



RIGHT.

OKAY,
SO I'LL
TAKE
YOUR
KEYS...

...AND HANG
AROUND
YOUR PLACE
UNTIL YOU
GET OFF
WORK.

UMM,
TANEDA...
ABOUT OUR
DISCUSSION...



OUR
DIS-
CUSSION
?

YOU
MEAN ABOUT
WHEN YOU
WERE
ABDUCTED
BY ALIENS
AS A KID?

I've
heard
it
before.

NO,
NOT
THAT.

UH...
YOU KNOW,
ABOUT REALLY
STARTING UP
THE BAND
AGAIN!



See
ya
later...

BA
M!

I'LL
FOLLOW
YOUR
LEAD...



OH,
NEVER MIND.
WE CAN
TALK ABOUT
IT TONIGHT.

OH...

BI
NG
BO
NG

FWOOSH

...JUST
AS SOON
AS YOU
FIGURE OUT
WHAT IT IS.

KLAKKA

4

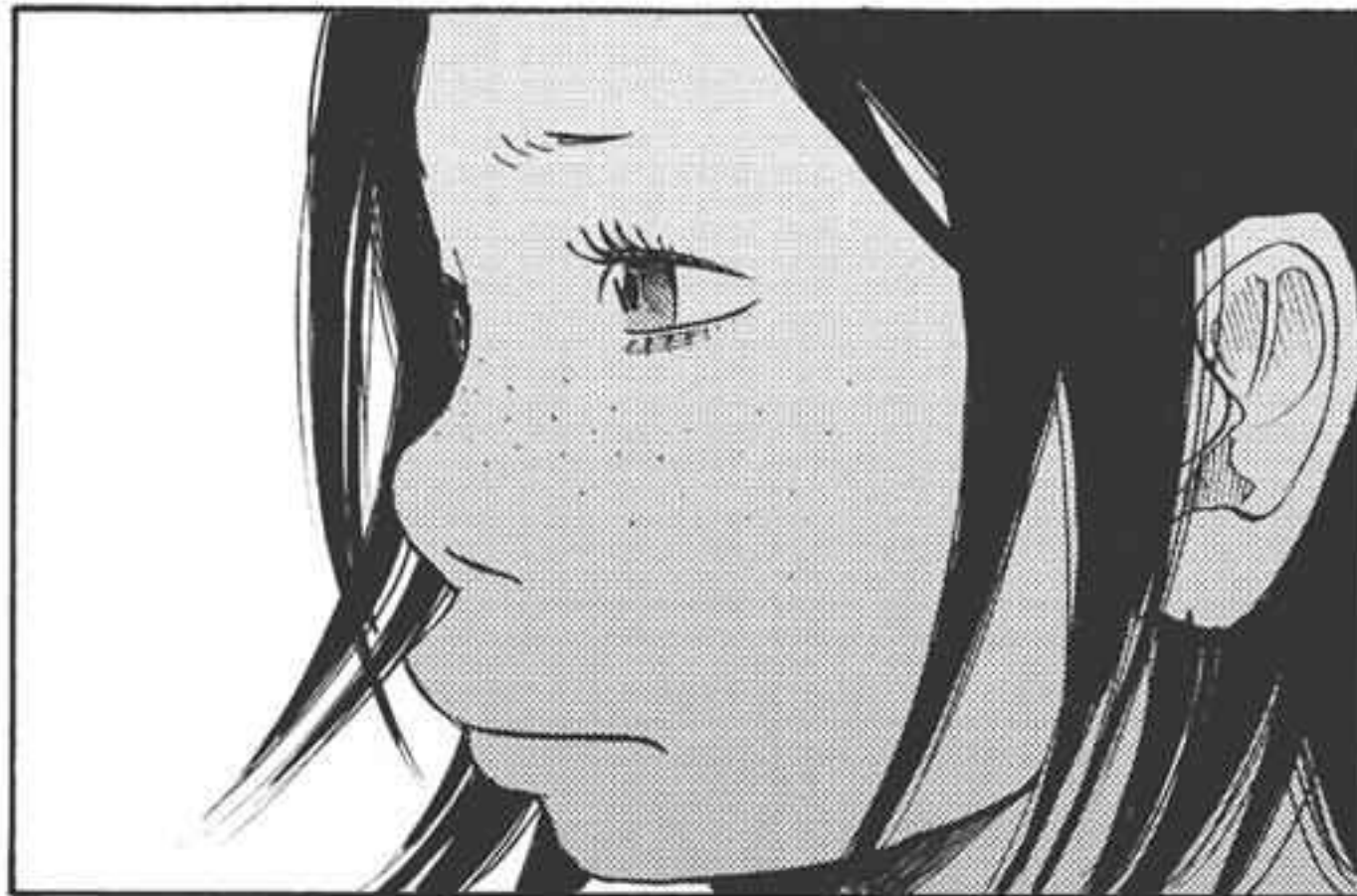
Why...

...am
I in
Tokyo?

Right now my
life has an
expiration date
determined by
my bank balance.

But that's
more of an
excuse than
a real reason.

If I'm honest,
it's because
my boyfriend's
here.

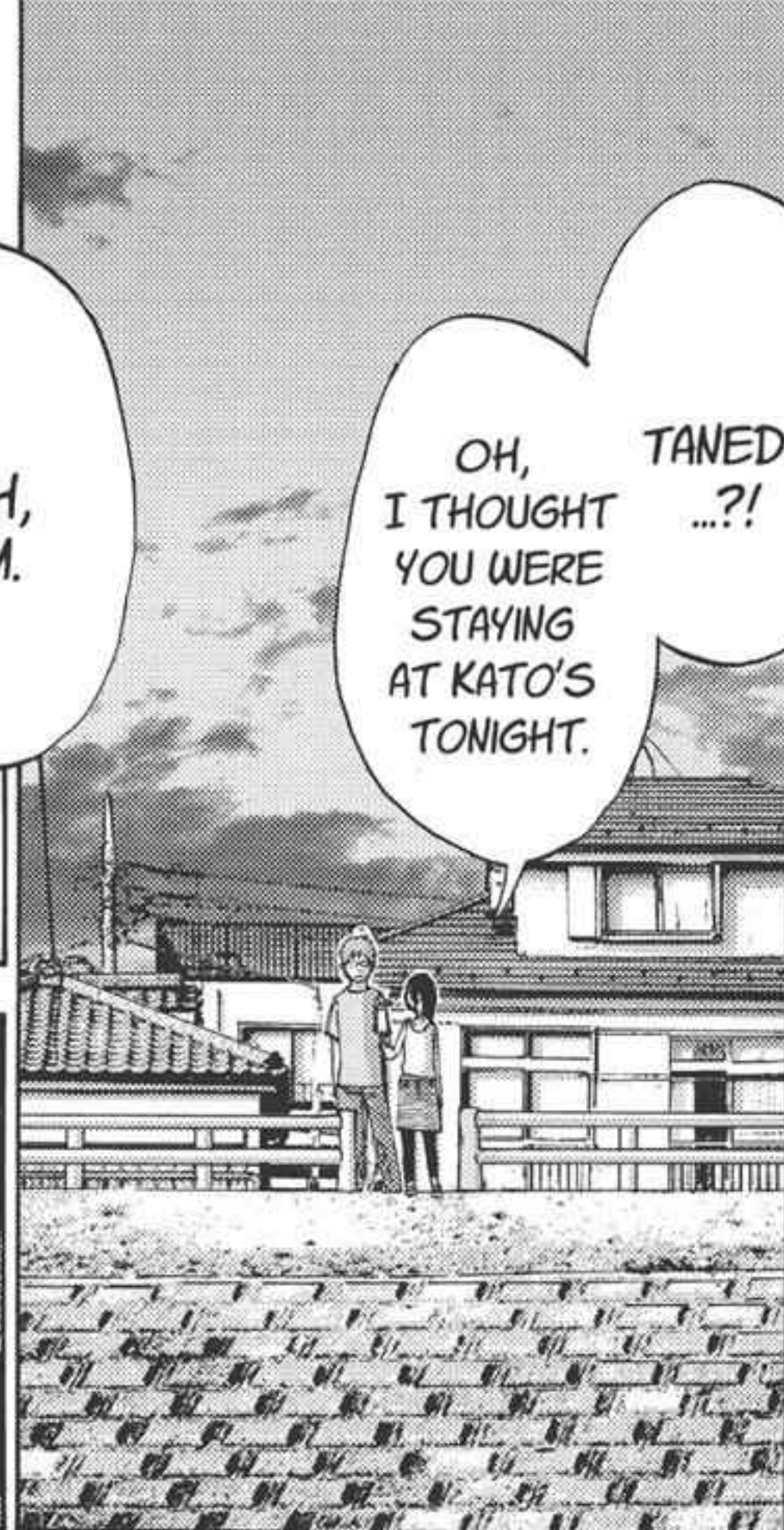


MEIKO,
DIDN'T
YOU QUIT
SMOKING?



I
THOUGHT
I'D INTRODUCE
MYSELF TO
YOUR MOM
FIRST.

YEAH,
I AM.



OH,
I THOUGHT
YOU WERE
STAYING
AT KATO'S
TONIGHT.

TANEDA
...?!



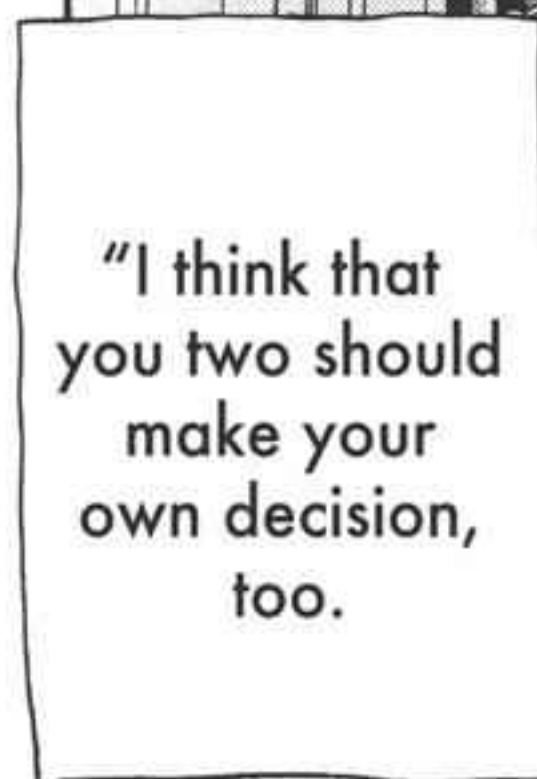
BUT...
WHAT ARE
YOU DOING
HERE?



MMM...

HEY,
WHAT'S
THE
MATTER?

HA
HA
HA.



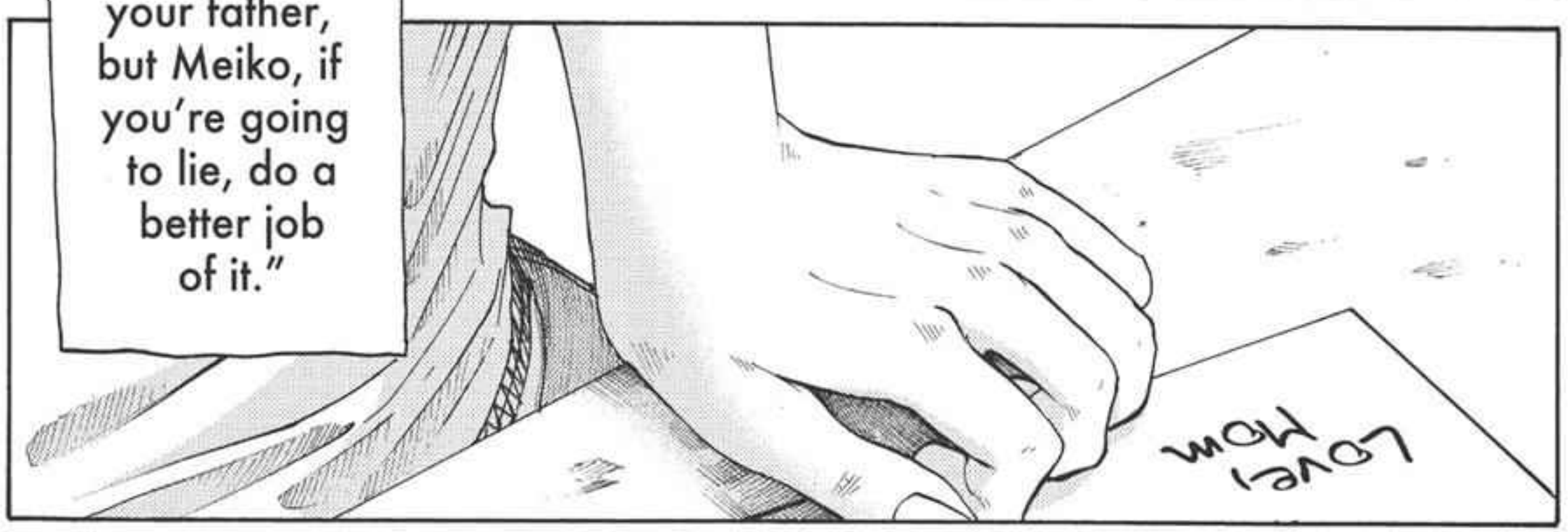


"P.S. The nameplate on your mailbox is a dead giveaway that you're living together."

"I'll stay at the hotel like I originally planned."

"I made some curry stew, so heat it up and enjoy."

"I won't tell your father, but Meiko, if you're going to lie, do a better job of it."



TANEDA...
I'M
SORRY.

FOR
WHAT?



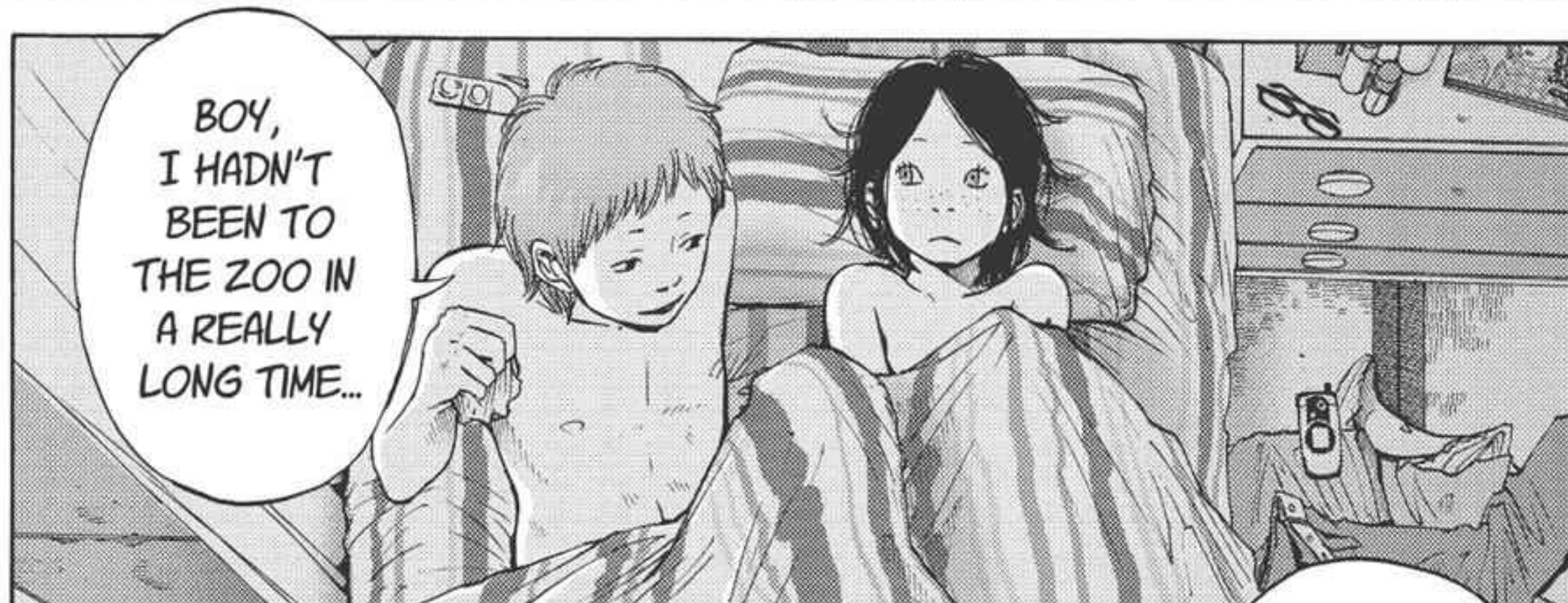


IT'S
HARD TO
ADMIT
THINGS
LIKE THAT
TO YOUR
PARENTS.

WELL,
I
DON'T
BLAME
YOU.

I
THOUGHT
SHE'D
GET MAD,
SO I
LIED.

WHEN MY
MOM ASKED
IF WE
WERE LIVING
TOGETHER...



BOY,
I HADN'T
BEEN TO
THE ZOO IN
A REALLY
LONG TIME...



THAT'S
WHY I
LIKE
HEARING
ABOUT YOUR
FAMILY...

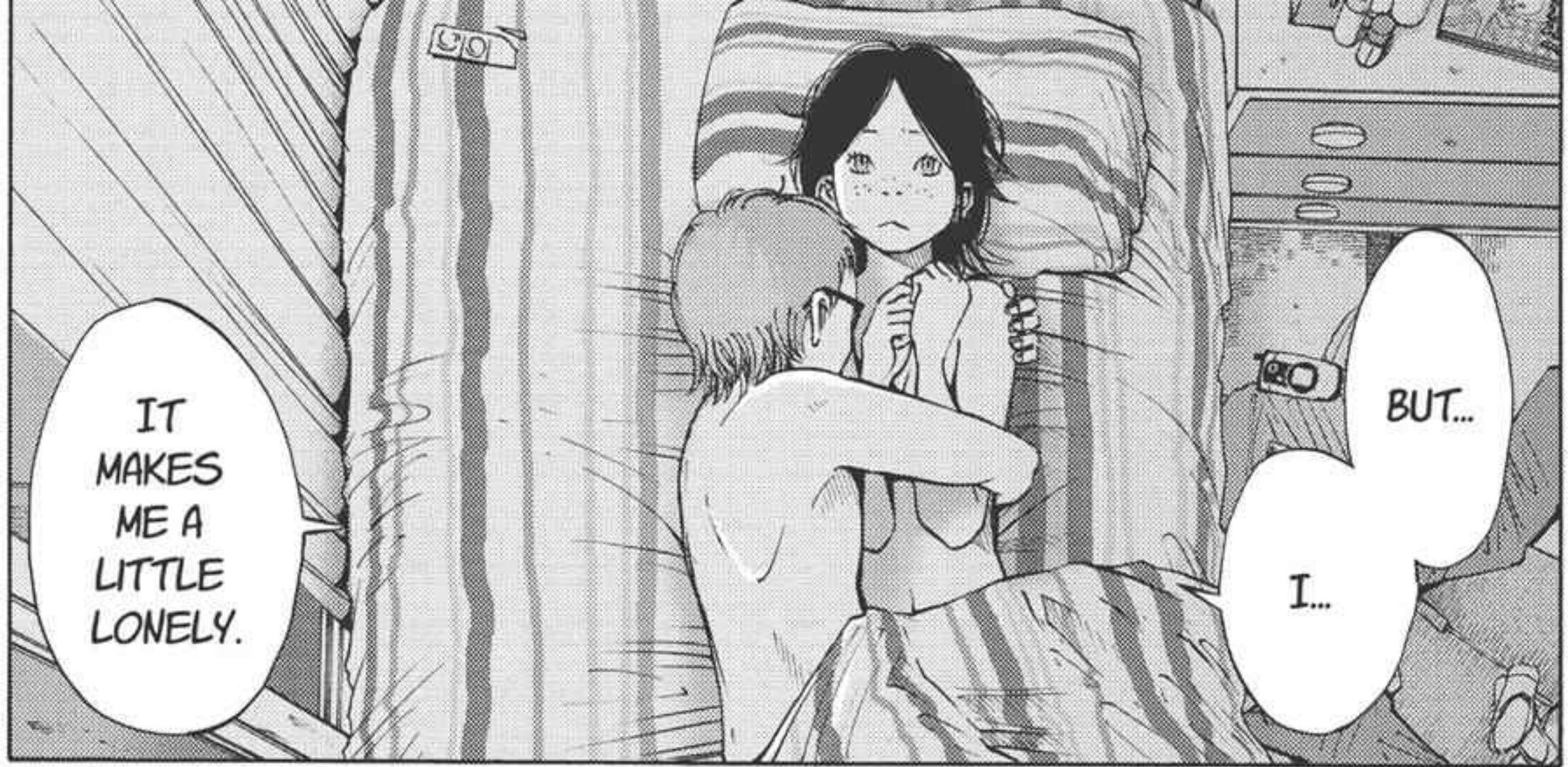
BOOP

I
HARDLY
TALK TO
THEM
ANYMORE.
WE'RE
PRETTY
DYSFUN-
CTIONAL.

YOU KNOW MY
PARENTS WERE
WORKAHOLICS,
AND THEY KIND OF
HATED EACH
OTHER...SO WE
NEVER REALLY
WENT ANYWHERE
TOGETHER AS
A FAMILY.



I
THINK
IT'S
GREAT.





NICE
TO MEET
YOU!

I'M
MEIKO'S
MOM.



UH...
HOW DO
YOU DO?
I'M SORRY
ABOUT
CUTTING
INTO YOUR
TRIP...



MEIKO,
SHE'S NOT
WHAT I
PICTURED
AT ALL...

SHE'S GOING
TO HER CLASS
REUNION. I THINK
SHE GOT THE
WRONG IDEA
ABOUT WHAT
TO WEAR.







...IT'S ALL
RIGHT,
MR. TANEDA,
NO NEED
TO BE SO
NERVOUS.

I WORRY
ABOUT HER,
BUT...



I HAVE A
FEELING YOU
TWO ARE
GOING TO
DO JUST
FINE.



HEH
HEH...
SHE
HASN'T
CHANGED
AT ALL.

SHE'S
ALWAYS
BEEN
IMPULSIVE...
OR NAÏVE,
I GUESS.



THERE ARE
TIMES WHEN I
WONDER WHAT
MIGHT HAVE
HAPPENED IF
I'D DONE THINGS
DIFFERENTLY,
BUT...

...AM I
HAPPY?
YES, I'M
VERY
HAPPY.



SHE PROBABLY
DOESN'T REALIZE IT,
BUT MEIKO SEES
ME AS SOMEONE TO
AVOID BECOMING.
AND THAT'S PROBABLY
WHY SHE DOESN'T
WANT TO COME
HOME.

THE
TIMES
BEING WHAT
THEY WERE,
I ENDED UP
BACK IN
AKITA.

A LONG
TIME AGO,
I GRADUATED
FROM A
COLLEGE
HERE AND
WORKED
IN THE
CITY.

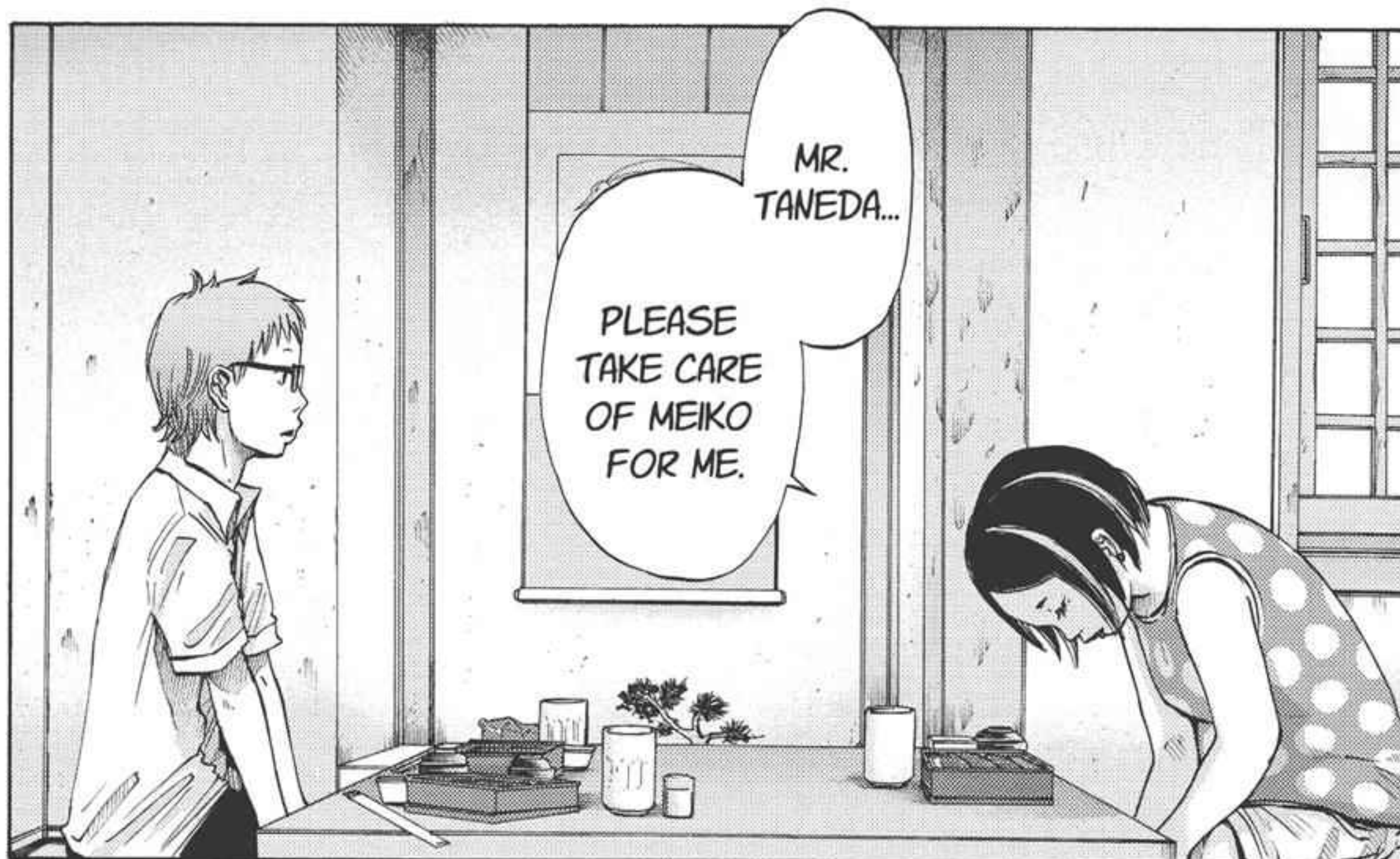


...BUT IT'S
ACTUALLY
MUCH
SIMPLER
THAN THAT.

WHEN
YOU'RE YOUNG,
YOU THINK
THE ONLY WAY
TO HAPPINESS
IS THE HARD
ROAD...

...I THINK
THE TWO OF
YOU SHOULD
BE FREE TO
DO WHATEVER
YOU WANT
RIGHT NOW.

ANY-
WAY...



MR.
TANEDA...

PLEASE
TAKE CARE
OF MEIKO
FOR ME.



YES,
MA'AM!





YOU TOO,
MOM. AND
STOP SENDING
ALL THOSE
VEGETABLES.

YOU
TWO TAKE
CARE OF
YOURSELVES
NOW.

I
WAS...

ME
TOO. I
COULDN'T
EVEN TELL
YOU WHAT
I ATE.

...SO
NERVOUS...



WHAT
DID YOU
AND MY
MOM TALK
ABOUT?

IT'S A
SECRET.

TANEDA...?

HUH?



OKAY.

IF
WE EVER
GET RICH,
LET'S GO
AND HAVE
EEL THERE
AGAIN.

LISTEN
MEIKO...

