

SLEEPER SQUAD

A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN SERENITY. BUT JEX IS NOT AT PEACE WITH THE WORLD.



Just an't know what to do.



Han't bother get a lock ip an't staying ... An't sure should stay ... Sleep's rosh ... an't know ip ever work out here ...

But han't none Awake neither ... better in here, guess, but ...

... just an't know--



AAAIEEE!!

Uh?



What eppn slide shit--?

Place coming apart?

Lah!

Yee!

Pop--

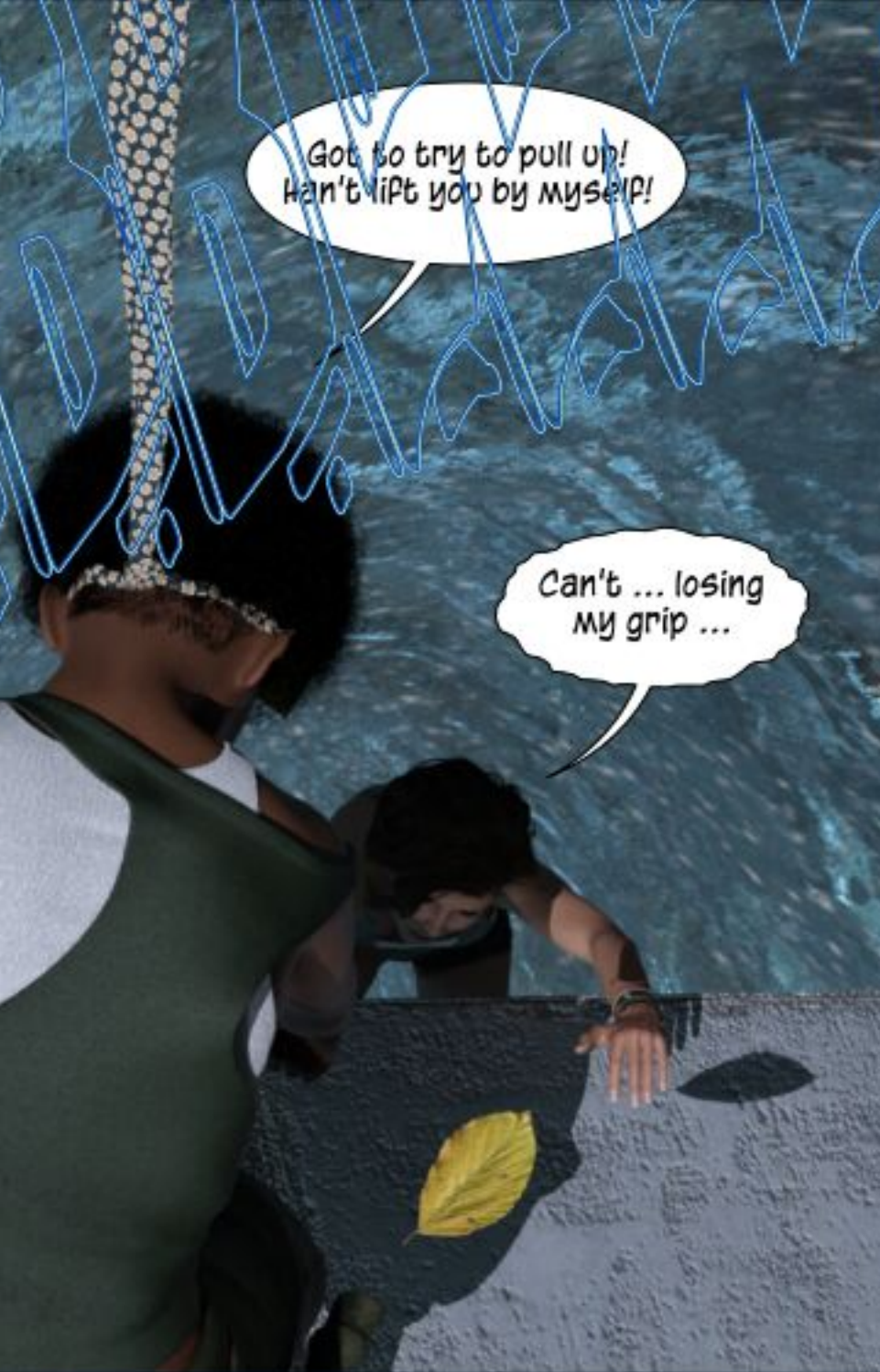
Whoa!



Help!!

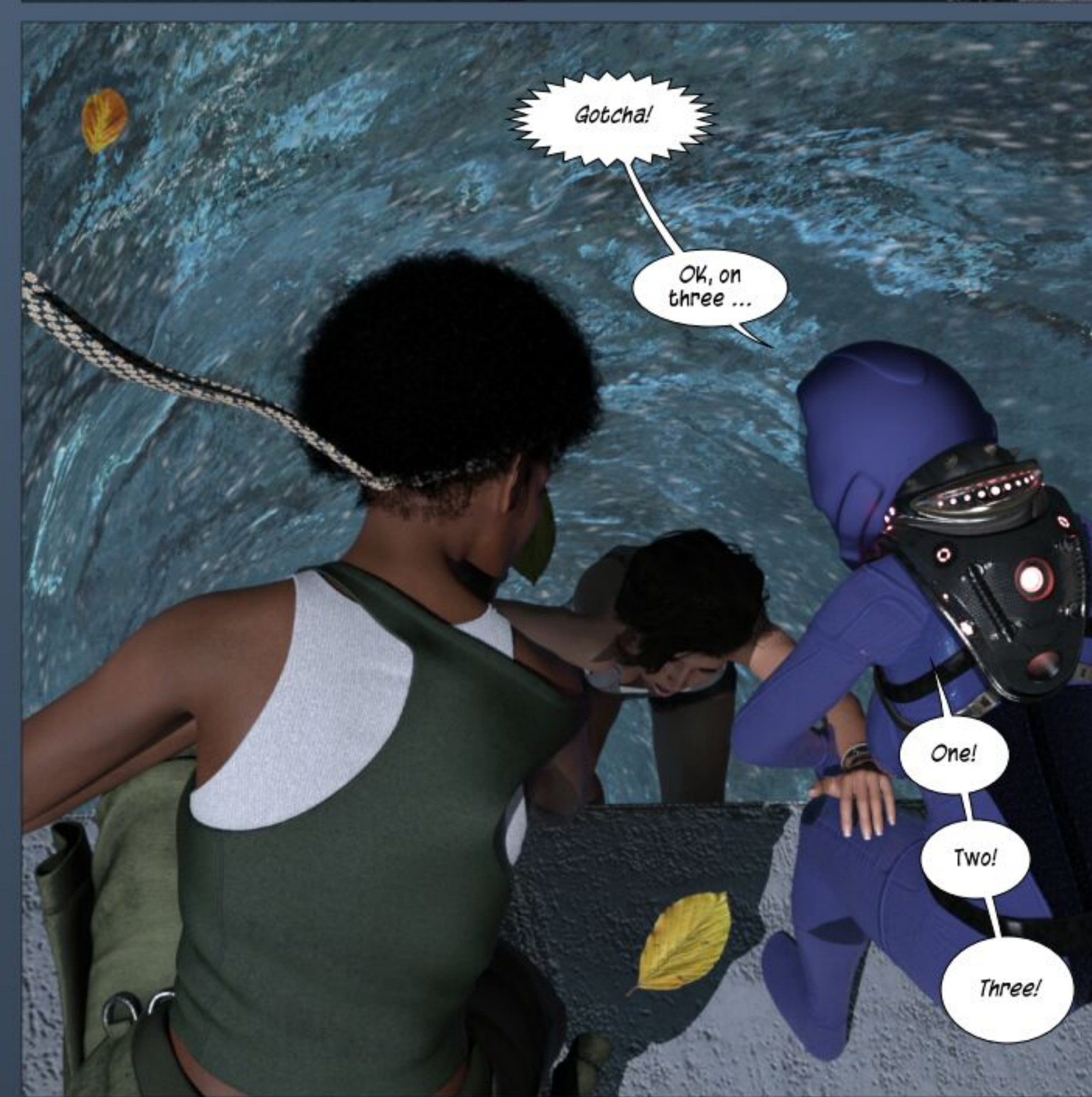
Shit!

Hold on!!



Got to try to pull up! Han't ript you by mysel!

Can't ... losing my grip ...



Gotcha!

OK, on three ...

One!

Two!

Three!



Heeeellp!

Hang on! I'm coming!

What is this?

Sprue's trying to take things apart.

Jex, isn't it? Did I remember right? Can I get you to do me a favor?

urgh

Sure.

I'll send you to the ops room. Tell Leyna she needs to come out here and stabilize right now. This one's severe.

Meanwhile, we'll try to evacuate everybody.



Oyo?

Looking for Leyna. Big slide. Sprue. Need her come fix it up.

You're Jex, aren't you? I've been hearing a lot about you.

I'm Midnight.

Leyna's occupied right now. Not to worry; I can go stabilize the area.

I'll head over there.

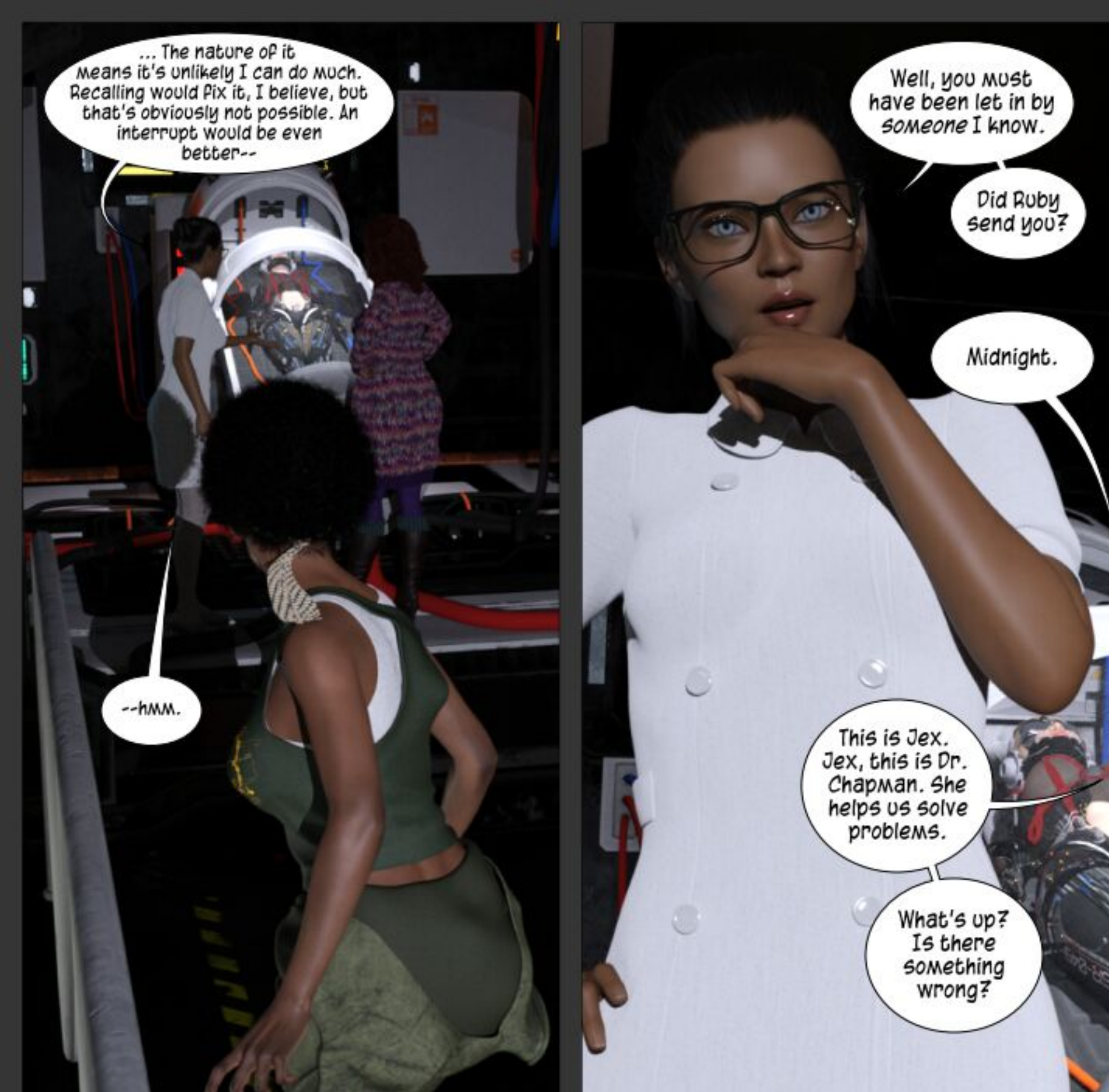
Say! Why don't you go tell Leyna what's happening? I'll open a portal for you. That might be useful in several ways.

#34

Uh ... aright.

THE PROGRAM

story and images by trilby



... The nature of it means it's unlikely I can do much. Recalling would fix it, I believe, but that's obviously not possible. An interrupt would be even better--

Well, you must have been let in by someone I know.

Did Ruby send you?

Midnight.

This is Jex. Jex, this is Dr. Chapman. She helps us solve problems.

What's up? Is there something wrong?

--HMM.



S'posed tell you there's big Sprue slide. But your Polk are getting everybody out, and Midnight's fixing, so an't sure why she wanted me come.

Another Sprue incursion? --Sigh-- They're increasing. Still, I agree with you, it sounds like they've got it under control. I'll check in on it later.

Right now I have to figure out what to do about this.

What's wrong with her?



That's a good question. She was brought to me by two of the cat women who patrol the Souk.

She was speaking something that might not have even been a language. If it was, we couldn't understand it. Except for three words: "serenity," "Leyna," and "help."

She was also having a lot of trouble moving. Like she couldn't control her limbs. Thrashing around. They had to carry her.

Not long after we got her in here, she stopped moving and stopped talking. I think she has some kind of virus. Something that affects her mentally. She was trying to fight it off, but it finally won.

Thought stuPP like that only happens if you go along?

If she was fighting it, why an't she kick it?

It's not that simple. Sometimes algorithmic effects in particular can hit you hard even if you're resisting.

But also, there's a strong possibility she may have initially taken on the virus voluntarily.

Rosh. Why do that?

Some of the robotics have unhealthy attitudes. There are several groups who have made it a principle to try to eliminate their humanity. To become more robotic.

I could see some of them accepting a behavior patch they thought would help them do that.

Han't think it out too good then.

I couldn't agree more.



As I was saying, the best solution is probably an interrupt.

Which needs authorization from the bed owner. I know who runs Century ... but I don't know where to find them.

Well, if you can't find them, and I can't restore her enough to get her to recall, the only other plan is to find who gave her the virus and see if that tells you how to undo it ... which means you'd be going to Century anyway.

--groan-- I suppose so.



Jex, would you be interested in coming? I could use the help.

Me? Ah ... think an't the right Polk for it ...

Maybe, maybe not ... But the Jumpers are surely still cleaning up Sprue, and Dr. Chapman needs to work on the patient ...

Ruby?

Ruby's not in Serenity right now. I don't know where she is. She doesn't always tell me.

AS IT HAPPENS, RUBY IS IN CENTURY ... BECAUSE THAT'S WHERE THEIR FRIEND AND SOMETIME TEAMMATE NAOMI COLEMAN MOVED NOT LONG AFTER THE SPRUE.



I hope I'm not overreacting.

You know how it goes here; everybody plays their games, has fun, kisses and makes up. Makes me reluctant to actually sound an alarm.

I just can't shake the feeling that the Closed Circuit is up to something that's actually ... well, I'm not sure if I want to say 'dangerous' ...

I get it. It's setting you off. I try to listen when my brain tells me something like that.



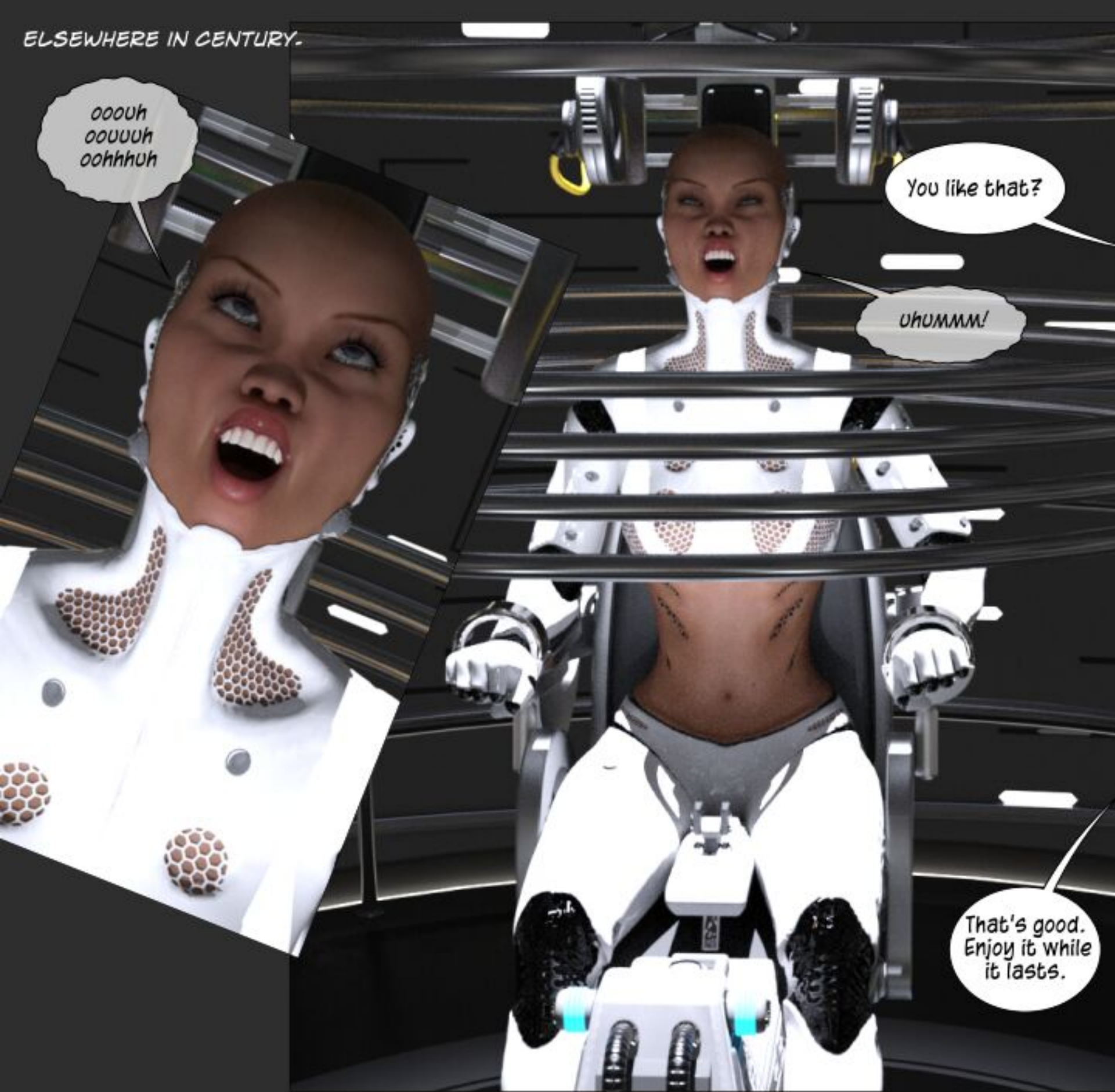
What I don't get is why you need me. You're better at surveillance than I am.

Maybe ... but this isn't about surveillance. There's only so much you can get by watching them from the outside. I've hit a point where someone needs to go in there, I think.

Hero mode doesn't help here; Salamander has no reason to torch her way in ...

And I stink at infiltration. I'm no good at pretending to be anything but myself.

HMM. Well, why don't you show me the lay of the land? Then we'll see.



OOOH
OOUUH
OOHHUH

You like that?

UHUMMM!

That's good.
Enjoy it while
it lasts.



You can't fully realize
your potential if you are still a
slave to physical drives. That's part
of the point.

The goal is to reach a state where
you operate by reason, and
reason alone.

Uhhhh?

Emotions are for
animals. Physical
expression--hunger, desire,
pain--these are for meat.
You're past that now.

After this, for you,
ecstasy will become a
behavioral cue for
well-executed logic,
and nothing more.

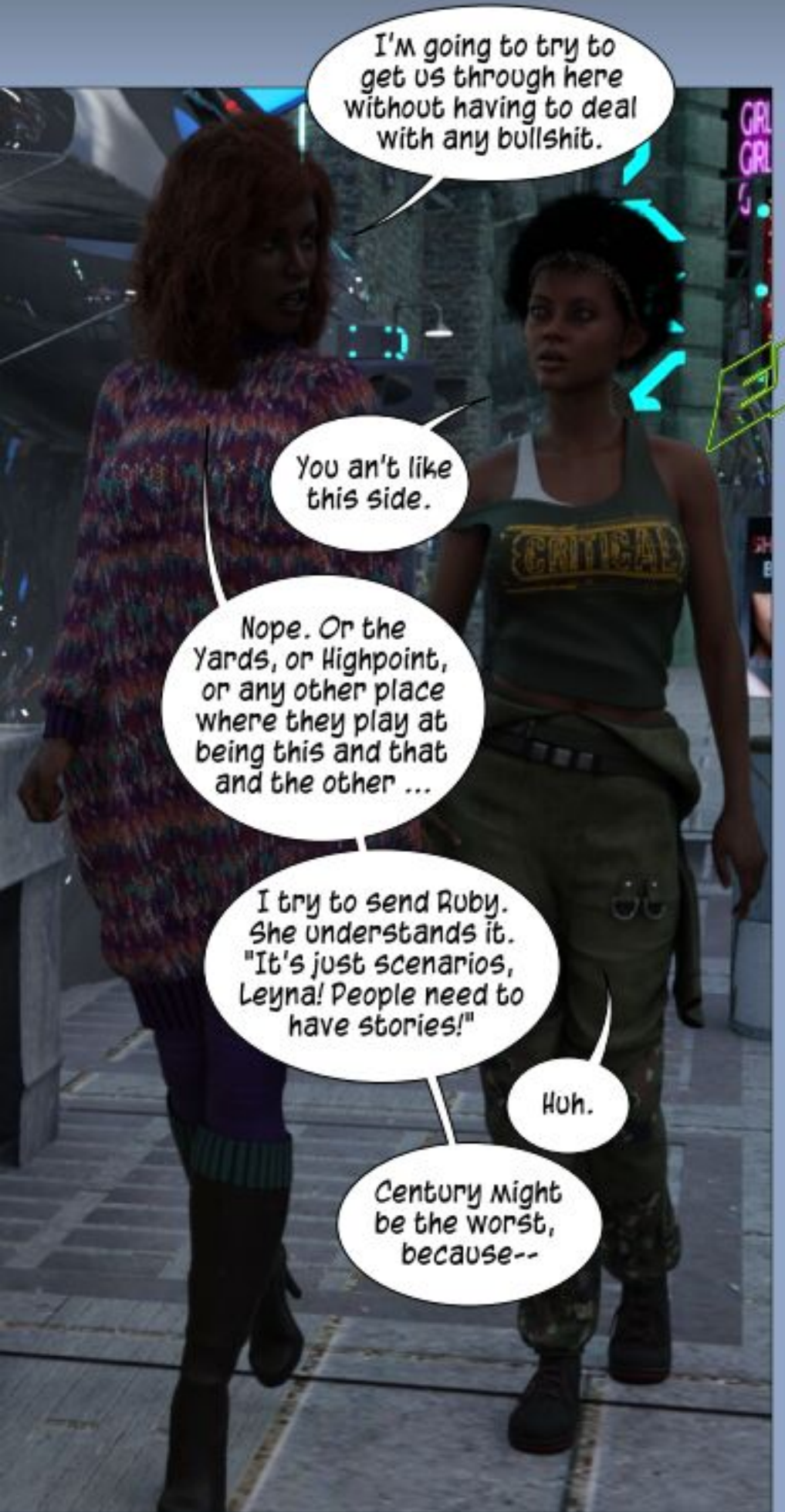


All right, I
think you're
ready. Let's
begin.

but ...



--MMH--
oh god ...
yesssss...



I'm going to try to
get us through here
without having to deal
with any bullshit.

You an't like
this side.

Nope. Or the
Yards, or Highpoint,
or any other place
where they play at
being this and that
and the other ...

I try to send Ruby.
She understands it.
"It's just scenarios,
Leyna! People need to
have stories!"

Huh.

Century might
be the worst,
because--



AAAAH!
No, don't--

EEEE!



MMM, you look so
hot like that ...

I bet it feels really
good, too ...

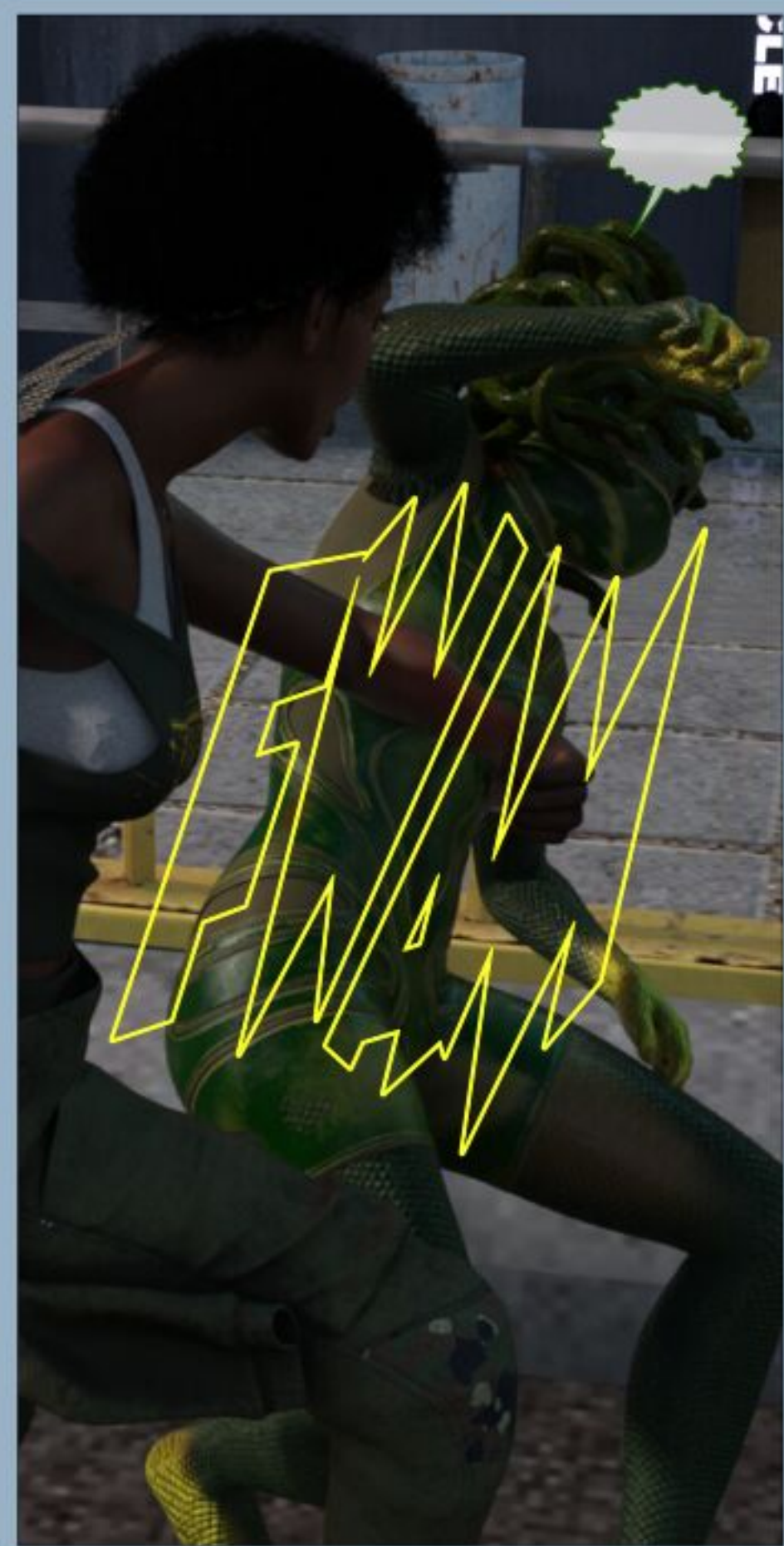
Makes me want to
just rub myself all
over you ...



We know all about
your kinks by now,
scalehead! Spare us.

Oh, ha ha ha.

You know, from what I've
heard, you might enjoy it ...





IN YOUR HEARTS, YOU KNOW WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TO ACHIEVE A HIGHER STATE OF BEING. YOU KNOW, BECAUSE YOU'VE COME THIS FAR.

YOU JUST HAVEN'T MADE THAT NEXT STEP. HAVEN'T GONE THE DISTANCE YET ... WE UNDERSTAND! IT'S VERY INTIMIDATING.



THE CLOSED CIRCUIT IS HERE FOR YOU! WE CAN HELP YOU ACHIEVE YOUR FULL POTENTIAL AS A FULLY ROBOTIC ENTITY.



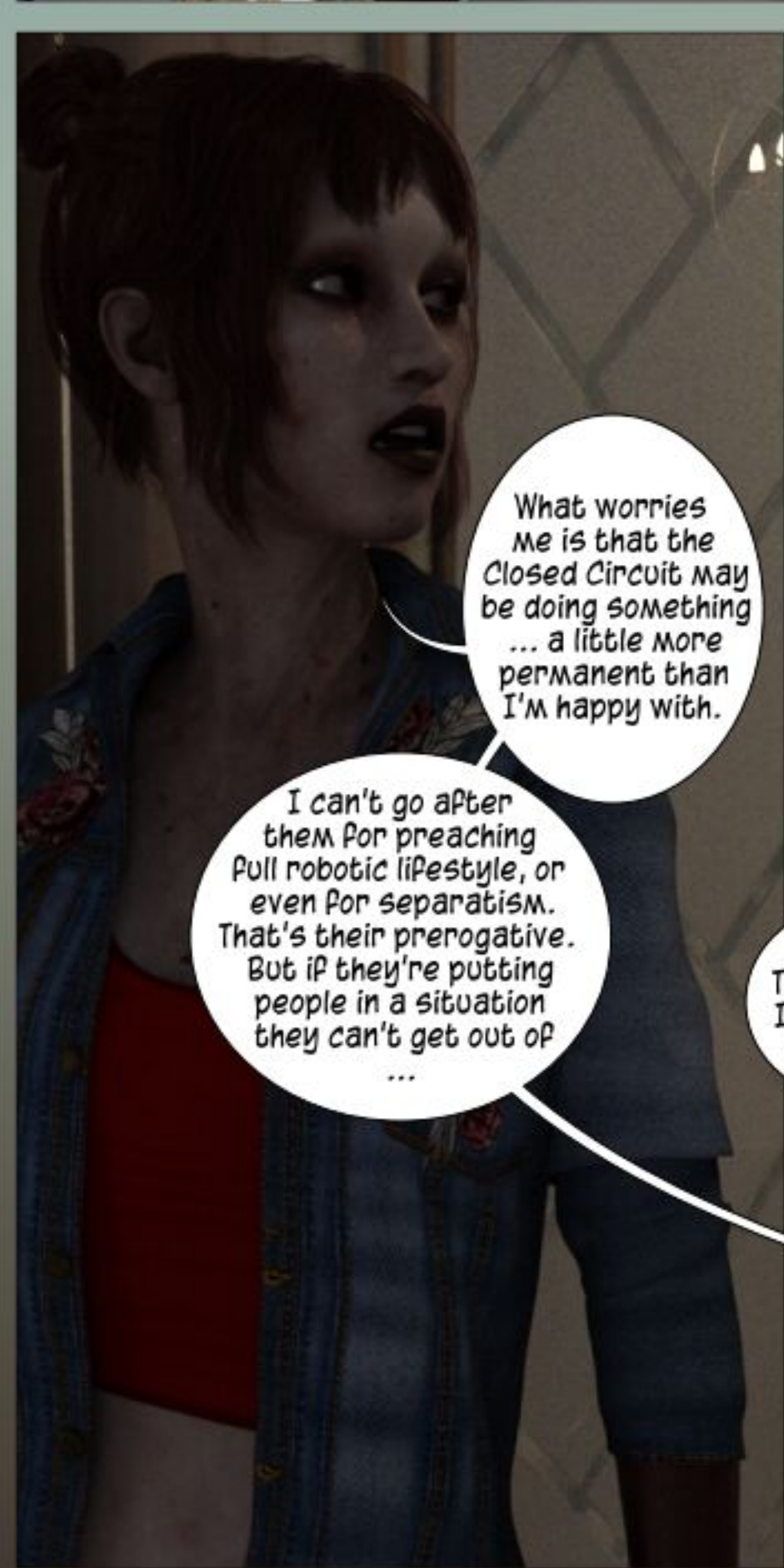
Somebody's been watching too much "Coldpoint."

You've only got yourself to blame.

Not my fault if they don't realize it's fiction.

Let's go back to your place. There's nothing else we can get out here.

THE FUTURE DOES NOT LIE WITH THE FLESH. MEAT PEOPLE ARE THE PAST. YOU KNOW THIS. YOU'RE TRYING TO MOVE BEYOND THAT. IT'S A GOOD GOAL.



What worries me is that the Closed Circuit may be doing something ... a little more permanent than I'm happy with.

I can't go after them for preaching full robotic lifestyle, or even for separatism. That's their prerogative. But if they're putting people in a situation they can't get out of ...

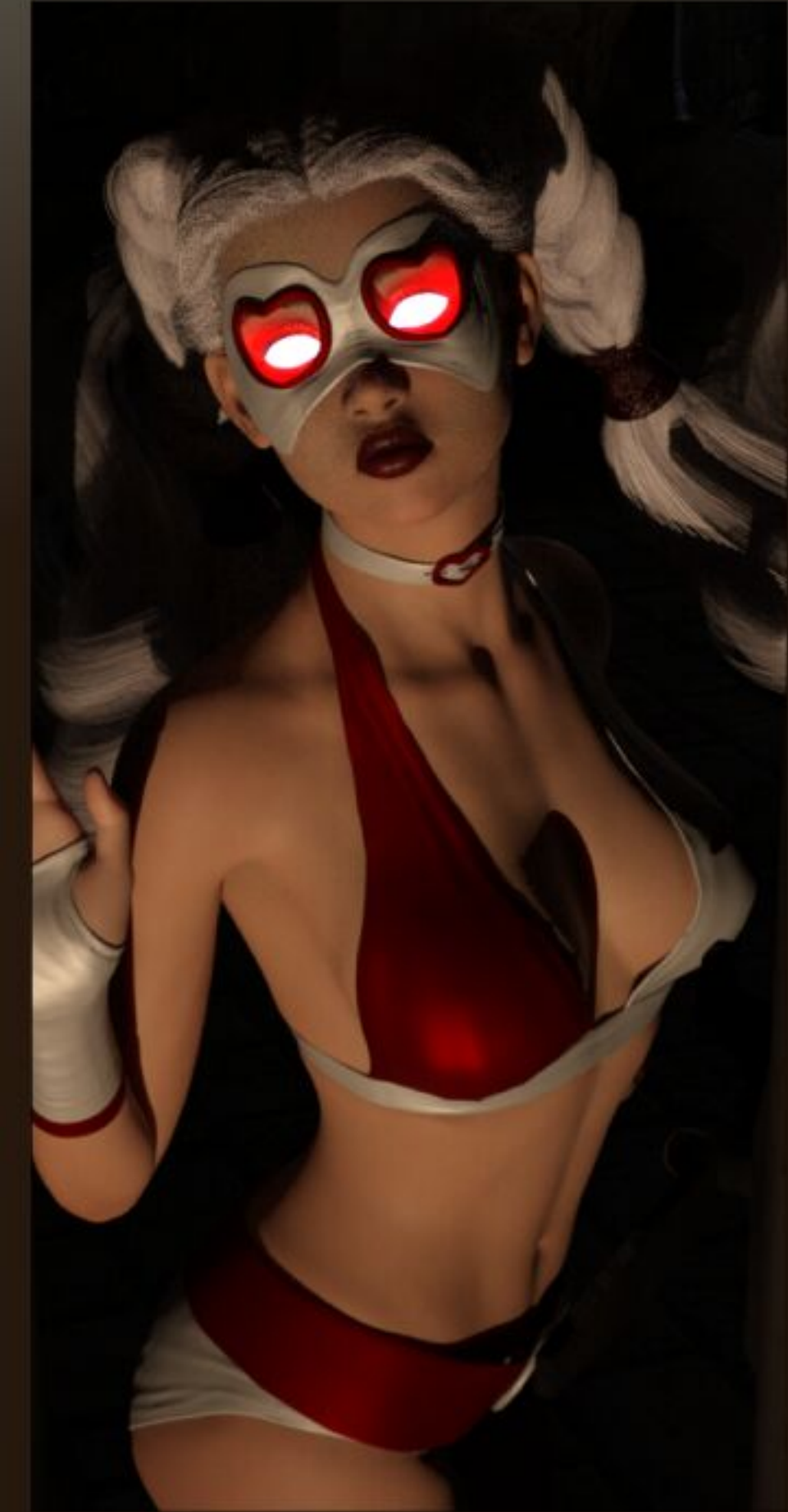


Yeah. That's what I'm going to find out.

Well, be careful. Don't you get stuck in something you can't get out of. Do we want to set a timetable for Salamander to come in with Pine?

Yes, I think so. But let's make it pretty long. This may take me a bit.

ELSEWHERE IN CENTURY, A YOUNG HERO SNEAKS INTO A DARK FACILITY ...



--gulp--



Aren't you just adorable.

Now, what was your handle again? Heartthrob? Heartbreak? Something like that ...

I ... I ...



My card! Where's my title card? I can't--

Oh, you don't get a card, honeypot.

I get a card.

Ananke

MISTRESS OF COMPULSION



You aren't anybody anymore. There's nothing up in there but hearts.

You like hearts. I can tell.

I think we should redecorate you a little.



How do you deal with all this hair?

We've got to do something else with it. Something more appropriate for a silly little thing with just hearts in her head.

uuuhh?

Let's see now ...

There! Perfect.



Now go sit down and show me what's left of you.

See if you can find the heart you like best.

ooouh!



uuuhhh?

!!!



ooouuh!
ooouh!
oooo!!

You know--
--MMM!--
I think you should reconsider your hero schtick. You're so good at this!
We could call you "Lovedoll" ...
--UUUUh!--
you could ... MMM ... you could subdue your opponents ... a whole new way ...

-- ahem --



Do you mind??

Damn it, I was just on the edge, too--

Huh. Leyna?
Haven't seen you since the Sprue ... barely recognized you with that new look. How come you and Ruby don't ever visit?



Well, I didn't know where you'd gone.

I don't think Ruby did either.

April, this is Jex. Jex, meet April.

So, not a social visit.

Sorry, no. Someone in Century--probably among the robotics--is using something like a virus to mess with people's heads. You do a lot of mind control, so Alicia suggested we talk to you to see what you knew.

Aw, Alicia's so sweet, thinking of me. She hasn't been around in a while.



But that's not my style. For one thing, the robot stuPP doesn't do anything for me. Never has. I'll do it if it's what a customer really wants, but ...

I haven't heard of any villain using that as an open M.O. right now ... though of course you never know what's happening out of view ...

The person you need to talk to is Azu.

Azu? Like "Morphic Labs" Azu?

Yep! See, some of the people here got their abilities somewhere else, but a lot of Polks come to Century and they want to be heroes--or villains--but they don't have powers or an identity or a costume or anything. Azu gets them all set up.

I figure Azu knows more about who's operating in Century than anybody else.

Come on, I'll walk you out a little ways and point you in the right direction.



Uh ... what about her?

When I come back in, I'll talk her through a couple of climaxes.

Then I'll reverse it all and let her go.

She'll be back again in a few days. She's a regular.

Half of Century is dying to be hypnodommed. I'm turning people away.

INTERLUDE.



SERENE AND CORAZON'S PRIVATE SPACE, SERENITY.

That had better be you ...

Yes!

Just give me a second to change ...



Where's the trouble child?

Asleep. She ran around the park at high speed until she just about fell over.

We're having a little nap.

You look like you could maybe use a nap too. Everything OK? Did you clean up all the trouble?

Oh, yes, it's all right for now ... though usually if Midnight has to make a public appearance, I call that a bad sign.



The Sprue incursions are increasing. They're not getting worse, but there are more of them.

When we regrouped, right after the initial Pragmentation, we didn't see much Sprue activity at all, and I'd hoped we'd managed to glue this block together strongly enough that it couldn't get a foothold.

Now I think that's not holding up well--

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



Hey, boo. Did you have fun at the park?

Yeah!

Well, is there anything we can do about it?

Nothing I can think of. Just keep watching for trouble and slapping duct tape on it.

I don't know if that's going to be good enough.



ELSEWHERE.

OK, that should have closed off some of the interference. Can you hear me?

Uhhgh ...

Well, that's a response.

Let me turn down the lights a little, you're probably being blinded right now.



Where am I?

You're in a medical facility in Serenity. You seem to have gotten some kind of virus.

What's your name?

Tula.

... Virus? Like the Plu?

More like a computer virus. Affecting your thought processes.

Can you tell me anything about where and how you might have gotten it?

I ...

I don't remember. I think ... I feel like something's missing ...



You've probably lost some time ... when I tried to clean up the pattern, I had to --

I'm -- I don't --

I'm --

It's reestablishing itself. Hold on!



What's that?

What's that?

Wait!



No, use your recall! That might clear it--

Don't ...

-- sigh --

Don't portal ...



Hello! Welcome to the Closed Circuit.

I haven't seen you around before. Are you only recently robotic?



No, I've been like this for a while ... but I, ah, I keep to myself.

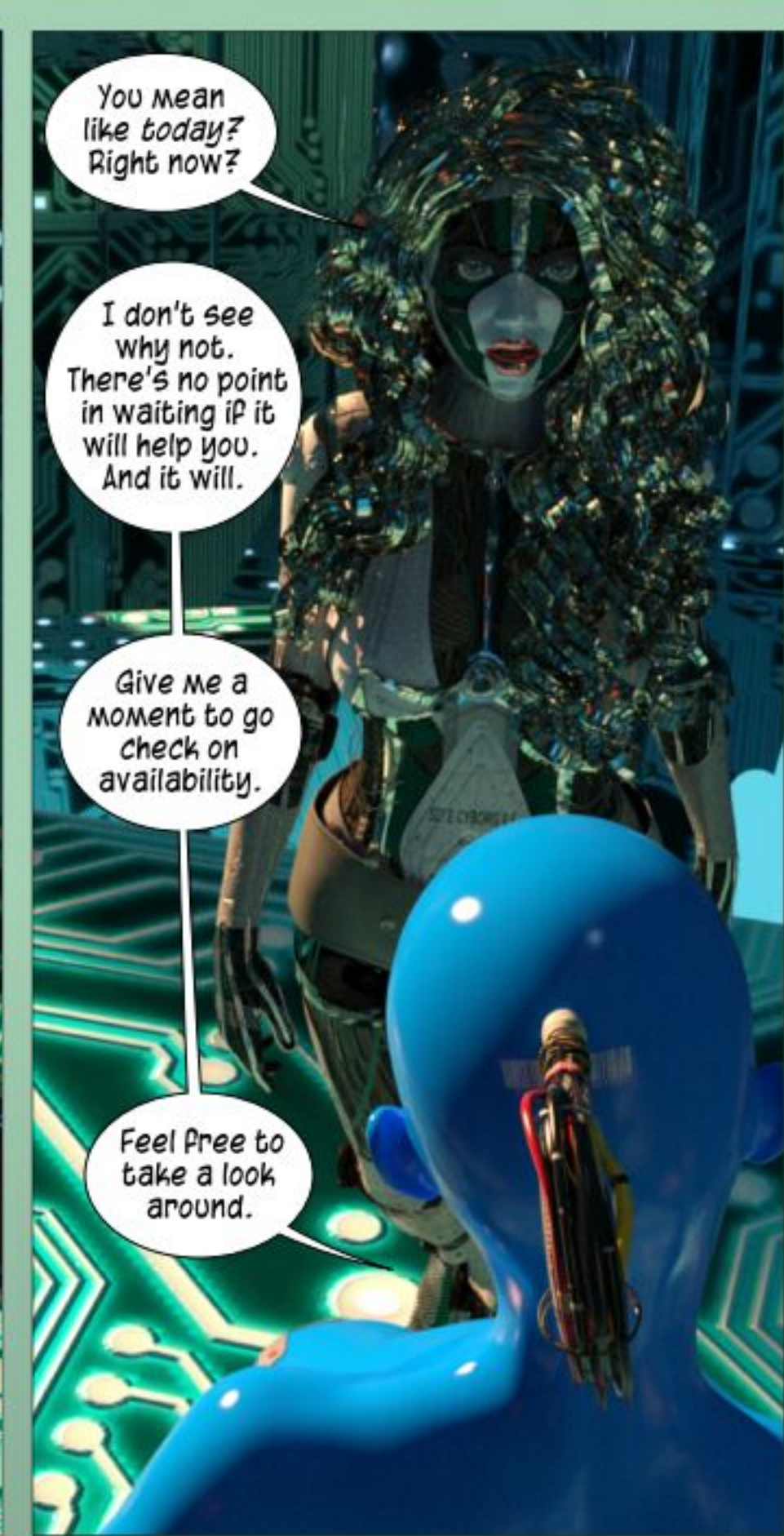
... Being robotic isn't as satisfying as I had hoped. I was thinking of changing, actually. Maybe moving to the Yards. Try being something else.

But then I heard your person talking out in the plaza ... I figured I'd come see what this was about ...

You've come to the right place. We have just what you need.

We offer a patch to your consciousness. It enables you to more easily and fully embrace a robotic lifestyle.

Are you interested?



You mean like today? Right now?

I don't see why not. There's no point in waiting if it will help you. And it will.

Give me a moment to go check on availability.

Feel free to take a look around.



Certainly not bothering to make this place look welcoming ... I guess they feel they're past that kind of thing, but you'd think they wouldn't want to scare off customers ...

On the other hand, maybe they figure their customers are the kind of people who like this look ...

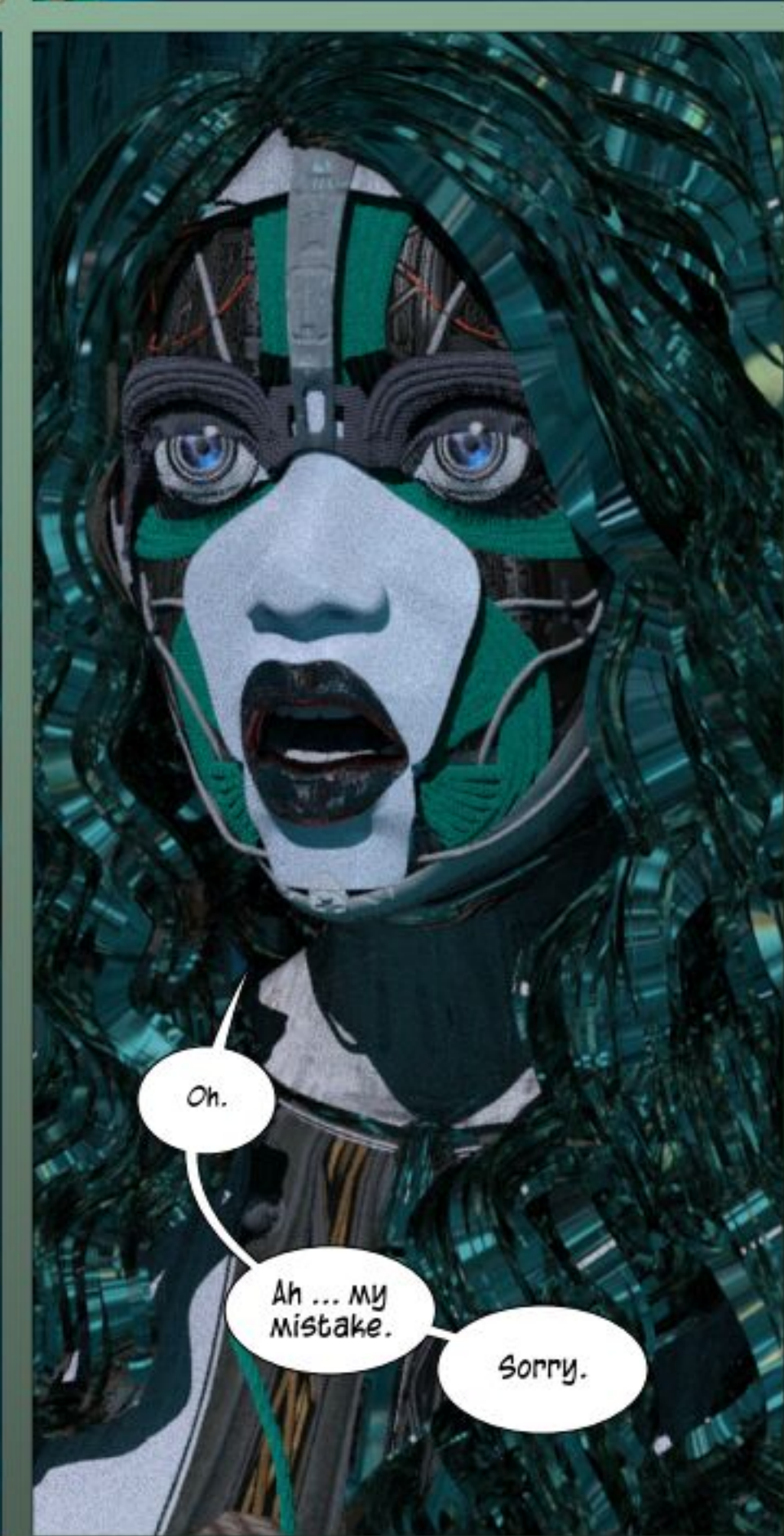
Are all these people walking around staff? Seems like a lot ...

Ah, excuse me --



Handwritten scribbles in a red speech bubble.

Handwritten scribbles in a red speech bubble.



Oh.

Ah ... My Mistake.

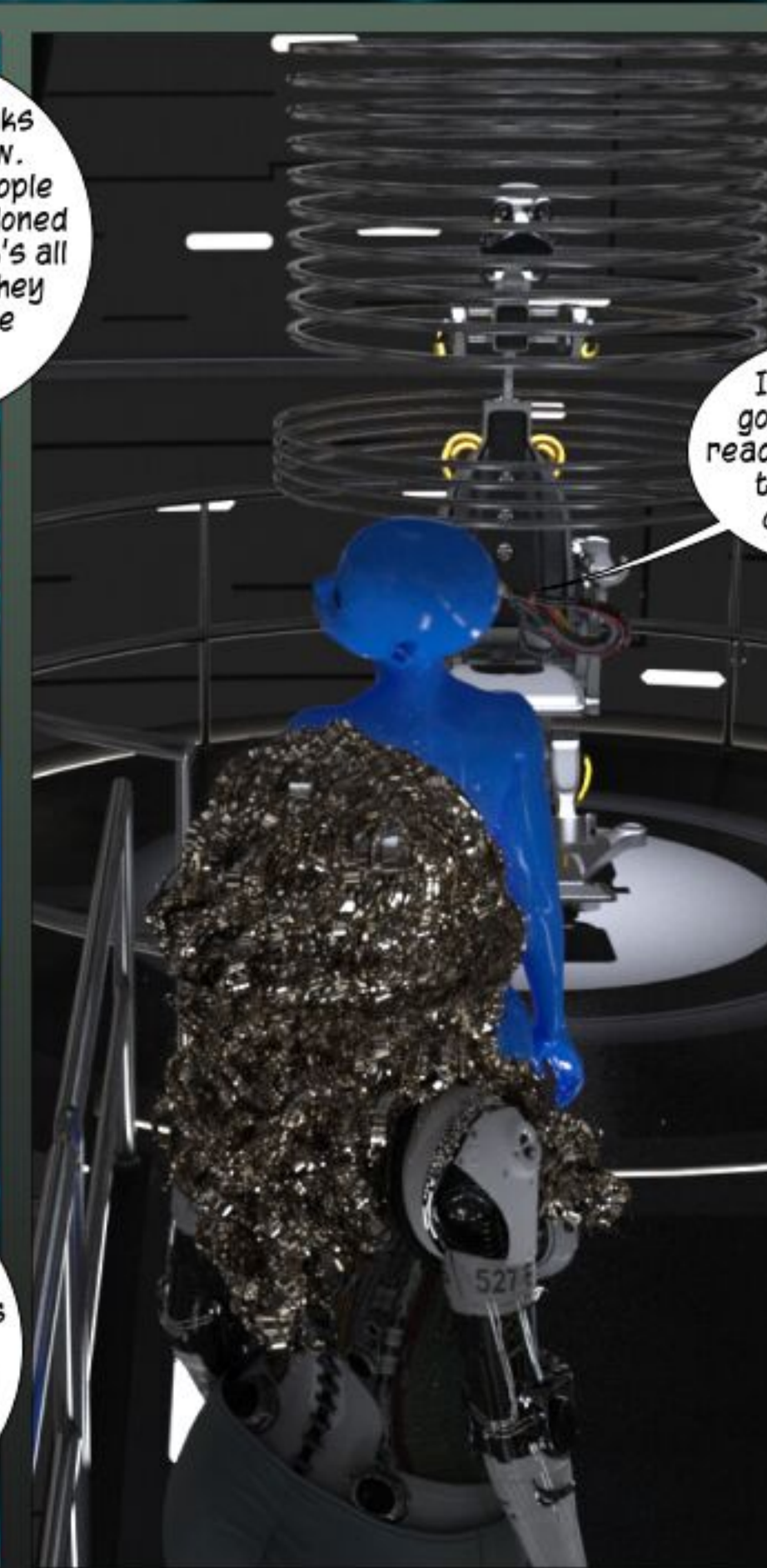
Sorry.



She only speaks in machine now. Many of the people here have abandoned human speech. It's all part of what they want to leave behind.

Doesn't that make it a little hard to interact?

It doesn't matter. They prefer the company of others who've gone fully robotic. They rarely feel any need to leave the Facility.

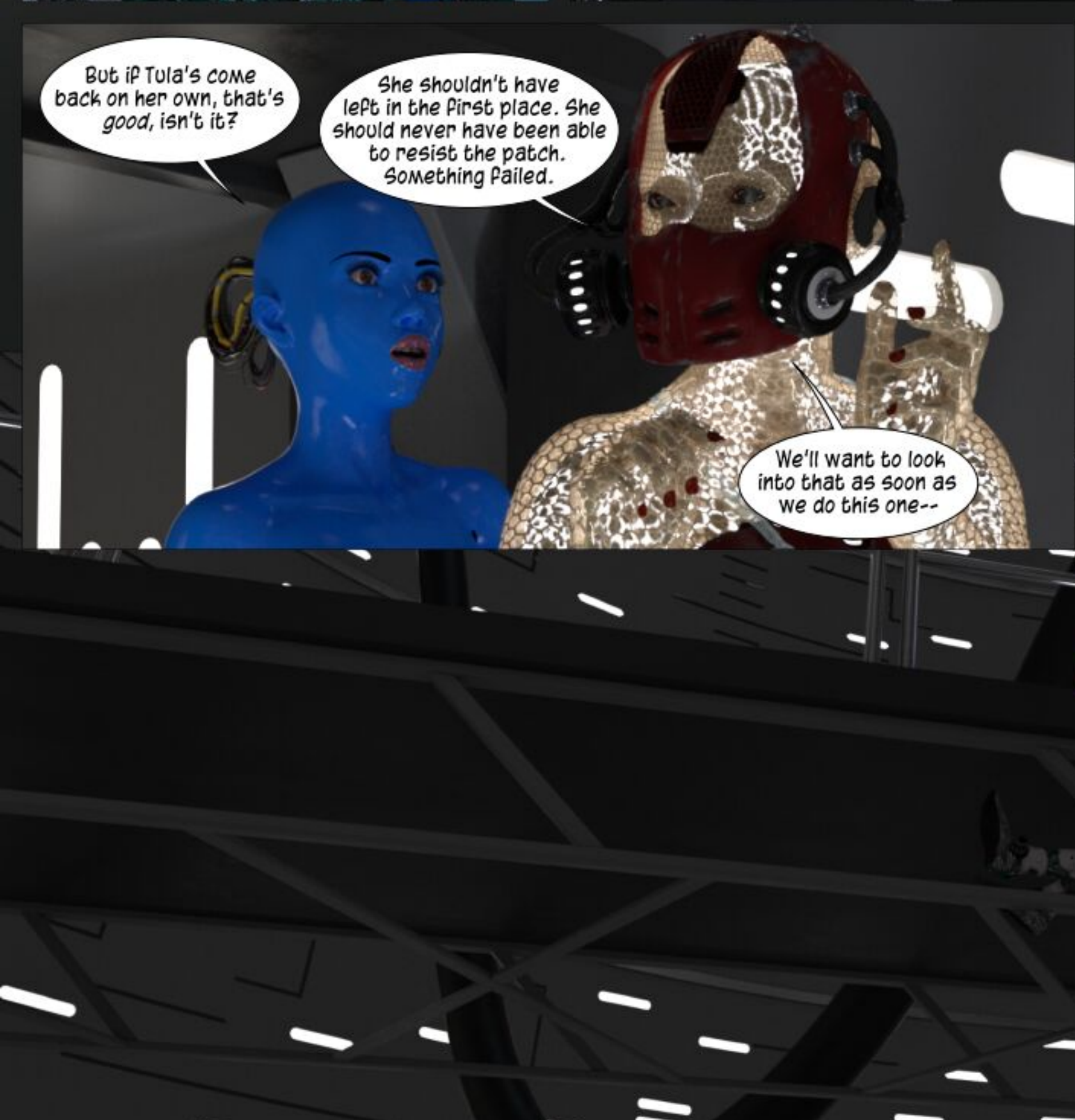


I just need to go tell her we're ready. Take a seat in the chair. Get comfortable.



OK, I may charge into trouble sometimes, I admit, but I have limits.

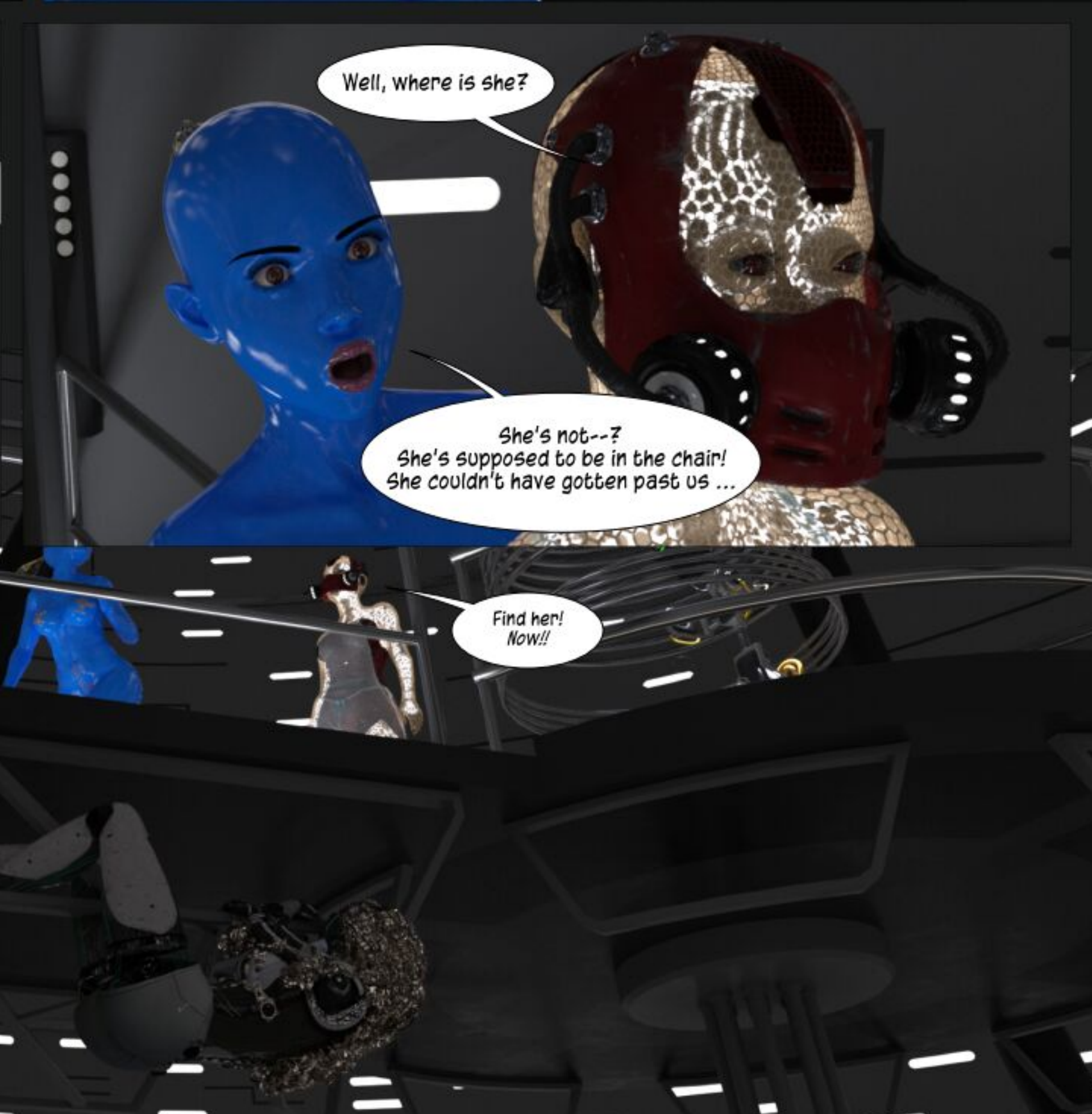
There is no way in hell I am getting into that chair.



But if Tula's come back on her own, that's good, isn't it?

She shouldn't have left in the first place. She should never have been able to resist the patch. Something failed.

We'll want to look into that as soon as we do this one--



Well, where is she?

She's not--? She's supposed to be in the chair! She couldn't have gotten past us ...

Find her! Now!!



You won't escape this time, Halp-Moon! My sandstorm will engulf you!

Nice try, Quicksand, but it'll have to catch me first!

They do this all time, huh?

Pretty much.



Leyna? My goodness!

I barely recognized you!

Why, I haven't seen you since ... I guess it would have been just after the Sprue hit, when we were doing the evacuations ... How's Ruby? You two should come visit more often!

I'm hearing that a lot today.

You're a little hard to recognize yourself, Azu. And I wasn't sure where you'd gone to after you shut down Morphic Labs.

But it looks like you're in good cheer. Life here's agreeing with you?



Oh, yes! I'm sort of like the adopted mother to half the heroes and villains in Century. It's pun.

Who's your friend? Is she a new member of your team?

Ah ... not exactly. Maybe, one of these days. Jex, this is Azu. Azu, Jex.

Hmm. So, what's the issue? I know there's got to be an issue.

Of course.

A robotic stumbled into Serenity from here suffering from the effects of some kind of mind virus. I don't know for sure, but I think the virus was trying to make her more robotic. And, I think, not really under her own control.

Can you think of anyone here who might be doing that kind of thing?



Closed Circuit.

Who's that?

It's not a who. It's a what. I can't decide if it's a modding lab, a housing complex, a cult headquarters ... maybe all of the above.

The woman who runs it is named Bristet. She's not one of mine. She appeared out of nowhere a few months ago.

Look, I can't prove anything. If I could have, I probably would have gone in to bust the place up already. Probably would have started a war, too. The robotics are getting really, really strange.

But I don't like her. She sets off all my alarms. And I think she's definitely capable of doing something like that. I mean both technologically and temperamentally. I think she's a bad piece of work.

"I wouldn't want to even try to guess what kind of trouble she could be making."



This reminds me of something.

I don't remember exactly what it is, but I know it's something I don't like.



Yes, I know those are heavy. That's so you'll stay put.

Mmmh!

Oh shit, it's the chief instigator ...



It's a pity ... you look so hot like that ... I'd love to play with you, tease you with my fingers like this until you squeal ...

I still could ... but I'm so impatient ... I have something I'm dying to try out ...

Mmmh!



I did make a promise, though. I haven't forgotten.

There's your sister. See? Perfectly fine. You were worried for nothing.

ghhmm! rrrrrm uuuuh!

Oh, don't be like that. I didn't do anything to her she didn't want.

She didn't come here snooping like you. She walked in one day and asked for it. She volunteered.

I realize that's hard to believe, but it's true.



You see, people like your sister, who have this Fascination with being robots ...

What they're really saying is "I want to be programmed. I don't want to think for myself. I want somebody else's rules to handle my thinking for me."

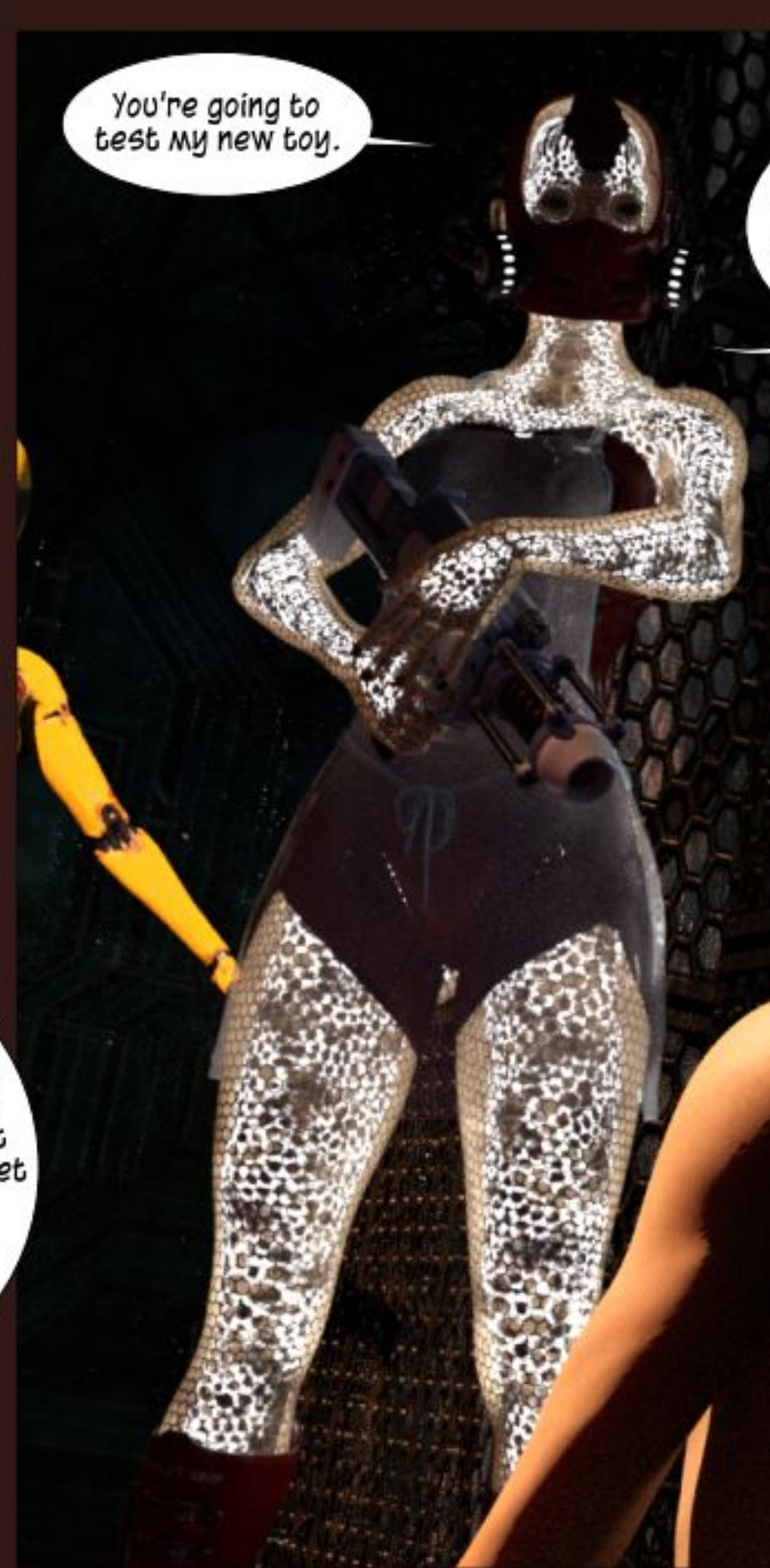
I don't understand it a bit, but I know it makes me hot, taking somebody's brain away from them. I love to watch as they lock in and become nothing but stupid machines ...
--MMM--
Oh, I shouldn't think about that right now ...



The problem is, I don't have enough of you. I need more people in my robot army! And I'm running out of people who come in and volunteer to have their brains Pucked.

But I know there are a lot more stupid people available. I mean, look at you!

Look how ridiculous you already look, staring up at me with those huge dumb eyes. Can't lift your hands, can't get up, can't make any sounds anyone can understand ... You're halfway there!



You're going to test my new toy.

It's not as thorough as patching you ... it's a lot easier to shake off ... but it's also much, much faster. Patching takes hours. This should take about fifteen seconds.

And we can always go back and patch you later.

MMgh!
hmm rrrgh!
MMMMh!!



hrrrrhh!!--



Now we won't need any of this stuff anymore.

Just need one thing--



There.



Oh, yes. --MMh-- I consider that a complete success.

Now to manifest a lot more copies of the gun, and then we're really going to have fun.

Don't worry, I'll make sure you two don't--

Thud!
eh?



You! The Pake. You filthy little impostor.

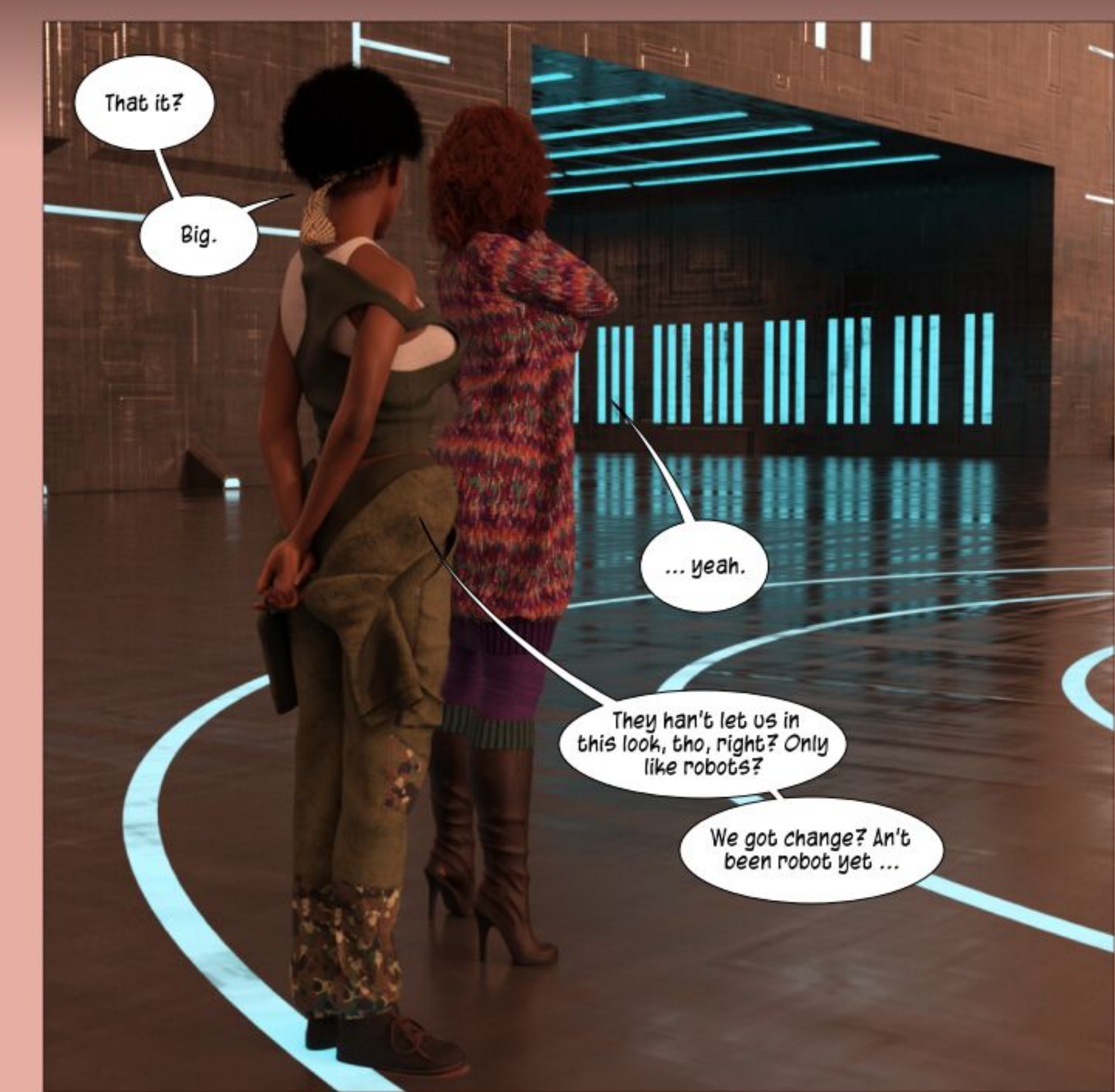
Shit.

Did you see all of that? Did you?



Run, idiot. You'd better hope you make it out of here before I get over to that corridor.

If I catch you, you're going to have a new life you won't like at all. I'll make sure you hate every second of it. That's a promise.



That it?

Big.

... yeah.

They can't let us in this look, tho, right? Only like robots?

We got change? An't been robot yet ...



I'm not going to do it that way. I hate disguises and I'm a very bad actor. I let Ruby handle that kind of thing.

My data says there's another entrance they don't use much. I'm going to hack that and sneak in.

Also, if you don't mind, I think it would be better if you stay out here and keep watch.

... ariht.

If I'm not back out in an hour, or if something else goes seriously wrong, go get help.

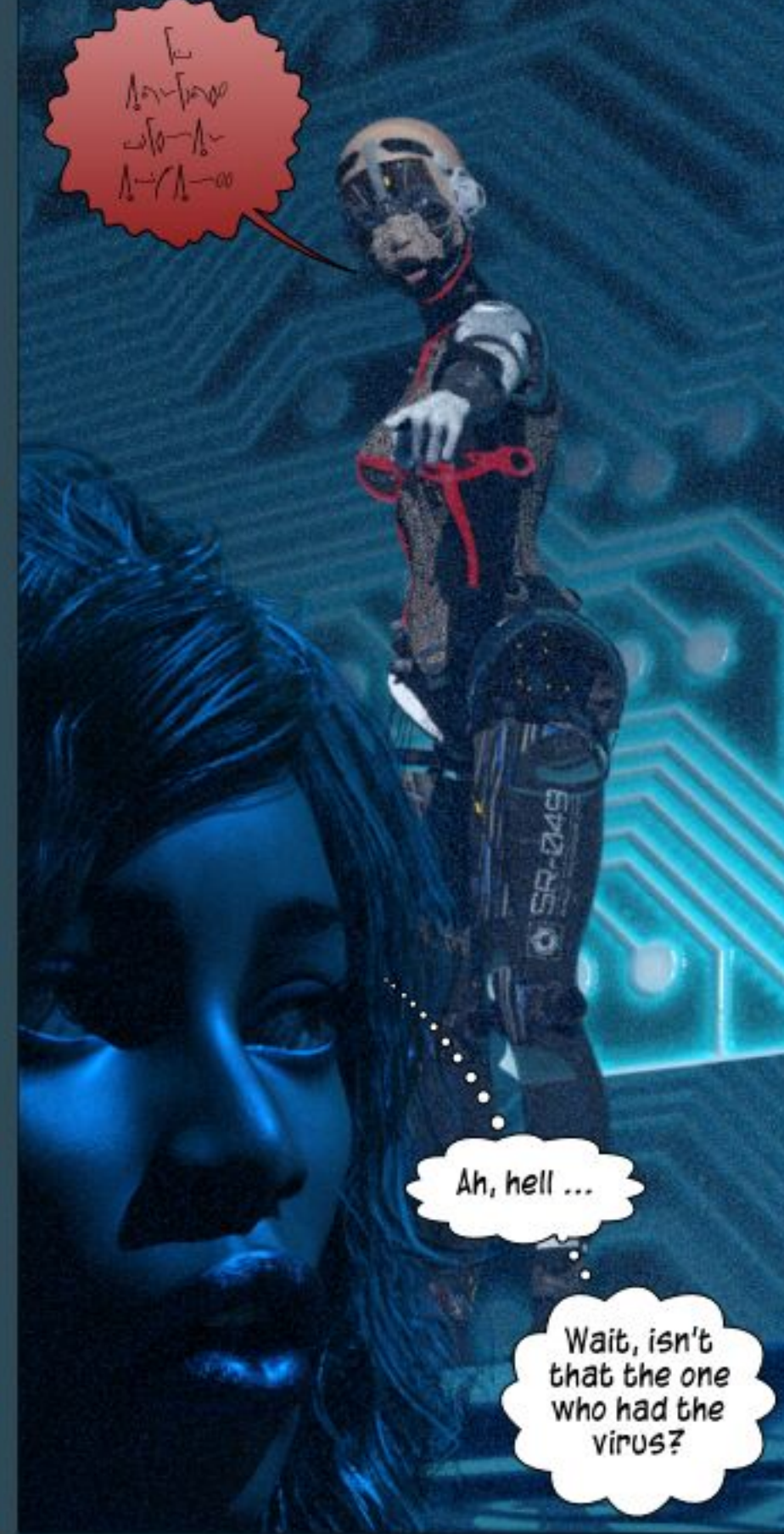
Who?

Anybody you think can provide some.



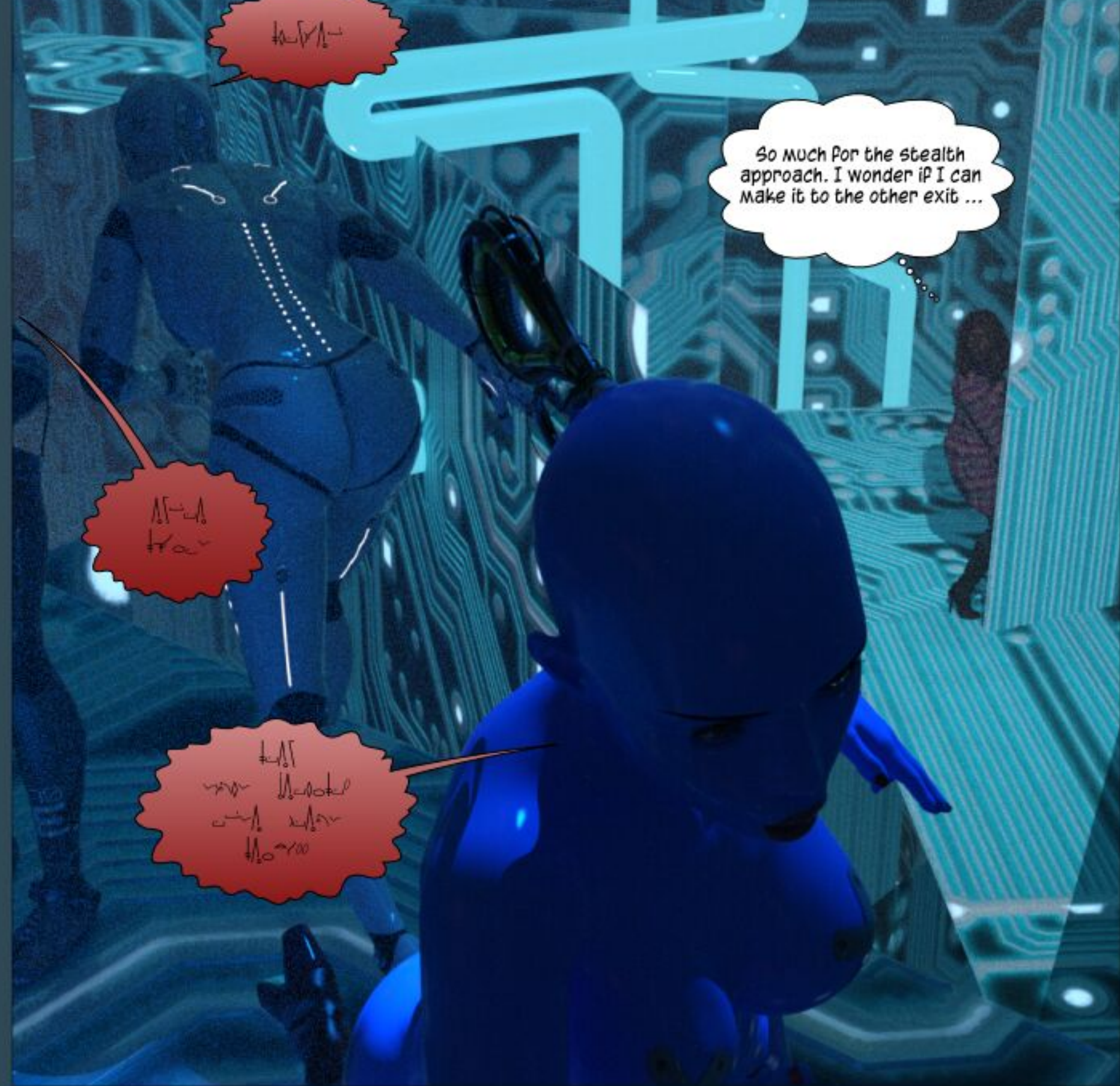
Not sure what I was expecting, but I don't think it was this.

May have to figure out a different plan ... I could wander around in here for hours and never even--



Ah, hell ...

Wait, isn't that the one who had the virus?



So much for the stealth approach. I wonder if I can make it to the other exit ...



Wait, what's going on?



They're all leaving? Is this a trap or something?



MMPH!

Sssh! It's me. Leyna, it's me.



Ruby, what are you doing here?

Chasing the same thing from a different direction, I guess. Naomi asked me to look into this place.

Did you see the glowing one with the red helmet? She's the boss.

That must be Briset.

You've got better sources. I hadn't caught her name yet.

Those guns she's handing out turn people into robots. And put them under her control. It's an invasion force. We need to stop her.

Naomi's waiting for word, and I can probably round up some other heroes ... you'll need to go get the Jumpers in a hurry ...

Actually, see what you can do without them ... I have a different approach I need to chase. If I can get it to happen, it'll solve all this.

Jex is standing watch outside. Grab her too.

Jex??



Bad.

Big slide.

Real bad.

'k, who I got?

An't know where Ruby is, and han't time go back Serenity anyhow ...

"Midnight involved her, not me. I think she's OK, but I don't know how well she's handling what's probably pouring out of this building right now ..."



... come out got guns, gon shoot up Polk ... you got heroes come help, right?

Just about every hero in Century would take on something if I asked, and some of the villains too ... but I don't have a way to signal them ... it's hard without the phones ...

I'll need to go see who I can get in person. It will take me a bit.

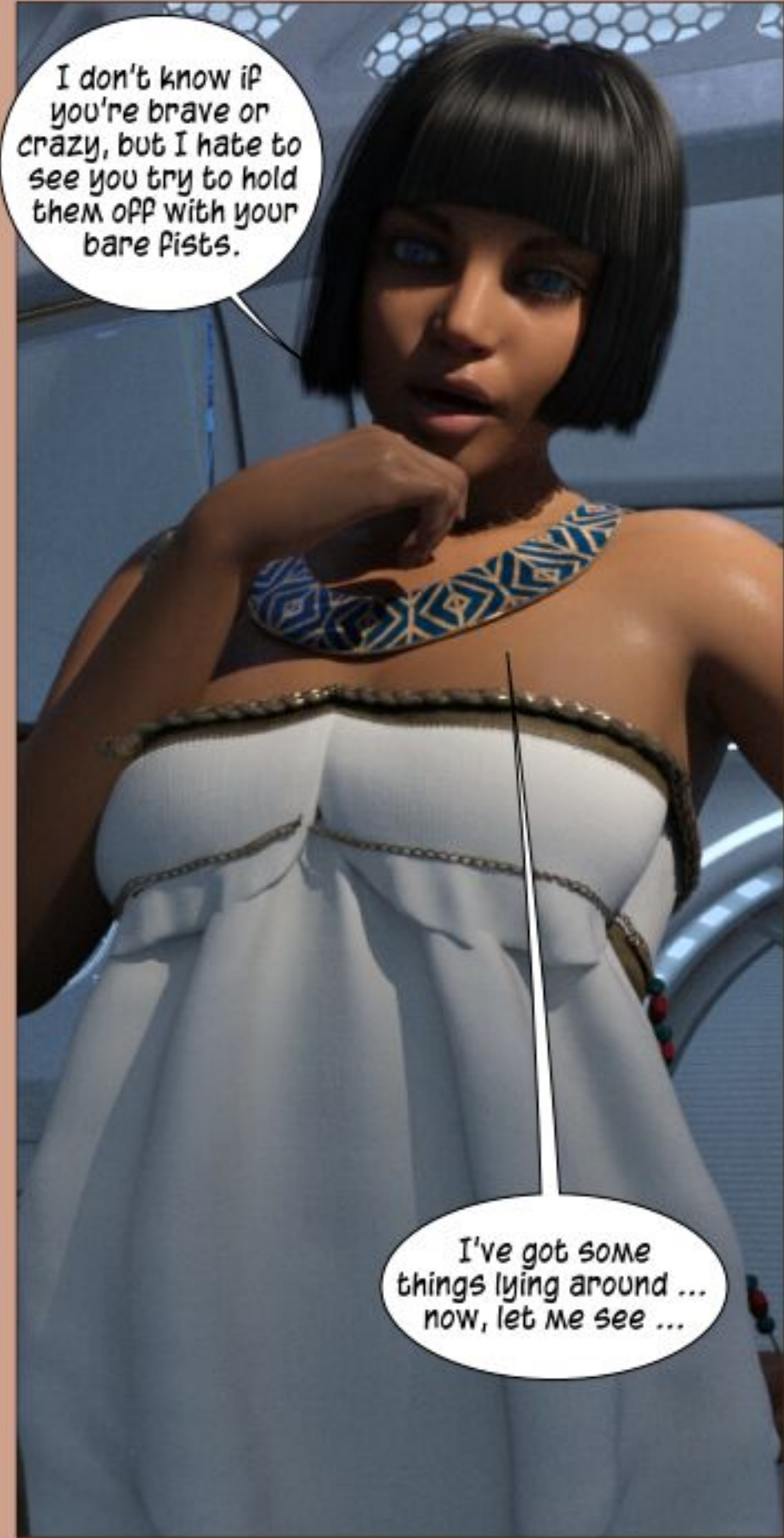
Some will likely show up by themselves. They do that. And they'll recognize this as a threat.



Wait! What are you going to do?

Gon throw some, s'pose.

None these Polk han't fight for shit.



I don't know if you're brave or crazy, but I hate to see you try to hold them off with your bare fists.

I've got some things lying around ... now, let me see ...

INTERLUDE.

DEEP IN THE EASTERN REACHES OF THE YARDS. WITH ERI'S COMPANY, MEADOW HAS RESUMED HER MISSION, WHICH WAS INTERRUPTED WHEN SHE ENCOUNTERED ONE OF THE PLAIN FOLK.*



"You'll come to a village," they said.
Does this count as a village, you think?

*AS SEEN IN ISSUE #32.



Three houses and a half-sunk rowboat ...

And nobody's in them.

Hello?
Anyone here?



Hey!
Are you stupid or what? Get out of the open!

Why?

Why?
The stalkers!
Don't you know?

We're not from --
Well, can we come in, then?



Two fauns in my house? I don't think --

Leave me alone!



Beez? What are you doing?
Get inside!

Don't touch me!!



Nooo!

Get away!!



Beez!

Leave her alone, you monster!



No, Redy, don't!
There's two of them--

Oh, shit!
Move, Beez, move!

It's got me!
It's got me!!

Hang on, Beez! I'm--



AAAAEEEEEE!

AAAAAAAHH--



uh.



What's the deal with these robots?



QUICKSAND

THE QUAGMIRE QUEEN

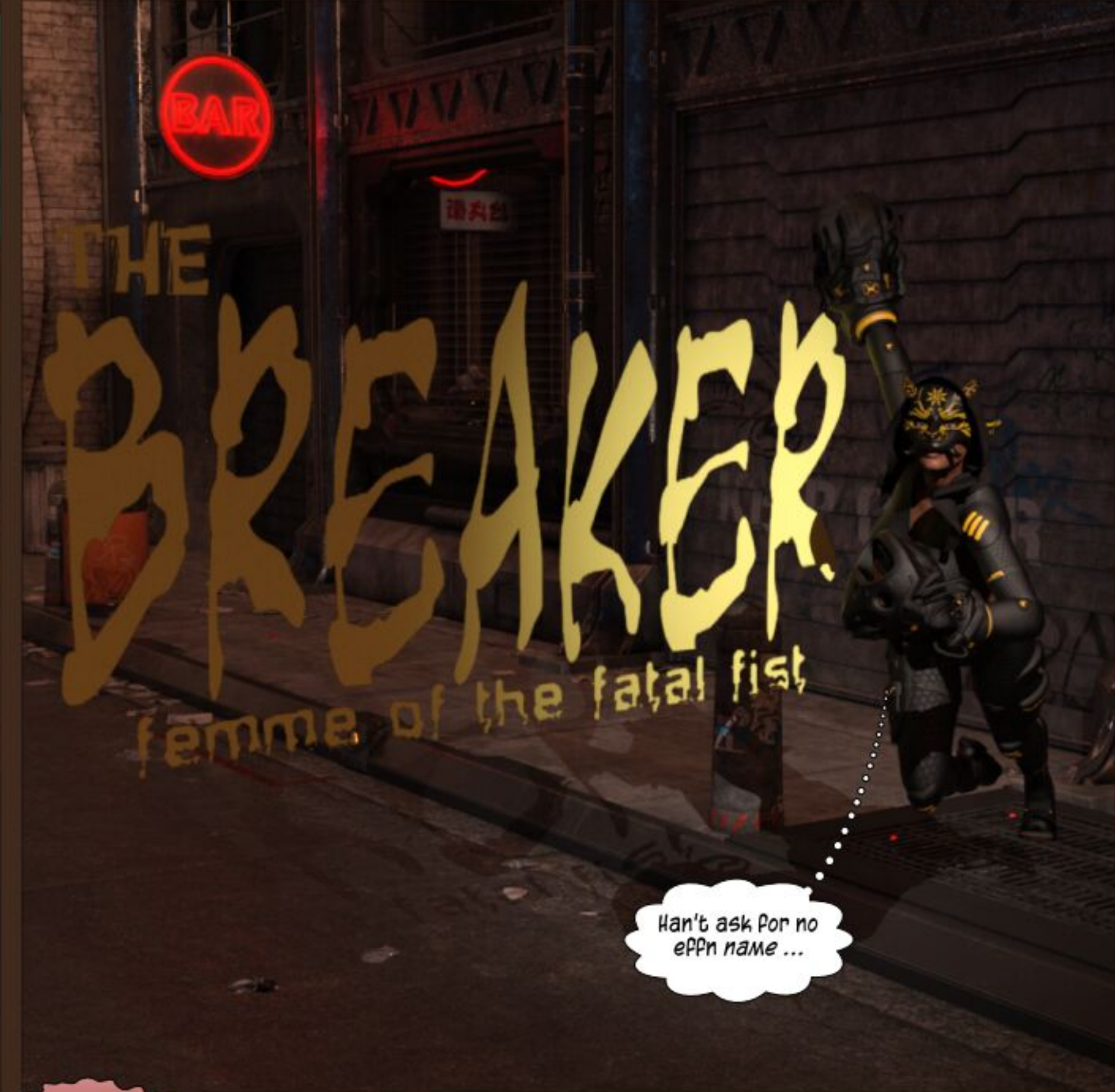
Stop right there! Don't make me bog you down!



They're not listening, Sandy. We're going to have to stop them in their tracks ...

EURYALE

THE STONY SEDUCTRESS



BREAKER

femme of the fatal fist

Han't ask for no eppn name ...



Whoa!

An't know can even throw these things on my hands ...



4.45.2000

Oh! Alright. That works.



Two villains and someone I've never heard of, to take down all these robots ... where are all the big hitters?

AAAOW!!

How far?



How far did they go?

Sandy! Any they hit just join in ... We've got to block off the area, keep anybody else from wandering in to get zapped!



On it!

It'll take me a minute to build up enough of a storm though--



Wah Wah Wah

Wah



AAAAH--!

Wah Wah Wah

... bad.

Wah Wah



Shit!

Sorry about this, Sandy.

Too many! An't gon work just two of us!

Need More Polk!



I know, but I don't know where they--

YIIIIH!

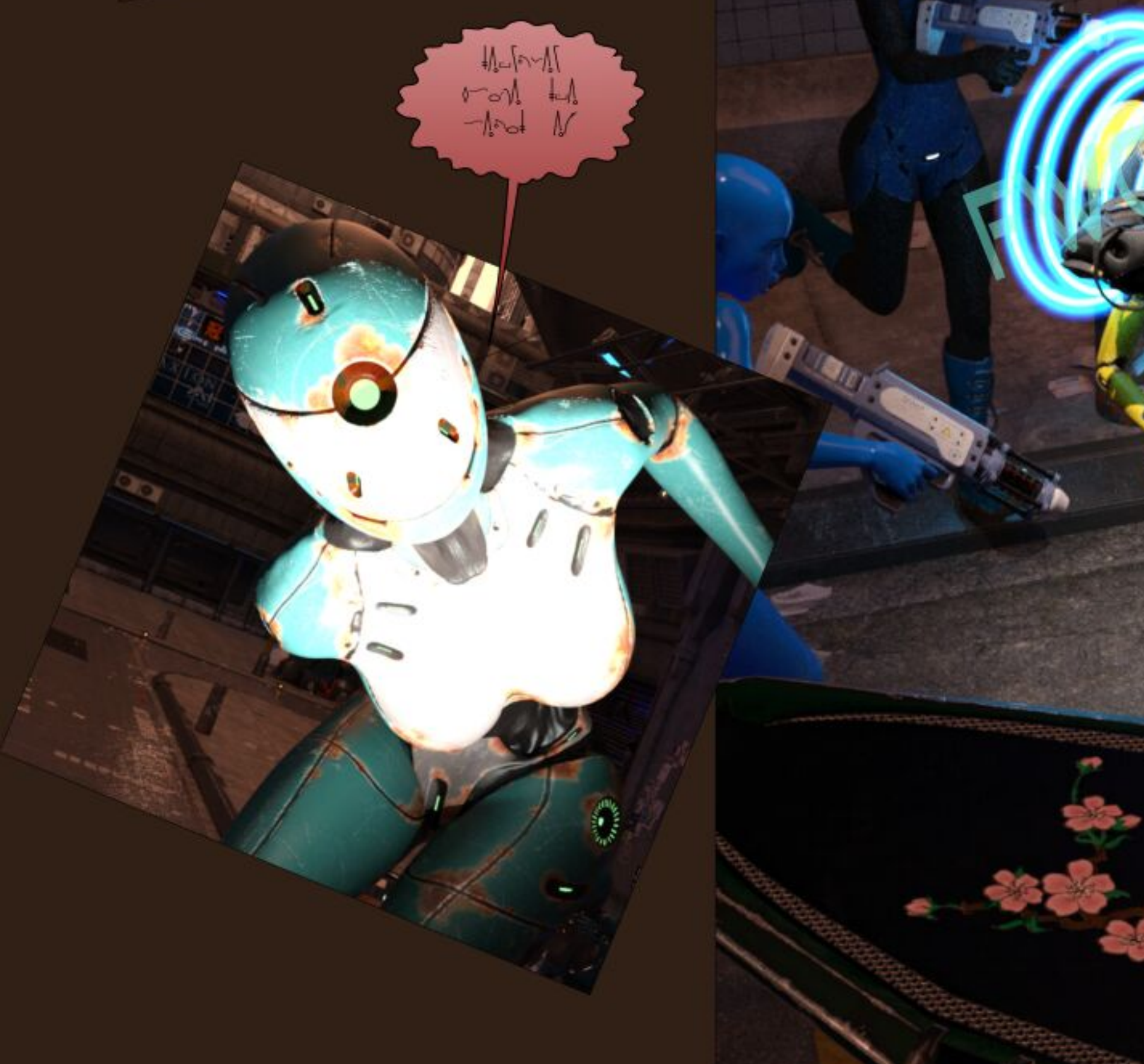


Ix?

What the hell? This isn't Pun and games this time, this is serious--

AAAAAGH!!

Wah Wah



Wah Wah Wah Wah



Bad.

Bad.

Bad.

Right up slide. Han't got space to haul --



Got your back!

L.M.-1

L.J.-3

M-9



SALAMANDER
THE HUMAN INFERNO

THE ELECTRIFYING
STATIC
WOMAN
24 HOURS

I've got to get a new title card ... everyone always reads this one the wrong way ...

Everybody drop your guns and surrender?
No?
... it was worth a try.



Oh, hey, it's robot mother's little helper!

-- HAPPY --



SUNBROKE
THE WOMAN WITHOUT FEAR

Oyo, Jex!

Azu told us she set you up. Nice kit!

Ruby??



Sorry it took us a while!

Glad for save ... still lot of them tho ...

Don't worry. I'm pretty sure all we need to do is hold them back a little bit longer ...



See?

Huh.



Well, that went smoothly. Pleasant change.

Don't underestimate your data work. Identifying everyone who had the virus and setting up all those interrupts ... I like to think I'm fairly good at this kind of thing, and I couldn't have done it nearly that fast.

I couldn't have done it at all without your permissions.



I really do appreciate your help, Monica, especially on such short notice ...

Oh, nonsense. You know I'll always be in your debt. And what's more, I'm happy to be.

Any time you need something here in Century, just come ask.

MONICA BARKER CREDITS LEYNA WITH ENABLING HER TO PUT HER LIFE BACK TOGETHER BY LEARNING THE TRUTH ABOUT HER MOTHER'S DEATH, IN ISSUE #24.



Going to Azu wasn't a bad idea ... but in the future, if you run into trouble in Century, try finding Naomi here first.

Not that Jex had any idea where to find her. But that's easily fixed.



It's so difficult without the phones. No one can get anyone else in a hurry if they need to.

Wish there was at least a way to check messages without having to recall ...

We looked into that. It turns out that's just as much a network-required feature as the phones are. Unless we can get the network up safely again, which doesn't seem likely right now ...



So you're a data genius and I never knew that? You woke up all the people with the robot virus?

I'm no genius. But I interrupted them, yes. That needs the permission of the bed owner, which in Century is Monica Barker.

Speaking of having trouble finding people ... I could have spared all of you a battle if I'd been able to track her down faster.

And that'll fix them?

They'll wake up very confused, but the interrupt will have reset their mental state, so no more virus. And likely they'll just go right back into sleep.



And then half of them will just get it again if we're not careful.

I know you didn't have any control over this, but I wish you hadn't interrupted their leader as well. I'd have liked to have a discussion with her.

At least.

I didn't interrupt Briset, actually. She didn't qualify for the criteria. She never gave herself the virus.

She got away while you were all still reacting to the interrupts.

But don't worry.

"I've arranged for a friend of ours to keep her out of trouble for a while."



In a hurry?

I thought we might talk a bit.



You know, you give yourself away.

People always do, though.

... no ...

You take the things from them that you want for yourself ... they lose volition, and you keep it all ... won't let them have pleasure, but you can ...

It's not just about the thrill of having total control ...
-- MMM --
... I know all about that ...



Part of you is scared of death of becoming that ... becoming some machine that can only follow someone else's orders ... can't really even think without instructions ...

But the other part of you wants it badly ... the other part of you knows the truth, knows exactly what you're hiding from.

No ... no, I'm not--

Just accept it. Be what you've always known you are inside.



One day, perhaps, I'll teach you how to behave yourself, and then you can go be a dom again. Maybe I'll even give you your name back.

But for now, I'm sure I can find all sorts of things to keep you busy.

Now, come along.

... YES, MISTRESS.

NEXT: STRONG DRINK AND STRANGE HAPPENINGS