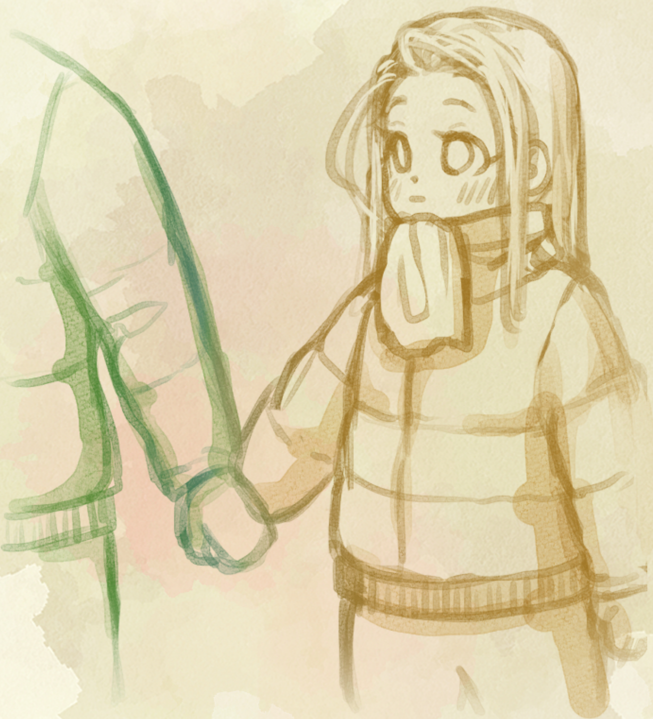
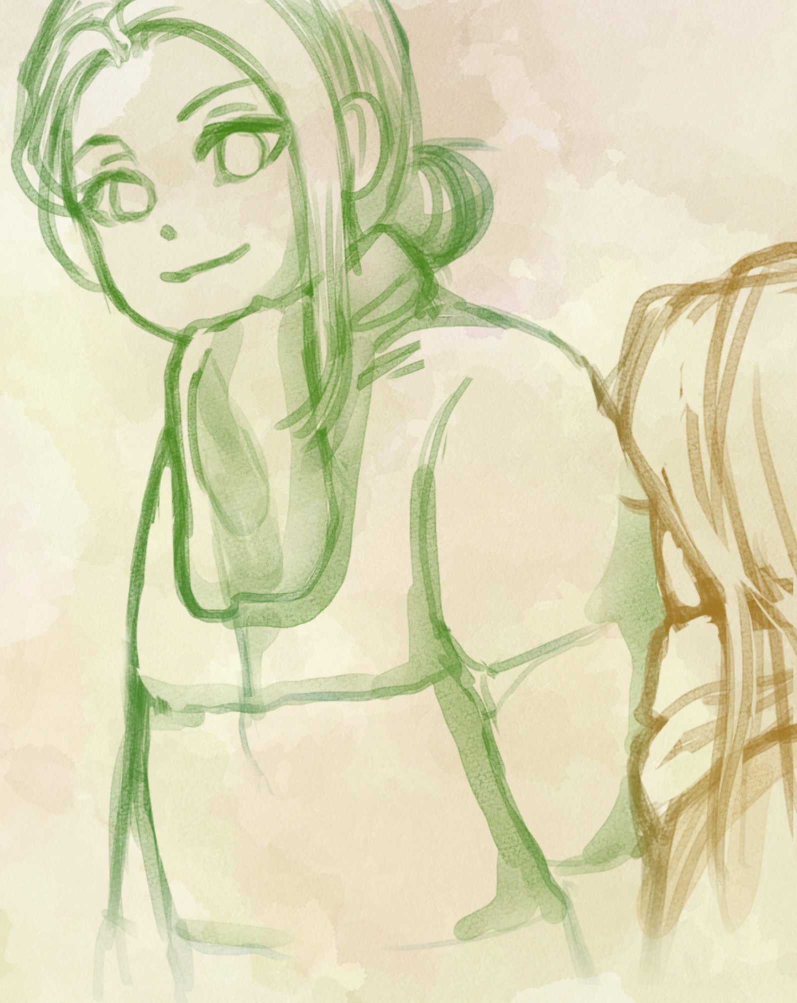
Disclaimer: TGW is a fictional story that involves Judo, a Japanese martial art that is practiced worldwide. There are many different cultures around how it's practiced. Therefore, the setting and story is a combo of personal experience, research, and some fictitious elements to support the plot. I try my best to portray the core parts of Judo accurately, but in no way am I an expert teacher. Even if I was... **don't try any of this at home.** Please find a local dojo instead :) Enjoy!

EVER SINCE I WAS LITTLE...

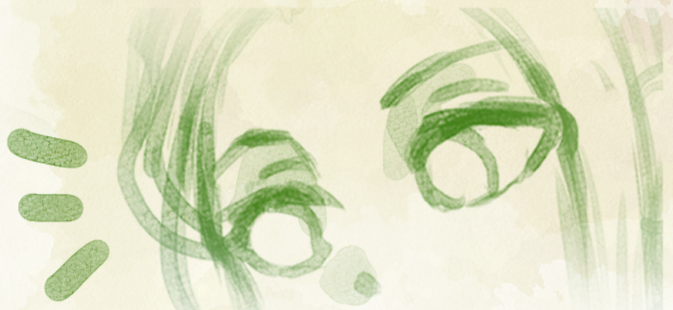


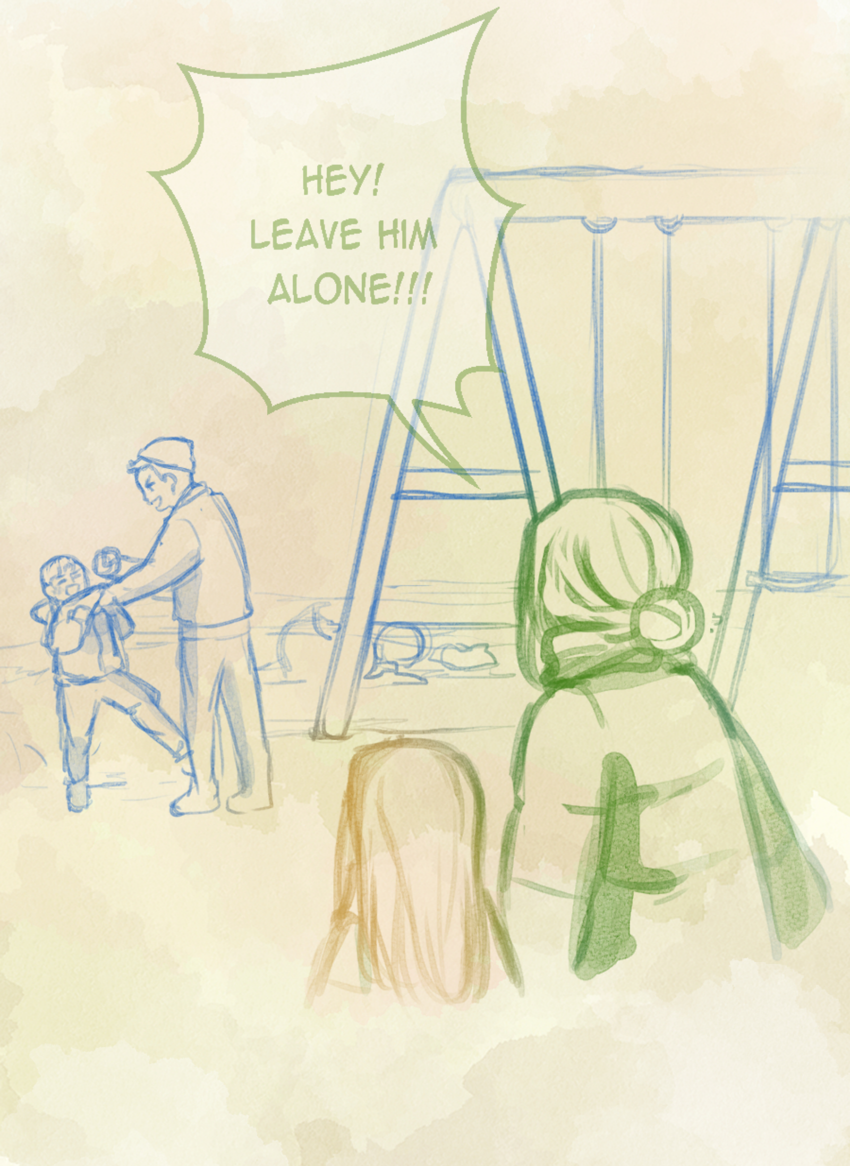
...I'VE ALWAYS LOOKED UP TO MY BIG SISTER.

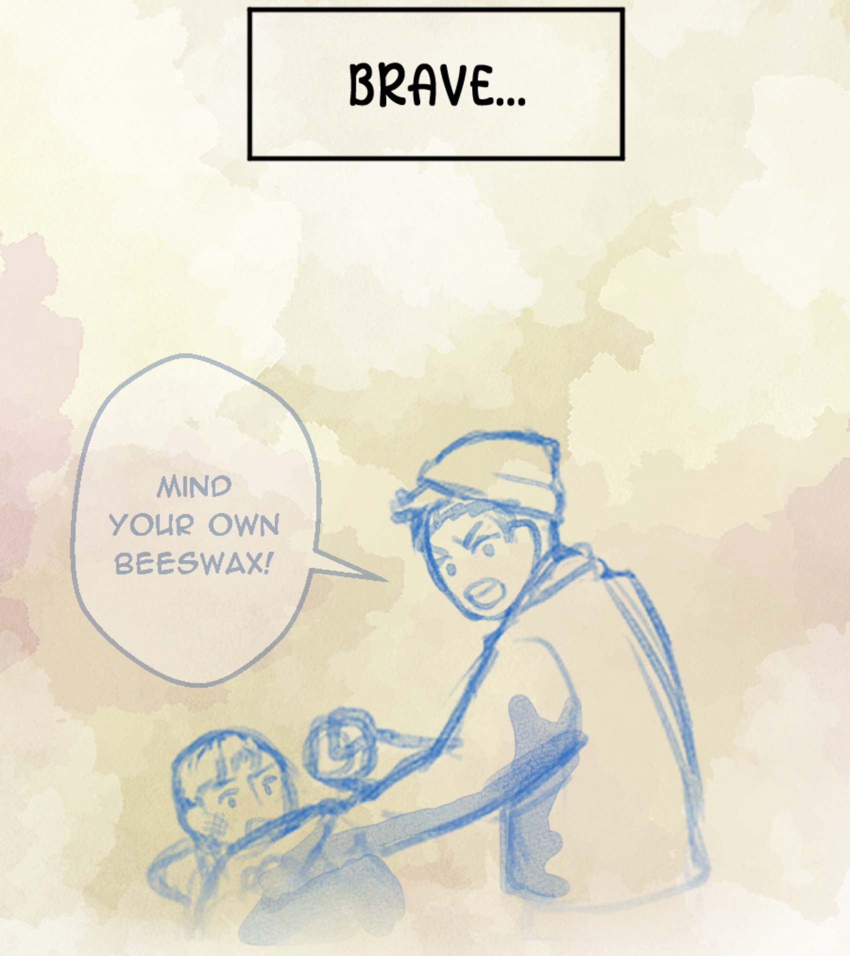


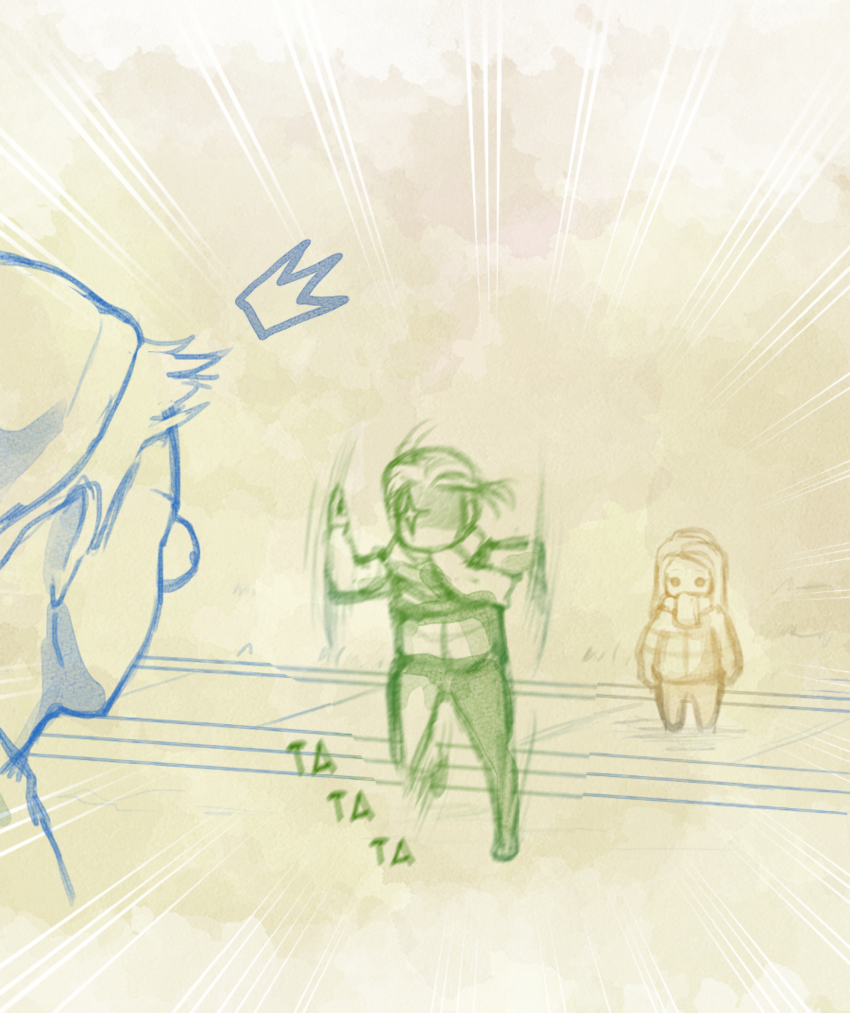
OH! NOT LITERALLY. I MEAN, SHE WAS TALLER THAN ME, SO YES, BUT--... ANYWAY...

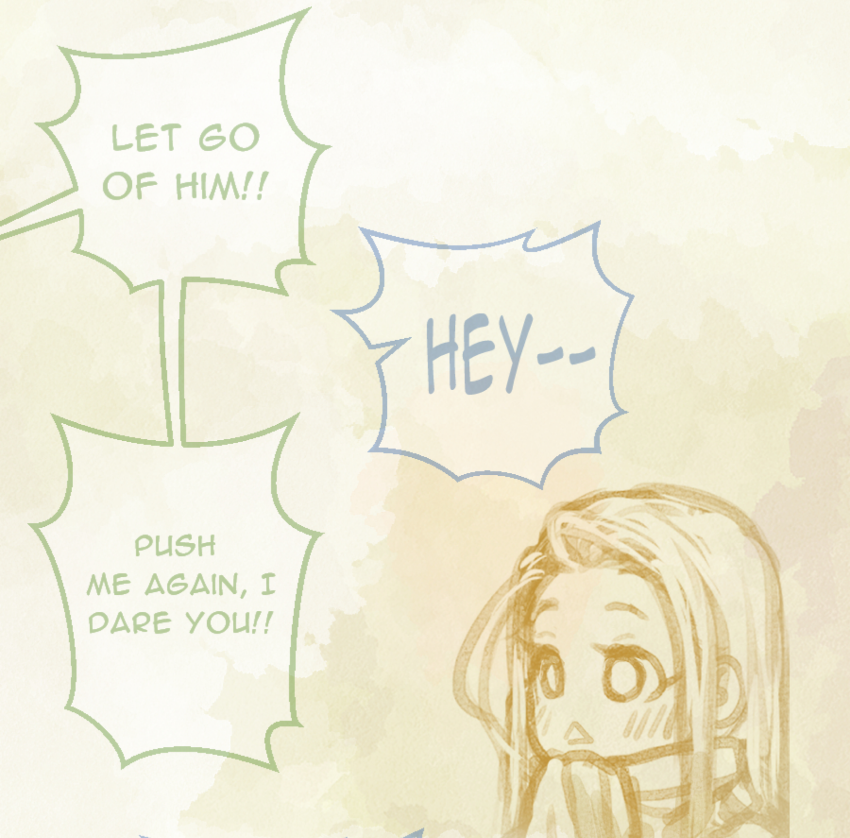
SHE WAS LIKE A SUPERHERO IN MY EYES.

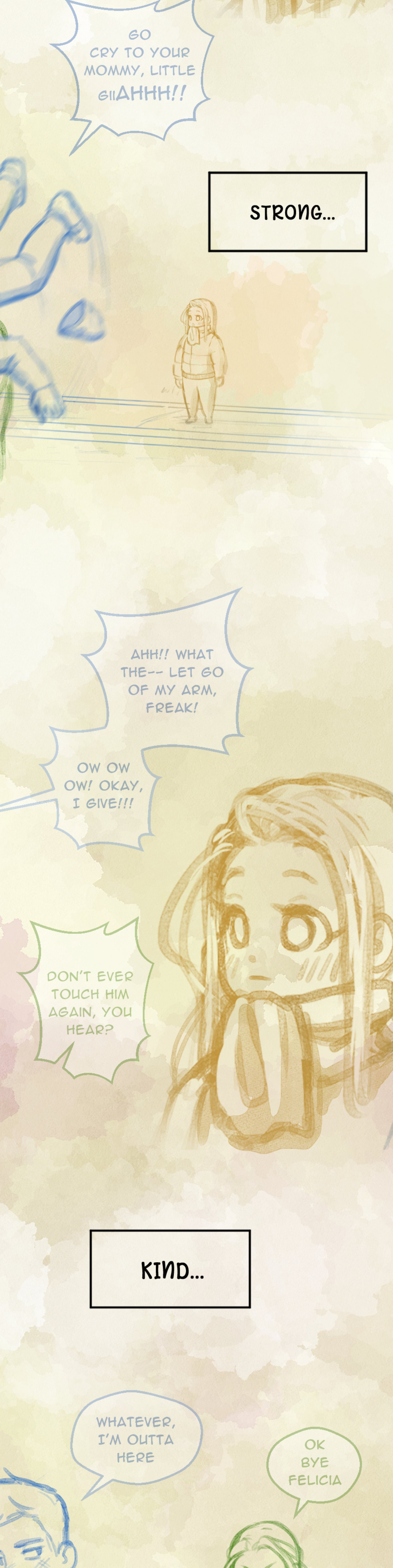


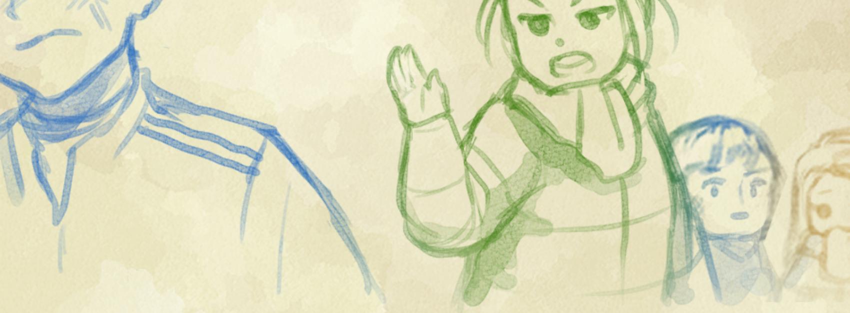

HEY! LEAVE HIM ALONE!!!


BRAVE...
MIND YOUR OWN BEESWAX!

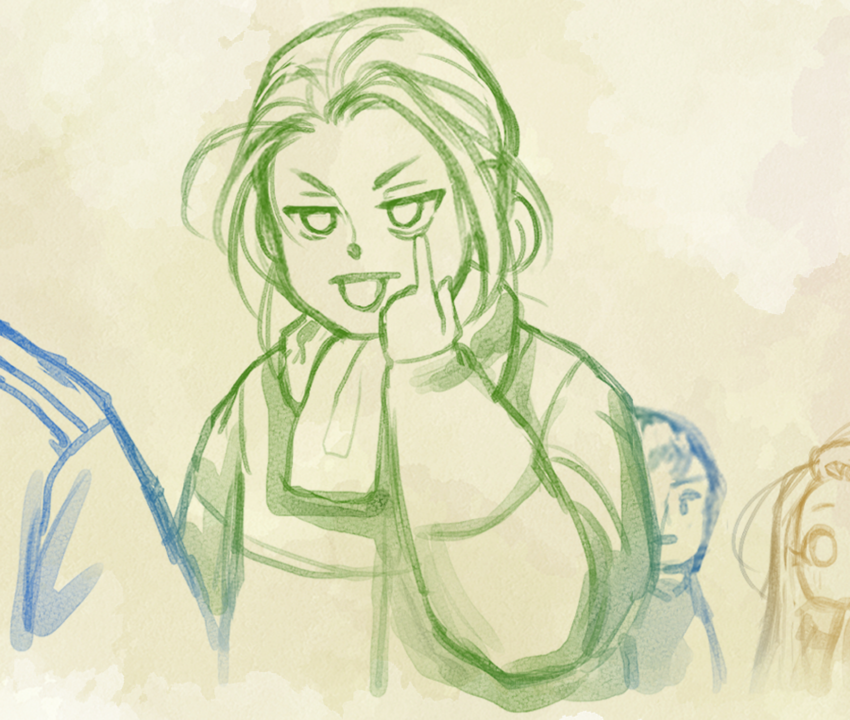



LET GO OF HIM!!
HEY--
PUSH ME AGAIN, I DARE YOU!!

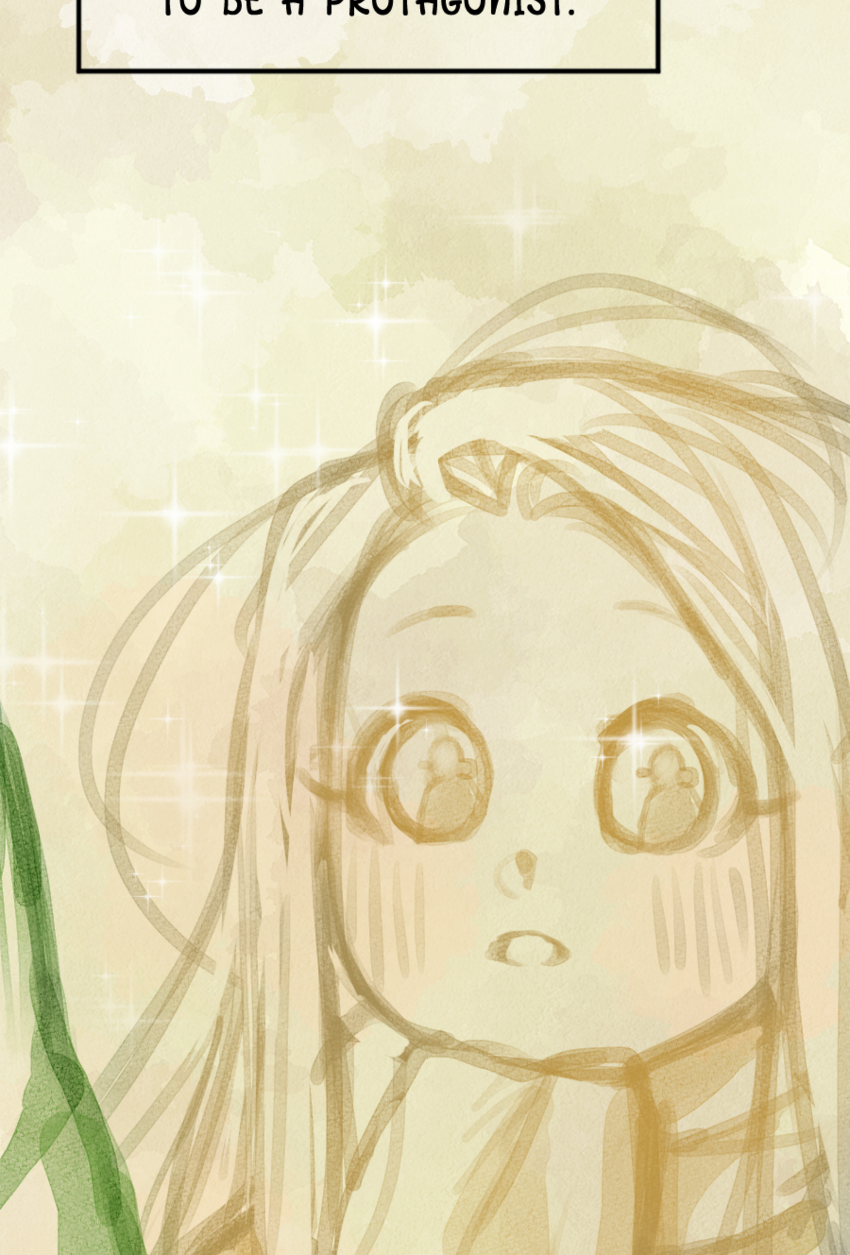

GO CRY TO YOUR MOMMY, LITTLE GIIAHHH!!
STRONG...
AHH!! WHAT THE-- LET GO OF MY ARM, FREAK!
OW OW OW! OKAY, I GIVE!!!
DON'T EVER TOUCH HIM AGAIN, YOU HEAR?
KIND...
WHATEVER, I'M OUTTA HERE
OK BYE FELICIA



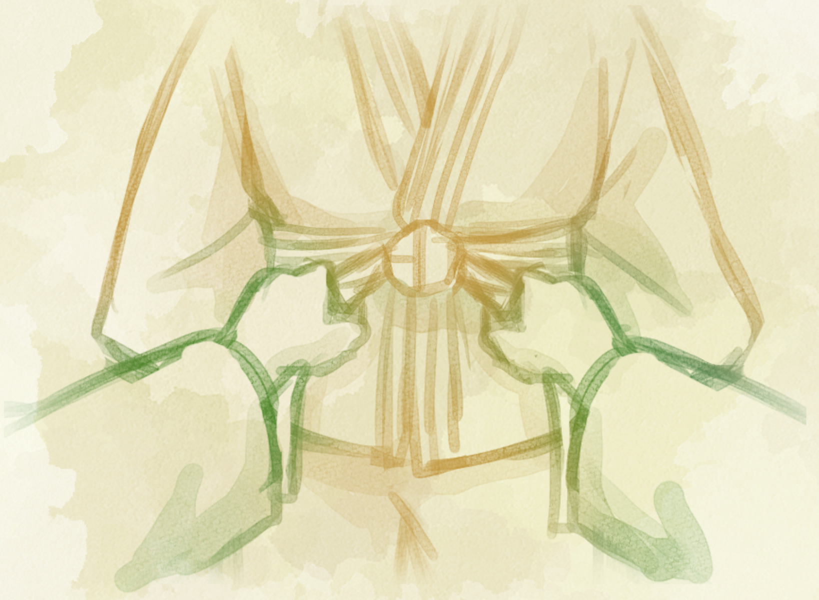
BEAUTIFUL...

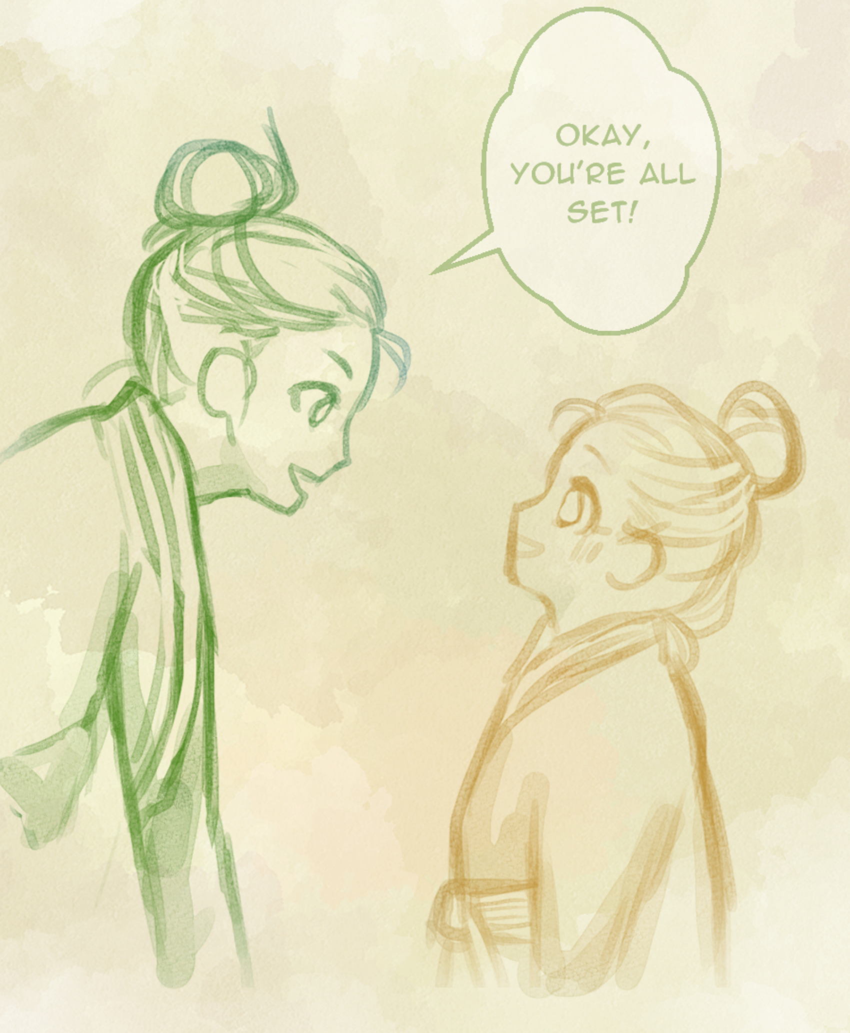


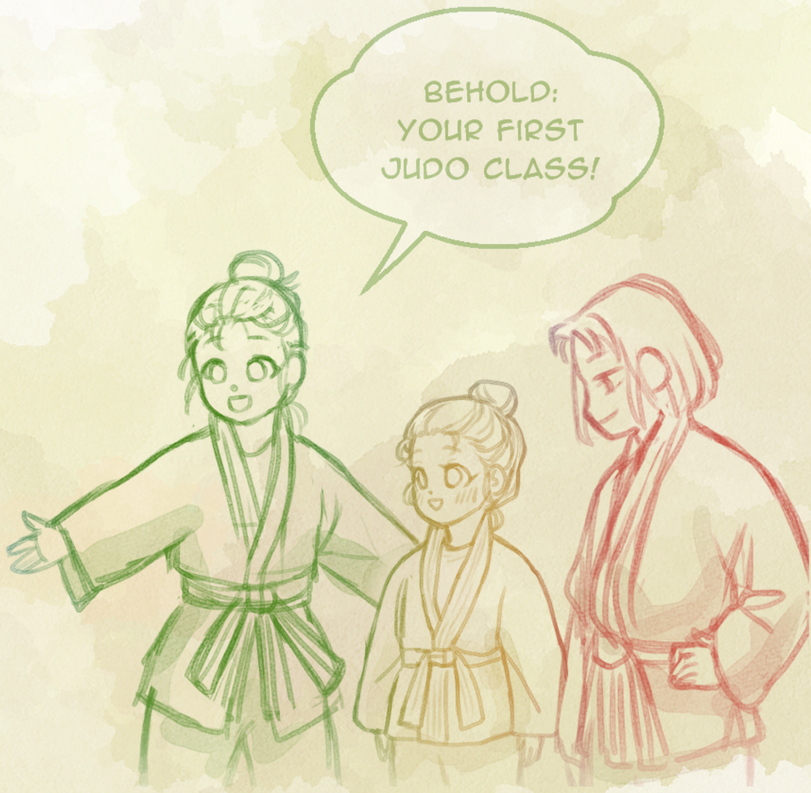
...LIKE THE PERFECT
KIND OF GIRL YOU'D WANT
TO BE A PROTAGONIST.

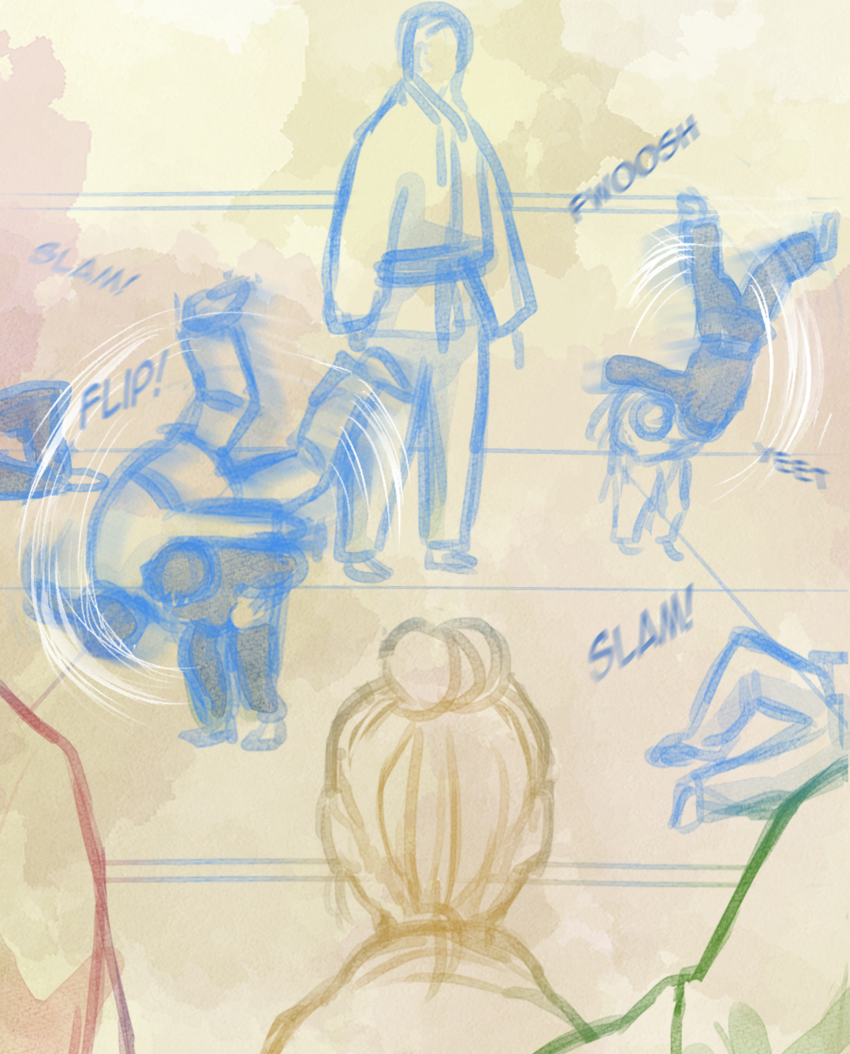


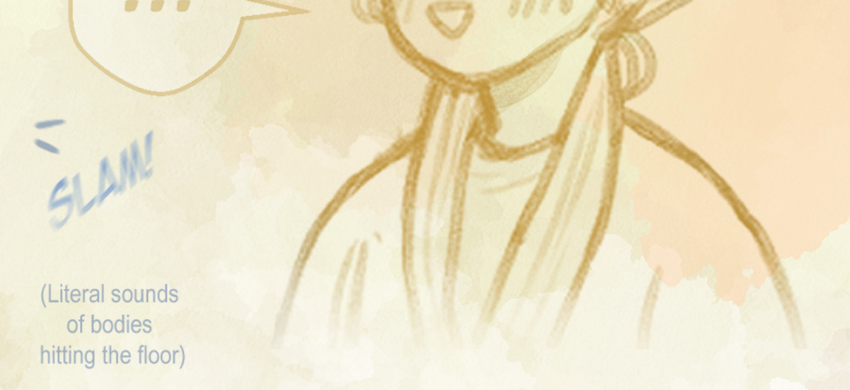
OF COURSE...
I WANTED TO BE JUST
LIKE HER.

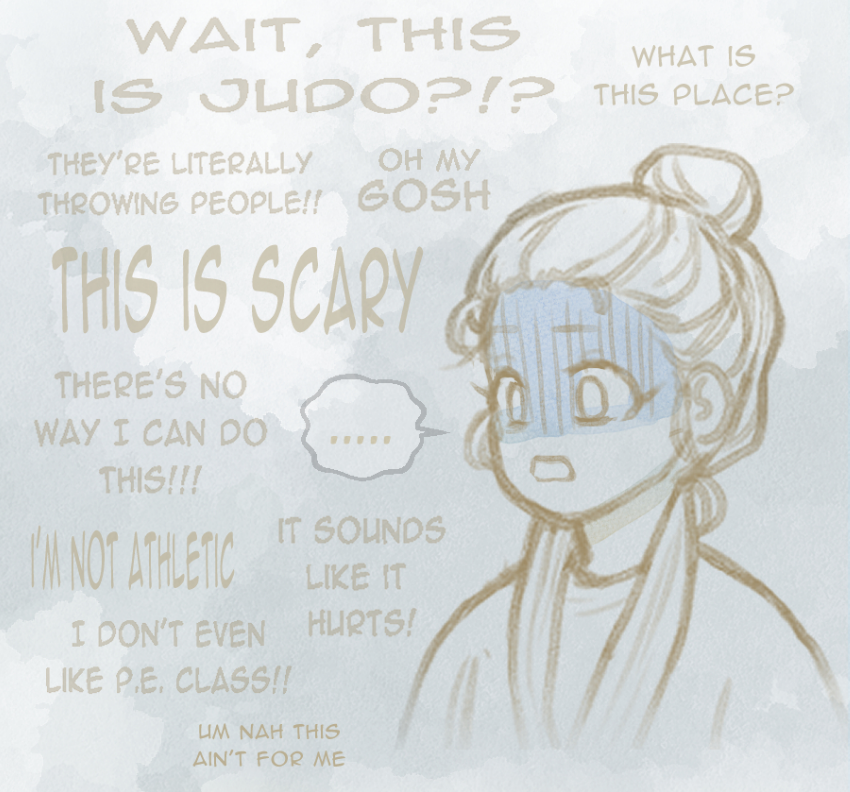


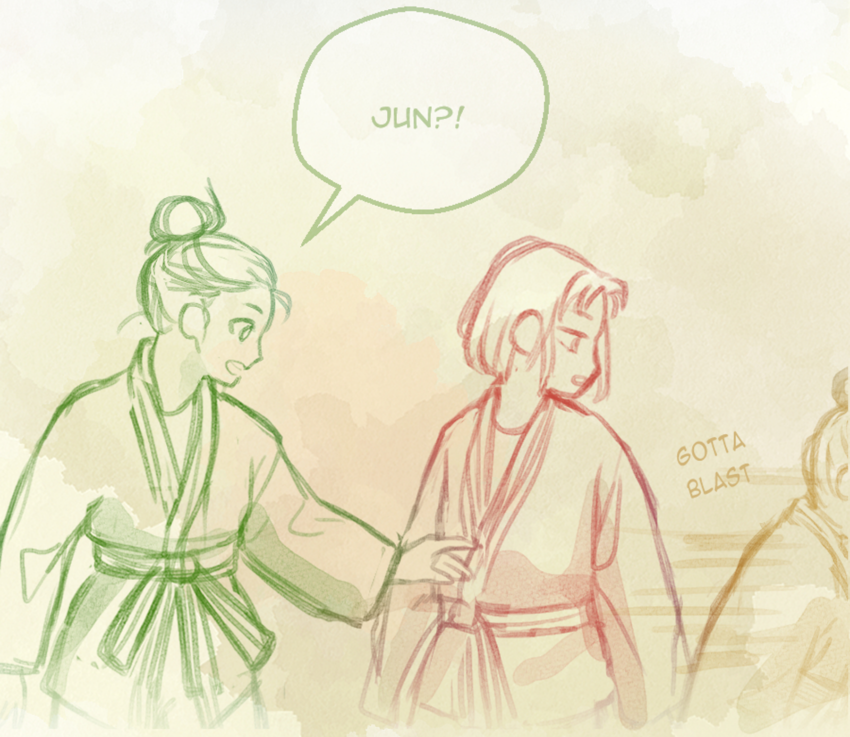

OKAY, YOU'RE ALL SET!


BEHOLD:
YOUR FIRST
JUDO CLASS!


FWOOSH
SLAM!
FLIP!
YEET
SLAM!

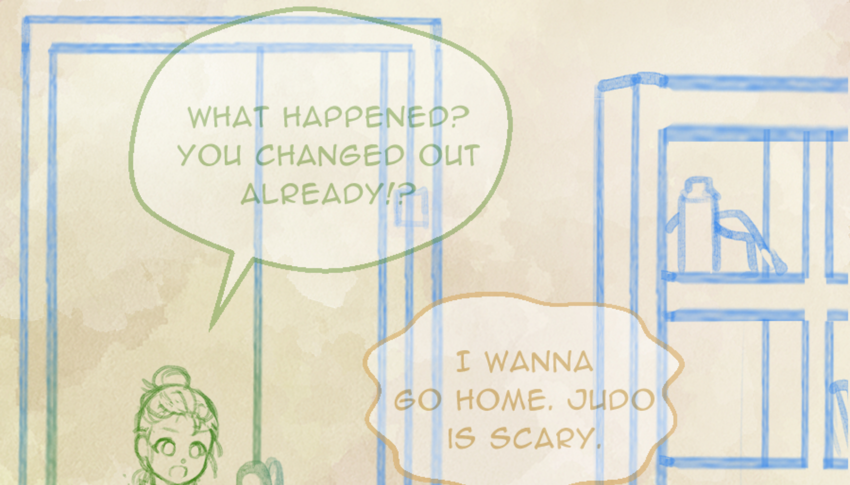

...
SLAM!
(Literal sounds of bodies hitting the floor)

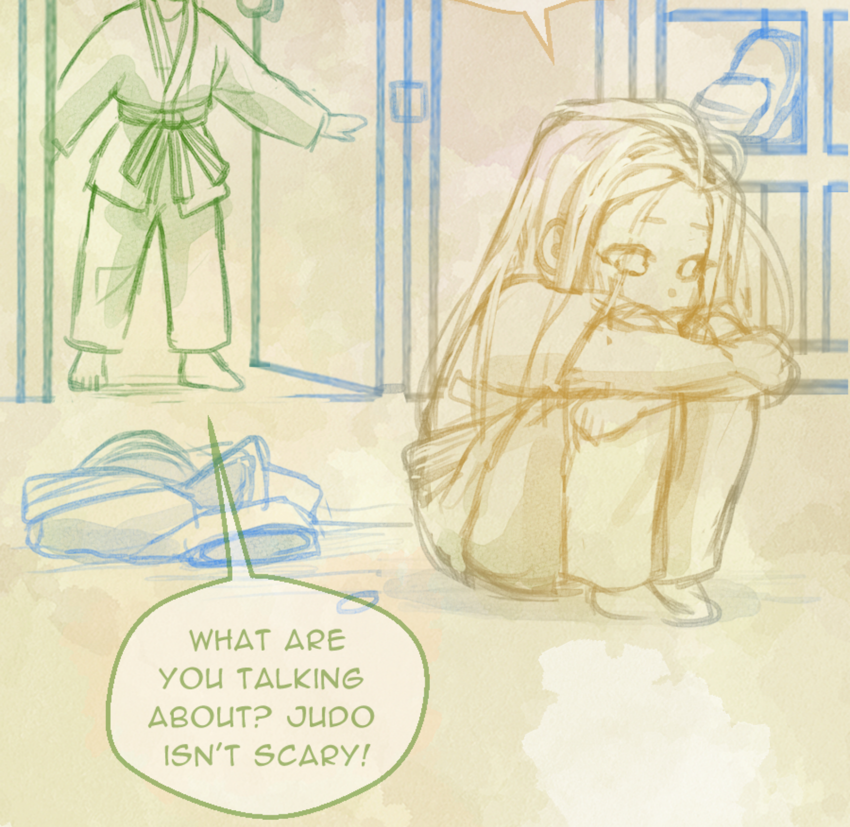

WAIT, THIS IS JUDO?!?
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
THEY'RE LITERALLY THROWING PEOPLE!!
OH MY GOSH
THIS IS SCARY
THERE'S NO WAY I CAN DO THIS!!!
.....
I'M NOT ATHLETIC
IT SOUNDS LIKE IT HURTS!
I DON'T EVEN LIKE P.E. CLASS!!
UM NAH THIS AIN'T FOR ME


JUN?!
GOTTA BLAST

MY SISTER WAS AS SHOCKED AT MY REACTION AS I WAS.

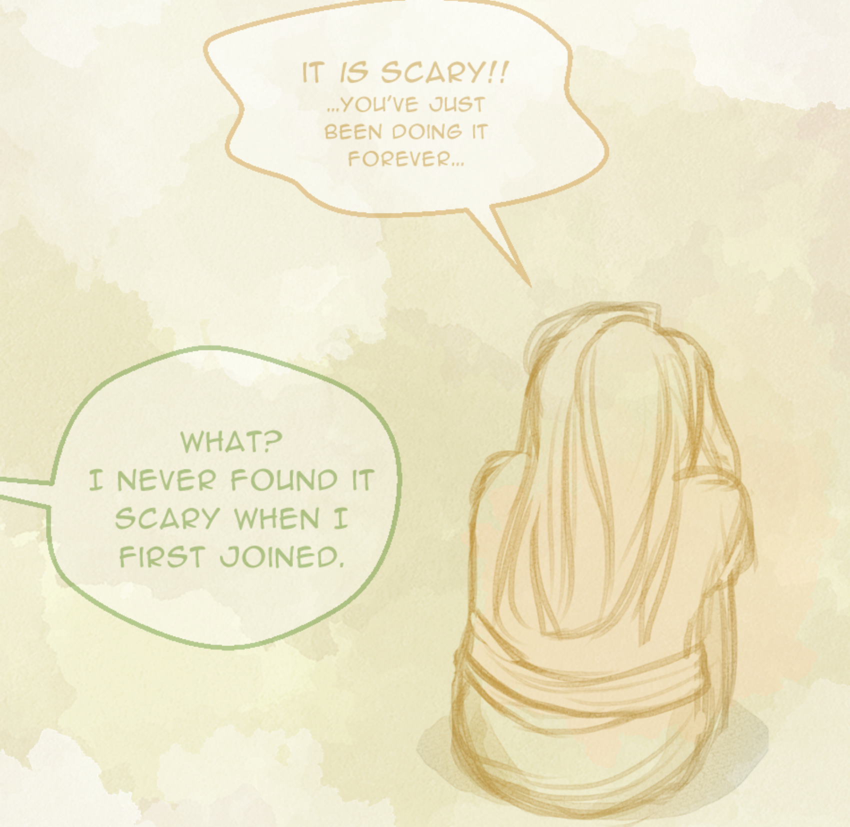
I *WANTED* TO DO JUDO. I REALLY DID. BUT...


WHAT HAPPENED? YOU CHANGED OUT ALREADY!?
I WANNA GO HOME. JUDO IS SCARY.


WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? JUDO ISN'T SCARY!

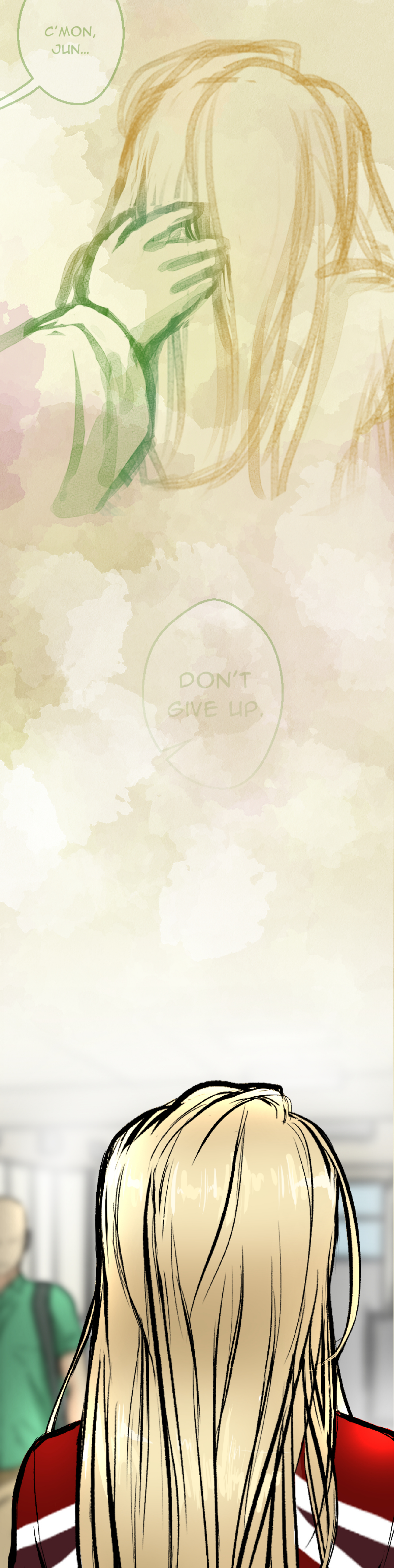
HOW WAS SHE SO COMFY WITH SOMETHING I FOUND SO TERRIFYING?
IT DIDN'T SEEM FAIR...

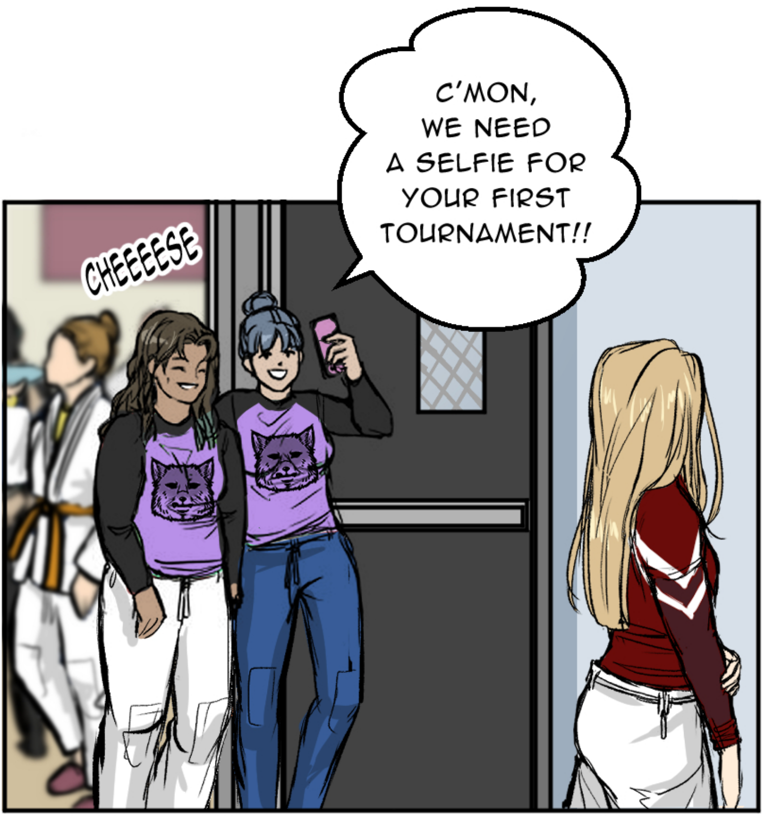
WHY COULDN'T I JUST BE AS FEARLESS AS HER?

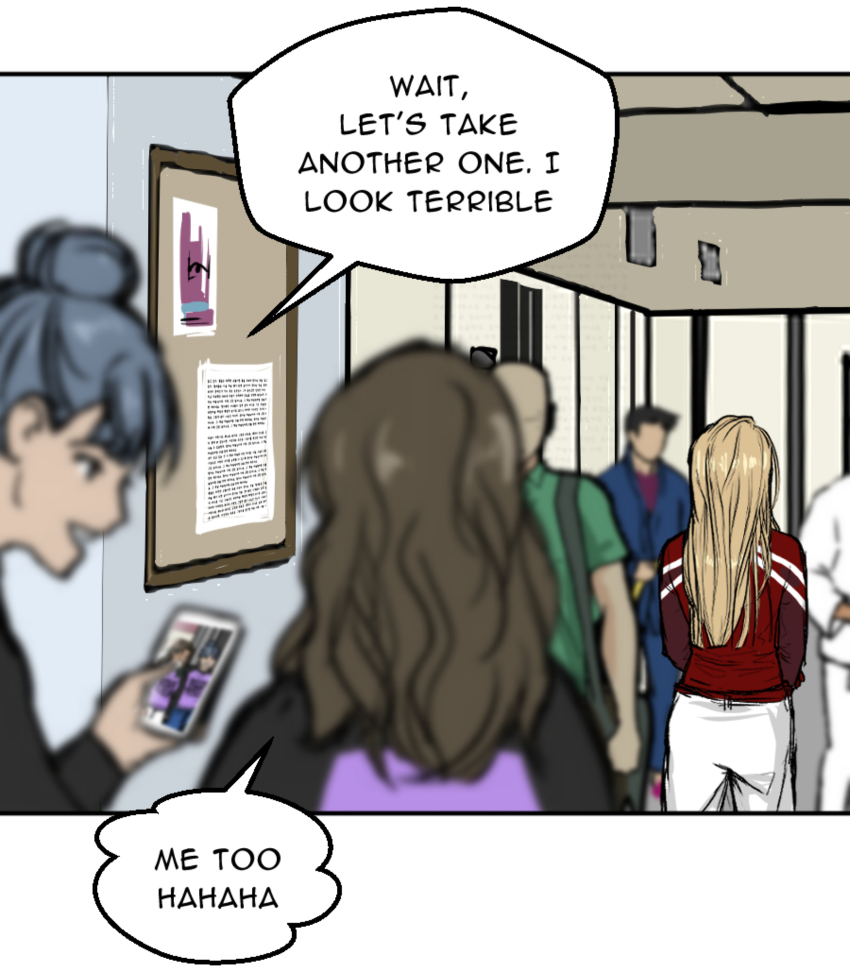

IT *IS* SCARY!! ...YOU'VE JUST BEEN DOING IT FOREVER...
WHAT? I NEVER FOUND IT SCARY WHEN I FIRST JOINED.

THAT DAY,
IT WAS MADE CLEAR
TO ME...

...THAT ALL PEOPLE
ARE BUILT DIFFERENTLY.

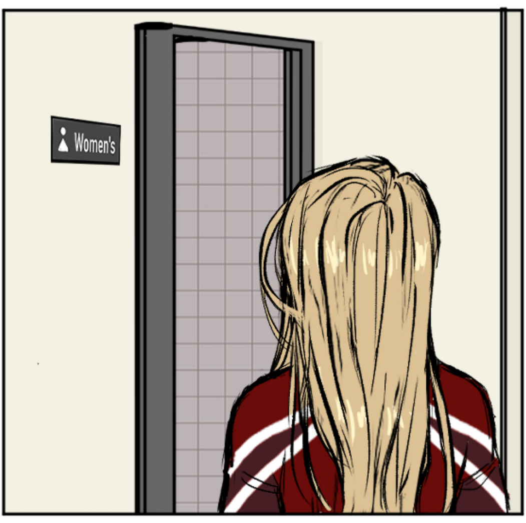

C'MON, JUN...
DON'T GIVE UP.


C'MON, WE NEED A SELFIE FOR YOUR FIRST TOURNAMENT!!
CHEEEESE


WAIT, LET'S TAKE ANOTHER ONE. I LOOK TERRIBLE
ME TOO HAHAHA

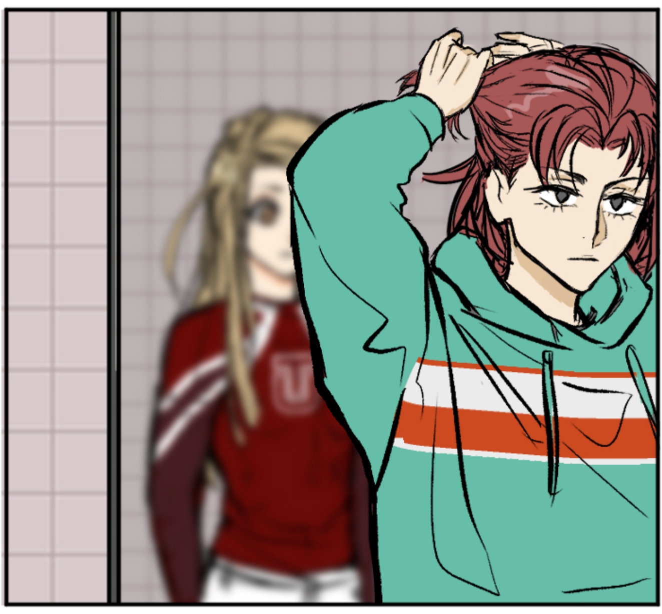
I THINK IT'S HUMAN NATURE TO ONLY WANT TO SHOW OUR GOOD SIDES.

WE PREFER TO HIDE OUR FLAWS SO SOCIETY ACCEPTS US.

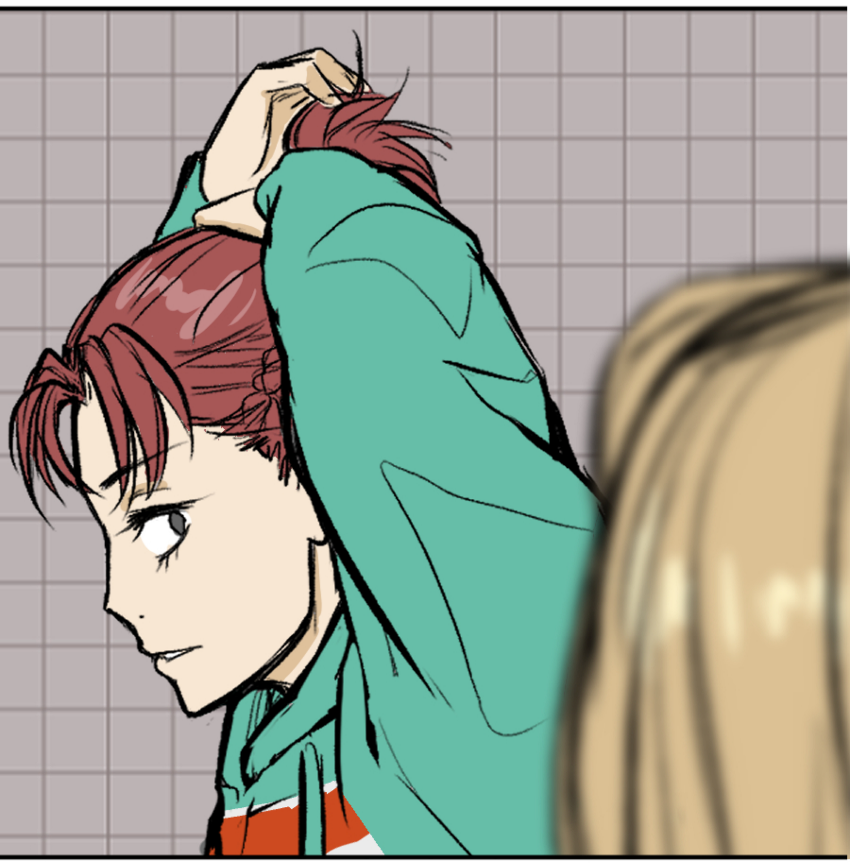


BUT SOMETIMES BEING SURROUNDED BY SO MUCH *SUCCESS*...

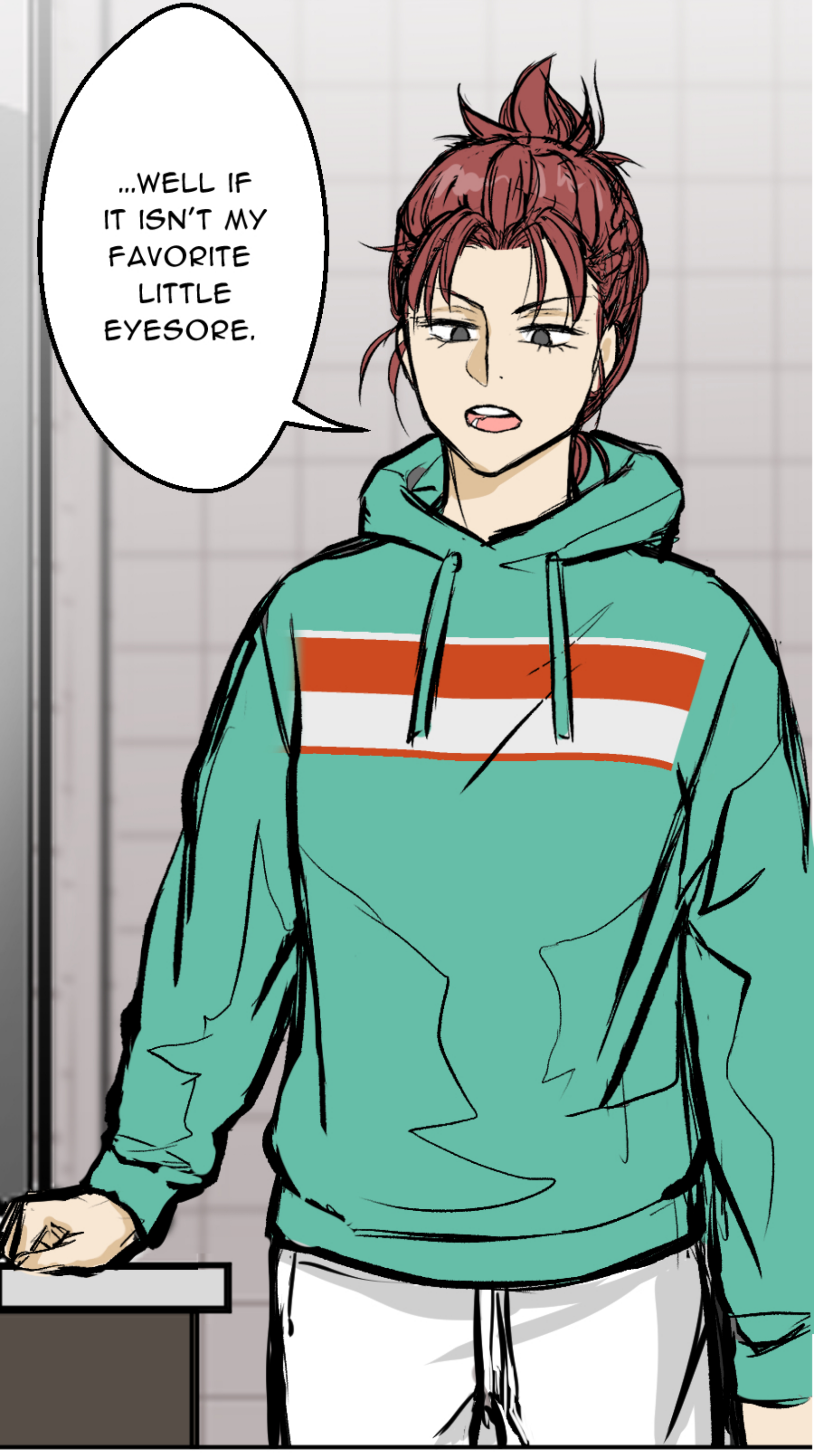
...LEADS TO SELF-DOUBT AND UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS.

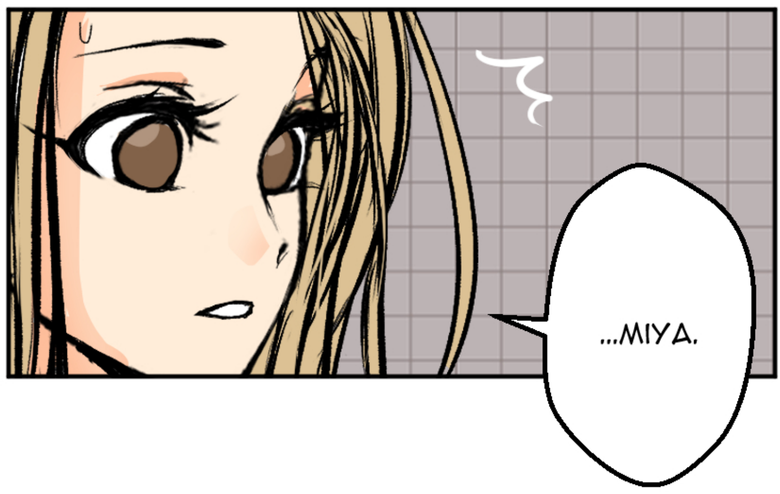


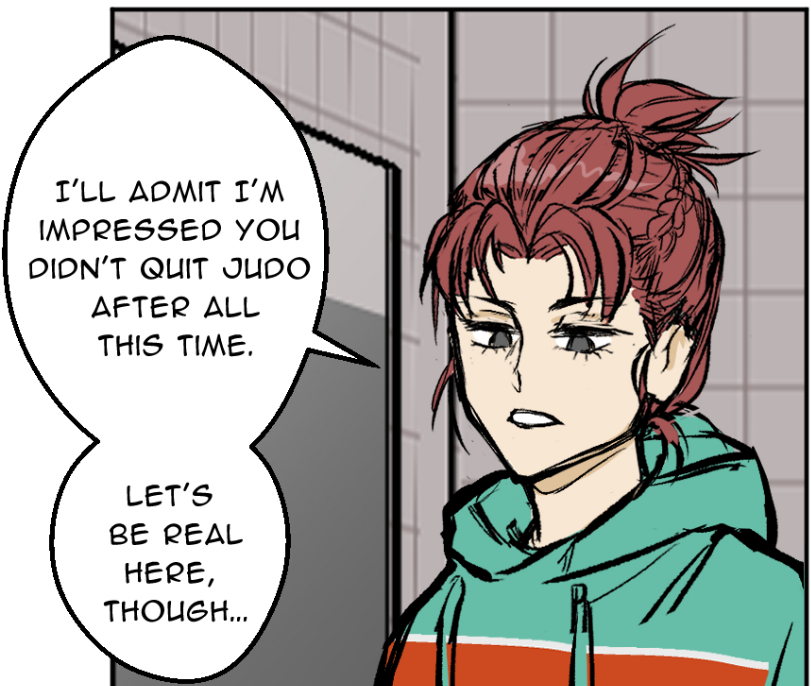
IN REALITY,
WE ALL STRUGGLE.

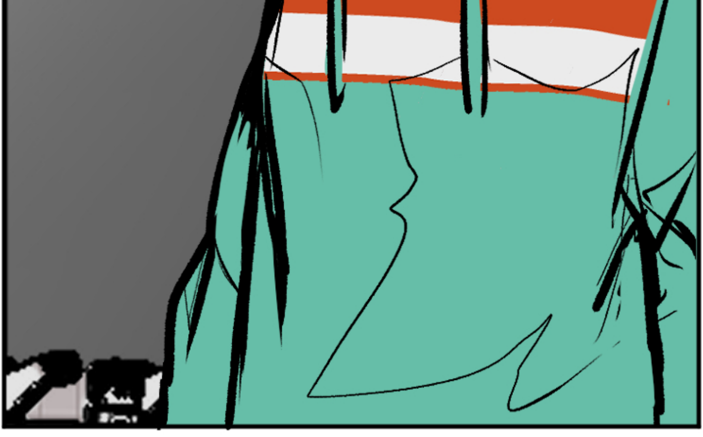


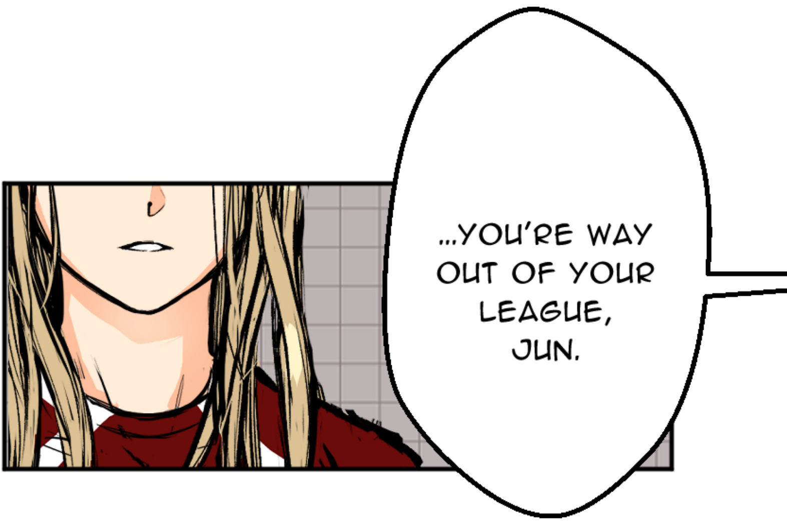
...AND WE ALL HAVE
FLAWS.

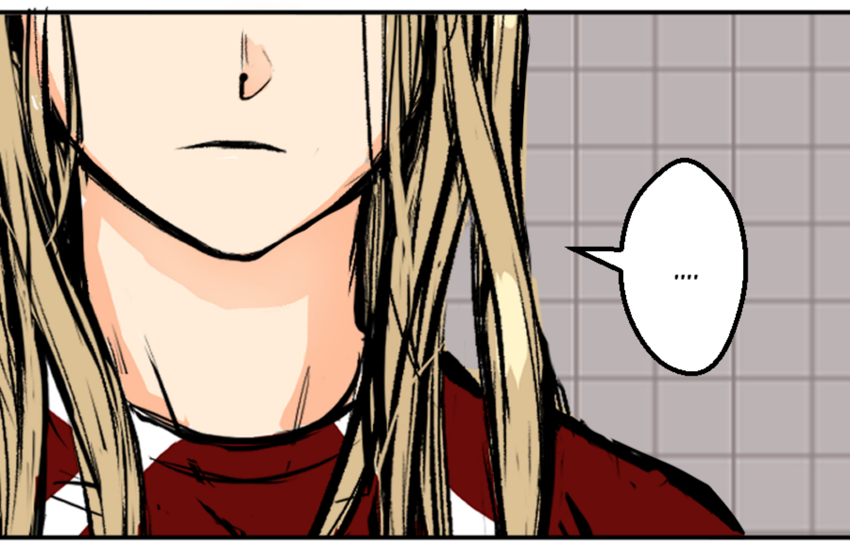

...WELL IF IT ISN'T MY FAVORITE LITTLE EYESORE.

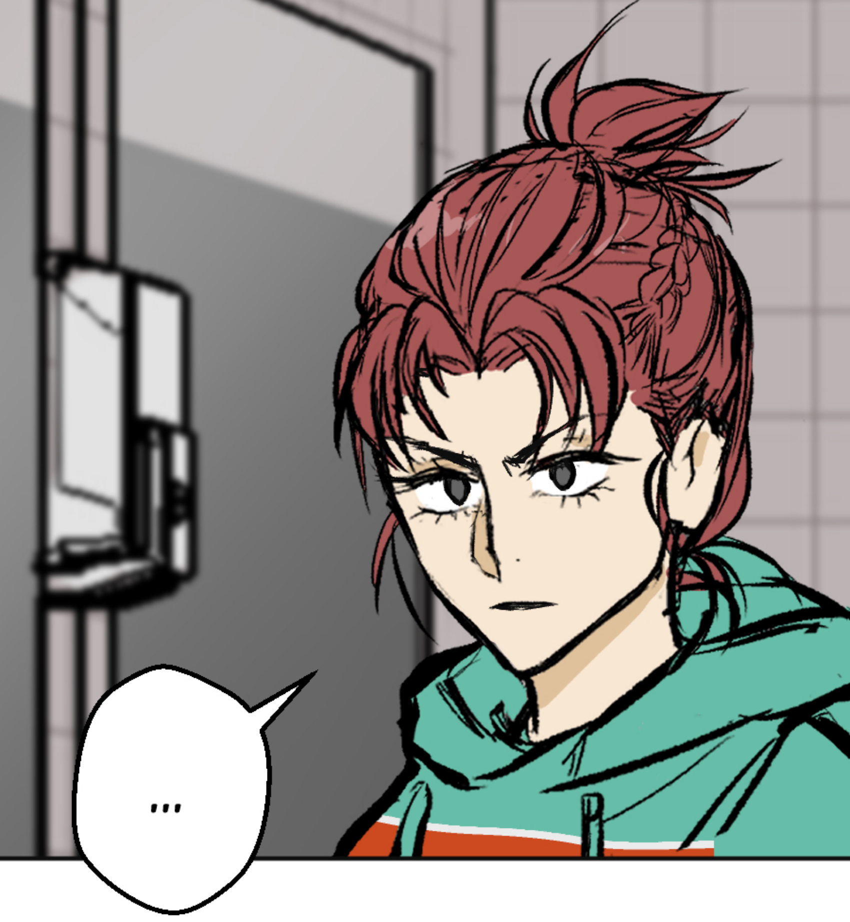


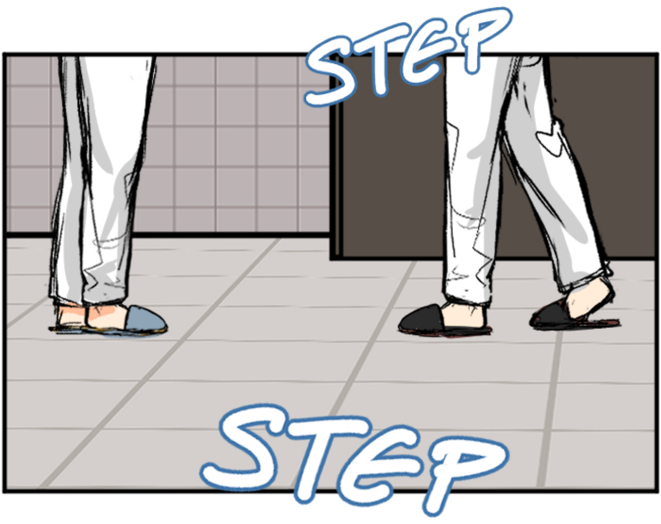

I'LL ADMIT I'M IMPRESSED YOU DIDN'T QUIT JUDO AFTER ALL THIS TIME.
LET'S BE REAL HERE, THOUGH...

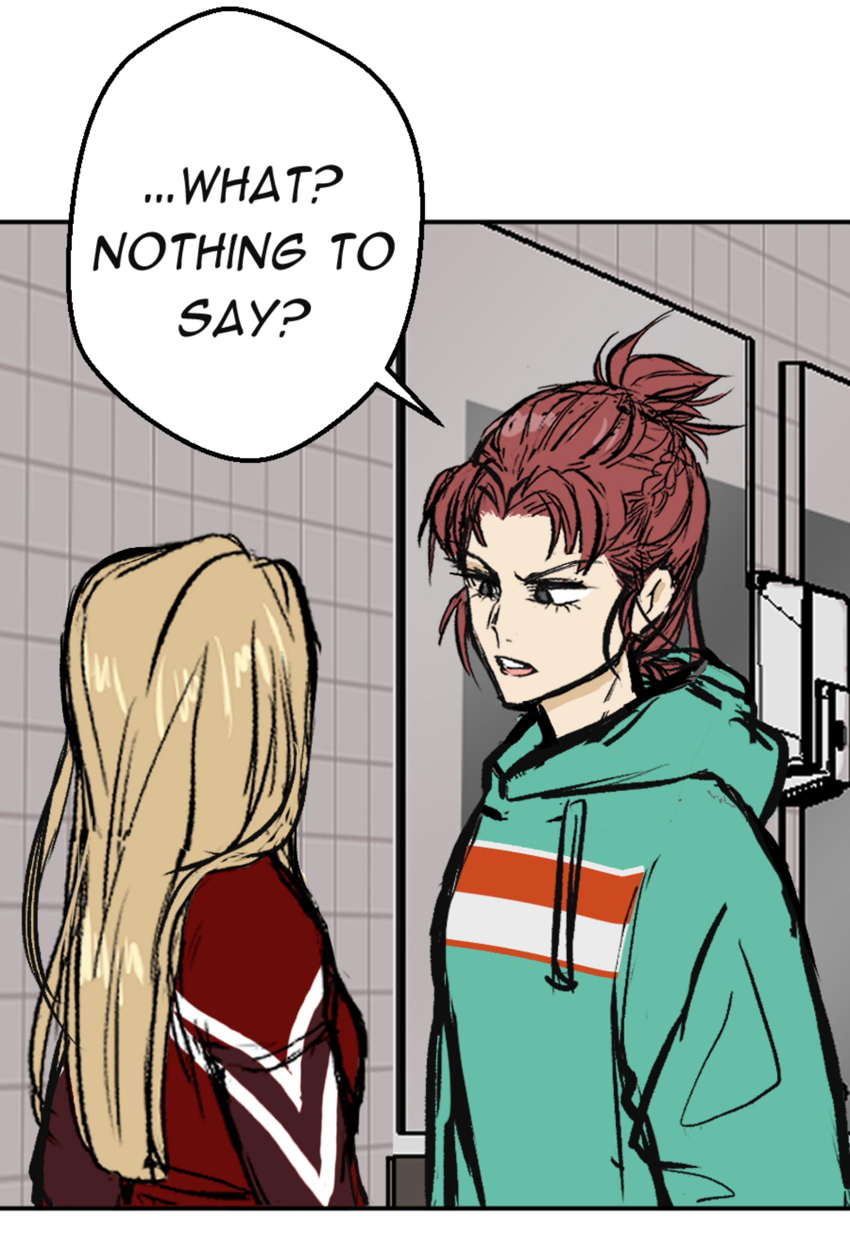


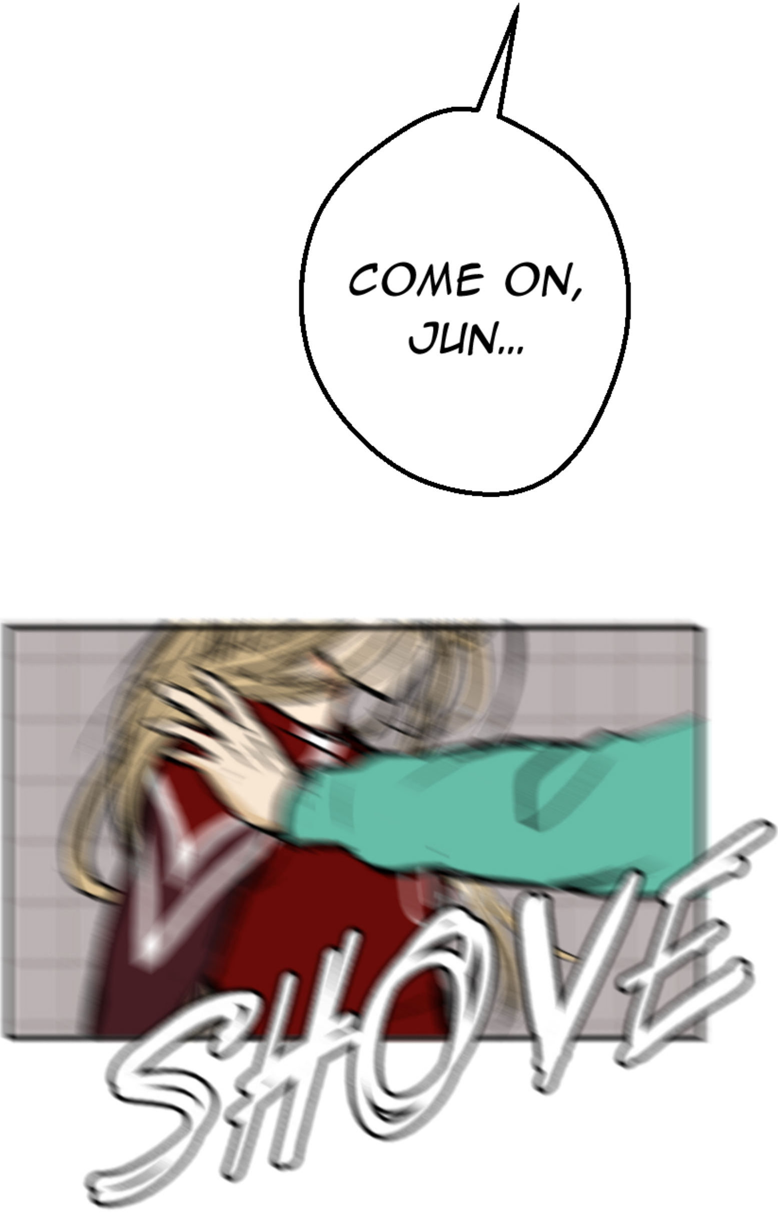

...YOU'RE WAY OUT OF YOUR LEAGUE, JUN.

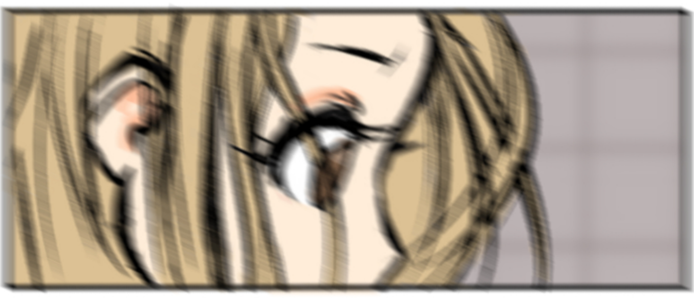


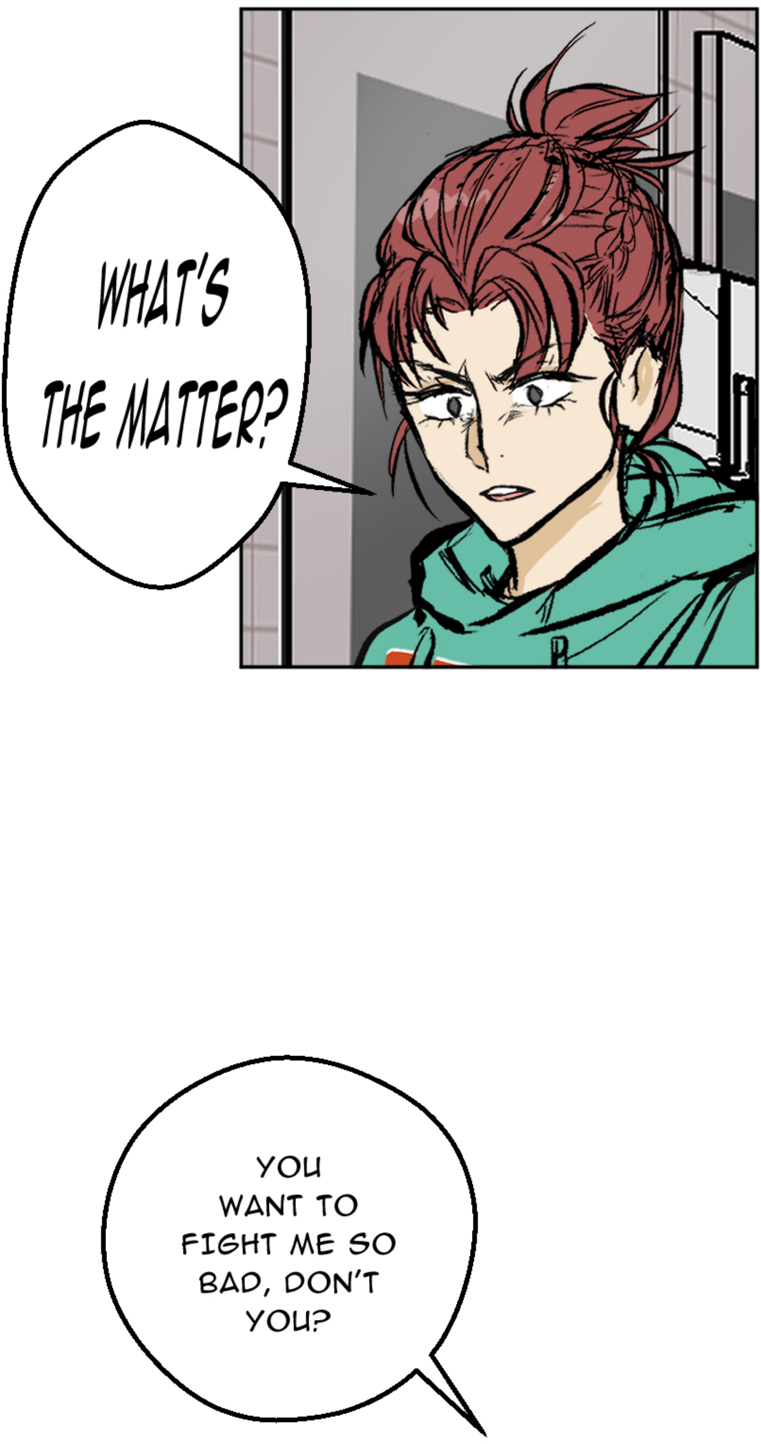


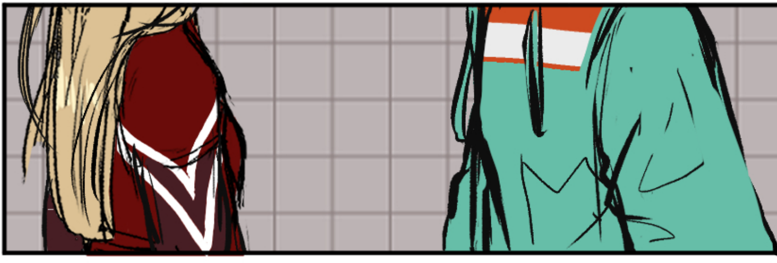



...WHAT? NOTHING TO SAY?

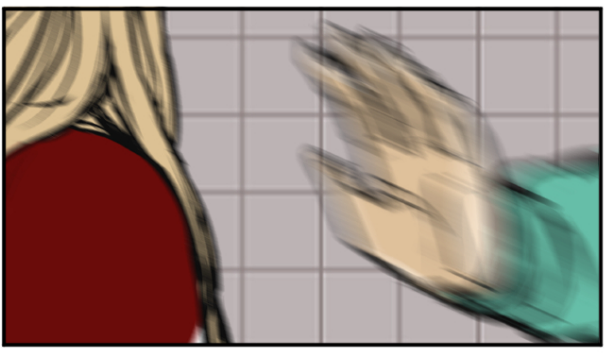

COME ON, JUN...
SHOVE

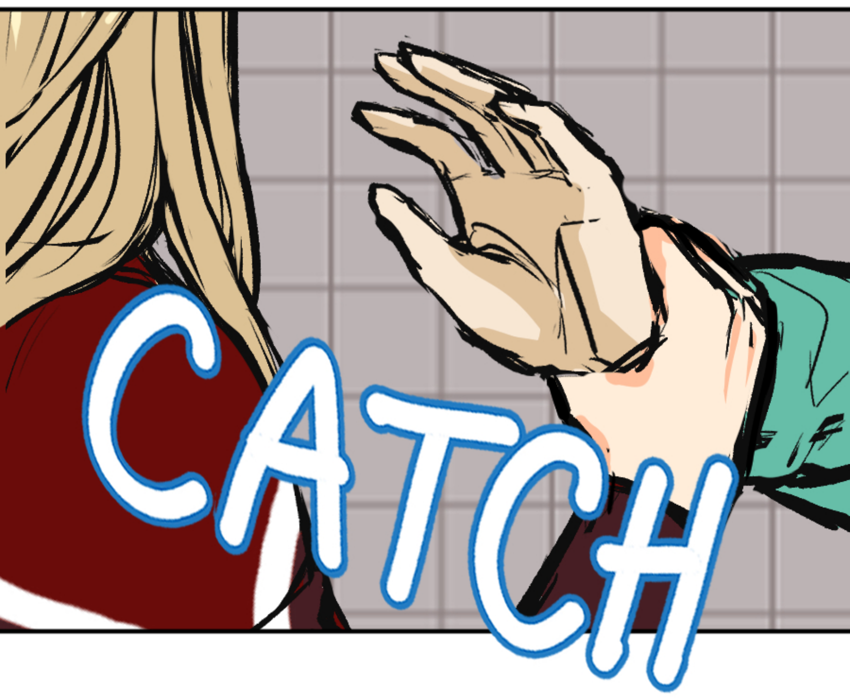


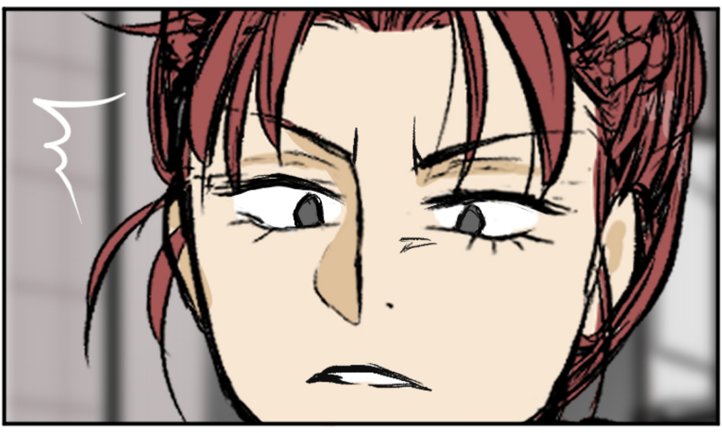

WHAT'S THE MATTER?
YOU WANT TO FIGHT ME SO BAD, DON'T YOU?

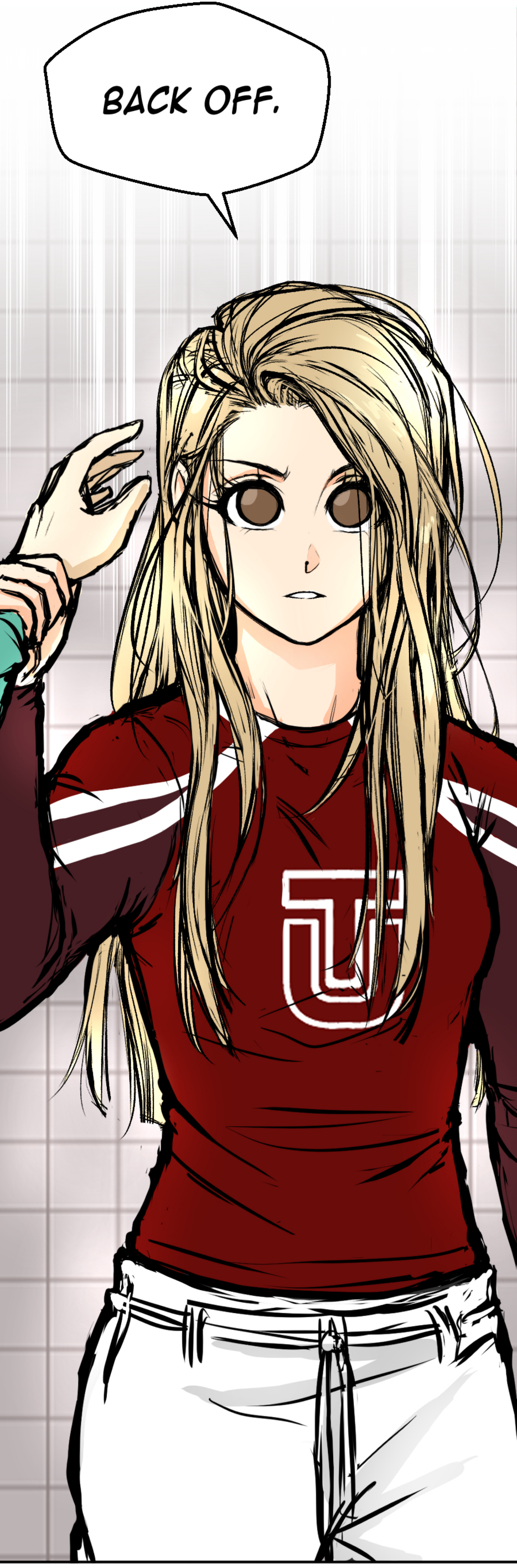


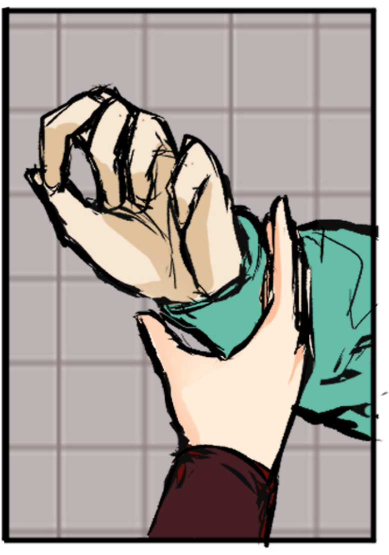
WELL, I'M RIGHT HERE

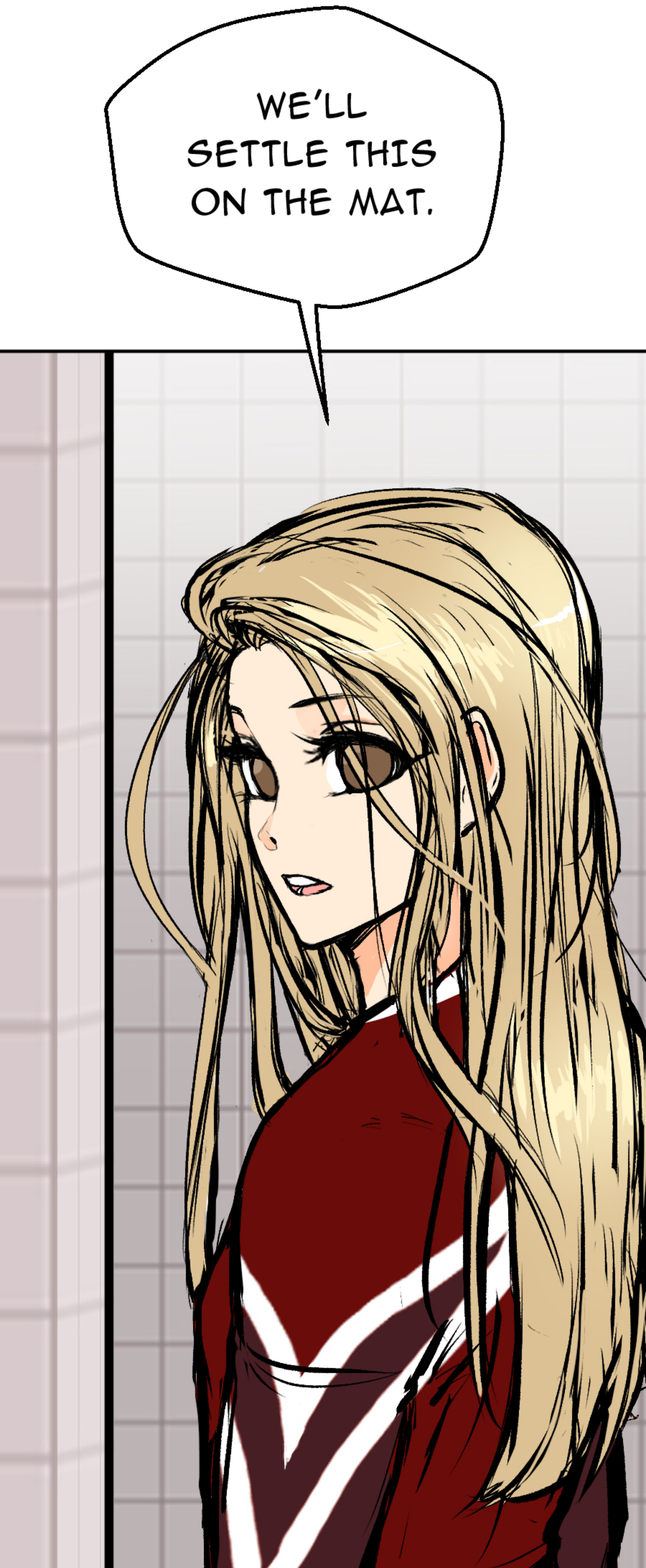


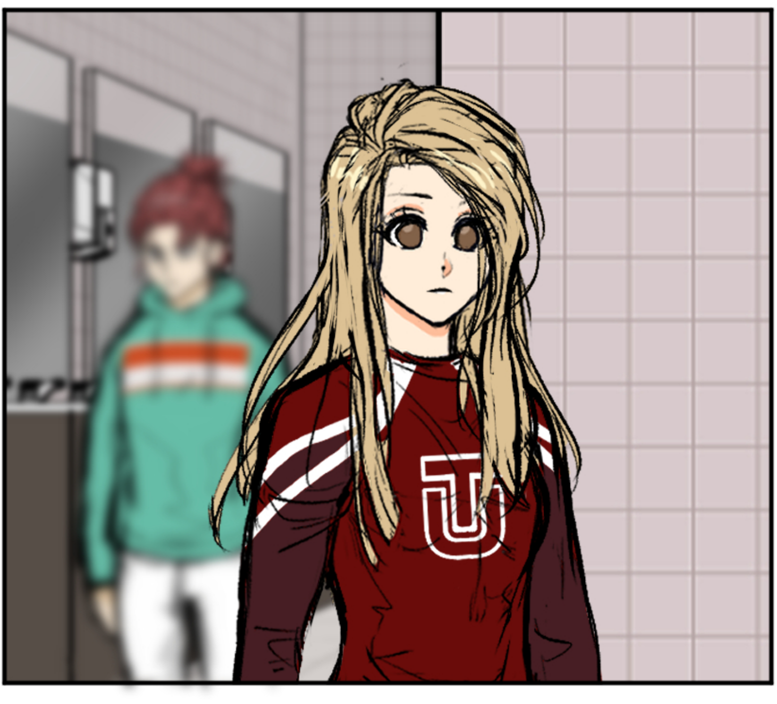


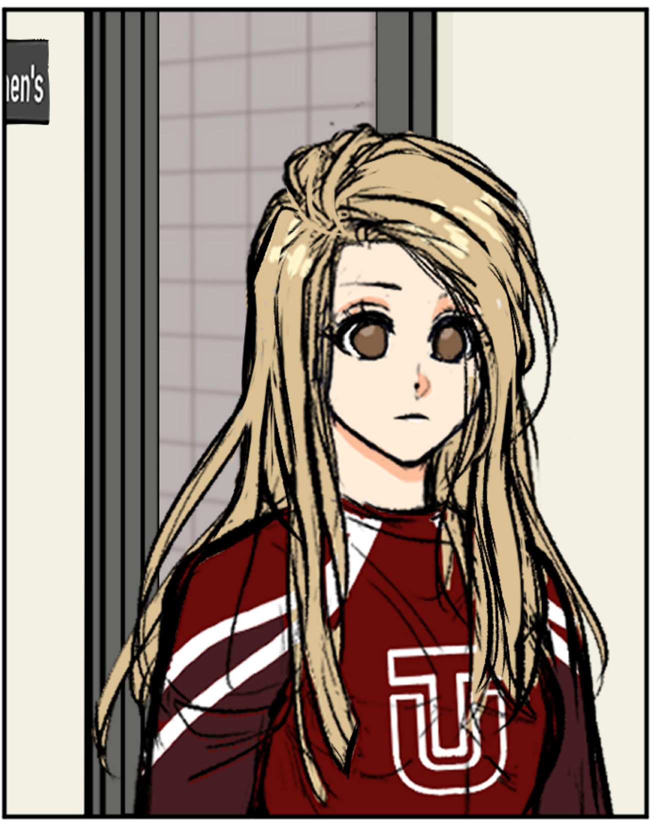


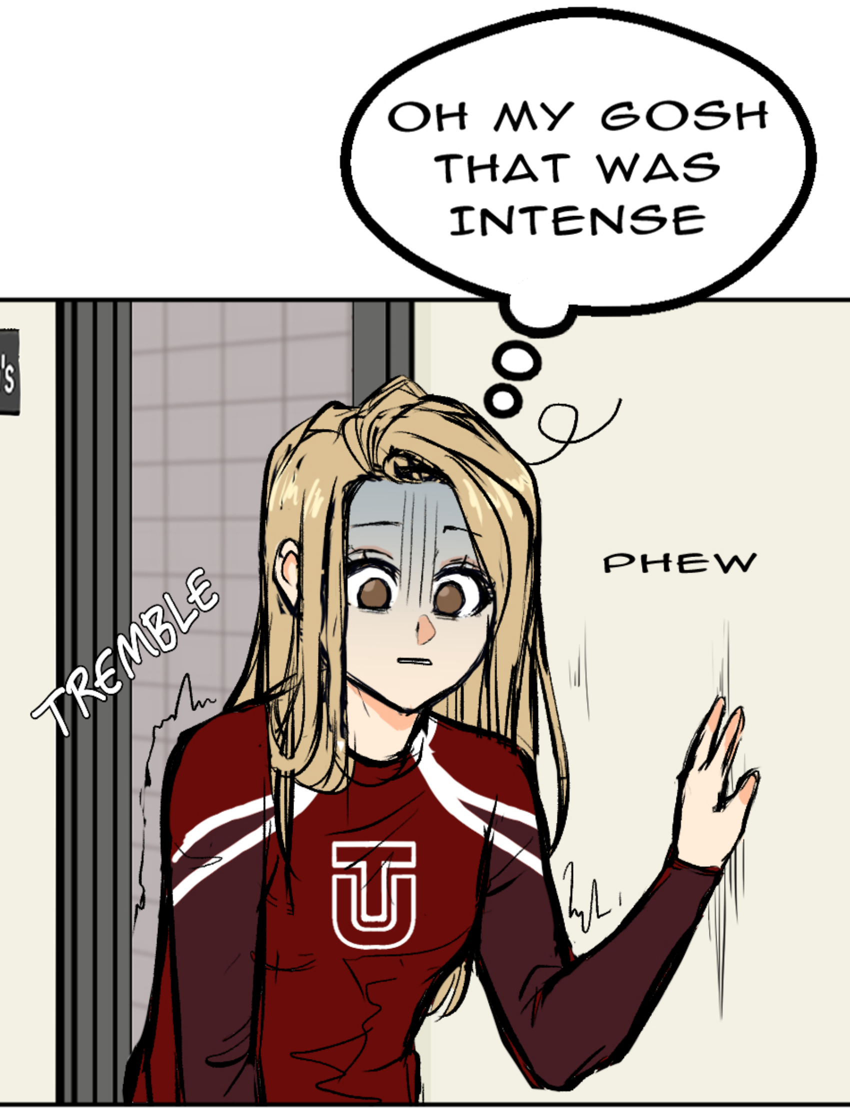


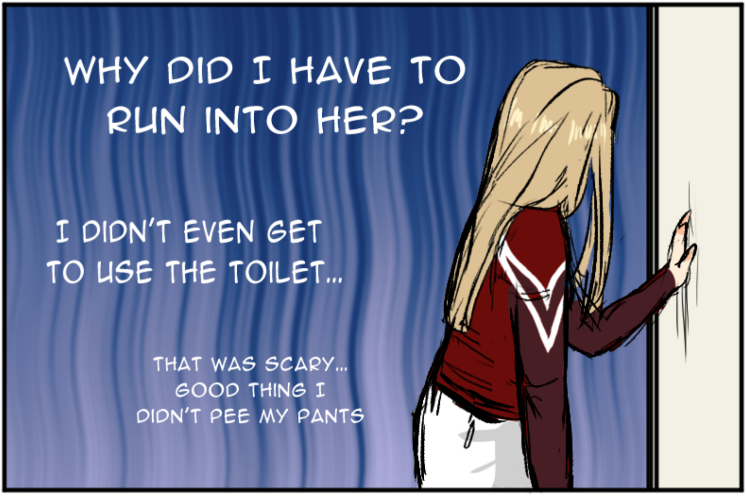


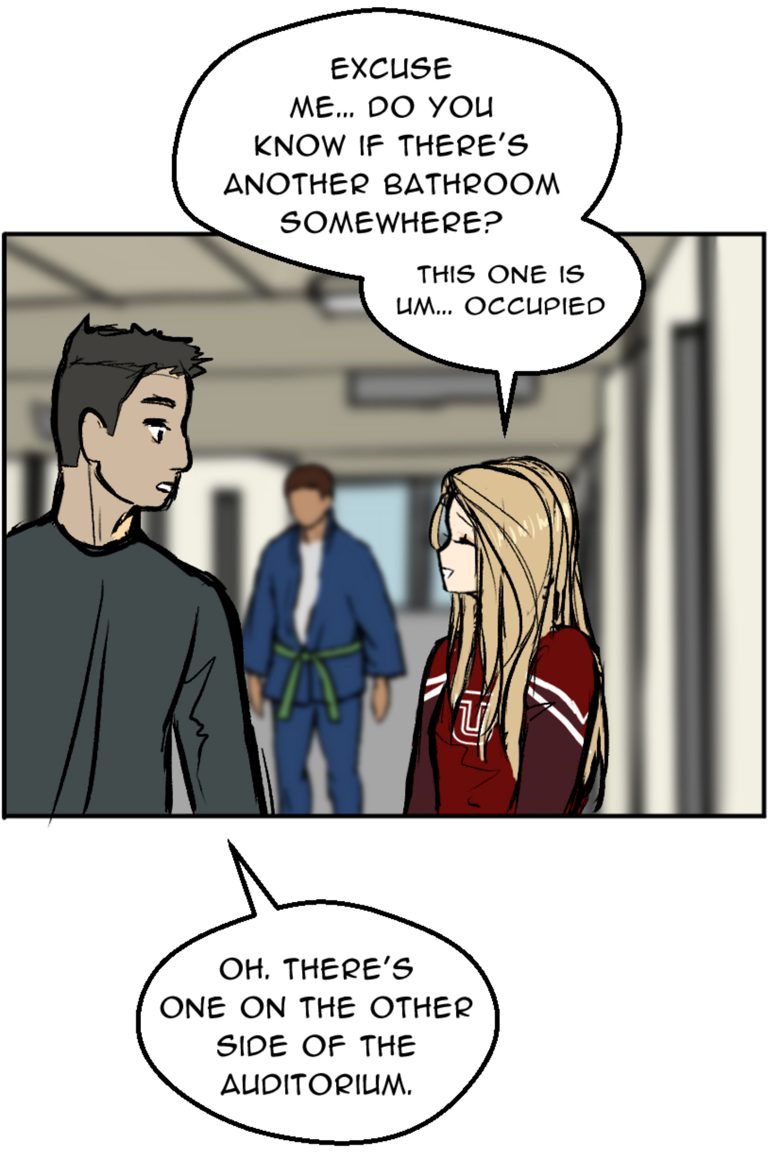

WE'LL SETTLE THIS ON THE MAT.

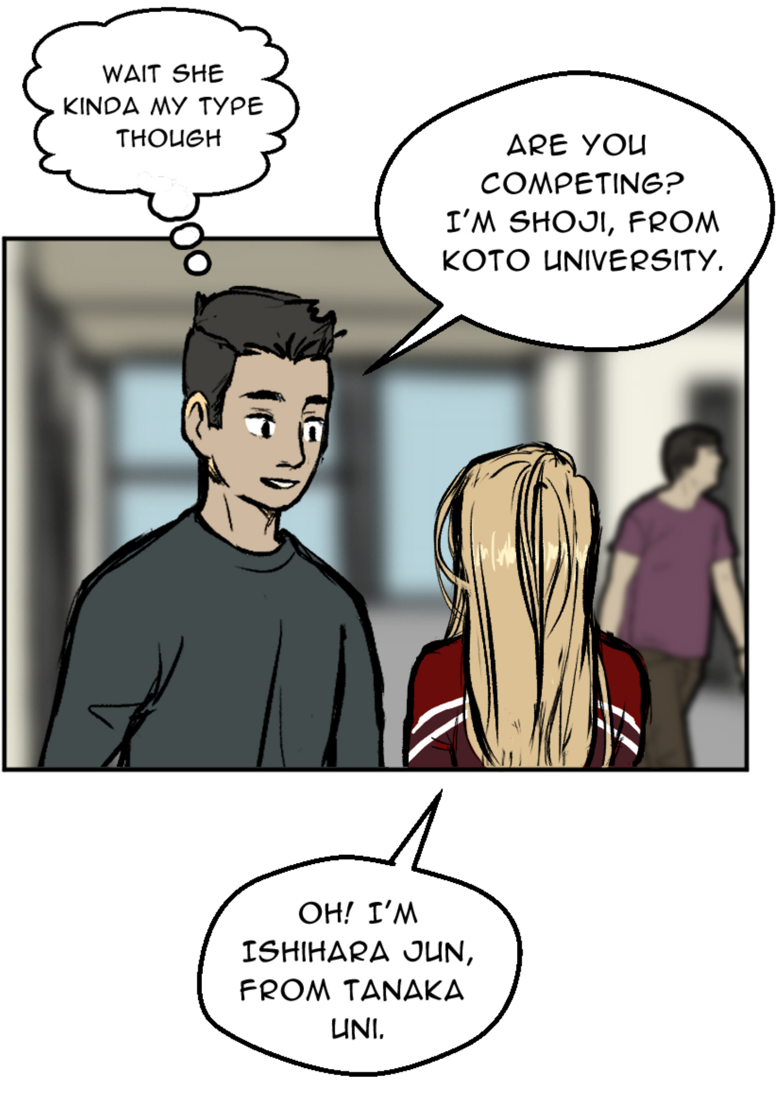


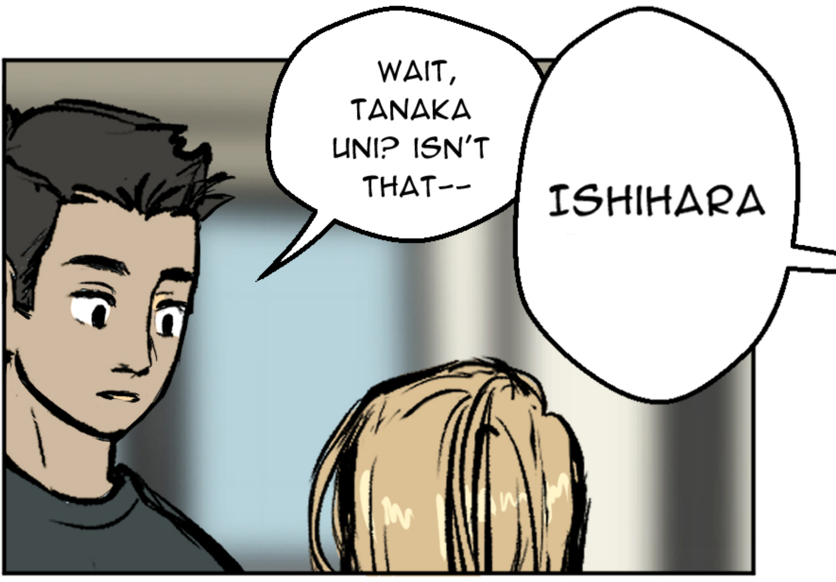


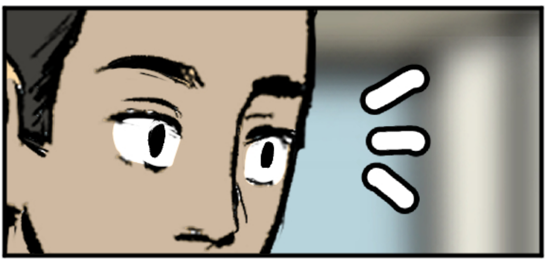

OH MY GOSH THAT WAS INTENSE
TREMBLE
PHEW

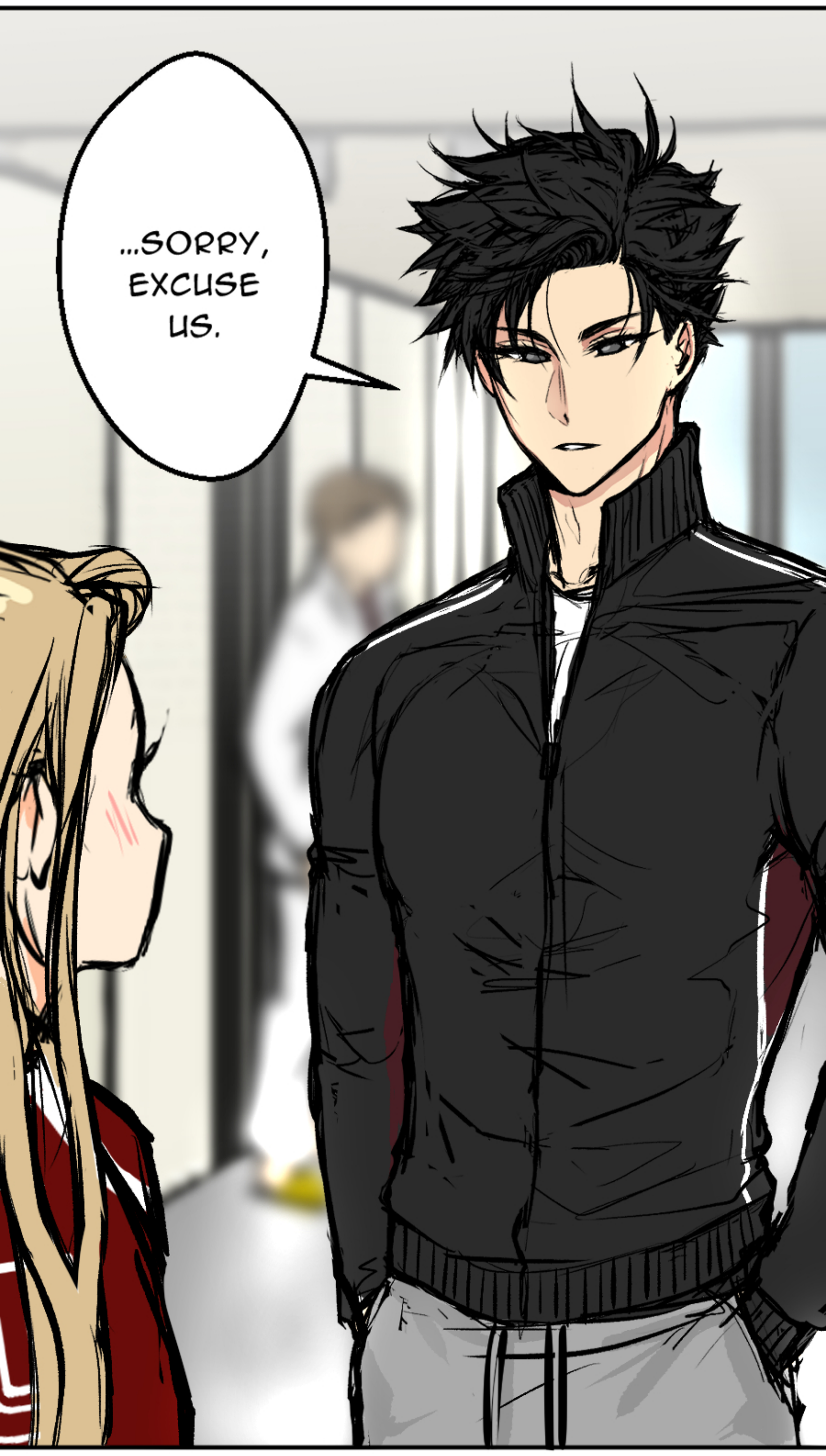

WHY DID I HAVE TO RUN INTO HER?
I DIDN'T EVEN GET TO USE THE TOILET...
THAT WAS SCARY... GOOD THING I DIDN'T PEE MY PANTS

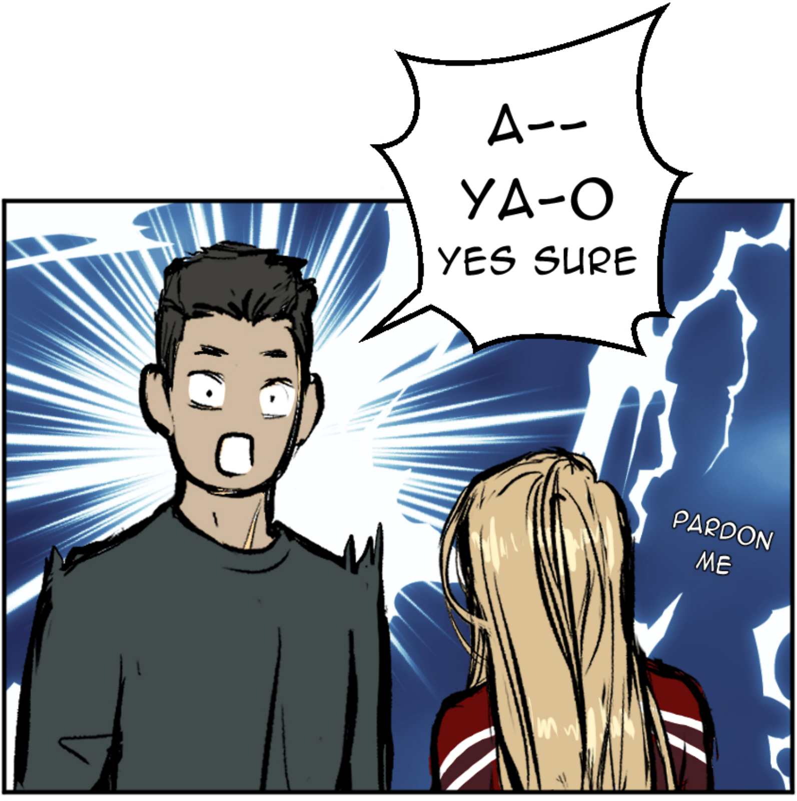

EXCUSE ME... DO YOU KNOW IF THERE'S ANOTHER BATHROOM SOMEWHERE?
THIS ONE IS UM... OCCUPIED
OH. THERE'S ONE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE AUDITORIUM.

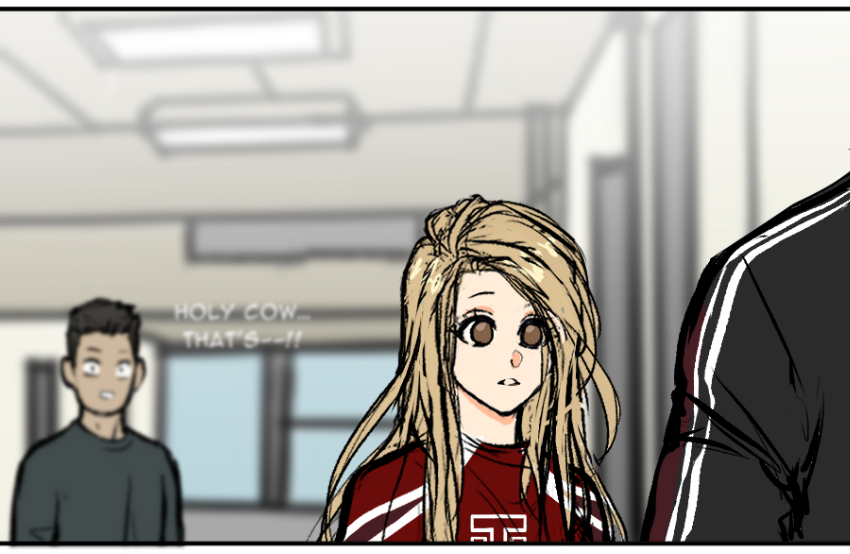

WAIT SHE KINDA MY TYPE THOUGH
ARE YOU COMPETING? I'M SHOJI, FROM KOTO UNIVERSITY.
OH! I'M ISHIHARA JUN, FROM TANAKA UNI.

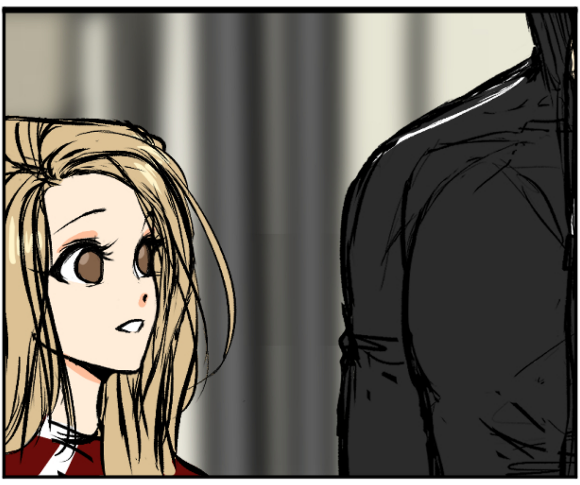

WAIT, TANAKA UNI? ISN'T THAT--
ISHIHARA



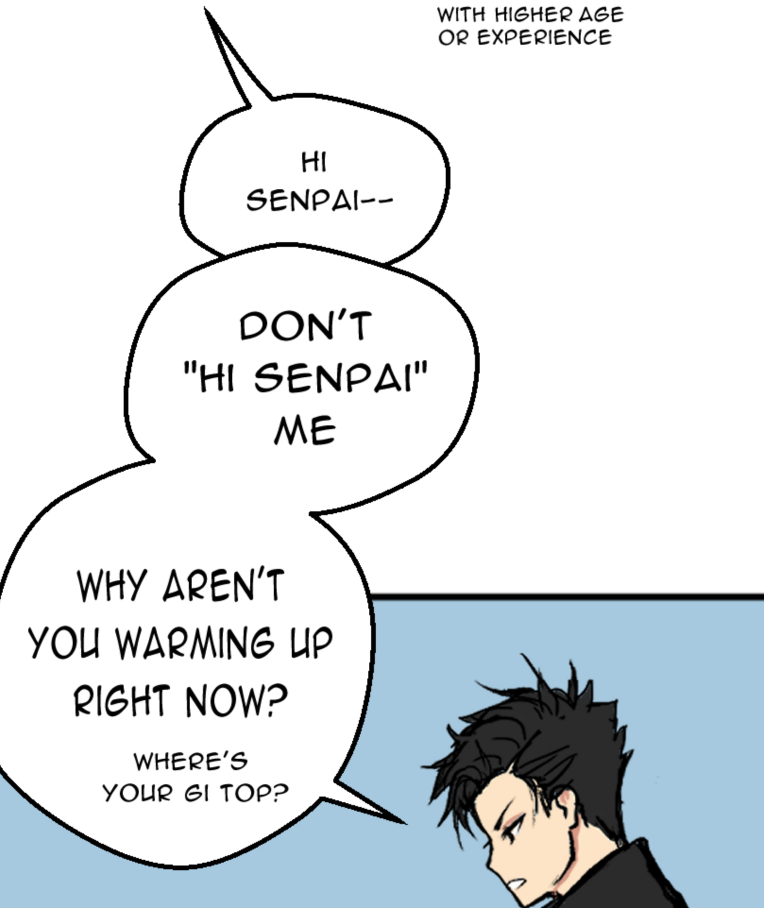

...SORRY, EXCUSE US.

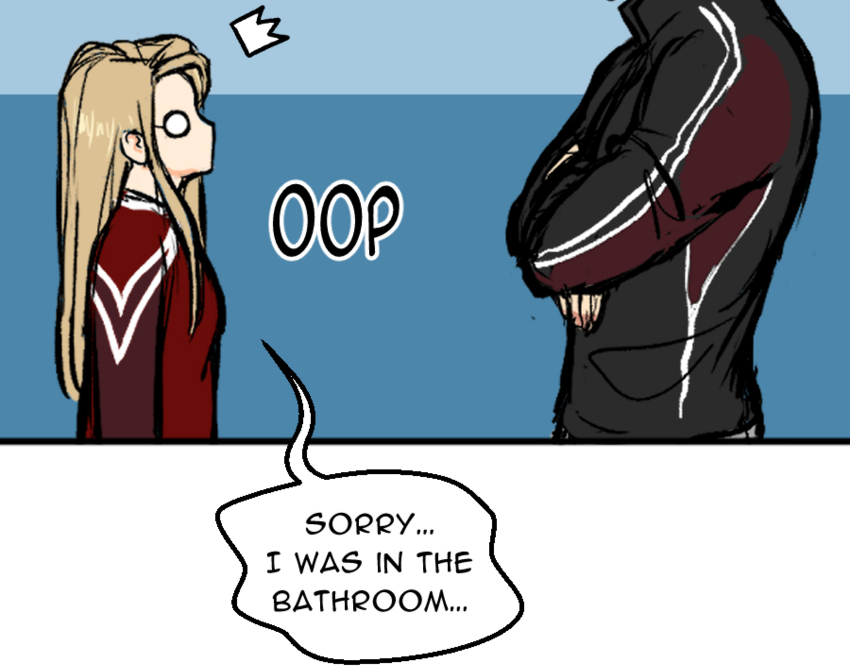

A-- YA-O YES SURE
PARDON ME

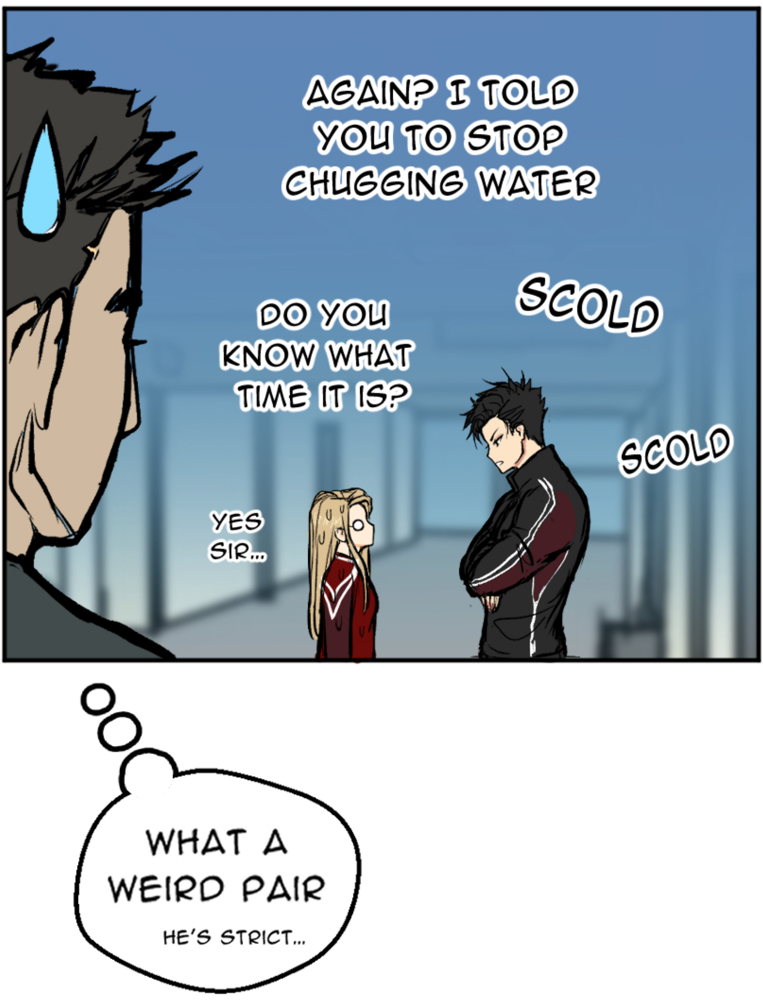

HOLY COW... THAT'S--!!

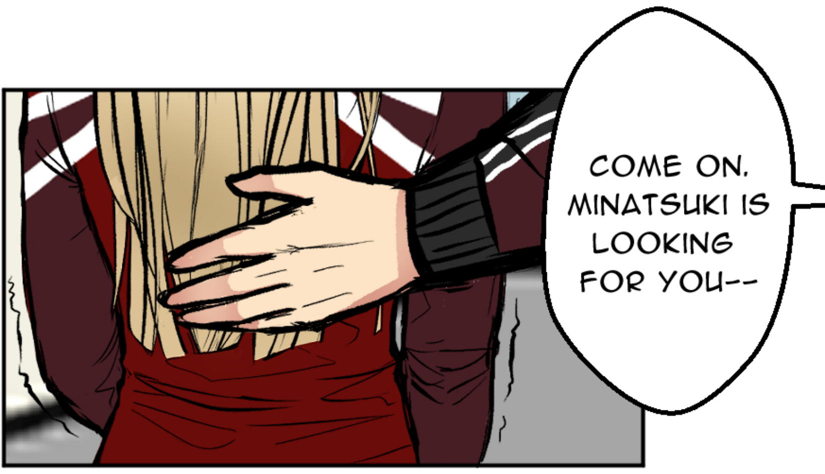


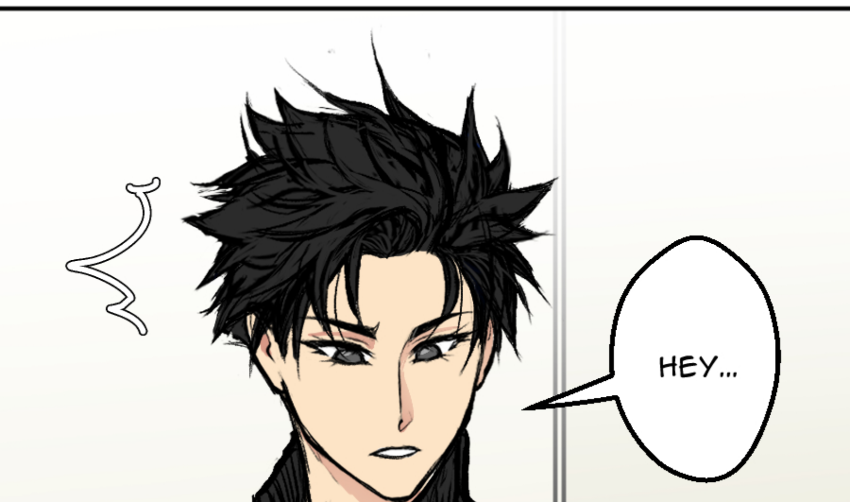
"SENPAI" = TERM TO ADDRESS THOSE WITH HIGHER AGE OR EXPERIENCE

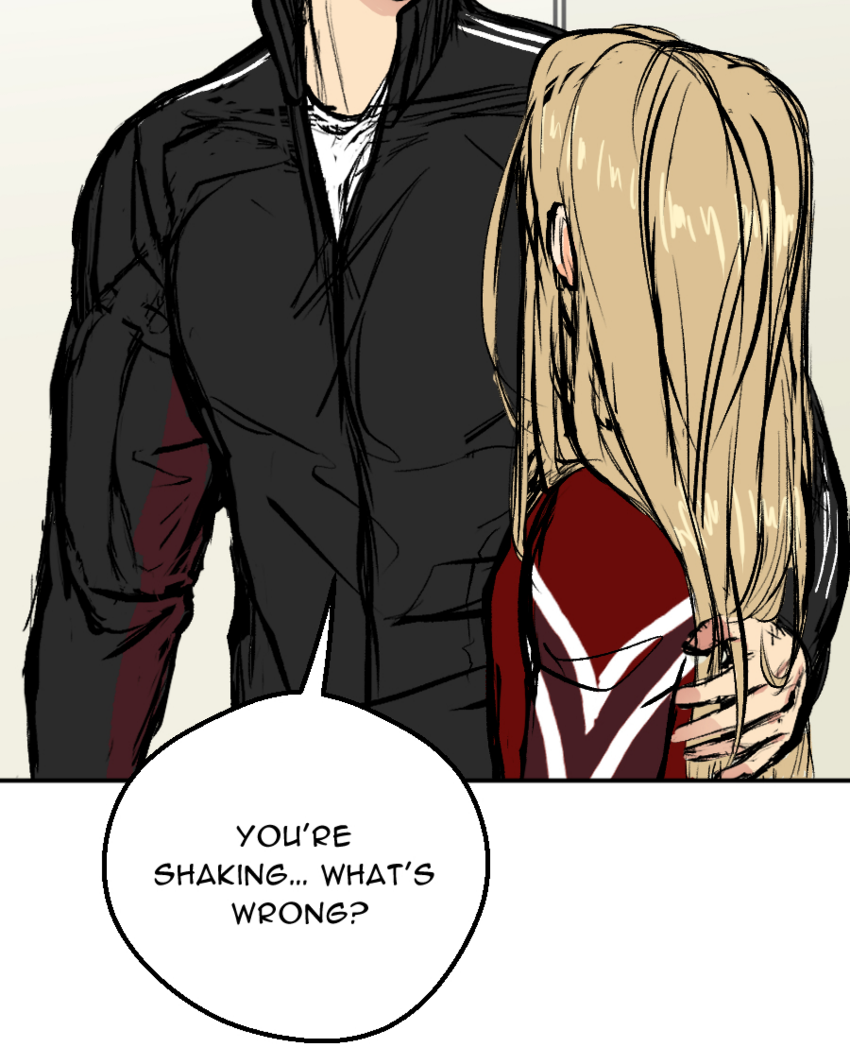

HI SENPAI--
DON'T "HI SENPAI" ME
WHY AREN'T YOU WARMING UP RIGHT NOW? WHERE'S YOUR GI TOP?

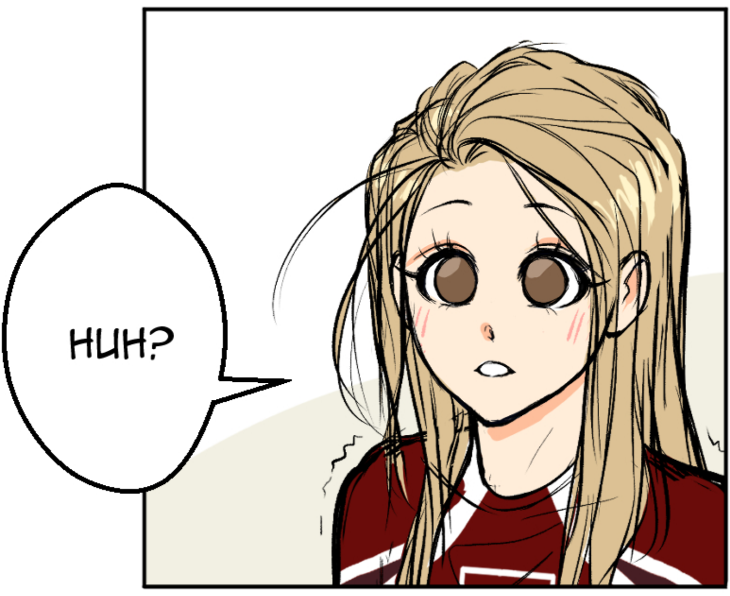

OOP
SORRY... I WAS IN THE BATHROOM...

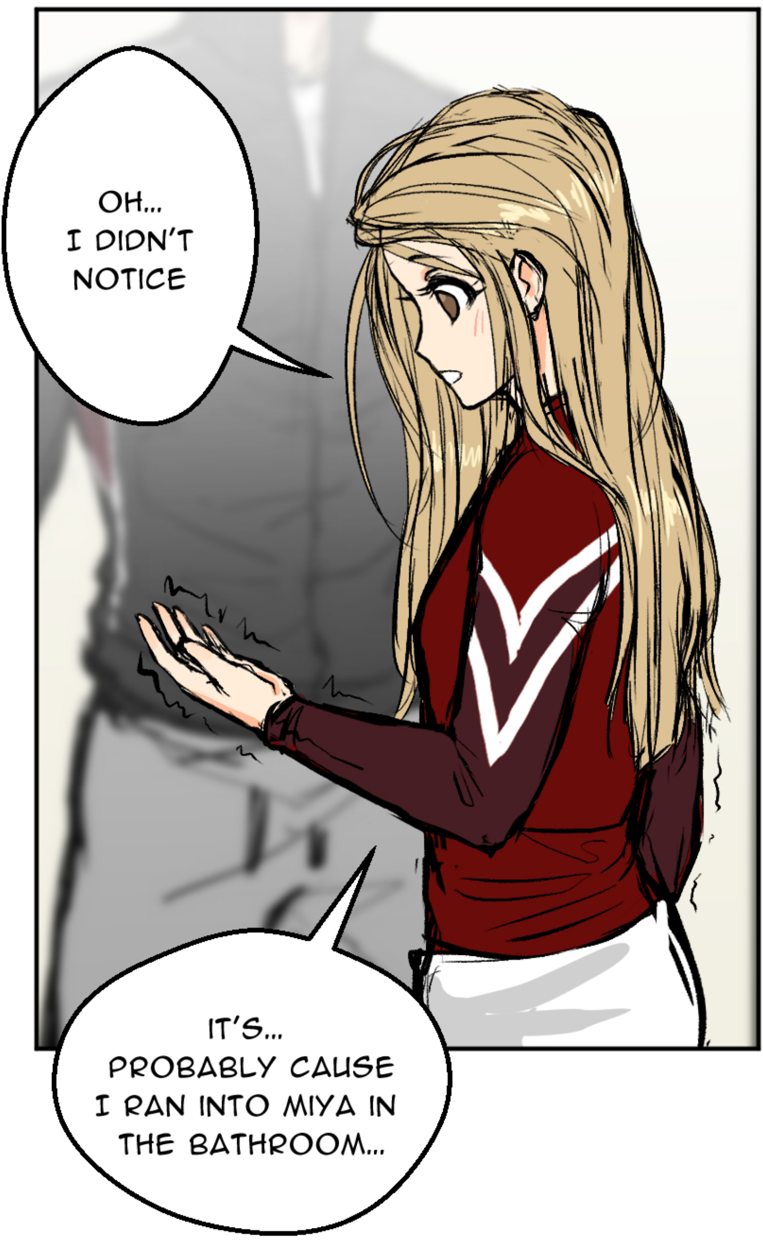

AGAIN? I TOLD YOU TO STOP CHUGGING WATER
DO YOU KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS?
SCOLD
SCOLD
YES SIR...
WHAT A WEIRD PAIR
HE'S STRICT...

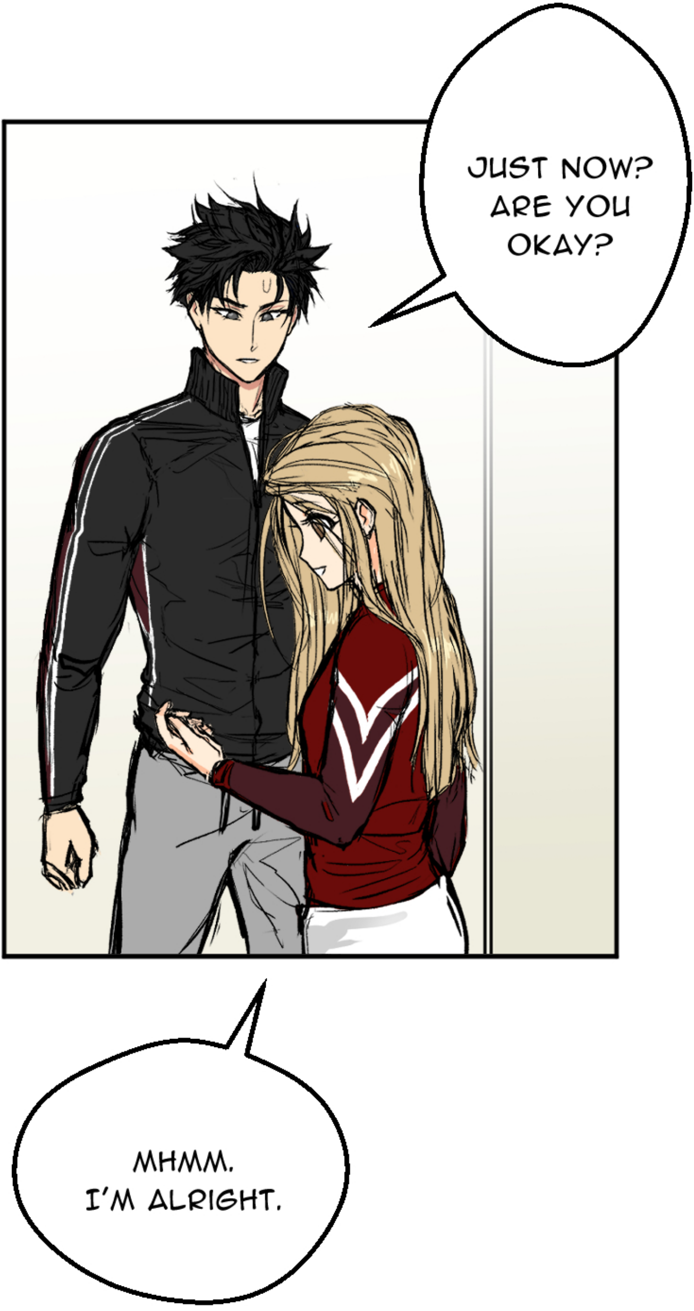

COME ON. MINATSUKI IS LOOKING FOR YOU--

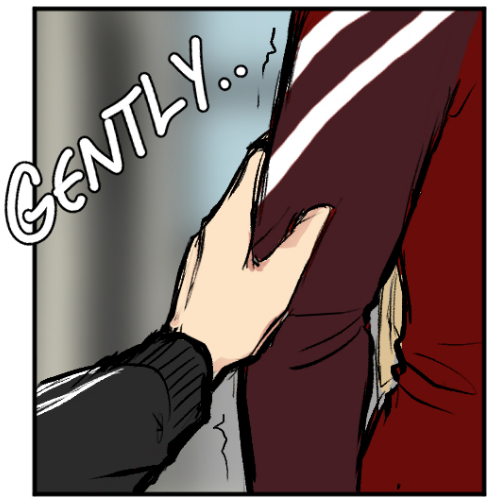


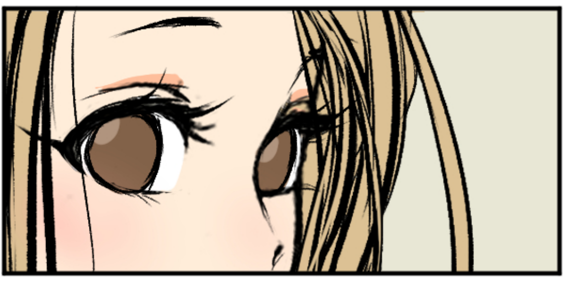

YOU'RE SHAKING... WHAT'S WRONG?

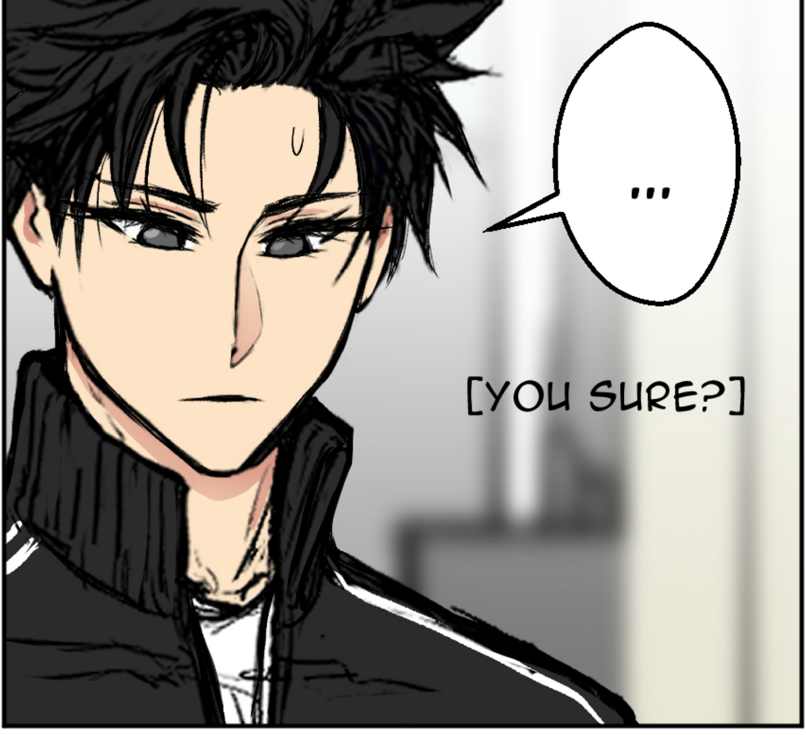


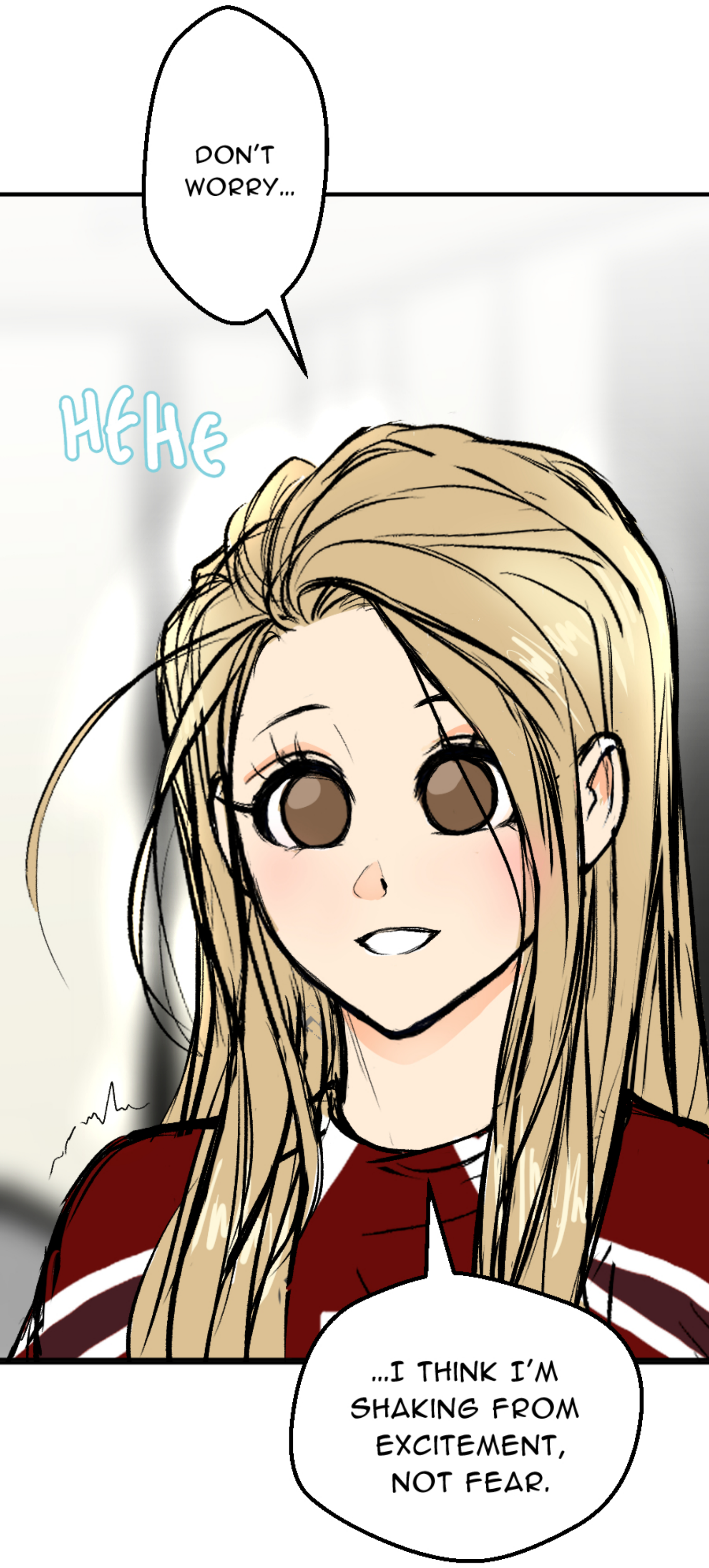

OH... I DIDN'T NOTICE
IT'S... PROBABLY CAUSE I RAN INTO MIYA IN THE BATHROOM...

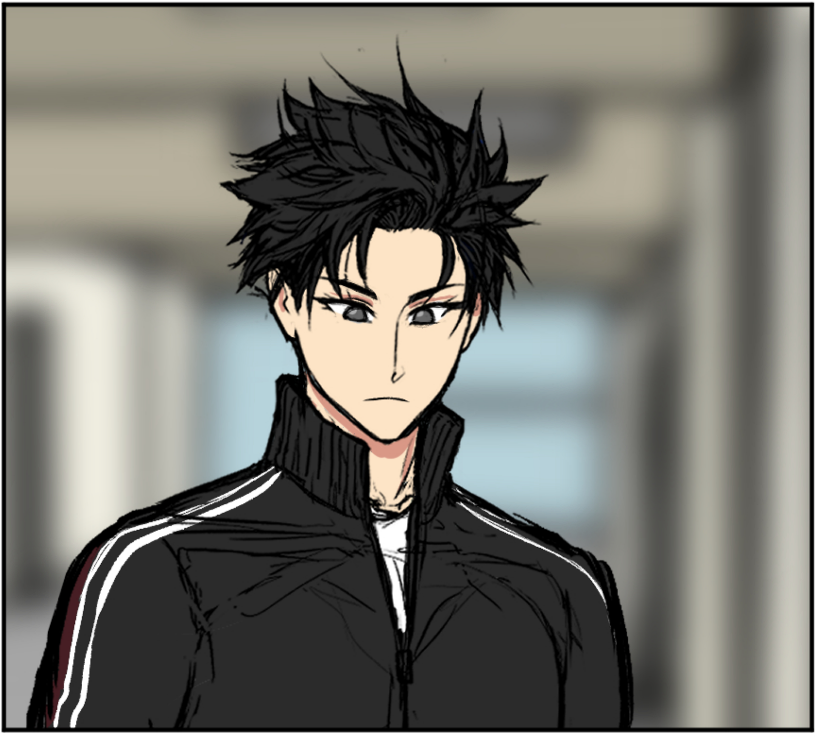

JUST NOW? ARE YOU OKAY?
MHMM. I'M ALRIGHT.

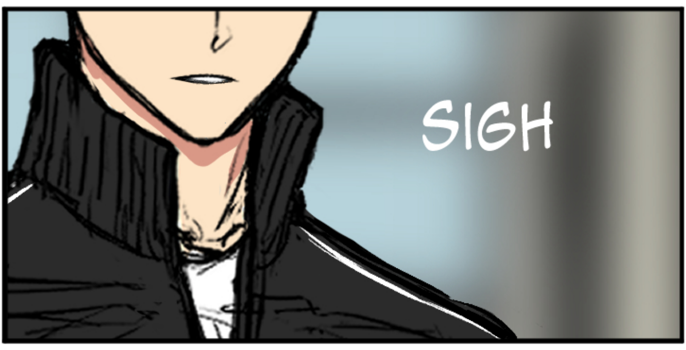


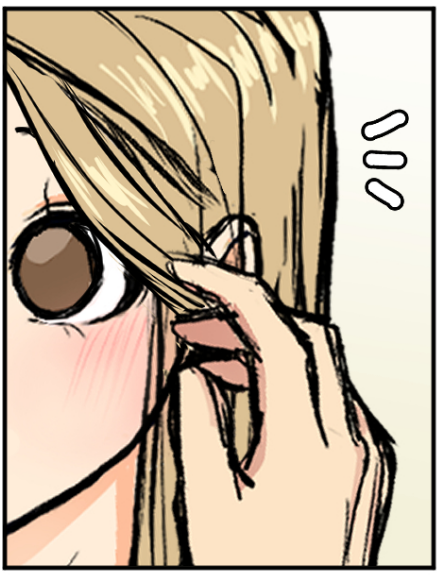


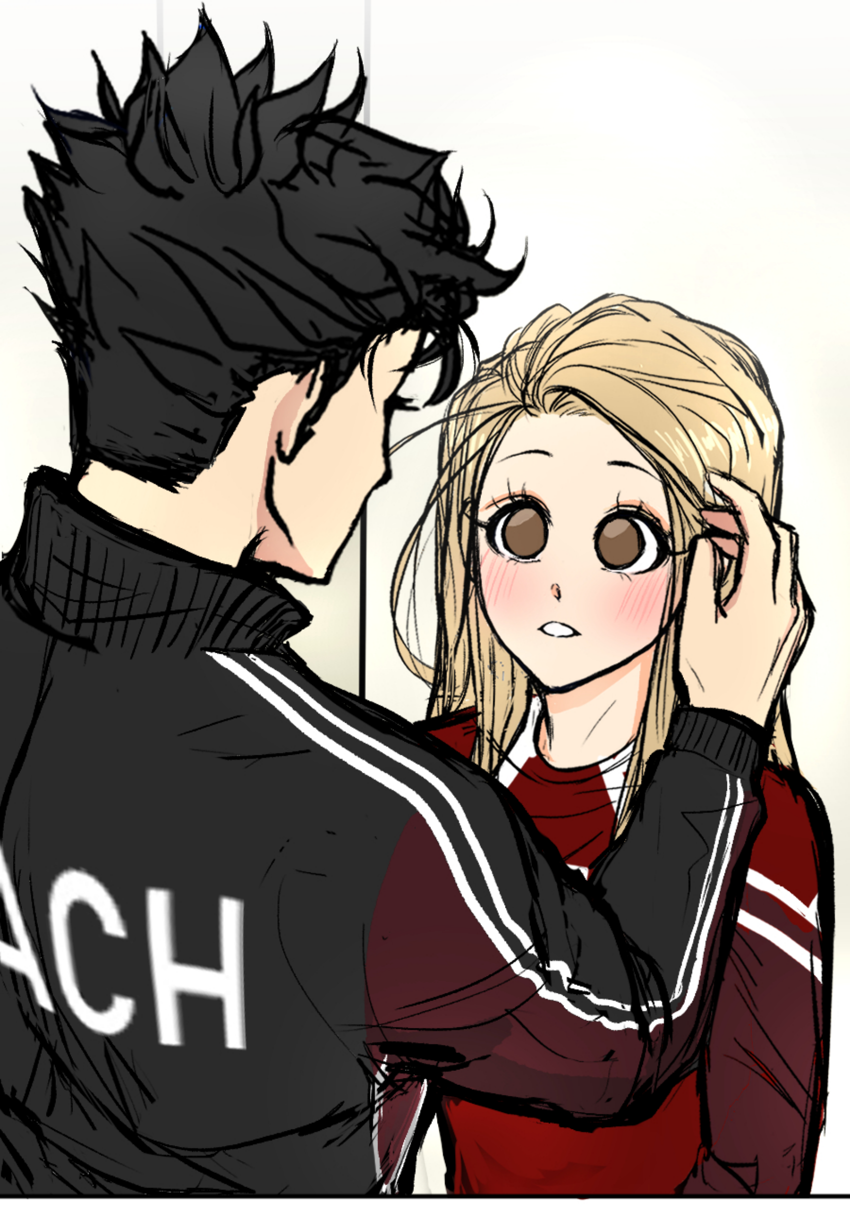


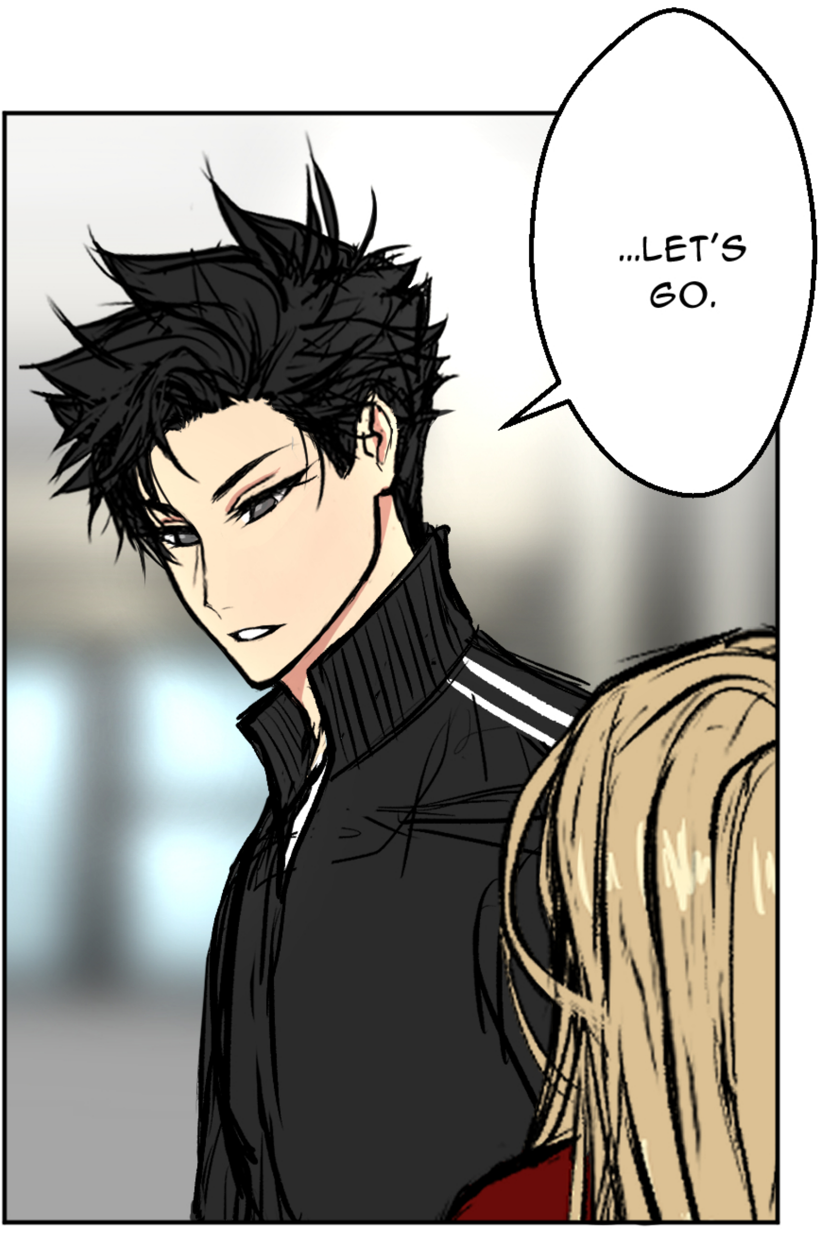

DON'T WORRY...
HEHE
...I THINK I'M SHAKING FROM EXCITEMENT, NOT FEAR.

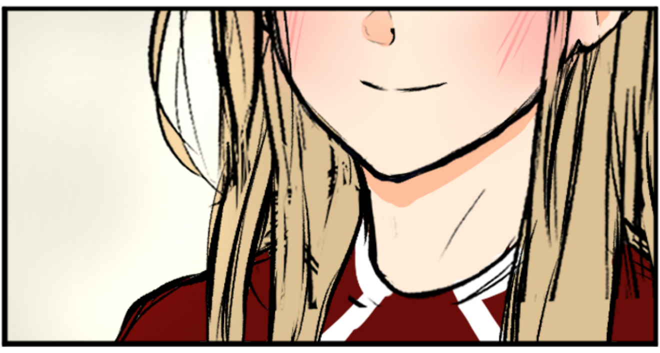


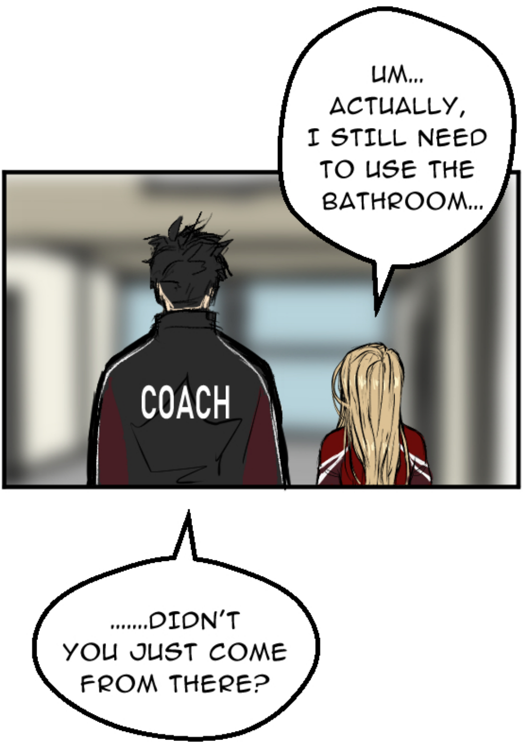






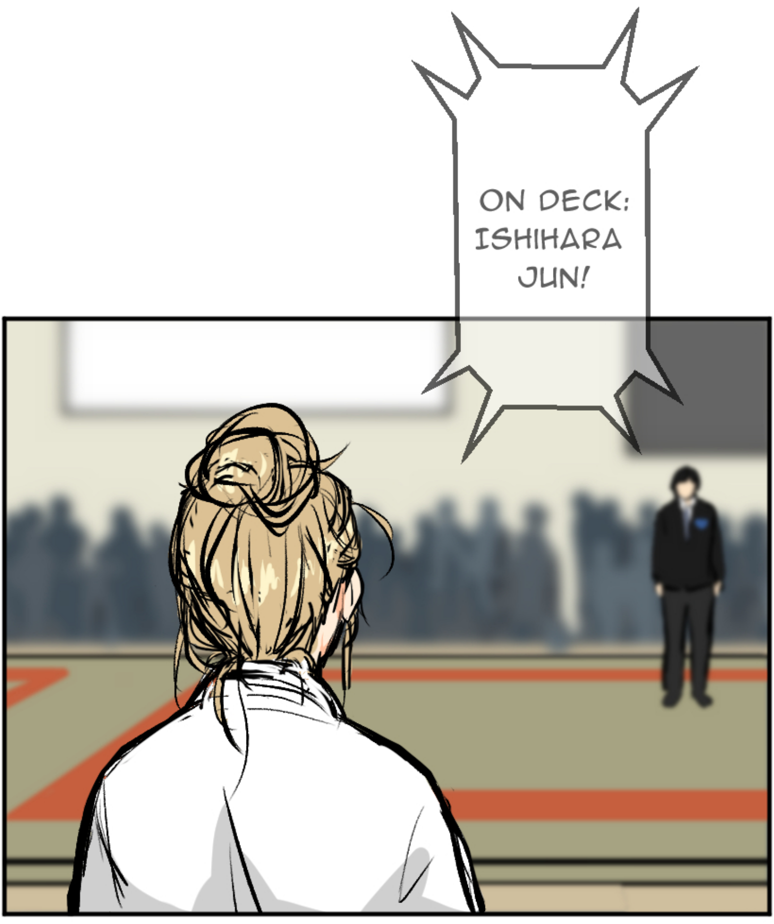





UM...
ACTUALLY,
I STILL NEED
TO USE THE
BATHROOM...
COACH
.......DIDN'T
YOU JUST COME
FROM THERE?

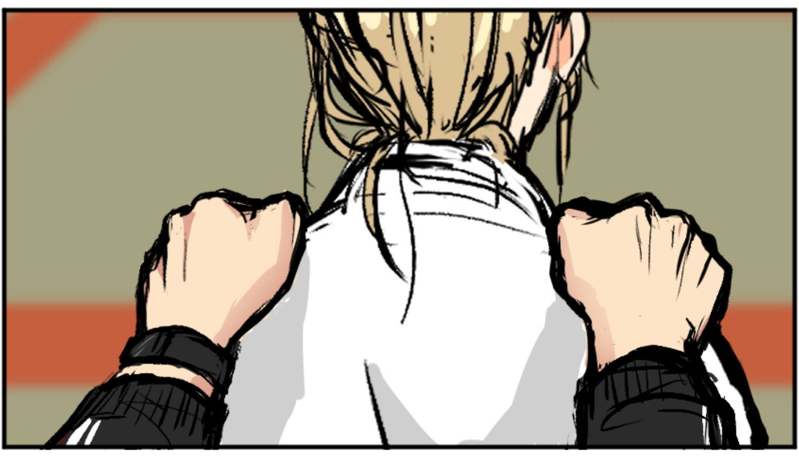
PEOPLE AREN'T PERFECT.

BUT WE CAN ALWAYS STRIVE TO BE BETTER THAN YESTERDAY.

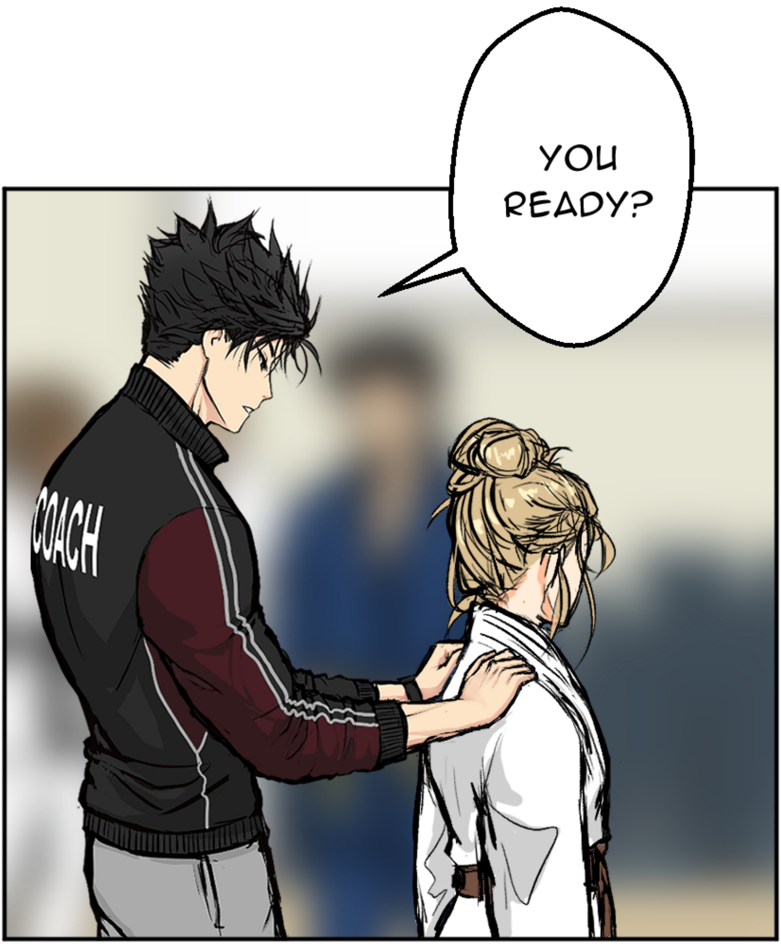

ON DECK: ISHIHARA JUN!

I WISH I COULD TELL YOU THAT CHANGE IS EASY, BUT IT ISN'T.

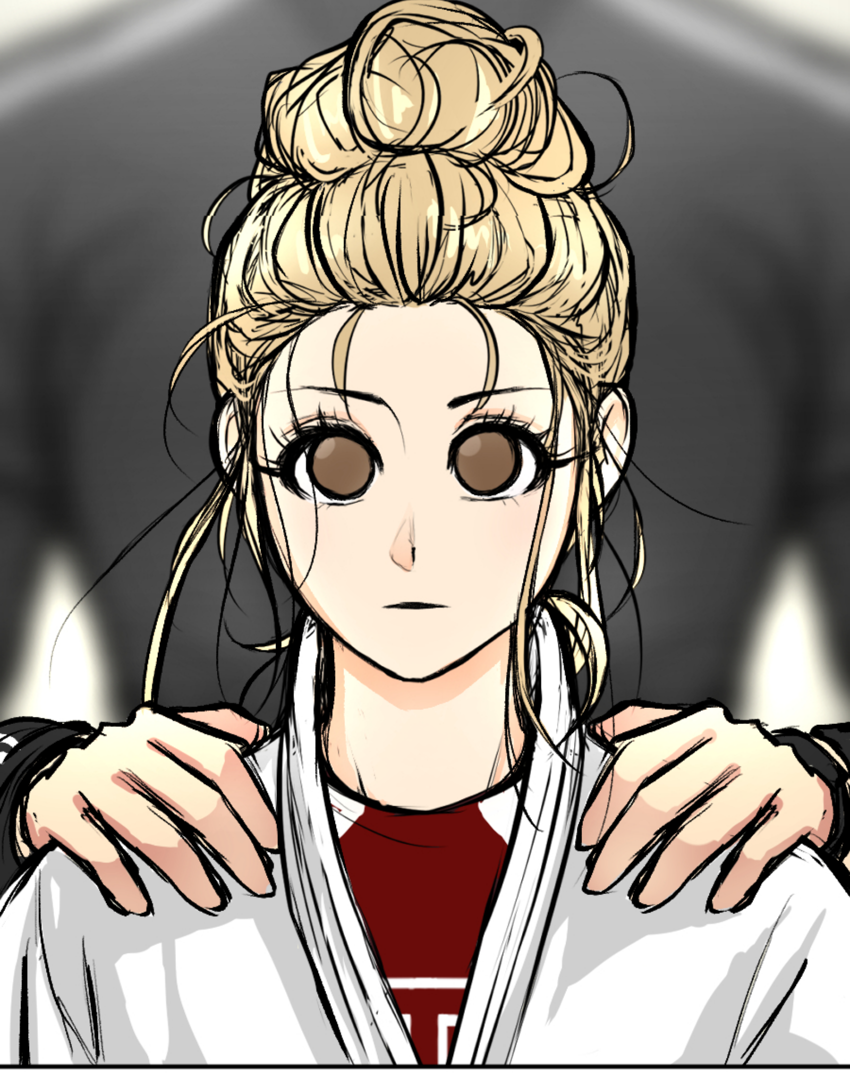
WHAT I *CAN* TELL YOU...



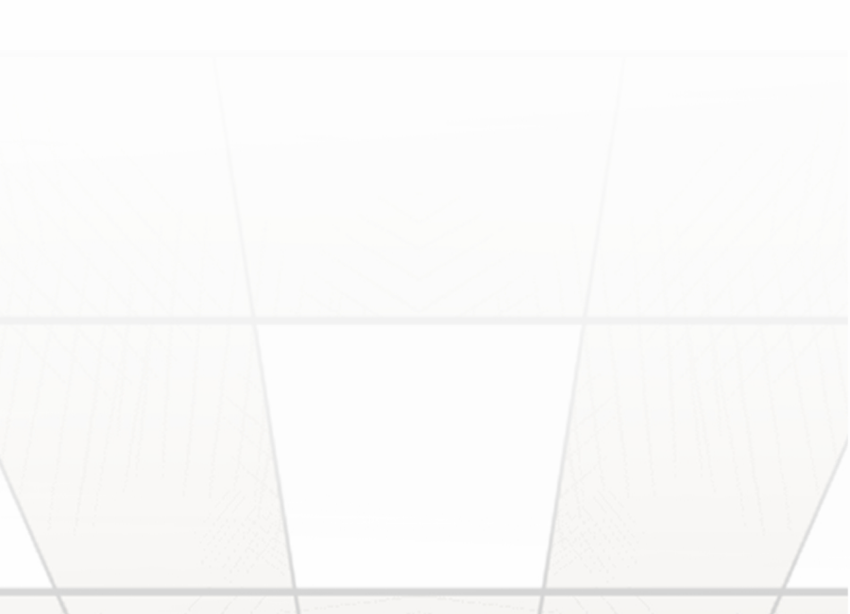
...IS YOU DON'T HAVE TO FIGHT ALONE.

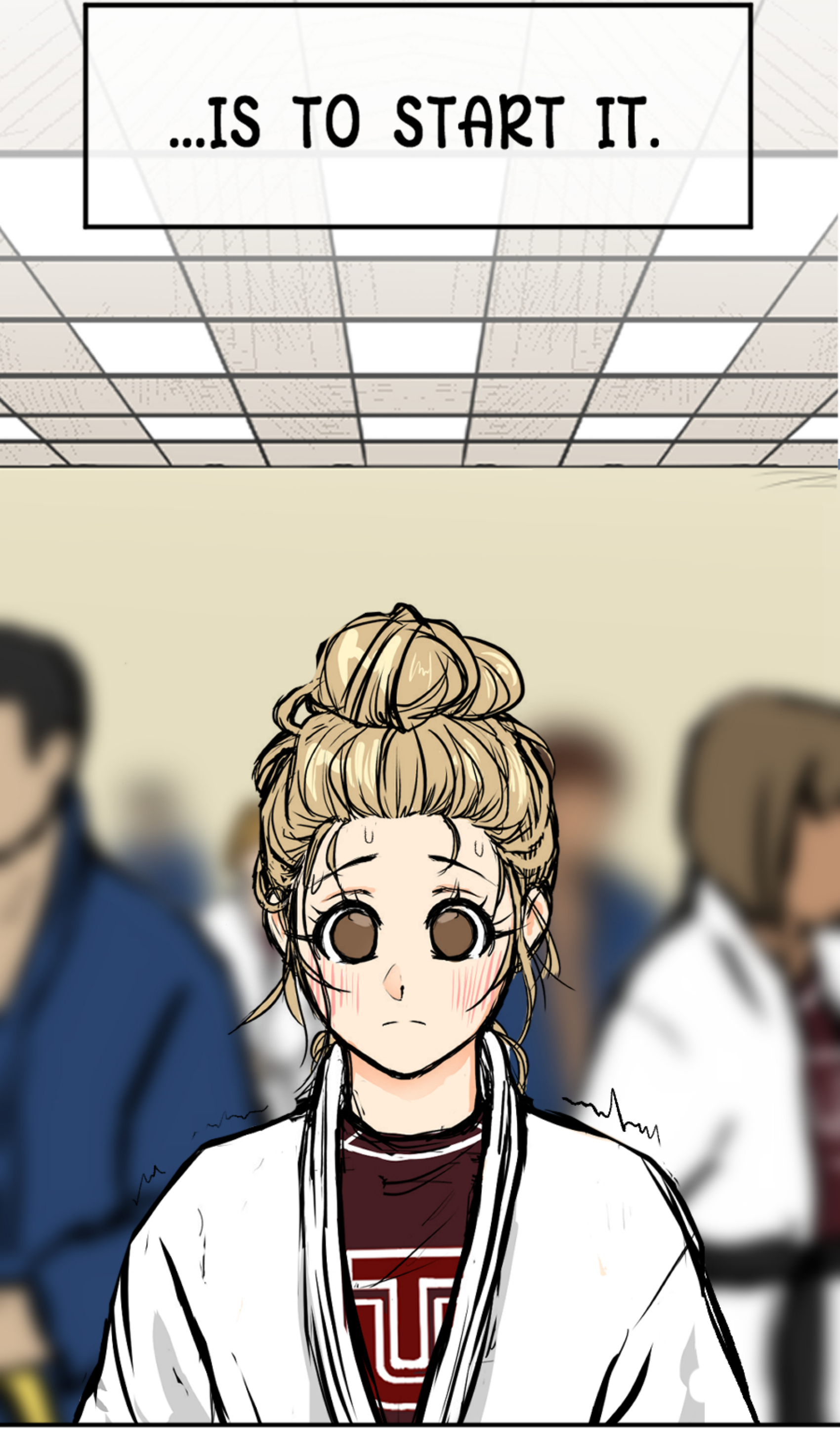

YOU READY?
COACH

DON'T FEAR FAILURE.



AND THE
MOST IMPORTANT
PART OF ANY JOURNEY...




...IS TO START IT.

18 MONTHS AGO...

the gentle way
柔道
story & art by True