



The New Member

新社員

Author: Li-Ying Chien **Illustrator:** Ai-Yang **Publisher:** Halftone Press

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188 pages | 14.8 x 21cm **Volume:** 1 (END)

Award: Selected for the Taiwan Pavilion at the 2023 Seoul Book Fair

Adaptations: BL rock musical *The New Member* by the Against Again Troupe (Original)

BFT2.0 Translator: Mike Fu

"If real life can't be like manga, then it's the fault of real life!"

The first rock musical in BL history, written by Li-Ying Chien, the acclaimed playwright behind the Taiwanese theater sensation *Wave Makers*. Through the lens of BL, the story captures the pure, teenage love of being seventeen, interwoven with the anime and manga subculture we cherished in our youth.

This groundbreaking work bridges fujoshi culture and marriage equality, showcasing the shared journey of fujoshi and LGBTQ+ communities as they move forward together.



Script Writer **Li-Ying Chien**

Li-Ying Chien born in 1984 in Yuanlin, Changhua, is the Content Director at DaMou Entertainment and has also served as a part-time lecturer in the Department of Drama at Taipei National University of the Arts. With a career spanning over 30 stage productions as a writer and director, her notable works include the theater script collection *Spring Sleep*, *The Possible Memoirs of Traitor Mammy*, and the original manga *Until the Night Turns Gentle*.



Illustrator **Ai-Yang**

Currently based in Japan, Ai-Yang began creating manga during university and now works as a full-time manga artist and part-time instructor in the manga department at Osaka Design College. With extensive experience in adapting scripts into manga, Ai-Yang's publications include *Burn! Shanghai Men's Rugby Club* (2 volumes, Dyna Books), as well as *The New Member* and *Remarry* (Halftone Press).

When Reality and Comics Intertwine: How *The New Member* Breaks Through the BL Framework

by Wen-Chien Hsu

BL (Boy's Love), originating from Japan's "Shonen-ai" manga in the 1960s, evolved into a major genre by the 1990s. BL works typically feature young male protagonists and explore emotional connections and romantic relationships beyond friendship. With the rise of the genre, the term "fujoshi" came to represent female fans of BL, becoming a proud identity for enthusiasts.

The New Member stands out among BL comics with its unique narrative perspective. Adapted from a Taiwanese musical, it not only portrays school rock and male-male romance but also features a fujoshi as the narrator, guiding readers

through the BL story while allowing them to actively participate in its development. Unlike traditional BL comics, where the fujoshi's role is secondary, this plot prioritizes a female narrator who loves BL and engages readers as participants. This narrative strategy enriches the experience and creates an emotional connection with the audience.

A key plot point centers on the love between two male faculty members: a teacher and the rock band advisor. Once schoolmates, their romance was cut short by familial pressures. The story culminates in a heartbreaking scene when one serves as the other's best man at his—

heterosexual—wedding. This unfulfilled relationship contrasts sharply with the younger generation, who pursue love with greater boldness, highlighting how the possibilities of love are influenced by the era. However, these adults quietly support the young lovers from the background, encouraging them to embrace their emotions freely.

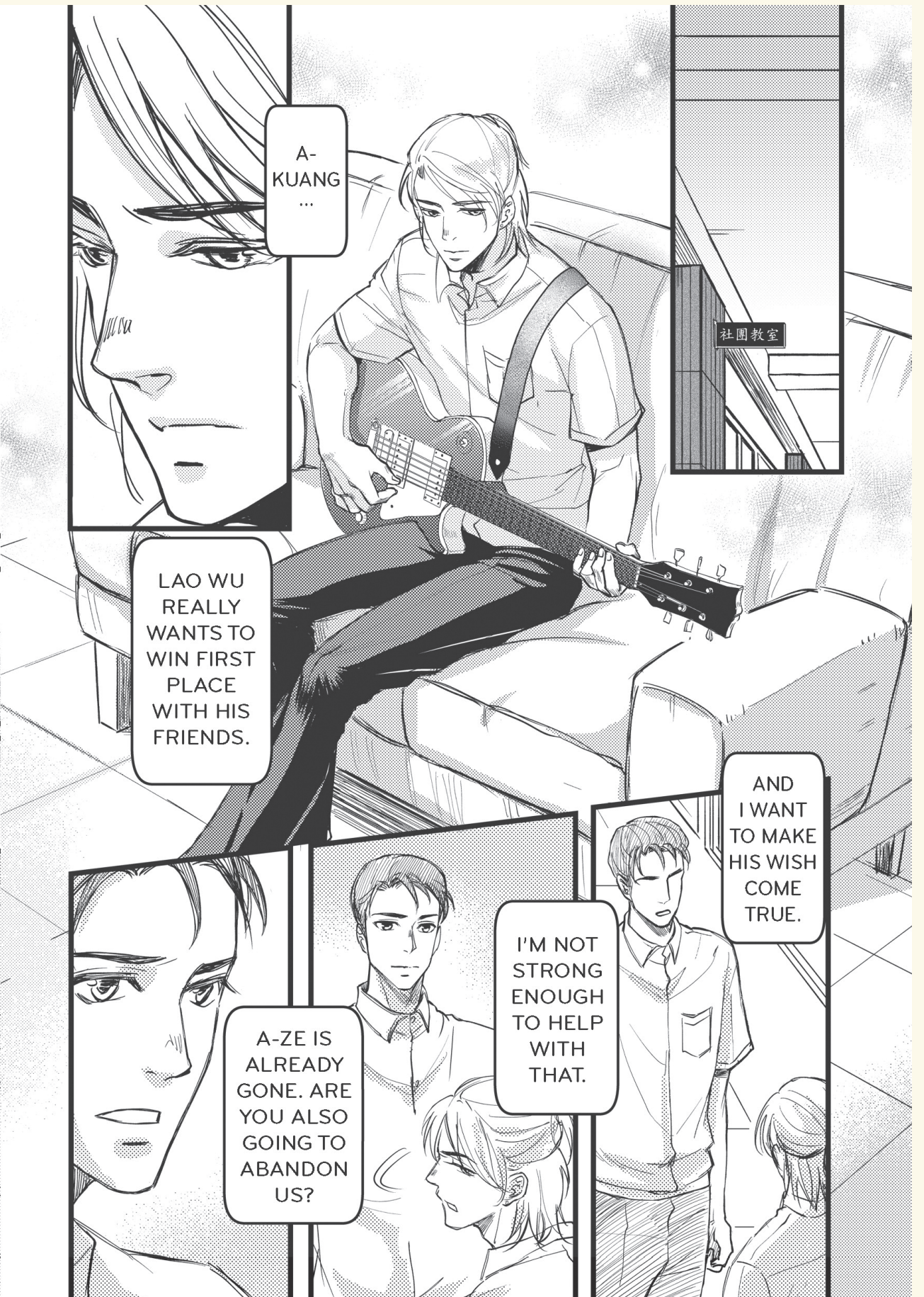
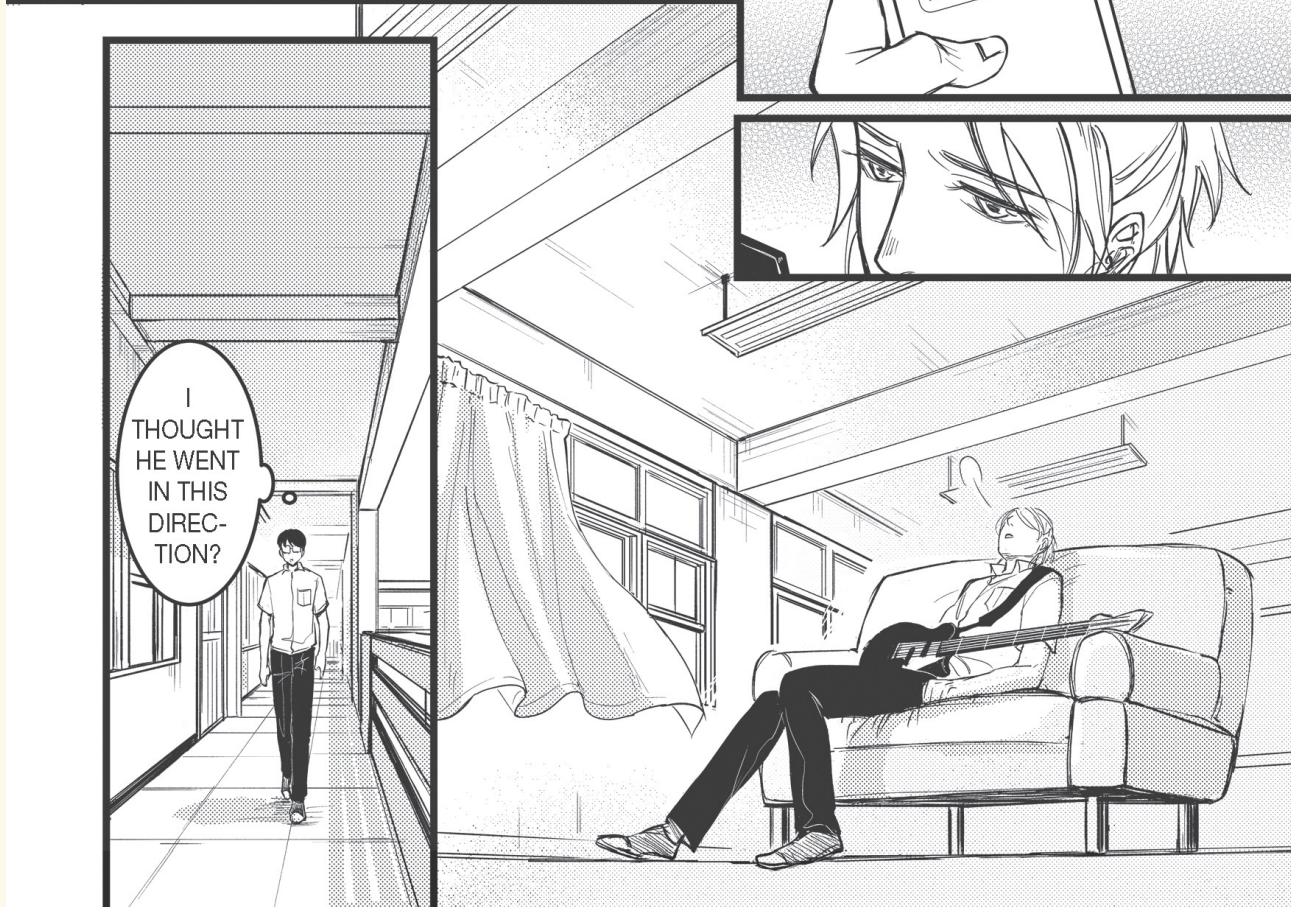
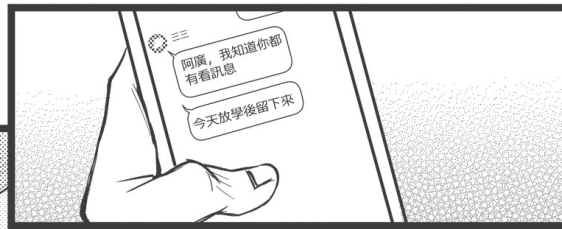
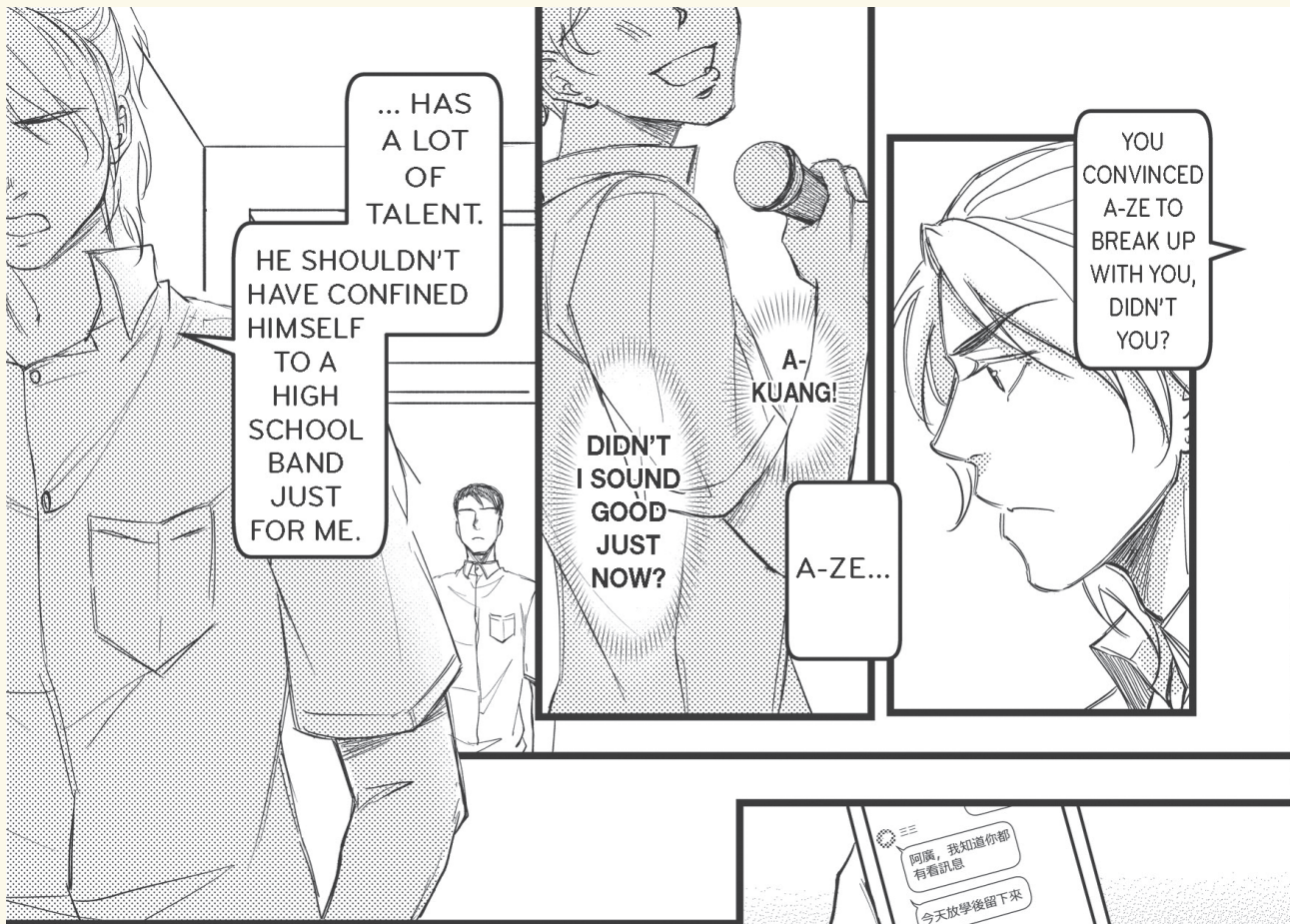
A pivotal moment focuses on Hsiao Ba, an androgynous woman who realizes she has feelings for a fellow club member but hesitates to confess. Our fujoshi narrator encourages Hsiao Ba to act, to which Hsiao Ba responds, "Real life can't be as beautiful as manga." The narrator retorts, "If real life can't be like manga, then it's the fault of real life!" This exchange highlights both the potential for social change and youthful passion.

The rooftop serves as both a symbol and a setting for romance and liberation, a space where characters

can shed their disguises. When a club member quits after a breakup, his friends shoot a music video on the rooftop to reignite his passion. At the climax, the rooftop transforms into a freeing place for characters to express their desires for music, victory, and love.

The New Member incorporates the perspectives of real-life BL fans, breaking free from idealized love in traditional BL works. Through its narrator, the comic fosters dialogue between fujoshi and LGBTQ+ communities, highlighting the diverse forms and possibilities of love.

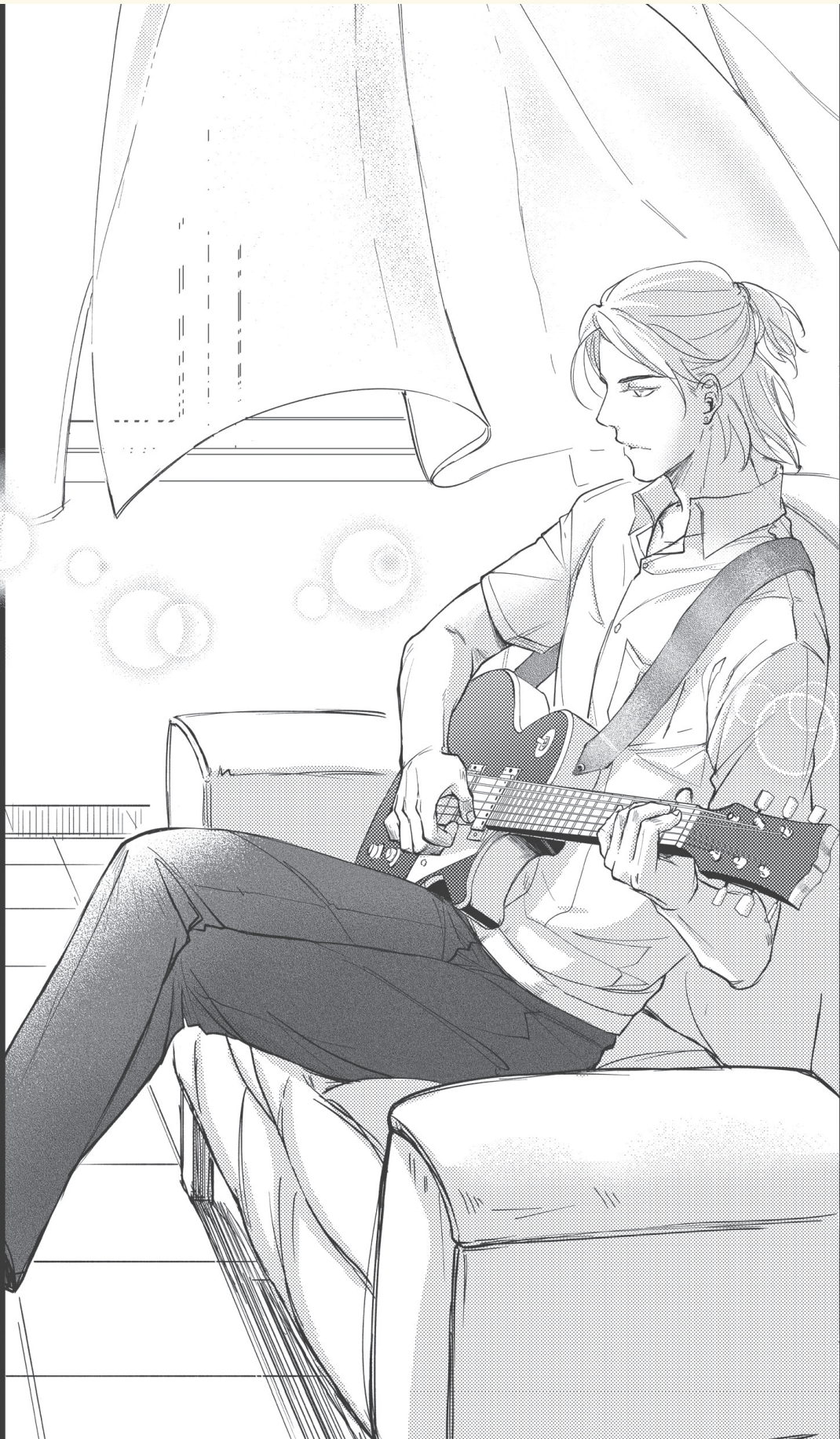
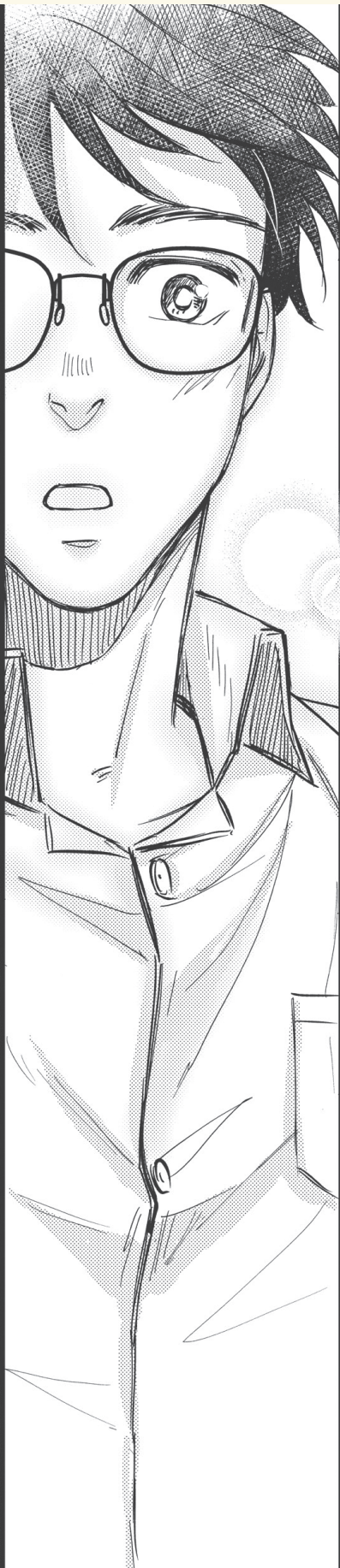
Wen-Chien Hsu possesses a free-spirited soul. She has worked at a LGBTQ+ organizations, the 113 Domestic Violence Hotline, and now works as an editor of Books from Taiwan 2.0.





... HOW
TENDER
AND
DEEPLY
SAD THIS
GUITAR
SOUNDS—

BUT THIS
SADNESS IS
FAMILIAR
TO ME, TOO.



I JUST
RUSHED
OVER
HERE
ON A
WHIM.

THE
SOUND
OF A
GUITAR...

WHAT
AM
I EVEN
DOING...





IN MY EYES
BURNS YOUR
REFLECTION

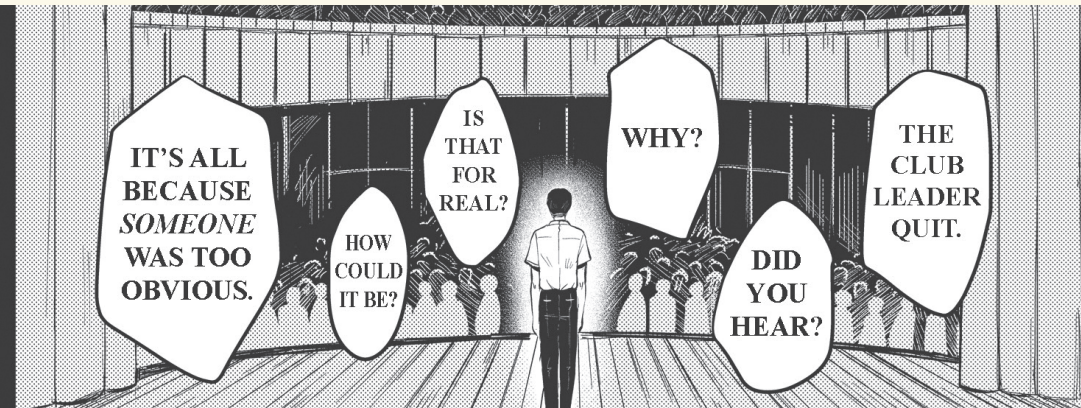
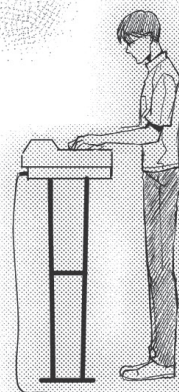
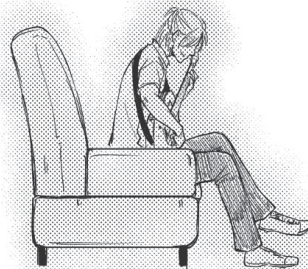


BUT IT WAS
ALWAYS JUST

A MOCKINGBIRD
IN A DREAM

IN MY DREAMS

I PURSUE MY
UNREQUITED LOVE



IT'S ALL
BECAUSE
SOMEONE
WAS TOO
OBVIOUS.

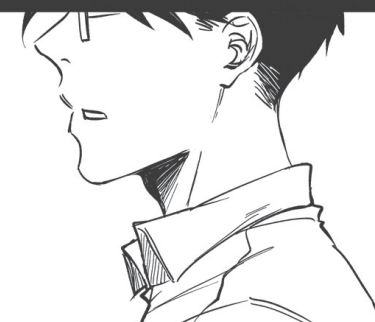
HOW
COULD
IT BE?

IS
THAT
FOR
REAL?

WHY?

THE
CLUB
LEADER
QUIT.

DID
YOU
HEAR?



YOU'RE REALLY
CAUSING A LOT OF
TROUBLE FOR ME.

DON'T YOU
HAVE ANYTHING
BETTER TO DO?

