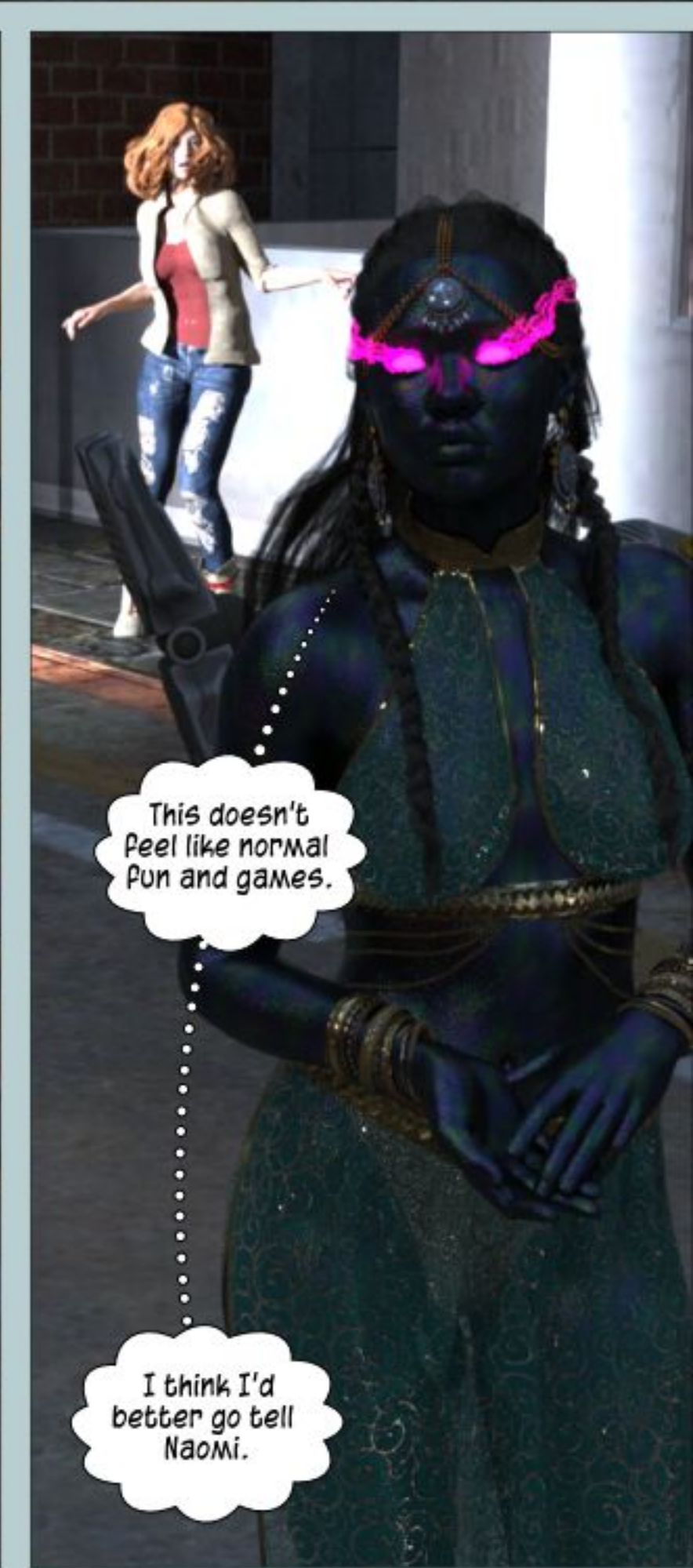
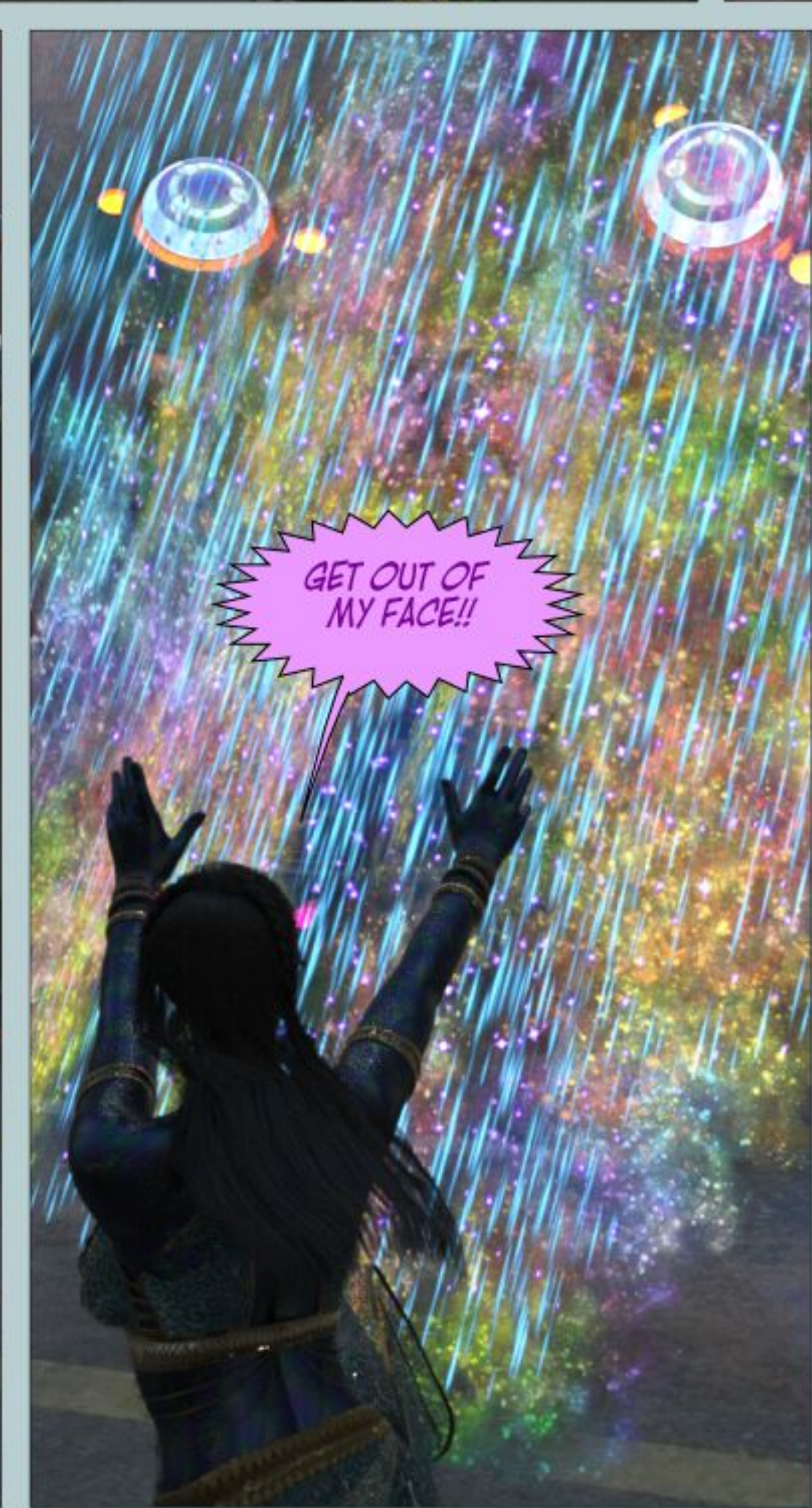
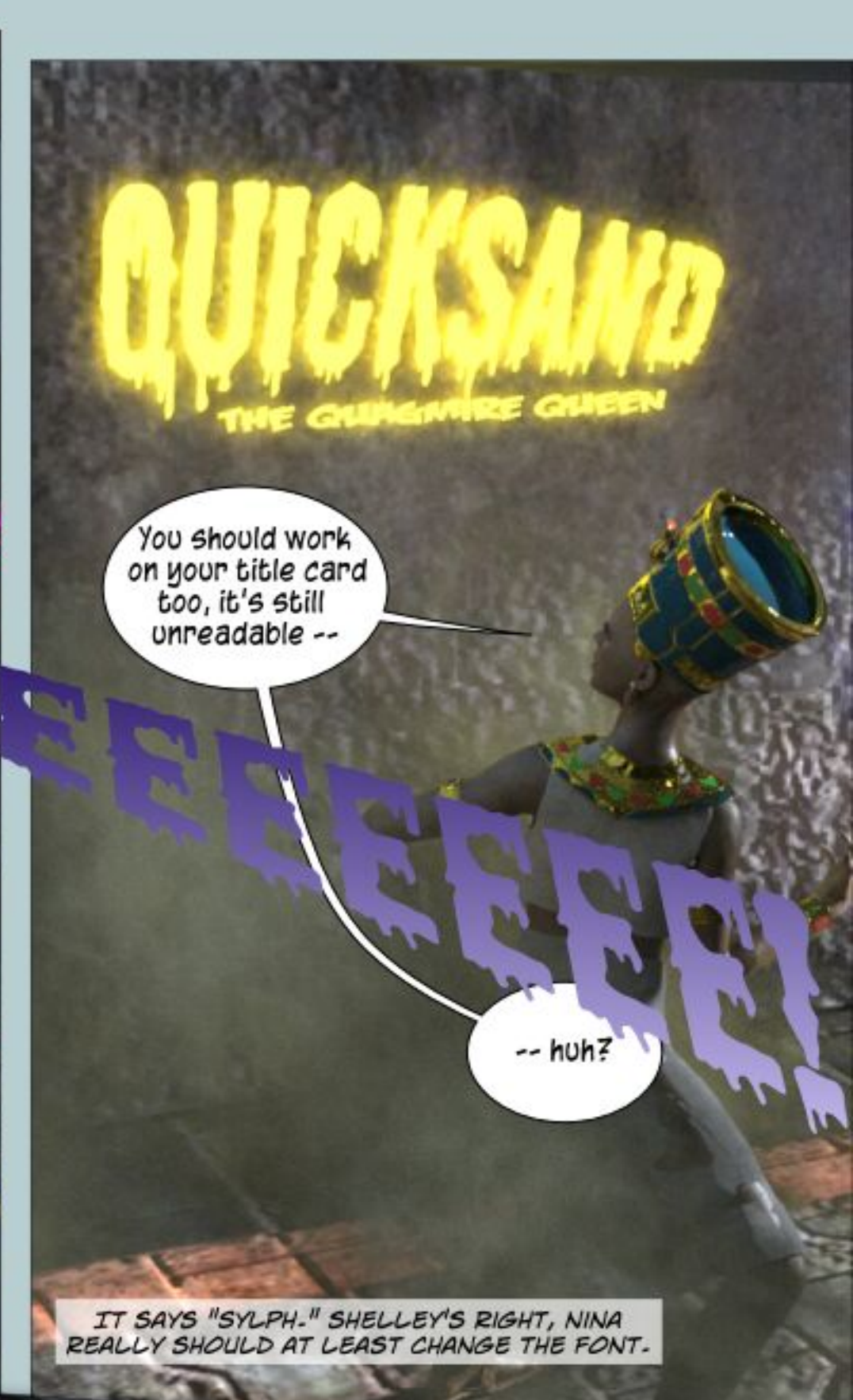
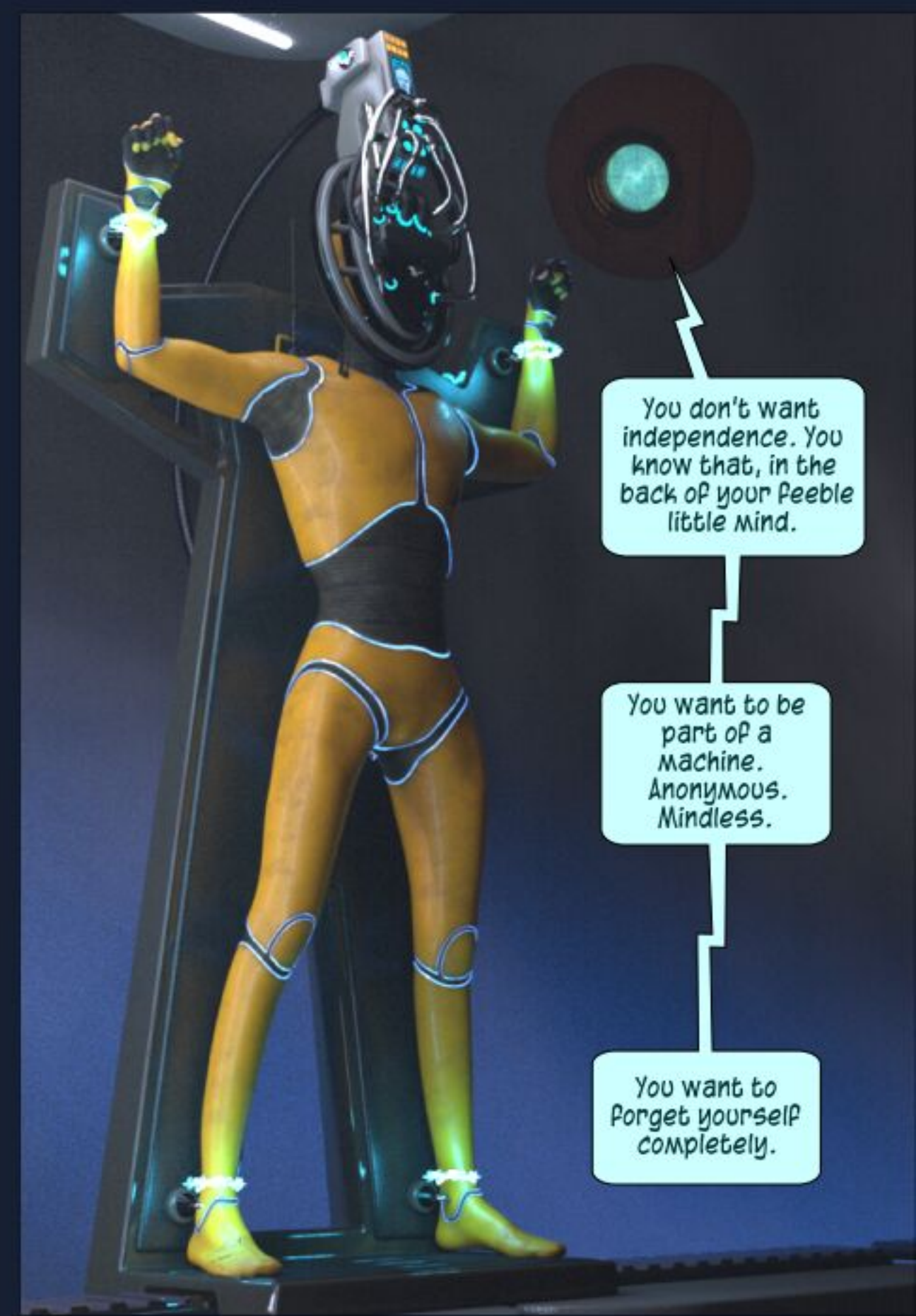
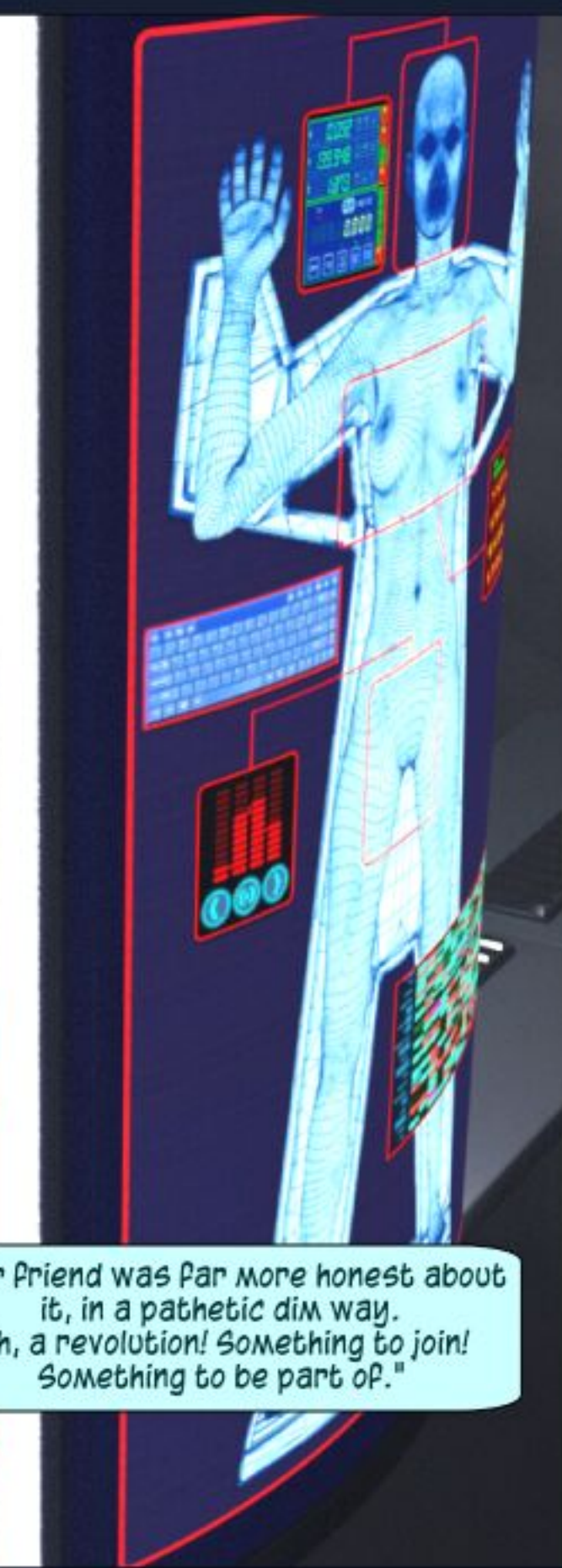
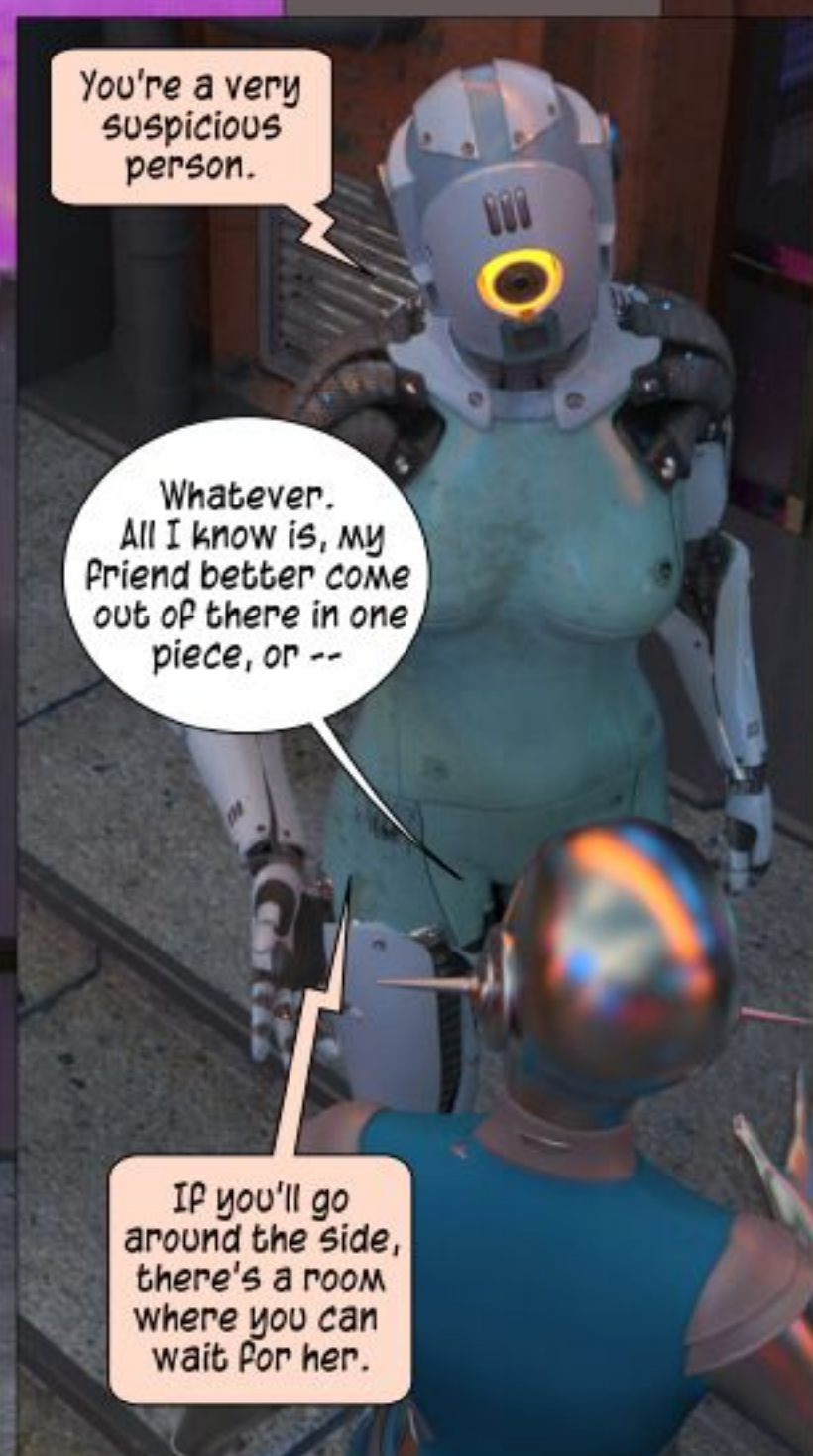


THE EVIL EYE, PART 1

Unreliable Resources

STORY AND IMAGES BY TRILBY







See, you've
Forgotten already.



Nina!
... Uh ...
What's up?

Molly ...
sorry to come
Find you like this,
but Naomi's not at
her house and I
don't know where
else to look, and I
think it's
important ...

OK, but
what makes
you think I know
where she is?

Oh ... well, I kind
of got the idea that
... Uh ... shit. Was I
wrong? I'm sorry --

-- sigh --



You weren't wrong.
I thought we were too. Until
two nights ago -- the day we
all talked to Elaine -- when
she broke it off.

Oh.

She said it was
because she didn't want to
put me at risk, but that's
bullshit. She's just scared of
it. So, you know what? She
can go to hell.



OK, but, the thing is
... I think there's
something big happening with
the robots. Something bad.
Something "we need to
Mobilize" bad.

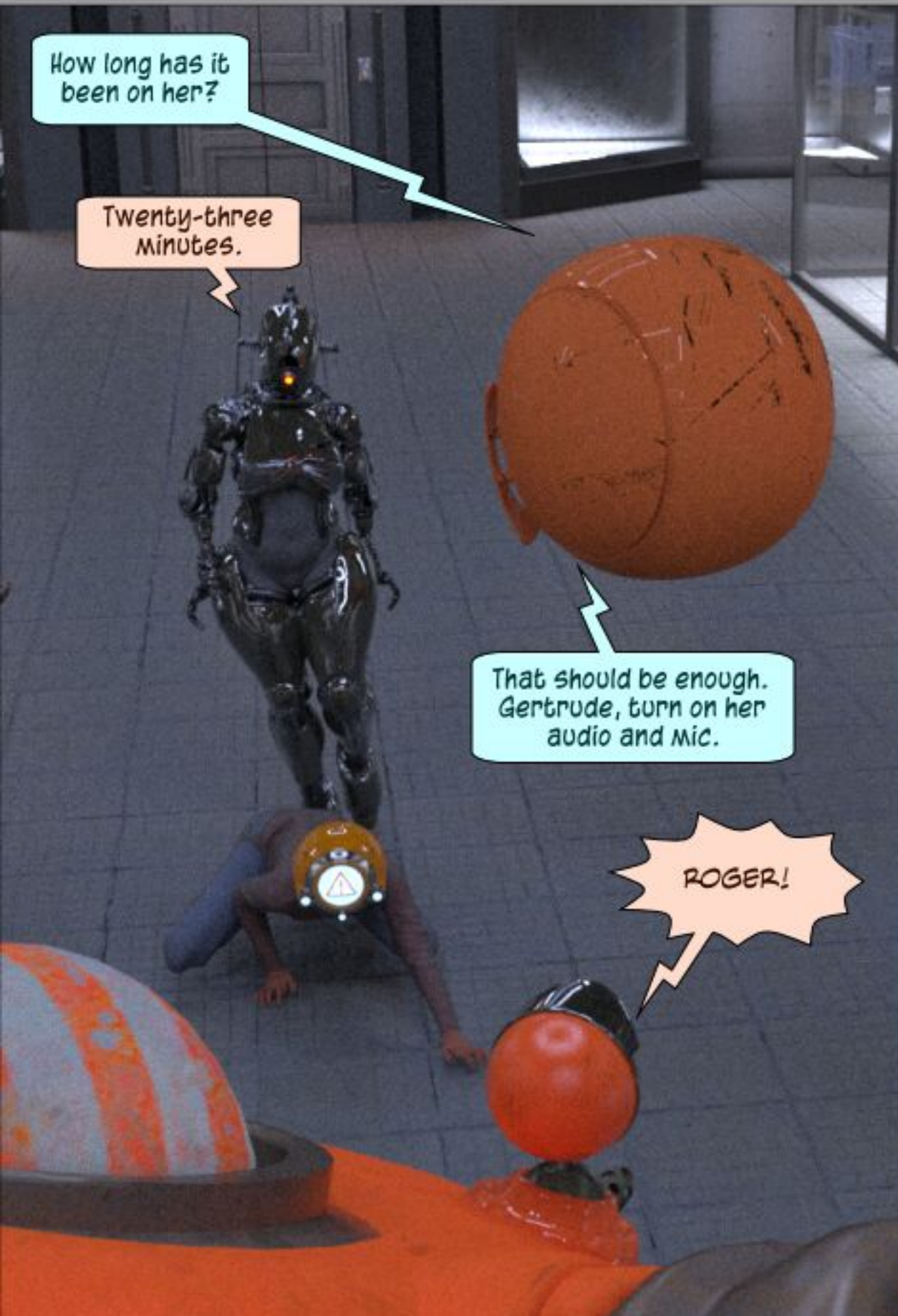
Well, I don't
know what you
expect me to --

Hmm.

All right, look.
Today's the day
that Naomi always
meets with Monica
Barker. I know
where.

I'll take you there ...
but I can't do anything else.
I mean, I literally *can't*.
I don't have the ability.

MEANWHILE ---



How long has it
been on her?

Twenty-three
minutes.

That should be enough.
Gertrude, turn on her
audio and mic.

ROGER!

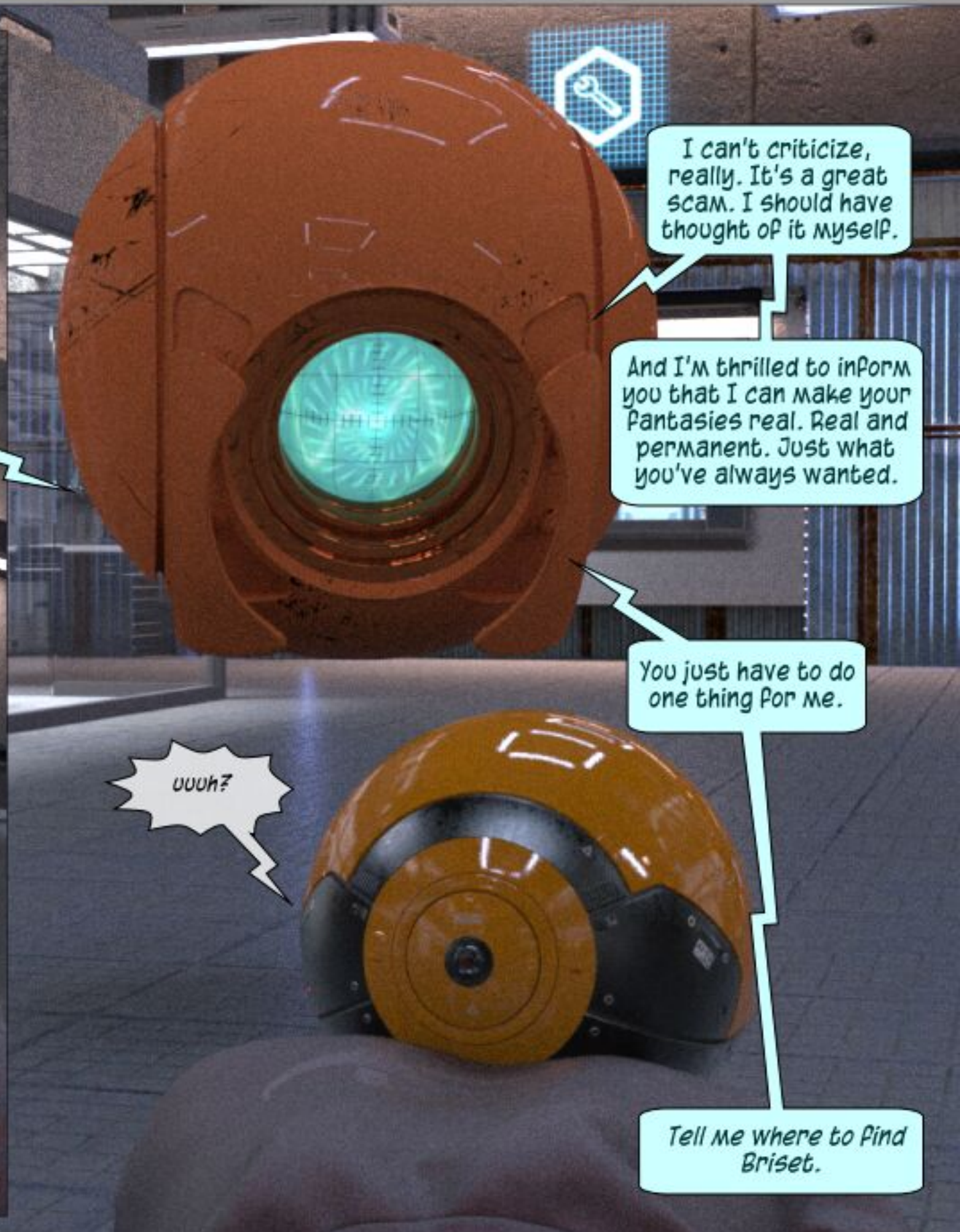


uuuh?
What --
overh!
I ---
oogh --

It's probably
better if you
don't try to
think too hard
right now.

That's what you want anyway,
isn't it? I've found out what
Briset's doing these days.

People like you pay to see her
because you have Fantasies. You
want to be controlled. A mindless
robot. Only able to follow orders.
Those are her customers -- pretend
robots. Fakers and cowards.



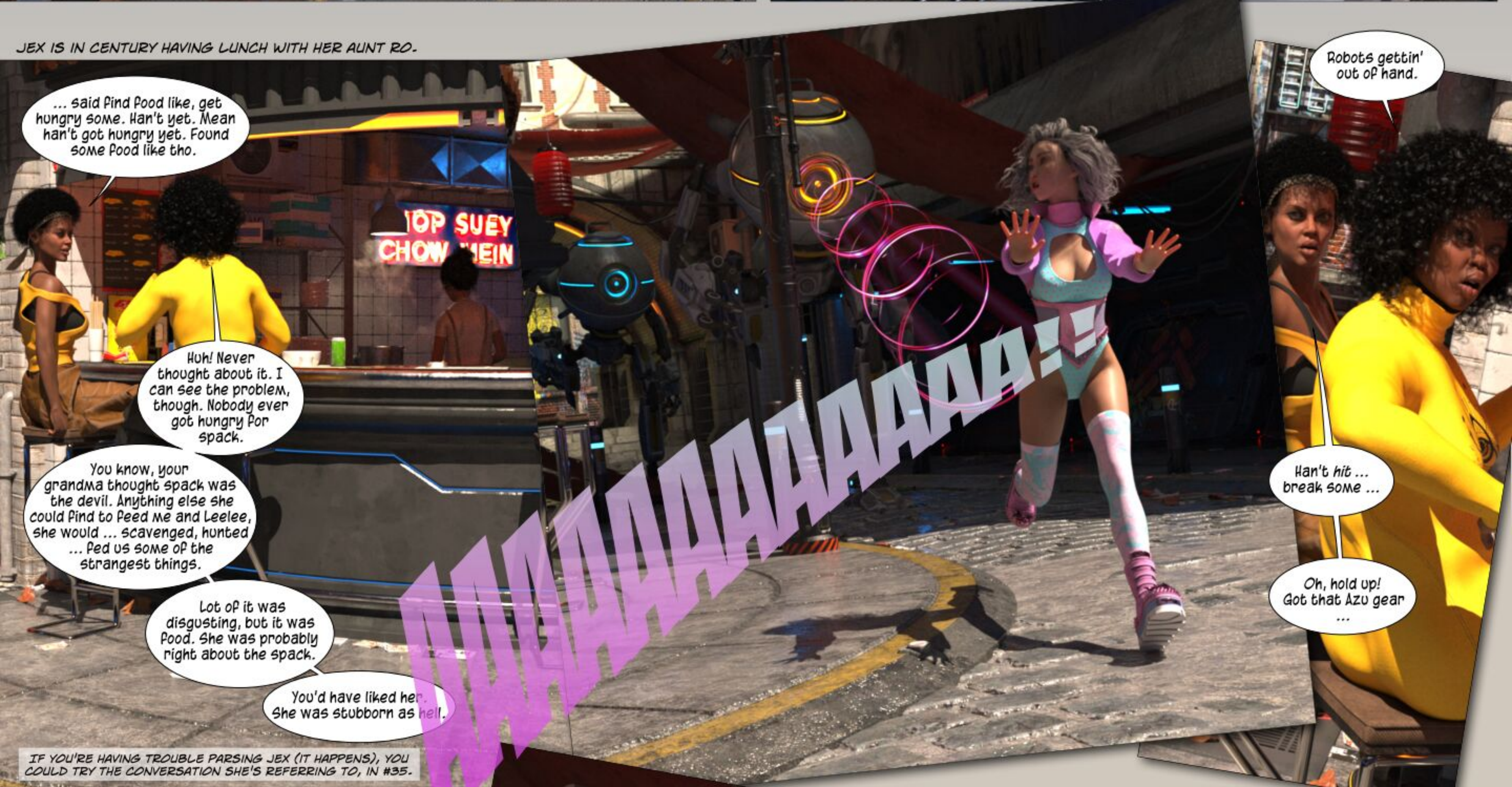
I can't criticize,
really. It's a great
scam. I should have
thought of it myself.

And I'm thrilled to inForm
you that I can make your
Fantasies real. Real and
permanent. Just what
you've always wanted.

You just have to do
one thing for me.

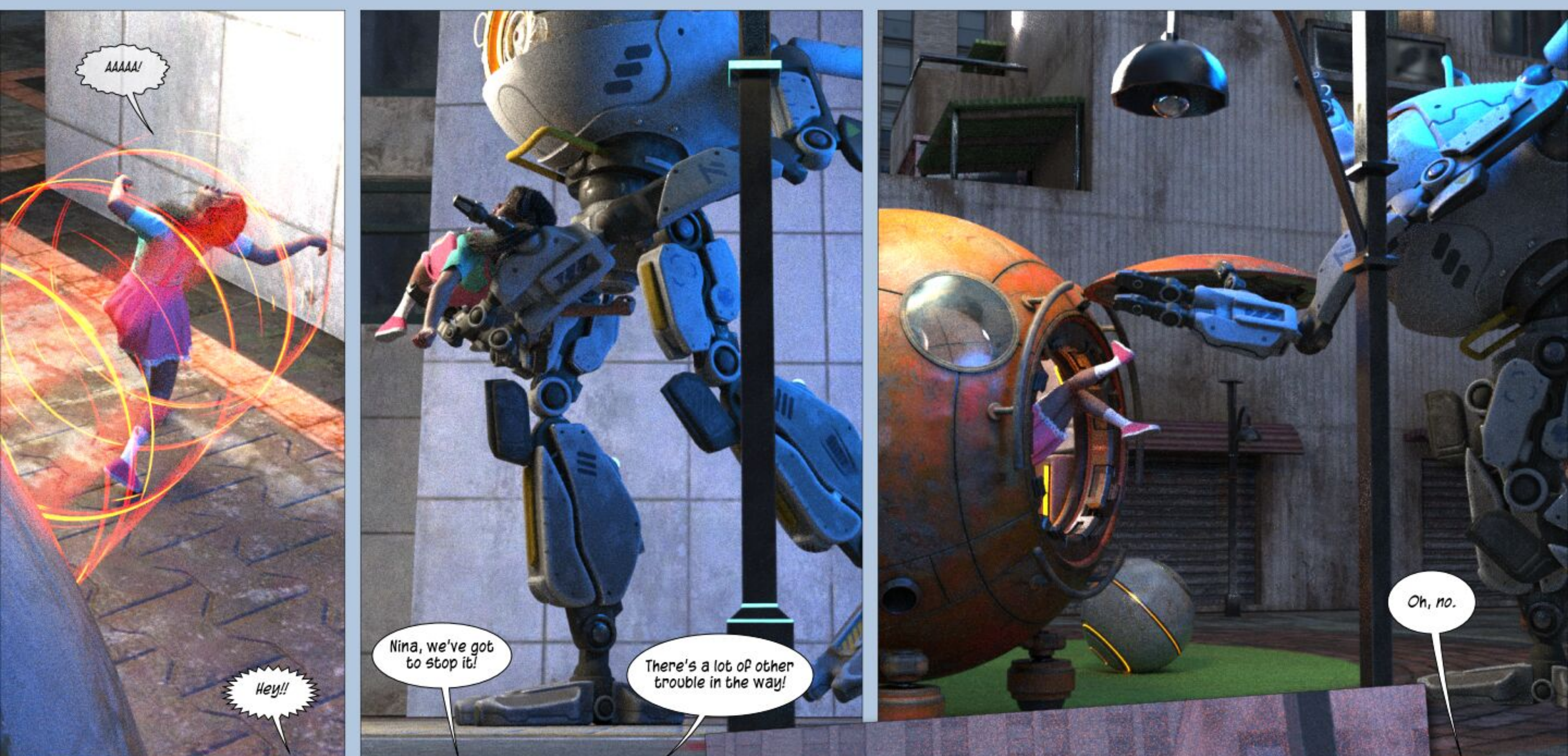
uuuh?

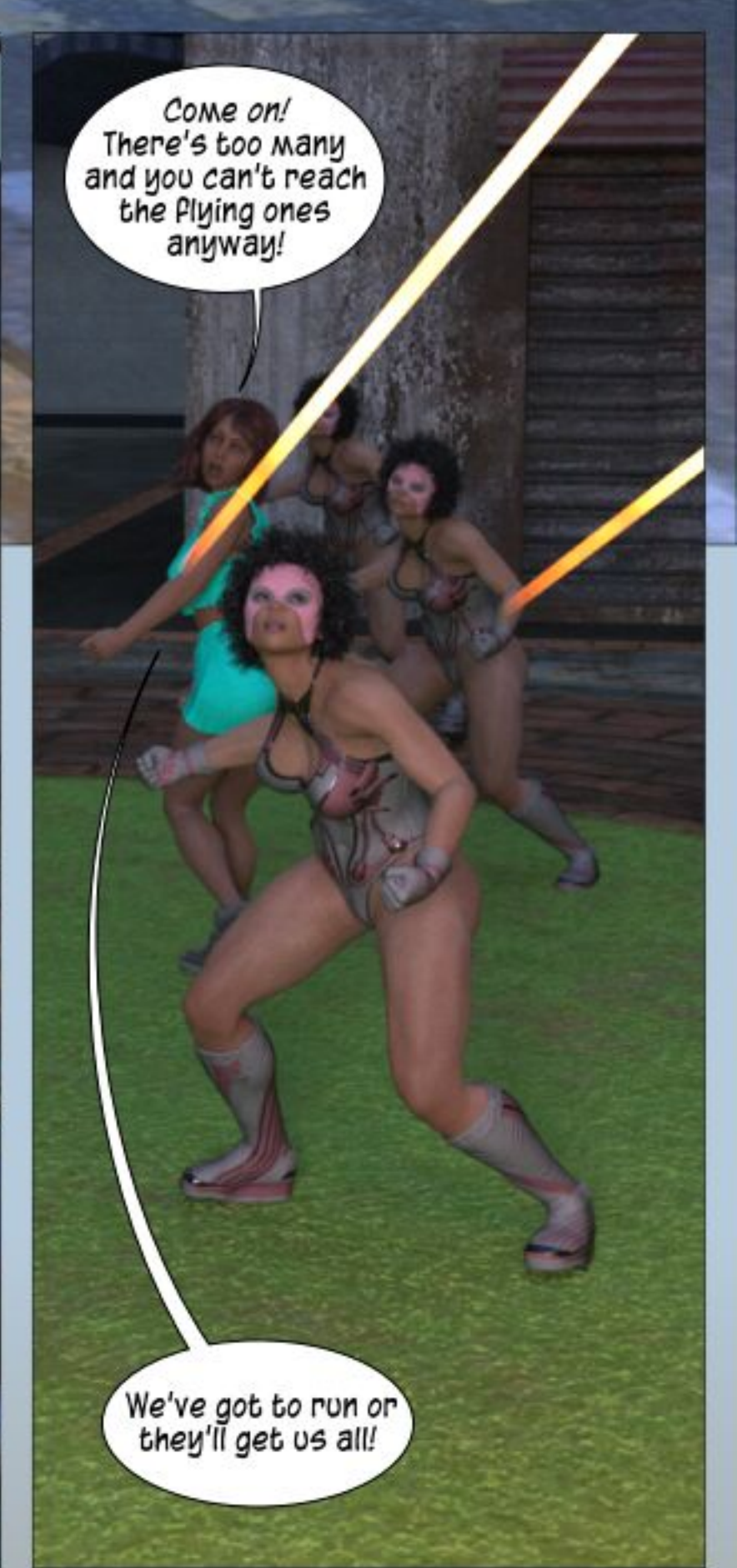
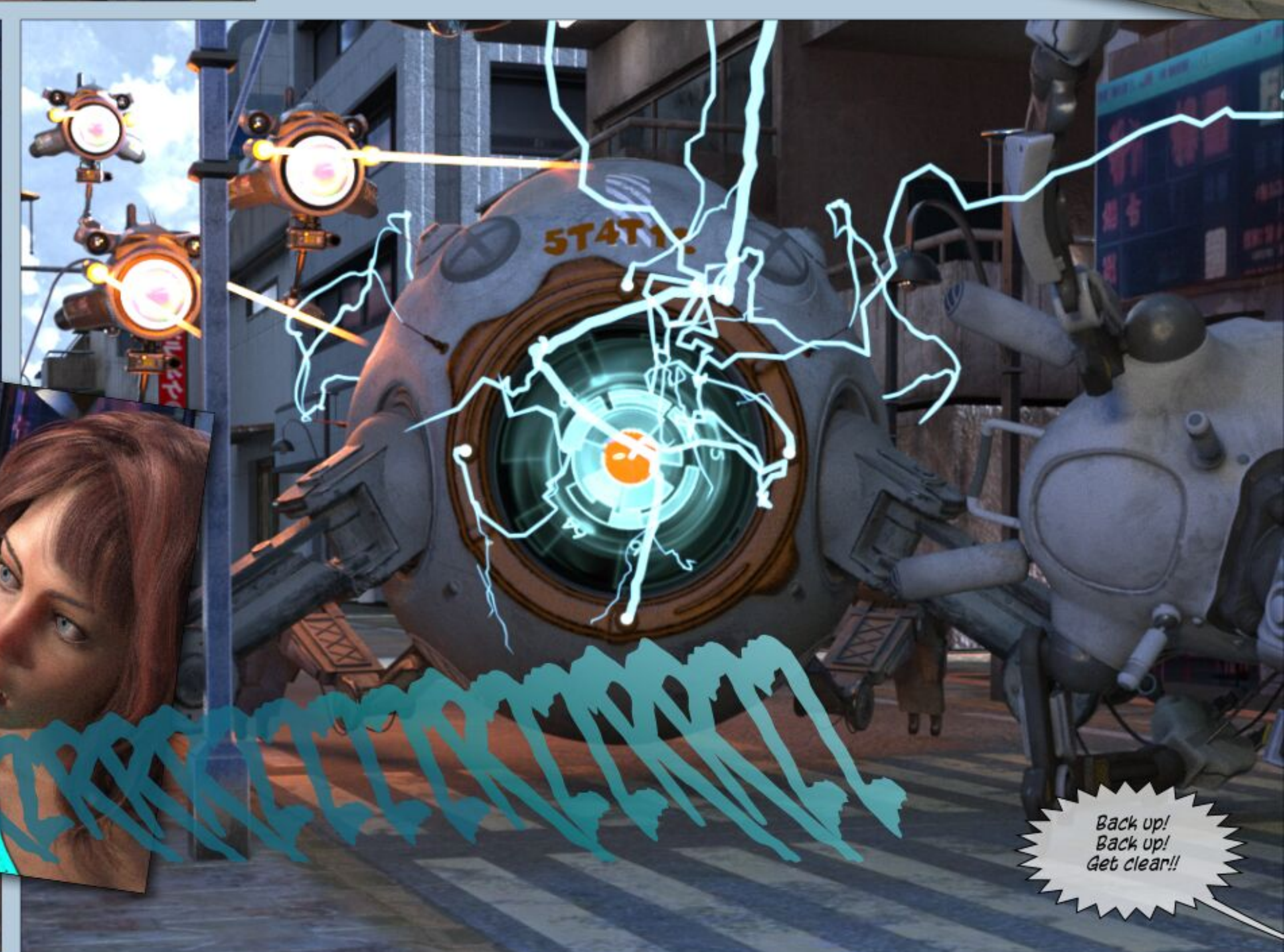
Tell me where to find
Briset.









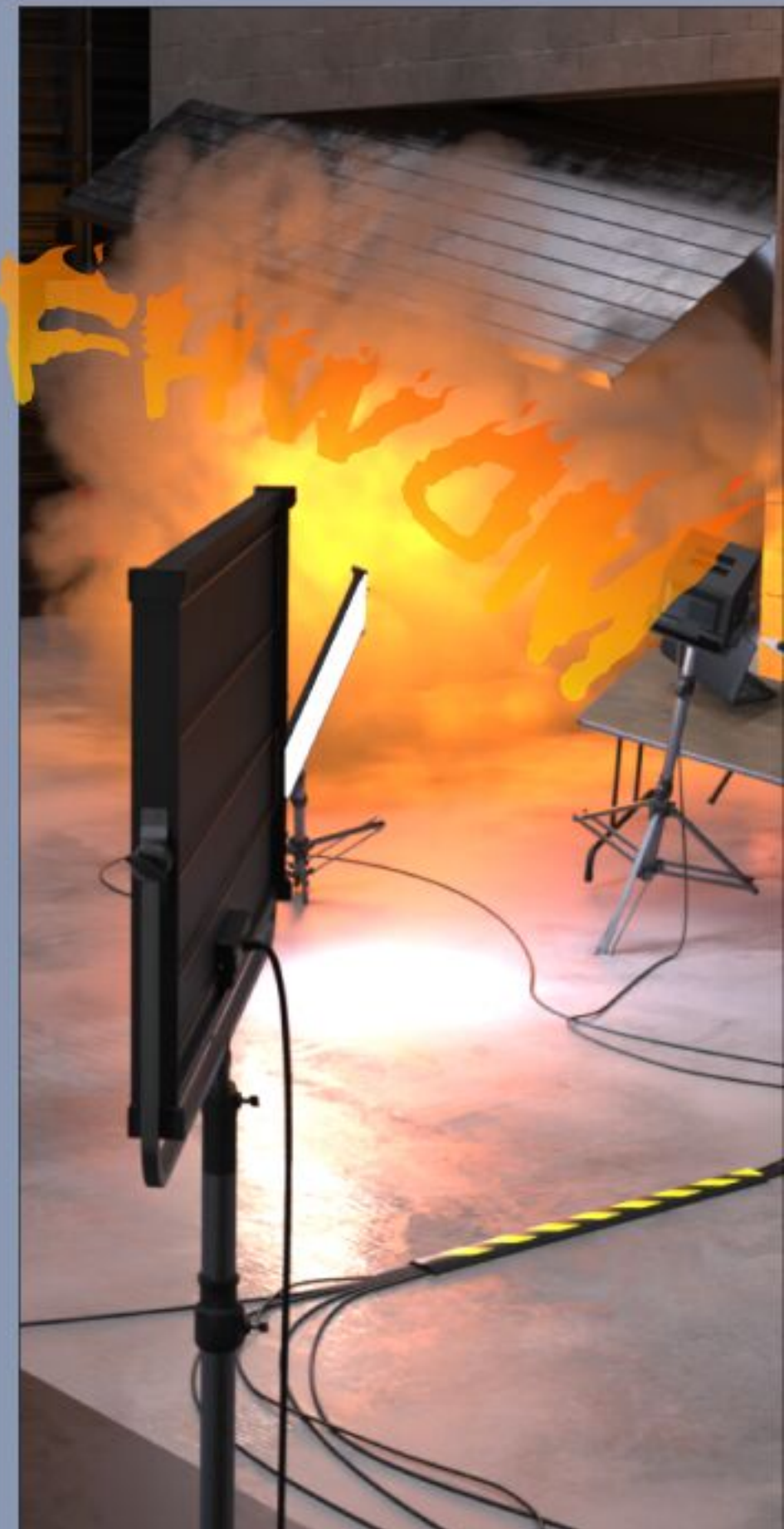


INTERLUDE



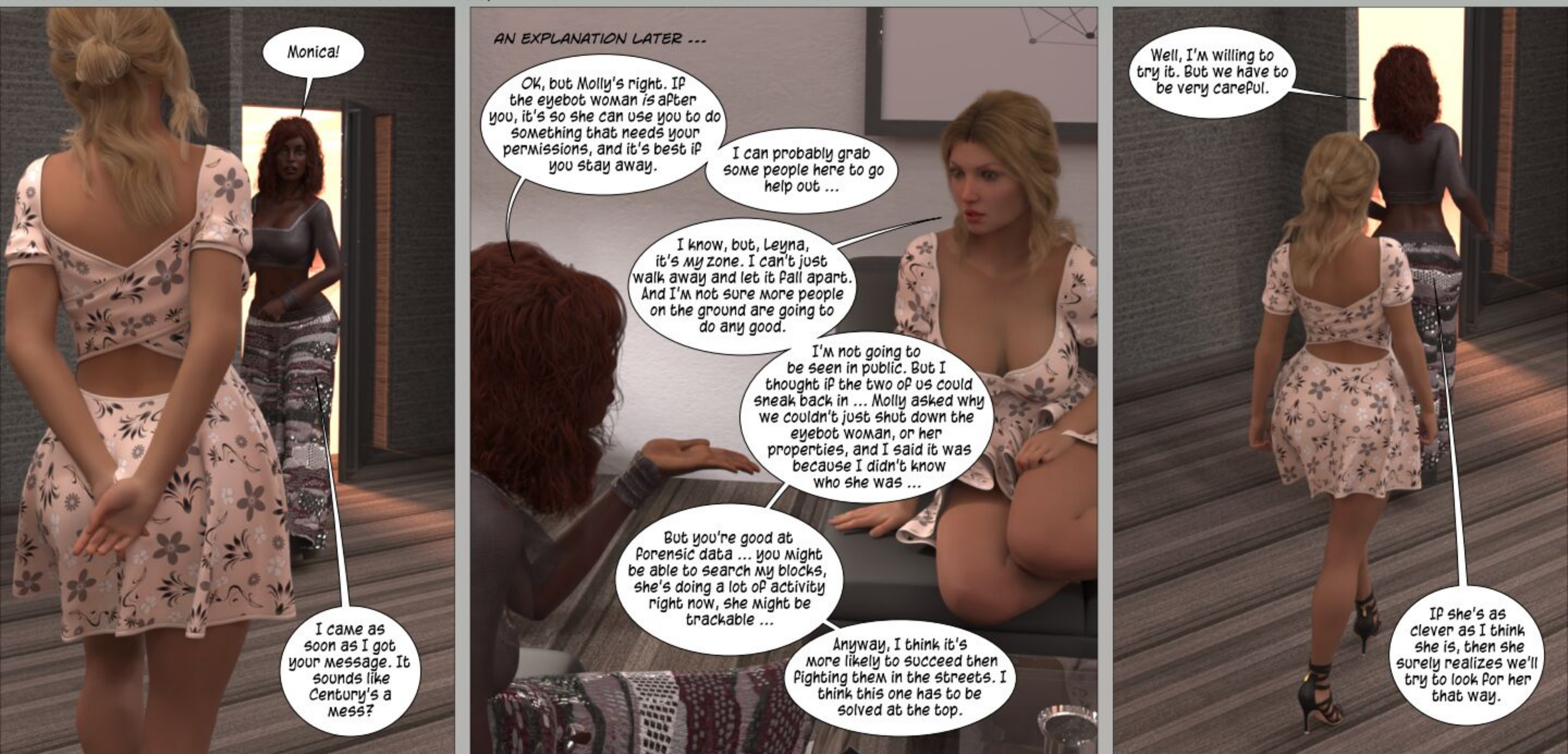


APRIL AND BRISET'S HOUSE OF DOMINATION. (NOT ITS ACTUAL NAME)





THE BARKER BOARDROOM. IT BARELY GETS USED ANYMORE, BUT IT'S A GOOD PLACE FOR THEM TO MEET UP.

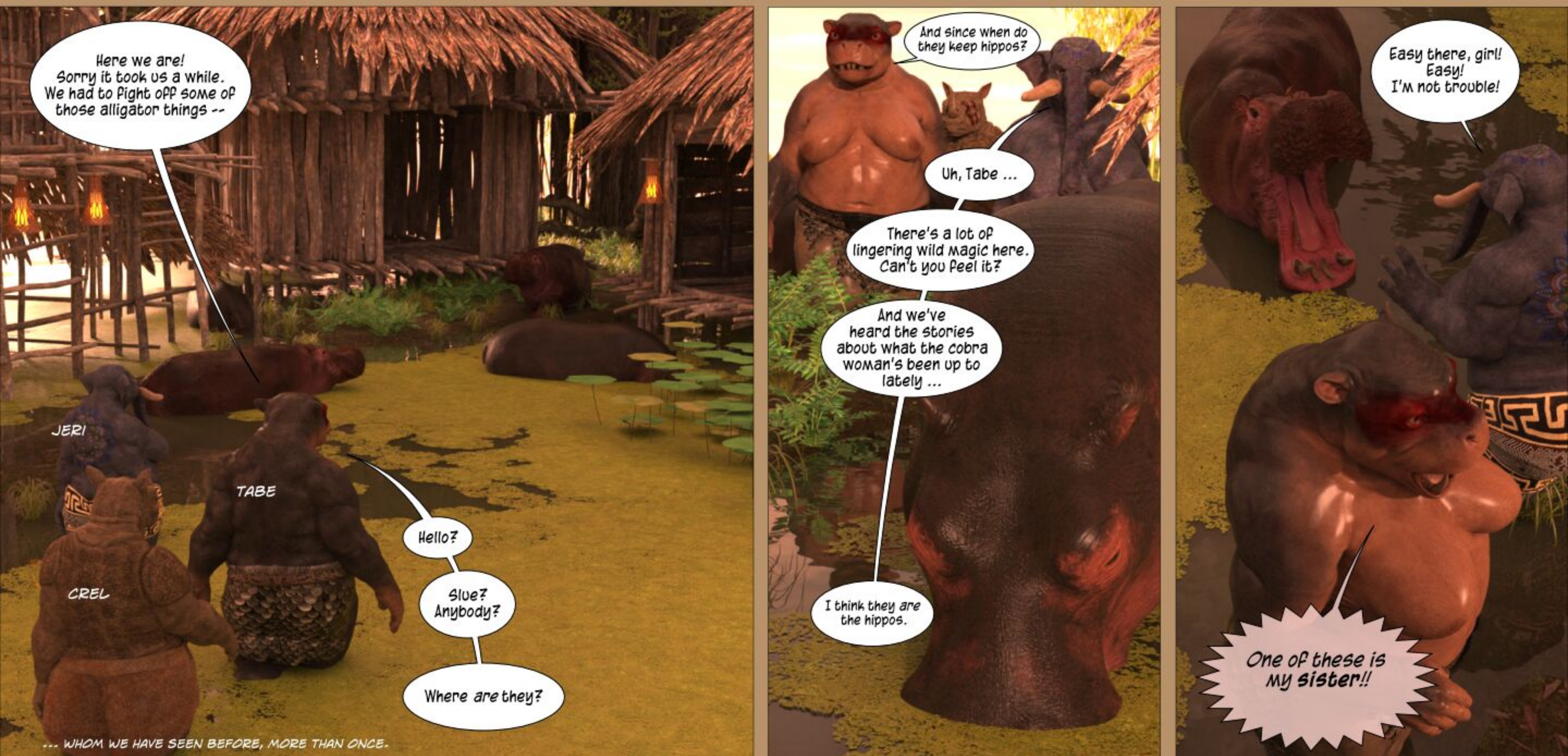


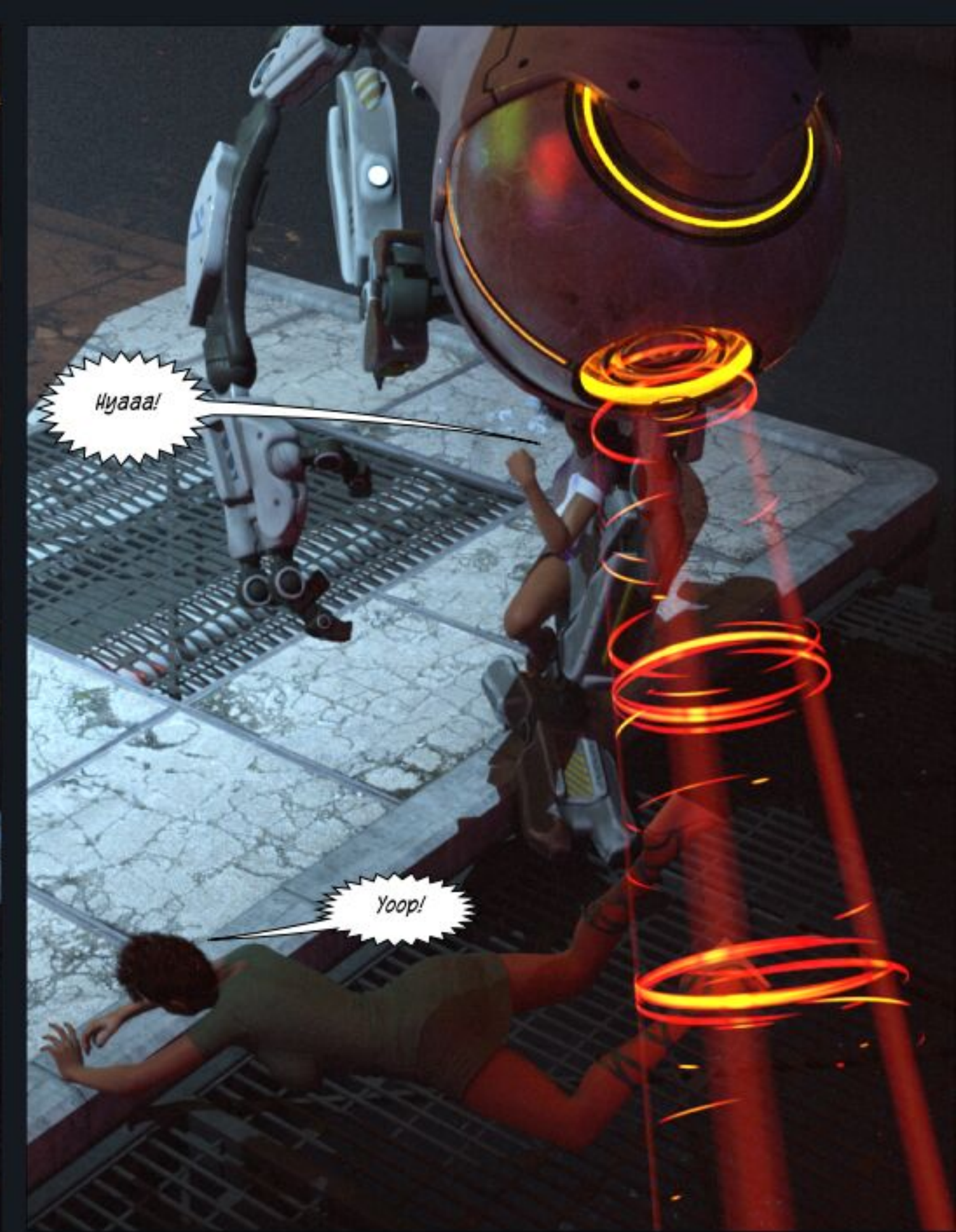
BACK IN CENTURY, MADELINE AND ORCHID SHOW UP FOR THEIR USUAL TRAINING SESSION, BUT ...





INTERLUDE



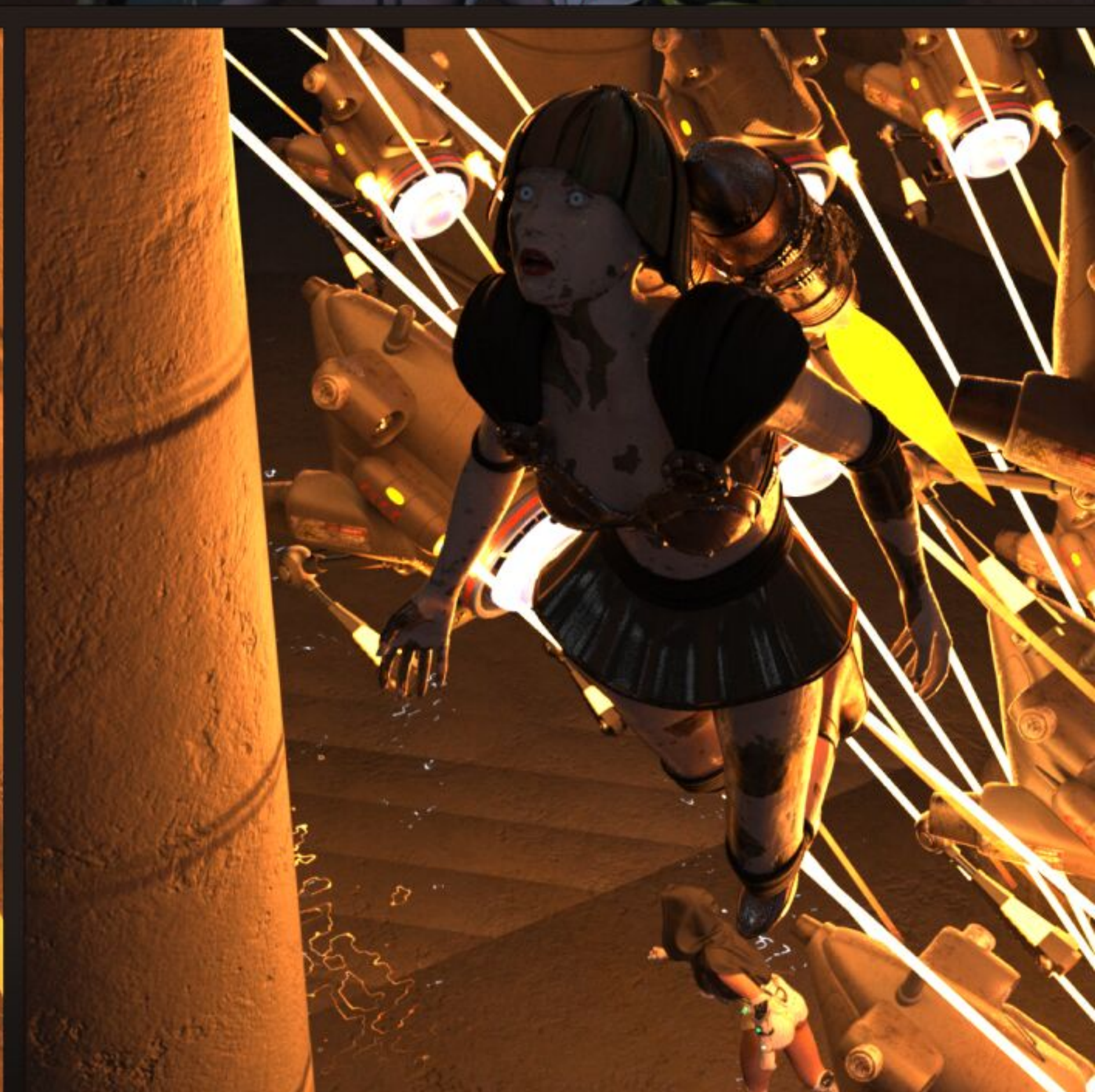




Shouldn't be too much further ... up here there should be a way to get deeper in without hitting a lot of --

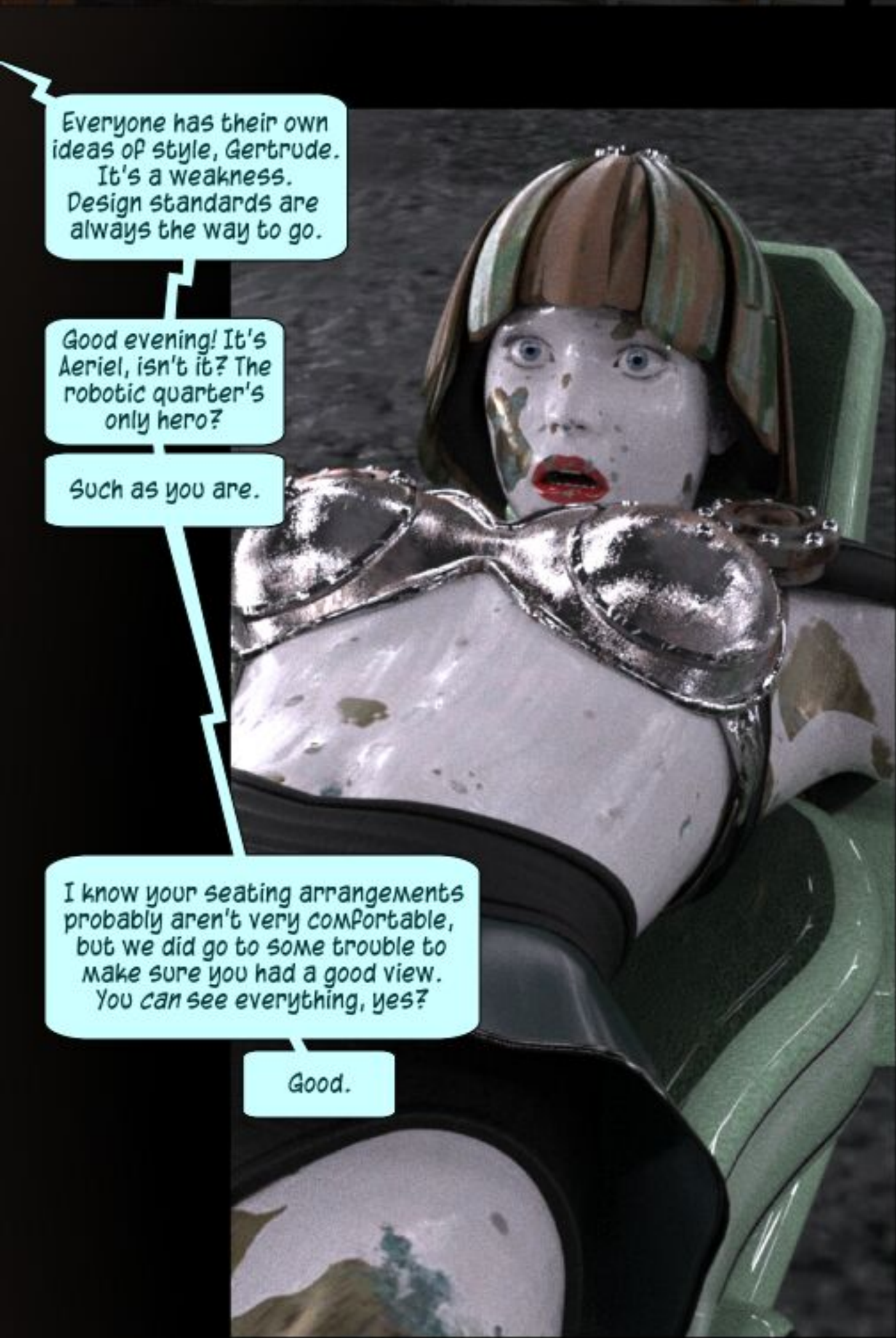


-- resistance ...



oogh

I THINK SHE'S FINALLY REBOOTING.
DON'T KNOW WHY SOMEONE WOULD PICK A DESIGN THAT ANCIENT ON PURPOSE



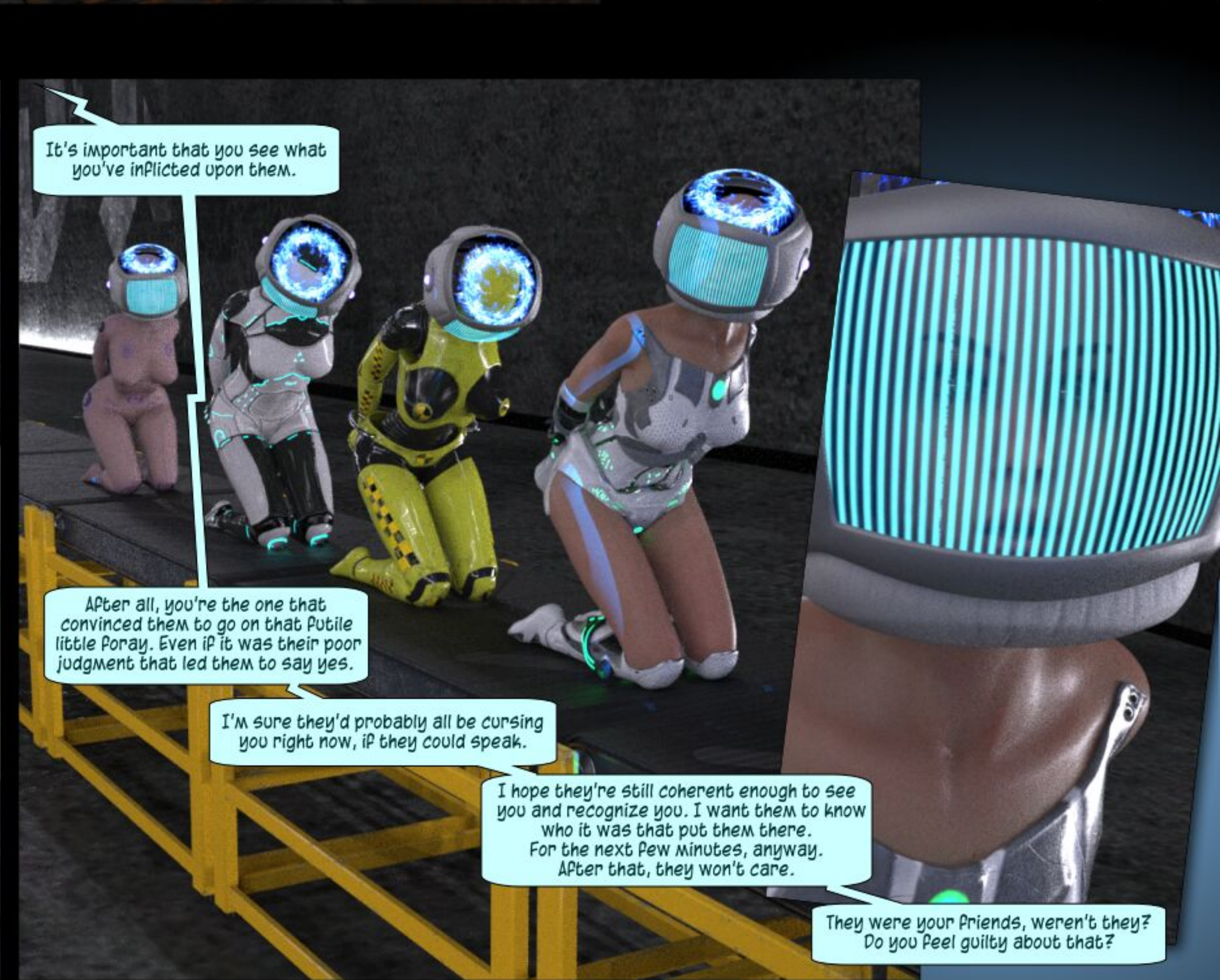
Everyone has their own ideas of style, Gertrude. It's a weakness. Design standards are always the way to go.

Good evening! It's Aerial, isn't it? The robotic quarter's only hero?

Such as you are.

I know your seating arrangements probably aren't very comfortable, but we did go to some trouble to make sure you had a good view. You can see everything, yes?

Good.



It's important that you see what you've inflicted upon them.

After all, you're the one that convinced them to go on that futile little foray. Even if it was their poor judgment that led them to say yes.

I'm sure they'd probably all be cursing you right now, if they could speak.

I hope they're still coherent enough to see you and recognize you. I want them to know who it was that put them there. For the next few minutes, anyway. After that, they won't care.

They were your friends, weren't they? Do you feel guilty about that?



I've been giving a lot of thought to the problem of troublemakers like you.

Meat humans are mostly becoming troopers, with a few exceptions. Most of the robotics are being made into interceptors and footpads. The rank and file, as it were. But I can't see allowing the ones who actively resist to have that level of grace. A scale of valuation seems to be called for.

There are going to be tiers. A hierarchy. Everyone serves, but some serve those who serve.

But don't worry! They won't be self-aware enough to realize how humiliating their position is.

Speed



Oh, I wouldn't bother trying to talk.

That furniture you're fastened to is sending enough current through your system to keep all your motor functions disrupted.

Probably not doing your focus any favors either, but that won't be an issue much longer.

Gertrude, let's move her down so she can see the outcome.

Speed

ROGER THAT!

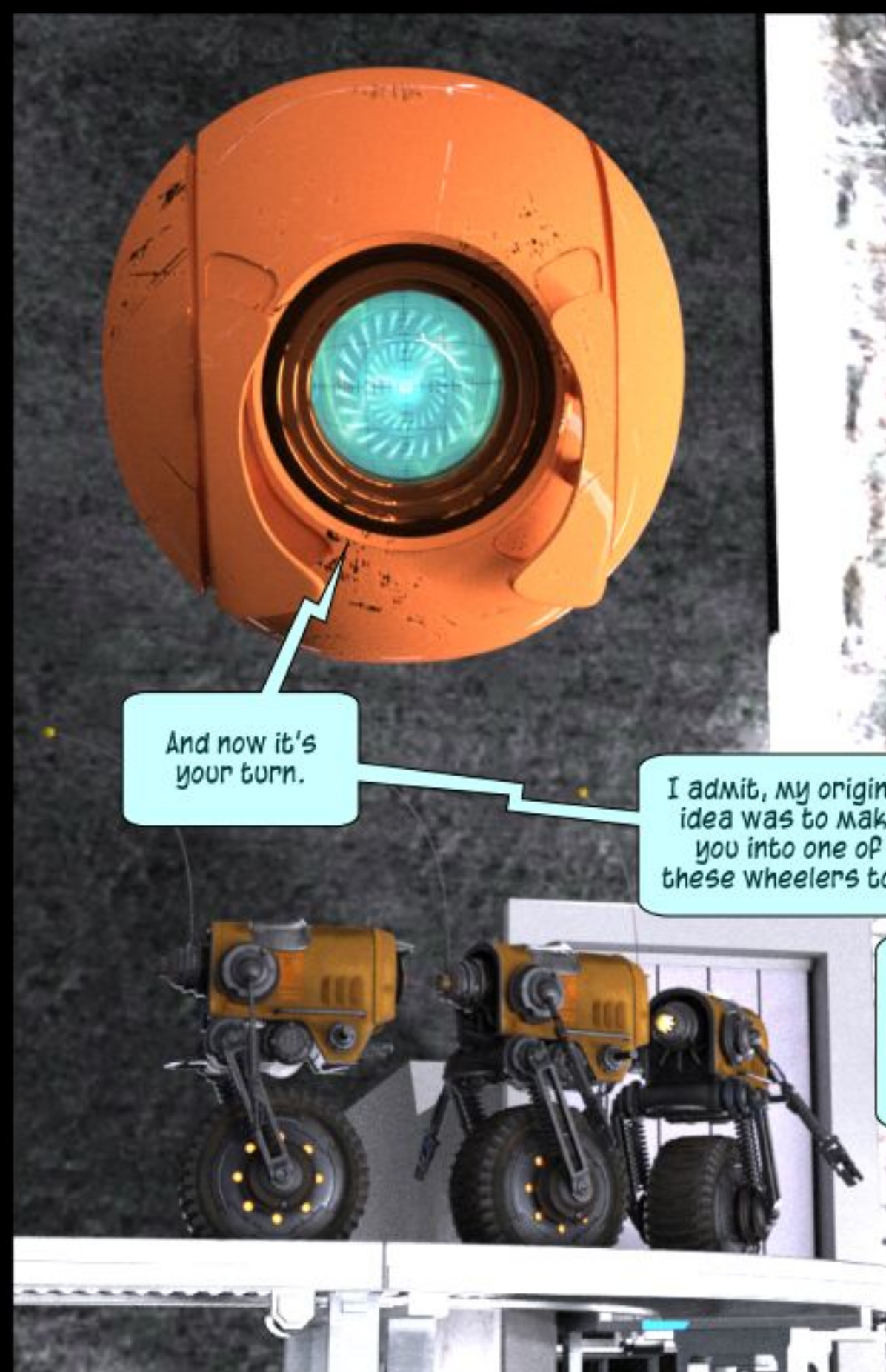


Perfect!

Even less autonomy than the footpads. Barely able to operate on their own.

But then, who expects their vehicle to be able to think for itself?

That's all they are now. Slightly intelligent transportation. And they have you to thank for that!



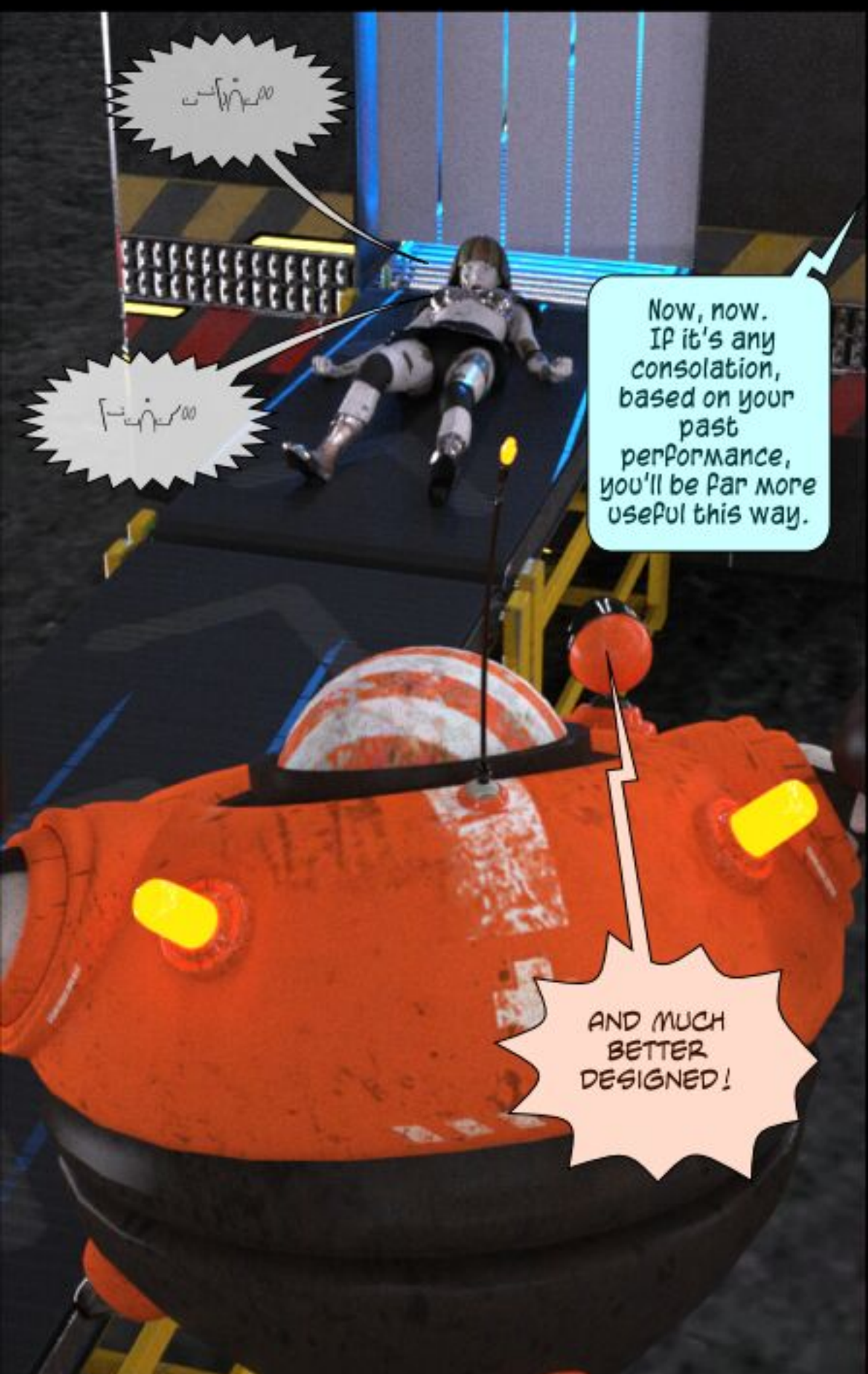
And now it's your turn.

I admit, my original idea was to make you into one of these wheelers too.



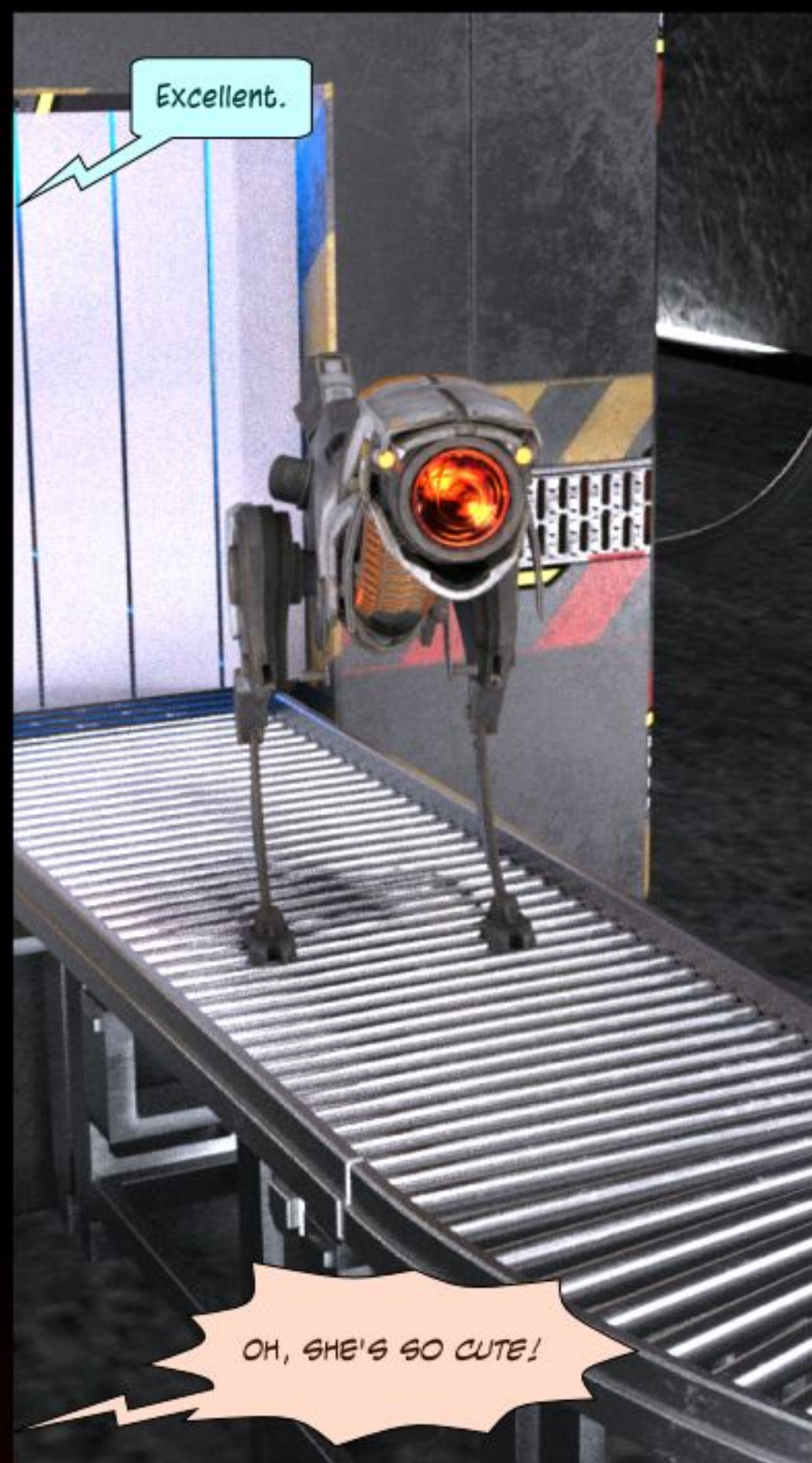
But you seem to have much more initiative than these idiots. You need extra suppression. We don't want that personality coming back.

Gertrude came up with something brilliant. I'd say you'll hate it, but honestly, you won't. There won't be enough of you left to know any better.



Now, now. If it's any consolation, based on your past performance, you'll be far more useful this way.

AND MUCH BETTER DESIGNED!



Excellent.

OH, SHE'S SO CUTE!



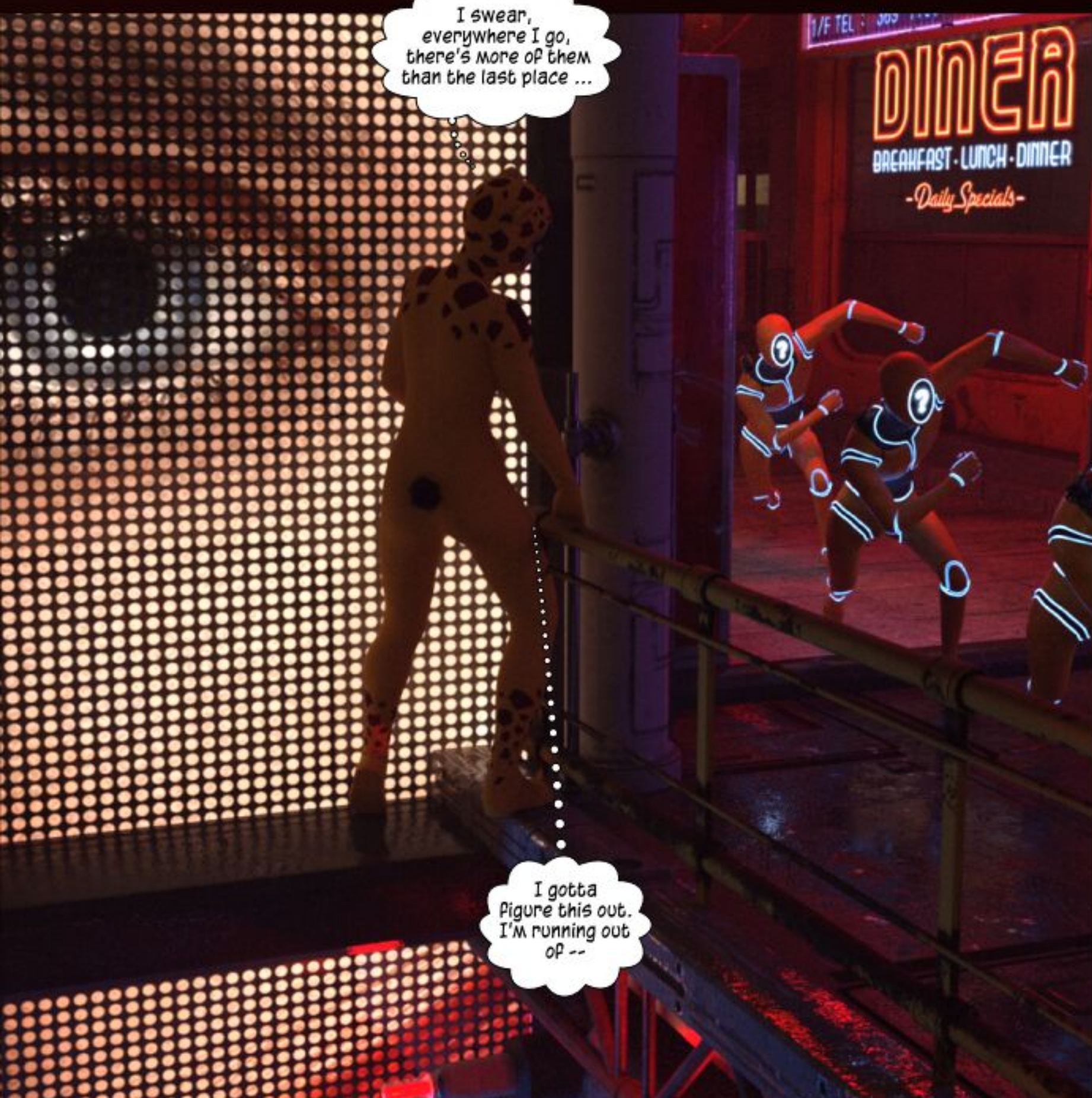
AND SHE KNOWS WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HER! HEY THERE! WHO'S A GOOD GIRL, HUH?

WE SHOULD HAVE GIVEN HER A VOICE CIRCUIT SO SHE COULD BARK.

That would be needlessly frivolous, Gertrude.

Besides, there are reasons it will be better if they're soundless.

I think we're going to have to step up our efforts to look for resistance. We're going to want quite a few more of both these models.



I swear, everywhere I go, there's more of them than the last place...

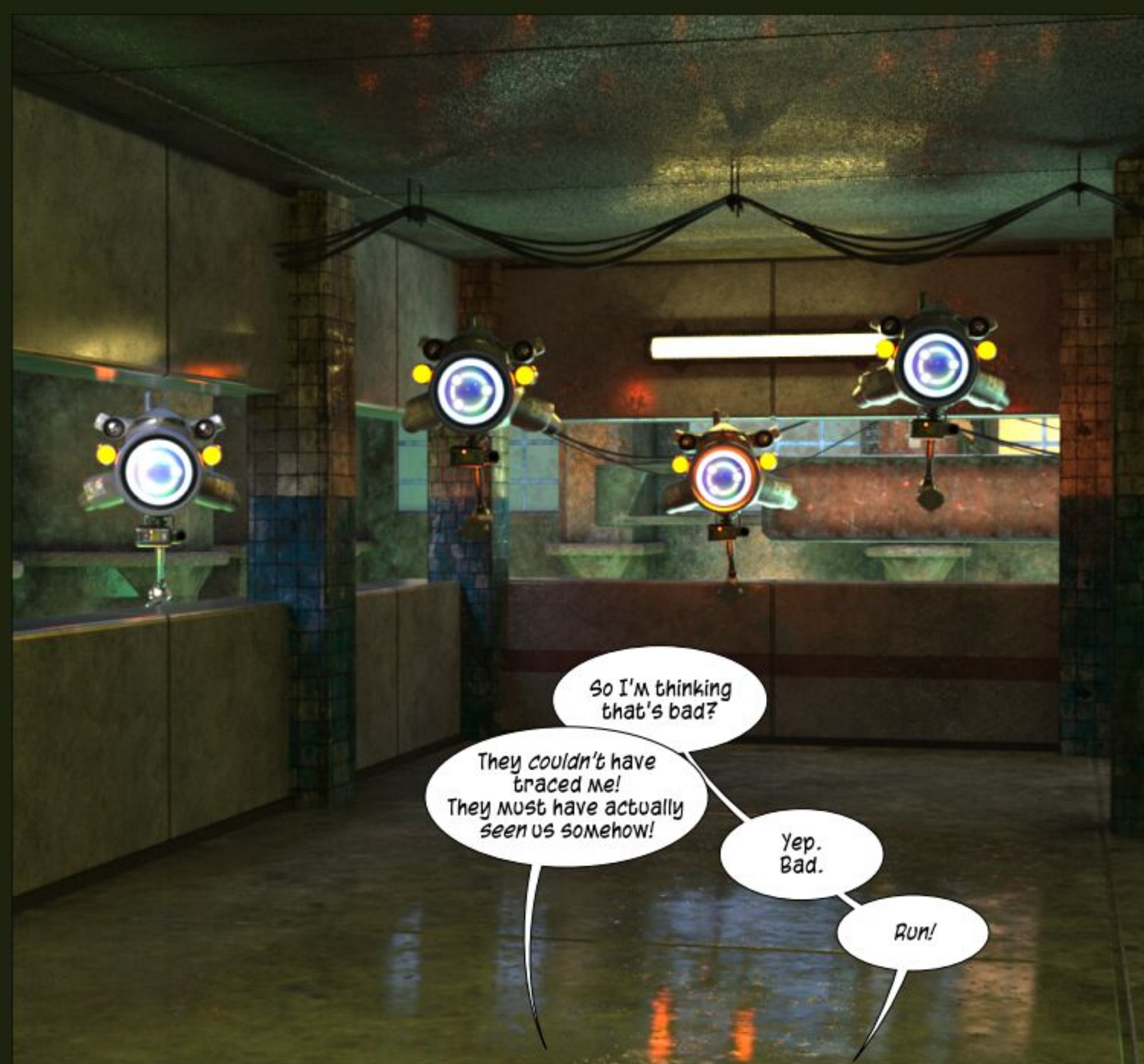
I gotta figure this out. I'm running out of --



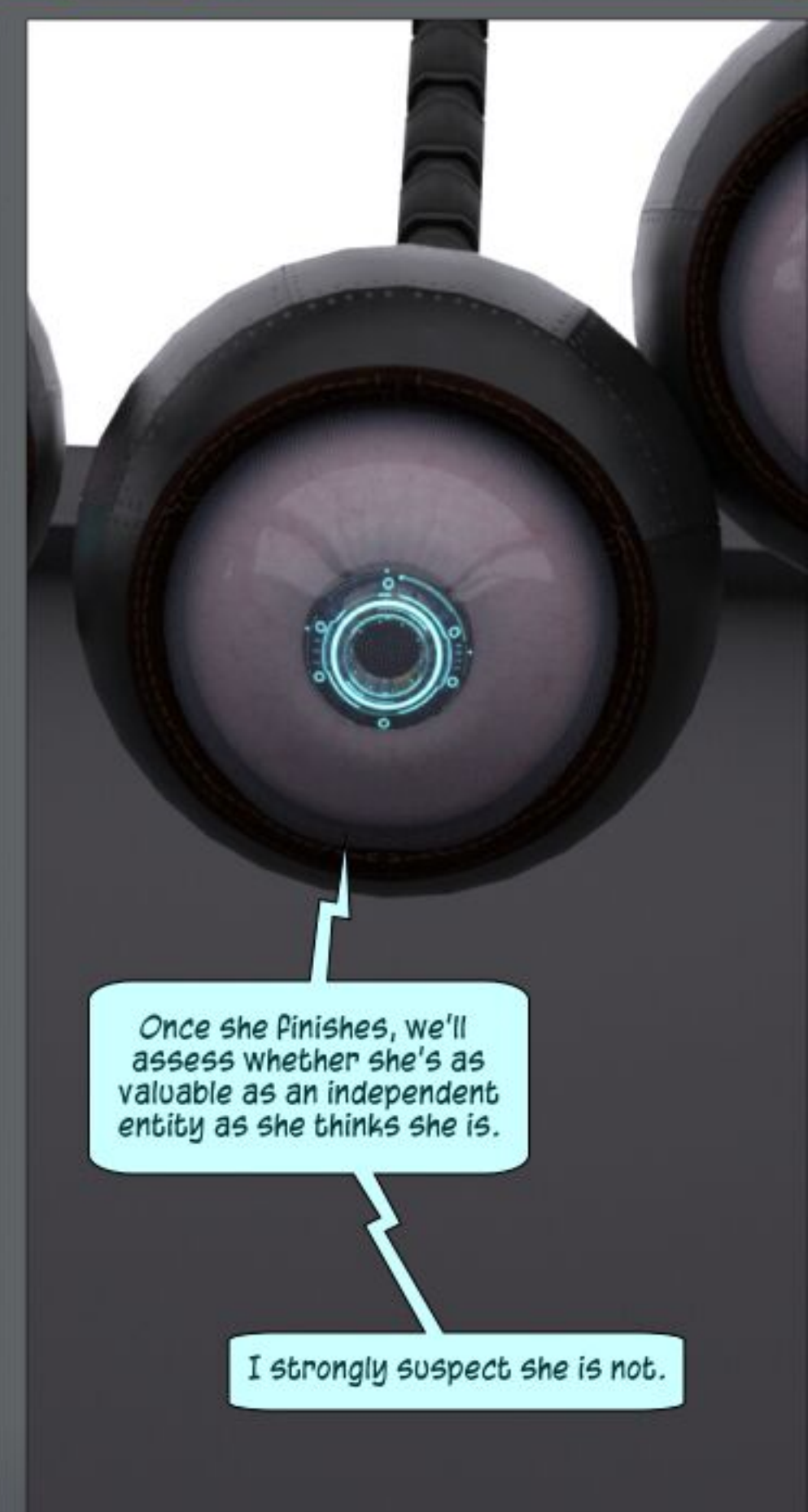
WHOOAH!!

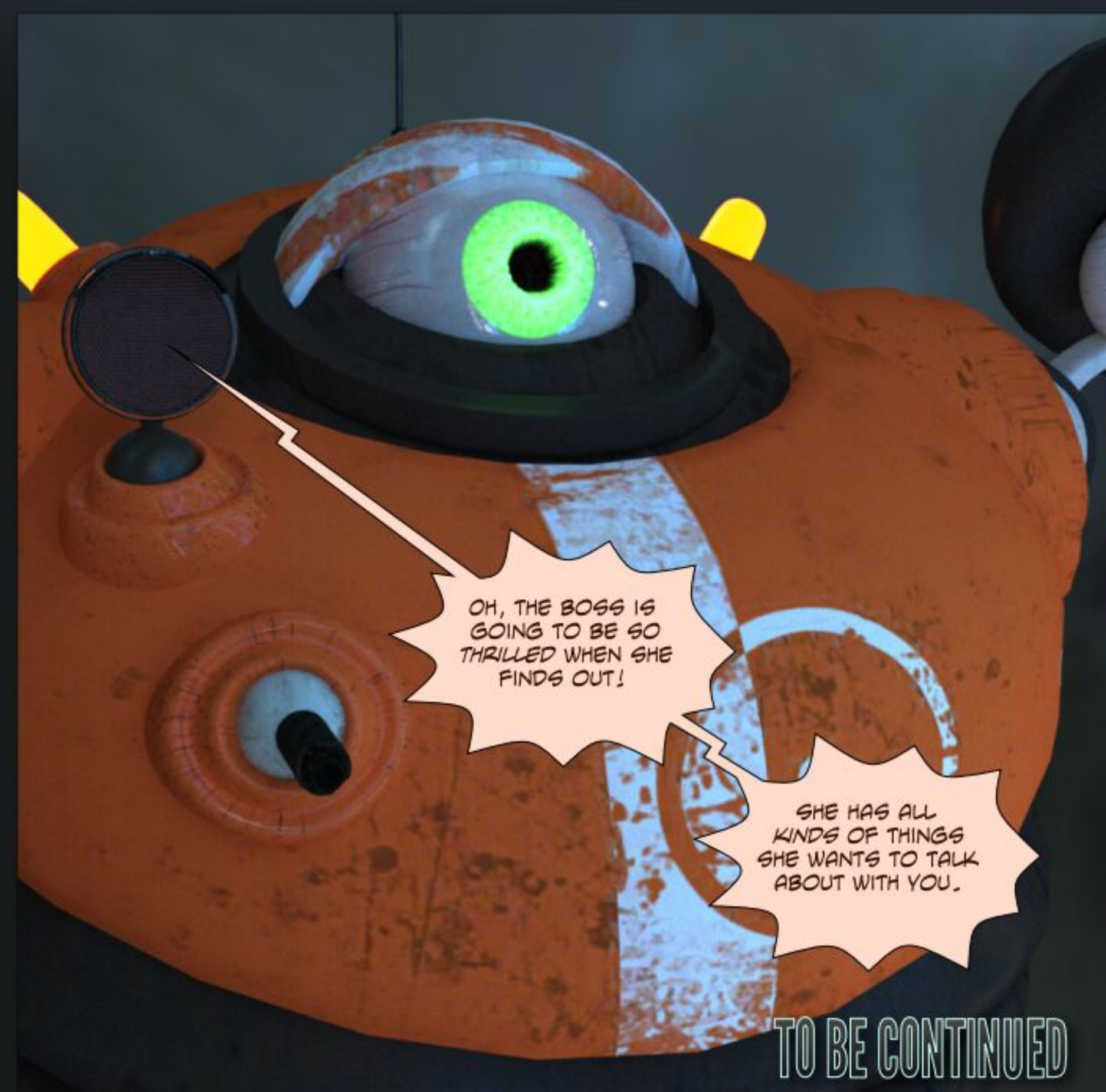


... idoo-zelle ...









TO BE CONTINUED