

MARJORIE LIU  
ISSUE 1

SANA TAKEDA



# MONSTRESS

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MARJORIE LIU • SANA TAKEDA  
WRITER ARTIST

RUS WOOTON JENNIFER M. SMITH  
LETTERER EDITOR

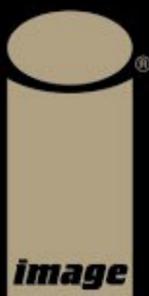
ISSUE #1

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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.



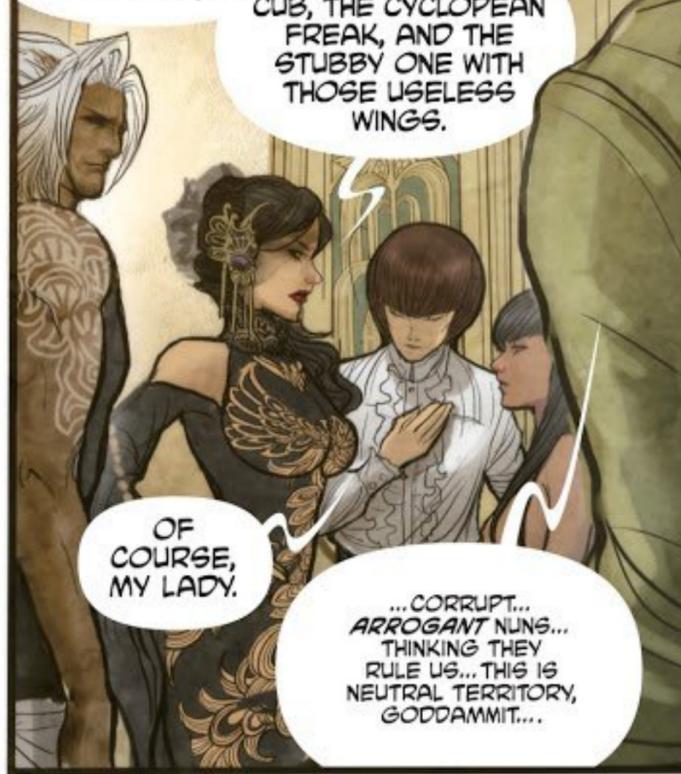
MY LADY.

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.

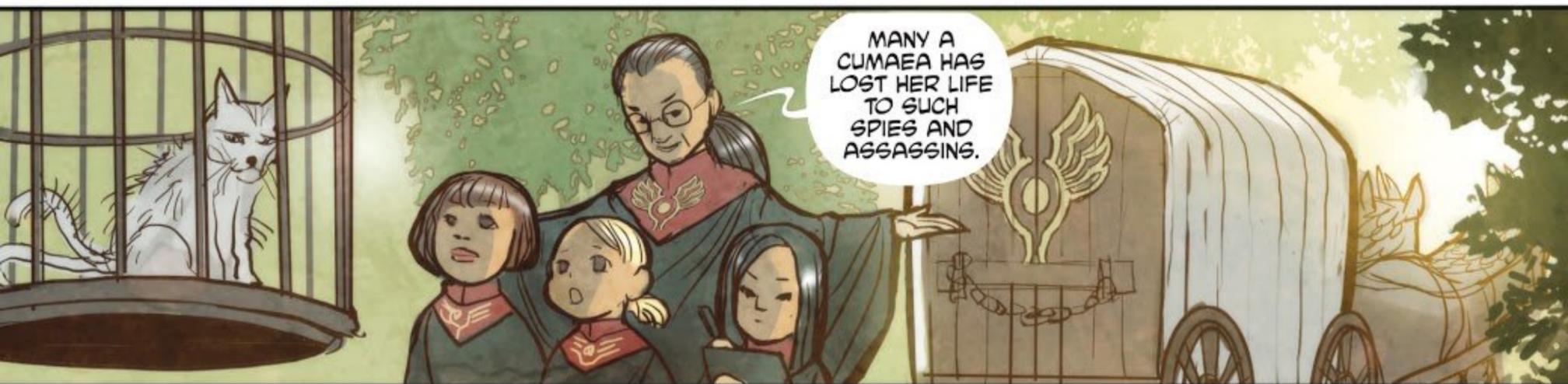
THERE ARE FEW ANIMALS MORE TREACHEROUS THAN THE CAT. ASSUME THE WORST, SHOULD YOU ENCOUNTER ONE, NO MATTER HOW *UNTOUCHED* IT MIGHT SEEM.

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.

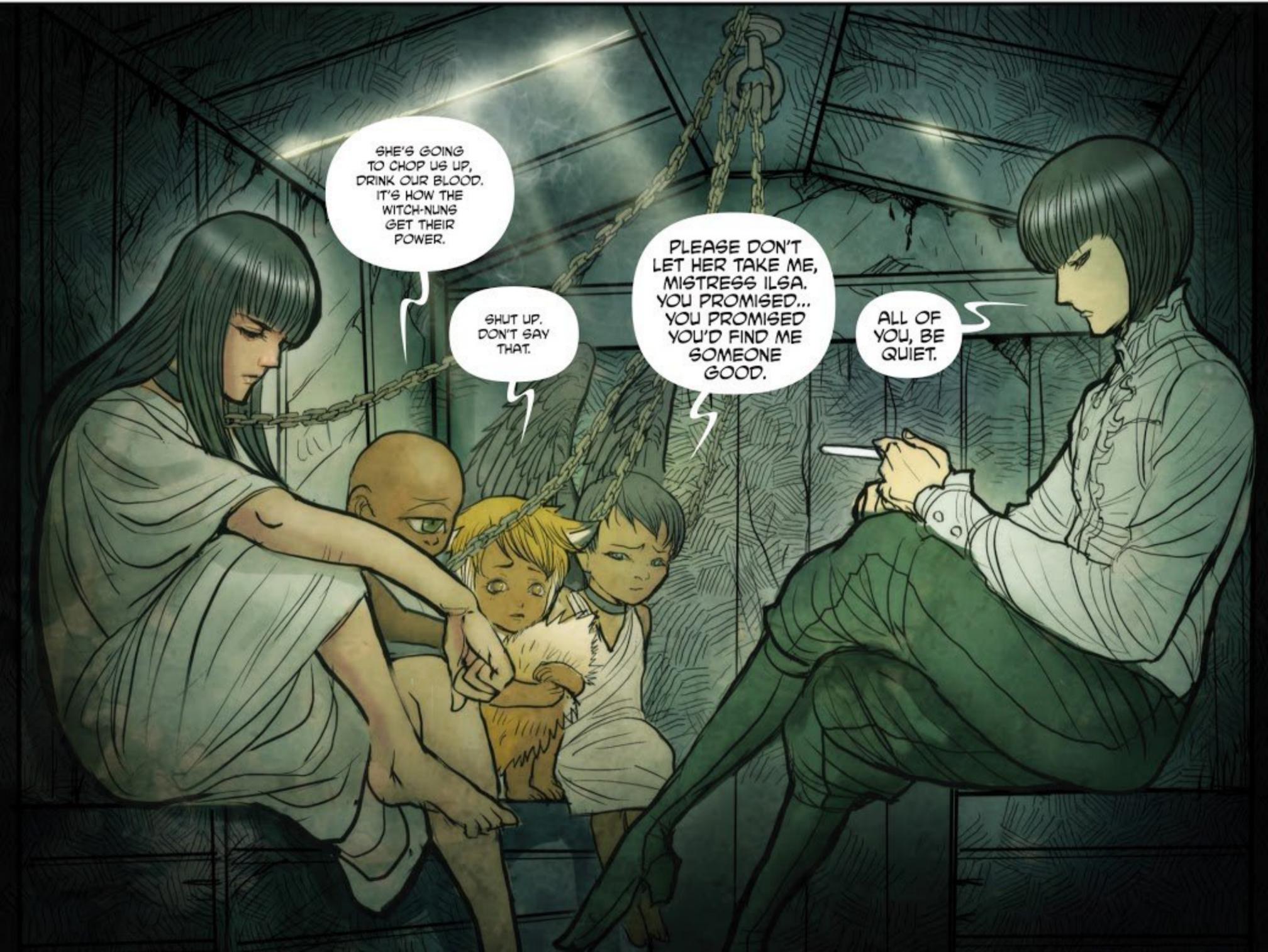


SHE'S GOING TO CHOP US UP, DRINK OUR BLOOD. IT'S HOW THE WITCH-NUNS GET THEIR POWER.

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, ILSA.



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.

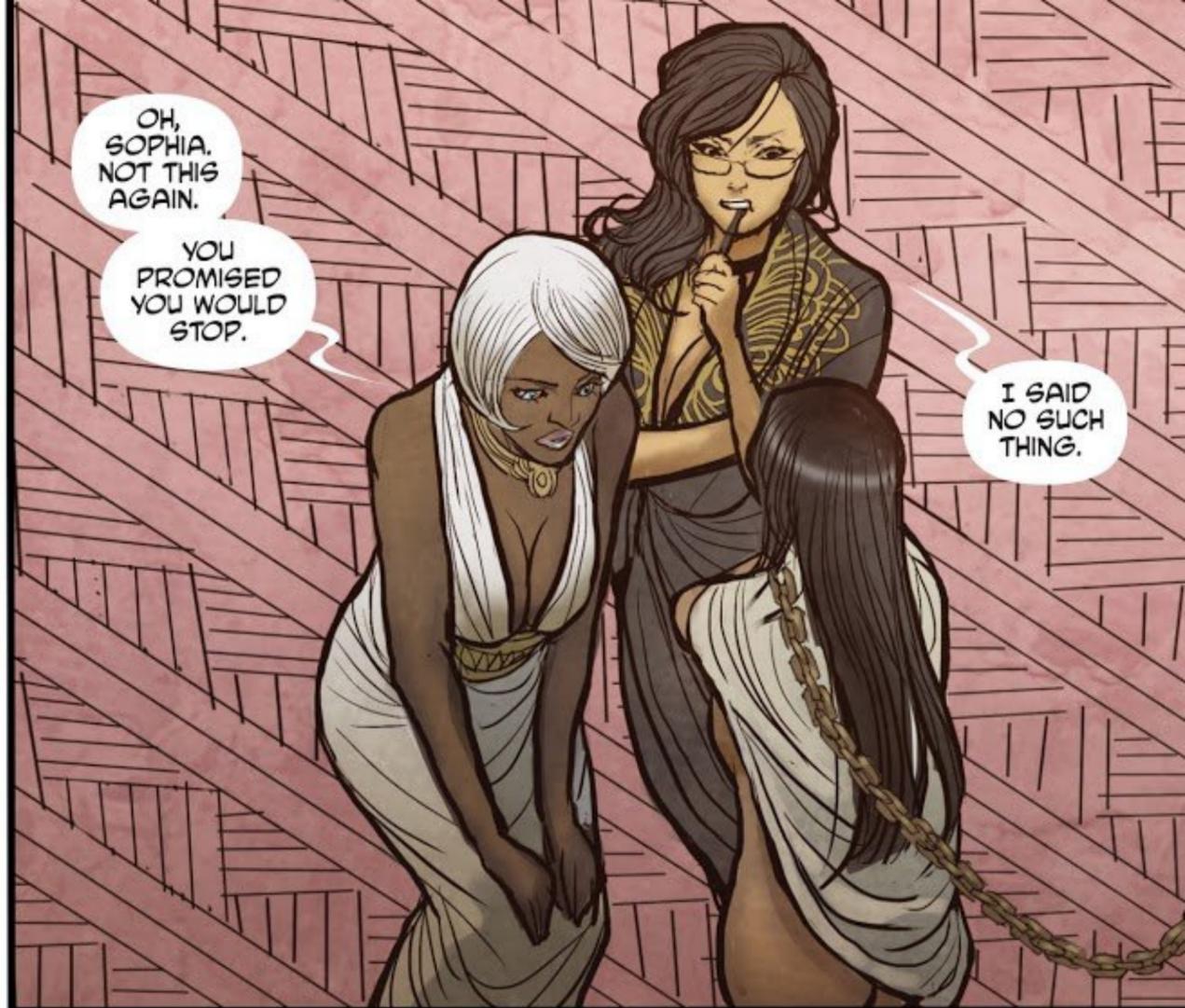
SHOW US YOUR CHEST, GIRL.





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

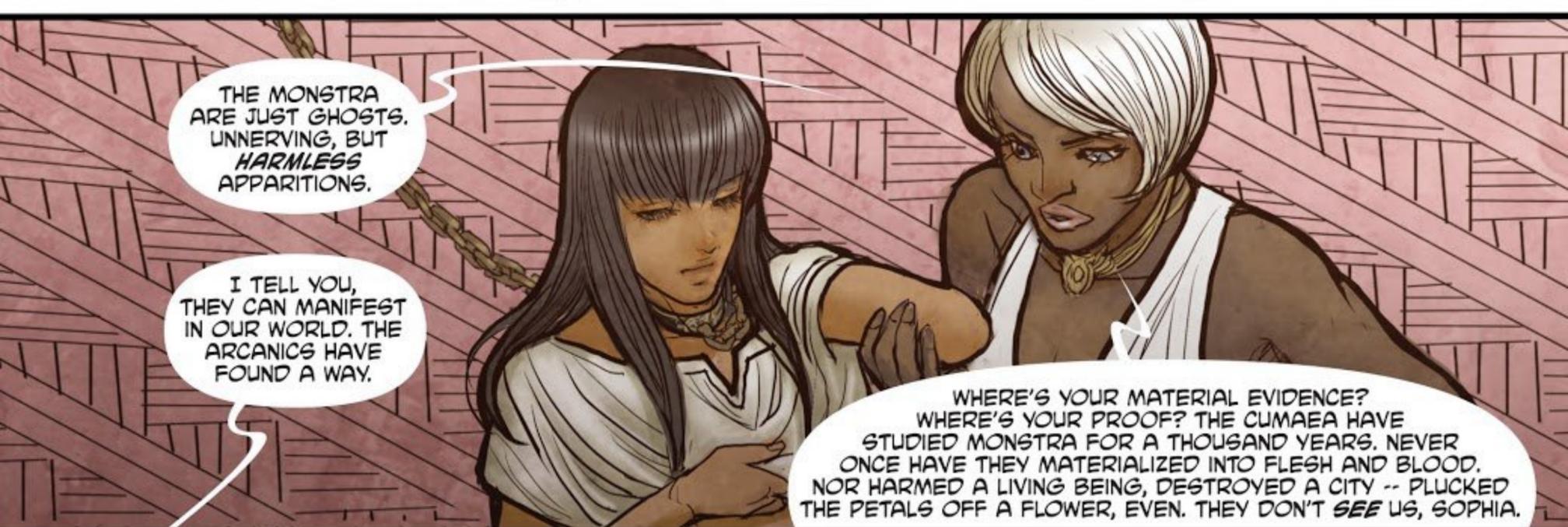
SHE'S BEEN BRANDED BY ONE OF THOSE ARCANIC RELIGIOUS CULTS, THE KIND THAT WORSHIPS THOSE DEMONIC MONSTROSITIES.



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.

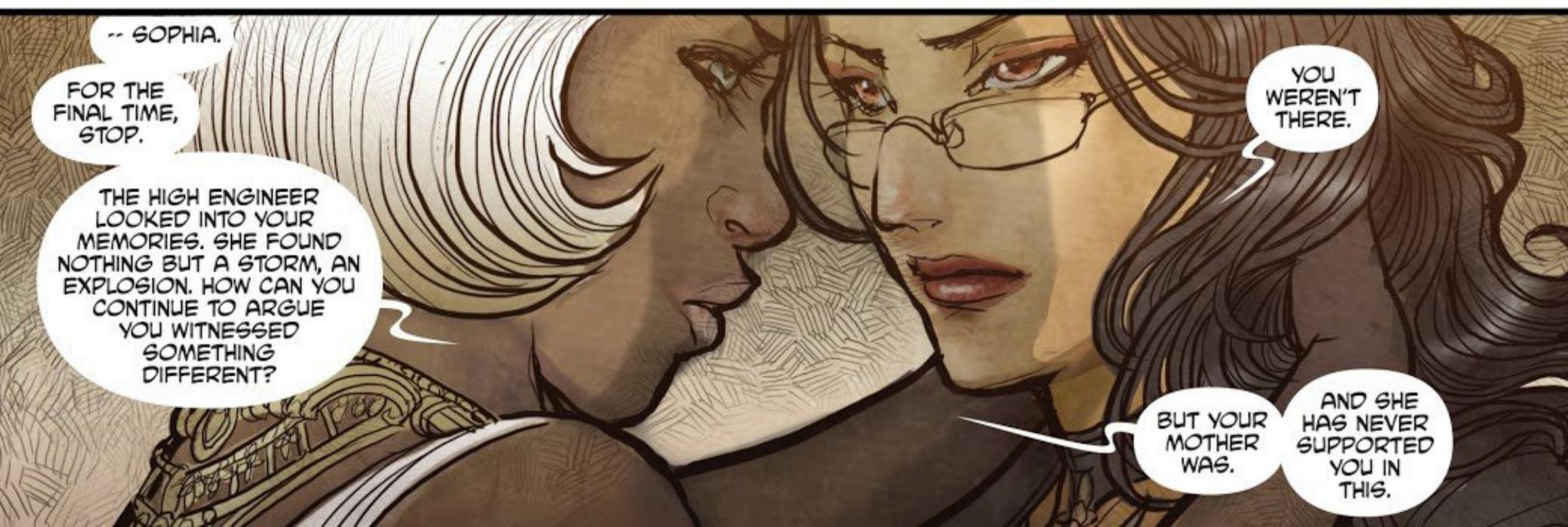


AND IF THE ARCANIC COULD SUMMON A MONSTRUM, DON'T YOU THINK THEY WOULD HAVE DONE SO BY NOW?

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.

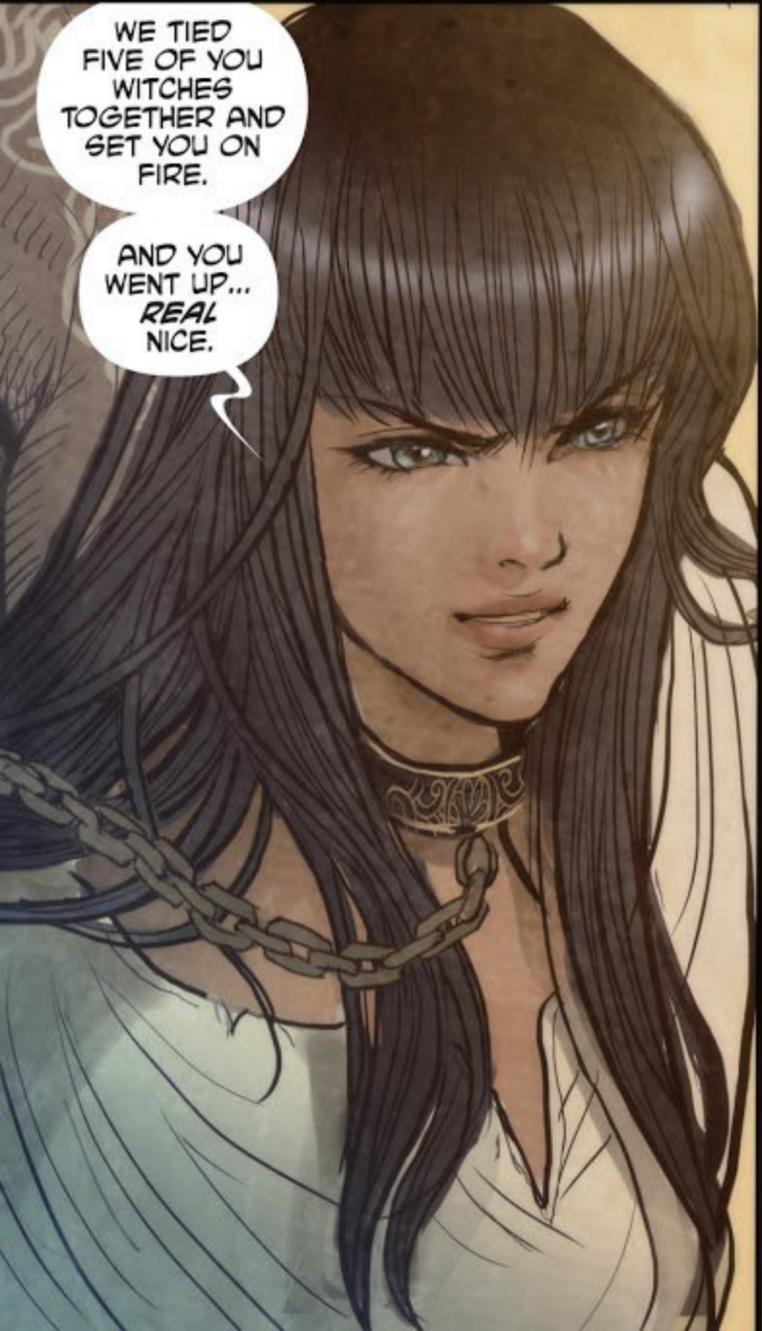
AND SHE HAS NEVER SUPPORTED YOU IN THIS.



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

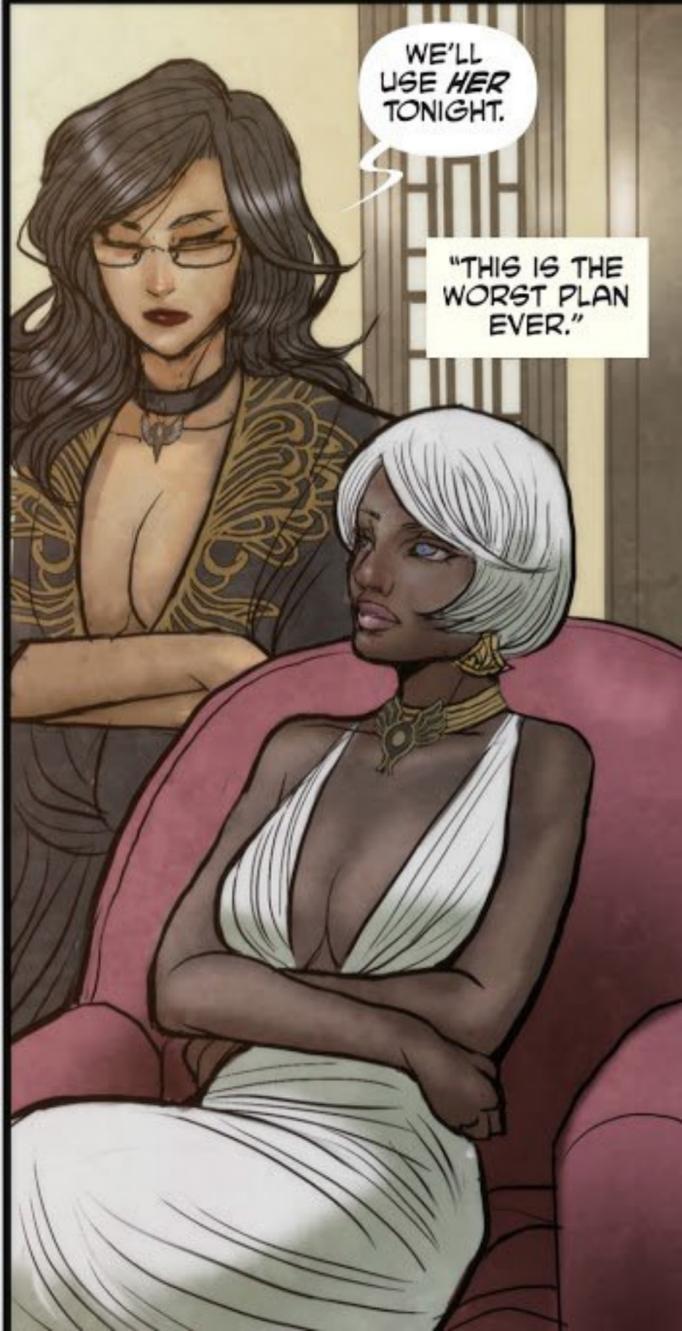


IT WAS A BOMB.



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.



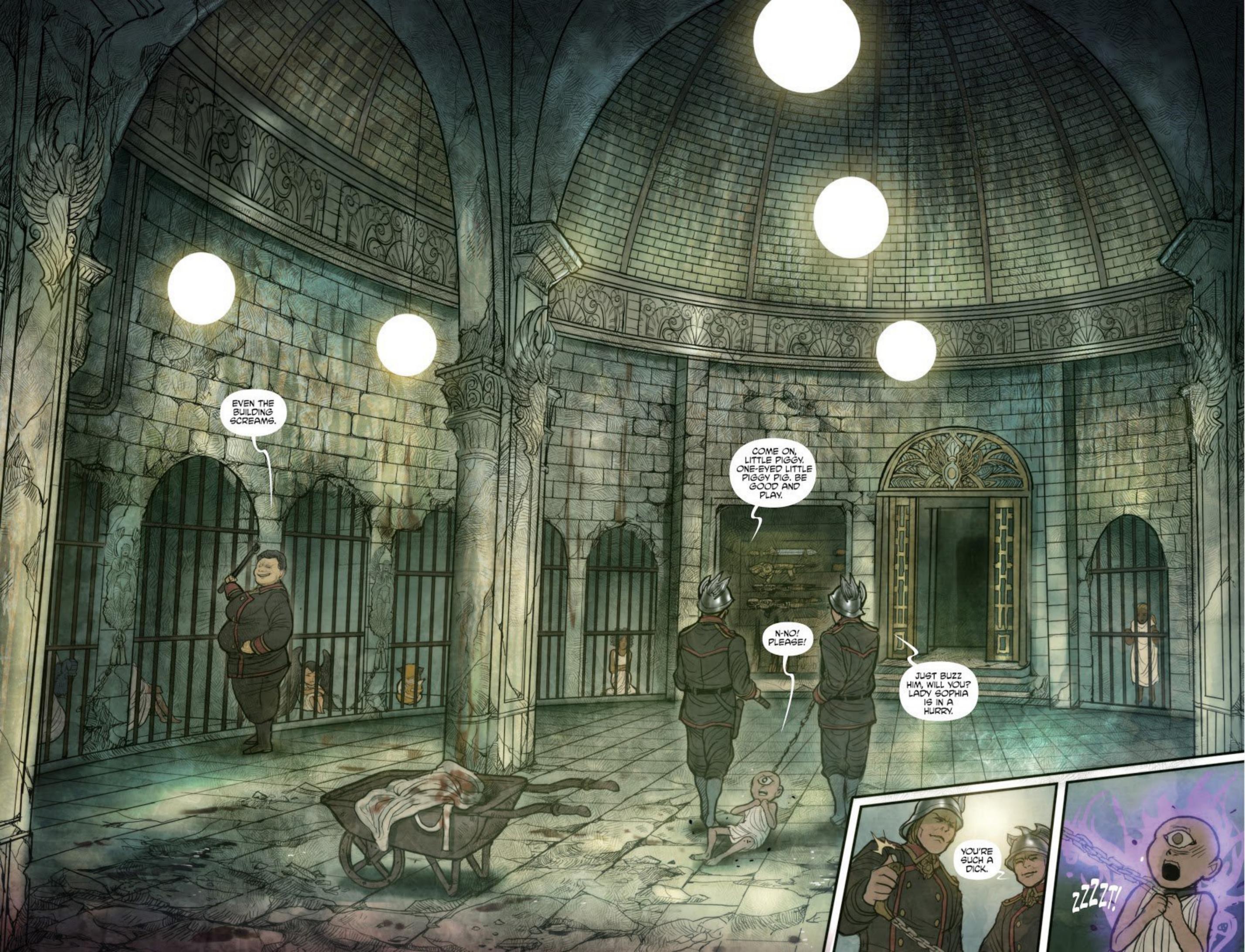
ZZZZT  
ZZZZT

AH, HERE  
WE GO. LADY  
SOPHIA HAS  
STARTED.



ZZZZT  
ZZZZT

I LOVE  
THESE  
MOMENTS.



EVEN THE BUILDING SCREAMS.

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

N-NO! PLEASE!

JUST BUZZ HIM, WILL YOU? LADY GOPHIA 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.



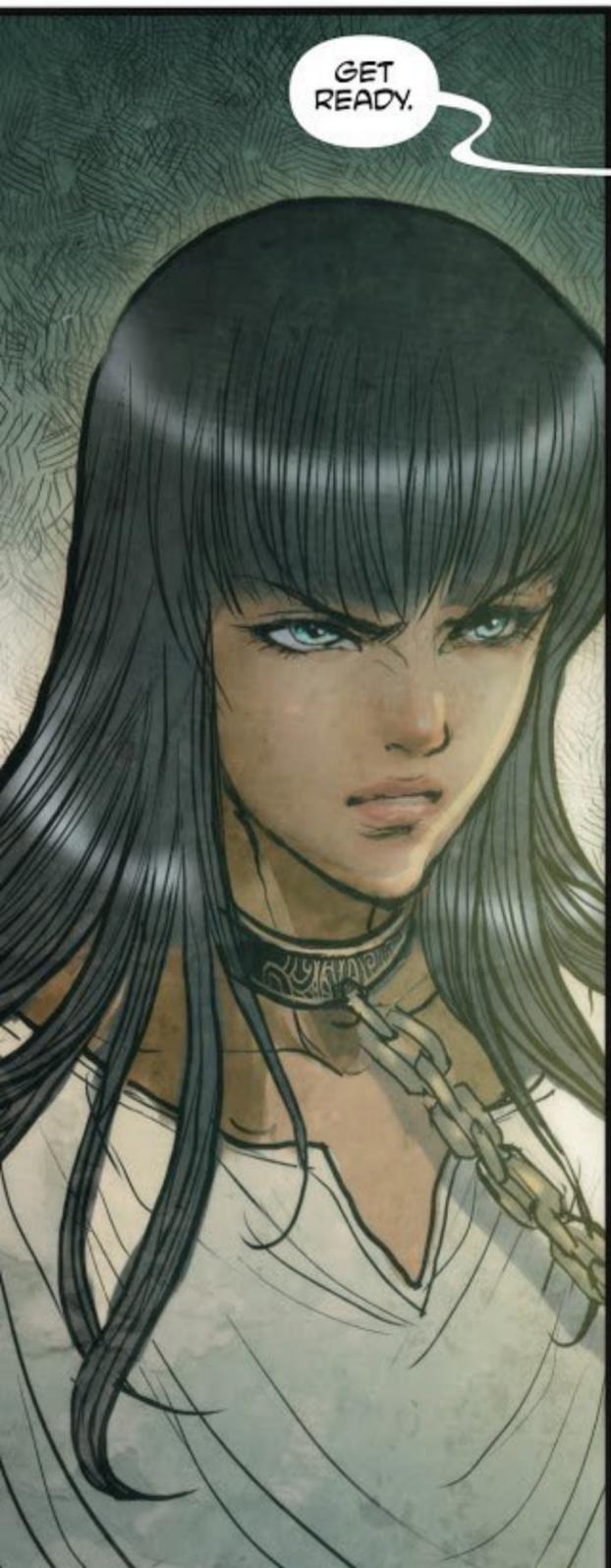
UNNH!  
UNNH!

NOTHING BUT THOSE RUTTING GRUNTS.

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



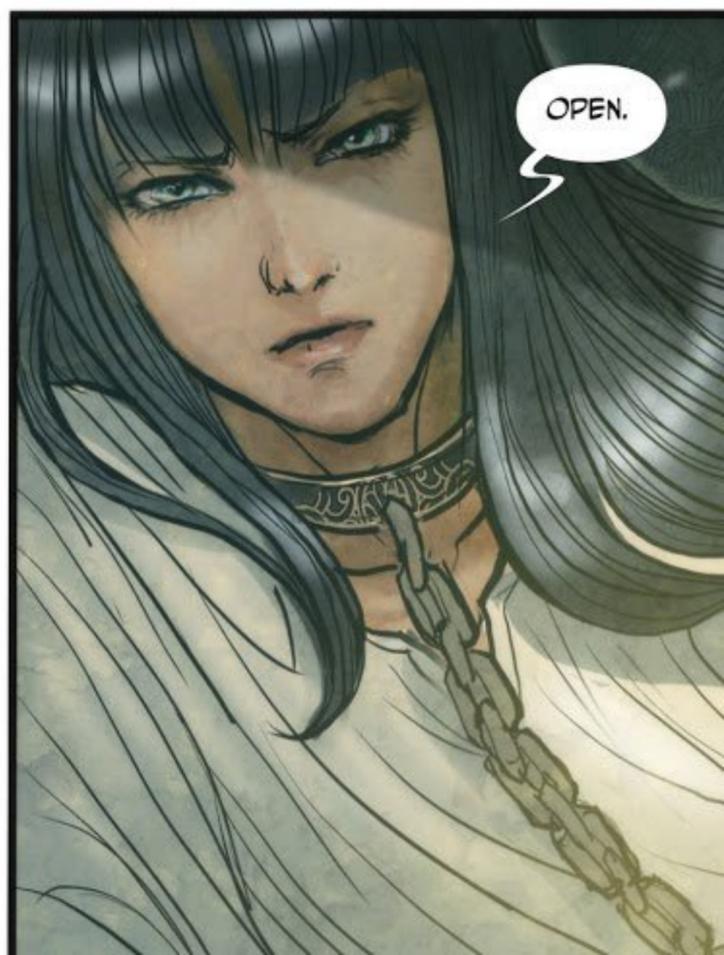
MAYBE YOU'LL MAKE THAT SOUND.



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.







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!

What I feel now is worse.



Why can't I stop it?

Why don't I want to?



GRRRRR

RRRRRR

SNRFF

HRFF



GRROFF



IRFF!



HRNN

RNN  
RNN

LOOK AT YOU...



SO...  
RED...



DON'T...



HRRF!  
HRRF!

HRRF!  
HRRF!

HRRF!  
HRRF!



HRRF!  
HRRF!  
HRRF!  
HRRF!

...DON'T...

HRRF!  
HRRF!  
HRRF!



...RUN...



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  
LILIUM.



LOOK.

≠GASP≠

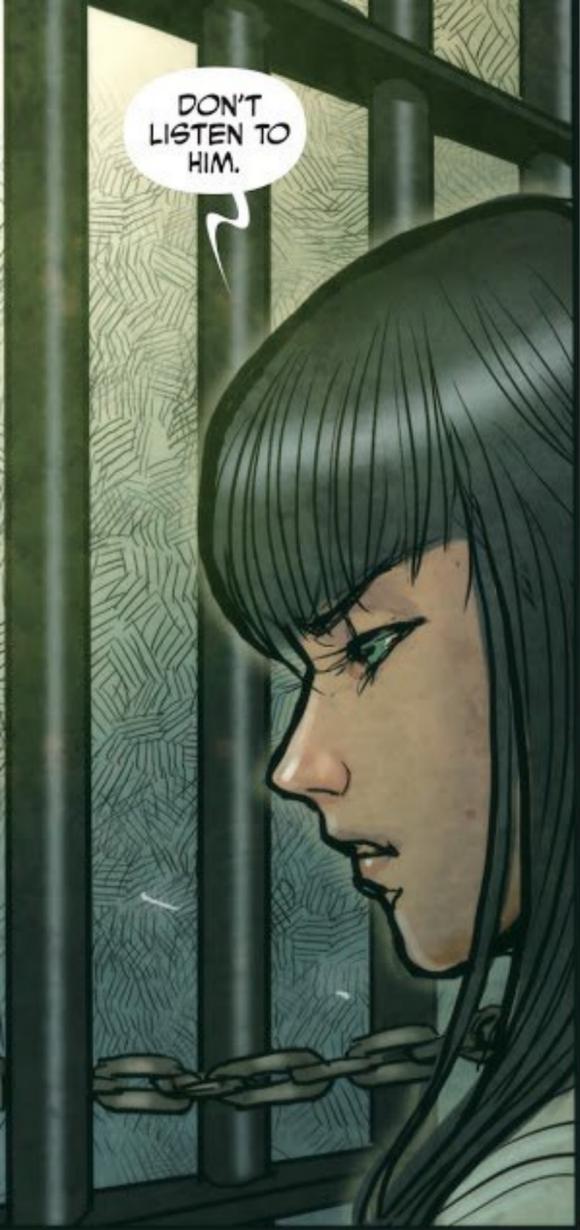


MY HEAD  
IS NEXT.

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 --



-- ʘNNNNGH!ʘ -- YOU.



-- ʘNNNNGH!ʘ -- I'LL SAVE --



-- ʘNNNNGH!ʘ



NO, STOP!

STOP!

-- ʘNNNNGH!ʘ



-- ʘNNNNGH!ʘ

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!!!

ZZZZRRRTT



NNNGGGH..



HEH. LET'S HEAR YOU MOUTH OFF AGAIN.



AAAAAAAAA!

WRRRNICH



URRKK!



HSSS!





...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.



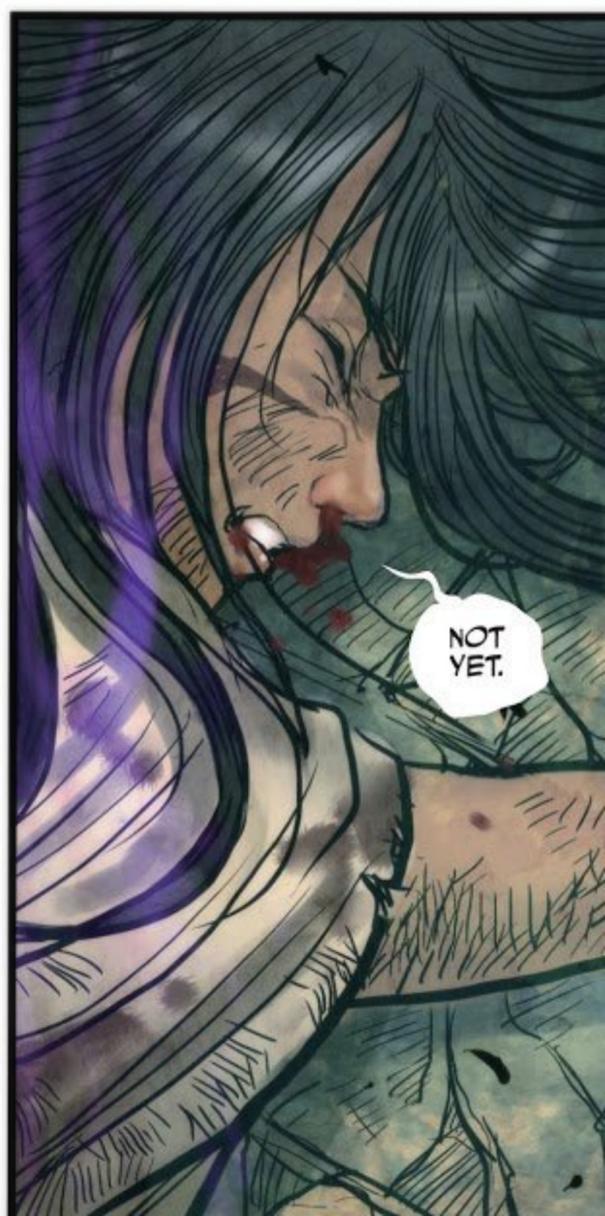
IT'S A WITCH TRICK.

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?



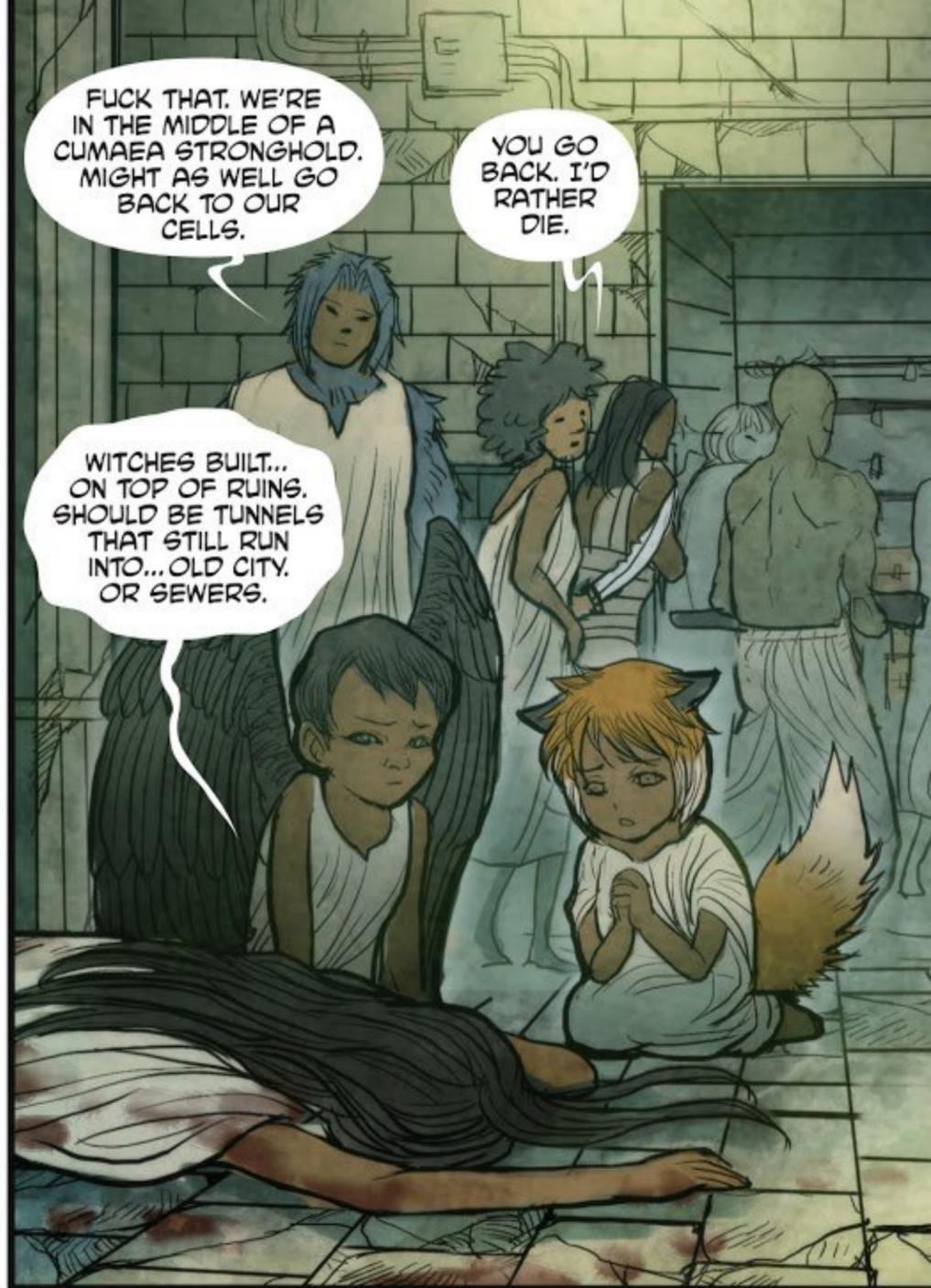
NOT YET.



YOU ALL...  
NEED TO  
LEAVE... RIGHT  
NOW.

IF YOU  
DON'T...  
YOU'RE NOT  
GETTING  
OUT.

SOUNDS  
GOOD  
TO ME.



FUCK THAT. WE'RE  
IN THE MIDDLE OF A  
CUMAEA STRONGHOLD.  
MIGHT AS WELL GO  
BACK TO OUR  
CELLS.

YOU GO  
BACK. I'D  
RATHER  
DIE.

WITCHES BUILT...  
ON TOP OF RUINS.  
SHOULD BE TUNNELS  
THAT STILL RUN  
INTO... OLD CITY.  
OR SEWERS.



AREN'T  
YOU COMING  
WITH US?

I'M NOT...  
TRYING TO  
ESCAPE.

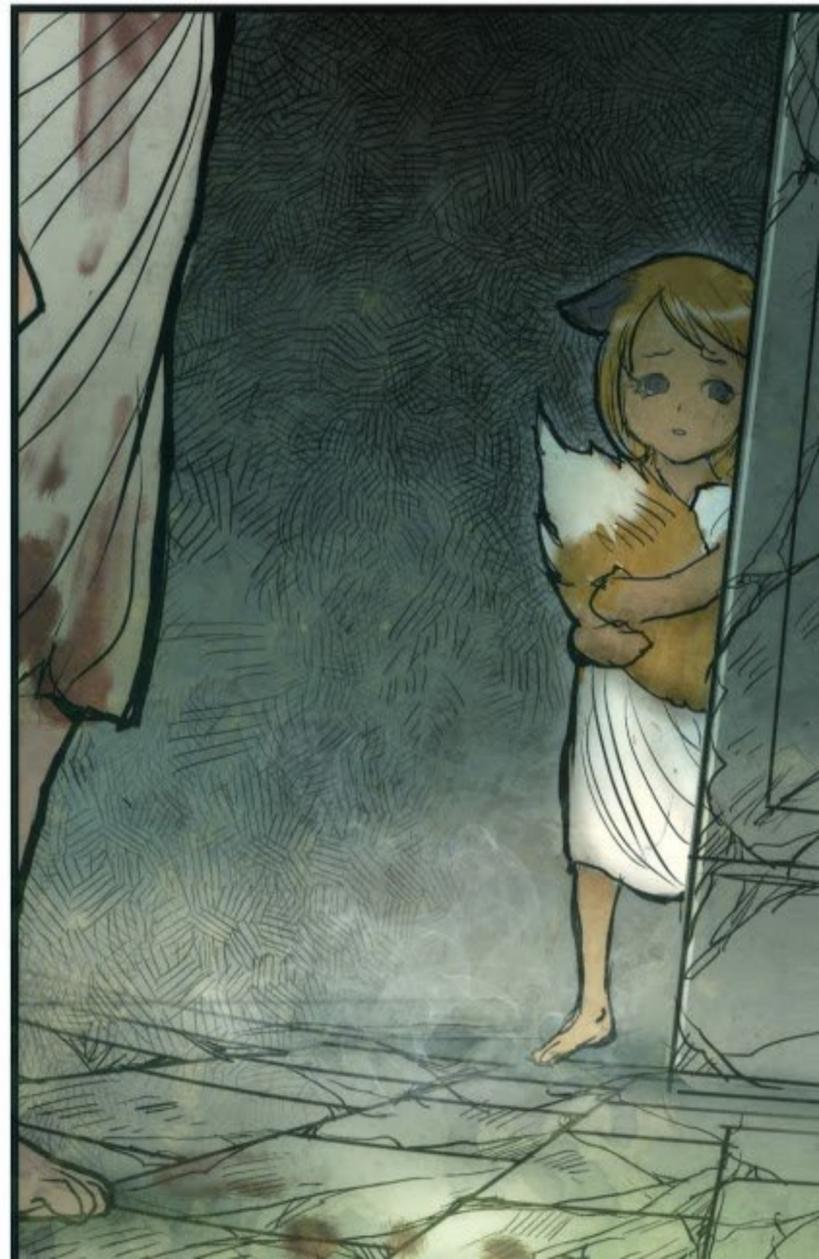
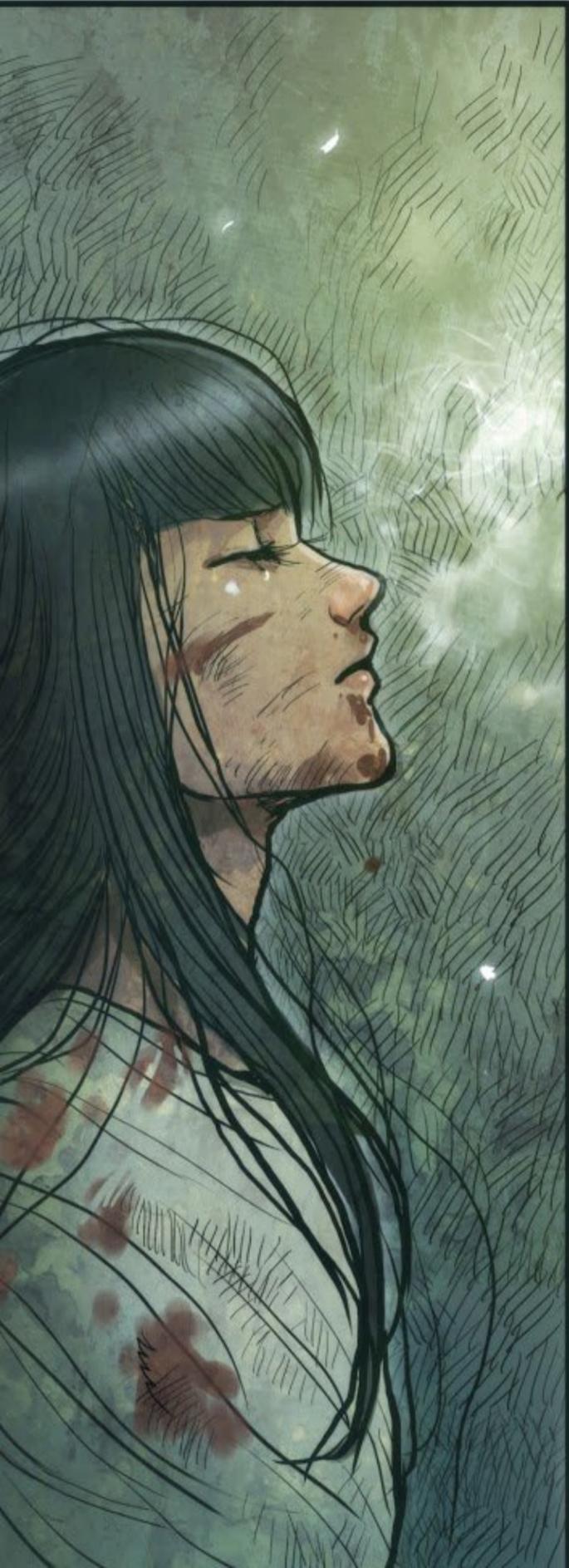


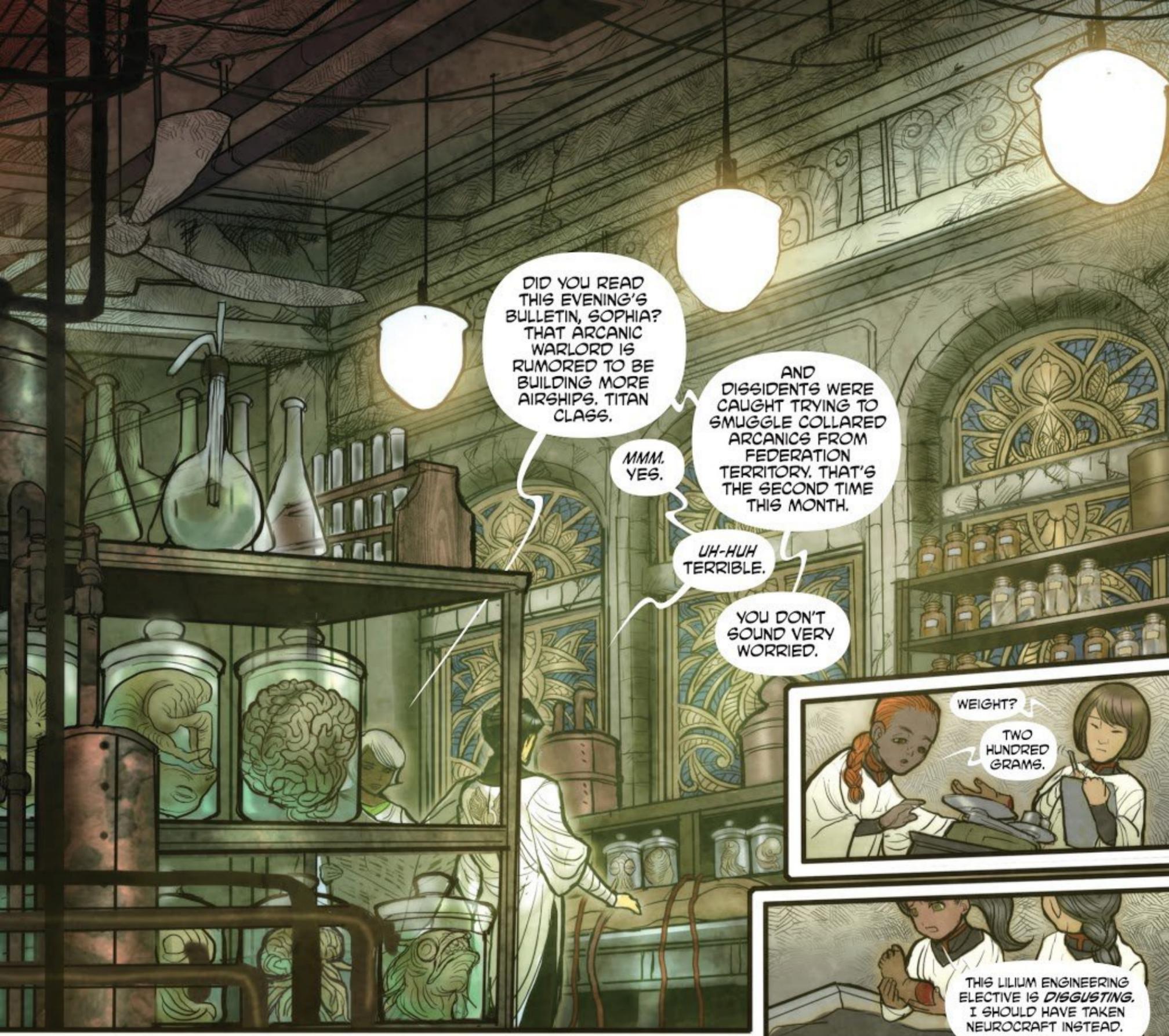
COME ON,  
HURRY.

BUT WHAT  
ABOUT HER?  
SHE SAVED US.

I DON'T KNOW  
THAT. AND EVEN IF SHE  
DID, IF SHE DOESN'T WANT TO  
LEAVE THERE'S NOTHING TO BE DONE.







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.



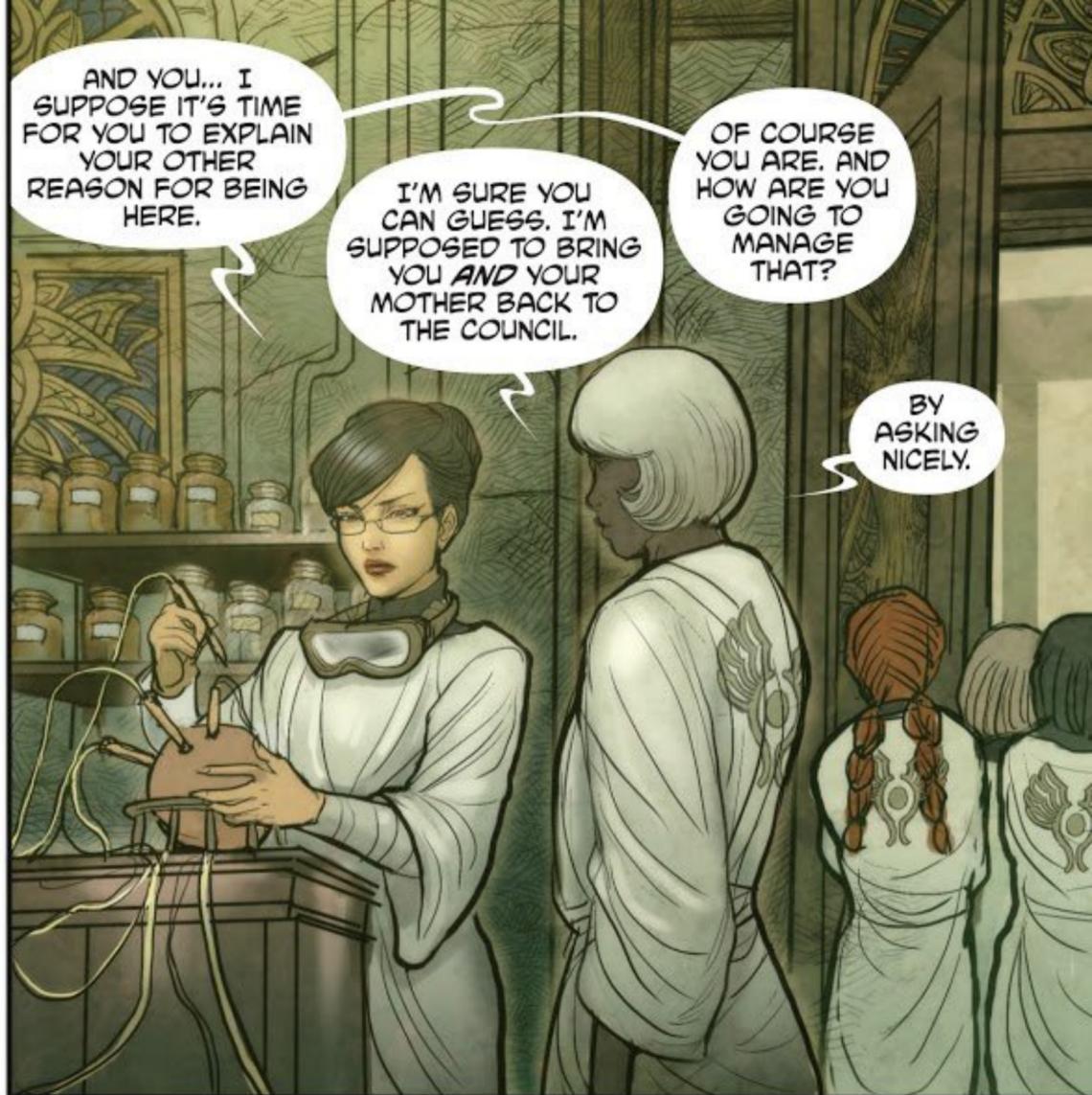
TAKE THESE TO MY MOTHER. DON'T DILLY DALLY. THEY NEED TO BE WARM OR SHE'LL COMPLAIN.

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.



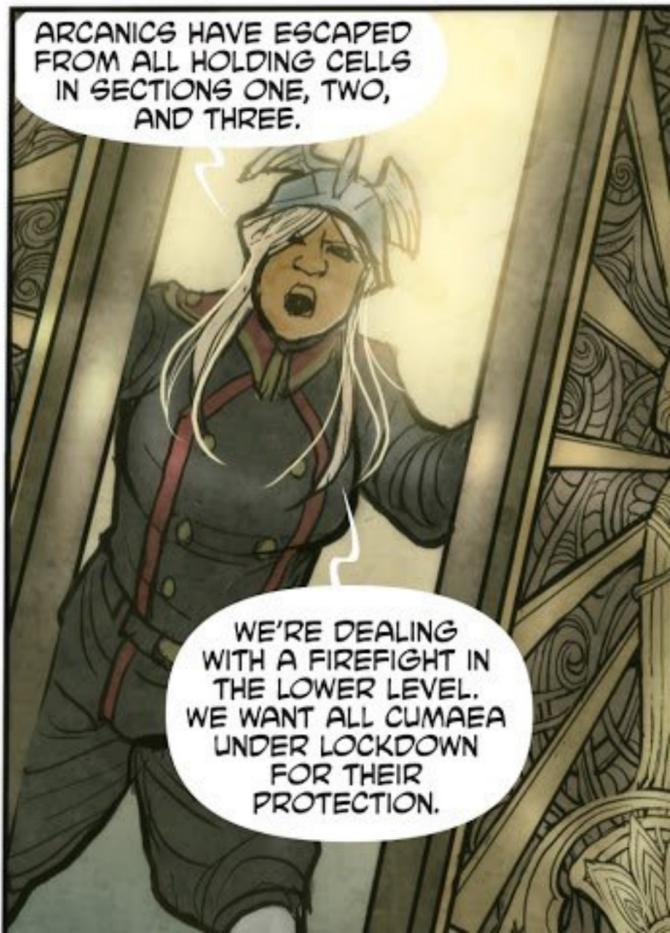
PLEASE. EITHER YOU COMPEL YOUR MOTHER TO OBEY, OR THE COUNCIL WILL --

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.



CAN'T YOU FEEL IT? CAN'T YOU HEAR THE SCREAMING?

SOPHIA, FOCUS. TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE. MAYBE WE CAN --



WAIT, WHAT ARE YOU -- DON'T SIPHON --

I'VE FELT THIS BEFORE...

SOPHIA, STOP. THE GUARDS ARE PROTECTING US. WE'RE NOT IN DANGER.



NO, SOPHIA! THE COUNCIL FORBIDS MORPHOSIS!

...I'VE HEARD THOSE SCREAMS...

...IN CONSTANTINE.



STOP IT!

...NOT AGAIN... NOT AGAIN...



≡PANT≡  
≡PANT≡

STAY THERE. STAY CALM. I'M... I'M GETTING HELP.



NO! DON'T OPEN --



AAIEEEEE!



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.

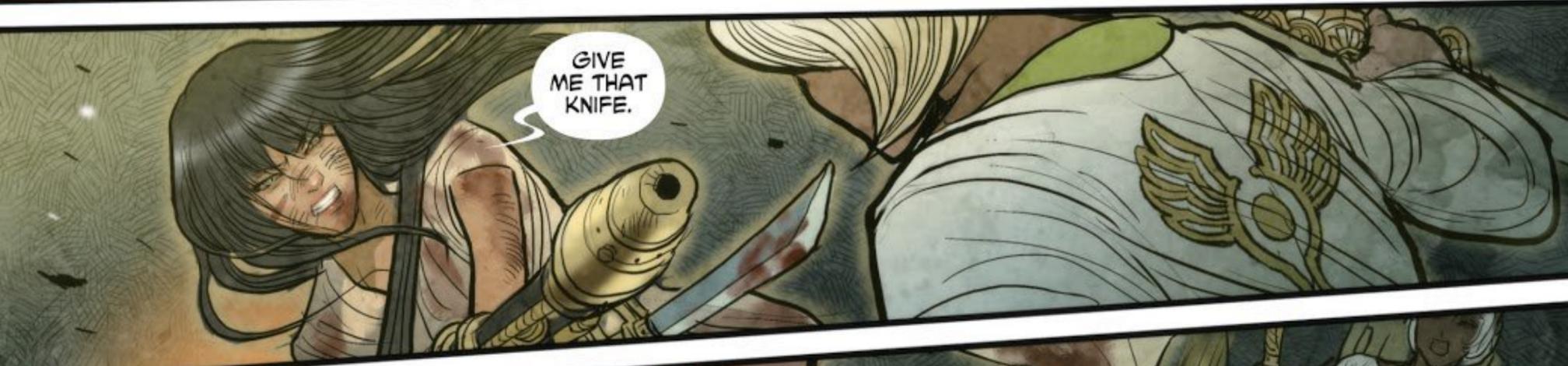
NOOOO...

**THUD**



YOU --

DON'T.



GIVE ME THAT KNIFE.



HOW?

LOOKS LIKE YOUR HAND IS FULL.



BITCH.

PUT IT ON THE GROUND. MOVE TO THE WALL.



SHANK

SOPHIA!



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?

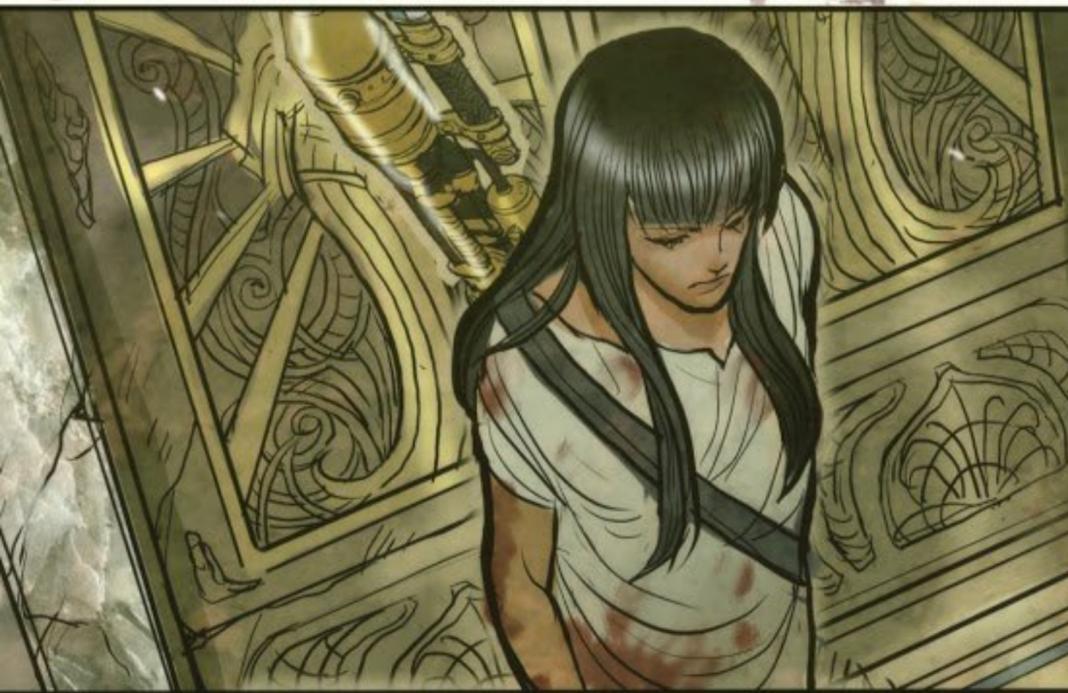


MORE OR LESS.

AACHH!



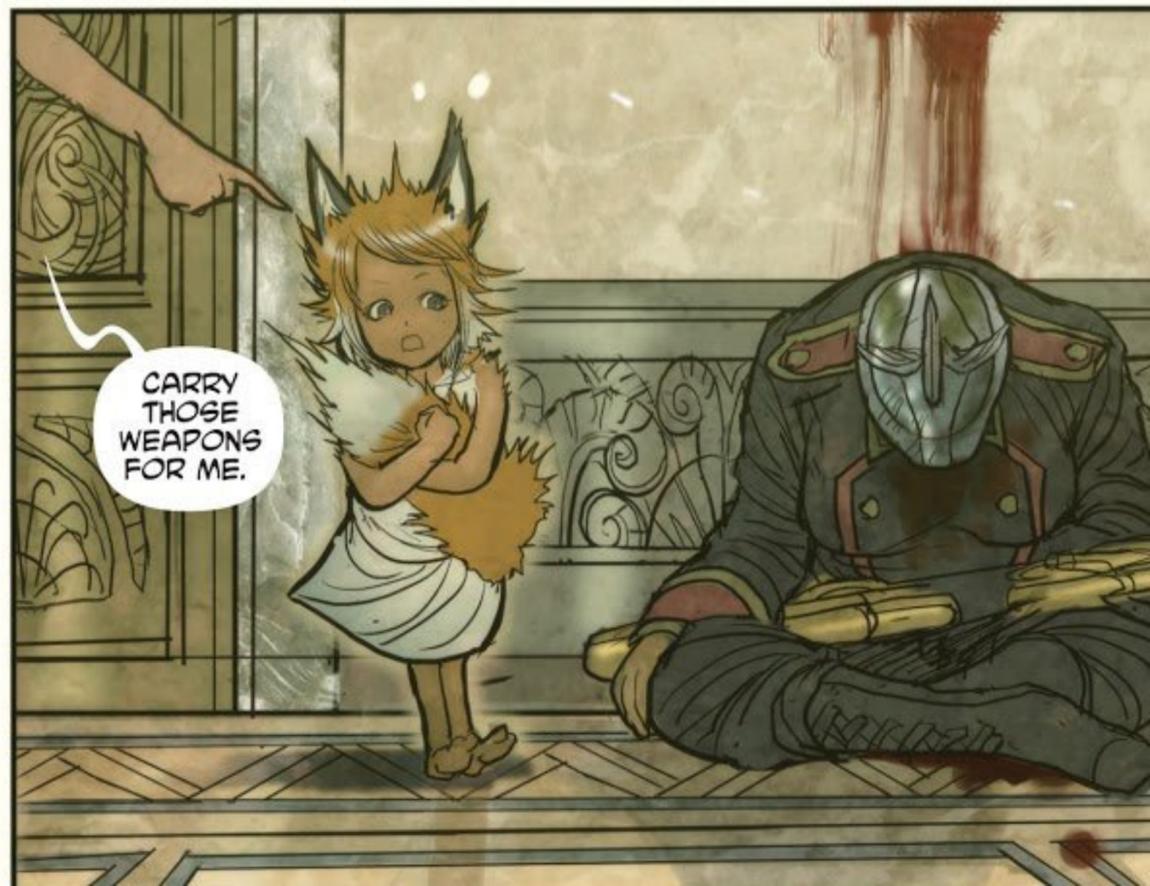
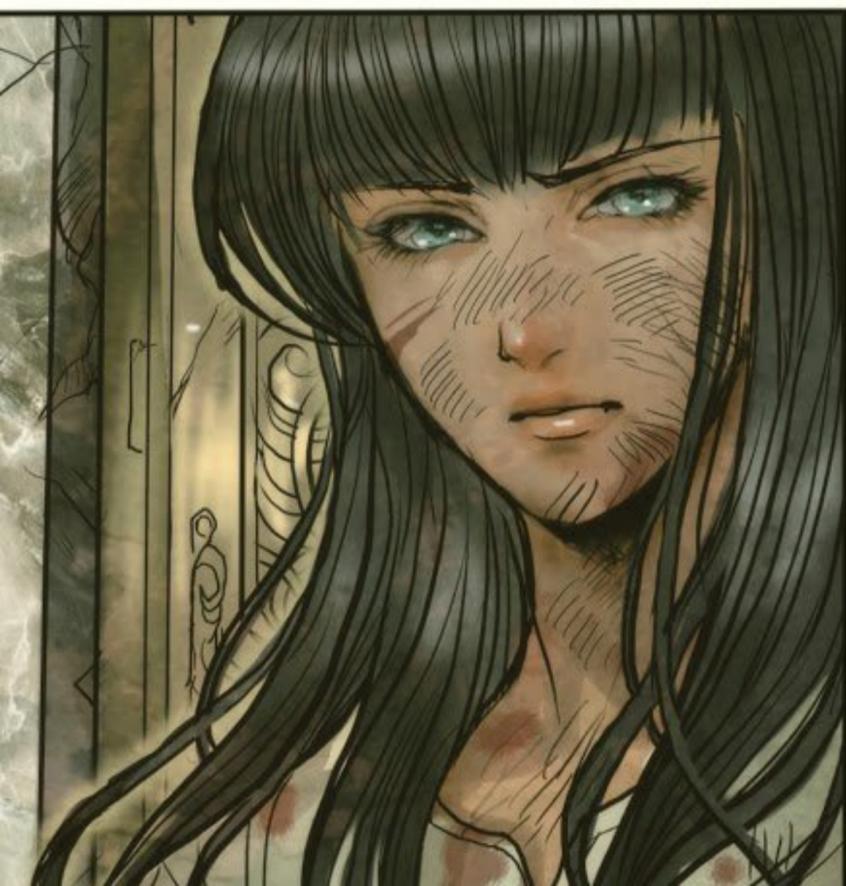
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, LITTLE FOX?



I FOLLOWED YOU.

I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE SAFER.

YOU'RE GOOD AT KILLING.



CARRY THOSE WEAPONS FOR ME.



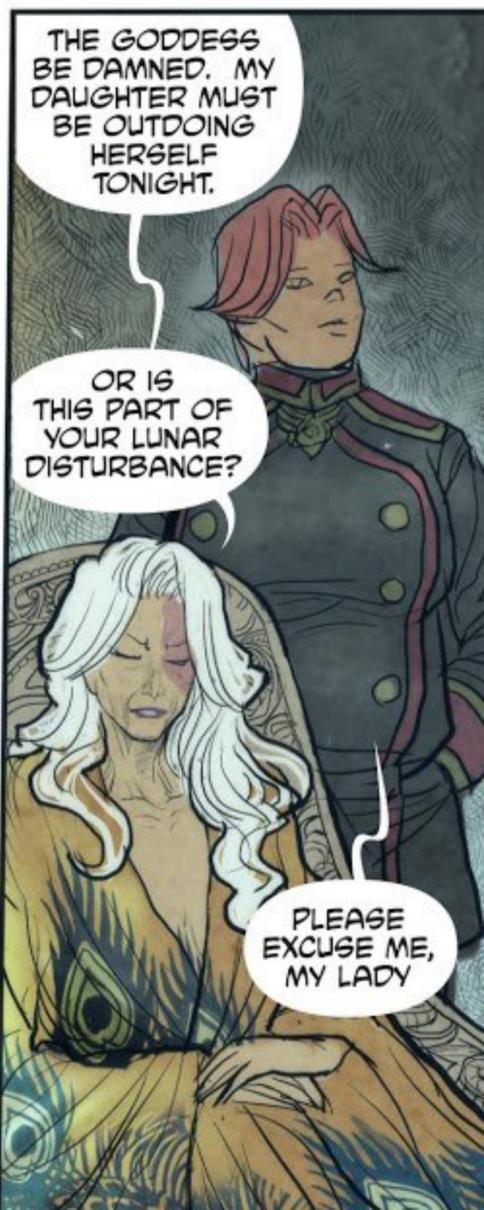
I'M NOT A FOOL.



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.



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.

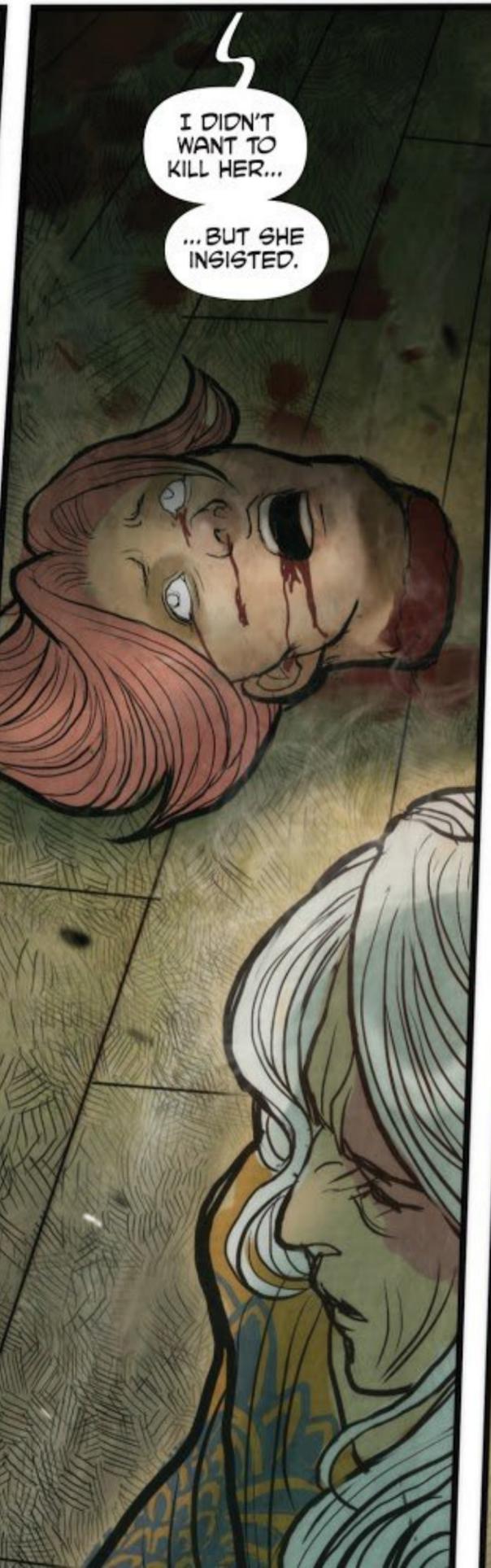
DO I EVER?



HMMM.



THUDD



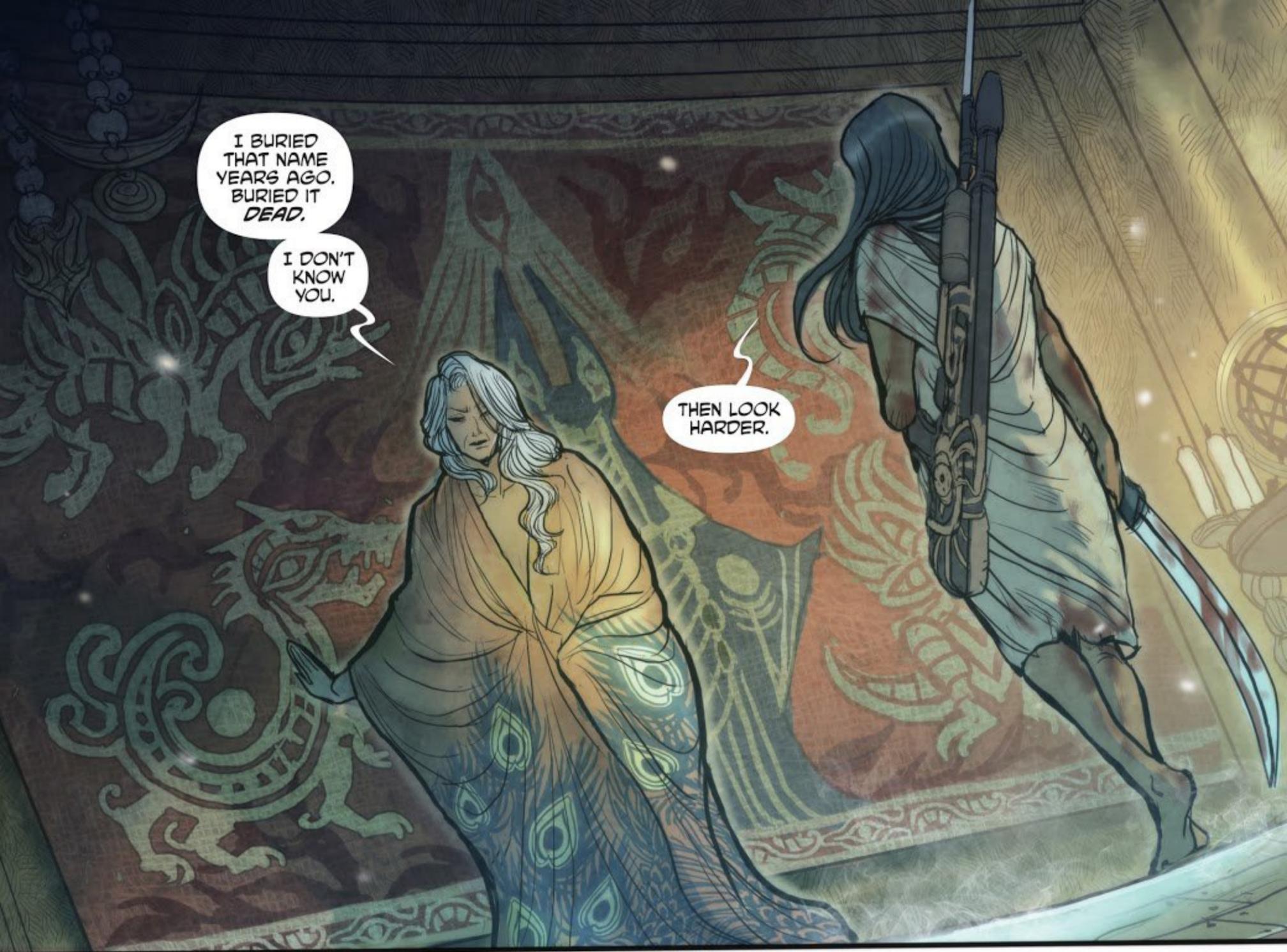
I DIDN'T WANT TO KILL HER...

... BUT SHE INSISTED.



YVETTE LO LIM.

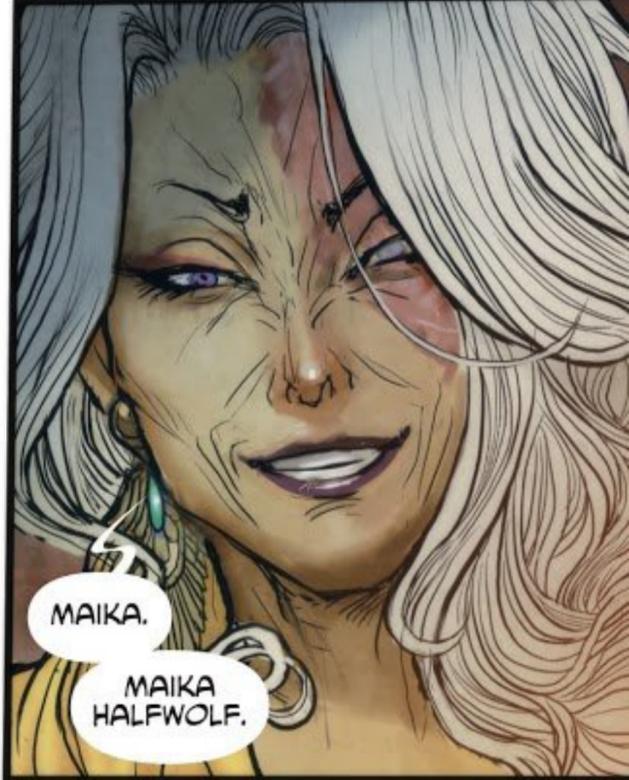
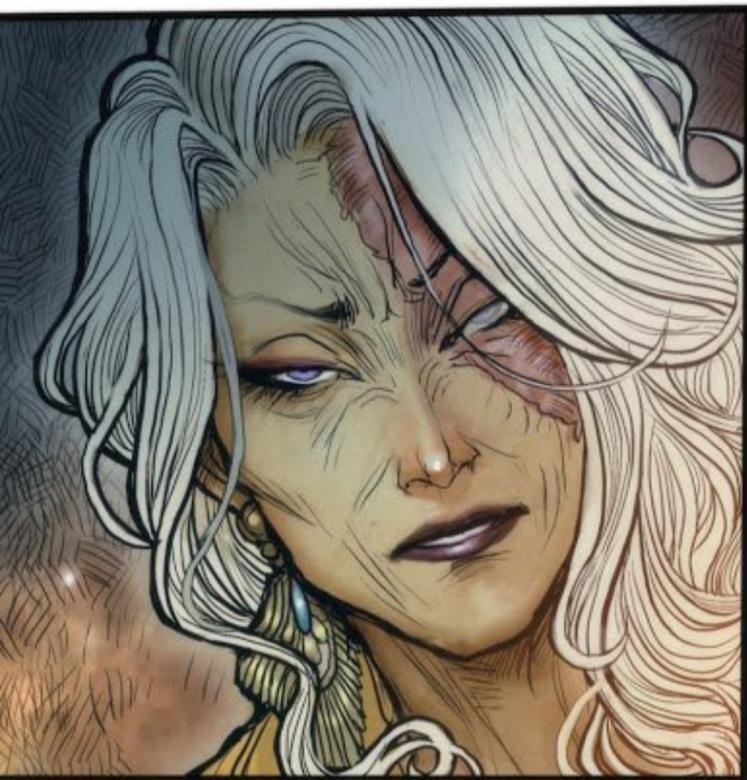
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.



I BURIED  
THAT NAME  
YEARS AGO.  
BURIED IT  
*DEAD.*

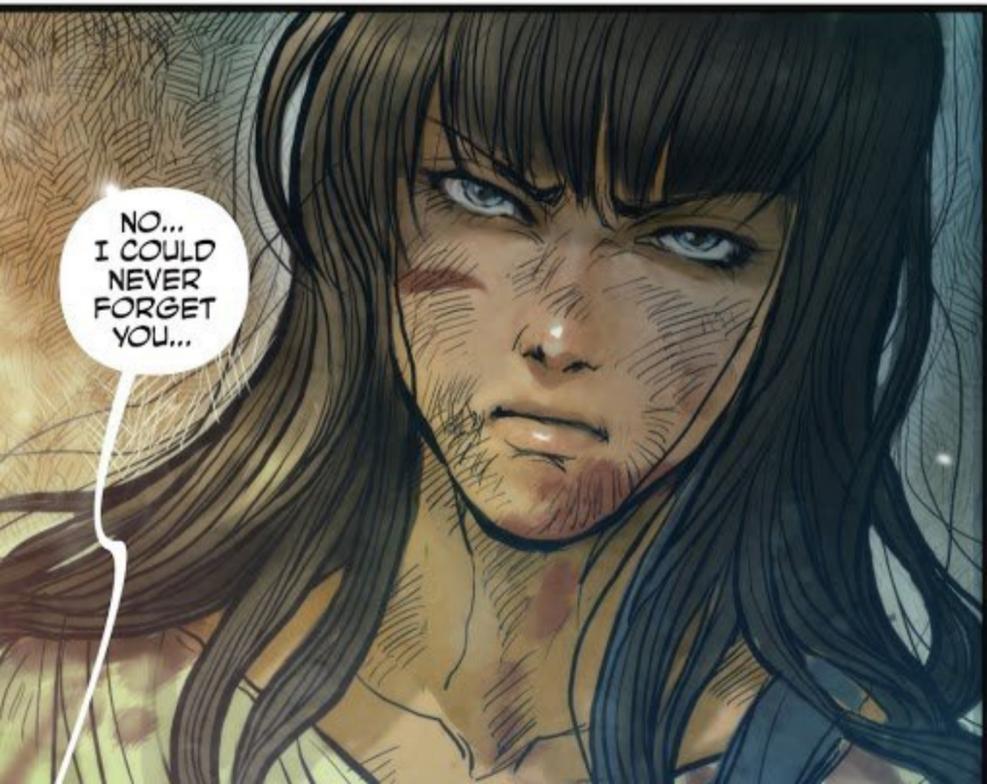
I DON'T  
KNOW  
YOU.

THEN LOOK  
HARDER.



MAIKA.

MAIKA  
HALFWOLF.

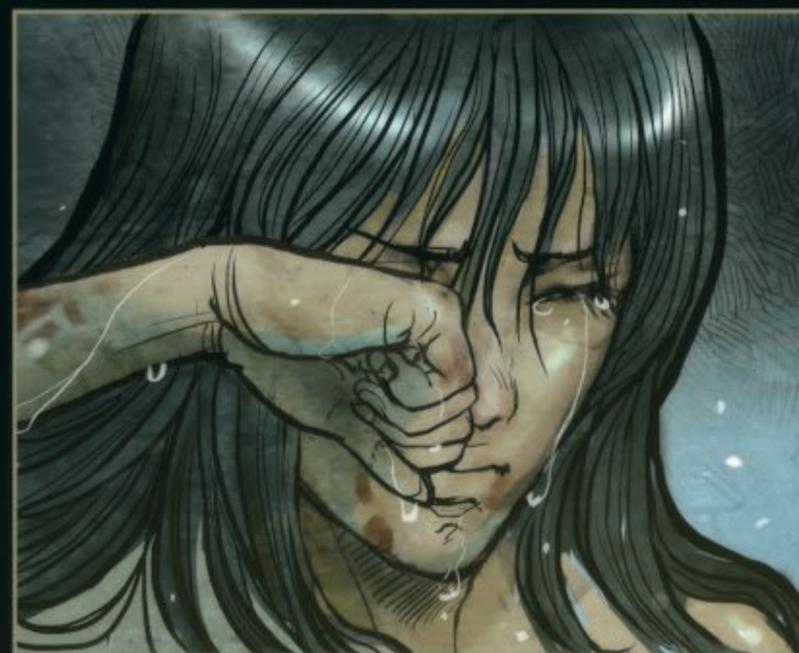


NO...  
I COULD  
NEVER  
FORGET  
YOU...



...OR YOUR  
MOTHER.

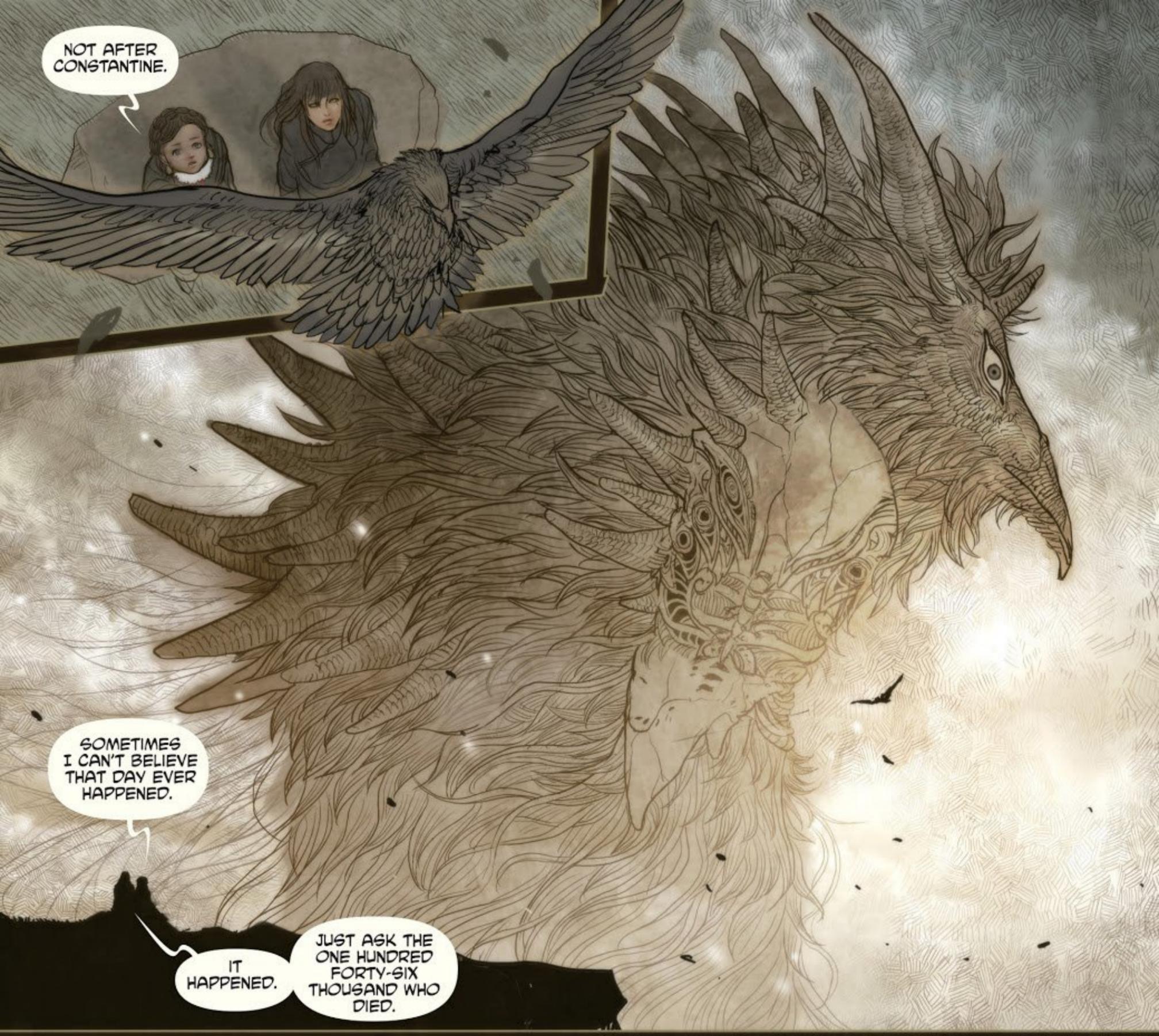
ONE  
MONTH  
AGO.





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.

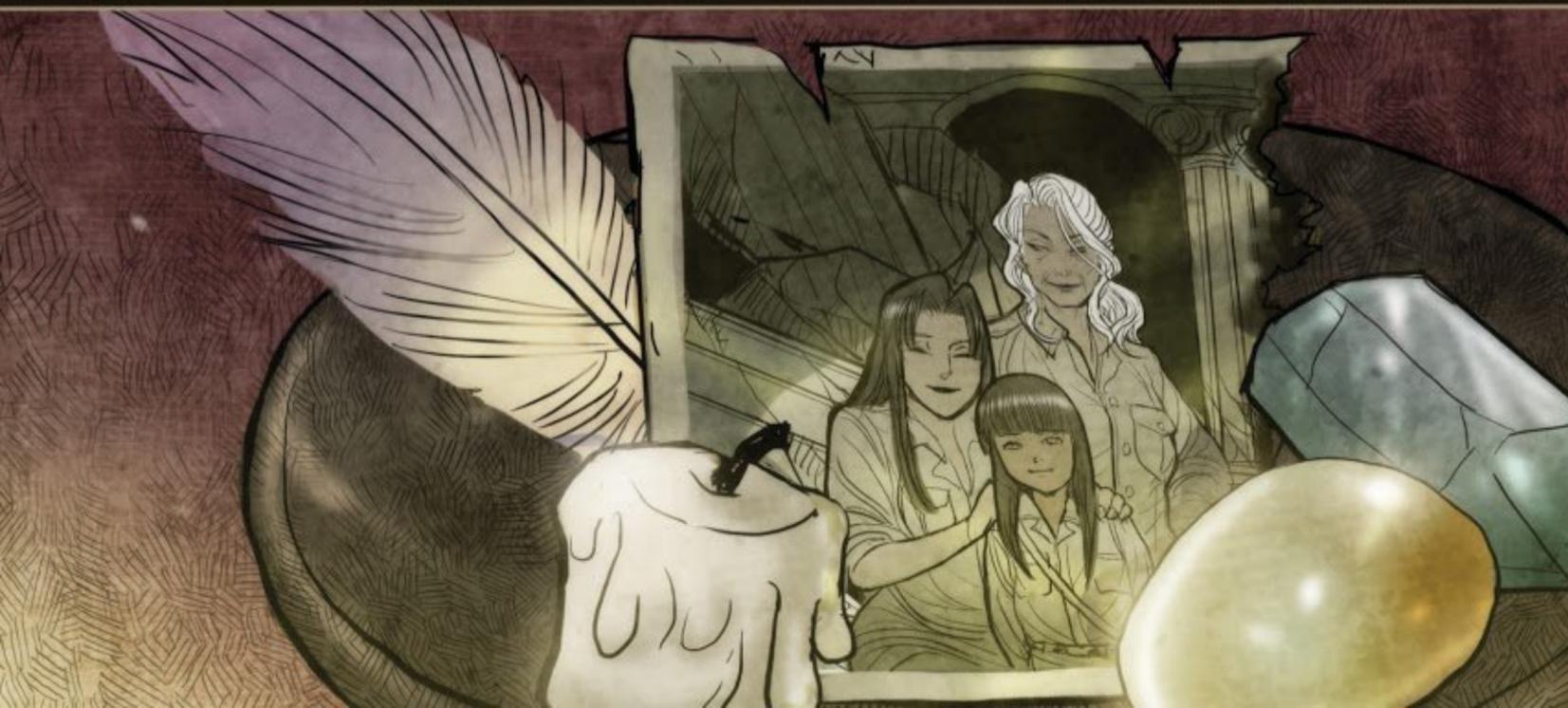


I'VE GOT  
ENOUGH  
GHOSTS IN  
MY LIFE.



GUESS YOU GOT TIRED OF FIDDLING WITH THAT LOCK.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?



"I LOOKED FOR YOU AFTER HER DEATH, MAIKA."



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 HALFWOLF.



DON'T SAY HER NAME!



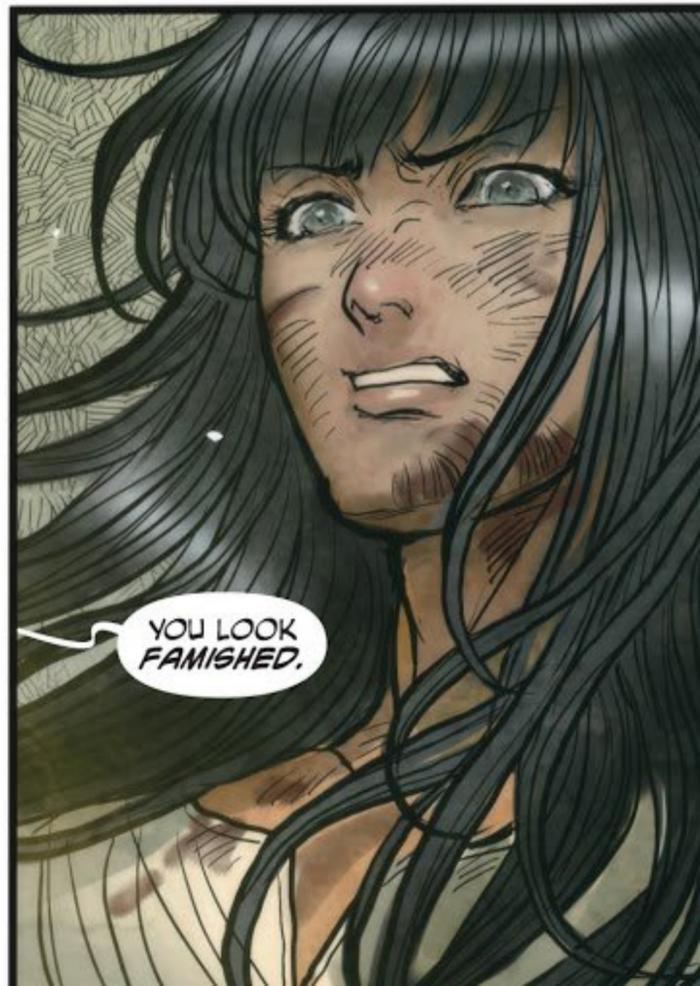
DO... MNNNGH BE CAREFUL. I'M AN OLD WOMAN. WE BREAK EASILY.



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...

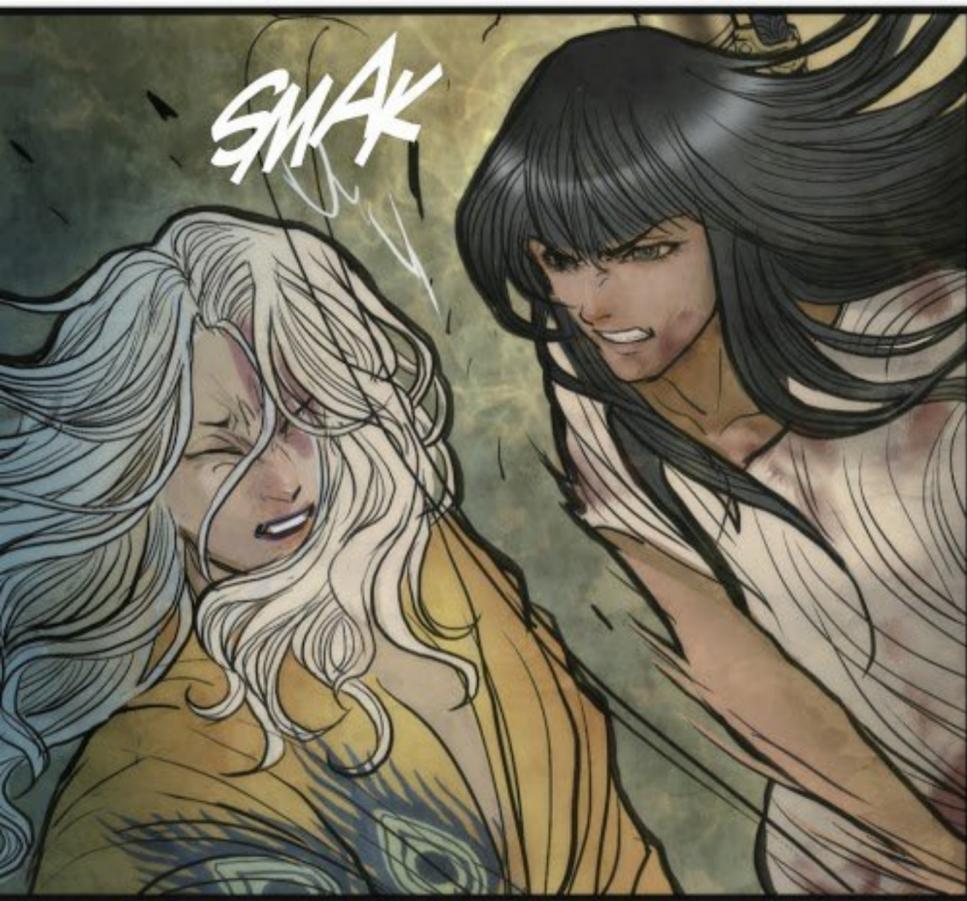
... AND WHAT YOU ALL WERE DOING IN THE DESERT WHEN SHE WAS MURDERED.



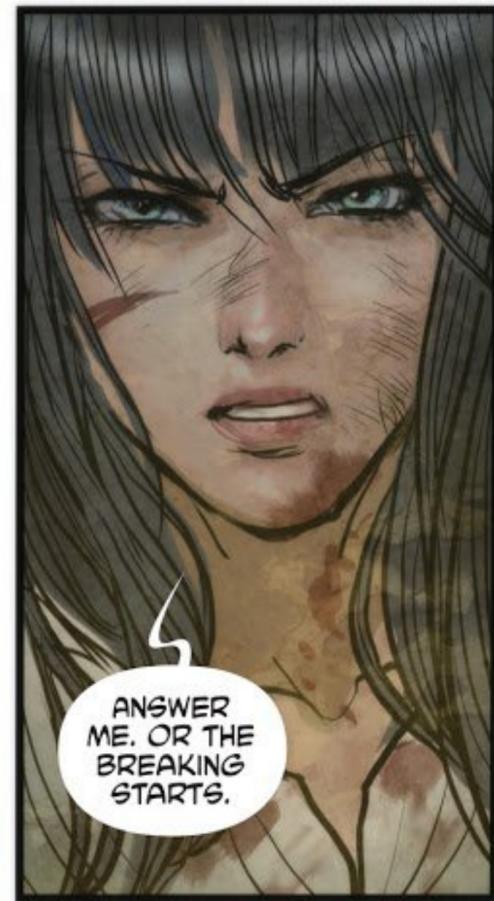
YOU CAME ALL THIS WAY, ALL THESE YEARS, RISKED EVERYTHING, JUST TO ASK ME THAT?

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

LIKE YOUR SOUL DEPENDS ON IT.



SMACK

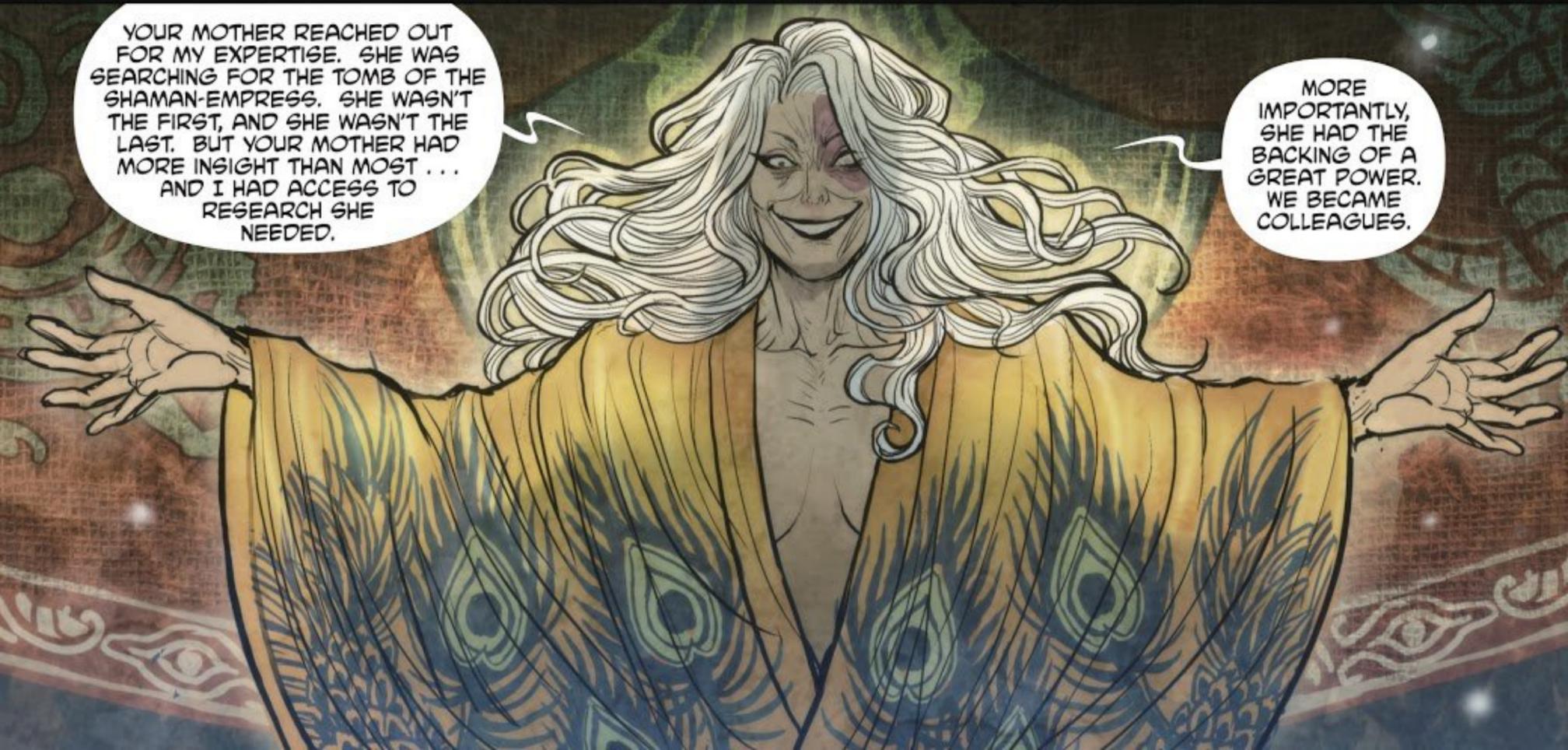


ANSWER ME. OR THE BREAKING STARTS.



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 HALF-WOLF.



TELL ME WHERE YOU HID IT.



SCCCREEEEEEEE! SCCCREEEEEEEE!

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



SCCCREEEEEEEE! SCCCREEEEEEEE!

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



SCCCREEEEEEEE! SCCCREEEEEEEE!

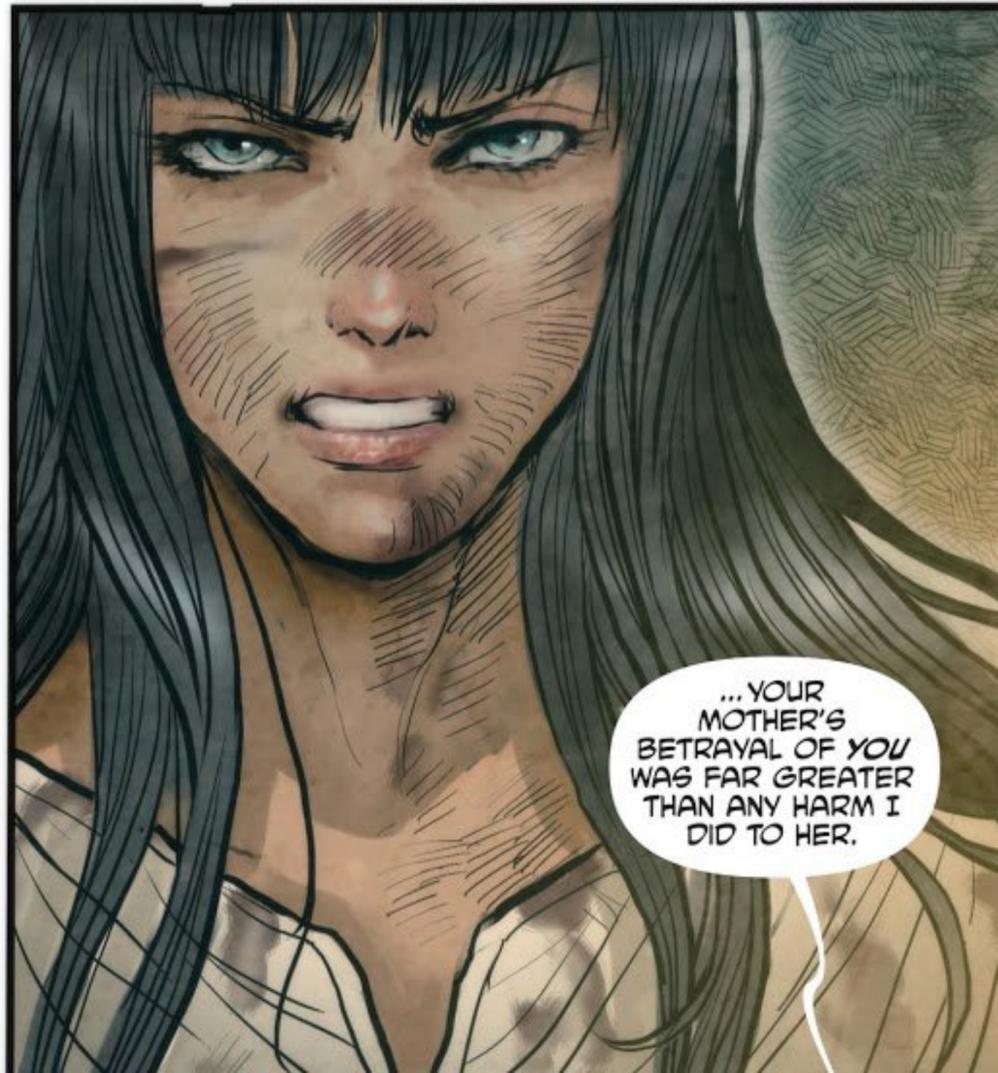
WHATEVER YOU'RE LOOKING FOR WENT WITH MY ARM. YOU CAN THANK YOUR SISTER-KIND FOR THAT.

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.



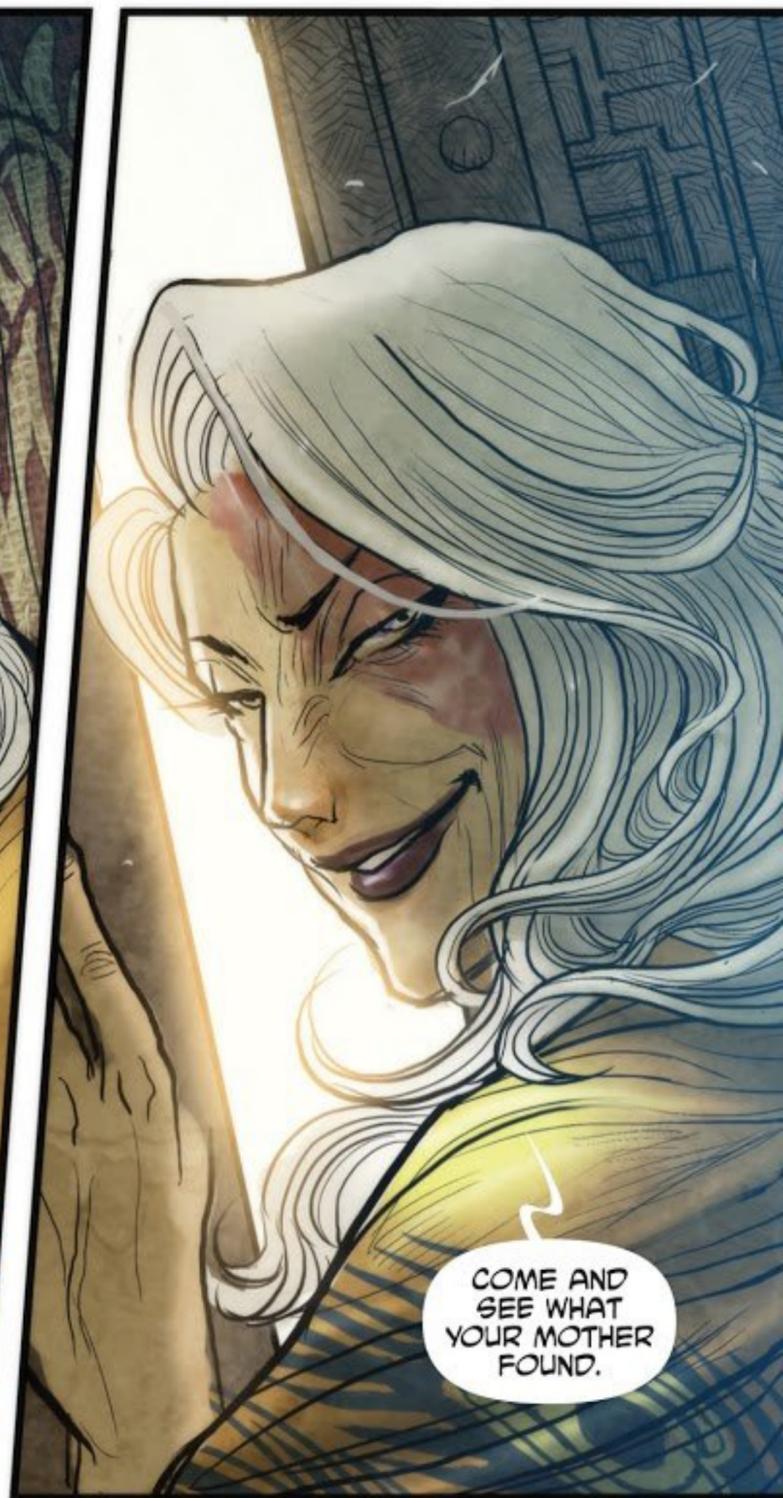
MISS?

SUCH A  
CONFUSED  
YOUNG  
WOMAN.

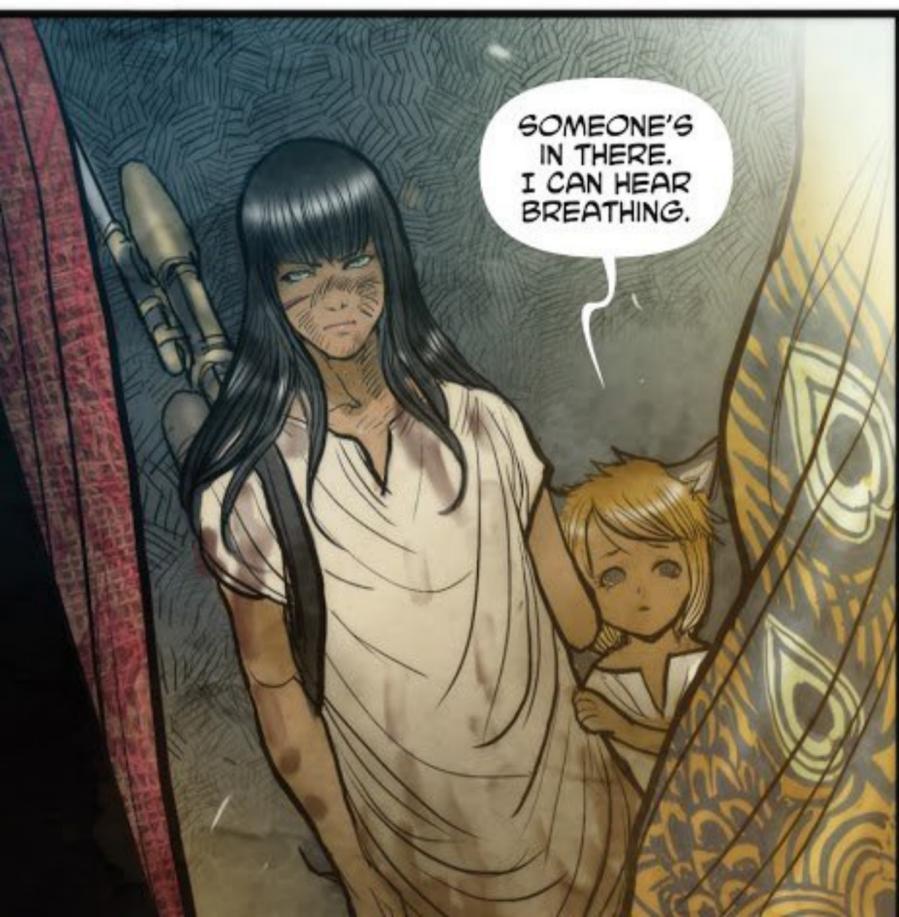
LET ME SHOW  
YOU SOMETHING  
THAT WILL ANSWER  
AT LEAST  
ONE OF YOUR  
QUESTIONS...



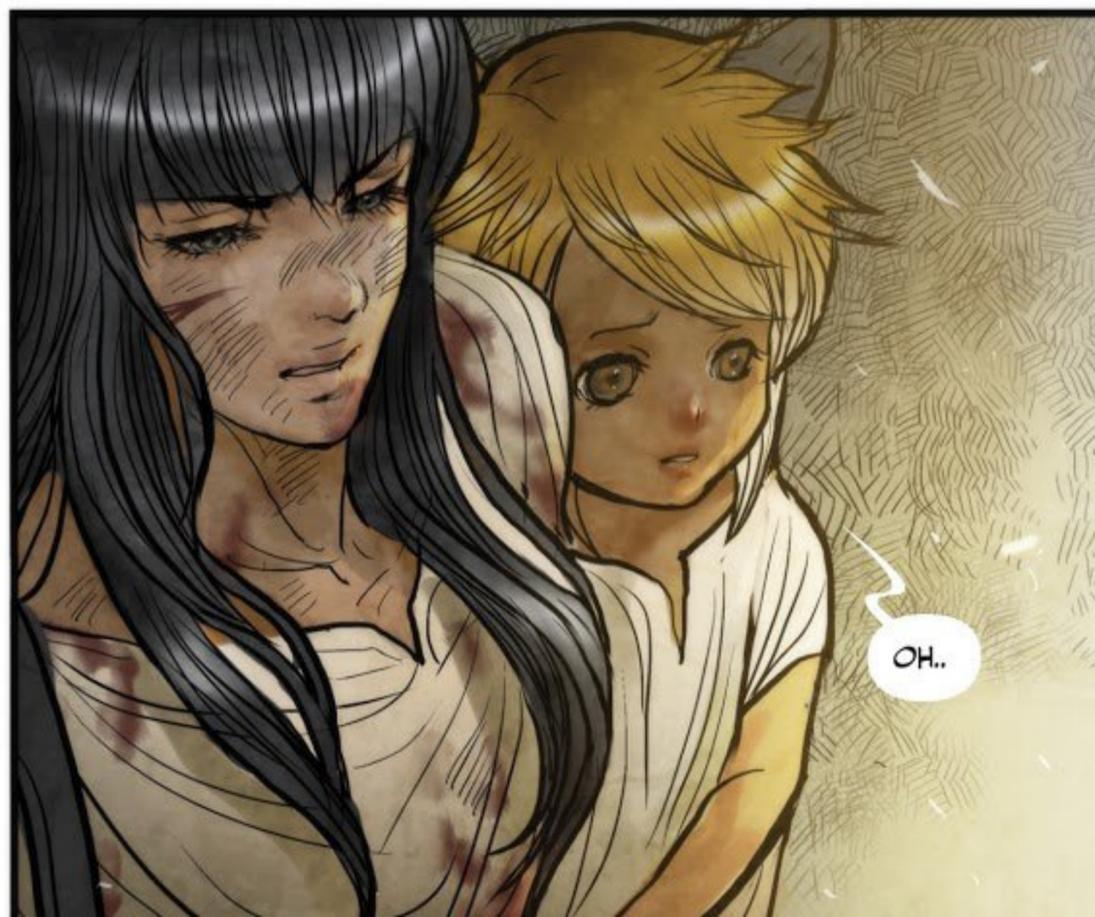
...AND  
MAYBE  
MINE, AS  
WELL.



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.



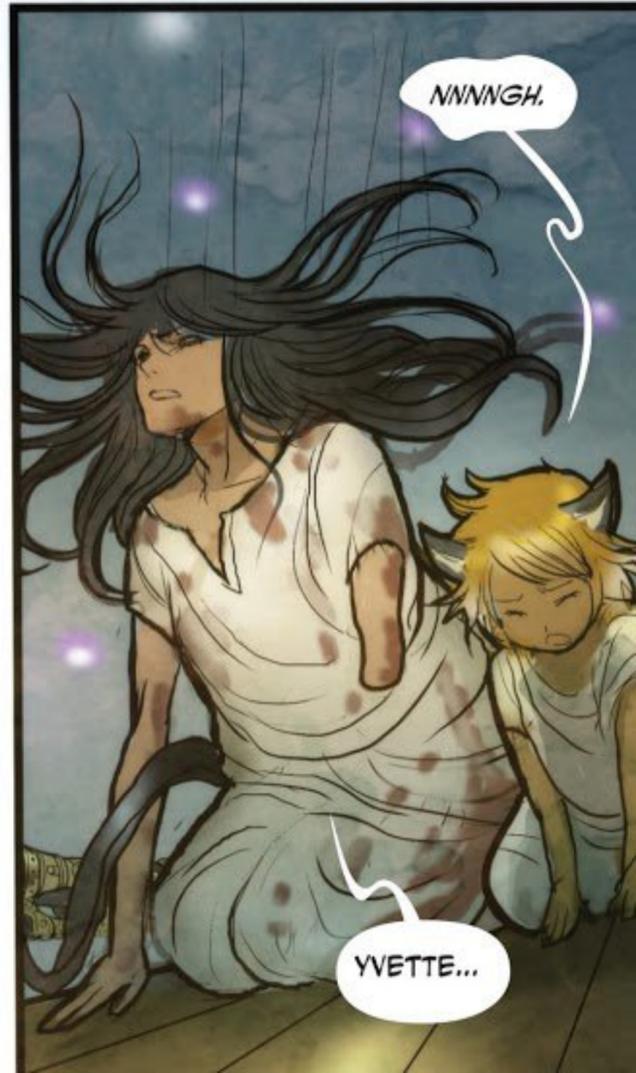
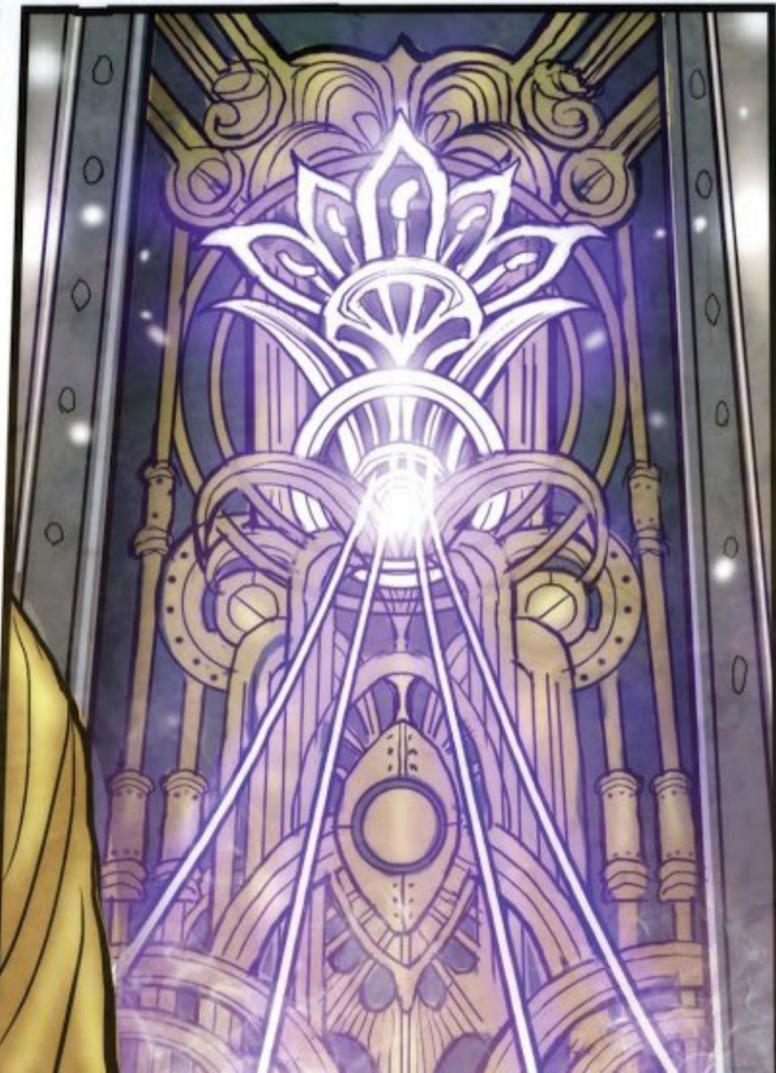
WHAT DOES HE HAVE TO DO WITH MY MOTHER?



HIM? NOTHING AT ALL.

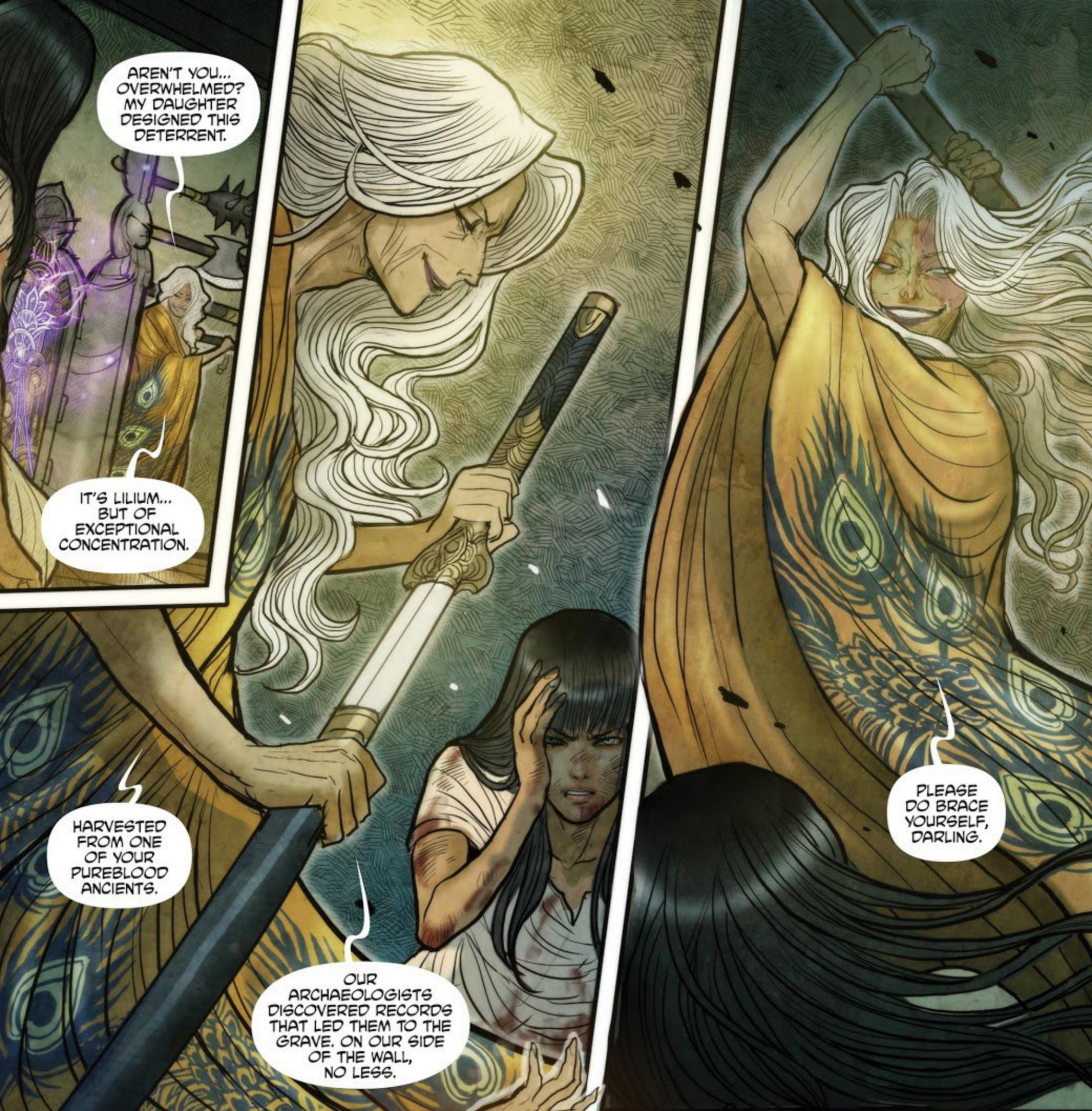


UNLESS YOU NEED A SNACK.



NNNNGH.

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.



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



MMMPH!



WLUDD



IMPOSSIBLE.

NO ARCANIC IS IMMUNE TO LILIUM.

UNLESS...

CRACK



KRRCH

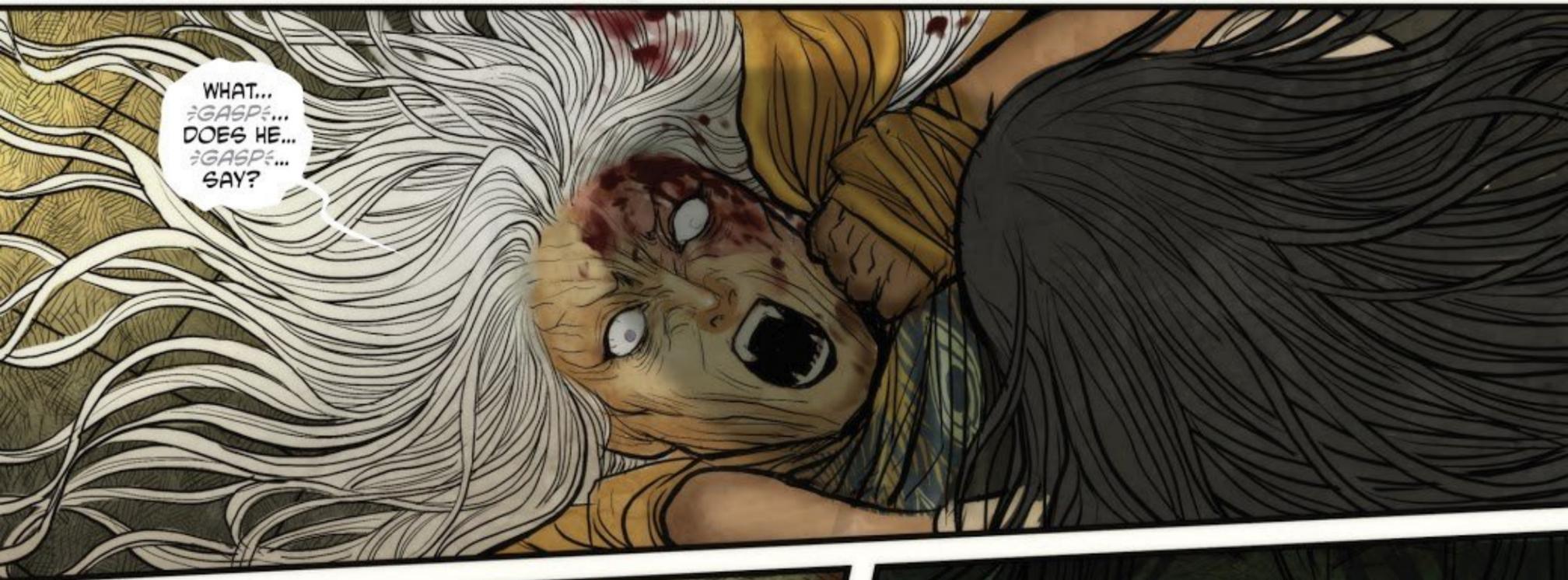
UFF!



I KNEW IT THE MOMENT I SAW YOU.

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

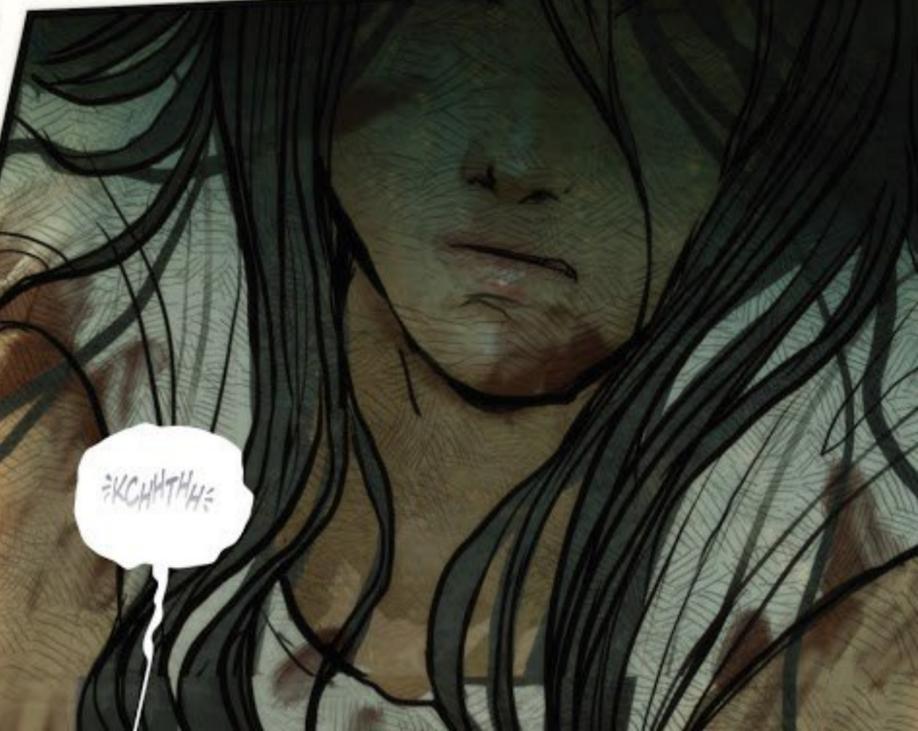
CAN YOU... ?GASP?... HEAR HIS VOICE... ?



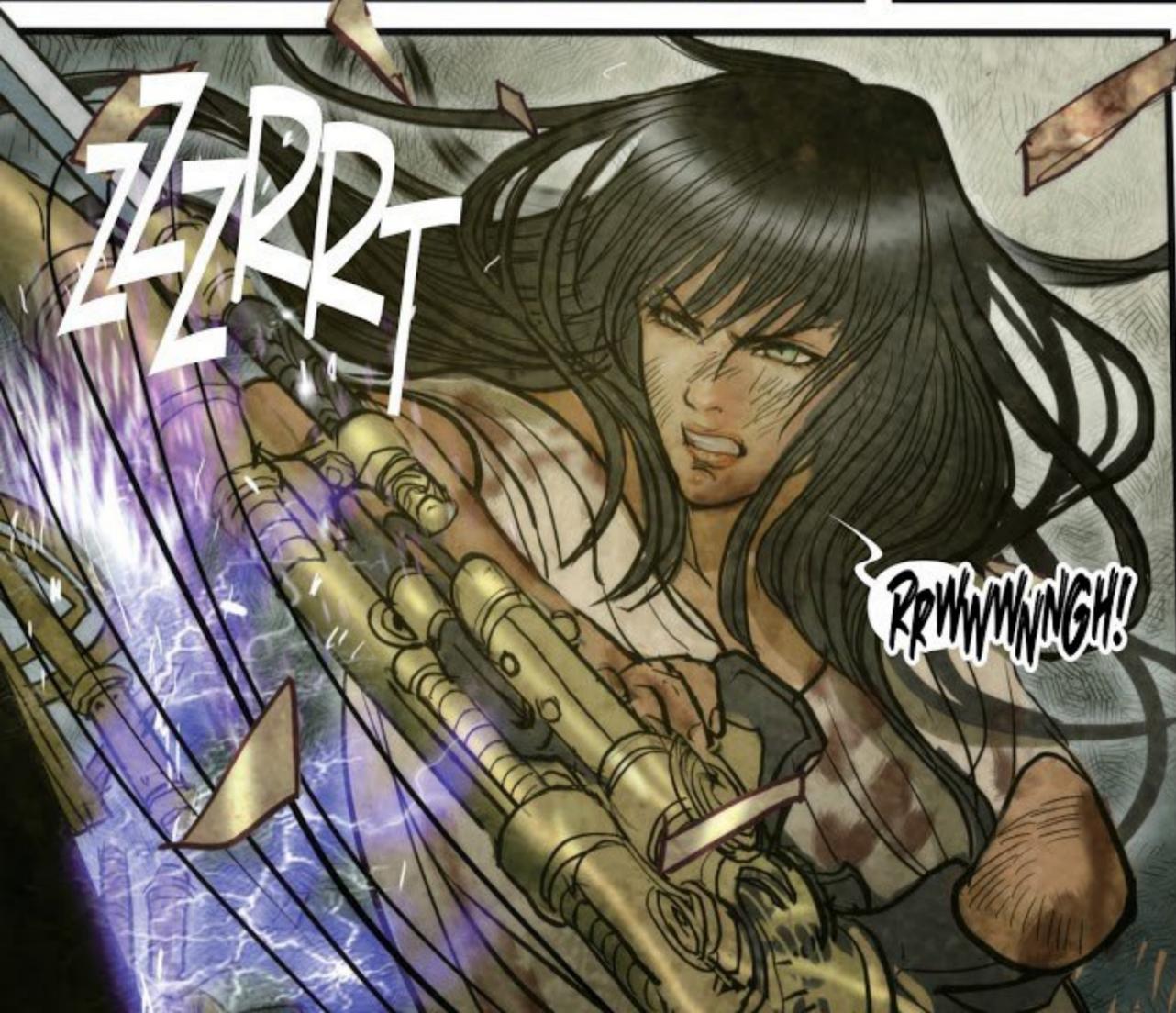
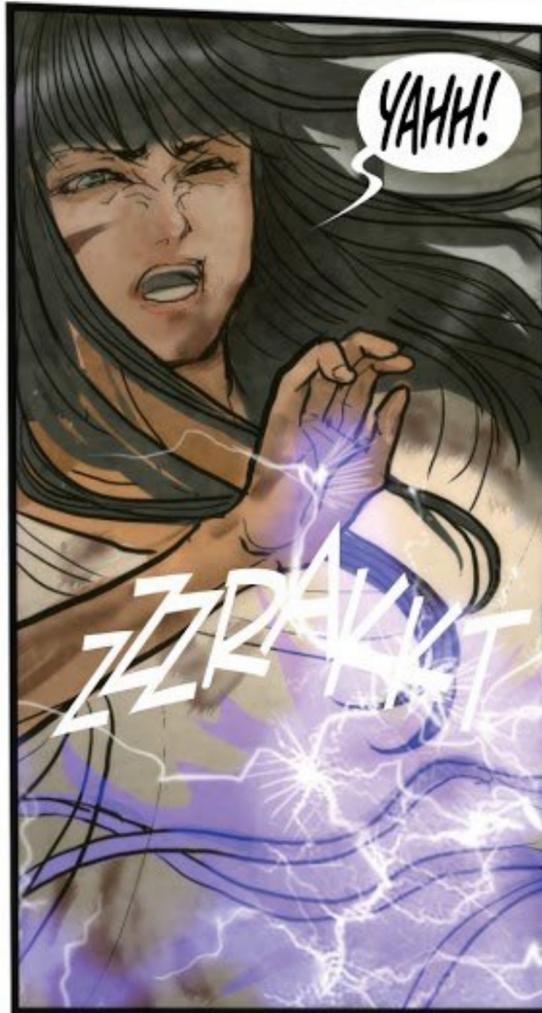
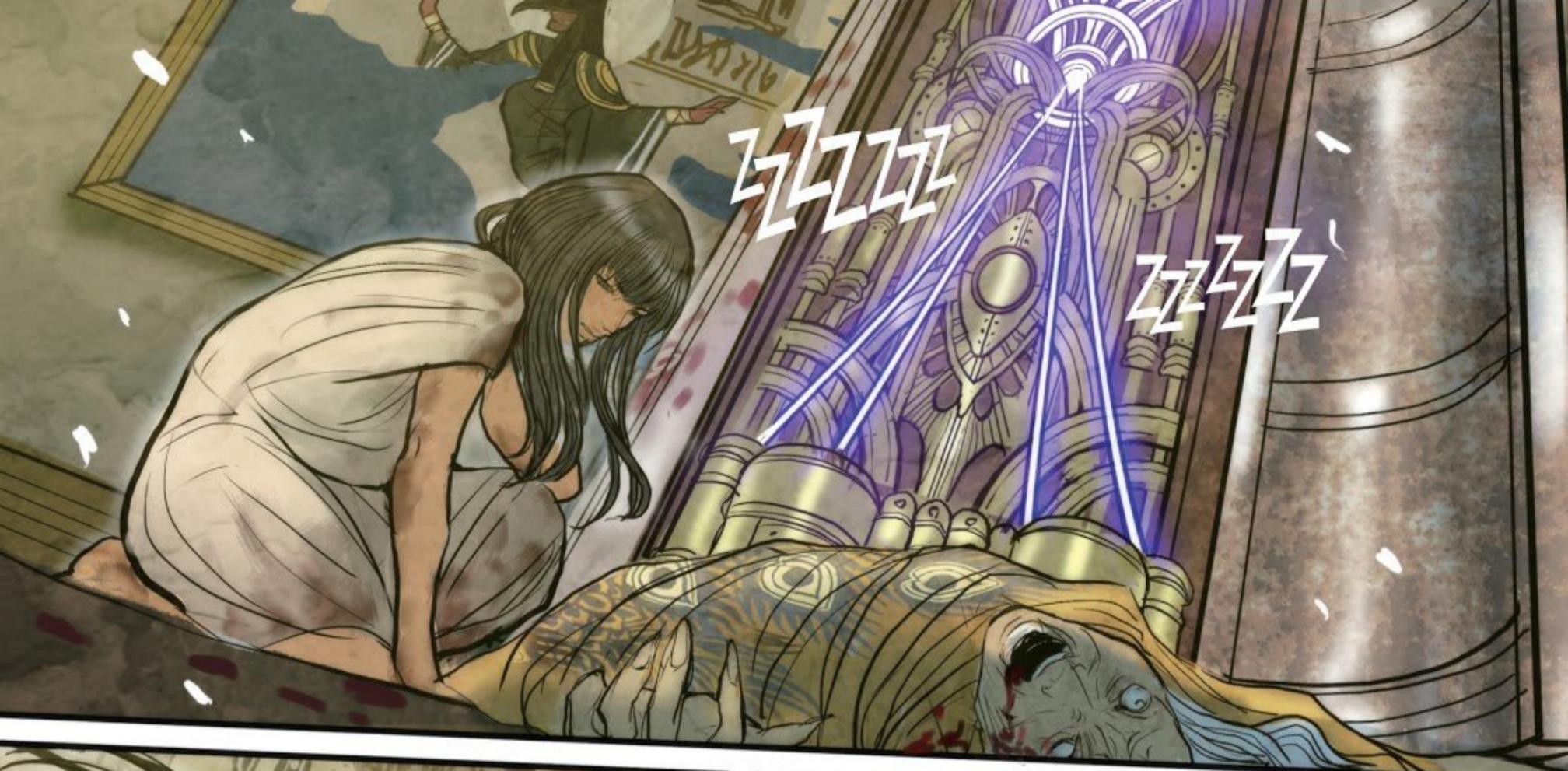
WHAT... ?GASP?... DOES HE... ?GASP?... SAY?

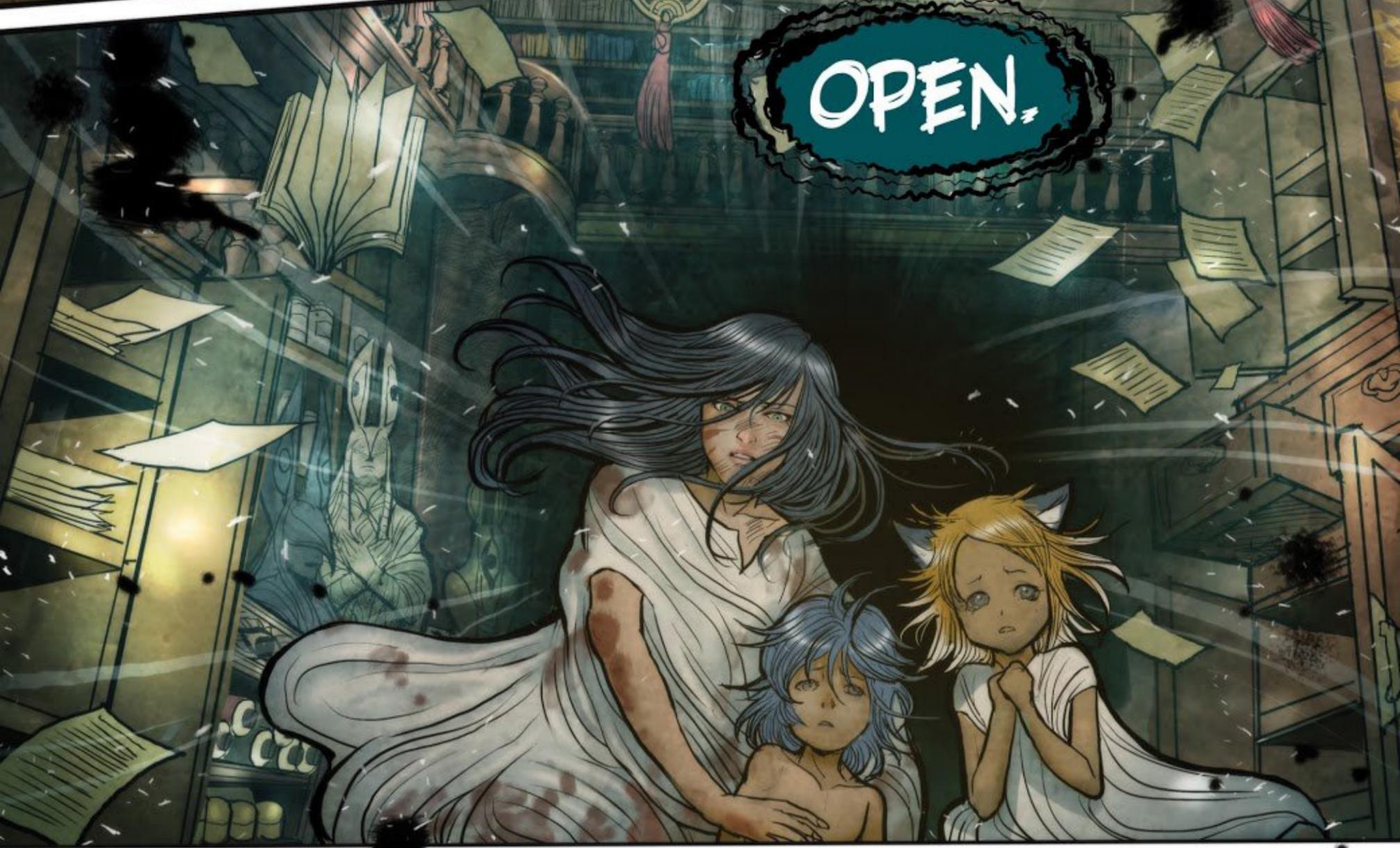


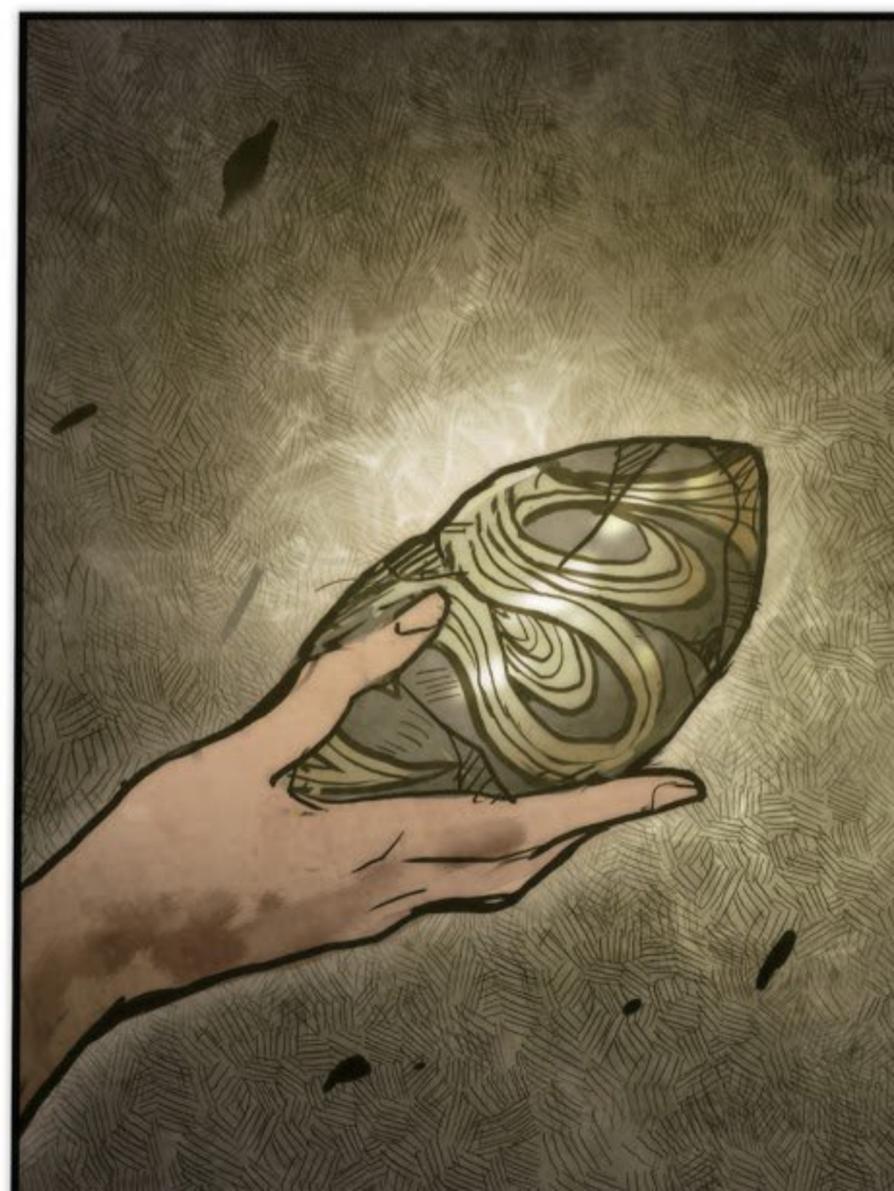
WHAT.. DOES... HE..



?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.

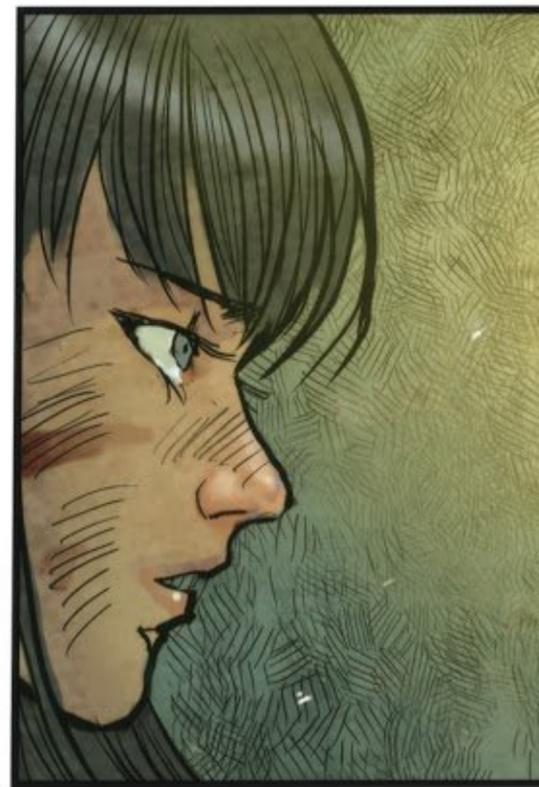
IT'S OK.  
I CAN SEE IN  
THE DARK.

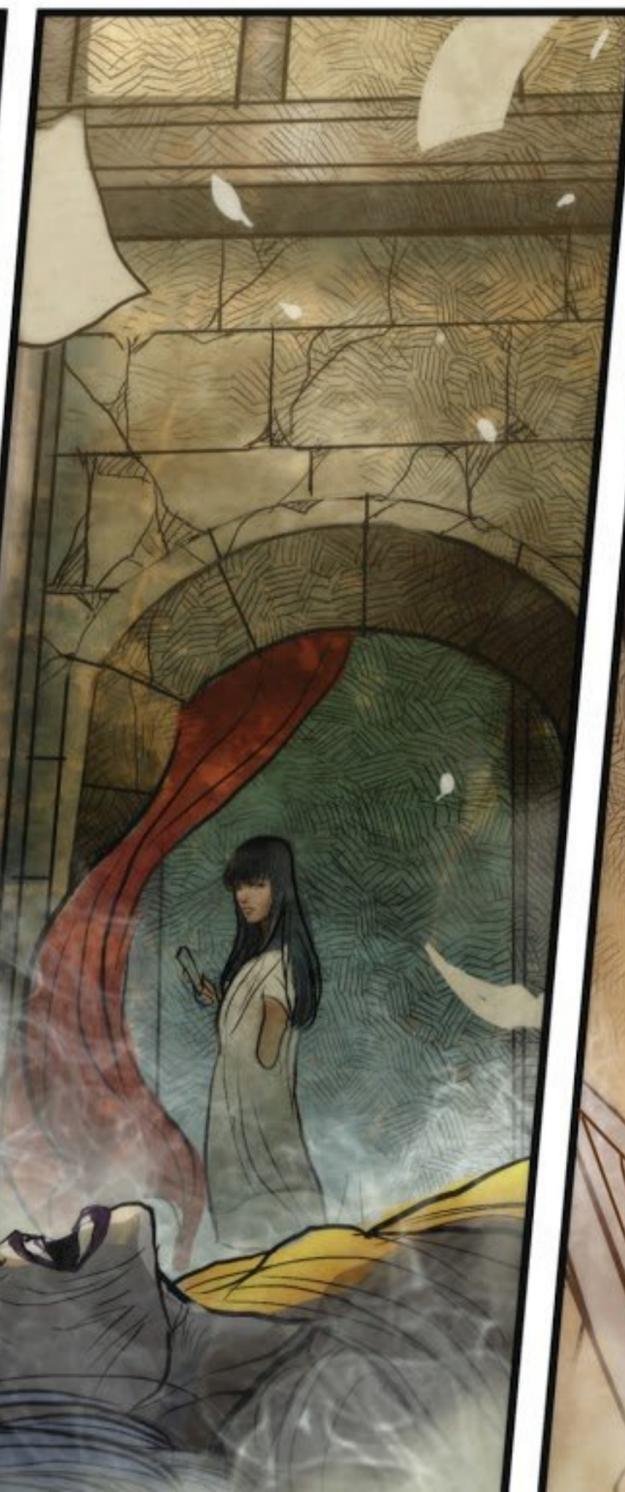
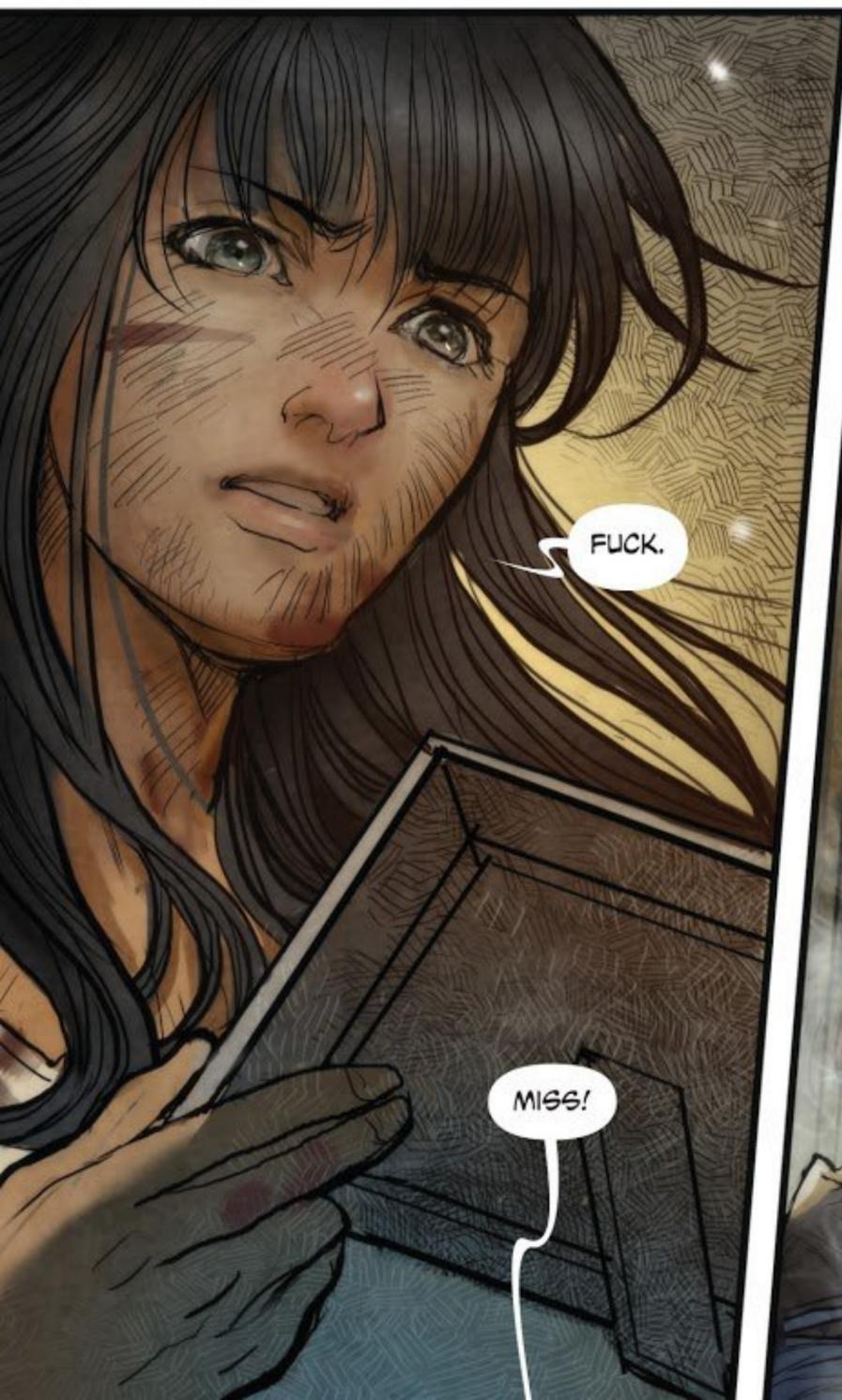
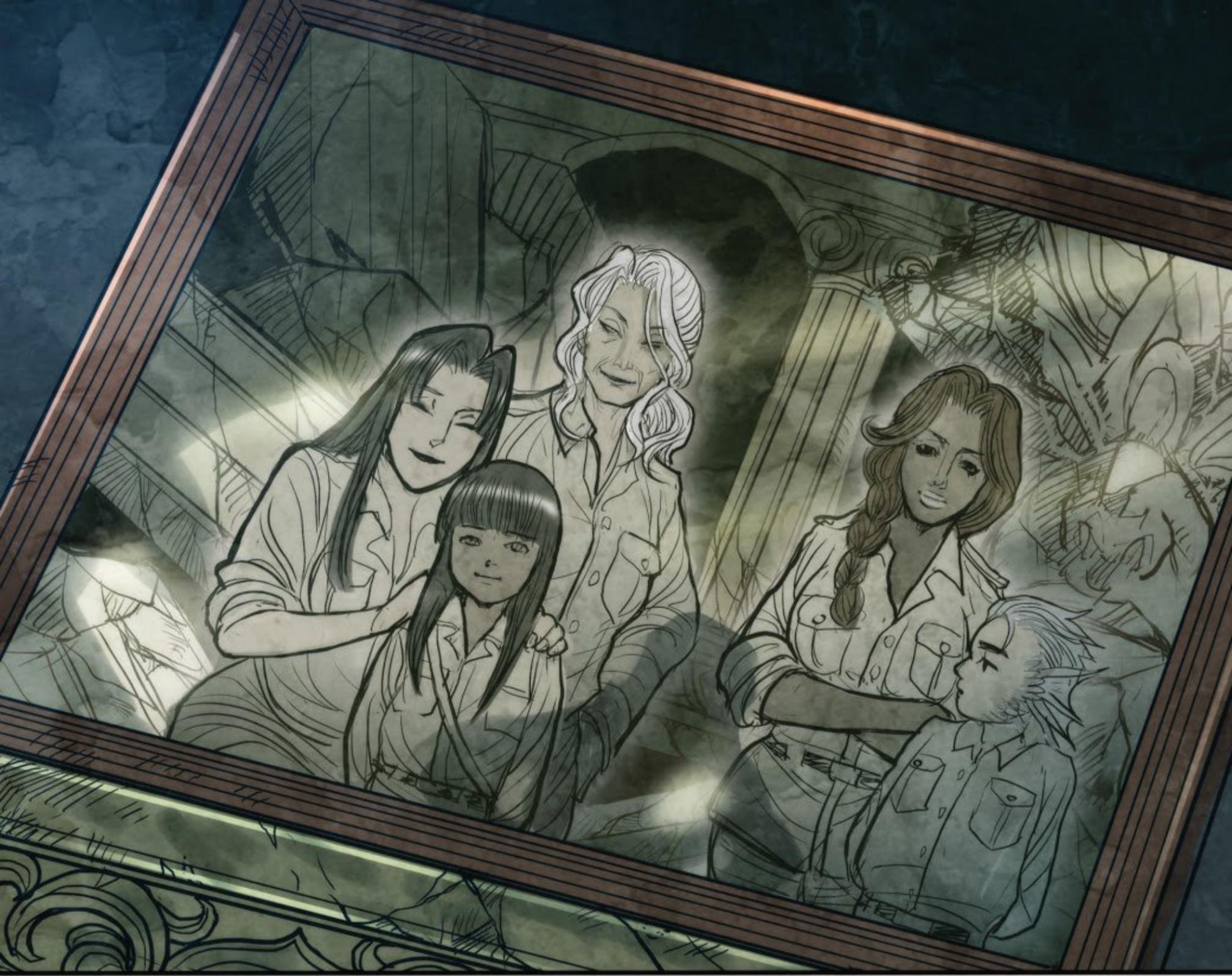


LEAD  
THE WAY.



I'LL  
BE RIGHT  
BEHIND  
YOU.

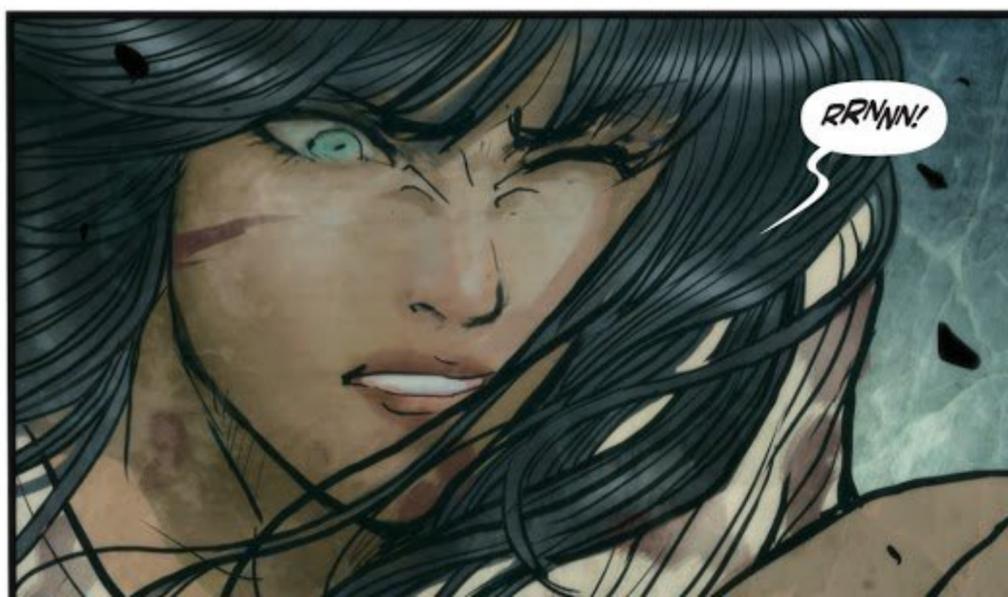






WE HAVE TO HURRY! I CAN HEAR THEM!

WE'RE CLOSE... WE'RE CLOSE TO WHERE MY FRIENDS --



RRNWN!



MISS!

YAHH!



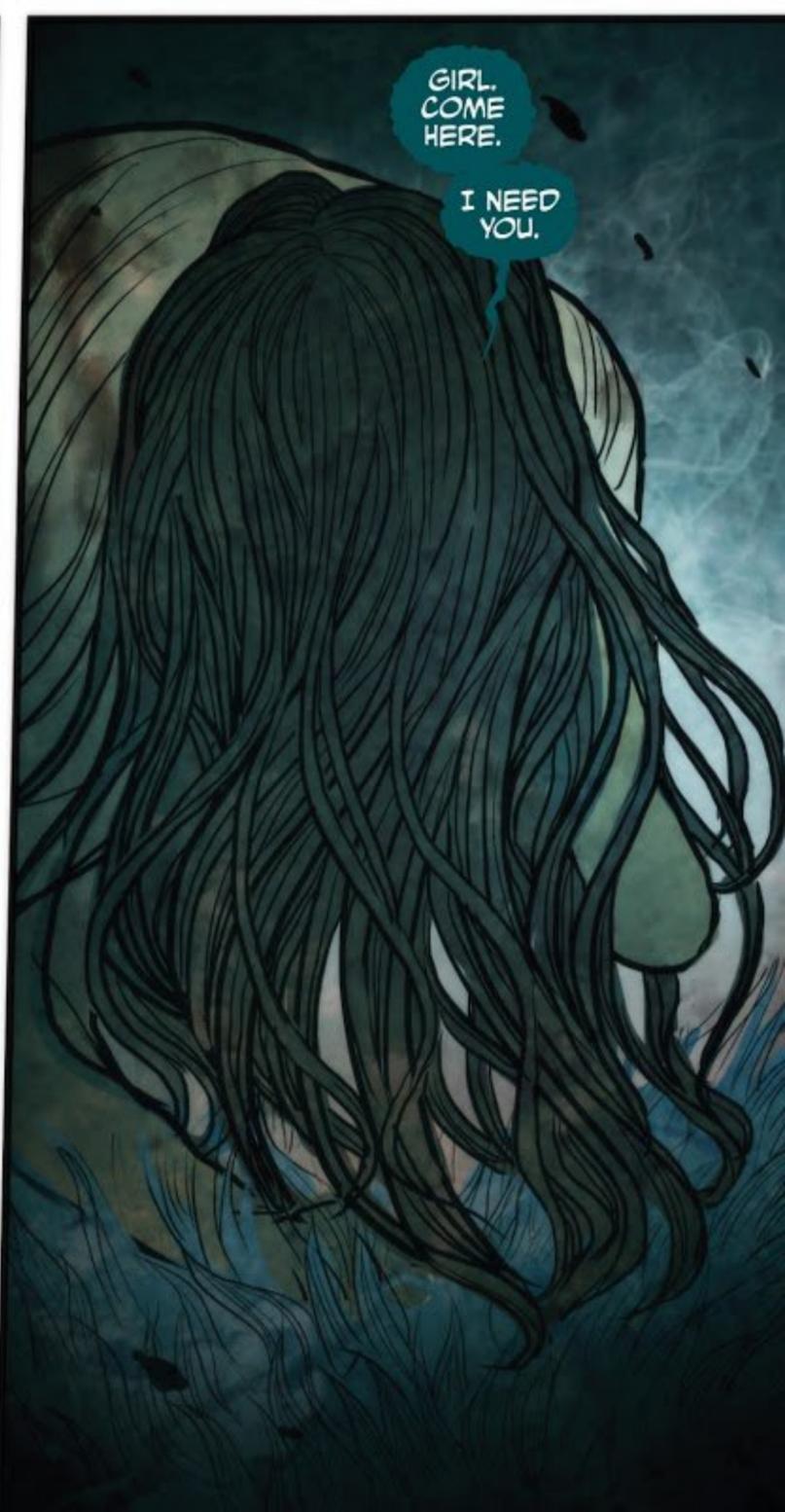
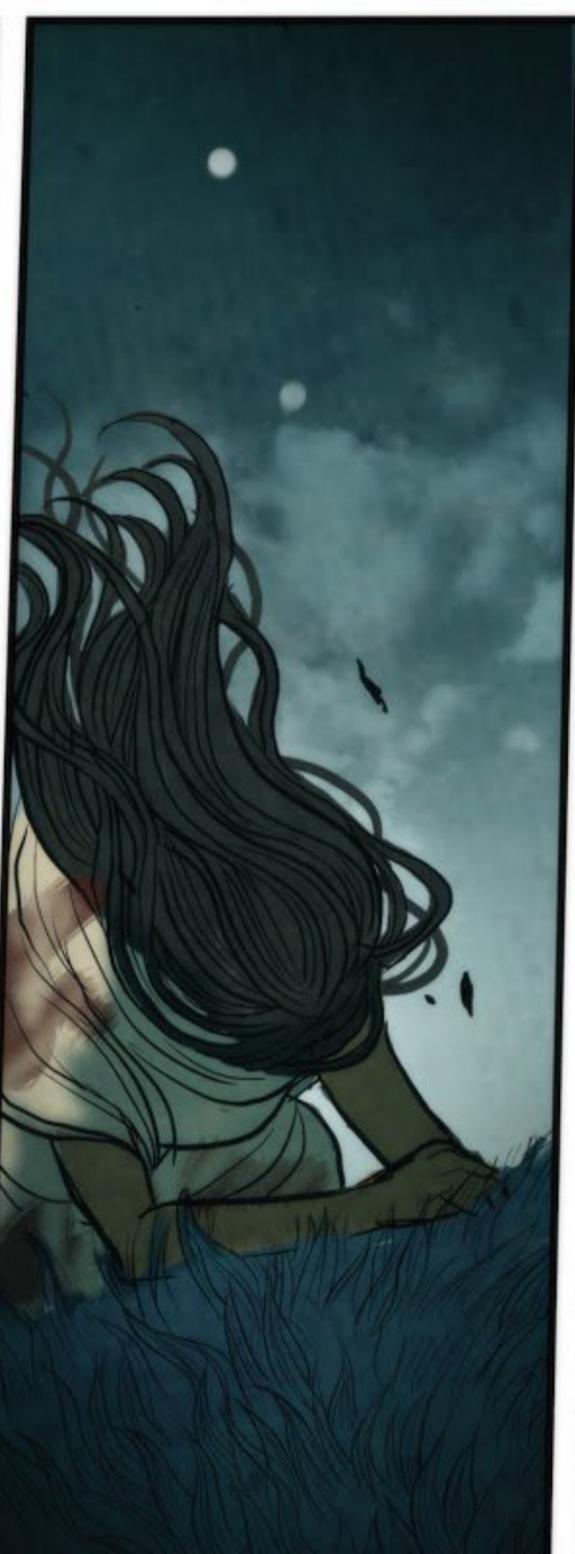
NNNGGGH!



ARE YOU OKAY?  
MISS?

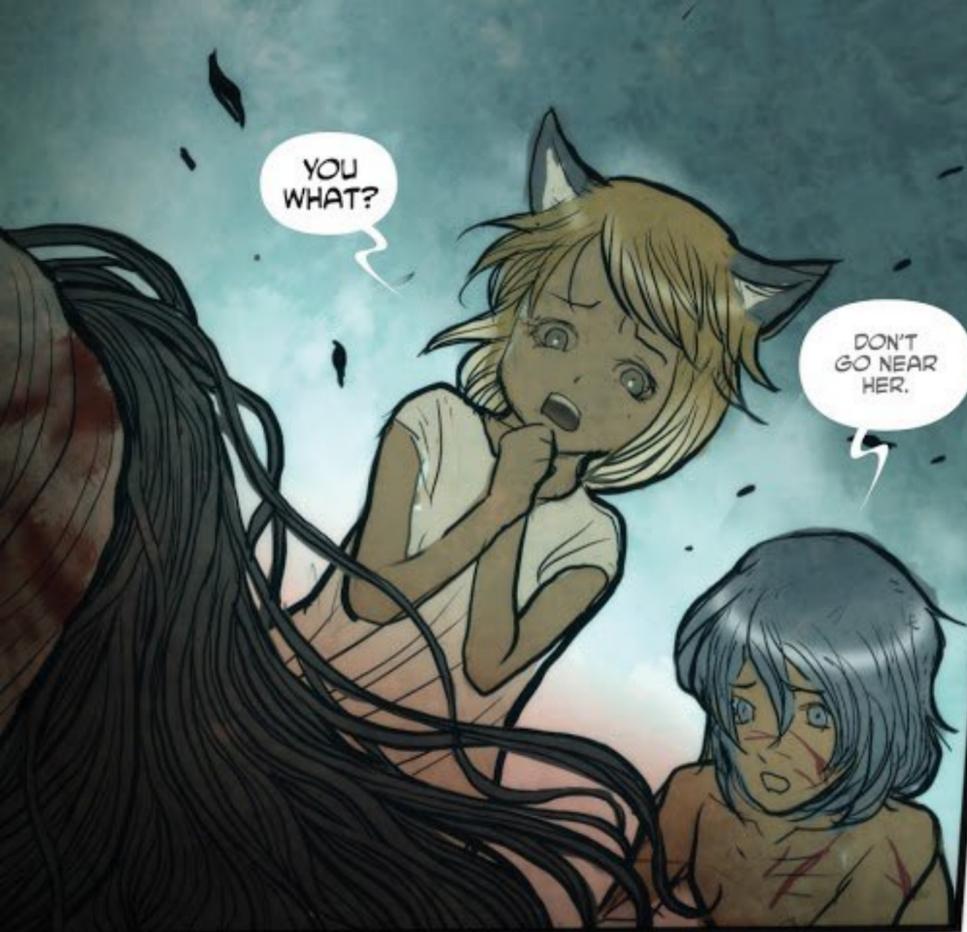


IT'S... IT'S NOTHING.



GIRL,  
COME  
HERE.

I NEED  
YOU.



YOU WHAT?

DON'T GO NEAR HER.



RUN!

NO! WAIT!

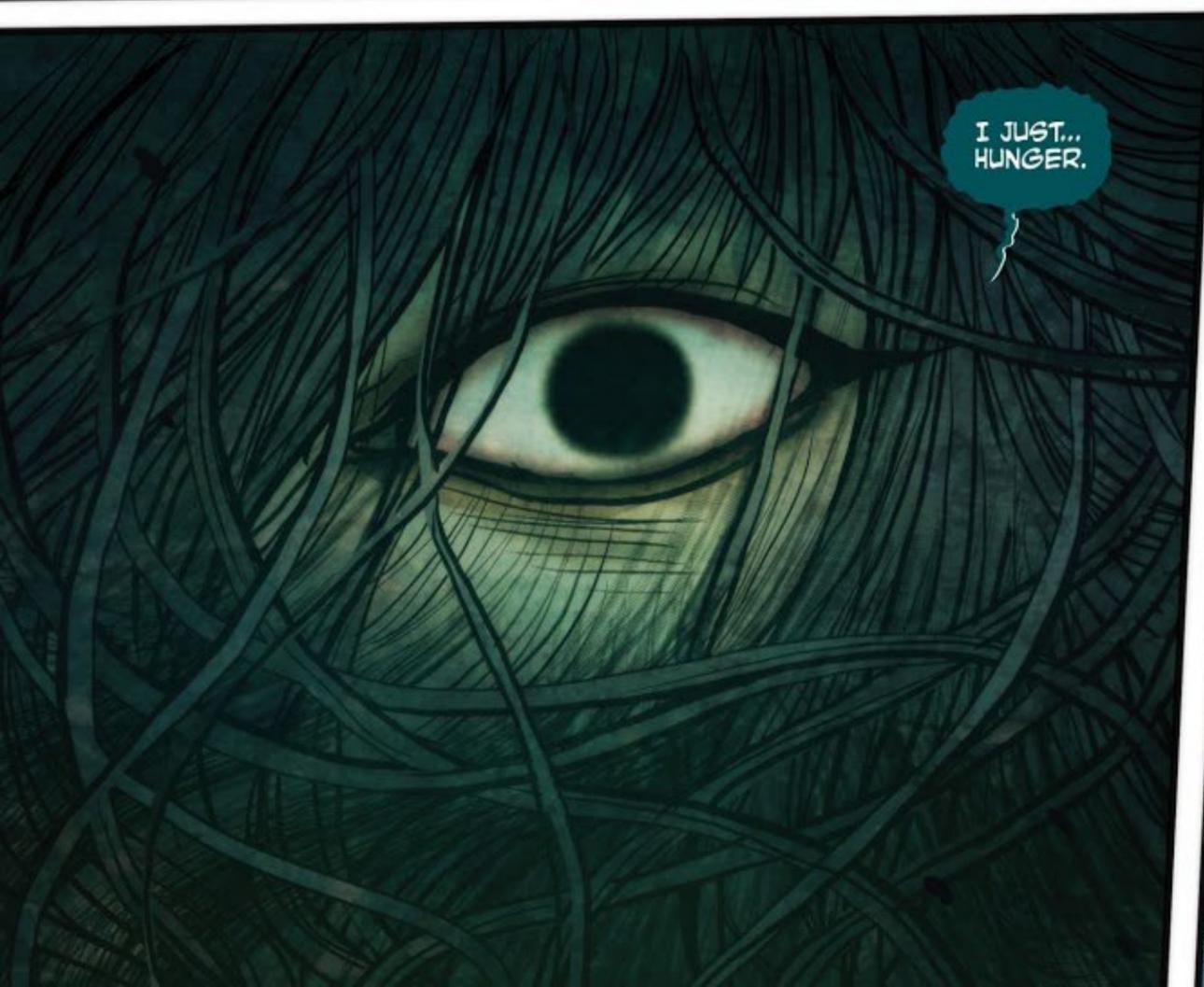


EEP!



WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?

NOTHING IS WRONG, GIRL...



I JUST... HUNGER.



AFFF!



RUN...



DON'T...  
COME  
NEAR  
ME...



UNNN!



I'M NOT...  
NOT A  
MONSTER...



NO...  
NO I'M  
NOT...



TUYA...  
HELP...





**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 monstrosity of others without succumbing to a rising monstrosity 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](mailto:monstress.comic@gmail.com)!  
#Monstress for Twitter and Instagram!

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NEXT ISSUE

# MONSTRESS



ISSUE 2

MARJORIE LIU



SANA TAKEDA

\$3.50

#MONSTRESS



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RATED M / MATURE

# SPECIAL DELIVERY



D'ARGH-EMPIRE