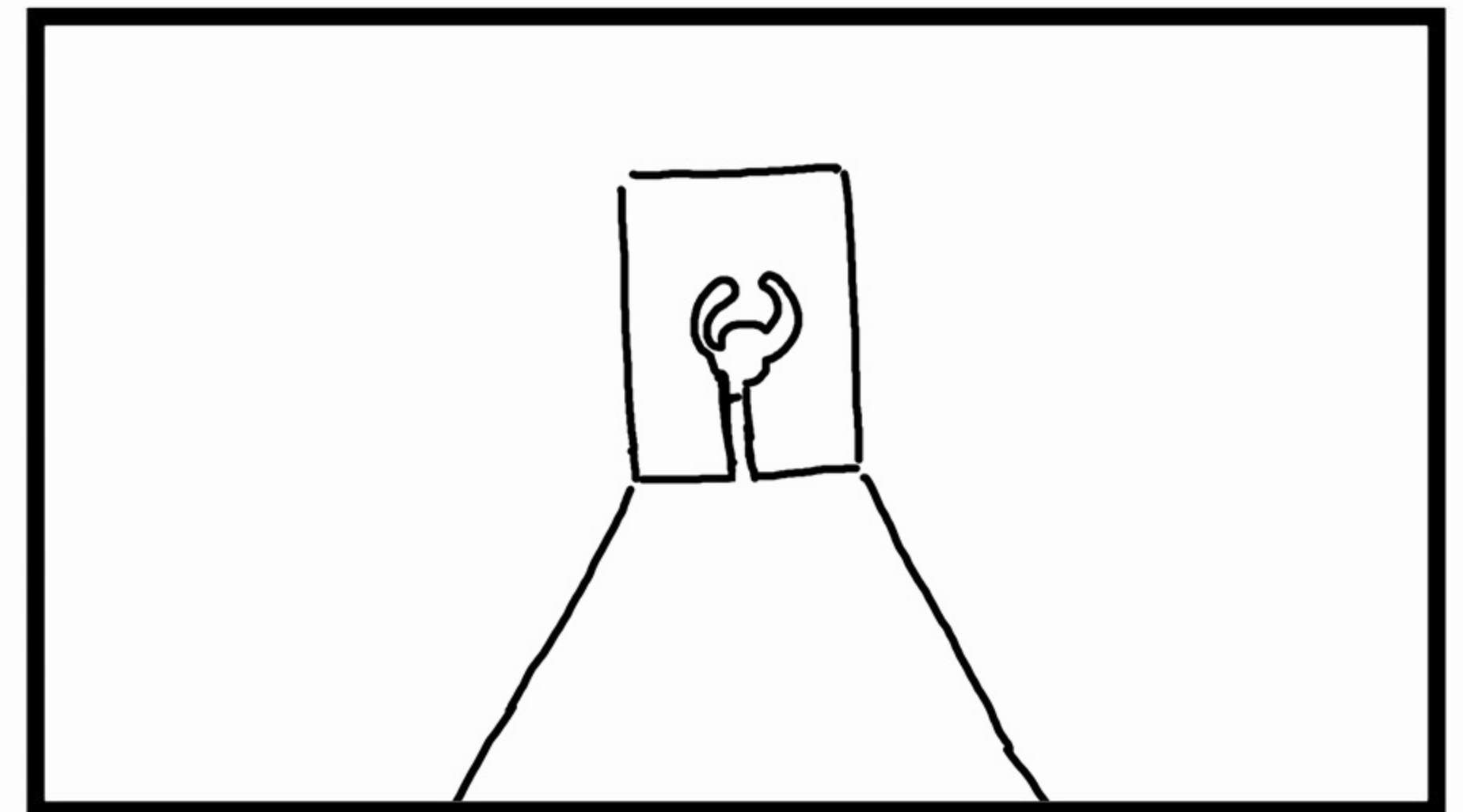
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And there's a lot of rules and often it can create like a very like harmful environment.

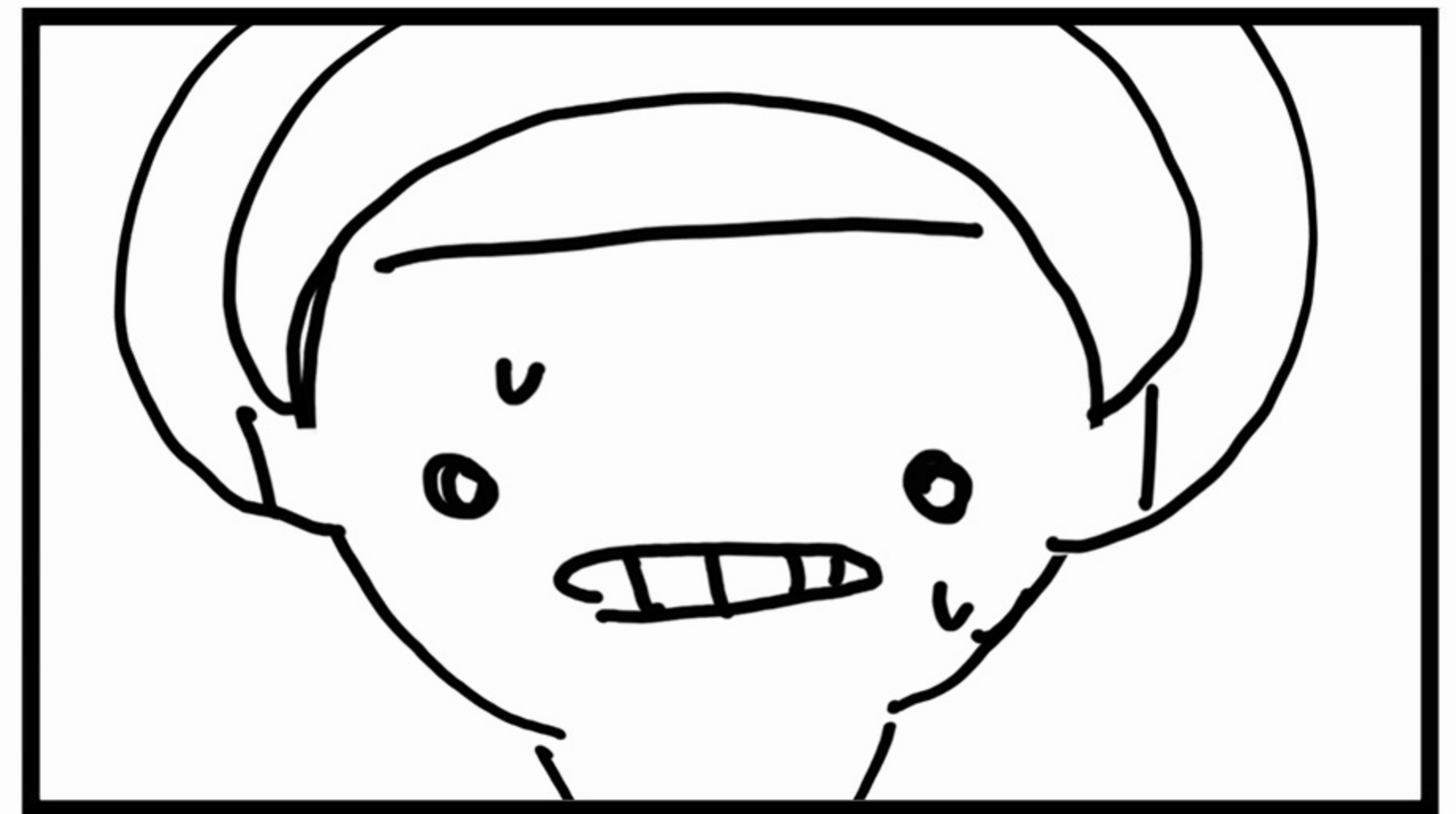
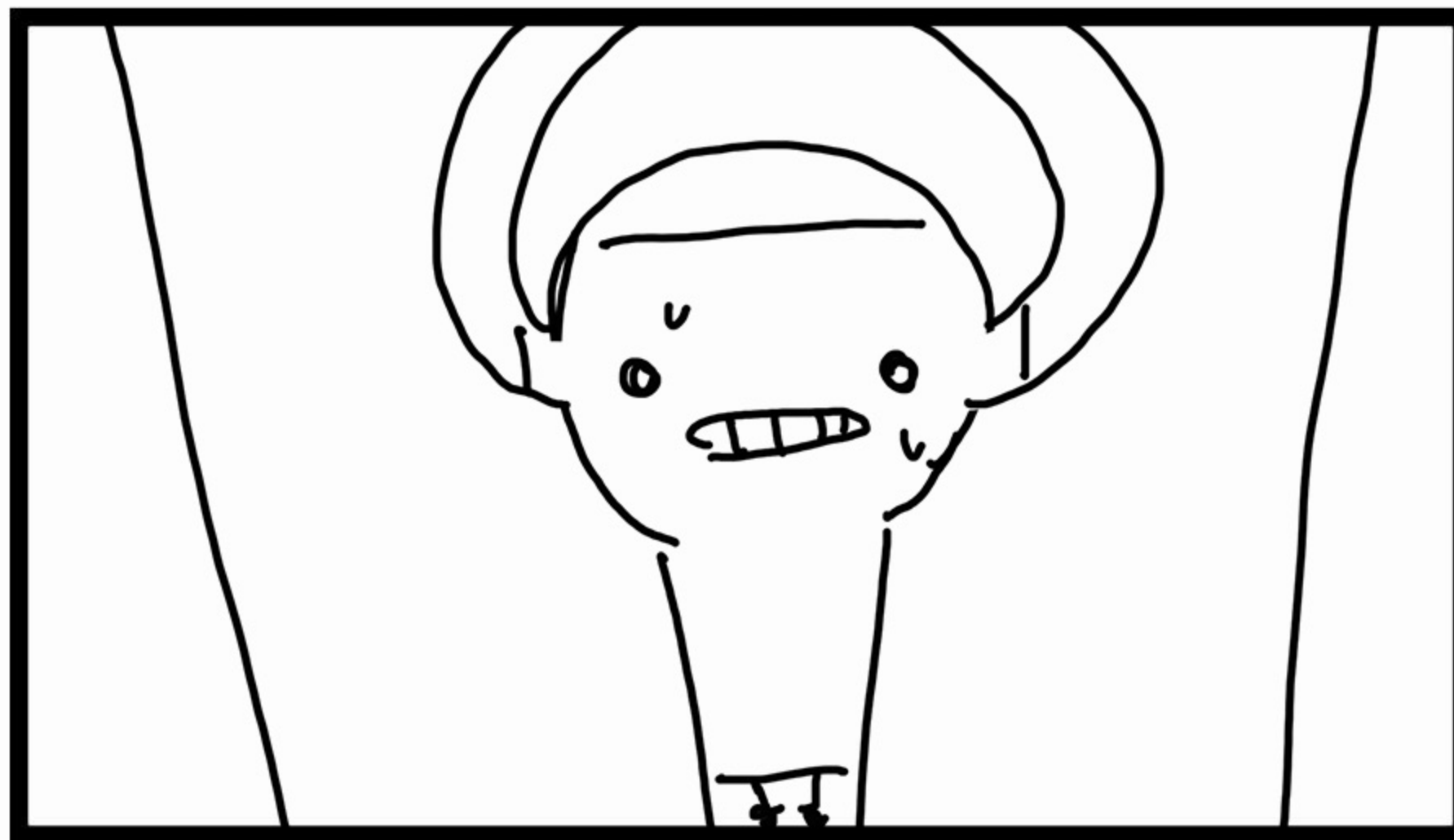
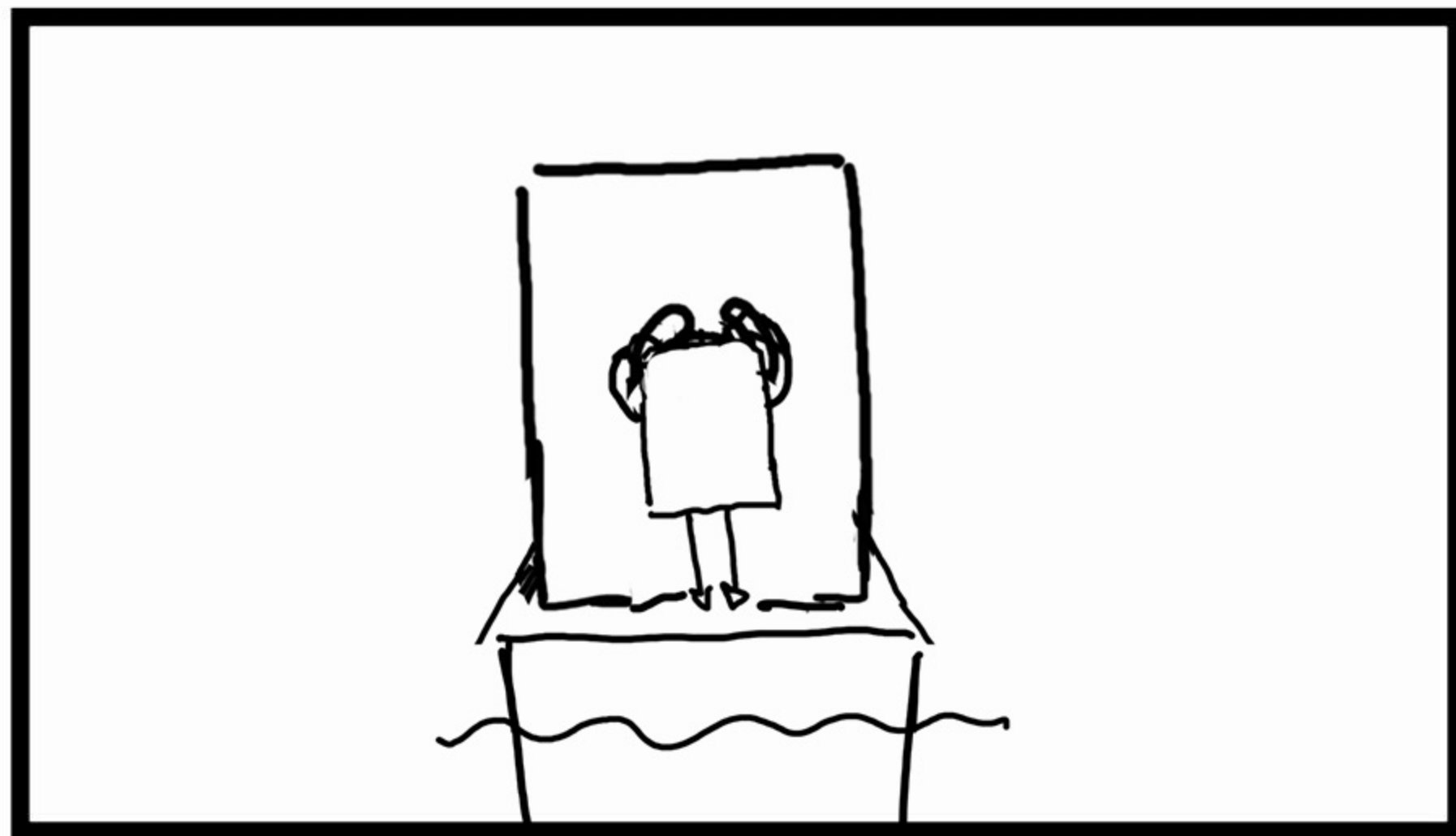
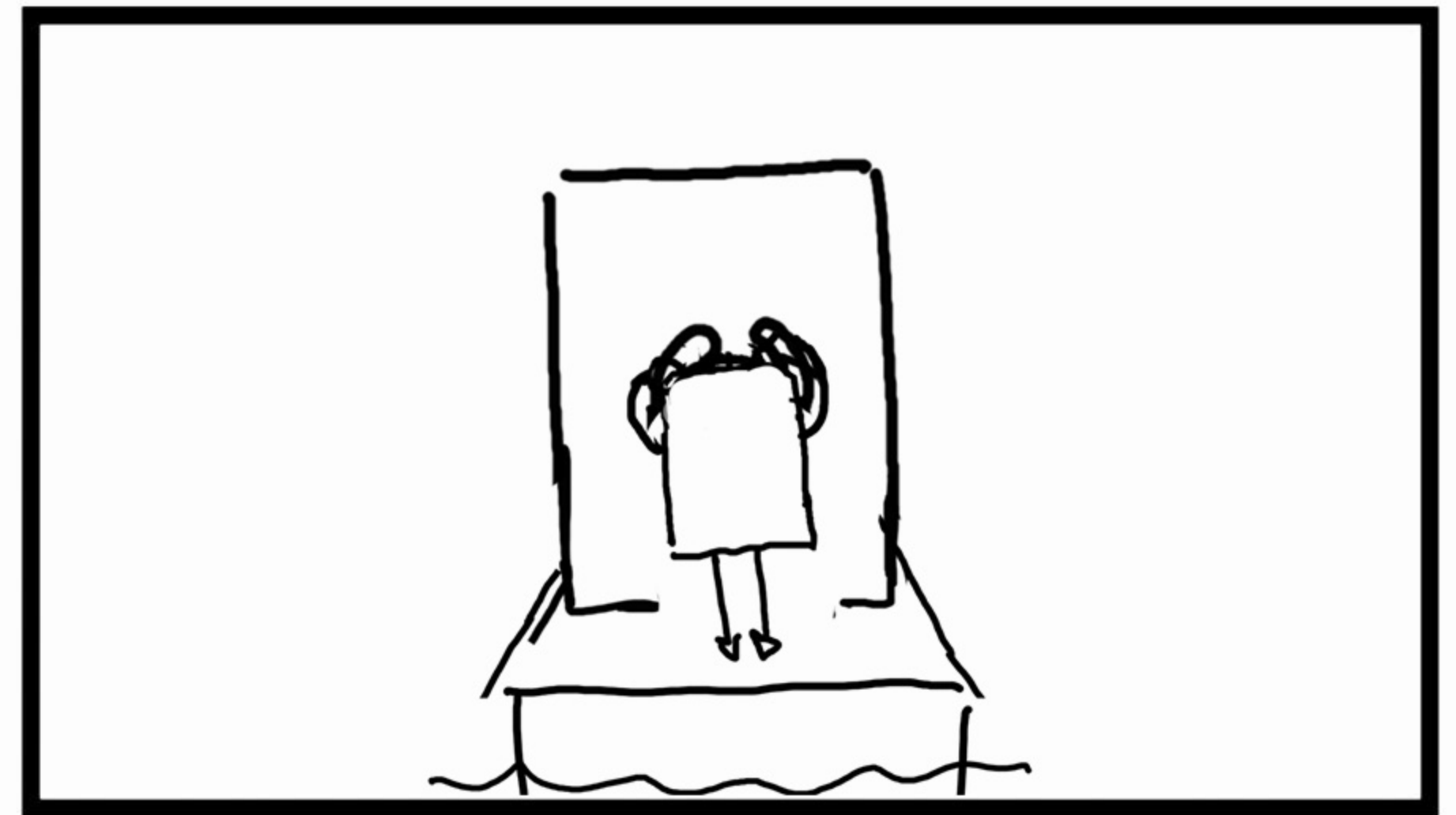
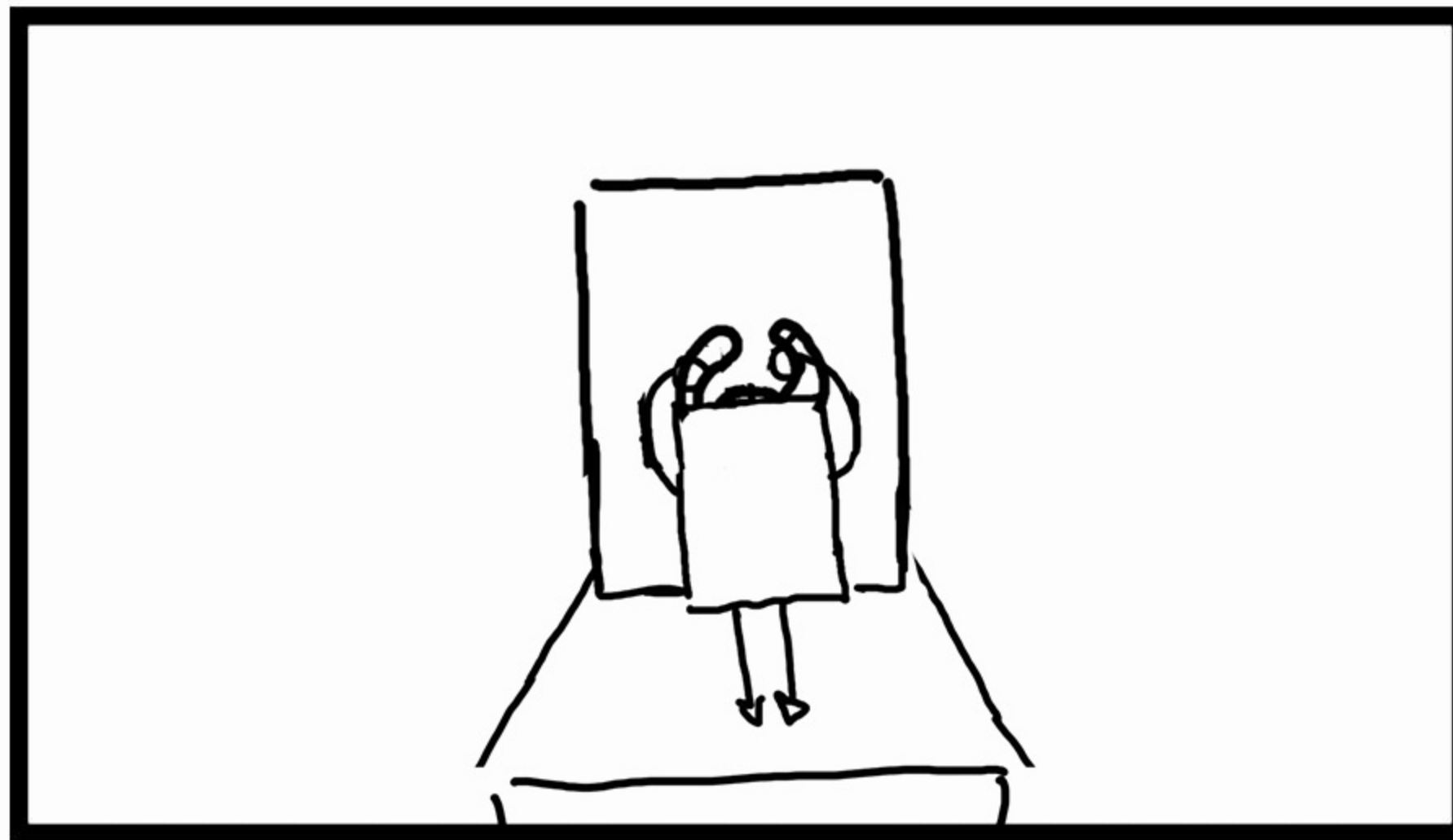
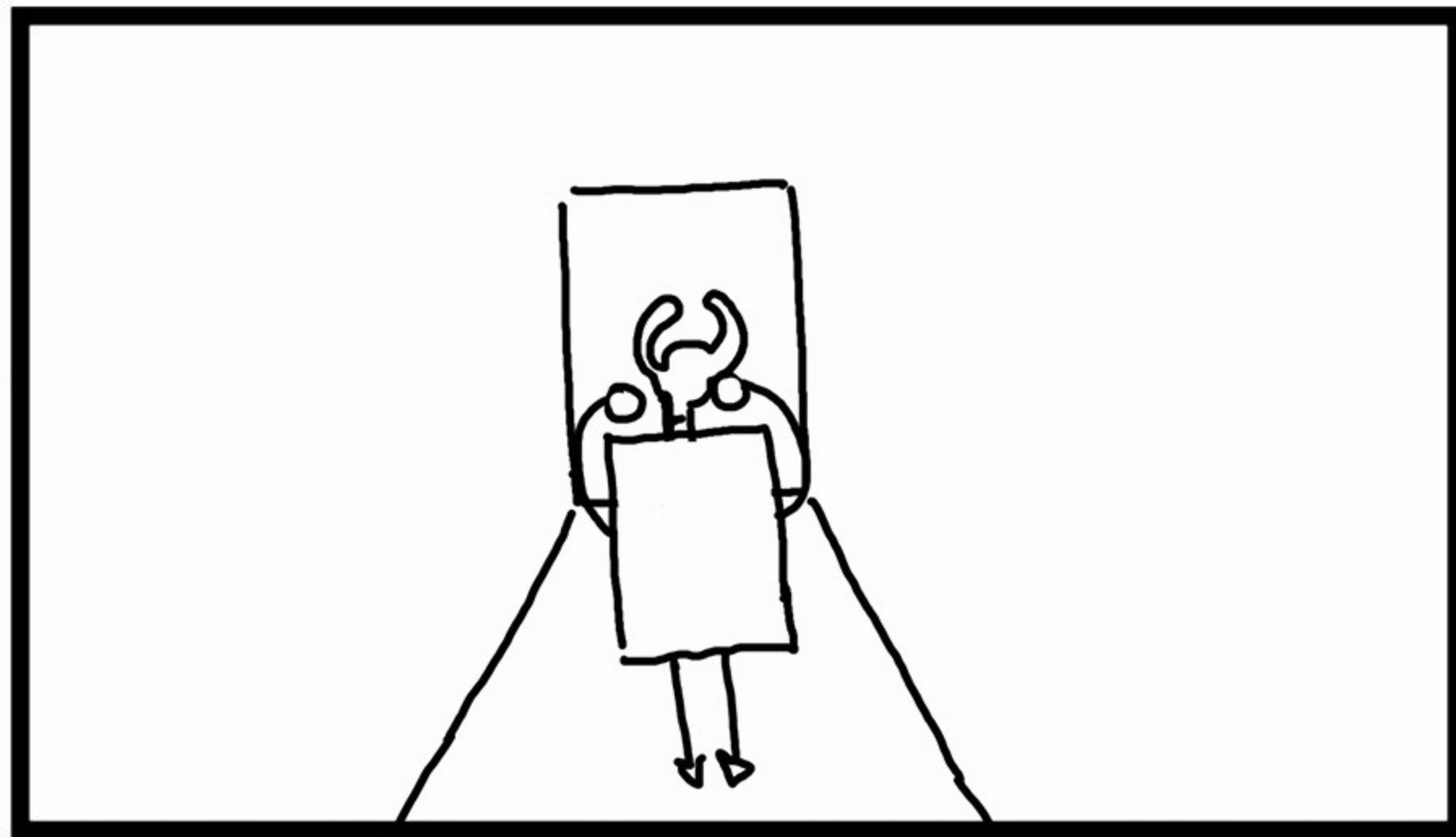


This also kind of ties into like talent, because in ballet, obviously, there is a body type and it's very clear to see who has it

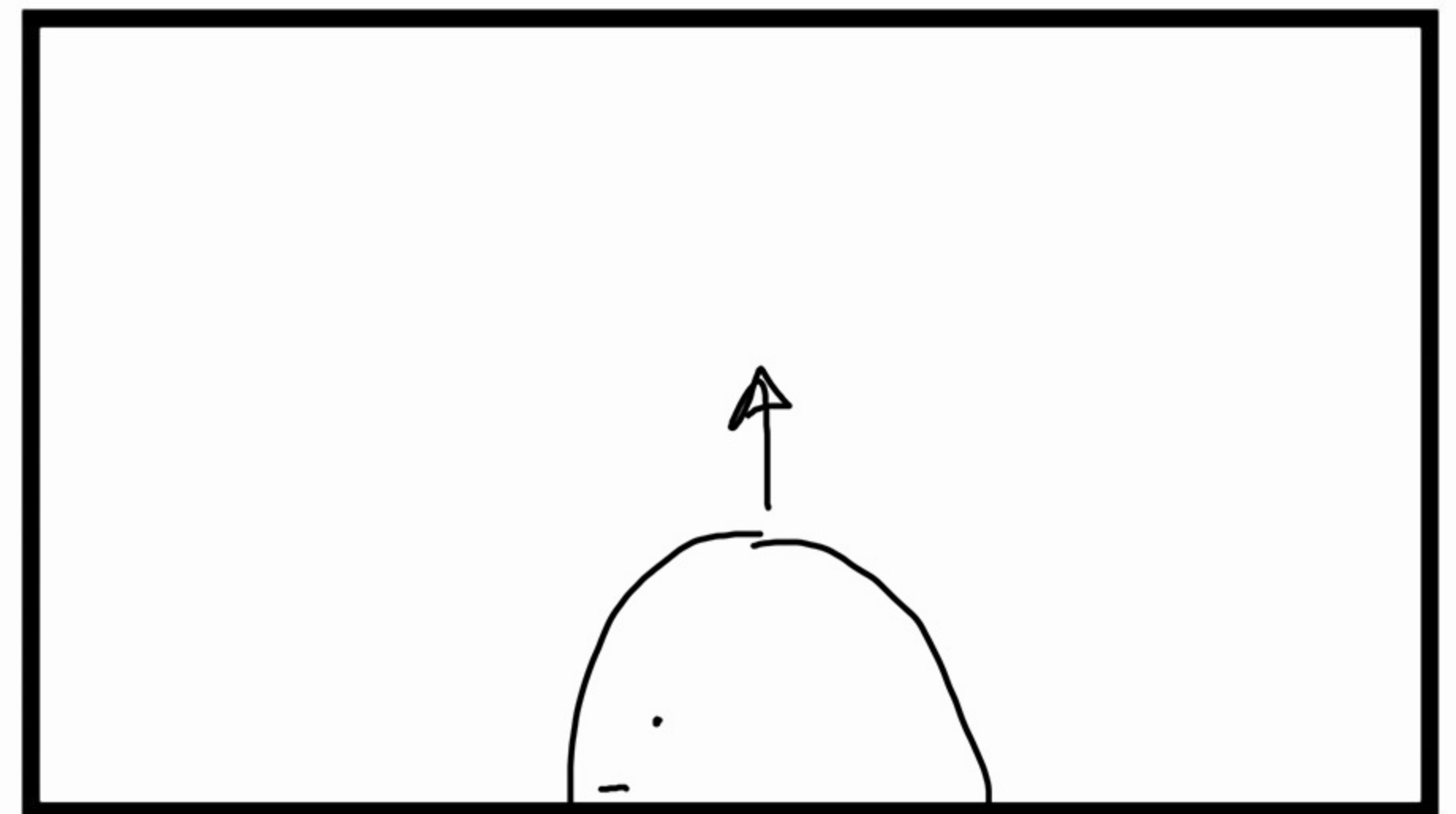
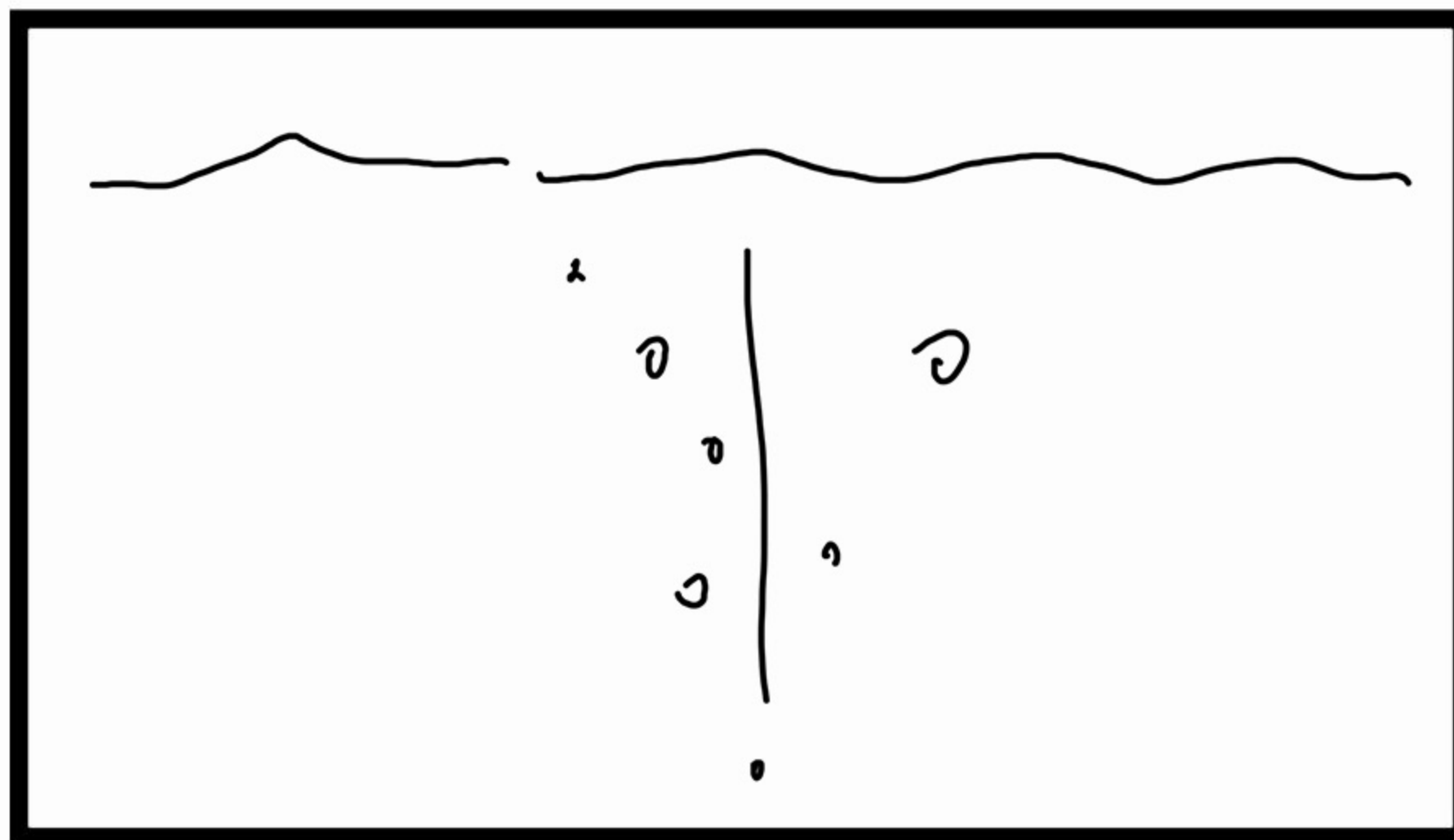
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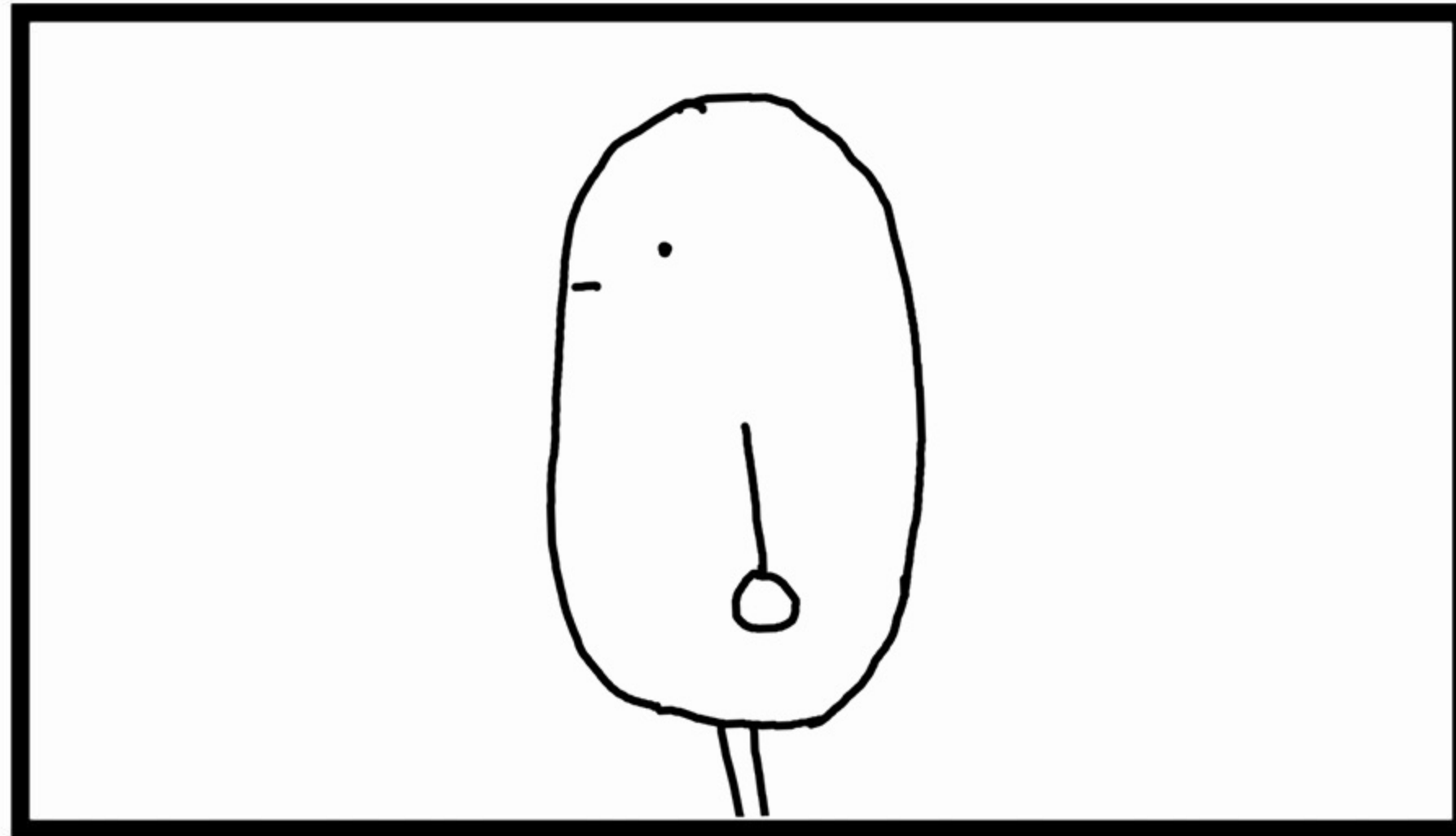
and who doesn't.



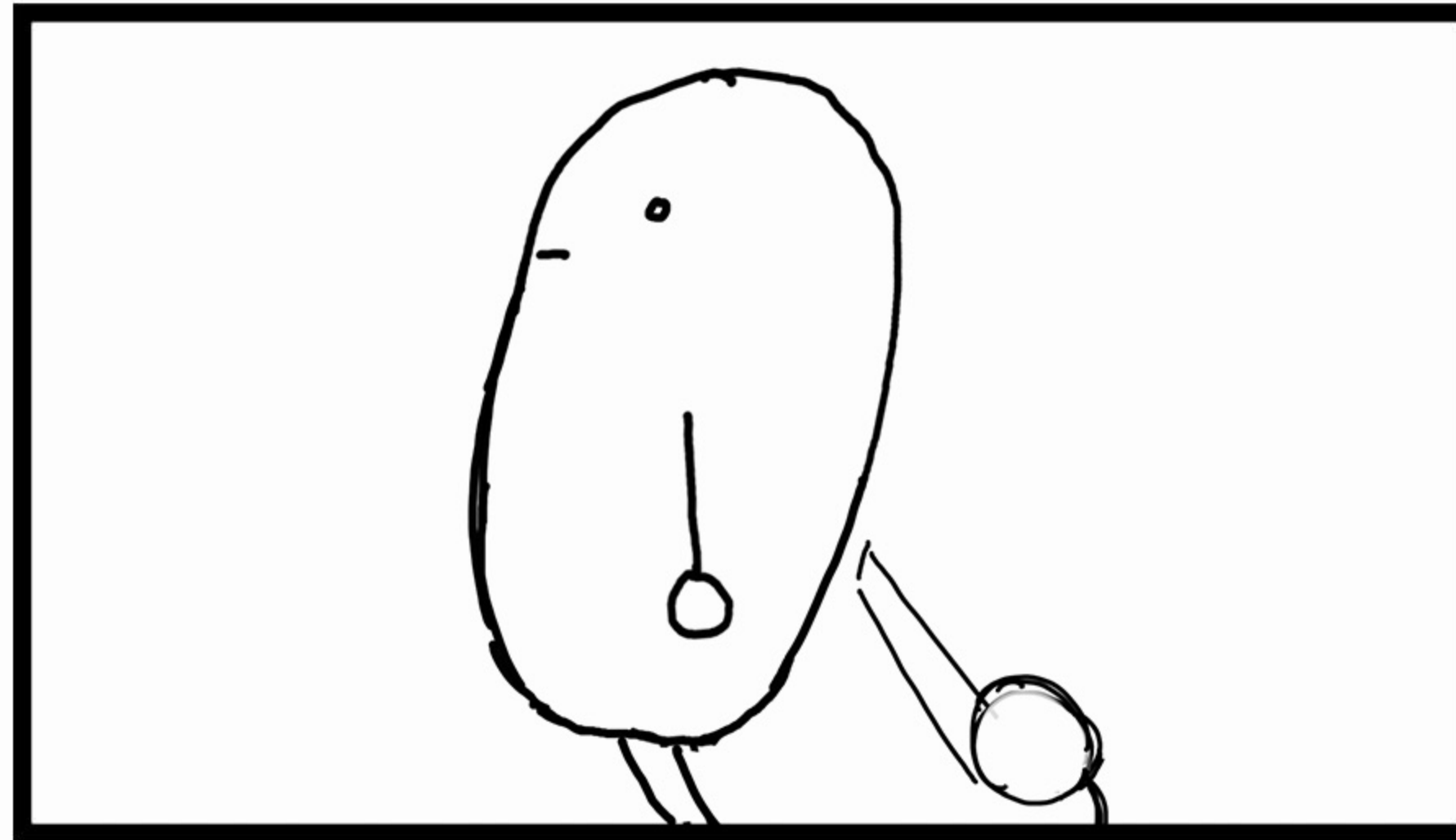
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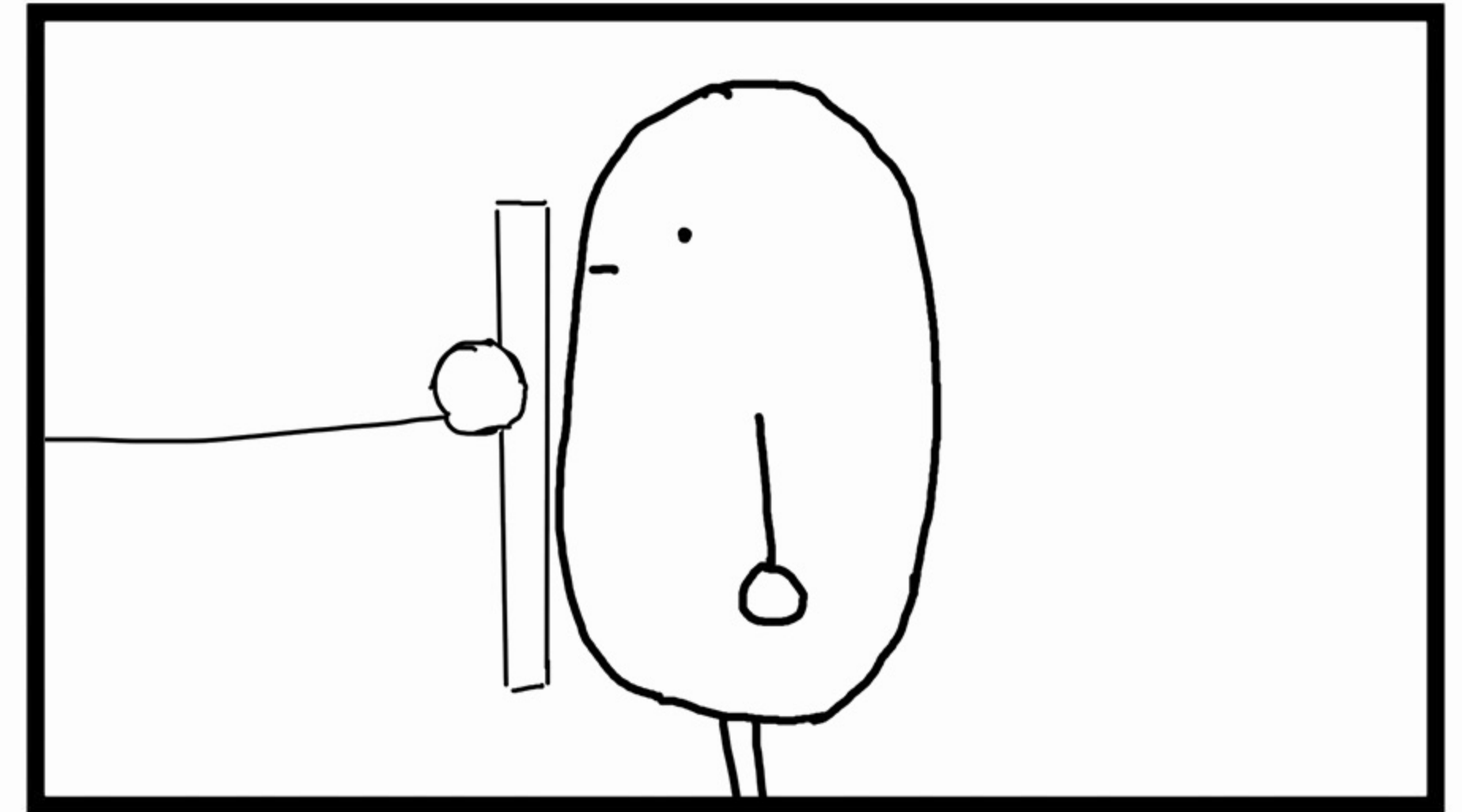
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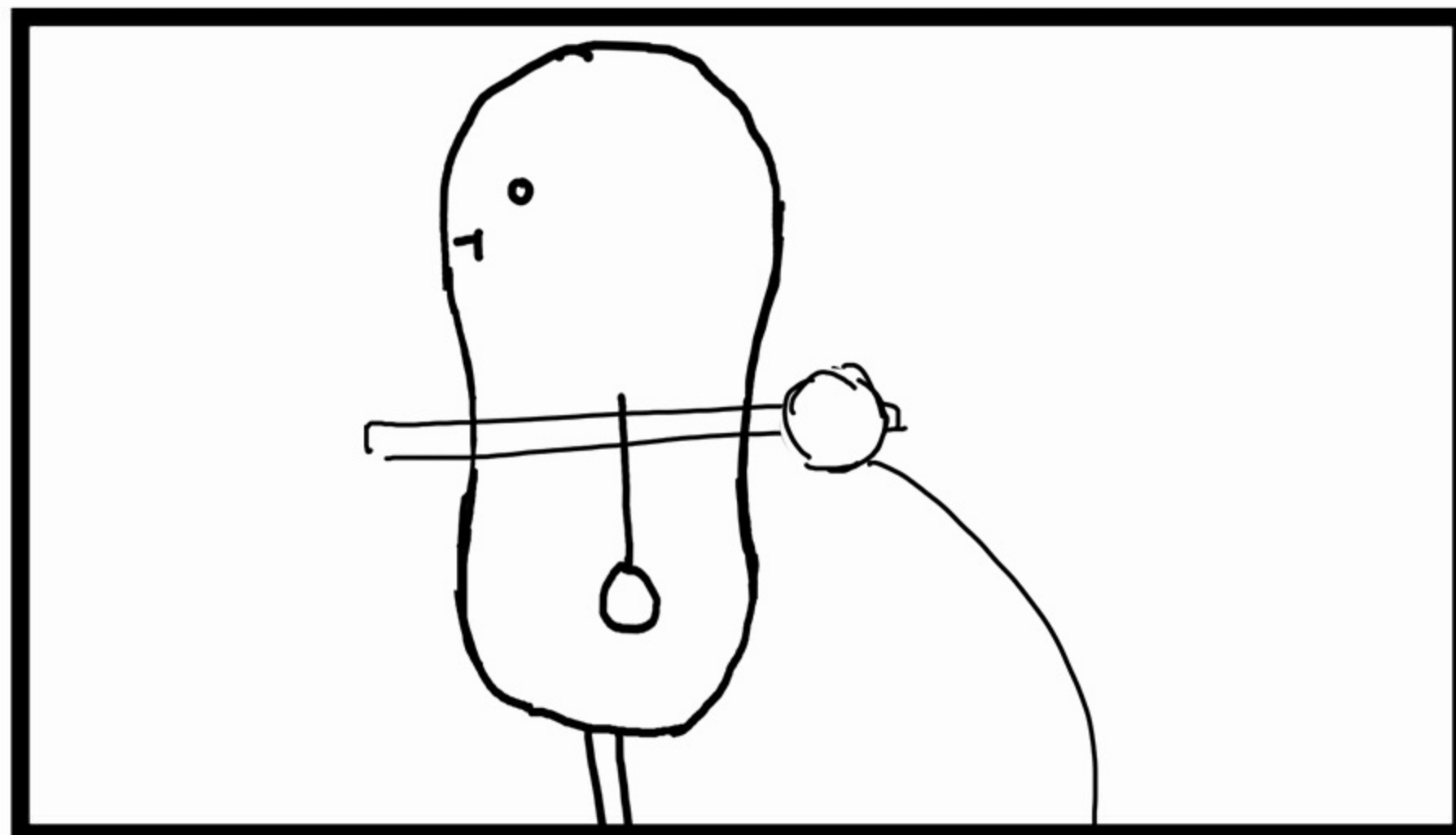
And in general, like a lot of what they say is like, "stomach in,



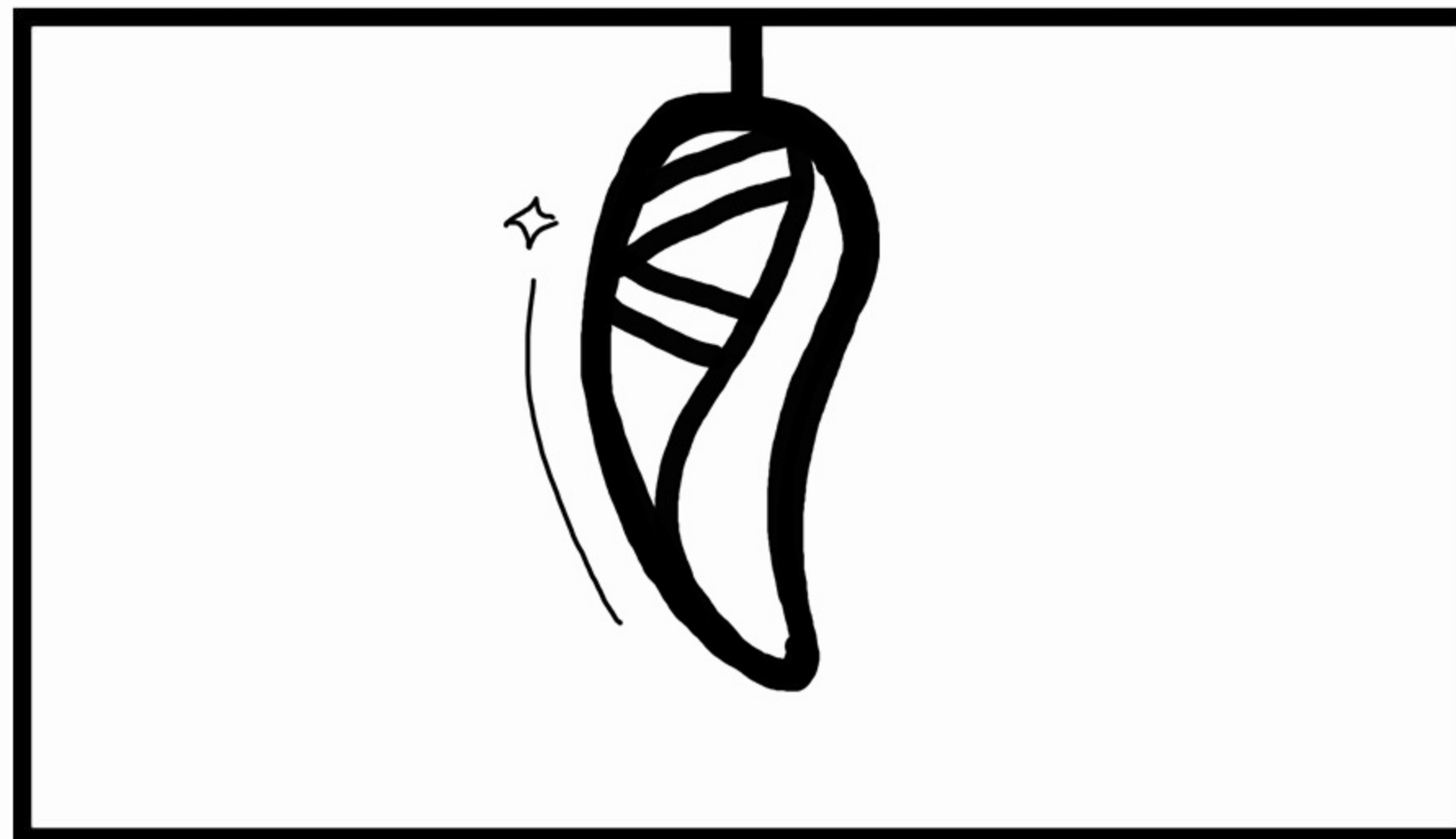
bottom in",



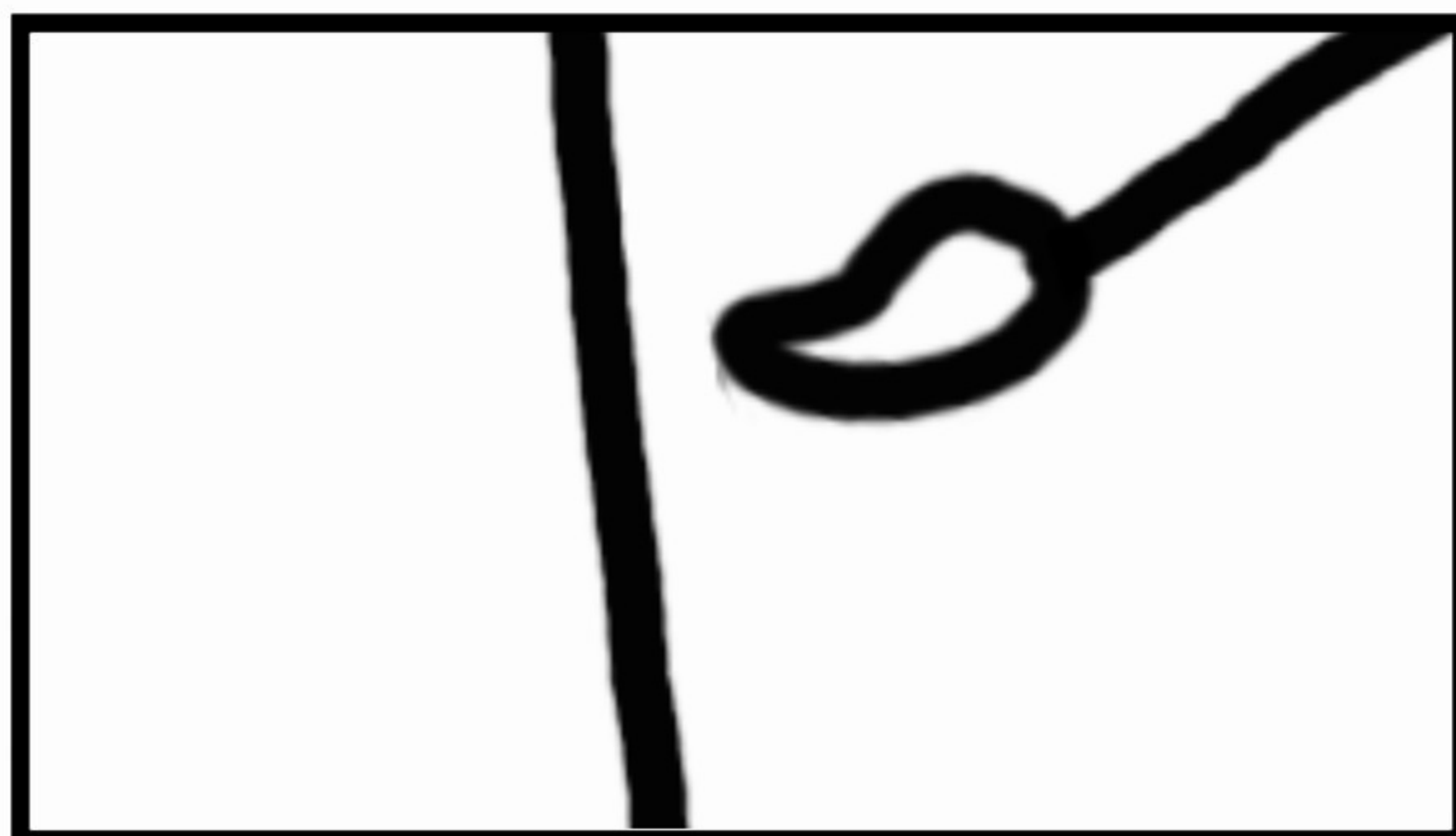
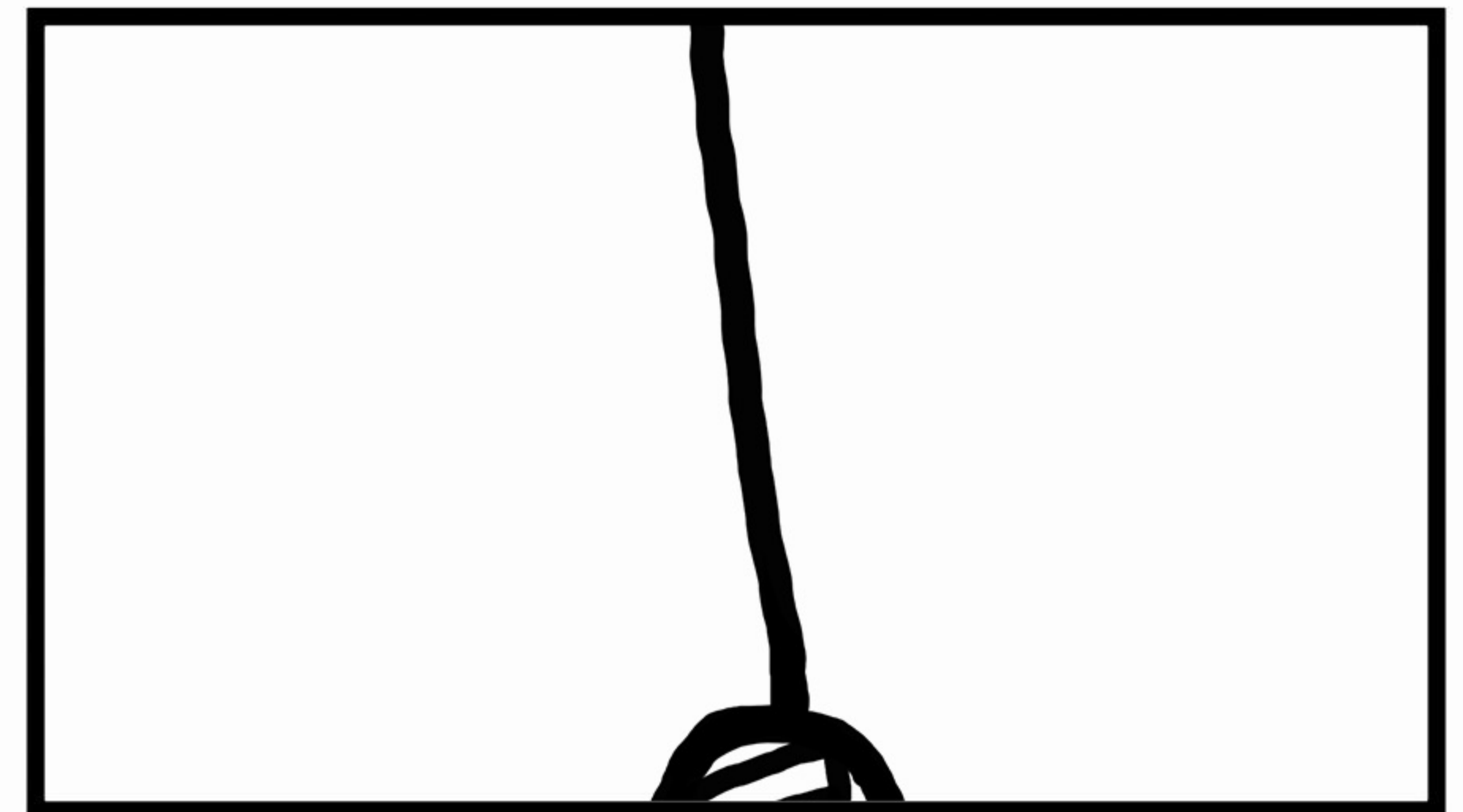
and you have to be really flat,



really this.



Also, just like in general, like we all know that if you have like really nice arches,



really straight legs,

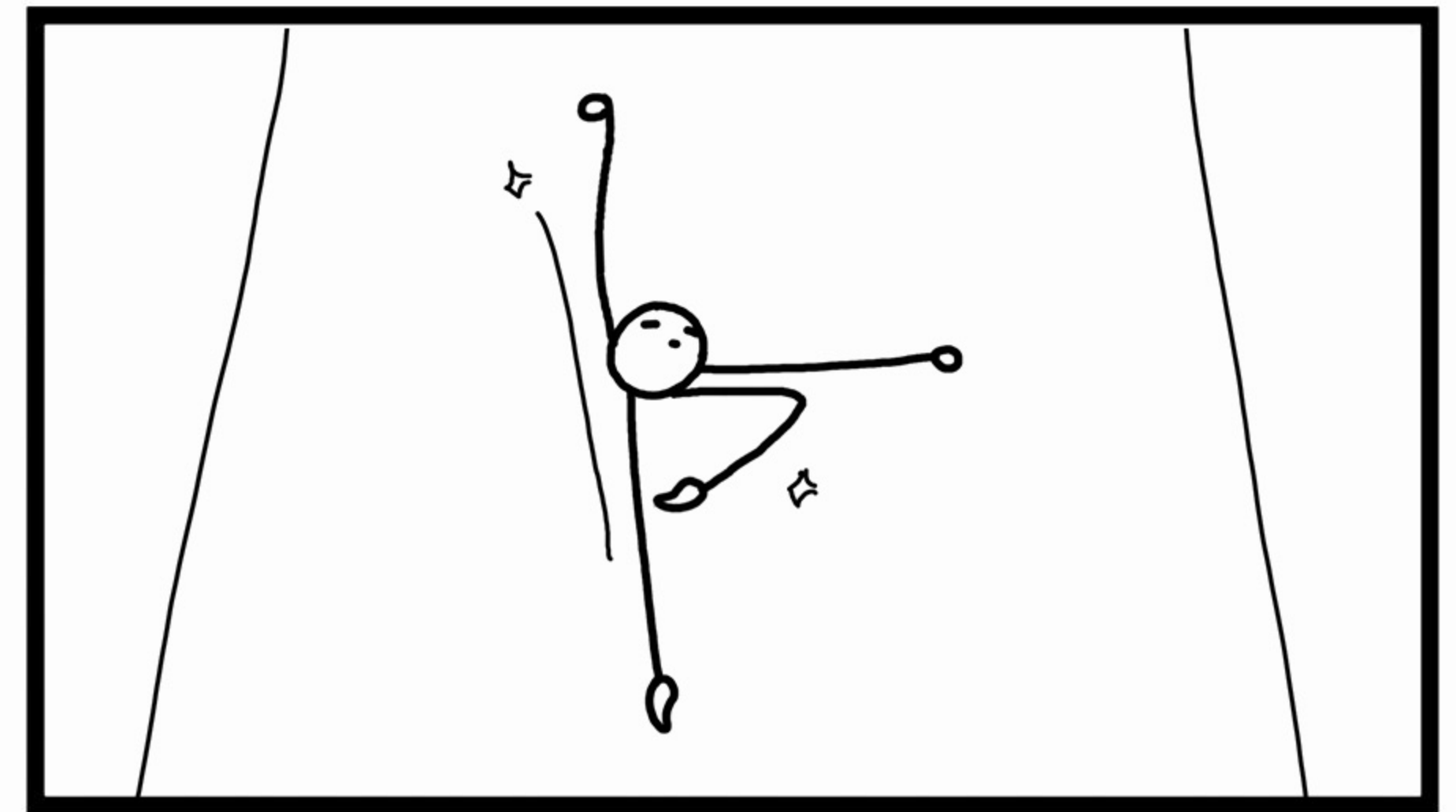
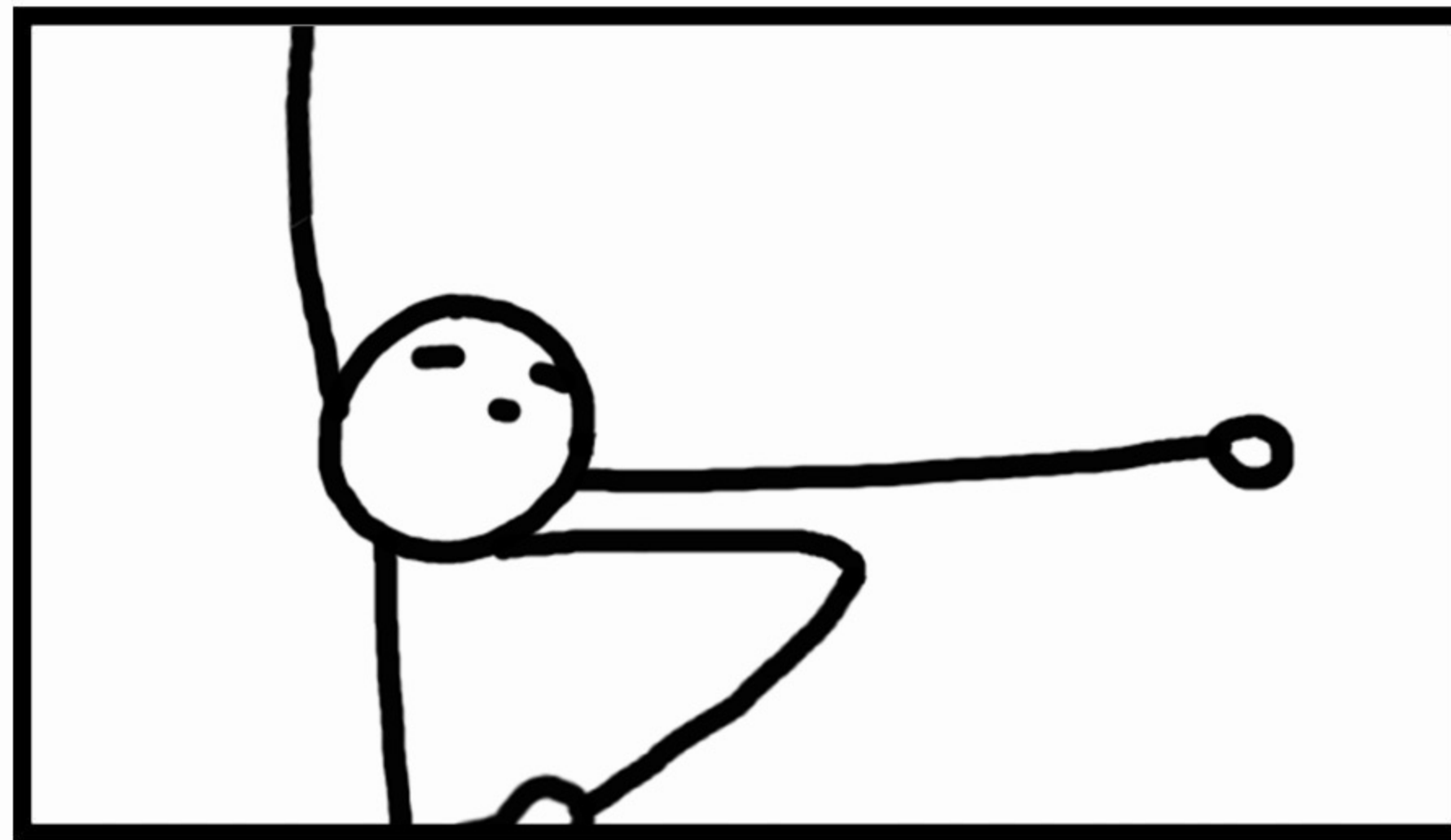
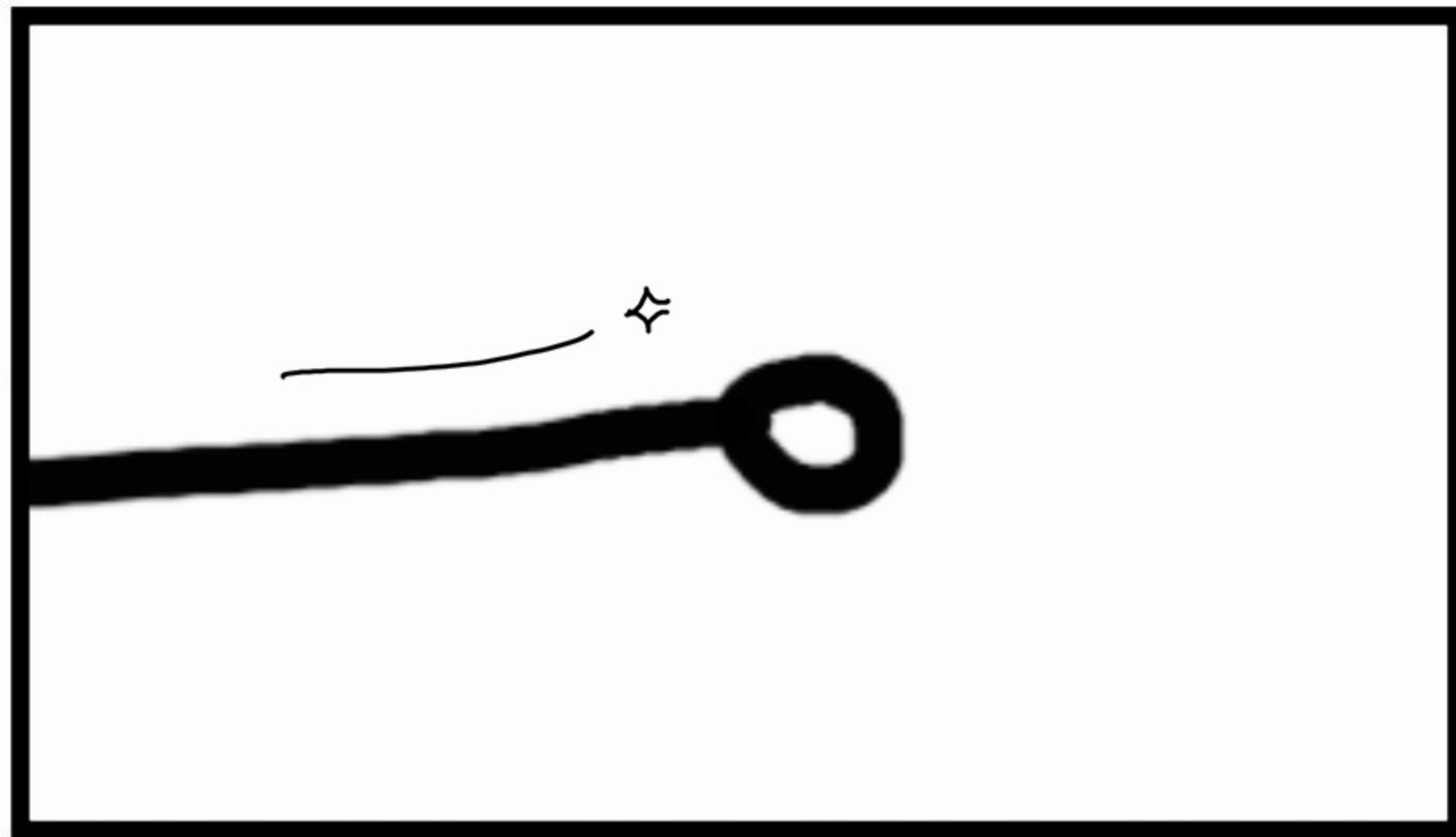


long limbs, all that stuff,

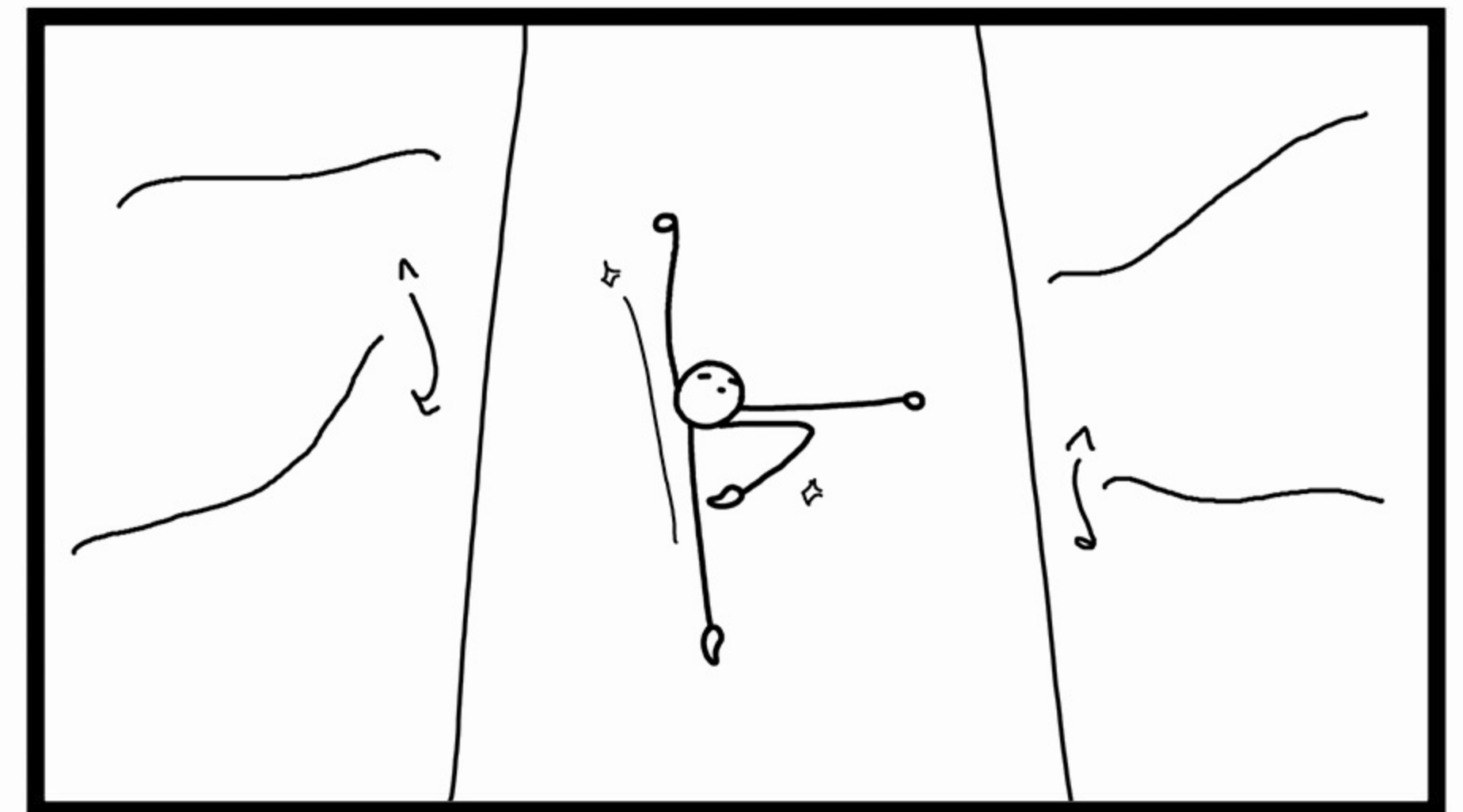
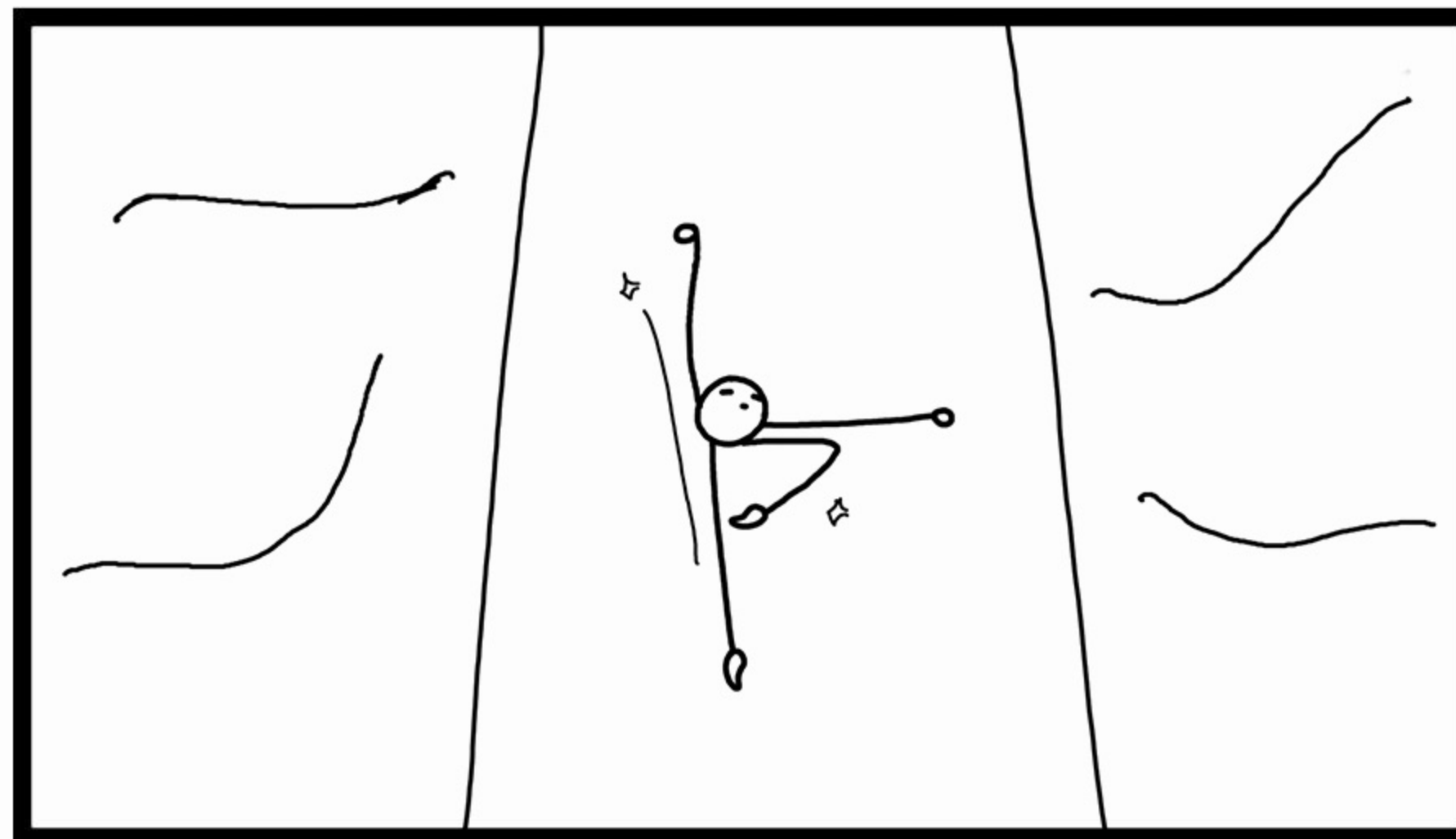
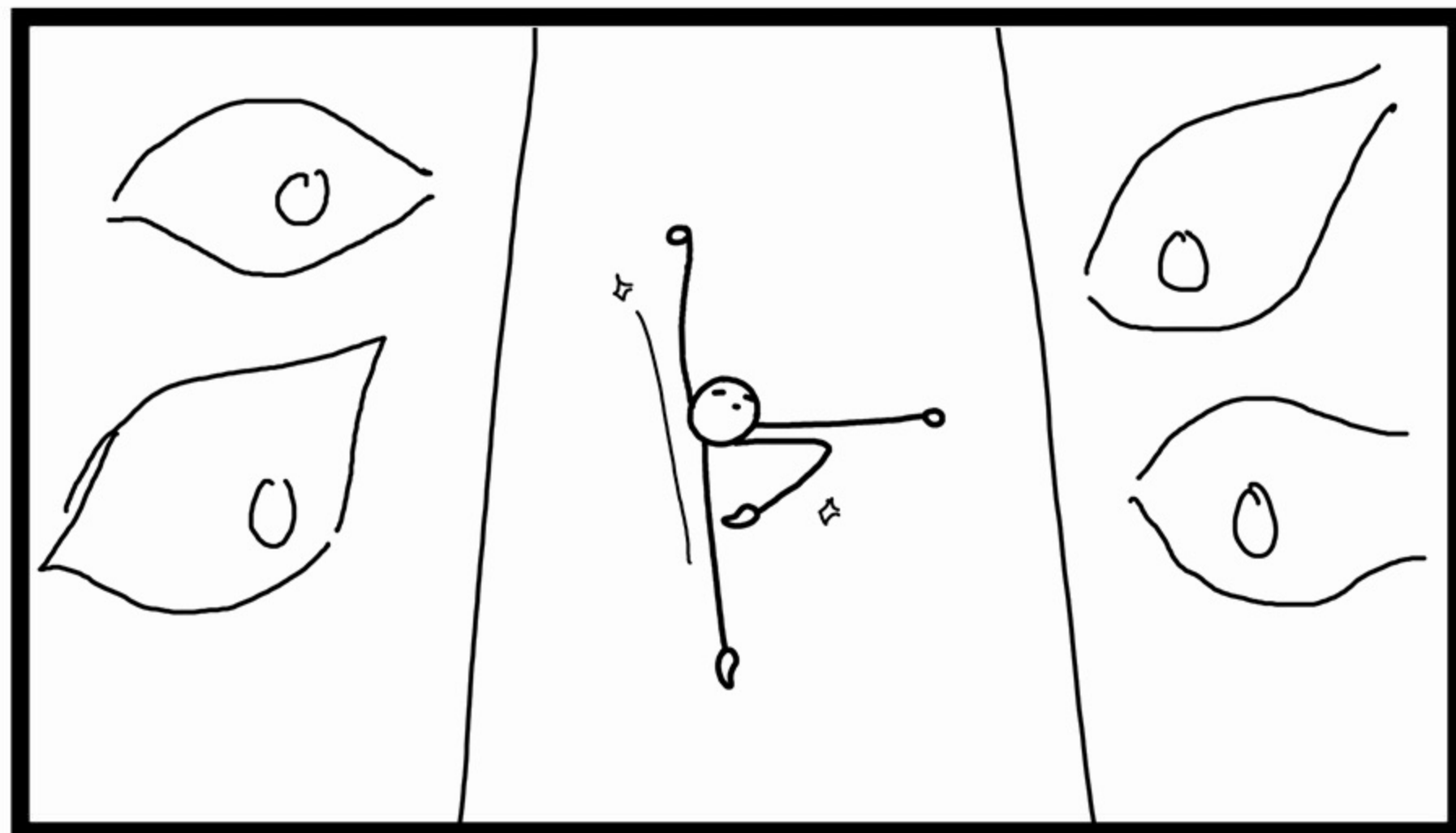
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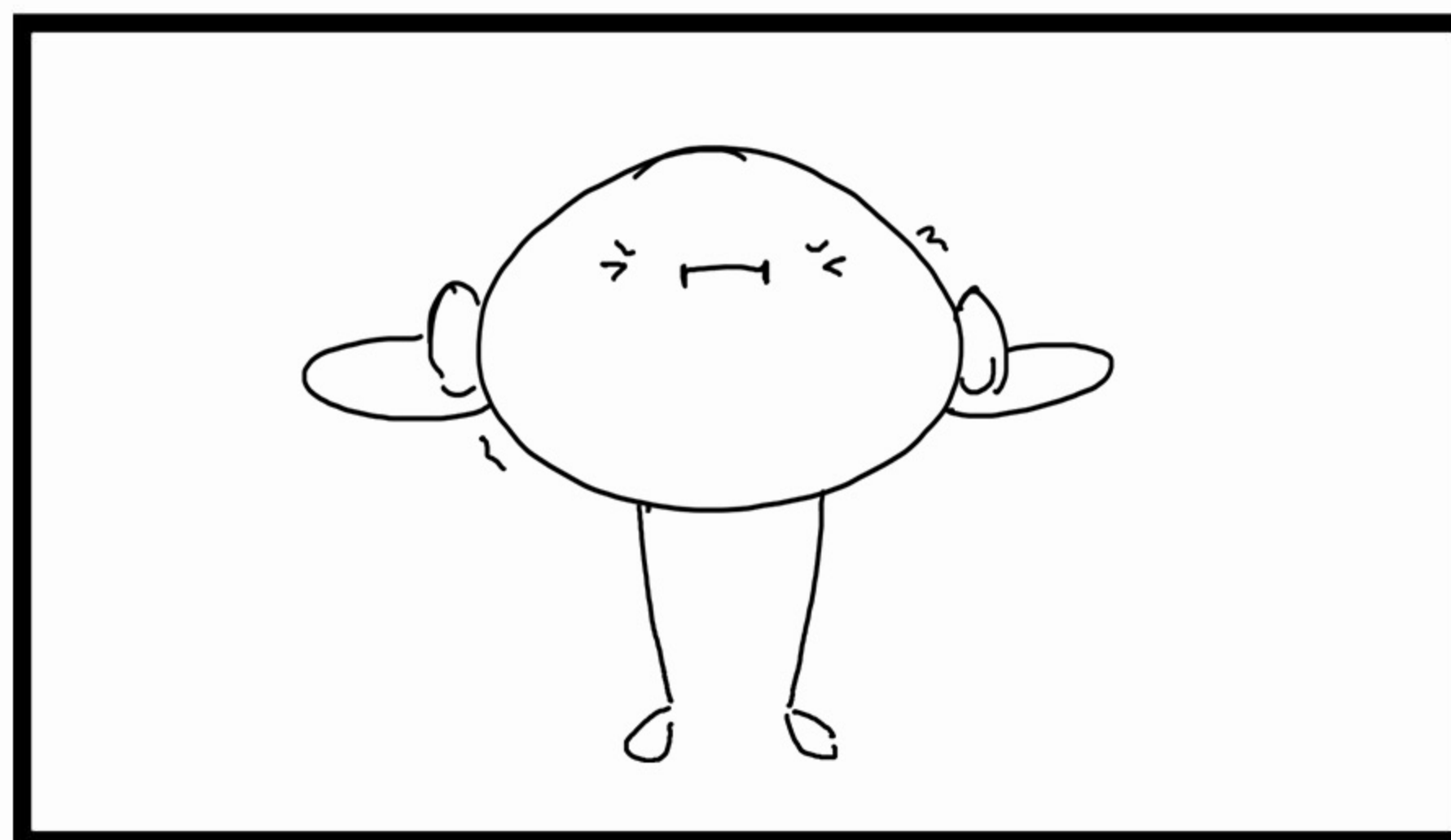
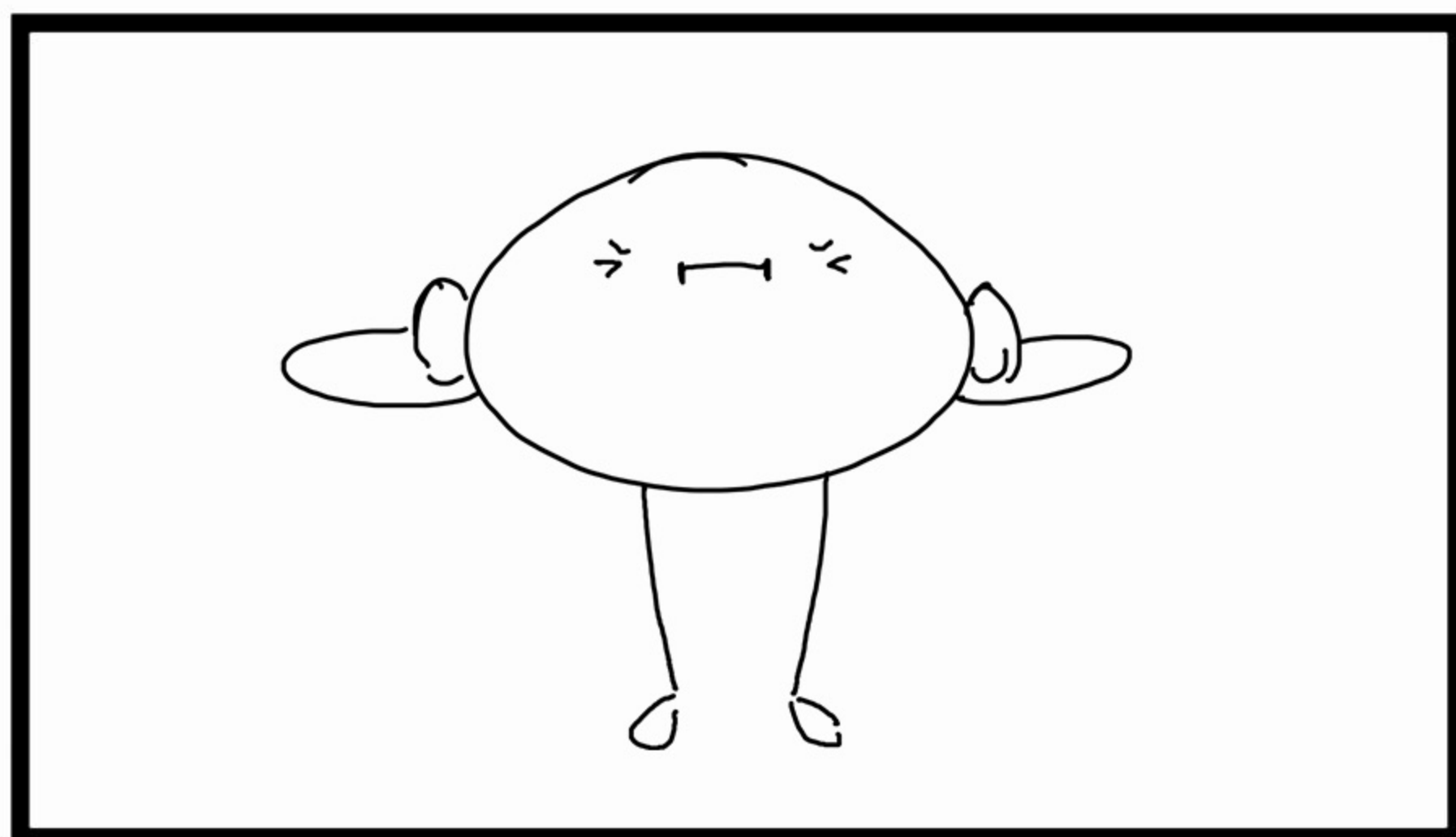
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it will look better in the mirror.



And everyone agrees that that's the standard.

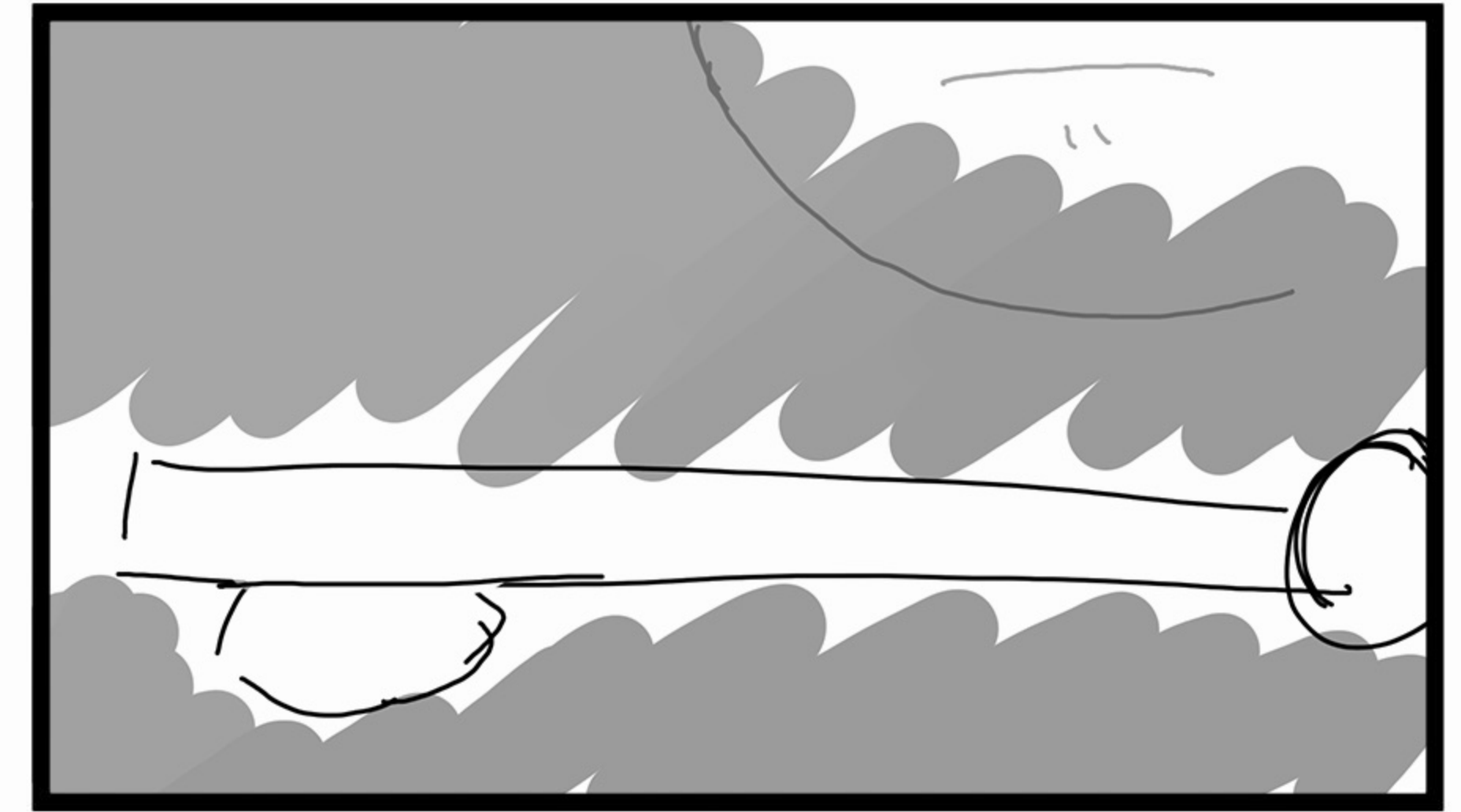
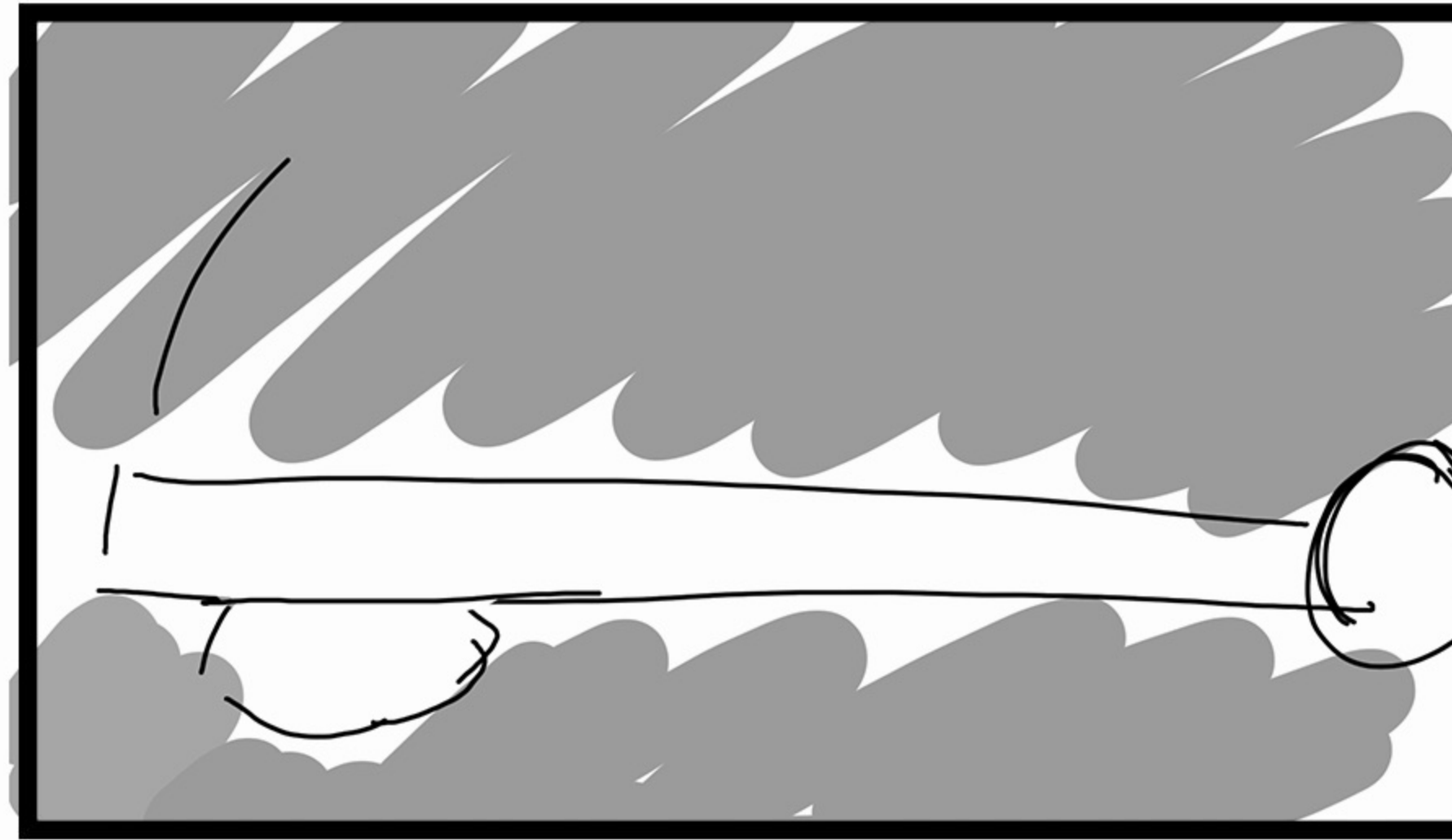
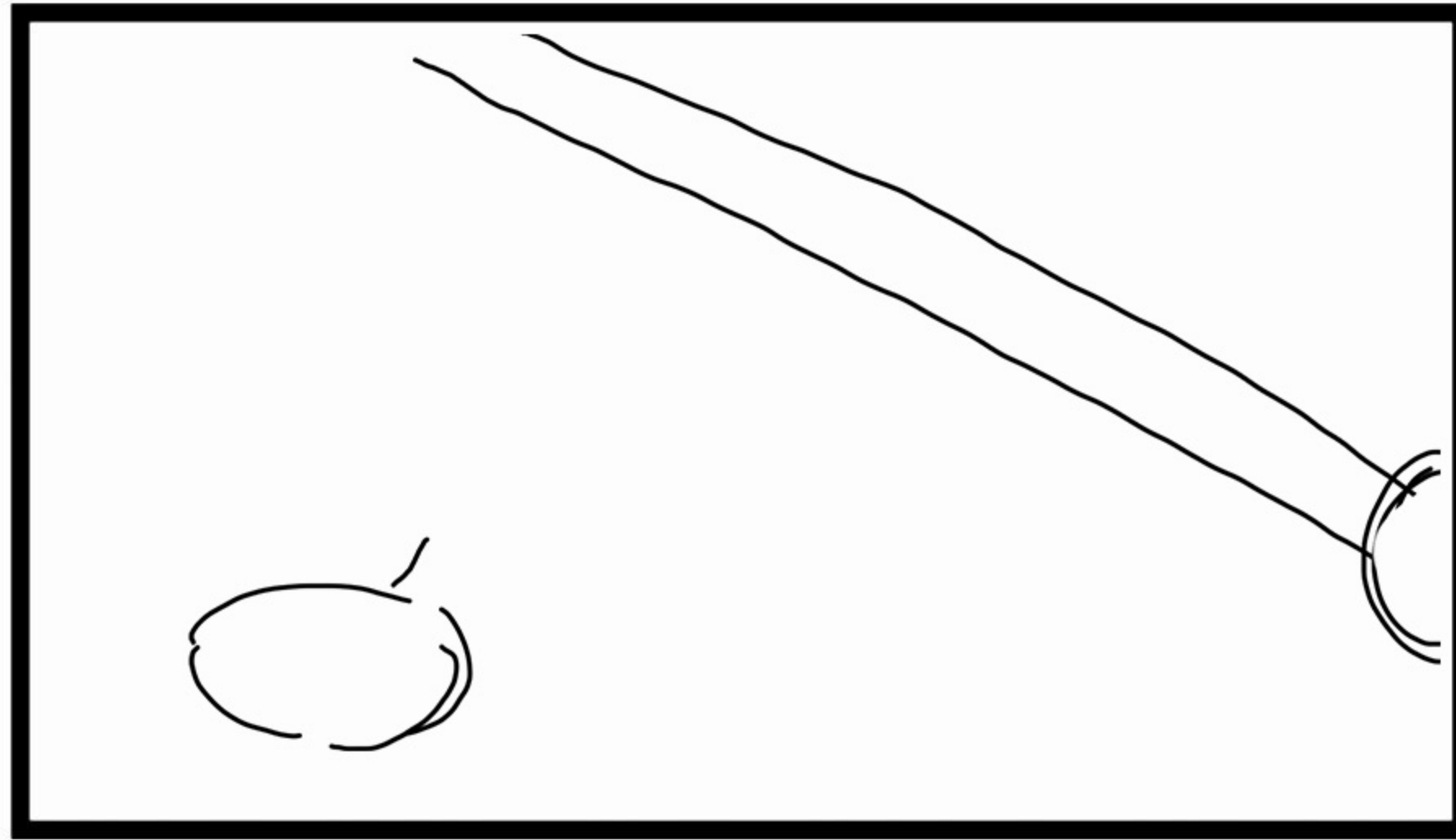


And you're all kind of like, secretly like trying to strive for that, even though it might not be healthy for some people.

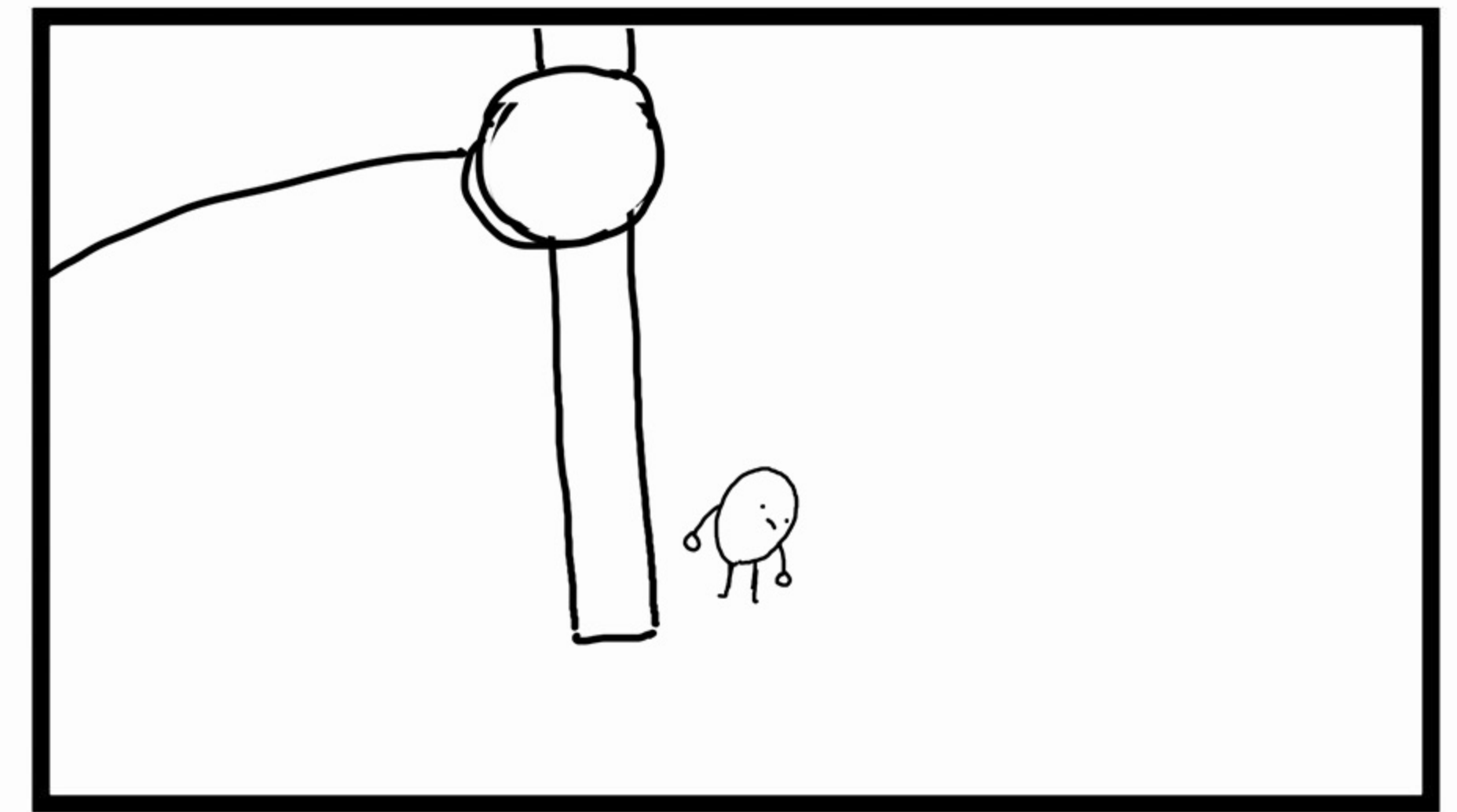
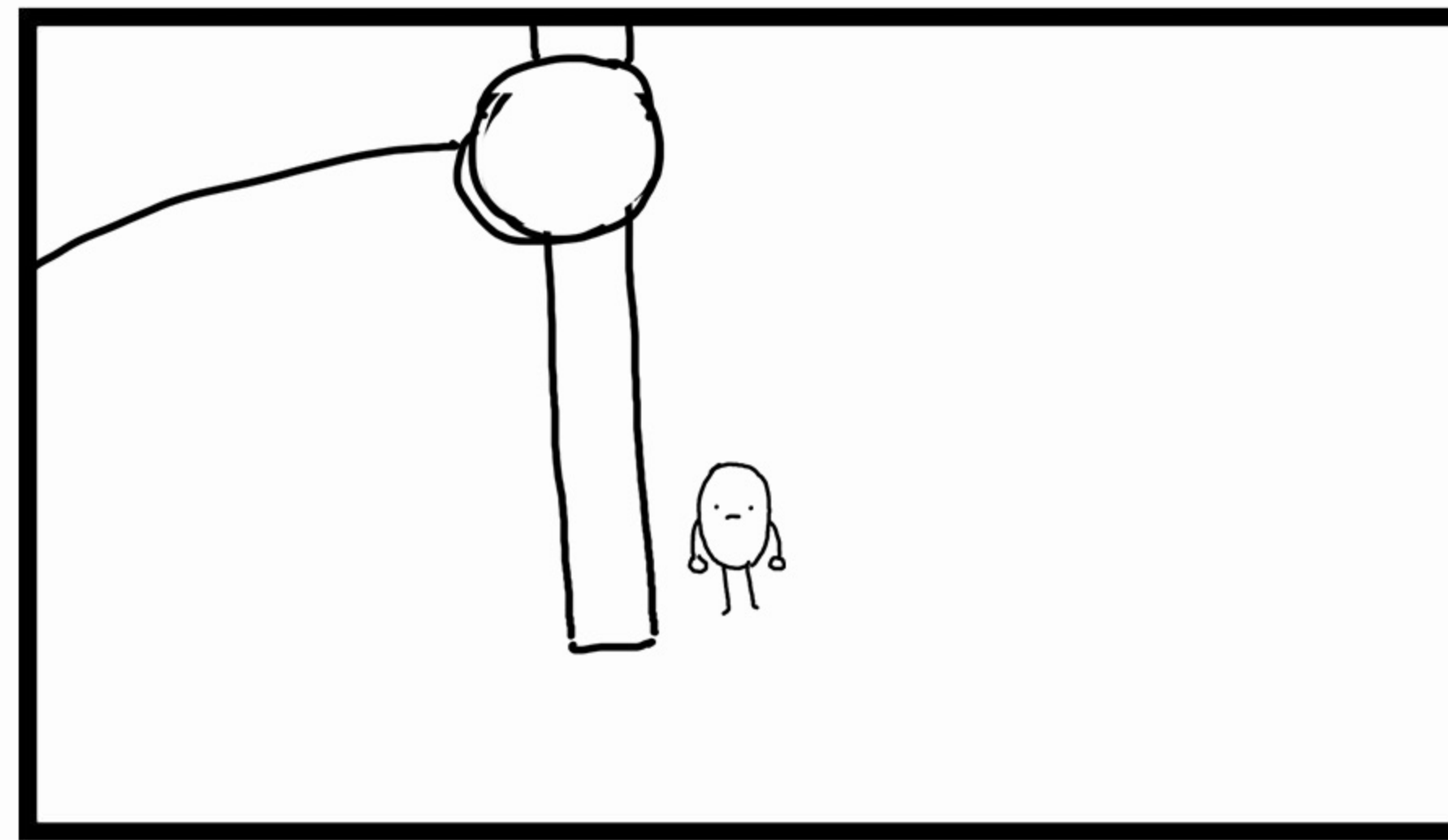
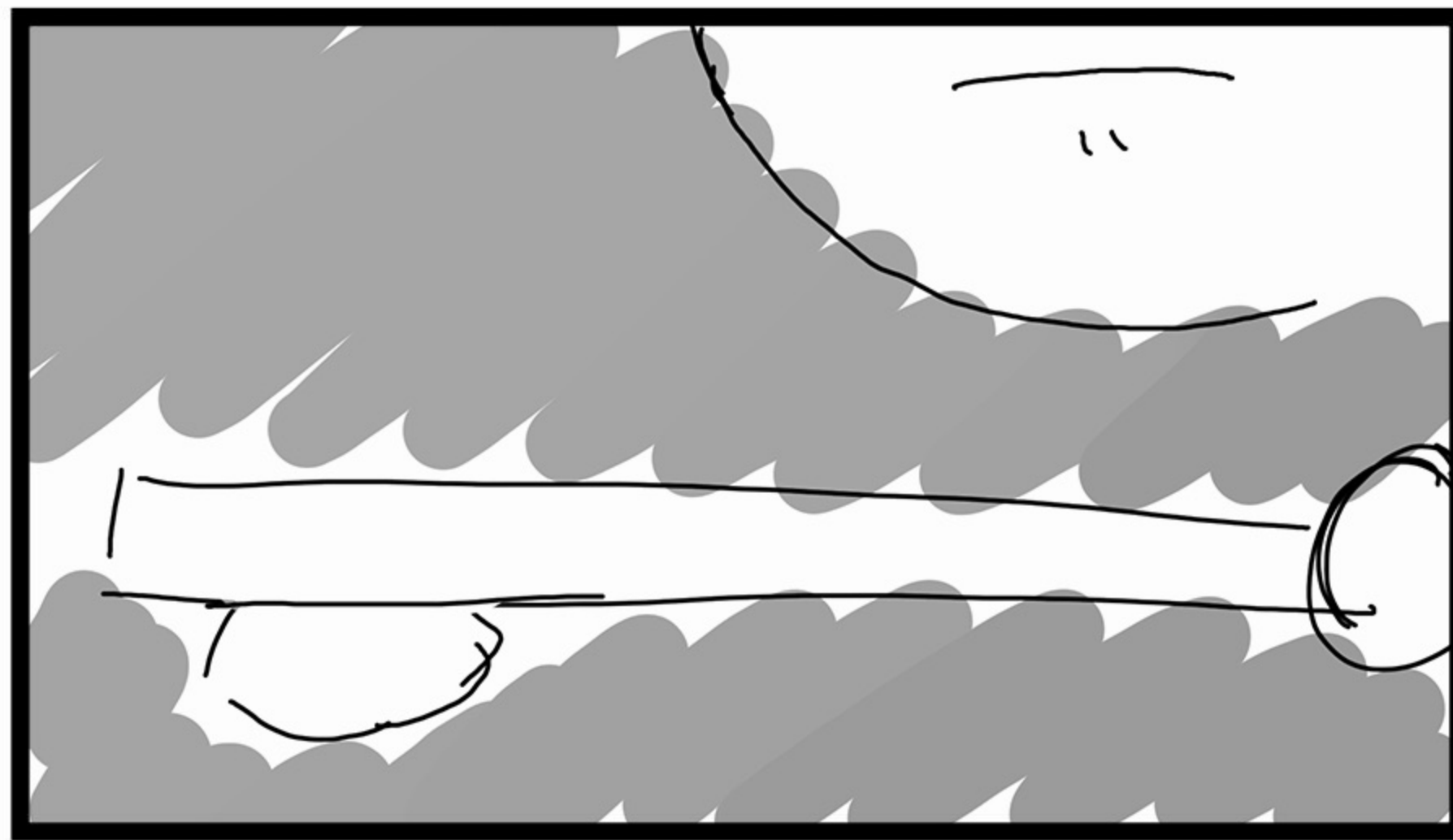
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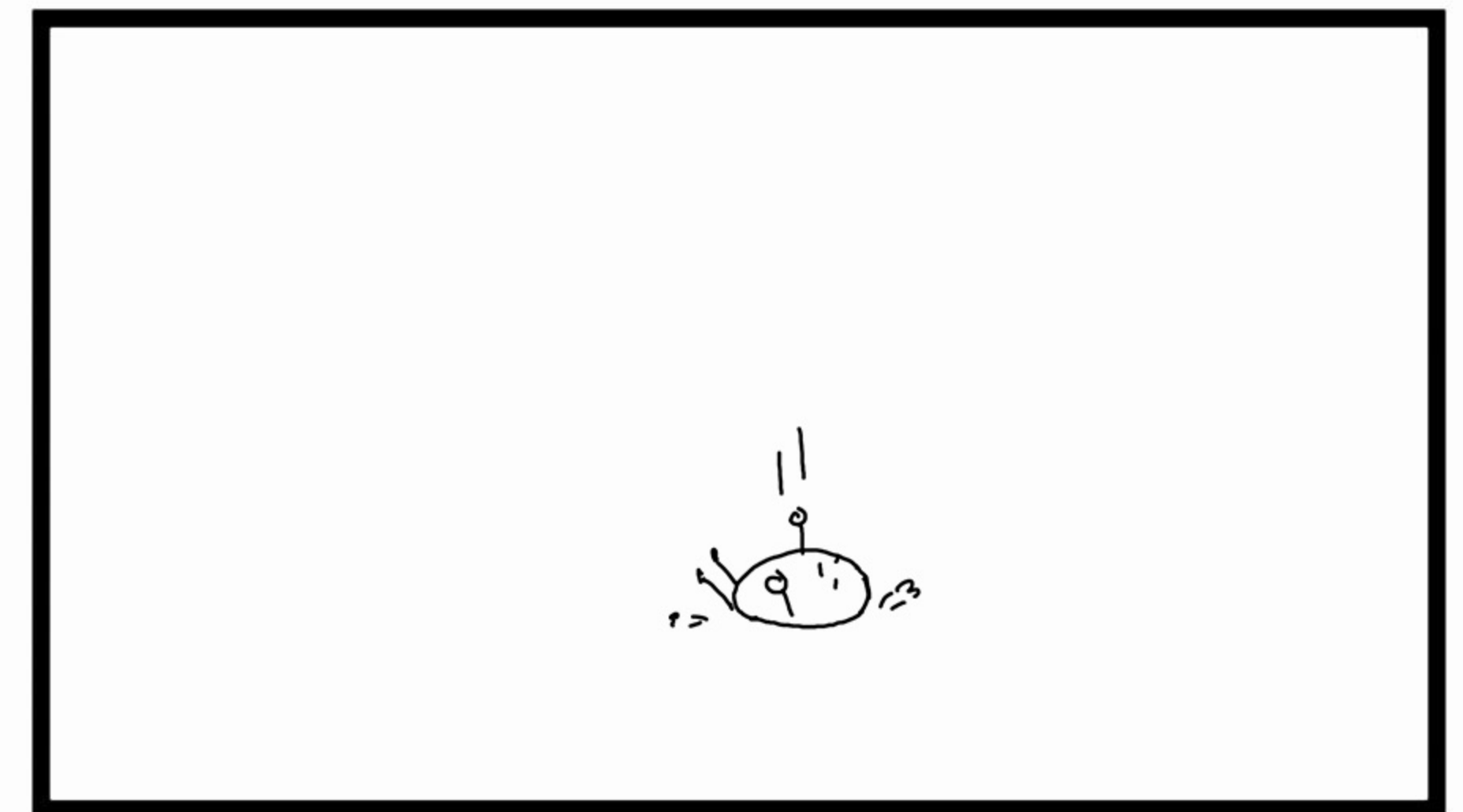
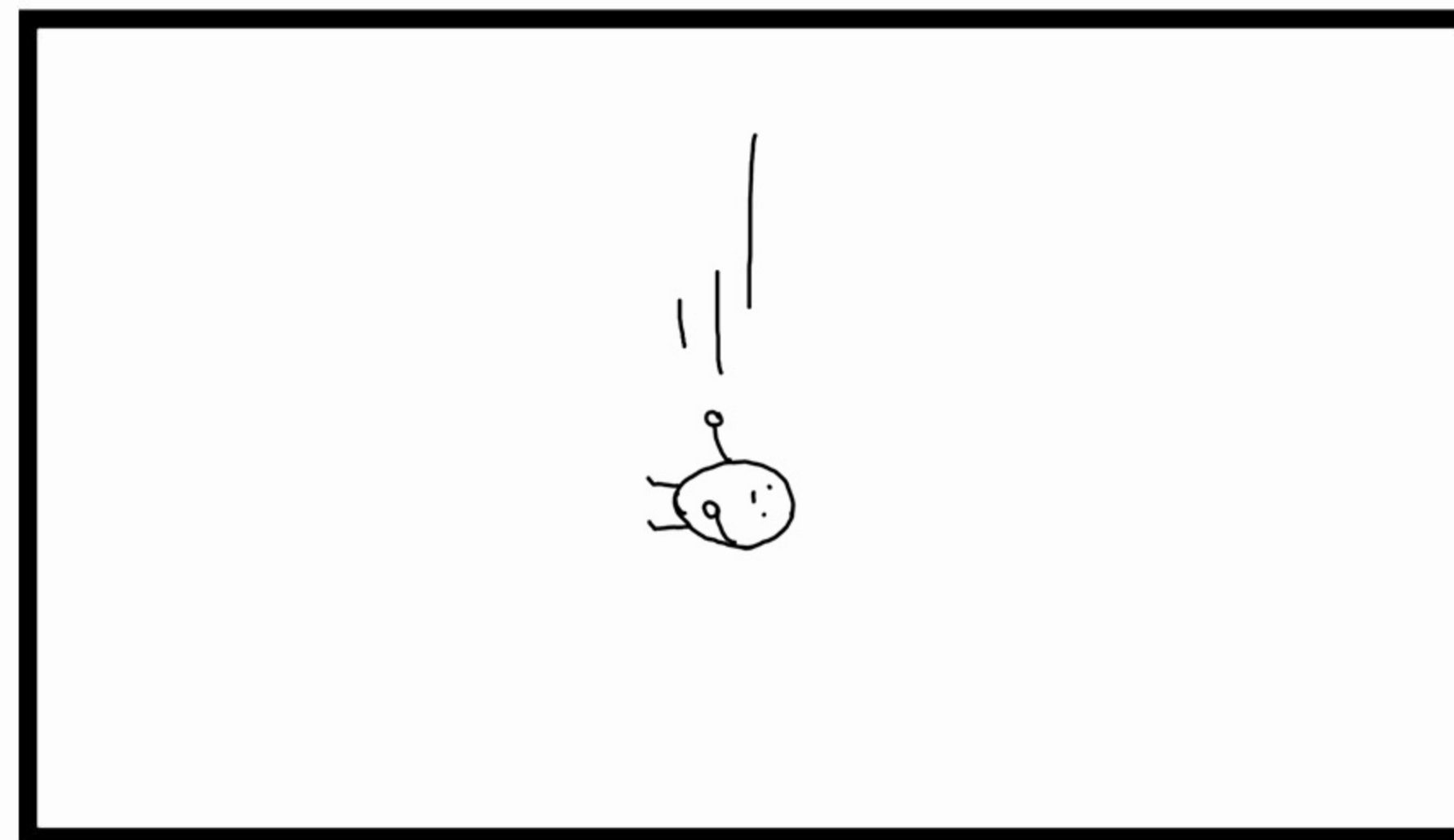
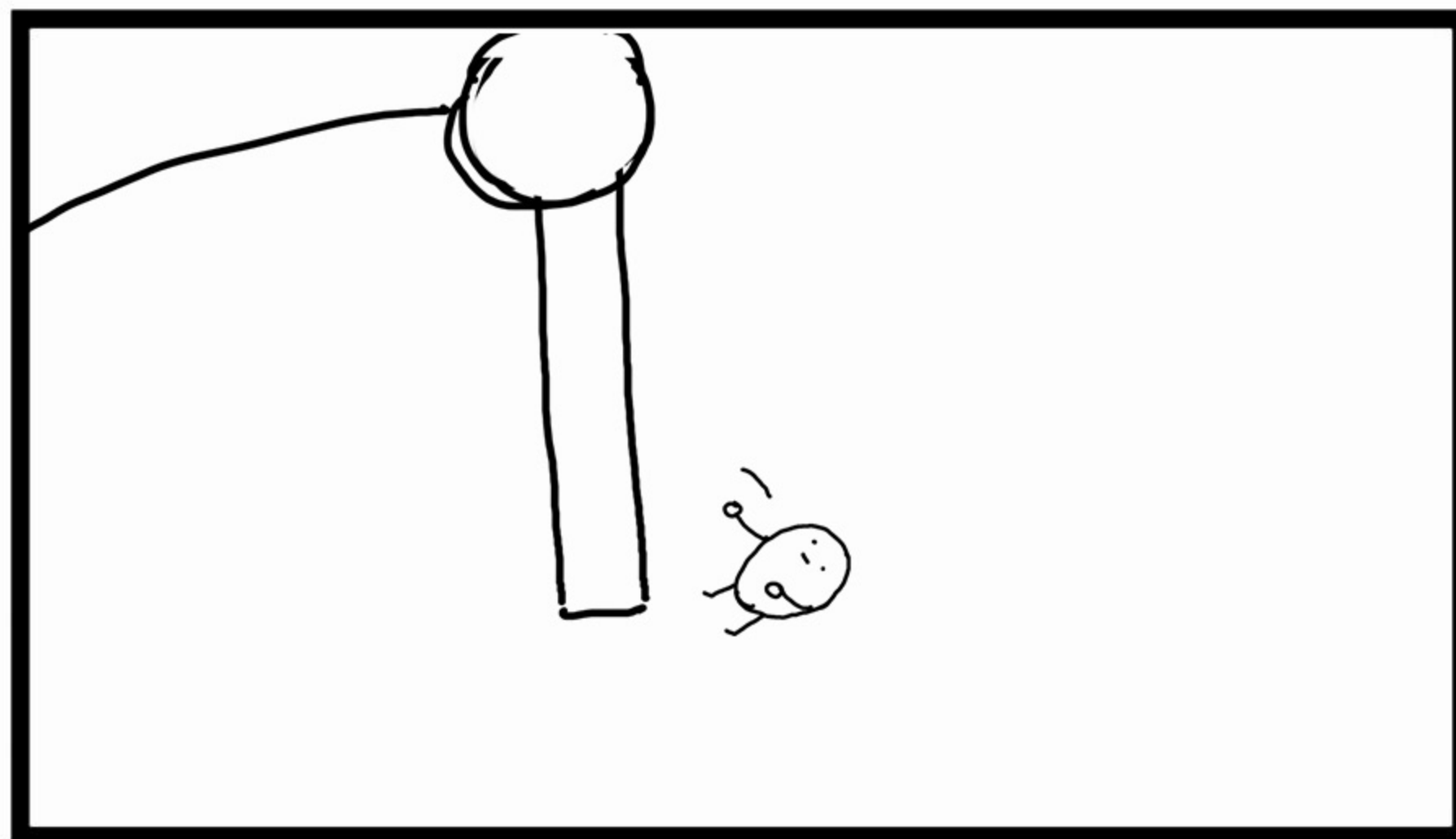
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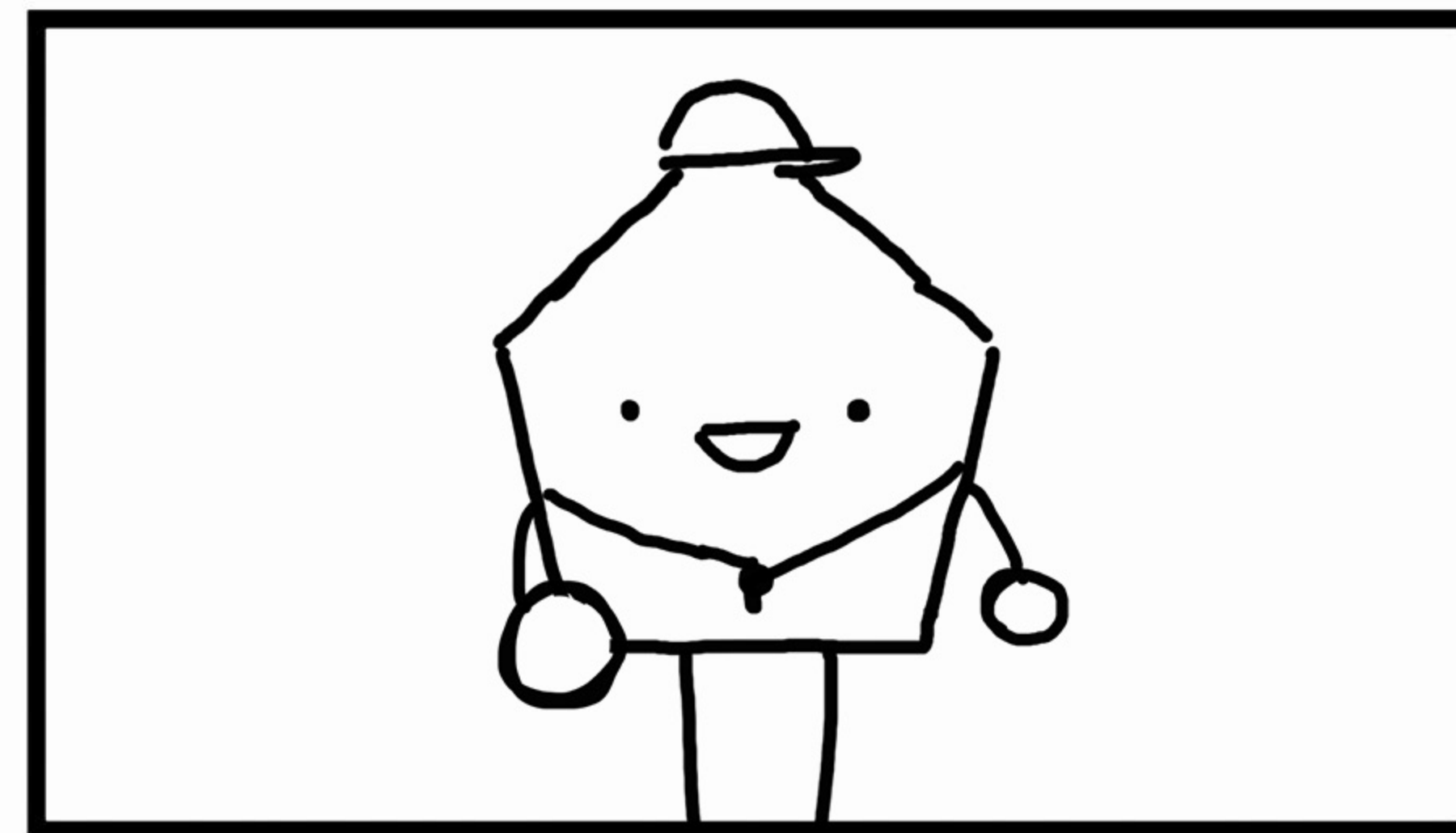
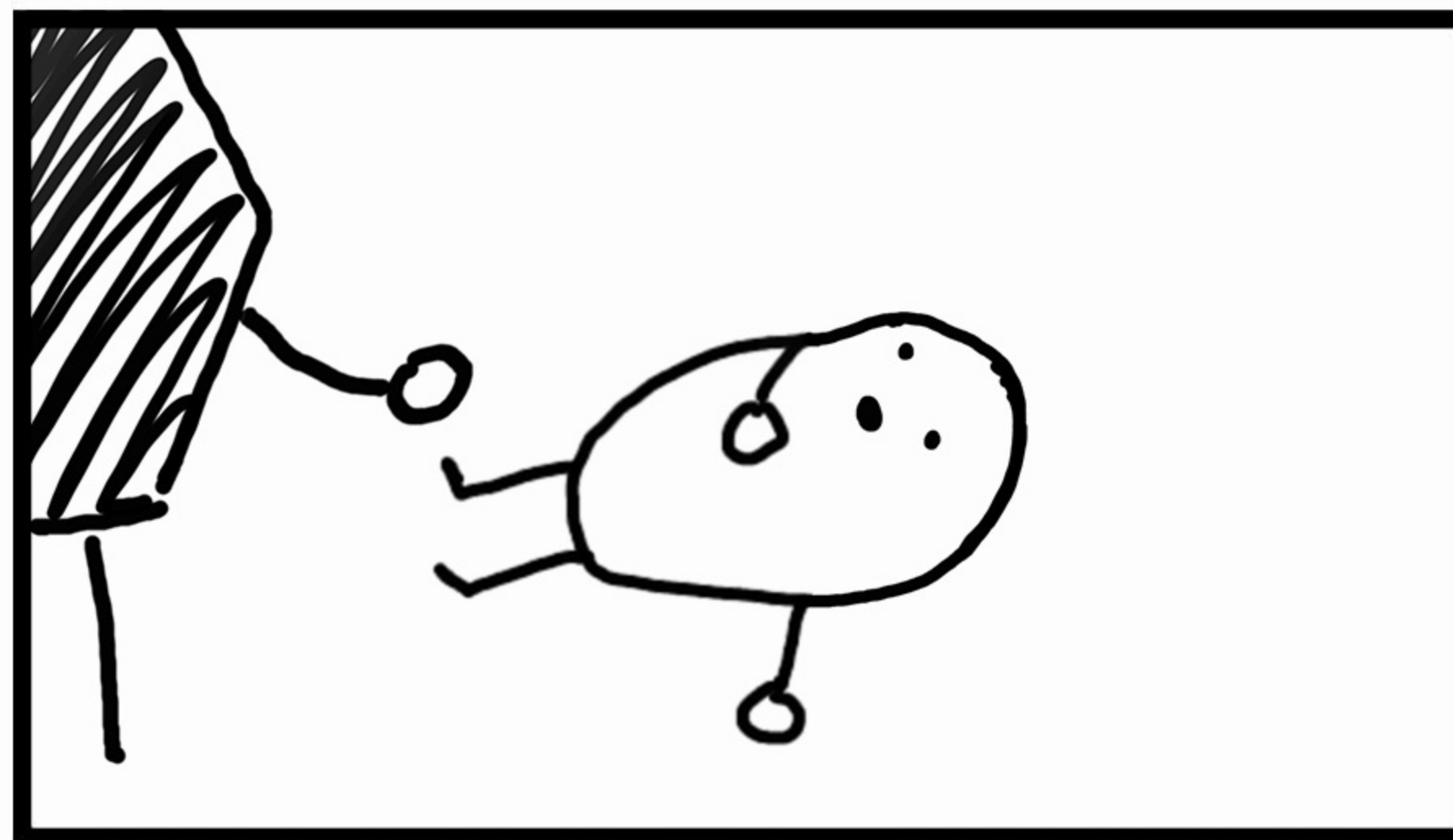
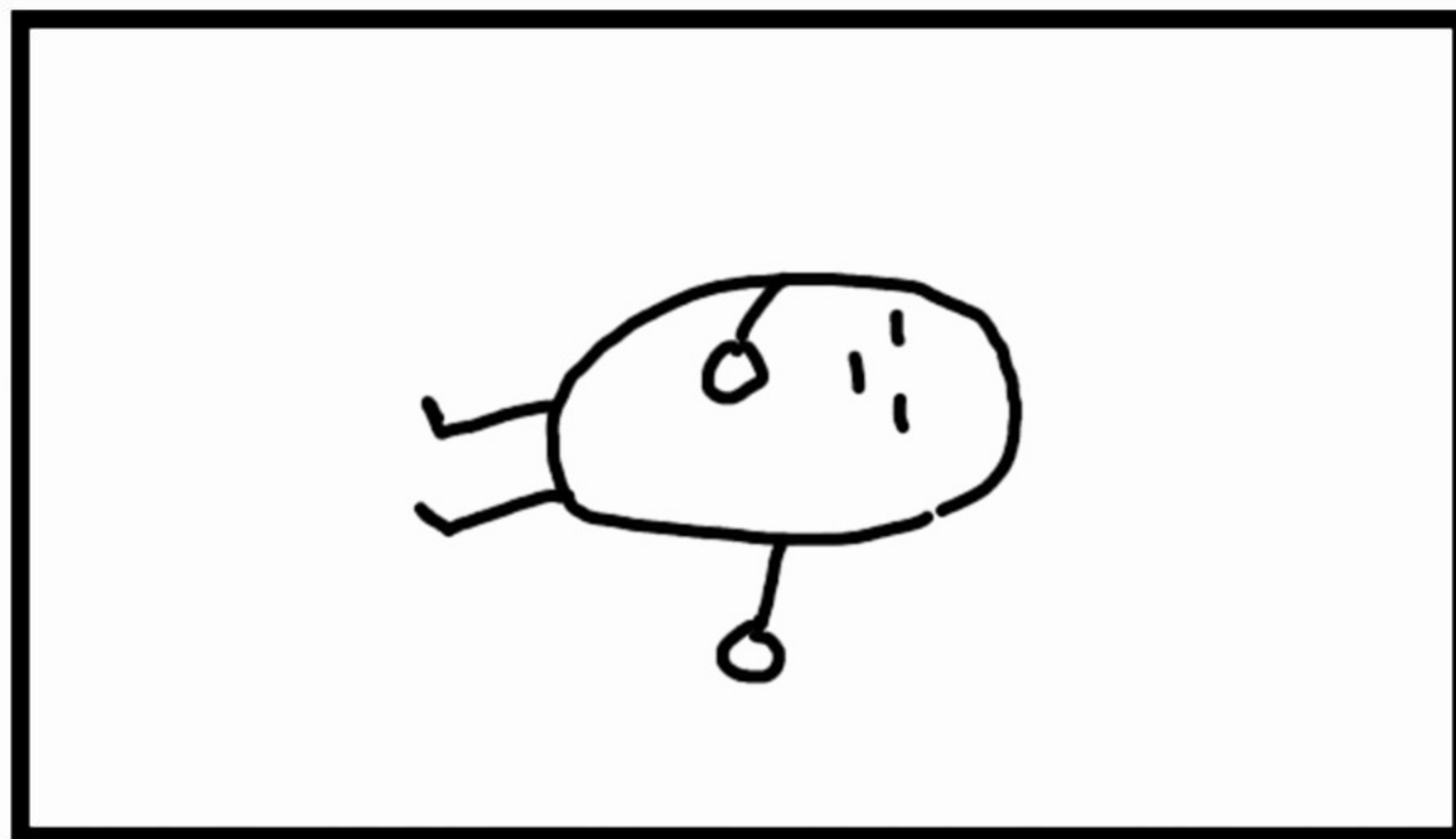
The teachers are really, really harsh in ballet.



It's kind of hard. Like with them, I never really lived up to their expectations.

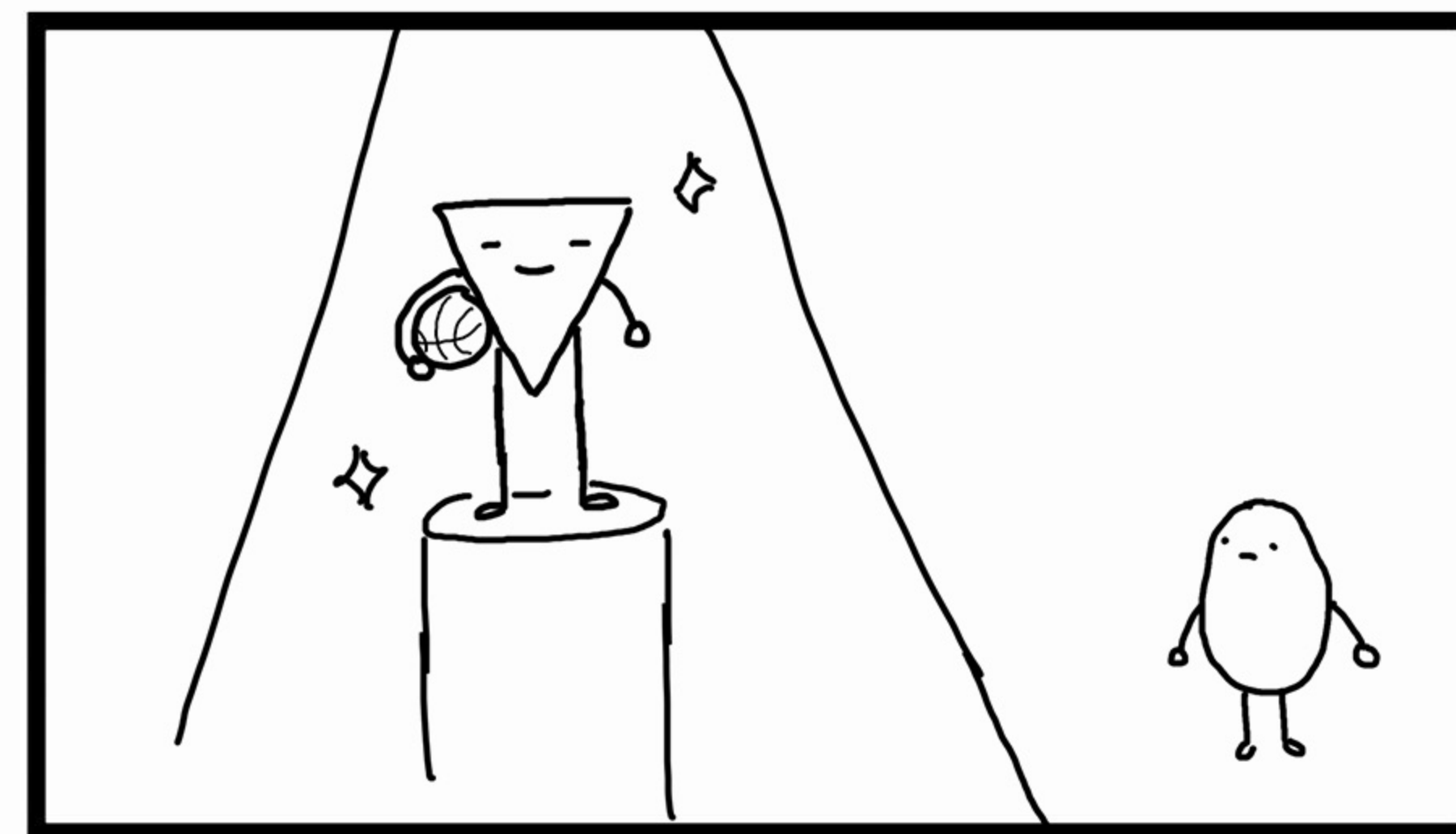
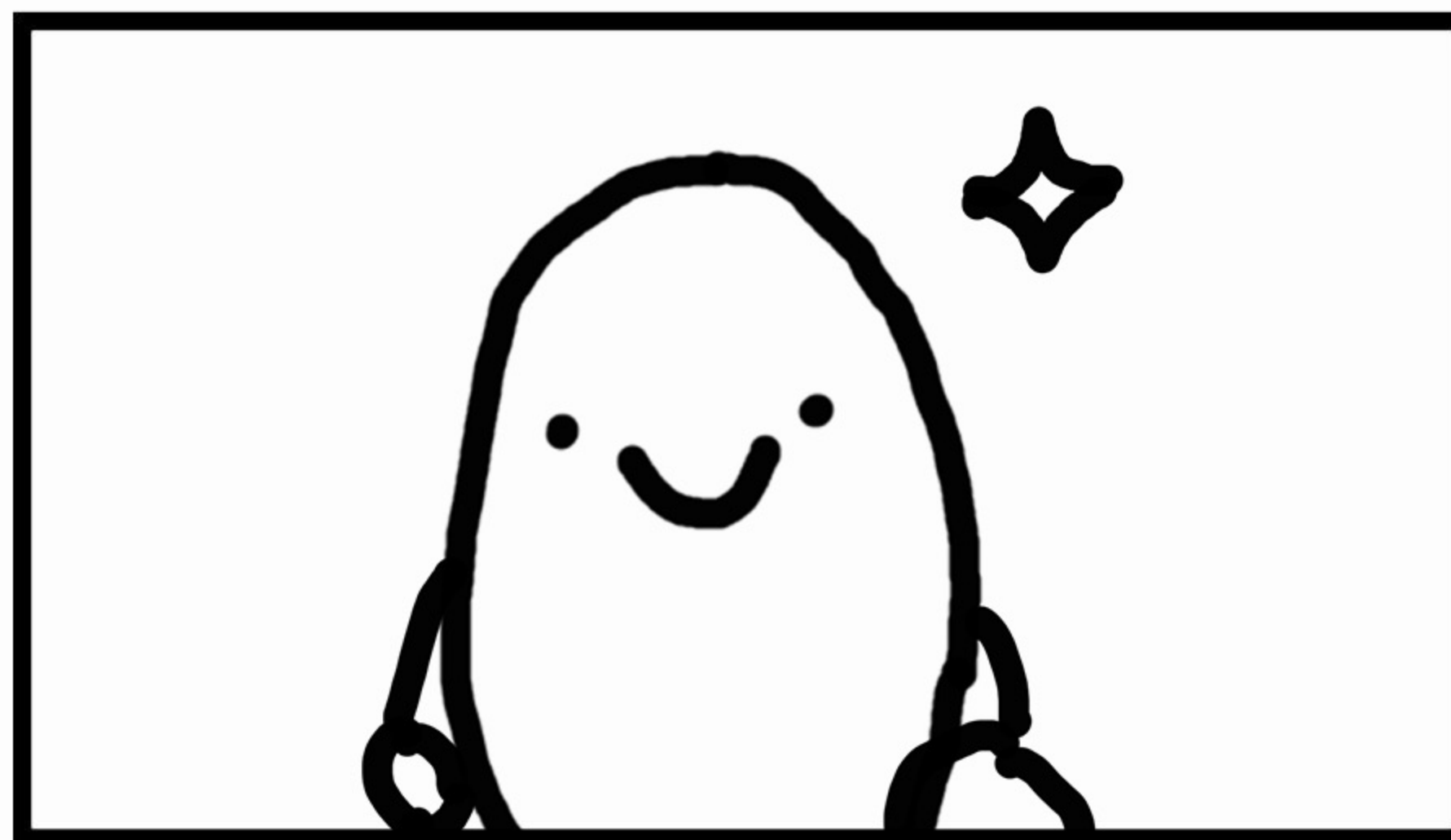
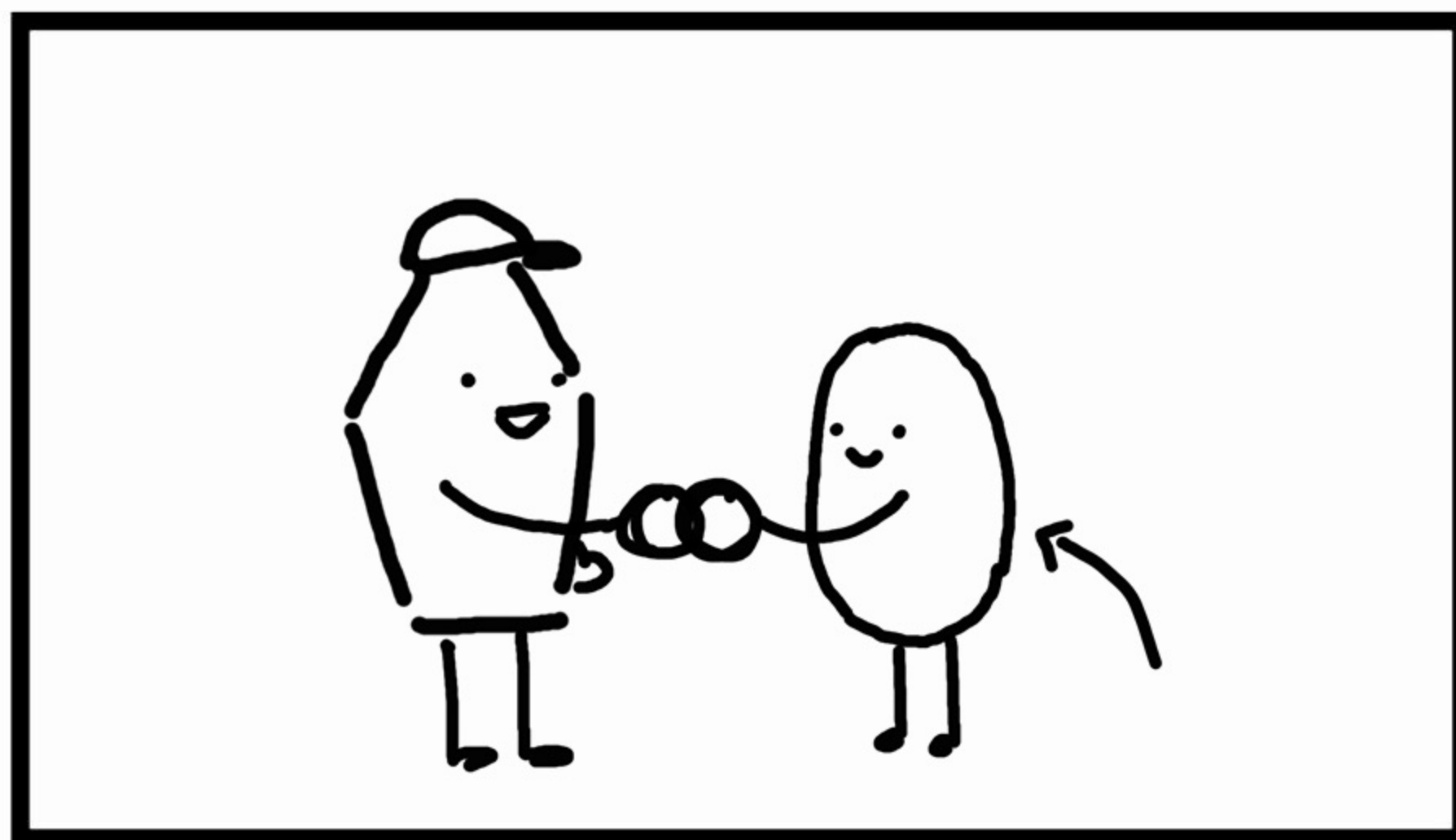


I still don't, and that's been one of the things that actually pulls down on my confidence.

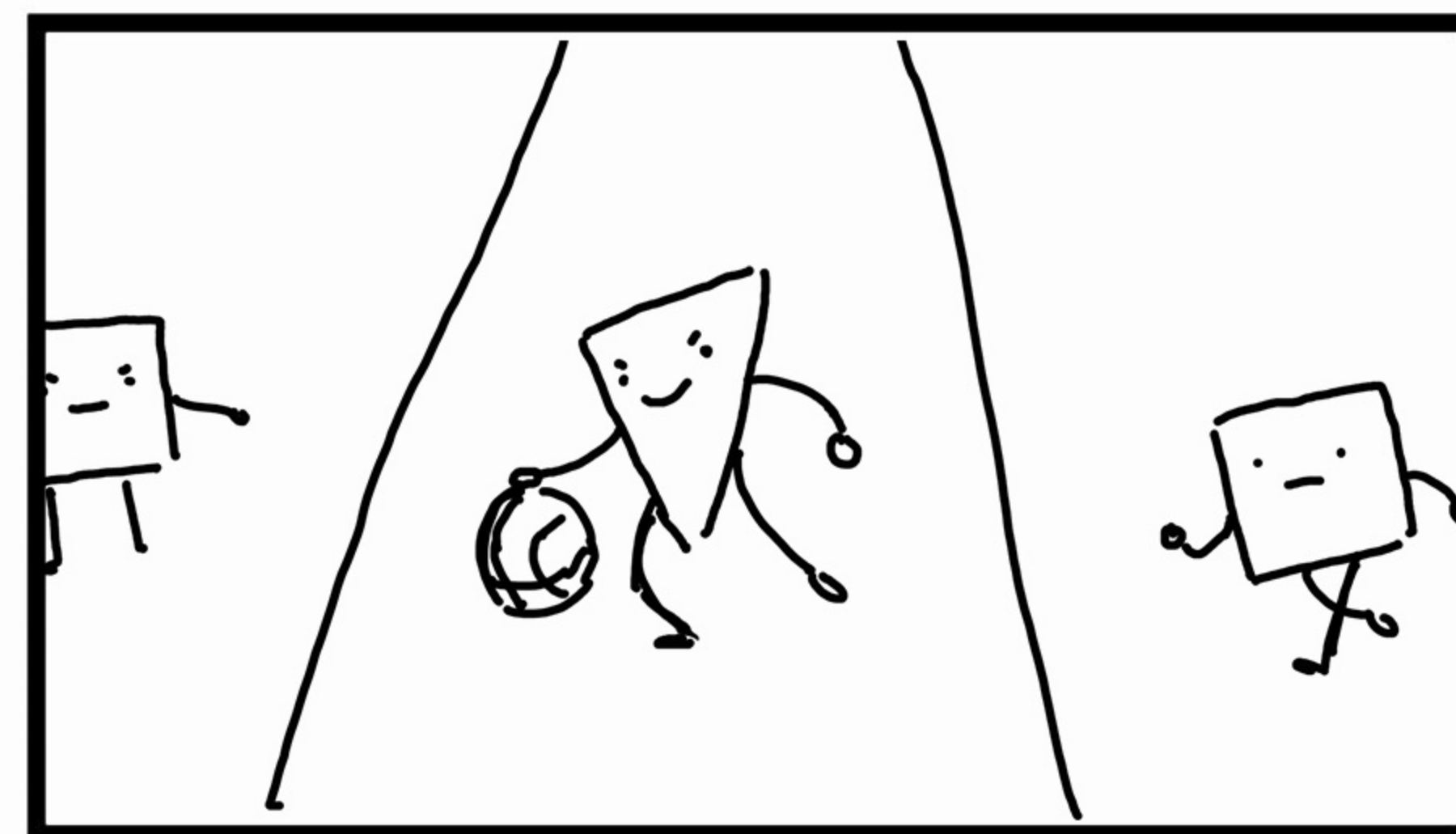
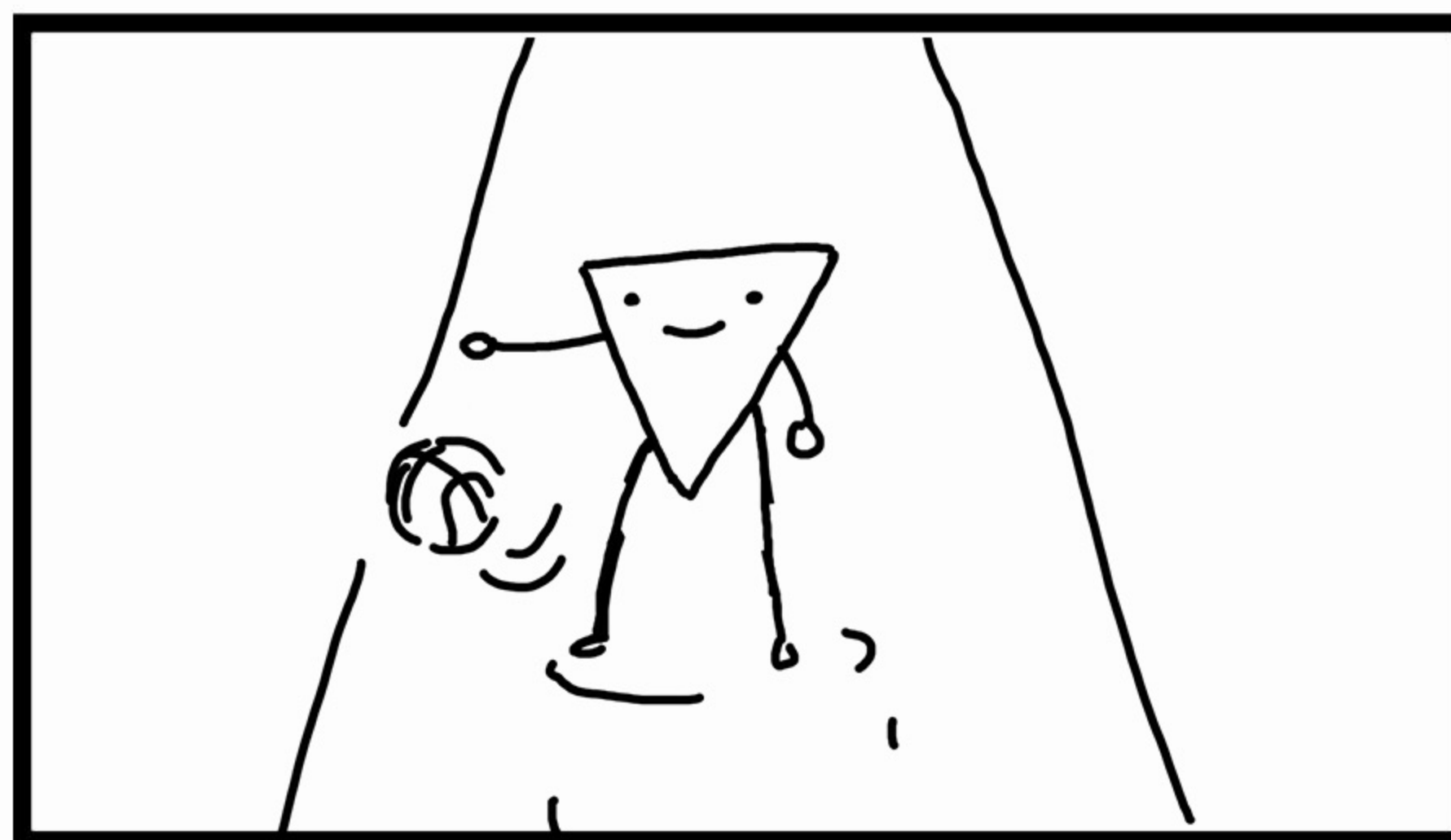
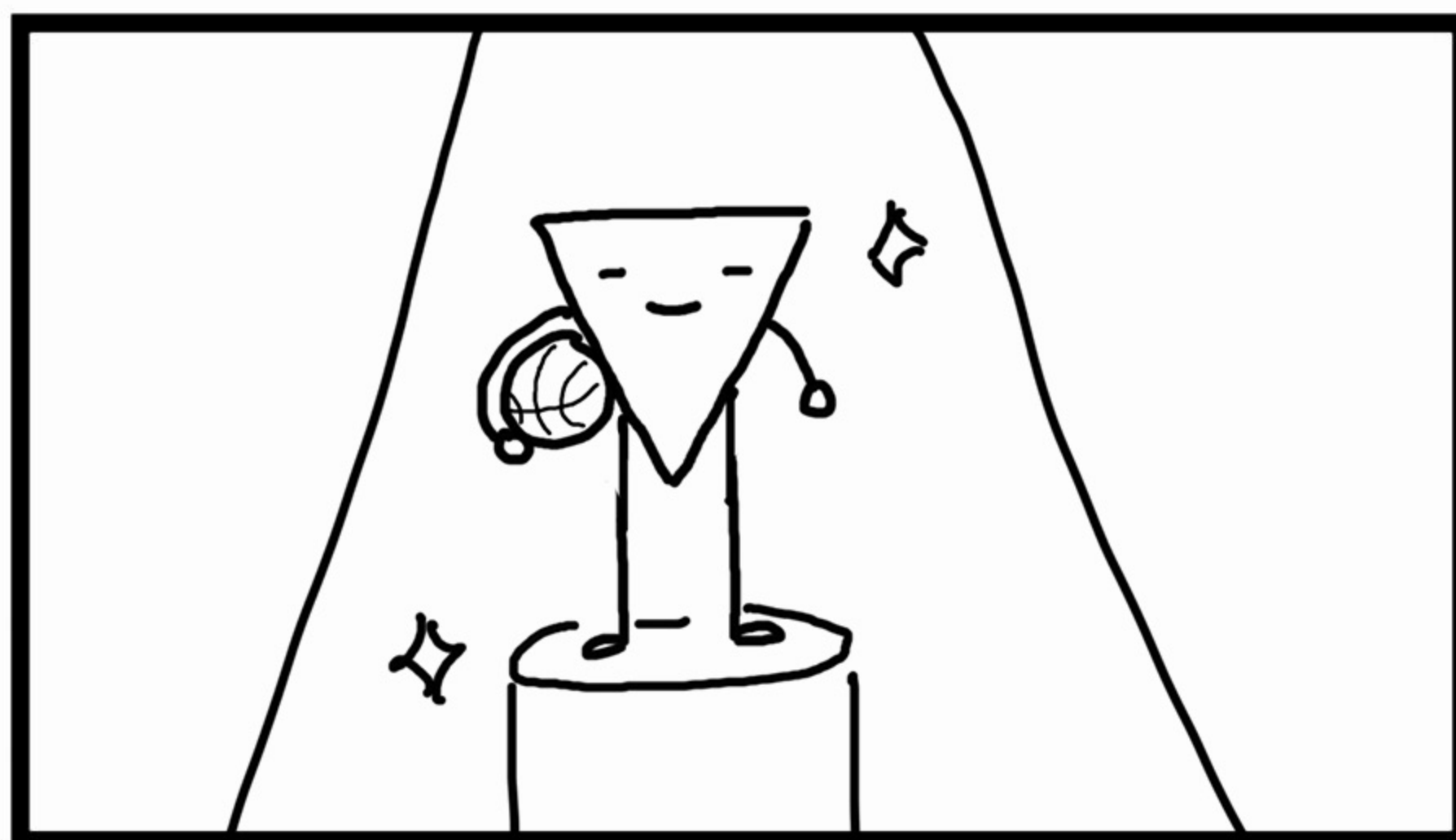


And whereas with cross-country, like the coaches are really supportive.

And I feel like, it's kind of like, it has the opposite effect.



Like they kind of build me up and that kind of confidence that I got from cross country helped me more like, I guess, be confident in myself in ballet. like, not sure that I was a person who could, like, make such big improvements.

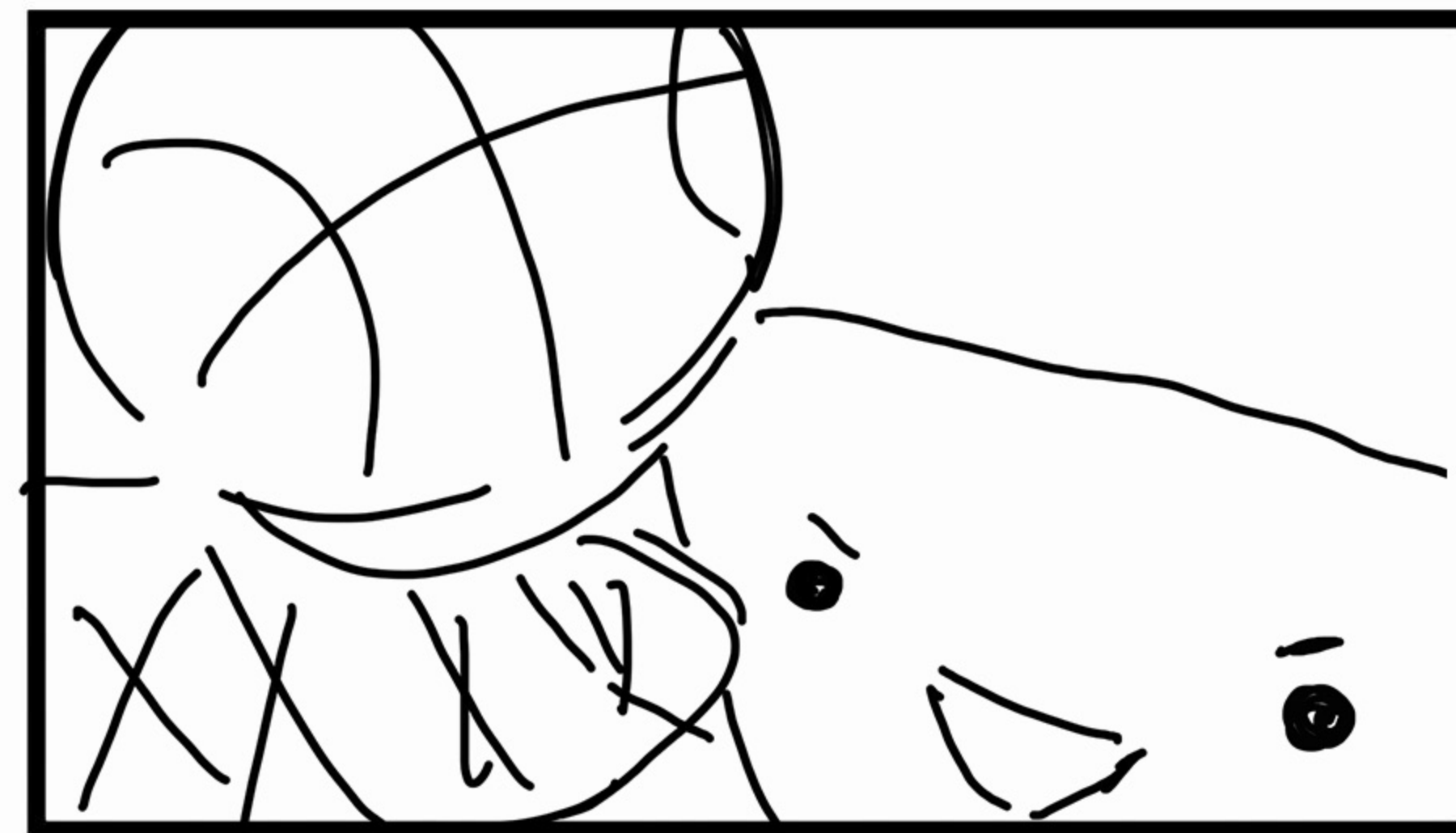
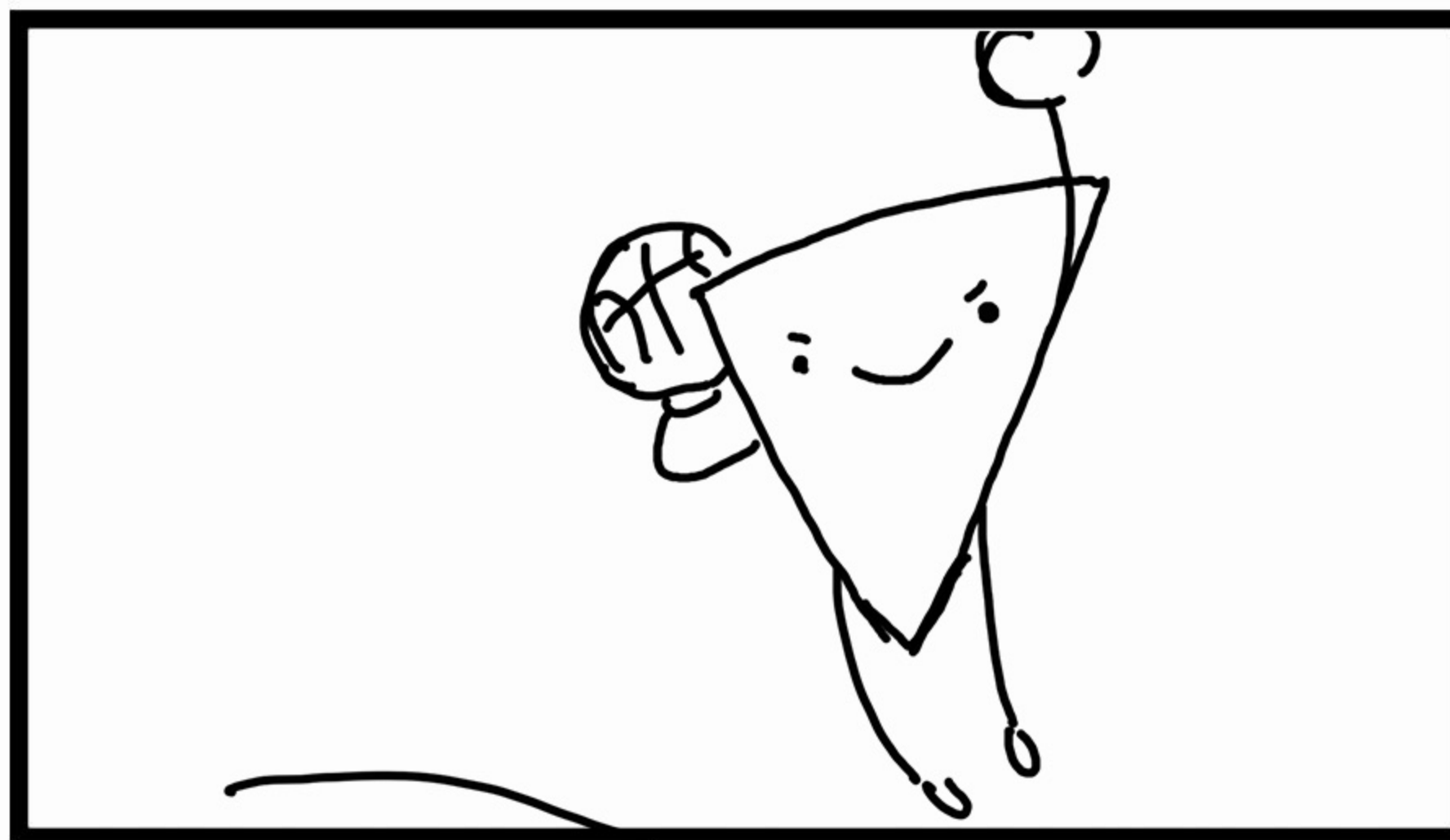
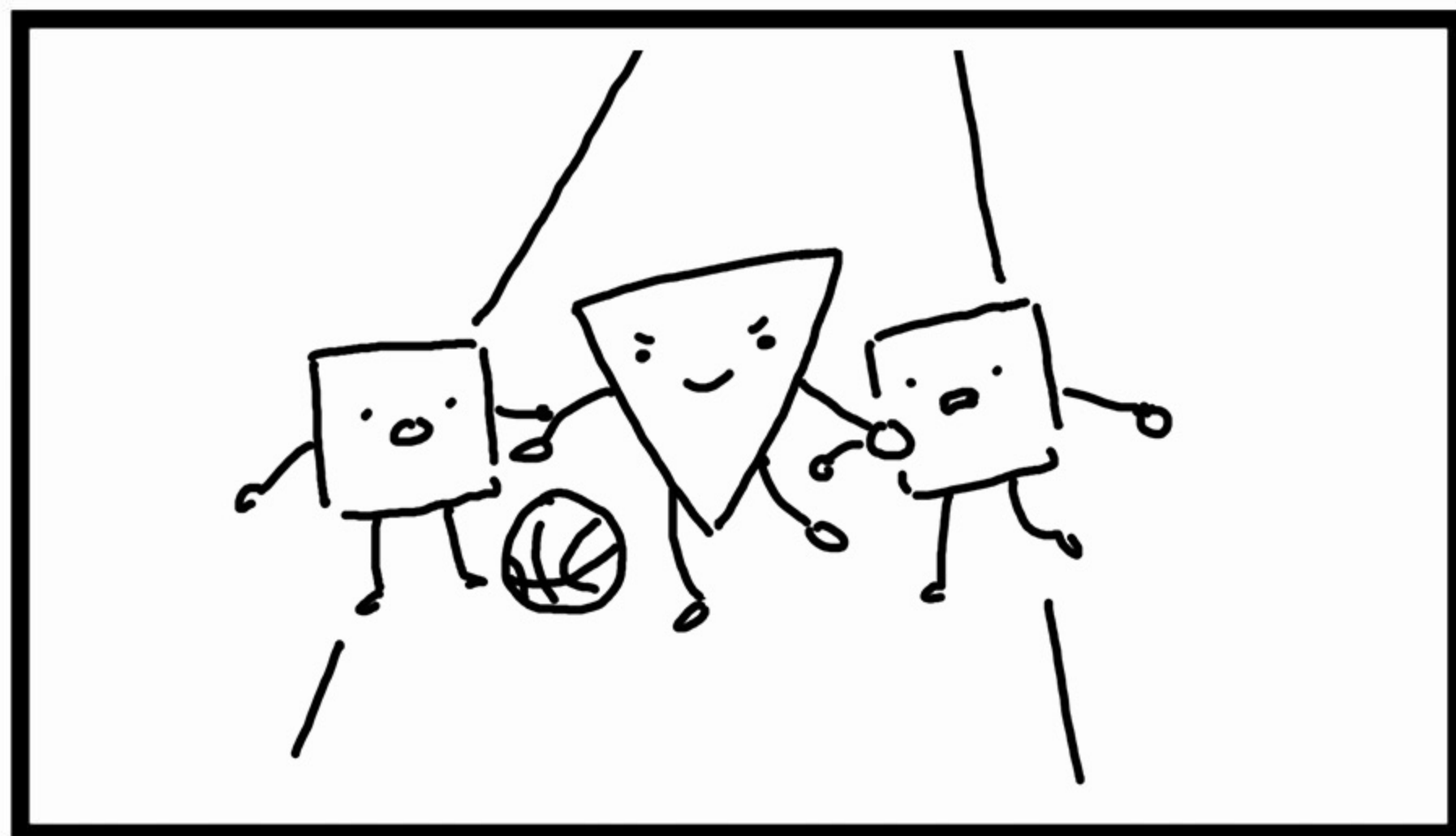


I always just assumed that people were either born with talent or not born with talent,

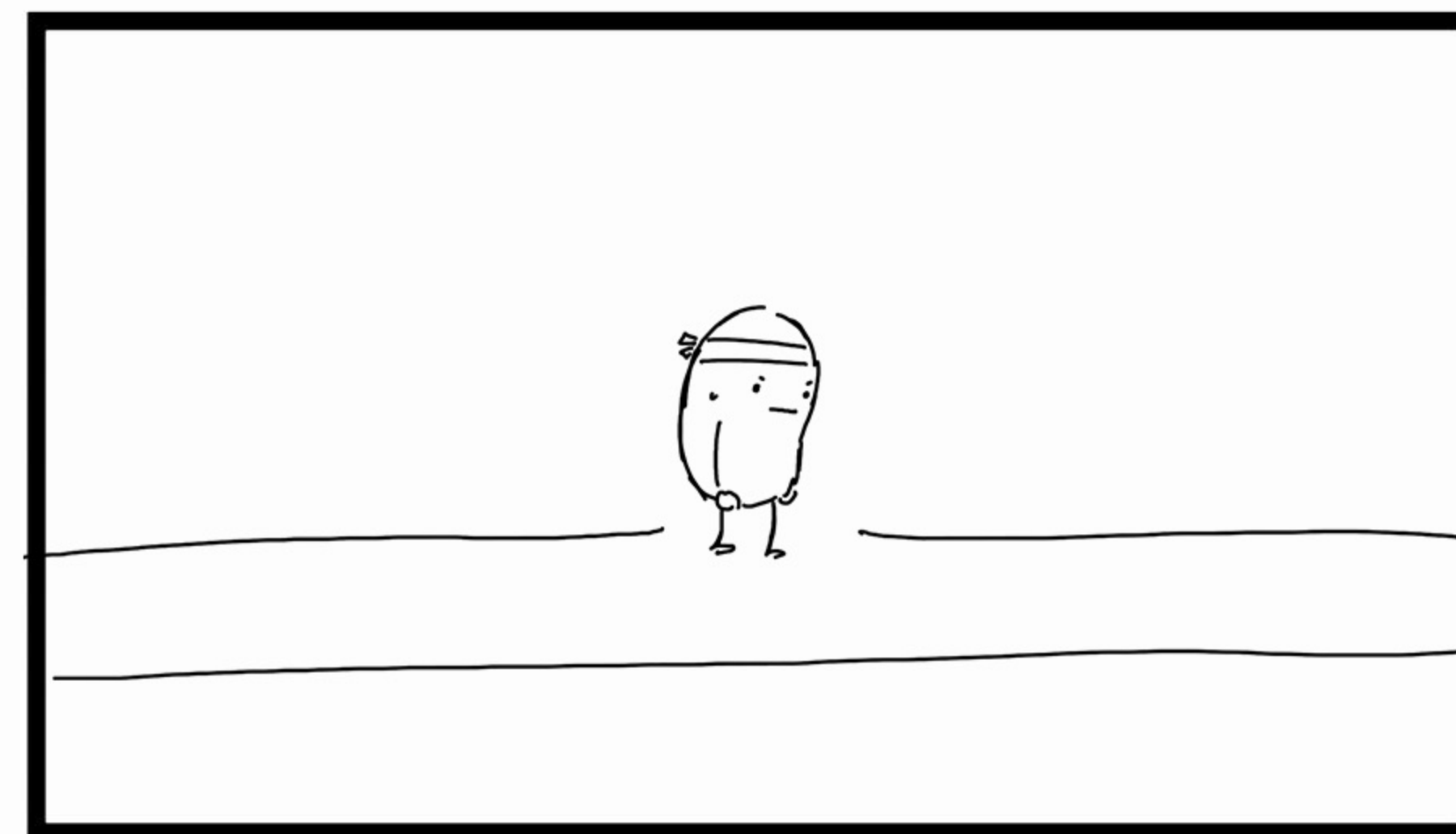
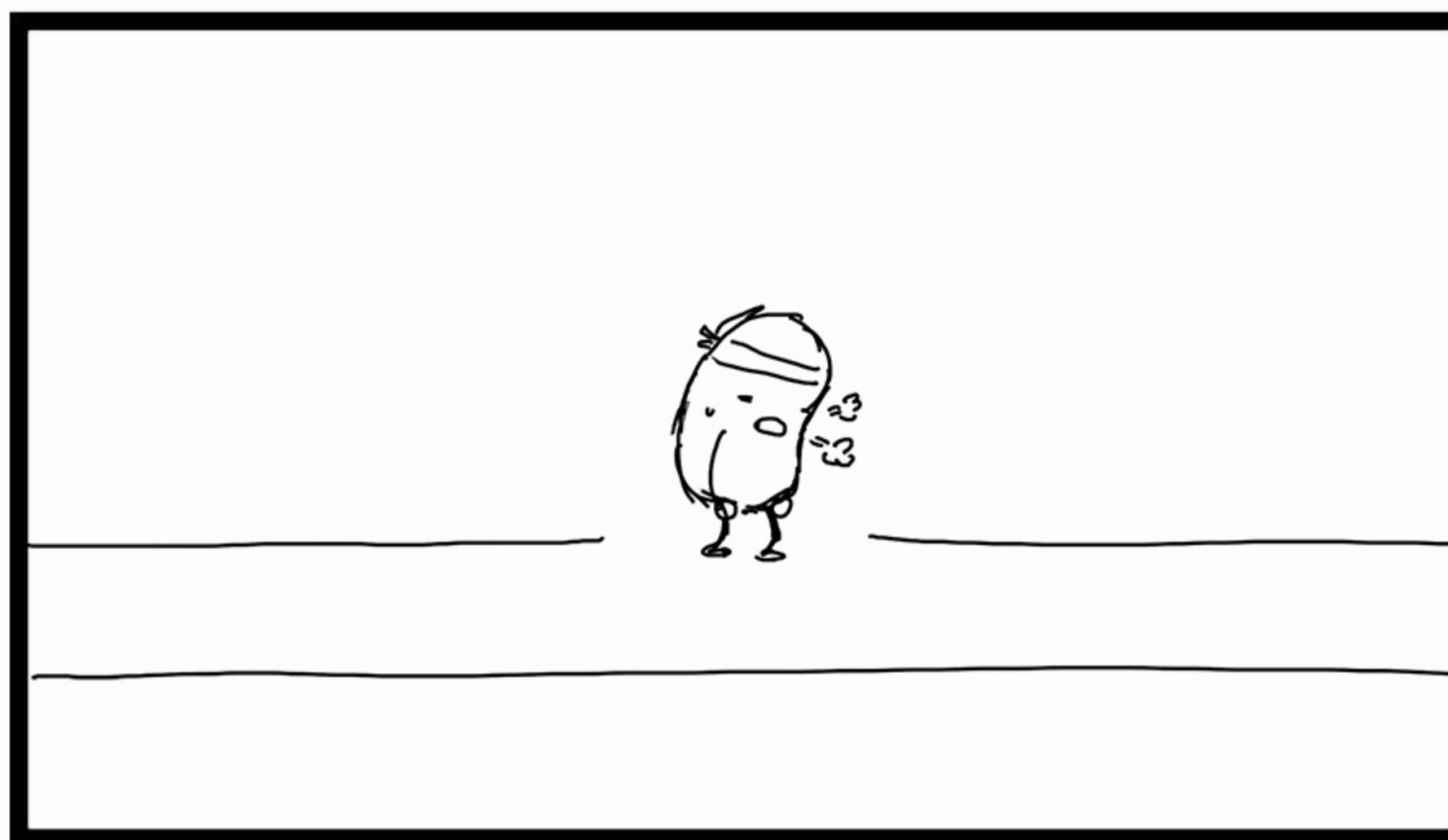
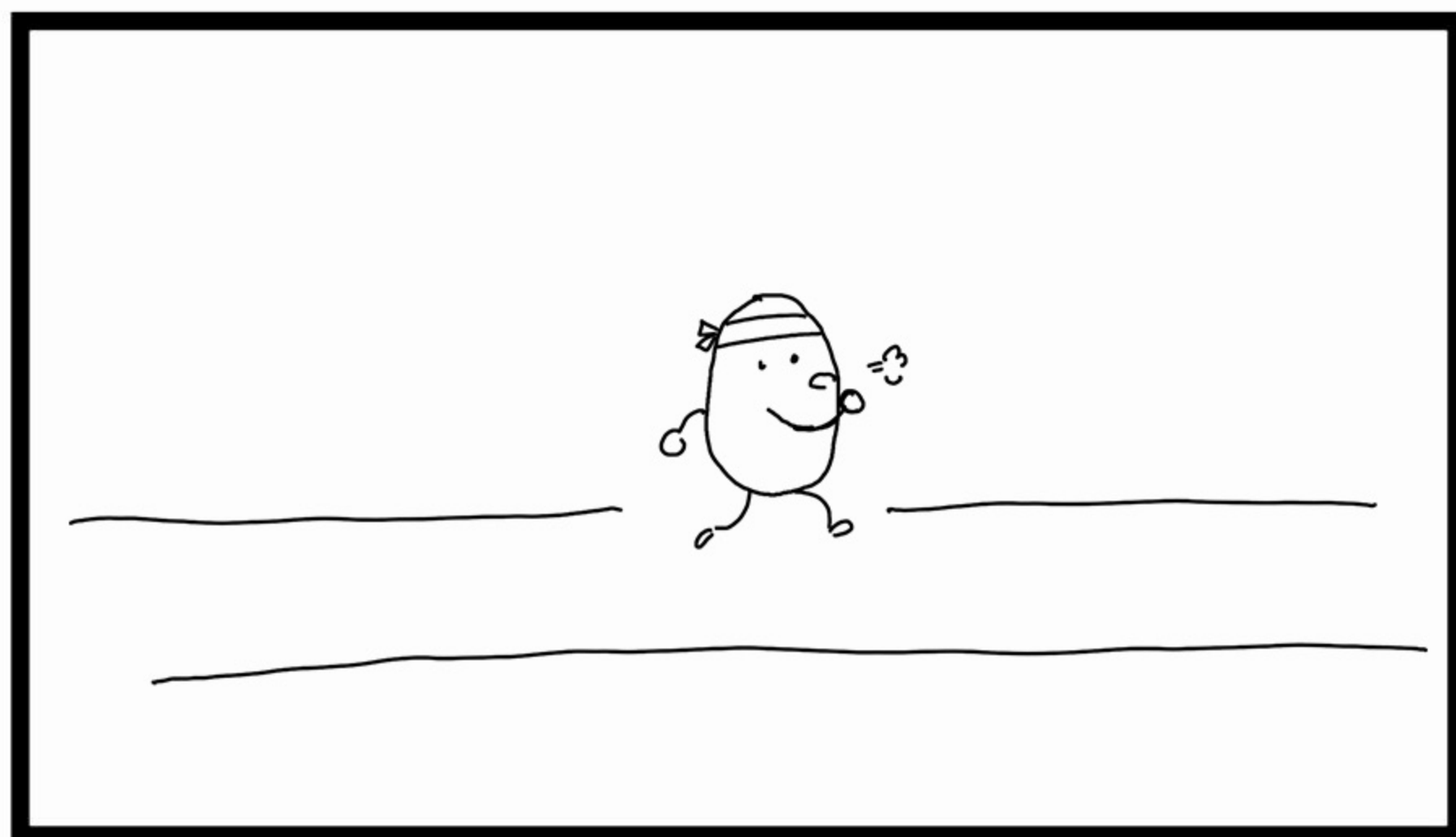
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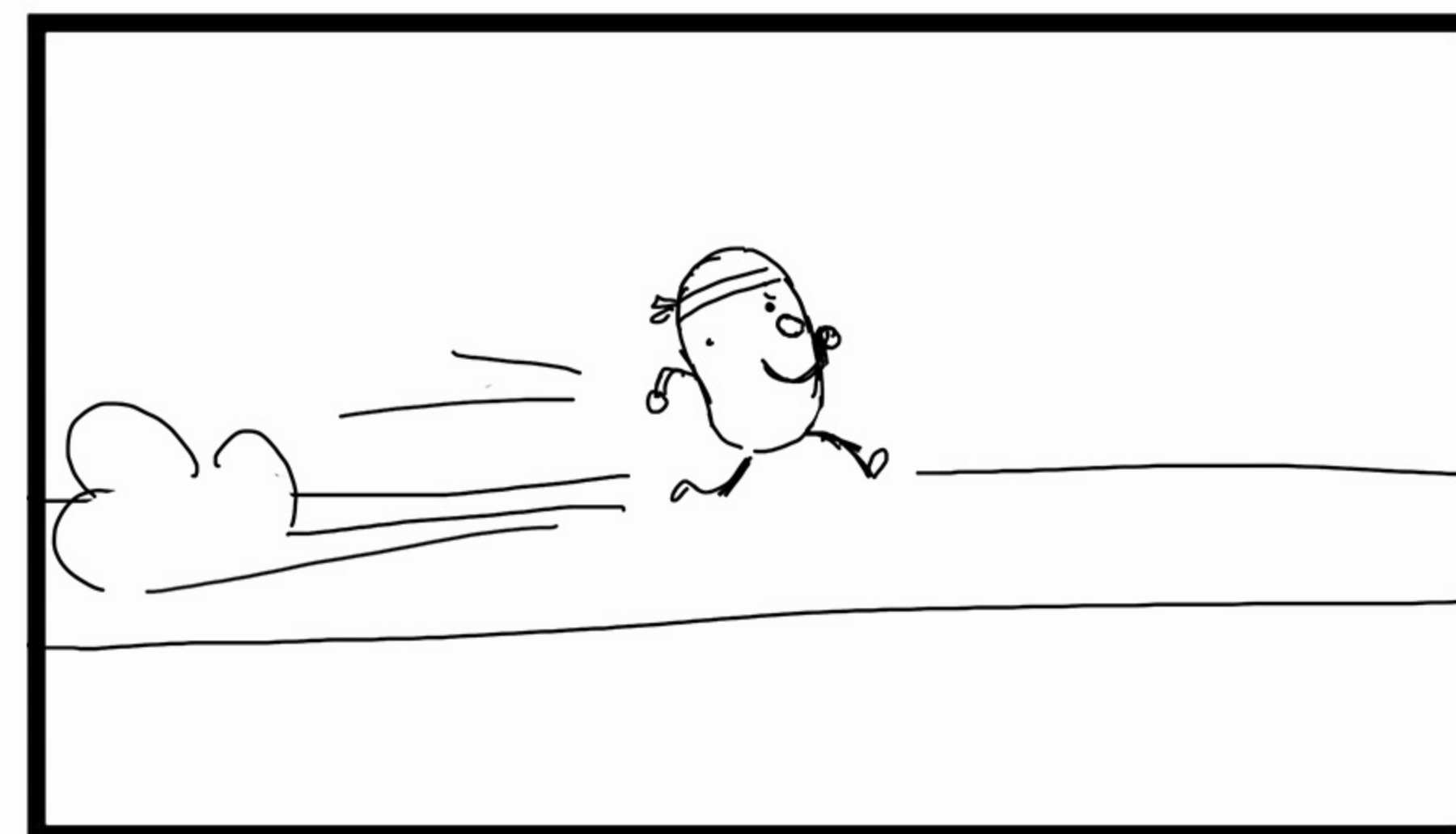
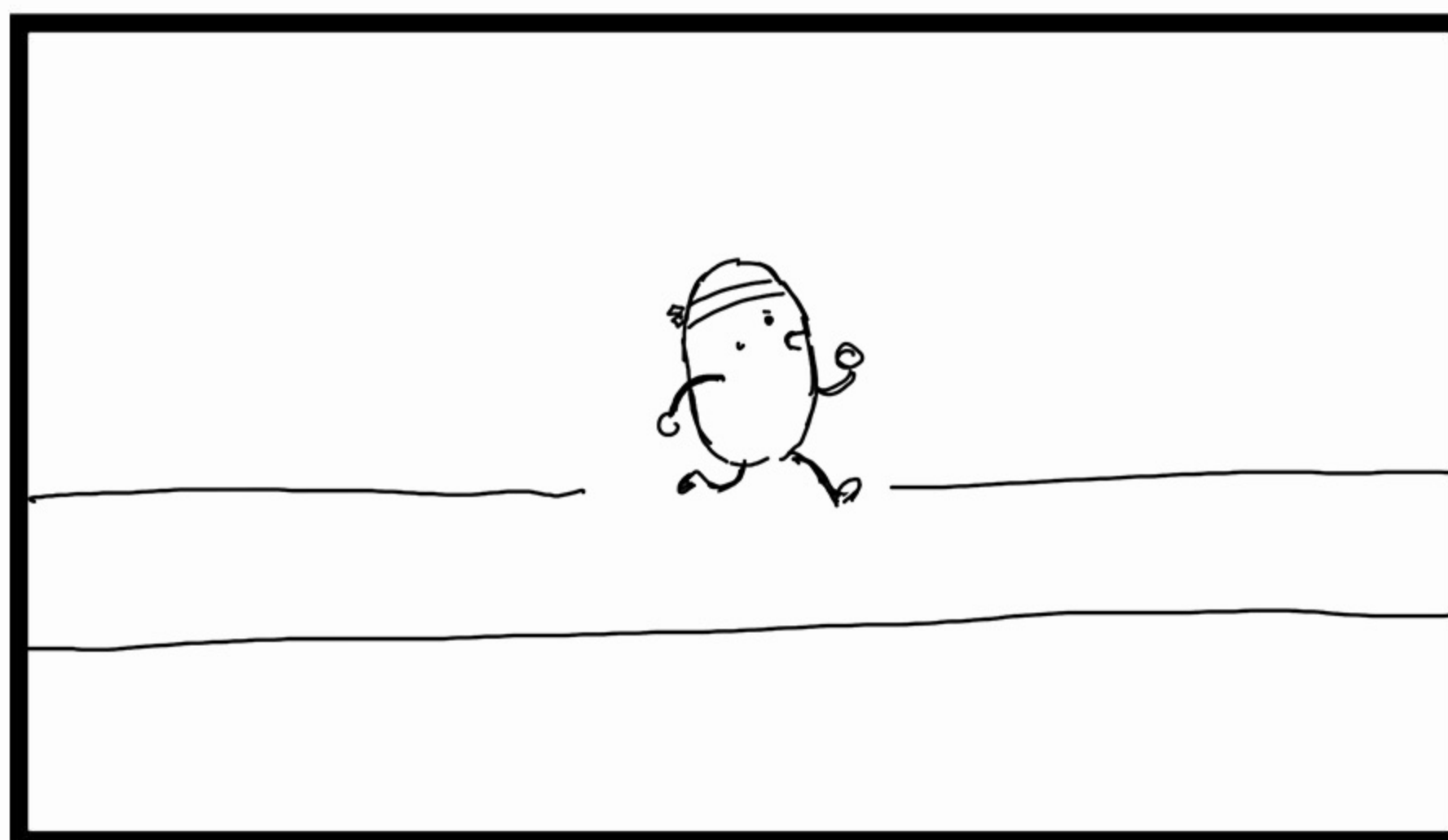
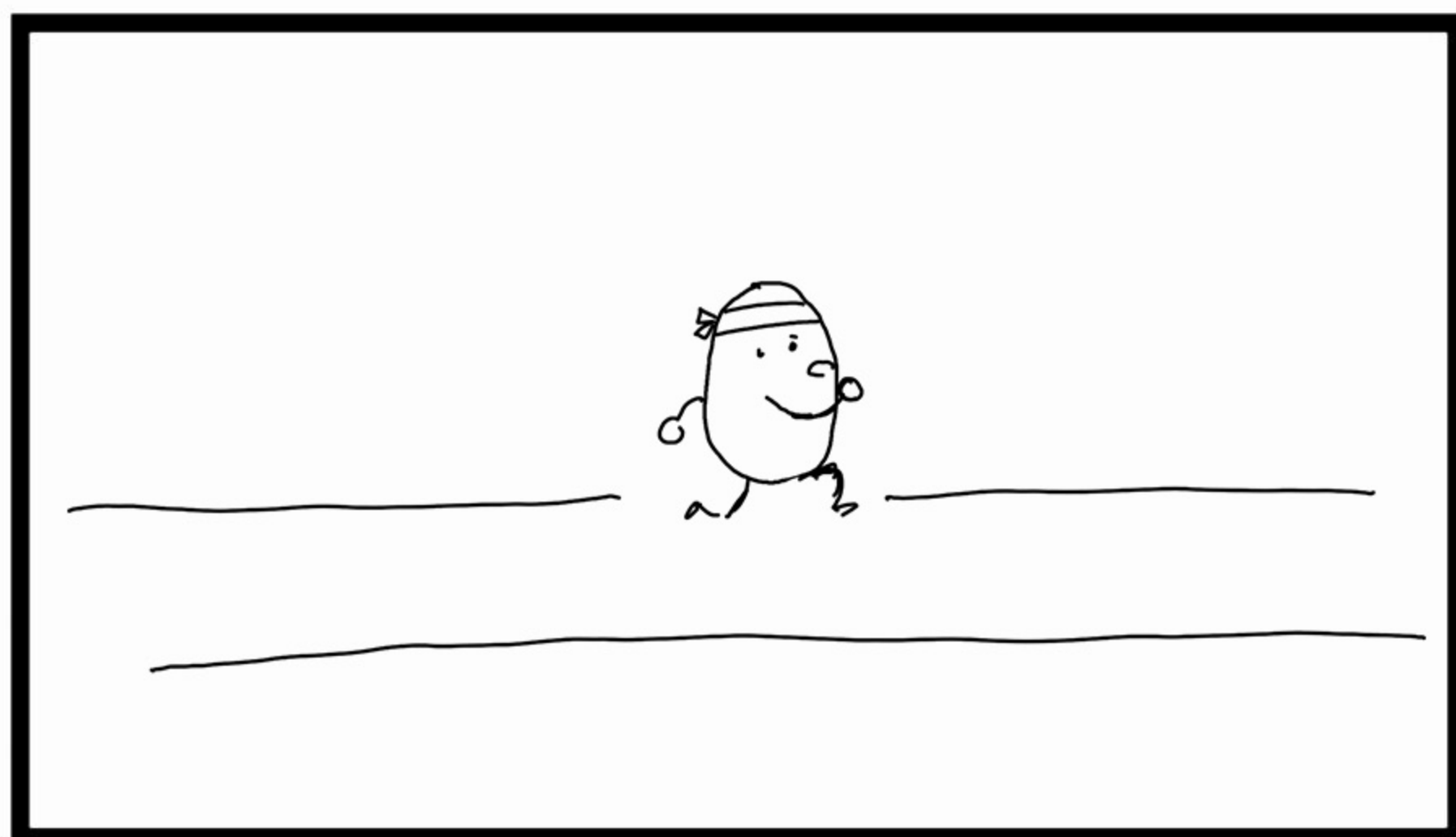
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and depending on how much talent you had in a given area, that would define how you would succeed in it.



But for cross-country, like even though I started like everybody else, like barely even being able to run like a mile, going at a really slow pace.

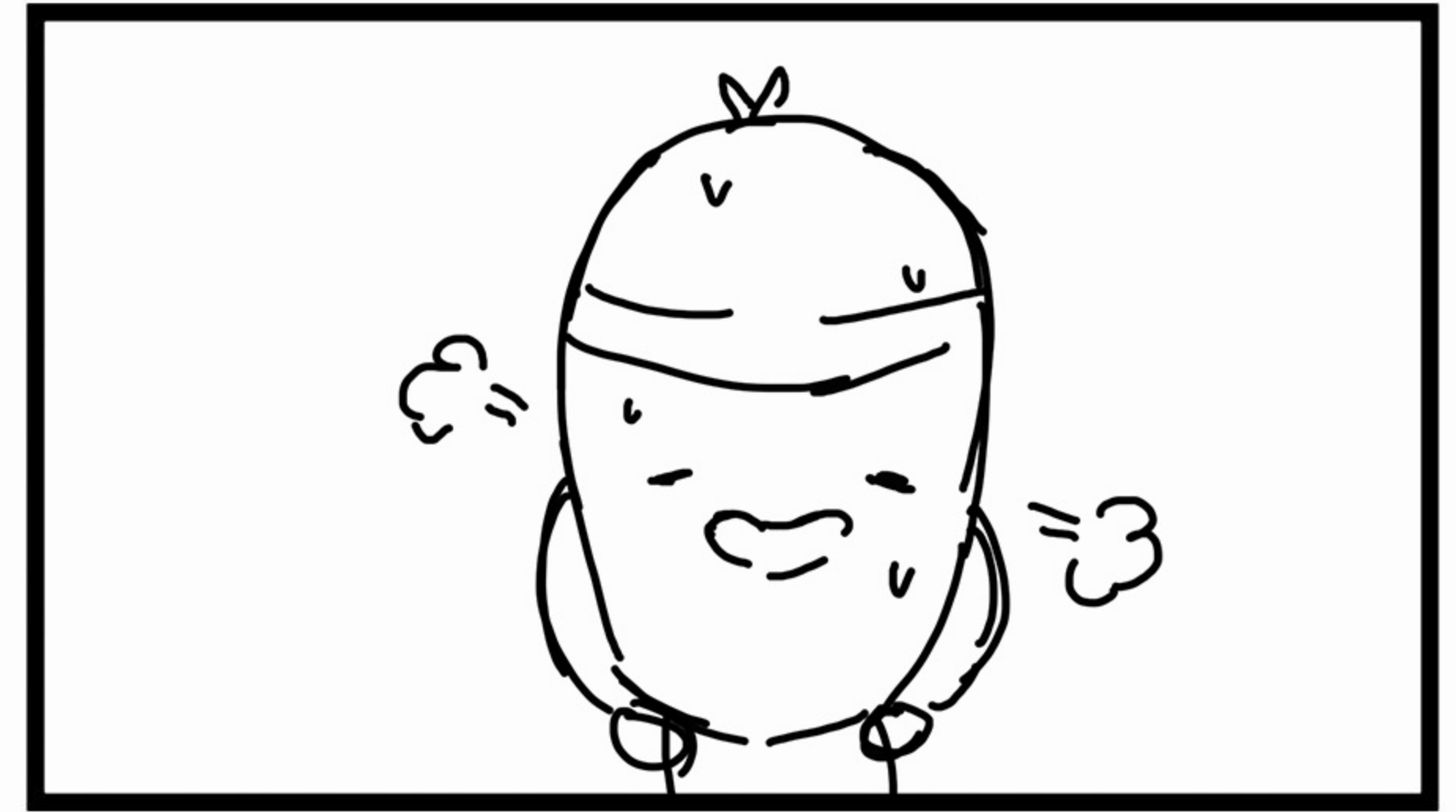
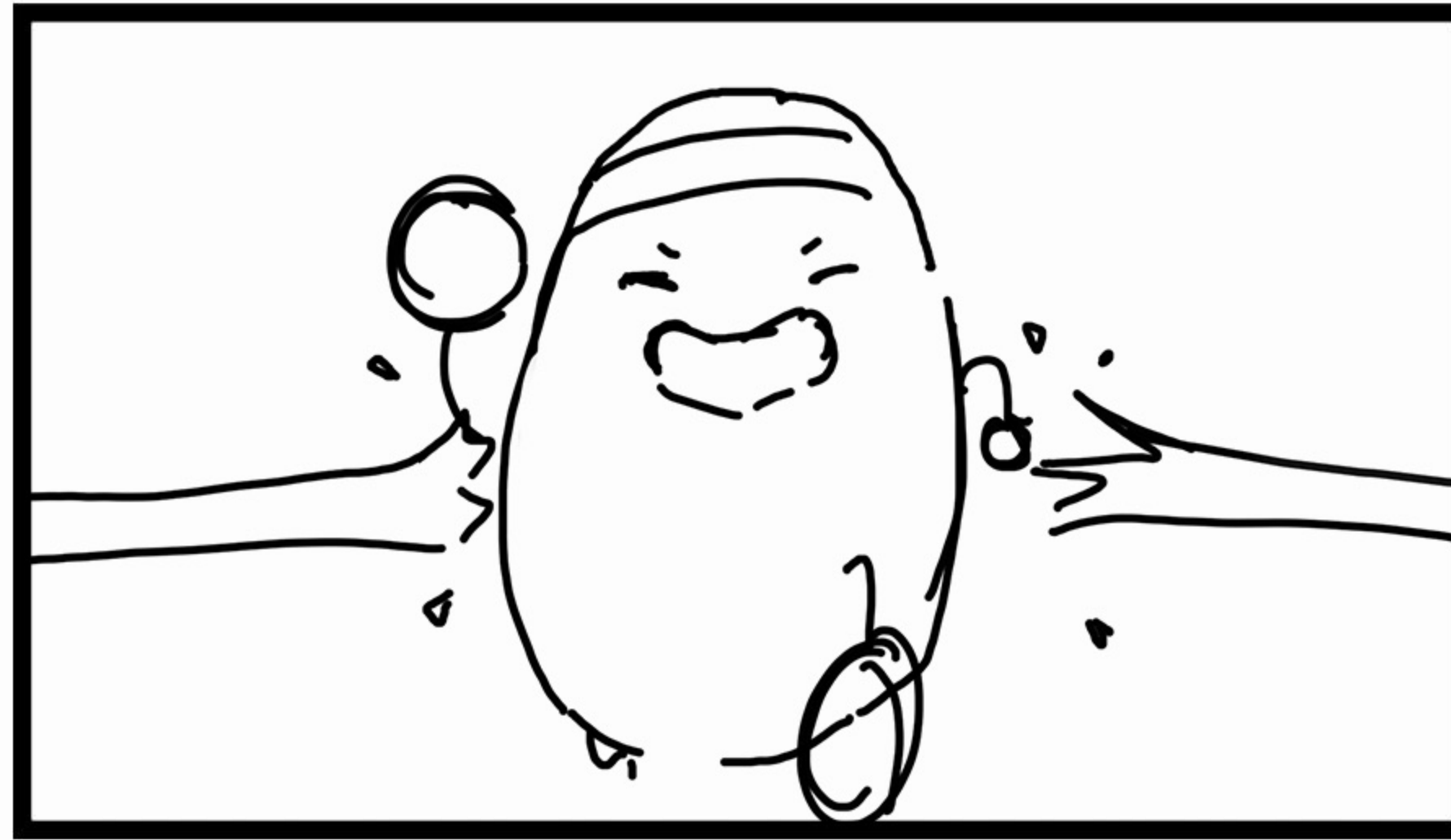
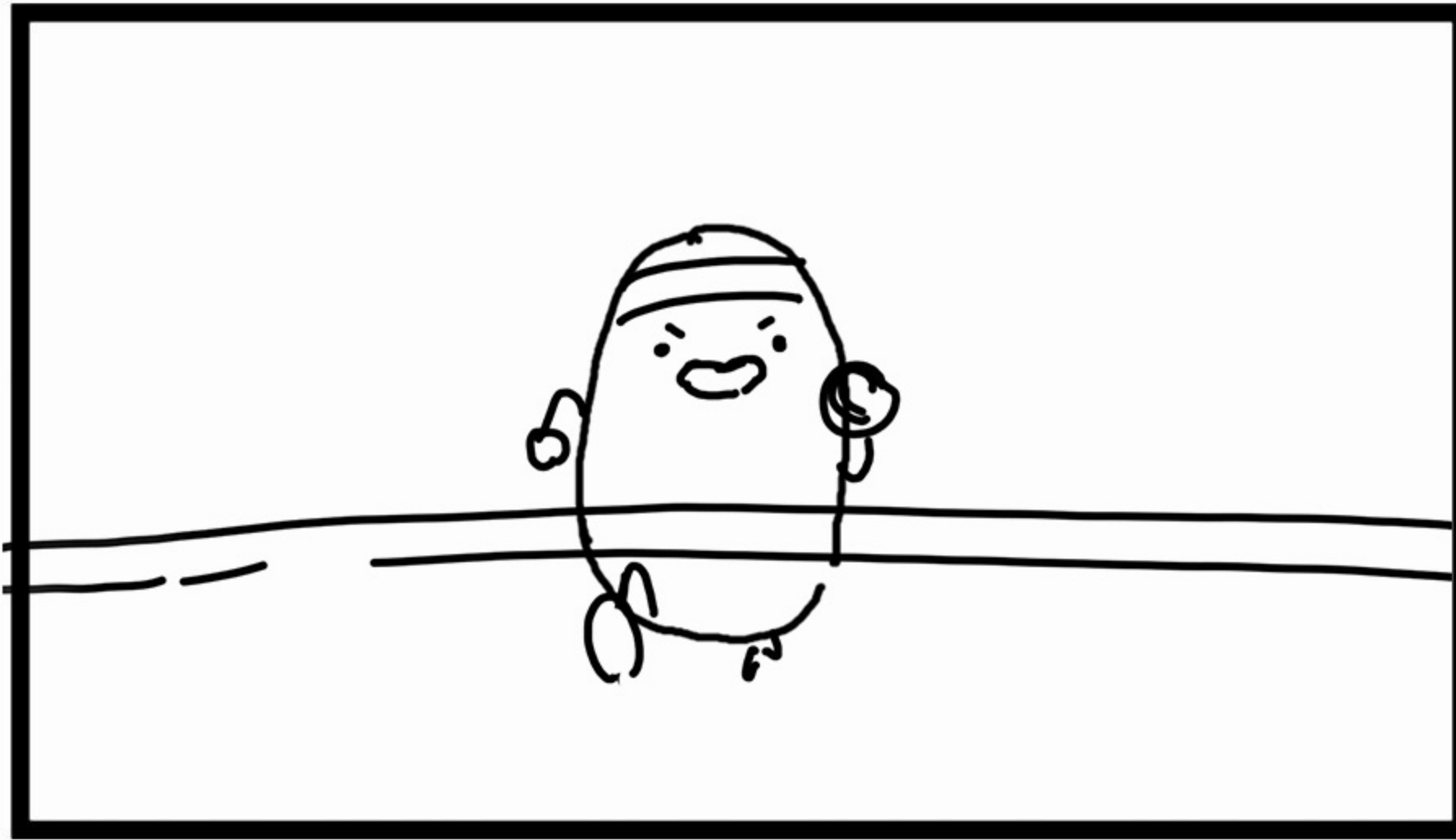


Over time, I saw that, like all the effort I put in, it started paying off. I started getting faster. I started being able to run longer.

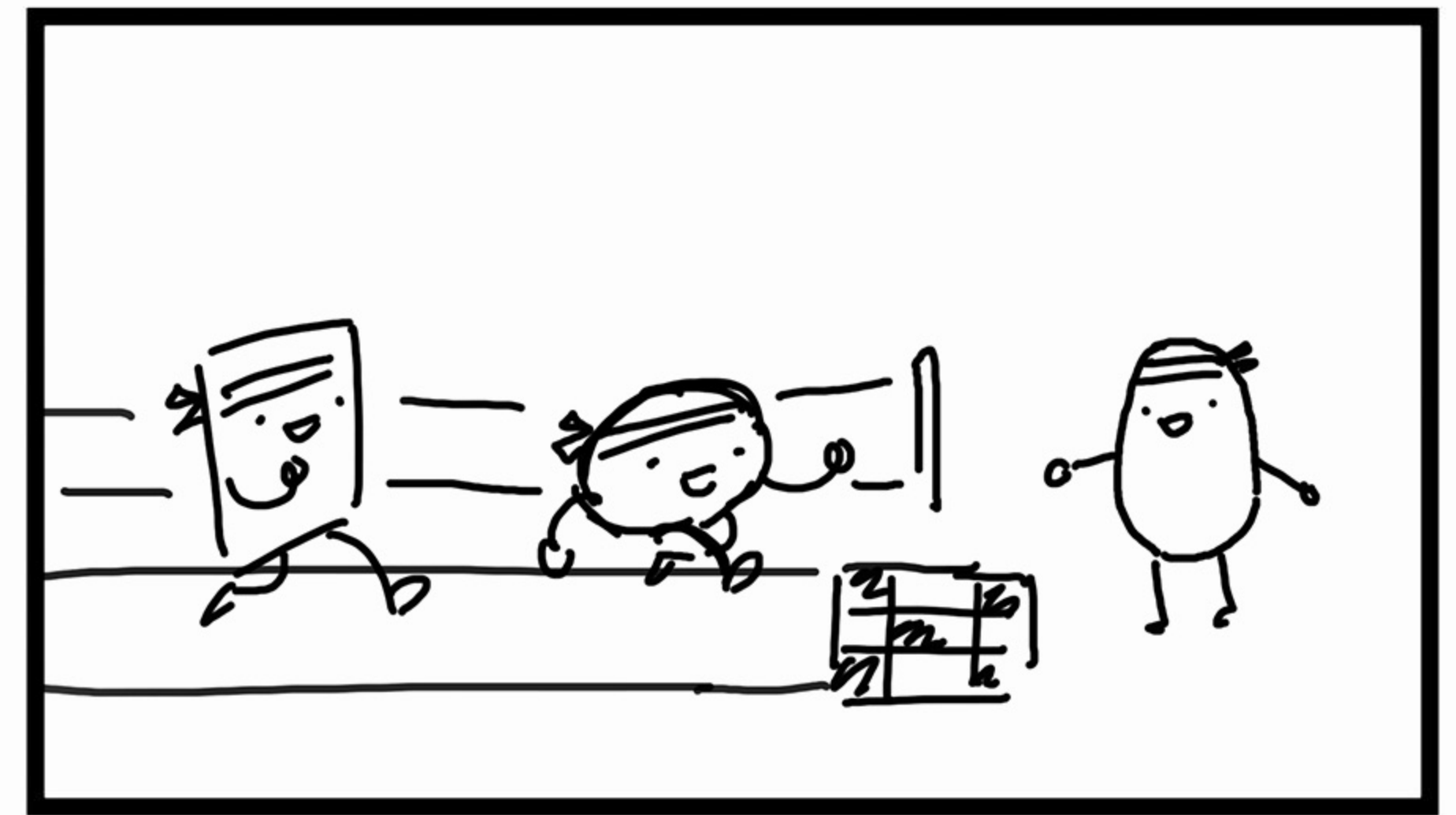
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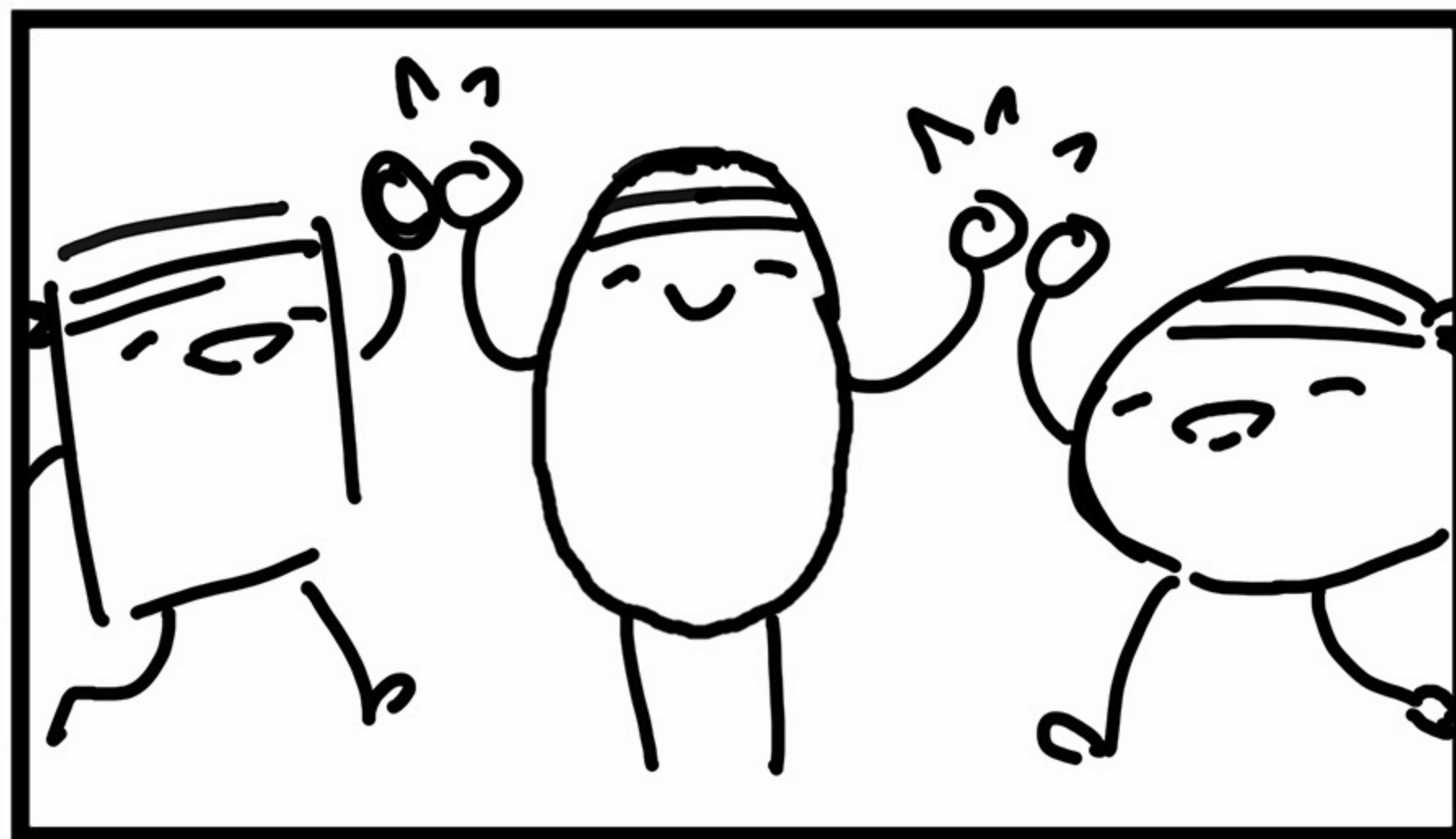


It definitely has helped me become more confident and realize that it's not just about talent,



it's more about how much work you put in.

Everyone can do it and everyone will improve.



And that's just super rewarding.