

SLEEPER SQUAD

IT WAS A VICIOUSLY HOT MONTH. I WAS ENJOYING THE SMALL AMOUNT OF BREEZE THE ELECTRIC FAN COULD MANAGE. BUSINESS HAD BEEN SOMEWHERE BELOW SLOW, AND I DIDN'T SEE ANY PENALTY FOR CLOSING MY EYES FOR A WHILE.

I'M JOE FISHER. I'M A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR, WHEN THERE'S WORK.



MAMIE HANDY, MY SECRETARY. THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I THOUGHT I SHOULD FIRE HER FOR THE NINE KINDS OF HELL SHE GIVES ME. THESE DAYS I'M PRETTY SURE I'M NOT PAYING HER NEARLY ENOUGH.

I hate to interrupt your "meeting," but you have a client.

MAMIE HAD FOUR WAYS TO INTRODUCE A CLIENT. ALL IN THE TONE OF HER VOICE. THE FIRST ONE MEANT SHE THOUGHT THEY WERE BAD NEWS. THE SECOND WAS NEITHER HERE NOR THERE. THE THIRD MEANT SHE LIKED THEM ON SIGHT. THE FOURTH MEANT SHE WASN'T SURE, BUT SHE KNEW I'D WANT A LOOK ANYWAY.

THIS WAS A NUMBER-FOUR.

Send them in.



Mr. Fisher?

My name's Ellie Stanford.

SHE HAD A WIDE-EYED LOOK LIKE A BABY ANIMAL, OR SOMETHING ELSE THAT YOU NATURALLY WANT TO PROTECT. I DIDN'T GO FOR THAT VERY MUCH. I PREFER WOMEN WHO LOOK LIKE THEY CAN HURT ANYBODY WHO GETS IN THEIR WAY.

STILL, MAYBE SHE WASN'T AT HER BEST. PEOPLE WHO COME TO HIRE ME USUALLY AREN'T.

I'm sorry to come without calling first ... I think you may be the only person who can help me.

I need you to find out who killed my Pather.

OK, hold up, hold up. Pause this.



Didn't you tell me you were writing this thing for a guy's private session? Where'd this silly-ass narration come from?

Private session? Are we watching a private scenario? Is that OK?



Don't worry. It's fine.

I usually make a reference recording, especially if it's one of the elaborate ones. I give a copy to the customer. Like a souvenir.

This one turned out so good that we're thinking of making a passive out of it. Nathan was thrilled; he not only gave permission to show it, we got him to come record the narration. If we do release it, we'll give him a cut, of course.

We're not completely sure it'll work, though. You're the test audience.

And I know the narration's corny, but it's accurate. Nathan gave me homework. I watched a lot of old "movies" and read a bunch of books, so I could get it right.

OK, ready?

#13

Nathan Sargent Denise Cardullo

in

"THE FISHER CASE"

A Lou Laurence Production
in association with Serene Entertainment

Written and Directed by Ruby Martinez

Why is it "The Fisher Case?" Shouldn't it be "The Stanford Case"?

Sounded better. Besides, these stories are usually more about the detective than the crime.



OK, Harrison Stanford. Construction business, right? Found shot at his office desk six days ago.

You know all about it already!

Only what I read in the paper. Who do you think killed him?

Mr. Fisher, if I knew that, I wouldn't be here.

THE BABY ANIMAL HAD A FEW TEETH. GOOD.

The business was doing OK?

As far as I know. They got a lot of work in the suburbs. Not much in the city, because--

Yeah, I know why.

Look, even if you haven't picked a horse, you have to give me some idea who's in the race. Who had reason to want your Pather dead?



But, truly, I can't think of anybody. Daddy didn't socialize much after mother died. Work and home and back.

Business rival?

I suppose, but I wouldn't know if there was. You'll need to talk to Mr. Montrose. His business partner.



Well, it's a place to start. I'm going to want a look at the office. Probably the house, too.

Of course. Here, I have a key to the office. You can come by the house anytime.

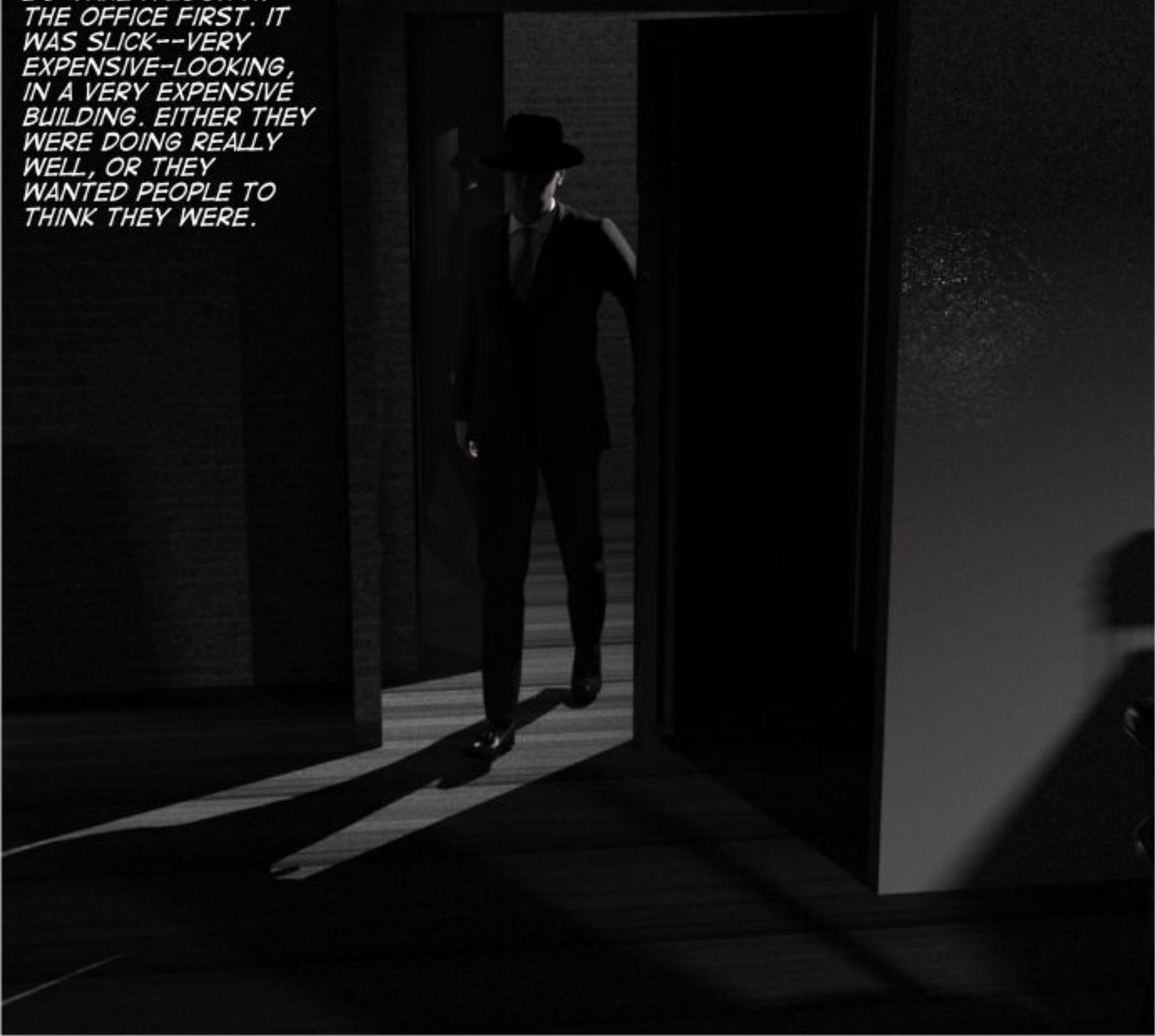


So I guess we have a client. Anything I can do?

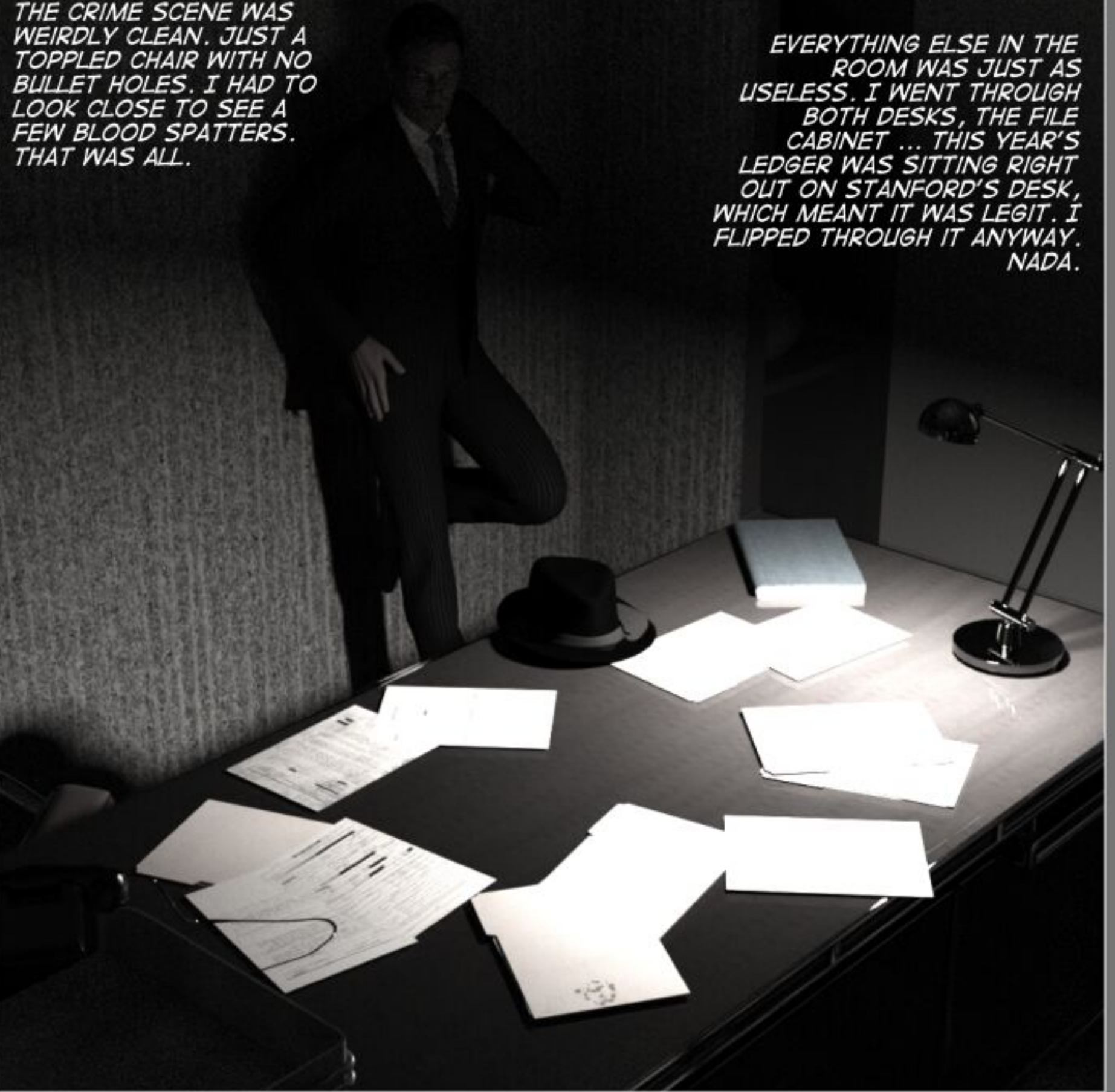
Blue-eyes, I don't even know if there's anything I can do.

I likely won't be back in today. Hold the fort.

MONTROSE WASN'T ANSWERING HIS PHONE, SO I DECIDED I'D TAKE A LOOK AT THE OFFICE FIRST. IT WAS SLICK--VERY EXPENSIVE-LOOKING, IN A VERY EXPENSIVE BUILDING. EITHER THEY WERE DOING REALLY WELL, OR THEY WANTED PEOPLE TO THINK THEY WERE.



THE CRIME SCENE WAS WEIRDLY CLEAN. JUST A TOPPLED CHAIR WITH NO BULLET HOLES. I HAD TO LOOK CLOSE TO SEE A FEW BLOOD SPATTERS. THAT WAS ALL.



EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE ROOM WAS JUST AS USELESS. I WENT THROUGH BOTH DESKS, THE FILE CABINET ... THIS YEAR'S LEDGER WAS SITTING RIGHT OUT ON STANFORD'S DESK, WHICH MEANT IT WAS LEGIT. I FLIPPED THROUGH IT ANYWAY. NADA.



Finding everything you need all right, then?

Lieutenant. Always good to see the Force on duty.

COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE. LT. NORRIS AND I WEREN'T BUDDIES, BUT I'D TAKE HIM OVER MOST OF THE REST OF THE POLICE ANY DAY. AT LEAST YOU COULD GET AN IDEA INTO HIS HEAD SOMETIMES.

This is a crime scene. I should run you in.

You've had a week. They even took the tape off the door.

Breaking and entering, then.

Sorry. I have a key and an invitation.

Ah. Who's your client? Montrose?

Who is this guy? Another detective?
Kind of. He detects, but he's a police officer. State-sponsored law enforcement.



Get out.

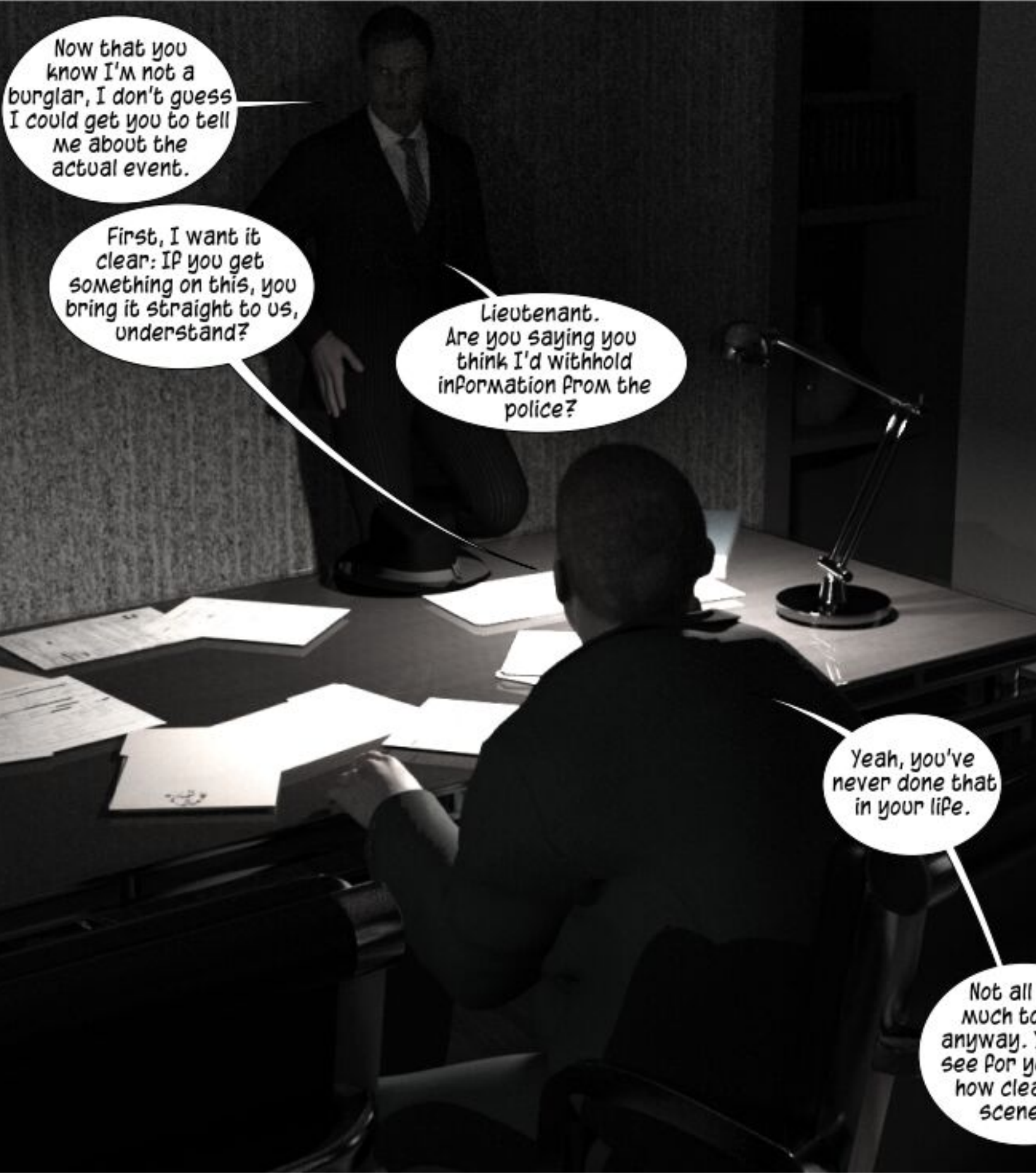
No, for real. There were two kinds: the ones who went around in "plain clothes," like this guy, investigating crimes, and others in uniform--you'll see one later--who walked around trying to make sure people didn't do crimes in the first place.

Might not have worked very well: it seems like a lot of them were either brutal, corrupt, or just not very effective.

The police didn't like private investigators much ... I think maybe because they were worried the PI's were doing what the police were supposed to be doing? It doesn't make a lot of sense to me either. But the history's clear.



We know this part's a problem. We're trying to figure out how to stick an explanation in without disrupting the story too much.



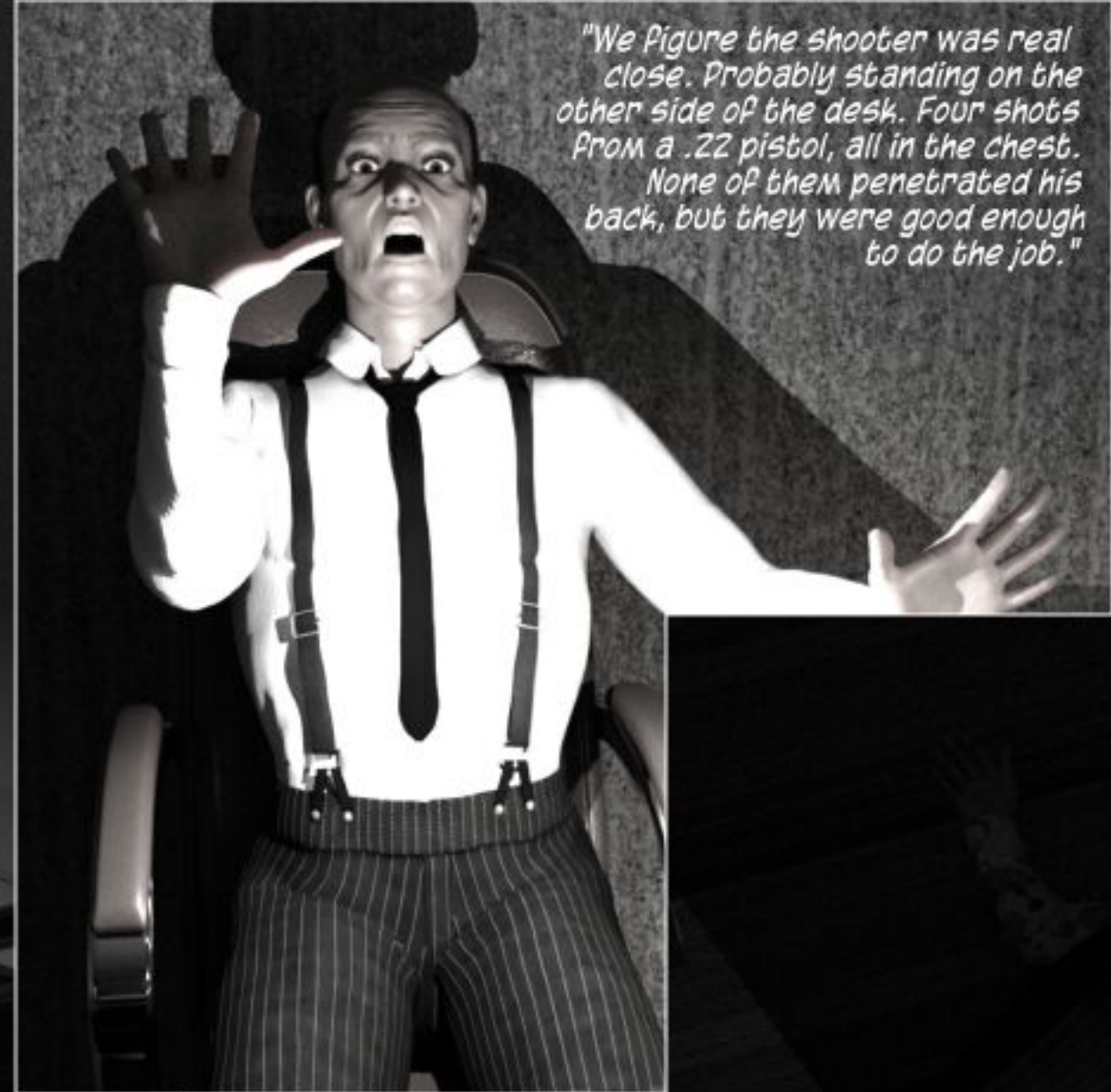
Now that you know I'm not a burglar, I don't guess I could get you to tell me about the actual event.

First, I want it clear: If you get something on this, you bring it straight to us, understand?

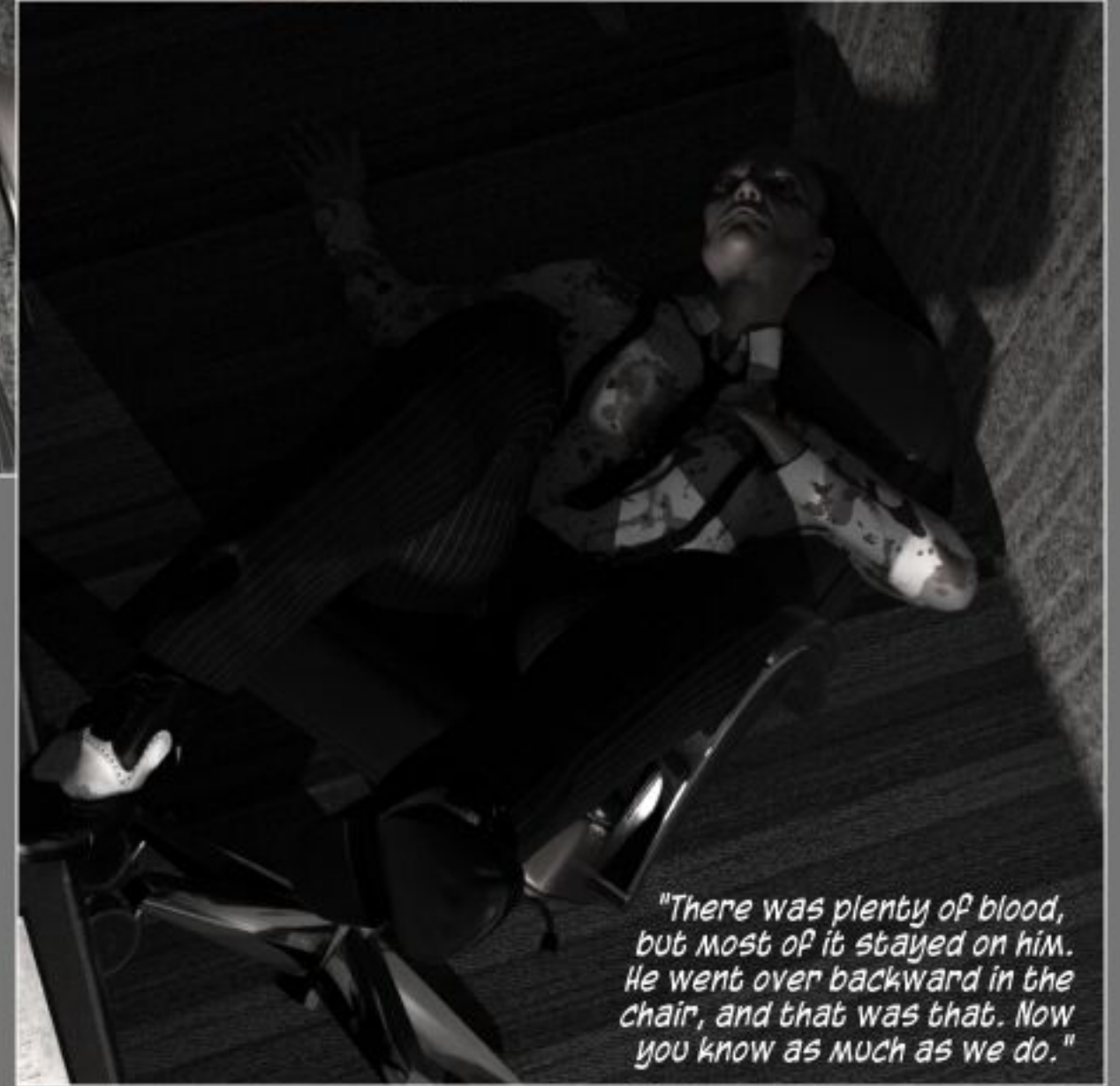
Lieutenant. Are you saying you think I'd withhold information from the police?

Yeah, you've never done that in your life.

Not all that much to tell anyway. You can see for yourself how clean the scene is.



"We figure the shooter was real close. Probably standing on the other side of the desk. Four shots from a .22 pistol, all in the chest. None of them penetrated his back, but they were good enough to do the job."



"There was plenty of blood, but most of it stayed on him. He went over backward in the chair, and that was that. Now you know as much as we do."

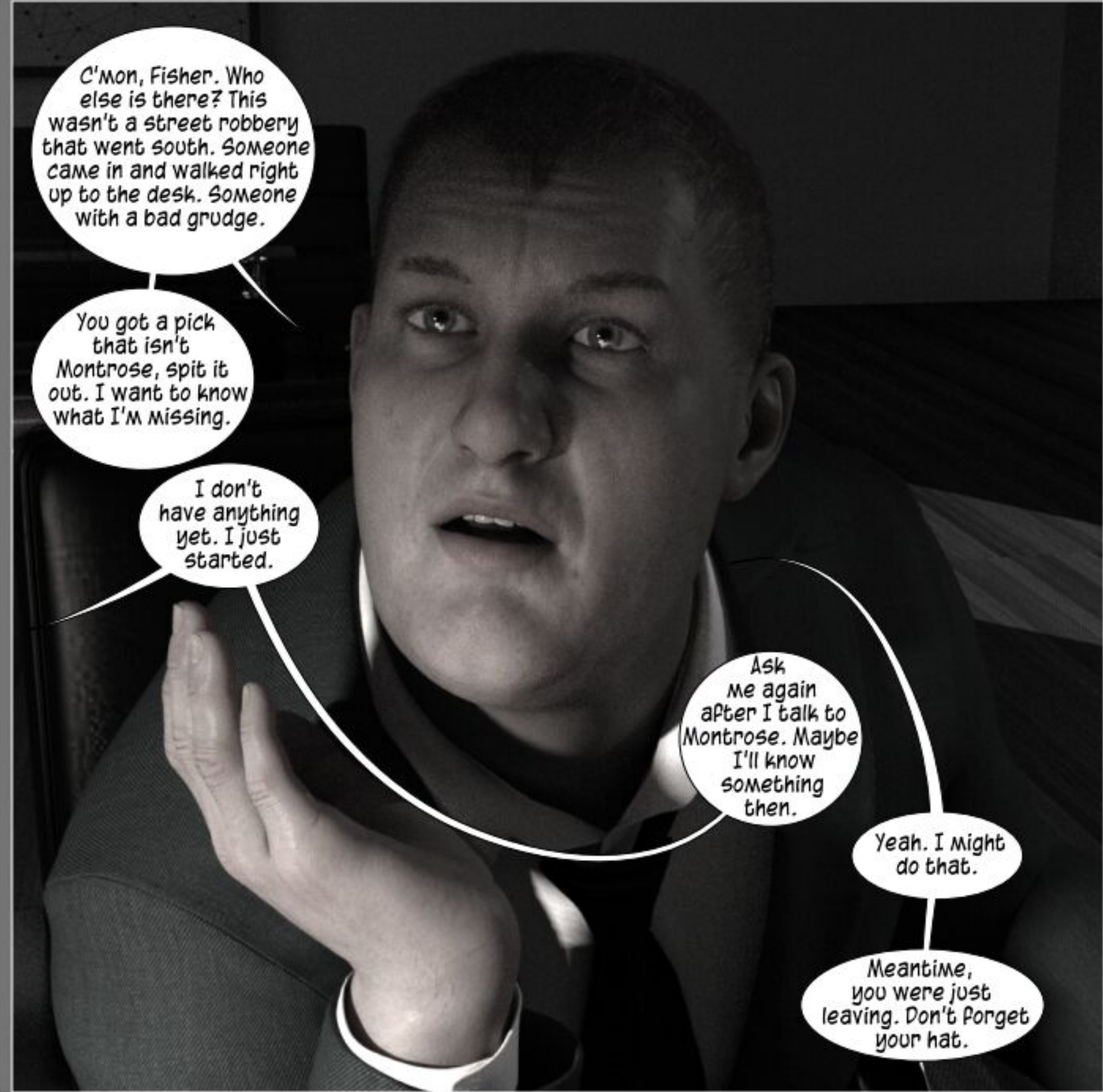


You didn't answer my question about your client.

You know damned well you have to come up with a much better reason before I disclose that.

Yeah, yeah. Don't get bent out of shape. I'm just wondering if it's Montrose. Because if it is, you might wanna give him back his money and get clear, y'know?

So the police are convinced Montrose did it?



C'mon, Fisher. Who else is there? This wasn't a street robbery that went south. Someone came in and walked right up to the desk. Someone with a bad grudge.

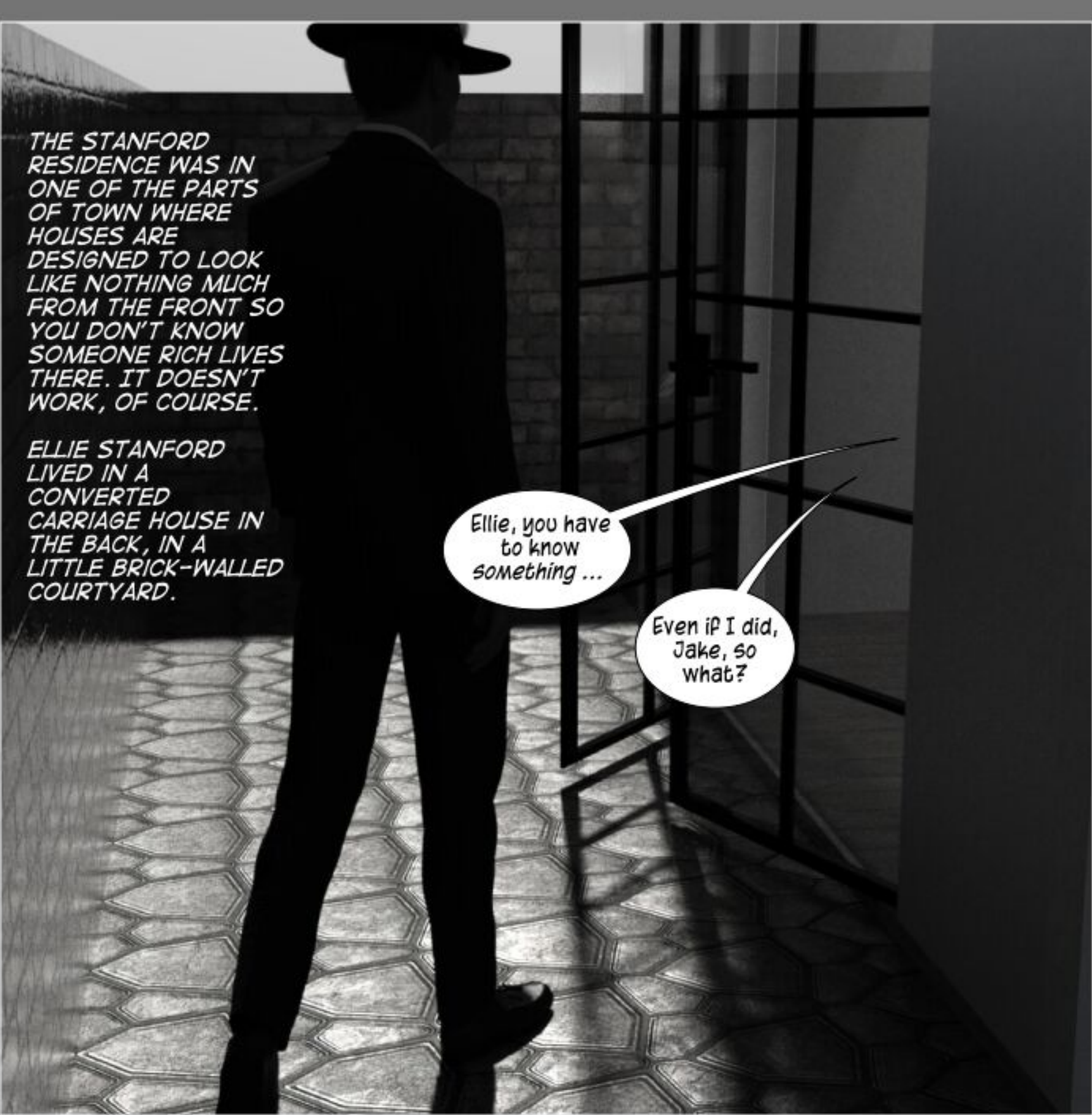
You got a pick that isn't Montrose, spit it out. I want to know what I'm missing.

I don't have anything yet. I just started.

Ask me again after I talk to Montrose. Maybe I'll know something then.

Yeah. I might do that.

Meantime, you were just leaving. Don't forget your hat.



THE STANFORD RESIDENCE WAS IN ONE OF THE PARTS OF TOWN WHERE HOUSES ARE DESIGNED TO LOOK LIKE NOTHING MUCH FROM THE FRONT SO YOU DON'T KNOW SOMEONE RICH LIVES THERE. IT DOESN'T WORK, OF COURSE.

ELLIE STANFORD LIVED IN A CONVERTED CARRIAGE HOUSE IN THE BACK, IN A LITTLE BRICK-WALLED COURTYARD.

Ellie, you have to know something ...
Even if I did, Jake, so what?



WHOEVER THIS GUY WAS, THE FREEZE WAS CLEARLY ON.

I don't owe you a damned thing. And you've got a lot of nerve even asking, after--

Why, hello, Mr. Fisher!



I didn't expect to see you so soon.

I don't think you've met Mr. Montrose yet. Jacob Montrose, Joe Fisher.

Did you need something from me?



Nothing too urgent. But I do want to talk to Mr. Montrose.

Well, I'm in the middle of a conversation, Mr. Fisher, so--

Yeah, and you can't tell when you're not wanted?

Come on. Let's take a walk.



MONTROSE WAS ONE OF THOSE MATCHSTICK GUYS WITH A WHINE IN HIS VOICE. I TRIED TO TELL MYSELF NOT TO HOLD THAT AGAINST HIM.

There's no reason I should tell you anything. Frankly, I don't even know why she hired you.

You know, the police already have you tagged for killing Stanford.

And you may not have noticed, but his daughter thinks you did it, too.



Ellie? No, she can't possibly ...

She does, doesn't she? That's why she's acting like this.

And do you think I killed him as well?

Haven't decided. That's why it'd be awfully helpful if you answered my questions. For instance, what were you doing on the night of the murder?

Are you working with--?

No, you wouldn't be ... all right, Pine. I was following him. Harrison.

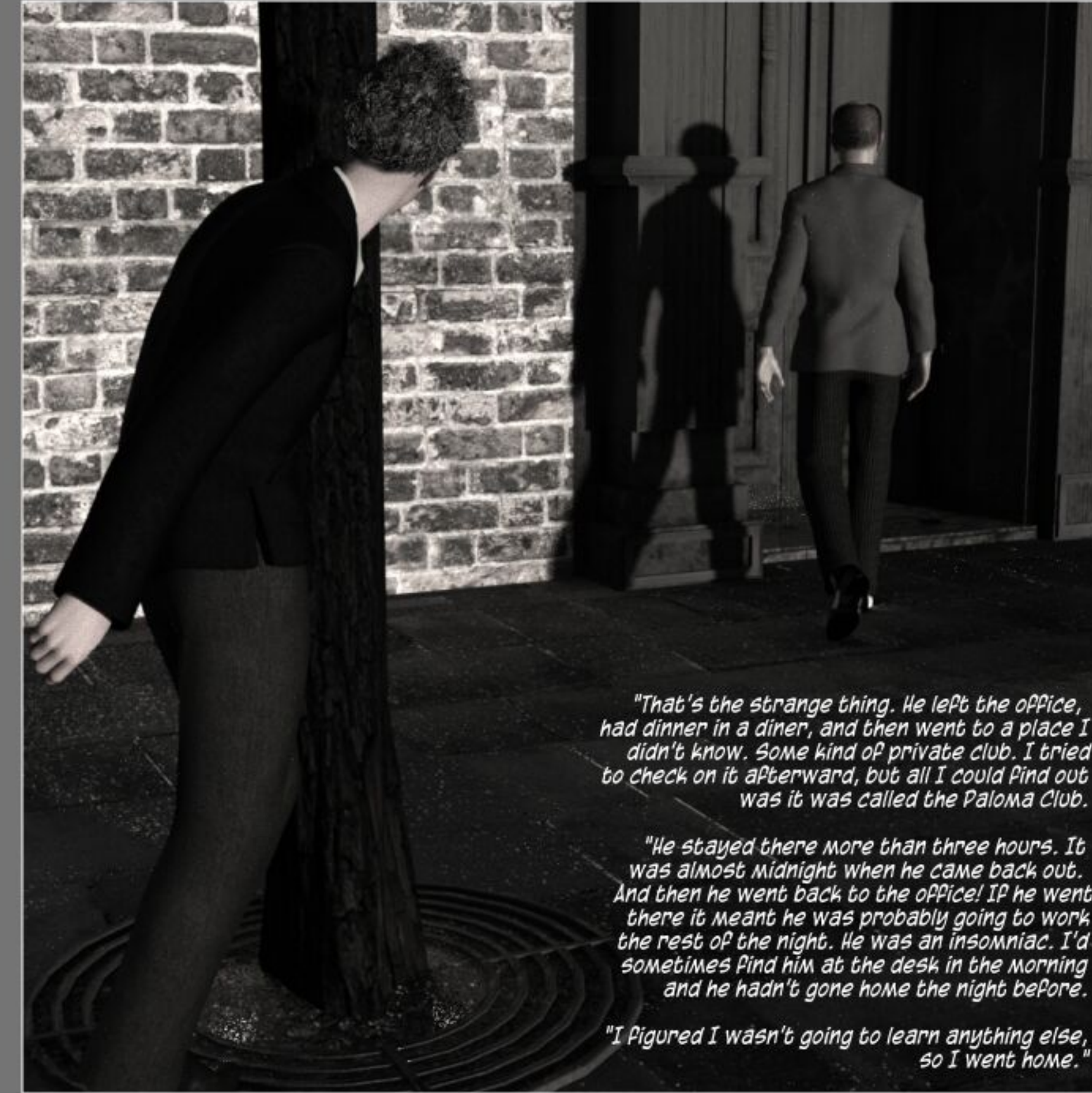
Now, why would you do a thing like that?

Because he was holding out on me! We were supposed to be partners, but for the last few months he's been doing business without telling me anything.



"The day before he died, he had an afternoon meeting somewhere that he didn't say a word to me about. Then, the next day, I heard him saying to someone on the phone how 'it went pretty well, he thought' and 'tell you about it when I see you tonight.' I'd had enough. I decided I was going to see who he met and then we were going to have a reckoning."

"What did he do that night?"



"That's the strange thing. He left the office, had dinner in a diner, and then went to a place I didn't know. Some kind of private club. I tried to check on it afterward, but all I could find out was it was called the Paloma Club.

"He stayed there more than three hours. It was almost midnight when he came back out. And then he went back to the office! If he went there it meant he was probably going to work the rest of the night. He was an insomniac. I'd sometimes find him at the desk in the morning and he hadn't gone home the night before.

"I figured I wasn't going to learn anything else, so I went home."

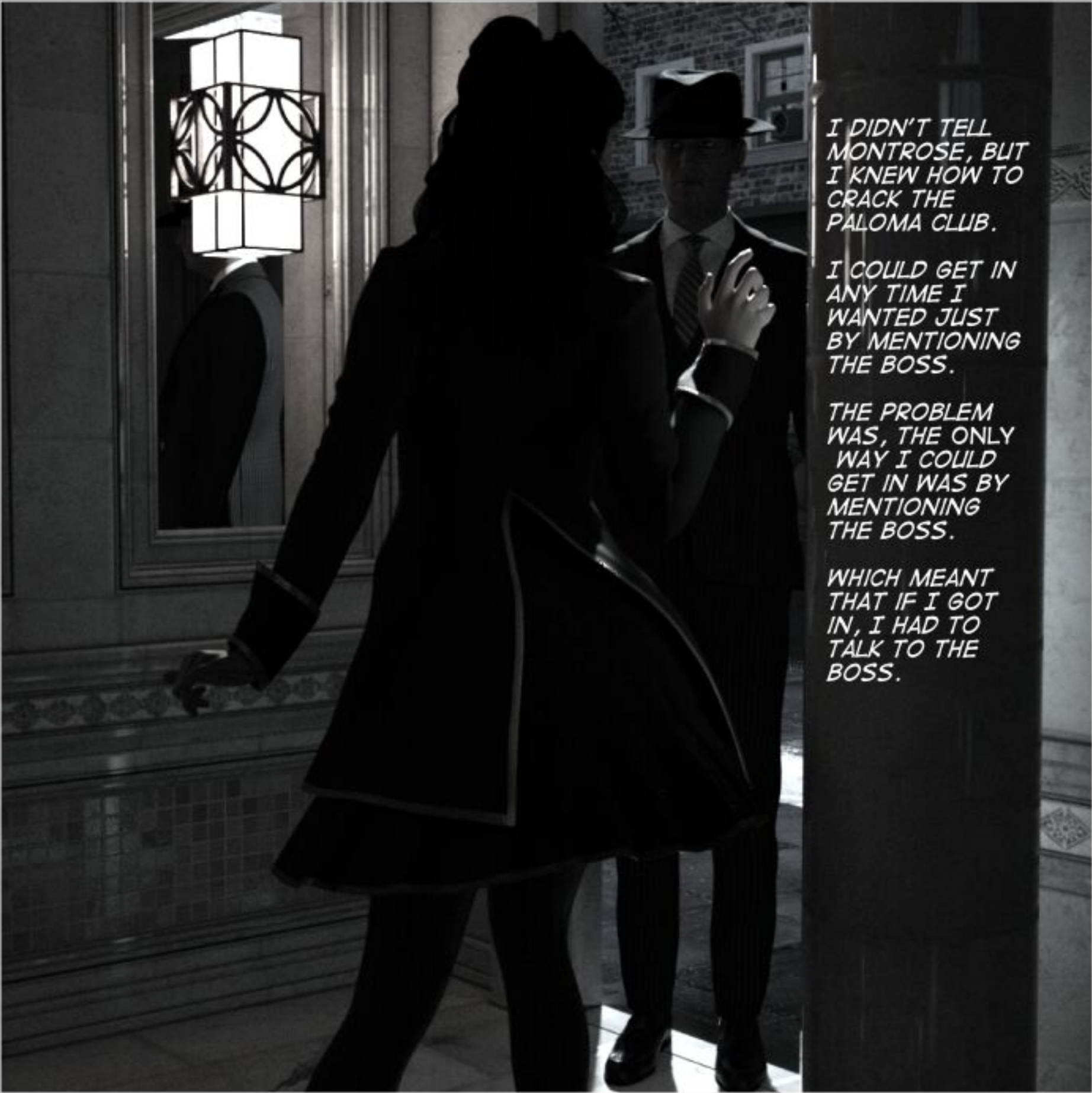


So you're telling me you went home to bed, and probably not an hour later, someone else walked into the office and shot him.

You don't believe me.

I believe everybody until I have reason not to.

But I'll give you some free advice: Don't share that story with the police.



I DIDN'T TELL MONTROSE, BUT I KNEW HOW TO CRACK THE PALOMA CLUB.

I COULD GET IN ANY TIME I WANTED JUST BY MENTIONING THE BOSS.

THE PROBLEM WAS, THE ONLY WAY I COULD GET IN WAS BY MENTIONING THE BOSS.

WHICH MEANT THAT IF I GOT IN, I HAD TO TALK TO THE BOSS.



HMM.

... We'll work out the details later, dear. Lina has brought me a surprise.

Thank you, Lina. You and Sue both run along now.



How long has it been, Joe? Six years? Seven?

I'm not here for that, Fuchsia. I just need a little information is all. One of your customers--

Really? You go this long and then when you finally show up you're all business?



I thought you were going to see me again, you know. Regularly.

And I thought you made it pretty clear we didn't have that kind of relationship.

Look, you're not going to be compromising him. He's dead and no one else cares. I just need to know--

Oh, you've gotten so boring! Relationships. Business. Do you ever have any fun now, Joe? Did you forget how?



I tell you what. I'll give you your so-important information if you do something interesting first.

Fuchsia, I didn't come here to be seduced.



Then start putting up some resistance.



I DIDN'T.



Oh, yeah!!

Uh-huh. I knew you were just here for the sex scenes.

Well, not just for them, but I do think they're pretty important, y'know?

Yeah. I think so too, which is why we departed Prom genre norm here in a big way.

What do you mean?

She means the Hays Office would not approve.



Lou, you sneak! I should have known you would have studied some of the history.

I felt it went with the territory. I like to know everything I can about my industry.

What was the Hays Office?

Censors. ... It's a long story.



Was he actually any good? I mean, you know how non-actors sometimes are ...

HMM? Oh! You're thinking I was playing Fuchsia?

No, no--I'm playing Mamie. I wrote Nathan hints and help steer him if he needed it. He mostly didn't need it, so you don't see Mamie much.

But I don't remember Kori, who plays Fuchsia, having any complaints!



WHEN I WOKE UP THE NEXT MORNING, FUCHSIA WAS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN, AND I WASN'T ABOUT TO GO OPEN EVERY DOOR IN THE CLUB LOOKING FOR HER.

SHE HADN'T TOLD ME A THING ABOUT HARRISON STANFORD.

I DIDN'T BOTHER GOING HOME TO CLEAN UP. I COULD CHANGE INTO A FRESH SHIRT AT THE OFFICE.

Morning, boss. You've got somebody in there waiting. Sorry, but he was pretty determined.

A client?

A lawyer. But I think he's harmless. Doesn't sound like he's after you, anyway.



Mr. Fisher. At last. I suppose private detectives don't have the same idea of a schedule as the rest of us ...

The work sets the schedule. Sometimes I don't come in here for days. Been waiting long?

NEVER YET MET A LAWYER WHO DIDN'T THINK THEIR TIME WAS MORE VALUABLE THAN ANYONE ELSE'S.

Over an hour.

Should have taken your coat off. It's already a hot day.

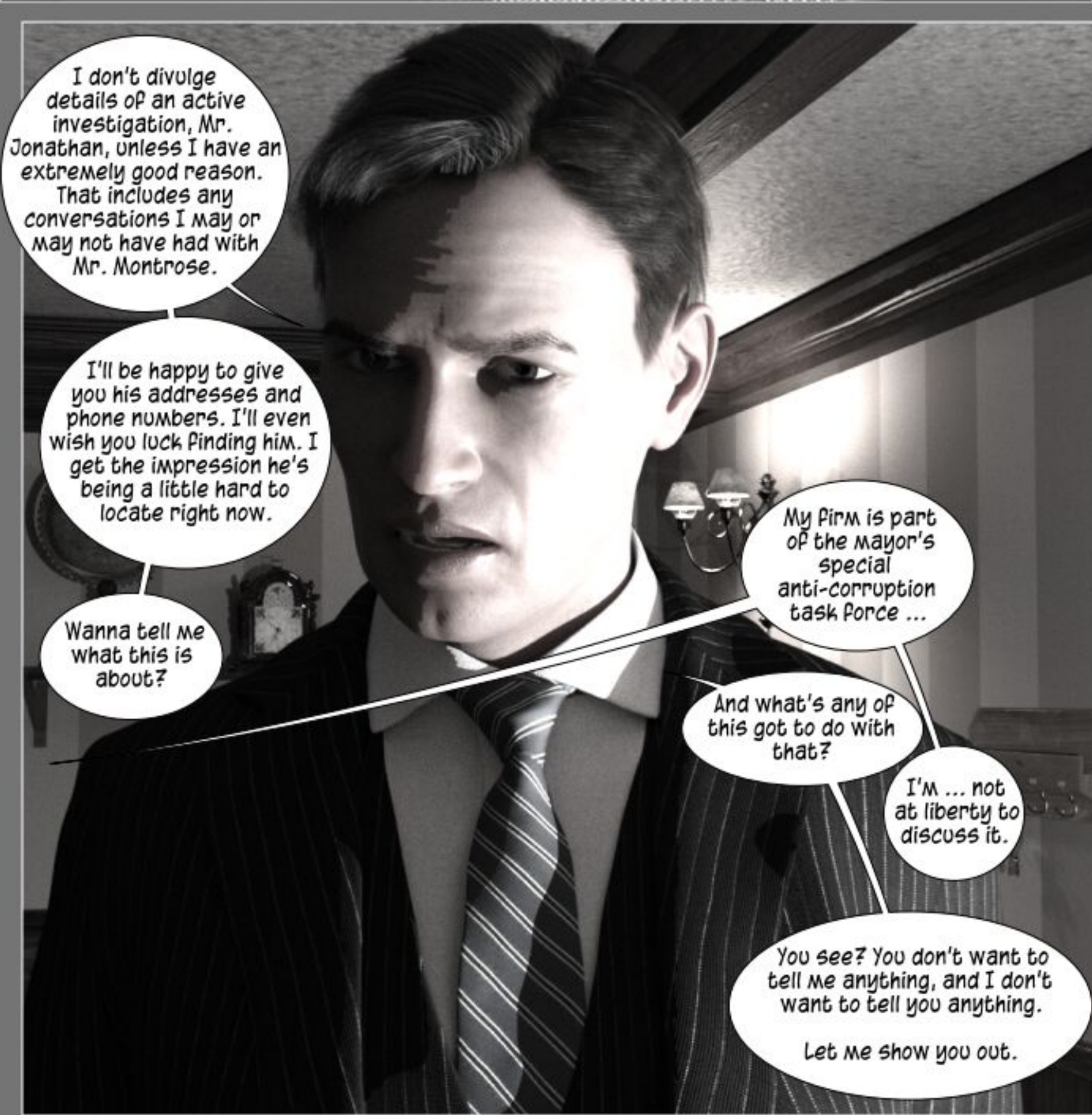


--ahem-- I represent the firm of Cortland and Winesap ...

You Cortland, or Winesap?

Neither. Peter Jonathan, associate.

It's come to our attention that you've been in communication with Jacob Montrose. In connection with the death of Harrison Stanford, we assume. We'd like to know the substance of your conversation with Mr. Montrose, and his whereabouts so we can talk to him directly.



I don't divulge details of an active investigation, Mr. Jonathan, unless I have an extremely good reason. That includes any conversations I may or may not have had with Mr. Montrose.

I'll be happy to give you his addresses and phone numbers. I'll even wish you luck finding him. I get the impression he's being a little hard to locate right now.

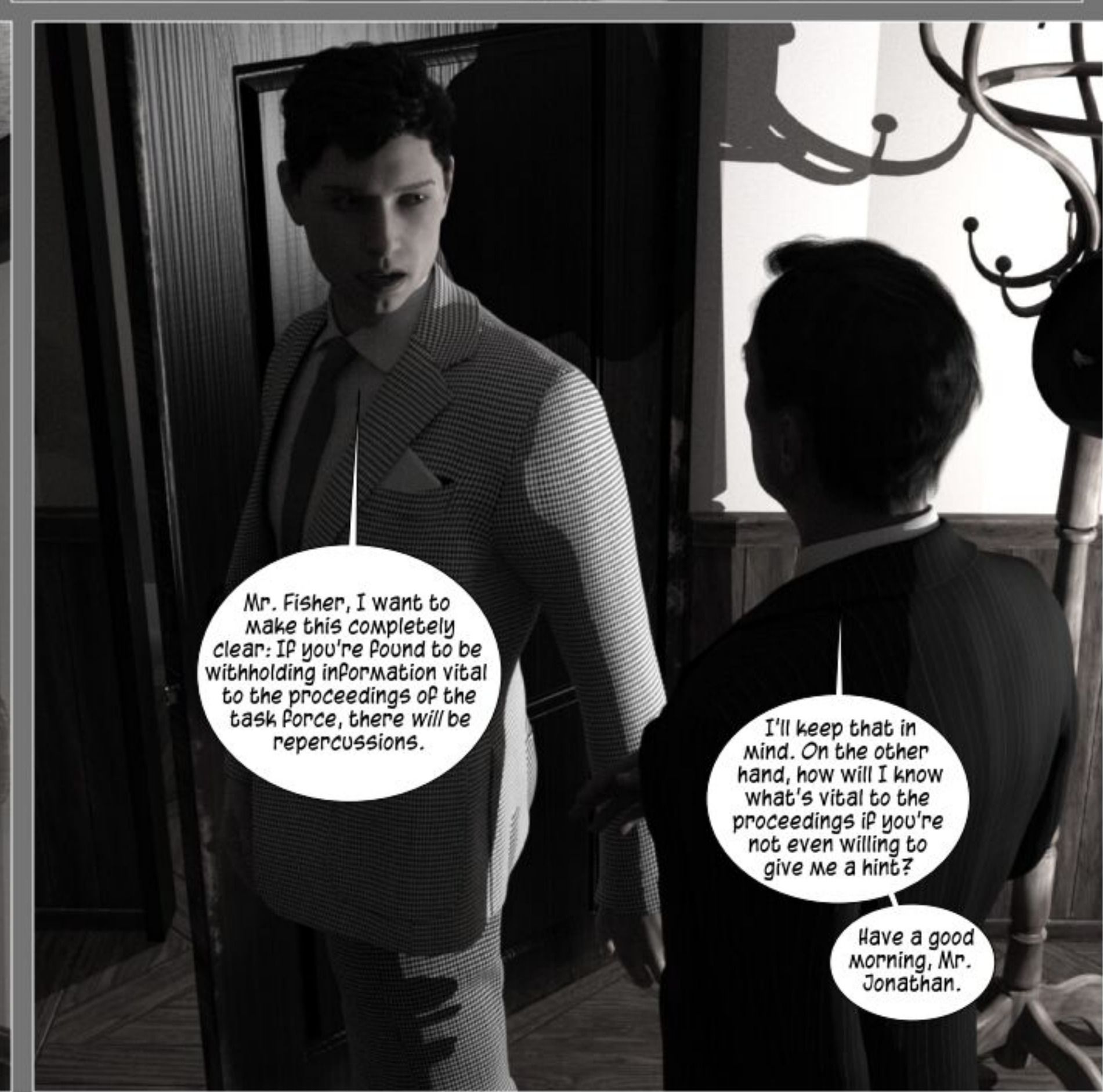
Wanna tell me what this is about?

My firm is part of the mayor's special anti-corruption task force ...

And what's any of this got to do with that?

I'm ... not at liberty to discuss it.

You see? You don't want to tell me anything, and I don't want to tell you anything. Let me show you out.



Mr. Fisher, I want to make this completely clear: If you're found to be withholding information vital to the proceedings of the task force, there will be repercussions.

I'll keep that in mind. On the other hand, how will I know what's vital to the proceedings if you're not even willing to give me a hint?

Have a good morning, Mr. Jonathan.



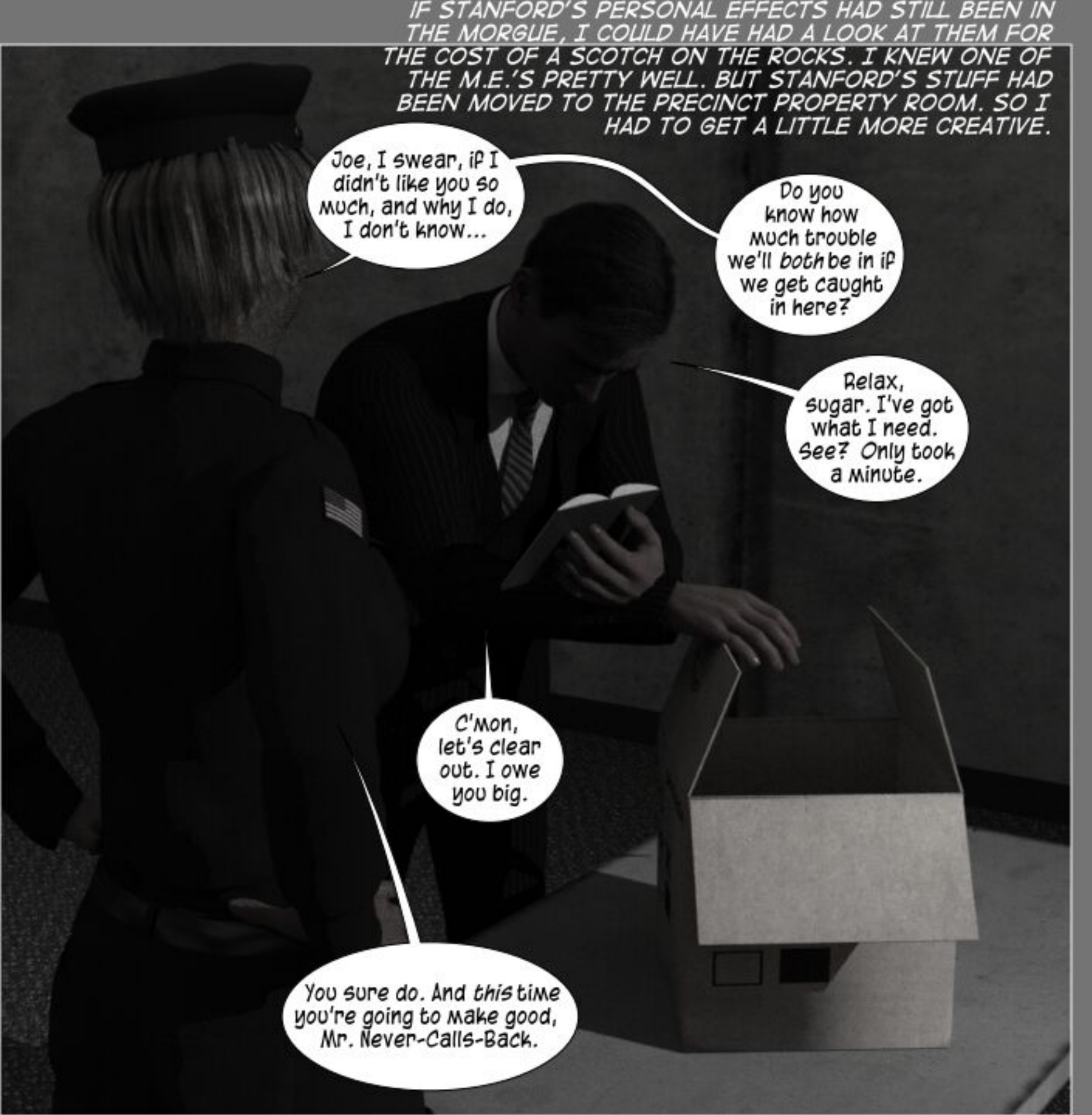
"Anti-corruption task Force" ... now that's an interesting concept.

What does "corruption" mean here, anyway?

Bad conduct by civic officials, mostly. Taking bribes ... blatant favoritism in their duties ...

So, business as usual?

Yeah, pretty much.



Joe, I swear, if I didn't like you so much, and why I do, I don't know ...

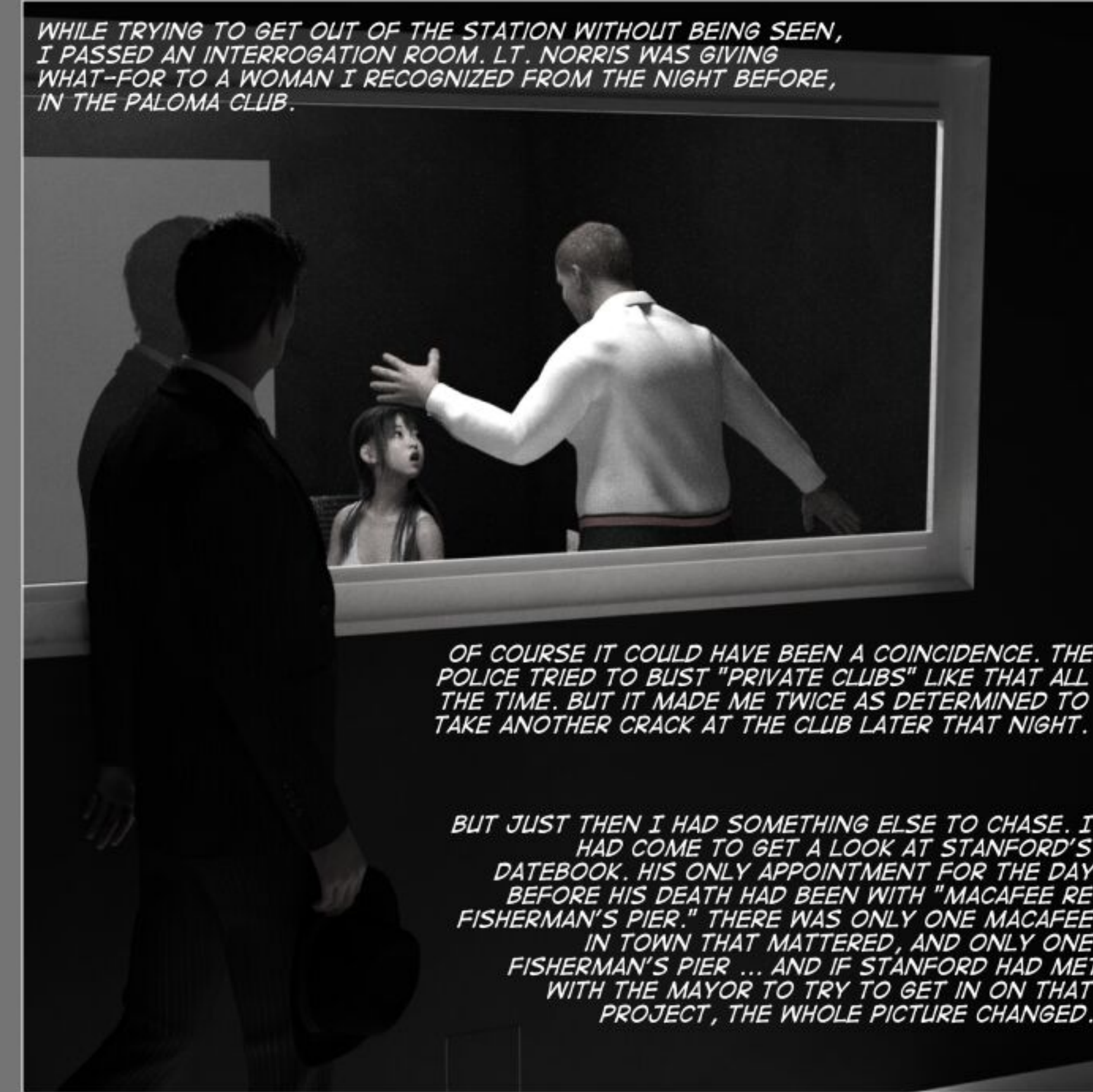
Do you know how much trouble we'll both be in if we get caught in here?

Relax, sugar. I've got what I need. See? Only took a minute.

C'mon, let's clear out. I owe you big.

You sure do. And this time you're going to make good, Mr. Never-Calls-Back.

IF STANFORD'S PERSONAL EFFECTS HAD STILL BEEN IN THE MORGUE, I COULD HAVE HAD A LOOK AT THEM FOR THE COST OF A SCOTCH ON THE ROCKS. I KNEW ONE OF THE M.E.'S PRETTY WELL. BUT STANFORD'S STUFF HAD BEEN MOVED TO THE PRECINCT PROPERTY ROOM. SO I HAD TO GET A LITTLE MORE CREATIVE.



WHILE TRYING TO GET OUT OF THE STATION WITHOUT BEING SEEN, I PASSED AN INTERROGATION ROOM. LT. NORRIS WAS GIVING WHAT-FOR TO A WOMAN I RECOGNIZED FROM THE NIGHT BEFORE, IN THE PALOMA CLUB.

OF COURSE IT COULD HAVE BEEN A COINCIDENCE. THE POLICE TRIED TO BUST "PRIVATE CLUBS" LIKE THAT ALL THE TIME. BUT IT MADE ME TWICE AS DETERMINED TO TAKE ANOTHER CRACK AT THE CLUB LATER THAT NIGHT.

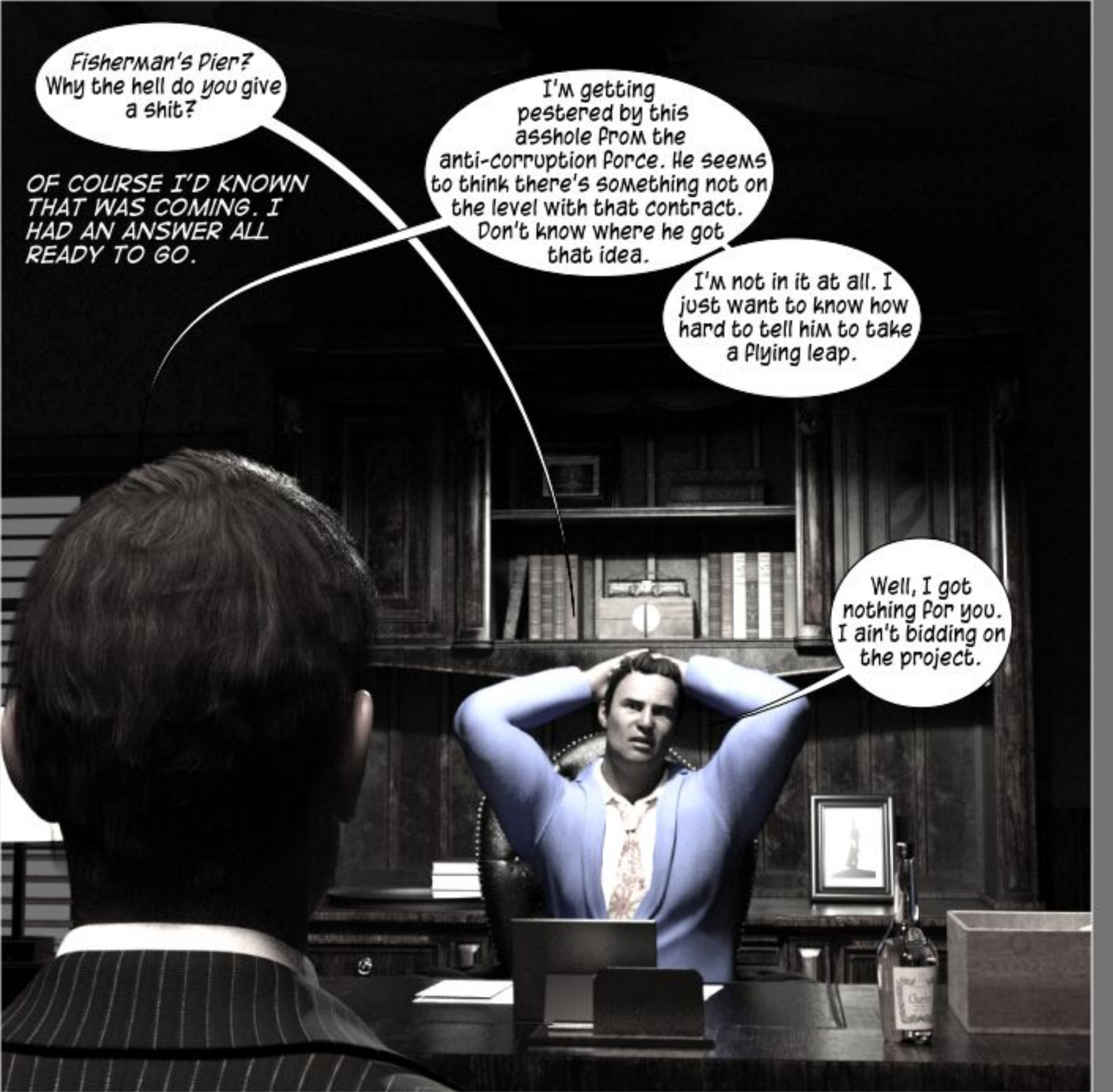
BUT JUST THEN I HAD SOMETHING ELSE TO CHASE. I HAD COME TO GET A LOOK AT STANFORD'S DATEBOOK. HIS ONLY APPOINTMENT FOR THE DAY BEFORE HIS DEATH HAD BEEN WITH "MACAFEE RE FISHERMAN'S PIER." THERE WAS ONLY ONE MACAFEE IN TOWN THAT MATTERED, AND ONLY ONE FISHERMAN'S PIER ... AND IF STANFORD HAD MET WITH THE MAYOR TO TRY TO GET IN ON THAT PROJECT, THE WHOLE PICTURE CHANGED.



"Mob"?

Organized crime. Like a business, but for doing bad things.

FISHERMAN'S PIER WAS A BIG DEAL, AND THERE WAS NO QUESTION IT WAS THE KIND OF THING DINUCCI WOULD USUALLY HAVE HANDED TO HIM. IF STANFORD WANTED IT, THAT MAY HAVE PUT HIM ON DINUCCI'S HIT LIST--A PLACE YOU DIDN'T WANT TO BE.



FisherMan's Pier? Why the hell do you give a shit?

I'm getting pestered by this asshole from the anti-corruption Force. He seems to think there's something not on the level with that contract. Don't know where he got that idea.

I'm not in it at all. I just want to know how hard to tell him to take a flying leap.

OF COURSE I'D KNOWN THAT WAS COMING. I HAD AN ANSWER ALL READY TO GO.

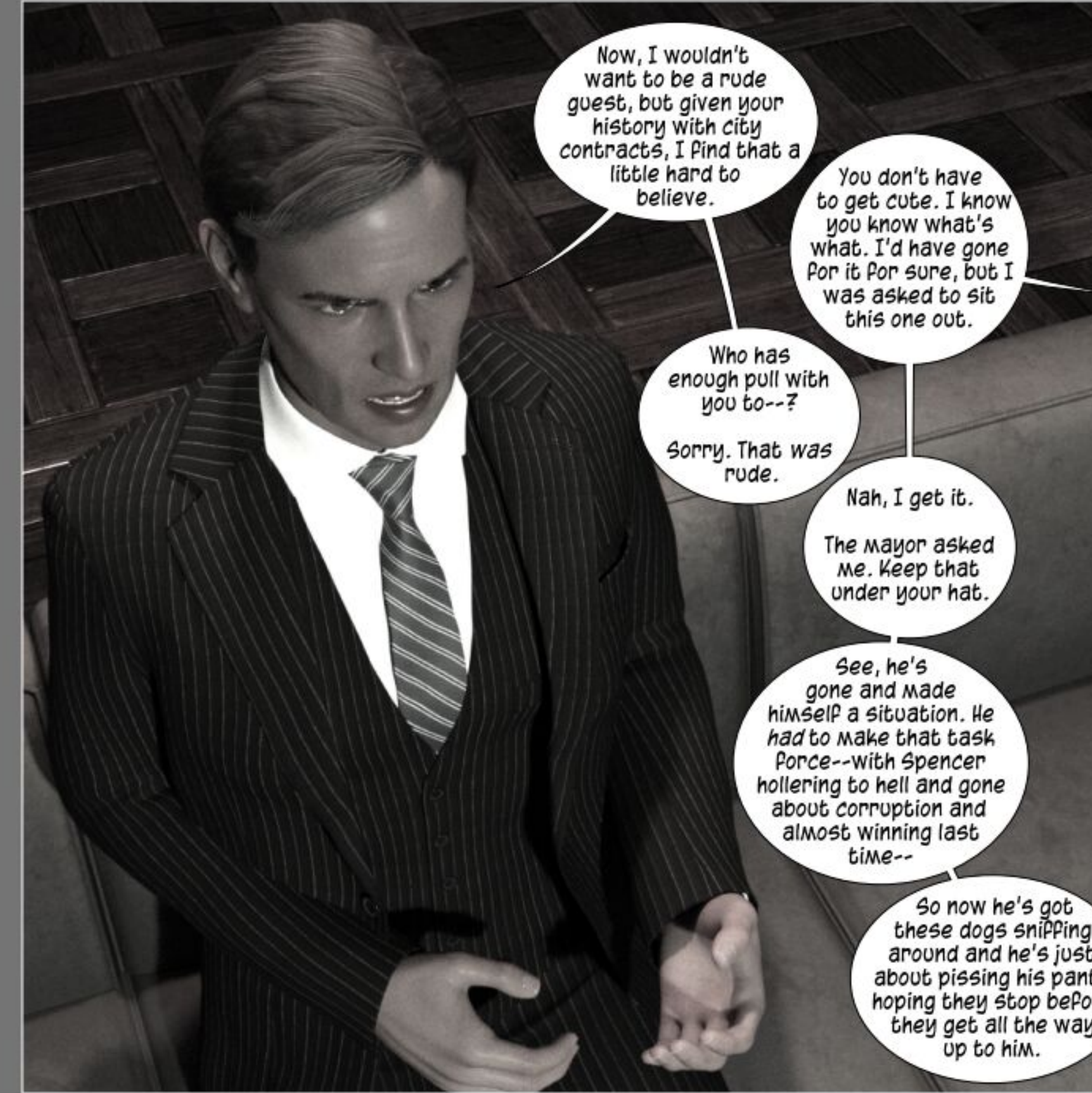
Well, I got nothing for you. I ain't bidding on the project.



GETTING TO DINUCCI WASN'T TOO HARD. I'D GOTTEN TANGLED IN SOME BUSINESS OF HIS A FEW YEARS BACK AND I DON'T KNOW WHETHER HE DECIDED I'D EARNED SOME RESPECT, OR WHETHER HE JUST TRUSTED ME NOT TO SAY THE WRONG THINGS TO THE WRONG PEOPLE, BUT FOR WHATEVER REASON, HE'D NEVER THROWN ME OUT ON MY ASS. AT LEAST, NOT YET. THE GUY WAS KNOWN TO END ARGUMENTS WITH A SHOTGUN, SO I FIGURED I WAS DOING PRETTY WELL.

Fisher. Siddydown, siddydown. You want a drink?

No, thanks. Just passing through, and wanted to ask you about the FisherMan's Pier contract.



Now, I wouldn't want to be a rude guest, but given your history with city contracts, I find that a little hard to believe.

You don't have to get cute. I know you know what's what. I'd have gone for it for sure, but I was asked to sit this one out.

Who has enough pull with you to--?

Sorry. That was rude.

Nah, I get it. The mayor asked me. Keep that under your hat.

See, he's gone and made himself a situation. He had to make that task Force--with Spencer hollering to hell and gone about corruption and almost winning last time--

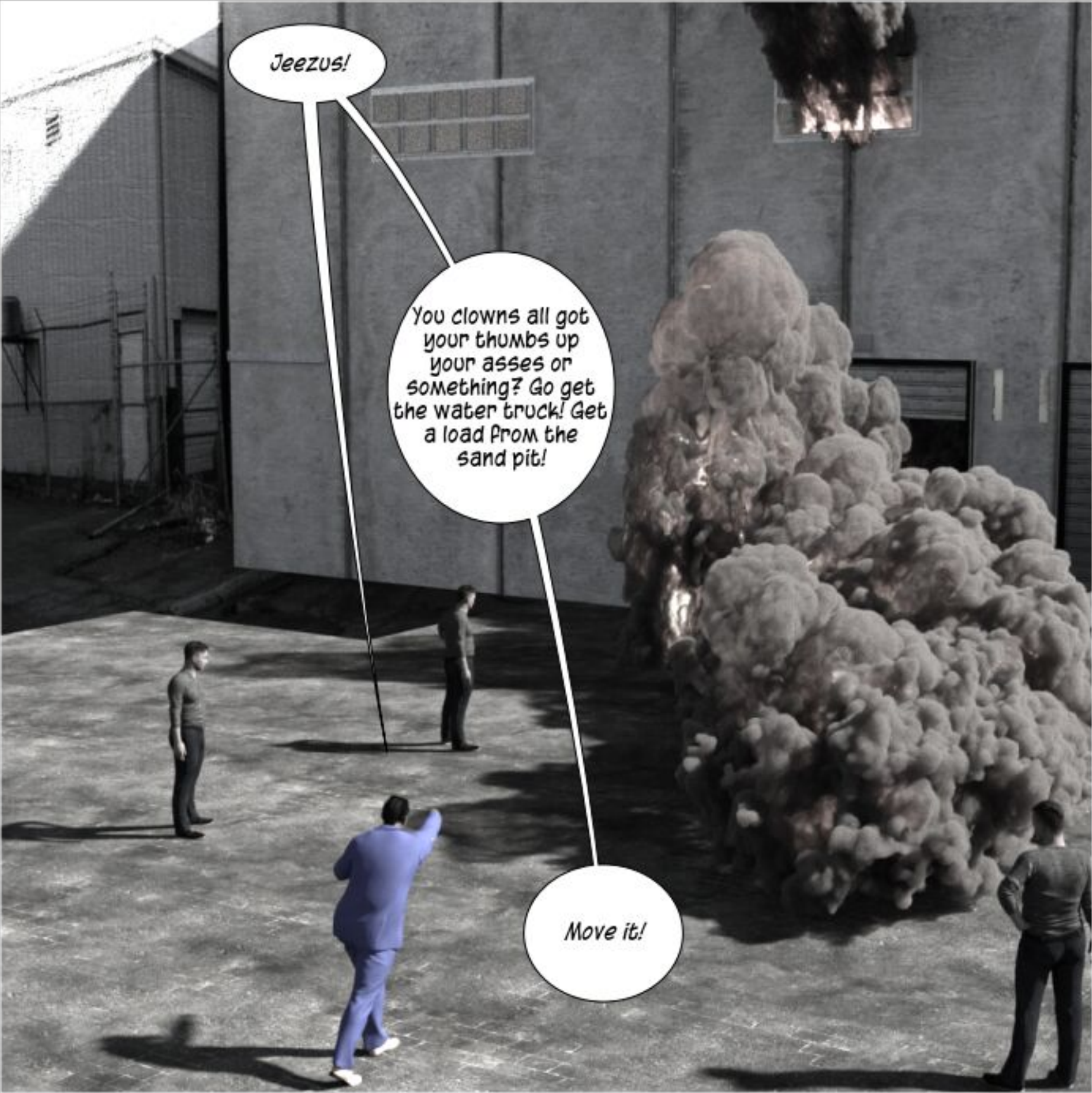
So now he's got these dogs snipping around and he's just about pissing his pants hoping they stop before they get all the way up to him.



It's pretty damned Punny when you stop to think about it--

KHOBO

What the Puck??



Jeezus!

You clowns all got your thumbs up your asses or something? Go get the water truck! Get a load from the sand pit!

Move it!



If that sonofabitch thinks he can just walk right into my yard and--

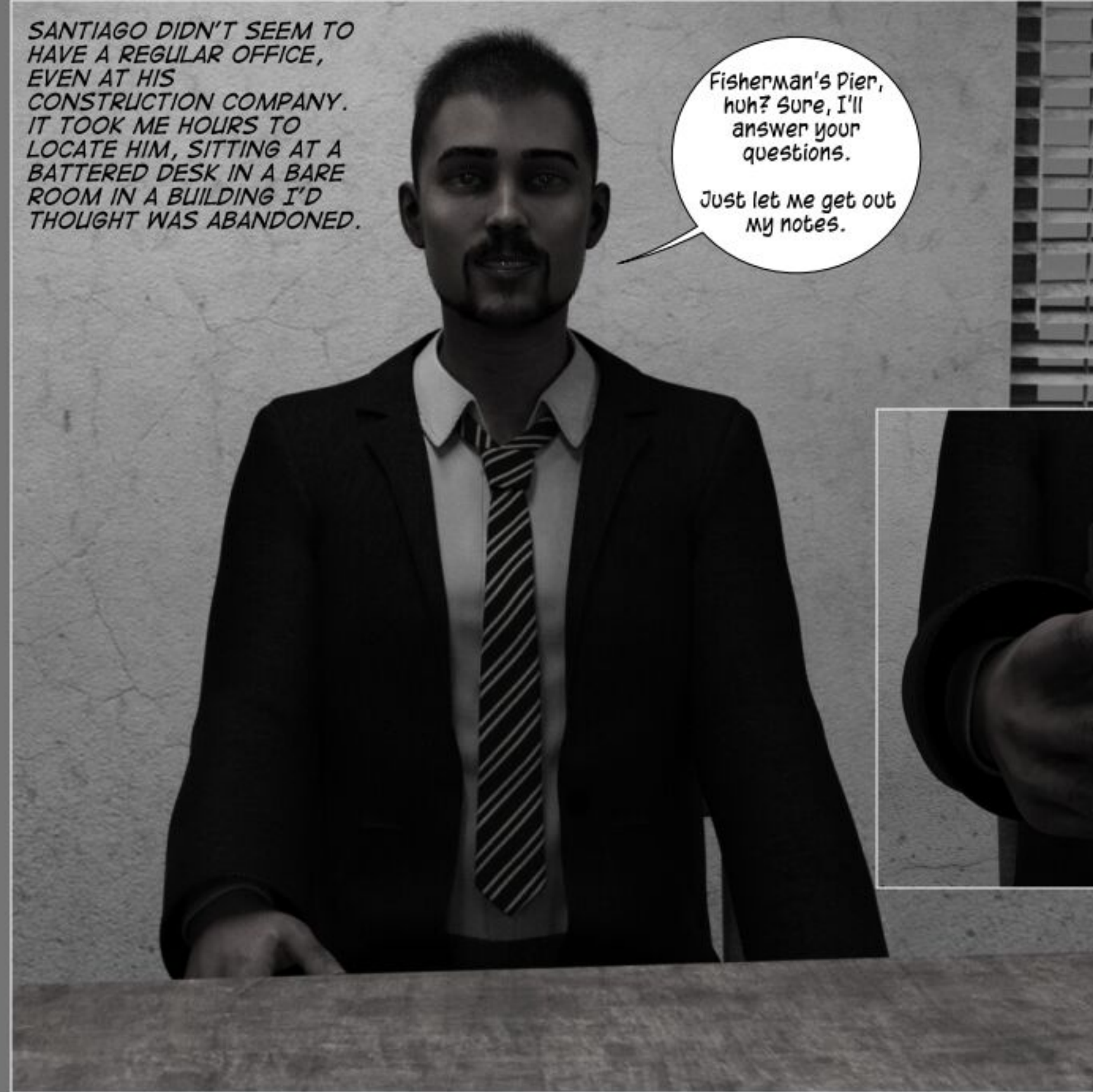
Now, which son-of-a-bitch would that be?

You still here? ... Eh, what the hell. Heard anything about Diego Santiago?

Nothing much and nothing good. He's got a construction business too, doesn't he? Is he competing with you?

He thinks he is. This is how the bastard "competes." OK, he wants to do it that way, he's gonna find out who's got the real muscle. Those street gangs he's got under his thumb--

Ah, you don't need to hear that. Listen, you wanna ask about Fisherman's Pier, go bother him, not me. But watch your ass if you do. You ask me, the guy's pocking nuts.



SANTIAGO DIDN'T SEEM TO HAVE A REGULAR OFFICE, EVEN AT HIS CONSTRUCTION COMPANY. IT TOOK ME HOURS TO LOCATE HIM, SITTING AT A BATTERED DESK IN A BARE ROOM IN A BUILDING I'D THOUGHT WAS ABANDONED.

Fisherman's Pier, huh? Sure, I'll answer your questions.

Just let me get out my notes.



I DECIDED THAT DINLUCCI MIGHT BE RIGHT ABOUT SANTIAGO.

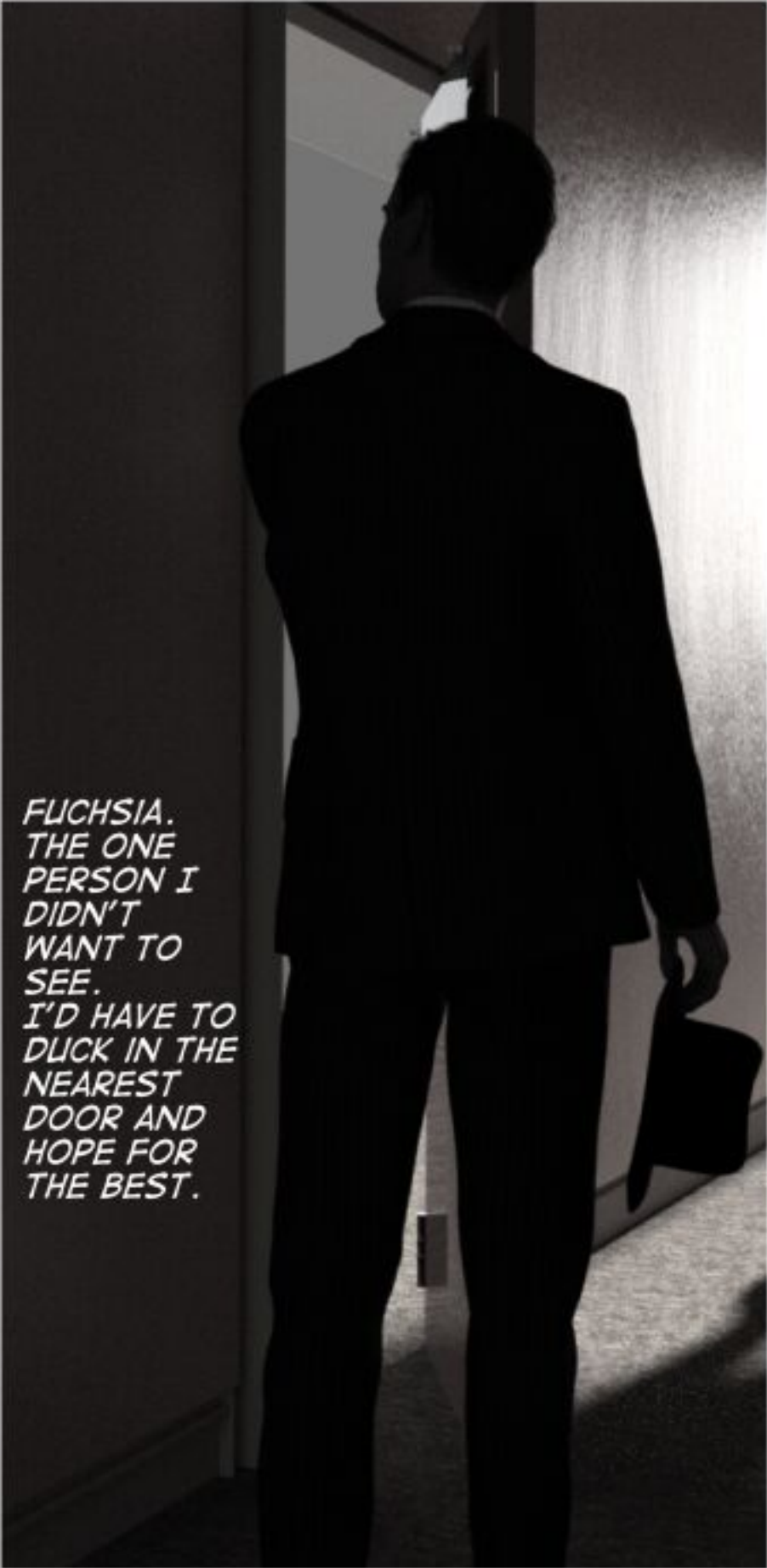


SINCE SANTIAGO WAS A DEAD END UNLESS I COULD GET HIM TO TALK WITH HIS MOUTH INSTEAD OF HIS GUN, I SWITCHED TRACKS AND WENT BACK TO WORK ON THE PALOMA CLUB. THIS TIME I WASN'T GOING IN THE FRONT DOOR.



APPARENTLY CUSTOMERS WANDERED THE BACK HALLS PRETTY FREELY; NO ONE PAID ANY ATTENTION TO ME.

... No, that's wrong. We moved it to the blue room for tonight. I told Dolores that.



FLUCHSIA. THE ONE PERSON I DIDN'T WANT TO SEE. I'D HAVE TO DUCK IN THE NEAREST DOOR AND HOPE FOR THE BEST.



There you are, Mr. Dubois! Late for your very first session, tsk.

Still, there should be enough time, and Corinne needn't know.



Here's your outfit. Did you shave everywhere as we asked?

Get out of all that, and while you're putting this on, I'll go fetch your stockings and shoes.



Uh ... well ... I'm not Mr. Dubois.

Oh! Then you're in the wrong room. Whose customer are you?

I'm not a customer. Look, this is ... You have a regular customer named Harrison StanPord. he's asked me to deliver a message to the person who is normally ... who he's usually a customer of ... I don't know what you call it.

I WAS TAKING A COUPLE OF RISKY LEAPS HERE, BUT I COULDN'T THINK OF ANYTHING BETTER ON THE FLY.

Well, that'd be Sue ... do you need to deliver the message to her directly?

That's right ... it's personal and private.



Sorry to take you away from your duties ...

It's all right. I think Mr. Dubois is a no-show, anyway. Corinne will be annoyed.

But Sue may have a customer right now. If she does, we can't disturb her.



You're not supposed to be in this room. Don't tell!

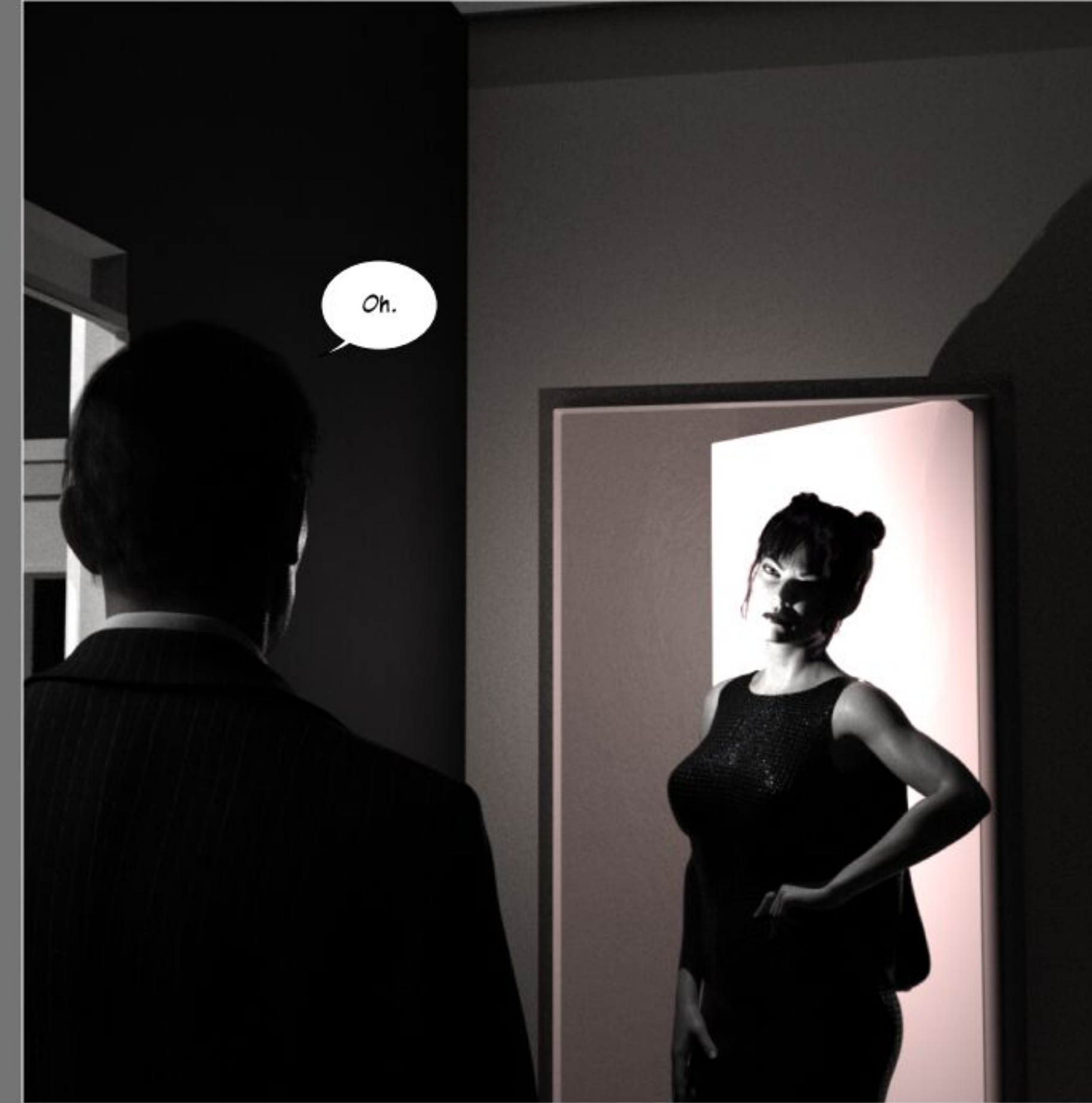
Yes, that's what I thought--she's with somebody. You'll have to come back later.

Don't worry, they can't see us.



Would StanFord have ... That is, does Sue do this with all her customers, Miss ...?

... Miss?



Oh.



I mean, honestly, Joe.

Do you think I keep secrets because I enjoy it? The privacy of my customers is important to me. And to the business. If they thought I couldn't keep their secrets, they'd stop coming.

I understand that, Fuchsia. And I don't want to reveal your secrets. Thing is, this is the last place StanFord went before going back to his office and getting shot. You see why there's interest?

You know, you could have told me that yesterday.

You didn't really give me a chance to.



If the police haven't already jumped up your ass about this, it's only because Montrose is doing his best to avoid talking to them. That won't last.

But ... there's no way the club could have anything to do with this! Harrison was a complete sweetheart, and besides, we don't knock off people even if we don't like them. It's bad for business.

What about blackmail? That was some pretty interesting stuff happening in that room. Nobody seemed to care about customers walking around ... easy enough to get a look at what the other ones were getting up to.



Not as easy as you think, apart from private investigators who know how to pick the back door lock.

Sure, we let them wander around. It's not a prison. But they usually can't get into anything they shouldn't see. My staff lock the doors while they're working.

Besides, I do a lot of screening before they ever get to the point where they can go back there. I'd like to think I wouldn't have let a shitheel blackmailer in there in the first place. I'm a pretty good judge of character, you know.

Which is probably why I tolerate your bullshit.

THERE WAS ANOTHER POSSIBILITY, WHICH WAS THAT FUCHSIA HERSELF, OR ONE OF HER STAFF, HAD TRIED TO BLACKMAIL STANFORD, HE'D GOTTEN NASTY, AND THEY'D SHOT HIM. I DIDN'T BRING THAT UP TO FUCHSIA, WHO WOULD HAVE SLAPPED MY FACE, AND ANYWAY I DIDN'T CONSIDER IT THE LEAST BIT LIKELY. FUCHSIA WAS ALWAYS FULL OF SURPRISES, BUT I KNEW HER BETTER THAN THAT. AND BESIDES, SHE'D SAY BLACKMAIL WAS ULTIMATELY BAD FOR BUSINESS TOO. YOU DON'T BLEED THE CASH COW.



OK, hang on.

What is all this about blackmail? What did StanFord do to get blackmailed for?

You're not going to tell me he could be blackmailed just for wanting to get dommed once a week.



Right? It's ridiculous. But that really does seem to be how it was.

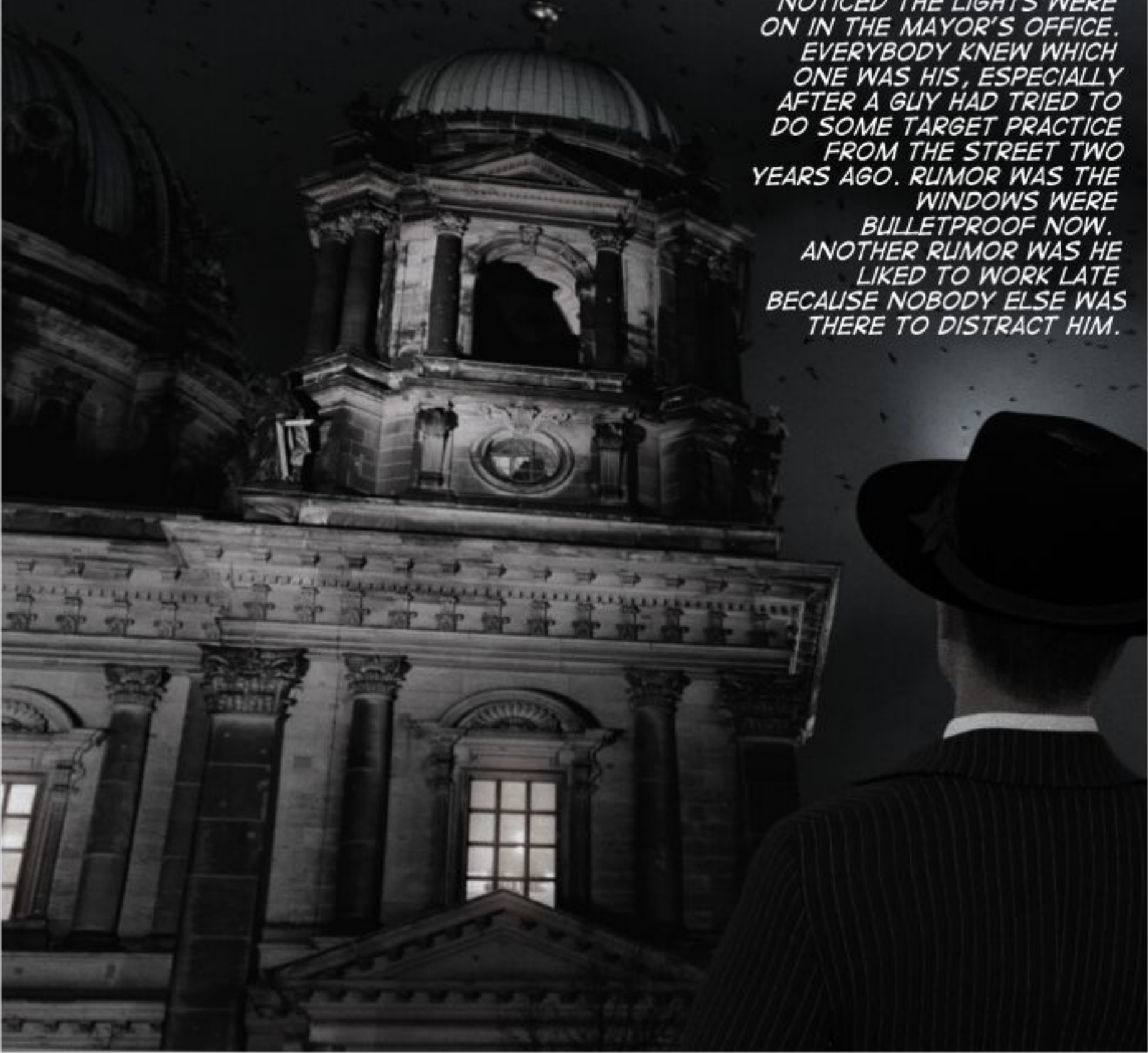
I found stories of people having to give up their positions because someone found out they'd paid for sex. Not anything particularly kinky, even. Just the idea that they'd paid for sex.

Seems like everyone had to pretend they were chaste and squeaky clean at all times. They weren't; they did all the stuff we do. They just weren't allowed to admit it? I don't know.

That must have been really boring. Glad I wasn't there.

I WALKED A WHILE AFTER LEAVING THE CLUB, TRYING TO GET MY HEAD UNTANGLED. IT WASN'T WORKING.

AS I PASSED CITY HALL, I NOTICED THE LIGHTS WERE ON IN THE MAYOR'S OFFICE. EVERYBODY KNEW WHICH ONE WAS HIS, ESPECIALLY AFTER A GUY HAD TRIED TO DO SOME TARGET PRACTICE FROM THE STREET TWO YEARS AGO. RUMOR WAS THE WINDOWS WERE BULLETPROOF NOW. ANOTHER RUMOR WAS HE LIKED TO WORK LATE BECAUSE NOBODY ELSE WAS THERE TO DISTRACT HIM.



THERE PROBABLY WASN'T ANYTHING USEFUL I COULD GET FROM HIM. ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU DON'T GET TOO MANY CHANCES TO TALK TO THE MAYOR WITH NO WITNESSES PRESENT. MAYBE HE'D LET SOMETHING LOOSE.



Hmm?
Who are you?
What are you doing here?

You've said many times your door's always open to your constituents.

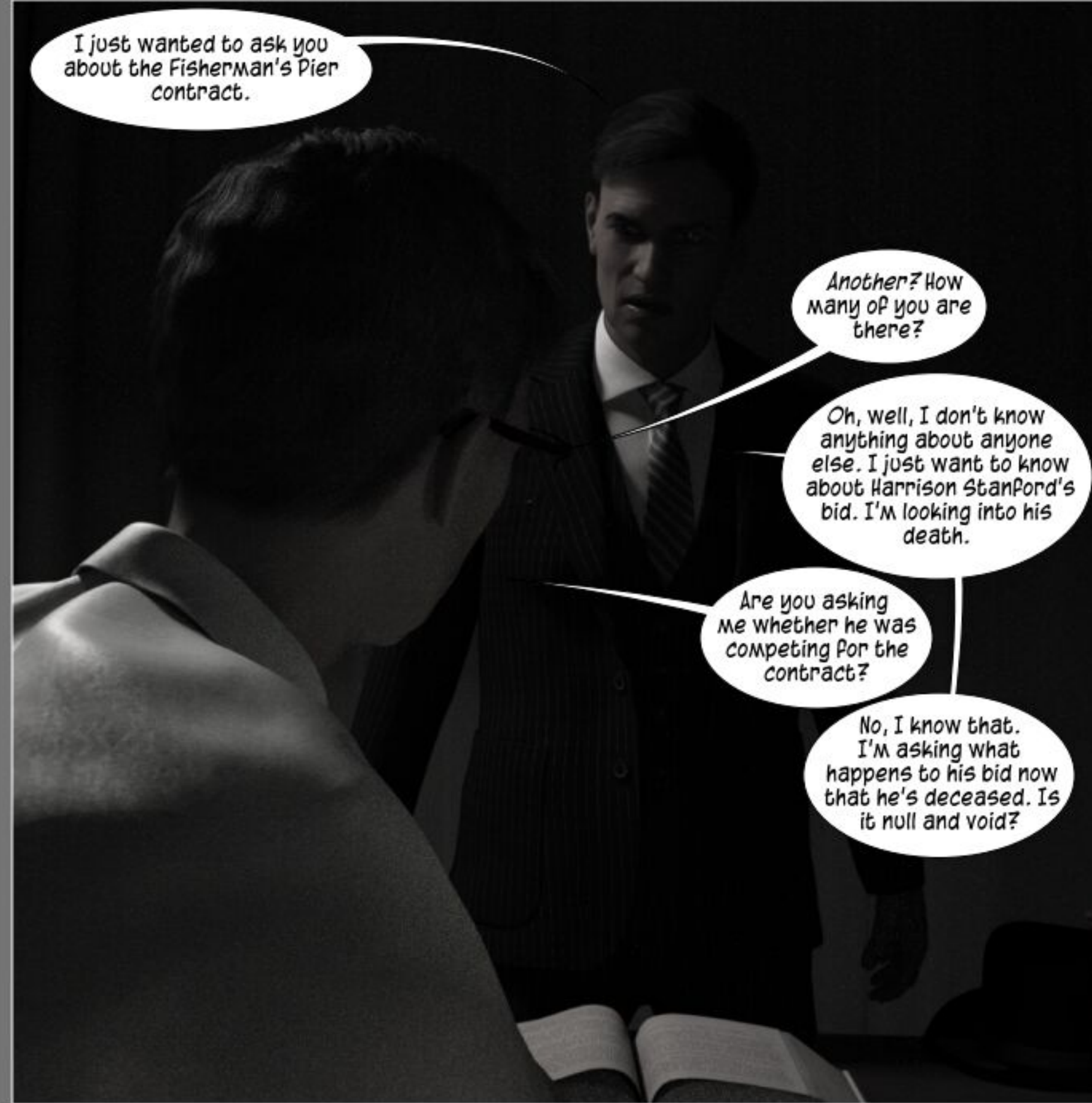
Not at this hour. How'd you get past the guard?

Didn't see one. Guess he was on rounds. My name's Joe Fisher.

Hrm. Fisher, eh? ... Weren't you the fellow who dealt with the Sterling embezzlement matter?

Flattered you remember.

It was a nice bit of work. What do you want, Mr. Fisher?



I just wanted to ask you about the Fisherman's Pier contract.

Another? How many of you are there?

Oh, well, I don't know anything about anyone else. I just want to know about Harrison Stanford's bid. I'm looking into his death.

Are you asking me whether he was competing for the contract?

No, I know that. I'm asking what happens to his bid now that he's deceased. Is it null and void?



Until a few hours ago, I'd have said yes. But I met with his business partner earlier today and I gather he wants the bid to stand.

SO MONTROSE WASN'T JUST HIDING SOMEWHERE SITTING ON HIS HANDS, THEN.

Thanks, that's very helpful. Just between us, how likely is he to get the contract? Is there a lot of competition?

Mr. Fisher, I think you know better than to expect me to answer that. And I don't see how it can possibly be relevant to any investigation you're doing.

Now, I think you should leave. Feel free to come talk to me some time--with an appointment.



AS I WALKED OUT, I HEARD THE SOUND OF MACAfee DIALING THE PHONE. HE HADN'T EVEN BOTHERED TO WAIT TO HEAR ME OFF DOWN THE HALL, SO I FELT LIKE EAVESDROPPING WAS FAIR GAME.

Rocco? This is Larry.

Rocco, what the hell is up with all of these people wanting to talk to me about Fisherman's Pier? Have you been telling people you're out? You know that looks just as bad, don't you?

Well, I don't know, then. *Somebody* sure got the word that it was open season ...

I NOTICED MACAfee WASN'T MENTIONING STANFORD OR MONTROSE. EVERYONE KNEW HE WAS VERY CHUMMY WITH DINUCCI, BUT DID THAT EXTEND TO TELLING DINUCCI WHO HAD PLACED BIDS?

I HEADED HOME AND TRIED TO GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP, OR SOMETHING CLOSE ENOUGH TO IT.



I DIDN'T MANAGE TO.

Morning, boss. Third day in that suit, I see.

Different tie, though. You can't talk, you wear the same dress every day.

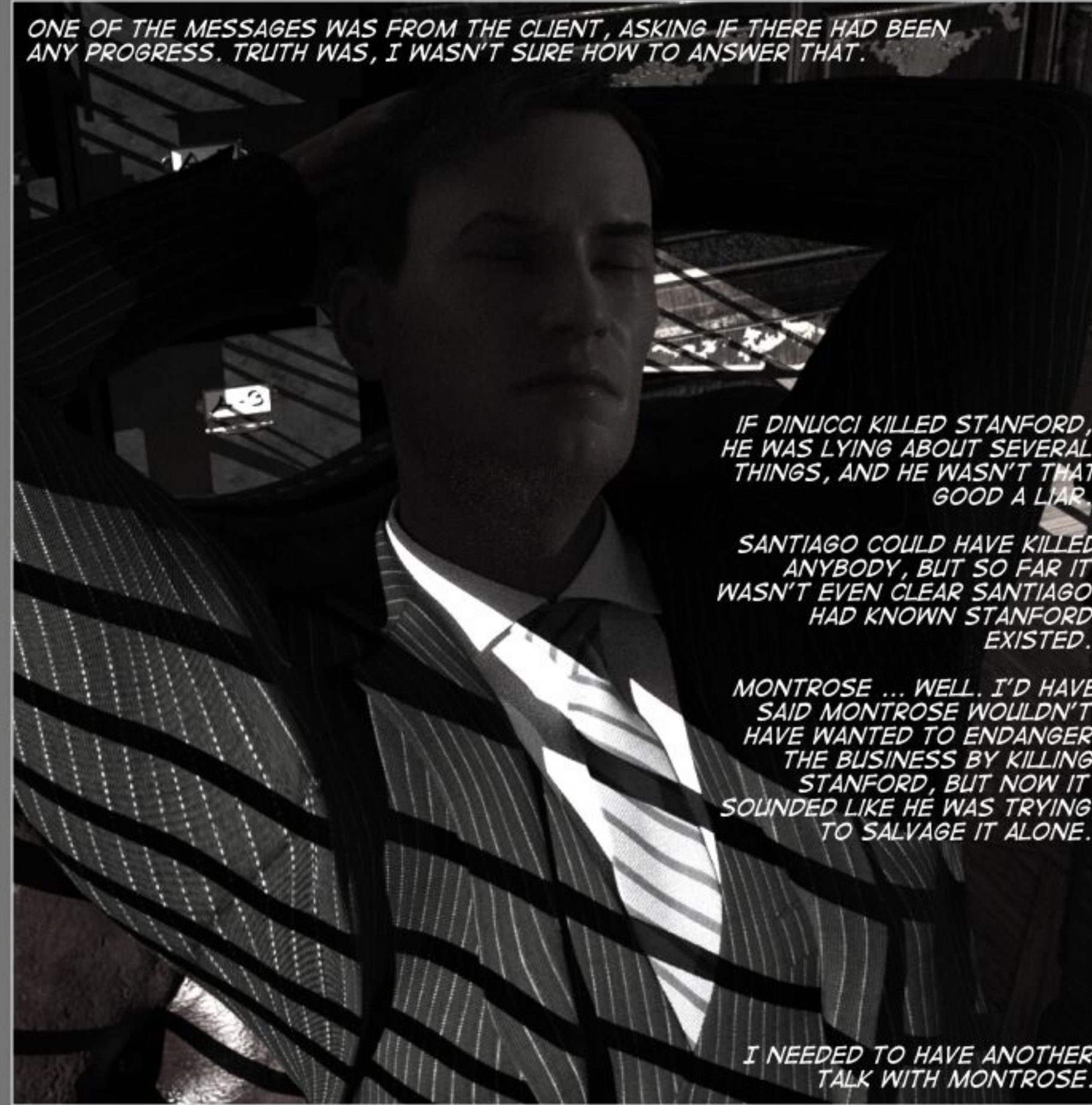
Not true. I have five identical dresses.

On Sundays I do laundry.

What do you do on Saturdays?

I run naked through Griffith Park.

Your messages are on your desk.



ONE OF THE MESSAGES WAS FROM THE CLIENT, ASKING IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY PROGRESS. TRUTH WAS, I WASN'T SURE HOW TO ANSWER THAT.

IF DINUCCI KILLED STANFORD, HE WAS LYING ABOUT SEVERAL THINGS, AND HE WASN'T THAT GOOD A LIAR.

SANTIAGO COULD HAVE KILLED ANYBODY, BUT SO FAR IT WASN'T EVEN CLEAR SANTIAGO HAD KNOWN STANFORD EXISTED.

MONTROSE ... WELL, I'D HAVE SAID MONTROSE WOULDN'T HAVE WANTED TO ENDANGER THE BUSINESS BY KILLING STANFORD, BUT NOW IT SOUNDED LIKE HE WAS TRYING TO SALVAGE IT ALONE.

I NEEDED TO HAVE ANOTHER TALK WITH MONTROSE.



I SPENT MOST OF THE NEXT DAY LOOKING FOR MONTROSE. WHEREVER HE WAS HIDING, HE WAS DOING A DAMNED GOOD JOB OF IT. I EVEN WENT TO NORRIS AND HUMILIATED MYSELF TO FIND OUT WHETHER THE POLICE HAD HIM. THEY DIDN'T.

IT WAS GETTING PRETTY LATE, AND I WAS IN A ROTTEN MOOD AND WAS CONSIDERING SEVERAL LARGE WHISKEYS, WHEN IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT THERE WAS SOMEONE WHO MIGHT HAVE SOME DIRT ON STANFORD AND MONTROSE.

MARTIN CALDWELL AND I HAD BEEN IN THE ARMY TOGETHER. WHEN WE CAME HOME, I WENT INTO DETECTING; HE WENT INTO HIGH FINANCE. HE WAS WORTH A WHOLE PILE THESE DAYS, BUT YOU COULDN'T TELL FROM ANY OF HIS HABITS--UNLESS YOU HAPPENED TO LOOK CLOSELY AT HIS SUITS.

MARTIN KNEW ABOUT ALL THE MONEY IN TOWN. WHO HAD IT, WHO'D LOST IT, AND WHO WAS DESPERATE FOR IT.



Well, hello, Joe! What do you know?

Evening, Martin.

I could use a favor.

Psh. And I was hoping this was a social visit.

What do you need?

Information. On a company called Stanford and Montrose. Construction business.



Now, Joe.

Not that I've never done anything out of the goodness of my heart, and you know I think the world of you ... but information takes work, and work costs money. I'm on a value-received basis these days, you know.



Make me an offer.

I'm not sure what I could offer. What do you get the man who has everything?

I could throw you a cut of my pie, but I get the impression that wouldn't interest you much.

You'd be right about that.

But, ah, if you're up for it, I'd be interested in alternate forms of compensation.



Assuming you remember how.



You know, you've still got a great body, even after all these years ...



IF YOU'RE EXPECTING ME TO SAY SOMETHING ABOUT GETTING INFORMATION AT ALL COSTS, FORGET IT. MARTIN AND I HAD BEEN THROUGH A LOT TOGETHER, AND THIS WASN'T ANYWHERE CLOSE TO BEING THE FIRST TIME.

GOING TO BED WITH HIM WAS HARDLY A FATE WORSE THAN DEATH, IS WHAT I'M SAYING.



Nice!

Was that his idea or yours? You didn't spring it on him without warning, did you?



Before I even start to write a scenario, I talk to the client to find out where the limits are. Not just what they want, but what they will and won't do.

Nathan was pretty much up for anything. I couldn't tell him any of what was going to happen, because he was trying to figure out the mystery as he went, but I decided to throw this at him to see what he'd do.

I knew Byron, who plays Caldwell, would definitely push pretty hard--I've worked with him many times. But Nathan always had the opportunity to say no. There was a "plan B" at every stage of the script.

Nathan took it all in stride. He was full of surprises. I'd love to do another job for him some day.

And before Doreen asks--Byron told me later that Nathan clearly hadn't done that much, if at all ... but made up for it with enthusiasm.

I love it!



It's later than you think, Joe.

--HMM--

Good morning to you too. There's coffee in the kitchen.

Are you awake enough for the dirt, or do you need coffee first? I've been making some calls.

No, hit me.

Well, the gist is, the company is broke, no matter what their books say. They had debt they didn't have any apparent reason to have. I got that from a banking source who wasn't supposed to tell me, so don't you tell either.

Nobody knows why they're broke, though. The business was doing well. Some money was going down a hole somewhere, but I can't find where. Maybe I could with another week's work.



Don't bother. So Stanford needed that contract pretty badly ... and Montrose knew it too, or he probably wouldn't have tried to preserve the bid.

Thank you, Martin. That's very useful to know.

You're welcome. Any time you want to barter for more information, feel free.

Well, feel free to pay a call even when you don't want information, and we'll barter anyway.

Go get some coffee.



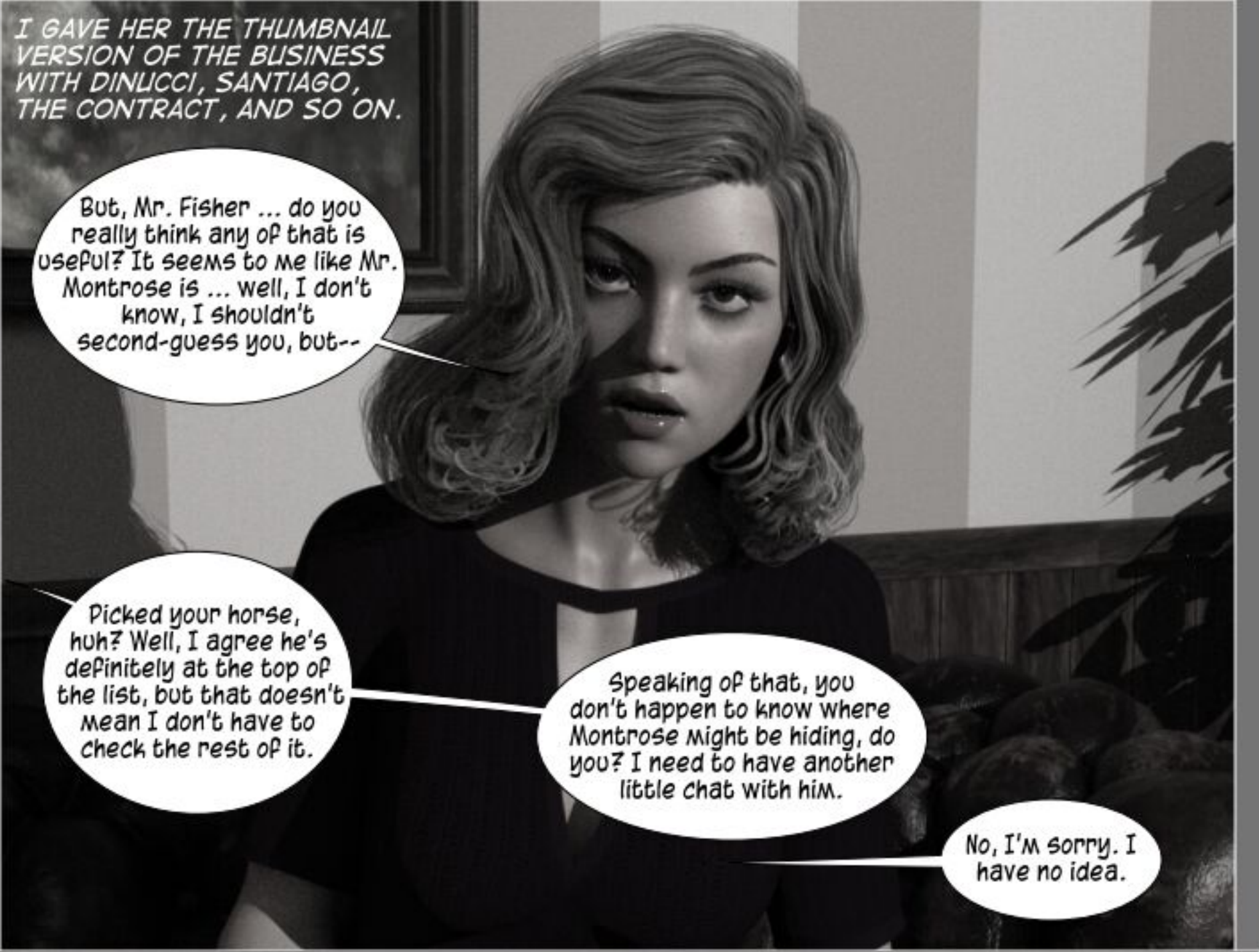
I WAS DEFINITELY RUNNING BEHIND, ESPECIALLY AFTER I WENT HOME TO CHANGE, BUT IT HAD BEEN WORTH IT. ASIDE FROM THE INFORMATION, I'D GOTTEN MUCH BETTER SLEEP THAN THE NIGHT BEFORE.

WHEN I GOT TO THE OFFICE, THE CLIENT WAS WAITING.

Sorry I'm so late, Miss Stanford.

Please, call me Ellie.

Have you learned anything?



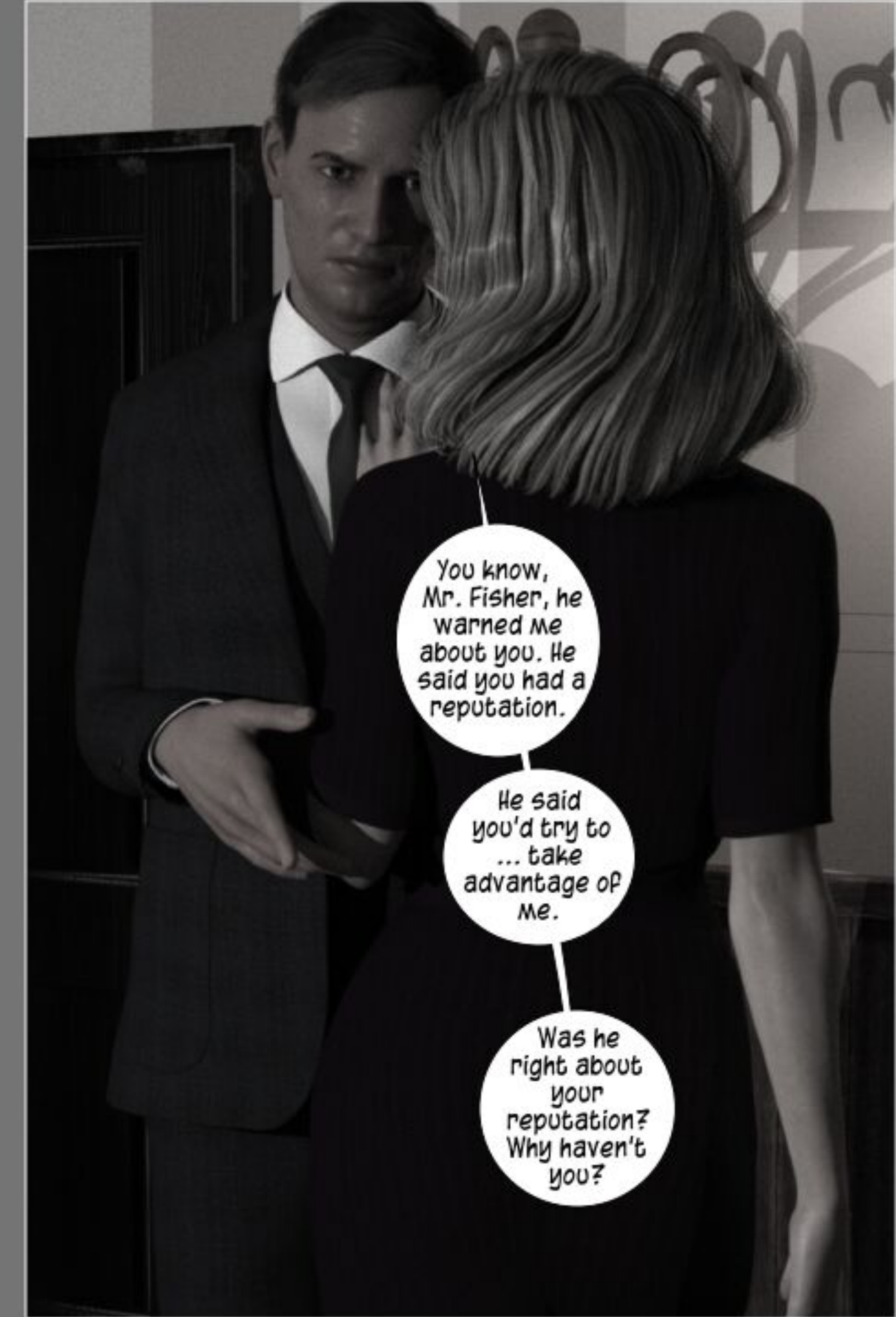
I GAVE HER THE THUMBNAILED VERSION OF THE BUSINESS WITH DINUCCI, SANTIAGO, THE CONTRACT, AND SO ON.

But, Mr. Fisher ... do you really think any of that is useful? It seems to me like Mr. Montrose is ... well, I don't know, I shouldn't second-guess you, but--

Picked your horse, huh? Well, I agree he's definitely at the top of the list, but that doesn't mean I don't have to check the rest of it.

Speaking of that, you don't happen to know where Montrose might be hiding, do you? I need to have another little chat with him.

No, I'm sorry. I have no idea.



You know, Mr. Fisher, he warned me about you. He said you had a reputation.

He said you'd try to ... take advantage of me.

Was he right about your reputation? Why haven't you?



I wait for an invitation, Miss Stanford.

Ellie.

Well, that's a pleasant change of pace.

And if I gave you an invitation?

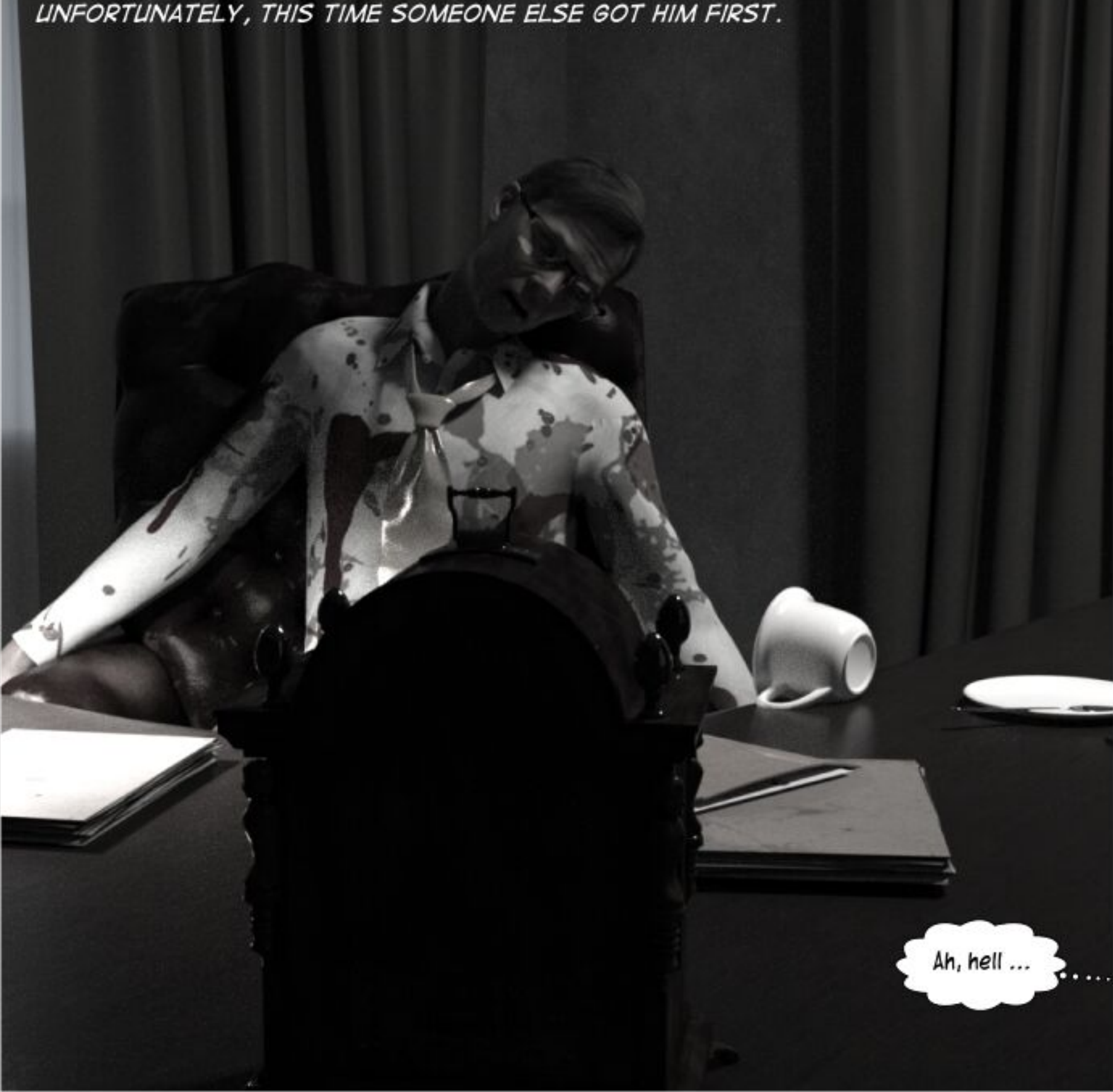
You'd still be a client.

When we're done, we could always discuss it. But not until then.



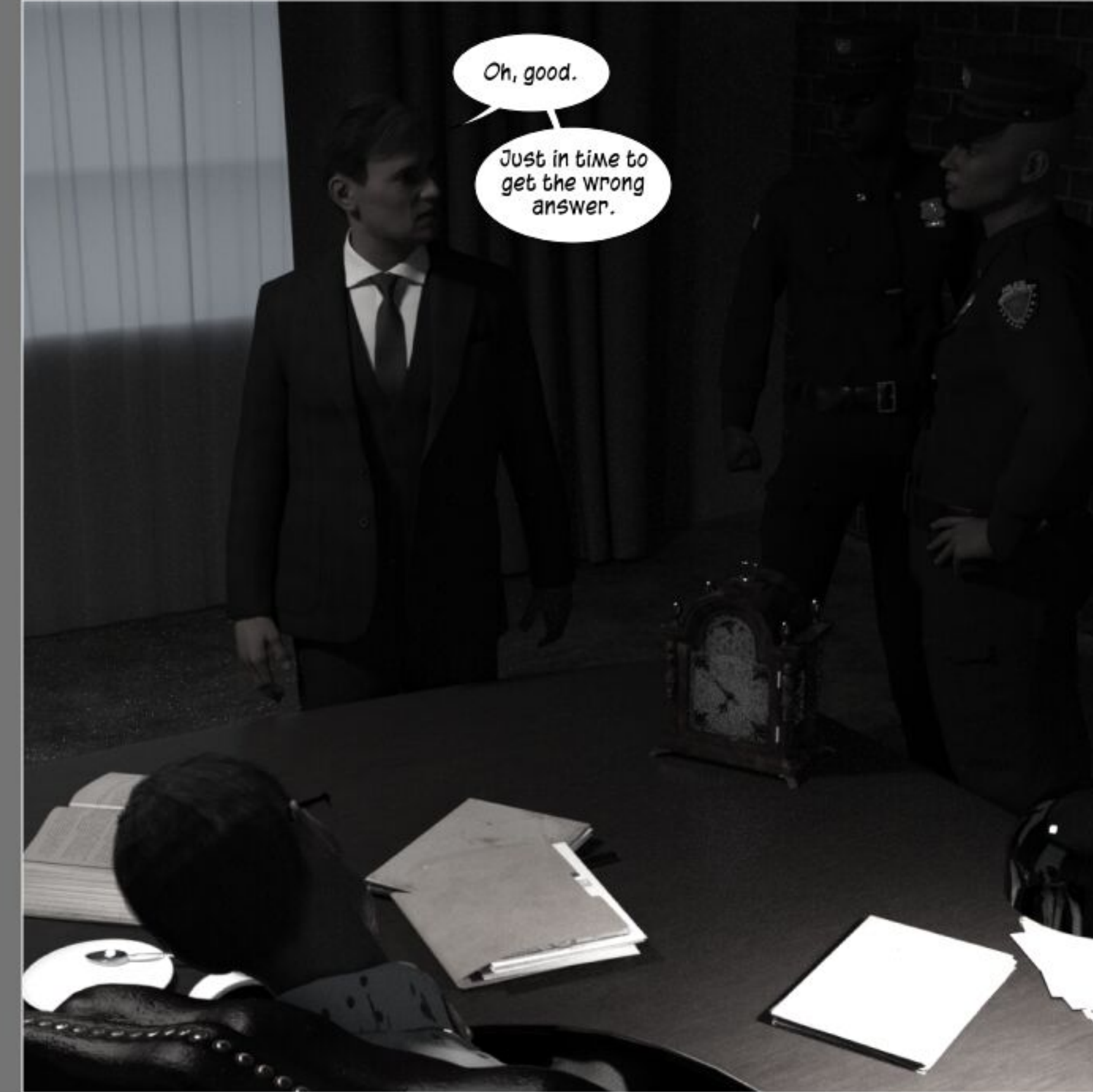
I DIDN'T WANT TO ADMIT TO HER HOW LITTLE I HAD. DINUCCI INSISTED HE WASN'T IN IT, SANTIAGO WOULDN'T SAY A DAMNED THING, I COULDN'T FIND MONTROSE, AND I DIDN'T HAVE A LEVER TO USE ON HIM IF I COULD.

I DID HAVE A COUPLE OF FRESH QUESTIONS FOR THE MAYOR, IN VIEW OF THE INFORMATION FROM MARTIN, SO LATER THAT NIGHT I WENT TO GO TRY TO CATCH HIM WORKING LATE AGAIN. IT SEEMED LIKE THE EASIEST WAY TO GET HIM.



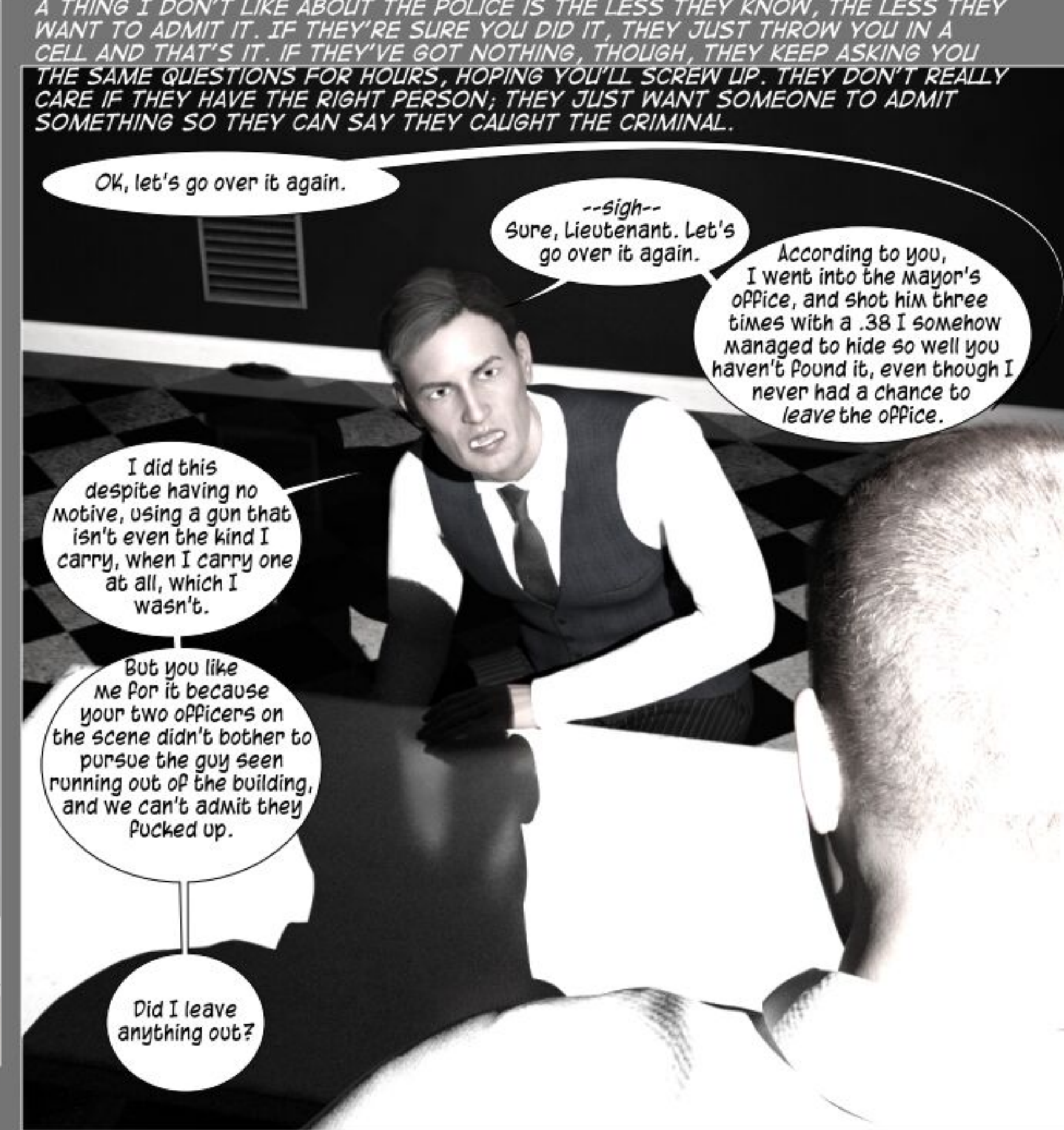
UNFORTUNATELY, THIS TIME SOMEONE ELSE GOT HIM FIRST.

Ah, hell ...



Oh, good.

Just in time to get the wrong answer.



A THING I DON'T LIKE ABOUT THE POLICE IS THE LESS THEY KNOW, THE LESS THEY WANT TO ADMIT IT. IF THEY'RE SURE YOU DID IT, THEY JUST THROW YOU IN A CELL AND THAT'S IT. IF THEY'VE GOT NOTHING, THOUGH, THEY KEEP ASKING YOU THE SAME QUESTIONS FOR HOURS, HOPING YOU'LL SCREW UP. THEY DON'T REALLY CARE IF THEY HAVE THE RIGHT PERSON; THEY JUST WANT SOMEONE TO ADMIT SOMETHING SO THEY CAN SAY THEY CAUGHT THE CRIMINAL.

OK, let's go over it again.

--sigh-- Sure, Lieutenant. Let's go over it again.

According to you, I went into the Mayor's office, and shot him three times with a .38 I somehow managed to hide so well you haven't found it, even though I never had a chance to leave the office.

I did this despite having no motive, using a gun that isn't even the kind I carry, when I carry one at all, which I wasn't.

But you like me for it because your two officers on the scene didn't bother to pursue the guy seen running out of the building, and we can't admit they fucked up.

Did I leave anything out?



Fisher, I swear to god, sometimes I think you want to lose your license.

There's nothing in the rules that says I have to be polite to cops. I've checked.

Aren't you getting tired of this? I bet you'd like to get out of here. It's late.

Hey, tell you what-- get the D.A. to come out from behind that window where he's watching, and the three of us'll go somewhere and I'll buy you both a drink.



Norris.

Get him out of here. I'm tired of listening to him.

Fisher, watch your ass, or one of these days I will take your license.

And don't leave town.

I guess this means you don't want that drink.

THE CITY WAS IN AN LIPROAR THE NEXT MORNING. I GUESS WHEN THE MAYOR GETS SHOT IN HIS OFFICE IT'S A BIG DEAL.



If I got killed in my office, I'd be lucky to get an inch's worth of obituary buried somewhere in the back.

Aw, c'mon, boss. Self-pity isn't usually one of your vices.



No, you're right. Sorry. It's just because I'm so frustrated. I can't get anywhere on this case, and I'm not going to get anywhere unless I can scrape up some more info somehow.

HMM.

Dinucci and the Mayor were good friends, right? Dinucci seems like the kind who takes it pretty personally when someone kills one of his friends. Think you could use that to get some help from him?

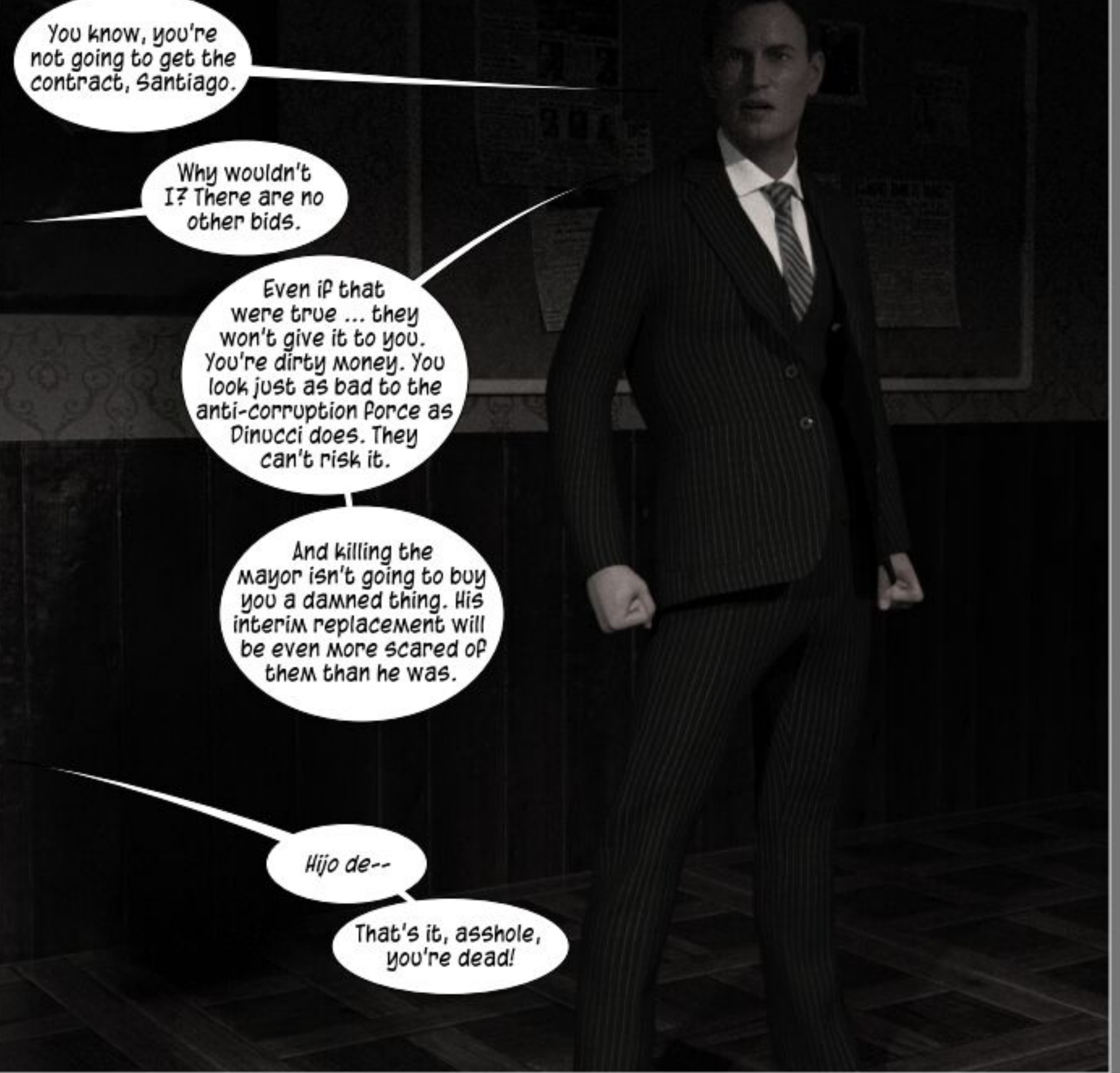
WHEN I WALKED INTO DINUCCI'S OFFICE, I GOT A RUDE SURPRISE.



Fisher!
Have you met
Santiago yet?

We've come to what
you might call an
understanding.

Amazin' what you
can do with a little
communication.



You know, you're
not going to get the
contract, Santiago.

Why wouldn't
I? There are no
other bids.

Even if that
were true ... they
won't give it to you.
You're dirty money. You
look just as bad to the
anti-corruption force as
Dinucci does. They
can't risk it.

And killing the
Mayor isn't going to buy
you a damned thing. His
interim replacement will
be even more scared of
them than he was.

Hijo de--

That's it, asshole,
you're dead!



Santiago, you
crazy bastard!
Don't go shooting
people in my
office!

KPOW
KPOW



Oh! Sorry, I didn't
know you were
changing clothes--

Hey! You're hurt!

Just grazed.
Santiago's a lousy shot.

Hope Louie the
tailor can mend the
coat, though. I like
this suit.

Santiago? I
thought you were
going to see
Dinucci?

Santiago and
Dinucci are all
chummy now. And he
knows Dinucci's
not in it.

Might not last,
though; I think I
gave Rocco Food For
thought.



I'm sorry,
boss. If I hadn't
suggested ...

Not your
fault, blue-eyes.
It was a good
idea.

I'm about to
give up on the
whole thing,
anyway.

I don't like telling
the client I blew it,
but I don't think I
have much of a
choice. This is going
nowhere fast.



I WENT TO THE CLIENT'S HOUSE TO THROW IN THE TOWEL
-- BUT THE DAY WAS FULL OF SURPRISES.

... Ellie, you
have to!

Tell me--do you somehow not
know how much this has
destroyed my life, or is it just
that you don't care?

Jake, listen to
me! I--



Hey!

I'll take
that.

What the hell are you
doing, genius? Don't you
think you're in enough
trouble already?



Interesting antique.
Where'd you dig this up?
Come on, we need to talk.

It was my Pather's. It's
been sitting in a drawer
for years. And I have
nothing to say to you.

You can talk to me or you
can talk to the police. You're
out of other choices.



I don't know what you're expecting me to tell you. If I could prove I didn't kill Harrison, I'd have done it already.

Then let's talk about something else. What was he blowing company money on?



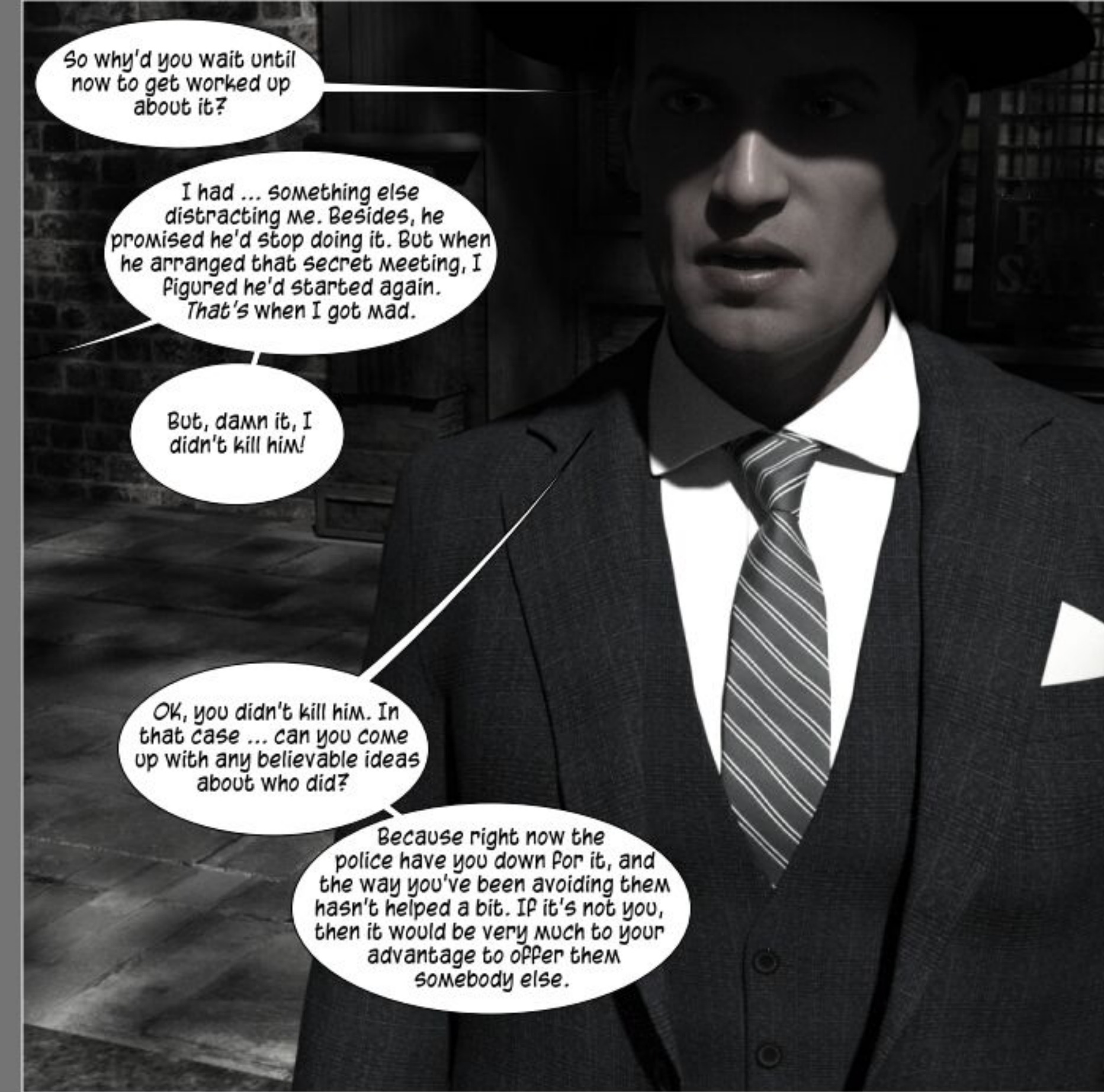
Real estate speculation. In addition to wasting our profits, he skimmed on materials and labor for six or seven major contracts. The clients didn't get what they paid for, and he threw that money the same place he threw the rest of it. And none of his land deals worked out, of course.

He didn't cut corners enough to endanger anybody's safety, thank god--our buildings aren't going to fall down--but if it got out, we'd never get work again. I don't think he cared.

How long had you known?

A little over a year. I figured it out when I went to inspect one of the projects we'd just finished.

After I confronted him, that's when he started leaving me out of things.



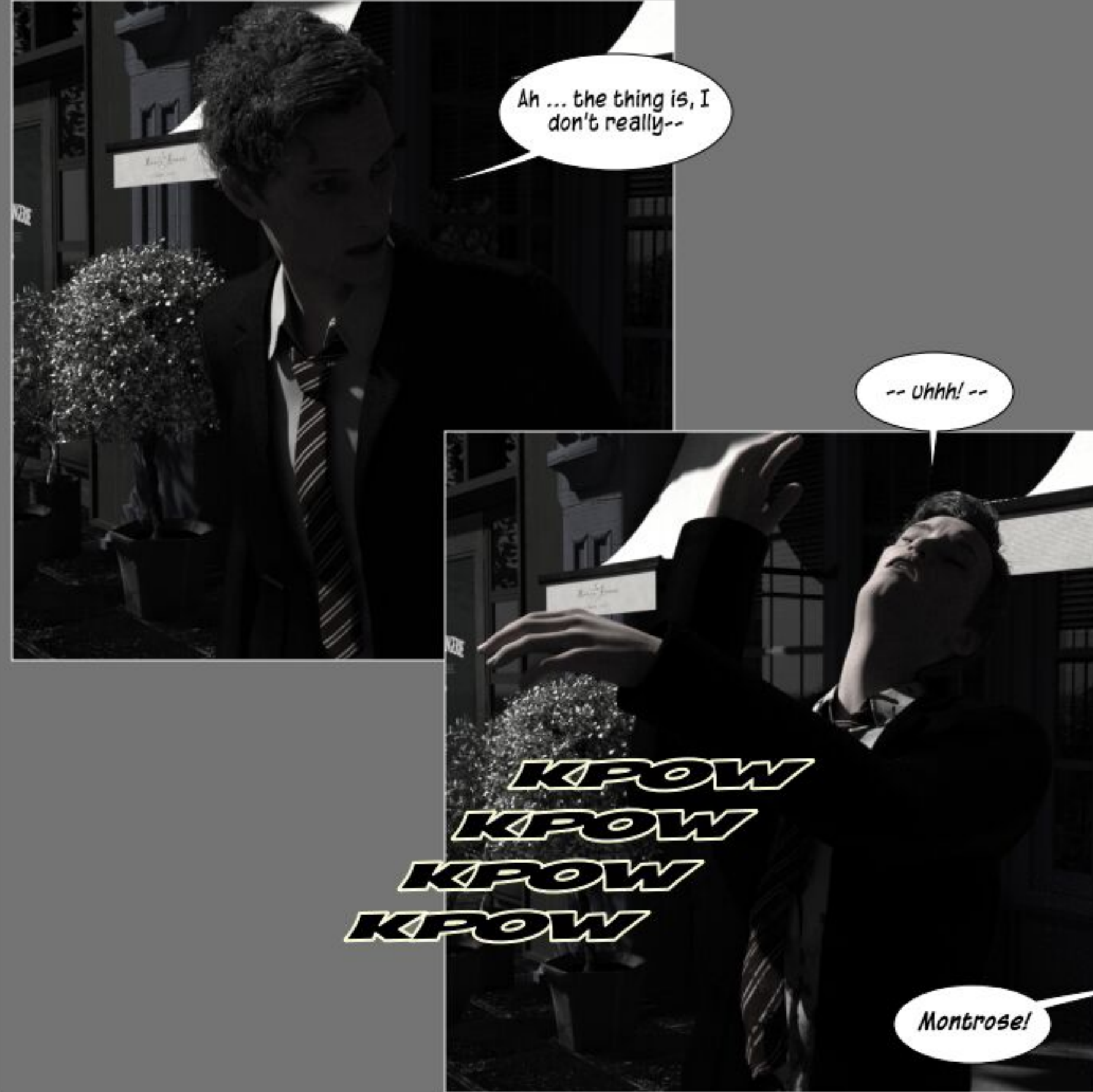
So why'd you wait until now to get worked up about it?

I had ... something else distracting me. Besides, he promised he'd stop doing it. But when he arranged that secret meeting, I figured he'd started again. That's when I got mad.

But, damn it, I didn't kill him!

OK, you didn't kill him. In that case ... can you come up with any believable ideas about who did?

Because right now the police have you down for it, and the way you've been avoiding them hasn't helped a bit. If it's not you, then it would be very much to your advantage to offer them somebody else.



Ah ... the thing is, I don't really--

-- Uhhh! --

**KPOW
KPOW
KPOW
KPOW**

Montrose!



Stop!

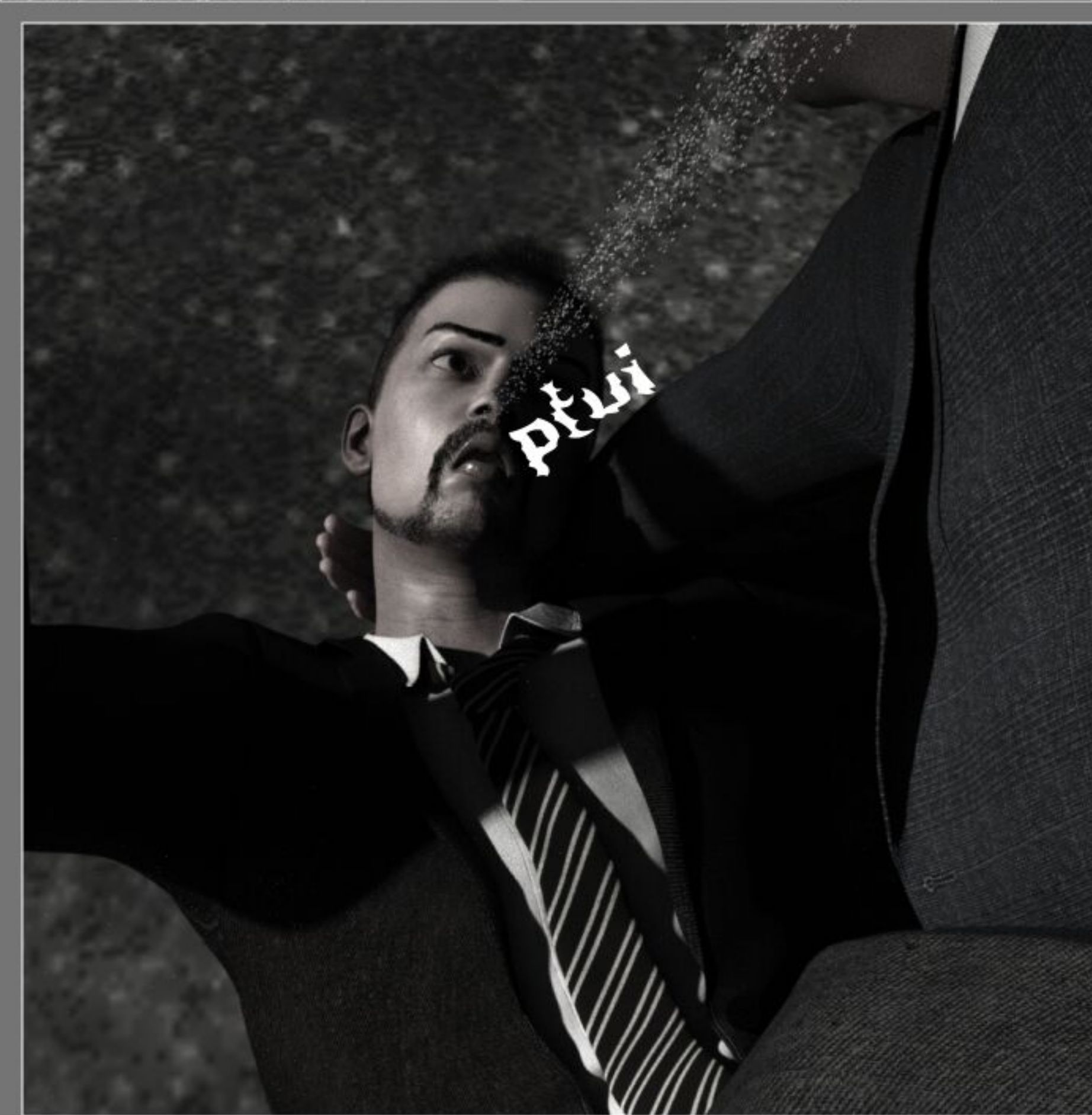


Damn it, stop or I'll shoot!

**click
click
click**



Not loaded.
Hilarious.



Hey! Why'd you pause it?

Because it's time for you to solve the case!

Everything Prom here on is the ending. No more clues.

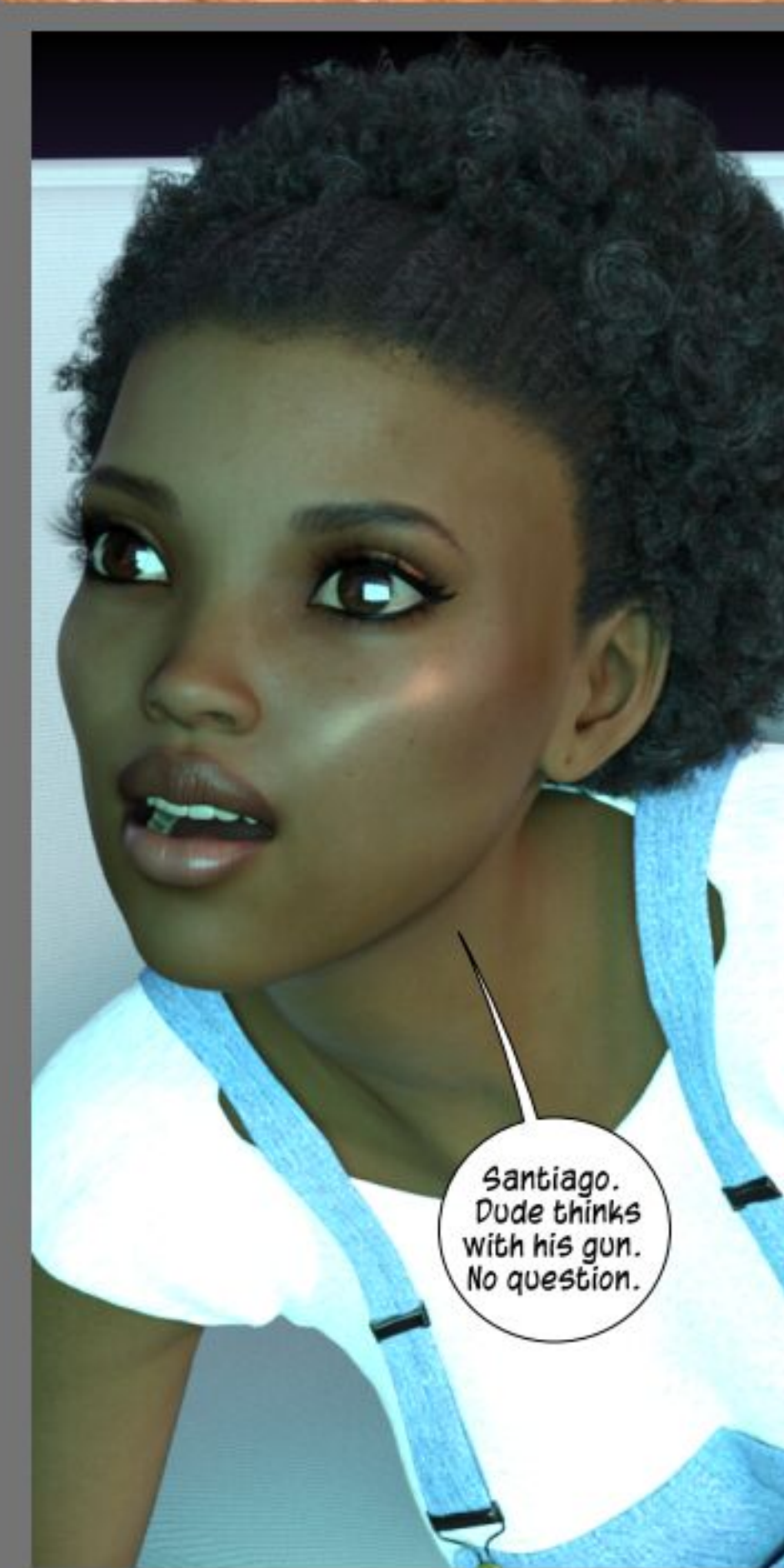


This is where I took Nathan aside, off-set, to see if he had the right idea of where it was going to end up.

He got it right, too! He didn't figure out all of the why, but he got the who. I was impressed.

Anyway, Lou's disqualified, they've seen it already, but the rest of you should at least take a guess:

Who shot Harrison Stanford?



Santiago. Dude thinks with his gun. No question.



I think it's got to be Montrose. Nobody else has a good enough motive.



I think it's Dinucci, just because we got told so fast that it wasn't Dinucci.

I think we should take that even further.



What do you mean?

I think it's going to be somebody we weren't even supposed to put on the list.

I'm not sure who, but Ruby's sneaky. I don't think it's going to be one of those three.

TWO DAYS LATER. OR MAYBE IT WAS THREE. I WASN'T GETTING A LOT OF SLEEP.



Boss.
... Boss.
You OK?

Huh?

Oh. Yeah, sorry. Just trying to decide something.

Well, Lt. Norris is on the phone.



Morning, Lieutenant.

... Is that right?

No, I guess I'm not all that surprised. Wish I were.

Yeah, that's what I'd assume too.

Thanks for letting me know.

Goodbye.



Diego Santiago was found dead in his cell this morning.

Suicide?

No. And not a natural death.

Oh. Bet the police are thrilled about that.

This is probably my fault, sort of.

Remember I said I gave Dinucci Pood Por thought?

If he decided to agree with me that Santiago killed the mayor ... Dinucci doesn't like people killing his friends.

Or, y'know, maybe he just decided Santiago was too loose a cannon to let live.

Yeah. I hope you're not shedding too many tears over him.

Not at all. Actually, it's helped me make that decision I was talking about.

I CALLED THE CLIENT, WHO CAME TO THE OFFICE ABOUT TWO HOURS LATER. I HAD A MOMENT WHERE I WONDERED IF SHE'D SHOW UP AT ALL.



... But we're done, though, aren't we?

I mean, with Mr. Montrose and this Santiago person both dead, it hardly matters which of them killed my father.



I'm afraid it still matters quite a lot.

Because neither of them shot him.

Like Dinucci, Santiago didn't even know Stanford or Montrose existed. Santiago still didn't realize they had a bid on that contract until I accidentally tipped him off ... which I regret doing, because I figure the next thing he did was go find someone in City Hall who'd tell him, and once he did, Montrose was doomed.

As for Montrose, he was too interested in trying to keep the business together. He wanted to get Stanford to clean up his act, but he didn't want to kill him. That wasn't the answer he was looking for.

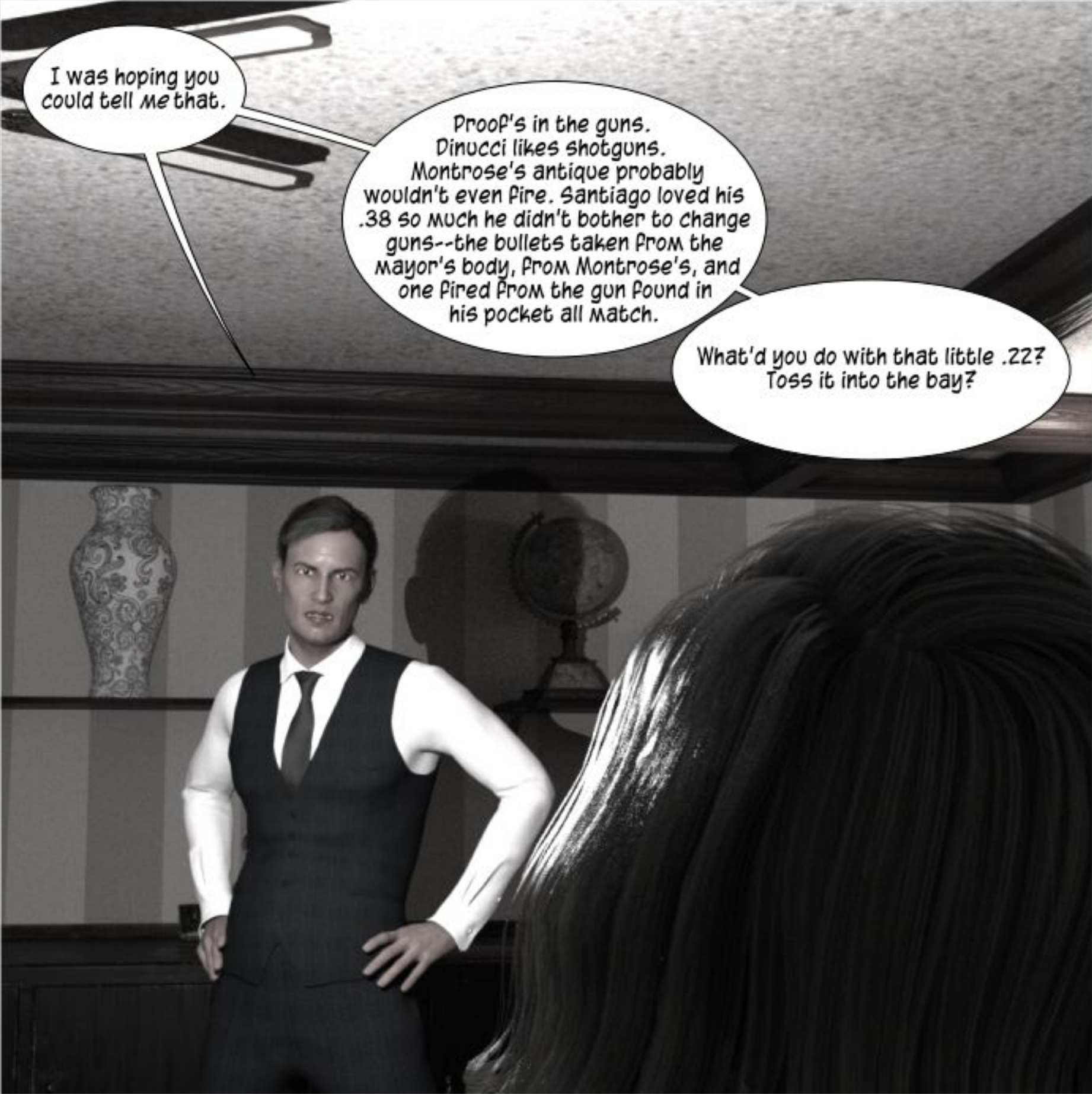
Besides, he just doesn't strike me as being able to kill anybody. We're talking about the man who tried to intimidate you with an unloaded gun.

No. None of them killed your father. You did.



... I ... why ... Mr. Fisher, you've lost your mind!

How could I kill my own father? Even if I could bring myself to do it, what possible reason could I have?



I was hoping you could tell me that.

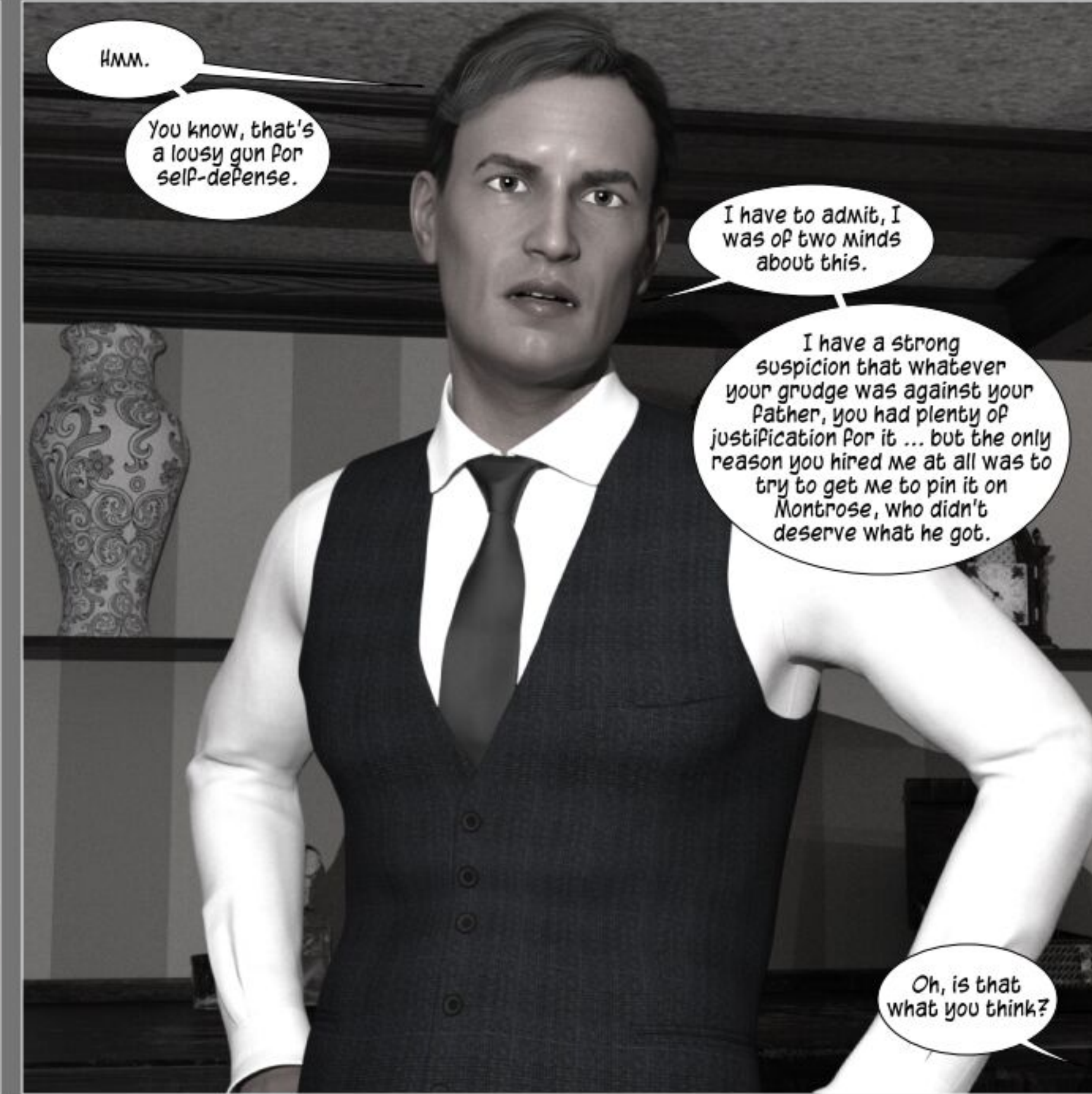
Proof's in the guns. Dinucci likes shotguns. Montrose's antique probably wouldn't even fire. Santiago loved his .38 so much he didn't bother to change guns--the bullets taken from the mayor's body, from Montrose's, and one fired from the gun found in his pocket all match.

What'd you do with that little .22? Toss it into the bay?



No, Mr. Fisher.

It's right here in my purse, where it always is.



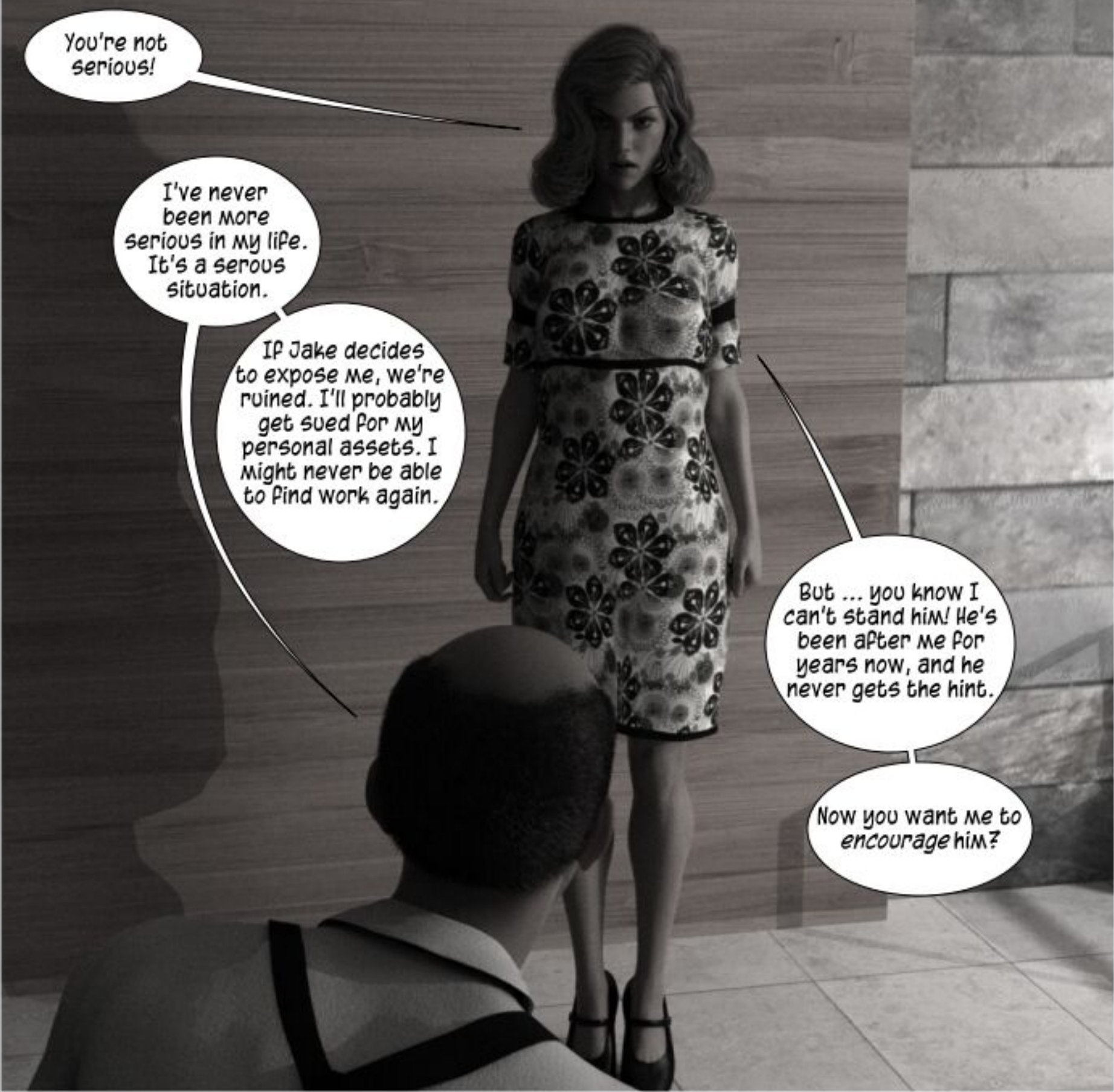
Hmm.

You know, that's a lousy gun for self-defense.

I have to admit, I was of two minds about this.

I have a strong suspicion that whatever your grudge was against your father, you had plenty of justification for it ... but the only reason you hired me at all was to try to get me to pin it on Montrose, who didn't deserve what he got.

Oh, is that what you think?



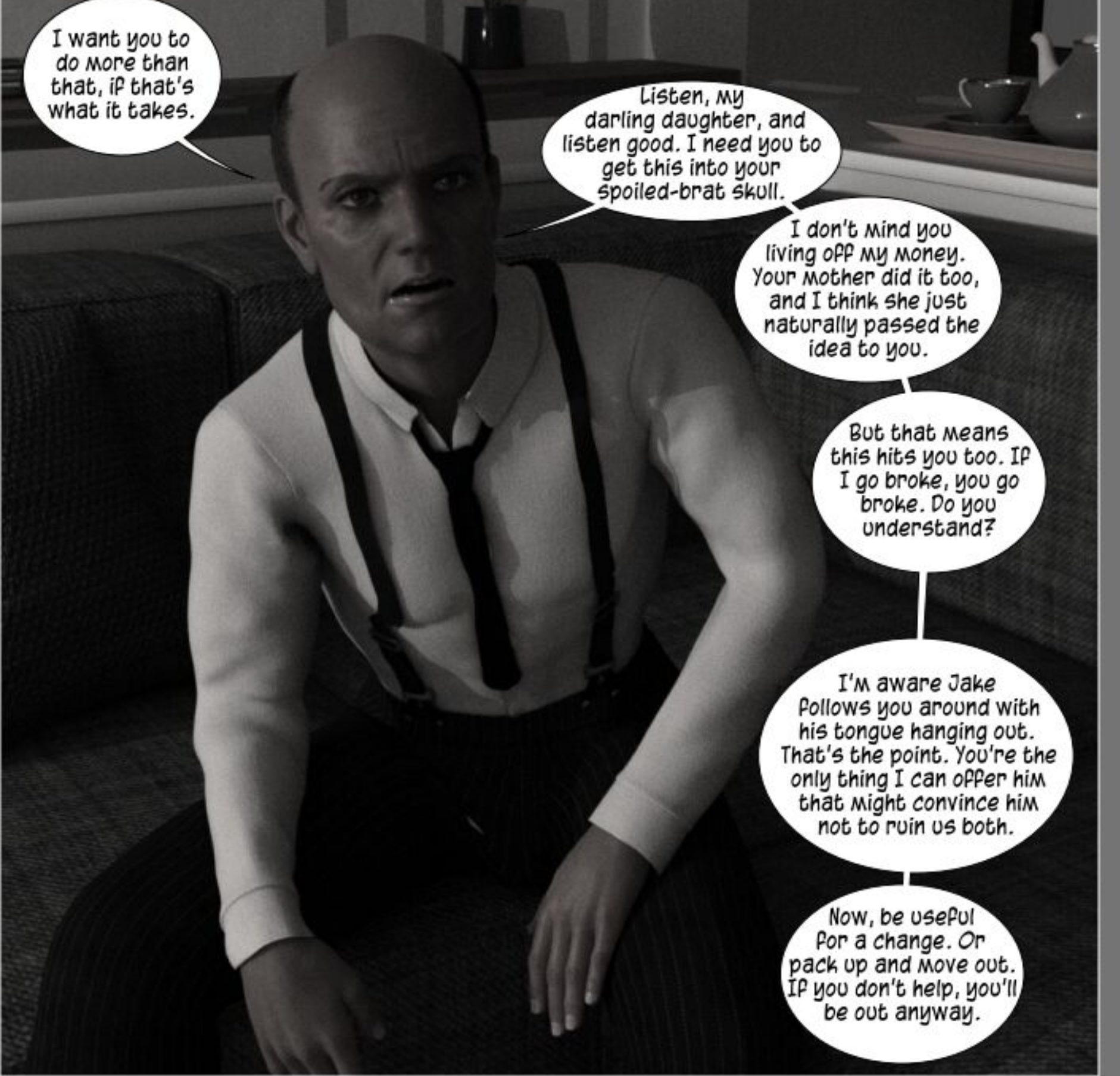
You're not serious!

I've never been more serious in my life. It's a serious situation.

If Jake decides to expose me, we're ruined. I'll probably get sued for my personal assets. I might never be able to find work again.

But ... you know I can't stand him! He's been after me for years now, and he never gets the hint.

Now you want me to encourage him?



I want you to do more than that, if that's what it takes.

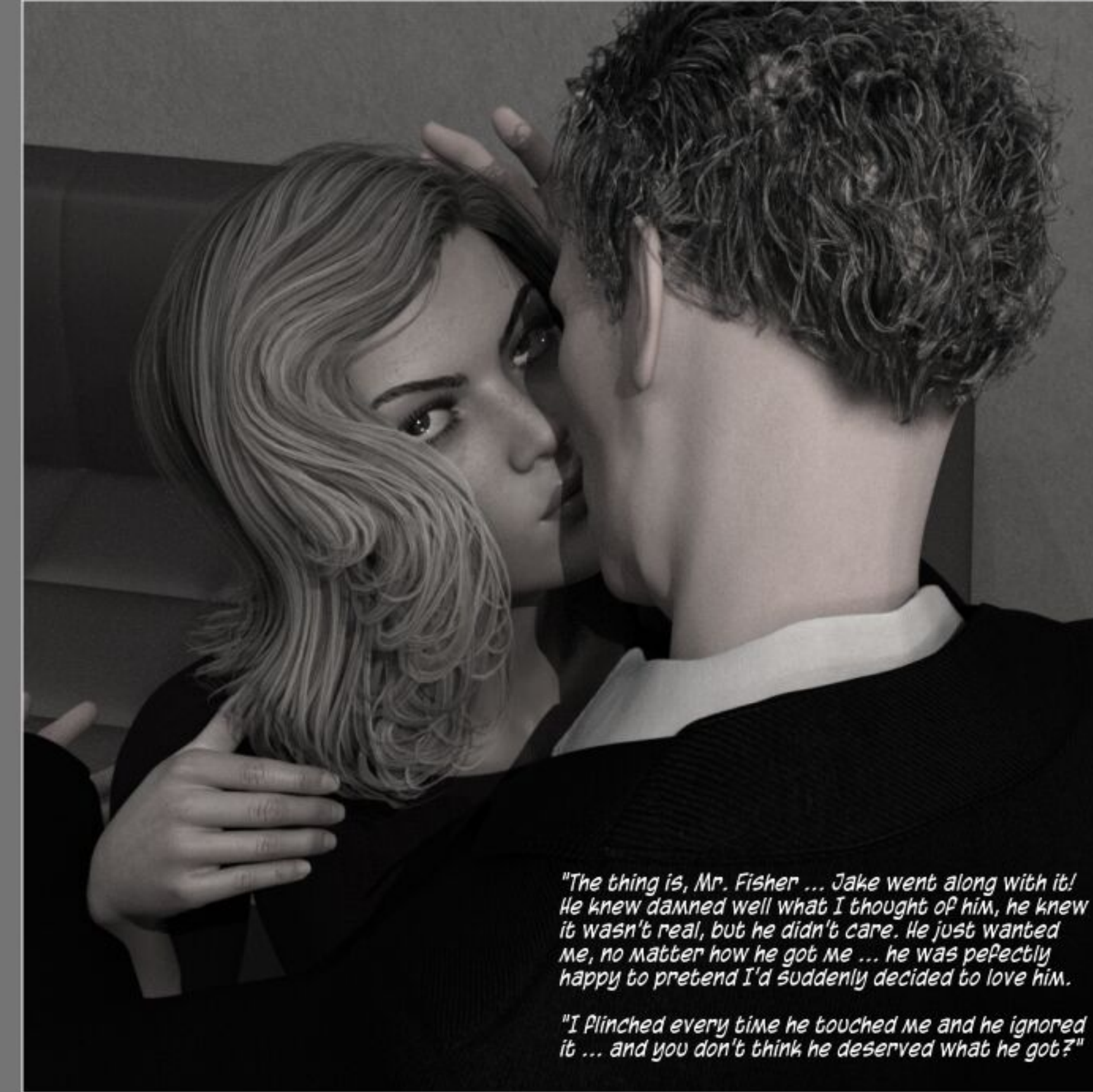
Listen, my darling daughter, and listen good. I need you to get this into your spoiled-brat skull.

I don't mind you living off my money. Your mother did it too, and I think she just naturally passed the idea to you.

But that means this hits you too. If I go broke, you go broke. Do you understand?

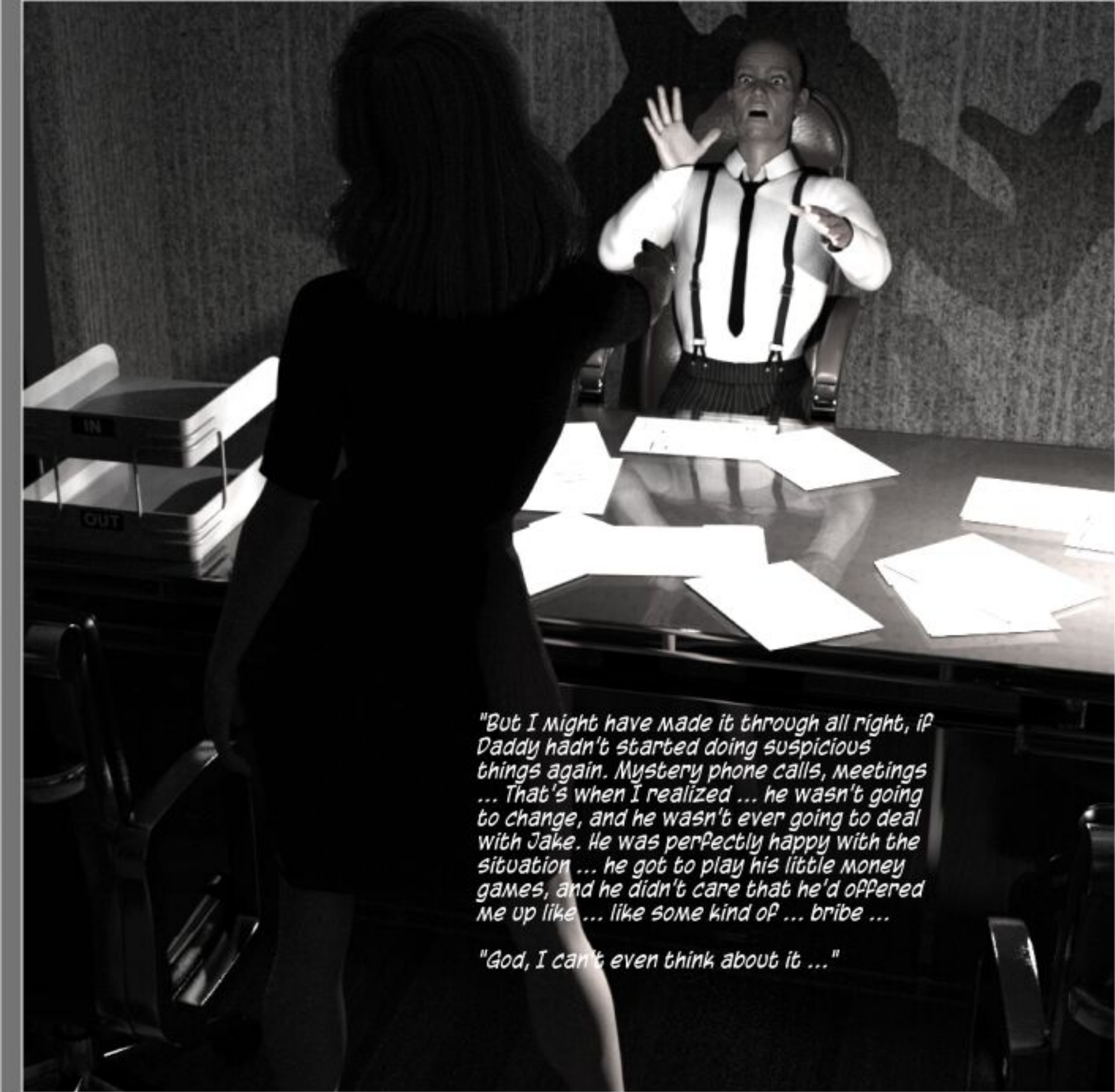
I'm aware Jake follows you around with his tongue hanging out. That's the point. You're the only thing I can offer him that might convince him not to ruin us both.

Now, be useful for a change. Or pack up and move out. If you don't help, you'll be out anyway.



"The thing is, Mr. Fisher ... Jake went along with it! He knew damned well what I thought of him, he knew it wasn't real, but he didn't care. He just wanted me, no matter how he got me ... he was perfectly happy to pretend I'd suddenly decided to love him.

"I flinched every time he touched me and he ignored it ... and you don't think he deserved what he got?"



"But I might have made it through all right, if Daddy hadn't started doing suspicious things again. Mystery phone calls, meetings ... That's when I realized ... he wasn't going to change, and he wasn't ever going to deal with Jake. He was perfectly happy with the situation ... he got to play his little money games, and he didn't care that he'd offered me up like ... like some kind of ... bride ...

"God, I can't even think about it ..."



-- sigh --

Here. Do whatever you're going to do.



For what it's worth, I don't think Montrose had the slightest idea how you really felt.

I don't say the man was a saint. But when I talked to him, two things were obvious: He worshipped the ground you walked on ... and he was one of the most clueless people I'd ever seen.

And he didn't want to bust you, even though he'd figured out you did it. He was hesitating about telling me when he was killed.

Ponder that, because I think you ought to at least feel some guilt.

Go on, get out of here. I'll keep the gun.

Don't kill anybody else. You might not get lucky next time.

And don't stiff me on my fee.

SHE TRIED TO KISS ME AS SHE LEFT--OUT OF GRATITUDE, I SUPPOSE; I NEVER BELIEVED FOR A MOMENT THAT SHE WAS REALLY INTERESTED IN ME. I WASN'T MUCH IN THE MOOD FOR GRATITUDE.



So how much of that did you hear?

Aw, boss, you know this office has the thinnest walls in the world.

I thought about running in when she pulled the gun on you, but you didn't sound like it was anything much.

Yeah, I'd have been amazed if she could hit me at all, where I was standing. And if she had, it probably would just have bounced off.

If you ever decide to carry a gun, I expect you to have more sense than to make it a snub .22.



Do you think I did the right thing?

Well ... It's what I would have done, if that counts.

Do you think you did the right thing? That's the important part.

I don't know yet.

Ask me again tomorrow, after I see how well I sleep tonight.

FOR THE RECORD, I SLEPT PRETTY WELL THAT NIGHT.

... And that's it!
What did you think?



It was great!

Yeah!

Liked it a lot.

Needed more sex, though.

I'm a little surprised at the ending. I mean, I don't think it was the wrong choice ... well, mostly not ... but I didn't expect you to write it that way.

Ah, that was Nathan. He got to make the decision on that in real time. I didn't know which way he was going to go until he did it.

There was a different ending ready if he turned her in. I have to say, this one's cheerier, though.

Same thing with whether he slept with Ellie. His choice. He decided Fisher wouldn't go to bed with a client. I think he was probably right.

Denise was a little sad about that, though!



So, if you figure out how to do the explanations, and it turns out people really like this ... What happens if you accidentally start a historical revival?

We could all of a sudden have people roleplaying detectives in dark suits and hats everywhere.



Heh. I think there are worse problems to have.

But it would mean we'd have to convince Ruby to write another one!

Oh, I could probably manage that ...

--- END ---

NOT ENOUGH OF OUR USUAL WEIRDNESS IN THIS ISSUE FOR YOUR TASTE, DEAR READER? HAVE NO FEAR. TUNE IN FOR ISSUE #14, WHERE WE BEGIN SOMETHING THAT IS GOING TO CHANGE EVERYTHING--AT LEAST FOR A WHILE! DON'T MISS IT!