

Hey, sugar, I'm Birdie.  
Anybody home?  
...  
I know something that's good for a bad mood ...



Oh!  
You are talking to me. I'm sorry.  
I, uh ... I don't usually do that kind of thing ...  
Zone out, or have sex?  
Er ... the second one.  
I mean, I do, I guess, but not usually with, ah ...  
Aw, c'mon. I don't bite and I don't overcharge.  
I'm clean. Wanna see my certificate?  
Well, I, uh--



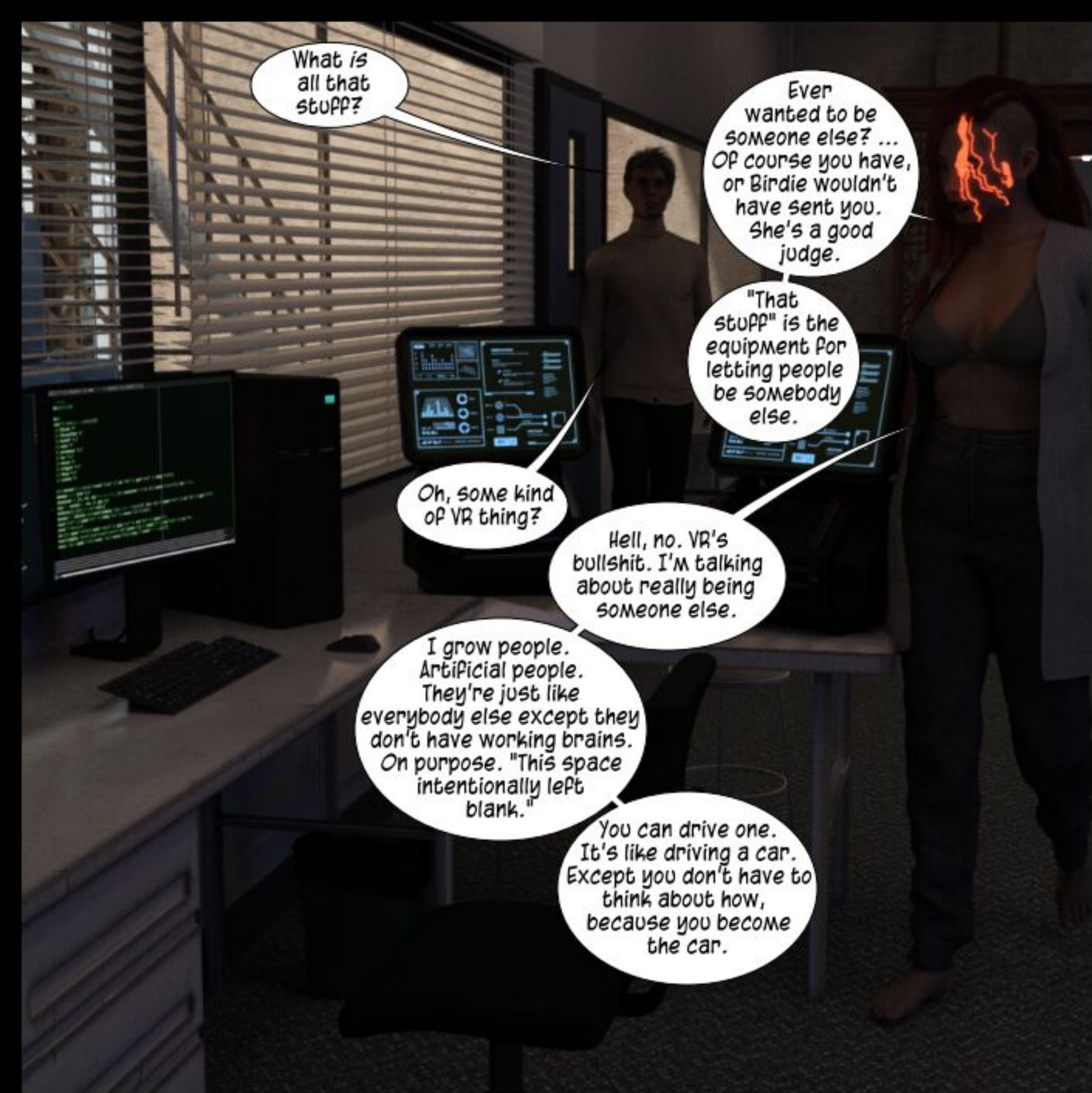
# BIOPROXY

words and images by trilby









What is all that stuff?

Ever wanted to be someone else? ... Of course you have, or Birdie wouldn't have sent you. She's a good judge.

"That stuff" is the equipment for letting people be somebody else.

Oh, some kind of VR thing?

Hell, no. VR's bullshit. I'm talking about really being someone else.

I grow people. Artificial people. They're just like everybody else except they don't have working brains. On purpose. "This space intentionally left blank."

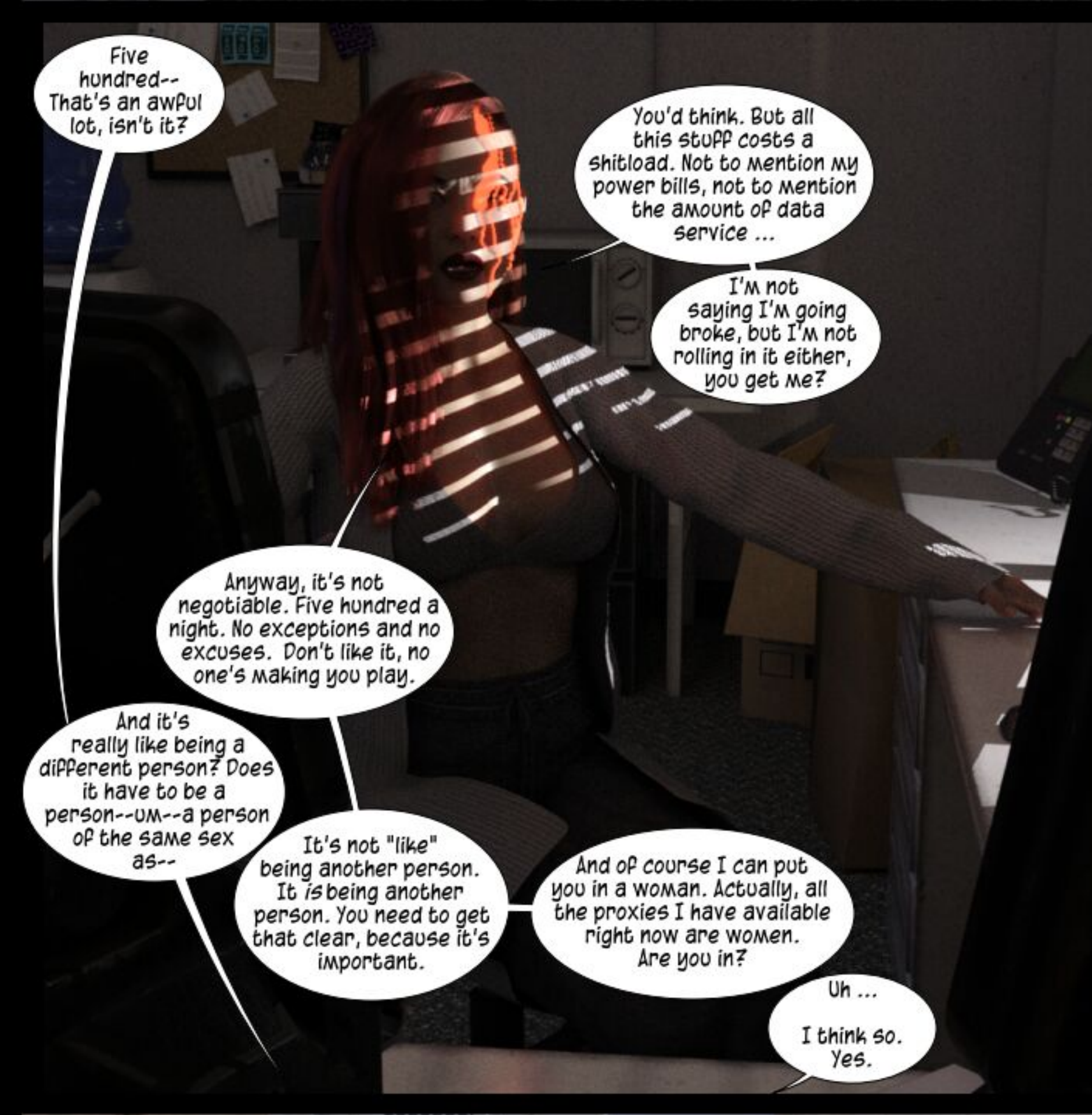
You can drive one. It's like driving a car. Except you don't have to think about how, because you become the car.



That's, uh, a little hard to believe ... why haven't I heard about this before?

Because I don't want anybody to know. I don't want rich assholes pounding down my door ... or finding ways to steal it. They can go fuck themselves without my help.

I pick my customers my way. You look like you qualify, though. If you're interested. Five hundred dollars a night.



Five hundred-- That's an awful lot, isn't it?

You'd think. But all this stuff costs a shitload. Not to mention my power bills, not to mention the amount of data service ...

I'm not saying I'm going broke, but I'm not rolling in it either, you get me?

Anyway, it's not negotiable. Five hundred a night. No exceptions and no excuses. Don't like it, no one's making you play.

And it's really like being a different person? Does it have to be a person--um--a person of the same sex as--

It's not "like" being another person. It is being another person. You need to get that clear, because it's important.

And of course I can put you in a woman. Actually, all the proxies I have available right now are women. Are you in?

Uh ... I think so. Yes.



Take off all your clothes and lie on the scanner bed. Face up.

OK, but why?

You think I'm half-assed about this? I only look like a mad scientist. I have safety rules, and one of them is I need to know all about you medically in case there's anything that could cause problems.



That's good. Be as still as possible. You want to close your eyes, too, it's going to be bright.

Don't worry. It doesn't hurt and it doesn't take long.



Though you may find that you black out for a minute or two. That's normal.



... think it had probably better be Raeann, I don't think he's ready for a sex change and a race change at the same time ...

Uh ... What just happened?

You blacked out. Like I said you might.

While you were napping, I got out a neural suit. It's next to you on the scanner bed. Put it on.



This is really kind of--ah--ridiculous, isn't it?

You're not going to be walking the streets in it.

It picks up all your nervous-system impulses so they can be transmitted to the proxy. Without this, the whole thing wouldn't work.

There's a face part, too, but you can wait to put that on until we get to your crib.









I Peel ... like My balance is off ...

That's no surprise.

Misty, you've got great timing. Will you get Raeann together?

Raeann ... wait, I'm Raeann. Right? I'm Raeann?



Ooh, first time, huh?

I haven't fixed up a new one in a while. This'll be fun!

OK, first thing, we need to get you some hair.

I've got something in mind I think'll look really good on you.

Take a seat over in the chair while I go dig it out.



Oh, yeah. That looks just as good as I thought it would.

Stay put. I'm going to take it off for a second so I can put some fixative on, then I'll put it back on you again.

... Fixative?

Yeah, you know, like glue? So it won't come off. Wouldn't want that. We've got a solvent to take it off when you come back.

Once the hair sets, we'll go to the other table.



Don't guess you really know your colors yet ... that's OK, I'm pretty sure I know what I'm going to dress you in ... I'll just do you to match that.

Dress me?

Well, yeah, silly. You don't want to go out on the streets in the buff, right?

Now, when I'm done with the nails, just keep your hands still, and while they dry, I'll do your face.



Now, let me see ... I think we want to keep it simple this time ... good thing we're all pretty much the same size ... though you've got a little more in the butt ...

So you're, uh ... you're also a ...

Yep! Been in this proxy for a long time now.

OK, here we go. You get into this. I'm going to get dressed and made up while you do that.



Oh, we look amazing! We're going to have a blast.

Um ... I guess we're going somewhere?

I did think this was kind of much to just wear home ...

Come on, why would you pay for this just to go home?

I know all the good places. The ones where you can have fun without worrying about, y'know, horrible stuff happening.

Ready?

I guess so ...

Please bring the outfit back intact, Raeann. Our wardrobe is limited.



Misty, I Peel really ... I don't know ... exposed.

That passes pretty quick. Come on, let's dance a little.





It feels like everybody's staring at us ...

Nah. Most of them don't even notice. They're busy.

There's a few who are, sure. Why wouldn't they be? We look hot.

Like I said, this place is one of the safe ones. You don't have to worry much about attracting the wrong people in here. So if someone's giving you the eye, and you think they're cute, give it right back to them.

Like that one leaning on the pillar over there. Been locked on you since you came in.



That's a guy!

You noticed.

I don't ... I mean, I'm not interested in men. I don't think I am?

Well, you can try for just women ... nothing wrong with that. Me, I don't like to cut anybody out. I like as big a pool to fish in as I can get!

Men are easier a lot of the time, anyway. Definitely in here. You're not going to have much luck fishing for women in this place ... it's real straight; all the men are looking for somebody to pool around with and all the women are trying to decide which men they'll say OK to.

You don't think he's cute? You could at least go say hi to him.

I ... uh ... maybe.



Misty! Misty!!

I need a sec, love. My friend's got a bug up her ass.

Don't go anywhere. I'll be right back.



He wants me to go to a captel with him!

So? You looked like you were into it. Are you worried about him? 'Cause I heard you talking with him and I think he's harmless. Besides, the captels are monitored ...

No, no, that's not the problem ... the captels all check certipicates!

Oh! Don't worry, you've got one. You'll pass the scan.

You can't get pregnant--you don't have the equipment--and Cecilia pays a doctor to come do the inoculations and the certification on the sly.



Well, in that case ...

Have Fun!



OH GOD



# A FEW DAYS LATER





9:36 PM



10:12 PM



10:34 PM



11:26 PM



12:03 AM



1:40 AM

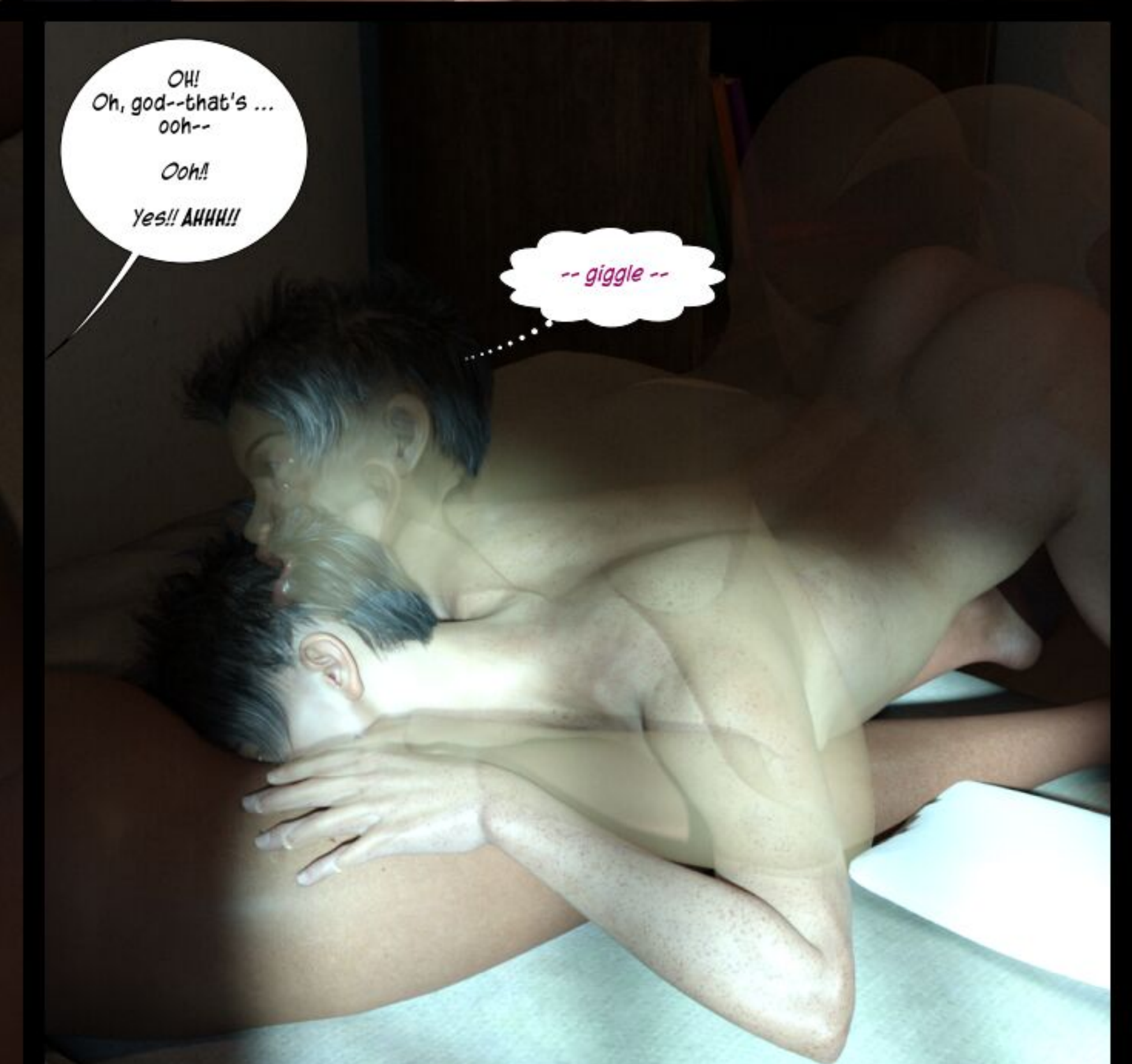




# FOUR NIGHTS LATER



## AFTER DRINKS AND DINNER ...

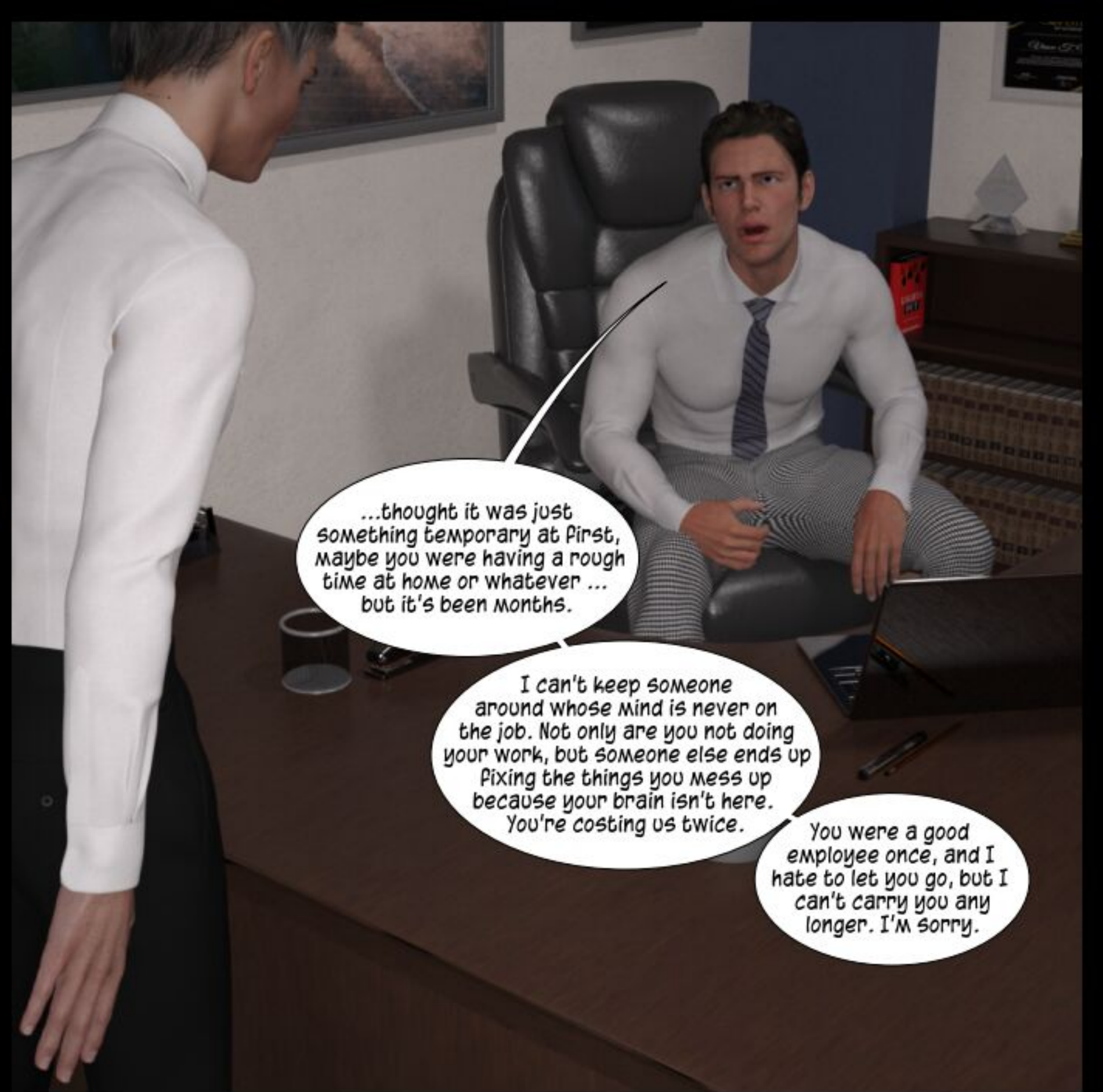






I can't do it again. I can't go back. It's doing something to my brain, I know it ... I have to just stop thinking about it. Just. Stop--

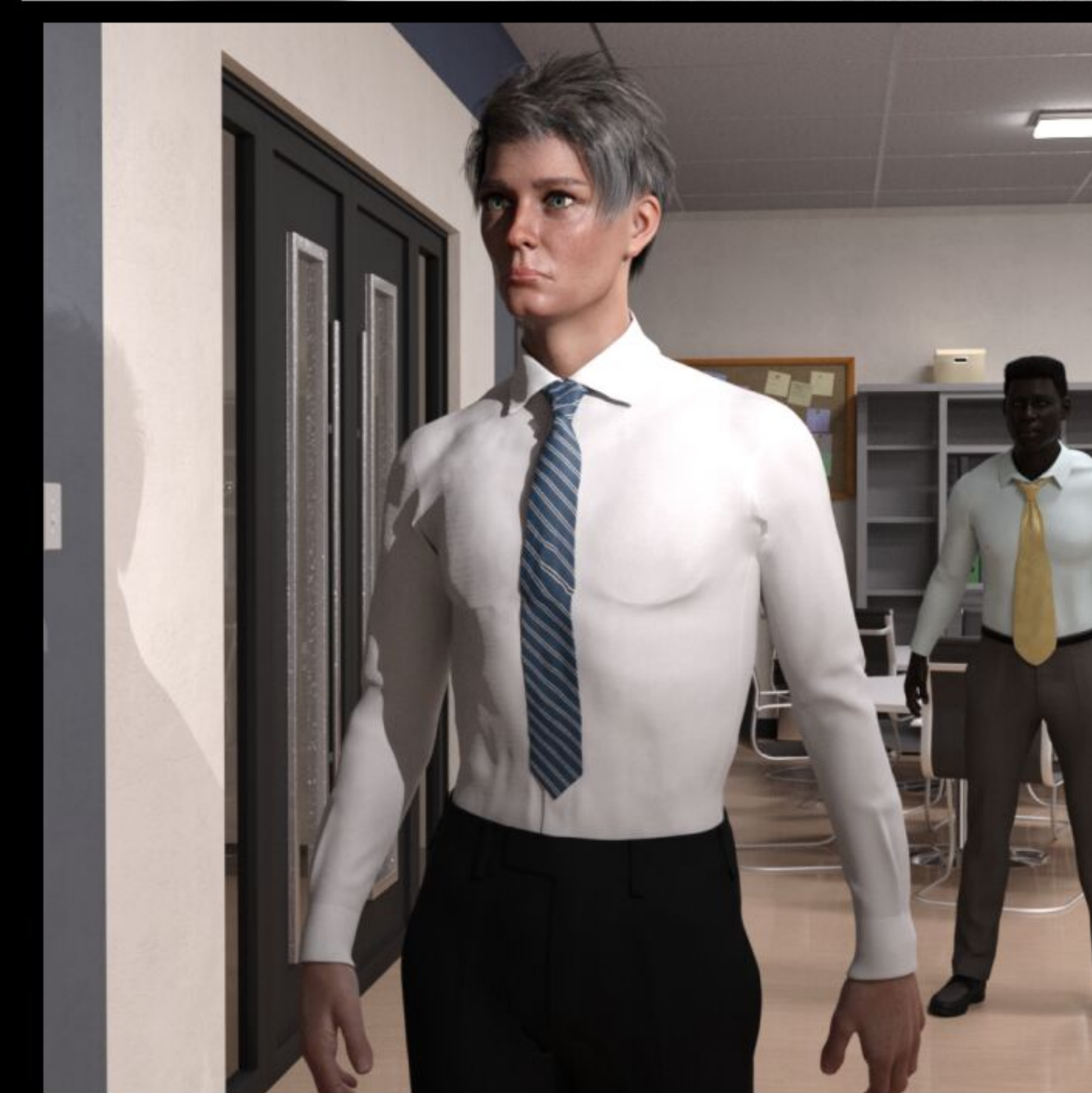
Hey, the boss wants to see you.



...thought it was just something temporary at first, maybe you were having a rough time at home or whatever ... but it's been months.

I can't keep someone around whose mind is never on the job. Not only are you not doing your work, but someone else ends up fixing the things you mess up because your brain isn't here. You're costing us twice.

You were a good employee once, and I hate to let you go, but I can't carry you any longer. I'm sorry.



Arrgh! Damn it!

Hardly any wonder someone's in a bad place when they're getting rained on all the goddamned time!



In early today ...

I unexpectedly got the afternoon opp.

Well, Misty isn't around, but I think you can probably handle soloing at this point.

Leave your clothes out so they can dry.



Don't leave the city, no matter what.

You should be able to get data signal everywhere, except maybe somebody's private vault or something.

If you start to feel dizzy, nauseous, that's your brain telling you it's losing signal. Transmission lag affects the inner ear. Get out of wherever you are immediately.

If you drop signal the body goes comatose and I have to sneak into the med facility and pay opp somebody so I can steal it back, and I get pissed when that happens.

Have Pun.



Oh, I'll have Pun.

The world is my goddamned oyster.





Oh, hey ... I bet I would look really good in that ...

I'm gonna go in and see what else they've got.



Where's all the good stuff like in the window?

Boring!

-- giggle --  
Well, that one's kinda supposed to be, y'know?



Nobody's supposed to look at the dress, they're supposed to be too busy staring at you in it!

It'd look awesome on you, by the way ...

They'd be staring at me falling out of it! I don't think I could even get it on. Anyway, I'm just looking ...

Yeah, I'm really supposed to be picking out a swimsuit ... Oh, hey, you can help me!

Uh ... sure! What do you need?



I'm going on a long weekend at the beach and I can't decide! The little gold one is a good color for me, but it's hard to resist leopard, y'know?

Oh, that's a tough choice. I don't know either!



Hmm ... This one would look really hot on you. The color suits you better than me.

That is nice ... But I don't need a bikini ... no place to wear it around here, and I, uh, can't make any long trips right now.

Oh, me neither! I'm not leaving the city. Sawyer has one of those virtual estate thingies.

Wow. Aren't those, like, really expensive? Oh! Sorry. That was rude.

-- giggle --

It's OK, I get it. Yeah, I think he's pretty rich. I don't ask.



Candi, are you still trying to find a bikini?

Sawyer! Hey!  
... We can't decide!

Ooh.

I've got it down to two--let me show you ...

I'll just buy you both of them. Problem solved! I'll see how they look on you later.



Who's your friend?

I don't know her name yet!  
-- giggle --  
I got too distracted to ask ...

I'm Raeann.

Hi, Raeann. My name's Sawyer. Candi and I are going for a long weekend at my beach house. Would you like to join us? You look like you'd be good company, and there's plenty of room ...

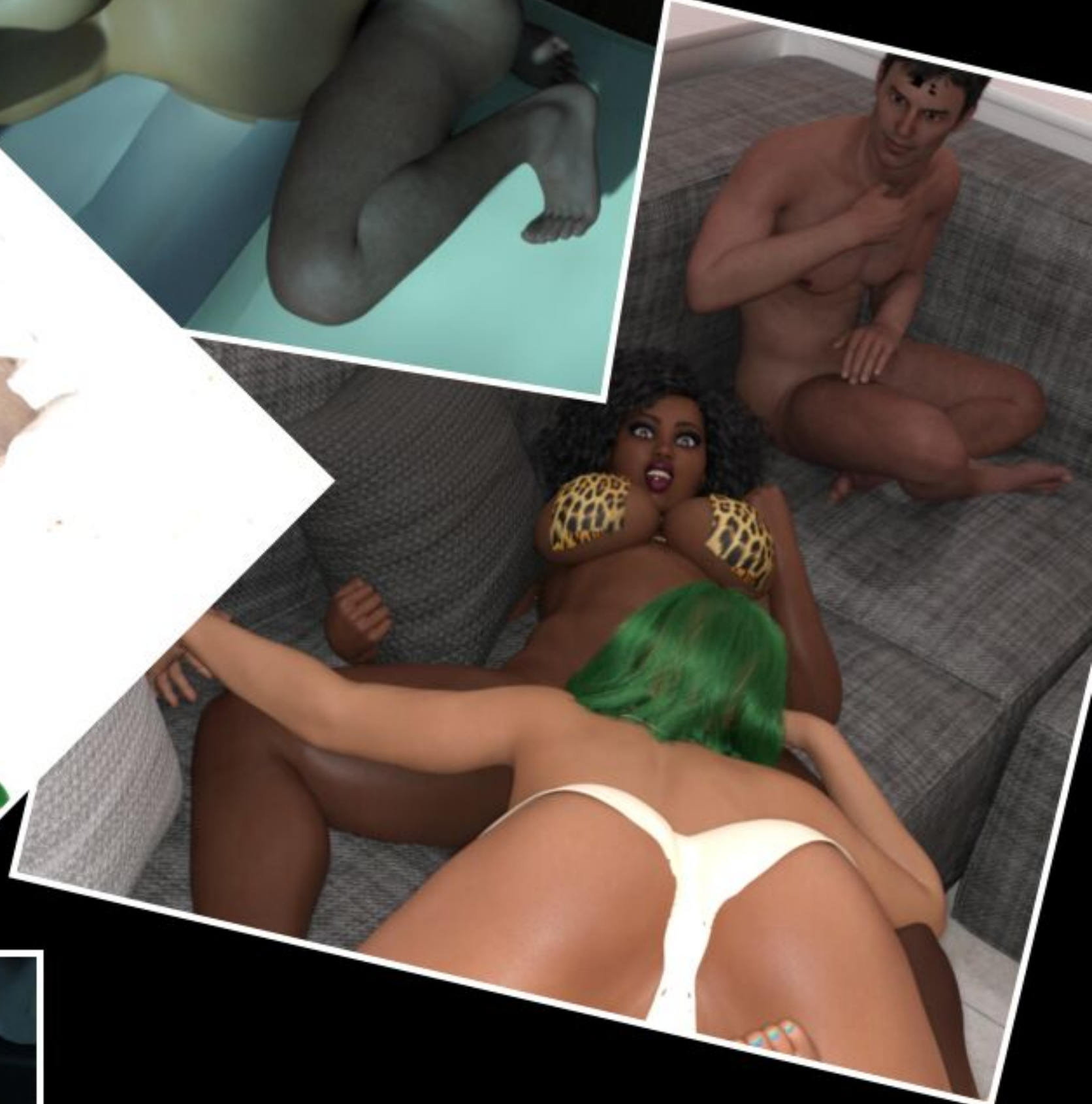
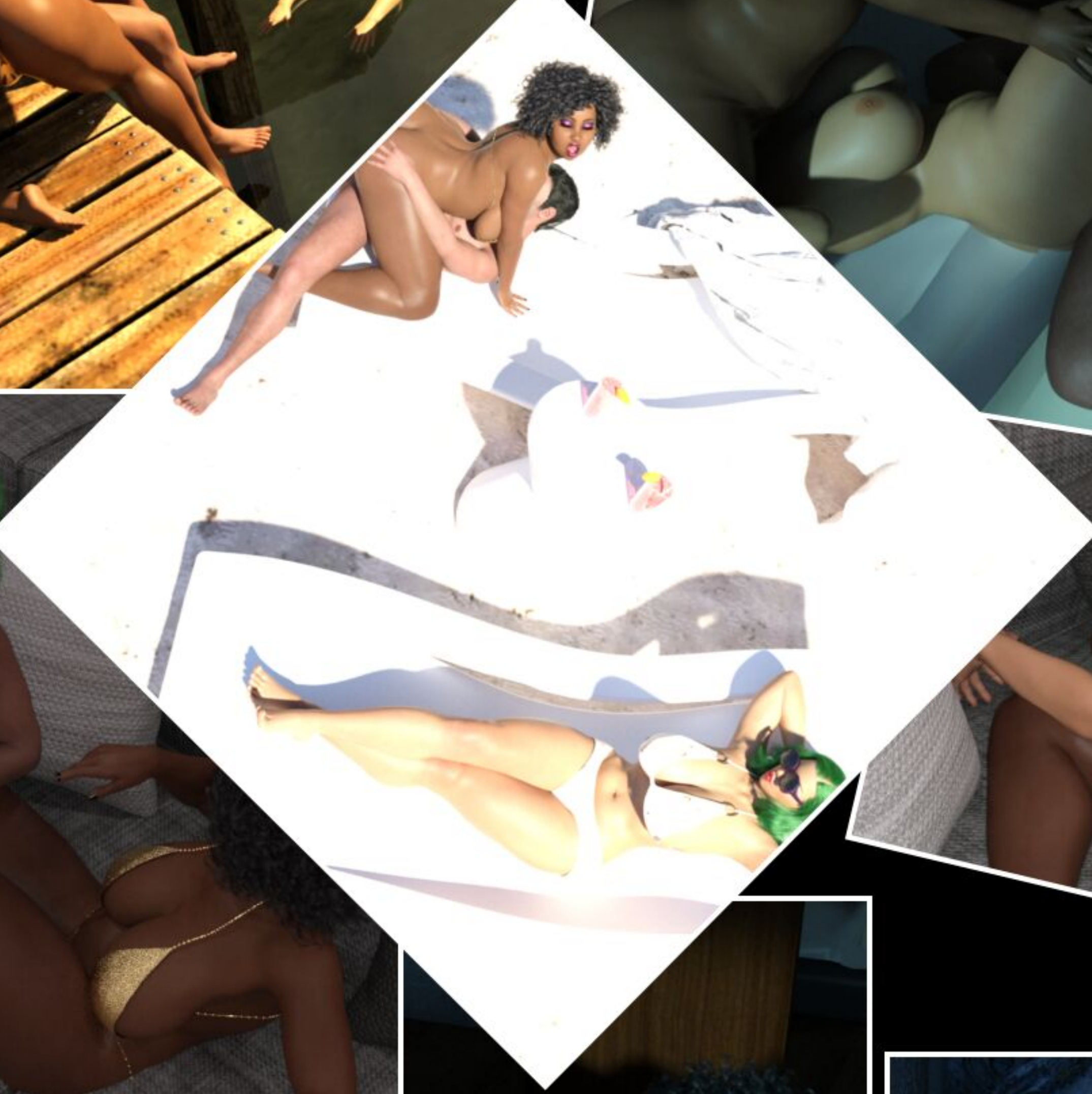
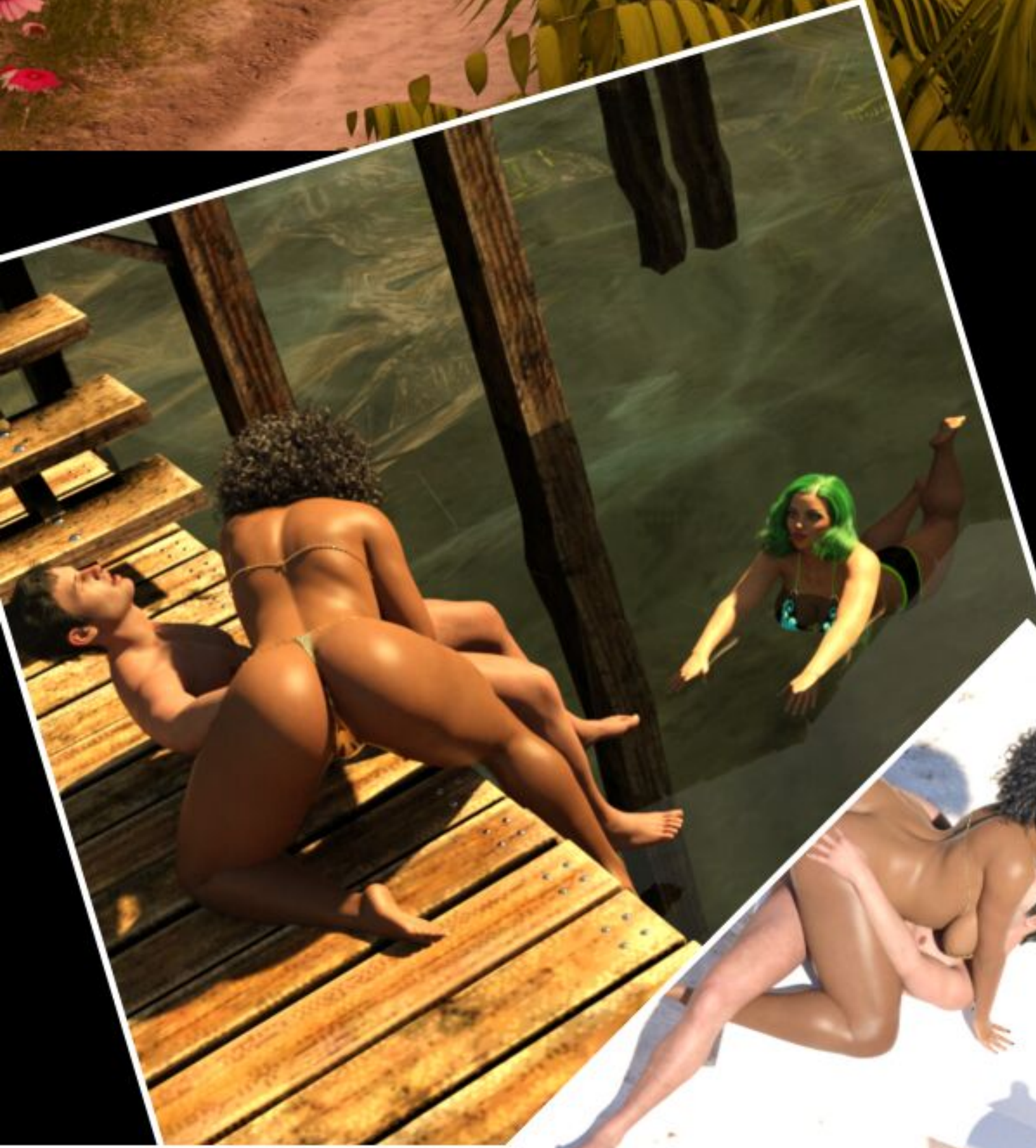
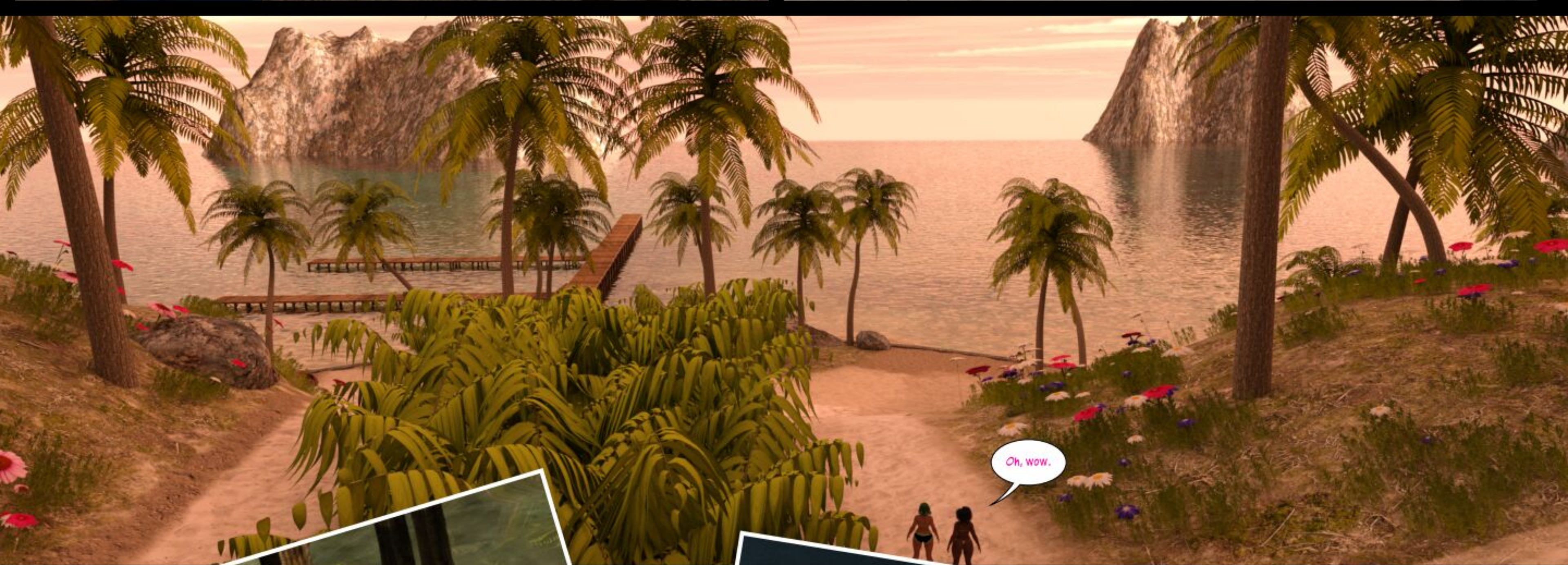


... I expect you to kick me, but you know?

I kinda guessed that!

... Sure, I'll come! It sounds like a lot of fun!









You paid for one night and you were out for four.

You owe me fifteen hundred dollars.



I'm not sure I should pay it.

I mean, I wouldn't even be here if you hadn't been messing with my mind.

It's a scam.

That's what you think, eh?

Every time I'm in this body, all of a sudden I'm interested in men. I've never been interested in men. Every time I'm in this body I get all excitable and start trying to fuck anything that'll hold still long enough. That all came out of nowhere. What other explanation is there?

Something happens to my mind every time I'm Raeann, and you know it, and you're exploiting it to keep me paying you.



When you were in the scanner, I did give you some suggestions. Little things, meant to help. Housekeeping. Like responding to a new name, and having less trouble walking in heels.

I never altered your drives or your mindset. I don't have the ability even if I wanted to. That's a lot deeper than my suggestions can go.

What you do when you're Raeann--who you lust for, the way you act, how you talk--all of that comes from inside you. Nowhere else.

Whether you want to admit it or not.



Now, you know what happens if you don't pay me?

Nothing.

Nothing?

Except that I disconnect you, throw you out, and never, never let you use a proxy again. Never.

You OK with that?

No.



Right.

See, the thing is, you're not completely wrong. We only pick people like you. Ones who have these really weird ideas about who they can and can't be, should or shouldn't be. We give you what you need so badly, something you've told yourself you can't get any other way ... and suddenly you're addicted.

But you're having a great time, right? So pay up and keep going.

That might be hard ... I got fired. Just before I came in last time.

Hmm. And you don't figure you'll do any better at another job now because your brain's in your pants these days.

Uh ...

This is a common problem. I have a solution.



I have a friend. Her name's Lorena. You can go work for her. She treats people well and makes sure they're decently paid. Of course, I'm going to arrange with her to take a large part of your earnings off the top.

What ... kind of a job is it?

I think you've already guessed. She sends out people to engage in public social functions, usually followed by intimate private ones.

You want me to go be a hooker.

Technically, I want you to be a very high-end call girl.

What's your objection? You've established you have an aptitude for the work.

Really, given the way you've behaved, I think it's clear I'm giving you a rare opportunity to do what you love.



I ...

... OK.



# TWO MONTHS LATER



Why? Do you?  
Sometimes. A little.  
I don't think you should. Look: Lorena gets employees she knows are reliable, we get paid, and the customer gets what they always wanted. Everybody wins.  
It's not our fault if sometimes it takes them a while to realize that's what they always wanted. Anyway, they can always change their minds and come back.  
But none of them ever have, have they?  
No. None of them ever have.



# END