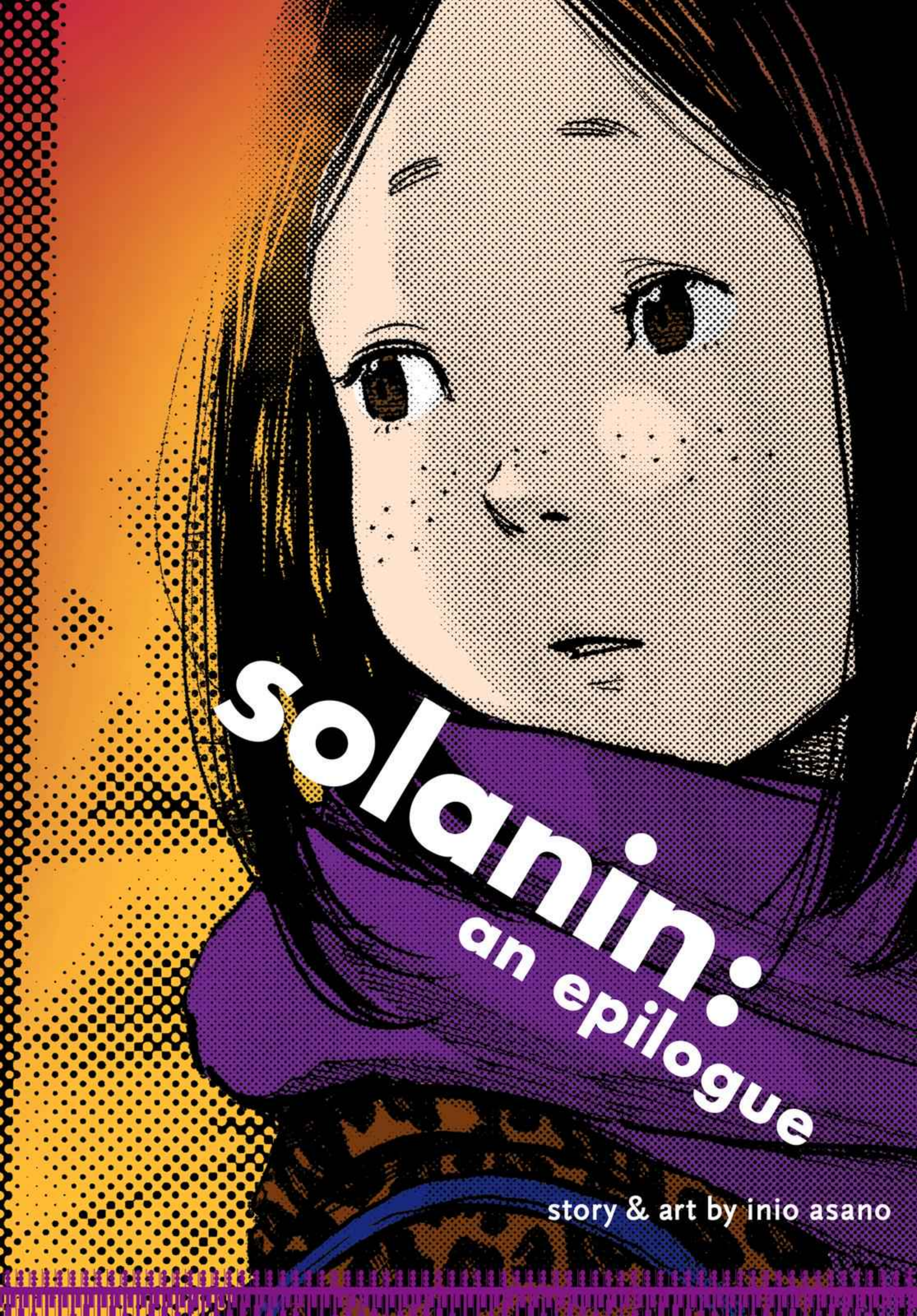

solanin:
an epilogue
story & art by inio asano

solanin: an epilogue

story & art by inio asano

Awaiting Spring

Awaiting Spring

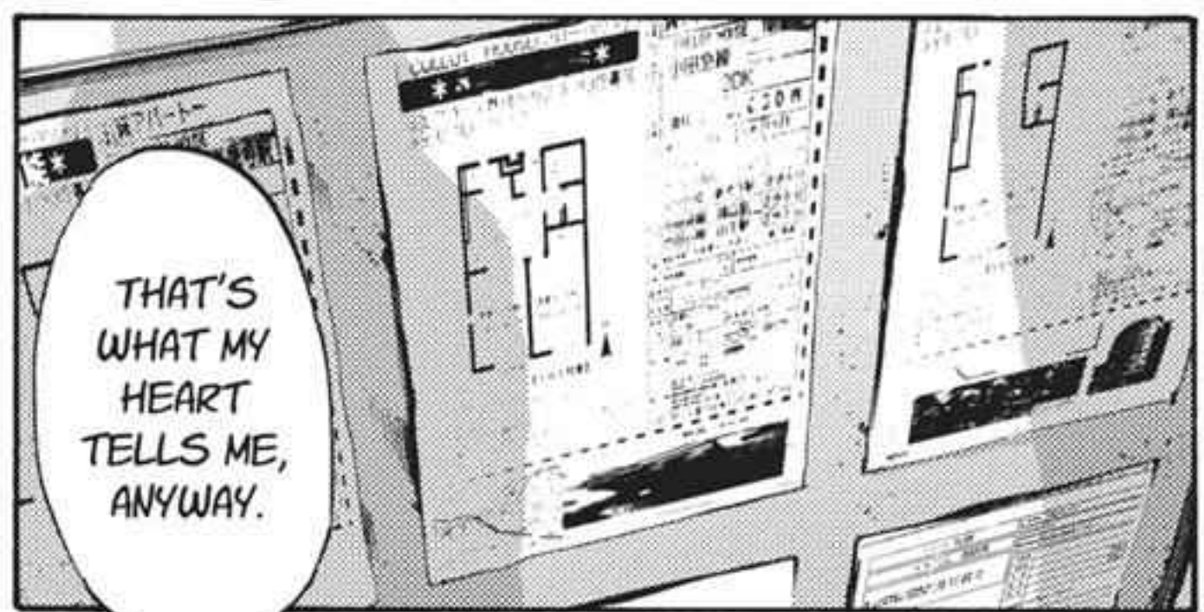
THIS IS PRETTY FAR FROM THE CITY CENTER.

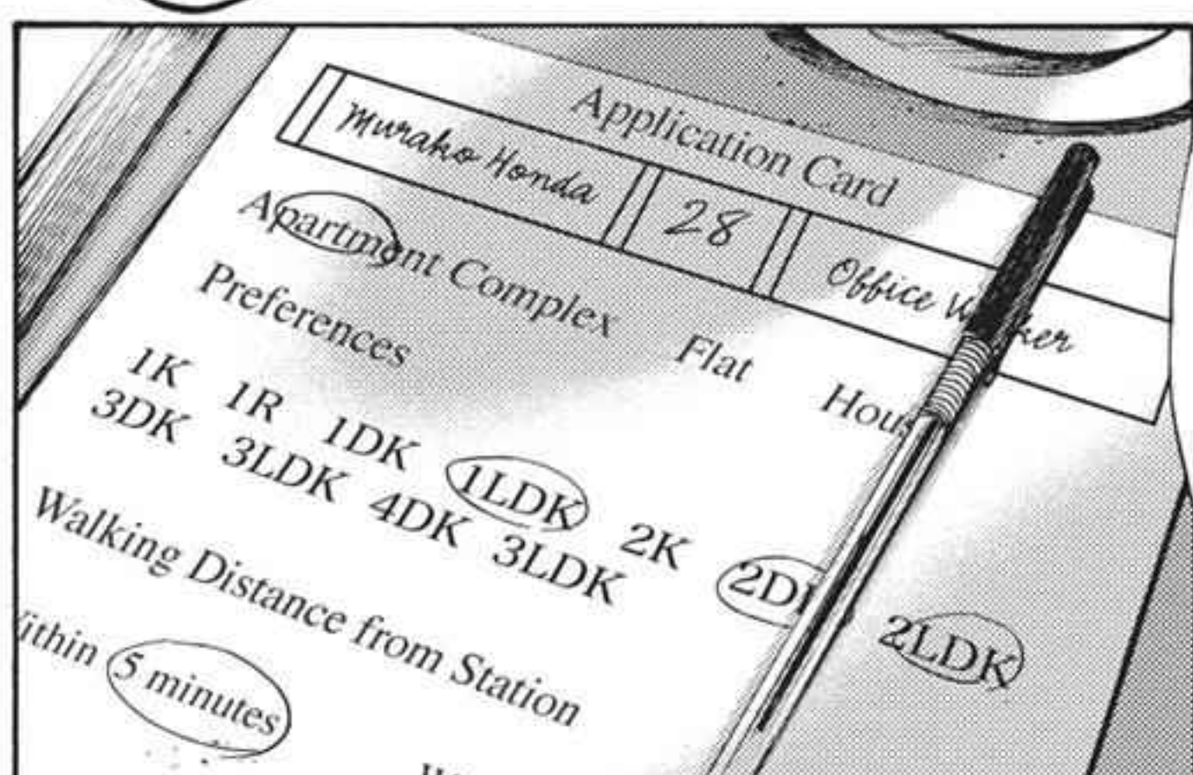
I CAN'T TELL IF IT'S JUST QUIET HERE OR TOTALLY DESERTED.

THAT'S WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT IT!

IT'S NOT EVEN 30 MINUTES TO SHINJUKU.

AND I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO LIVE ALONG A RIVER.



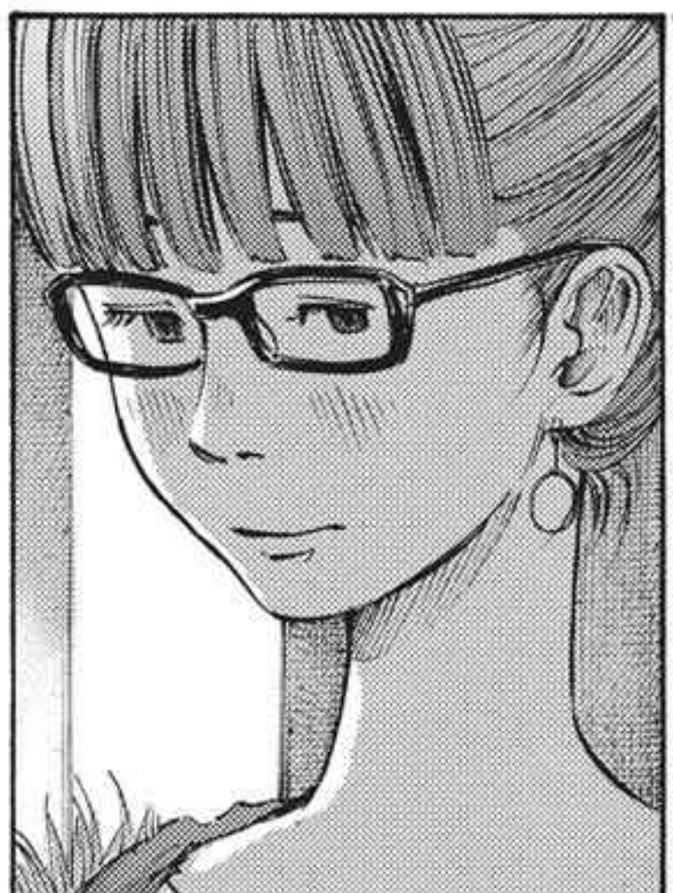


THERE AREN'T MANY APARTMENT BUILDINGS IN THIS AREA.

AND YOU ALSO NEED TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THAT IT'S PAST THE MOVE-IN SEASON.

NOW, THIS APARTMENT IS IN AN ESTABLISHED BUILDING WITH WOODEN CONSTRUCTION.

BUT IT'S ALSO BEEN EMPTY, AND I BELIEVE THE LANDLORD WILL BE WILLING TO NEGOTIATE ON THE RENT.



IT IS. WOULD ONLY ONE PERSON BE LIVING HERE?

THE PREVIOUS TENANT WAS AN OFFICE LADY WHO LIVED ALONE.

WEEELL.

I THINK THIS PLACE IS MORE THAN BIG ENOUGH FOR ONE PERSON.

OH, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.

I HAVE TO TAKE THIS CALL.

SURE THING. GO RIGHT AHEAD.

MMM-HMM. BUT...

...I THINK THIS IS THE PLACE.

I GET THE FEELING THIS PLACE IS FREEZING IN THE WINTER.

YOU'RE SENSITIVE TO THE COLD. WON'T THAT BE TOUGH FOR YOU?

THERE'S NO NEED TO RUSH INTO IT.

WHAT'RE YOU DOING?

HA HA..

IMAGINING.

OUR LIVES IF WE LIVED HERE.

HMM?

WHAT'S THIS?

EVENTUALLY, THEY SPLIT UP. AND SHE WAS SO GRIEF STRICKEN SHE LEFT THE APARTMENT.

SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

BUT OVER TIME HE STEADILY STARTED TO FEEL INFERIOR TO HIS BREADWINNER GIRLFRIEND AND SAID HE WANTED TO BREAK UP FOR SOME HALF-ASSED REASON.

MAYBE ONE DAY HER UNDERACHIEVING MUSICIAN BOYFRIEND MOVED IN AS HER GIGOLO.

YOU GRADUATED FROM A GOOD SCHOOL, GOT A JOB OFFER RIGHT OFF THE BAT AND ALL YOUR DREAMS HAVE COME TRUE. YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND!

HARD TO IMAGINE YOU EVER DREAMED OF BEING A WRITER!

WHAT KIND OF SAD STORY IS THAT?

GOOD QUESTION...

SO WHAT ARE THEY DOING NOW?

THOSE AREN'T DREAMS. THEY'RE GOALS.

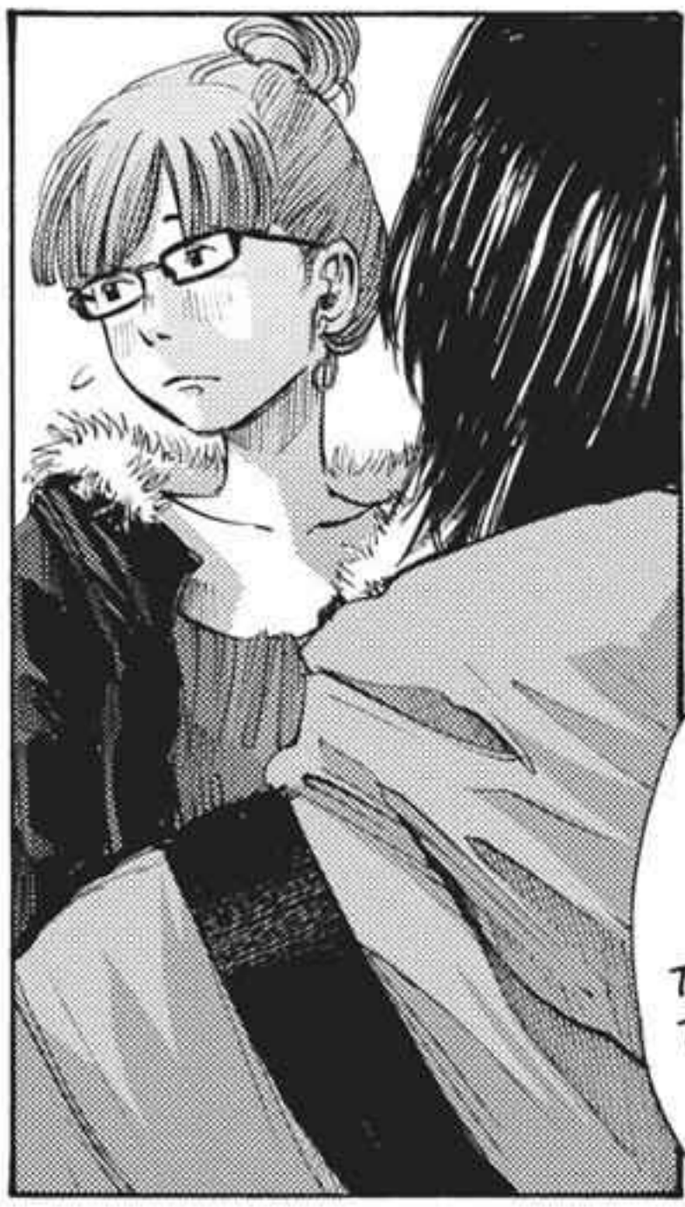
DID THE BOYFRIEND RACK UP SO MUCH DEBT THAT HE'S RESTING AT THE BOTTOM OF TOKYO BAY?

I'M SURE THAT AS WE SPEAK...

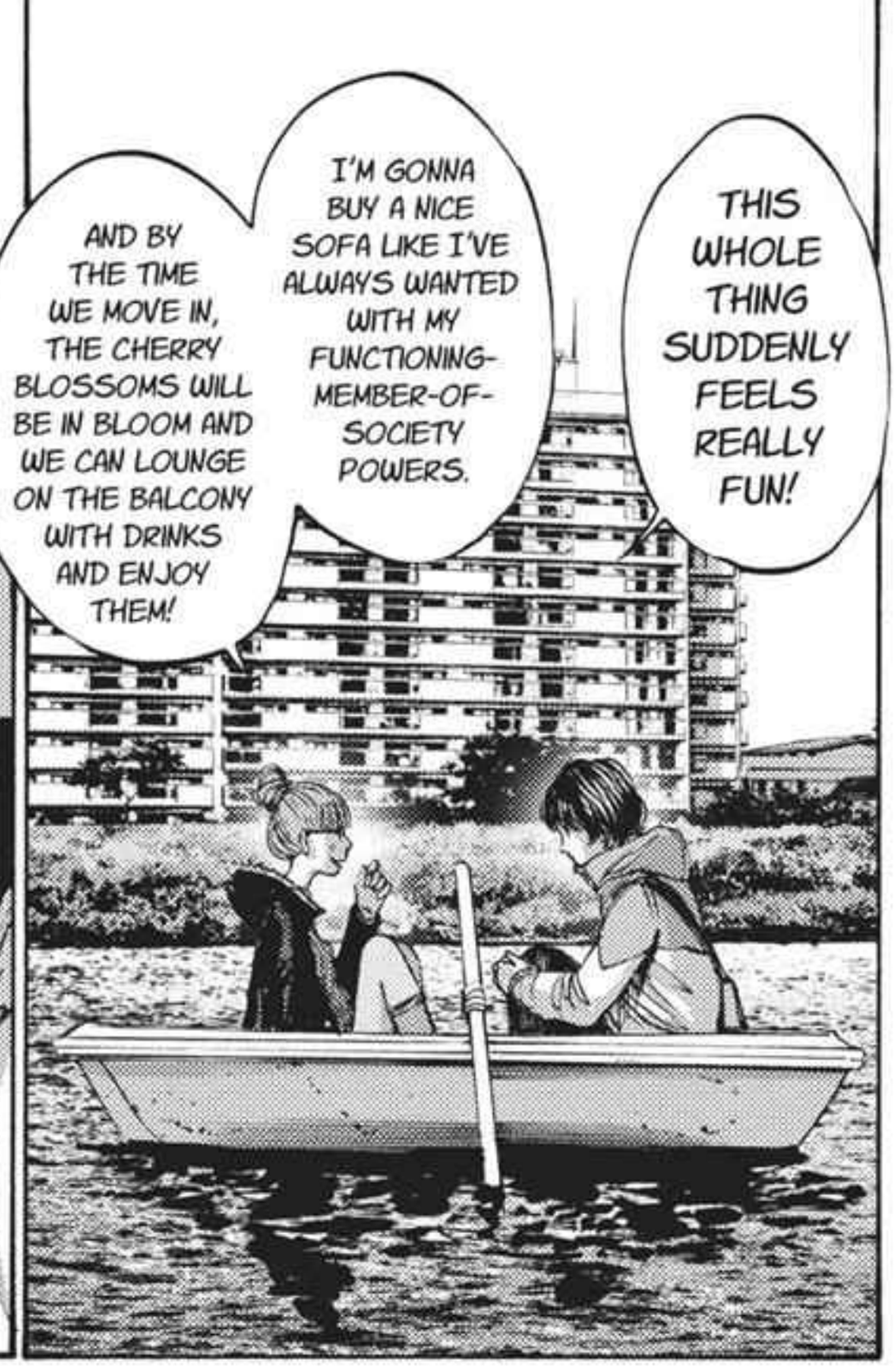
...THEY'RE BOTH LIVING THEIR ORDINARY LIVES SOME-WHERE.

PEOPLE DON'T GET *THAT* DEPRESSED OVER THOSE KINDS OF THINGS.

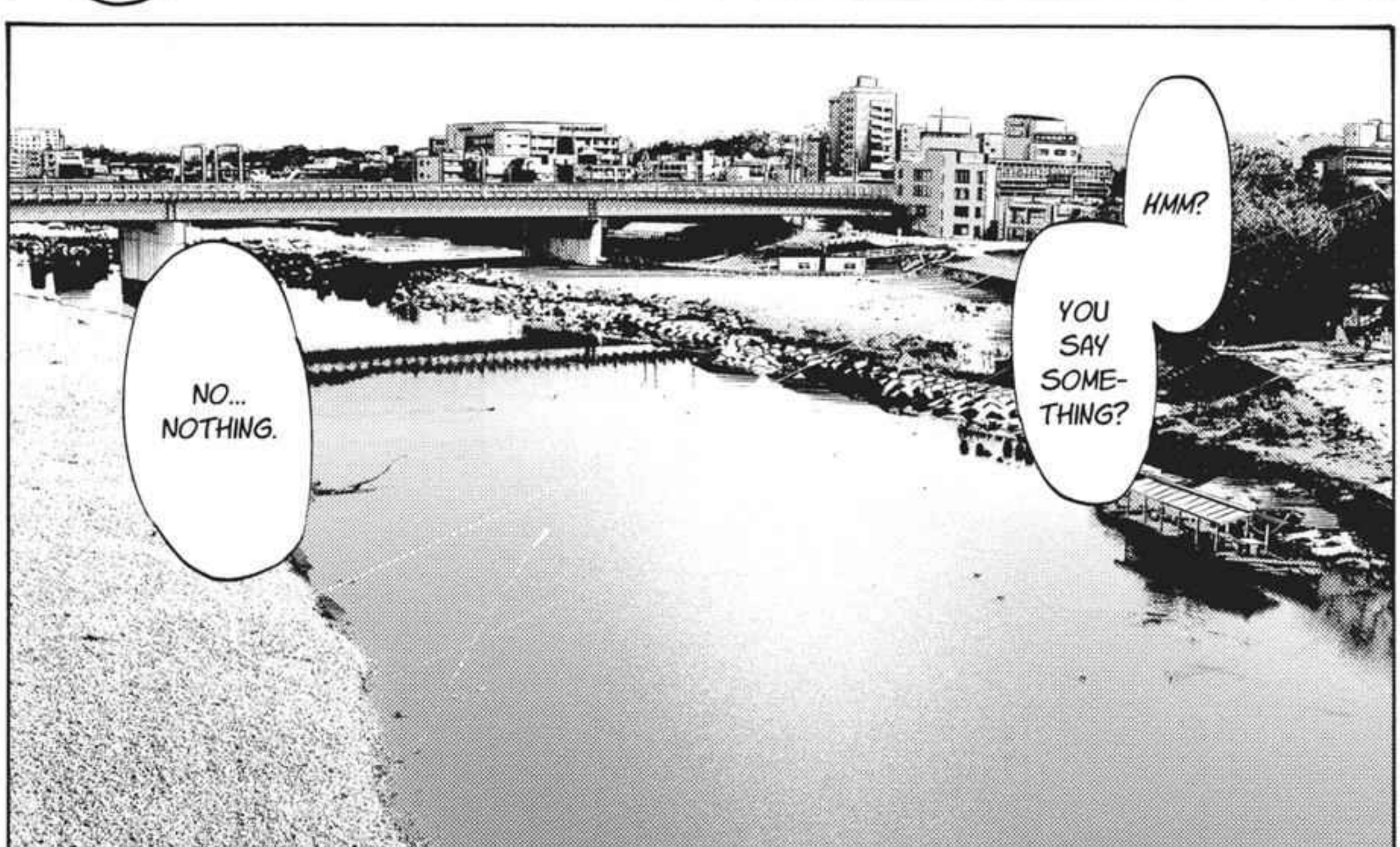
YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT.



OOPS. I HAVE TO RETURN THE BOAT.


AND BY THE TIME WE MOVE IN, THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS WILL BE IN BLOOM AND WE CAN LOUNGE ON THE BALCONY WITH DRINKS AND ENJOY THEM!
I'M GONNA BUY A NICE SOFA LIKE I'VE ALWAYS WANTED WITH MY FUNCTIONING-MEMBER-OF-SOCIETY POWERS.
THIS WHOLE THING SUDDENLY FEELS REALLY FUN!

I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK.
YUCK.

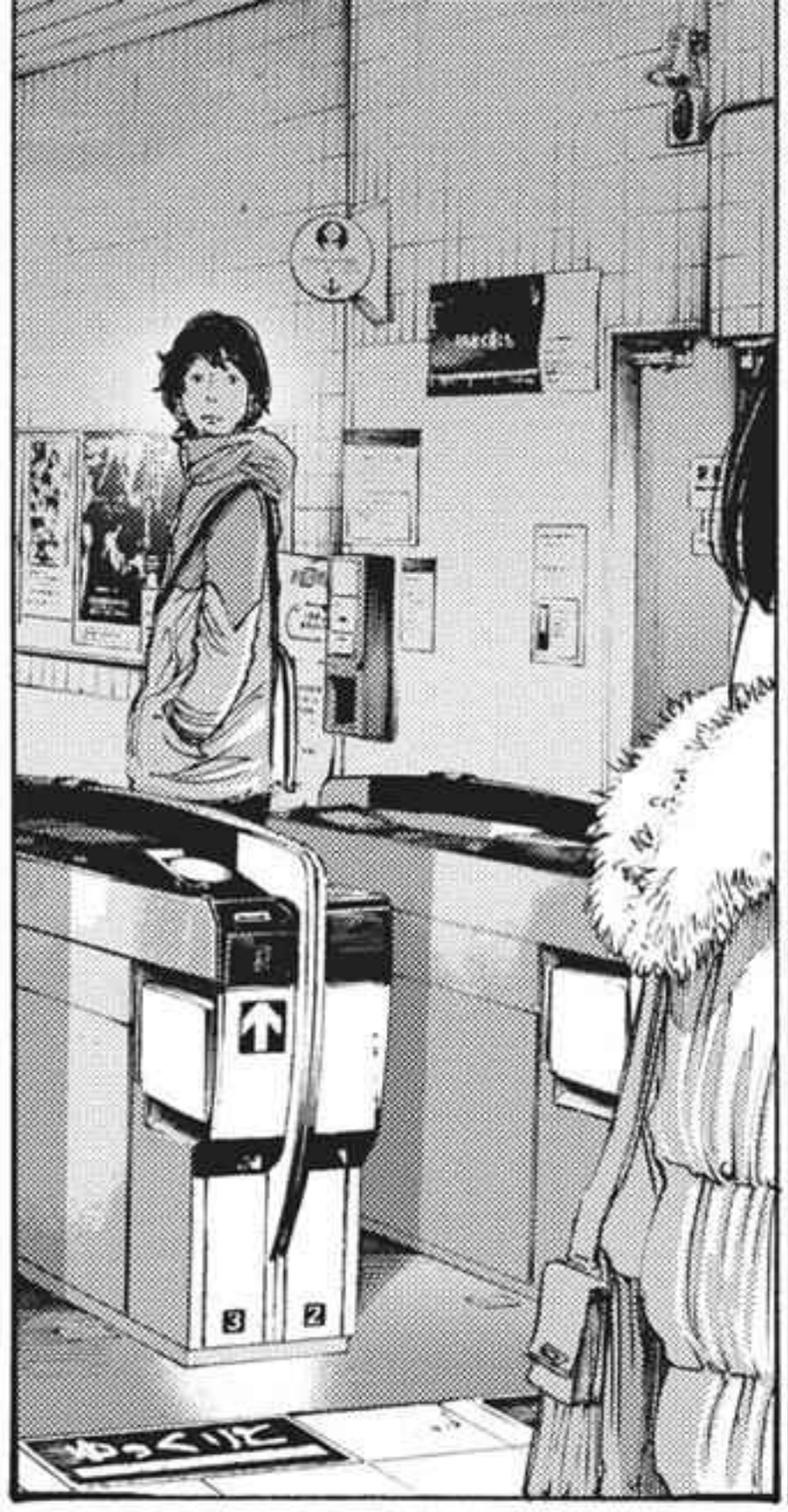

NO... NOTHING.
YOU SAY SOME-THING?
HMM?

HUH?

I THINK I ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER, BUT ARE YOU SURE...

...I CAN'T CHANGE YOUR MIND?

ABOUT BREAKING UP?



You're going to ride the Odakyu Line towards Shinjuku and fade away like you've melted into the crowd.

...as the Nice Boyfriend Who Understands Me.

And so ends your role...

...as the Mean, Selfish Girlfriend.

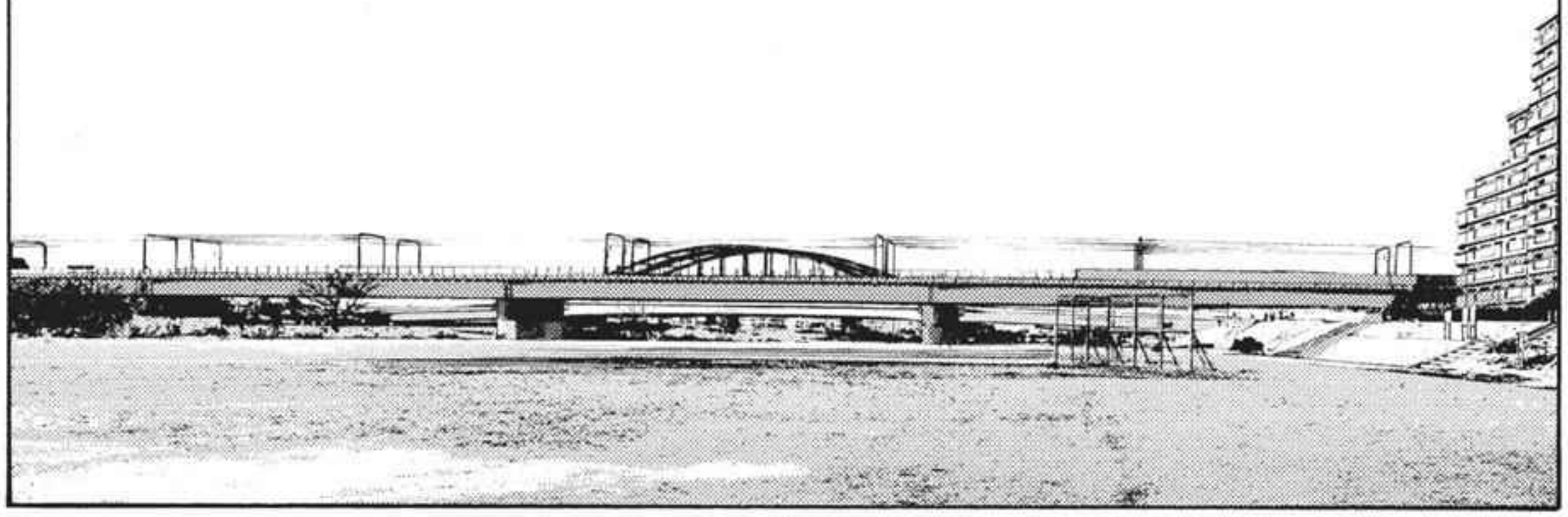
And my role...

...tucked away in some corner of Tokyo.

...in my spacious two-bedroom apartment with the kitchen and dining room...

...for it to warm up...

I'll wait all by myself...



If only I had an instrument to play at times like this.

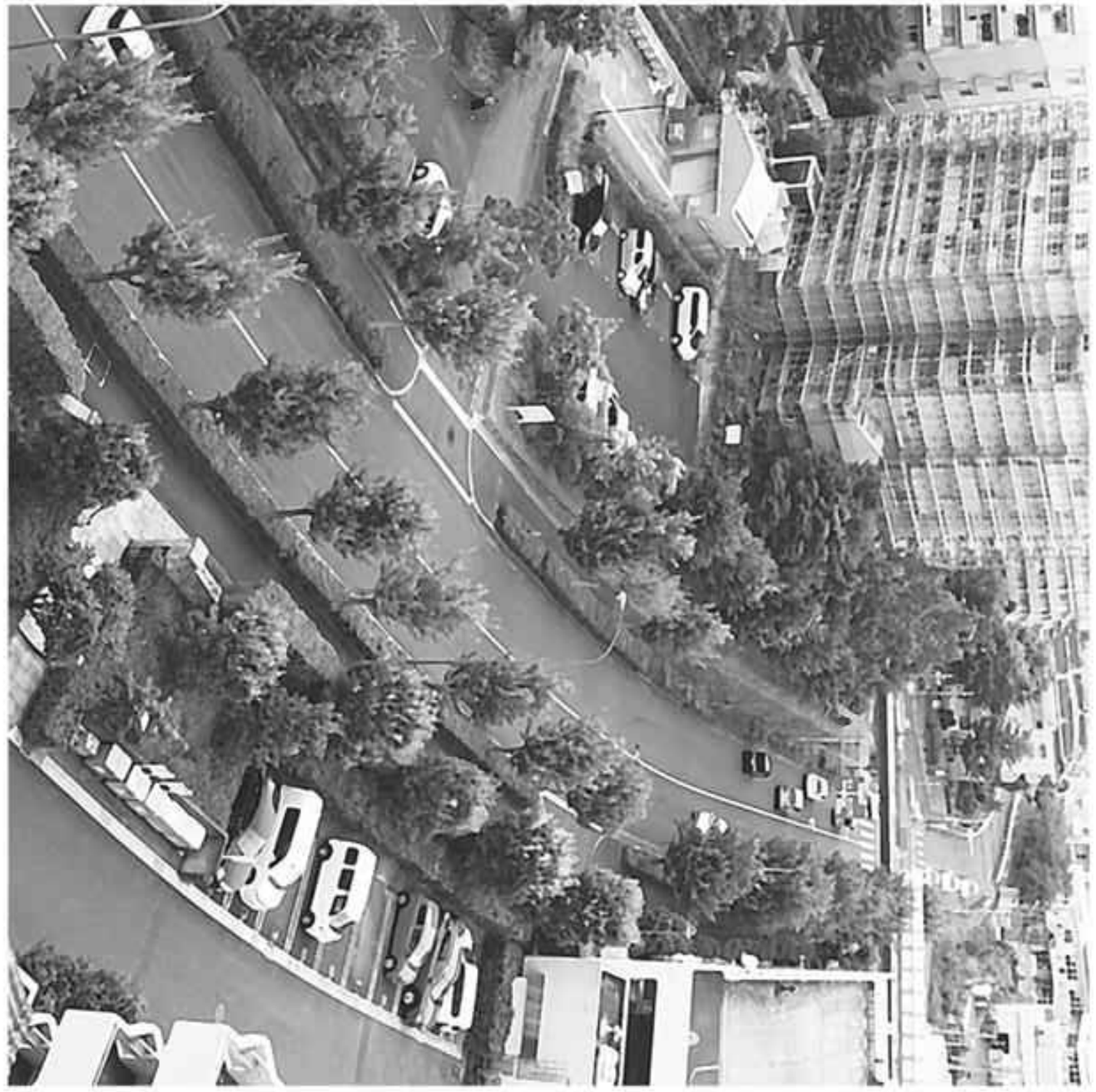
So sometimes I tell silly lies.

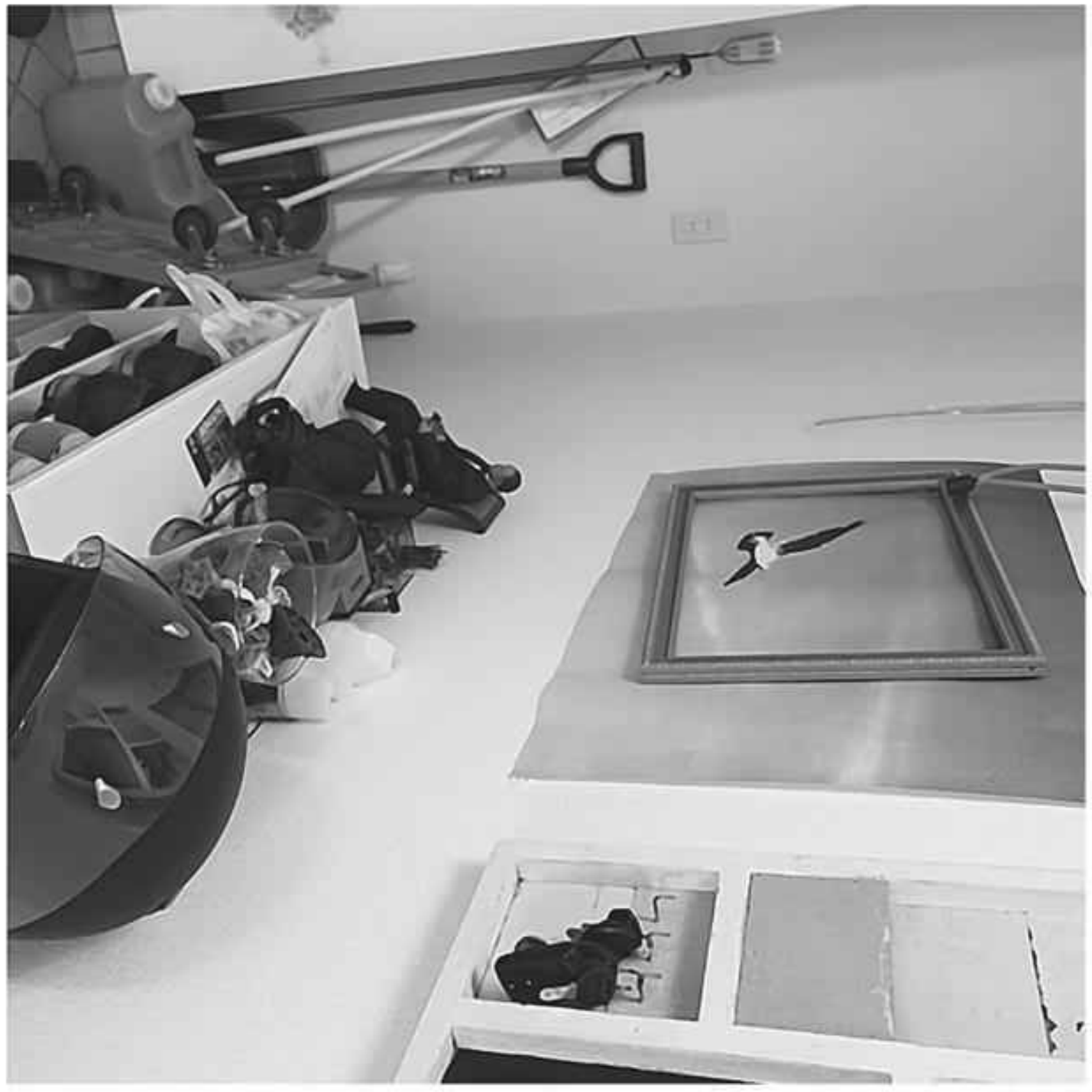
I can only express myself in words.

Awaiting spring.

Come to me already.

Hurry, hurry.





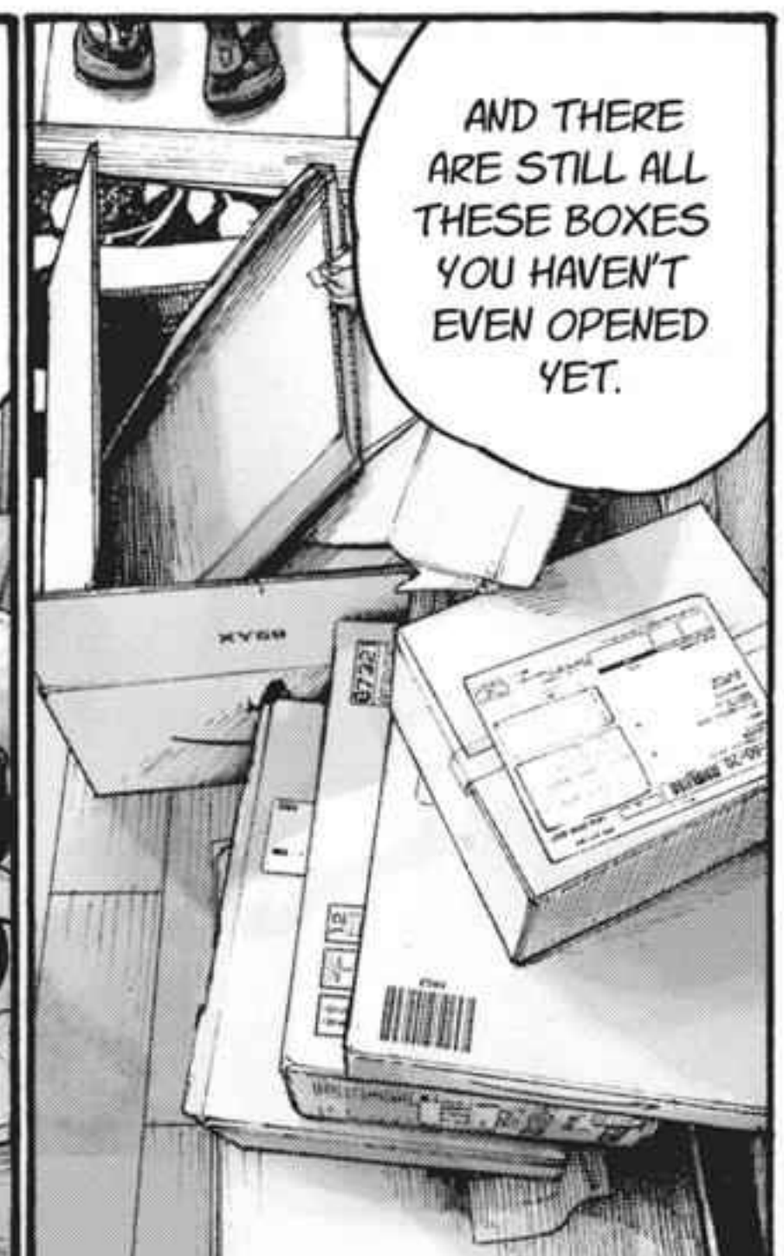
TABATAAAA! YOU HAVE A PACKAAAAGE!

COMIIIIING.

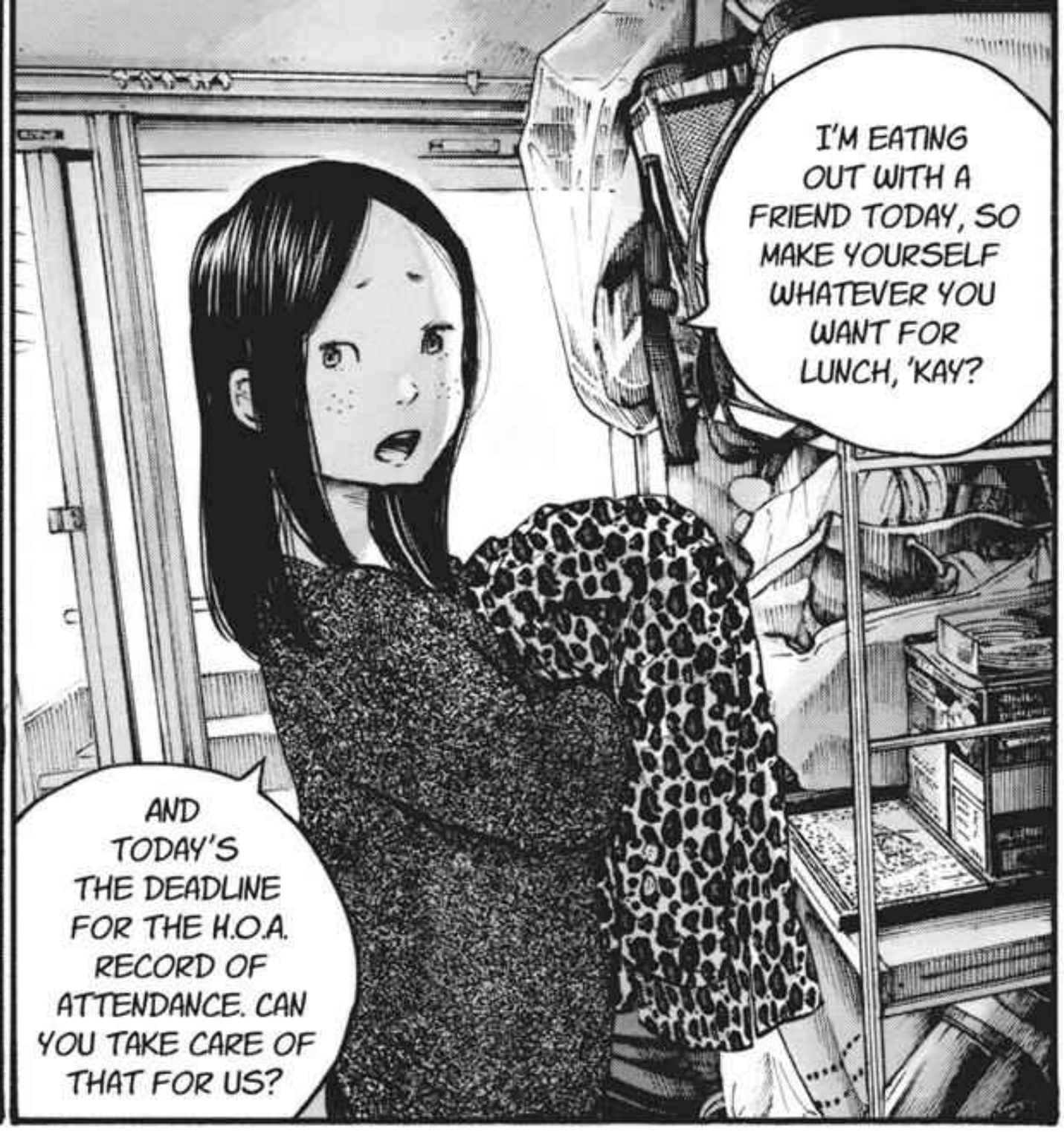
29

YOU GOT A BUNCH OF PACKAGES AGAIN.
YUKI?

ARE THEY WEIRD FIGURINES OR MYSTERIOUS GADGETS AGAIN?
MMM... LET ME THINK...
WHAT ARE THEY...?


AND THERE ARE STILL ALL THESE BOXES YOU HAVEN'T EVEN OPENED YET.

MMM...
'KAY...
THANKS FOR REMINDING ME.


I'M EATING OUT WITH A FRIEND TODAY, SO MAKE YOURSELF WHATEVER YOU WANT FOR LUNCH, 'KAY?
AND TODAY'S THE DEADLINE FOR THE H.O.A. RECORD OF ATTENDANCE. CAN YOU TAKE CARE OF THAT FOR US?

I FEEL LIKE HE'S NOT LISTENING TO ME.
AAARGH, IT'S HOPELESS.

AAACK! I'M GOING TO BE LATE!

12:45
March 29 (Sat)
UH-OH...

3-1102
Tabata

The show starts at 3pm so meet me in Shinjuku at 1. It's been forever since I've seen you, so I'm sure the two of us will be in for a surprise.

16:24

Sent 17:02 Got it.

Today

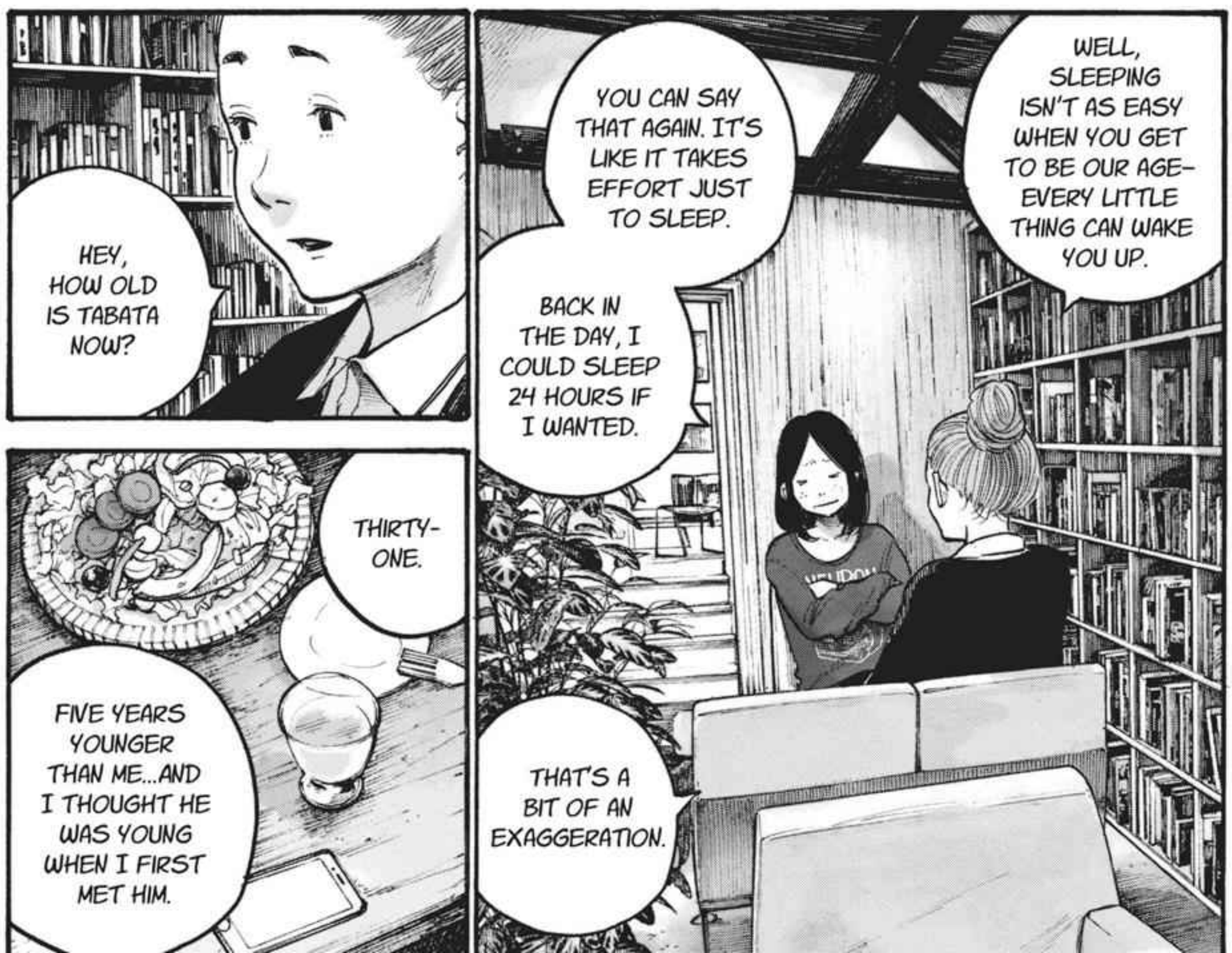
Sent 12:41 Sorry! I'll be 30 min late.

I figured, so I came 30 min early. We'll be on time so take it easy.

12:45

Sent 12:47 Ai, you're the best. Will do (: 'o')

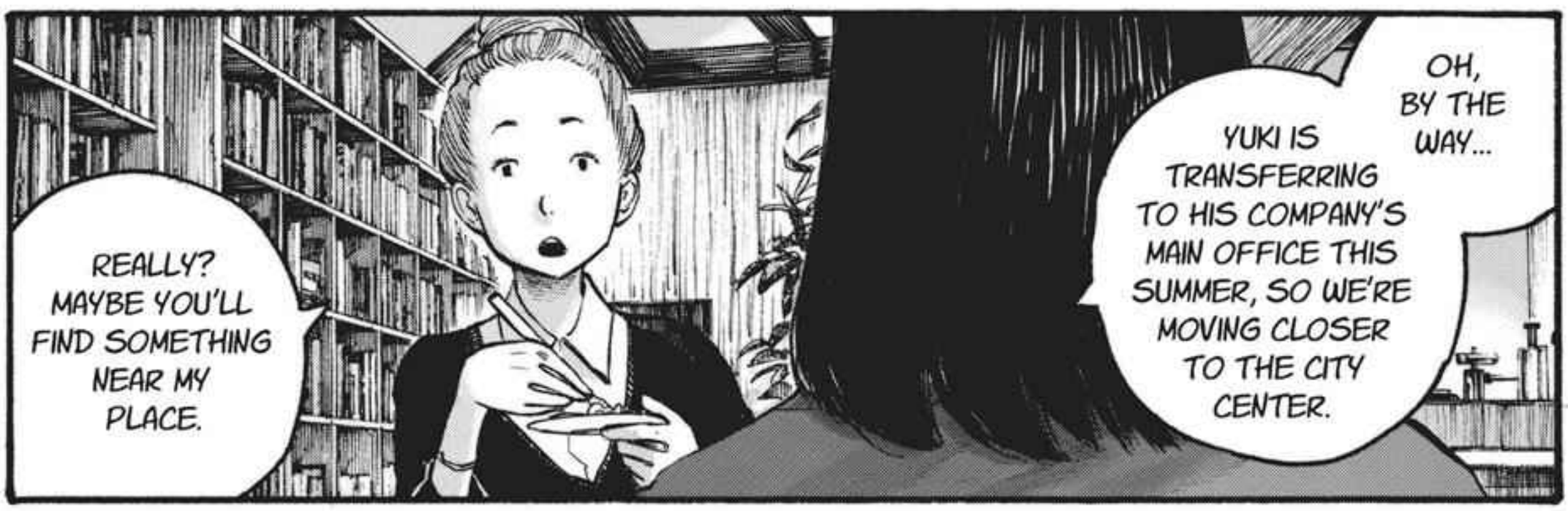
I MEAN, HE HAS EVERY RIGHT. HE WORKED FOR THAT MONEY, SO HE CAN BUY WHATEVER HE WANTS.



YEAH...
I GUESS SO.
I WONDER IF STRESS FROM HIS JOB MAKES HIM BUY THINGS COMPULSIVELY.

HE CERTAINLY ACTS LIKE AN ADULT. I MEAN, HE'S PRACTICALLY MIDDLE-AGED.
ON HIS DAYS OFF, HE LAZES AROUND THE HOUSE ALL DAY AND BARELY RESPONDS WHEN I TALK TO HIM.

I WOULDN'T BLAME HIM. WORK KEEPS HIM BUSY, RIGHT?


OH, BY THE WAY...
YUKI IS TRANSFERRING TO HIS COMPANY'S MAIN OFFICE THIS SUMMER, SO WE'RE MOVING CLOSER TO THE CITY CENTER.
REALLY? MAYBE YOU'LL FIND SOMETHING NEAR MY PLACE.

UH...
I'M ACTUALLY THINKING OF... QUITTING MY JOB.

YOU LIVE IN NAKANO, RIGHT? THAT'S SUCH AN EXPENSIVE AREA.
AND IF WE GET AN EVEN SMALLER PLACE THAN THE ONE WE HAVE RIGHT NOW, WE'RE GOING TO RUN INTO PROBLEMS.
YEAH?
BUT YOU TWO HAVE DUAL INCOMES, SO I'M SURE YOU COULD RENT ANY PLACE YOU WANT.

AGAIN? YOU SAID YOURSELF...

WHAAAAAT?!

...YOU WERE BETTER SUITED TO WRITING FOR WEBSITES.

IT'S FUN, BUT THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN THAT.

YOU CAN'T KEEP LIVING AIMLESSLY LIKE THAT.

I FEEL SORRY FOR POOR TABATA.

I GUESS IT'S MORE LIKE I'M CONSIDERING TAKING A BREAK.

SIGH... I WOULDN'T BLAME HIM IF HE DECIDED TO RUN AWAY.

HAVING TO WORK THE REST OF HIS LIFE TO SUPPORT ME!

YUKI REALLY DOES HAVE IT ROUGH.

BUT YOU GO, MEIKO. THE GANG WILL BE SURPRISED TO SEE YOU AGAIN AFTER SO LONG.

SOMETHING ELSE SUDDENLY CAME UP.

THAT'S COLD...

WAIT... AREN'T YOU COMING TO THE SHOW, AI?

THAT'S WHY I CAME OUT HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE.

RIP'S GOING TO MISS YOU.

I JUST HAD DRINKS WITH RIP LAST MONTH.

BESIDES, I'LL PASS ON A BAND THAT ABUSES ITS POWER BY DRAGGING IN SUBORDINATES FROM WORK AGAINST THEIR WILLS.

I HEAR KATO PLAY EVERY DAY, SO I'VE HAD MY FILL.

HA!

HIS AUNTIE'S GOING TO BE WORRIED ABOUT HIM.

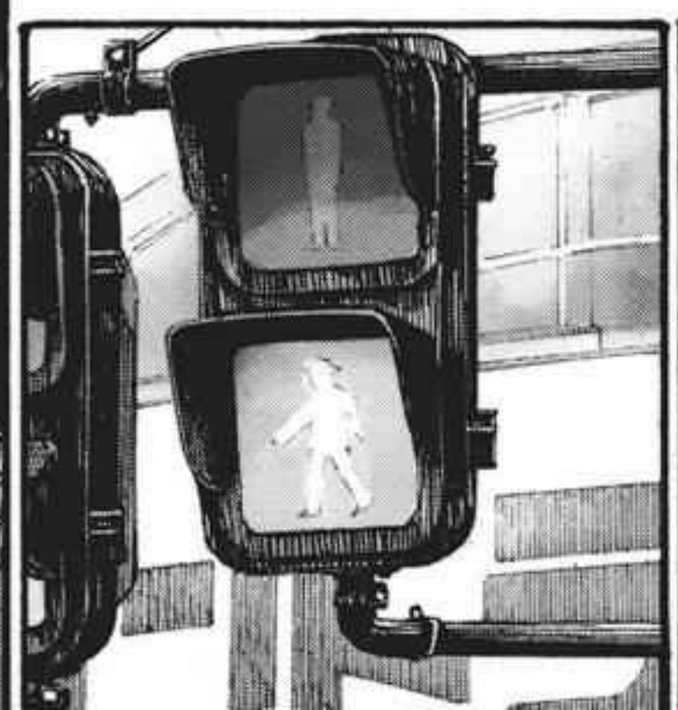
HE FAILED TO MENTION HOW HE'S BECOME OBSESSED WITH THE COLLEGE GIRLS AT SOME LADIES' BAR.

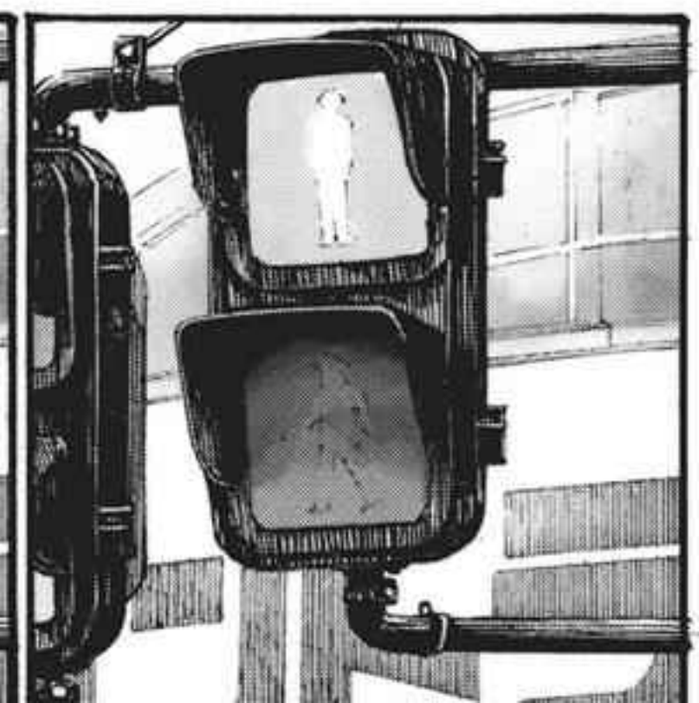
TELL HIM FOR ME THAT HE CAN'T GET MARRIED YET.

OOPS.
Hair & Make
7F

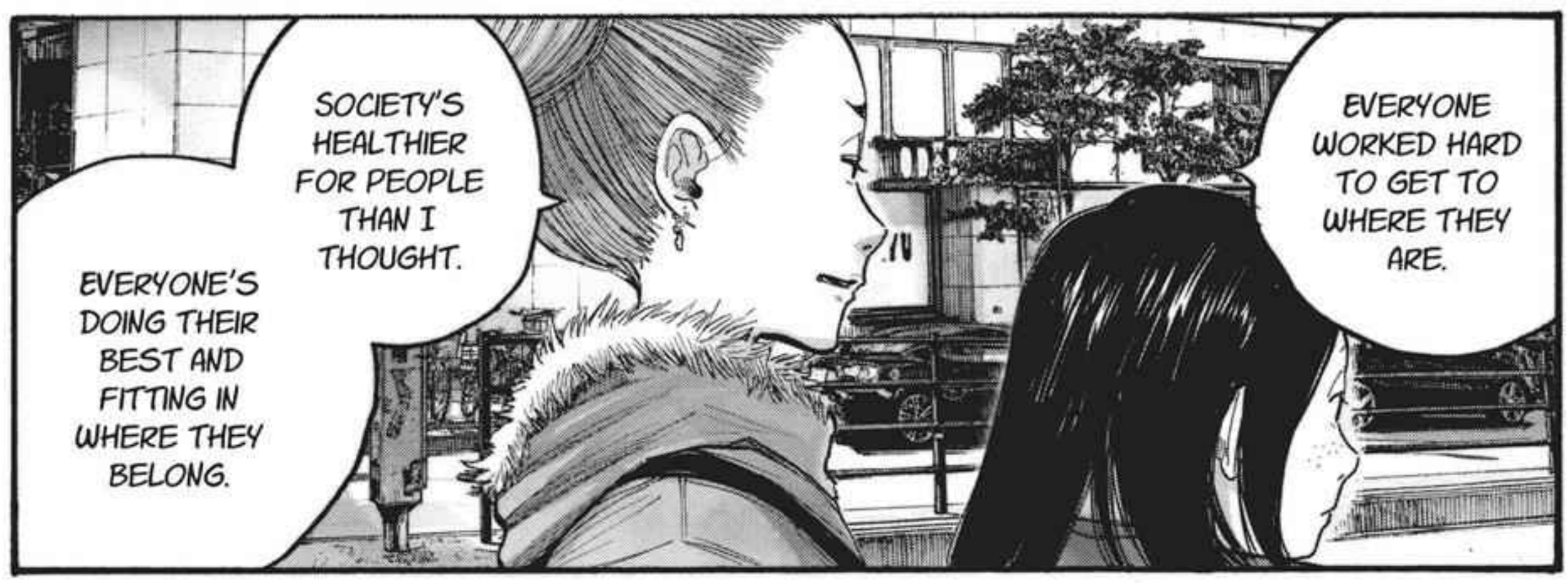
MEIKO, YOU'VE GOT TO PAY BETTER ATTENTION.
SORRY ABOUT THAT. I HAD THIS SUDDEN THOUGHT.

AH...





SOMEHOW OR OTHER, THINGS WORKED OUT.
IT FEELS LIKE I'M LIVING IN A DREAM.
I'M NOT REALLY SURE HOW TO PUT IT.
I MEAN, I'M SUPER HAPPY EVERYONE SEEMS TO BE DOING SO WELL.


SOCIETY'S HEALTHIER FOR PEOPLE THAN I THOUGHT.
EVERYONE'S DOING THEIR BEST AND FITTING IN WHERE THEY BELONG.
EVERYONE WORKED HARD TO GET TO WHERE THEY ARE.

Oda Real Estate
Café Peace

I ALMOST FORGOT TO MENTION...
I'M PREGNANT.
B2F
Hang Over
Holland
B1

WHAT...?

OH. THAT'S WHY YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT CUTTING BACK ON WORK AND WANTING A BIG PLACE.

YOU SHOULD'VE SAID SO SOONER.

CONGRATS, MEIKO. I'M HAPPY FOR YOU.

I KNOW YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A MOM.

ALL YOUR HARD WORK'S PAID OFF.

HEH HEH.

AT FIRST I FELT LIKE A SICK KID. I HAD HIM REALLY WORRIED.

YOU'VE LOST A LOT OF YOUR CYNICISM, MEIKO.

IT'S CALLED GROWING UP, AI.

BUT, OH WELL!

I'M SURE IT WILL ALL WORK OUT FOR THE BEST!

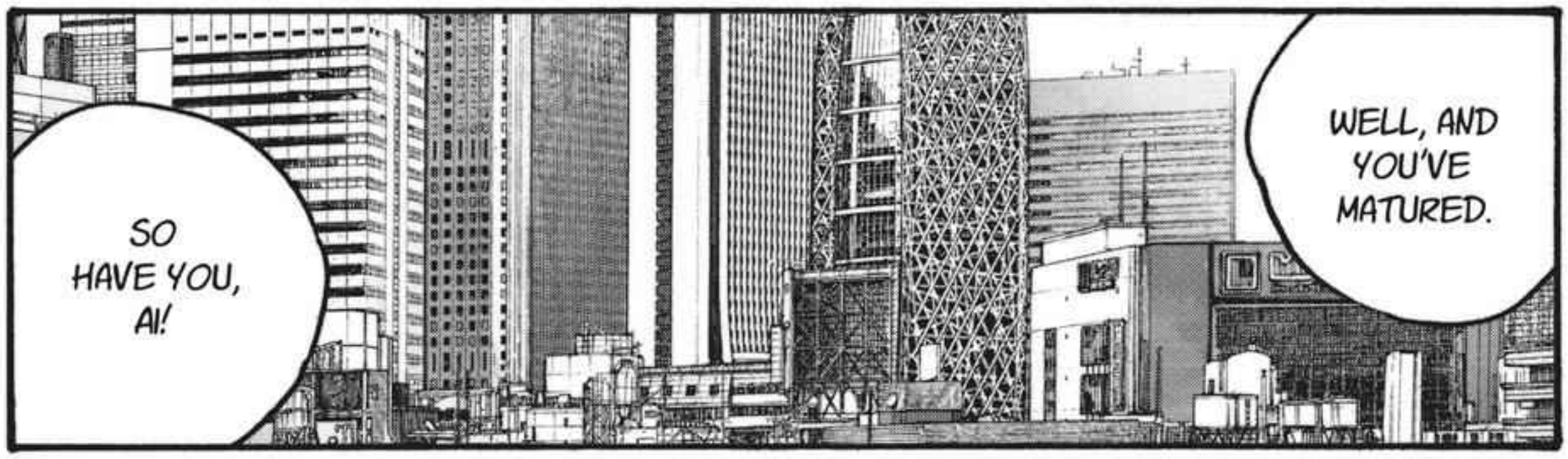
WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT?

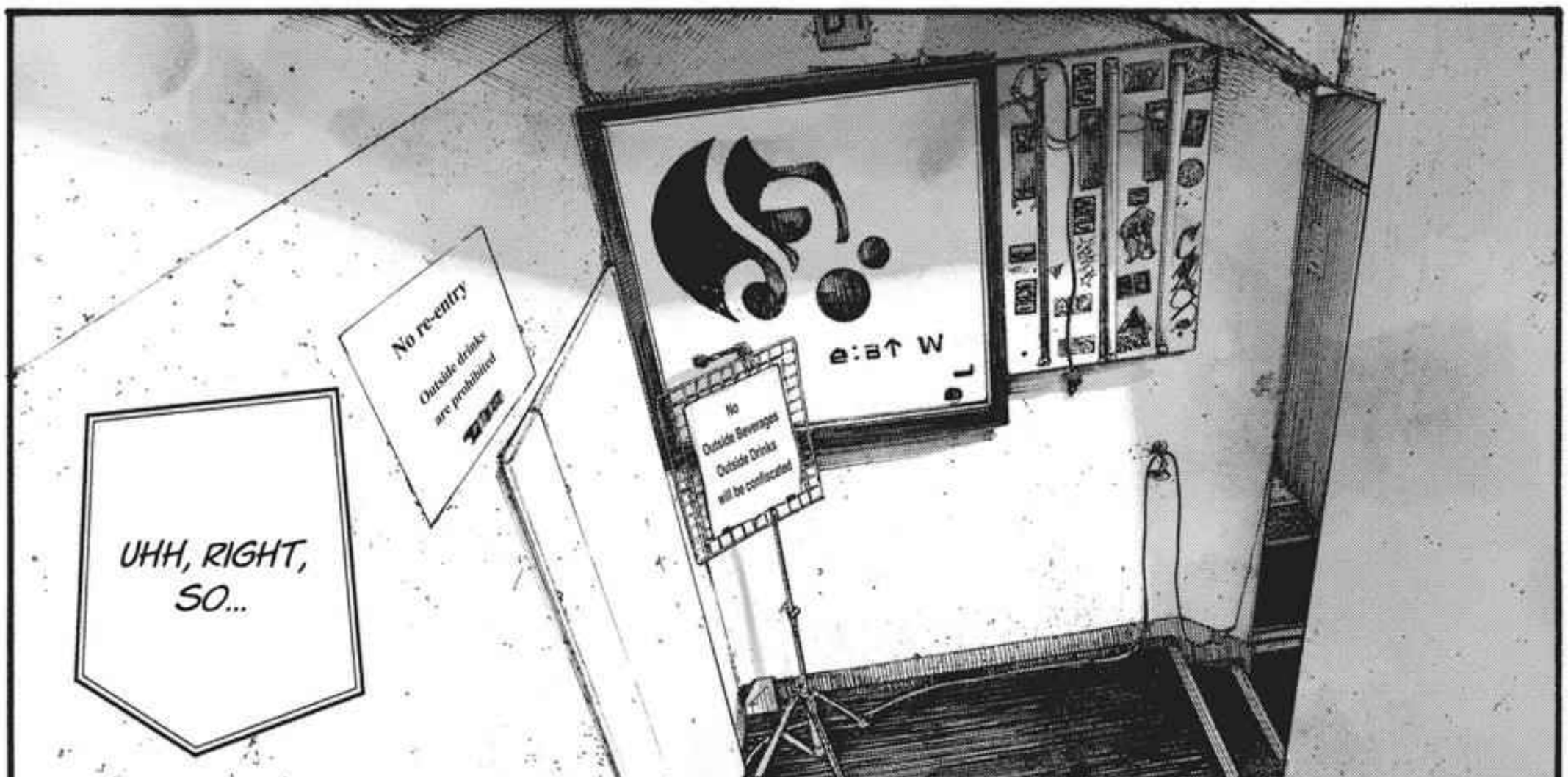
MEIKO.

HMM?

I THINK IT'S A GOOD THING.

YOU LOOK HAPPY.


SO HAVE YOU, AI!
WELL, AND YOU'VE MATURED.

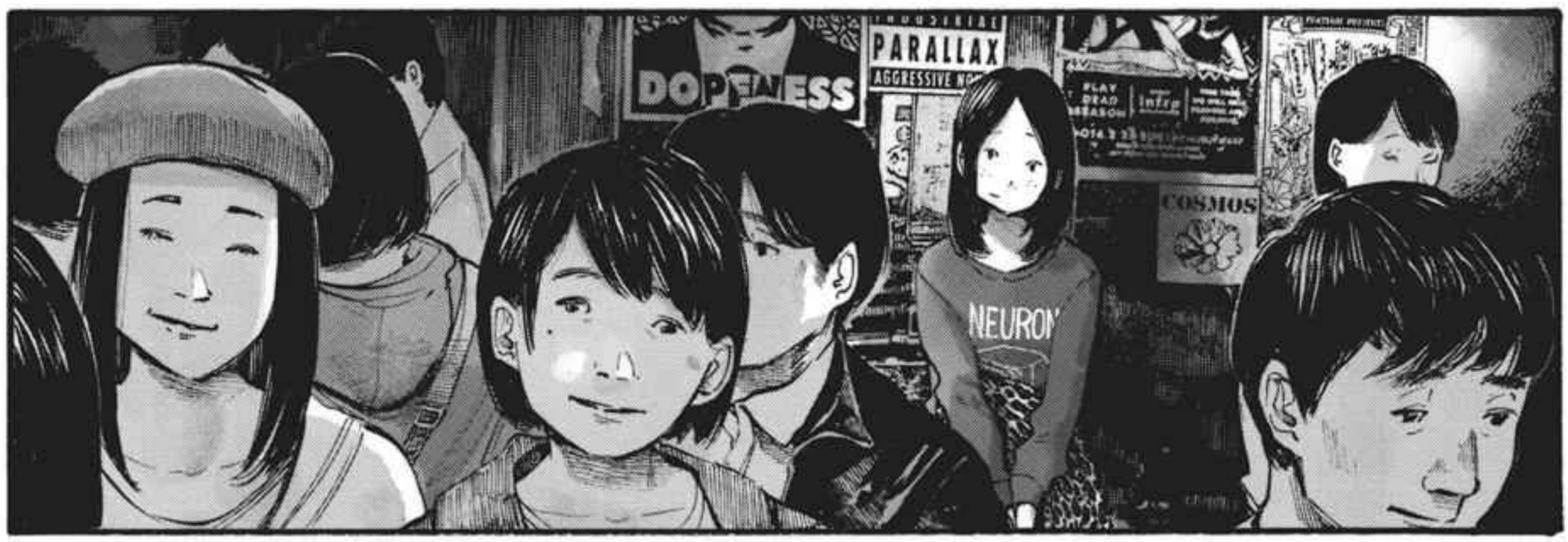

UHH, RIGHT, SO...
No re-entry
Outside drinks are prohibited
No Outside Beverages Outside Drinks will be confiscated

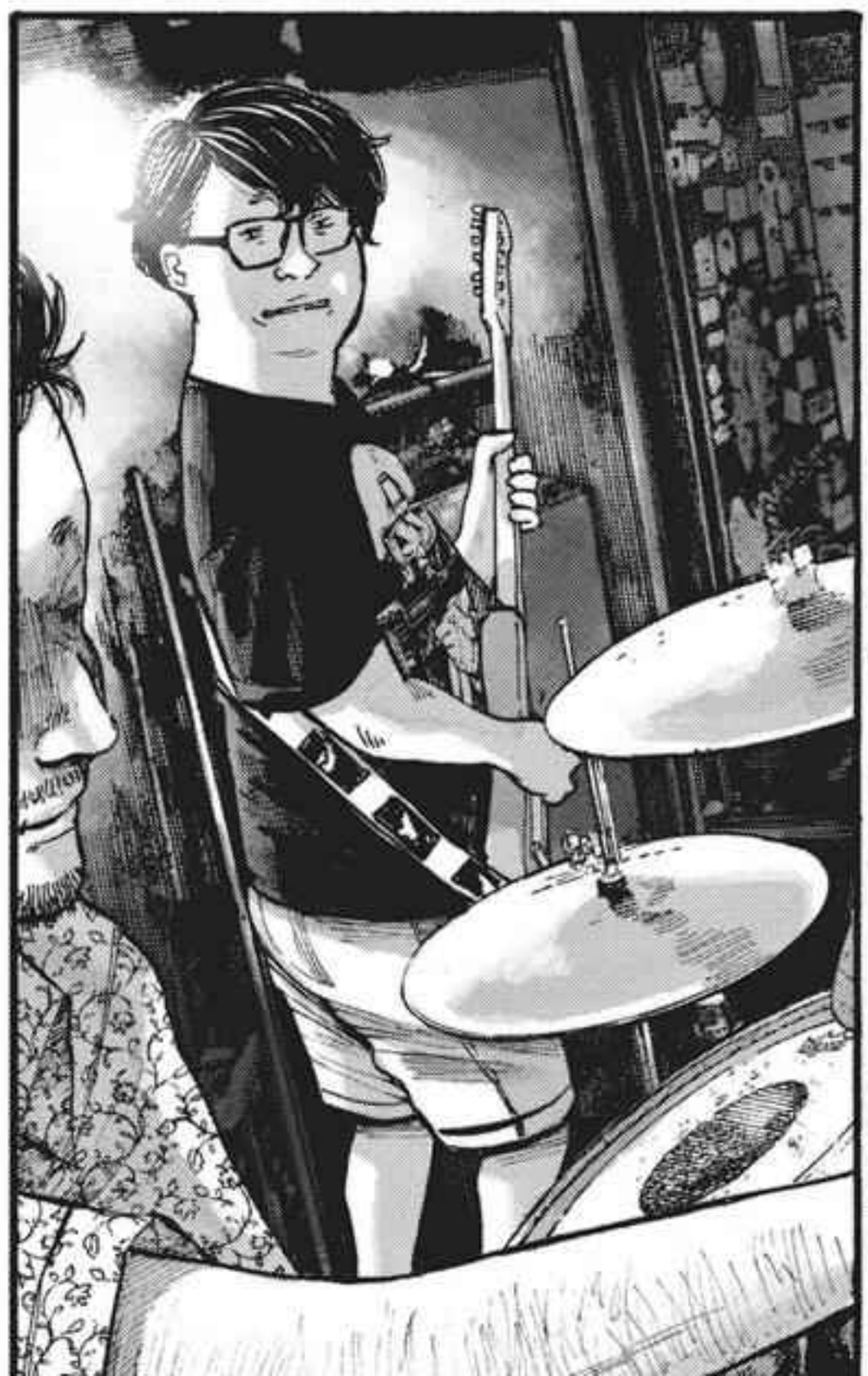
I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO KEEP THAT STORY UNDER WRAPS.

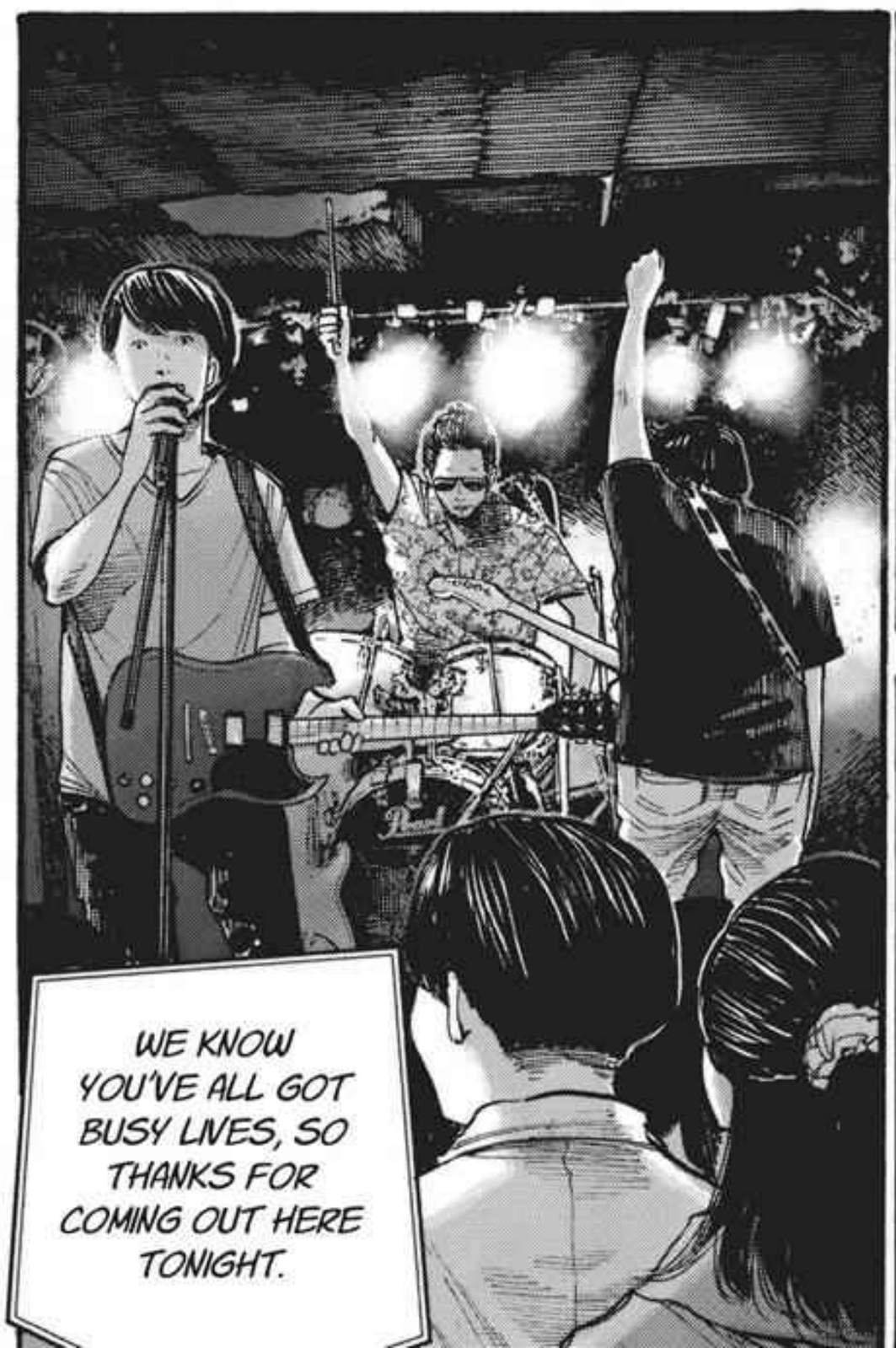
U-UM, YOKOYAMA?

I ONLY JOINED THIS BAND TO MAKE SOME COLLEGE MEMORIES, SO ORIGINALLY I REFUSED TO DO THIS.

BUT SINCE KATO BEGGED ON HIS KNEES...



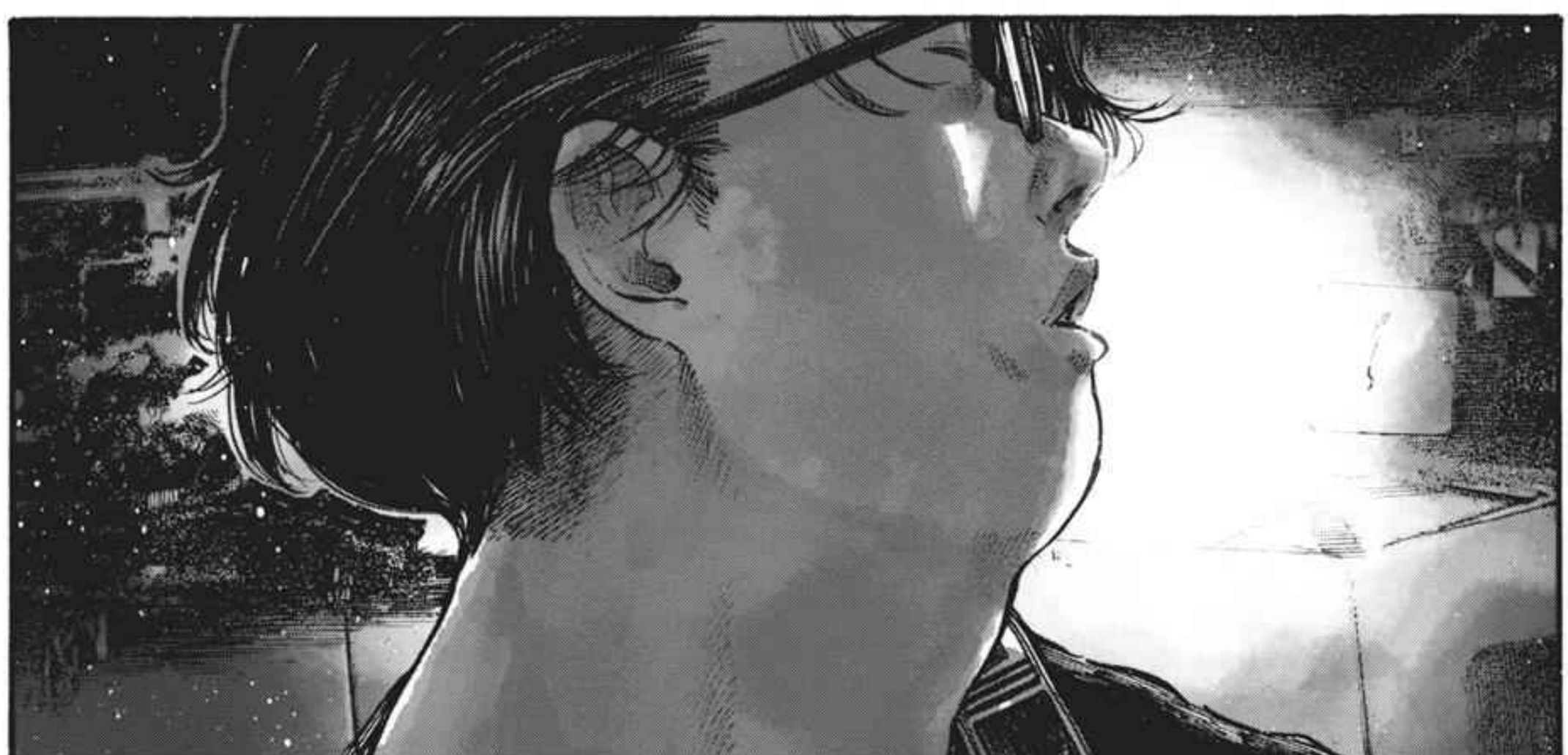



WE KNOW YOU'VE ALL GOT BUSY LIVES, SO THANKS FOR COMING OUT HERE TONIGHT.

ALL RIGHTY, THEN...THIS NEXT ONE IS OUR LAST NUMBER.

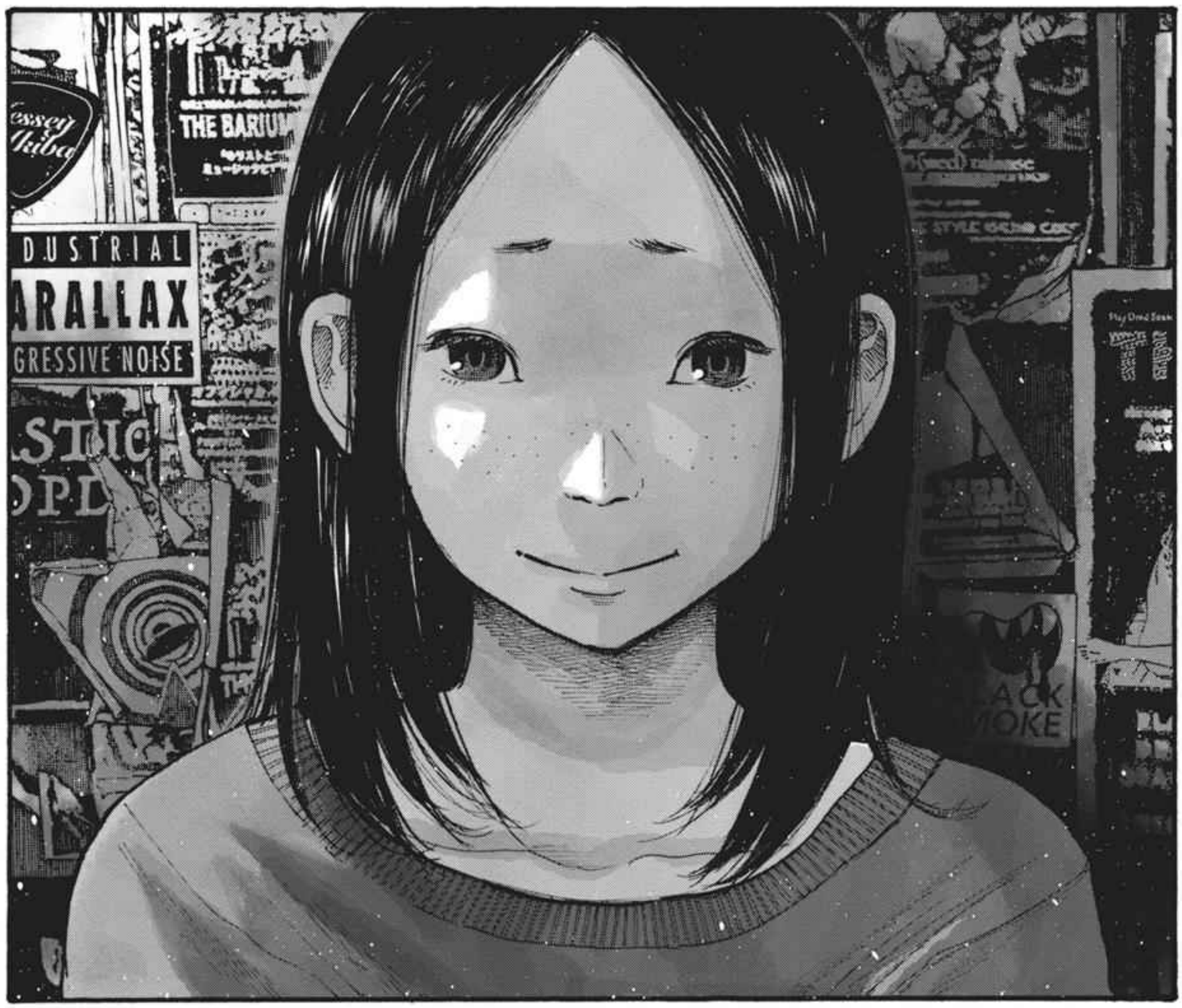
TOO LOUD!
AARGH!

I DON'T KNOW THIS SONG...
KATO, WHAT THE HECK?!



That's how I used to feel, ten years ago.

"There's a demon lurking in Tokyo."

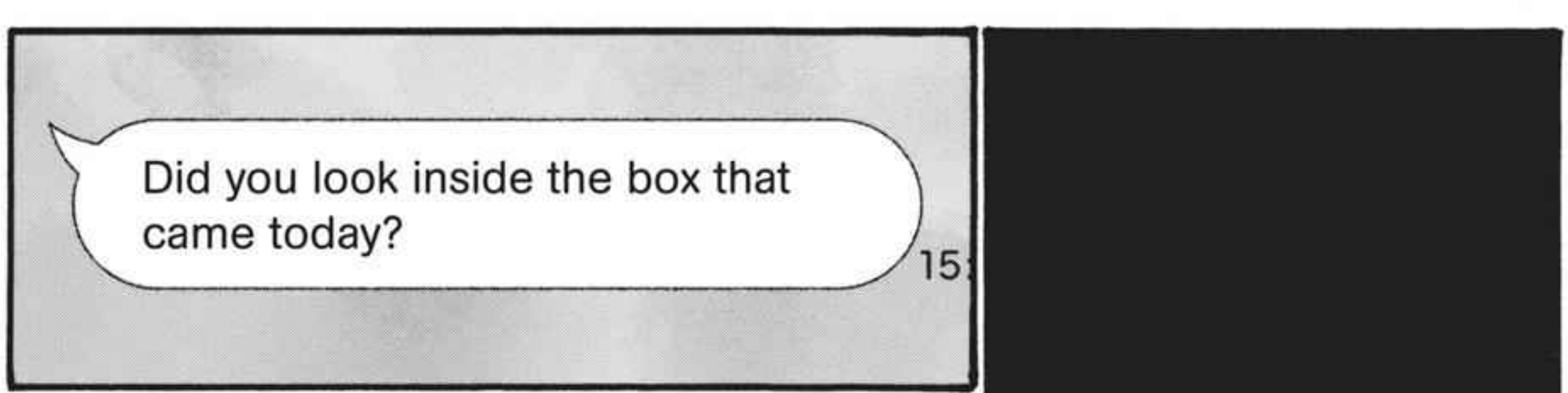


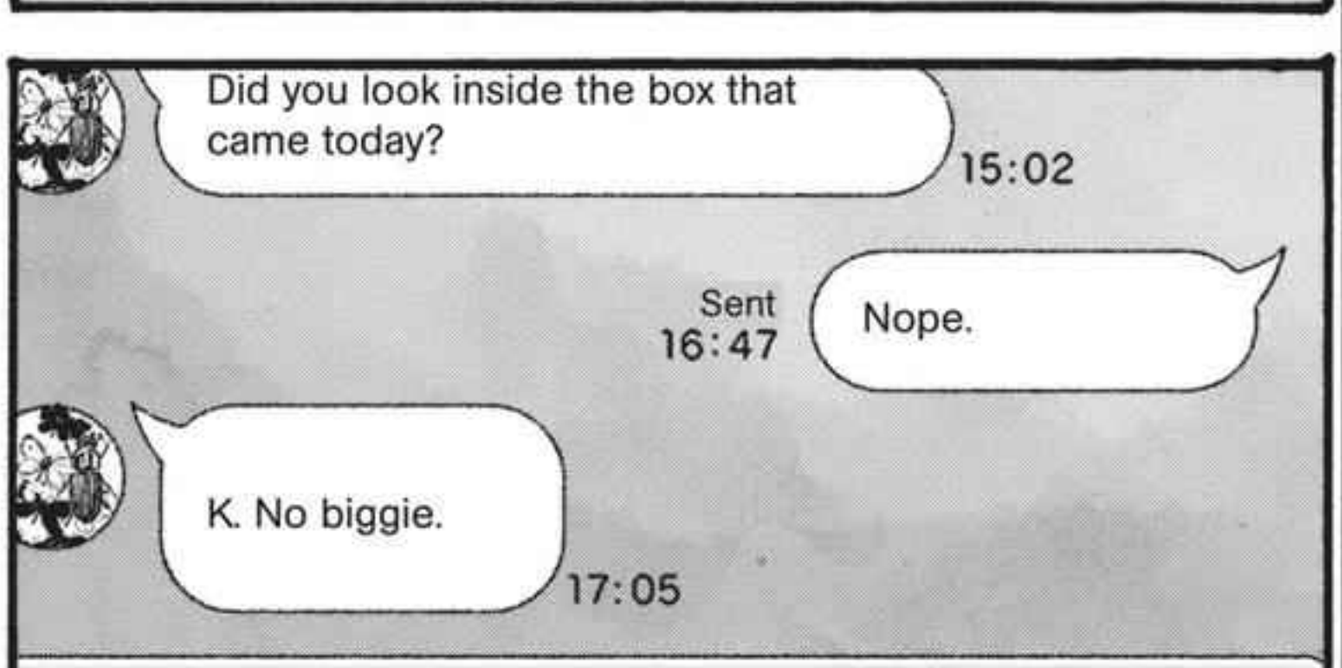
But what were we really fighting back then?

...but we still randomly tried to take on the invisible fiend.

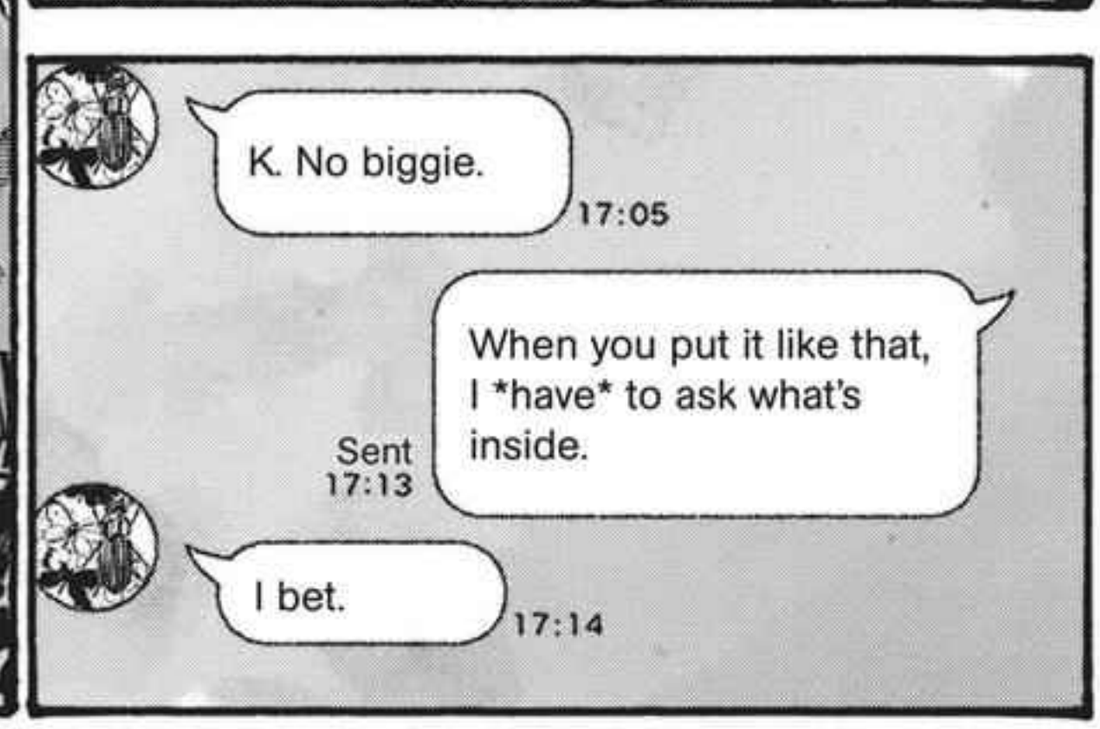
We were unarmed...

And did
we end up
losing?



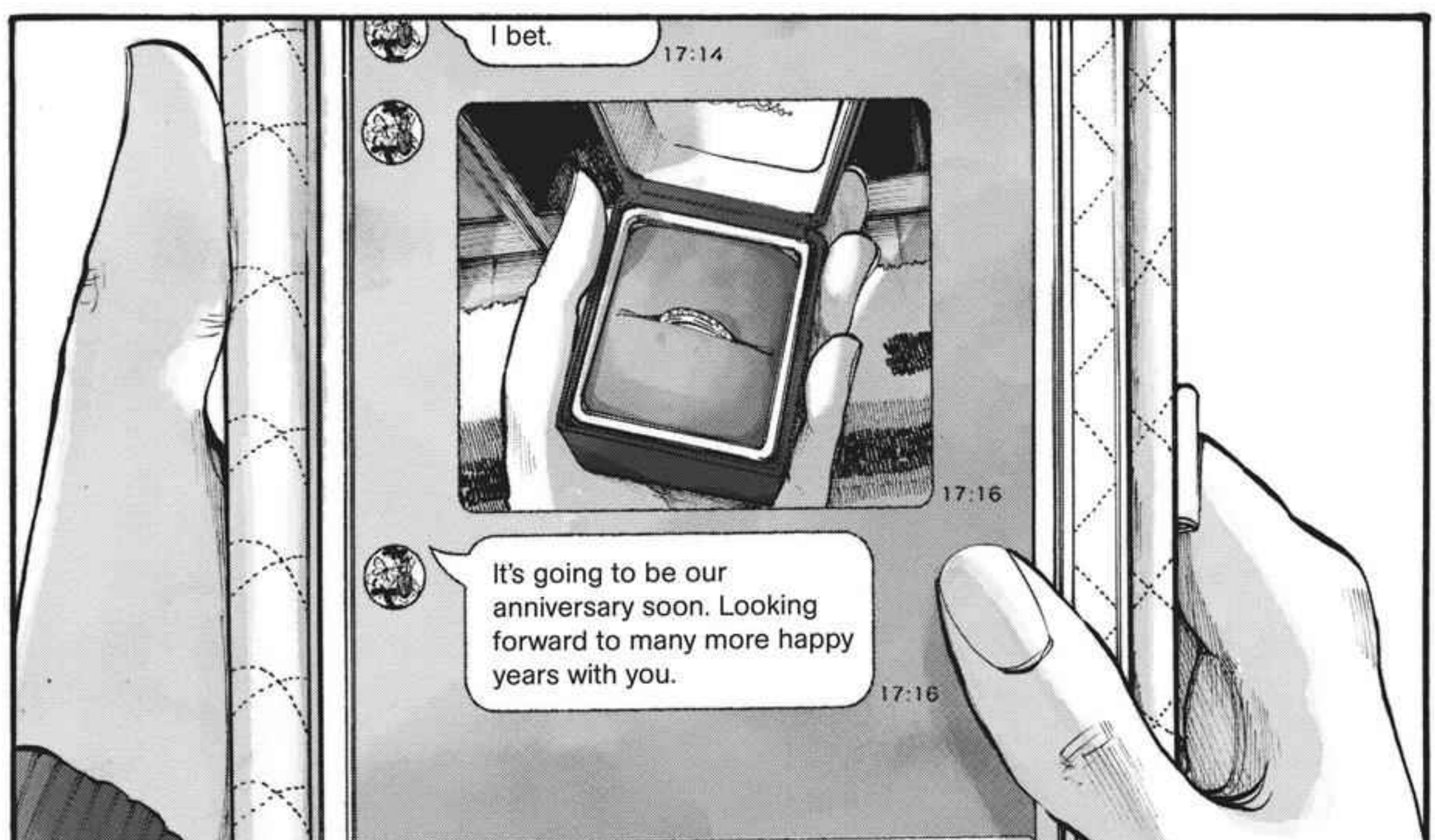


Now I have
something to
protect.



And I'm living today to support that faint hope.

I think I'm better cut out to protect than to fight.



Who goes buying things like that online without talking to the girl first?
But I forgive you. On my way home.
It's going to be our anniversary soon. Looking forward to many more happy years with you.
17:16
Who goes buying things like that online without talking to the girl first?
17:19
Days will feel ordinary and at the same time like I'm in a dream.

...that melody comes back to me.

Sometimes, even now...

"But I can't become the boy I was."

"If I could return to then..."

"If I had done this then..."

And I have to keep moving forward.

I've walked too far away now.

Yeah. There's no going back.

...and I have to keep on to the very ends of the earth.

Even if the going's tough...

solanin special edition staff:

Ran Atsumori
Booko
Miki Imai

Inio Asano, a bona fide earthling, was born in Ibaraki, Japan, in 1980. In 2001, his short story "Uchu kara Konnichiwa" (Hello from Outer Space) won the first *Sunday GX* Rookie Prize. Later, *GX* published his series *Subarashii Sekai*, available in English from VIZ Media as *What a Wonderful World!* His other works include *Hikari no Machi* (City of Light), *Nijigahara Holograph* and *Umibe no Onna no Ko* (*A Girl on the Shore*), as well as *solanin*, *Goodnight Punpun* and *Dead Dead Demon's Dedededede Destruction*, also available from VIZ Media.

afterword

I'm not one to believe in curses and superstition, but back in my twenties I was in the habit of subconsciously making little bets with the divine. For example, I would think things like "If the vending machine gives me all my change in ten-yen coins, I'll get a story serialized" or "If I cross the crosswalk before the signal starts blinking, I'll sell a hundred thousand copies." But now I hardly ever do that anymore, because none of my little wagers ever panned out. And I've had about seven fortunes work out for me due to my own sweat and blood. It's not the most glamorous thing in the world, but I've gotten used to it and I think it's natural.

solanin was released 11 years ago. At the time, I was super stressed out about it selling more copies, but looking back, I think it sold pretty well. Manga was still selling back then, but even beyond that, I really lucked out with the timing. It got adapted into a film, and I can still appreciate the song Asian Kung-fu Generation wrote for it, like any other person, and I still listen to it sometimes.

I decided to release this special edition now because volumes 1 and 2 of *solanin* were released in an omnibus collection in the U.S. in A5 size, and it looked so good that I figured, "Why not release it like that here in Japan for the tenth anniversary?" But by then, 11 years had actually passed. My bad.

Reading it again for the first time in years, the drawings are even worse than I remembered, and there's a lot of unnecessary stuff and a few too many scenes that feature characters throwing up. It makes me wish I could ask my old self if we really needed it all. But I'm sure that's just how the story had to be, with all its imperfections included. It's like when you know the right way to do things in some small corner of your brain, and it makes you want to do it wrong even more. I'm sure it's because back then my readers and I were still young. That's all.

After I finished writing chapter 29 for the special edition, I realized that I had barely thought about Takeda at all during the sketching or writing stages. And it made me feel a little sad because that's what it's like when people die. Takeda was proud and affected, so I never really liked him, even when the story first started serializing. This was the first time I ever felt a little bad for him.

Even to this day, I still get asked a lot whether Takeda's death was an accident or a suicide. And every time, I answer noncommittally. Back when I was writing it, I tried not to think too much about the reasons behind Takeda's actions. Or more accurately, I didn't want to think about the reasons. After all, I'm sure they were stupid. But if I had to explain his motives now, I think that Takeda's cause of death was "betting with the divine." The type of bet that goes, "If I can make it before the light changes, I'm sure everything will work out." He really was pathetic for leaving everything to chance all the way to the end. It was incredibly stupid. Getting results through your own hard work means everything, and if you can't accept that, you'll never progress. I don't think I'll ever like Takeda. After all, he's dead.

Ever since I started drawing manga, one of my goals has been to write a story that would have staying power, even ten years after the fact. Now it's been ten years, and I'm releasing a special edition of this story. I am really truly thankful to everyone who was involved in this project, to all the readers who have picked up *solanin* all over again and even to any new readers.

From the beginning of the year to about the halfway point, I was working on a story about a middle-aged mangaka. It's called *Reiraku* (Downfall). As luck would have it, I think it's turned out to be the polar opposite of *solanin*. In *solanin*, the main characters slowly but surely die as all their dreams wither. Whereas in *Reiraku*, the main character has reached middle age and all his dreams have come true, but he's now at a deadlock. I think releasing two works at one time like this has coincidentally resulted in more sales for both, but that's not the reason I wrote *solanin* in the first place. Regardless, I'm really happy I was able to give one more layer of significance to this story after ten years. There are no answers, and nothing lasts. So there's really only one thing that matters. And that's **right now**. I've aged a little, but I still think the same things I did back then and continue to write nonsensical manga to this day. And you? How are you feeling these days?

—Inio Asano

solanin: an epilogue

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PARENTAL ADVISORY
SOLANIN: AN EPILOGUE is rated T+ for Older Teen and is recommended for ages 16 and up. Contains depressing adult realities.

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