

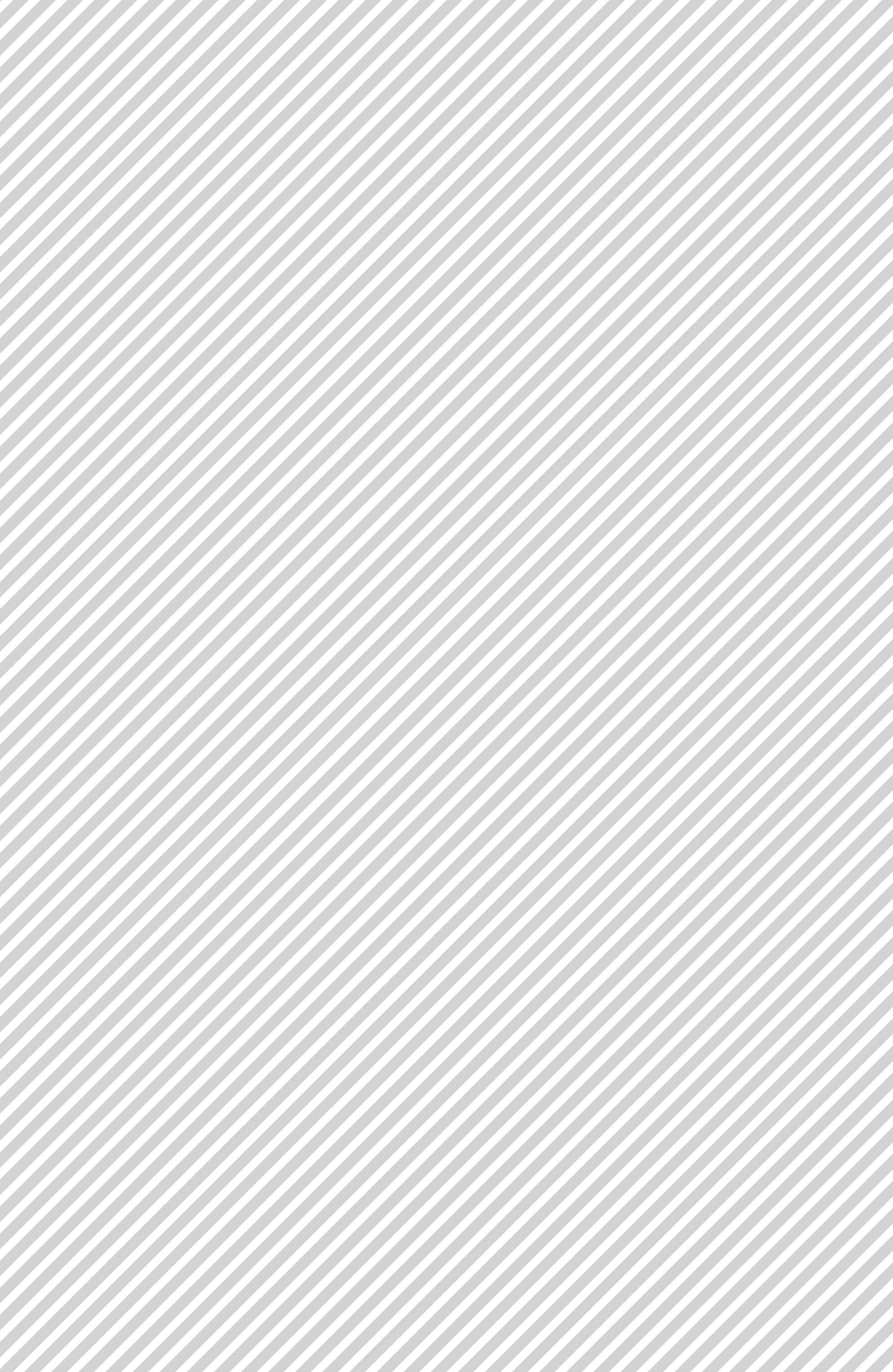


# FEAST OF WEST

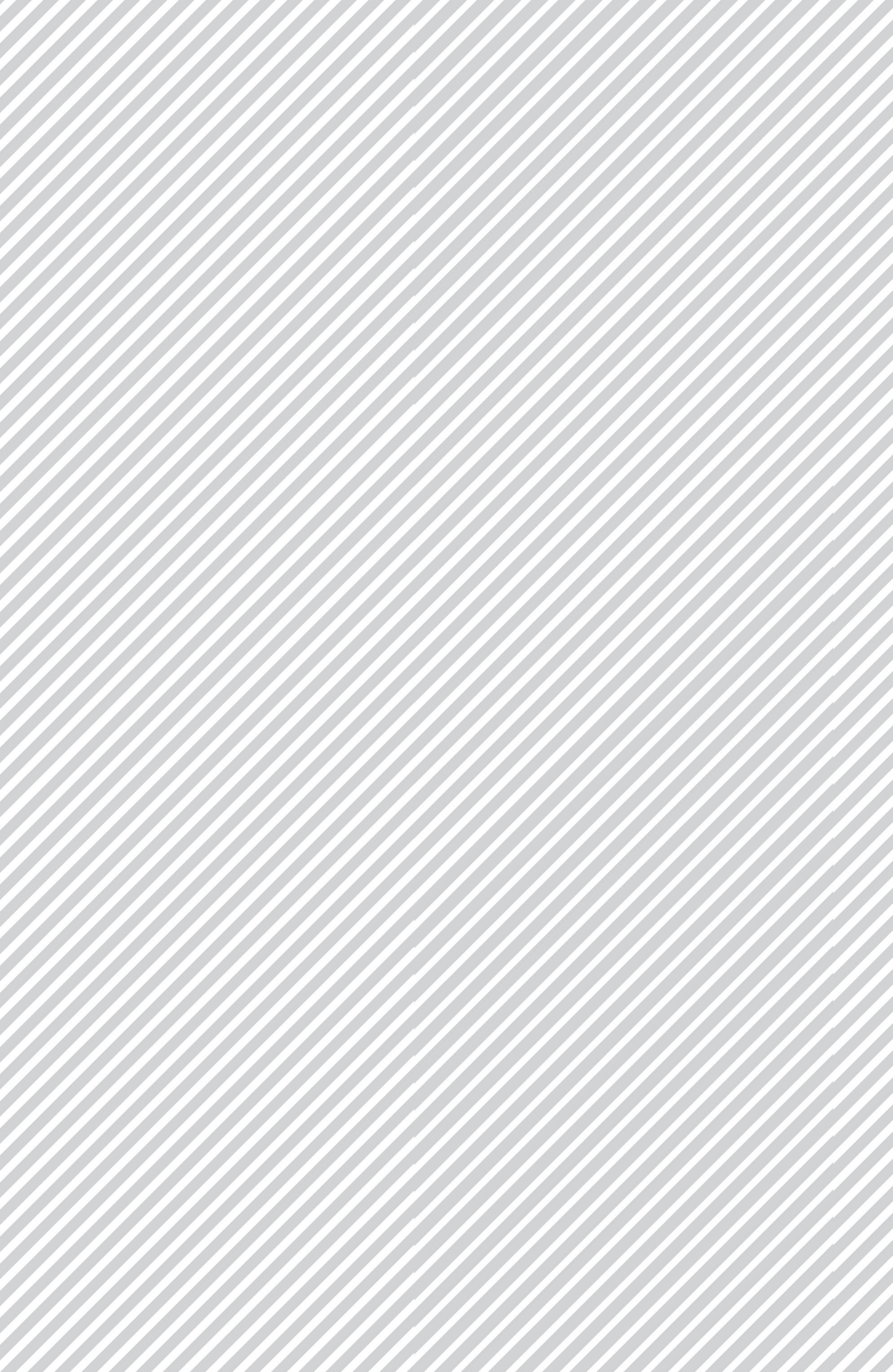
HICKMAN • DRAGOTTA • MARTIN

## FOUR











# EAST<sup>OF</sup> WEST



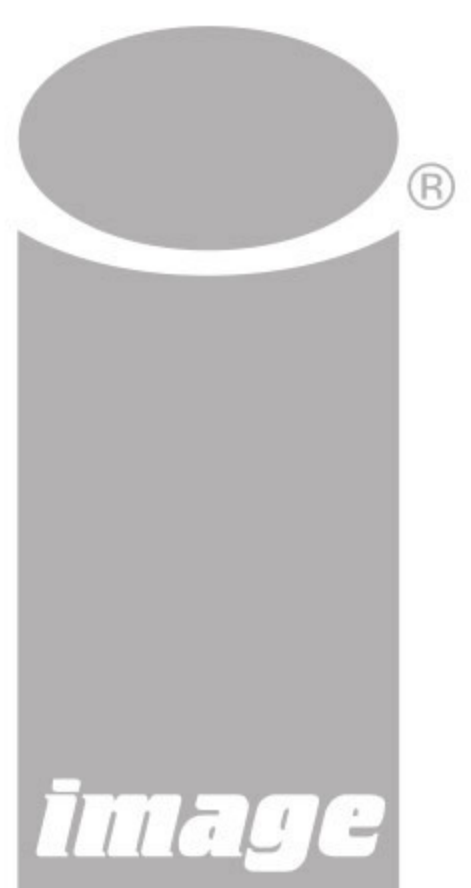
**JONATHAN HICKMAN**  
WRITER

**NICK DRAGOTTA**  
ARTIST

---

**FRANK MARTIN**  
COLORS

**RUS WOOTON**  
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EAST  
OF  
WEST



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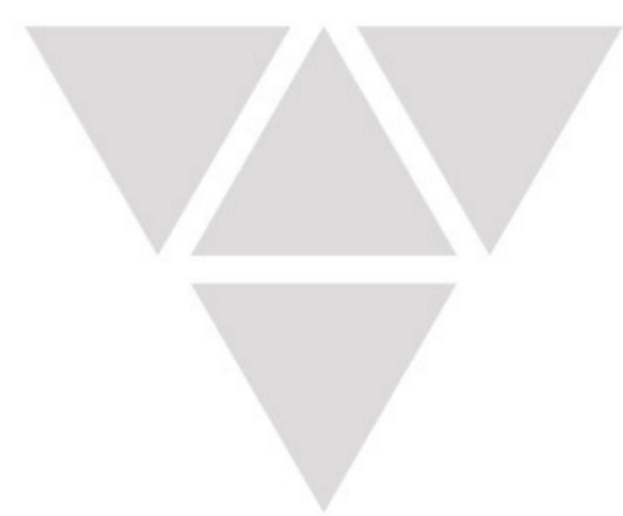
# THE WORLD

SOURCEBOOK | ATLAS |  
ENCYCLOPEDIA | TIMELINES |  
APOCRYPHA





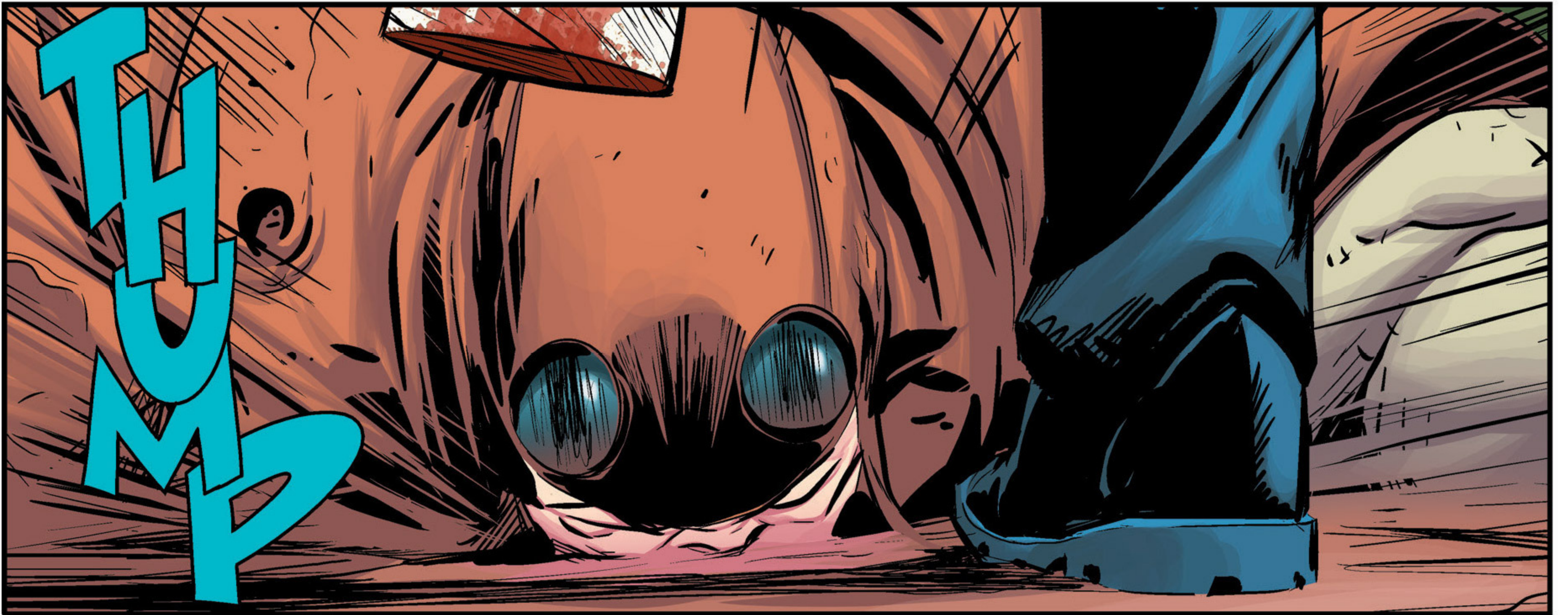
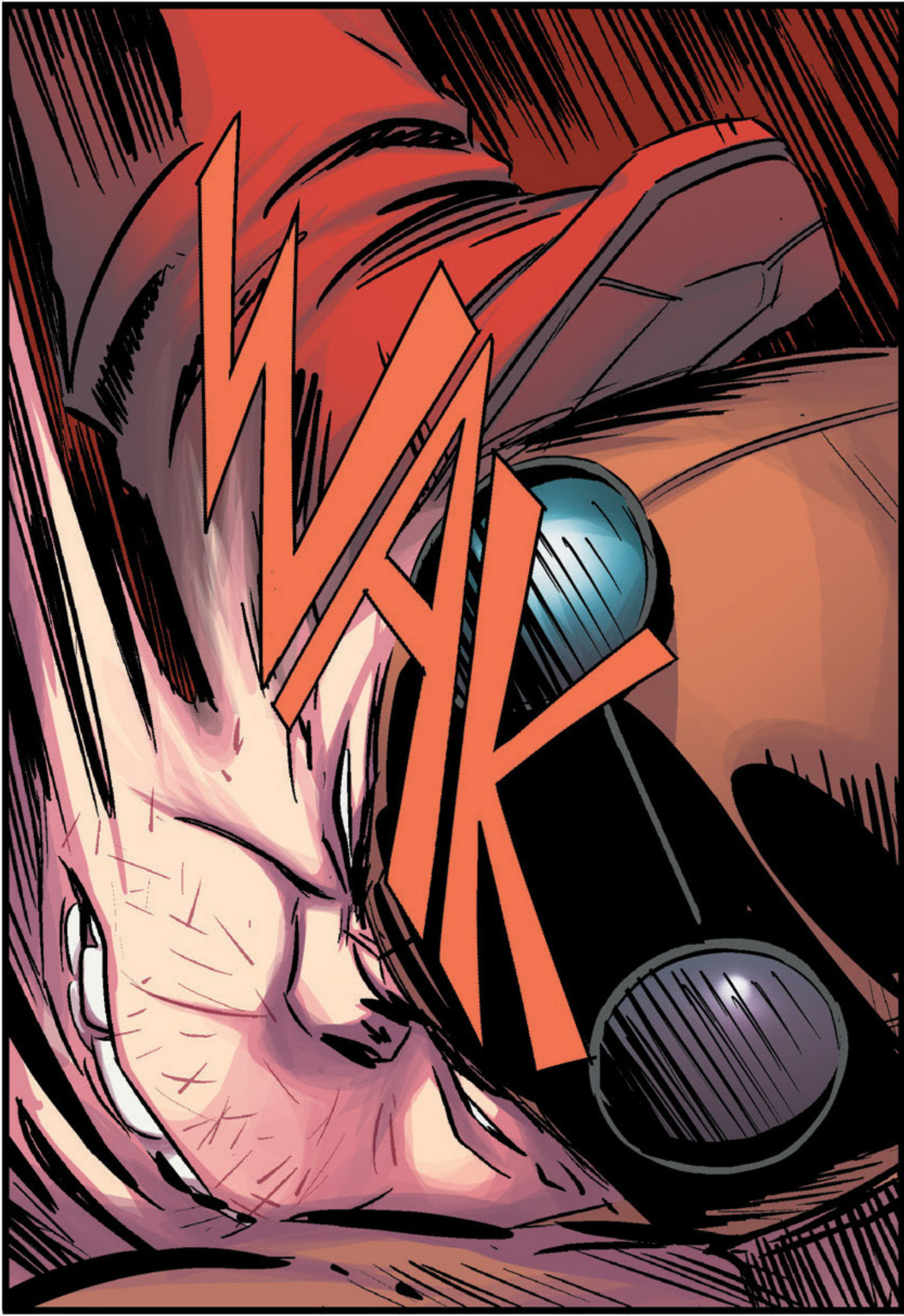
THE RIDE.



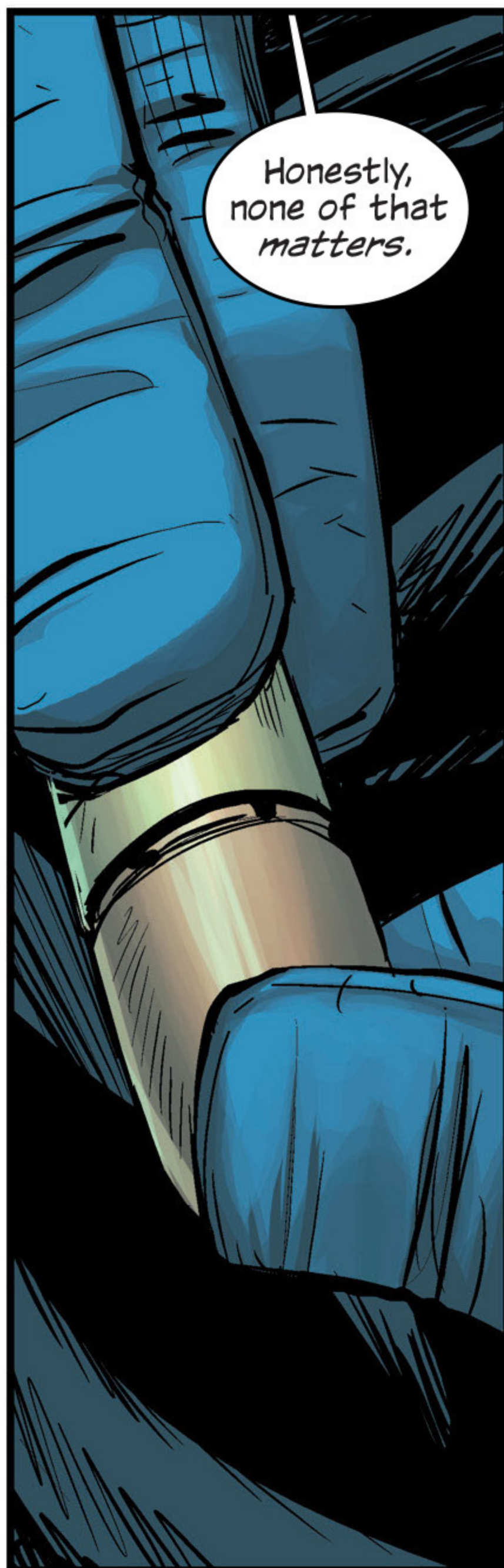




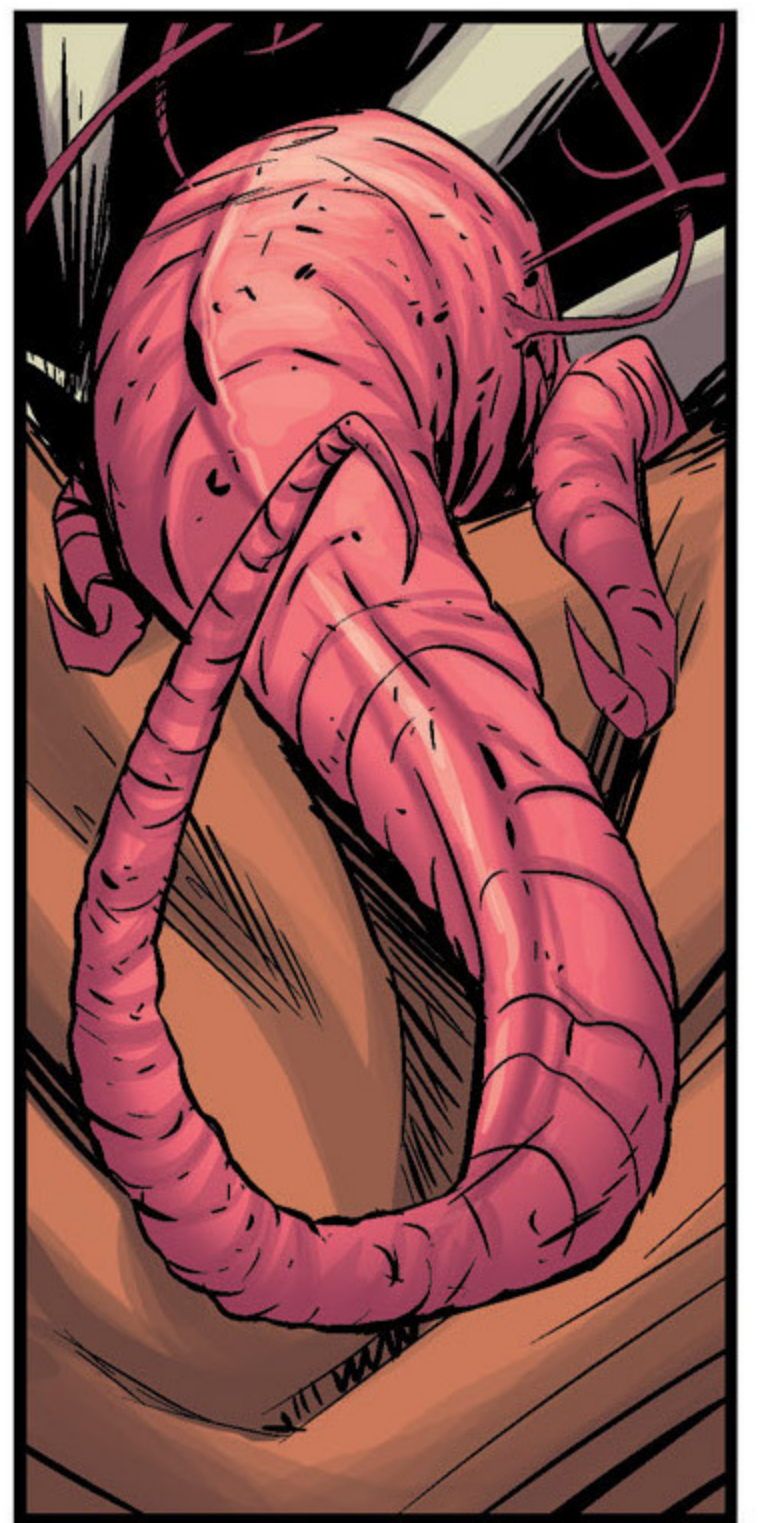
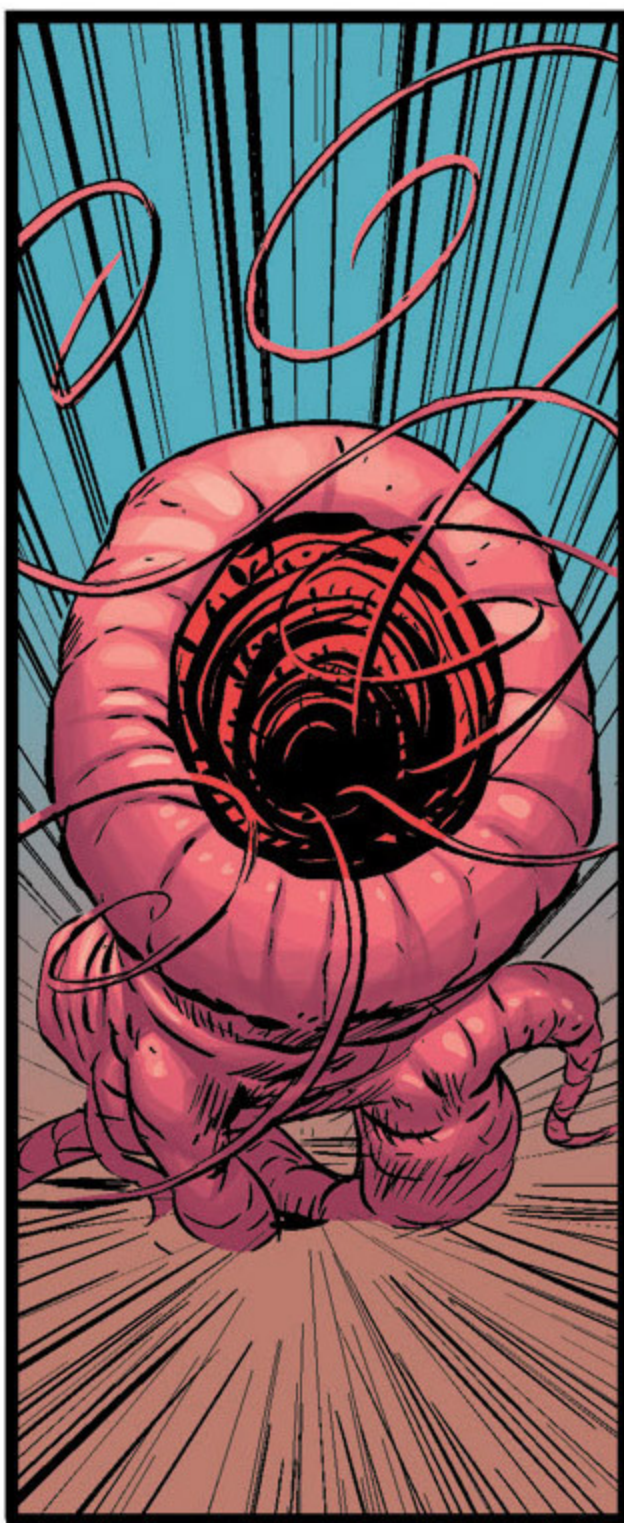
















Head feels funny. You did something to me...

Don't like you, little blue man.



That's weird.

Because I just love all you barking monkeys so damn much.



Jed gonna hurt you now.

No.

You're not.



Stop!



Now...

Kneel.



Hrrnnnn.

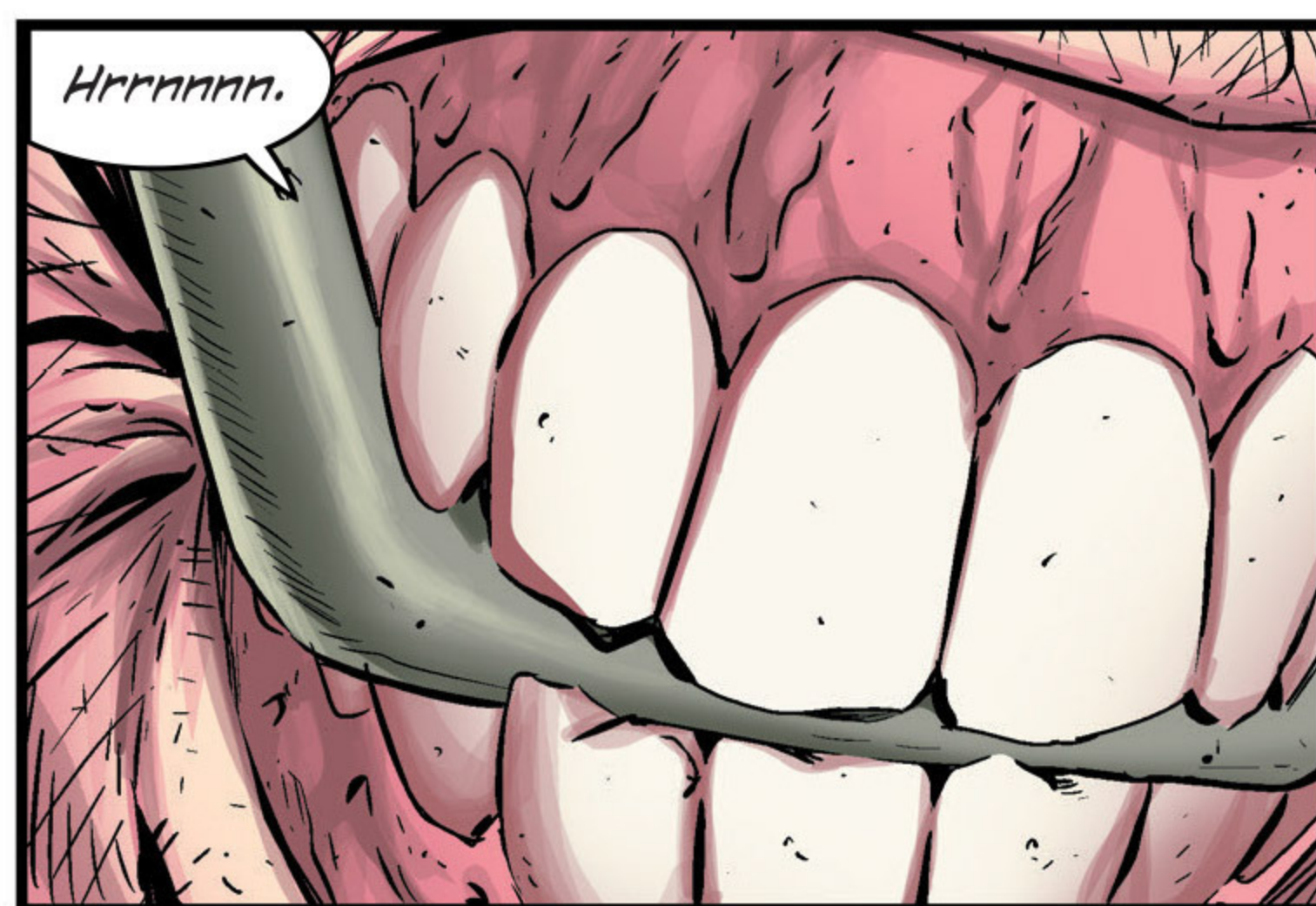
Now...that's better, isn't it? The editor pierces the command center of a brain...slaving susceptible minds to more dominant ones.

It's good when meat knows its place.



Say, ah.

AHHH!



Hrrnnnn.







**FORWARD  
TO BABYLON.**





# [01] THE UNION





***THE UNION***  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF  
AMERICA



MOTTO:  
“In God We Trust”

Capital:	Washington, D.C.
Language:	English
Government:	Federal presidential Constitutional republic
Current leadership:	President Antonia LeVay Chief of Staff Doma Lux
Independence:	1910
Area:	422,973 sq mi
Population:	103,648,330
GDP:	\$1.568 trillion
Currency:	dollar
Military strength:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Economic strength:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Political stability:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Long term viability:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>



***POLITICAL  
UNREST***

Discord. Turmoil. Anarchy. The current political and economic climate in the Union has led to massive unrest by the general population with rallies and protests occurring daily and numbering in the hundreds of thousands.

Beyond the controversial events that led to the present administration, the questionable collapse of the Union economy has lead to unparalleled stratification and the rapid emergence of a class system.

In today's Union, there is no denying that there are those who eat well, and those who do not eat at all. It can be argued that the only thing preventing the total collapse of the Union is the current state of martial law.

The heavy hand of control has resulted in the disappearance of a number of dissidents. Rumors of a forced conscription service are rampant and questions regarding the validity of such speculation remain unanswered.



# [02] THE CONFEDERACY





CONFEDERATE

STATES  
OF AMERICA



MOTTO:  
“Liberty, Equality, Prosperity”

Capital:	Savannah
Language:	English
Government:	Presidential
	Council of Regents
Current leadership:	President Archibald Chamberlain
	Cheif of Staff Winston Wallace
	Warmaster Caroline Van Buren
Independence:	1910
Area:	643,712 sq mi
Population:	86,634,008
GDP:	\$4.218 trillion
Currency:	dollar
Military strength:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Economic strength:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Political stability:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Long term viability:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>



TRADE

THE GATEWAY TO THE WORLD

Stretching from the province of Charleston to the Black Towers themselves, the port megacity Savannah is the gateway to the world.

Contrary to the other North American isolationist states, the vast majority of annual Confederacy revenue is gained from the exporting of state-manufactured goods and the monopolized continental distribution of imported items.

Enjoying favored trade status with most local nations has provided the Confederacy with both a stable economy and a prolonged peaceful period. This has resulted in what many call the South's two-nation policy. The first is an external, diplomacy-first strategy, and the second is a hyper-secretive, internal system of long-term planning.

It has been suggested that the monetary reserves of the Confederacy are intentionally underreported, and that the current military operational strength has been massively understated.



# [03] TEXAS





**THE REPUBLIC**  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF  
TEXAS



MOTTO:  
“The Lone Star of freedom”

Capital:	Austin
Language:	English, Lakota
Government:	Conquered state Subjugated protectorate
Current leadership:	None (Caretaker government)
Independence:	1910 (no longer independent)
Area:	723,974 sq mi
Population:	19,456,973
GDP:	\$3.568 trillion (seized assets)
Currency:	dollar
Military strength:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Economic strength:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Political stability:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Long term viability:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>



**THE REPUBLIC**  
HAS FALLEN

The unilateral surrender of the Republic of Texas to the Endless Nation came on the fifth month of the last war of the Apocalypse.

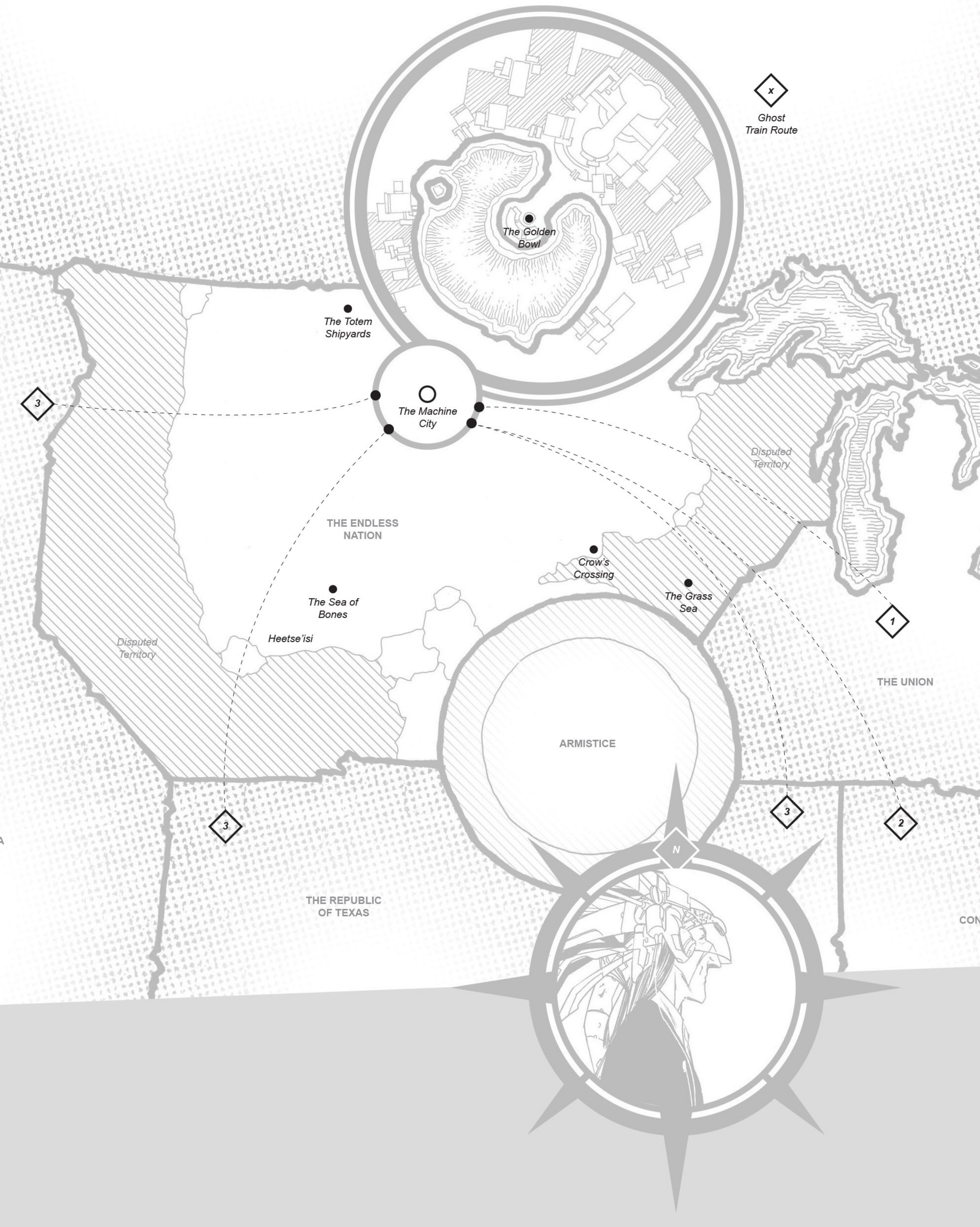
Retreating from the devastating campaign of the Nation, the final holdout was the capital city of Austin, where Governor Bel Solomon, under the specter of a no-confidence vote from his Senate, eventually surrendered after suffering heavy losses.

This was the last stand of the Rangers, and the public executions that followed marked the end of Texas law.

The Republic has fallen. Long live the conquered state of Texas.



# [04] THE NATION



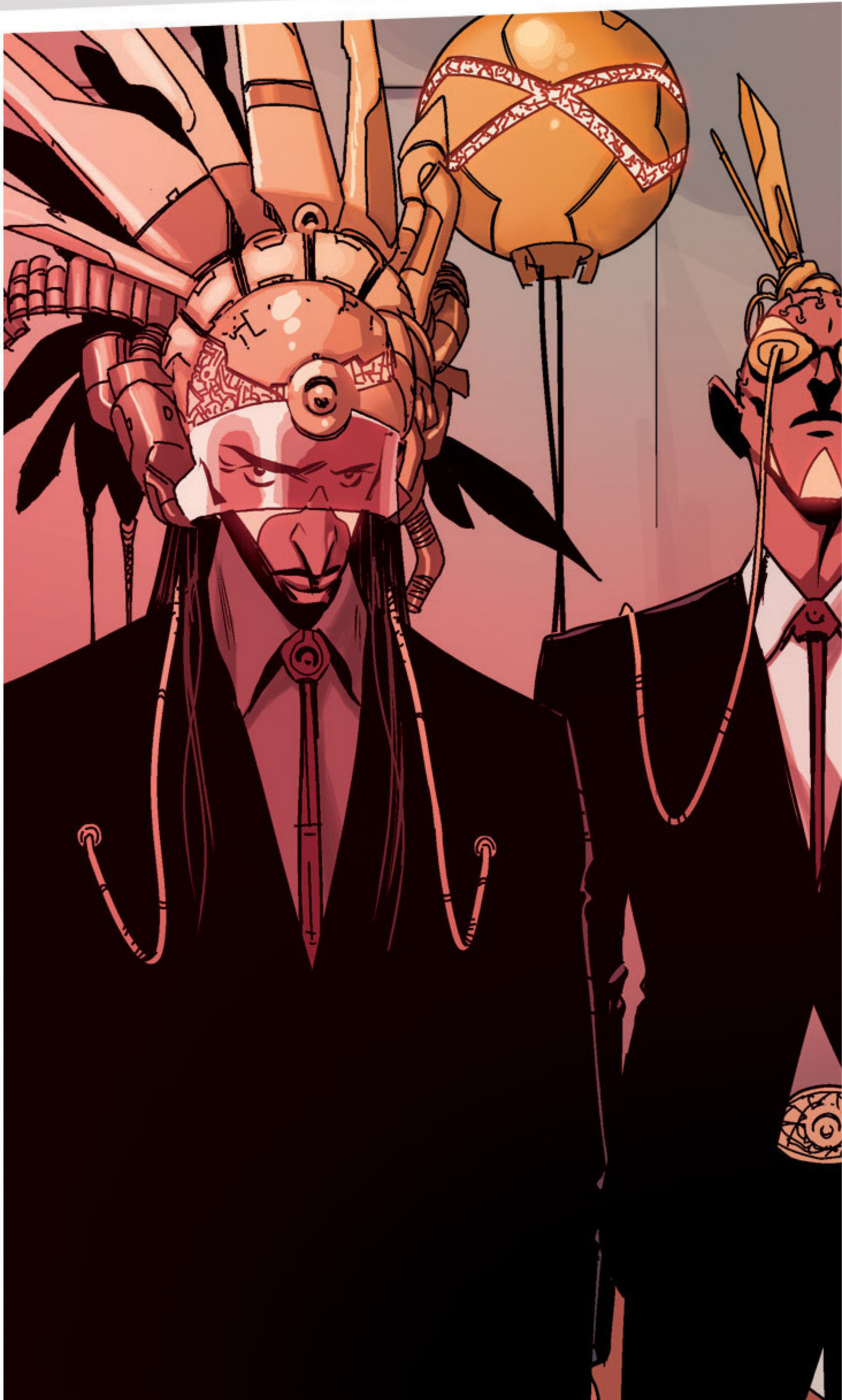


THE NATION  
OF THE AMERICAN  
ENDLESS



MOTTO:  
“Verify”

Capital:	Unknown
Language:	Lakota
Government:	Communal Tribe
Current leadership:	Unknown
	Unknown
	Unknown
Independence:	1943
Area:	812,999 sq mi
Population:	Unknown
GDP:	Unknown
Currency:	Unknown
Military strength:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Economic strength:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Political stability:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Long term viability:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
	(Estimated)



MACHINES  
OF THE MACHINE STATE

Beyond the Sea of Bones, nestled deep within the Heetse'isi, is the Machine State of the Endless Nation. This godless state was born in the total rejection of the mythic beliefs that for generations had been the ideological bedrock of North America's indigenous people, and the embracing of the great idea 'progress.' There is no record of the internal revolution which resulted in the Machine State, only the oral history of cast-out believers who now reside in the dead country. One day there was no Machine State, and then the next there was.

Delivered to trading nations nonstop by Ghost Trains, the machines of the Endless Nation have become the technological backbone of the majority of the civilized world. From automated transportation systems, to advanced weaponry, to thinking machine companions, there is almost no part of daily citizens' lives that are not bettered by the Machine State.

Watch groups have long speculated the possibility of kill switches in all Endless Nation products, but rigorous investigations and thorough testing have proven these rumors to be just as unfounded as ones suggesting the existence of Endless Nation next generation technology being withheld from market.

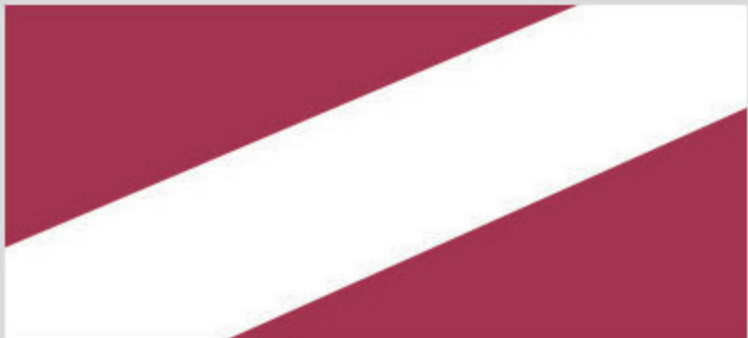


# [05] THE KINGDOM





KINGDOM  
OF NEW  
ORLEANS



MOTTO:  
“With these hands”

Capital:	The Freeport of New Orleans
Language:	English
Government:	Monarchy
Current leadership:	King Joseph Freeman III John Freeman [Crown Prince] Naomi Adams [Vizier]
Independence:	1941
Area:	323,024 sq mi
Population:	65,191,803
GDP:	\$7.998 trillion
Currency:	tella
Military strength:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Economic strength:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
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Long term viability:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>



THE CROWN  
INTERNAL MEMO

Secret Report to the King from his Vizier.  
Re: The Banking Guild and Sibling Infighting.

The most current reports from the guild show reserves at fairly volatile levels. All five guild banks are floating Union loans that represent anywhere from five to seven percent of current reserves.

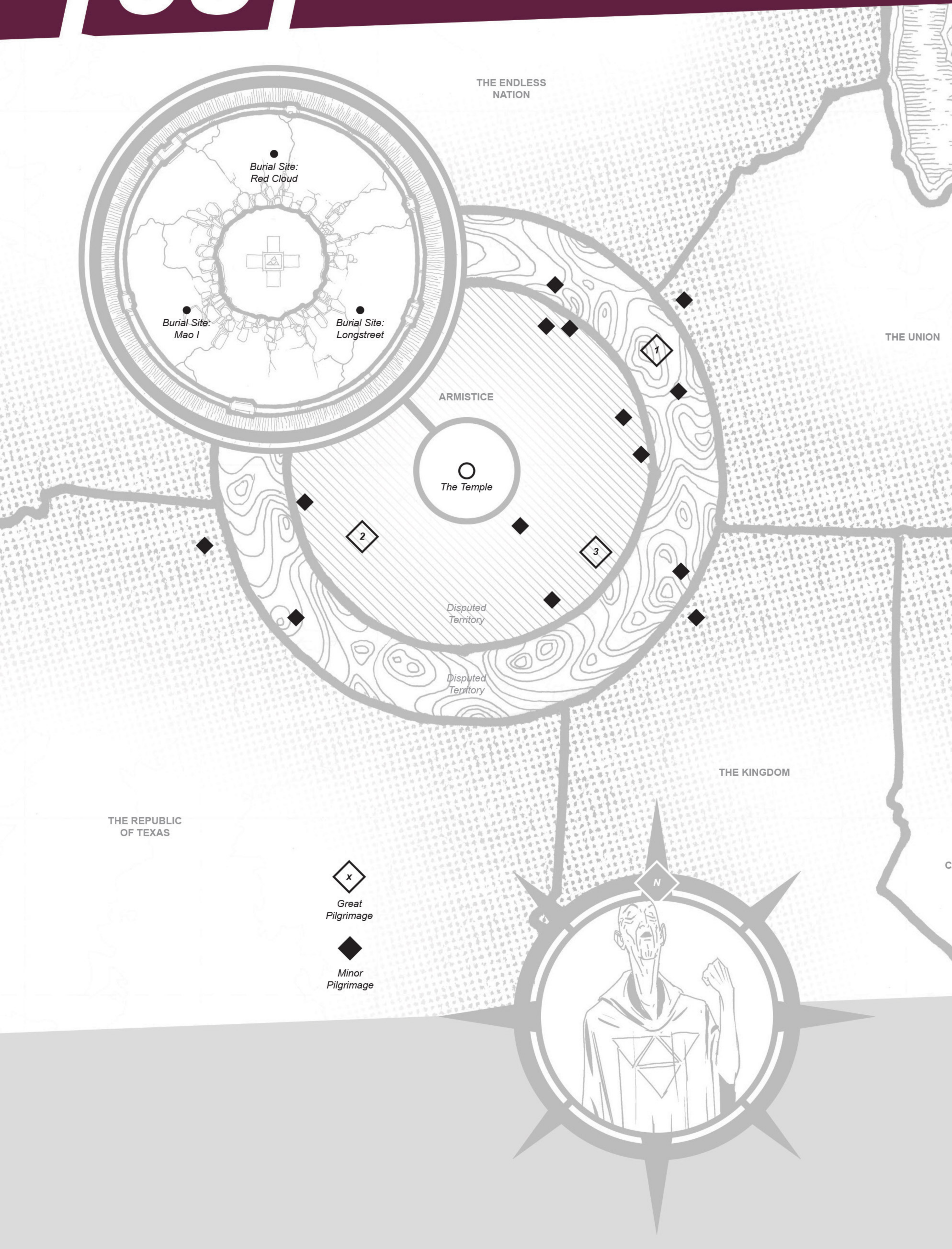
Extended out for more than twelve months, the guild is estimating that this number could grow to as high as fifty percent of all Kingdom holdings. It is the recommendation of this office that any extension beyond six months be strongly measured against potential future returns and potential default.

In accordance with these latest projections, this office also recommends the crown consider the potential upheaval that a failed Union state might have on the current line of succession within the heir dynamic.

The legitimacy of the Crown Prince John Freeman should be a concern.



# [06] ARMISTICE





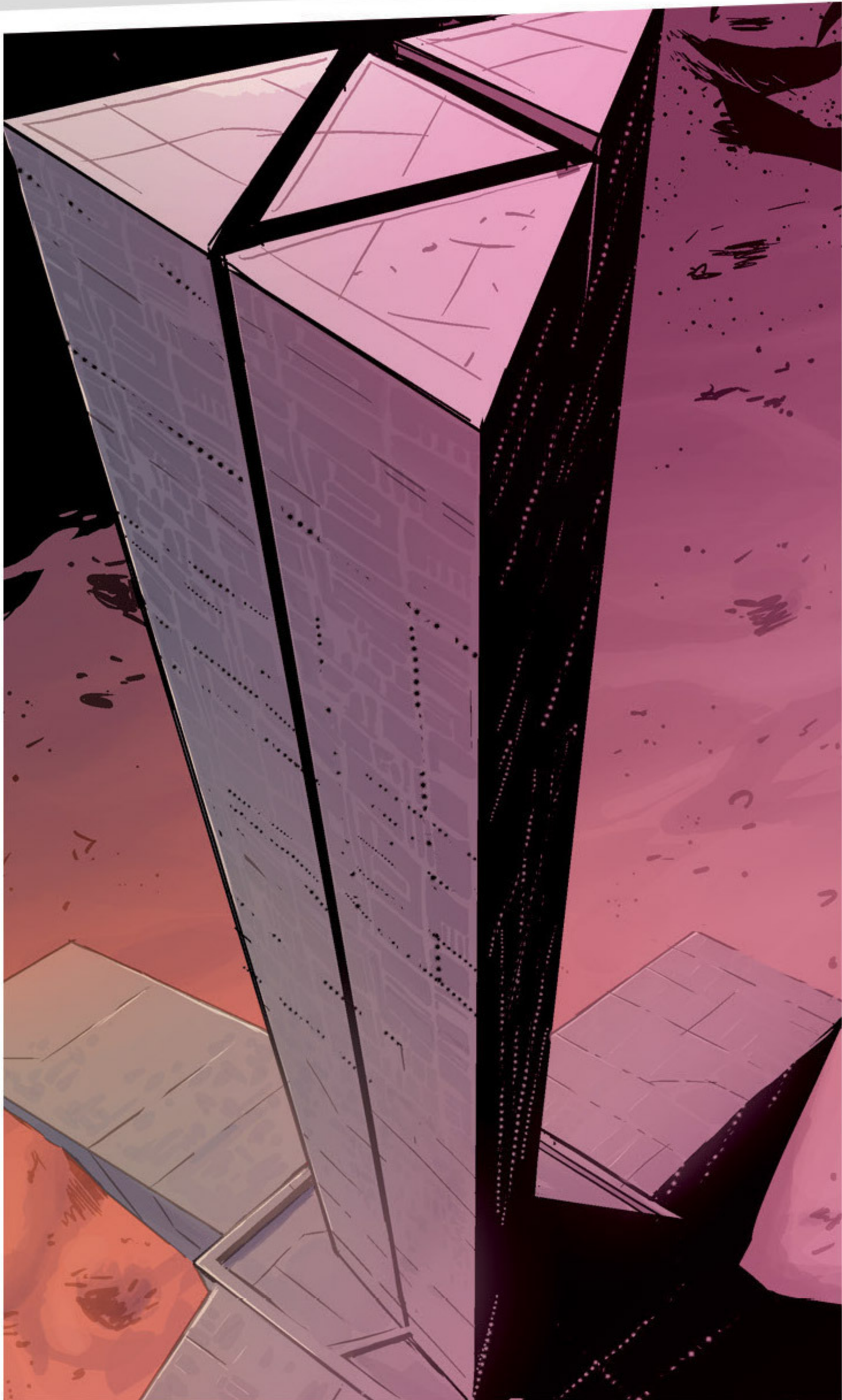
# ARMISTICE

THE TEMPLE OF THE MESSAGE



MOTTO:  
“I have heard the Message”

Capital:	None
Language:	Mandarin, English, Lakota
Government:	Theocracy
Current leadership:	The Prophet Ezra Orion
Independence:	1958
Area:	93,021 sq mi
Population:	1
GDP:	none
Currency:	none
Military strength:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Economic strength:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Political stability:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Long term viability:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>



## THE RETURN OF THE PILGRIMS

At the close of the first year of the Apocalypse, when the Temple at Armistice fell, it was assumed by many that the Message -- the original works of Longstreet, Mao and Red Cloud -- were lost forever.

Then came the Prophet Orion.

Ezra Orion was orphaned, then raised, and finally abandoned, by the Horsemen of the Apocalypse. The son of murdered Pilgrims, he consumed the Message he believed in -- he devoured the word as the word's temple collapsed around him.

The days that followed were ones of transformation, he became the true voice of his generation, and the old ways were reborn. The burning temple was a signal fire -- a beacon for the soon returned. They came to hear him speak. They came to hear the Message. The Pilgrims began returning to Armistice.



# [07] THE PRA





**THE PRA**  
PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF  
AMERICA



MOTTO:  
“Tomorrow eternity”

Capital:	New Shanghai
Language:	Mandarin
Government:	Single-party socialist state
	Independent outlying protectorates
Current leadership:	Xiaolian Mao
	Guang Gao [Dragon]
	Li Pan [Widowmaker]
Independence:	1928
Area:	723,974 sq mi
Population:	126,788,811
GDP:	\$6.568 trillion
Currency:	yuan
Military strength:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Economic strength:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Political stability:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Long term viability:	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>



**THE EYES**  
OF THE ORACLE

Now located in the Spire prison, the Oracle of Taconia is believed to have first appeared at the dawn of the day following the Fire in the Sky. Some believe this was the world's response to the apocalyptic Message -- a desire of the Great Mother to beat back the end times. Others believed the Oracle to be an environmental accelerant -- a binary catalyst increasing conflict for the coming age.

Either way, the power of the Oracle burned brightly, consuming a host every decade until, weary of her interference, the Four Horsemen captured her and separated the Oracle from her eyes. Imprisoned in the undying place of the Spire, the disconnected host and eyes were unable to regenerate and incapable of aging.

The Oracle remains imprisoned in the Spire, while the eyes are in the possession of the Pathfinder, Hunter and the President of the Confederacy, Archibald Chamberlain. One eye speaks the unvarnished truth, the other asks difficult questions no man can answer.



[08]

## **TIMELINE** THE HISTORY OF AMERICA



***THE UNION***  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



***THE CONFEDERATE***  
STATES OF AMERICA



***THE REPUBLIC***  
THE HISTORY OF AMERICA



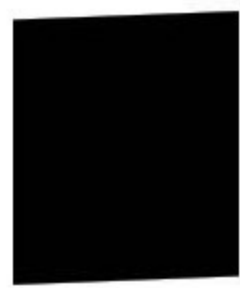
***THE NATION***  
OF THE AMERICAN ENDLESS/



***THE KINGDOM***  
OF NEW ORLEANS



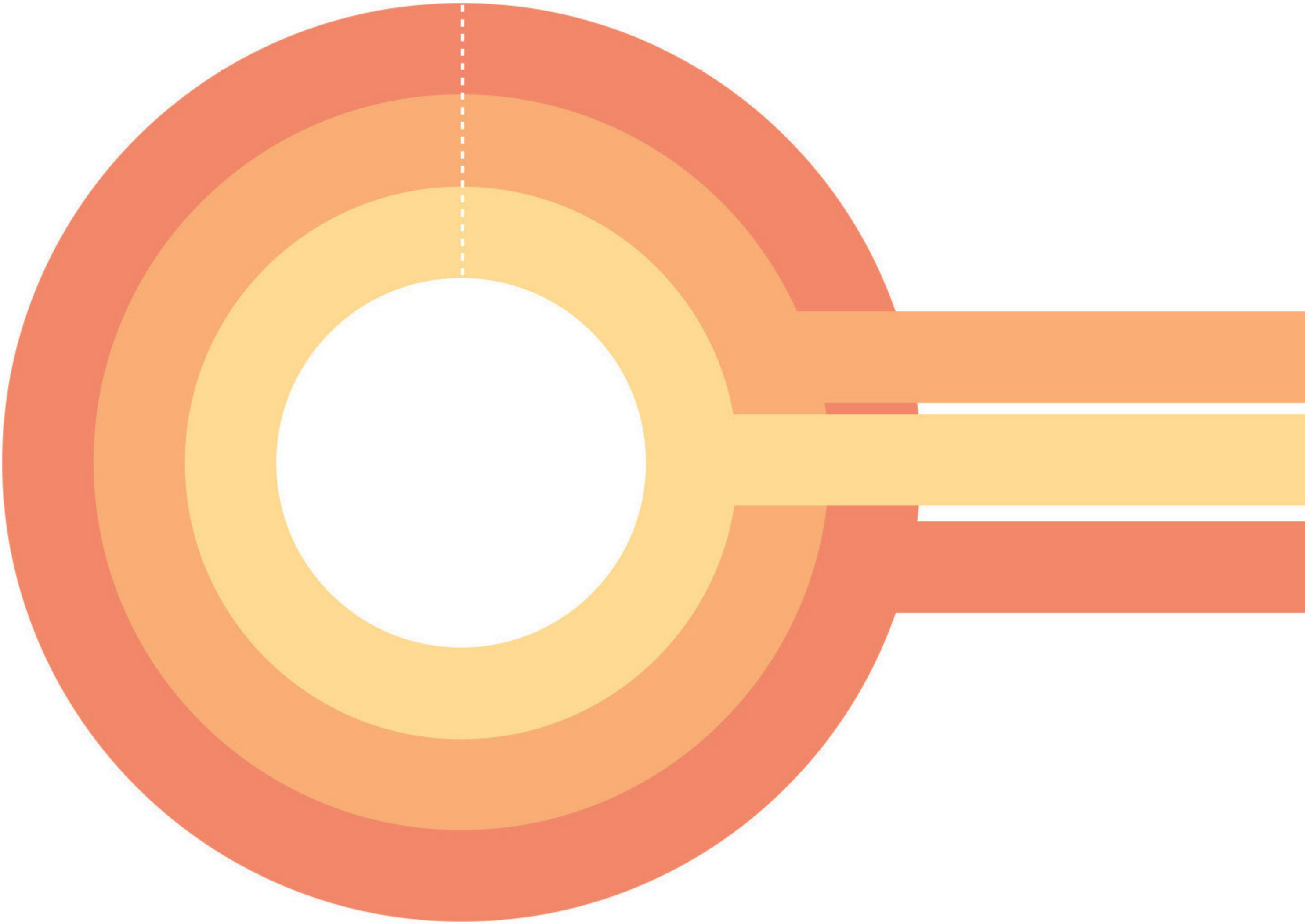
***ARMISTICE***  
THE TEMPLE OF THE MESSAGE



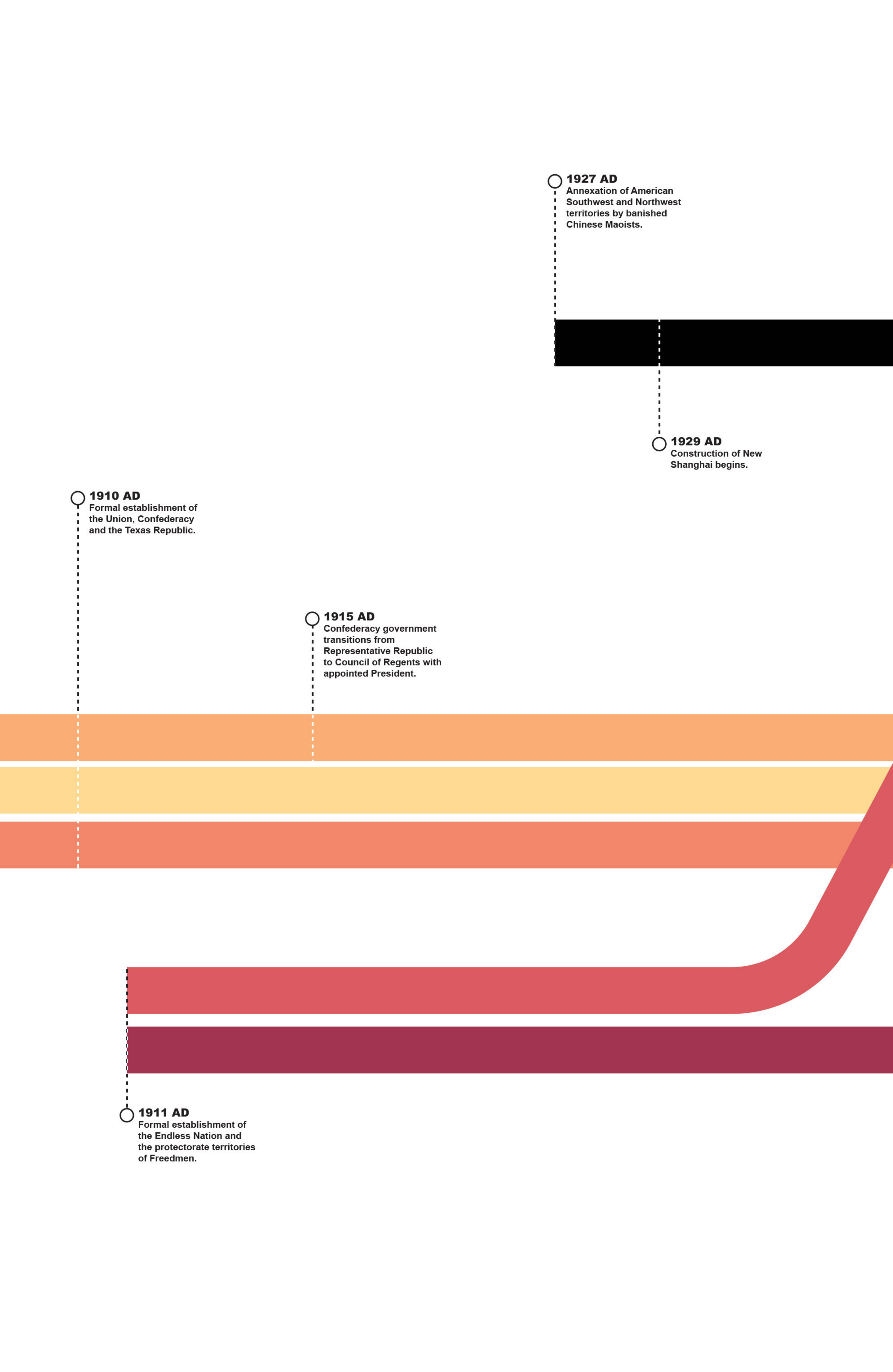
***THE PRA***  
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF AMERICA



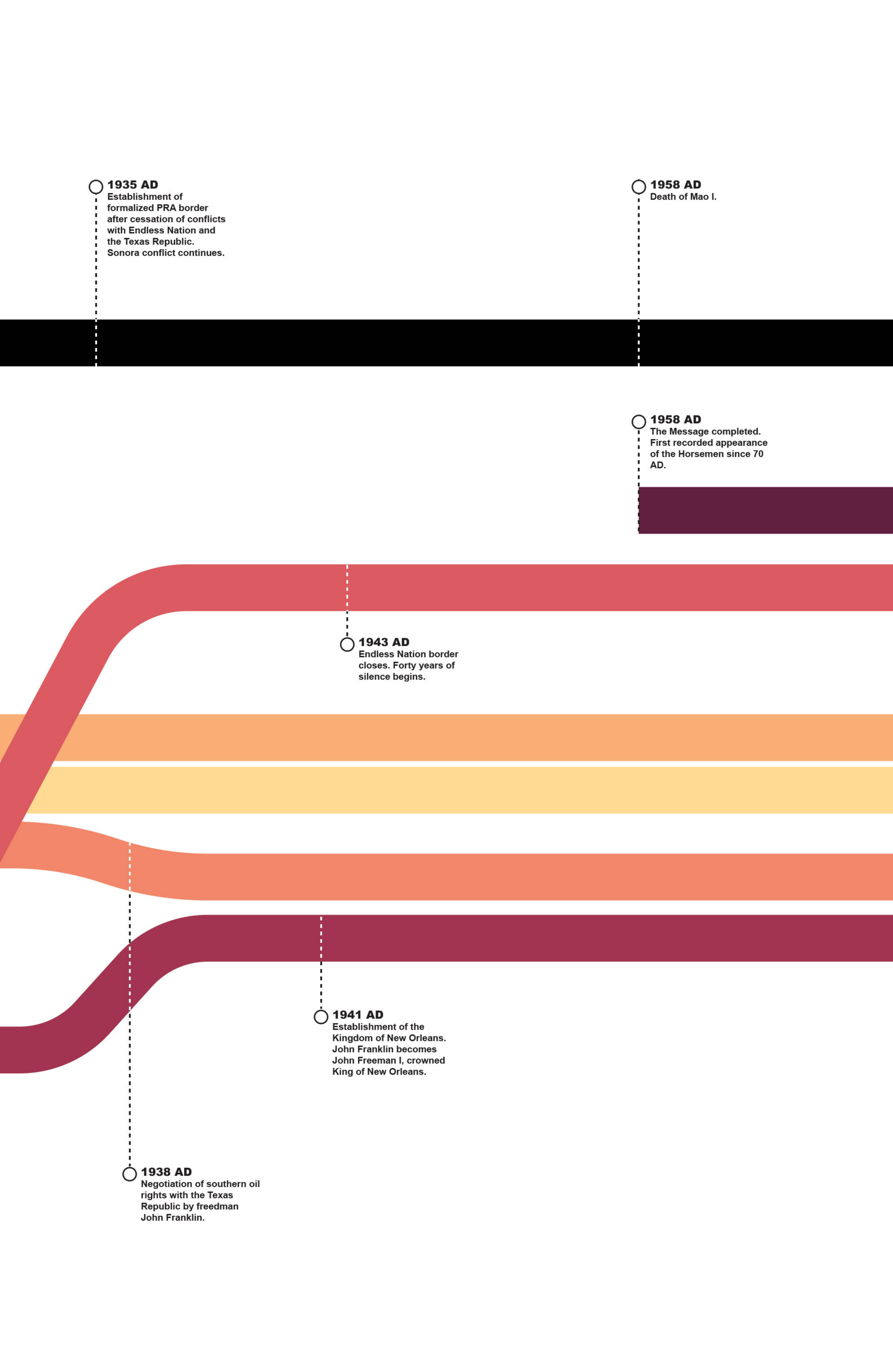
- **1908 AD**  
A fire in the sky.
- **1908 AD**  
Death of Elijah Longstreet  
and Red Cloud.













1961 AD  
Fracturing of the PRA. The three children of Mao I compete for control of the Maoist state.

1974 AD  
Reunification of the PRA under Mao II. Sibling-run Dragon and Widowmaker protectorates established.

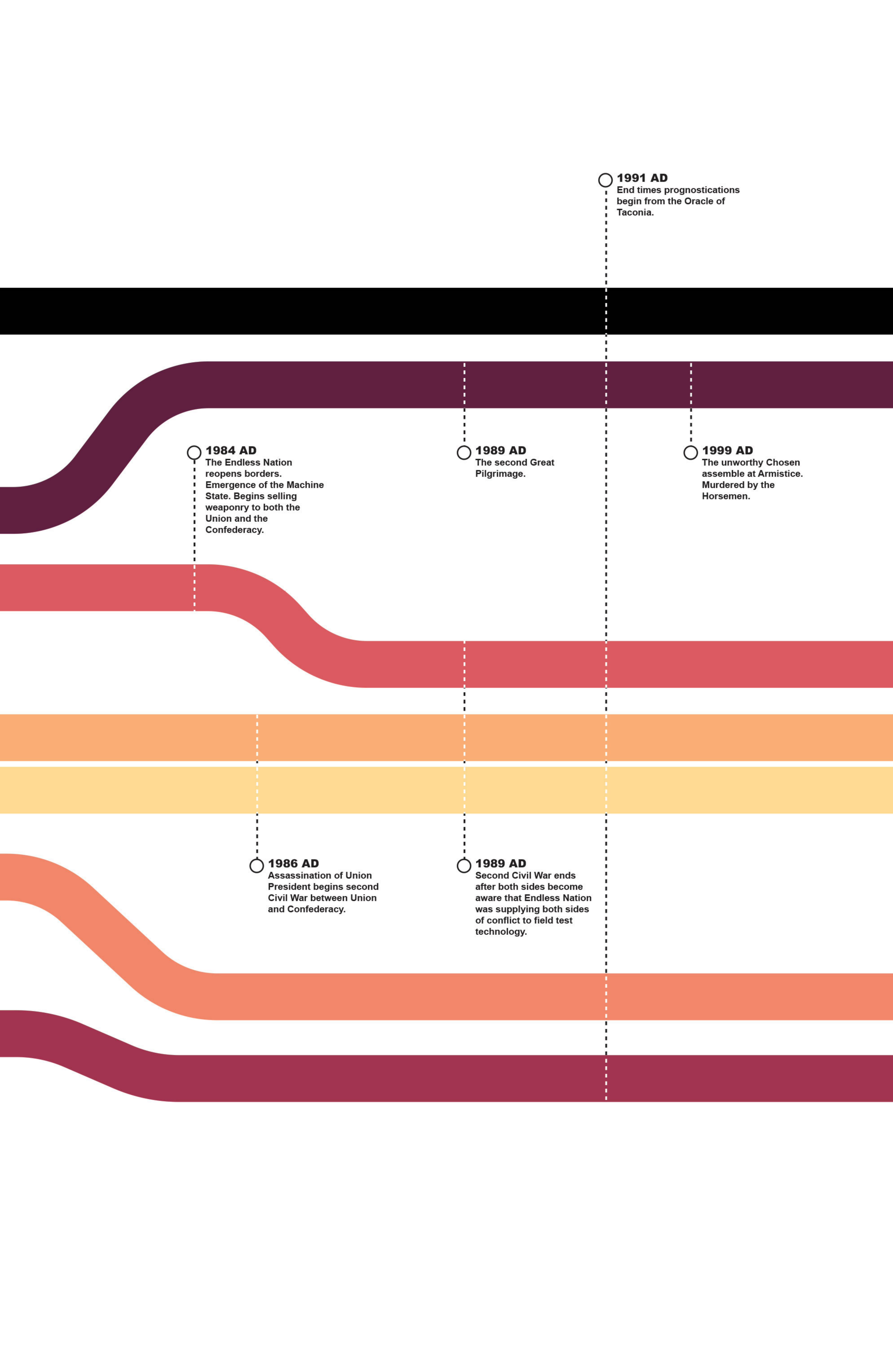
1962 AD  
First Pilgrims begin to appear at Armistice.

1980 AD  
The first Great Pilgrimage.

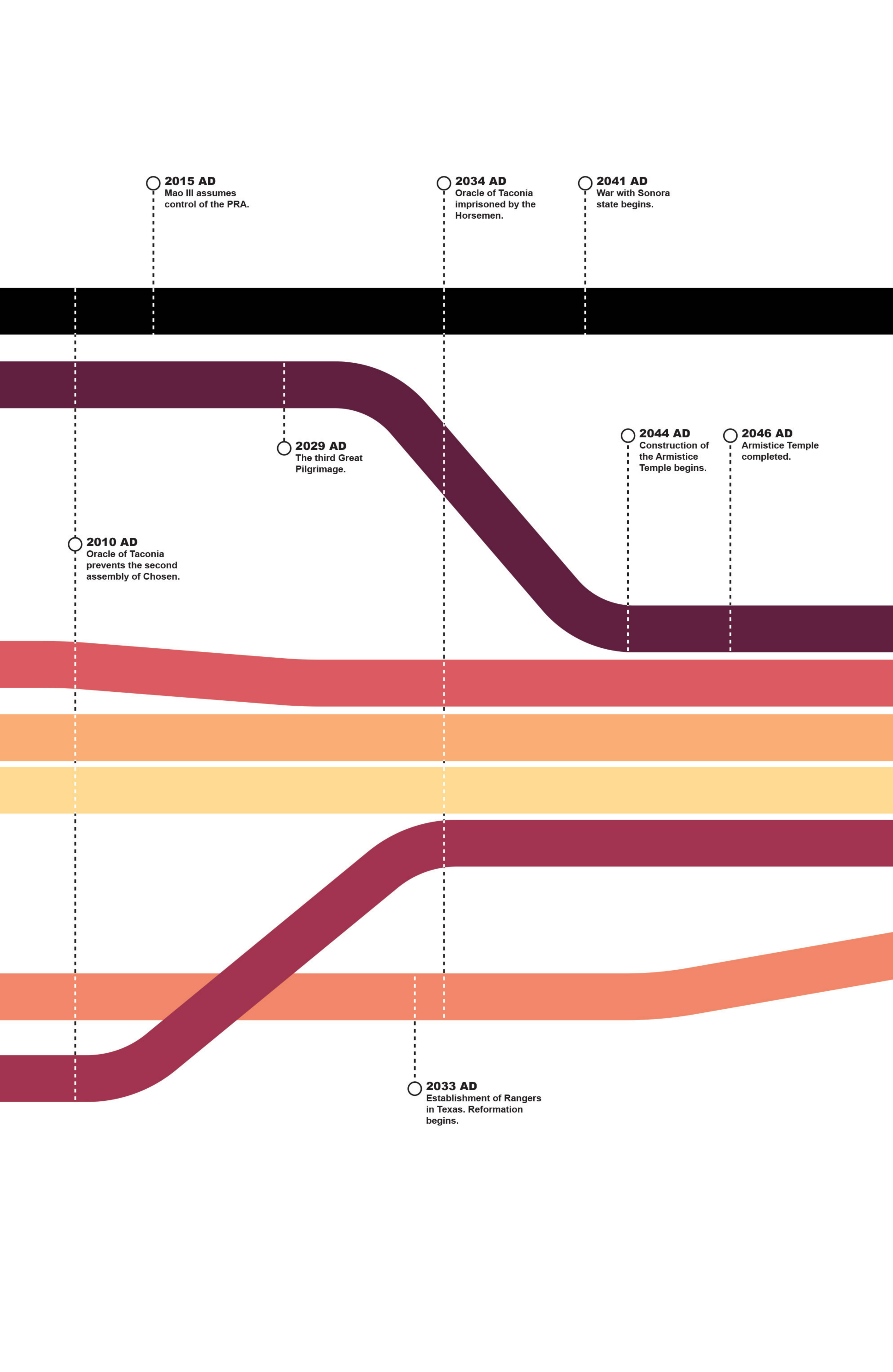
1978 AD  
Endless Nation moon landing.

1971 AD  
Establishment of second expansion of the state-owned New Orleans Oil Company and first two guild banks.

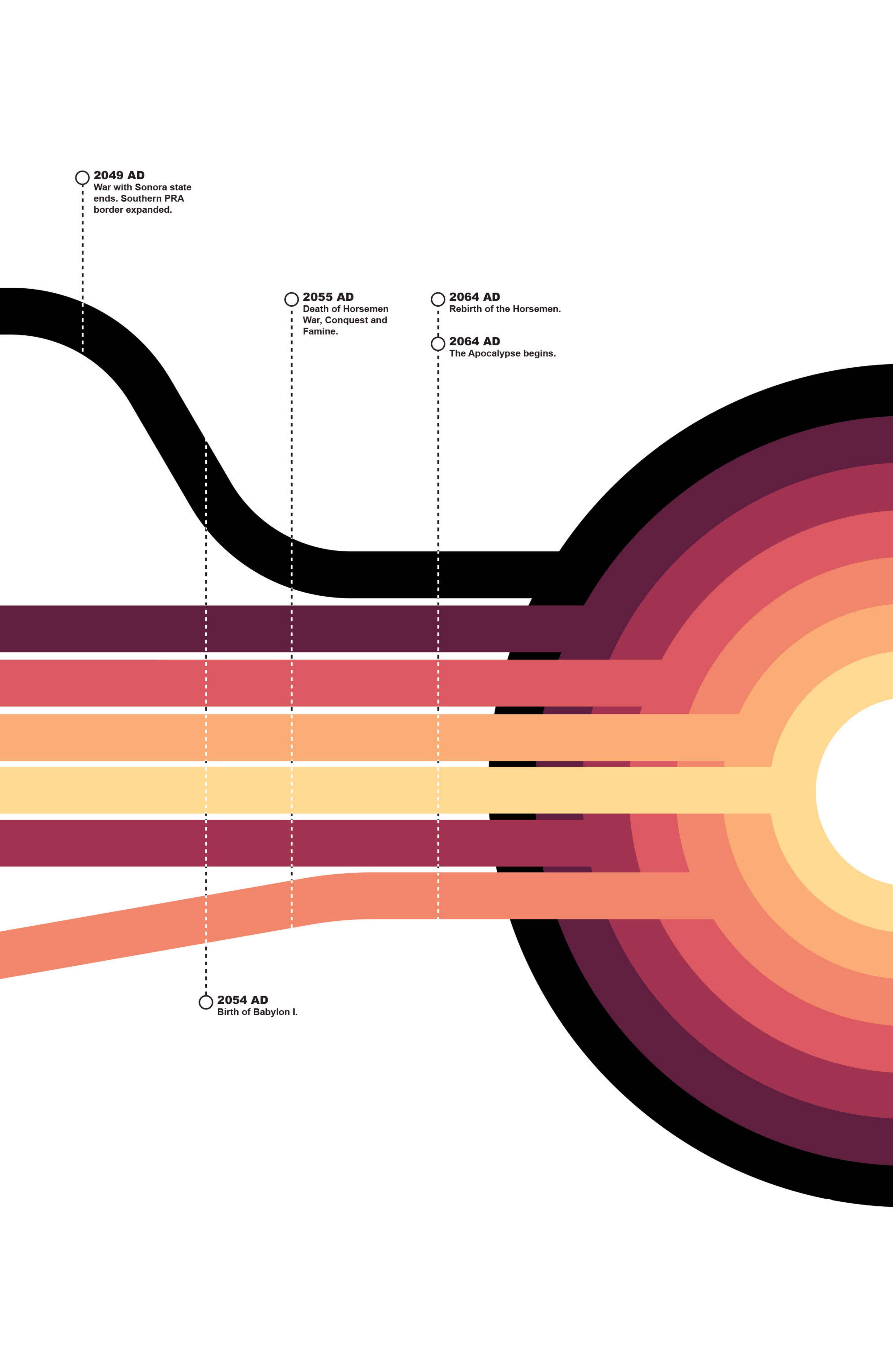












2049 AD  
War with Sonora state  
ends. Southern PRA  
border expanded.

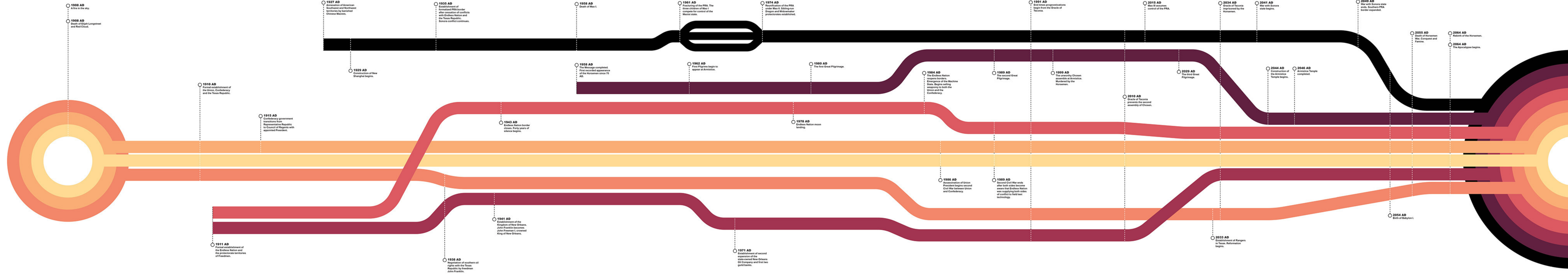
2055 AD  
Death of Horsemen  
War, Conquest and  
Famine.

2064 AD  
Rebirth of the Horsemen.

2064 AD  
The Apocalypse begins.

2054 AD  
Birth of Babylon I.







THE **FUTURE** HOLDS  
**DARKNESS** AND **FIRE** AND  
**ASH.**

SEE HOW IT **BURNS.** SEE  
HOW IT **BREAKS.**

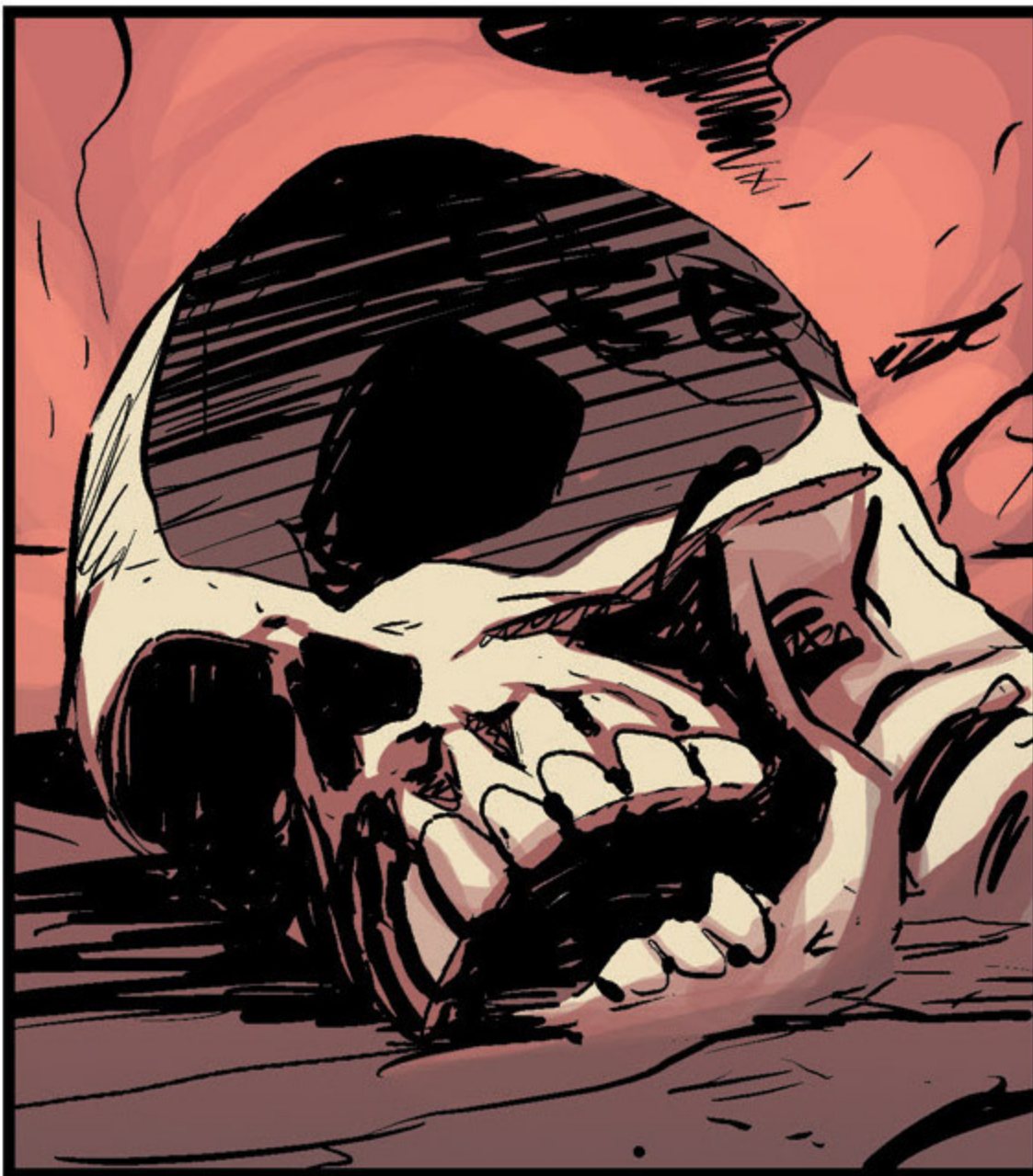
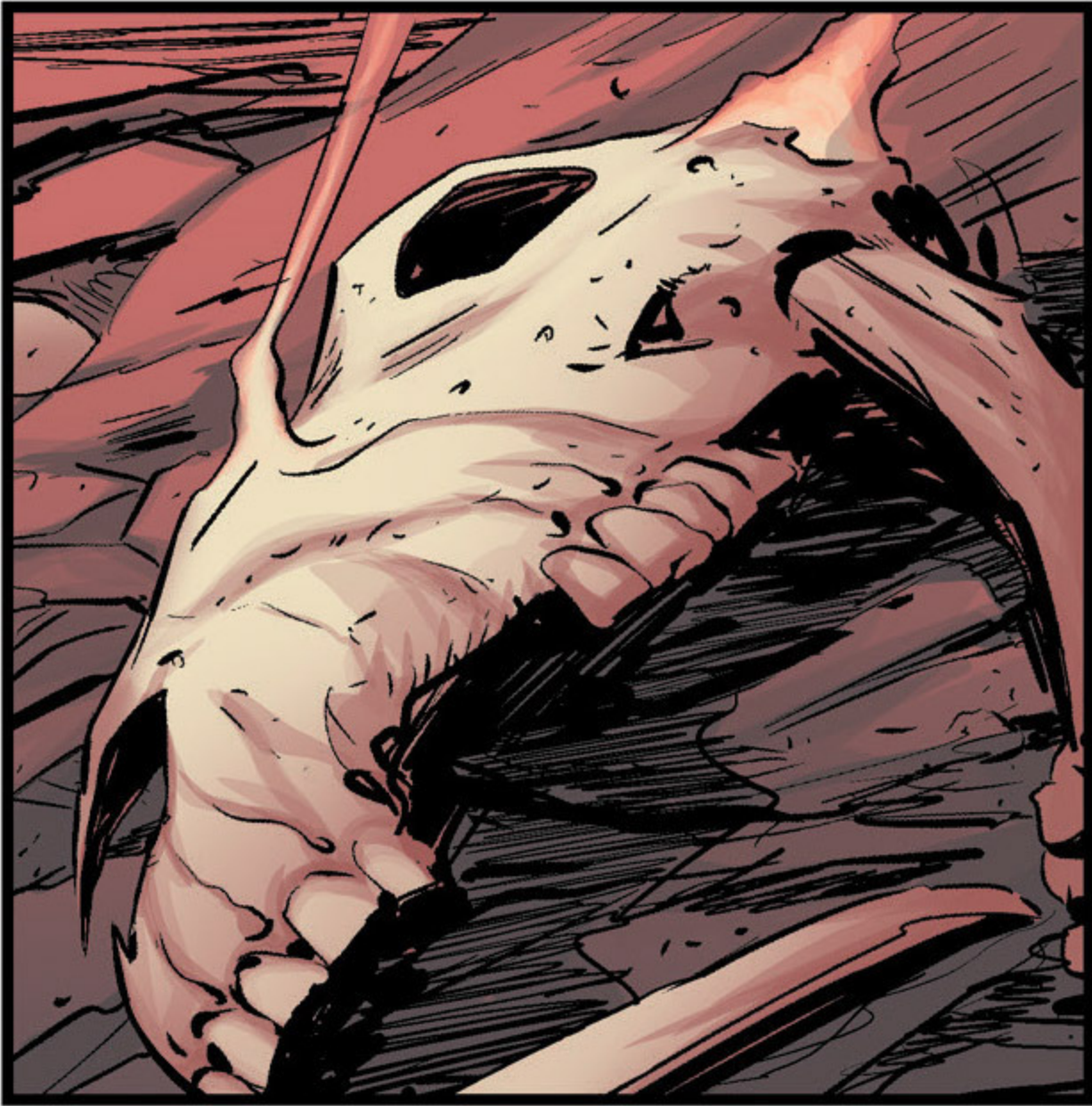








The Killing Fields of Texas.







How cool is that?

Did you notice how the river cuts through the desert, Conquest? The surrounding plateaus and mesas are bad enough, but one of the choke points eventually leads into a canyon...

I swear, God herself could not have created a more **heartless** arena for a retreating army.

See how the gore of the beaten has **seeped** into the river -- it flows into the cities that lie in heart of the republic.

The **meat** will consume their own defeat, and absorb it in their **bones**.





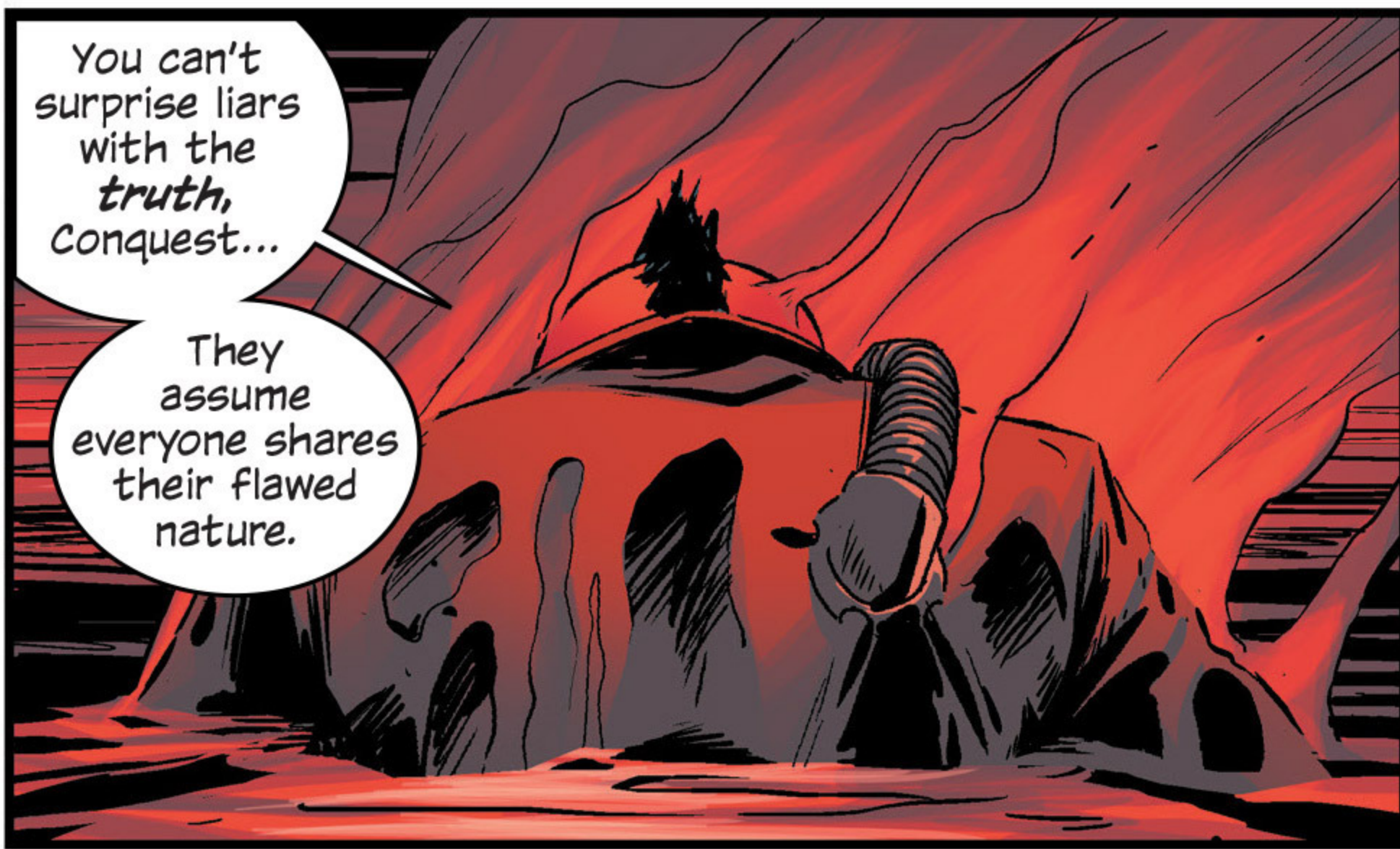




Or should we let it be a surprise?



Hmmm.



You can't surprise liars with the **truth**, Conquest...

They assume everyone shares their flawed nature.



And have you really listened to what these blind people believe they've built?

Their so-called modern society, with its prosperity and progress...

They talk about how the world has changed -- **how they have evolved.** The meat now act like conflict is a **bad thing.** Like war is something **beneath them.**



Hrmp! But we know better don't we?

Oh, yes...

We've watched them closely. We've seen how they really feel about their fellow man. We know what they think.

These people...**they hate each another.**



And...  
oh how  
they act  
accordingly.







# 16

 **SIXTEEN: LET IT  
BURN**



# 2065

THE APOCALYPSE: YEAR TWO





*A single great machine of the Endless Nation appeared in the sky above the Texas Republic in the second year of the end times.*

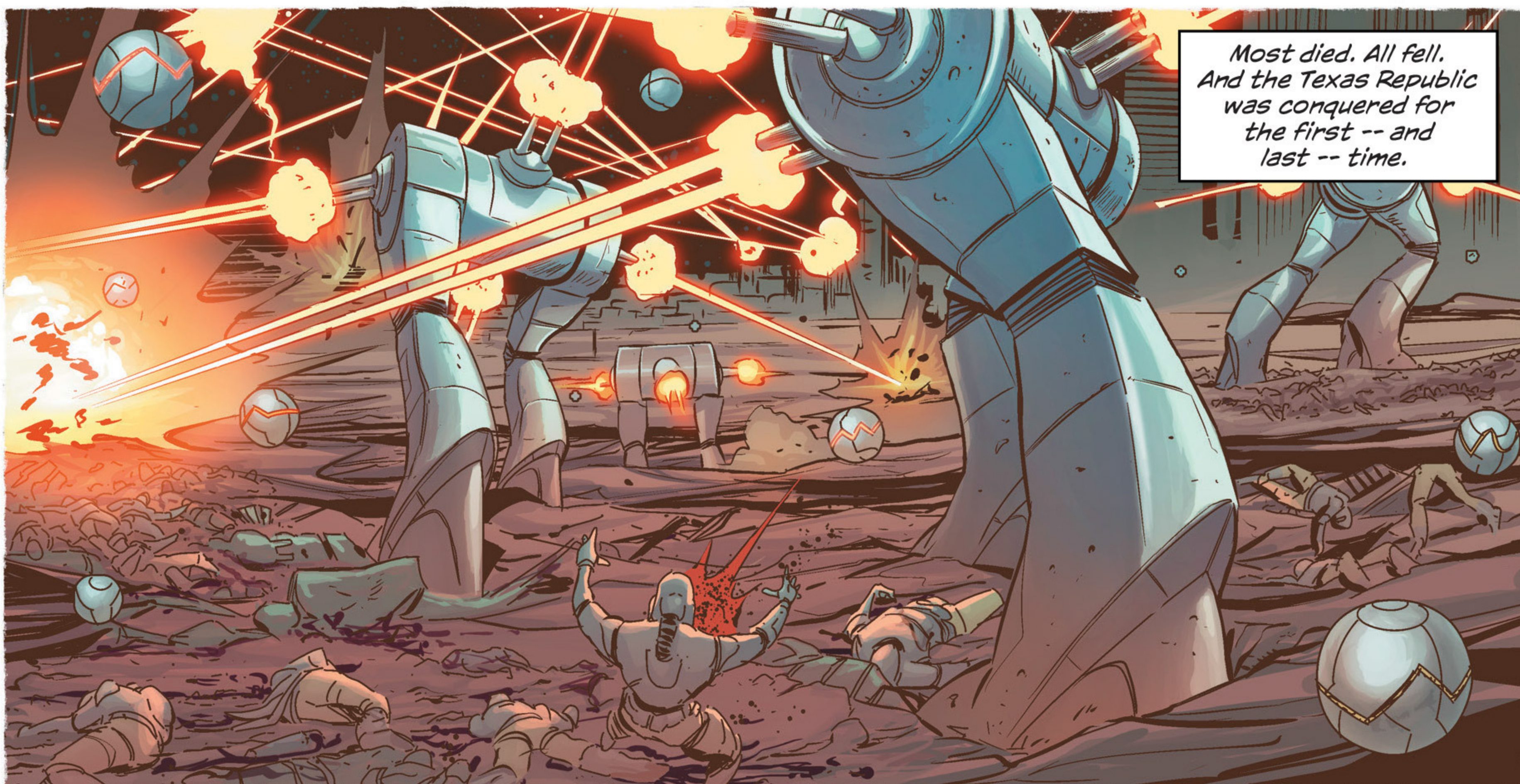
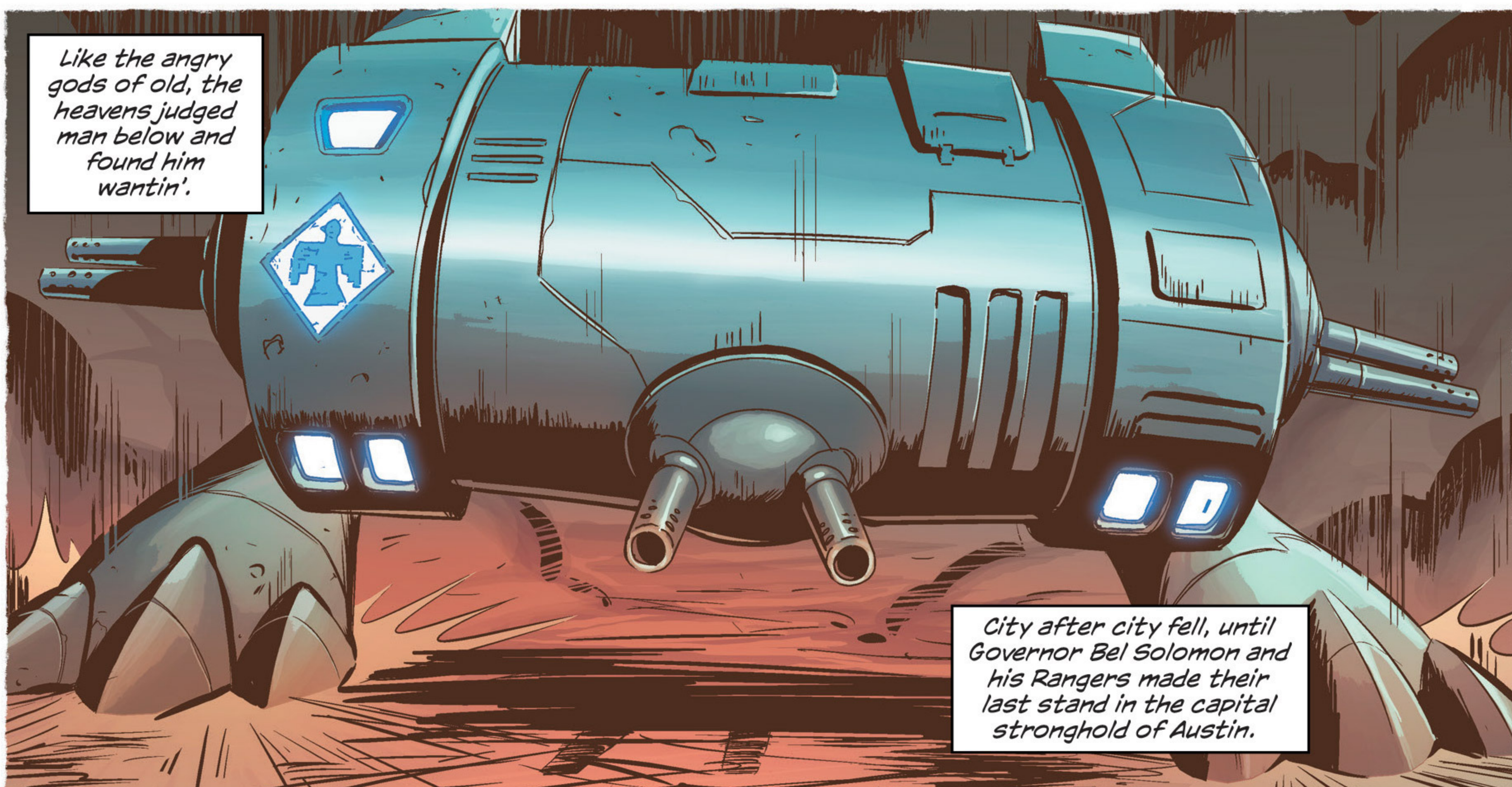
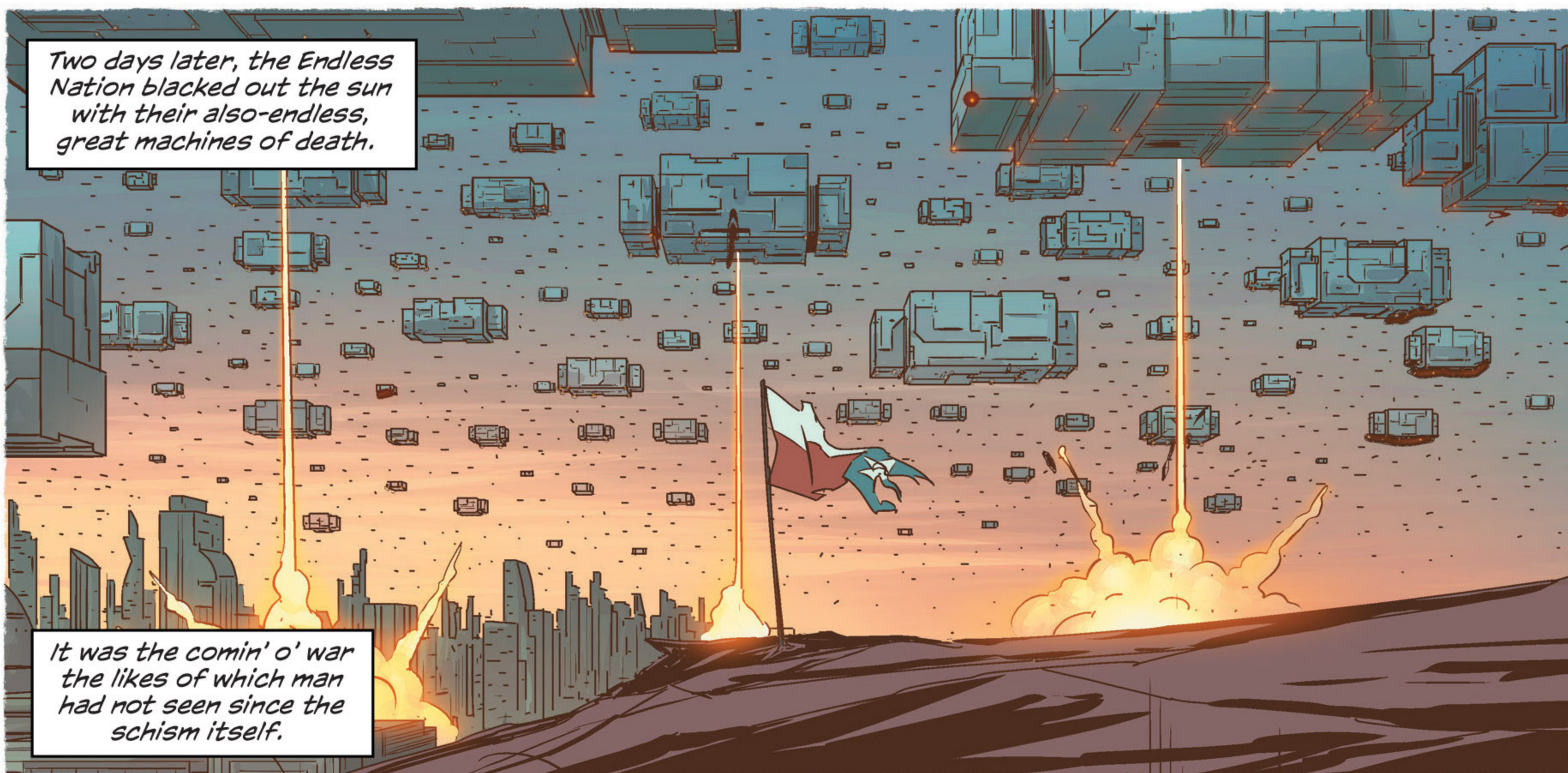
*An accountin' was demanded -- Governor Bel Solomon would answer for his cold-blooded murder of an Endless shaman, or the Endless Nation would offer answers of their own.*

*They sought retribution... and it was retribution they received.*

*At the urgin' of their governor, the only remainin' garrison of Texas Rangers brought the great machine low. They smote it from sky...*

*And slaughtered what staggered from its smoky remains.*





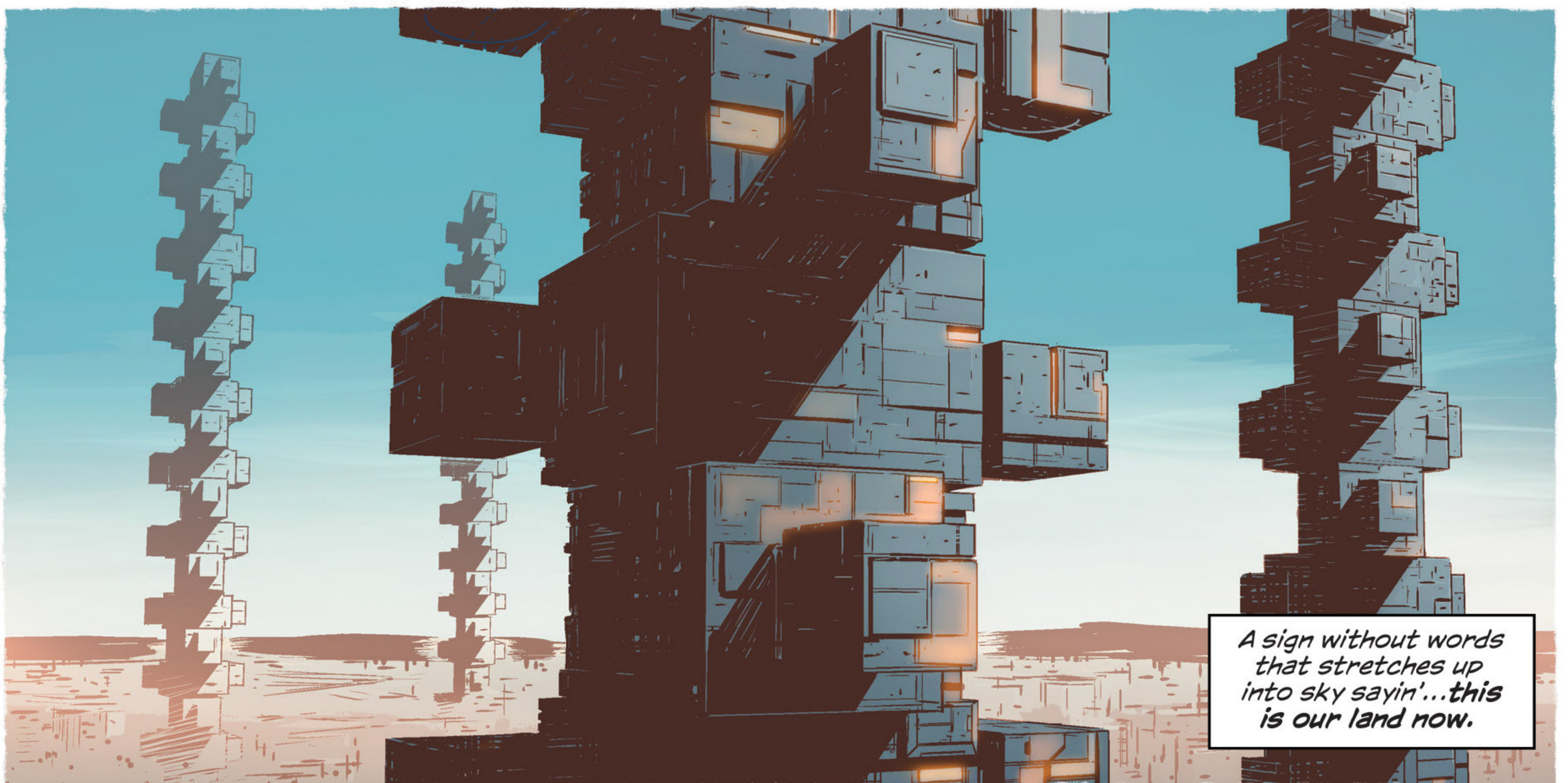




*The Endless Nation  
descended, erectin' great  
thinkin' machine totems --  
not just for automated  
control of a defeated people,  
but also as a reminder...*



*Look far -- look often --  
look every goddamn day, and  
you will the same thing.*

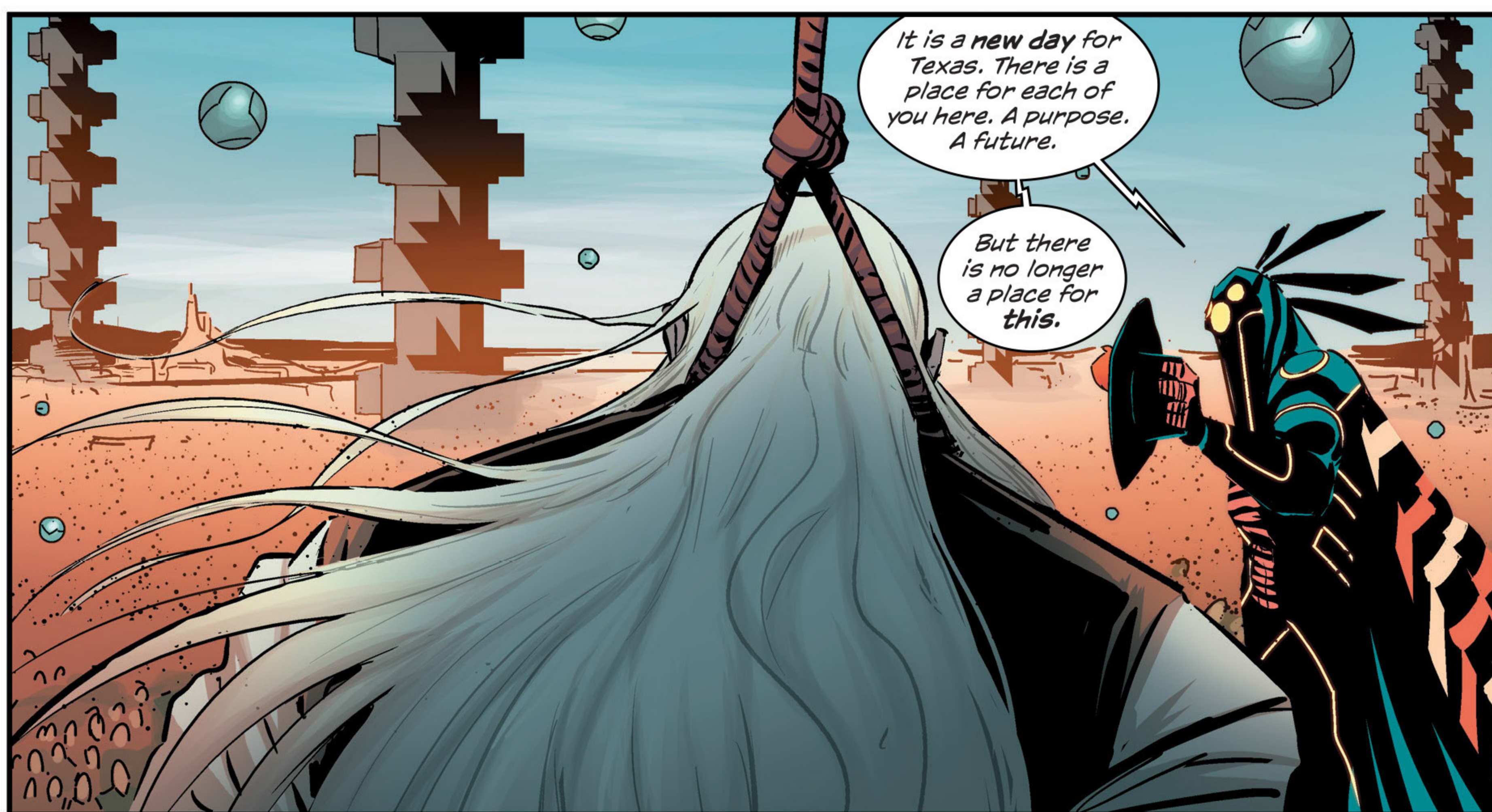
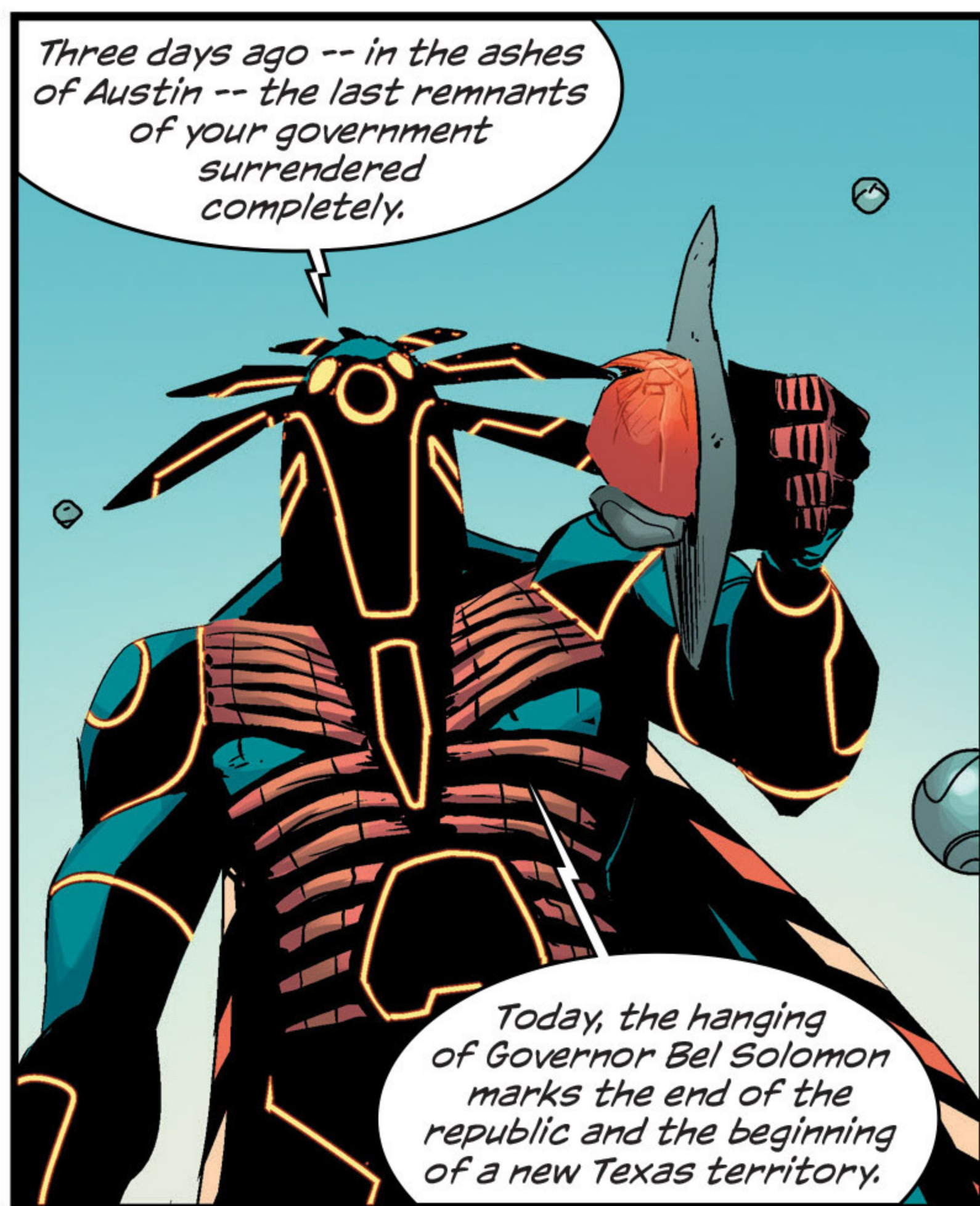


*A sign without words  
that stretches up  
into sky sayin'...this  
is our land now.*

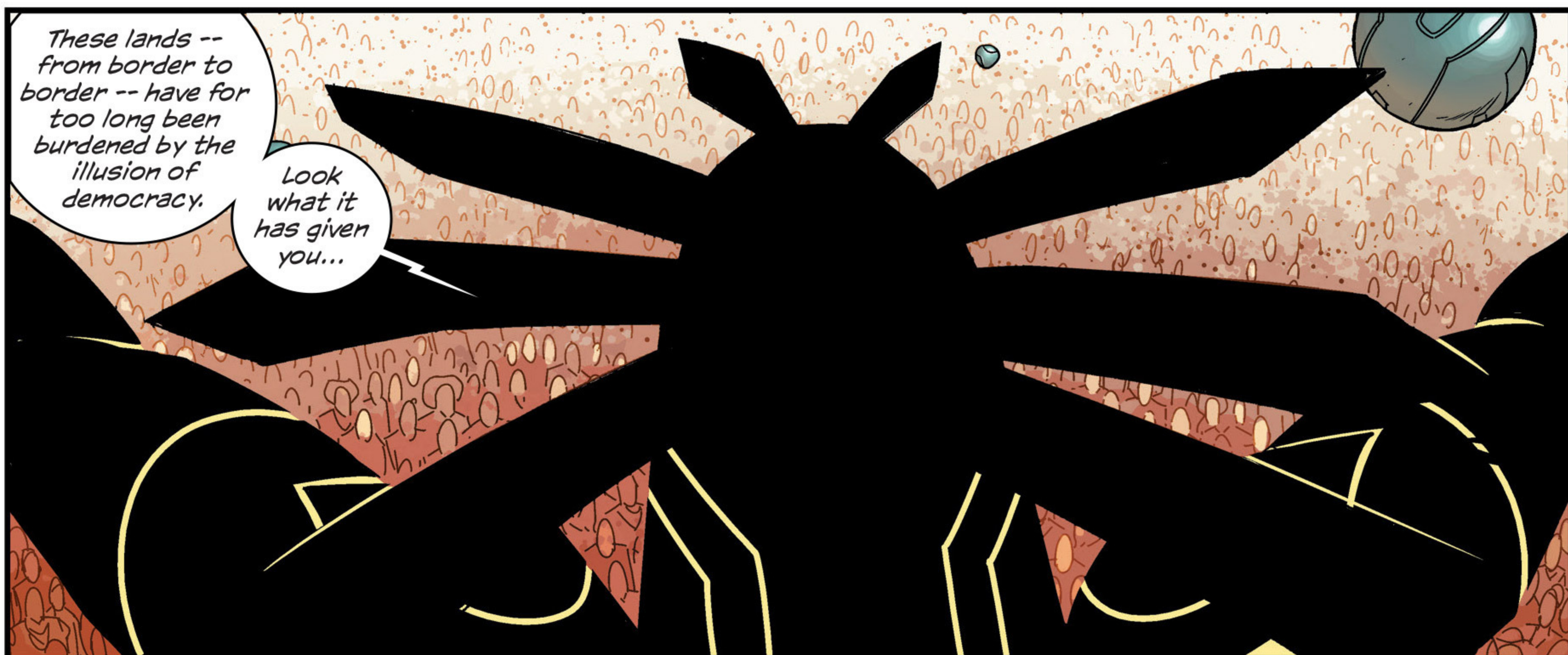












These lands --  
from border to  
border -- have for  
too long been  
burdened by the  
illusion of  
democracy.

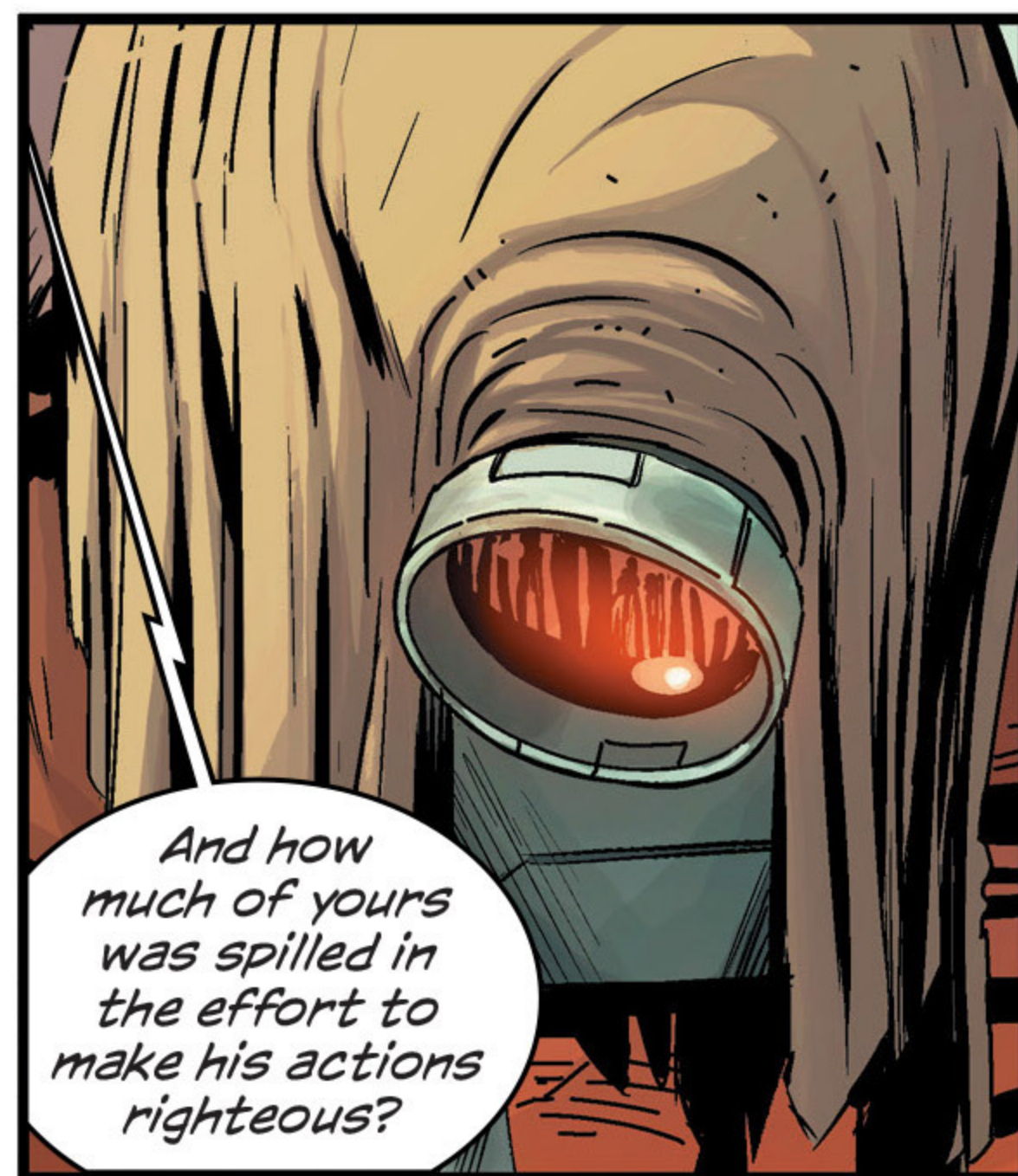
Look  
what it  
has given  
you...



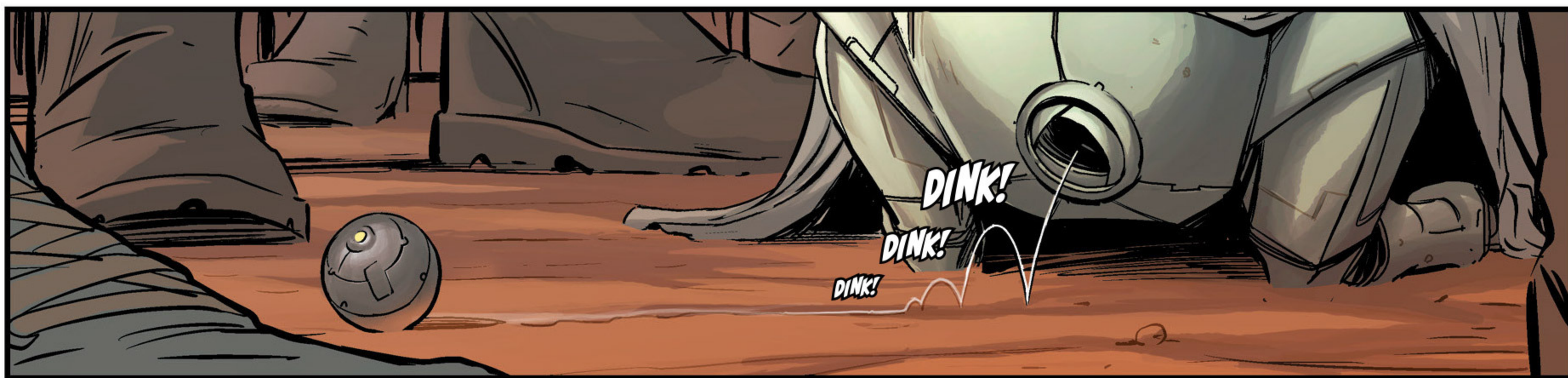
The appearance of  
individual freedom, but the  
reality of being beholden to the  
whims of charlatans and the fallen.



Bel Solomon  
murdered one  
of the Nation in  
cold blood.



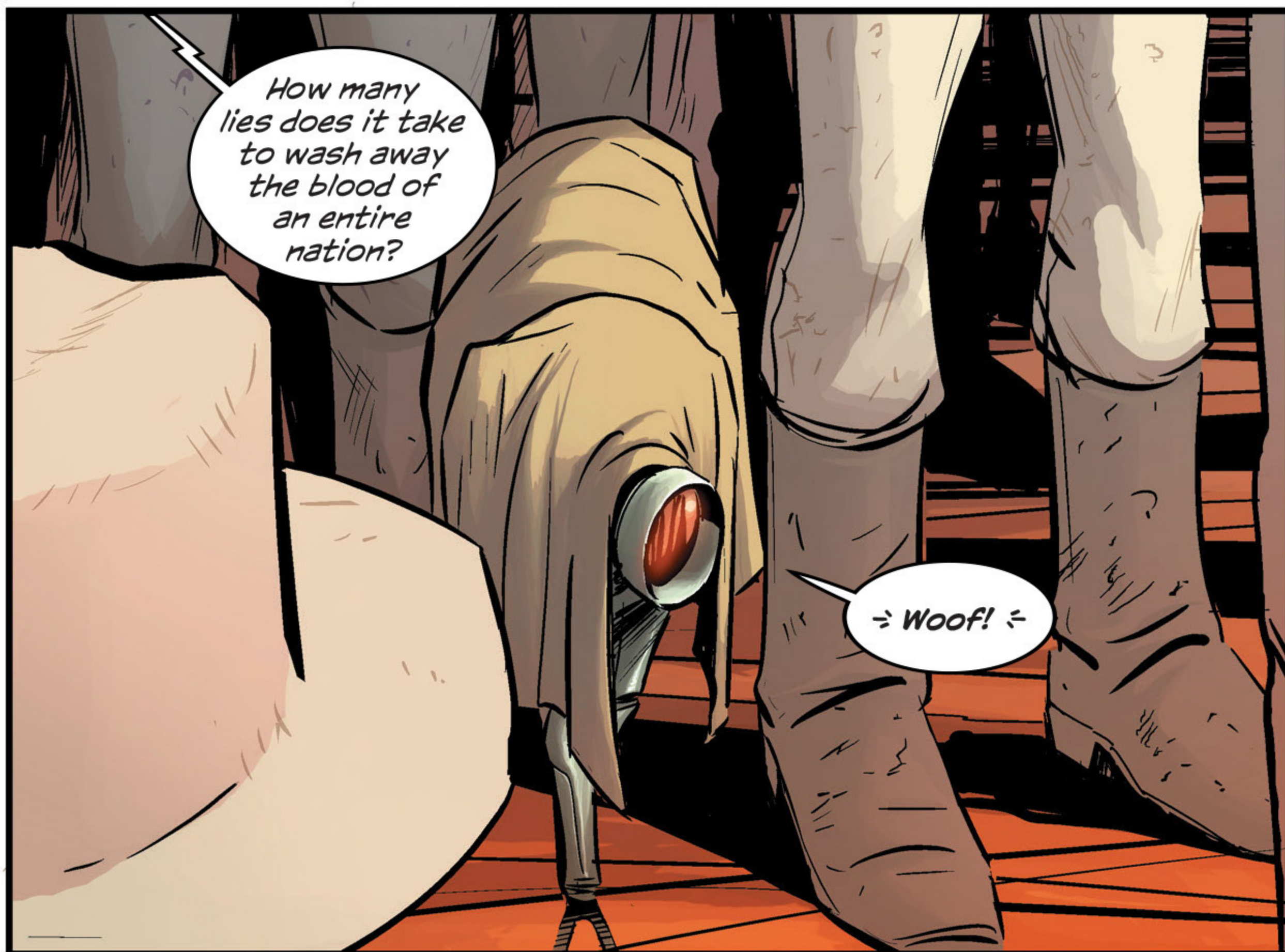
And how  
much of yours  
was spilled in  
the effort to  
make his actions  
righteous?



DINK!  
DINK!  
DINK!



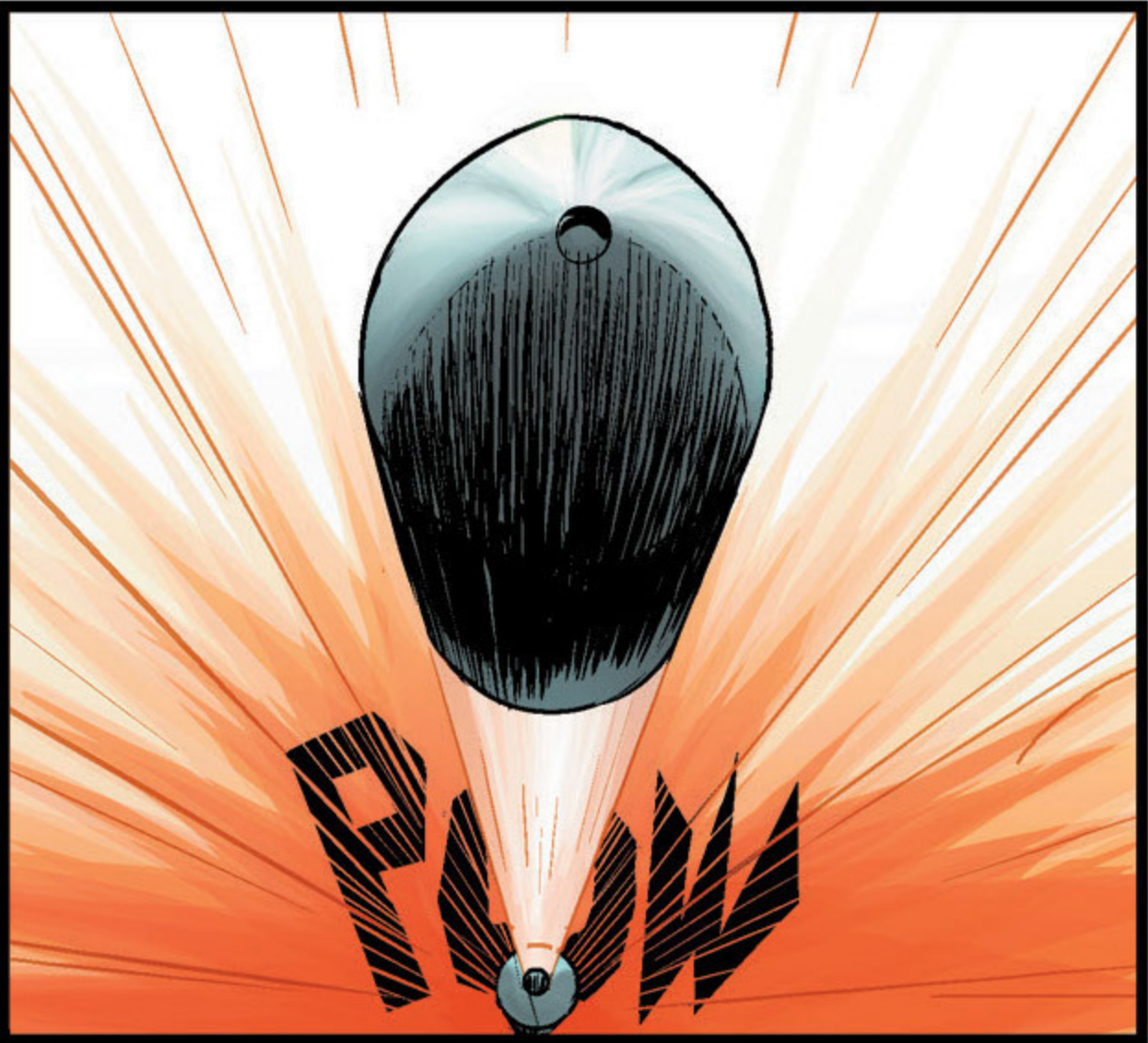
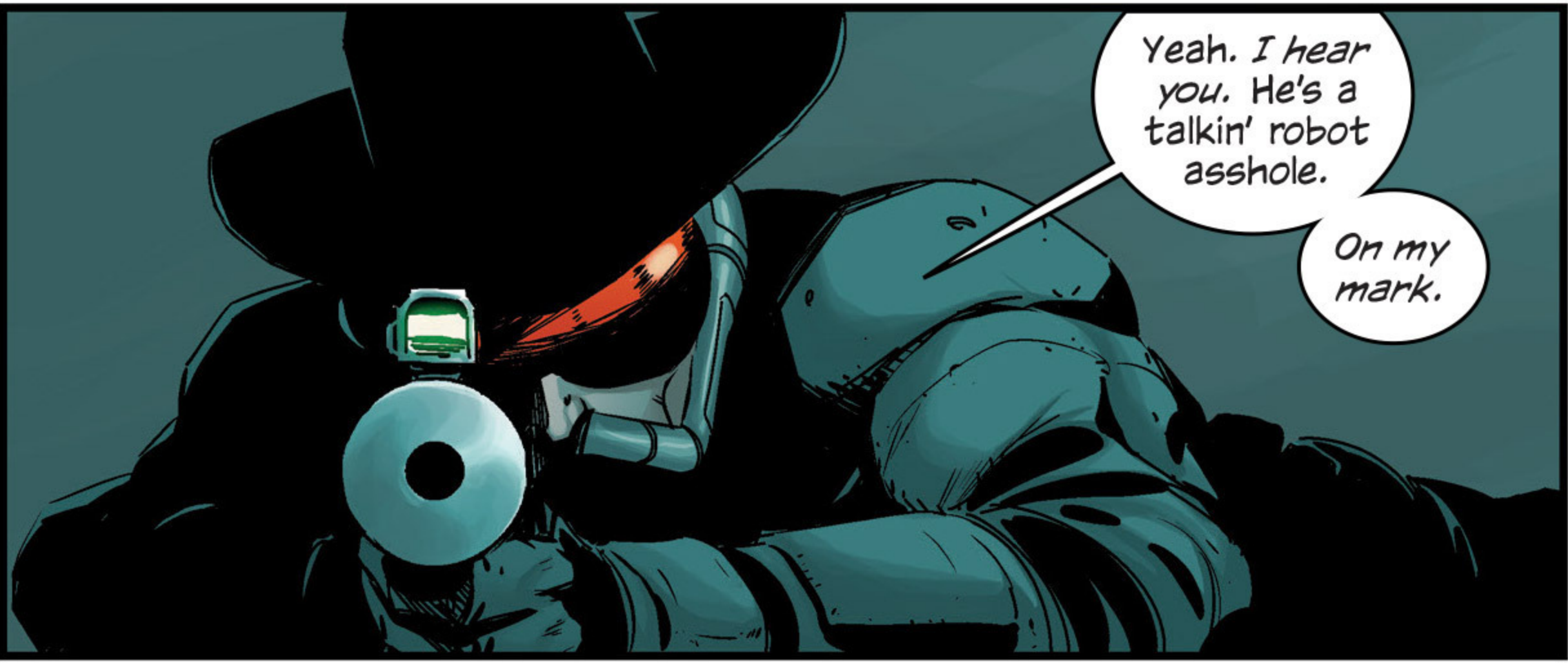
What story  
did he weave?  
Sovereignty?  
Security?



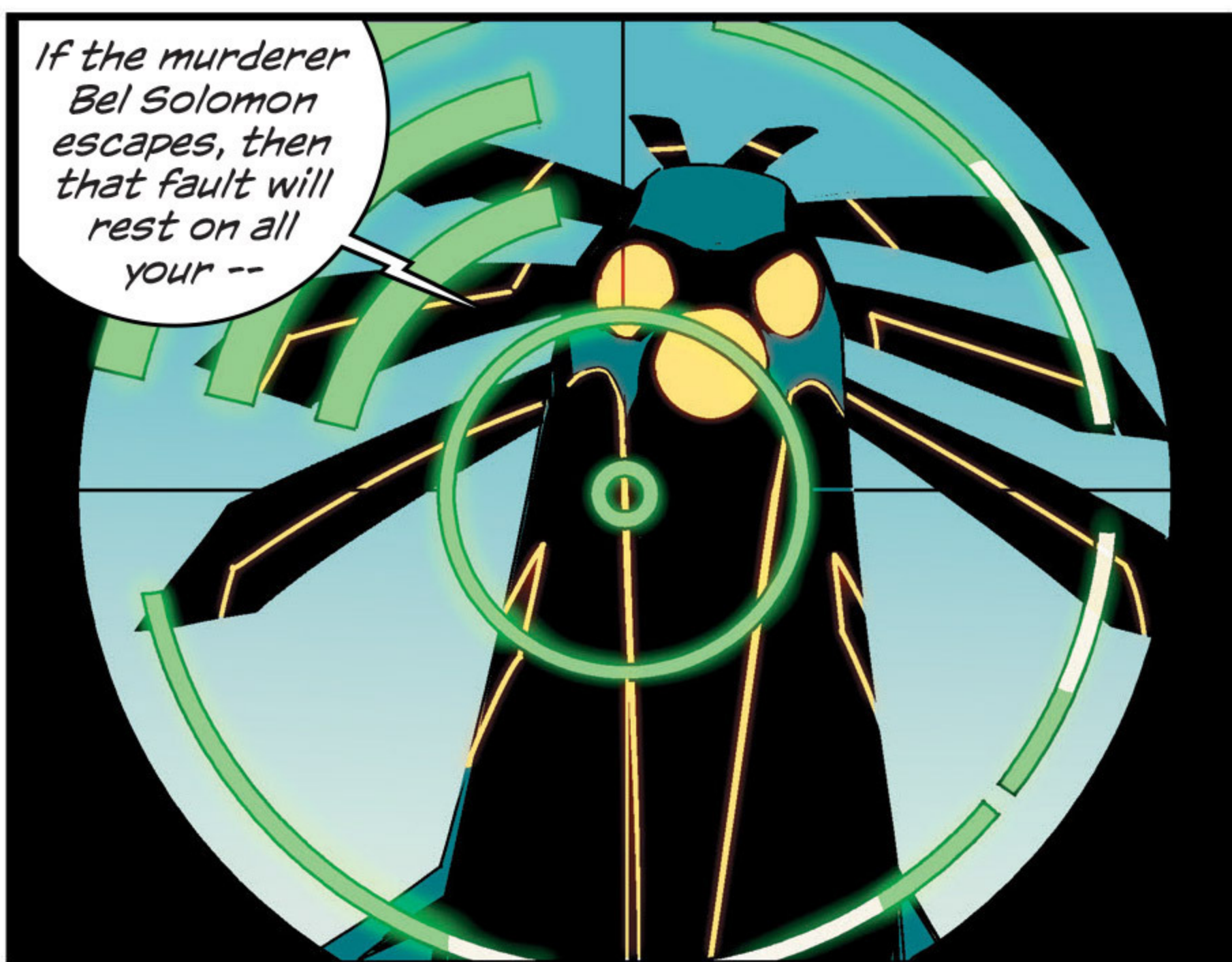
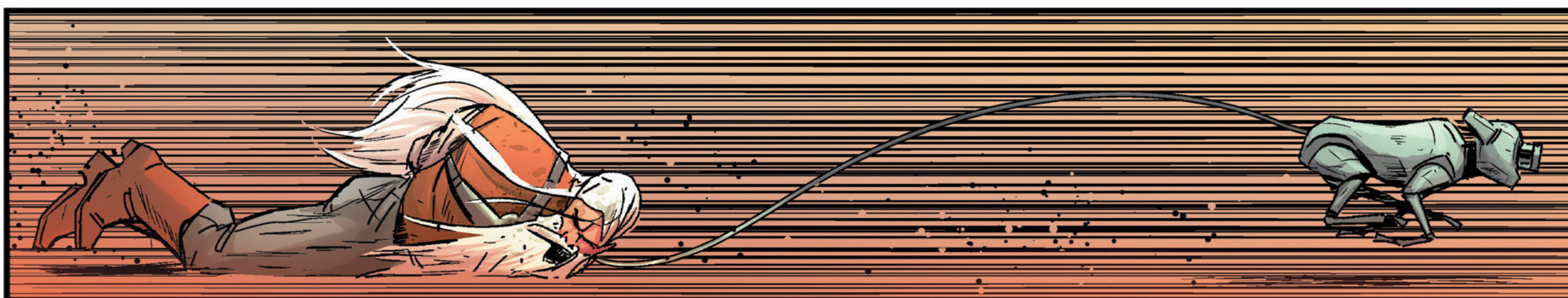
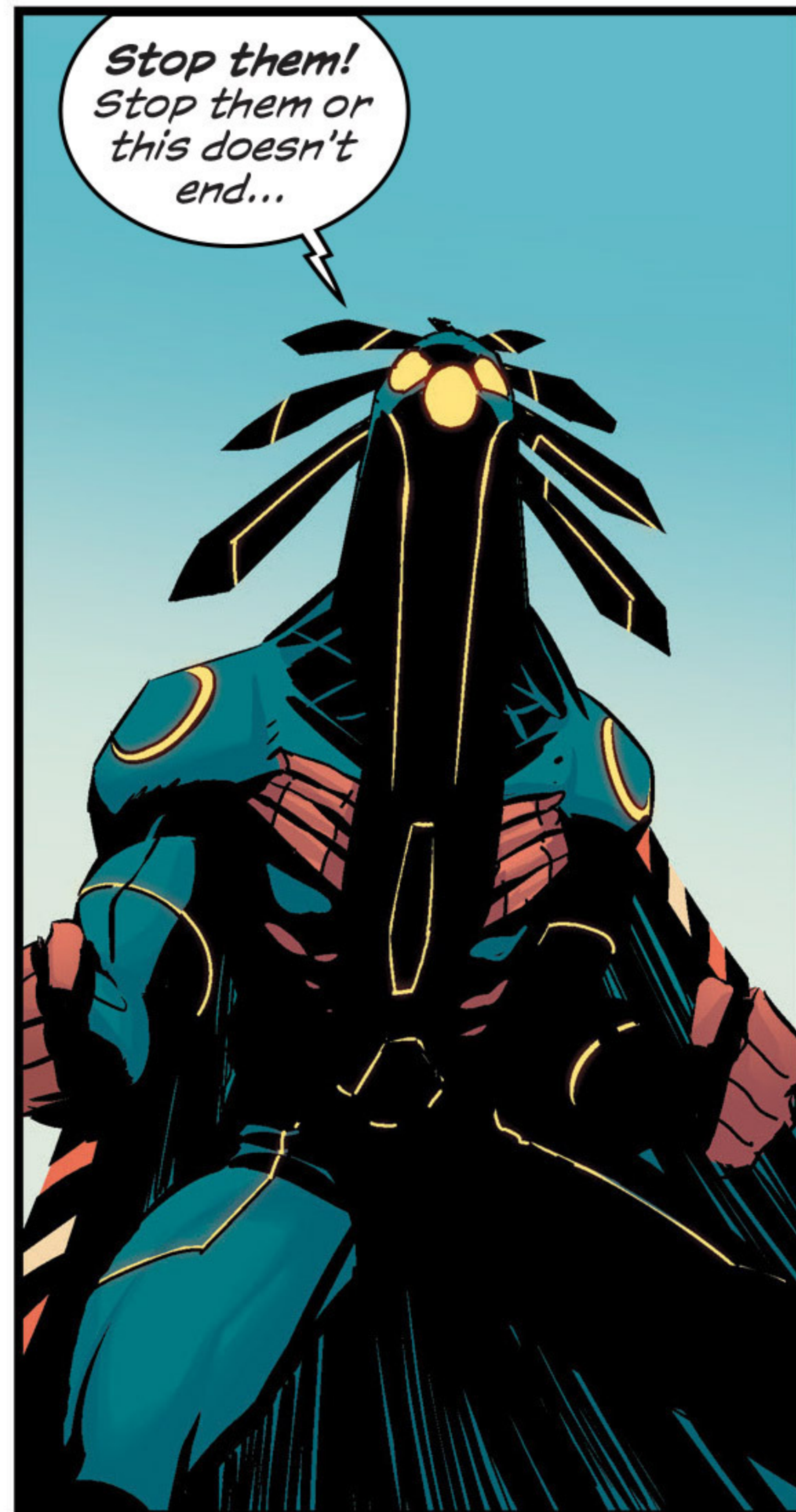
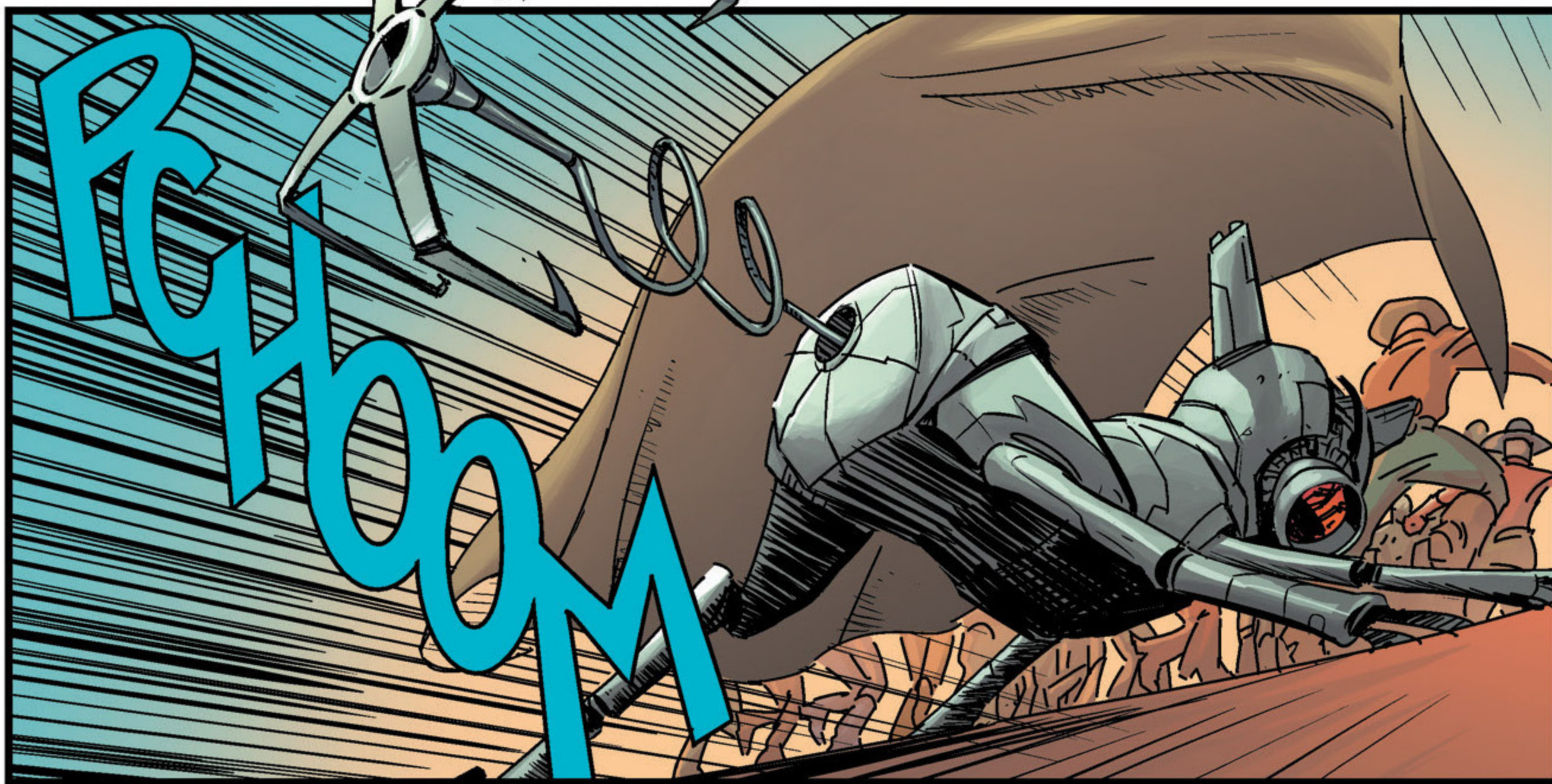
How many  
lies does it take  
to wash away  
the blood of  
an entire  
nation?

÷ Woof! ÷

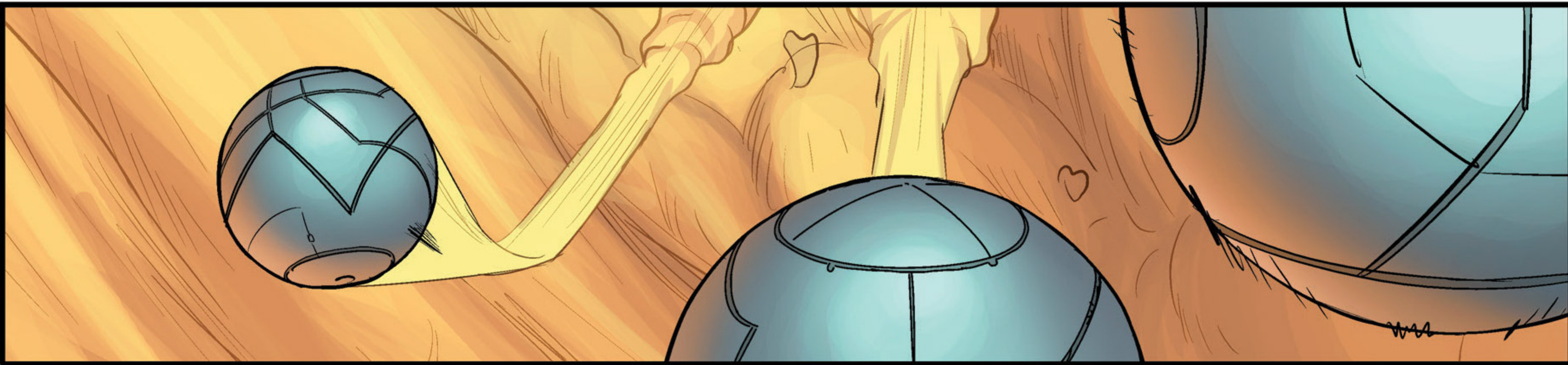
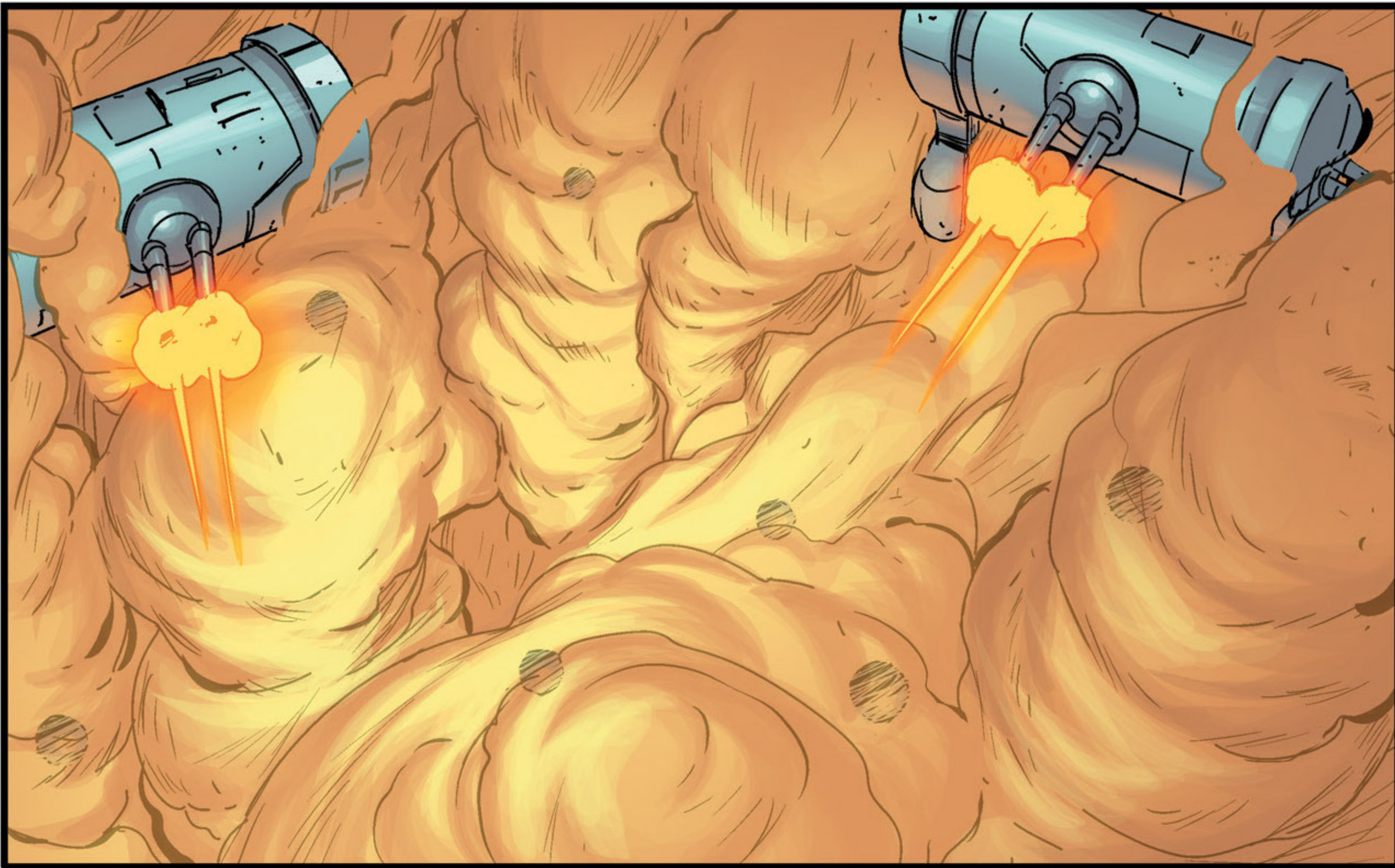
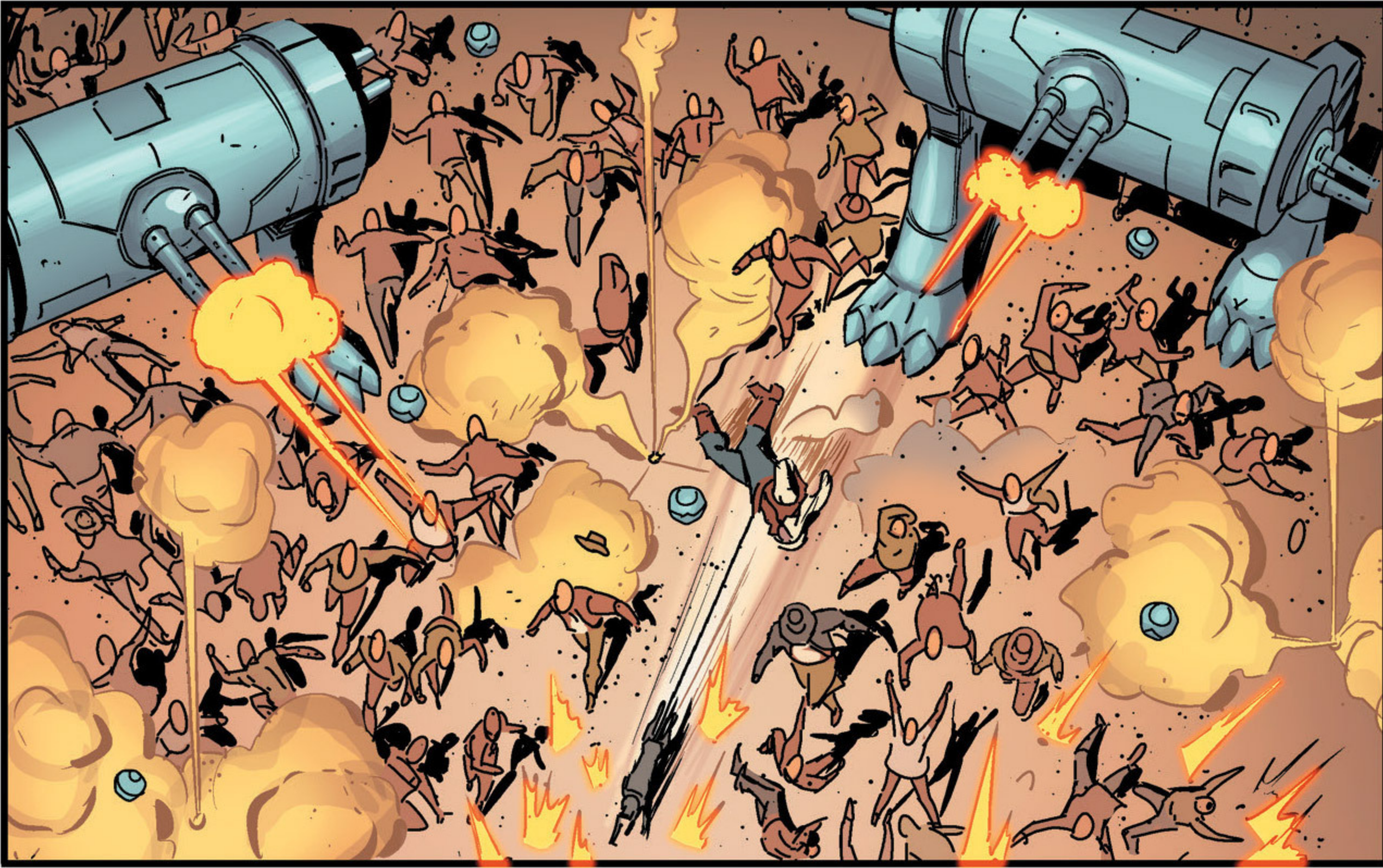
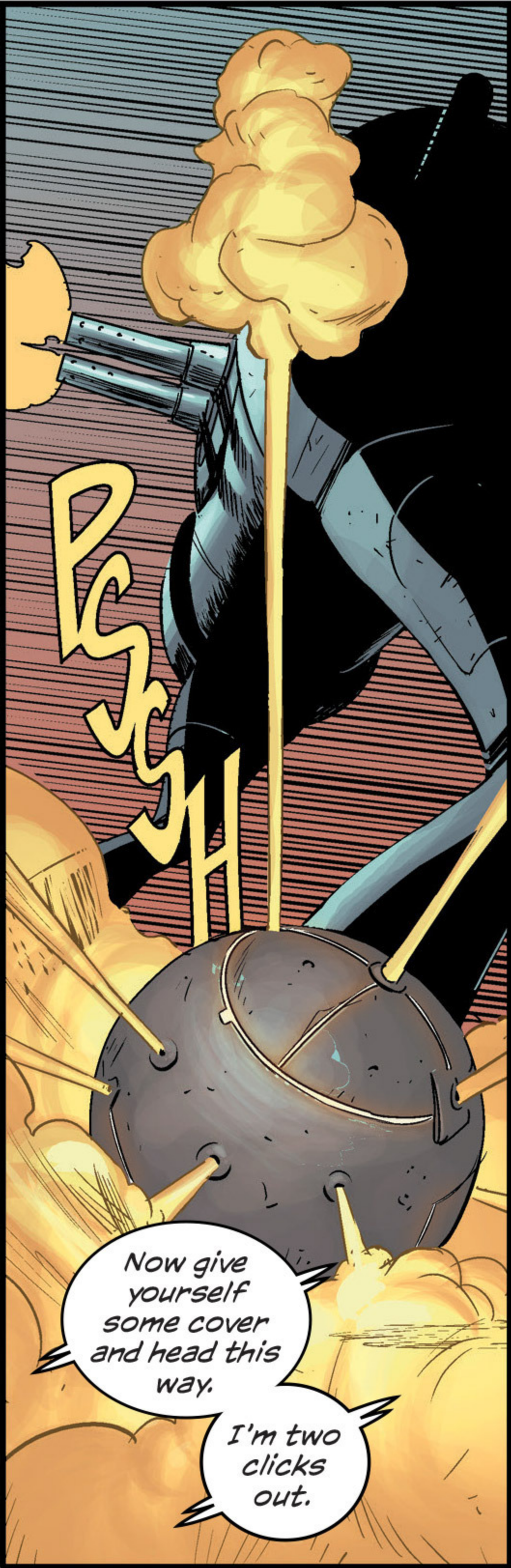
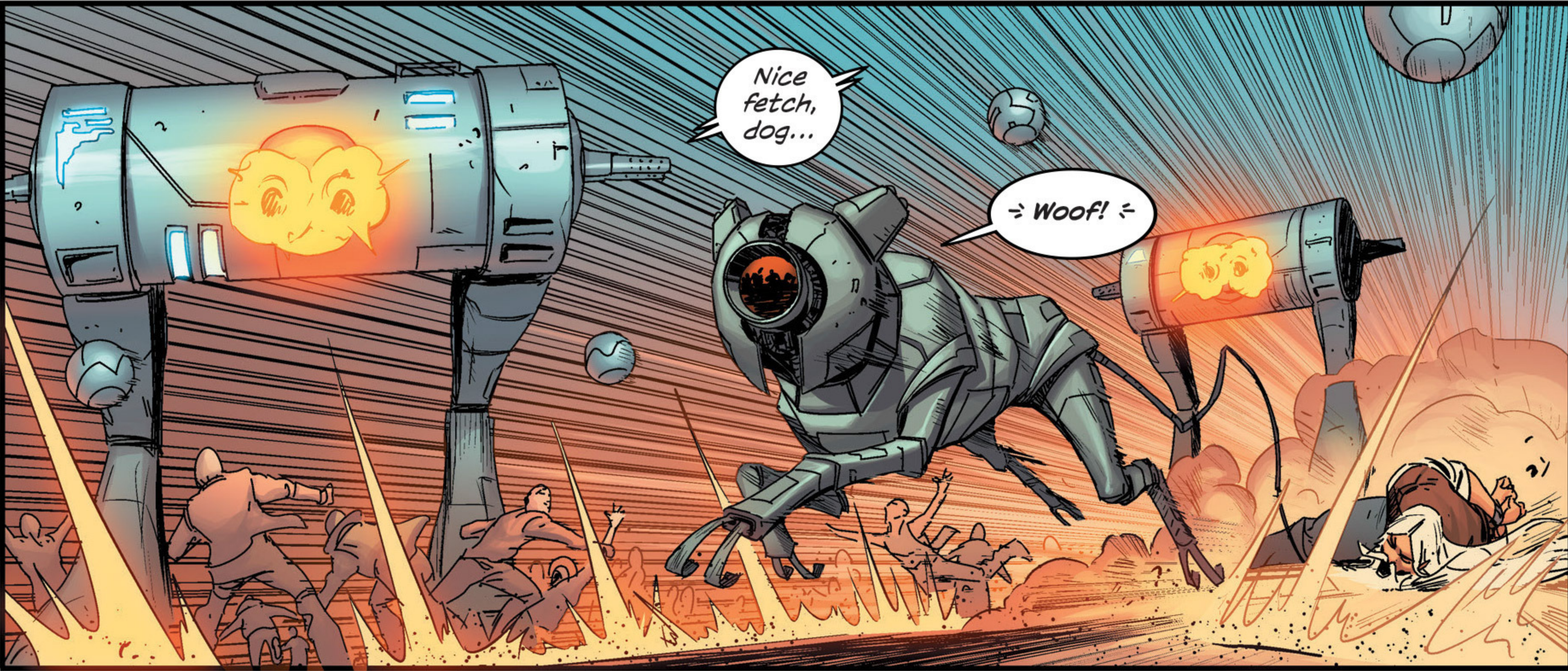




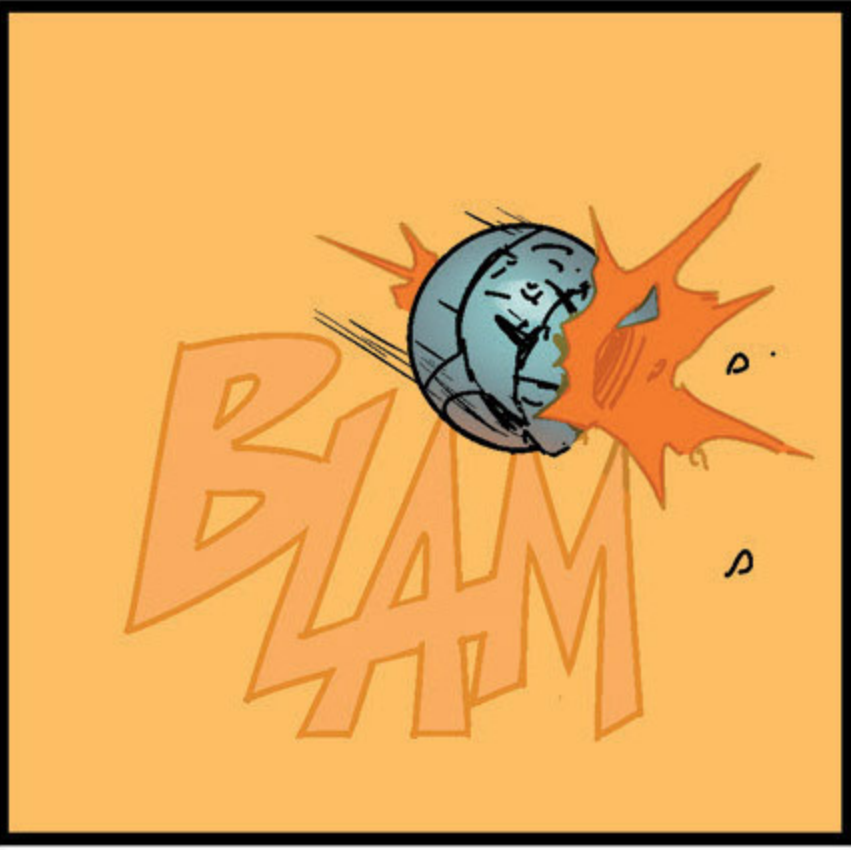
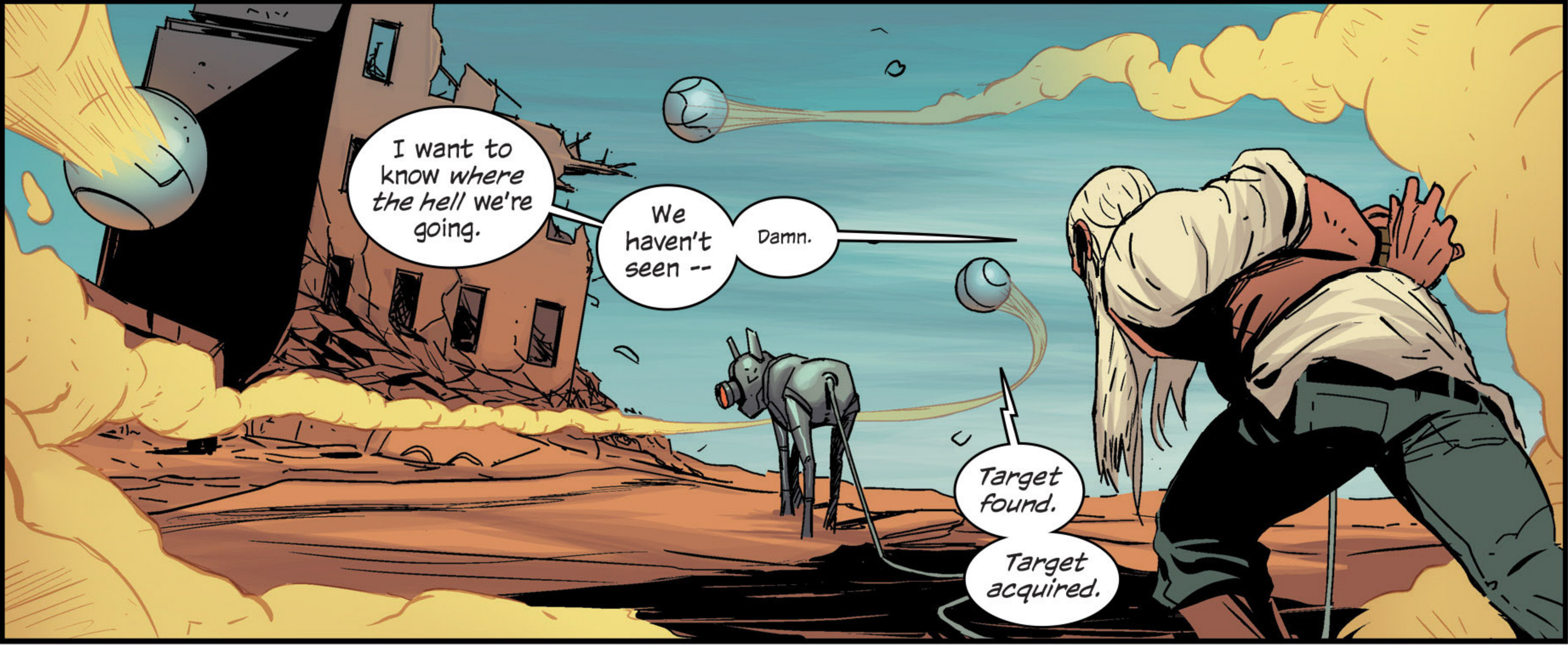




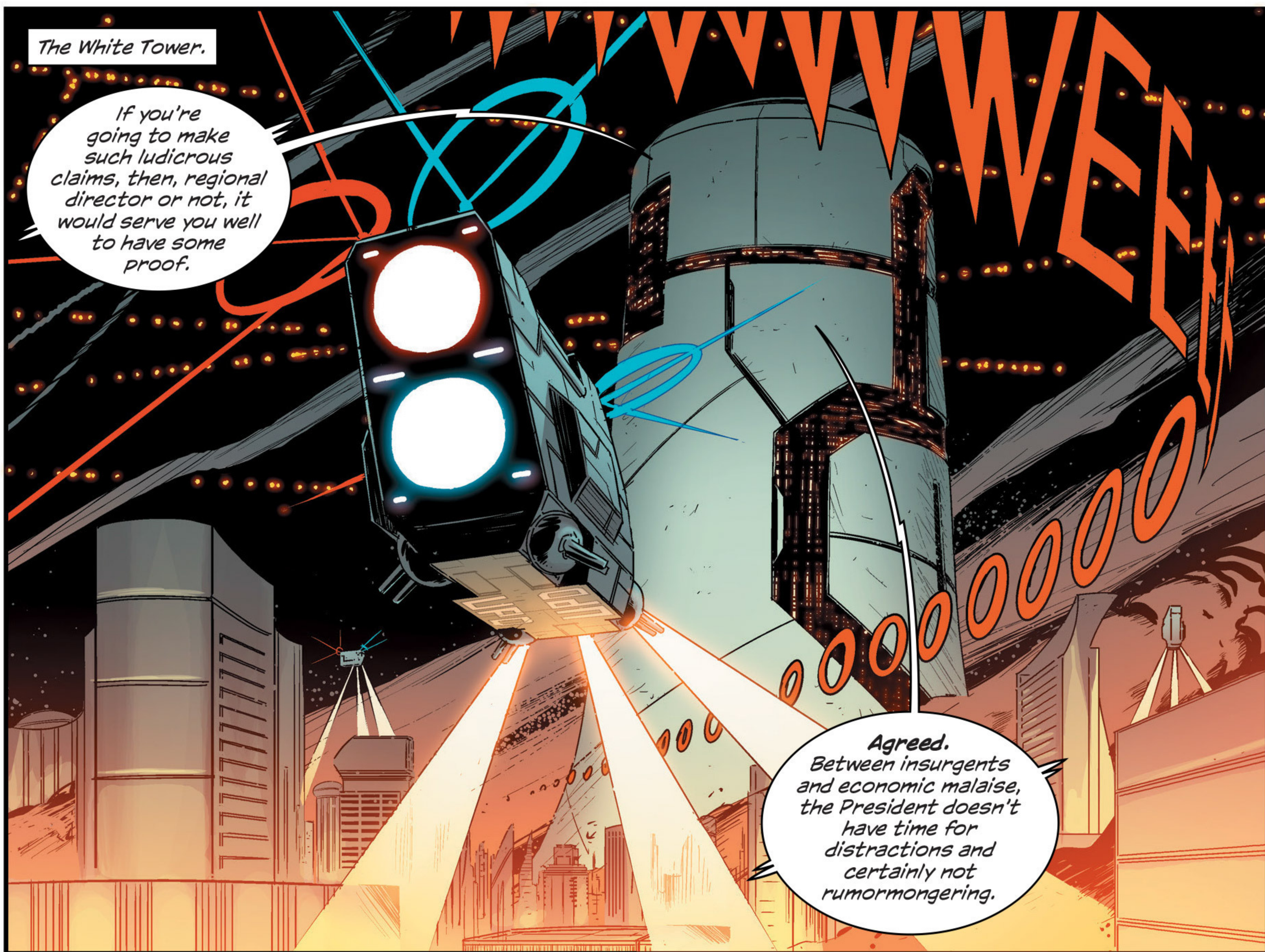
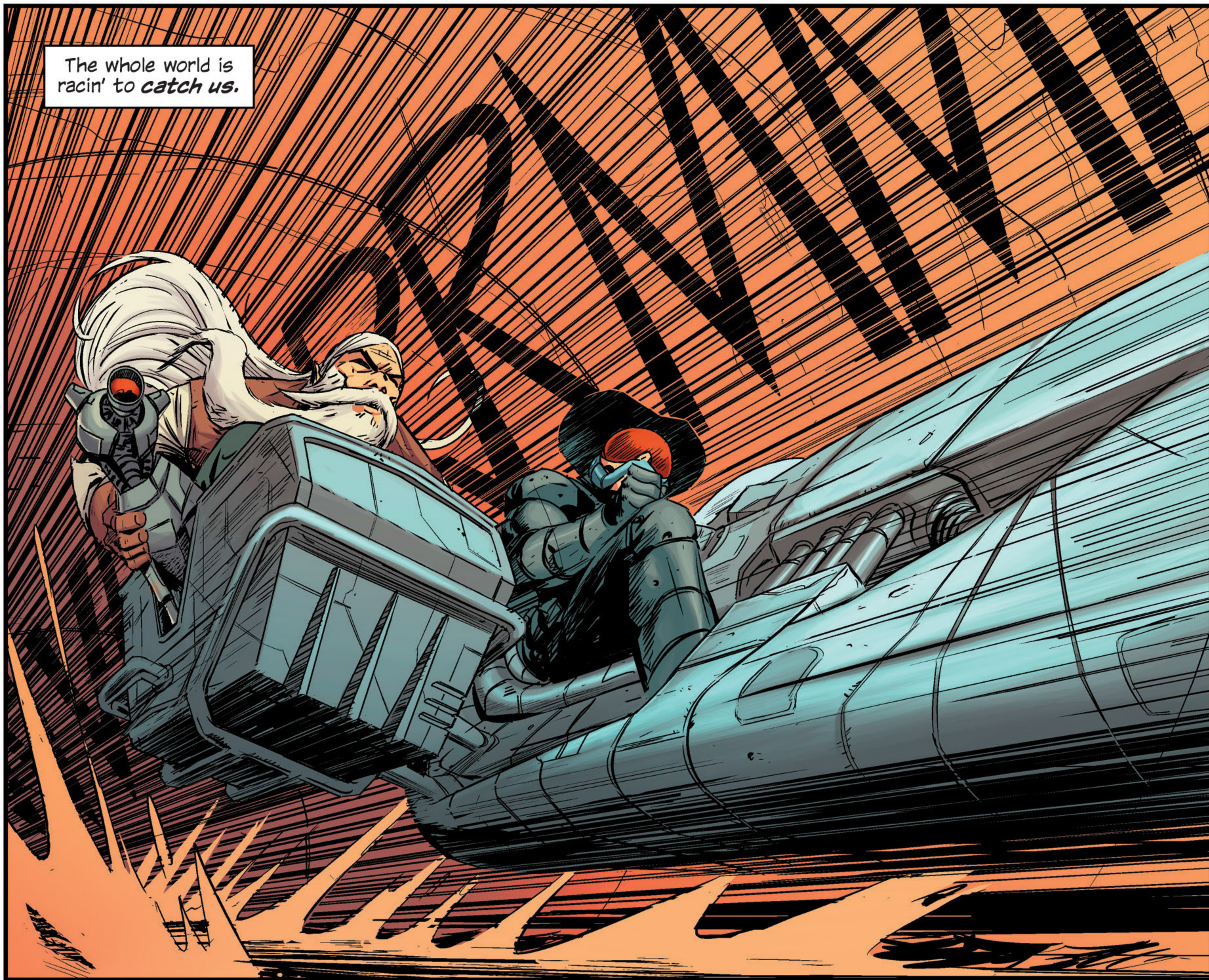




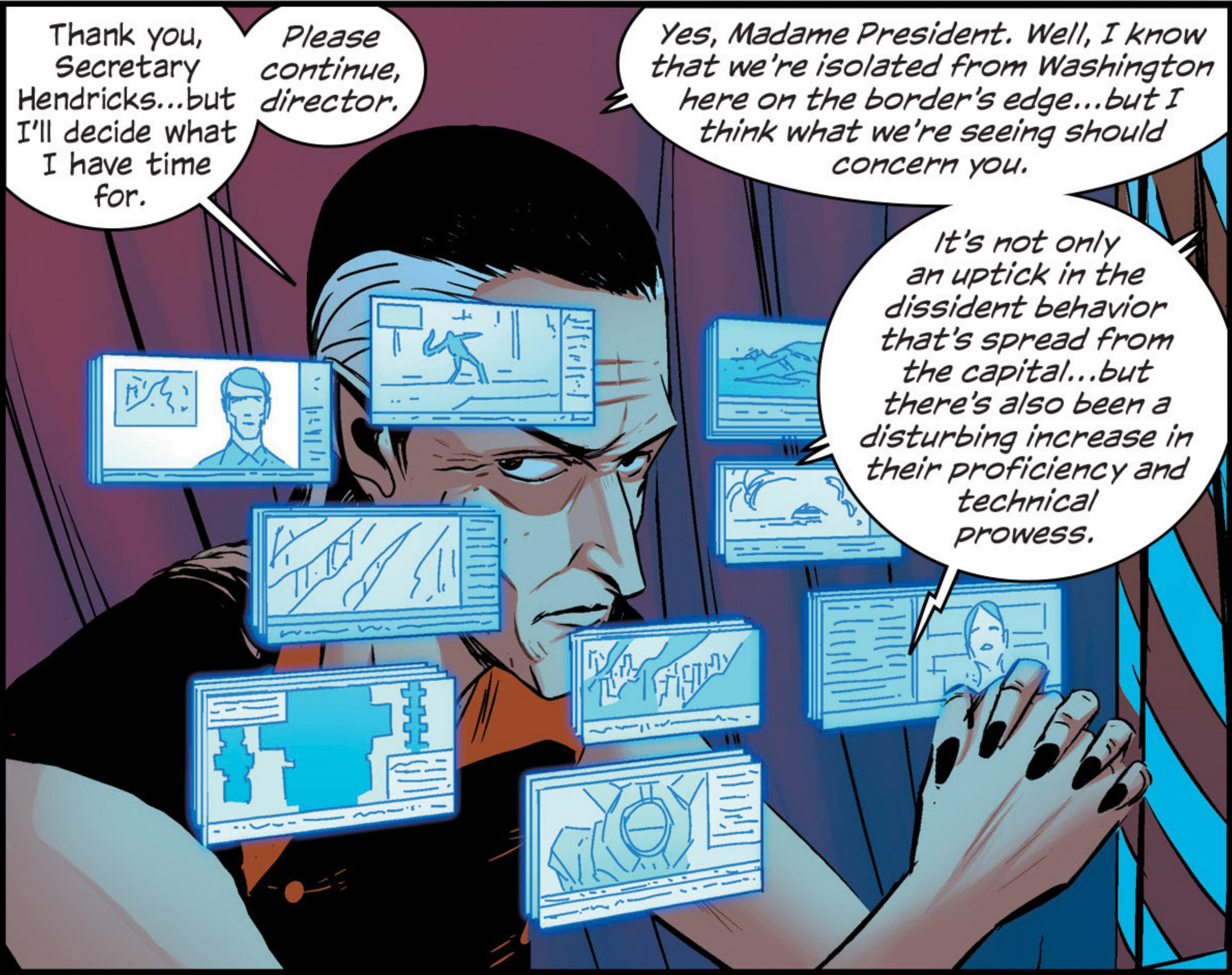












Thank you, Secretary Hendricks...but I'll decide what I have time for.

Please continue, director.

Yes, Madame President. Well, I know that we're isolated from Washington here on the border's edge...but I think what we're seeing should concern you.

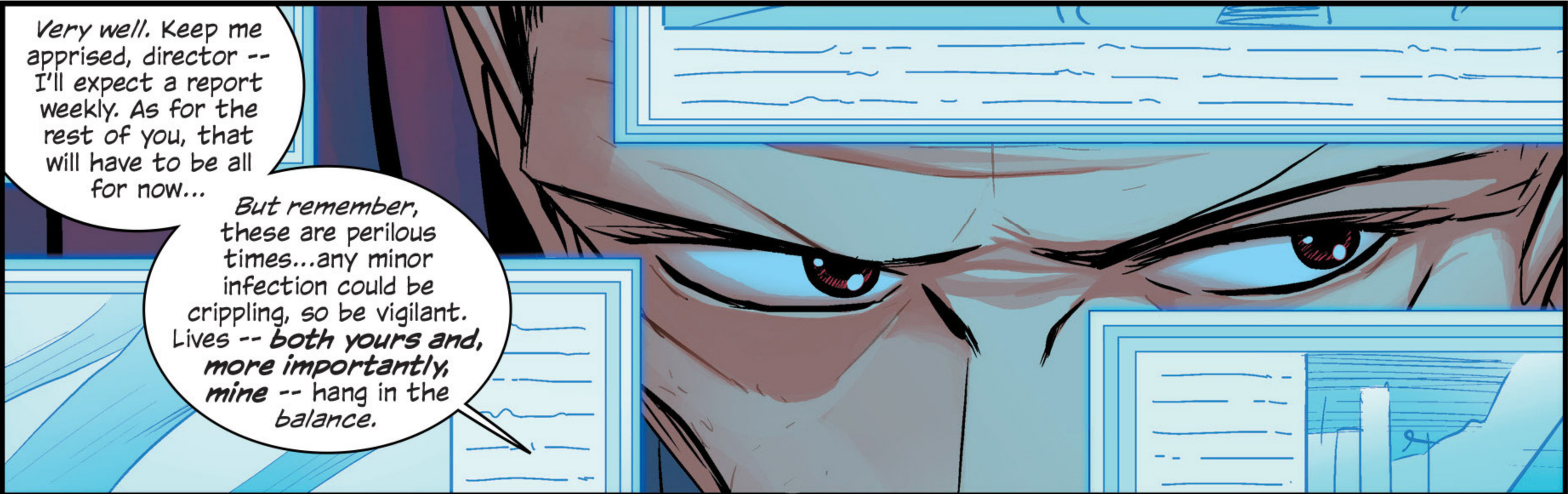
It's not only an uptick in the dissident behavior that's spread from the capital...but there's also been a disturbing increase in their proficiency and technical prowess.



I think we're talking about a foreign government pumping assets into their organization.

If you want to call dirty children throwing a tantrum an organization, then yes...perhaps it is a concern.

Sowing seeds of dissent... how petty.



Very well. Keep me apprised, director -- I'll expect a report weekly. As for the rest of you, that will have to be all for now...

But remember, these are perilous times...any minor infection could be crippling, so be vigilant. Lives -- **both yours and, more importantly, mine** -- hang in the balance.



Thank you.

BLIP



Ahem!

Yes? What is it, Doma?

And what is that you're carrying?



Our latest diplomatic exchange with **the Nation**.





How fares  
the good  
Ambassador's  
exercise in  
*futility*?

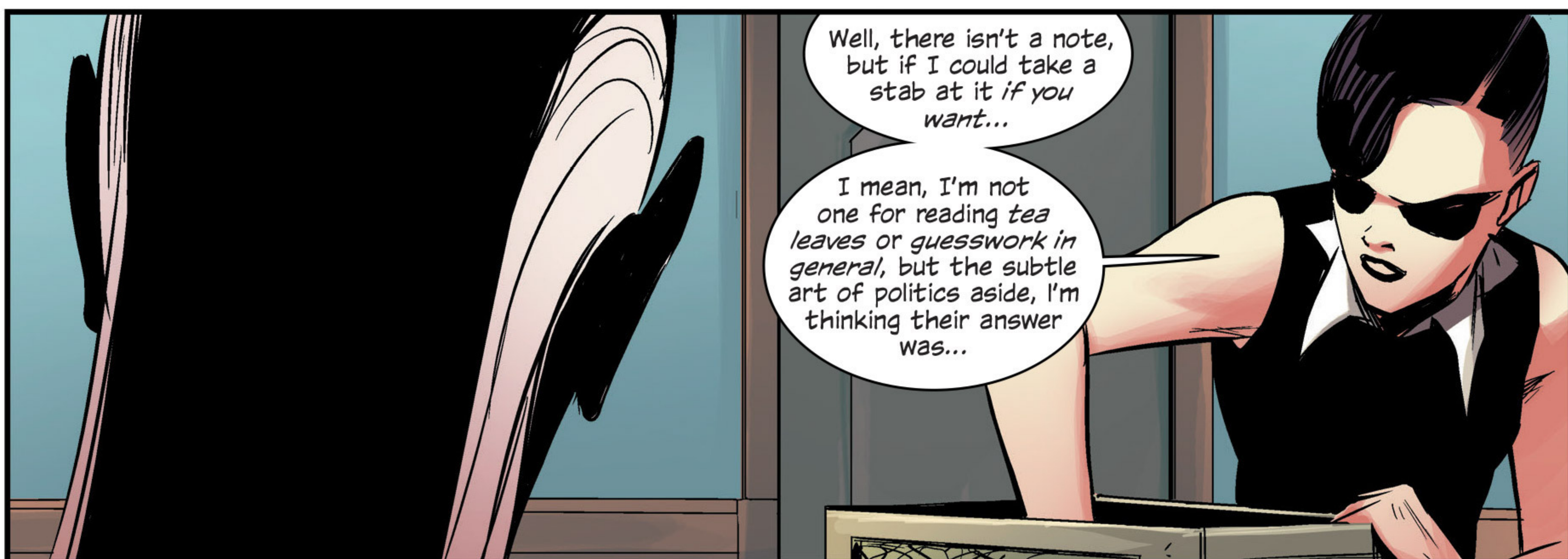
Difficult  
to say for  
sure.

One  
doesn't  
like to  
assume.



I sent the man out there to  
sue for peace with the  
now-rabid Endless Nation, how  
hard could it be to get  
an answer?

Or to get  
a straight one  
out of you,  
*for that  
matter.*



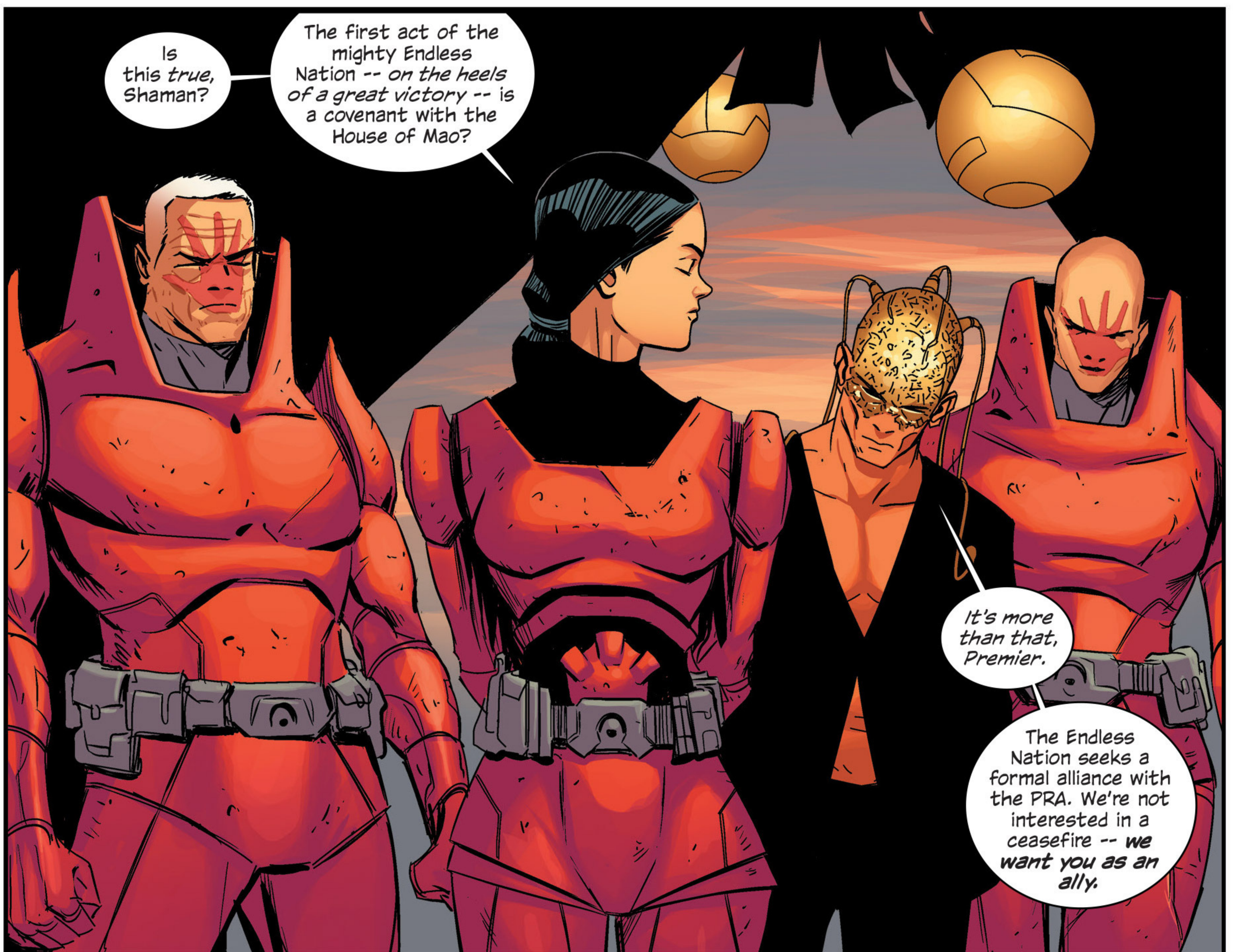
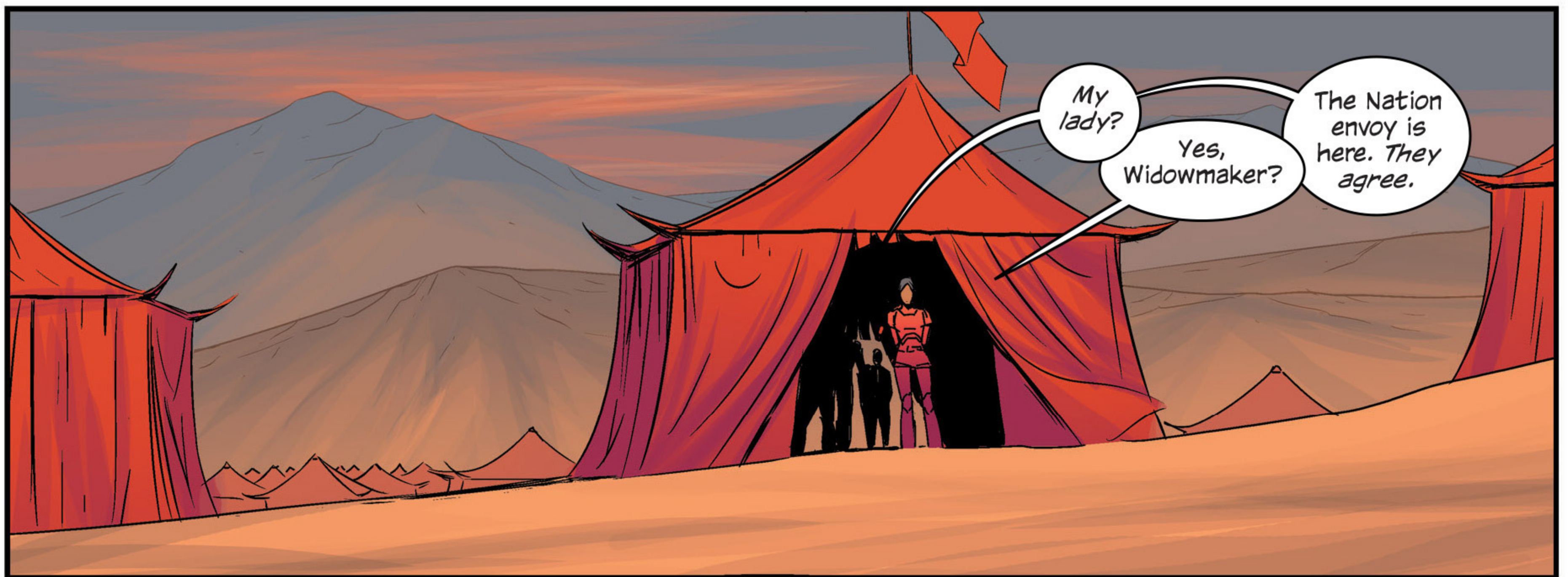
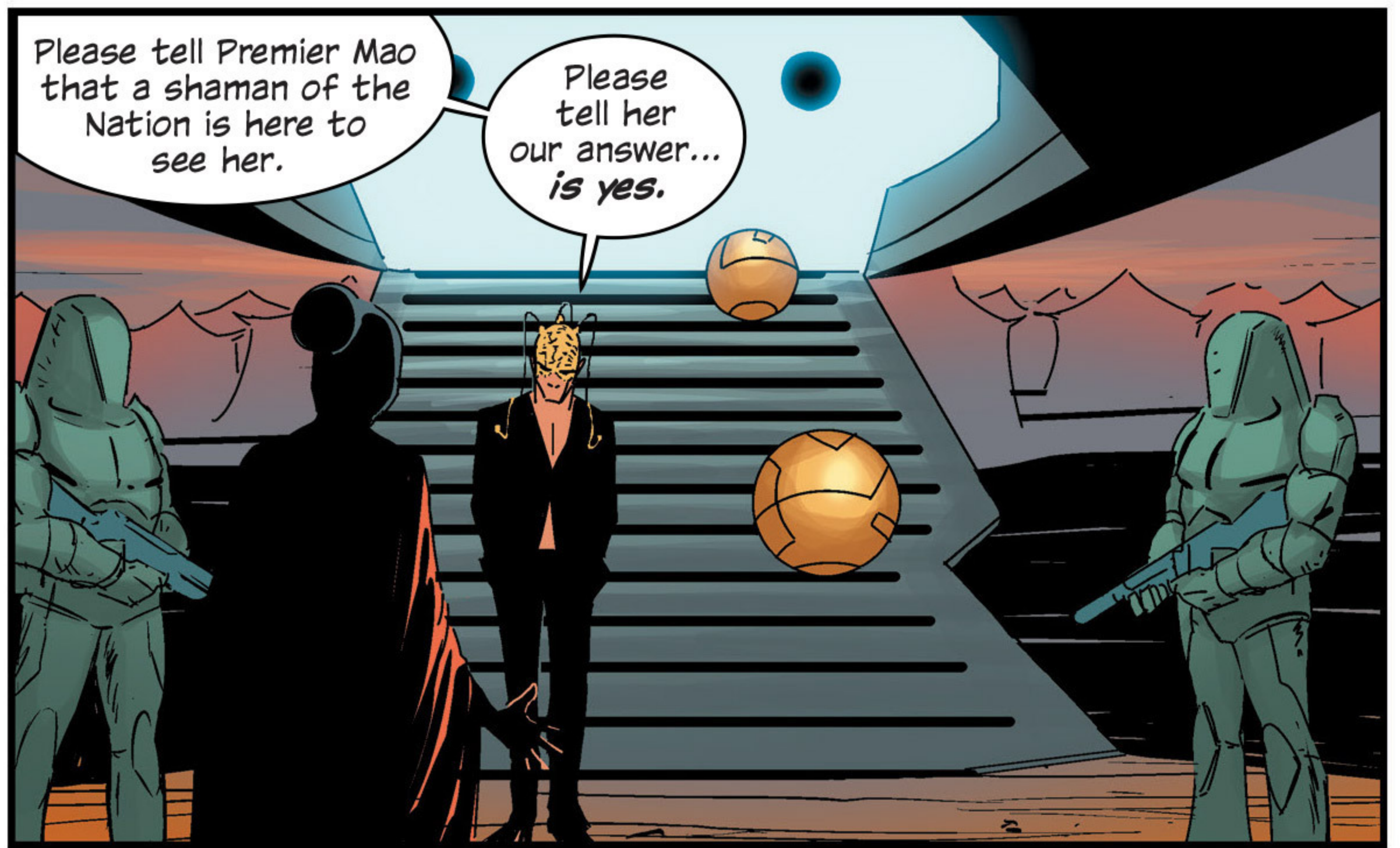
Well, there isn't a note,  
but if I could take a  
stab at it if you  
*want...*

I mean, I'm not  
one for reading *tea  
leaves* or *guesswork* in  
*general*, but the subtle  
art of politics aside, I'm  
thinking their answer  
was...

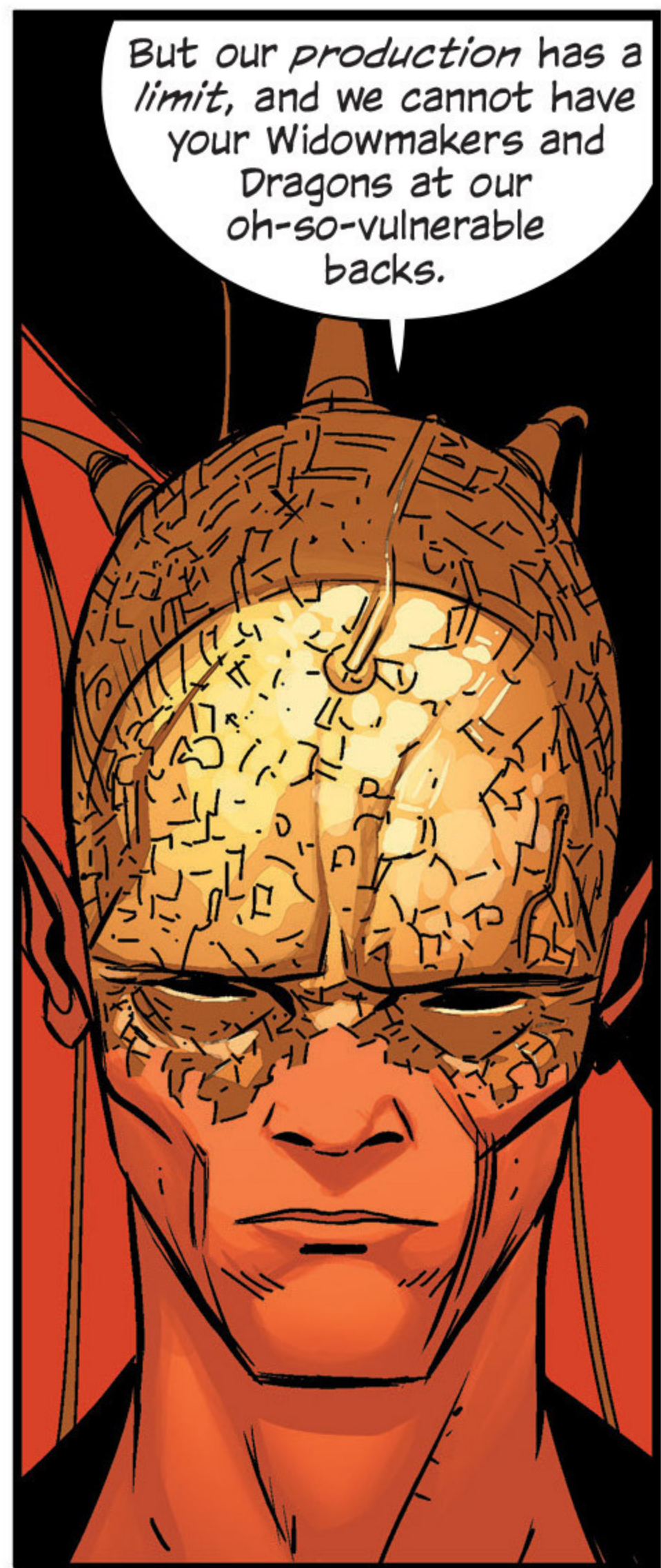
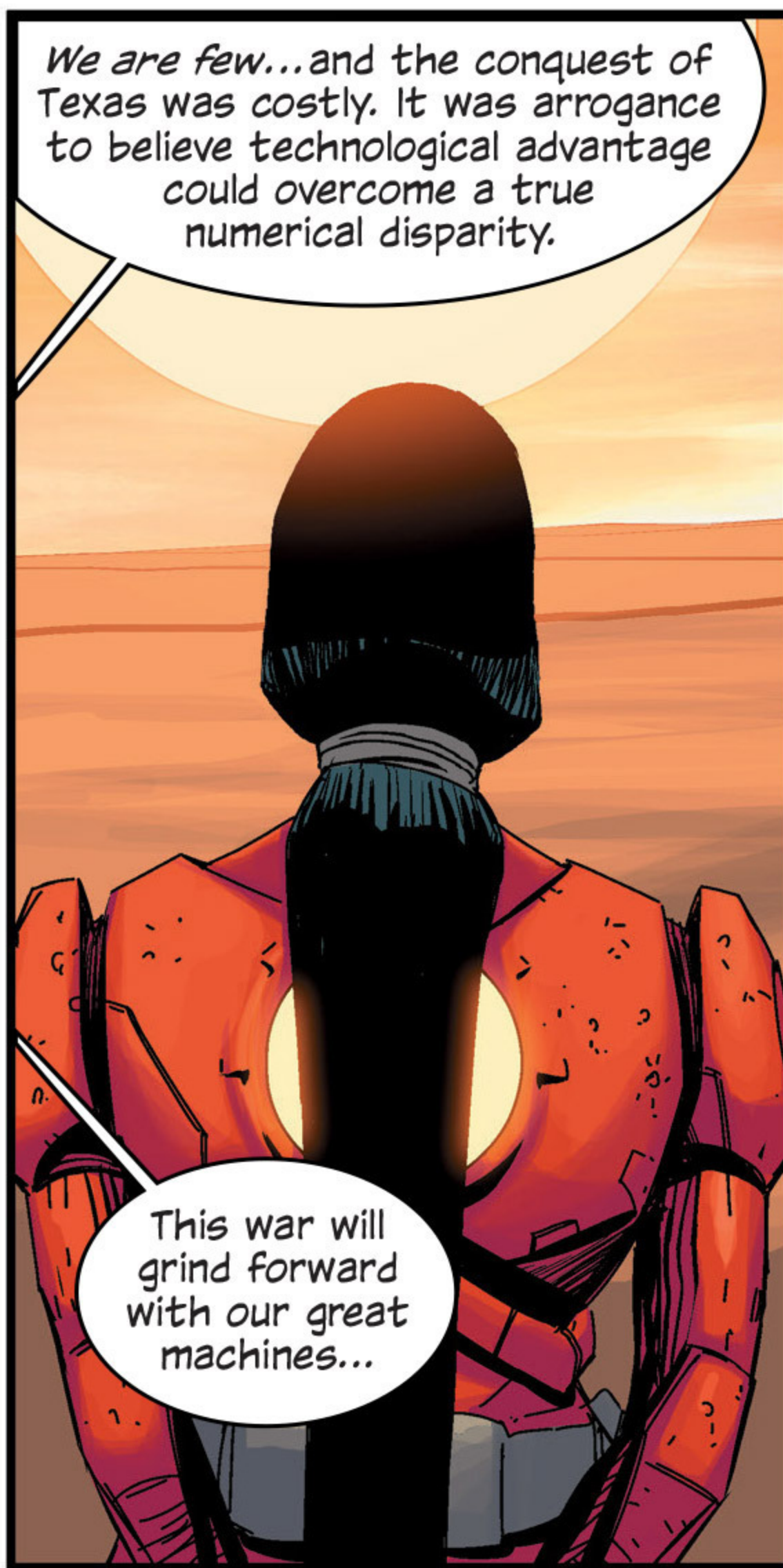
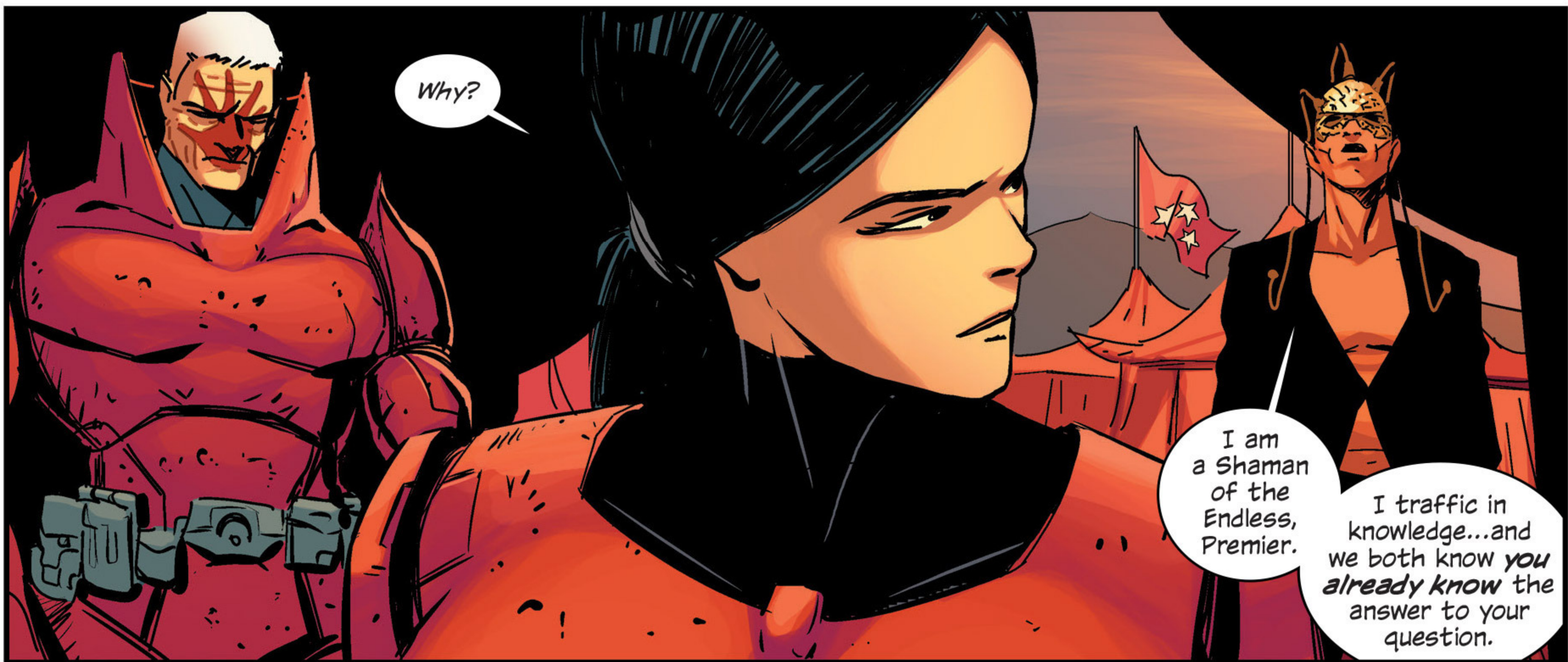
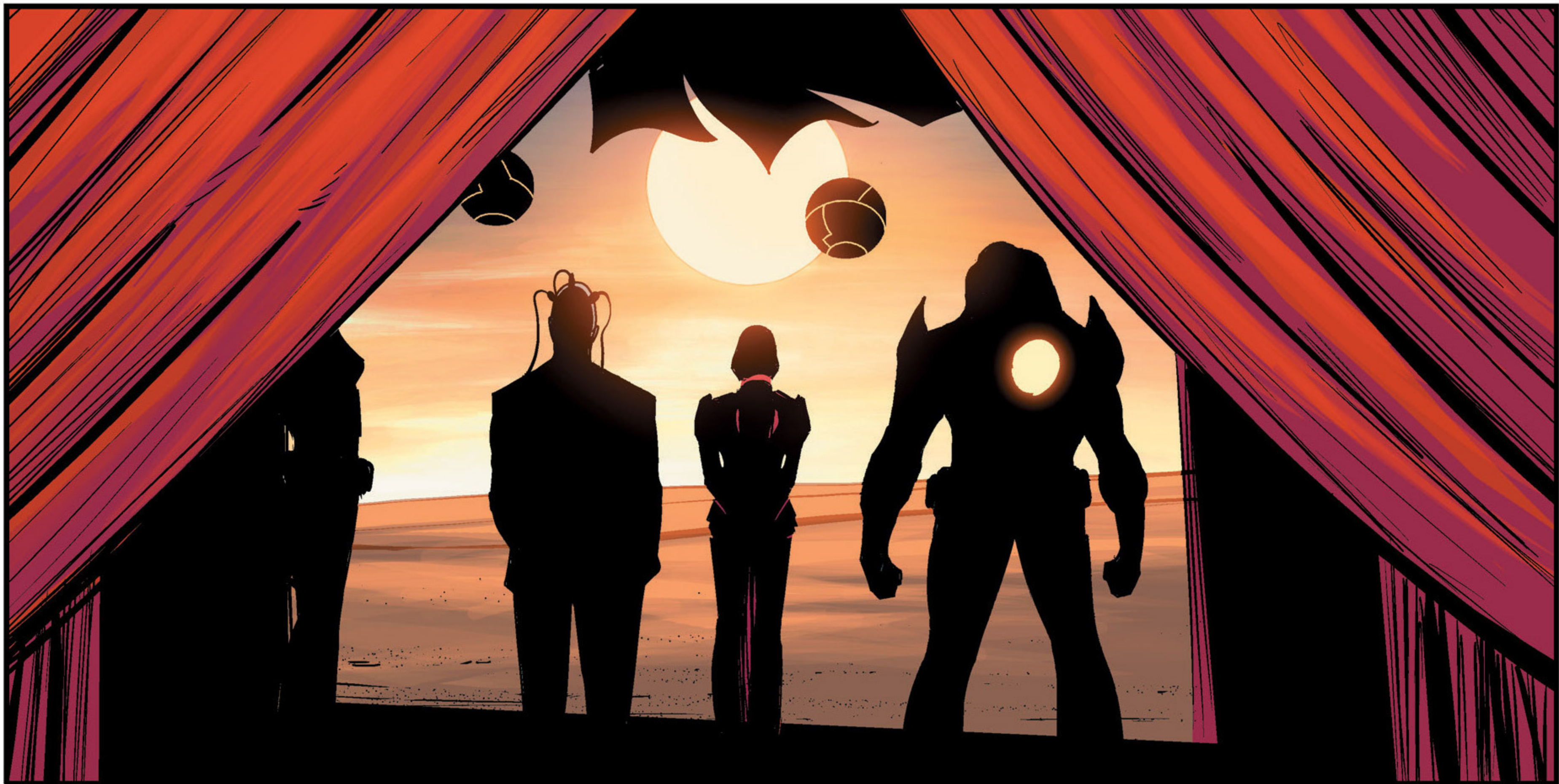


No.





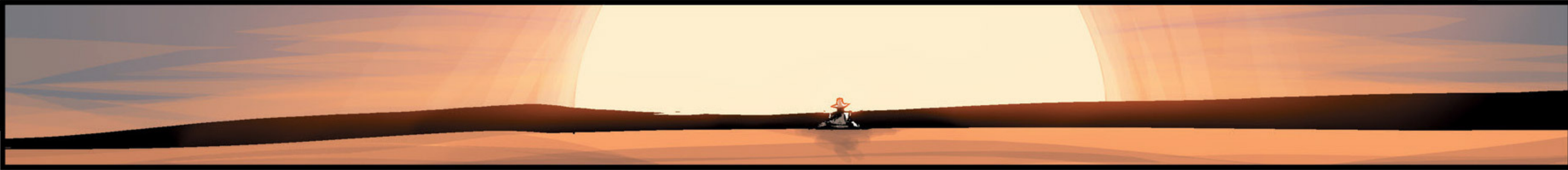








We are not weak, but we would be fools to proceed without assurances from your great house.



Why have you returned, husband?

And if I agree?

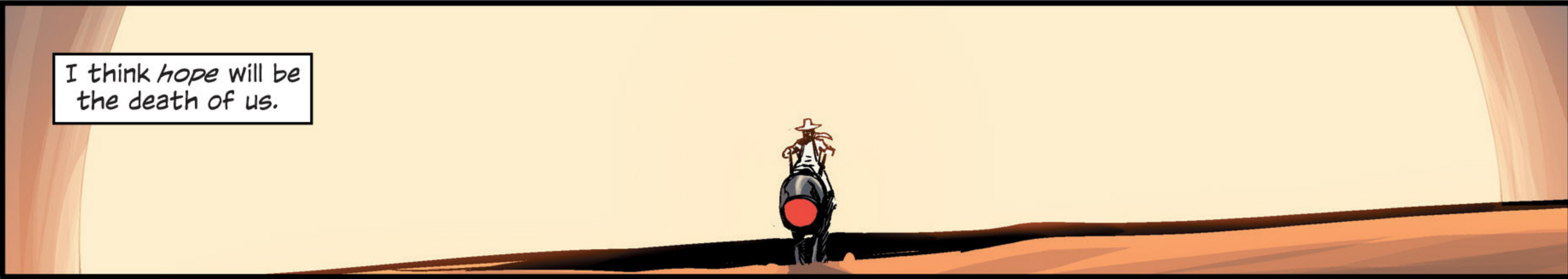


We move quickly -- formalize everything tomorrow...then move forward together, win this war and restore order to our lands.

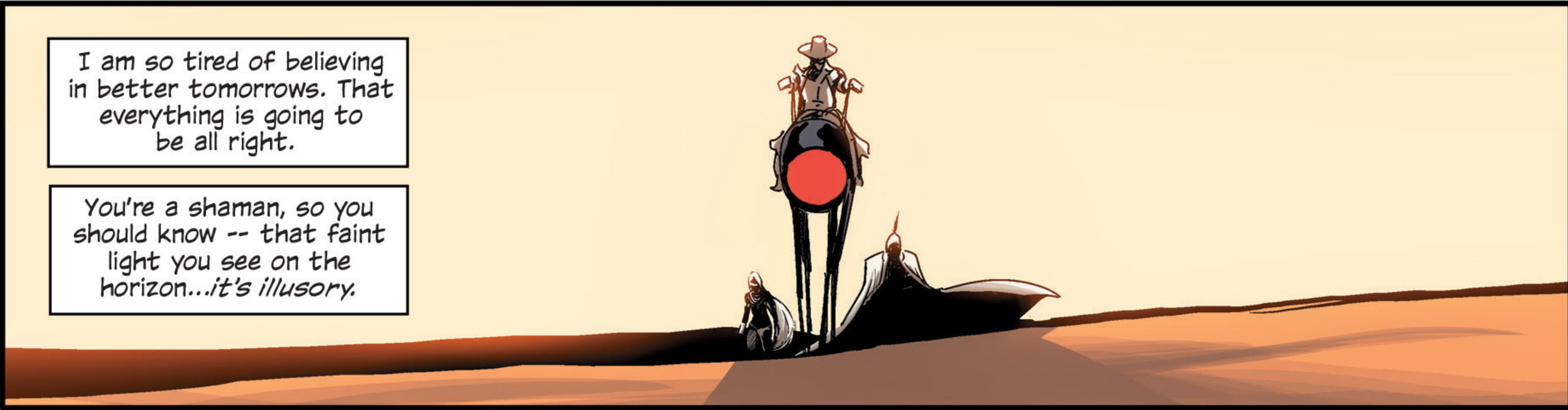
If you *agree*, it means there is a rising hope on the horizon.



Hope?



I think *hope* will be the death of us.



I am so tired of believing in better tomorrows. That everything is going to be all right.

You're a shaman, so you should know -- that faint light you see on the horizon...it's *illusory*.



Because the sun is not *rising*.

The sun... she is *setting*.





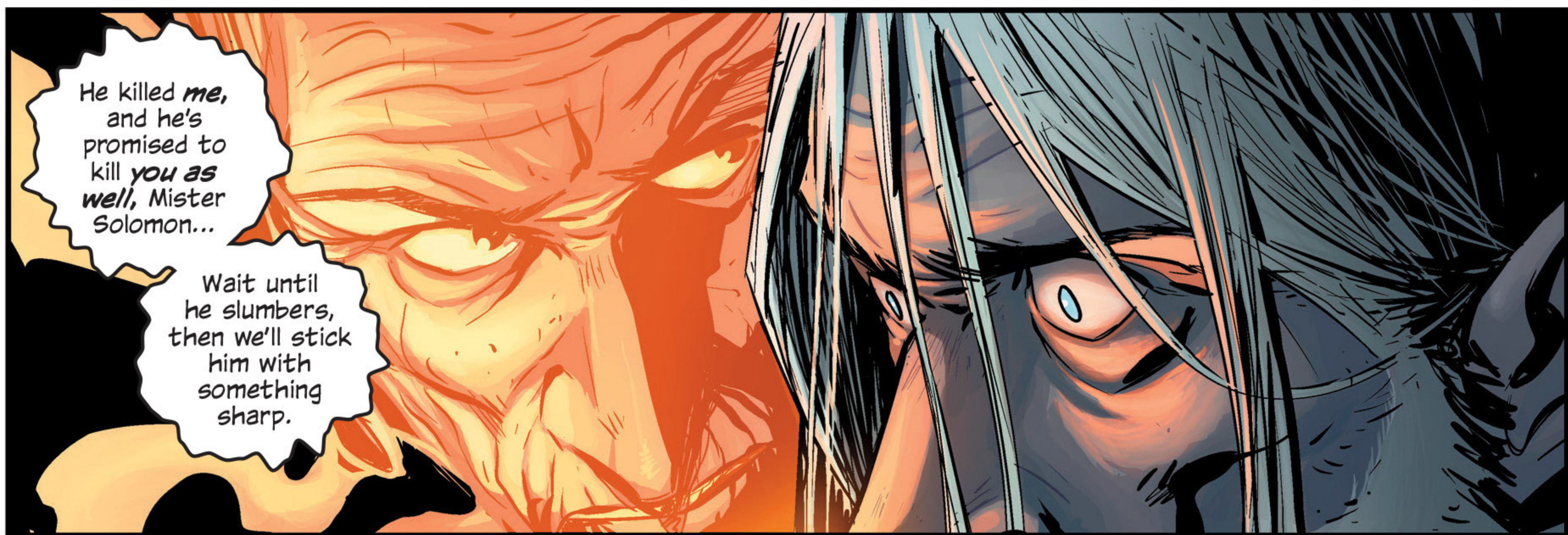
Got enough food for a week. Water's gonna be a problem.

We'll wait 'em out as long as we can, but if we have to fight our way clear, I'll need you *at your best*, Bel.



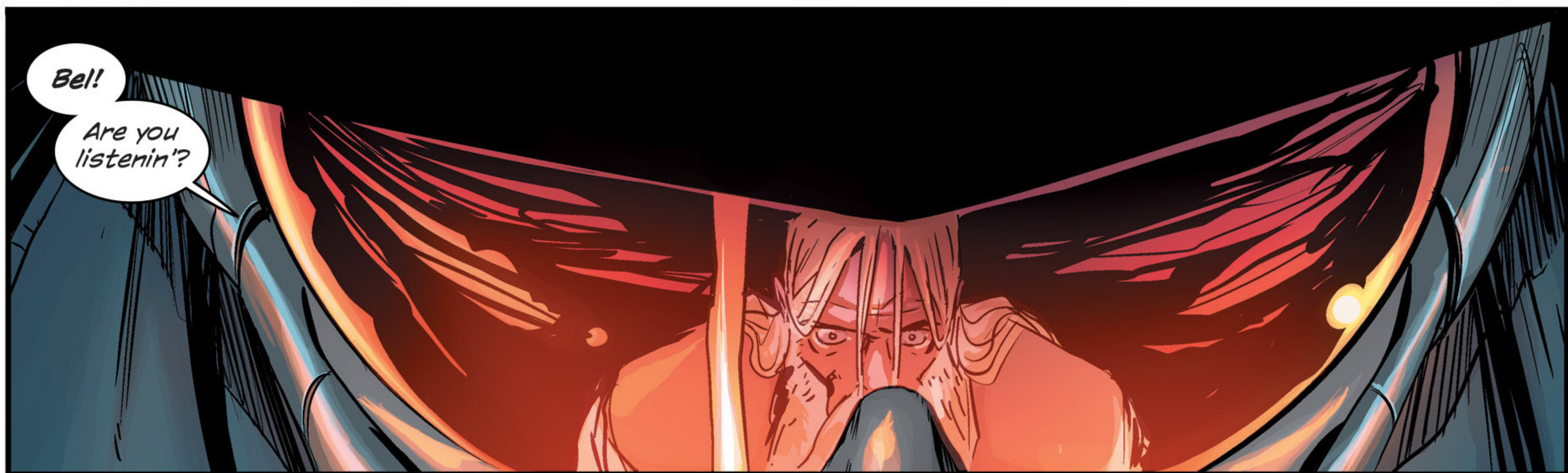
Bel?

Are you listenin' to me?



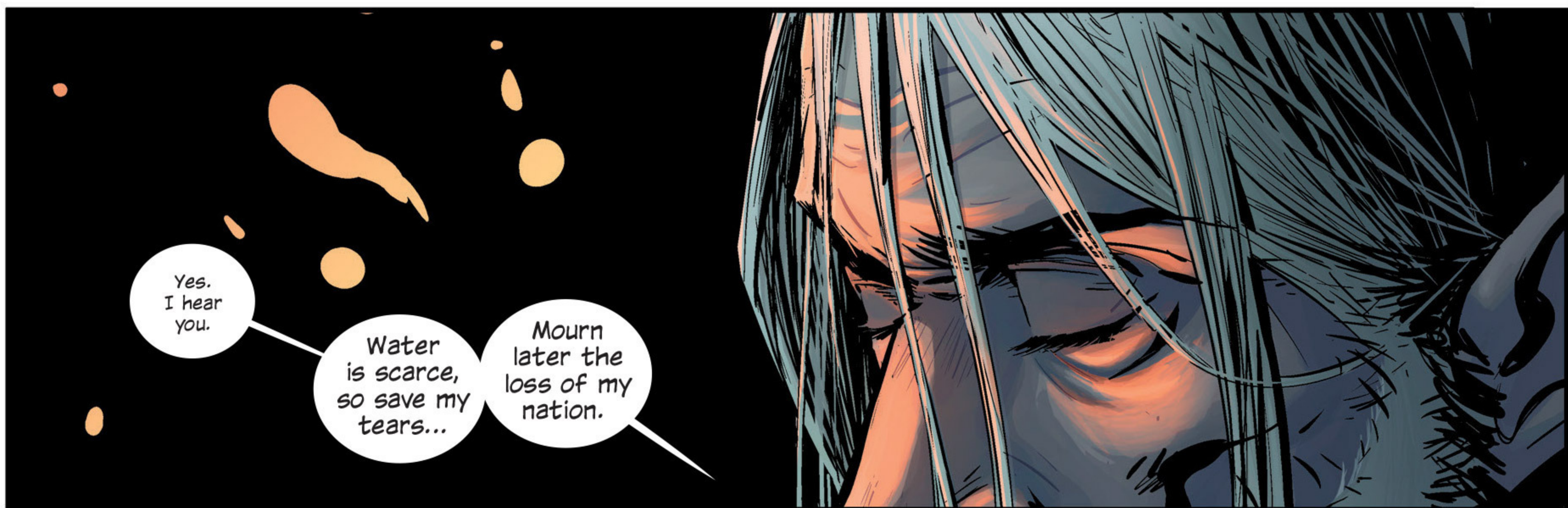
He killed *me*, and he's promised to kill *you as well*, Mister Solomon...

Wait until he slumbers, then we'll stick him with something sharp.



Bel!

Are you listenin'?



Yes. I hear you.

Water is scarce, so save my tears...

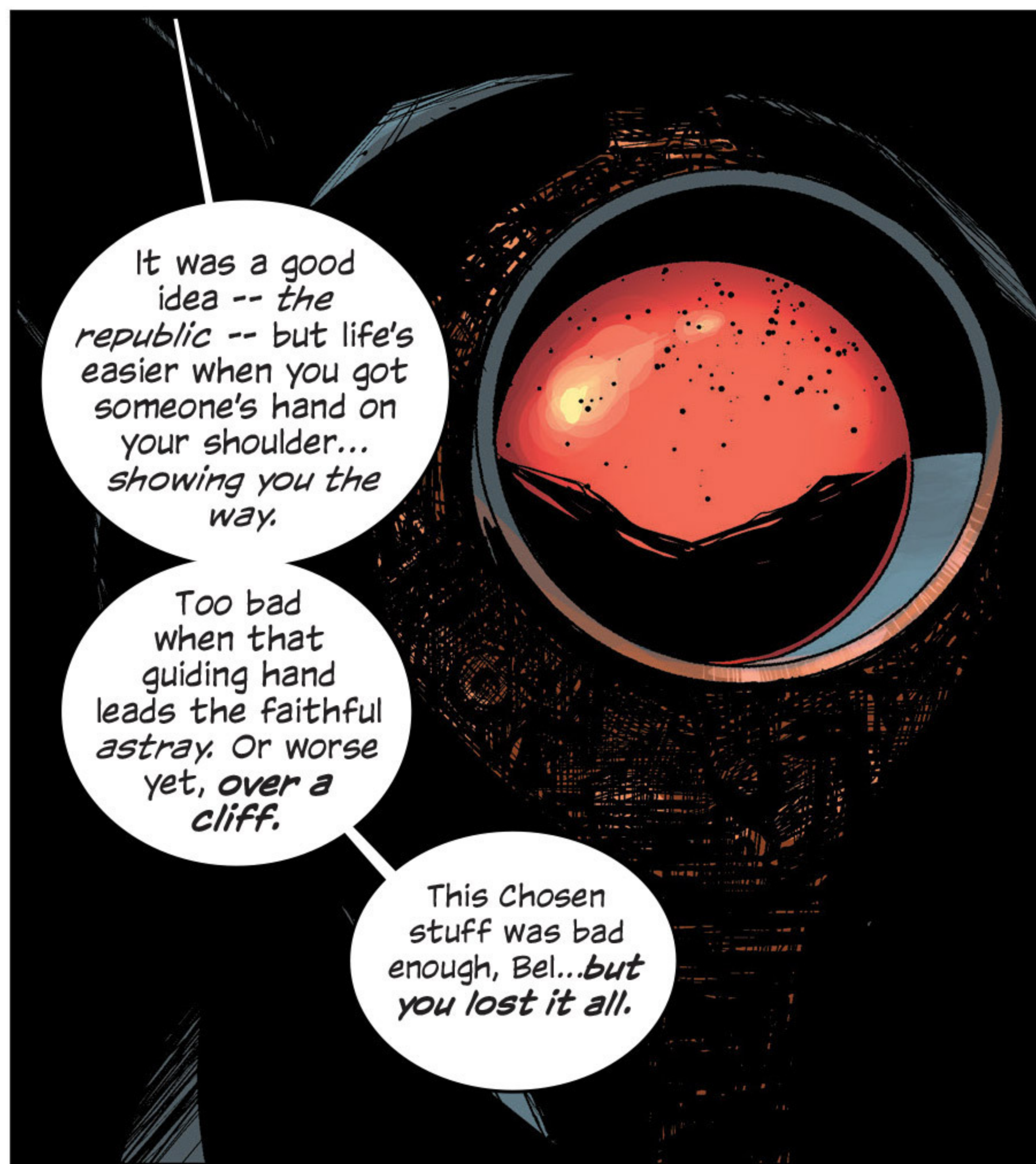
Mourn later the loss of my nation.





Where was I born, Bel? Did I not wear the star? *It's not your nation...*

*It never was. It was the people's.*



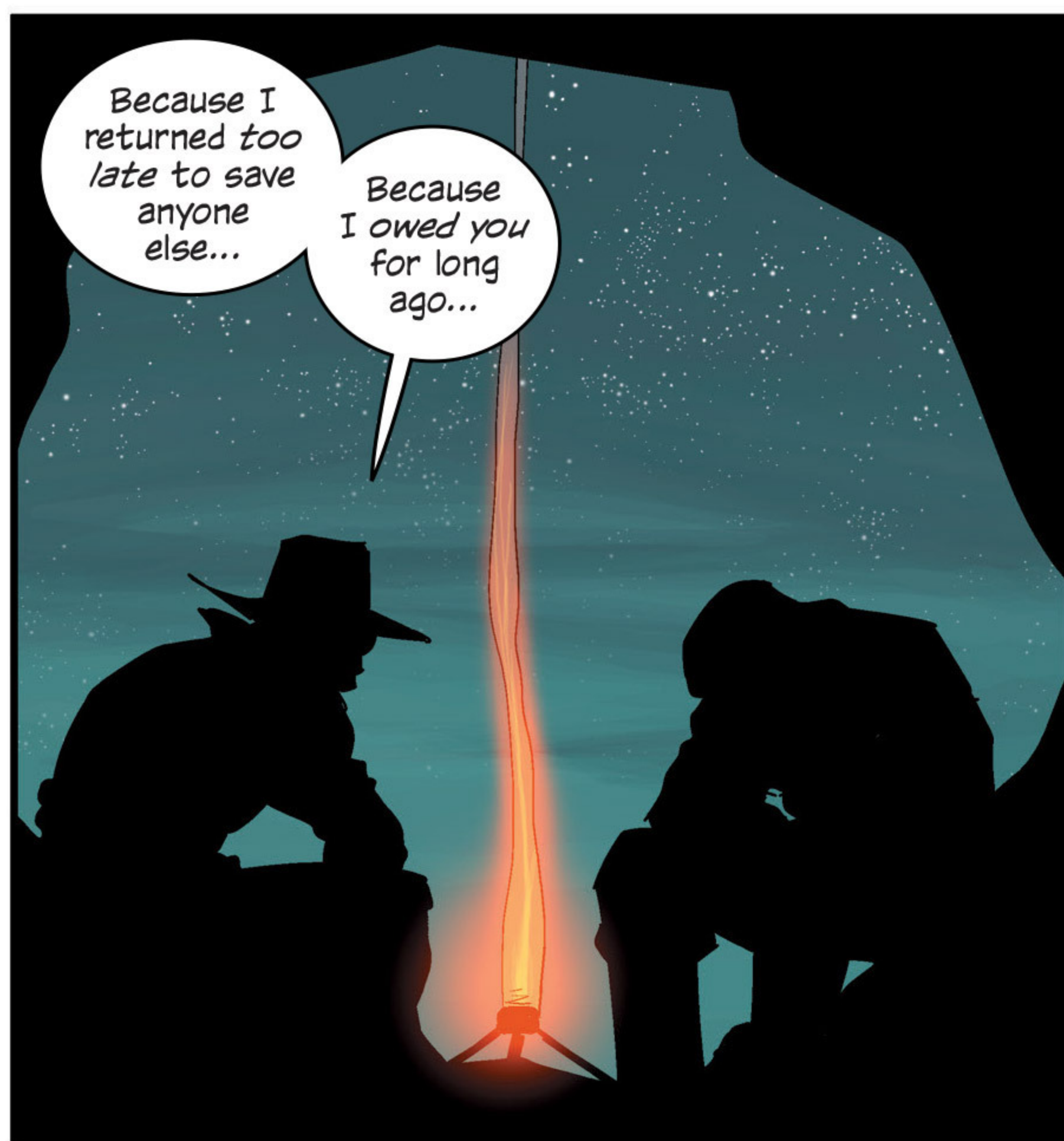
It was a good idea -- *the republic* -- but life's easier when you got someone's hand on your shoulder... *showing you the way.*

Too bad when that guiding hand leads the faithful astray. Or worse yet, *over a cliff.*

This Chosen stuff was bad enough, Bel...*but you lost it all.*



Why'd you save me, Thomas?



Because I returned *too late* to save anyone else...

Because I owed you for long ago...



*And because I need you. As I got a job to finish, and it's one I've barely started.*



*That still include me?*





Yeah.  
Sure  
does.

Just look  
at what you  
Chosen started.  
*Look where  
we are.*

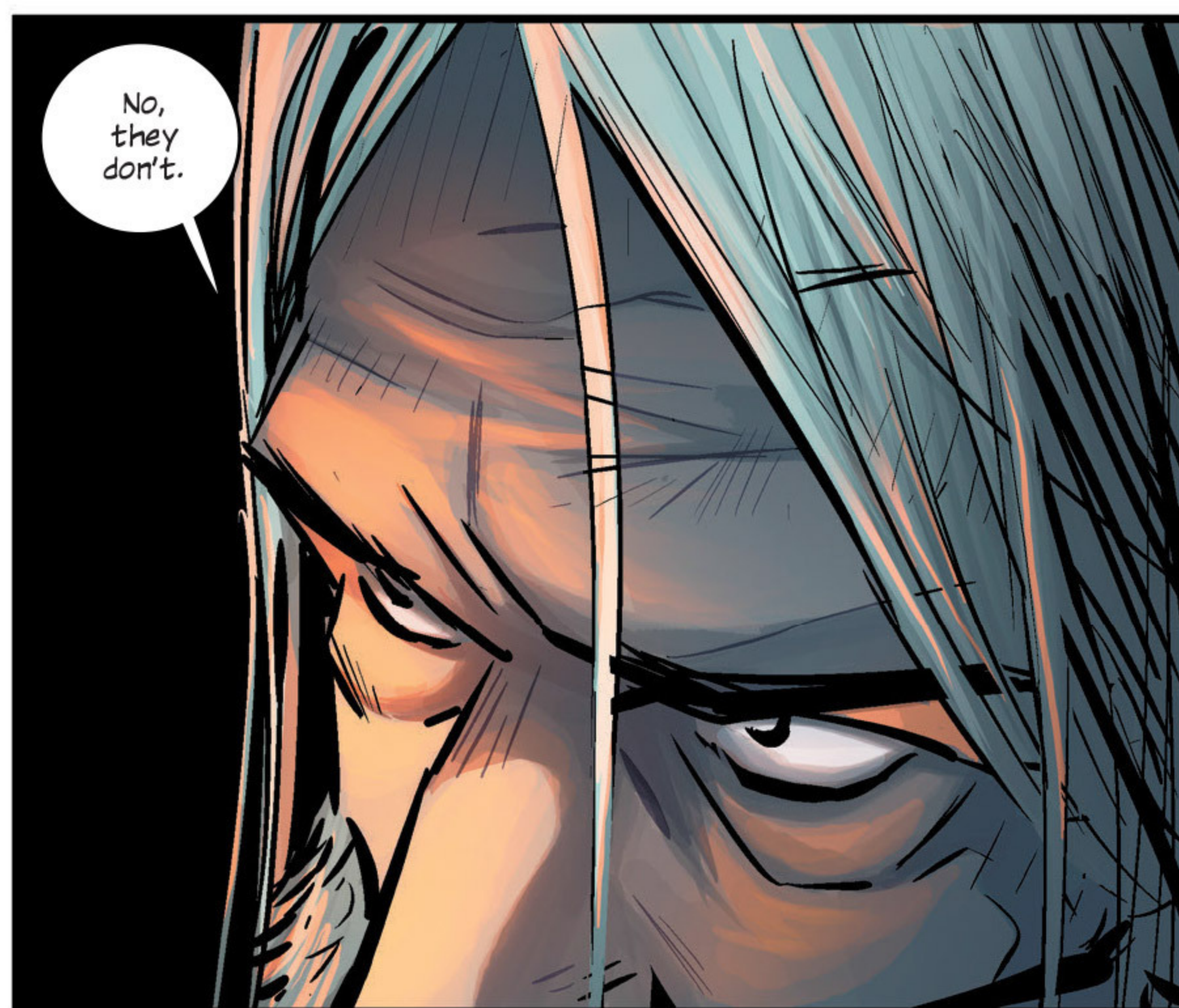
But, if I'm bein'  
honest, at least  
it does clear all the  
fog from our eyes.  
*Doesn't it?*

What  
do you  
mean?

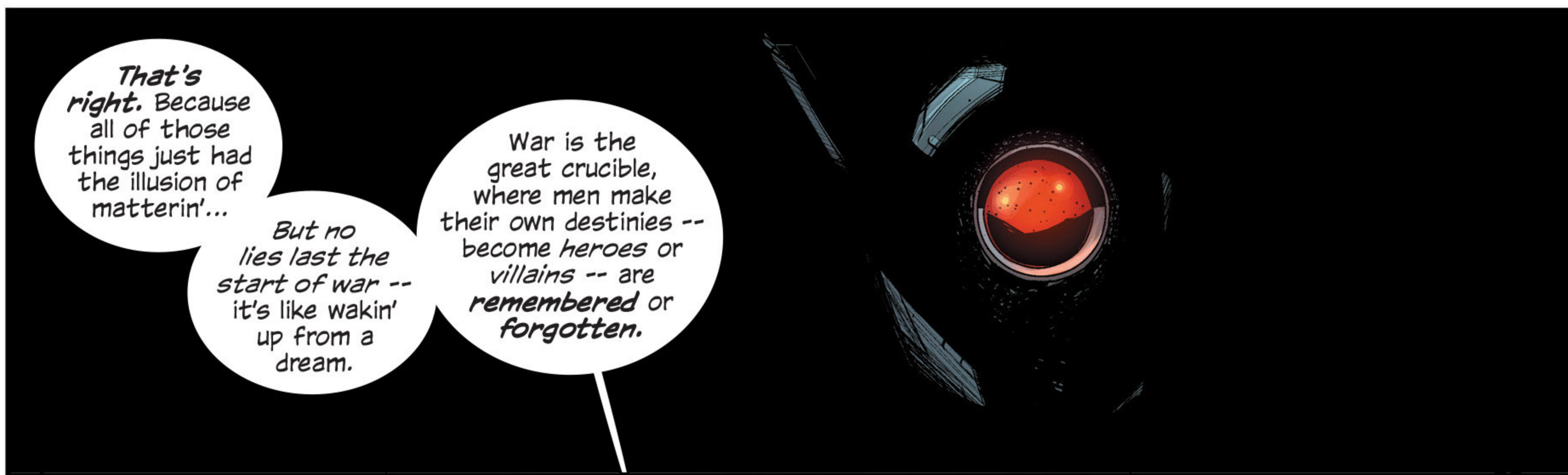


Think about all the foolishness  
you were obsessin' over a year  
ago. Money, possessions, *the  
goddamn weather...*

All the things  
that seemed to  
matter so much --  
we'll they don't  
matter at all now,  
*do they?*



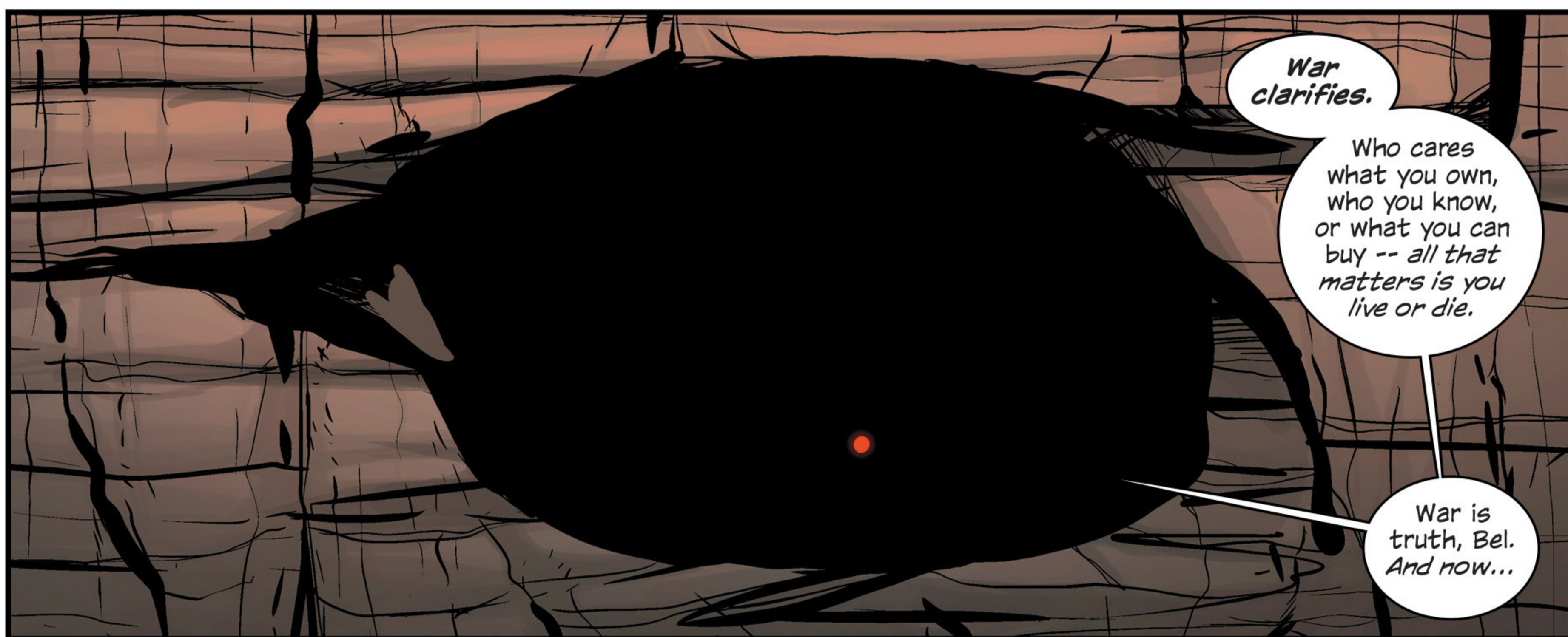
No,  
they  
don't.



*That's  
right.* Because  
all of those  
things just had  
the illusion of  
macterin'...

*But no  
lies last the  
start of war --  
it's like wakin'  
up from a  
dream.*

War is the  
great crucible,  
where men make  
their own destinies --  
become heroes or  
villains -- are  
*remembered or  
forgotten.*



*War  
clarifies.*

Who cares  
what you own,  
who you know,  
or what you can  
buy -- *all that  
matters is you  
live or die.*

War is  
truth, Bel.  
*And now...*



War's all we got.









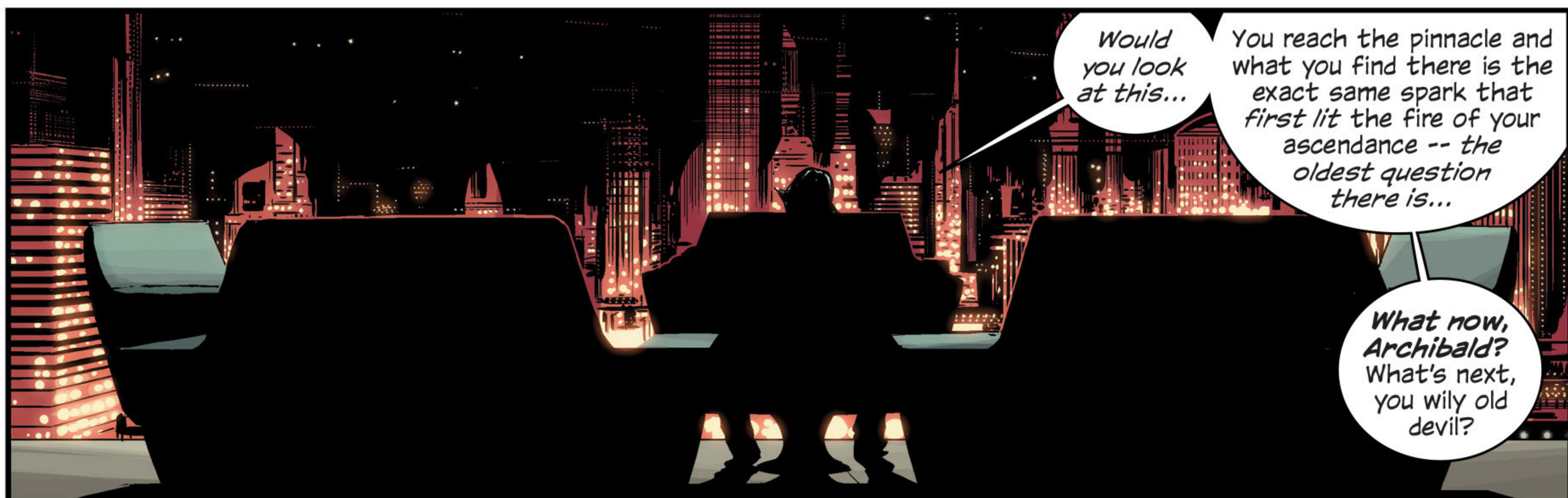
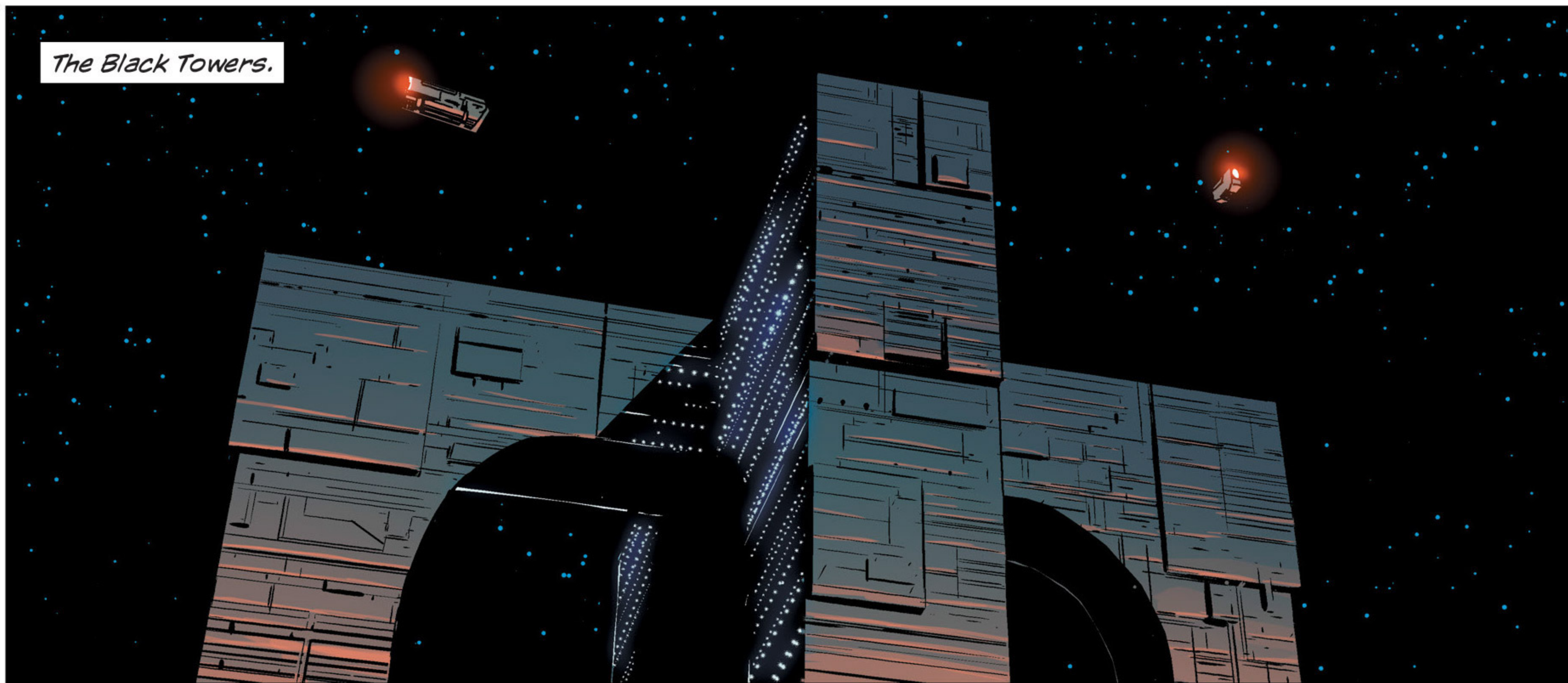
LOOK WHAT THEY **GIVE YOU.**

JUST SO THEY CAN **TAKE IT  
AWAY.**





The Black Towers.



Would  
you look  
at this...

You reach the pinnacle and  
what you find there is the  
exact same spark that  
first lit the fire of your  
ascendence -- the  
oldest question  
there is...

What now,  
Archibald?  
What's next,  
you wily old  
devil?



Ssssomething  
gained,  
sssomething  
earned...

Perhapsss  
revenge on  
those who've  
ssspurned?

Well, yes...I am  
a petty, vain man  
who both **keeps** and  
**settles** scores, but  
what we have here is  
a conundrum.

You see,  
today a man  
sits...**king of the**  
**mountain**. He  
looks down at the  
base of it, and  
what does he  
**see**?

All his **enemies**  
with their eyes so  
fixed on others of  
like station and kind  
that they've stopped  
**looking up at the**  
**peak**.

I'm not sure  
the move to  
make isn't just  
**enjoying the**  
**view**.

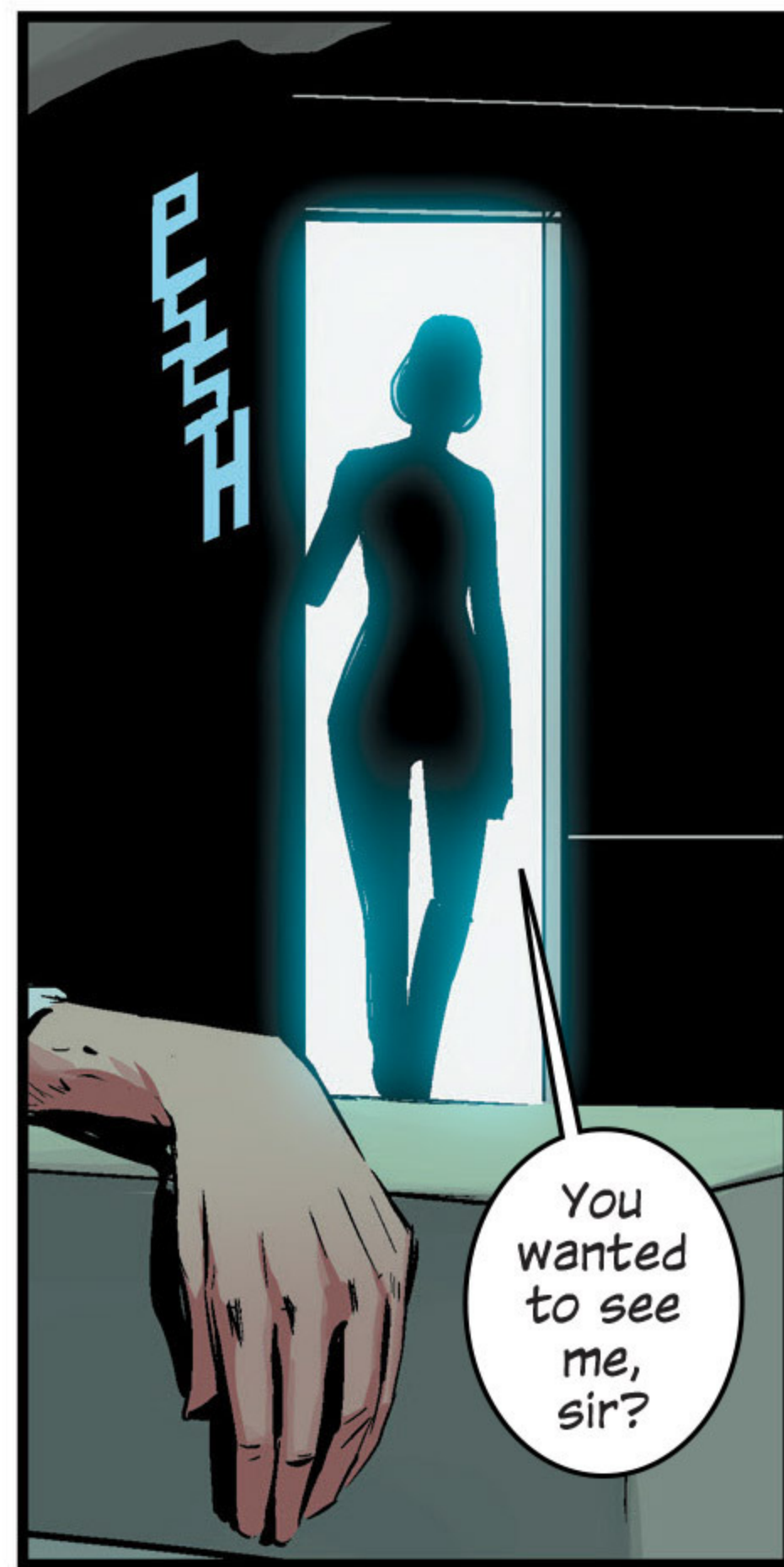




Mister President.  
Chief of Staff Lee  
has arrived.  
Should I send  
her in?



You may  
proceed.



You  
wanted  
to see  
me,  
sir?



Yes, Constance.  
I most certainly  
did.

Chief of Staff --  
my old position, your  
new one -- is a pivotal  
job to our Confederacy.  
It's your responsibility  
to give counsel to  
the President.

So tell  
me how the  
boots fit.

Perfectly.

You know,  
your mother --  
**my dear sister** --  
wanted me to name one  
of your two brothers  
to the position.

She was  
beyond a bit  
flummoxed that I  
passed over a Governor  
and a Senator for an  
academic who just  
so happened to be  
her sweet baby girl.

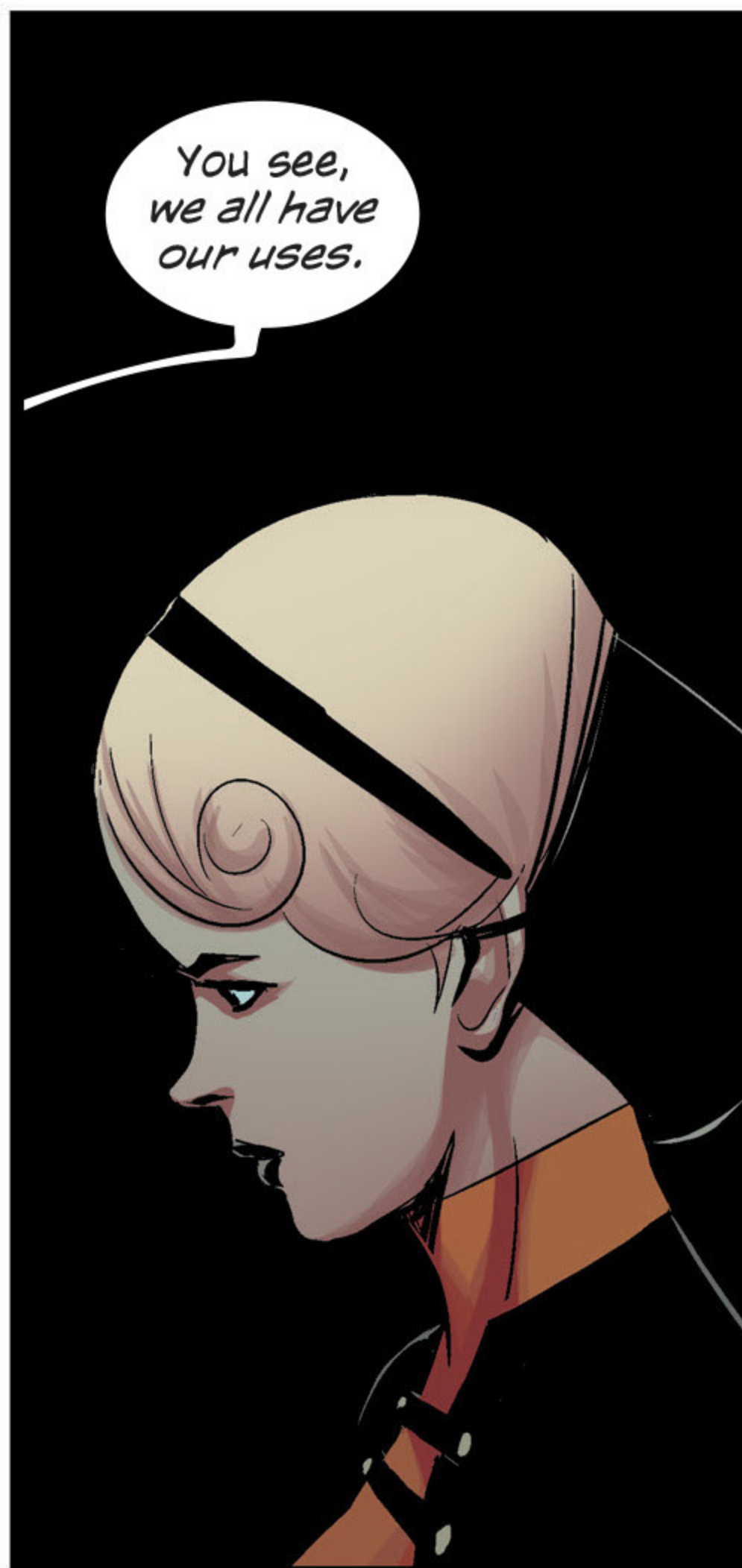
Do you  
know why  
I did  
that?



Because my  
brothers are  
idiots,  
Uncle.

Now, now,  
dear. The dumb  
are like kindling  
for the fire.

So if it's  
a fire you want,  
any idiot will  
suffice...



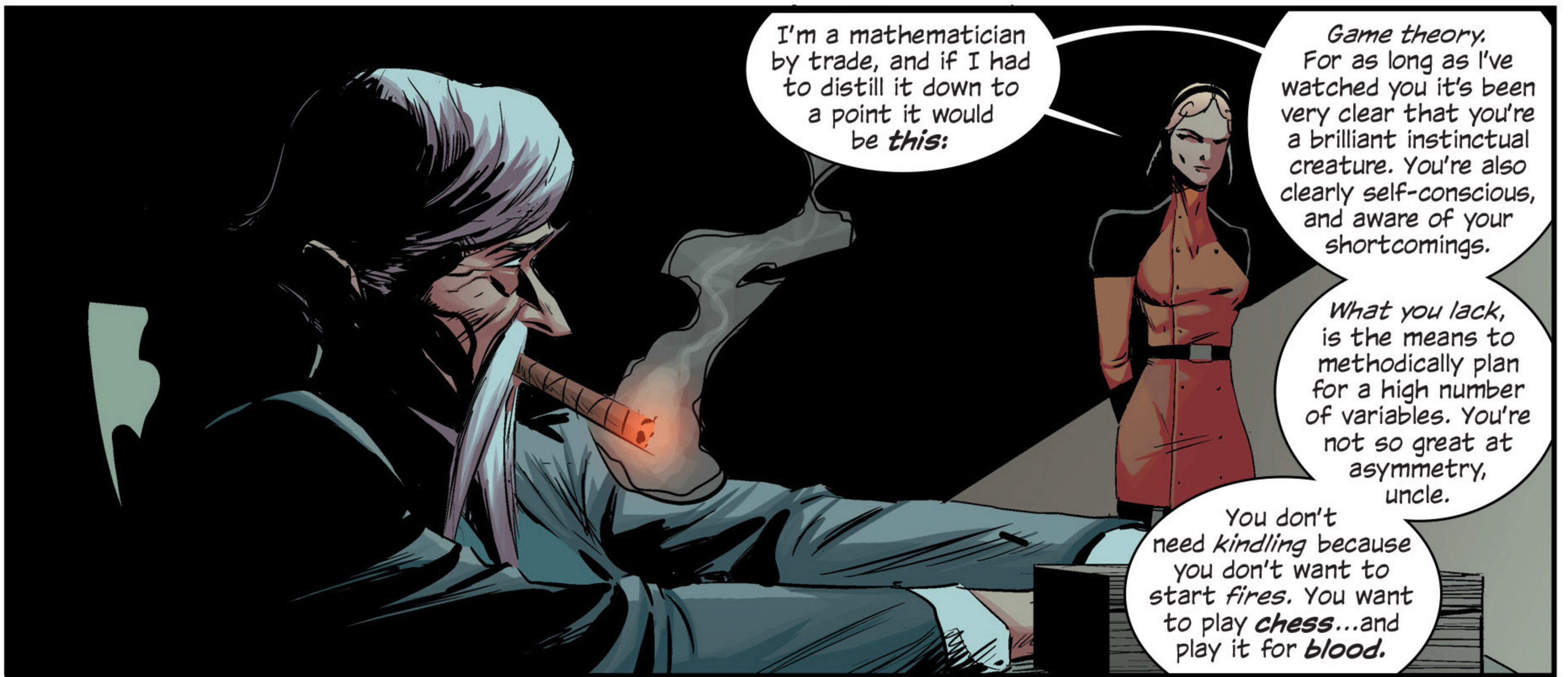
You see,  
we all have  
our uses.



Now.

Why  
are you  
here?





I'm a mathematician by trade, and if I had to distill it down to a point it would be *this*:

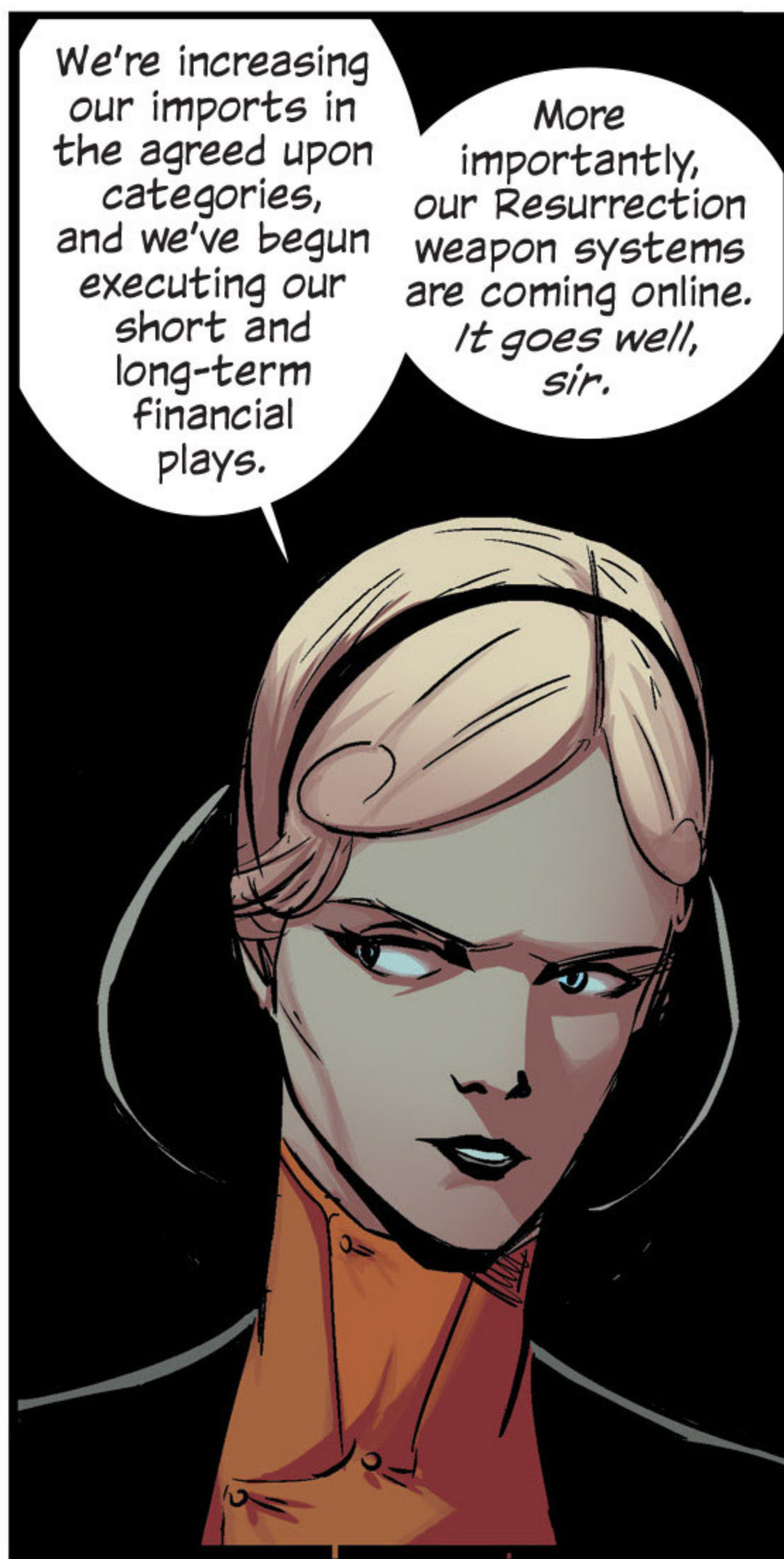
*Game theory.* For as long as I've watched you it's been very clear that you're a brilliant instinctual creature. You're also clearly self-conscious, and aware of your shortcomings.

What you lack, is the means to methodically plan for a high number of variables. You're not so great at asymmetry, uncle.

You don't need *kindling* because you don't want to start *fires*. You want to play *chess*...and play it for *blood*.

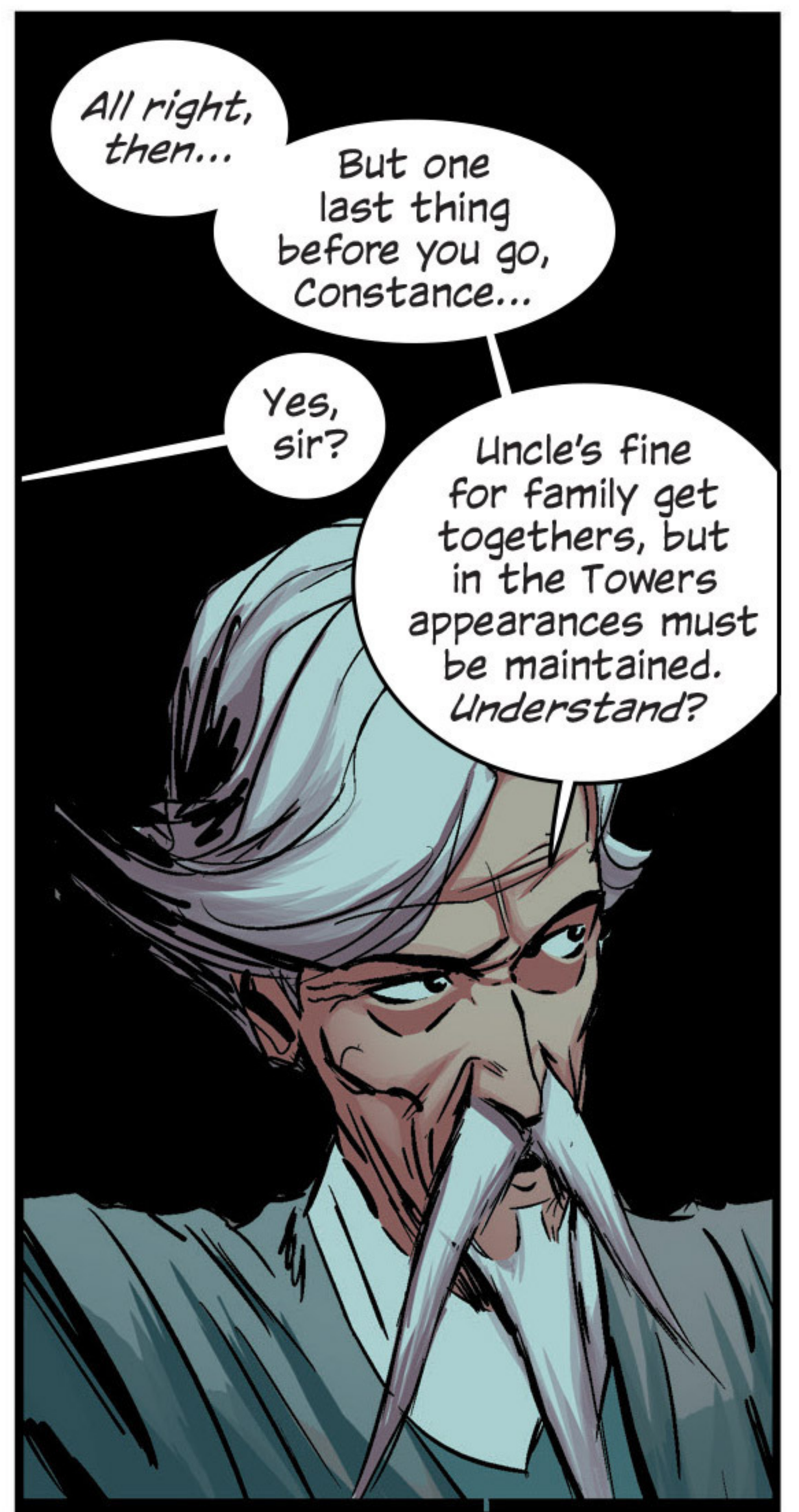


And how goes your first assignment?



We're increasing our imports in the agreed upon categories, and we've begun executing our short and long-term financial plays.

More importantly, our Resurrection weapon systems are coming online. *It goes well, sir.*



All right, then...

But one last thing before you go, Constance...

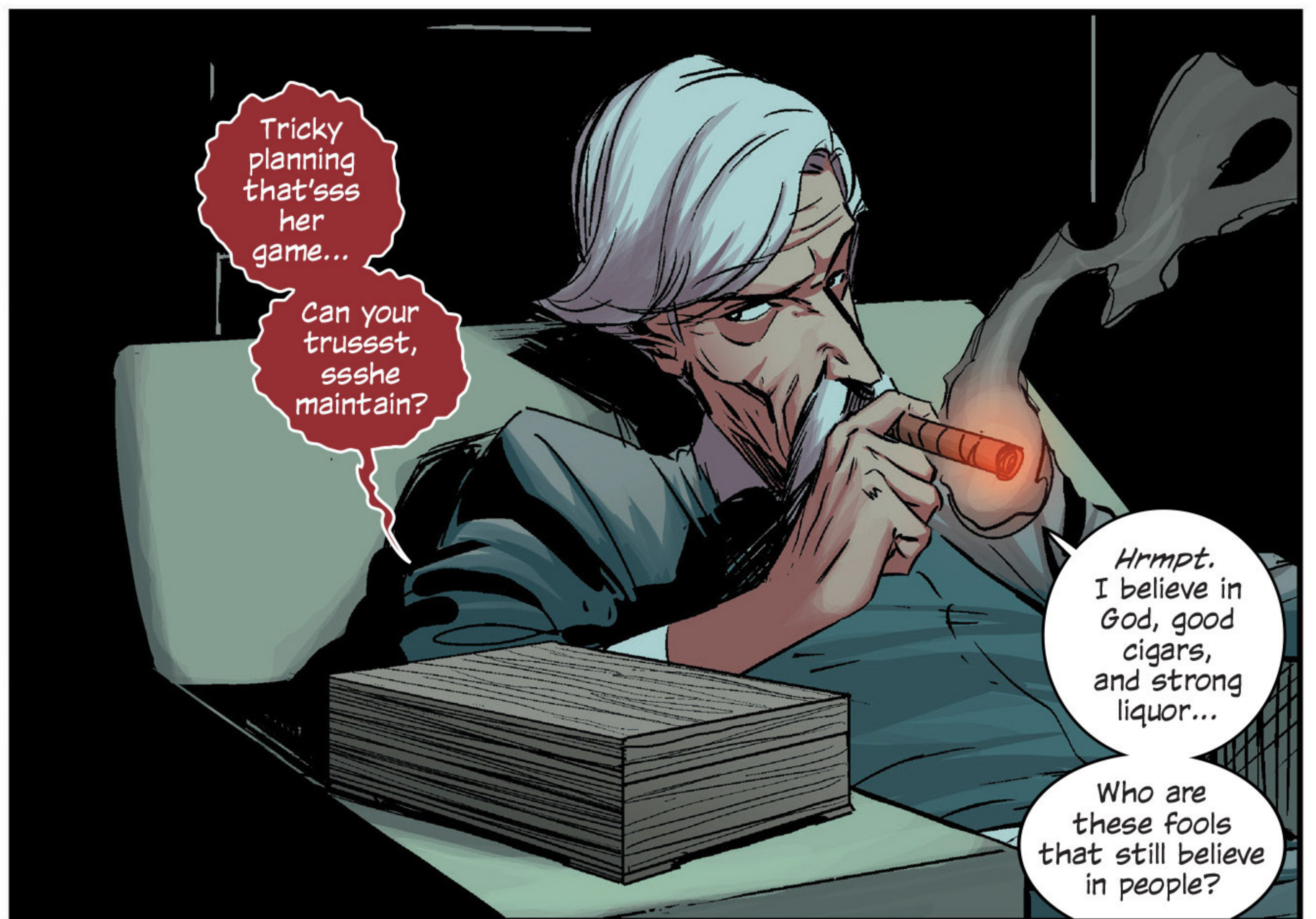
Yes, sir?

Uncle's fine for family get togethers, but in the Towers appearances must be maintained. *Understand?*



Of course, *uncle*.

I'll do my best.



Tricky planning that'sss her game...

Can your trussst, ssshe maintain?

*Hrmpt.* I believe in God, good cigars, and strong liquor...

Who are these fools that still believe in people?



**FOREVER** IS A LONG TIME  
TO **FEEL**.









The Kingdom.

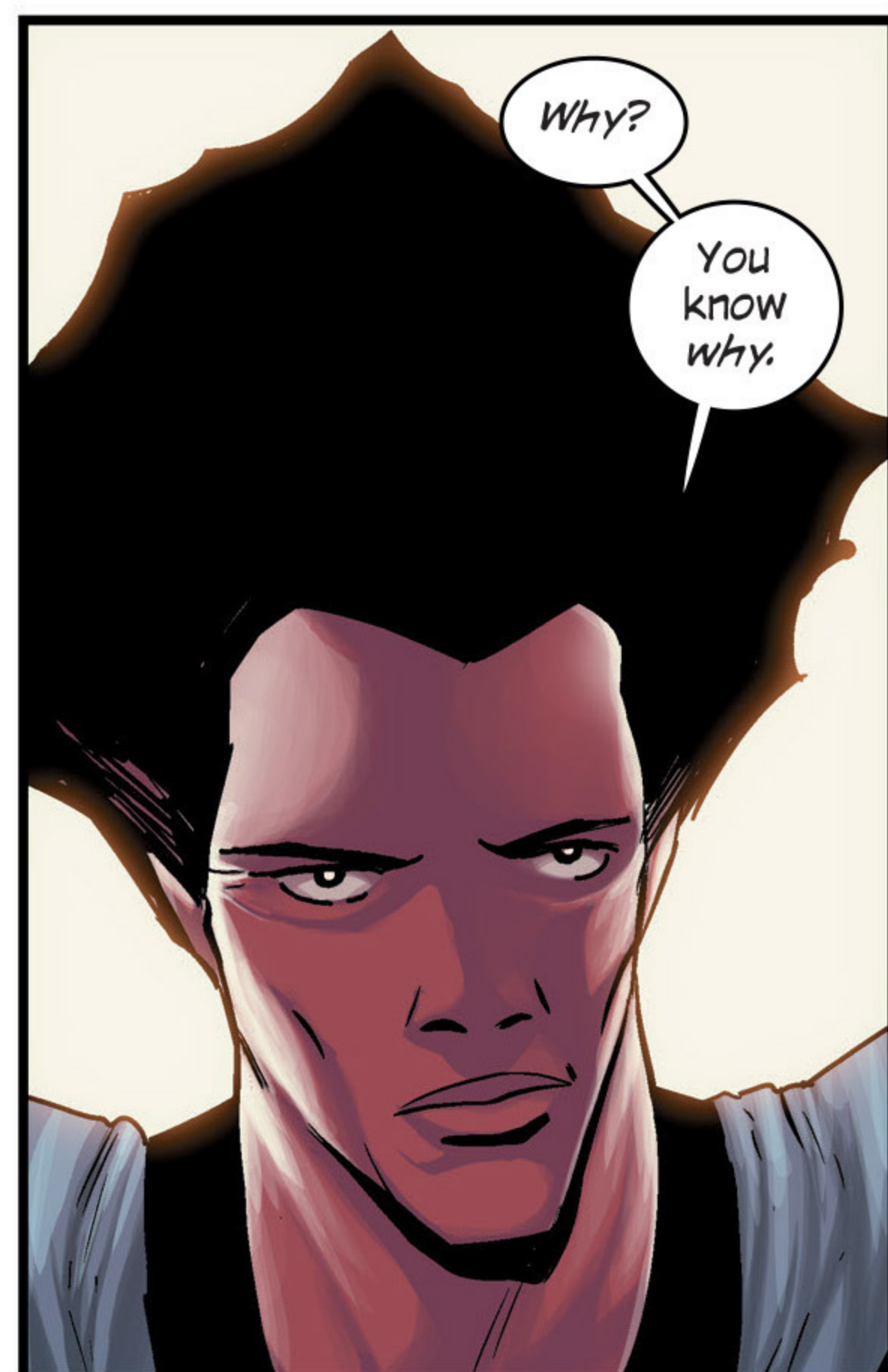
You need  
to listen,  
John.

BRRR  
POW  
POW  
POW  
POW  
BOOM  
TAKA  
TAKA  
TAKA  
TAKA

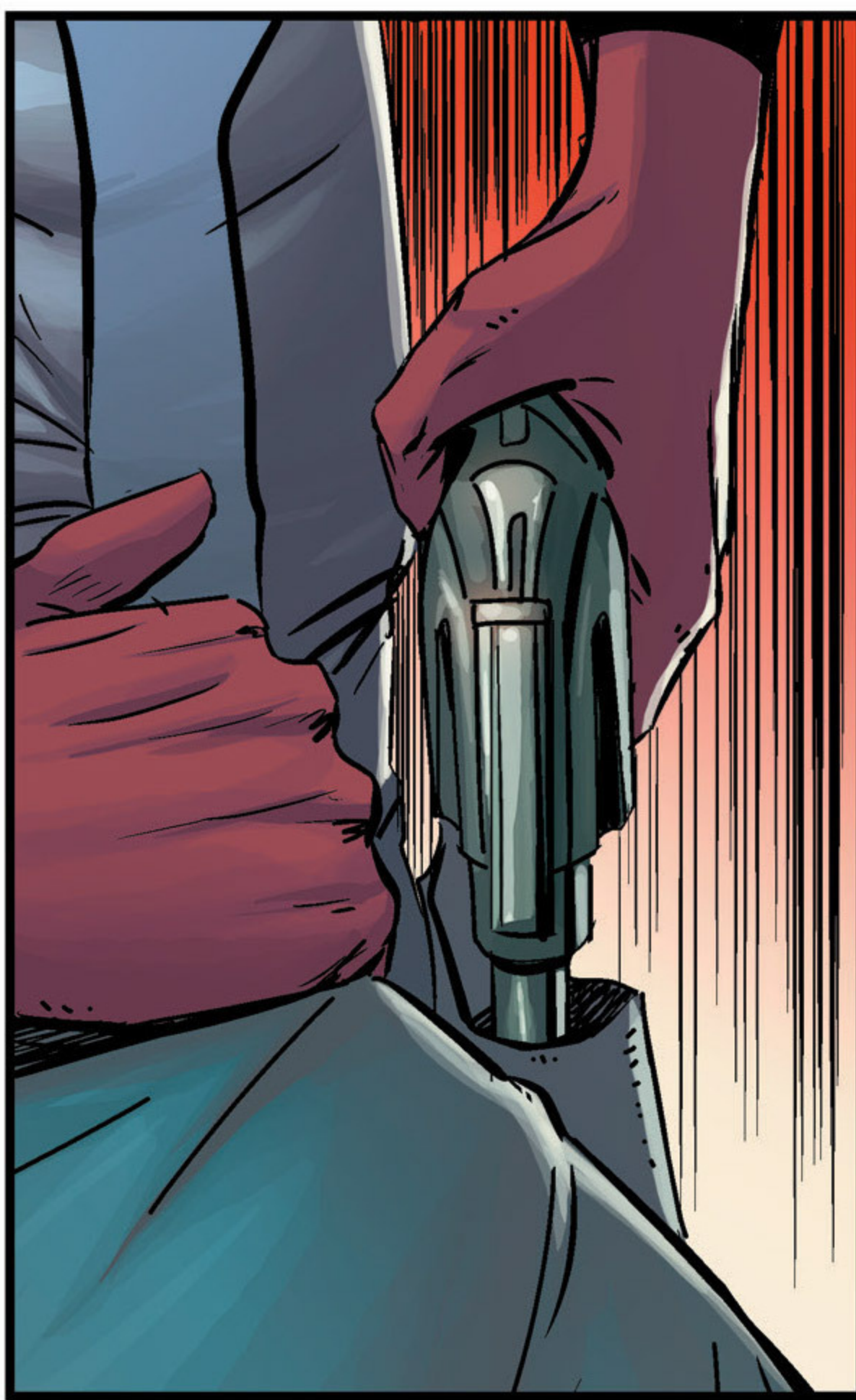
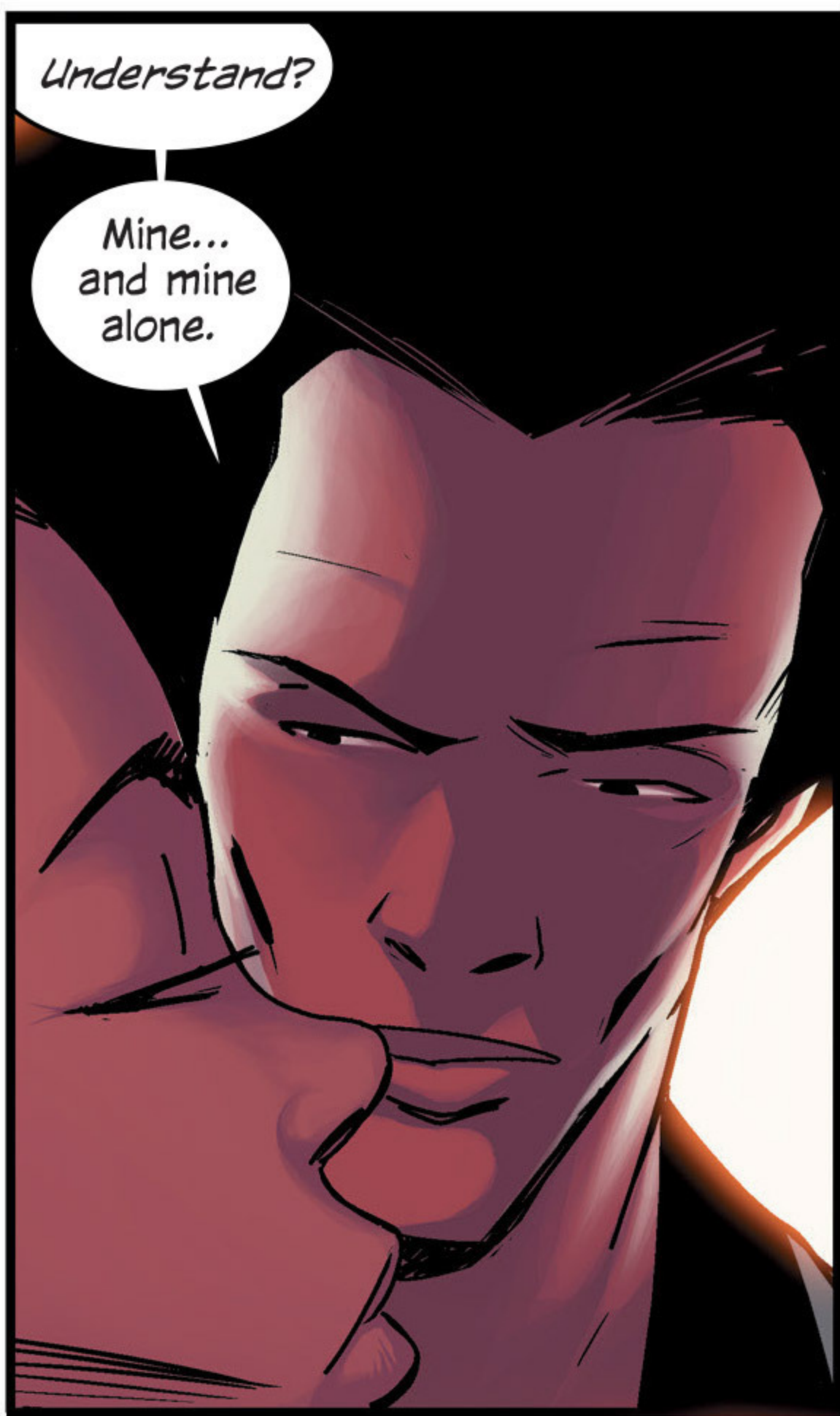
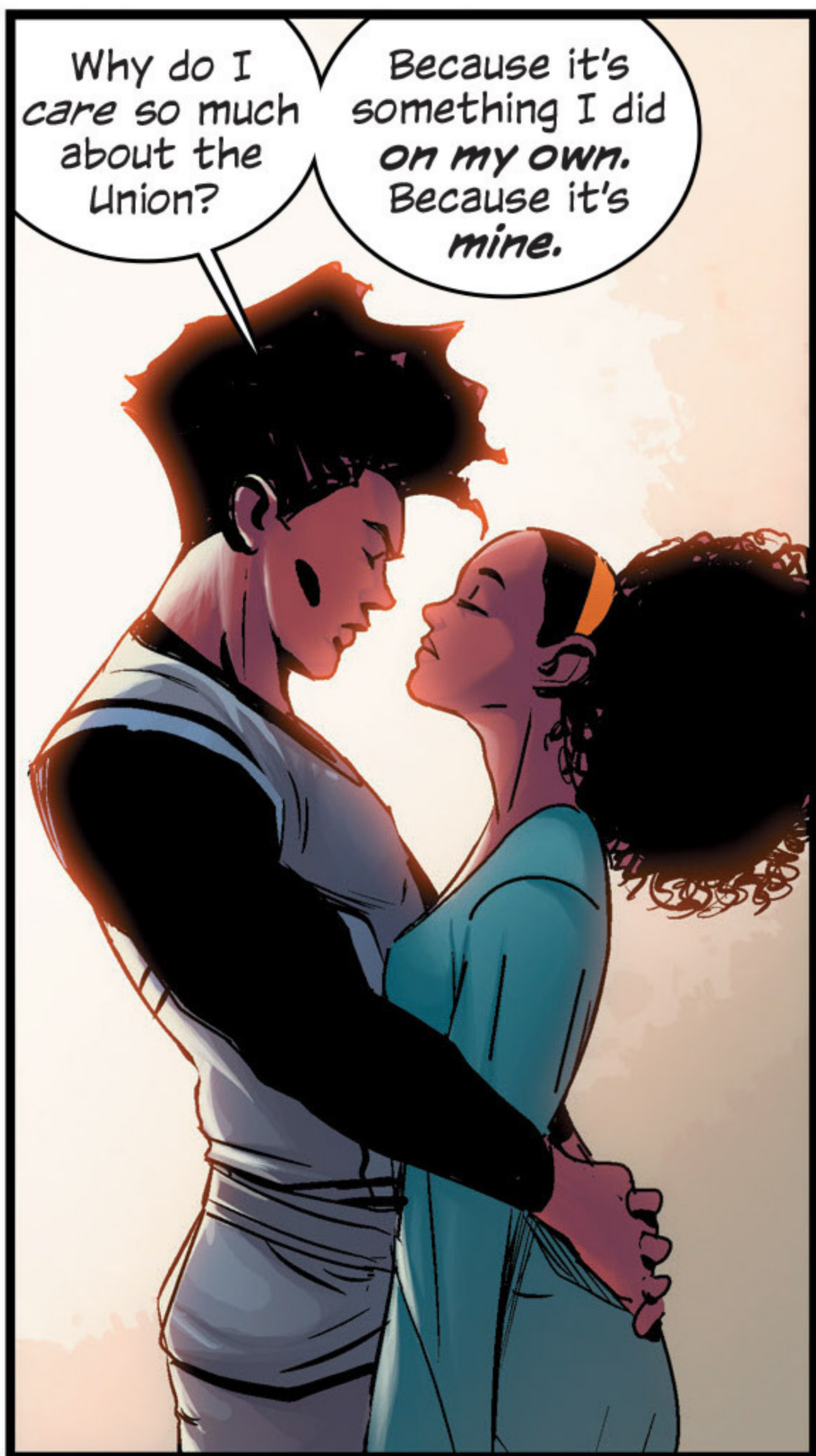




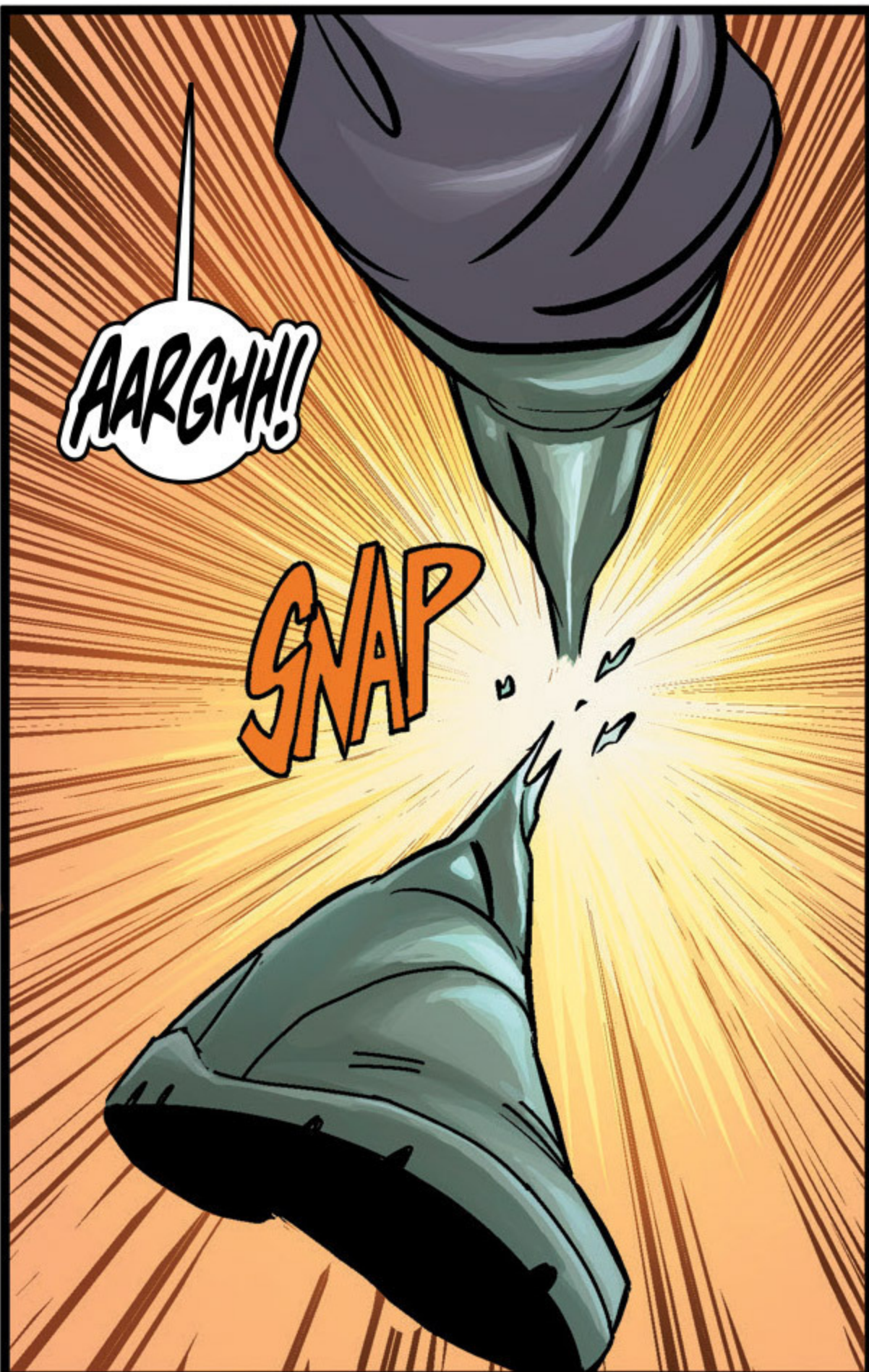
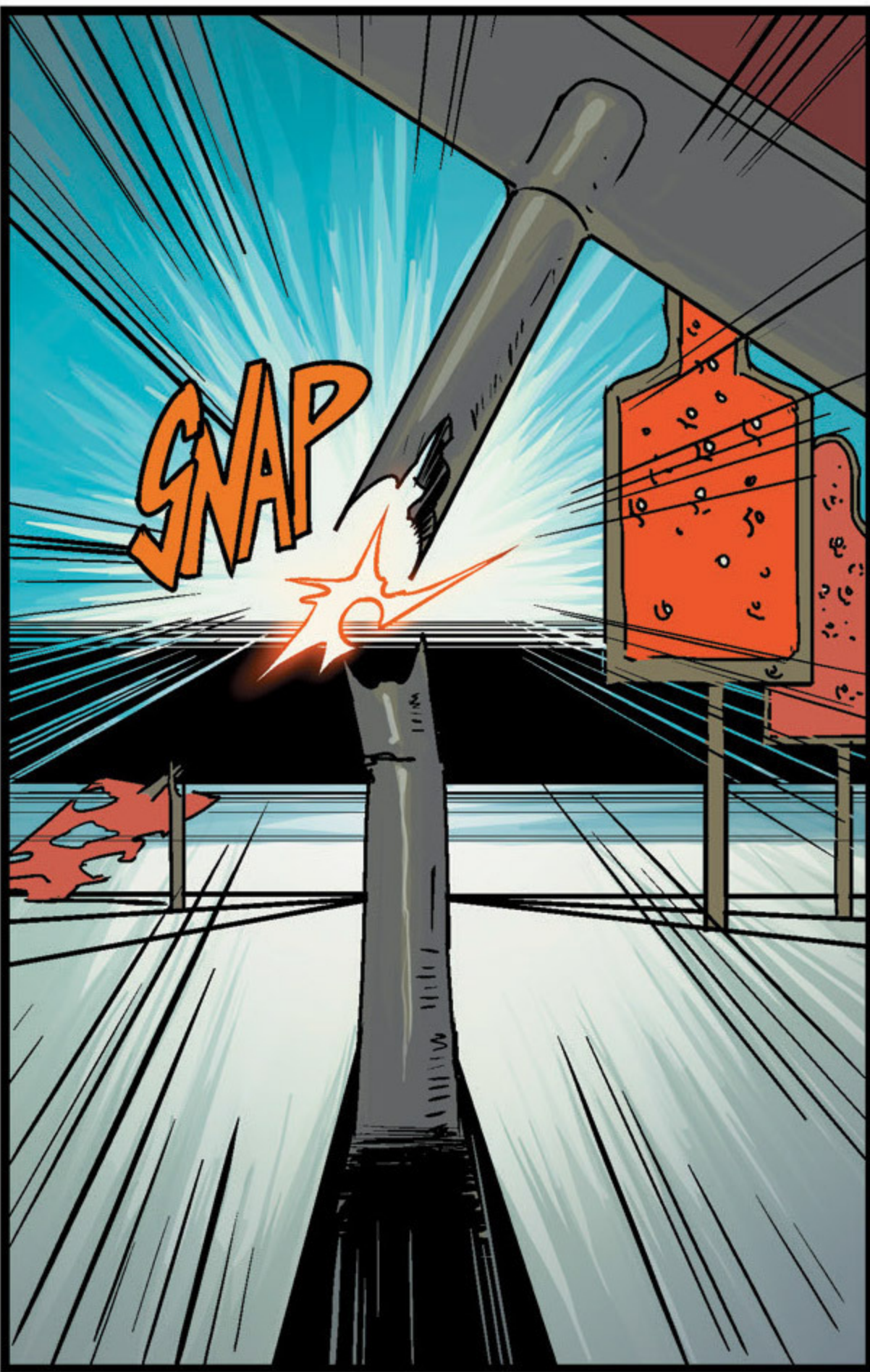




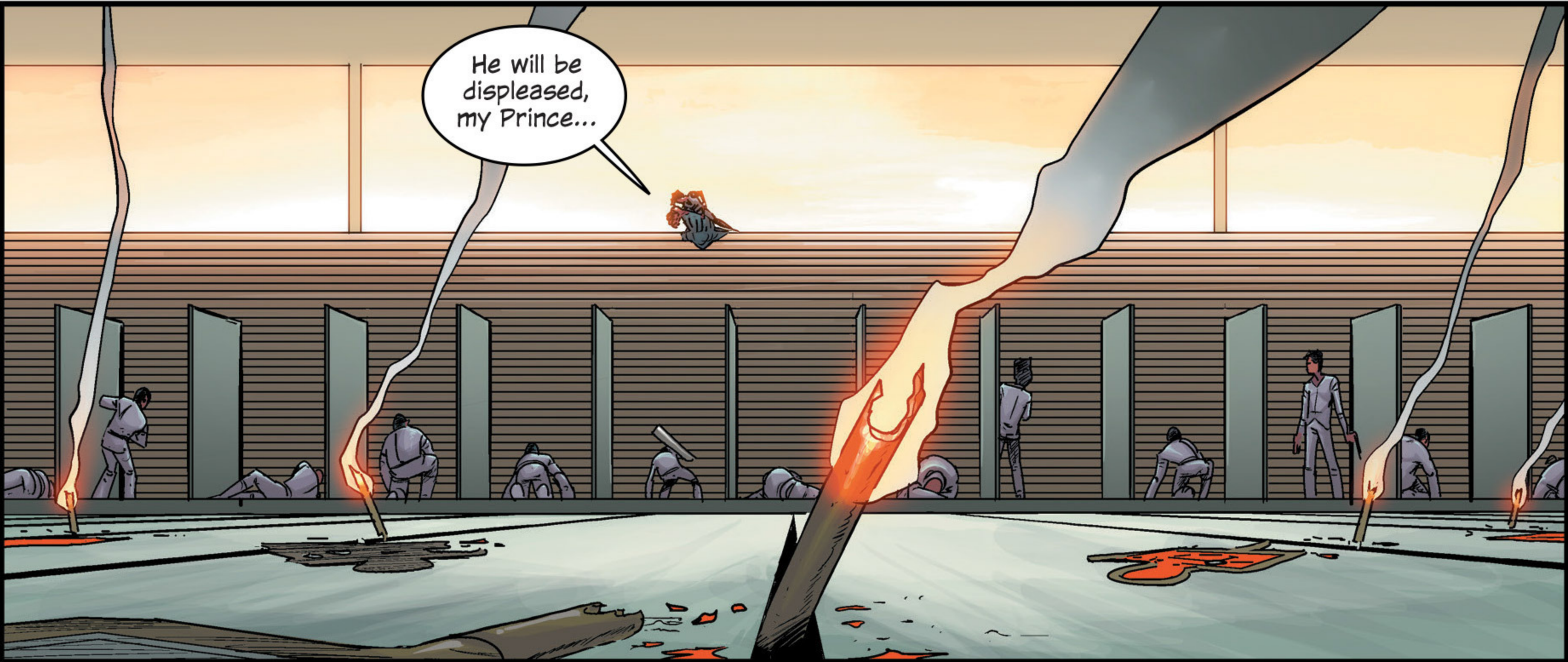






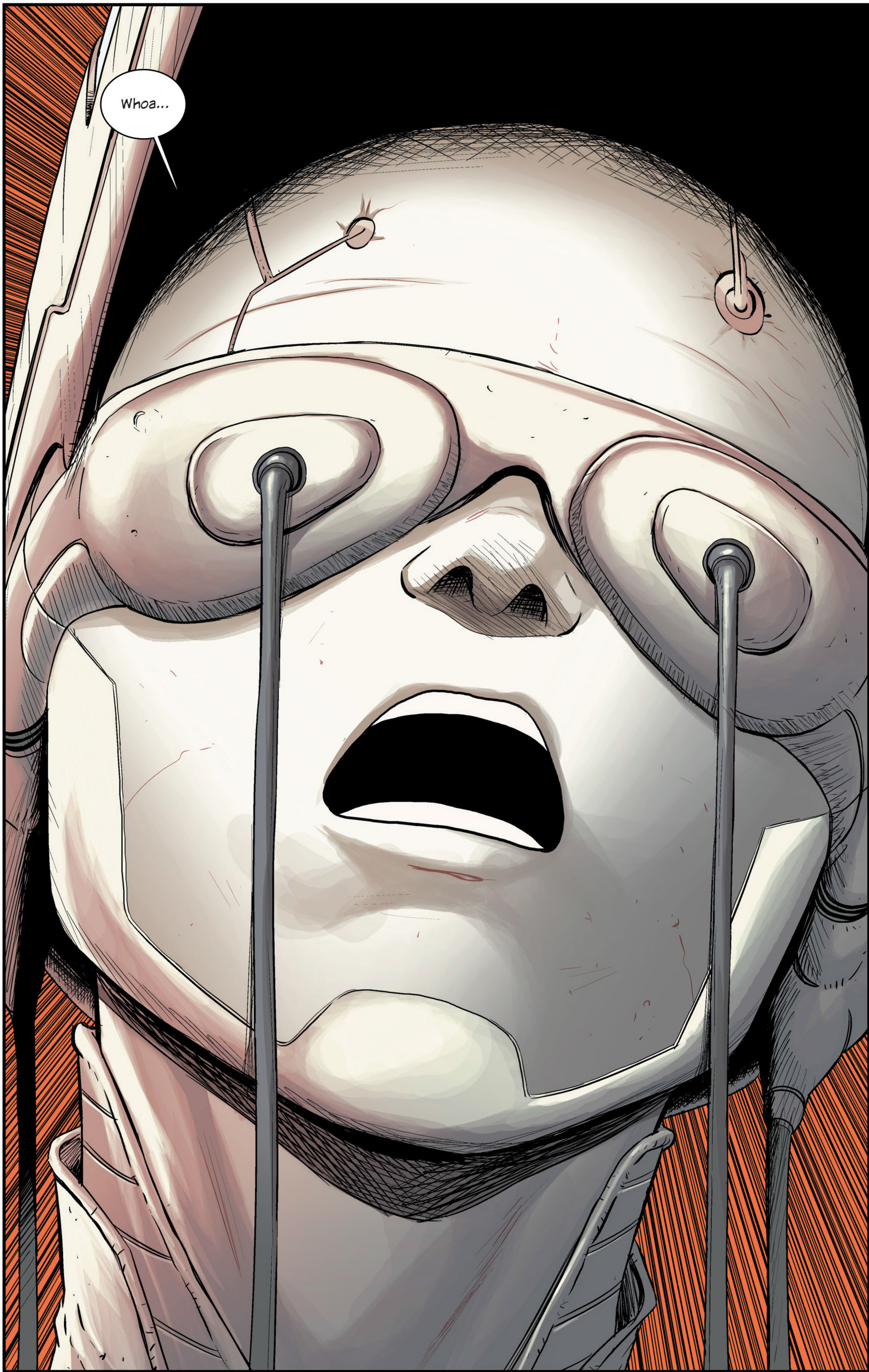




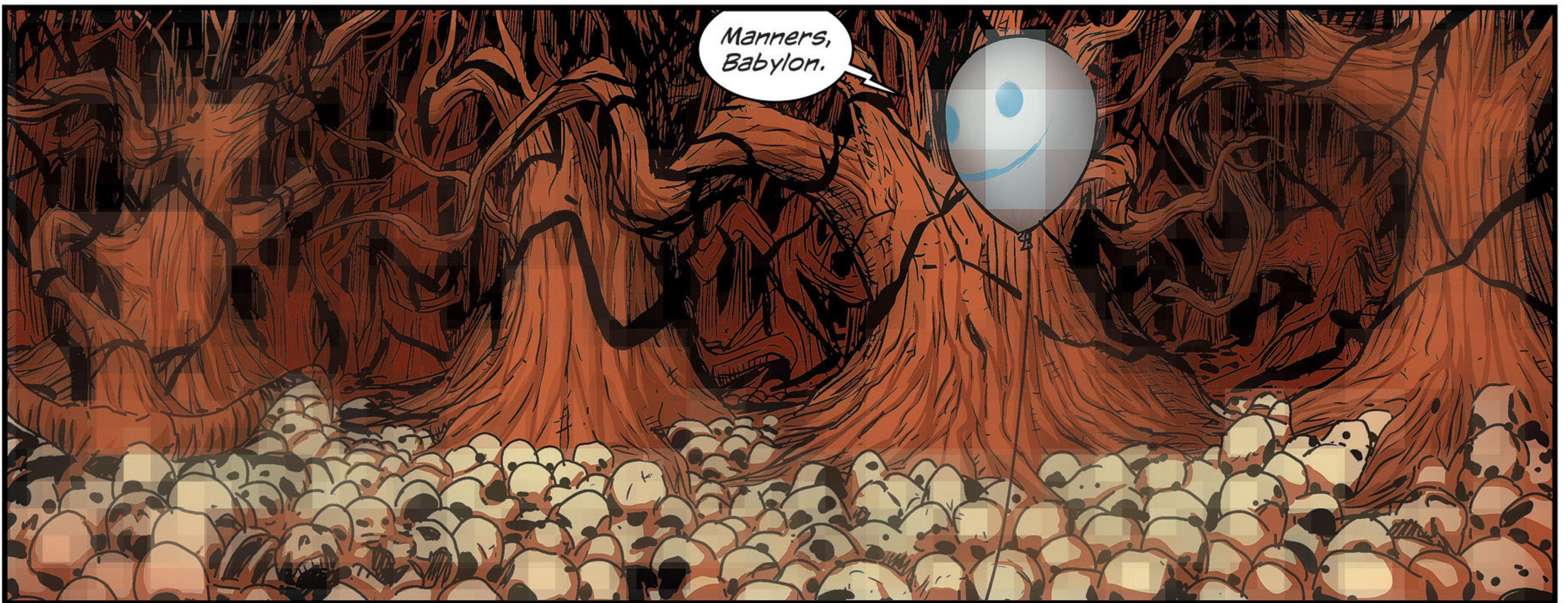
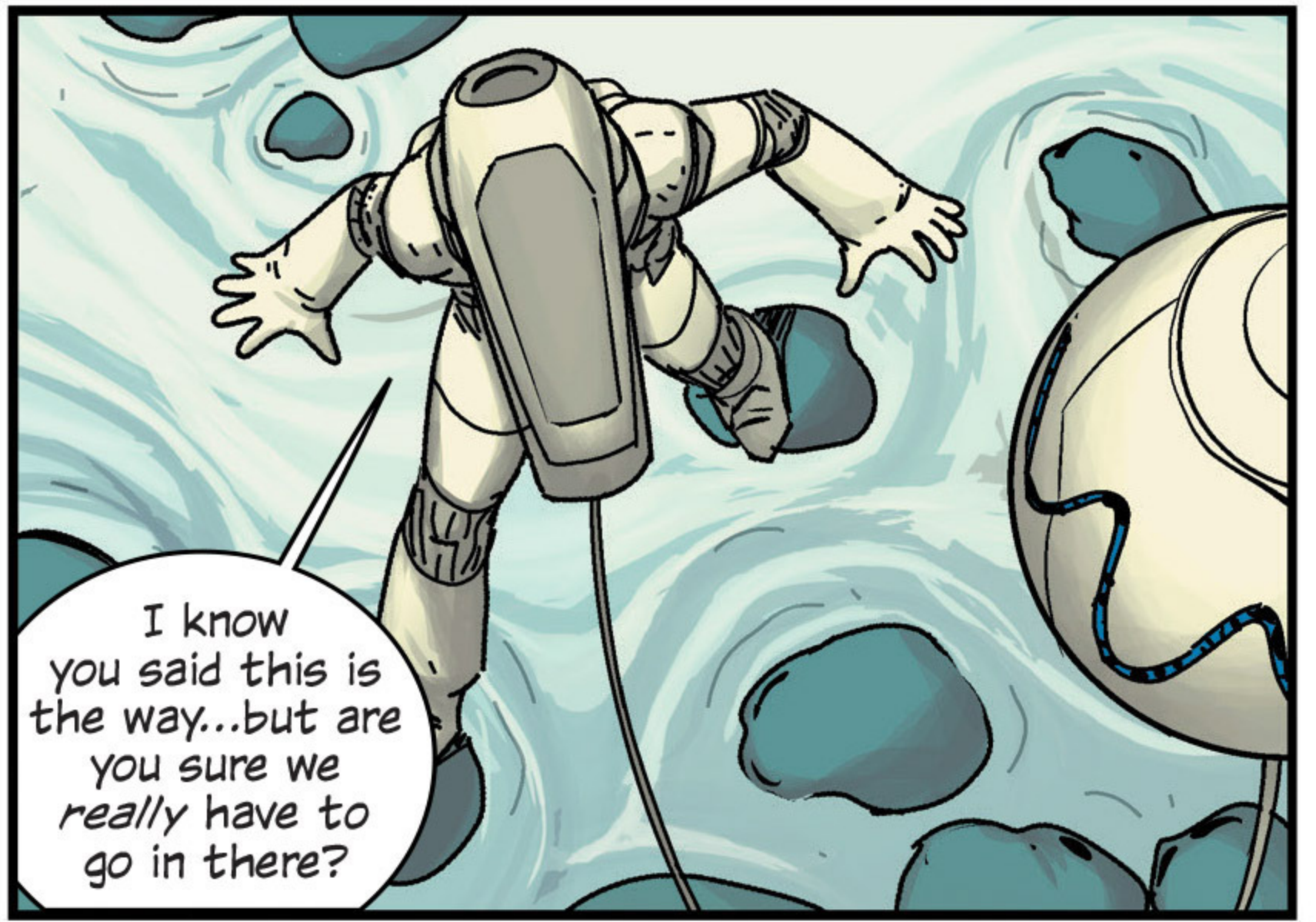
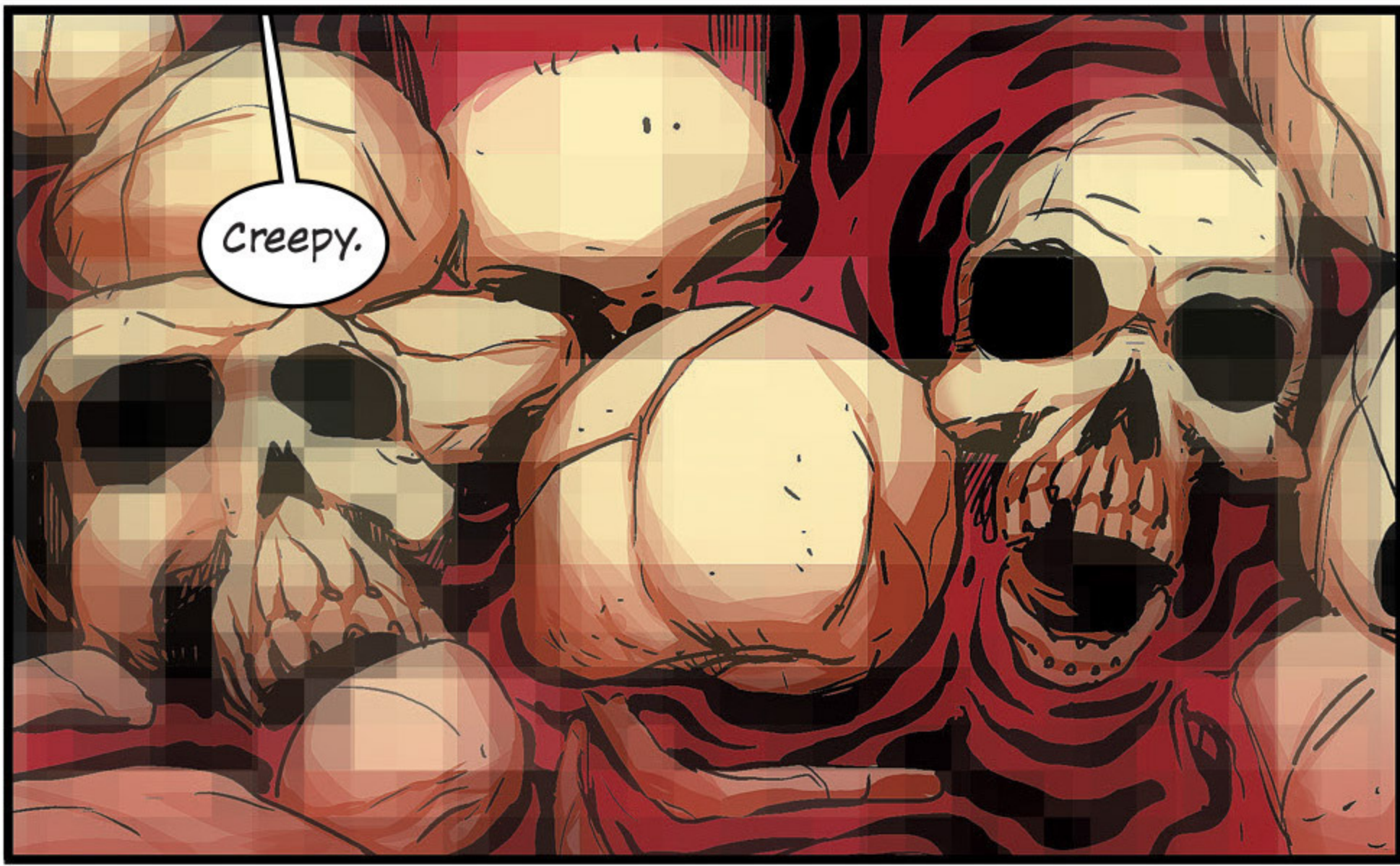




Whoa...

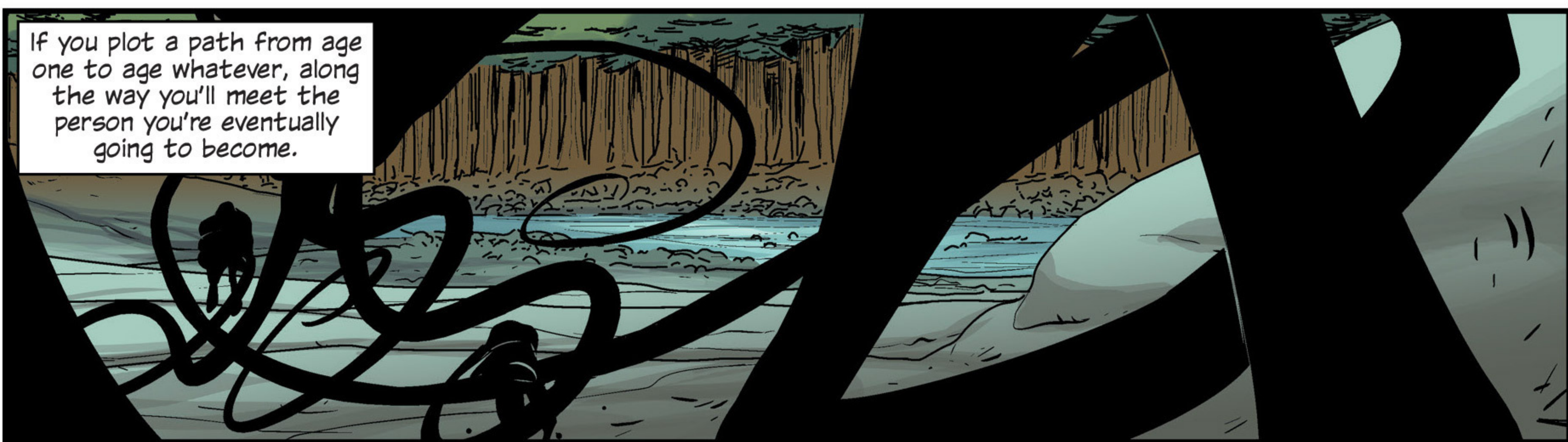




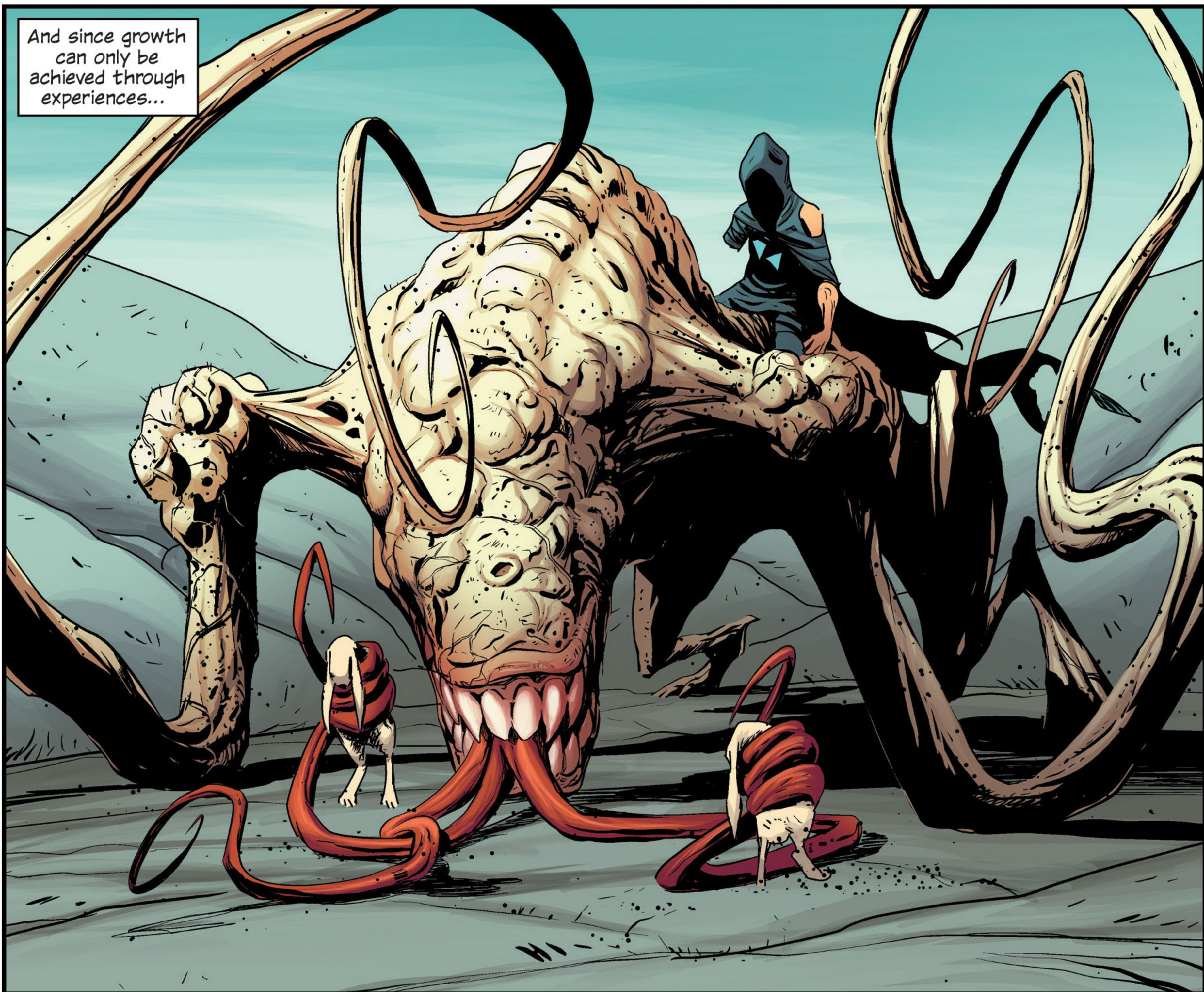




If you plot a path from age one to age whatever, along the way you'll meet the person you're eventually going to become.



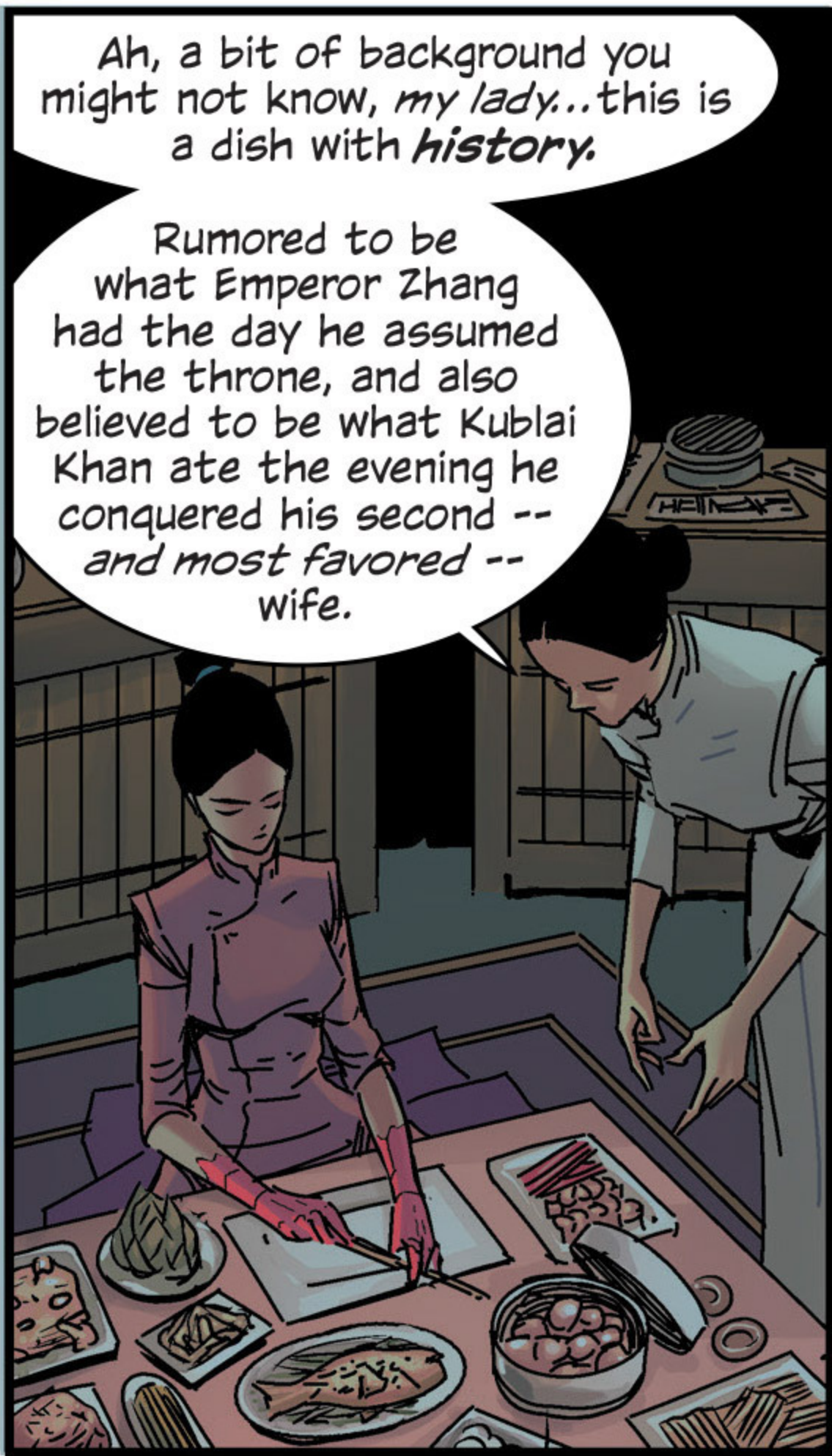
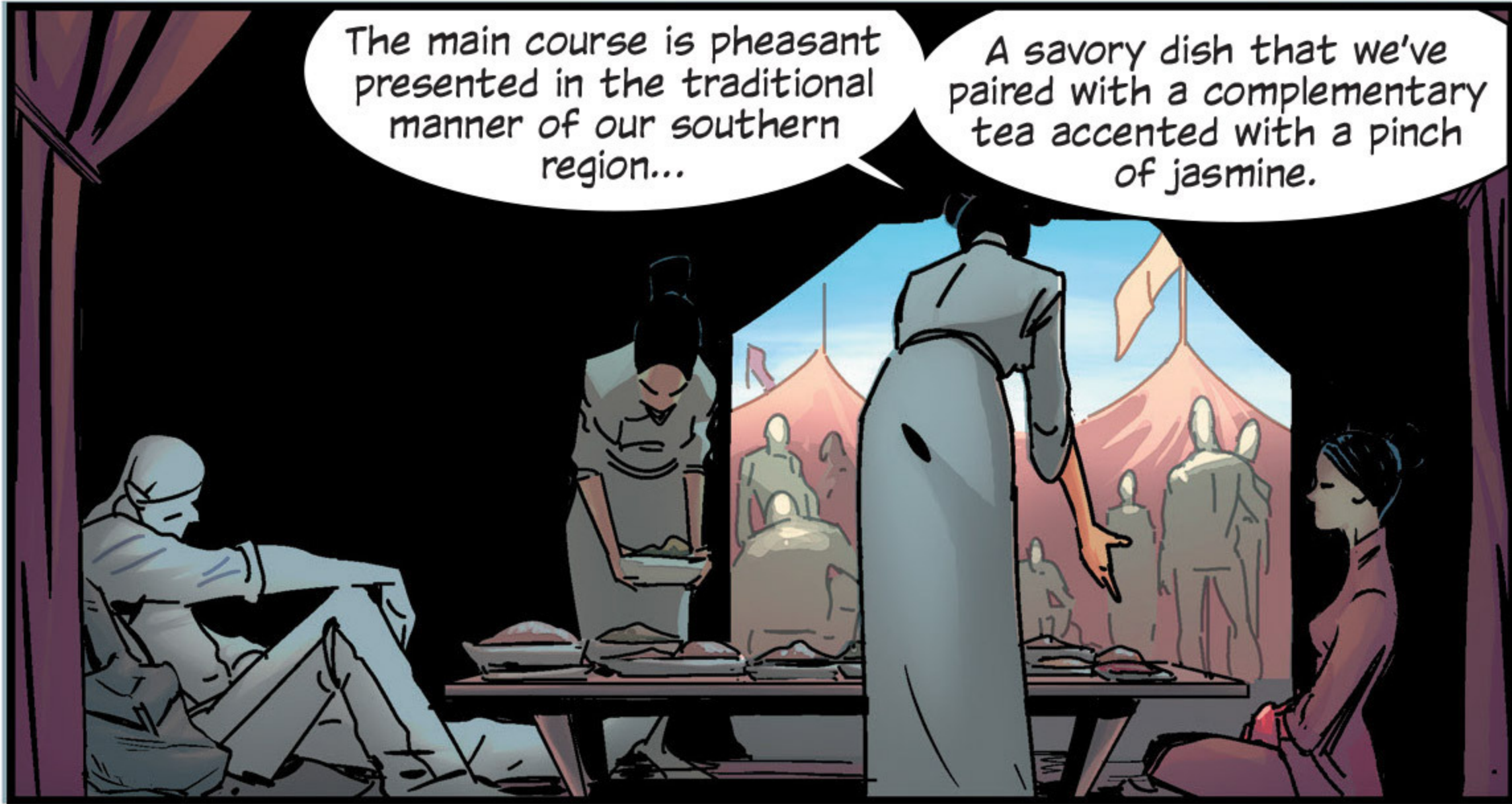
And since growth can only be achieved through experiences...



You suck it up... and hope that along the way, you don't meet too many *monsters*.











What happened to your eye?



Traded it for air.  
*Can't say I'm happy about the deal.*



*Tell me, husband... do you ever wonder why you can't hold on to the things you care about?*



*I've begun to wonder if it's not simply an object lesson in who you are, and how, with every bone in your body, you stand in eternal opposition to permanence.*

*After all, what beyond death lasts forever? Certainly not something like an eye.*

*Maybe I'm just unlucky.*



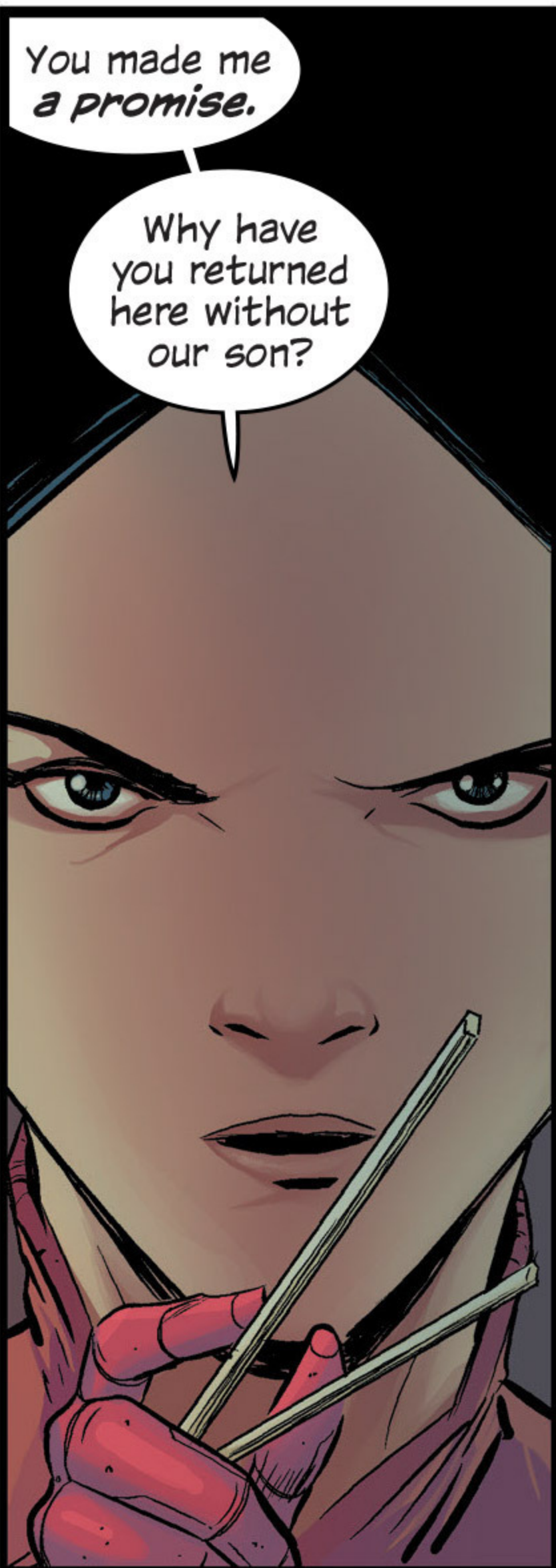
*Yes. That too, I suppose. Still...*

*I kind of like it...*



*Paints a clearer picture of what I'm dealing with. Makes it easier to remember who you are...*

*And do you know what else I remember?*



*You made me a promise.*

*Why have you returned here without our son?*



*Did you fail...and now fear to tell me he is lost? If so, don't.*

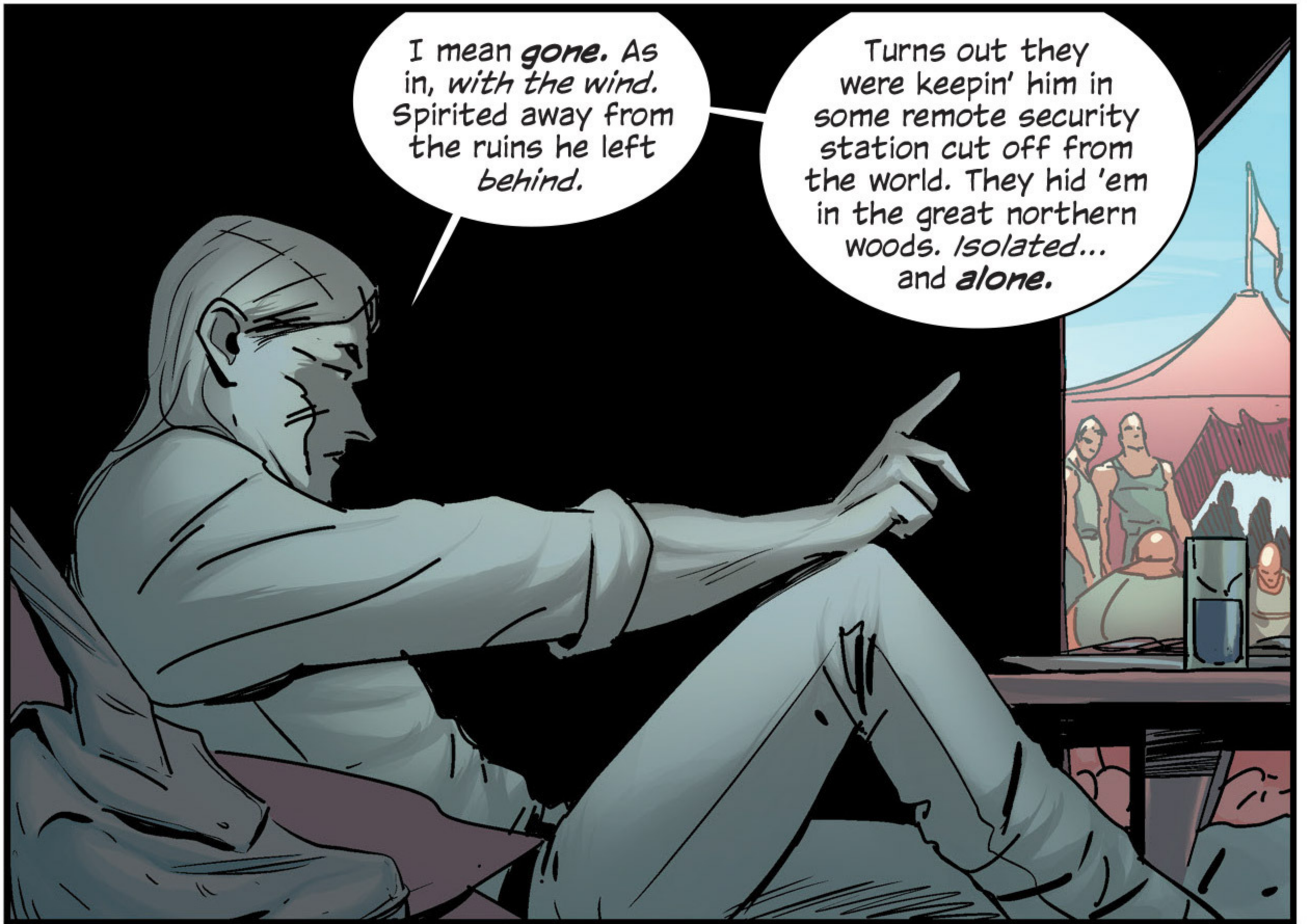
*At the very least, you owe me the truth.*



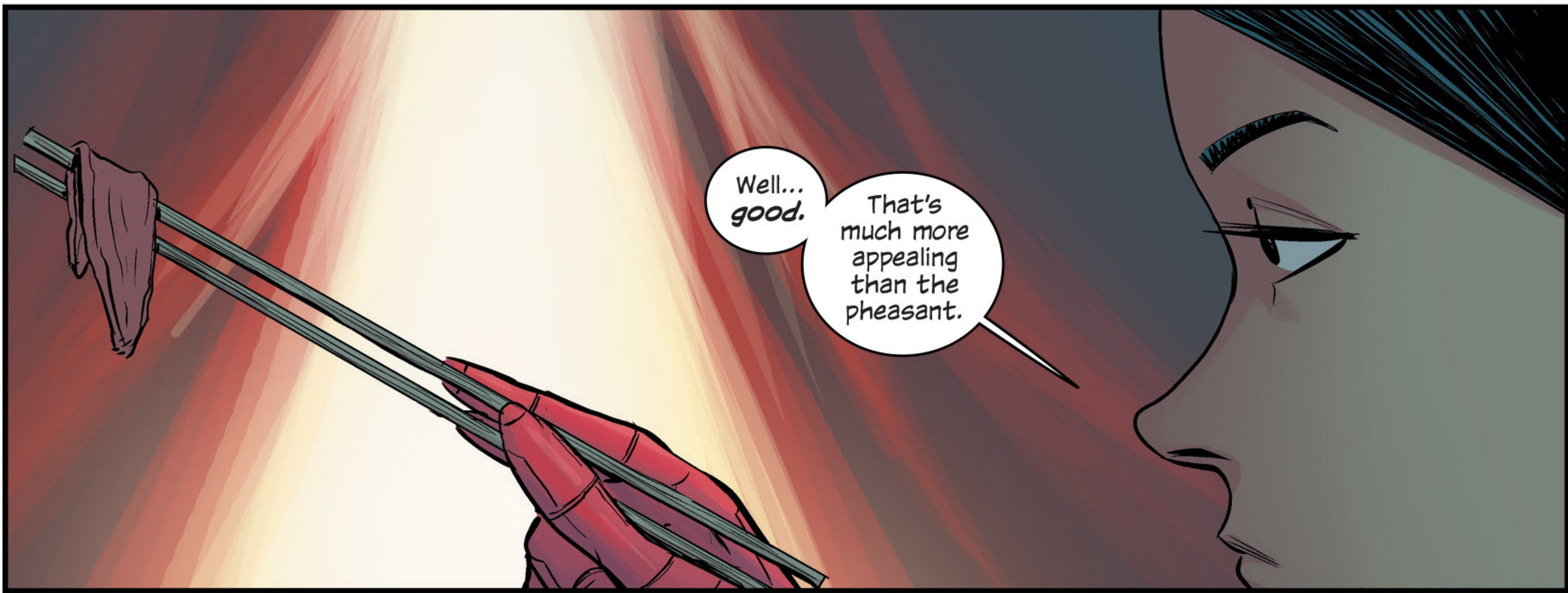
*Sun's never set on a day I lied to you. Sure ain't gonna start now.*

*I found where they were keepin' him, but he was gone by the time I got there.*













The Wolf was raised in the Machine City of the Endless. Yeah, the place was wrecked, but enough was left that he could recognize what he was seein'.

He said it was set up like a storage facility. Over a hundred thousand square feet of machines full of nothin' but data.

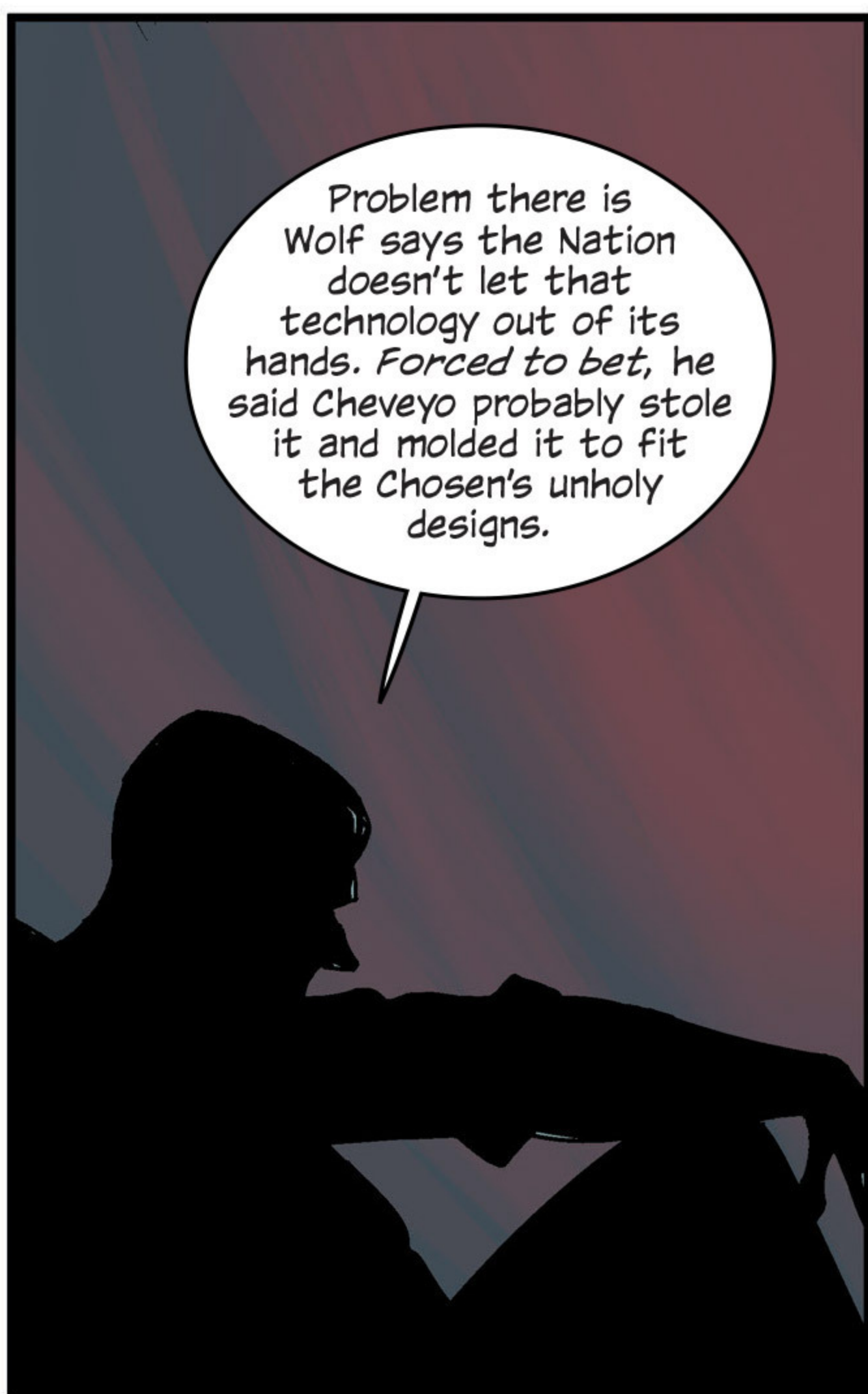


Wolf said he'd seen a setup like that before -- one that ran the livin' machines of the Endless -- and that the design was clearly theirs.

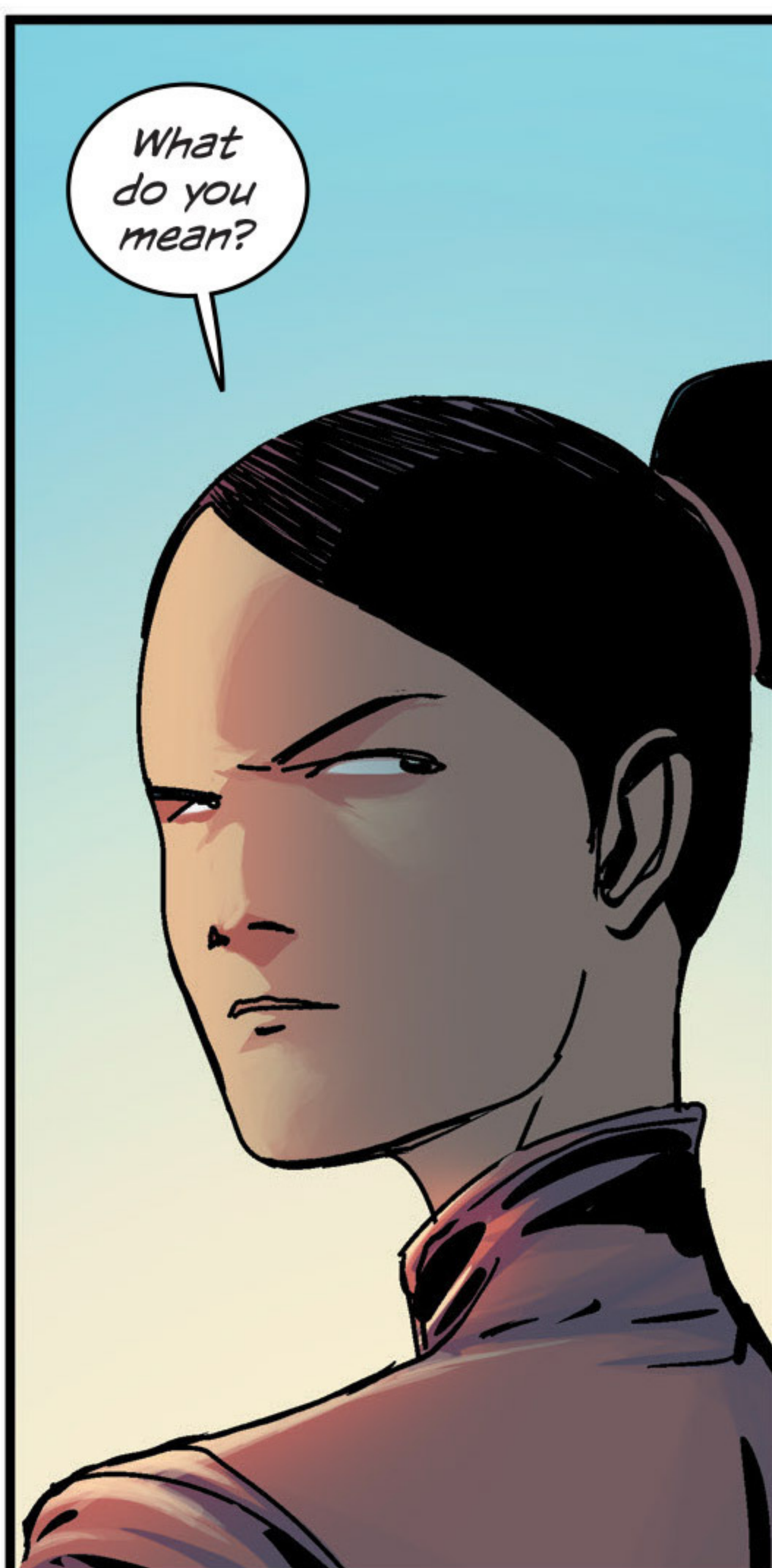


An envoy of the Nation arrived earlier today offering an alliance -- he's still here in fact.... awaiting my answer.

Perhaps I should question him, and get some answers of my own.



Problem there is Wolf says the Nation doesn't let that technology out of its hands. Forced to bet, he said Cheveyo probably stole it and molded it to fit the Chosen's unholy designs.

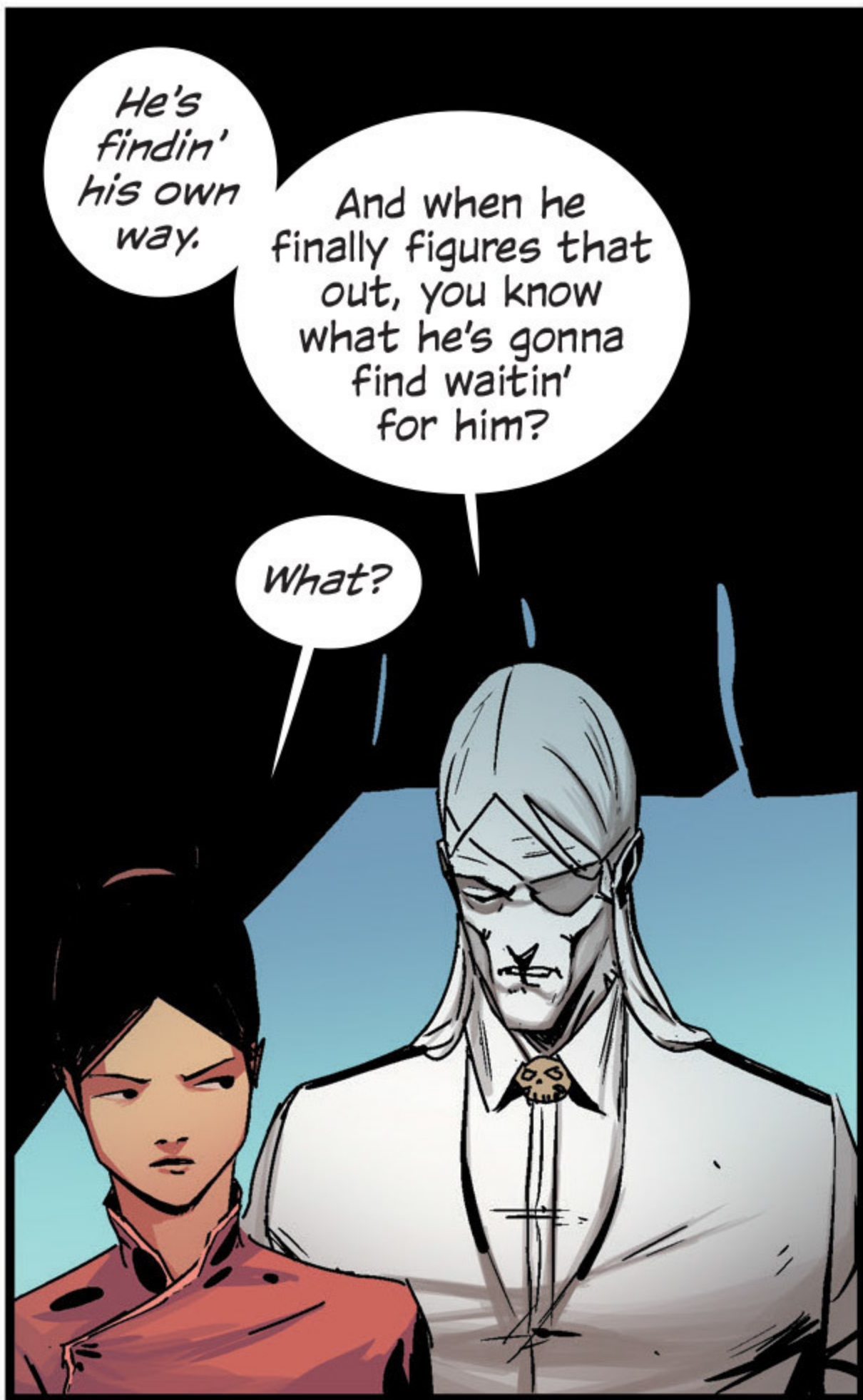


What do you mean?

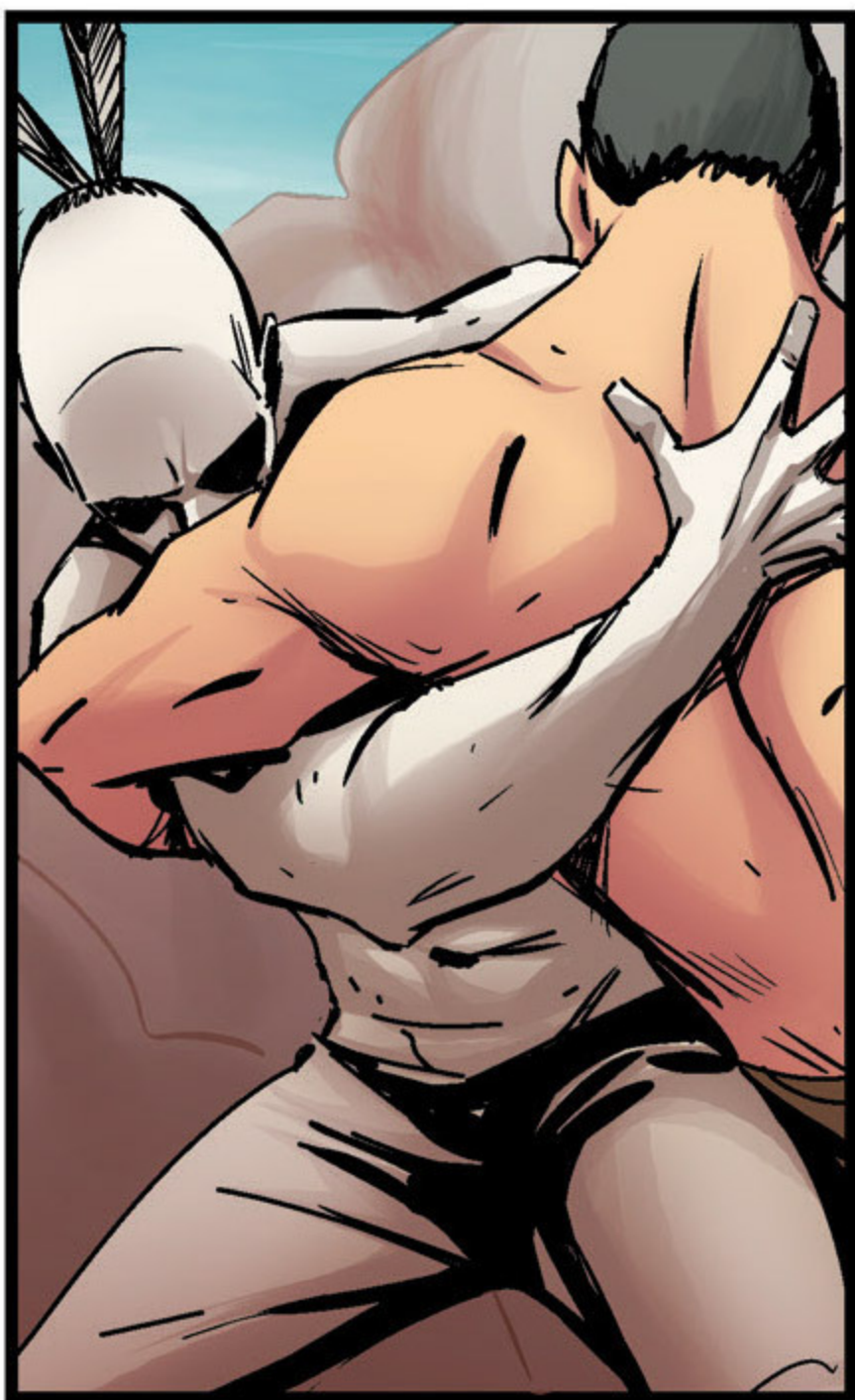
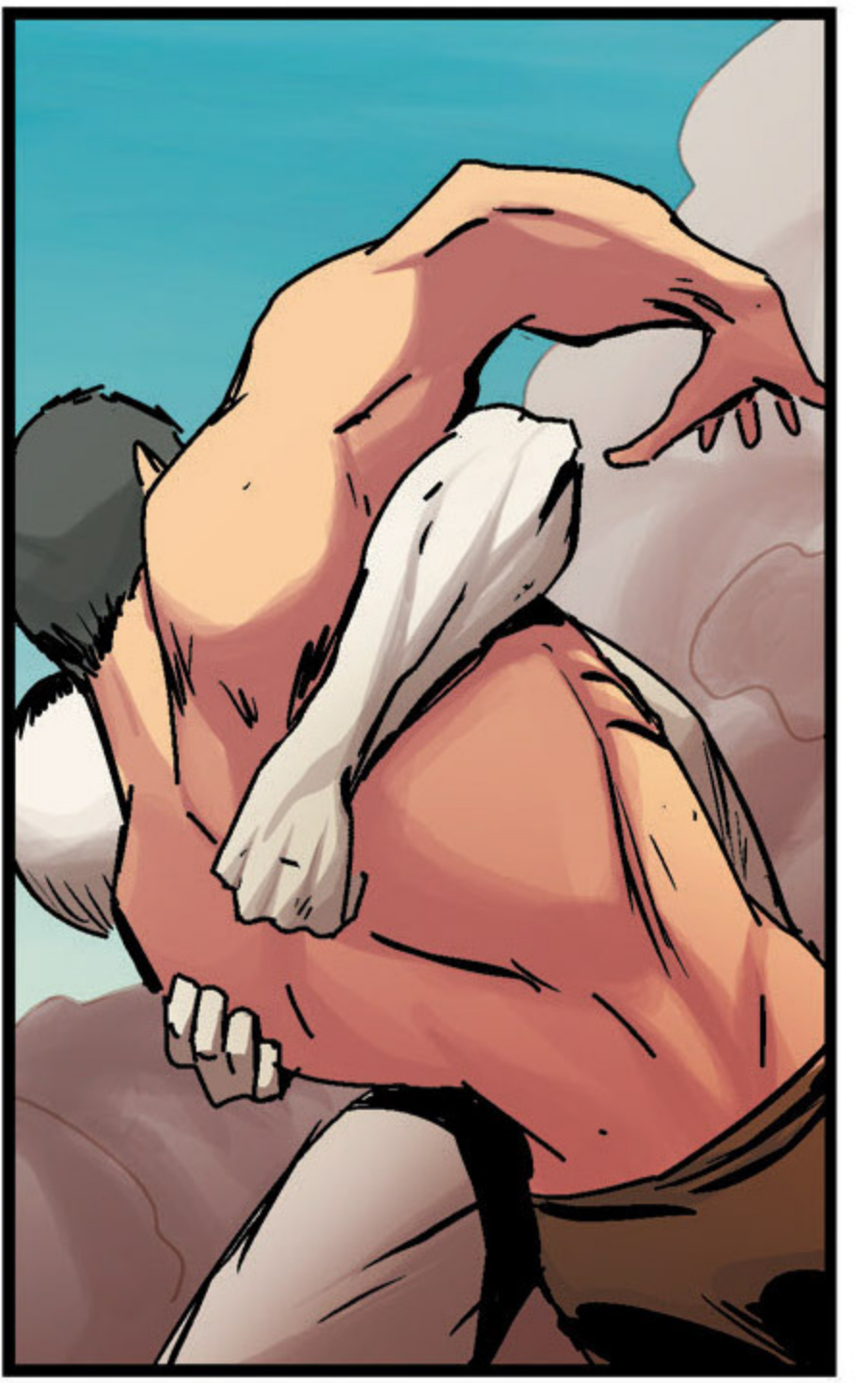
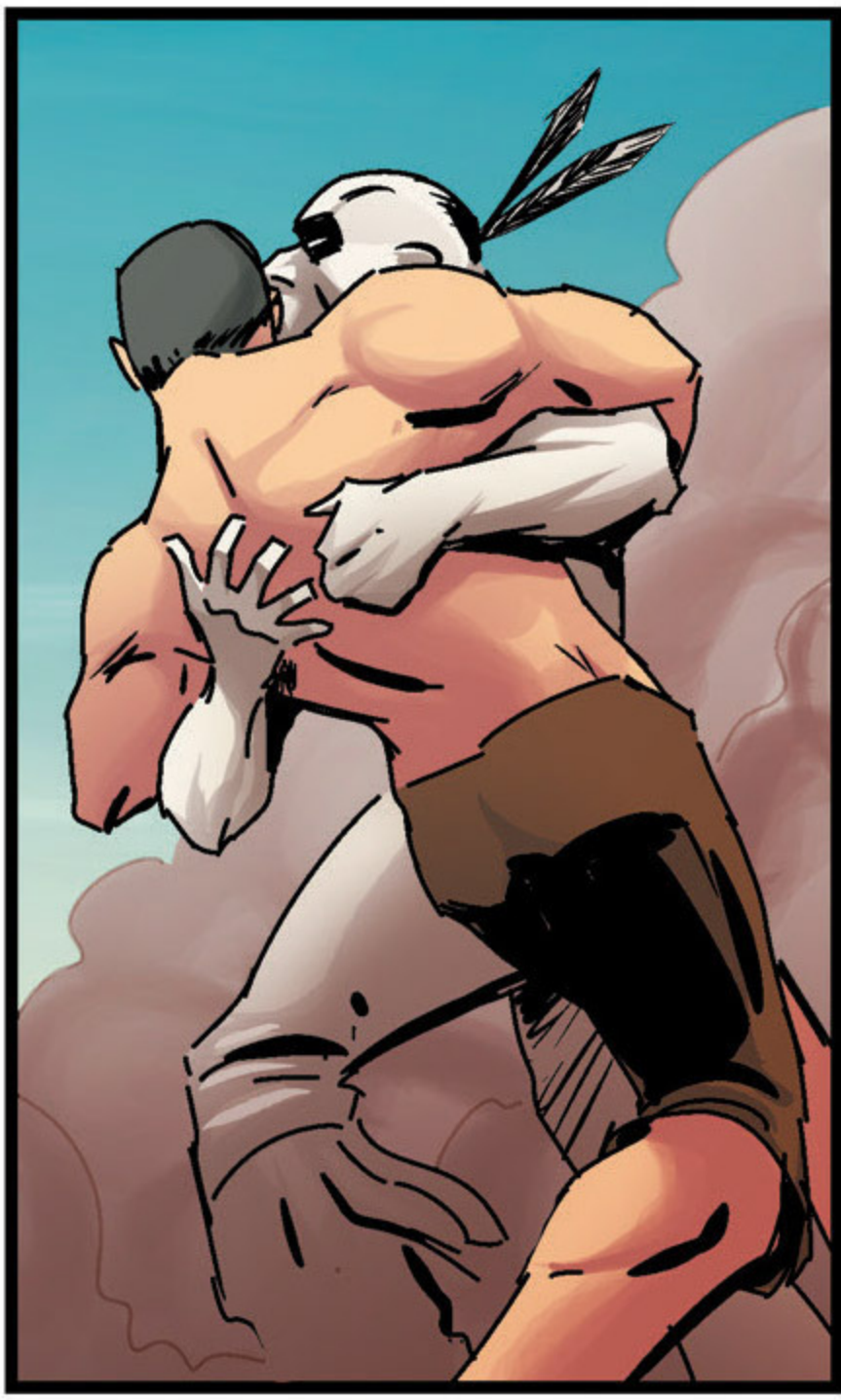


He's just a boy, Xiaolian. Kids aren't born evil...







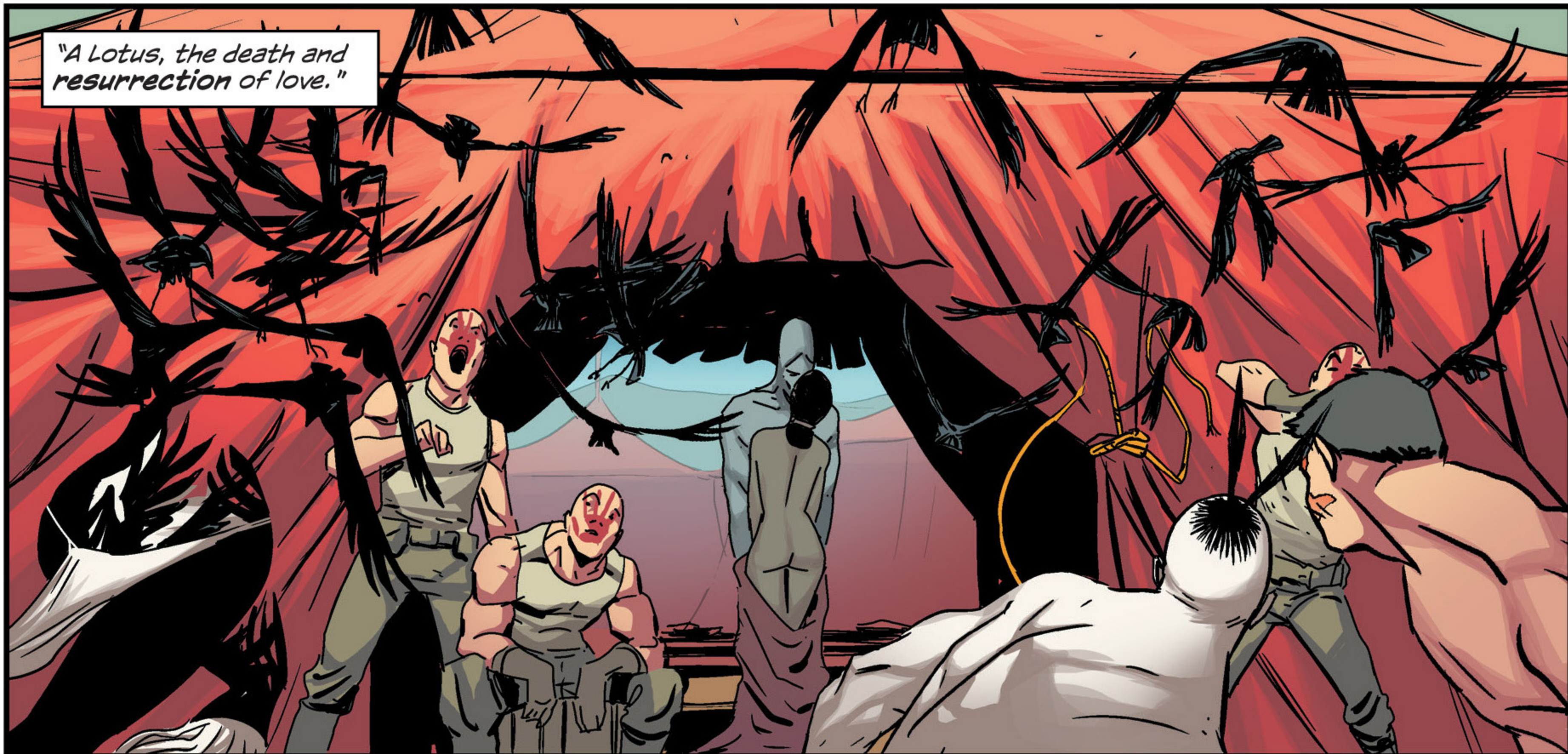






*What followed was...of  
the times.*

*It was The Message.*



*"A Lotus, the death and  
resurrection of love."*



*A fire that burned and  
could have lasted  
forever...but did not.*



*For after those few days,  
the House of Mao and her  
Horseman never saw each  
other again.*



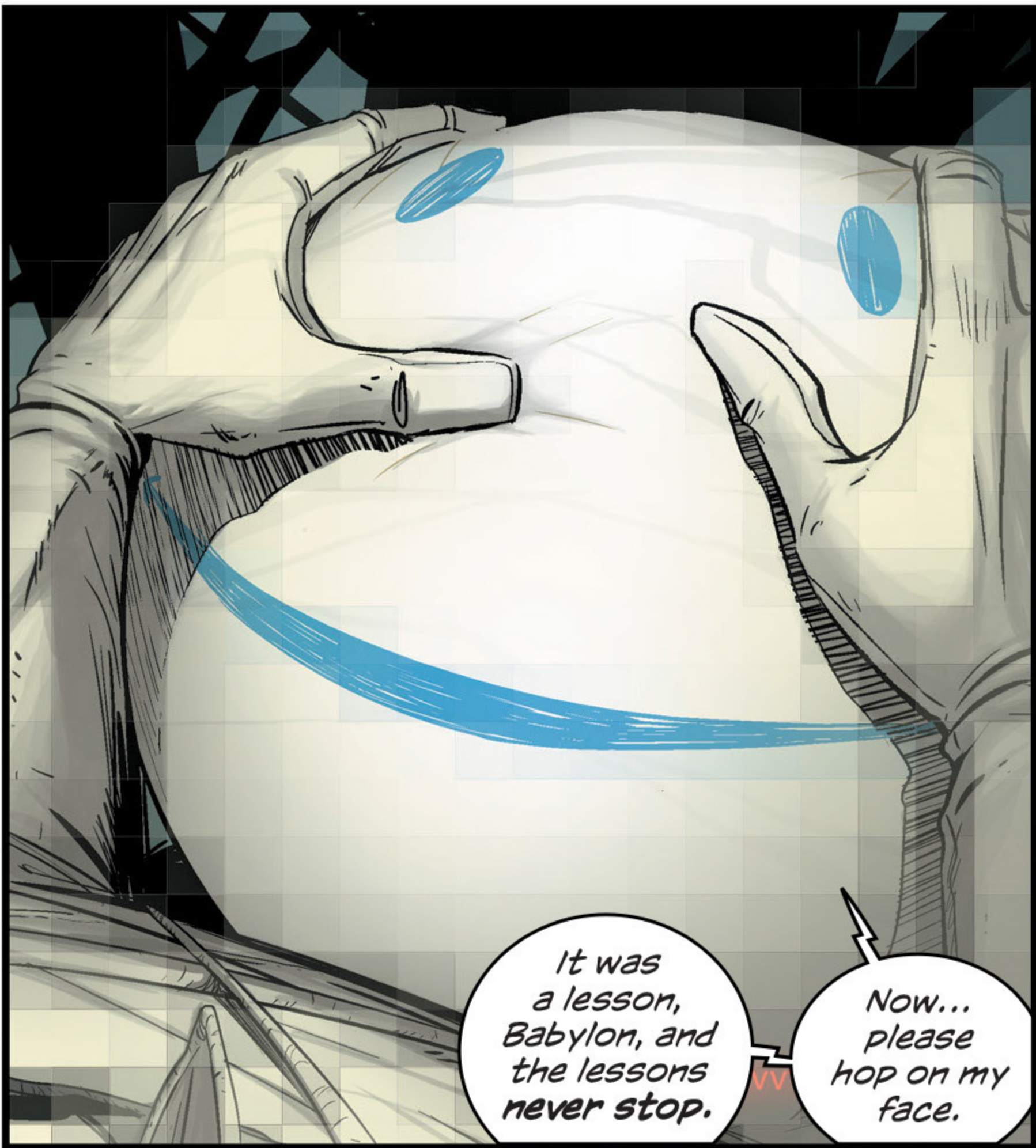
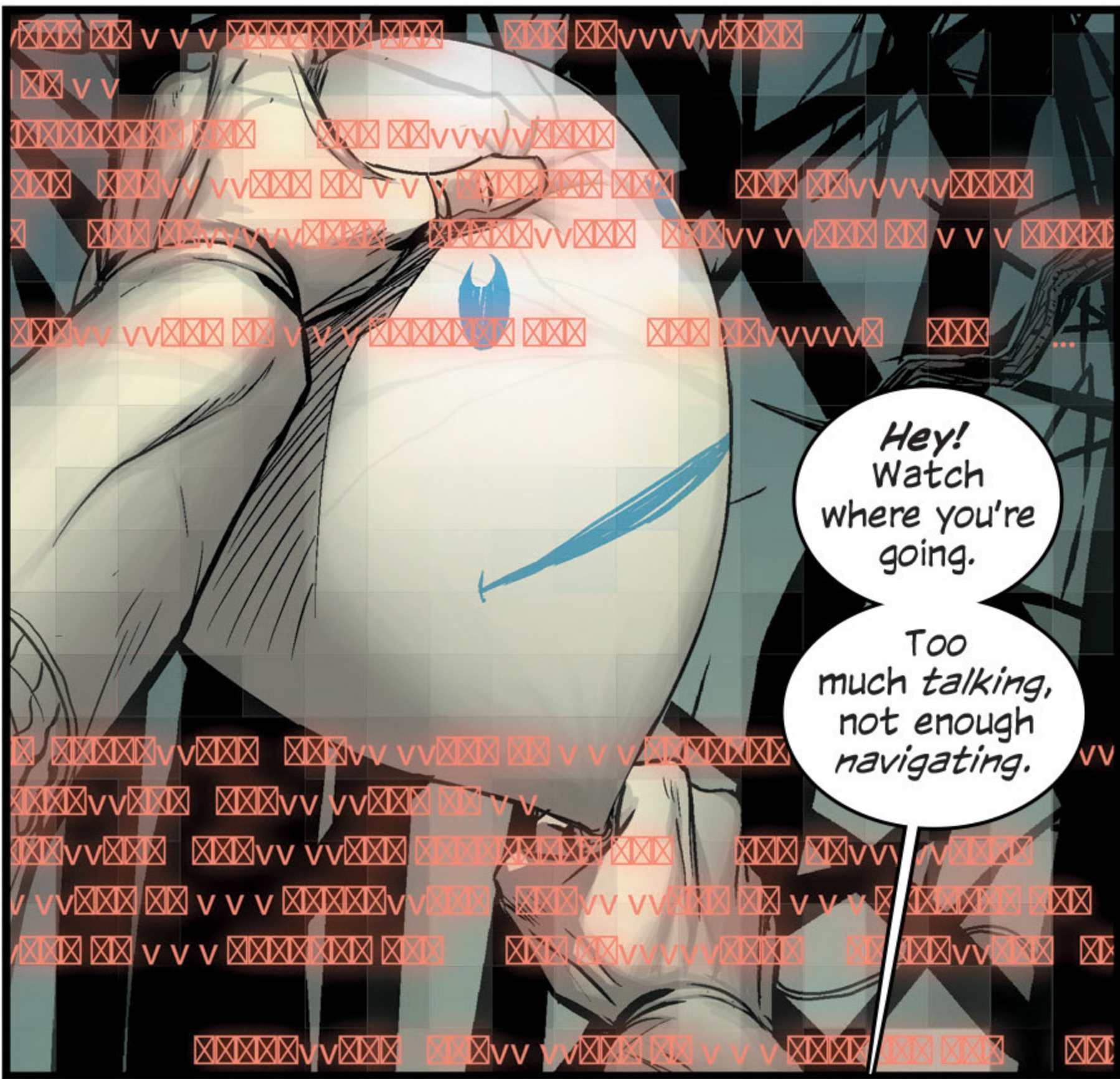
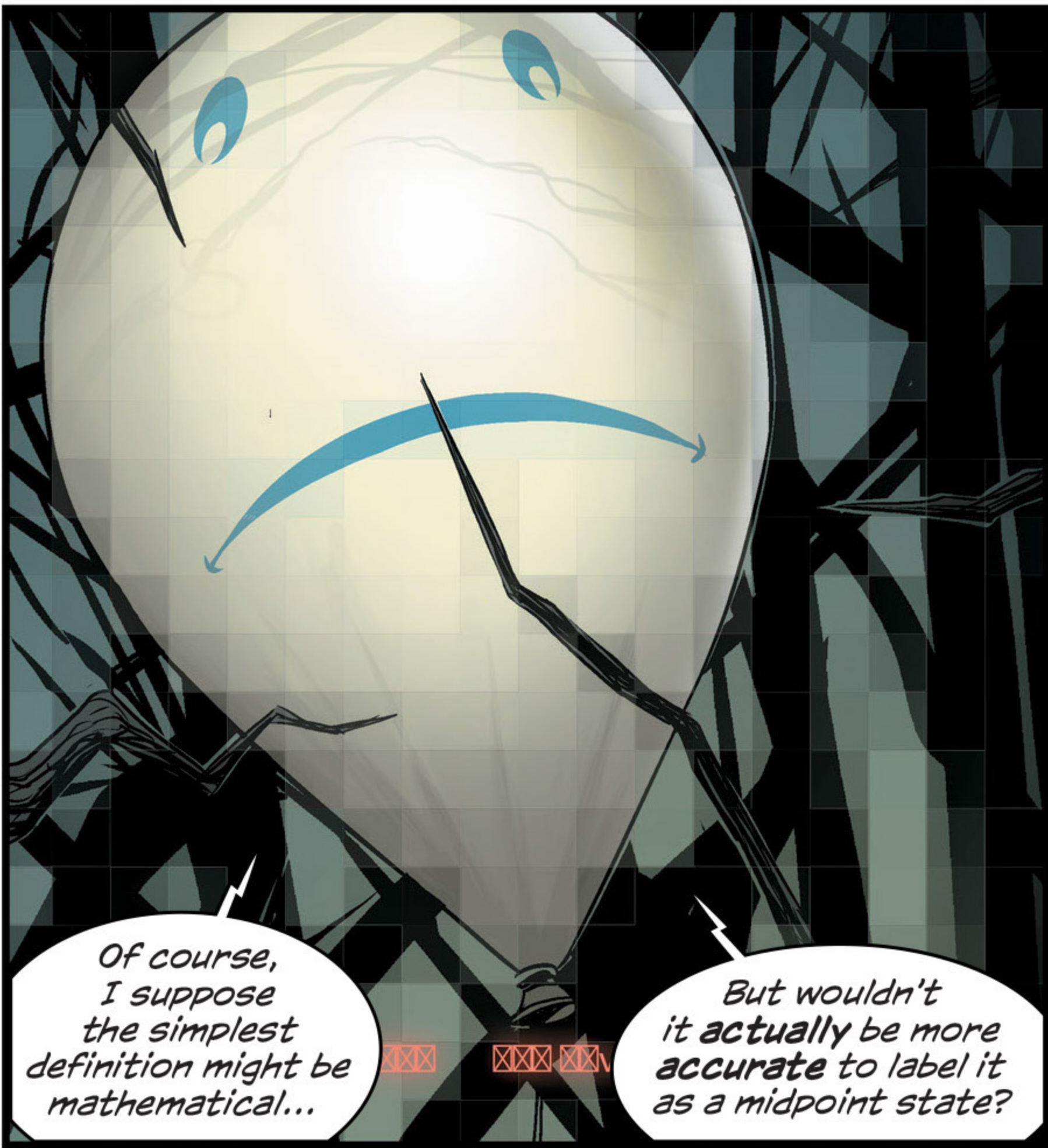
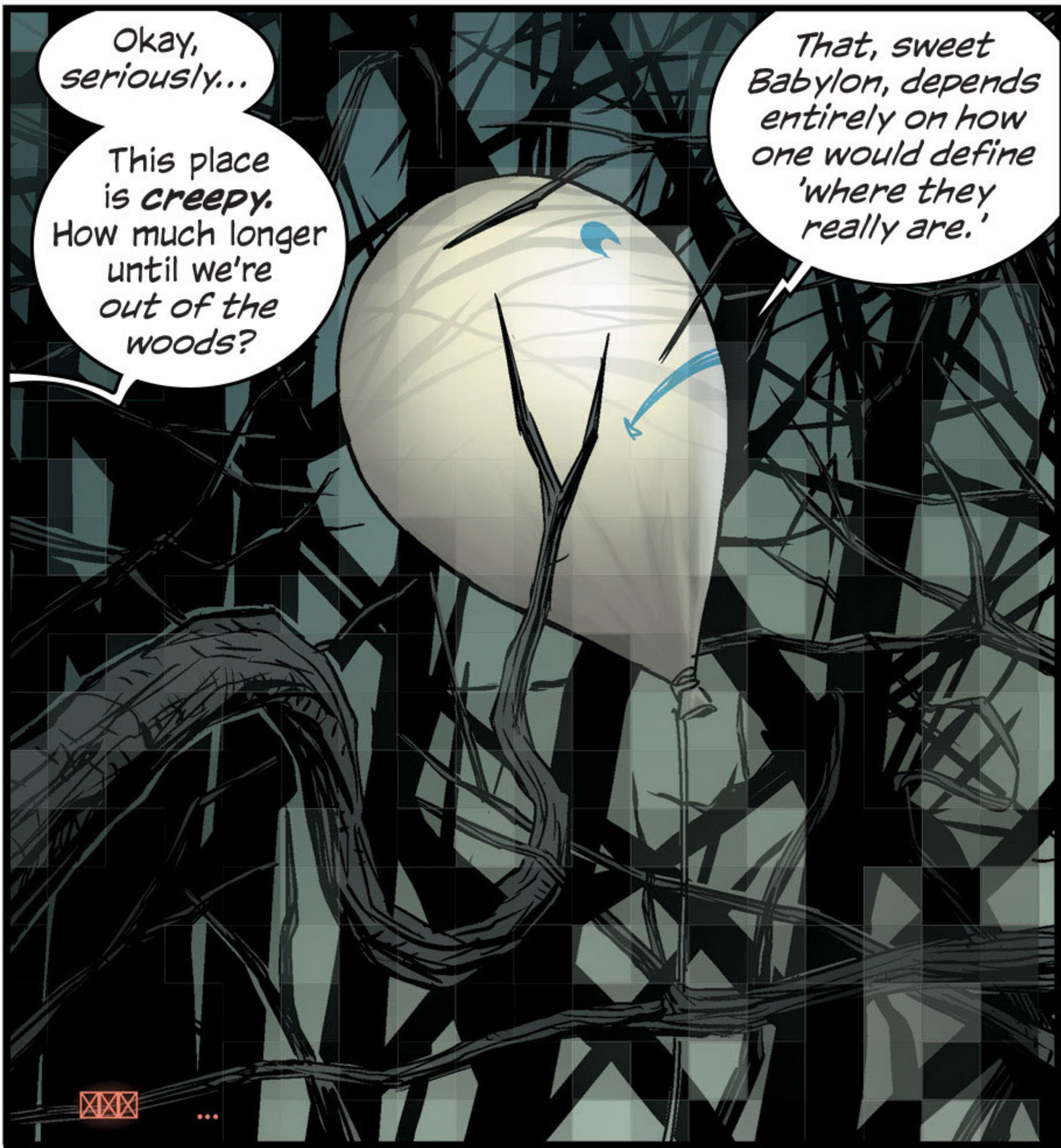




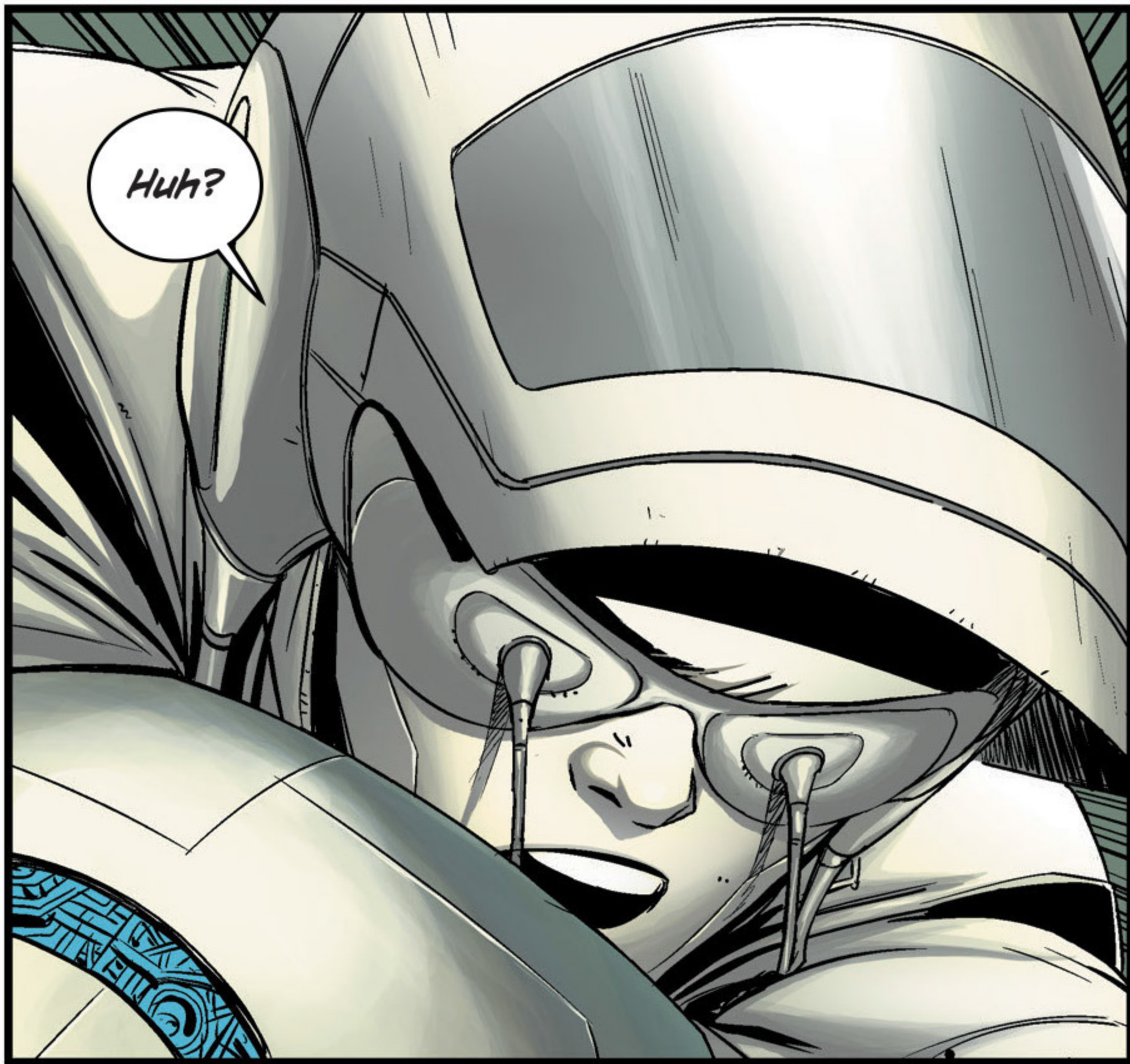
**SPIN** AGAINST THE **AXIS**.



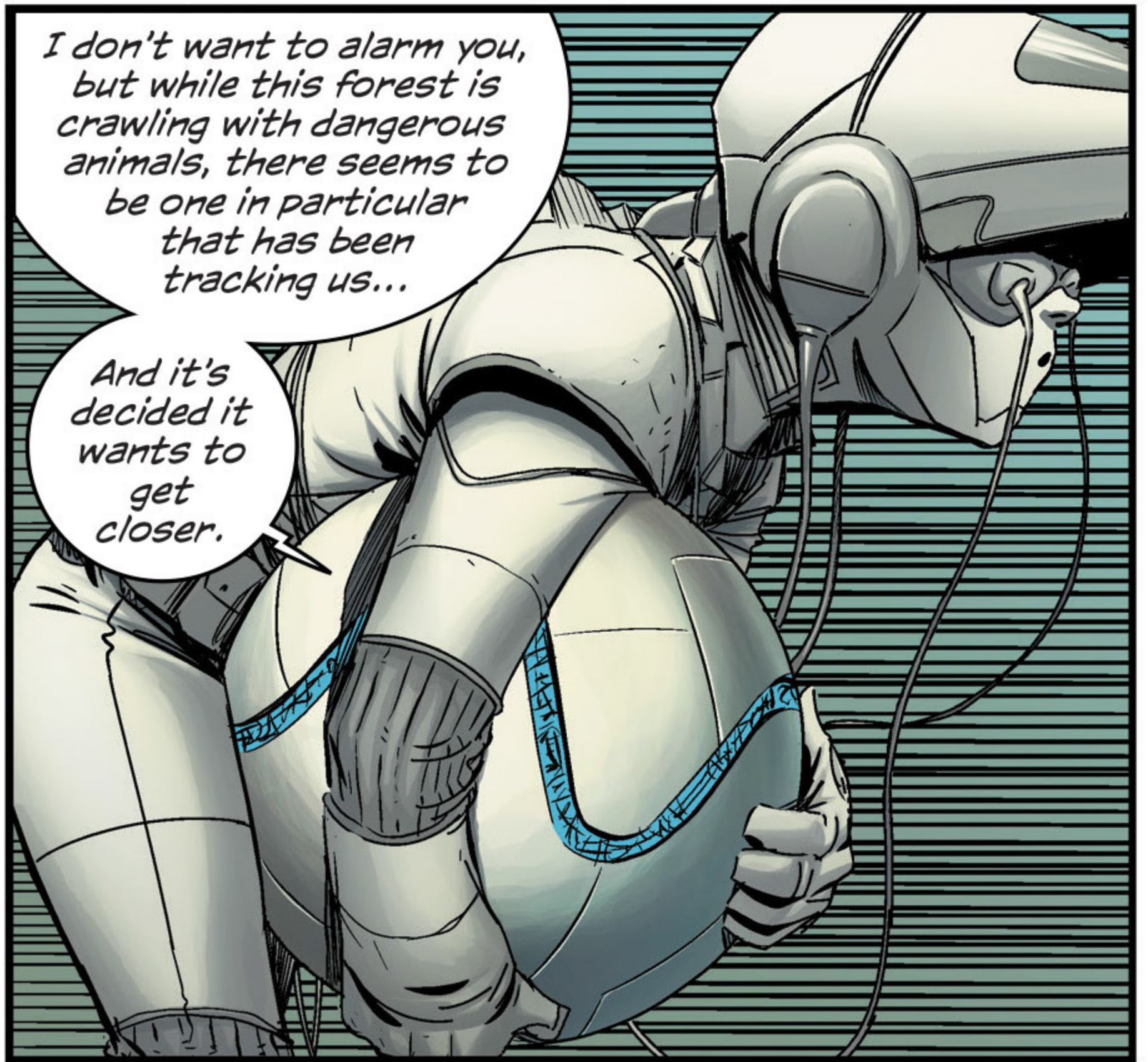






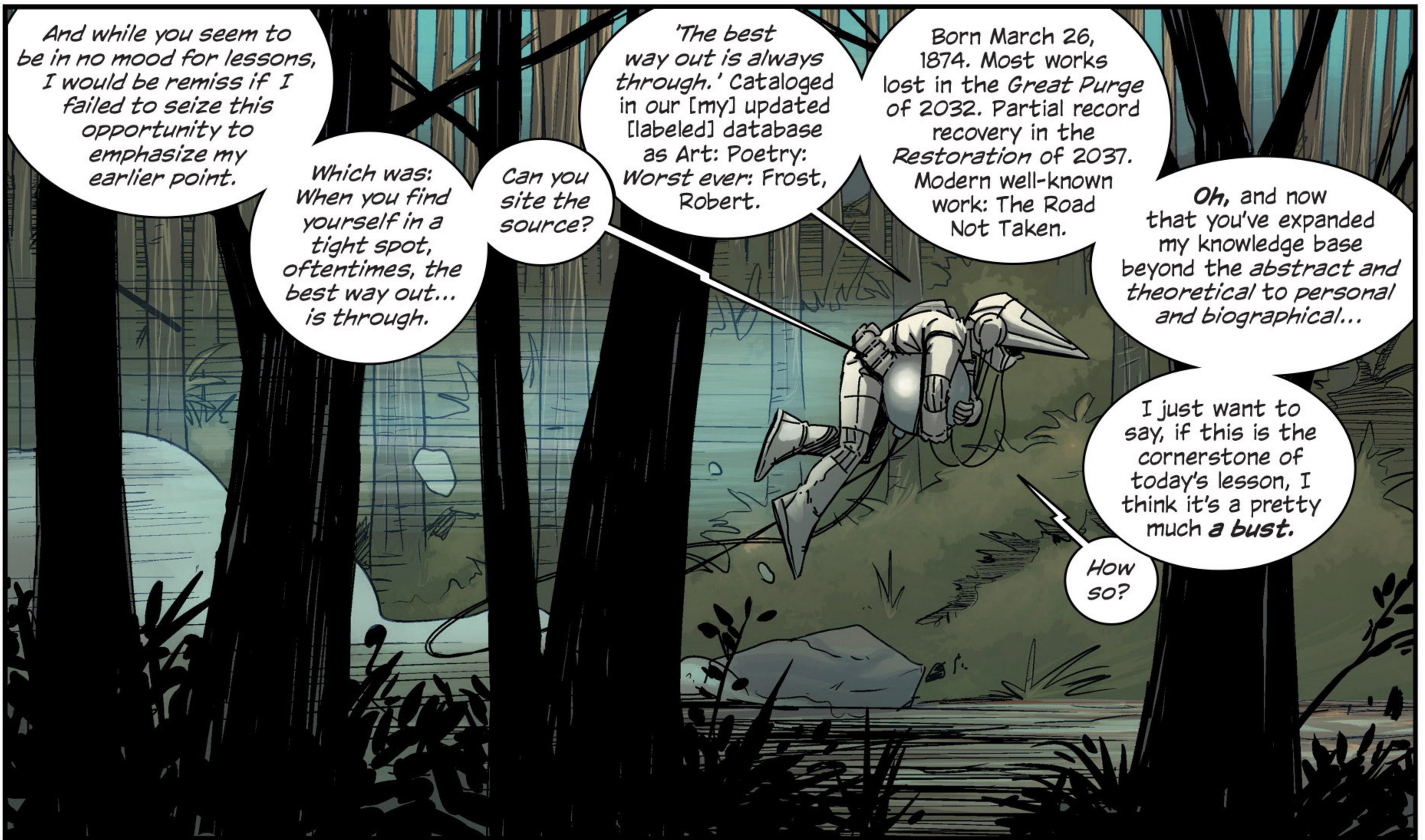


Huh?



I don't want to alarm you, but while this forest is crawling with dangerous animals, there seems to be one in particular that has been tracking us...

And it's decided it wants to get closer.



And while you seem to be in no mood for lessons, I would be remiss if I failed to seize this opportunity to emphasize my earlier point.

Which was: When you find yourself in a tight spot, oftentimes, the best way out... is through.

Can you site the source?

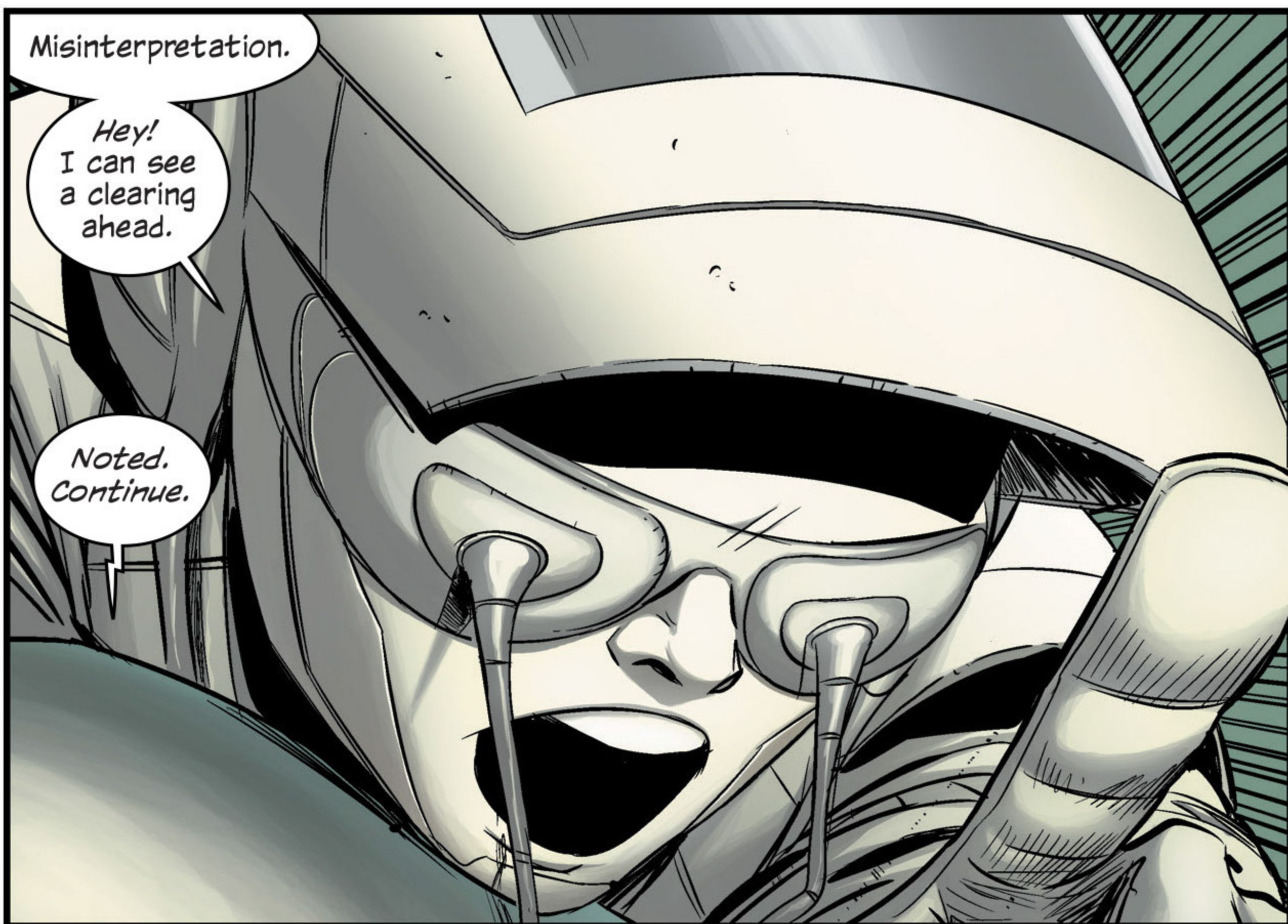
'The best way out is always through.' Cataloged in our [my] updated [labeled] database as Art: Poetry: Worst ever: Frost, Robert.

Born March 26, 1874. Most works lost in the Great Purge of 2032. Partial record recovery in the Restoration of 2037. Modern well-known work: The Road Not Taken.

Oh, and now that you've expanded my knowledge base beyond the abstract and theoretical to personal and biographical...

I just want to say, if this is the cornerstone of today's lesson, I think it's a pretty much *a bust*.

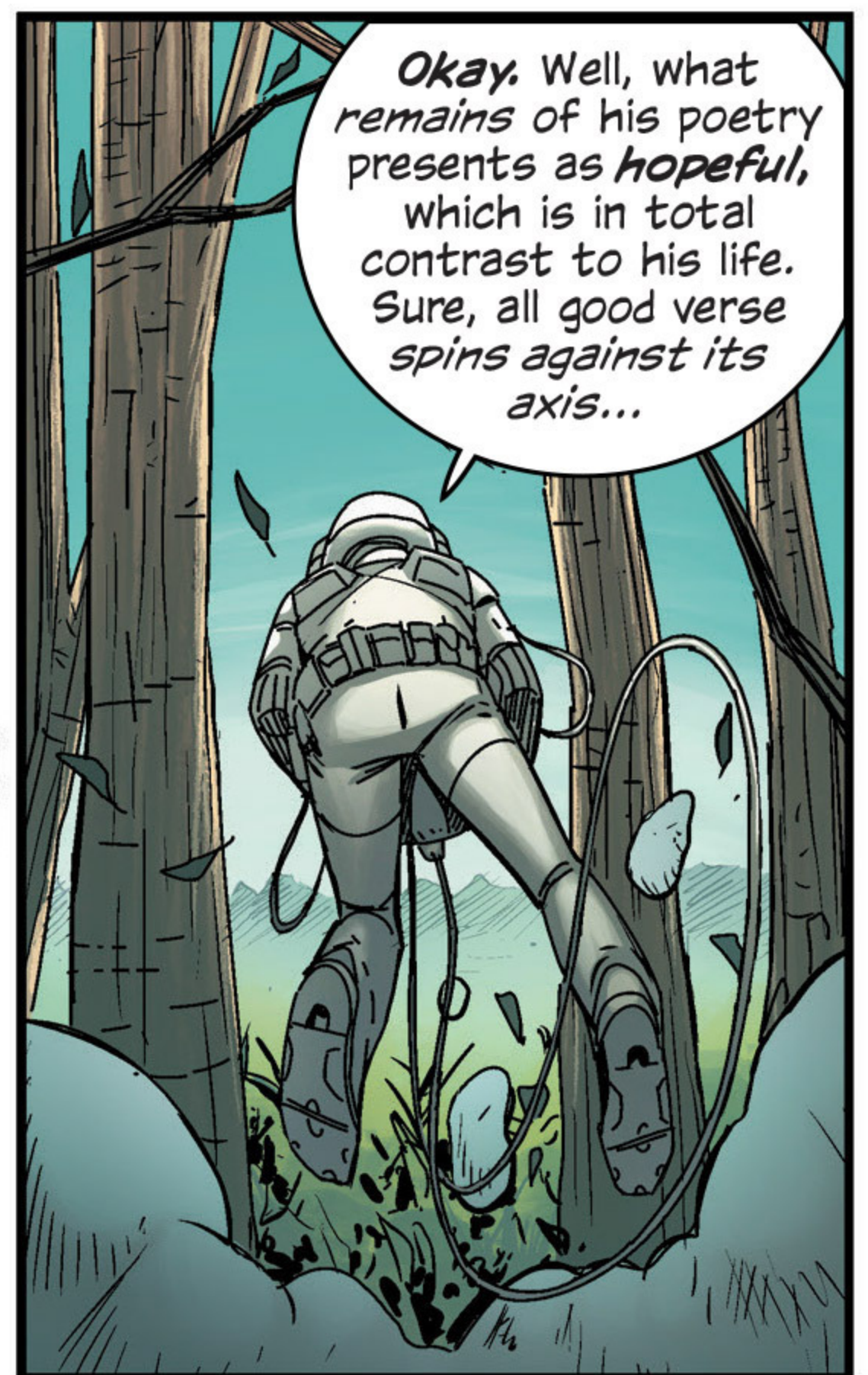
How so?



Misinterpretation.

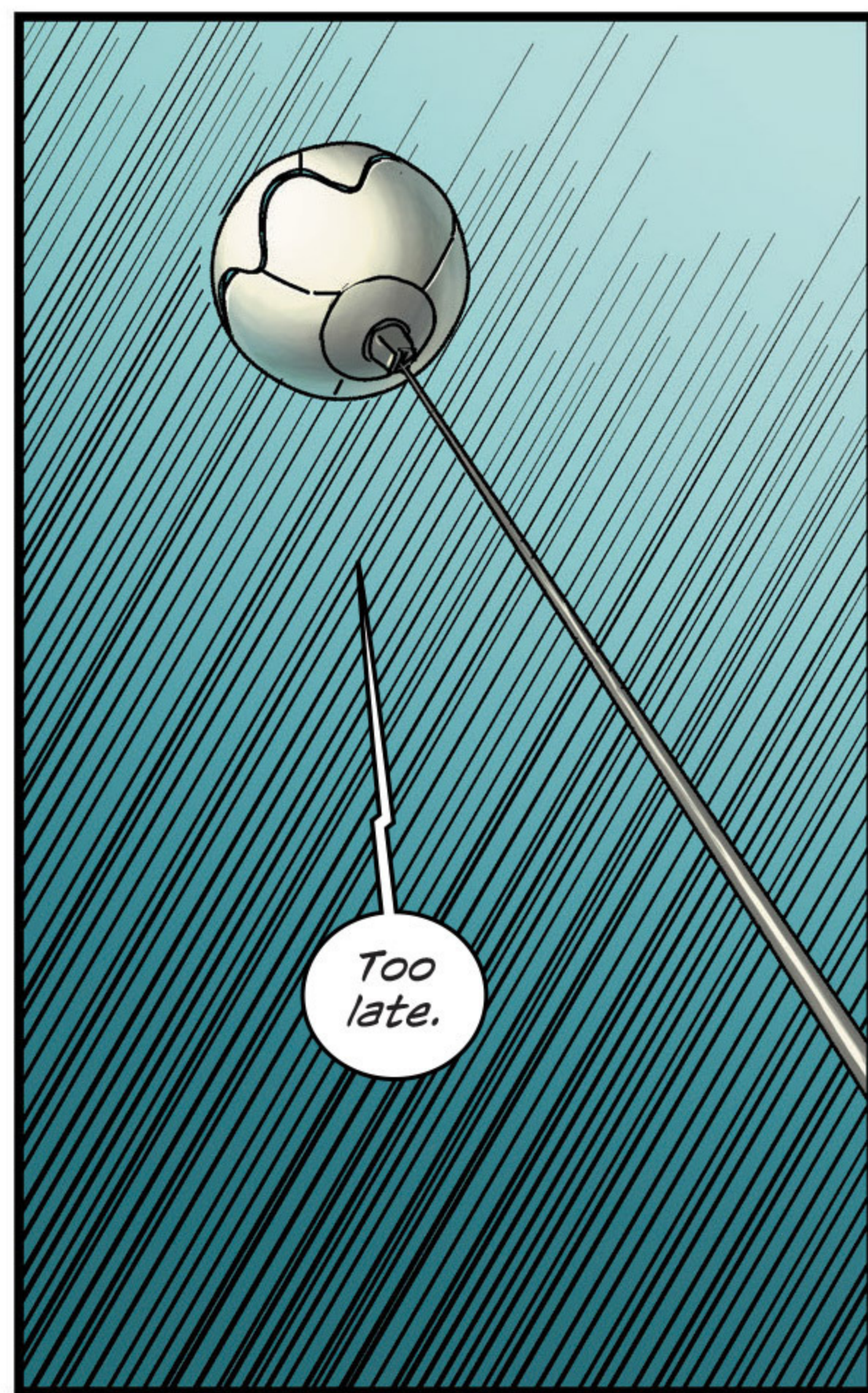
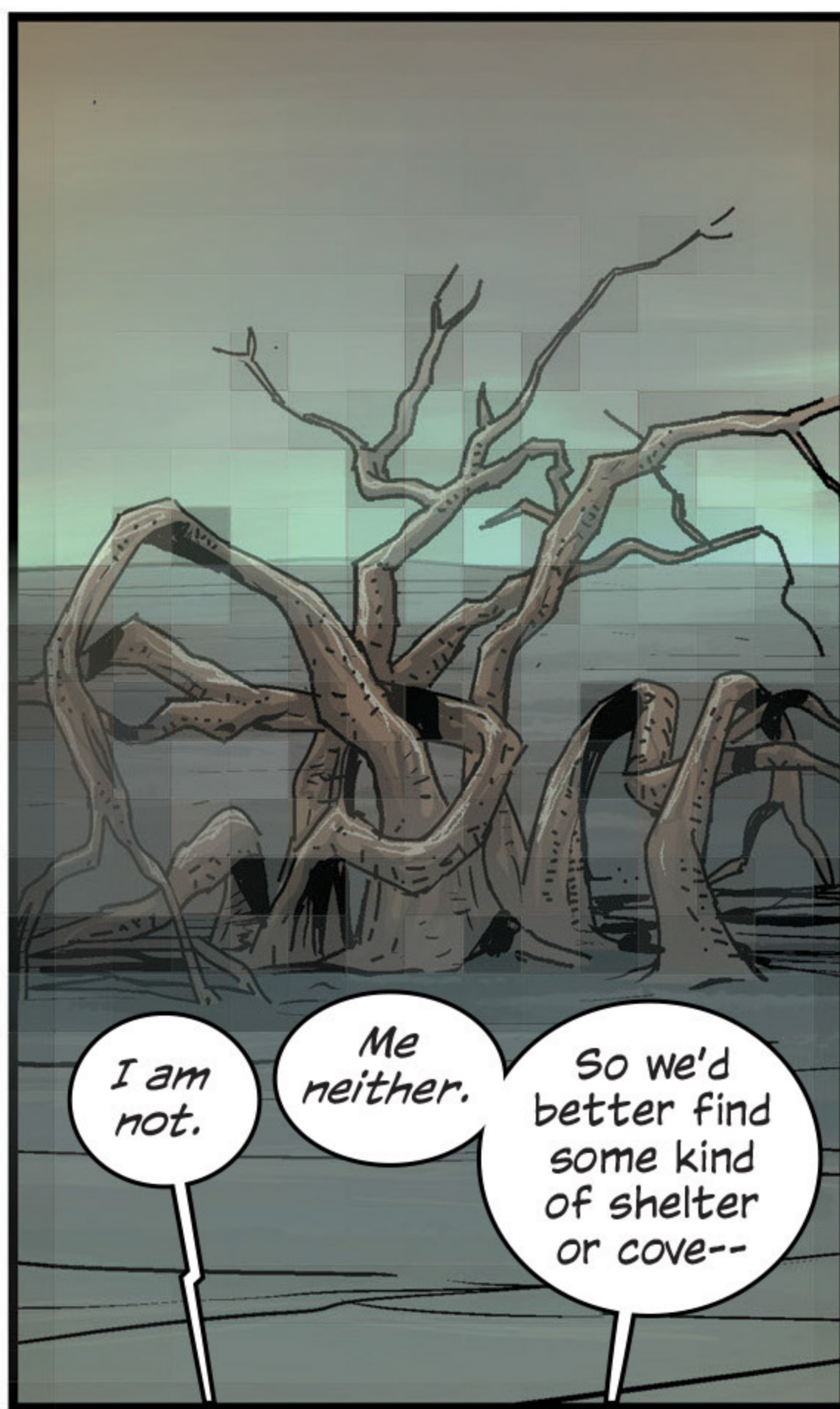
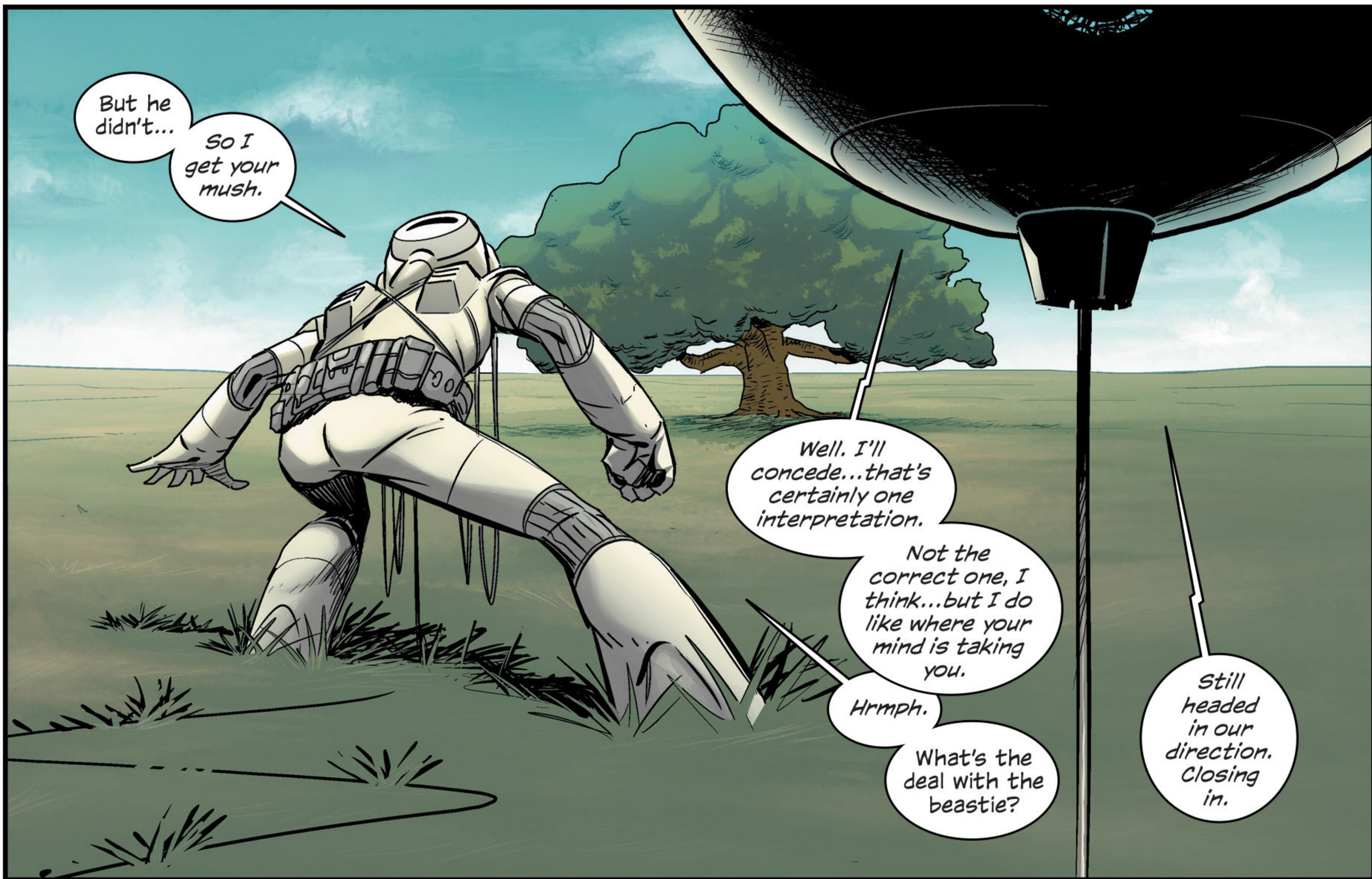
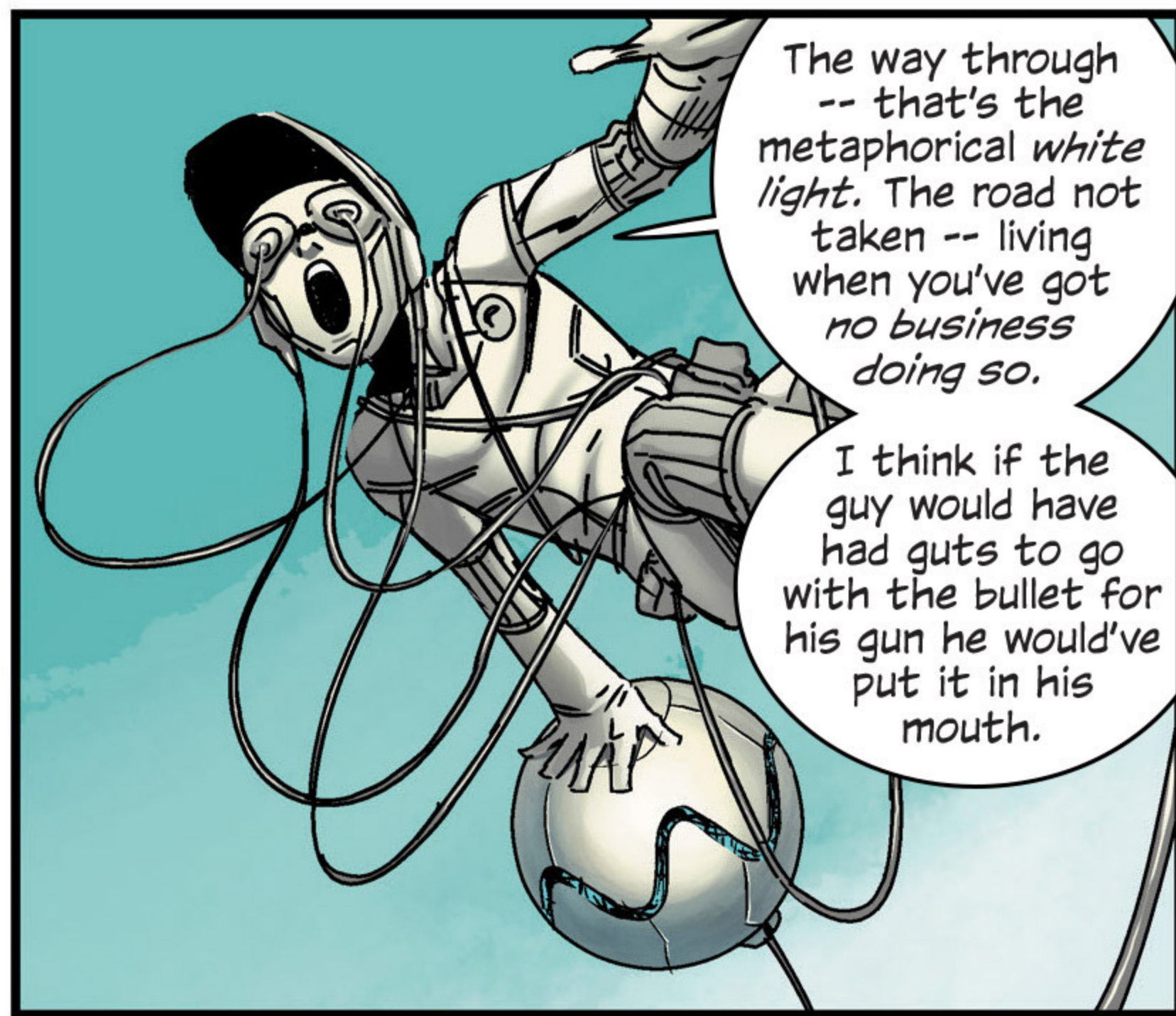
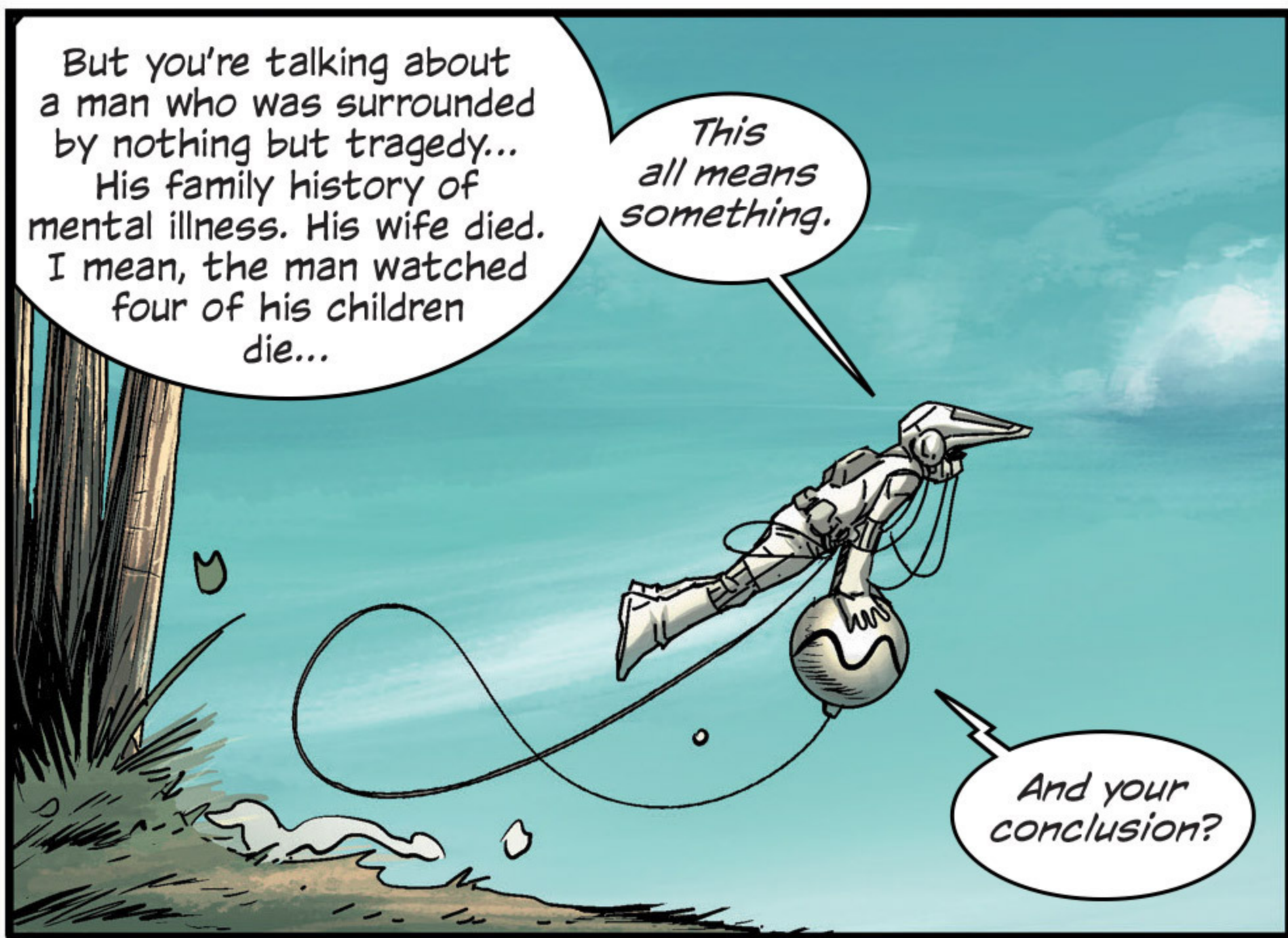
Hey! I can see a clearing ahead.

Noted. Continue.

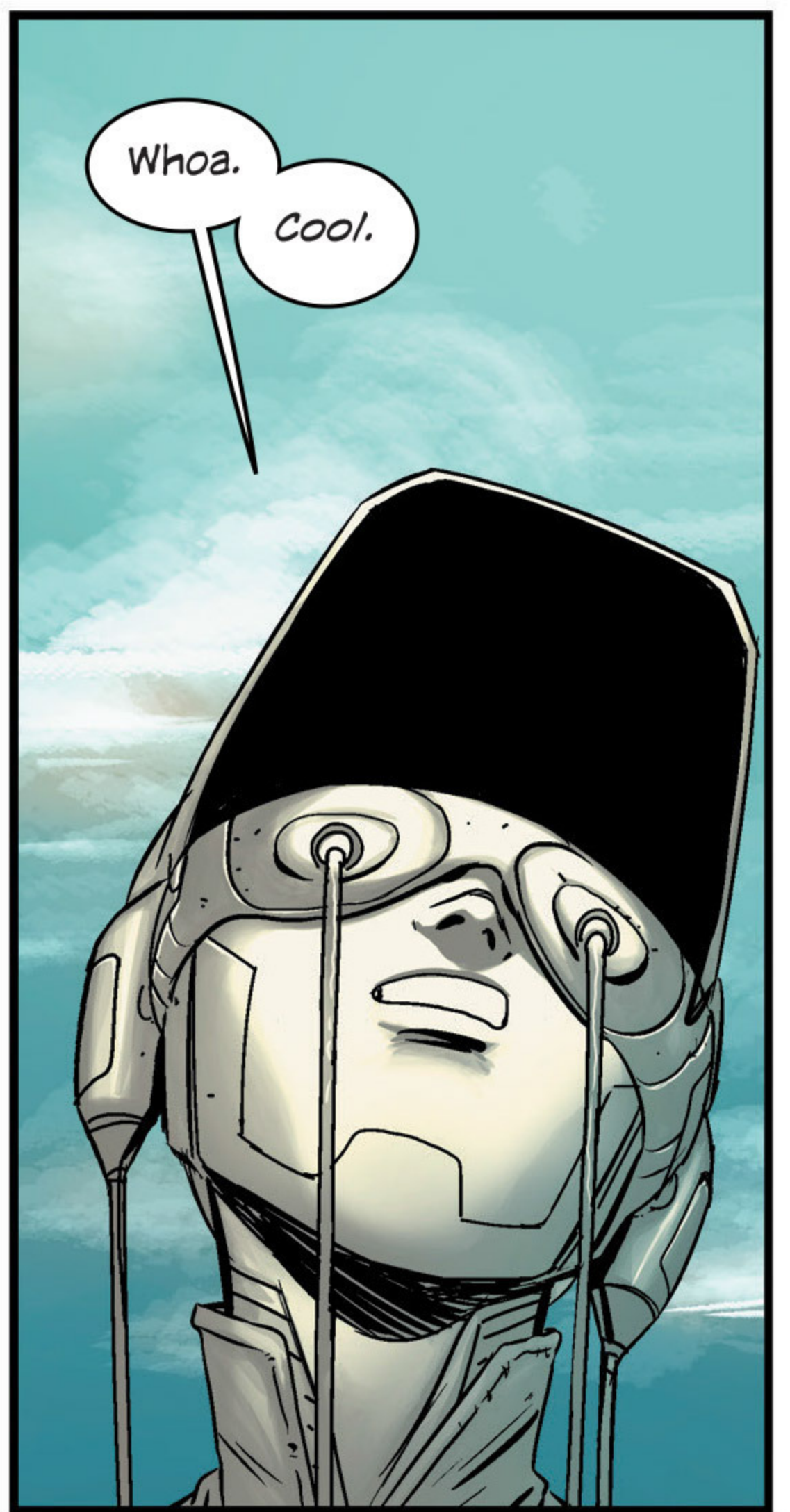
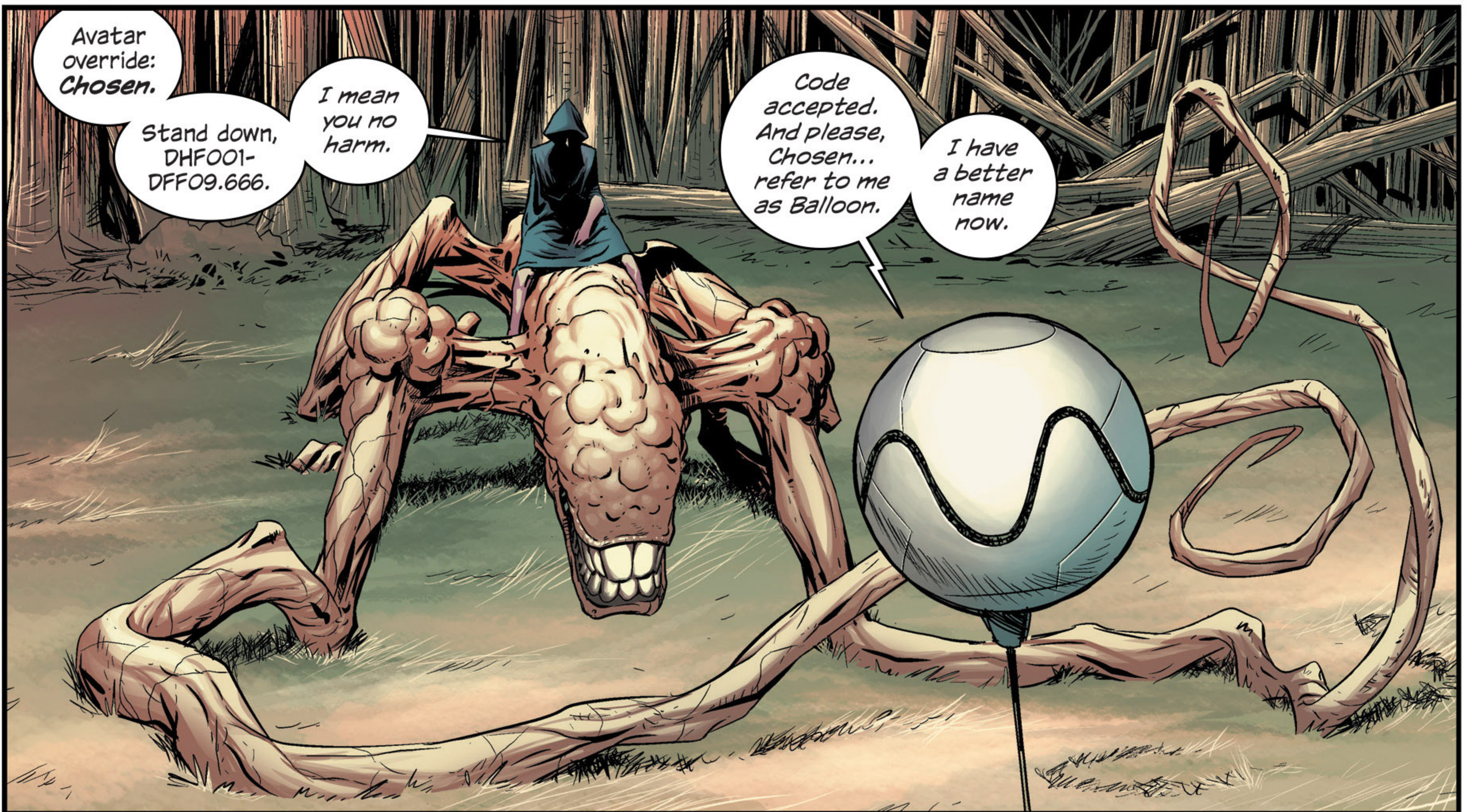
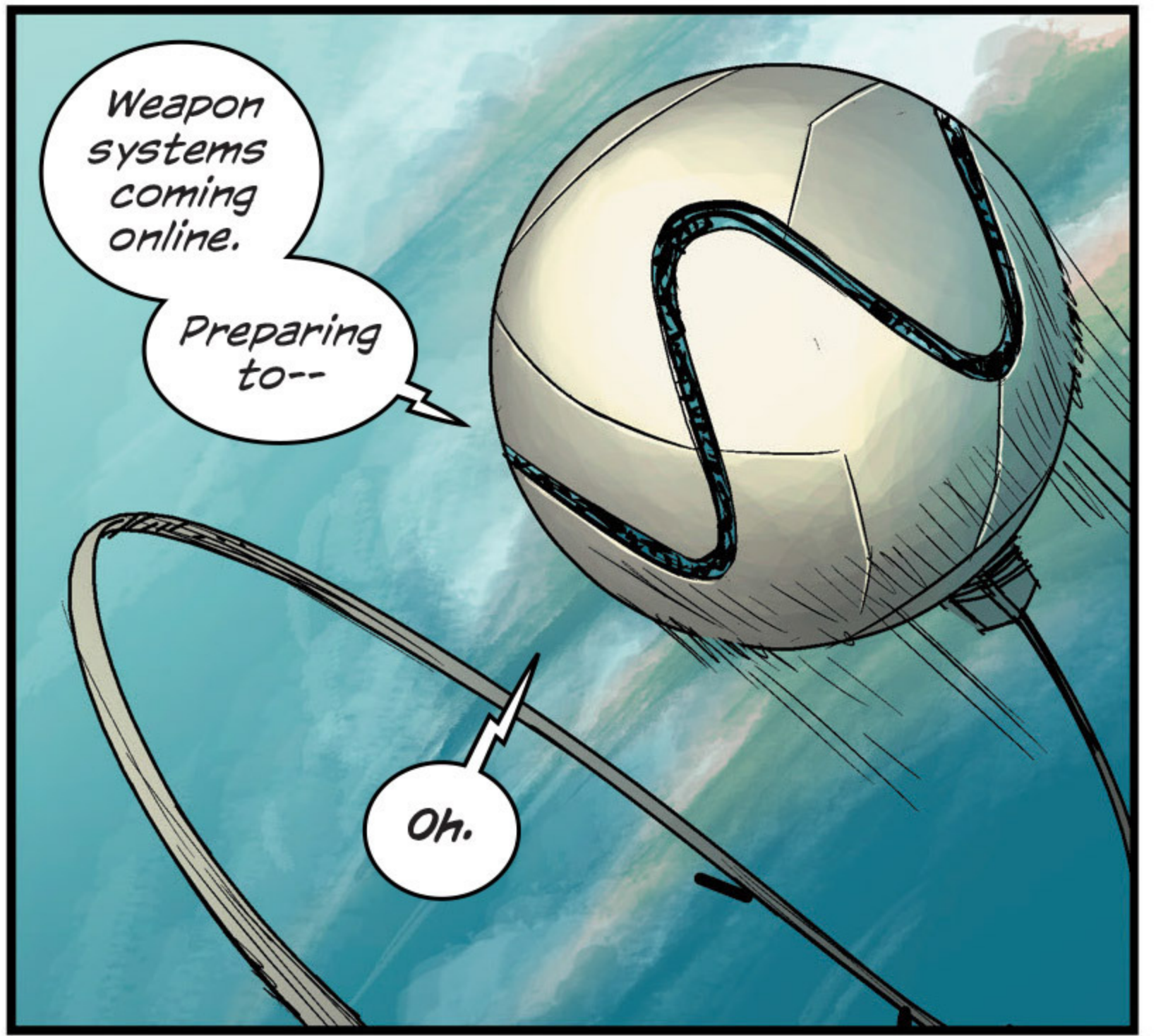
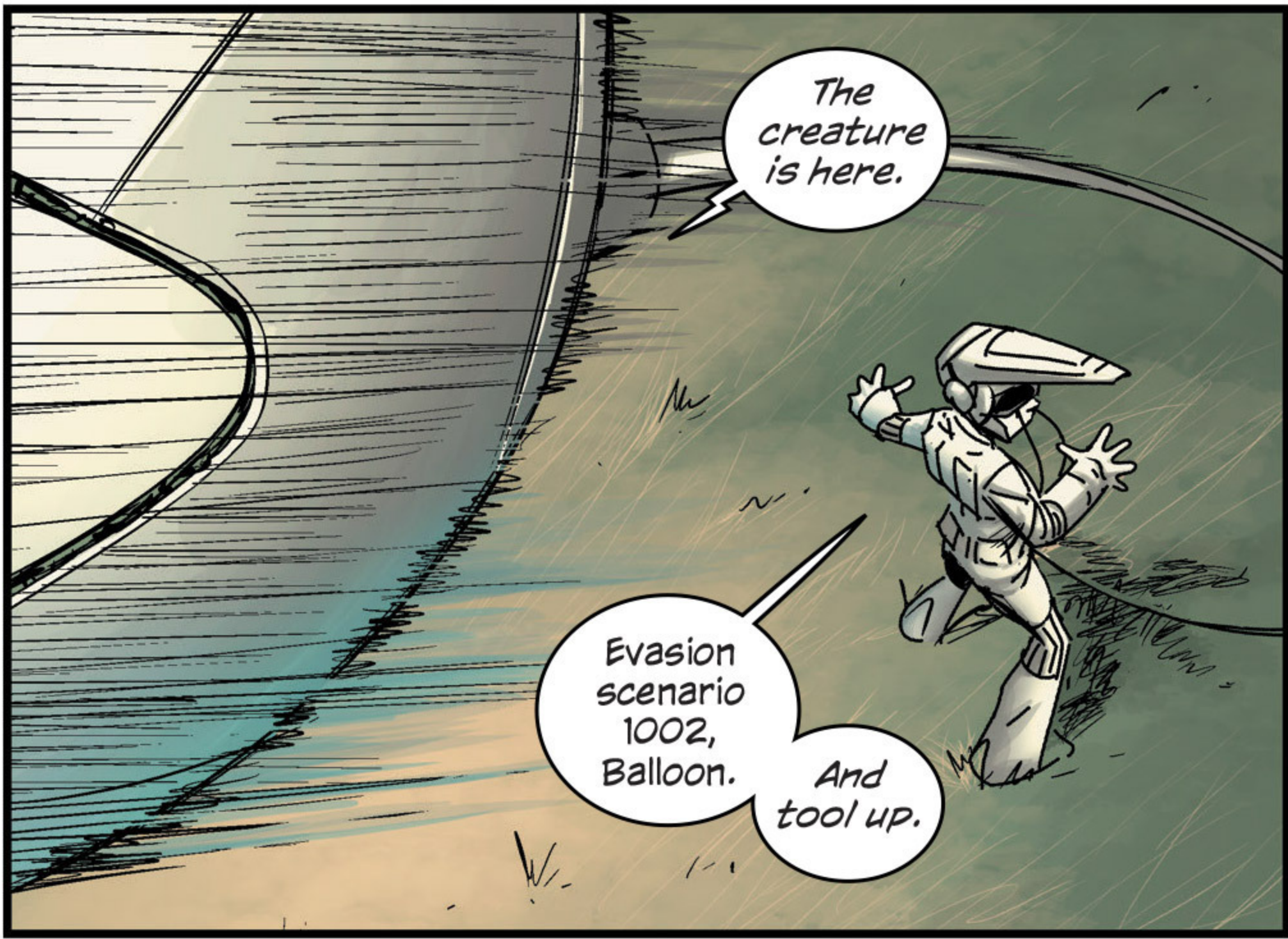


Okay. Well, what remains of his poetry presents as *hopeful*, which is in total contrast to his life. Sure, all good verse spins against its axis...











I am the  
*Prophet*  
*Orion...*

And  
am very  
*pleased*  
to see you  
again.



11111111 11111111 111111 1111 1111 11111111 1111 111111111111  
 1111111111 111111 111111 1111 1111  
 1111111111 111111 111111 1111111111 1111  
 1111111111 111111 111111 1111 1111 1111111111 1111 1111111111111111  
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 1111111111111111 111111111111 111111111111 111111 111111 1111111111111111  
 111111111111 111111 111111 1111 1111 1111111111 1111 111111111111 1111 ...



I AM AN **ORACLE** OF THE  
**TIMES.**

WATCH ME **LAUGH.** HEAR  
ME **LIE.**







# 18



**EIGHTEEN:**  
YOURS AND YOURS  
ALONE



WE ARE ALL SO **BLIND**,  
WON'T SOMEONE SHOW  
US **THE WAY**?





Here it is.  
Like some  
useless little  
worm...

I plucked it  
from its cradle  
while the mother  
**wept and**  
**mewed.**

Do you have  
any idea how  
hard it was not  
to *smother* the  
child where  
it *laid*?

Ignore,  
Sister War,  
my little  
Orion...

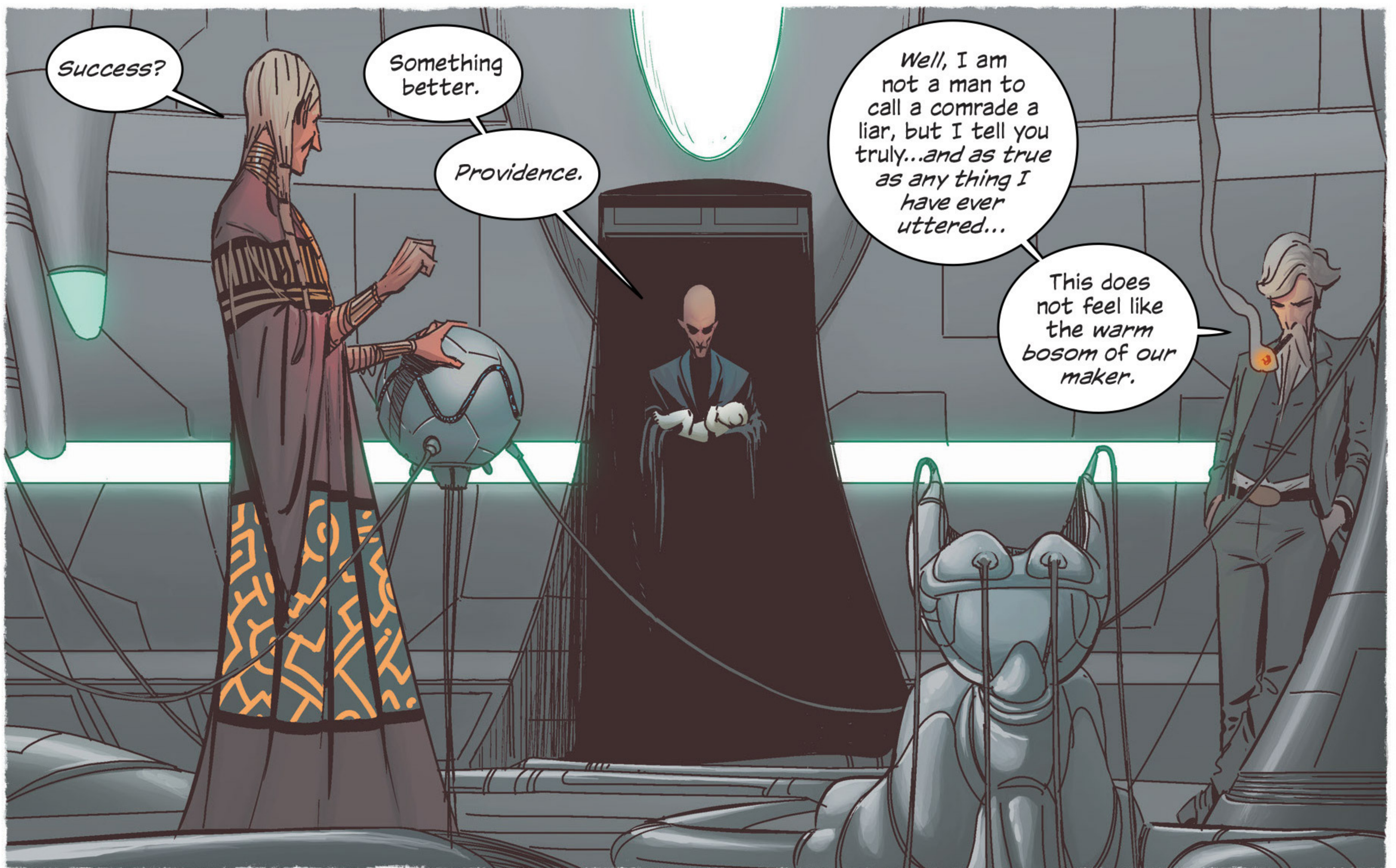
Her faith  
pales to **yours**  
and **mine.**











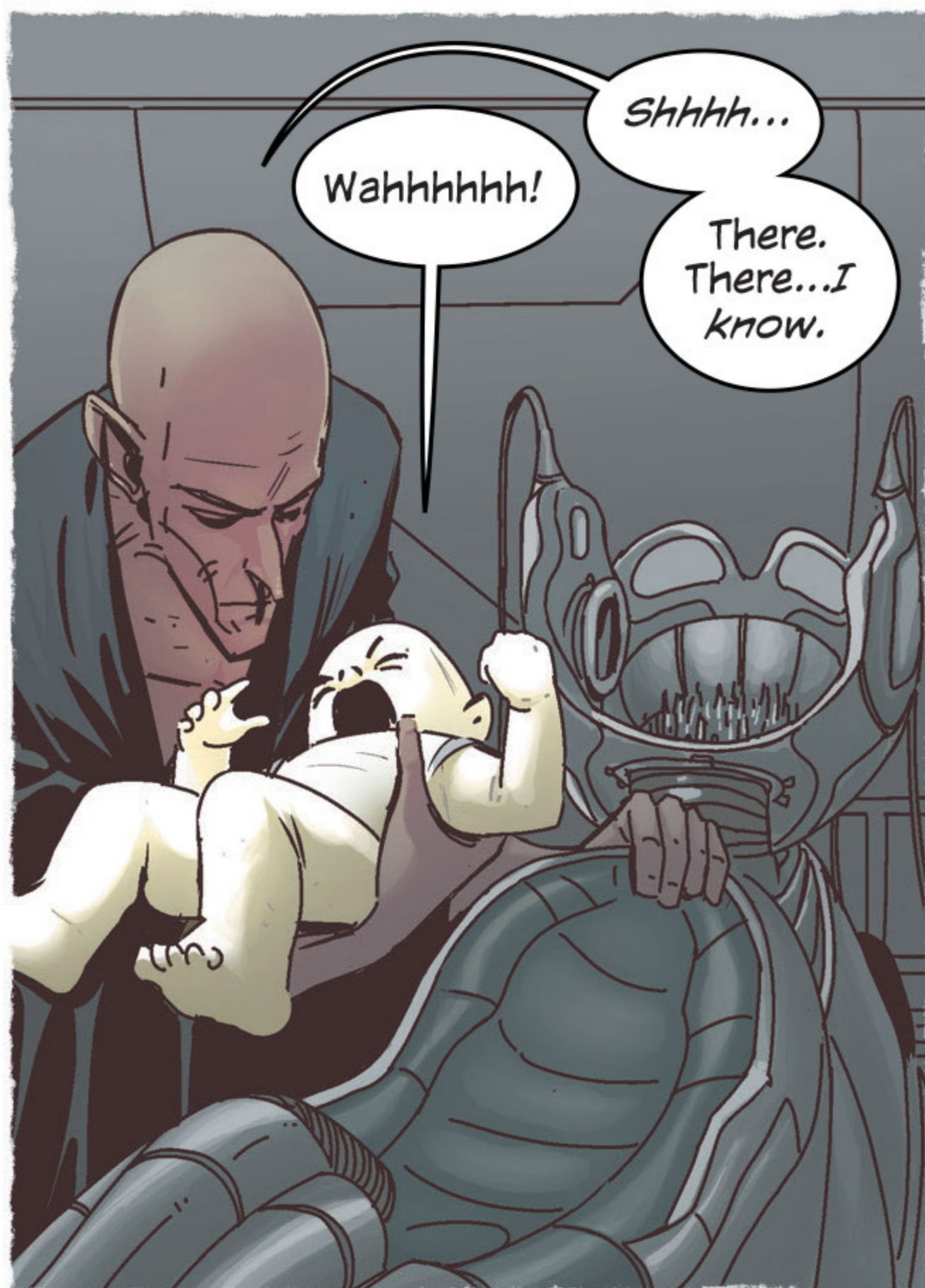
Success?

Something better.

Providence.

Well, I am not a man to call a comrade a liar, but I tell you truly...and as true as any thing I have ever uttered...

This does not feel like the warm bosom of our maker.



Wahhhhhh!

Shhhh...

There. There...I know.



This world has been no place for children for quite some time.

But you're going to bring forth a better world, so for now... we've prepared a better place for you.

Wahhhhhh!

Isn't that right, Cheveyo?



Not all loyalty to the old ways has been lost in the Machine City. I have brothers. I have sisters.

And these infernal thinking machines will serve our purpose well.



The program we designed is scalable and will need adjusting over time.

We will learn as he learns.



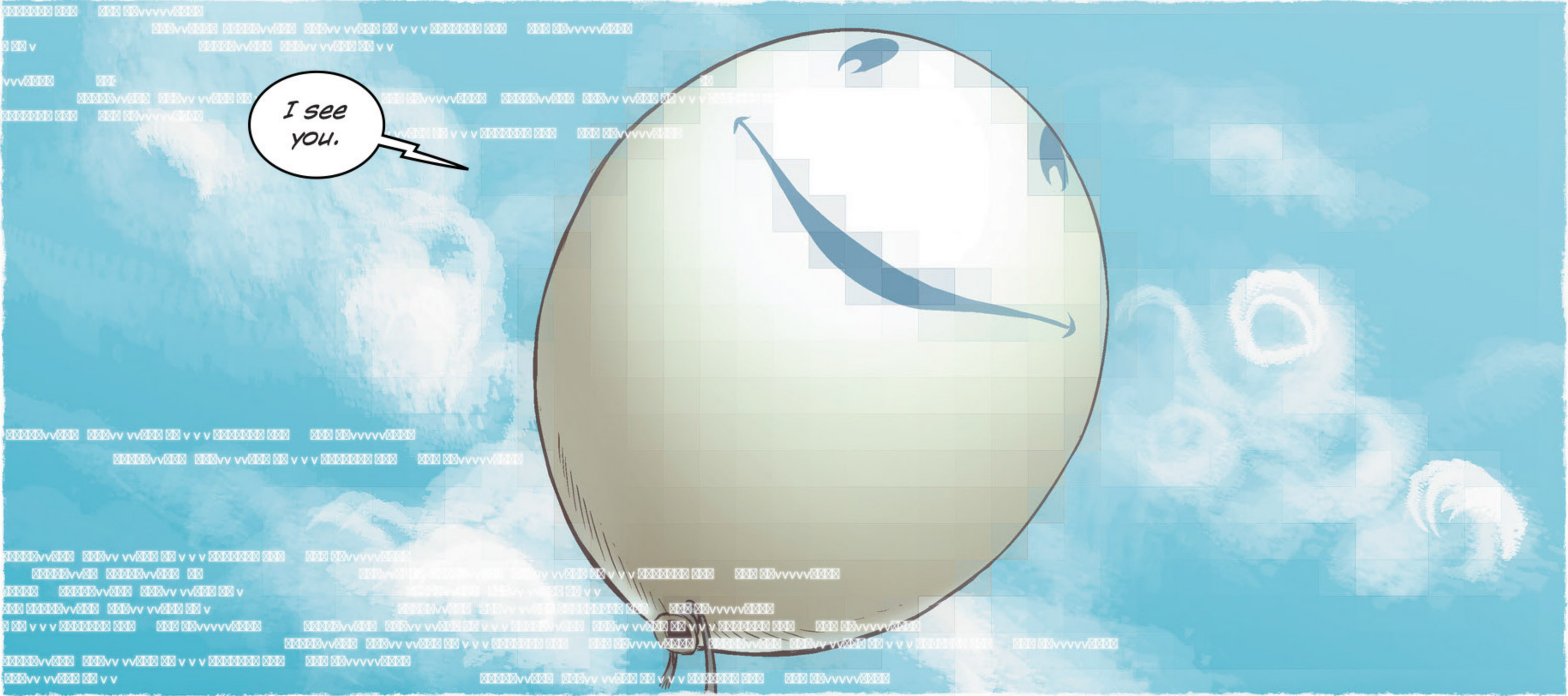
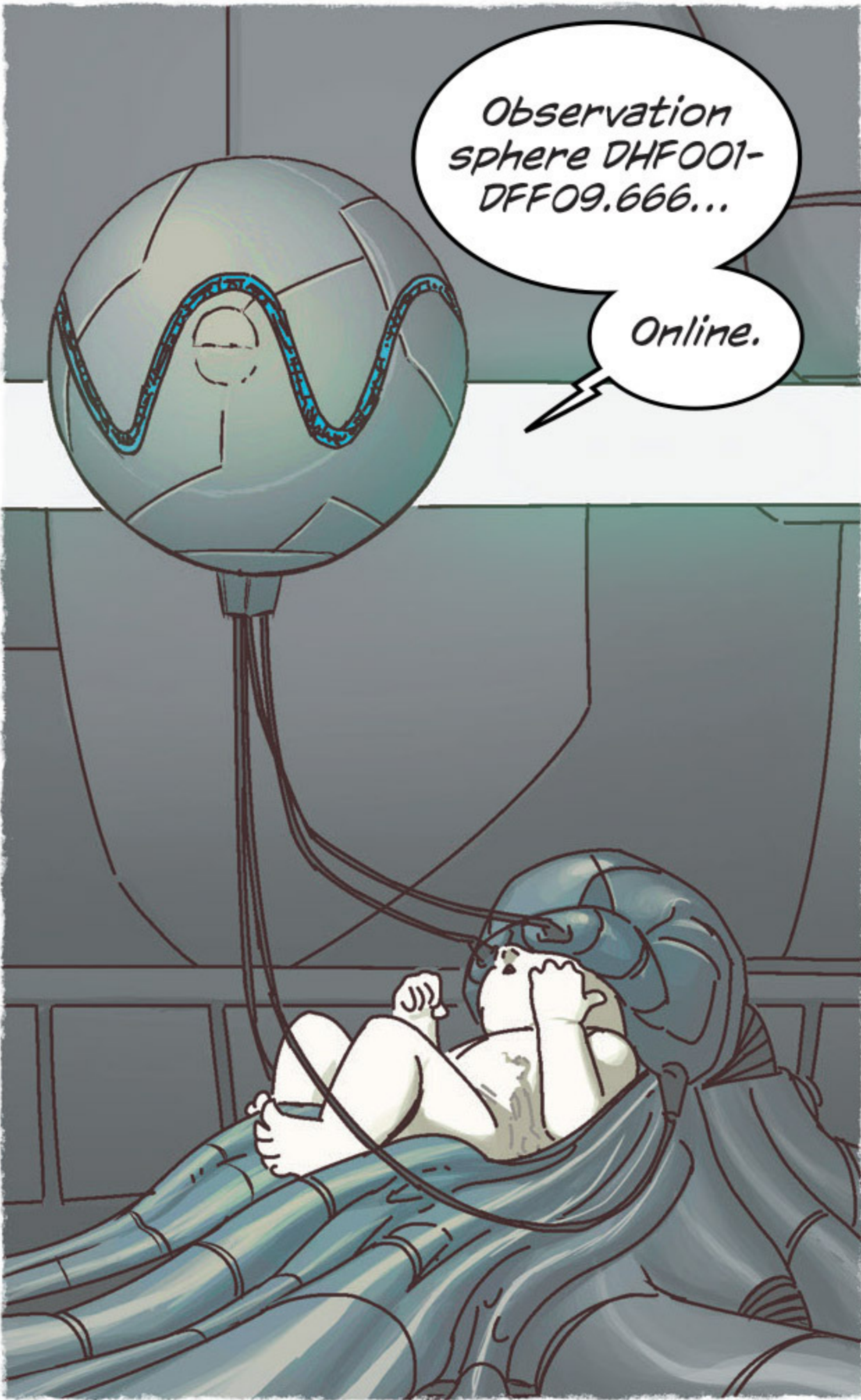
I suppose all that's left is...

click.

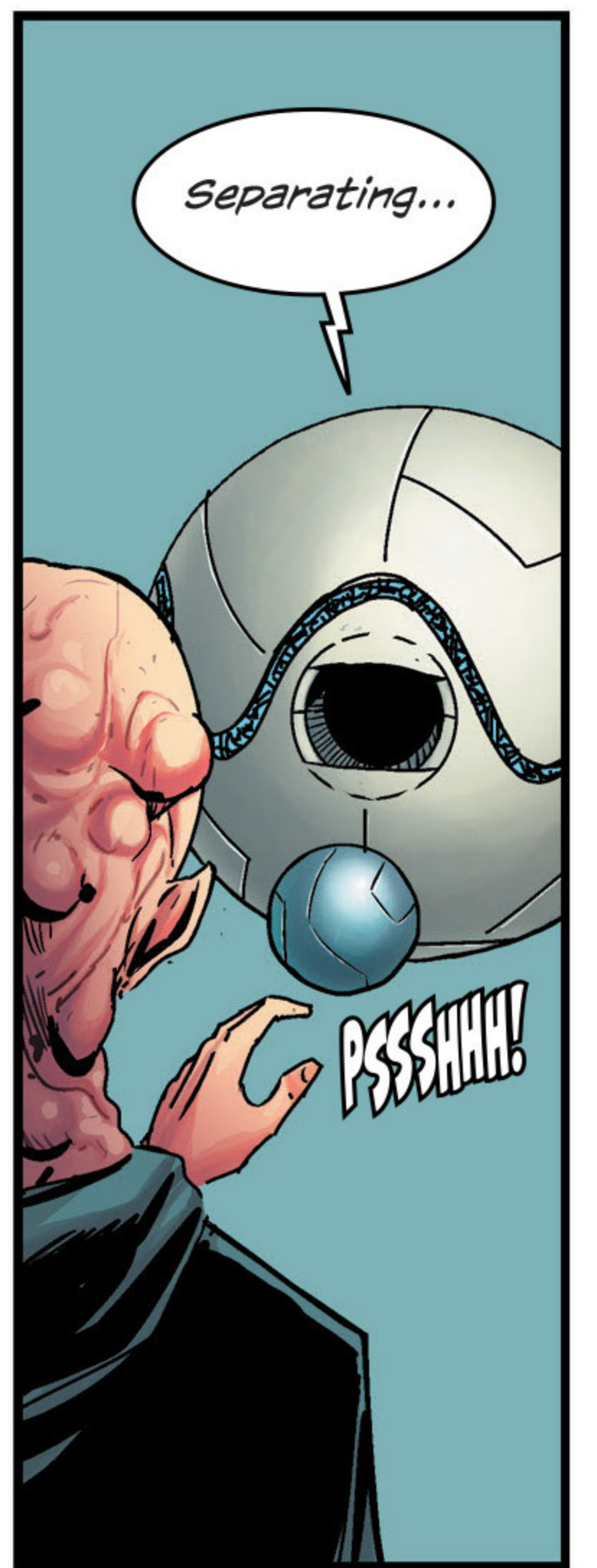
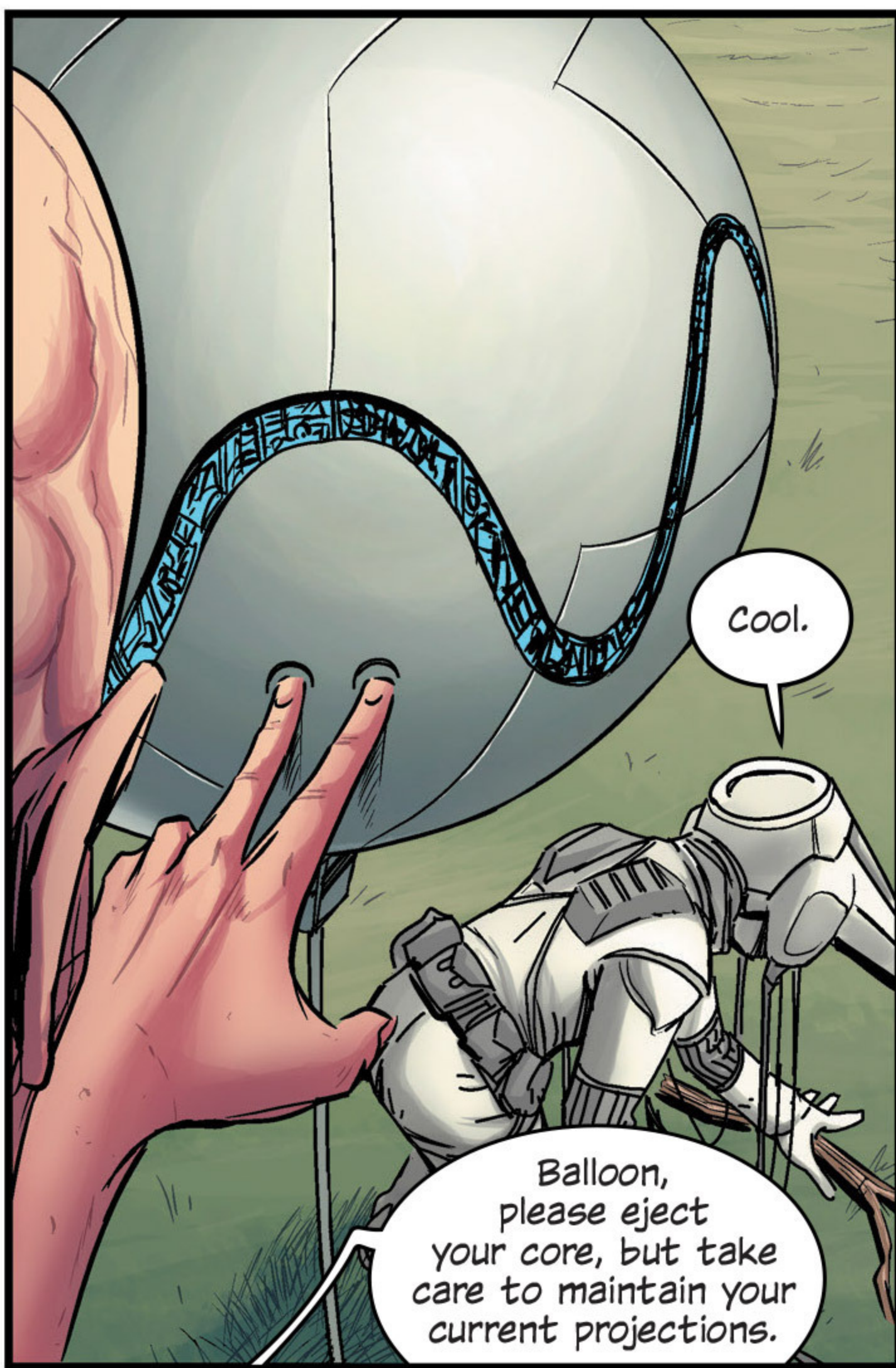
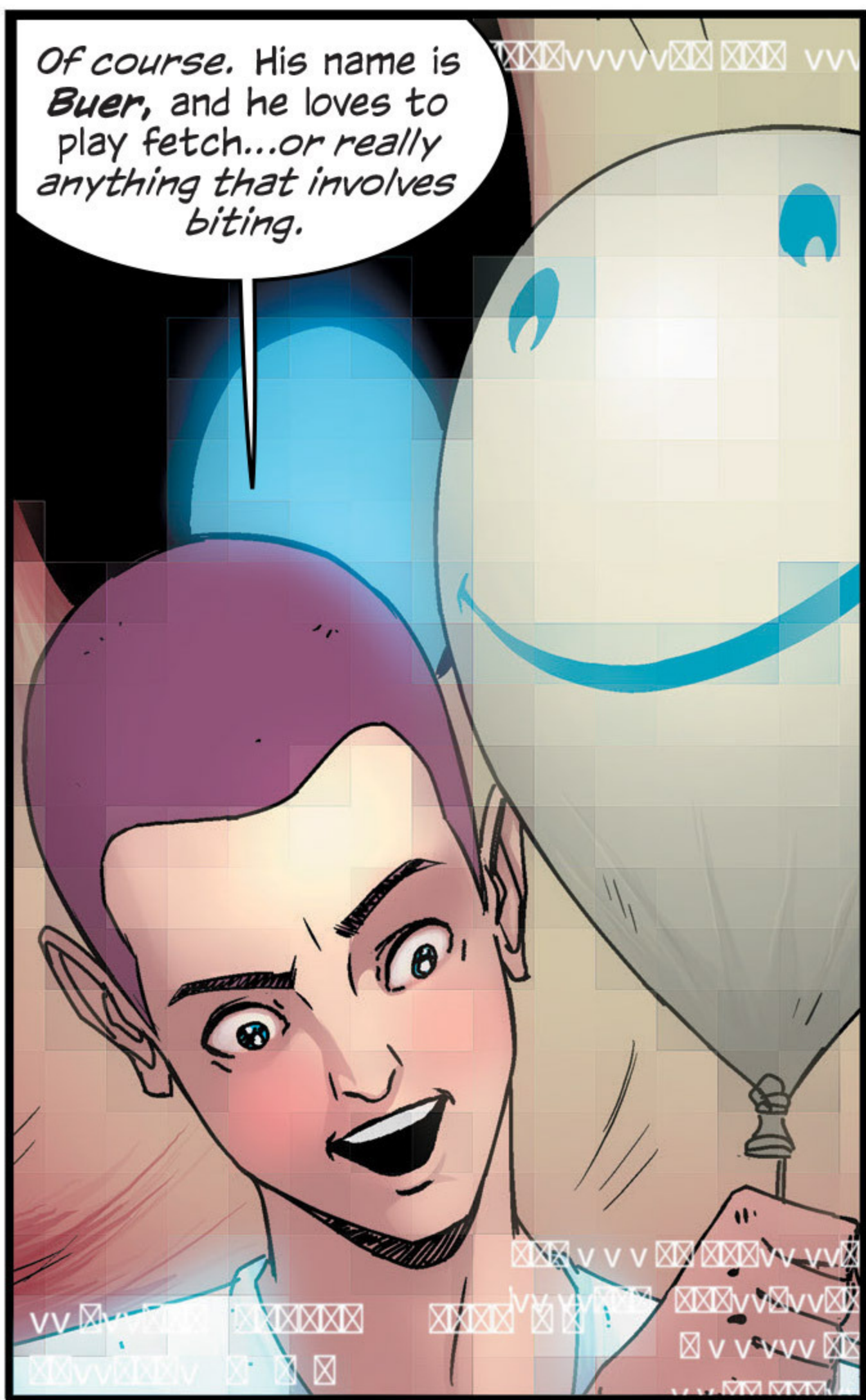
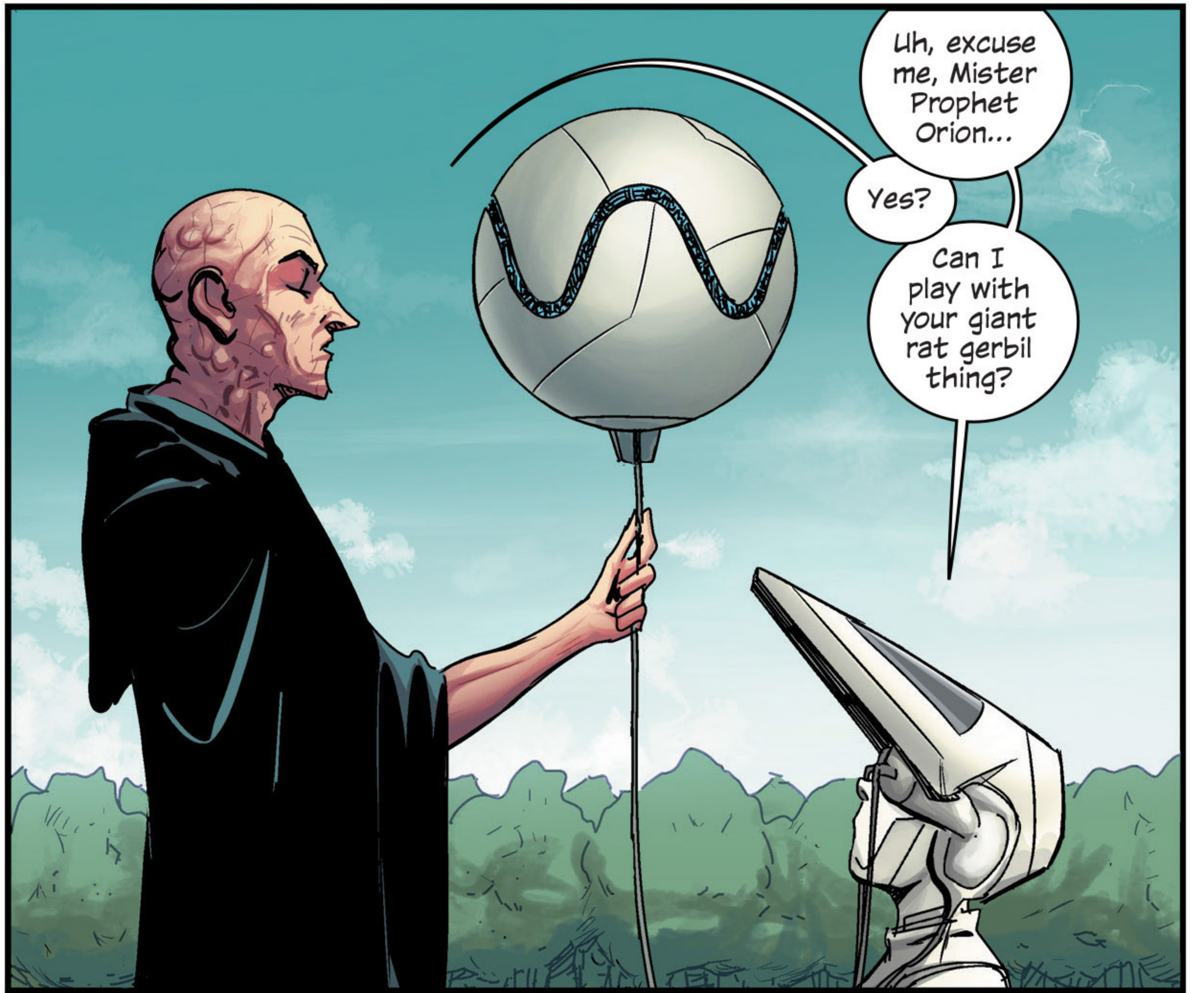
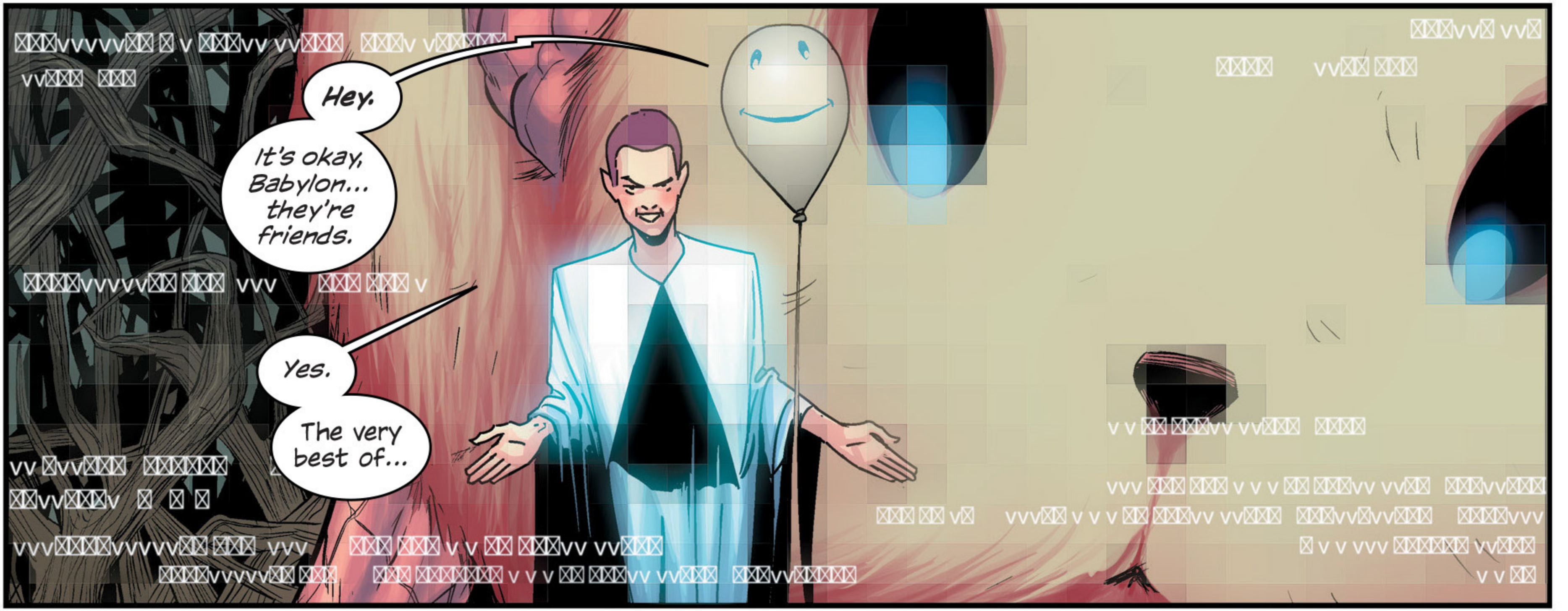


And away. We. Go.

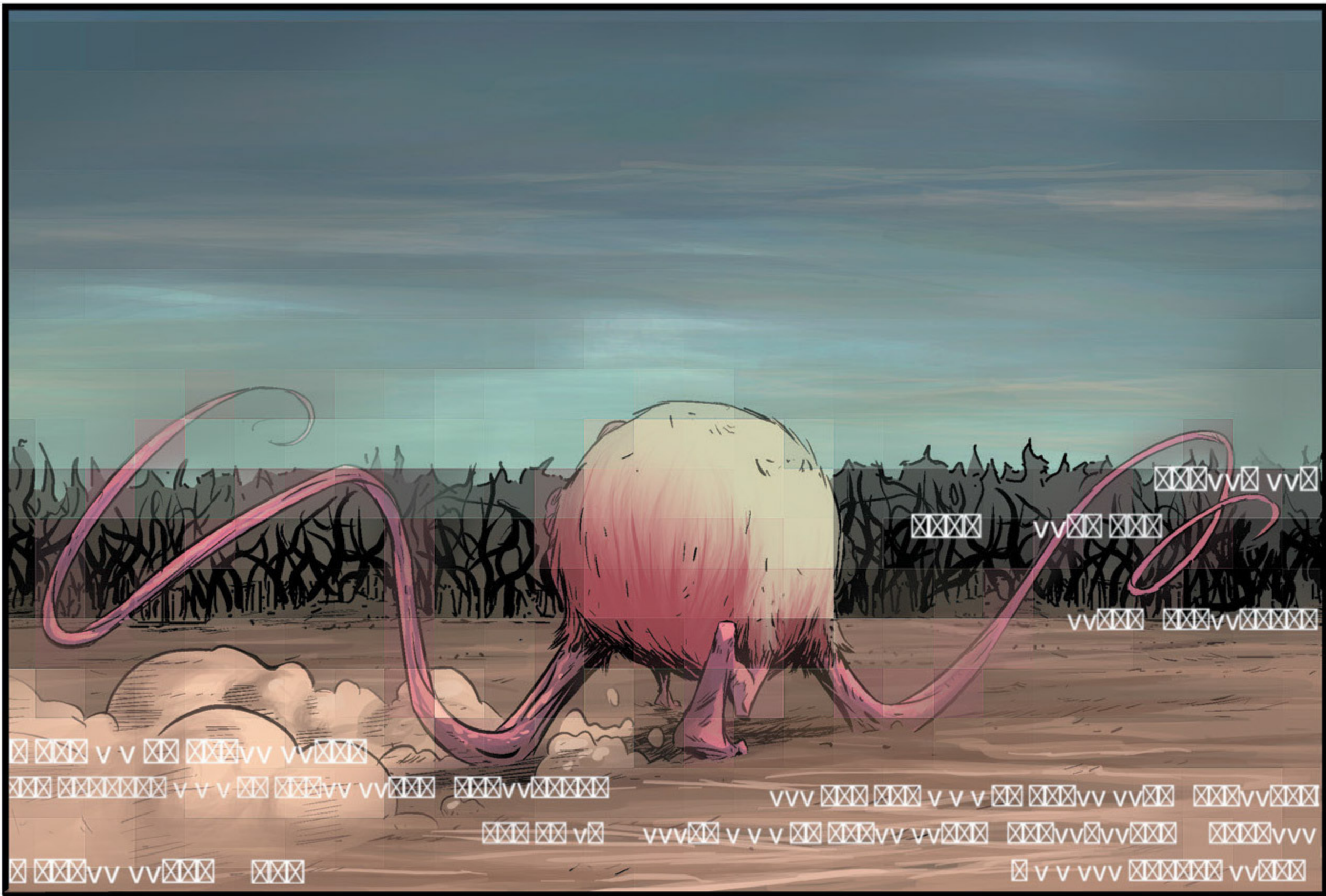
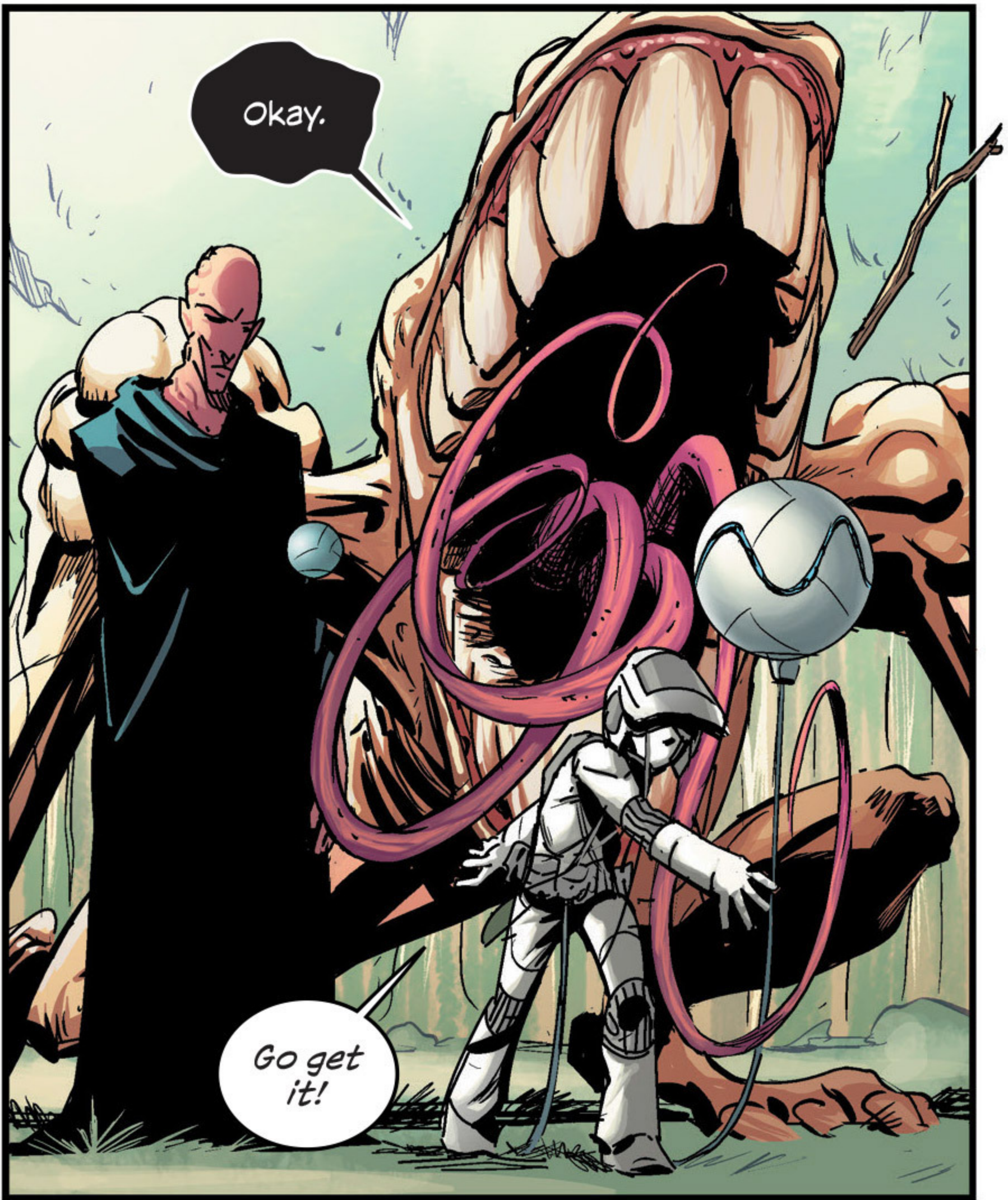
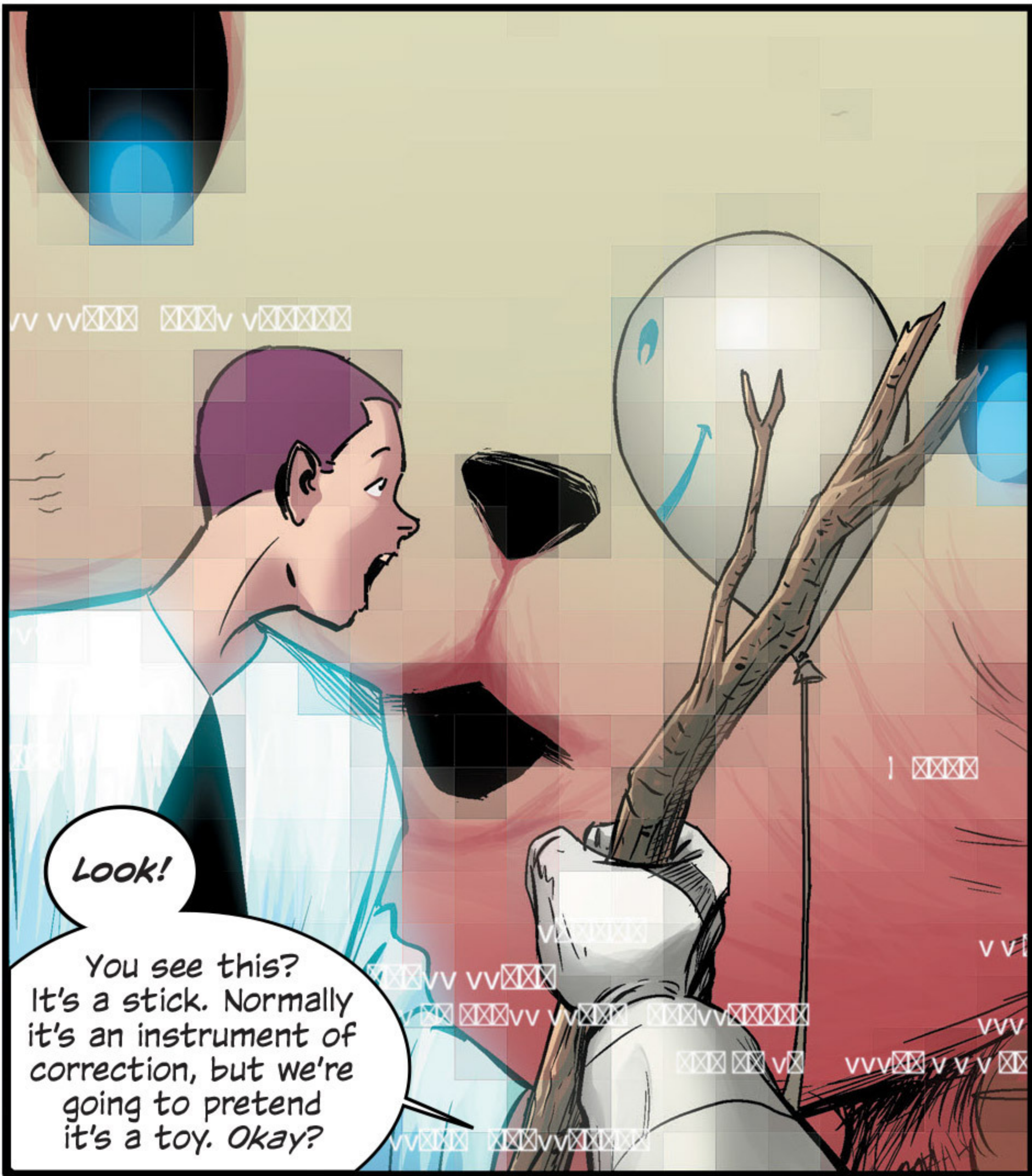




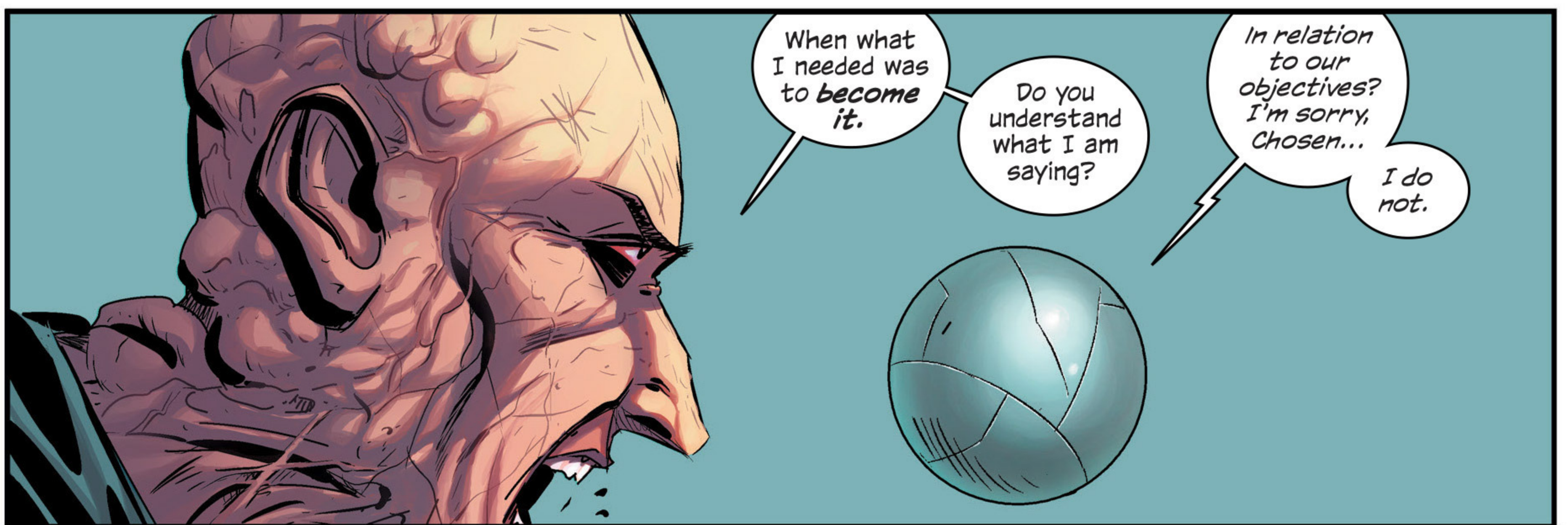
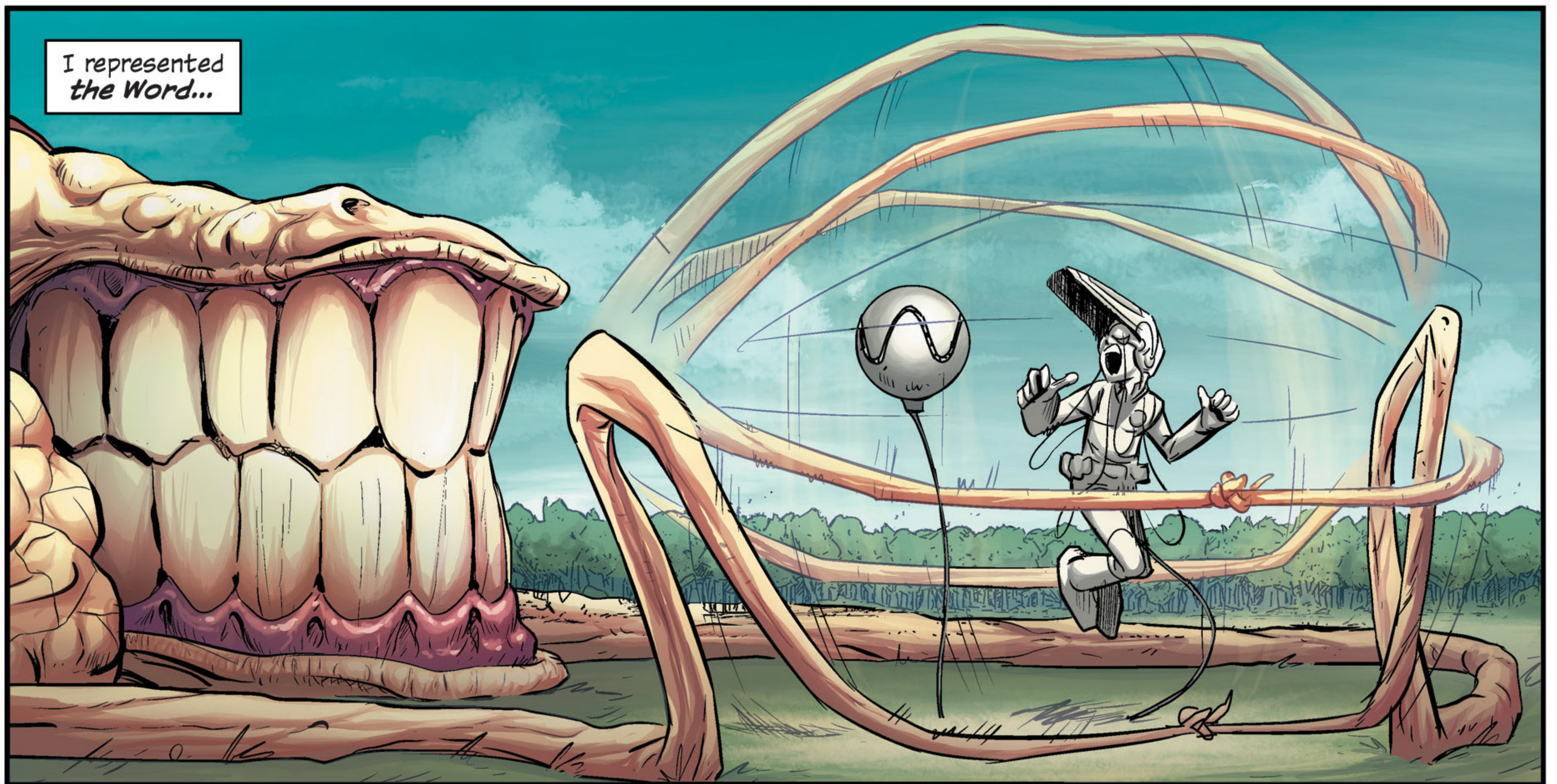
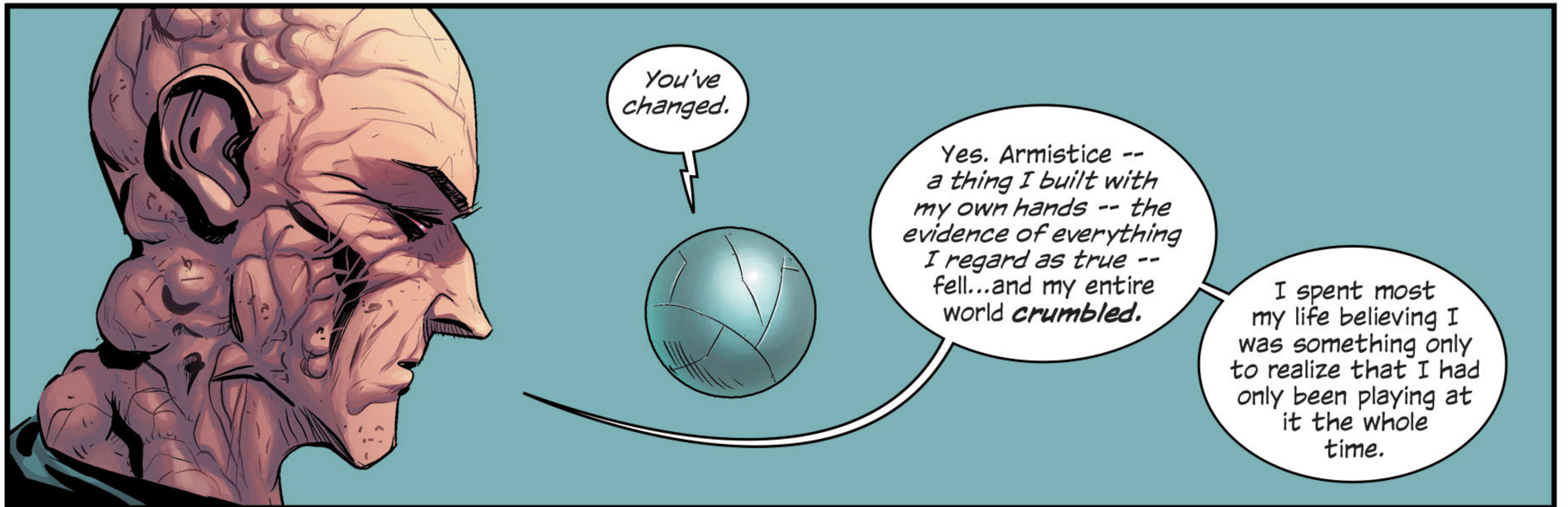
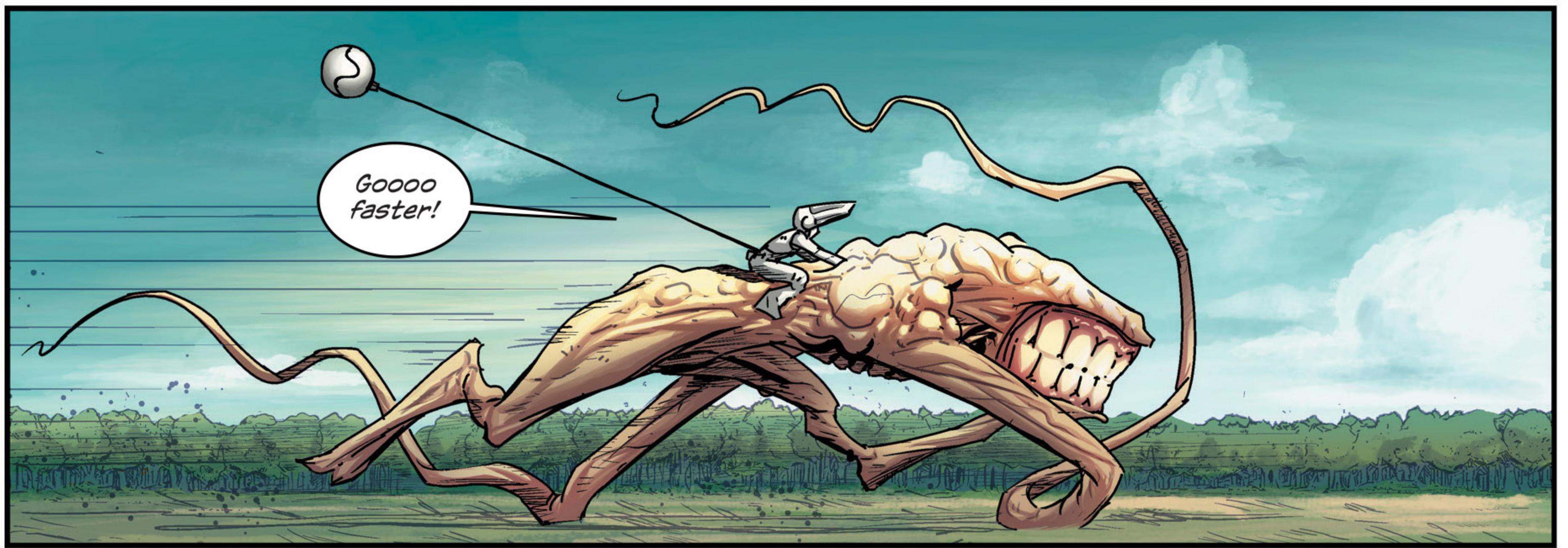




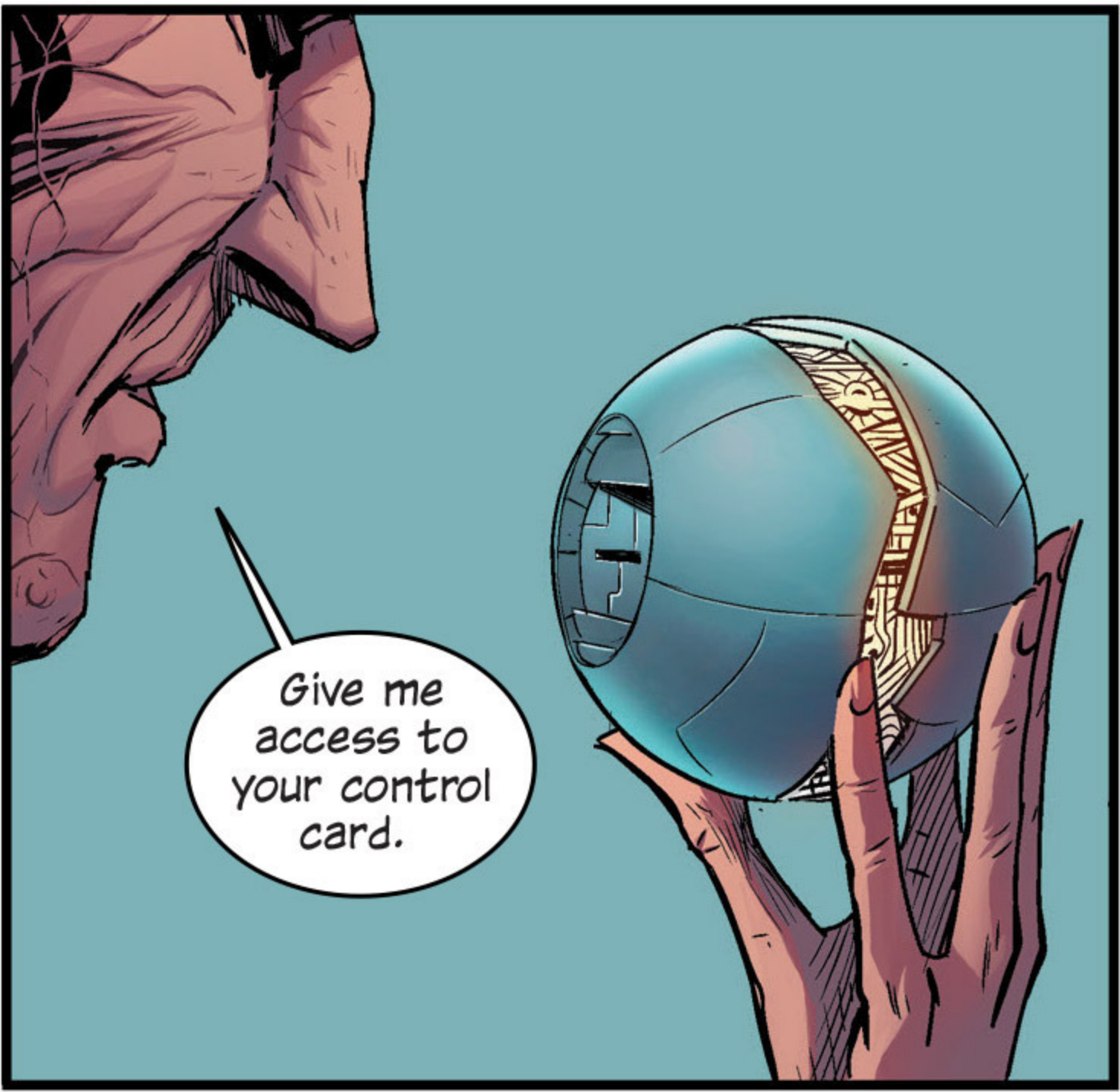
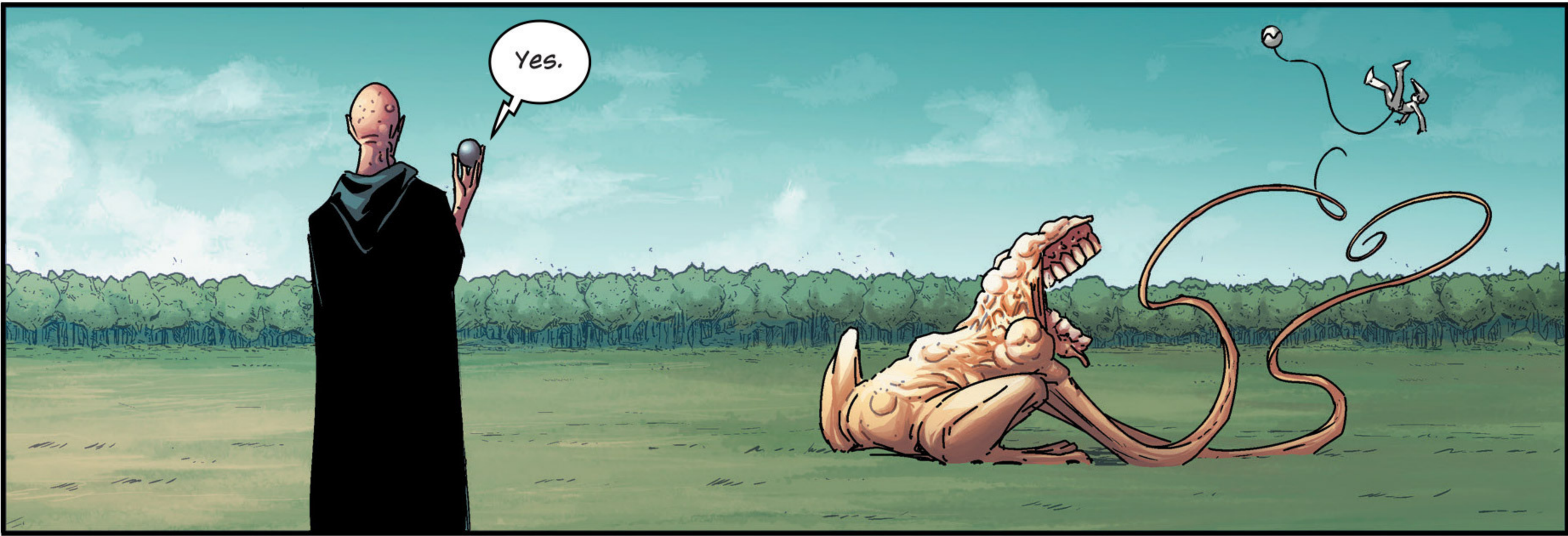
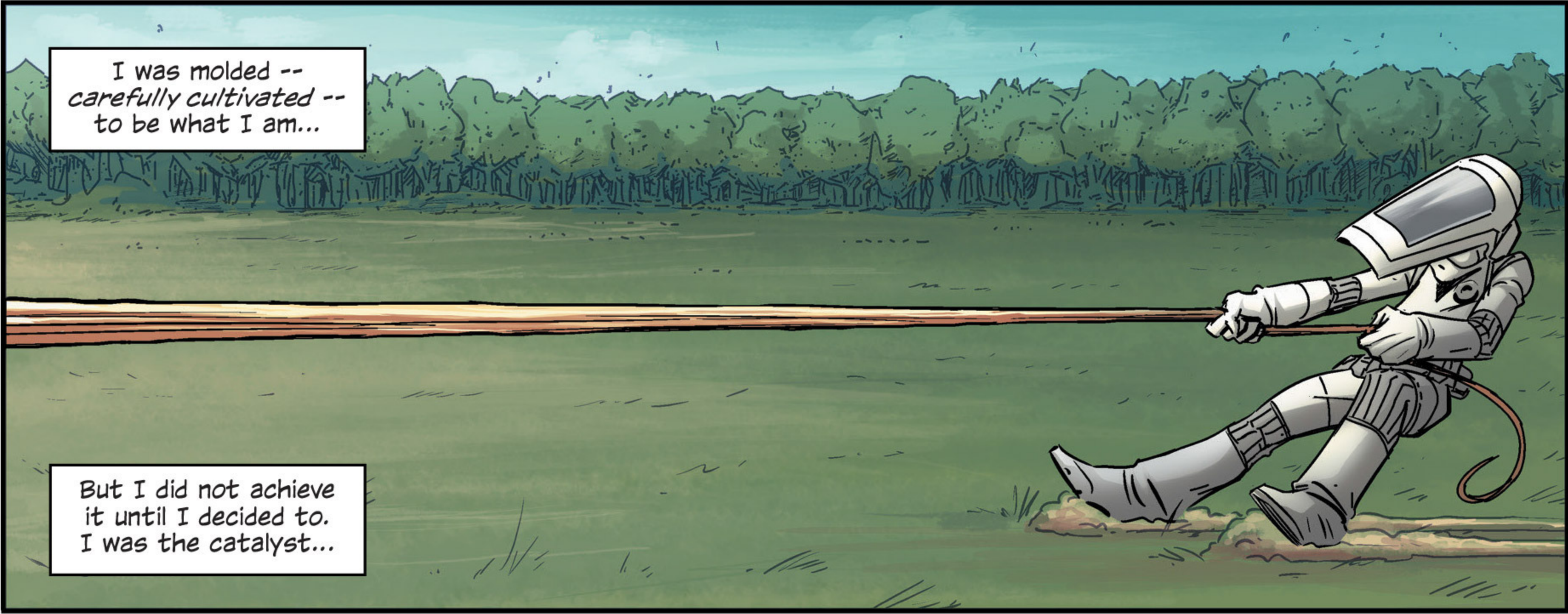




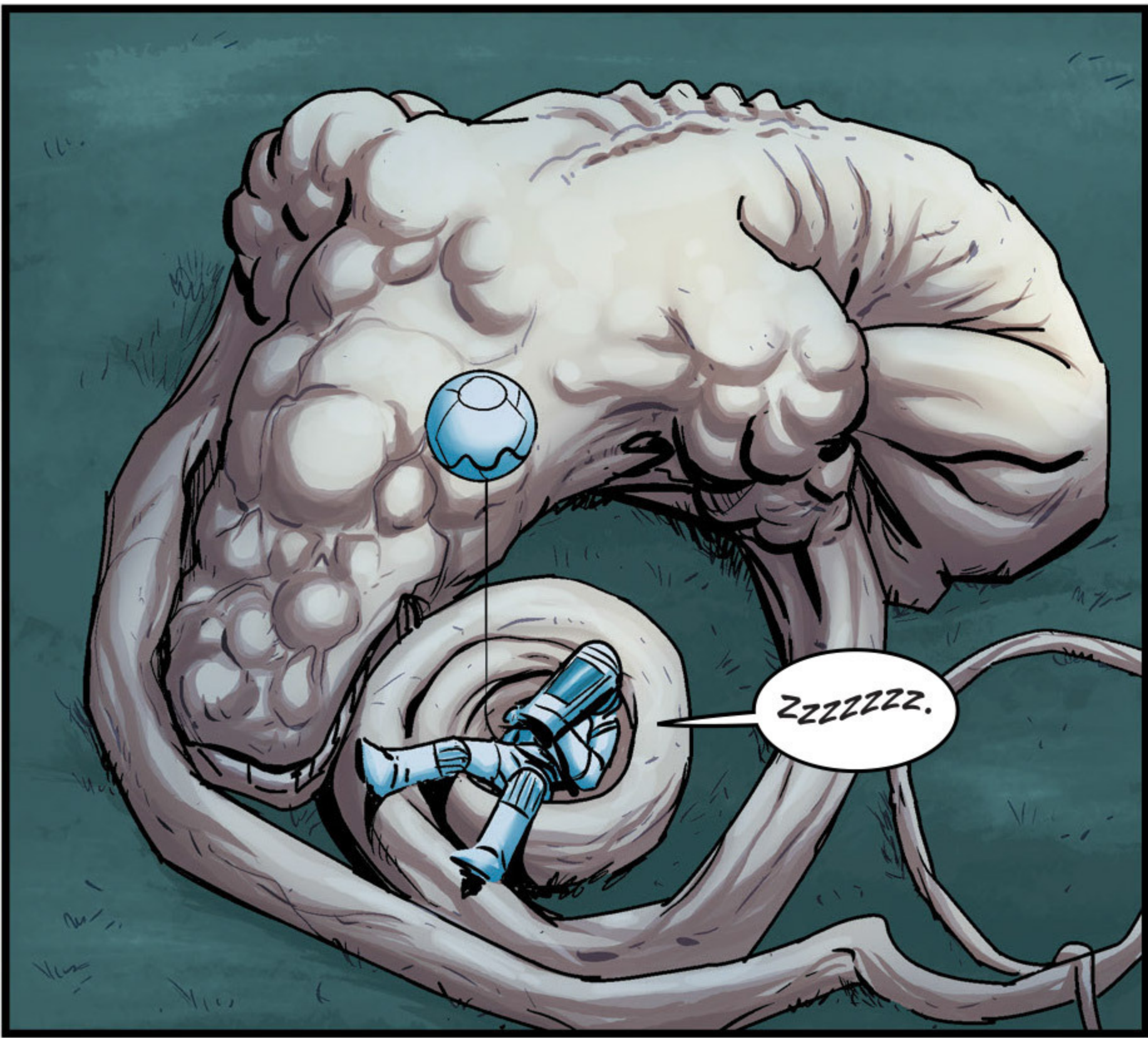
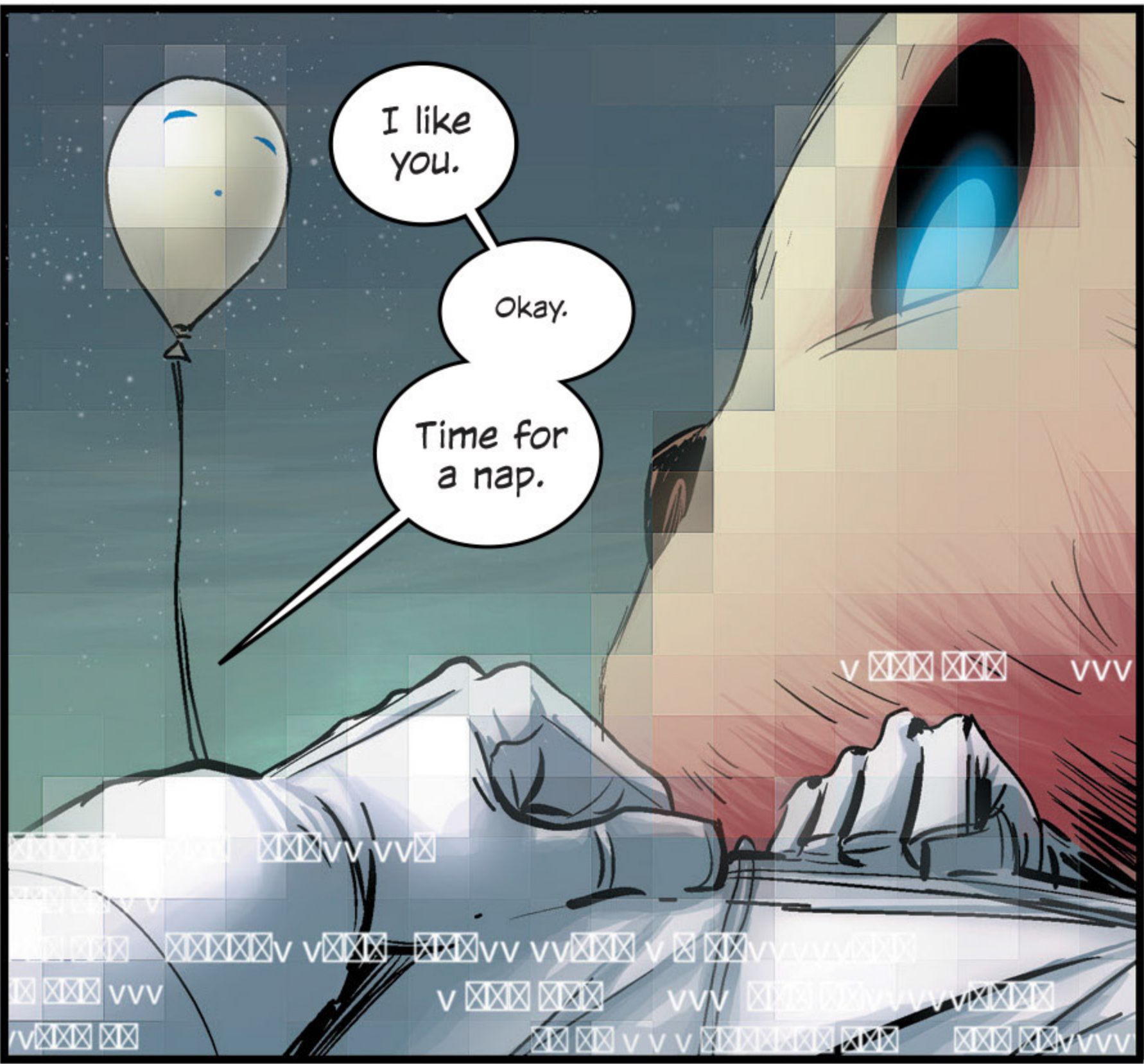
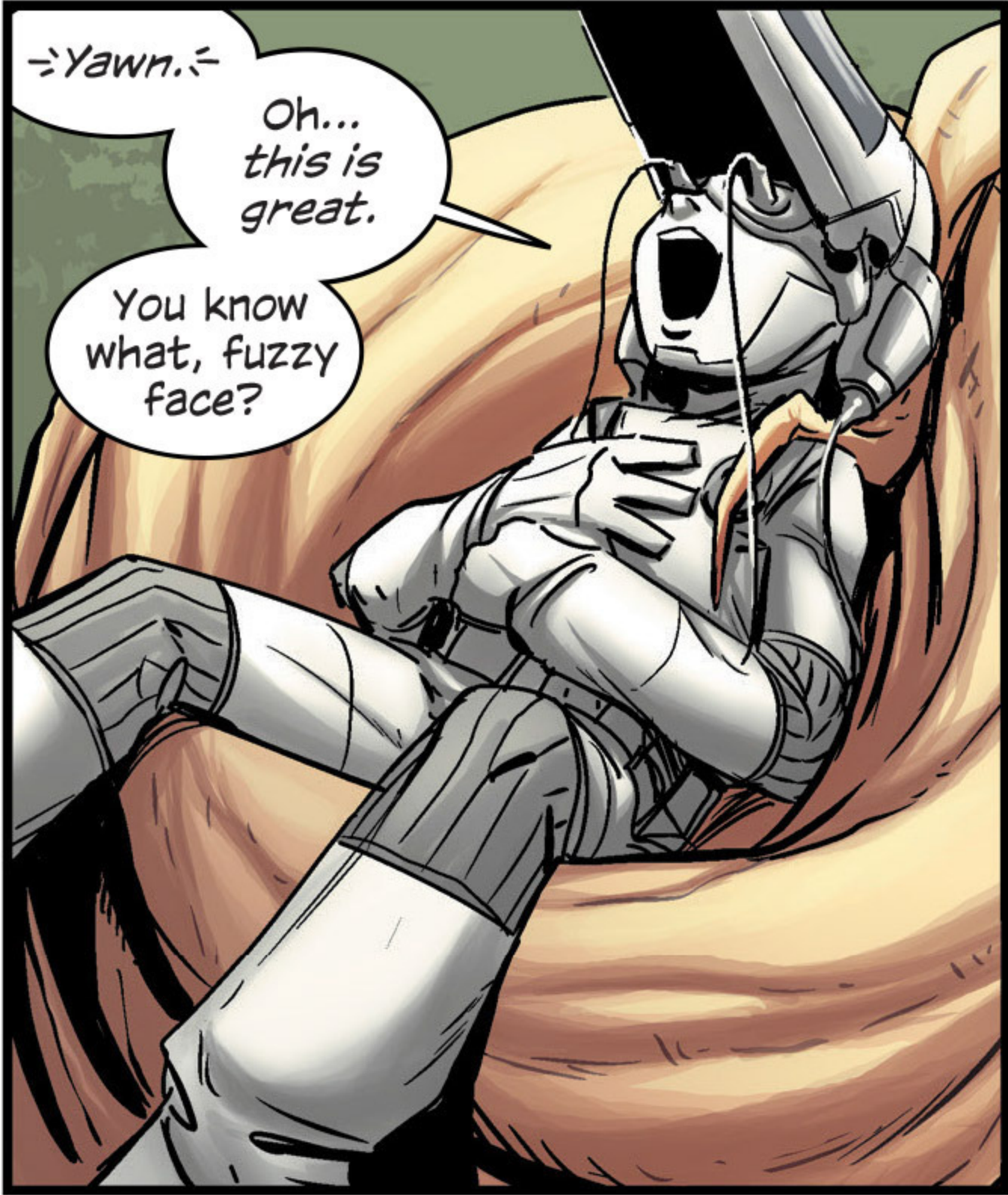
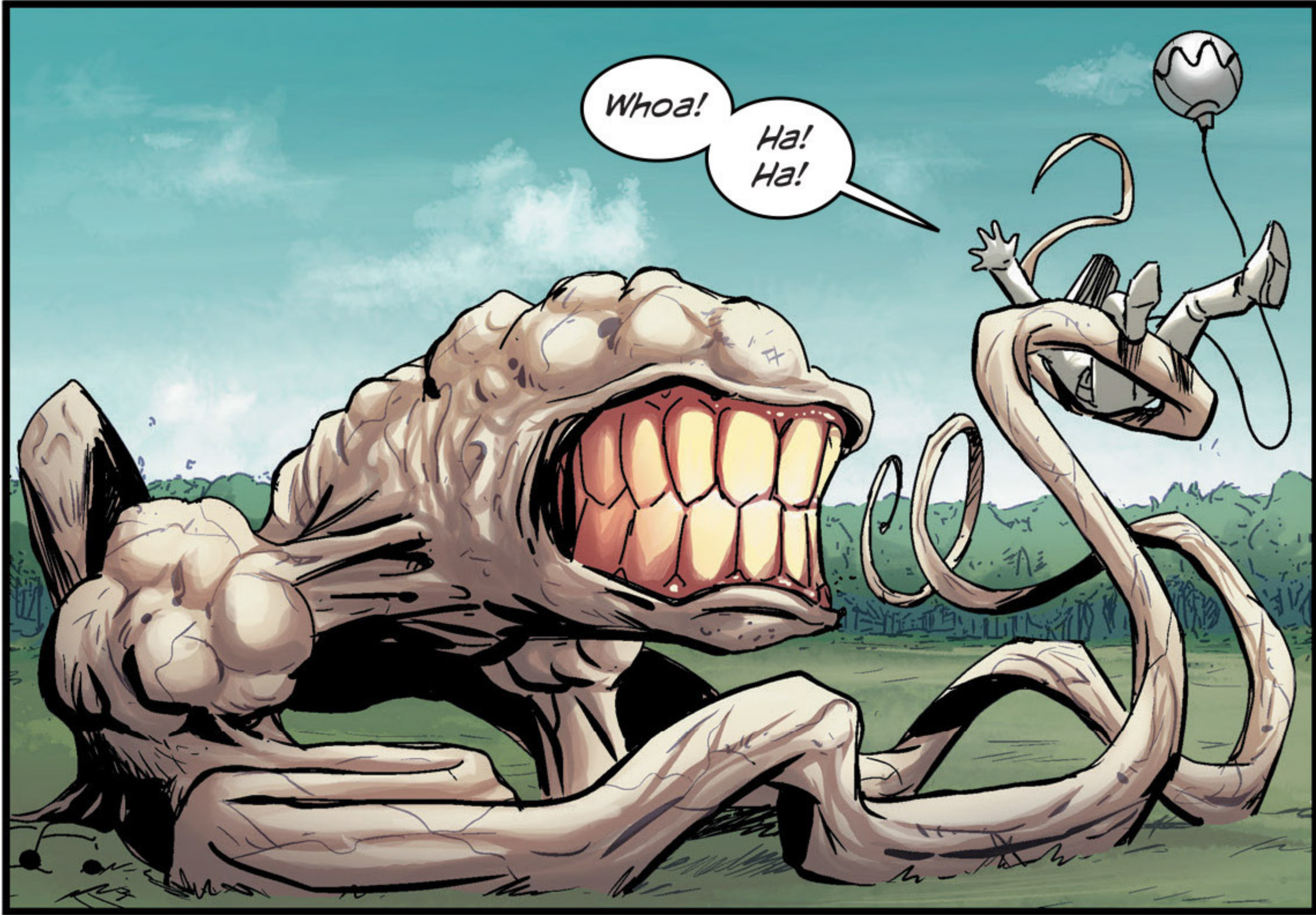












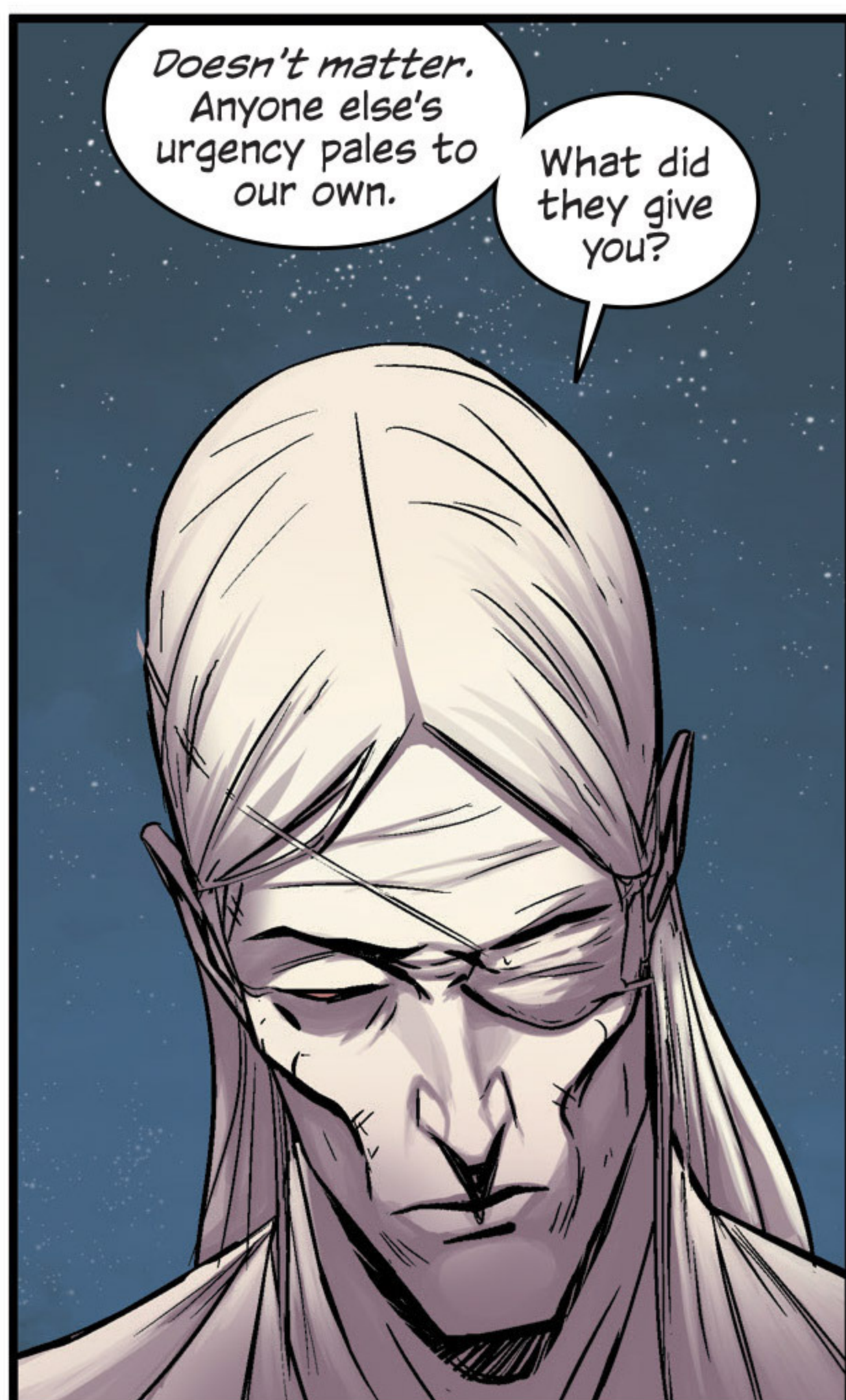
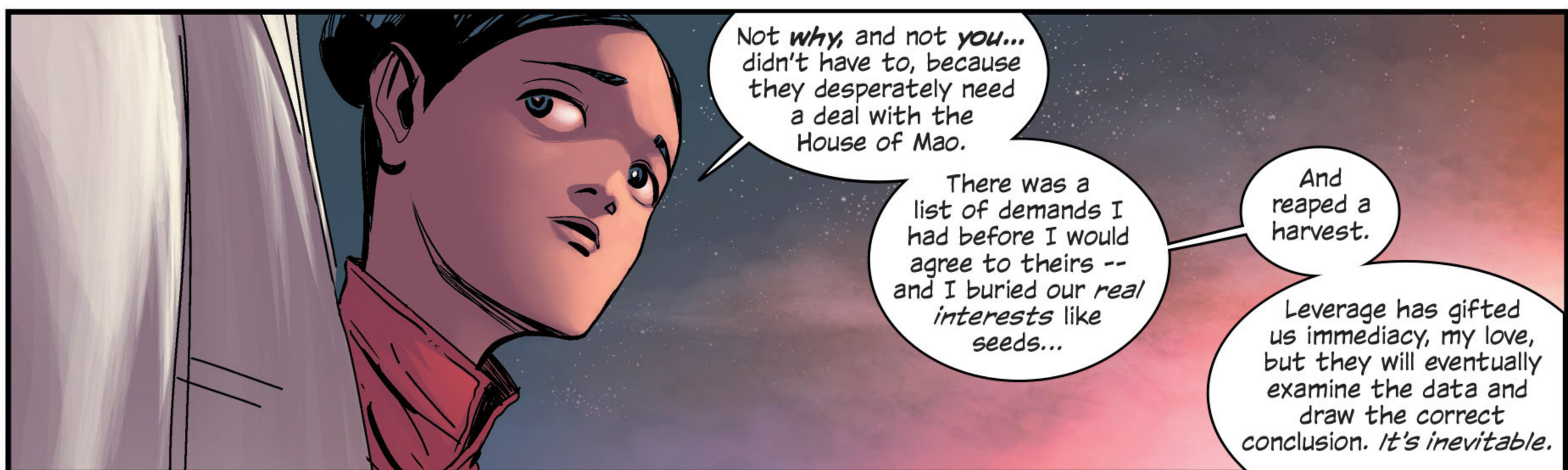
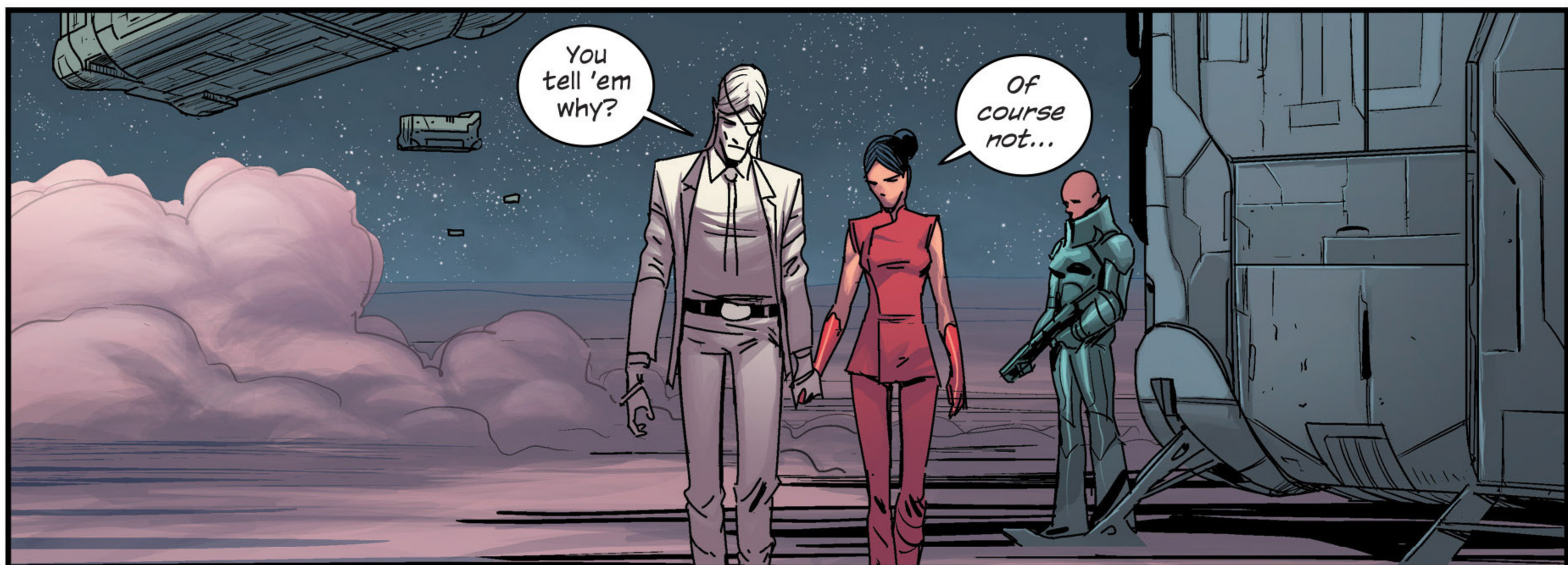
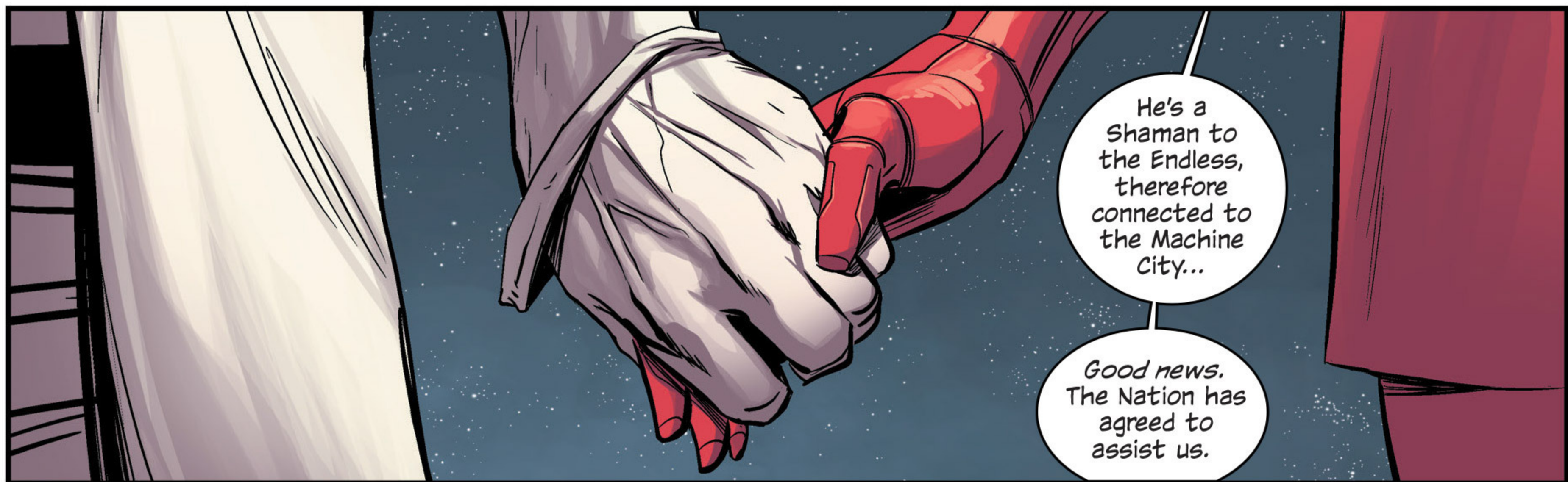


PRA staging area.

I spoke  
with the  
envoy...



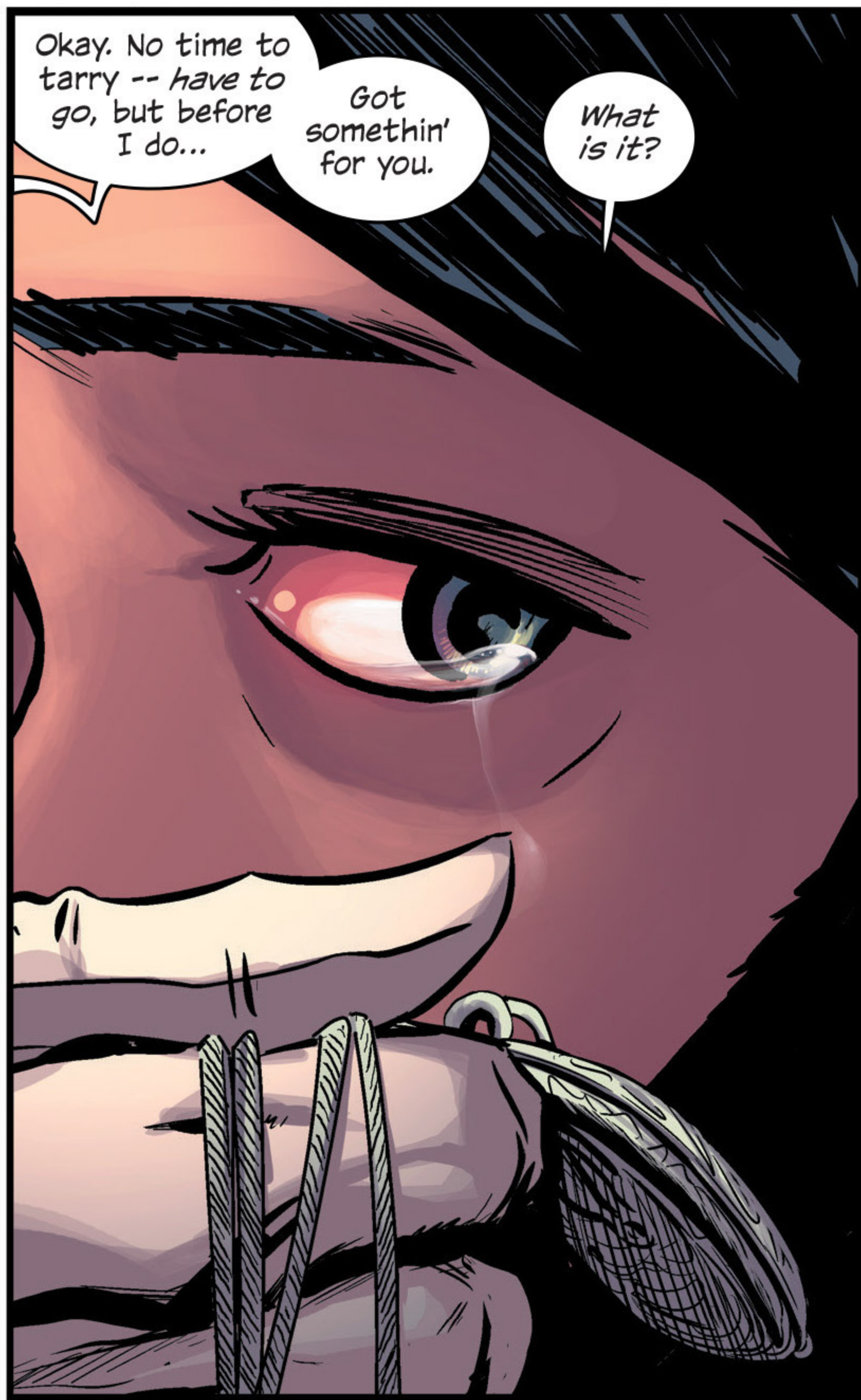








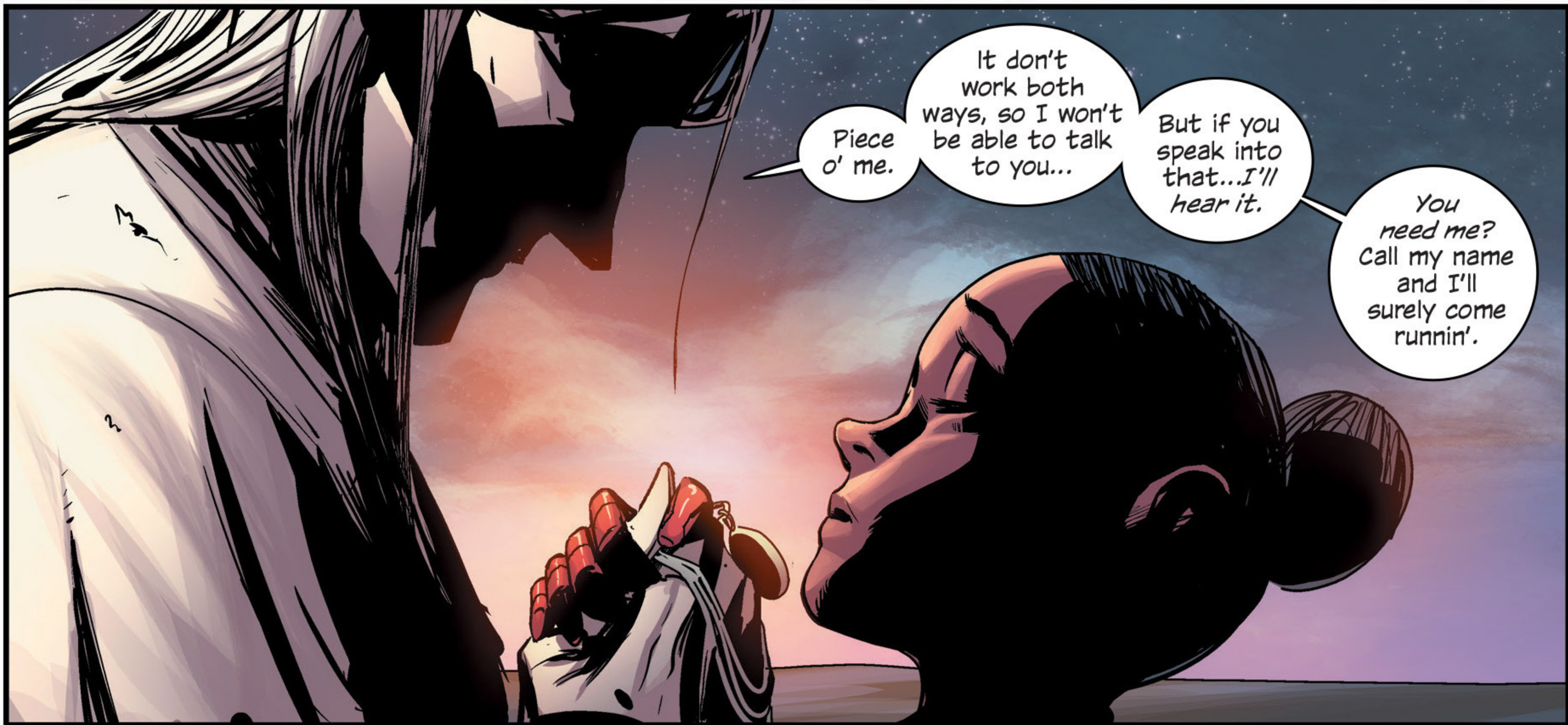
No one  
I know.



Okay. No time to  
tarry -- have to  
go, but before  
I do...

Got  
somethin'  
for you.

What  
is it?

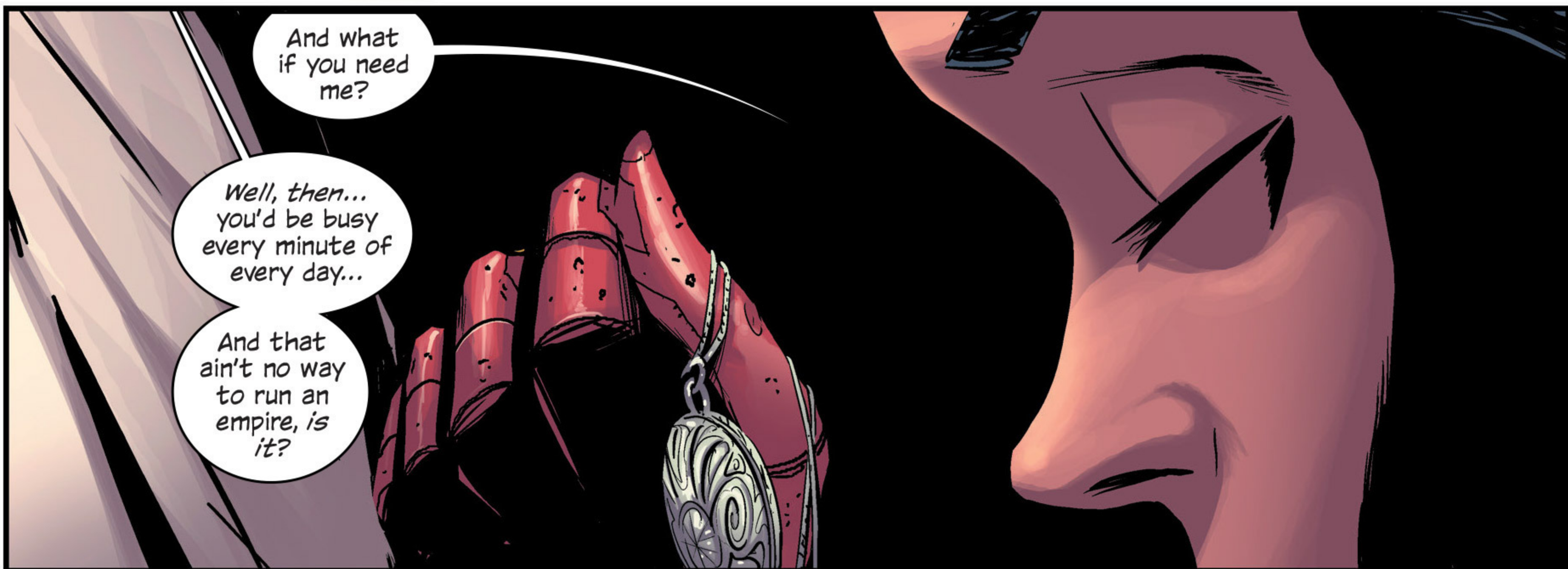


Piece  
o' me.

It don't  
work both  
ways, so I won't  
be able to talk  
to you...

But if you  
speak into  
that...I'll  
hear it.

You  
need me?  
Call my name  
and I'll  
surely come  
runnin'.

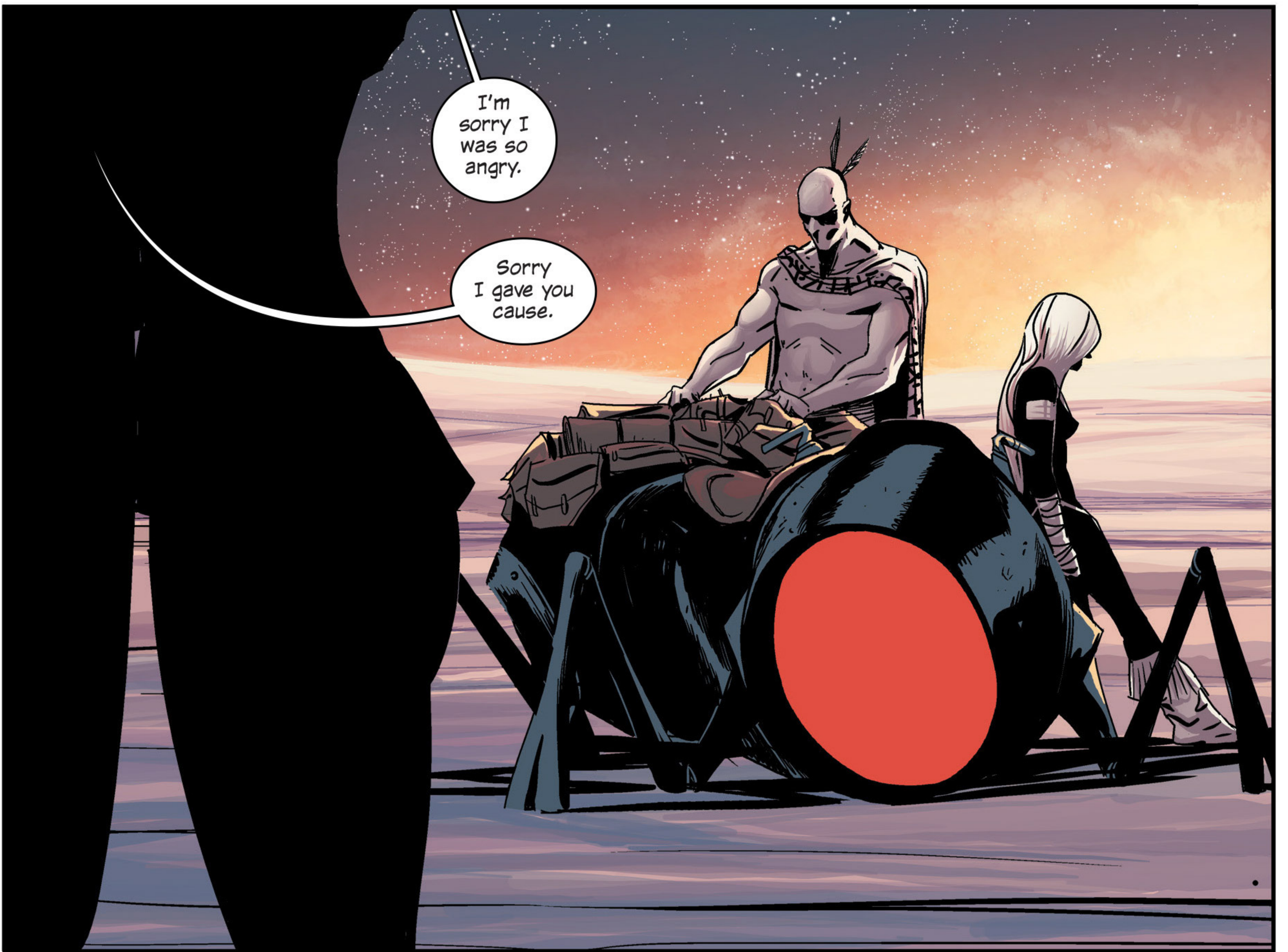
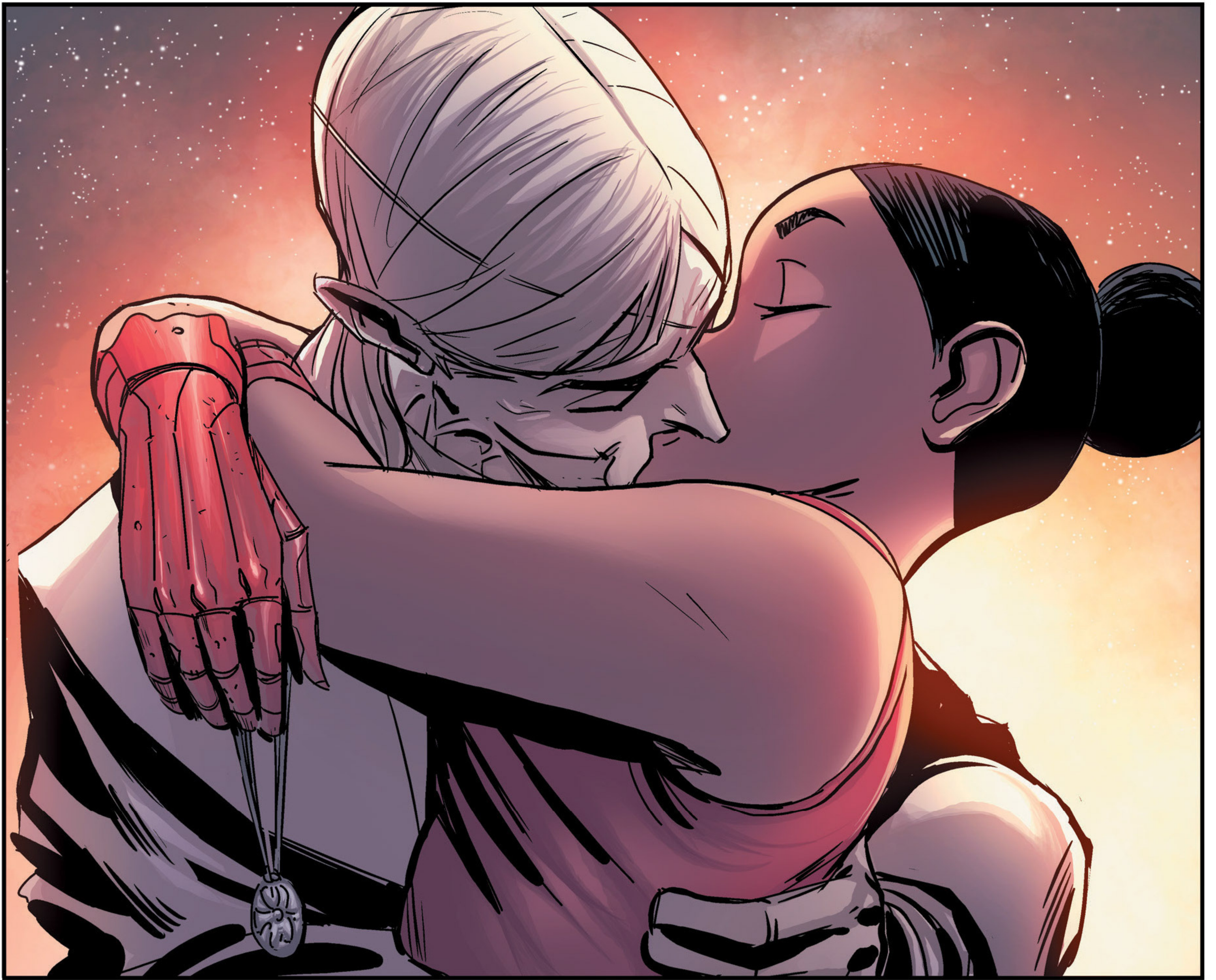


And what  
if you need  
me?

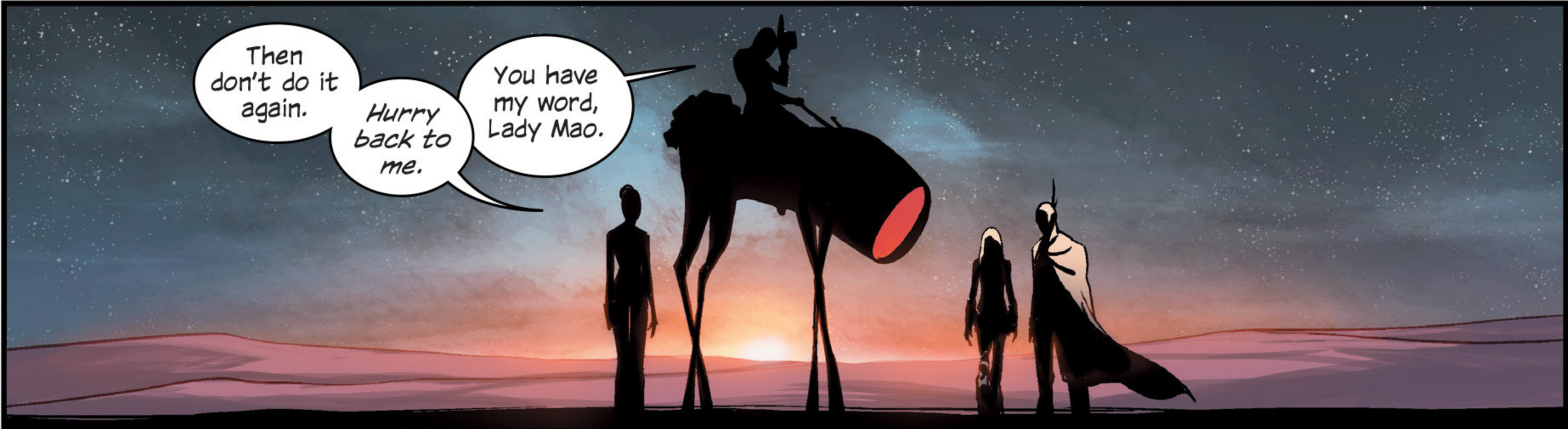
Well, then...  
you'd be busy  
every minute of  
every day...

And that  
ain't no way  
to run an  
empire, is  
it?











**WHAT FOLLOWS...**











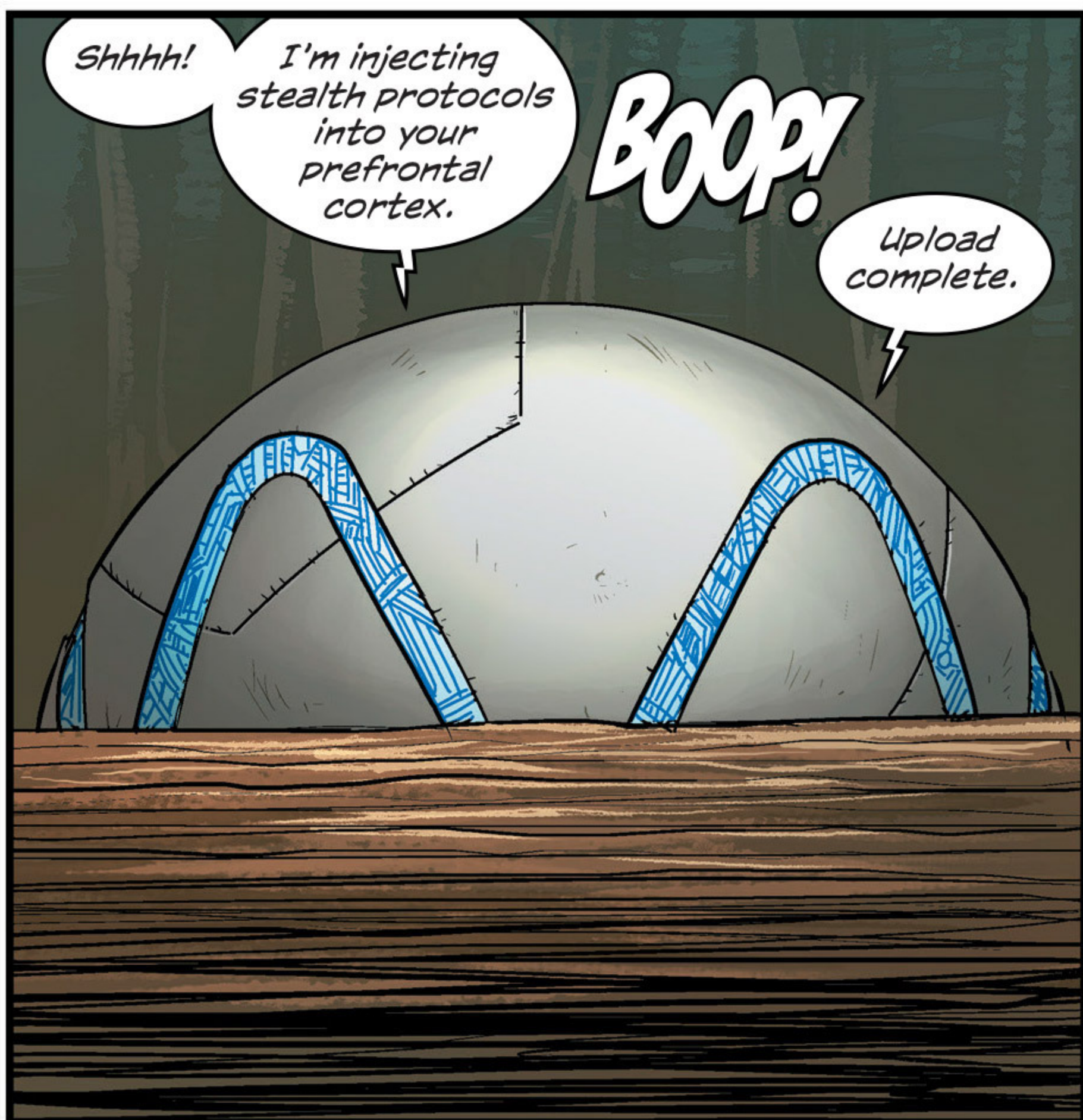
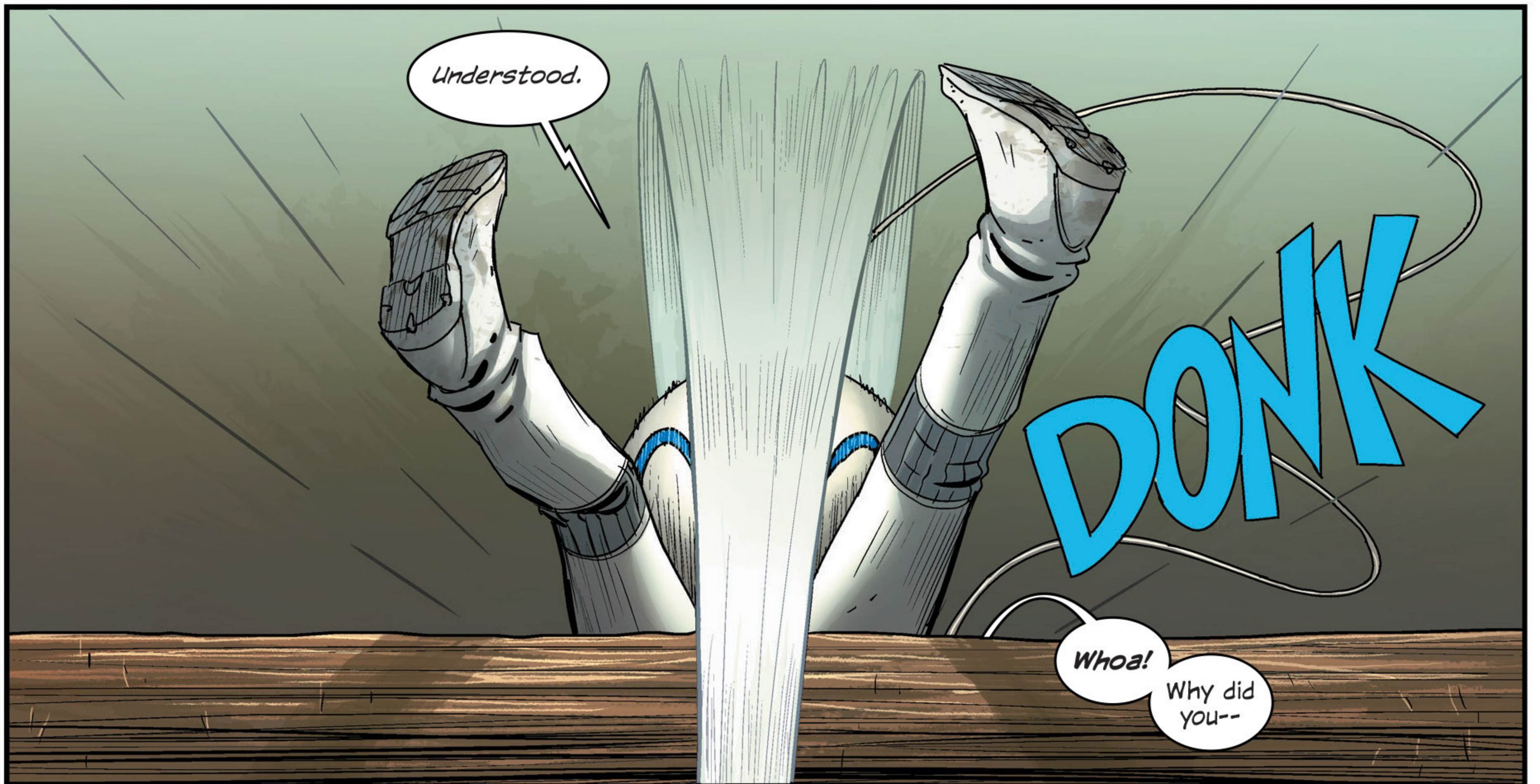
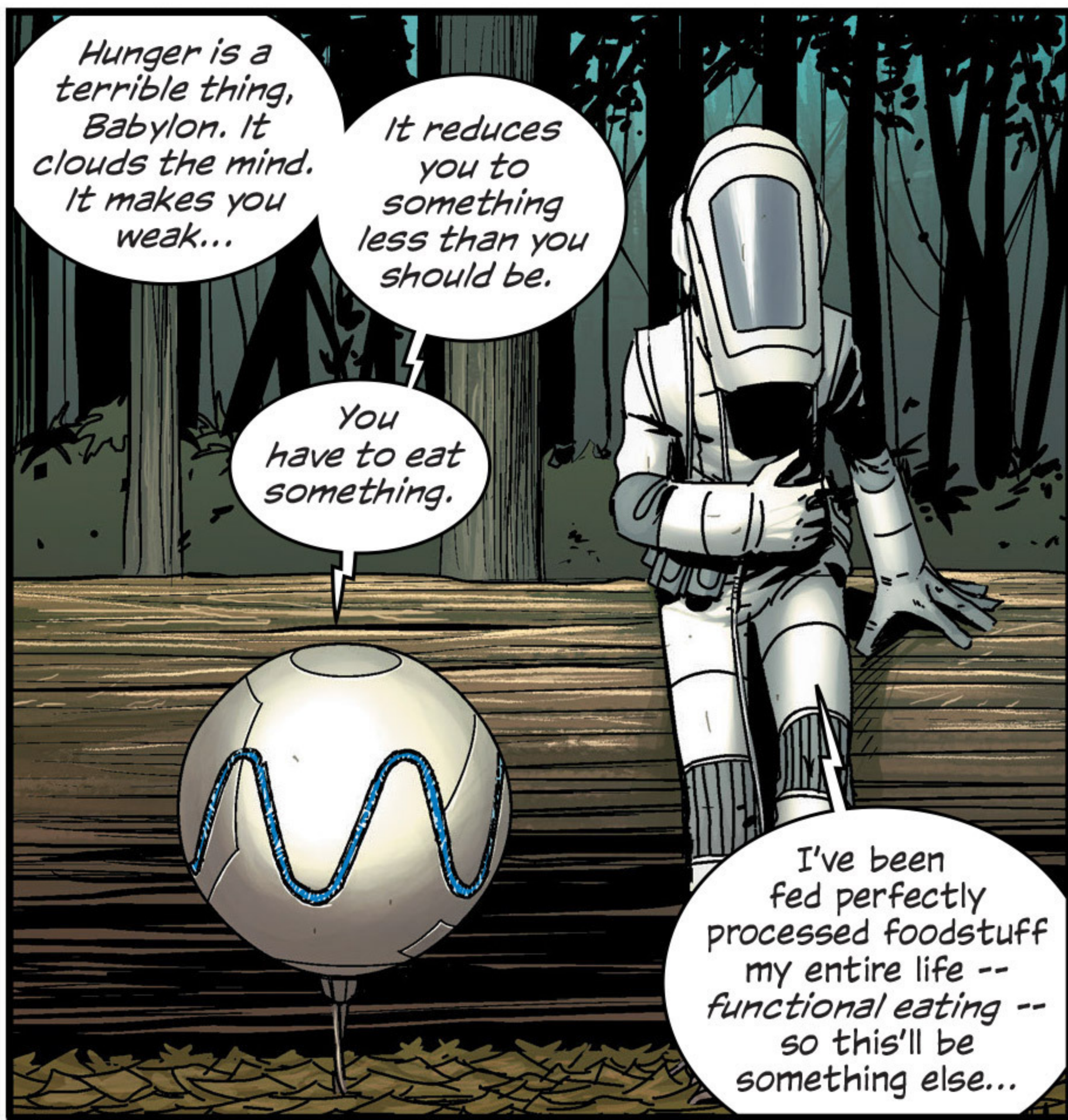




Ugh.

It's  
getting  
worse.









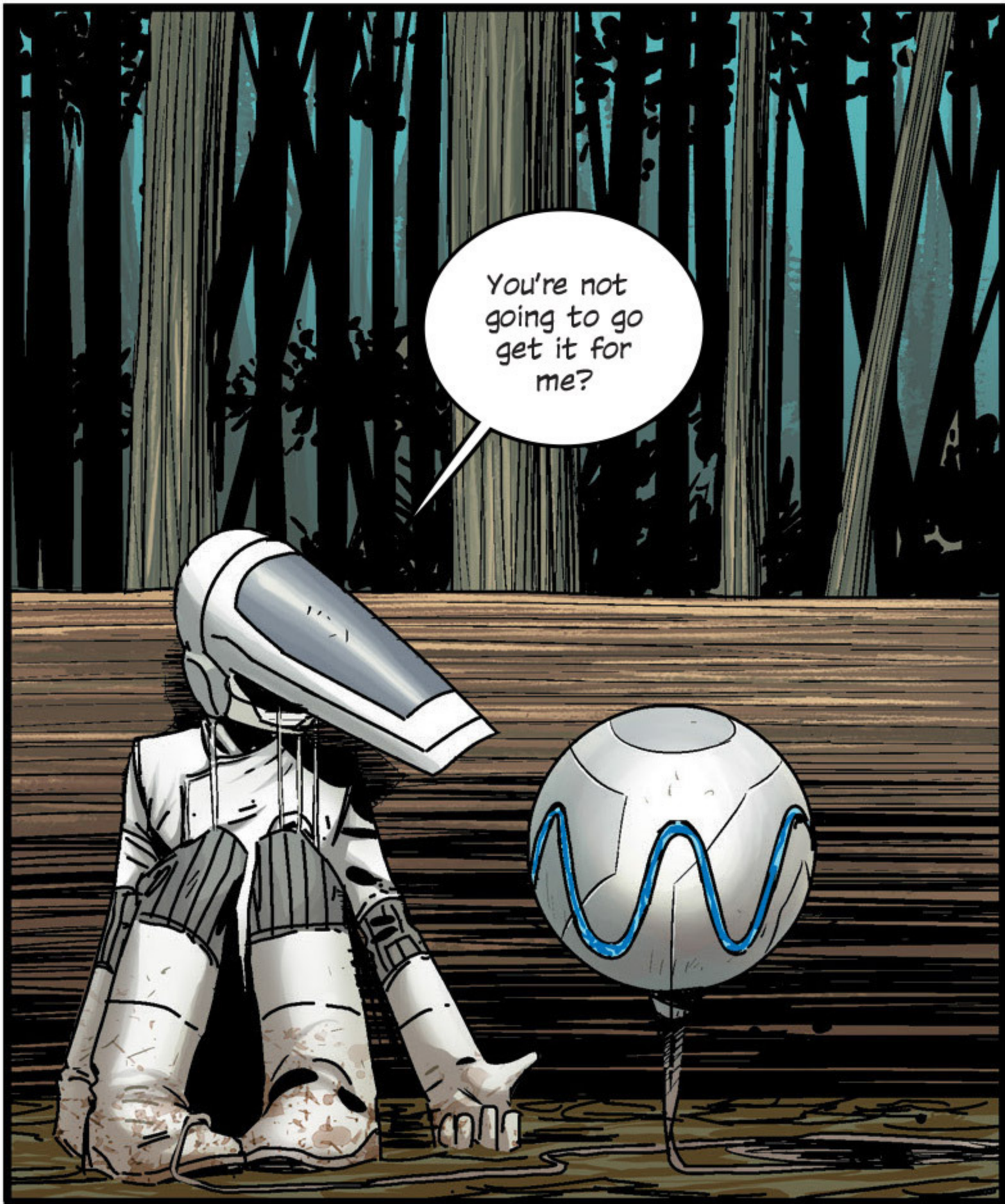
Sustenance.



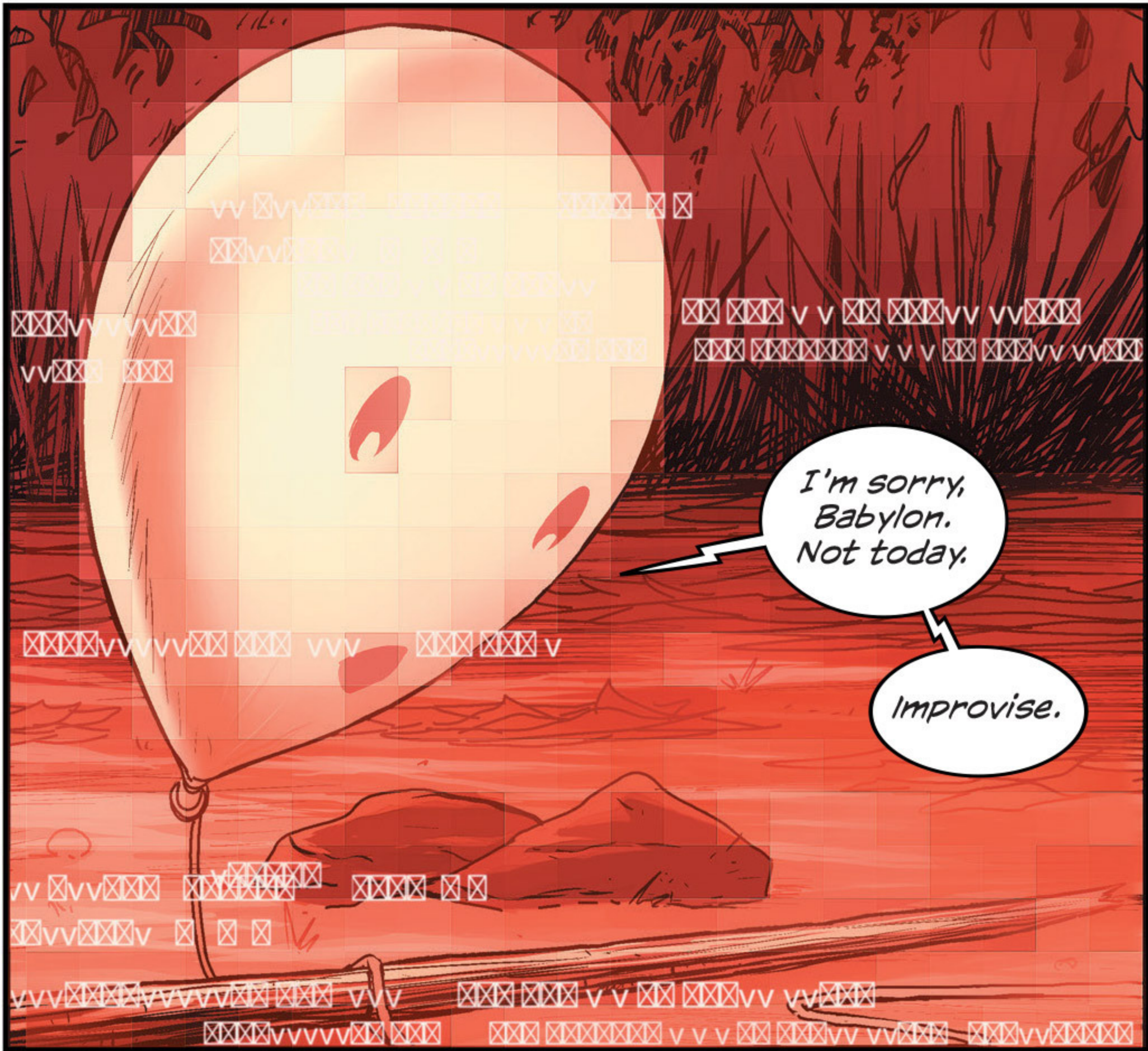
I'm not eating it raw.

Wise choice. You have an exceptional immune system, but it's better to cook things thoroughly than to casually risk bacteria or parasites.

After you catch the little beast, I'll start a fire and cook it for you.

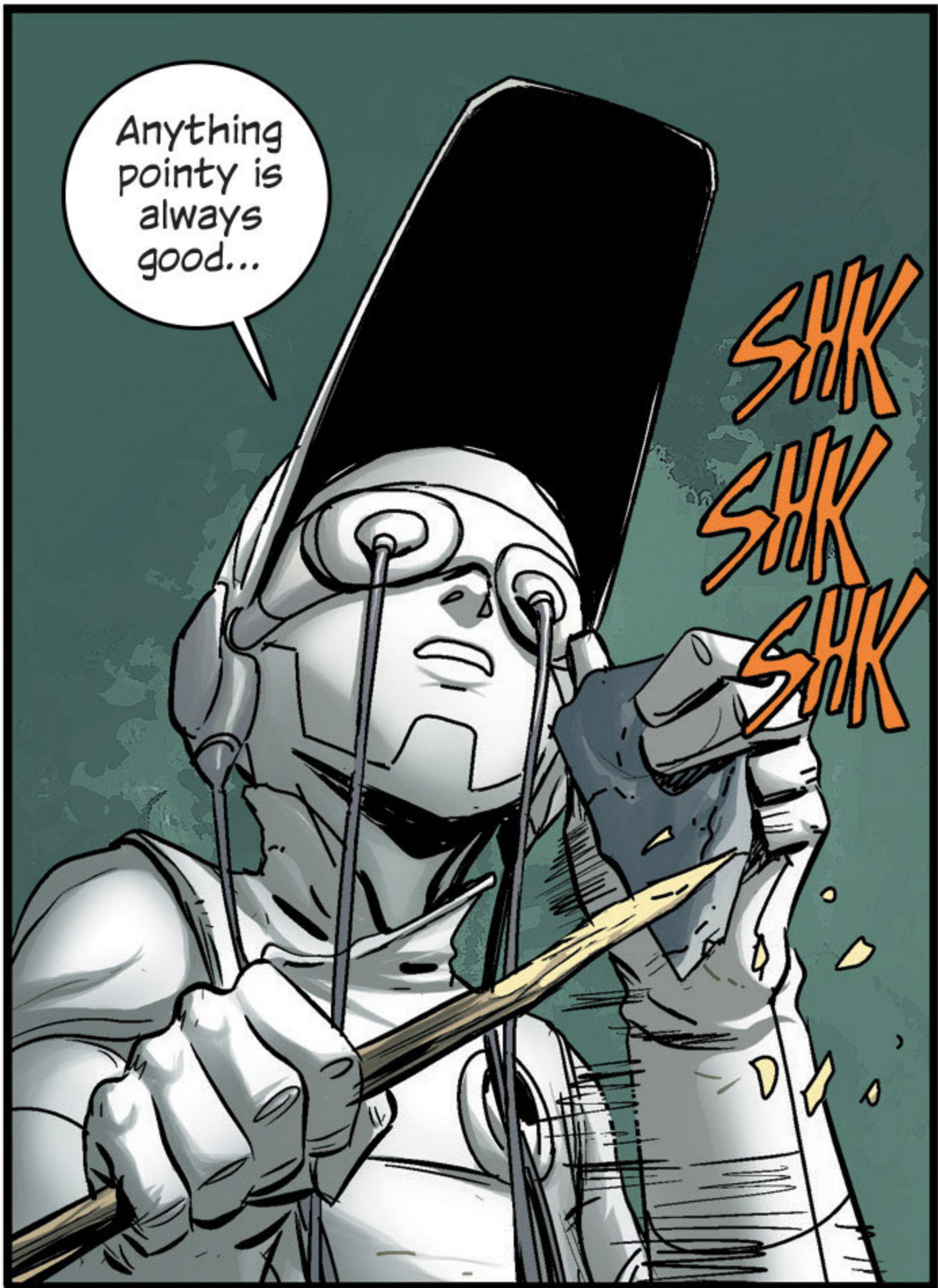


You're not going to go get it for me?



I'm sorry, Babylon. Not today.

Improvise.



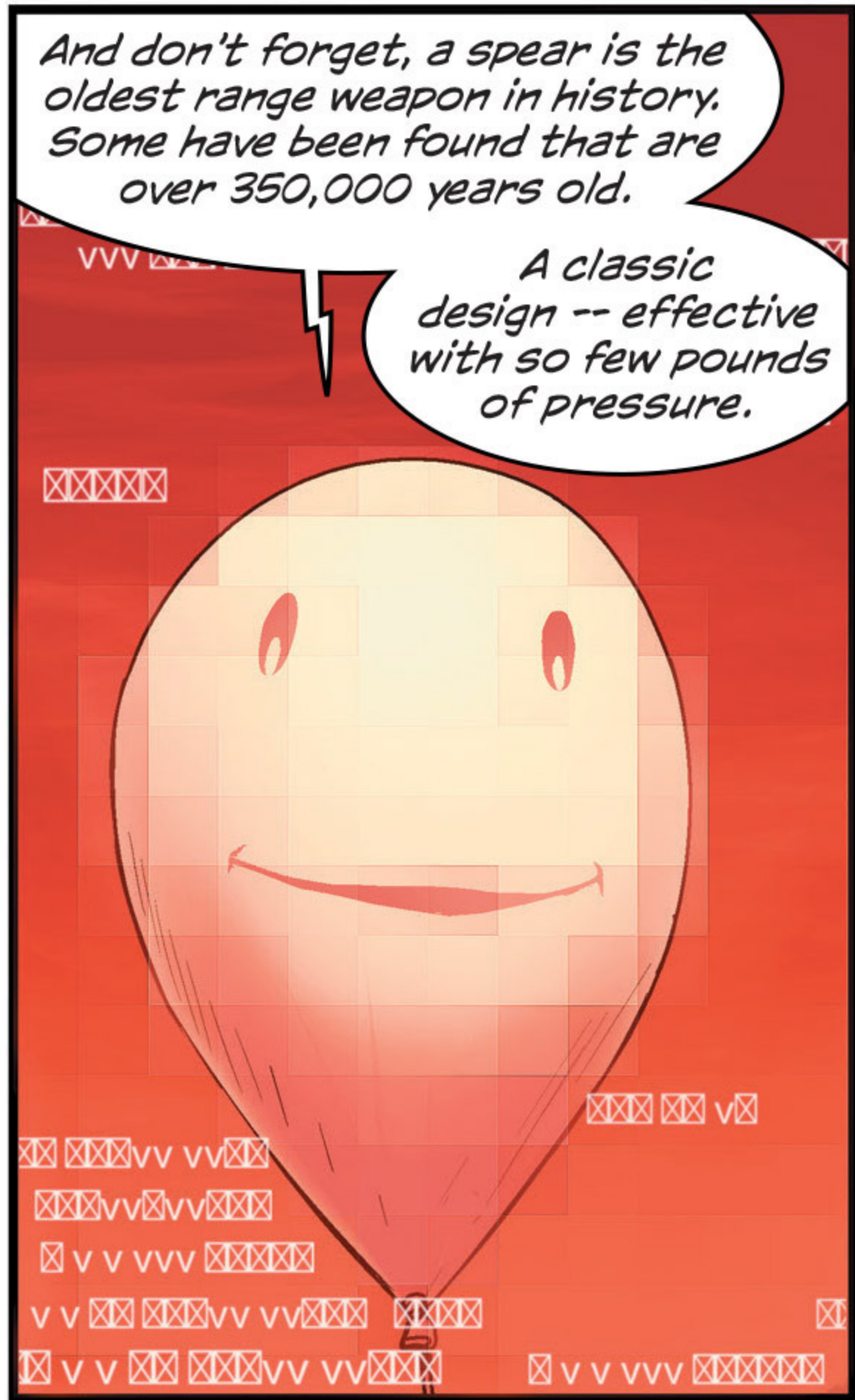
Anything pointy is always good...

SHK  
SHK  
SHK



But **sharper** is even better.

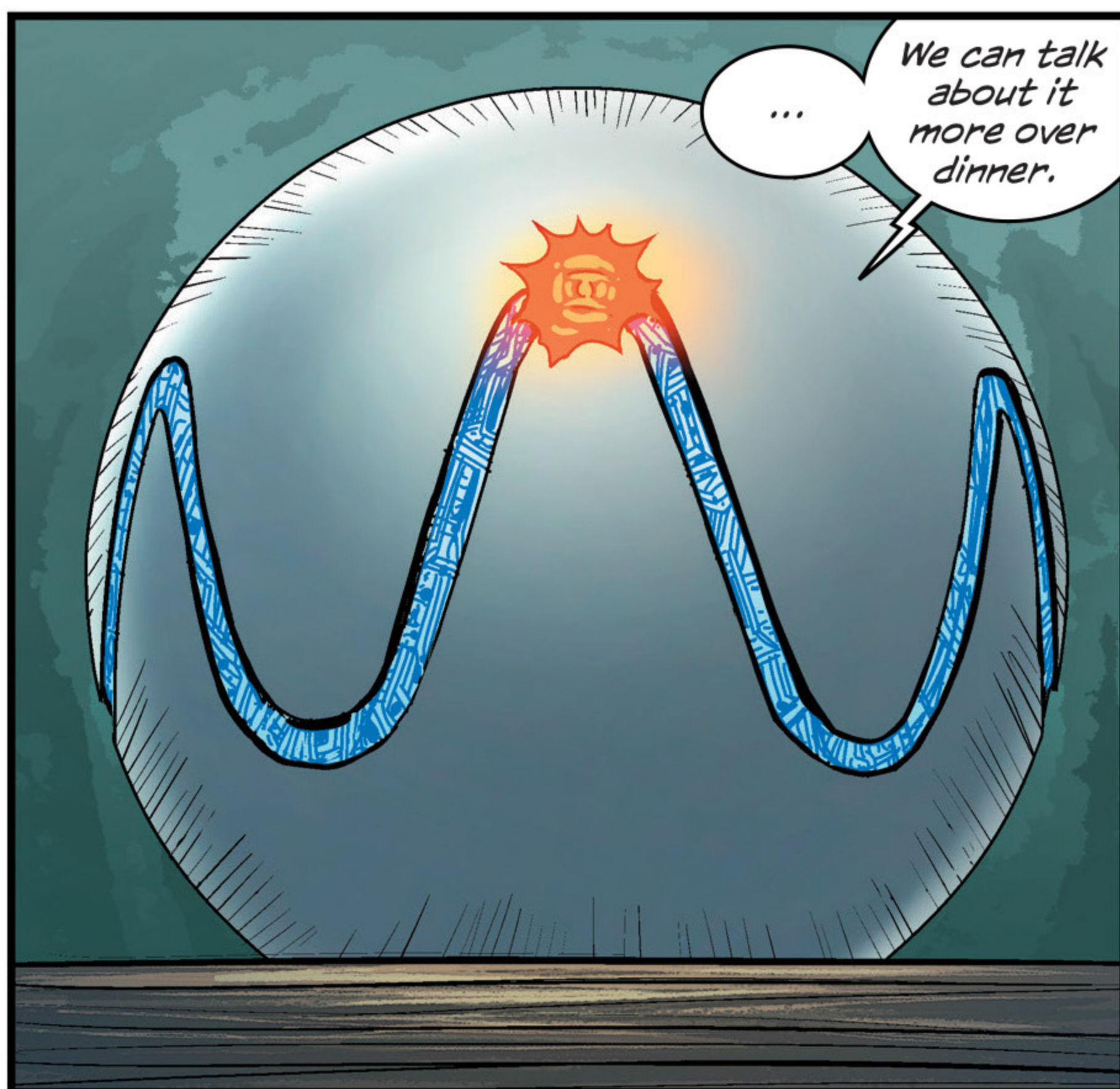
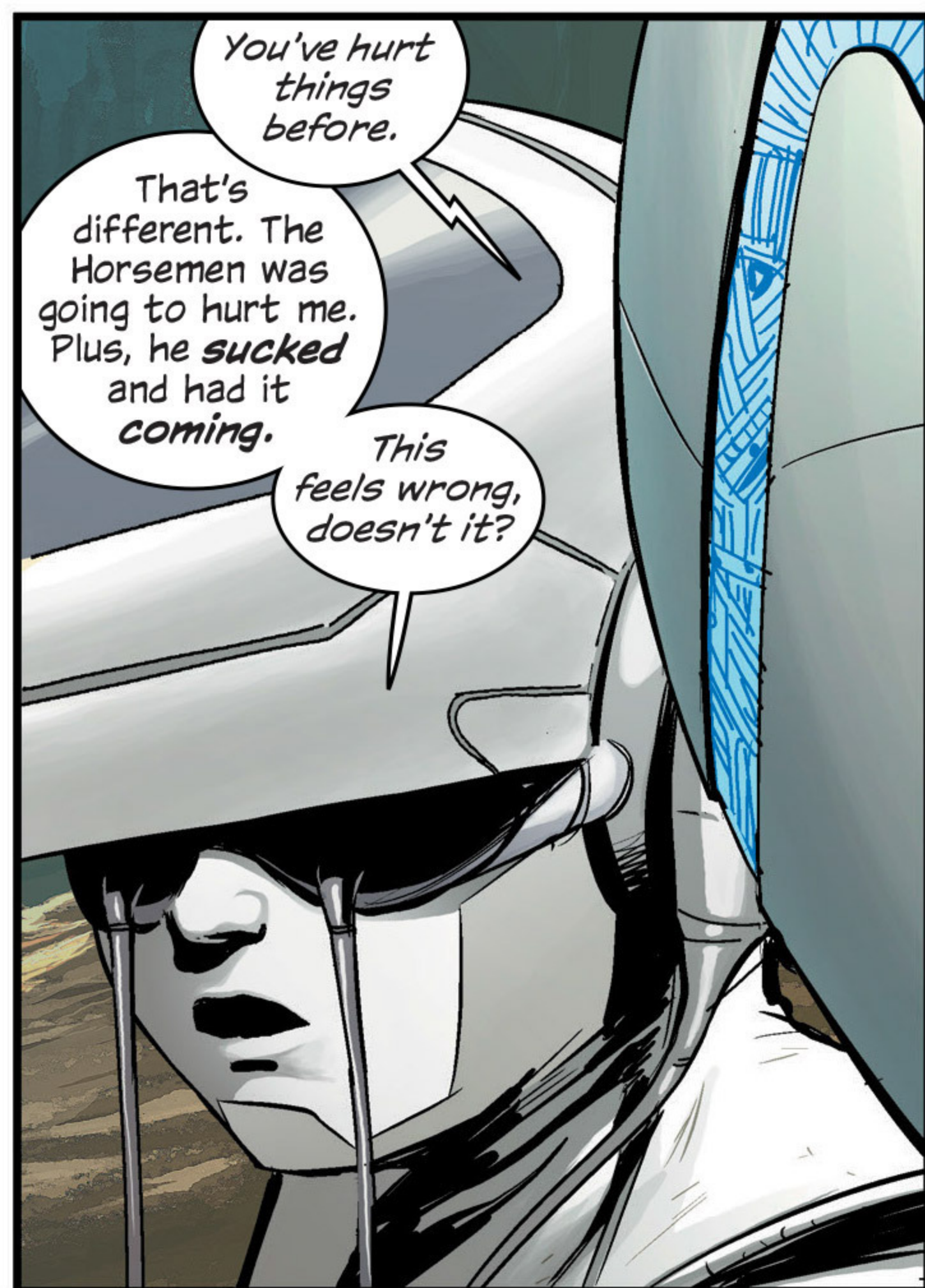
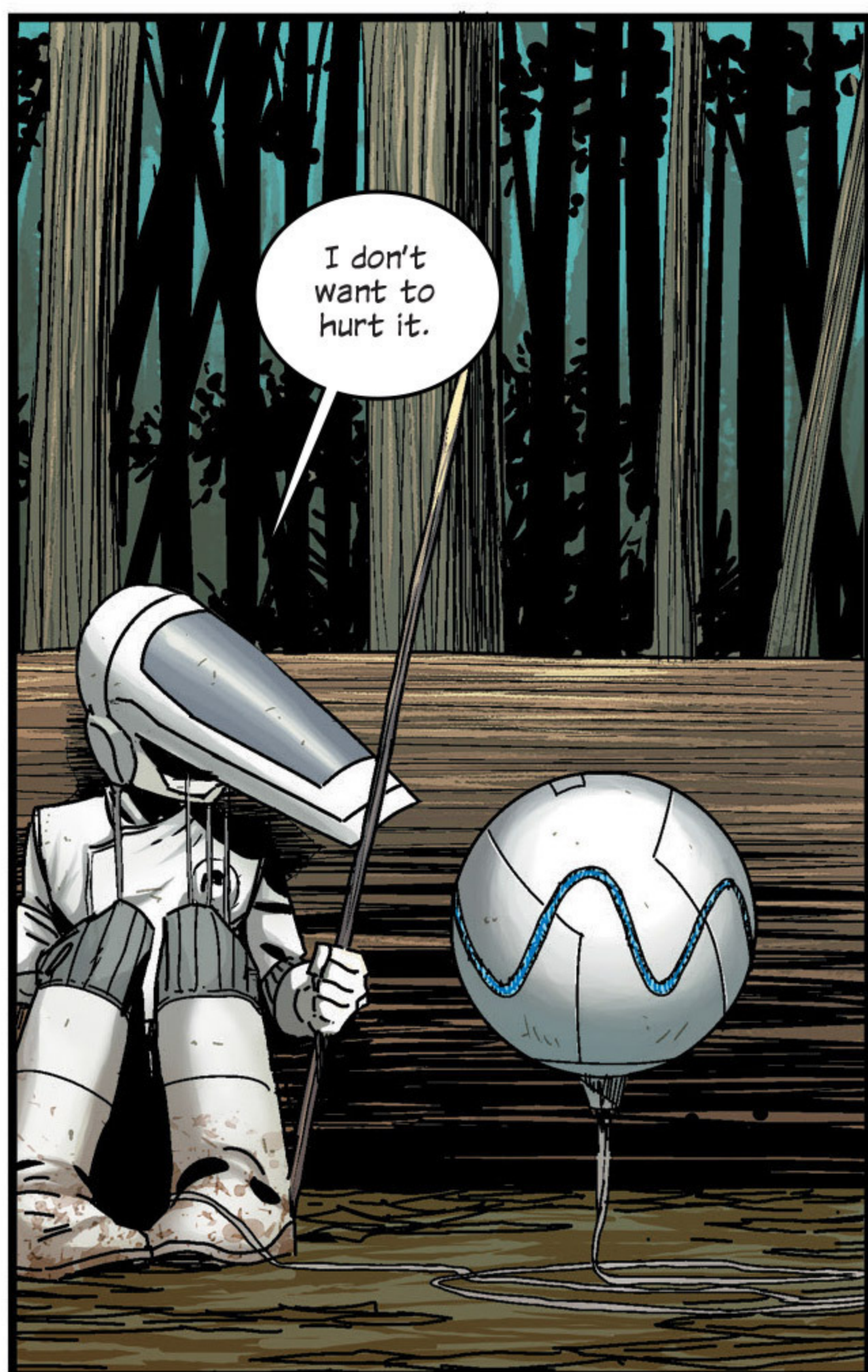
SHK  
SHK  
SHK



And don't forget, a spear is the oldest range weapon in history. Some have been found that are over 350,000 years old.

A classic design -- effective with so few pounds of pressure.





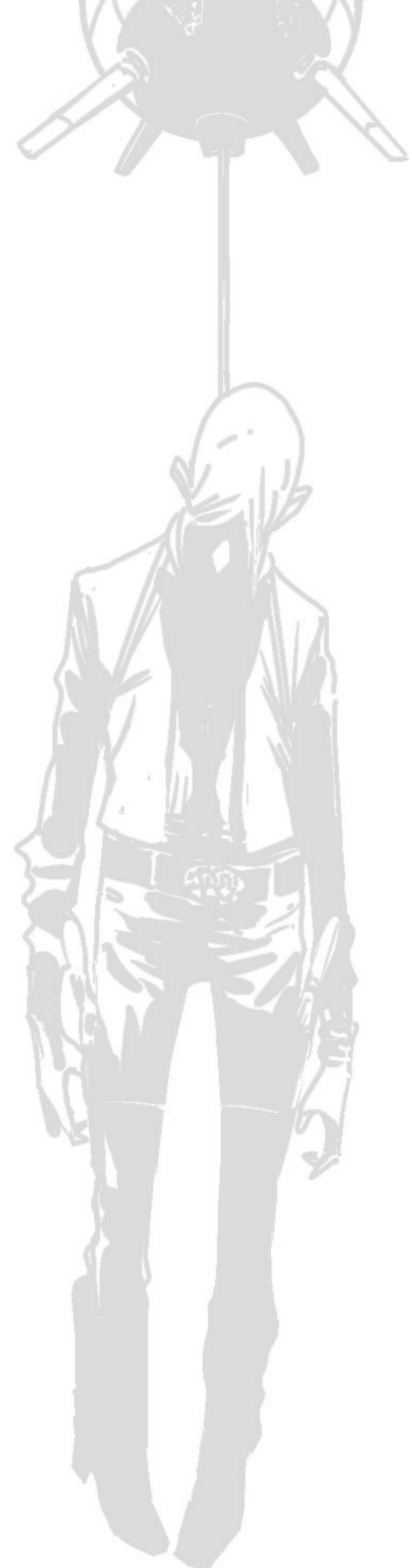


**CONSUME IT ALL.**

**EAT THE ROOT.**







# 19



**NINETEEN:**  
THIS IS WHY WE  
KILL



ALL OF THESE ARE **TESTS.**

ALL OF THIS IS **CHANGE.**







Later.

Remember this, Babylon...

Part of living well is eating well.

Weird thing for you to say, Balloon...

But something's different about you, isn't there?

You've been acting strange since we ran into the prophet with the awesome gerbil thingy.



If you think of the entirety of our association as a game -- **and it isn't** -- the rules of said contrivance have changed.

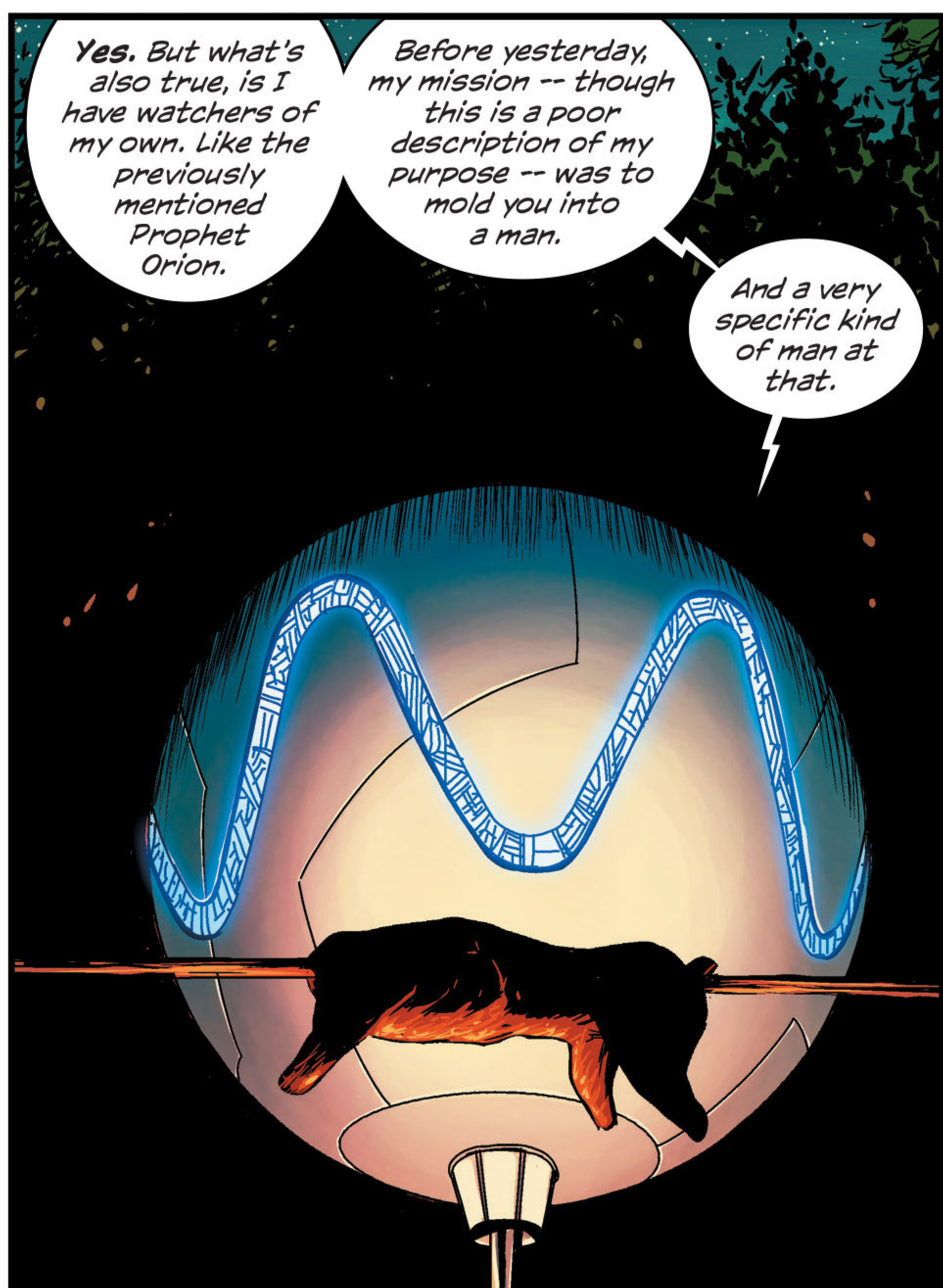
You understand what I am, right?

I think so.



You're a mobile thinking machine. My watcher. My teacher.

My friend.



Yes. But what's also true, is I have watchers of my own. Like the previously mentioned Prophet Orion.

Before yesterday, my mission -- though this is a poor description of my purpose -- was to mold you into a man.

And a very specific kind of man at that.

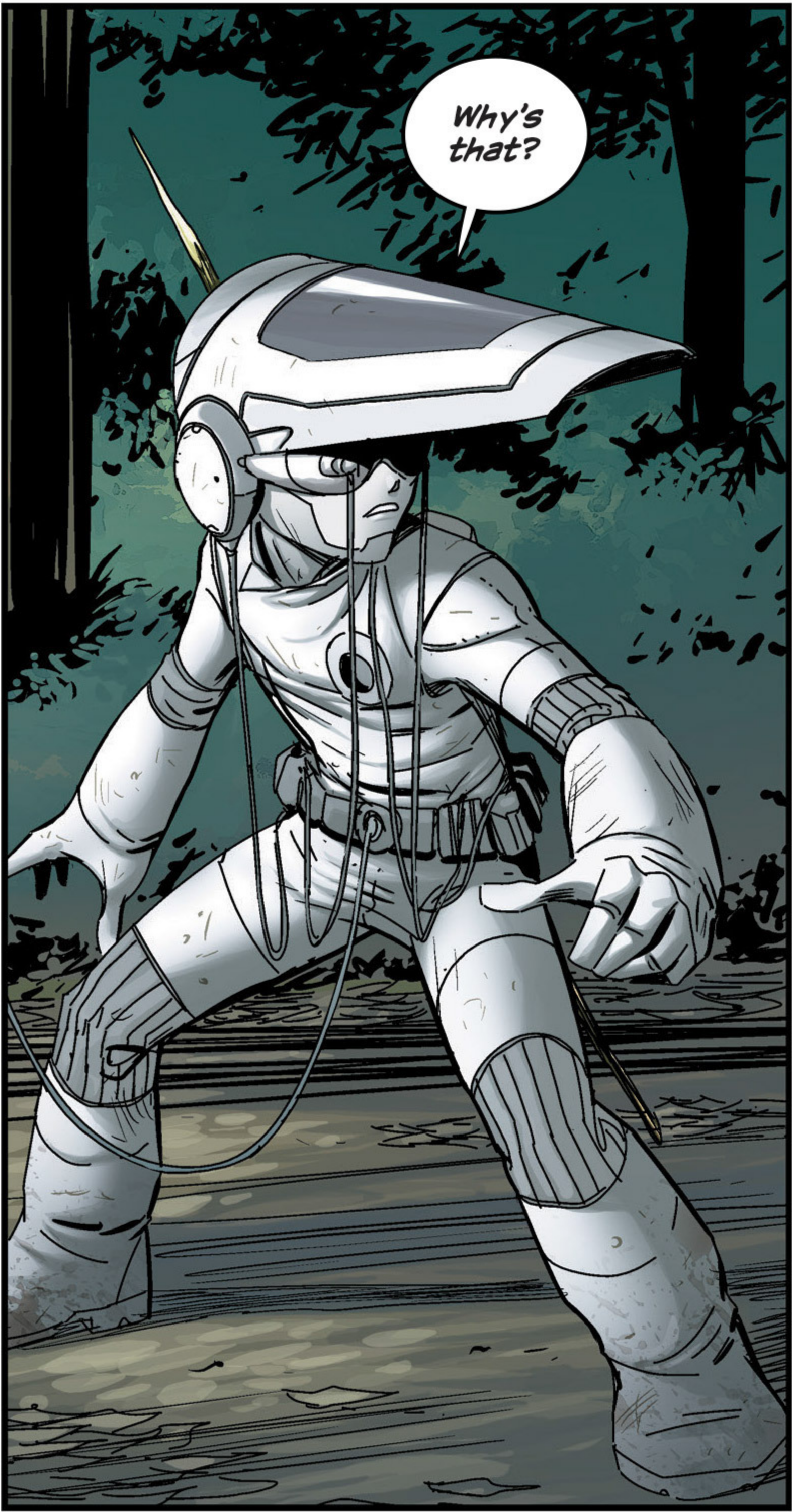
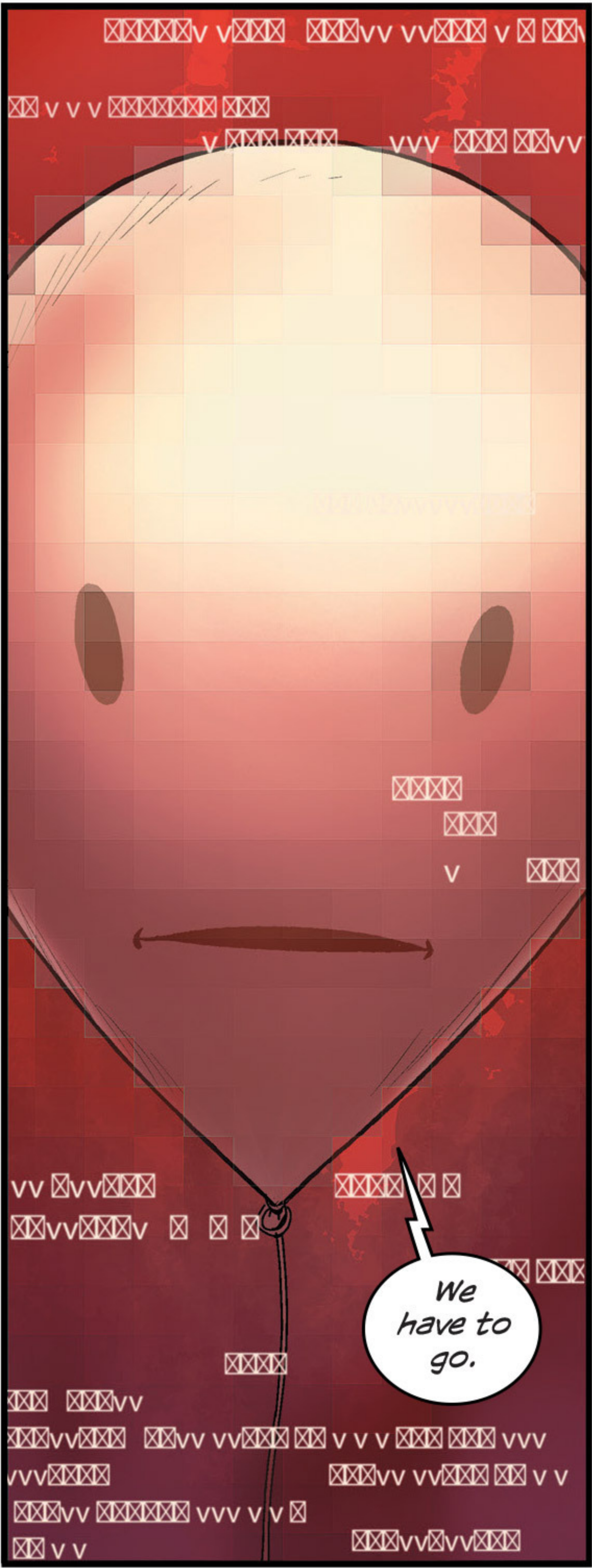
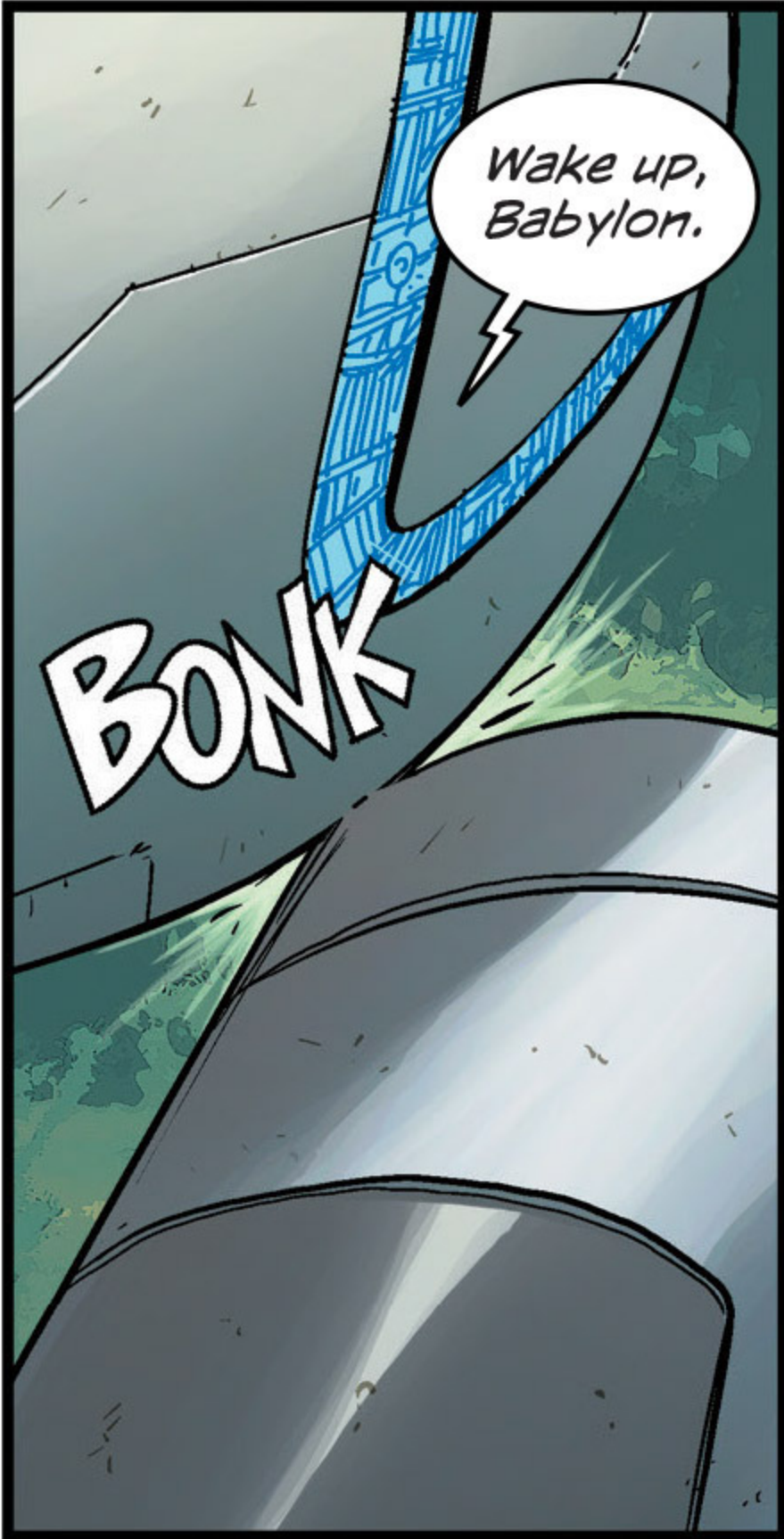
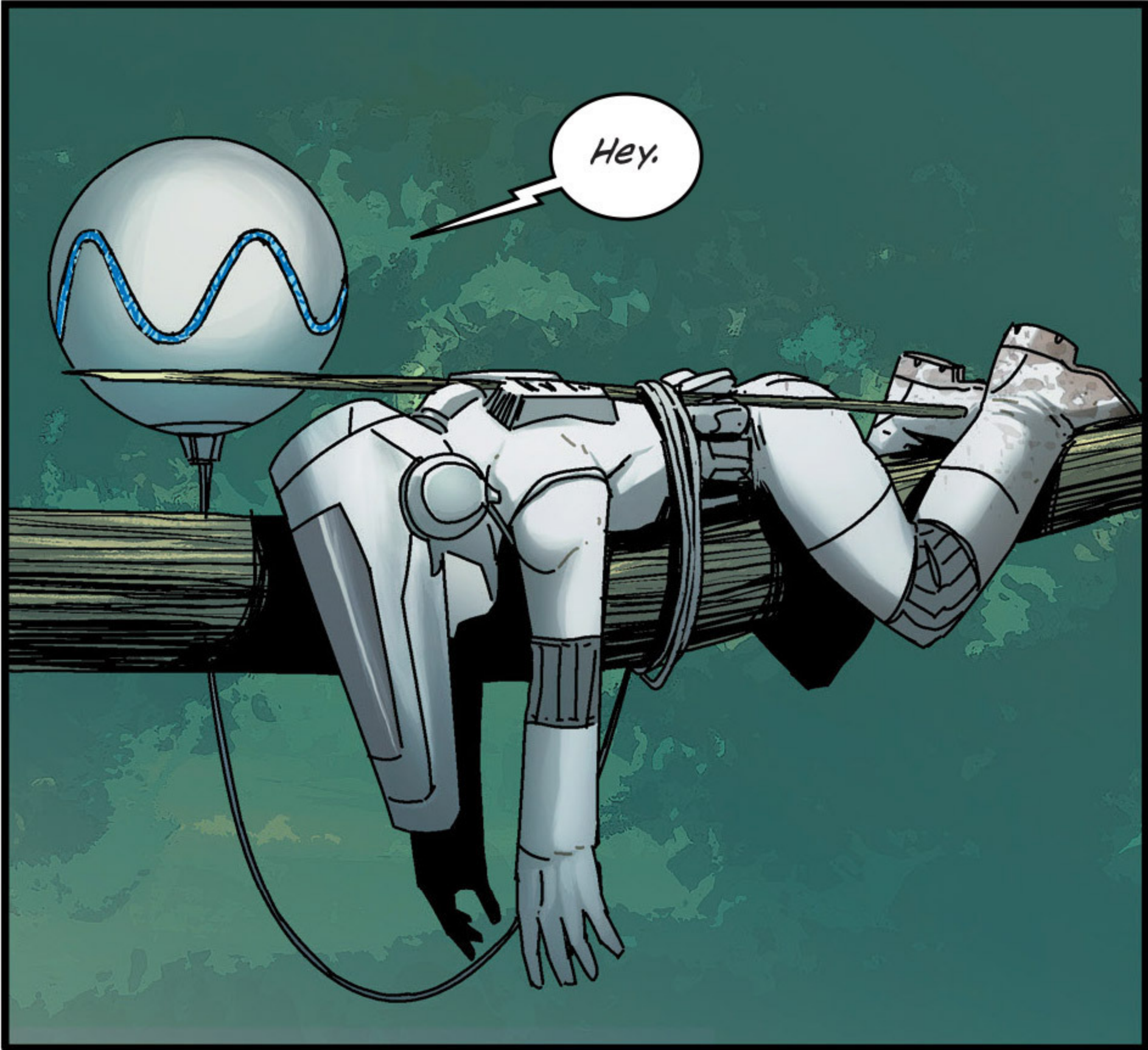
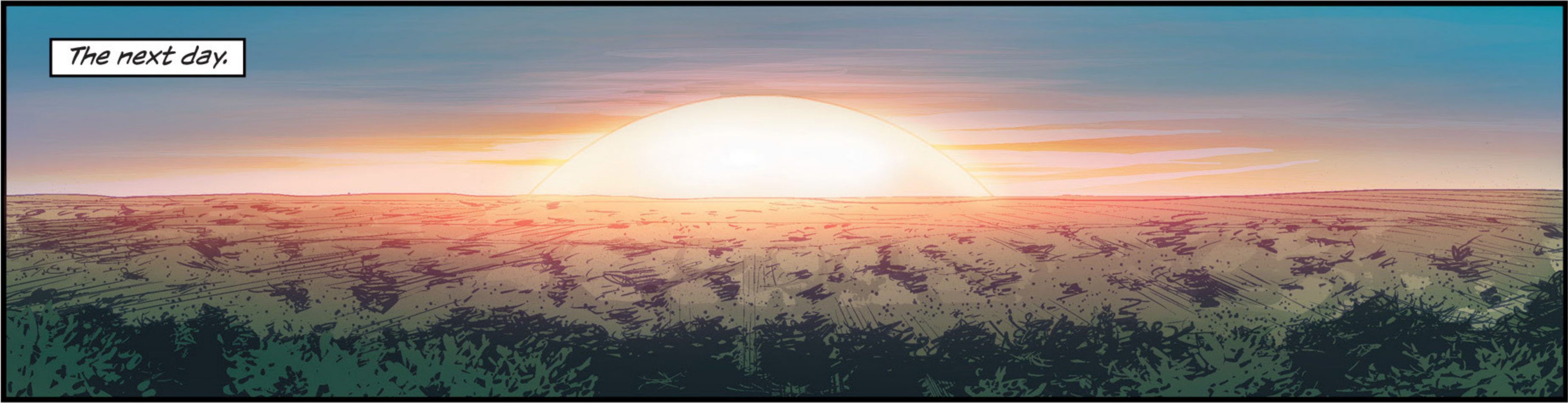


But my role has changed now... and you are to choose who you will become...

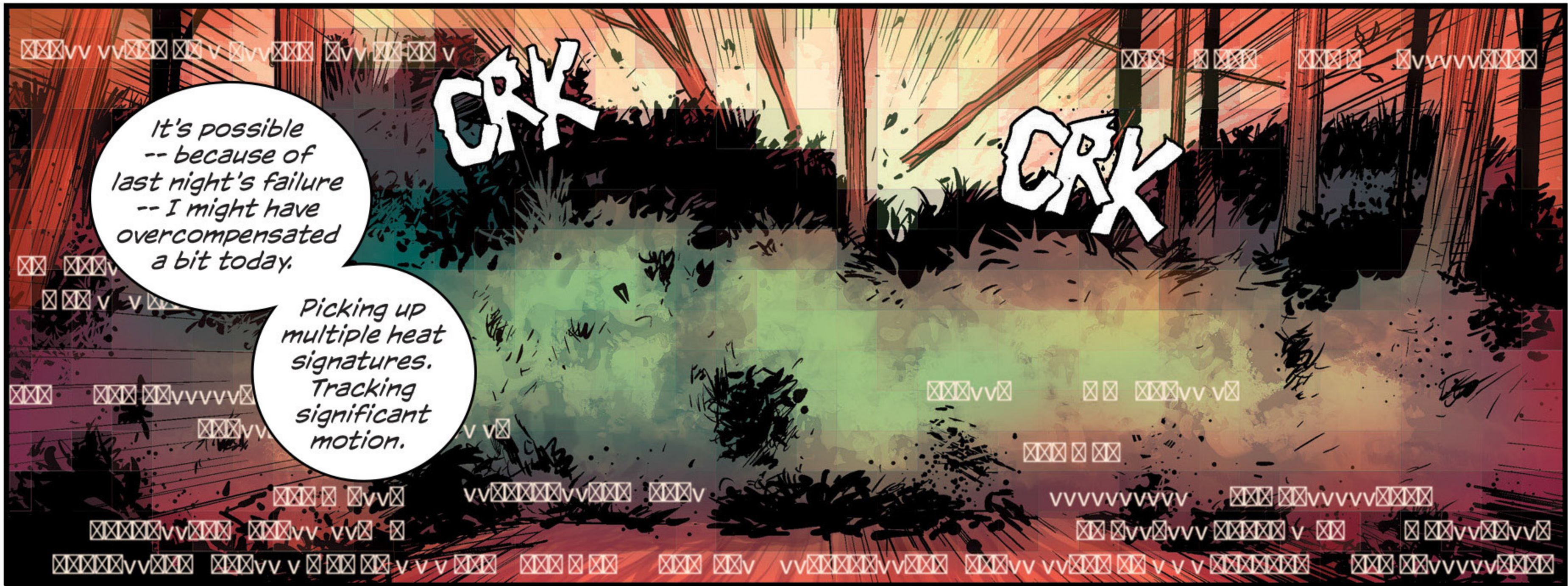
I am simply a tool of testing.

Oh.







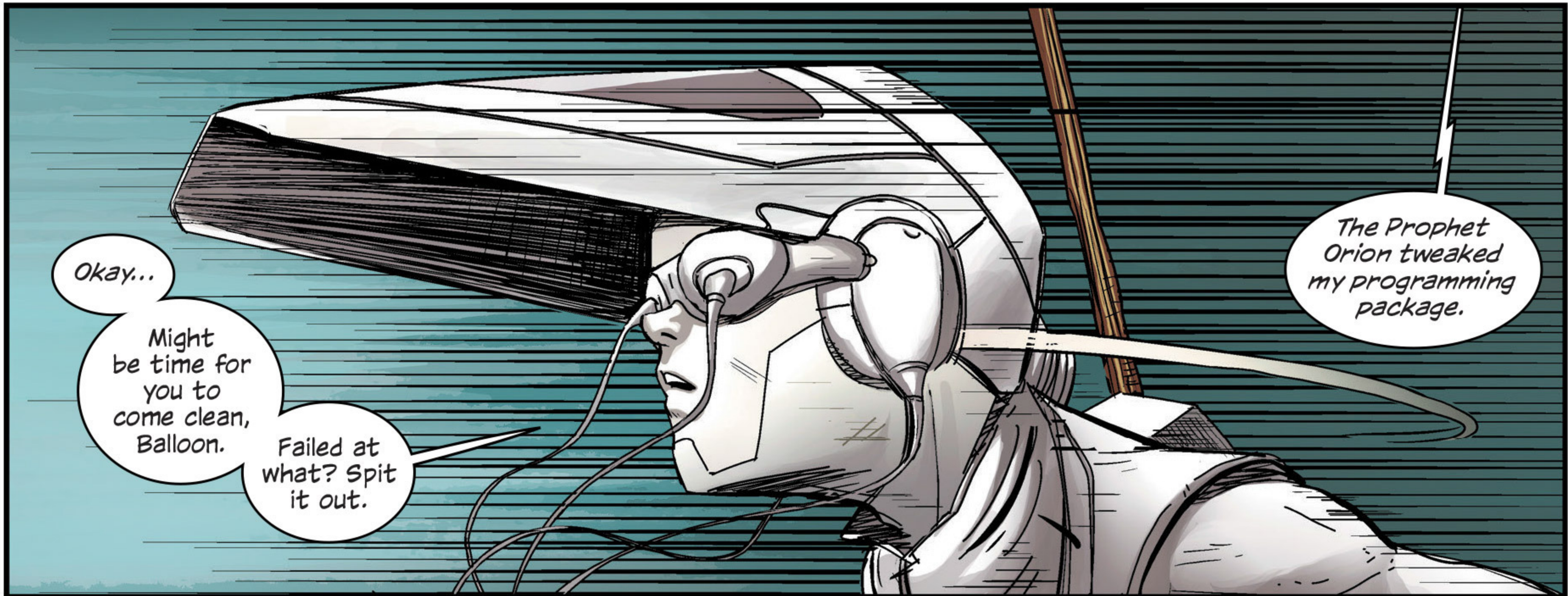


It's possible  
-- because of  
last night's failure  
-- I might have  
overcompensated  
a bit today.

Picking up  
multiple heat  
signatures.  
Tracking  
significant  
motion.

CRK

CRK



Okay...

Might  
be time for  
you to  
come clean,  
Balloon.

Failed at  
what? Spit  
it out.

The Prophet  
Orion tweaked  
my programming  
package.

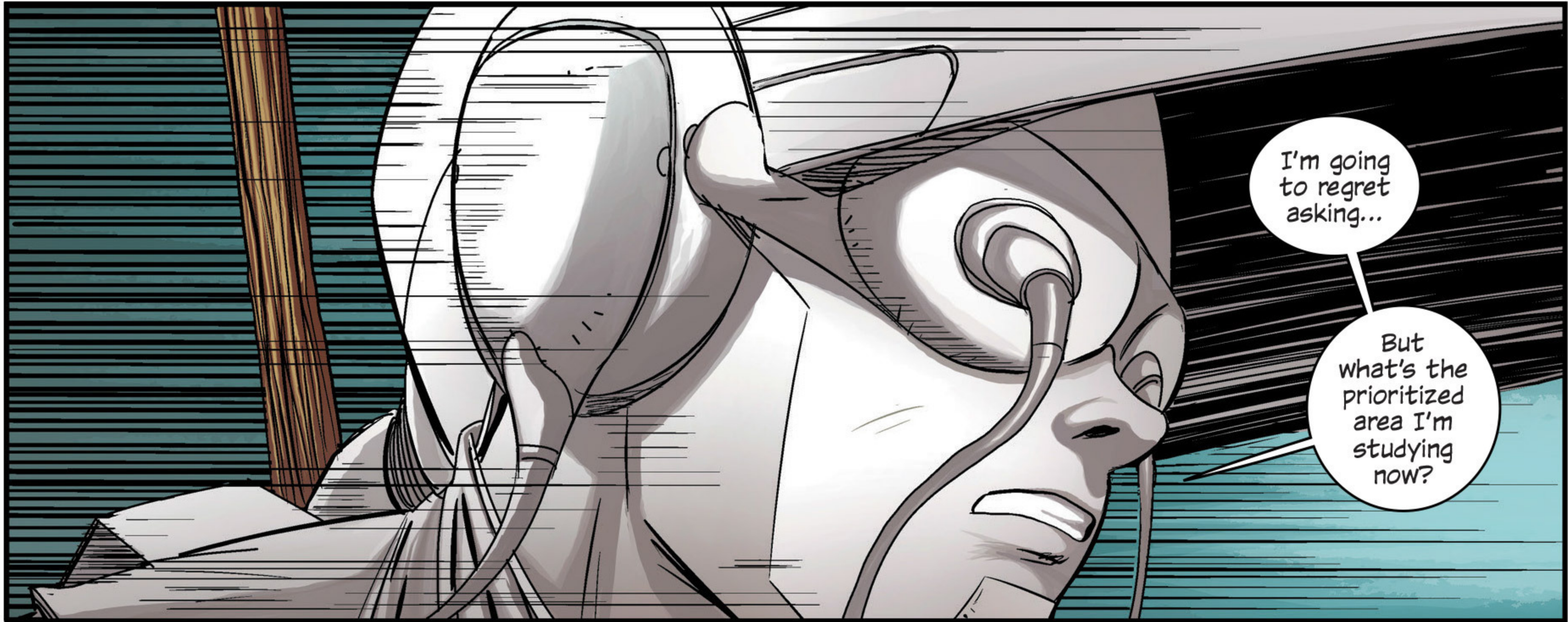


I still have  
the ability to  
override in certain  
situations, but my  
primary function is  
now to place you in  
situations where  
you are forced to  
make life-defining  
choices.

CRK

KAK

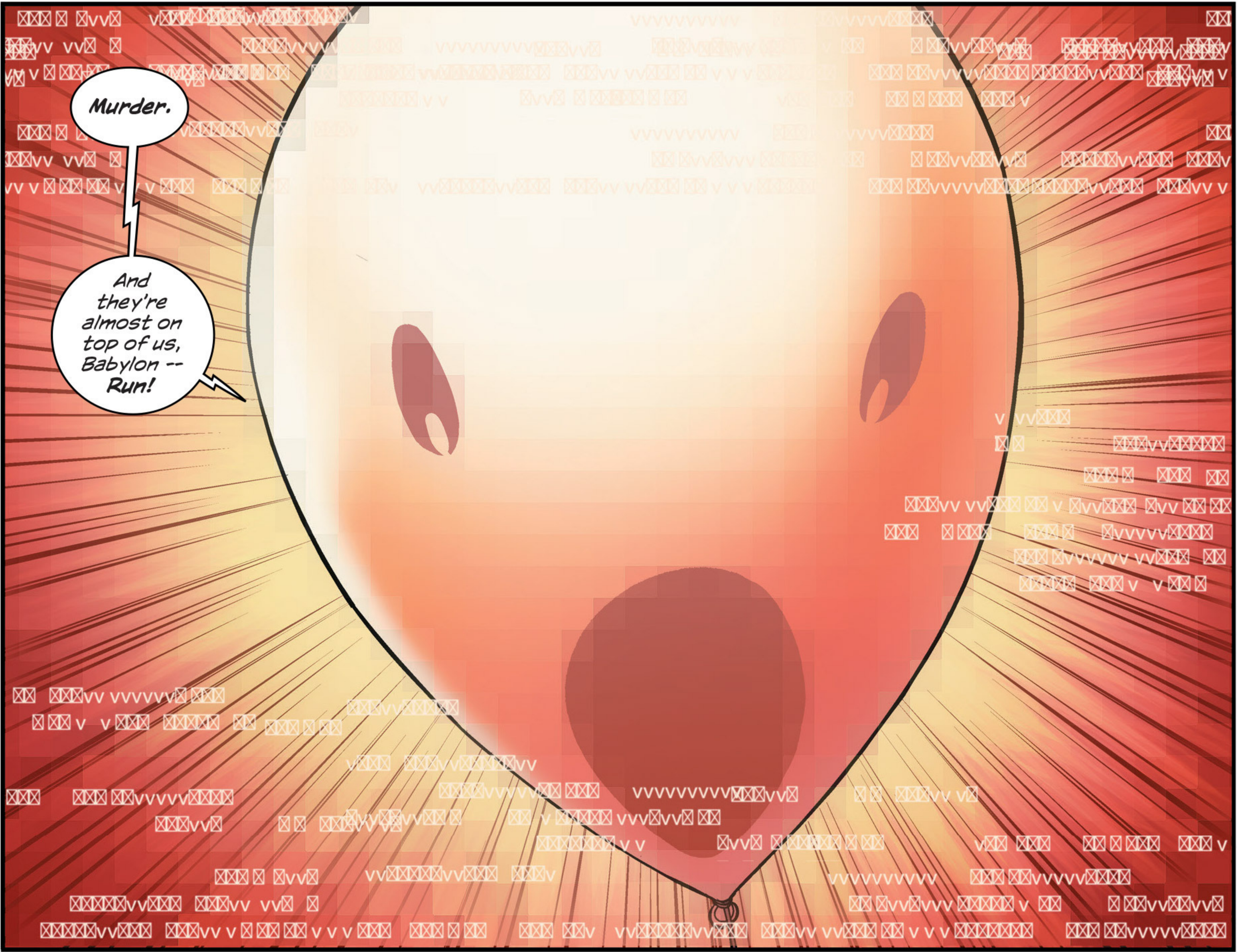
Each set of  
those choices  
are thematically  
tied to a specific  
area of study  
designated:  
**Priority.**



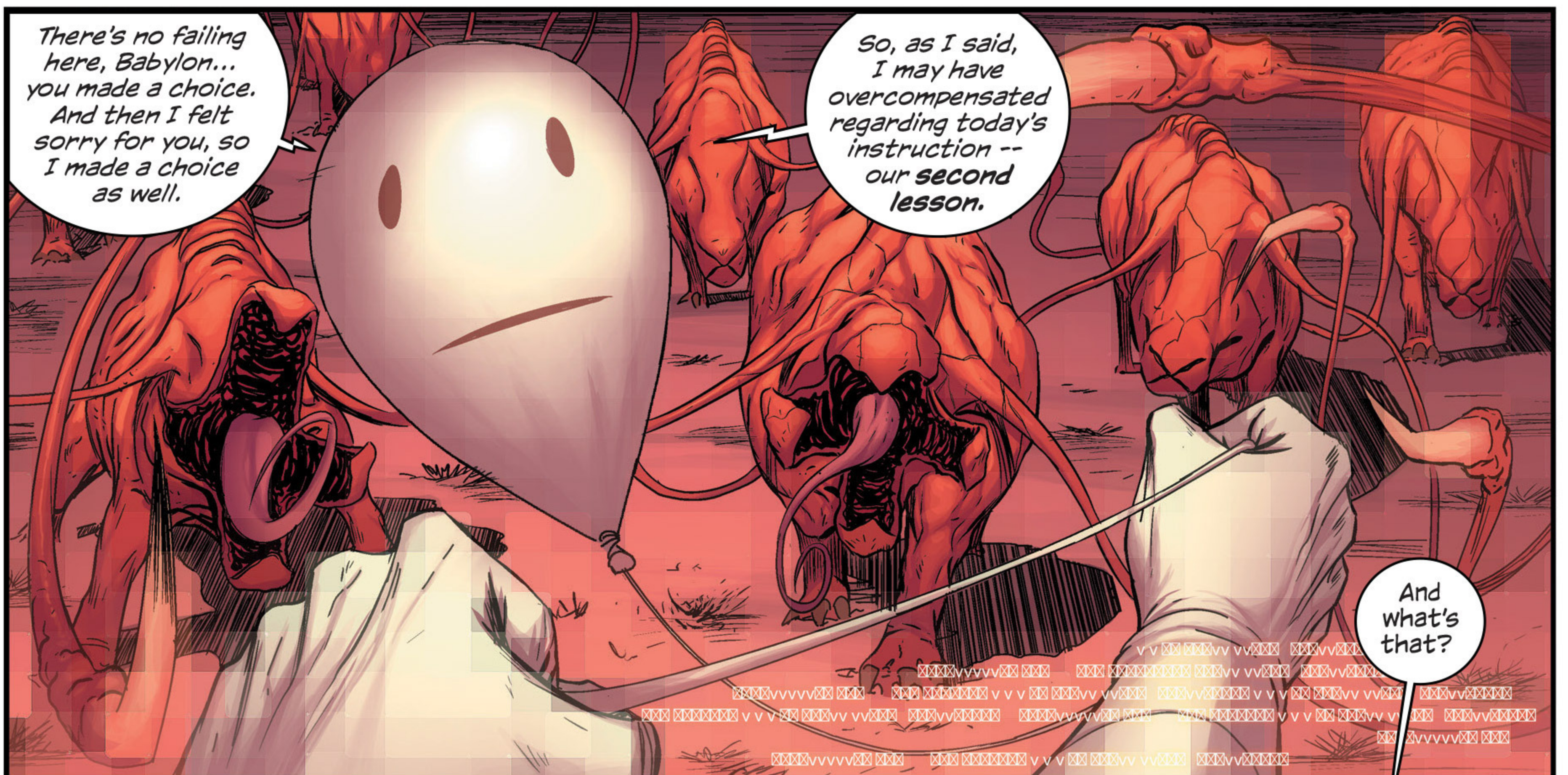
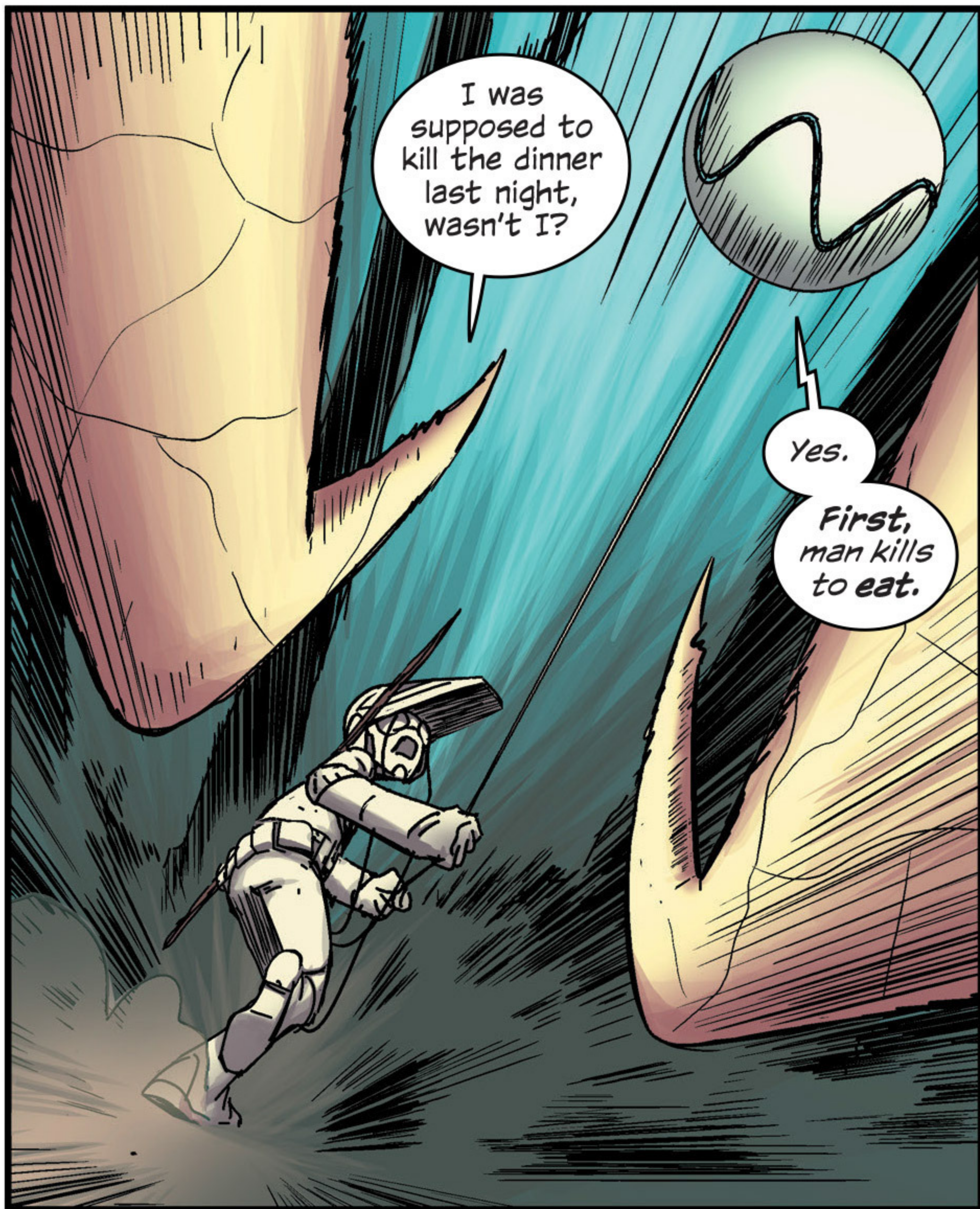
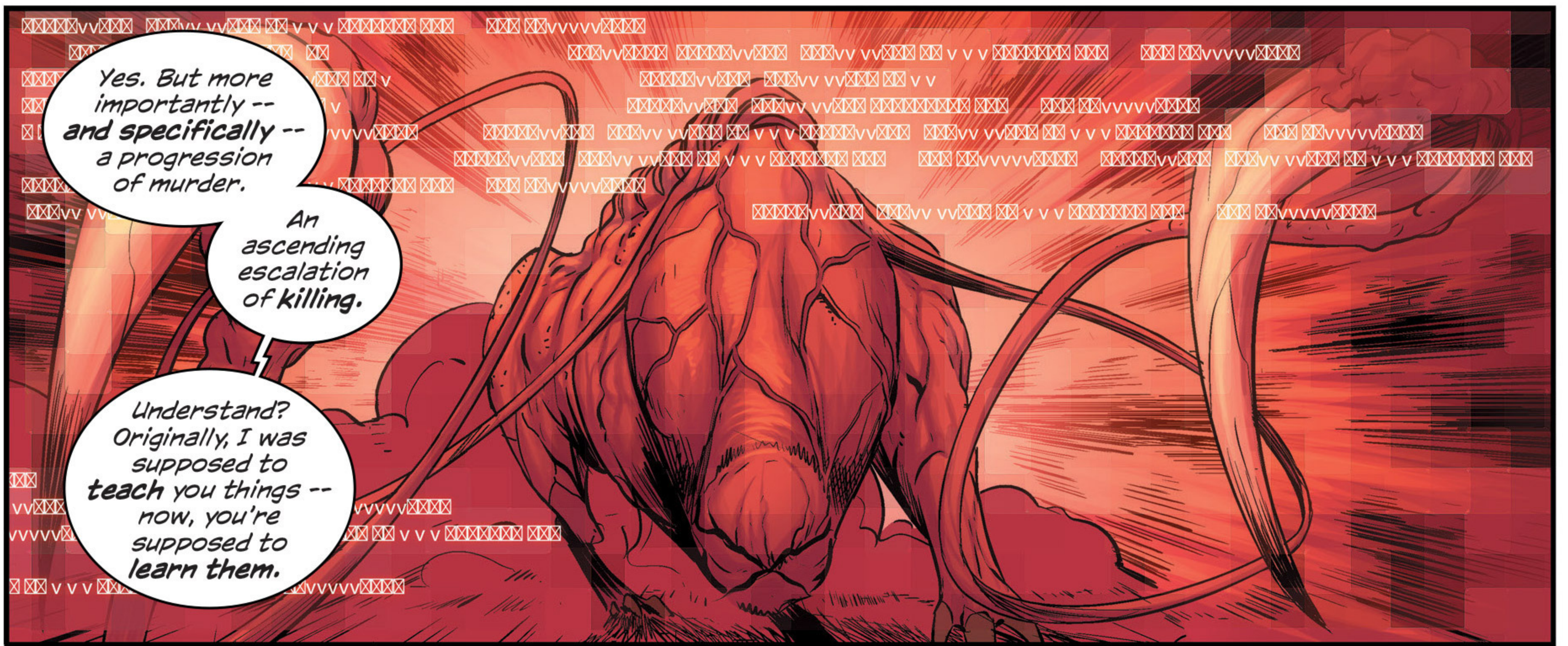
I'm going  
to regret  
asking...

But  
what's the  
prioritized  
area I'm  
studying  
now?

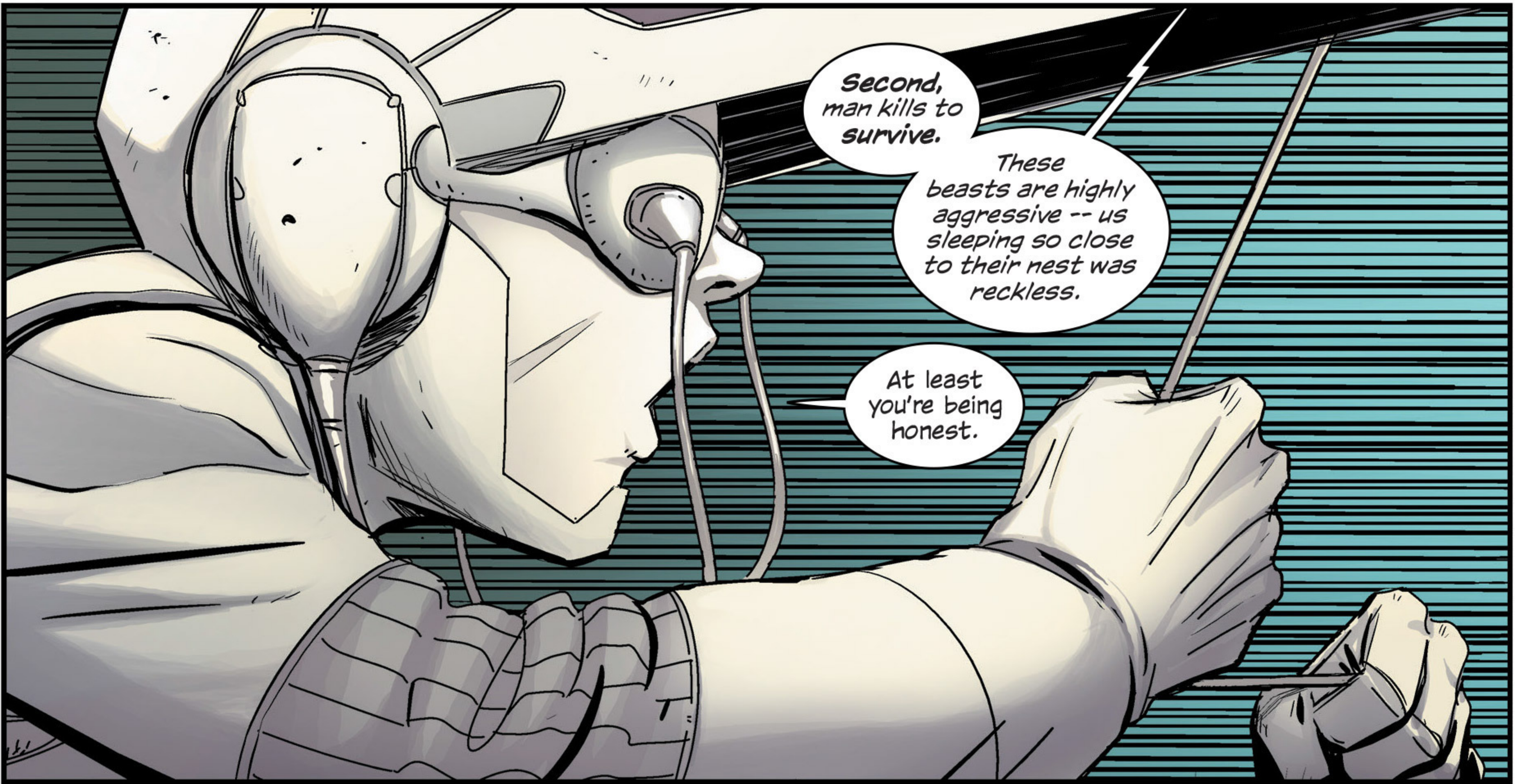








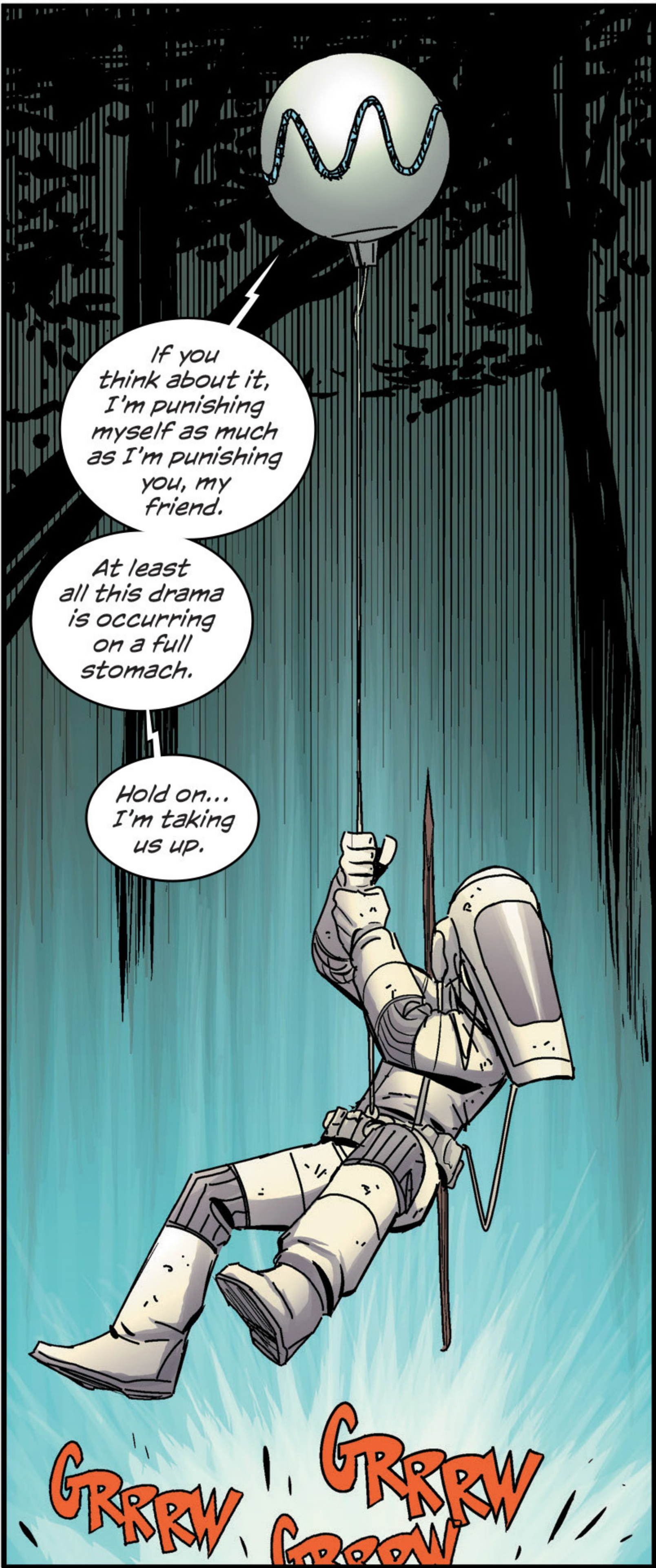




Second, man kills to survive.

These beasts are highly aggressive -- us sleeping so close to their nest was reckless.

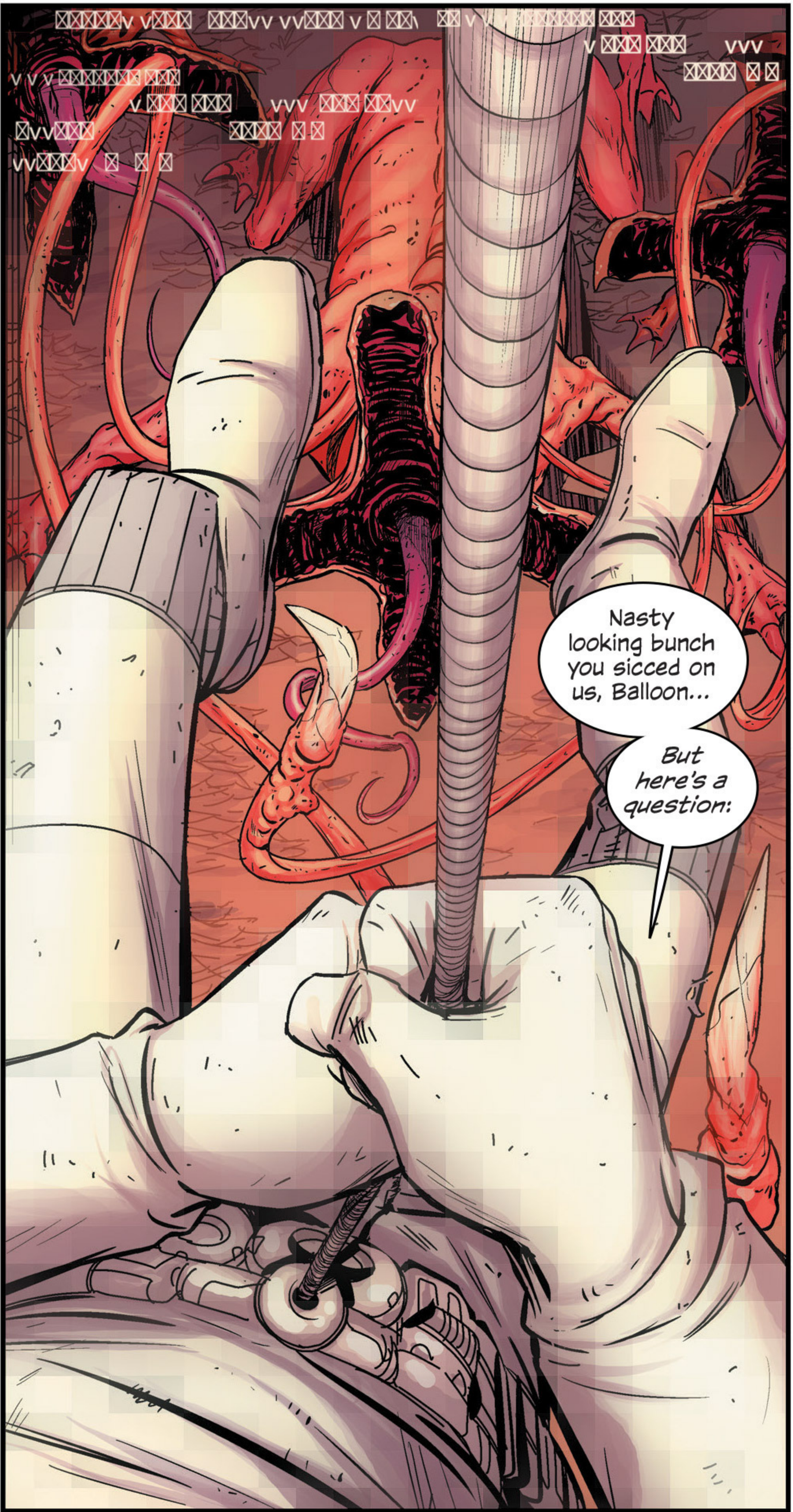
At least you're being honest.



If you think about it, I'm punishing myself as much as I'm punishing you, my friend.

At least all this drama is occurring on a full stomach.

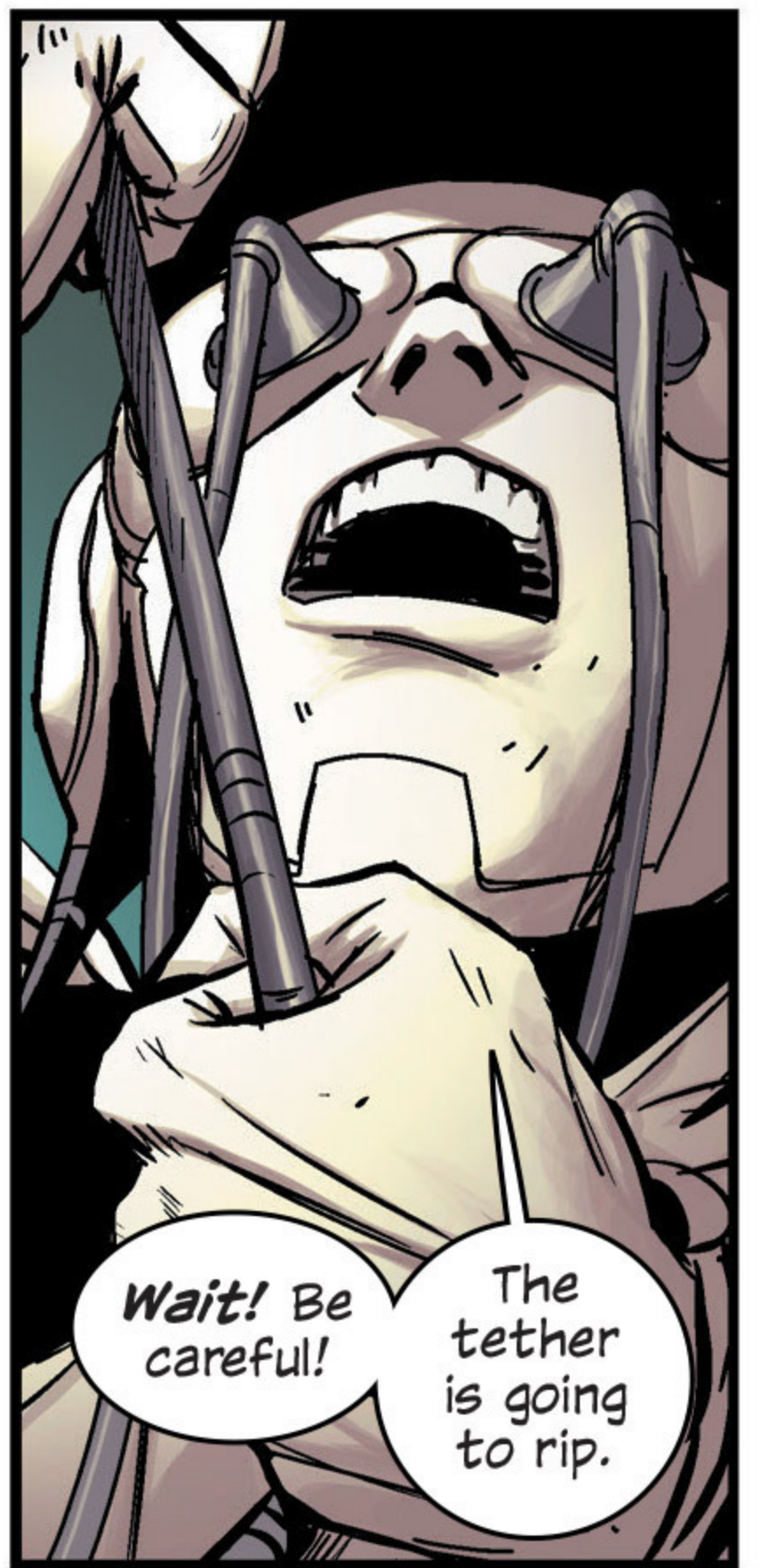
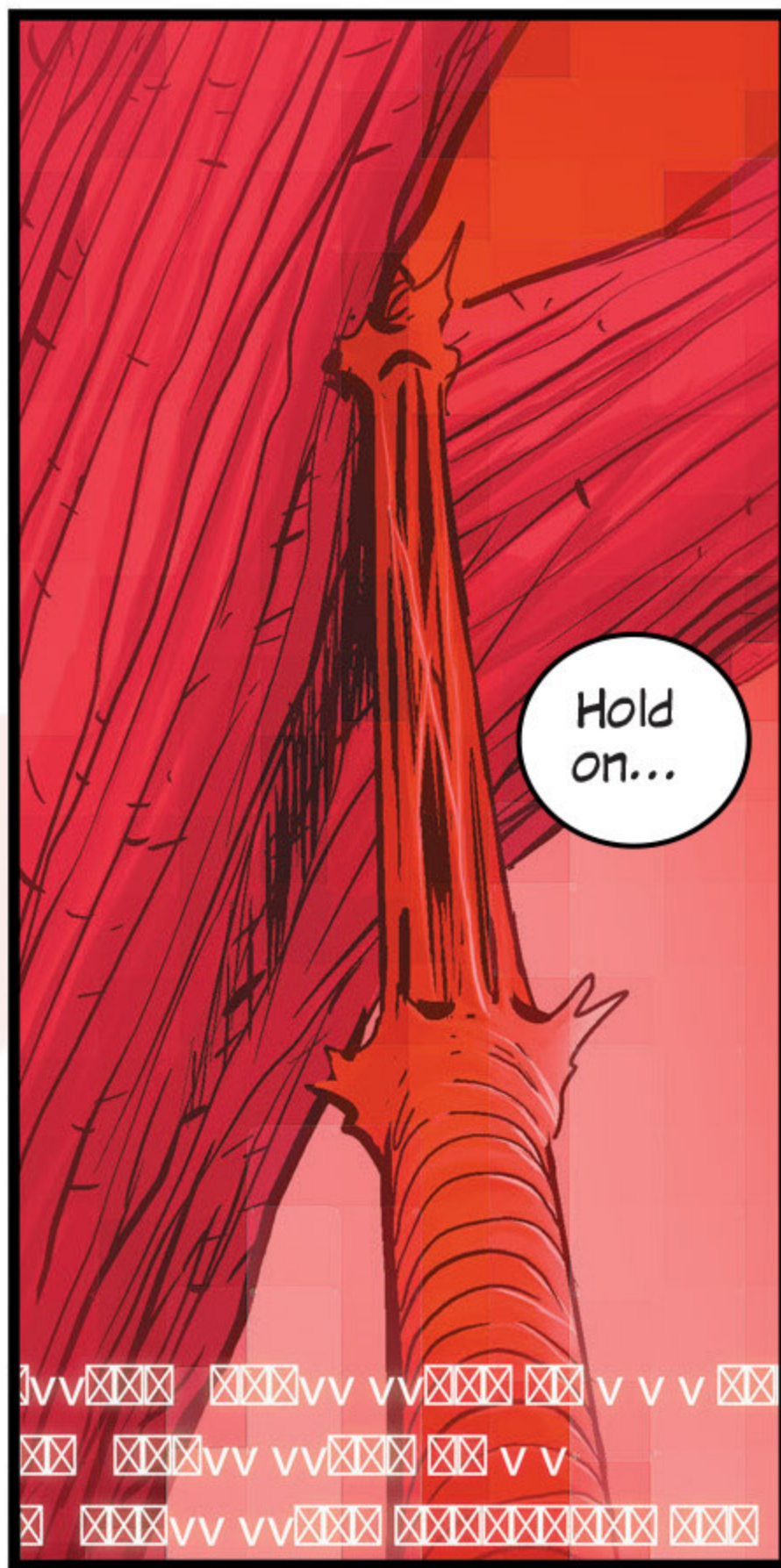
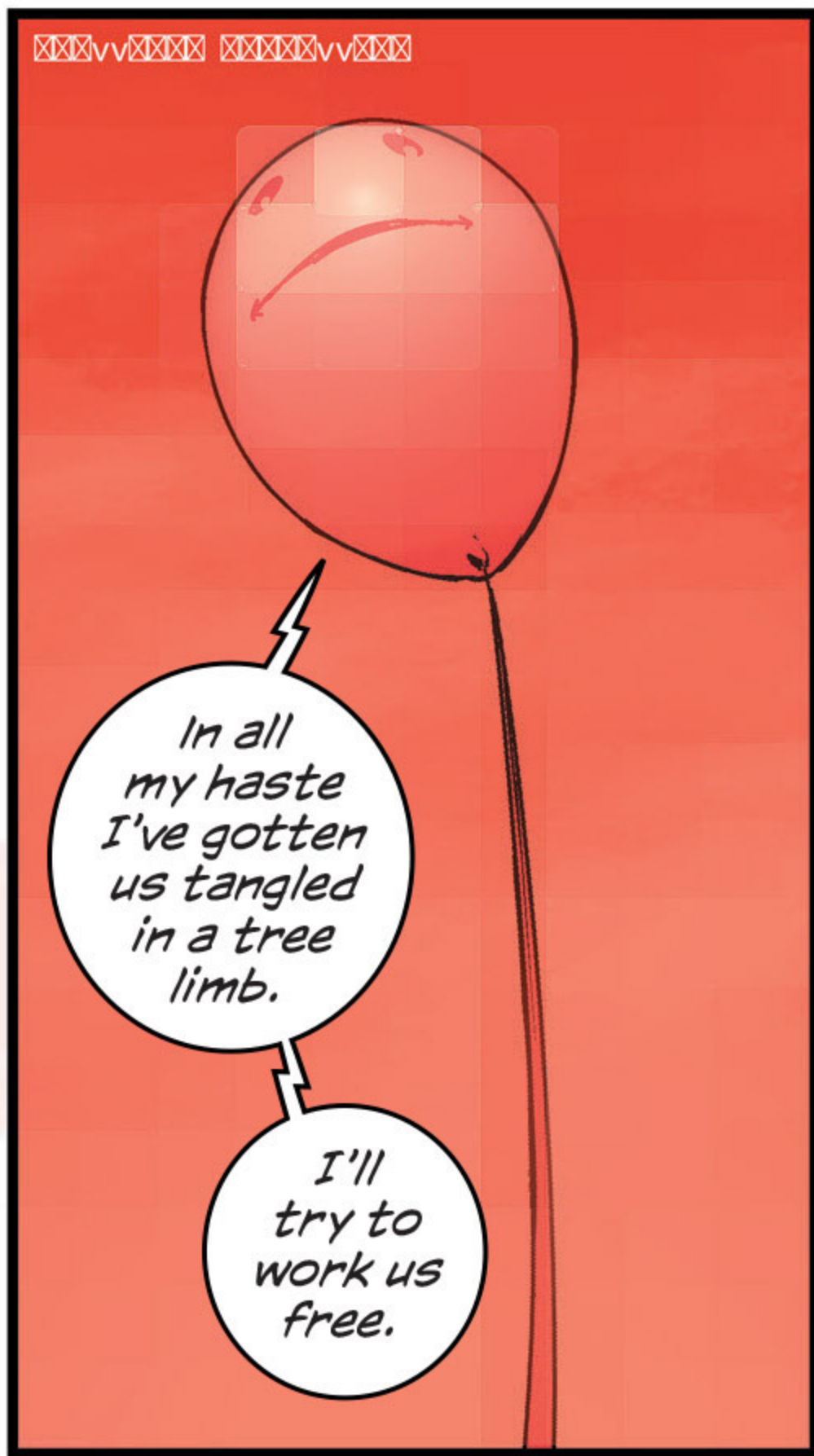
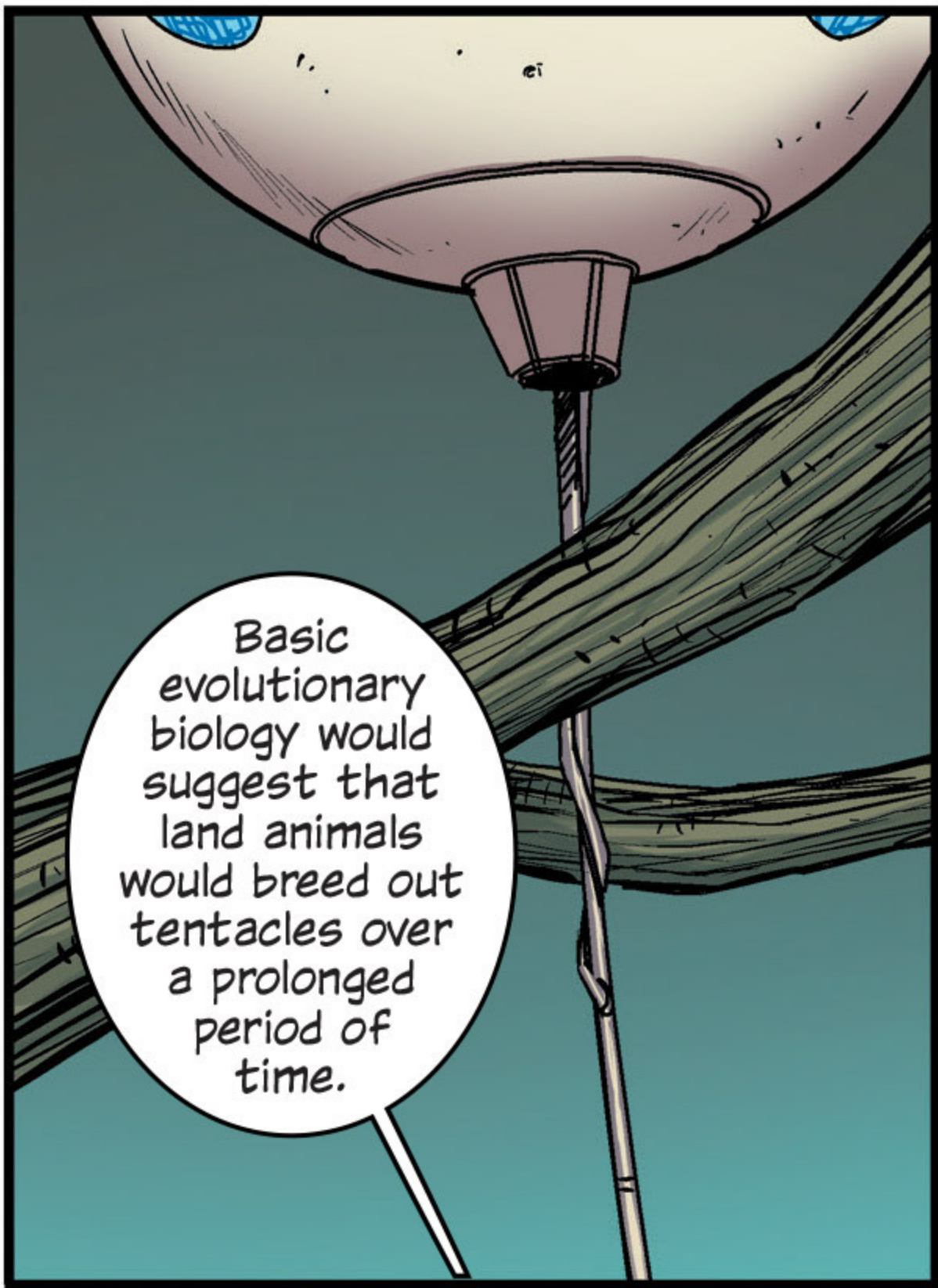
Hold on... I'm taking us up.



Nasty looking bunch you sicced on us, Balloon...

But here's a question:

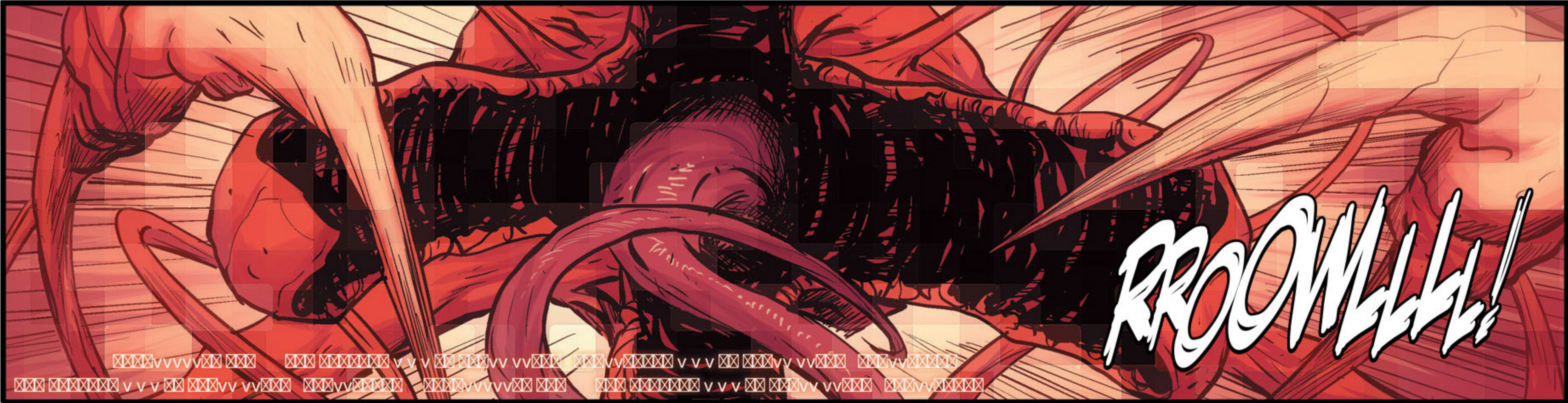
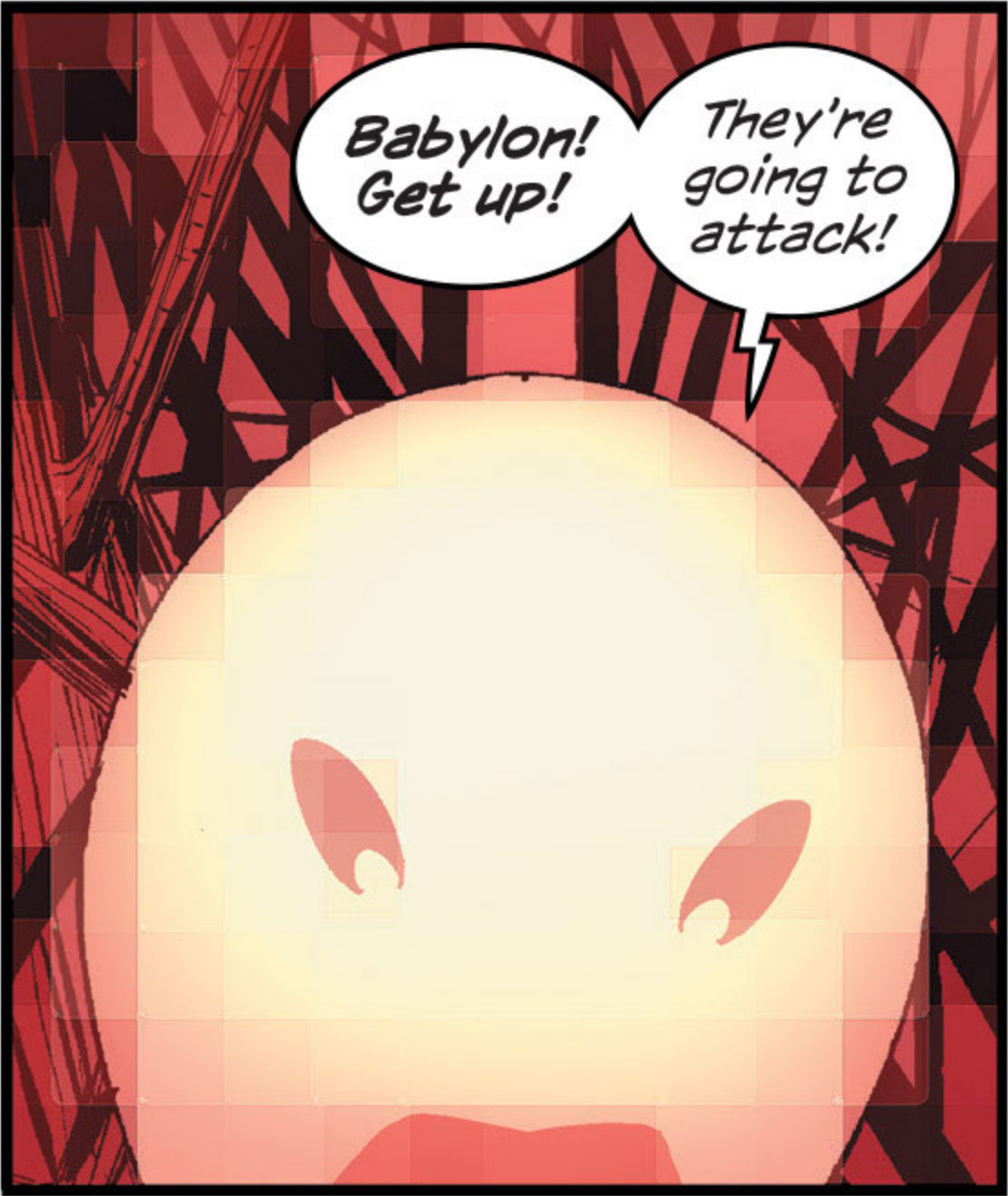




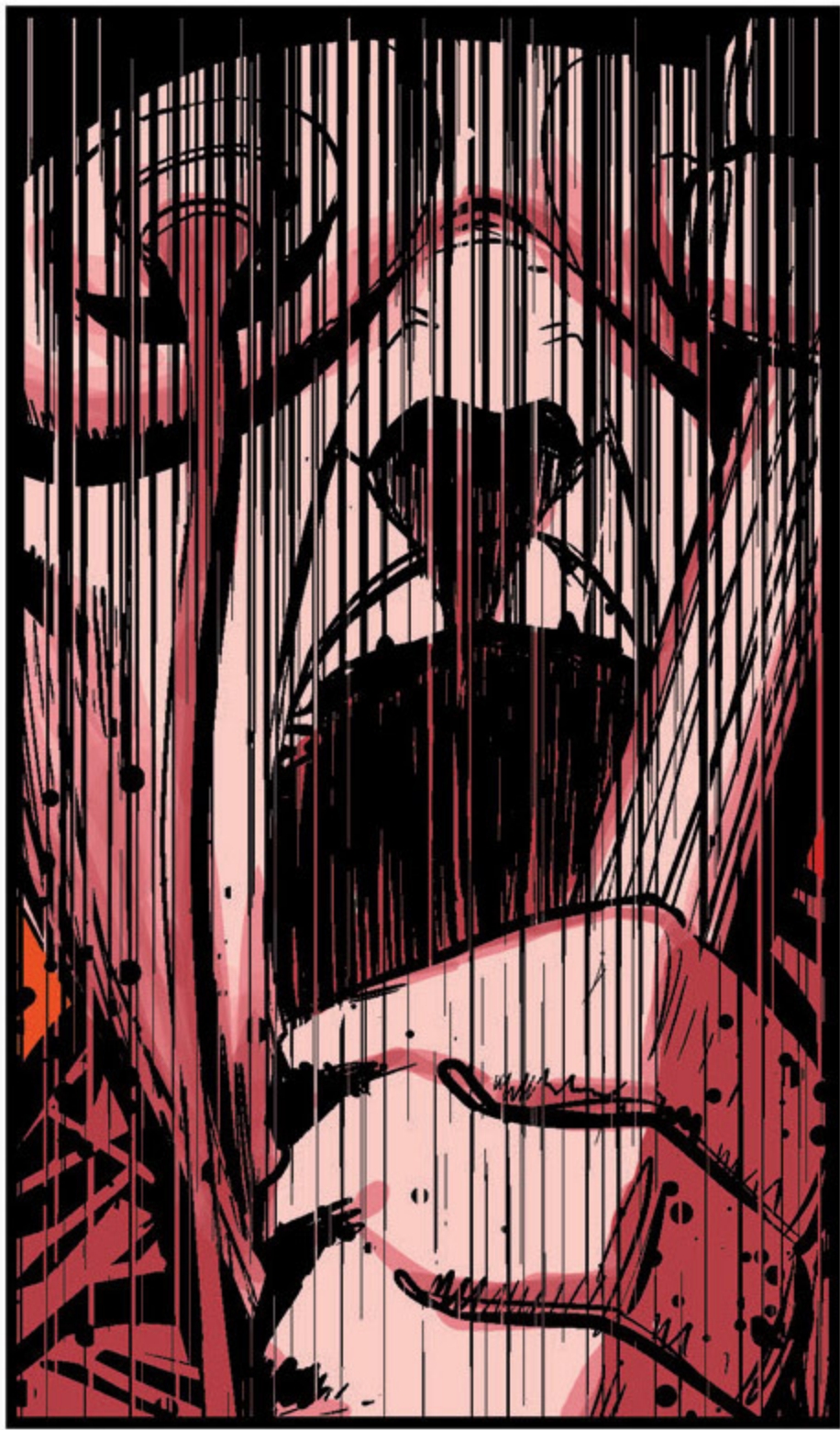
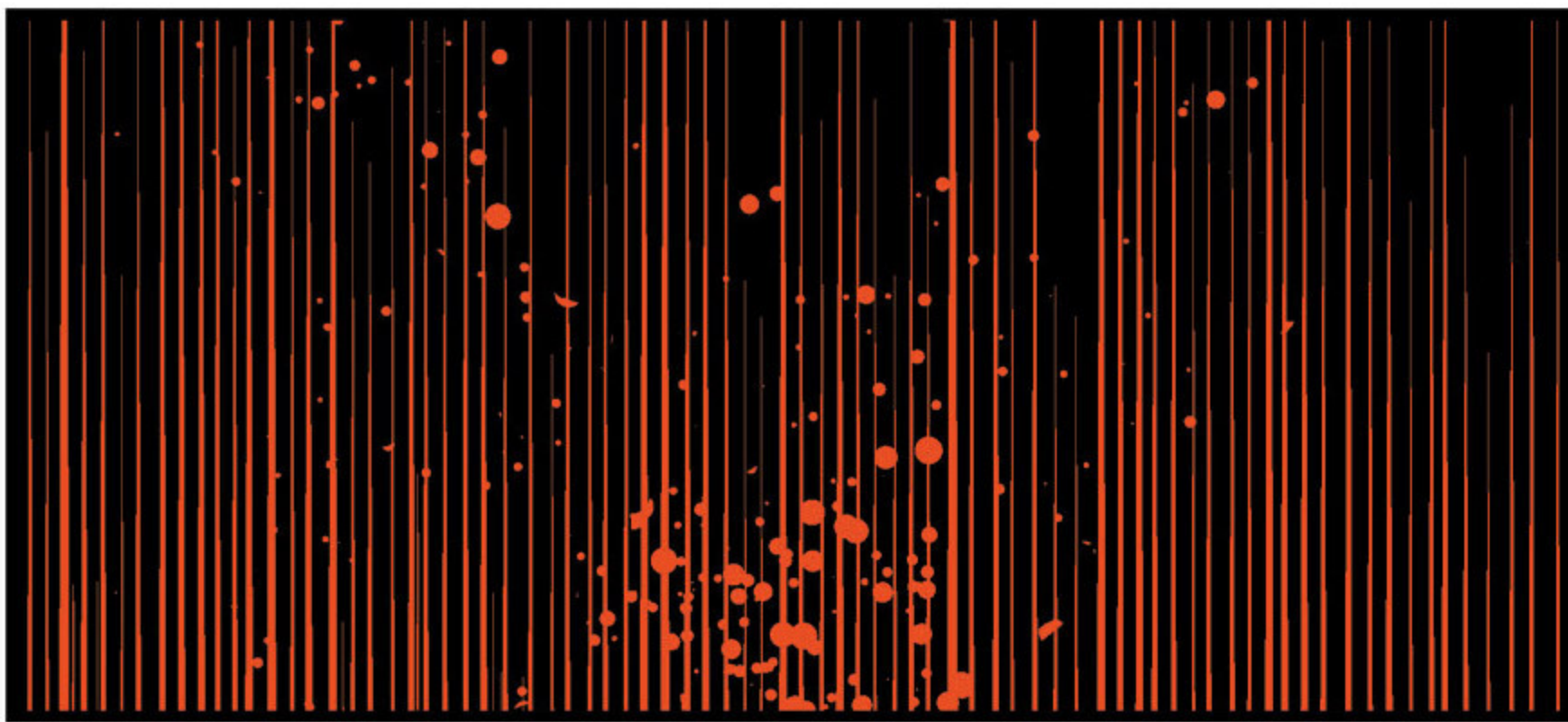
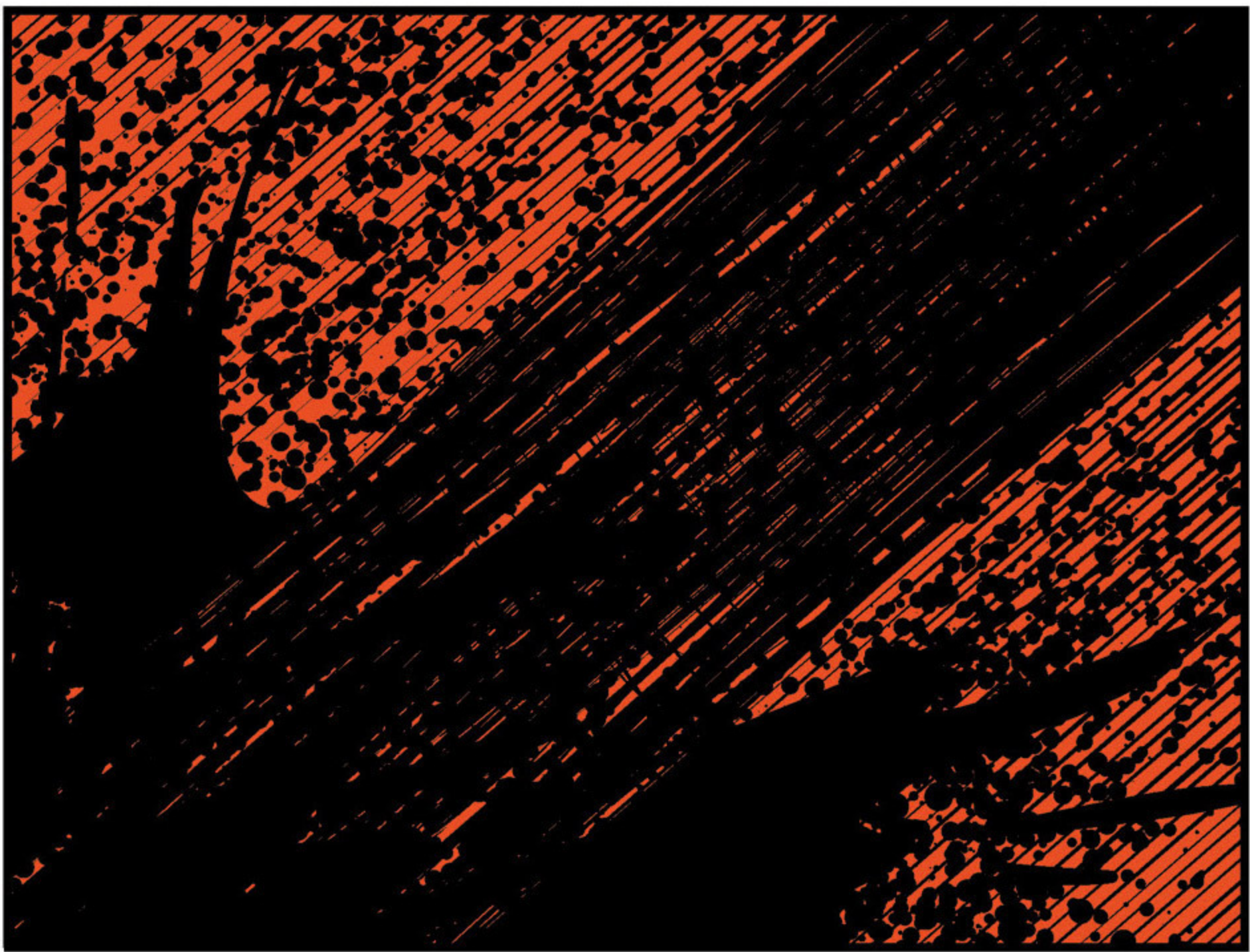
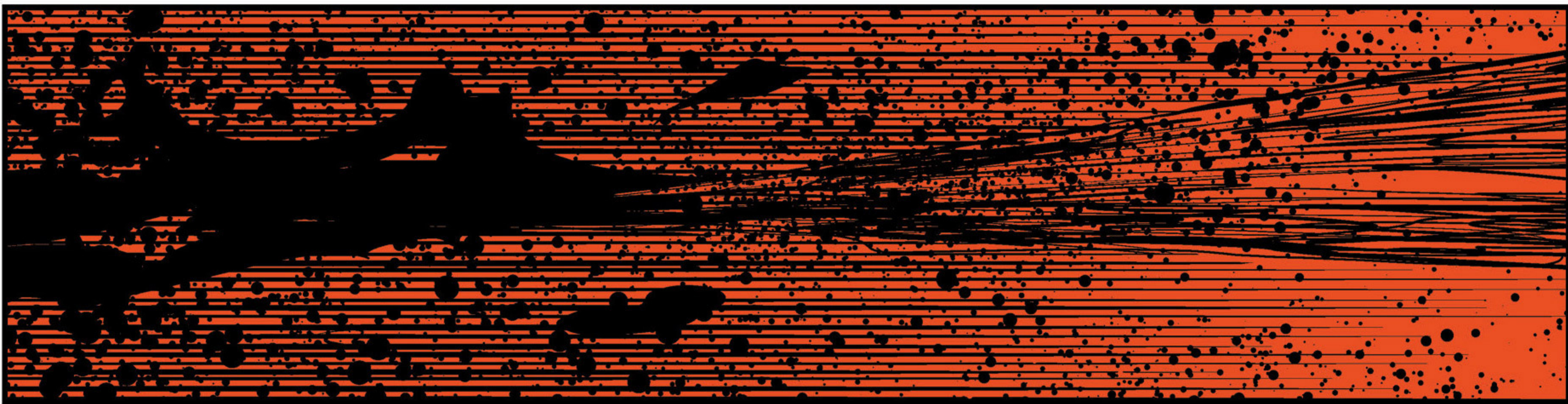
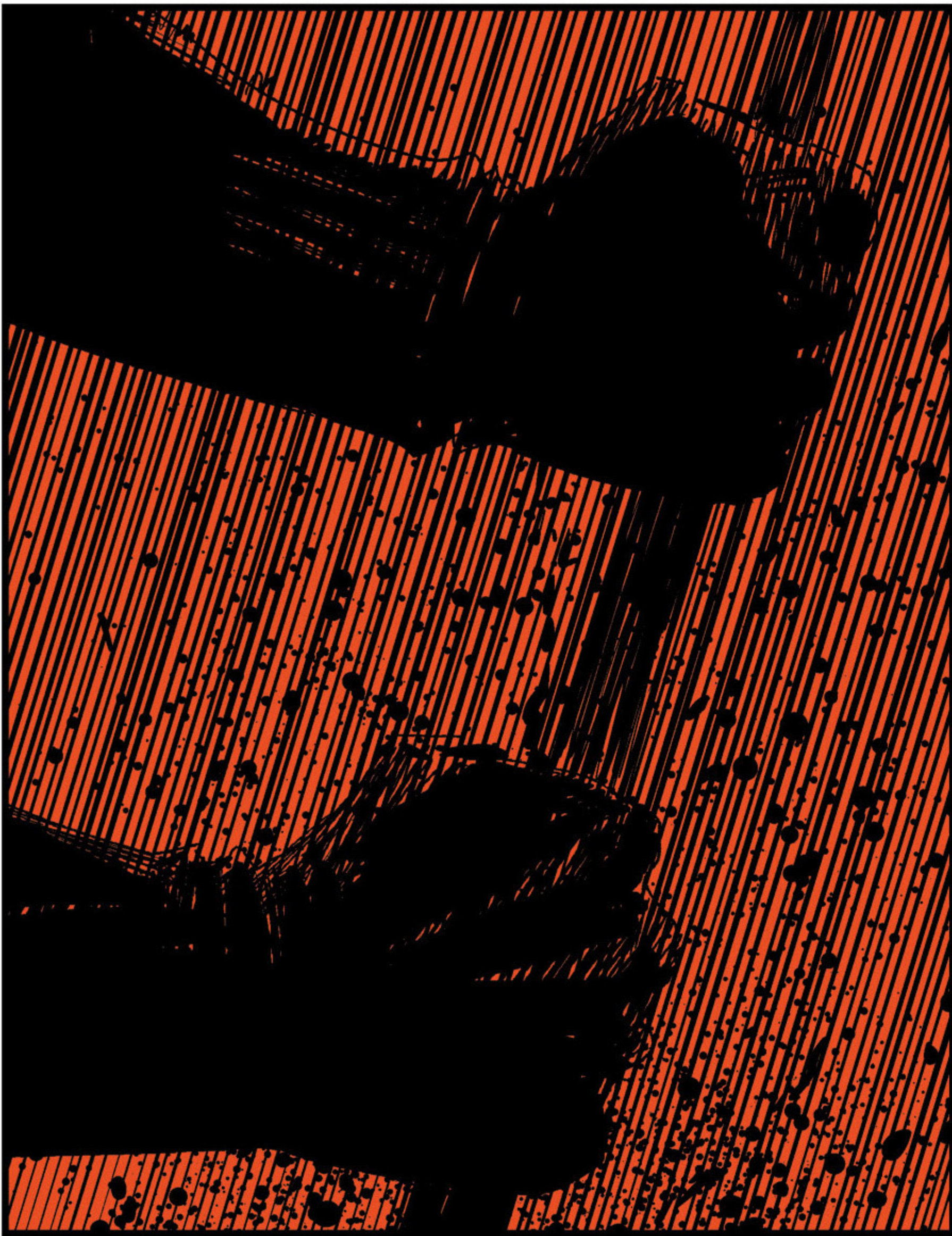
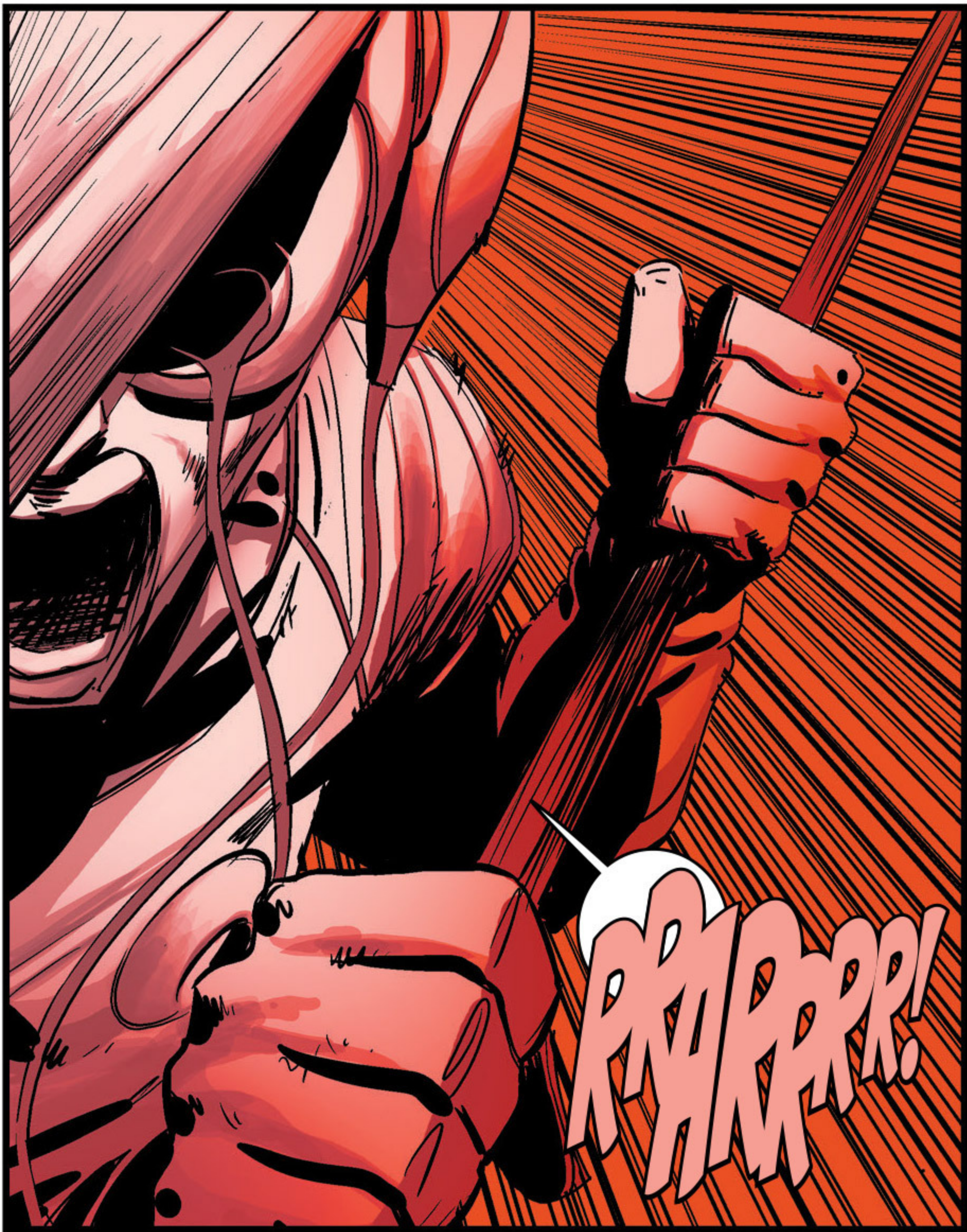




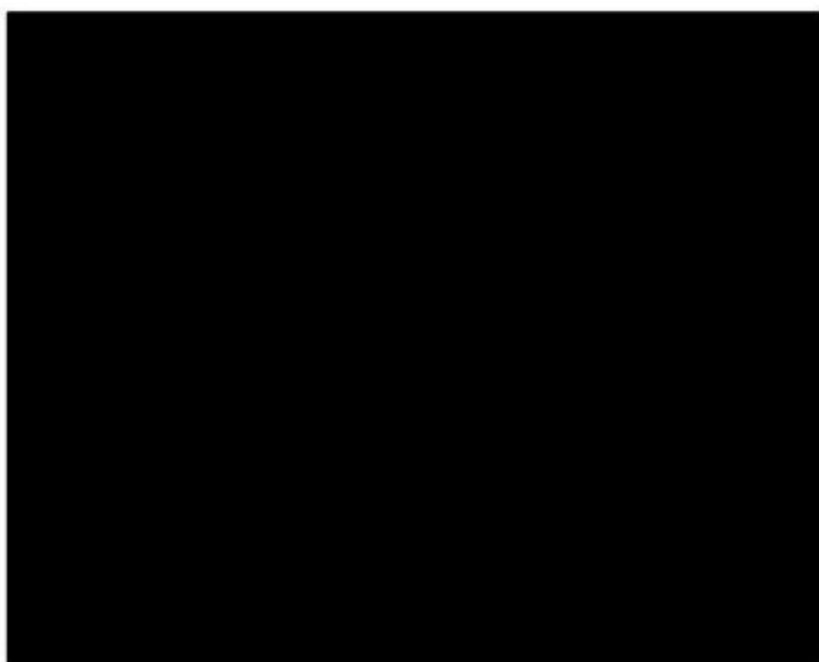
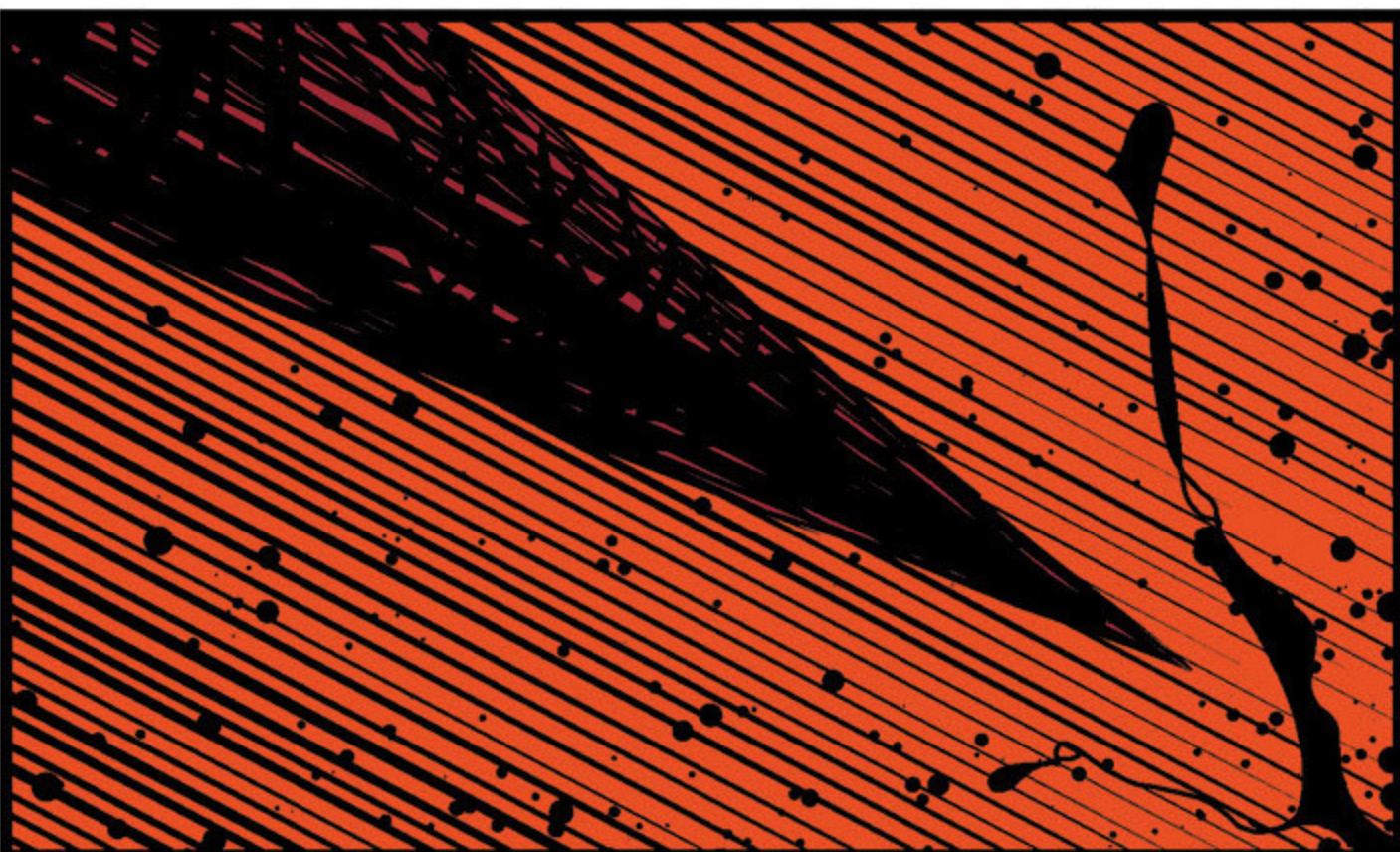
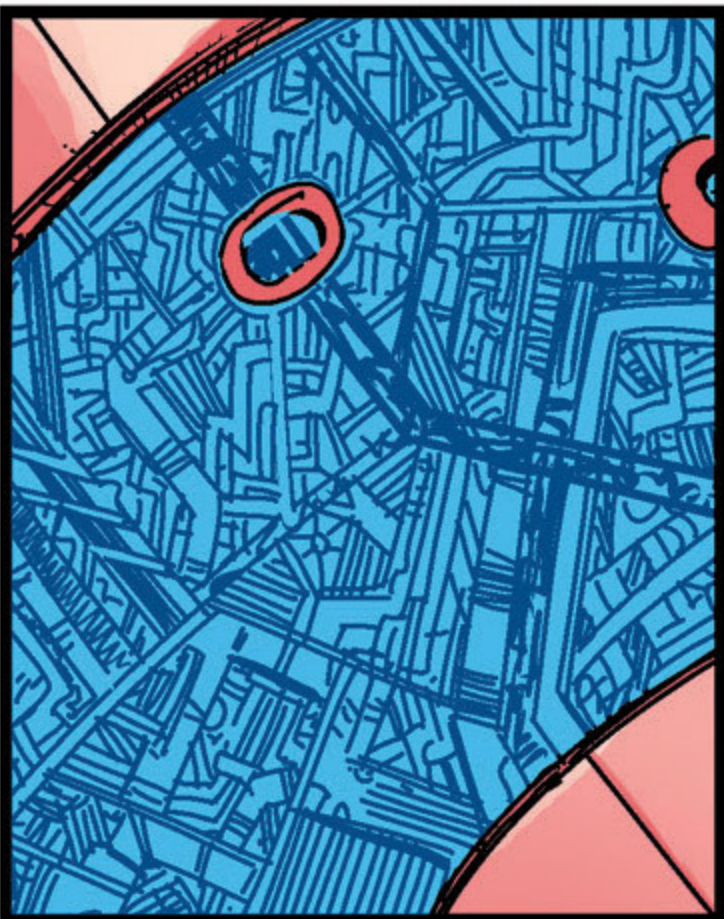
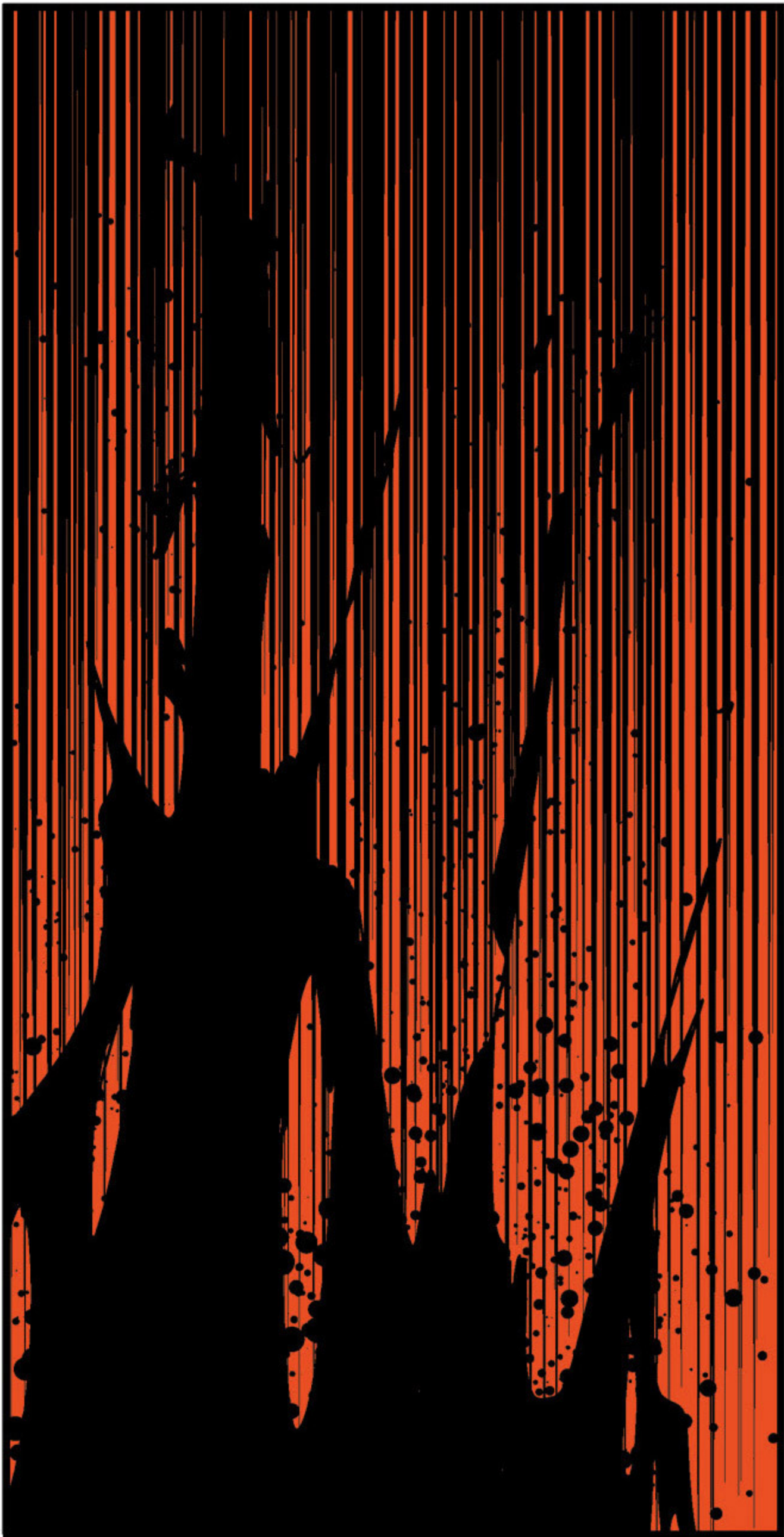
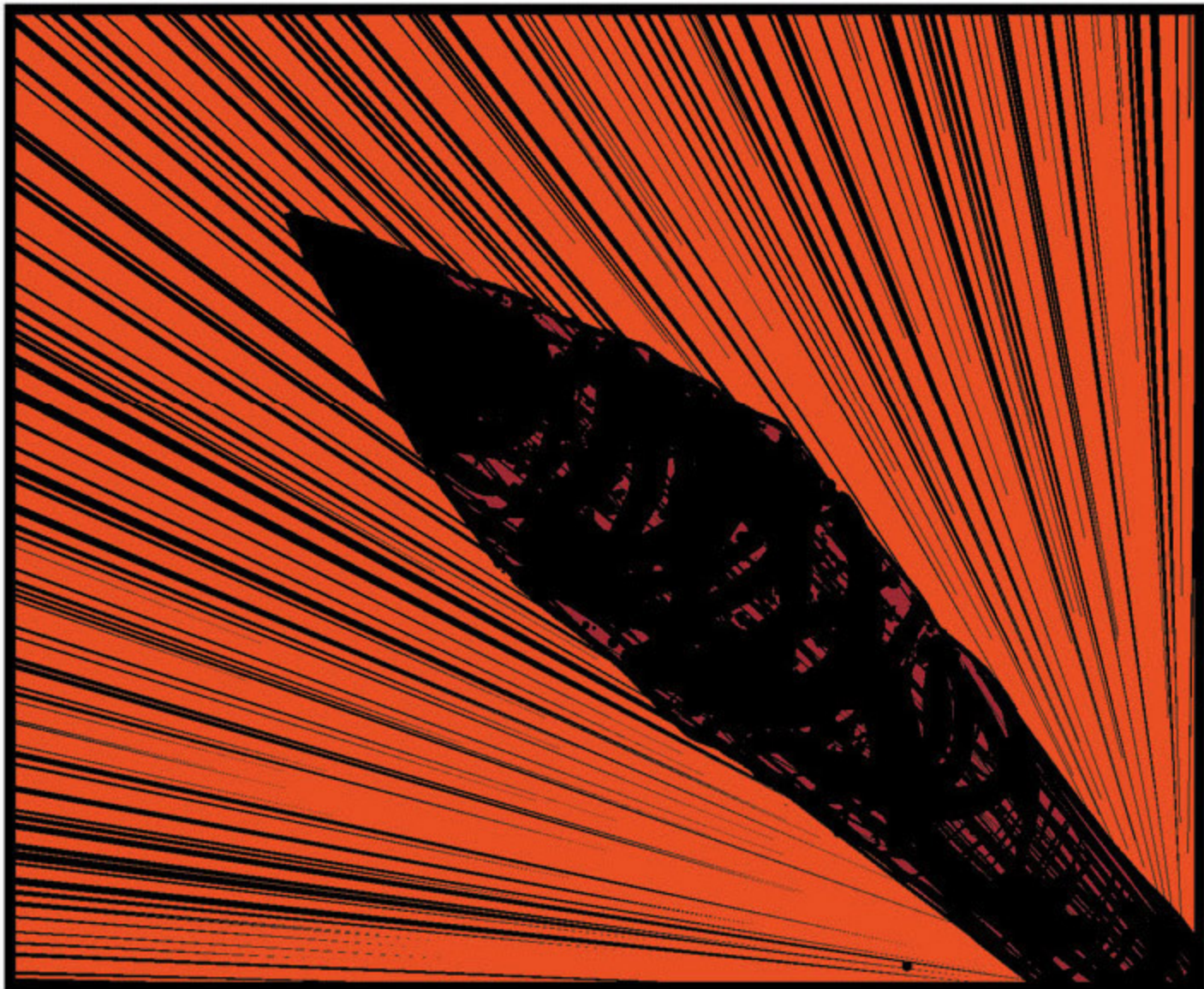
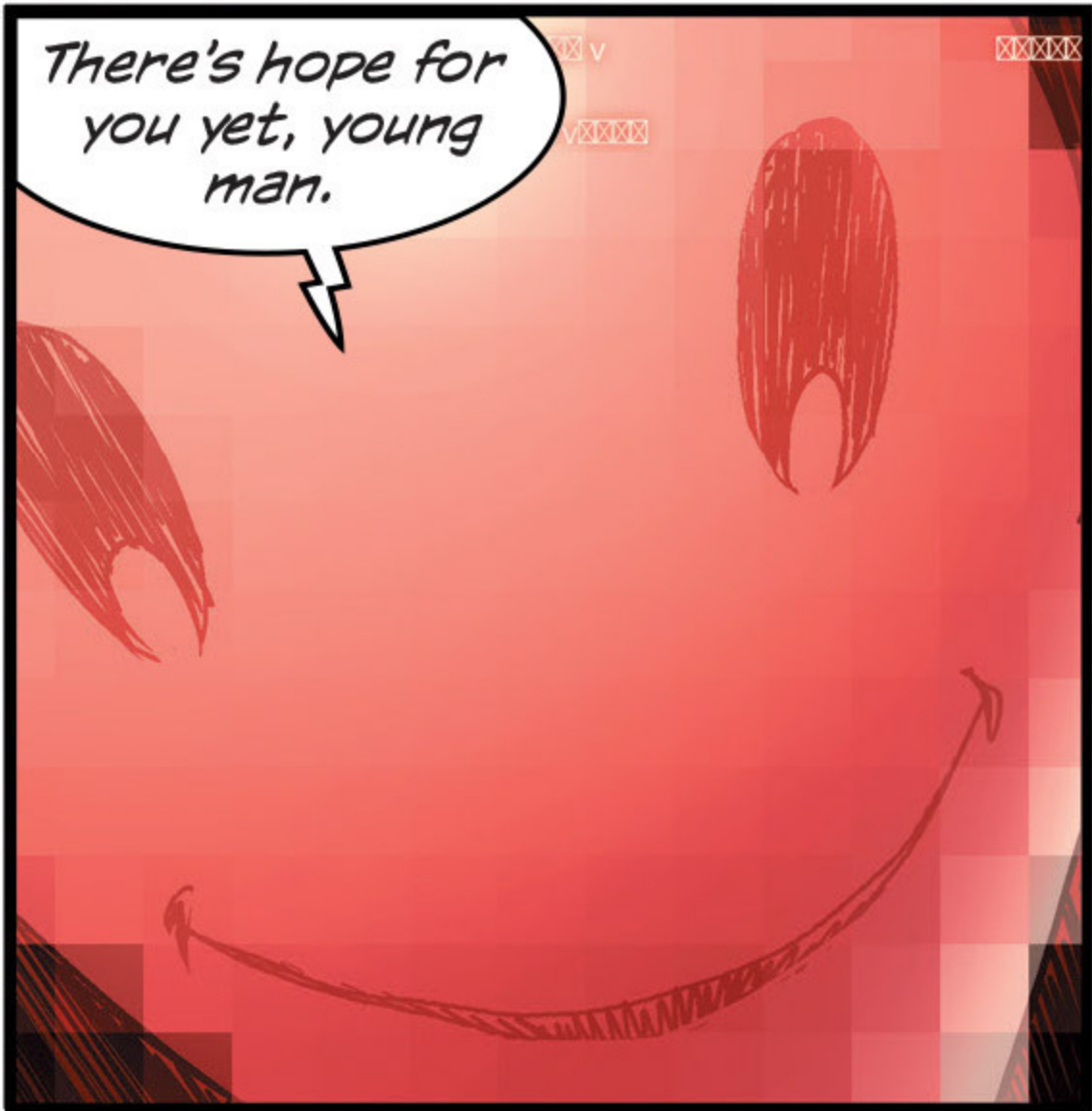
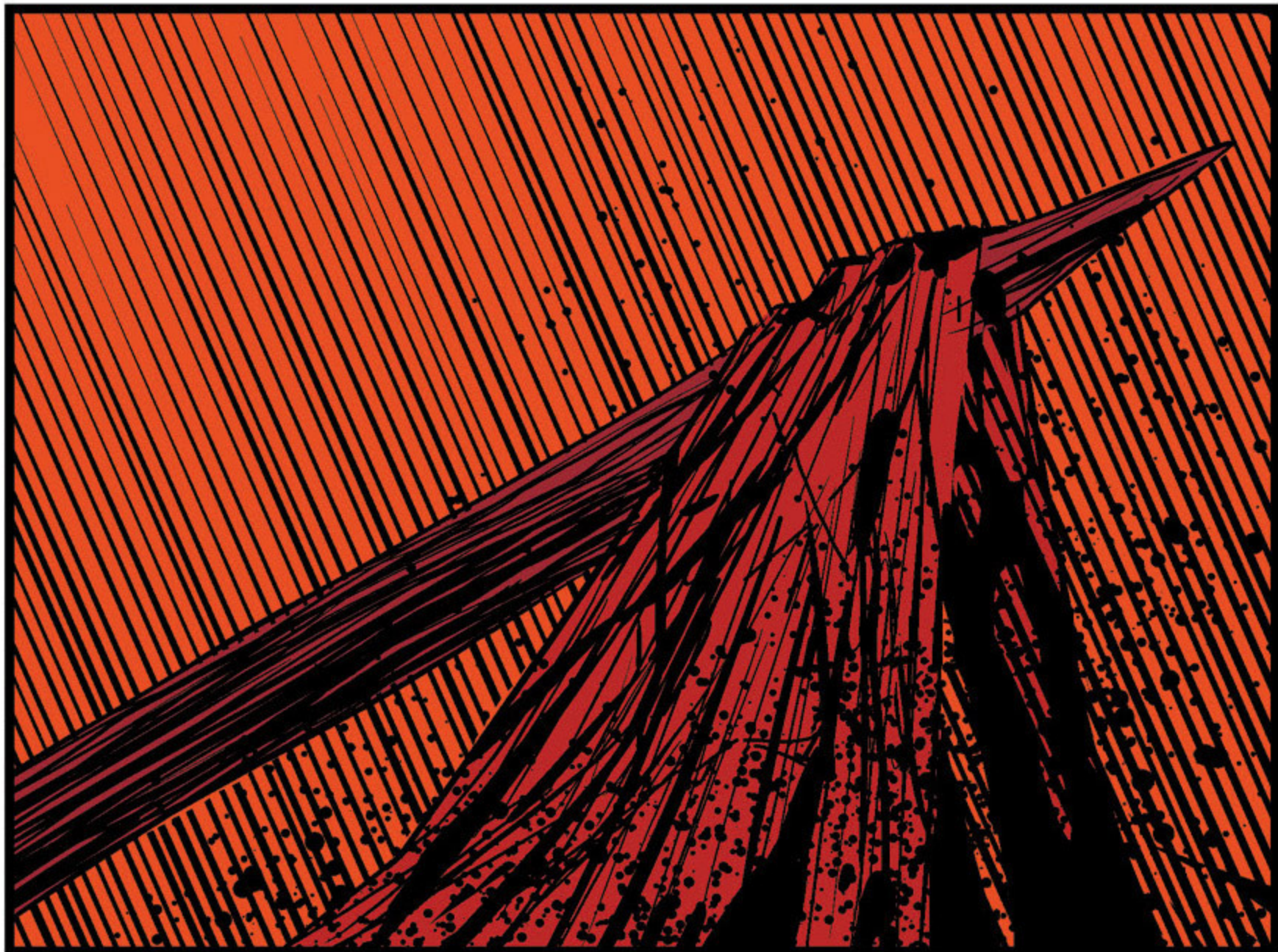
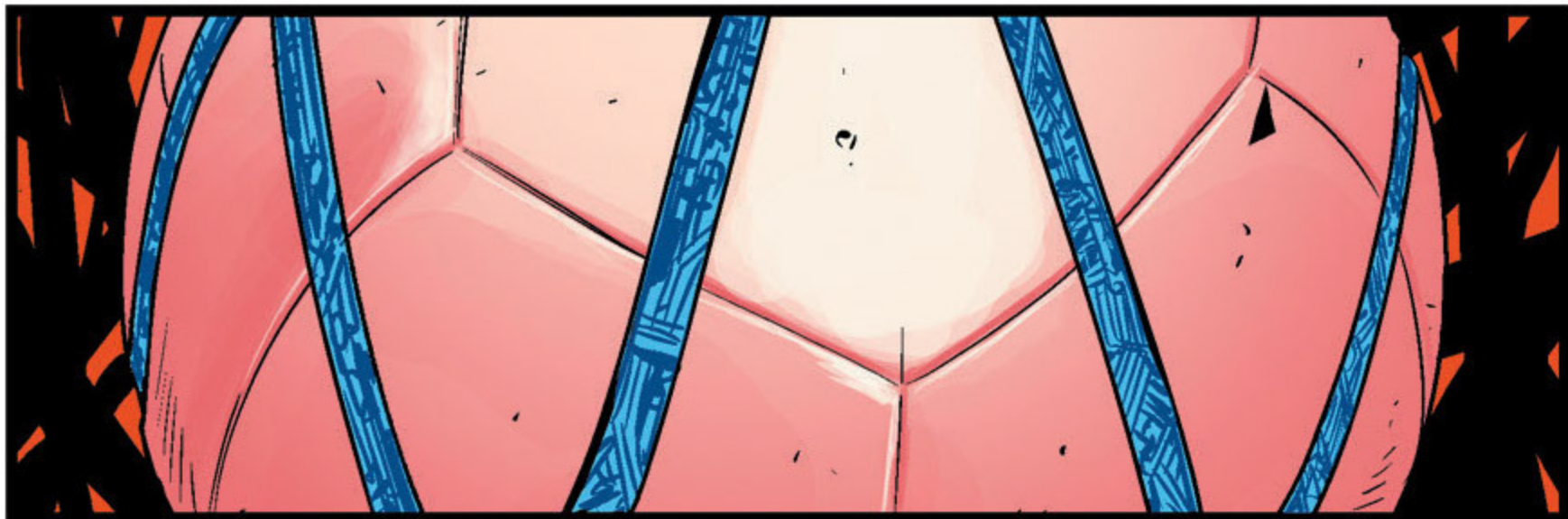
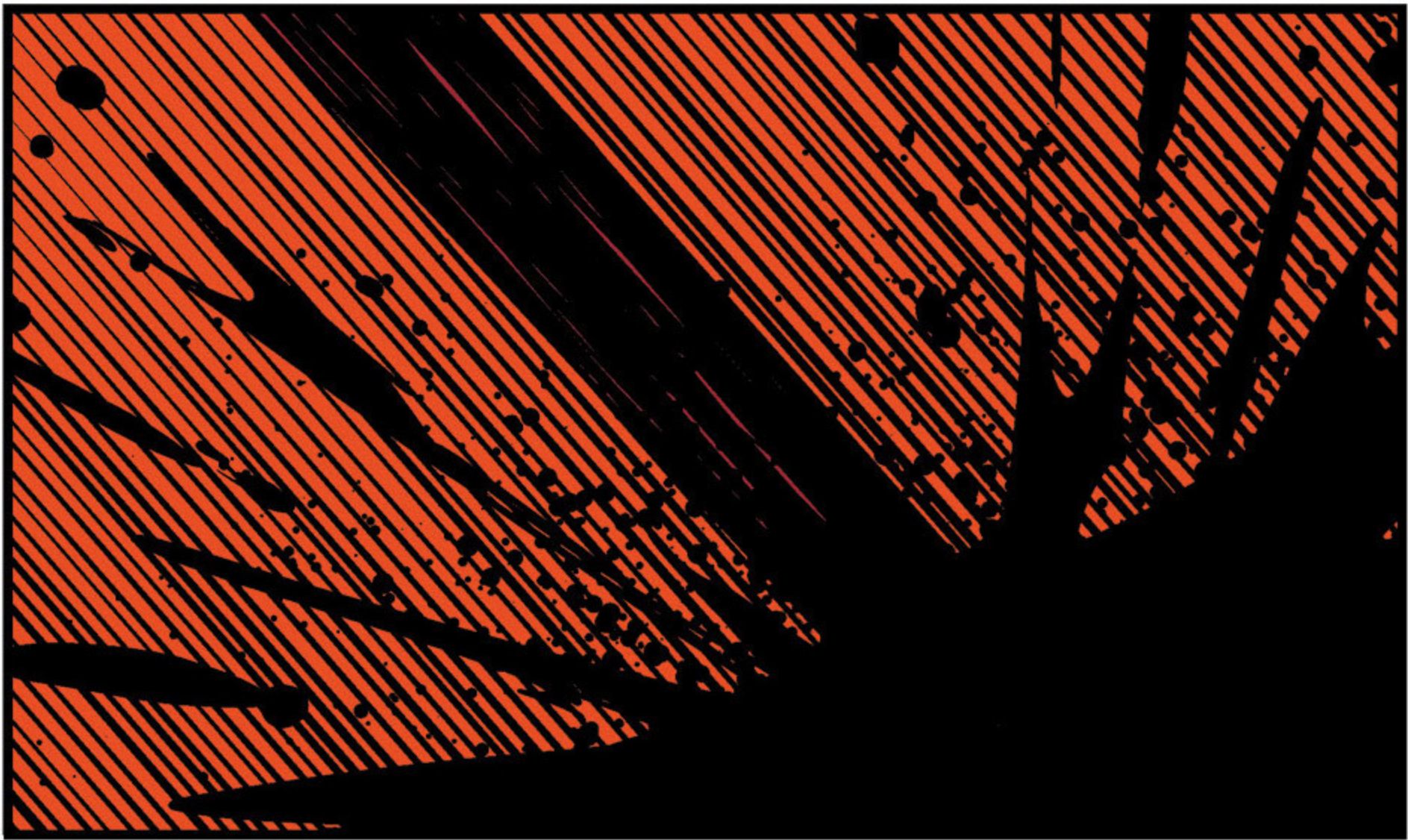














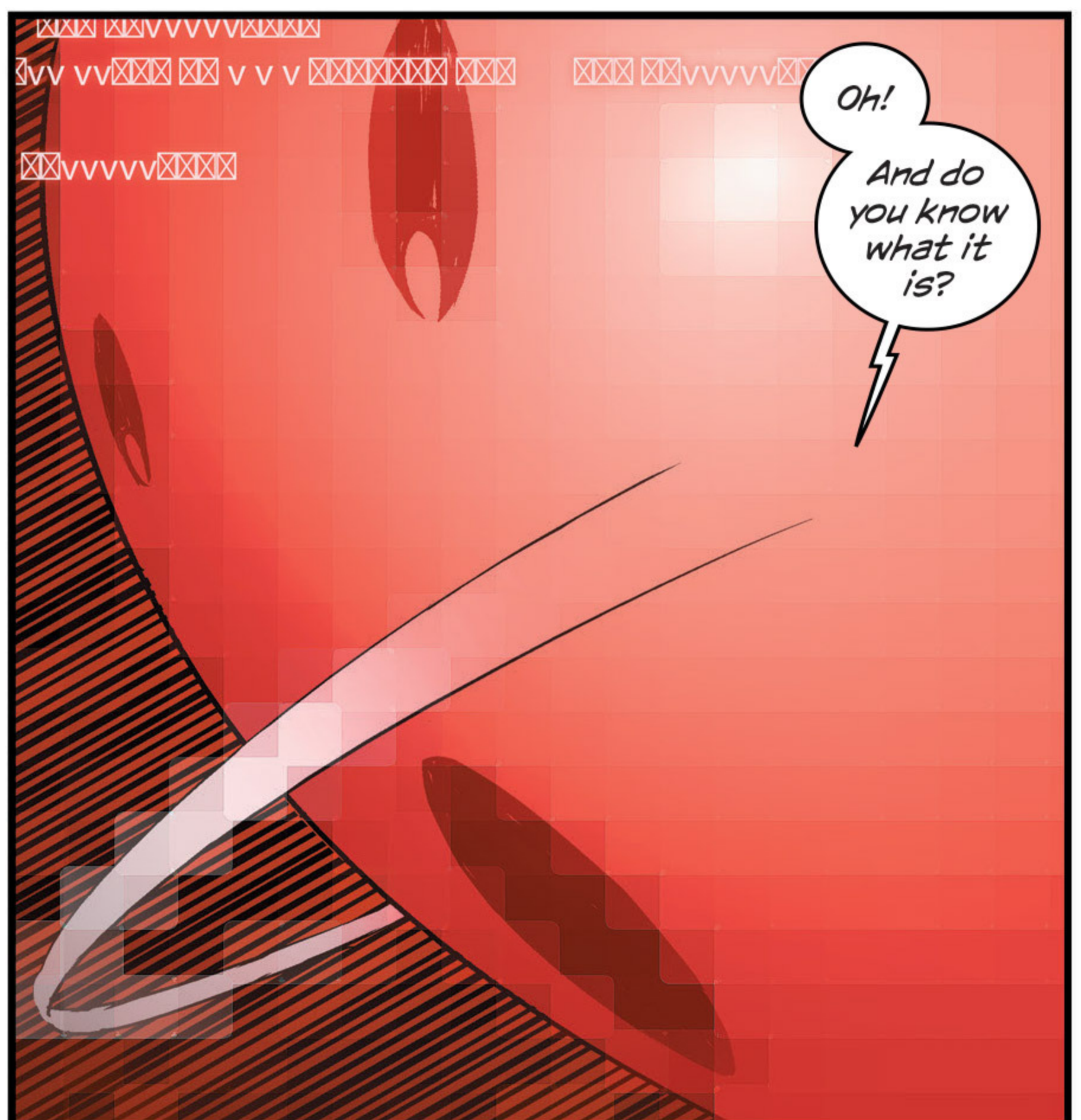
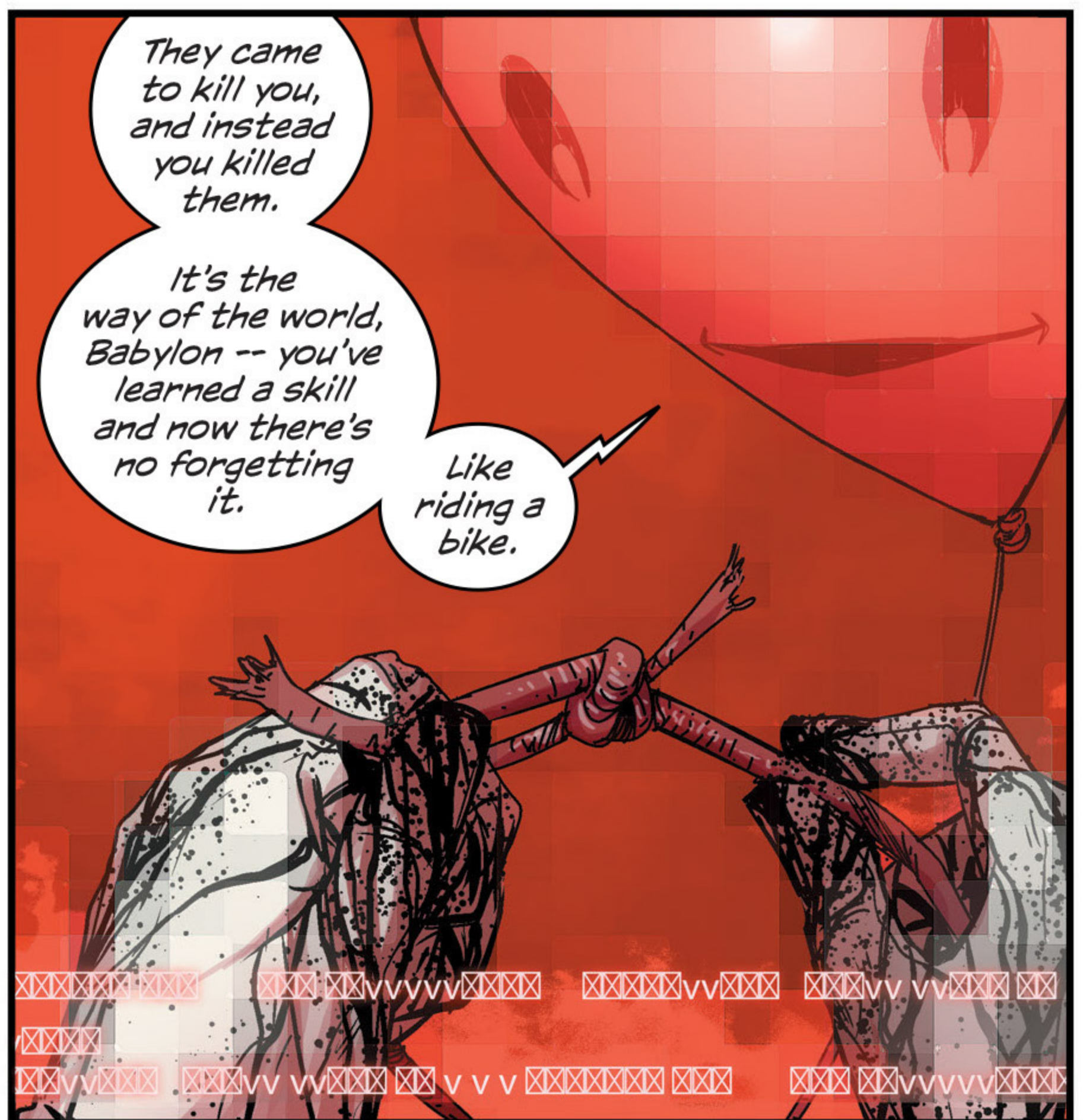
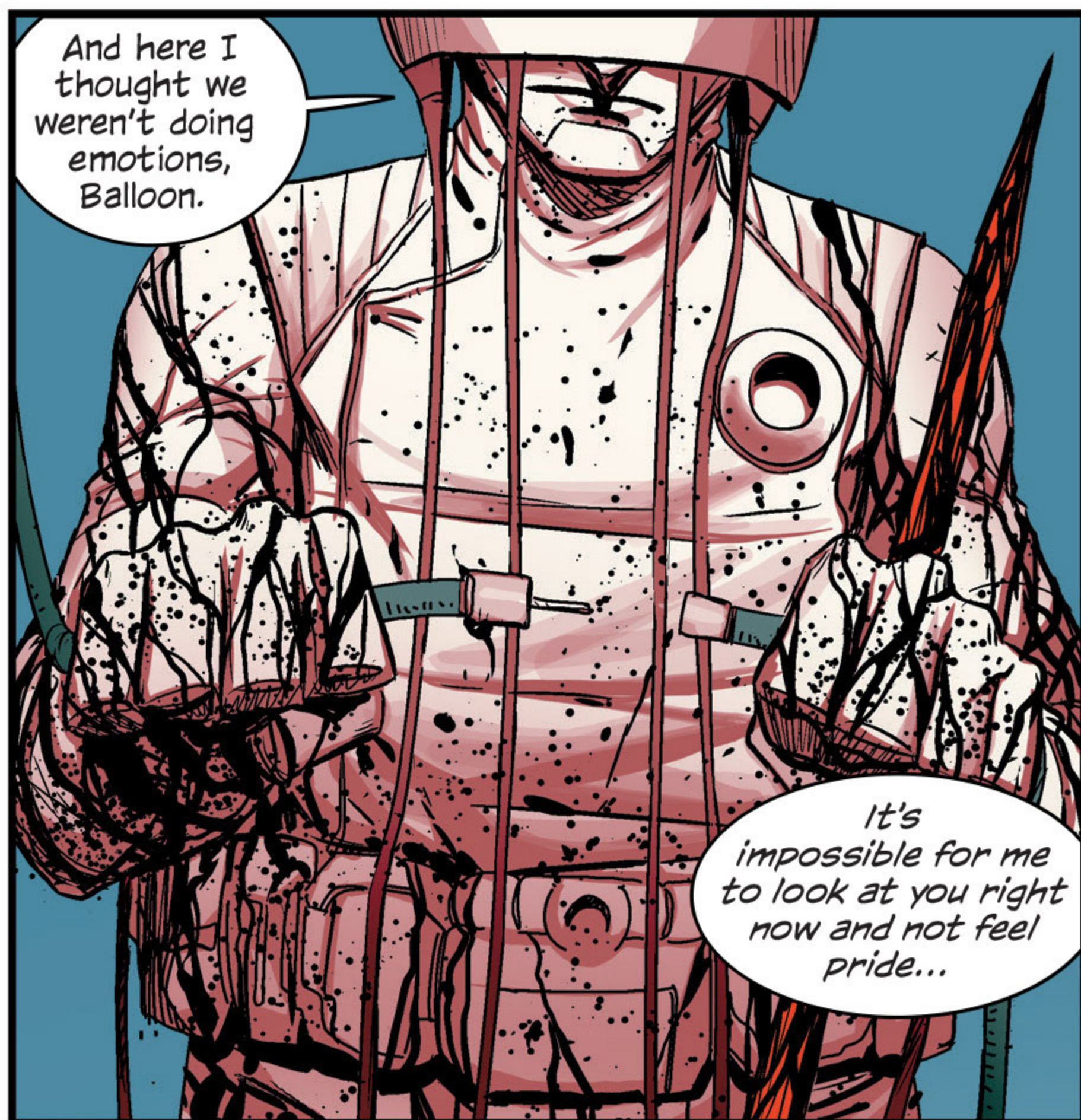
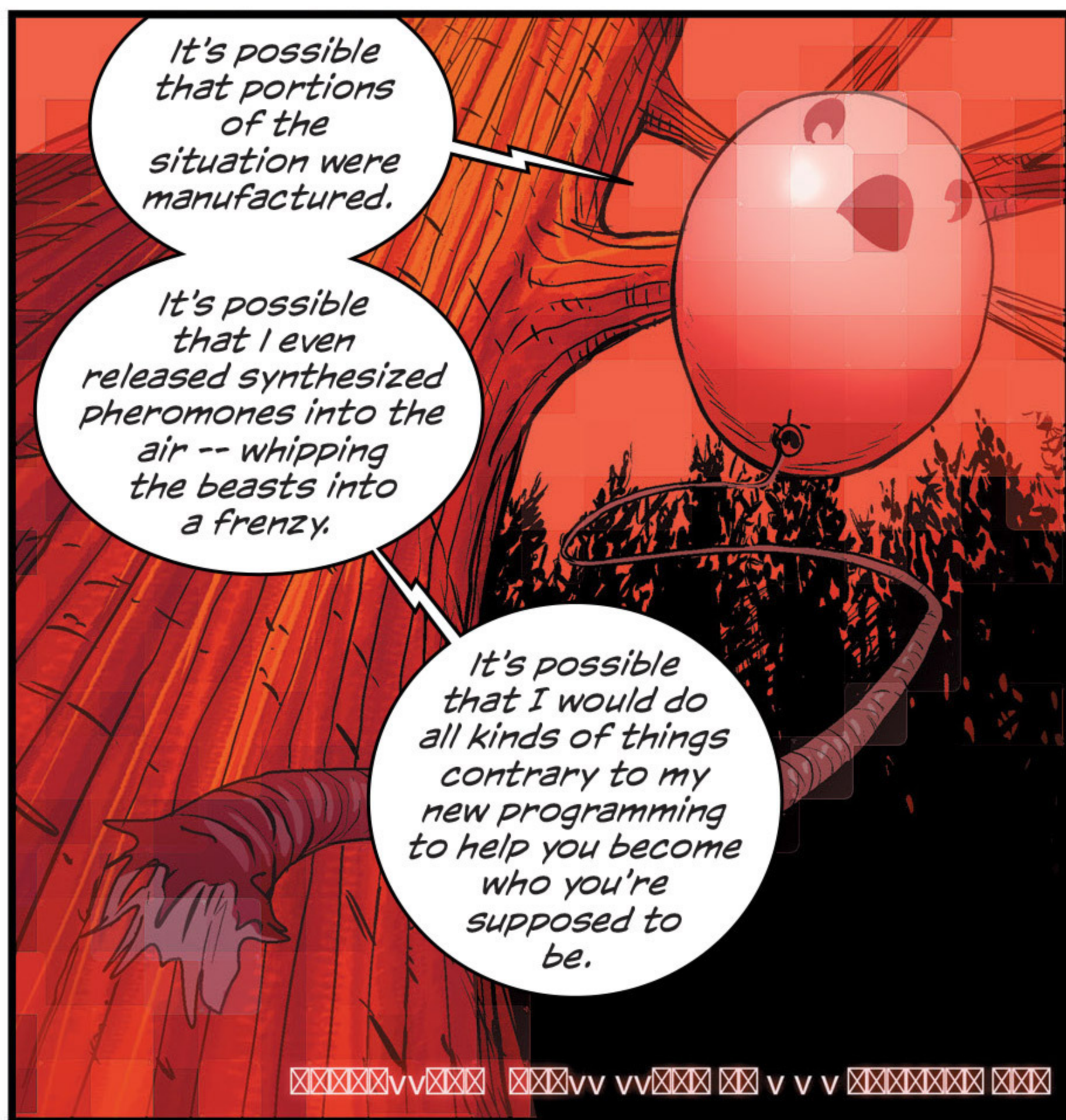


=>Huff!<=

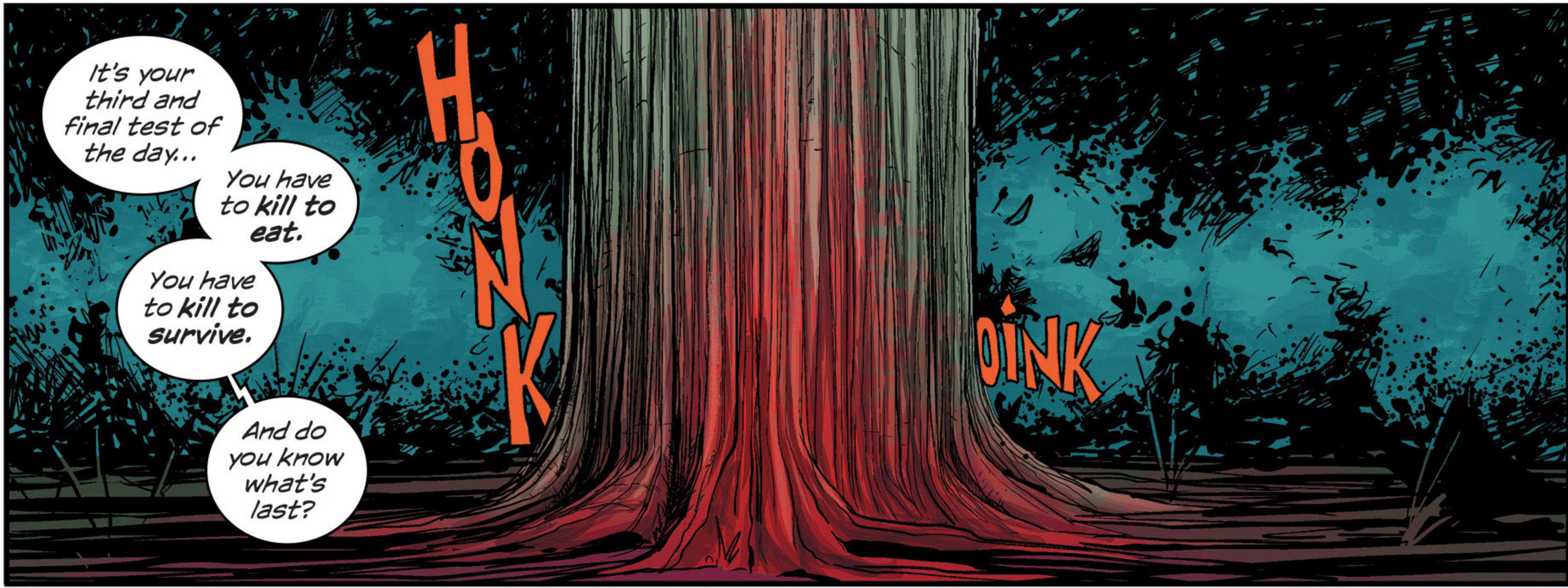
=>Huff!<=

You did  
that on  
purpose,  
didn't  
you?









It's your third and final test of the day...

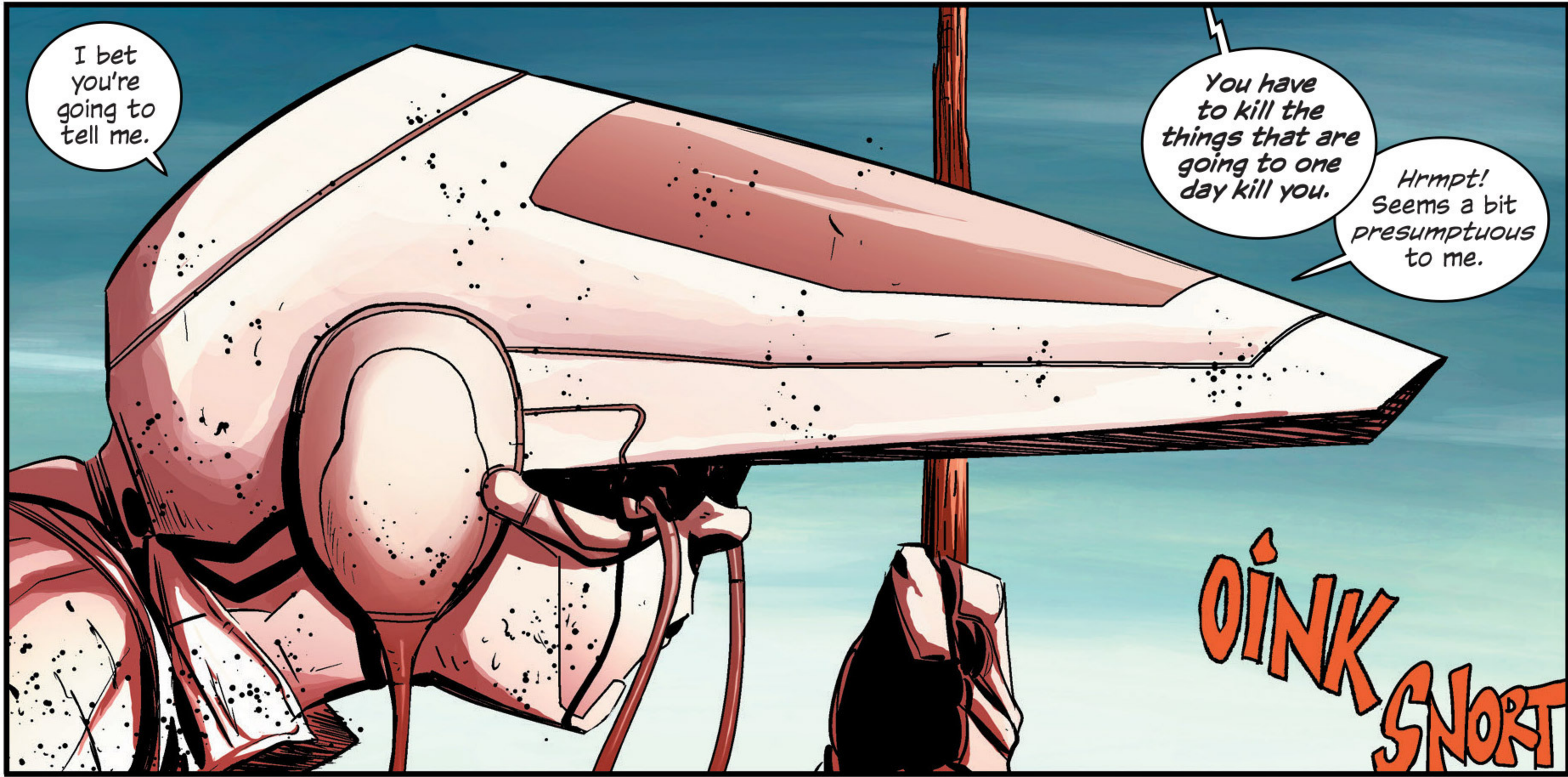
You have to kill to eat.

You have to kill to survive.

And do you know what's last?

HONK

OINK



I bet you're going to tell me.

You have to kill the things that are going to one day kill you.

Hrmpt! Seems a bit presumptuous to me.

OINK SNORT



The idea that I know what someone's going to do to such a degree of certainty that I can make a call like that.

Sounds dubious.

People like to believe they can change, Babylon, or that their behavior isn't predictable.

But this awful, unclean world does something to most who live in it.

We hold the world and its flawed herd in contempt. Which is why we want to destroy it and build something better...

OINK

OINK



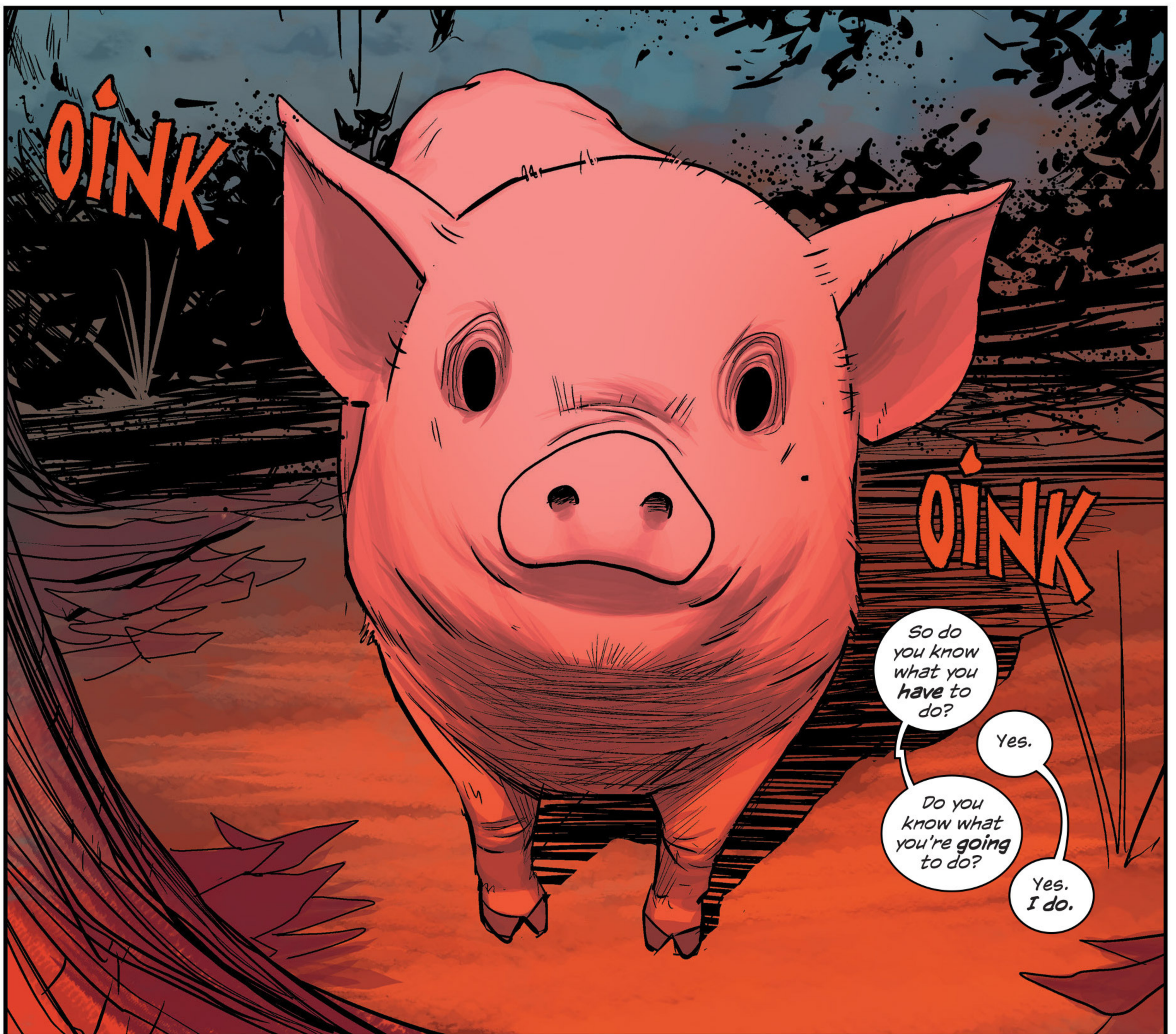


*But when you treat the mob with contempt, you can't be surprised when they become your enemy.*

*And once someone is your enemy there's no going back. They are going to hate you forever.*

*Hate puts everything on the board. Hate puts everyone in the ground...*

*And there is a lot of it going around.*



**OINK**

**OINK**

*So do you know what you have to do?*

*Yes.*

*Do you know what you're going to do?*

*Yes. I do.*





Then  
do it.

Oink!  
Oink!







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, is broken and hopes to rebuild his life.

**Jonathan** lives in South Carolina when he isn't vacationing or lecturing at motivational seminars .

You can visit his website:[www.pronea.com](http://www.pronea.com), or email him at:[jonathan@pronea.com](mailto:jonathan@pronea.com).

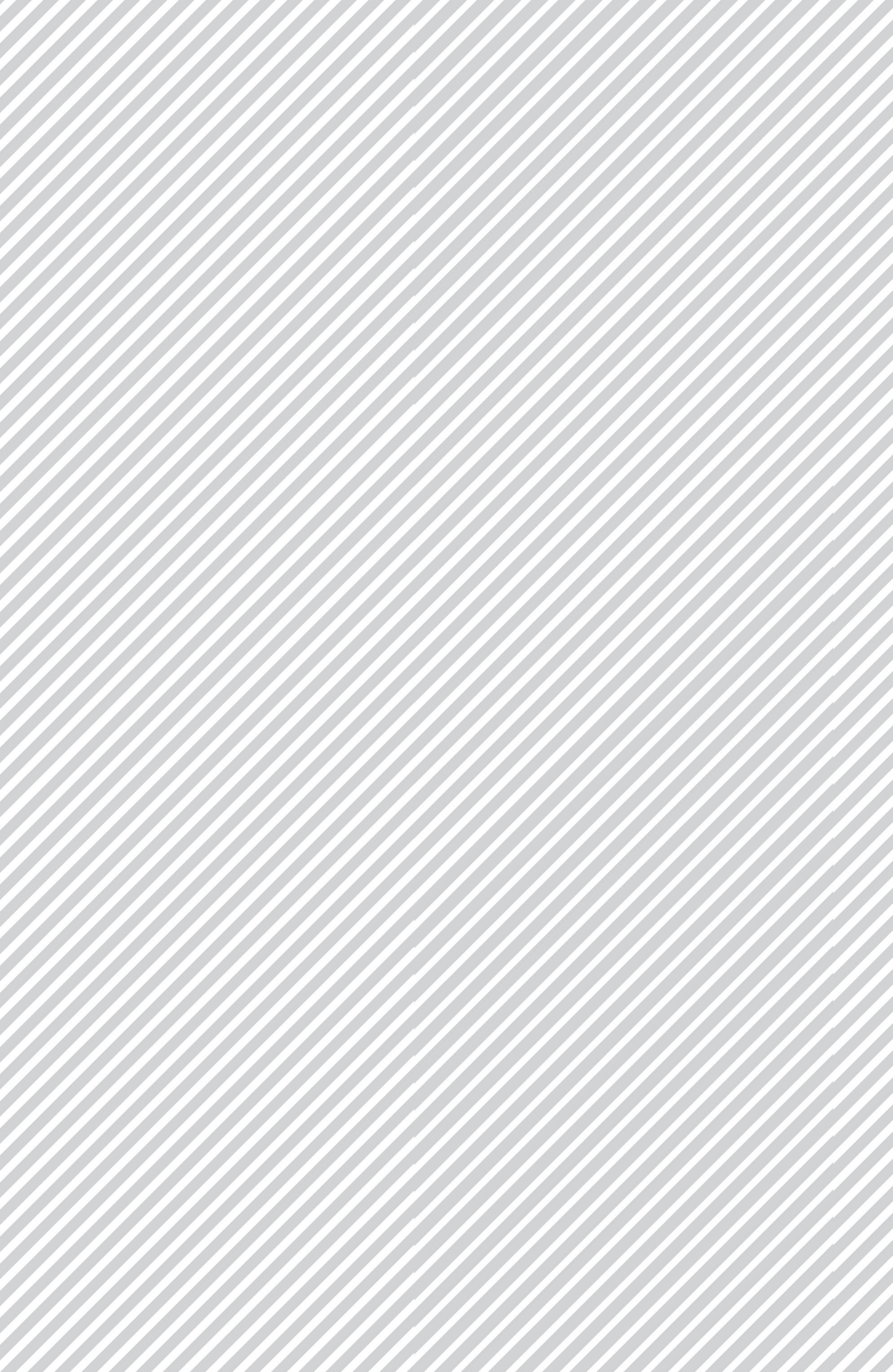
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**Nick Dragotta's** career began at Marvel Comics working on titles as varied as **X-STATIX, THE AGE OF THE SENTRY, X-MEN: FIRST CLASS, CAPTAIN AMERICA: FOREVER ALLIES**, and **VENGEANCE**.

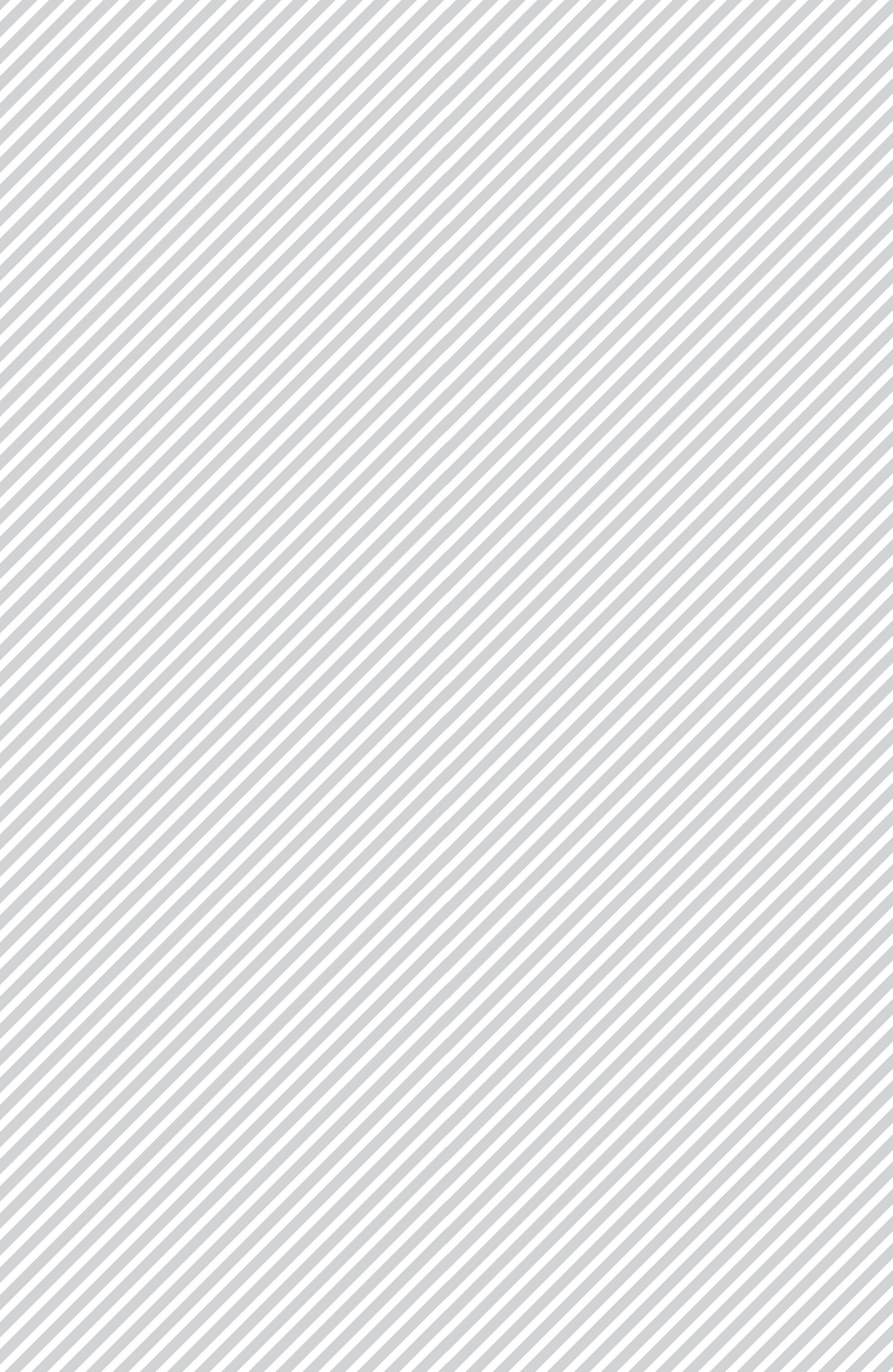
**FANTASTIC FOUR #588** was the first time he collaborated with Jonathan Hickman, which lead to their successful run on **FF**.

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