

MARJORIE LIU
ISSUE 1

SANA TAKEDA



MONSTRESS



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ISSUE #1

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*It took three years
to find a name.
Another two years
to find the person.*

LADIES AND
GENTLEMAN, WE
BEGIN OUR
EVENING WITH LOT
EIGHT-ONE-NINE.
ARCANIC, BUT WITH
A *FULLY* HUMAN
APPEARANCE.

SEVENTEEN
YEARS OLD.
VIRGIN.

BIDDING WILL
START AT FIVE
PIECES OF
GOLD.

*And now
I'm here.*



I promised myself
I would never be in
this position again.

ARE YOU CERTAIN
SHE'S AN ARCANIC?
WE WOULDN'T WANT
TO BUY A *HUMAN*
BY MISTAKE. WE'RE
CRIMINALS, NOT
SAVAGES.

DON'T
BE SILLY,
SIR CONROY.
WOULD I EVER
SELL ONE
OF US?

BESIDES, YOU
KNOW THAT NOT
ALL ARCANICS
RESEMBLE MONSTERS.
WE PROVIDE SCOPES
IF YOU WISH TO
CONFIRM.

HMPH.

AND HER
MISSING ARM?
THAT BRAND?
EVEN IF SHE IS A
MONSTER, SHE'S
DEFORMED.

I thought I'd
rather die.

NO HUMAN HOUSE
DESIGNED THAT BRAND,
SIR CONROY. HER
OWN PEOPLE MARKED
HER. A BARBARIAN
RITUAL.

AS FOR HER
ARM? YES, IT'S
UNSIGHTLY. NOT
THAT MOST OF YOU
STILL HAVE ALL
YOUR LIMBS.

THE WAR TOOK
ITS TOLL. FOR
BOTH SIDES.

AND YET, LOOK
AT HER FACE.
WILD BEAUTY,
FOR YOUR *WILD*
TASTES.

I was
wrong.

Tuya says I've
lost my mind.

SO, SHALL
WE COMMENCE
WITH THE
BIDDING?

NO.
WE
SHALL
NOT.

I wish I
could tell
her...

...that's exactly what I'm trying to prevent.



MY LADY.

HOW MAY I SERVE THE CUMAEA?



YOU MAY DONATE THIS ARCANIC TO OUR ORDER.

AND THE FOX CUB, THE CYCLOPEAN FREAK, AND THE STUBBY ONE WITH THOSE USELESS WINGS.

OF COURSE, MY LADY.

...CORRUPT... ARROGANT NUNS... THINKING THEY RULE US... THIS IS NEUTRAL TERRITORY, GODDAMMIT...



SIR CONROY.

TWO MONTHS FROM NOW, YOUR WIFE IS GOING TO FIND YOU IN BED WITH ANOTHER MAN.

SOON AFTER YOU'LL BE FOUND STONE COLD DEAD. CURIOUSLY, NO ONE WILL BE CHARGED.

REFLECT ON THAT.



ILSA? HAVE THE ARCANICS SENT TO MY LAB AT THE CUMAEA COMPOUND.

AS YOU WISH, MY LADY.

CITY OF ZAMORA.

So much was destroyed during the war.

And yet some cities rebuilt themselves... as if nothing happened.

Too bad people don't rebuild themselves so easily.

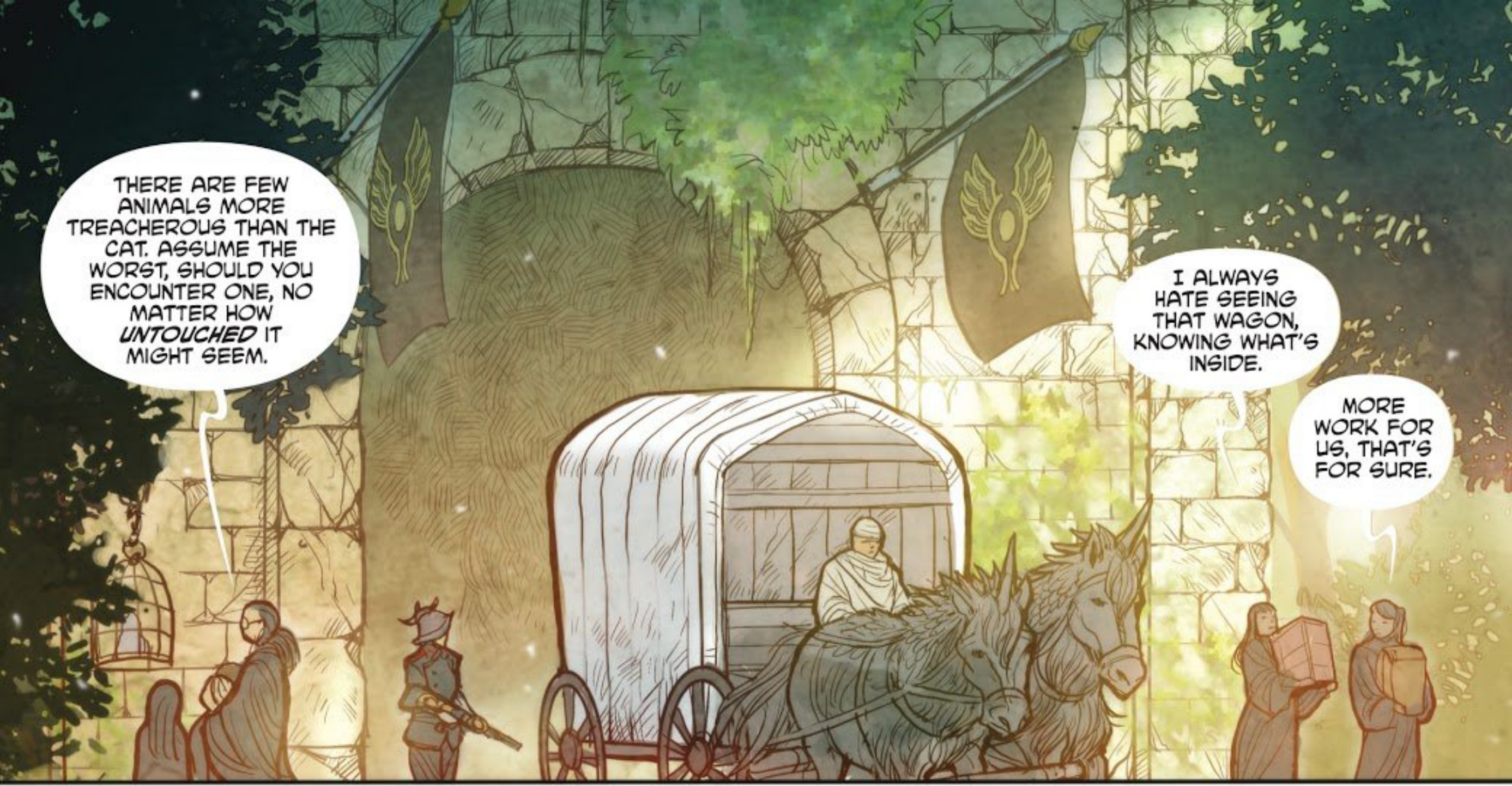
Only five years.

I've forgotten so much already.

I can't afford to forget the blood.

Or who spilled it.


COME, COME... YOU CUMAEA HIDE IN YOUR OUTPOST LIKE BANDITS! AT LEAST SPREAD SOME COIN AROUND.



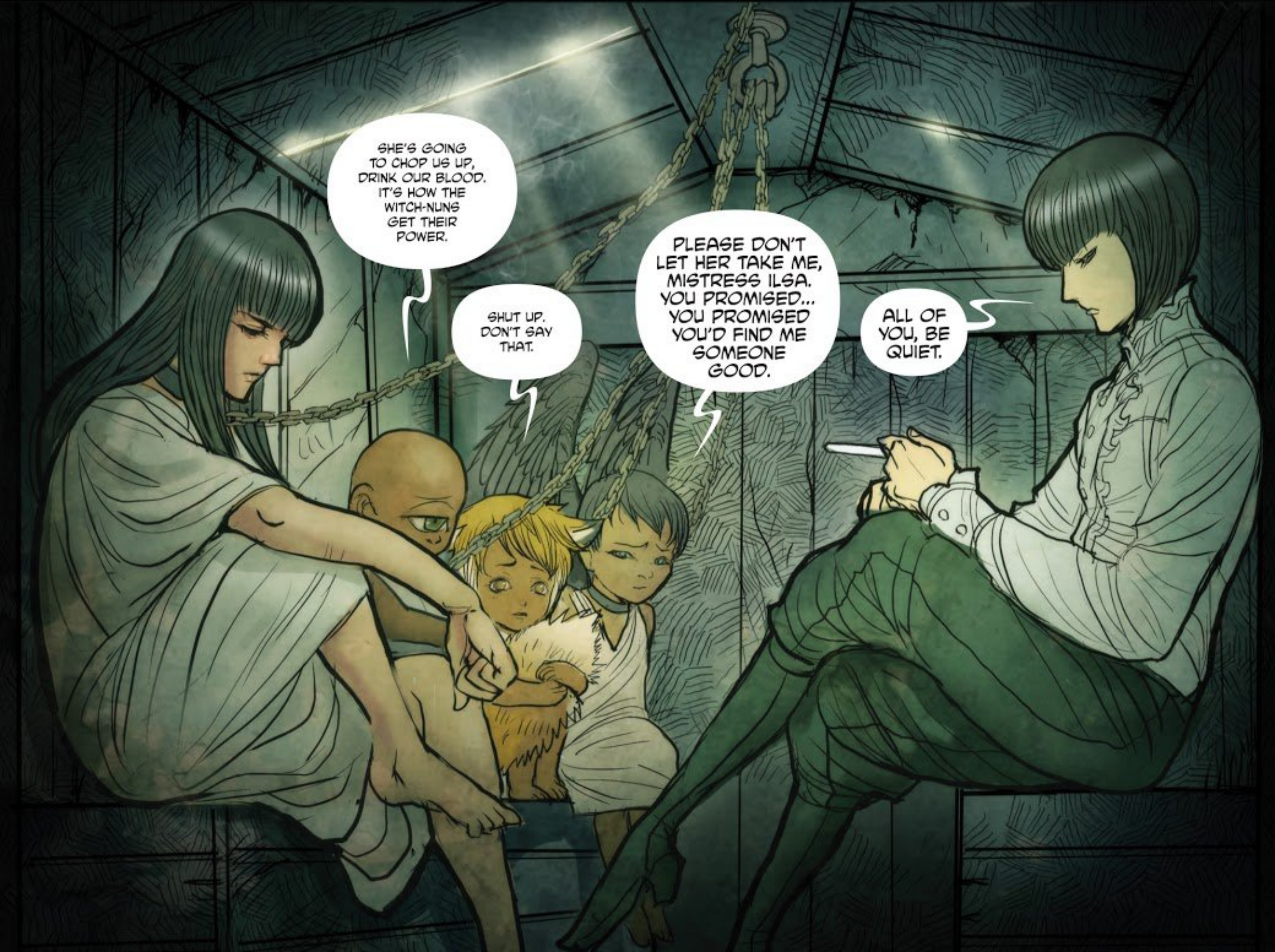
THERE ARE FEW ANIMALS MORE TREACHEROUS THAN THE CAT. ASSUME THE WORST, SHOULD YOU ENCOUNTER ONE, NO MATTER HOW *UNTOUCHED* IT MIGHT SEEM.

I ALWAYS HATE SEEING THAT WAGON, KNOWING WHAT'S INSIDE.

MORE WORK FOR US, THAT'S FOR SURE.



MANY A CUMAEA HAS LOST HER LIFE TO SUCH SPIES AND ASSASSINS.



SHE'S GOING TO CHOP US UP, DRINK OUR BLOOD. IT'S HOW THE WITCH-NUNS GET THEIR POWER.

SHUT UP. DON'T SAY THAT.

PLEASE DON'T LET HER TAKE ME, MISTRESS ILSA. YOU PROMISED... YOU PROMISED YOU'D FIND ME SOMEONE GOOD.

ALL OF YOU, BE QUIET.



WHAT, NO CRYING?

GOOD. SHE LIKES THEM BRAVE.

IS THAT WHY YOU ONLY DEAL IN CHILDREN?



WATCH YOUR FUCKING MOUTH. YOU'RE A SLAVE. AN ANIMAL PIECE OF SHIT ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE WALL. IF THERE WEREN'T A STALEMATE IN THE WAR, THERE WOULDN'T EVEN BE A WALL AND ALL YOU INHUMAN FREAKS WOULD BE IN CHAINS.



SHE'S GOING TO KILL YOU. EVEN AMONG THE CUMAEA, SOPHIA FEKETE IS KNOWN FOR HER KNIVES.

YES.

I NEVER WANT TO SEE THOSE KNIVES.



THAT'S YOUR CHOICE, ILGA.



YOU'RE
A BITCH,
MAIKA.

THUMP
THUMP

MA'AM,
WE'VE
ARRIVED.



SEND MY
BEST TO YOUR
DAUGHTER. JUST
IN CASE.

IF YOU
SURVIVE, YOU'LL
SEE HER
BEFORE I
DO.

IF YOU DON'T
SURVIVE...



...YOU'LL
PROBABLY STILL
SEE HER BEFORE
I EVER WILL.



HERE'S
THE LOT.

BE CAREFUL
OF THIS ONE.
SHE STILL
THINKS SHE'S
HUMAN.



NO!

FIGHTING
ONLY MAKES
IT WORSE.



BE SMART. BE
OBEDIENT.

THAT
MIGHT
KEEP YOU
ALIVE...



"...BUT NOTHING WILL KEEP YOU WHOLE."

"NOT IN THAT PLACE."



ATENA, YOU ARE SUCH A CHEAT. HOW DID YOU *EVER* COME UP WITH THAT ELEGANT SOLUTION TO THE MATSUKAWA QUESTION? I'VE BEEN TRYING TO SOLVE IT FOR YEARS.

SOPHIA, YOU HAVE YOUR TALENTS. AND NONE OF THEM INVOLVE MATH.



MY LADY.

THE NEW ACQUISITION, AS REQUESTED.



AH. SPLENDID.
ATENA, YOU MUST SEE THIS CURIOSITY.



YOU CAN LEAVE, GOU. GIVE RESAK HER FETTERS.

SHE'S MAIMED. FROM THE WAR, OR HARVEST?

IT DOESN'T MATTER.

SHOW US YOUR CHEST, GIRL.



I'VE SEEN THIS SYMBOL IN MY RESEARCH, BUT NEVER ON A PERSON.

SHE'S BEEN BRANDED BY ONE OF THOSE ARCANIC RELIGIOUS CULTS, THE KIND THAT WORSHIPS THOSE DEMONIC MONSTROSITIES.



OH, SOPHIA. NOT THIS AGAIN.

YOU PROMISED YOU WOULD STOP.

I SAID NO SUCH THING.



THE MONSTRA ARE JUST GHOSTS. UNNERVING, BUT *HARMLESS* APPARITIONS.

I TELL YOU, THEY CAN MANIFEST IN OUR WORLD. THE ARCANICS HAVE FOUND A WAY.

WHERE'S YOUR MATERIAL EVIDENCE? WHERE'S YOUR PROOF? THE CUMAEA HAVE STUDIED MONSTRA FOR A THOUSAND YEARS. NEVER ONCE HAVE THEY MATERIALIZED INTO FLESH AND BLOOD. NOR HARMED A LIVING BEING, DESTROYED A CITY -- PLUCKED THE PETALS OFF A FLOWER, EVEN. THEY DON'T *SEE* US, SOPHIA.

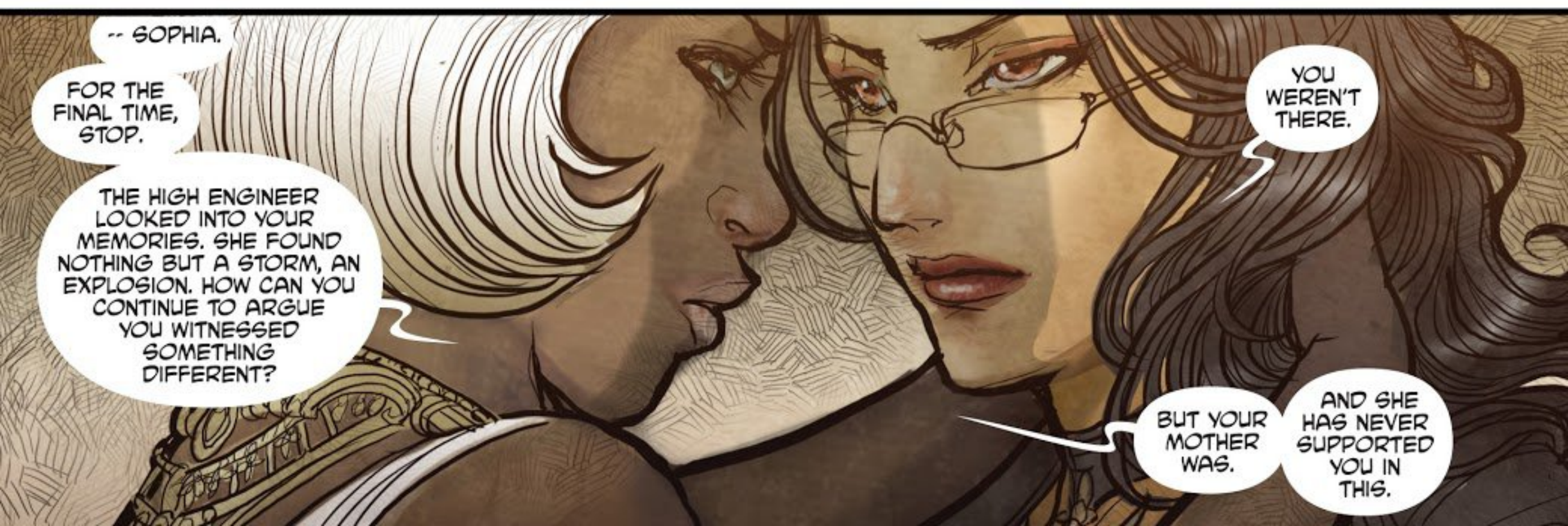


AND IF THE ARCANIC COULD SUMMON A MONSTRUM, DON'T YOU THINK THEY WOULD HAVE DONE SO BY NOW?

OOF!



FOR FUCK'S SAKE, THEY DID! AT THE BATTLE OF *CONSTANTINE*. I WAS AT THE BORDER, ATENA, I SAW --



-- SOPHIA.

FOR THE FINAL TIME, STOP.

THE HIGH ENGINEER LOOKED INTO YOUR MEMORIES. SHE FOUND NOTHING BUT A STORM, AN EXPLOSION. HOW CAN YOU CONTINUE TO ARGUE YOU WITNESSED SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

YOU WEREN'T THERE.

BUT YOUR MOTHER WAS.

AND SHE HAS NEVER SUPPORTED YOU IN THIS.



THE CUMAEA COUNCIL AGREED IT WAS NOTHING MORE THAN AN INCREDIBLY POWERFUL BOMB, MOST LIKELY DESIGNED BY THOSE TRAITORS.



IT *WAS* A BOMB.



WE TIED FIVE OF YOU WITCHES TOGETHER AND SET YOU ON FIRE.

AND YOU WENT UP... *REAL* NICE.



WE'LL USE *HER* TONIGHT.

"THIS IS THE WORST PLAN EVER."

ONE
MONTH
AGO.

FOR REAL,
MAIKA. YOU
ARE A LOCA.
ABSOLUTELY
LOQUISIMA.

I CAN'T BELIEVE
YOU'RE CONSIDERING
THIS. HUNDREDS OF
WITCHES, IN THE HEART
OF A CUMAEA
STRONGHOLD.

YOU WON'T
EVEN BE ABLE TO
PASS AS HUMAN, IF
YOU GET THE CHANCE.
THEY'LL TAKE ONE
LOOK AT YOU AND
KNOW.

ARE YOU LISTENING
TO ME? WE SURVIVED
THE WAR. WE MADE
LIVES FOR
OURSELVES.

DON'T MESS
THAT UP. THERE
ARE BETTER
WAYS.

BETTER,
BUT NOT
SHORTER,
TUYA.

THAT DOESN'T
MEAN YOU GO
ON A *SUICIDE*
MISSION.

MAIKA, PLEASE.
WHY ARE YOU
SUDDENLY IN SUCH
A RUSH?



THAT'S NOT
WHAT THIS IS.
SUICIDE, I
MEAN.

IT WOULDN'T
BE THE FIRST
TIME YOU'VE
TRIED TO KILL
YOURSELF.



I'M
SORRY.

BUT ONCE YOU'RE
IN, THEN WHAT? YOU
JUST ASK FOR THIS
WOMAN? NO ONE
GETS CLOSE TO HER.
NOT EVEN OTHER
CUMAEA.



I JUST NEED
TO GET INTO THE
COMPOUND. I'LL
FIGURE OUT
THE REST.

OH, GODS.
YOU THINK YOUR
"SPECIAL" POWER
WILL HELP YOU?
IT *NEVER*
WORKS.



IT DOES
WHEN I'M IN
TROUBLE.

LIKE
ALMOST
NEVER.



AND YOU'LL
BE SO
ALONE.

"MUST BE
STRANGE,
LOOKING
SO HUMAN.
LOCKED UP
IN A PLACE
LIKE THIS."

CA-CLINK
CA-CLINK

ALWAYS
THANKED THE
GOOD MARIUM
MY BLOOD
TESTED
PURE.

BUT I SUPPOSE
YOU ALREADY
RECONCILED YOURSELF
TO BEING AN ANIMAL.
MUST HAVE HURT
WHEN THAT ARM
CAME OFF.

CA-CLINK
CA-CLINK

CA-CLINK
CA-CLINK

I WONDER
WHAT YOU'LL
LOSE THIS
TIME?

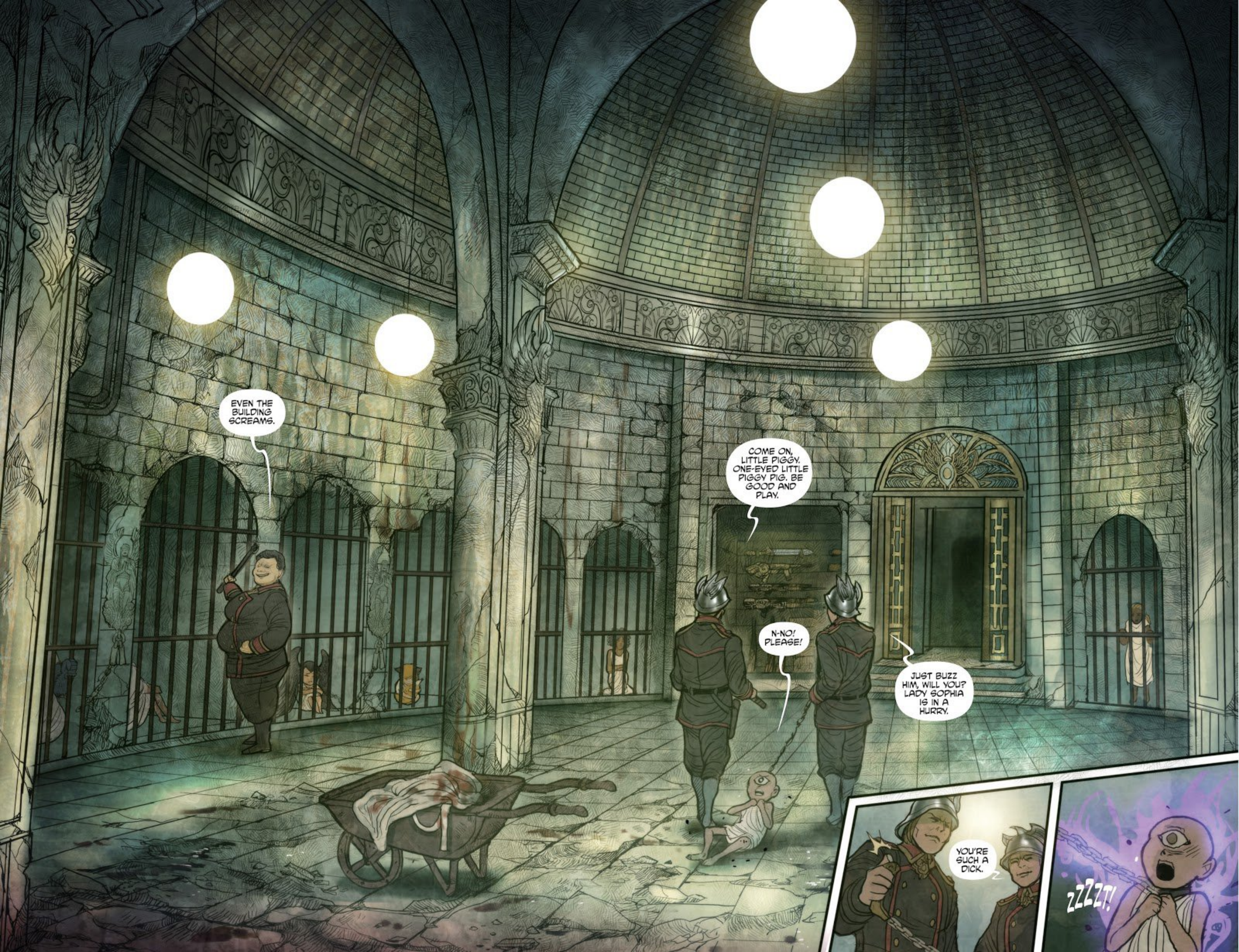
I CAN'T
WAIT TO FIND
OUT.



AH, HERE
WE GO. LADY
SOPHIA HAS
STARTED.



I LOVE
THESE
MOMENTS.



EVEN THE
BUILDING
SCREAMS.

COME ON,
LITTLE PIGGY.
ONE-EYED LITTLE
PIGGY PIG. BE
GOOD AND
PLAY.

N-NO!
PLEASE!

JUST BUZZ
HIM, WILL YOU?
LADY SOPHIA
IS IN A
HURRY.



YOU'RE
SUCH A
DICK.



zzzzzz!



YOU
LIKE TO
TALK.

WITH THOSE
WHO CAN. YOU KNOW
SOME OF YOUR
KIND DON'T SPEAK
HUMAN TOO
WELL.



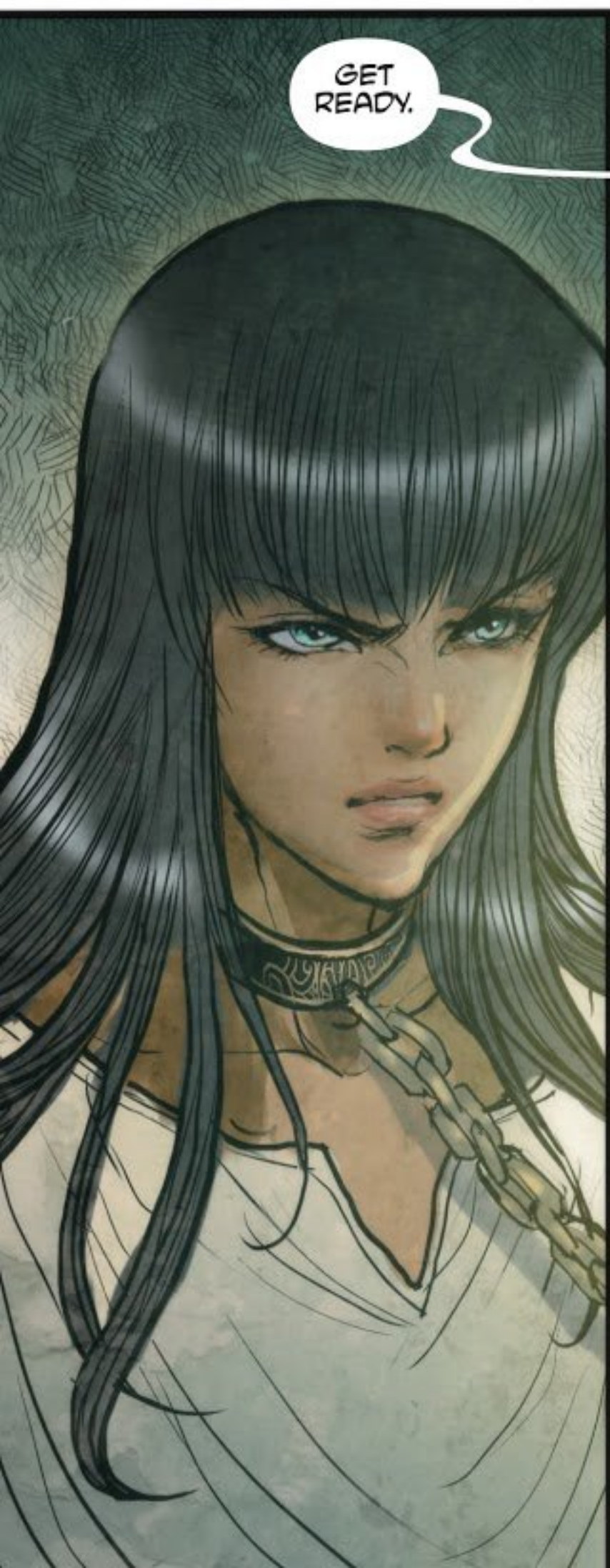
UNNH!
UNNH!

NOTHING
BUT THOSE
RUTTING
GRUNTS.

SOMETIMES
I FUCK THEM WITH
THIS CATTLE PROD
SO THEY MAKE
A BETTER
SOUND.



MAYBE
YOU'LL
MAKE THAT
SOUND.



GET
READY.



YOUR NIGHT
IS GOING
TO BE VERY
LONG.



OPEN.

ONE
MONTH
AGO.

OPEN.

OPEN.

WILL YOU
JUST
STOP?

NO. I
WON'T.

THEY'RE
GOING TO
PUT A
COLLAR ON
YOU.

YOU
REMEMBER
WHAT THAT WAS
LIKE, DON'T
YOU?

THIS IS
DIFFERENT. LIKE
CONSTANTINE.
YOU REMEMBER
THAT, DON'T
YOU?

ALL I
KNOW IS THAT
I WASTED A
BUNCH OF
MONEY ON A
LOCK YOU CAN'T
OPEN, EVEN
AFTER A WEEK
OF STARING
AT IT.





YOUR
PLAN SEEMS
ILL-ADVISED,
YOUNG
MAIKA.

FEW ESCAPE
THE CUMAEA.
I KNOW THAT
PERSONALLY.



TO
QUOTE THE
POETS--

I DON'T
LIKE
POETRY.



LIAR.



STOP FOLLOWING US.
I DON'T LIKE STRANGE
CATS. I NEVER KNOW
WHAT YOUR KIND
WANT.

MAYBE ORPHANS
SEEK OTHER ORPHANS.
MAYBE THE NIGHT IS
COLD. MAYBE WE ARE
ALL REFUGEES.



OR MAYBE
I JUST LIKE A
MYSTERY.

YOU TALK TOO
MUCH. GO AWAY.
OR ELSE I'LL
HAVE TUYA GET
HER EAGLE ON
YOU.



EAGLES
DON'T EAT
CATS.



Eagles will eat cats.



Eagles will eat anything if they're hungry enough.



We all do.

Here's something the poets say:

"There's more hunger in the world than love."

When we were slaves, we knew endless hunger.

HRRF!
HRRF!

HRRF!
HRRF!

HRRF!
HRRF!

HRRF!
HRRF!

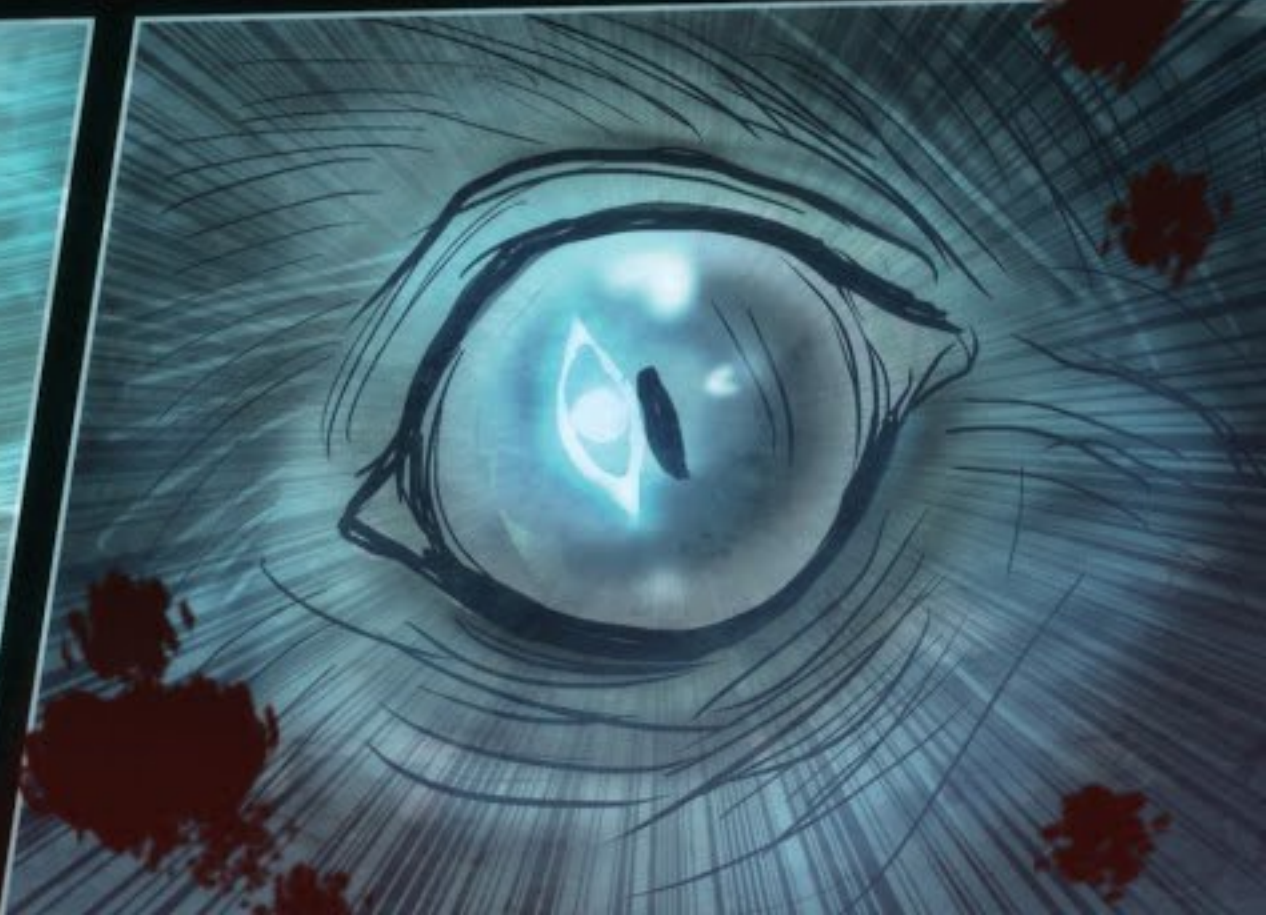
What I feel now is worse.




Why can't I stop it?


Why don't I want to?



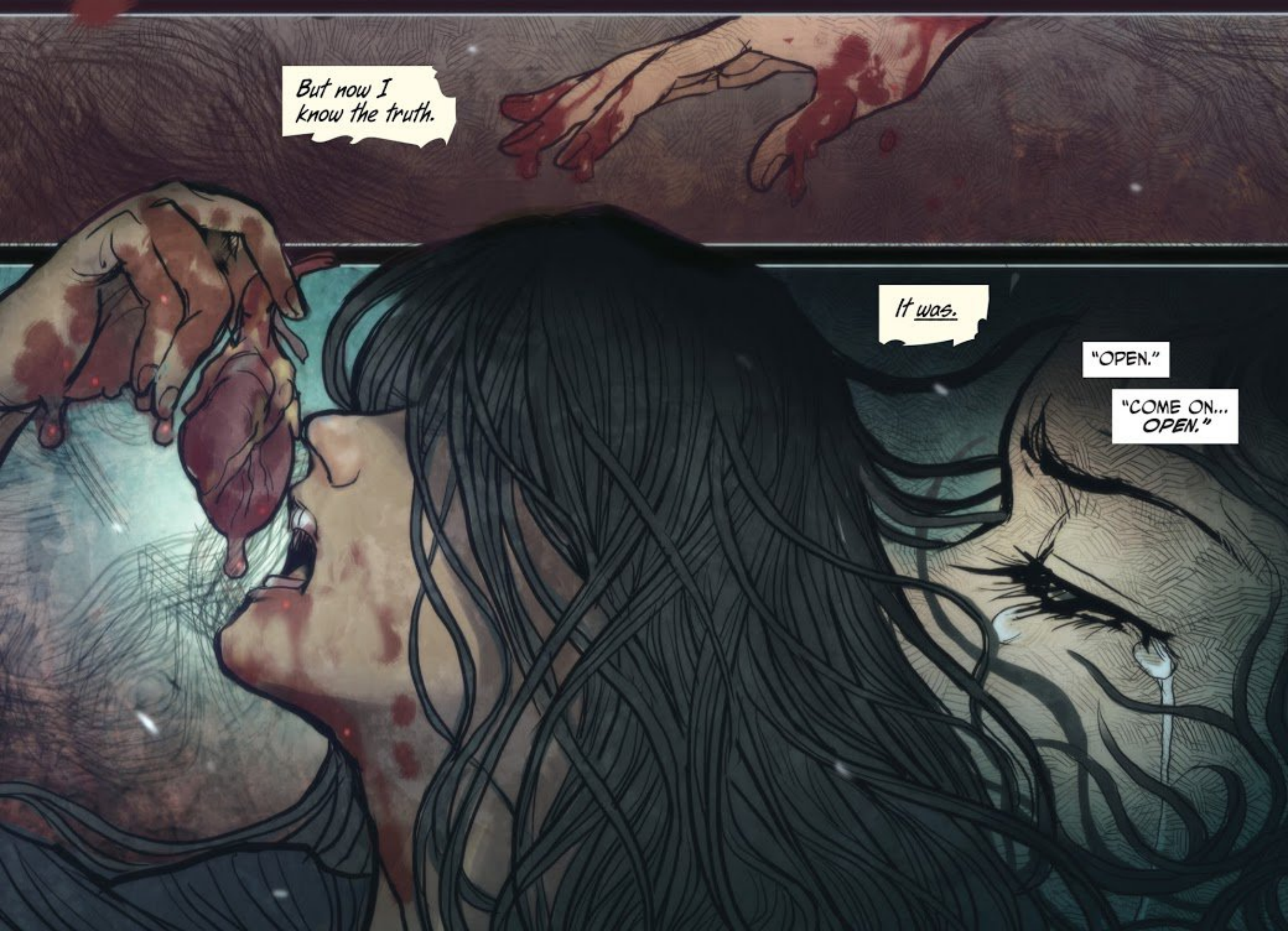




When we were slaves
and starving, we once
ate the contents of a
dead boy's stomach.



We said it wasn't
like eating the boy.



But now I
know the truth.

It was.

"OPEN."

"COME ON...
OPEN."



OPEN.
OPEN. OPEN.
OPEN.



OPEN.

PLEASE DON'T
LET THEM TAKE MY
SOUL PLEASE
DON'T LET THEM
TAKE MY SOUL...

THEY CAN'T
TAKE YOUR SOUL,
KIPPA. NO WITCH
CAN DO THAT.

HE'S
RIGHT.



THEY'LL JUST TAKE OTHER
THINGS. LIKE YOUR PRETTY
EARS AND YOUR
FINE TAIL.

THEY'LL USE
YOU FOR PARTS.
THEY'LL TORTURE
YOU. EVENTUALLY
YOU'LL BE
DEAD.



AND YOUR
CORPSE WILL
MAKE THEIR
LILUM.



LOOK.

≡GASP≡

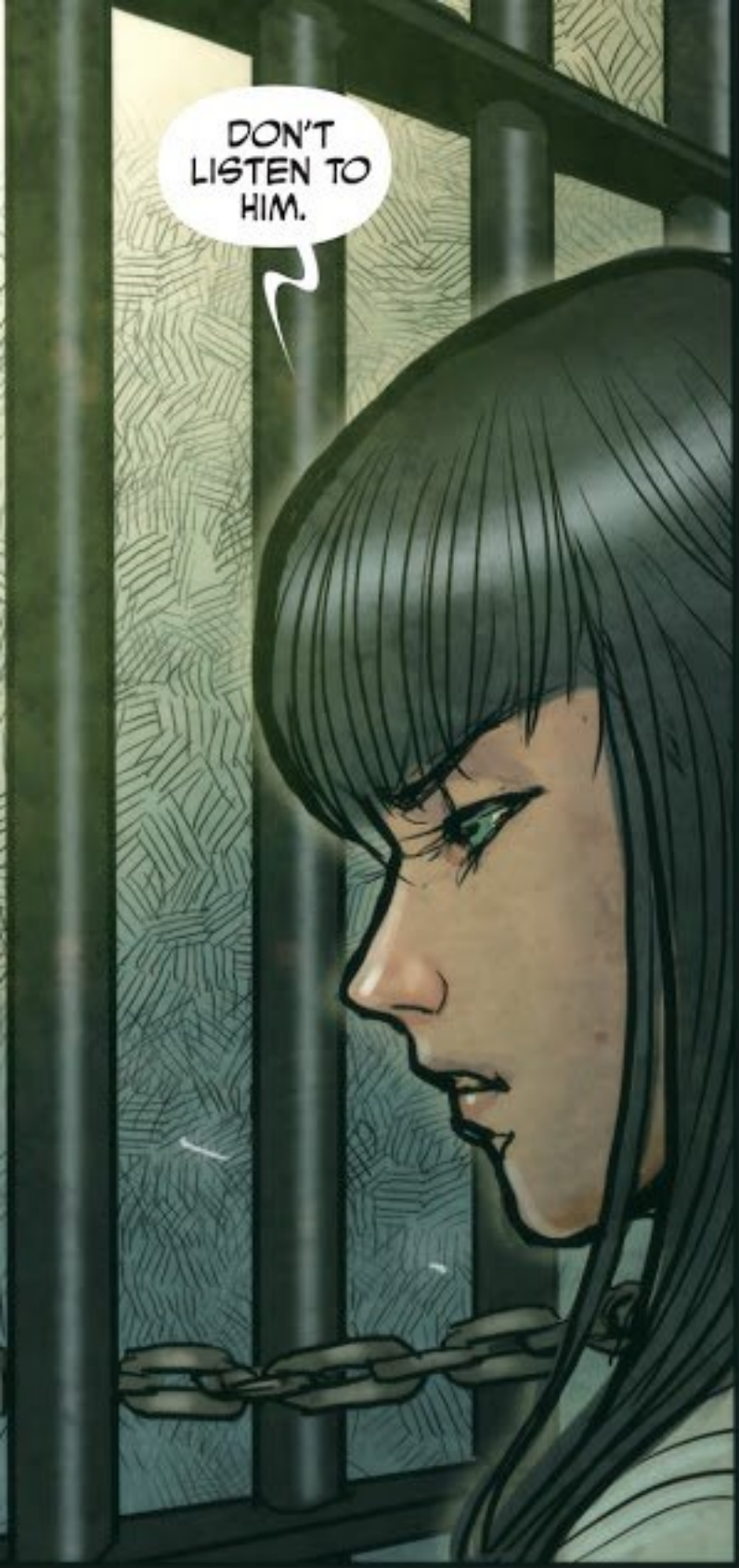


MY HEAD
IS NEXT.

I SHOULD
JUST GIVE
IT TO THEM
NOW.



YOU *ALL*
SHOULD DIE
RIGHT NOW.
BEFORE THEY
COME FOR
YOU.



DON'T
LISTEN TO
HIM.



NO, LISTEN.
LISTEN.

I'LL DO
IT *FOR* YOU.
I'LL SAVE
YOU.

I'LL BREAK
THESE BARS AND
TAKE YOUR HEAD
BEFORE THEY
CAN.



I'M
STRONG.
I'LL
SAVE --



-- *NNNNNGH!* --
YOU.



-- *NNNNNGH!* --
I'LL SAVE --



-- *NNNNNGH!* --



NO,
STOP!

STOP!

-- *NNNNNGH!* --



-- *NNNNNGH!* --

LITTLE FOX
AND BIRD. KEEP
YOUR EARS
COVERED.



NNNGH!



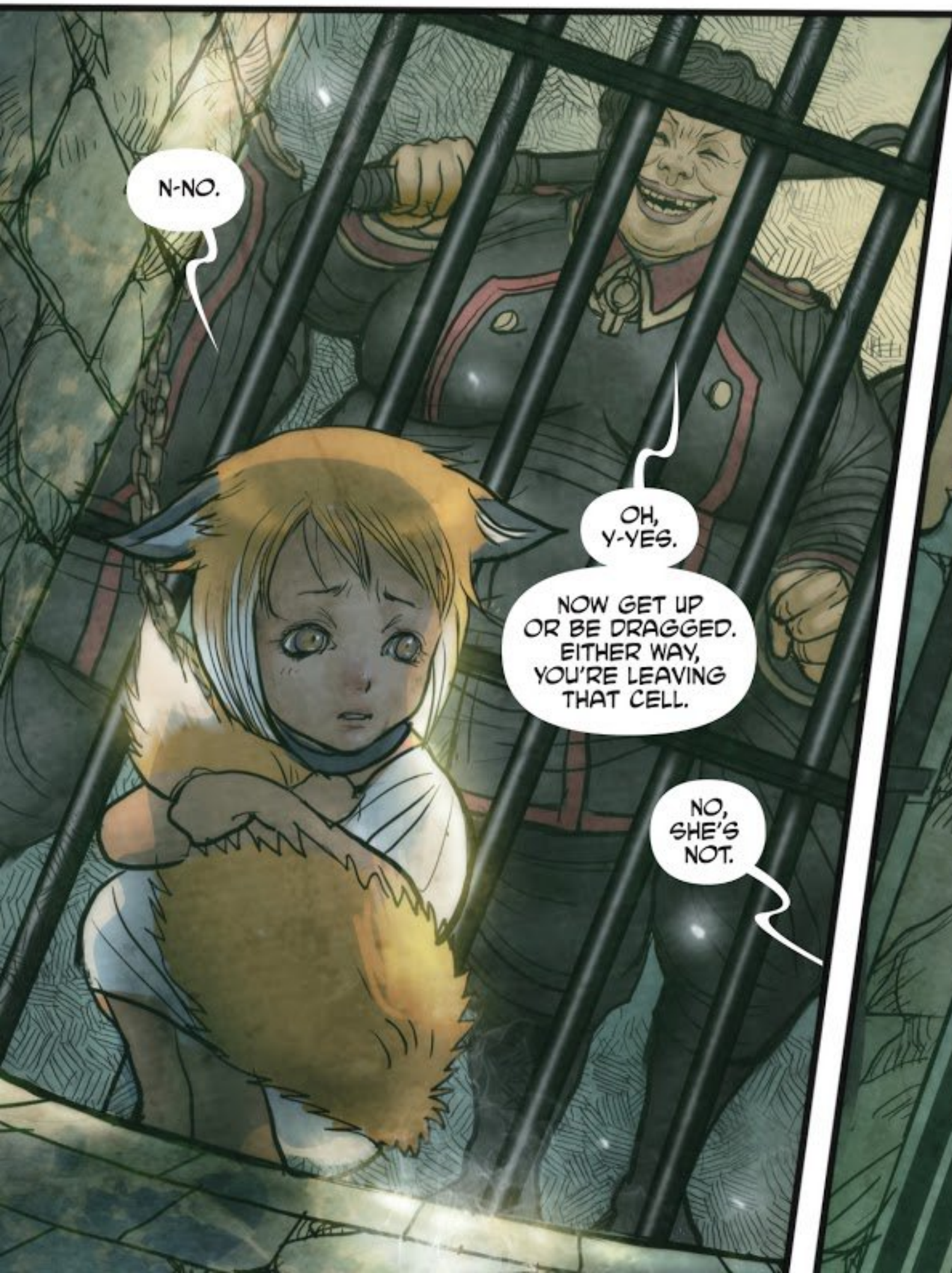
OPEN.

FUCK.



YOU TWO, START
CLEANING THAT
MESS. AND DON'T
THROW AWAY THE BODY.
LADY SOPHIA MIGHT
HAVE SOME USE
FOR IT.

I'LL TAKE
THE NEXT
WINNER.



N-NO.

OH,
Y-YES.

NOW GET UP
OR BE DRAGGED.
EITHER WAY,
YOU'RE LEAVING
THAT CELL.

NO,
SHE'S
NOT.



YOU'RE
GOING TO
TAKE ME.

YOU
DISGUSTING,
MISERABLE,
FILTHY, PIG.



CHANGE OF PLANS, BOYS.
BRING THE FOX
TO LADY
SOPHIA.



I HAVE
OTHER
WORK TO
DO.



AAAAHHHHH!!

ZZZZRTT



NNNGGGH..

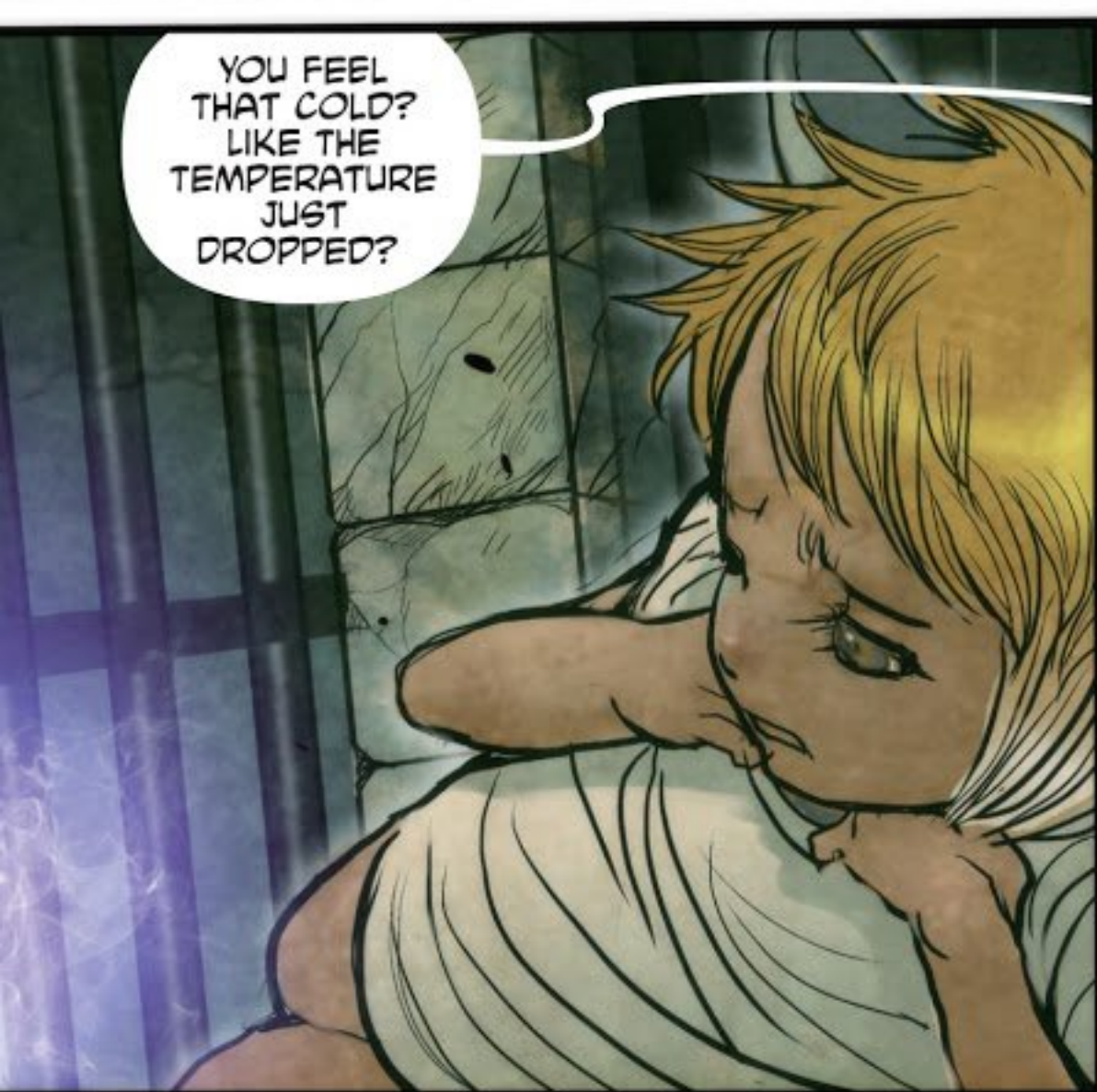


HEH. LET'S
HEAR YOU
MOUTH OFF
AGAIN.



LET ME GO!

KIPPA...
DON'T
FIGHT
THEM...



YOU FEEL
THAT COLD?
LIKE THE
TEMPERATURE
JUST
DROPPED?



DON'T
PASS OUT
QUITE
YET.

I NEED TO
KNOW IF YOU'RE
STRONG ENOUGH
TO TAKE ONE
MORE, LITTLE
ONE.



... FUCK...
YOU...



HMMM?
WAS THAT
A YES?



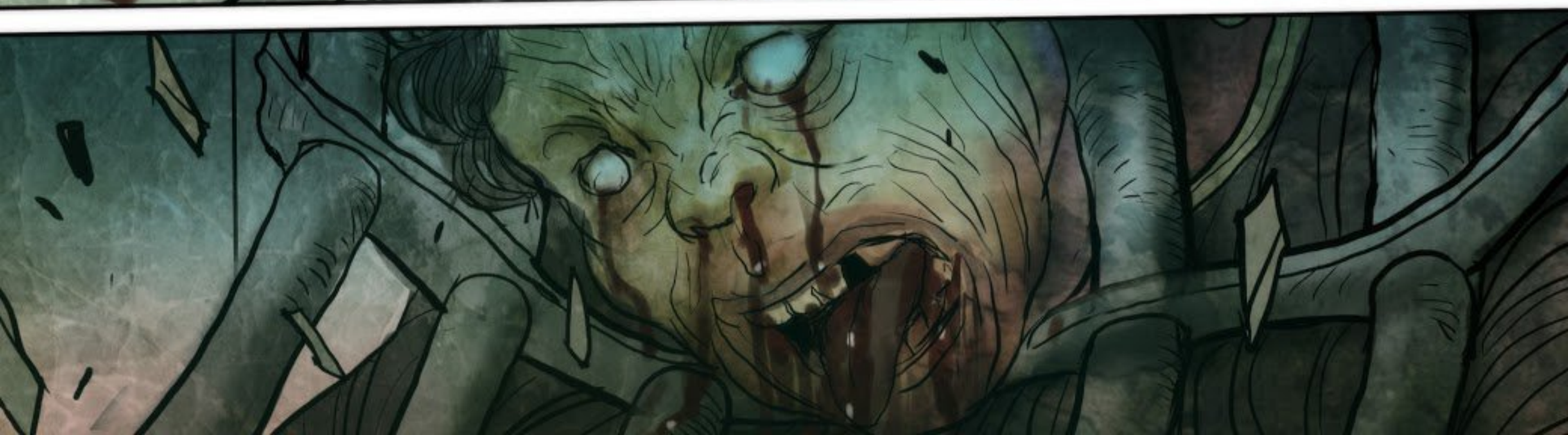
ZZZZZZZZ

ZZZZZZZZ
RRRTT

AAAAHHHHH

AAAAAAAAAAAA!

WRRRNICCH





...FINALLY...



OH, G-GODDESS...

WHAT THE HELL?

MY COLLAR... MY COLLAR IS GONE...



SHE KILLED THE BAD WOMAN.

DON'T LOOK, KIPPA.



SHE DID IT WITH HER MIND.

SHE -- SHE SAVED ME.



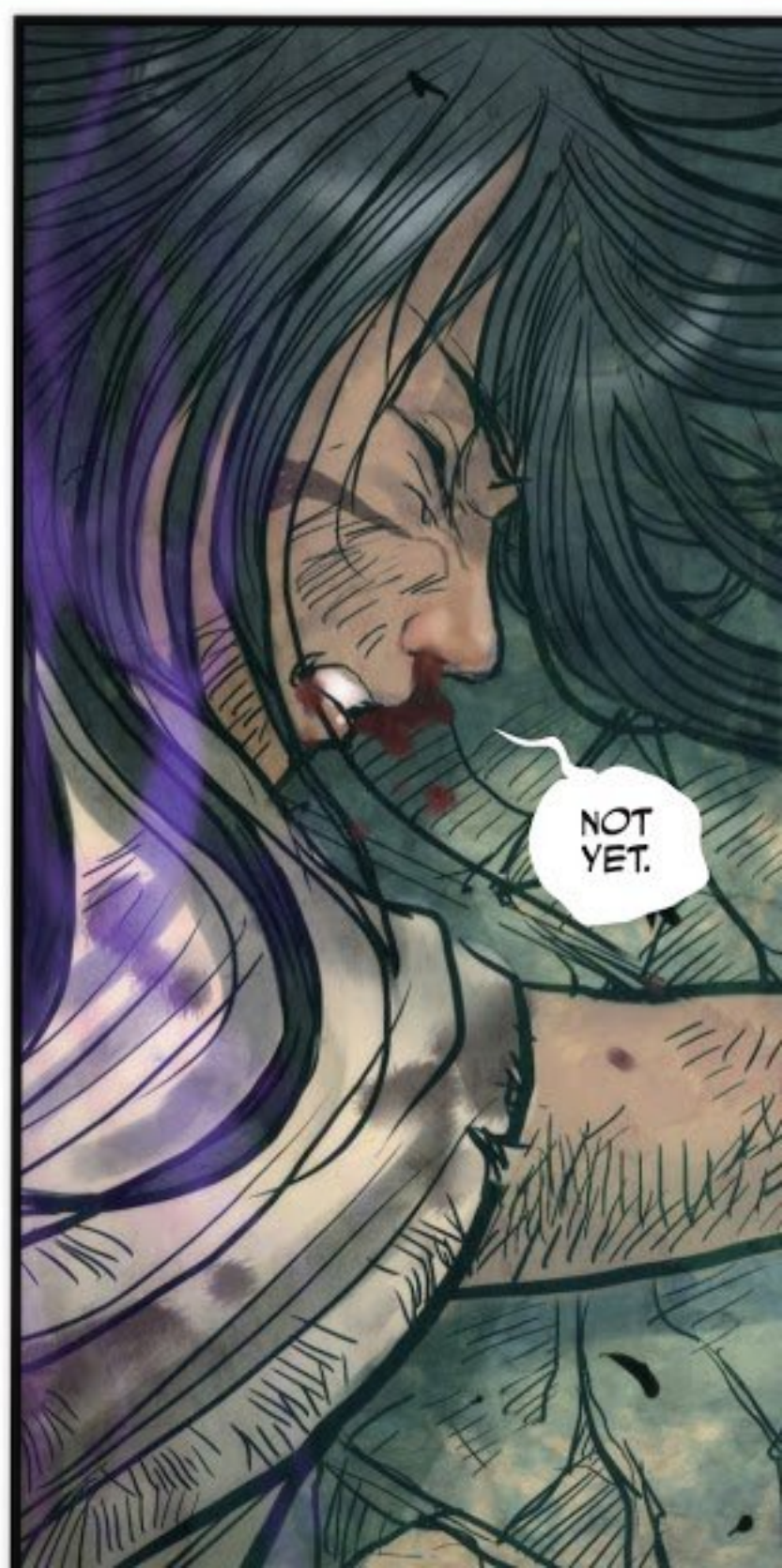
IT'S A WITCH TRICK.

THE TRICK WHERE THEY RIP OFF OUR CELL DOORS AND KILL THEIR OWN PEOPLE? SHUT UP.

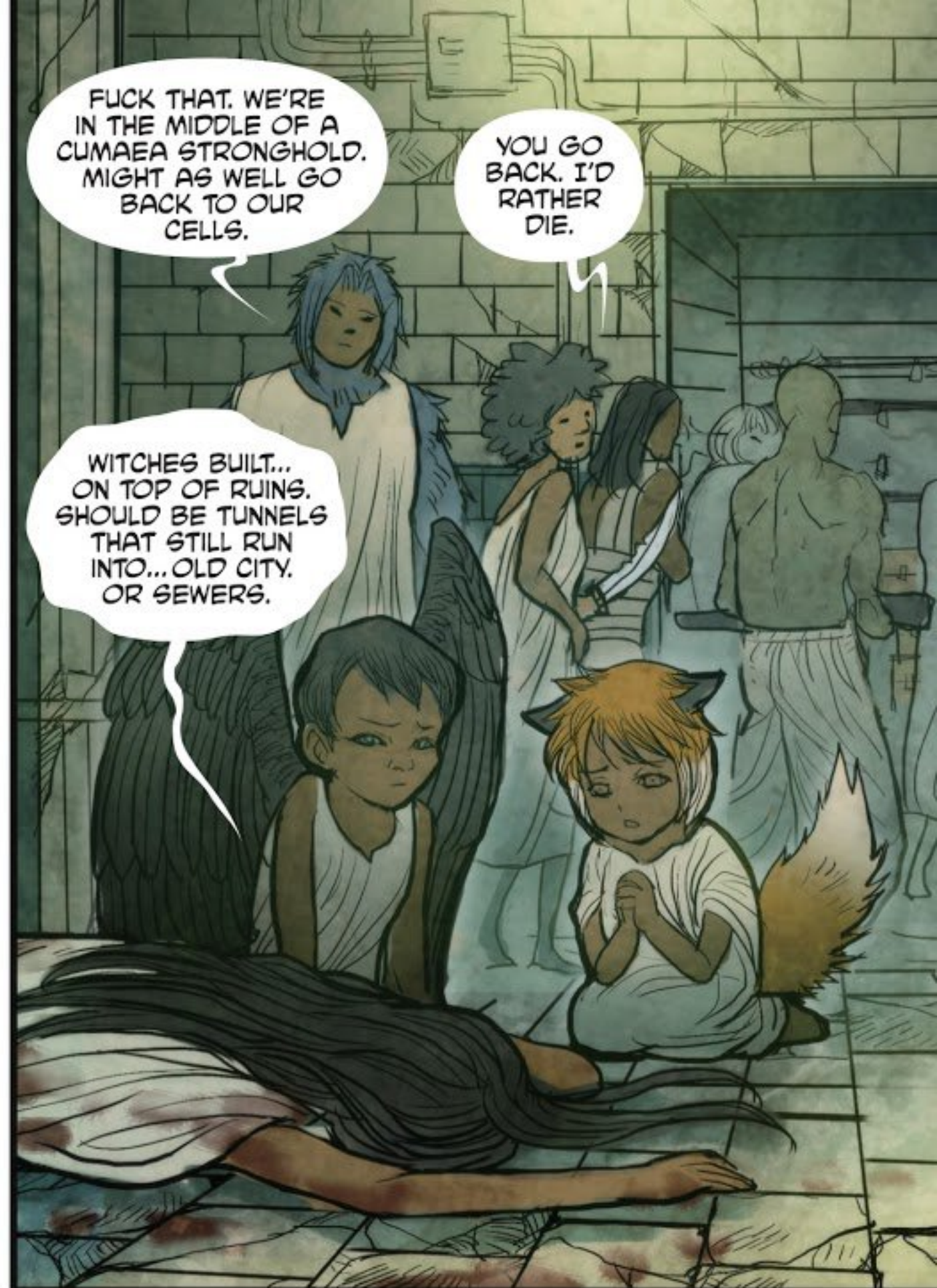
HOW DID SHE DO IT?

HOW DO YOU KNOW IT WAS HER?

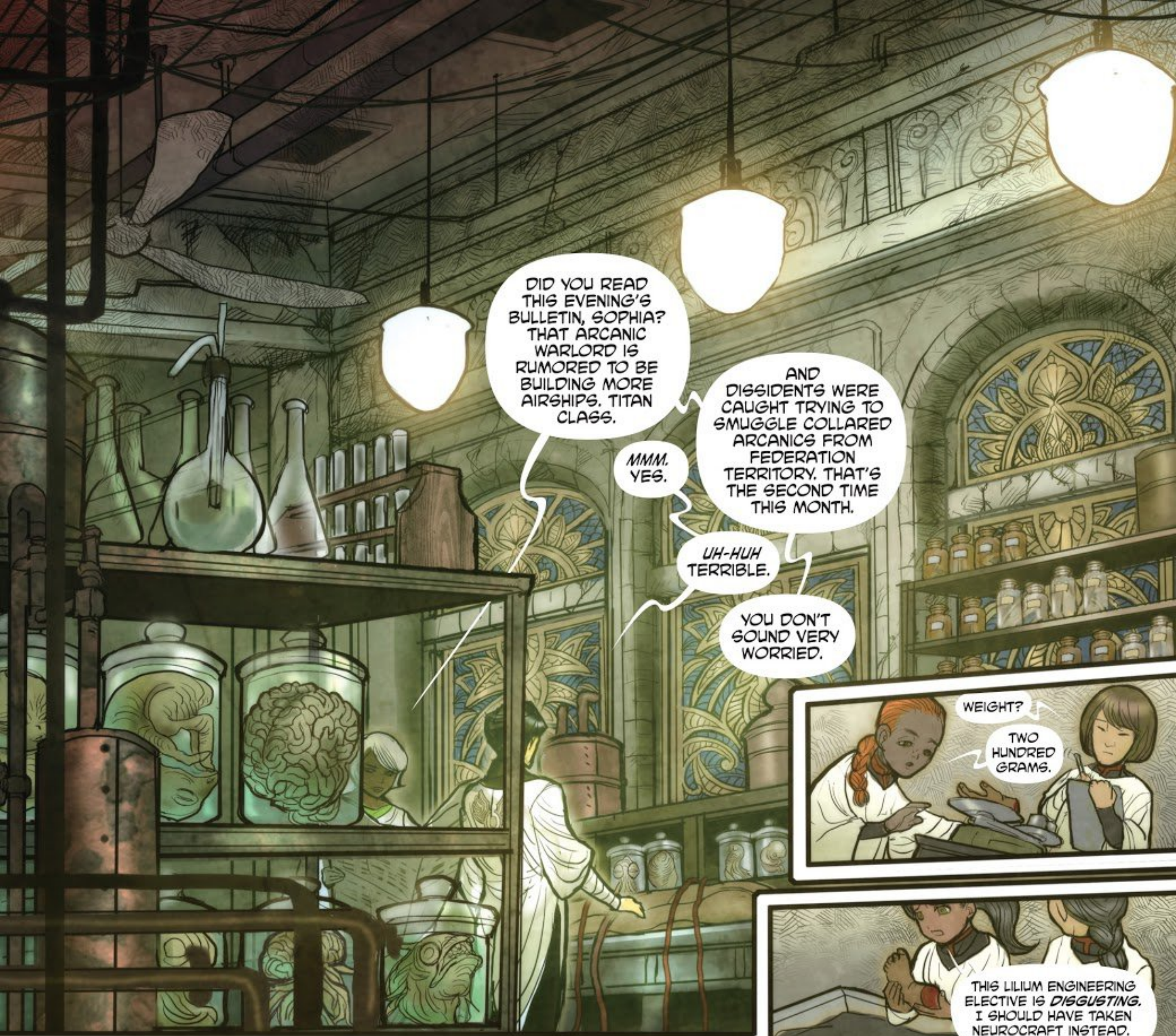
IS SHE DEAD?



NOT YET.







DID YOU READ THIS EVENING'S BULLETIN, SOPHIA? THAT ARCANIC WARLORD IS RUMORED TO BE BUILDING MORE AIRSHIPS. TITAN CLASS.

MMM. YES.

AND DISSIDENTS WERE CAUGHT TRYING TO SMUGGLE COLLARED ARCANICS FROM FEDERATION TERRITORY. THAT'S THE SECOND TIME THIS MONTH.

UH-HUH TERRIBLE.

YOU DON'T SOUND VERY WORRIED.



WEIGHT?

TWO HUNDRED GRAMS.



THIS LILIUM ENGINEERING ELECTIVE IS *DISGUSTING*. I SHOULD HAVE TAKEN NEUROCRAFT INSTEAD.



IT'S A DISTRACTION FROM MY RESEARCH AND MY WORK IS THE REASON YOU'RE HERE, ISN'T IT?

ONE OF THE REASONS.

THE FEDERATION ISN'T READY FOR ANOTHER WAR. IF THE ARCANICS ATTACK, NOT EVEN WE CUMAEANS COULD STOP THEM. WE'RE STILL WEAK, AND OUR NOVICES ... ARE YOUNG.



SOFT AND NAÏVE, YOU MEAN.



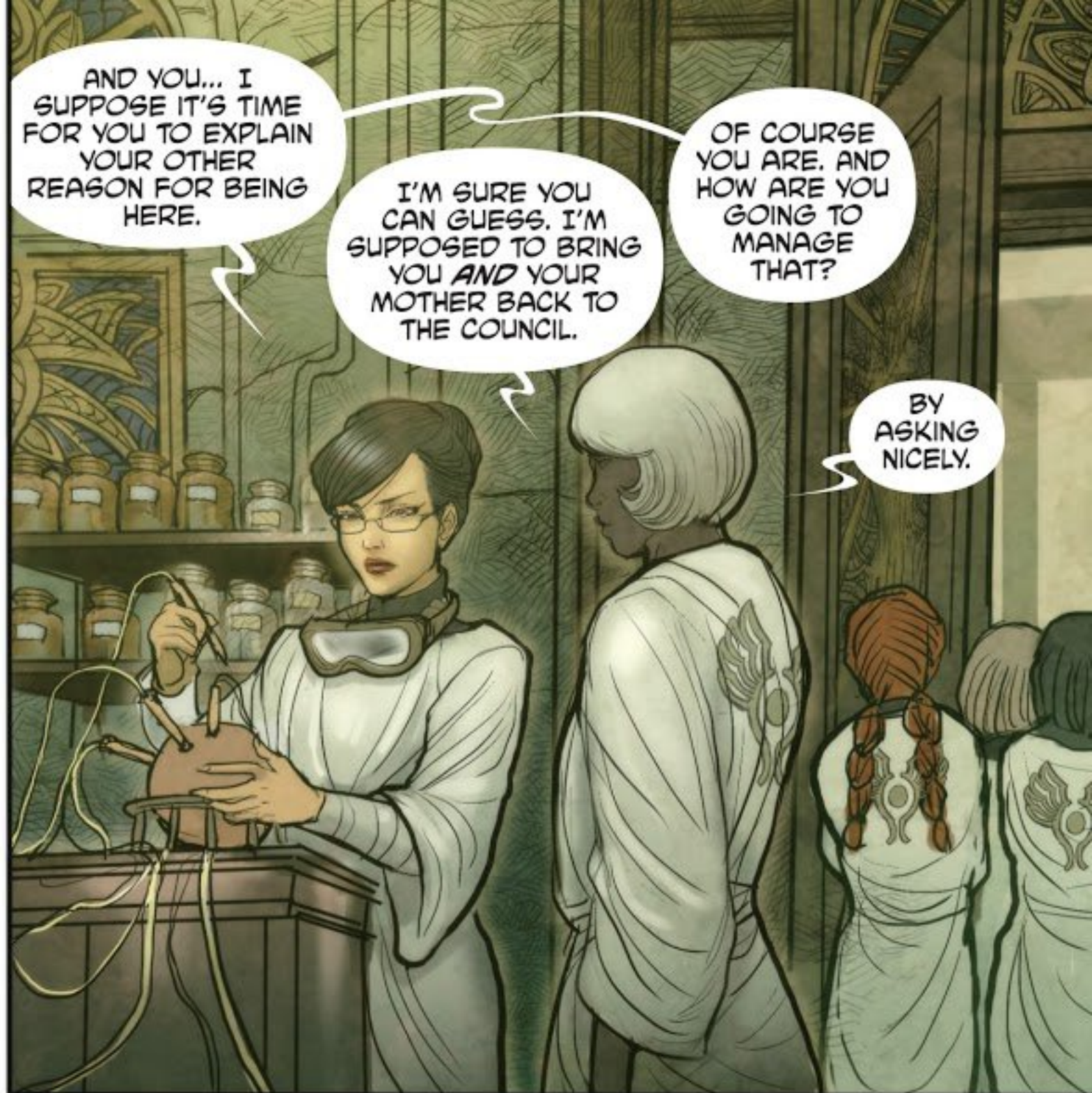
TAKE THESE TO MY MOTHER. DON'T DILLY DALLY. THEY NEED TO BE WARM OR SHE'LL COMPLAIN.

OH, GODDESS. YOU MEAN, *THAT* PART IS TRUE? I THOUGHT IT WAS A DISGUSTING RUMOR.

MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS, ATENA.



YOUNG LADIES!
FINISH BURYING
THOSE RENDERS
AND GET OUT. LAB
IS DISMISSED
FOR THE DAY.



AND YOU... I
SUPPOSE IT'S TIME
FOR YOU TO EXPLAIN
YOUR OTHER
REASON FOR BEING
HERE.

I'M SURE YOU
CAN GUESS. I'M
SUPPOSED TO BRING
YOU *AND* YOUR
MOTHER BACK TO
THE COUNCIL.

OF COURSE
YOU ARE. AND
HOW ARE YOU
GOING TO
MANAGE
THAT?

BY
ASKING
NICELY.



HA.

ME,
THAT'S
ONE
THING.

BUT MY MOTHER?
AS FAR AS THE
COUNCIL IS
CONCERNED, SHE'S
LONG DEAD. FOR
GOOD REASON,
IN MY OPINION.



WISHFUL THINKING. BUT
THEY'RE NOT *THAT* STUPID.
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF
TIME BEFORE THE WAR
BEGINS AGAIN. THEY NEED
YOU BOTH. EVEN IF
YOUR MOTHER IS...
UNPREDICTABLE.

FUCK
THEM.

SOPHIA,
SENDING ME WAS
A NICETY. YOU
DON'T WANT THEM
DISPATCHING AN
INQUISITRIX.

I'D
FEEL SORRY
FOR THE
INQUISITRIX.



PLEASE. EITHER YOU COMPEL
YOUR MOTHER TO OBEY, OR
THE COUNCIL WILL --

SOMETHING'S
WRONG.



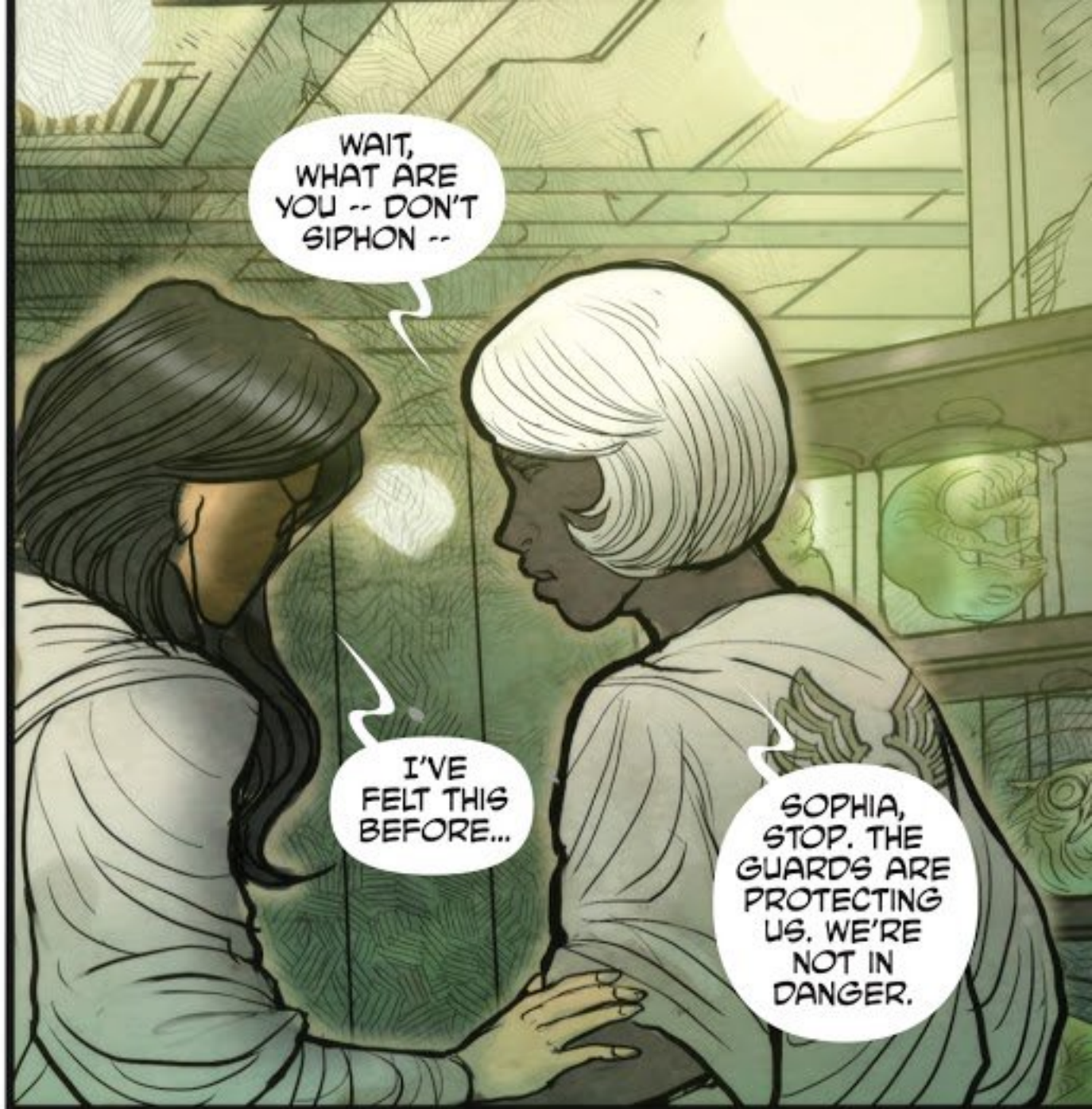
WE'RE IN
DANGER.

MY
LADIES!



ARCANICS HAVE ESCAPED
FROM ALL HOLDING CELLS
IN SECTIONS ONE, TWO,
AND THREE.

WE'RE DEALING
WITH A FIREFIGHT IN
THE LOWER LEVEL.
WE WANT ALL CUMAEA
UNDER LOCKDOWN
FOR THEIR
PROTECTION.





LADY SOPHIA, YOU AND I NEED TO TALK.

IT WON'T TAKE LONG.



YOU FUCKING ANIMAL.

AIYEEEEEE...



WE'RE GOING TO SKIN YOU ALIVE.

...EEEEEE...



I THINK WE SHOULD NEGOTIATE.

...EEEEEE...

THUMP



YOU
KNOW WHAT?
NEVER MIND
TALKING.

FWOOSH

IT WAS
YOU.

click

IT WAS
YOU, WASN'T
IT?

I CAN
FEEL IT. THAT
BRAND ON
YOUR -

YES.

AAAAA!

I LIKE YOU
BETTER ON
FIRE.

YOU
CAN'T... KILL
ME... THAT
EASILY.

DO YOU
KNOW... WHO
I AM?

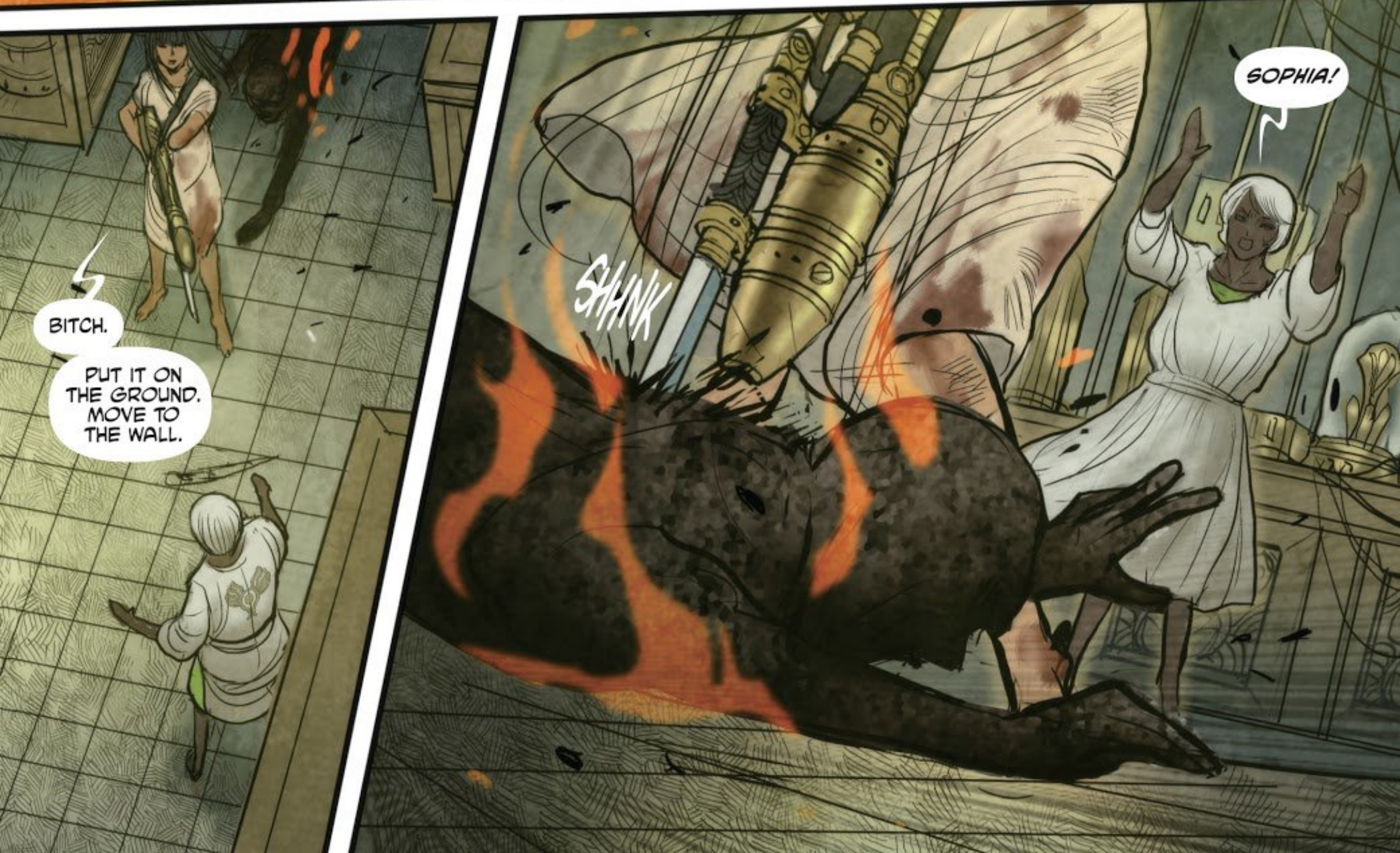
A
WITCH!

FWOOSH

WITCHES
ALL BURN
THE SAME.

NOOOO...

THUD





WHAT
DO YOU
WANT?

ONE SIMPLE
ANSWER TO
A VERY SIMPLE
QUESTION.



WHERE
IS SHE?



I DON'T --

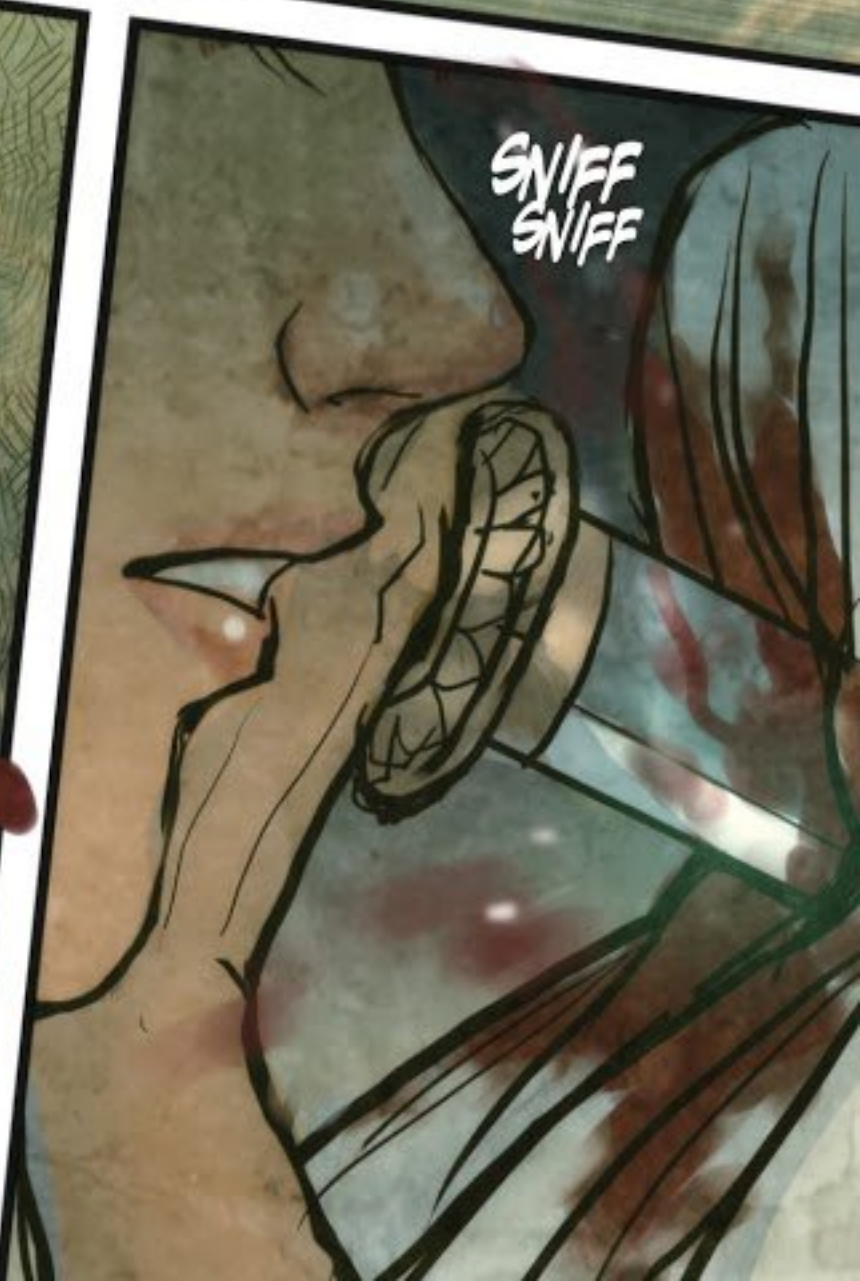


SKKRCH



I WON'T
ASK
AGAIN.

AAAGH!



SNIFF
SNIFF



MISS?

ARE YOU
STILL ALIVE
IN THERE?

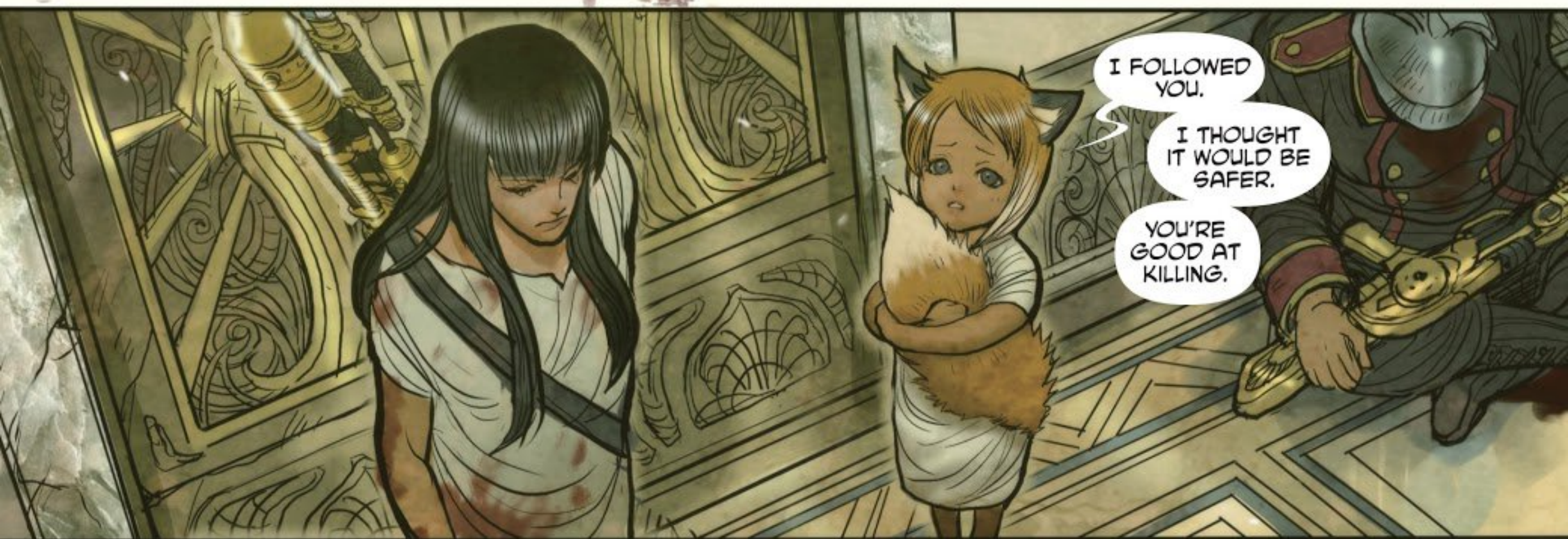


MORE OR
LESS.

AACHH!



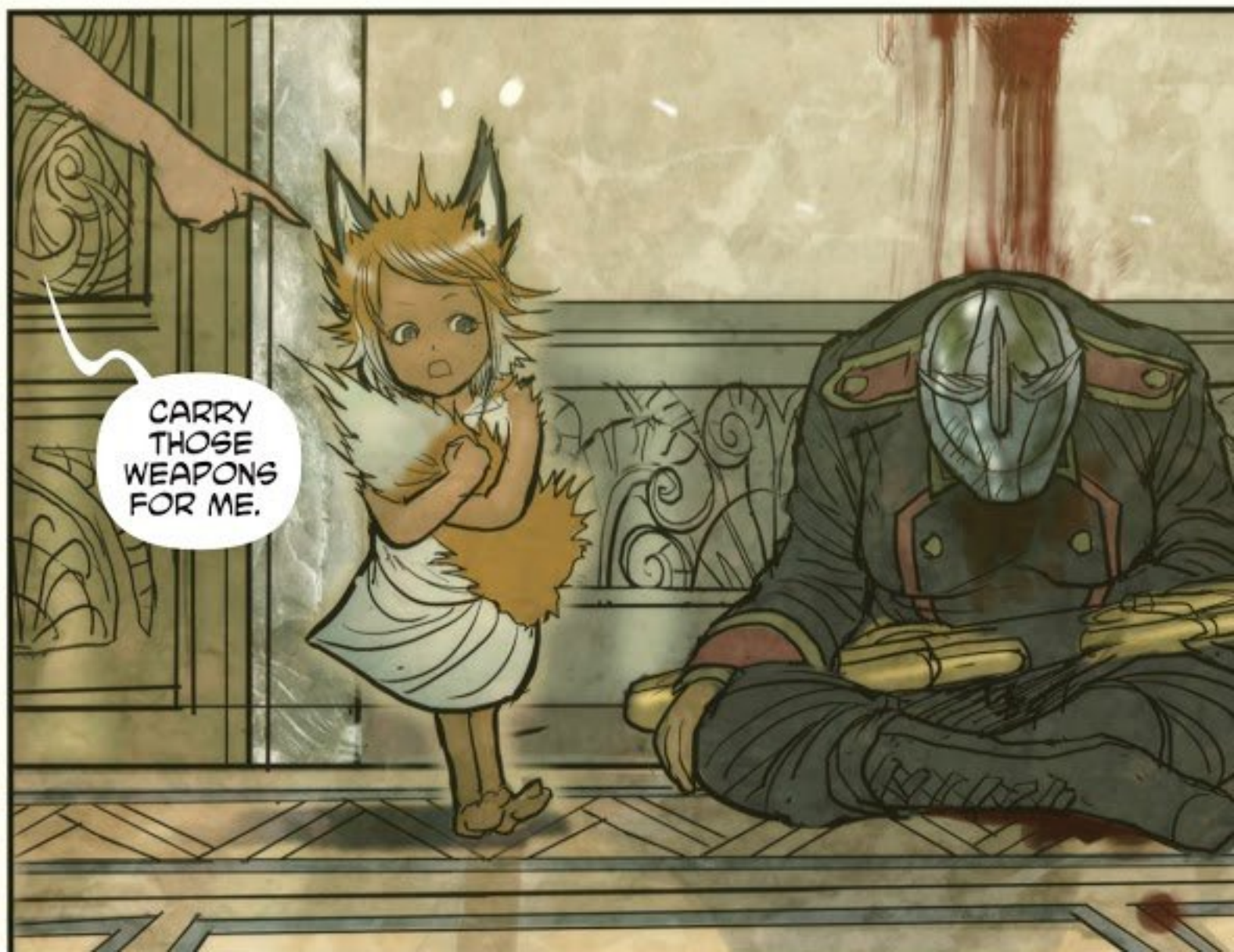
WHAT ARE
YOU DOING
HERE, LITTLE
FOX?



I FOLLOWED
YOU.

I THOUGHT
IT WOULD BE
SAFER.

YOU'RE
GOOD AT
KILLING.



CARRY
THOSE
WEAPONS
FOR ME.



I'M
NOT A
FOOL.



GUARDS DON'T
USUALLY POUR MY
TEA AND HOVER
OUTSIDE MY DOOR.
YOU AND THE
OTHERS ACT LIKE
HENS BEFORE A
CLEAVER.

IT'S NOTHING,
MY LADY. A MINOR
DISTURBANCE.

THE FULL
MOON ALWAYS
BRINGS THE
WORST OUT OF
THE ARCANICS.



VZZVZZ

THE GODDESS
BE DAMNED. MY
DAUGHTER MUST
BE OUTDOING
HERSELF
TONIGHT.

OR IS
THIS PART OF
YOUR LUNAR
DISTURBANCE?



PLEASE
EXCUSE ME,
MY LADY



I NEED
TO CHECK WITH
THE OTHERS.
WHATEVER HAPPENS, I
MUST ASK THAT YOU
NOT OPEN THE DOOR
TO ANYONE
BUT US.

DO I
EVER?



HMMM.



THUDD



I DIDN'T
WANT TO
KILL HER...

...BUT SHE
INSISTED.



YVETTE
LO LIM.

IT'S
BEEN
A LONG
TIME.



I BURIED
THAT NAME
YEARS AGO.
BURIED IT
DEAD.

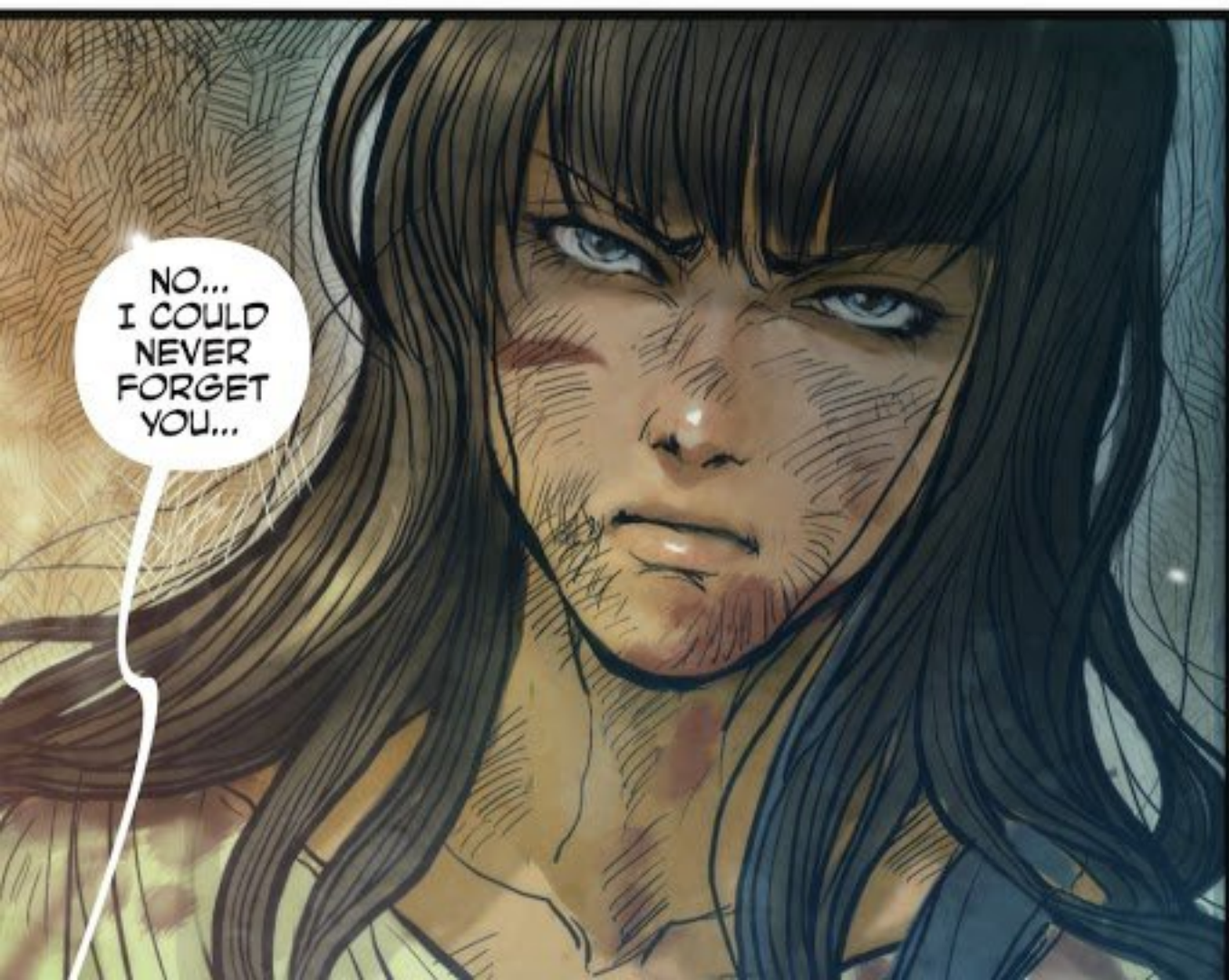
I DON'T
KNOW
YOU.

THEN LOOK
HARDER.



MAIKA.

MAIKA
HALFWOLF.



NO...
I COULD
NEVER
FORGET
YOU...



...OR YOUR
MOTHER.

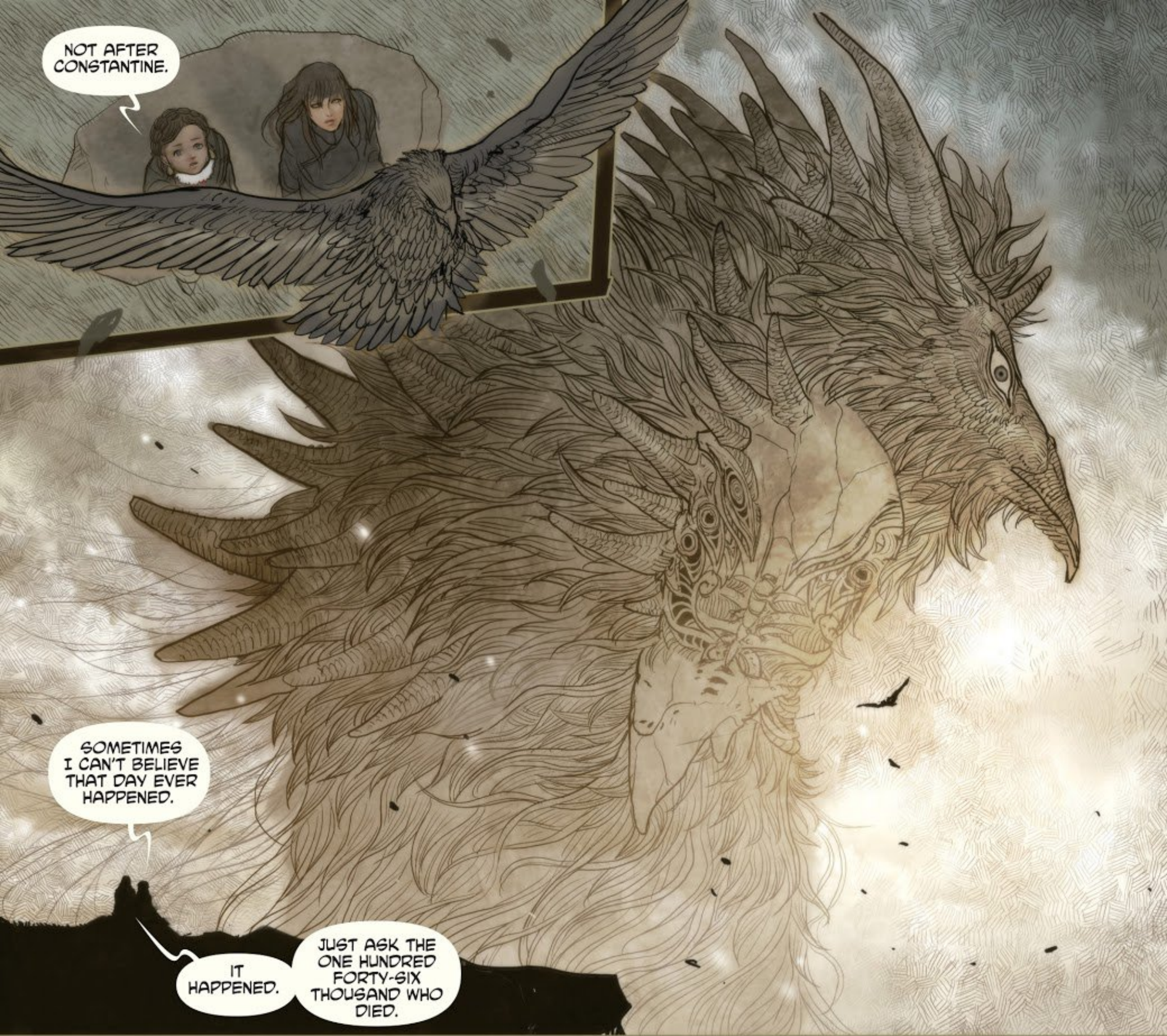
ONE
MONTH
AGO.





THE PRIESTS
SAY THEY'RE
THE GHOSTS OF
DEAD GODS.

BUT I
DON'T BELIEVE
THEY'RE
GHOSTS.



NOT AFTER
CONSTANTINE.

SOMETIMES
I CAN'T BELIEVE
THAT DAY EVER
HAPPENED.

IT
HAPPENED.

JUST ASK THE
ONE HUNDRED
FORTY-SIX
THOUSAND WHO
DIED.

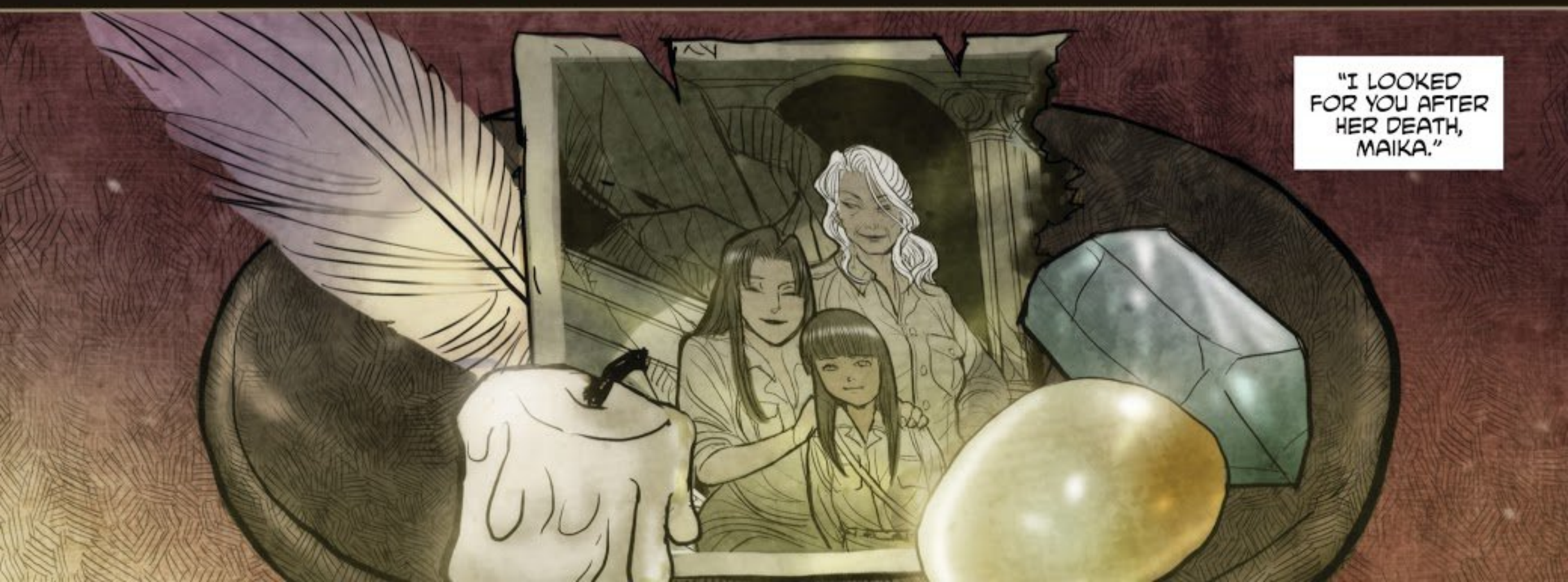


COME ON.
LET'S GO
BACK TO
CAMP.



I'VE GOT
ENOUGH
GHOSTS IN
MY LIFE.







YEARS, I SEARCHED.



YOU SHOULD HAVE SCOURED YOUR OWN SLAVE CAMPS.



AH.
THAT... IS NOT THE FATE I EXPECTED. NOT FOR THE DAUGHTER OF MORIKO HALF-WOLF.



DON'T SAY HER NAME!



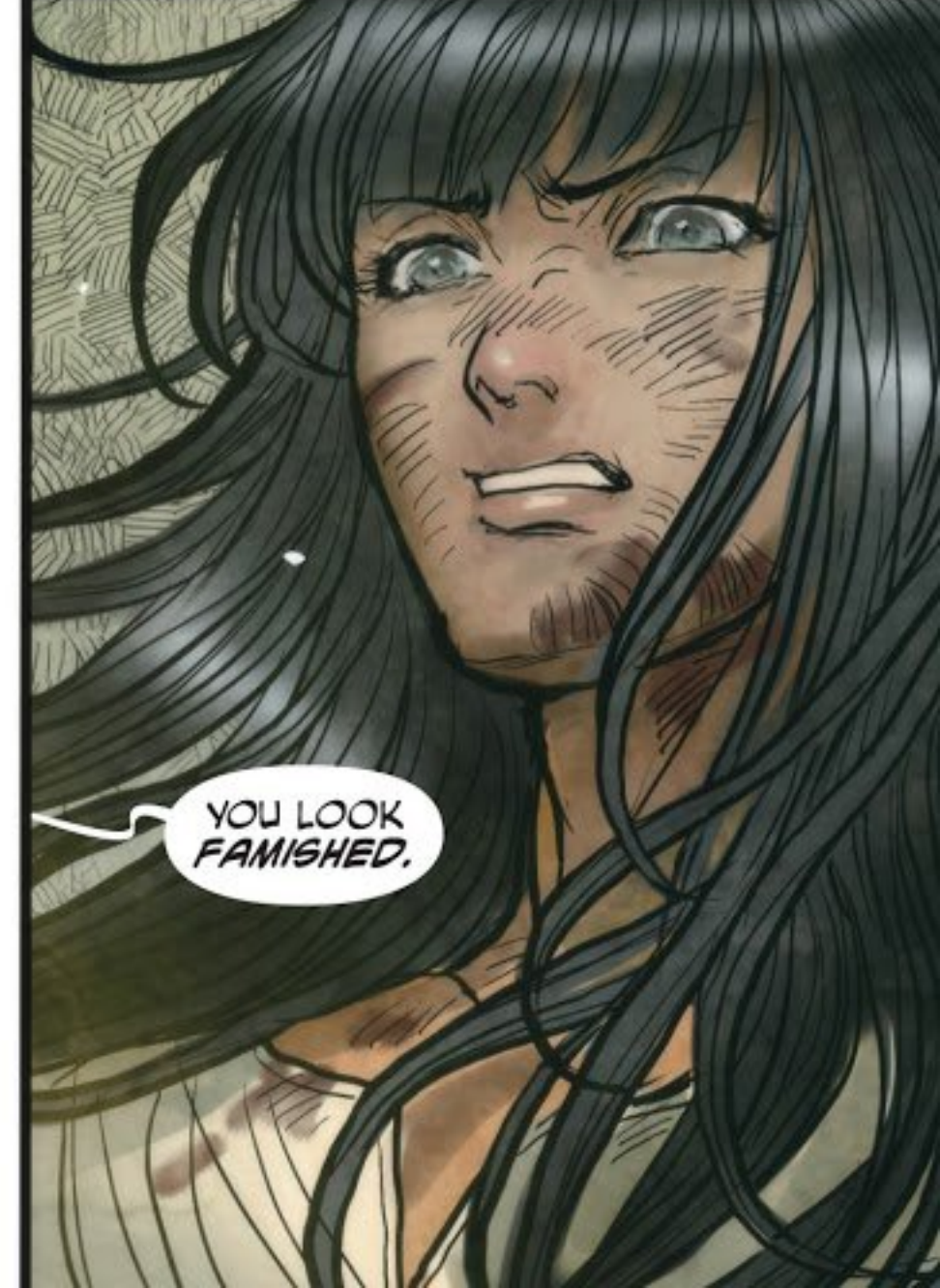
DO... NNNNGH BE CAREFUL. I'M AN OLD WOMAN. WE BREAK EASILY.



THEN BREAK.
HA.
COME, SIT DOWN. YOU LOOK WEARY, MY CHILD.



HAVE YOU EATEN?



YOU LOOK FAMISHED.



SHUT UP.

I WANT TO KNOW ABOUT MY MOTHER...

...AND WHAT YOU ALL WERE DOING IN THE DESERT WHEN SHE WAS MURDERED.



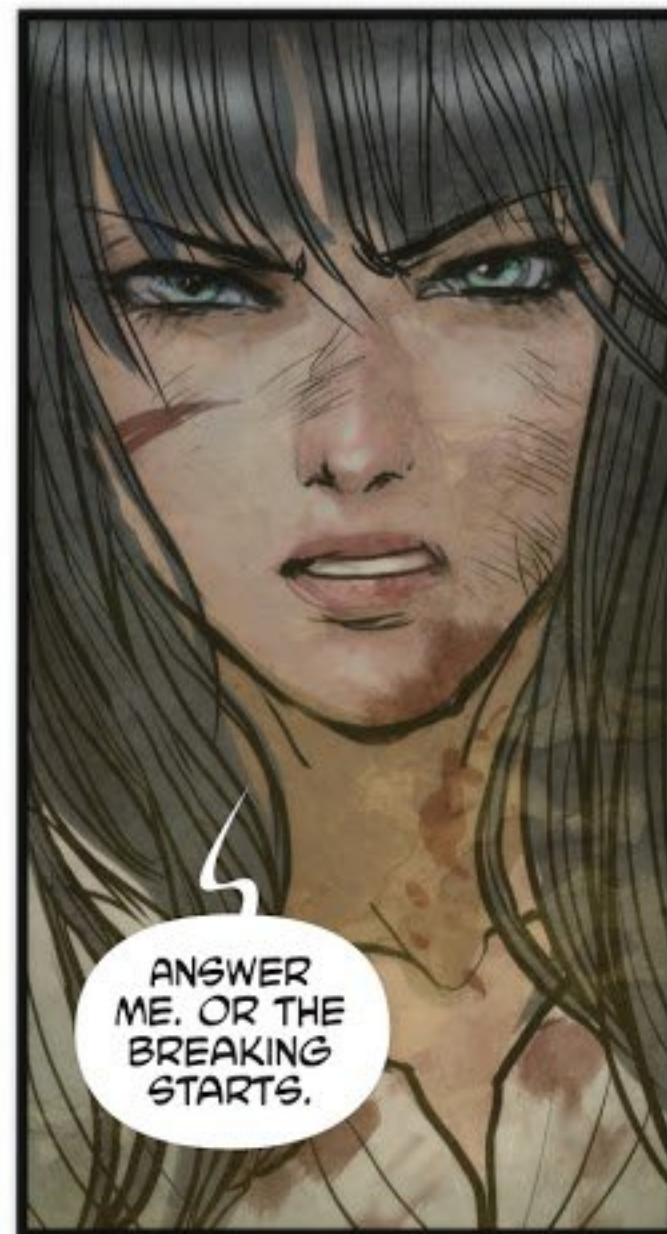
YOU CAME ALL THIS WAY, ALL THESE YEARS, RISKED EVERYTHING, JUST TO ASK ME *THAT*?

NO, I DON'T THINK SO. YOU'RE TOO DESPERATE.

LIKE YOUR SOUL DEPENDS ON IT.



SMACK

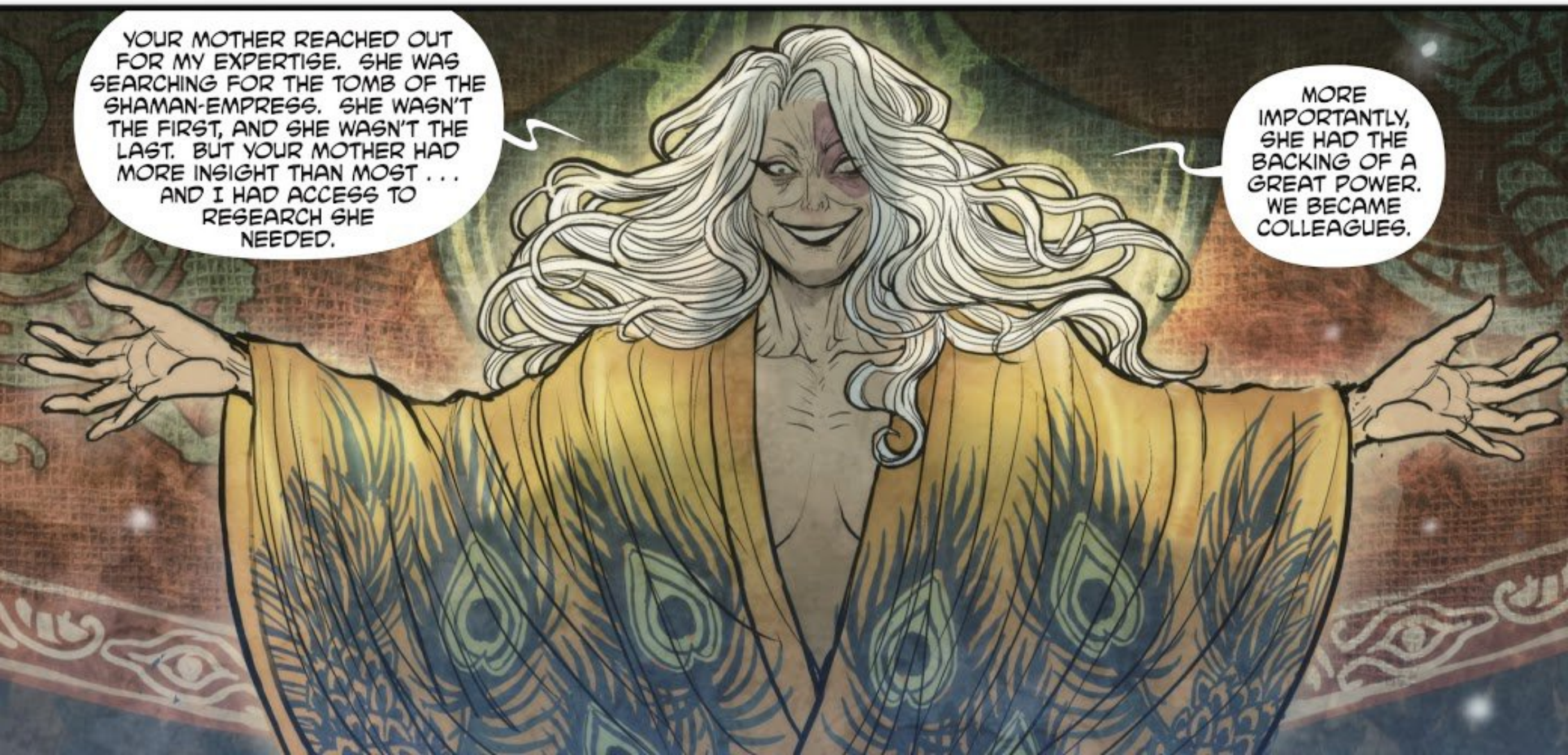


ANSWER ME. OR THE BREAKING STARTS.



YOU WANT A STORY? DARLING, I'M FULL OF THEM. YOURS IS SIMPLE.

I KNEW YOUR MOTHER BEFORE THE WAR. WHEN THE MOTHERLAND AND ARCANICS STILL TOLERATED ONE ANOTHER. WHEN SOME OF US STILL MADE FRIENDS AND FAMILIES WITH EACH OTHER. BEFORE CERTAIN DECISIONS SENT THAT WORLD TO HELL.



YOUR MOTHER REACHED OUT FOR MY EXPERTISE. SHE WAS SEARCHING FOR THE TOMB OF THE SHAMAN-EMPRESS. SHE WASN'T THE FIRST, AND SHE WASN'T THE LAST. BUT YOUR MOTHER HAD MORE INSIGHT THAN MOST ... AND I HAD ACCESS TO RESEARCH SHE NEEDED.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, SHE HAD THE BACKING OF A GREAT POWER. WE BECAME COLLEAGUES.



IT WAS A...
NNNGH... **THRILLING**
TIME. I KNEW YOU
NOT LONG AFTER
YOU WERE
BORN.

BUT THINGS
CHANGED, AS THEY
ARE WONT TO DO
IN THIS LIFE, AND
CERTAIN PEOPLE
GOT HURT. I'M
SORRY YOU WERE
ONE OF THEM.

AND THE
TOMB? WHY
DID YOU WANT
TO FIND IT?



POWER, OF
COURSE.

SURELY, YOU KNOW YOUR HISTORY. THE
SHAMAN-EMPRESS WAS THE MOST
POWERFUL ARCANIC WHO EVER LIVED...
AND SHE WAS A SCIENCEMASTER OF
THE HIGHEST ORDER. SHE CREATED
TECHNOLOGY AND MAGICS THAT
WOULD MAKE US LOOK LIKE
WE'RE LIVING IN THE
DARK AGES.

AND SHE
BURIED IT
WITH HER.
THE BITCH.



THERE IS NO
GOVERNMENT, NO GENERAL,
NO MERCENARY, NO CAPTAIN
OF INDUSTRY, WHO DOESN'T
COVET HER TOMB. MY KIND,
YOUR KIND, IT DOESN'T
MATTER.

YOUR OWN
MOTHER WAS SENT BY HER
WARLORD TO UNCOVER THE
SHAMAN-EMPRESS'S RESTING
PLACE. WE FAILED IN THAT.
BUT WE FOUND SOMETHING ELSE.



AT
LEAST...
YOUR
MOTHER
DID.

SOMETHING...
UNEXPECTED.

SOMETHING
WONDROUS.



DO YOU
STILL HAVE
YOUR PIECE OF IT?
SHE GAVE IT TO YOU,
SHE MUST HAVE. IT
WASN'T ON HER
BODY.



THAT'S WHY YOU'RE
HERE, ISN'T IT? YOU'VE
TASTED THAT POWER...
AND IT'S CHANGING
YOU.

I CAN HELP YOU...
BUT YOU NEED TO
HELP ME, YOUNG
HALFWOLF.



TELL ME
WHERE YOU
HID IT.



SCCCREEEEEE! SCCCREEEEEE!

THE GUARDS
MUST HAVE FOUND
WHOMEVER YOU
KILLED TO REACH
ME. YOU DON'T
HAVE MUCH TIME.



SCCCREEEEEE! SCCCREEEEEE!

GIVE ME
WHAT I
NEED AND
I'LL SEND
THEM AWAY.



SCCCREEEEEE! SCCCREEEEEE!

WHATEVER
YOU'RE LOOKING
FOR WENT WITH
MY ARM. YOU
CAN THANK YOUR
SISTER-KIND
FOR THAT.

I DON'T
WANT
YOUR HELP.



YOU
KILLED MY
MOTHER. YOU
BETRAYED
HER.

MY
DARLING...



... YOUR
MOTHER'S
BETRAYAL OF *YOU*
WAS FAR GREATER
THAN ANY HARM I
DID TO HER.



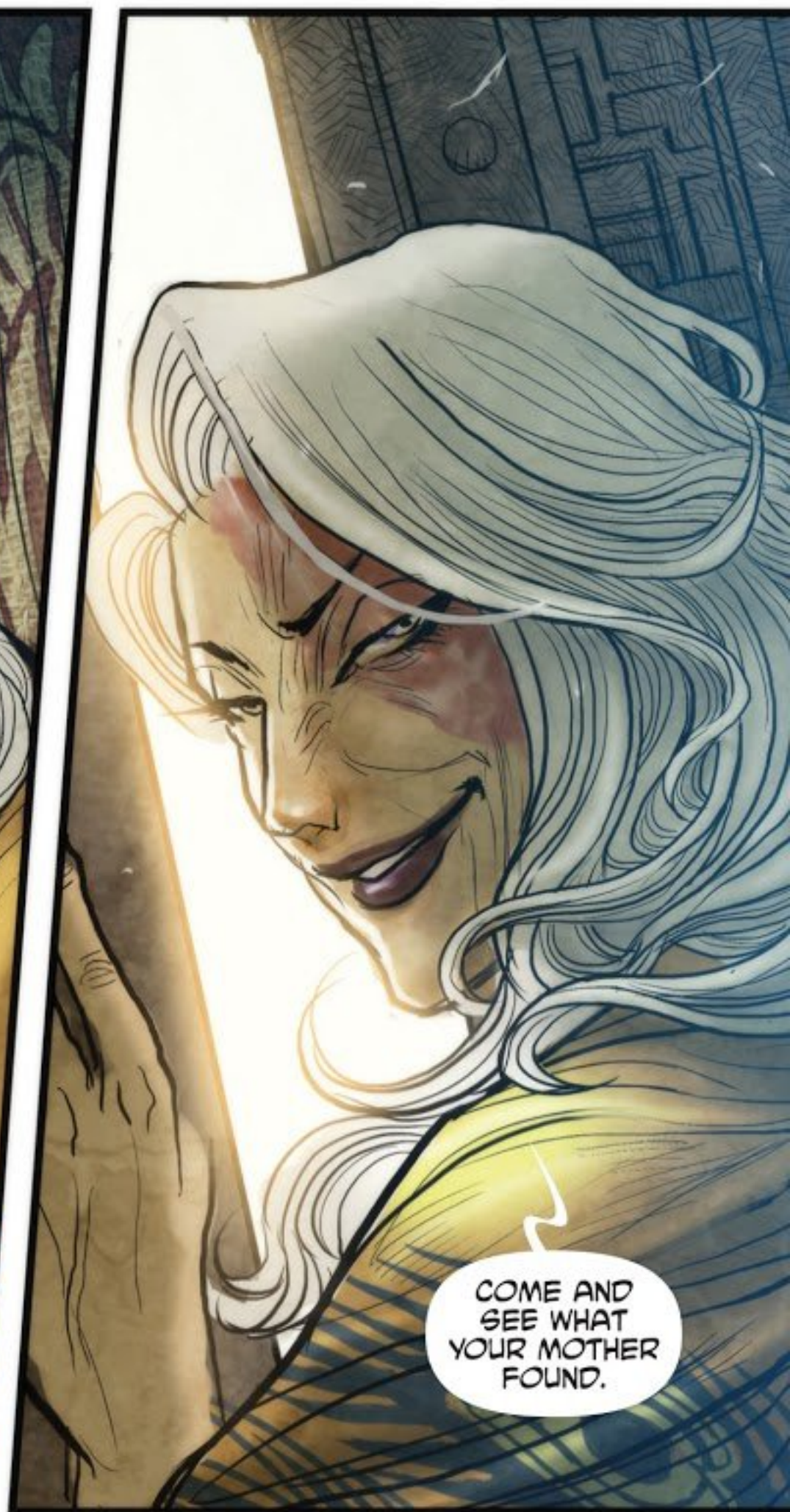
MISS?

SUCH A
CONFUSED
YOUNG
WOMAN.

LET ME SHOW
YOU SOMETHING
THAT WILL ANSWER
AT LEAST
ONE OF YOUR
QUESTIONS...



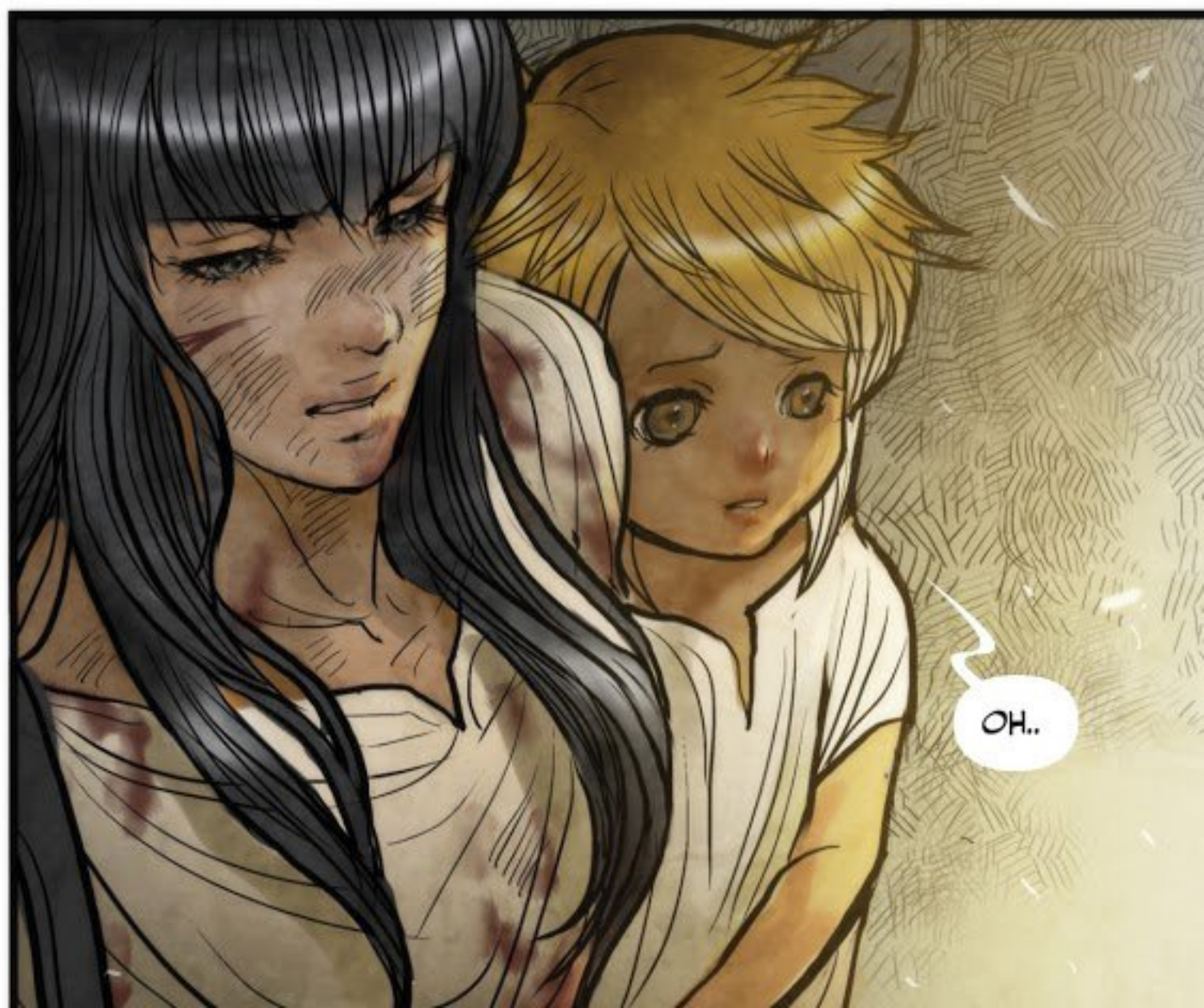
...AND
MAYBE
MINE, AS
WELL.



COME AND
SEE WHAT
YOUR MOTHER
FOUND.



SOMEONE'S
IN THERE.
I CAN HEAR
BREATHING.



OH..



NO...NO, NO.
PLEASE DON'T
HURT ME. PLEASE
DON'T EAT ANY MORE
OF ME. I'LL BE GOOD,
I'LL BE SO GOOD I
PROMISE... JUST
DON'T TAKE ANY
MORE...

WHINER.



WHAT DOES
HE HAVE TO
DO WITH MY
MOTHER?



HIM?
NOTHING
AT ALL.

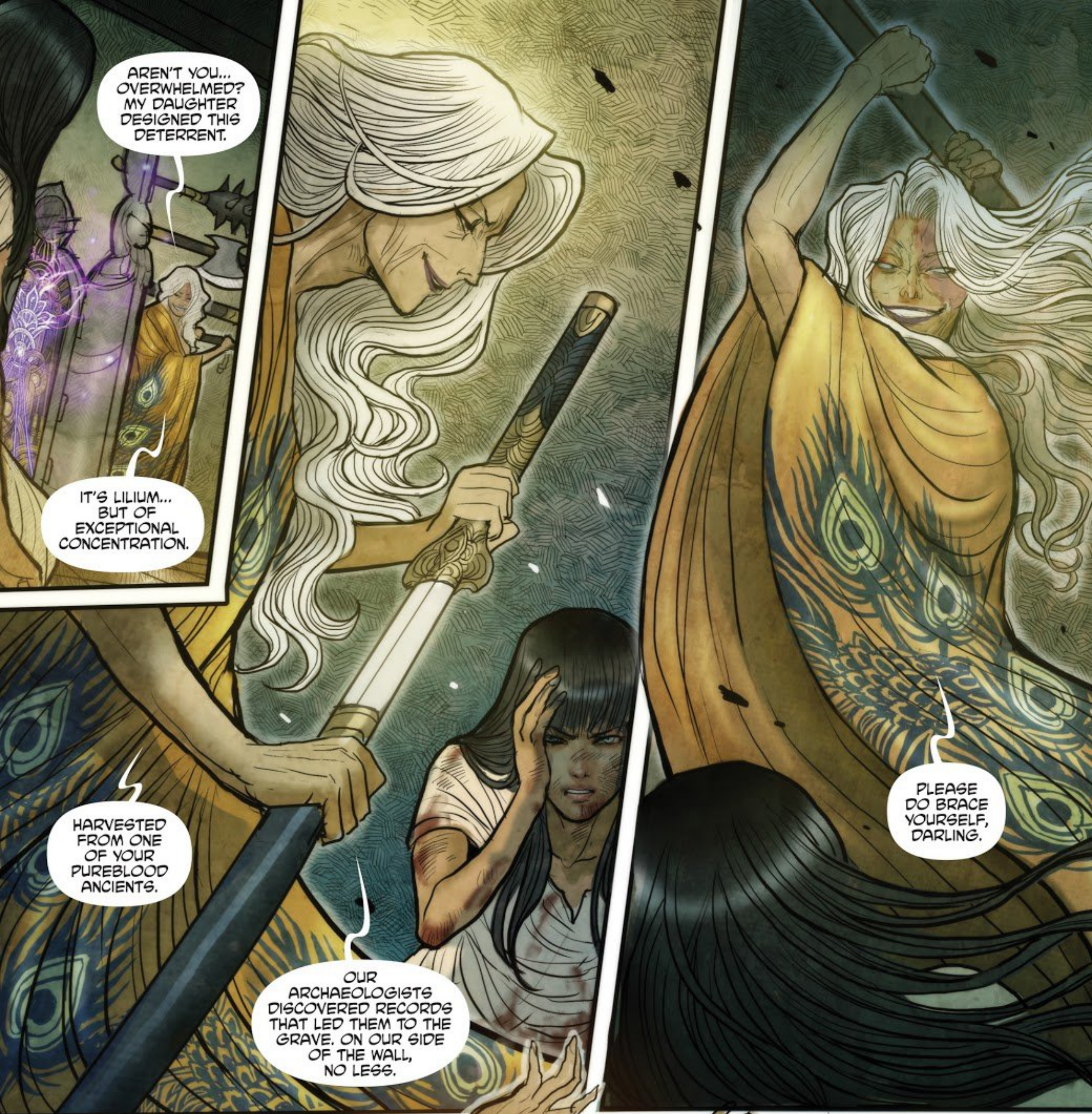


UNLESS
YOU NEED
A *SNACK*.



NNNGH.

YVETTE...



AREN'T YOU...
OVERWHELMED?
MY DAUGHTER
DESIGNED THIS
DETERRENT.

IT'S LILIUM...
BUT OF
EXCEPTIONAL
CONCENTRATION.

HARVESTED
FROM ONE
OF YOUR
PUREBLOOD
ANCIENTS.

OUR
ARCHAEOLOGISTS
DISCOVERED RECORDS
THAT LED THEM TO THE
GRAVE. ON OUR SIDE
OF THE WALL,
NO LESS.

PLEASE
DO BRACE
YOURSELF,
DARLING.



MMMPH!

YOU WON'T
NEED YOUR OTHER
ARM FOR THE
REST OF THIS
INTERVIEW.

WHUDD



IMPOSSIBLE.

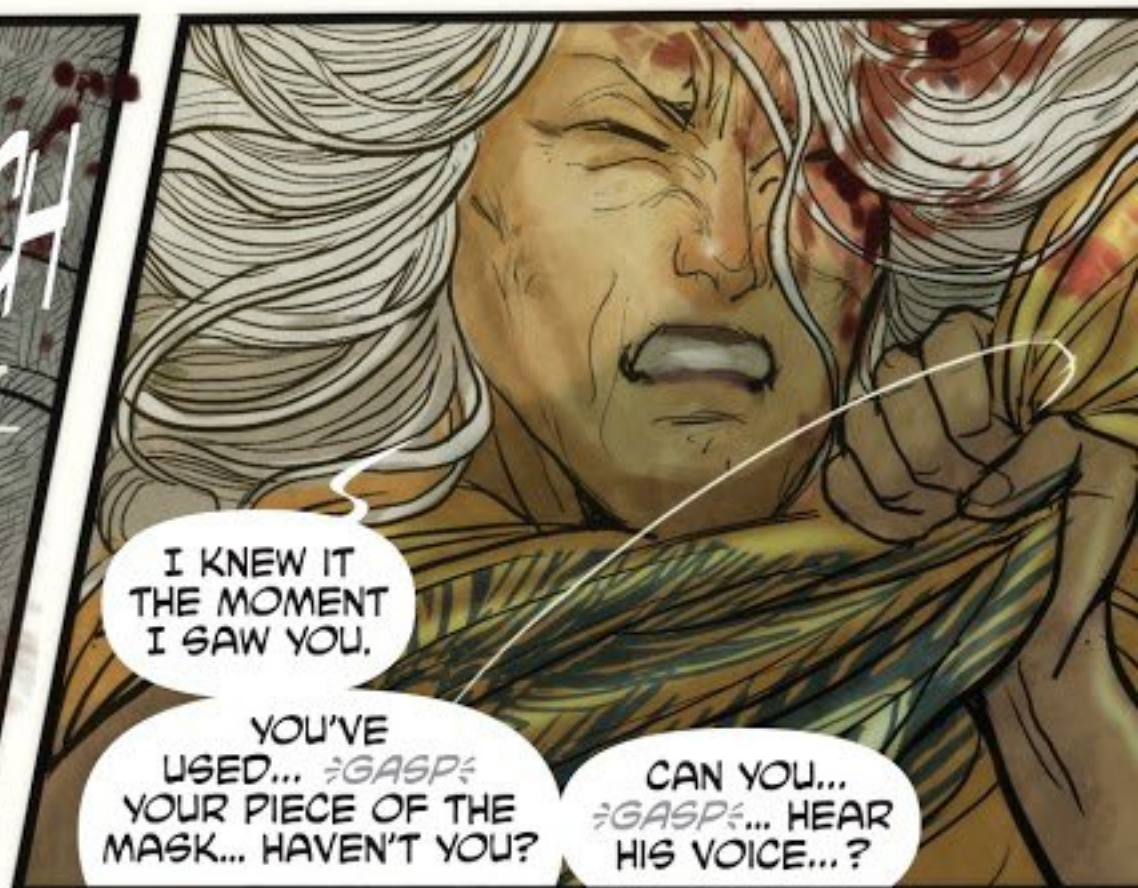
NO ARCANIC
IS IMMUNE TO
LILIUM.

UNLESS...



KRRCH

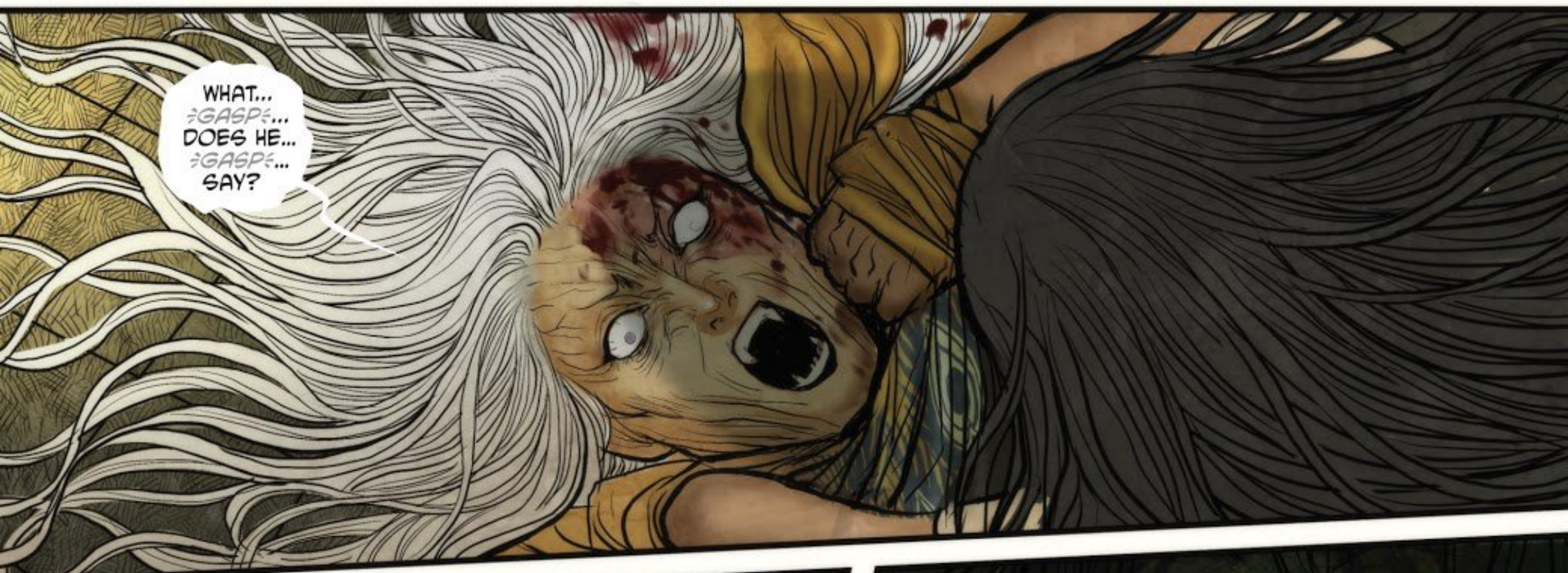
UFF!



I KNEW IT
THE MOMENT
I SAW YOU.

YOU'VE
USED... *~GASP~*
YOUR PIECE OF THE
MASK... HAVEN'T YOU?

CAN YOU...
~GASP~... HEAR
HIS VOICE...?



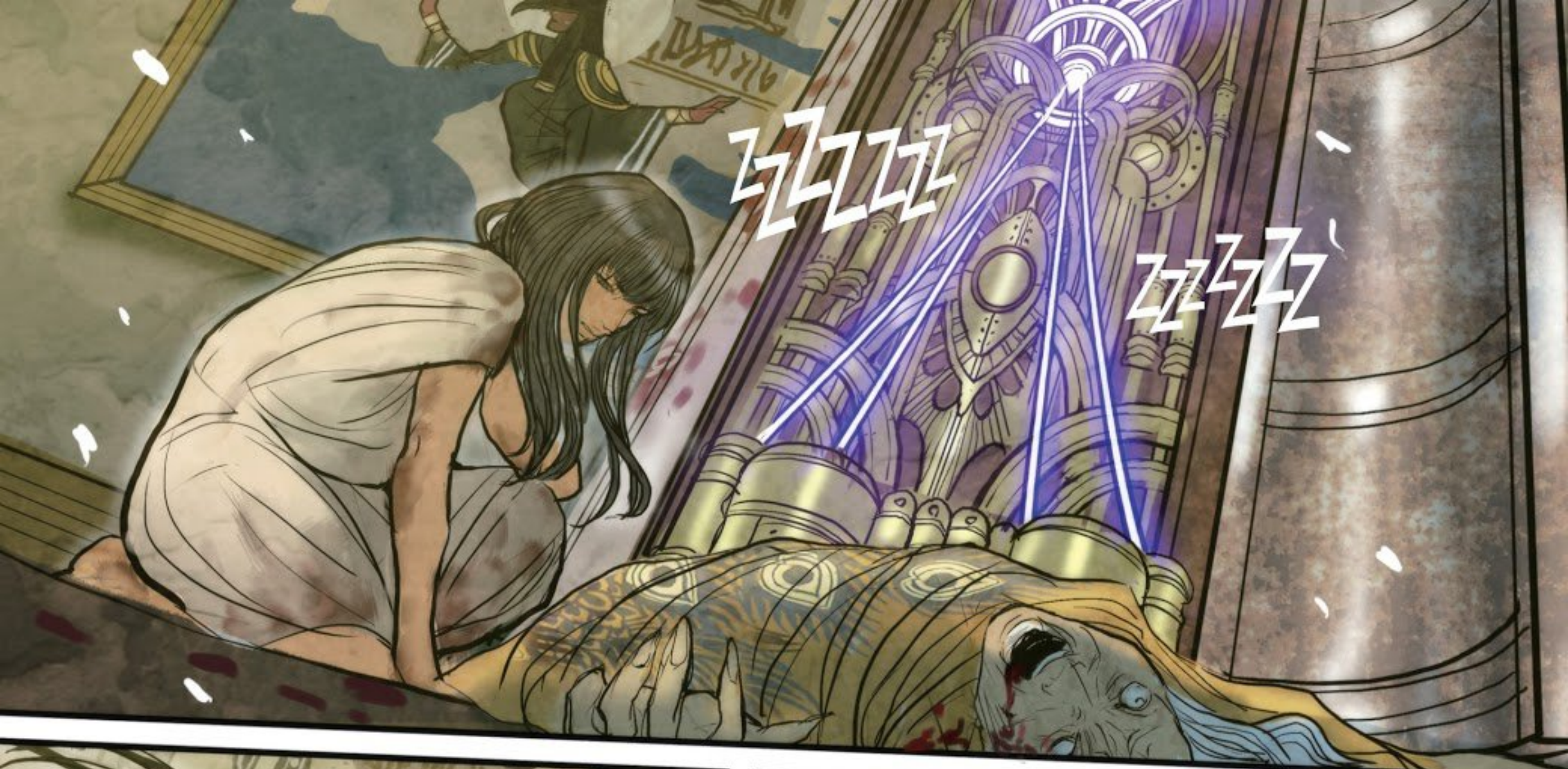
WHAT...
~GASP~...
DOES HE...
~GASP~...
SAY?

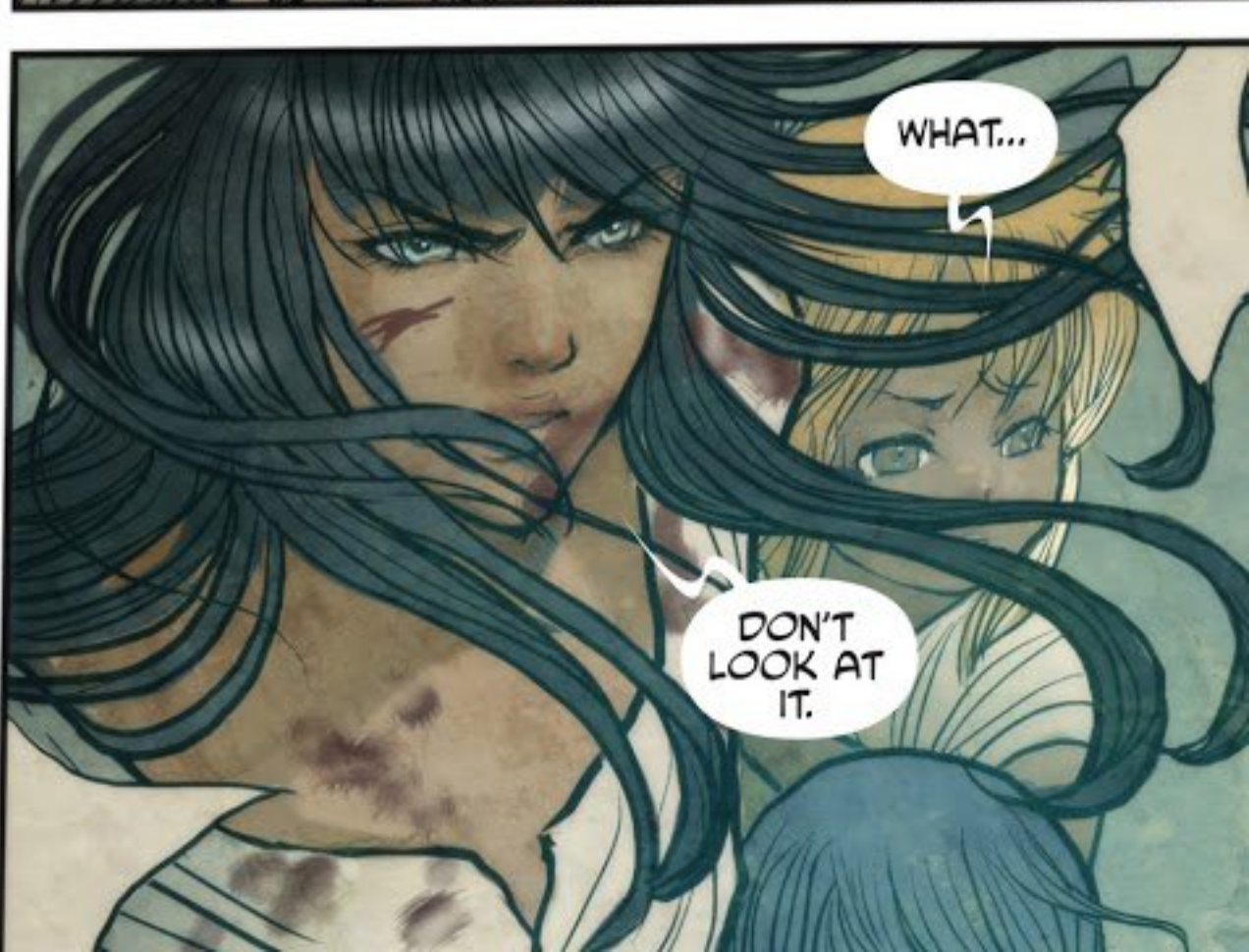
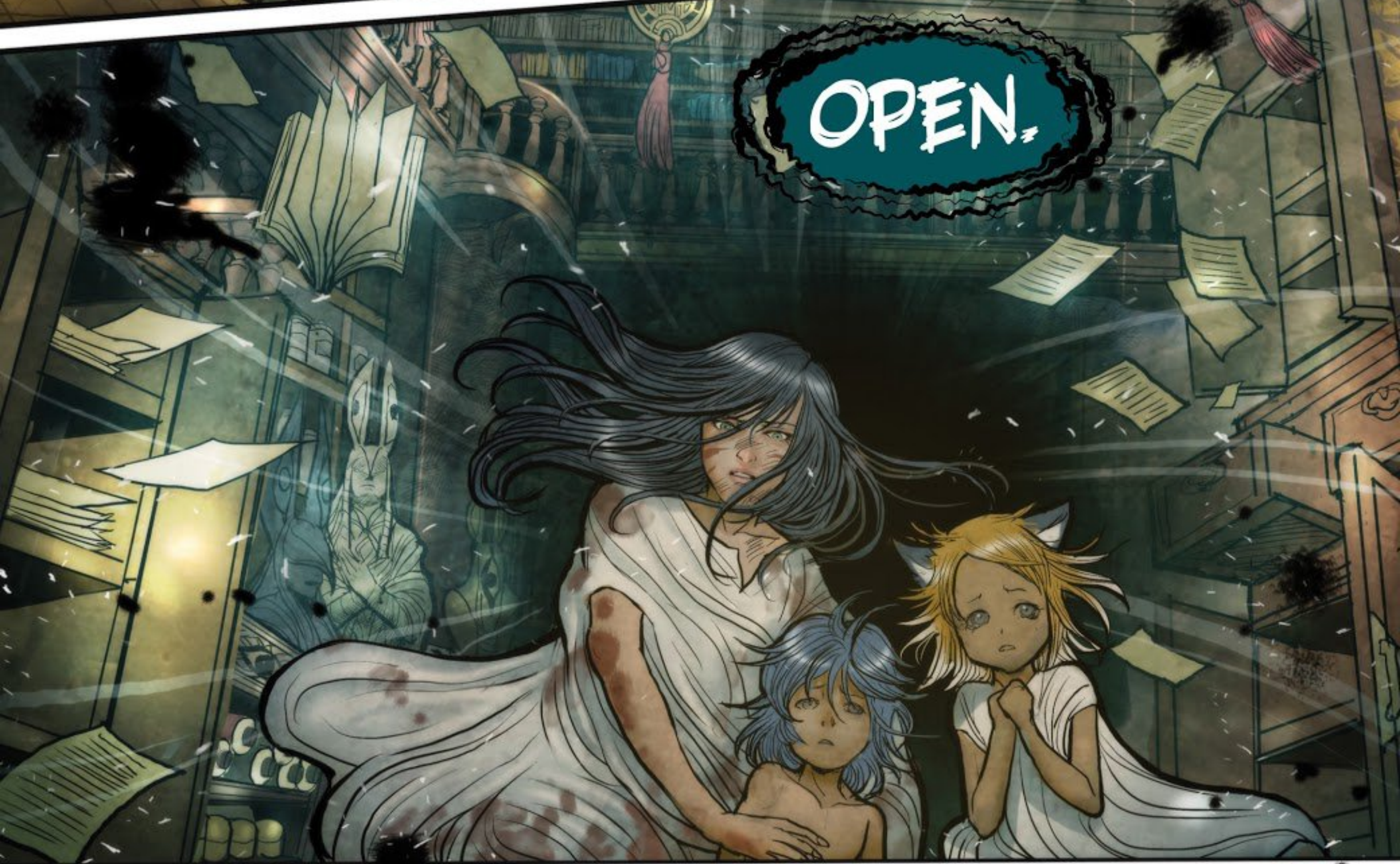


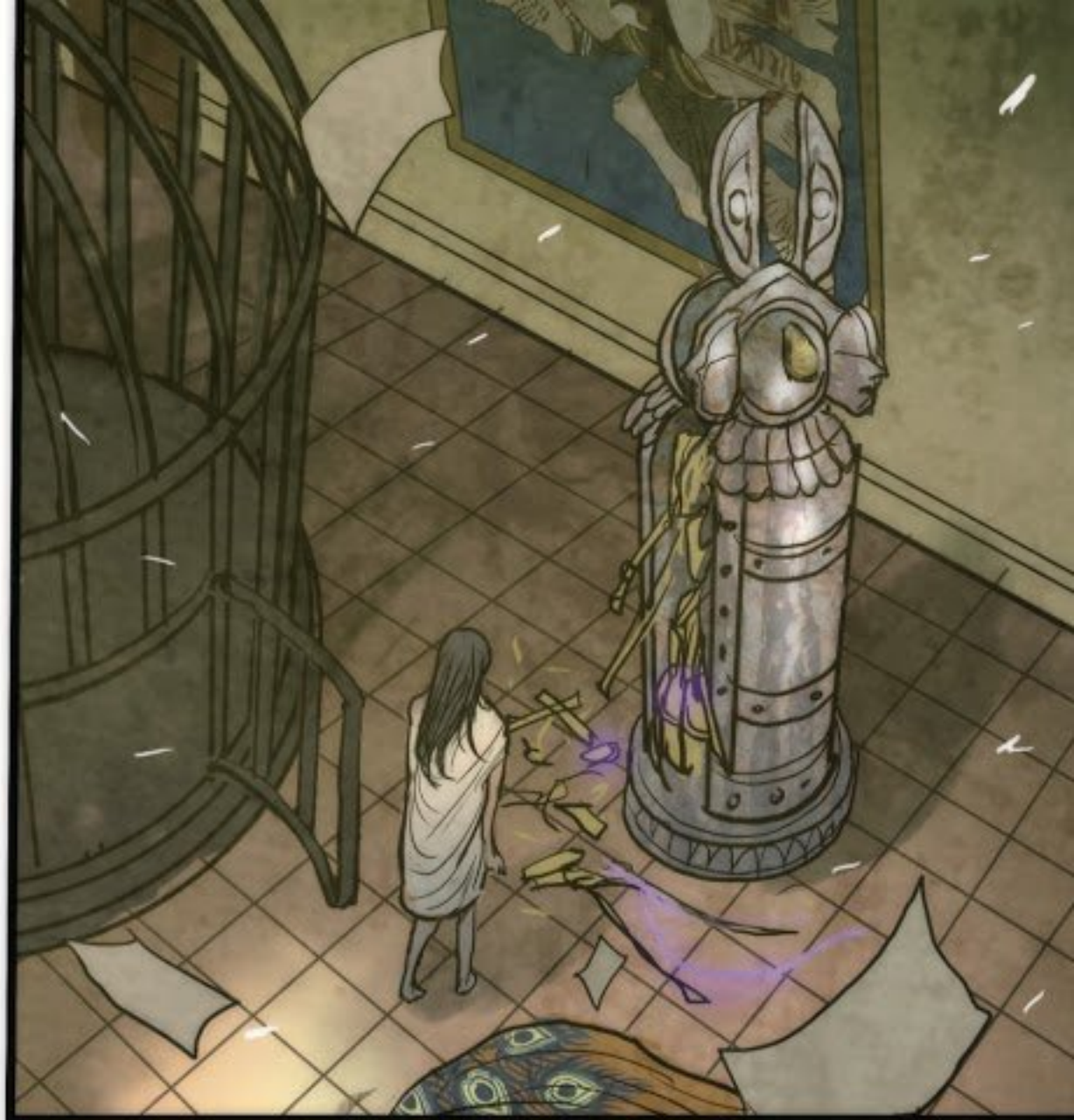
WHAT...
DOES...
HE...



~KCHTH~











MISS?

I L-LOCKED
THE DOOR BEFORE.
BUT THE G-GUARDS
ARE STARTING TO
B-BURN IT.

WE--WE
NEED TO FIND
ANOTHER
WAY OUT.

I THINK I
ALREADY
HAVE.



I SMELL
WATER.

AND THERE
ARE STEPS
CARVED INTO
THE STONE.

NO
LIGHTS.

IT'S OK.
I CAN SEE IN
THE DARK.

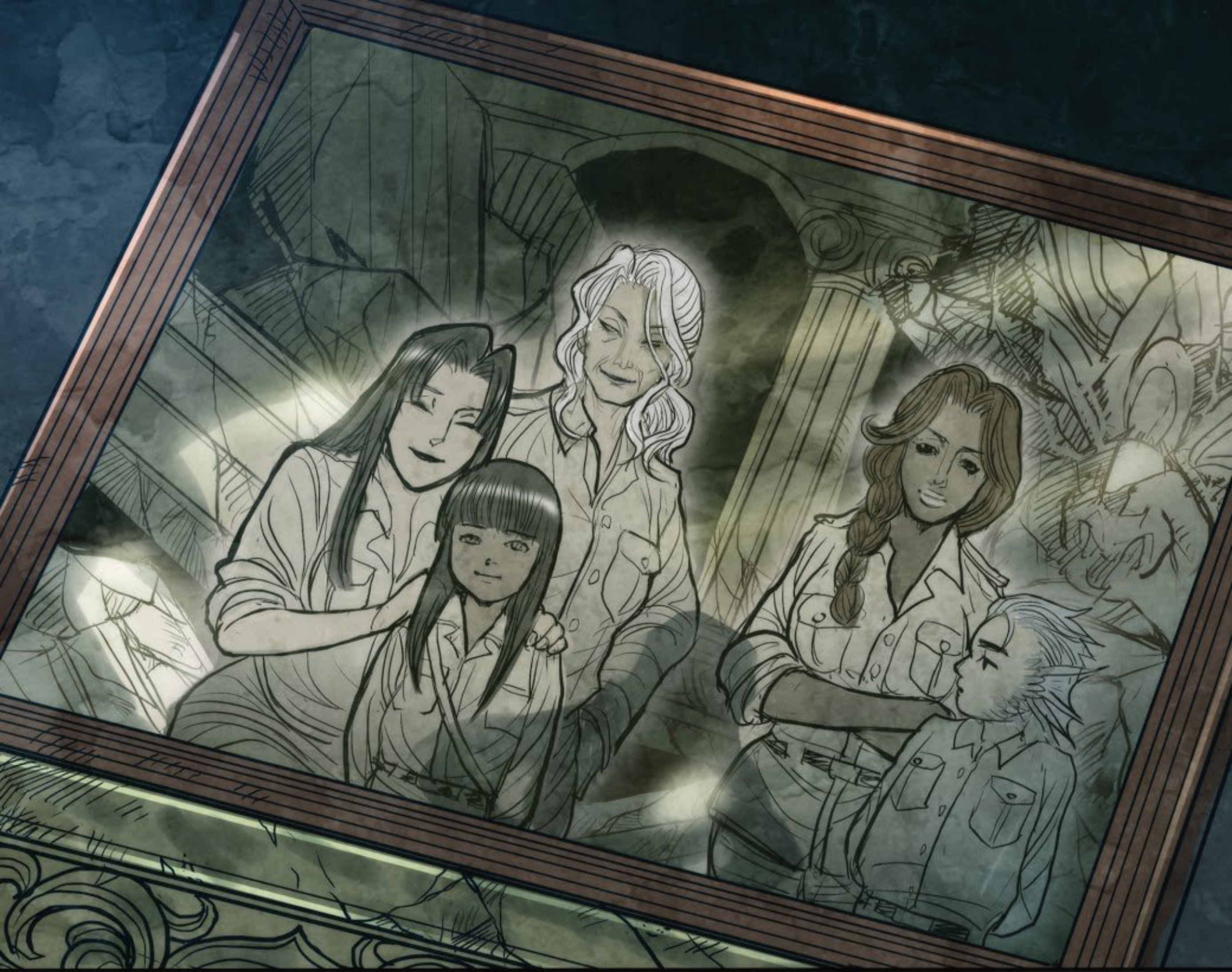


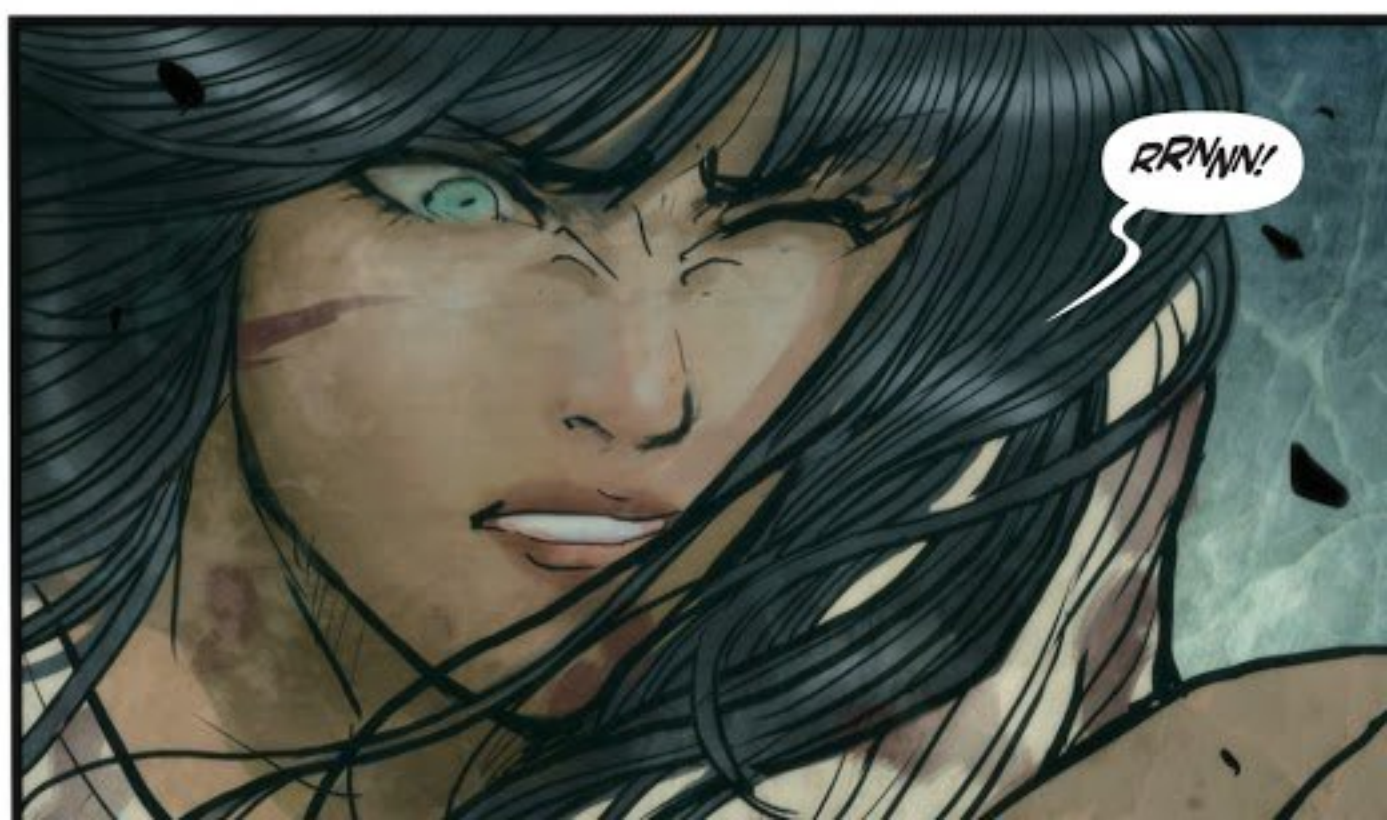
LEAD
THE WAY.

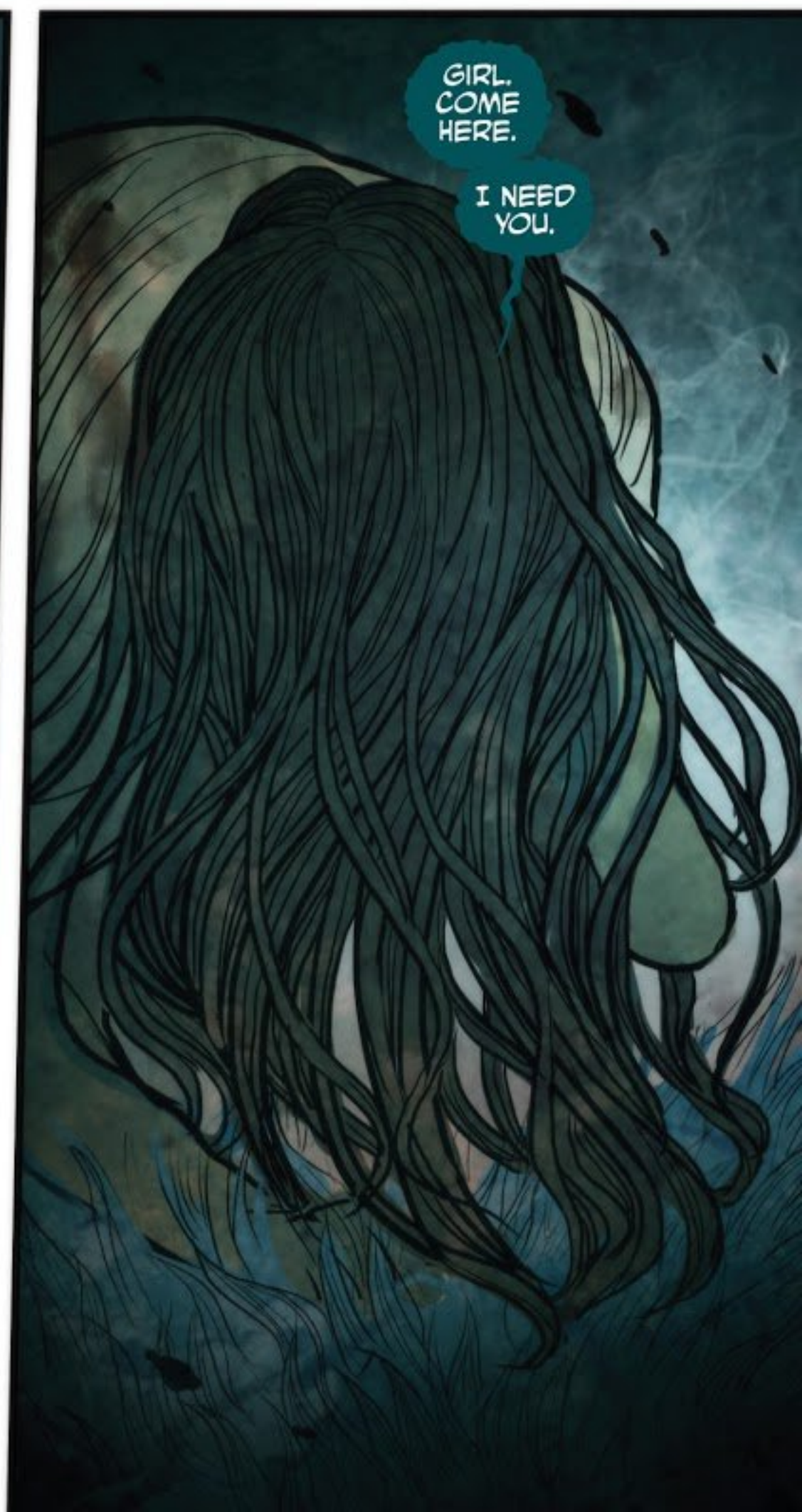
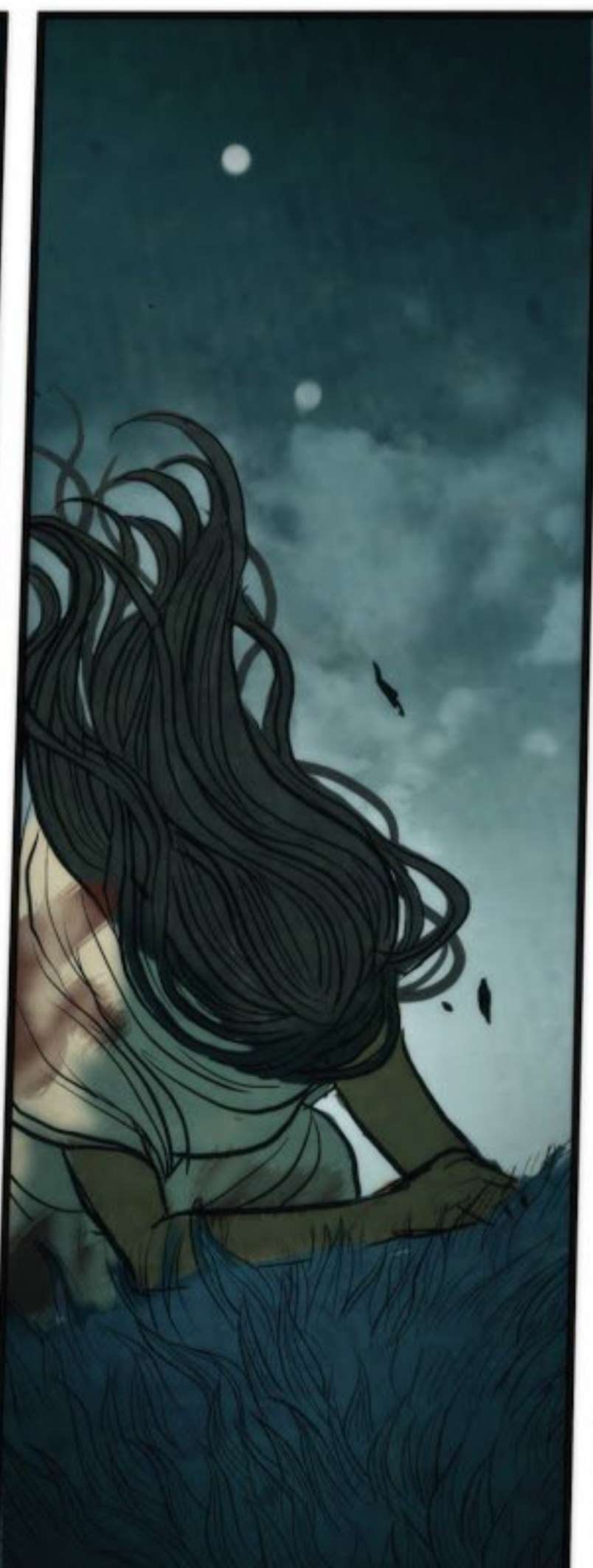


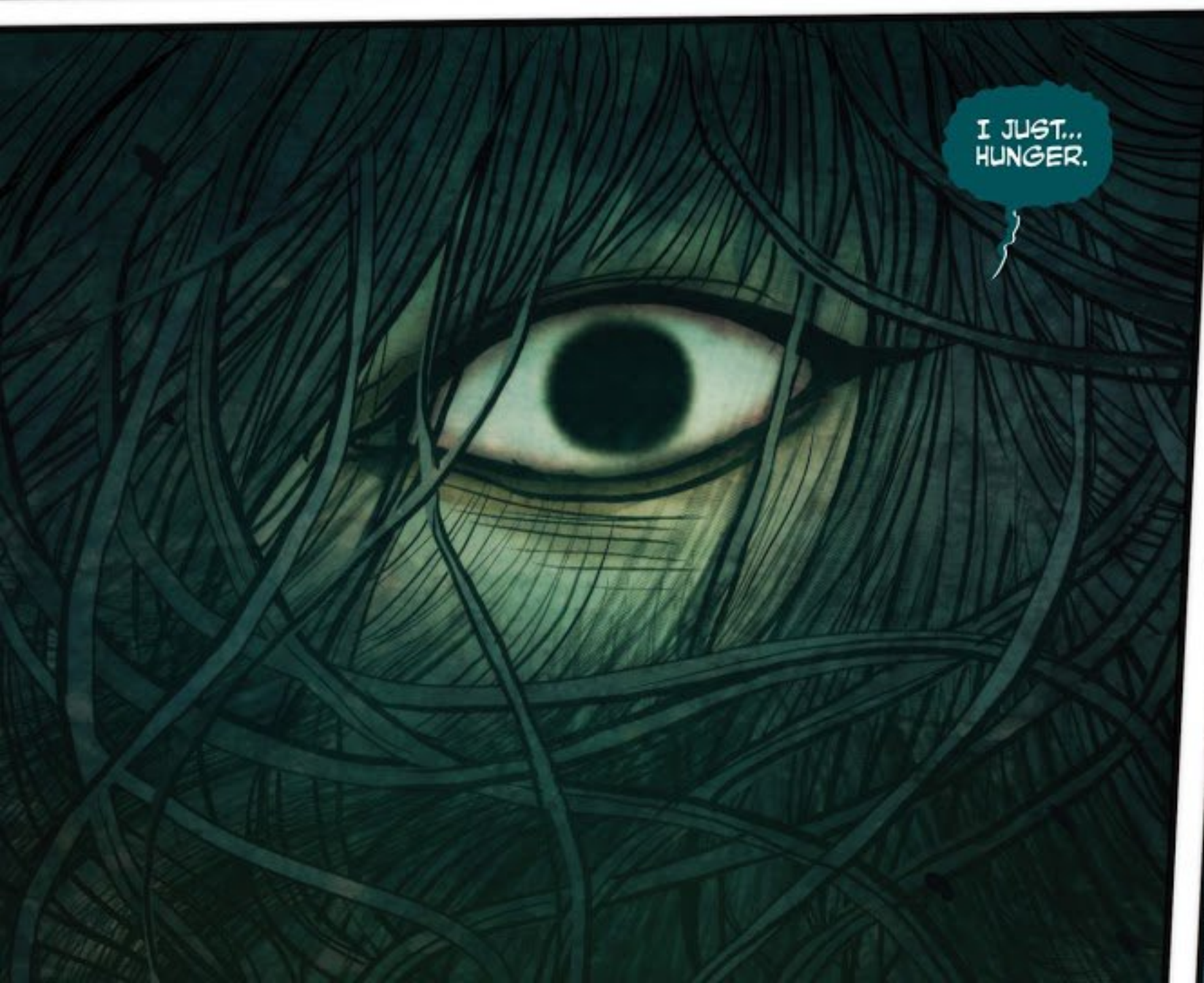
I'LL
BE RIGHT
BEHIND
YOU.



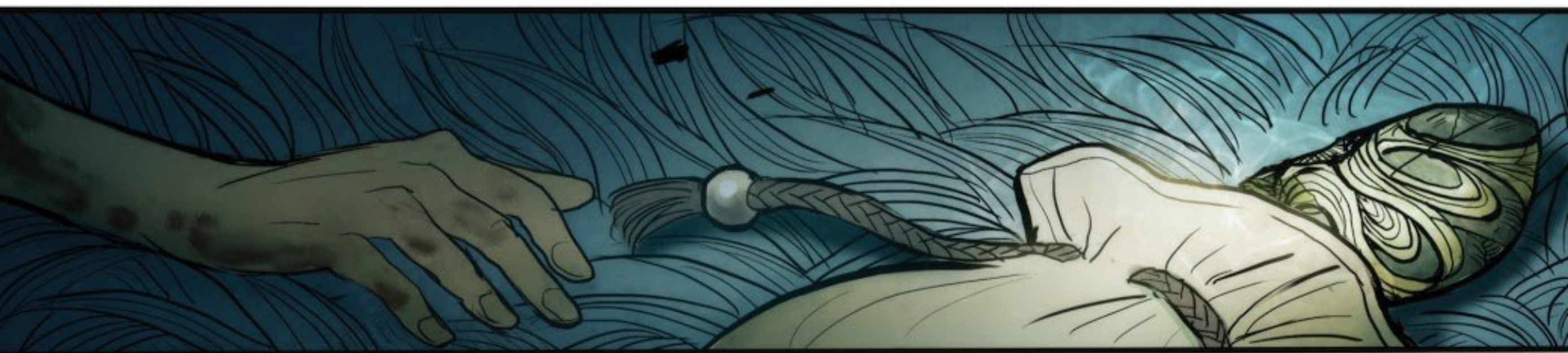














MONSTRESS was more a desire than an idea. An impulse that came over me, something I'd think about in the shower or when I was driving and listening to Janet Jackson on the radio. I had this image in my head of a battered girl standing alone, absolutely furious, and behind her a battlefield that stretched for miles. I didn't know what to do with it – and I'm not all that patient – but I had no choice in this matter. Nothing was there. No story. Just that girl.

I don't know anything about war, not having lived through one. But my grandparents experienced the devastation of war firsthand in China. In their stories surviving was more horrifying than dying. Surviving required a desire to live more powerful than any bomb or army, a summoning of superhuman resilience to keep going, day after day. Starvation, biological experimentation, rape camps, occupation, colonization – what ravaged Europe during WWII, also ravaged China and the rest of Asia. And the victims of this horror had to learn how to first survive...and then survive the surviving.

To be Chinese-American meant the war loomed upon the history of my world. I grew up hearing my grandparents tell nightmarish stories. Heartbreaking, too. And also heroic beyond words. What they endured I could scarcely imagine. I thought, always: If I could only be as strong as them.

My grandparents were chouchun. I'm a twig in comparison. That's okay. My imagination is strong. And the root of my desire, I finally realized, was to tell a story about what it means to be a survivor. A survivor, not just of a cataclysmic war, but of racial conflict and its antecedent: hatred. And to confront the question: how does one whom history has made a monster, escape her monstrosity? How does one overcome the monstrousness of others without succumbing to a rising monstrousness within?

The image of that furious girl never left me. She followed me from Beijing to Boston and to Japan, where Sana and I first began our collaboration and where that girl finally began to speak. And here we are – and here you are.

And here she is too.

Sana and I thank you, deeply, for partaking in the epic journey of this haunted young woman who believes she's alone, with a war far behind her – and another one, rising, like a doom, like a monster, on the horizon.

I like to think my grandparents would have recognized her.

Much love,
Marjorie Liu

Thank you so much for picking up MONSTRESS!

It would be a great honor if the world that Maika sees gave a little spice in your life.

Hoping that your inner "monster" will never wake up.

Best wishes,
Sana Takeda

We love hearing from readers! Send all your letters and fan art to monstress.comic@gmail.com!
#Monstress for Twitter and Instagram!

NEXT ISSUE

MONSTRESS



ISSUE 2

MARJORIE LIU



SANA TAKEDA

\$3.50

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