

# MONSTRESS



MARJORIE LIU • SANA TAKEDA

ISSUE 4



ISSUE #4

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MARJORIE LIU • SANA TAKEDA

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**THE STORY SO FAR...**In the aftermath of a terrible war, the Federation of Man is still in conflict with supernatural Arcanic hybrids, whose bodies are harvested for lilium, a powerful substance coveted by a human religious order called the Cumaea. Maika Halfwolf, an Arcanic teen, is on the run after breaking into a Cumaeen stronghold, murdering one of its elders, and stealing from her a photograph and a fragment of an ancient and powerful mask, both of which might provide clues about the murder of Maika's mother.

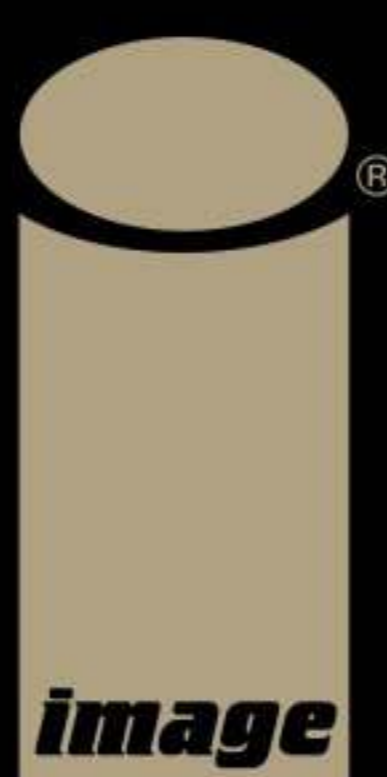
In the wake of her escape, Maika has been hunted by Federation soldiers and Cumaeen Inquisitrixes alike, but she has fought them all off with the help of her greatest secret, and greatest burden: a creature called a Monstrum that lives inside of her and hungers for flesh. With the help of her two companions, a young Arcanic girl named Kippa and an enigmatic cat named Master Ren, Maika has turned south in search of answers about her past, her present, and the monster under her skin.

MONSTRESS CREATED BY MARJORIE LIU & SANA TAKEDA  
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HAHAHAH!!

YOU'RE  
OVERREACTING,  
MY DARLING  
WARLORD.

MY *GENTLE*  
SWORD OF  
THE EAST.

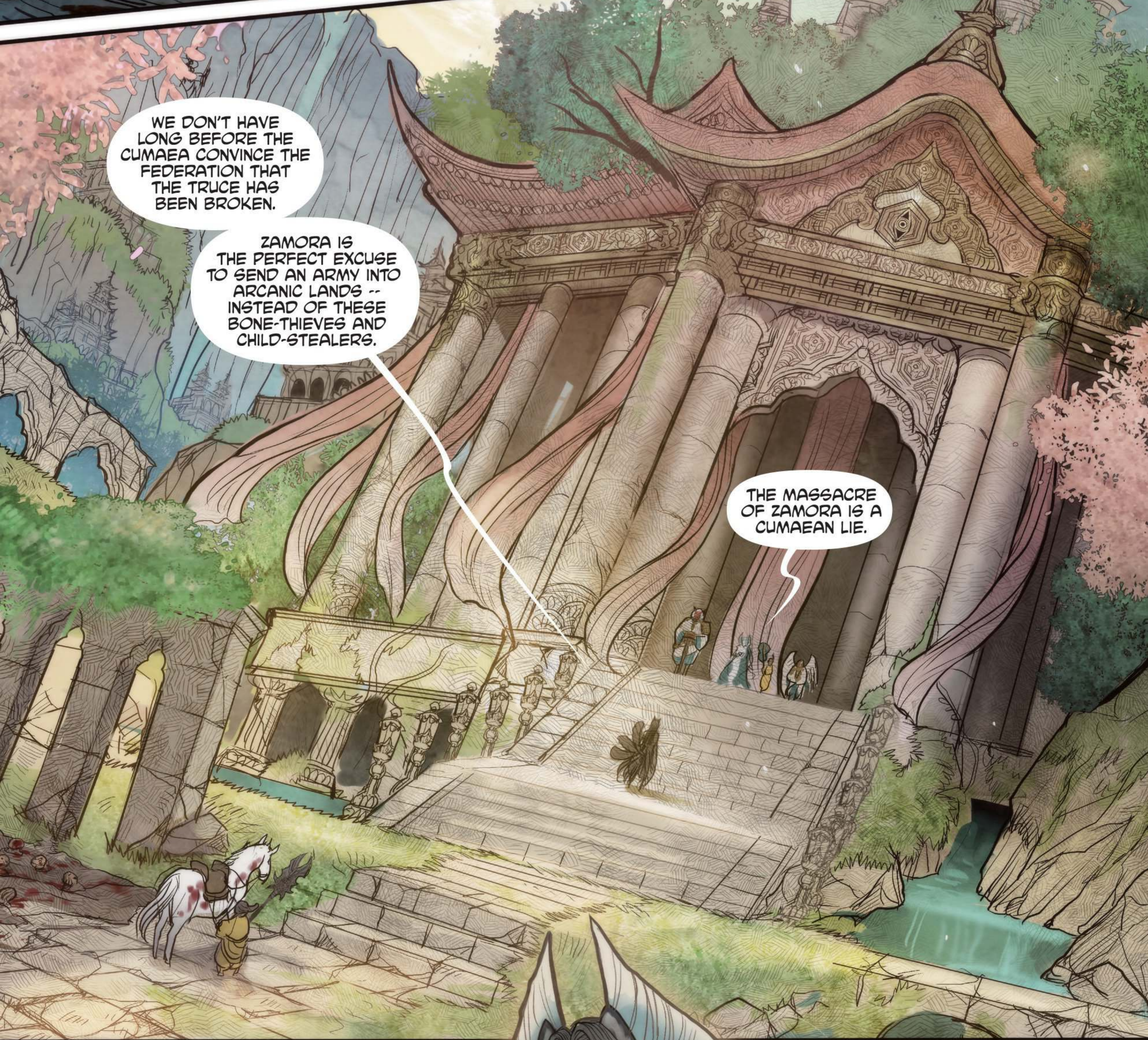
DAMN YOU,  
I'M NOT A GRAVE  
ROBBER! I DIDN'T  
STEAL THOSE  
BONES --

SPLURRTCH

NO, I AM NOT  
OVERREACTING.



OUR TIME  
HAS RUN  
OUT.



WE DON'T HAVE  
LONG BEFORE THE  
CUMAEA CONVINCES THE  
FEDERATION THAT  
THE TRUCE HAS  
BEEN BROKEN.

ZAMORA IS  
THE PERFECT EXCUSE  
TO SEND AN ARMY INTO  
ARCANIC LANDS --  
INSTEAD OF THESE  
BONE-THIEVES AND  
CHILD-STEALERS.

THE MASSACRE  
OF ZAMORA IS A  
CUMAEAN LIE.



NOT EVERY  
HUMAN IN THE  
FEDERATION IS A  
FOOL, OR OUR ENEMY.  
I HAVE HOPE THIS  
WILL NOT TURN  
AGAINST US.

HOPE WON'T  
SAVE YOU FROM  
A CUMAEAN  
HACKSAW, OH  
HONORED QUEEN  
OF WOLVES.

MAG! ANY  
WORD YET FROM  
THE SCOUTS?



NO, MY WARLORD. NO EAGLES HAVE RETURNED. NOR THE TALON OF CATS WE HIRED.

THE DUSK COURT REMAINS CLOSED TO US. THEIR SILENCE IS NOT YET BROKEN.

COWARDS.

HIDING WITH THEIR ARMY WHILE THE REST OF US BLEED FOR THEM.



THOSE FOOLS WILL BLEED, TOO.

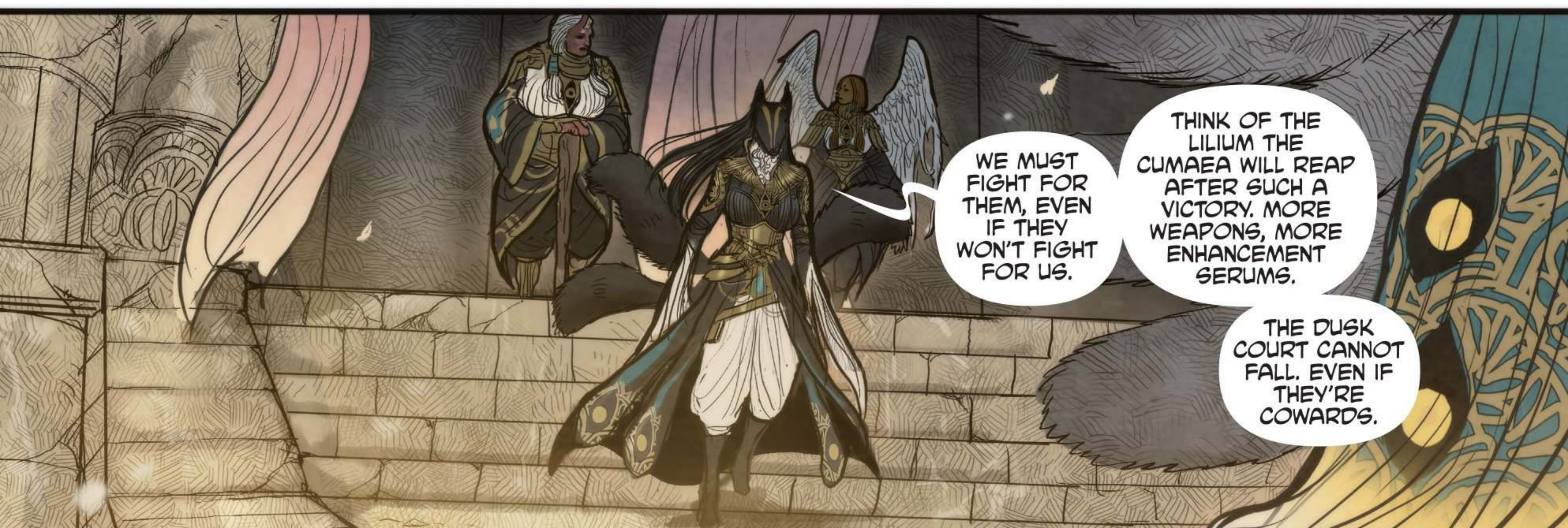
MARK IT, ALIA. THE FEDERATION AND THE CUMAEA WILL CUT RIGHT THROUGH THEM ON THEIR WAY TO US.

SERVES THEM RIGHT.



NO.

WE CAN'T LET THAT HAPPEN.



WE MUST FIGHT FOR THEM, EVEN IF THEY WON'T FIGHT FOR US.

THINK OF THE LILIUM THE CUMAEA WILL REAP AFTER SUCH A VICTORY. MORE WEAPONS, MORE ENHANCEMENT SERUMS.

THE DUSK COURT CANNOT FALL. EVEN IF THEY'RE COWARDS.



LOOK AT YOU.  
PRETENDING NOT  
TO HAVE A CARE IN  
THE WORLD.

HOW  
MUST IT FEEL  
FOR YOU AND  
THE OTHER  
ANCIENTS?

FOR A  
THOUSAND YEARS  
YOUR POWERS HAVE  
FADED. YOU'RE ALL  
WEAK. PRACTICALLY  
MORTAL.



ALL YOU HAVE LEFT  
ARE THE SWORDS OF  
YOUR HYBRID CHILDREN.  
CHILDREN WHO DIED FOR  
YOU -- THOUSANDS UPON  
THOUSANDS OF THEM -- SO  
THAT YOU CAN STAND HERE  
TODAY AND CONTINUE  
PRETENDING YOU'RE  
ABOVE IT ALL.

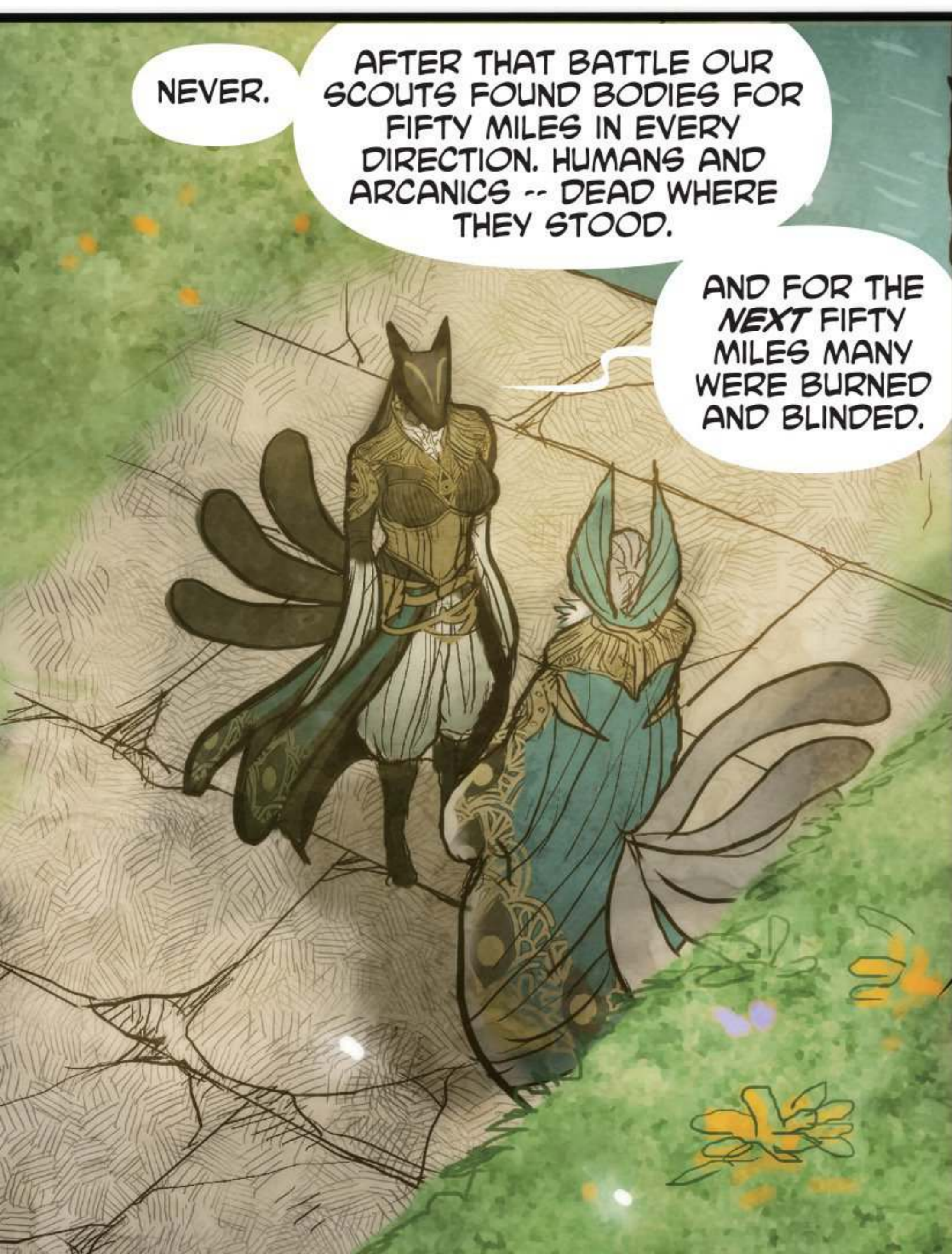
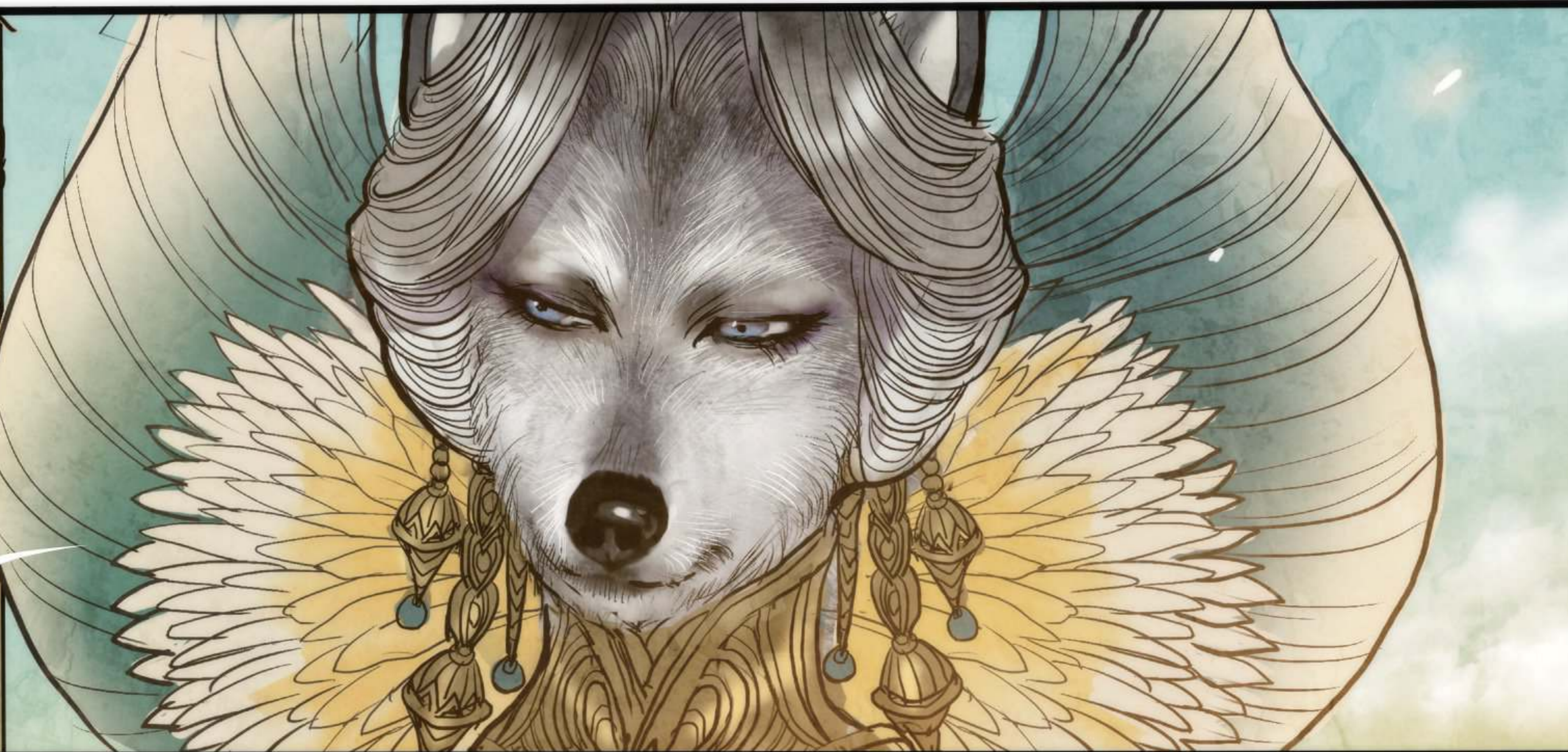
AND YOU'RE  
NOT. YOU'RE  
MEAT LIKE THE  
REST OF US.



THE ANCESTRALS  
CHOSE WELL WHEN  
THEY MARKED YOU  
AS OUR WARLORD.  
BUT THAT DOESN'T  
MAKE YOU LESS A  
FOOL.

YOU'D BE WISE  
TO LISTEN TO  
THIS OLD PIECE  
OF MEAT. ON  
ONE THING, AT  
LEAST.

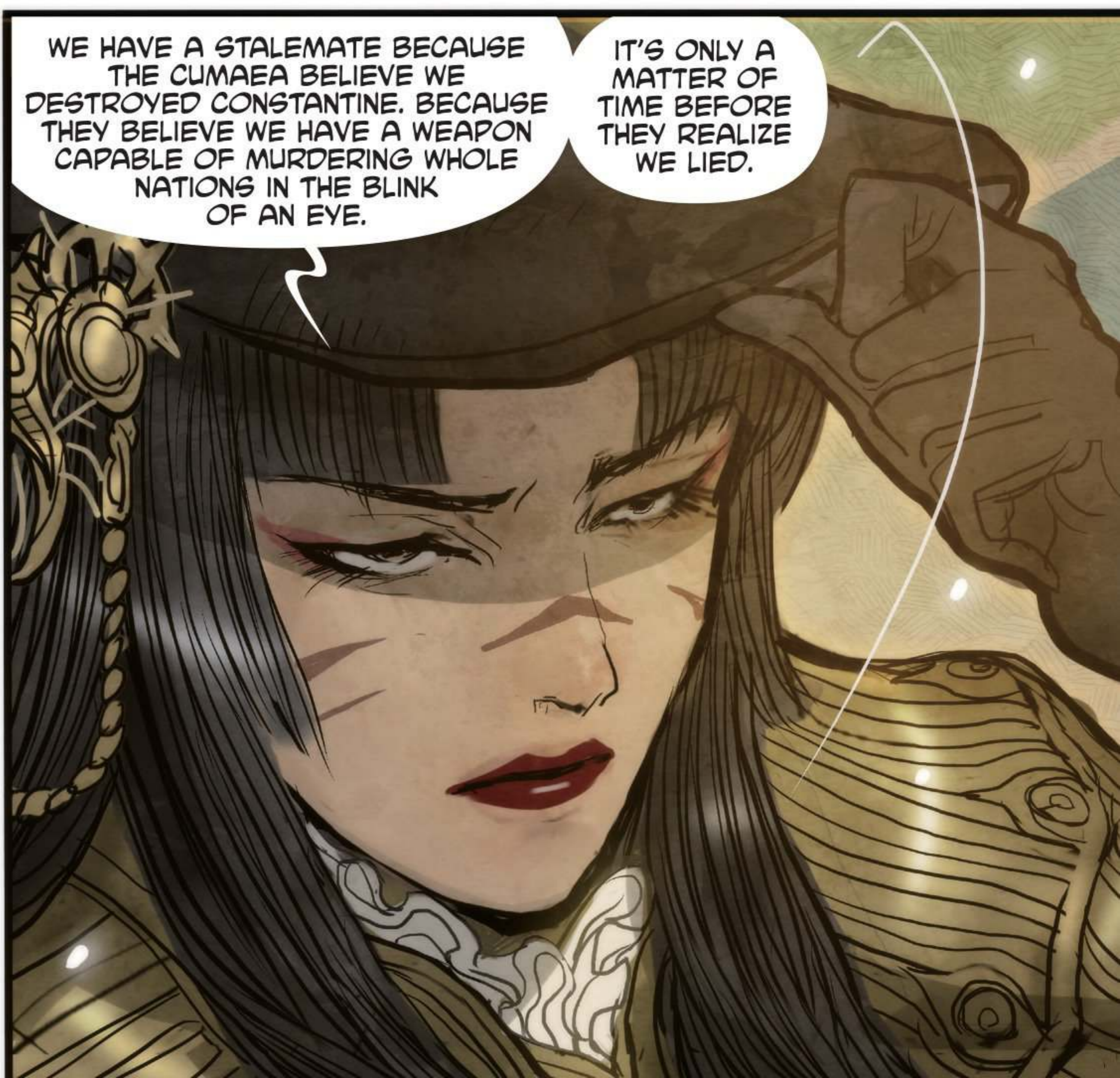
STOP  
SEARCHING  
FOR WHAT  
DESTROYED  
CONSTANTINE.



NEVER.

AFTER THAT BATTLE OUR  
SCOUTS FOUND BODIES FOR  
FIFTY MILES IN EVERY  
DIRECTION. HUMANS AND  
ARCANICS -- DEAD WHERE  
THEY STOOD.

AND FOR THE  
NEXT FIFTY  
MILES MANY  
WERE BURNED  
AND BLINDED.



WE HAVE A STALEMATE BECAUSE  
THE CUMAEA BELIEVE WE  
DESTROYED CONSTANTINE. BECAUSE  
THEY BELIEVE WE HAVE A WEAPON  
CAPABLE OF MURDERING WHOLE  
NATIONS IN THE BLINK  
OF AN EYE.

IT'S ONLY A  
MATTER OF  
TIME BEFORE  
THEY REALIZE  
WE LIED.

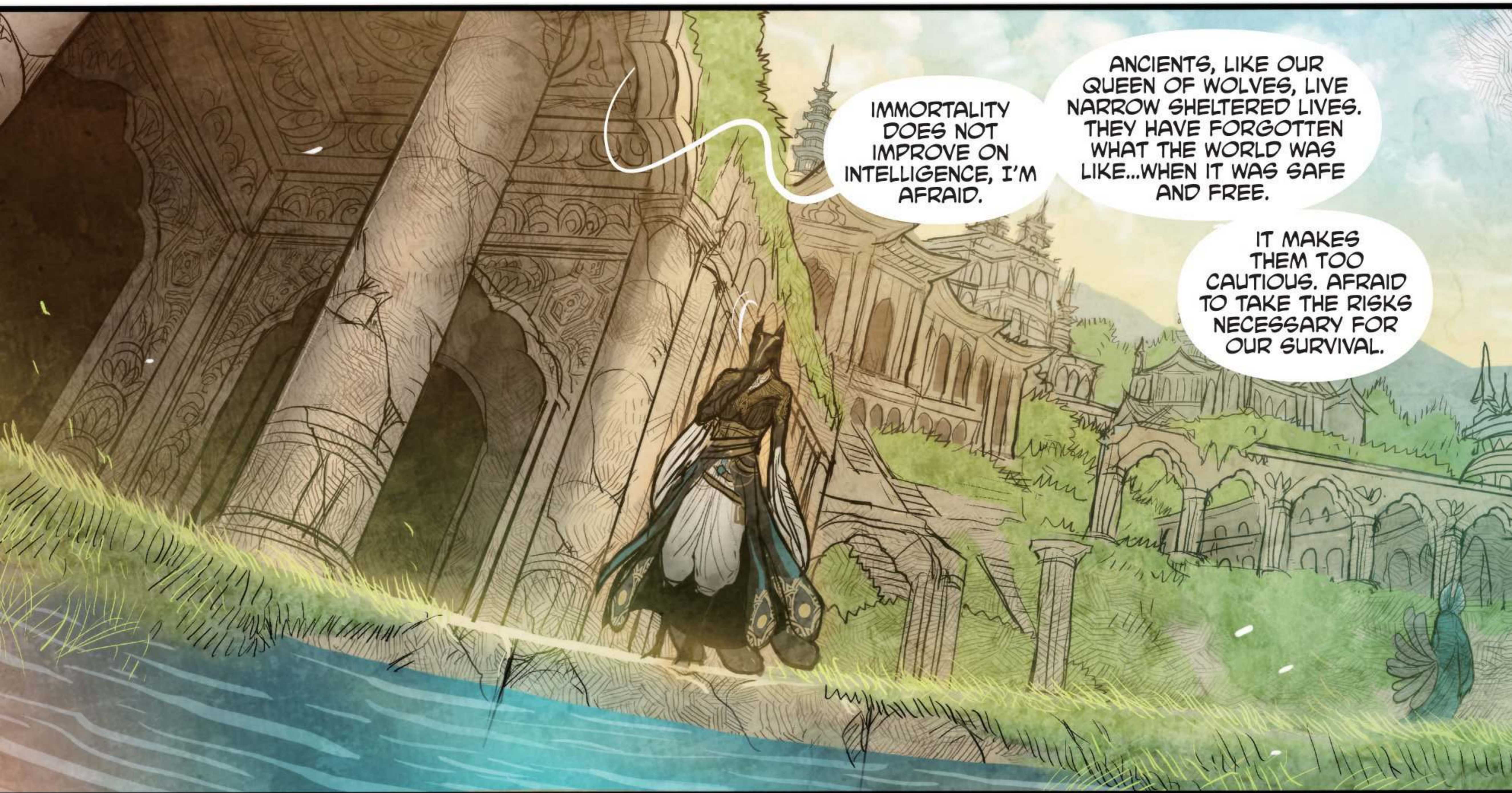


HAS IT OCCURRED  
TO YOU... THAT THING  
MIGHT BE BETTER  
LEFT UNFOUND?

THAT IT  
POSES A  
RISK GREATER TO  
US THAN EVEN THE  
WITCH-NUNS?

YOU  
SHOULD  
GO NOW.

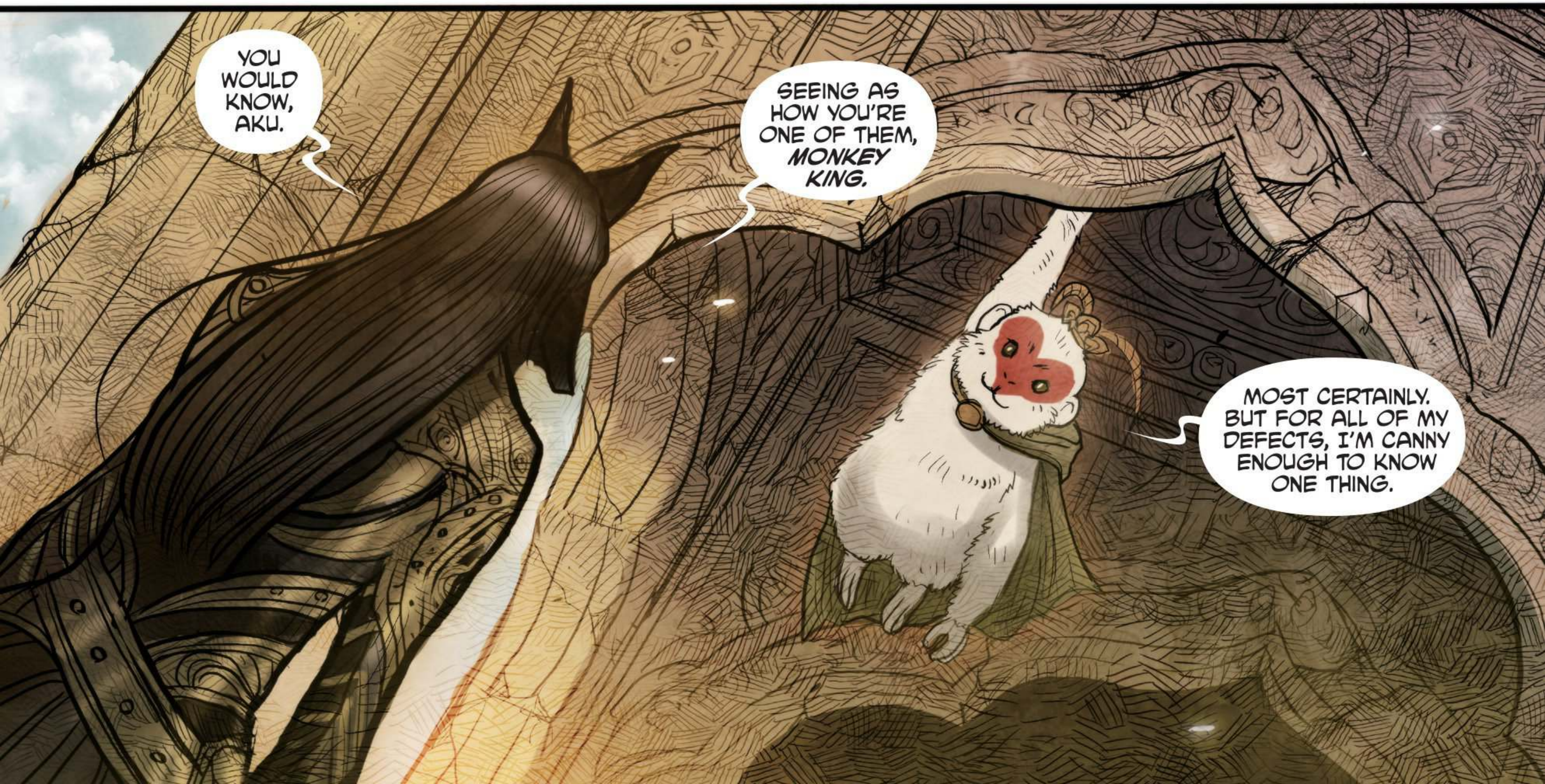
ENJOY  
YOUR  
TEA.



IMMORTALITY  
DOES NOT  
IMPROVE ON  
INTELLIGENCE, I'M  
AFRAID.

ANCIENTS, LIKE OUR  
QUEEN OF WOLVES, LIVE  
NARROW SHELTERED LIVES.  
THEY HAVE FORGOTTEN  
WHAT THE WORLD WAS  
LIKE... WHEN IT WAS SAFE  
AND FREE.

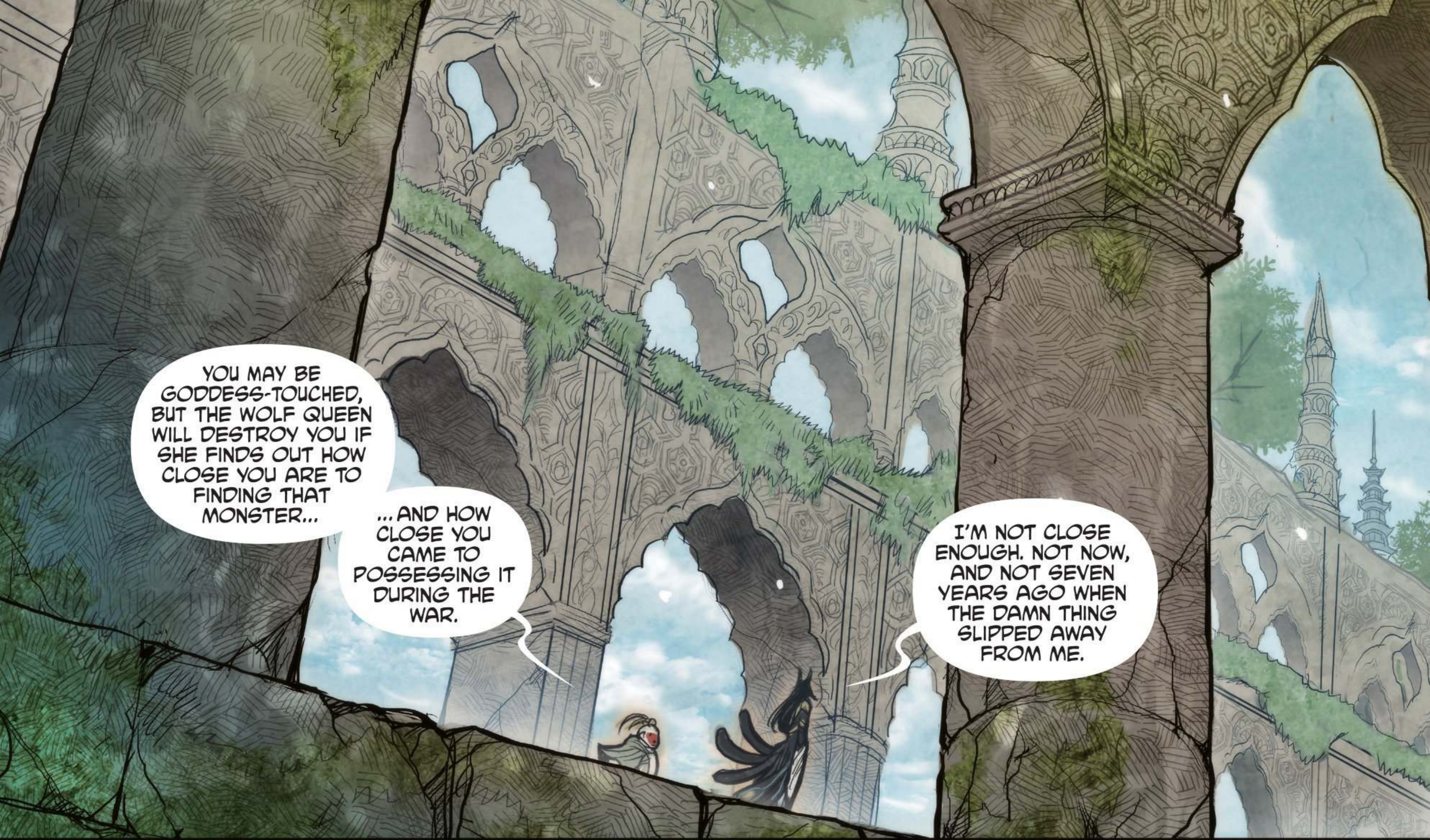
IT MAKES  
THEM TOO  
CAUTIOUS. AFRAID  
TO TAKE THE RISKS  
NECESSARY FOR  
OUR SURVIVAL.



YOU  
WOULD  
KNOW,  
AKU.

SEEING AS  
HOW YOU'RE  
ONE OF THEM,  
**MONKEY  
KING.**

MOST CERTAINLY.  
BUT FOR ALL OF MY  
DEFECTS, I'M CANNY  
ENOUGH TO KNOW  
ONE THING.



YOU MAY BE  
GODDESS-TOUCHED,  
BUT THE WOLF QUEEN  
WILL DESTROY YOU IF  
SHE FINDS OUT HOW  
CLOSE YOU ARE TO  
FINDING THAT  
MONSTER...

...AND HOW  
CLOSE YOU  
CAME TO  
POSSESSING IT  
DURING THE  
WAR.

I'M NOT CLOSE  
ENOUGH. NOT NOW,  
AND NOT SEVEN  
YEARS AGO WHEN  
THE DAMN THING  
SLIPPED AWAY  
FROM ME.



YOU'VE BEEN  
CLOSER THAN  
ANYONE IN A  
THOUSAND  
YEARS.

WELL, EXCEPT  
FOR YOUR  
SISTER, OF  
COURSE.



MY  
APOLOGIES.  
I FORGOT  
MYSELF.

NO. YOU  
DIDN'T.



MY LADY  
WARLORD...

...YOU DISCOVERED  
SURVIVORS FROM THE  
HEART OF THE BLAST,  
WHEN NO ONE ELSE  
COULD.



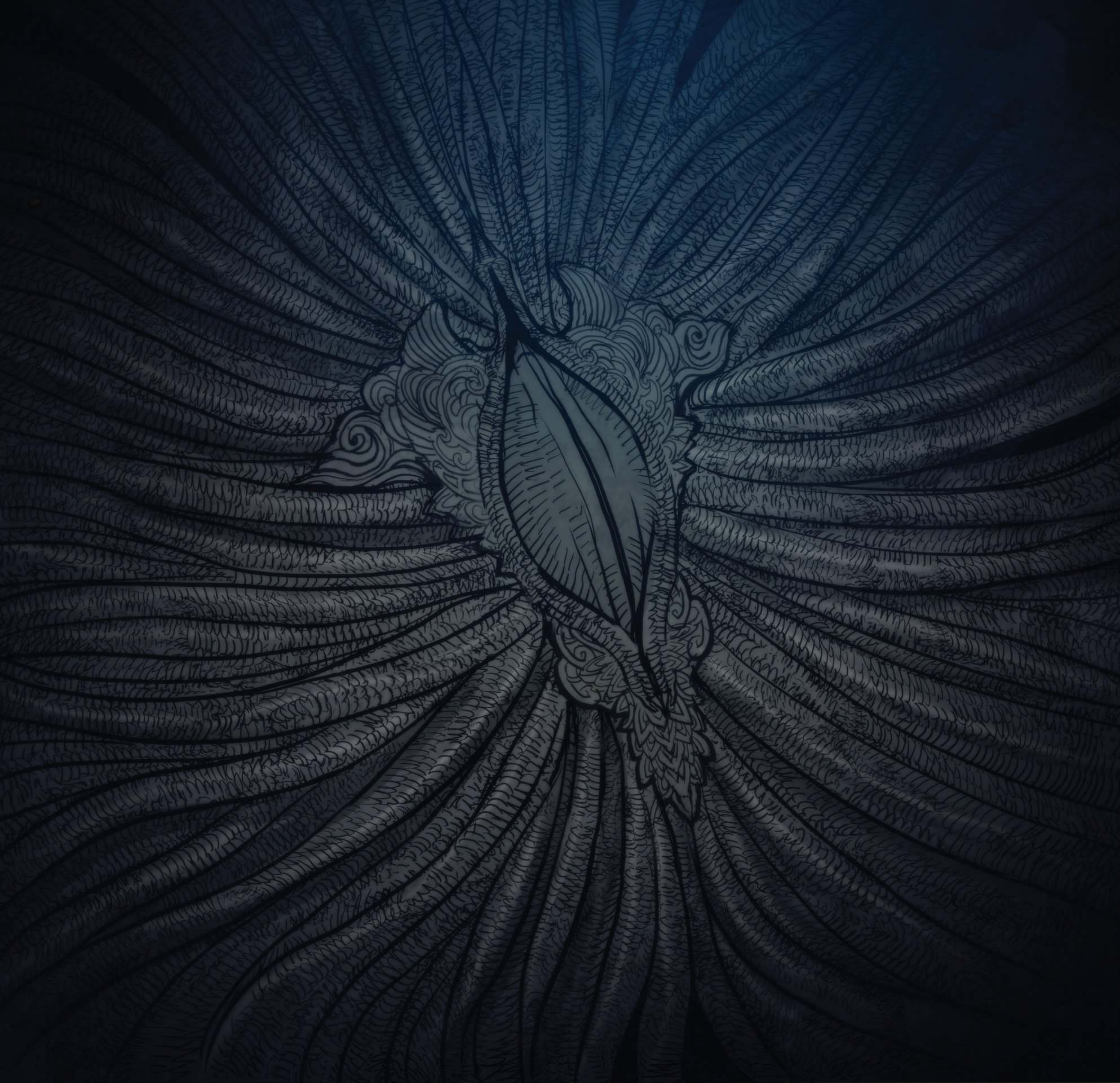
EIGHT ARCANIC  
CHILDREN WHO  
WALKED AWAY, WITHOUT  
A SCRATCH, FROM  
THE CONSTANTINE  
EXPLOSION.

YOU  
HAVE  
SIX OF  
THEM.



IF THEIR BODIES  
WON'T TELL US  
WHAT HAPPENED  
THAT DAY... AND  
WHO RELEASED THE  
MONSTER...

... MAYBE  
THEIR  
GHOSTS  
WILL.





I  
CANNOT...  
SLEEP.

NOT A  
SLEEP...DEEP  
ENOUGH...FOR  
DREAMS.



CURSE...  
THAT  
MASK.

CURSE THE  
CHILD...FOR  
FINDING IT.



AND  
YOU...



HAS IT BEEN...  
SO LONG...THAT  
EVEN YOUR FACE  
IS HIDDEN  
FROM ME?

HAVE I...  
FORGOTTEN  
SO MUCH?



I THOUGHT...  
I COULD KEEP  
YOU ALIVE...  
FOREVER.

WE  
WERE...  
BOTH  
FOOLS.



AND  
NOW... I AM  
LOST.



AGAIN?

NO!

IS  
NOTHING...  
OF MINE...  
SACRED?



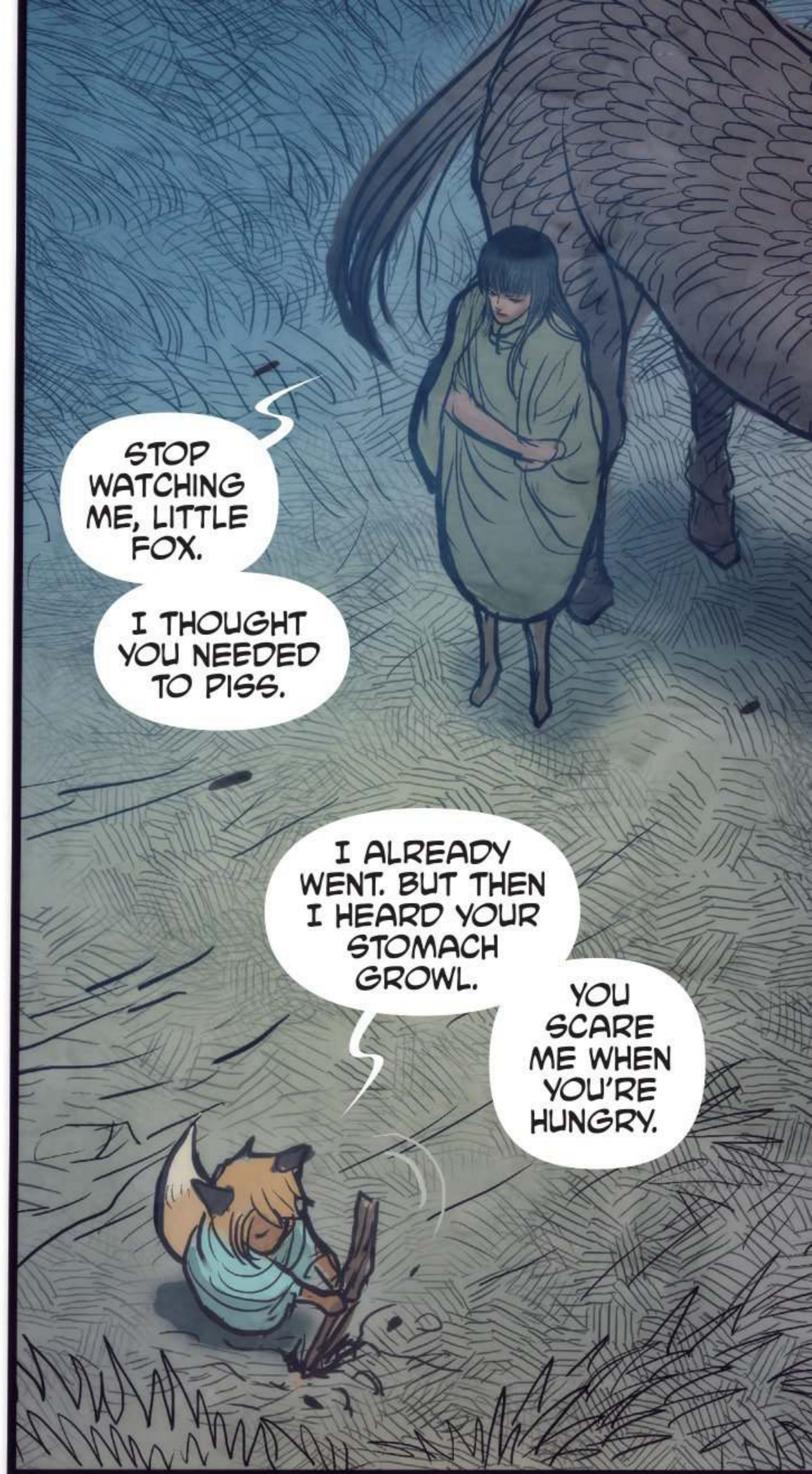


Don't be scared. Don't scream.  
Don't think about what's inside  
you. Pretend it's not there.

MISS? DOES  
IT STILL HURT?  
YOUR STUMP?

YOU KEEP  
STARING  
AT IT.

You are in  
control.

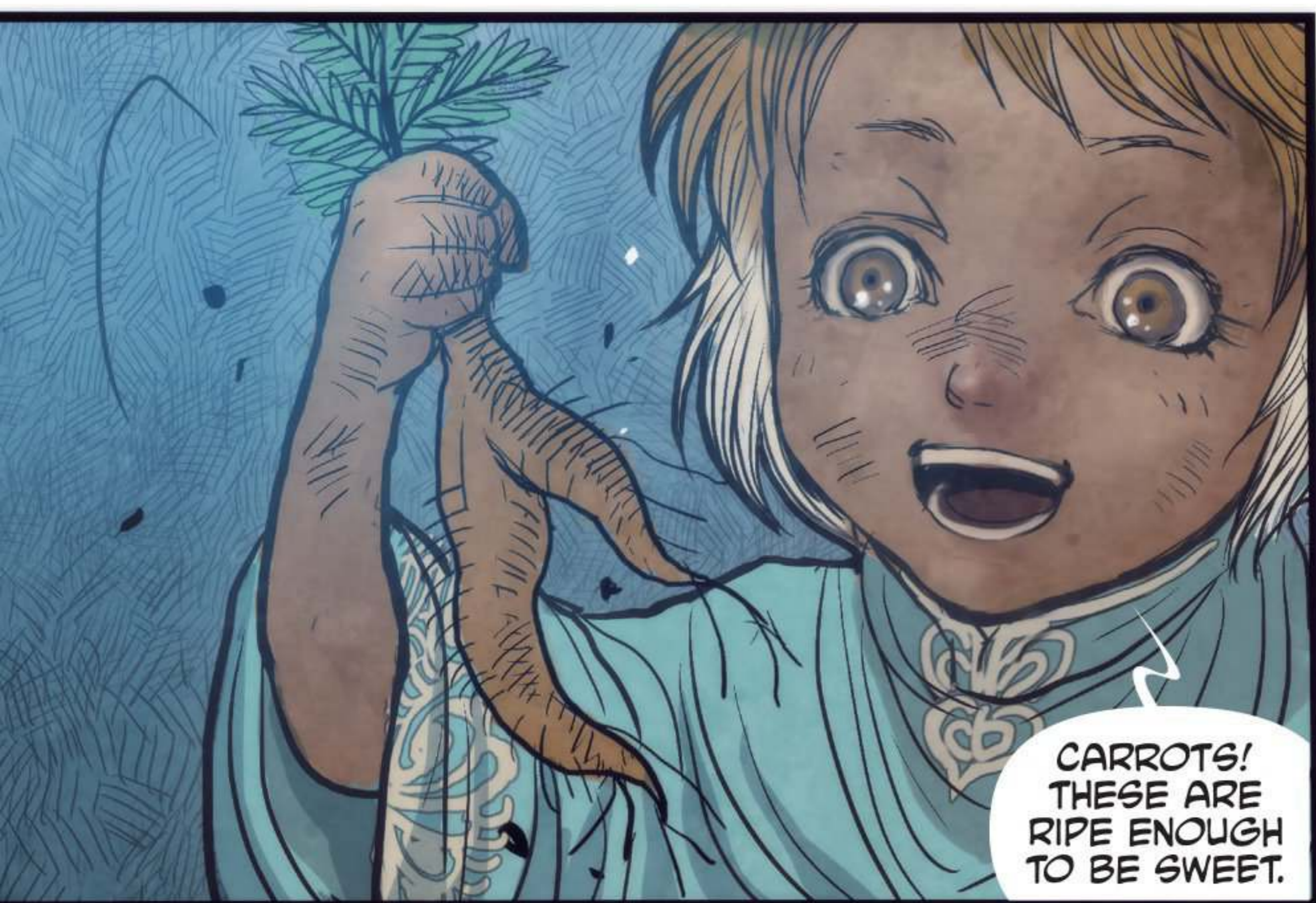


STOP  
WATCHING  
ME, LITTLE  
FOX.

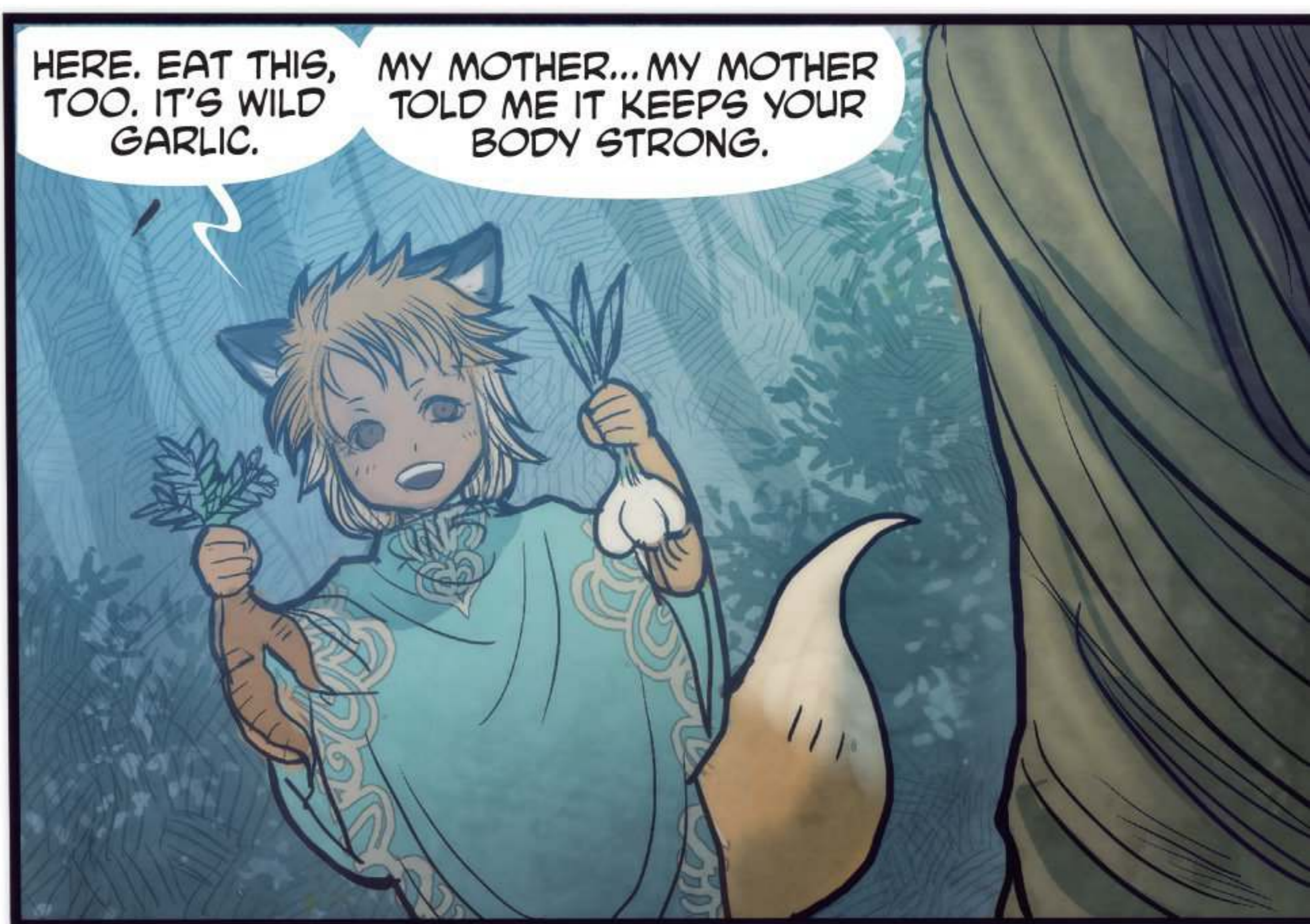
I THOUGHT  
YOU NEEDED  
TO PISS.

I ALREADY  
WENT. BUT THEN  
I HEARD YOUR  
STOMACH  
GROWL.

YOU  
SCARE  
ME WHEN  
YOU'RE  
HUNGRY.



CARROTS!  
THESE ARE  
RIPE ENOUGH  
TO BE SWEET.

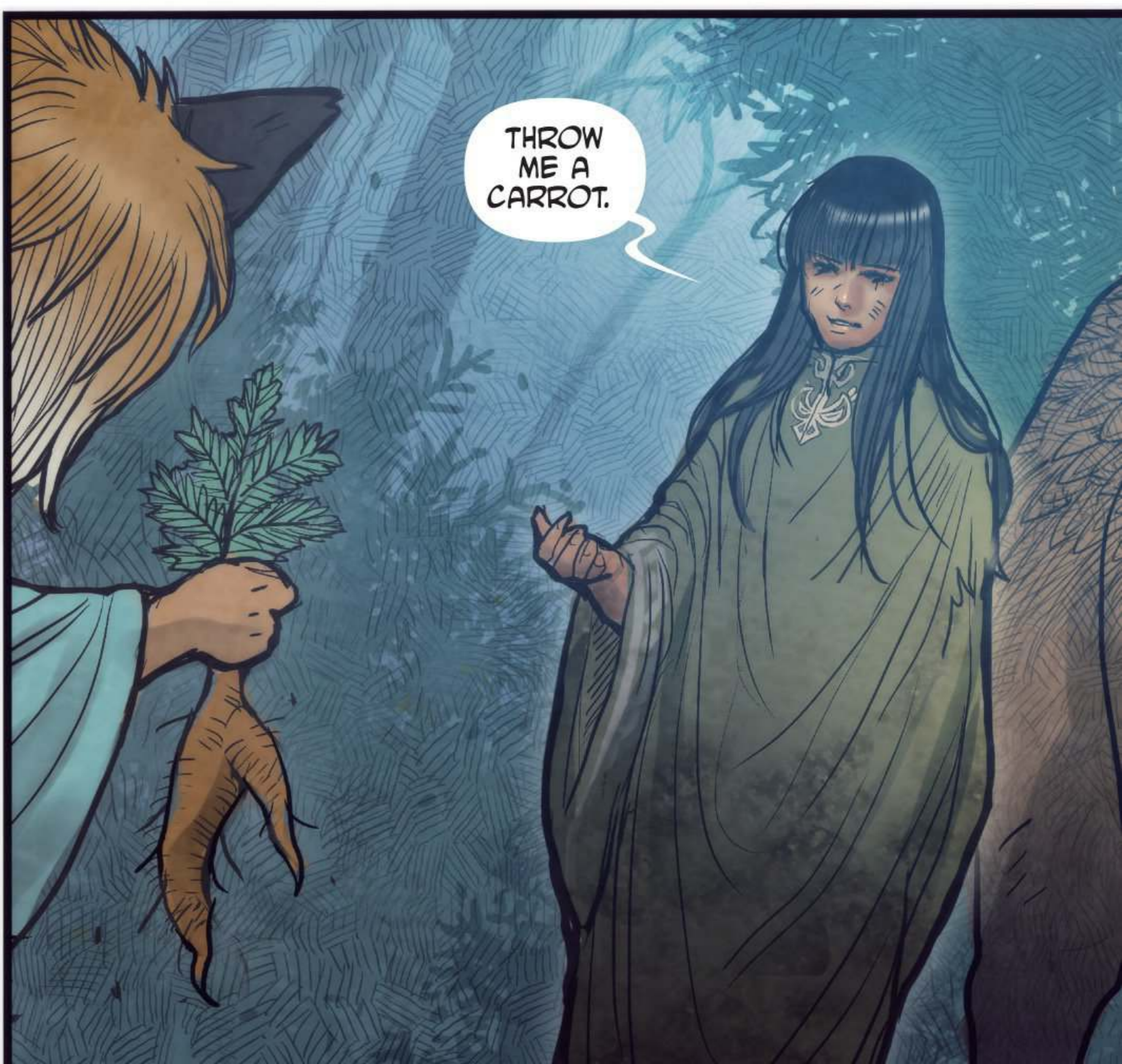


HERE. EAT THIS,  
TOO. IT'S WILD  
GARLIC.

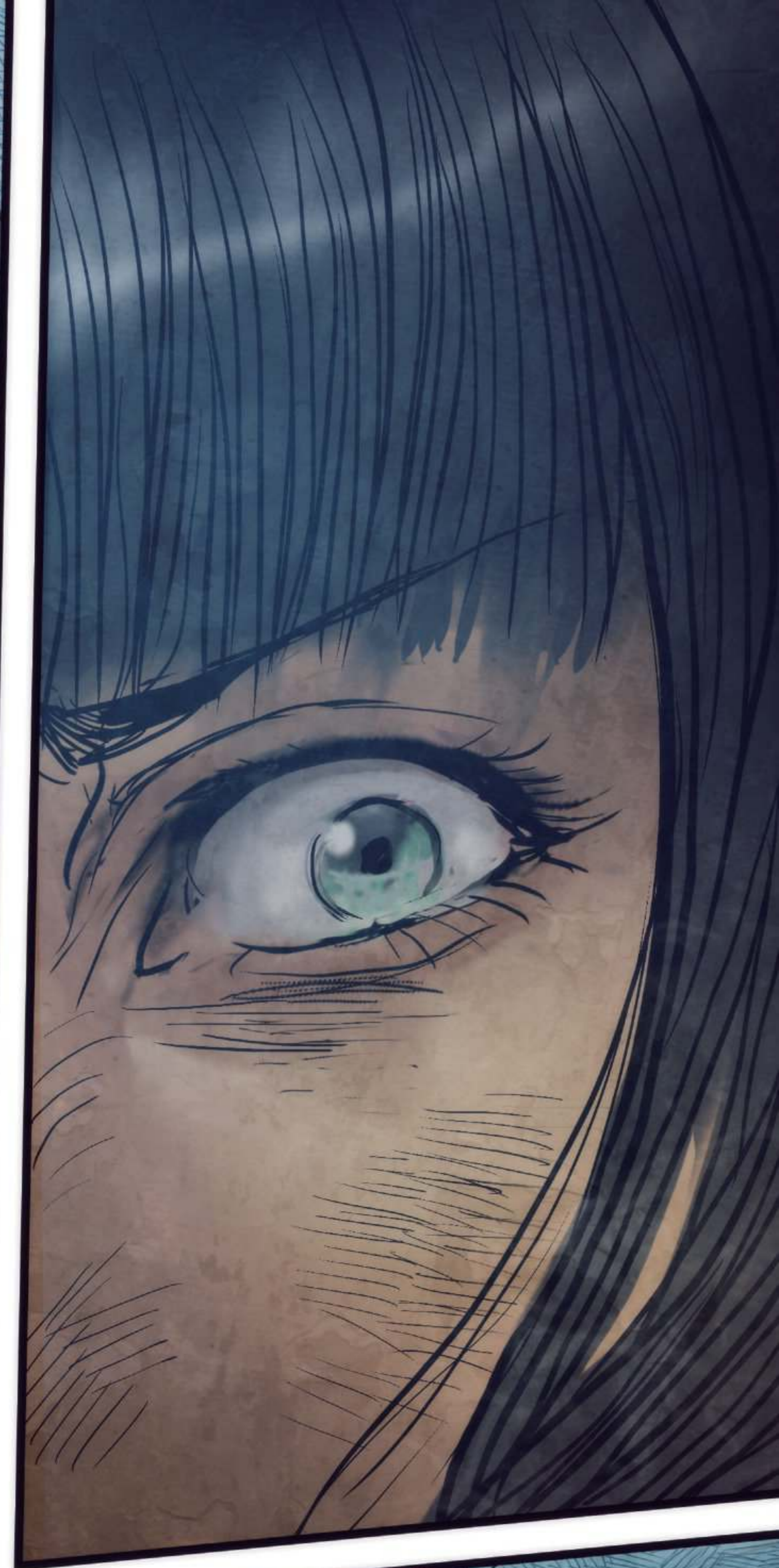
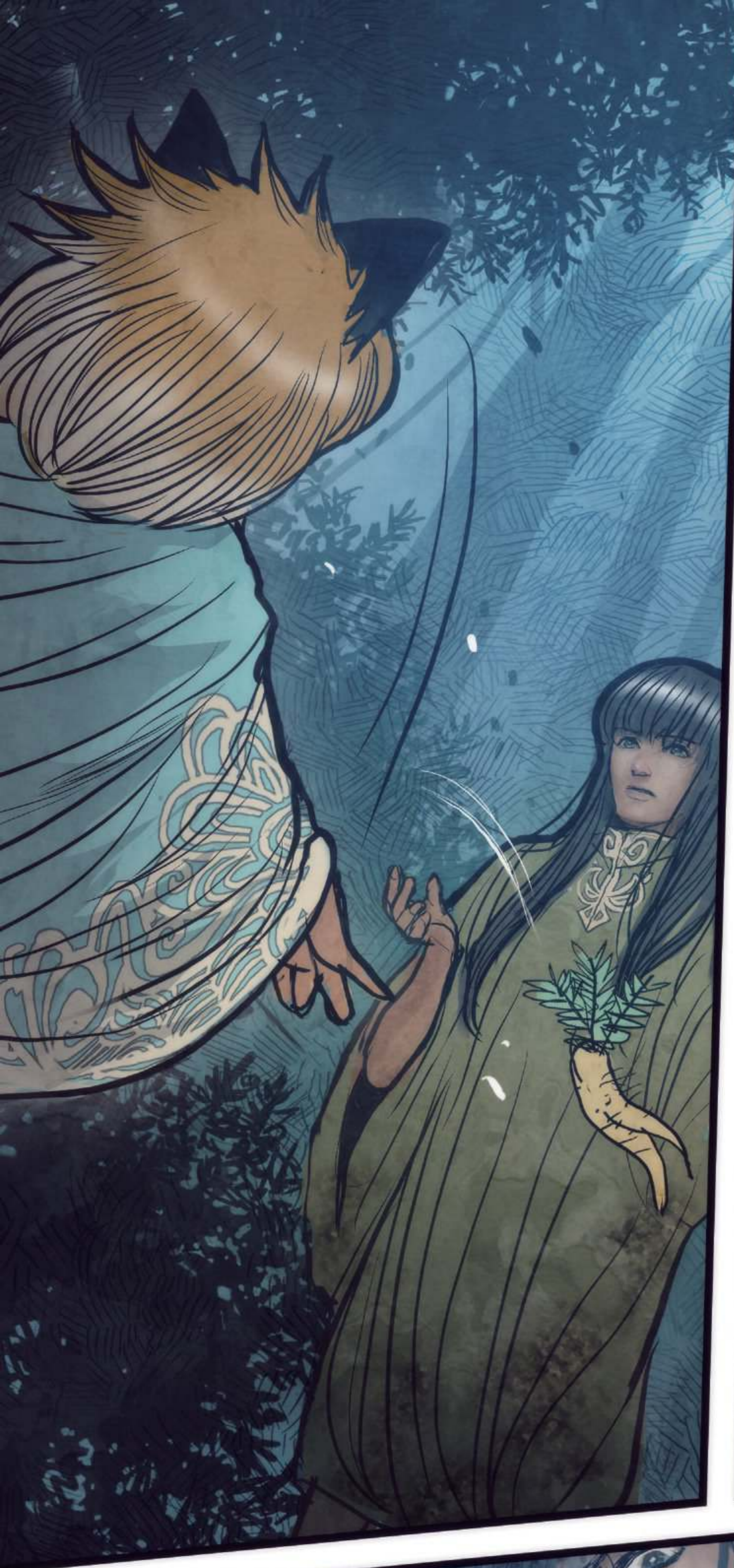
MY MOTHER... MY MOTHER  
TOLD ME IT KEEPS YOUR  
BODY STRONG.

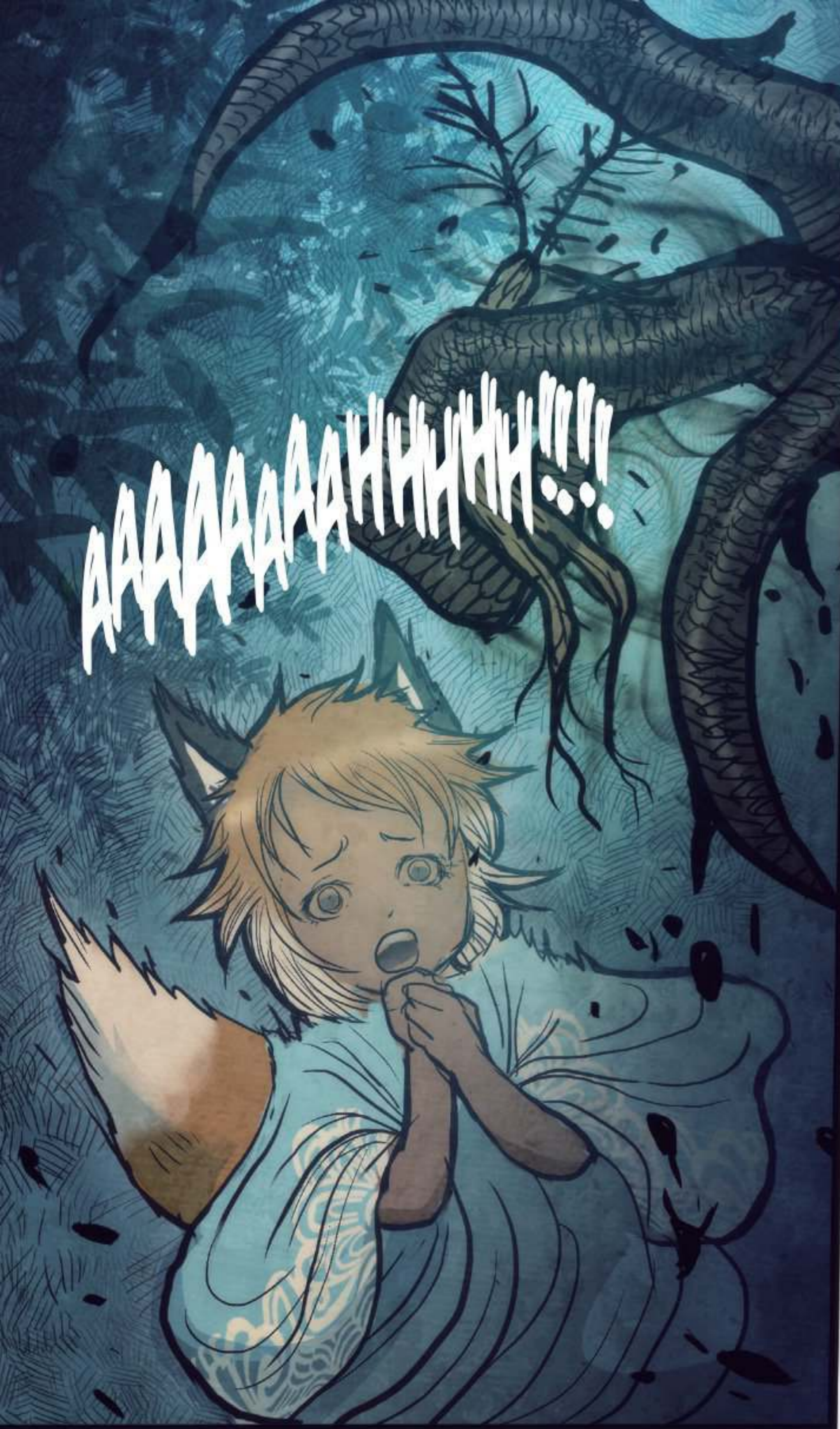


MY MOTHER...  
USED TO  
SAY ---



THROW  
ME A  
CARROT.





AAAAAAAAHHHHH!!!!



I CANNOT...  
RETURN TO  
SLEEP.



SOMEHOW....  
YOU HAVE  
MADE THAT  
IMPOSSIBLE.

YOU HAVE  
THE MOST...  
UNQUIET  
MIND.



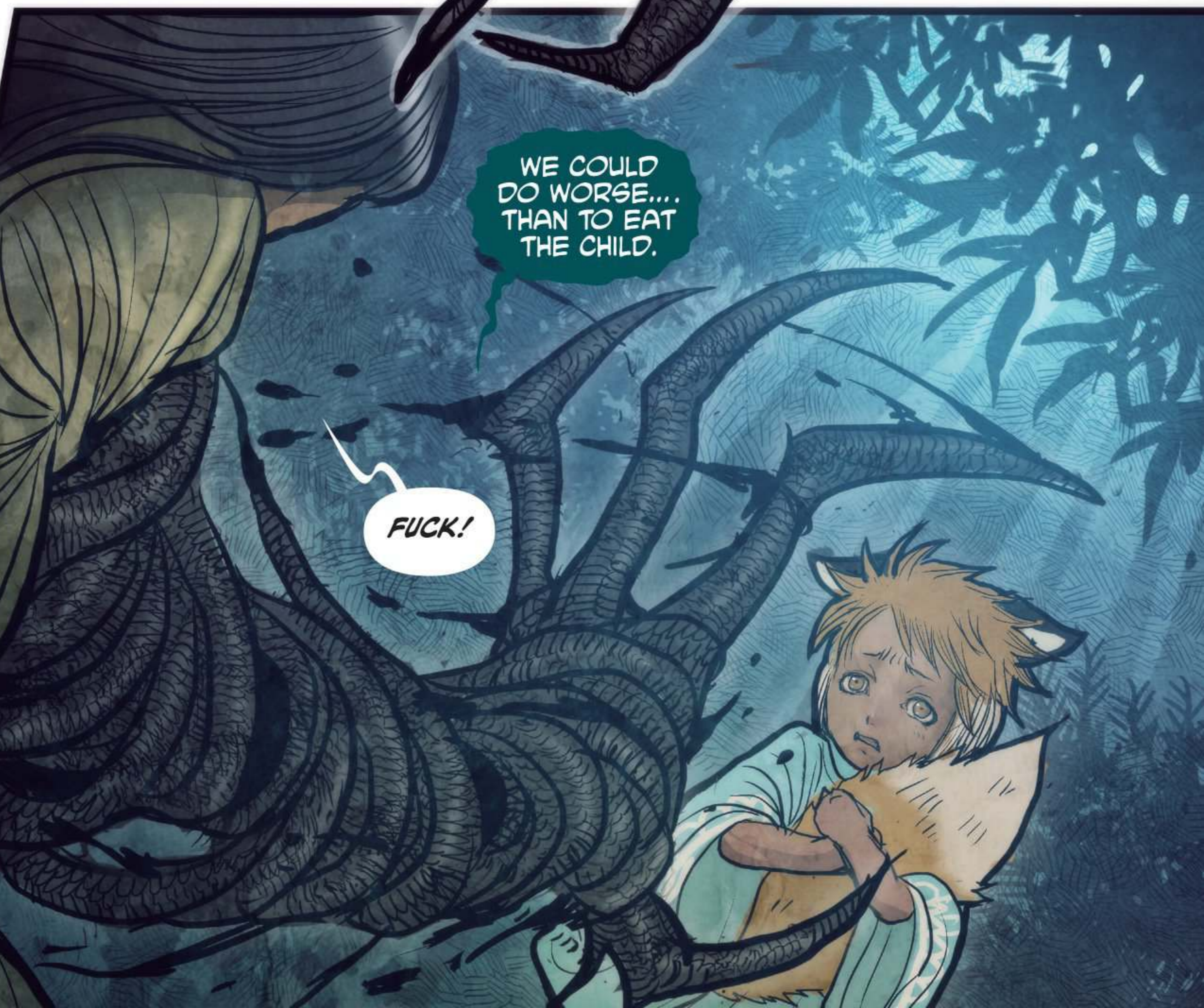
WHICH IS...  
VEXING.

GET...  
OUT... OF...  
ME!



KRRSSH

HOWEVER...  
AS I AM AWAKE...  
I WILL SOON  
REQUIRE  
SUSTENANCE.



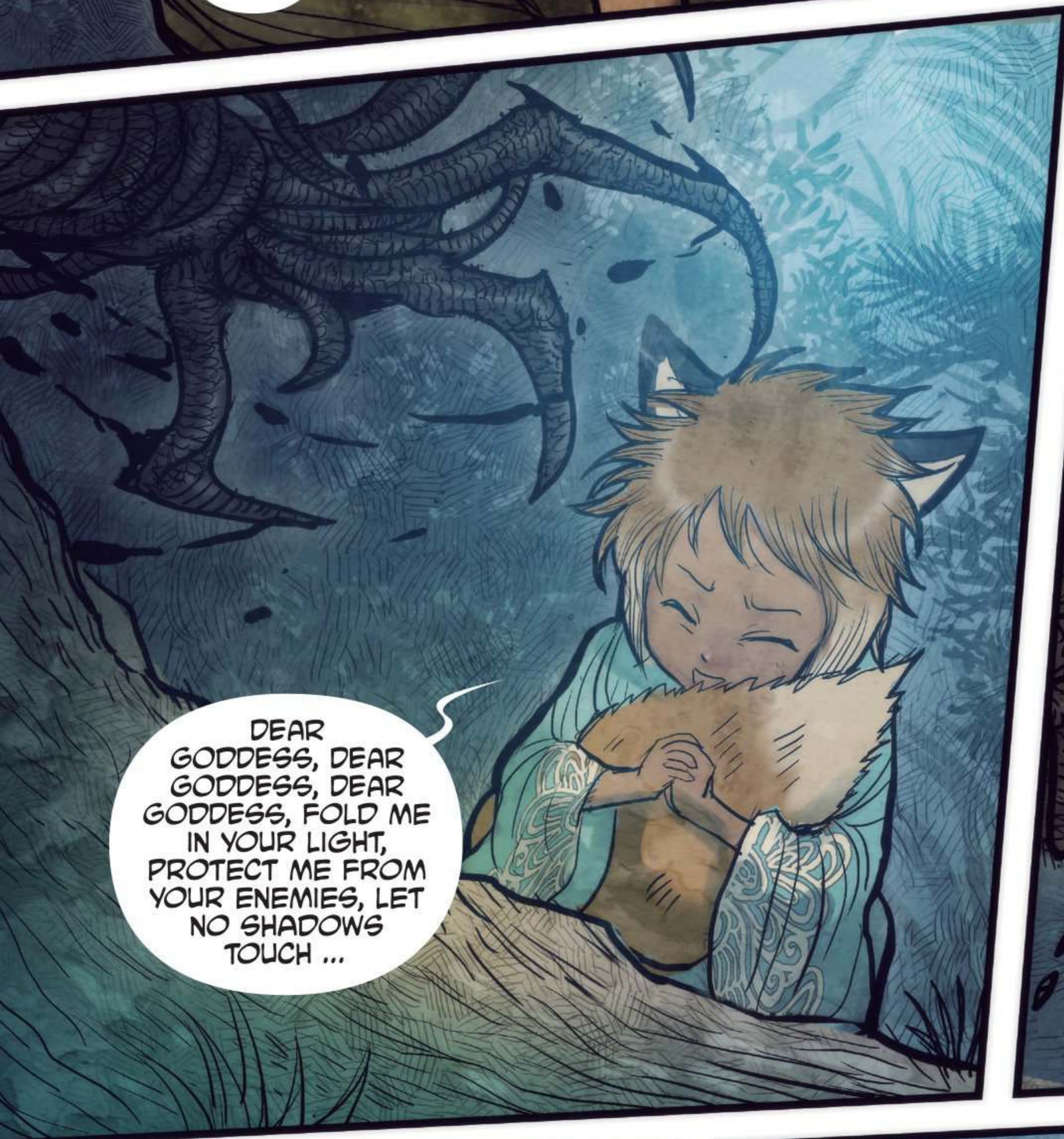
WE COULD  
DO WORSE....  
THAN TO EAT  
THE CHILD.

FUCK!

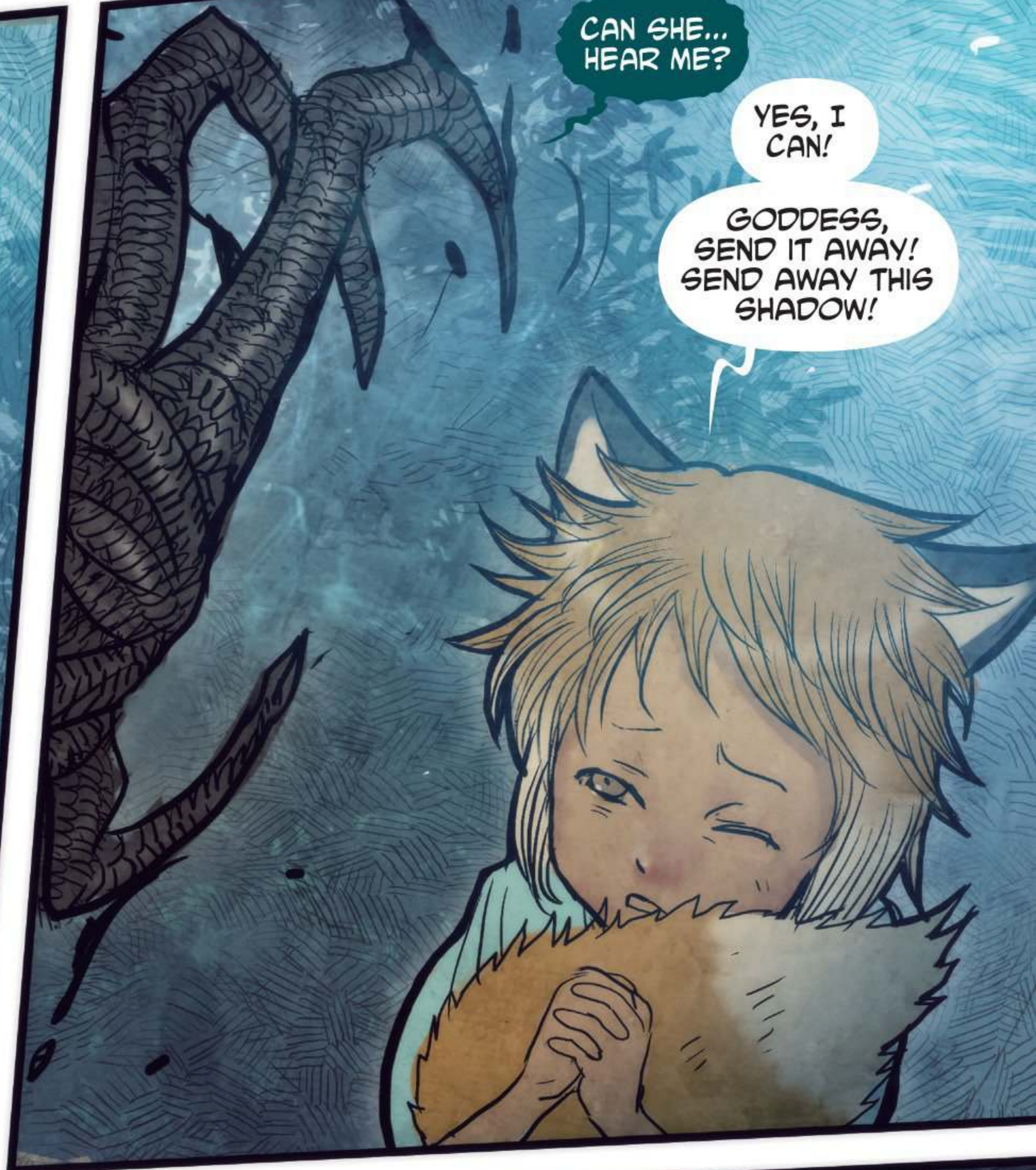


FUCK,  
FUCK,  
FUCK!

STAY  
AWAY  
FROM  
ME!



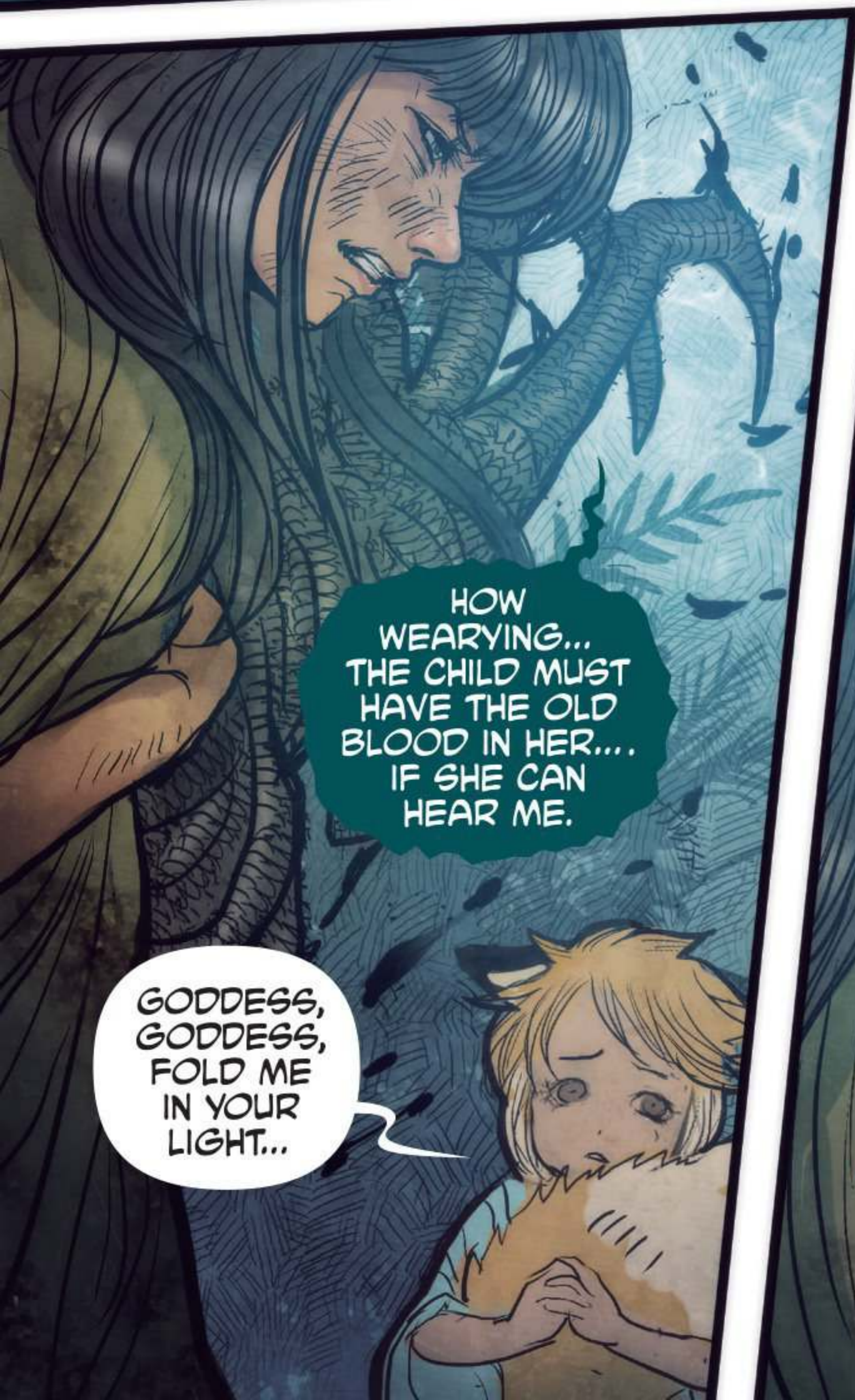
DEAR  
GODDESS, DEAR  
GODDESS, DEAR  
GODDESS, FOLD ME  
IN YOUR LIGHT,  
PROTECT ME FROM  
YOUR ENEMIES, LET  
NO SHADOWS  
TOUCH ...



CAN SHE...  
HEAR ME?

YES, I  
CAN!

GODDESS,  
SEND IT AWAY!  
SEND AWAY THIS  
SHADOW!



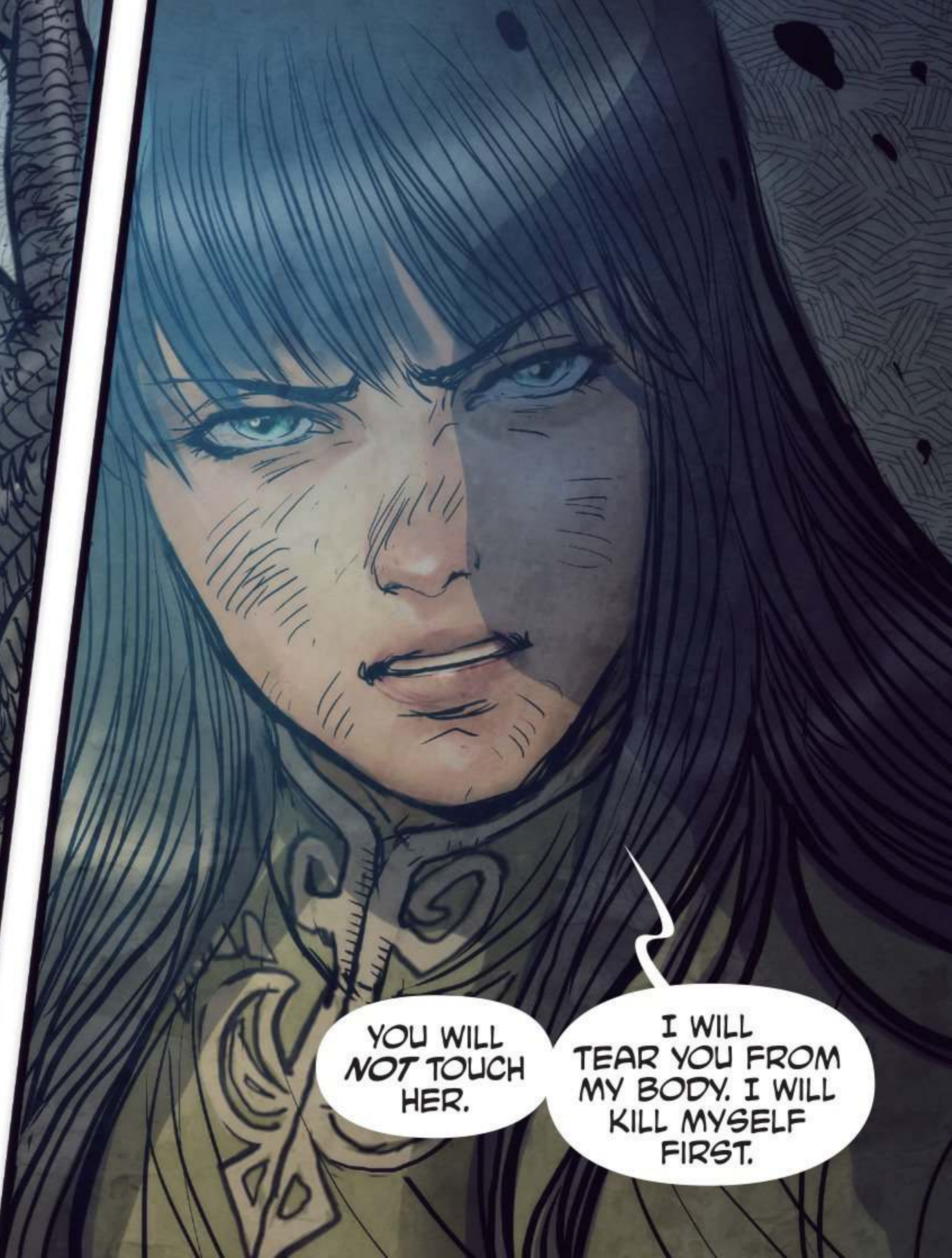
HOW  
WEARYING...  
THE CHILD MUST  
HAVE THE OLD  
BLOOD IN HER....  
IF SHE CAN  
HEAR ME.

GODDESS,  
GODDESS,  
FOLD ME  
IN YOUR  
LIGHT...



BEGGARS,  
ALAS,  
CANNOT BE  
CHOOSERS--

KILL  
HER.



YOU WILL  
NOT TOUCH  
HER.

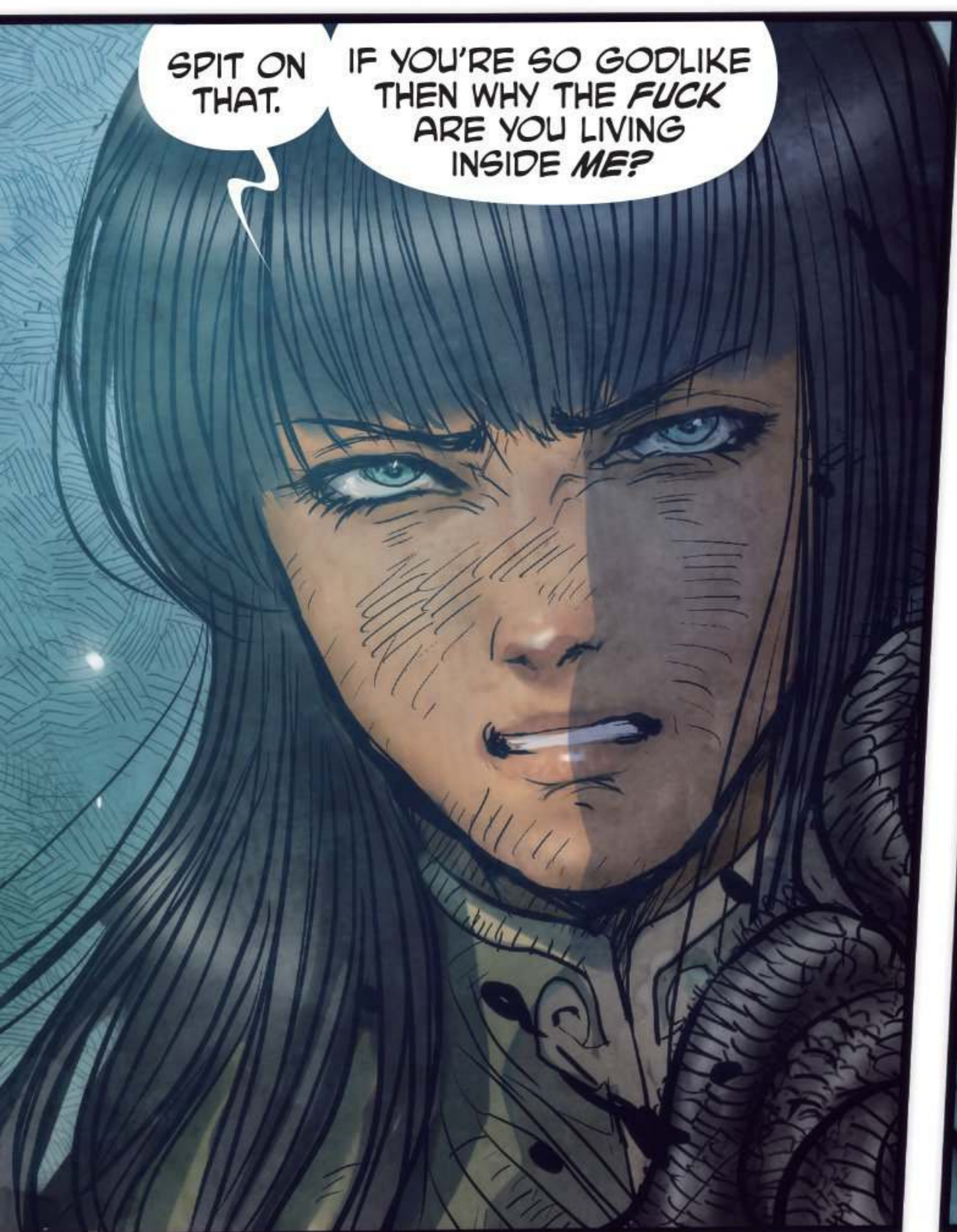
I WILL  
TEAR YOU FROM  
MY BODY. I WILL  
KILL MYSELF  
FIRST.



YOU...  
CANNOT  
STOP  
ME.

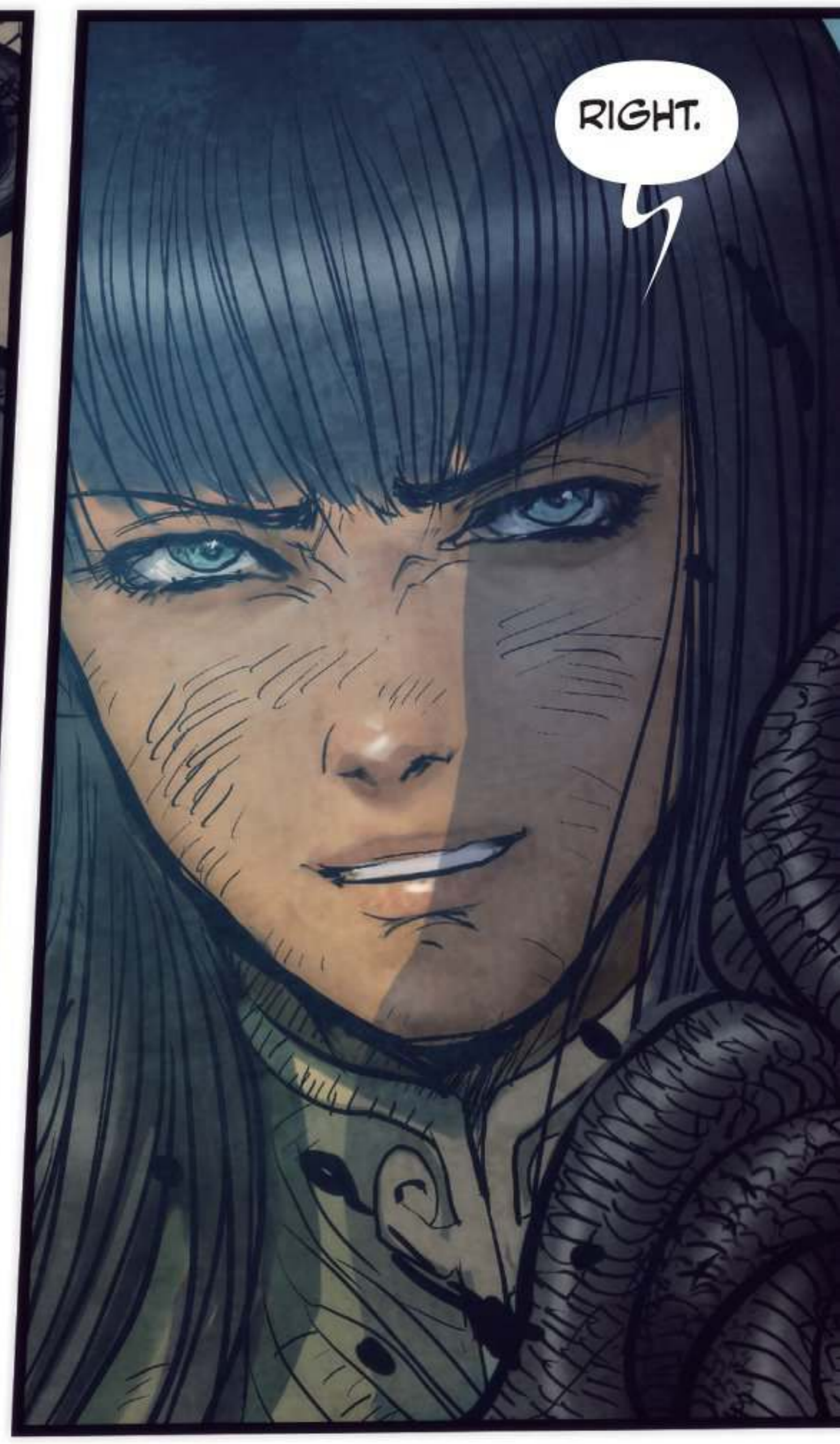
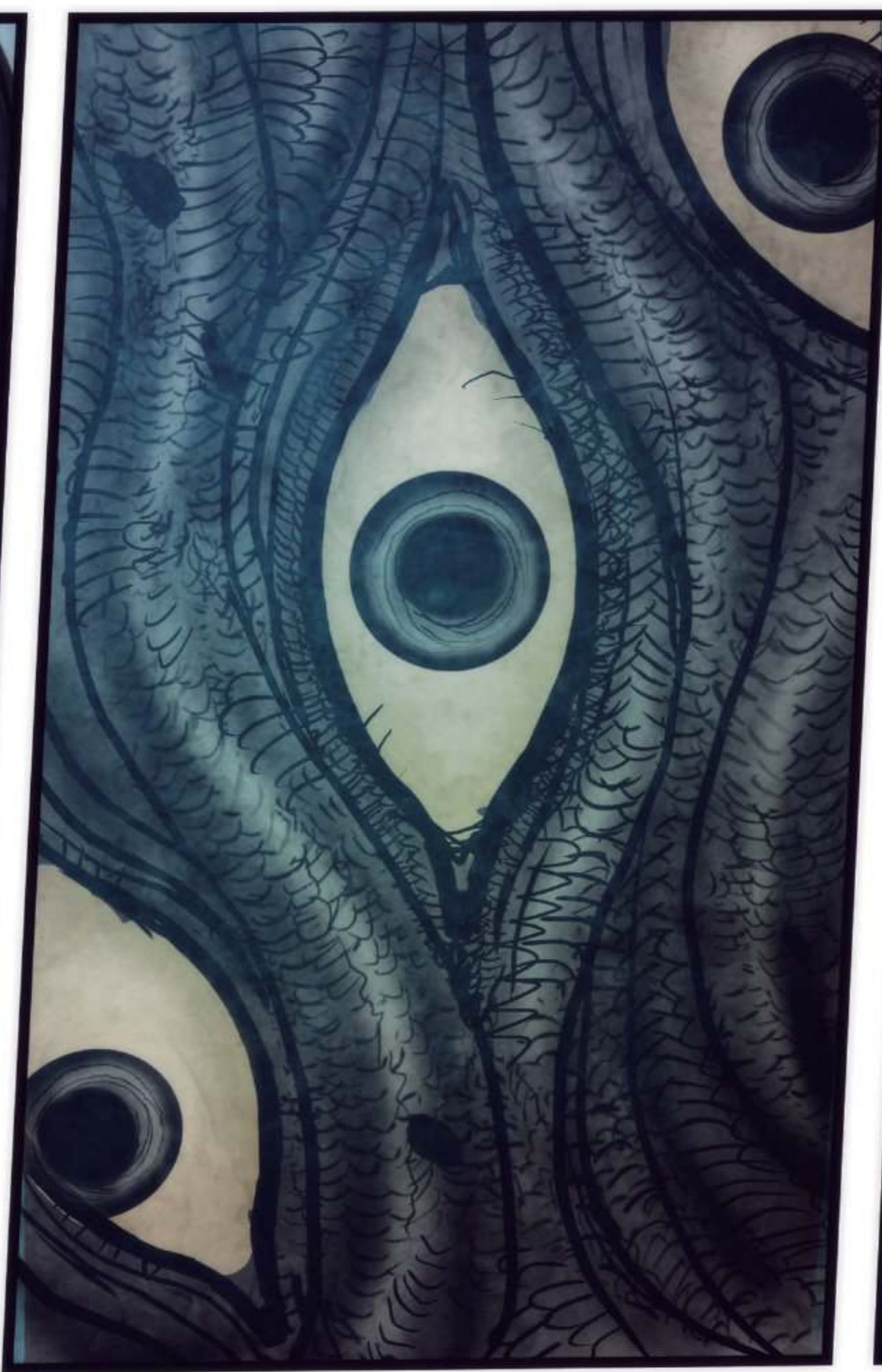
YOU...  
HAVE NO  
POWER  
OVER  
ME.

I AM A  
GOD.



SPIT ON  
THAT.

IF YOU'RE SO GODLIKE  
THEN WHY THE *FUCK*  
ARE YOU LIVING  
INSIDE *ME*?



RIGHT.



STAY HERE,  
KIPPA.  
AND KEEP  
PRAYING.



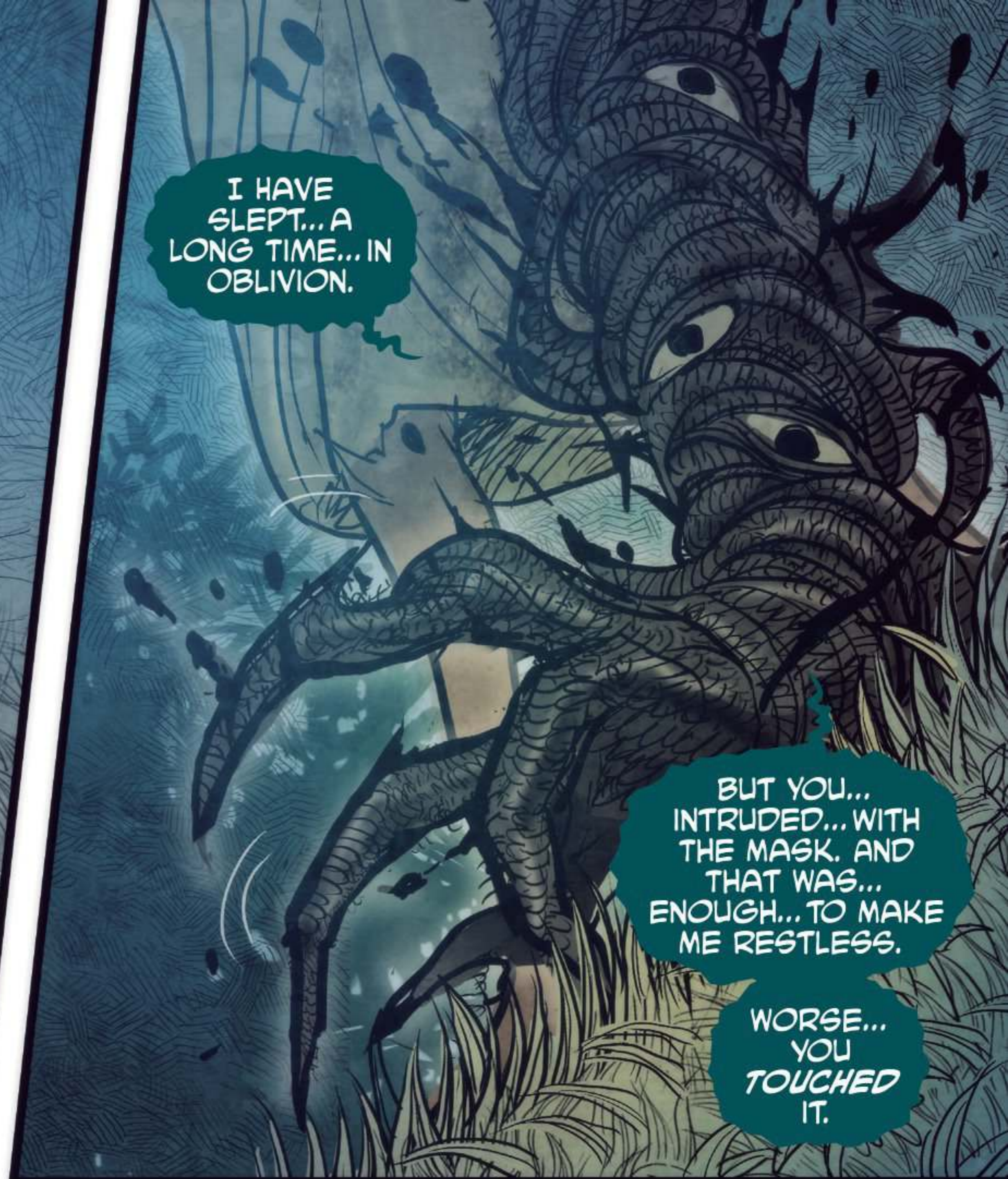
I'M GOING  
HUNTING.



WHAT ARE YOU? A GHOST? A SPIRIT?

A DISEASE?

YOUR QUESTIONS... DO NOT MATTER.



I HAVE SLEPT... A LONG TIME... IN OBLIVION.

BUT YOU... INTRUDED... WITH THE MASK. AND THAT WAS... ENOUGH... TO MAKE ME RESTLESS.

WORSE... YOU TOUCHED IT.



YOU TOUCHED IT.



YOU WOKE NOT ONLY ME... BUT MANY. MANY EYES WILL SEARCH... FOR THE MASK.

SEARCHING FOR THE MASK... WILL LEAD THEM TO YOU... TO ME.



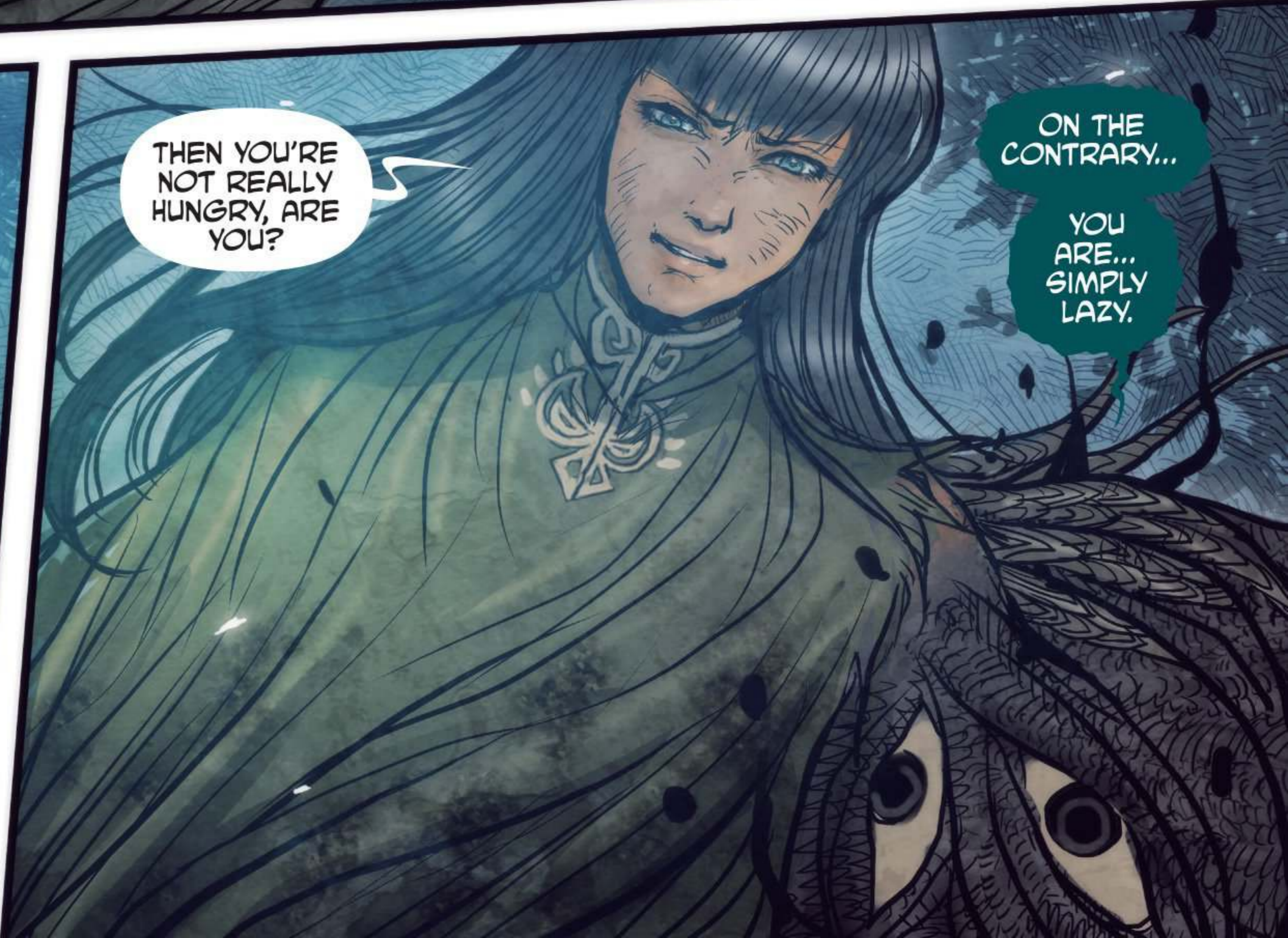
IT BODES ILL FOR US ALL. EVEN... FOR THE WORLD.

YOU ARE A **CHATTY** FUCKING MONSTER. ESPECIALLY ABOUT **NOTHING** I CARE ABOUT.

NOW SHUT UP.



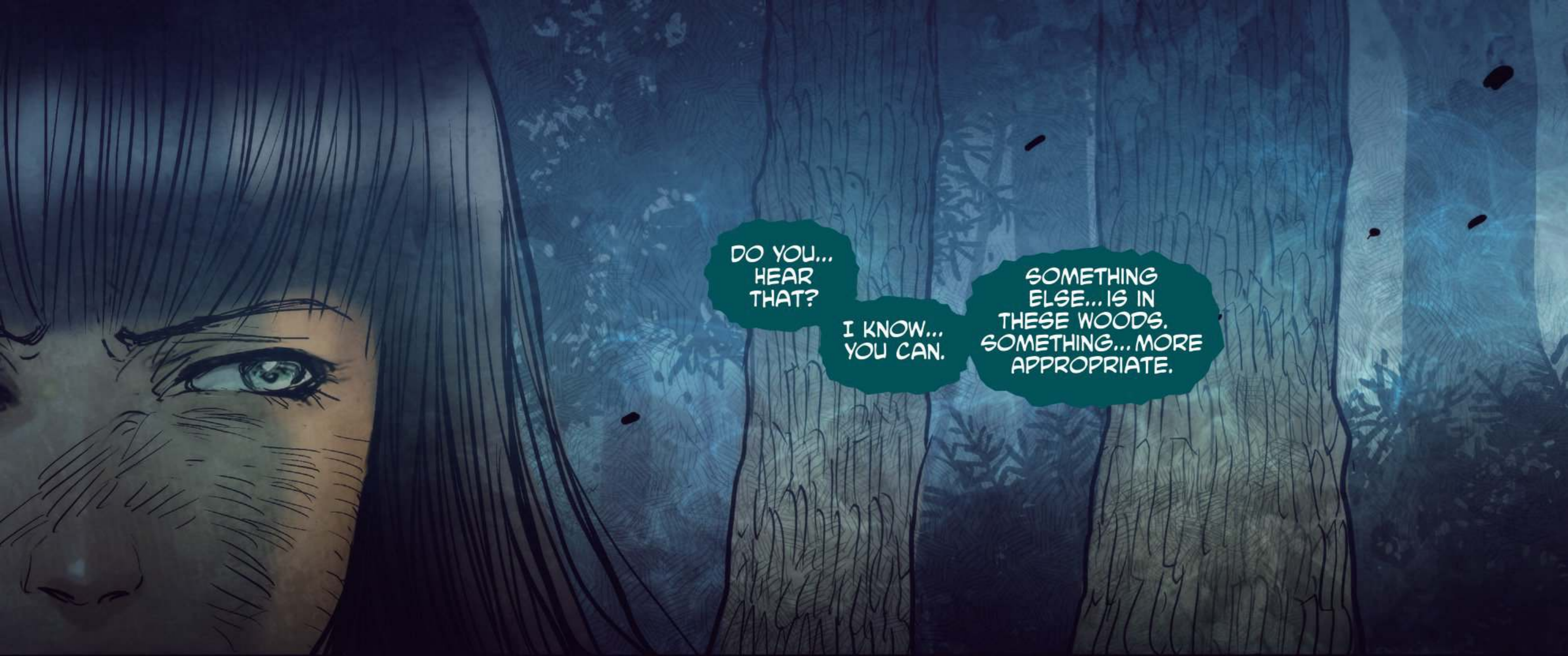
I REQUIRE MEALS... WITH A BIT MORE INTELLIGENCE.



THEN YOU'RE NOT REALLY HUNGRY, ARE YOU?

ON THE CONTRARY...

YOU ARE... SIMPLY LAZY.



DO YOU...  
HEAR  
THAT?

I KNOW...  
YOU CAN.

SOMETHING  
ELSE... IS IN  
THESE WOODS.  
SOMETHING... MORE  
APPROPRIATE.



"YOU CAN...  
TASTE IT."

"CAN'T YOU?"



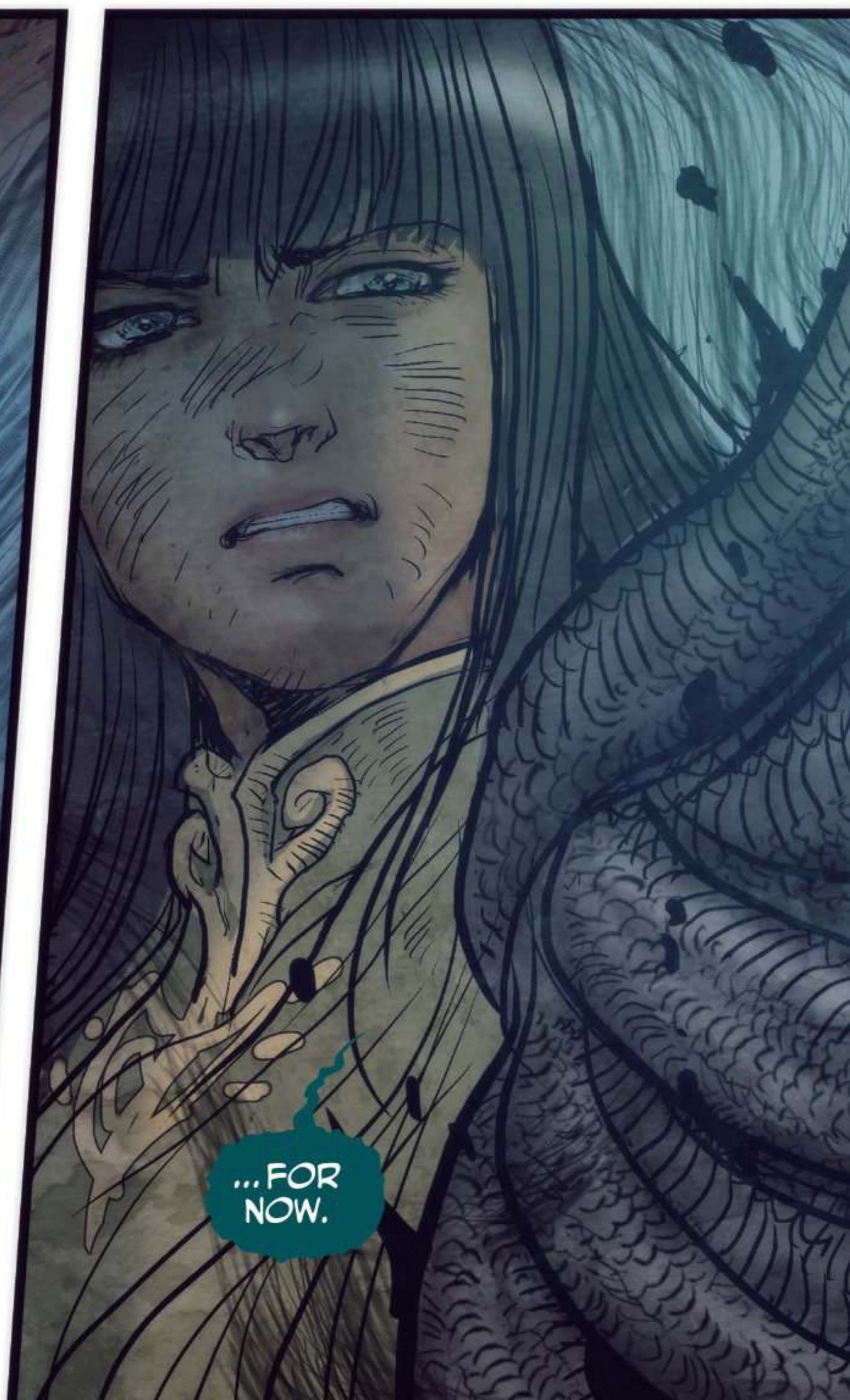
"IT IS ALREADY  
WOUNDED... IT  
IS DYING."

"WILL THAT...  
SATISFY...  
YOUR RISIBLE  
MORALITY?"

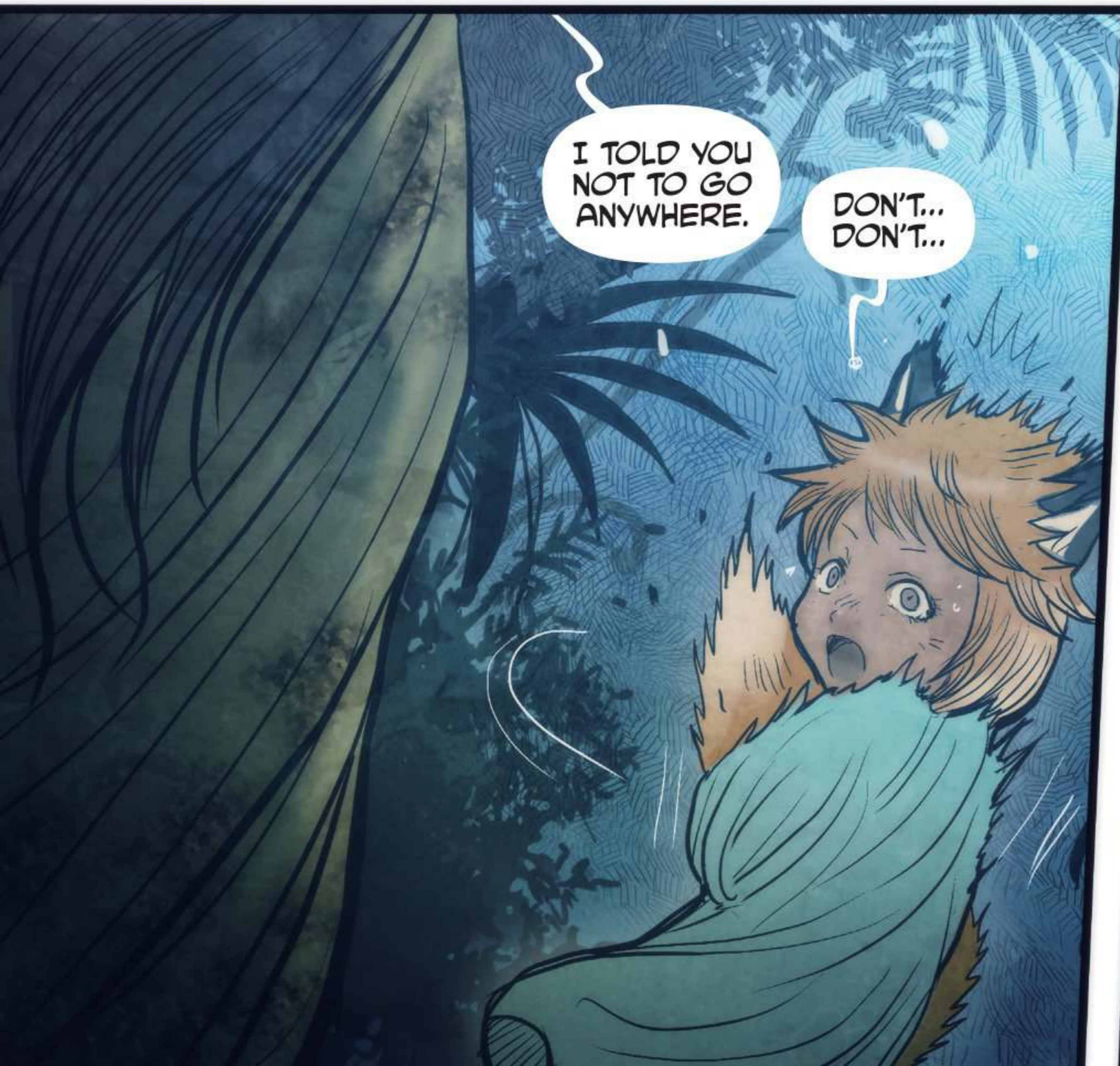
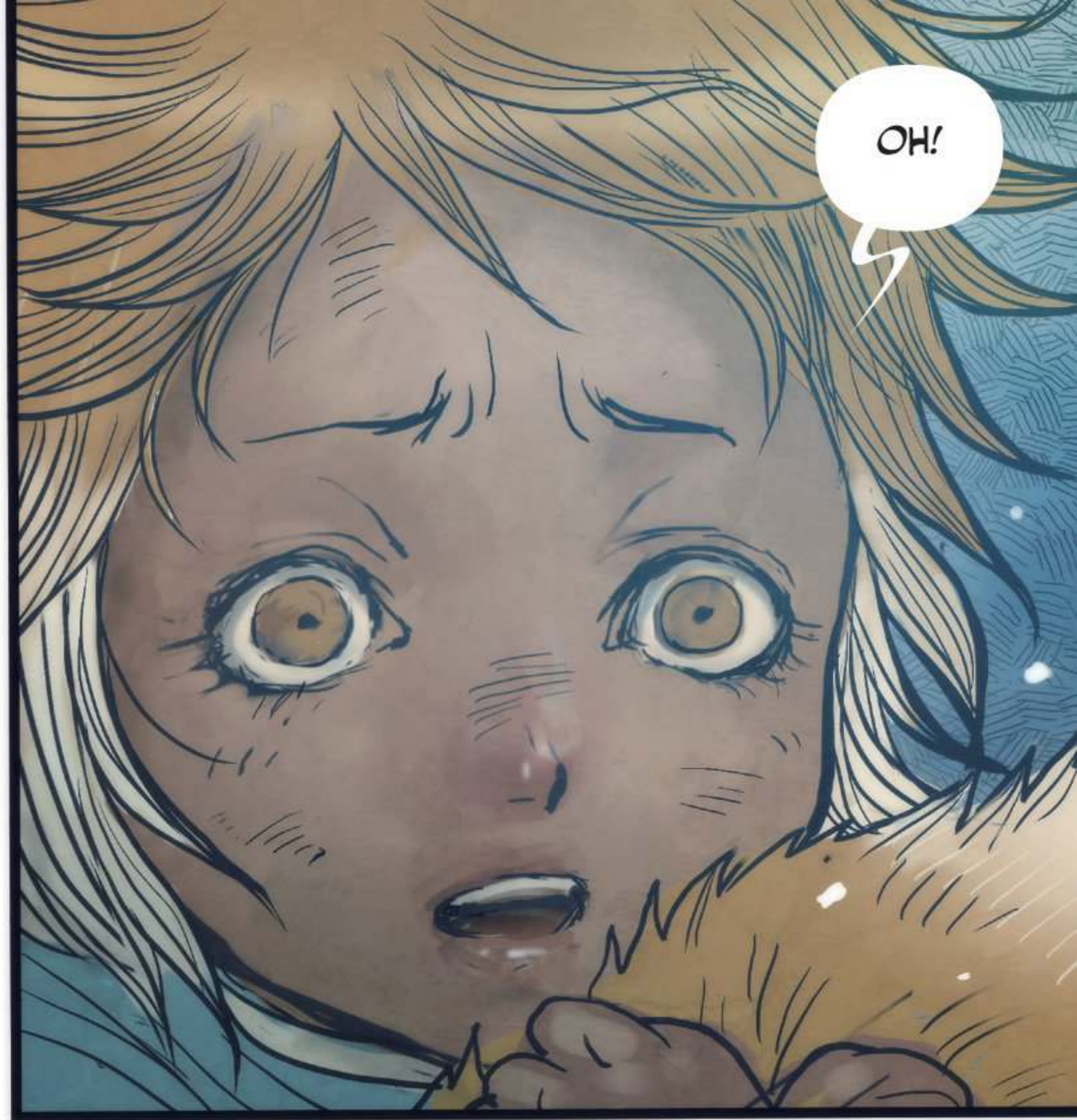


"I THOUGHT...  
AS MUCH."

"THIS MEAL  
WILL DO..."



...FOR  
NOW.





I FED IT.



WHAT IS IT? WHAT ARE YOU?

COME HERE. HELP ME LOOK FOR MY THINGS.



YOU'RE RIGHT. STAY THERE.

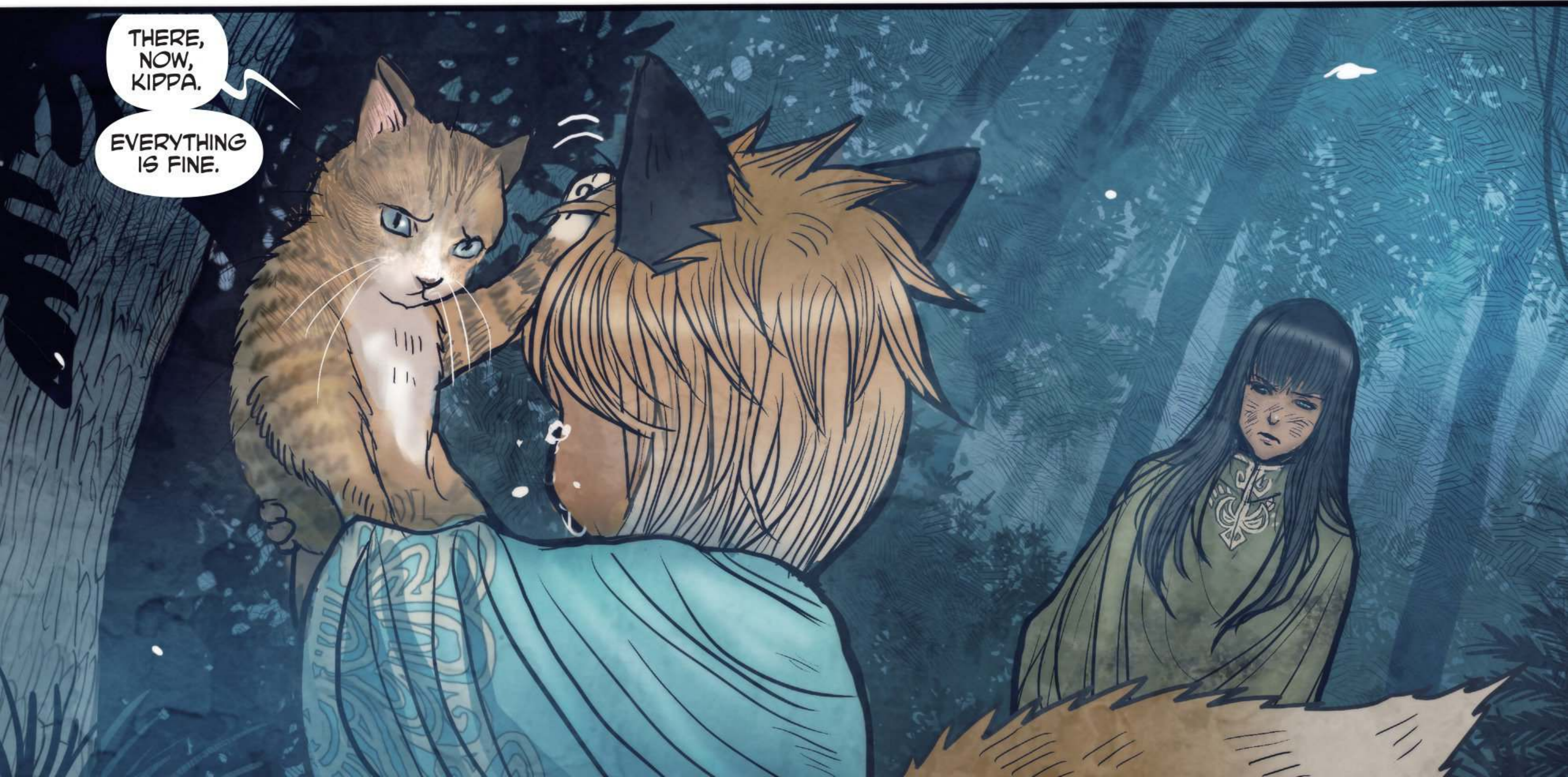


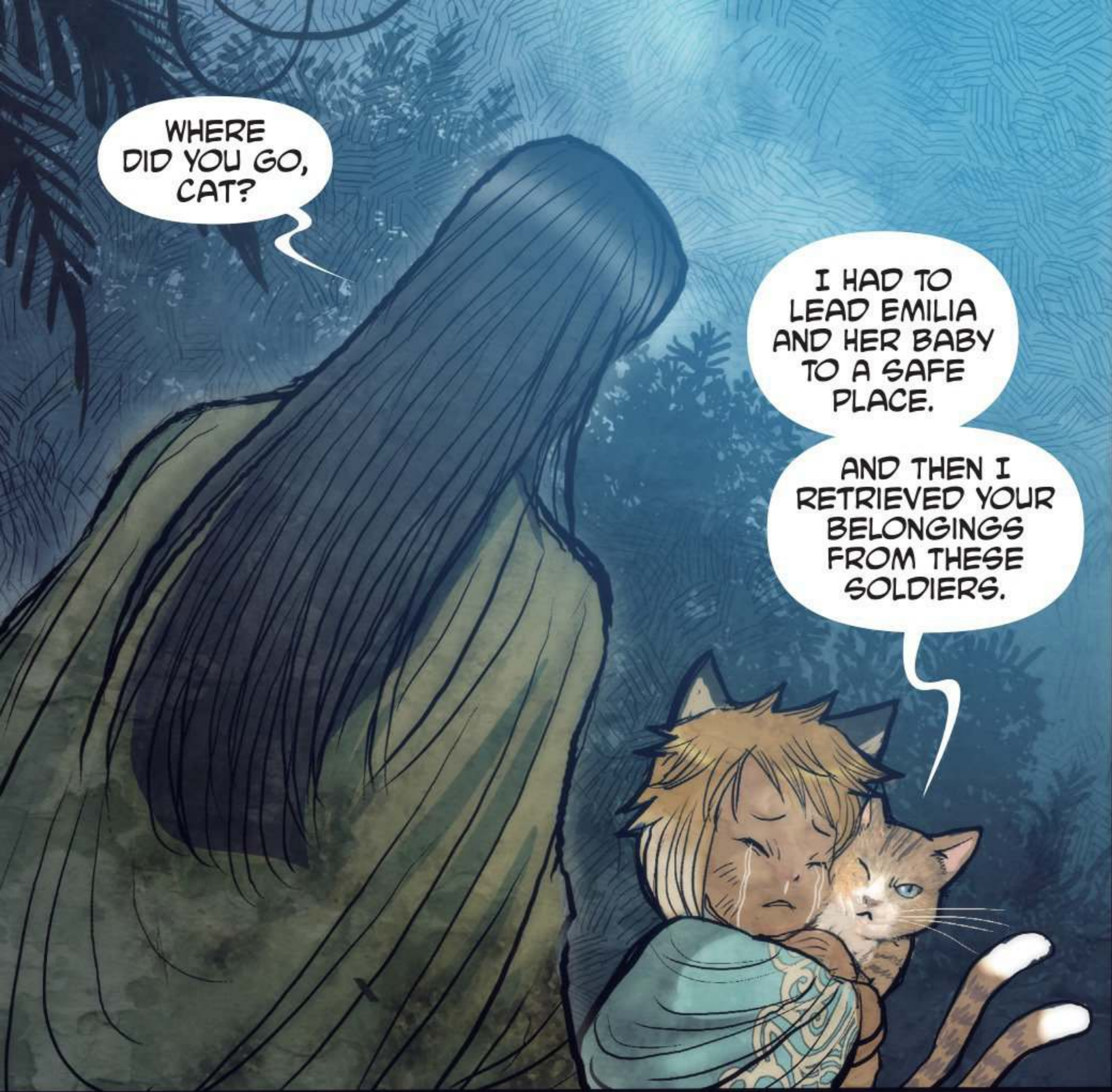
THE WITCH-NUNS WOULDN'T KILL THEIR OWN, WOULD THEY?

WITCHES DON'T HAVE WEAPONS THAT CAN DO THIS.



NOT MANY DO.





WHERE DID YOU GO, CAT?

I HAD TO LEAD EMILIA AND HER BABY TO A SAFE PLACE.

AND THEN I RETRIEVED YOUR BELONGINGS FROM THESE SOLDIERS.



THEY WERE STILL ALIVE, THEN.



I DIDN'T KILL THEM. THOSE WOUNDS WERE MADE BY A NIGHT-CUTTER.

THAT'S A DUSK COURT WEAPON.

BUT THE DUSK COURT IS UNDER THE SILENCE. NONE OF THEIR ARCANICS HAVE BEEN SEEN IN YEARS.



SO WHERE ARE MY BELONGINGS, CAT?

AND WHO THE FUCK IS OUT THERE USING A NIGHT-CUTTER?



THAT WOULD BE ME.



AND THIS, I  
BELIEVE... IS  
YOURS?

TO BE CONTINUED...

AN EXCERPT OF A LECTURE FROM THE ESTEEMED **PROFESSOR TAM TAM**, FORMER FIRST RECORD-KEEPER OF THE IS'HAMI TEMPLE, AND LEARNED CONTEMPORARY OF NAMRON BLACK CLAW...

THE POETS WILL BE THE FIRST TO CONFESS THAT NO ONE, NOT EVEN THEY -- IN ALL THEIR INSPIRED WISDOM -- CAN IDENTIFY WHERE THE ANCIENTS WERE FIRST BORN.

NOT EVEN THE ANCIENTS KNOW, FOR CERTAIN. IT IS ONE OF THE NINE GREAT MYSTERIES THAT HAS NOT YET BEEN SOLVED. GHOSTS ARE SILENT ON THE MATTER. SO IS UBASTI, BLESSED BE HER NAME.

BUT WE *DO* KNOW THE IDENTITY OF THE FIRST ARCANIC HALF-BREED.

LISTEN, KITS. THERE USED TO BE RULES. AN ANCIENT MIGHT TAKE A HUMAN AS A LOVER, BUT NOTHING WOULD COME OF IT. NO CHILDREN. NONE, EVER, FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. ANCIENTS RARELY BRED AMONGST THEMSELVES, BUT IT DIDN'T MATTER TO THEM.

HUMANS WERE AN EXOTIC PASTIME. INTELLIGENT, AMUSING, ENTERPRISING -- QUICK TO WORSHIP THE ANCIENTS AS EMMISSARIES OF THE OLD GODS. POWER IS ATTRACTIVE -- REMEMBER THAT. NO ONE, NOT EVEN THE GREATEST SERVANT OF UBASTI, IS ENTIRELY IMMUNE TO ITS CALL.

IMMORTALITY ROBS LIFE OF ANY URGENCY. AND OTHER IMPORTANT VALUES.

BUT POWER SOMETIMES HAS A MIND OF ITS OWN. AND IT IS THOUGHT THAT THE SAME MYSTERIOUS FORCE THAT MADE THE ANCIENTS, REMADE THEM AGAIN -- REMOVING THAT LAST WALL BETWEEN THEIR FLESH, AND HUMANS.

AND SO A CHILD WAS CONCEIVED.

NO ONE UNDERSTOOD UNTIL SHE WAS BORN. UNTIL THE MIDWIVES GAZED UPON THE INFANT'S FACE, AND INSTEAD OF A SMALL ANCIENT, FOUND THEMSELVES HOLDING A SMALL HUMAN.

OH, HOW THIS HALF-BREED FRIGHTENED THEM ALL. THE OTHER ANCIENTS ALMOST KILLED THE CHILD. THEY WOULD HAVE, HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE MOTHER AND HER CONSIDERABLE POWER.

AND, OF COURSE, THE AID OF A CAT -- THE GREAT POET RUSKAIYA BRASS TALON -- WHO SPIRITED THE INFANT AWAY AND RAISED HER IN THE TEMPLE OF UBASTI. OTHER HALF-BREED CHILDREN, BORN SOON AFTER, WERE *NOT* SO LUCKY.

POET RUSKAIYA MADE SURE TO STRIKE THE CHILD'S TRUE NAME FROM THE RECORDS. BUT WE *ALL* KNOW HER.

FOR SHE BECAME THE **SHAMAN-EMPRESS**. THE FIRST, AND GREATEST, OF THE MANY HALF-BREEDS TO COME. SHE, WHO WAS MORE POWERFUL THAN EVEN THE ANCIENTS.

SHE, WHO PAVED THE WAY FOR A NEW RACE, BOTH ANCIENT AND HUMAN...

...THE **ARCANICS**.

SHE, WHO SHATTERED THE WORLD...



# MONSTRESS MAIL

**We're touched and honored by all of the amazing fanmail we've received here at MONSTRESS headquarters. While space constraints prevent us from printing every letter, rest assured that we've read and loved them all. This month, though, we wanted to highlight some of our international fans, who have written to us from all corners of the globe...**

Everything started when I saw, somewhere on the Internet, this giant ghost (maybe) of a three-eyed god, towering above two tiny shadows. This picture captivated me right away. Mesmerized, I stared at it for a long, long time. Under the picture was a name. MONSTRESS.

I had to know more.

So I bought the digital issue of MONSTRESS #1, and it was perfect. The graphics are so gorgeous, I don't have the right words to describe how beautiful they are – how elegant and brutal, how detailed and gloriously coloured and lighted. The story is intense and captivating, the universe mysterious yet fascinating. MONSTRESS just pulls you in and never lets go. Never before have I read a story with so many female characters, driving the narrative with such physical and emotional strength.

I absolutely loved it, so I bought MONSTRESS #2 the next day. I know now that this series will probably break my heart, but I don't mind. I can't wait for the next issue. Thank you. Thank you so much.

From France,  
Émilie G.

---

After amazing first and second issues, I felt that I had to write. It's so easy to get into the story and care for the characters, and the drawings are absolutely awesome because they create a unique and spectacular environment. The drawings feel inspired by a combination of different cultures, mixing in a way that reminds each reader of a figure, a symbol from their own environment. I think that your imagination will affect so many people in the upcoming years, inspiring new kinds

of fantasy worlds. You have a fan in Antalya, Turkey counting down weeks to read the next issue.

Best,  
Ugur U.

---

Thank you for giving us a story that is full of substance and beautifully illustrated. If I were to pick a version of the world to live in, this would be it – in a time of peace, of course. I will never get tired of reading issues 1-3 over and over again until issue 4 this March. (I think I have a bit of a crush on Lady Sophia already, haha.) I love that the majority of the characters are of Asian descent and people of color. Since I am Filipino, I am very proud.

Sana, keep up the great artwork, and I hope this series continues for 50 issues or more. Please don't get tired of drawing something so elegant and amazingly detailed. (And beautiful ladies and cats, because I love cats!) Marjorie, thank you for a story worth reading and thank you for responding to me on Facebook. It is the closest thing to an autograph for me since I live halfway across the globe. I was and still am starstruck. Again, thank you. I cannot wait for issue 4!

Sincerely yours,  
Charles R.

---

Greetings from Mexico City! I've been a long-time, die-hard fan of comic books and manga, and your book is one the very best I have ever jumped into. Ever. It really got me hooked from page one, and you can see how both styles blend beautifully. I love reading sci-fi, fantasy, and horror stuff... and writing, drawing, and playing drums when I have spare time. (I am a geneticist so I don't get much!) Even if your book didn't have such an incredibly well-written story, it would be still worth buying just for the amazing art. Everything in MONSTRESS looks really promising. Can't wait to read issue 2.

Best regards,  
Jörg C.

---

I read the first issue and I really like it. Thanks! I hope that you will continue to explore the effects of violence and war on all of us "normal" people and how it may wake up our "monsters." I'm very curious to see how the story will unfold. I also like the "Druillet" touch in Sana's artwork and I really would like to see more of it. Please continue to be brave!

For the moment, thanks!  
Daniele S. - London

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**Thank you to all our fans, far and wide, for sticking with MONSTRESS. We hope you'll continue on the ride as Maika heads into even more dangerous territory next month. But before we go, here's one more letter, featuring some fans from our favorite part of the animal kingdom:**

Just wanted to let you know that MONSTRESS #2 solidified the series as my favorite new comic. Issue 1 pulled me in with the amazingly beautiful art and intriguing story, and with this issue we got some great world building as well. Also, I must speak on Master Ren. This great "Nekomancer" (I love this by the way) could soon be my favorite character. Please, more of Ren!

I have attached a photo of my very own apprentices of Zorian, known as Syl (left) & Dalinar (right).

Thanks for making awesome comics,  
Daniel E.



# FAN ART

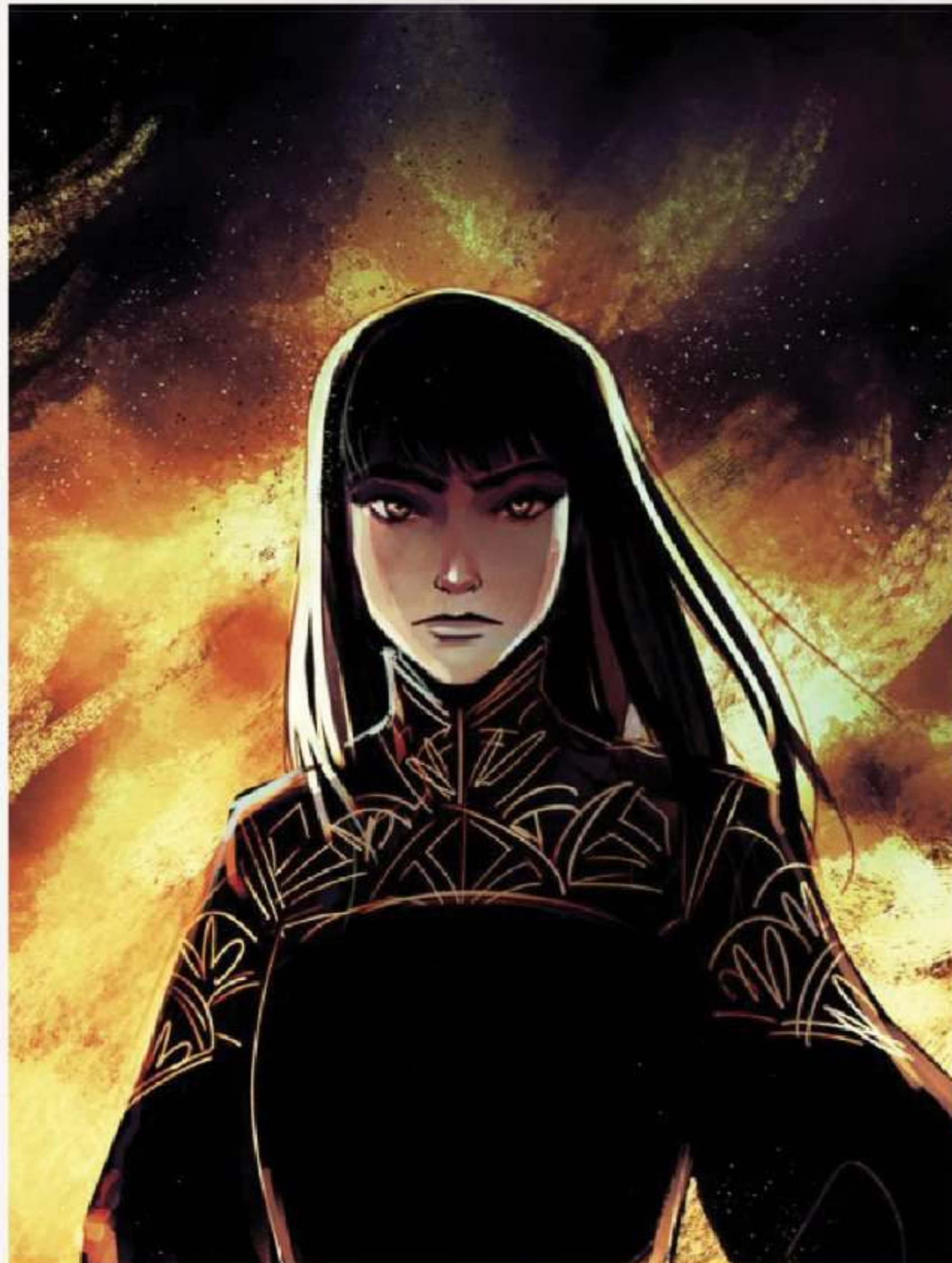
Send Letters & Fan Art to  
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#Monsstress for Twitter & Instagram

Here at Team MONSTRESS, we love our fans -- and we love the creative work they produce. We put out a call for you to send in your fan art, and you delivered beyond our wildest dreams. Check out some of the stunning interpretations of our hero, Maika, that we received...



Alaire Bowen from @SweetPorkComics



psuedofolio.tumblr.com



Yen Quach @yendraws



Spare Time Heroes Studio



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# SANA'S SKETCHES...

WINGED WOMAN



MAGE



Monkey King



SANA'S SKETCHES...

Queen face



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