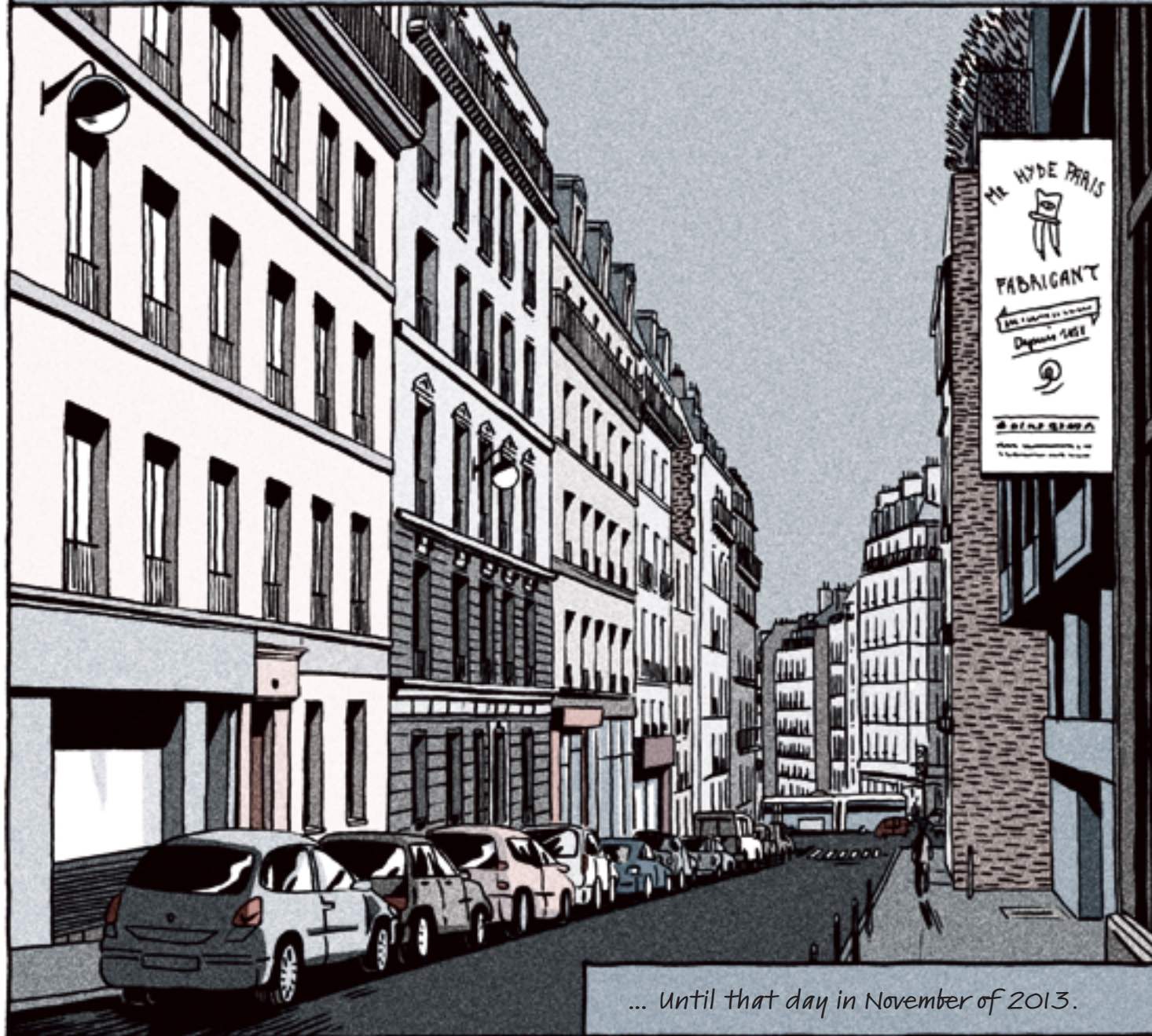


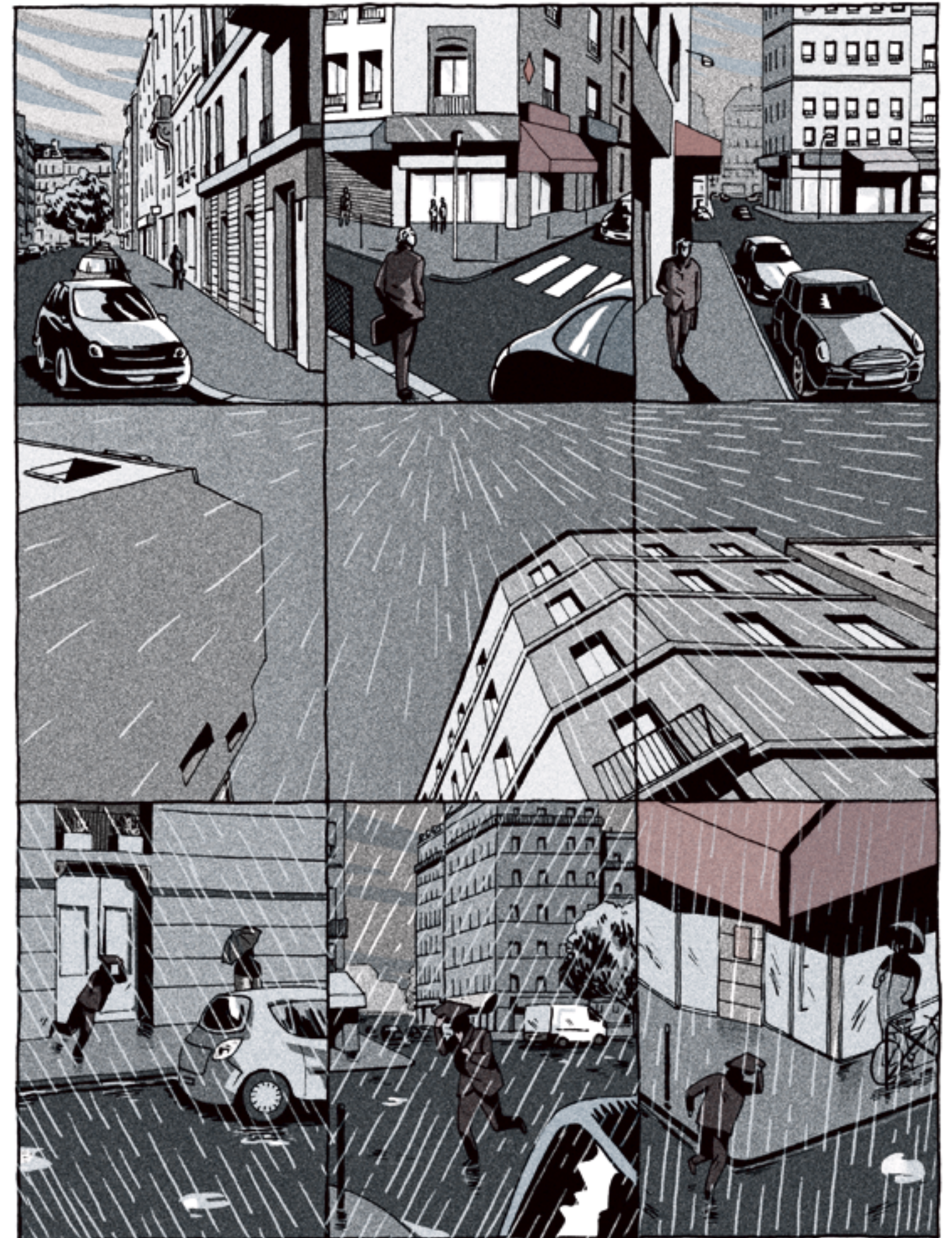
SWIMMING IN DARKNESS

Even before this story got its hooks in me, my father used to tell me about Pierre ... Back then he was one of many students he had. Pierre was working on a thesis about the Vals Thermal Baths, the famous building designed by the Swiss architect Peter Zumthor. My father spoke to me about him because he knew how strongly attached I was to that building, which we had visited together.

My father hadn't mentioned Pierre for some time ...



... Until that day in November of 2013.





Ladies and gents,
you are my saviors!

An espresso, please.

Here.

Pierre?

Oh, Mr. Harari! How are
you keeping?

Fine, and you? What
are you doing here?

I'm the
barman ...
For the
time being.

I'm going to sit down ...

Come with me, the
place is empty.



We were worried at
the school.

I'm sorry,
I had health
problems.

A shame ... True, I
didn't recognize you
at first.

You've lost
weight.

Whatever became of you, Pierre?
You disappeared overnight.

I'm doing
better now.

And your thesis?

I remember your research on
Zumthor's thermal baths.
Prone to fantasy, but
worthy.

I had a
sort of breakdown ...



One evening, I was working on my thesis. I was sure I'd written hundreds of pages.

I went into a kind of trance ... I couldn't help myself. I had the deep conviction that I'd understood everything, and discovered the building's secret mystery.

It was all there! I was writing feverishly ... Putting out my cigarettes on the floorboards ... I was ... I was possessed.

And then ...

I don't remember much, but the next day, I couldn't find the files.

I destroyed it all.



Why didn't you say anything? I had copies of your research.

I know. But the months afterward were complicated ...

I'm better now.

But it's not a Ph.D. thesis anymore.

All right ...

Oh, really? Send it to me. I'd be interested in reading it.

I have to run, I have a meeting.

I was happy to see you again, Pierre.

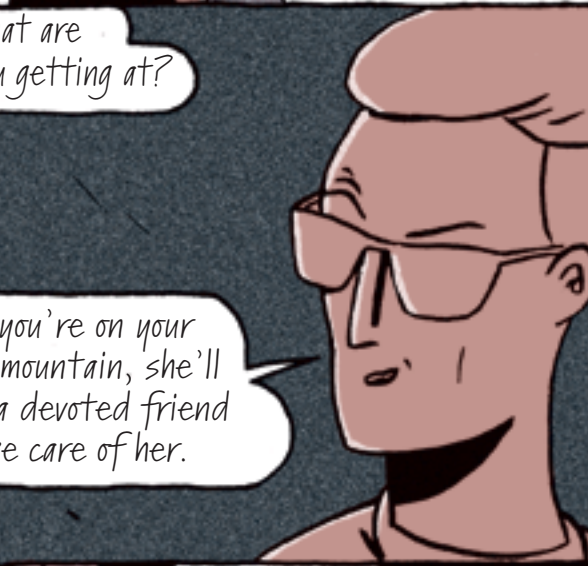
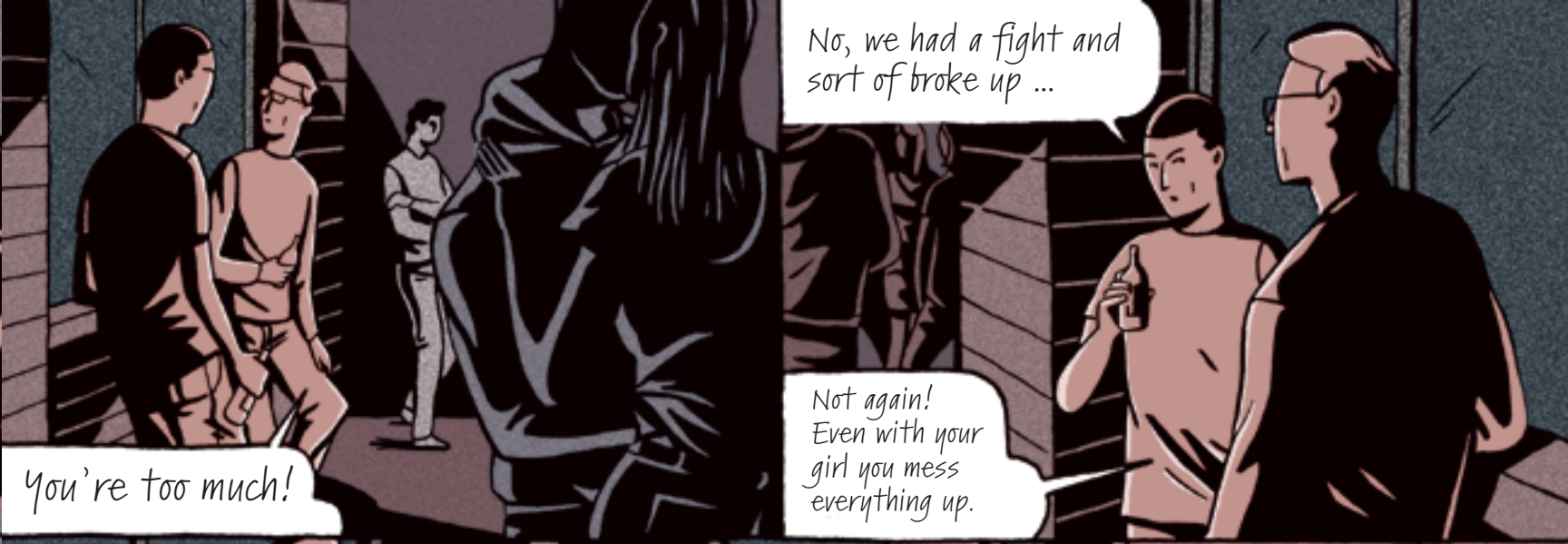
I'm going there, sir.

To Vals.

Take care of yourself!

Pardon me?

I'm leaving next month.



No, we had a fight and sort of broke up ...

Not again! Even with your girl you mess everything up.

You're too much!

You should talk. A different one every week!

Because I never met a girl like Lucie.

Yeah, sure ... We met her at the same time.

Did you tell her?

Anyway ...

since you sort of broke up ...

... And you're leaving in two weeks ...

What are you getting at?

About what?

When you're on your magic mountain, she'll need a devoted friend to take care of her.

That you're leaving in two weeks.

Not yet.

There, my friend ...

Oops, sorry ...

Where you going?

Drink too much?

HEY! WATCH OUT!

To get some air.

I need a smoke!

