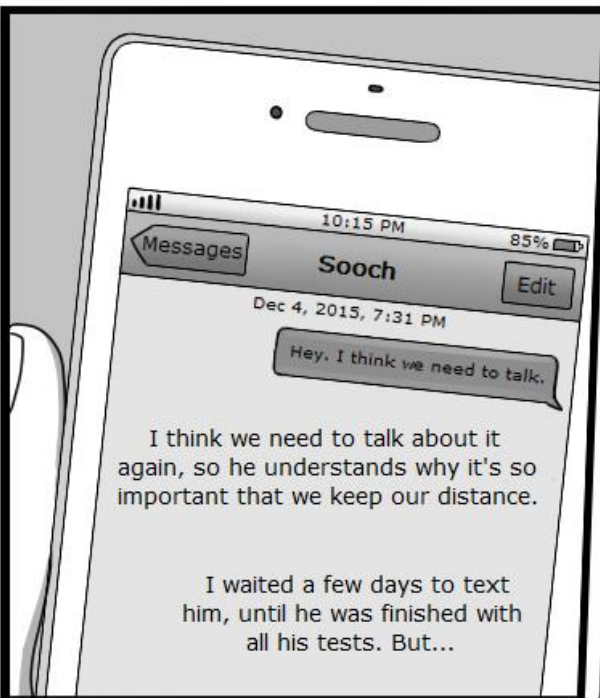
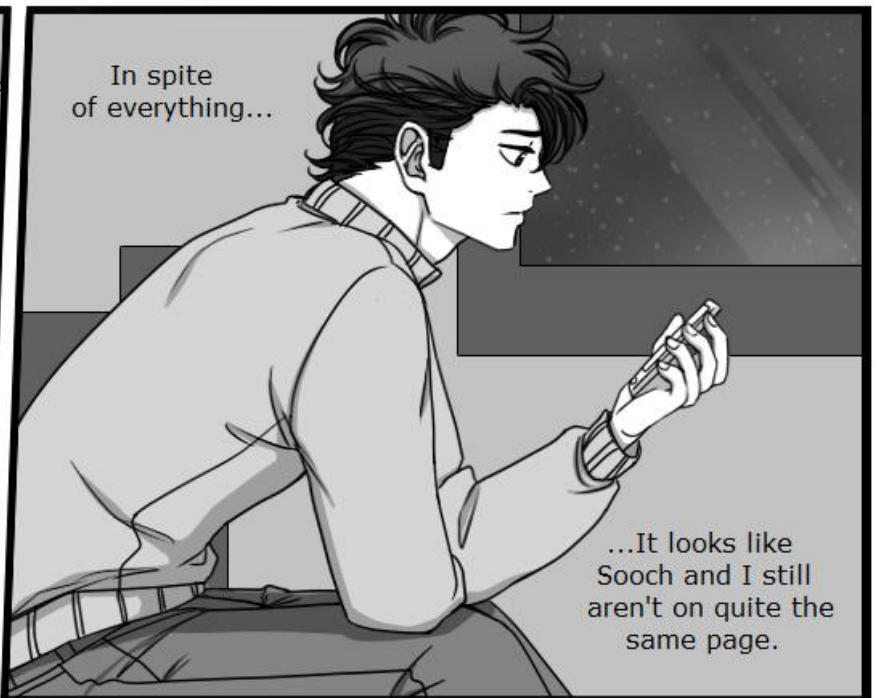


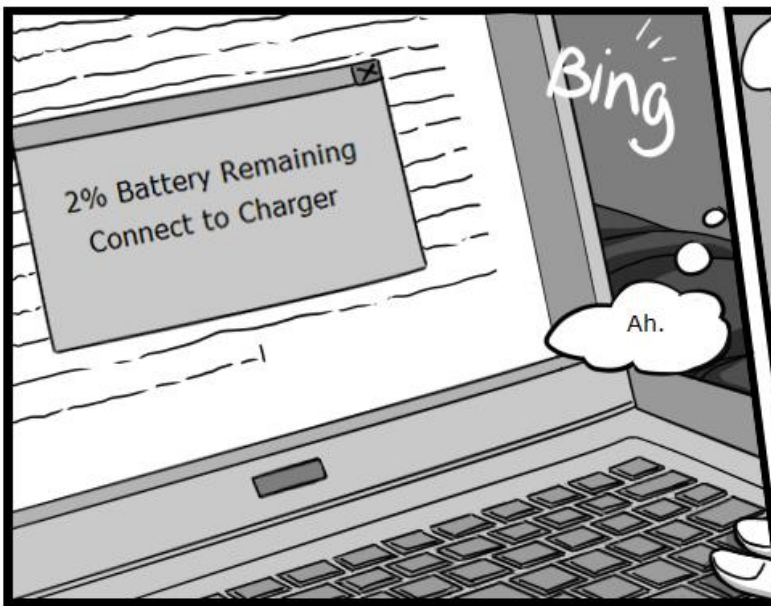
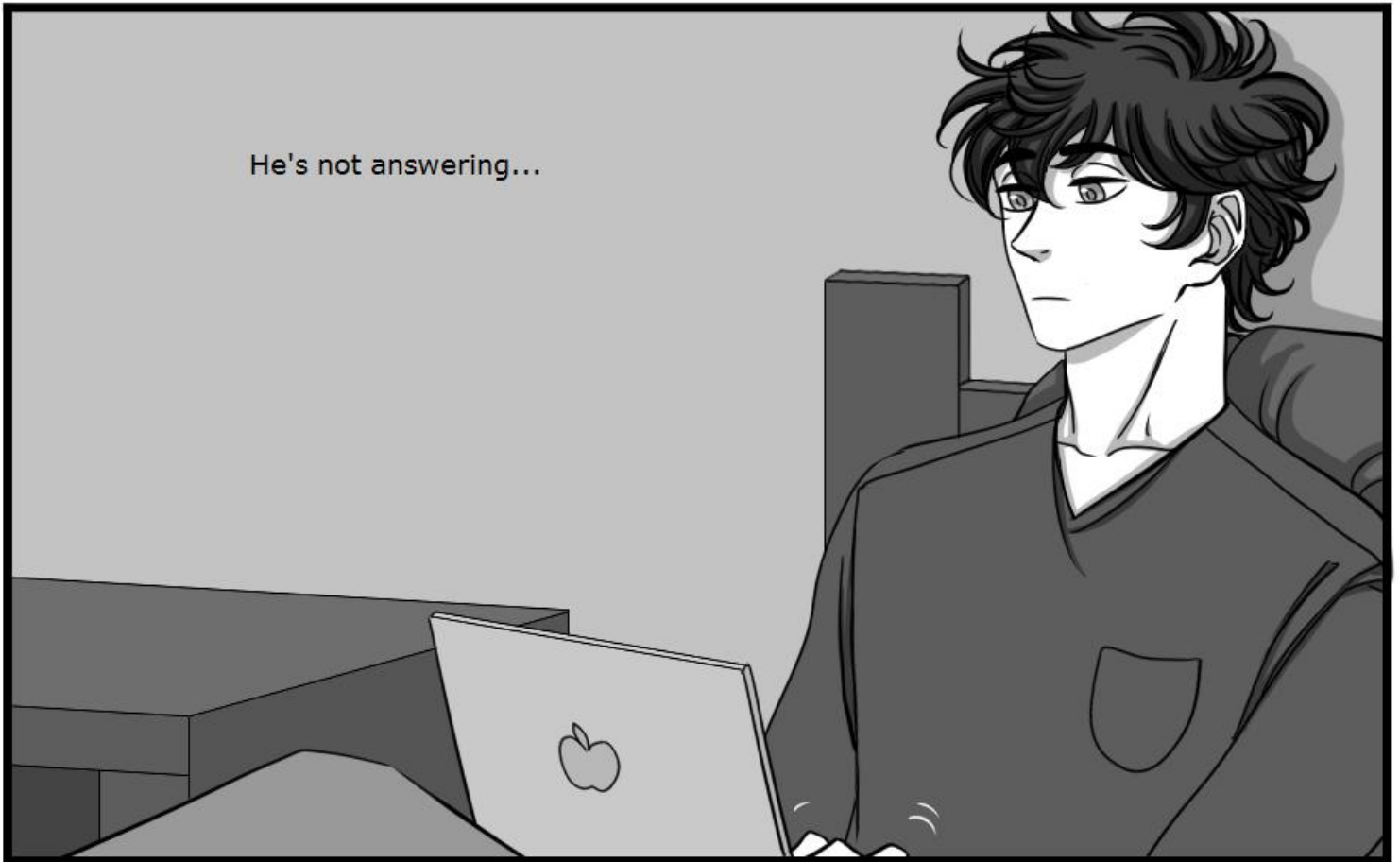


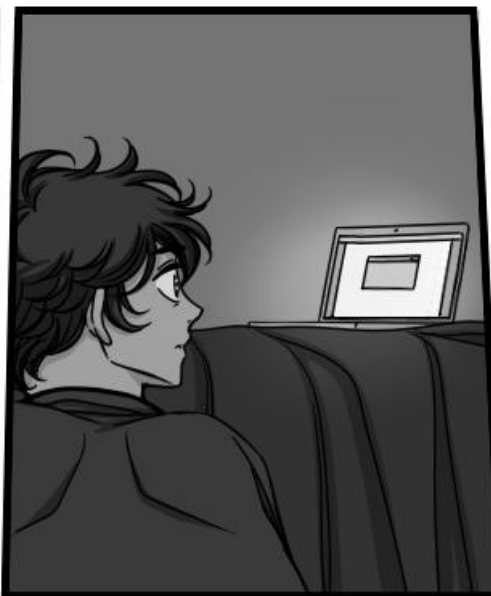
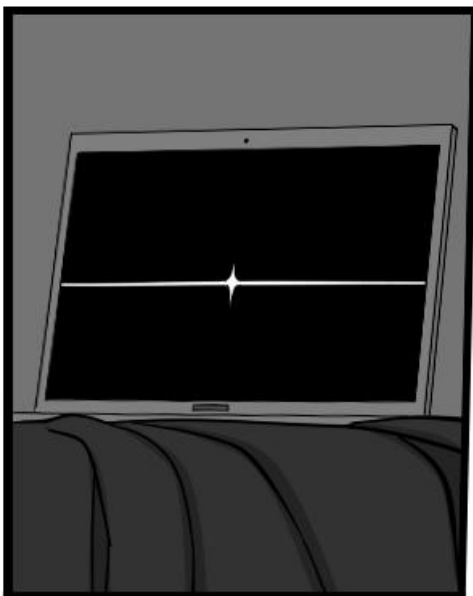
So this whole separation thing isn't working out as well as I hoped it would.



In spite of everything...











Howie! Hey!



Can you believe
this power outage?
Crazy, right?

...



Howie?

O-oh. Yeah.
Crazy...



Ooh,
hiya Ben!



Aw, what's the
matter big guy?

Nothing.

You look like
you're about to cry.

Fuck off, Molly.

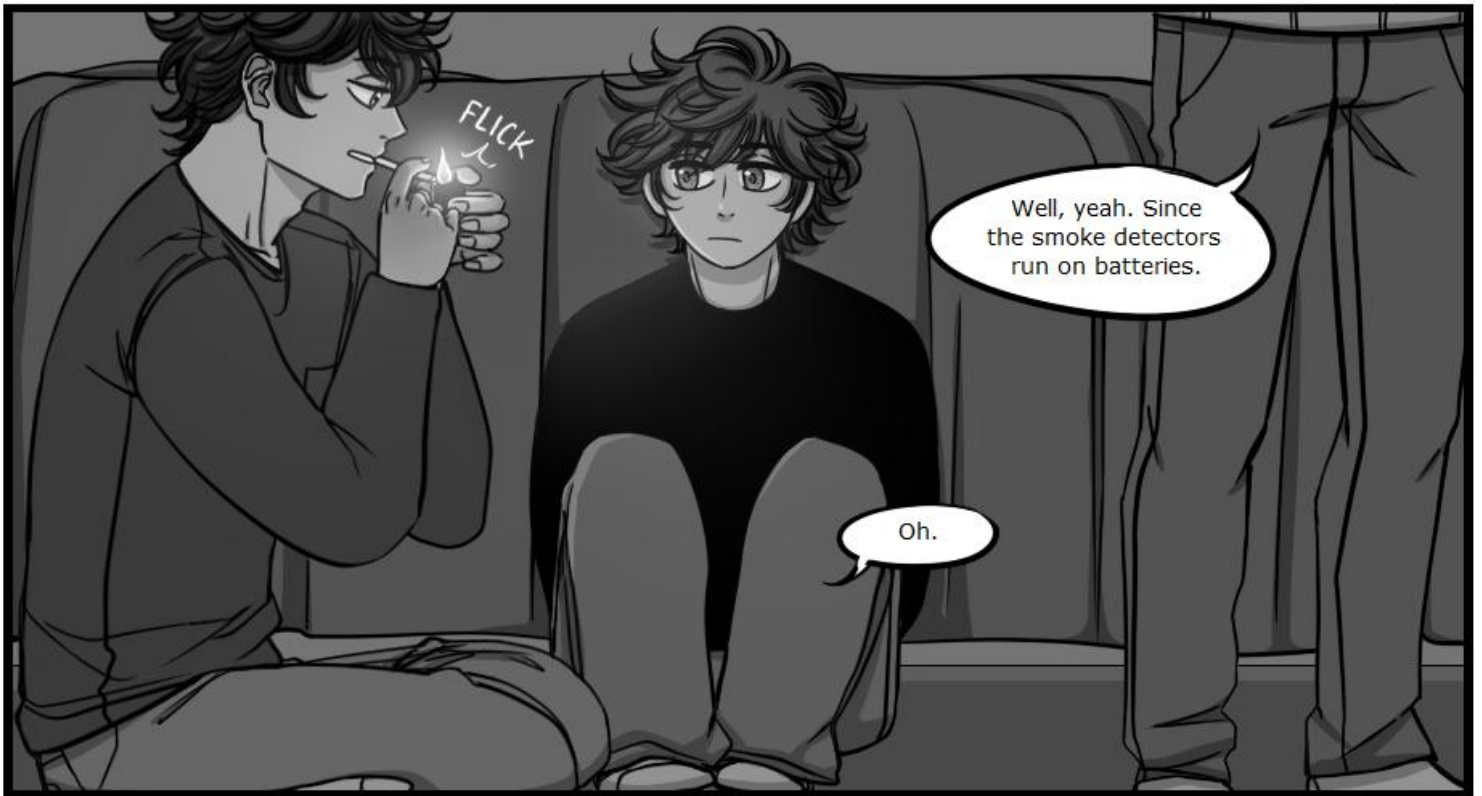


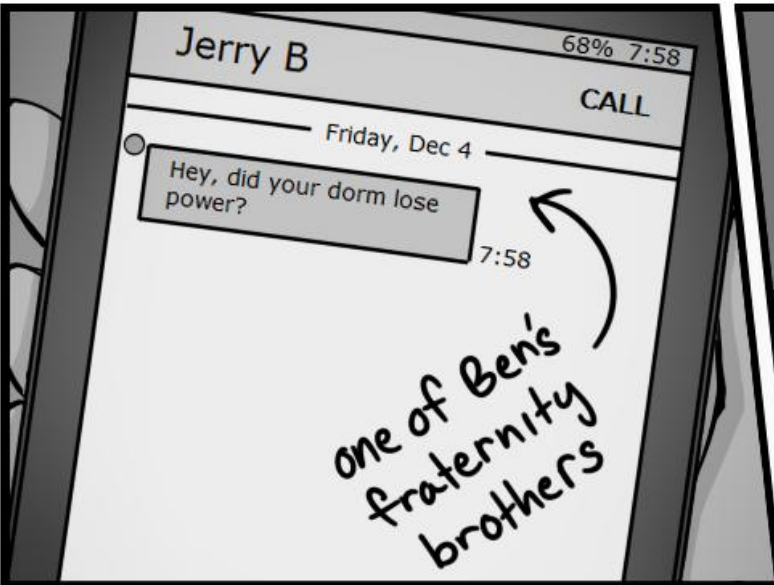
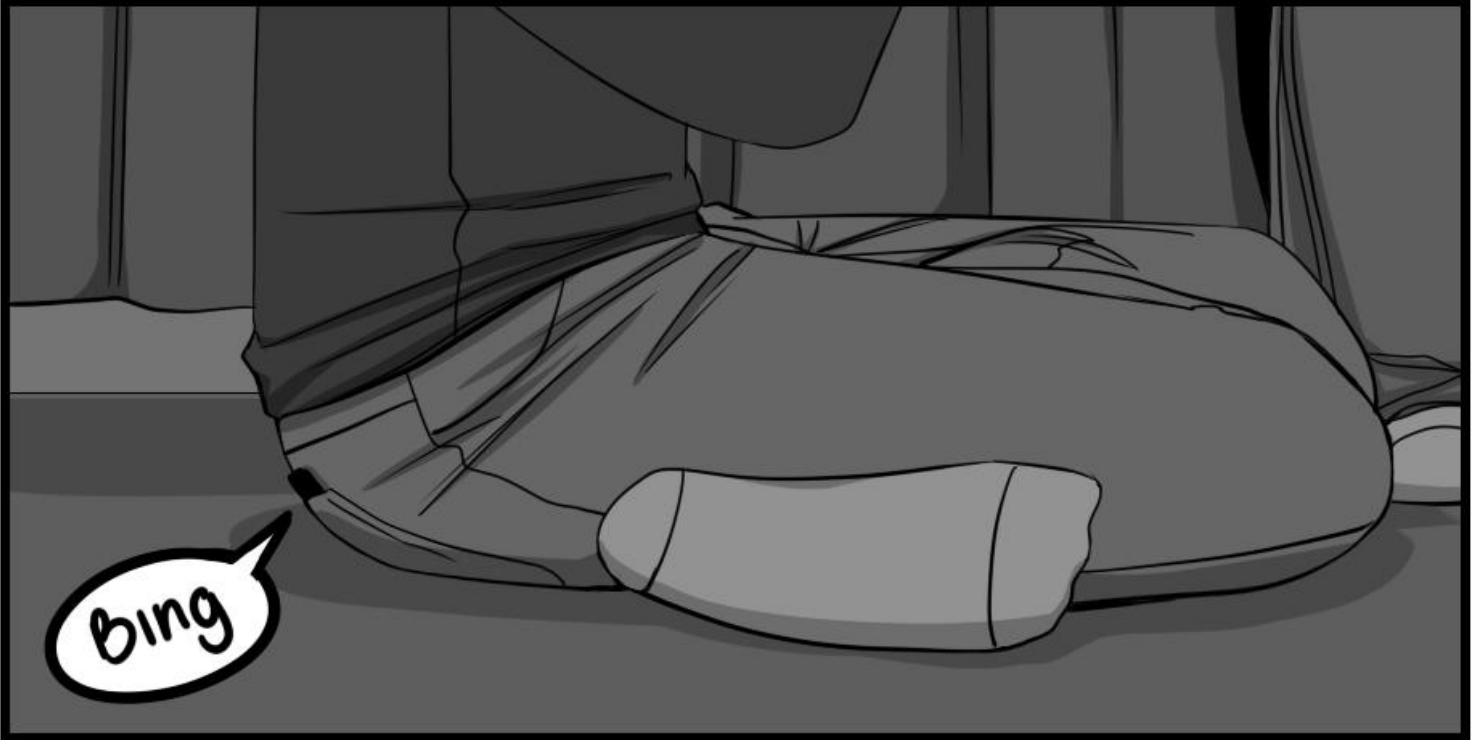
I have such a
fucking headache....

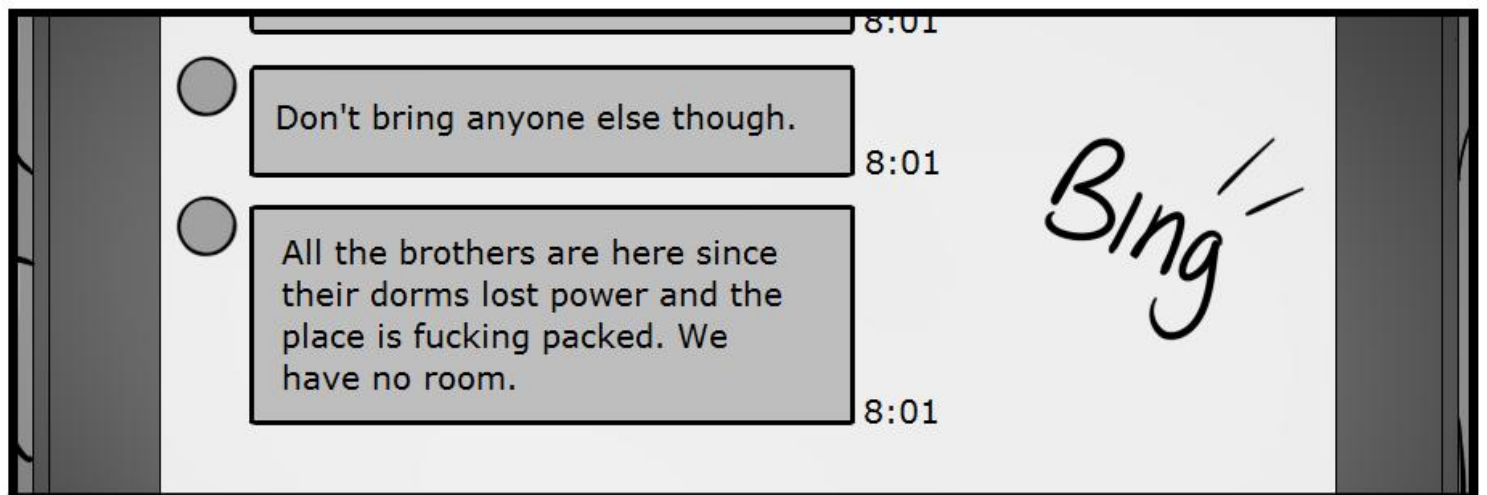
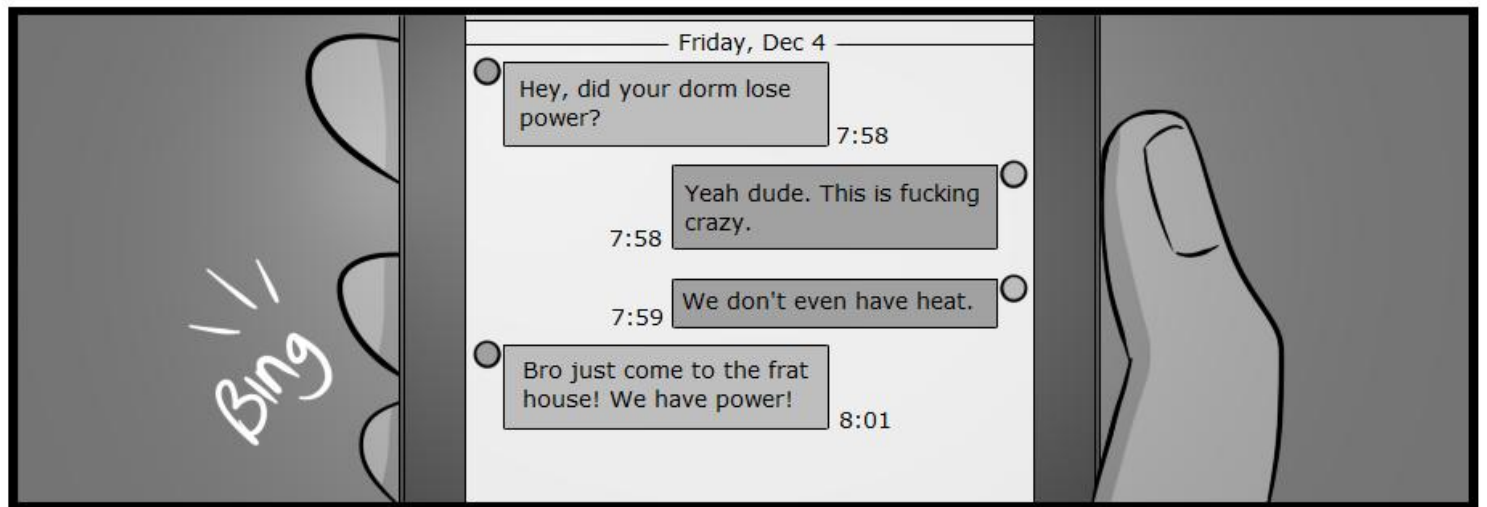
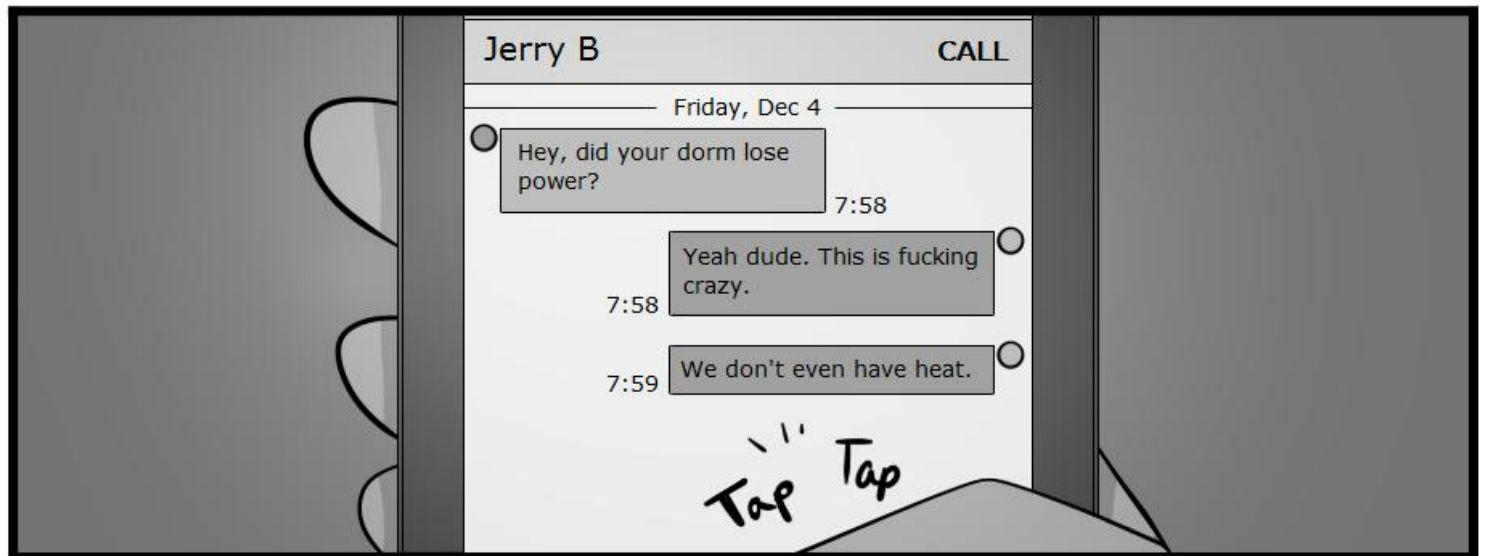
I'm gonna go smoke.
Who's coming?



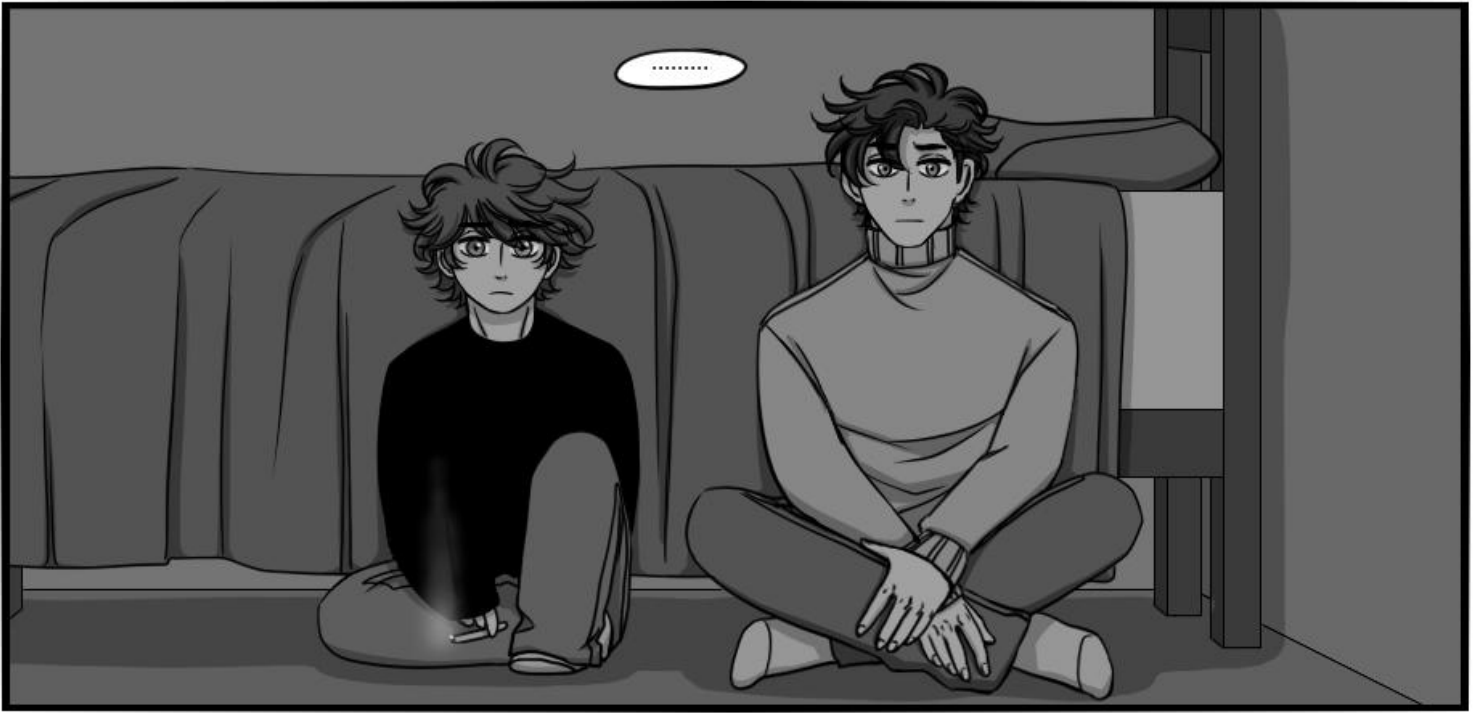
























...Yes...

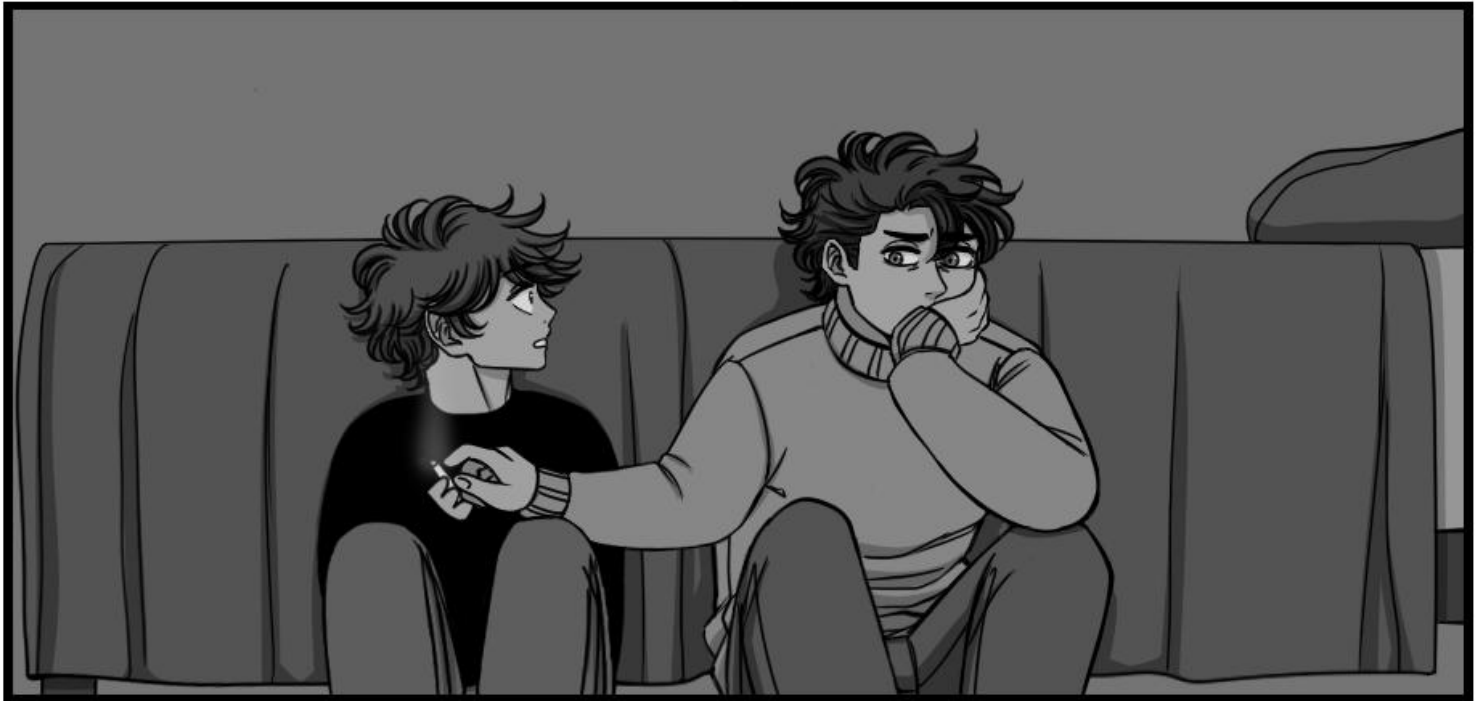
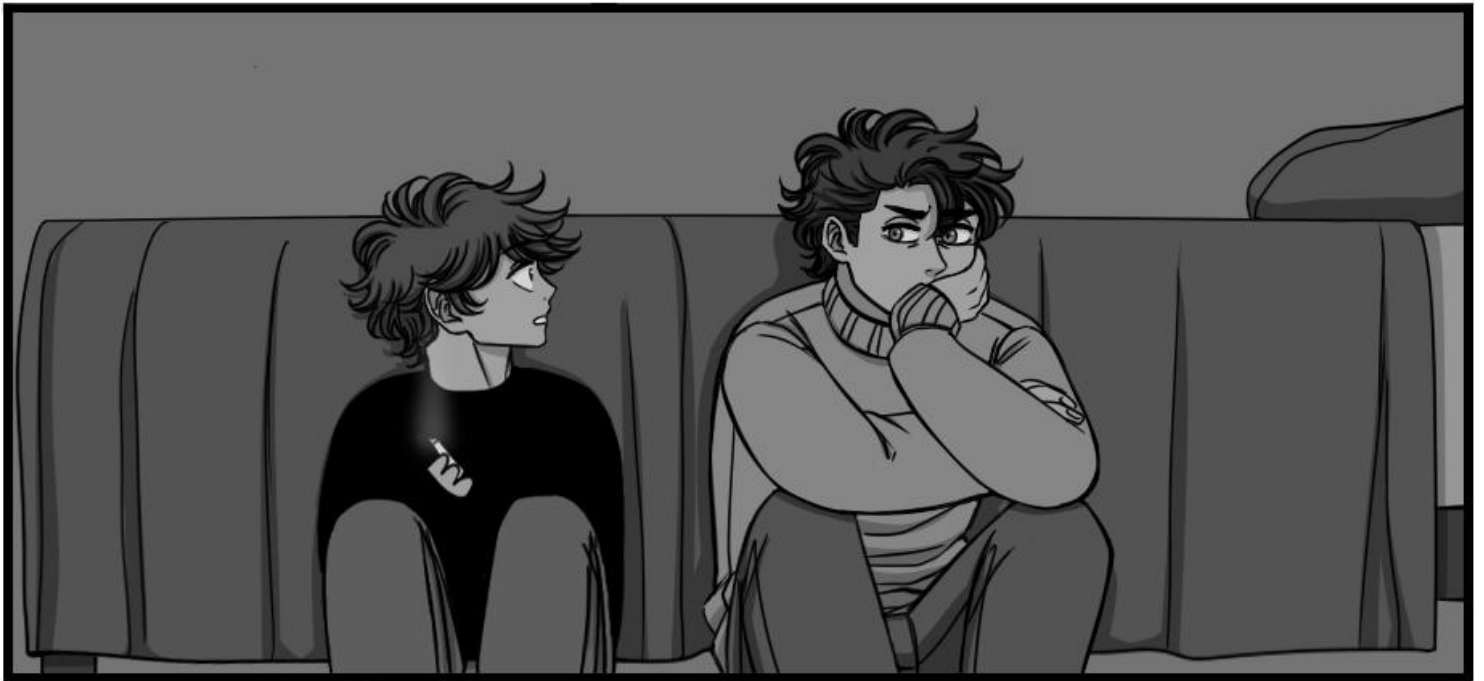
I want to be with you in that way....



B-but that isn't--

That's not the only thing I want from you, Sooch...







With *who*?

.....When?



...You don't know him...

It was over the summer.... I met him when I went out this one night. He came onto me and it just kind of happened...

It was just a one time thing. We didn't stay in touch.



...I'm gay. Is it really so shocking?

It's just-- I mean... You never mentioned it before....

Well it wasn't exactly something I could talk about.

....I guess....



You know....

It wouldn't have made a difference if I had experience or not...



I know what I want.



But....

I also understand that you're unable to give me what I want.



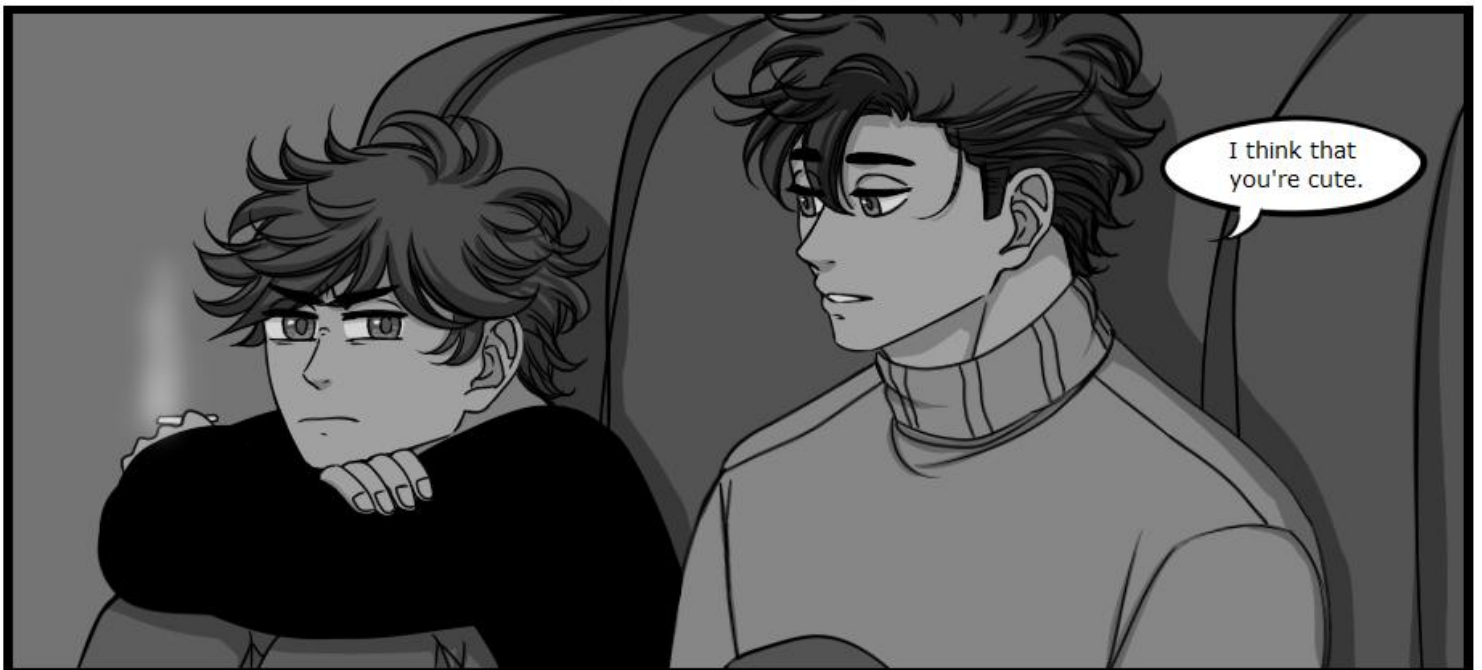




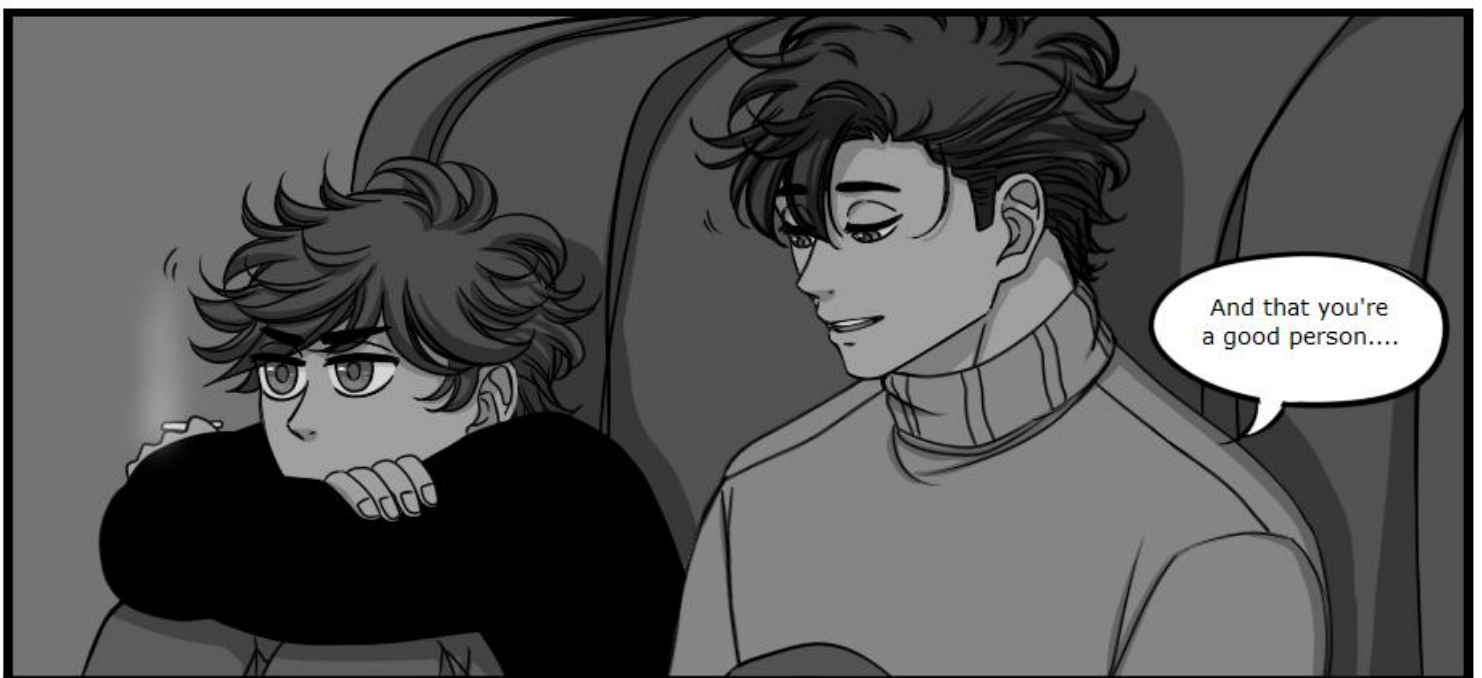
How I can be myself around you....



And how you've always been there for me when I needed you....



I think that you're cute.



And that you're a good person....





Yeah, I do.

And I think--



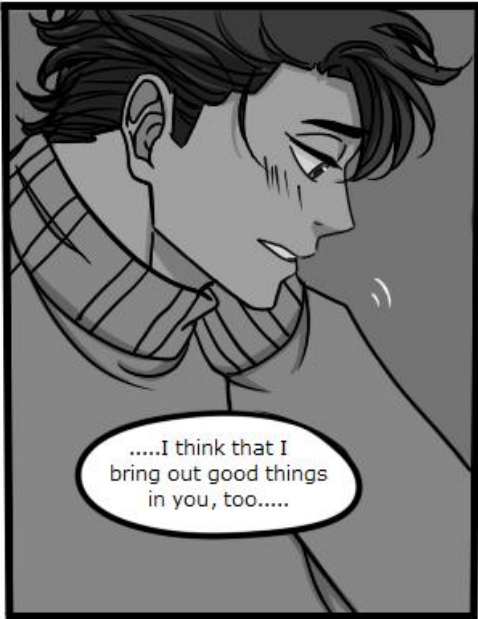
...

You...

think that...?



.....



.....I think that I bring out good things in you, too.....



...

Well, I--

I think....



And that's exactly my problem, honestly...!

And it's why I'd been so adamant that we stay separated!



And whenever we spend time together that part just kind of *takes over*,

and I keep getting my hopes up over nothing.

In my mind, you and I are so fucking good for each other that,

even though one part of me understands that you can't return my feelings,

there's this other part of me that just can't let go.



And I can't help thinking that..



Even though I know I shouldn't, and as much as I try not to...

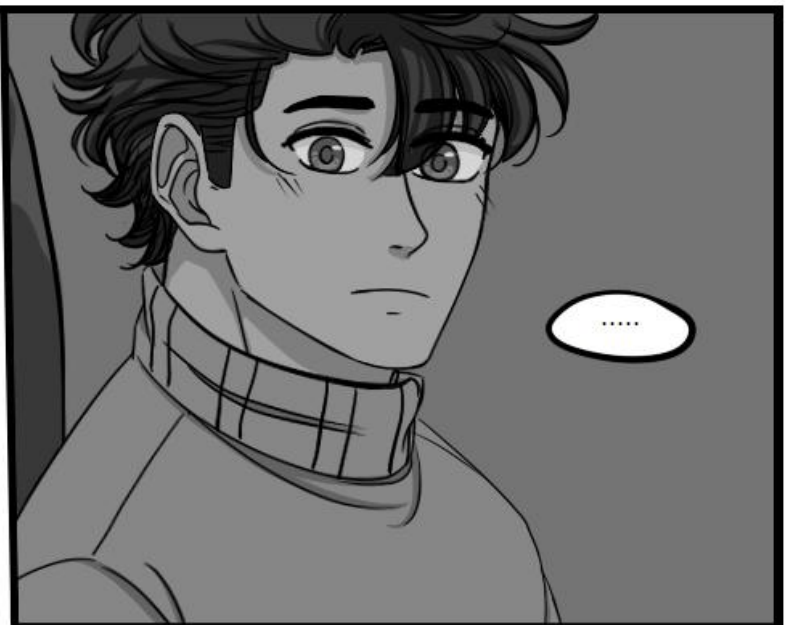
I keep getting caught up in this idea that you and I are perfect for each other...



if you'd just give it a chance...

...you'd feel the same.







What if, hypothetically,
I gave it a chance...

and I really just...
couldn't do it.

What would
happen?



To be honest...
that would suck.

And it would
hurt. A lot.



Would things
between us go back
to normal? Is that
even possible?

....



But....
Maybe.

If I saw for myself that
it really is impossible for you...
Then maybe I'd stop having
these delusions about us...







...It's pretty clear that you already seem to know what your answer would be.

So you can't exactly say you're "giving it a chance"

And honestly, I don't think I could handle you telling me that you think I'm gross to my face-



I don't think that, Howie! I'd never think that!

And I'd never say something like that to you!

I'd be lying if I said I wasn't already pretty sure how it would turn out, if I were to try it...

Although I'd do my best to try and keep an open mind.



I know you're probably thinking that what I'm saying sounds selfish

But my reasoning is that if we establish once and for all whether it's possible or impossible for me to be with another man, or to ever be able to see you as more than a friend... then you and I can finally start seeing eye to eye.

And we can decide what to do about our relationship based on that.

.....



I just want us to figure something out. I feel like we're going to avoid each other forever at this rate--

Okay.



I just really hate what we've been doing, Howie...

I hate how we've been avoiding each other. I hate this ambiguous state that we're in....



Maybe you're right. Maybe separating from you hasn't worked like I'd hoped

My feelings for you haven't subsided at all. And we're both miserable.

Maybe we need to try something else.



How.....?



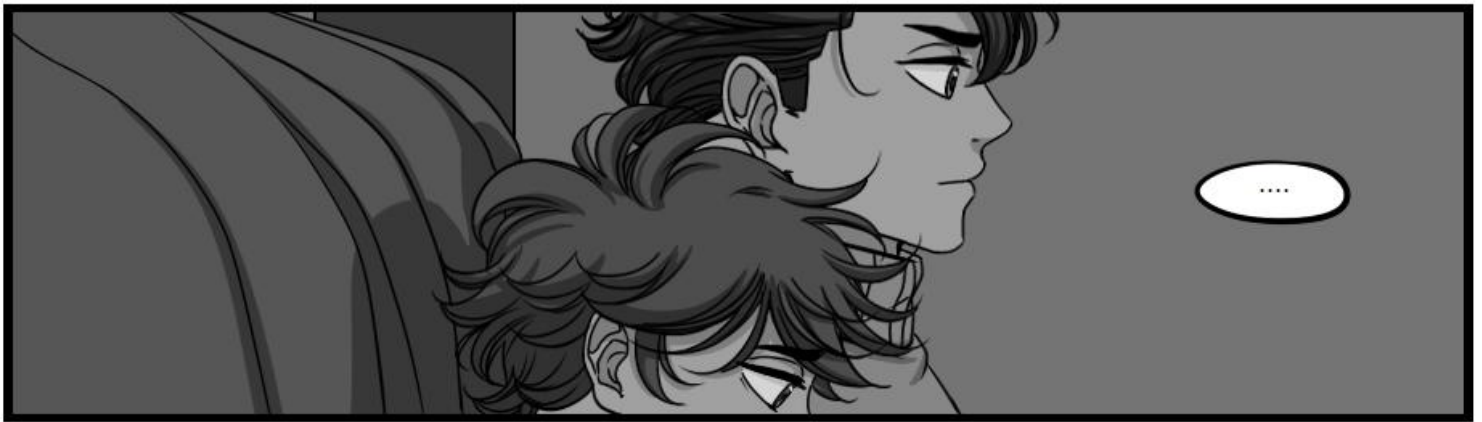
Okay.

Right.

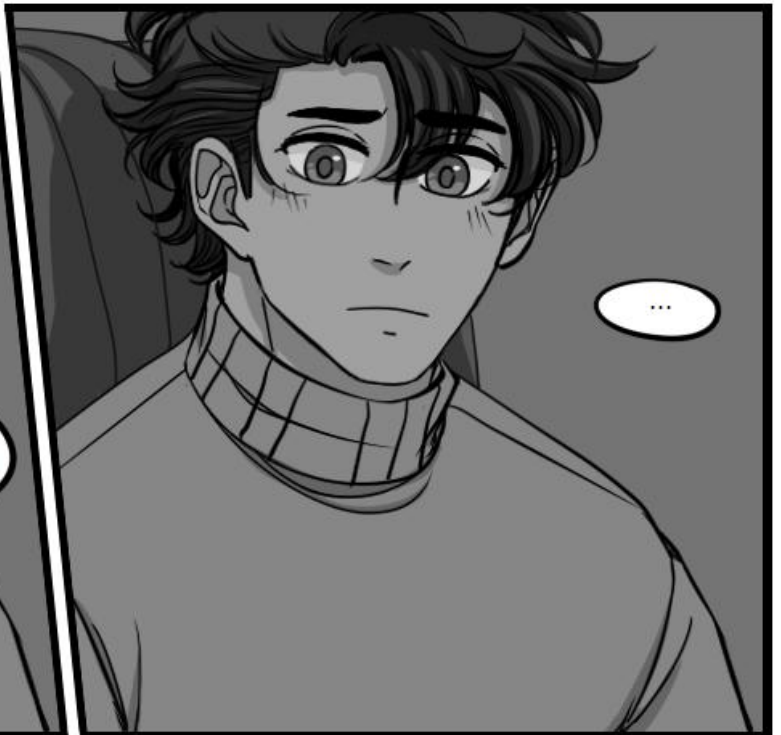
So I'll just... try it then.



...Okay.











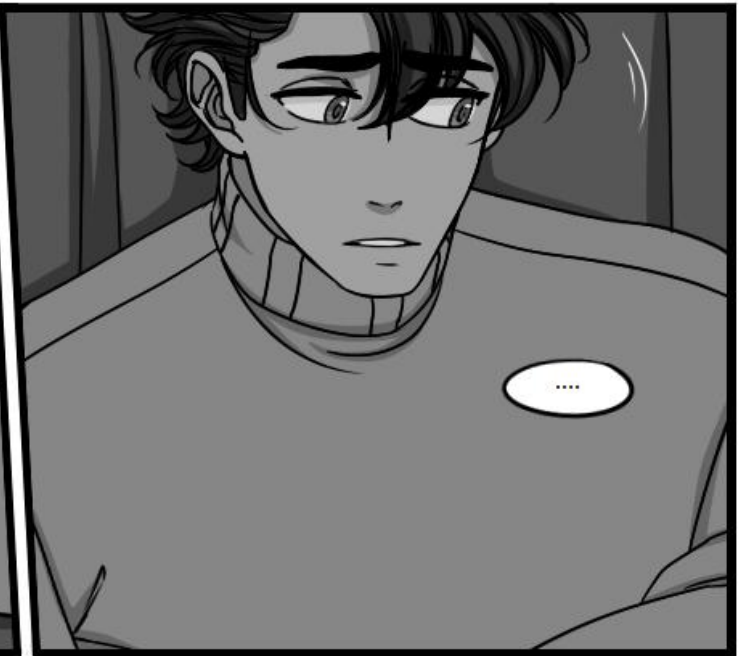


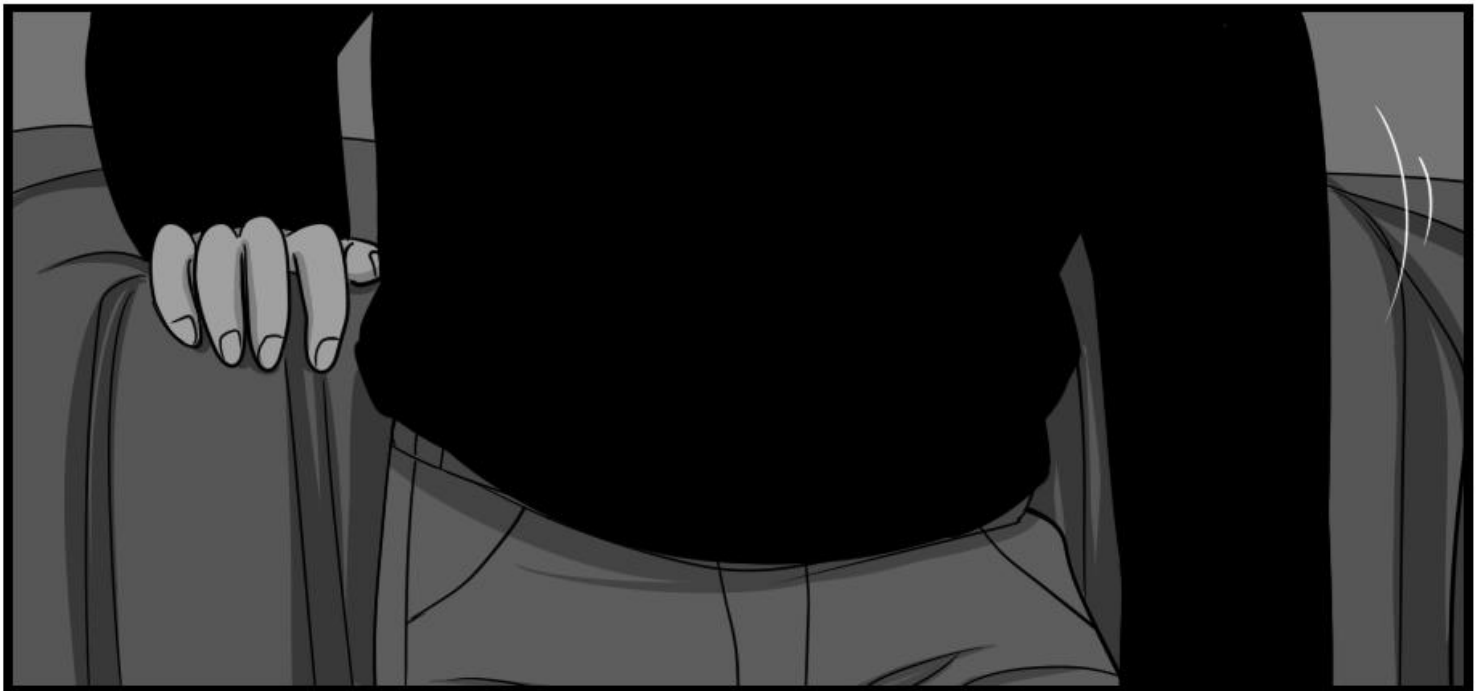














end of chapter seven