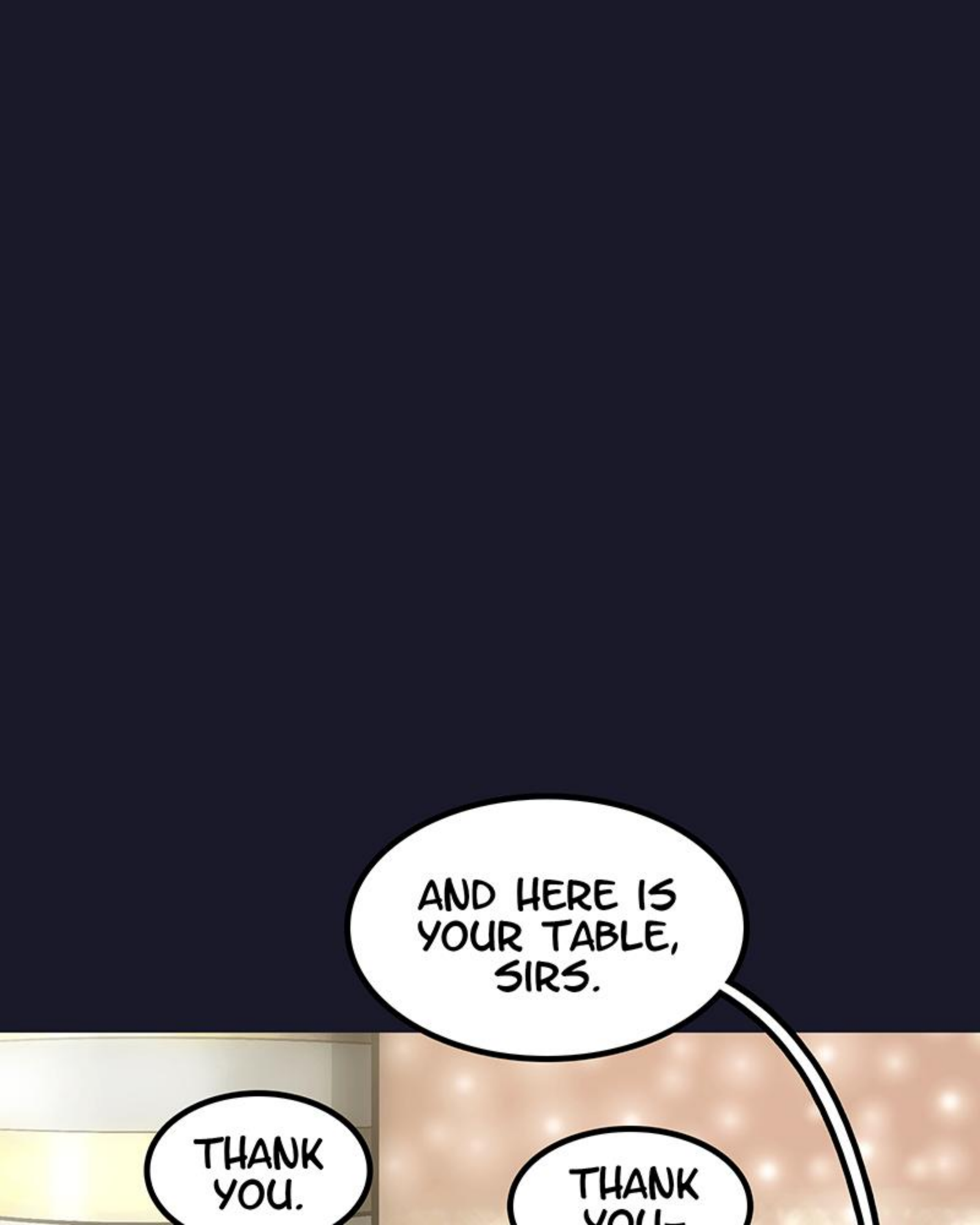




AND HERE IS
YOUR TABLE,
SIRS.

THANK
YOU.

THANK
YOU.

you-
WHAT DO
YOU MEAN
TEST??



PLEASE
SIT DOWN.

NO!
THAT WAS
A REALLY WEIRD
THING FOR YOU
TO SAY-

I'M NOT
HAVING DINNER
WITH YOU BECAUSE
OF SOME "TEST".





I WORDED
THAT POORLY,
BUT I CAN
EXPLAIN-

AND
ASIDE FROM
THAT I REALLY

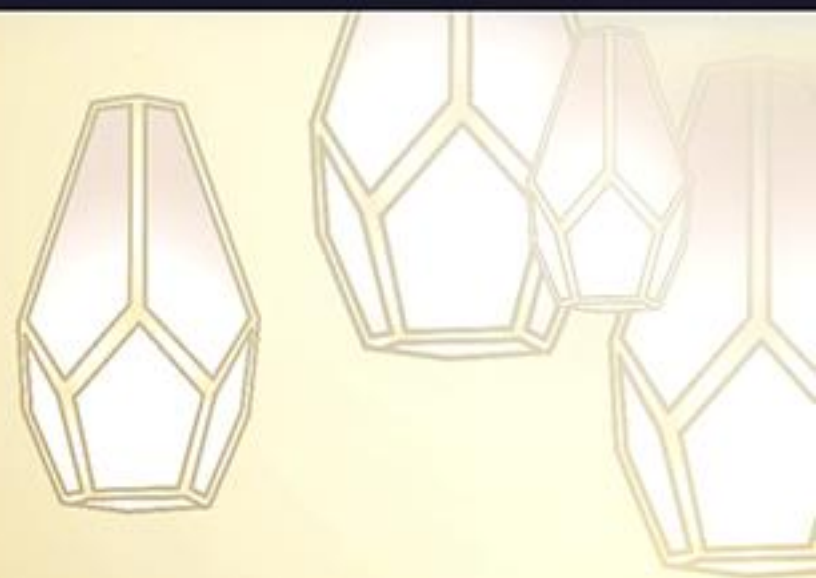


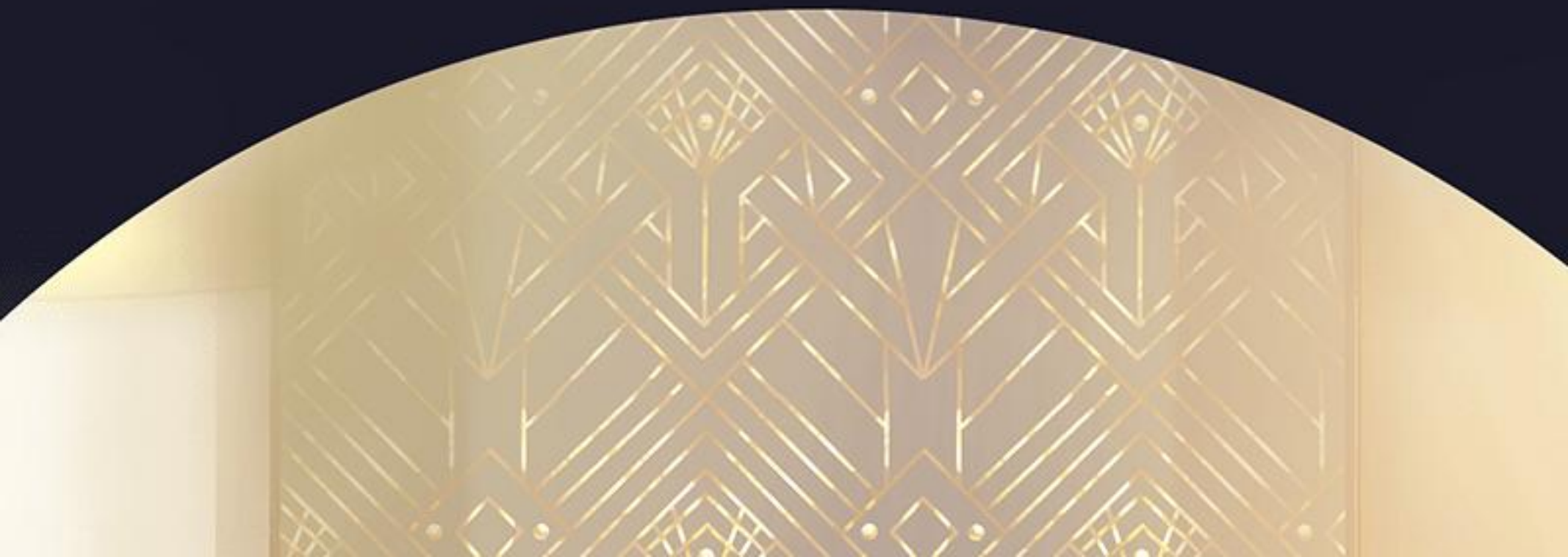
DO JUST WANT
TO HAVE DINNER
WITH YOU-

THAT'S
HOW I WANTED TO
BREAK THE NEWS OF
YOUR AWARD IN THE FIRST
PLACE BUT THEN ALL

PLACE BUT THEN ALL
THIS STUFF CAME
UP-

I'M SORRY,
PLEASE.







THANK
YOU.

ALRIGHT...
WELL THERE IS
NO REAL WAY FOR
ME TO SAY THIS
WITHOUT IT STILL
SOUNDING BAD-

SO LET
ME GET IT ALL
OUT FIRST...





YOU ARE
UNDERSTANDABLY
VERY PREOCCUPIED
WITH LACEY...





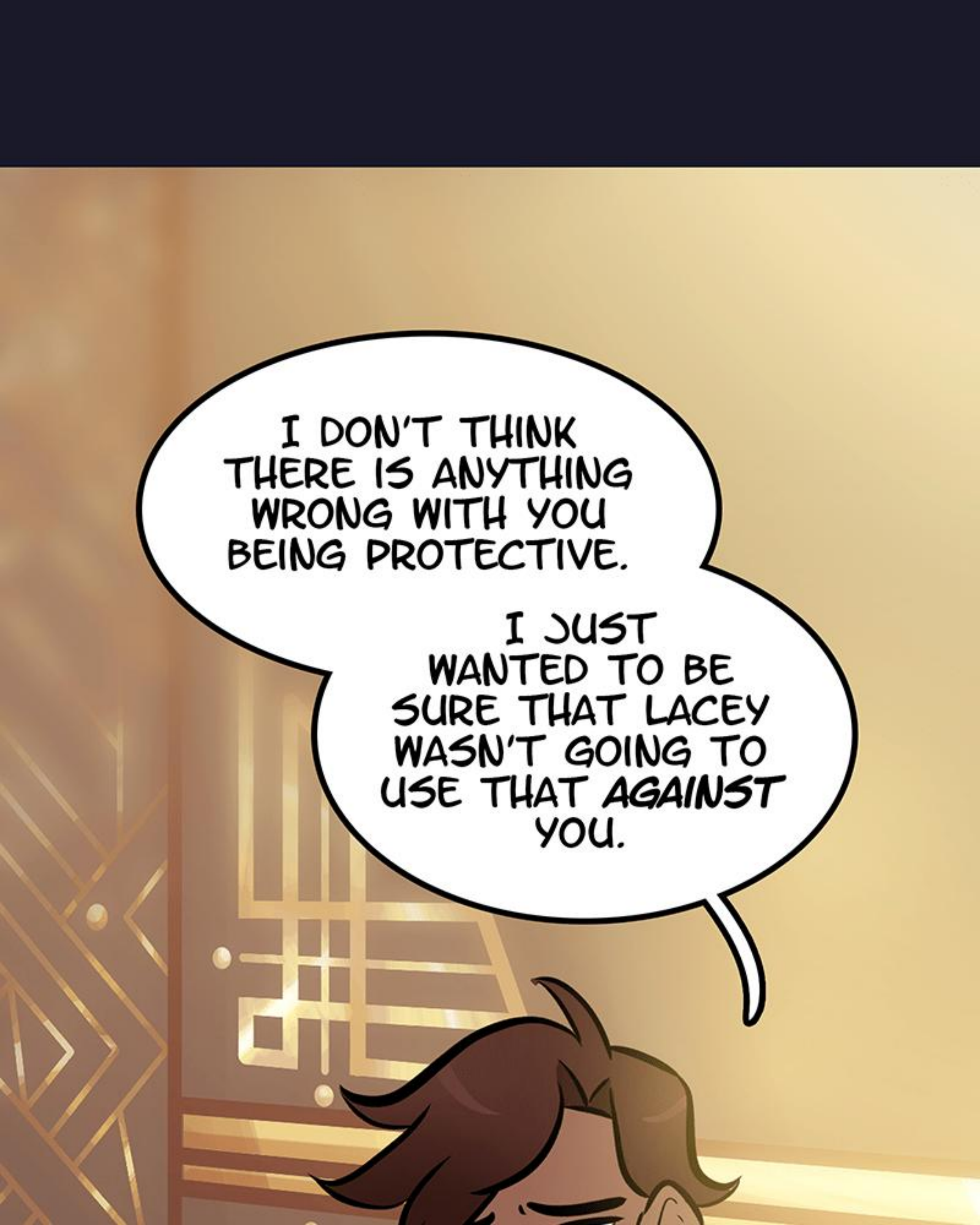
AND YOUR
DRIVE TO PROTECT
HIM... IT MAKES YOU
DEFENSIVE.



AND IT
REMINDS ME
OF HOW YOU
USED TO DEFEND
VELIX.

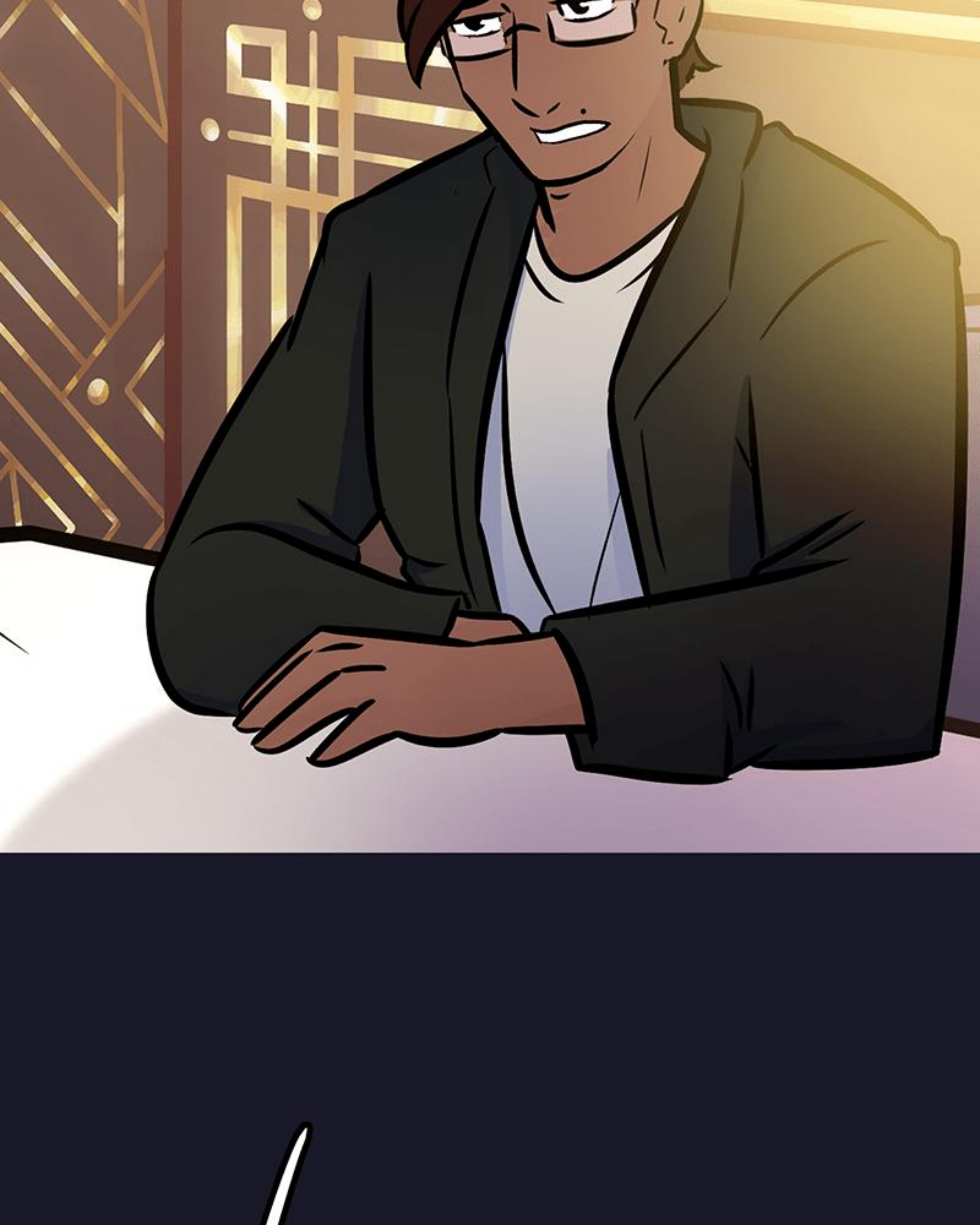


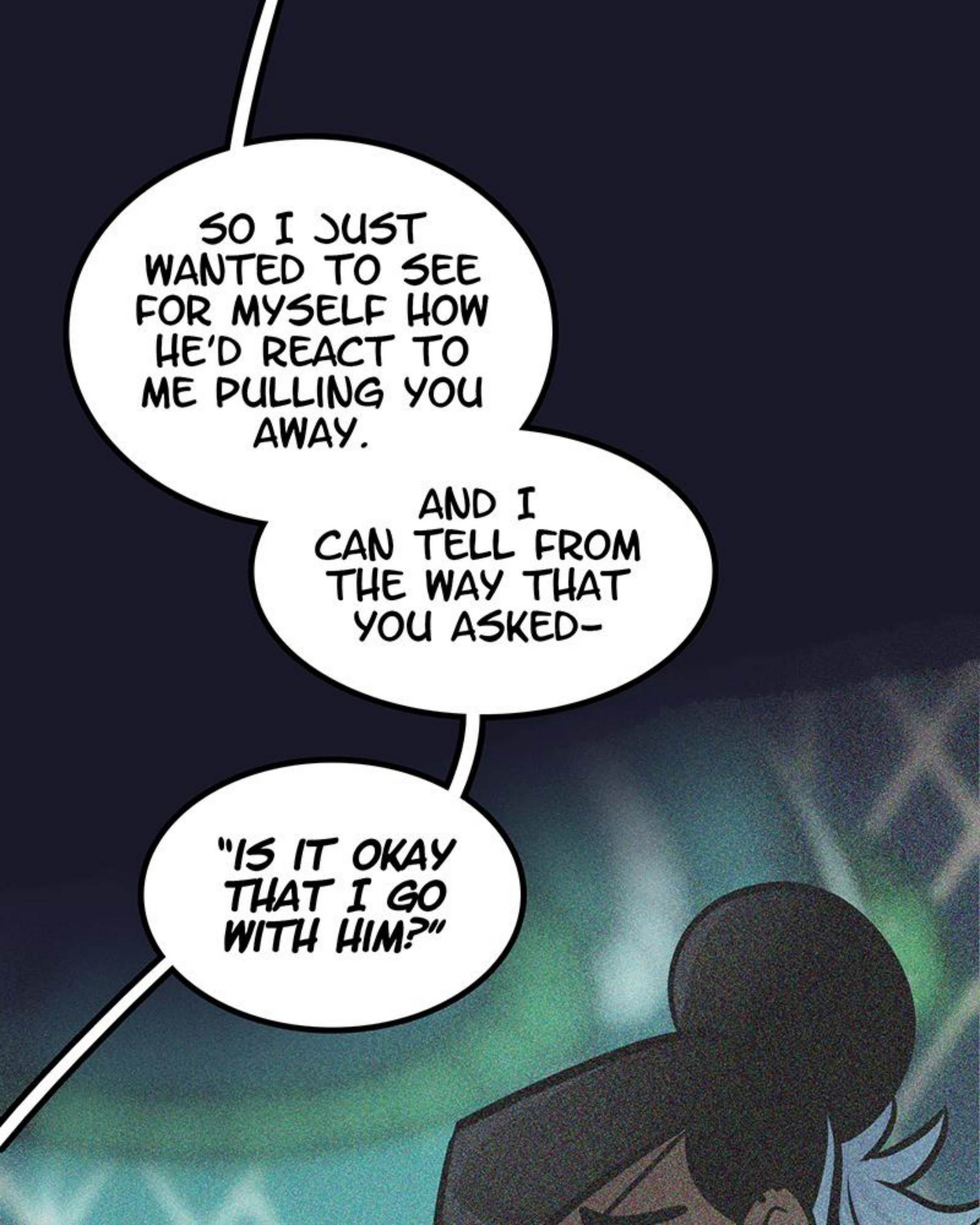
WH-

A comic panel with a warm, golden-brown background. On the left, there is a decorative wall with a grid-like pattern of gold lines. In the bottom center, the back of a character's head is visible, showing dark brown hair. A large, white speech bubble with a black outline originates from the character. Inside the speech bubble, there are two lines of text.

I DON'T THINK
THERE IS ANYTHING
WRONG WITH YOU
BEING PROTECTIVE.

I JUST
WANTED TO BE
SURE THAT LACEY
WASN'T GOING TO
USE THAT AGAINST
YOU.



A comic book panel with a dark blue background. Three white speech bubbles with black outlines are arranged vertically. The top bubble contains the text "SO I JUST WANTED TO SEE FOR MYSELF HOW HE'D REACT TO ME PULLING YOU AWAY." The middle bubble contains "AND I CAN TELL FROM THE WAY THAT YOU ASKED-". The bottom bubble contains "IS IT OKAY THAT I GO WITH HIM?". In the bottom right corner, the back of a person's head and shoulders are visible. The person has dark skin and is wearing a blue shirt. The background has a subtle green and blue gradient.

SO I JUST
WANTED TO SEE
FOR MYSELF HOW
HE'D REACT TO
ME PULLING YOU
AWAY.

AND I
CAN TELL FROM
THE WAY THAT
YOU ASKED-

"IS IT OKAY
THAT I GO
WITH HIM?"



-THAT YOU
WERE WORRIED
THAT HE WOULD REACT
POORLY LIKE VELIX
USED TO.





UGH, THAT
LECTURE WAS
EXHAUSTING.

XADA
YOU WANNA

YOU WANNA
GRAB DINNER
WITH ME?

OOOOH
YEAH THAT
SOUNDS
GOOD!





OH!
WE CAN TRY
THAT NEW GREEK
PLACE THAT OPENED
UP - I CAN
DRIVE!





AHH...
SORRY. I KINDA
JUST MEANT LIKE...
DINNER WITH ME AND
HIM. MY BOYFRIEND.
LIKE A DATE.





THEN WHY
DIDN'T YOU SAY
"XADA DO YOU WANT
TO GO ON A DATE
WITH ME"?



IF I
WANTED YOU
TO COME THEN I
WOULD HAVE SAID
"YOU GUYS WANNA GRAB
DINNER" INSTEAD OF
JUST SAYING
XADA.





IT'S VERY
STRAIGHT FORWARD.

YOU GOTTA
ADMIT IT'S STILL
KINDA FUCKED UP
TO ASK WHEN I'M
**STANDING RIGHT
HERE!**





WHAT I'M
HEARING IS:

"YOU CAN ONLY
TALK TO XADA WHEN
I'M NOT AROUND."

AND
ALSO- IF
I DO MESSAGE HIM
AND YOU CATCH HIM
LEAVING YOU END UP
COMING WITH HALF THE
TIME ANYWAY!!

OH! I'M SORRY
MY PRESENCE IS
SUCH A **HUGE**
INCONVENIENCE,
ERIK.





XADA CAN HANG
OUT WITH WHOEVER
HE WANTS. LIKE HIS
BEST FRIEND.

DID YOU
EVER THINK THAT
MAYBE HE **WANTS** ME
AROUND BECAUSE DOESN'T
FEEL COMFORTABLE
BEING ALONE WITH
YOU?

ARE YOU
FUCKING
DELUSION-

OKAY OKAY
OKAY-





A comic book panel featuring two characters at the bottom. The character on the left has dark skin and short black hair, wearing a blue jacket with a white collar and a brown strap over his shoulder. The character on the right has light skin, brown hair, and wears glasses, a brown jacket, and a backpack. They are standing in a grassy area with trees in the background. A large speech bubble originates from the right character, containing two lines of text. The background is filled with green grass and foliage, with some areas having a cross-hatched texture.

WE'RE ALL
SUPER HUNGRY,
YEAH?

SO LET'S
JUST ALL GO GET
DINNER AND THEN
ERIK - WE CAN GO
ON A DATE THIS
WEEKEND?



BUT THAT
DOESN'T-
HE-!





...FINE.
SURE.

THAT
WORKS I
GUESS.

FORGET IT.
I DON'T WANT TO
BE WHERE I'M NOT
WANTED.

WH-!





VELIX!!



COME
ON- DO YOU
AT LEAST WANT ME
TO BRING YOU BACK
ANYTHING???

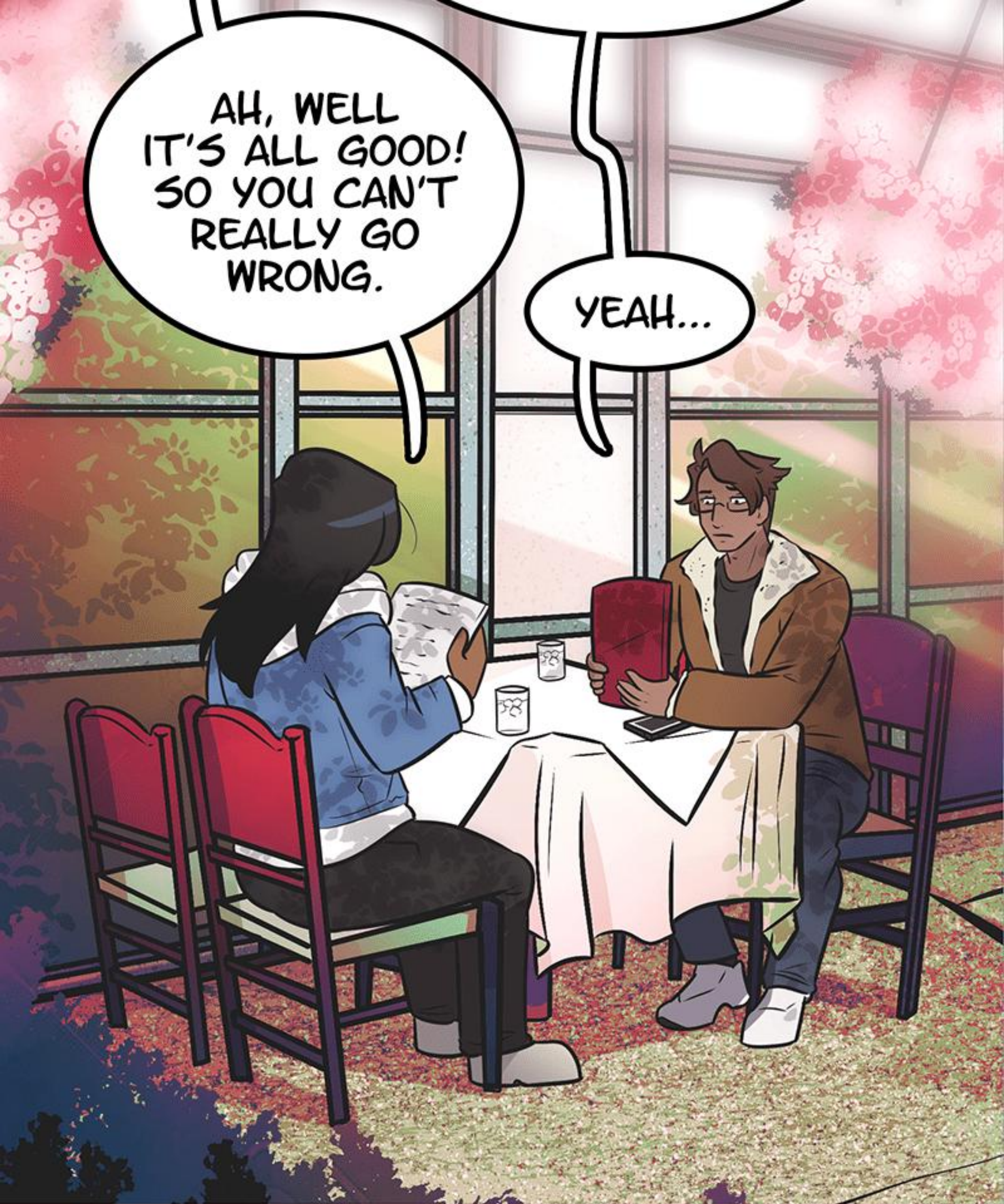


EVERYTHING
OKAY? YOUR BROW
IS FURROWED.

...I JUST
DON'T KNOW
MUCH ABOUT GREEK
FOOD, IS ALL.

AH, WELL
IT'S ALL GOOD!
SO YOU CAN'T
REALLY GO
WRONG.

YEAH...



HOW LONG
HAVE YOU BEEN
FRIENDS WITH
VELIX?

UUHHH
START OF
COLLEGE- SO
CLOSE TO 3
YEARS?

I SEE...
HE SEEMS...
A BIT **POSSESSIVE** OF
YOUR TIME... WHENEVER
WE TRY TO HANG
OUT.





OH NO
NO! IT'S NOT

LIKE THAT!

HE'S JUST
NOT USED TO
BEING AWAY FROM
ME, I GUESS-

SO HE'S JUST
ADJUSTING! IT'S
ALL GOOD-



A comic panel showing two characters from the chest up. The character on the left has brown skin and is wearing a blue jacket over a white shirt. The character on the right has darker skin and is also wearing a blue jacket over a white shirt. They are both looking towards the right. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape with a pinkish-purple sky and a green hill.

HE DOESN'T
HAVE A LOT OF
FRIENDS -

OR I
GUESS DOES
BUT HE SAYS THEY
ARE SHALLOW.

I THINK
YOU'D GET ALONG
SINCE YOU BOTH...
AH.

I KNOW
YOU HAVE **SOMETHING**
IN COMMON BUT I

IN COMMON BUT I
CAN'T REMEMBER
RIGHT NOW-

ANYWAY!
ONCE YOU GET
TO KNOW HIM **HE'S**
SUPER SWEET. HE
JUST DOESN'T WANT
ME TO GET **HURT,**
YOU KNOW?

HAVE...
YOU...AH...
LIKE ...

HAVE YOU
BEEN IN SITUATIONS
WITH GUYS IN THE
PAST THAT WERE...





YOU'RE
THE FIRST GUY
I'VE DATED SINCE
FIRST YEAR-

AND I ENDED
THINGS PRETTY EARLY
ON BECAUSE HE WAS
BAD NEWS.

BEEP
BEEP



WAS HE
REALLY OR...
DID VELIX MAKE
YOU BELIEVE-



SCOFFS





WHAT'S
THE MATTER?



A comic panel featuring a character with dark skin and long dark hair, wearing a blue patterned jacket over a white shirt. The character has a shocked expression with wide eyes and a slightly open mouth. A large speech bubble is positioned above the character's head, containing the text 'HE WROTE ME A WHOLE ESSAY AND THEN HE BLOCKED ME-'. To the right of the character, there is a smaller speech bubble containing the text 'WHAT??'. The background is a soft-focus image of pink and white flowers.

HE WROTE ME
A WHOLE ESSAY
AND THEN HE
BLOCKED ME-

WHAT??



HE MUST
BE REALLY UPSET...
I SHOULD GO TALK
TO HIM-

WHAT- ARE
YOU **SERIOUS**
RIGHT NOW?

RIGHT NOW!



HE BLOCKED
ME!

BECAUSE
HE FEELS ENTITLED
TO *YOUR* TIME.





XADA-
PLEASE-



I KNOW
I HAVEN'T
KNOWN YOU AS
LONG AS HE
HAS...

AND MAYBE
YOU'RE RIGHT, HE IS
JUST AGGRESSIVE BECAUSE
I'M A STRANGER RIGHT NOW
AND WE'D ACTUALLY BE
GREAT FRIENDS BUT

GREAT FRIENDS BUT -

BUT THIS
FEELS... WEIRD.
I REALLY FEEL
LIKE... IT'S NOT
GOOD FOR
YOU...





I REALLY

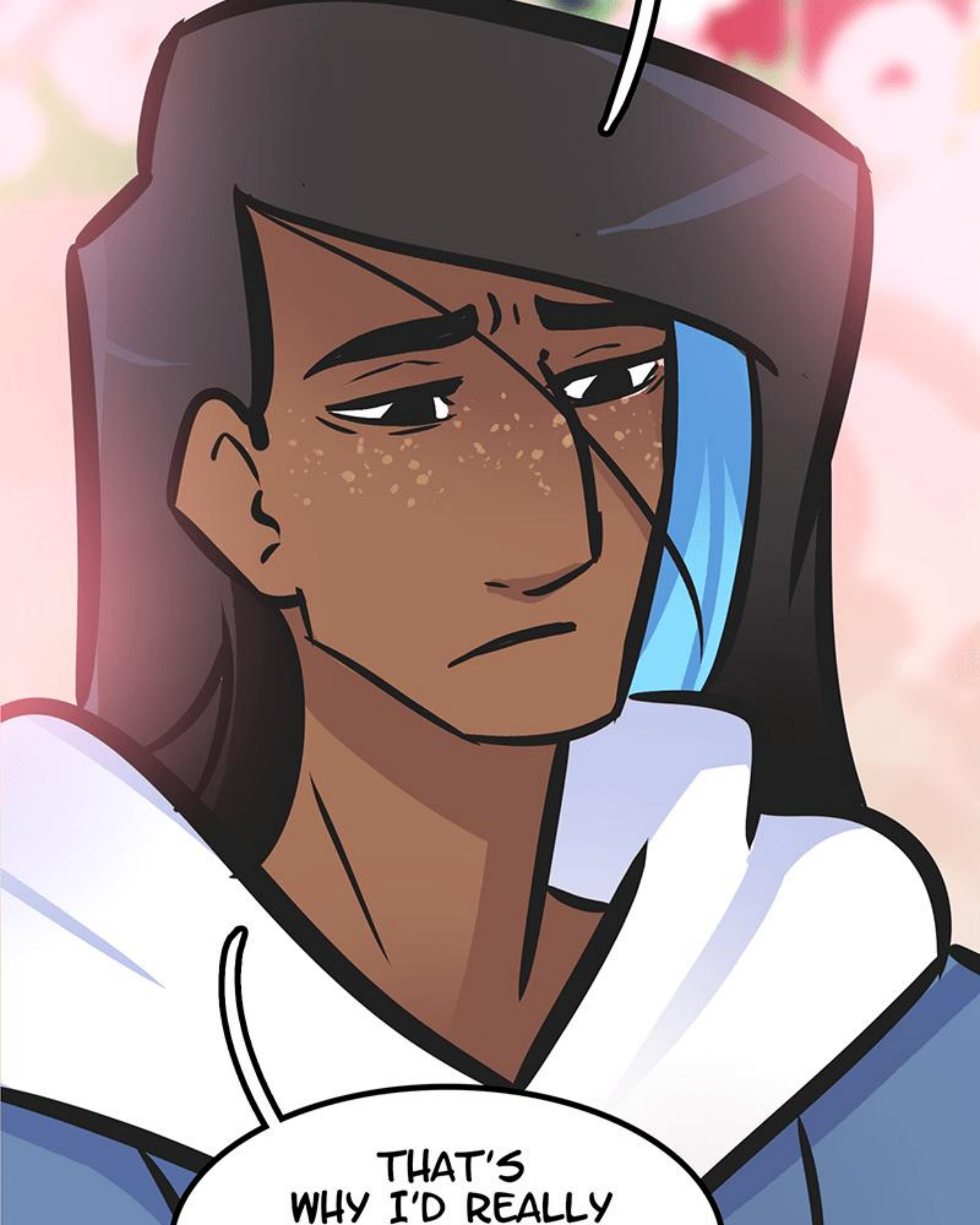


LIKE YOU...
AND I REALLY
WANT THIS TO
WORK...

BUT EVEN
IF WE WERE JUST
FRIENDS THIS WOULD
BE... REALLY
CONCERNING...



I REALLY
LIKE YOU
TOO...



THAT'S
WHY I'D REALLY

LIKE IT IF YOU TWO
COULD GET ALONG
TOGETHER...

I DON'T
UNDERSTAND
WHY IT CAN'T
WORK...

I'LL FIX
THIS!

I'LL TALK TO
HIM AND CLARIFY
SOME STUFF AND
IT'LL BE GOOD!



XADA...

IT'LL
BE GOOD!!
I PROMISE!





I'LL
CALL YOU
AFTER-

NO!
I'LL COME
OVER! I'LL BRING
PIZZA!!



OKAY...





FOR THE
RECORD... LACEY'S
RESPONSE WAS A
RELIEF...

I'M SORRY
FOR COMPARING
THE TWO OF
THEM.





THE FACT THAT
WE DATED FEELS
LIKE DIFFERENT
REALITY. ANOTHER
LIFETIME.

IT FEELS
WEIRD TO TALK
ABOUT NOW AFTER 7
YEARS OF BEING



FRIENDS.

BUT WE
REALLY DID TRY,
HUH... FOR 5 MORE
MONTHS AFTER
THAT DAY...



CAN I...
CAN I ASK YOU
ABOUT... THE
NIGHT WE BROKE
UP?

BACK
THEN YOU SAID
YOU WEREN'T
READY TO TALK
ABOUT IT
BUT...



EVERYTHING
SEEMED LIKE IT WAS
GOING *GREAT*. YOU
NEVER TOLD ME WHEN
YOU WERE UNHAPPY
UNTIL YOU...

A comic panel with a dark blue background. Two speech bubbles are shown. The top bubble is white with a black outline and contains the text 'I JUST... I JUST REALLY DON'T WANT TO REPEAT THE SAME MISTAKES WITH LACEY...'. The bottom bubble is also white with a black outline and contains the text 'FOR US TO FALL APART IN A FEW MONTHS...'.

I JUST... I
JUST REALLY DON'T
WANT TO REPEAT
THE SAME MISTAKES
WITH LACEY...

FOR
US TO FALL
APART IN A FEW
MONTHS...

A comic panel with a light brown background. A single speech bubble is shown, white with a black outline, containing the text 'AH... YES I THINK IT'LL BE EASIER TO TALK ABOUT NOW... THAT NIGHT I WAS...MM...'.

AH...
YES I THINK
IT'LL BE EASIER
TO TALK ABOUT
NOW... THAT NIGHT
I WAS...MM...



WELL,
IT WAS
REALLY
HARD...



XADA...

I'M SORRY...



**I CAN'T
DO THIS
ANYMORE.**

LOVEBOTS

By Chase Keels & Miranda M.

Edited by **Griffin Freitas & Bre Boswell**

Character Shading Assistant  coldpupsART



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