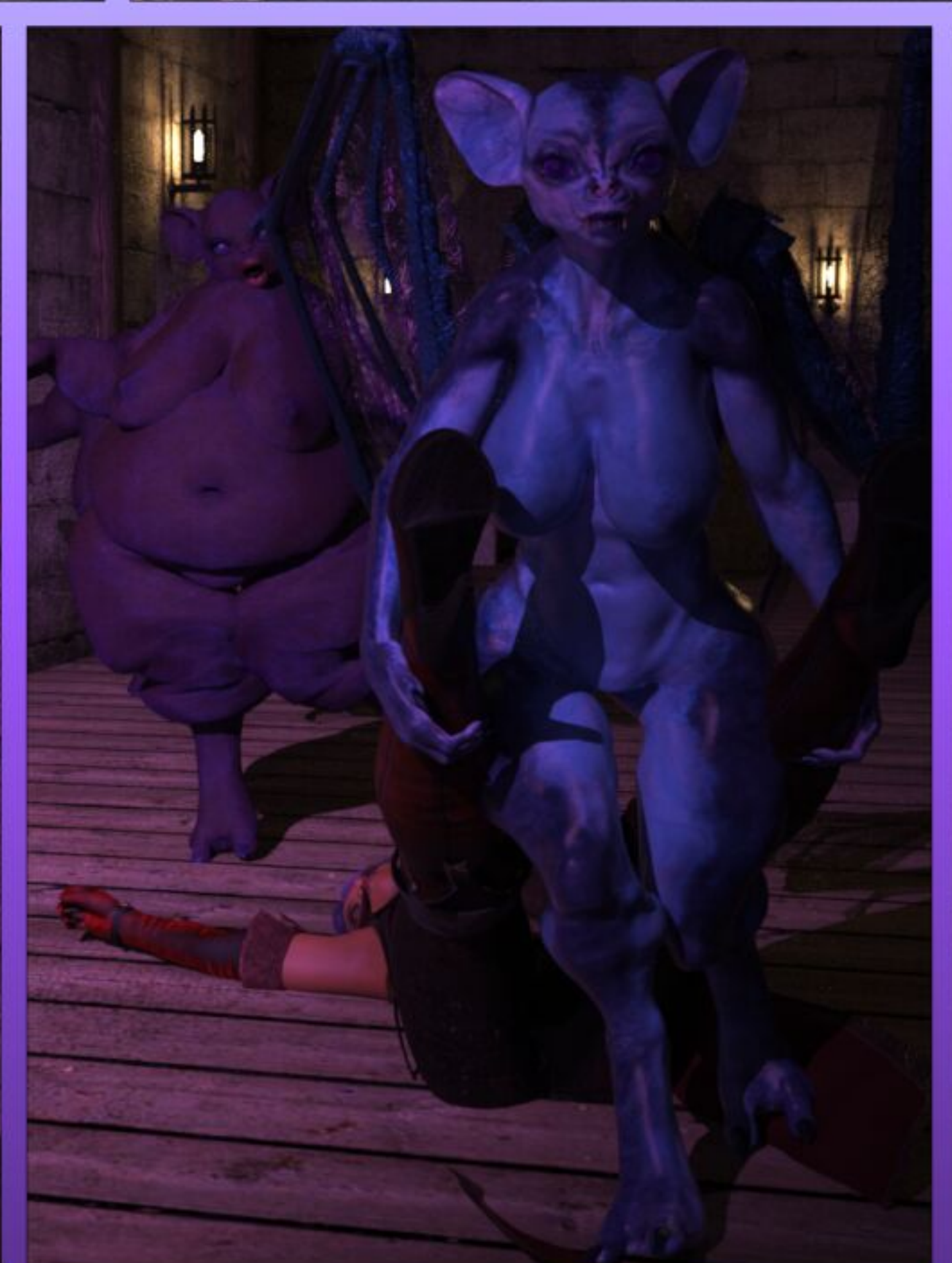
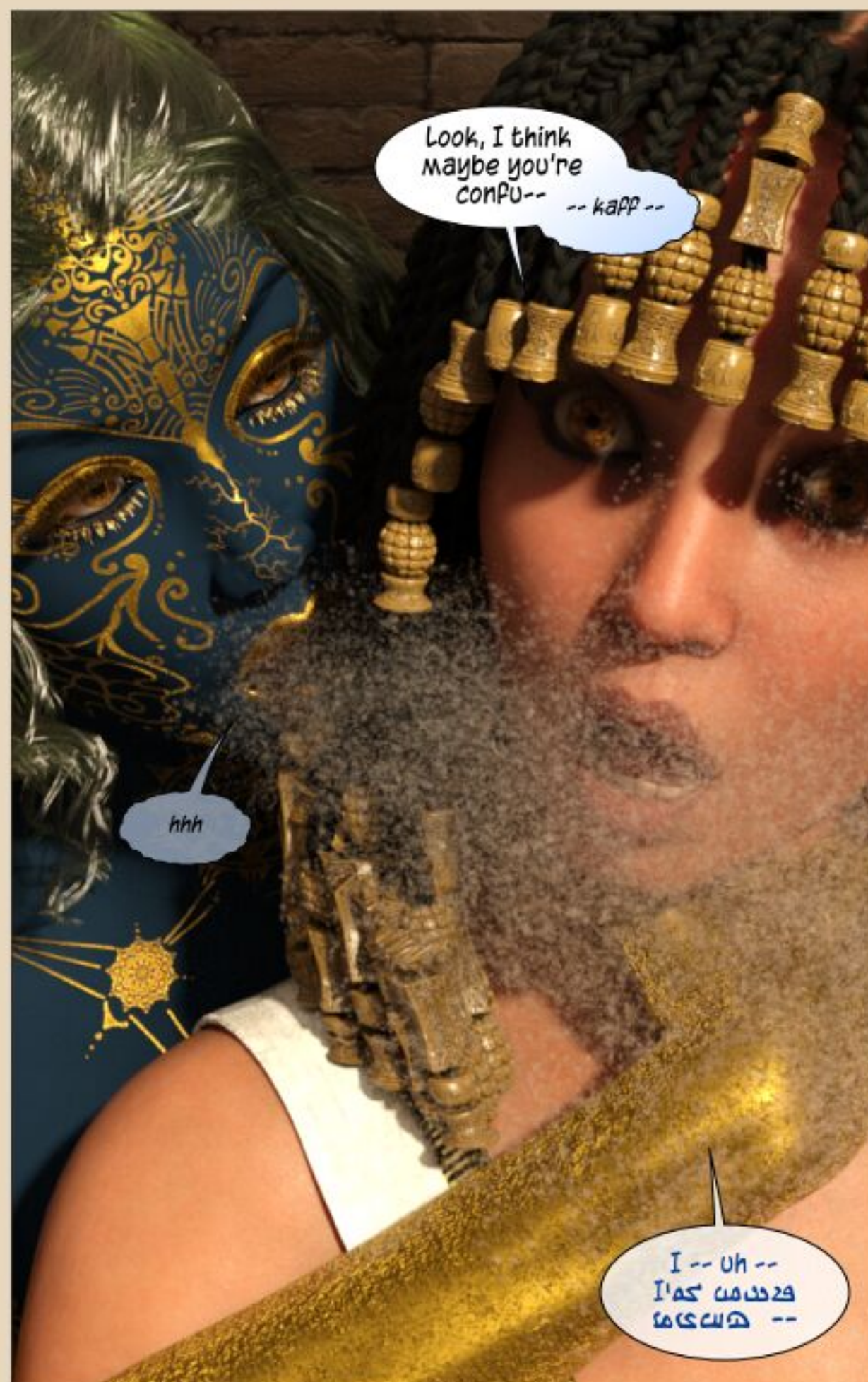




THE SOUK.





I wonder if I can manage to sneak up behind her ...



All right, that's enough!

Fix it all. Now.

What is there to fix?



The words are everything. You must not lose the words.



hgh



omigod my hair!!

Well, OK then!

CENTURY.



IT'S BEEN A WEEK SINCE "EYEBOT" WAS CAUGHT.
IT'S BEEN THREE DAYS SINCE THEY DISCOVERED SHE WASN'T REALLY EYEBOT.*

Sorry about the change in location. I wasn't sure it was a good idea to meet at the usual place anymore.

No, I think that makes sense.

Might even want to go on a rotation or something. Different place every time.

I considered that.

Though I think I may go in a different direction. Get a visible space. Like an office. Somewhere people know they can reach me.

I don't think my hiding has been good for Century.

* AND IF NONE OF THAT MEANS ANYTHING TO YOU, YOU NEED TO READ THE PREVIOUS TWO ISSUES.



Anyway, that's not what I wanted to talk to you about.

One thing this mess made clear is we can't do without some kind of policing.

I don't mean patrolling the streets -- well, I don't think I do, I'm pretty sure it wouldn't come to that -- but eyes and ears, to watch out for trouble like this, and the ability to deal with it when it happens.

Naomi, we've talked about this before, but we can't wait any longer. Especially not in the robotic quarter.

I'm not throwing them all out. I think most of them don't deserve that. But that means there will still be robotics there who bear watching ... and we don't have anybody there ... as we found out the hard way.



Monica ... I realize I haven't done much of anything about this since you asked me to.*

At the time I wasn't sure I was the right person for the job. I'm even less sure now.

... No, wait, that's inaccurate. I'm now sure I'm not the right person.

Besides, I'm not Peeling very recovered yet ... and I don't know how long that'll take ... and I'm about to go to the Yards, possibly for weeks. I have things I have to do there. I'd have left already, but I wanted to stay for this meeting.

You need to find someone else to put together a team.

I agree. In fact, I already have.

*IN #43.



I just want you to help me convince her to take the job.

Molly?

... actually, that's a really good idea ...

Glad you two agree on that.

I don't.

I mean, if you're really determined for me to do it, I'll do it, but there have got to be better choices.



If there are, I don't know them, and so I don't trust them.

I trust you.

Look, I got through this mess by accident. I stumbled into it, like I do everything else. I'm not a strategist. I can barely keep my own life together.

OK ... but go back to what you just said. You'll do it if you have to. Why? Why would you do it even if you didn't want?

Huh? ... Well ... because it's important? I mean, we don't want more robot takeovers or --

Exactly. You and I agree that this is important. I trust you to think this is important. No offense to Naomi, but she doesn't, not the same way.



I need someone who'll do what has to be done, not because they like it, not because they're good at it -- though I think you are -- but because it's what has to be done.

I don't have a lot of contacts ...

You have enough. The ones you have will lead you to more.

I'm not asking for a permanent commitment. If it doesn't work out, then tell me, and I'll look for someone else.

But I'd really like you to try.

THE ISIDORE ESTATE, HIGHPOINT.



Micheners!
Oh my goodness!

It's been ages! Why don't you come see me more often?

The weather's lovely -- we could get in the pool! I have cold champagne ...

Oh, and I finished a new sculpture the day before yesterday! I'd love for you to see it!



And we'd love to look at it, Cona ... but we need to talk a bit first.

I'm afraid this isn't entirely a social call.

IF YOU HAVEN'T MET SERGI AND SONJA MICHENER YET, YOU'LL PROBABLY WANT TO GO READ THEIR SCENE IN THE PREVIOUS ISSUE.



Oh ... -- sigh -- And I was so hoping it wouldn't be something boring.

You don't know that it will be, yet.

Theo isn't providing enough excitement?

Oh, heavens, Sonja, he's gotten worse. Spends all his time doing his "experiments."

Last week he turned three of the staff into some kind of sex demons. They haven't let him leave the lab.

I should probably go rescue him, but I peel the man's made his own bed, so to speak.

All right, dear, tell me all.



AN EXPLANATION LATER ...

... we really do need him. And we can't get anywhere with him, but we were thinking you could probably get his attention ...

Oh, goodness, yes. I'm not sure the man actually knows what I look like, you understand ... because every time we meet, his eyes never leave my bosom.

I think the last time I saw him, he was actually salivating.

But, Sonja, dear ... this conflict ... do you really believe it will come to this? Do you trust this Corven person?

I don't trust her as far as I can spit. And I don't think you should either.

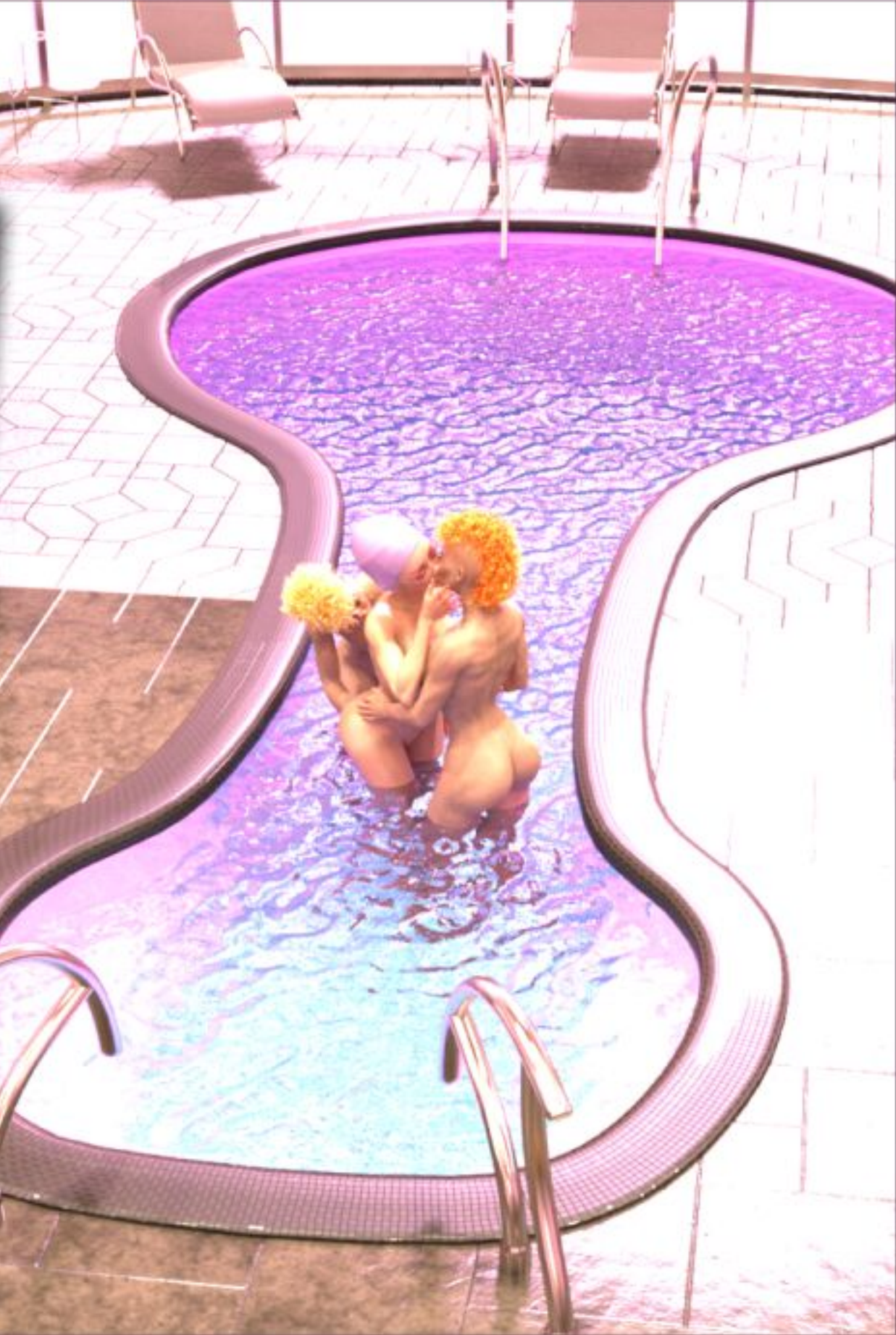
But I do think the fight is going to happen, and hers looks like the best team to be on. At least for now.

Hmm! Well. I'll be happy to help ... on one condition.



You two simply must stay for a while today so we can do something interesting together.

Oh, I'm sure we can manage that.



DR. CHAPMAN'S OFFICE, SERENITY.



... I mean, I'm pleased to see the street cats are back out again, and they obviously have things well under control ...

... but I'm concerned with what happens once they take someone into custody. Our options for this sort of thing are inadequate; theirs are zero. And Serille no longer uses the method she used to use ... not that I'd let her if she did.

What had she been doing?

Turning them into large cats. I recall you said you no longer believed algorithmic methods were useful for treatment ...

Oh ... no, I can't see where that could have accomplished anything positive. Though it's interesting to contemplate.



But, Leyna, I hope you're not tossing this at me.

Like you just said, we don't even have enough resources for Serenity. I can't possibly try to take care of the Souk as well ...



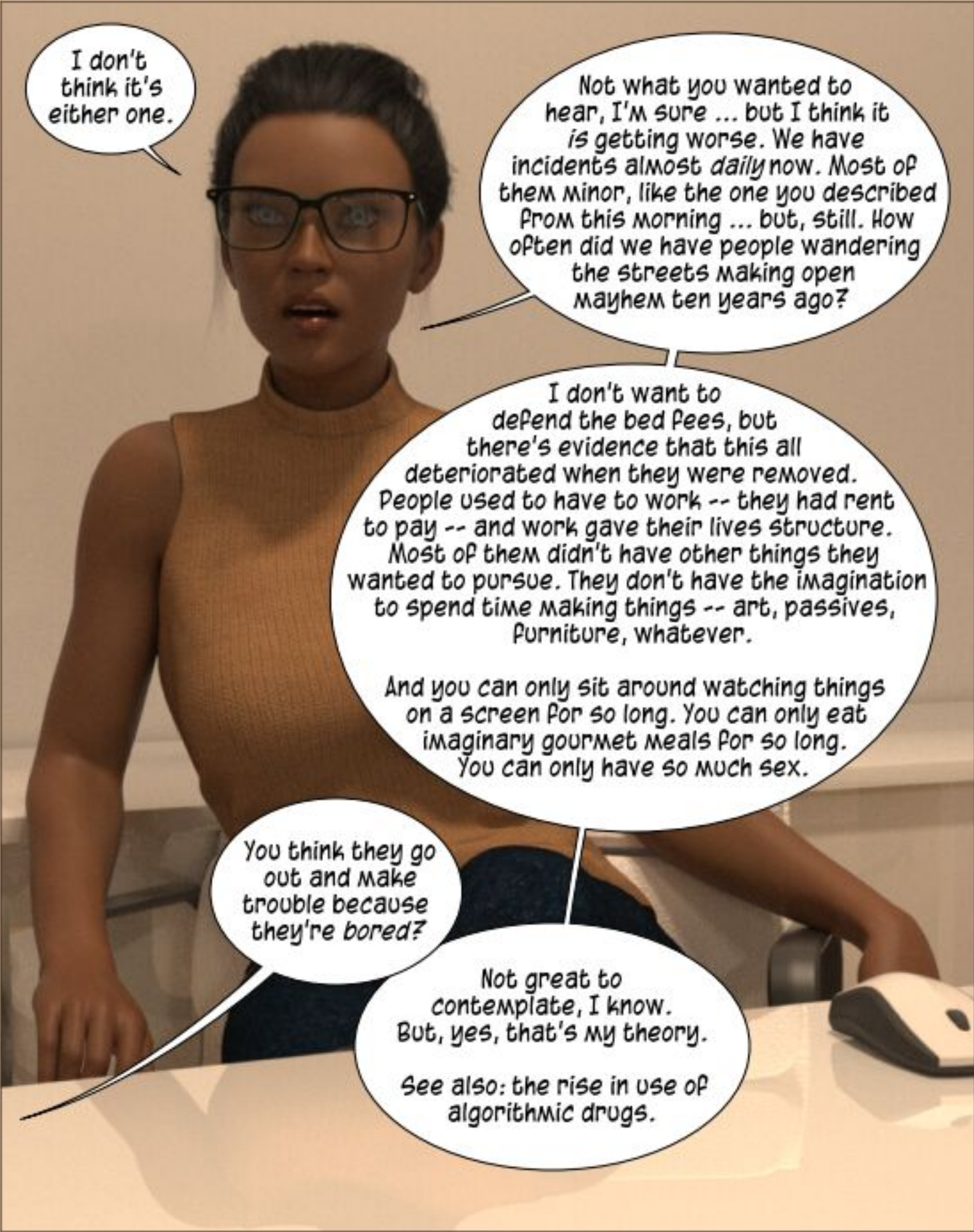
No, no ... I was just hoping you had some suggestions. Since the Souk is ultimately my responsibility now.

You know, when I took it on, Momma was amused and she didn't even bother to try to hide it. Like, "OK, kid, have fun with that."

And now I'm stretched into two different zones. I wouldn't put you in that position, trust me.

Especially since I can't shake this feeling that the problem's getting worse.

I know, that's probably pessimistic. Or paranoid, or something.



I don't think it's either one.

Not what you wanted to hear, I'm sure ... but I think it is getting worse. We have incidents almost daily now. Most of them minor, like the one you described from this morning ... but, still. How often did we have people wandering the streets making open mayhem ten years ago?

I don't want to defend the bed Pees, but there's evidence that this all deteriorated when they were removed. People used to have to work -- they had rent to pay -- and work gave their lives structure. Most of them didn't have other things they wanted to pursue. They don't have the imagination to spend time making things -- art, passives, furniture, whatever.

And you can only sit around watching things on a screen for so long. You can only eat imaginary gourmet meals for so long. You can only have so much sex.

You think they go out and make trouble because they're bored?

Not great to contemplate, I know. But, yes, that's my theory.

See also: the rise in use of algorithmic drugs.



For what it's worth, Serille thinks those have already peaked. She thinks people are starting to realize all the ways they can go wrong.

The Geni club has closed, for example. Of course, some of that's because its owner disappeared.

But, OK. If we both think the problem's getting worse ... that means a worse problem for us.

What do we do? Even if we could get psychological help to all of them -- even if that would work for all of them -- we can't do them all at once, not even if we had an army of you. Where do we put them in the meantime? Or what do we do with the ones we can't fix?

I wish I had answers for any of that, Leyna.

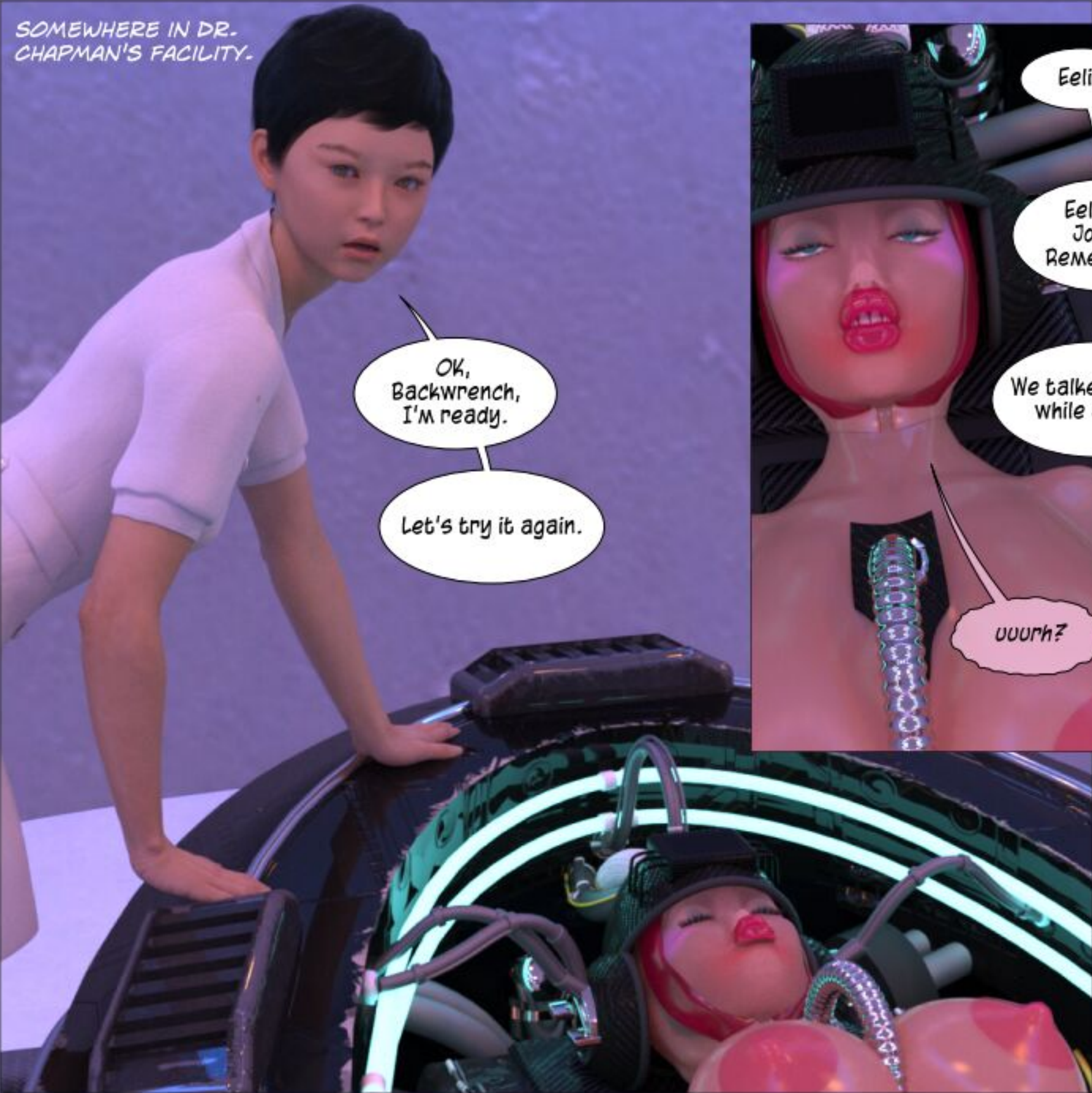


As it is, I still don't have enough resources even for our immediate backlog.

I haven't gotten any applicants besides Josie ...

... and although she's making amazing progress -- she's very, very quick -- I worry that I'm pushing her too fast. I feel like I threw her into deep water far too soon.

SOMEWHERE IN DR. CHAPMAN'S FACILITY.



OK, Backwrench, I'm ready.
Let's try it again.



Eeli?
Eeli, it's Josie. Remember?
We talked a little while ago ...

uuurh?



Eeli, it's OK!
Eeli, you're all right! You're safe! Nothing's going to --

uuurh!
uuer uuurh



Eeli, are you there?
Eeli?

... Damn it.

uuurr ...

hhnn
uuurr ...

uuunhhuh nuuuh uuur!
uuur! uuunhuu
rrr uuh hnnnn uuur!!

Backwrench, half suppression!

Put her back to sleep.



I just don't understand!

We gave her back her voice and her facial motion ... as far as we can tell there's nothing wrong with her brain ...

But I can't get an indication she's even hearing me! She's just --

Maybe if we tried starting at almost full suppression and reducing it gradually?

How about if you try eating something instead? And maybe taking the rest of the day off?



But I need to --

You need to step back.

I'm not a psychologist, but I do know you're taking this personally, and that's not going to do any of us any good. Neither is your running yourself ragged.

And Dr. Chapman would say the same.

Consult with her tomorrow. Leave it until then. Eeli isn't going anywhere.

I ... uh ... OK.

I'll go have some lunch. And maybe a nap.

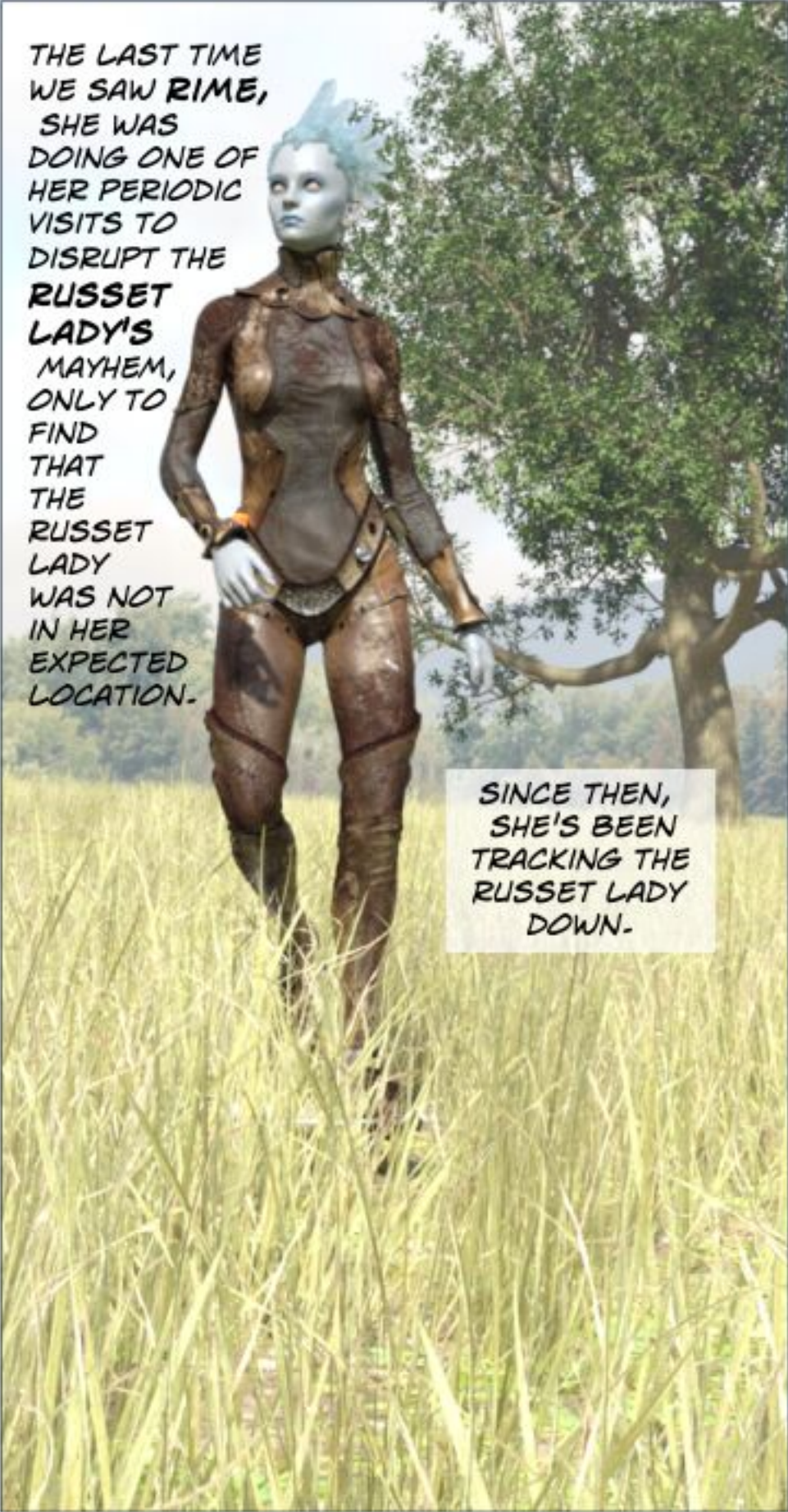


... Do you have to go back to Spindrop?

I don't guess I have to do anything. Why?

... I could use ... uh ... I'd like ... the company.

THE YARDS.



THE LAST TIME WE SAW RIME, SHE WAS DOING ONE OF HER PERIODIC VISITS TO DISRUPT THE RUSSET LADY'S MAYHEM, ONLY TO FIND THAT THE RUSSET LADY WAS NOT IN HER EXPECTED LOCATION.

SINCE THEN, SHE'S BEEN TRACKING THE RUSSET LADY DOWN.



IT HASN'T BEEN TOO HARD, BECAUSE OF THE RUSSET LADY'S TENDENCY TO LEAVE "ART" BEHIND EVERYWHERE SHE GOES.



RIME IS SURE SHE'S GETTING VERY CLOSE.



WHY?

Why can't you just leave me alone?

You know why.



I'm tired of you taking it out on me!

I don't deserve this!



You destroyed everything we had, and you keep making me suffer the consequences!

-- H2 --
Funny how you always remember it backwards.



AN HOUR OR TWO LATER, SOME OTHER TRAVELLERS PASS THROUGH.



CENTURY.





... I'm thinking it'll probably take her about a week.

That's too long.



She can't just throw herself at Prevost out of the blue, you know! She hasn't spoken to the man in close to a year. If she tries to do it without a little buildup first, it won't work!

He'll get suspicious, and he'll tell her no out of sheer stubbornness without even bothering to hear her out! He's like that.



Surely you don't think the Scholz thing is going to come to a head in the next few days --

I don't know! That's the problem. I can't possibly know. Neither can you. And it's possible that a few days could make all the difference! She could make her move tomorrow!

... All right, all right. It can't be helped. Certainly you're right to take care with Prevost. We need him too much.

I'm going to be unavailable for several days anyway. I'm going to investigate some other possible sources.



She doesn't really think Scholz is going to attack any time soon.

She's impatient because she wants to attack.

Don't let her know you know that. She thinks you're stupid, and it might be useful for her to keep thinking that.

OK, but are we sure we want to keep going with this?

We're committed. Anyway, she has a point about striking first. I think Scholz is a bigger danger than she is. For now.



We should warn the Soileaus ...

I'm pretty sure they've figured it out, but we'll talk to them tomorrow.

I am done with this mess for tonight.



Oh, good! Let's go have sex then.

Sergi! We fooled around with Oona for hours this morning ...

That was different!

... Sometimes I have a hard time convincing myself that there's no possible way the changes could have boosted your libido.



Hey, you got exactly what you wanted ...

I absolutely did.

THE OFFICE OF THE DATA ARCHIVIST, SERENITY.



You know, not having advance notice that someone is coming to visit means I don't have an opportunity to put on suitable clothes.

what's wrong with those?

... I withdraw the objection.

You do know it's the middle of the night?

you don't sleep a lot.

ruby doesn't either. she said i shouldn't come in if she was in bed with someone.

you don't do that. i think?



do you get lonely?



Do you?

i'm ... not sure?

there's so much happening, and i want to know ... i want to watch all of it ... i don't think i've had time to be ...

i do want to talk to somebody, sometimes ...

That's about where i am too.



The problem with seeing all the data is the constant fight to keep the data from eating you alive.

For the record, i'm not celibate. i've had loves, and lovers ...

... but none for a long time. i'm an old man and i don't get out much.

And the nature of the job doesn't seem to encourage relationships.



Did you just come to chat, or is something on your mind?

it could be both things.

what happened in century ... the person who was causing the trouble ... the one they didn't catch ...

MMHM. The artist formerly known as Eyebot.

Forgive me. Ancient historical joke.

What of her?



i know where she is.

do you think i should tell them?

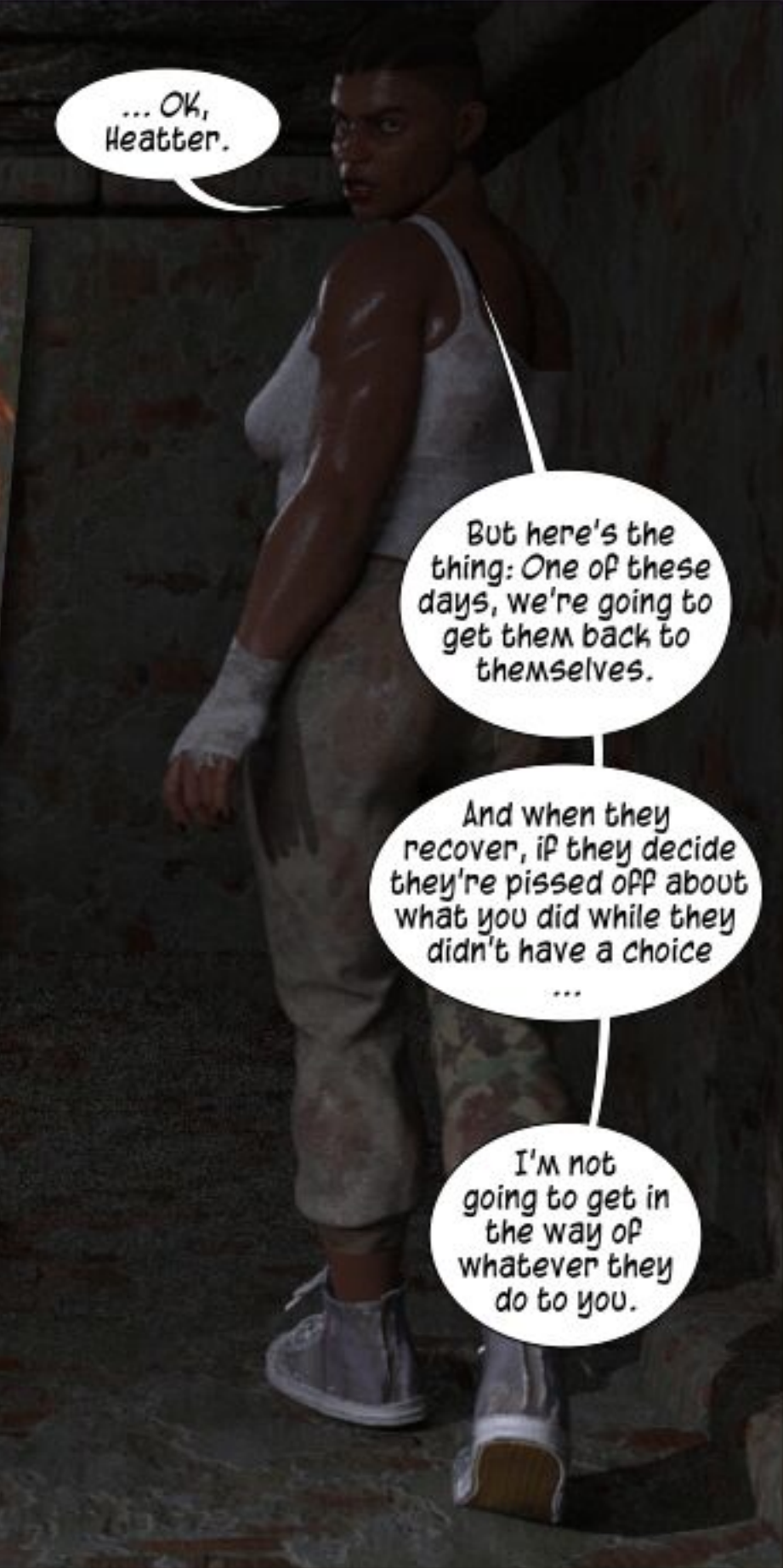
THREE DAYS LATER.



THE THALLIUM ESTATE, HIGHPOINT.



THE "DOLLHOUSE" CLUB, THE COBBLES
(BACK ENTRANCE).





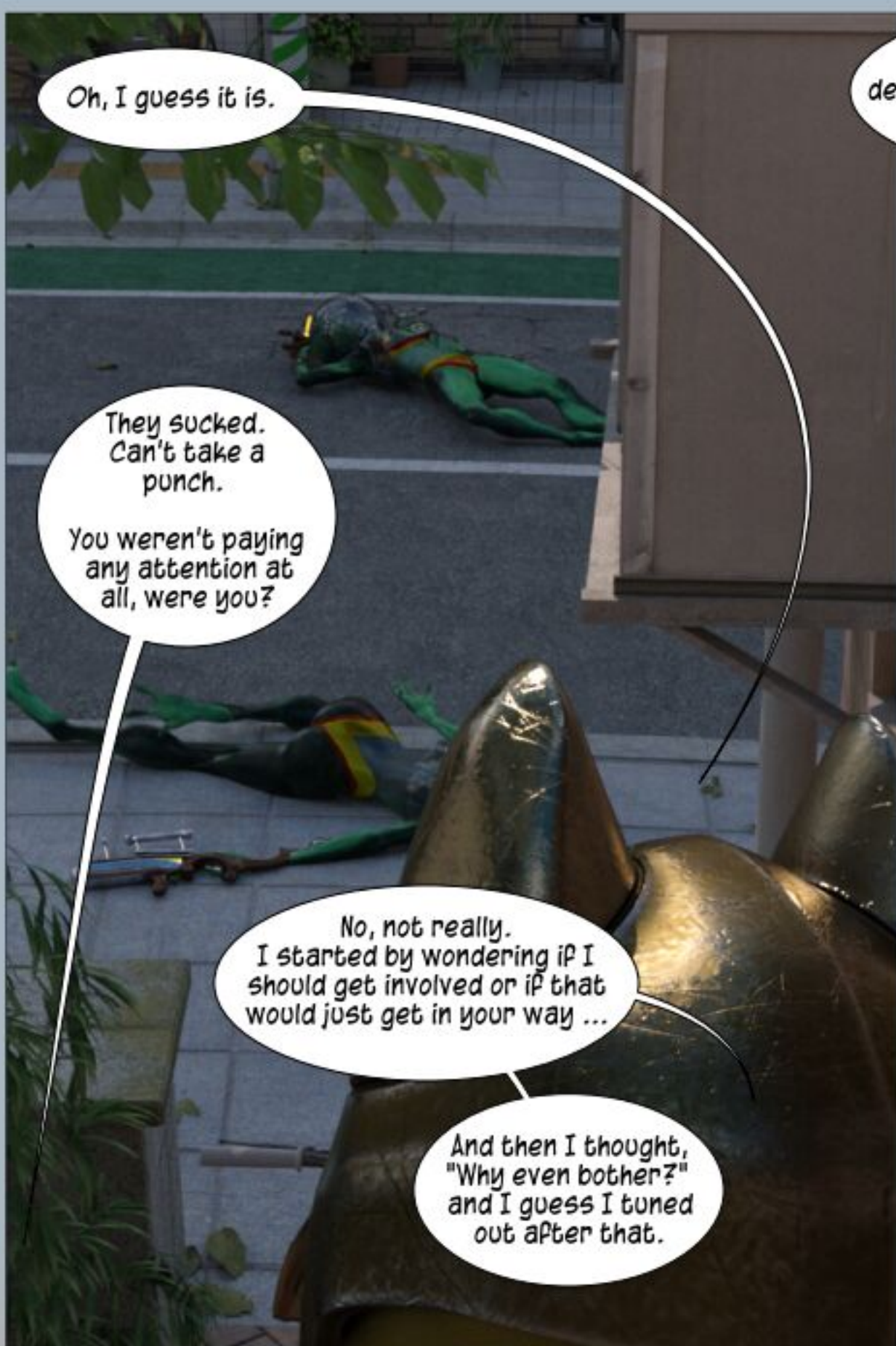
CENTURY, WHERE WE CAN WATCH DUPLI-KATE FIGHT ALIENS IN THE STREET AND THINK, "OH, HEY, LIFE IS RETURNING TO NORMAL."



... sigh ...



THE LYNX. (WE HAVE NOT YET LEARNED HER REAL NAME.)



You're serious?

We could have all ended up as mindless robots, Kate!

It wouldn't have lasted. It never does. None of it matters. We just pretend it does because it's all we've got. So we might as well just have fun with it.

JOSIAH BARKER'S RESIDENCE.



Call me Quinda.

Well, well.

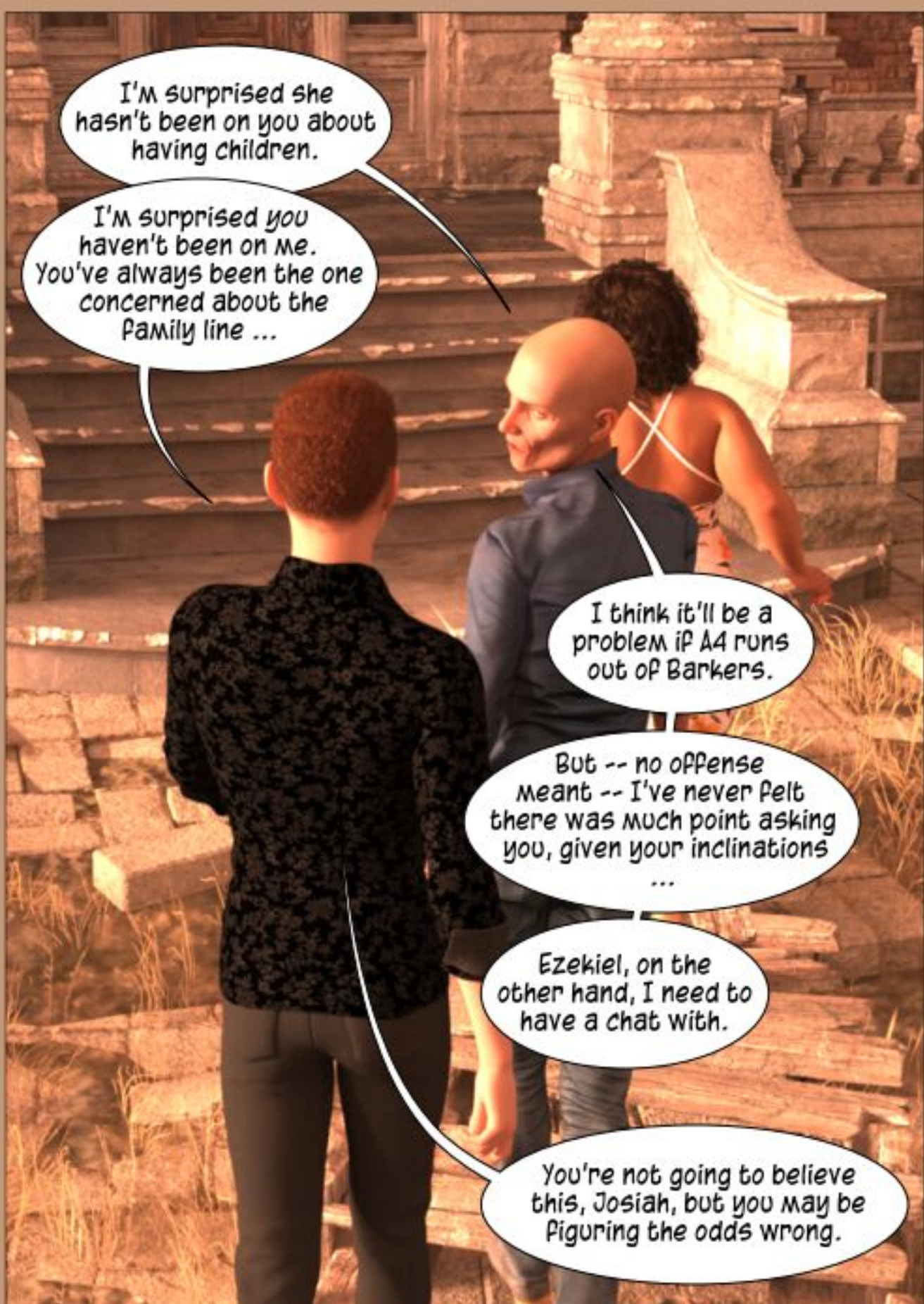
Pleased to meet you.



But yes. Since you moved back here, she's been a little worried.



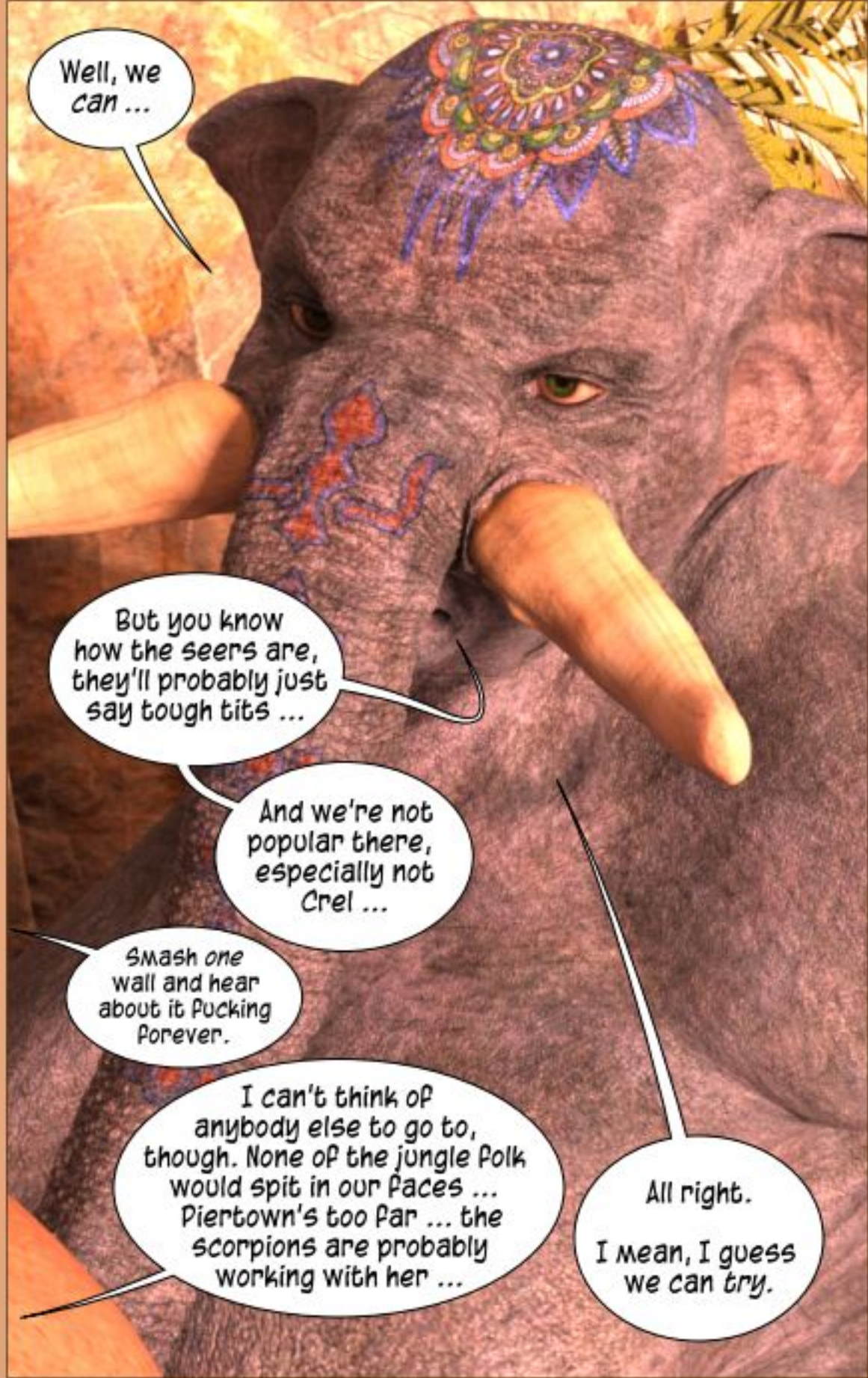
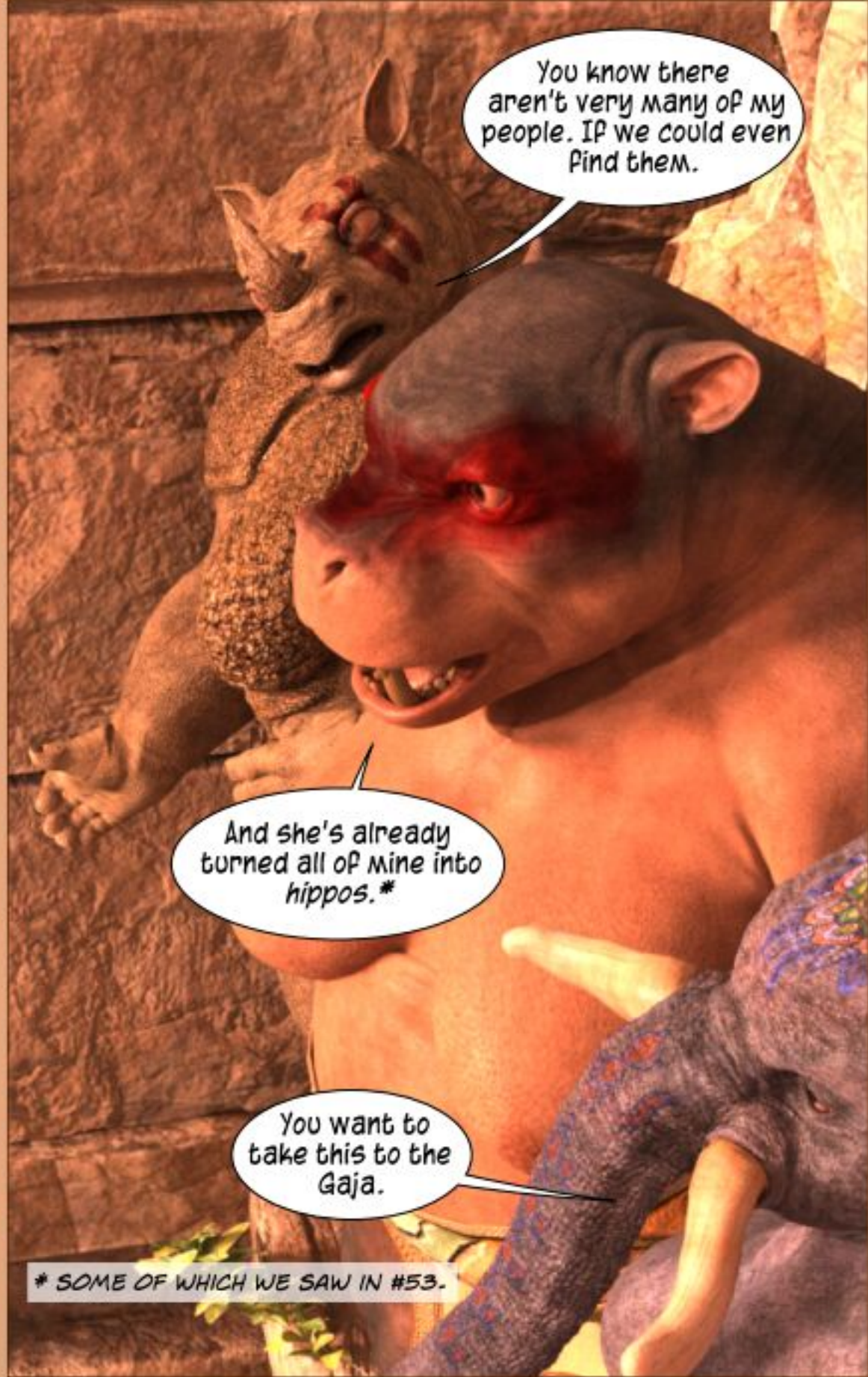
Let's go inside and I'll see about some coffee.



Ezekiel, on the other hand, I need to have a chat with.

You're not going to believe this, Josiah, but you may be figuring the odds wrong.

THE YARDS.



CENTURY.





Two days of busting our asses and losing our minds wondering if we're going to be able to save everybody else's, and they think it was all a really good joke.

Well, none of them remember much of it. It's hard to be affected by something you weren't really there for.

Besides, it's your job to take on the trauma for them. That's the heroing business.

That's why I'm not a hero. You take emotional damage even if you did everything right.

Hmm.



Thanks for coming. Mint ...

... I didn't know you ever spent time as Plesh and blood, though.

I go in Pits. That mess was the first time I'd used my robot form in months.

But it seemed like a good idea not to be robotic here right now. You know, she didn't do that situation any favors, and it already wasn't great.

Yeah. I'm aware.

So you don't want to be a hero? That's ...

... that could be a problem, because I asked you to meet me so I could ask for your help.

Monica Barker wants an official team. She's talked me into forming it.

UNLIKE MOLLY, WE HAVE SEEN MINT IN HUMAN FORM, LURKING AROUND #53 BEFORE SHE CHANGES TO ROBOTIC TO APPROACH EYEBOT.



You barely even know me ...

No, but I know you know what you're doing. And I figure you're on the right side or you wouldn't have helped the way you did.

Look, you're right about the robotics. That situation is going to need a lot of care to calm down.

I don't have anybody else I can get who knows the robotic quarter, who can function there. And we can't do without someone who can do that.

Even more would be better, but I don't know enough to know who I can recruit there. Maybe you do.

By the way, I'm not real thrilled about being a hero either, but I'm told I'm in denial.

THE THALLIUM ESTATE, HIGHPOINT.



... ooouh -- Cheating!

Hey, all's fair in love and war.

-- ahem --

Really, seev?

You didn't say not to disturb you.

Jeanne Laval is here, and it seems urgent.

... bring her in here.

If it's so damned urgent, she can take us like this.



right



... ooouh -- Cheating!

Hey, all's fair in love and war.

-- ahem --

Really, seev?

You didn't say not to disturb you.

Jeanne Laval is here, and it seems urgent.

... bring her in here.

If it's so damned urgent, she can take us like this.



A red room? Unexpected.

It's one of mine.

Jeanne, you know I'm pleased to see you again, and you certainly have a standing invitation ...

... but this is an odd hour for a social visit and I'm hardly prepared for one. Cut to the chase.



Corven is assembling forces. She has Soileau and Michener on board, presumably Bonisova since that's where she's staying, probably Isidore, and is trying to get Prevost.

She got some of them to come on board by convincing them they needed a united defense against Scholz -- but that's a lie, as usual. She'll attack Scholz first, as soon as she gets enough people.

And you know all this how?

I have two people watching Corven's activities closely.

Ah. Spies.

There seems to be a lot of that going around.



We found a spy for Scholz in our household this morning. She told us that Scholz is gearing up for battle.

She also told us that Scholz now knows Honor is here.

I had been hoping that when the fight came, we could just barricade and let it wash past us. Now that seems a lot less likely. Scholz feels she has a score to settle.

You're more worried about Scholz? Seems to me that Corven has a grudge or two against Honor as well.



Are you just here to bring misery, Jeanne, or was there something else you wanted?

It doesn't matter which one we need to be more worried about, because, if it comes down to it, both of them can take us easily.

I do not have an army. I have a handful of people. They're well-trained, well-equipped, dedicated and loyal ... but they aren't enough. Not even with Honor's abilities boosting them.

Neutrality was our only hope if it came to a war, and now that's shot.



I rather thought that neutrality stopped being an option when you sent people into the Delp holdings to deal with Corven.

Ruby went to some trouble to keep Scholz from realizing you were involved in that, but she didn't bother to hide it from Corven.

And I thought at the time that letting Corven possibly walk away was a bad idea, but I was in no position to argue with her. Ruby does what she wants.



We didn't go in to "deal with Corven," we went in to rescue my father.

Which you knew you couldn't do without confronting Corven.

I'm not accusing you of doing something wrong, Honor --

Then what are you doing?

You heard her. We don't have the people! We can't keep neutral because we'll be overrun. We can't pick a side because both sides are horrible. What are you recommending we do? Flee?

I'm trying to get to that.



... urgh.

THE GAJA LANDS, THE YARDS.

FOR TWO WEEKS NOW, HEJI HAS BEEN TEACHING CHELLE HOW TO HAVE MORE CONTROL OVER HER VISIONS.

Y'know, it's kind of hard to tell.

So?
Did the Pocus exercise work?

Are you OK with telling me what you saw?



Oh, sure. Let's see ... I was going to some kind of temple. Wading through water to get there. There were three people with me ... uh, a hippo, a rhino, and one of the Gaja. Not a seer. I don't know who any of them were.

Then I think I was walking inside the temple. They weren't with me anymore. I saw a woman who had skin like a snake, and a cobra hood. She had a little blue woman with wings cradled in one arm, and she was about to give the little person an injection of some kind. With a syringe, I mean.

And then I was the snake woman? I think? And all of a sudden there was a blue glowing woman, floating in the air, and I thought she was going to say something to me, but that's when it ended.

Heji, I understand the part about having access to all kinds of data, but that's all things that have happened. How can I see things that haven't happened? I mean, if this was a real vision, I know none of it has happened yet ...

You can't. Think of it like doing research and forming a theory. Your brain Pound some Facts you might not even realize are important, then tried to hook them together and guess what would happen. It just showed it to you as if it's the Future.

It might not be. I mean, your guess might be wrong.



But the thing is, if you're actually a seer, as you've Pound, you're usually not wrong. Because being a seer isn't just about having access to all this data, it's about making good guesses.

Of course you still need to be able to tell visions from dreams. Visions are usually cryptic, but dreams are just your brain sweeping up dust and mean nothing. Random.

But since this was a deliberate attempt to Pocus, it's not likely to have been a dream.

What were you trying to Pocus on, by the way?

Uh ... My own Future.

... I think I need to get some sleep. And have an actual dream.

My brain Feels like it needs some sweeping.

Want me to show you my secret technique to ensure vision-Free sleep?

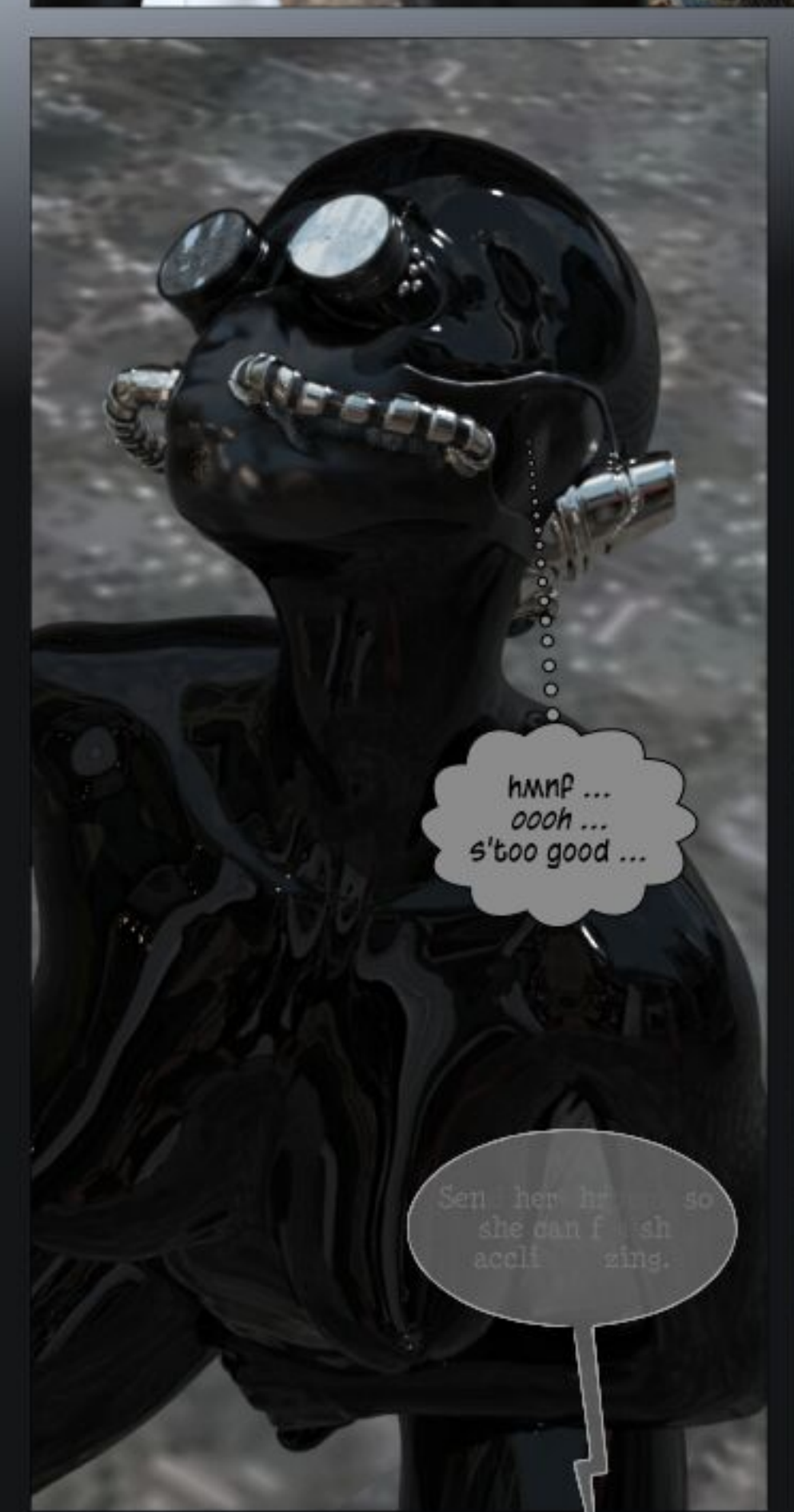
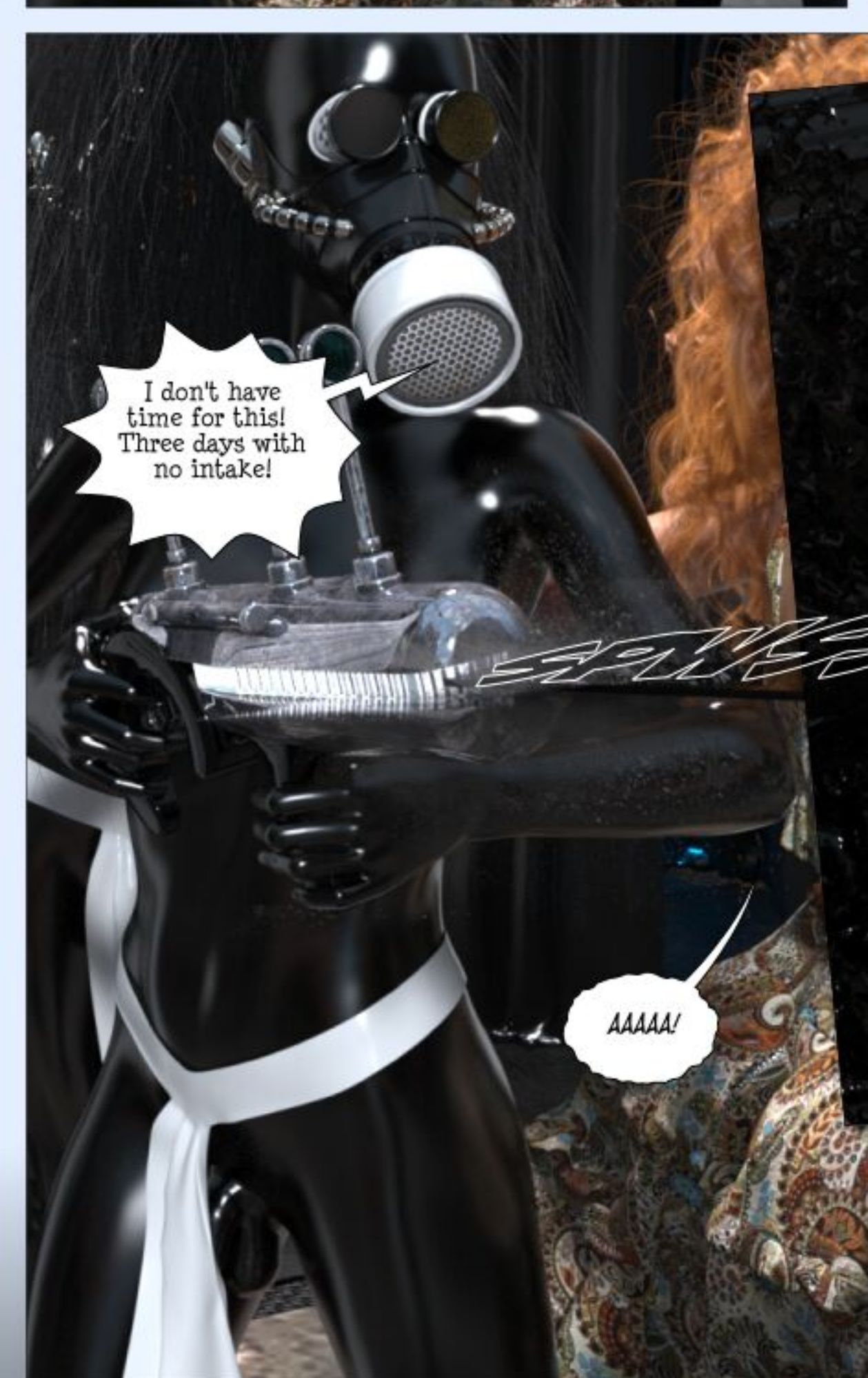


THE COBBLES.



THREE DAYS LATER.





THE THALLIUM ESTATE, HIGHPOINT.

My, my.

Hanne, I wouldn't have thought you'd have been interested in Bonisova's pseudo-Roman kitsch.

It's no different from pseudo-Japanese kitsch.

I'm not into ancient history much myself, but everybody's gotta like something.

This is Holly. Formerly of the Order of Vision.

Formerly?

Yes, though Corven doesn't know that yet.

... hmm.

I believe you know Honor Delp.

You could say that.

Don't let Corven find out this is where you're hiding. She has a grudge.

Unfortunately, we think she may already know.

Then you are definitely going to want to have a defensive plan.

HANNE HAS MET JUST ABOUT EVERYONE SIGNIFICANT IN HIGHPOINT FROM HER TIME AS BRENDAN'S BODYGUARD.

That seems to be this week's theme song.

Mhm.

Hanne, just so I'm clear: Are you offering us help with that?

More like mutual aid?

Bonisova's caught in the middle, like us. He's trying to figure out how he can throw Corven out safely and protect his people, but he doesn't have the resources on his own.

We were hoping we could cook something up, from all our bits and pieces.

Maybe we can. There might be some possibilities.

Chancy ones, you understand, but better than none, which is what I'd had told you we had a few days ago.

There are a few other "bits and pieces" we need to get ... but I think we can get them, and I think we can get them quickly enough.

We were on the verge of sitting down to lunch. Why don't you join us, and we'll strategize a bit.

Honor, would you mind showing Holly there? I want a moment to talk to Hanne.

... So.

So.

I didn't mean to surprise you with it. I just haven't seen you. In fact, I wasn't sure where you were.

Hiding. I'll explain more when we sit down.

It's all right. I didn't feel like we had that kind of relationship anyway, did we?

Actually, I'm thrilled that you've found somebody.

... You know, I could say the same to you.

That helmet is really cute on you, by the way.

BACK TO SERENITY.

Get away!

For pity's sake, hold still!

OK, that's enough.

Always be aware of where the gun's pointing.

Gotcha.

Good! Always follow through with the Pull Motion. Don't try to cut it short.

Do we try the disruptors?

Not this time. They won't do anything.

Leyna says the thing to do with these is just to take off the gear, especially that gizmo on the back of the neck.

Hate to interrupt her at a delicate time, but ...

Awww! But that was so good ...

Gina! Be nice!

If you liked it that much I'm sure they can set you up permanently.

You'd better be certain about it, though.

MEANWHILE, IN THE UNCHARTED ZONE THE EUPHORICS APPARENTLY CALL HOME ...



MMHh

... k.
good.
Needed that.

Fun slide,
but now got
Figure get out
this rosh.

Last
here, han't
none portal ...
Might need
recall ...

JEX AND HONOR WERE HERE IN #45.



That skel.
What pull now?

Han't hear
shit in this ...
got go round
close ...

... don't think
you realize the
mutual benefi.

First, I don't
speak for everyone
here, I've told you that.
There are other
speakers. We would
need to confer.

I get your
help to win my fight,
yes ... but once we've
won, you have a large
new pool of people
to convert.

I thought you did
that after the last
time we spoke.

Second, despite some
occasional lapses, we do
tend to want people to join
us voluntarily. You seem to
be operating under the
impression that --

Aright.

Got get Honor
that rez.
Might crux.

Recall,
guess ...

Maybe
save place?
Might need
come back.

THE YARDS.



Chully, I
appreciate the
gift, don't get me
wrong ...

... but I'm not
sure what to do
with her.

THOUGHT
MAYBE
WITCH.

BETTER
WITCH HERE
THAN OUT
MAKING
TROUBLE.

... Pair, but
we can't just
keep her in this
cage ...

Listen to your
troll, Rani. She's
obviously smarter
than you are.



Who the hell are you?
What are you doing here? Do I
know you from somewhere?

Step back,
boys, you
bother me.

You just don't
have the mindset
for this, Rani.

You're squandering
resources, and when you
get handed new ones, you
don't know what to do with
them. It's a shame.

I'm someone
who's a lot better
at all of this than
you are.

I don't think
we've ever met, but
I've learned all kinds of
things about you, the
past few days.





... Lois?



You've got a lot of nerve!

After all the things you did? I should petrify you and push you over this edge!

Lois, please ...

I know I can't apologize, I know an apology wouldn't ever be enough ... I just want to explain.

Why I Pucked up like I did.



You remember the Xenomorph club. I ... thought I had Friends there. I thought it was the first time I had a group of people I fit with.

But it turned out the only Friend I had there was you. None of the others ... they didn't know what to do with me. You know I was the club's only robotic?

And then there was the Sprue, and Century, and the robotic quarter here ... and there were others like me ... and none of the rest of you really accepted us, or understood us.

I ... the idea of separating, being our own isolated thing where we didn't have to put up with everybody else ... I believed in it, for a while. Even the ones who were lying to me.

By the time I realized none of it helped at all or meant anything because the person I really needed was you, it was way too late.

YOU CAN SEE IX JOIN THE XENOMORPHS WAY BACK IN #10. THE CLUB NO LONGER EXISTS, AND THE XENOMORPHS HAVE SCATTERED ALL OVER A4.



And now I've made a lot of mistakes I can't fix, and nobody will be my friend again, probably ever ...

... and I'm so disgusted with the way I got used that I don't want to be a robotic anymore. Isn't that hilarious? I blew away everything else for it, and now I don't even have that.

Ix ...



... you are just about the biggest fool I have ever known.

All of the Xenomorphs liked you, as far as I could tell. You were the one who had trouble approaching them, not the other way 'round.

And when you started to get ... well, radicalized ... and spending all your time in the robotic quarter, I was like "Aren't we Friends? What did I do to her?"

When you were part of the robot takeover -- I mean, the first one, the one that didn't get far -- that really hurt, when I saw you with them.

LOIS MEANS BRISET'S SCHEME IN #34, NOT THE EYEBOT BUSINESS FROM THE PAST SEVERAL ISSUES.

... I really don't know what to do with you sometimes.



I don't want to do this anymore either. It's stopped being fun. People who don't understand the rules have ruined it.

I'm thinking about going to another zone. Making a fresh start. Maybe the Yards.

Want to come with me?



errh?

Sorry to disturb your meditation.

You remember the vision you had three days ago?

Sure.

You know the rules ... you don't ever have to tell anybody what you see in visions, if you don't want. But ...

I think -- if you're willing -- that you should come tell Tasa about it.

You mean right now?

It could be important.



Completely blew us off! I knew we should have made Crei stay outside ...

It's not that and you know it, Tabe. I did warn you. They're just cowards.

Hey!

They won't intervene in anything. As long as it doesn't come to their gates, they don't care. Turning everybody in the swamp into an animal? Not their problem.

That's not entirely fair, Jeri.



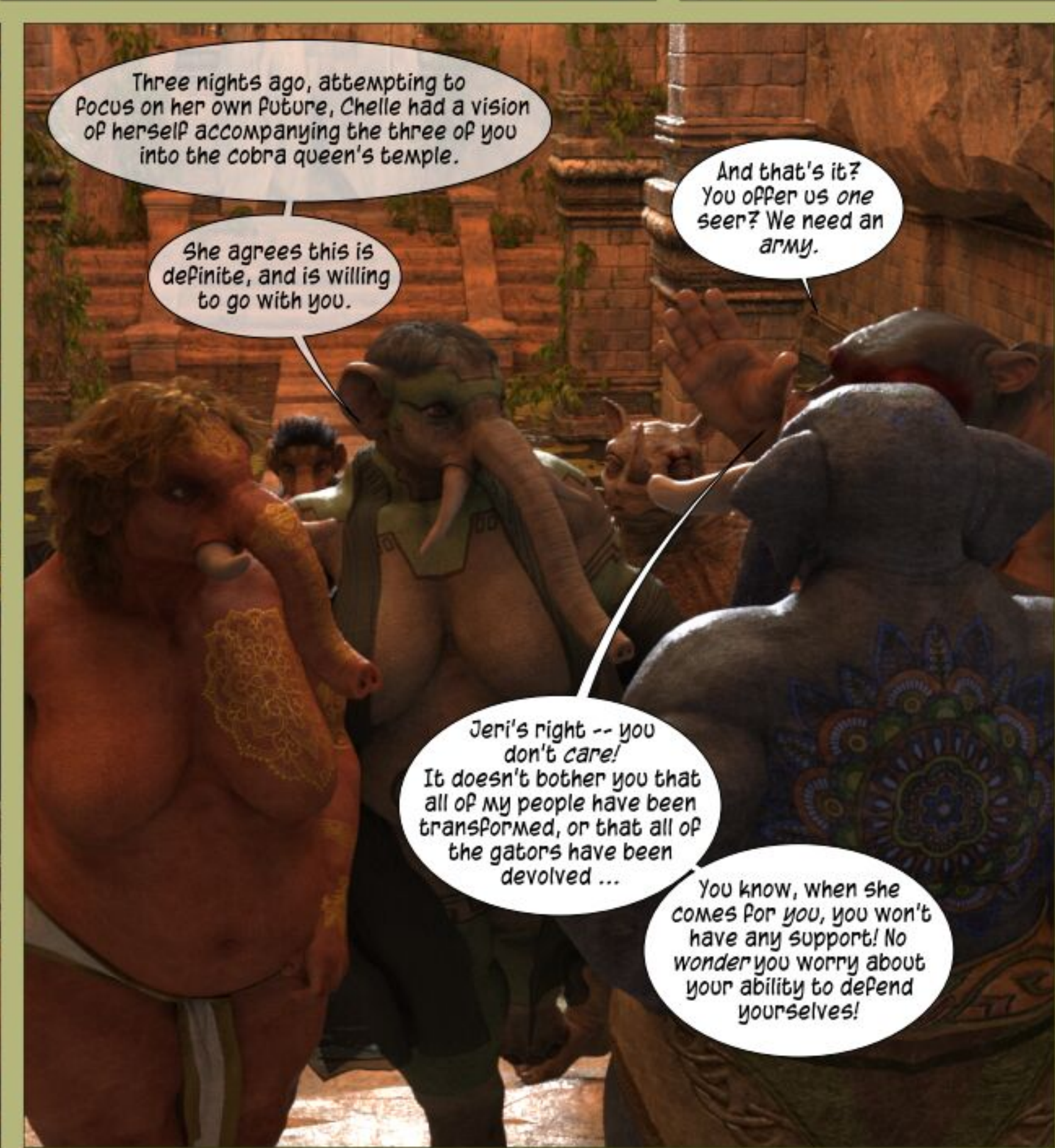
Our first priority must always be the safety of our own.

Often it's all we can do to protect ourselves. If a serious threat came, we might not be able to withstand.

It's safer not to intervene. To intervene is often to provoke. So, no, we don't respond to outside events.

Except.

Sometimes we receive a clear indication of the way we are meant to proceed. In those cases, the situation is different.



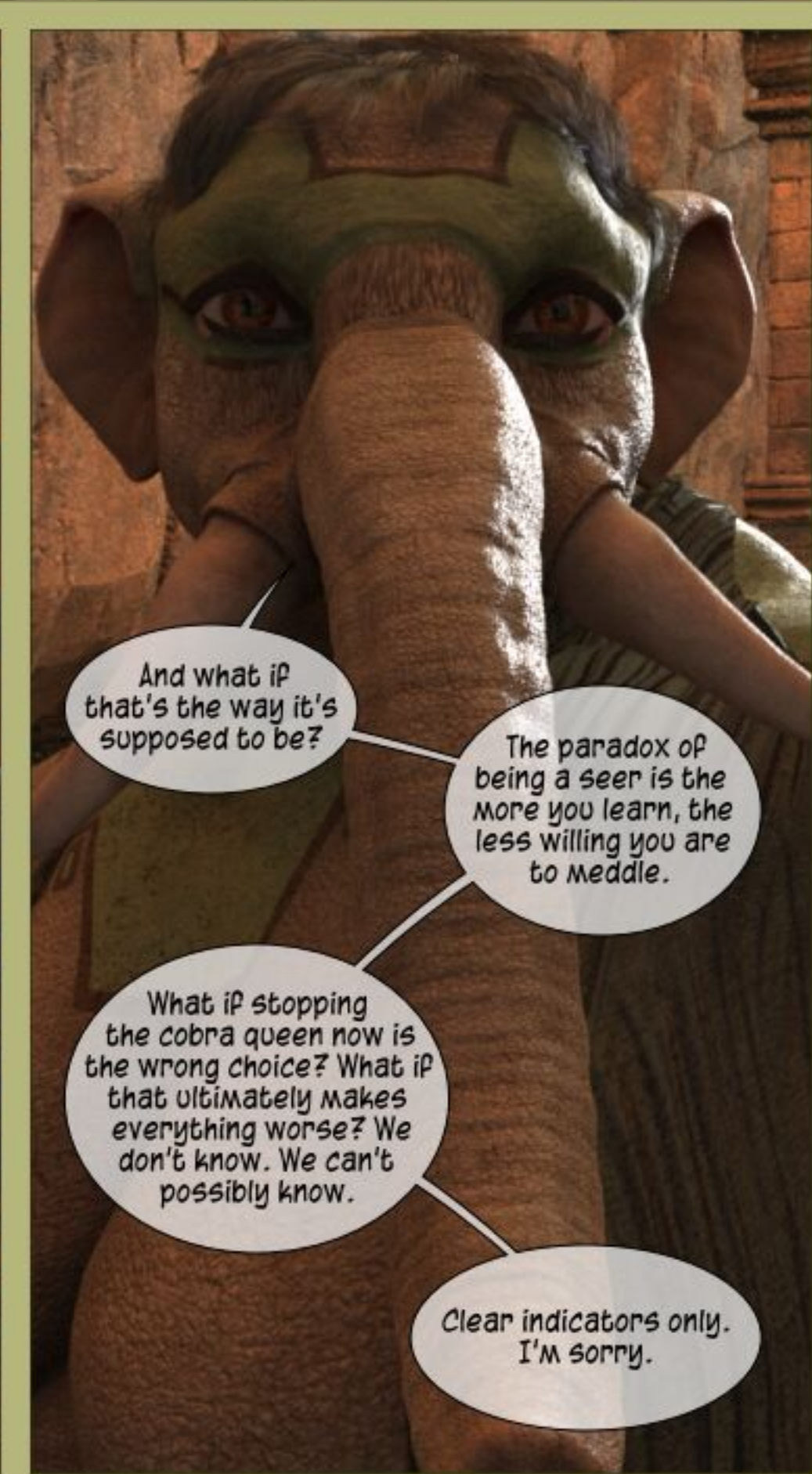
Three nights ago, attempting to focus on her own future, Chelle had a vision of herself accompanying the three of you into the cobra queen's temple.

She agrees this is definite, and is willing to go with you.

And that's it? You offer us one seer? We need an army.

Jeri's right -- you don't care! It doesn't bother you that all of my people have been transformed, or that all of the gators have been devolved ...

You know, when she comes for you, you won't have any support! No wonder you worry about your ability to defend yourselves!



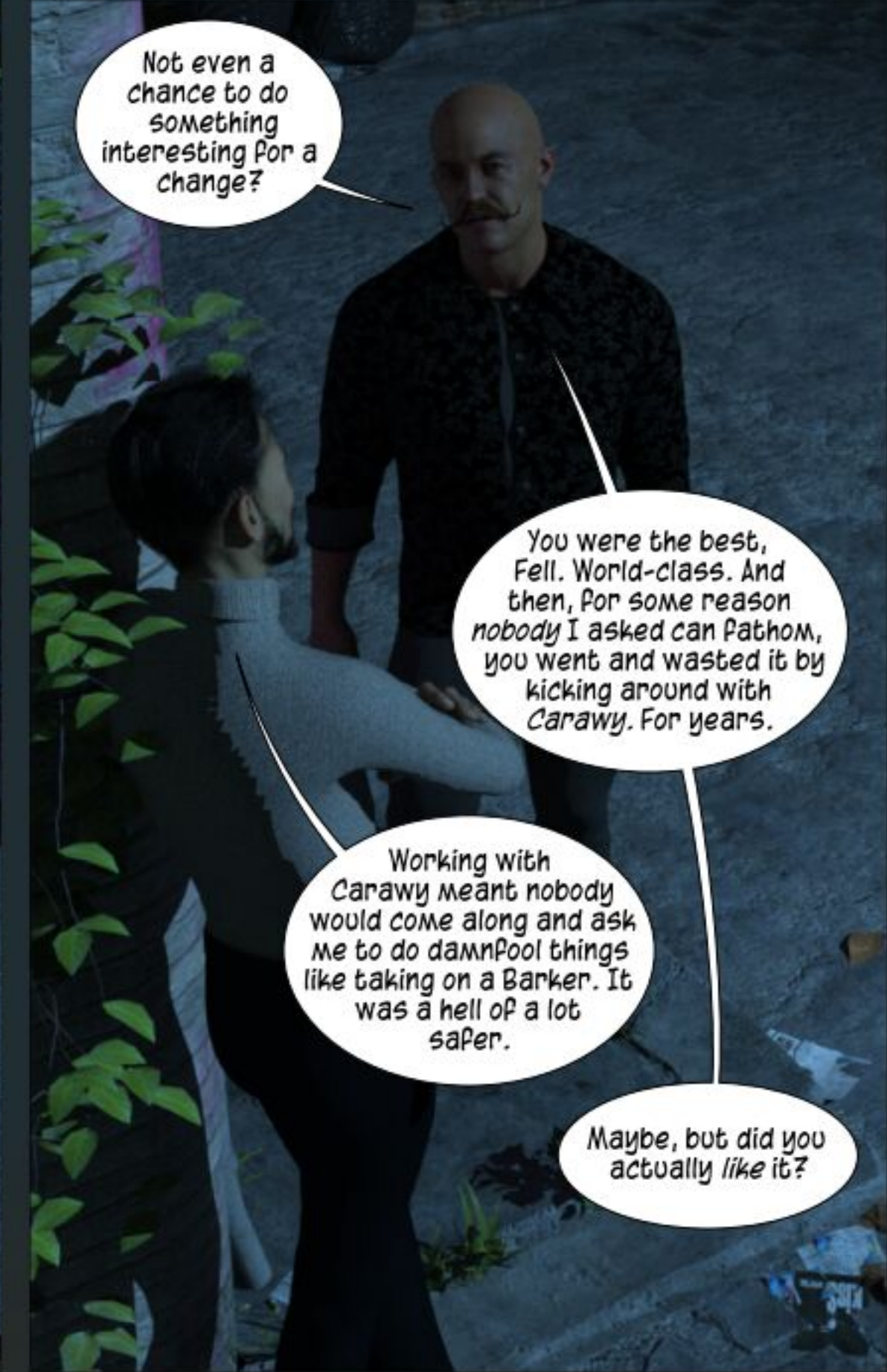
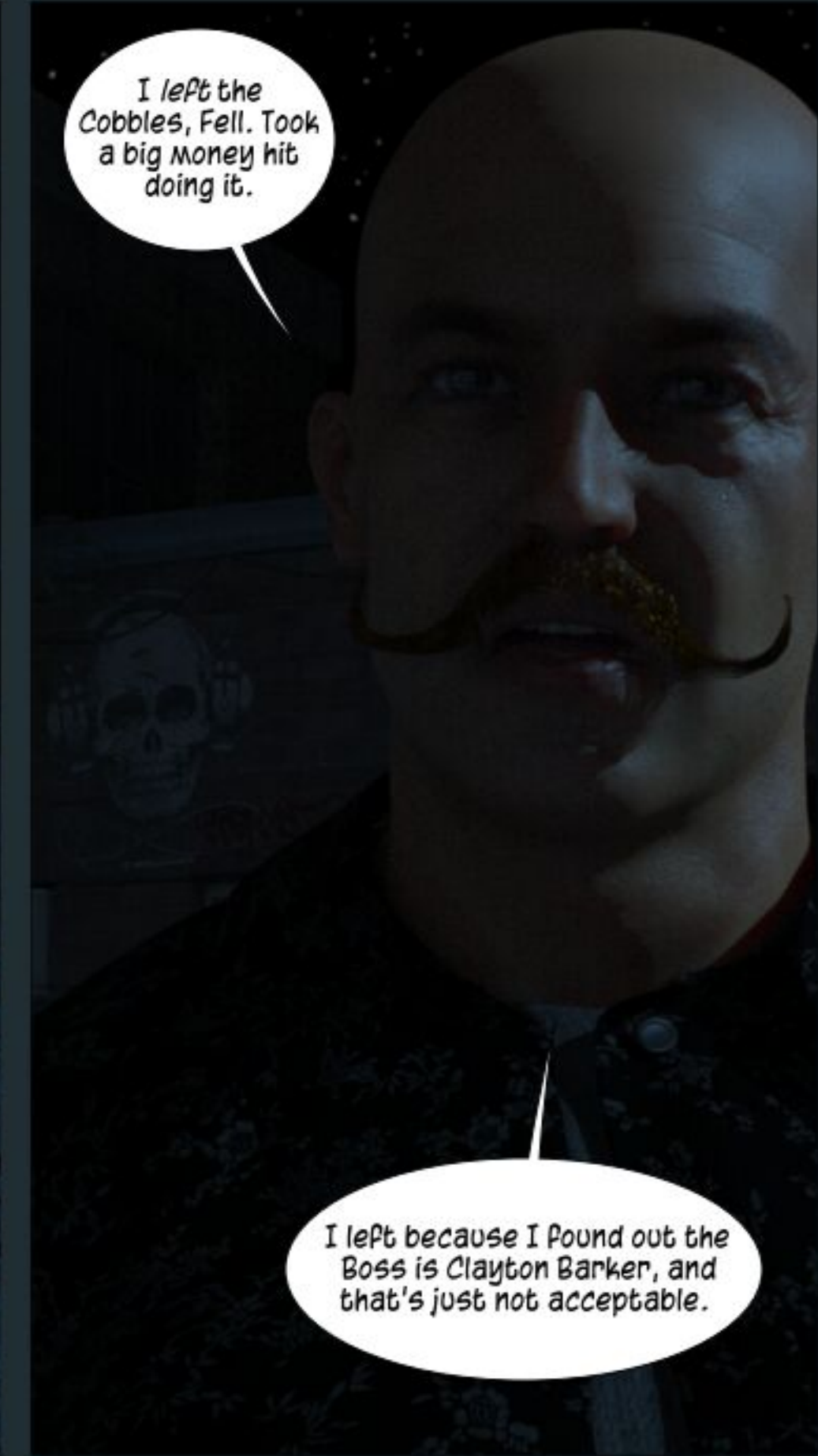
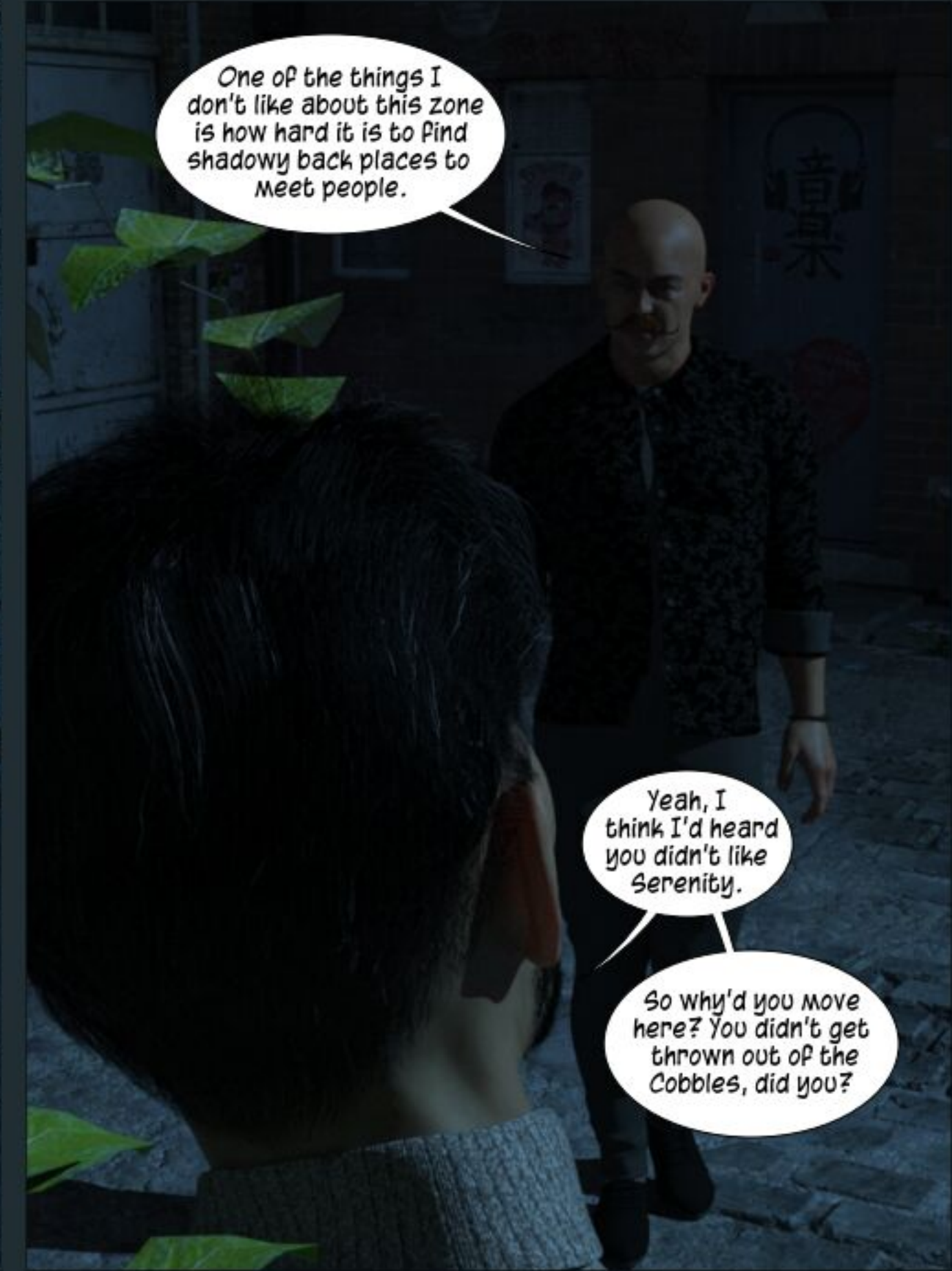
And what if that's the way it's supposed to be?

The paradox of being a seer is the more you learn, the less willing you are to meddle.

What if stopping the cobra queen now is the wrong choice? What if that ultimately makes everything worse? We don't know. We can't possibly know.

Clear indicators only. I'm sorry.

SERENITY.



FABIAN DUPRE'S PERSONAL SPACE, CENTURY.

