



What is ...?
Some kind
of Pight?



You don't
scare us!

Poison you and let
you rot in the sun!



Give up, beast!

Watch it!

Yes ... I
remember ... there were
two like that and they were
attacking ... somebody?
Who didn't ...

But what did I do?



Oh, that's
right.



Get out of here!



You better not be
vicious. You don't seem
like you are ...

I didn't see
either of them
sting you. I think
they may have only
gotten you a little?
Scratched you,
maybe?

Come on,
shake it off
...



Oop!
OK then.
Good.

You're all
right. Now you
should get out of
here before they
come back.



Oh!

Well, uh ...
I mean, that's
up to you.



I should tell you,
though ... I have no idea
where I'm going.



It's been disgustingly quiet. I'm worried one of these days I'm going to doze off while I'm sitting here. I think I may have picked furniture that's too comfortable.

Maybe I should put a bell on the door, in case I do and someone comes in.

ULA, SOLE EMPLOYEE.

Disgustingly quiet is a pretty good outcome. I was worried you'd be flooded with people who had complaints for me ... or worse.

There have been a few. Mostly people who want to gripe about Serille.



Is she doing something unpopular?

I wouldn't say that. She's really been stepping up the street patrols. Kitties everywhere.

Most of the Polks here don't have any complaint, I don't think. It's only the ones who want to do something sleazy and can't that are pissed off about it.

Other than that, nothing ... oh, no, I lie. There was *one* other. A guy who was looking for a missing person and wondered if we knew anything.

Huh. What was his name? I wonder if it was anybody I know.

Uh ... something kind of blunt? I have it written down, but ...

Strunk, that was it. Joe Strunk.



Joe Strunk? You're sure?

Pretty sure. I can go check my notes ...

Who was he looking for?

Someone named Gina Howard.

The name sounded kind of familiar, and I could have pointed him somewhere ...

But?

Well ... there was something about him I didn't trust. I wasn't sure he wanted to find her for anything good. Y'know?

I think your instincts were probably sound.

If he comes back, don't give him anything. I'll tell Gina he's looking for her, and she can decide what to do next herself.

And be careful. I don't know if it's still the case -- he's been missing for years -- but at one time he was a very dangerous ...

Hello?



Are you open?

Absolutely! Come on in. Don't mind me lying down on the job.

What can I do for you?

Well ... I was told this was where I should go if I wanted to speak to Leyna Barker?

That's correct ... and today is your lucky day! You can avoid the middleman!

Sorry?

This is her, right here.



Oh! Hello, Ms. Barker. My name's Fane.

The woman who was stuck in interspace. It took me a second to recognize you. It was hard to tell what you looked like there.

I'm glad to see you're OK. We were worried when you disappeared. By the time we got the bedders to confirm you'd been interrupted, you were already back in.

Is that what happened? I don't remember any of it ... I tried to go through a broken portal, and then I had a lot of, well, bad dreams, I guess ... and then all of a sudden I was awake ... like, really awake ...

Anyway, I wanted to thank you. For getting me out.

If you don't remember any of it, how do you know I got you out?



Oh. Uh ...

... the thing is, I'm not sure you're going to believe it ...

OK, there's this woman. I guess she's a woman. What she really is ... um ... she's kind of like a ghost, I guess. I mean, you can see through her. And she's blue.

She visited me the other night -- just appeared out of nowhere -- and told me what happened and said if I wanted to thank you, this was where I should go look.

It was all very weird. And very fast. I didn't even find out her name.



Sprue.

Her name is Sprue.

And you should probably know ...

... no, actually, never mind.



Anyway, you're very welcome ... and thank you for coming to find me. I appreciate it.

Sure.

Are you a resident of the Souk?

Well, I was ... but it seems like all my friends have left ... I'm thinking of moving to Serenity. I know people there.

I hope it works out for you.



What were you about to say to her?

I was going to warn her that Sprue was how she got stuck in interspace in the first place.

But she wasn't. Sprue didn't have anything to do with the Souk coming apart. That was Input.

You don't trust this Sprue person, huh?

... I'll get back to you on that.

FANE GETS THROWN INTO INTERSPACE IN #50 AND GETS RESCUED FROM IT IN #58.

THE DESERT AREA OF **THE YARDS** SEPARATES THE HILL COUNTRY FROM THE JUNGLE.

IT'S CONSIDERED UNINHABITED AND UNINHABITABLE, THOUGH THAT'S NOT STRICTLY TRUE.

SINCE THE EFFECT OF THE NEARLY-IMPASSIBLE DESERT IS TO MAKE THE JUNGLE AREA DIFFICULT TO REACH -- A LONG DETOUR THROUGH TREACHEROUS FOREST ON THE WEST OR AN EQUALLY HAZARDOUS TRIP DOWN THE BEACH AND THROUGH THE HOT SWAMP ON THE EAST -- SOME PEOPLE HAVE WONDERED IF PAULINE BARKER PUT THE DESERT HERE FOR EXACTLY THAT PURPOSE, SINCE IT DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE ANY OTHER.

PAULINE ISN'T SAYING, AND HONESTLY, AT THIS POINT SHE MAY NOT REMEMBER WHY SHE DID IT.

-- hrgh --
I thought deserts were supposed to be flat ...

Nasty bugs!!

Nasty, nasty, all time nasty!

Make bad, nothing but bad all time! Mess with poor Dezil!

We didn't touch her ...

Run, Pool!

Fix you! Want bad? Make little bad! No more big trouble! Only little trouble!

AAAGH!!

Bug for real! Only trouble for other bugs now!

Dezil!
I know her.
She was ... in my head with me? I think? And then she got out and ...

Fix you too! Make trouble for each other now!

NOOO!

We need to get away before she sees us.

You!!

Blue lady friend! Mean to Dezil! No Pun!!

Fix you too!

I don't think I can outrun her, she flies past ...

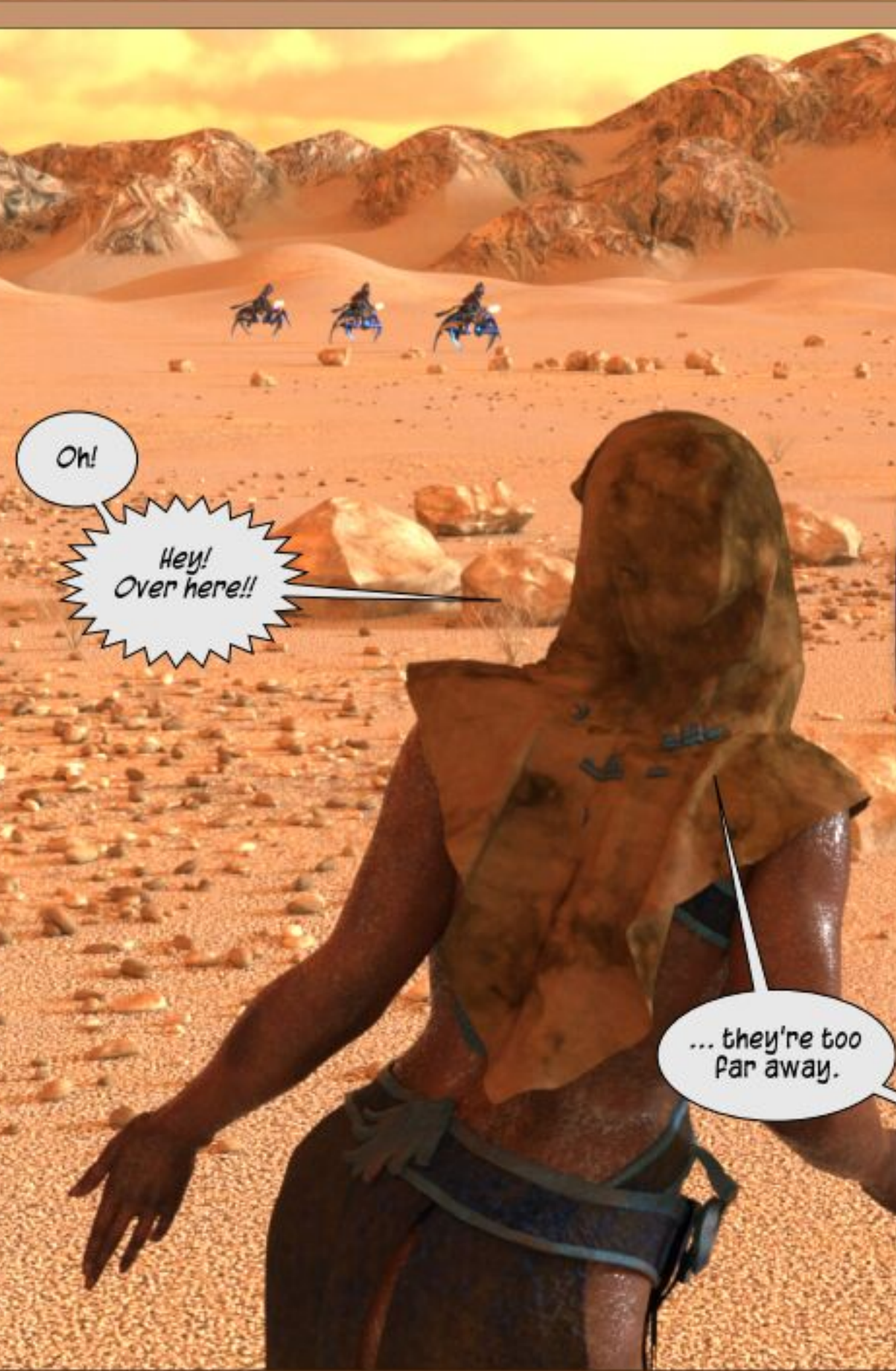
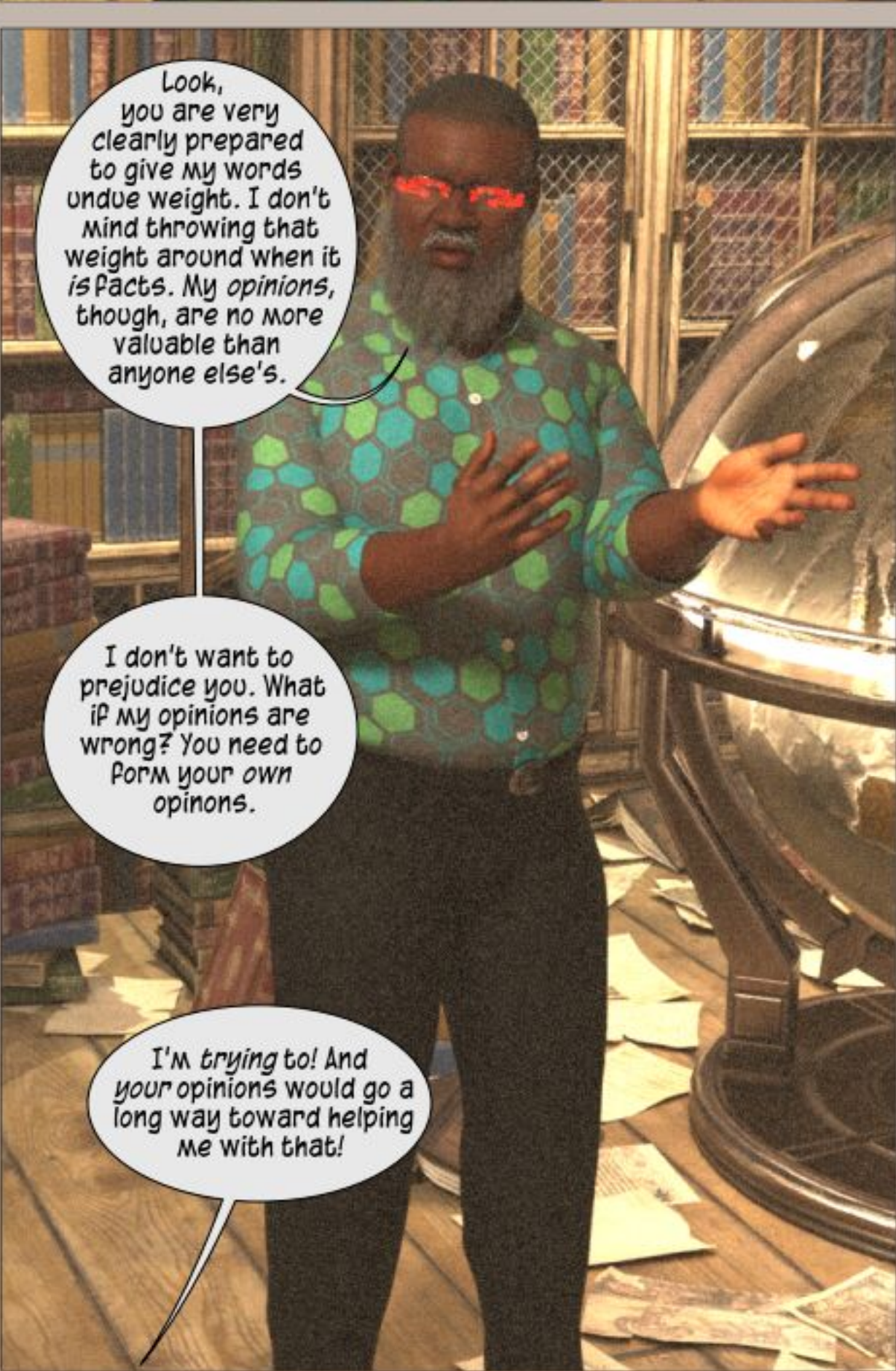
YAAAAH! Big!

Nasty dog thing! Try eat Dezil! Make you something tiny!

Oh. Bad.

OK, bye!

Stay away from Dezil now!





... and she said, "What, you don't want to do anything with Teena because she's a villain?"

And I'm like, no, dummy, that's not it, we do stuff with villains all the time, that's the way it works, you have a fight, everybody has fun, then you all go party together after ...

It's not the way Teena acts when she's being a villain that I have a problem with, it's the way she acts the rest of the time. She's --

YEEOWWWW!



Hey!!

I'm a hero, you know.

Even if I don't have a name yet.

What's your problem?



Now, you're going to fix my friend and -- Hey!

Don't just walk away from me!

You want me to knock you around?



Because I will, I --

AAAAAAA!



Sometimes it's hard to tell whether something is just the usual shenanigans or it's an actual disturbance.

MOLLY COLEMAN. KEEPER OF THE PEACE IN CENTURY THESE DAYS. NOT ENTIRELY HAPPY ABOUT THAT.

Doesn't seem to me like there's all that much difference, really.



MINT

AND NINA,

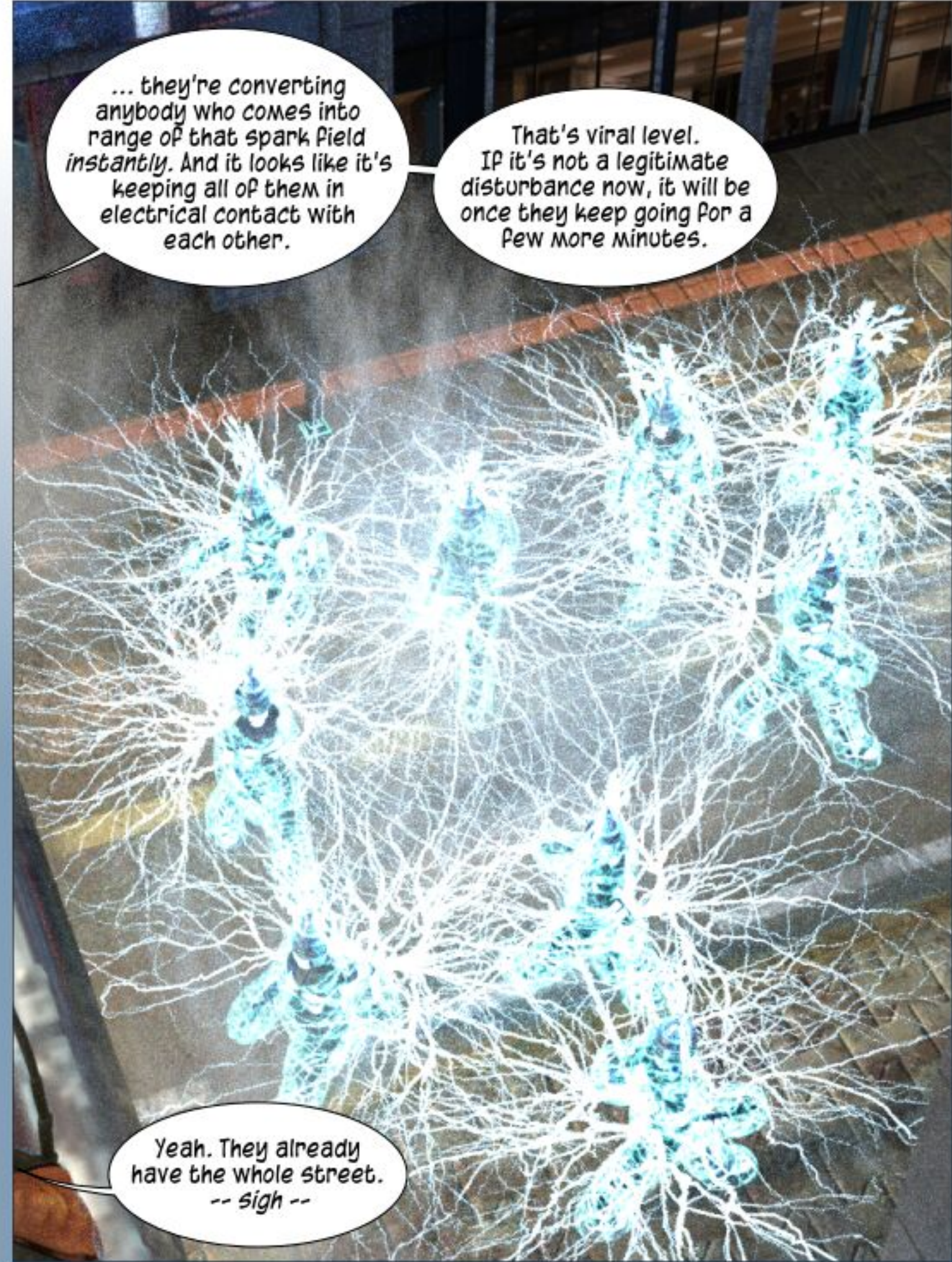
TWO OF MOLLY'S TEAMMATES.

Molly doesn't like to play the heroes-and-villains games. She only wants to intervene when it gets out of hand.

Well, I feel the same way she does ...

A voice of reason!

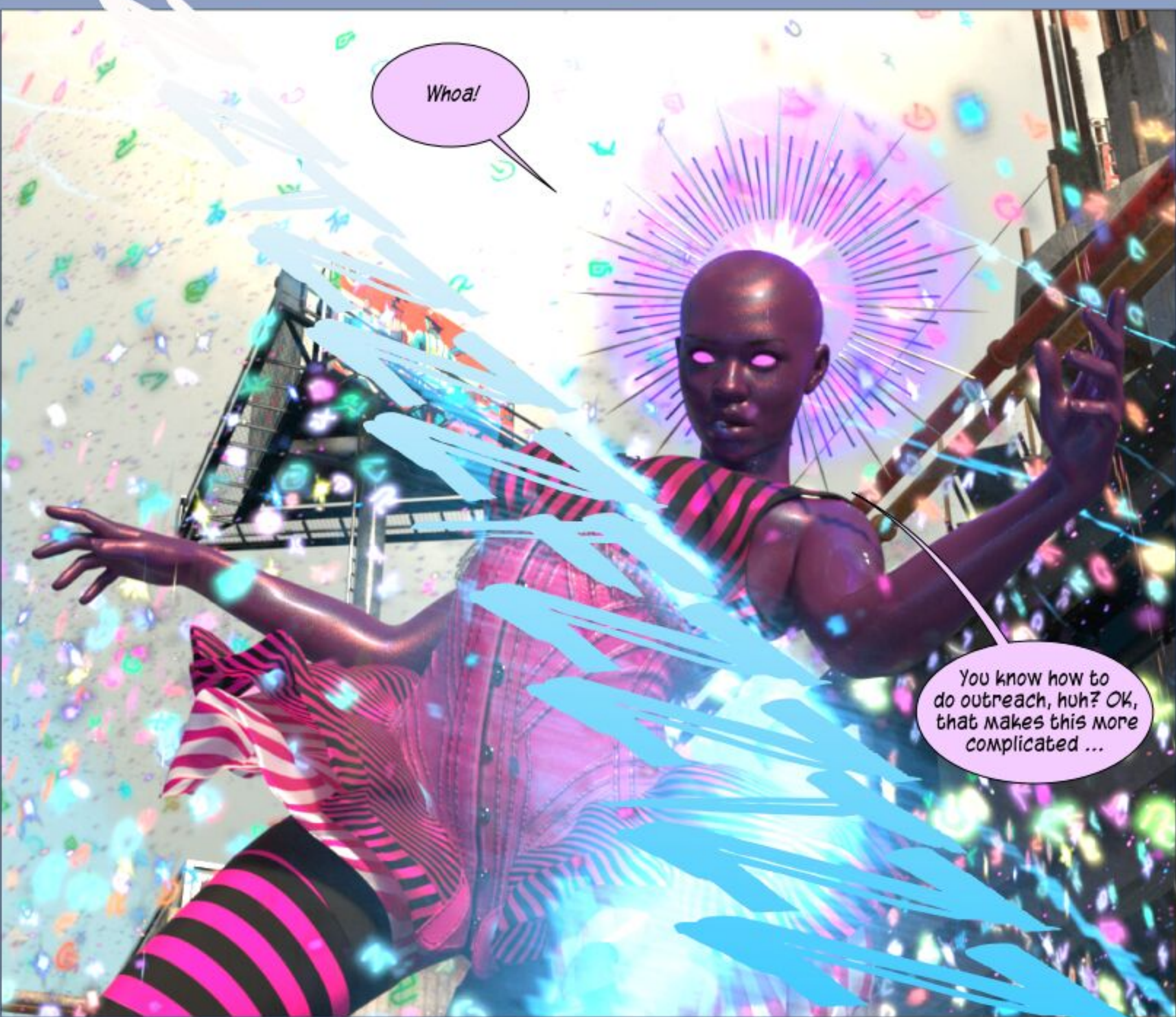
... but ...



... they're converting anybody who comes into range of that spark field instantly. And it looks like it's keeping all of them in electrical contact with each other.

That's viral level. If it's not a legitimate disturbance now, it will be once they keep going for a few more minutes.

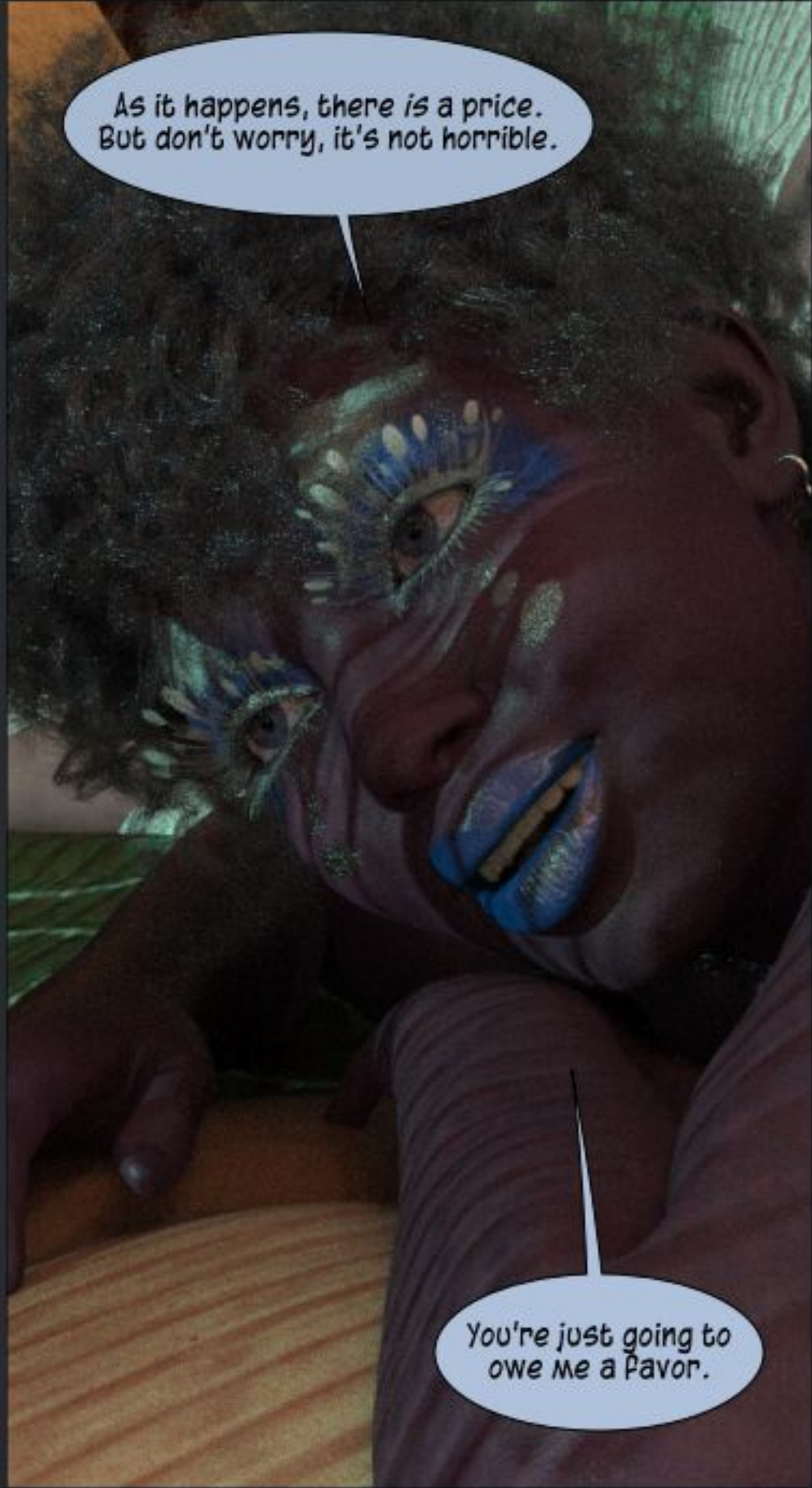
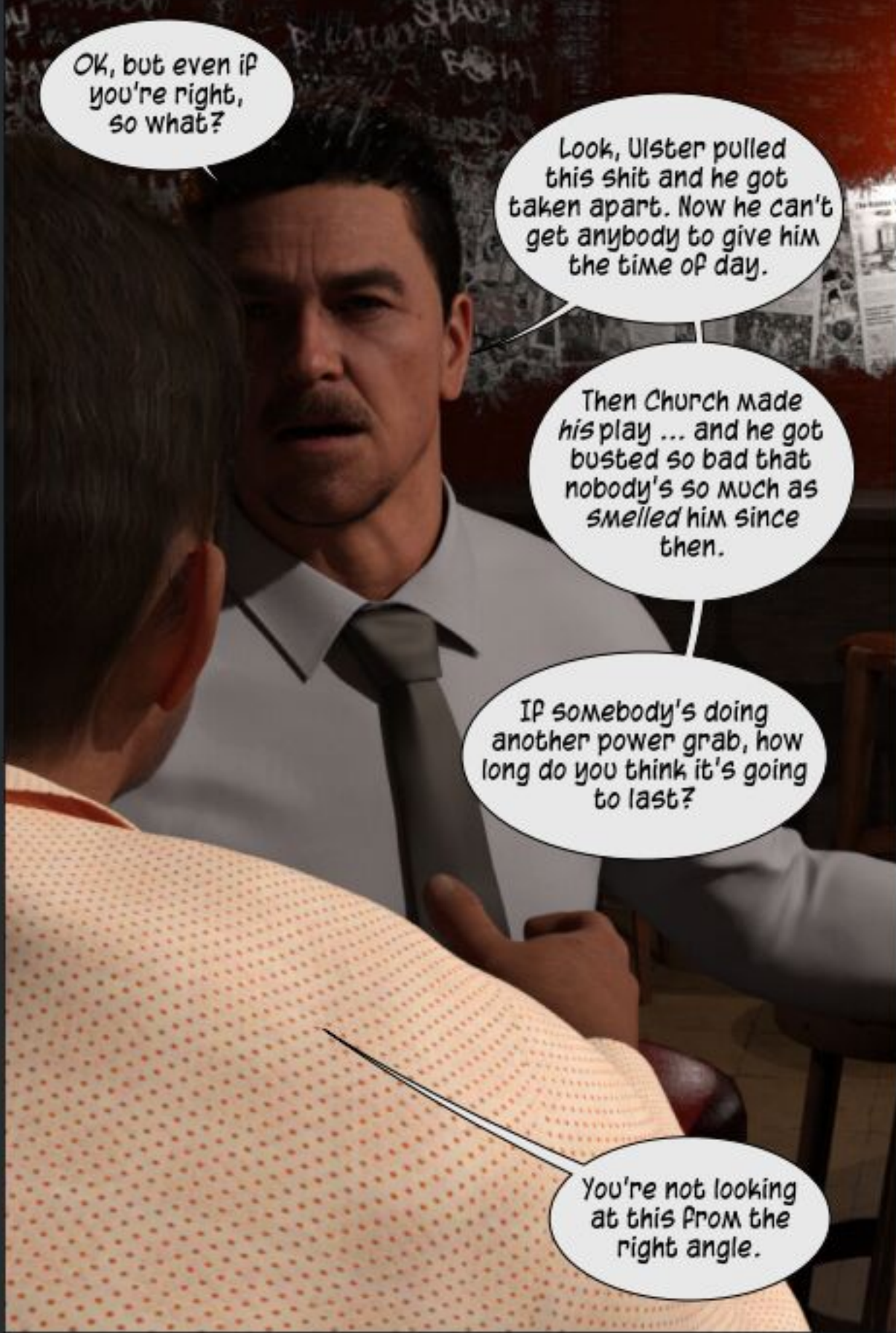
Yeah. They already have the whole street. -- sigh --



DUSK, AND A PAUSE TO REST.



THERE ARE ENOUGH DIVE BARS IN THE COBBLES THAT WE'RE NOT SURE WHICH ONE THIS IS.



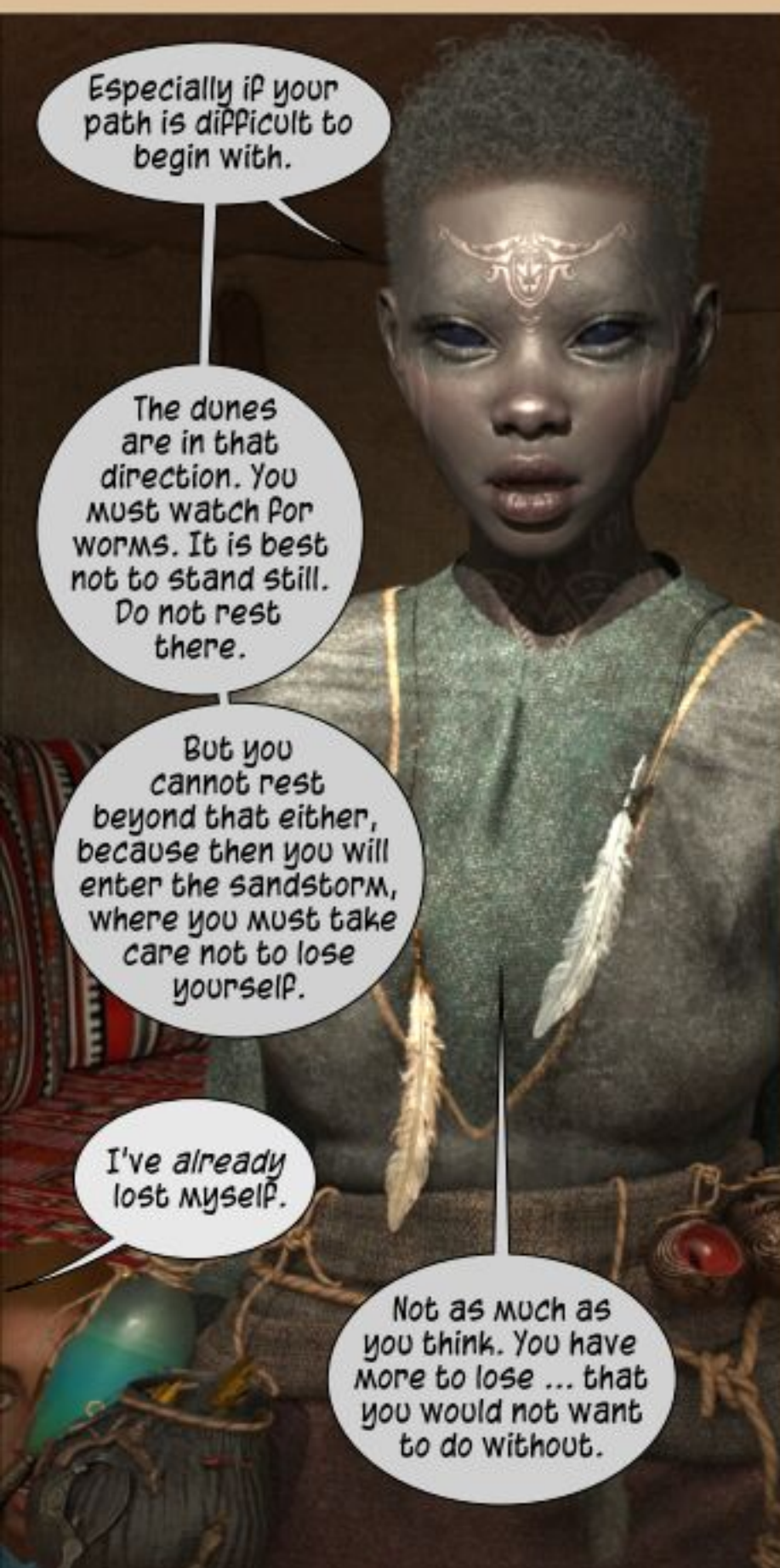








SEVERAL HOURS LATER.





I wasn't entirely sure you'd be coming back.

Does that imply it didn't do any good? I see you've changed appearance, so you must have gotten something ...



Yeah, I found this preset. I think this must be what I actually look like.

Though I also haven't used it in a long time, it said ... so what does "actually look like" even mean then?

Anyway, I like it better. I don't want to look like a doll person anymore.

... I also found out my name.



It's Cindy. Cindy Fuller.

But you can keep calling me "Cog" if you want.

I mean, at least I know I'll respond to that ... if someone calls me "Cindy" I probably won't even realize they're talking to me.

There's nothing there. It doesn't mean anything to me, y'know?

When you got me to remember my recall, I was hoping going there would shake something loose ...

I'm sorry.

There really was nothing else useful?

IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO COG, YOU'LL NEED THE FINAL SCENE OF #54 ... WHICH WON'T MAKE SENSE WITHOUT READING ALL OF #53-54 FIRST, AND AT LEAST ONE SCENE IN #49 ... SOMETIMES IT'S JUST LIKE THAT AROUND HERE.



Maybe. There were some return locations that I'd saved ... and some contacts. Some of them are family. A mother and a sister, looks like.

So I guess now I visit those places and people and see if any of them can tell me something about myself.

It's better than nothing.

Marginally.

Come back if you want to try more recovery sessions.

I will.

... and thank you.

I know you don't think you've done enough, but you did more than I could have hoped for.



I guess "no excitement" is a good thing here, but, wow.

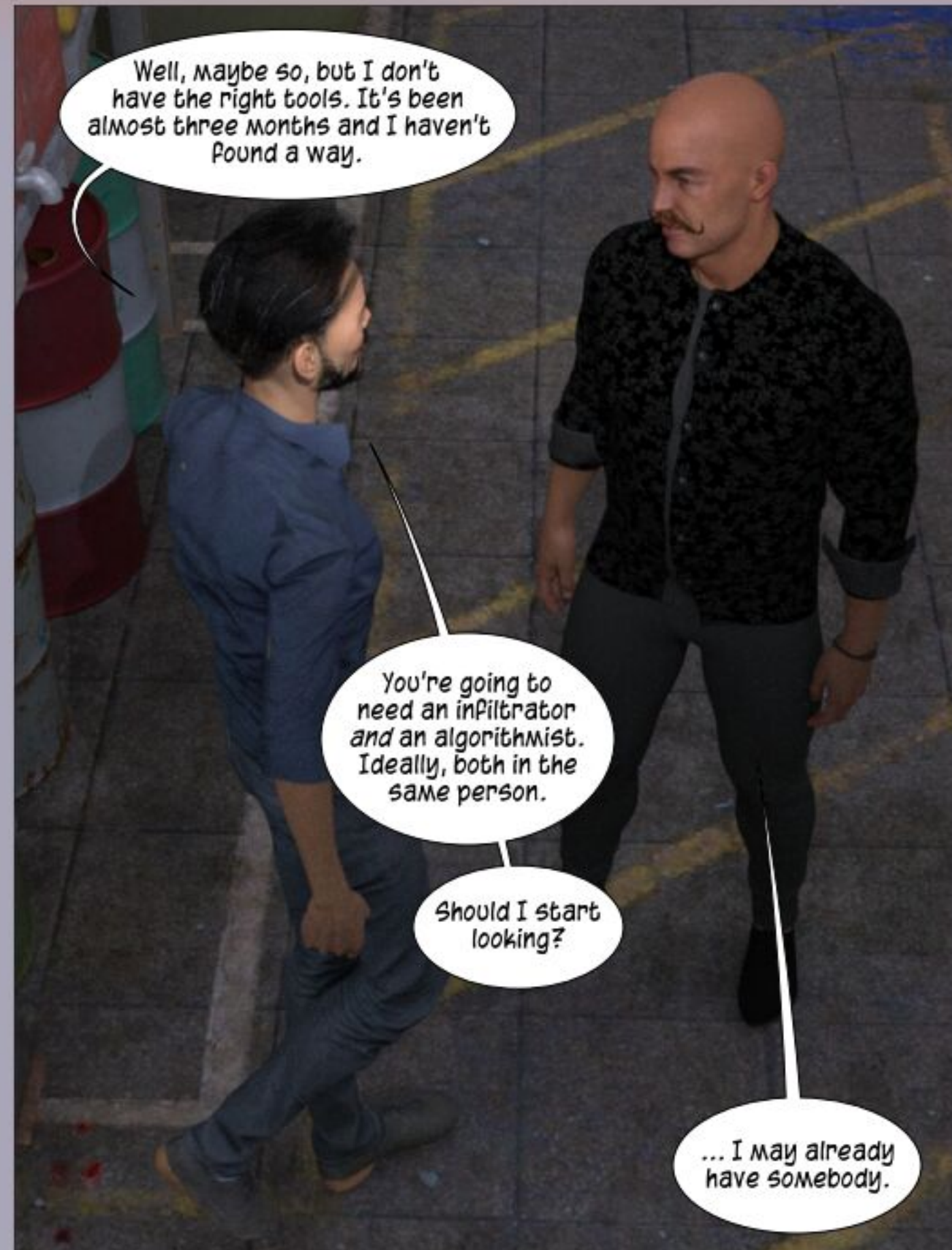
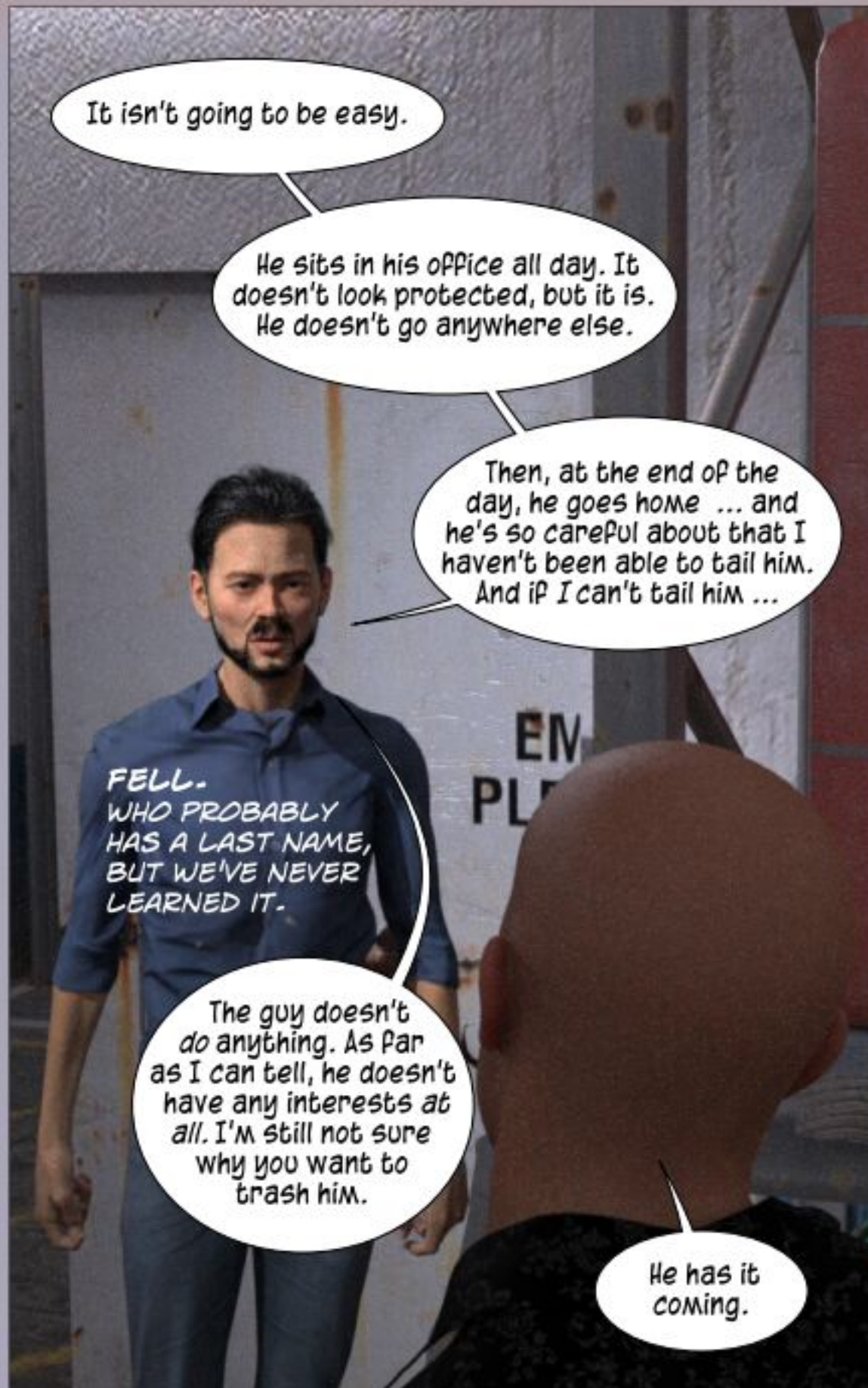
Not even so much as a rock ... I don't know about you, but I'm having a hard time staying awake just from the --



-- is the ground moving?



THE TROPICA CLUB, SERENITY.





Is this the blue lady's place?
It's ...

... Well, I can't say it wasn't what I was expecting, because I wasn't expecting anything ...

... but something about this feels ... off.



For one thing, it's falling apart. It sure doesn't look like anybody actually lives here.

Unless it just looks like that on the outside ...



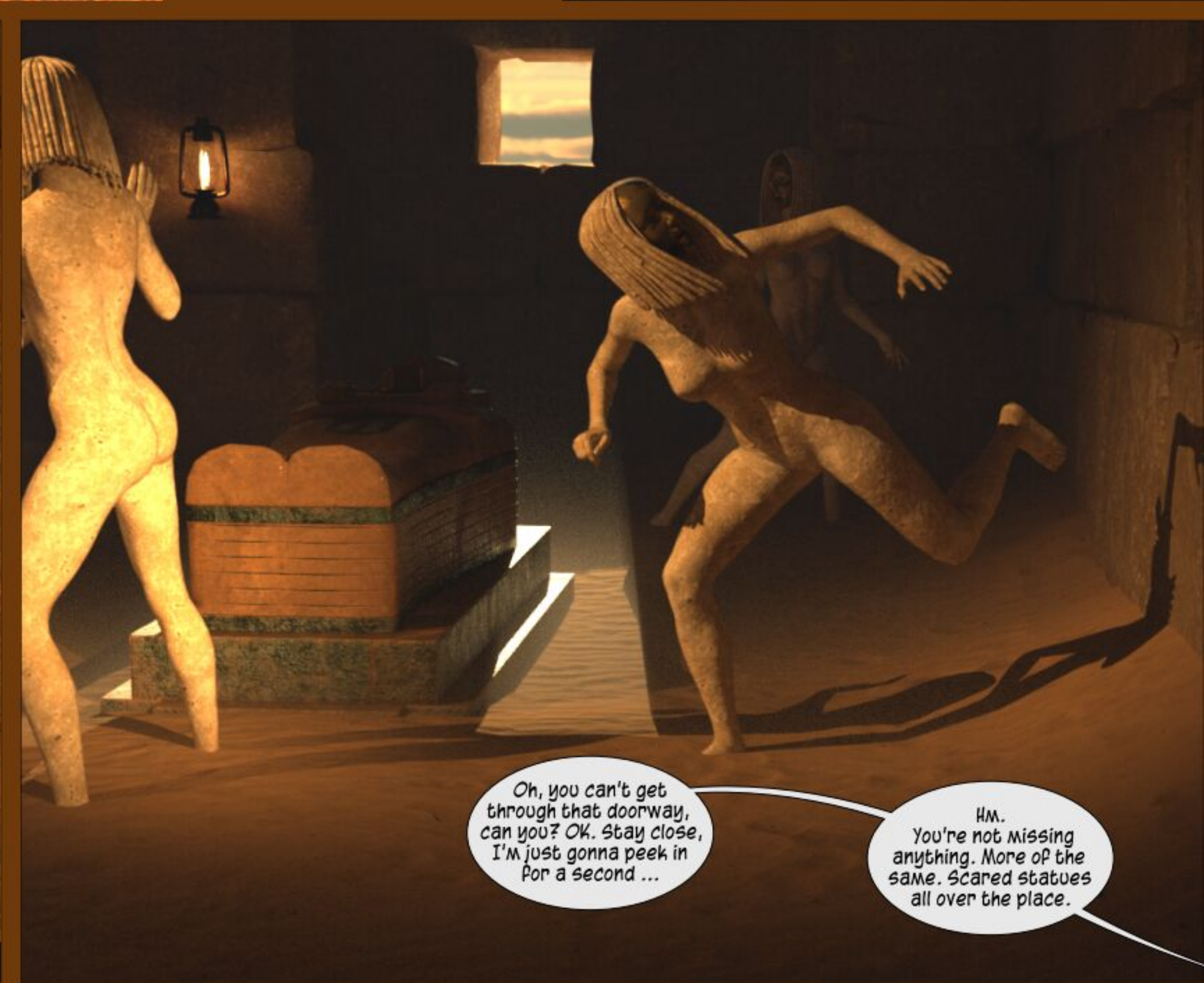
Whoa!



OK, if this is the blue lady's place, this is awfully mean of her, because I don't believe for a minute that these statues are just statues.

But I don't know what I can do about them.

It looks like there's a big room in the center. Let's go check that.



Oh, you can't get through that doorway, can you? OK. Stay close, I'm just gonna peek in for a second ...

Hm. You're not missing anything. More of the same. Scared statues all over the place.



Sandy, I think we've got the wrong address. Whatever went down in this place, it feels like it was a long time ago.

We should head back out --



IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME. SO LONG, NO ONE COMES ANYMORE.

-- WUH!

I SUPPOSE PEOPLE NO LONGER HAVE THE WILL FOR SACRIFICE.



BUT YOU! YOU CLEARLY WANT IT. YOU NEED TO SUBMIT SO BADLY. TO LET OTHERS SHAPE YOU.

I SHALL STRIP YOUR SOUL AND LEAVE AN OBJECT OF ETERNAL BEAUTY IN ITS PLACE.



AAGH!

That's what she told me.

IN #56.

She said I let everything push me around. That I just go with the flow all the time without ever putting up any resistance.

Even if she was right, I'm getting real tired of it.



THE SCHOLZ ESTATE, HIGHPOINT ...

... CURRENTLY IN THE PROCESS OF BEING DEMOLISHED.



... I just wonder if it's necessary.

Well, we don't have permission to delete the space outright, so we have to clean it out the hard way.

Not what I mean. I mean, why clean it out at all?

Among other reasons, to make the space harder for someone to use without our noticing.

Even though we're watching for her, she could sneak back in.

Though I don't really think she'll try.

HONOR DELP.
SORT OF RUNNING HIGHPOINT, AT LEAST TO THE EXTENT THAT ANYONE IS.

You better hope she doesn't. Because if she does come back and she sees this, it's just going to give her a grudge.

She'd have one anyway.

Sure, but ... I mean, if I found out all my stuff had been destroyed ...

We're not being quite that horrible.



"I've got people going through the place. They're storing anything that looks like a personal possession or of sentimental value. If she does show her face again, she can have all of that."

Still can't believe her bedroom looks like this ...

Maybe she wasn't the one who was into castles. Find anything?

Hey, this has drawers! Some of these weird blobs in the corners are cabinets!

I'll go check the others.



Look at this!

I guess Lord Scholz just wasn't doing it for her ...

If she liked it that big, no wonder.

For all we know, she kept that around to use on Lord Scholz.

I don't think this is gonna make it to storage. I think it's about to disappear.



Eww, girl, no.

I wouldn't even touch that if we didn't have gloves on ...

I'm going to clean it first, Misty. Honestly!

OK, but ... Val, sex toys aren't hard to get ...

She kept me as a pawn. For years.

You know what being a pawn was like? I couldn't even move on my own. Rooks had to carry me to wherever I was stationed.

A little pun is the least of what that bitch owes me.



How are you holding up?

What is that noise?

I know you probably want to stop ... so do I ... but she said we shouldn't rest in the dunes ...

... and there just keep being more dunes ...



GNHARRRRRGGH

HHRGAAARRRGHHH

Uh-oh.

Sandy, those are the creatures the two people were riding. The ones who ran away from us.

Either those big things ate the riders ... or those big things are the riders ... and I bet it's the second one.



And I think I see the problem.





hahahahahaha!

They want to tear each other up but they can't reach! Tiny little arms!

Yes, yes, it's hilarious.

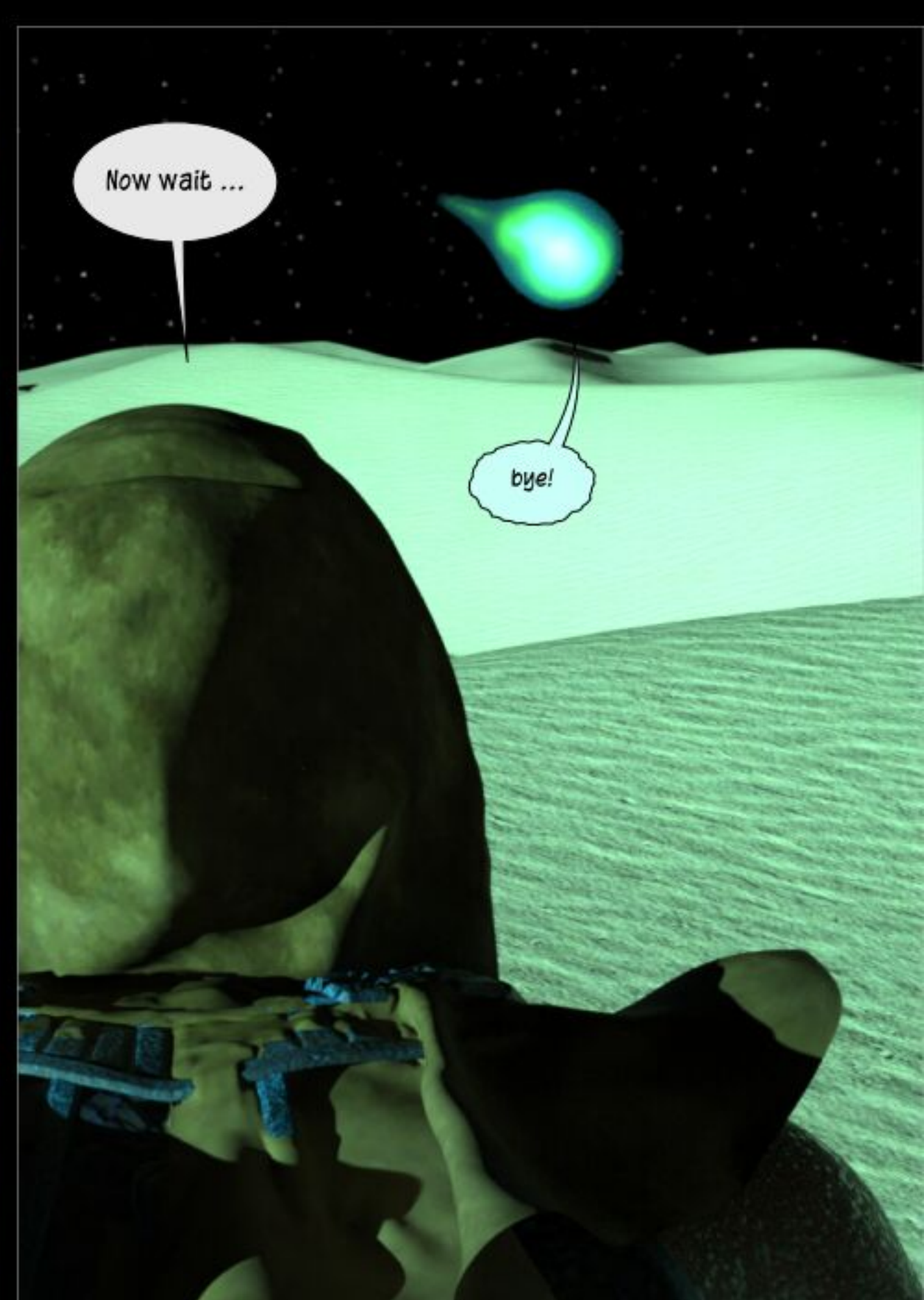
Now change them back.



Won't!

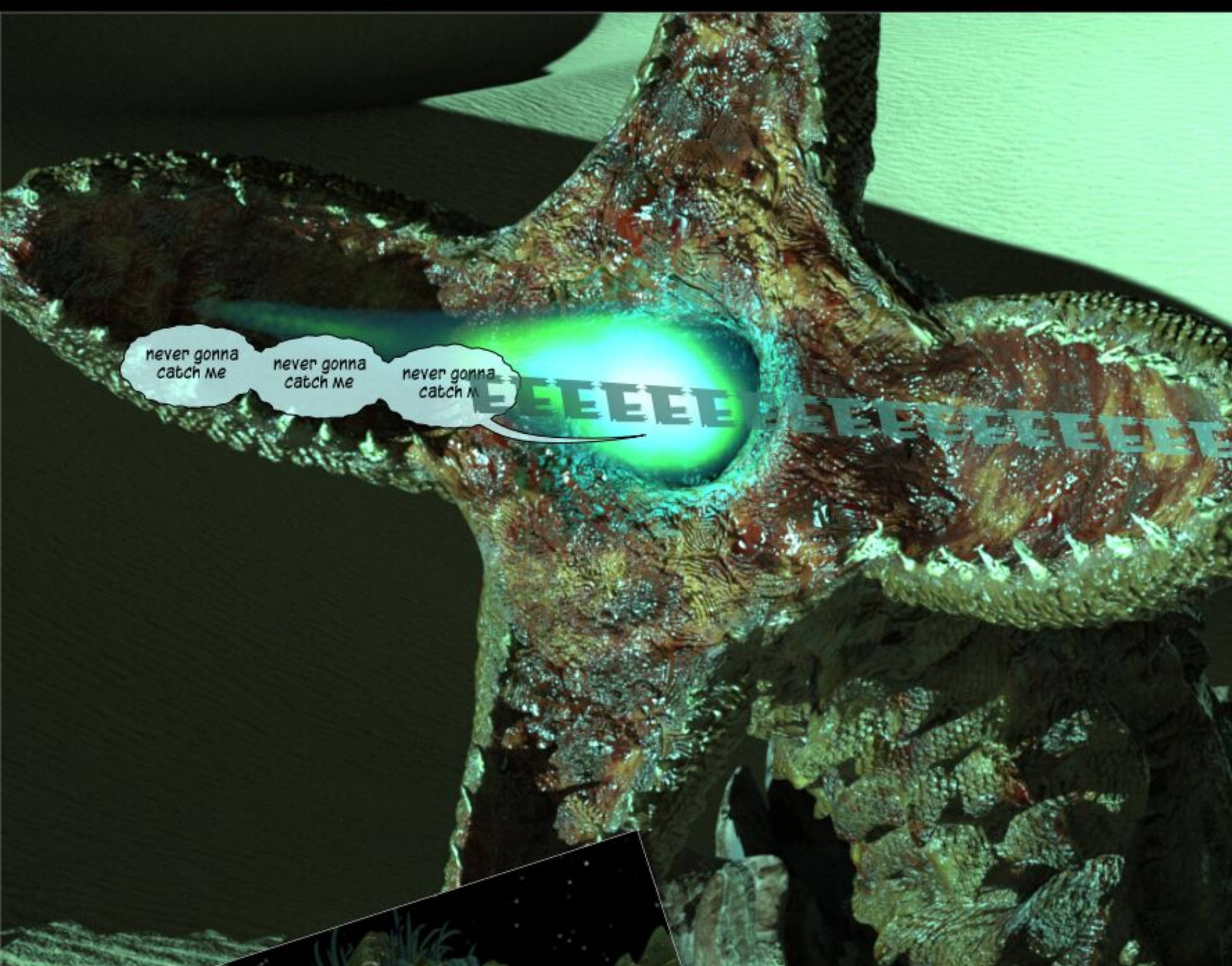
And you can't make me!

And I'm still gonna get to the blue lady before you do!



Now wait ...

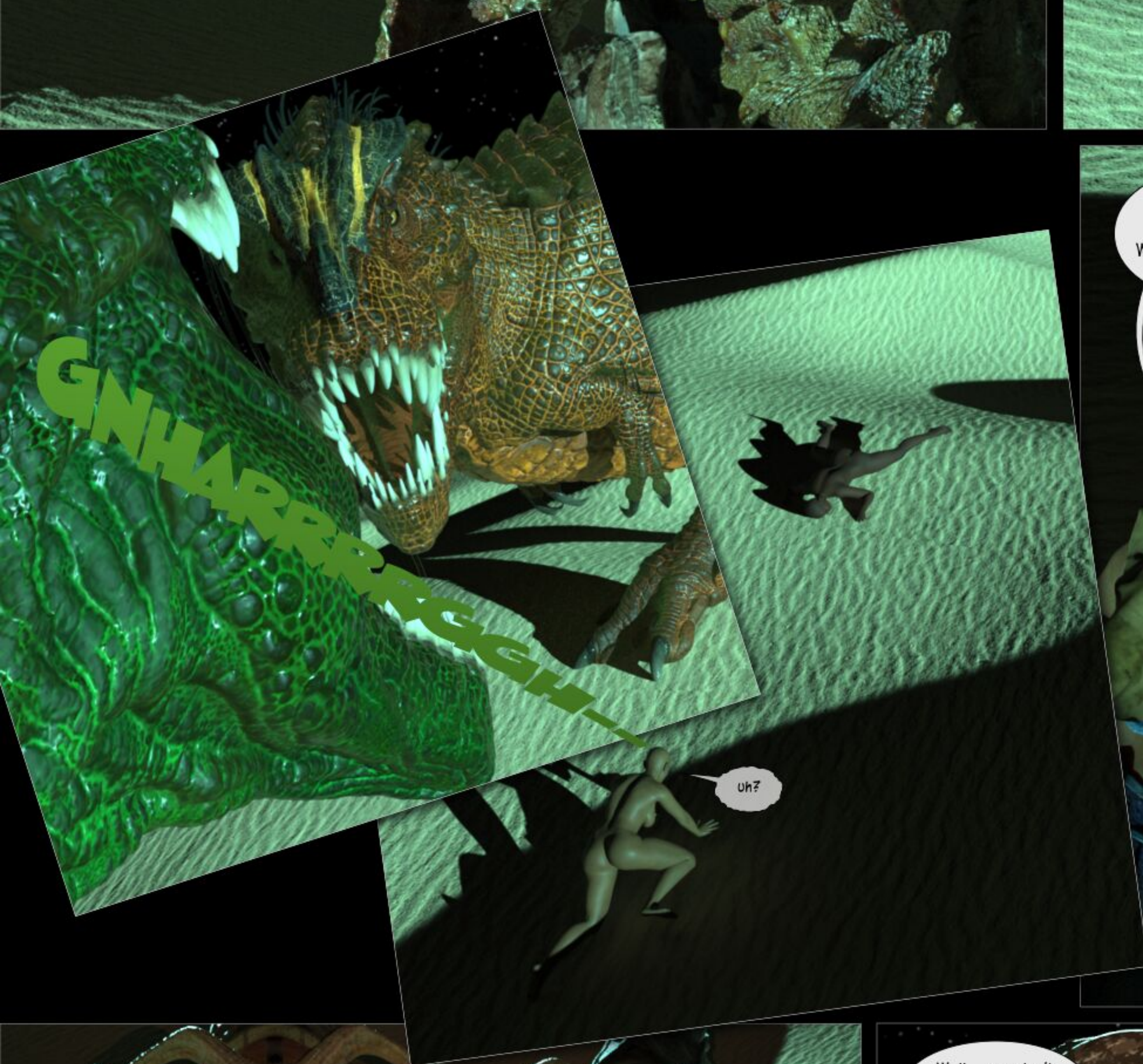
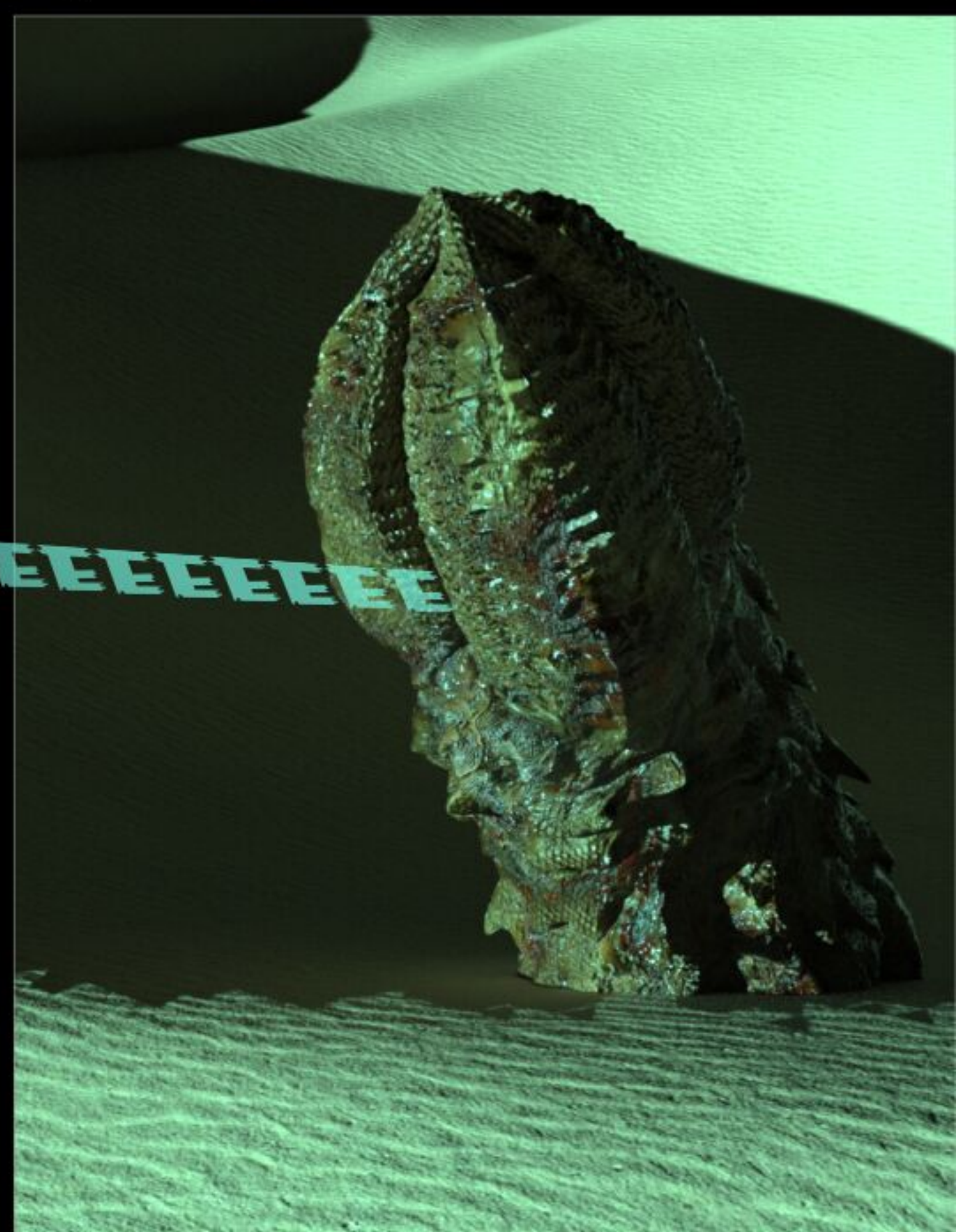
bye!



never gonna catch me

never gonna catch me

never gonna catch me



GNHARRRRRRGH!

Uh?



Hurry! Get on your mounts! We need to get out of here!

Even though that worm ate her ... I wouldn't be surprised if she managed to possess it, or something!



A SAFE DISTANCE AWAY, THEY STOP TO REGROUP (AND RE-DRESS).

I'm sorry about what we did before. We get a little jumpy around strangers ...

It's understandable.

There are a couple of places around here with bedrock the worms can't dig through. We use those as camps. The closest one's about fifteen minutes from here. Just follow us.

If you're going into the sandstorm you definitely want to rest first. We can show you the way in the morning ... but we won't go near it.

Is it that bad?



Well ... we don't know if we'd make it out a second time.

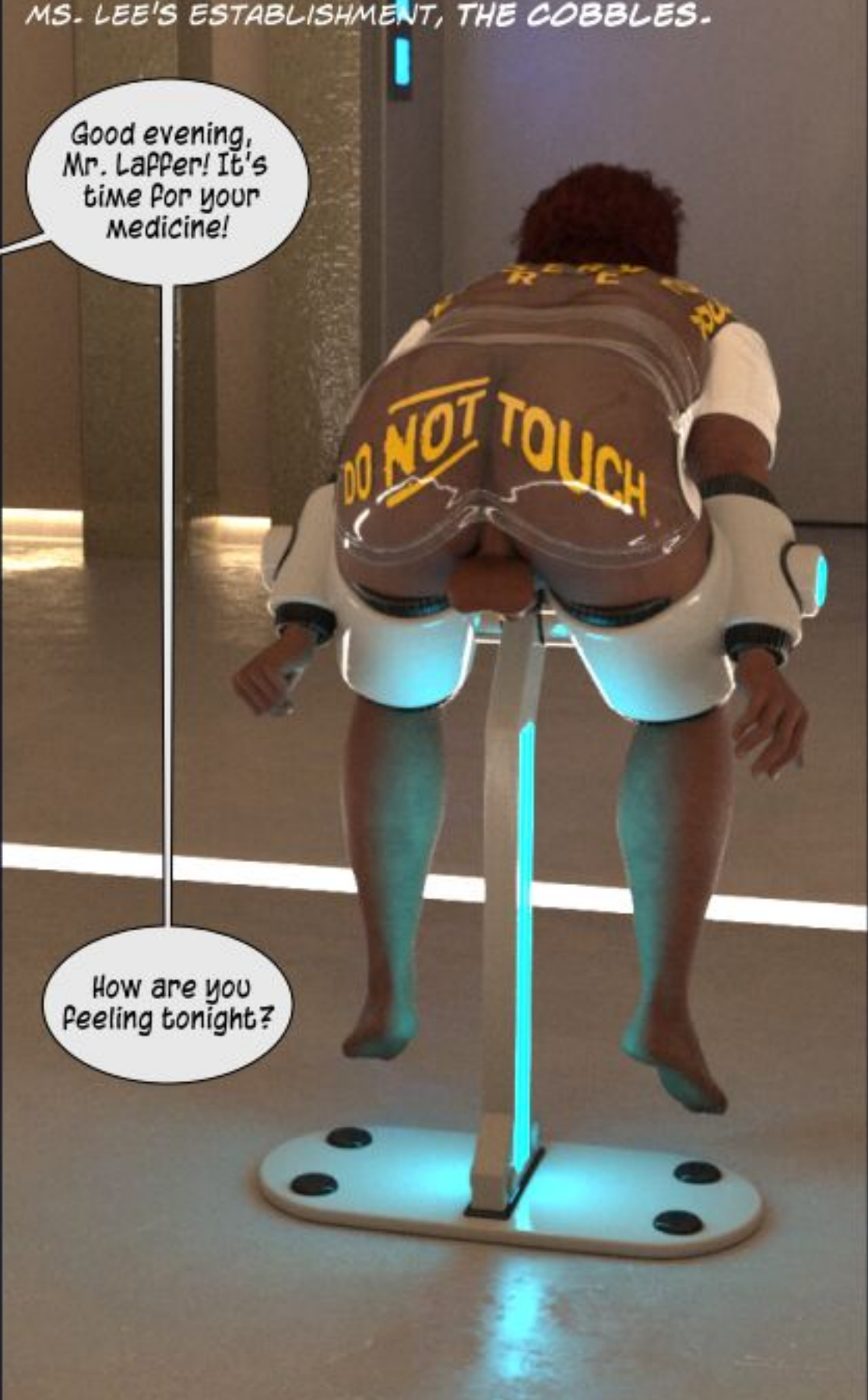
We escaped the sandstorm together.

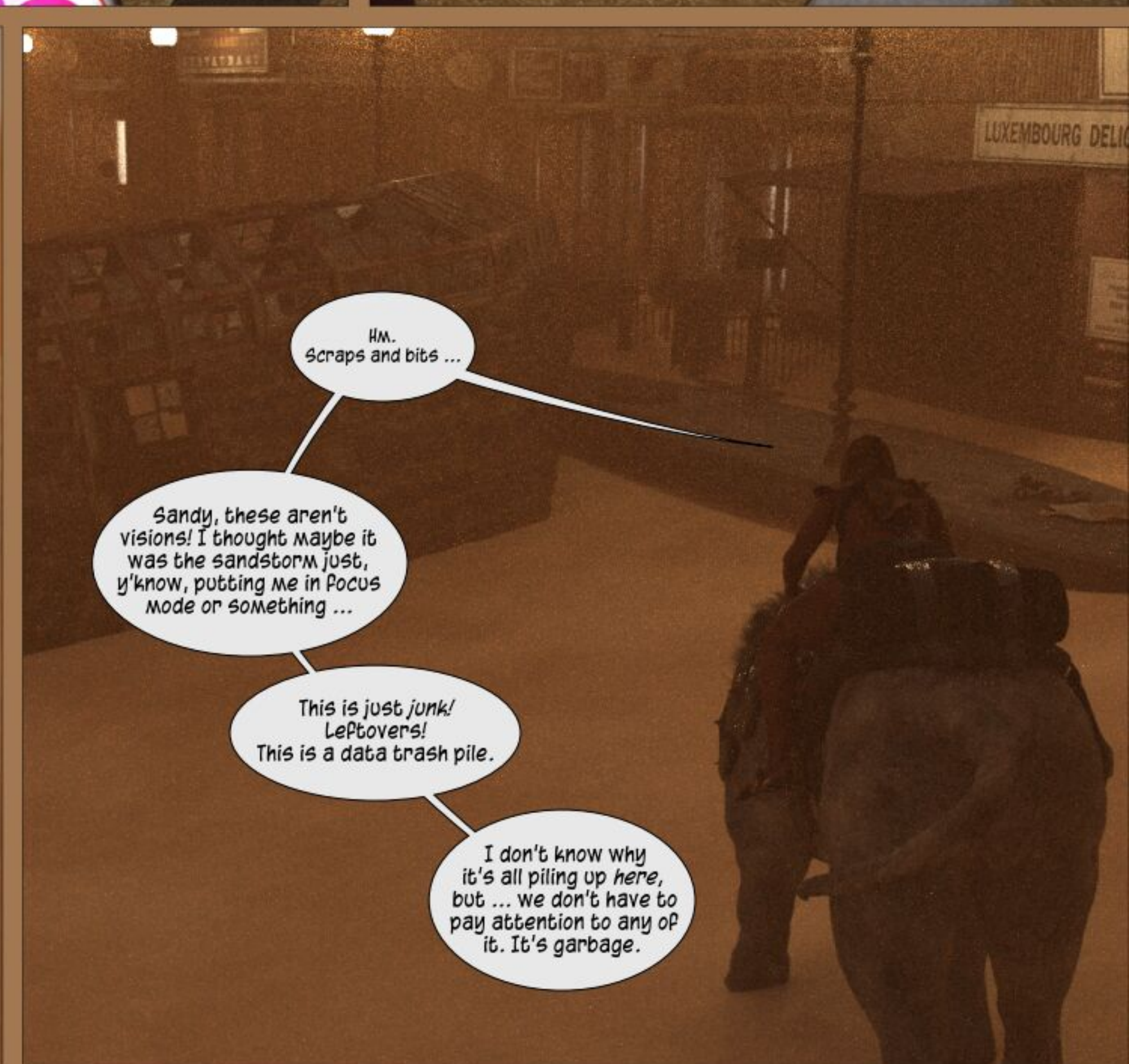
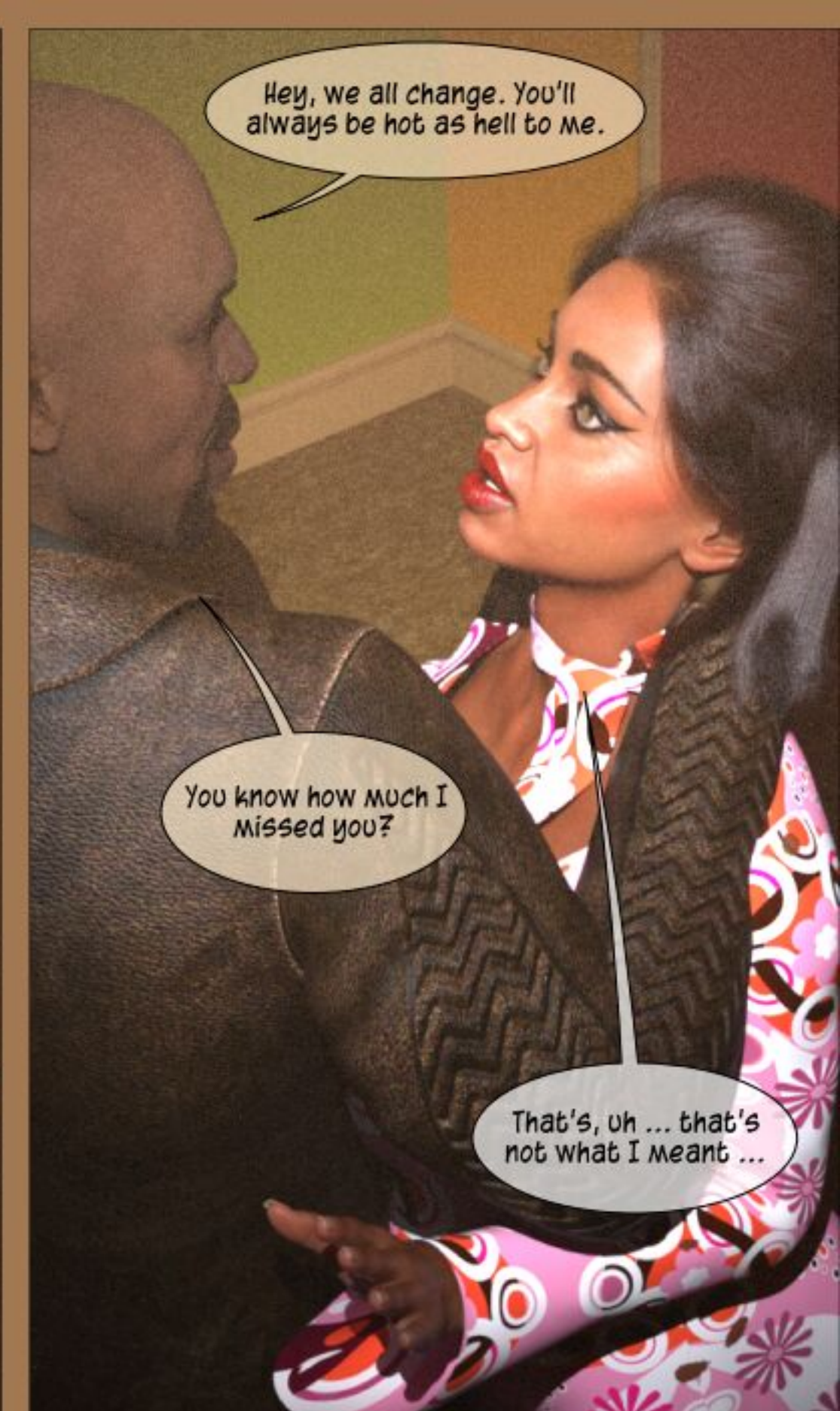
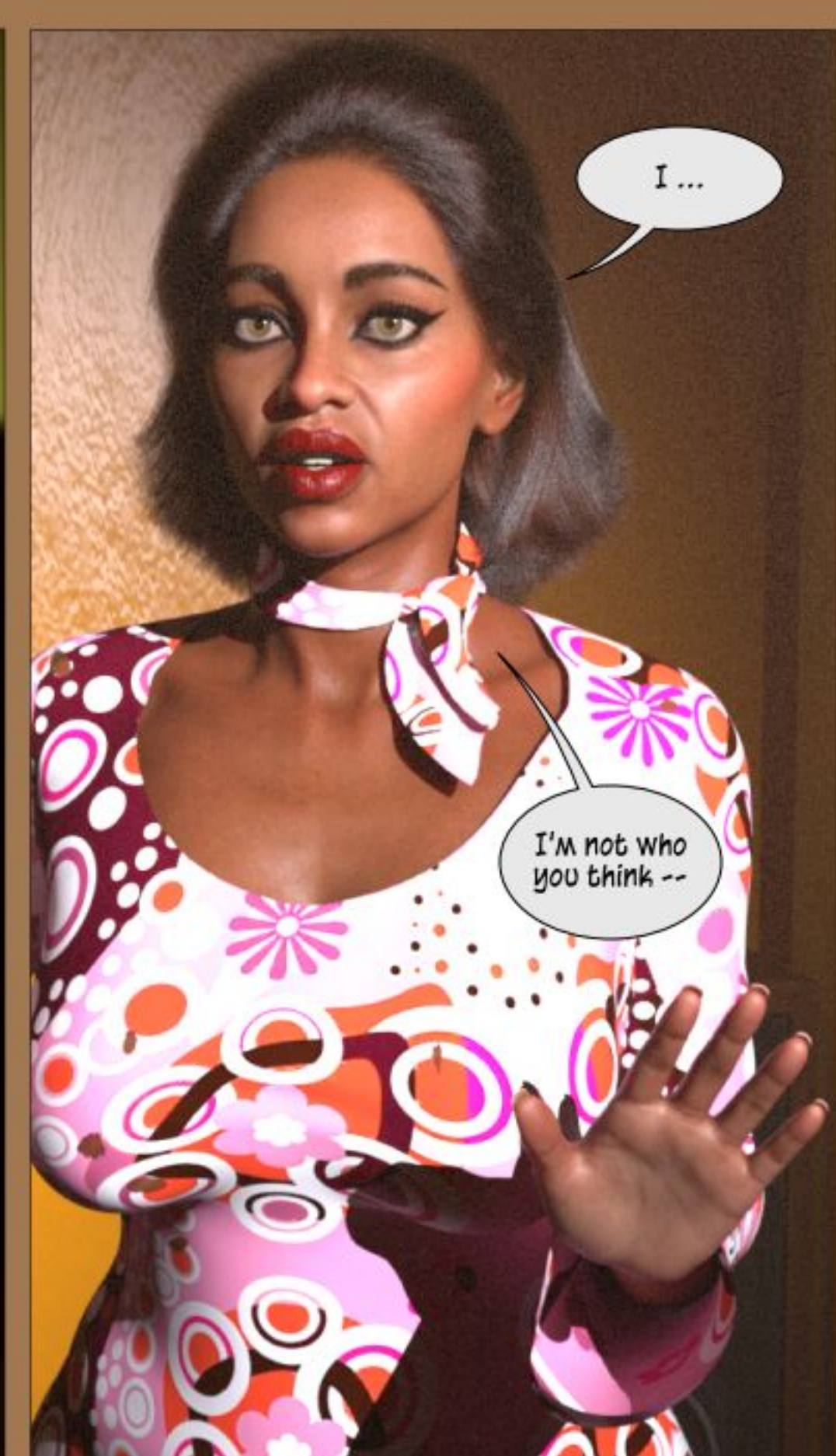
We don't know if we entered it together ... we don't know why we went in there ...

We don't know what our names were before we went in ... we don't remember anything about our pasts. We don't know how long we were in there. Everything got swept away.

I mean, if you want to forget yourself, I guess it could be useful.

MS. LEE'S ESTABLISHMENT, THE COBBLES.







Whew.
OK.
They're after somebody
else ... didn't even
notice us ...

I bet we could
sneak on across --



Go away!

Go AWAY!!



Huh.

Leave me alone!

She is not
part of this.

Sandy, you think you
can take a run at those
two? Give 'em the full
angry beast.



YAAAAAH!

That's right,
clear out!



leave me alone ...
-- sniff --
... everybody alwayth want
to Meth with Me ...

Prissy ...

... how did you even get
here? This chunk of scrap
didn't come from the Souk ...
this looks more like the
Cobbles ... and you're a long
way from either ...



Who ith
Prithy?

You are ...
at least, it's the only name I
ever heard for you ...

THERE IS NEVER ENOUGH SPACE TO EXPLAIN PRISY, BUT SHE WAS LAST SEEN IN #50.



I --

-- oh, goodness!
And here I am sitting
on this filthy street!
I'll ruin my dress!

Thank you so much ...
but now how do I get out
of this horrible place?

Uh ...
Well, can you remember
your recall?



... I guess
she could.

Y'know, I feel like
something shifted,
just then ...

Nothing to do
about it now,
though. I hope she
figures it out.

Let's get out of
here before the
meatheads decide
to come back.



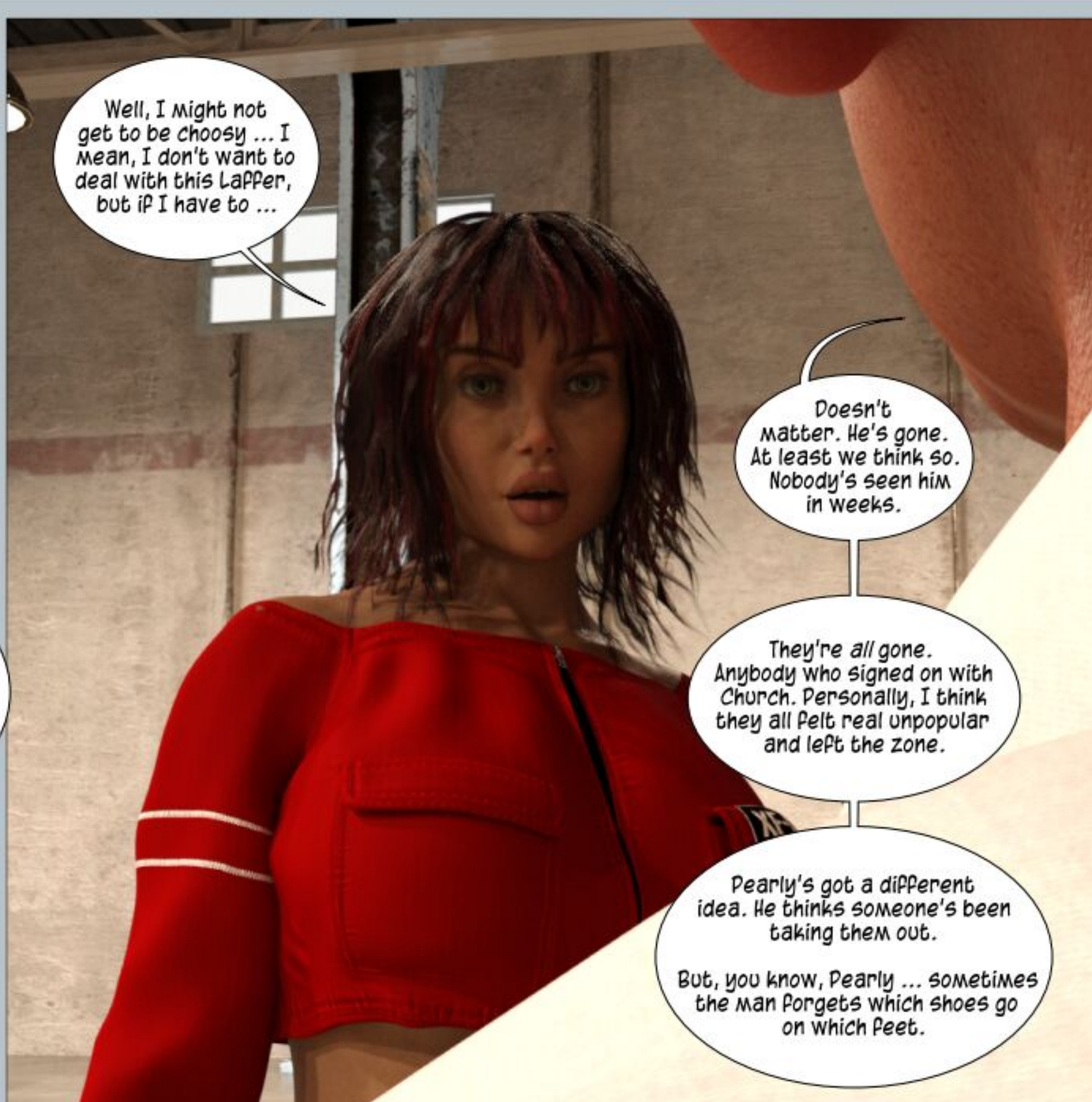
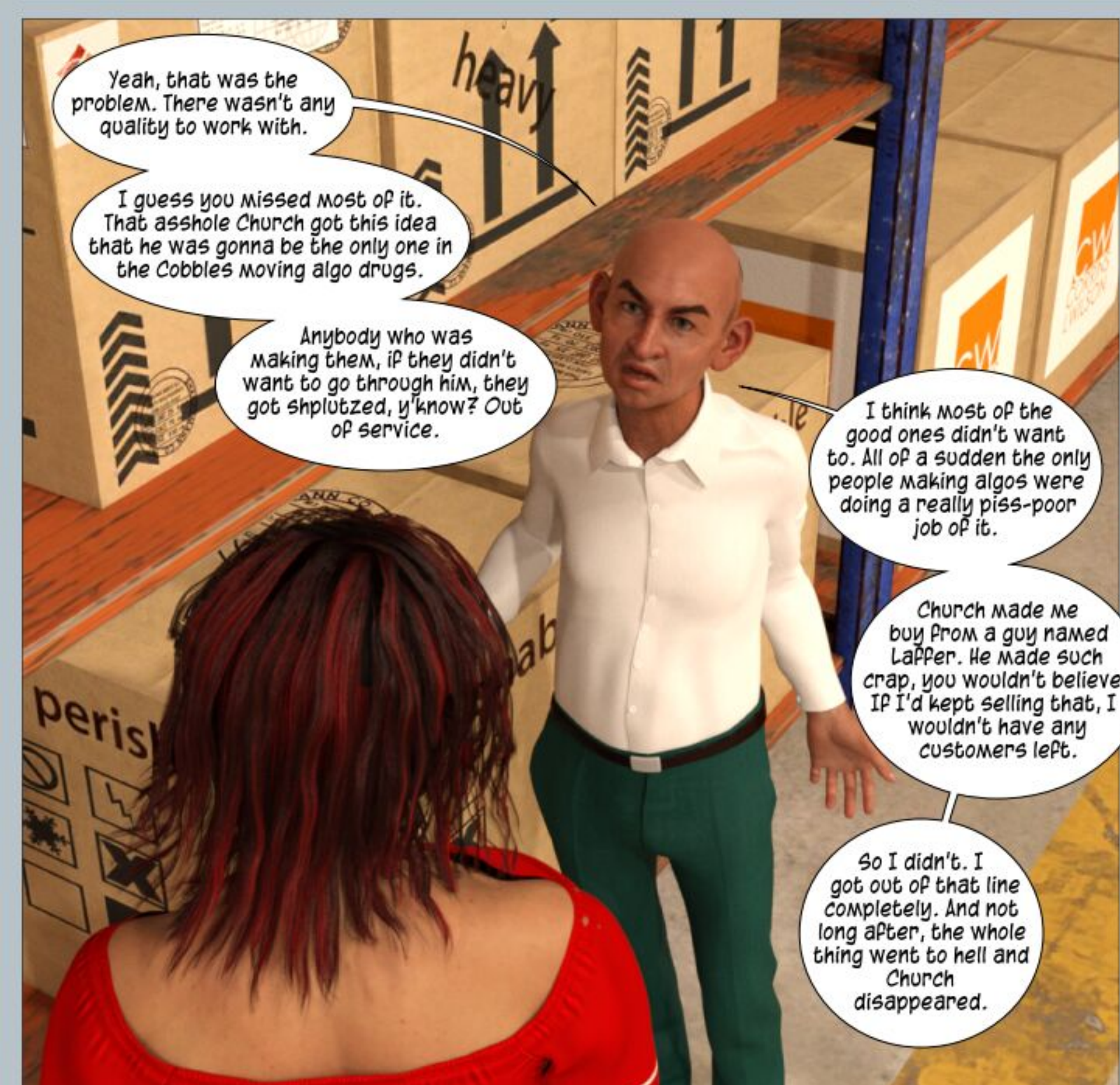
Wish someone
would come along and
tell me my name.

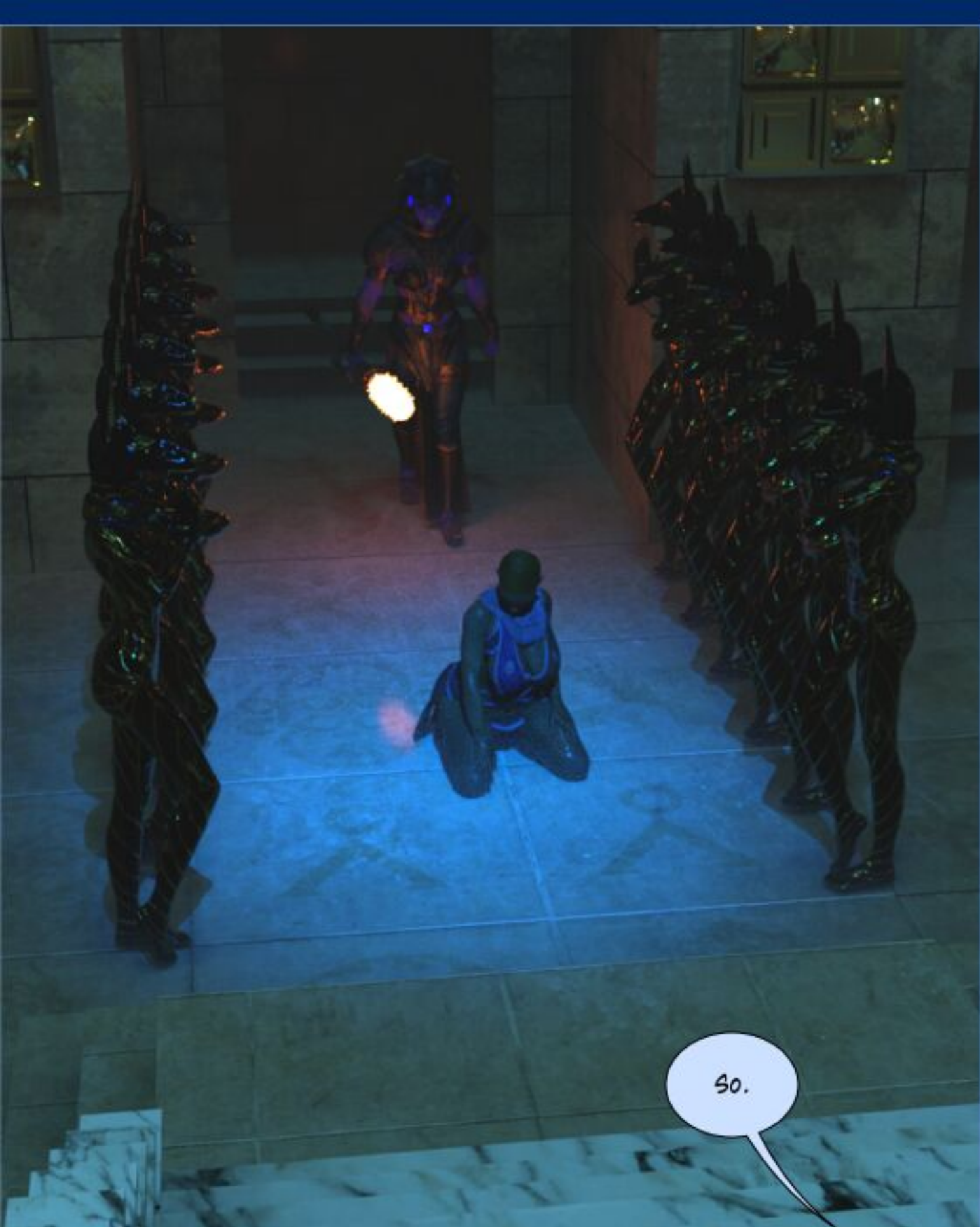
Hey, are we
getting to the end
already? It looks like
it's clearing, up
there ...

... and I see
something big ...



Oh, wow.





So.

It must have been a difficult road. Yet you endured it.

I didn't expect to see you again.

Why are you here? Why is it important for you to be here?



I ...

I don't know. I don't know anything.

But I have visions of you, sometimes. ... Often.

It feels like they're telling me I need to be here. That something is supposed to happen here.

I don't know what. I don't know why.



Hmm. You don't remember, do you?

Did this happen when you and the wisp separated? Did that leave this damage?

I'd ask how that came about, but I'm sure you wouldn't be able to tell me.

Prag!



Prag, this is ... hm. ... Lotus. We'll call you that, for now.

Find her a good room. She'll be staying with us for as long as she needs.

Get her some fresh clothes as well.

And a bath.



Imah, is that a good idea? What if she's here for ... well, revenge, for example?

She can hardly seek revenge if she can't remember why she'd want it.

And if she does remember?

Then we will act accordingly.

I've done her wrong, Nuri. I tried to give her a purpose. Instead I left her even further from one. I owe her this.

She's no threat at the moment. Let's move to something that might be.



You are a very strange creature.

Why have you chosen to make your path with her?

She has no hidden motivations. She doesn't even have any overt ones. But you ...

Let's see your true form, shall we?



... You shouldn't have been able to do that.

I can do anything I like.

No one else really understands that, no matter how often I tell them.

Why are you here? Her answer doesn't suffice for you. You're more complicated.

She needed to be protected! Guarded. It was important to her to get here, and she needed my help to do it. That's all.



So you insist you are the faithful companion, and nothing more?

Very well. Have it your way.

But if you're going to be her dog, then I think you should genuinely be a dog.

I don't trust your mind. We need to simplify it. Clear it out. You don't need all that to be a dog.



And I'm giving you a new look. A more appropriate one.

To help you fit into your role.

TEN DAYS LATER.

THE COBBLES, WHERE LEYNA IS FINALLY DOING SOMETHING SHE'S BEEN PUTTING OFF.



Now, you haven't been here at all, right?

Han't none need ...

Yeah. I've barely ever been here either. I try to avoid it.

I guess you should probably see it at least once, though.

Here just for that?

Well ... no. This can be a rough place, and I'm not a fighter. I hope nothing like that will happen, but if it does ...

I can definitely tell you that he will not be happy to see us. And he keeps muscle on hand.



What are you doing here?

I need to talk to you.

We don't have anything to talk about. Get out of my zone.

We're going to have a talk. You decide how you want to have it.

... By the way, Jex, this is ... uh ... the boss of the Cobbles.

Over there by the wall is Treece. I've never met her, but I've heard a fair bit about her.



-- sigh -- Treece, you're going to need to take a hike for a while. Private conversation.

Seriously?

'Cause if you get your ass kicked, I don't want you coming back later and saying I didn't do my job.

Won't be like that. She doesn't operate that way. Go on. Check back with me later this afternoon.



All right, I appreciate that. But ...

Why don't you just tell her? She's your only trusted employee but she still has no idea who you are?

Nobody here is supposed to know who I am. Bad enough that some of you clowns in Serenity know it. And now I guess you've told another one ...

Hey! Han't rat none.

She can keep a secret, Clayton. And I haven't told anyone but her, so far, even though I think there are a lot more people than that who have a need to know ...

OK, OK. What the hell do you want?

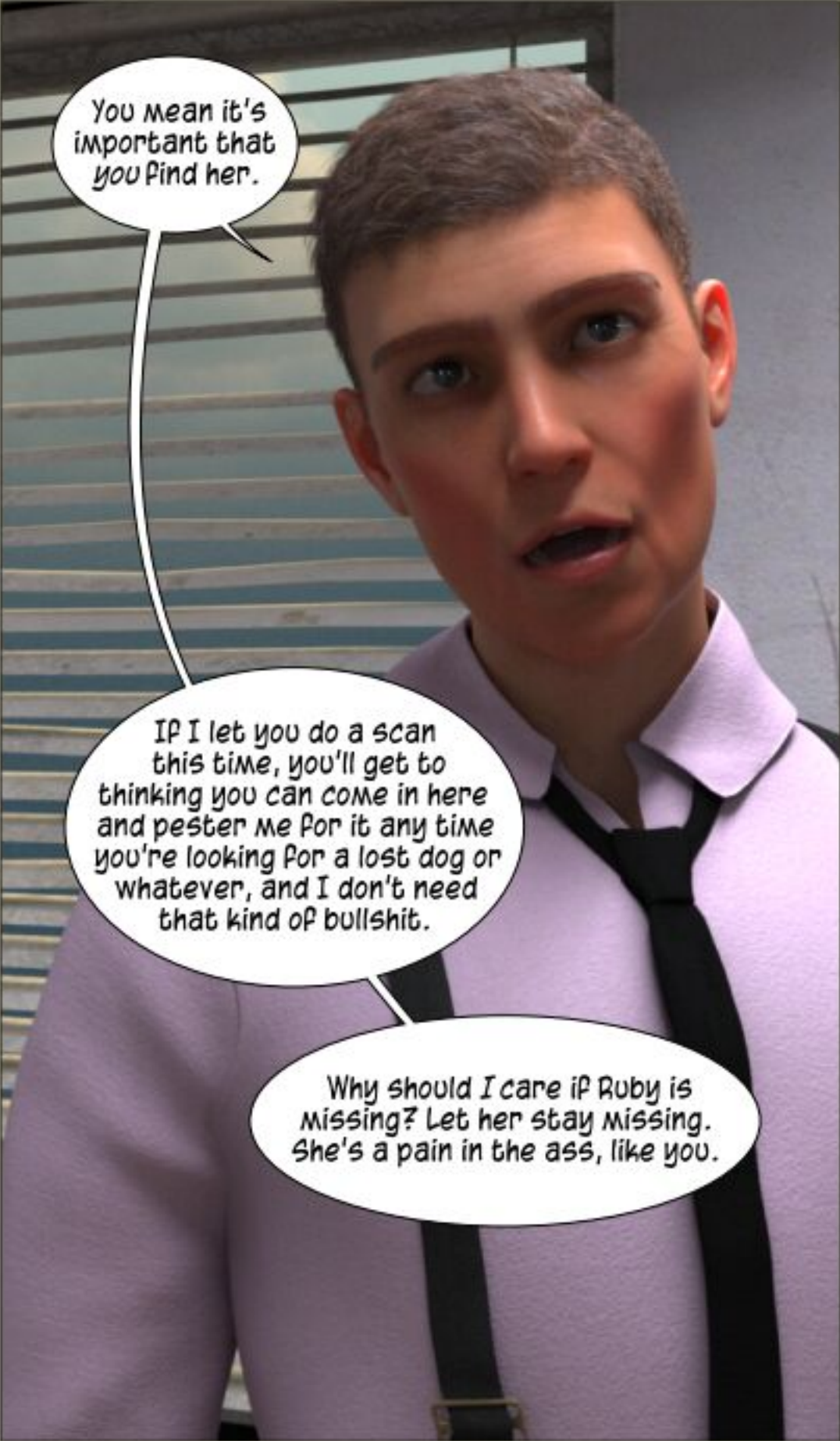


I need your authorization to do a block scan of the Cobbles.

I can do it right here in front of you, so you can see there's no trick. I'm only looking for one person, I'm not keeping any other data.

No way.

Clayton ... we've been trying to keep the word from getting out about this, but Ruby's missing. It's important that we find her!



You mean it's important that you find her.

If I let you do a scan this time, you'll get to thinking you can come in here and pester me for it any time you're looking for a lost dog or whatever, and I don't need that kind of bullshit.

Why should I care if Ruby is missing? Let her stay missing. She's a pain in the ass, like you.



I'm gonna point out that Ruby saved your ass. Whether you want to admit it or not.

Not to mention how much of the cleanup from Church's mess is still sitting around waiting for a cure -- in Serenity, because we were willing to take it on for you, because we are nice people, and nice people like to help each other out sometimes.

Yeah, well, I never claimed to be nice.



Flag Ruby here, know spill.

Oh, that's a good point!

Huh?

She means that if a scan does find Ruby in your zone, then you know to throw her out.

I mean, I'm sure you don't want her hanging around ...

OK. Fine. But you're going to do me a favor.

I have a few other people I want you to look for, while you're in there.

... you don't know how.



When would I have learned that? Who the fuck would have taught me?

The whole family refused to admit I existed for years, and then as soon as they did, none of them wanted to have anything to do with me!

I feel like it was you that didn't --

-- never mind. Point taken.

Let me set up a console.



ABOUT HALF AN HOUR LATER.

Well, Ruby isn't here, so you don't have to worry about that.

Piet ... is not in the Cobbles ...

... and I don't see Church, Cort, or Laffer either.

So they've all skipped?

Unless they're sufficiently altered that they're no longer under that identity.

What, like disguised?

No ... well, yes, but it'd have to be more than a disguise. You'd have to really be someone else. It's hard to do.

More likely scenarios would be, like, amnesia, or someone being mentally controlled, or ... basically, not in their right mind.

Literally not themselves.



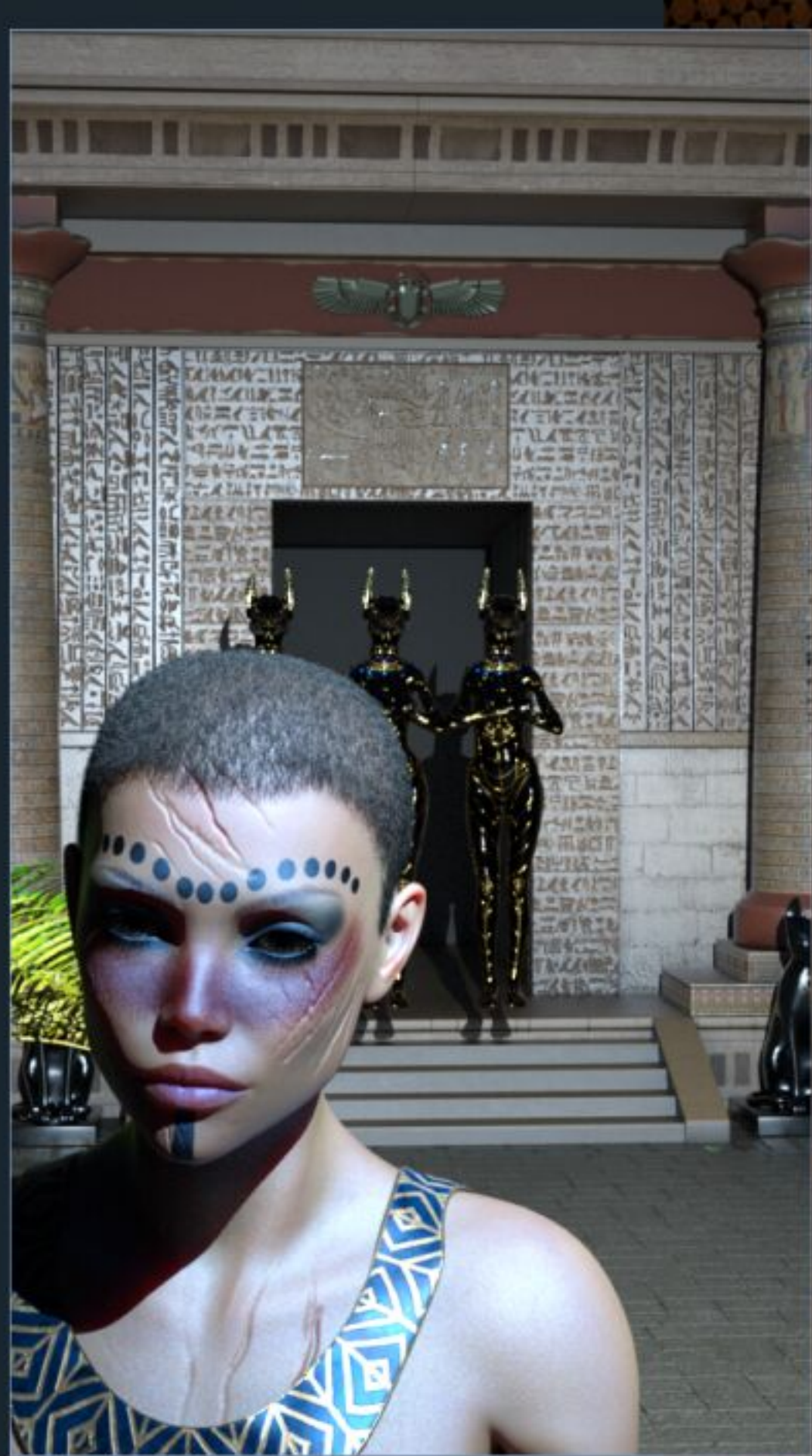
Seems to me like your scan isn't real useful, then.

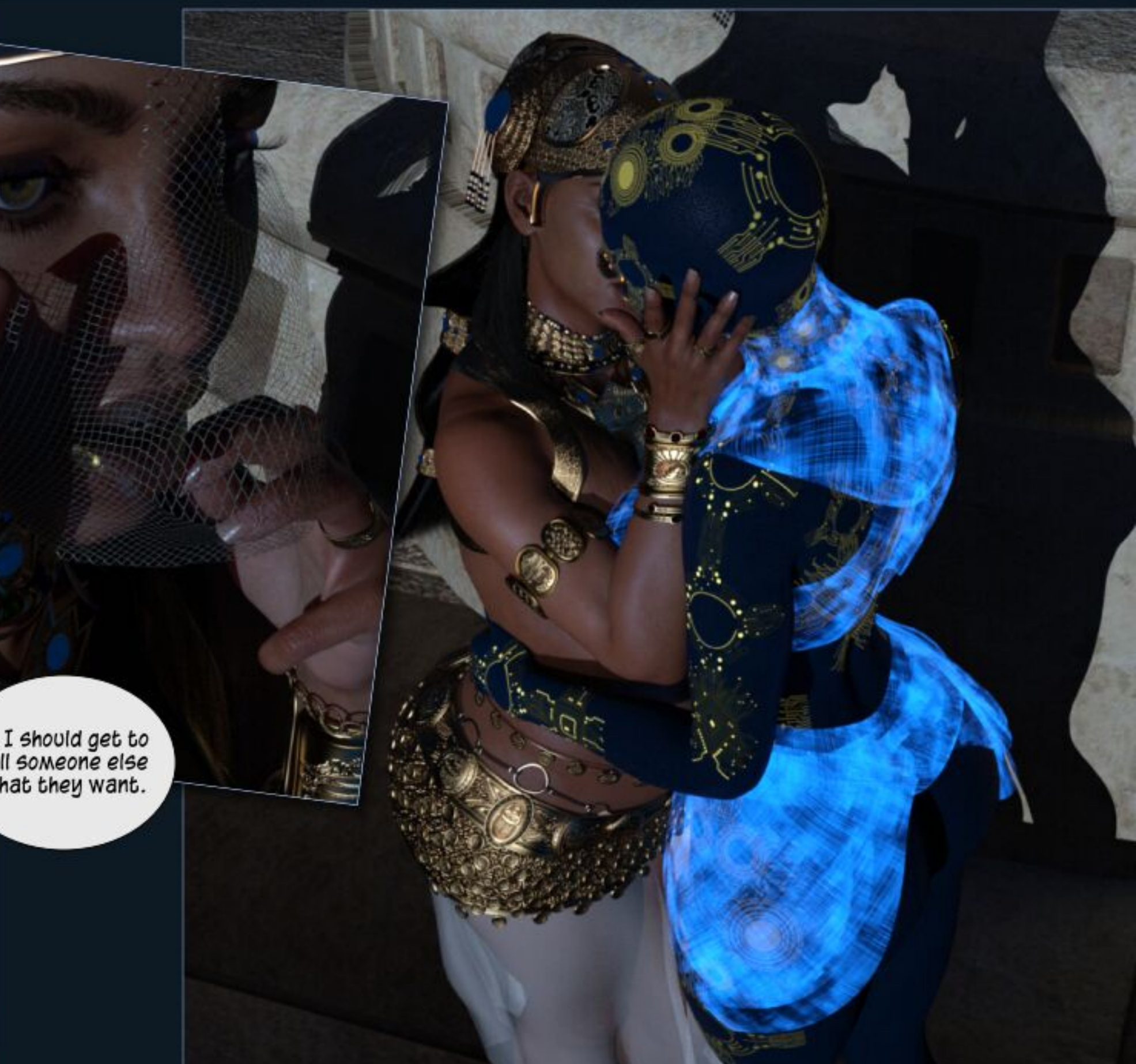
I mean, if Ruby's missing, the way she sticks her nose into everything, it's a lot more likely that she's out of her mind somewhere than just hiding. Unless she got sick of putting up with all of you.

Thanks a lot. I'm just trying to clean out the more obvious possibilities.

Yeah? And what do you do once you scan all the zones and she's not in any of them?

... I'll figure that out when I get there.











Oh no.
Oh no.

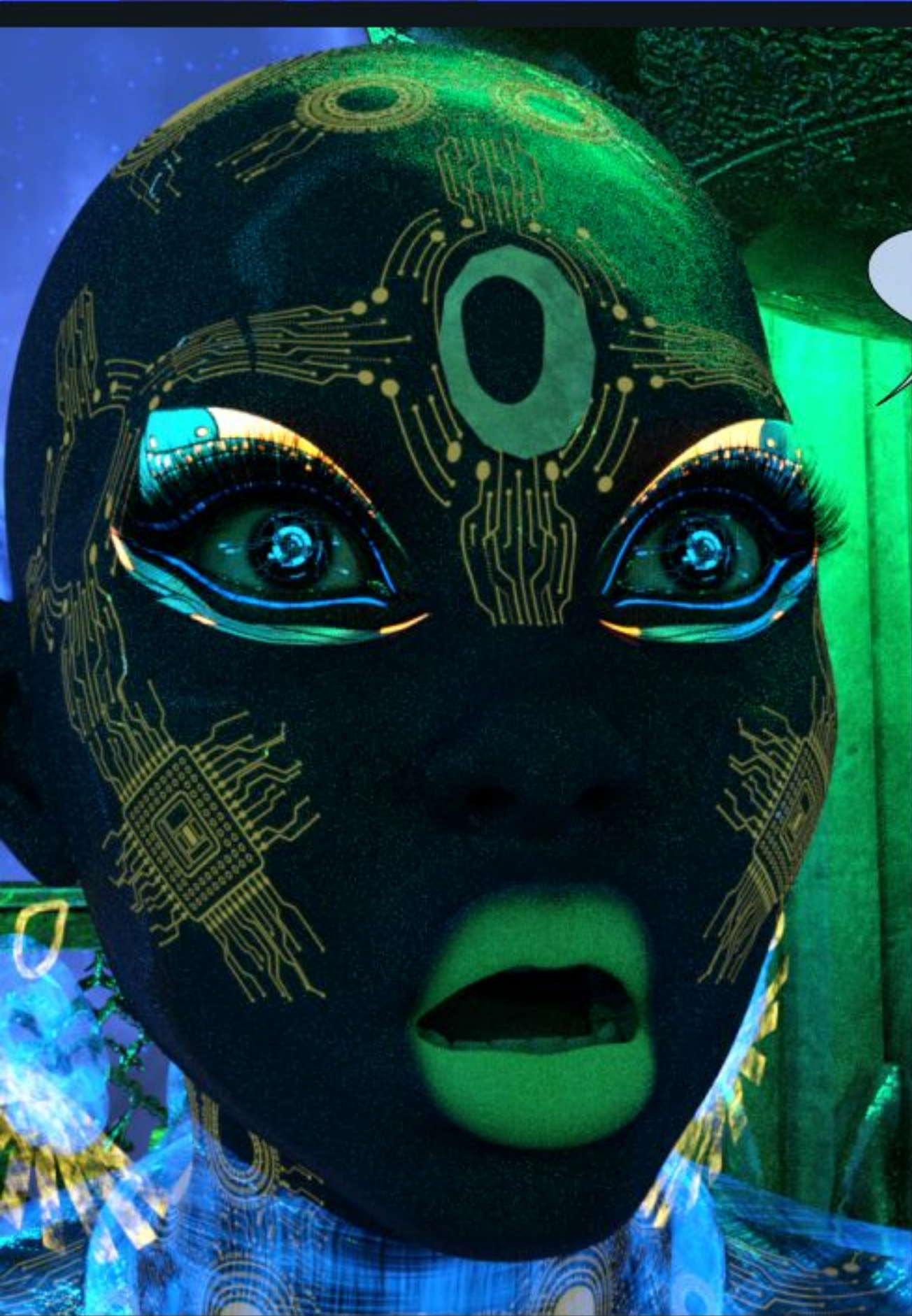


Why take it like this?
They deserve it ... they all
deserve it ...

Been holding back
for too long ...
no! ...
no, it's not right ...

... have to be better
than that ... have to be
better than them ...

Weak!
That's weak.
Who are you protecting?
Who is worth it?



No!!



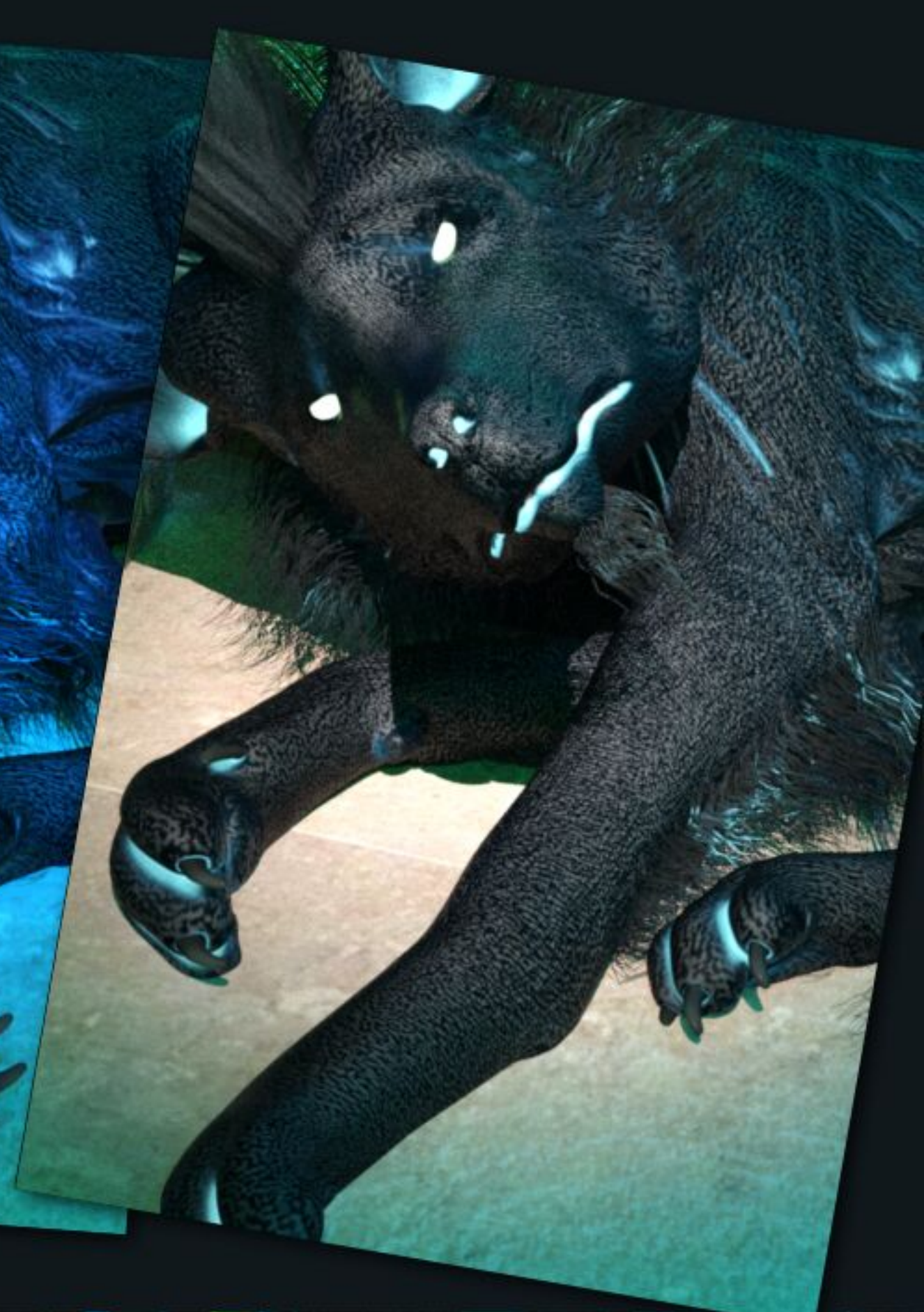
no ...
I didn't mean to ...
I'm ...

I've got to fix this ...
I can undo it ... I --

No!
What good is power,
then? You think you can
care about these idiots
and still --

It has to be fixed!

I won't do it!
Let them all stay
eclipsed forever --



... Mph?



Sandy?

What happened?
Why do I feel so weird?
My brain's all ... sludgy ...

Did she do this?
Where is she?

