

Becoming Real

CMN 231 - Communicating with Comics

Professor. Catherine Jenkins

Veronica Werle-Williams

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EPISODE 1 — “Arrival” (Panels 1–4)

Panel 1

Purpose: Establish Ren’s isolation vs the normal school world.

Camera / Framing: Wide establishing shot from a low-ish angle across the street, looking toward the school gate. The frame should feel spacious, with Ren small in it.

Ren:

Standing just outside or just inside the school gate, slightly off-center.

Shoulders a bit hunched, one hand gripping his backpack strap at chest level.

Feet close together, body angled slightly inward (like he wants to disappear).

Expression: Neutral-to-anxious. Mouth in a thin line, eyes not fully open, gaze downward or toward the ground near his feet.

Background:

School building in the midground.

Other students walking in pairs or groups, talking, laughing, some with phones out.

One or two bikes parked, maybe a tree or utility pole to frame the shot.

Lighting / Atmosphere:

Overcast sky—large flat cloud cover, little contrast, soft shadows.

Slight breeze shown by a corner of Ren’s blazer or hair moving subtly.

Extra Detail: Make Ren’s colors a bit muted compared to other students (not unrealistically, just less saturated) to emphasize how he doesn’t feel like he belongs.

Dialogue:

Ren (thought): “First day. New school. Maybe a chance to stop pretending. Or... pretend better.”

Panel 2

Purpose: Introduce Kai as an observer and hint at his interest.

Camera / Framing: From inside a classroom, slightly behind and to the side of Kai's shoulder. The window dominates the center, Ren is small outside.

Kai:

Only upper body visible. He stands near the window, one hand lightly resting on the window frame or sill.

Slight lean forward, posture relaxed but attentive.

3/4 view of his face, eyes focused on Ren below.

Expression: Calm, observant, not judging. Soft eyes, mouth relaxed, eyebrows slightly drawn in a thoughtful way.

Background:

Interior: desks in soft focus, a few empty chairs, maybe a half-open notebook or backpack on a desk.

Exterior through window: Ren in the distance by the gate (the same pose as Panel 1, but smaller).

Lighting / Atmosphere:

Soft daylight coming through the window, rim light on one side of Kai's face and hair.

Slight reflection of Kai's face in the glass for a subtle introspective vibe.

Dialogue:

Kai (thought): "He looks like he's trying to fold himself smaller."

Panel 3

Purpose: Zoom into Ren's anxiety.

Camera / Framing: Extreme close-up on Ren's hand gripping the backpack strap.

Ren (Detail):

Fingers tense, knuckles faintly highlighted to show pressure.

Thumb pressing into the fabric, slight bunching/wrinkles in the strap and shirt.

Maybe a small tremor indicated by a tiny motion line or a subtle double-line.

Background: Out-of-focus hints of his blazer or shirt, blurred colors of other students walking past.

Lighting: Light catching on the top of his hand, everything else slightly darker. Emphasize the contrast of his tension.

Extra Detail: Add a tiny sweat droplet near his wrist or palm if you want to push the anxiety.

Dialogue:

Ren (thought): "Don't shake. Don't make it obvious. Just hold yourself together."

Panel 4

Purpose: Show Ren entering a social space where he's immediately noticed.

Camera / Framing: Mid-wide shot down a hallway, perspective lines receding. Ren walking toward the viewer or slightly diagonal.

Ren:

In the center or slightly to one side, walking stiffly with backpack strap still held.

Head slightly lowered but eyes flicking sideways, trying not to make eye contact.

Other Students:

Two students in the foreground or midground turned toward him (Student 1 and 2).

One with a slightly raised eyebrow, the other leaning toward their friend a bit.

Other background figures blurred, in motion, talking.

Expression: Ren's face looks tense, lips pressed, eyes wide but trying to appear neutral.

Background: Lockers along the wall, classroom doors, posters or bulletin board to give "school" feeling.

Atmosphere: Slight visual "tunnel" effect: perspective lines + Ren in the middle makes him feel like everyone's gaze funnels toward him.

Dialogue:

Student 1: "That's the new kid."

Student 2: "He looks overwhelmed."

Ren (thought): "Great. They're already making assumptions."

EPISODE 2 — “Collide” (Panels 5–8)

Panel 5

Purpose: Awkward physical meet-cute moment.

Camera / Framing: Diagonal shot at the corner of a hallway where two corridors intersect. Ren just after impact.

Ren:

Torso slightly twisted as if he just bumped into someone.

One arm outstretched, the other still on his backpack.

Knees bent slightly like he almost lost balance.

Books:

Several books and a notebook mid-fall or already scattered on the floor.

One book corner tilted toward the viewer to give depth.

Other Person (Kai):

Mostly off-frame: maybe just his chest/shoulder or arm visible.

You can show his hand half-raised, like he tried to catch Ren or the books.

Background:

Hallway with lockers, maybe a classroom door slightly open.

One or two distant students turning their heads at the sound of the bump.

Expression: Ren’s face slightly panicked, mouth open mid-apology.

Dialogue:

Ren: “I—sorry, that was my fault—”

Panel 6

Purpose: First gentle interaction; physical proximity.

Camera / Framing: Low, eye-level shot from the side, both of them kneeling or crouched.

Ren:

Kneeling with one knee on the floor, reaching for a book.

Shoulders slightly hunched inward.

Hand pulled back slightly as his fingers have just brushed Kai's.

Kai:

Also crouched, one knee bent, the other foot flat on the floor.

Holding one of Ren's books, extending it to him.

Upper body leaning slightly forward in a non-threatening way.

Expressions:

Ren: cheeks slightly flushed, eyes a bit wide, lips parted in embarrassment.

Kai: small, reassuring smile; soft, steady gaze on Ren.

Background: Floor tiles, locker bottoms, a dropped pencil or eraser to add realism. Background slightly blurred to keep focus on the two of them.

Dialogue:

Kai: "It's alright. You're okay."

Ren: "Most people get annoyed."

Kai: "I'm not most people."

Panel 7

Purpose: Highlight the book on identity and Ren's vulnerability.

Camera / Framing: Close-up on the book between their hands.

Book:

Held upright or at an angle by Kai. Title clearly visible: "Identity Psychology" (or similar).

Slight wear on the edges to show Ren really uses it.

Hands:

Kai's hand on the spine or cover, relaxed grip.

Ren's hand coming in quickly to grab it, fingers curled and tense.

Faces (Optional framing):

At the top edge, a partial view of Kai's face—eyes scanning the title, neutral but interested.

At the side or bottom, Ren's blushing cheek or an eye narrowed in embarrassment.

Background: Just a hint of hallway floor or locker color; keep it minimal.

Dialogue:

Ren: "Please don't read that."

Kai: "Hey, it's interesting."

Ren: "People don't usually think so."

Panel 8

Purpose: Show the emotional beat where Kai sees through Ren a little.

Camera / Framing: Mid shot of both standing now, side-view or 3/4, with some space between them.

Ren:

Standing with shoulders drawn in, head turned slightly away.

Holding the recovered books close to his chest like a shield.

Kai:

Standing relaxed, arms at his sides or one hand casually in his pocket.

Body angled slightly toward Ren.

Expressions:

Ren: lips pressed, avoiding eye contact, maybe eyes half-closed in cautious resignation.

Kai: gentle but straightforward gaze, expression calm and honest.

Background: Corridor stretching behind them. One or two blurred figures further down, but it feels like the sound has faded and they're in their own bubble.

Atmosphere: Use a bit of empty space between them—they're not physically close yet, but the conversation is emotionally intimate.

Dialogue:

Kai: "You look scared of being understood."

Ren: "...Maybe."

EPISODE 3 — "Following Shadows" (Panels 9–12)

Panel 9

Purpose: Kai following Ren, slow, quiet tension.

Camera / Framing: Stairwell shot from the side, showing a slice of staircases going upward.
Perspective angle upward.

Ren:

A few steps ahead, hand gripping the railing.

Posture slightly rigid, leaning a little forward as he climbs.

Fingers tighter than necessary on the railing.

Kai:

Three or four steps behind, one hand on the railing loosely or in his pocket.

Upright but relaxed, not looming, just quietly present.

Expression:

Ren: We mostly see the back of his head or side of his face; jaw slightly tight.

Kai: Soft, almost amused but kind expression, eyes watching Ren.

Background: Bare stairwell walls, a window landing that lets in diffuse grey light.

Atmosphere: Echo-like silence, implied by emptiness. Maybe show their footsteps with small motion lines on the stairs.

Dialogue:

Ren: "Why are you still behind me?"

Kai: "Just walking in the same direction."

Ren: "...Right."

Kai: "And making sure you don't fall apart."

Panel 10

Purpose: Kai's internalized past, paralleling Ren.

Camera / Framing: Flashback with a different color tone (slightly desaturated or tinted blue/sepia). Medium shot of young Kai.

Young Kai:

Sitting on a chair or on the floor, knees drawn slightly in, hands gripping the edge of the seat or his pant legs.

Head lowered, eyes looking sideways or down.

Adult:

Only partially visible: maybe a torso and pointing hand, or a shadow across the wall behind Kai.

The face can be cut off by the top of the panel to keep focus on Kai's reaction.

Expression (Young Kai):

Sad, guilty, or frustrated; brows drawn together, lips slightly parted as if swallowing words.

Background:

Interior of a home or office—plain wall, maybe a framed picture slightly crooked, a table edge.

Atmosphere:

Heavier shadows than previous panels.

Slight blur around the edges of the panel to emphasize memory feeling.

Dialogue:

Kai (thought): "I remember trying to fix myself for other people."

Panel 11

Purpose: They connect over shared experience.

Camera / Framing: Mid shot of both on the stairs, facing each other. Ren is higher on the steps, so their eyes are closer to the same level.

Ren:

Turned around, one hand still on the railing.

Shoulders tense but facing Kai now.

Body angled toward him but with a little distance, like he's cautious.

Kai:

Standing calmly, one step lower, both feet planted.

One hand in his pocket or on the railing, casual but steady.

Expressions:

Ren: Confused, searching; brows furrowed slightly, eyes narrowed in evaluation.

Kai: Small, sincere smile or neutral expression with kind eyes; he looks like he isn't lying or exaggerating.

Background: The bend of the stairwell, a small window casting faint light on them. The light can fall between them to underline the conversation as a turning point.

Dialogue:

Ren: "You talk like you get what it's like."

Kai: "Trying to blend in? Yeah."

Ren: "Did pretending work for you?"

Kai: "It worked for them. Not for me."

Panel 12

Purpose: Ren internalizing Kai's words.

Camera / Framing: Slightly closer on Ren, with Kai blurred in the background.

Ren:

Head tilted downward, gaze fixed on some point on the stairs or railing.

Lips parted a little, like he's quietly admitting something to himself.

Shoulders slightly drooped, letting some of his guard fall.

Kai:

In the background, softer focus. We see enough to know he's watching Ren carefully, expression patient and a bit tender.

Background: Stair railing, wall texture, a faint reflection of light on the steps.

Atmosphere: More intimate and still—the world is reduced to this small space, this moment.

Dialogue:

Ren: "I don't even know who I'd be without pretending."

Kai: "Maybe that's something you're allowed to figure out."

EPISODE 4 — “Rooftop Air” (Panels 13–16)

Panel 13

Purpose: Ren’s moment of breathing space.

Camera / Framing: From behind Ren inside the stairwell, looking out as he pushes the rooftop door open. The door frames the sky.

Ren:

One hand pushing the heavy door, his body leaning into it.

His head tilted slightly back as the cold air hits, eyes closed or half-closed.

Loose strands of hair blowing forward a little.

Background:

Inside: darker stairwell behind him.

Outside: pale, open sky and a stretch of rooftop floor.

Lighting / Atmosphere: Light flooding in from outside, creating contrast between dim inside and bright rooftop. Feels like a threshold moment.

Dialogue:

Ren (thought): “Finally... I can breathe.”

Panel 14

Purpose: Kai joins Ren's quiet space without invading it.

Camera / Framing: Wide shot of the rooftop. Ren is already by the fence, Kai has just stepped out from the door.

Ren:

Standing near the fence with his back to Kai, hands resting lightly on the railing or in his pockets.

Slightly hunched in a habitual way, but more relaxed than in the hallway.

Kai:

Door behind him slowly closing (or he's holding it so it closes quietly).

Walking toward Ren at a calm pace, leaving a respectful distance.

Background: Rooftop surface with a few utility boxes/vents, high wire fence, city skyline of clustered buildings below.

Atmosphere: Wind indicated by hair and clothing edges. Rooftop is empty besides them—no other students.

Dialogue:

Kai: "So this is your spot."

Ren: "It's not a spot. It's just... quiet."

Kai: "Quiet can be a safe place."

Panel 15

Purpose: Quiet, honest rooftop conversation.

Camera / Framing: Side view of both at the fence, framed from the waist up.

Ren:

Leaning lightly on the fence, fingers hooked in the metal or resting on the top bar.

Gaze directed at the cityscape, not at Kai.

Kai:

Standing a little distance away, also facing the view.

One arm propped on the fence, body posture open.

Expressions:

Ren: Calm but sad, a bit distant; eyes softer than before.

Kai: Slightly turned toward Ren, expression thoughtful, listening carefully.

Background: City rooftops, distant clouds, maybe sunlight trying to break through in some places.

Atmosphere: Lots of empty space around them in the panel; the emptiness feels safe, not lonely.

Dialogue:

Kai: "Most people want attention."

Ren: "I just want someone to get me without rewriting me."

Kai: "That's rare. But not impossible."

Panel 16

Purpose: Ren's inner shift—less guarded, more introspective.

Camera / Framing: Close-up of Ren's face in profile, with the city blurred behind him.

Ren:

Hair blowing gently away from his face.

Eyes slightly narrowed, looking into the distance; expression introspective, with a hint of pain but also longing.

Lips parted as if he's talking or just finishing a sentence.

Background: The fence lines soft in the bokeh, abstract city shapes. Soft breeze indicated by hair strands and maybe a loose edge of his uniform.

Atmosphere: Gentle, emotional. This panel should feel like a quiet emotional cliff—he's on the edge of self-questioning.

Dialogue:

Ren: "People tell me who I'm supposed to be."

Kai: "Who do you want to be?"

Ren: "...I don't think I've ever had the space to decide."

EPISODE 5 — “Becoming” (Panels 17–20)

Panel 17

Purpose: Ren’s childhood wound about identity.

Camera / Framing: Slight high-angle shot looking down at a young Ren facing a cracked mirror.

Young Ren:

Standing on tiptoes or just tall enough to see himself in the mirror.

One hand on the sink or dresser, the other hanging at his side.

Shoulders tight, posture very still.

Mirror:

Reflection shows his face divided by the crack(s)—maybe one crack runs through an eye or across his cheek.

Reflection looks anxious, sad, or numb.

Voice Behind:

Speech bubble coming from off-panel behind Ren. Optionally, a blurred adult silhouette in the background of the reflection.

Lighting / Atmosphere:

Slightly dim, maybe yellowish indoor lighting.

Shadows under his eyes, giving a tired, worn feeling despite his age.

Dialogue:

Voice (off): “No one is going to accept you like this.”

Ren (thought): “It never mattered what I wanted.”

Panel 18

Purpose: Ren voicing his fear; Kai affirming him.

Camera / Framing: Medium close-up of both on the rooftop, facing each other at a slight angle.

Ren:

Shoulders slightly lifted, hands maybe gripping the fence or clenched at his sides.

Leaning a tiny bit toward Kai but still guarded.

Kai:

Facing Ren fully, body open, one hand gently resting on the fence or hanging relaxed at his side.

Stance stable, like an anchor.

Expressions:

Ren: Vulnerable; eyes glossy, mouth tense, brows furrowed with fear.

Kai: Soft but firm; eyes steady, lips forming gentle reassurance. He looks like he truly believes what he's saying.

Background: Sky and fence behind them, maybe a few clouds catching light; keep details low to focus on their faces and body language.

Atmosphere: Air feels still here, as if the world is holding its breath with them.

Dialogue:

Ren: "What if underneath all my versions... there's nothing real?"

Kai: "There is. You just learned to be afraid of him."

Ren: "What if I hate who I am?"

Kai: "Then we meet him together."

Panel 19

Purpose: Ren genuinely seeking Kai's answer; emotional tension.

Camera / Framing: Tight two-shot, chest-up. Faces are more central now.

Ren:

Fully turned to face Kai, body angled inward.

Eyes uplifted, searching Kai's face; a mix of confusion, hope, and disbelief.

Lips parted, the question heavy on them.

Kai:

Standing close (closer than before, but not overly intimate yet), head slightly tilted down to meet Ren's gaze.

Expression open and sincere; his eyes soft, gentle line to his mouth.

Background: Only suggestion of fence bars and sky—blur everything to keep all attention on their expressions.

Atmosphere: Emotional closeness; this is the slow-burn heart beat. The distance between their faces could be somewhat reduced to heighten tension but not yet “romantic overt.”

Dialogue:

Ren: “Why do you care this much?”

Kai: “Because you deserve someone who sees you without expecting you to perform.”

Panel 20

Purpose: Symbolic connection—Ren letting someone stay.

Camera / Framing: Slightly lower angle, focusing on both their upper bodies and their hands in the foreground.

Ren:

Standing closer to Kai now. One hand reaches out and lightly takes hold of Kai's sleeve near the wrist. Grip is gentle, not desperate.

His body is still a bit tense, but there's a small step forward from previous panels.

Kai:

Doesn't pull away; his arm remains still, relaxed.

He looks down at Ren with a subtle, warm smile or calm reassurance.

Optionally, his free hand could be relaxed at his side or lightly resting on the fence.

Expressions:

Ren: Eyes slightly wide but with a softer gaze; a fragile hope in his expression.

Kai: Steady, grounding presence; eyes kind, no hesitation.

Background:

Rooftop fence and city below, but softer and slightly brighter, maybe the clouds parting a bit more than before to hint at "first light."

Atmosphere: Quiet promise. The contact is small (just a sleeve), but emotionally huge. This is your closing "emotional image" for the first 5 episodes.

Dialogue:

Ren: "If I get lost... will you help me find myself?"

Kai: "That's why I'm here."

Caption: "Sometimes the first step toward identity is letting someone stay."