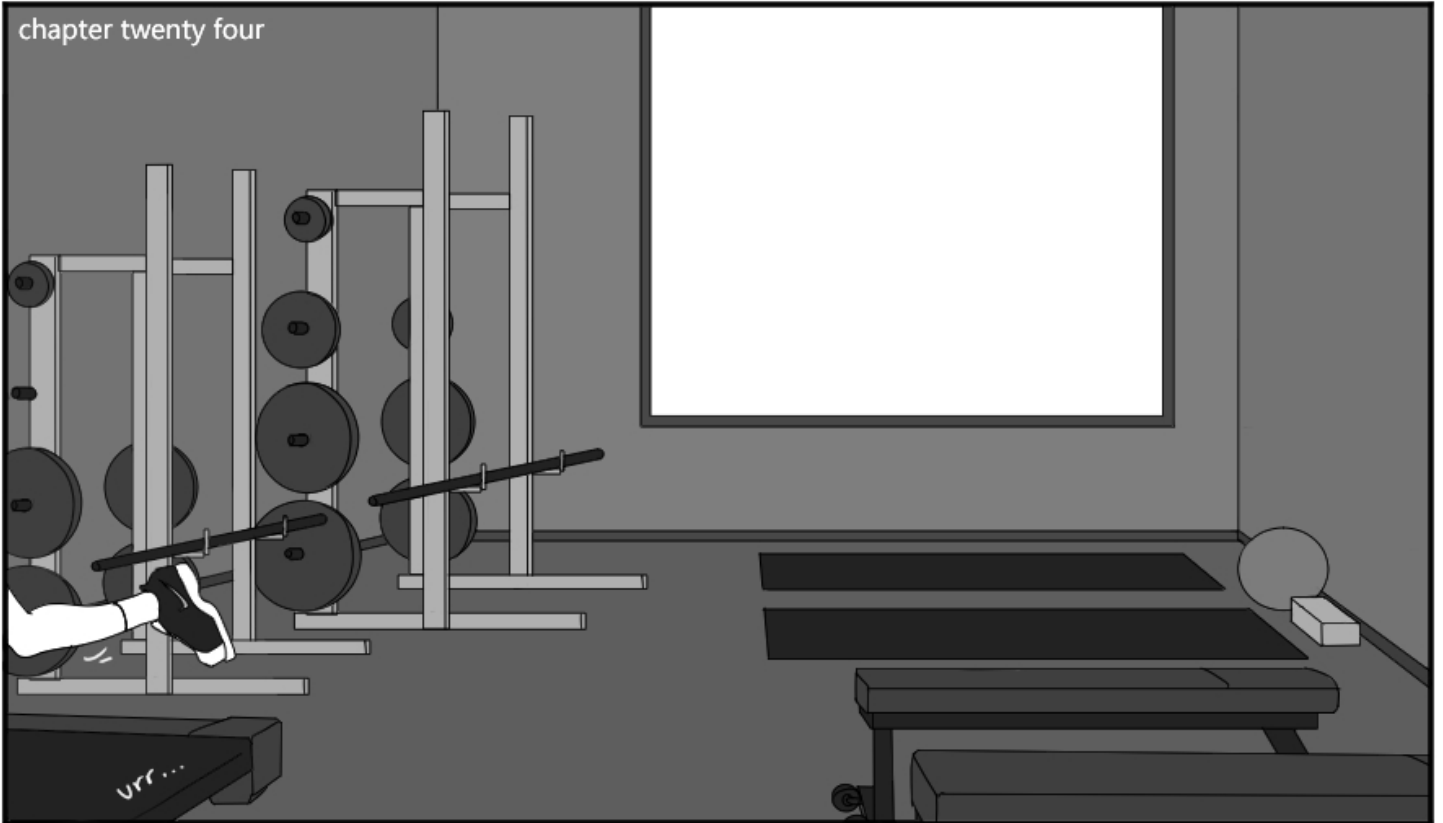


chapter twenty four





Oh.... Hi Steph....
I didn't know you were
gonna be here.

Yes,
I'm here!

Don't touch me
I'm sweaty.

dodge

You're late. I was
starting to wonder if
you were gonna bail.

Oh.... haha....
Course not....

Literally almost
bailed to get
some action.



Not really. I
stretched at home.

You need to warm
up or what?

Cool. You think you
could spot me, then?



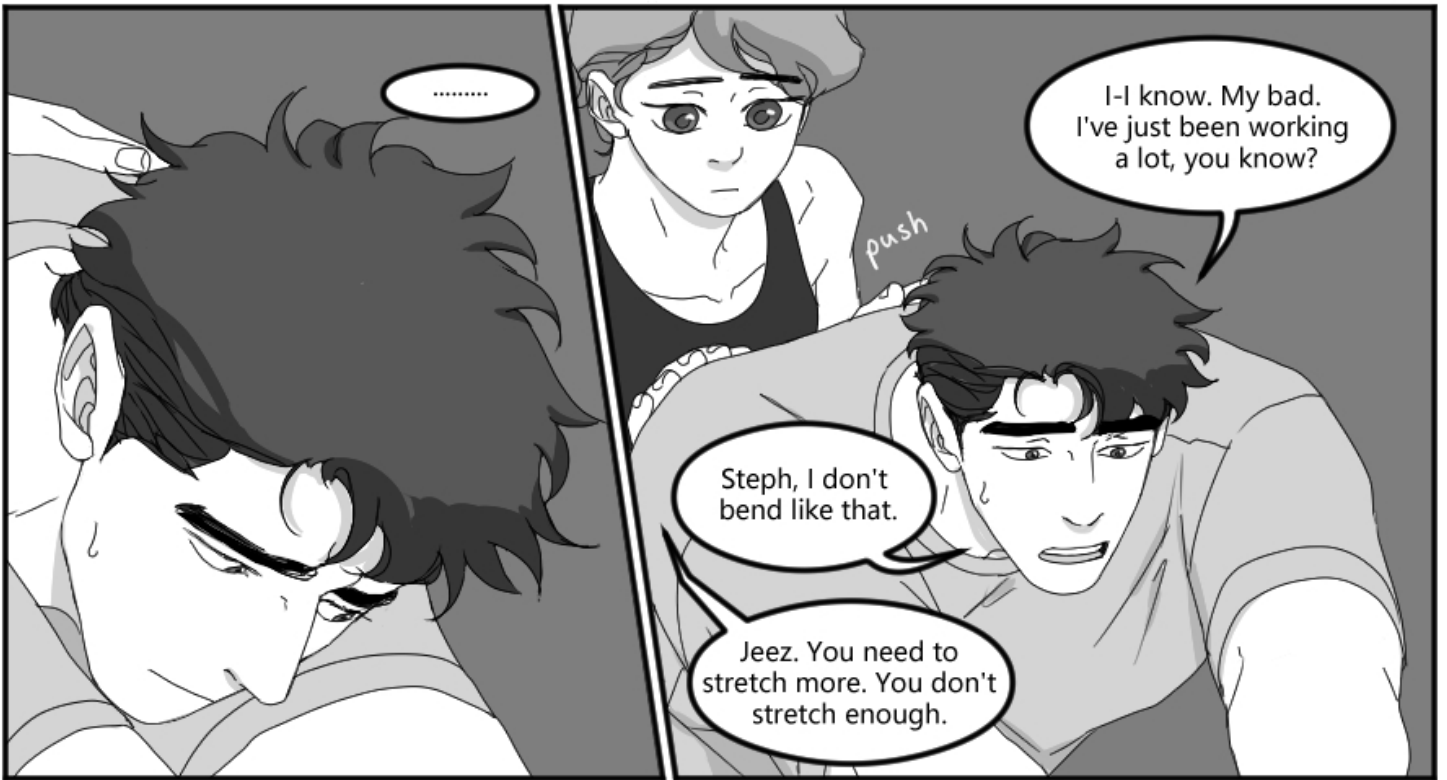
Sure-

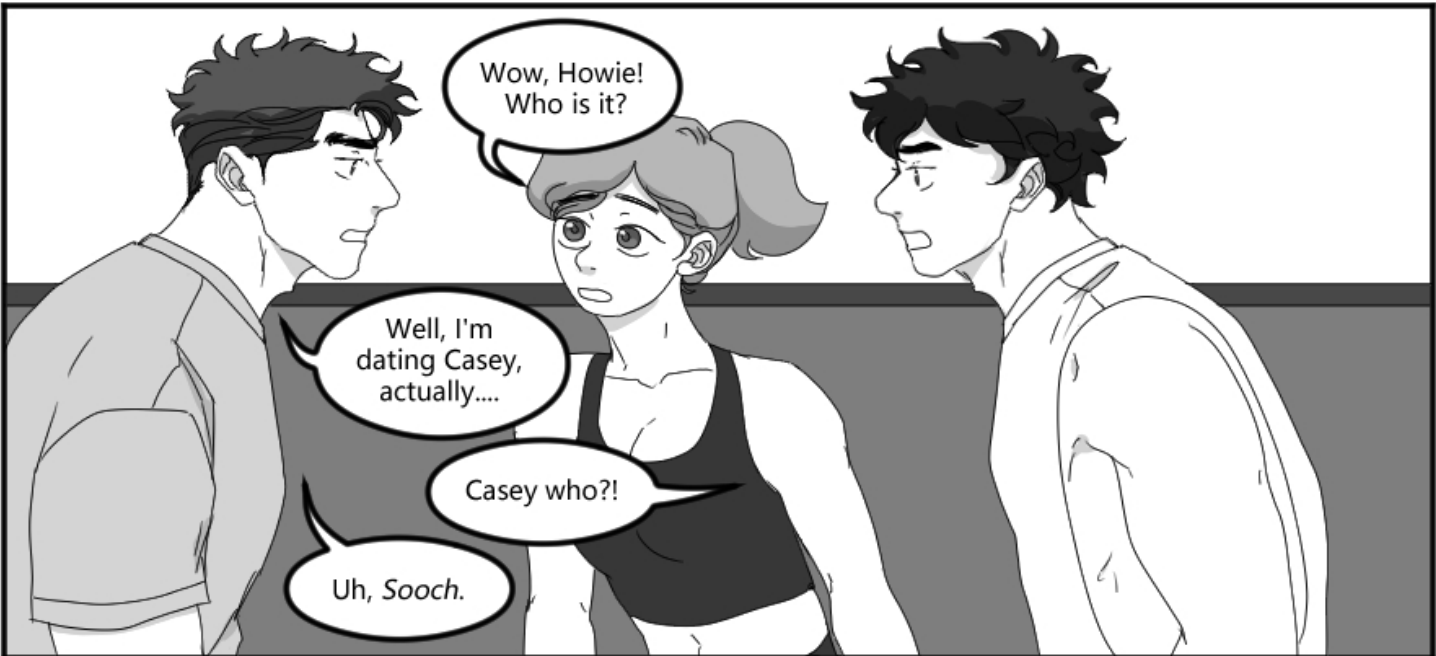
Ugh- Ben! Put
that thing away. You're
gonna poke my
eye out.

What the hell are
you even wearing?





















Yes. We are.
We've been dating
for a few weeks.

It's been private until
now. I planned on telling
Ben about it tonight-



I don't want
anyone making jokes
around him.

I don't want anyone
making any sort of commentary
about it, or acting funny
around him.

This hasn't been easy for
him and I don't want him to
have to deal with that kind of
shit, too. If I can help it.



-I didn't know
you were gonna be
there, to be honest.

Oh. Sorry....

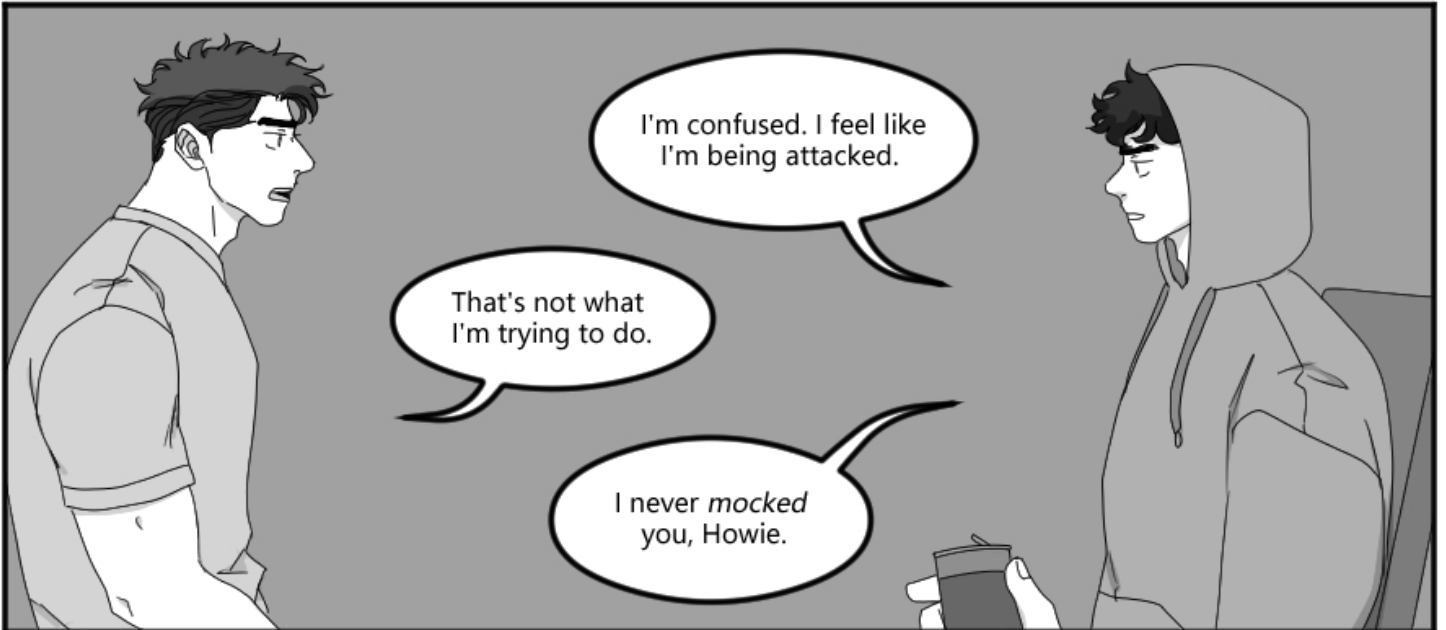
No, it's all
good. We want
you to know.



Anyway, I wanted
to break the news to
you without him, Ben-

-Because you weren't
exactly receptive when
I came out to you.

I know you didn't mean
any harm. And I didn't tell you
how it made me feel, which
is on me. But I didn't like it.





I'm not....
put off.

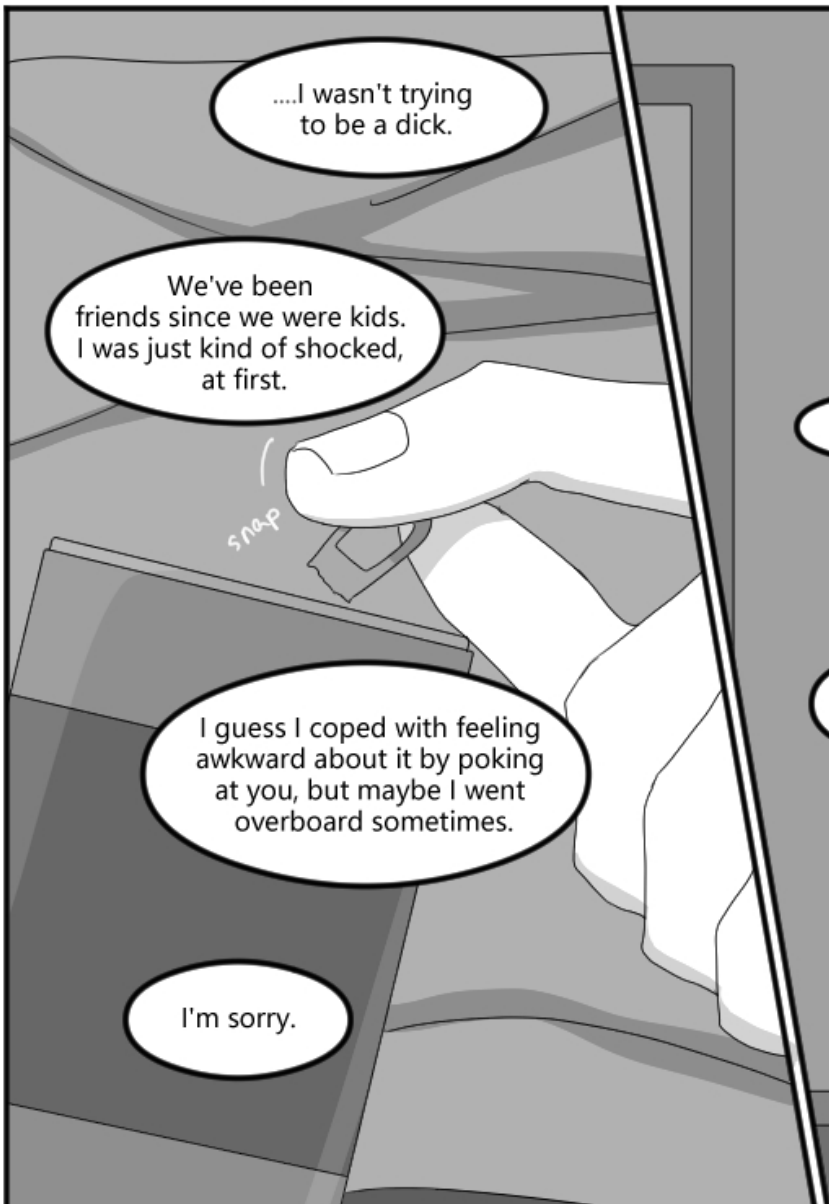
Jeez, Howie....



I mean, yeah-

In all honesty, I did
feel very *awkward*
about it, at first.

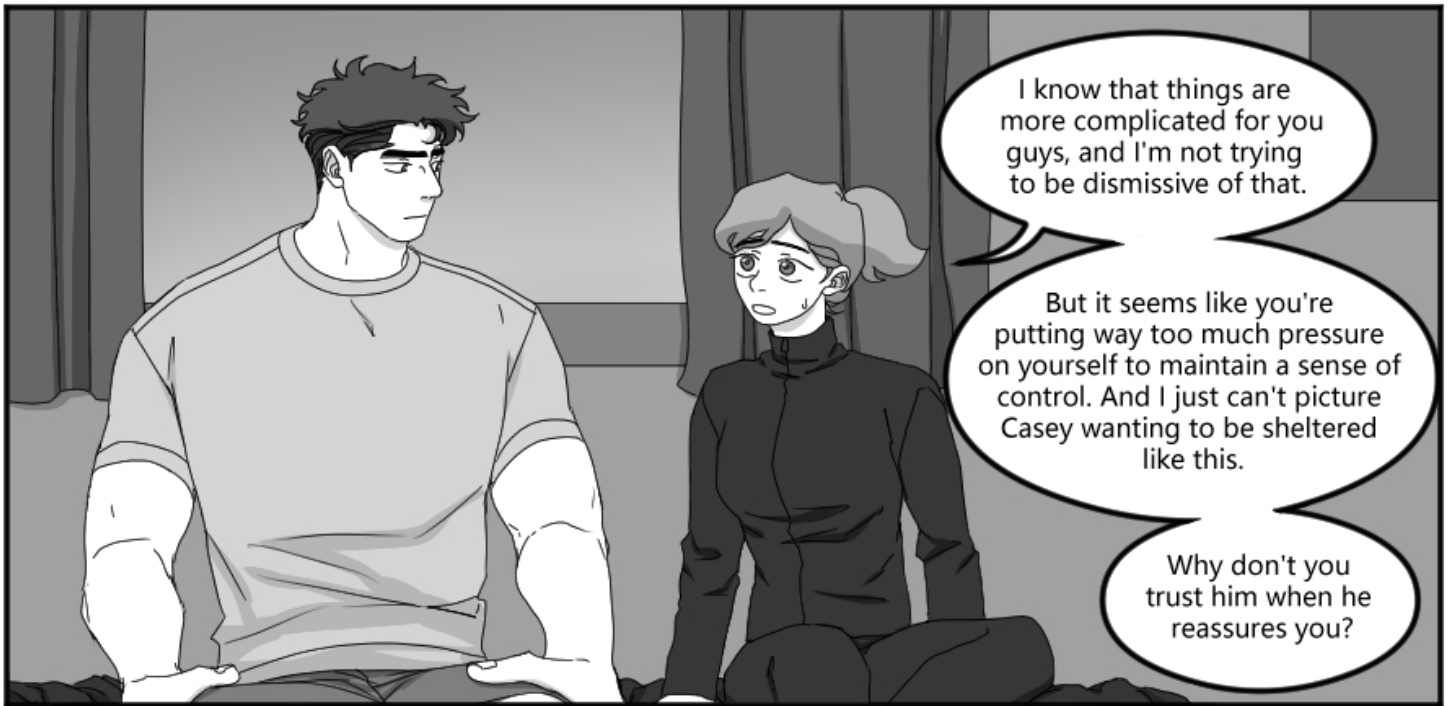
But I don't have a
problem with you
being gay.



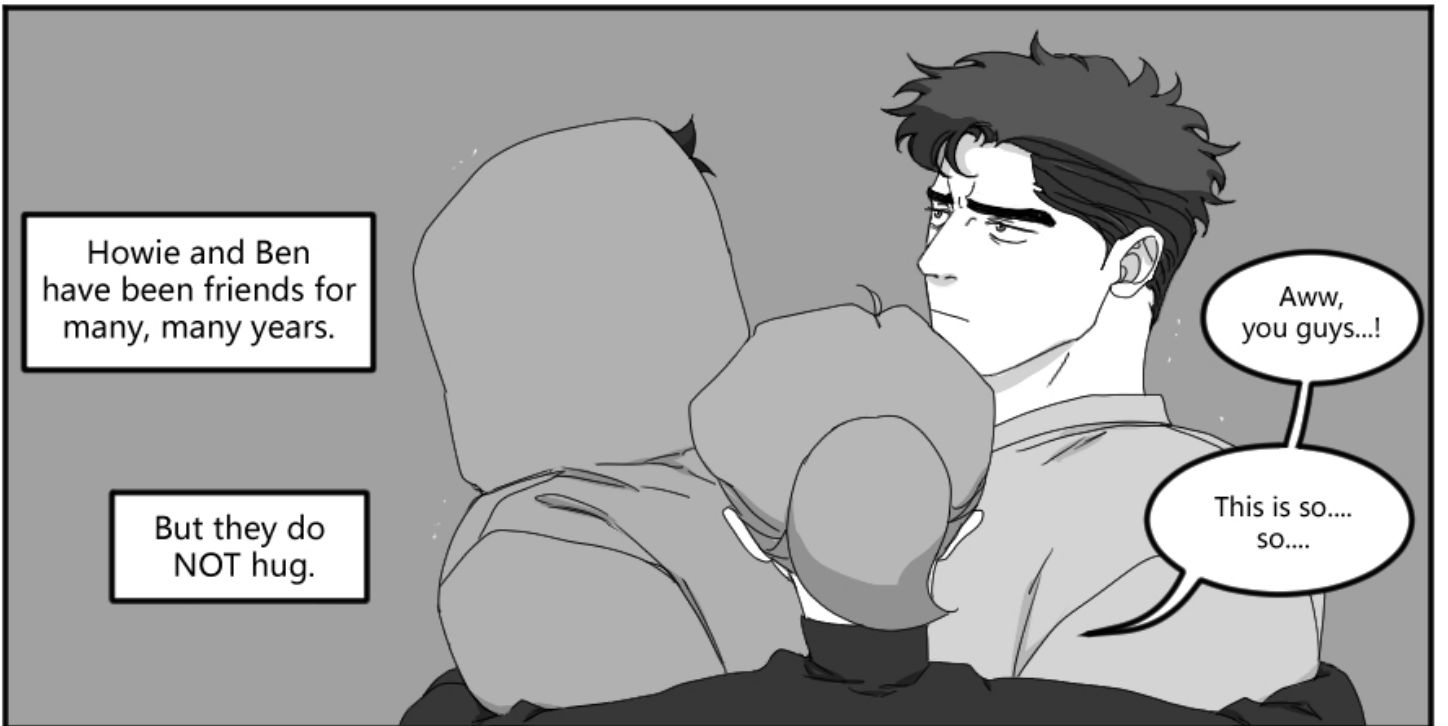




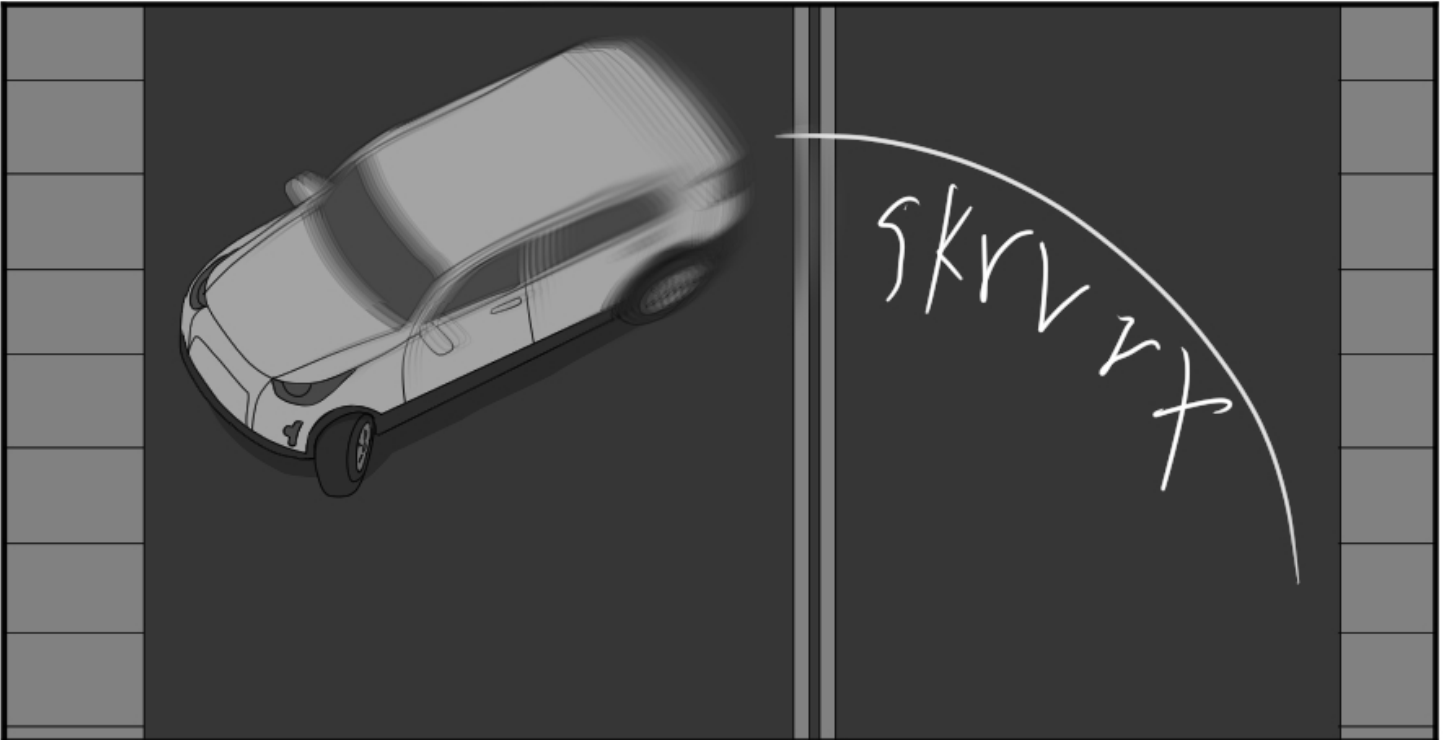


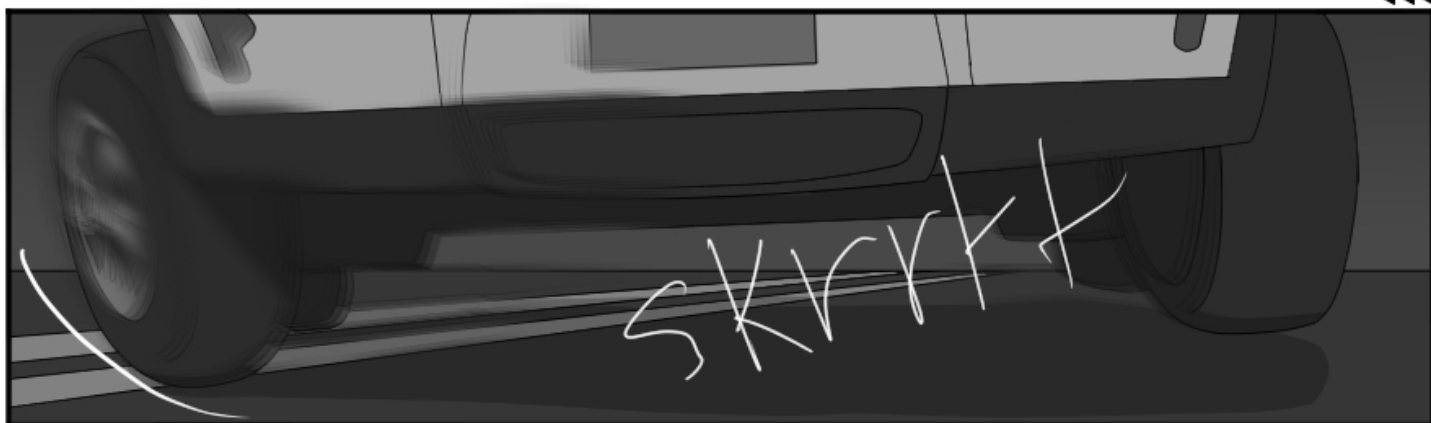


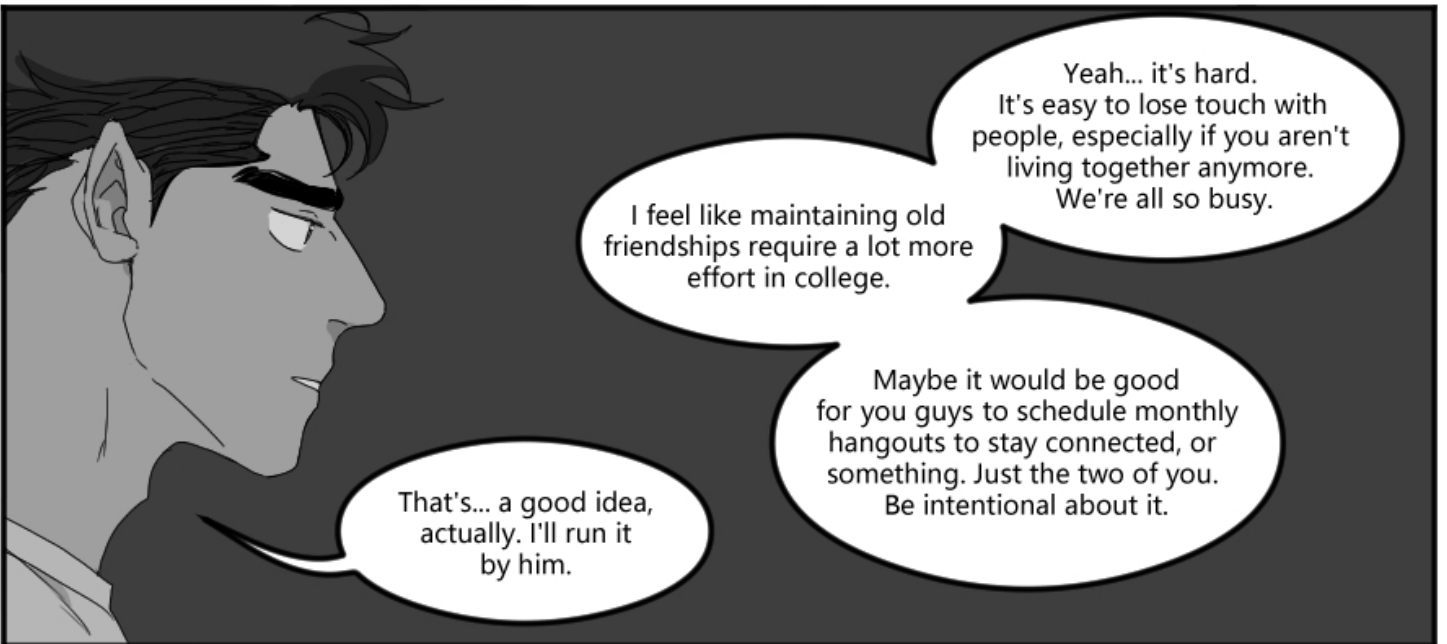
















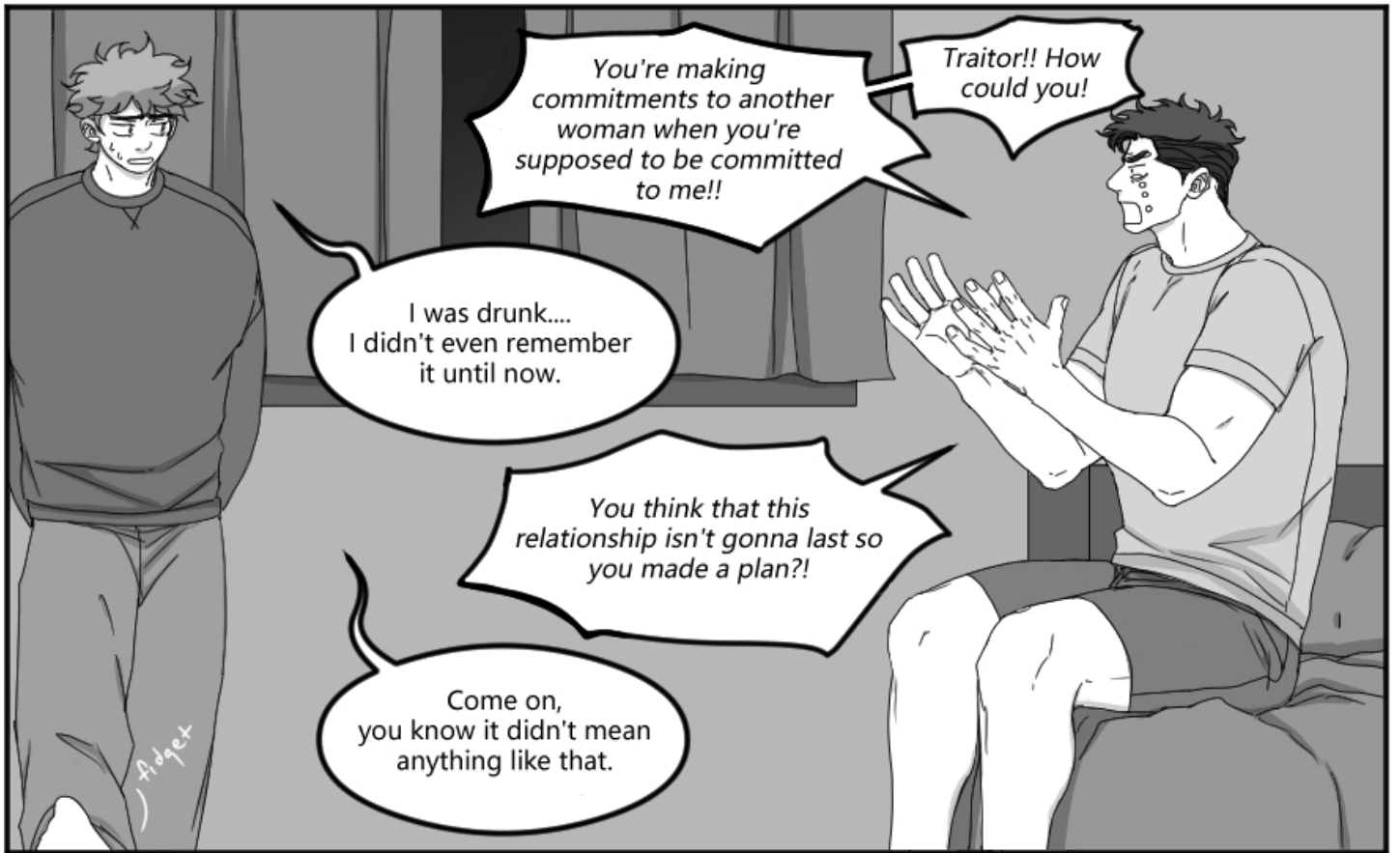
























You think the adderall helped?

Ugh. I dunno, Could've just been a placebo effect.

Oh, come on. What's your beef with the adderall?

You finished?

I think so.

I'll look at it with fresh eyes tomorrow.

That's awesome! It would be so good to finally be done with all the work.



I told you. I don't like the idea of relying on medicine.

I guess I just don't see it as a big deal. I mean, when I'm sore, I take ibuprofen.

I wanna build muscle to show off for you so I take my protein powder and my creatine.

Alright.

All I'm saying is I don't see the problem with getting help from a pill or whatever, if you need it.











....I want you to remember that we were best friends first.

If this situation's got you thinking I might feel disappointed with you, or that I may change my mind about you....

If you ever catch yourself having thoughts like that in the future....



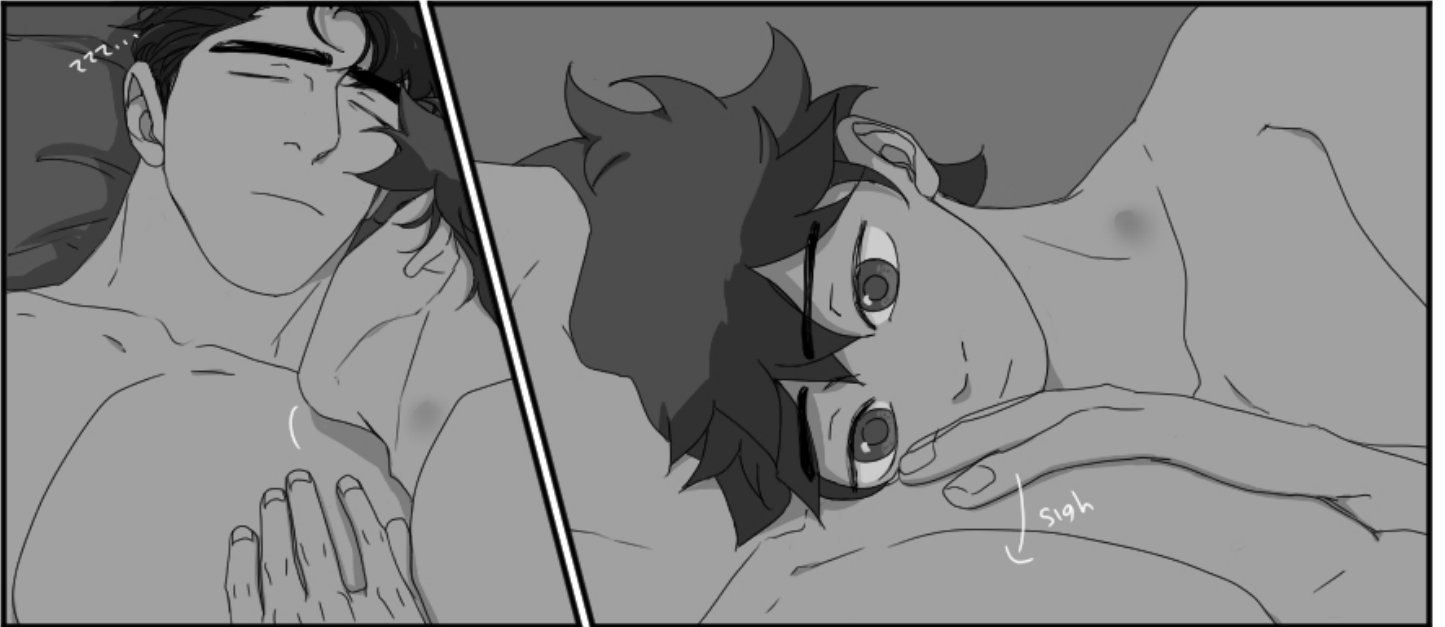
I knew you really, really well. Good, bad, ugly.

I fell in love with the whole picture. You understand? There's nothing to be disappointed with.

I understand the pressure you feel to be able to give your partner anything they could ever want, because I feel it too. But at the end of the day, all I want is to be in love with my best friend.









Oh.... yeah.
I'm wide awake.

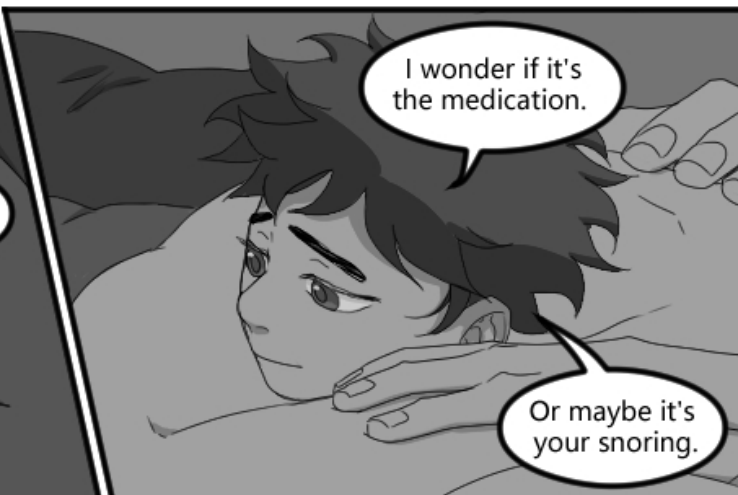
Can't sleep?

How come?

I dunno.



I don't
snore!



I wonder if it's
the medication.

Or maybe it's
your snoring.



Do I snore?

When you sleep
on your back. It's
quiet though.

I'm sorry I woke
you. You have work
tomorrow.

I can go to
the other bed so
you can sleep.

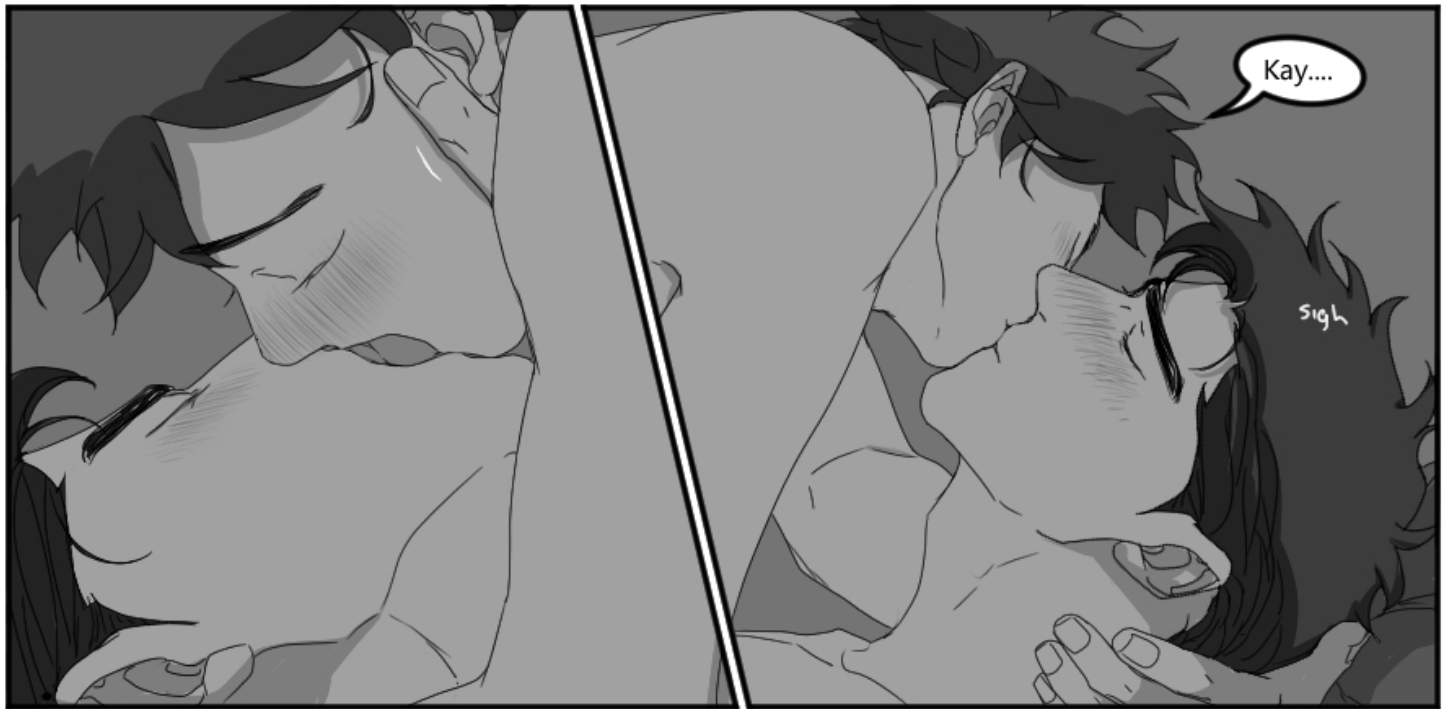
No. Stay.

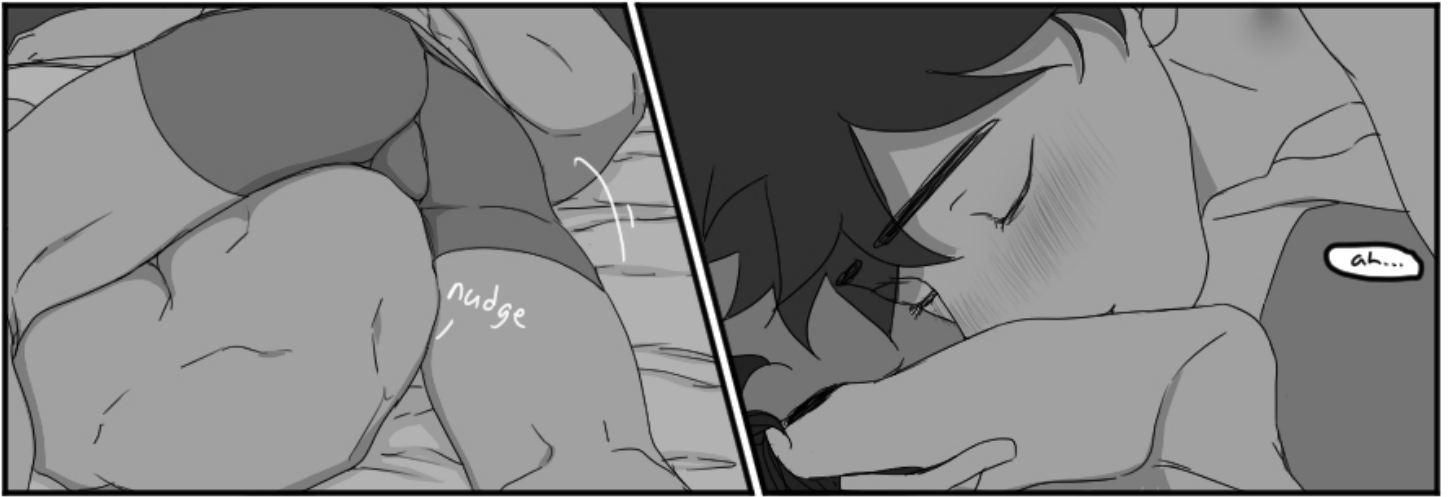
Okay. I'll stay.
Close your eyes.

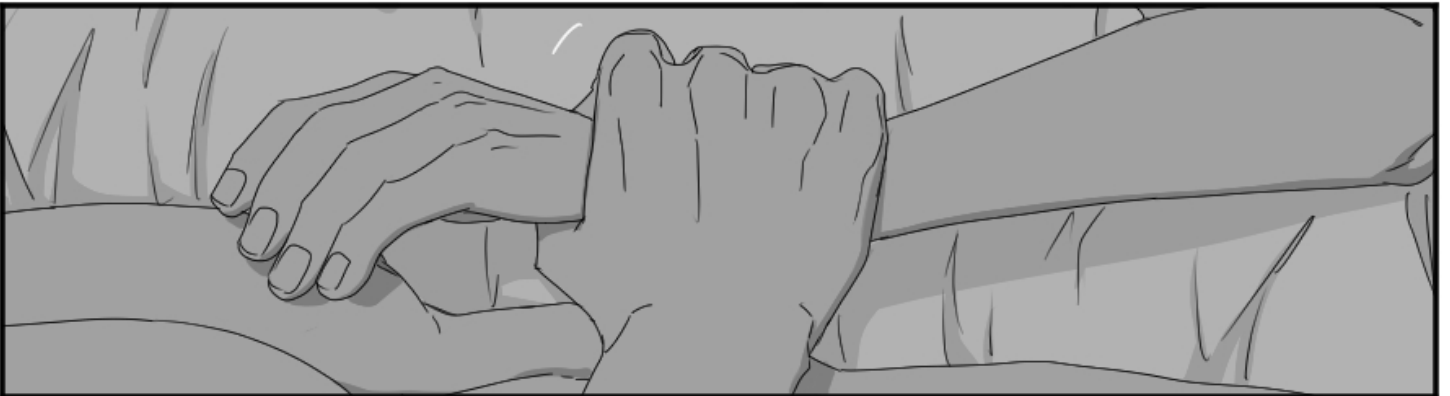
















....You don't wanna know what I want.



shake

brush
brush



If you knew the things I've been thinking about, lately...

....you wouldn't say that.

hah

hah

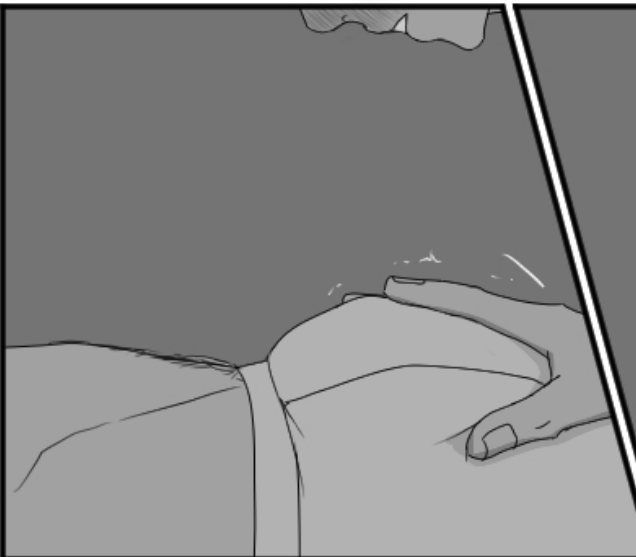
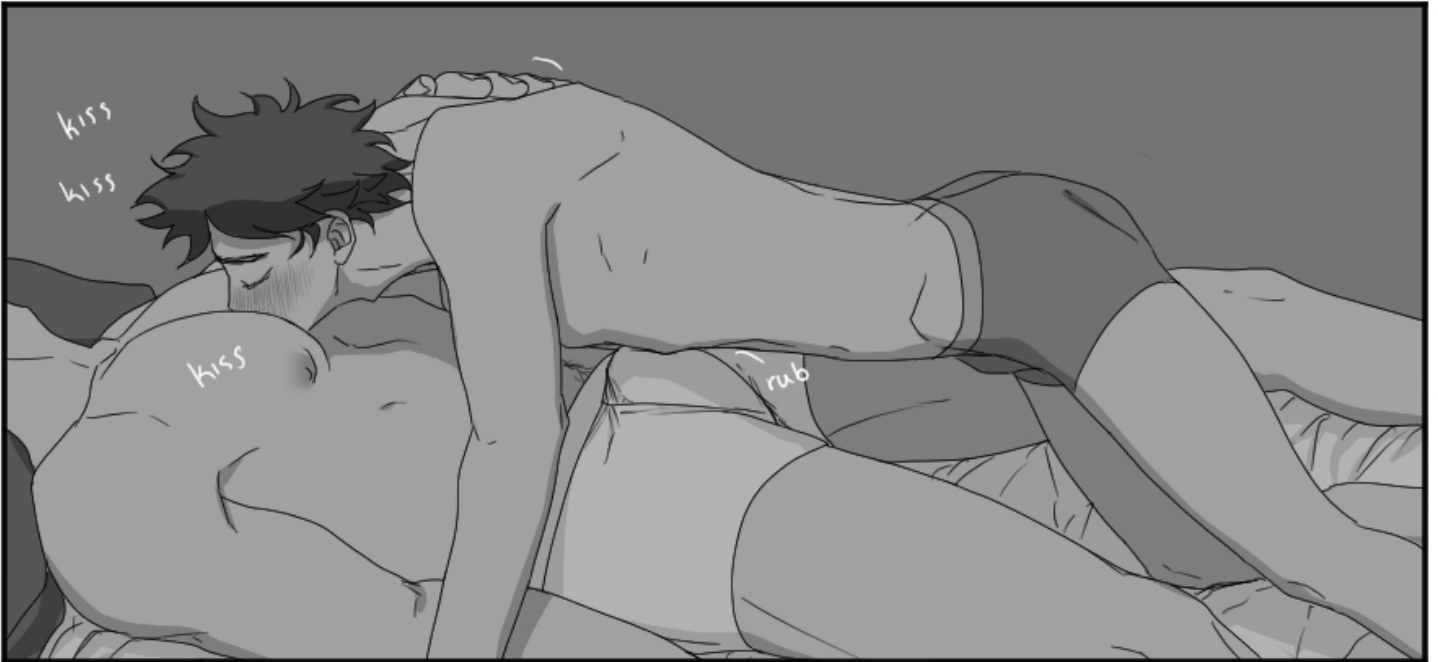
stroke



I want to go down on you again.



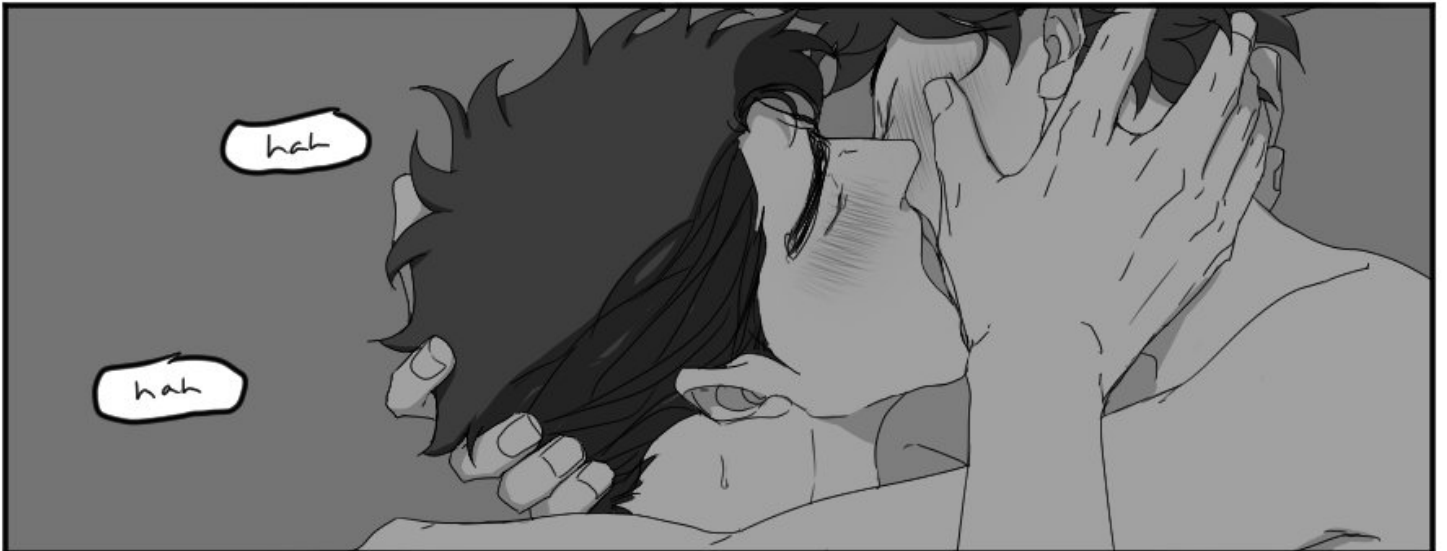


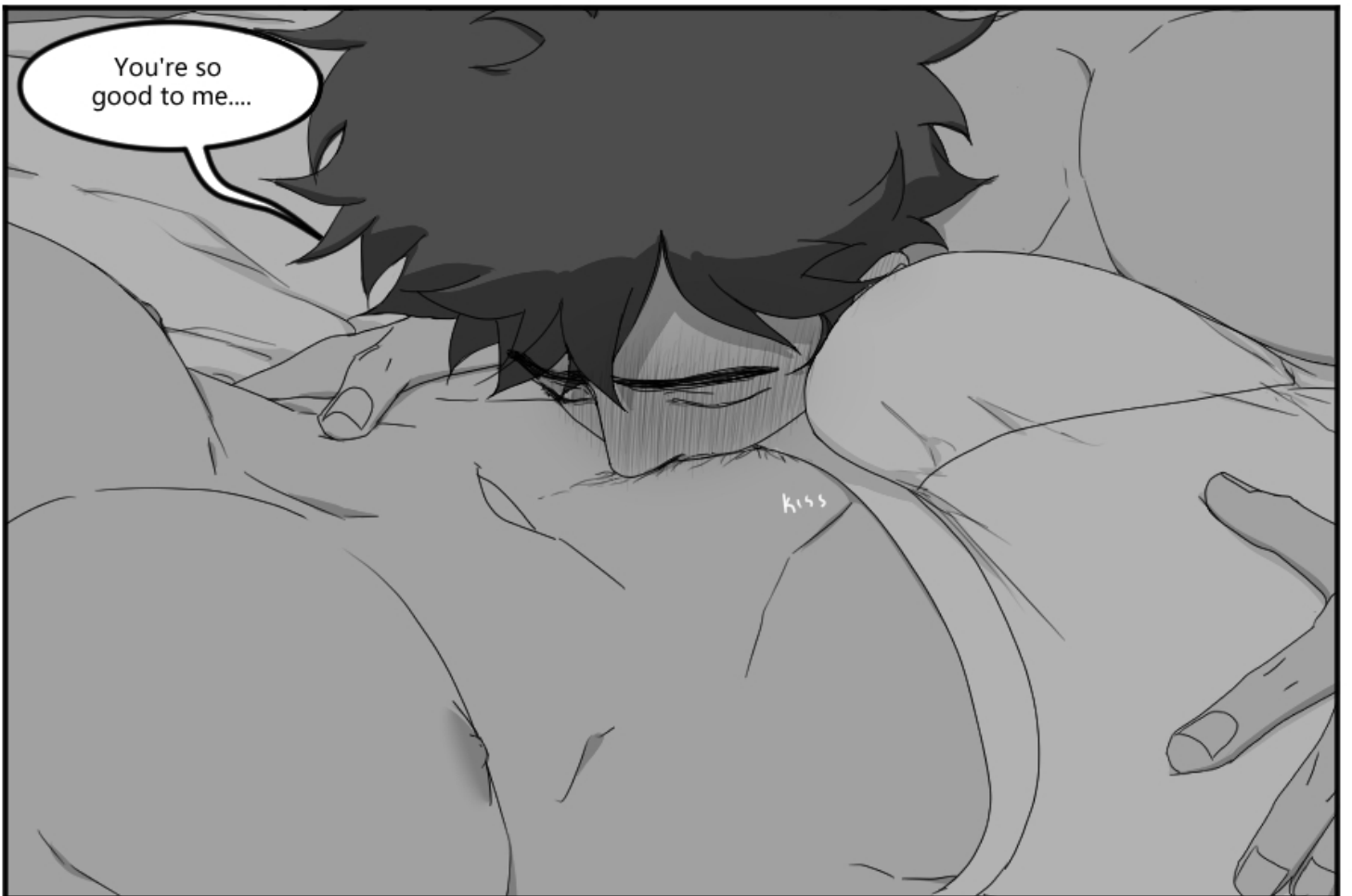




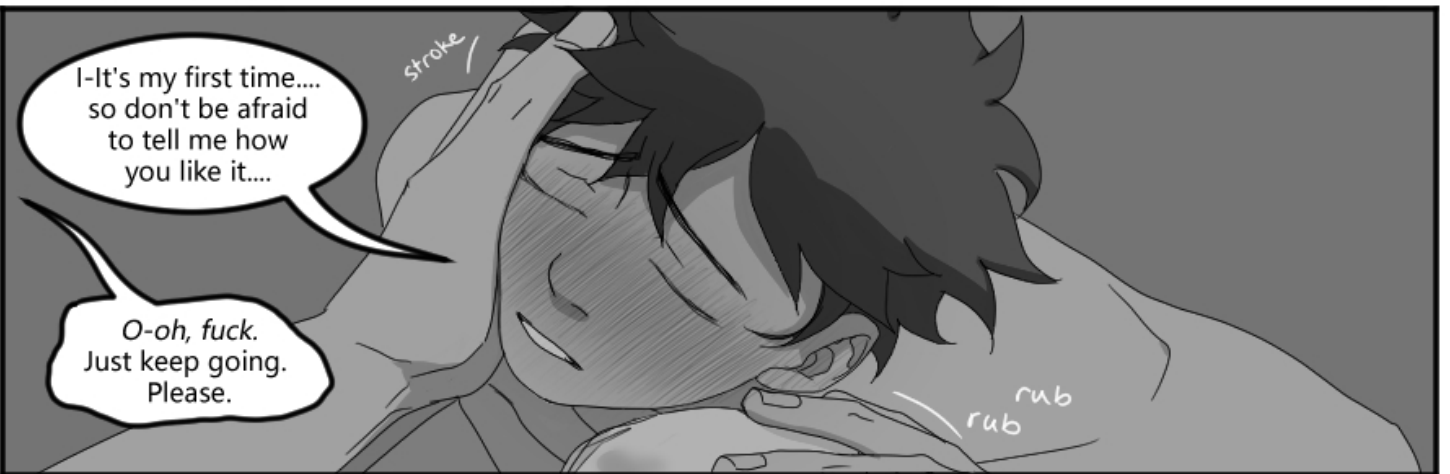
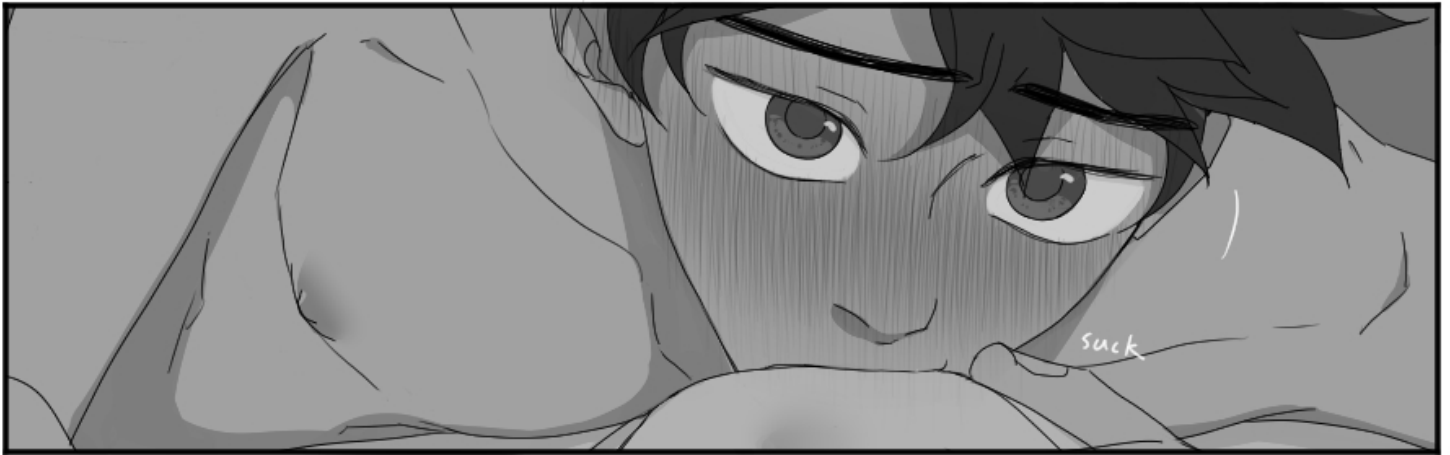


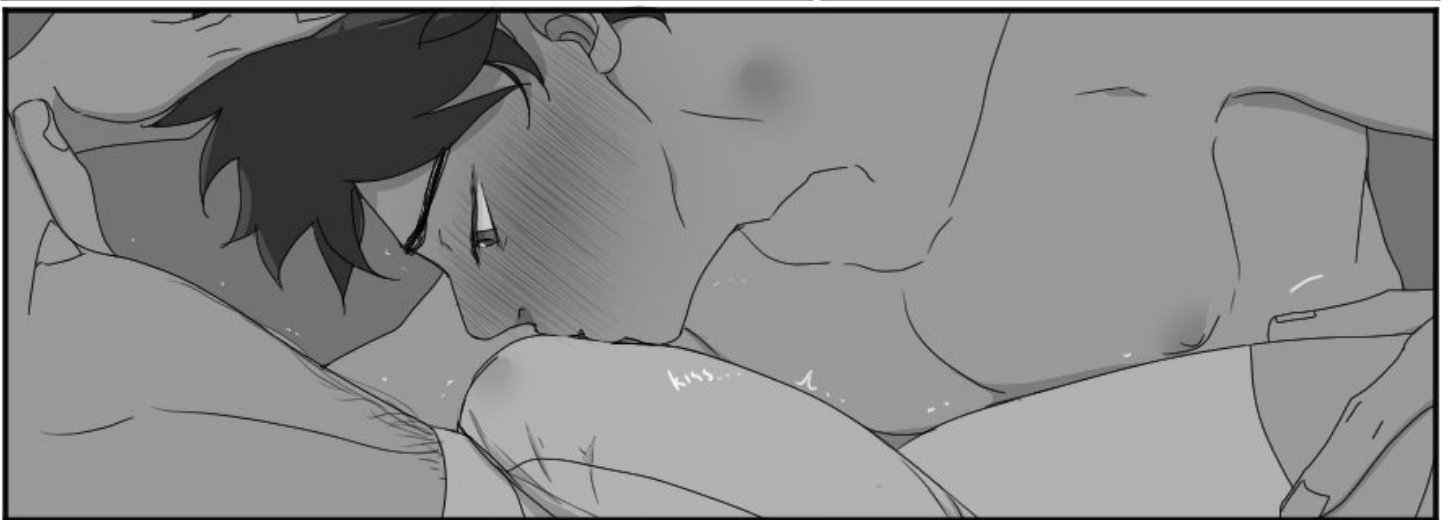
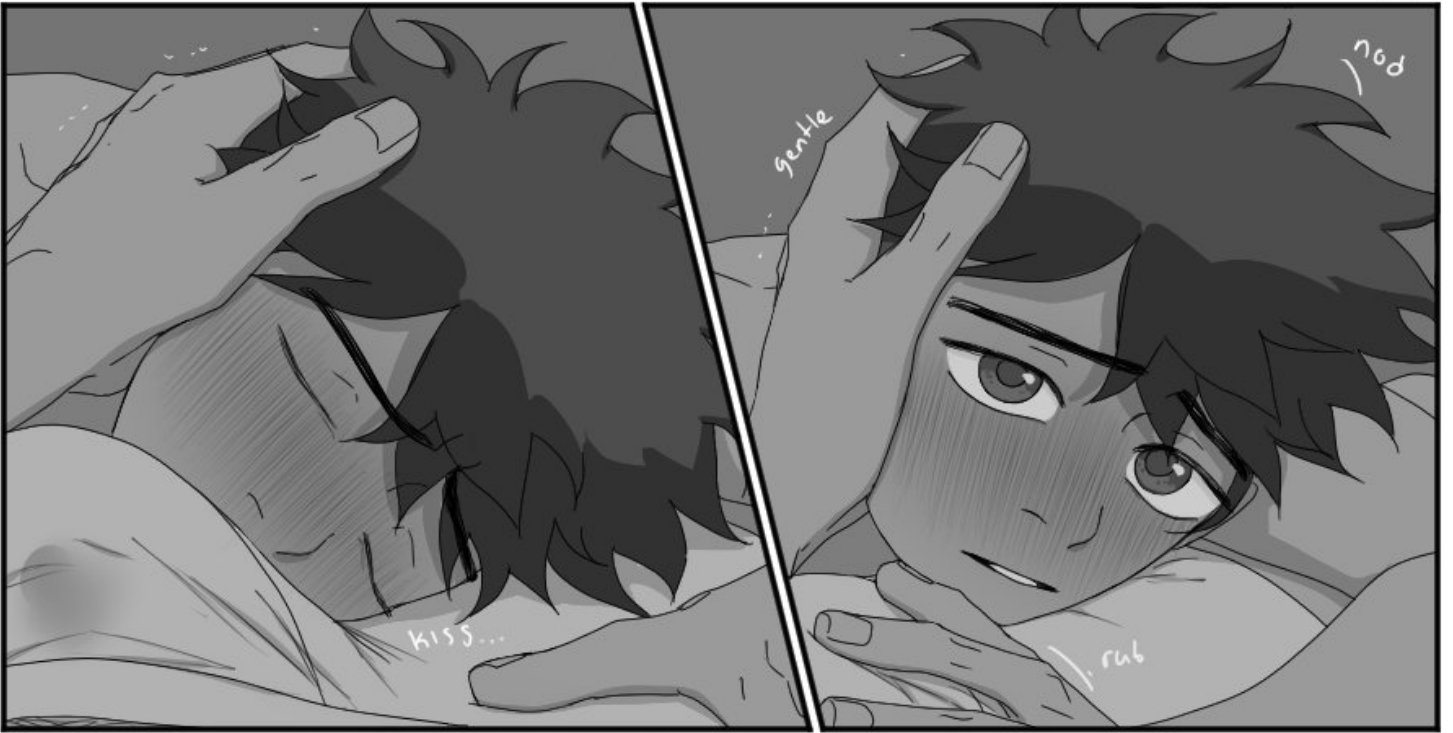






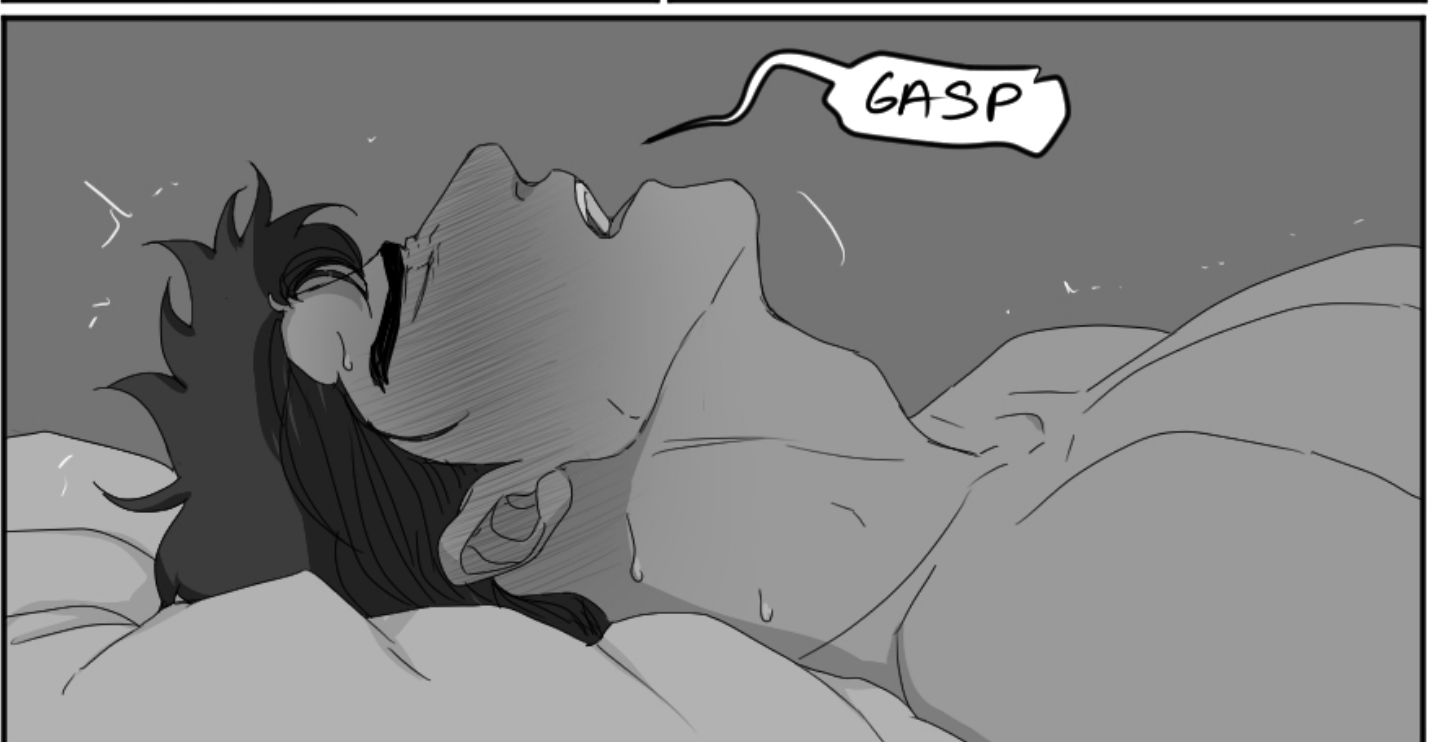


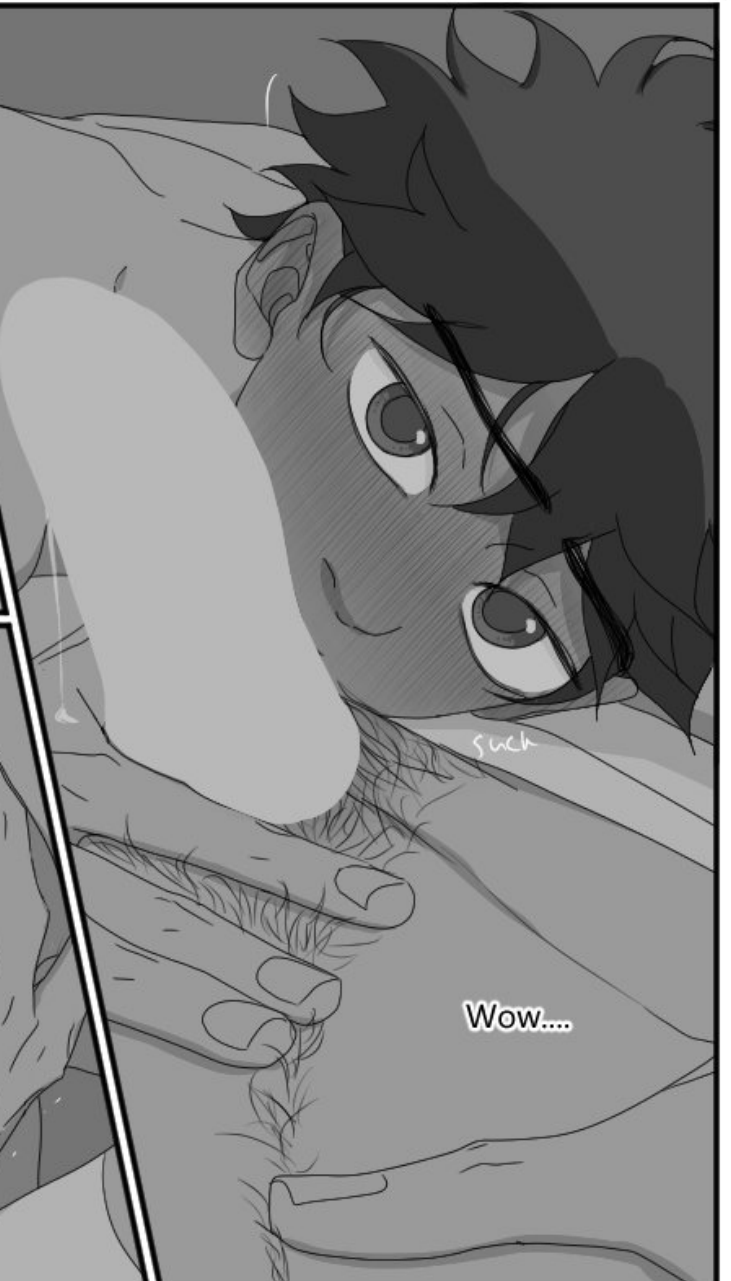
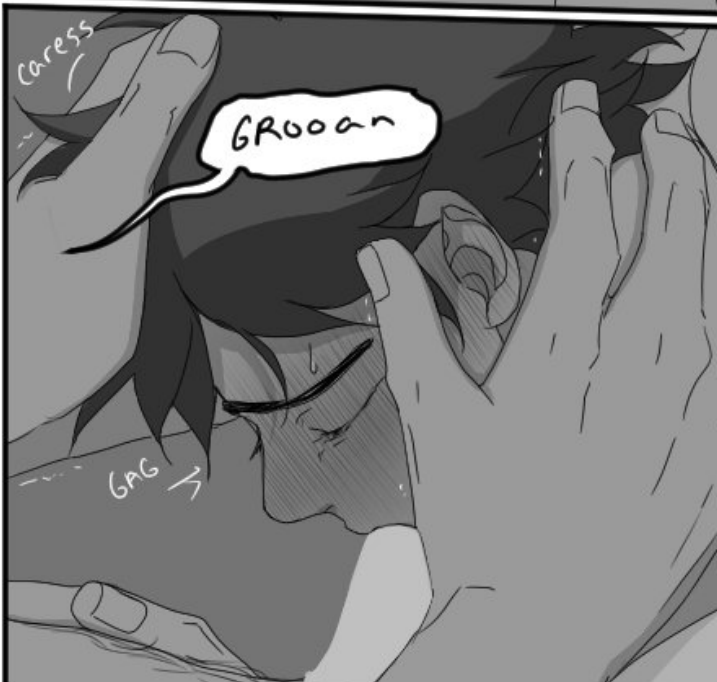
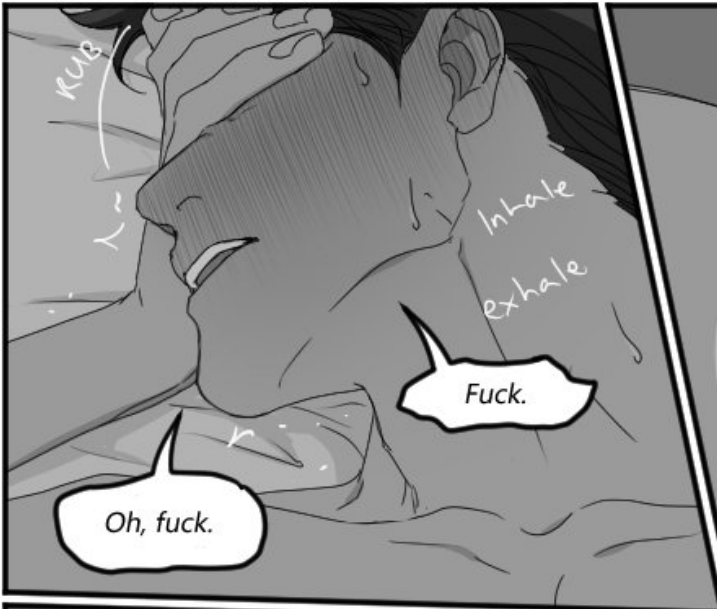


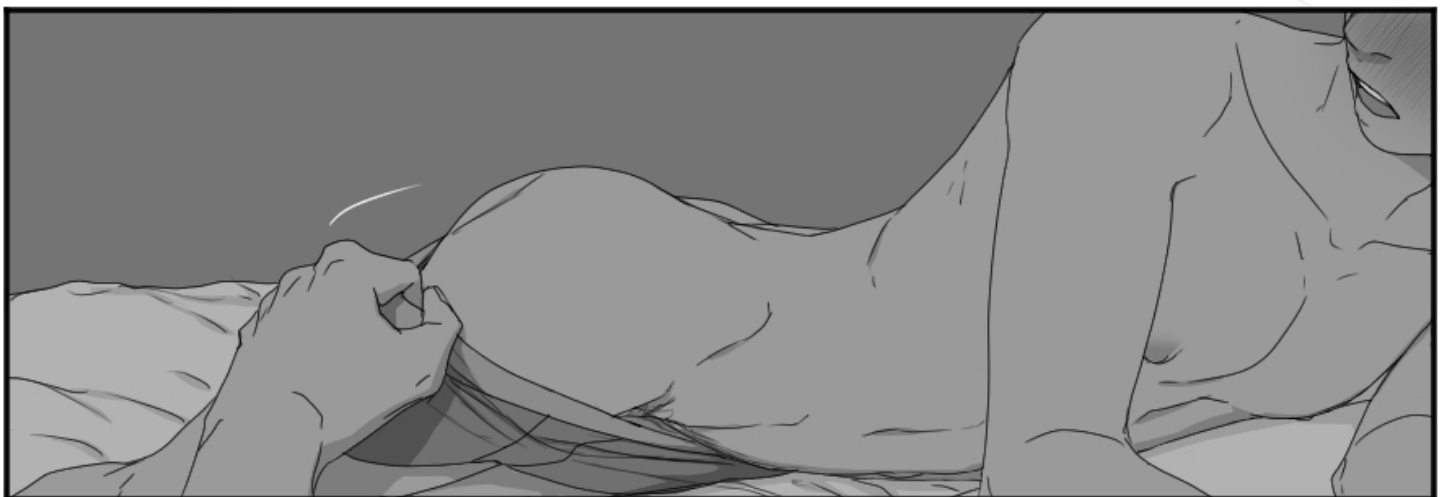
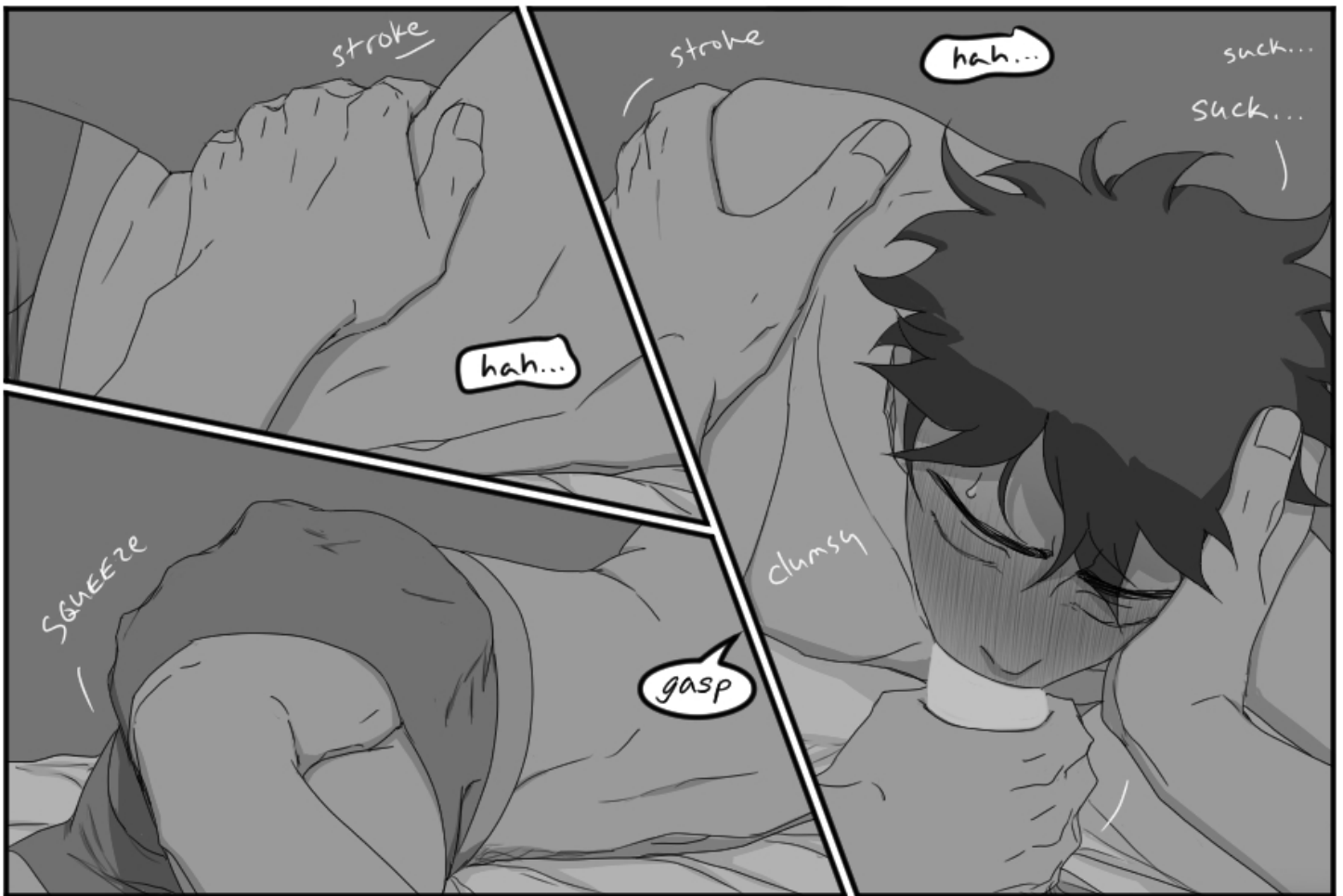
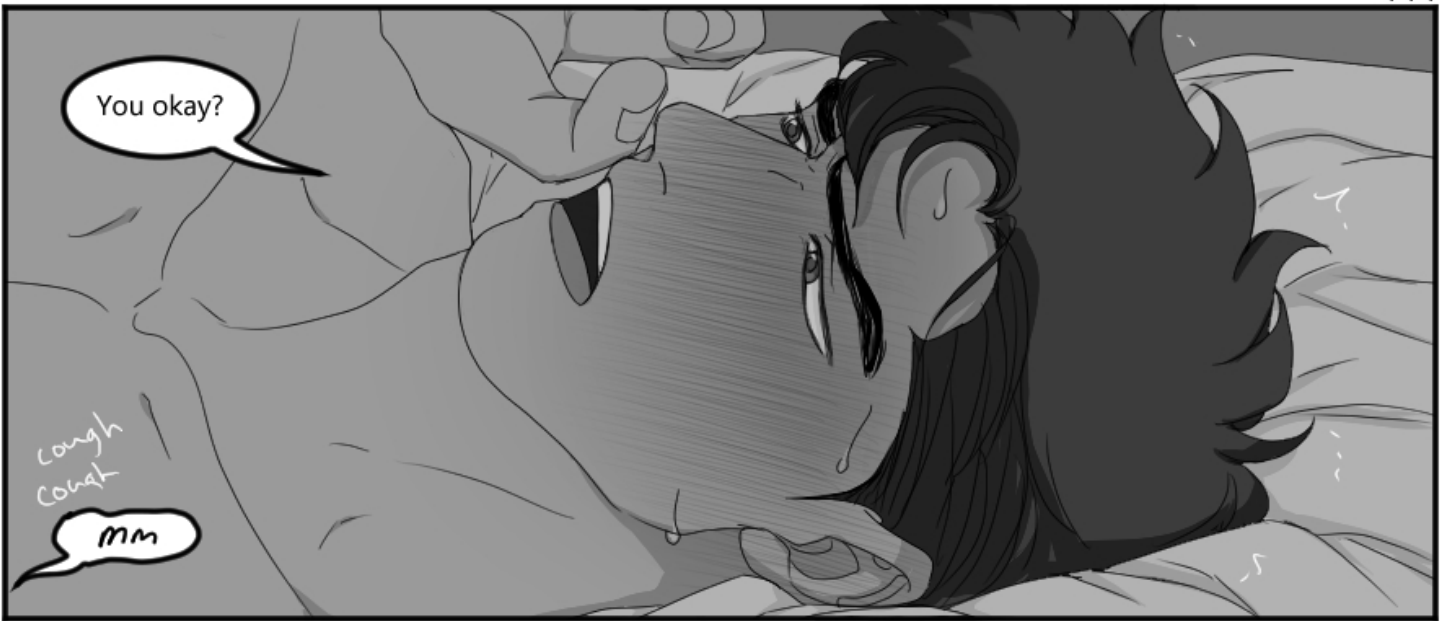


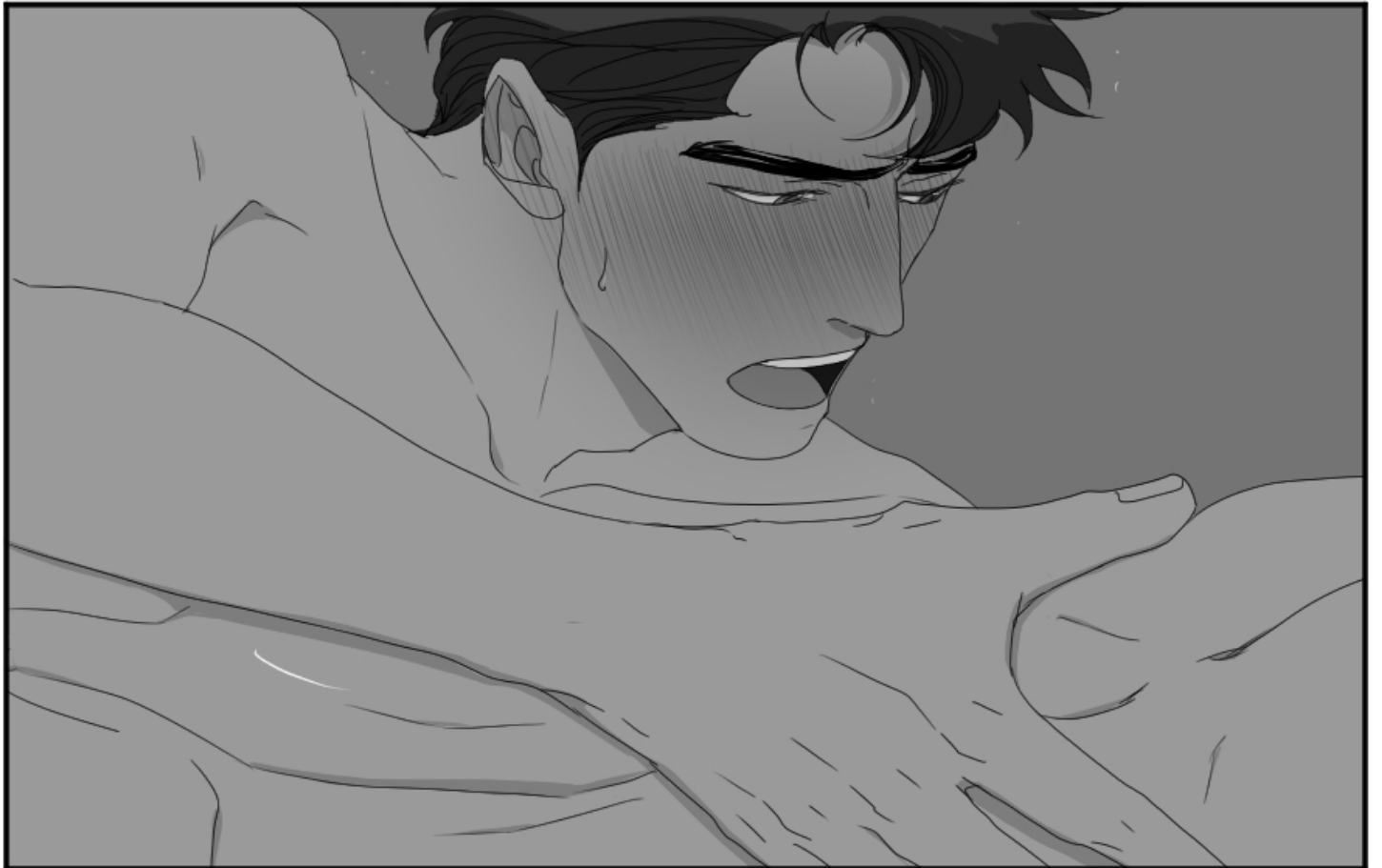


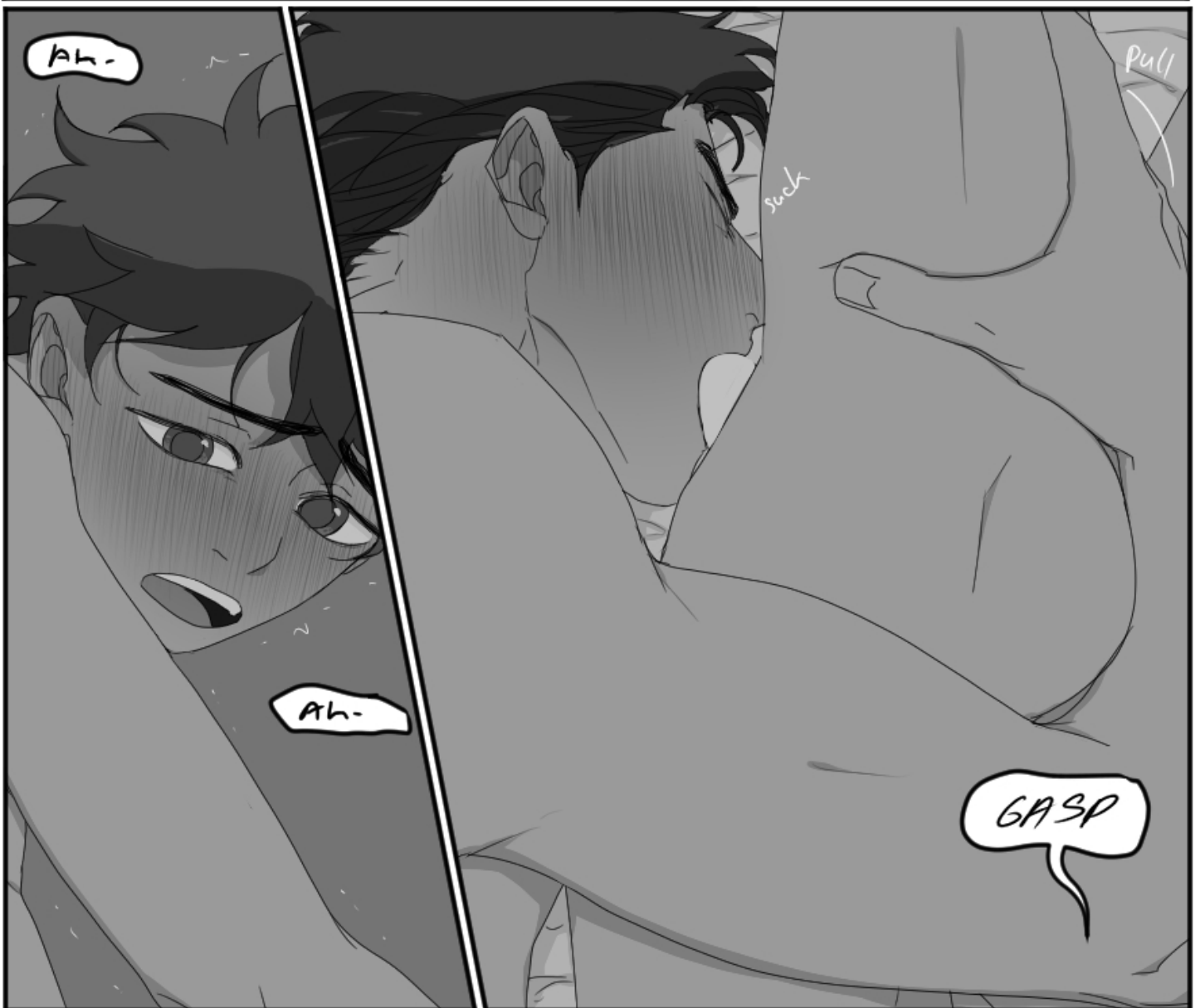






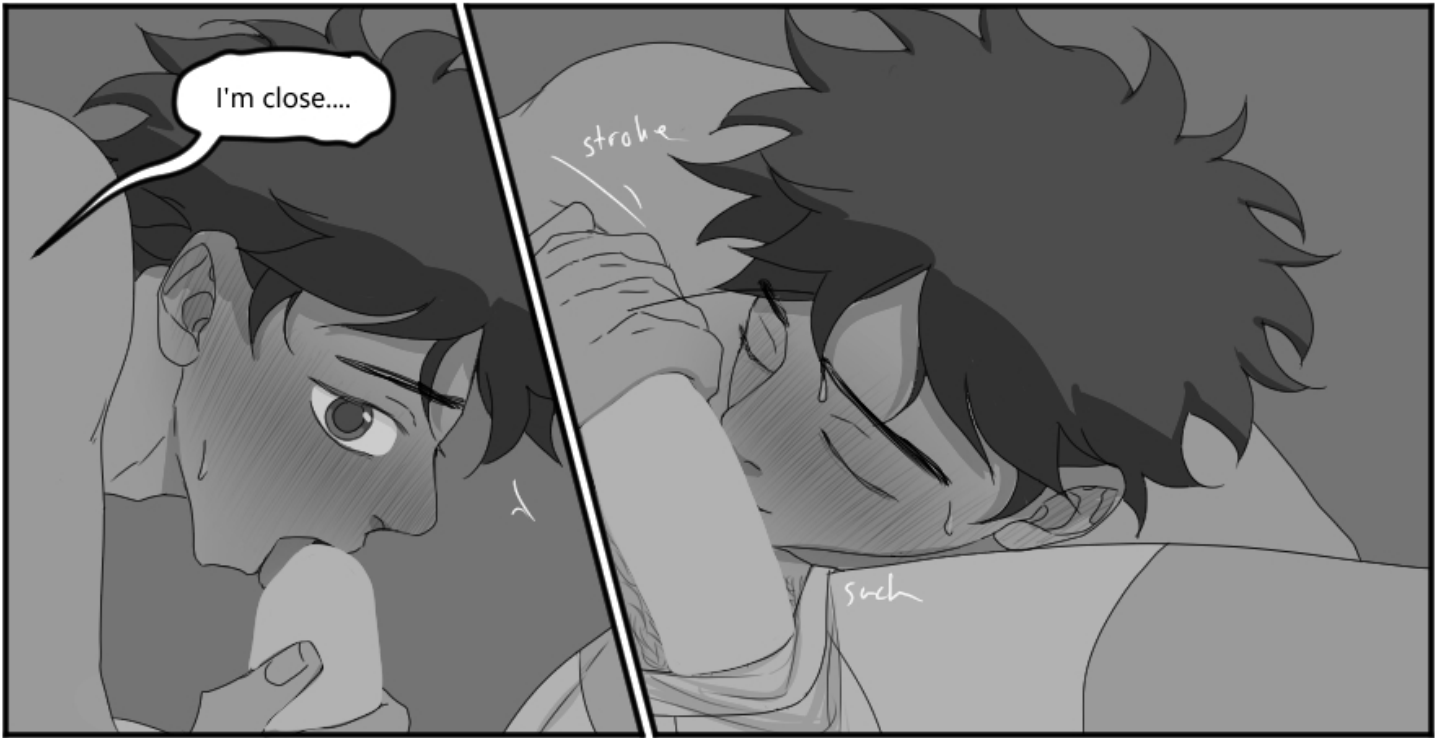




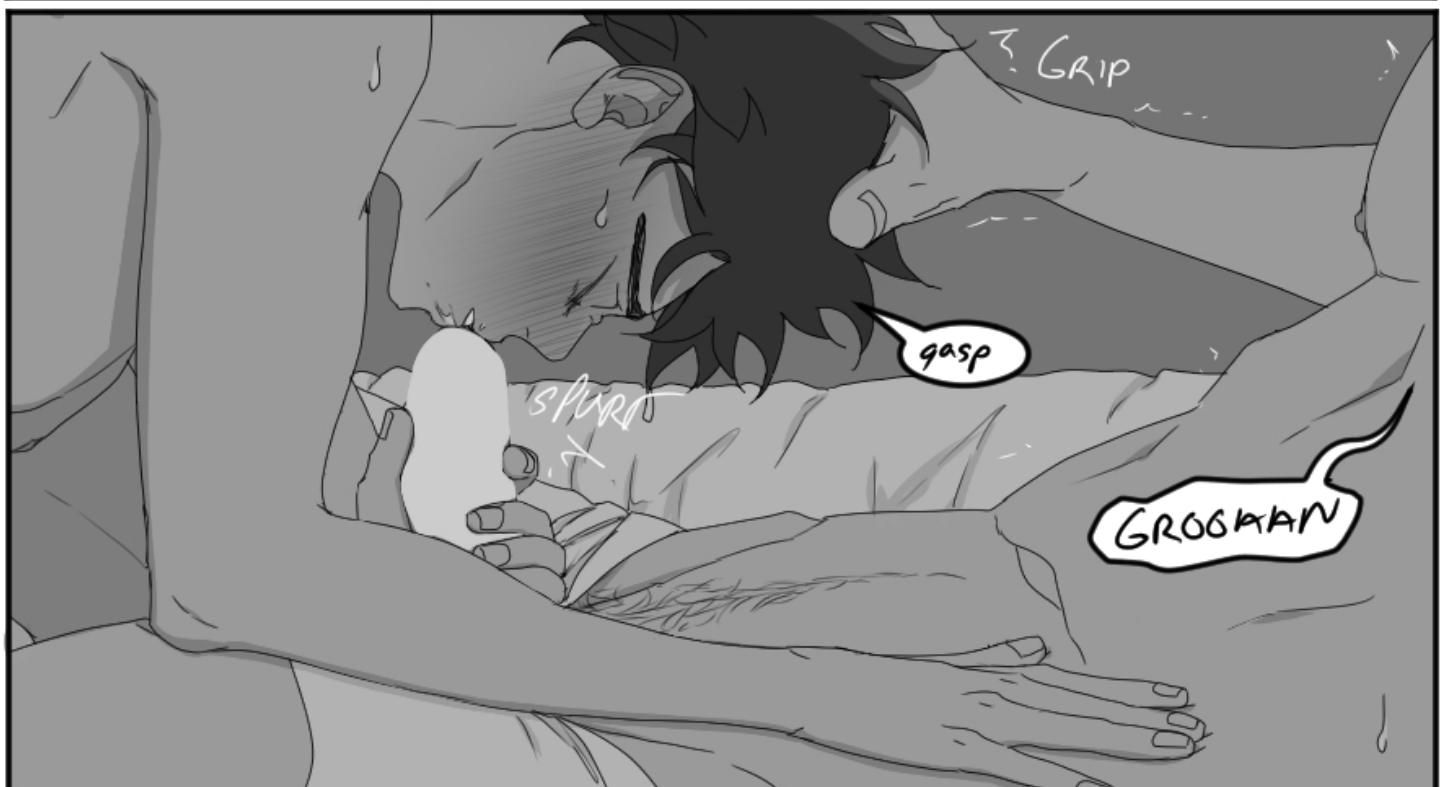


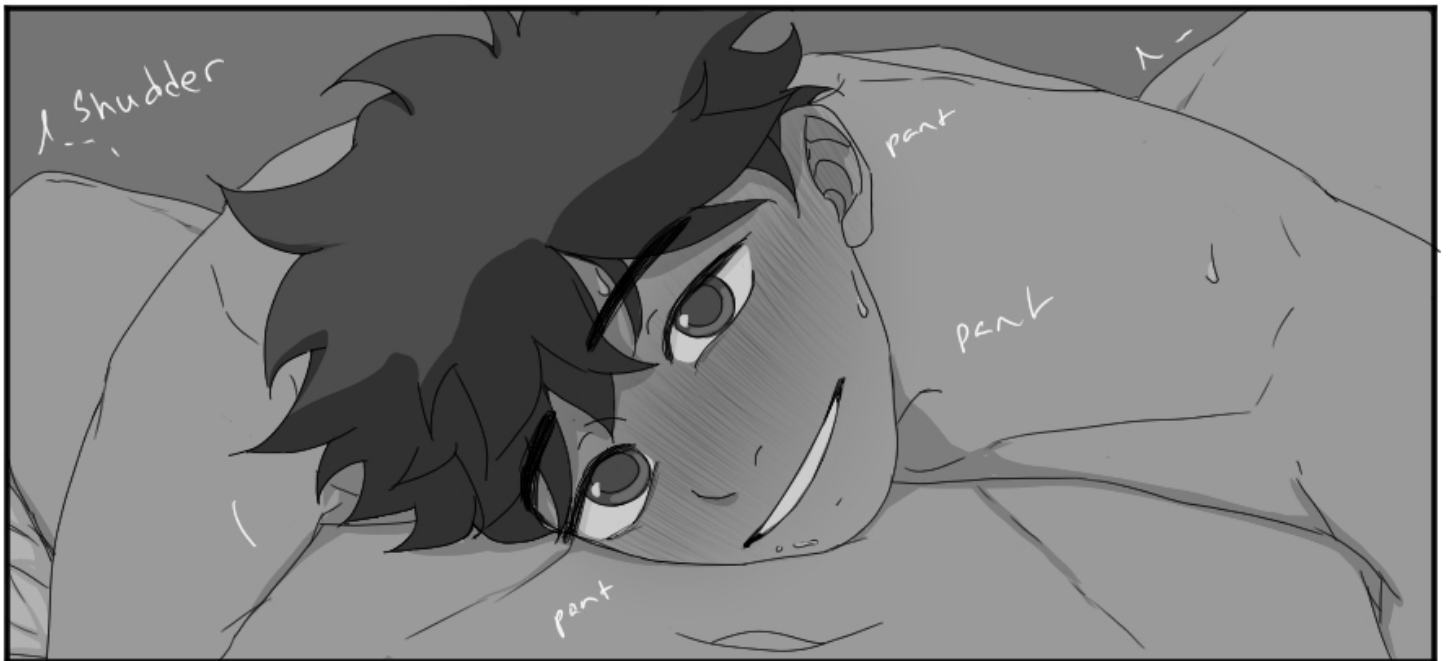
















Yeah. Baby, that was.... I loved that.

....I did, too.

I really, truly, actually did love that. What the hell.



There was a part of me that was a little worried that doing this might make me feel... subservient, or emasculated, but I feel the complete opposite.

I love the feeling of knowing that I made you feel this good.

This was one of the most sexually gratifying experiences I ever had in my life.



No.

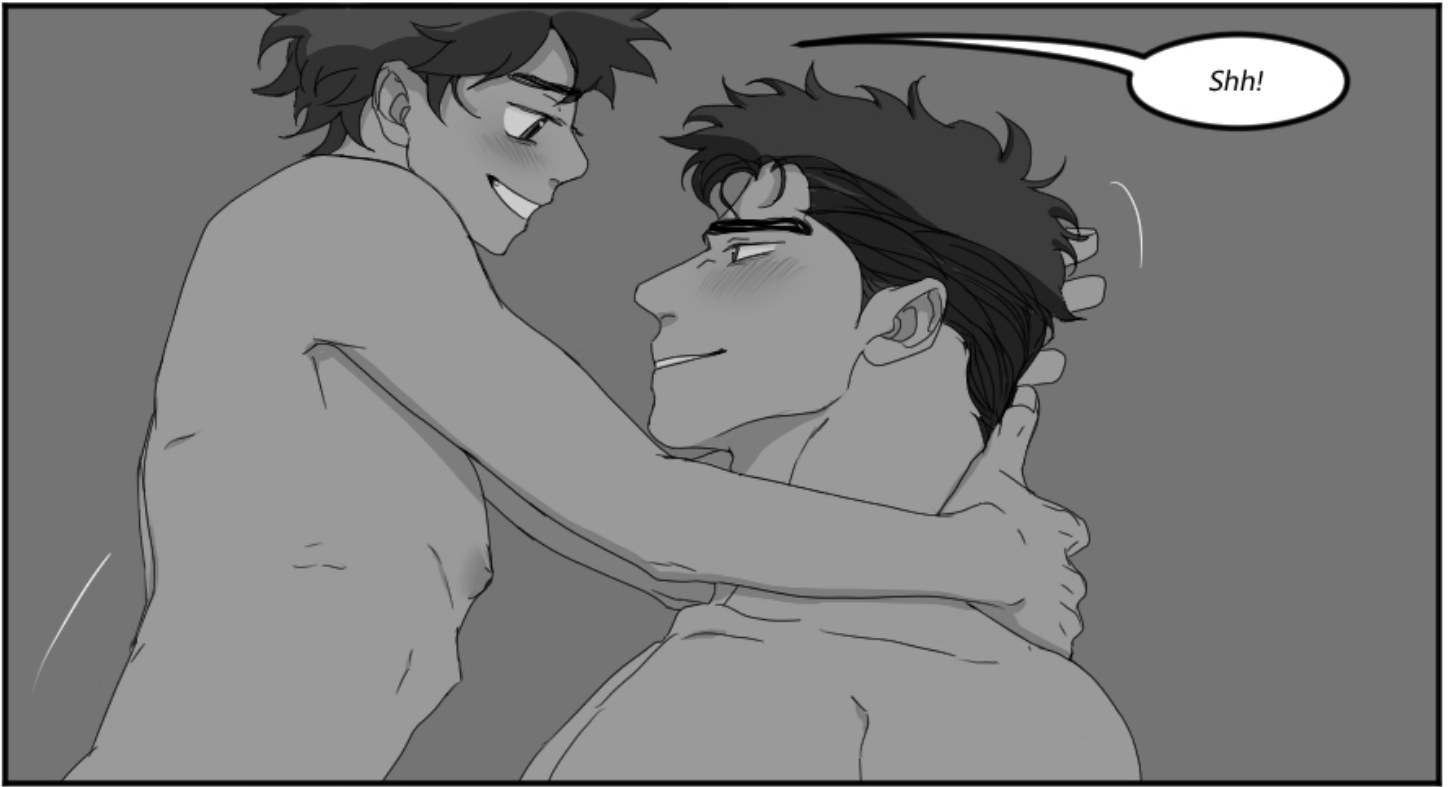
What do you mean, "no"?

No.

Are you telling me.... after all that you still won't sit on my lap?

Come up here.



















But it's.... you know.
Intimidating.



You said you've
done it before,
right?

It would be my first
time, obviously. You know
what you're doing...?



.....

.....Yeah, I do.



So....

would it hurt...?



But, baby.... I don't want this to stress you out.

....No.

We can talk about it. We can research together.

I'm in no rush. We have all the time in the world.

It's more tricky, and we have to be careful. But if it's done right, sex isn't supposed to hurt.



But... that's the thing.

I'll turn in my writing thing soon. And then the fall semester starts in less than two weeks. If I passed my classes.

And I'm exhausted after this summer, so I know the next semester's gonna kill me. And you'll have your classes to worry about, too.

I feel like we just have a small moment to breathe.... so.....







