

WHEN YOU CAME
BACK WITH PIZZA,
JUST LIKE YOU
SAID-



WE WERE
BOTH CONVINCED THAT
EVERYTHING WAS GOING TO
BE ALRIGHT. AND WE LEFT
IT AT THAT.





YOU AND I
BOTH WANTED
IT TO WORK.





BUT I COULD
TELL THAT VELIX WAS
NOT ON THE SAME
PAGE.



AND I COULDN'T
TELL IF YOU THOUGHT
THAT IF YOU IGNORED THE
PROBLEM LONG ENOUGH HE'D
EVENTUALLY COME AROUND...





...OR IF
YOU SINCERELY DIDN'T
THINK THAT THERE WAS A
PROBLEM AT ALL.





IN THE BEGINNING
IT WAS EASY TO PRETEND
THAT HE WASN'T GOING
TO BE A PROBLEM AGAIN.

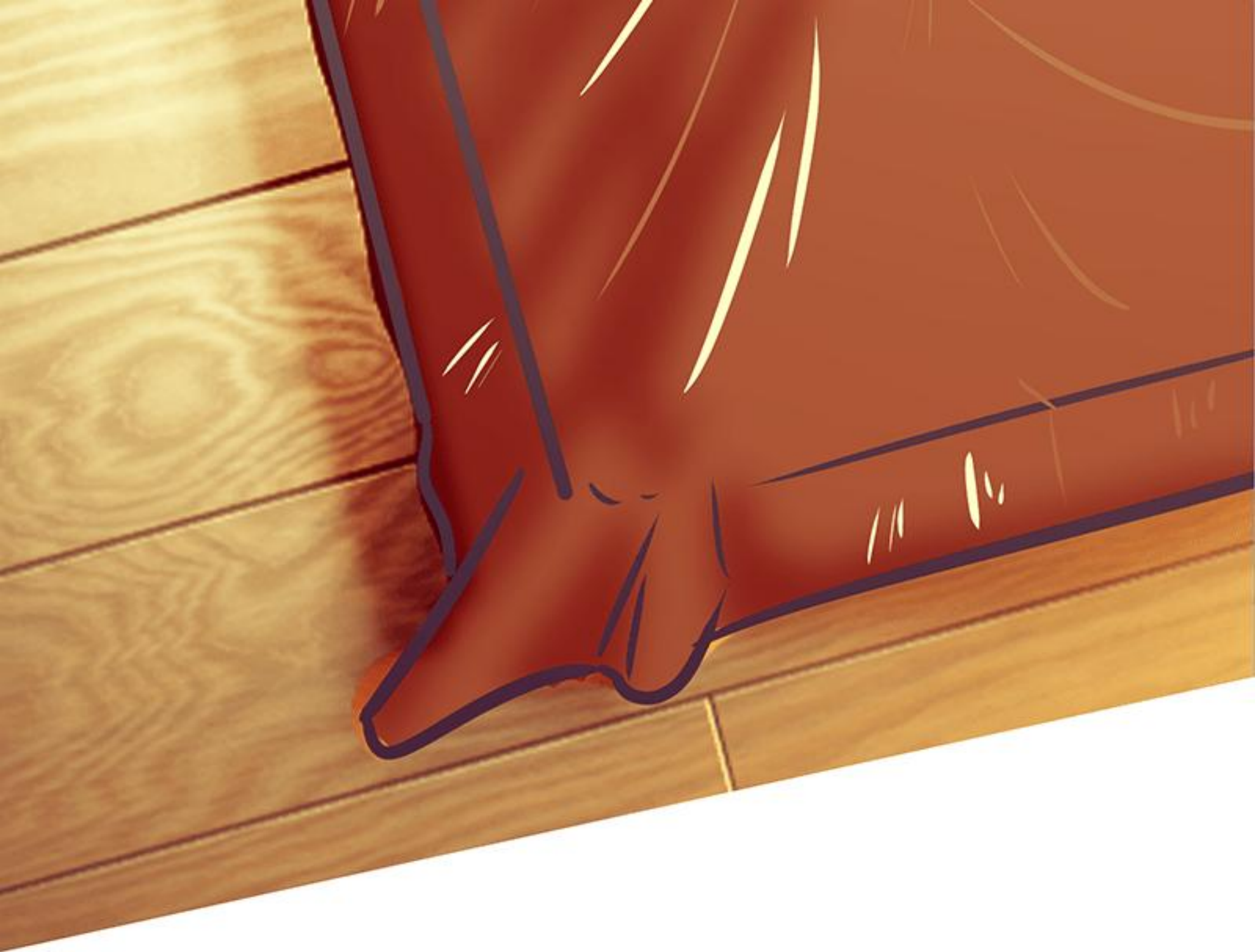




AND I WANTED
YOUR IDEAL WORLD
TO BE TRUE.







A WORLD
WHERE GENTLENESS
IS EVERYONE'S FIRST
INSTINCT

INSTINCT.

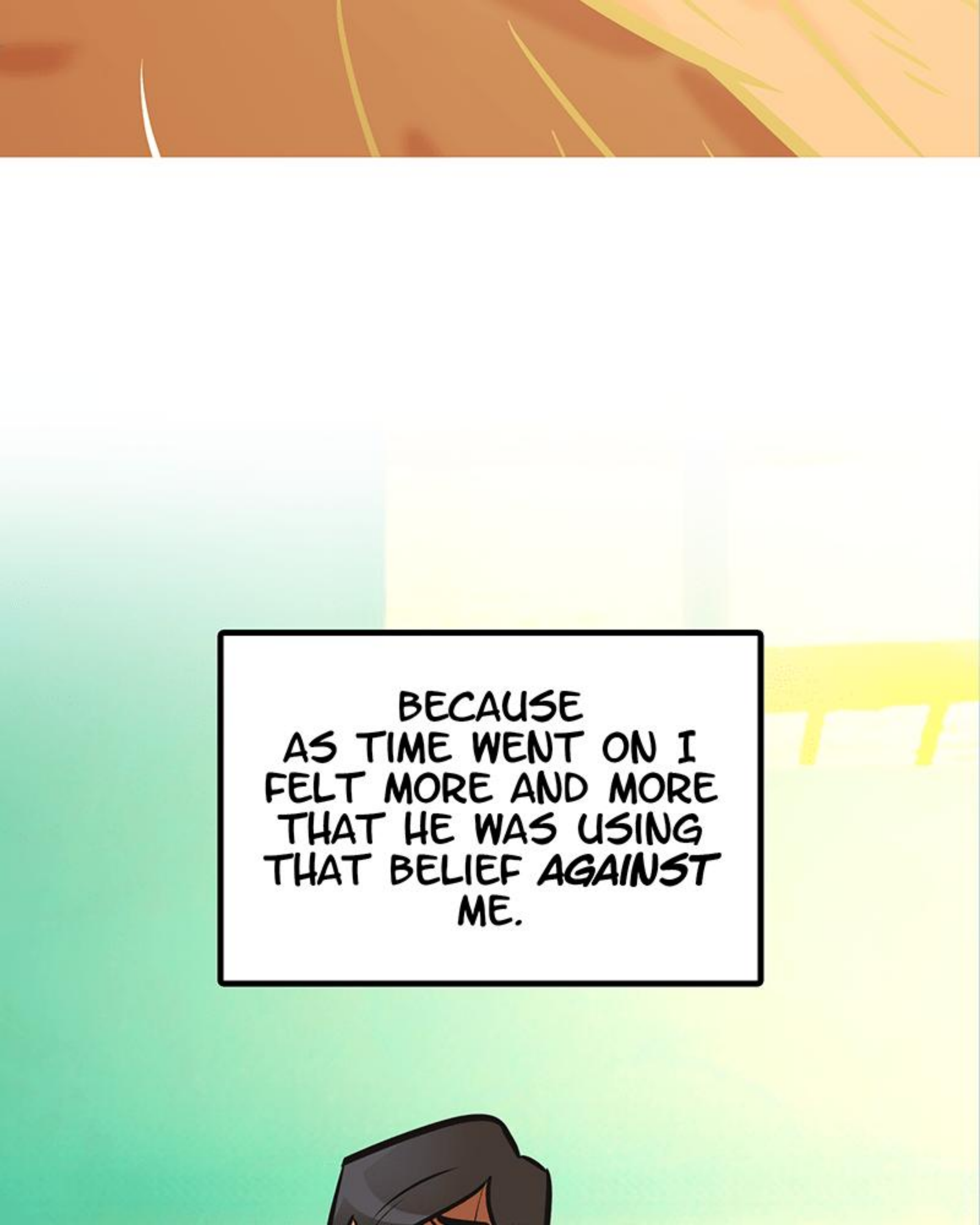




I WANTED TO BELIEVE THAT
VELIX WAS JUST OVER EAGER
AND PROTECTIVE. THAT HIS
INTENTIONS WERE *GOOD*.

BUT IN THE END
THAT MADE IT EVEN
HARDER...





BECAUSE
AS TIME WENT ON I
FELT MORE AND MORE
THAT HE WAS USING
THAT BELIEF AGAINST
ME.



AND I COULDN'T
HELP BUT THINK
ABOUT WHAT HE SAID
DURING THAT OTHER
FIGHT.





**"DO YOU
EVER THINK
THAT HE WANTS ME
AROUND BECAUSE YOU
MAKE HIM
UNCOMFORTABLE?"**





AND WHILE LOGICALLY I
DIDN'T THINK THAT WAS
TRUE, IT STILL ATE AWAY
AT THE CORNERS OF
MY MIND...





NOT THAT I
THOUGHT YOU WERE
UNCOMFORTABLE
WITH ME.

I COULD TELL
THAT YOU LIKED
ME...





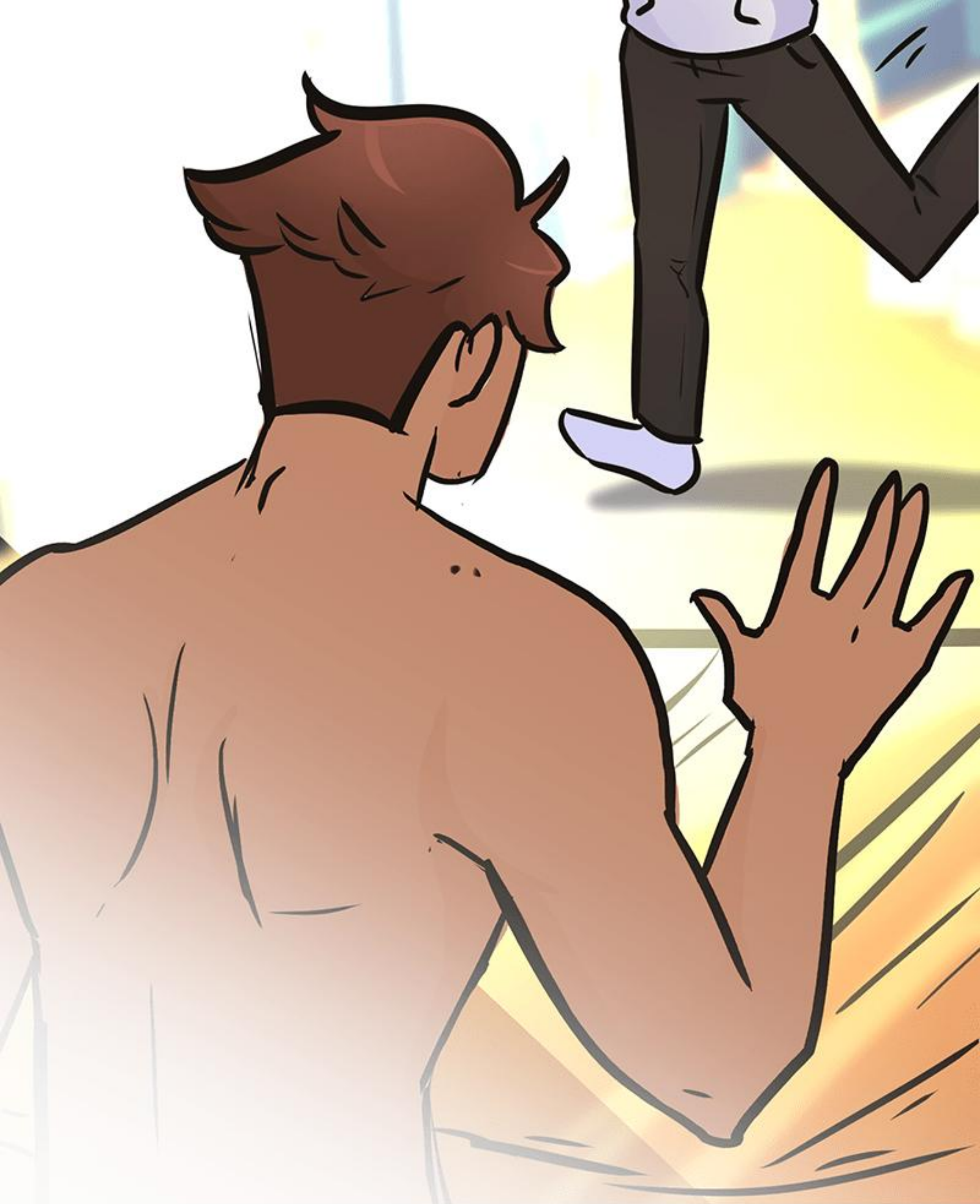




BUT THAT... HE WAS
YOUR BEST FRIEND AT
THE END OF THE DAY I
WAS AN INTRUDER AT
WORST...

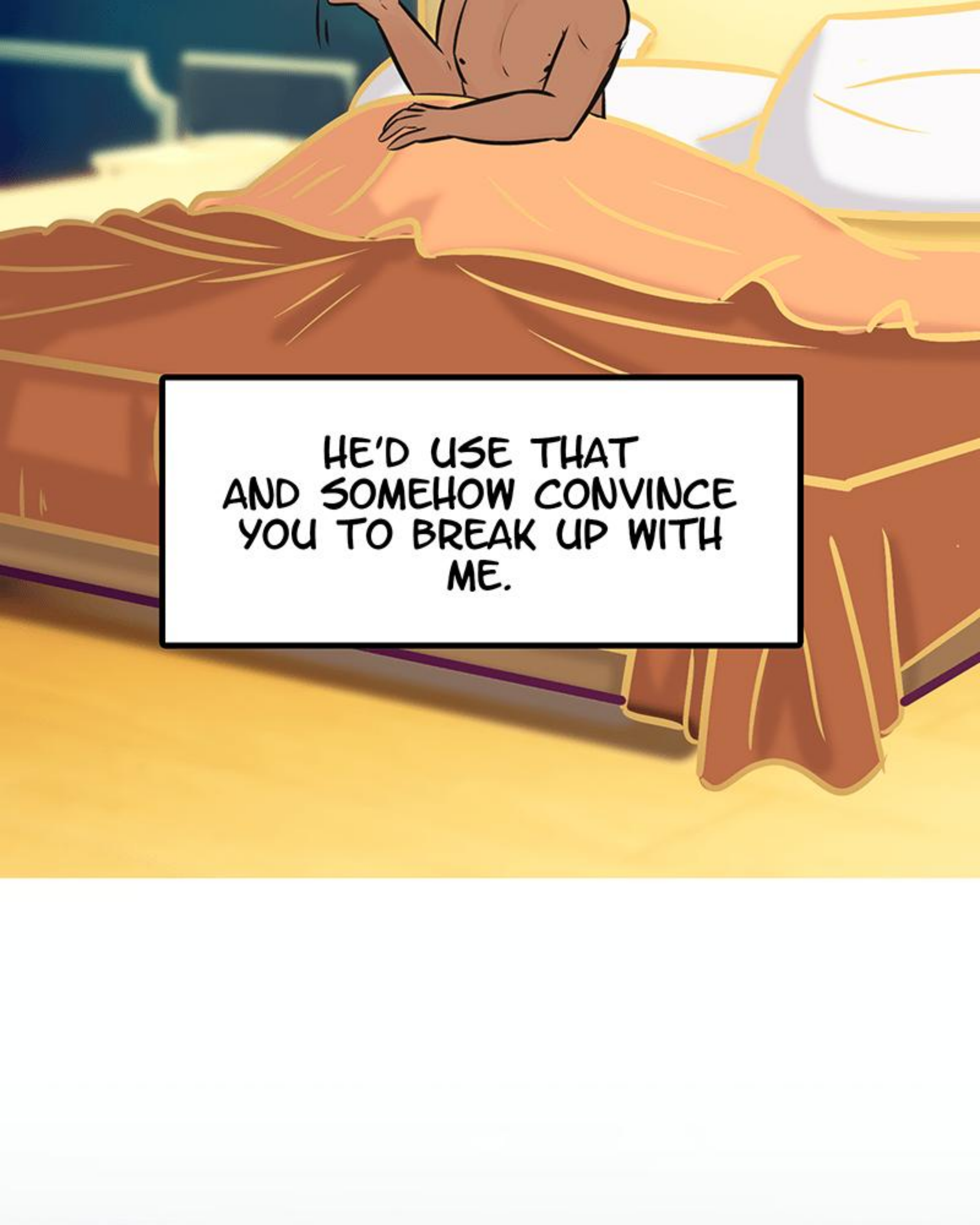
AND AN
INCONVENIENT
GUEST AT
BEST.





I FEARED
THAT IF I SAID ANYTHING
THAT MADE YOU UPSET
OR ANXIOUS...

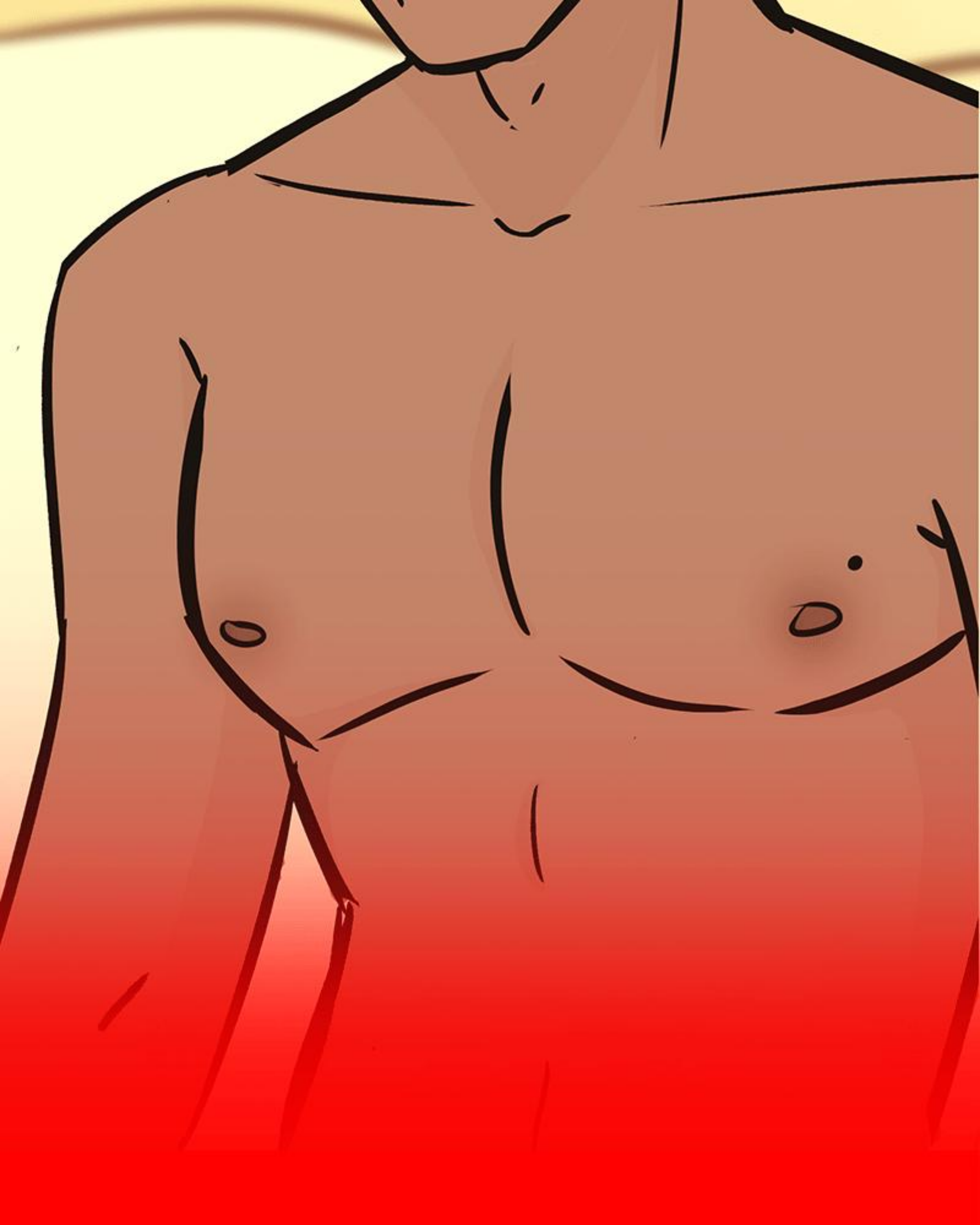


A cartoon illustration of a person with brown skin lying in bed, covered by a brown blanket. Their arms are crossed over their chest. A white speech bubble with a black border is positioned in the center of the image, containing text. The background shows a yellow pillow and a blue wall.

HE'D USE THAT
AND SOMEHOW CONVINCE
YOU TO BREAK UP WITH
ME.

AND IF
I TRIED TO TELL
YOU THAT HE SEEMED
UNHEALTHY FOR YOU...





HE WOULD CONVINCE
YOU THAT I WAS JUST
TRYING TO ISOLATE YOU
FROM YOUR FRIENDS.





ALL
THOSE LITTLE
THINGS...





EVERYTIME HE INVITED
HIMSELF TO COME ALONG
WITH US OR IF YOU HAD
TO LEAVE BECAUSE HE
NEEDED SOMETHING...





I BIT MY
TONGUE.





THEY
JUST WORE ME DOWN
UNTIL I FELT THAT IT
HAD ERRODED AWAY SO
MUCH THAT WE
COULDN'T COME BACK
FROM IT...





SO I KNOW
THAT TO YOU IT
CAME OUT OF
NOWHERE...





... WE NEED
TO BREAK UP.



I CAN'T IMAGINE
HOW CONFUSING AND
HURTFUL THAT WAS,
AND I'M STILL SORRY
FOR THAT.

WH-
WHAT!?





I'VE SPENT SO
MUCH TIME REGRETTING
HOW I HANDLED IT AND
WISHING THAT I HAD FOUND
A WAY TO EXPRESS MY
PROBLEM BETTER.

MAYBE THINGS
WOULD HAVE BEEN
DIFFERENT.

I DON'T

I DON'T
UNDERSTAND-
WHY? WHAT HAPPENED?
CAN'T WE TALK ABOUT
THIS?



NO- AND
IT'S NOTHING
YOU DID-



BUT INSTEAD I
JUST SHUT YOU
OUT ENTIRELY,

IT HAS
TO BE SOMETHING
TO DO WITH ME
OTHERWISE YOU'D
LET ME *HELP!*



XADA-
I'M SORRY-
I JUST-

I CAN'T
DO *THIS*
ANYMORE-



I KNEW IF I TRIED TO
EXPLAIN IT THAT IT WOULD ALL
SPILL OUT AS ANGRY AND
BITTER NONSENSE THAT I
WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO
TAKE BACK.





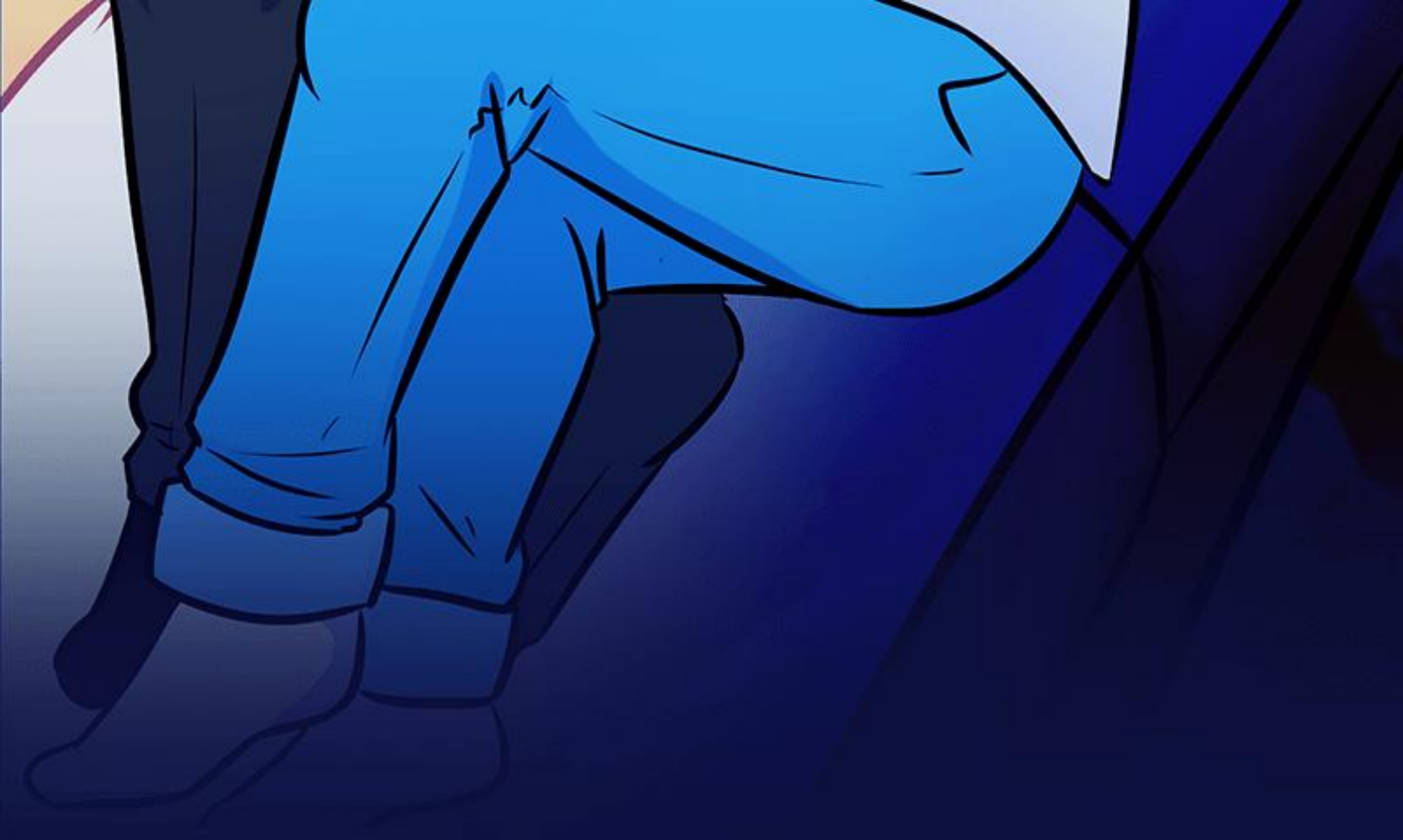
WE WERE JUST
STUPID COLLEGE KIDS.
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN
IT HURT ANY LESS...





IN THE END...
HE WON. BECAUSE HE GOT
TO BE THERE TO COMFORT
YOU WHEN I COULDN'T
COMMUNICATE.





I LIKE TO...
PRETEND THAT
THE SILVER LINING
IS THAT EVEN THOUGH
BITING MY TONGUE
CAUSED ME TO LOSE
YOU LIKE THAT...

HOLDING

BACK UNTIL I
HAD TIME TO DISTANCE
MYSELF WAS WHAT
ALLOWED US TO BE
FRIENDS AGAIN...





WENT TO
THERAPY. GOT SOME
PERSPECTIVE. ON
MYSELF, ON YOU...
ON VELIX.





I THINK PART
OF ME HOPED THAT
EVENTUALLY WE'D WORK
IT OUT AND THAT WE
MIGHT...

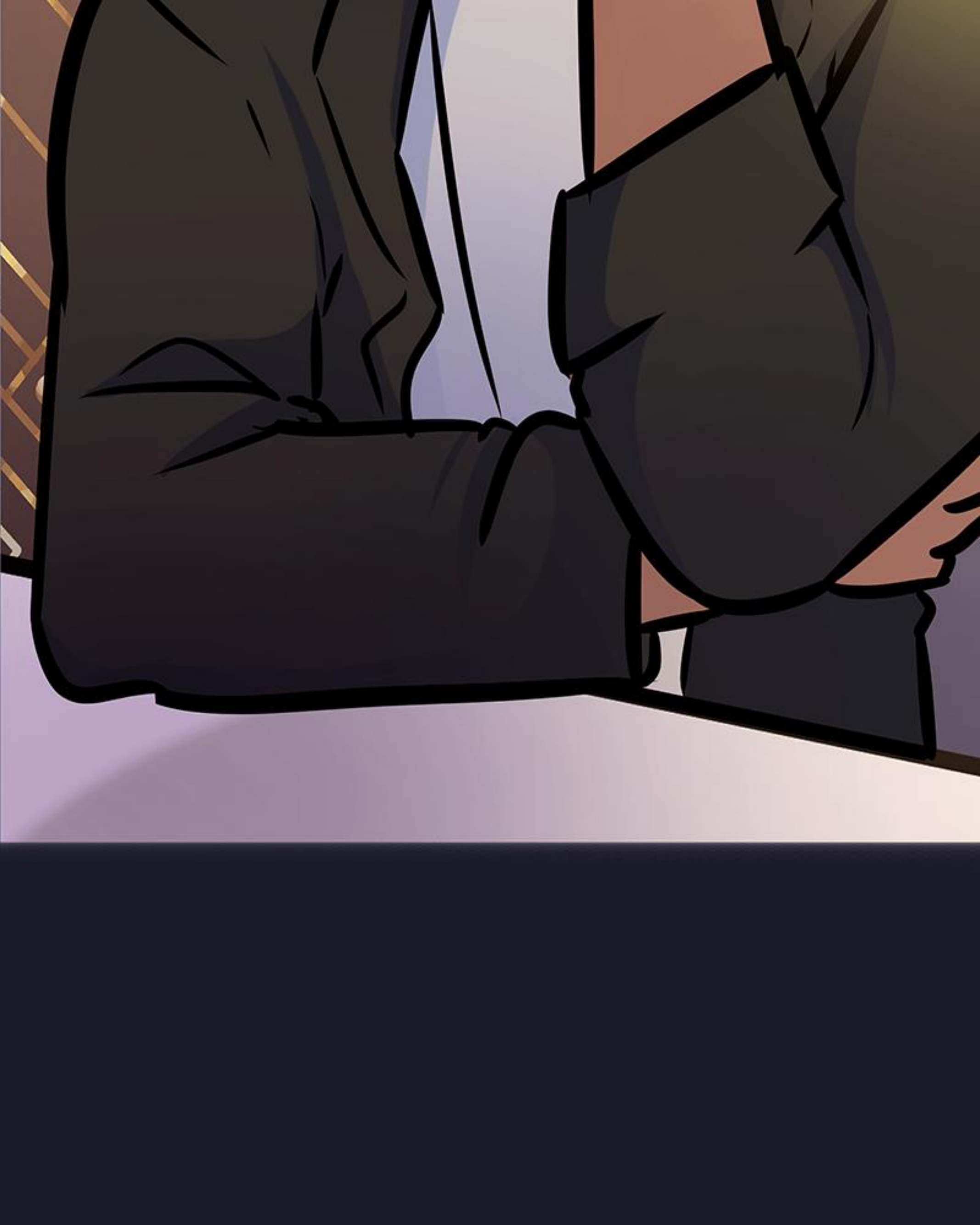




YOU ASKED
ME... HOW TO MAKE
SURE THAT YOU DON'T
REPEAT THE SAME
MISTAKES WITH
LACEY.

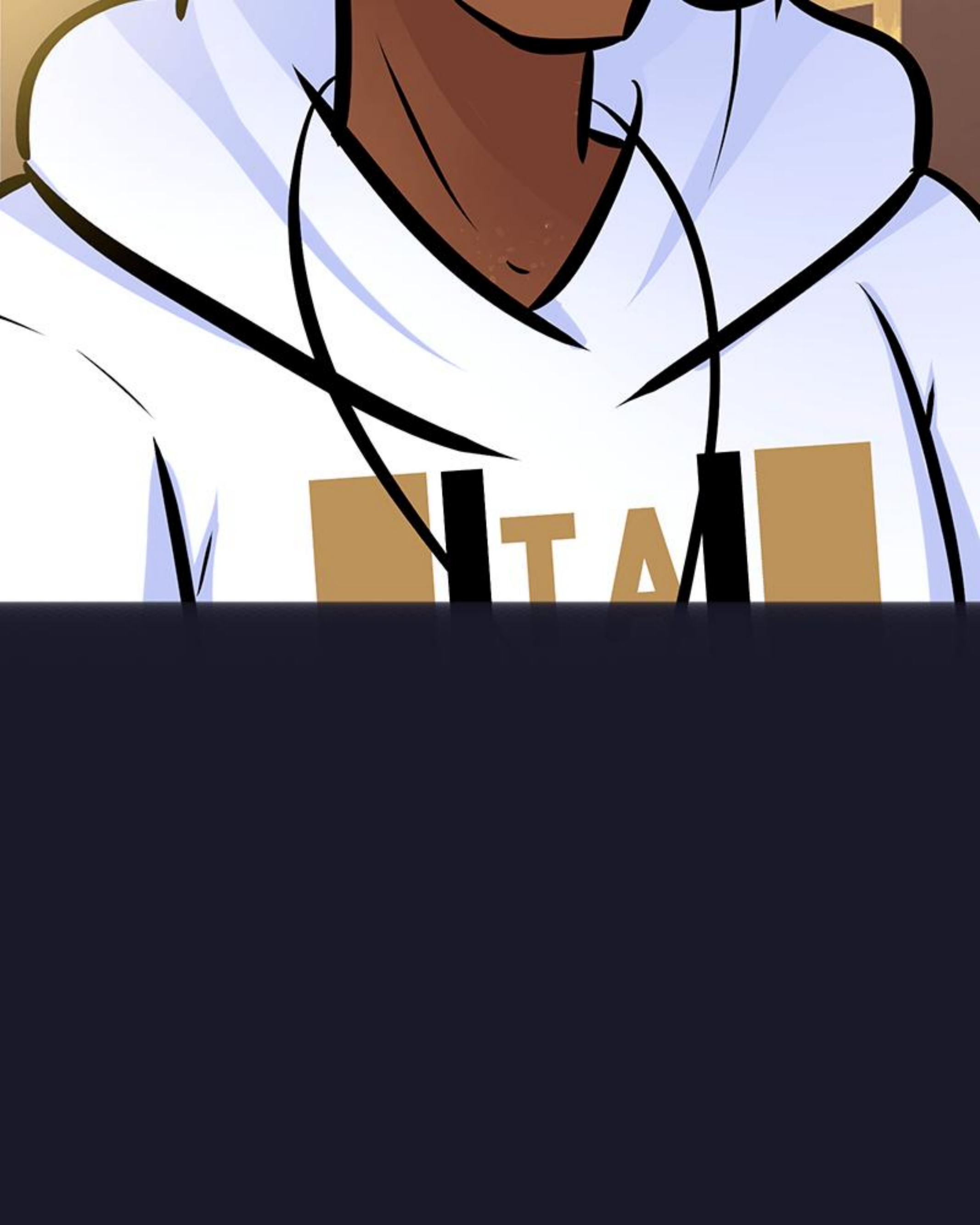
I'M REALLY
GLAD THAT
YOU ASKED...





BECAUSE
I THINK YOU'RE
ALREADY IN THE MIDDLE
OF REPEATING A LOT
OF THEM.





LOVEBOT

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