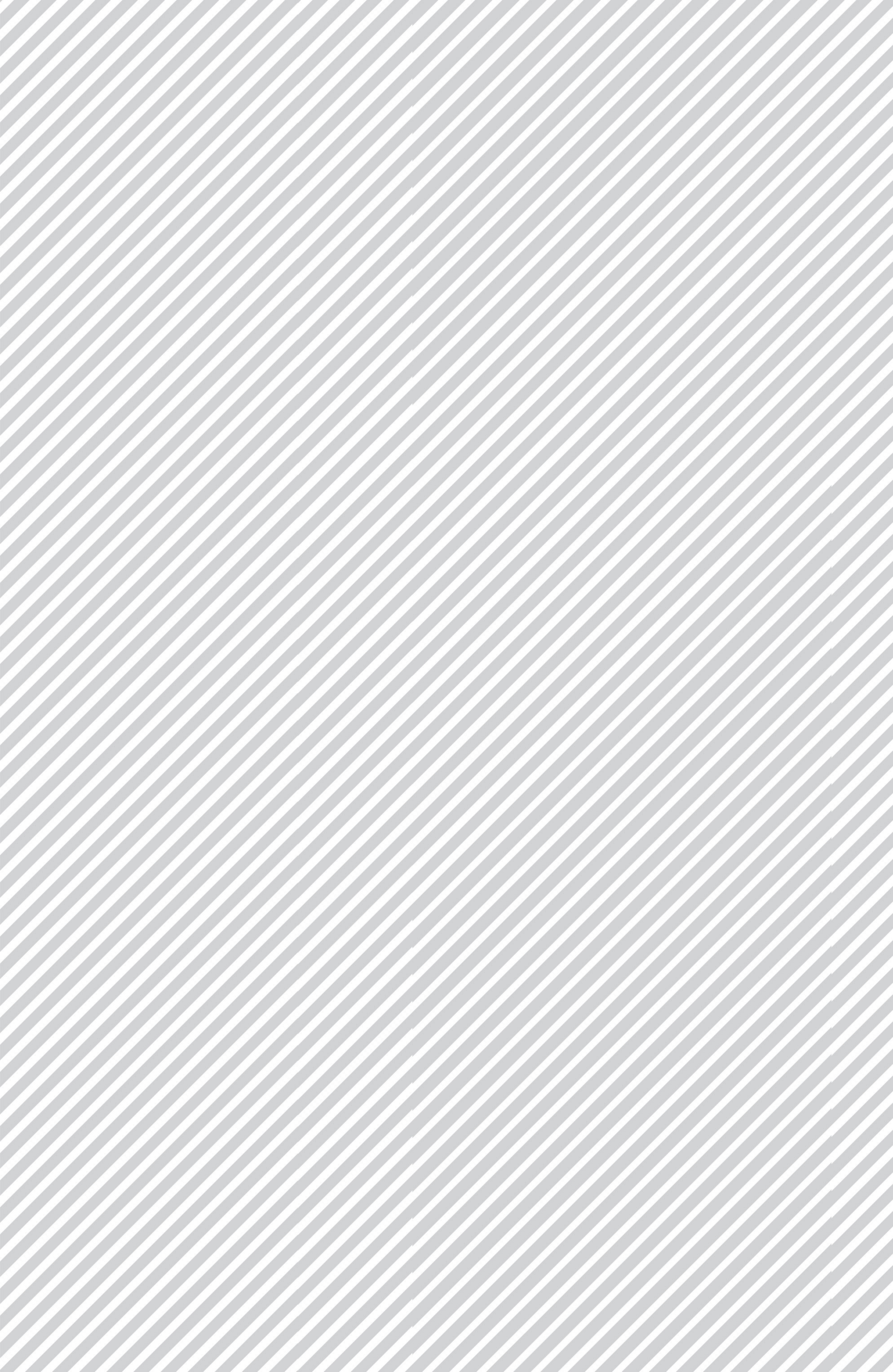




FEAST OF WEST

HICKMAN • DRAGOTTA • MARTIN

FIVE



EAST^{OF} WEST



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EAST
OF
WEST



The White Tower.

Three
separate
envoys...

All with
the same
response.





You
send them
off whole --
full of purpose --
and just look
what comes
back.

Less.

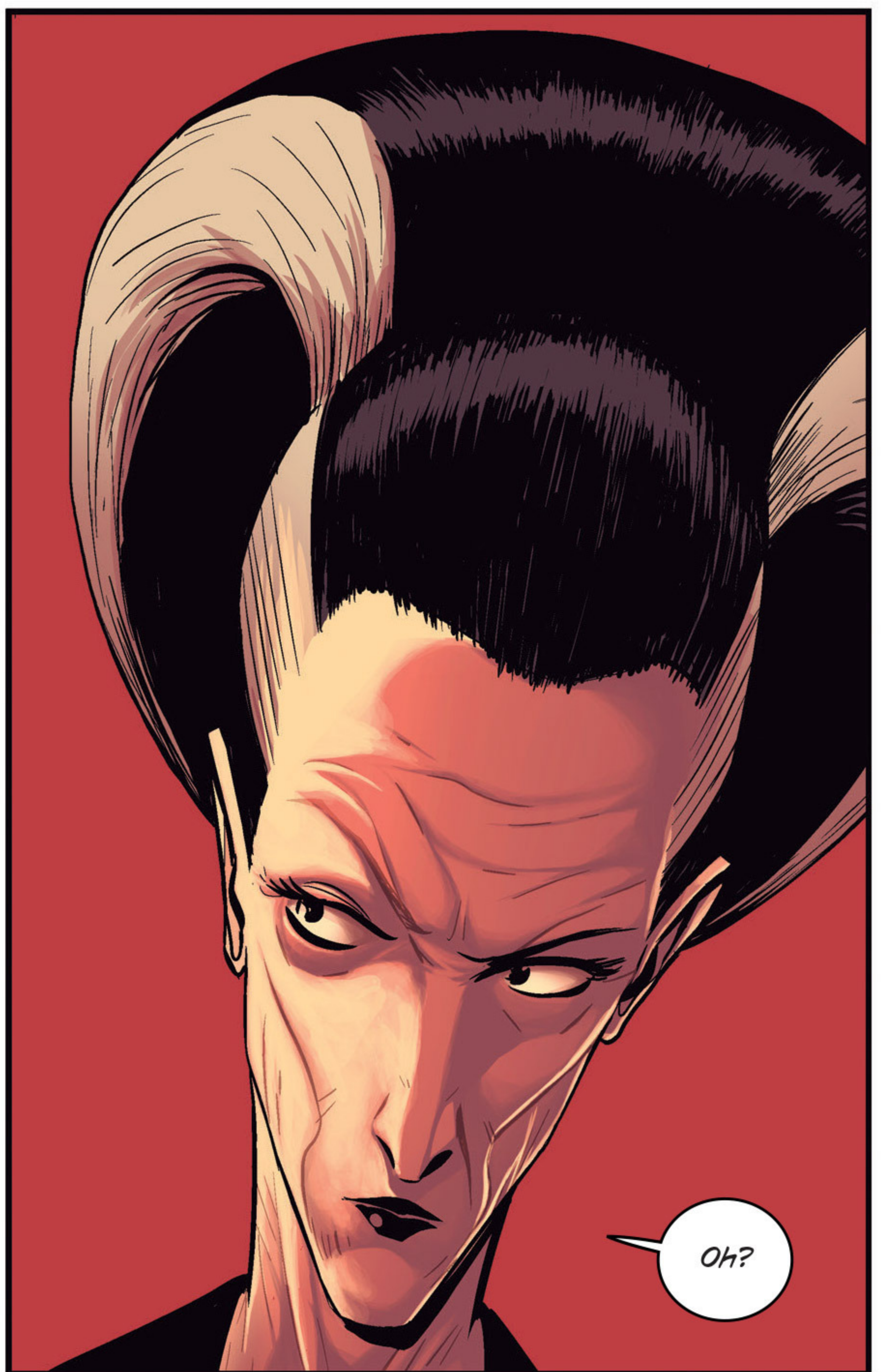


Have their
heads sent
to their families,
and arrange a
memorial...

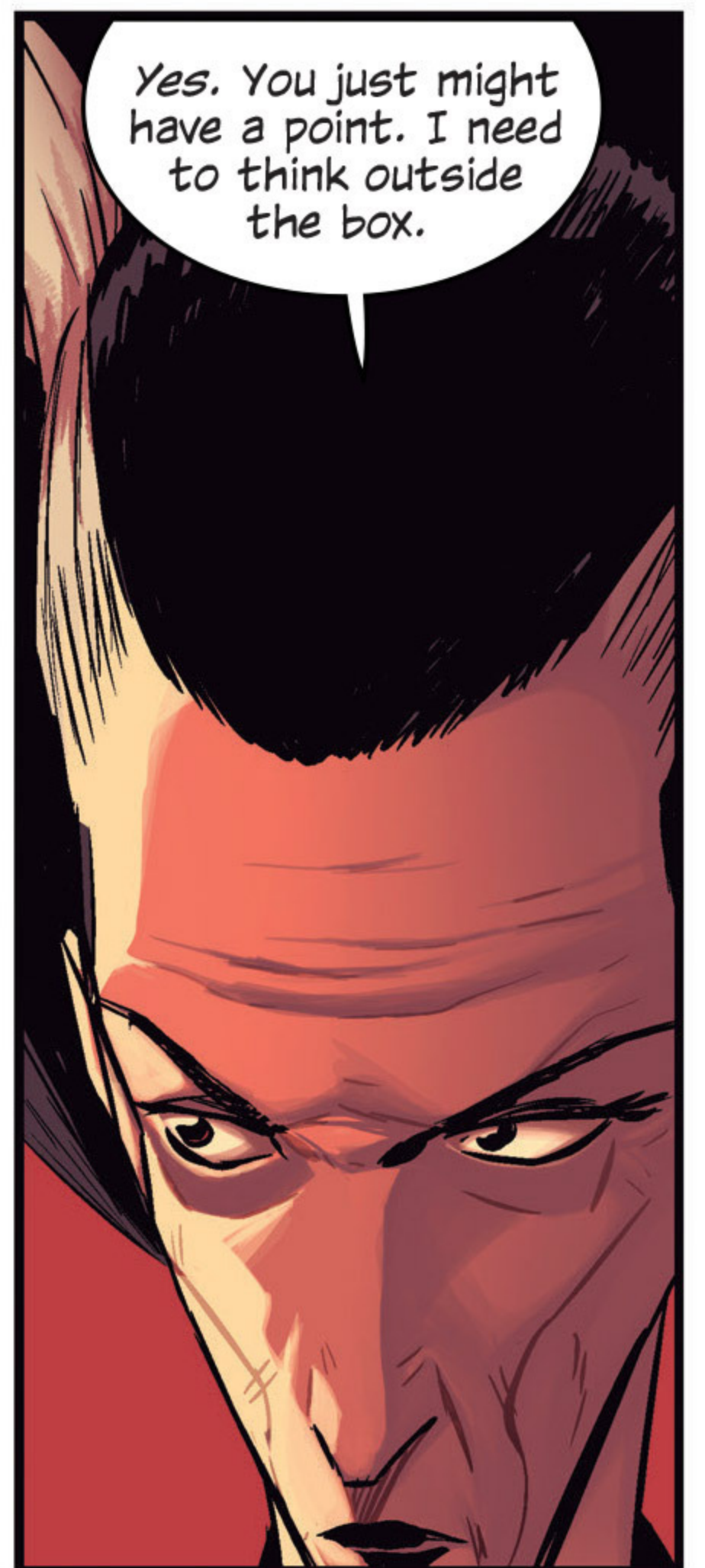
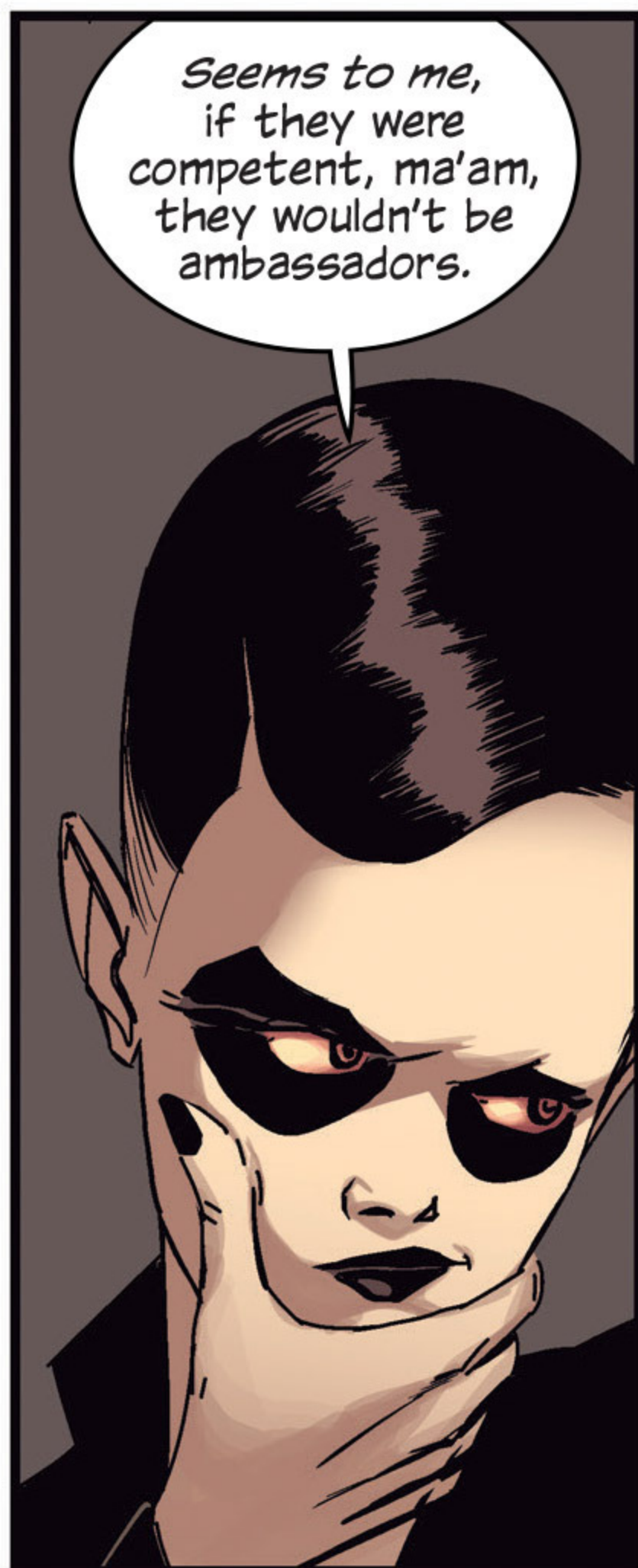
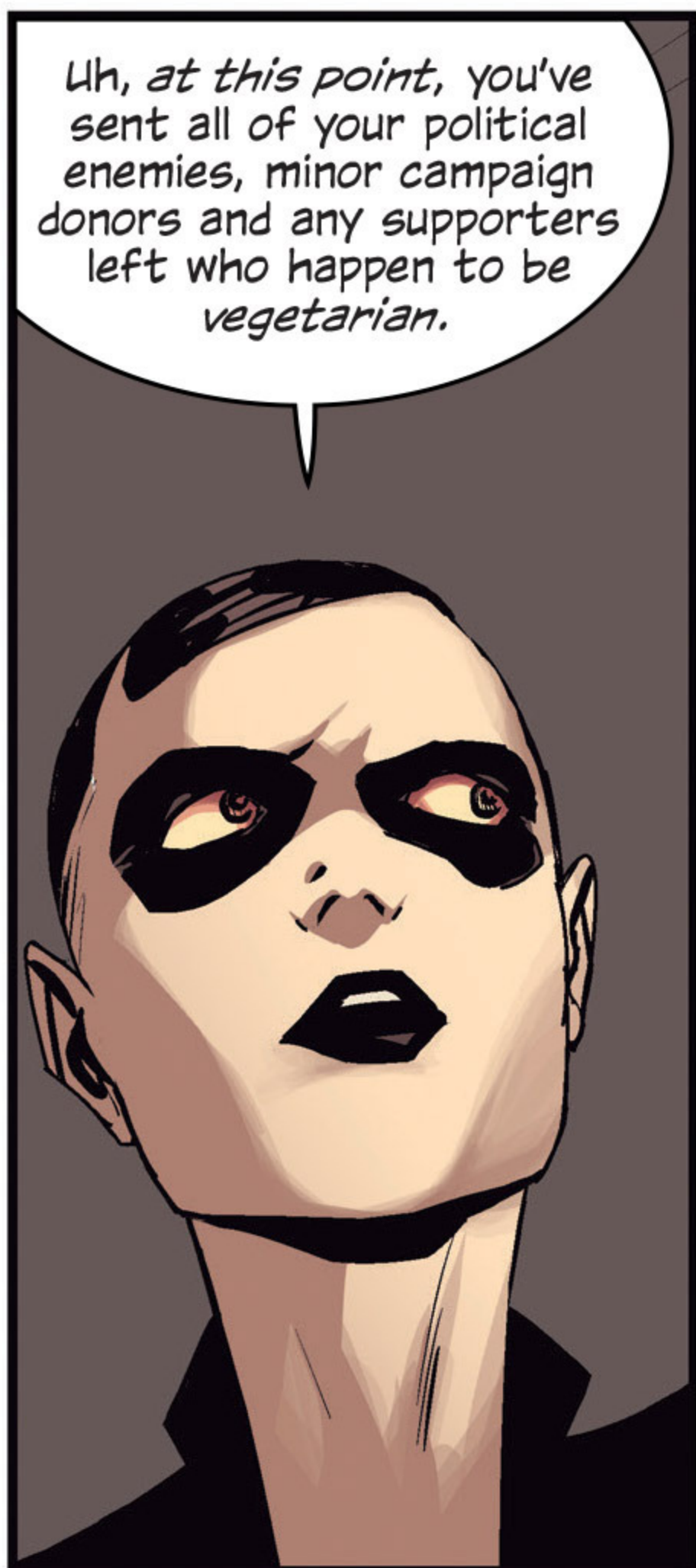
Along with,
I suppose, my
condolences. Or
send money.
Whichever. *I don't
care.*

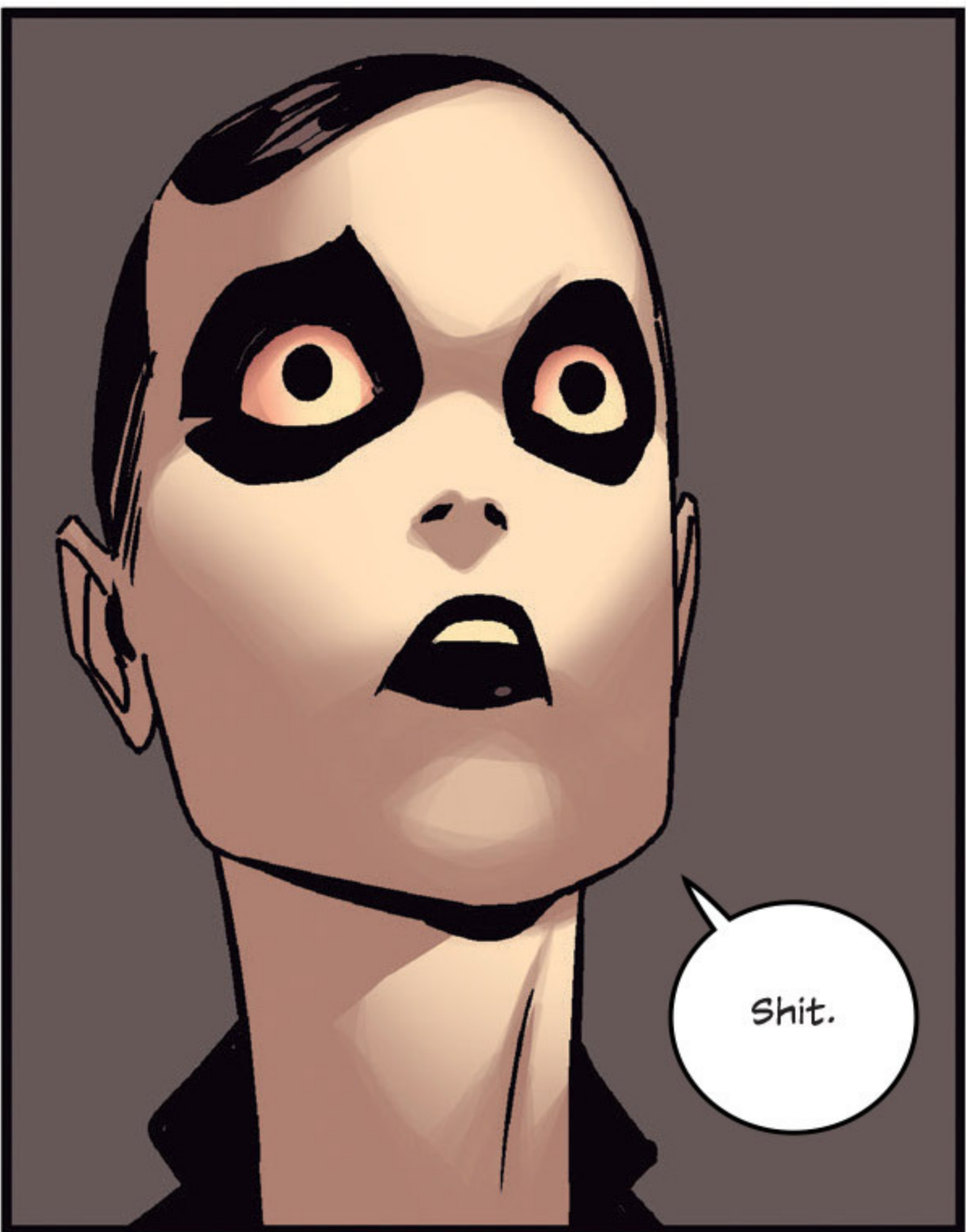
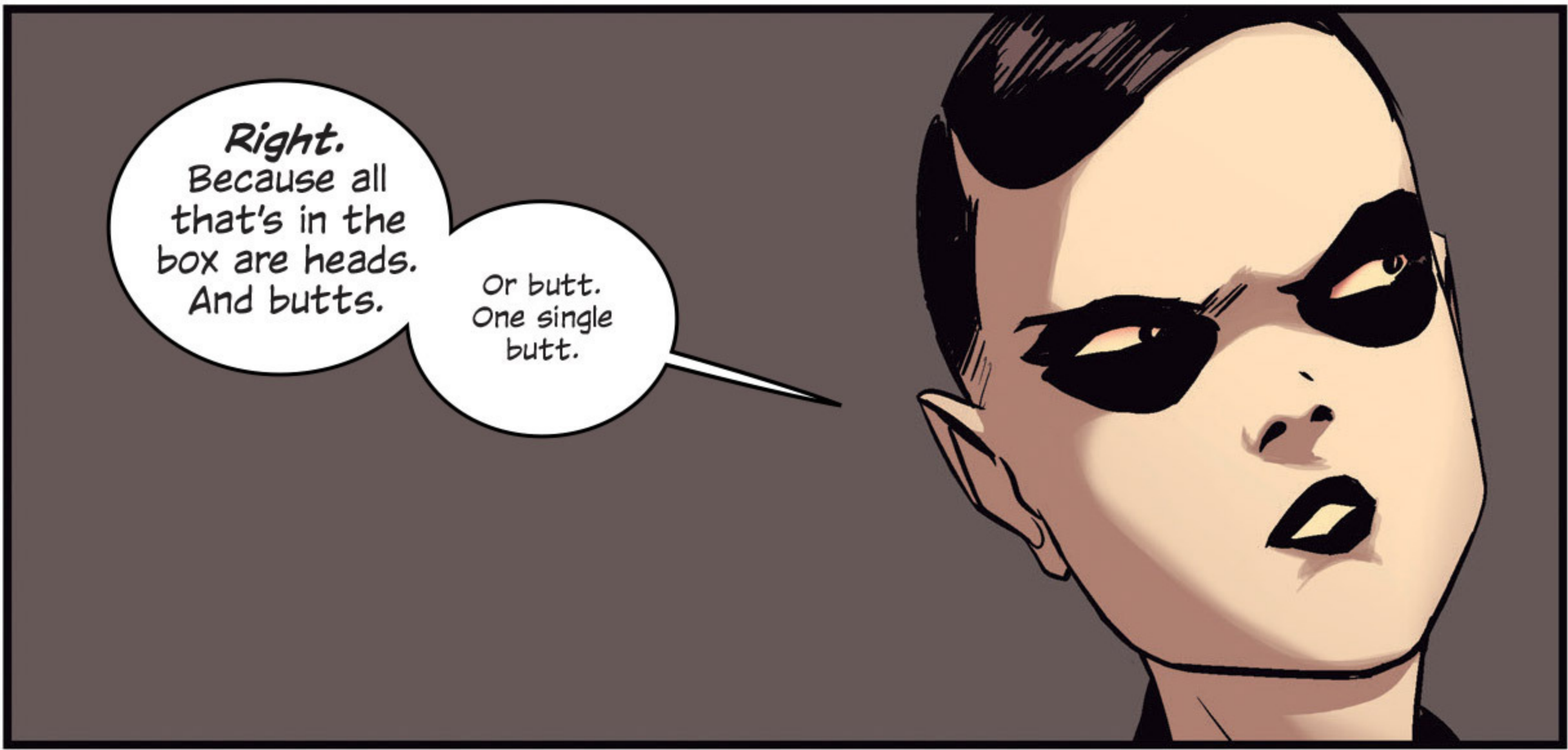


Actually,
ma'am, it's
not all heads
this time.



Oh?

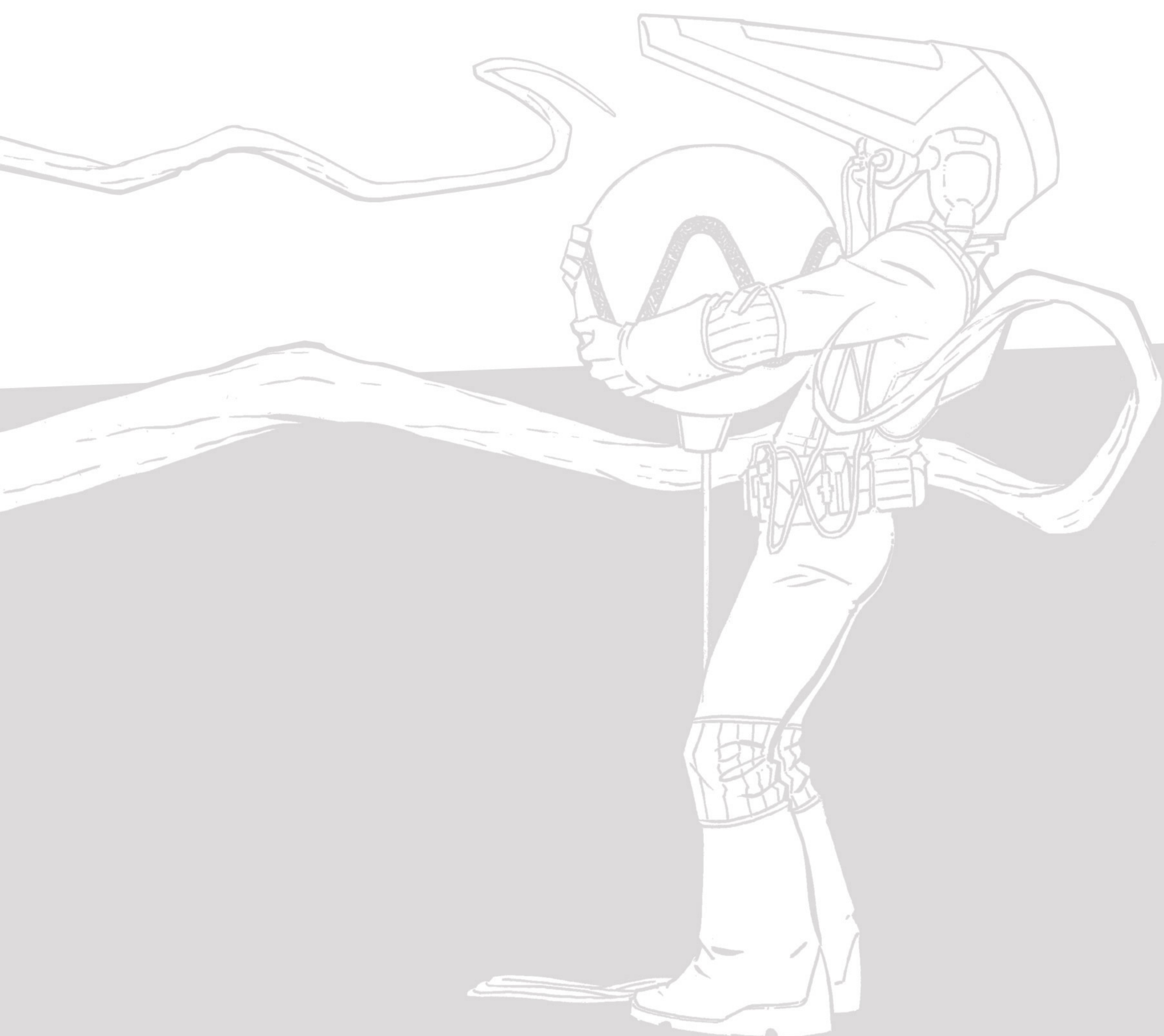




PAY CLOSE **ATTENTION.**

YOUR **ENEMIES** ARE
EVERYWHERE.





20



**TWENTY: THIS
TANGLED WEB**

WHAT ARE YOU **REALLY**,
CHILD?





If I told
you that you
were *nothing*,
some of you --
most of you,
perhaps -- would
believe me...

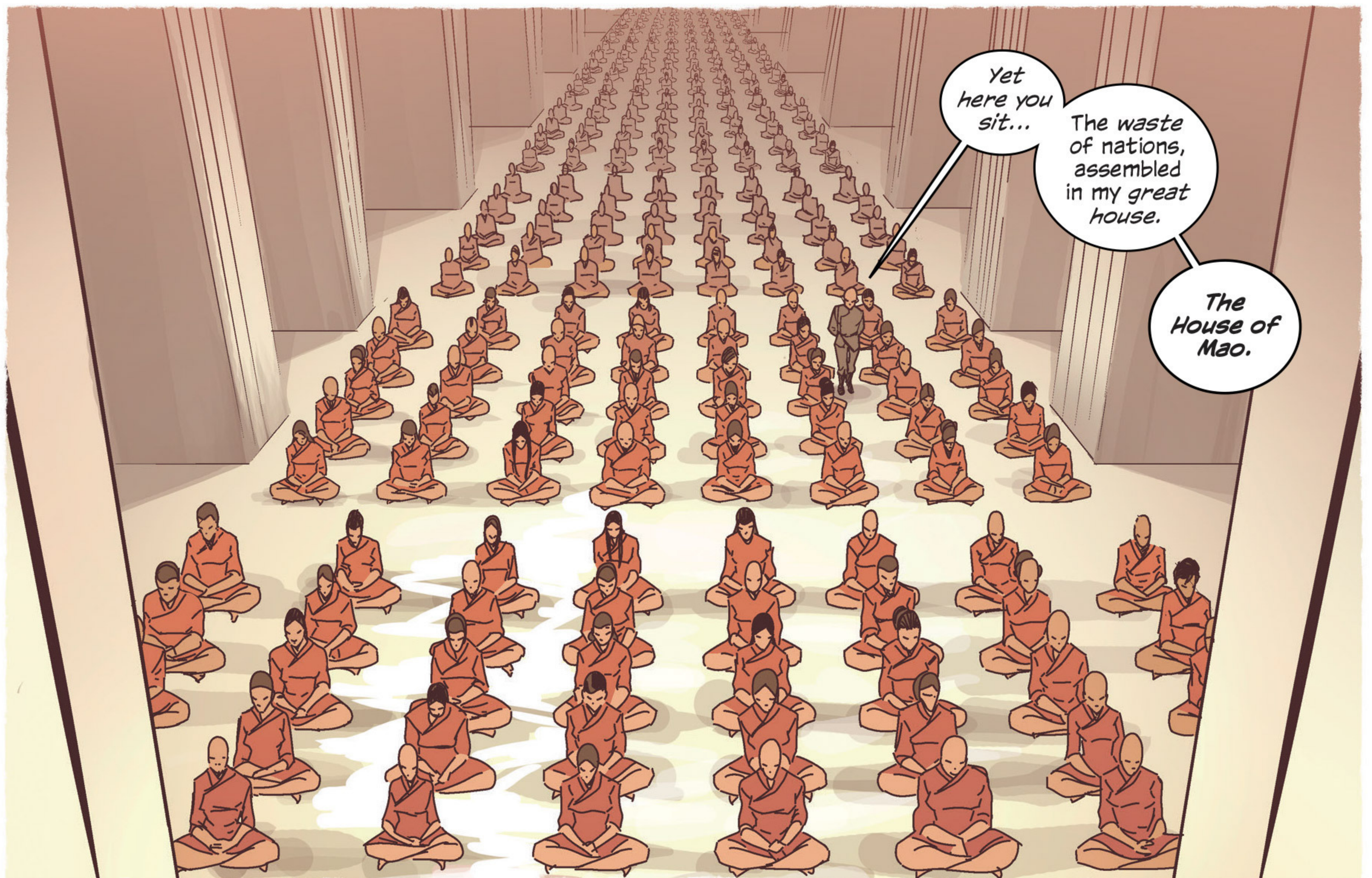
As to be
something,
one must
have
value.



And things
of value are
not *discarded*,
are they?

They
are not
disposed
of...


They have
not been
abandoned.



Yet
here you
sit...

The waste
of nations,
assembled
in my great
house.

The
House of
Mao.

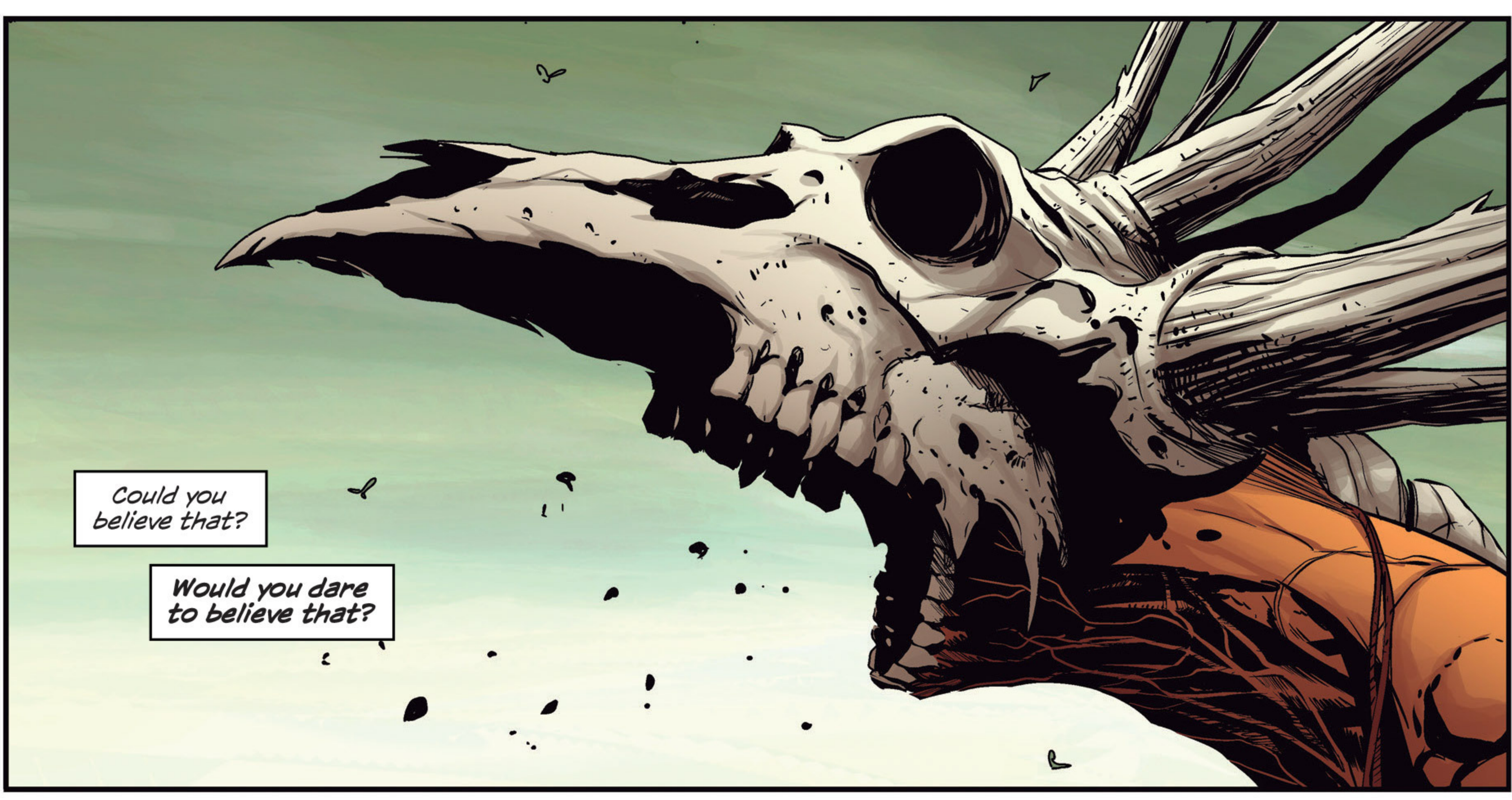


But imagine all of that
was a *lie*. Could you
dream of such a thing?

If I told you the *lessons*
you have lived...

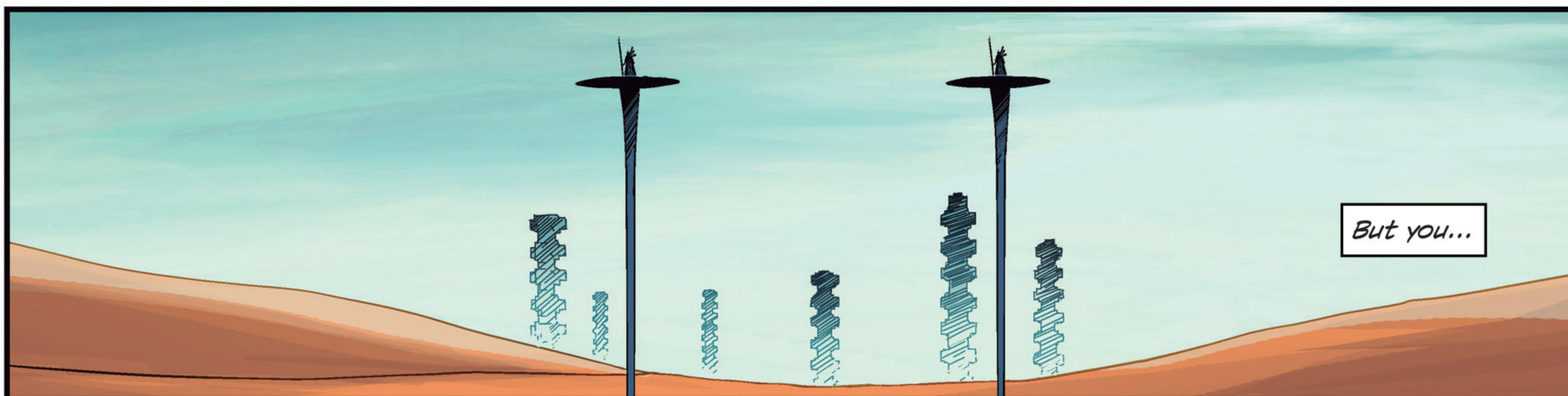
That you poor, you weak,
you failed things...are
only broken because you've
failed to *lift yourselves up*...

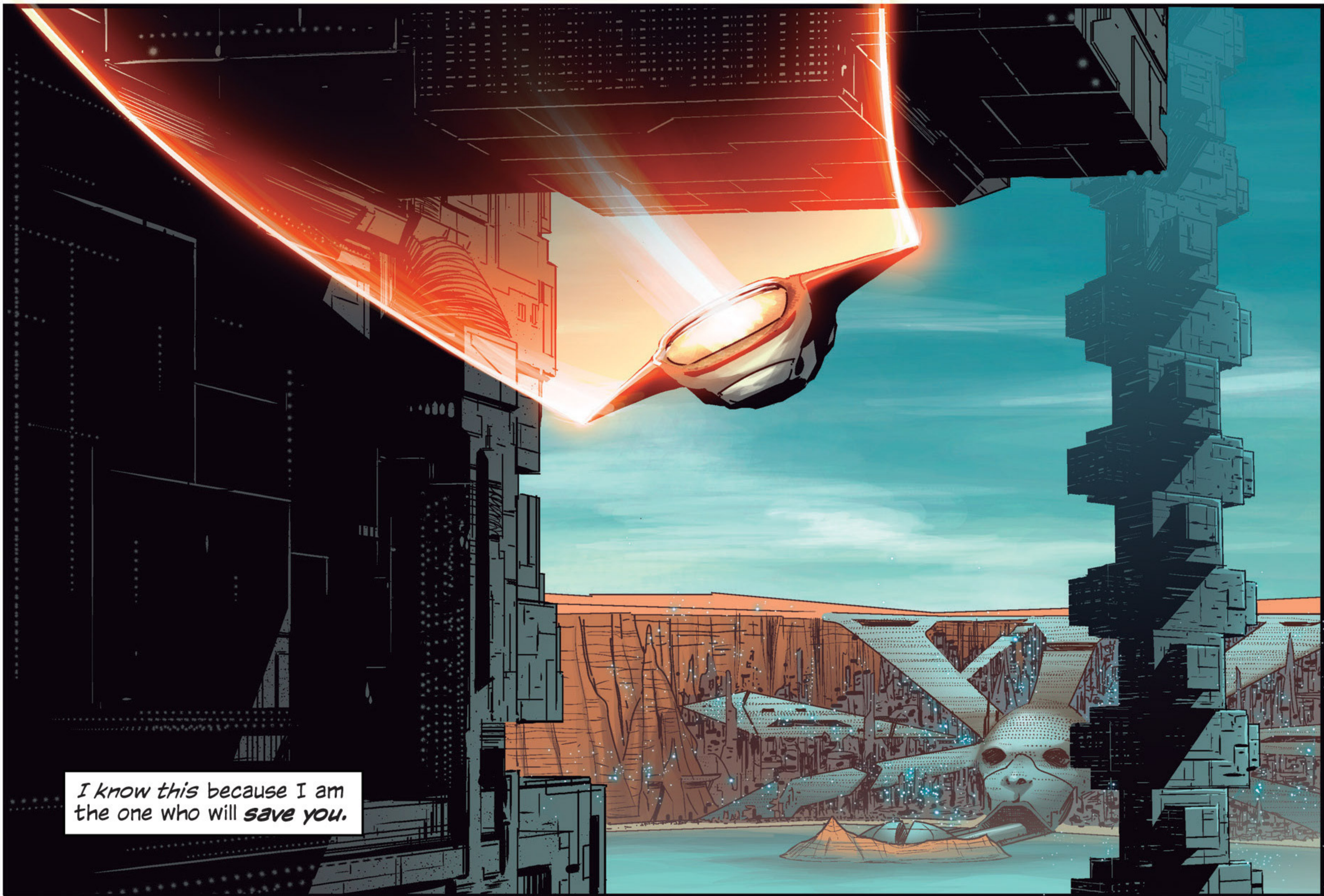
If I told you those
lessons only exist
because of the *failed*
nature of your
mother nations...



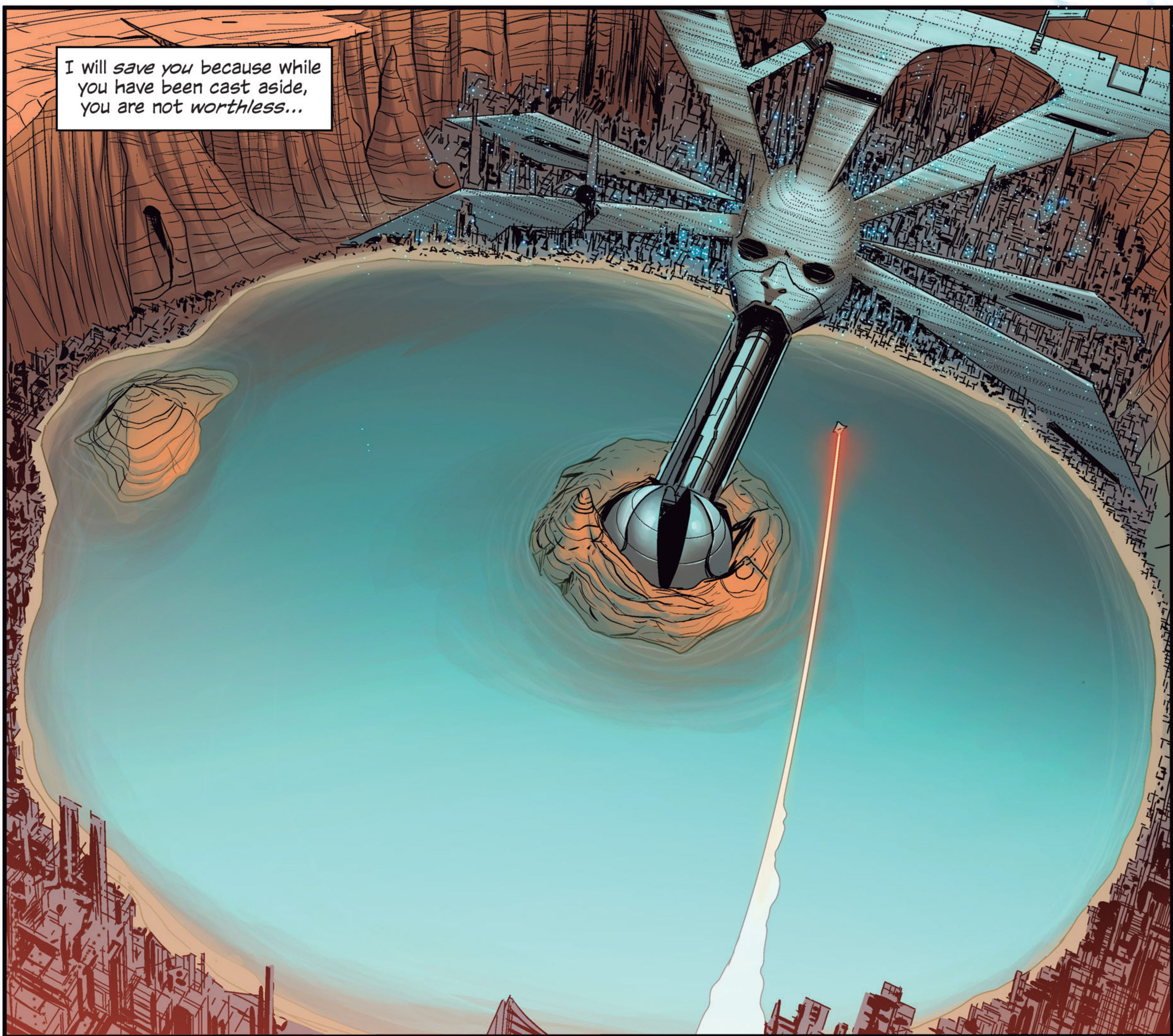
Could you
believe that?

Would you dare
to believe that?



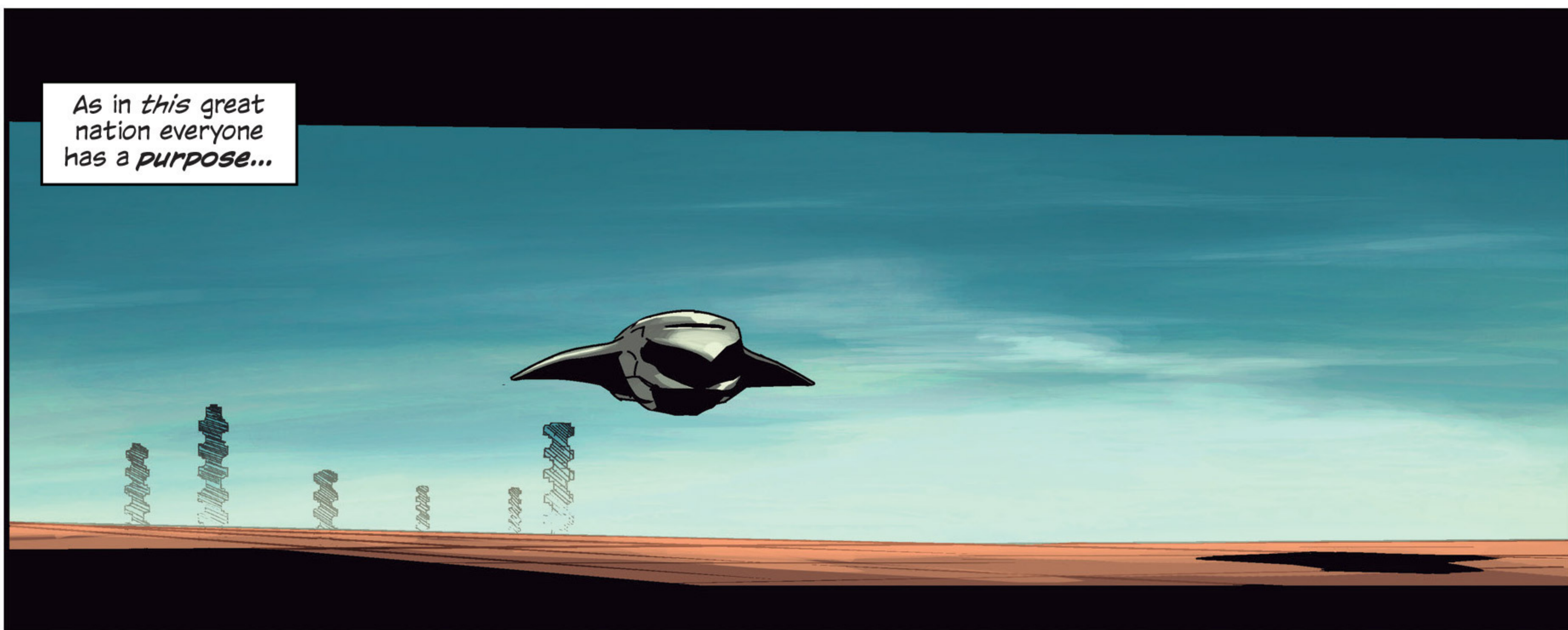


*I know this because I am
the one who will **save** you.*



*I will **save** you because while
you have been cast aside,
you are not **worthless**...*

As in *this* great nation everyone has a *purpose*...



And so shall you.



From this day forward, you are a *treasure* without peer...

A *Widowmaker*.



The Machine City of the Endless Nation.



I have returned, Great Chief... with *good news*.



It's done. The PRA have agreed to support us.

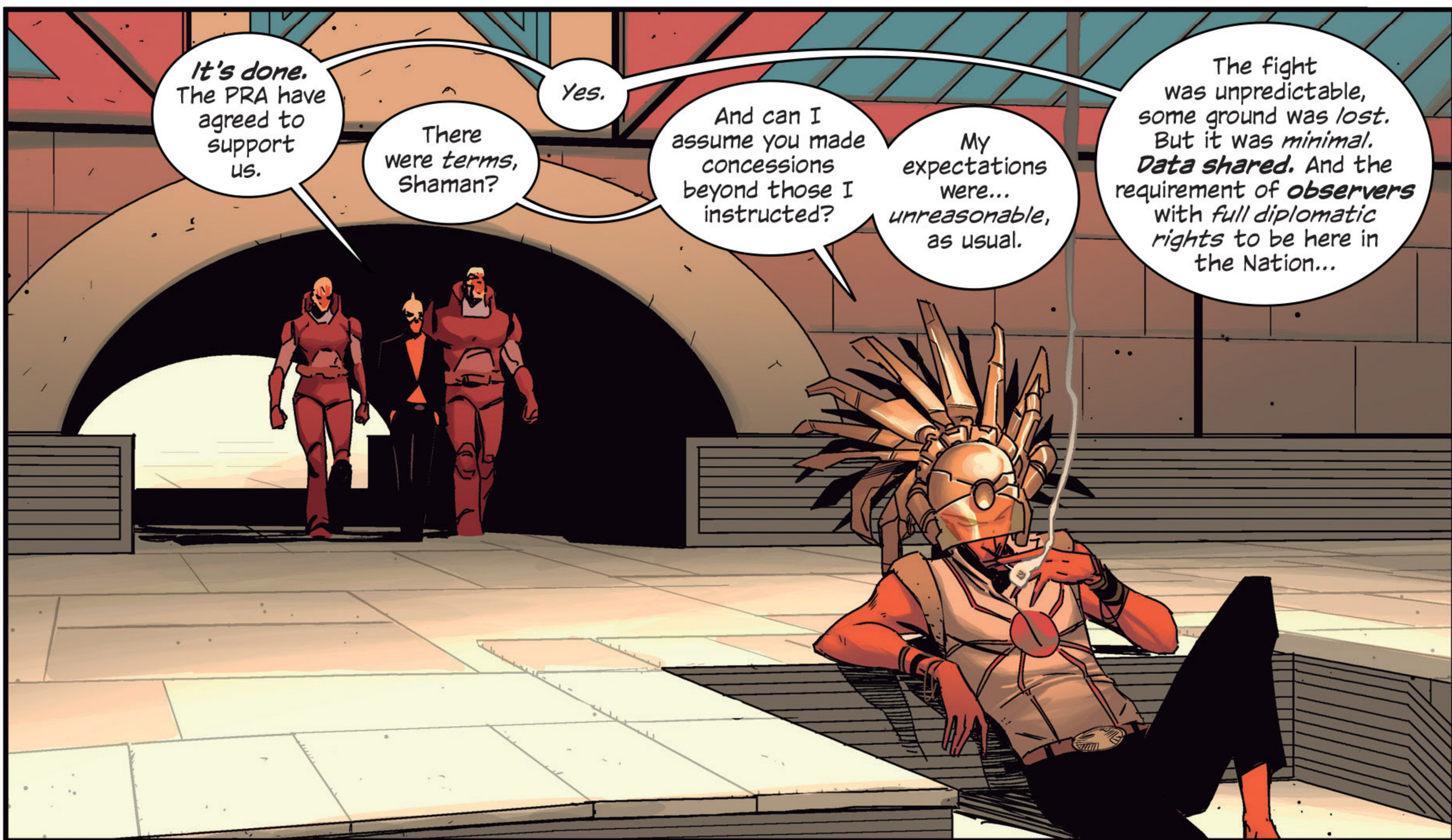
There were *terms*, Shaman?

Yes.

And can I assume you made concessions beyond those I instructed?

My expectations were... *unreasonable*, as usual.

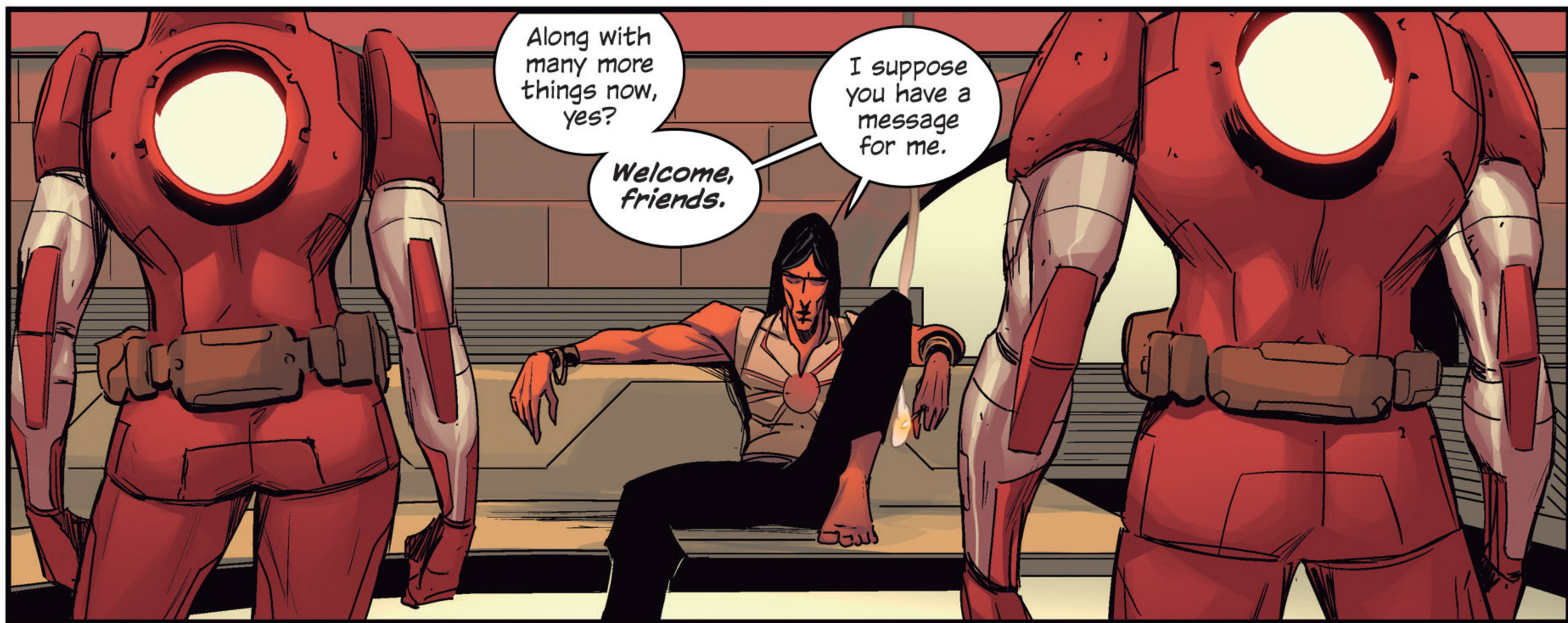
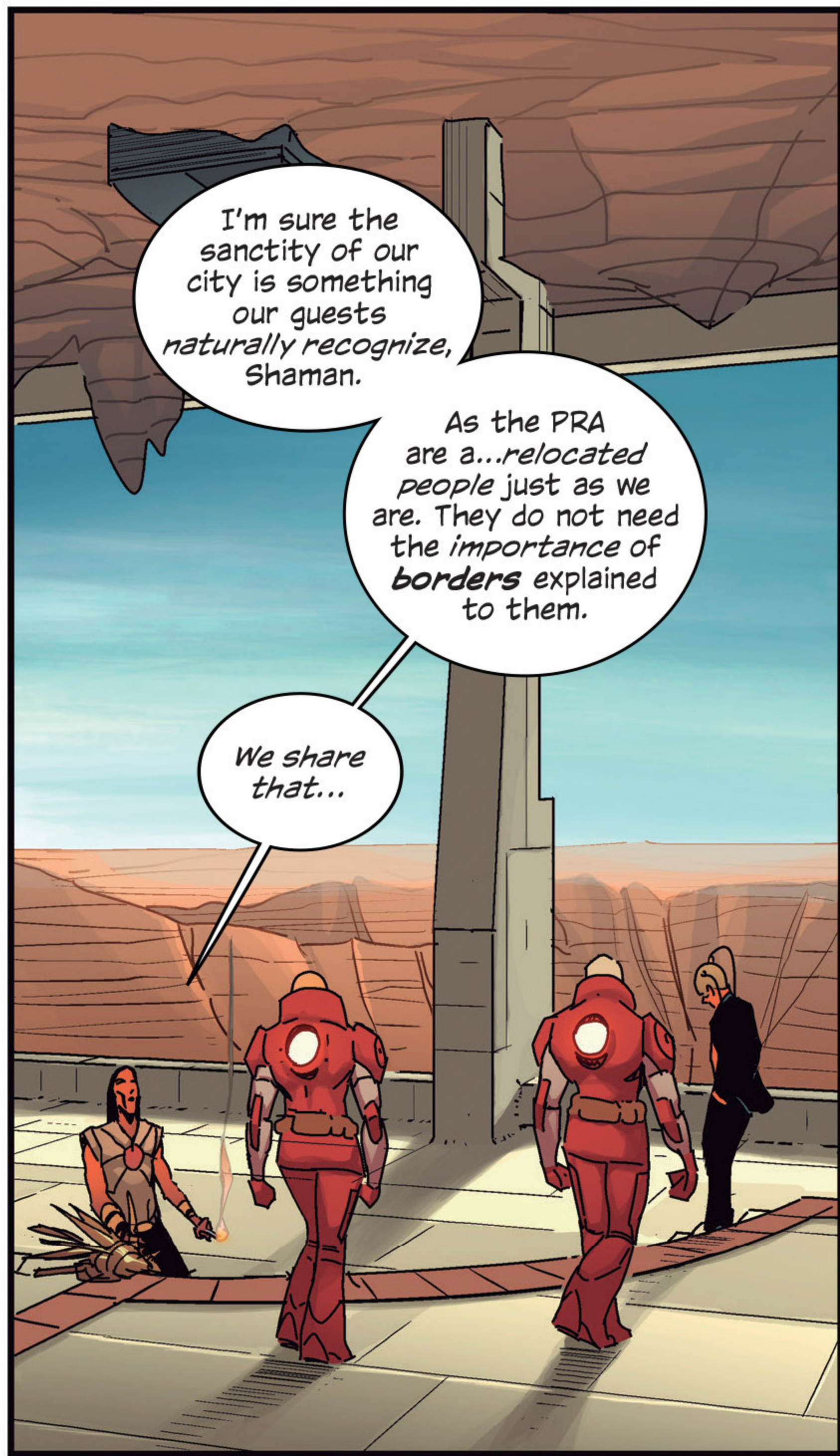
The fight was unpredictable, some ground was *lost*. But it was *minimal*. *Data shared*. And the requirement of *observers* with *full diplomatic rights* to be here in the Nation...

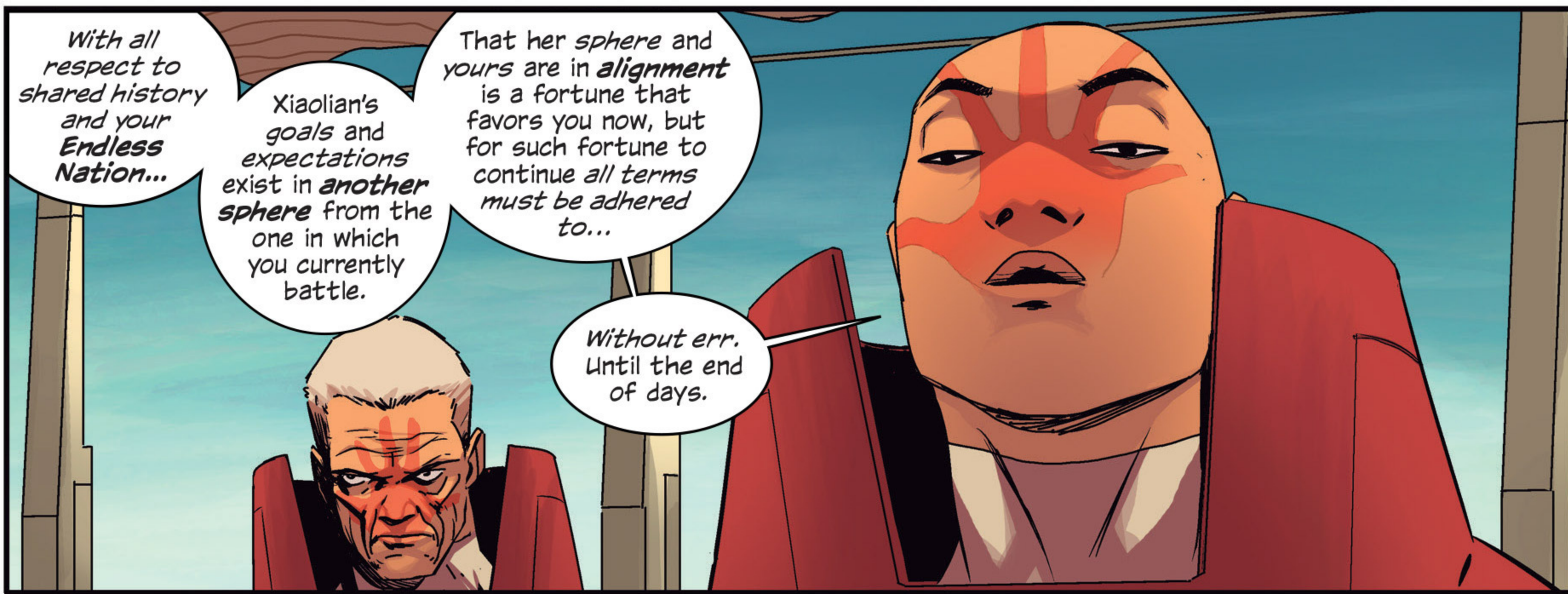


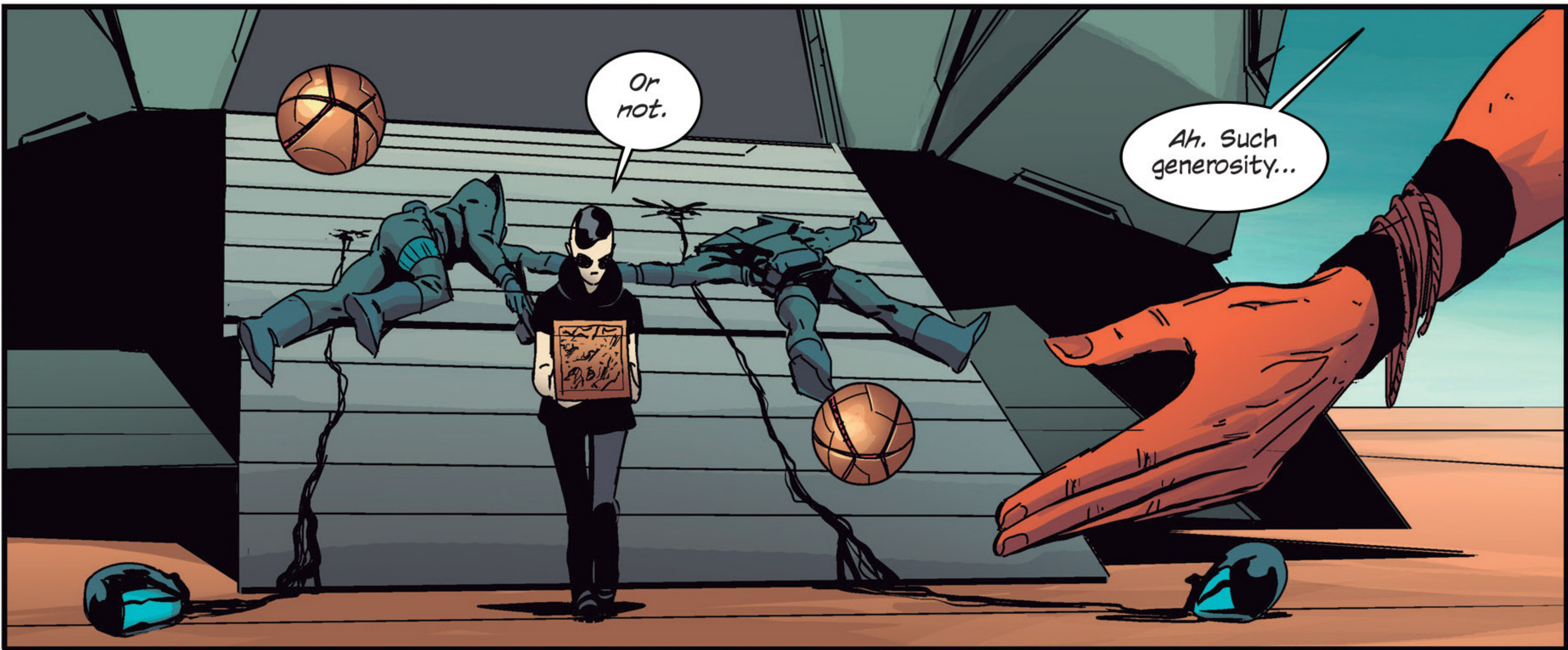
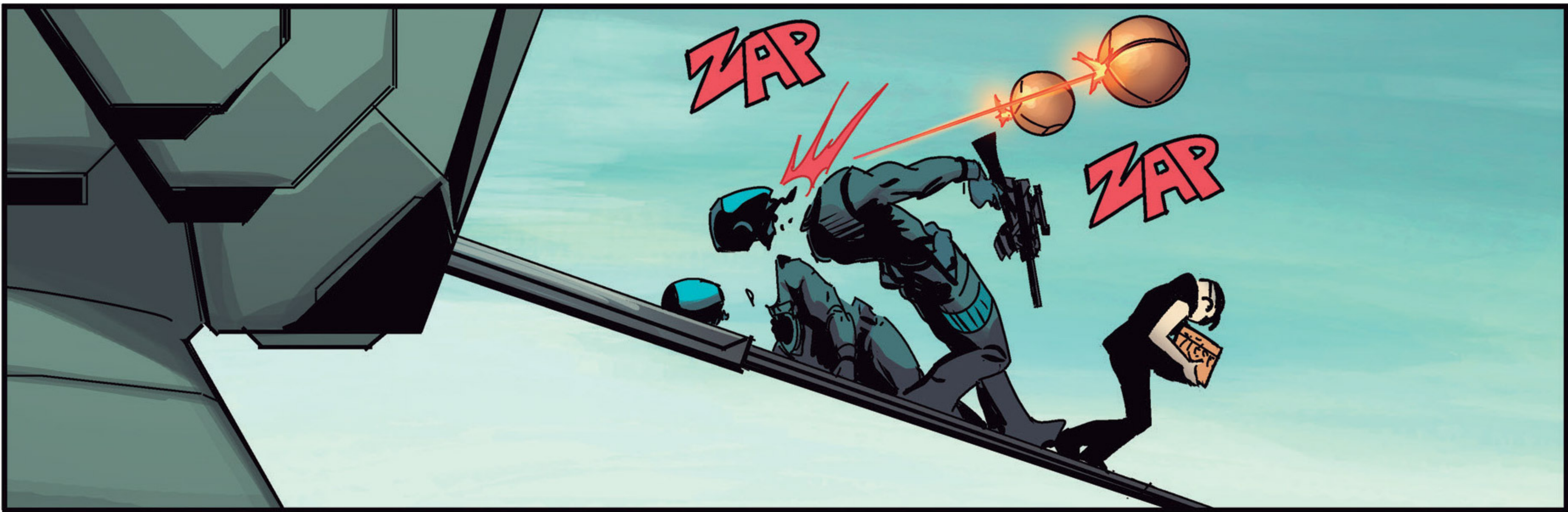
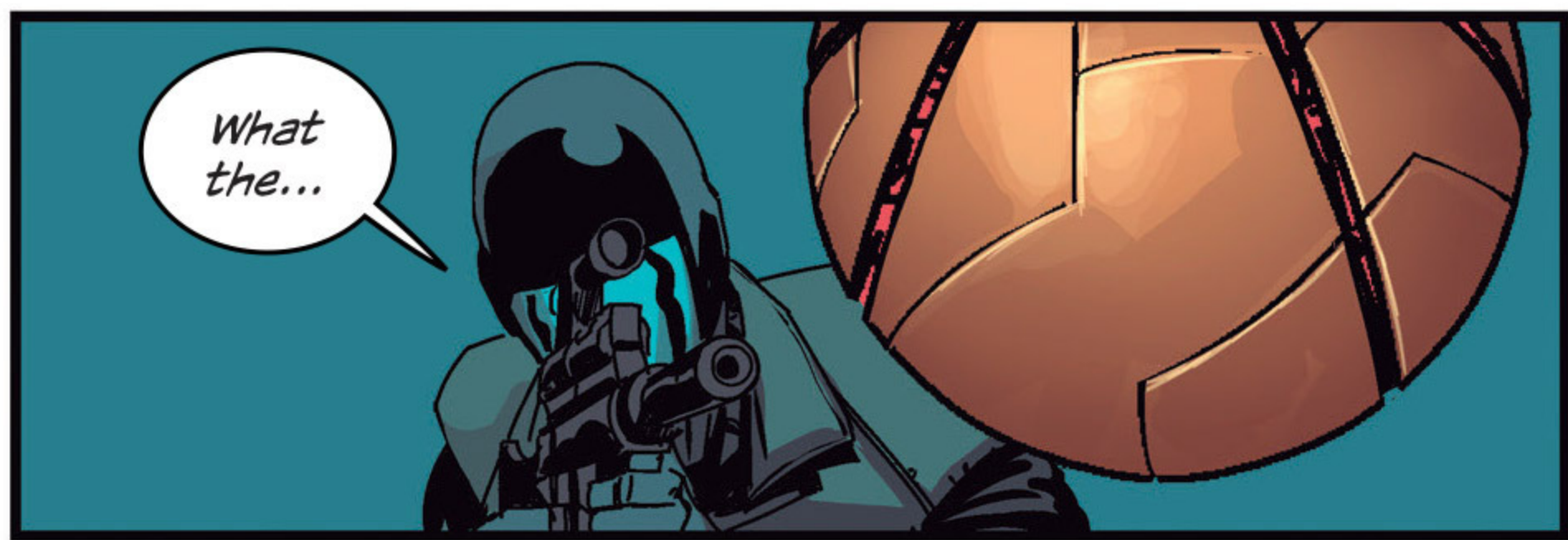
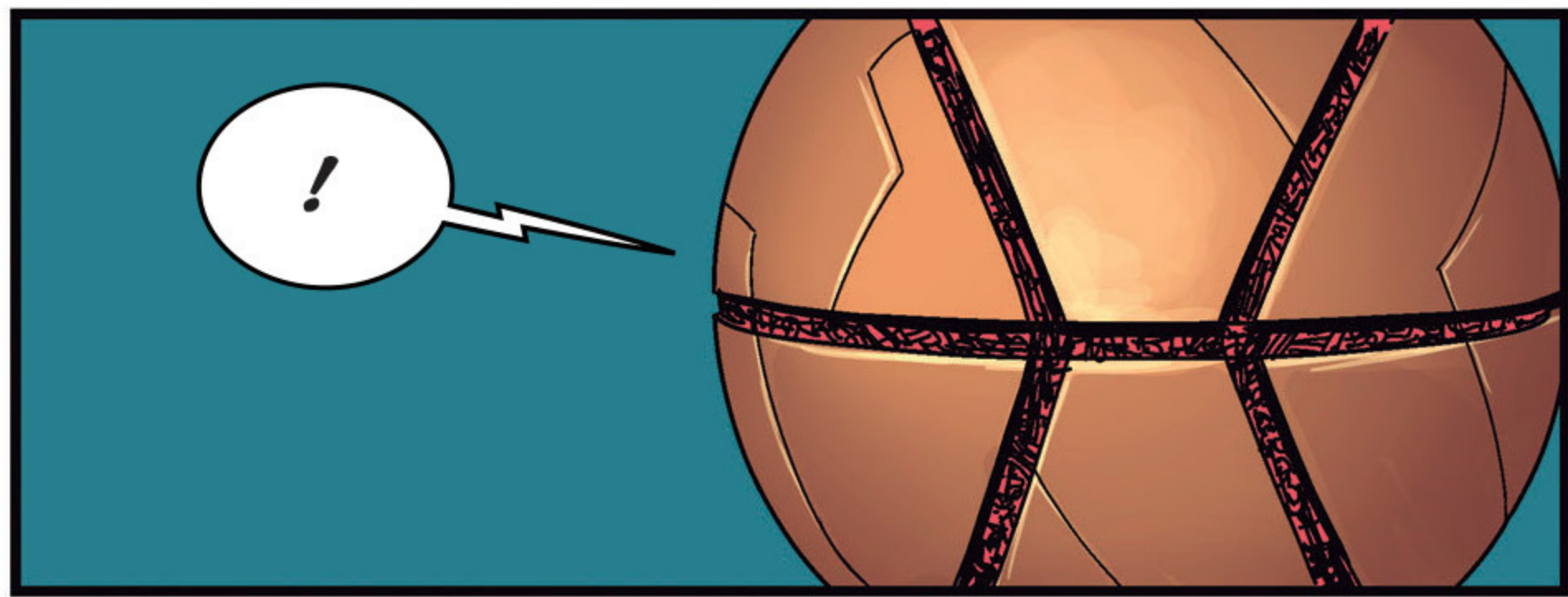
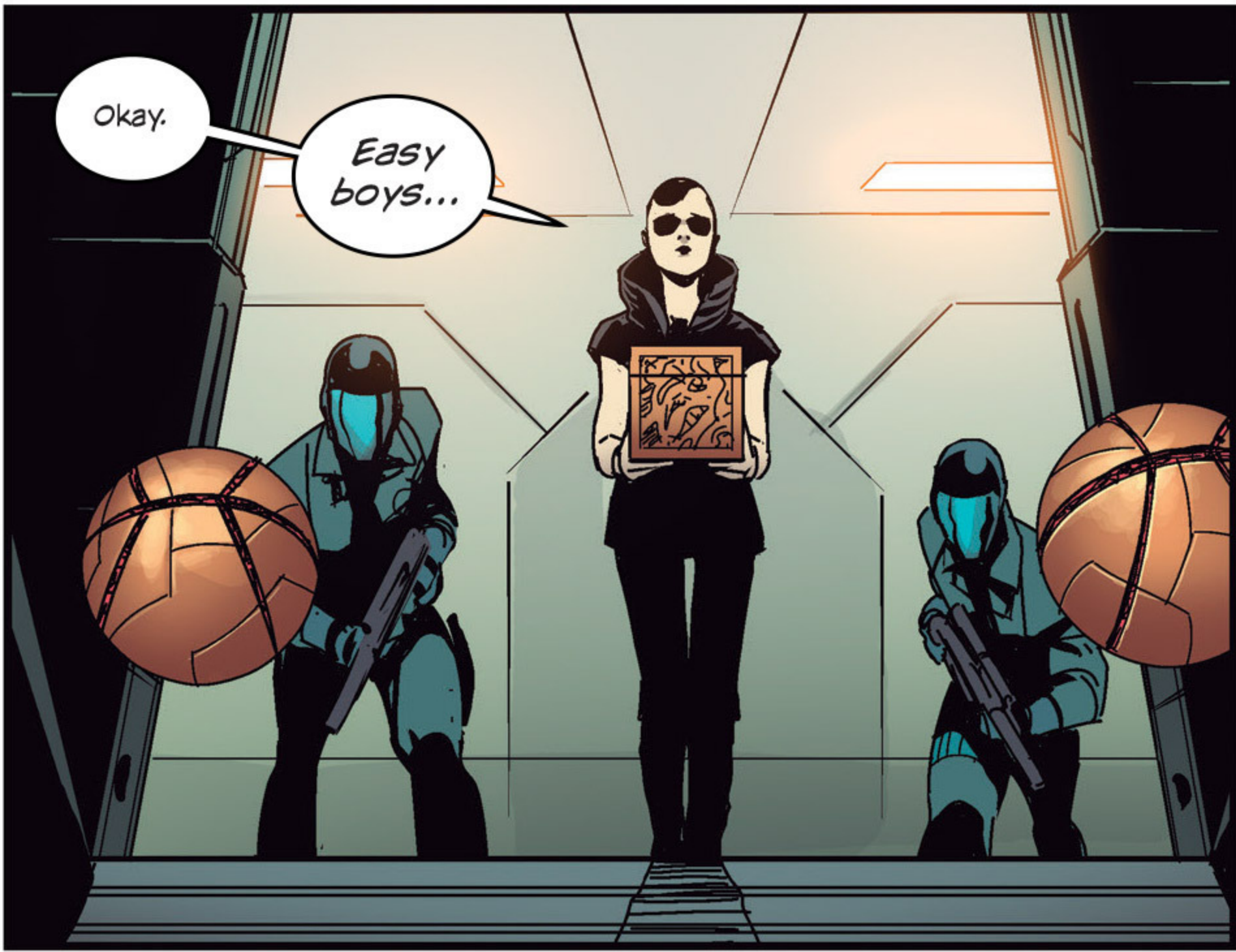
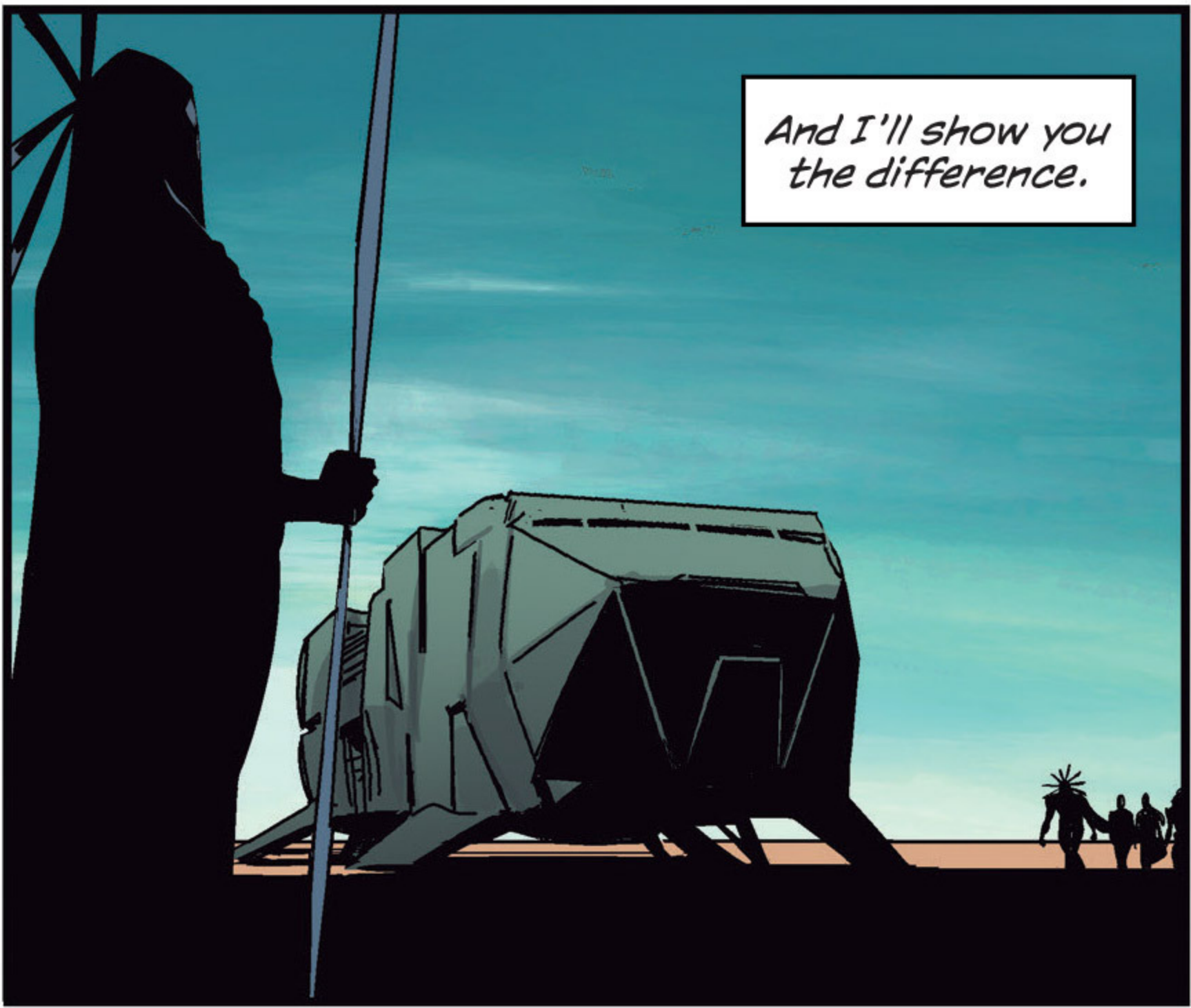
Which explains your company.

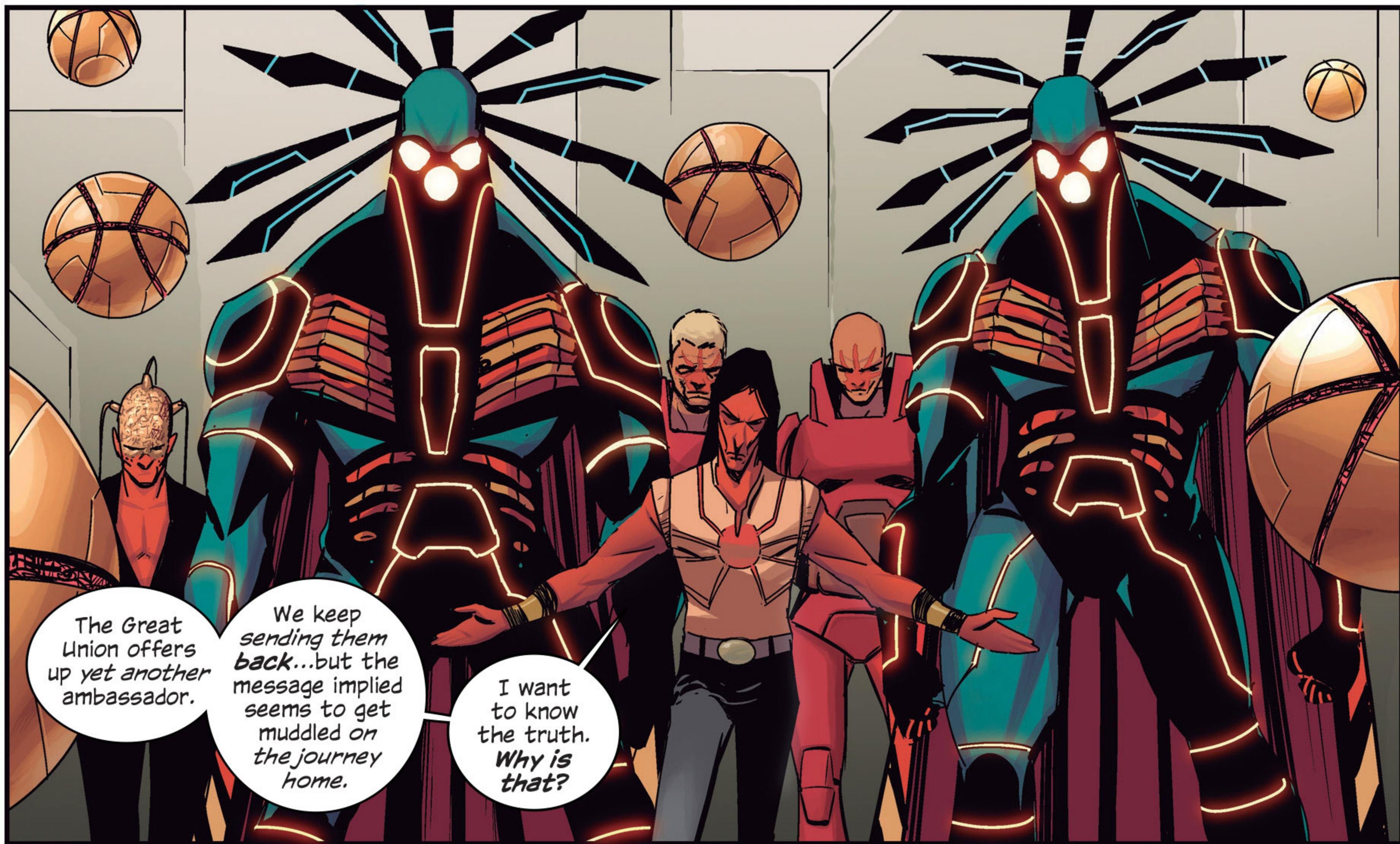
I have -- *ahem* -- informed them of the *privilege* they enjoy.







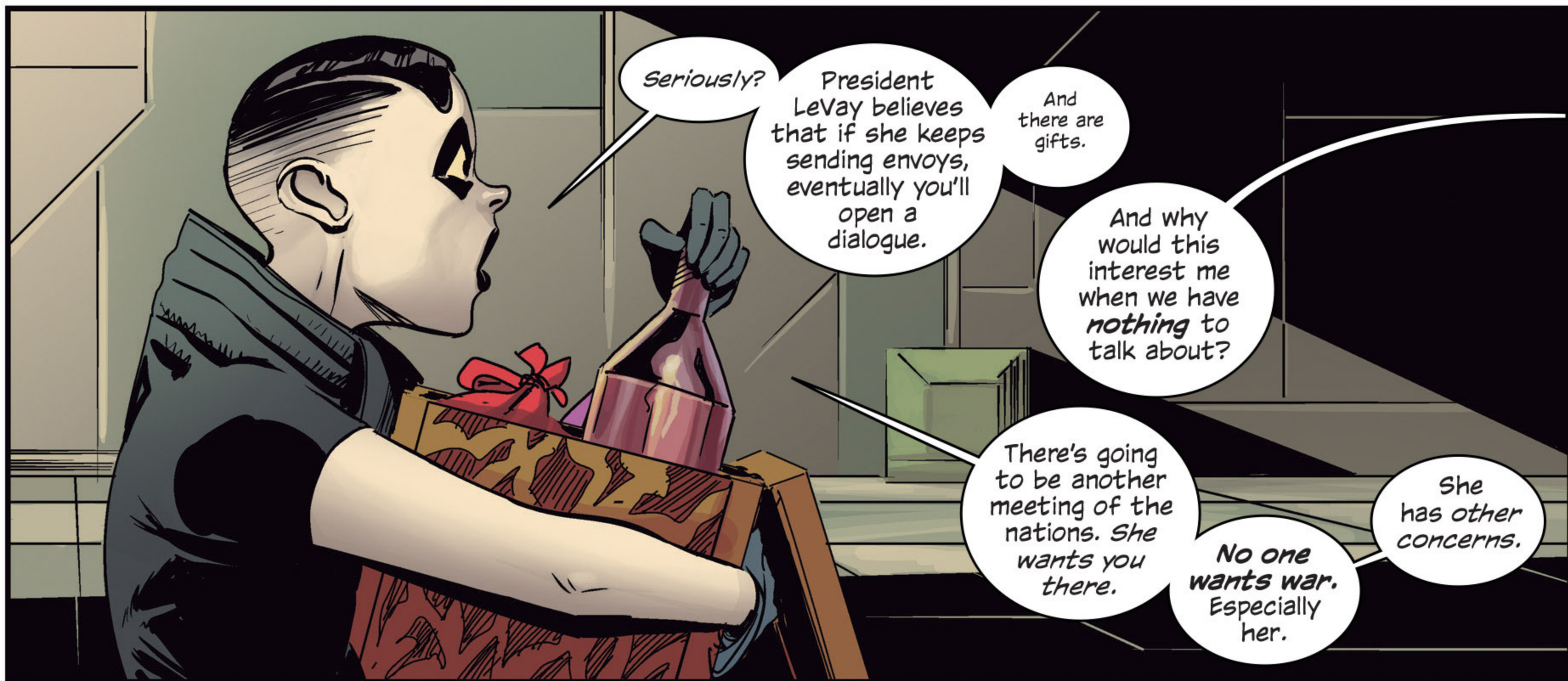




The Great Union offers up yet another ambassador.

We keep sending them *back*...but the message implied seems to get muddled on the journey home.

I want to know the truth. *Why is that?*



Seriously?

President LeVay believes that if she keeps sending envoys, eventually you'll open a dialogue.

And there are gifts.

And why would this interest me when we have *nothing* to talk about?

There's going to be another meeting of the nations. *She* wants you there.

No one wants war. Especially her.

She has other concerns.



Do you have any idea how long my people have *hated* yours? Do you have any idea how long we have waited for this?

No one wants war?

I want war.



When you see your President... make sure my message is clear.

Leave this one... *functional.*

This is justice...

Doesn't really sound that way.

This is justice... the cold, unflinching act of the Nation.

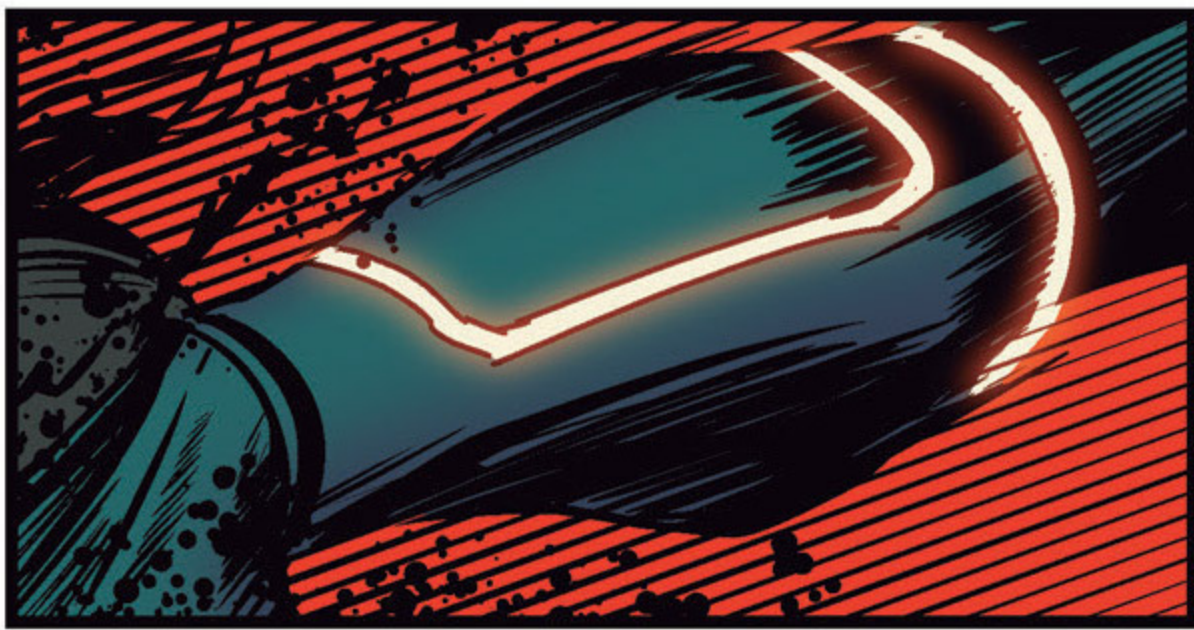
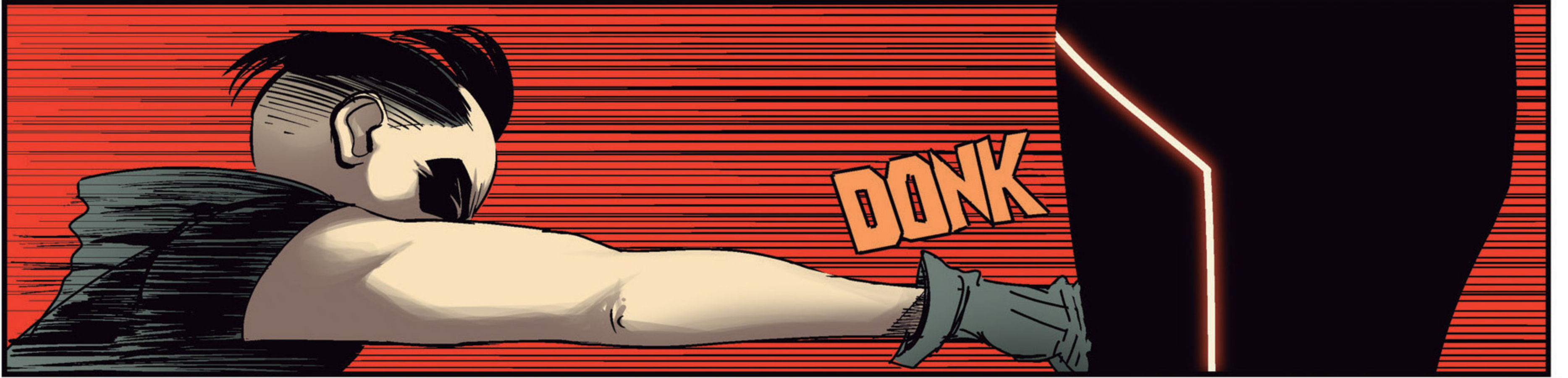
Functional in this case implies able to fulfill ones duty.

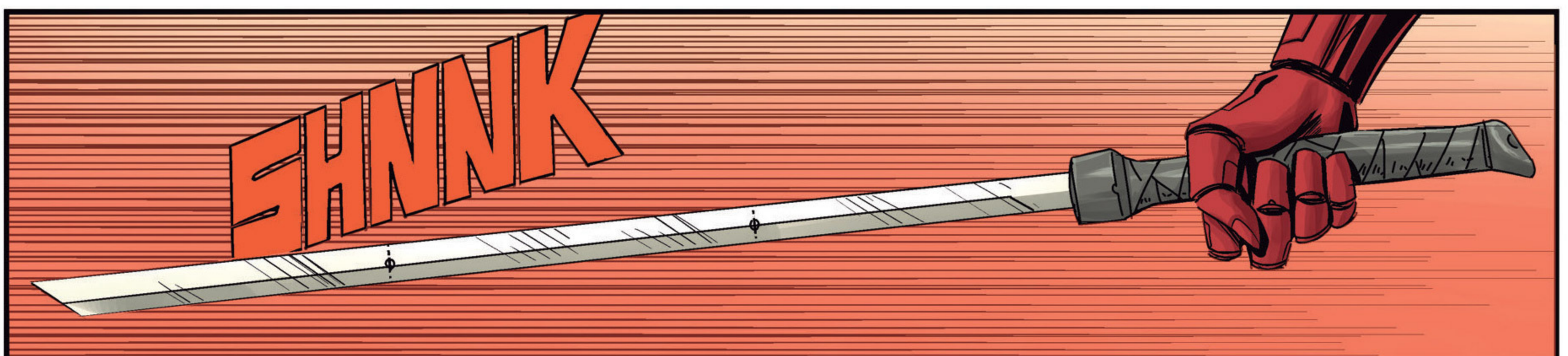
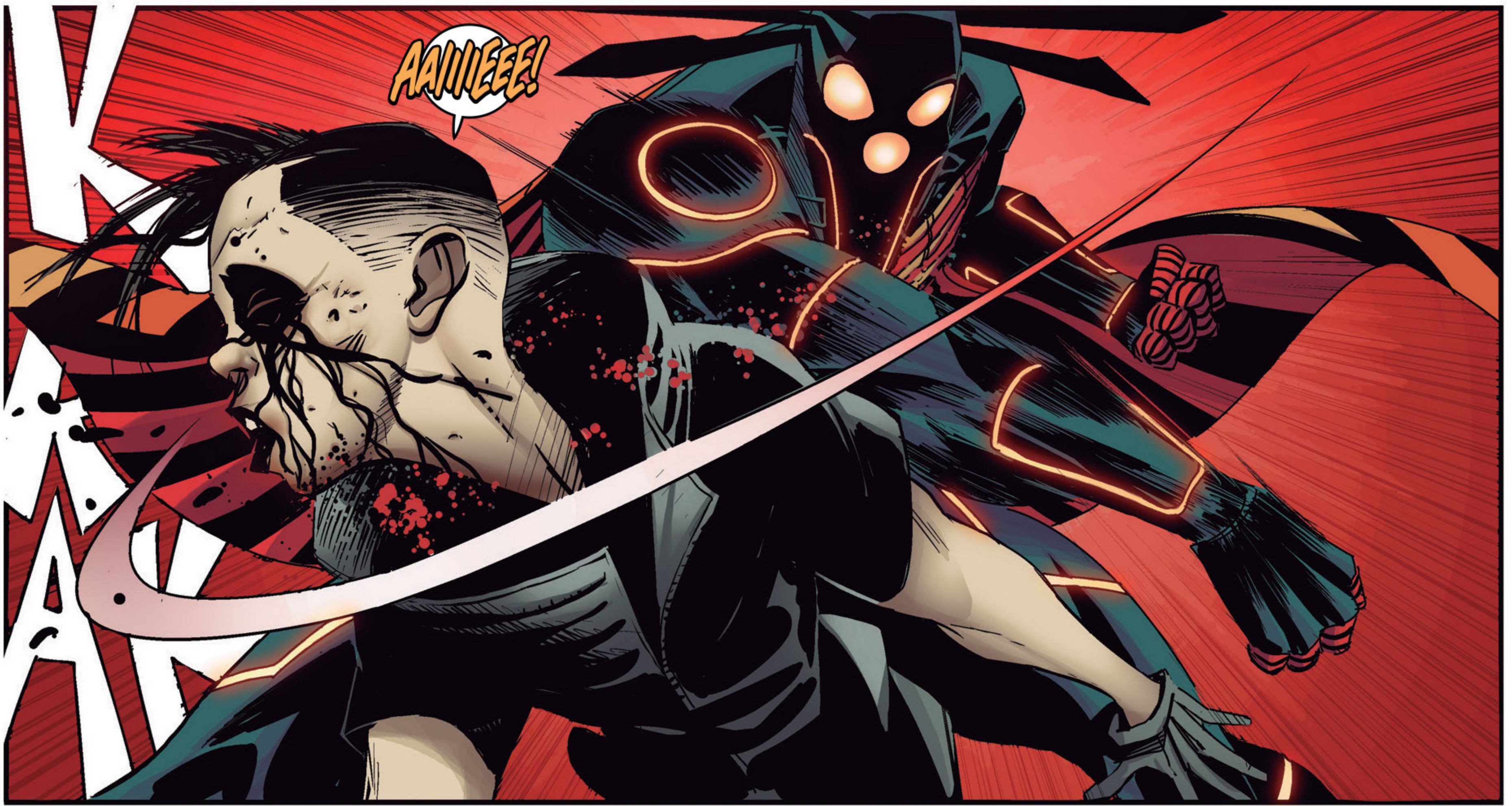
You are a messenger...

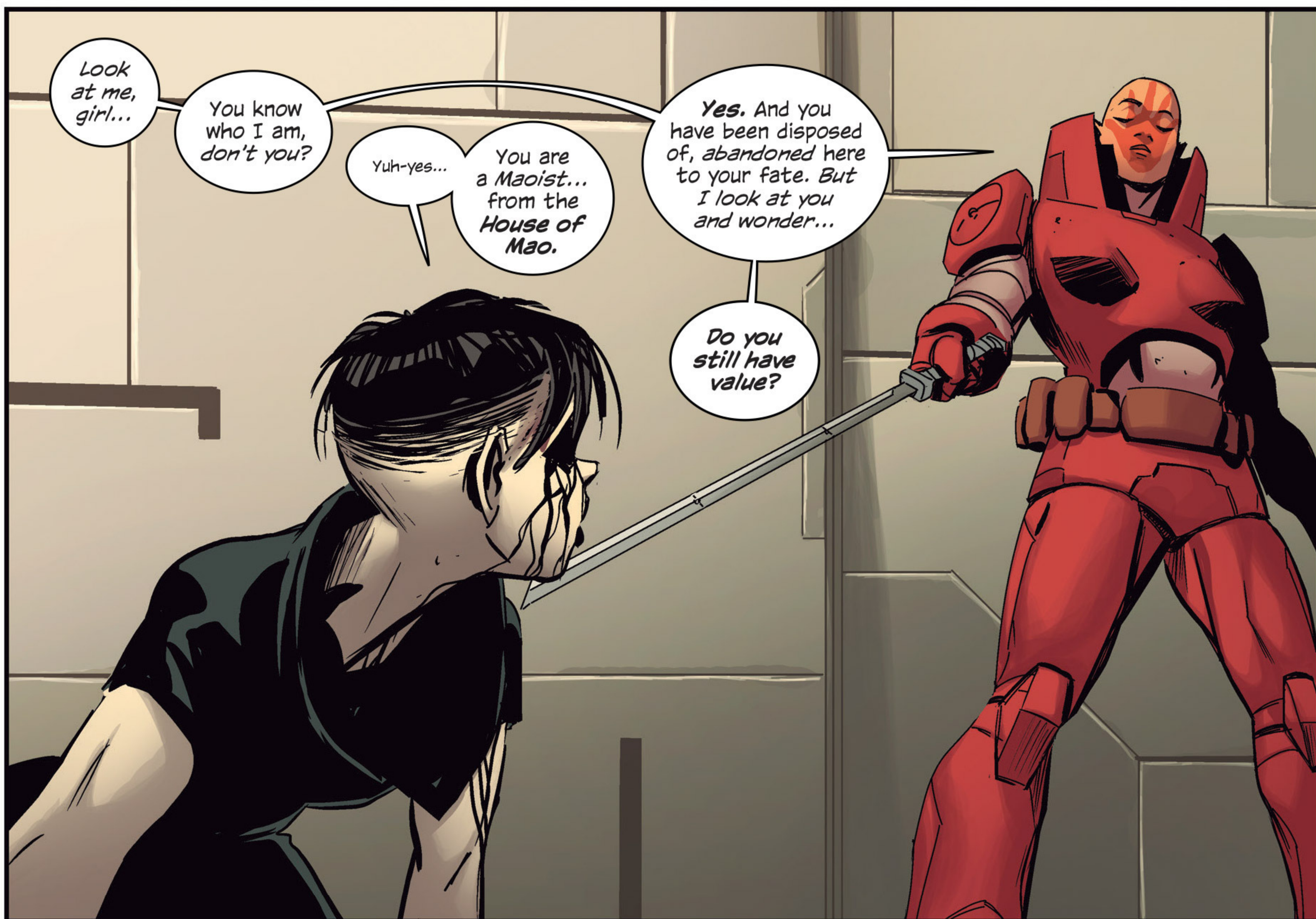
I will therefore only take your arms and legs.

Do you require an anesthetic?









Look at me, girl...

You know who I am, don't you?

Yuh-yes...

You are a Maoist... from the House of Mao.

Yes. And you have been disposed of, abandoned here to your fate. But I look at you and wonder...

Do you still have value?



What is the meaning of this?



This?

This is who I was.

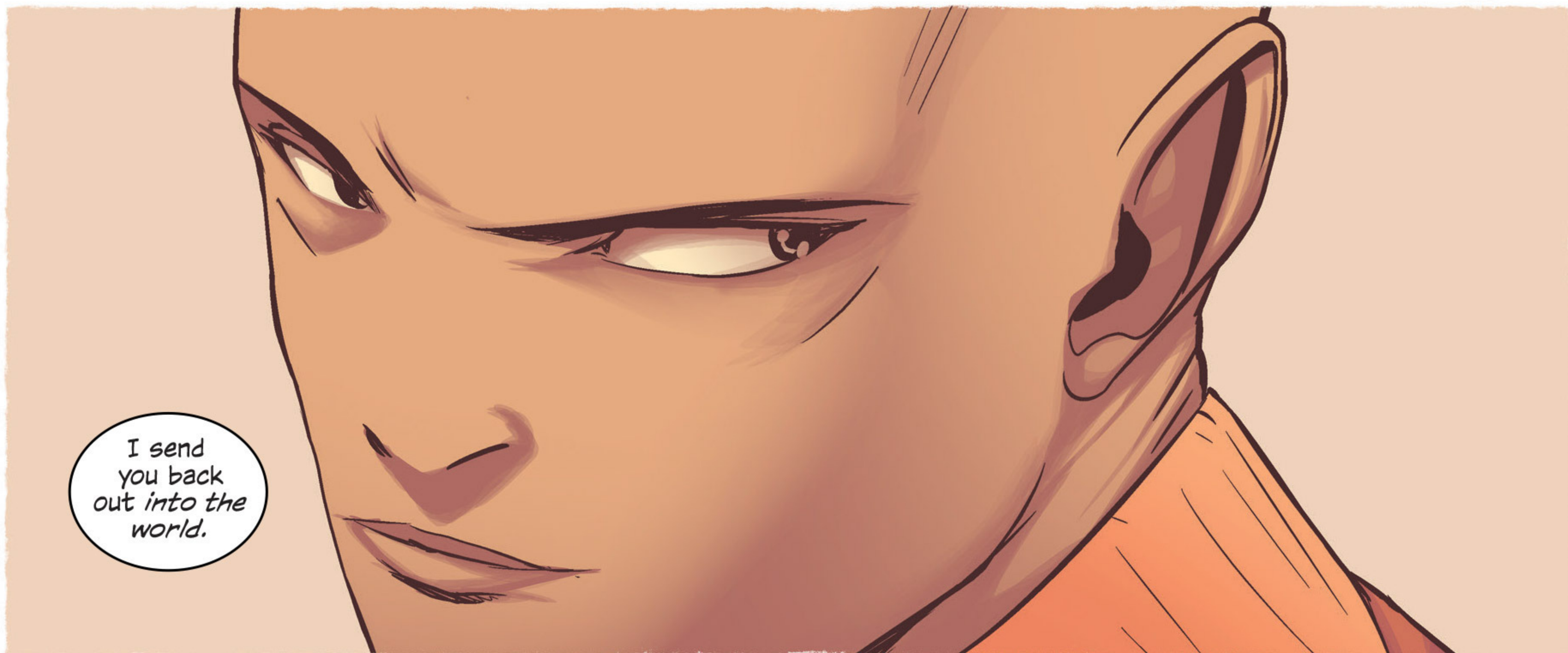


The discarded... embraced.

The useless... made useful.

A Widowmaker.





I send
you back
out *into the*
world.



I send
you back
from *where*
you came.



You will
return to the
ones who
abandoned you,
and to the
nations who
cast you
out.

And there
you will work
in *secret* for
our great
state.

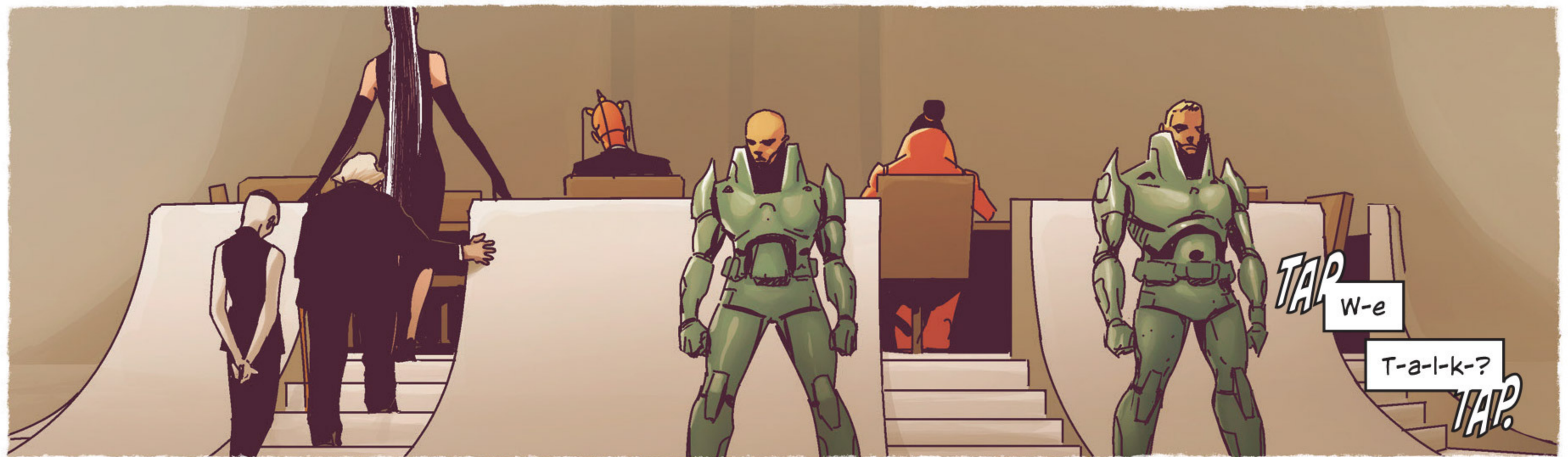
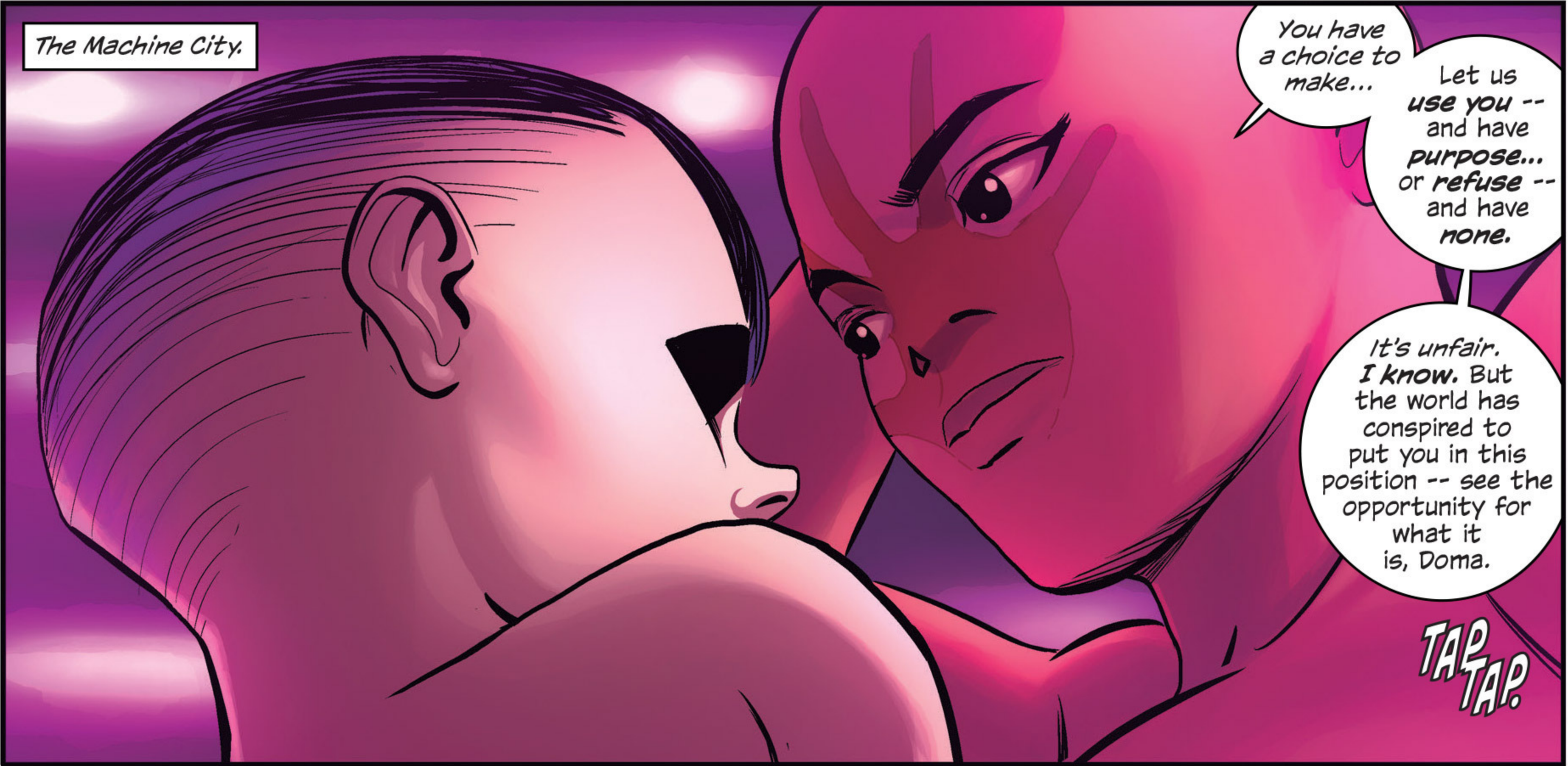


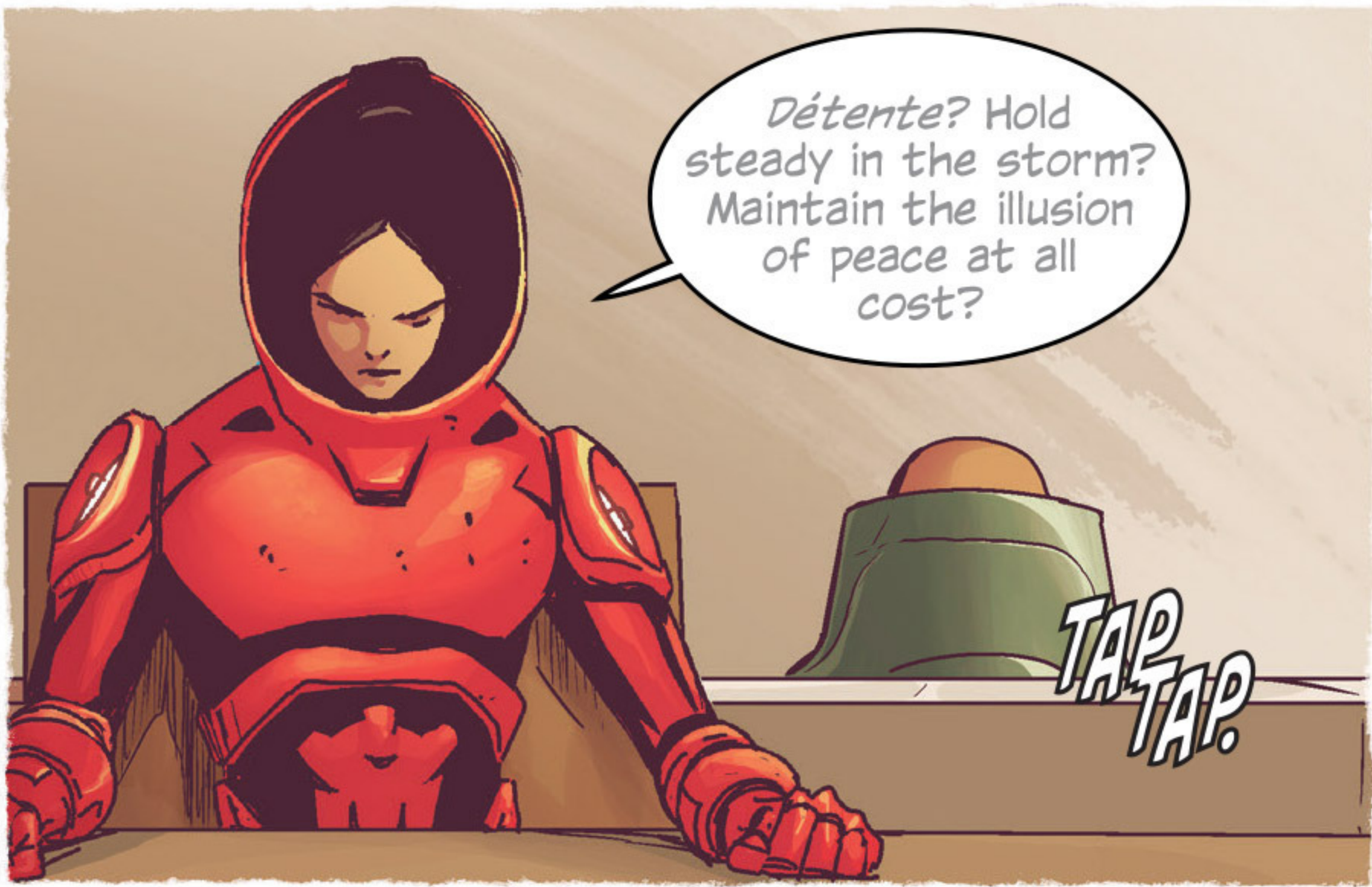
My
Widowmaker
...*lying in*
wait.



YOU HEAR **NOTHING**
BECAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW
WHAT TO **LISTEN FOR.**

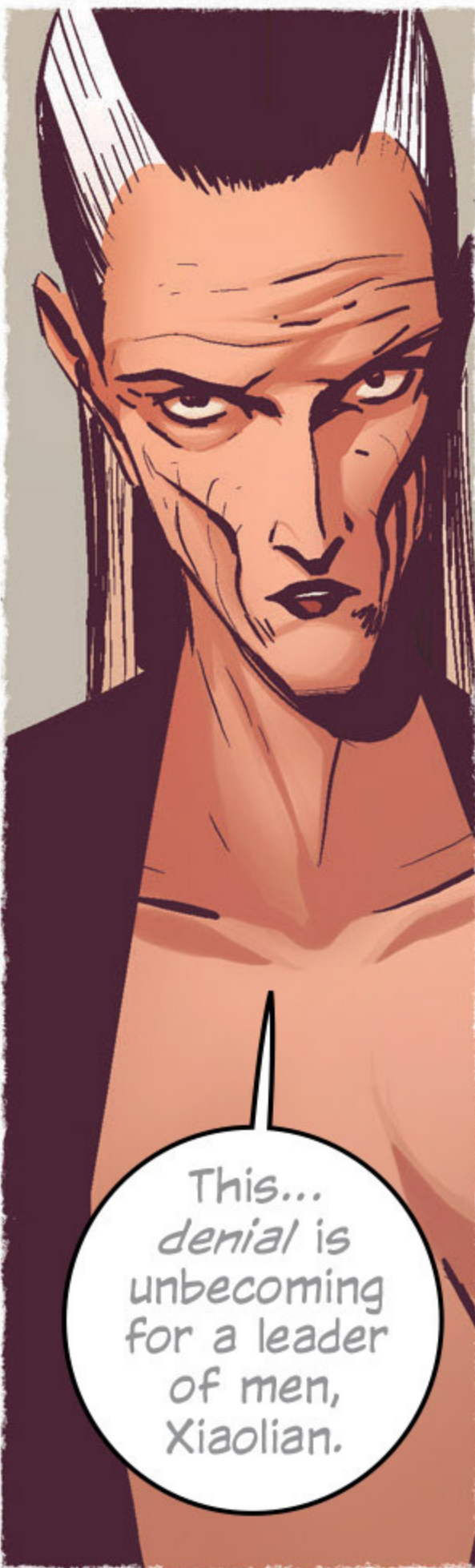








TAP
W-A-R



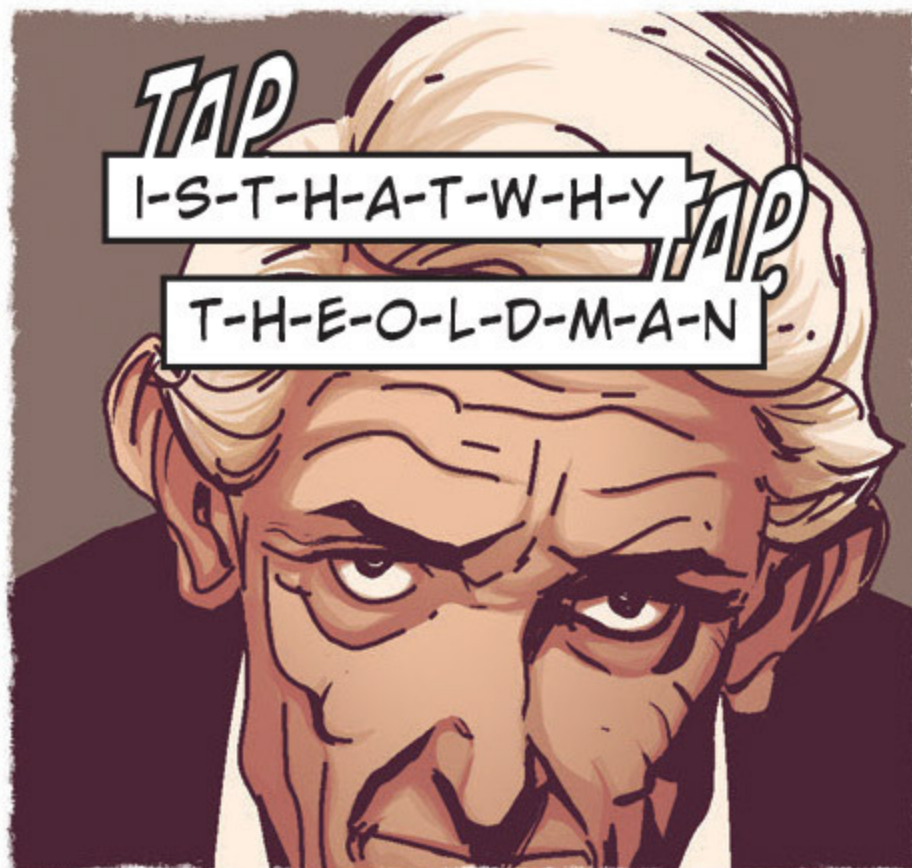
This...
denial is
unbecoming
for a leader
of men,
Xiaolian.



I-H-a-v-e
A-B-o-m-b



TAP
I-S-T-H-A-T-W-H-Y
T-H-E-O-L-D-M-A-N



TAP
TAP

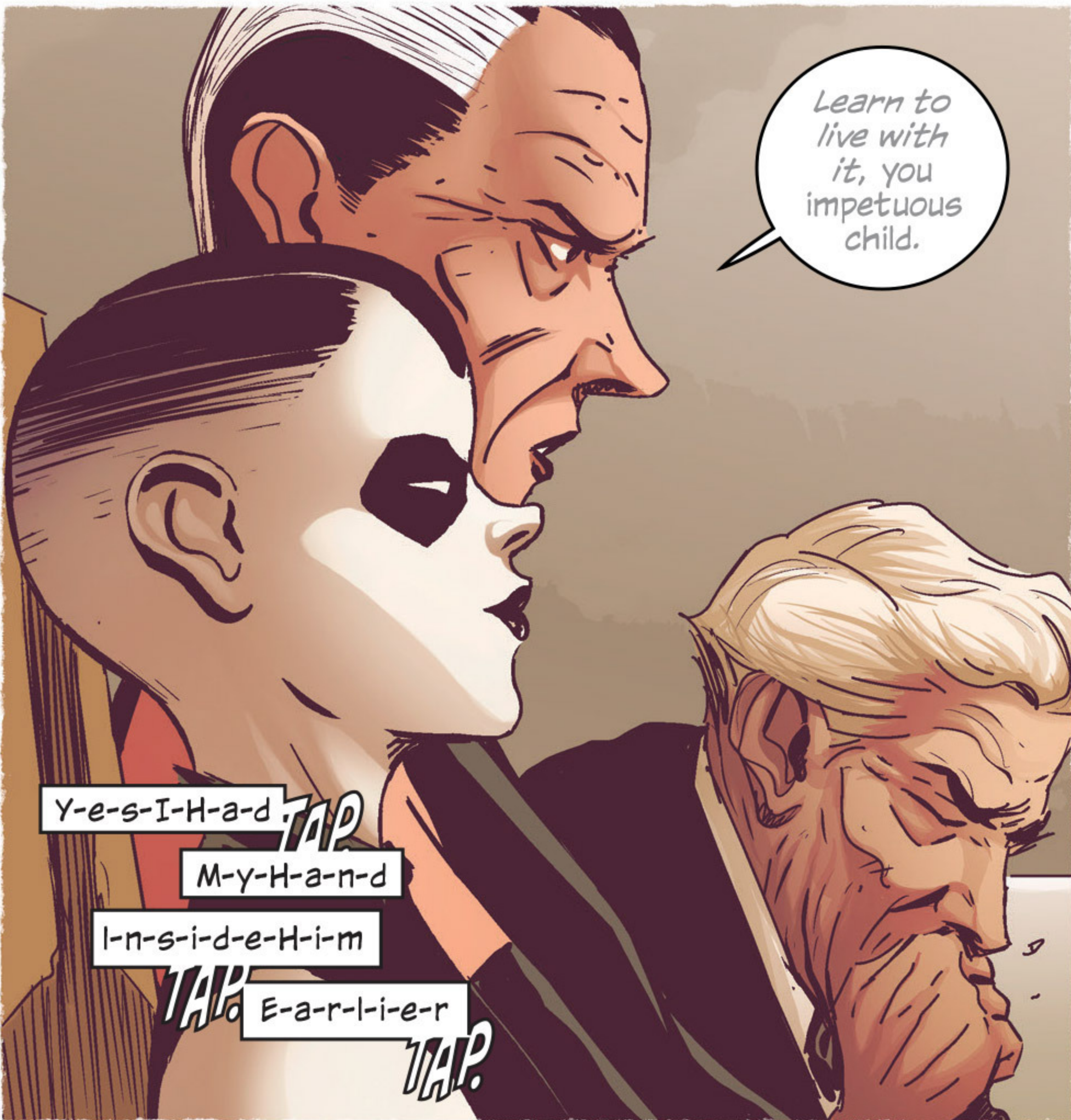


D-I-S-C-O-R-D
TAP



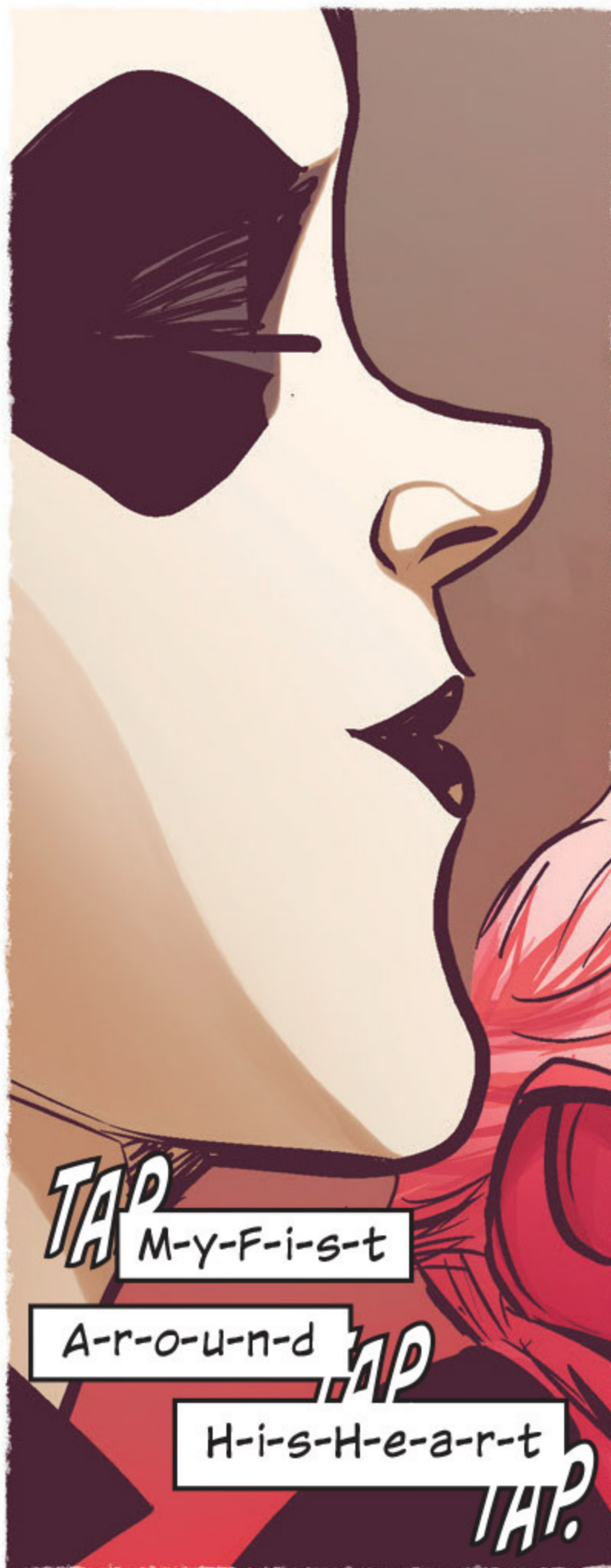
The
argument
is over and
you have
lost.

S-M-E-L-L-S
L-I-K-E-Y-O-U-?



Learn to
live with
it, you
impetuous
child.

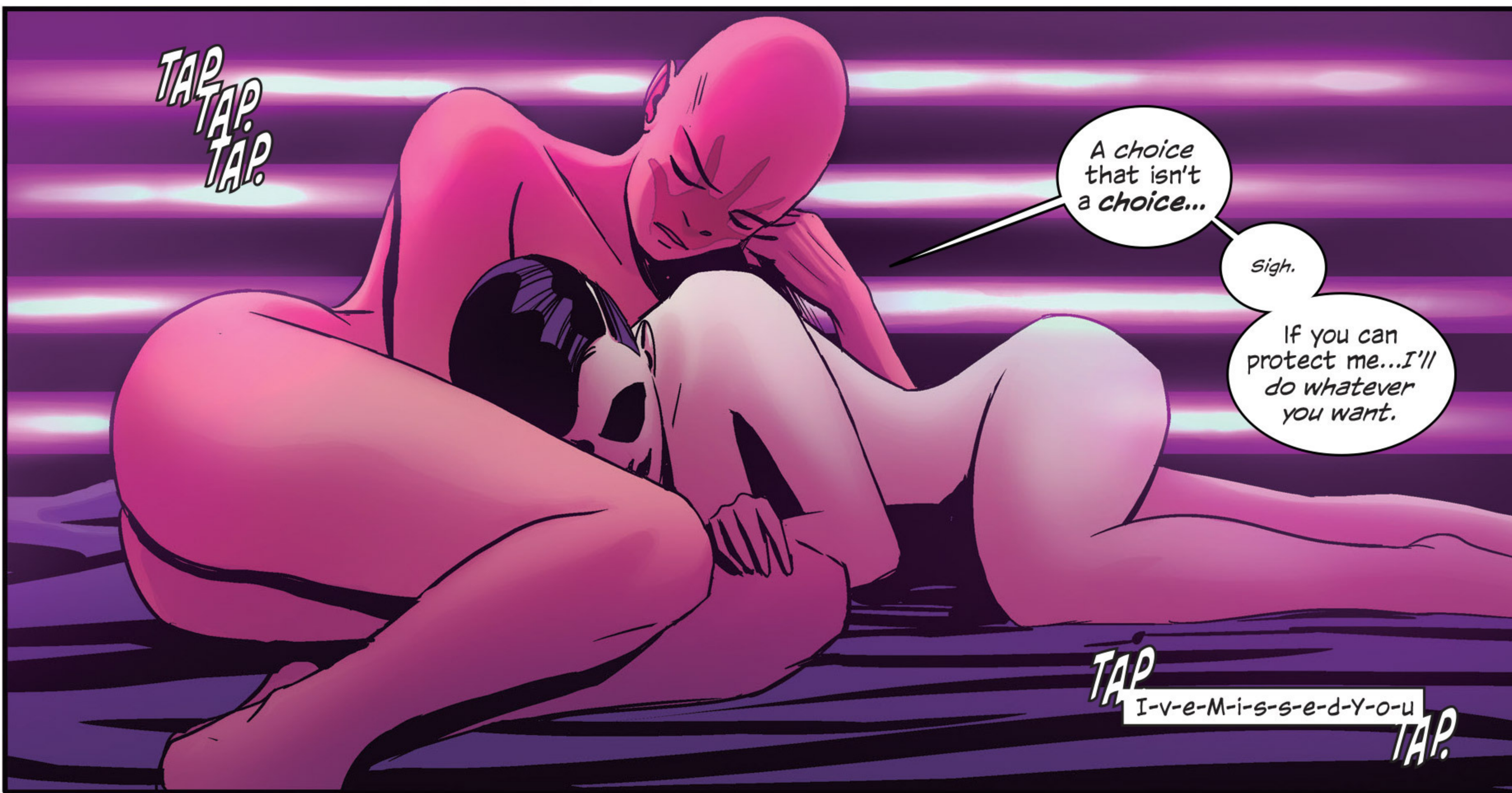
Y-e-s-I-H-a-d
M-y-H-a-n-d
I-n-s-i-d-e-H-i-m
E-a-r-l-i-e-r

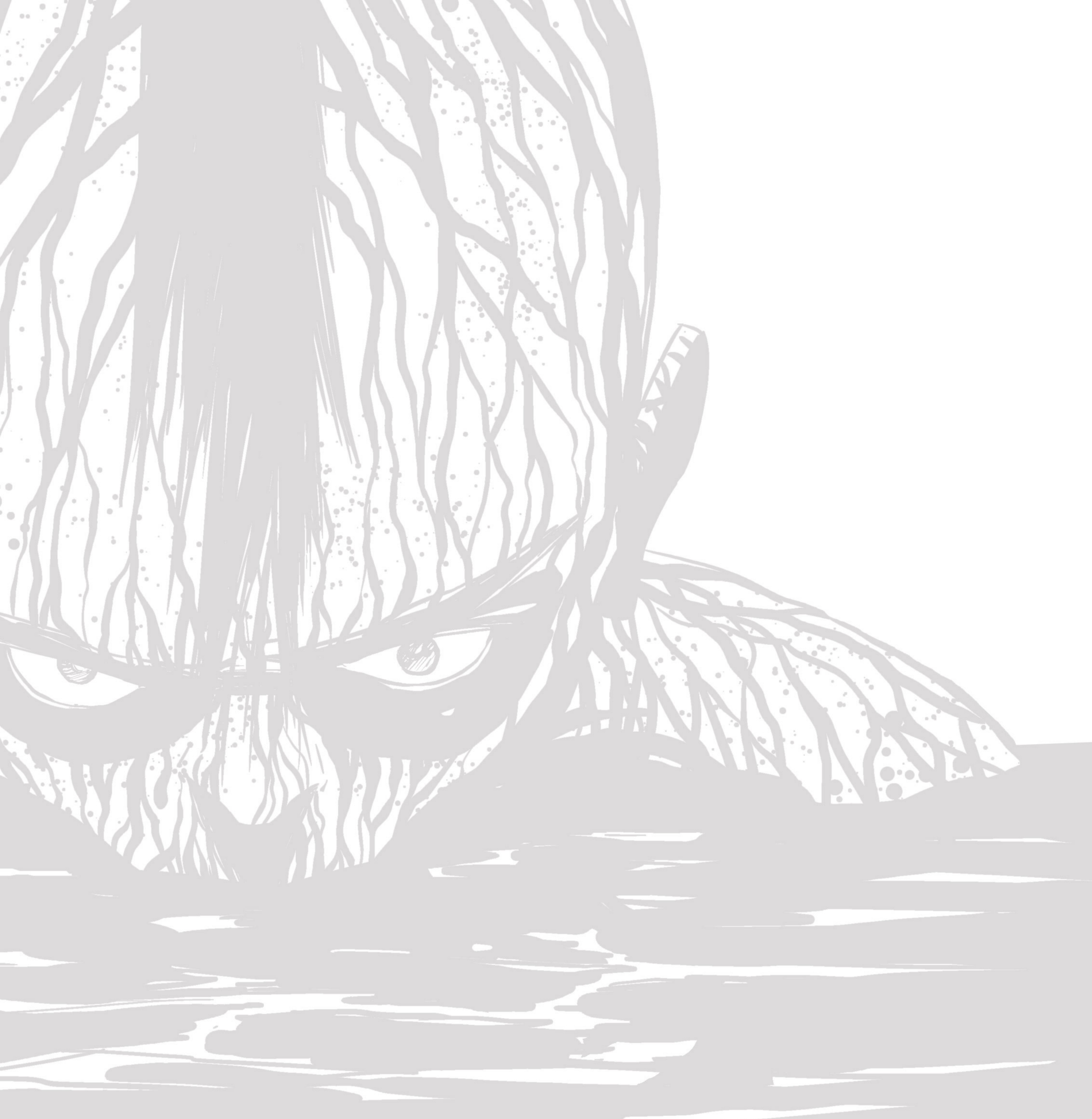


TAP
M-y-F-i-s-t
A-r-o-u-n-d
H-i-s-H-e-a-r-t



TAP
G-O-O-D





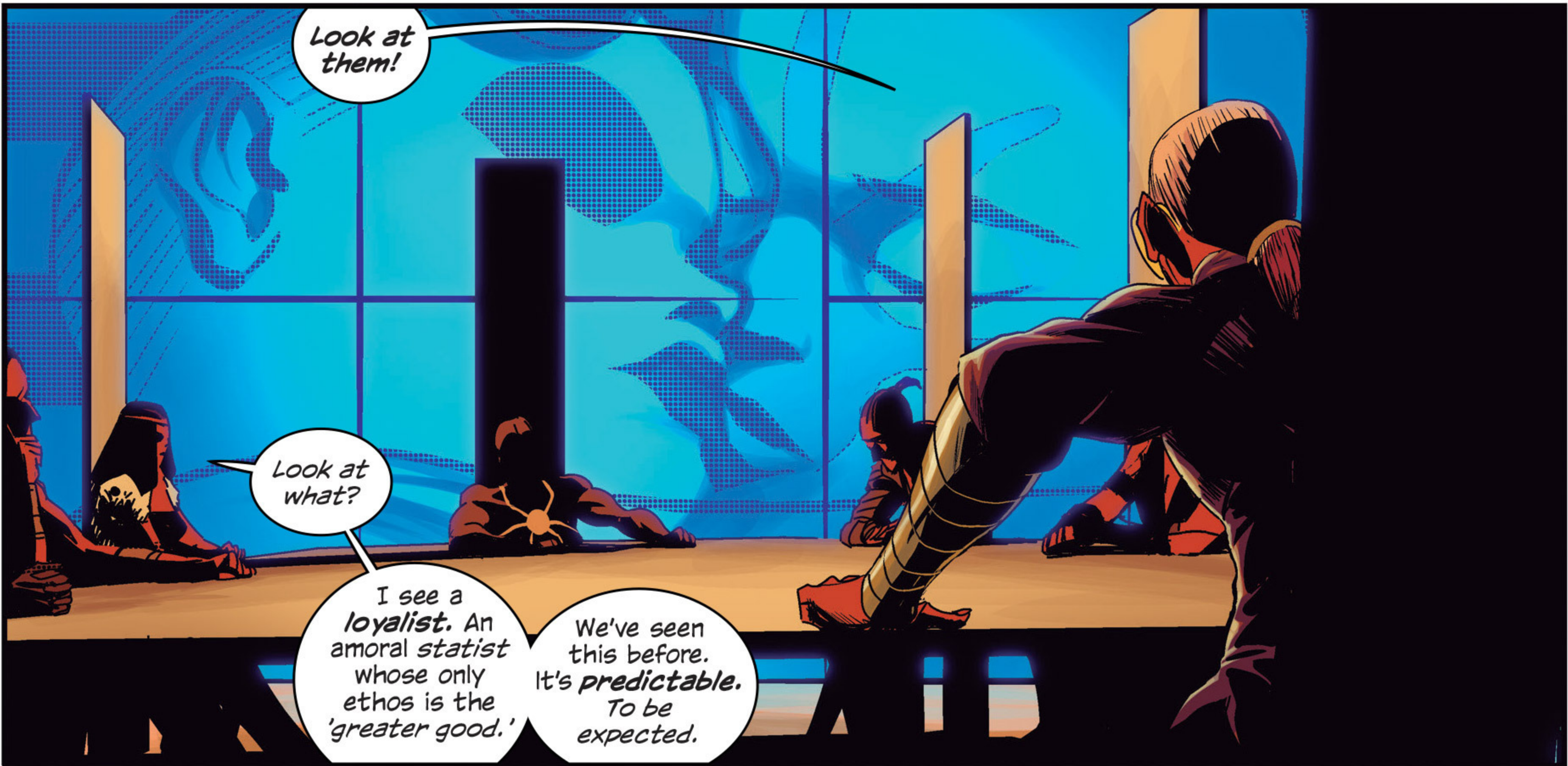
21



**TWENTY-ONE:
THIS GREAT CITY**

YOU HEAR **EVERYTHING**
AND IT REDUCES YOU TO
NOTHING.







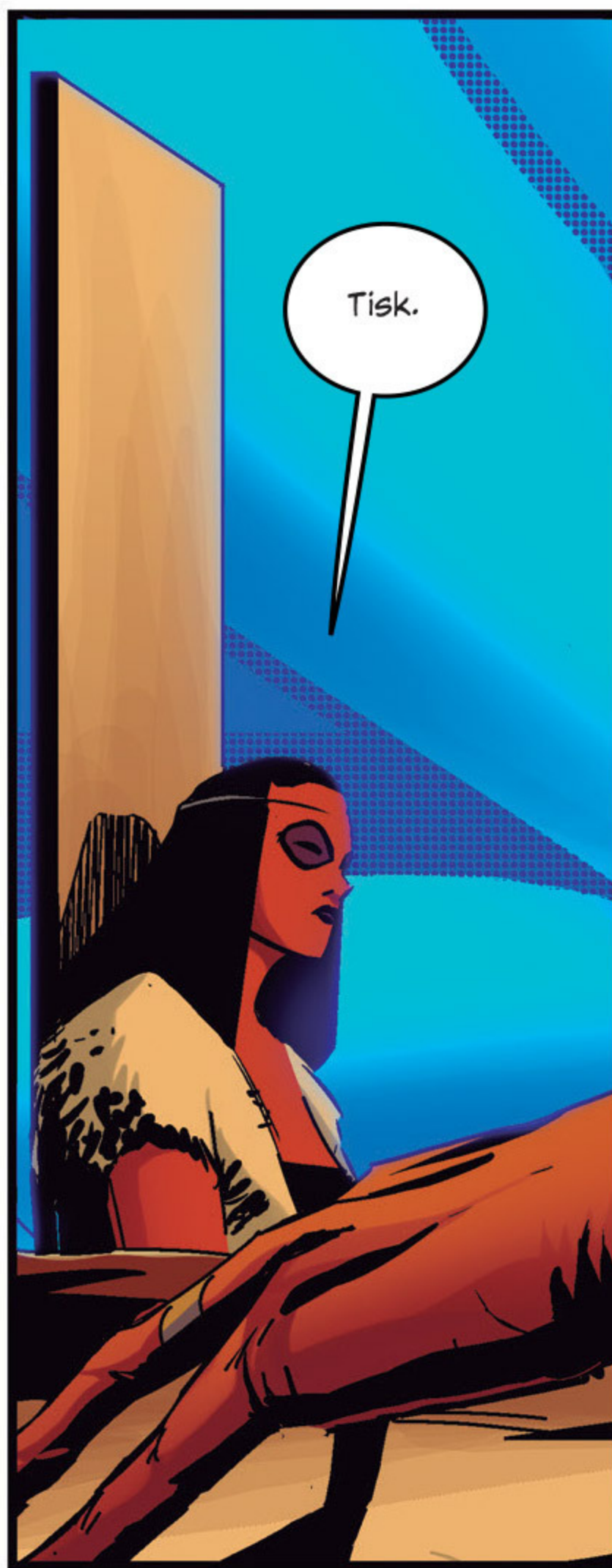
Speak for yourself, brother.

All I see is an **agent** turning an **asset**. If the PRA are our allies, how can this be a bad thing?

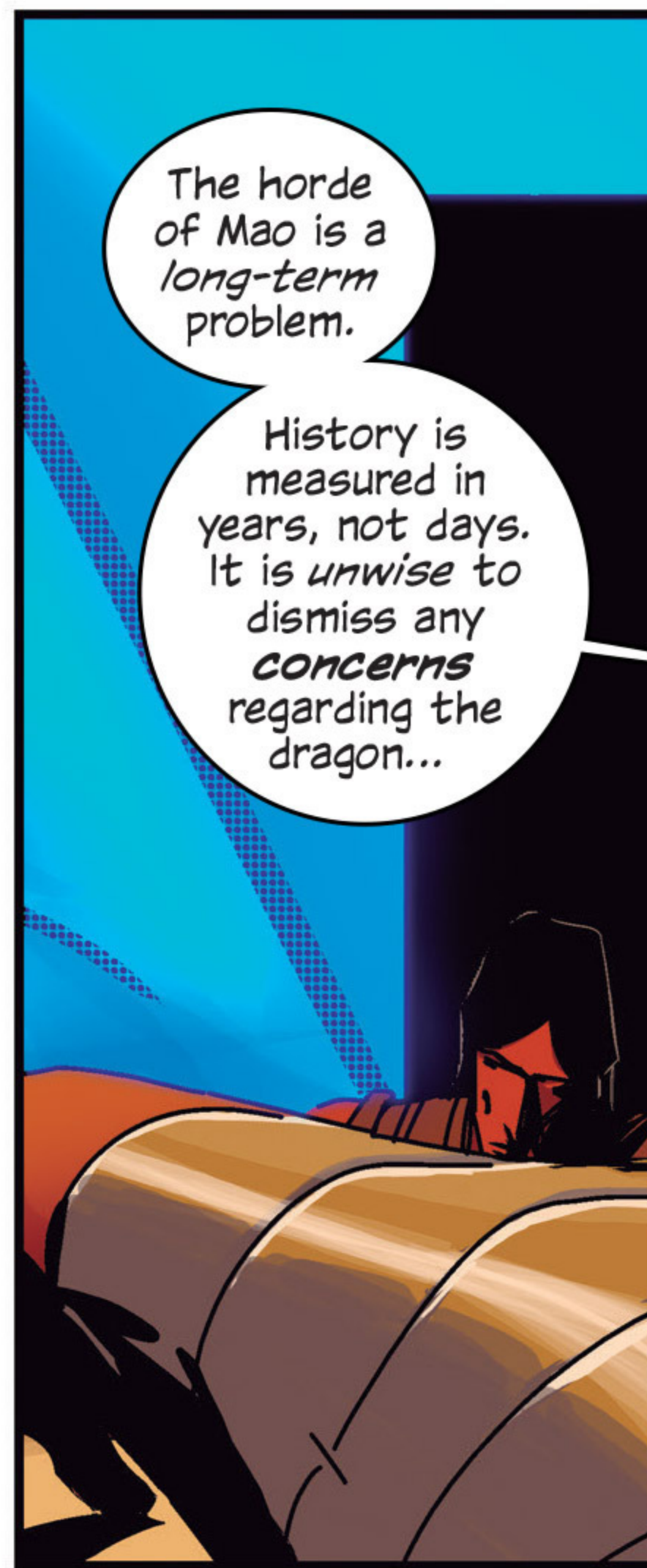


Bodaway finds affection **suspicious**, Niteesh...

Haven't you heard? The sun also rises in the east.



Tisk.



The horde of Mao is a long-term problem.

History is measured in years, not days. It is **unwise** to dismiss any **concerns** regarding the dragon...



What *profits* them today could be to our detriment decades from now.

Bodaway's apprehension is **my own**.

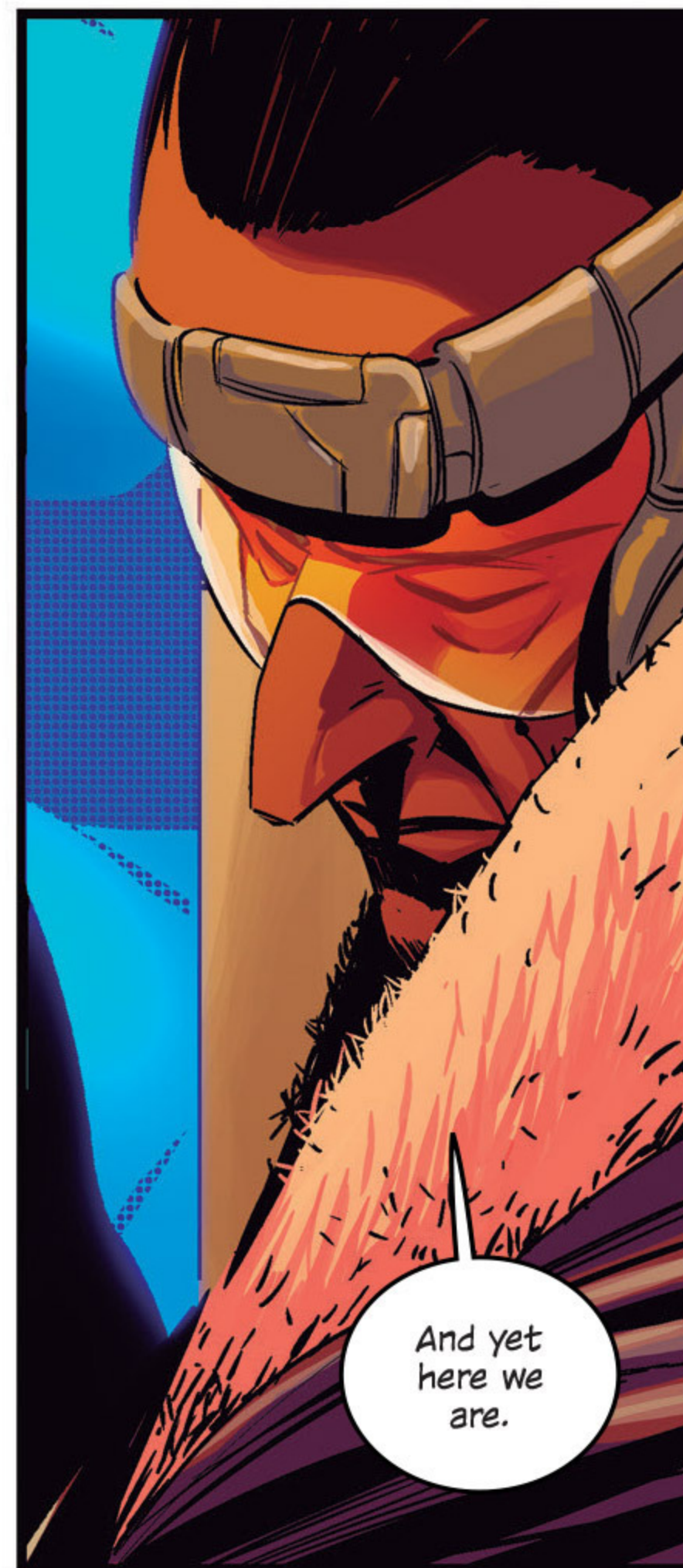


All of this feels like a mistake.



Agreed!

The data remains cloudy.



And yet here we are.

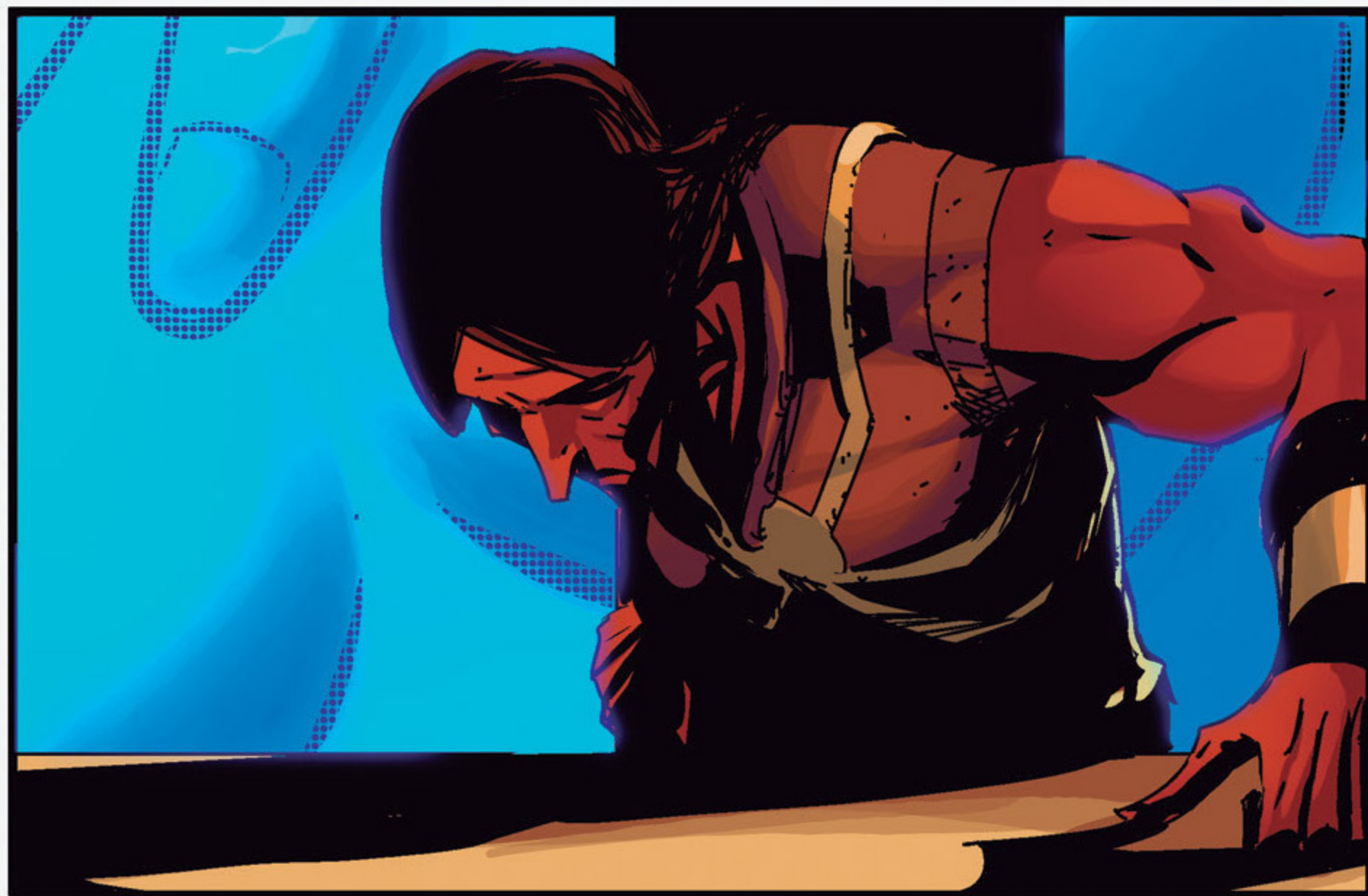
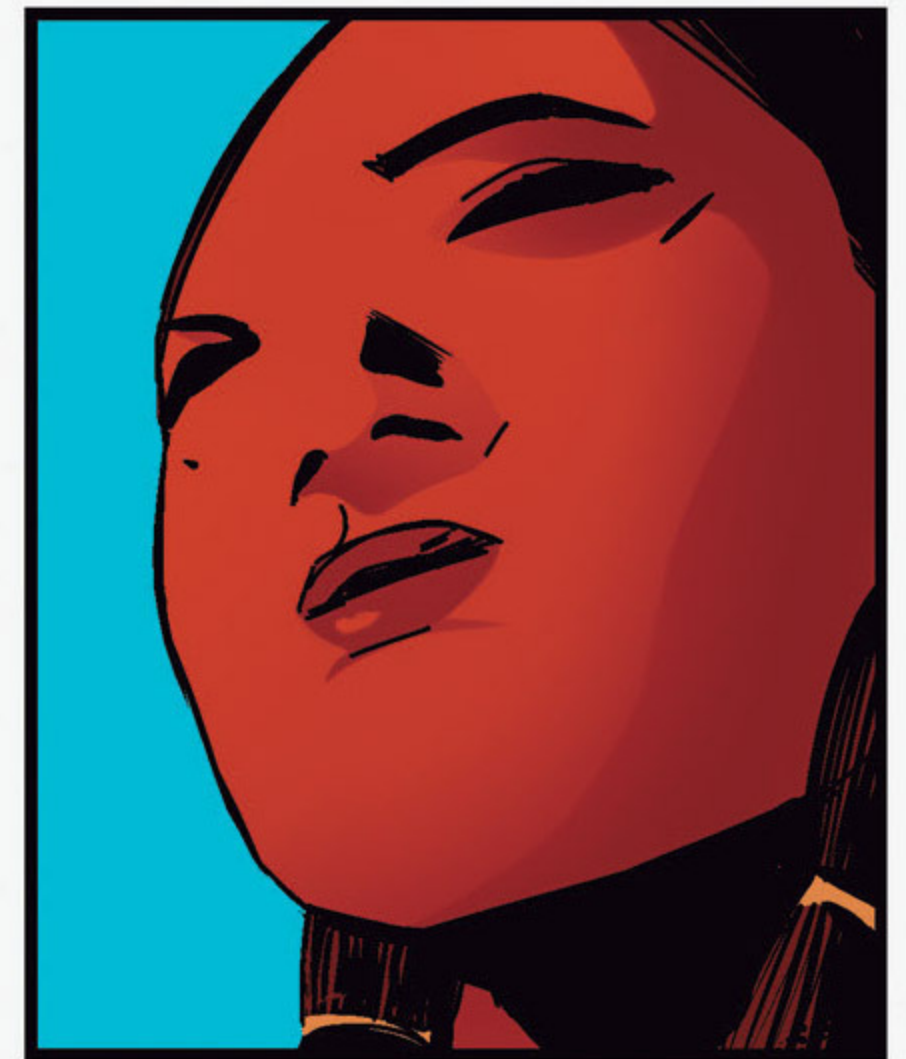
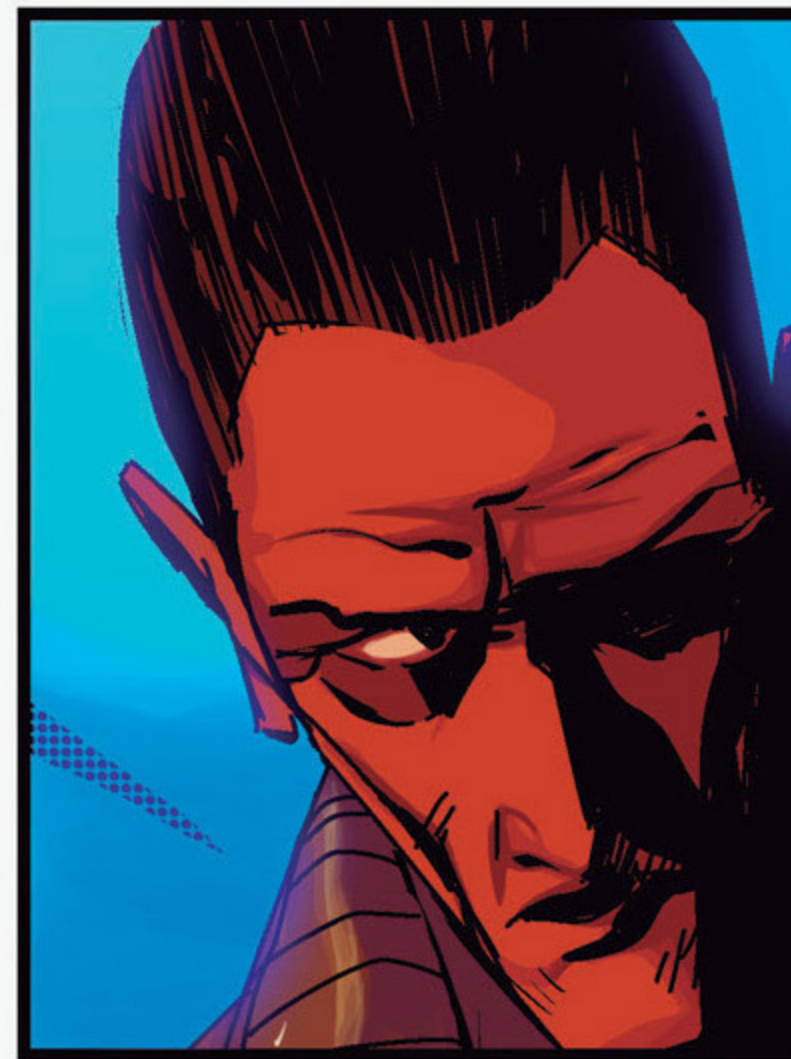


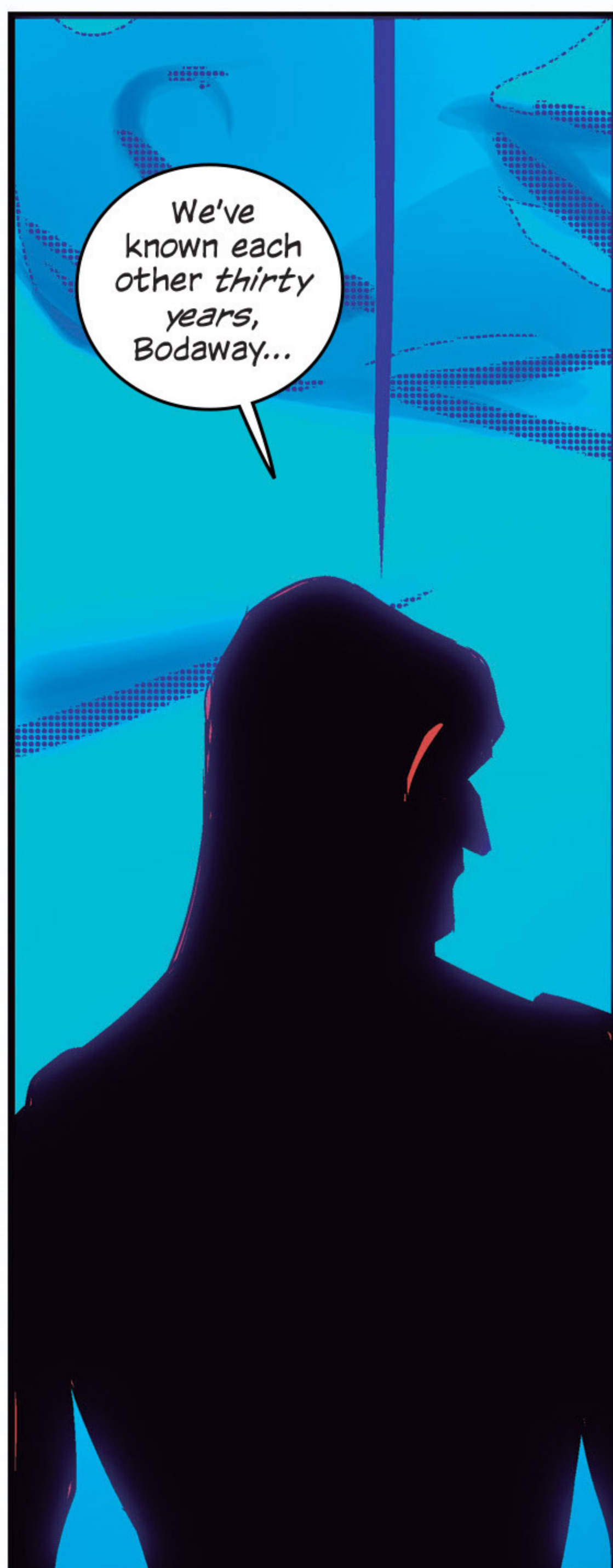
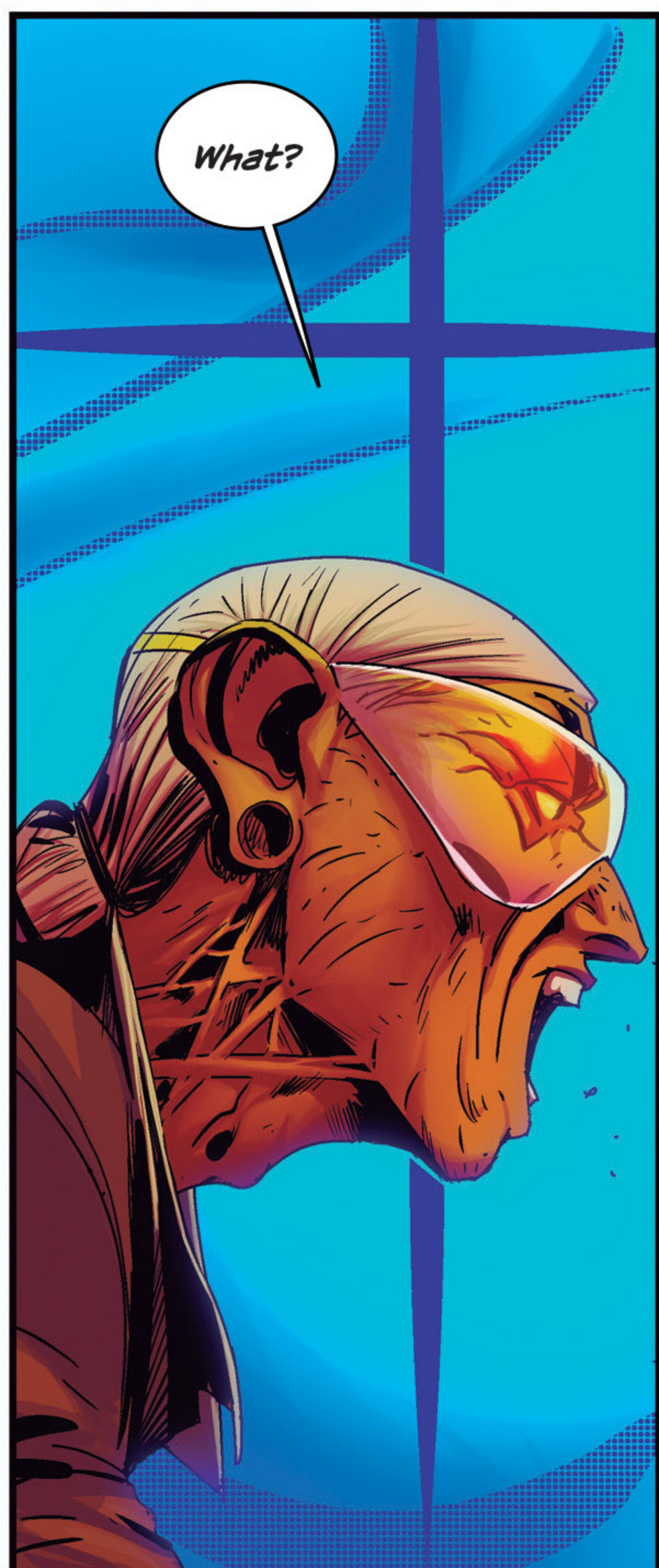
Yes. Here we are.

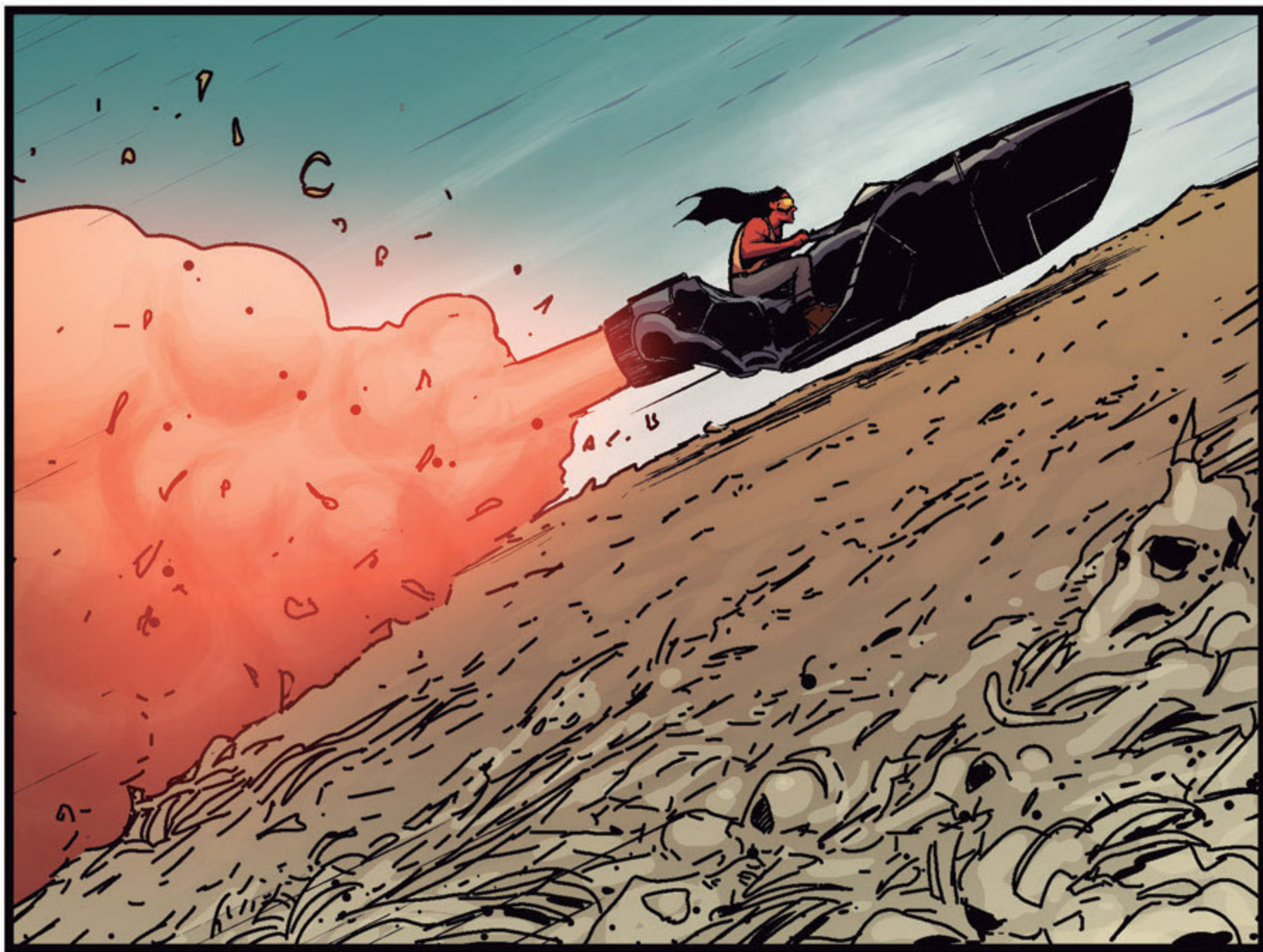
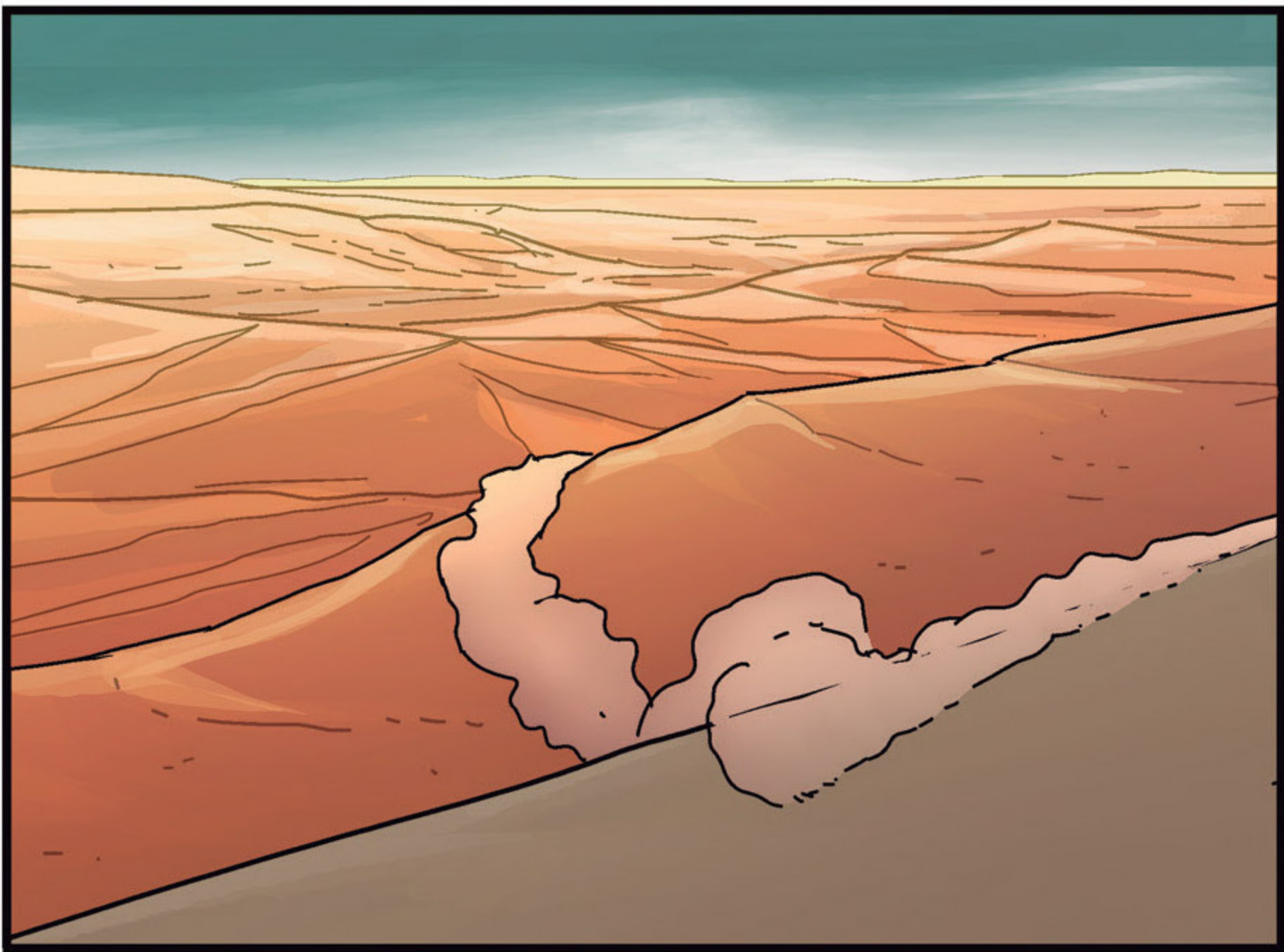
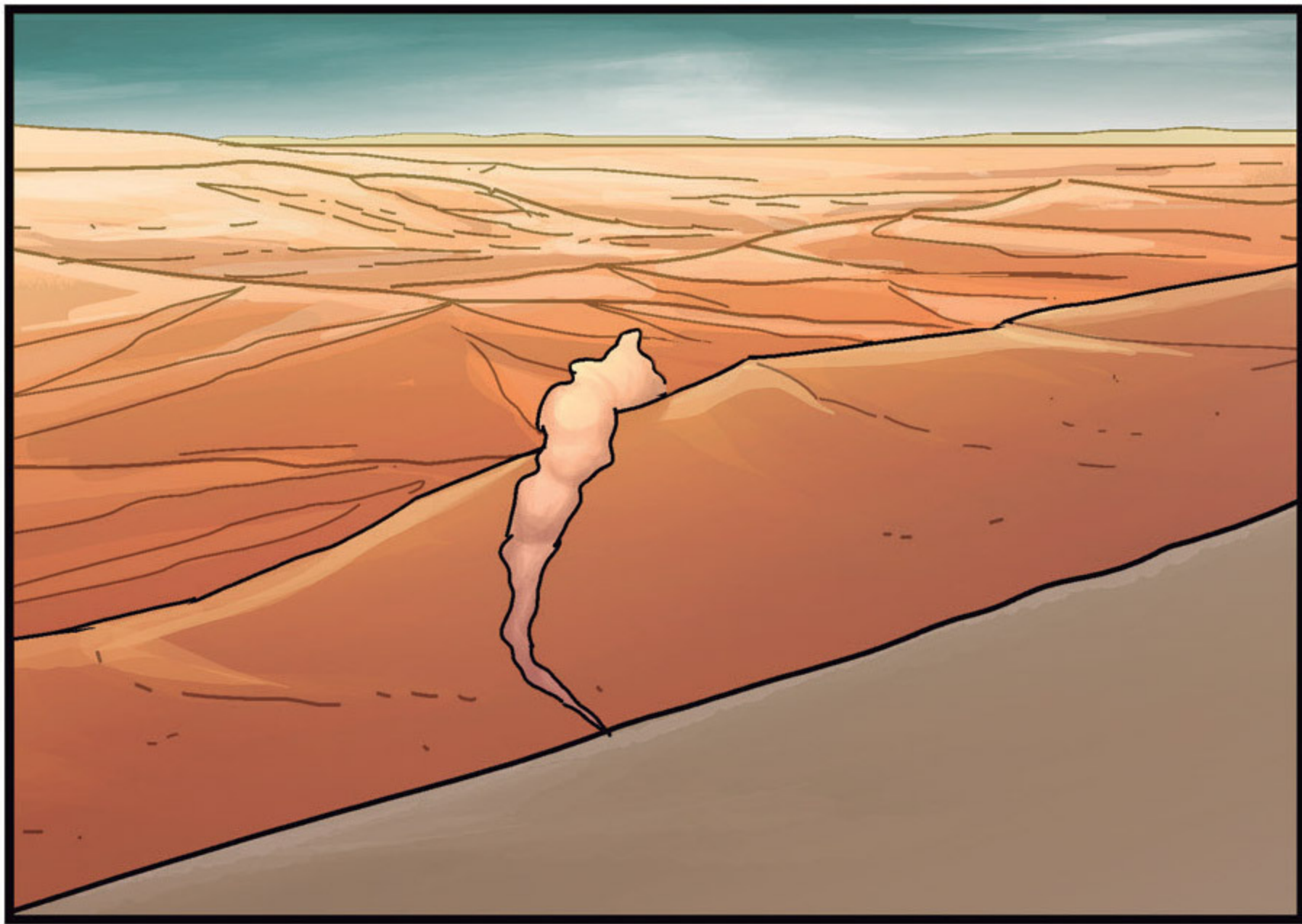
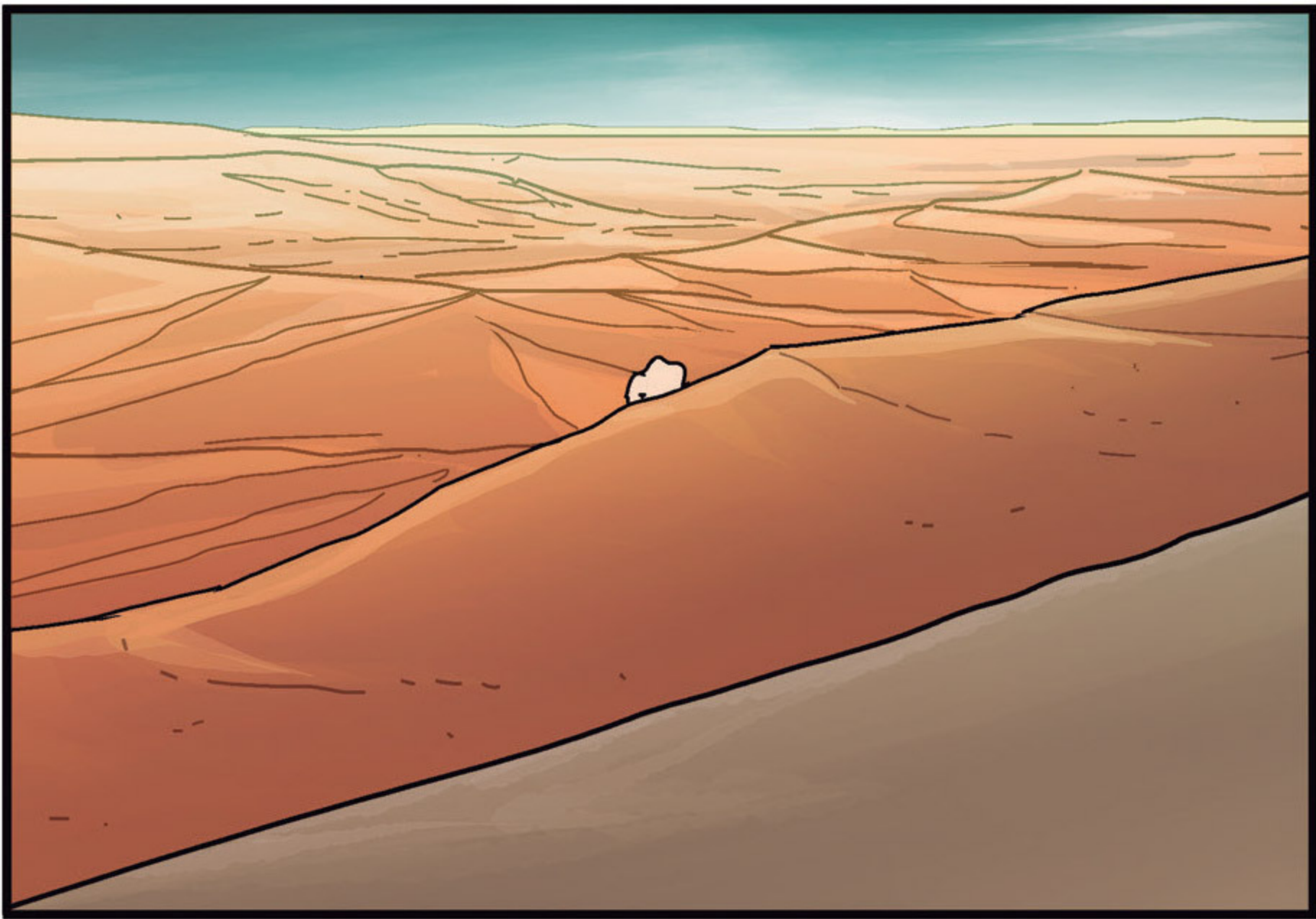
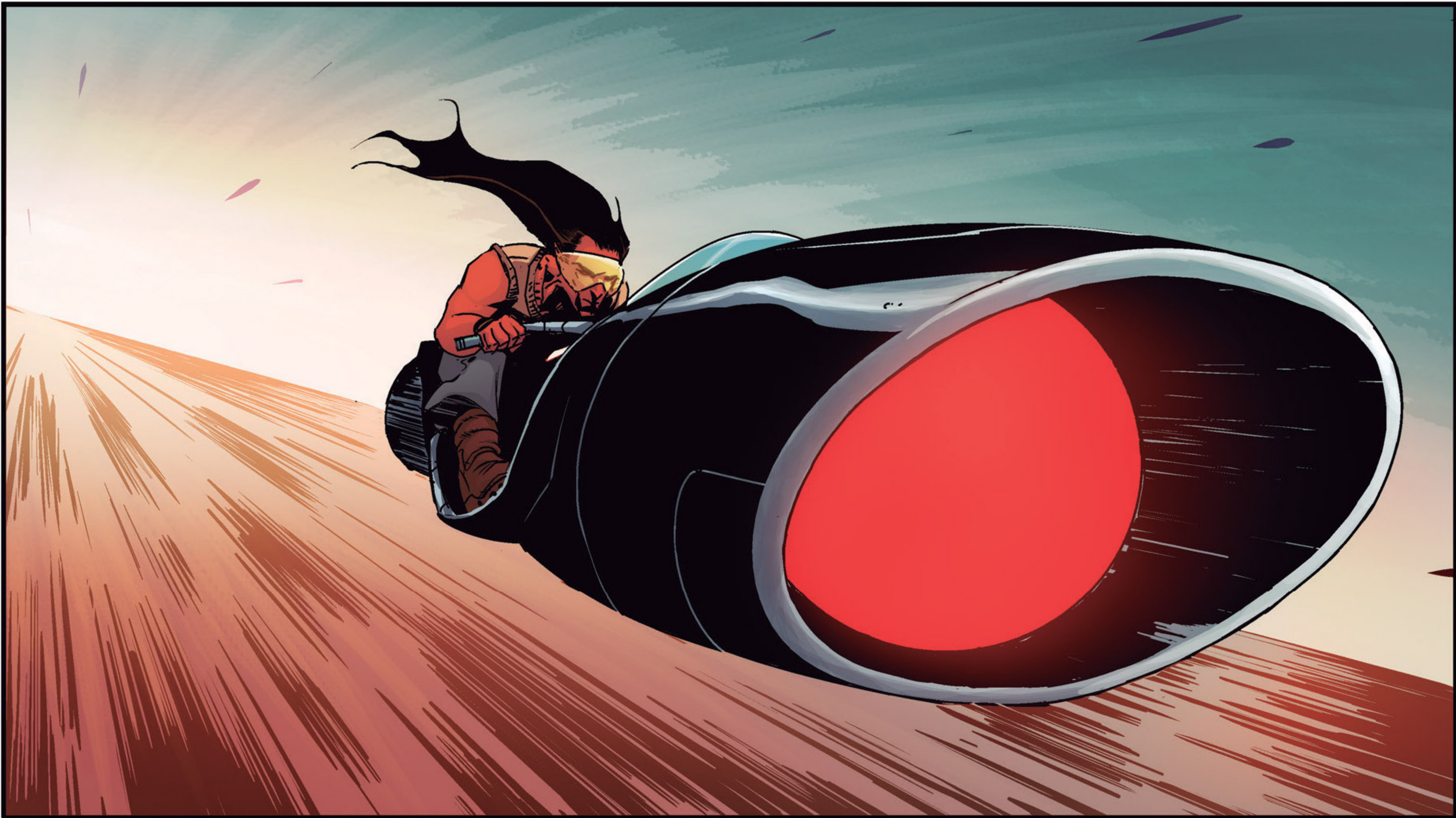
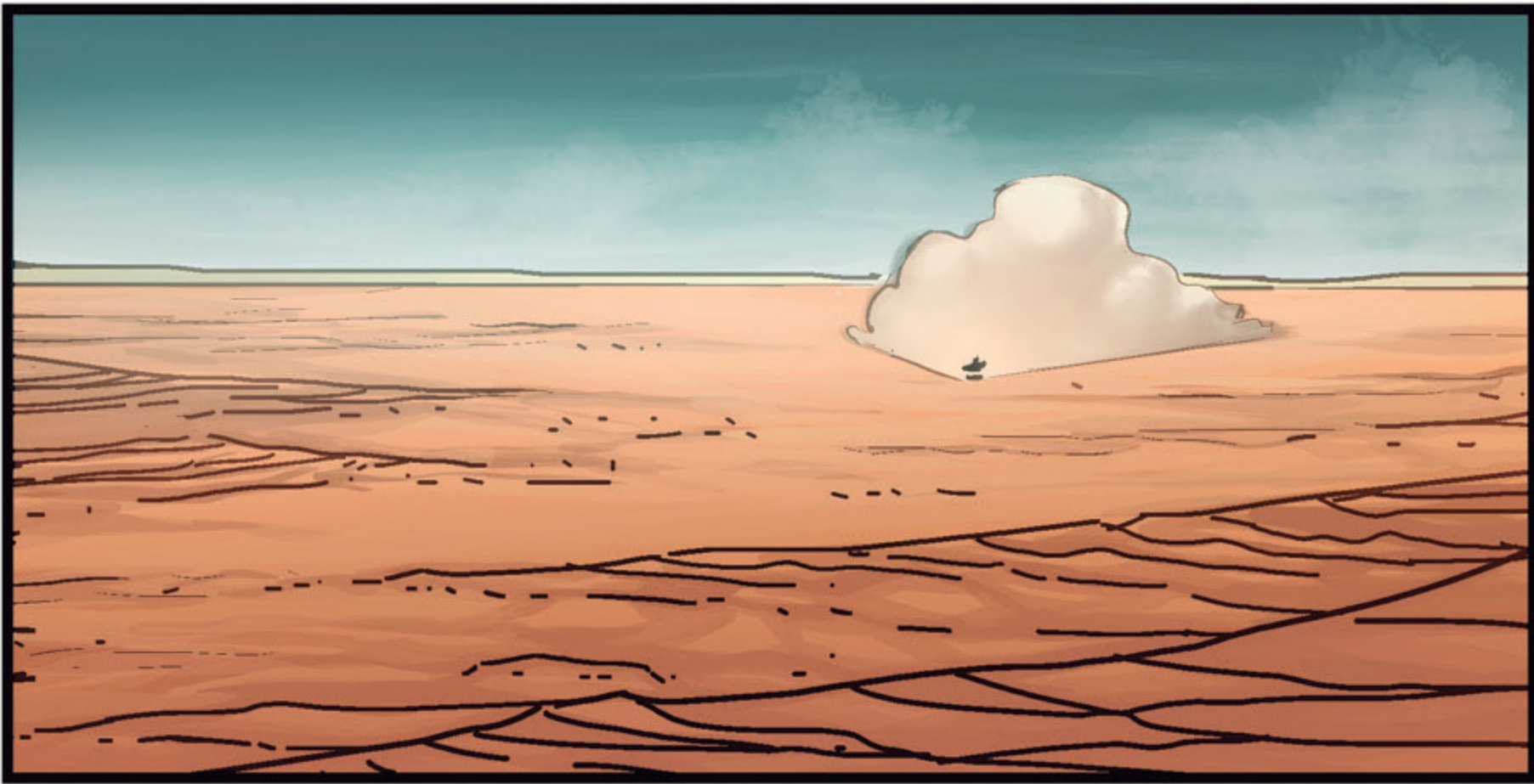
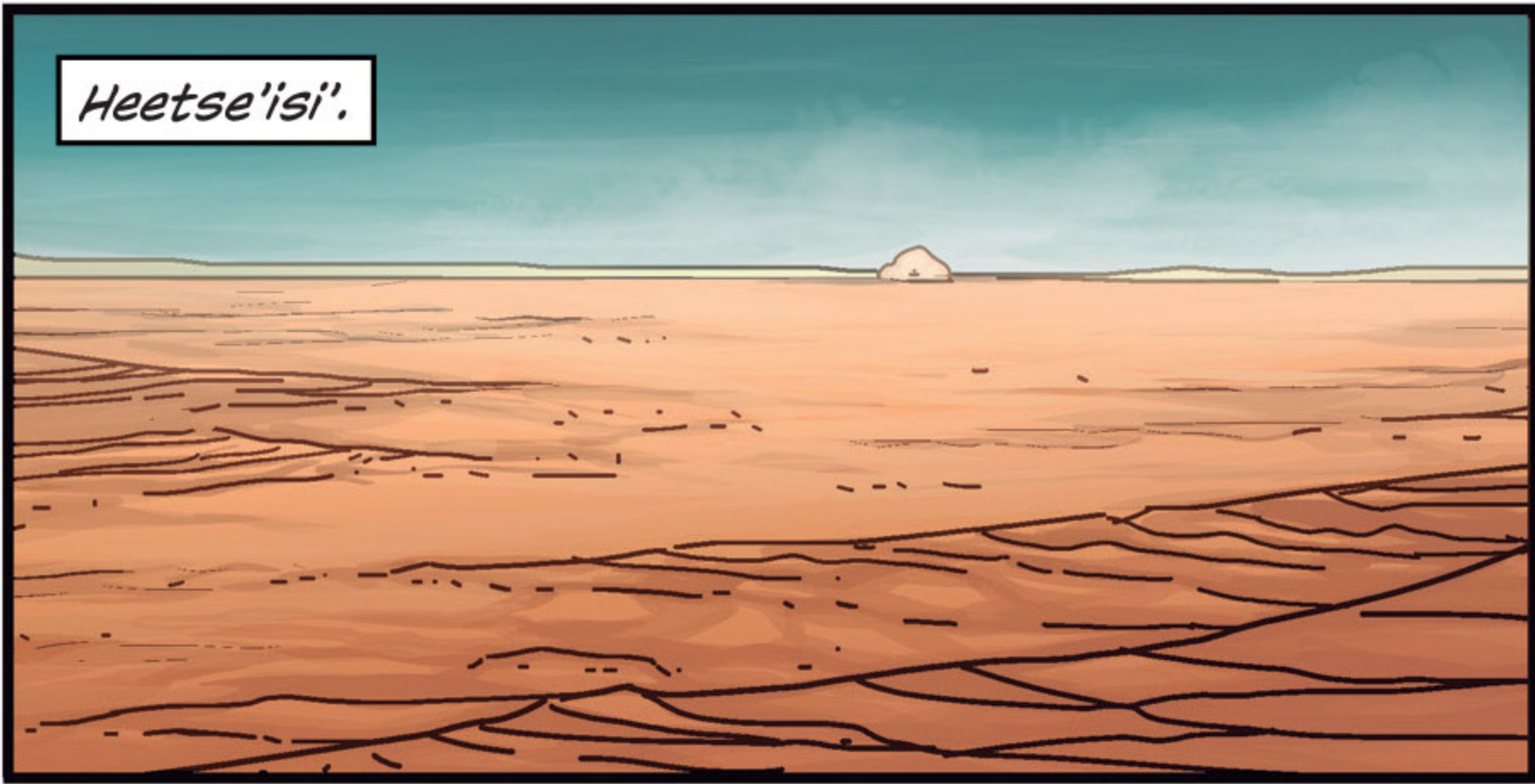
Exactly where we agreed to be months ago. Exactly where our chief -- **the chief of chiefs** -- has led us.

Many brothers and sisters have died because we were too aggressive in the south. So we **all agreed** on our alliance with the House of Mao.

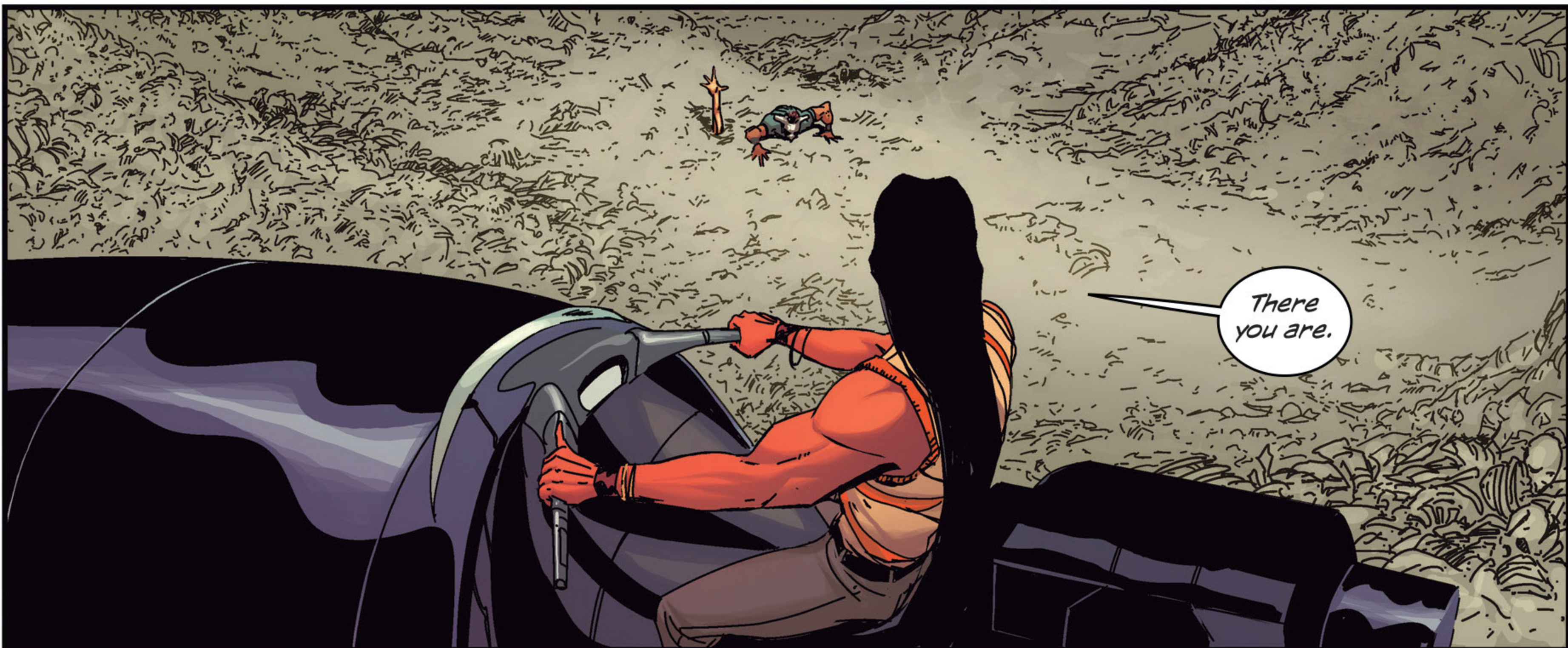
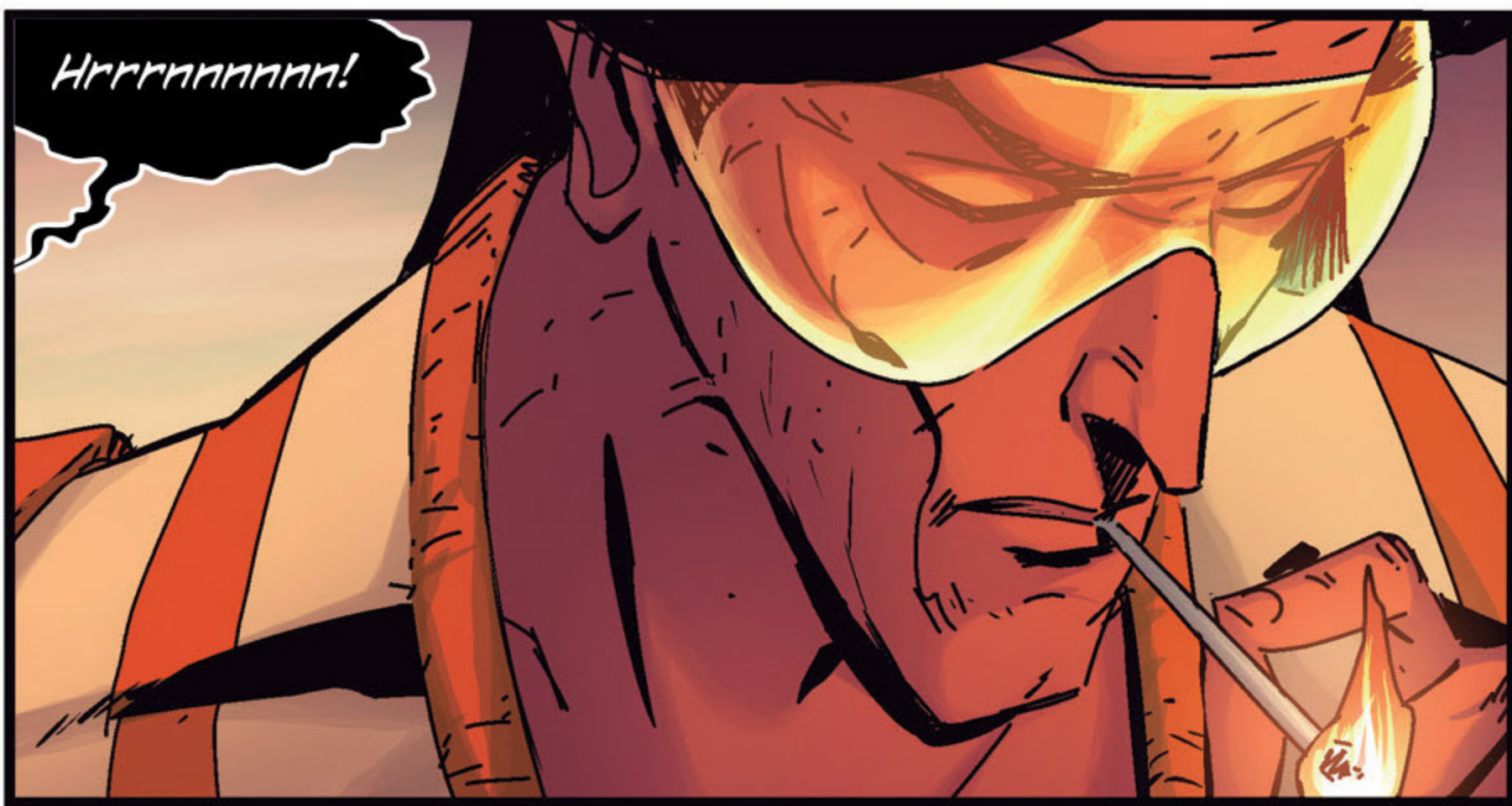
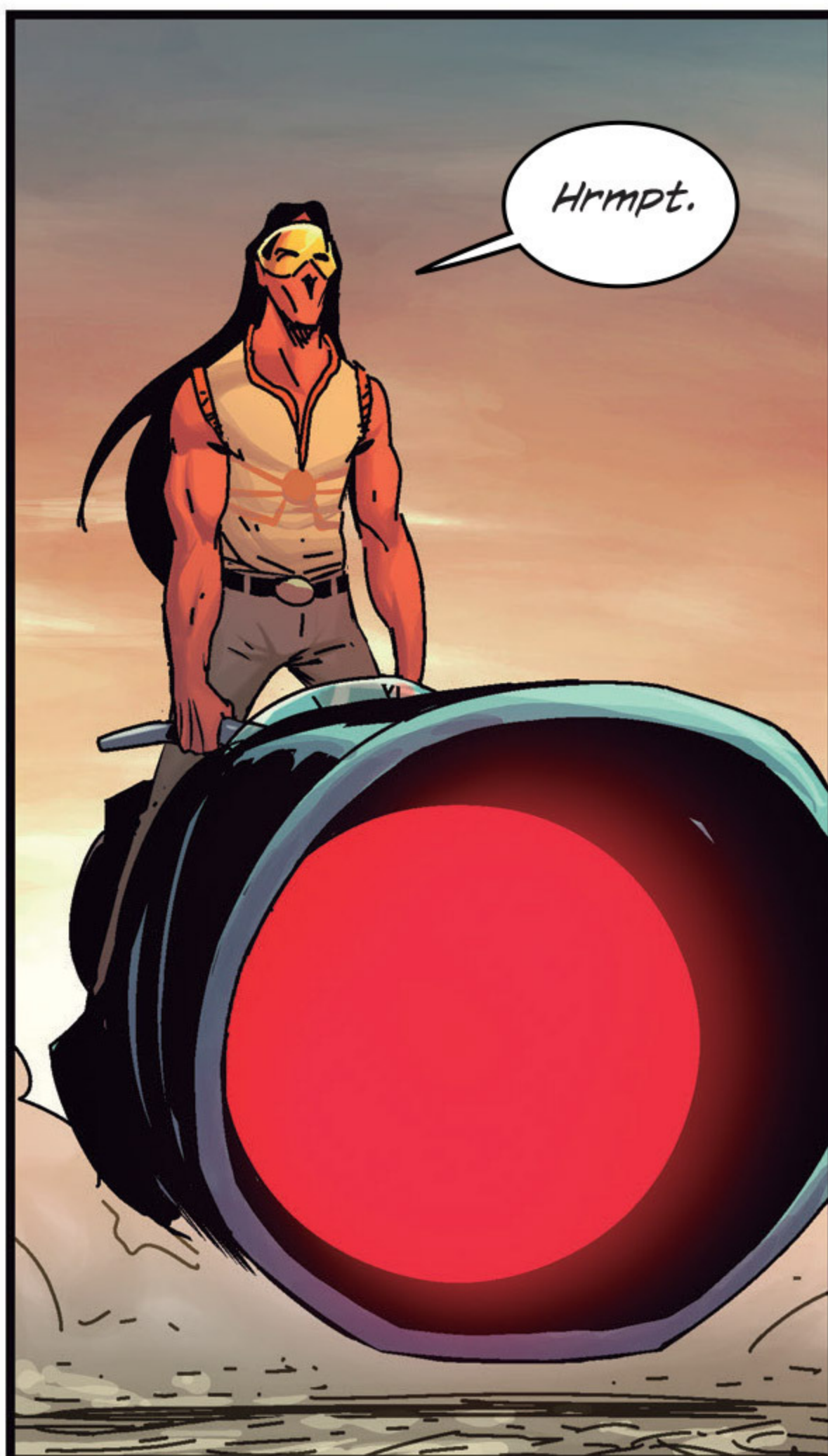
All of us. And we also agreed there would be no turning back. What has changed since then?

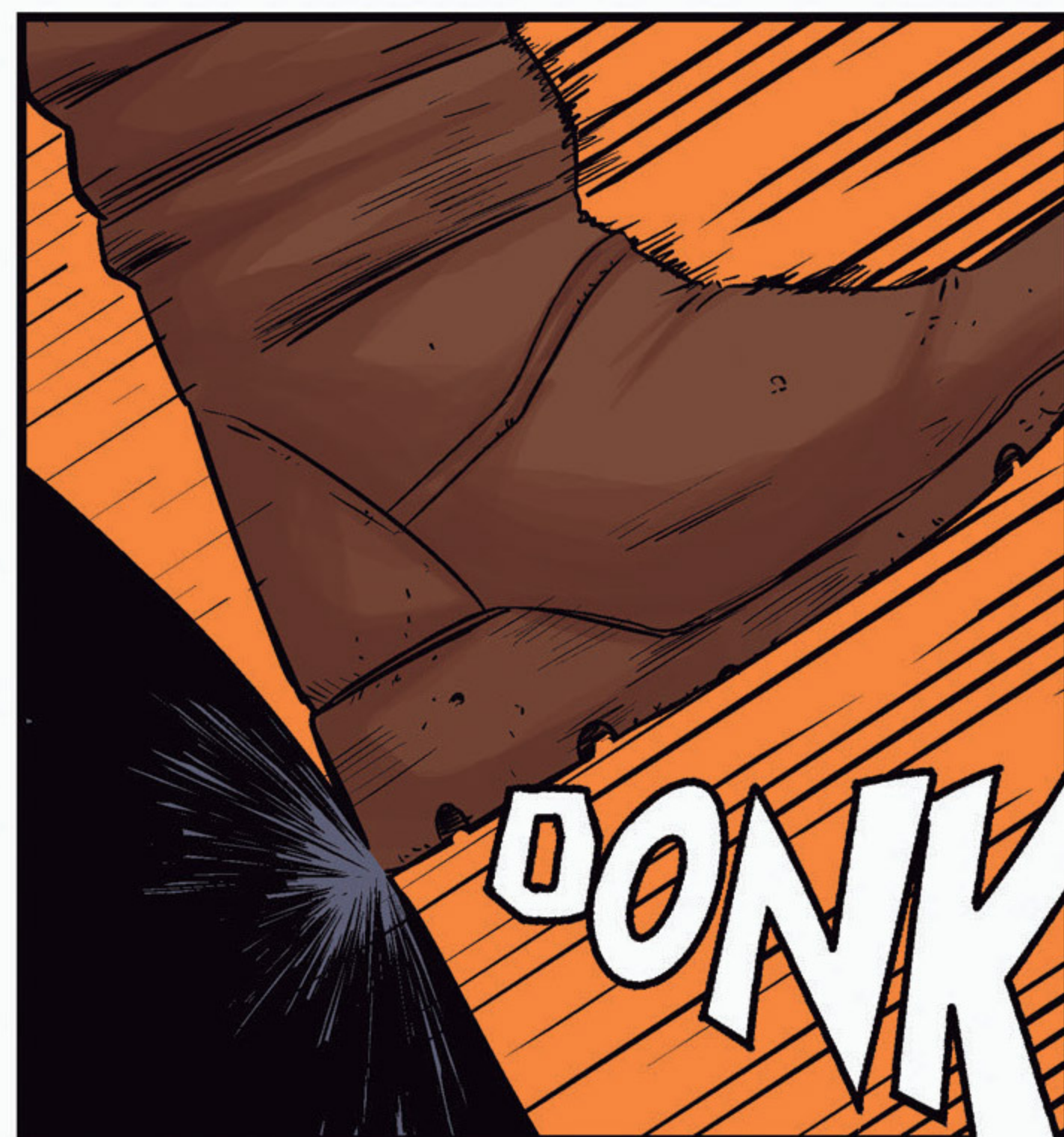
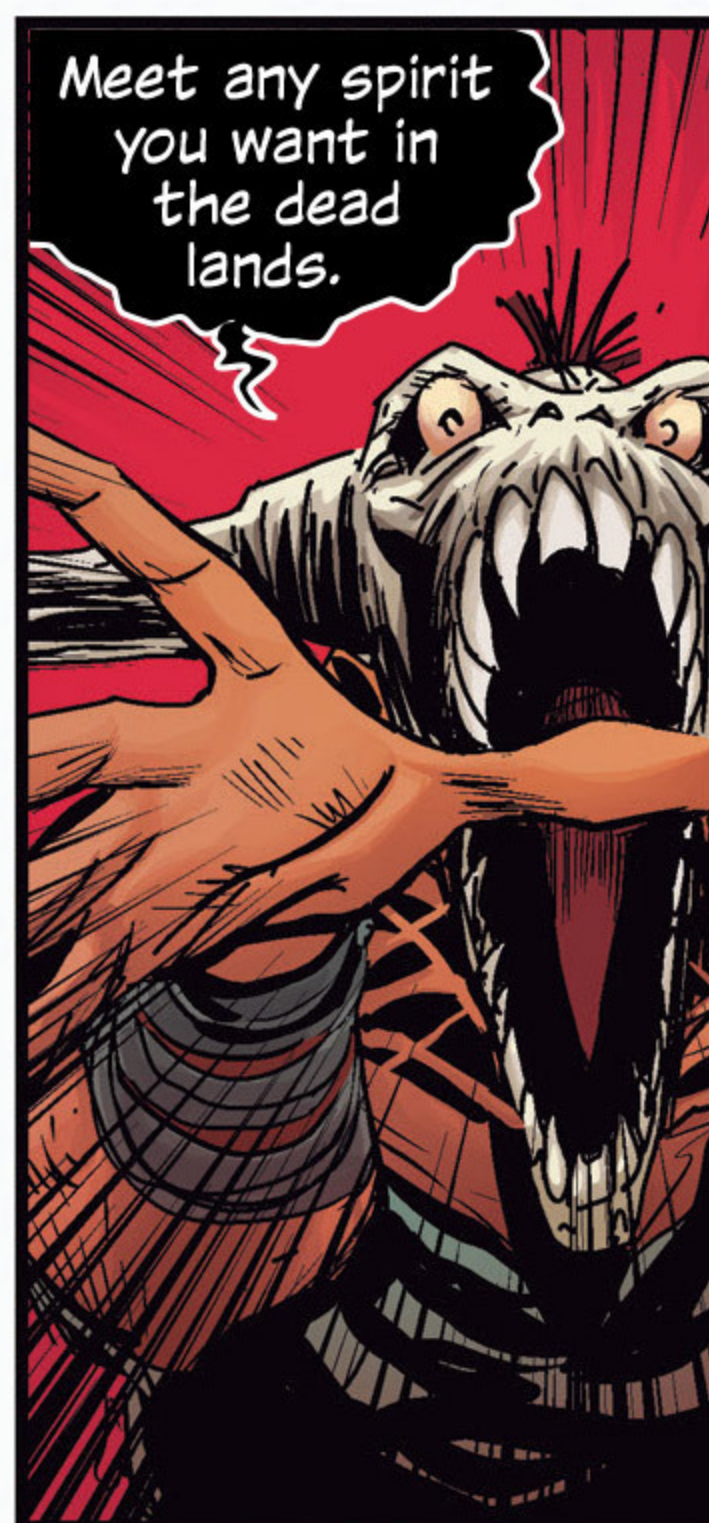
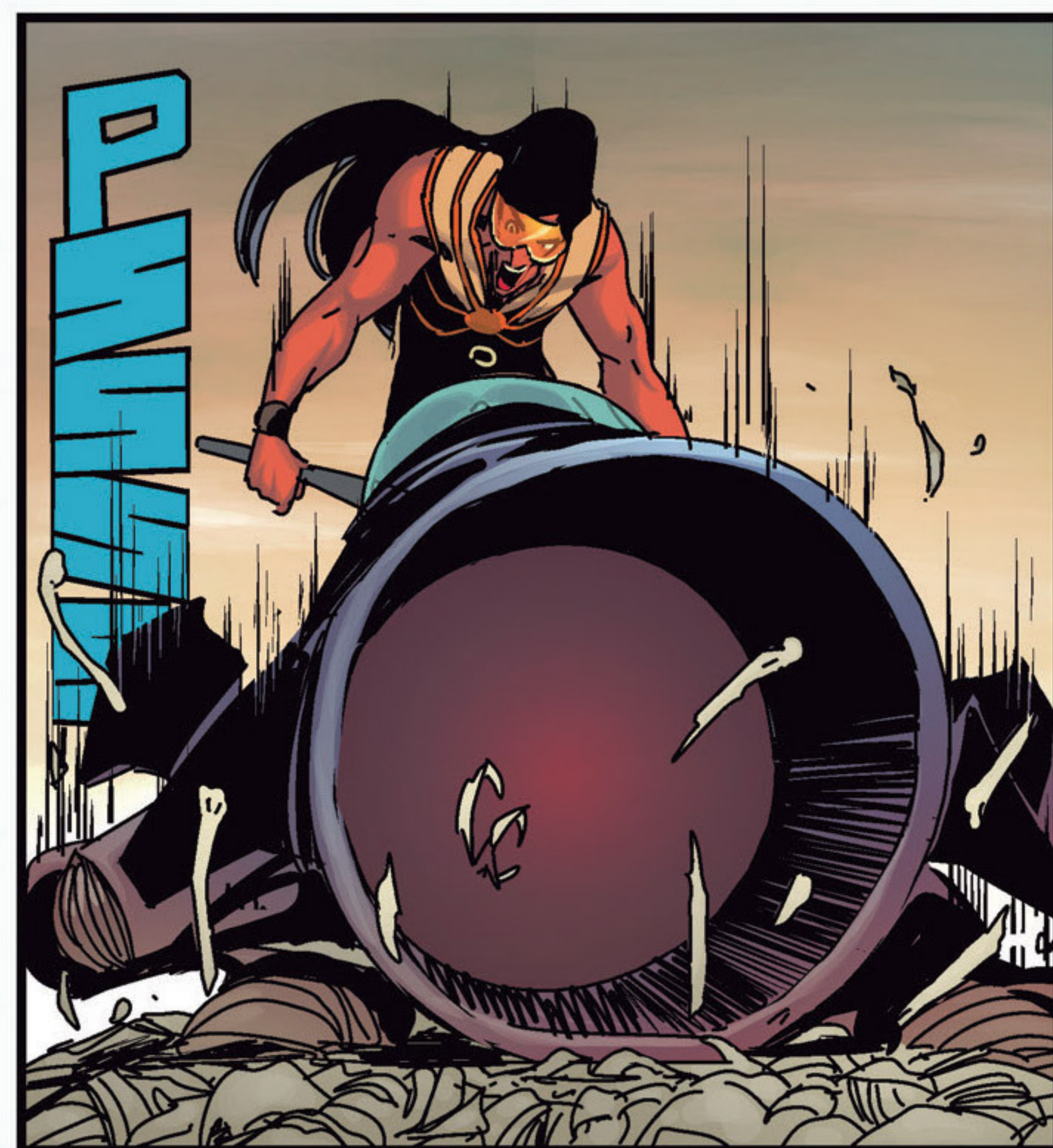
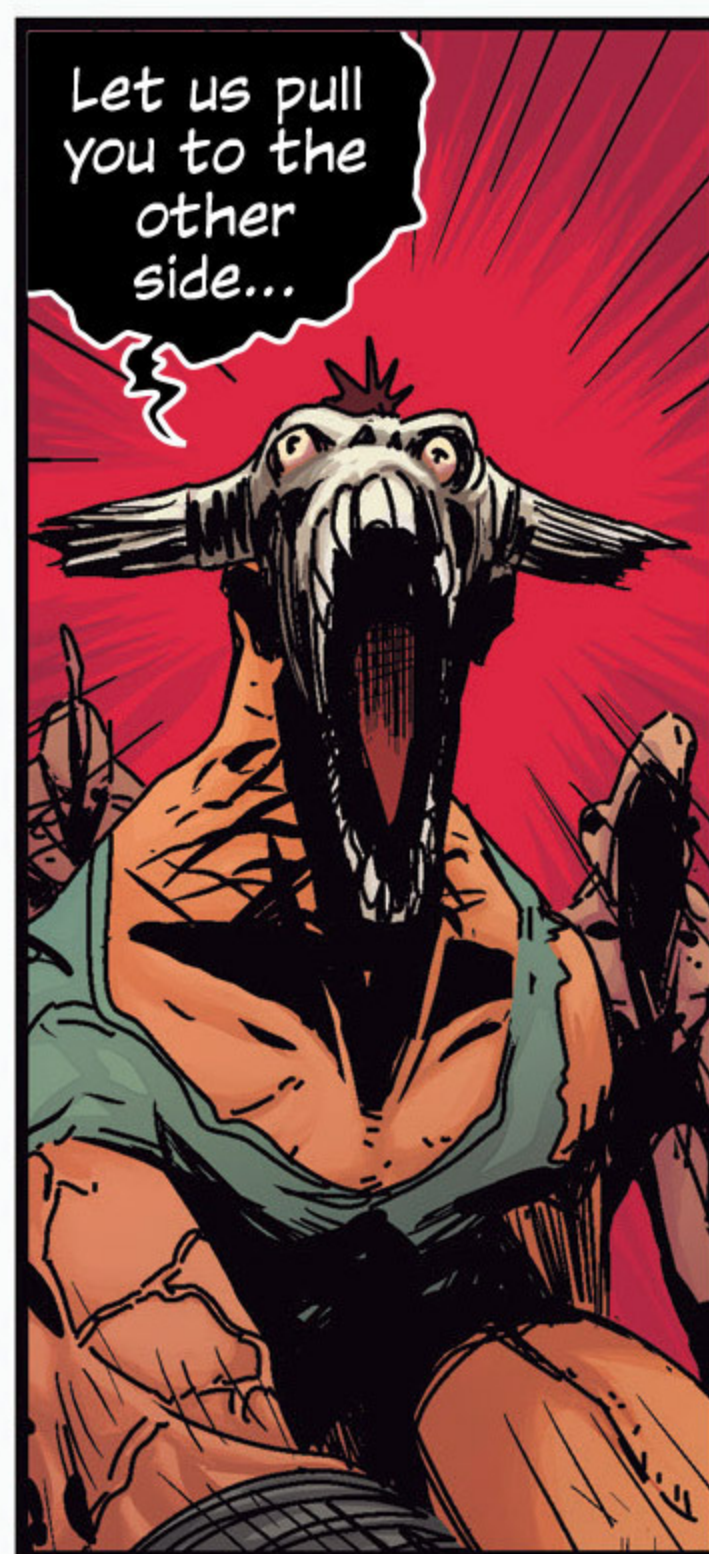
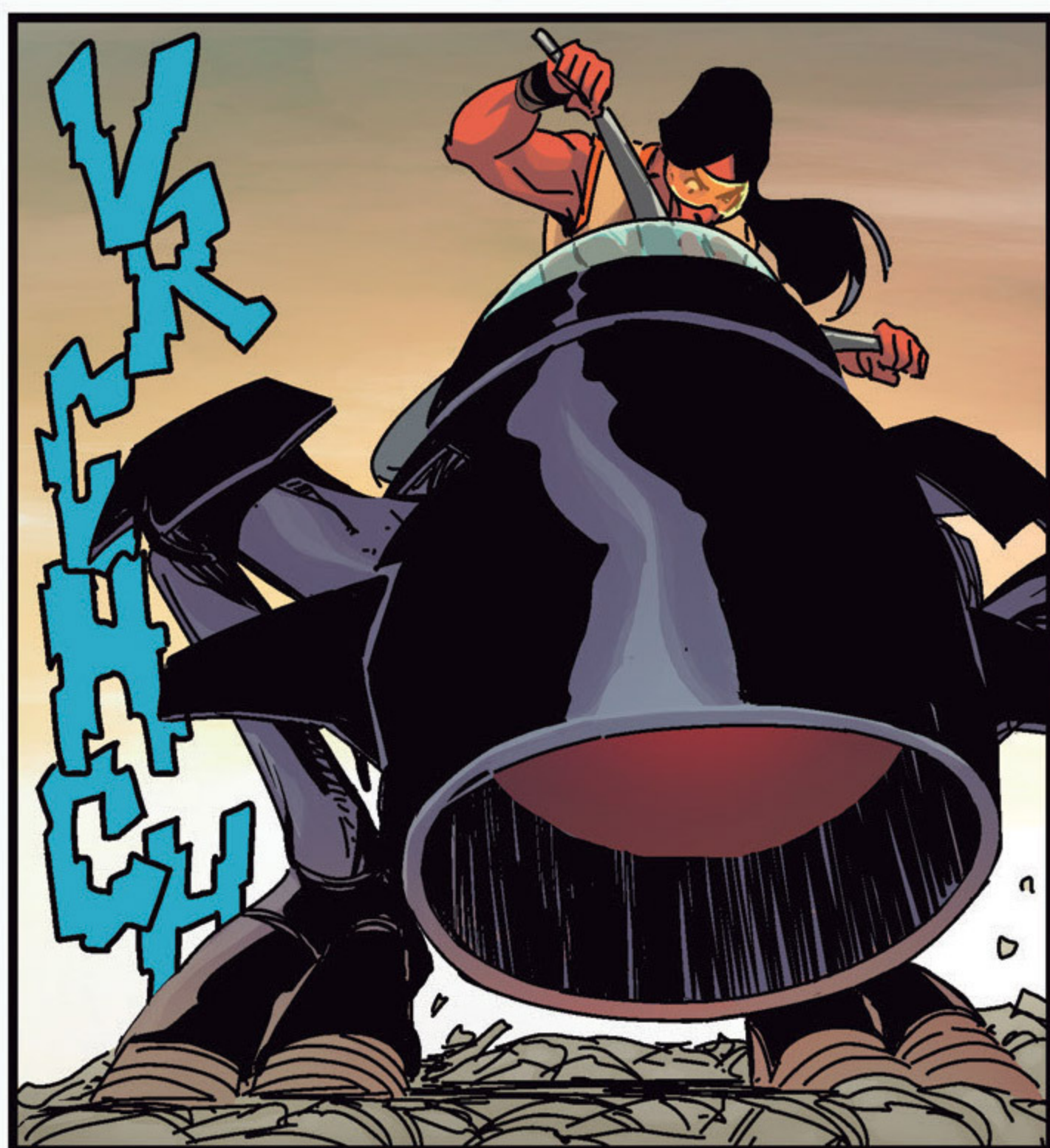
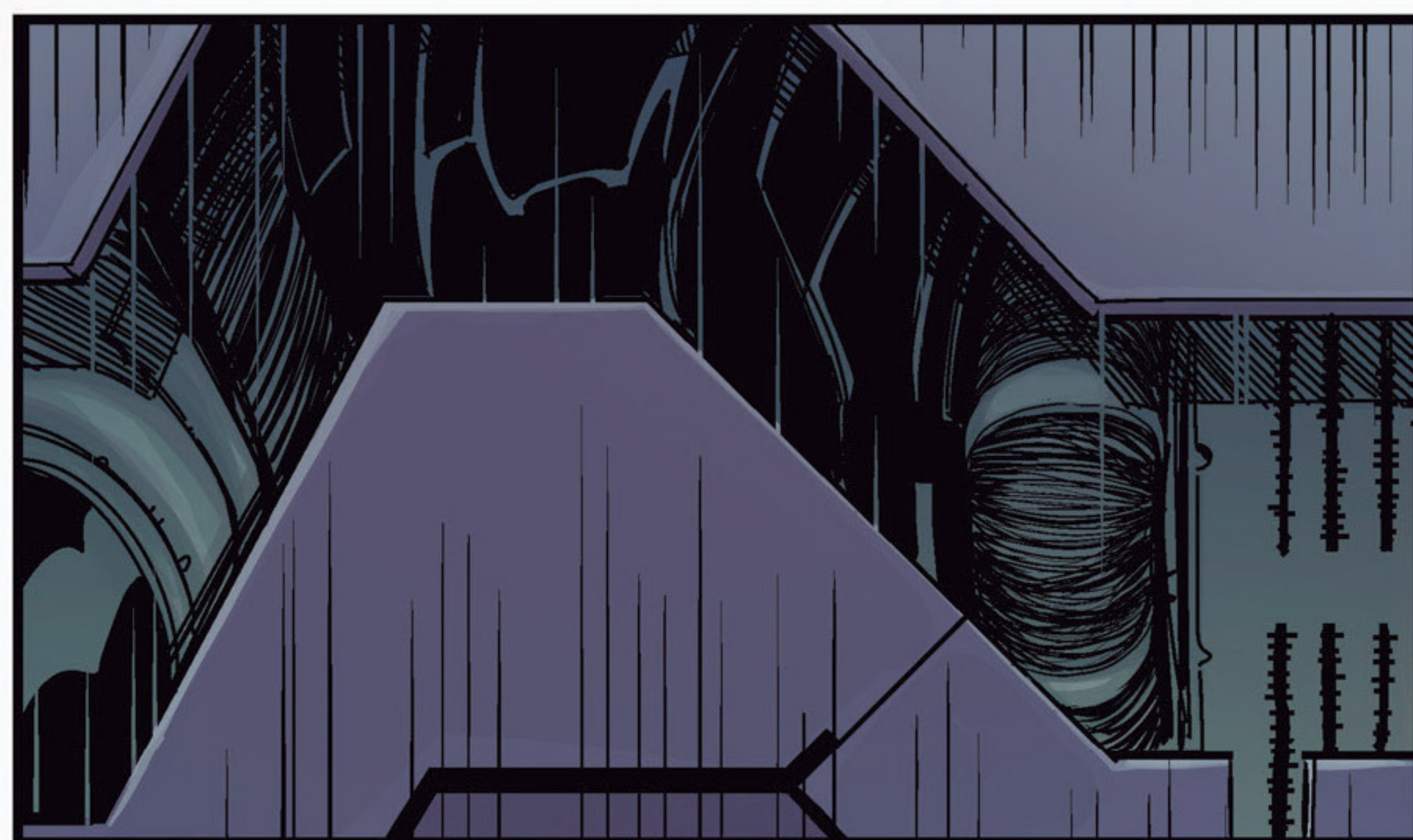
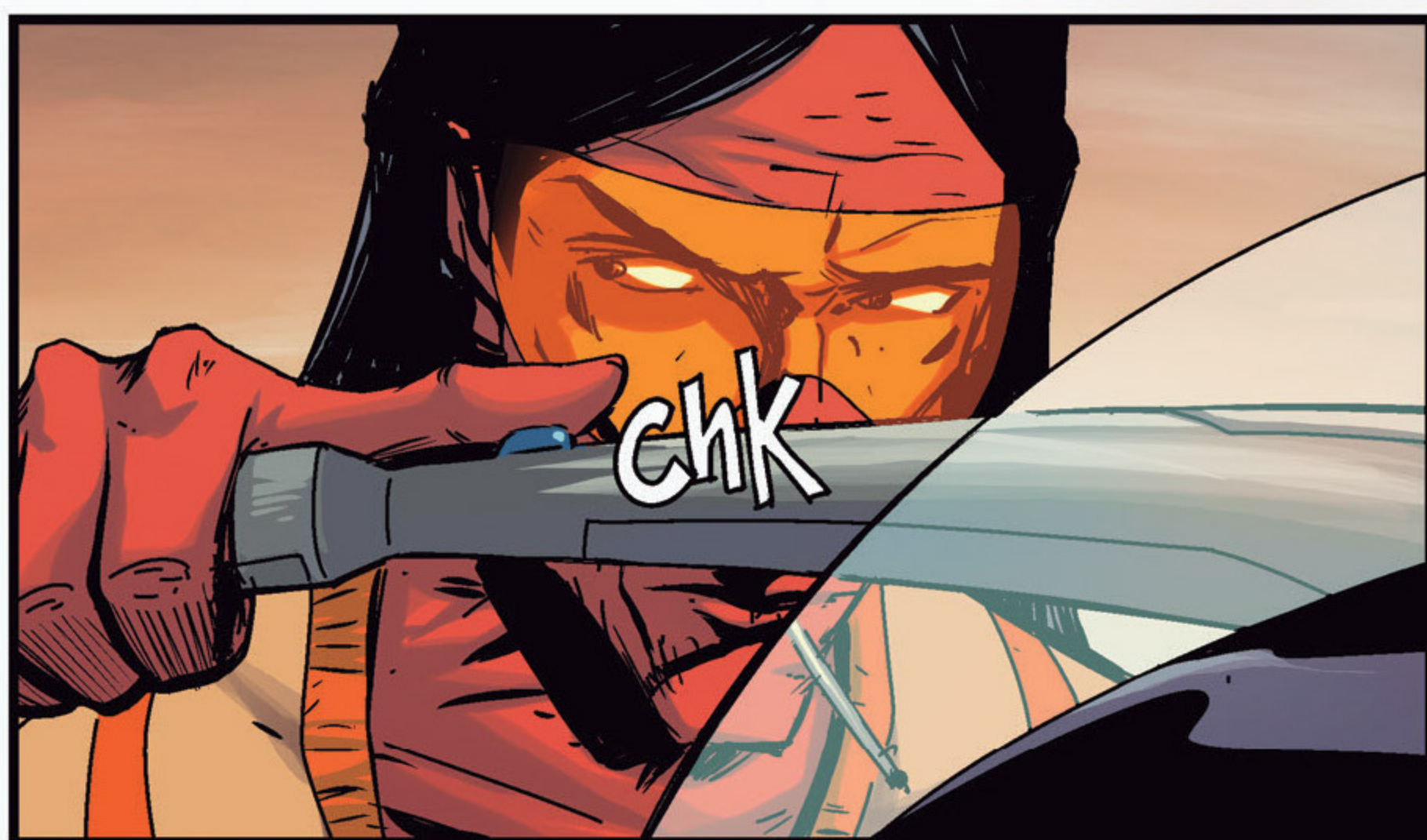
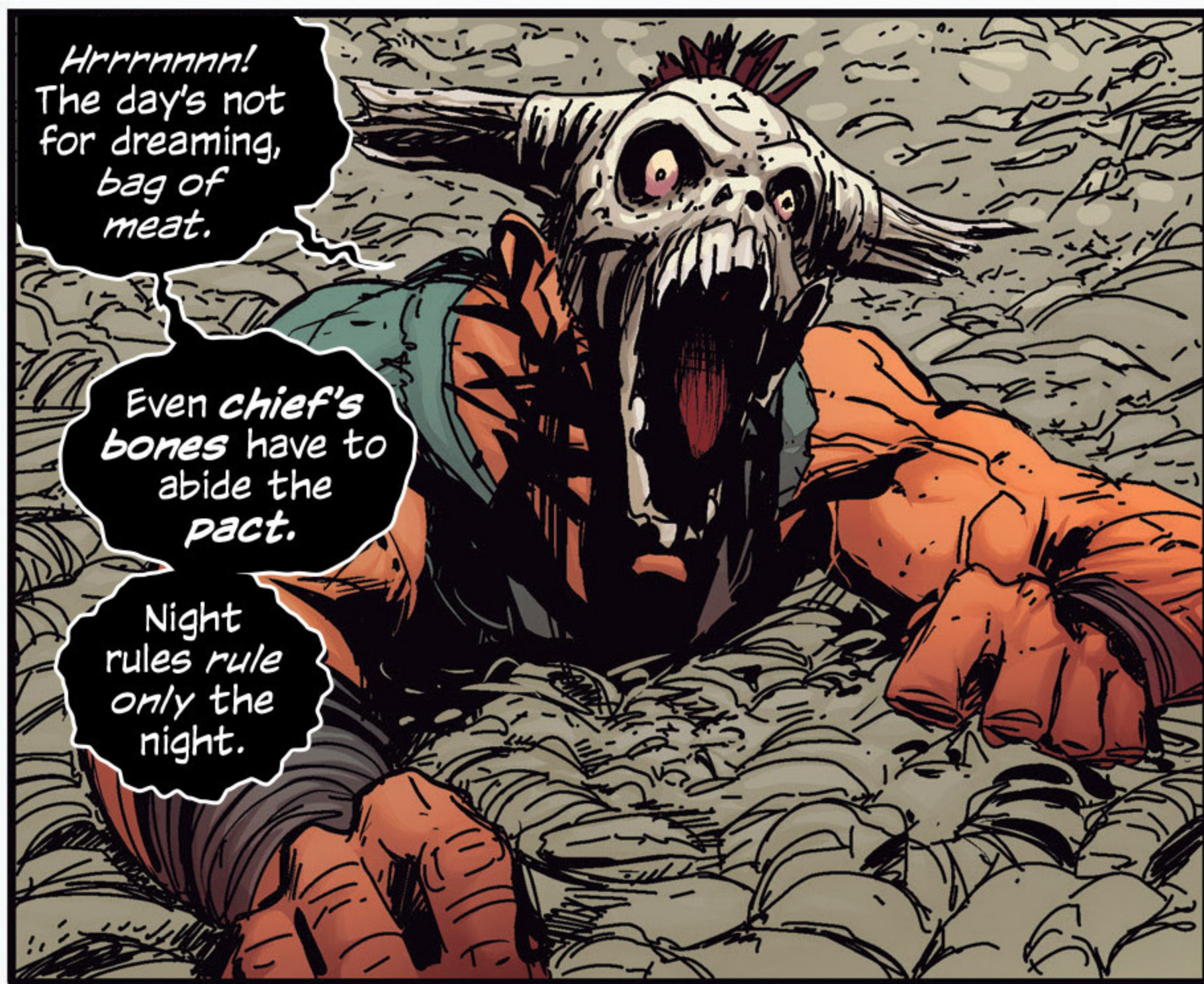






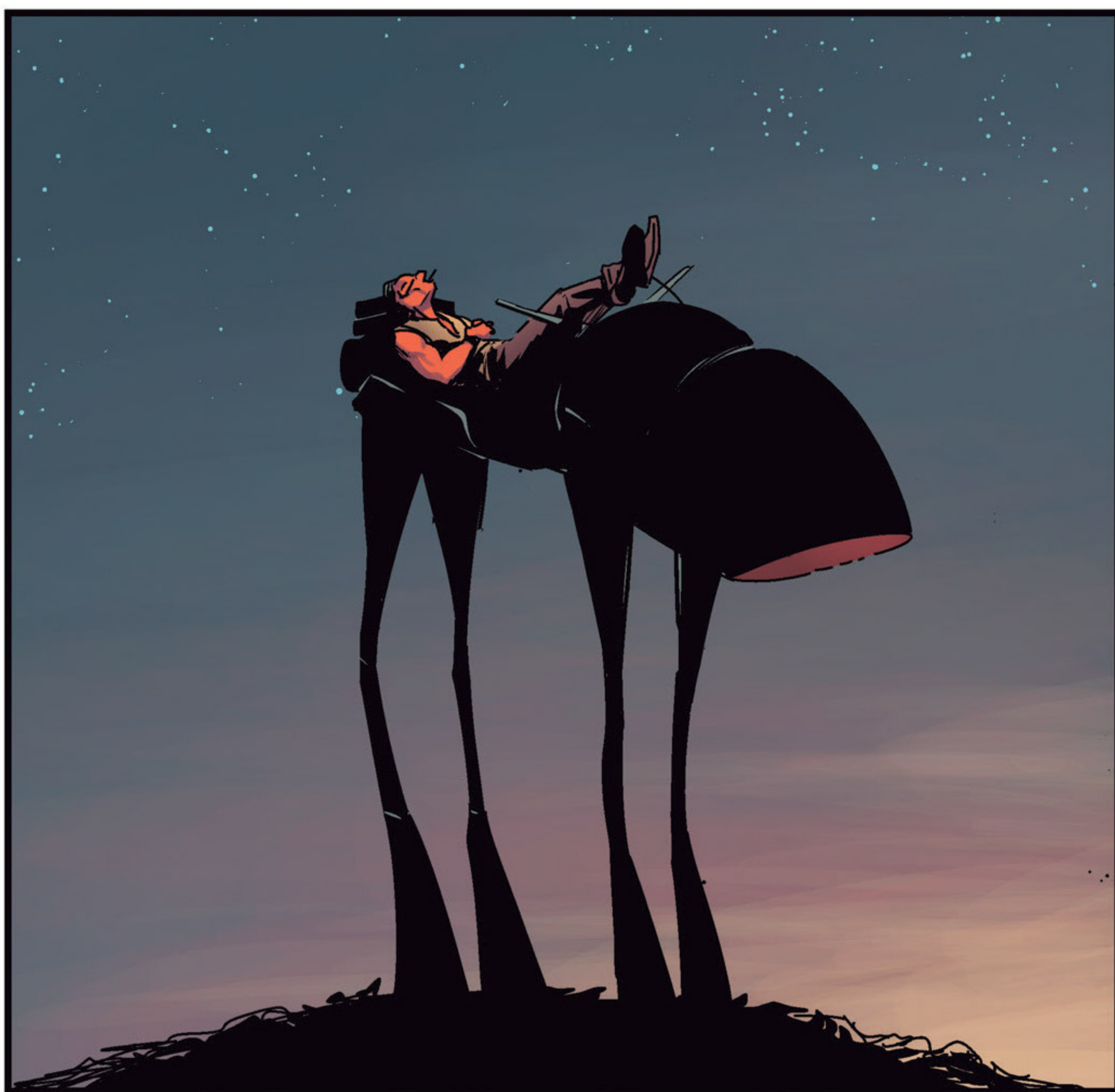
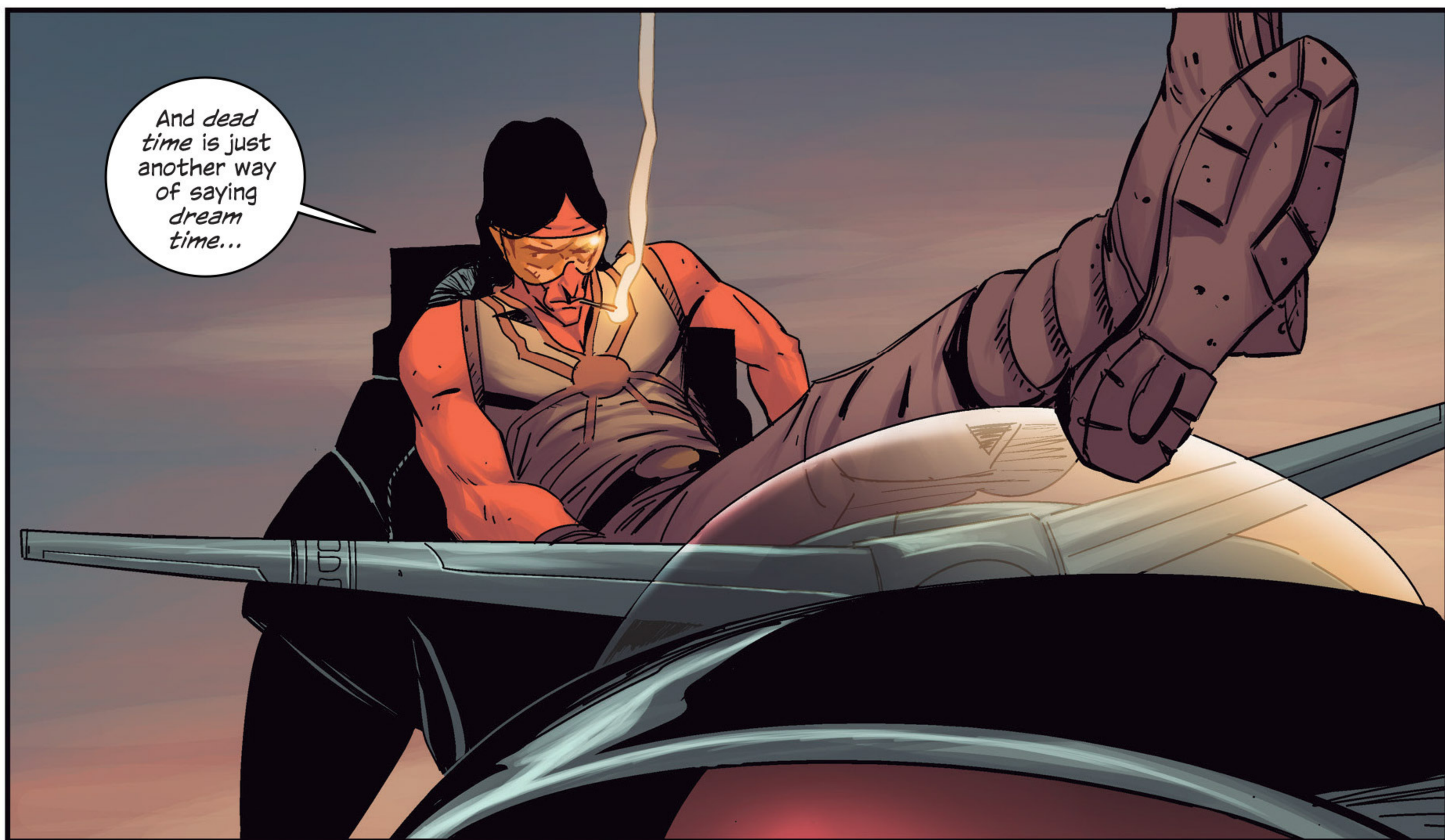
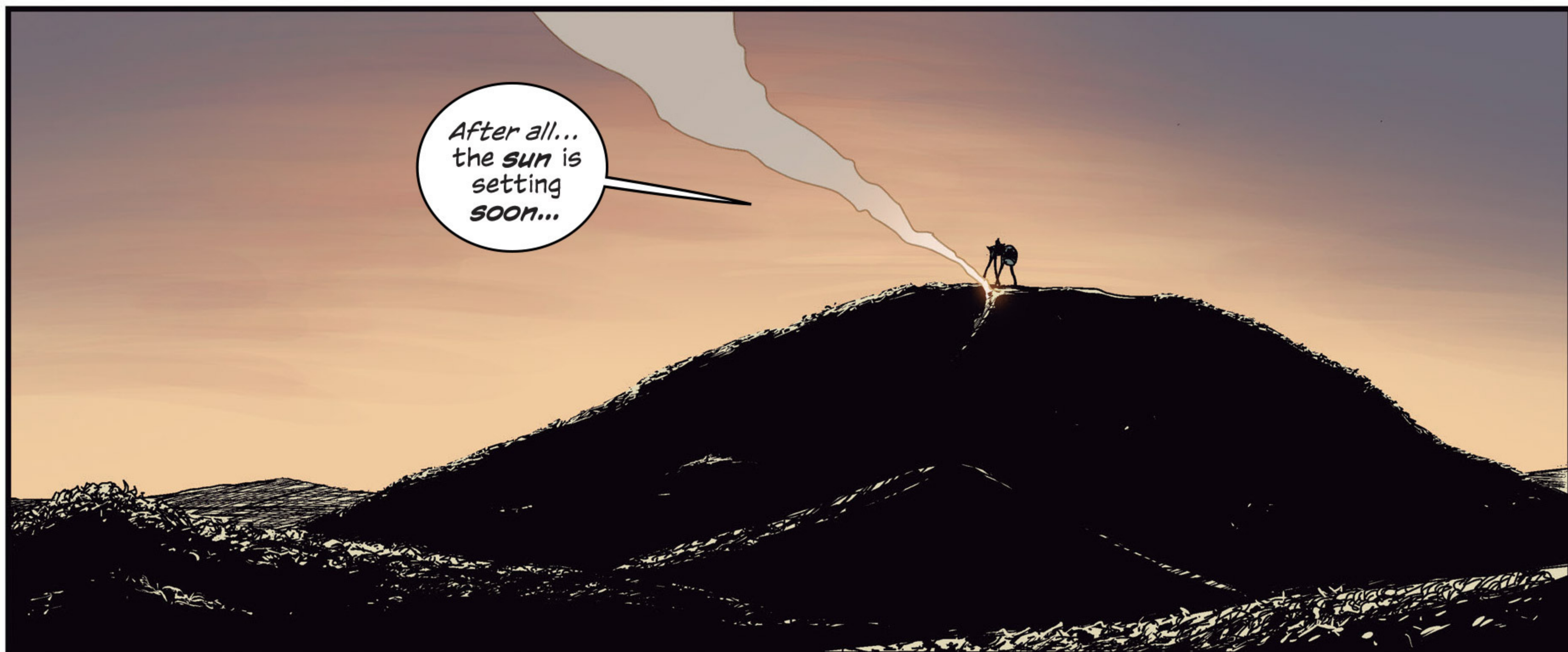
The Sea of Bones.

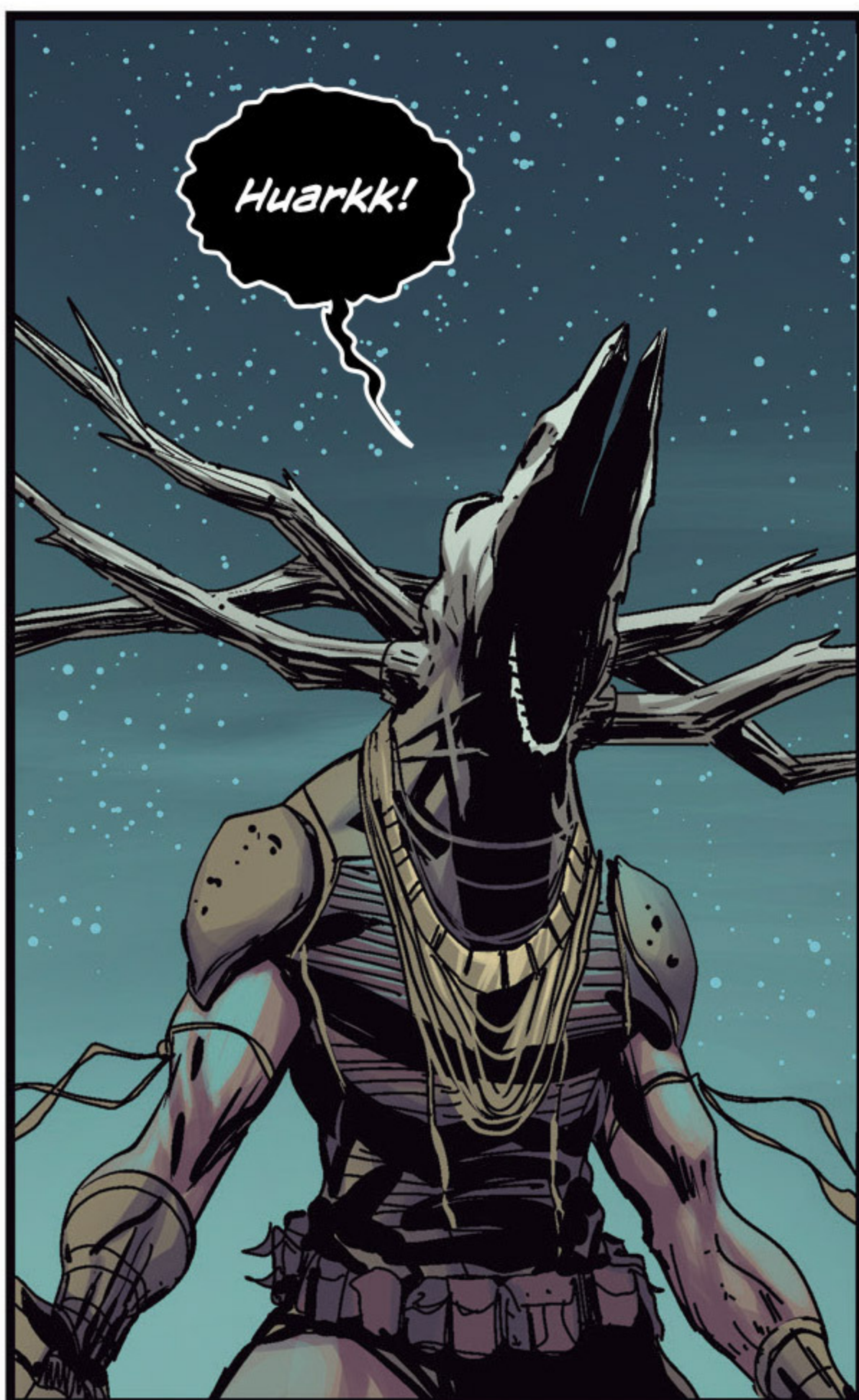
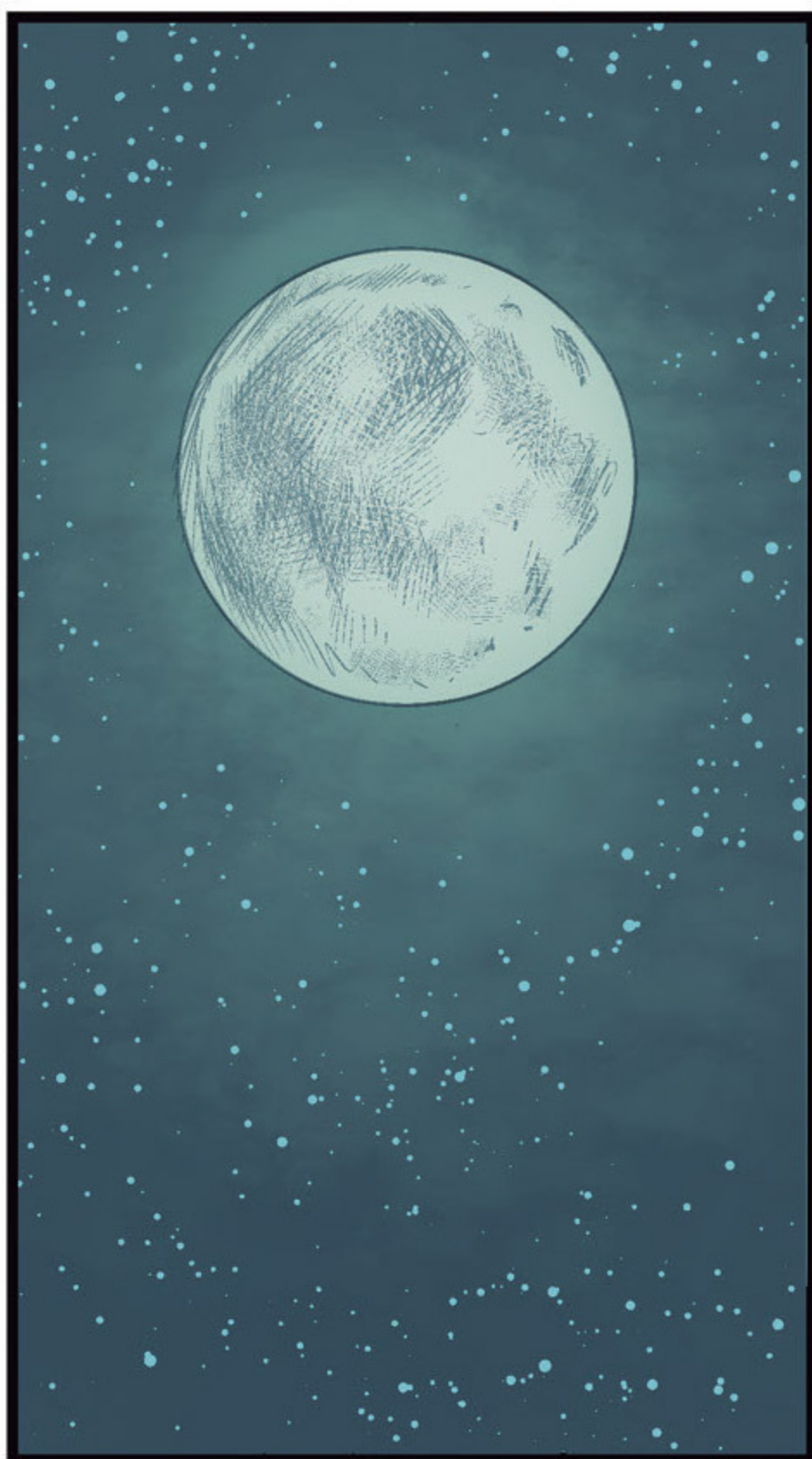


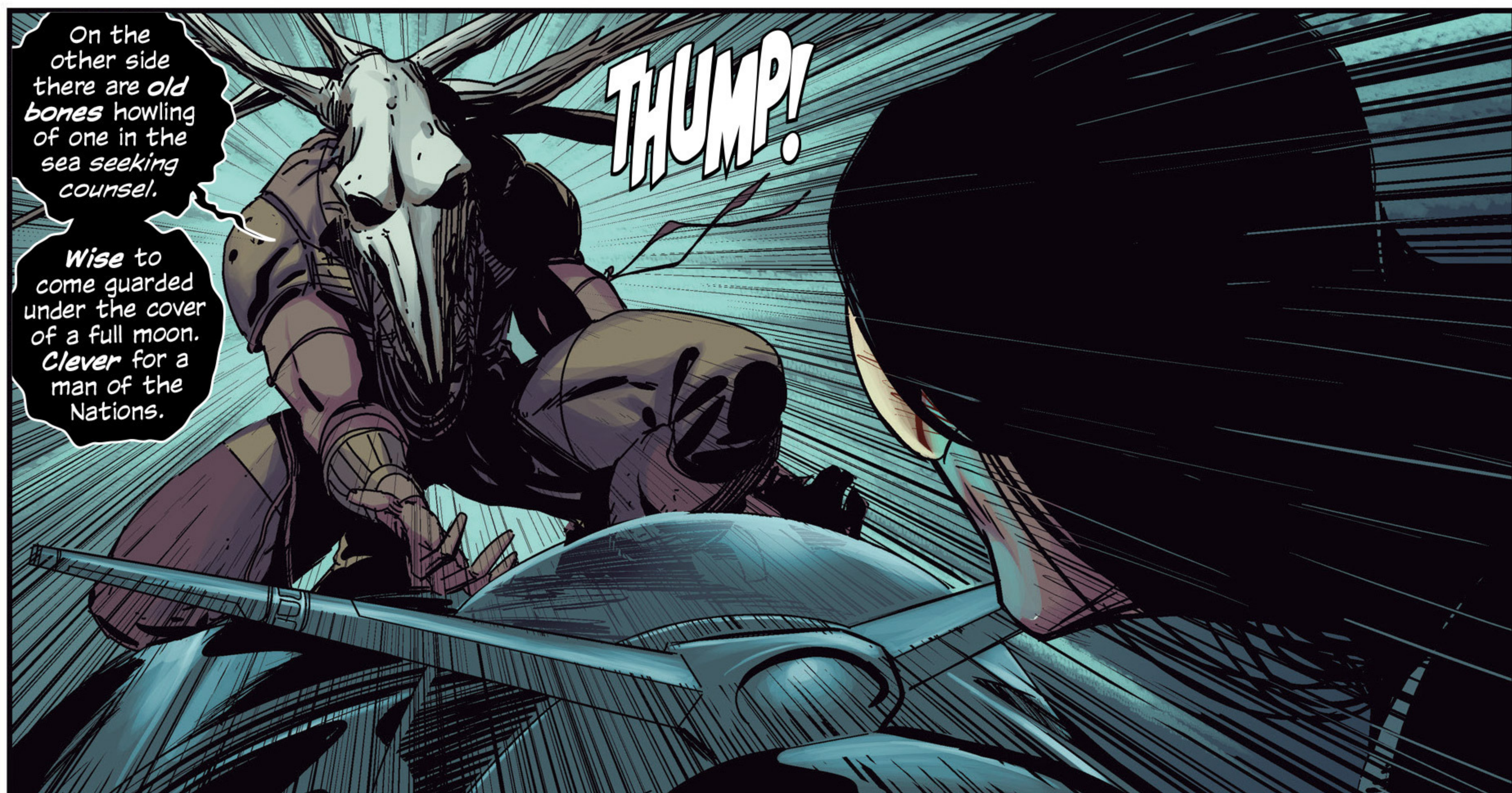












On the other side there are **old bones** howling of one in the sea seeking counsel.

Wise to come guarded under the cover of a full moon. **Clever** for a man of the Nations.

THUMP!



I see you, Nihnootheht.



Do you?

Look again, Great Chief.



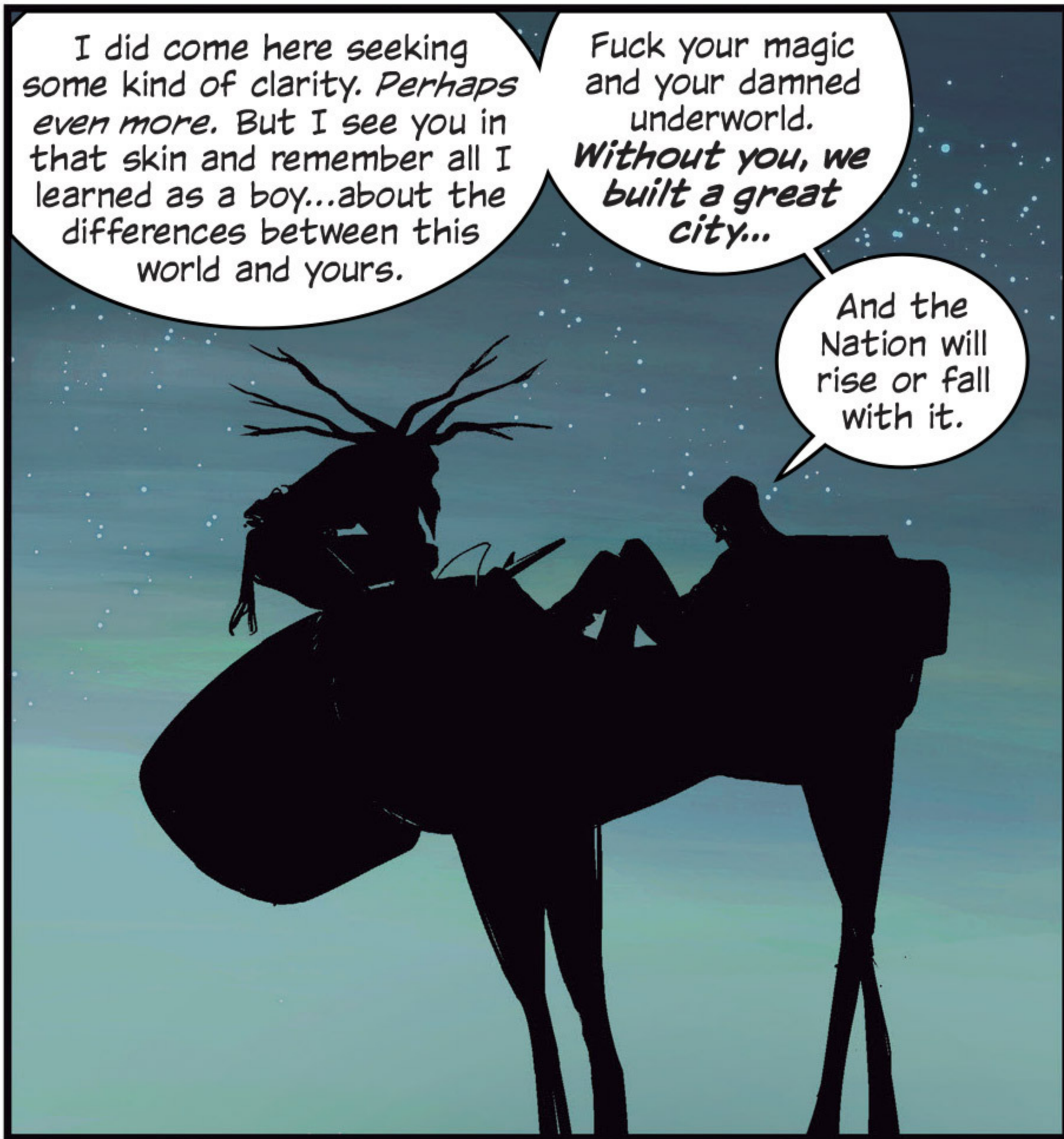
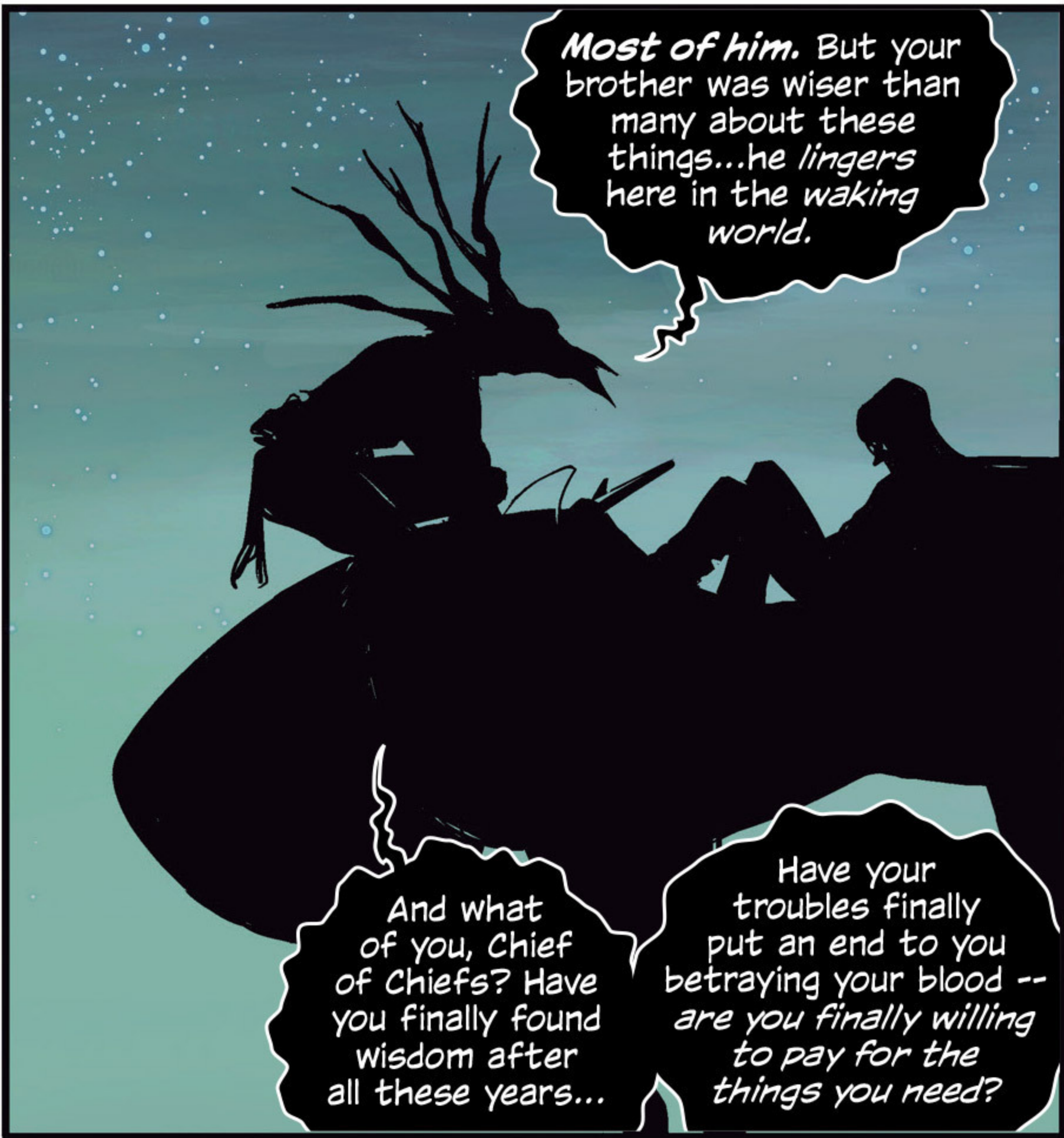
⇒ Sniff. Sniff. ⇒



You...

You're wearing Cheveyo's **skin**.

Is my brother dead?



One day later.

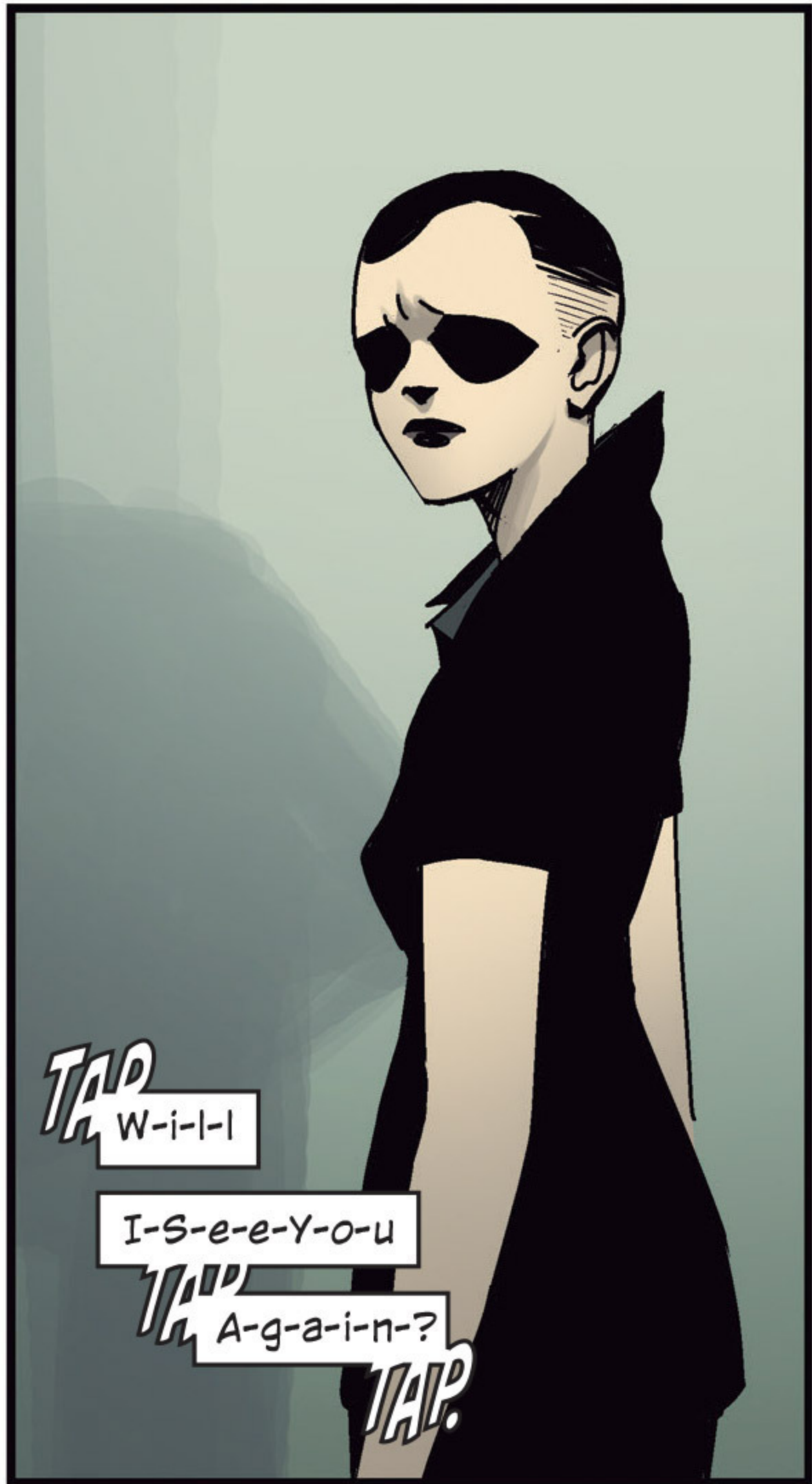
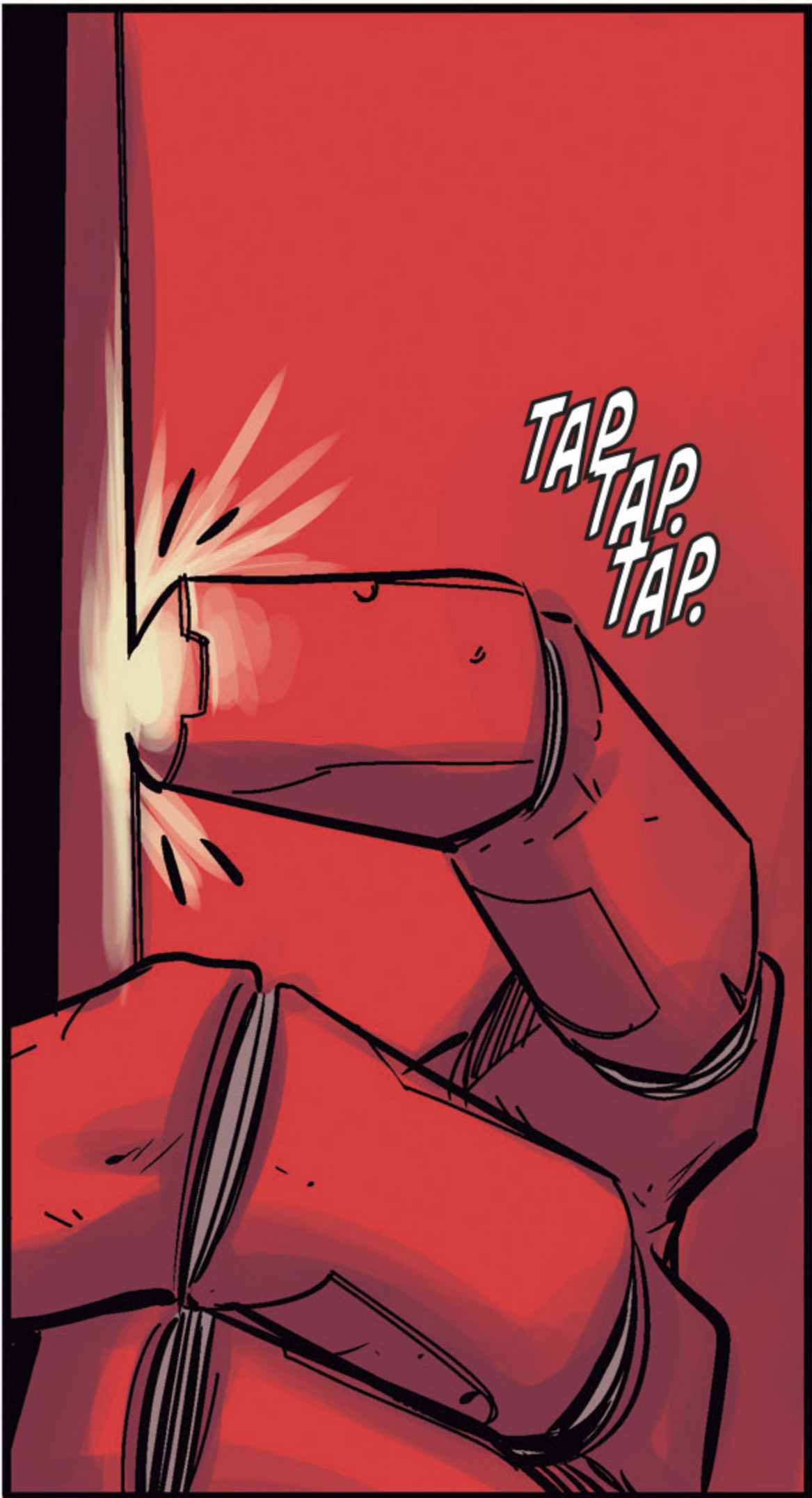
Go home,
Doma Lux.

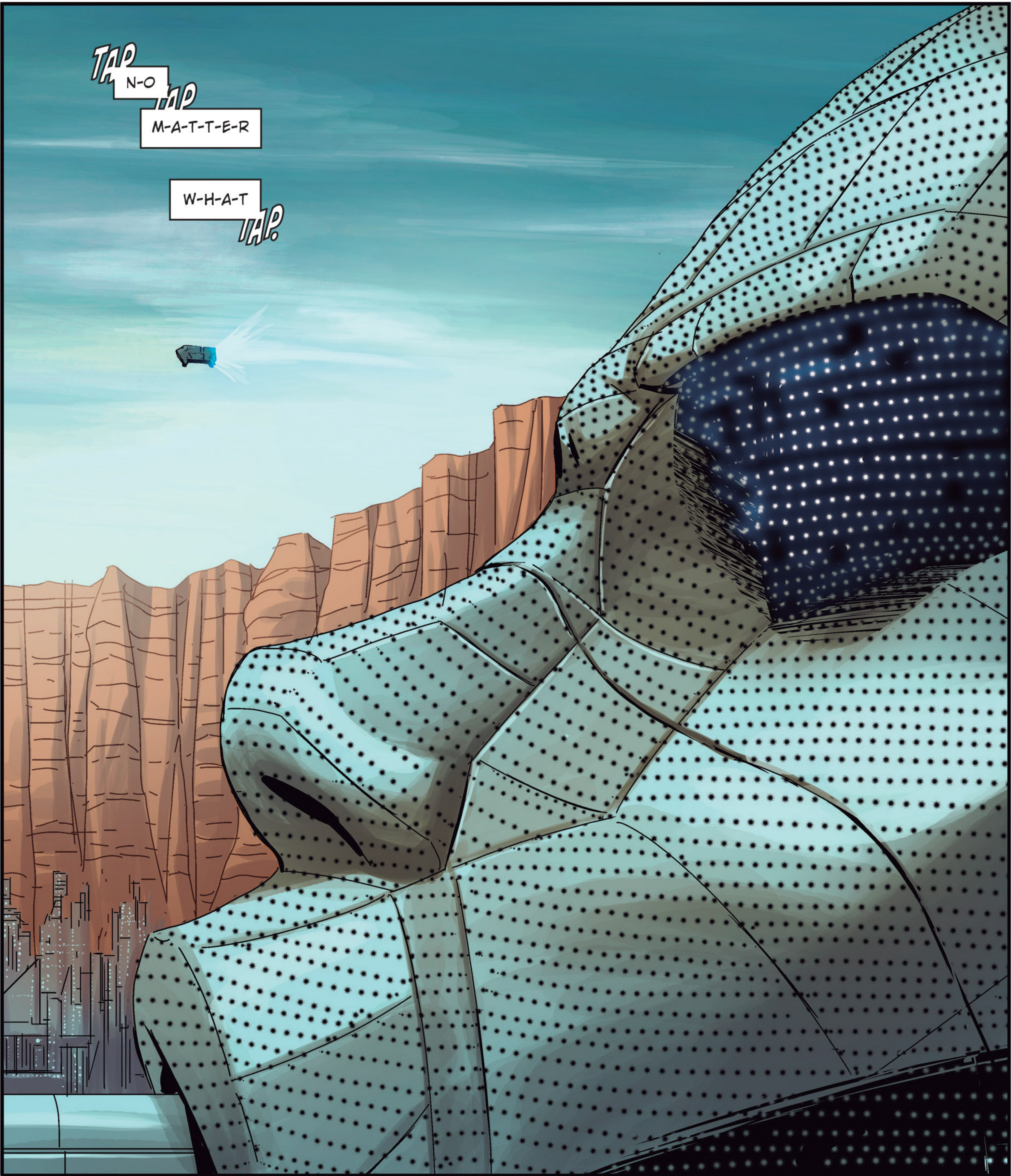
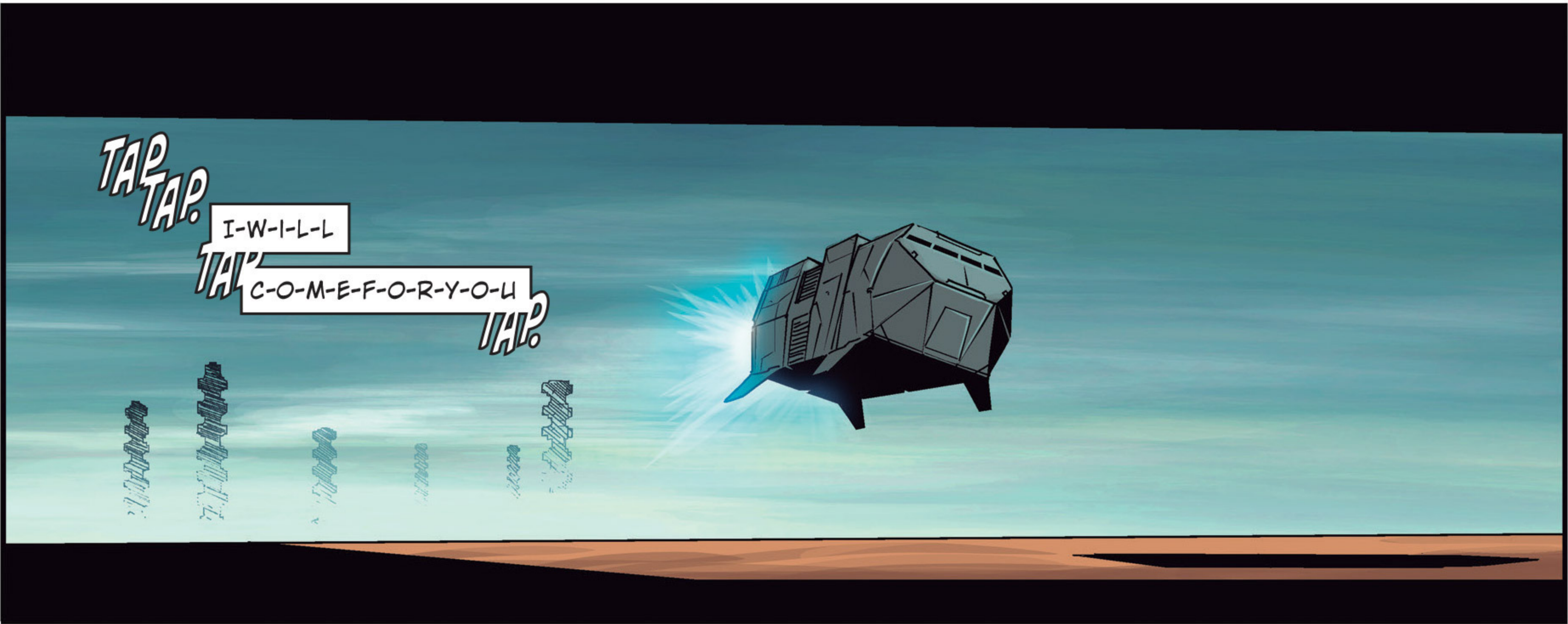
Return
there
with our
blessing.

Go back to
your Union. Go
back with *good
news* for
President
LeVay:

A truce,
hard fought
for with a
great many
concessions.



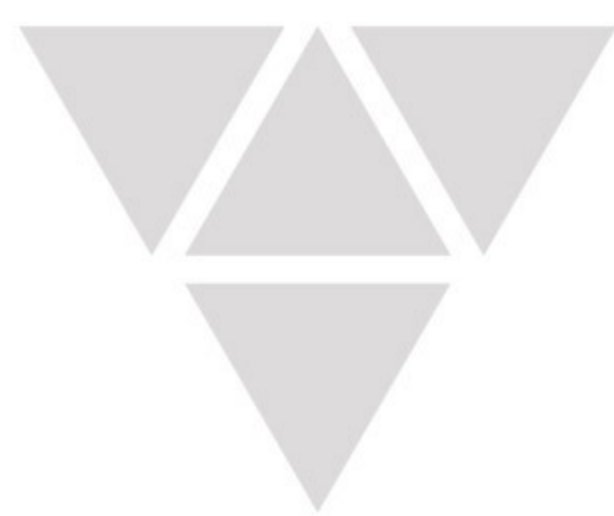


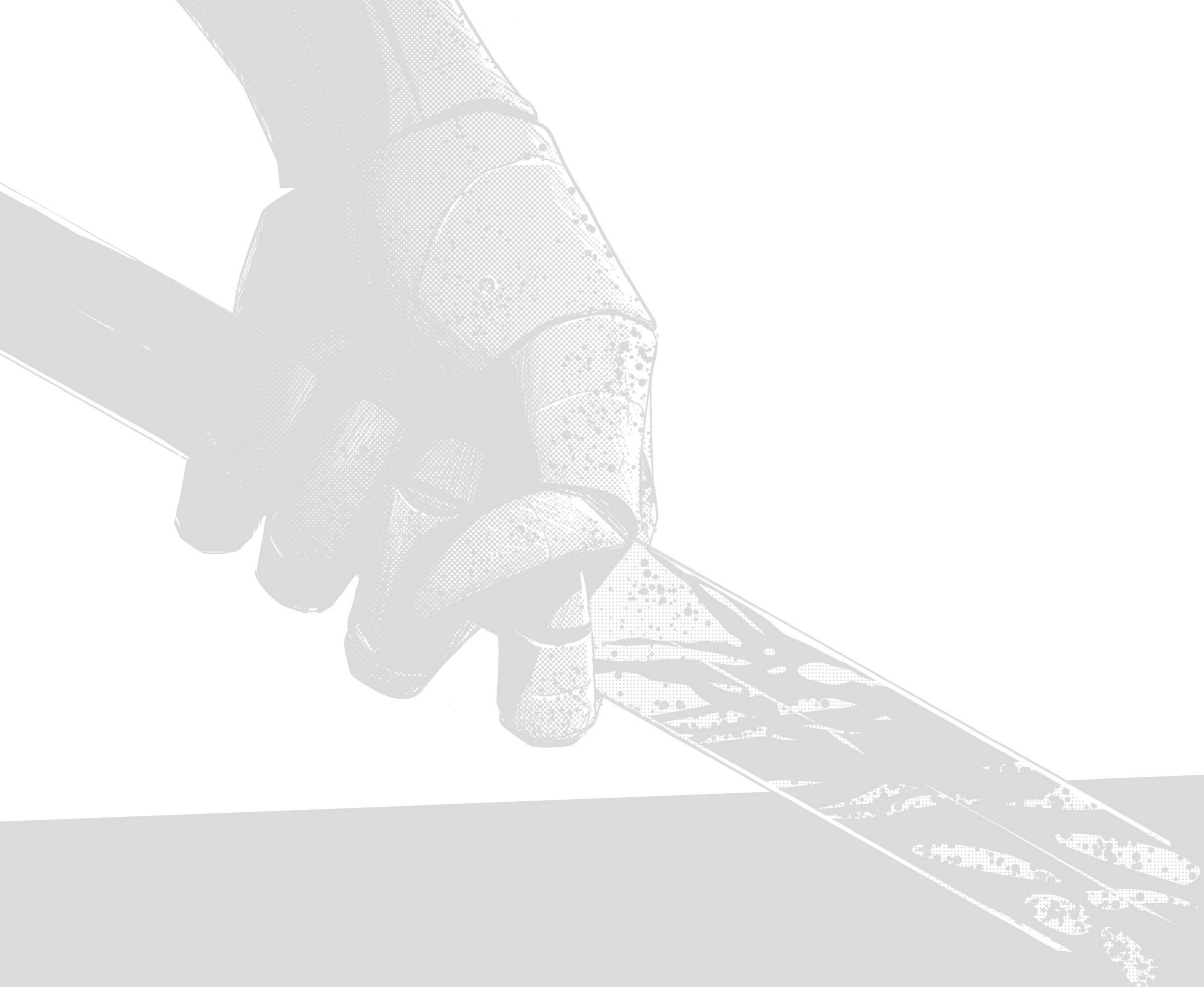




IT NEVER STOPS.

THE CYCLE OF **POWER, GREED**
AND **REVENGE.**





22

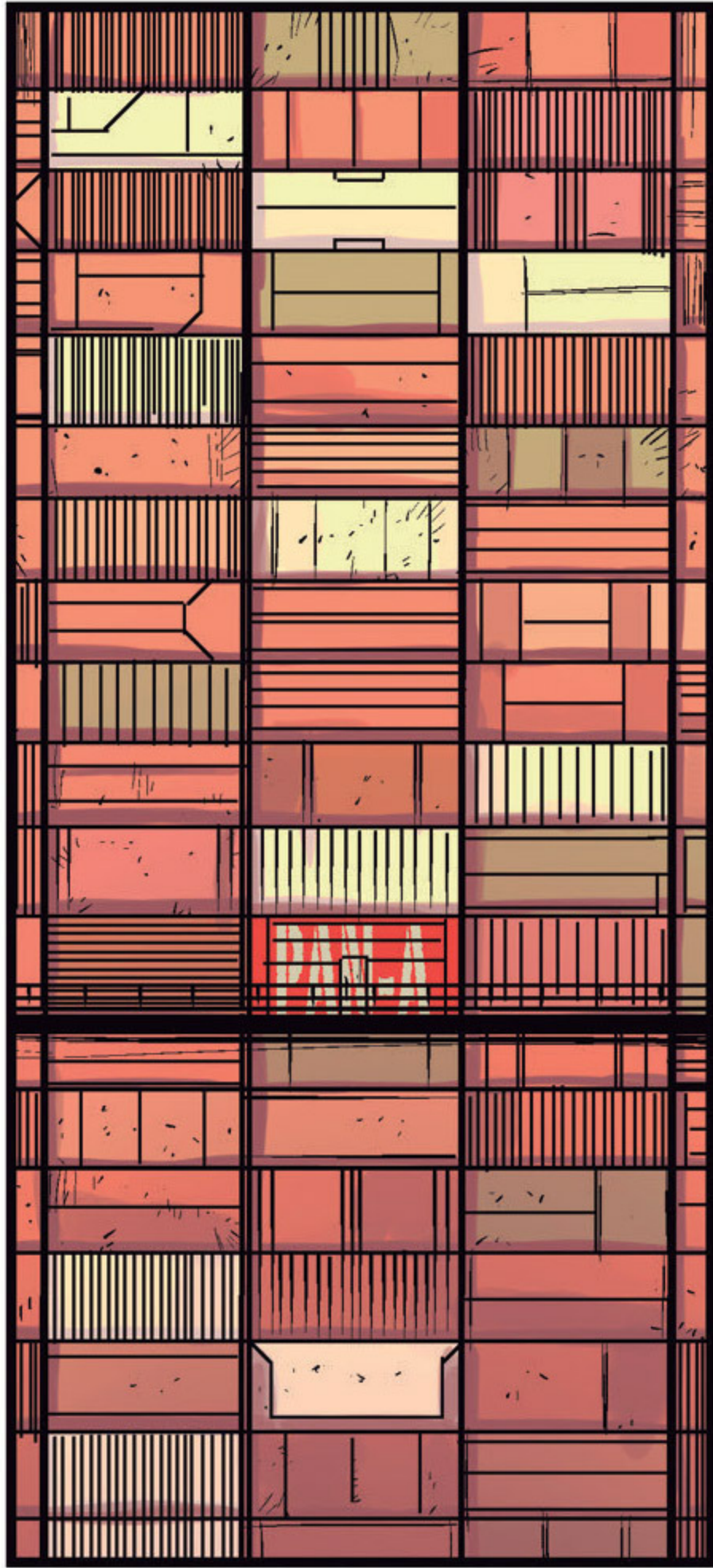
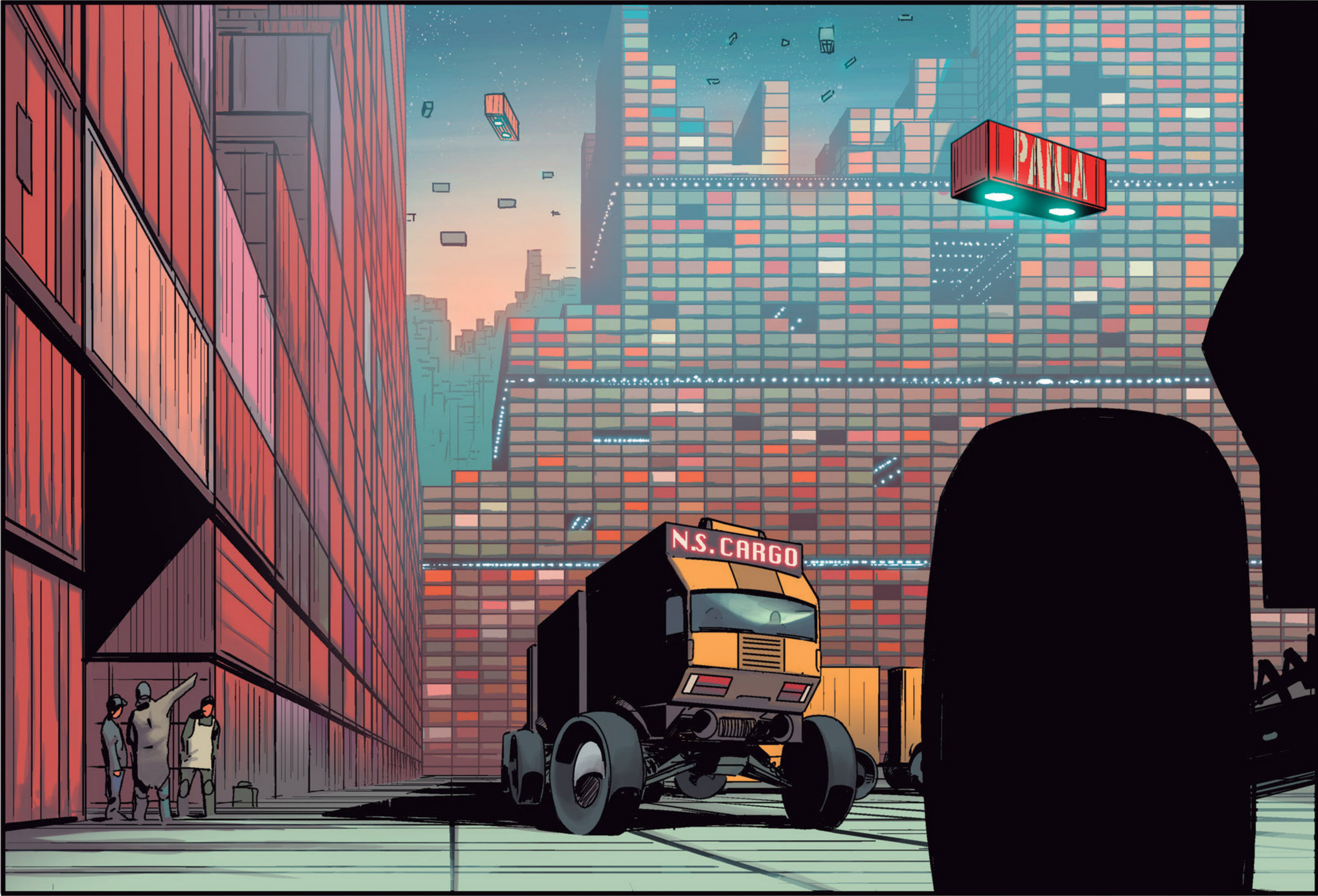


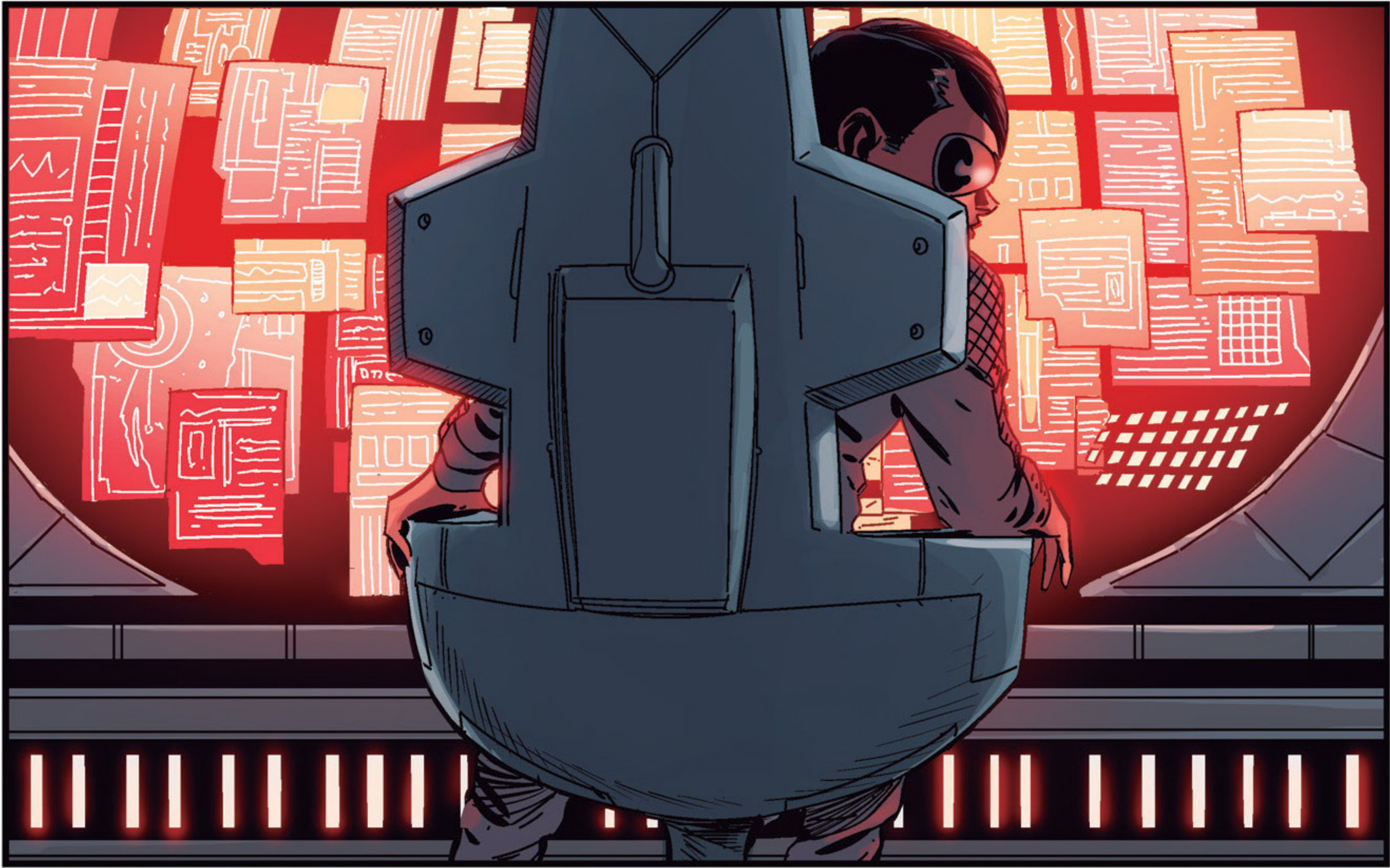
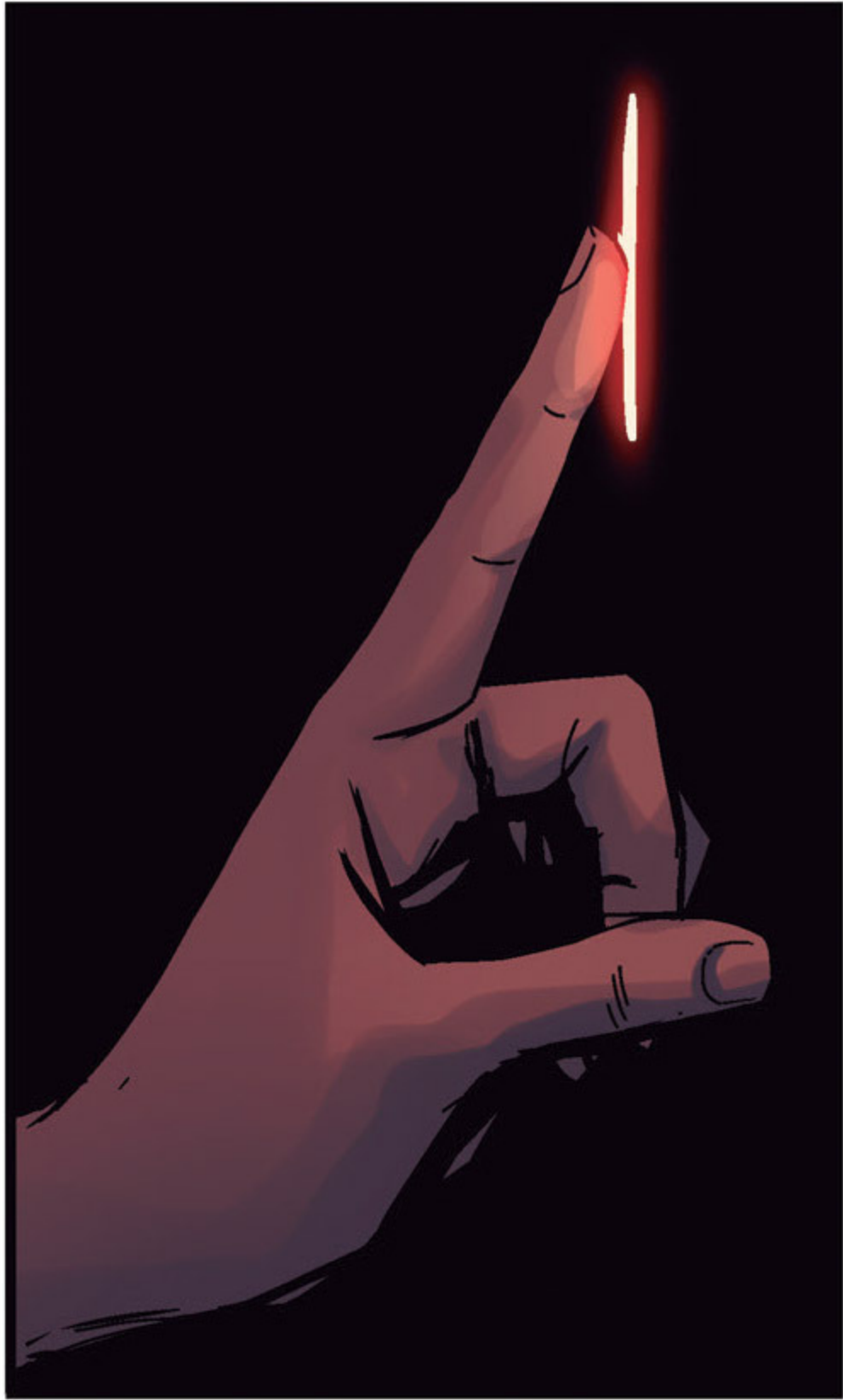
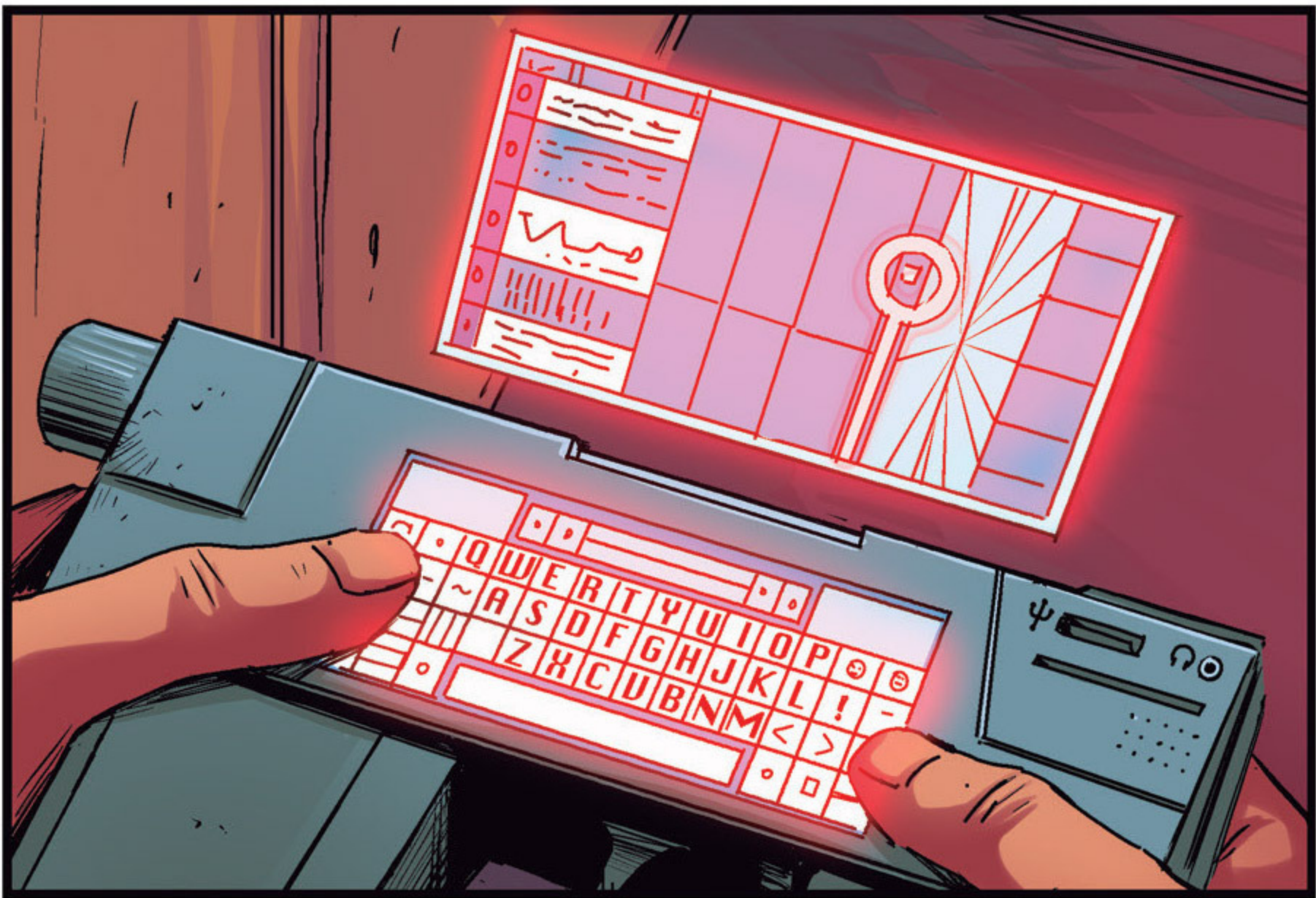
**TWENTY-TWO:
A MOMENT OF
SILENCE**

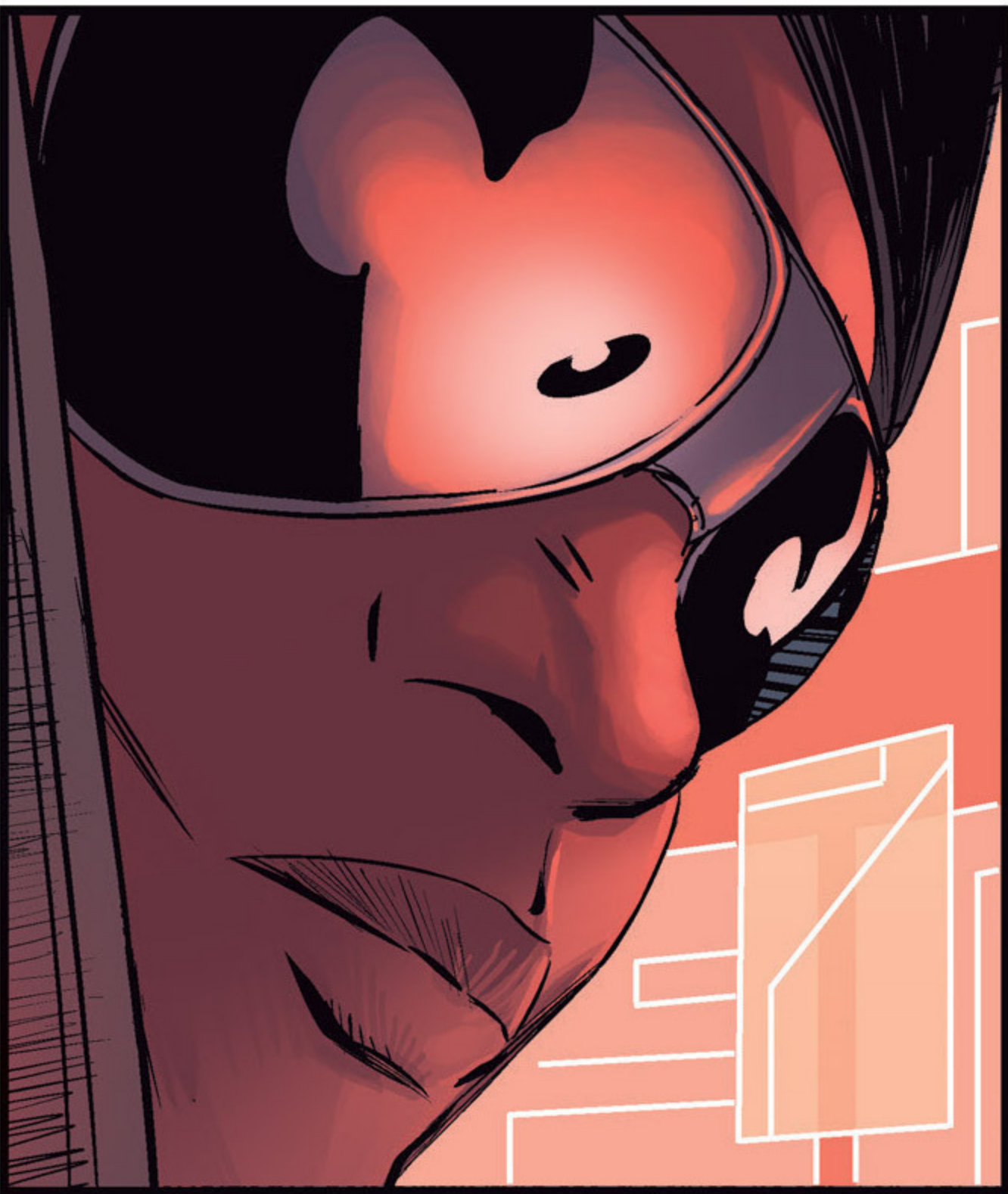
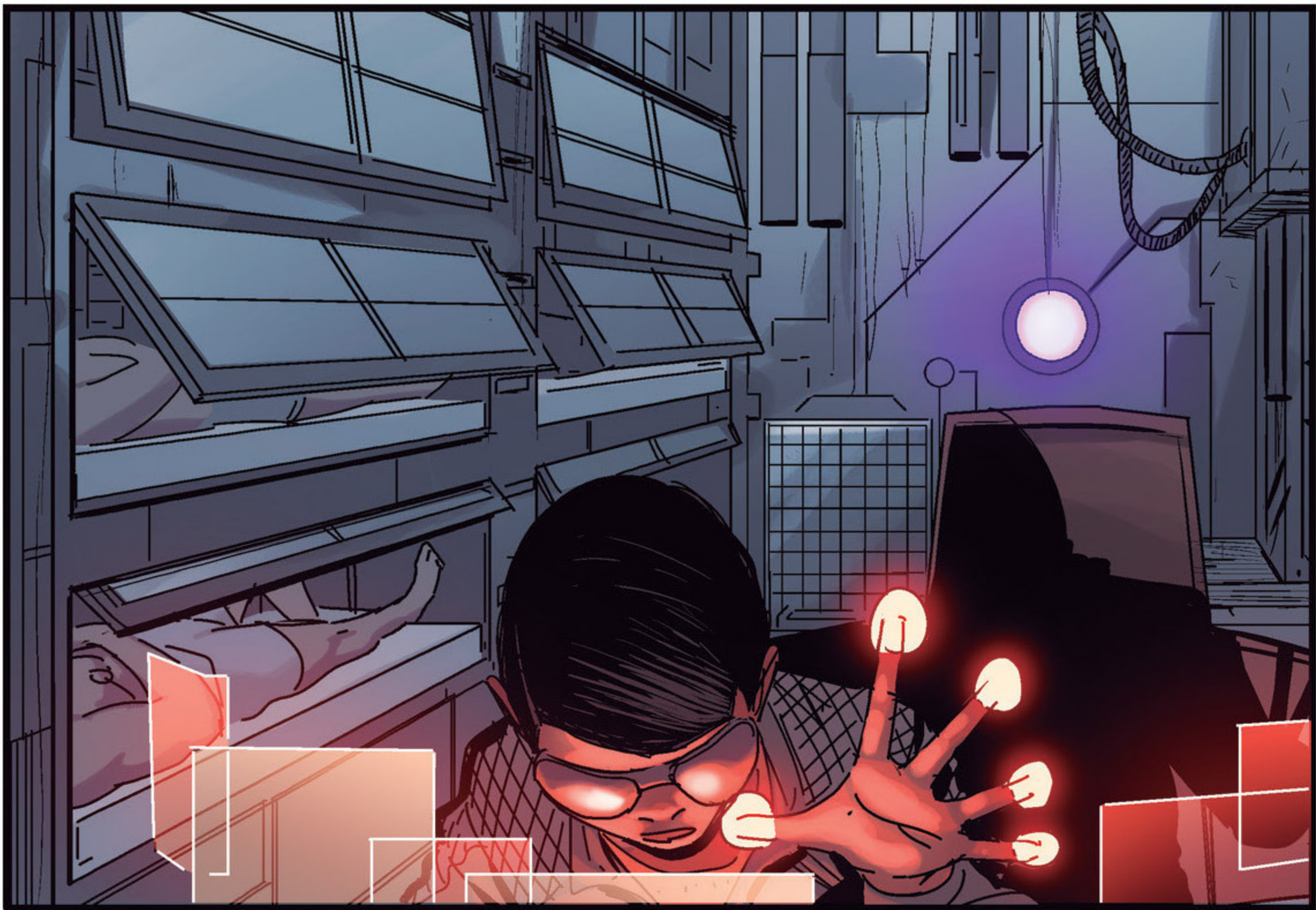
WHEN THEY COME FOR YOU,
IT WILL BE WHERE YOU FEEL
SAFEST.

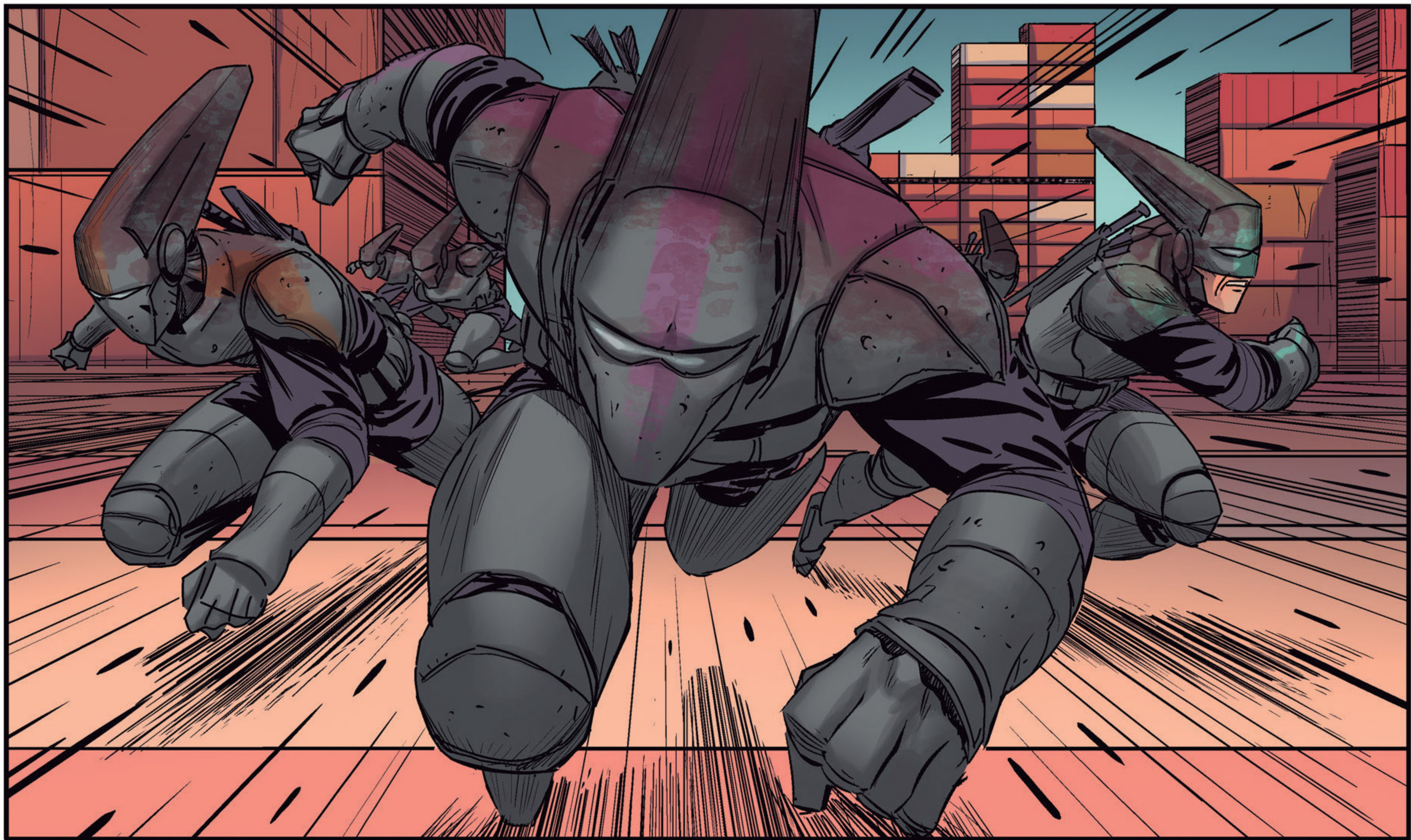
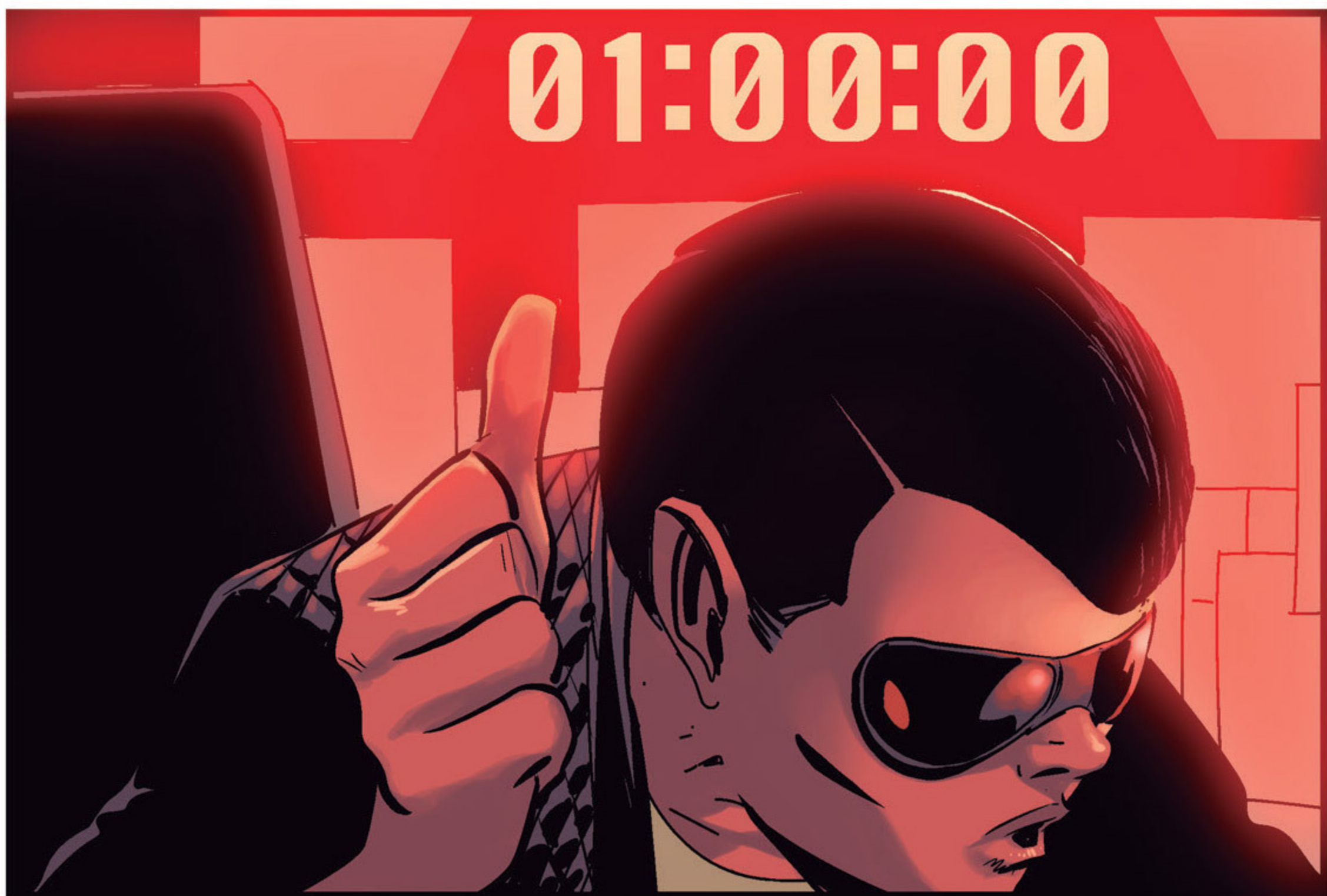
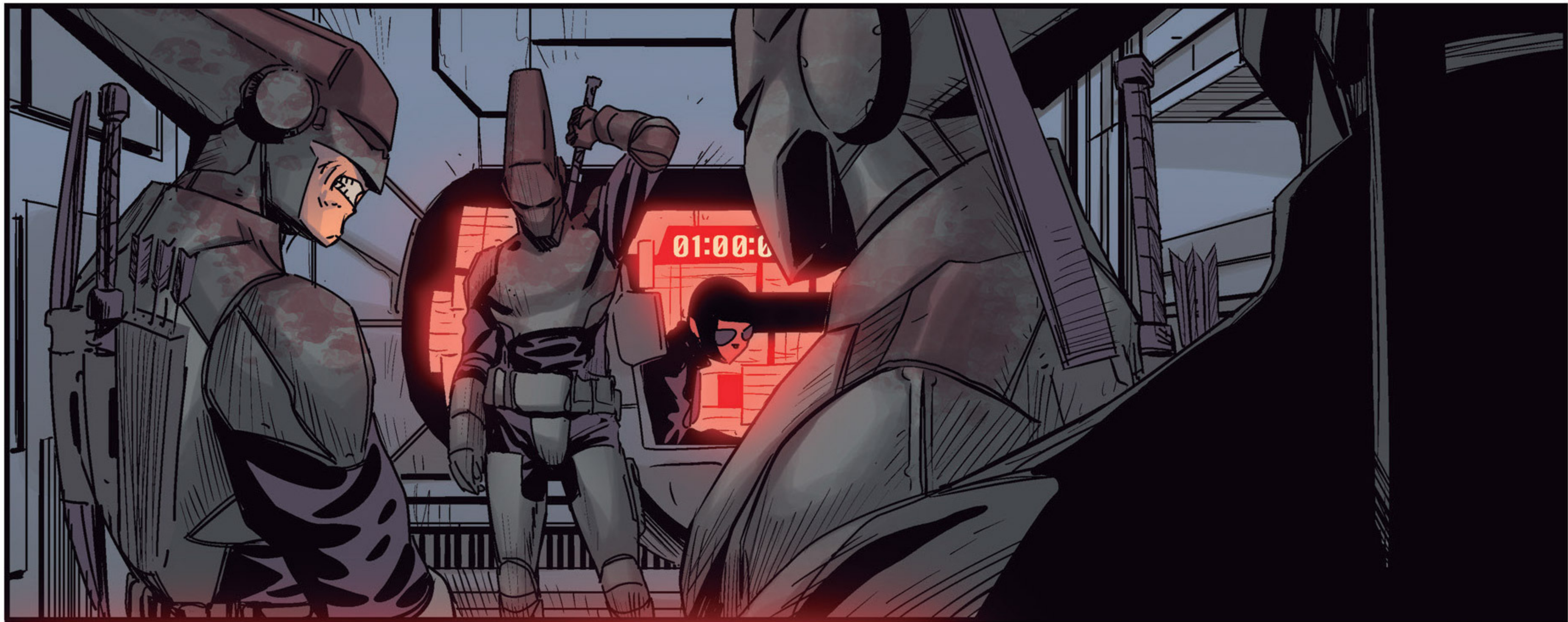
IN YOUR **HOME.** IN YOUR **BED.**
IN YOUR **SLEEP.**



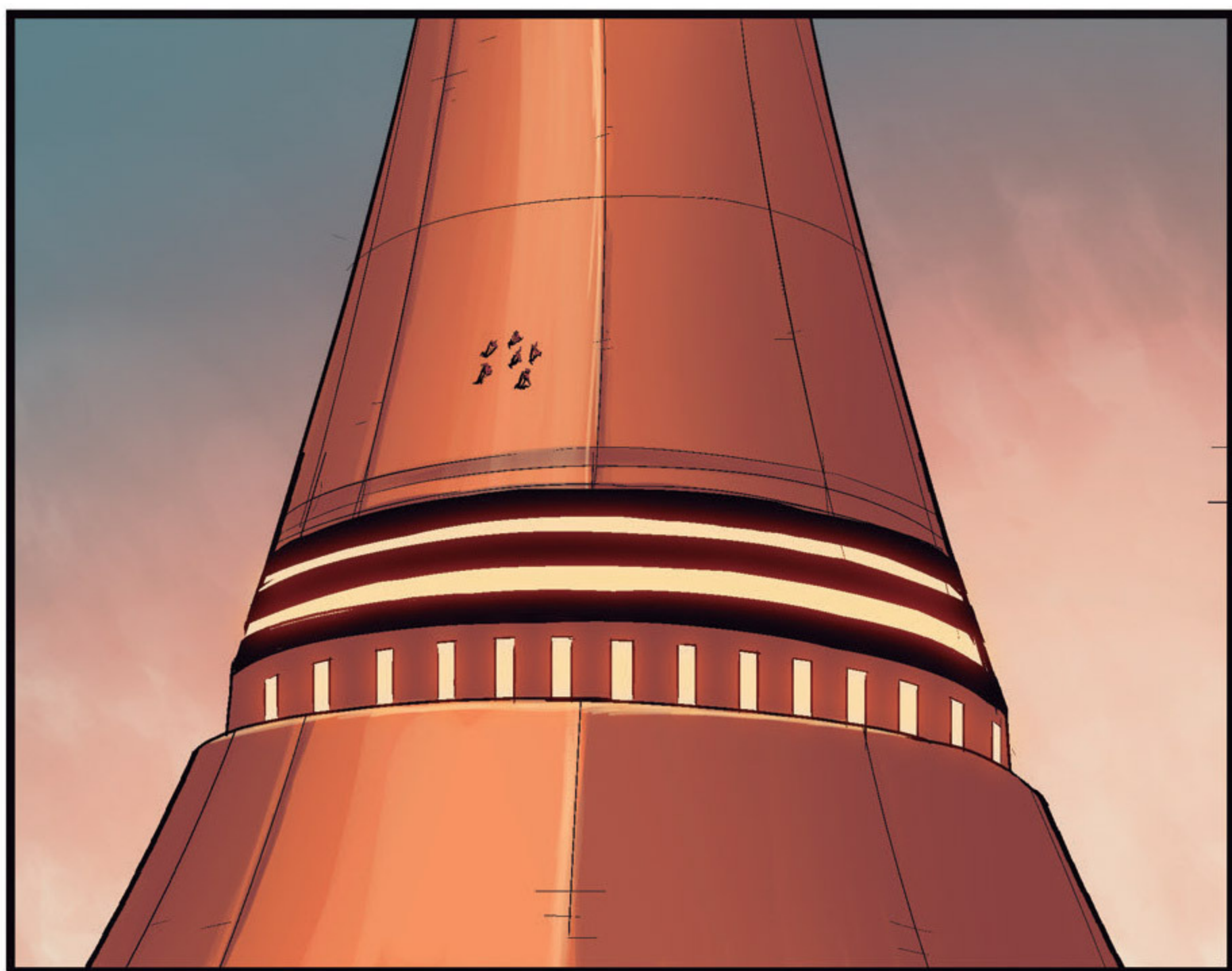
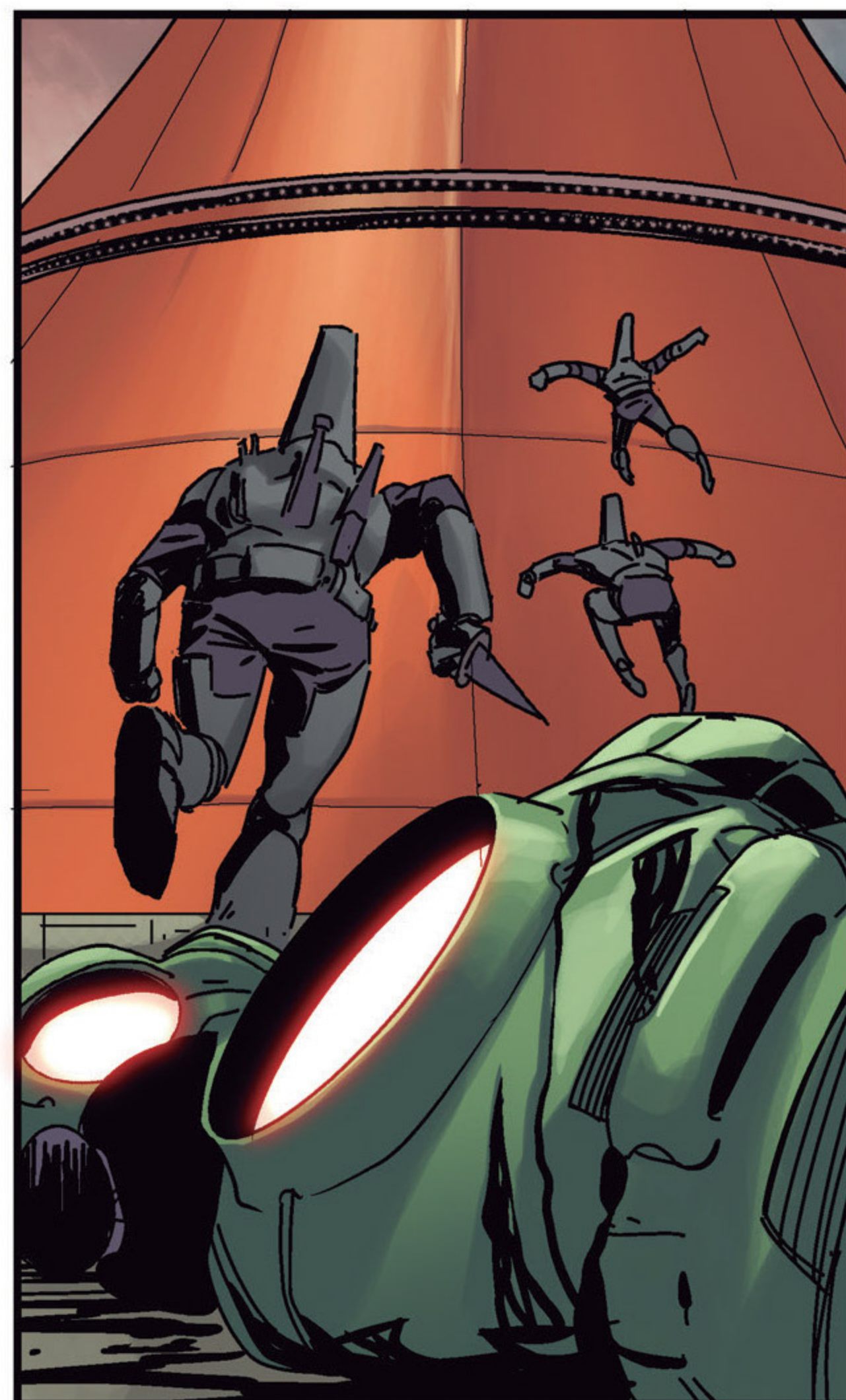
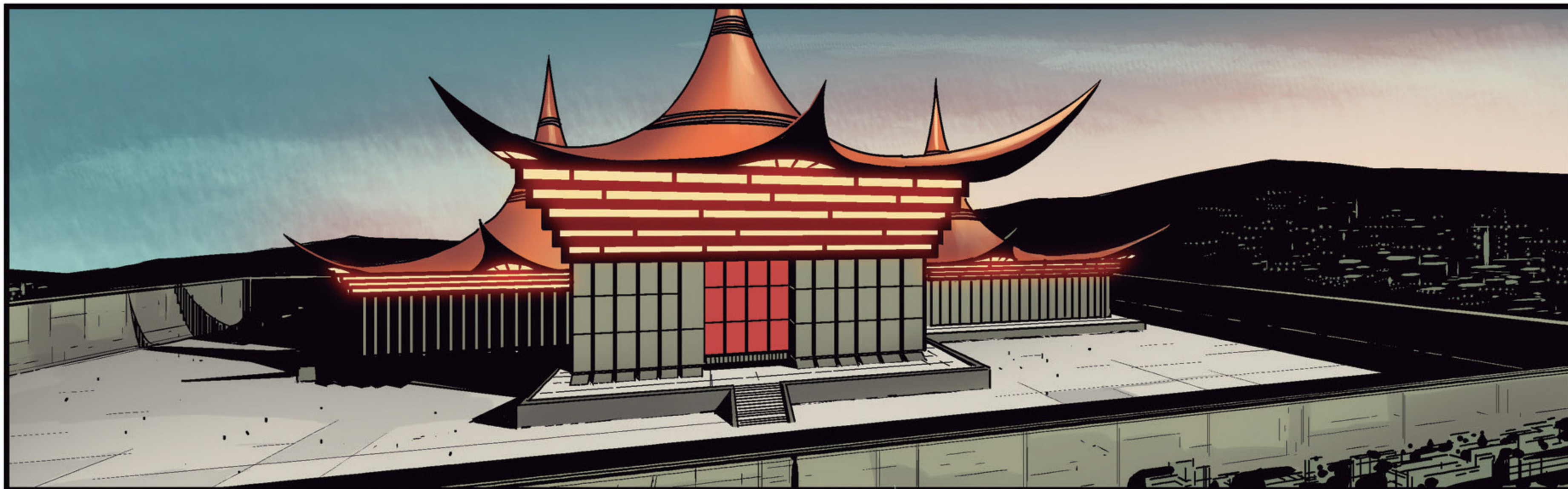






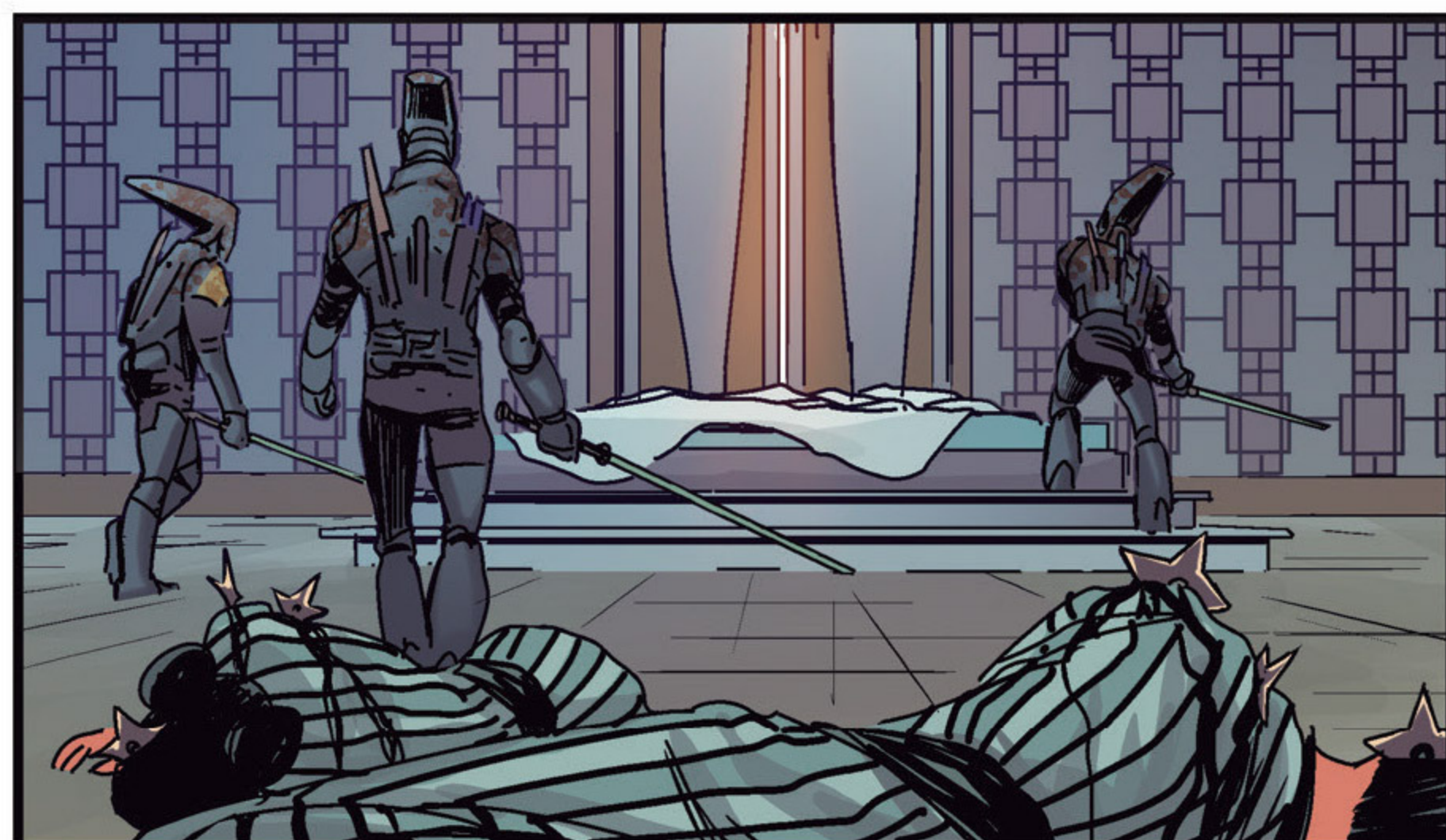
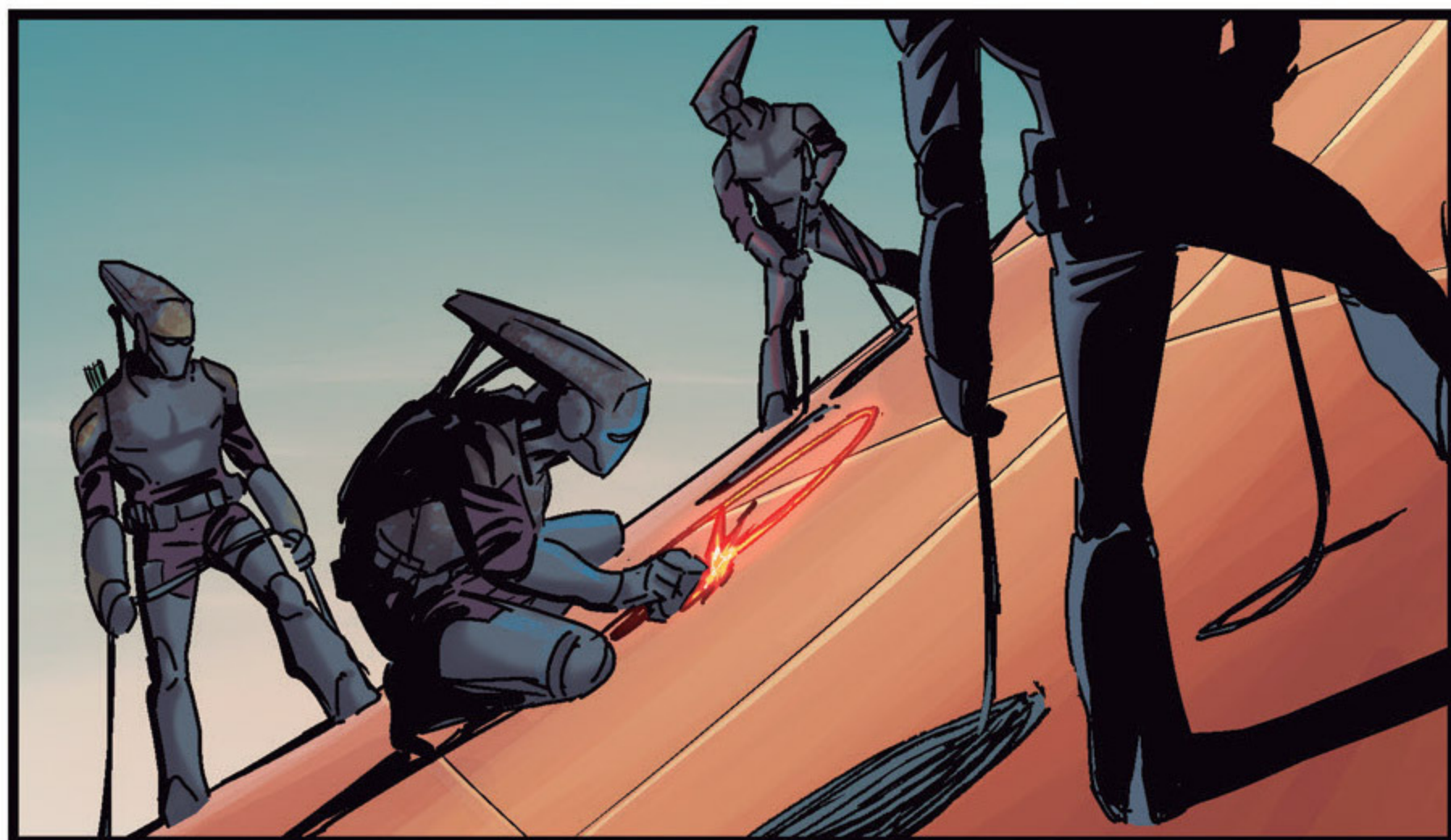


00:47:31

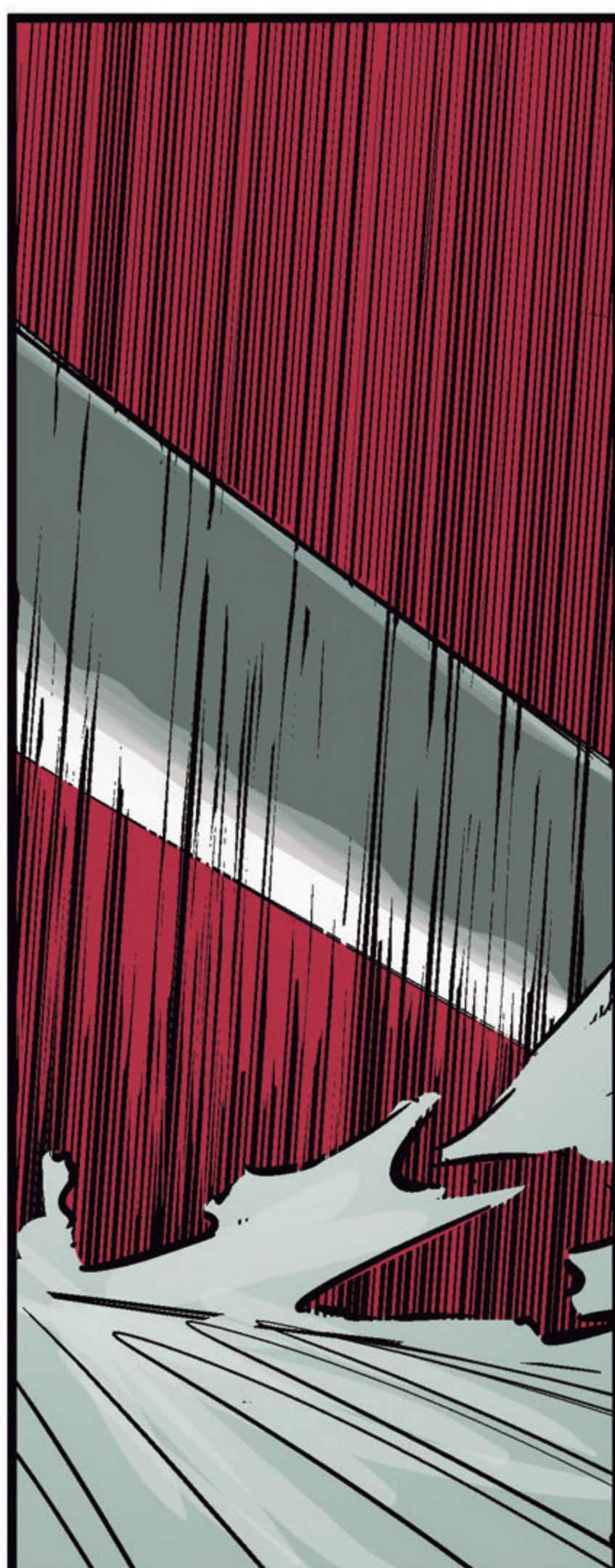


00:39:02

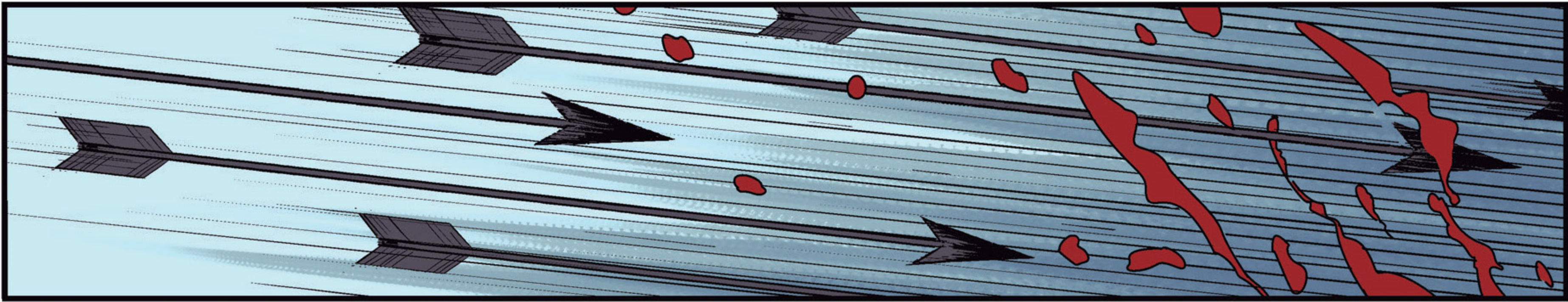
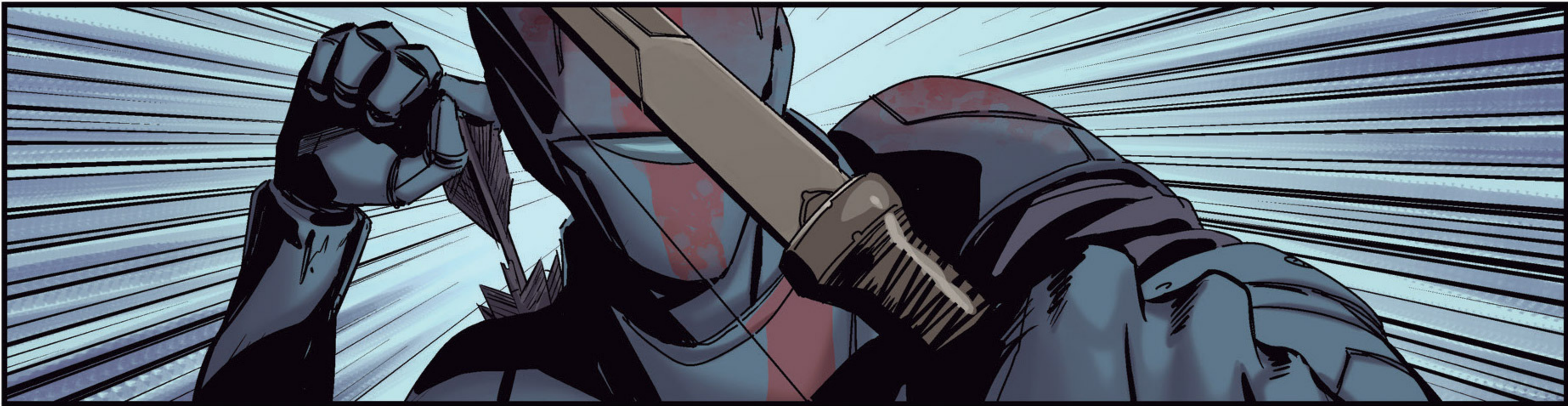
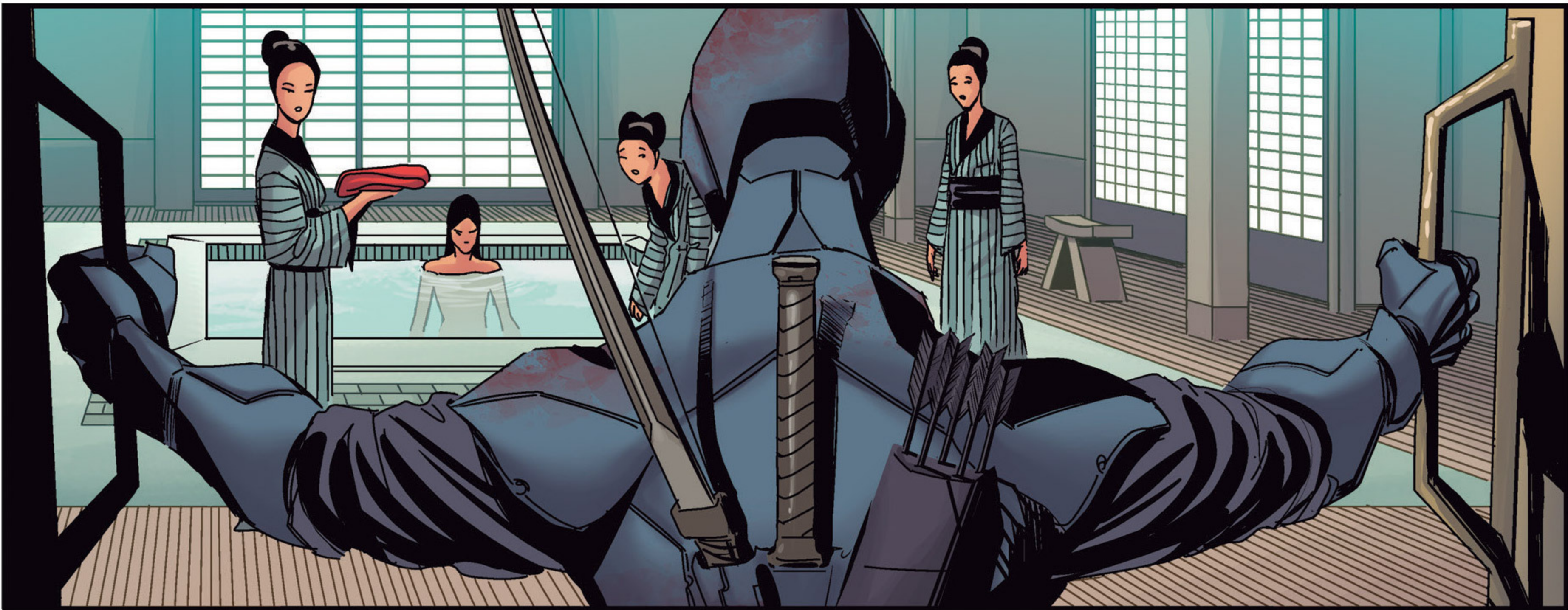
00:33:13



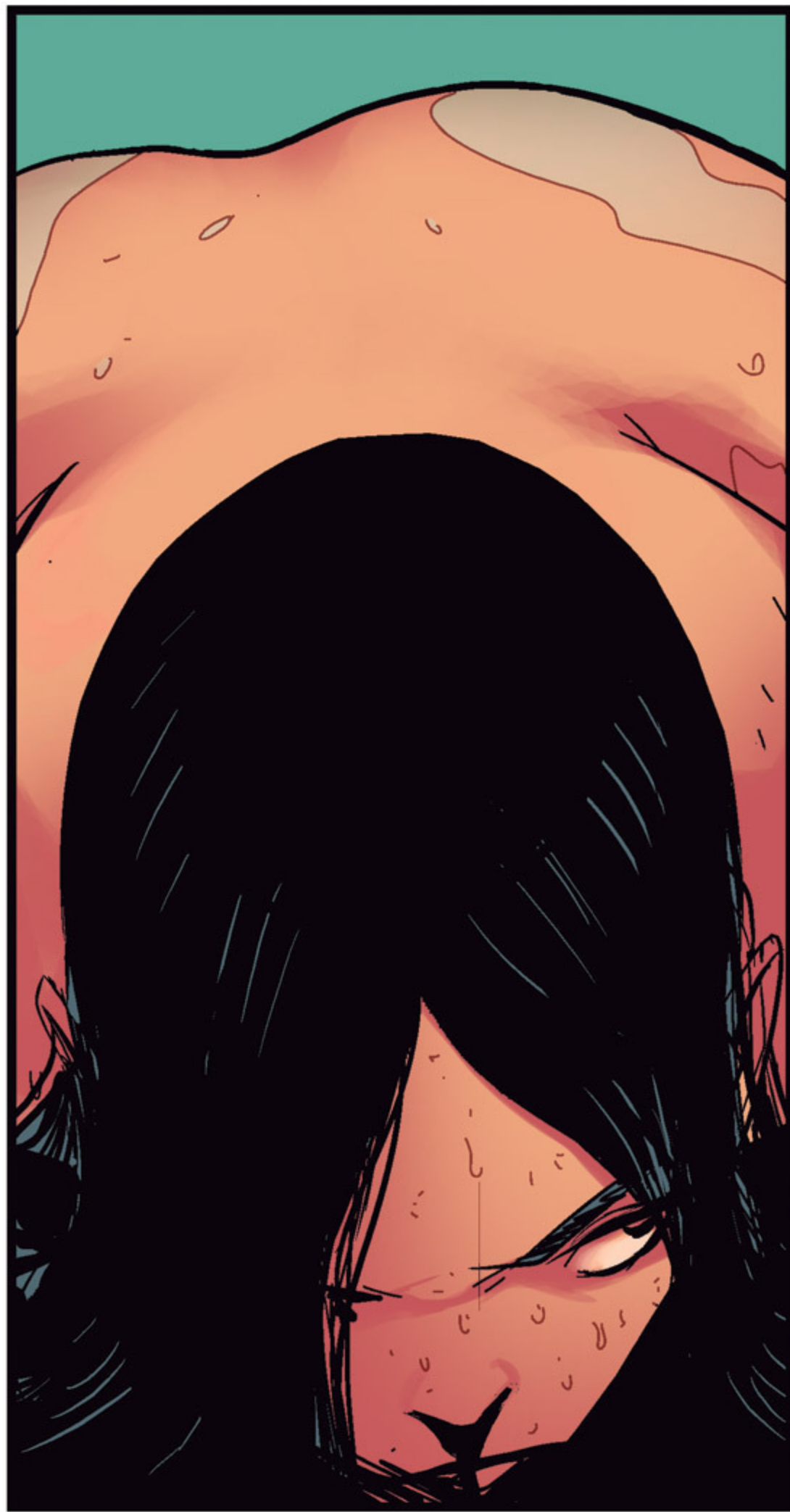
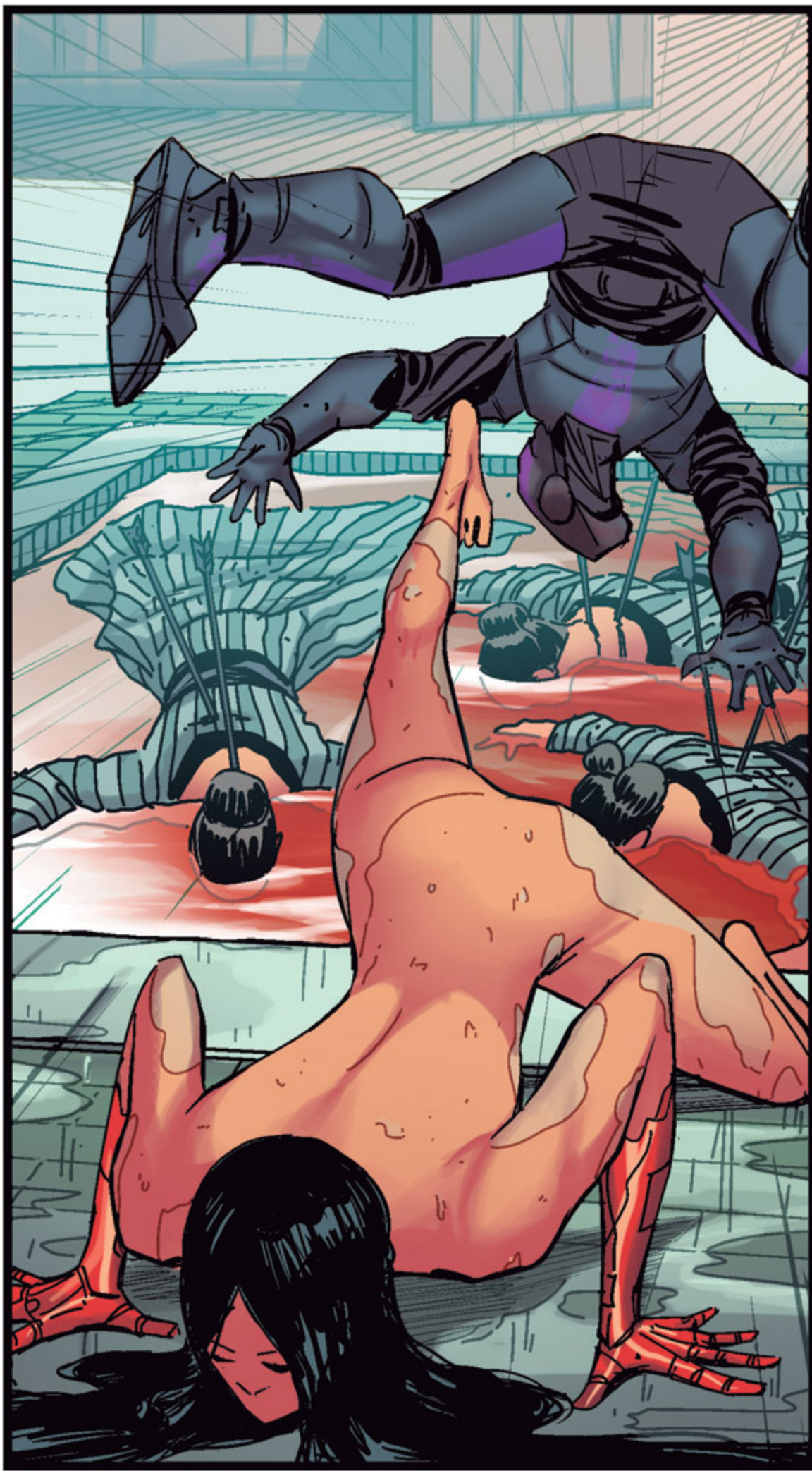
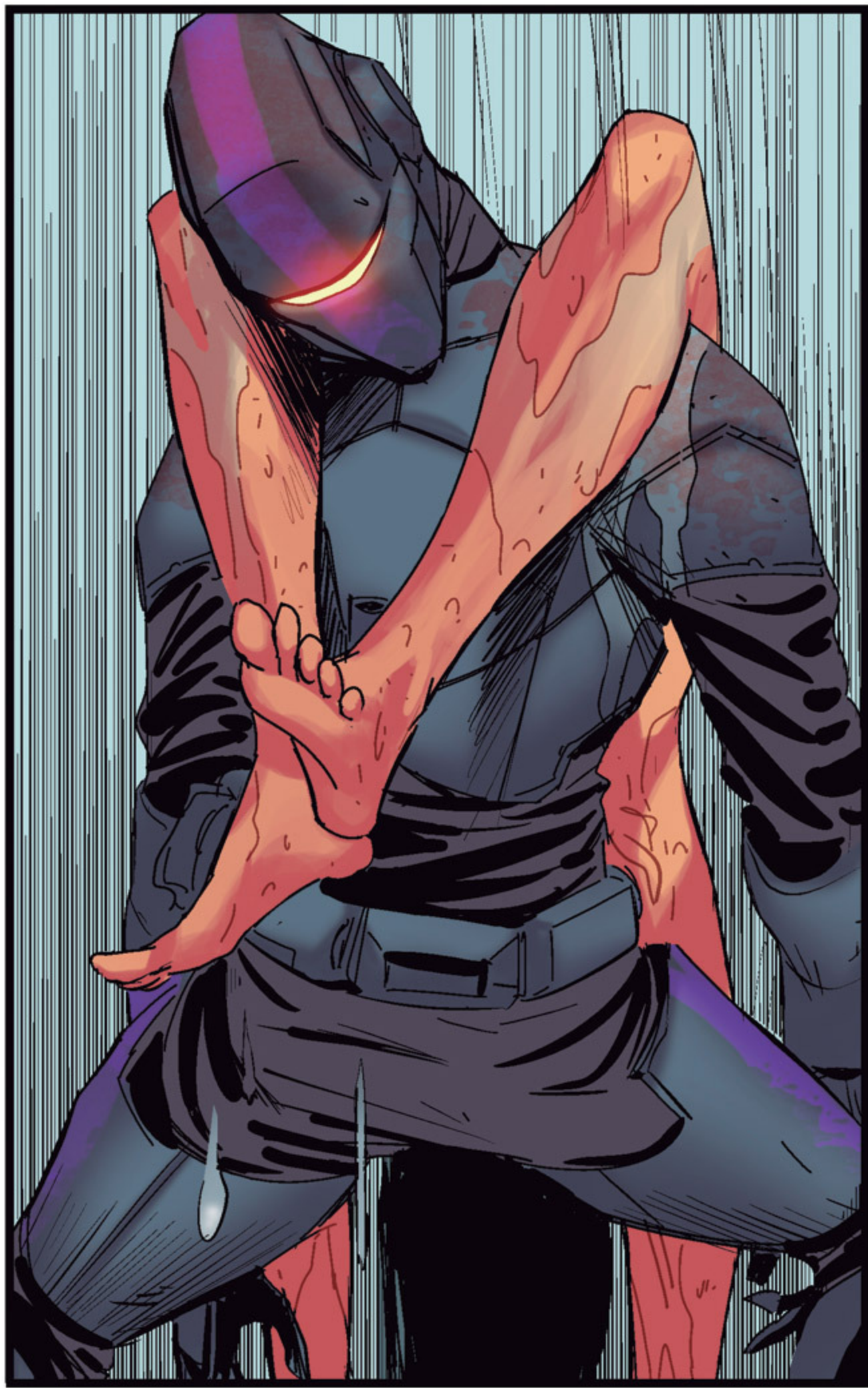
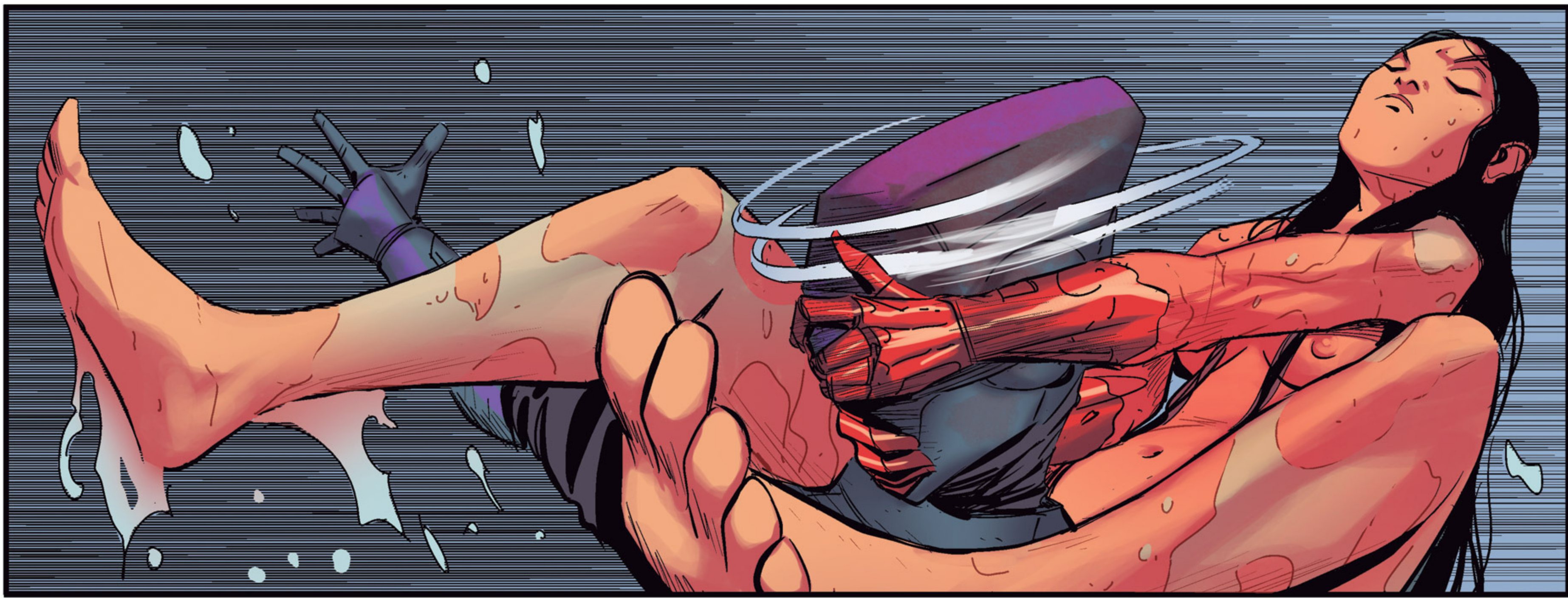
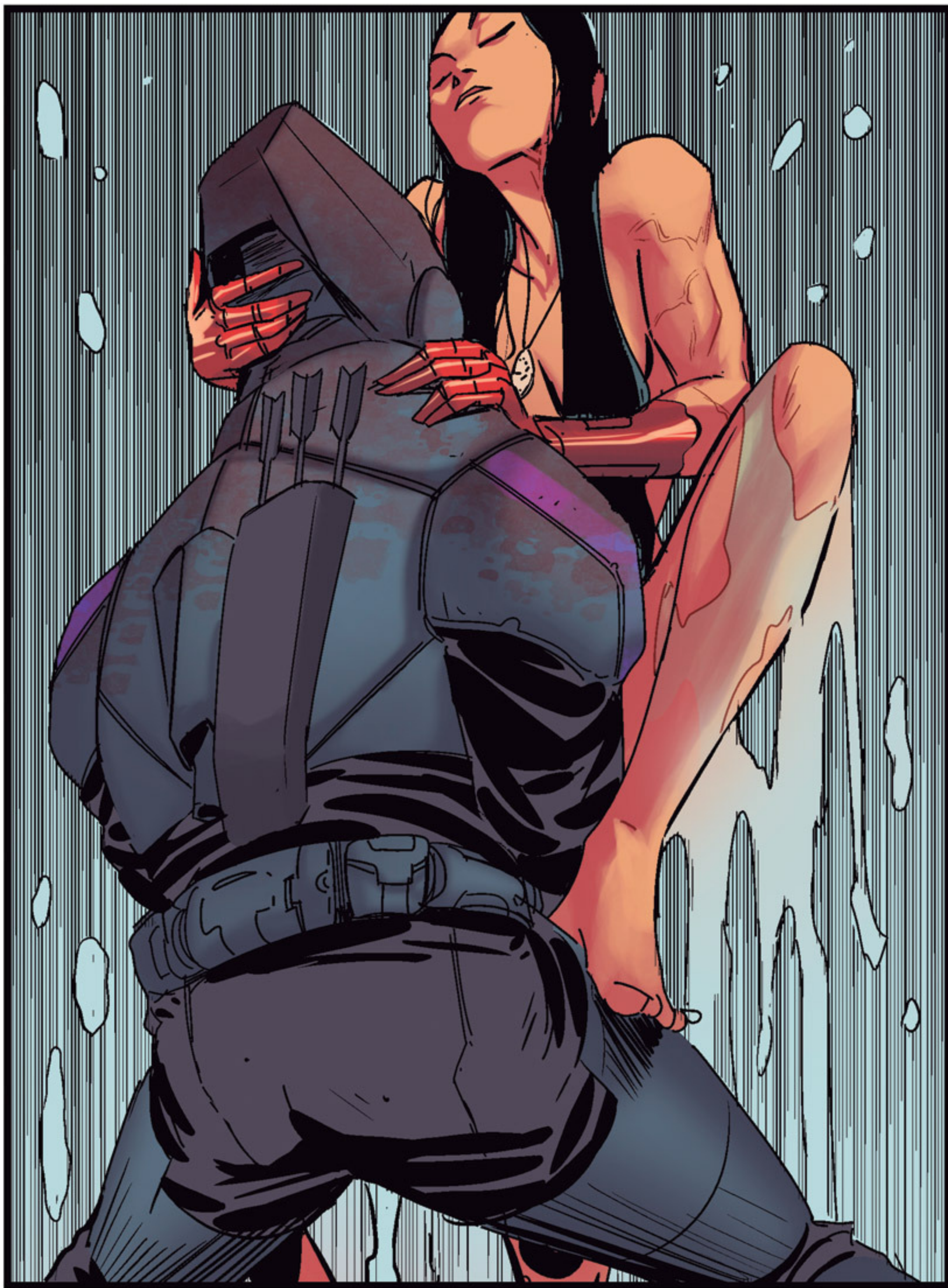
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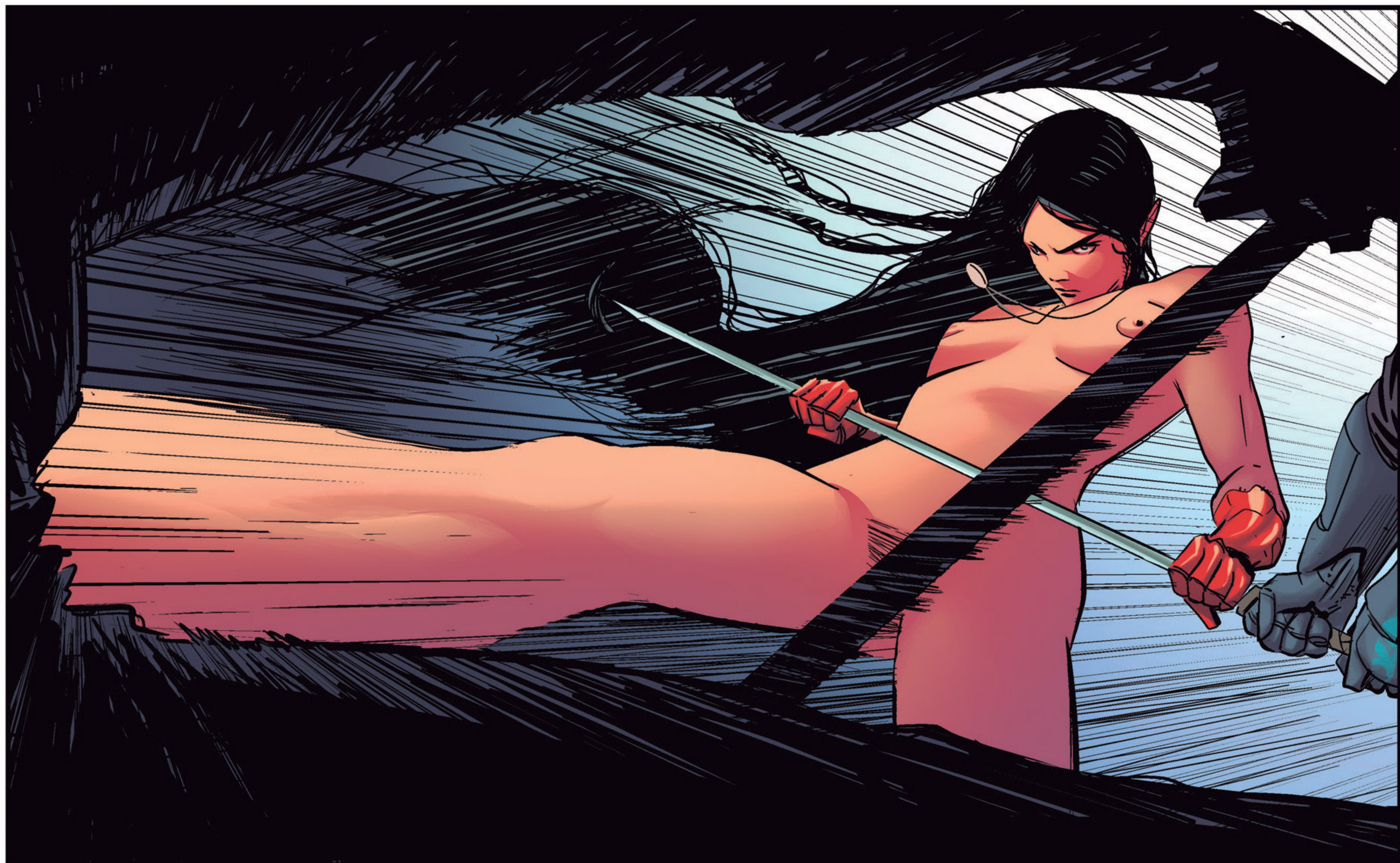
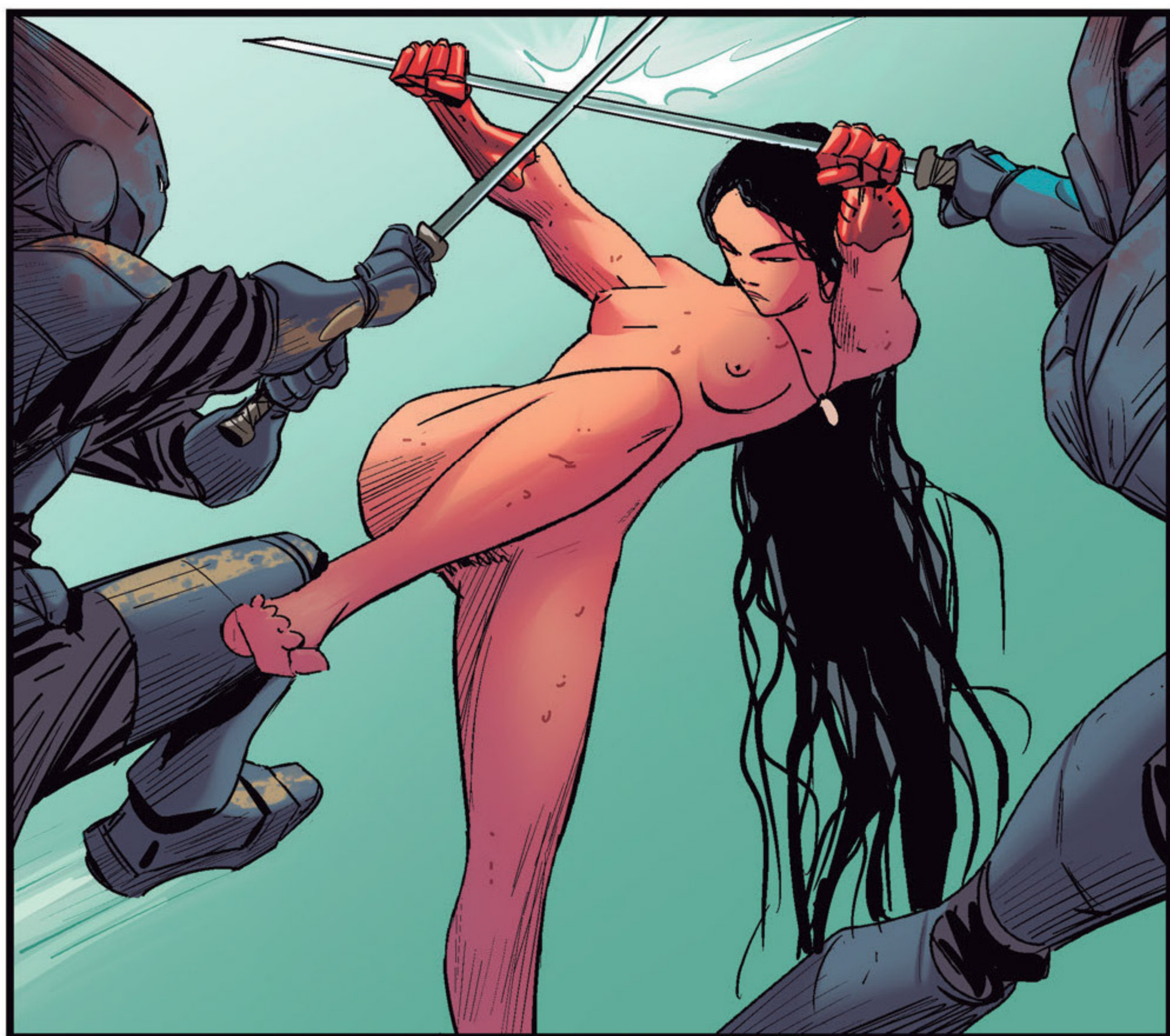
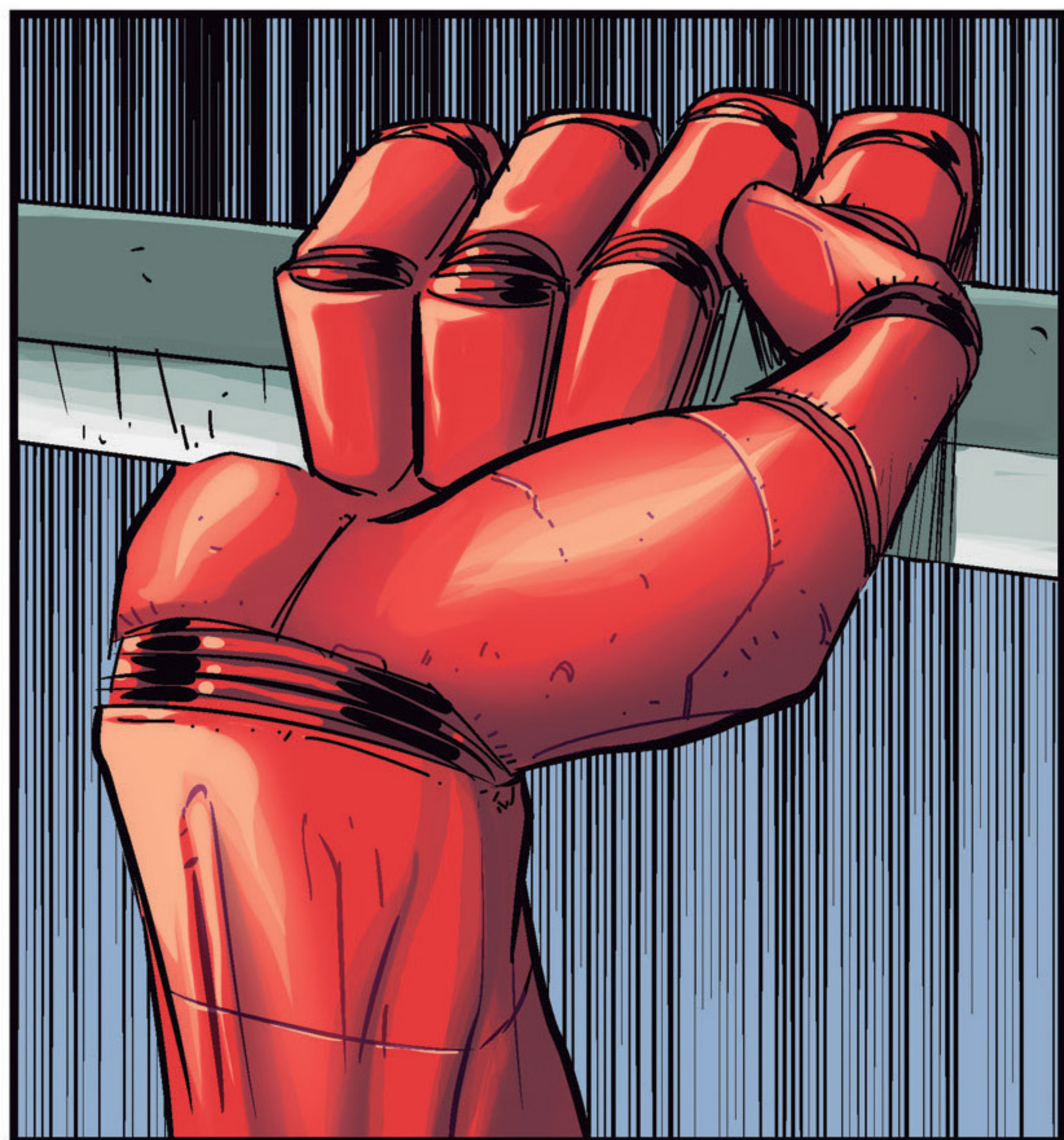
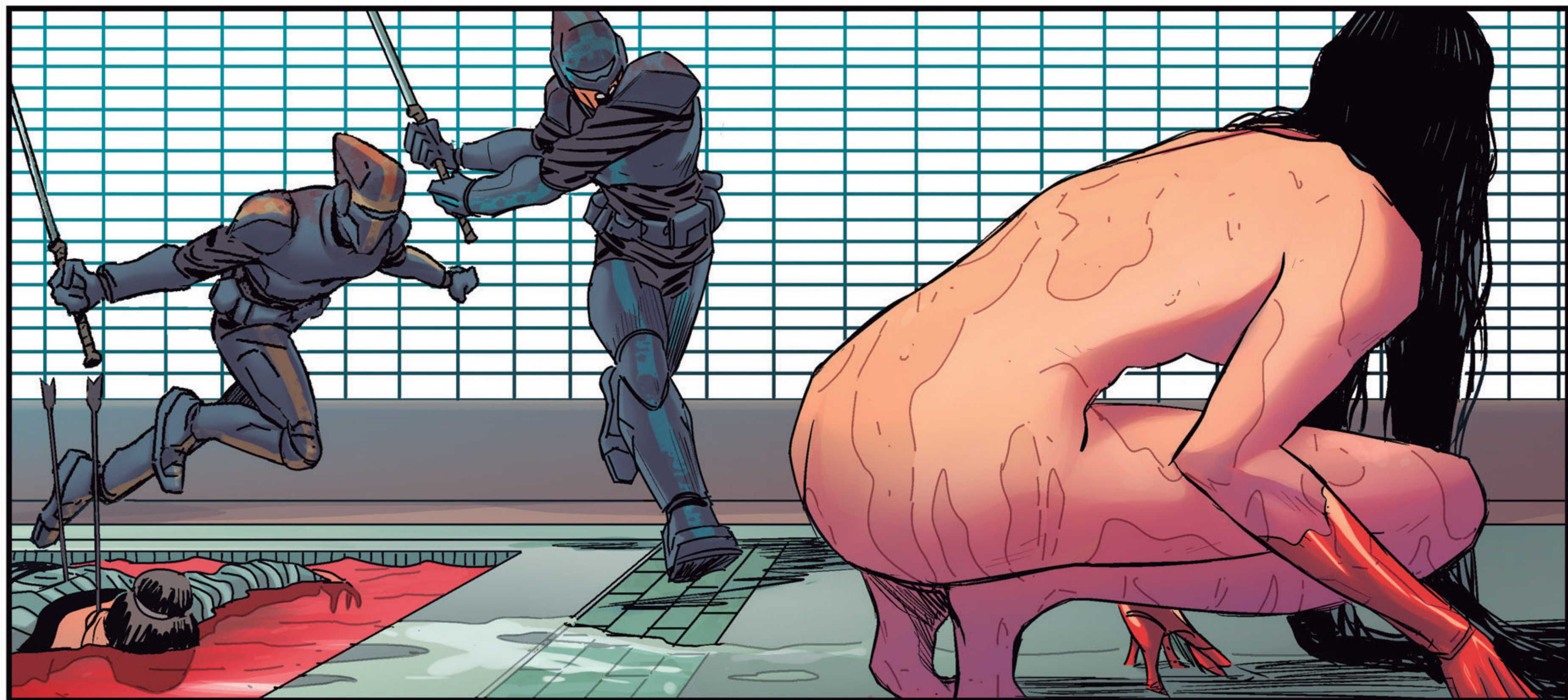


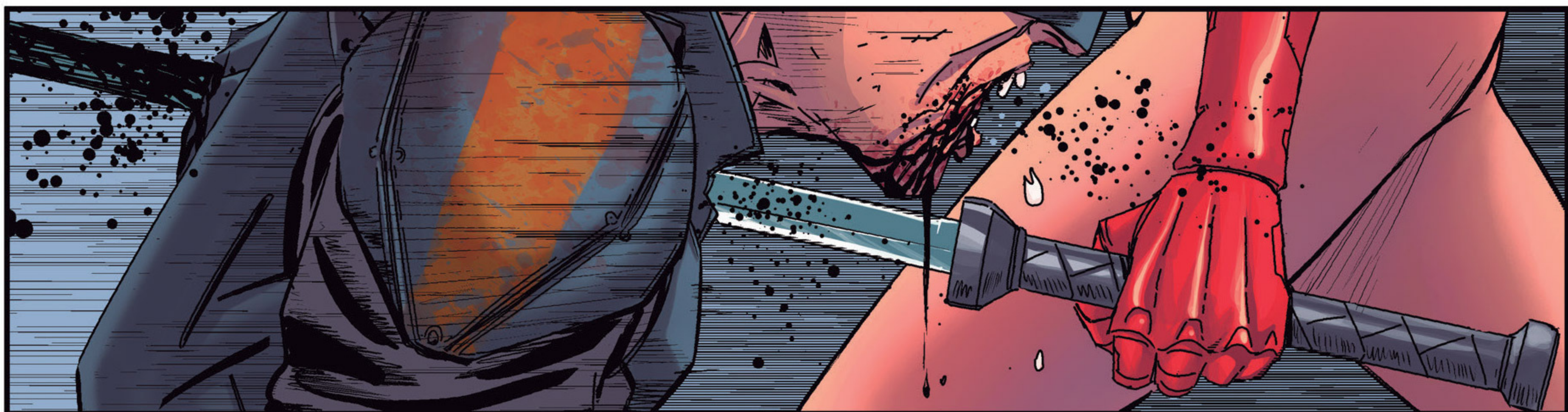
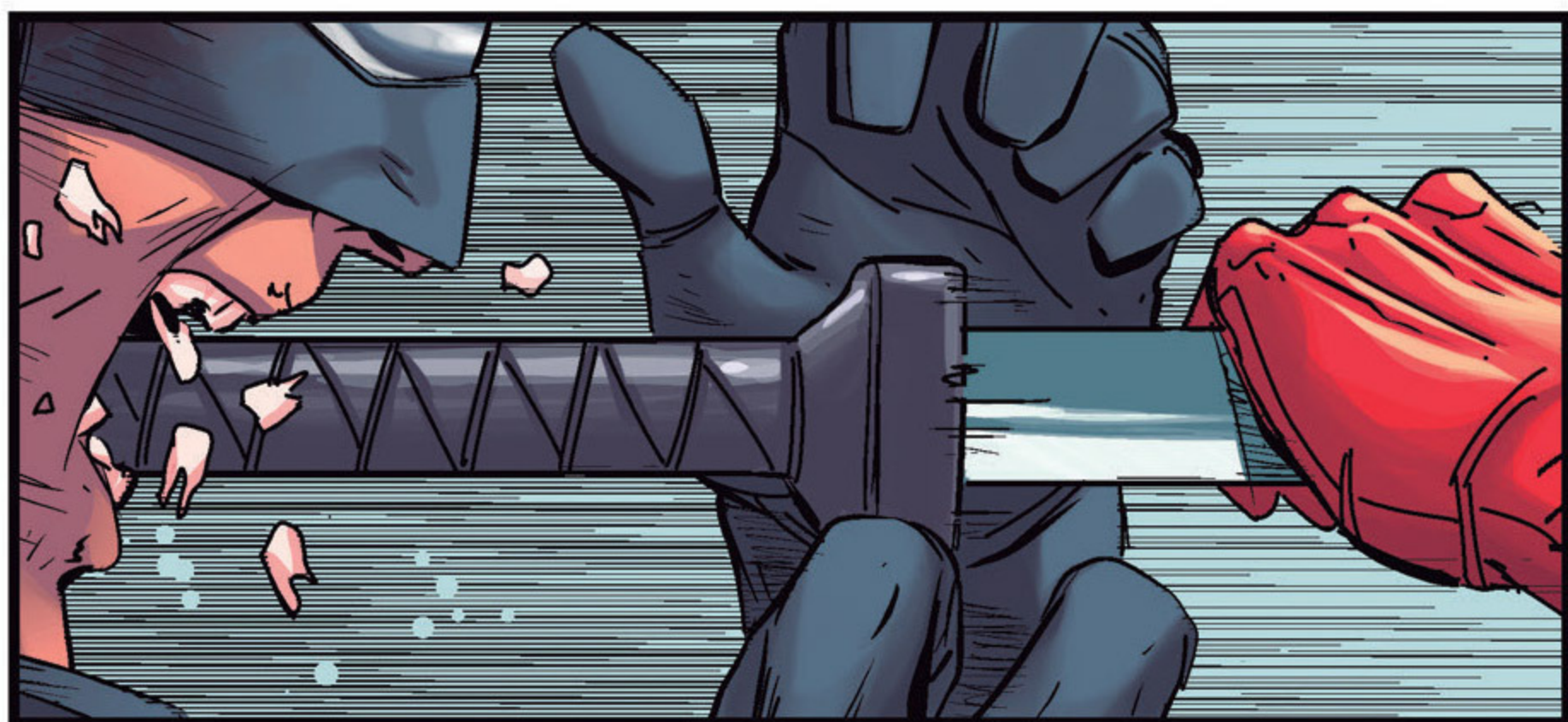
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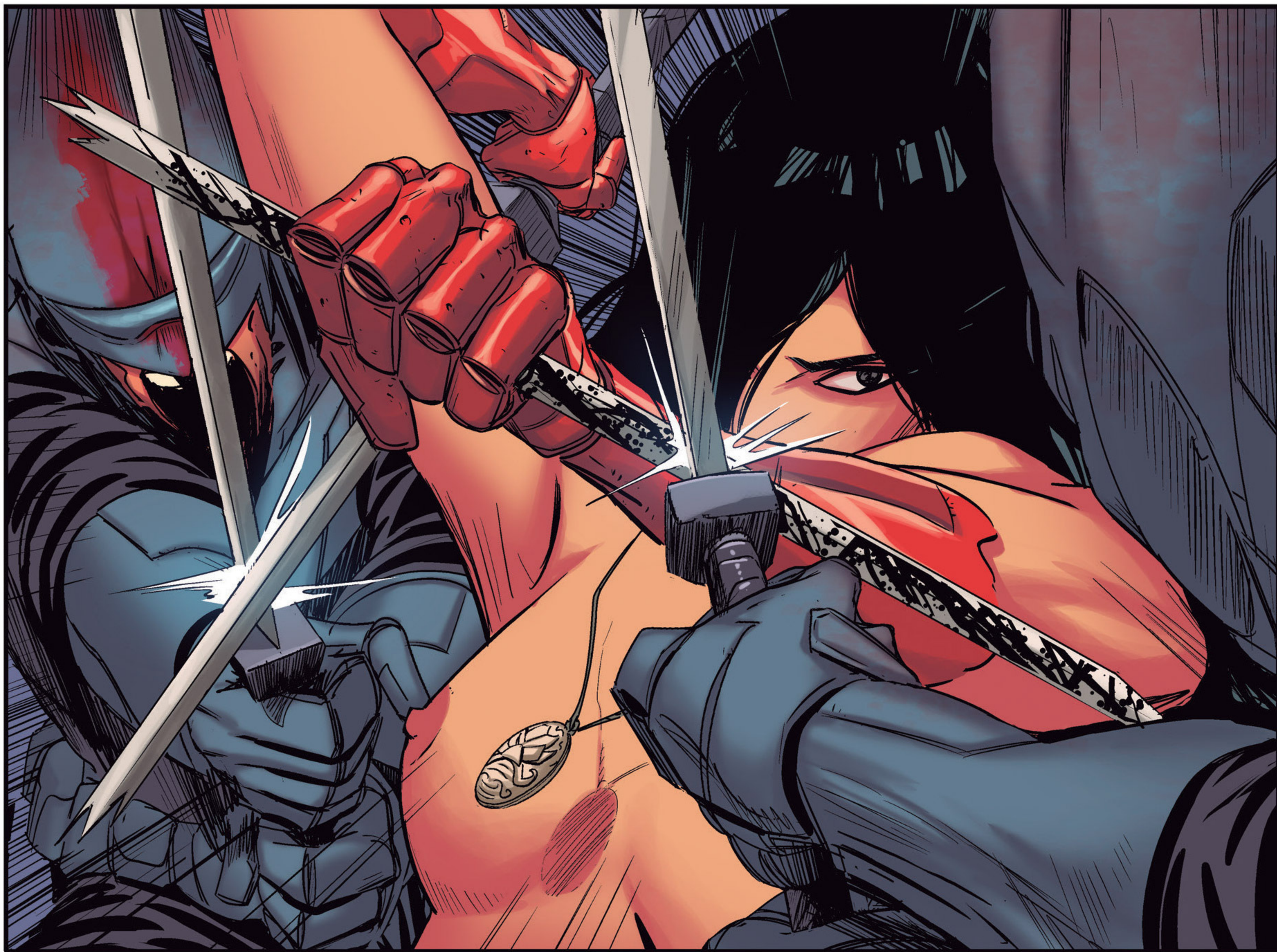
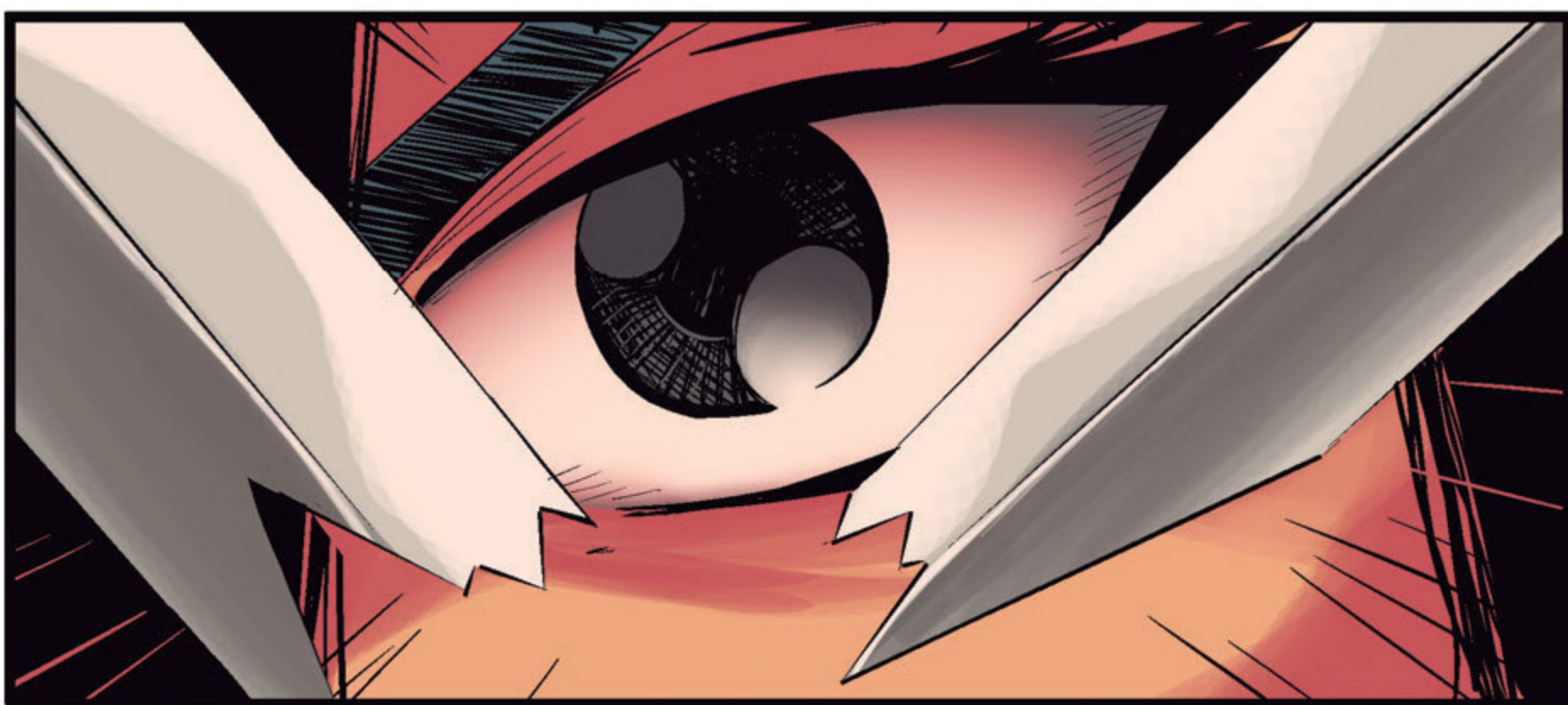
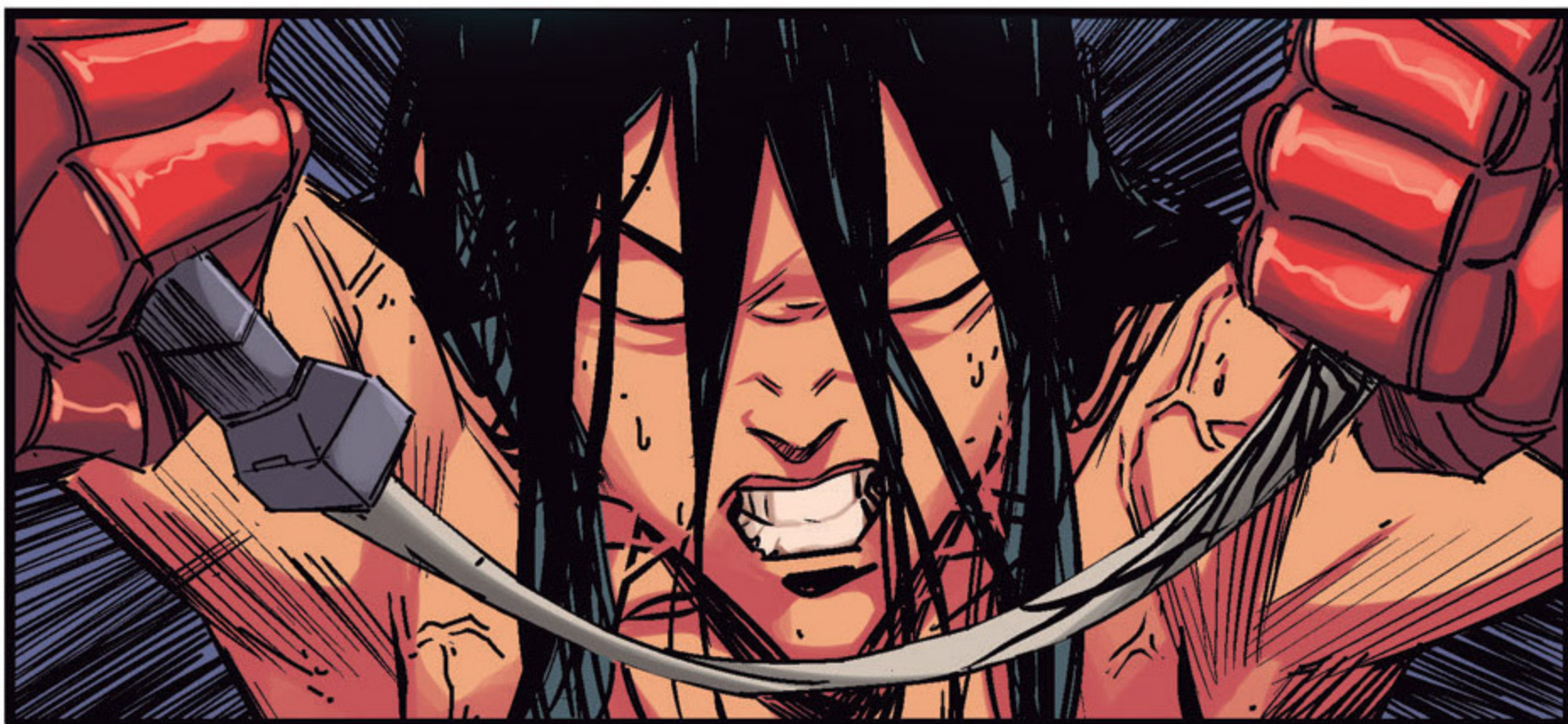
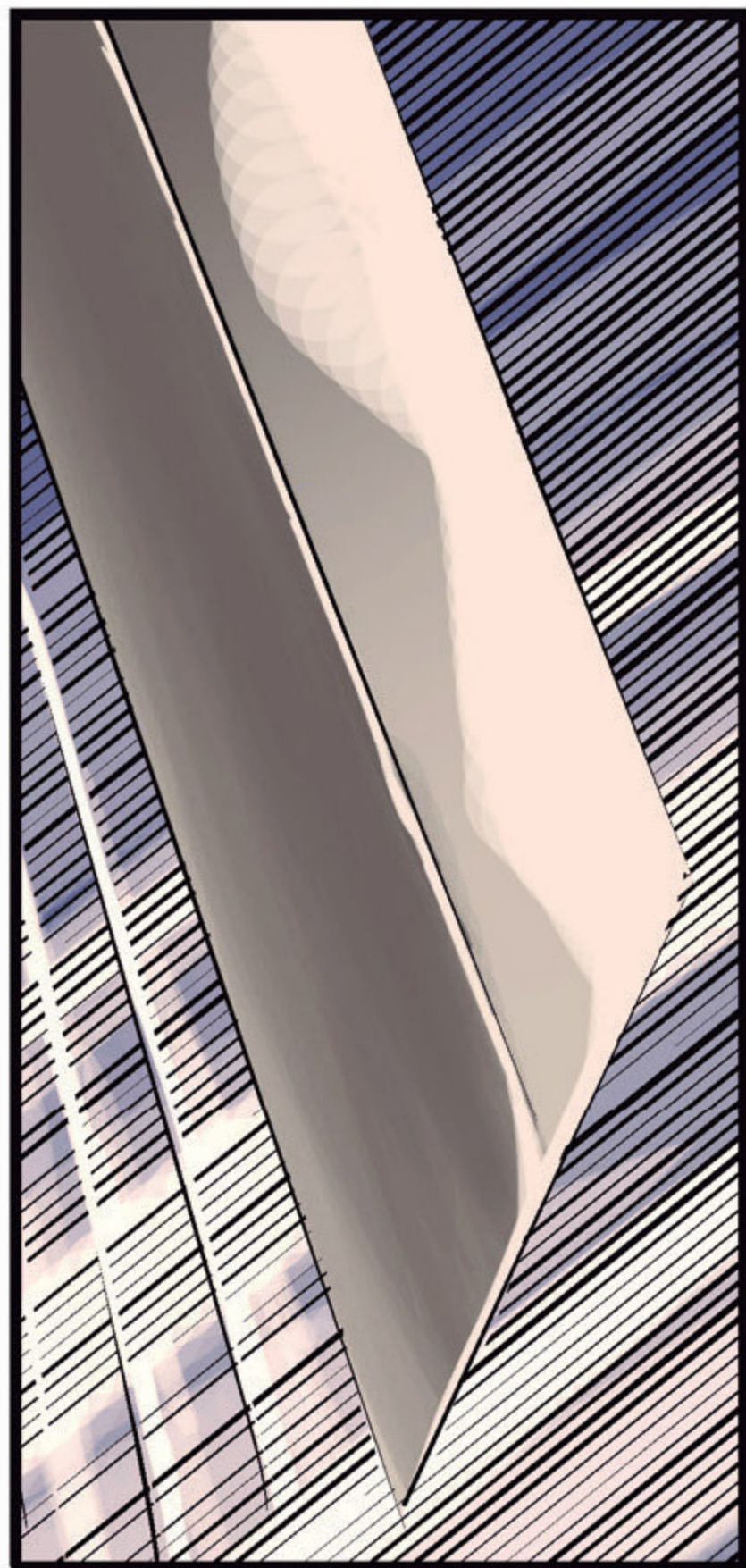
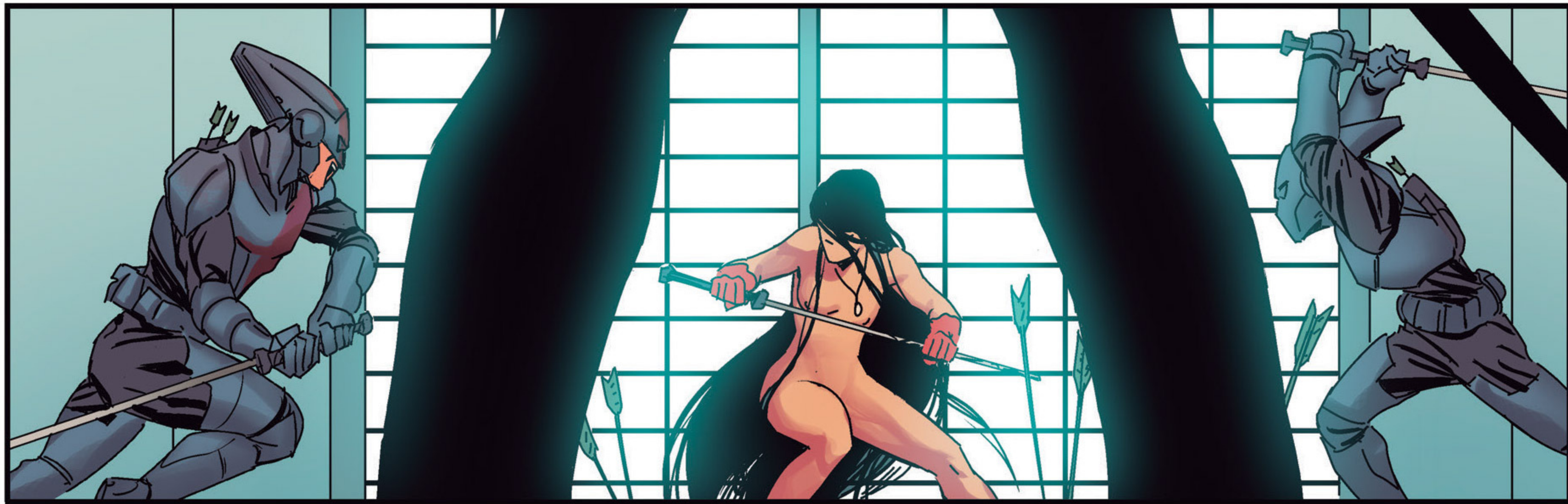


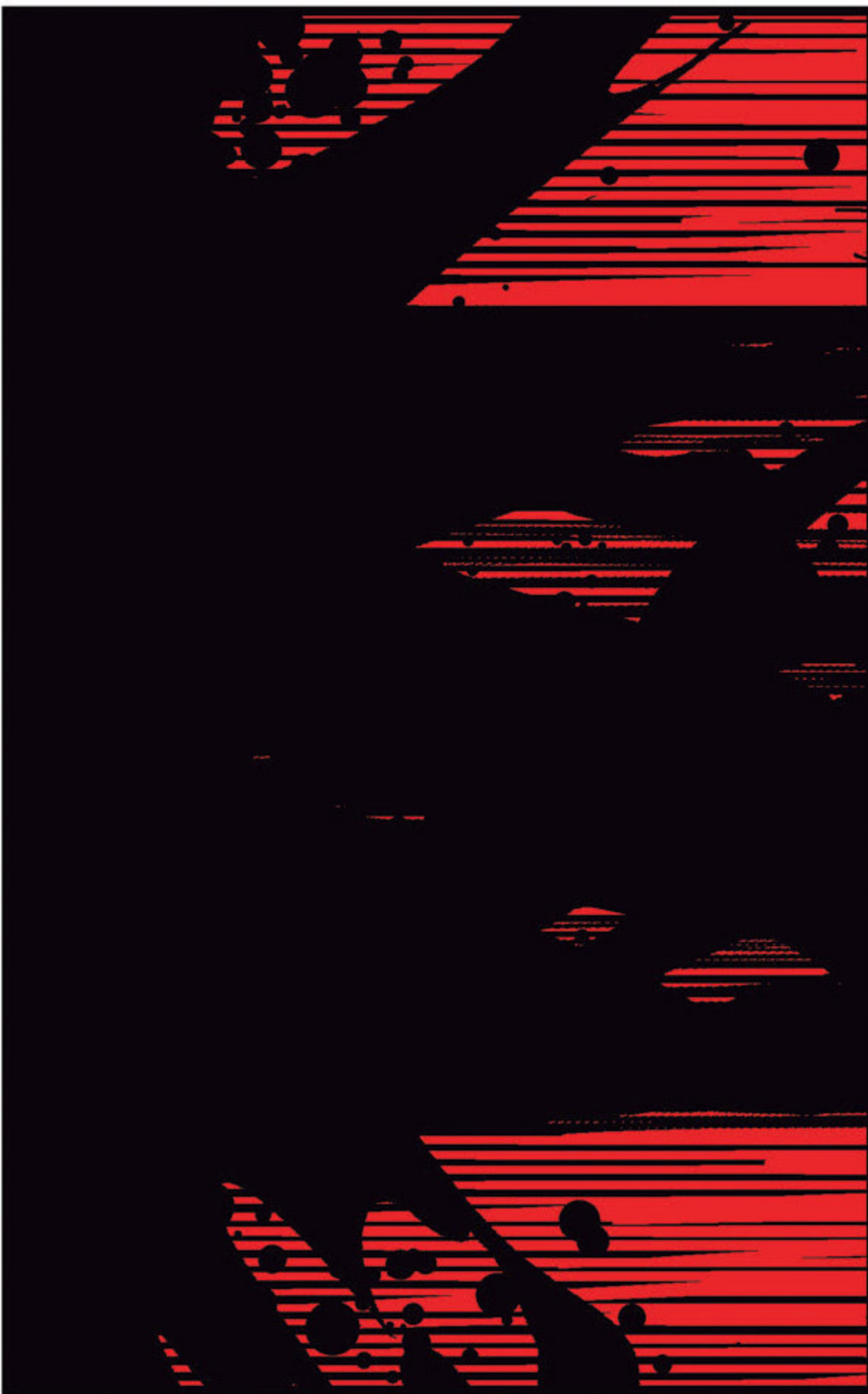
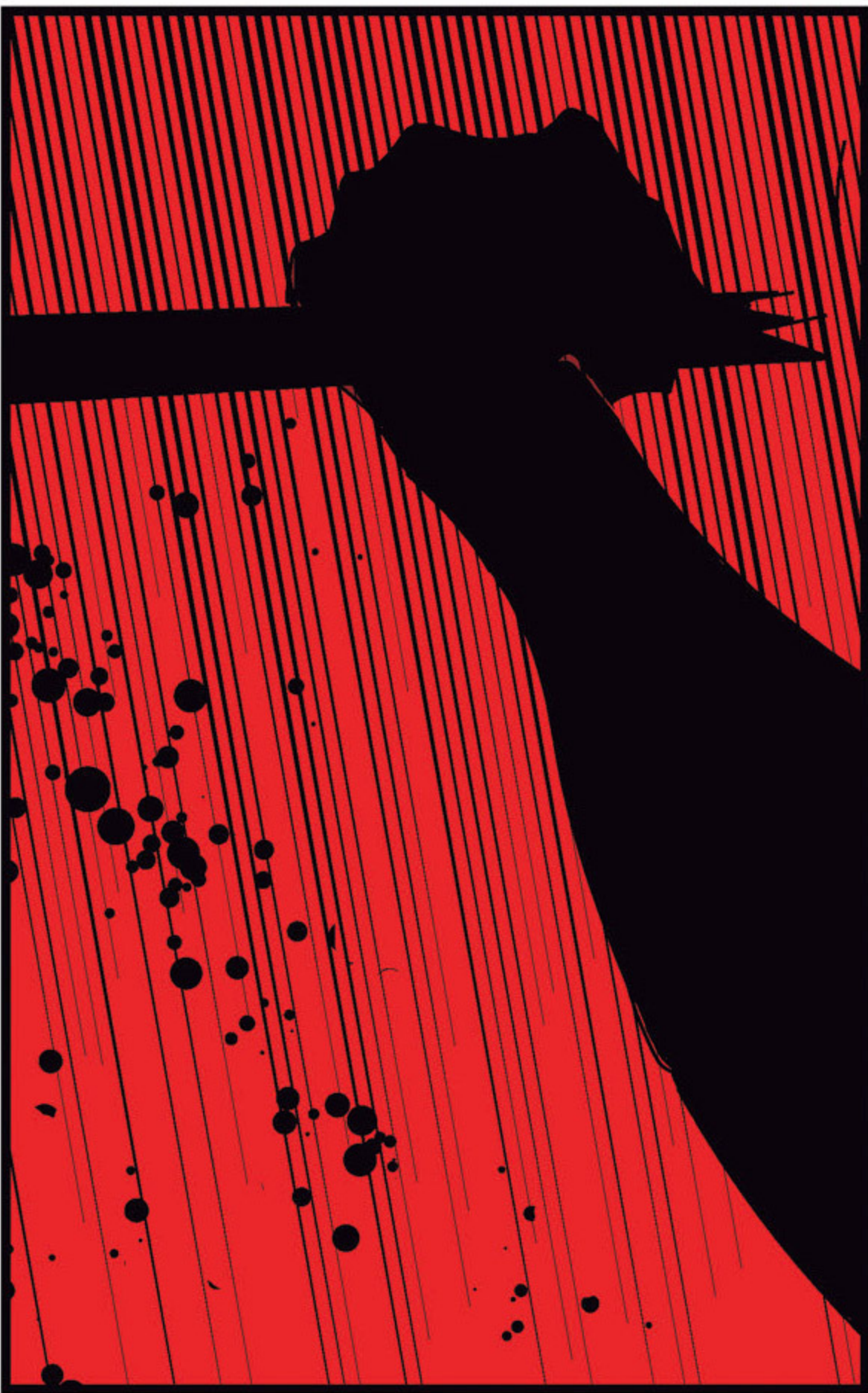
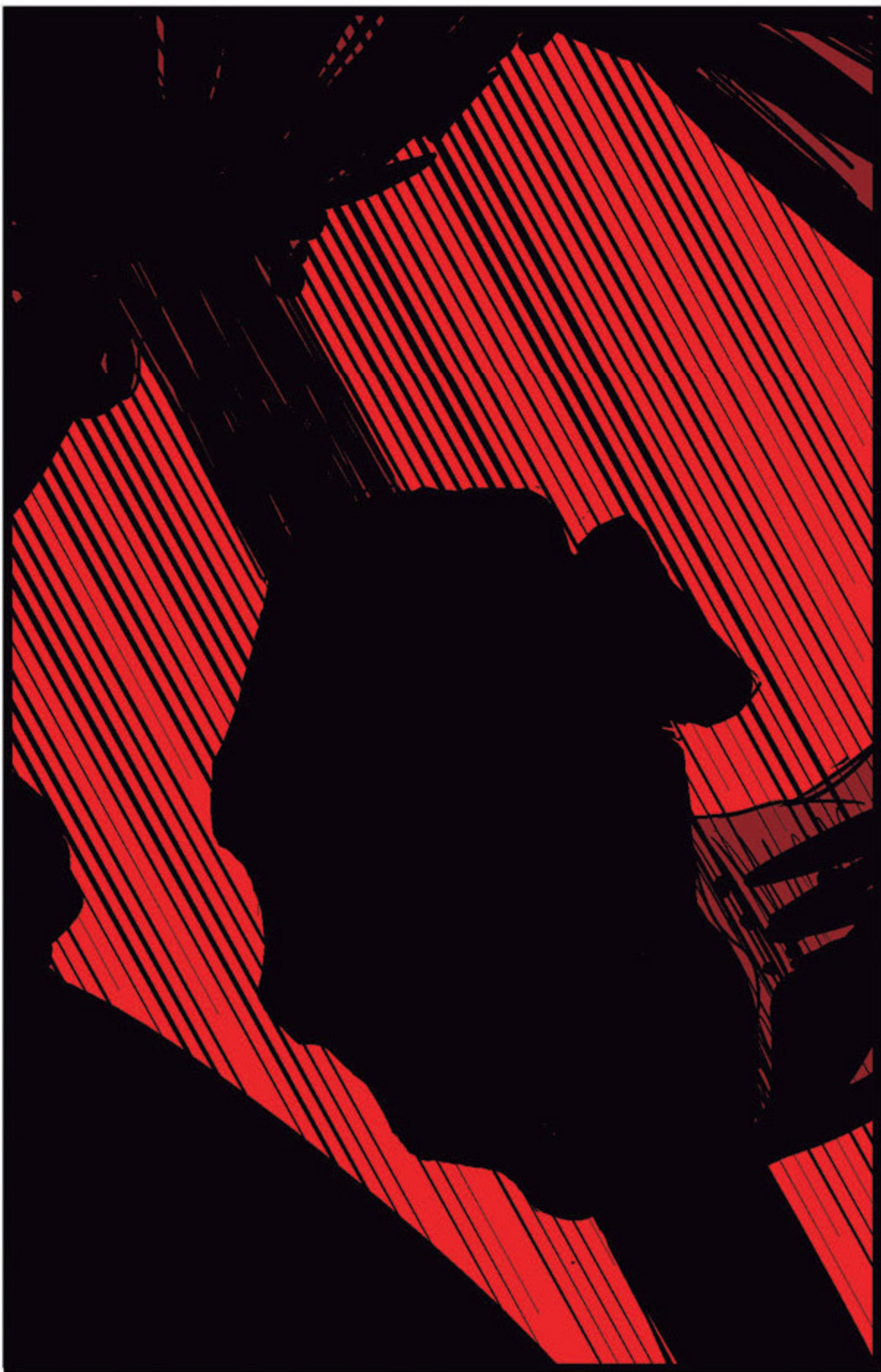
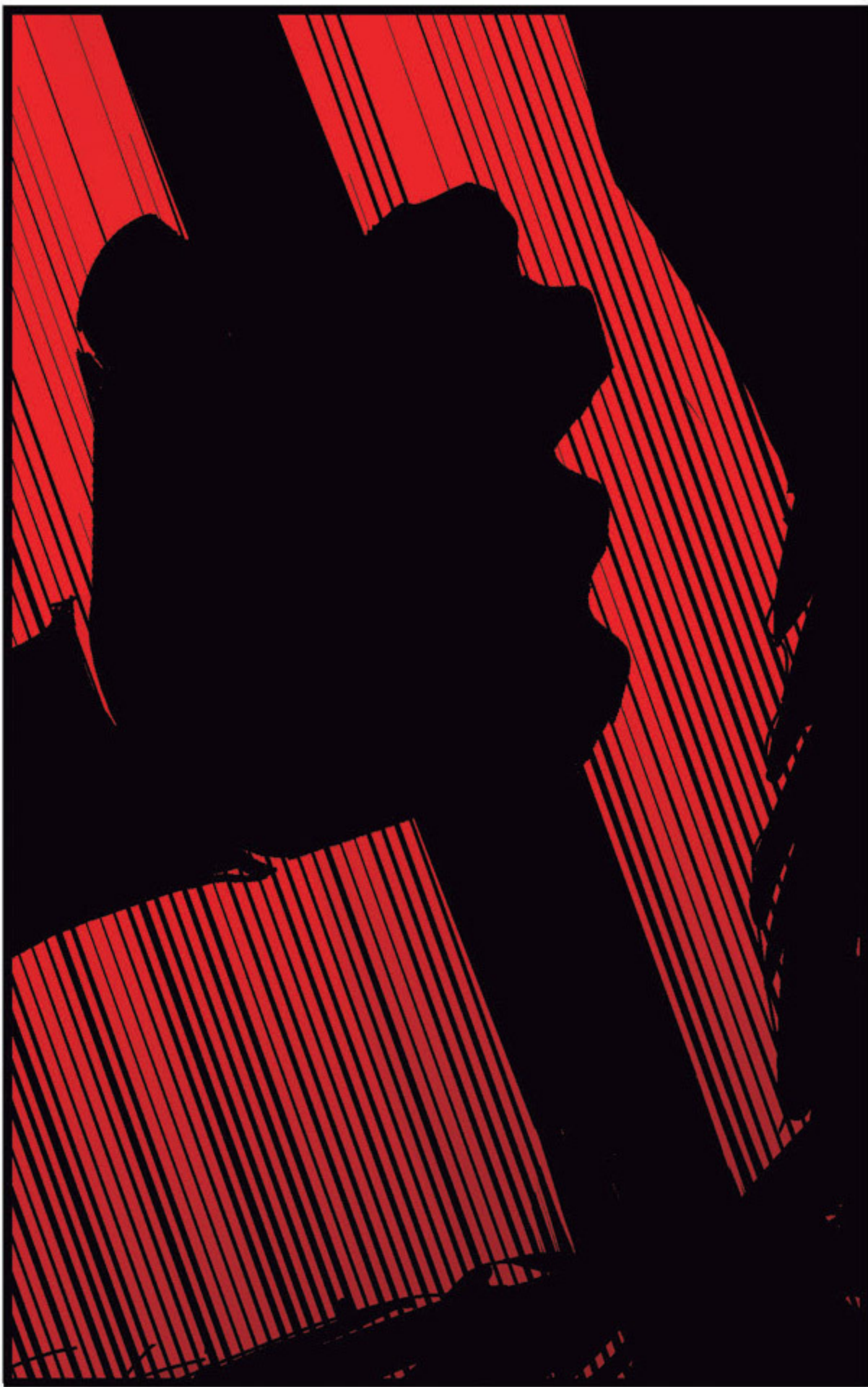


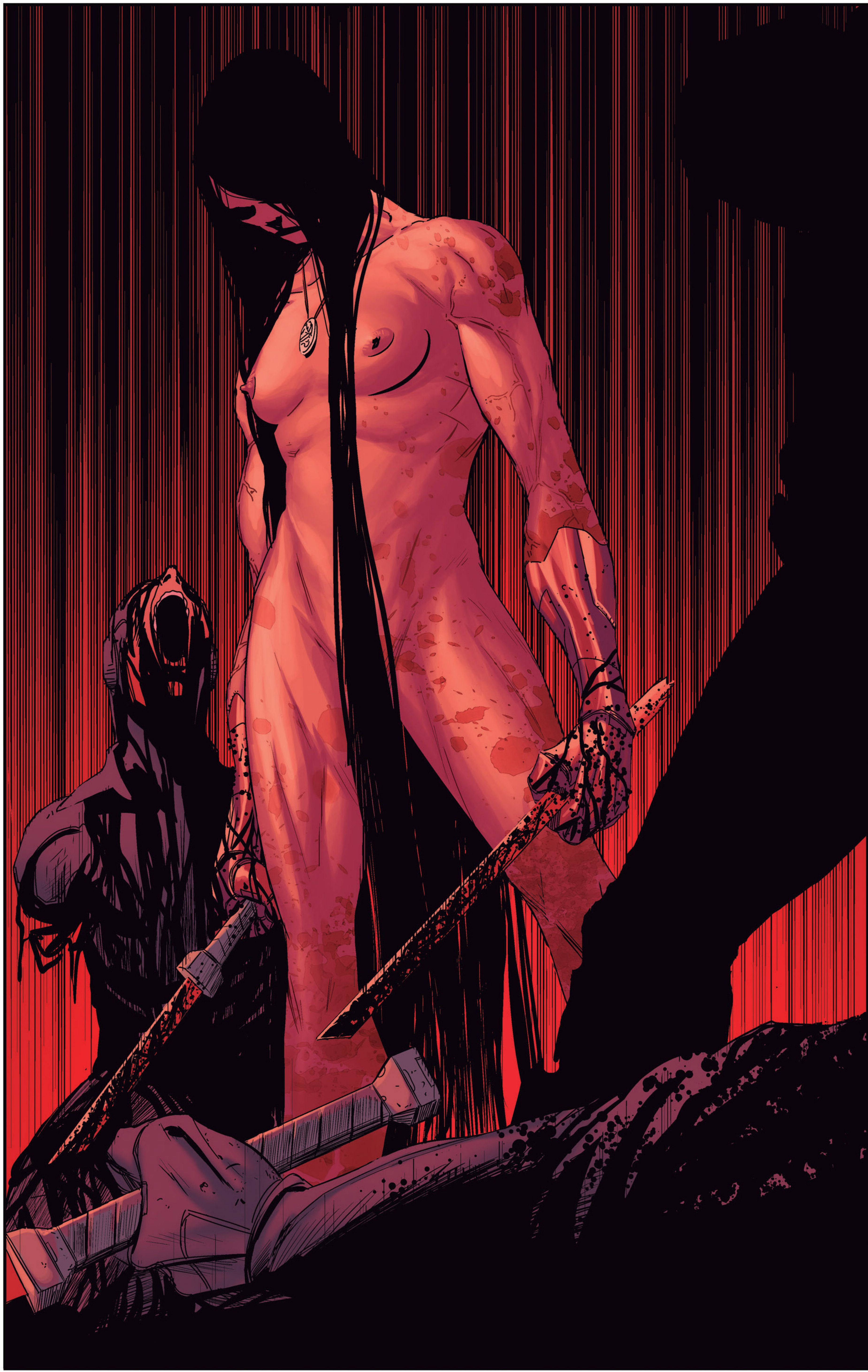




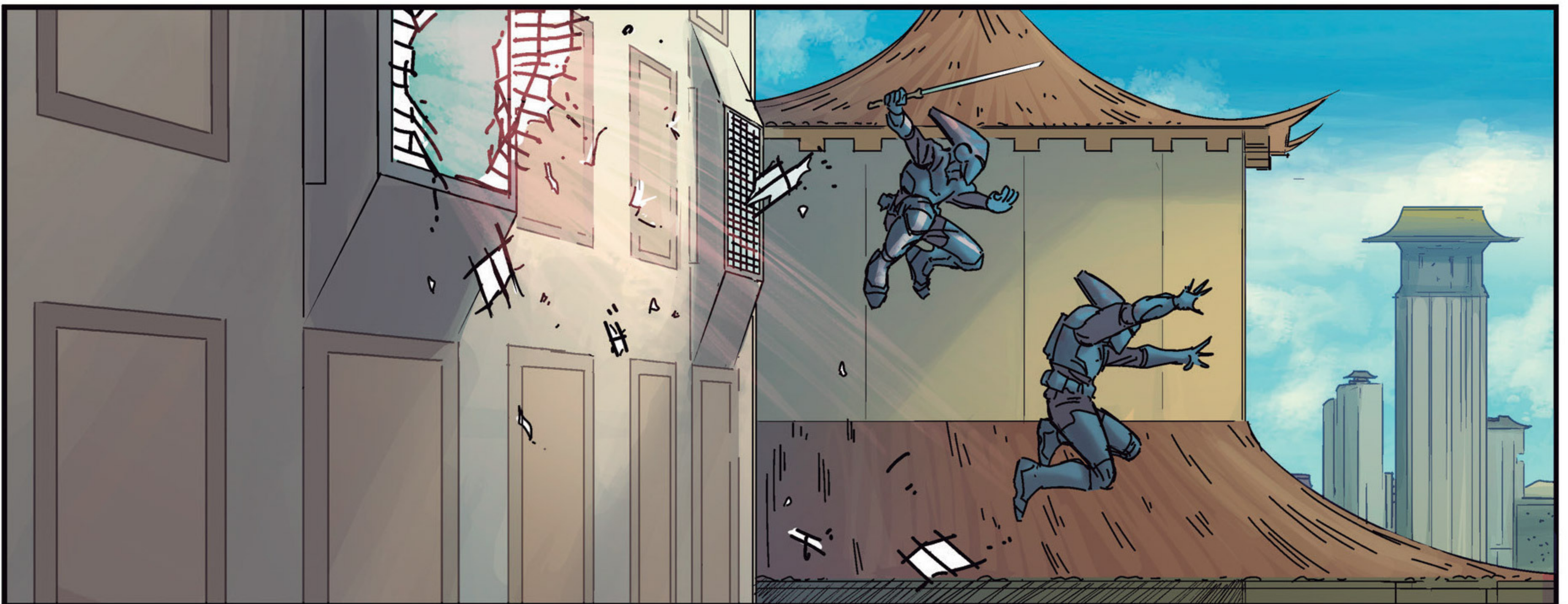
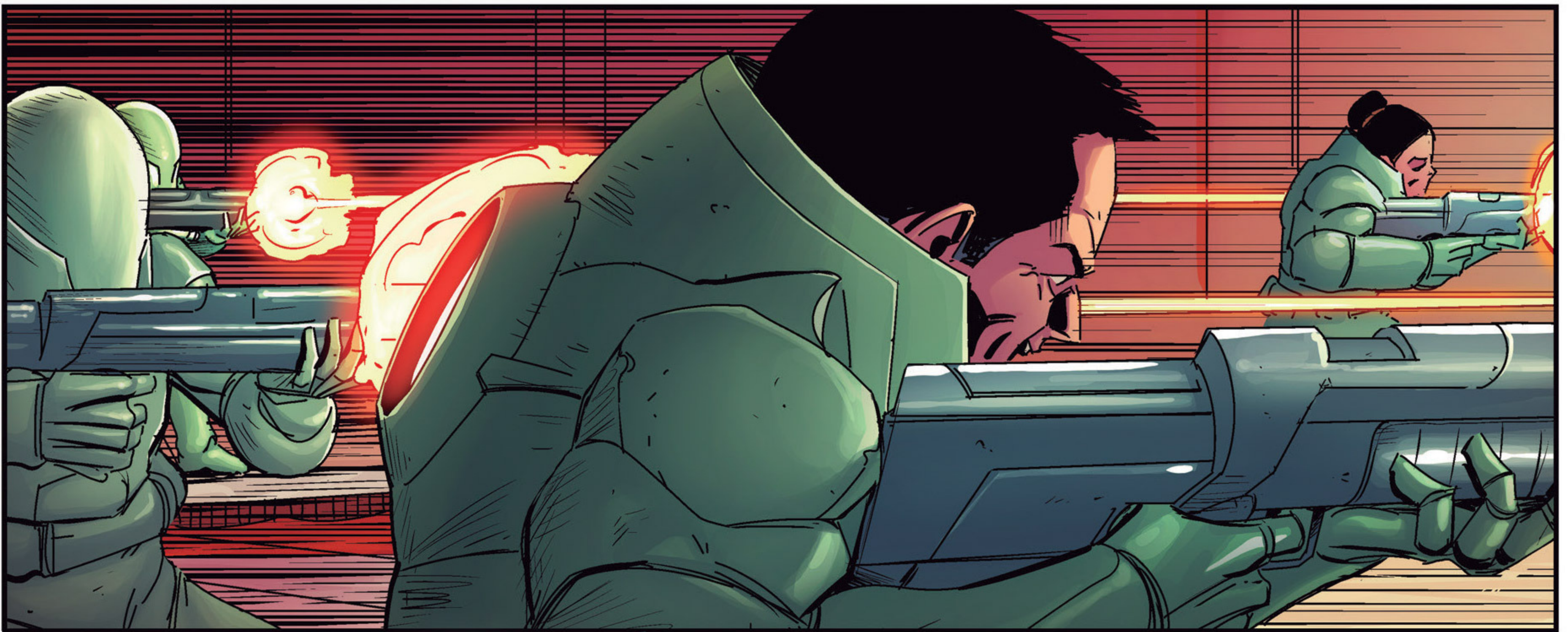
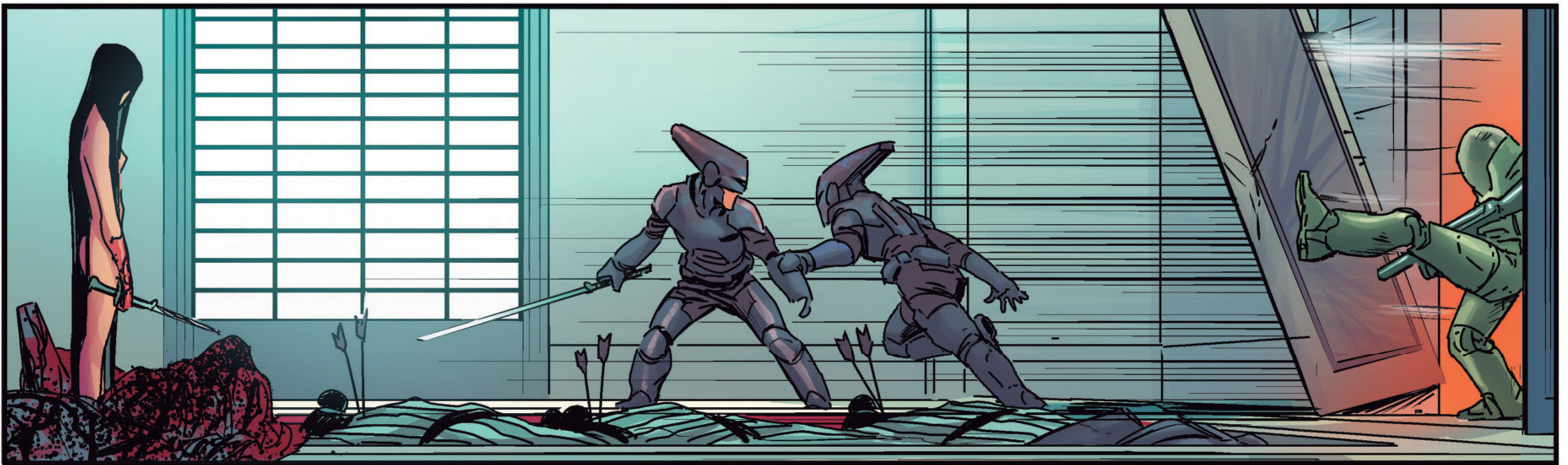
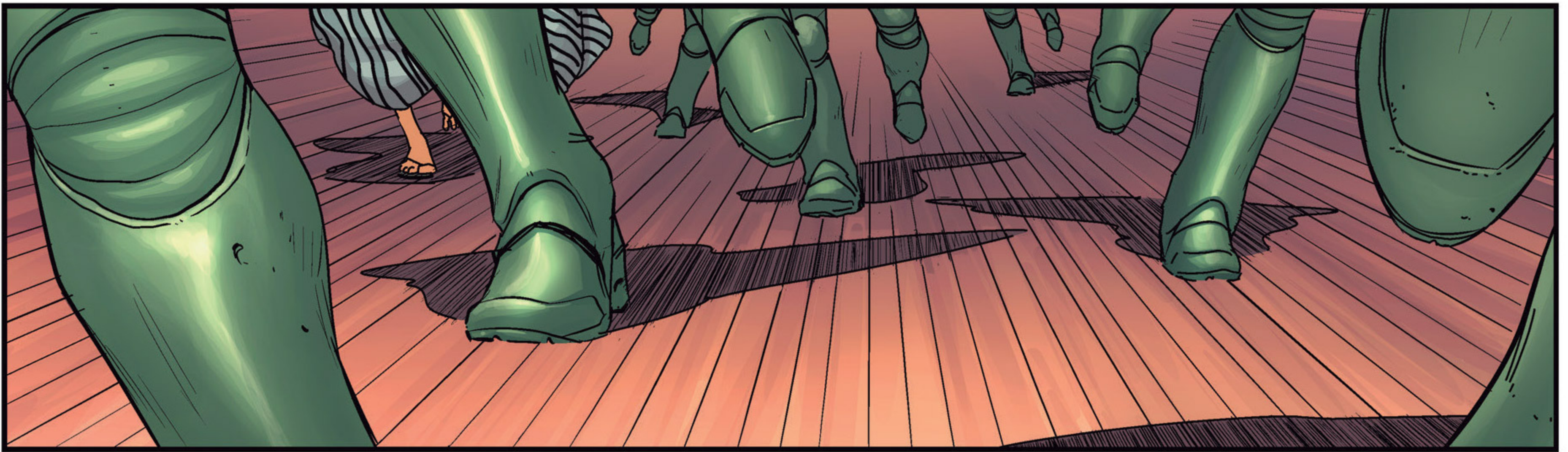


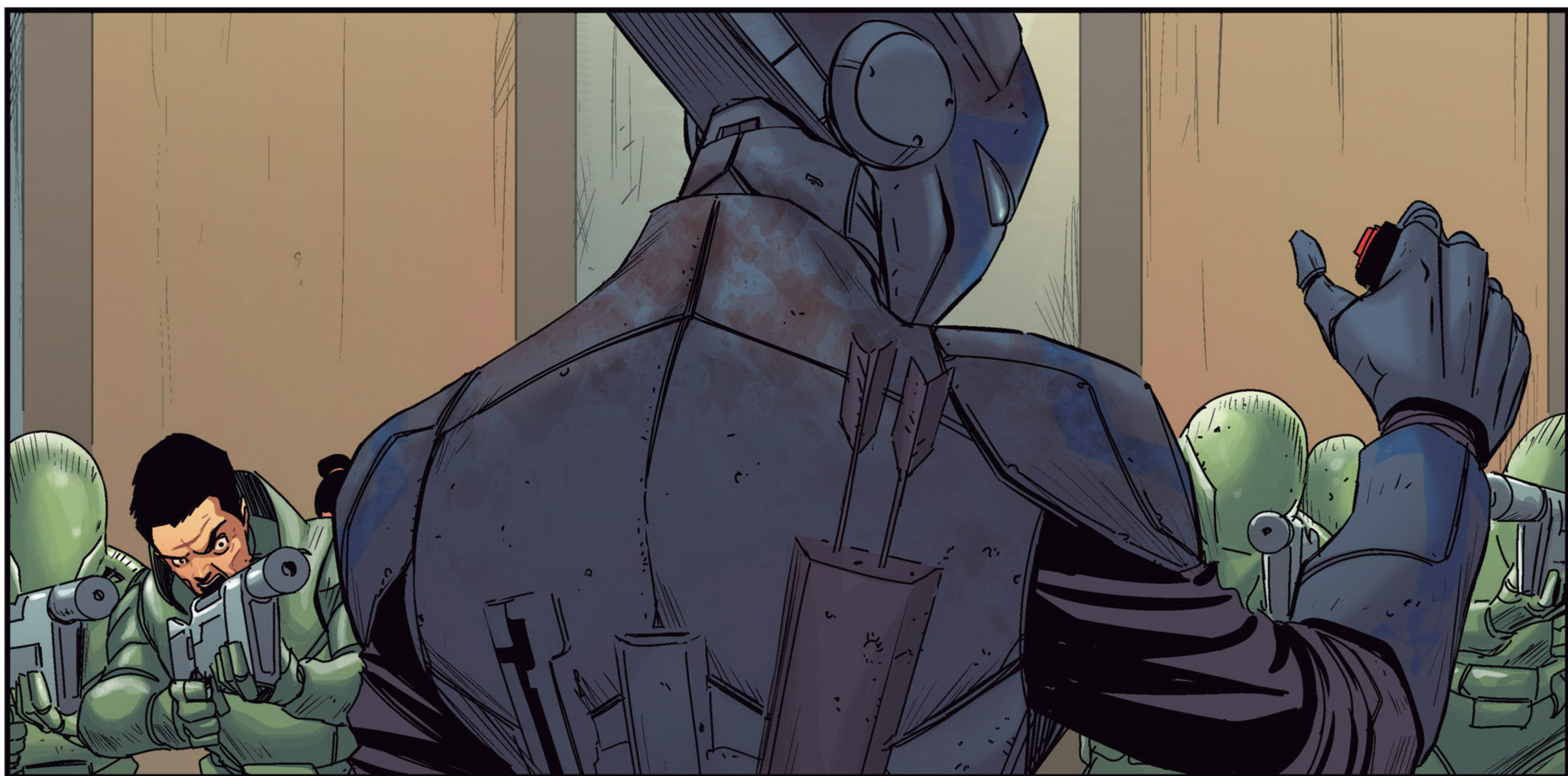
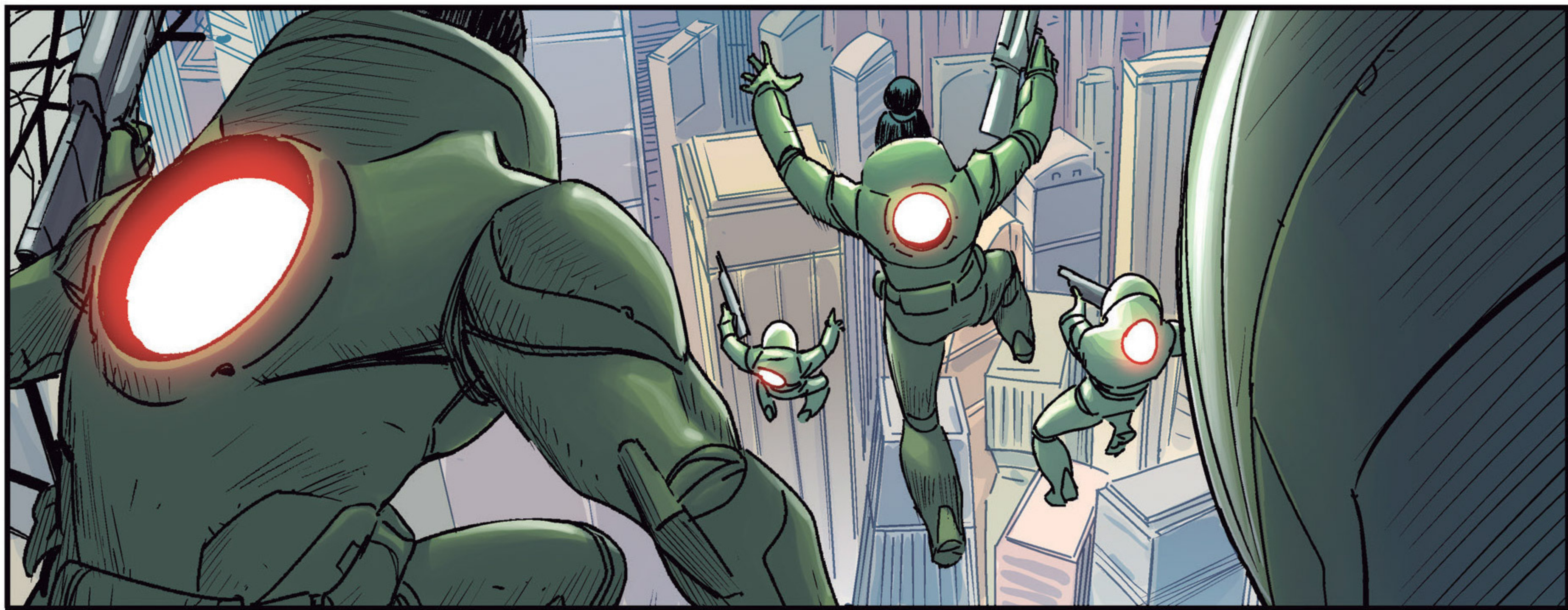


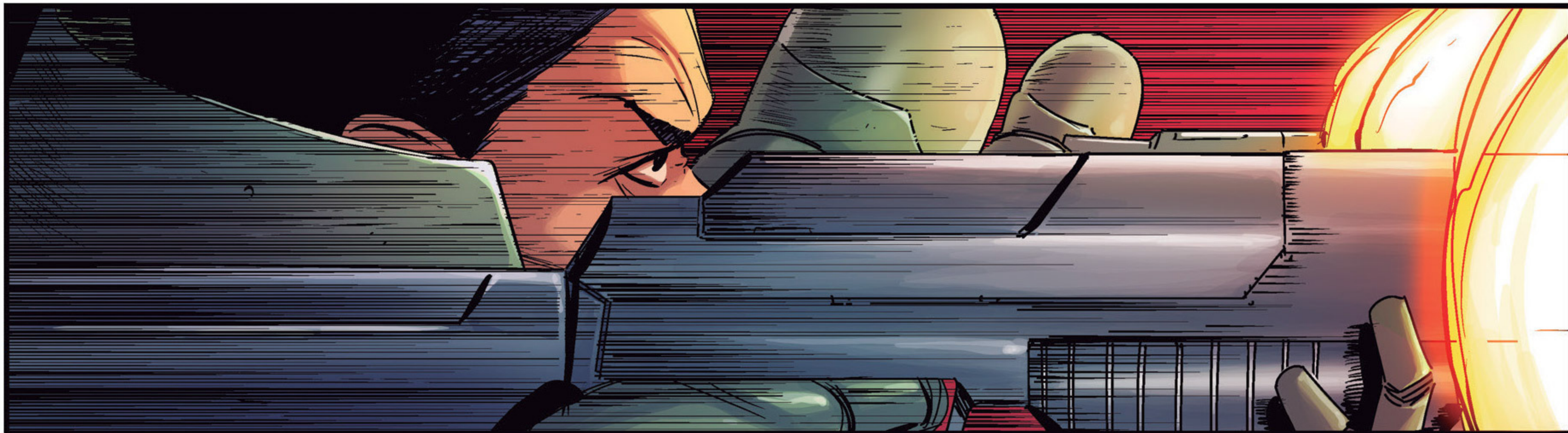




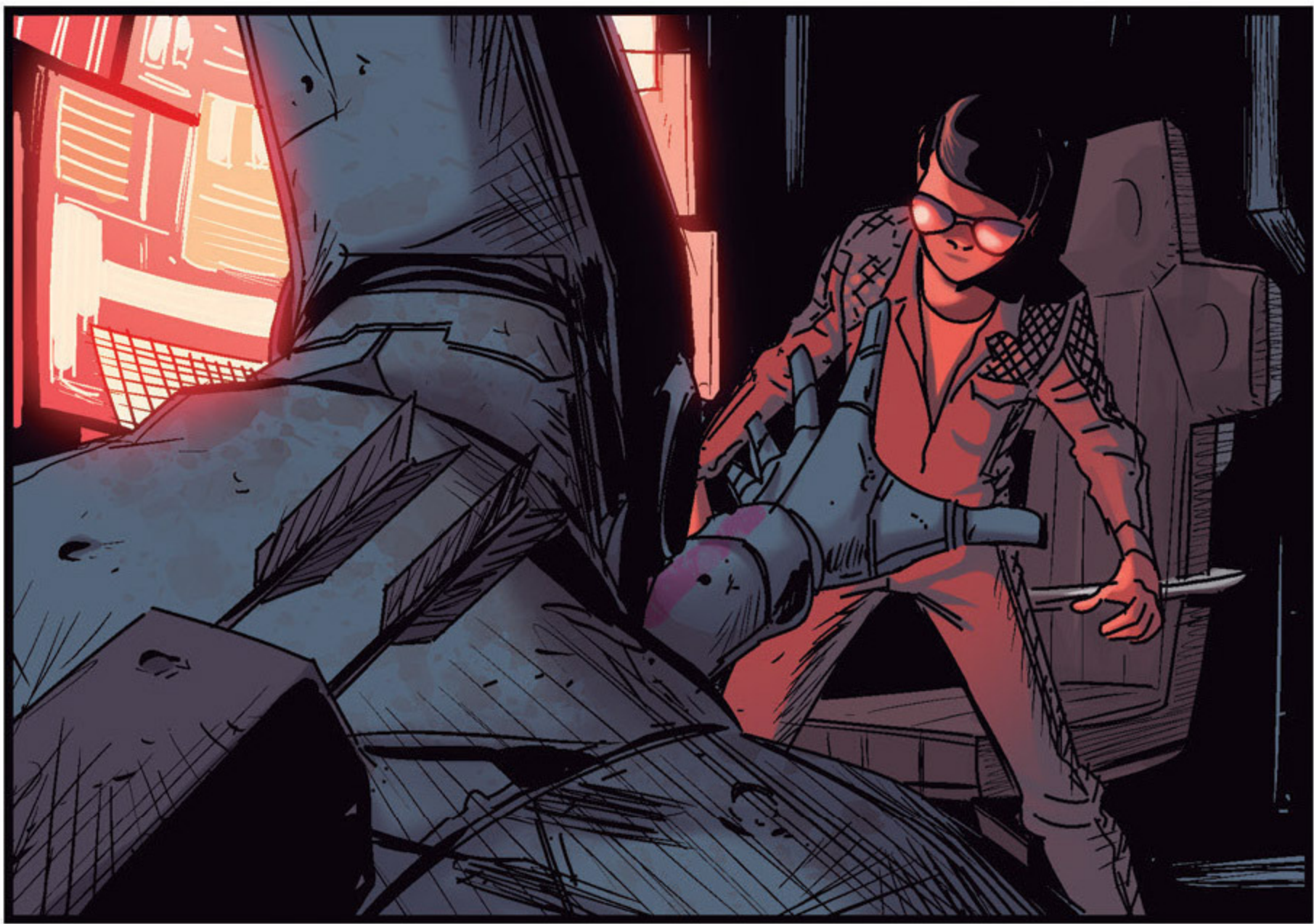
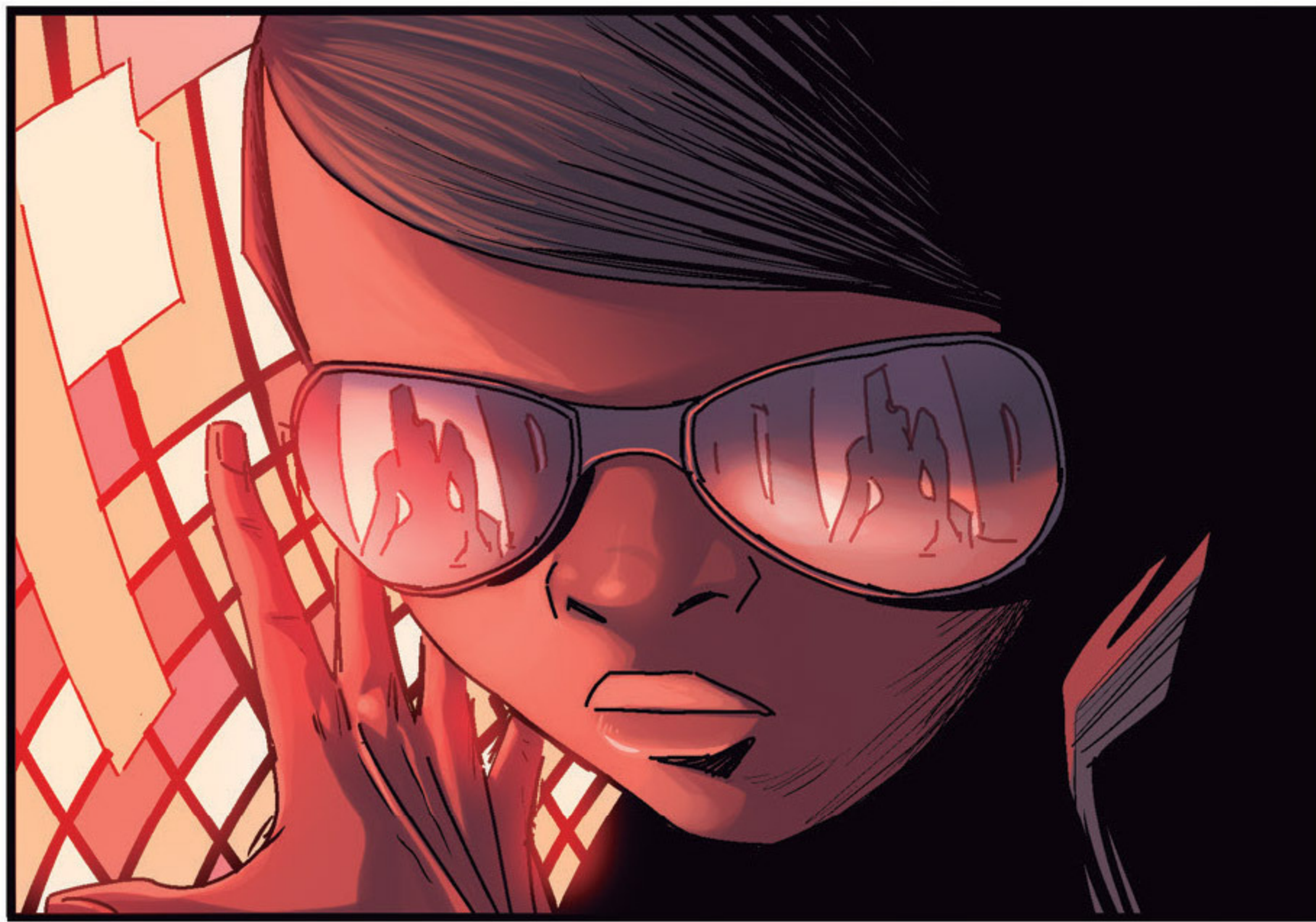
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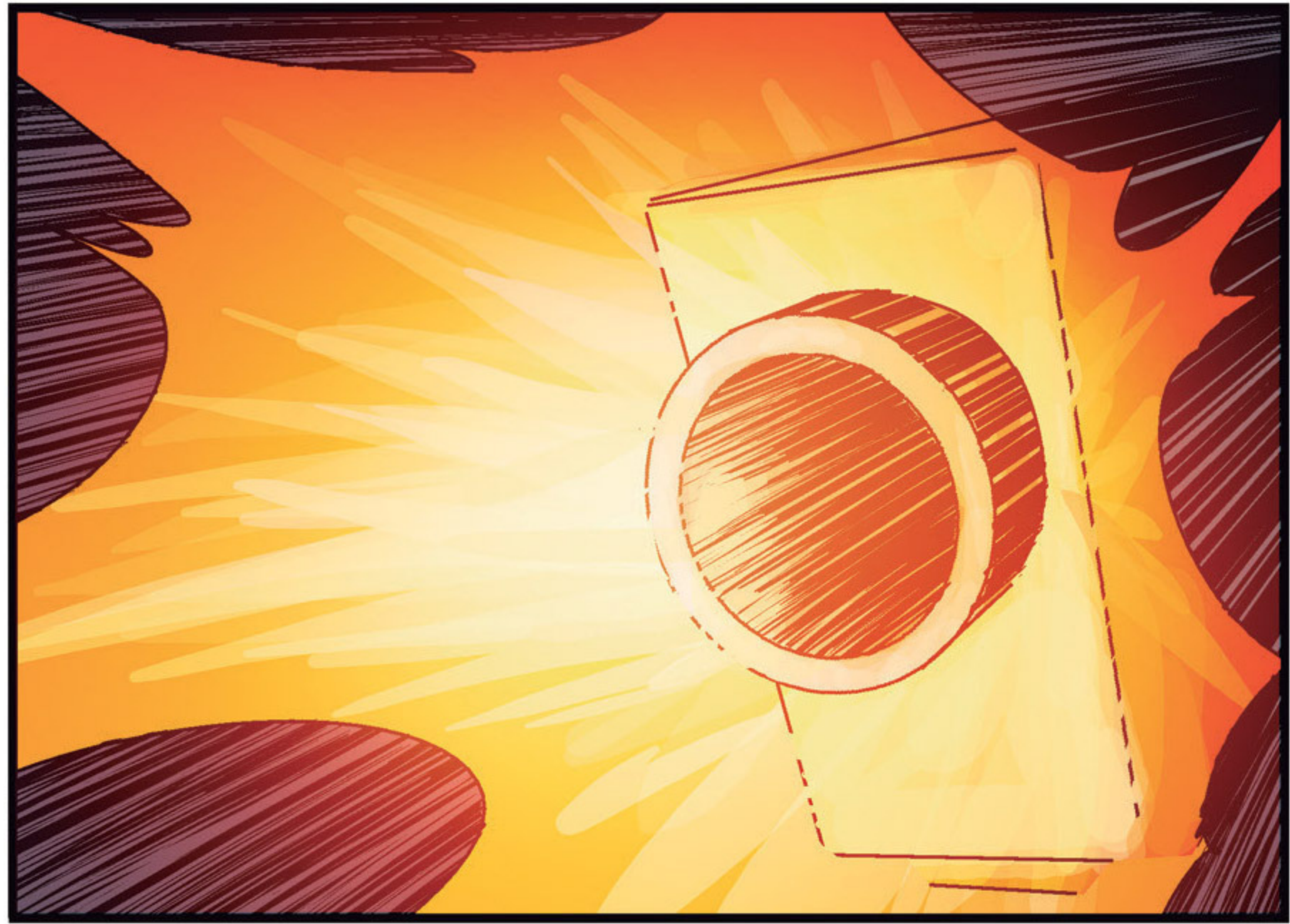
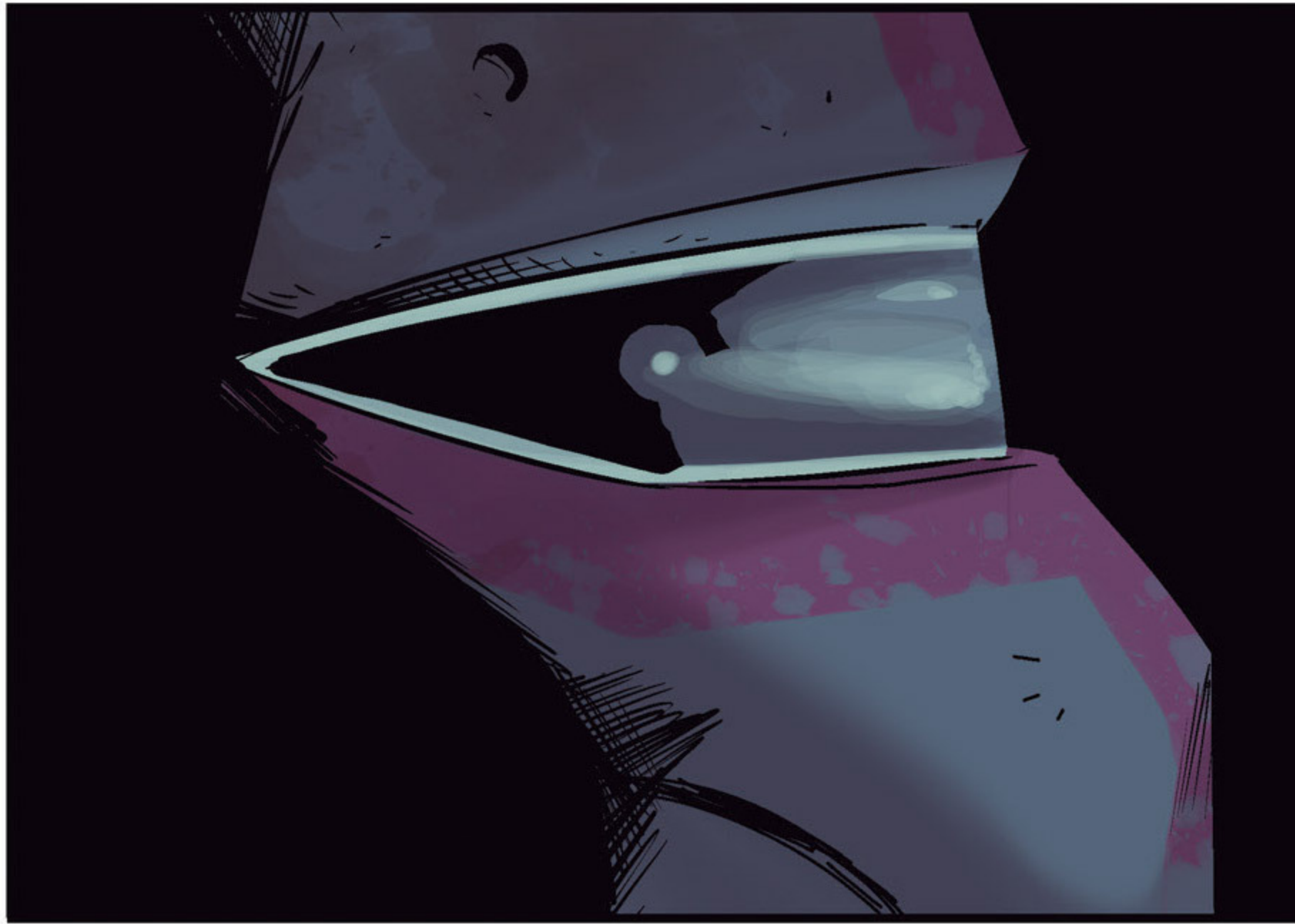
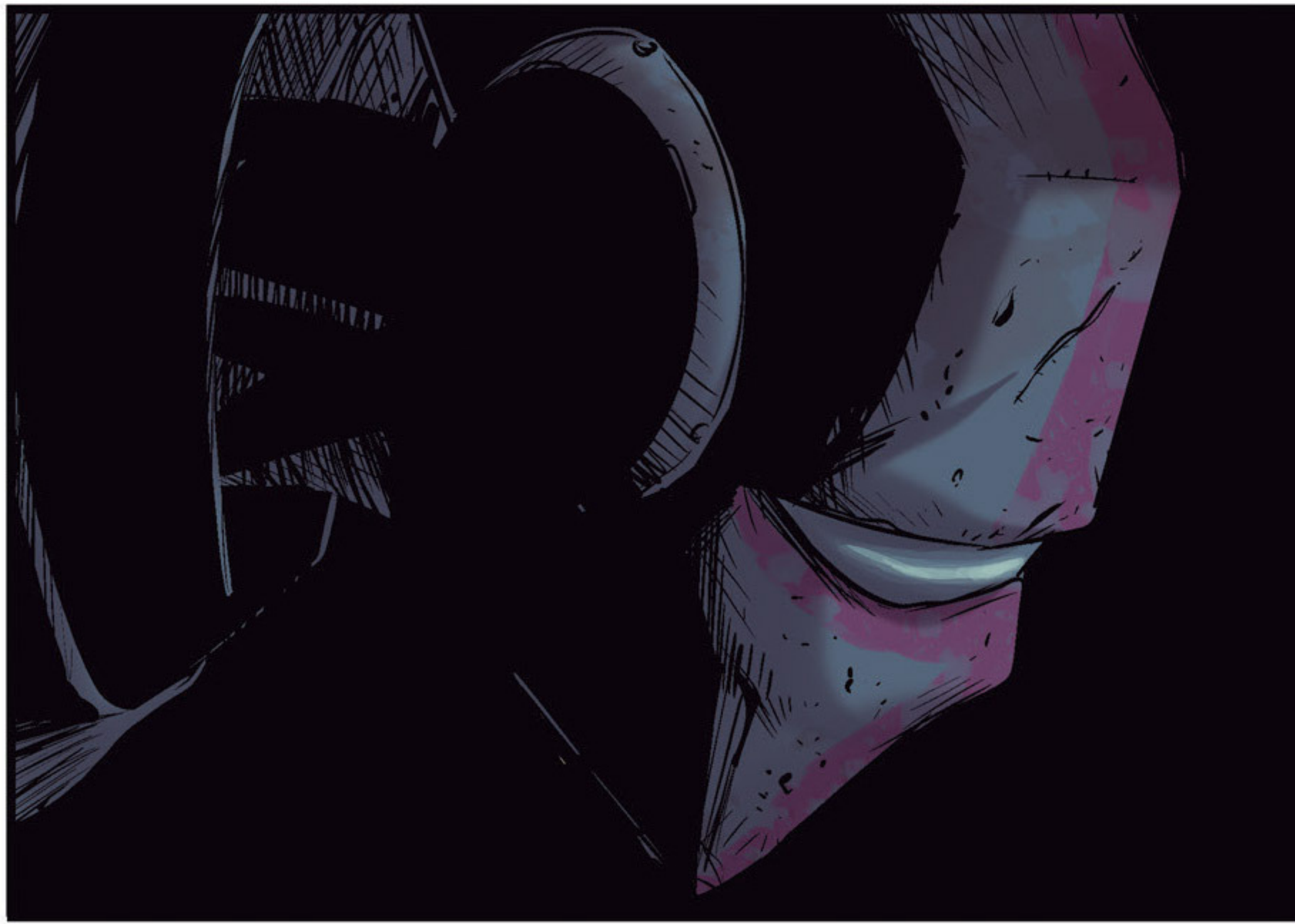


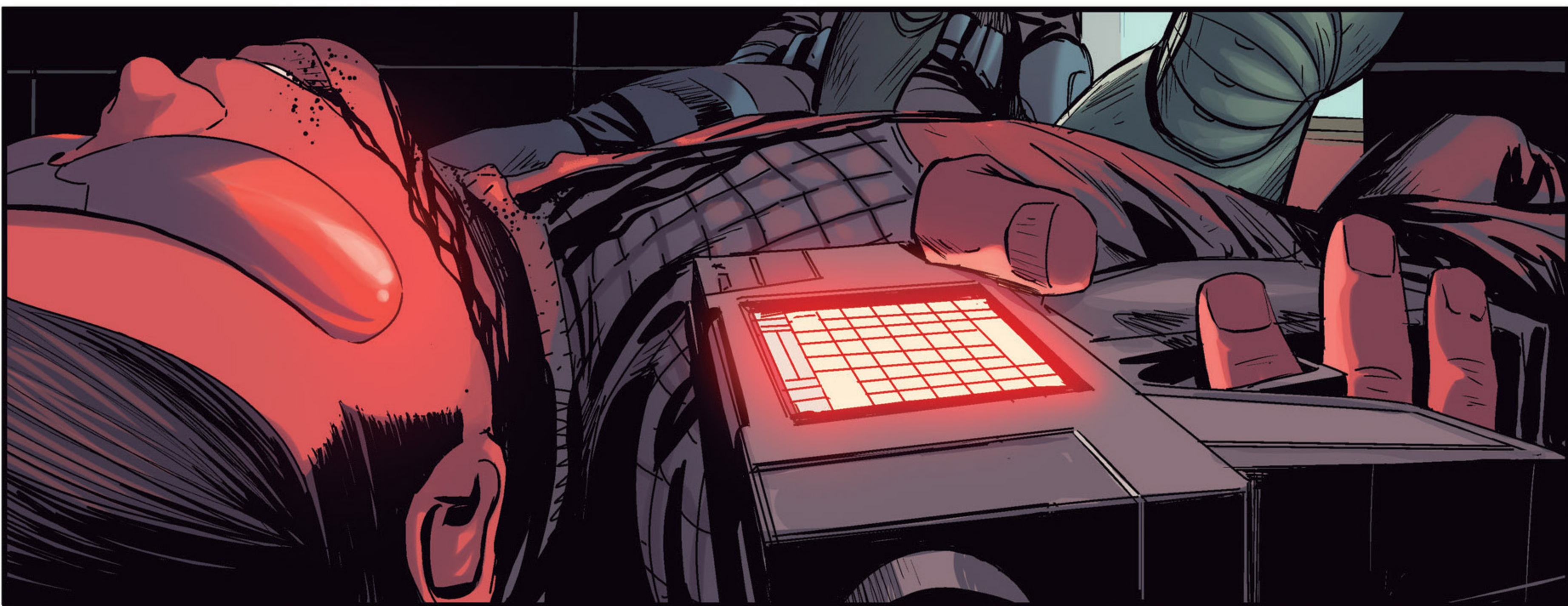
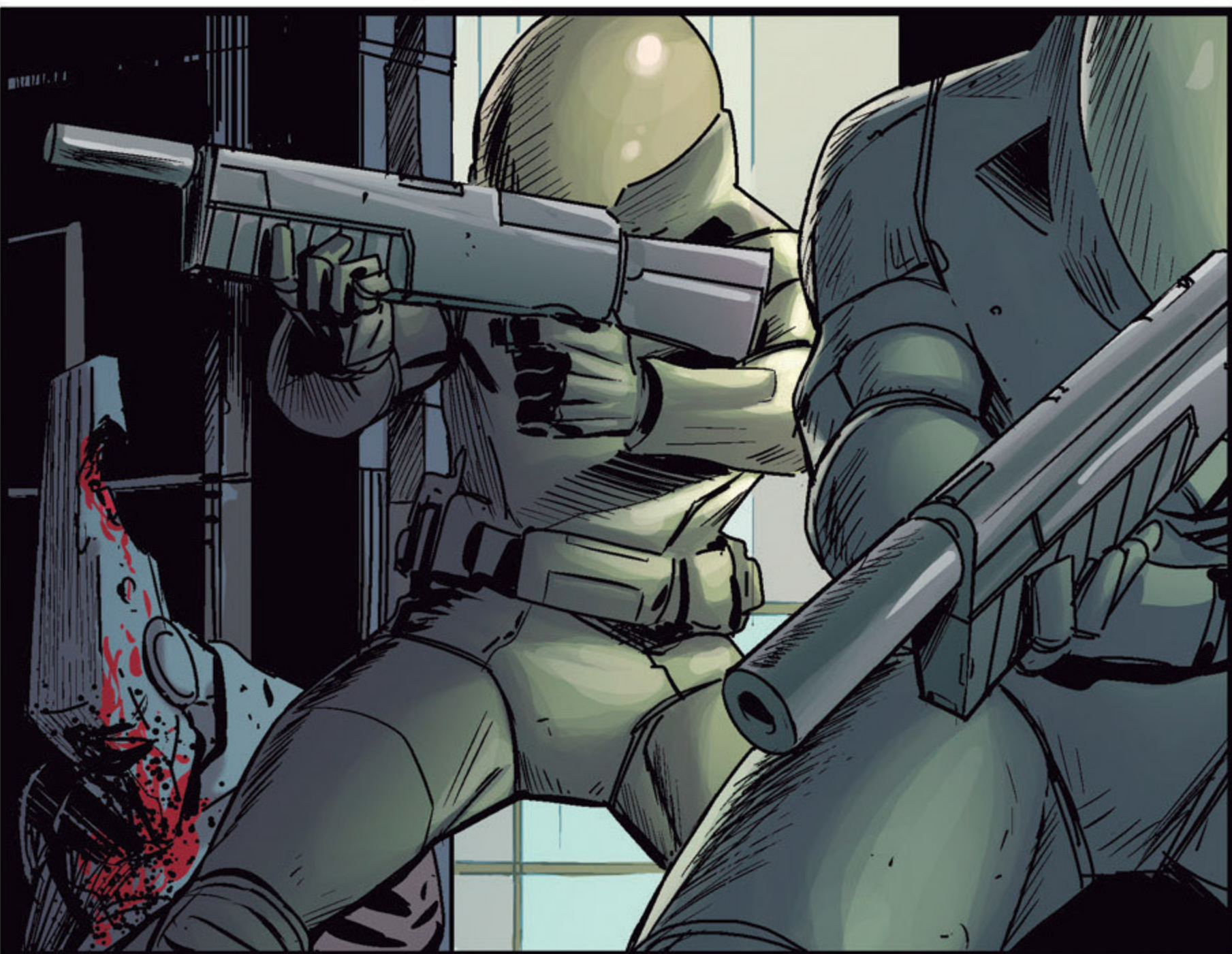
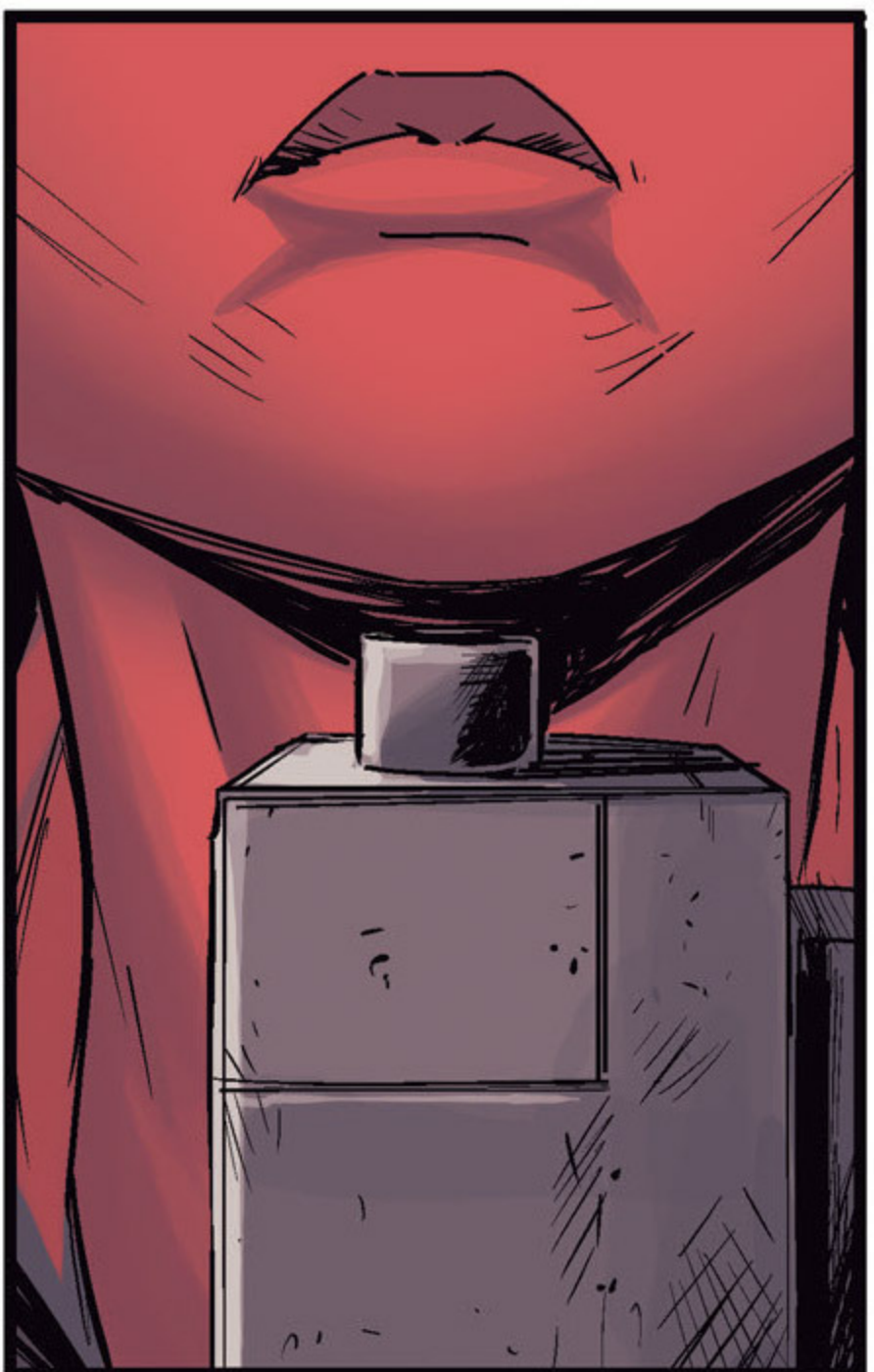
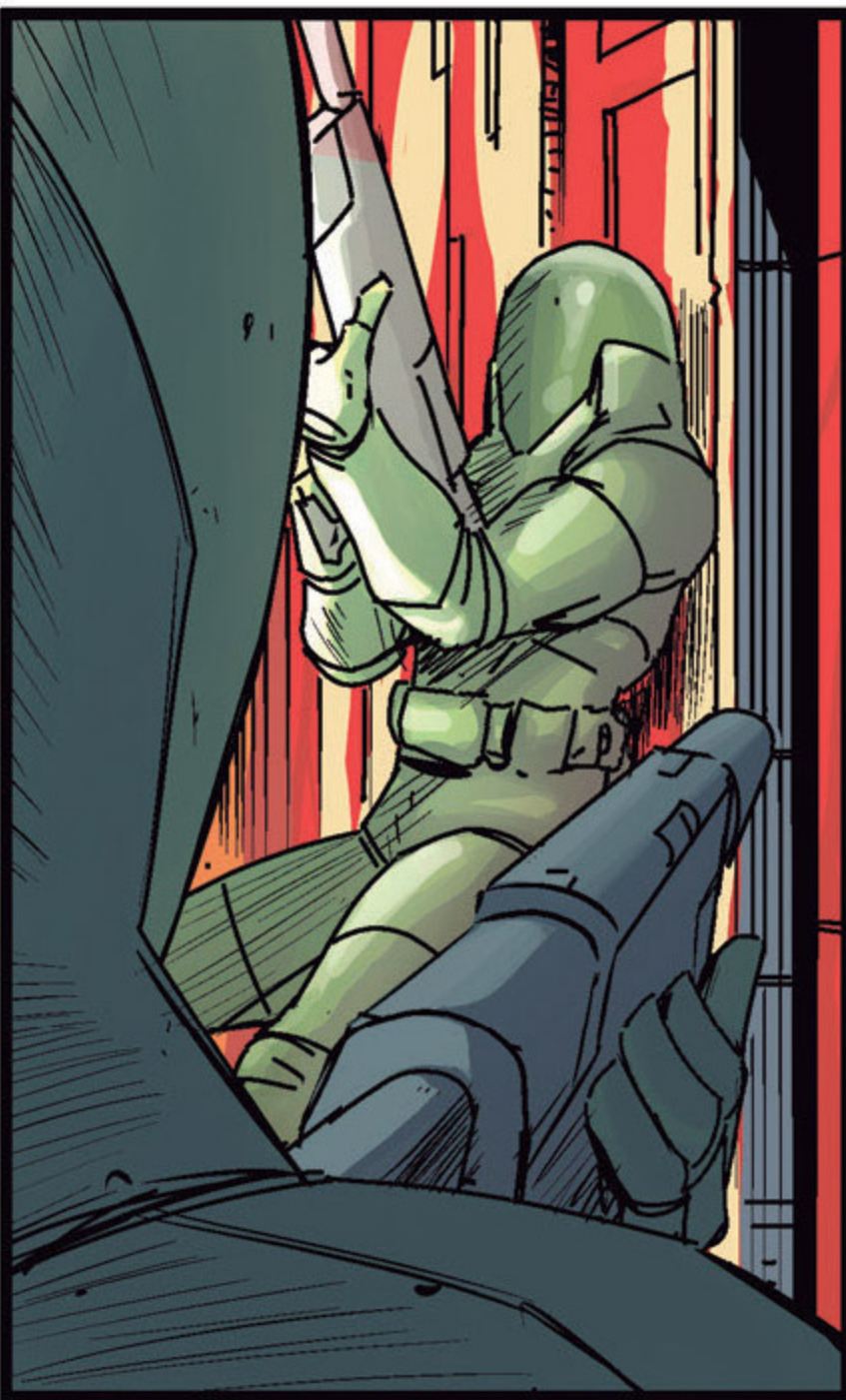
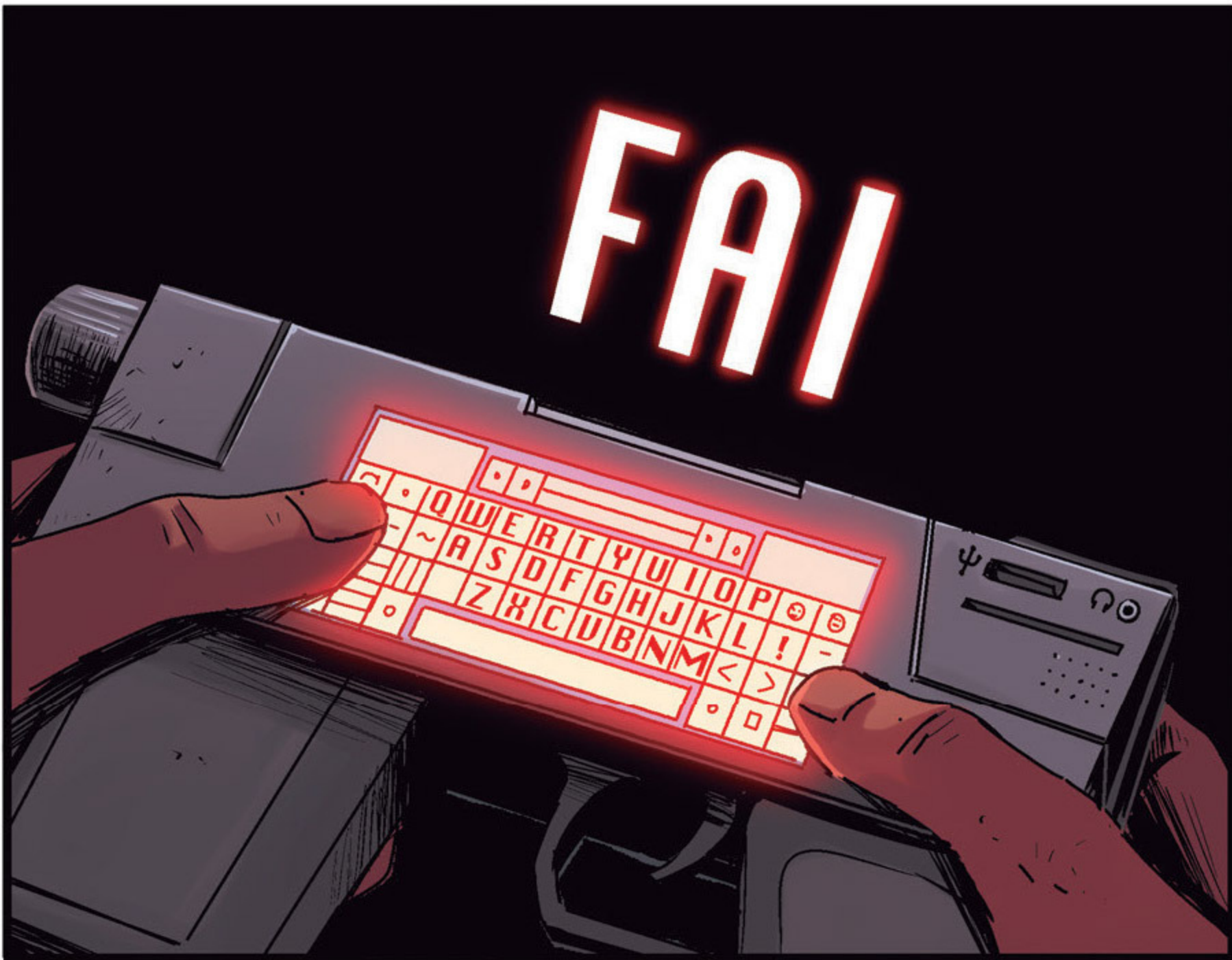
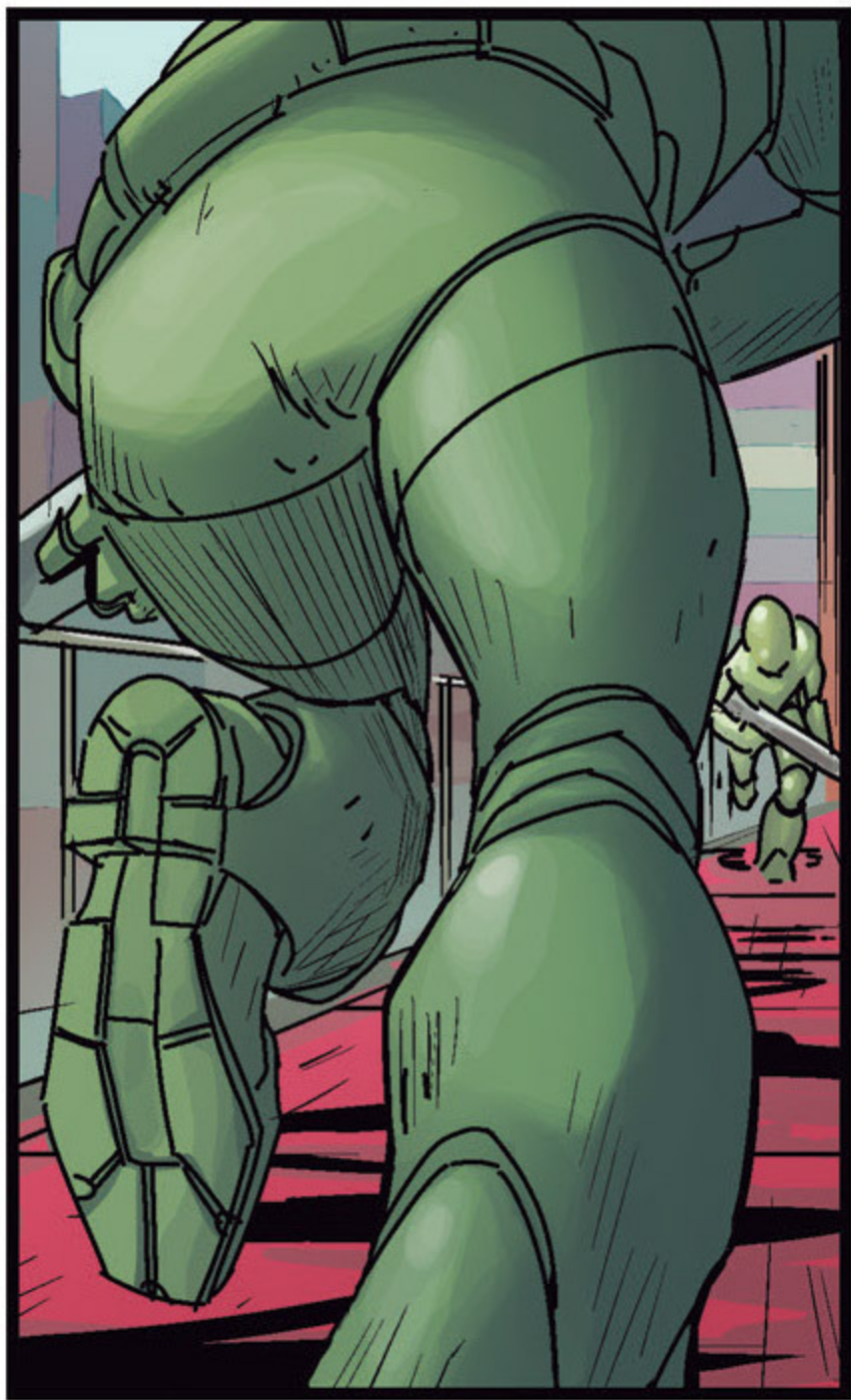


00:03:07



00:00:13

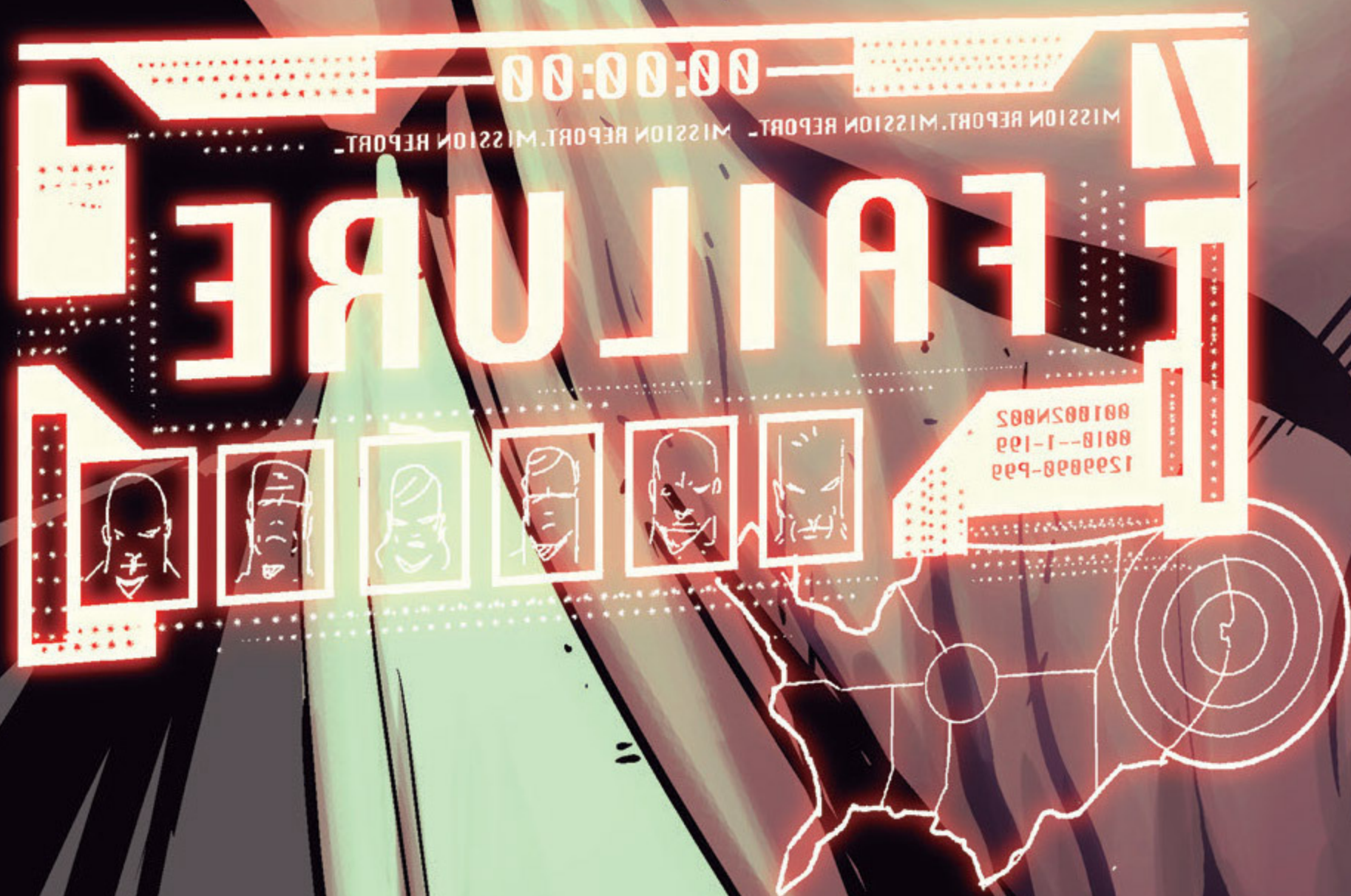




Well,
now...

I'm not
gonna
lie...

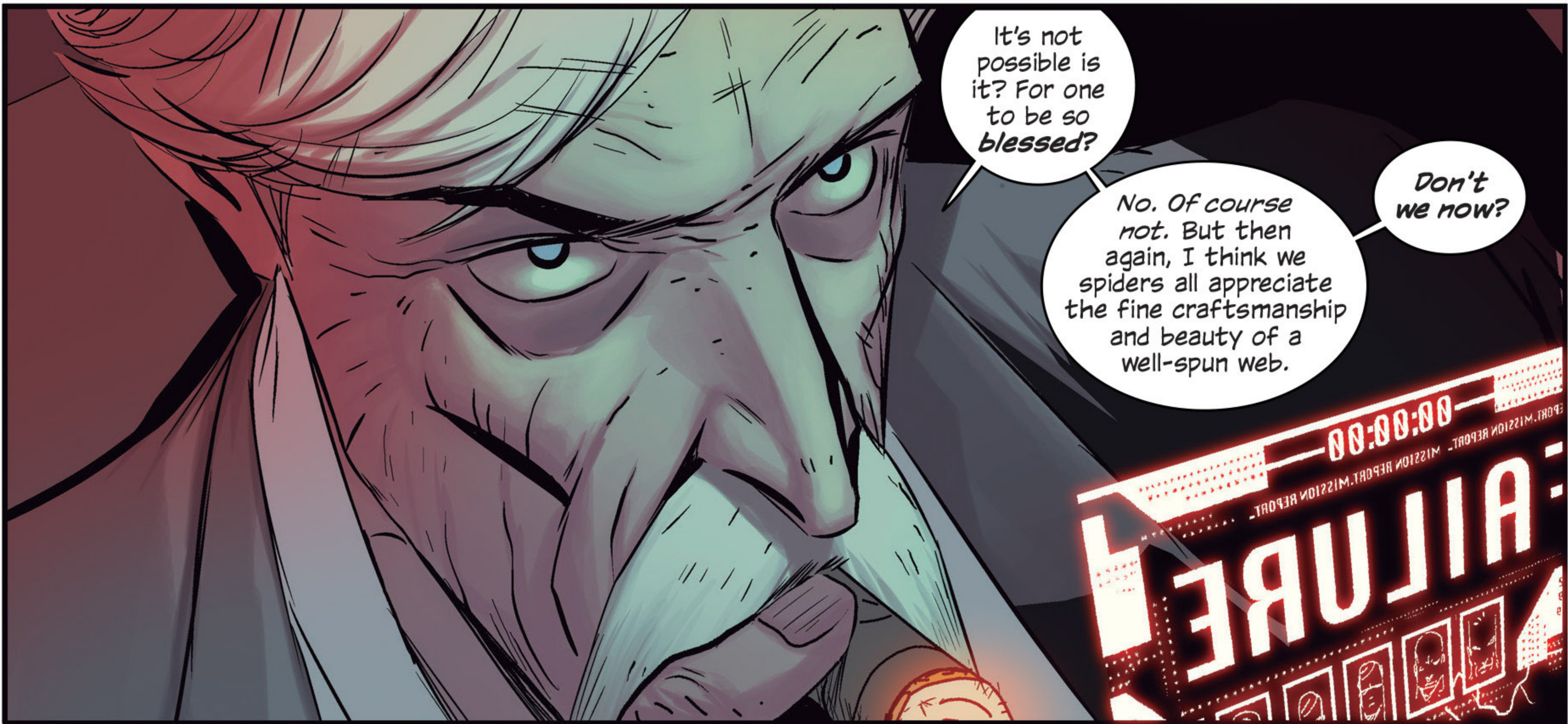
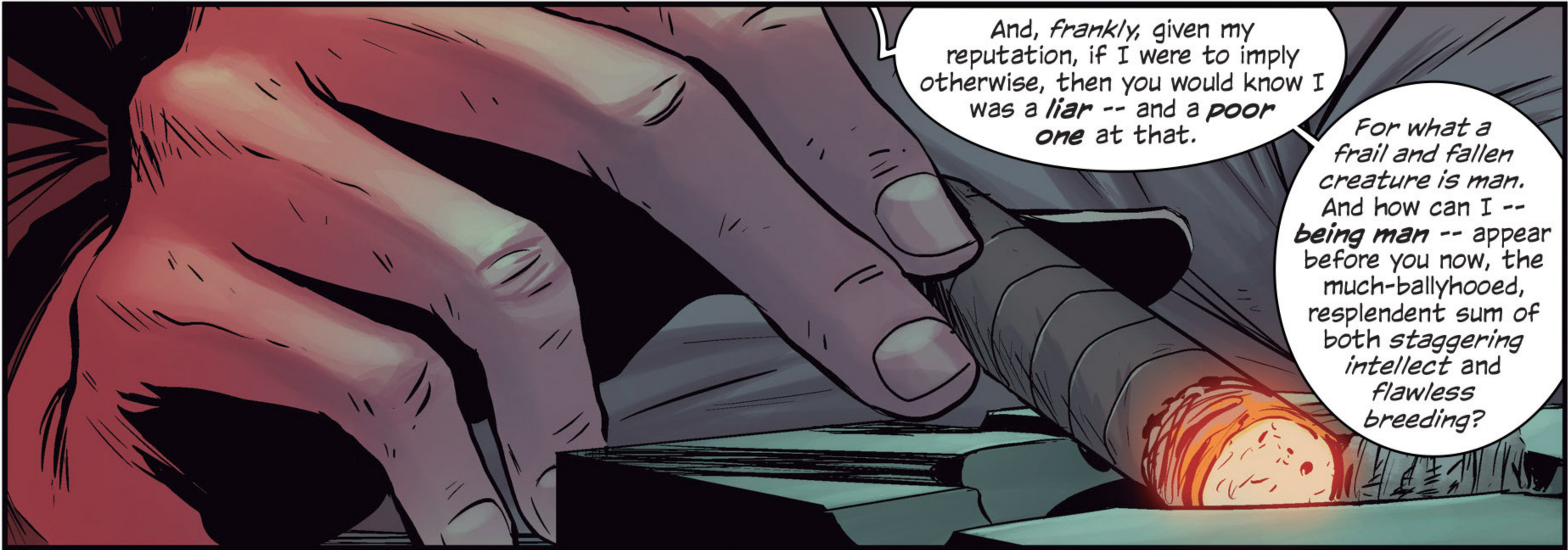
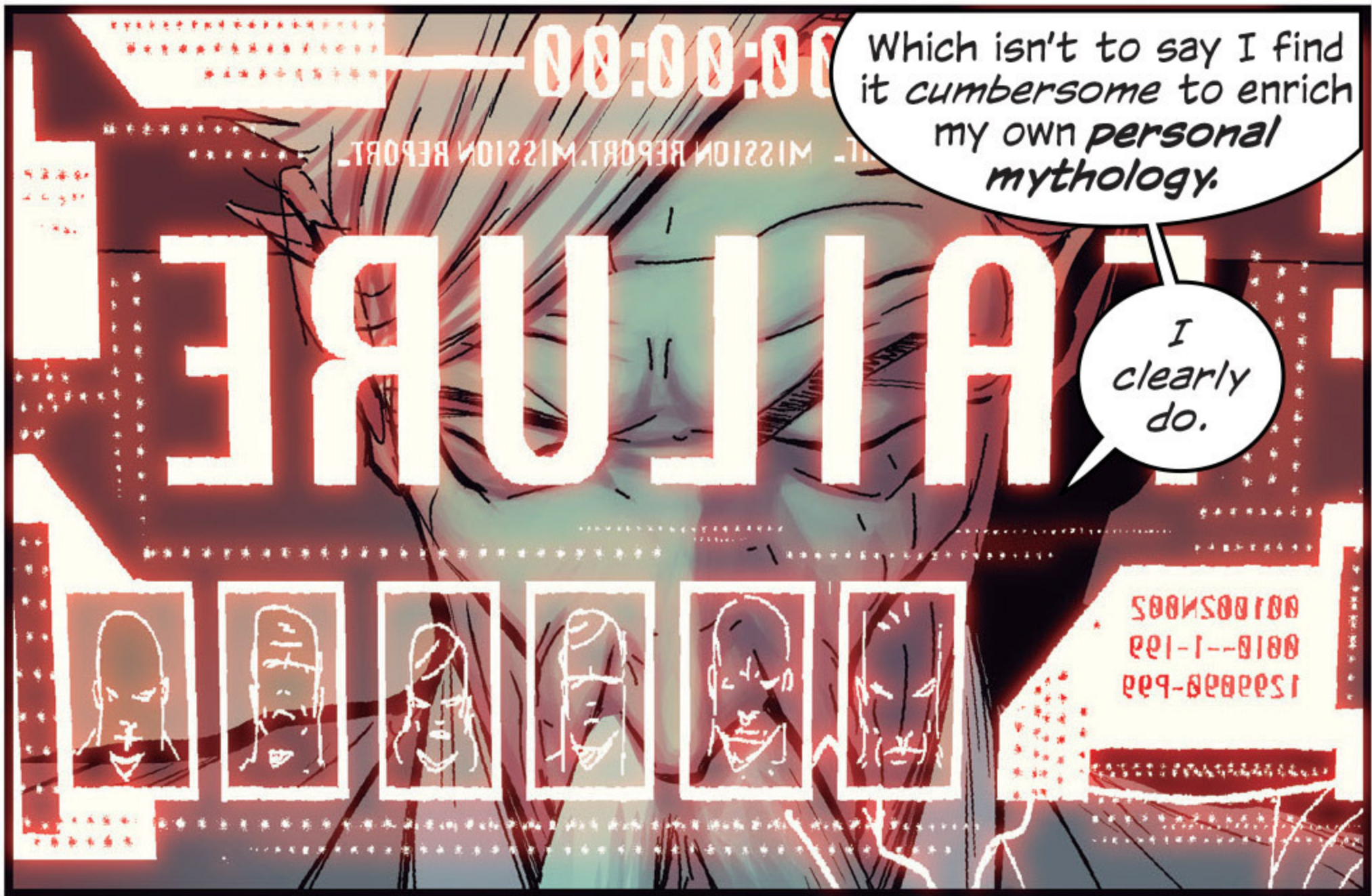
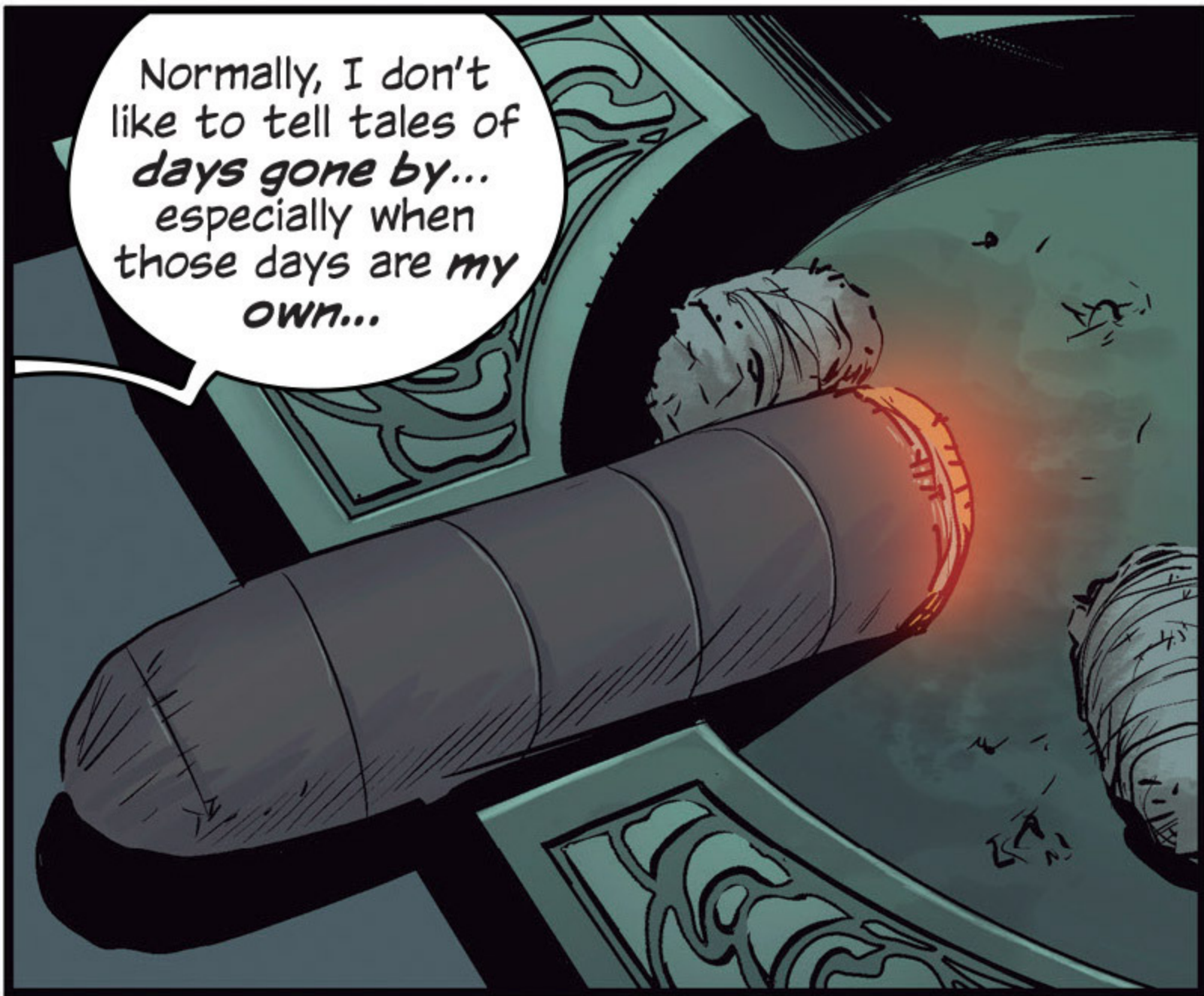
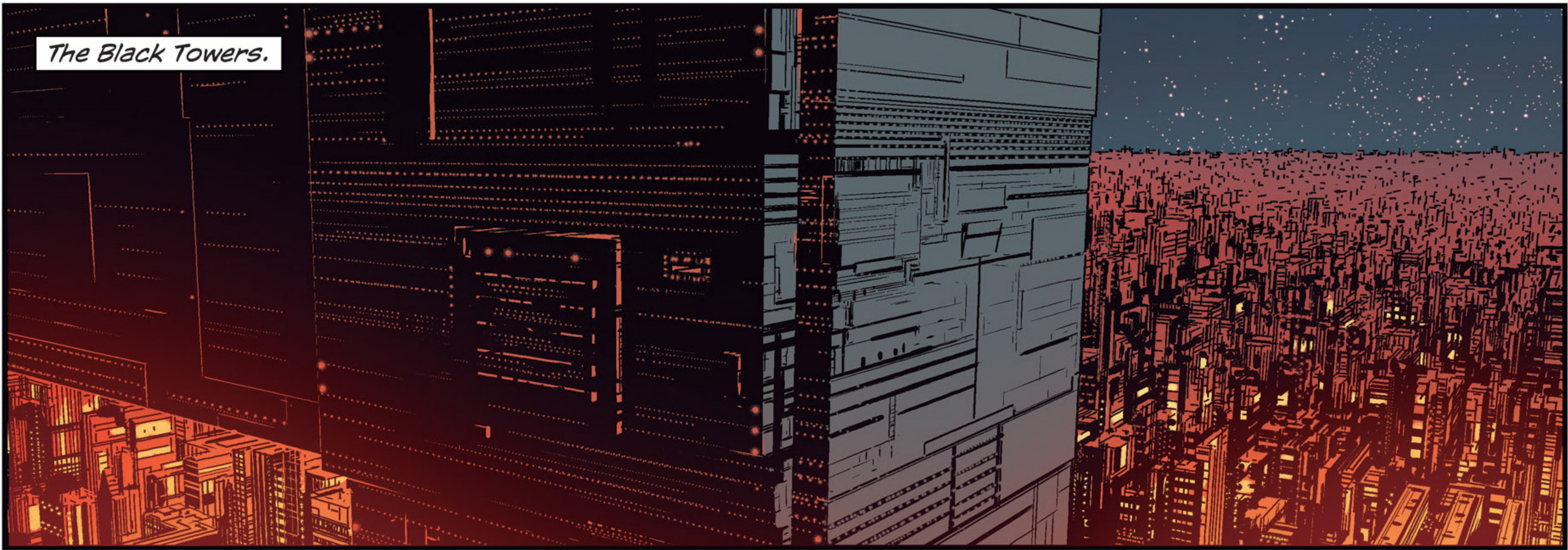
This'll
most certainly
complicate
things.





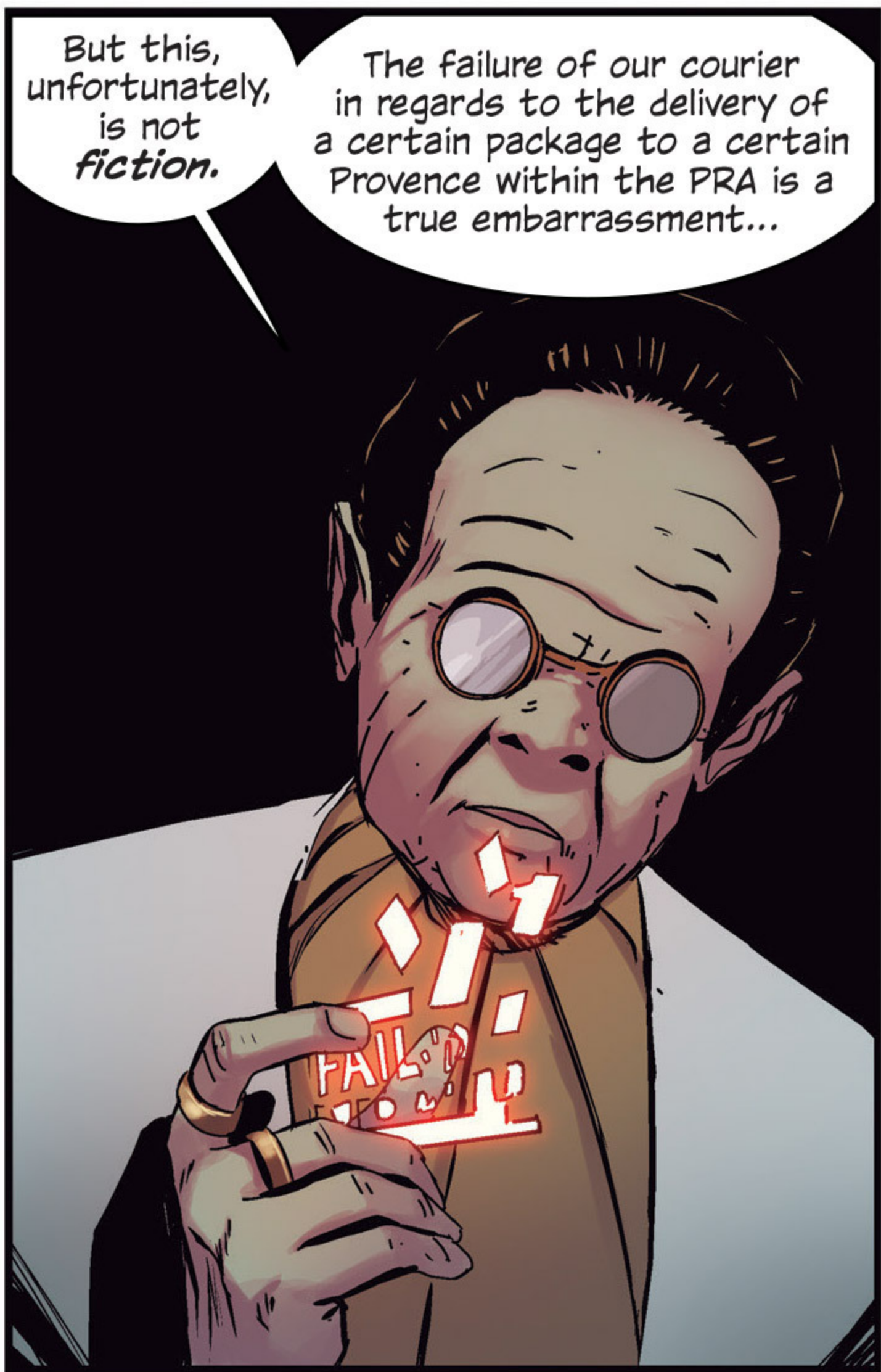
ONE BAD **LIE** AND THE WHOLE
WEB **UNRAVELS.**





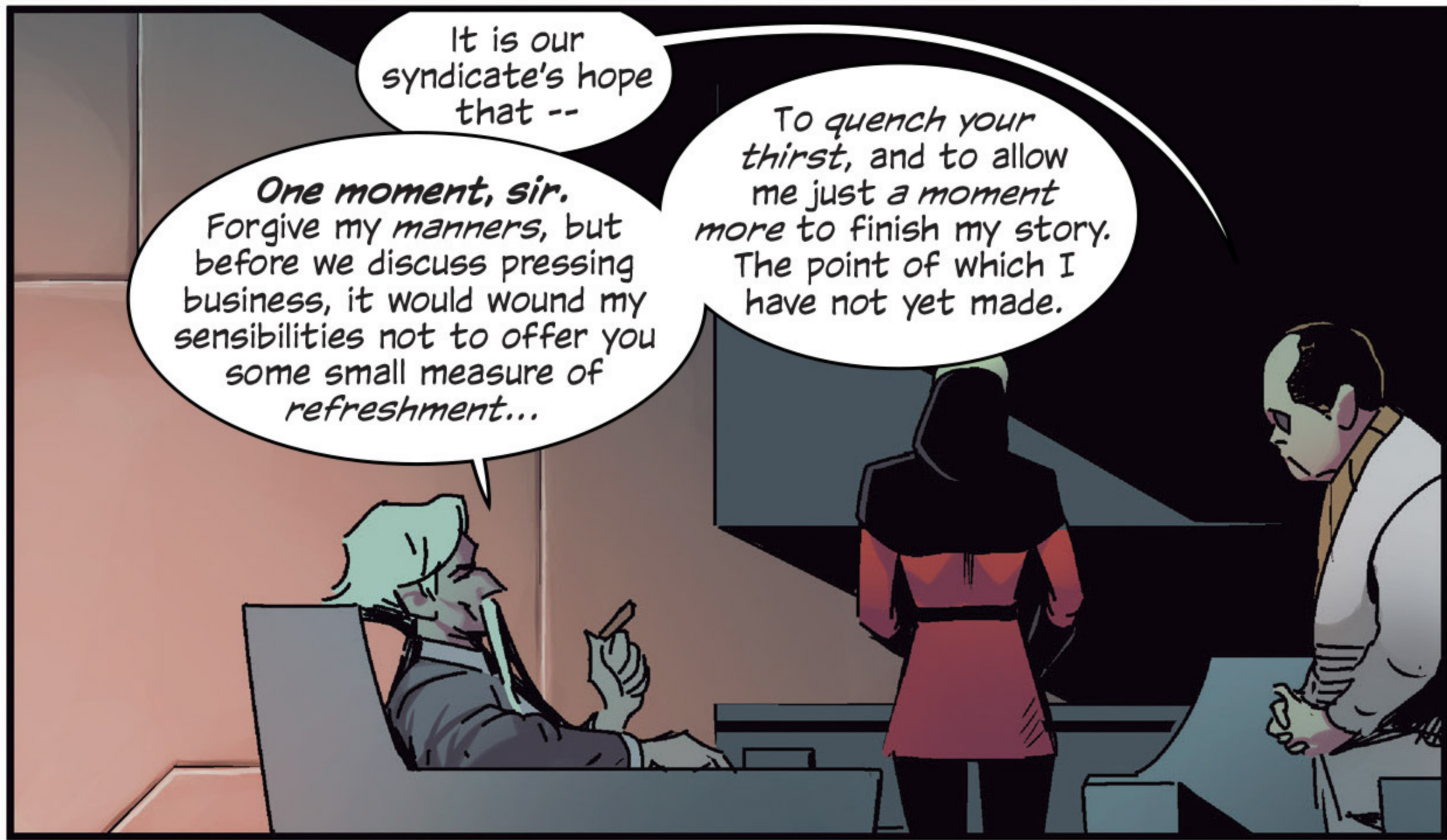


Of course, Mister President.



But this, unfortunately, is not *fiction*.

The failure of our courier in regards to the delivery of a certain package to a certain Provence within the PRA is a true embarrassment...



It is our syndicate's hope that --

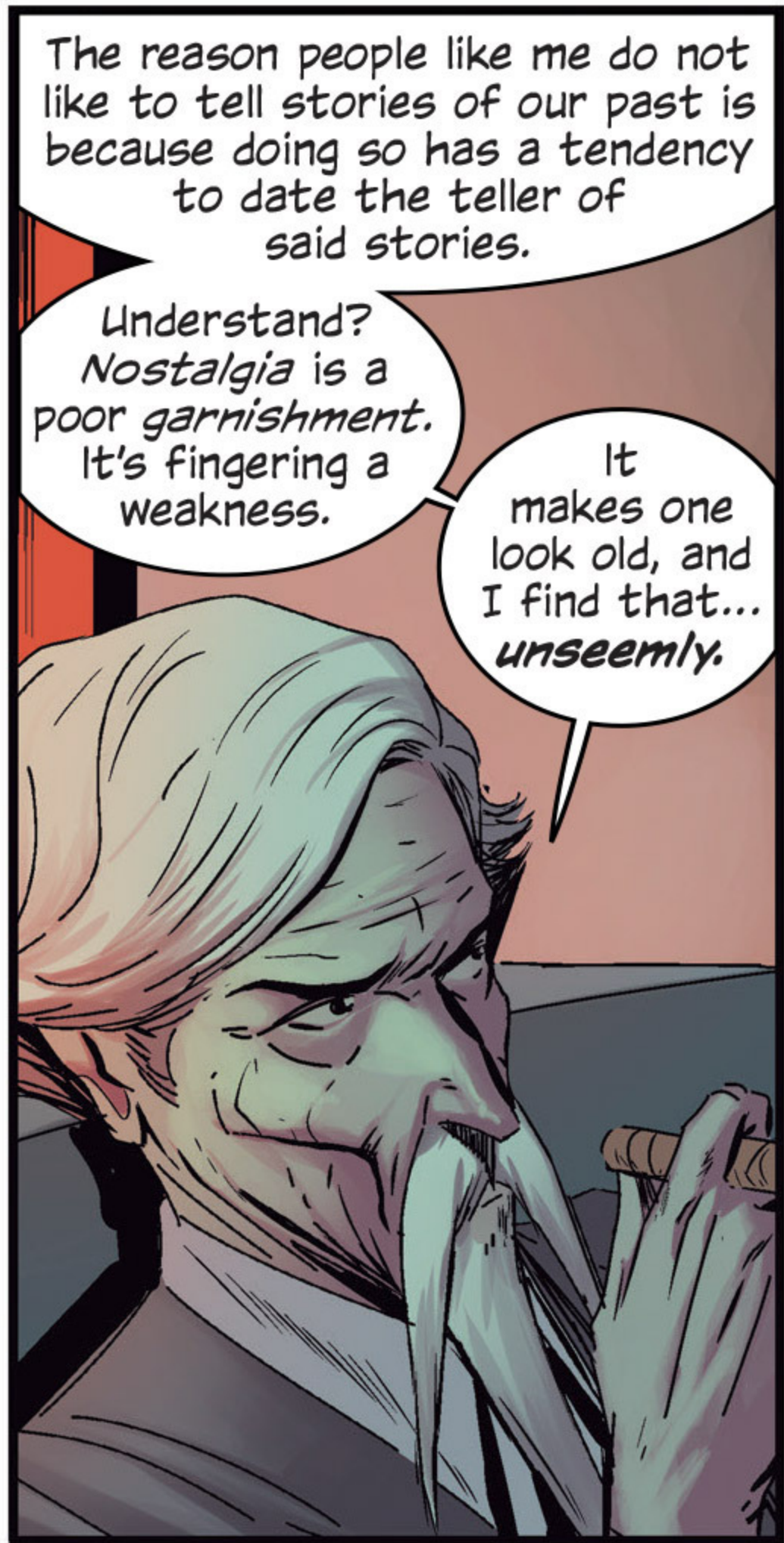
One moment, sir. Forgive my *manners*, but before we discuss pressing business, it would wound my sensibilities not to offer you some small measure of refreshment...

To quench your *thirst*, and to allow me just a *moment* more to finish my story. The point of which I have not yet made.



Ah. Yes. I apologize.

Thank you.



The reason people like me do not like to tell stories of our past is because doing so has a tendency to date the teller of said stories.

Understand? *Nostalgia* is a poor garnishment. It's fingering a weakness.

It makes one look old, and I find that... *unseemly*.



As age, you see, implies frailty, and worse than that a kind of *pervasive fatigue*.

It makes people like you think people like *me* might not *last*.



That's not--

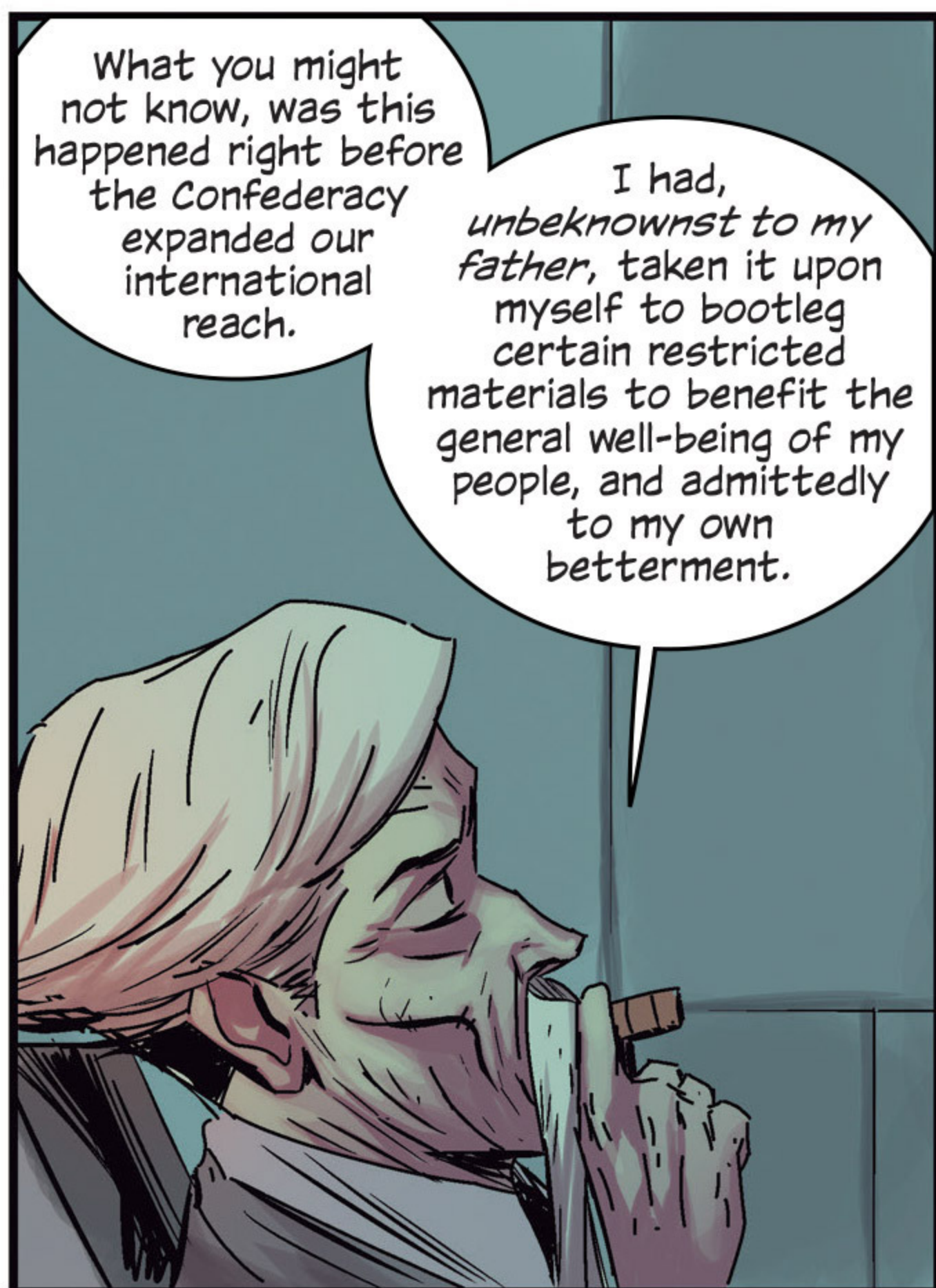


Yet here I am. And sitting here I can't help but remember a lesson my father taught me when I was a young man. Something he *did*. And something he *said*.

It was during the Wheat War, which I'm sure you recall.



Yes.



What you might not know, was this happened right before the Confederacy expanded our international reach.

I had, unbeknownst to my father, taken it upon myself to bootleg certain restricted materials to benefit the general well-being of my people, and admittedly to my own betterment.

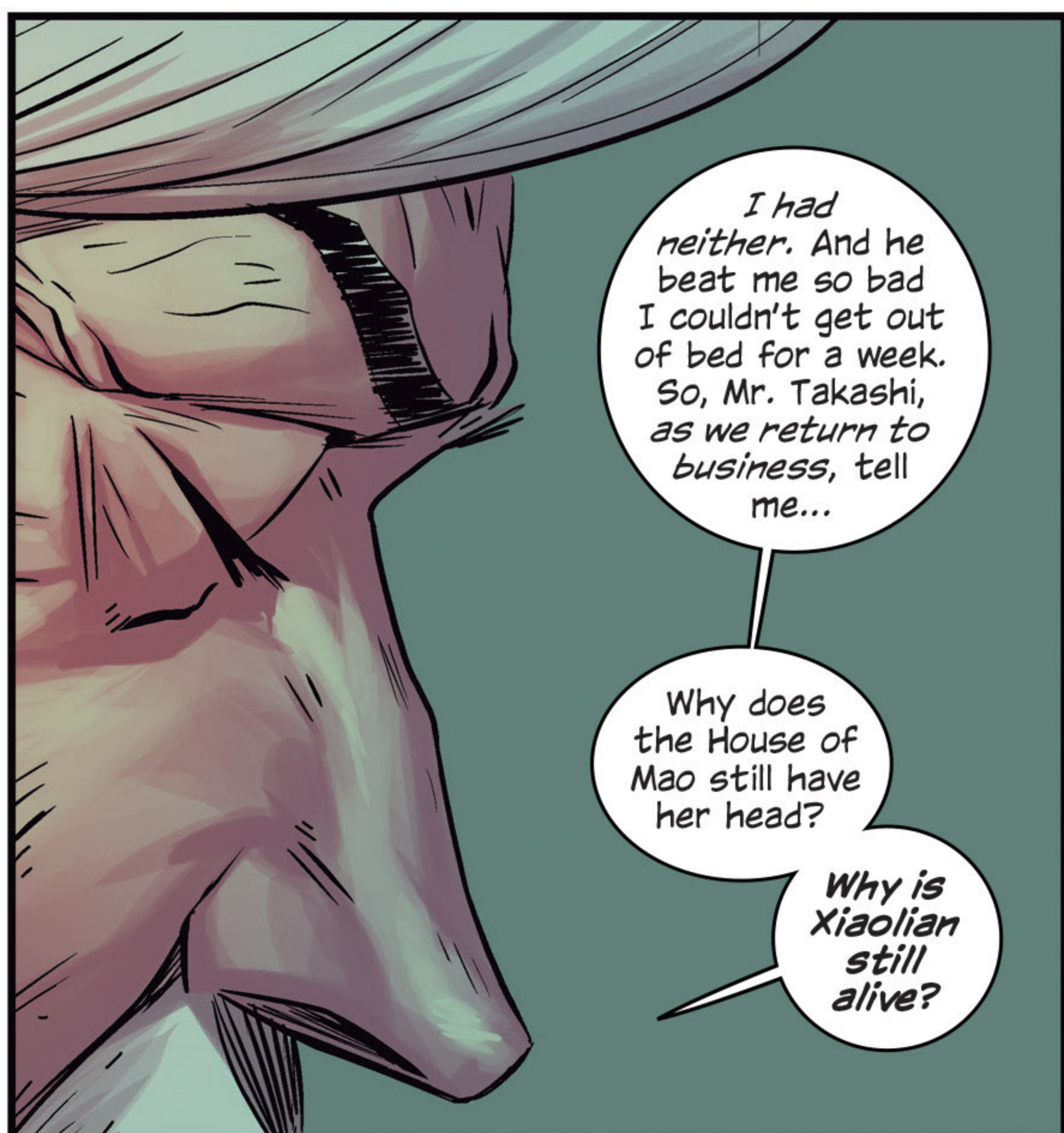


My endeavors *failed*. And when I tried to explain to my father why they had done so, he found my explanation... *unsatisfactory*.

He said to me, "Son, when you set out to accomplish anything involving risk, you must always have one of two things prepared..."



"An acceptable justification, or plan to clean your shit up."



I had neither. And he beat me so bad I couldn't get out of bed for a week. So, Mr. Takashi, as we return to business, tell me...

Why does the House of Mao still have her head?

Why is Xiaolian still alive?



It's complicated.



I'm sure.

Walk me through it.

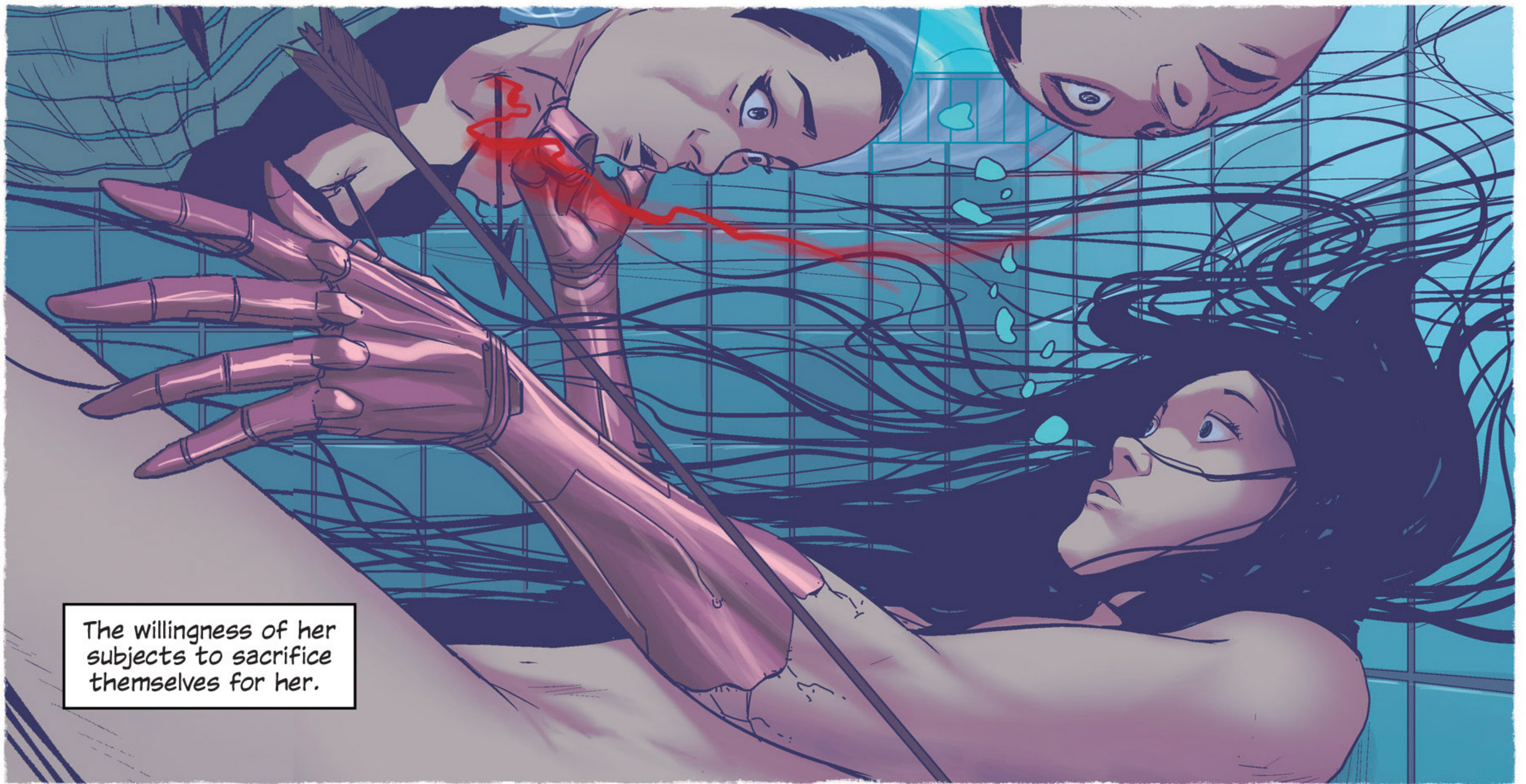


We analyzed potential weaknesses in security. We compared what we estimated to be *sufficient force* against *acceptable risk* of detection, and determined the size of our strike force from there.

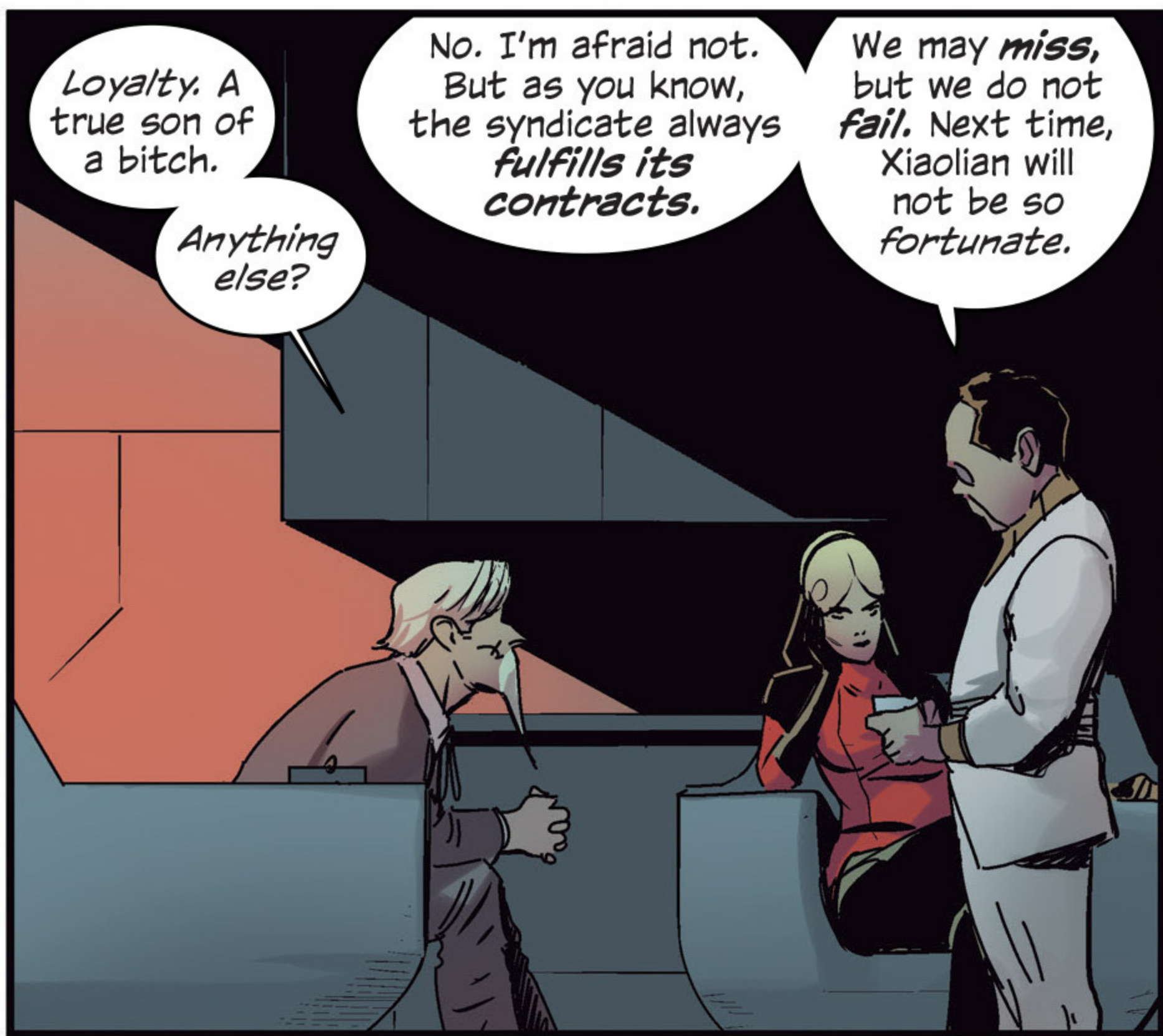
There were also other data points, but, unfortunately, we failed to factor in *one significant variable*.



And pray tell, *what was that?*



The willingness of her subjects to sacrifice themselves for her.



Loyalty. A true son of a bitch.

Anything else?

No. I'm afraid not. But as you know, the syndicate always **fulfills its contracts.**

We may **miss**, but we do not **fail**. Next time, Xiaolian will not be so fortunate.



Well...that wasn't the **deal**. And it's just not what my father would call an **acceptable justification.**



Excuse me?



Constance, if you don't mind...

Tell 'em what he's won.

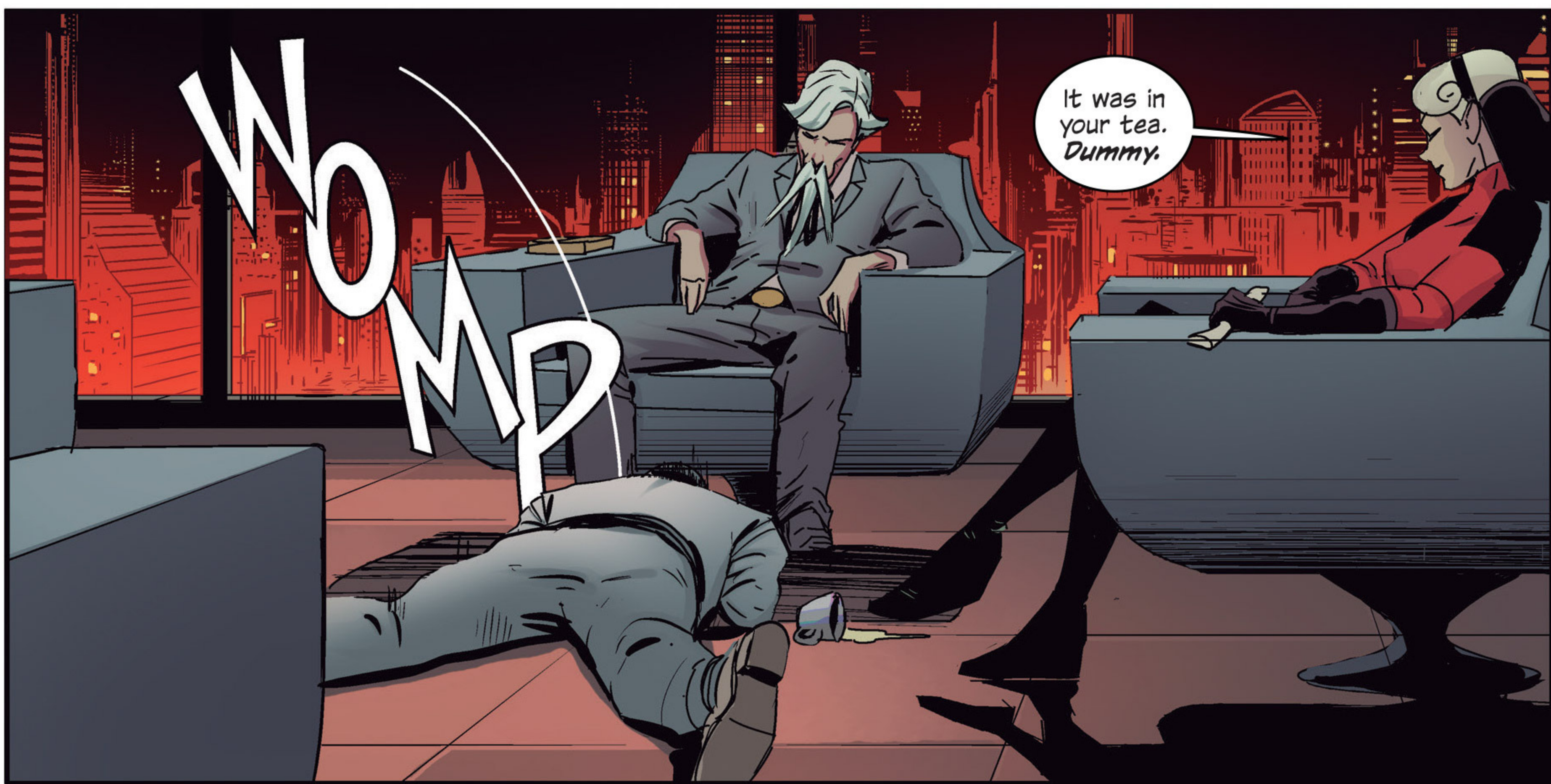
Of course, Uncle.

Right this moment, President Chamberlain's business partners in Imperial Japan -- *through whom he made your acquaintance* -- are busy cleaning up **this mess on their end.**

By now they will have eradicated your entire syndicate and erased any connection to the empire, and **through the empire... to us.**



Leaving just one thing to tidy up.



FEAR NOT.

DEAD MEN DO NOT **LIE.**



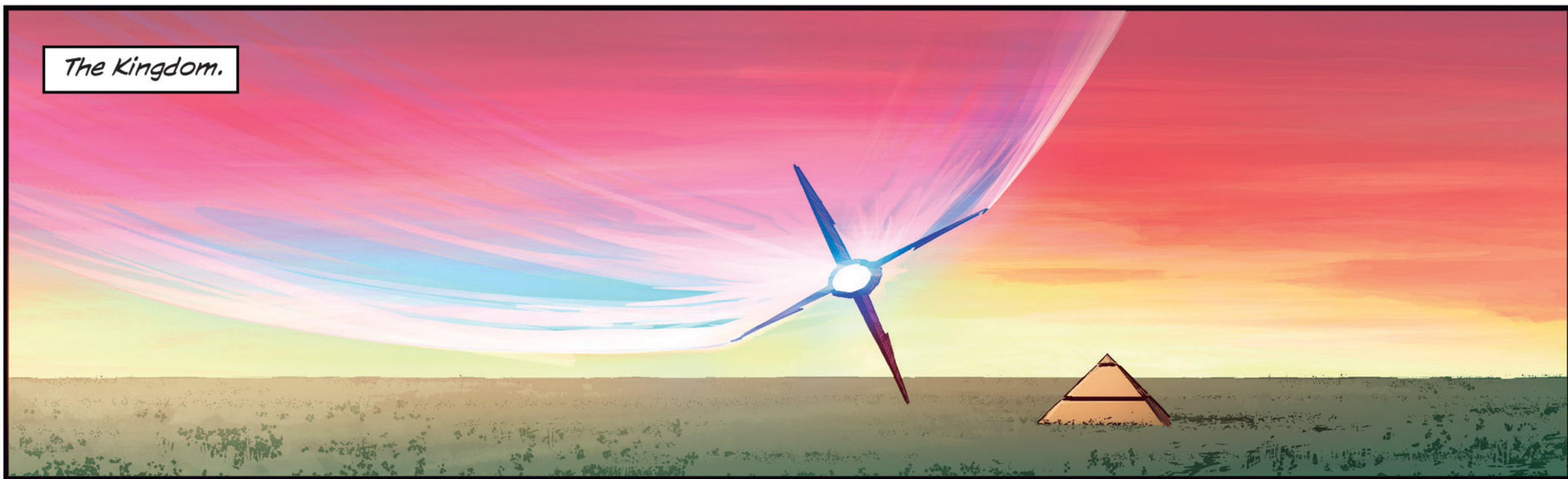


23

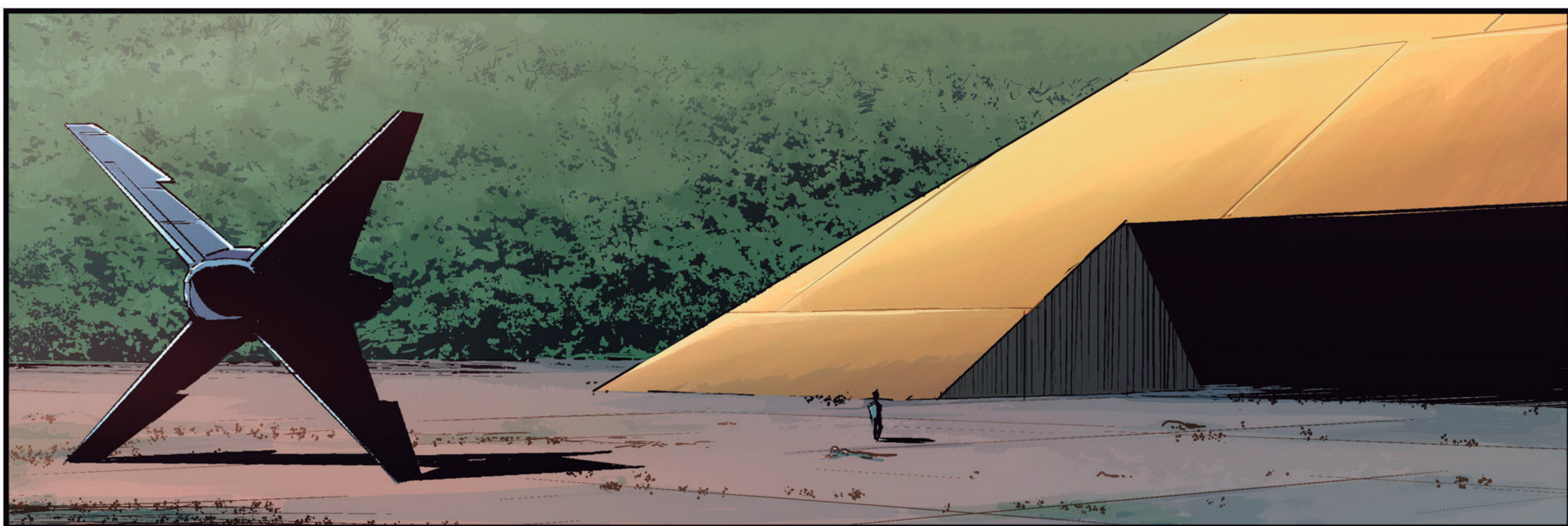
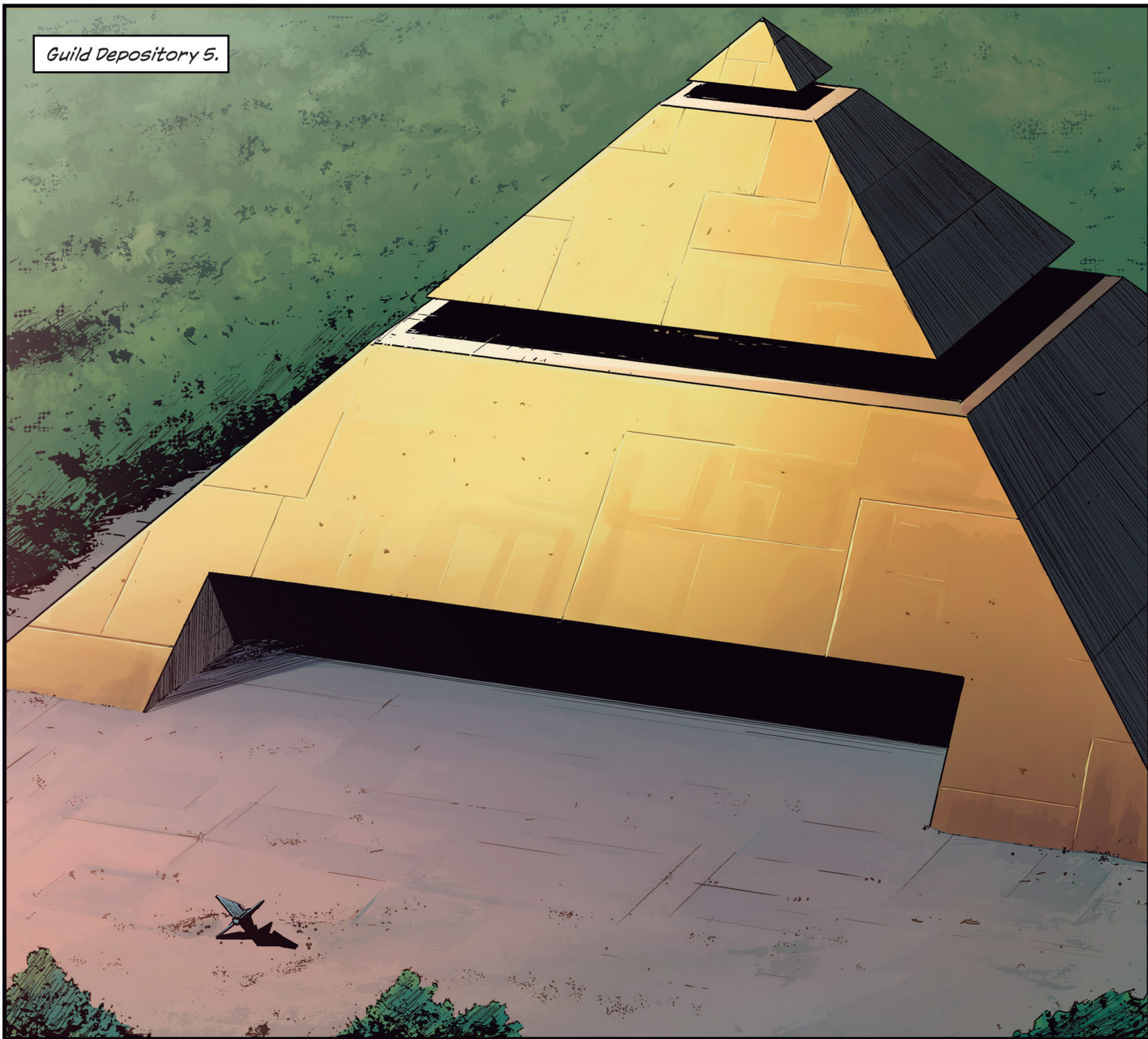


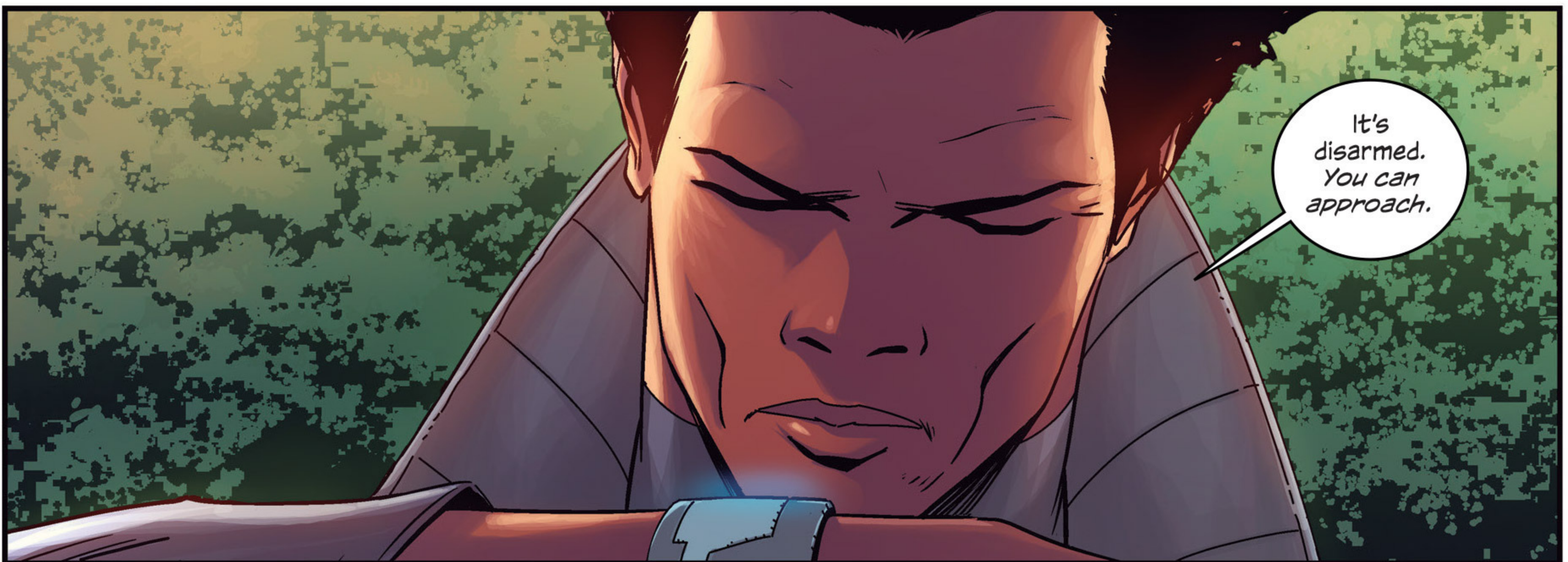
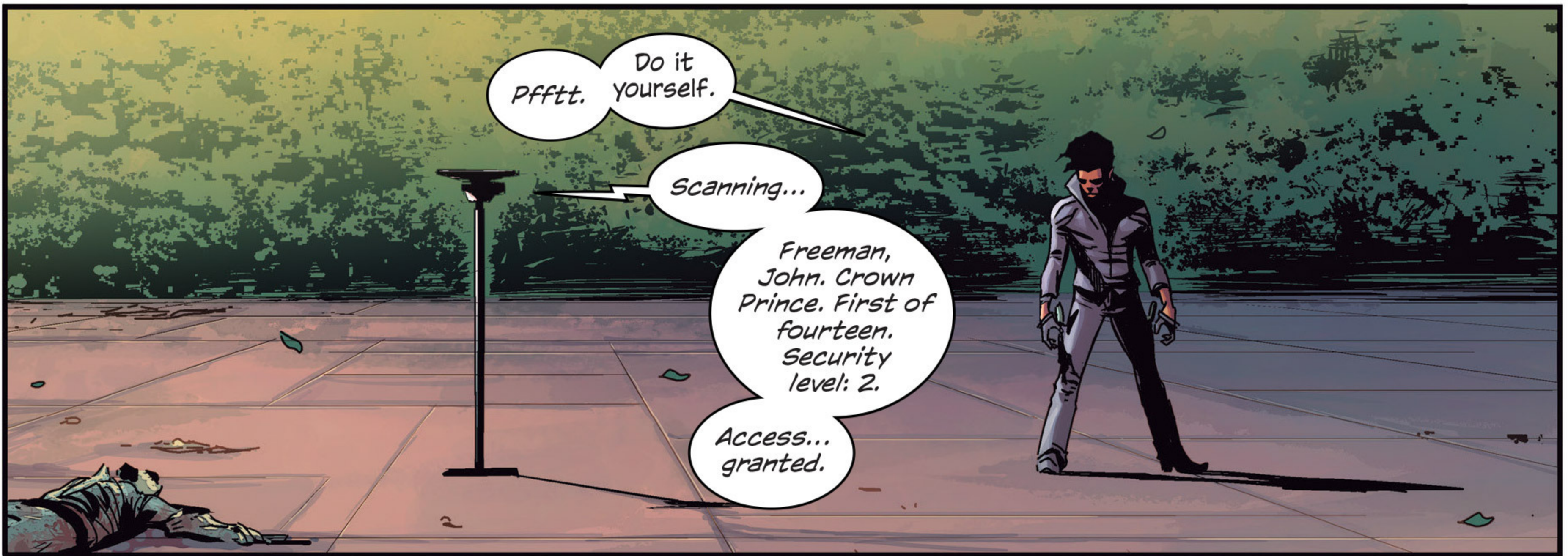
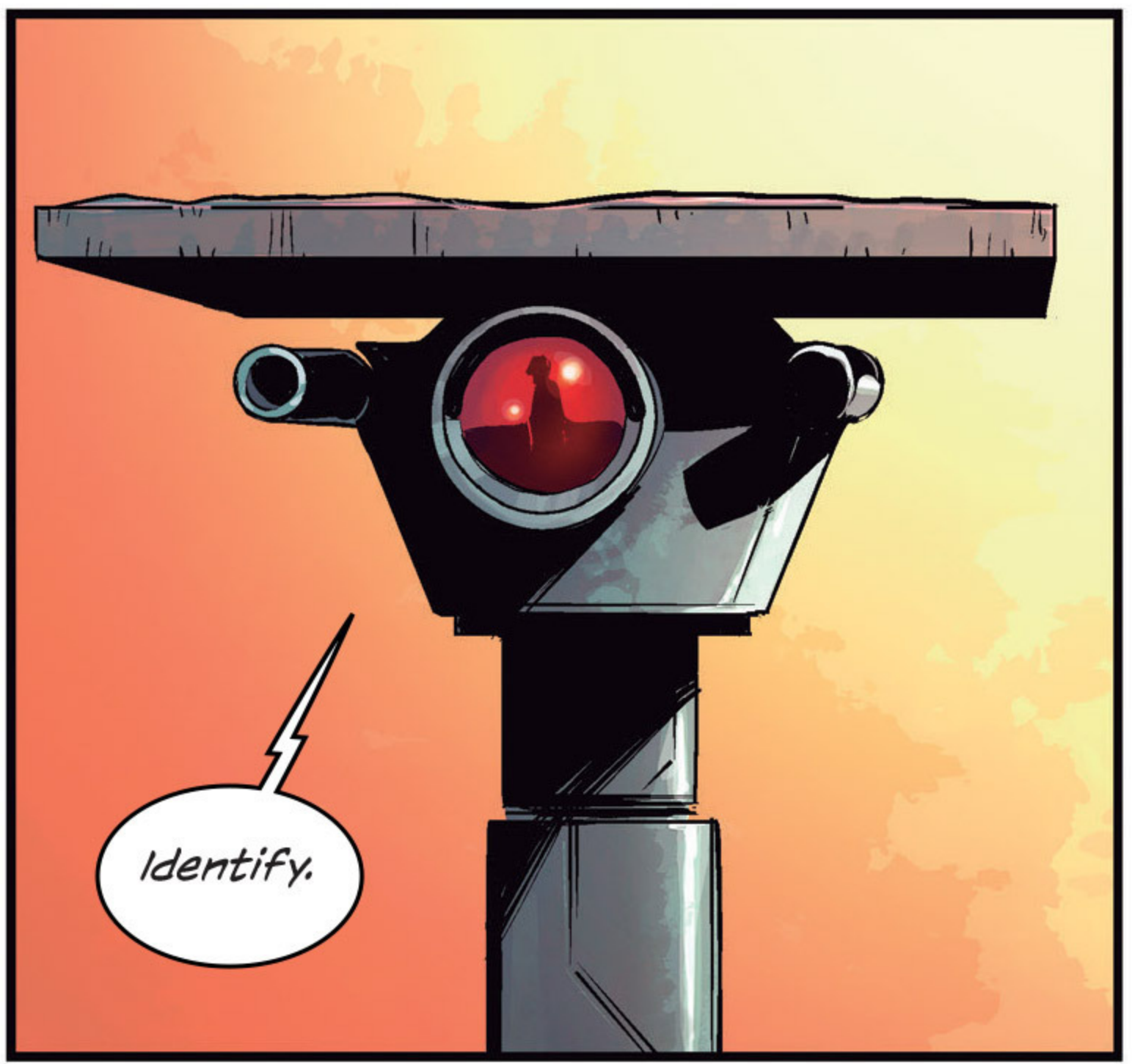
**TWENTY-THREE:
A SON OF THE
KINGDOM**

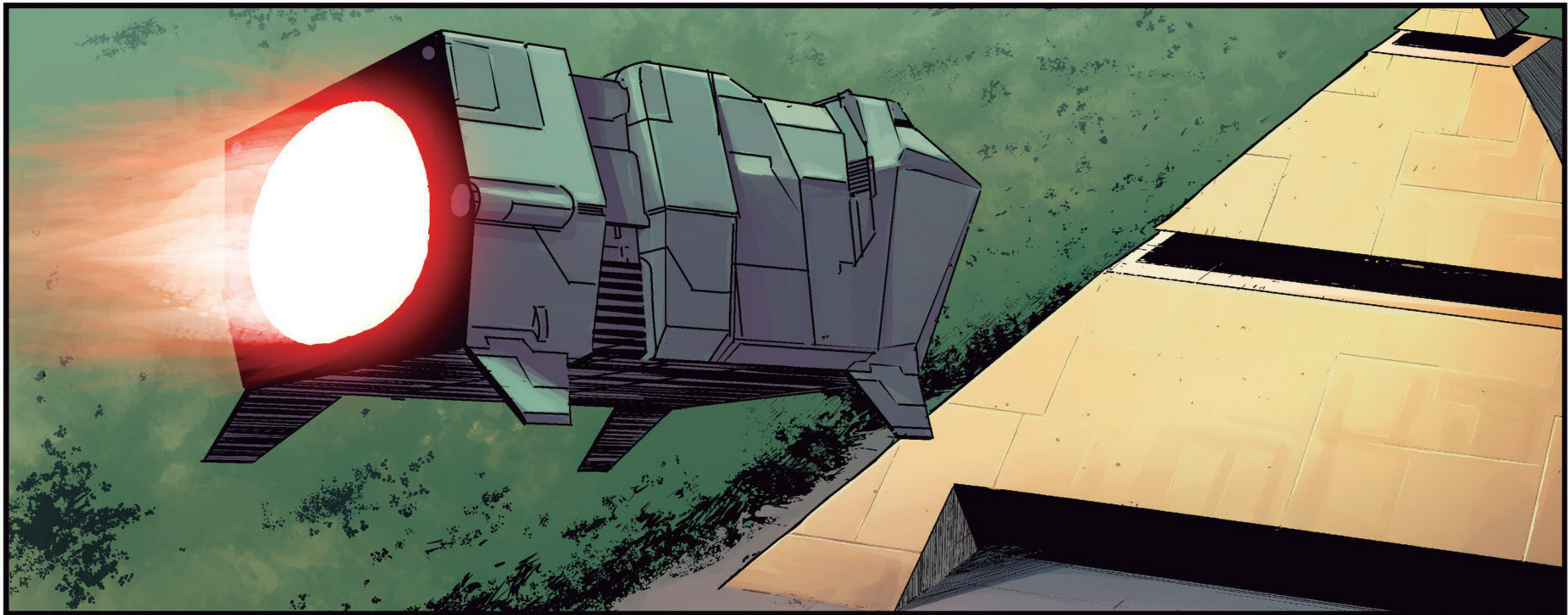
The Kingdom.



Guild Depository 5.







Okay...



That's far enough.

I've seen *you* before, but that doesn't mean I *know* you.

Where is she?

TAP
TAP



Ah. Yes.

She said I would need to...



Crown Prince. My envoy, Doma Lux, was *Chosen* by me to act as courier for this transaction.

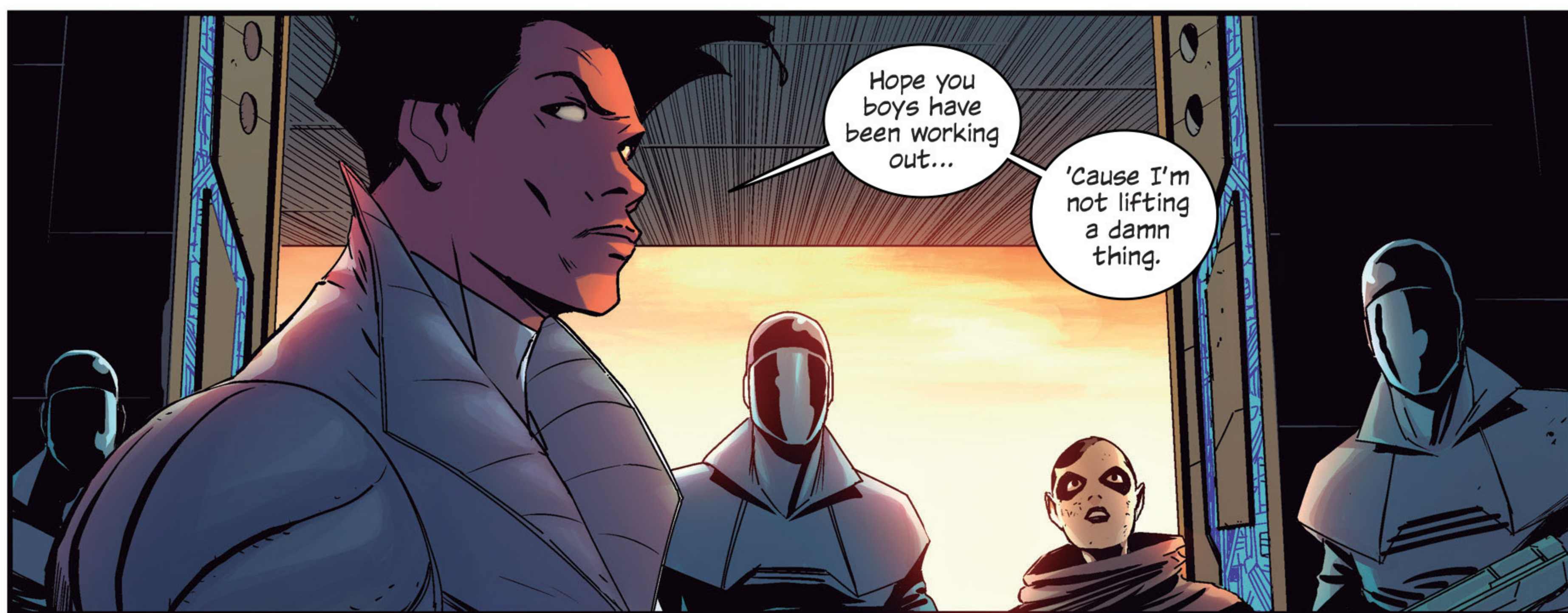
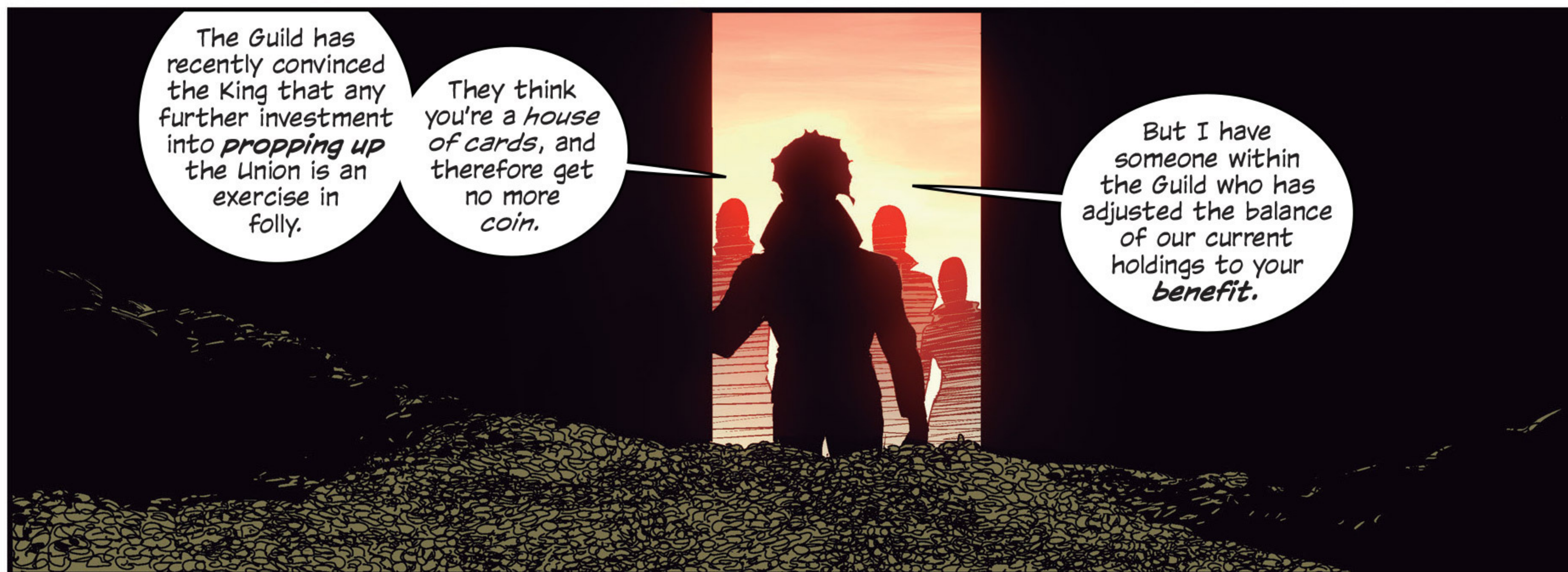
CLICK!

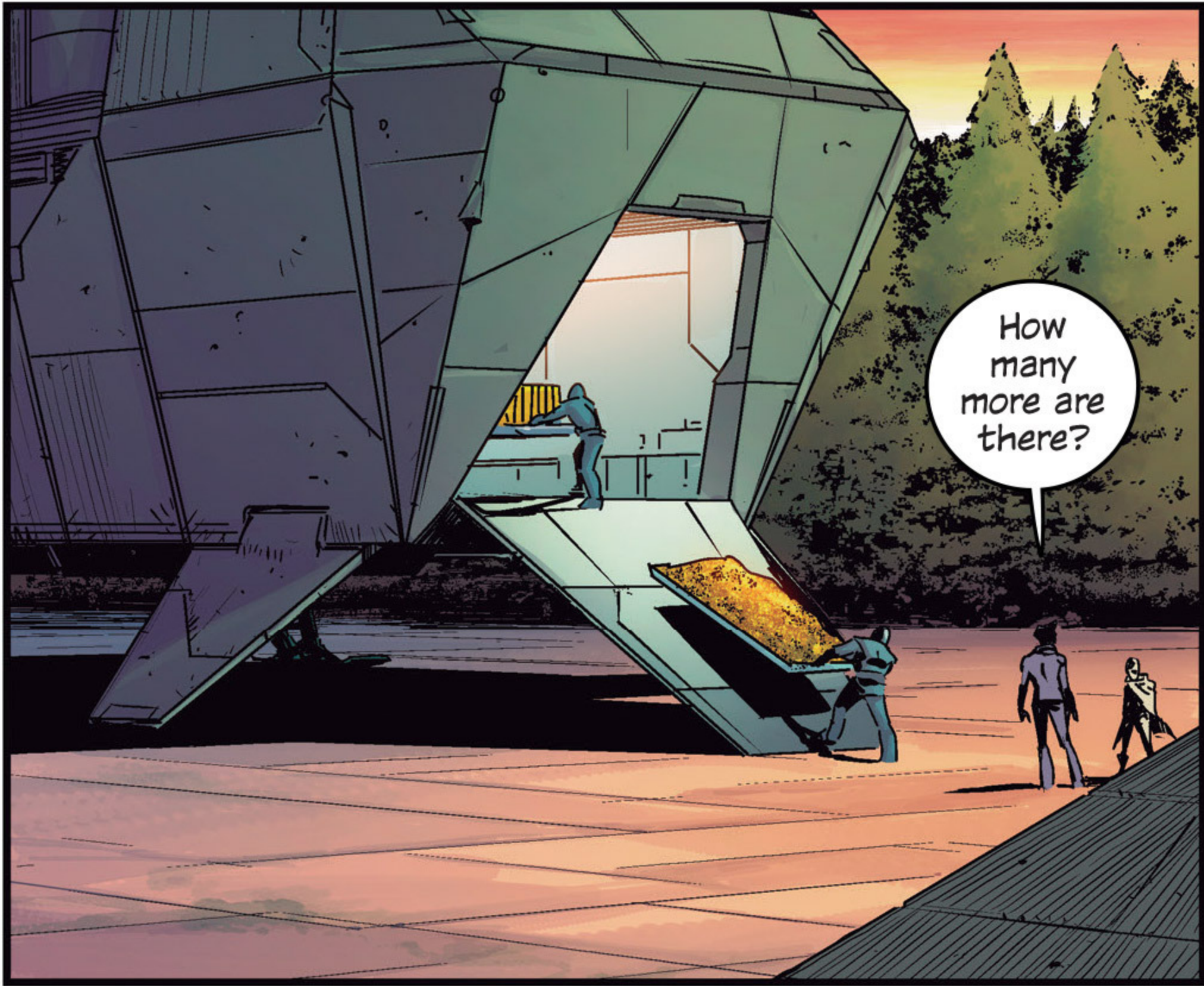
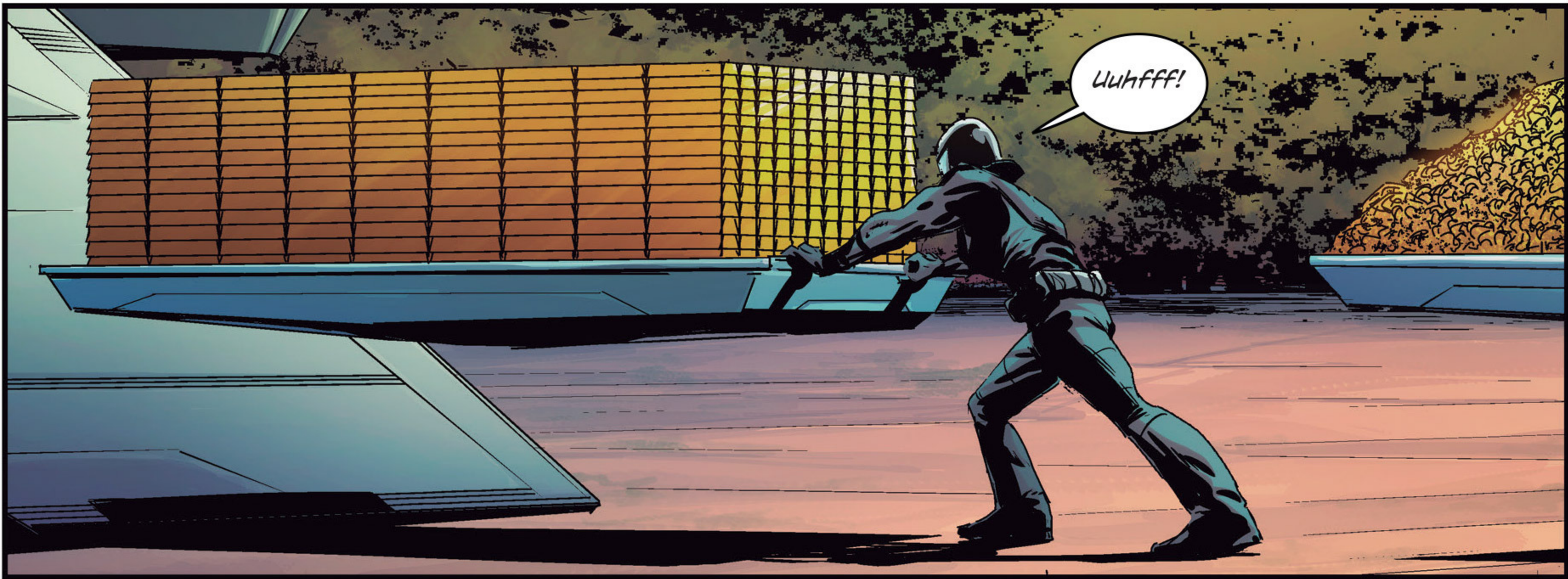
Please, embrace her as you would one of our own, and treat her companions in accordance with that trust.

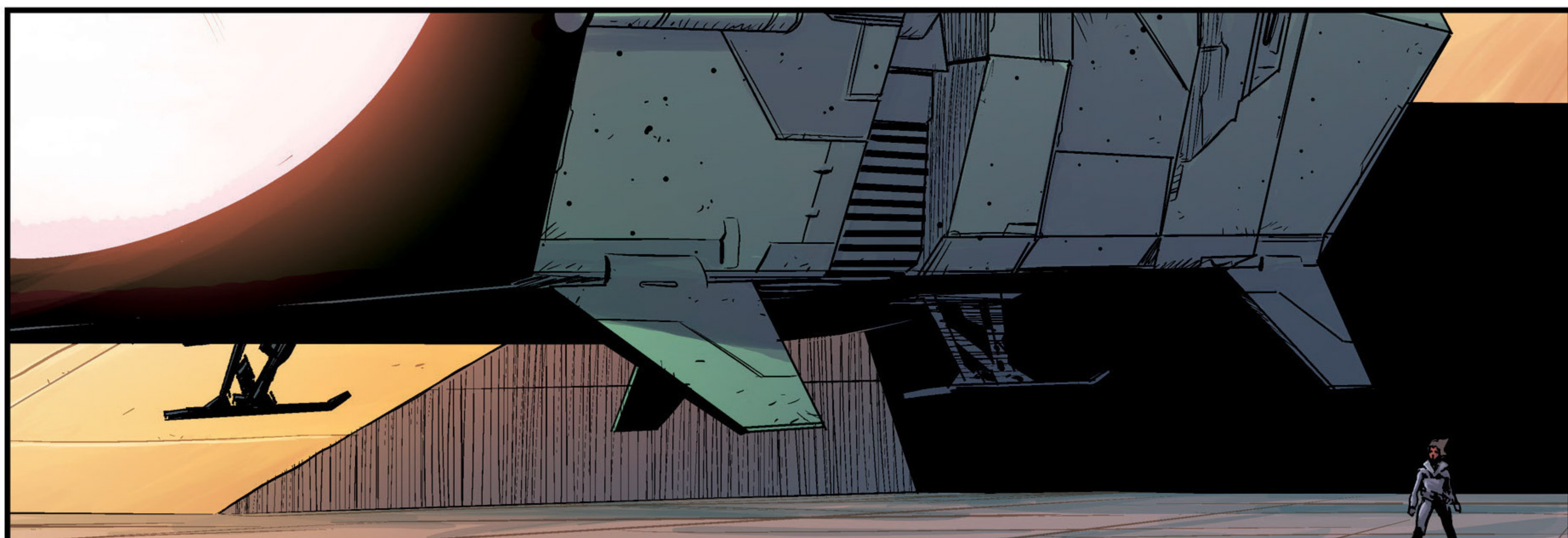
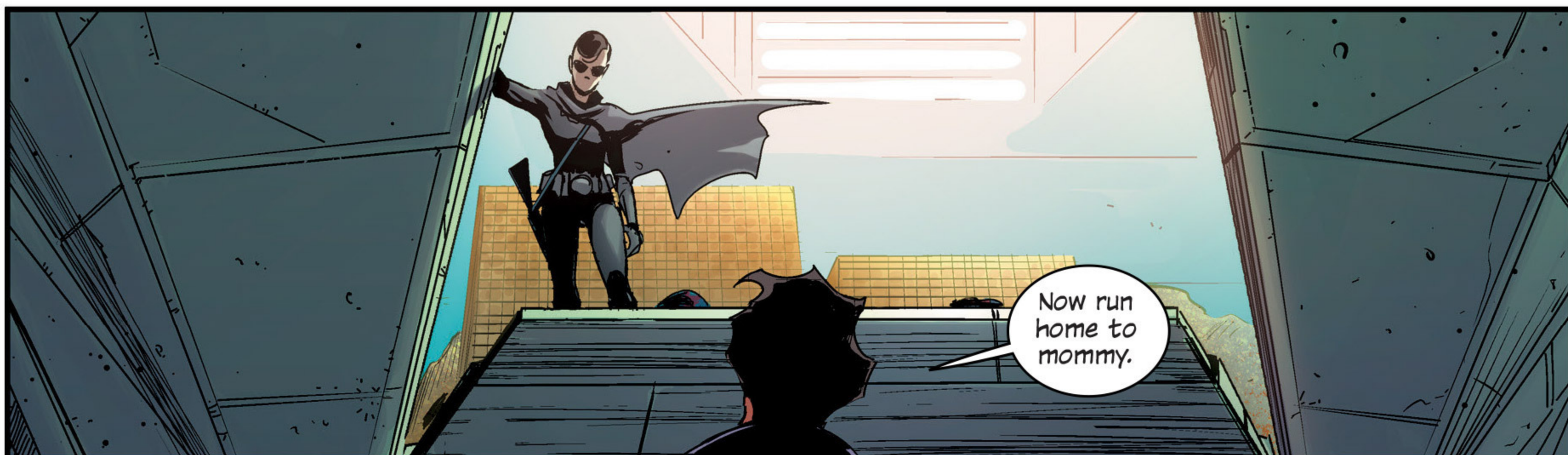


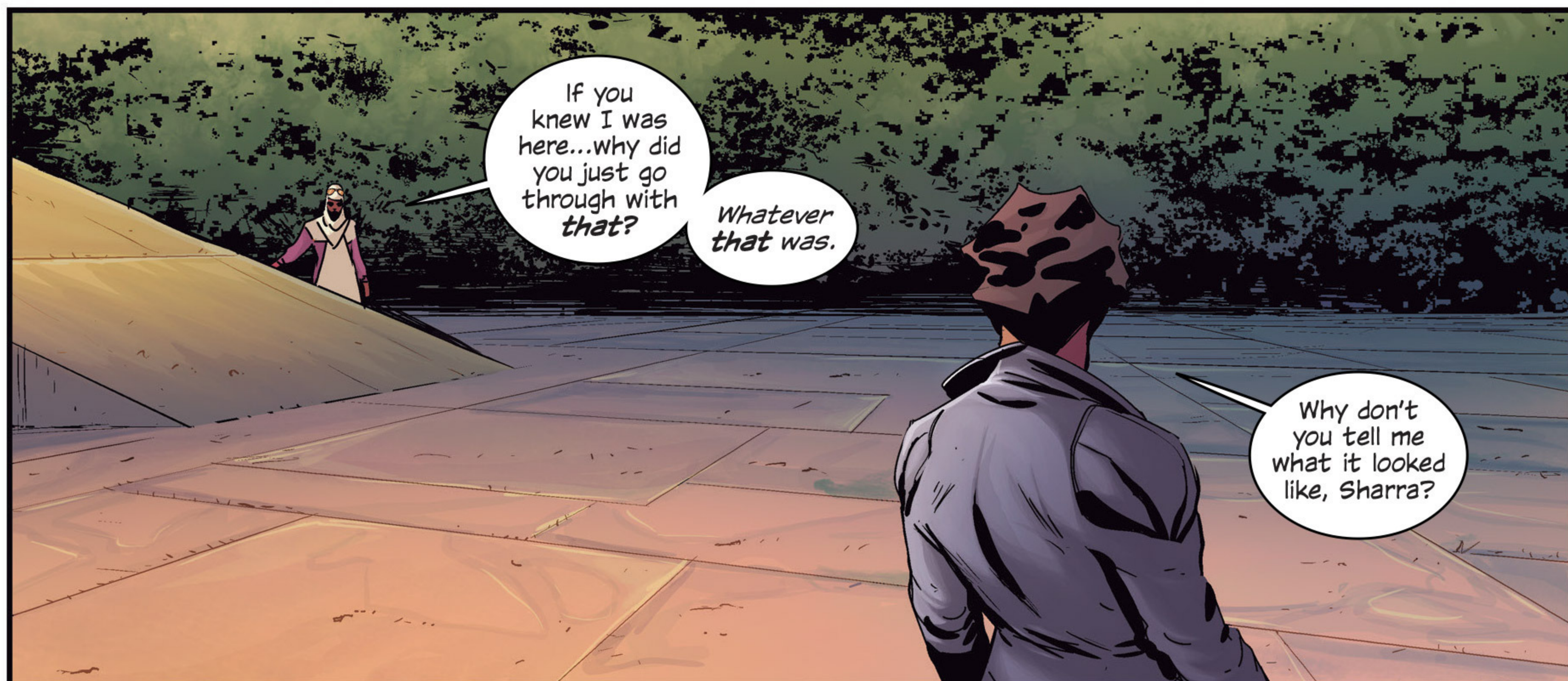
All right then...

Let's get you people paid.









If you knew I was here...why did you just go through with *that*?

Whatever *that* was.

Why don't you tell me what it looked like, Sharra?



A Crown Prince giving away the spoils of the Kingdom. And doing so after he was told by his father -- *the King* -- not to.

But I must be wrong, John Freeman, as seeing that would make you a *damned fool*.

No. You've pretty much got it. But as a King's Vizier, you're expected to look a little deeper than the surface.

Understand? I *wanted* you to see...because I *needed* you to see.



And what is it I'm supposed to be seeing?



Who I really am.



Goddammit, John! I followed you here because someone noticed what you were doing. They brought it to me, expecting me to take it to the King...and instead -- *like an idiot* -- I followed you.

Because I didn't want this to be true.



I know... and I love that you came after me. I really do.

It makes things *clearer* for us. It implies a *certain future* for you and me...

One that does not include my father.

Oh, god...

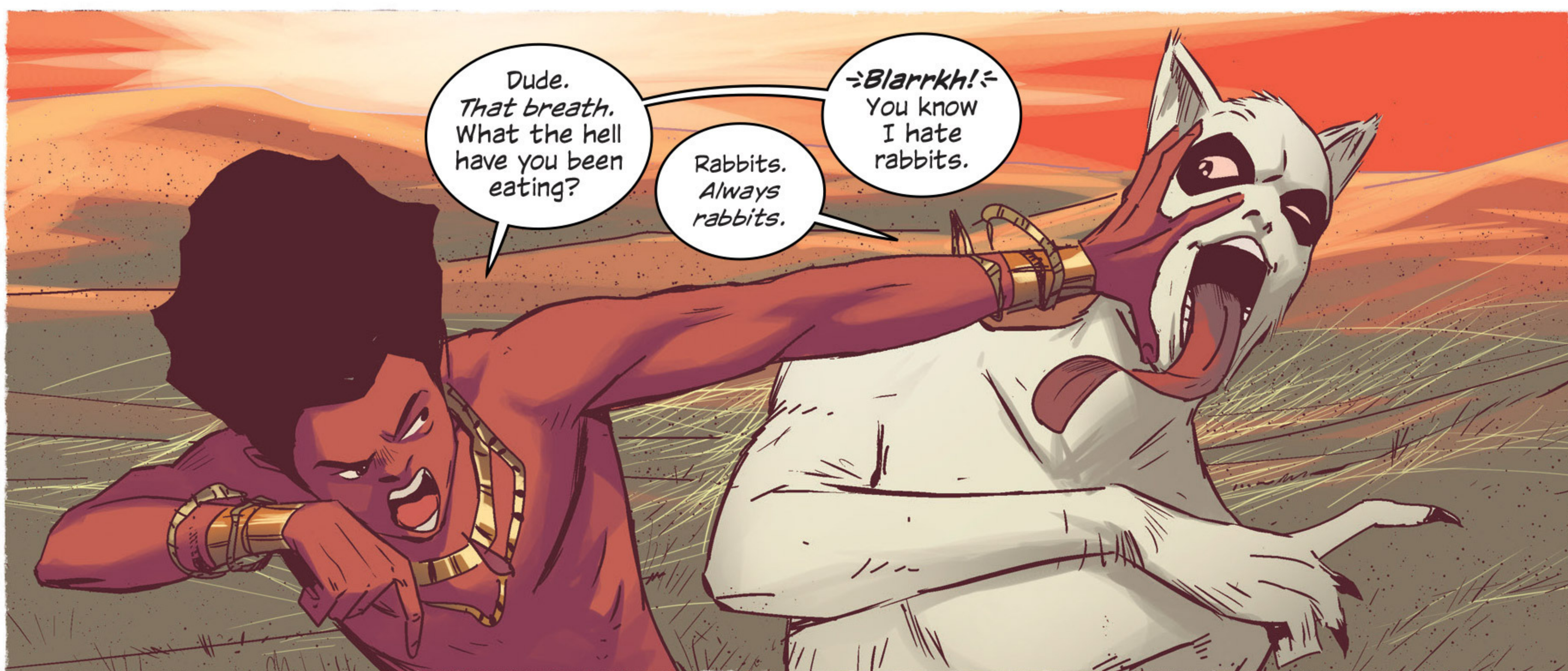


That's what this is about...you're planning to overthrow the King. *Aren't you?*



Oh, it's much more than that.







I know.
I was
kidding.

It was
my balls.

Oh, you
son of a
bitch...

Still...



I'm really
gonna miss
you.

Yeah.



I'm gonna miss
you too.



So Dad
said that the
transport should
be here tomorrow
to take you home.
You ready?

I barely even
remember the
Kingdom...

Honestly, I have
no idea what to
expect. Or what's
expected...

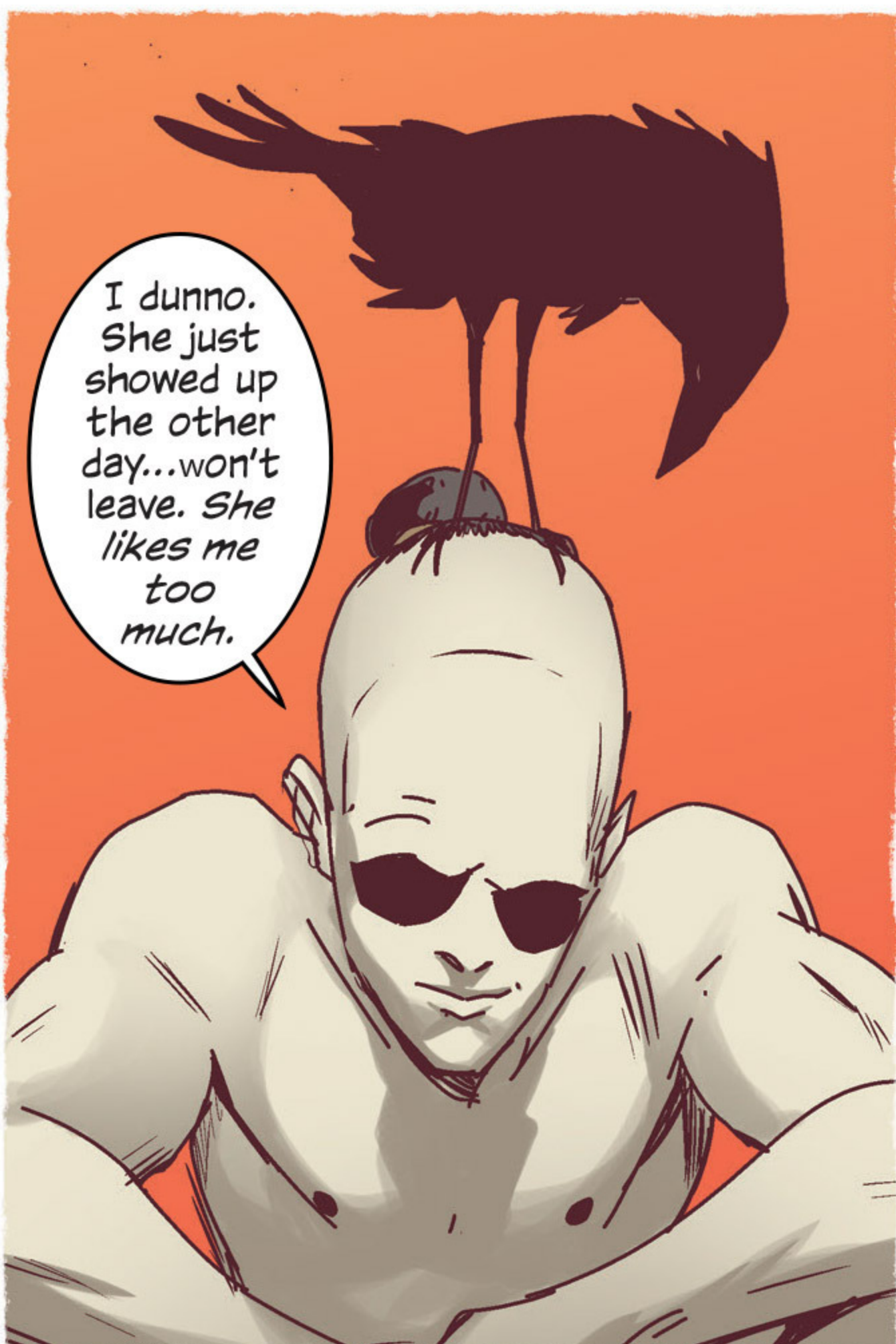


Yeah.
But it's
time. And Dad
says we're
ready.



I guess...

What's
with the
bird?



I dunno.
She just
showed up
the other
day...won't
leave. She
likes me
too
much.



Probably
that breath
of yours.

Hrmp.

...hey.

Yeah?

I don't
want to
go.

I know. And I don't want you to, Brother.
I suppose, in a dream, this could be our life.
The plains, and the hunt...

But we are meant for more
important things. In the waking
world, we have a purpose...

And to that
purpose, we
have been
forged.

Besides it's not
like we're not going
to see each other
again. Ahead of us
is *Armistice*, and
beyond that the
fall of man.

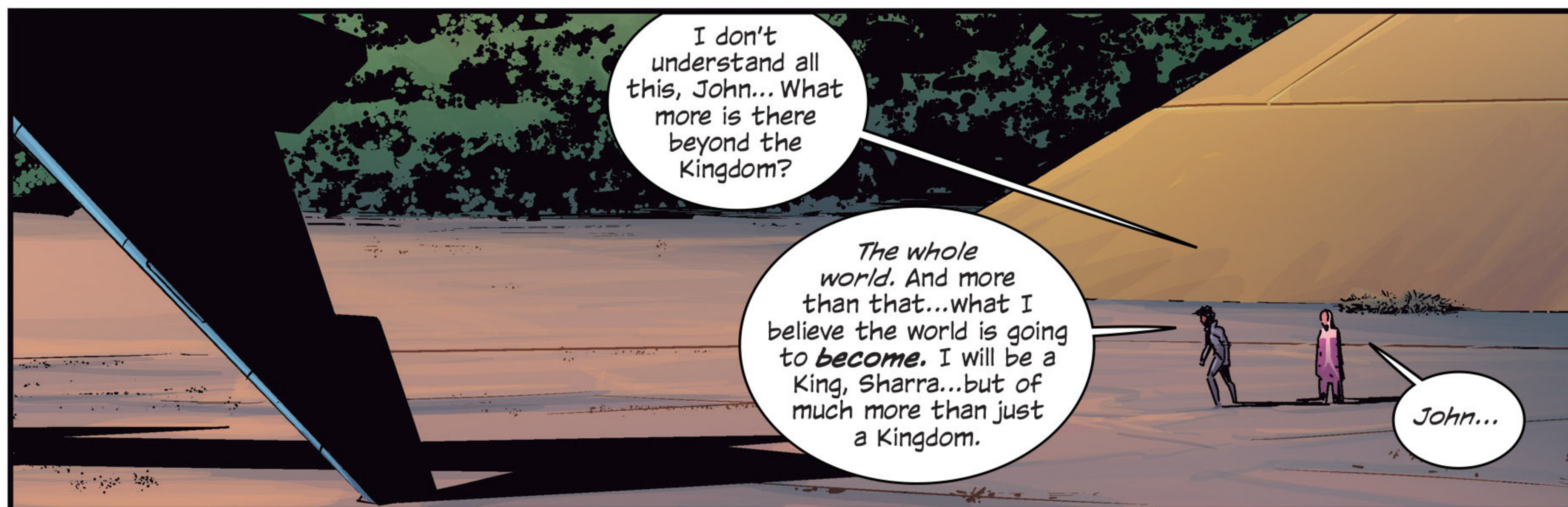
And
we know
this...

Because
we have
heard *The
Message*.

For
we are
Chosen.

I guess I'll
see you then,
Wolf.

To the
end of days,
Brother.



I don't understand all this, John... What more is there beyond the Kingdom?

The whole world. And more than that... what I believe the world is going to *become*. I will be a King, Sharra... but of much more than just a Kingdom.

John...



Yes?

I still don't understand why you want me involved in this.

You know I am loyal to the throne.



Did you know I have a brother?



Your father has fourteen heirs, John... of course, I know you have a brother.



No. I don't mean *one of them*. Jealous rivals coveting something they will never have.

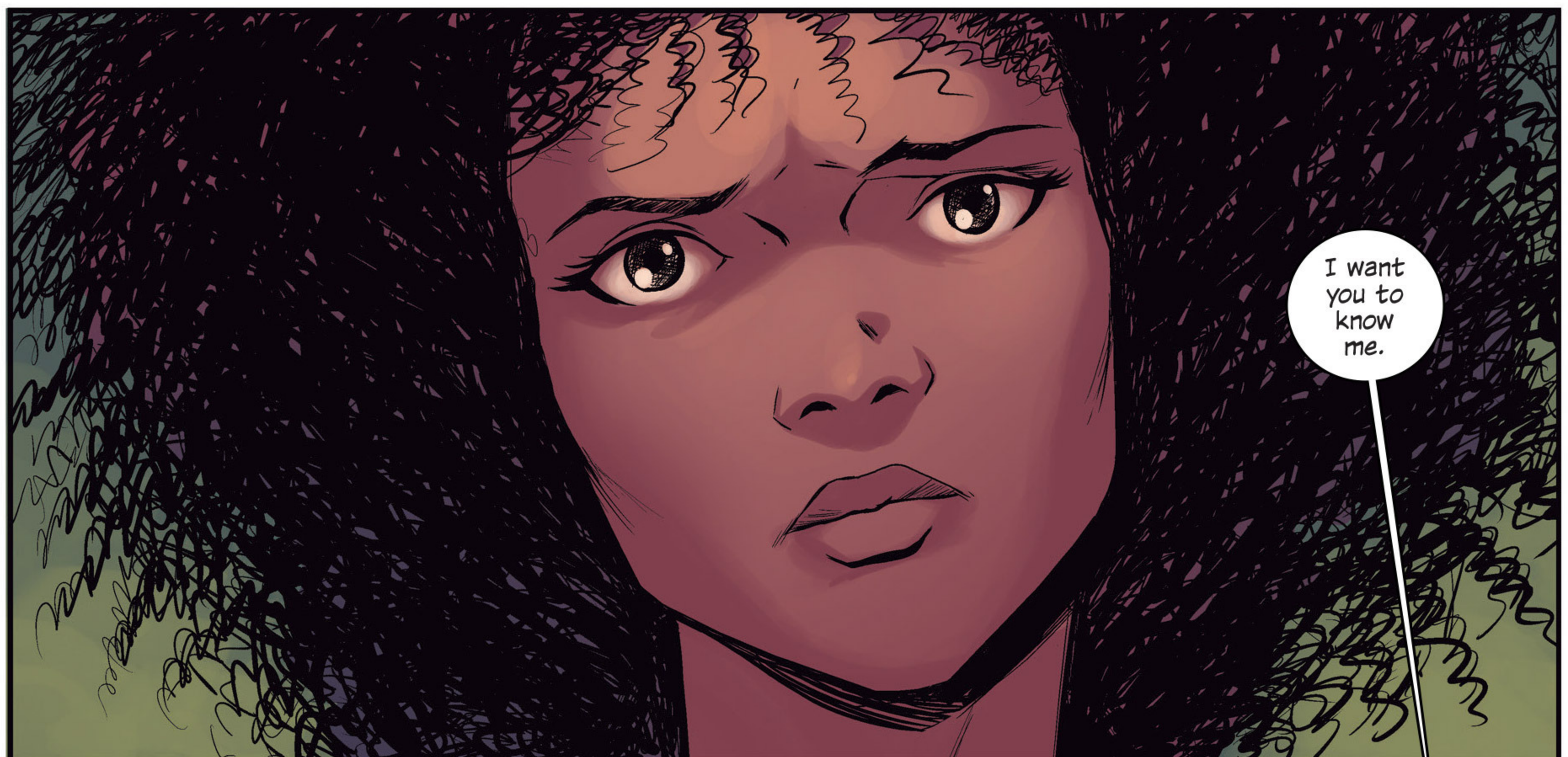
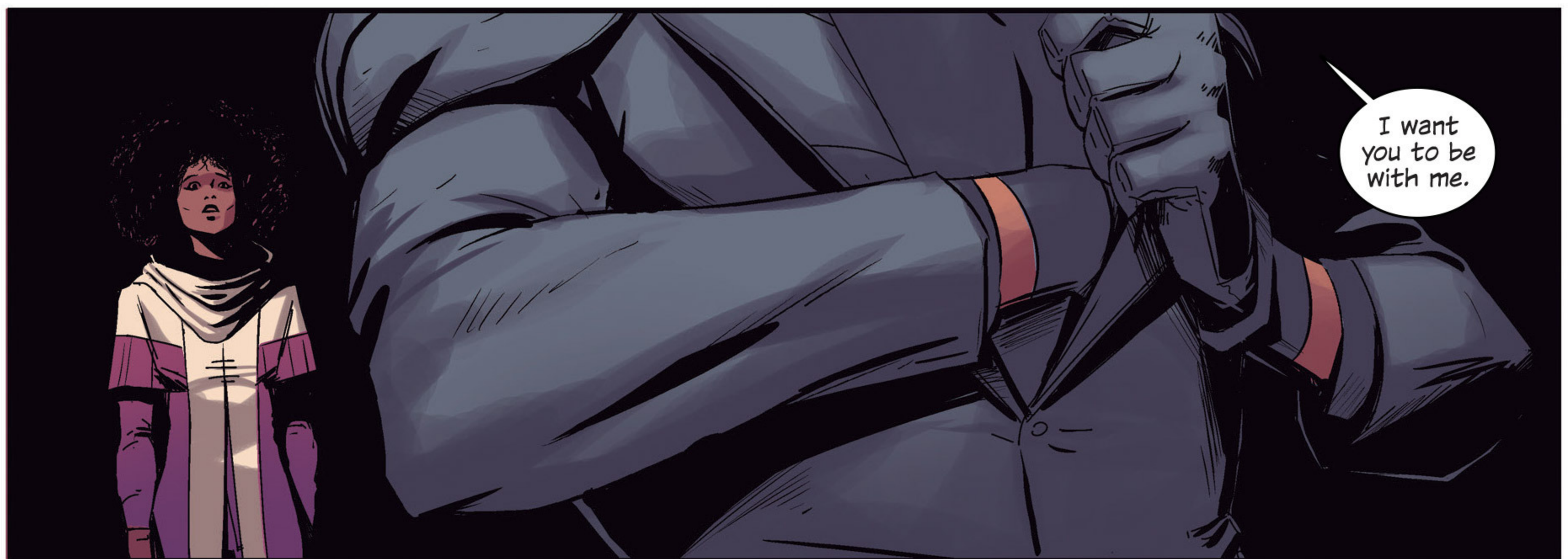
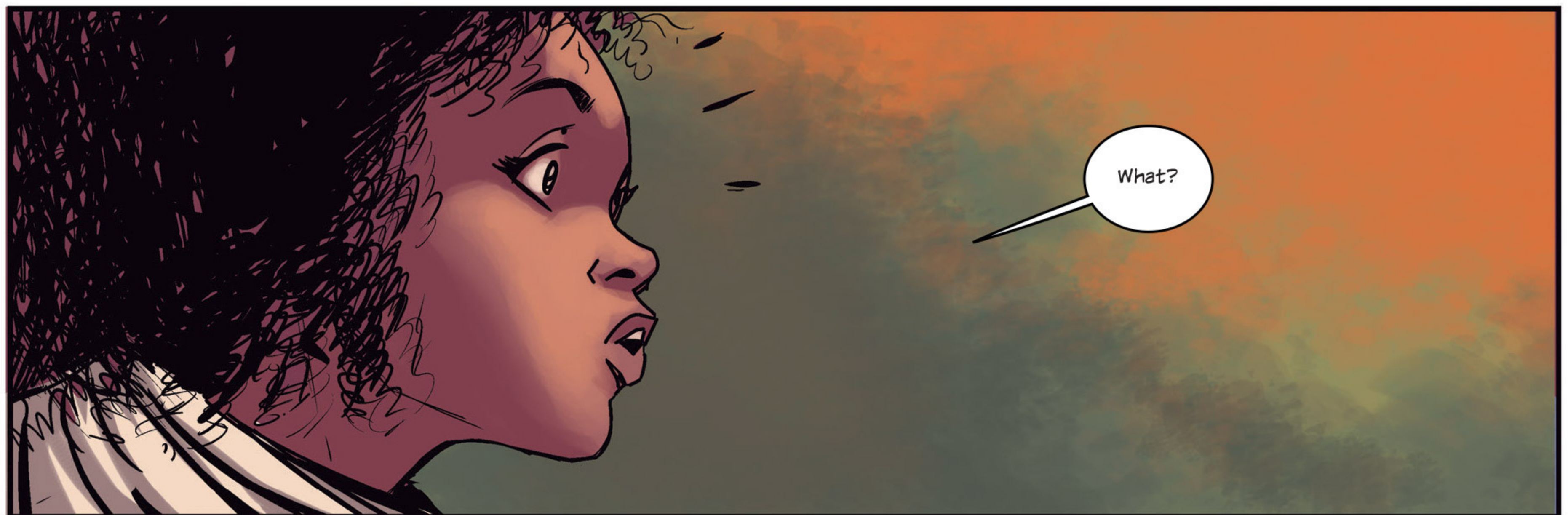
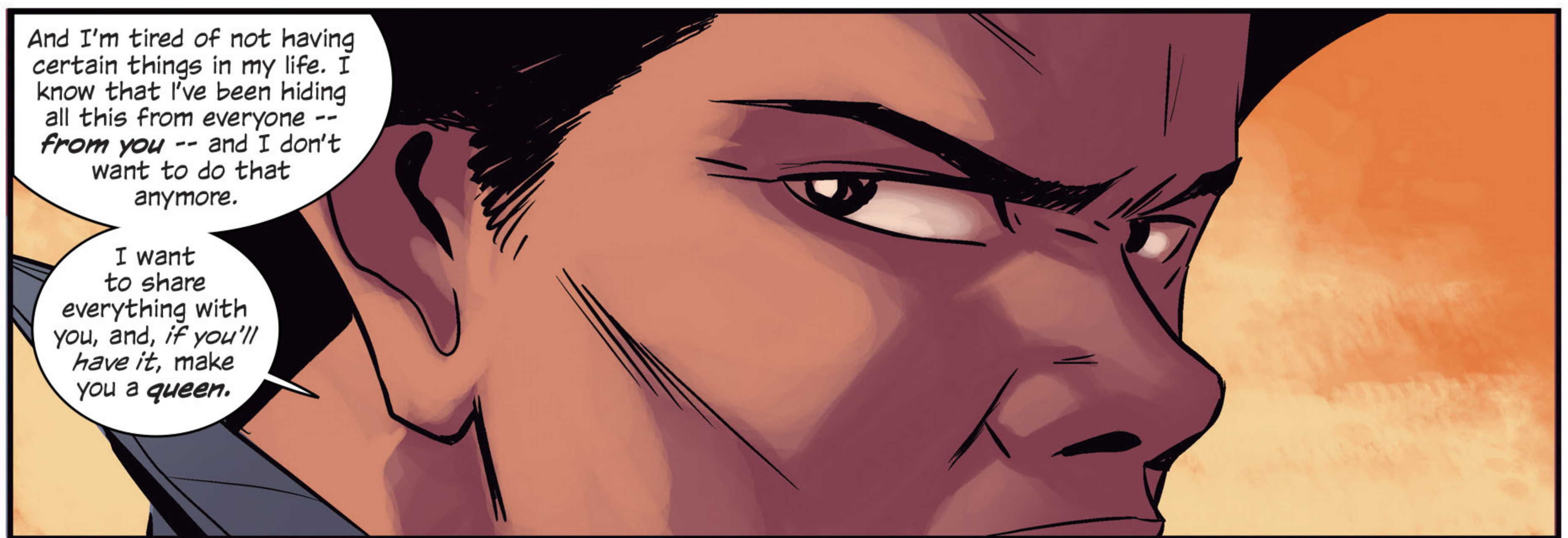
I mean a real brother. Someone I loved and shared everything with...

I didn't know that.

It's true... but he's gone now. *Lost*, and left a void in his wake.

I don't know what--

We've been playing at something for some time now...





And I want
to show
you who
I *really*
am.



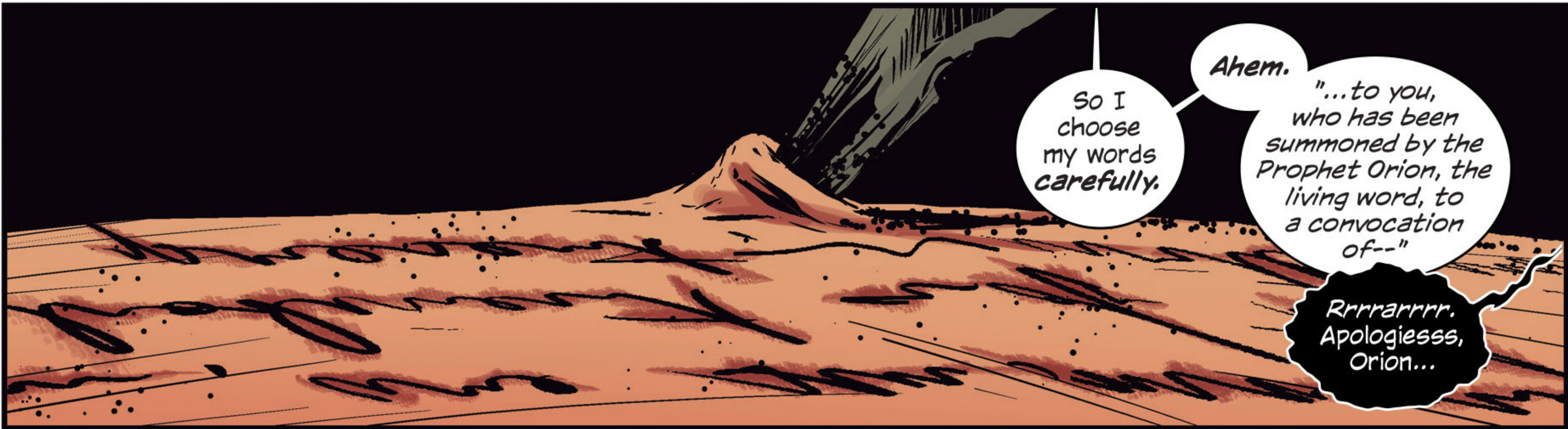


Urrrrrrrr...

There's an *art* to persuasion.



Especially when *persuading* those who are blind to a right and proper path...



So I choose my words *carefully*.

Ahem.

"...to you, who has been summoned by the Prophet Orion, the living word, to a convocation of--"

Rrrrrrrrr. Apologiesss, Orion...



But trying too hard iss never a good look. Perhapsss 'asssembly' there insstead of 'convocation'?

Sssubtlety, I ssay. Alwaysss an ally in the doomssaying.



That will be quite enough from you, Buer... For I am the prophet -- and won't be *rewritten*.

Urrrrrrrr...

And you!..

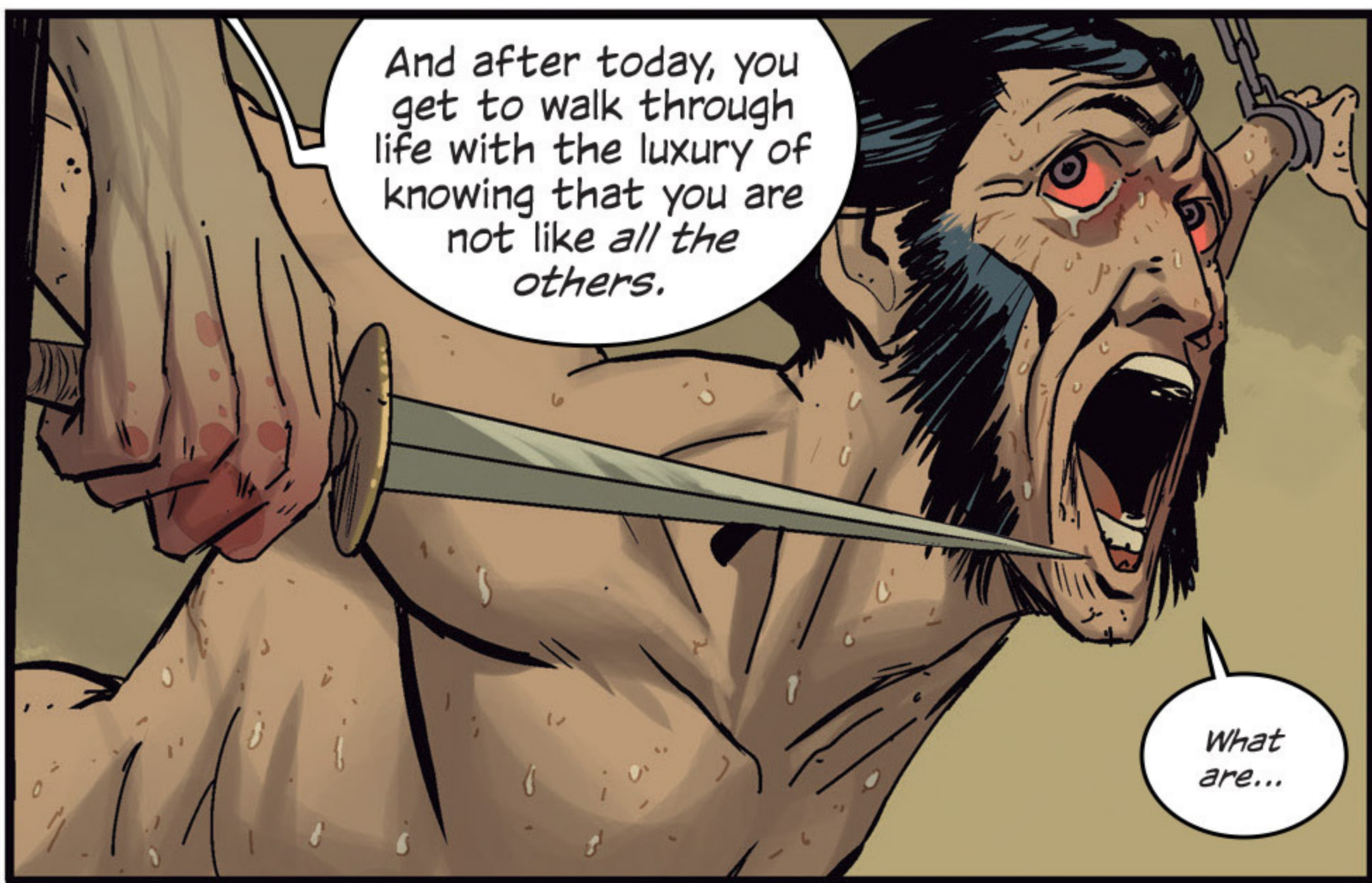
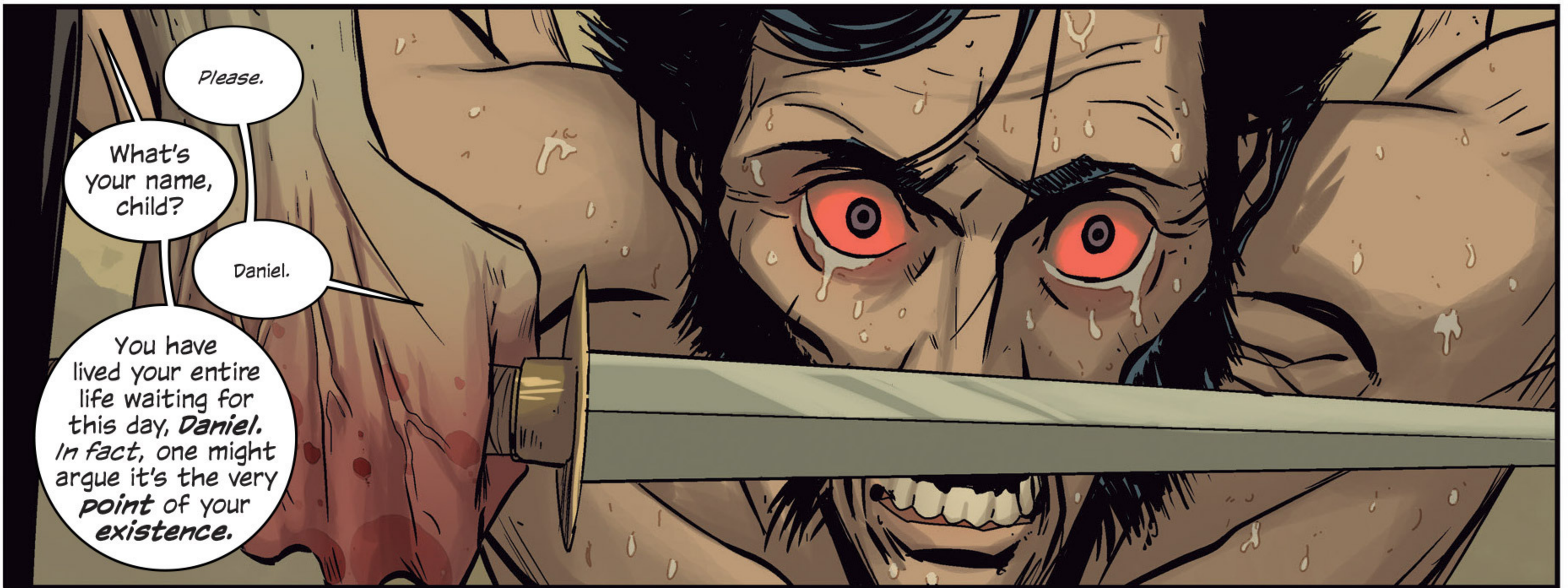
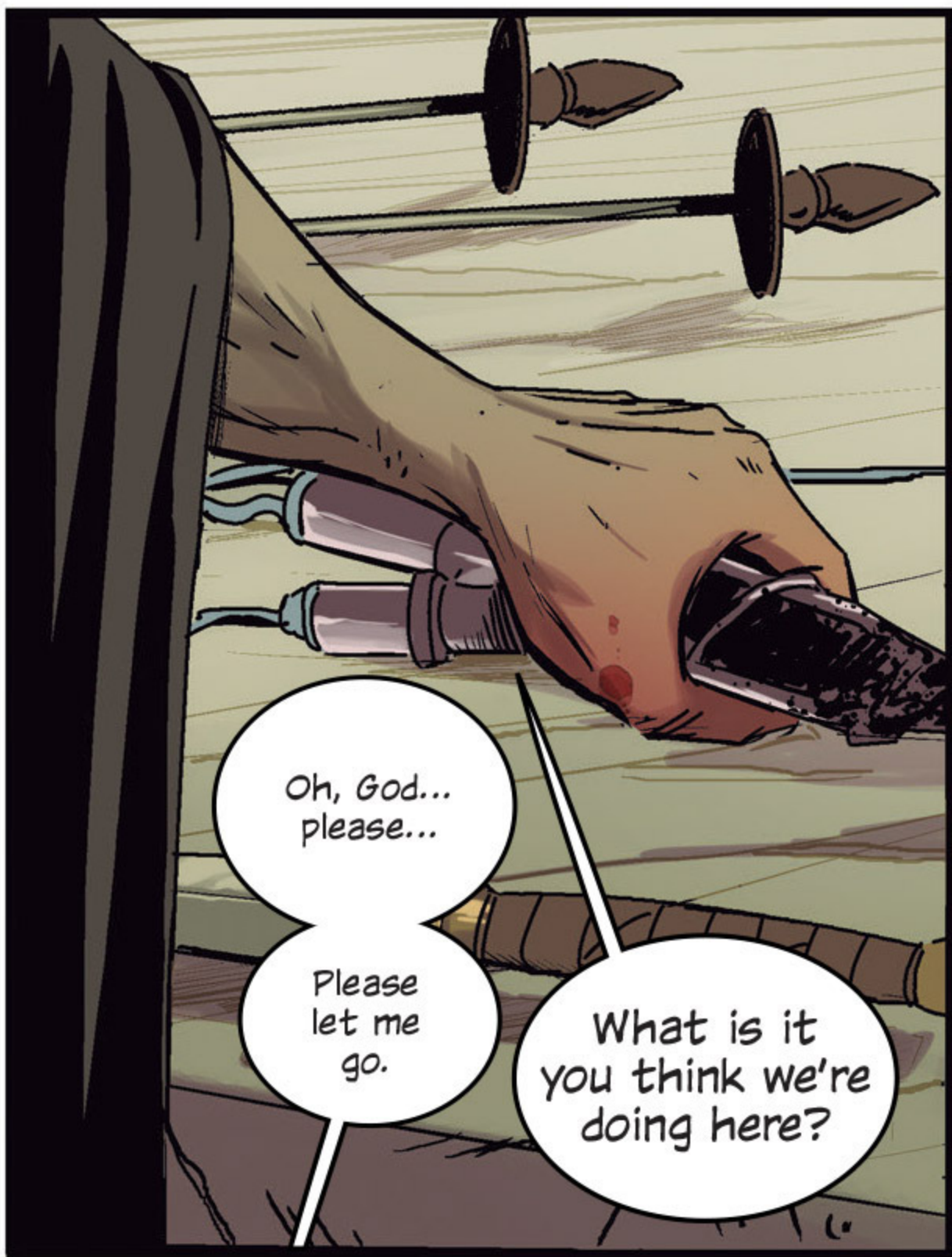


You
stop your
goddamn
mewling...

Can't
you see I'm
working
here?

Urrrrrrrrrr...

Puh-please...





Hrrnnnnn...

It-it hurts
so much...



Of course
it does. I
tell you truly,
friend.

Life *is*
pain.



Puh-
please...

Make...
make it
stop.



*It never
stops. Some
scars always
itch. Some
wounds never
close.*

They are
reminders
that you
have *paid*
your own
way...



*That pain
is an **honor**
you have
earned.*

I...I can't.
Please...

Please...

I don't
want this.

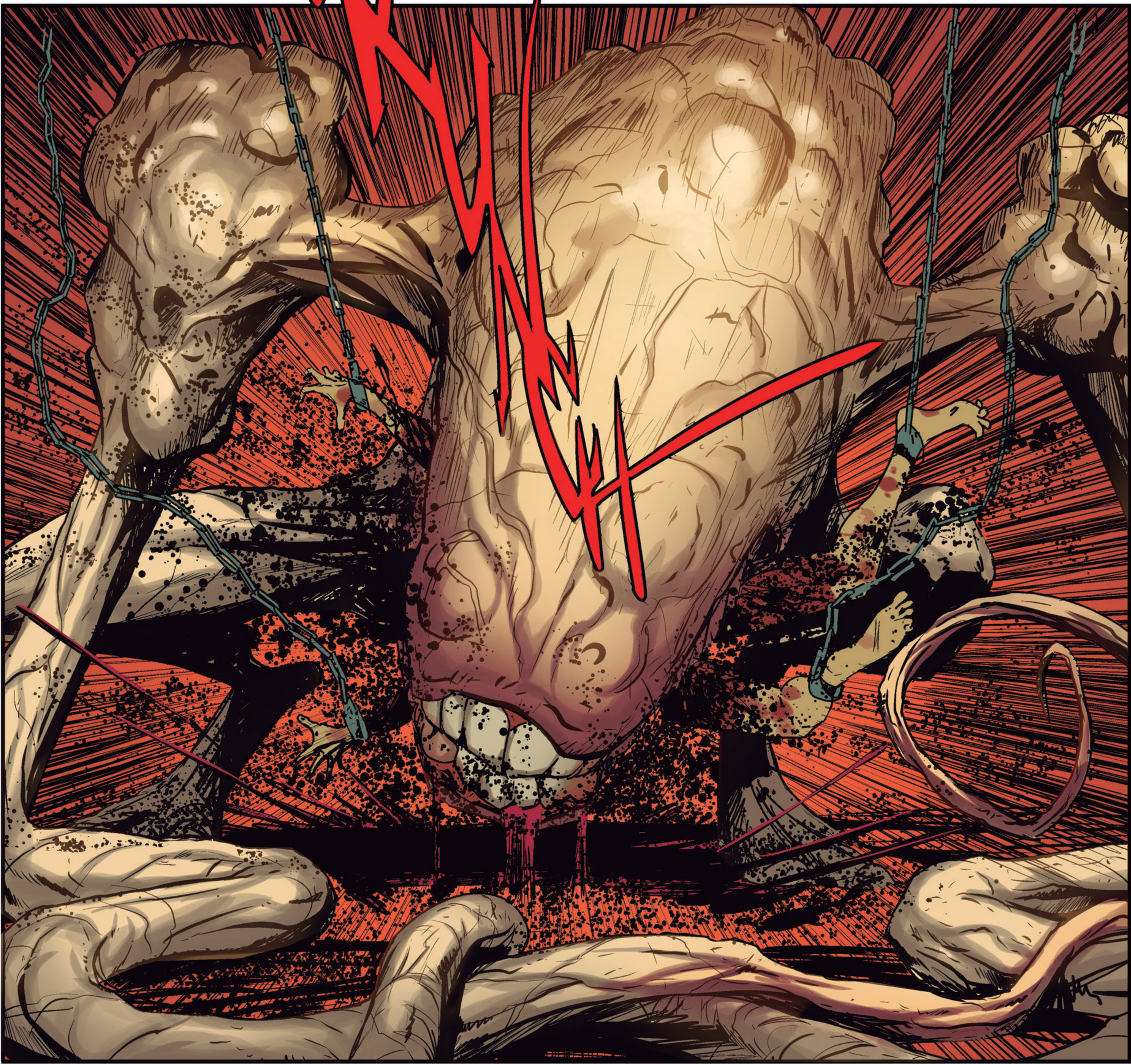
Just
make it
stop.

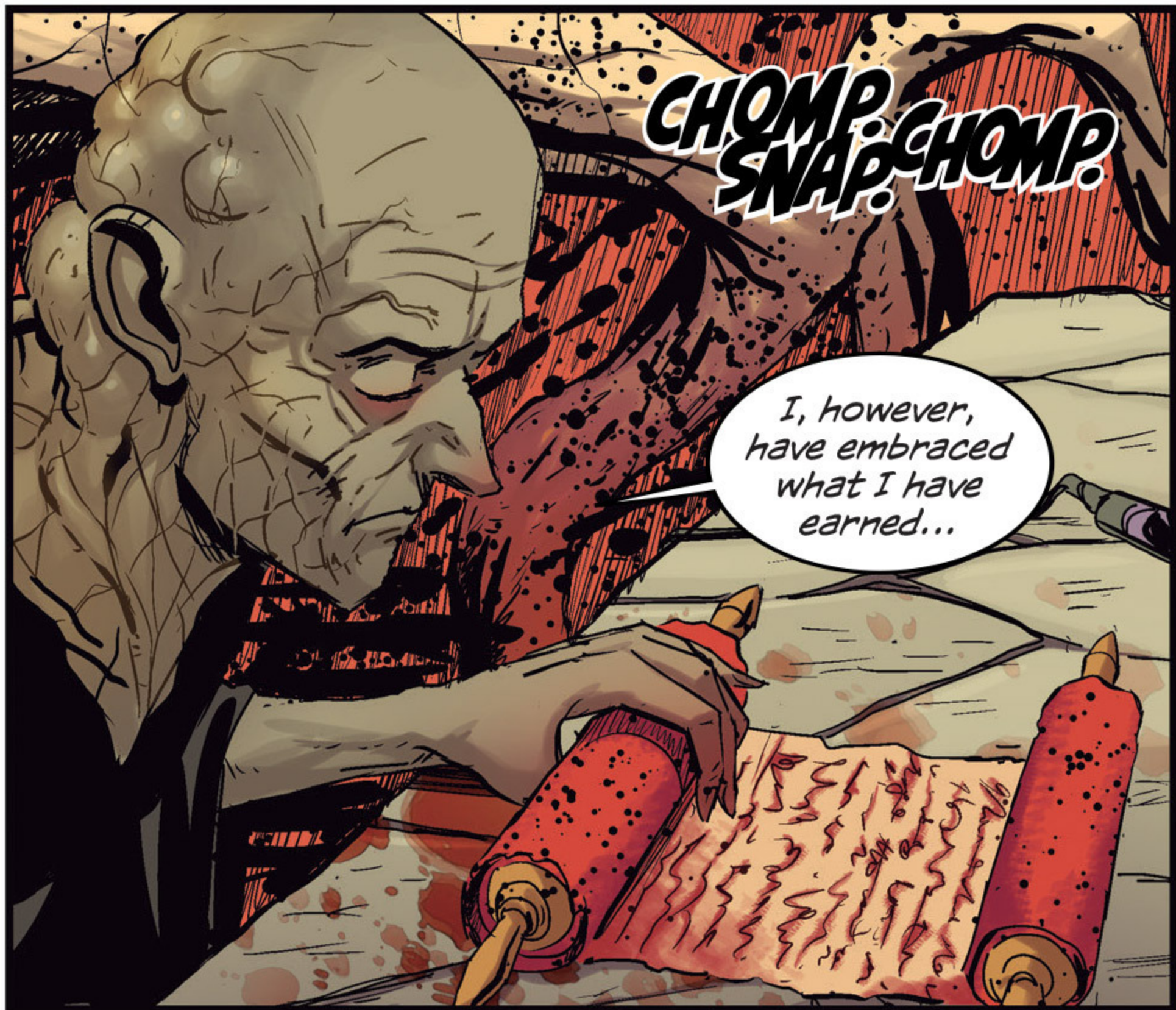


Do you see? I offered
a gift, but all these
people really want is
convenience...

No wonder
God has
forsaken this
soft land.

Go on,
Buer...





CHOMP. CHOMP.
SNAP. CHOMP.

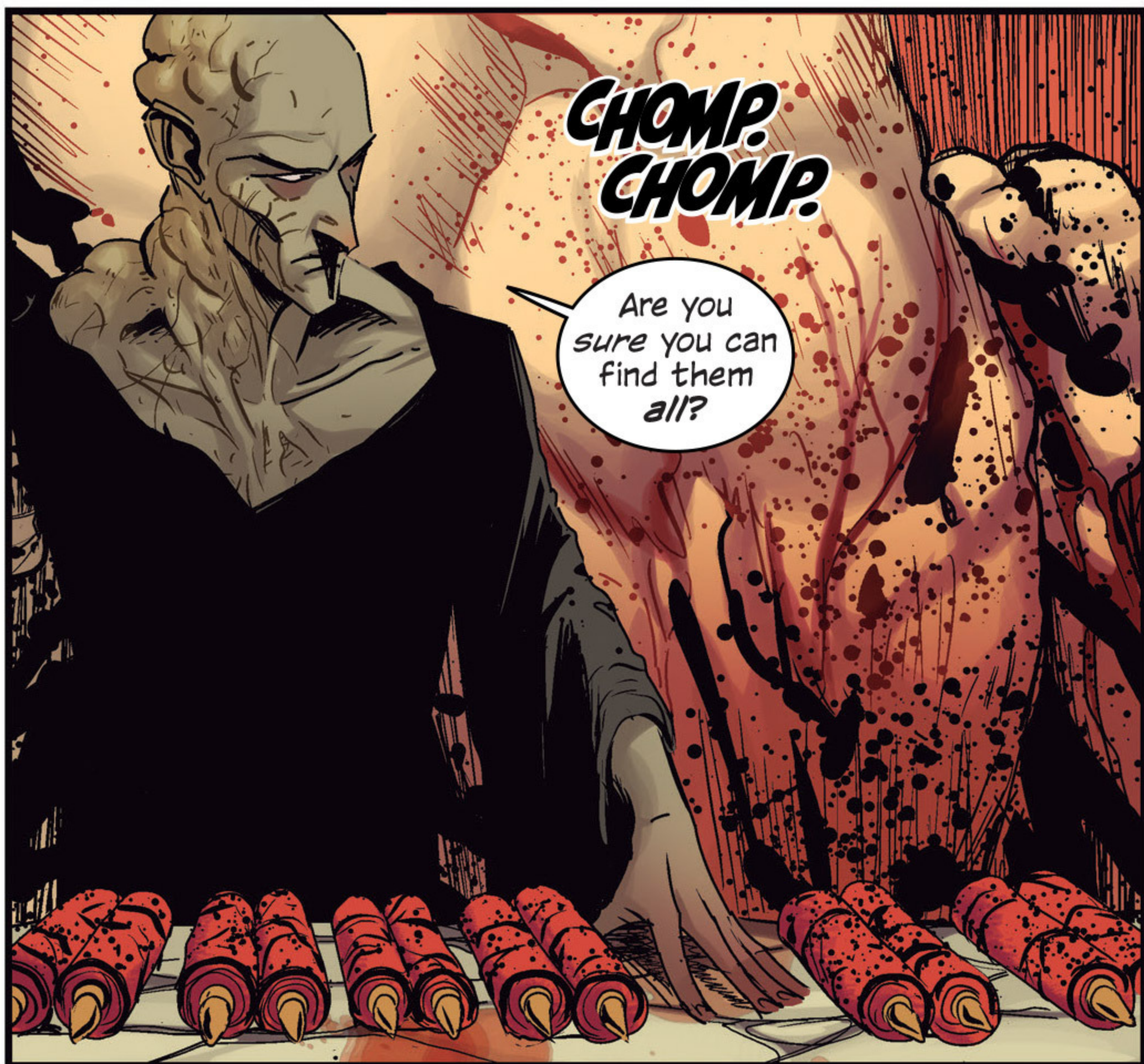
I, however,
have embraced
what I have
earned...



...I have written
the words, and those
words are *The*
Message.

Of which
there are now
seven...

One for
each of the
Chosen...



CHOMP.
CHOMP.

Are you
sure you can
find them
all?



Of
coursse.

I
am Buer,
of the
Legion.

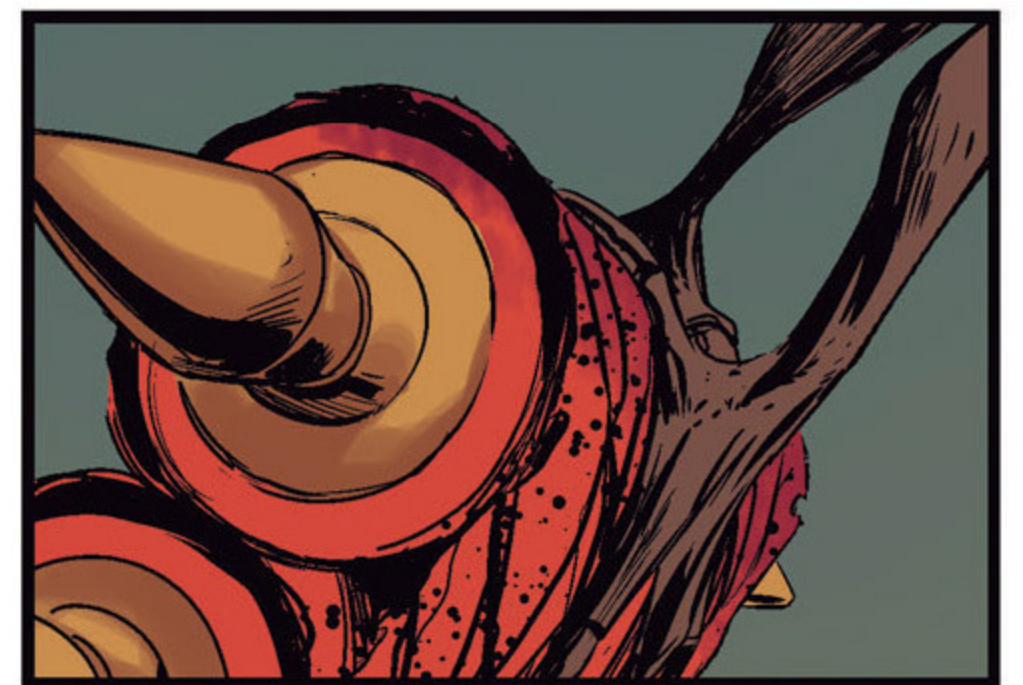
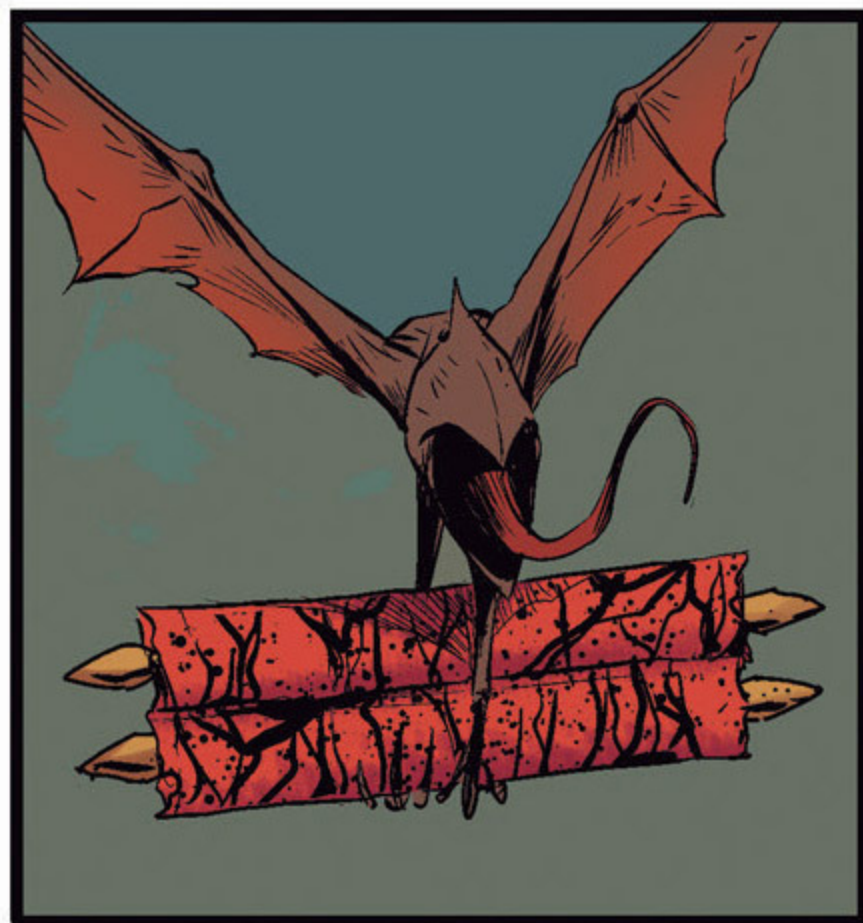
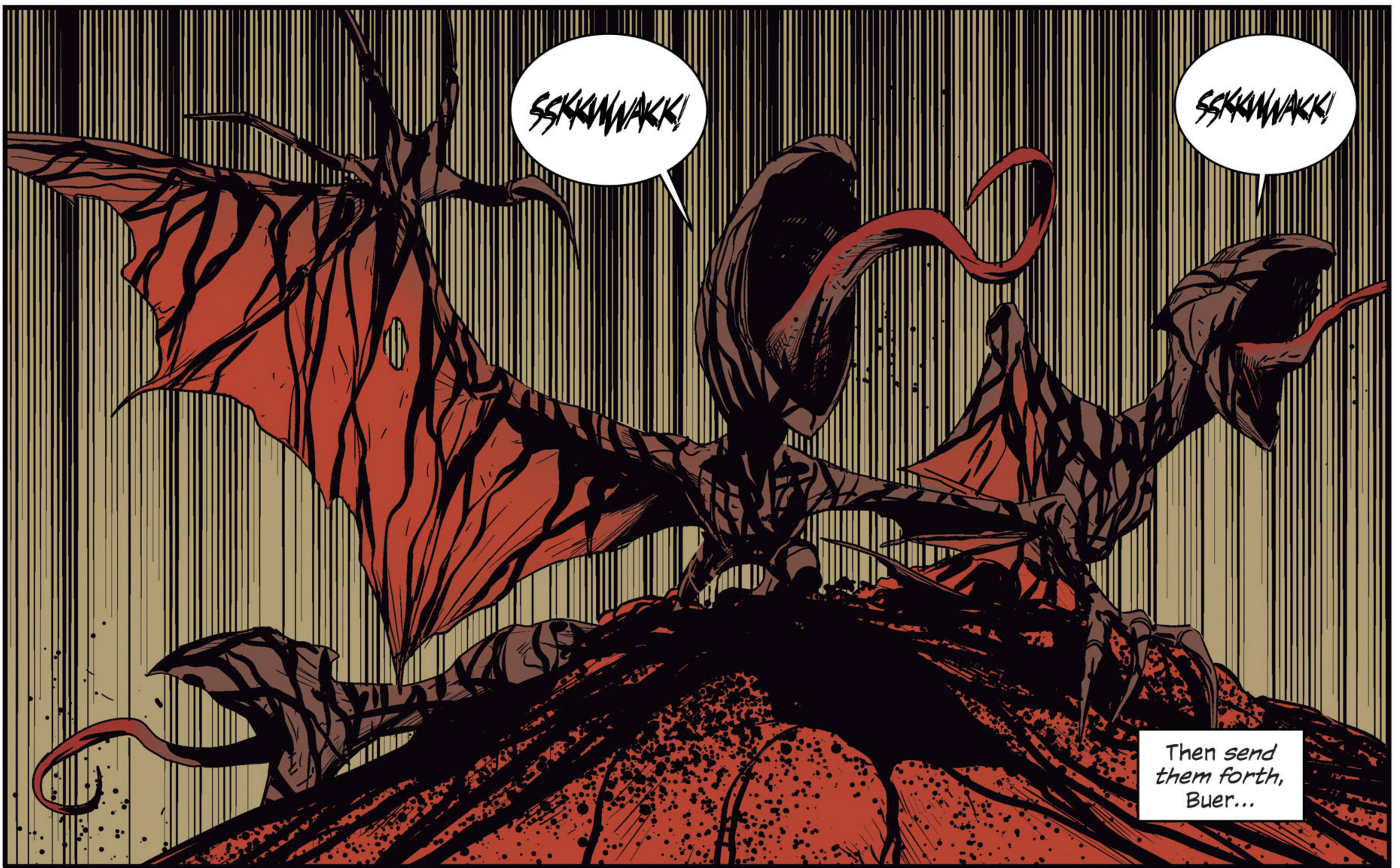


Within
me there
are many
fallen...

Hunters,
seekers...



All of
which...my
minions.





24



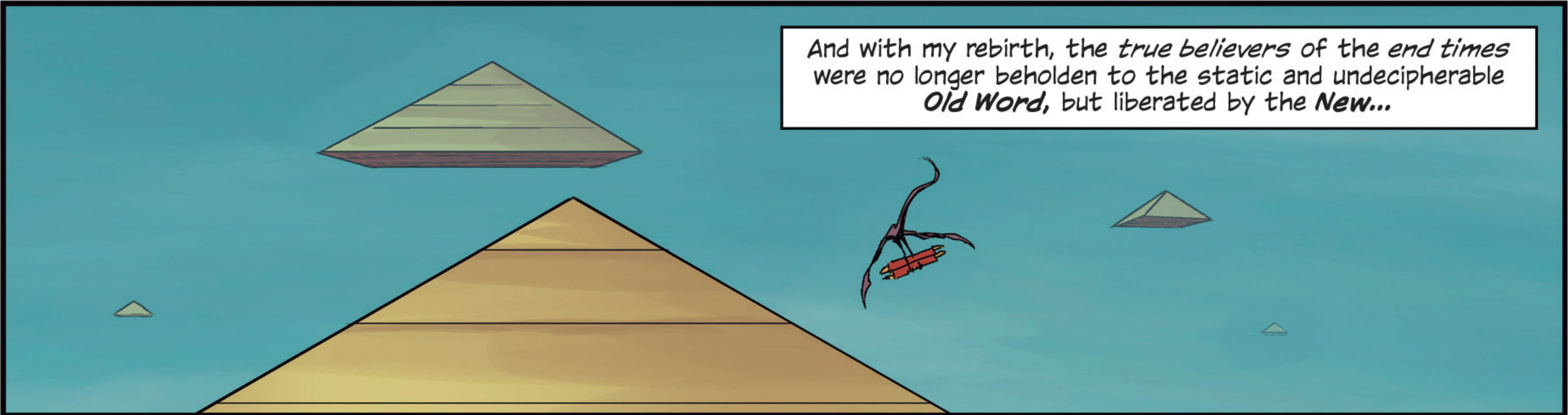
**TWENTY-FOUR:
THE LEGION
BRINGS WORD**



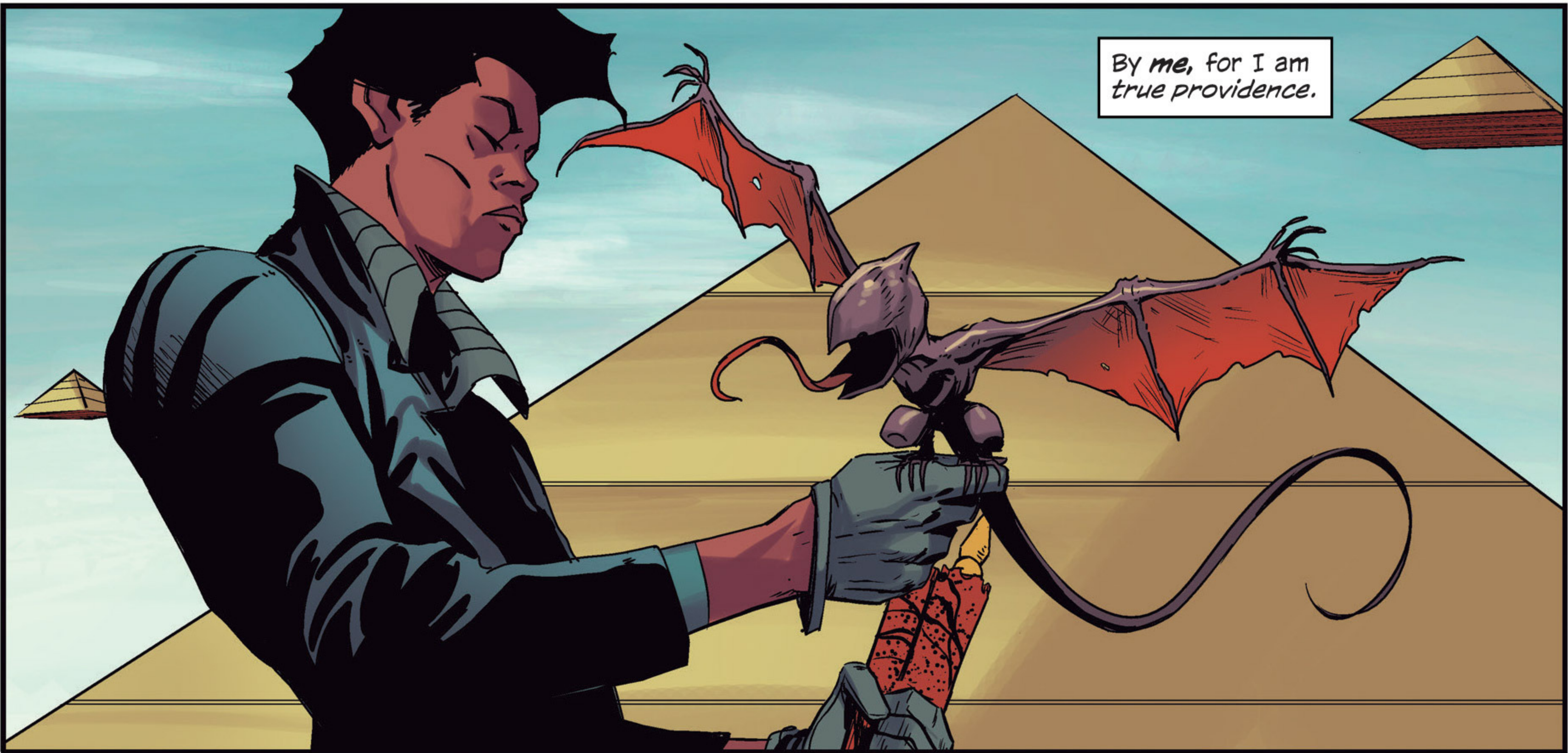
I devoured the three-fold *Message* at the fall of Armistice and became the *Living Word*.



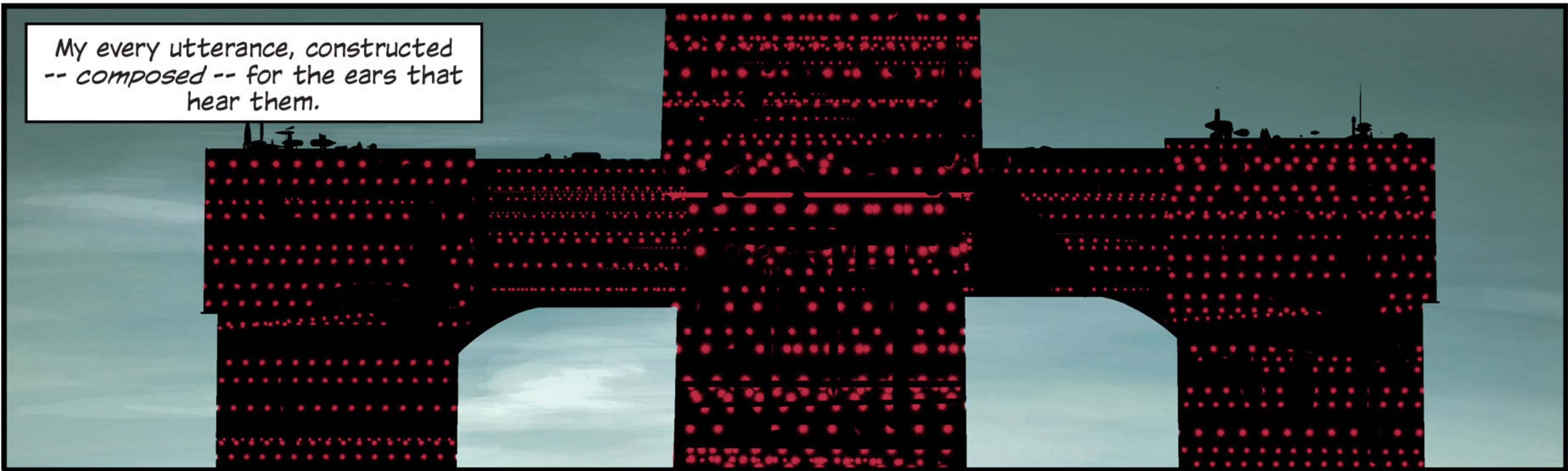
Apocrypha made flesh.



And with my rebirth, the *true believers* of the *end times* were no longer beholden to the static and undecipherable *Old Word*, but liberated by the *New*...



By *me*, for I am true providence.



My every utterance, constructed
-- composed -- for the ears that
hear them.



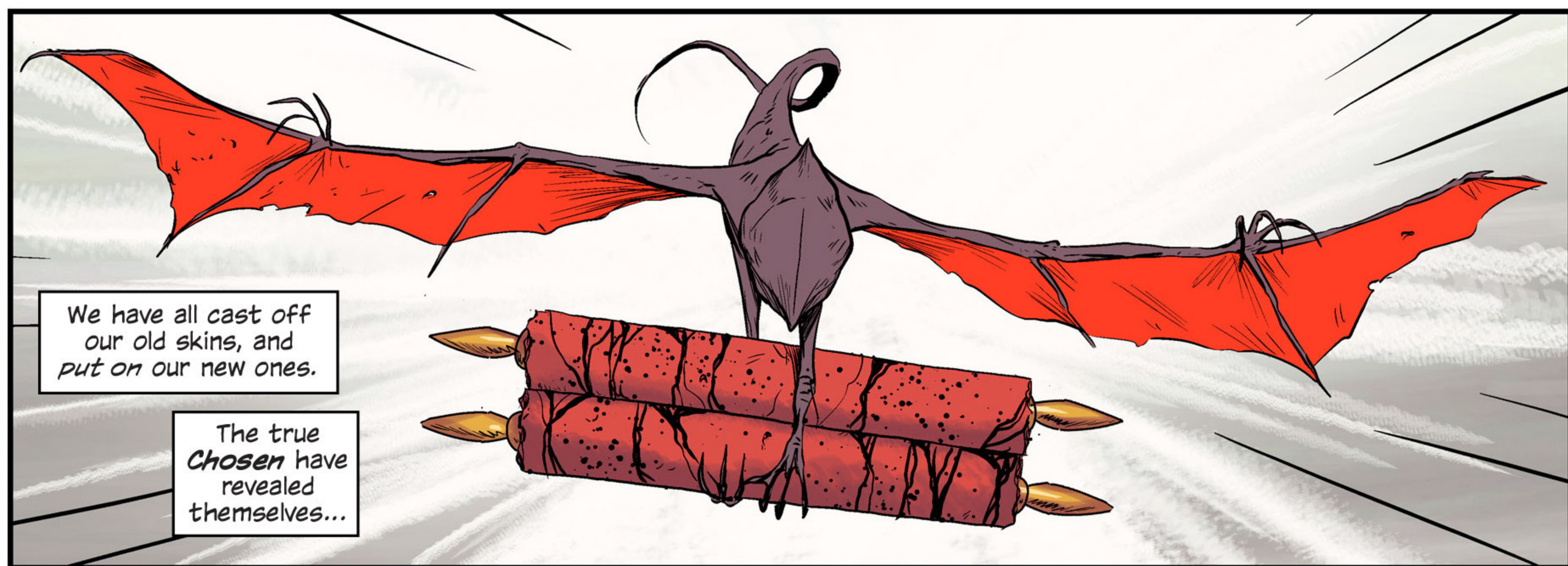
Each *Message*
I sent...unique...



To be witnessed by
their eyes only.

What iss
thiiss that
I sssee, iss it
the end of you
and me?

Hrmpt!



We have all cast off
our old skins, and
put on our new ones.

The true
Chosen have
revealed
themselves...



Both those who
have long believed...



And those
who have not.

Send
someone
to fetch
that.



Now...I call them all home.



Get this...

"... to that end, there is no denying that your nature absolves you of the wrongs you have wrought. And though thou are not Chosen, it is good and right that the avatars of the end times bear witness to our coming acts."



"So join us. And do so with head held high, for you have my forgiveness. Your loving son, the blah blah blah..."

What a total... piece. Of.

Shit.



You know, there's a good goddamn reason why every ten thousand years or so we have to cull this entire planet of semi-evolved ordure.

In fact, it's a pretty straight forward job...

But then you go and take one as a pet, teach it to believe, and now look...the ape thinks he's running things.



This is all on your head... **mother.**

⇒Sigh.⇒
You do the best you can.

Raise them on fate and the fallen nature of man...but **eventually** you have to let your children go.



Let 'em become who they're going to be.

It **is** disappointing. I honestly thought he'd have sharper teeth than this.



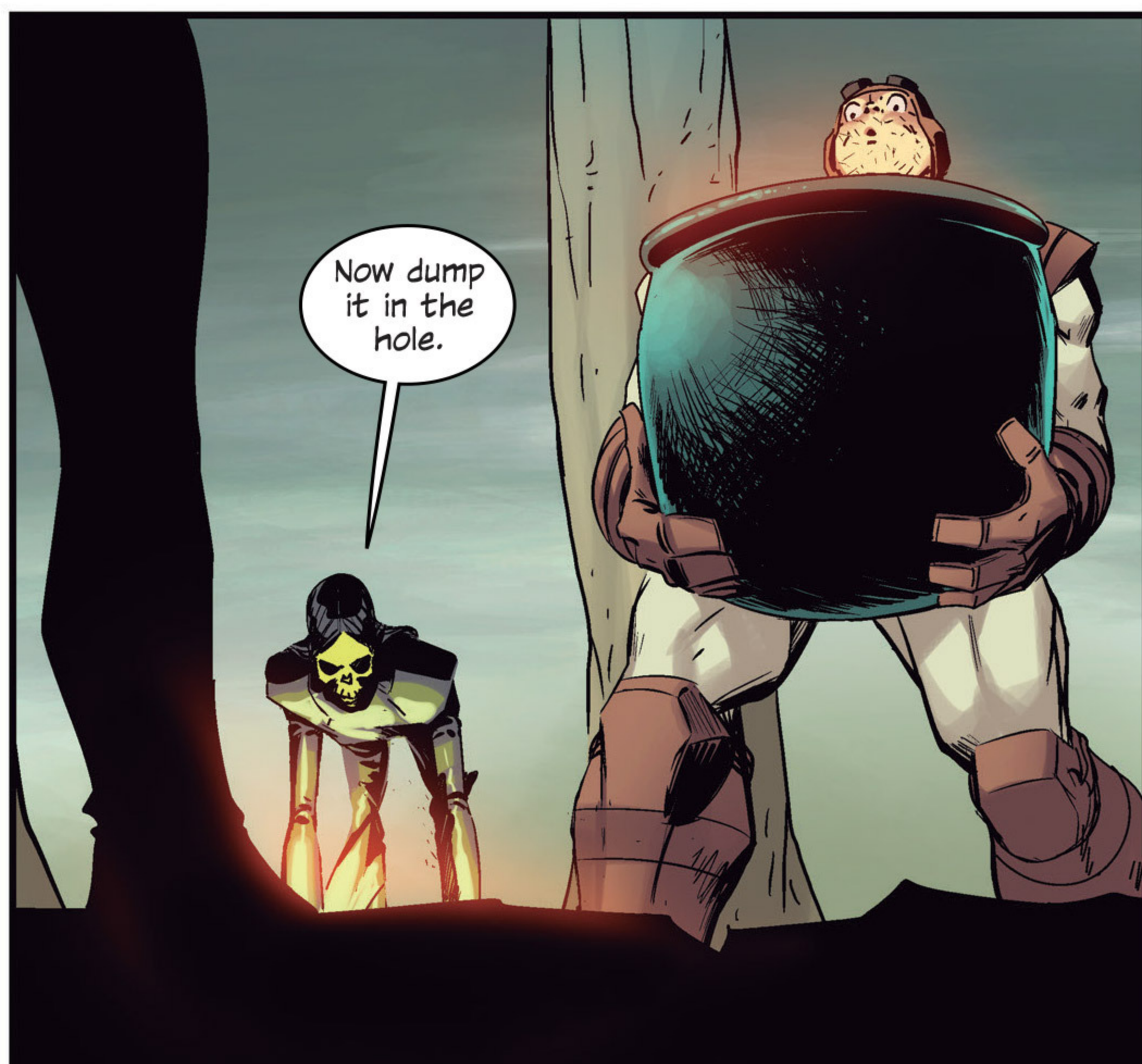
It's ready.



I've cooked down all the meat we brought with us. There should be enough base material...

Pick up the pot, Jed.

Hrrnnn.

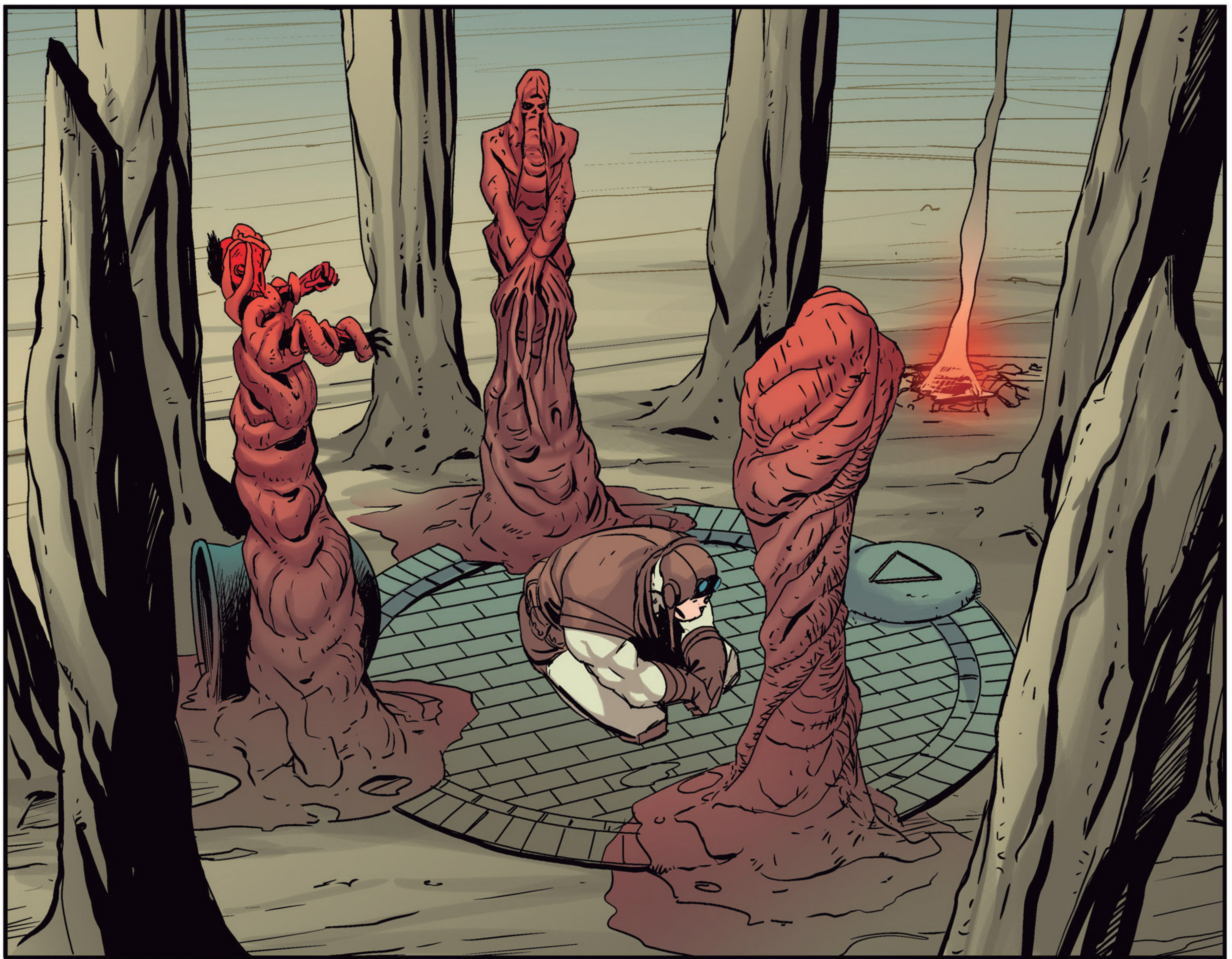
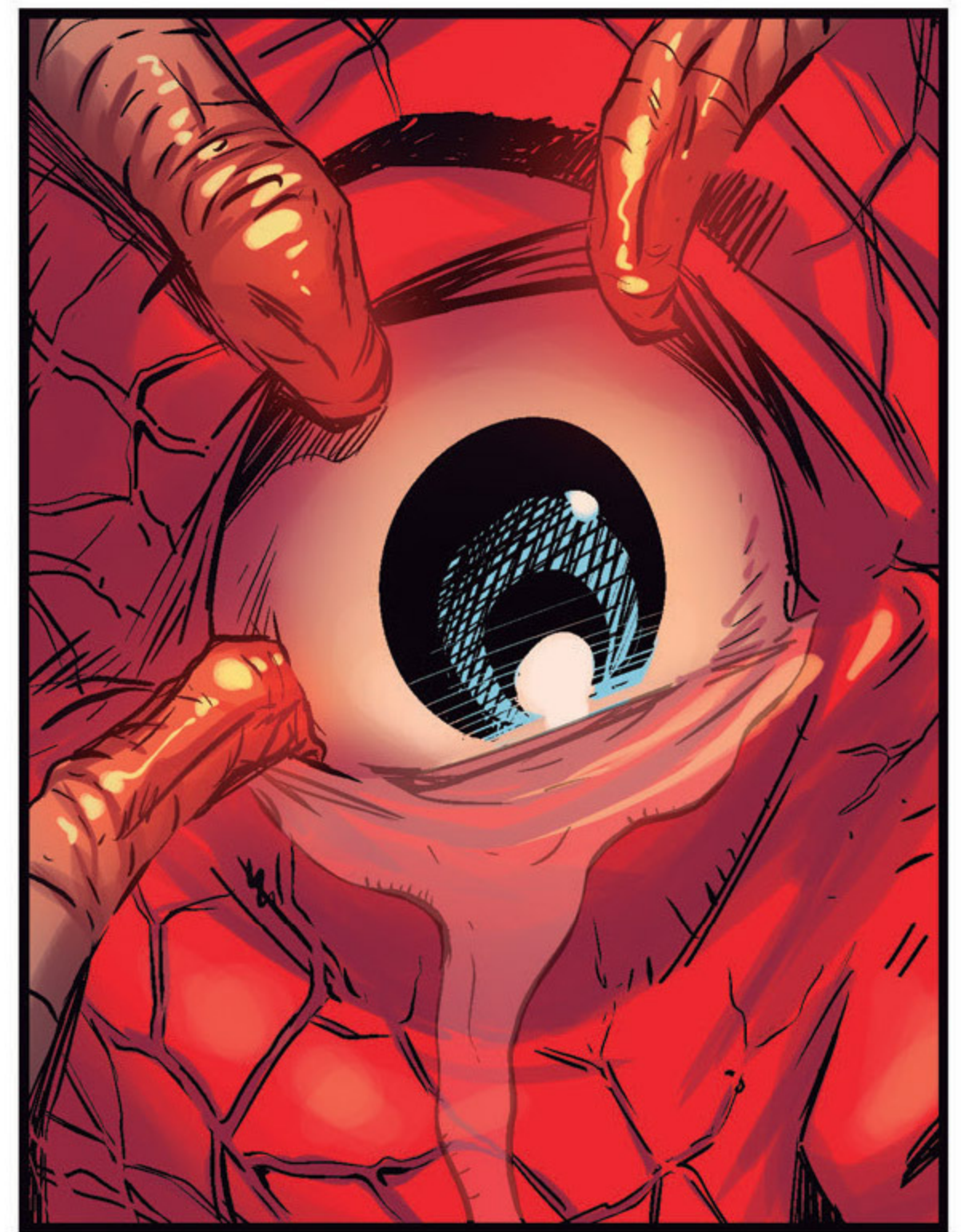
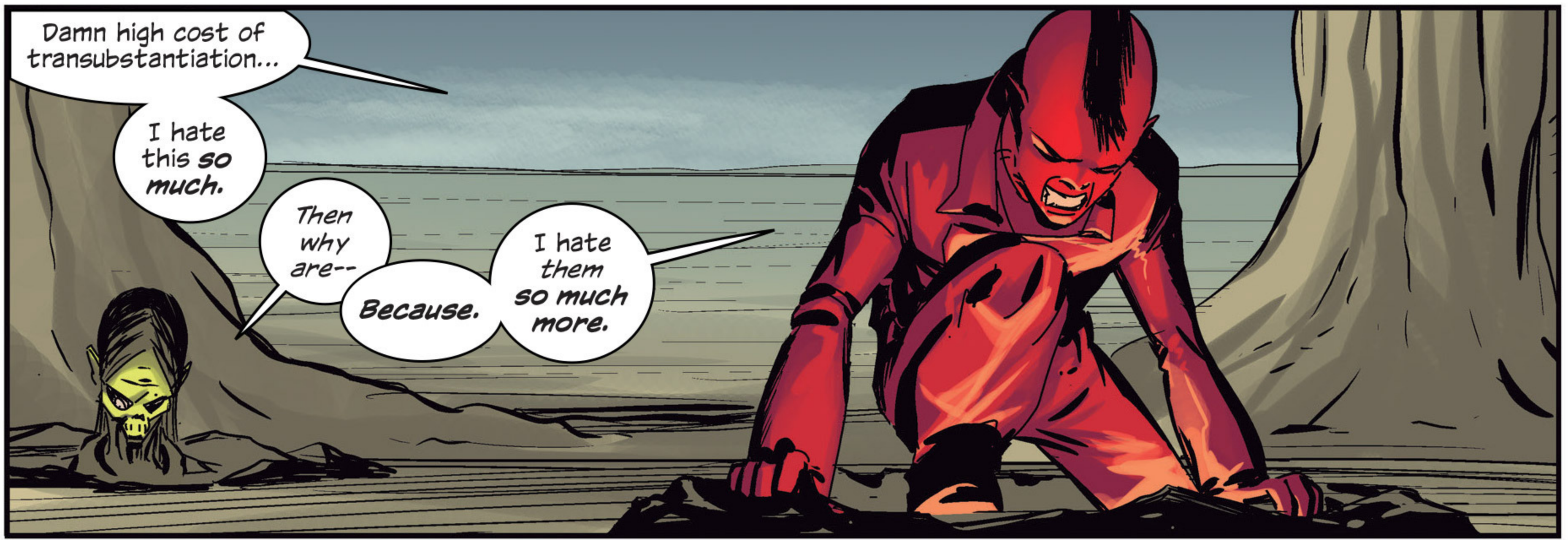


Now dump it in the hole.



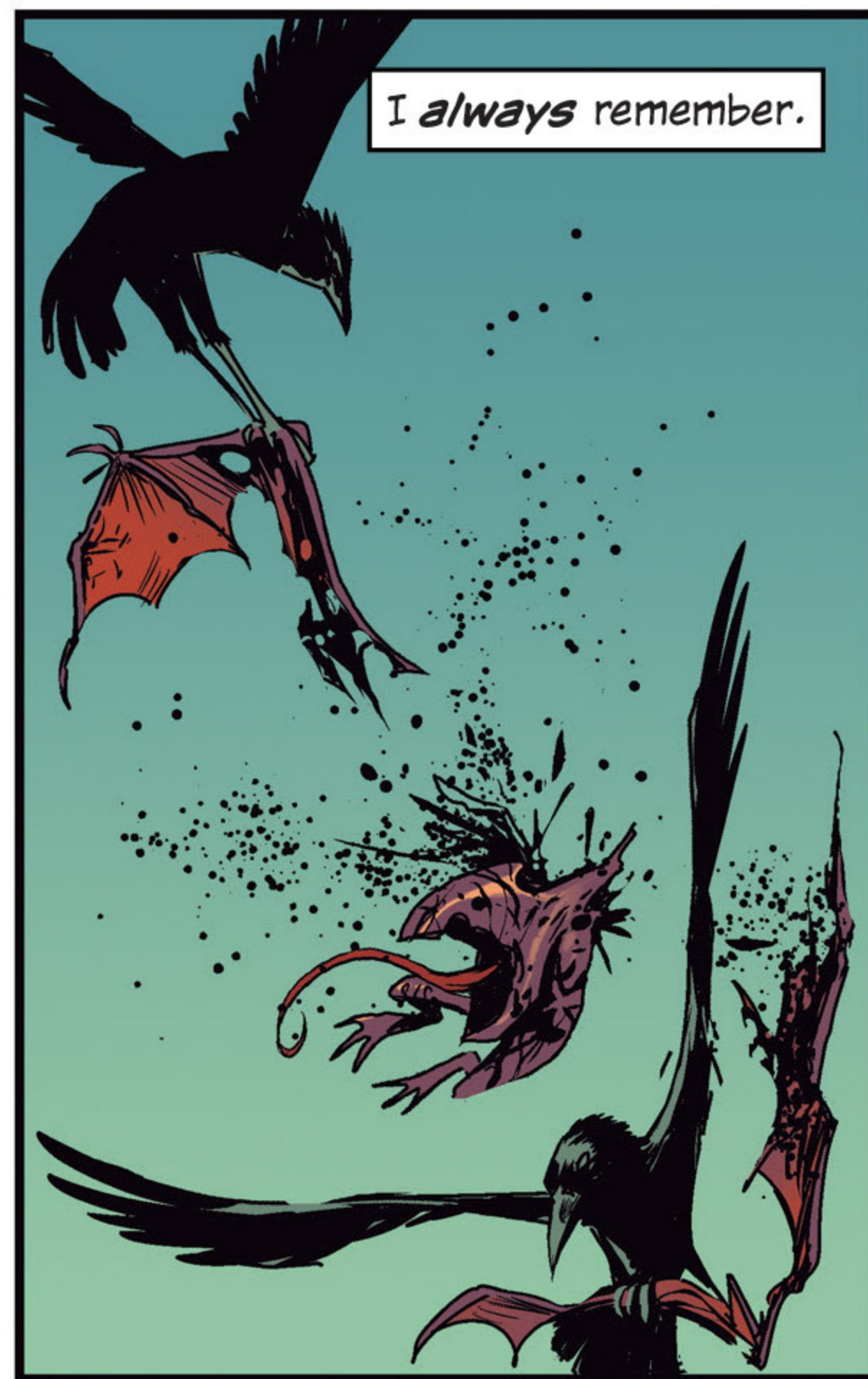
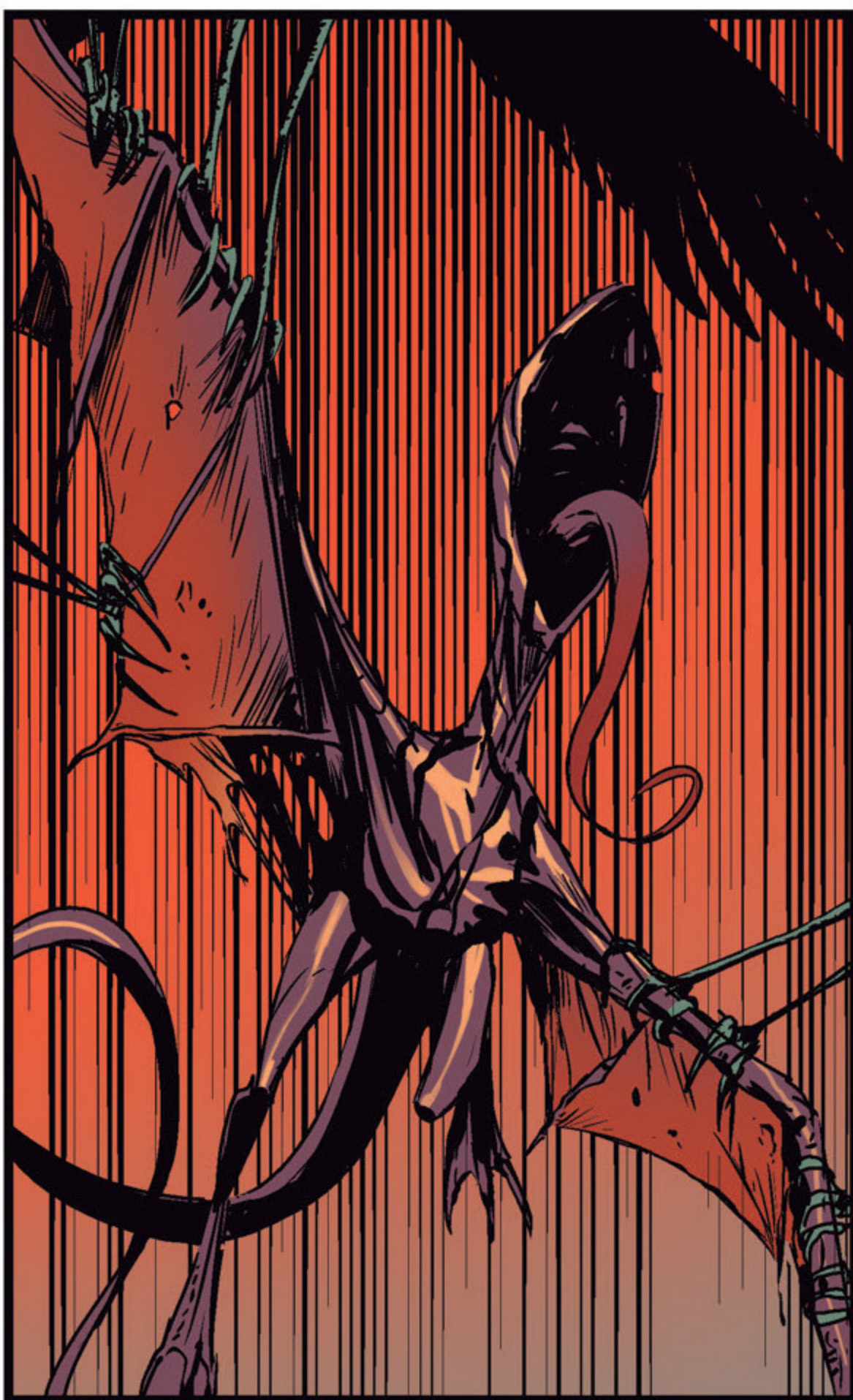
And make sure it's the **same** amount in each...

Because this is going to hurt bad enough without having to grow any extra parts ourselves...





Some people have trouble rememberin' things. But not me...



I *always* remember.



You made me a promise, Wolf...

That you'd be with me 'til this thing of ours was *done*.

Well... it *ain't* done...



And you never struck me as a man who went back on *his* word.



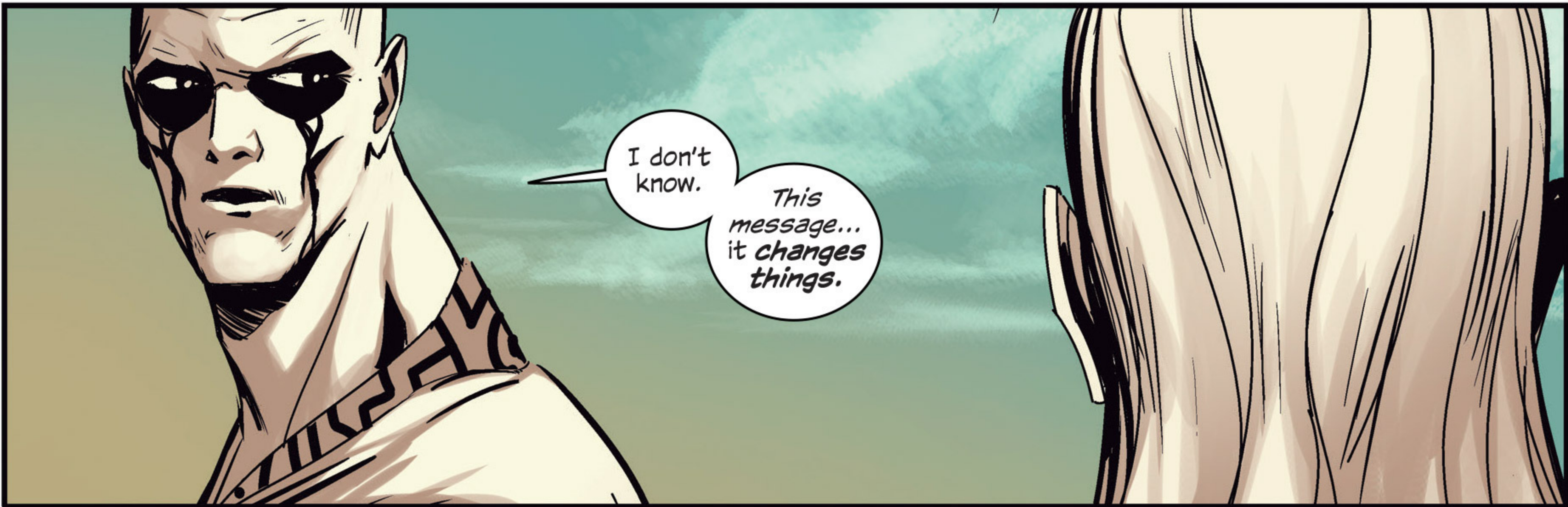
I'm not.

We are... with you.

We just won't be by your side for a bit.



For how long?



I don't know.

This message... it changes things.



If it's true -- and sun bleach my bones, I think it is -- I have to be somewhere soon...but before that, I must first return home.

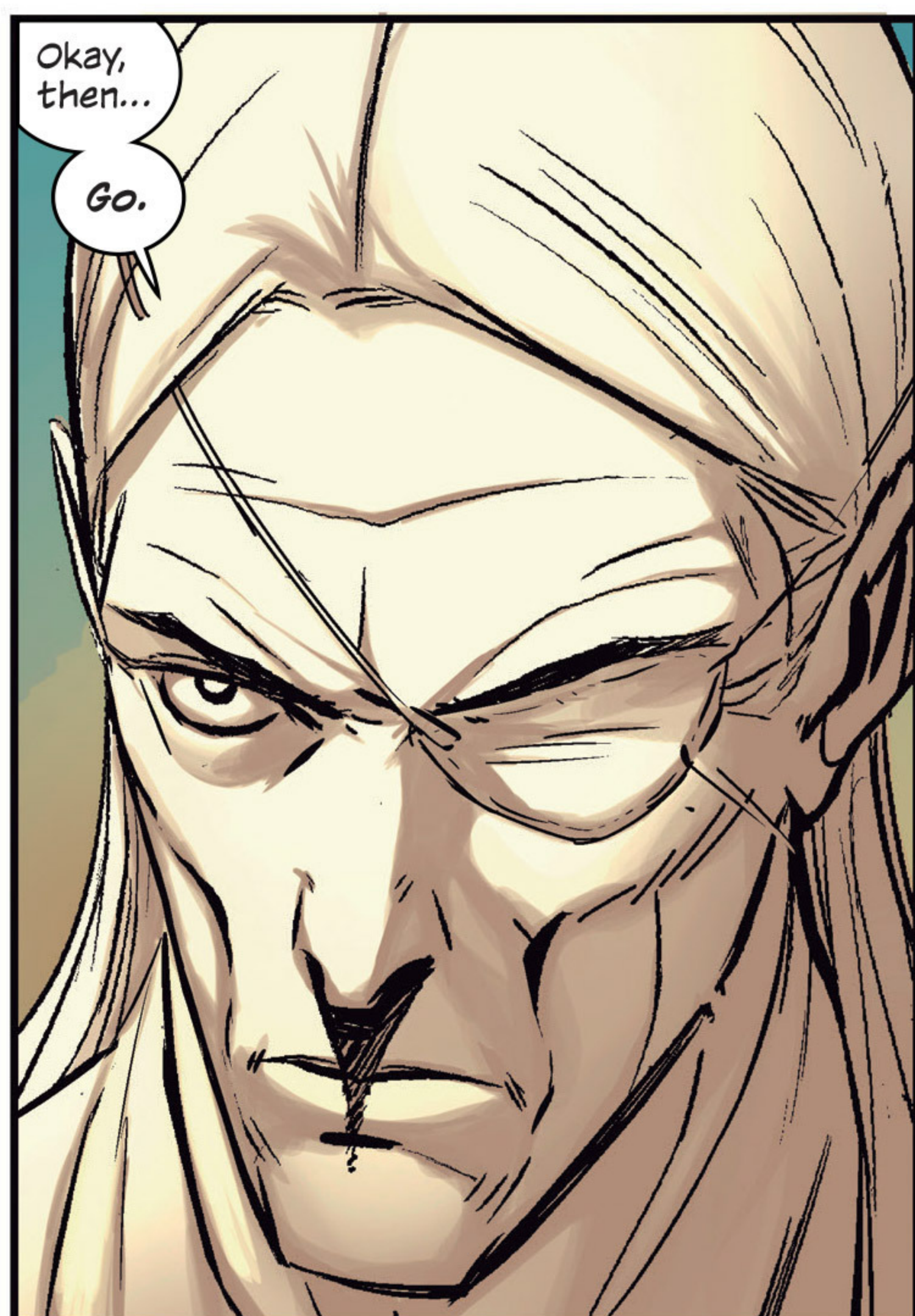
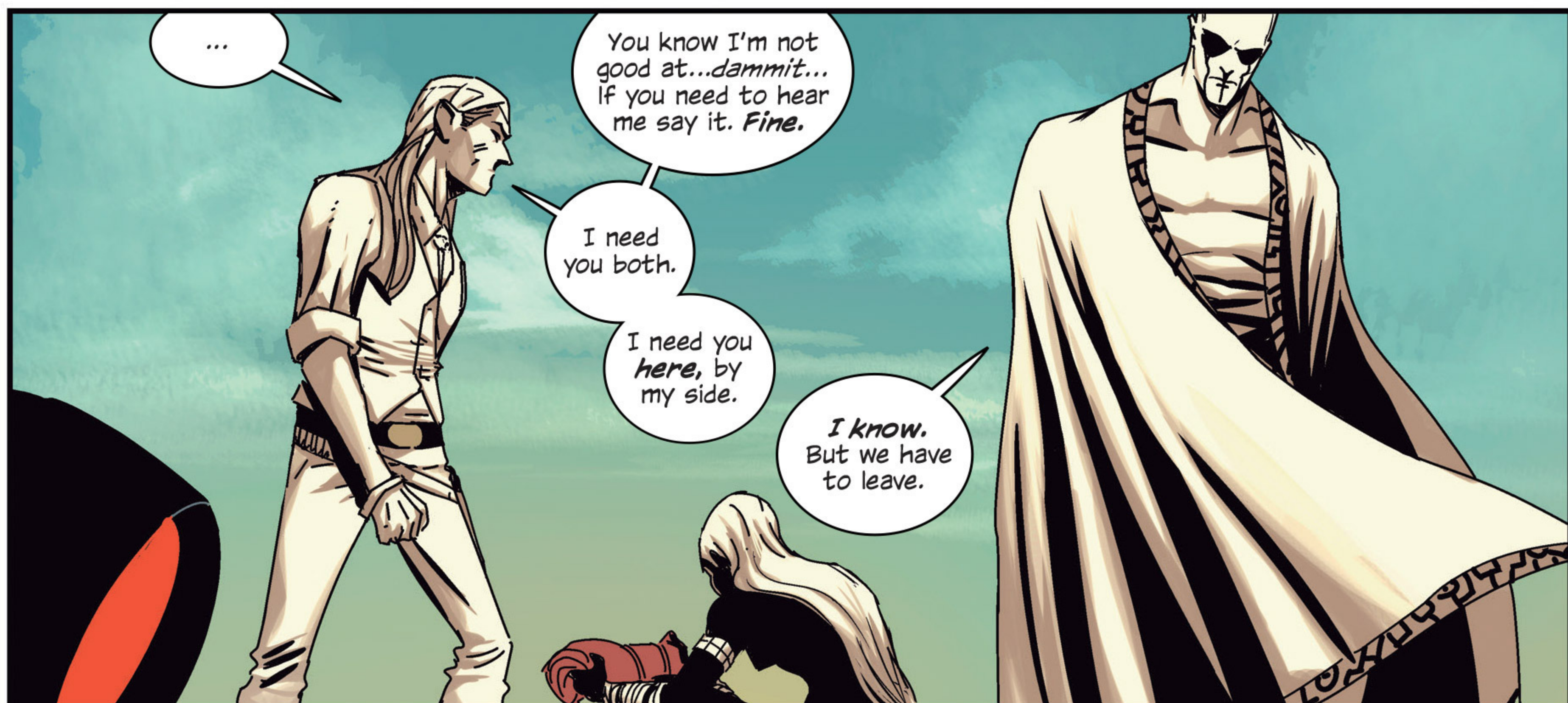
I guess none of us are escaping our past, are we?



Have I ever looked to you like a man runnin'?

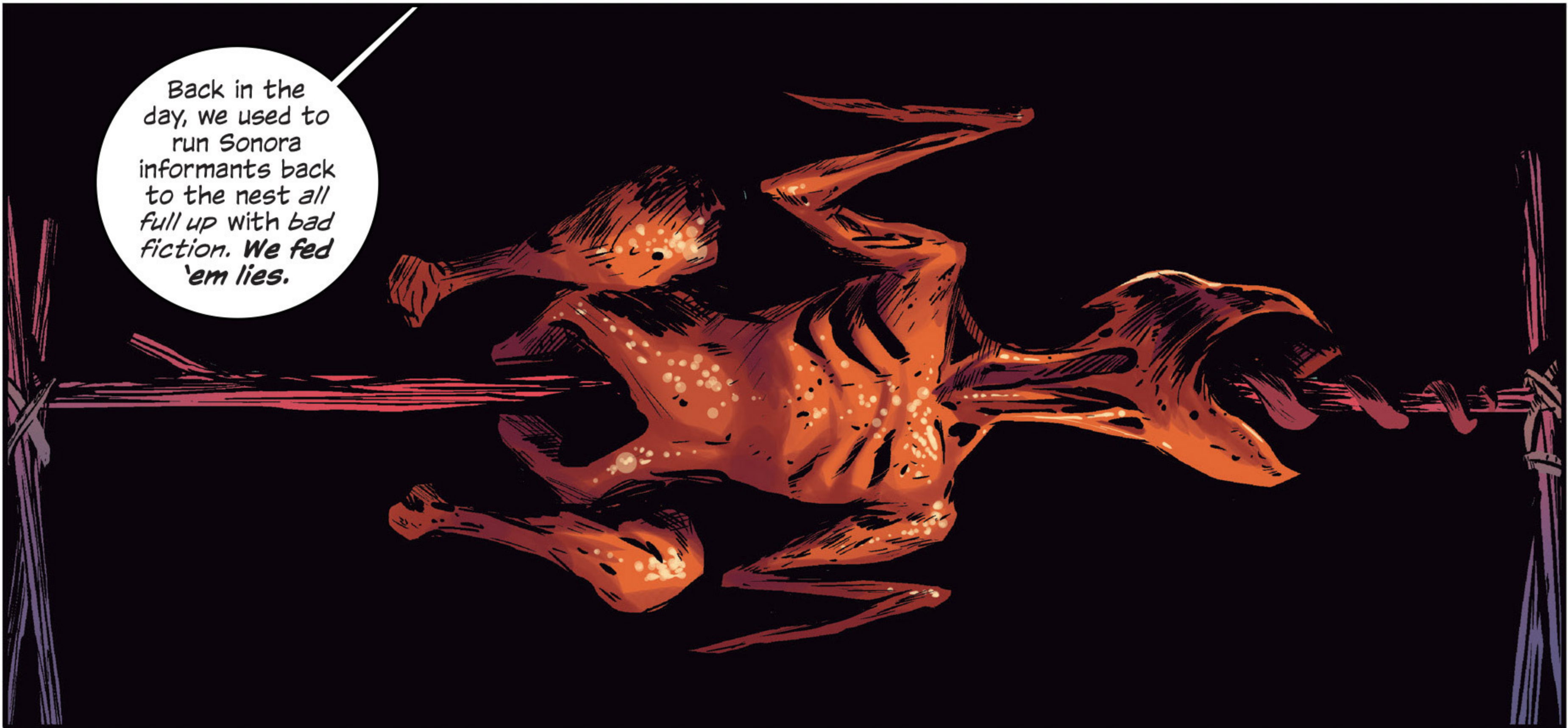
Heh. No, my friend. Not once.

It's why I admire you. You never look in the mirror.

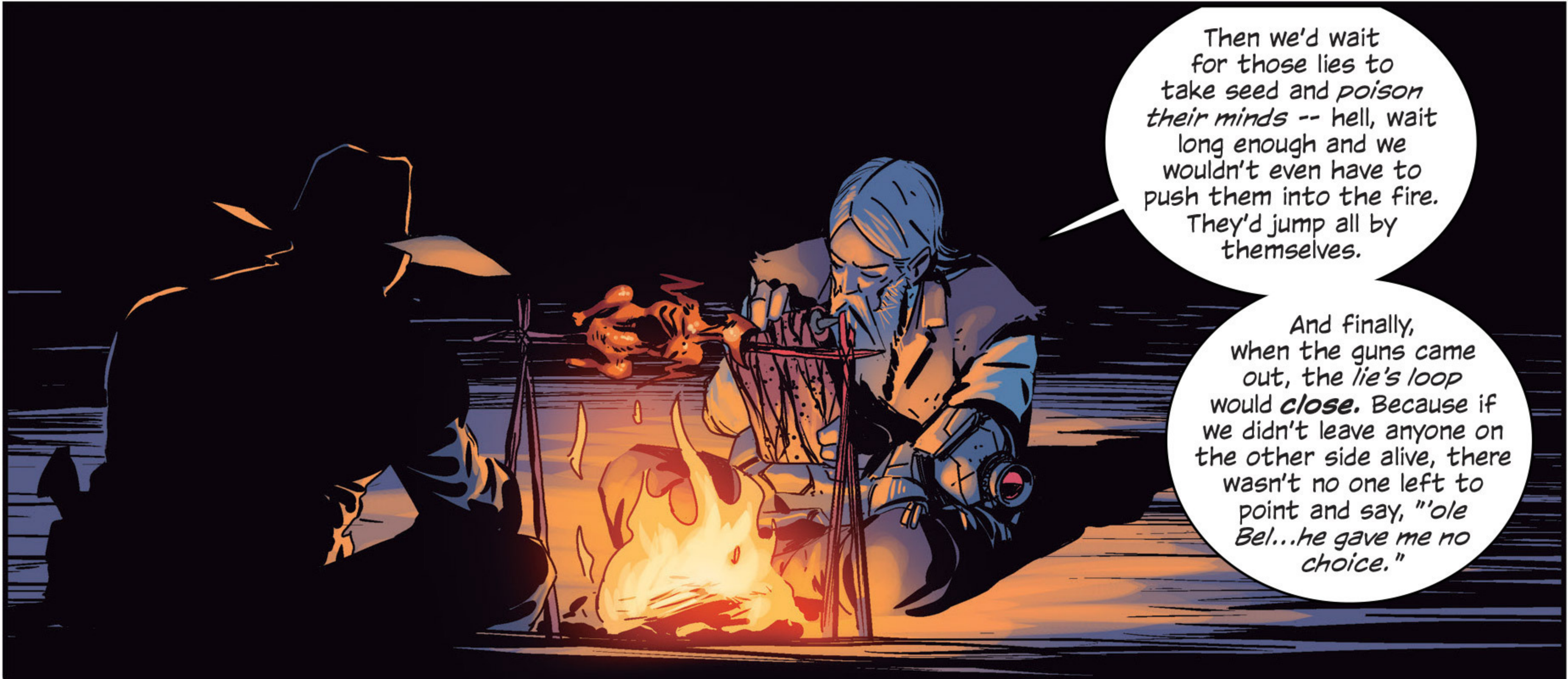




As you kill them all.



Back in the day, we used to run Sonora informants back to the nest *all full up with bad fiction. We fed 'em lies.*



Then we'd wait for those lies to take seed and *poison their minds* -- hell, wait long enough and we wouldn't even have to push them into the fire. They'd jump all by themselves.

And finally, when the guns came out, the *lie's loop* would **close**. Because if we didn't leave anyone on the other side alive, there wasn't no one left to point and say, "*'ole Bel...he gave me no choice.*"



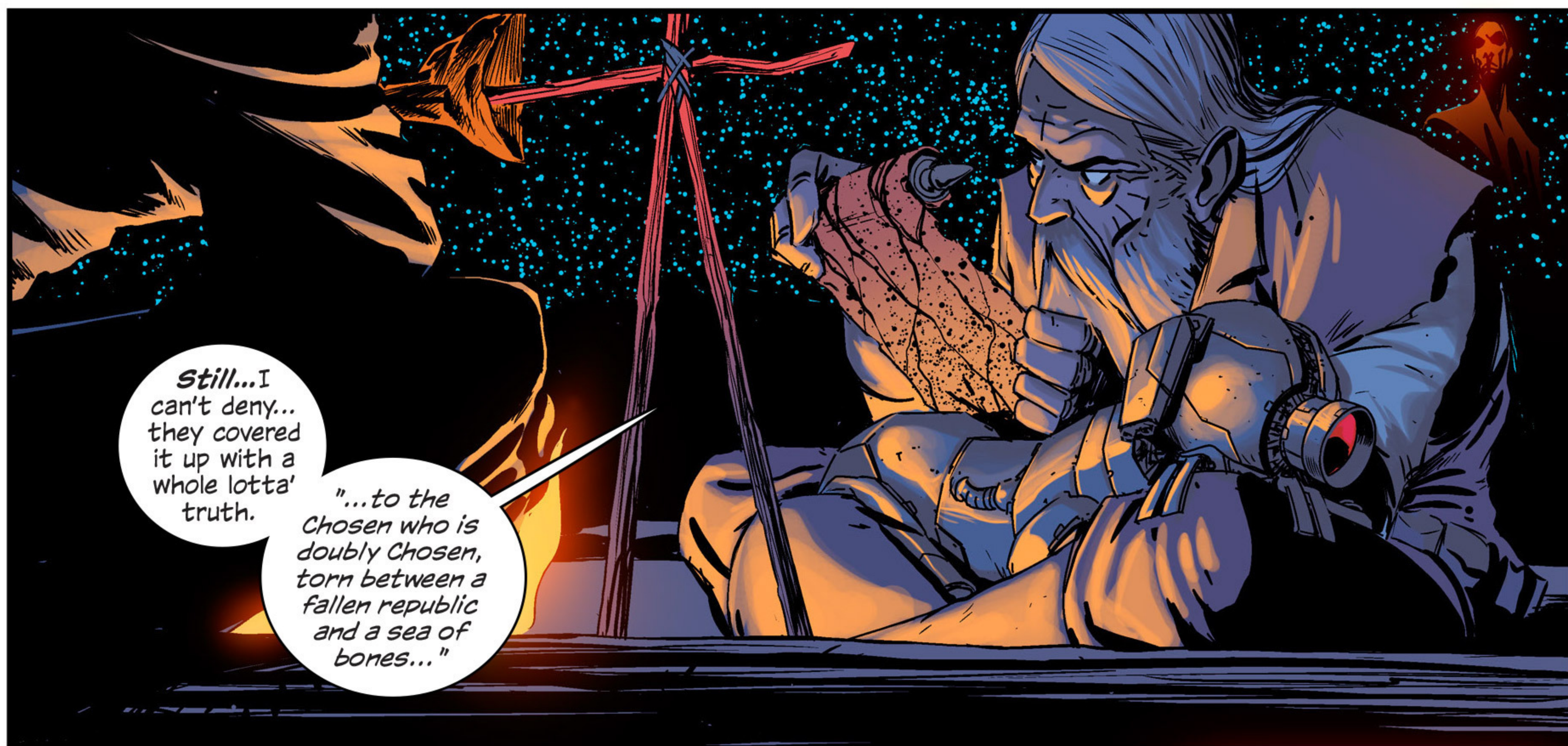
It was a *clean way to murder*. All nice and legal.

Startin' with a lie that was nothing but a lure...

Which brings me to this... *bullshit*. Do you think it's a trap?

'Cause it sure feels like a trap.

Look again.



Still...I can't deny... they covered it up with a whole lotta' truth.

"...to the Chosen who is doubly Chosen, torn between a fallen republic and a sea of bones..."



How's he know something like that?

Because it's *real*. It's always been *real*.

We can fight all we want...but the end is drawing nigh. Just say yes, Bel. Go home...



For you were *Chosen*.



Yes.

What?

You asked, and I'm telling you. *Yes*. I think it's a trap. Or at the very least some kinda ruse.

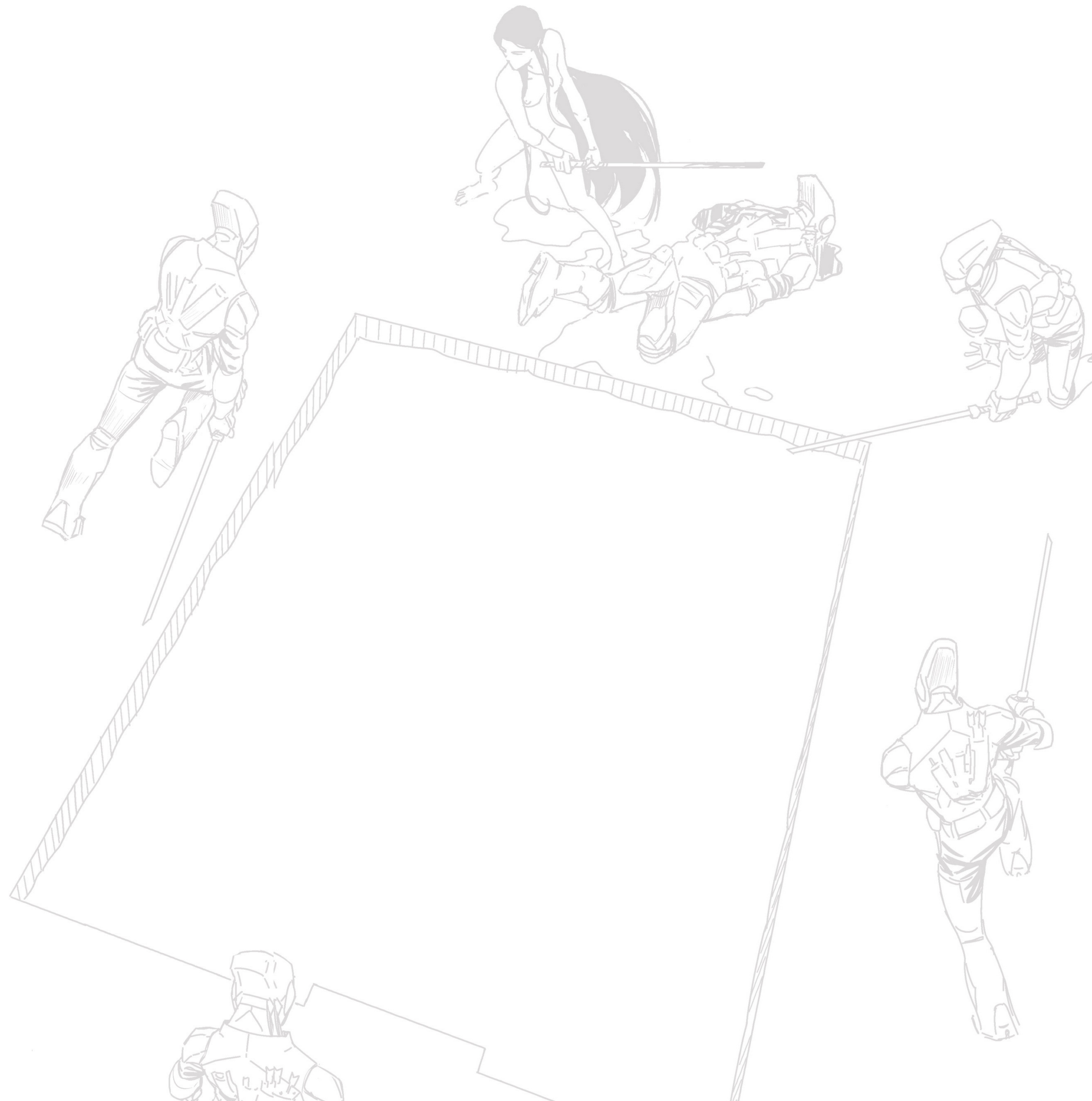
So we shouldn't go?

Not sayin' that at all. Hell, I'd bet my last dollar everyone we're lookin' for will be there...



And I just
don't think I
could *forgive*
myself if I passed
up that kind of
opportunity.





ALL MEN TELL **LIES**.
THESE ARE A **FEW** OF
THEM.



Jonathan Hickman is the visionary talent behind such works as the Eisner-nominated **NIGHTLY NEWS**, **THE MANHATTAN PROJECTS** and **PAX ROMANA**. He also plies his trade at MARVEL working on books like **FANTASTIC FOUR** and **THE AVENGERS**.

His twin brother, Marc, went missing in St. Lucia six months ago and hasn't been heard from since.

Jonathan lives in South Carolina when he isn't vacationing or searching for his brother.

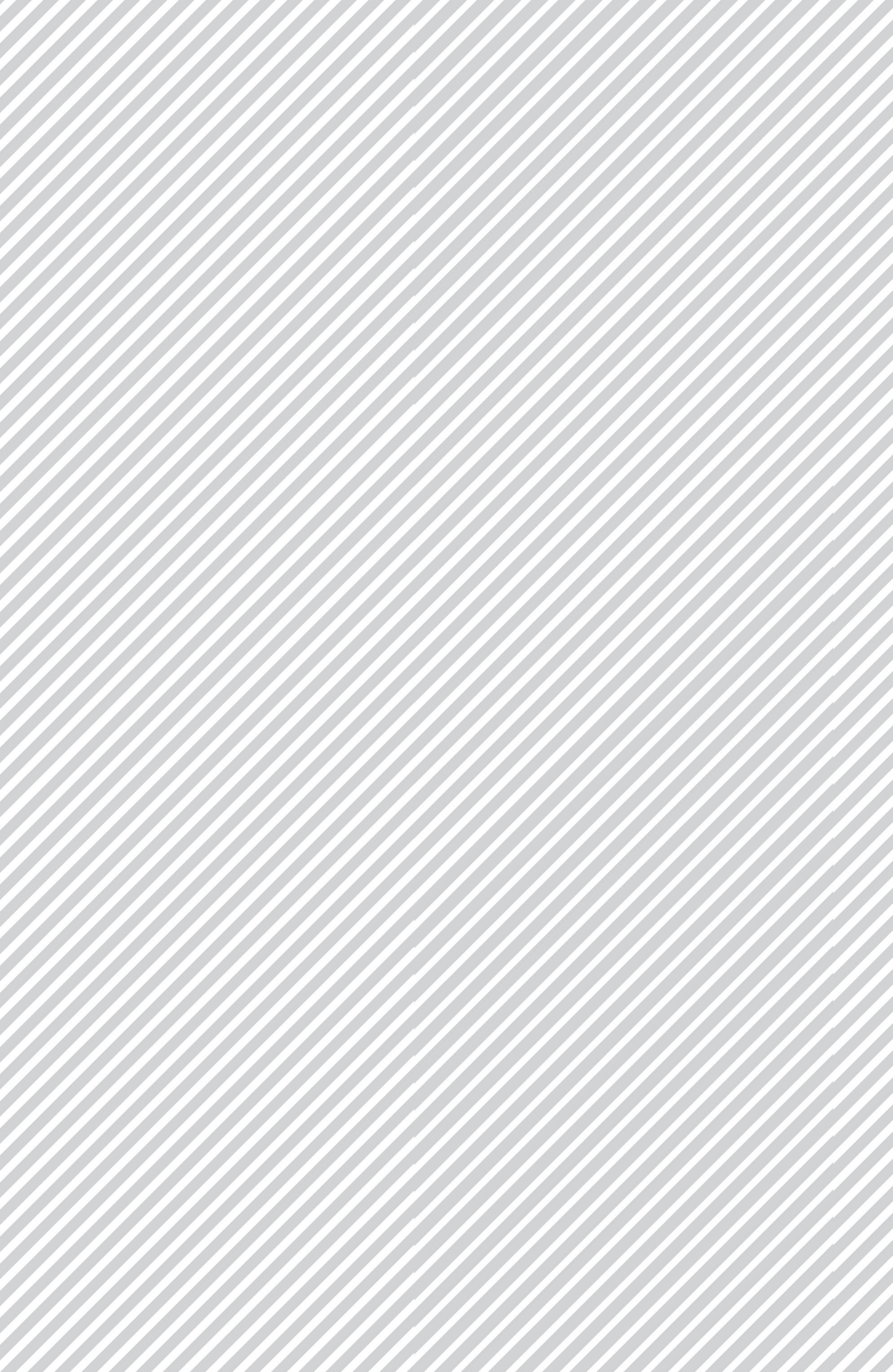
You can visit his website: www.pronea.com, or email him at: jonathan@pronea.com.

.

Nick Dragotta's career began at Marvel Comics working on titles as varied as **X-STATIX**, **THE AGE OF THE SENTRY**, **X-MEN: FIRST CLASS**, **CAPTAIN AMERICA: FOREVER ALLIES**, and **VENGEANCE**.

FANTASTIC FOUR #588 was the first time he collaborated with Jonathan Hickman, which lead to their successful run on **FF**.

In addition, Nick is the co-creator of **HOWTOONS**, a comic series teaching kids how to build things and explore the world around them. **EAST OF WEST** is Nick's first creator-owned project at Image.



WE WOULD TELL YOU TO
PRAY, BUT IT WOULDN'T
DO ANY GOOD.

YOU HAVE EARNED WHAT
IS COMING TO YOU.



SCIENCE FICTION
RATED **T+** / TEEN PLUS