

Marvin Saves the BUILD



Aspect
— BUILD —

Written by Jerried Walker

Illustrated by Alex Eagle

Nina was a new hire who couldn't wait to start.
Through years of university, she felt her code was art.
Internship after internship she did for this day.
Her start date began, when it once was so far away.

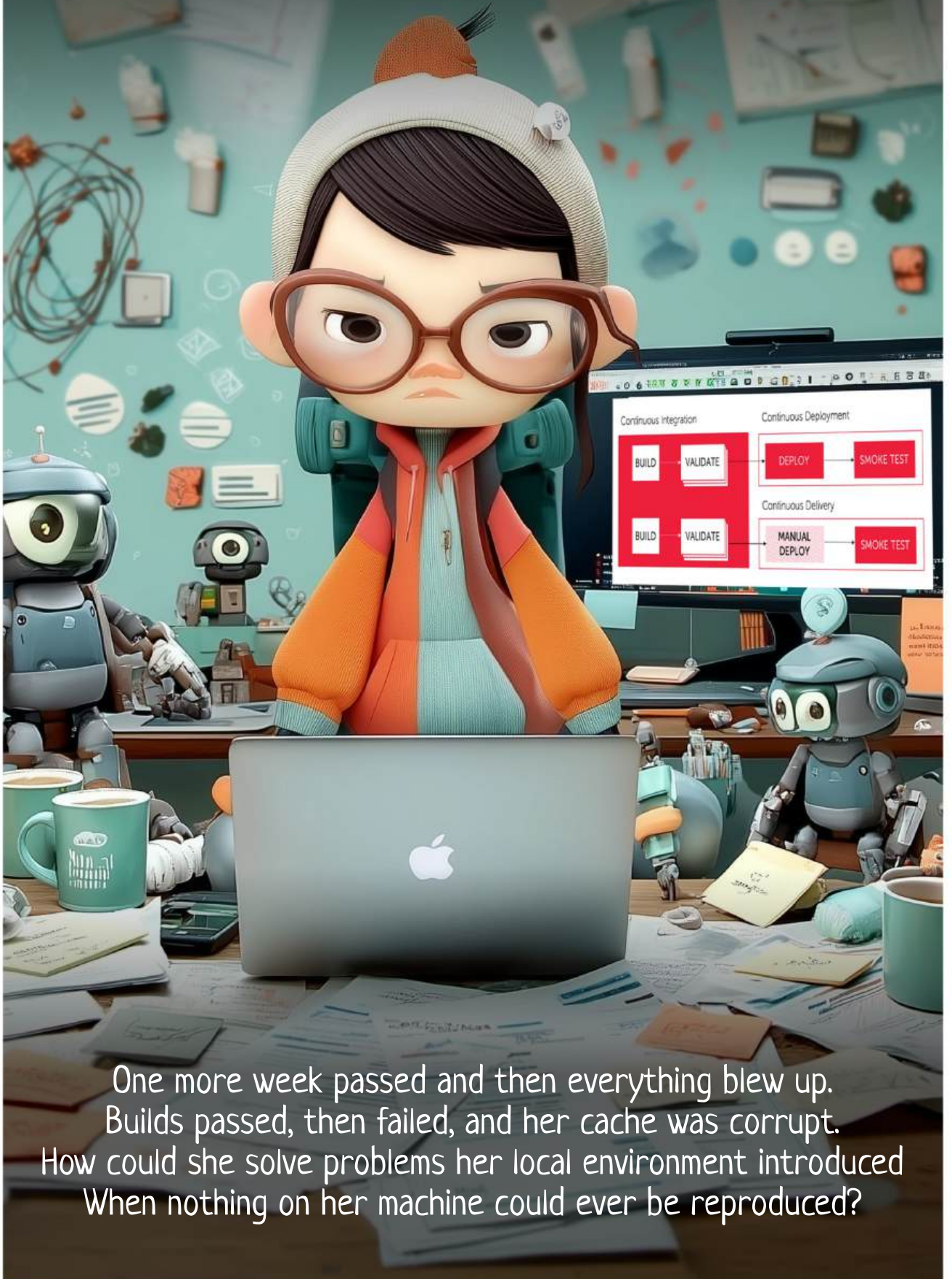
She showed up to work early, so eager to begin.
Her coworkers smiled and she felt happy again.
She turned on her Mac and set things up locally.
She started to work hard and use her time intentionally.

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By the third day of work things had gone from bad to worse.
She tested to make sure everything worked first.
Things passed on CI, but run local, they failed.
She troubleshooted for 3 days until her focus sailed.



One more week passed and then everything blew up.
Builds passed, then failed, and her cache was corrupt.
How could she solve problems her local environment introduced
When nothing on her machine could ever be reproduced?

From the air and on a deadline's edge.
Marvin soars by with a single pledge.
Every build Bazel can produce.
Will go faster, with less compute.

Using Aspect Extension Language Nina's builds became the same.
Her local machine matched CI, down to file names.
The starter templates gave her Bazel-managed environments.
She went further than any new hire ever went.

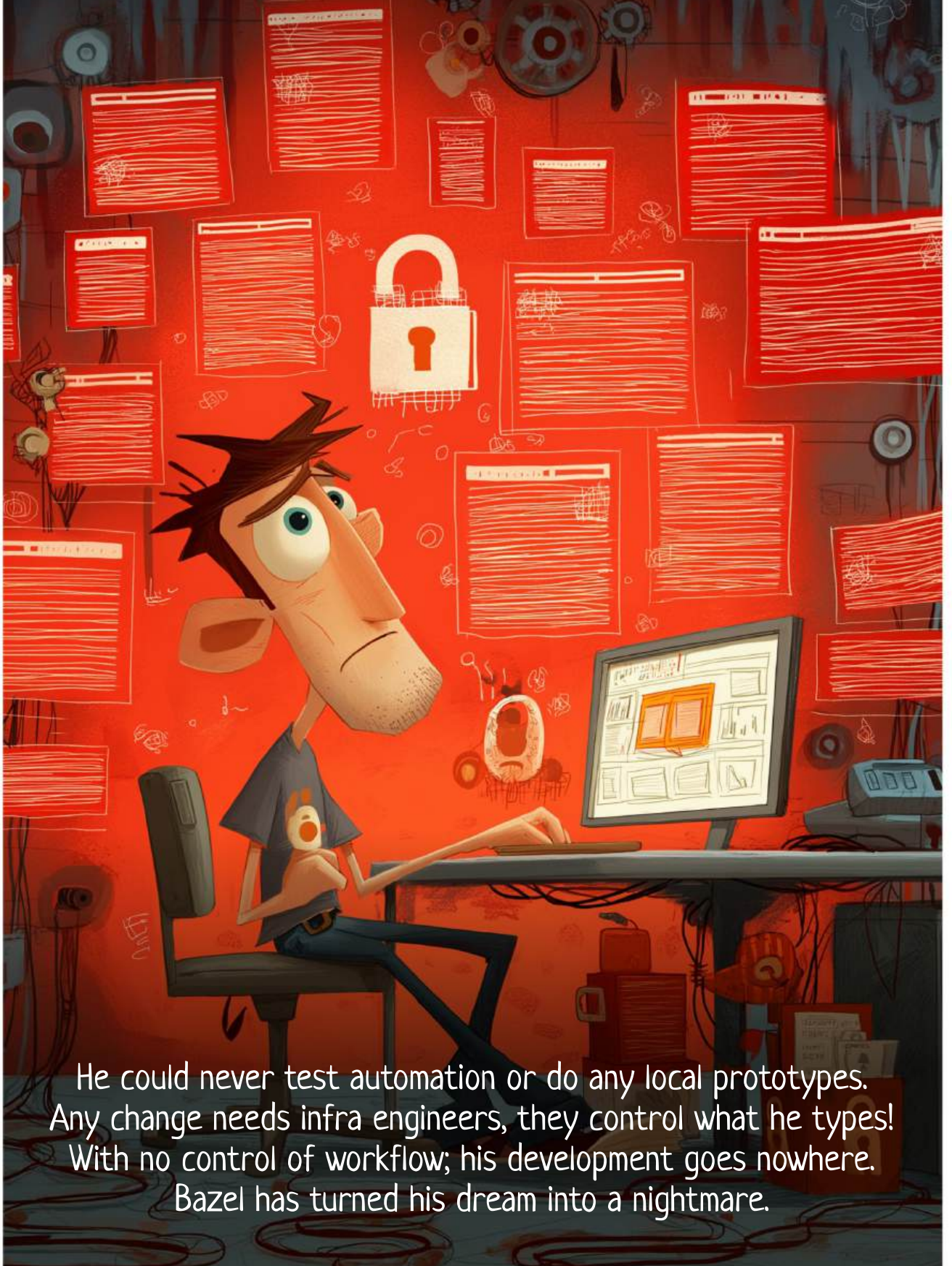


Perry was an engineer who thought that product was king.
When his company did a release, his angels would sing.
Every release completed, and turned green, with a ping.
When his workflow was smooth, he could code while sleeping!

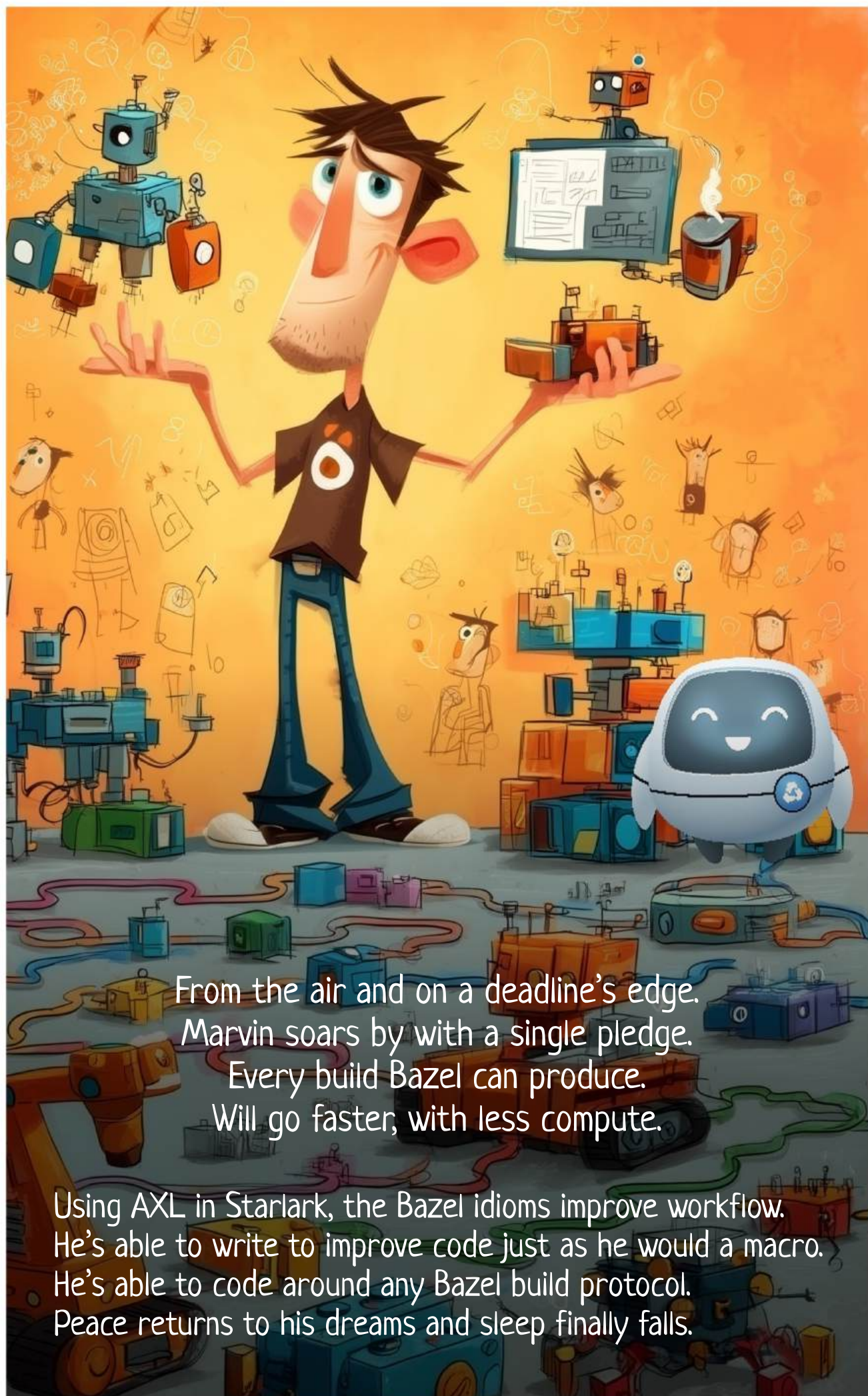


In this main workflow, every build pushed was a snooze.
His keystrokes were music, where expertise oozed.
With nothing to think about, his pushes ran at full steam.
How he worked, was something he had only dreamed!

As his eyes lifted, his company's Bazel builds spoke.
He began to cry, lamenting that he awoke.
Jenkins will not let him access locked scripts in Groovy.
There's nothing he can change or access smoothly.



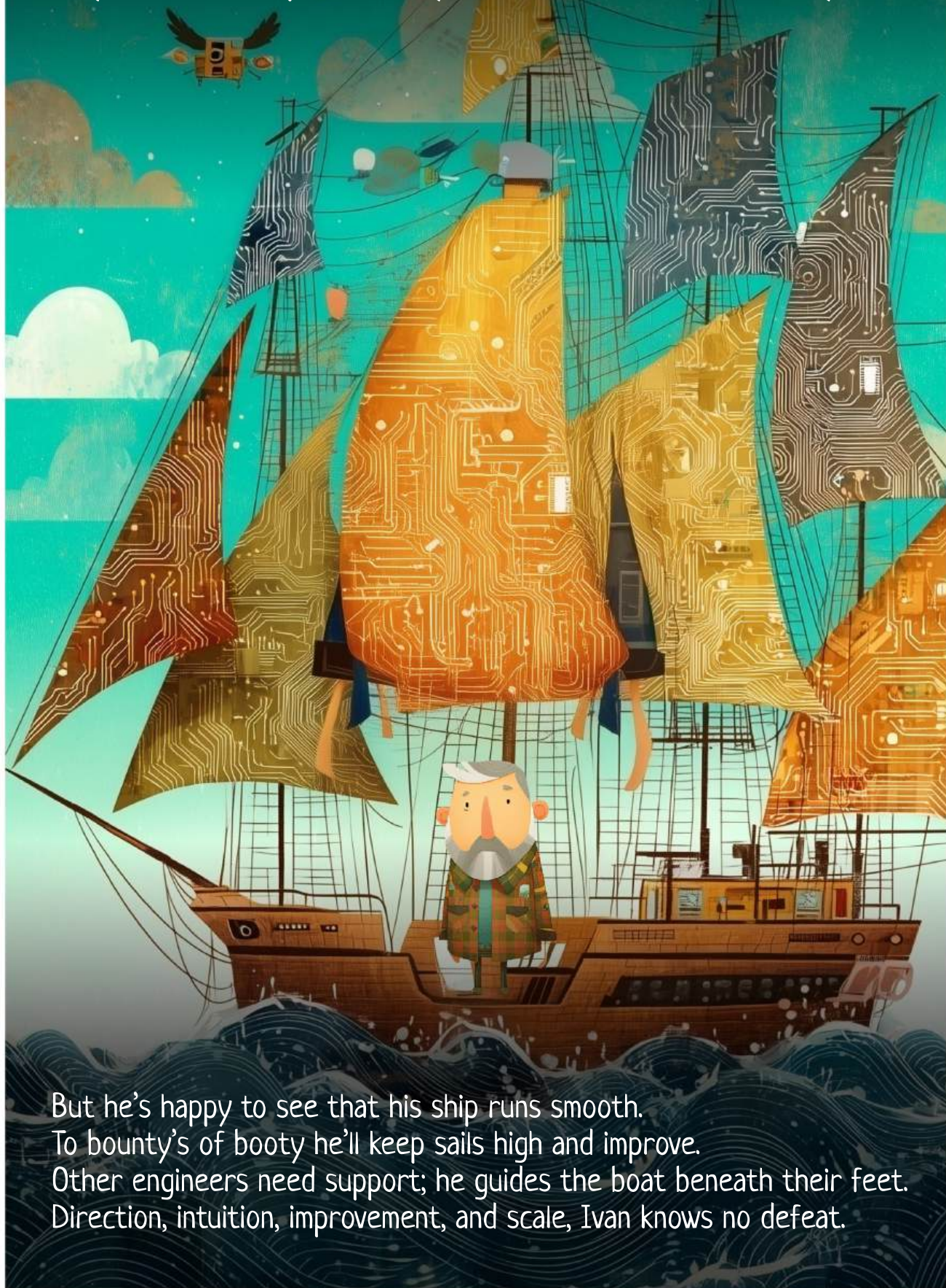
He could never test automation or do any local prototypes.
Any change needs infra engineers, they control what he types!
With no control of workflow; his development goes nowhere.
Bazel has turned his dream into a nightmare.



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Using AXL in Starlark, the Bazel idioms improve workflow.
He's able to write to improve code just as he would a macro.
He's able to code around any Bazel build protocol.
Peace returns to his dreams and sleep finally falls.

Ivan works in infra; his mind is speed and scale.
He's a crewman on a ship and the winds can never fail.
On his path to stability he uplifts the whole crew.
If you had this pressure, you would choke, wouldn't you?



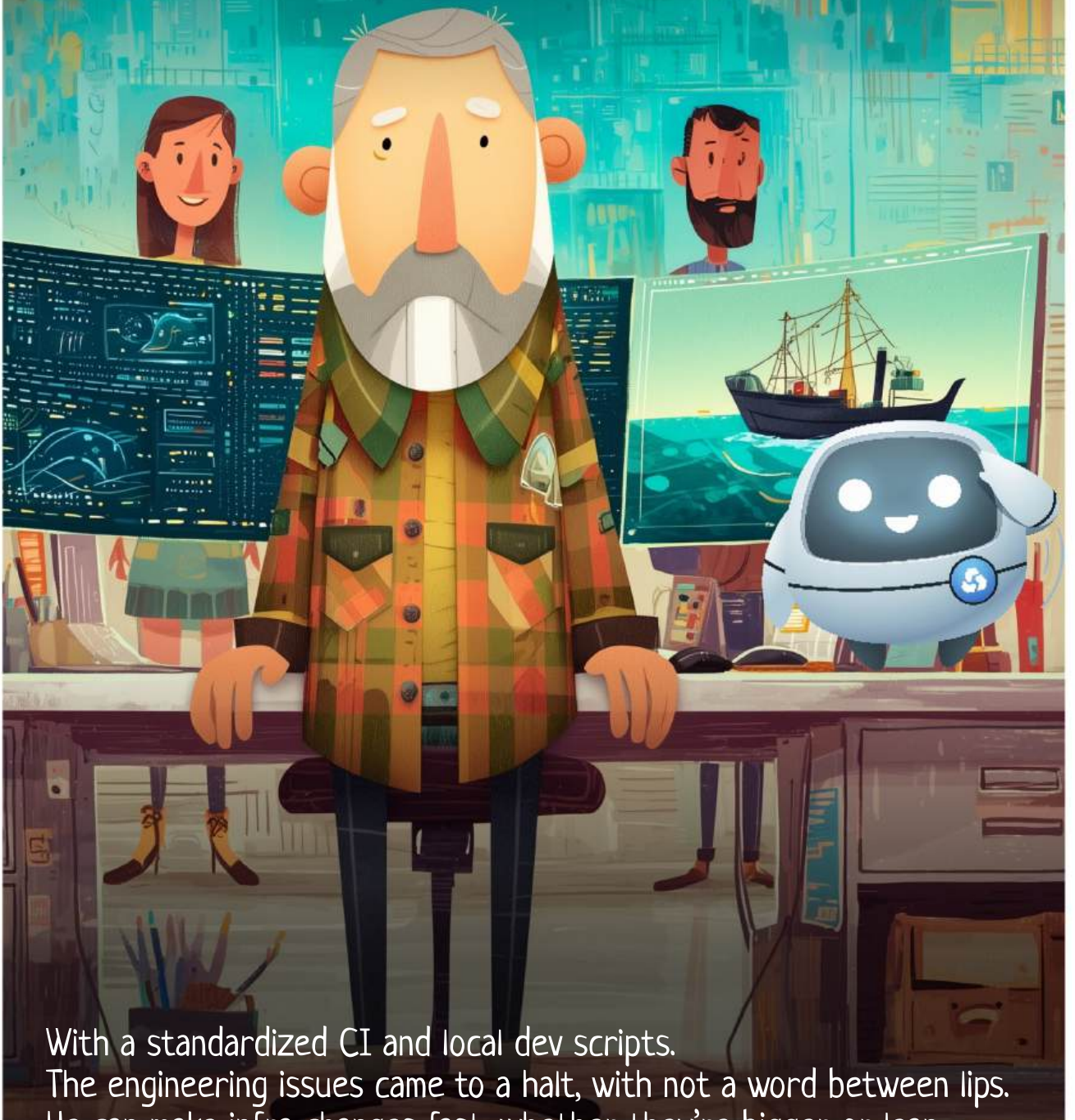
But he's happy to see that his ship runs smooth.
To bounty's of booty he'll keep sails high and improve.
Other engineers need support; he guides the boat beneath their feet.
Direction, intuition, improvement, and scale, Ivan knows no defeat.

Bazel came aboard and the ship began to rock.
It's build stream changed into an ocean; and the wave made them dock.
The structured data crumbled; Nina & Perry fumbled.
The whole engineering team stood aghast; humbled.



In his eyes he saw the waves stop his company's scale.
The Slack messages came in; they outsized his ship, like a whale.
In a minute, the flames burned, all through the night.
How can Ivan build, if all he does is firefight?

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With a standardized CI and local dev scripts.
The engineering issues came to a halt, with not a word between lips.
He can make infra changes fast, whether they're bigger or lean.
His boat is afloat, with cheers from the product team.

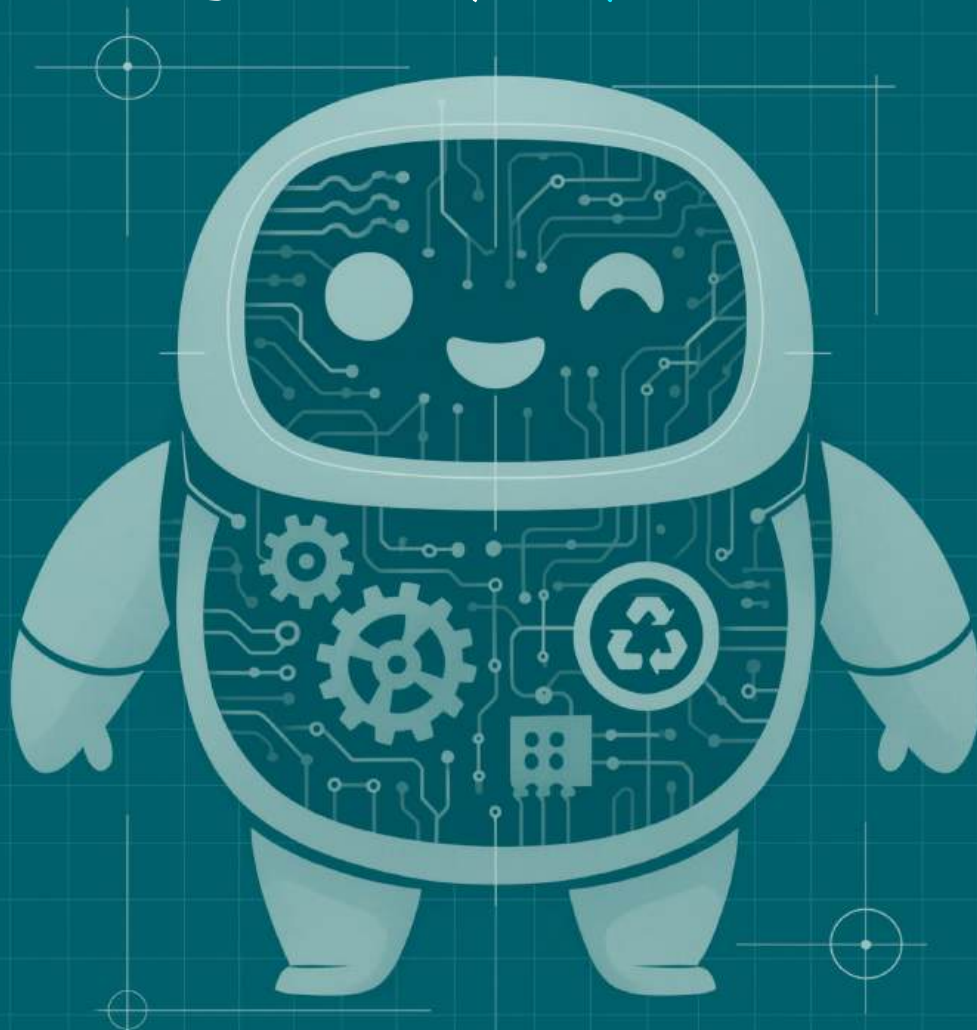
Marvin saved the build and the engineers met revenue.
The company grew and in their heart they knew.
Marvin kept every build together, and the failures were few.
They were all promoted, and their dreams came true.

Builds across the company were now falling in time.
The engineers cheered and the fear of Bazel died.
Marvin had showed that Bazel builds can be good.
And cared for growing Bazel like a mother or father would.



Here at BazelCon 2025 we've launched Aspect Extension Language to replace the sprawl of local dev and CI scripts with a programmable, maintainable interface. It gives engineers like Nina, Perry, and Ivan a unified way to extend Bazel beyond the bazel-out folder — integrating tasks like linting, scanning the source tree, and deployment pipelines using clear, composable APIs.

Talk with the Aspect Build team at our booth
and give AXL a try at aspect.build/axl



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