





Man, you were dead to the world last night. Once you fell asleep you didn't move an inch. Practically comatose.

Haha... I slept really well.



Right....

Where are you going?

I have work.



....You should ask to take the day off.

Why should I?

To hang out with me.

Yeah? What should be my excuse?

Tell them.... you can't work because you're sick.



Tell them *I'm* sick.

You trying to
get me fired?

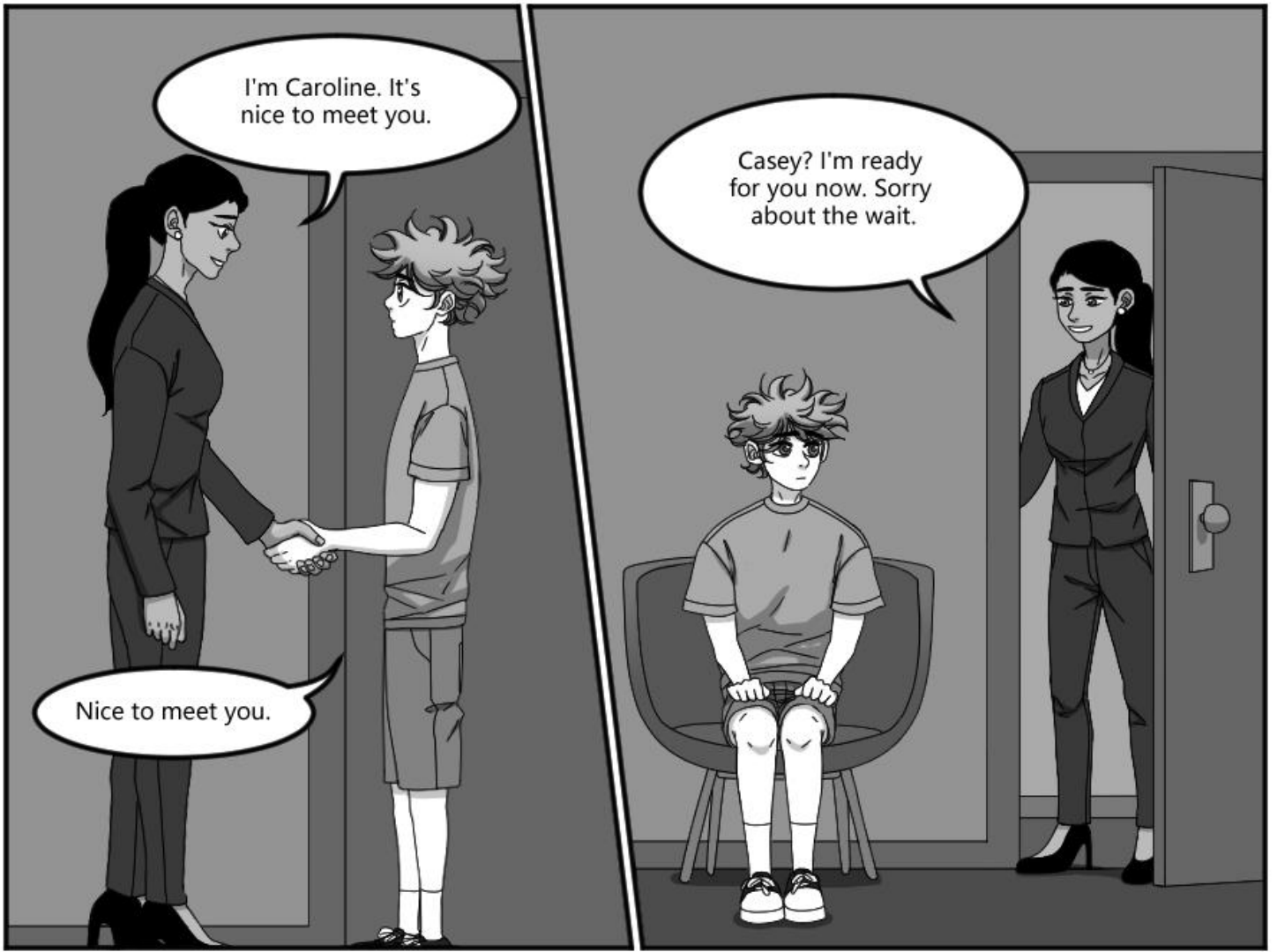


Er.... I'll be back
around 5. And then
tomorrow is Saturday....

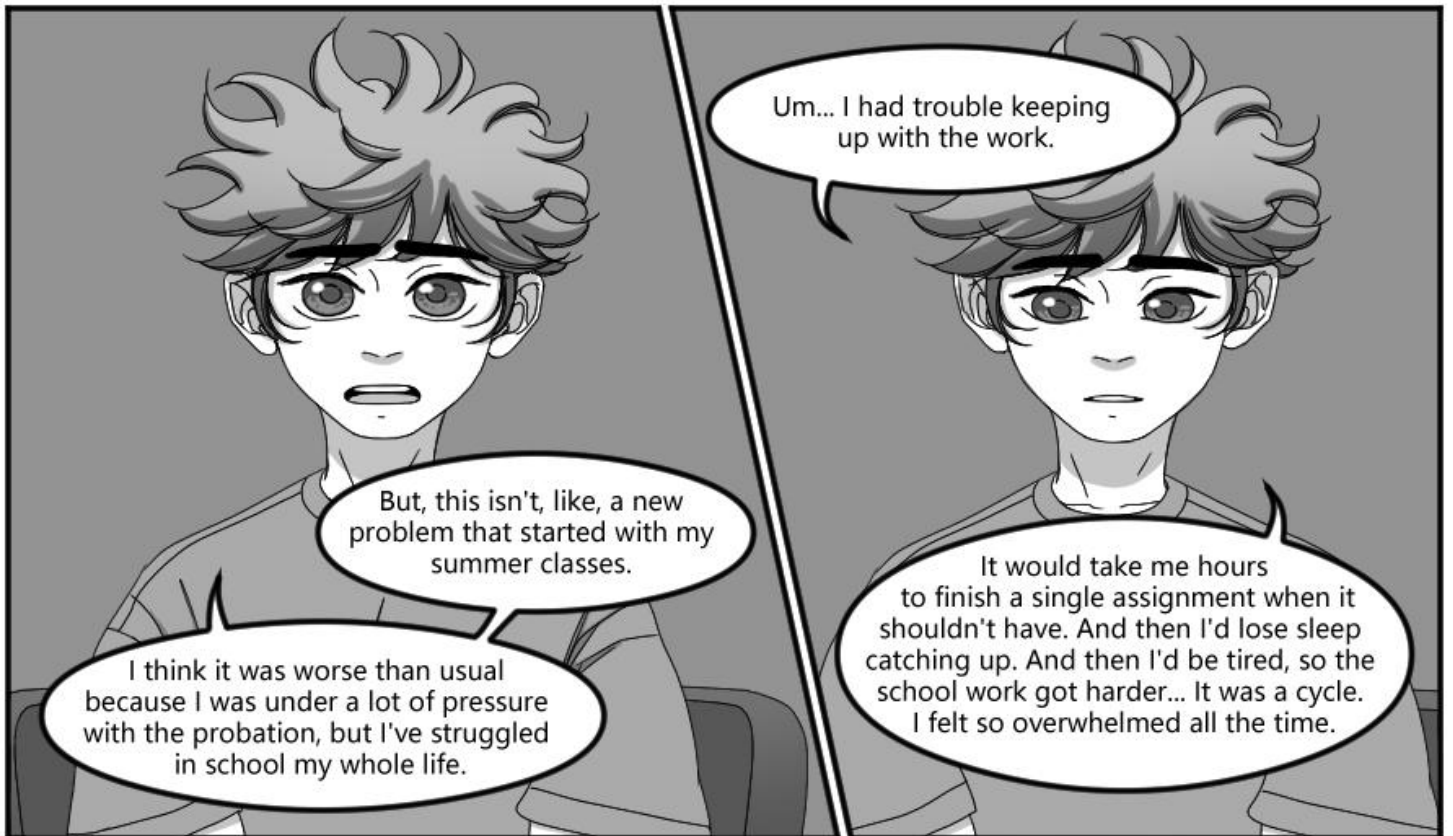
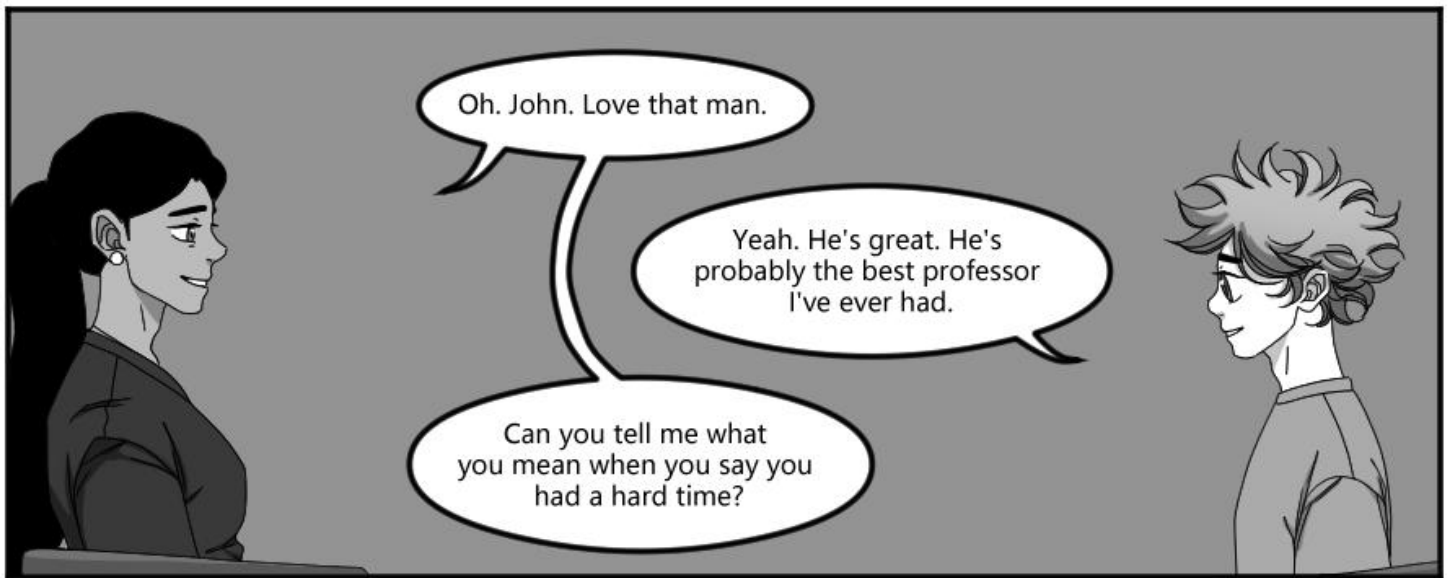
Kay.

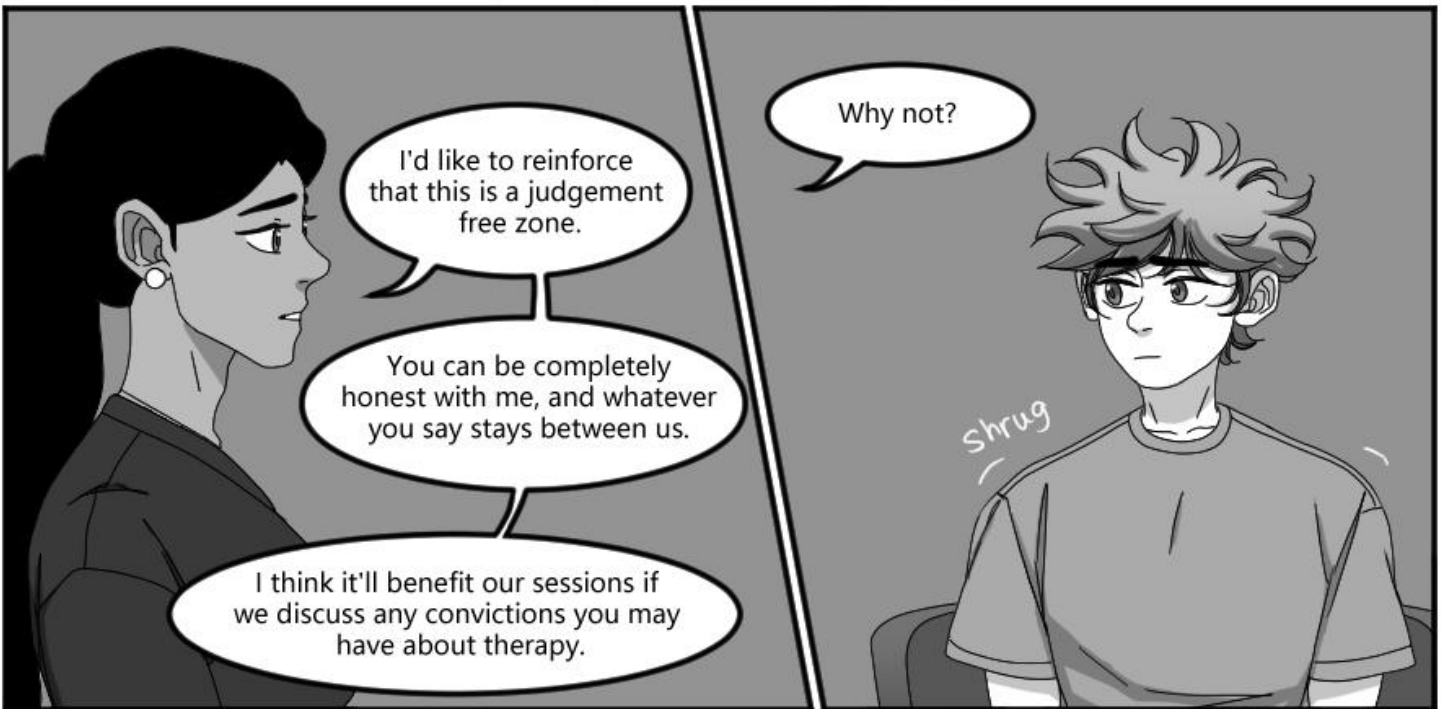
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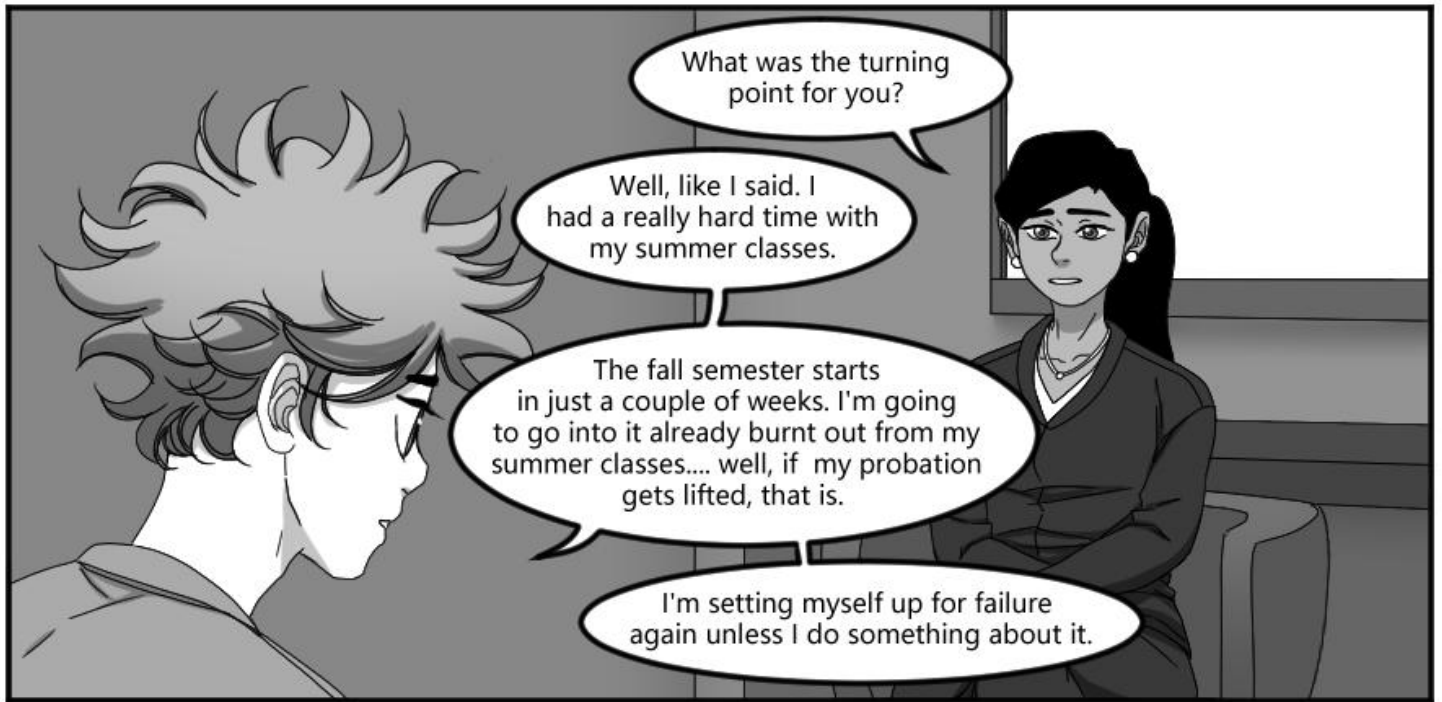












What was the turning point for you?

Well, like I said. I had a really hard time with my summer classes.

The fall semester starts in just a couple of weeks. I'm going to go into it already burnt out from my summer classes.... well, if my probation gets lifted, that is.

I'm setting myself up for failure again unless I do something about it.



And then... I'm also dating someone now.

Uh, his name is Howie. He did a lot for me to help me get through the summer.

He's nothing like me. He's really smart. He's going to be a physician's assistant.

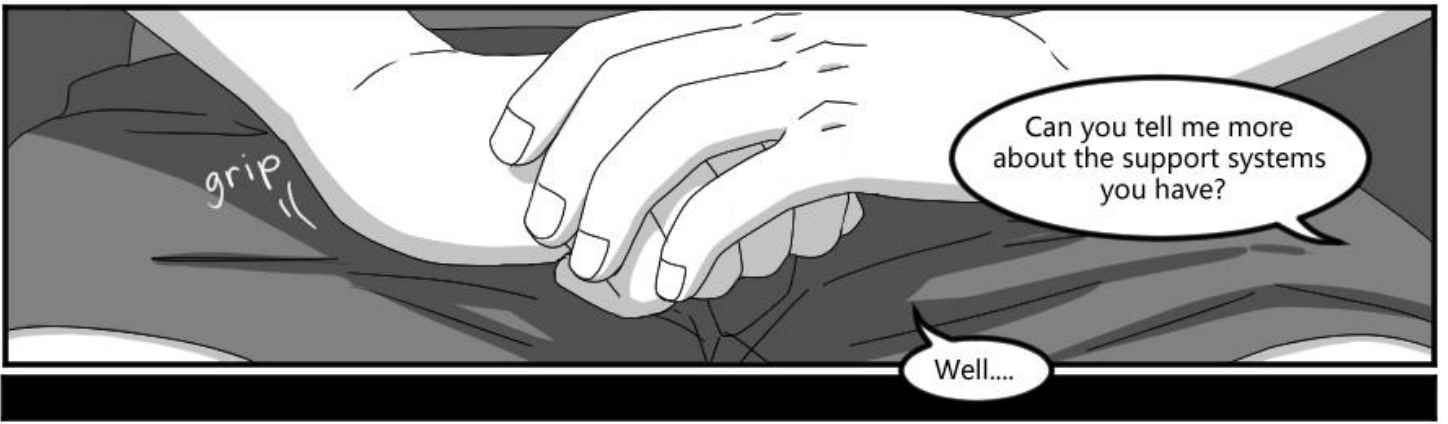
I just don't want to let him down by repeating the same patterns.



He makes you feel more accountable.

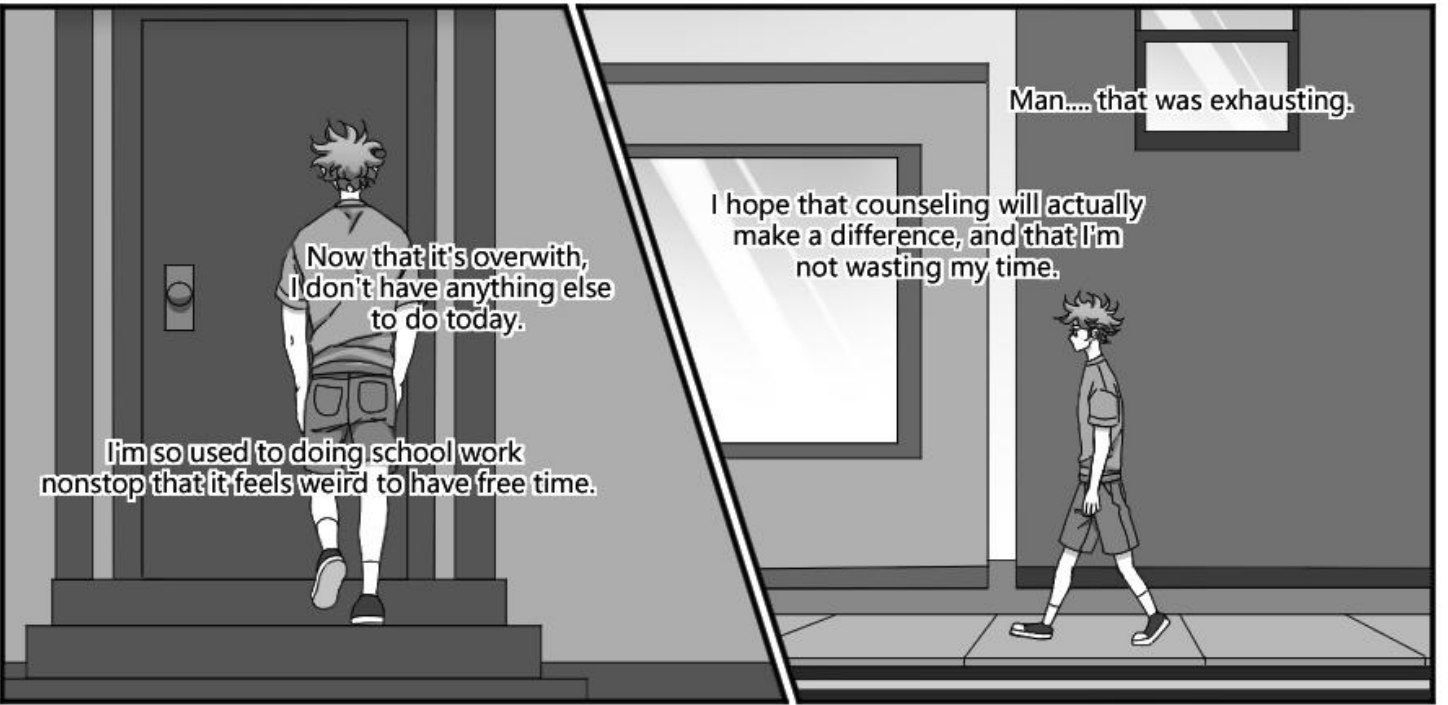
Right...

Well, he sounds wonderful. I'm happy that you have someone like him.



Can you tell me more about the support systems you have?

Well....



Now that it's overwith, I don't have anything else to do today.

I'm so used to doing school work nonstop that it feels weird to have free time.

Man.... that was exhausting.

I hope that counseling will actually make a difference, and that I'm not wasting my time.



swing

What am I supposed to do with myself for the rest of the day-





Aw, Sooch!!

Oh, you're alive!



Steph! I missed you.

I missed you too!!

I heard you finished your classes! Congratulations!

Thanks!



Hey, Molly. You cut your hair! It looks good!

Thank you!

Casey I'll make you a drink!



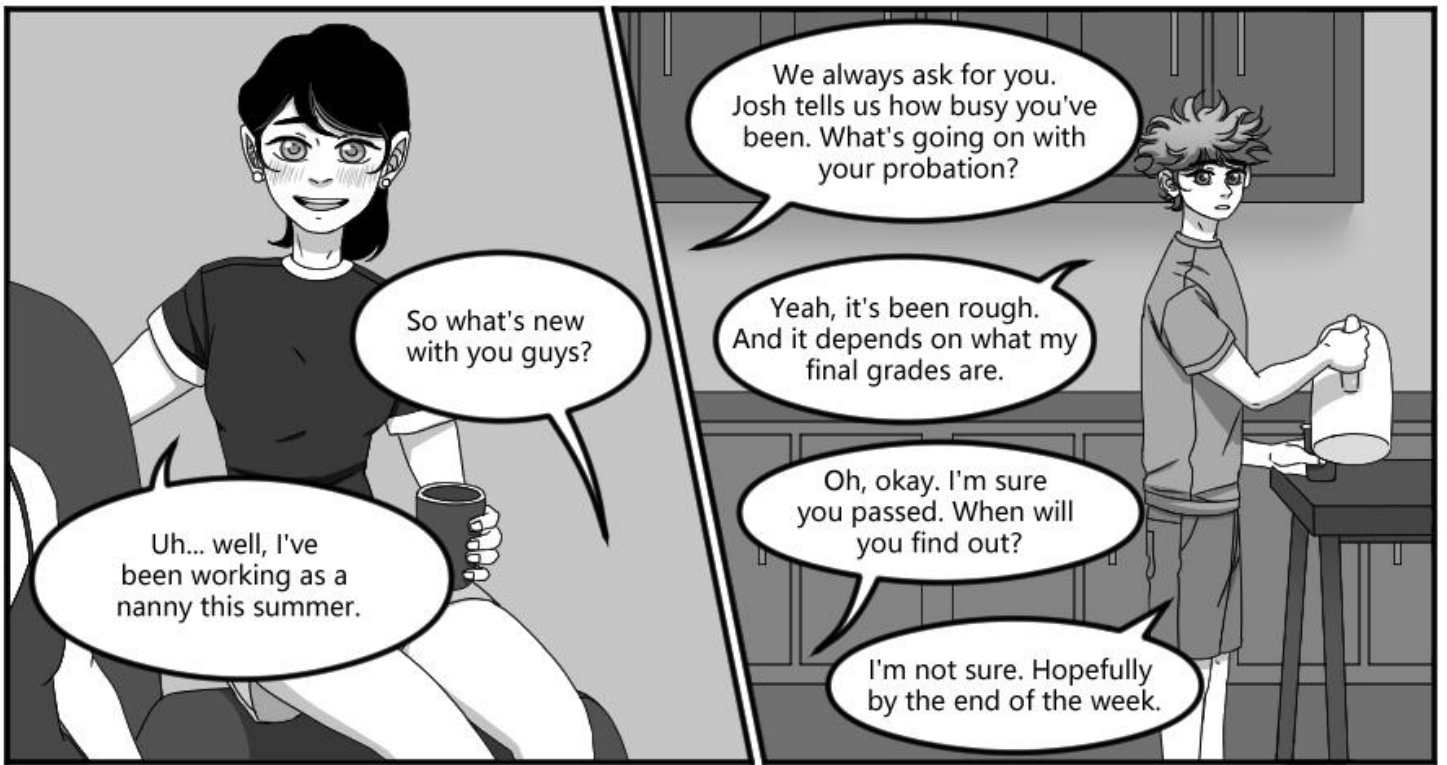
Welcome to my bar!

That's the dingiest bar I have ever seen.

That's cause we're broke!









Hey, how has Howie been?
I feel like I haven't seen or heard
from him all summer.

Oh, he's good. He's working.
He's been with me helping
me out so that's my fault.



I'm sick and tired of hanging
out with these delinquents.

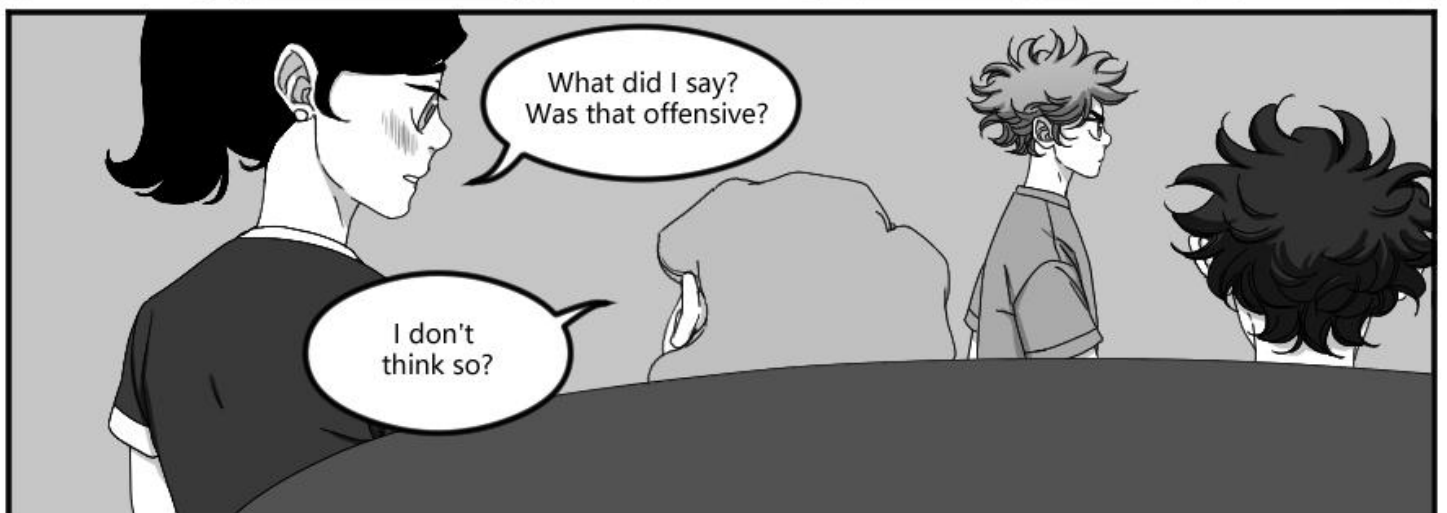
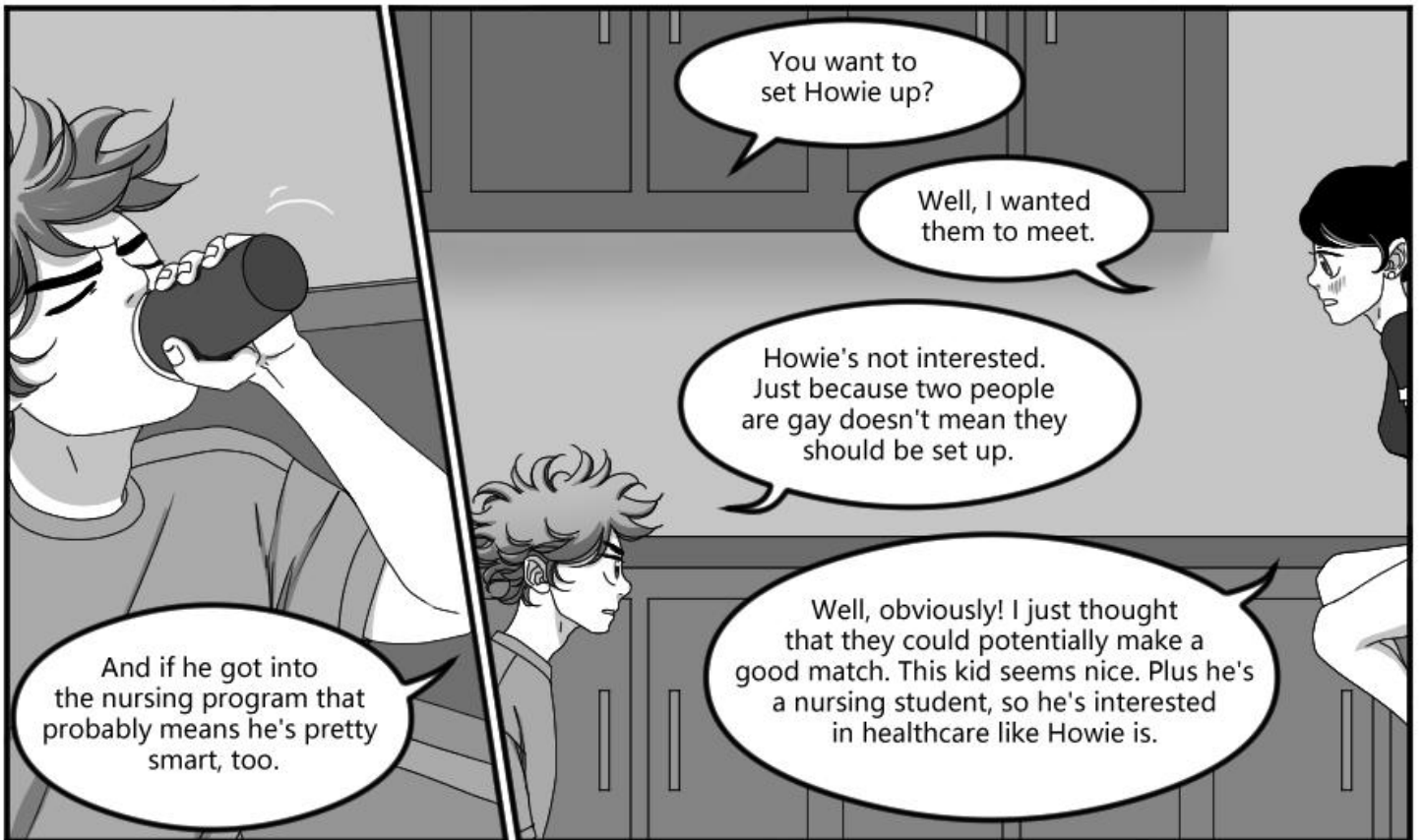
Hey!

Hmm. I miss him.



Oh my god. Speaking
of Howie, I really wish
he'd come by!

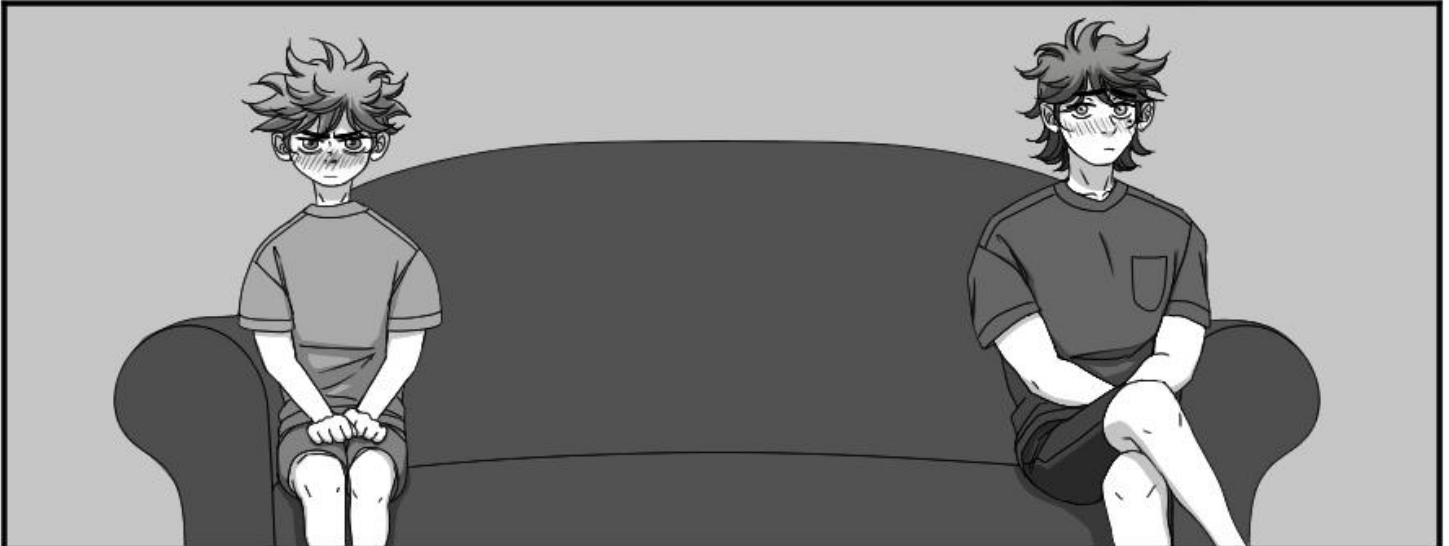
There's this cute guy who
comes to the parties here sometimes
who's gay. I've been wanting
to introduce him to Howie.





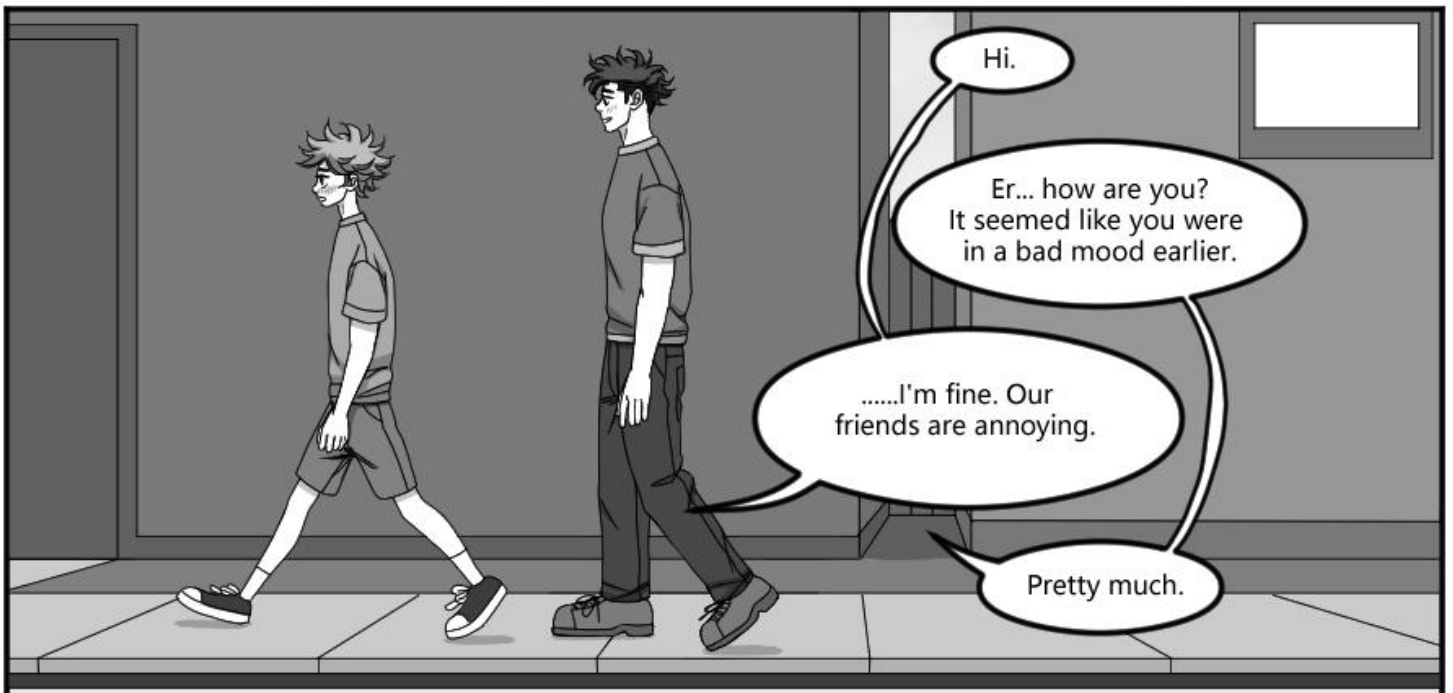




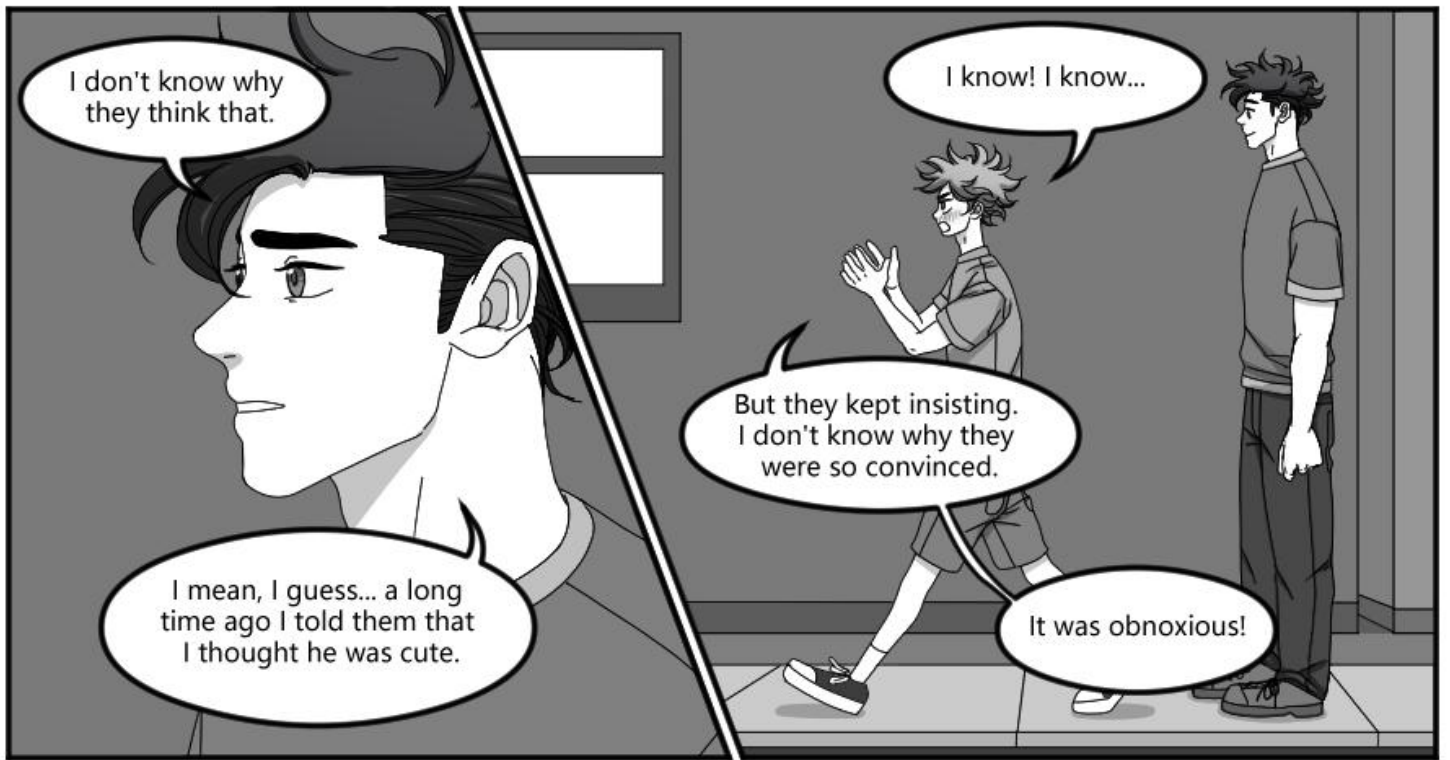


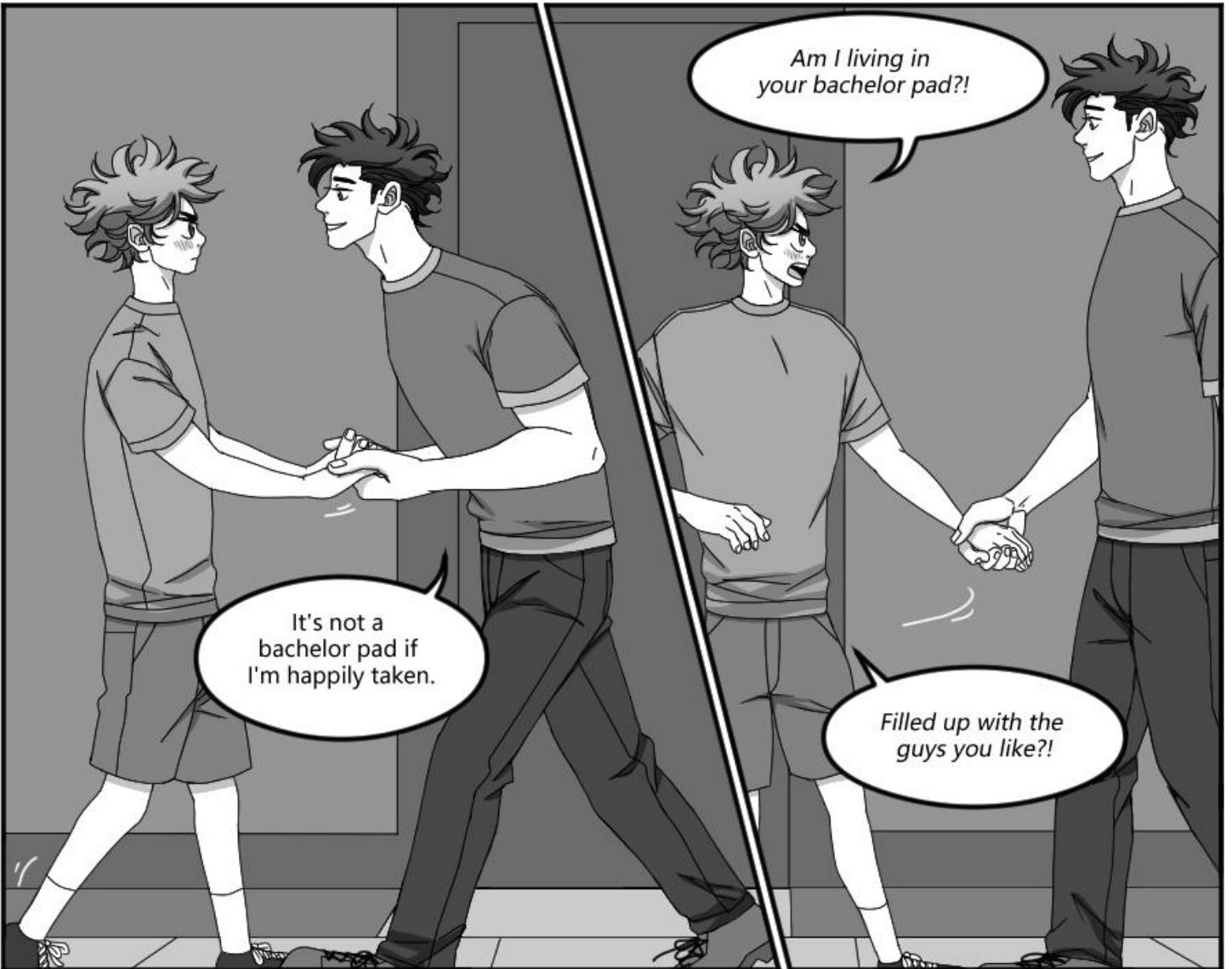


















You know what?
We should just get our
own place next year.

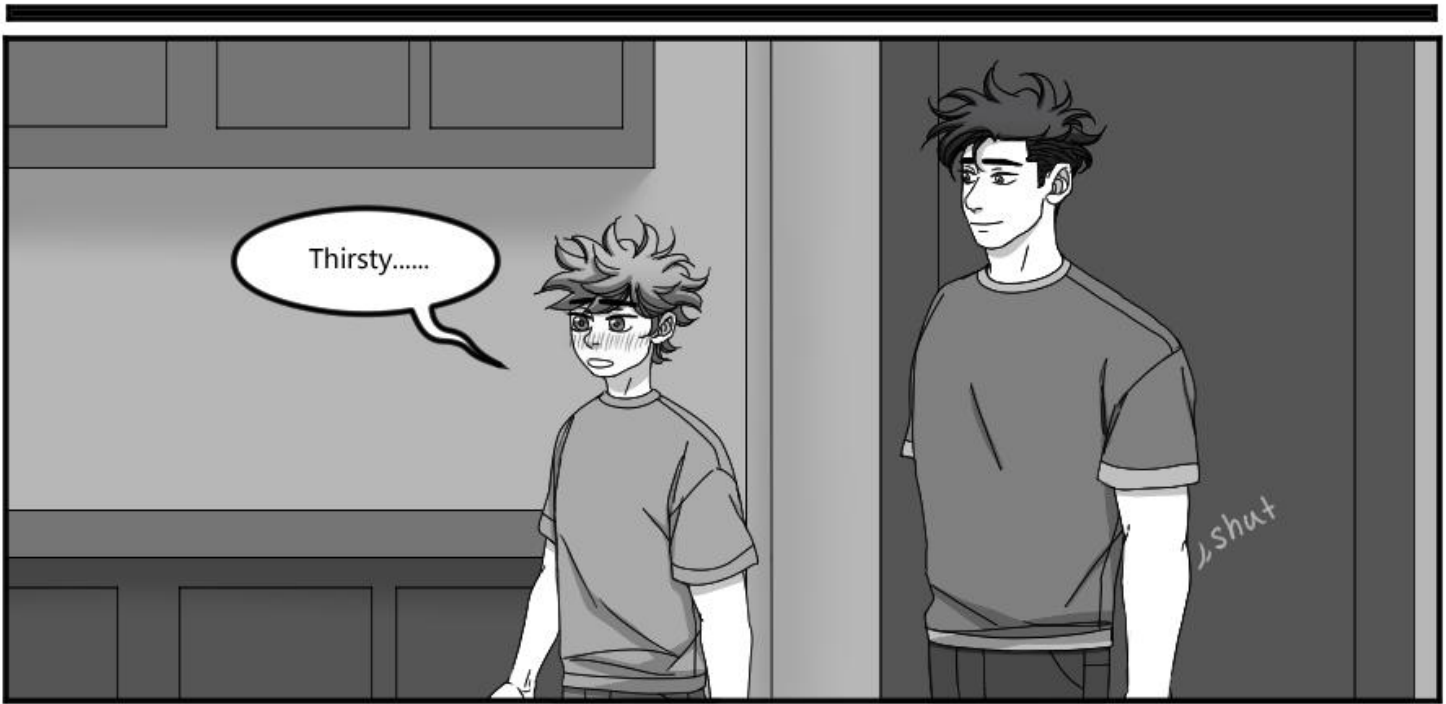
HA
HAHA
HAHA

.....

kiss



....Fine.



Thirsty.....

shut



Sorry.... I need to sober up.

Want to watch a movie?

Okay.

Ah.

Oh, Sooch. Let me.

splash

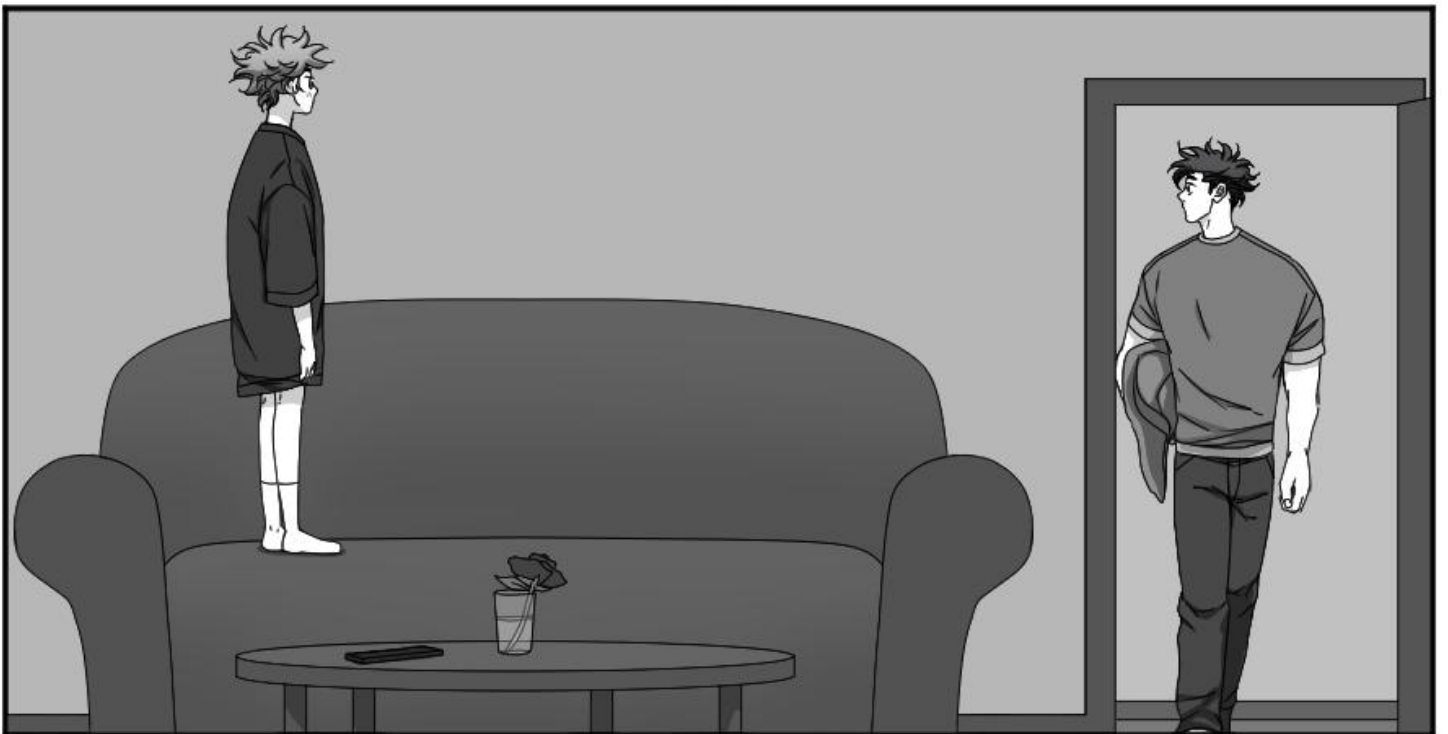


Here, you ding dong.

Thank you!



















Why would you ask me that?

Just.... you know. Lately I've been thinking about what would happen if I didn't pass.



Sooch.... you *passed*. I know you passed.

I'm saying, *what if*.

If I didn't pass my classes, I'm going to get kicked out of school.

Even if I do pass, if my GPA drops again, they won't give me another chance. They'll kick me out. I'll have to go to another school.



What would we do if that happened? Would we be long distance?





Be serious!

I am being serious!

But... all our friends are here...

And? They'll be just fine.

...I couldn't ask you to do that.

Sooch, the only reason I chose this school was because it was close to home. Aside from that, I didn't care where I studied. But I have you now. And if you have to leave, I'll go with you. It's that simple.



Besides.... I imagine that, if you had to leave, and go to some new school all by yourself, you might.... be sad.

I couldn't stay here knowing that you were alone and sad.

And I think.... I mean, I *imagine*.... that you might want me there with you....



...I'd want you there with me....







If you won't pick one, I will.

click



That's right....

Howie and I wouldn't have met.

We so easily might not have met, if either of us made different choices.



If I had never known you....



If you had never been my friend...

If you had never loved me...



How sad.

How sad.



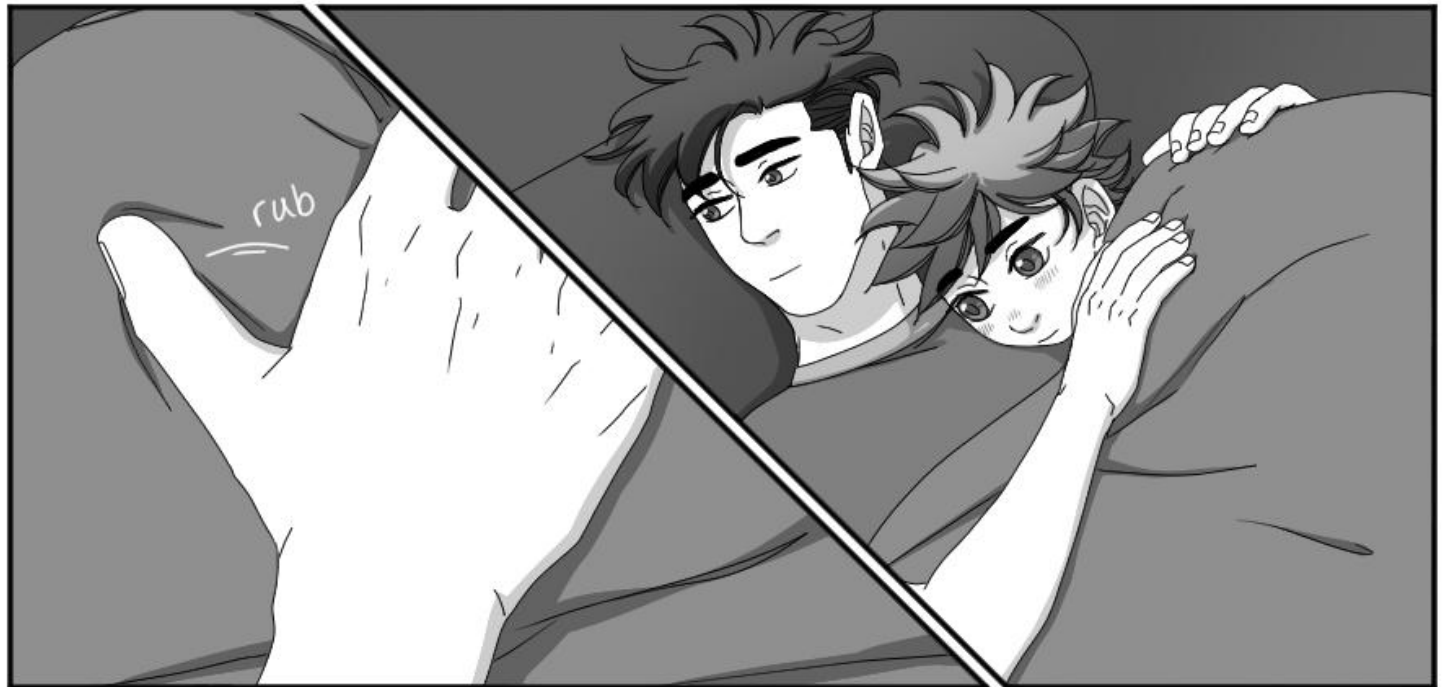
I feel very out of control of my life sometimes....

I always worry that I'm failing... that I'm behind everyone else....



But... if my life had been any different, I wouldn't be here right now.

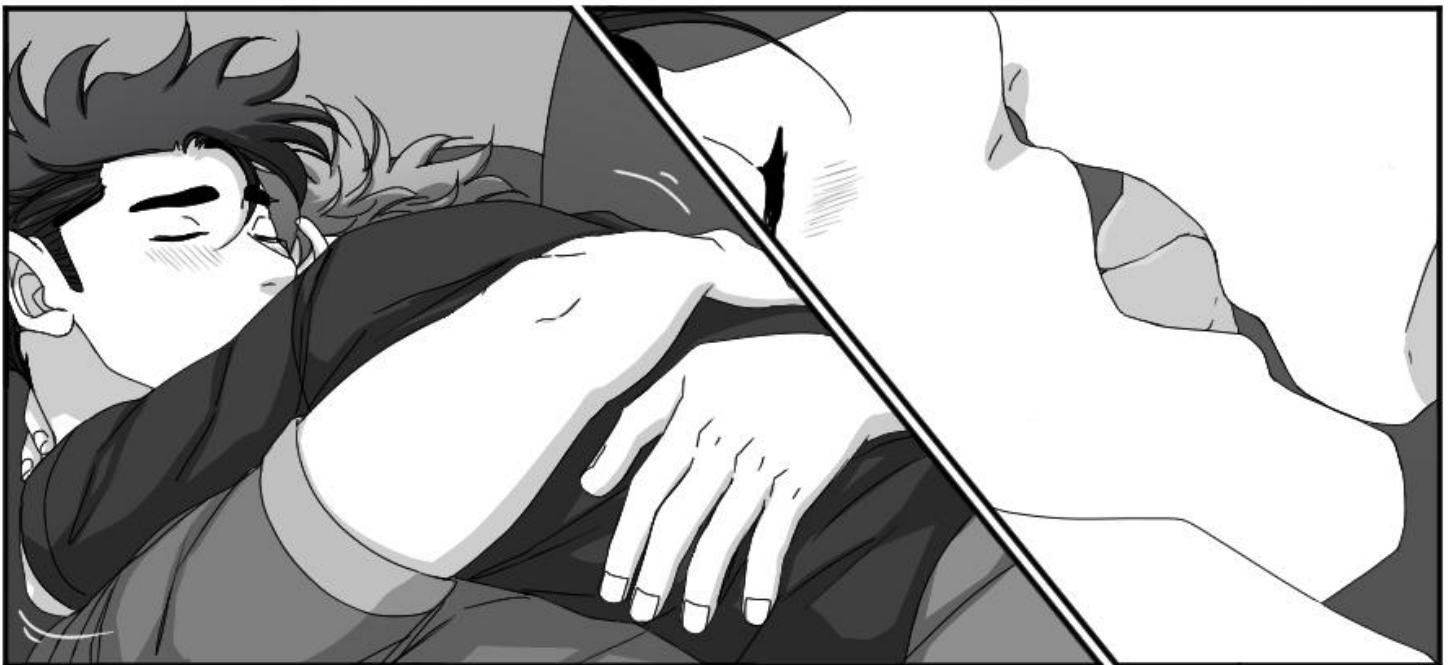
Maybe I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be.























And we're doing so well. We're doing really, really well.

I don't want to risk that by jumping into anything. There's no need to rush.

We did get together under some pretty.... *unusual* circumstances, after all.



Just to be clear, I'm not saying that we should jump into *anything*.

But I'm at a place where I feel ready to start... *moving forward* with you.

I think we're ready to start talking about it, at least... I think we need to.

We've been dancing around the subject lately. I mean, you always push me away when we kiss....



Uh. Well. That's...

I've.... liked you for a long time. When it comes to you, it doesn't take a lot for me to.... *you know*.

I don't want to be.... *too much*. I don't want to freak you out.



....You won't.

It's the same
with me....



Haha....

Just kidding....



What if.... you see
me naked.... and think,
"holy crap, Howie's, like, a
huge giant guy!".







I... love your strong arms. And your hands, they're so big and warm.

I love that you're so much bigger than I am.

I know I'm safest when I'm with you.

When you hold me... when you touch me, I just feel so...



I can't get enough. I never felt this way about anyone before...

...I didn't know. I didn't know I liked those things...



I wish I had known....



We did have an unusual start. We didn't get together in a typical way.

I know that you feel that our relationship is fragile because of that, and that you always need to be careful around me....

But that's not how I feel.



This whole thing started out as a sort of test in the beginning. We didn't know if it would work.

And we had been fighting. We were both hurting.... We were in a bad place.

And what we have now is so much more than what we had before.

But we worked really hard to build our relationship back up. It was scary, and we had to put a lot of trust in each other.

