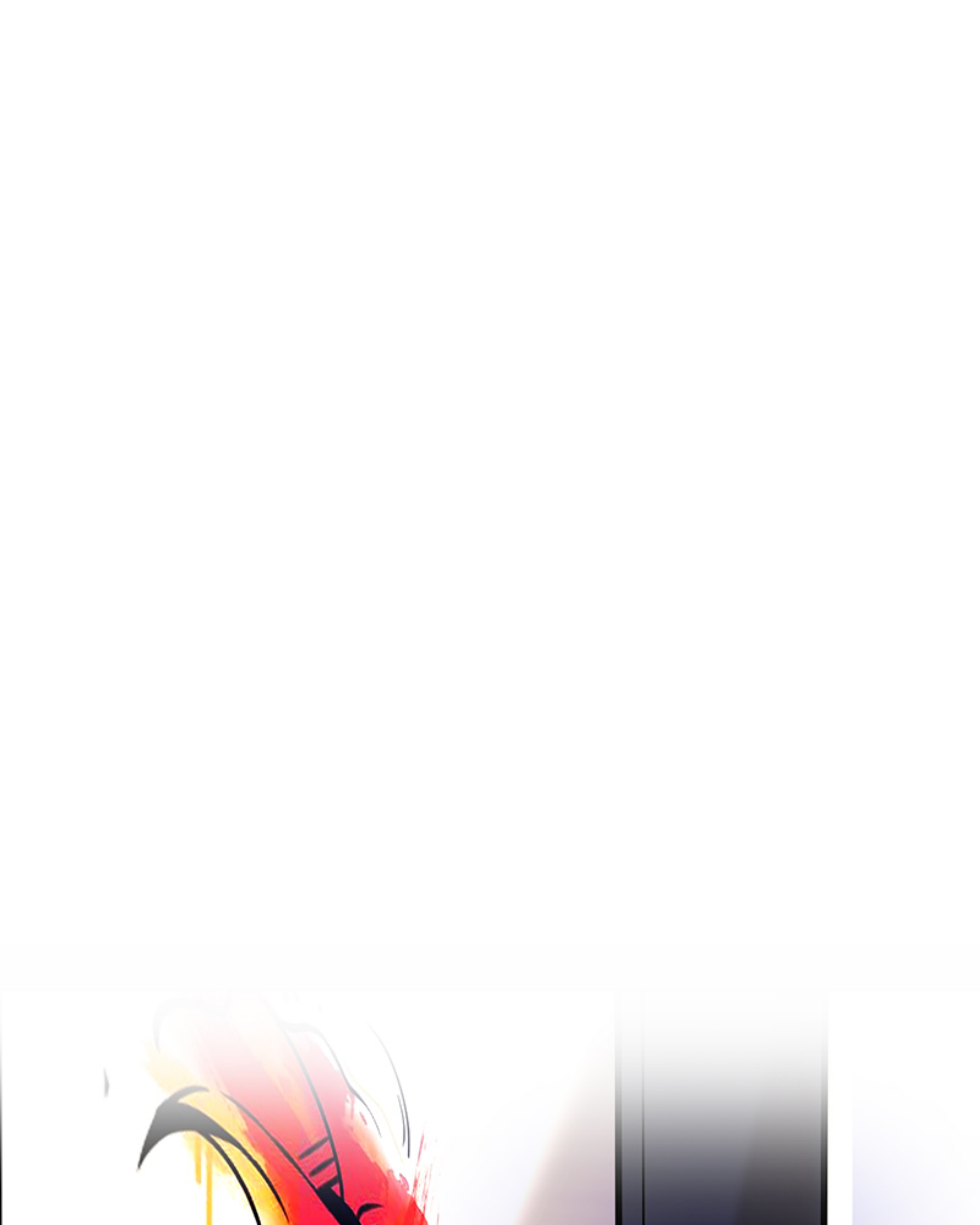






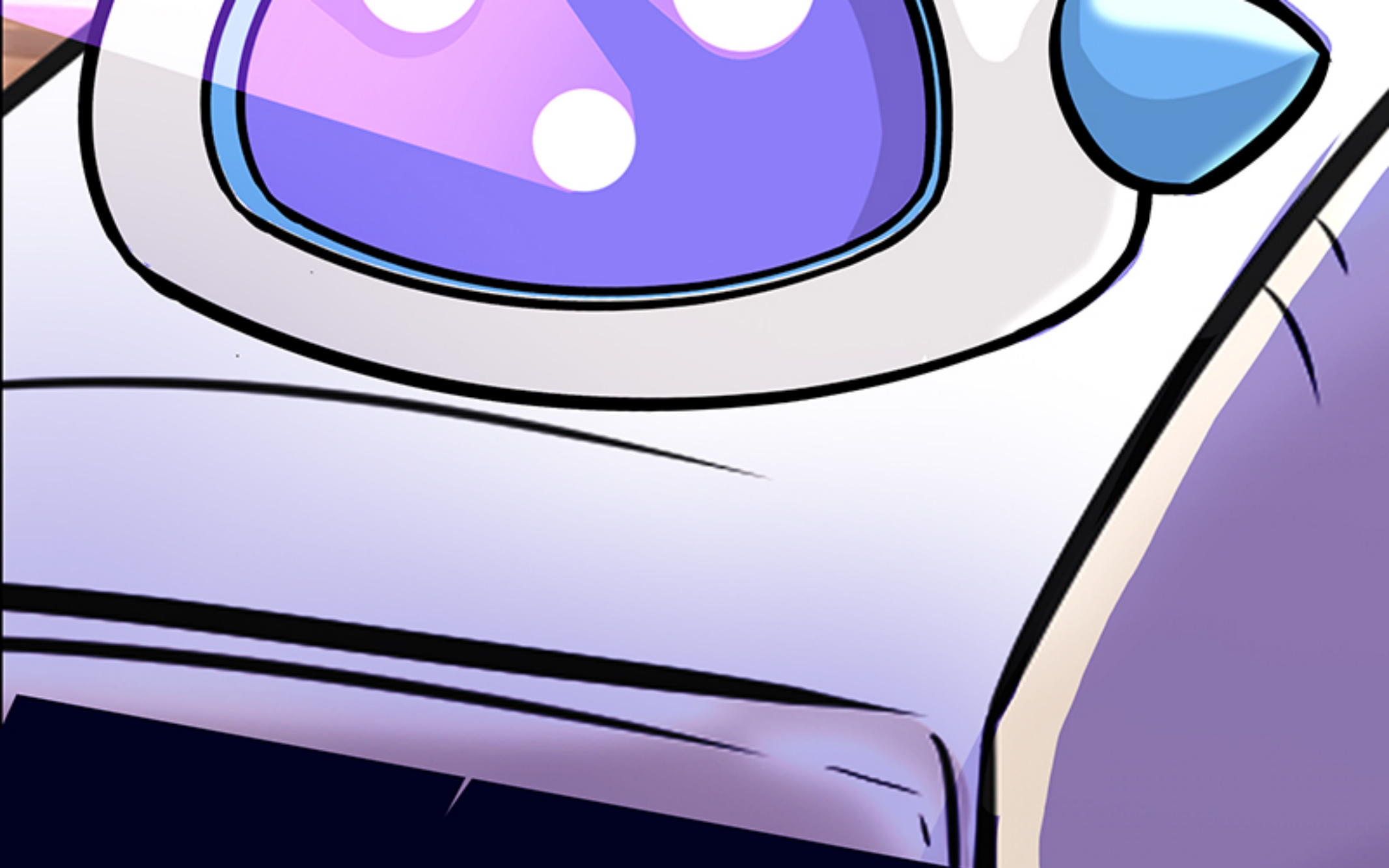


CALL
PROJECTION
MODE.



OH THANK
GOD-





WHERE
IS HE??

WHO-

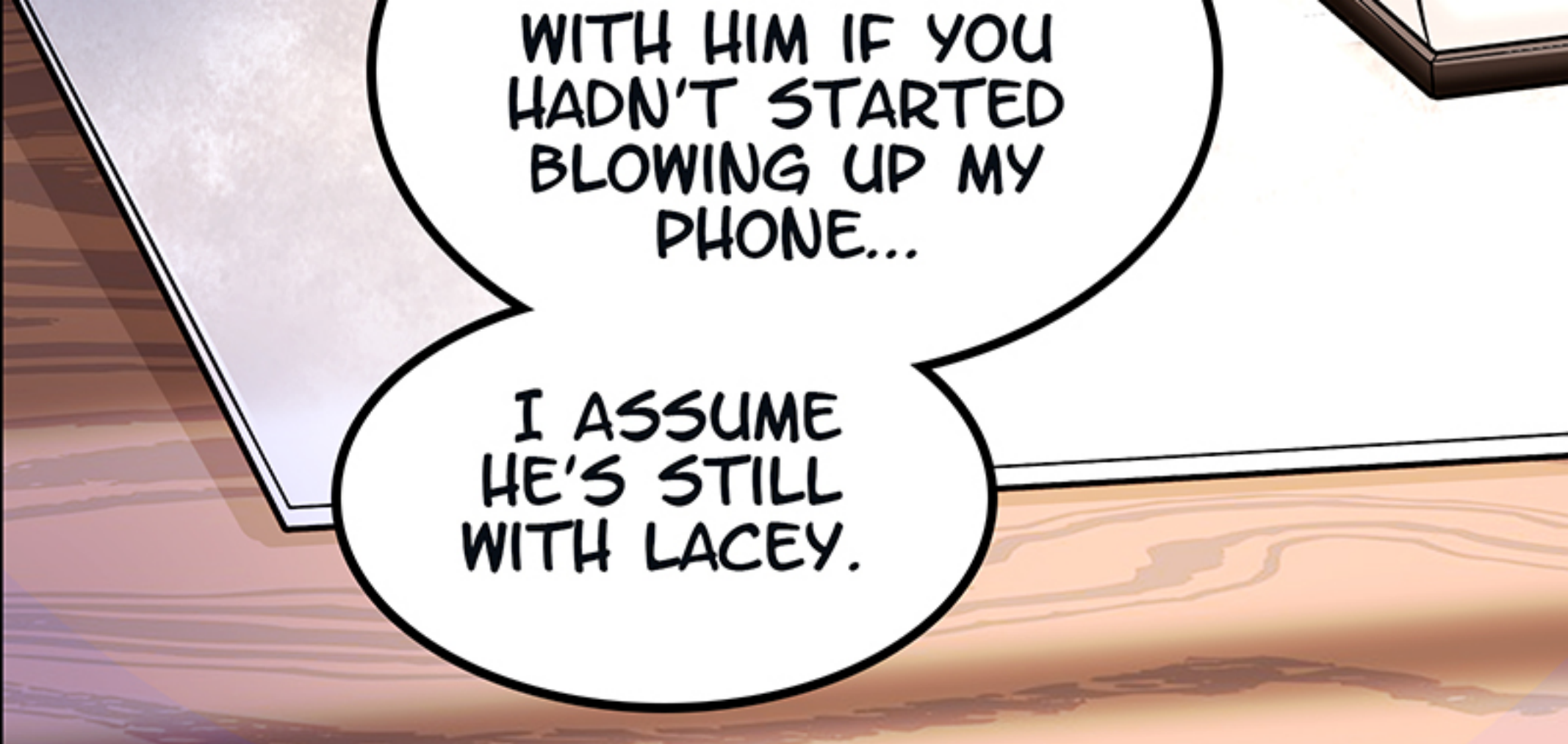




XADA!!



**WELL
I WOULD STILL BE**



WITH HIM IF YOU
HADN'T STARTED
BLOWING UP MY
PHONE...

I ASSUME
HE'S STILL
WITH LACEY.

NO
NO NO
NO-

ERIK-
HE CAN'T.
XADA CAN'T BE
NEAR HIM. HE'S
DANGEROUS!



YOU HAVE
TO GET THAT
THING AWAY
FROM HIM -

LACEY.

HE'S NOT
HUMAN - HE'S
THAT ROGUE
BOT - ON
THE NEWS-

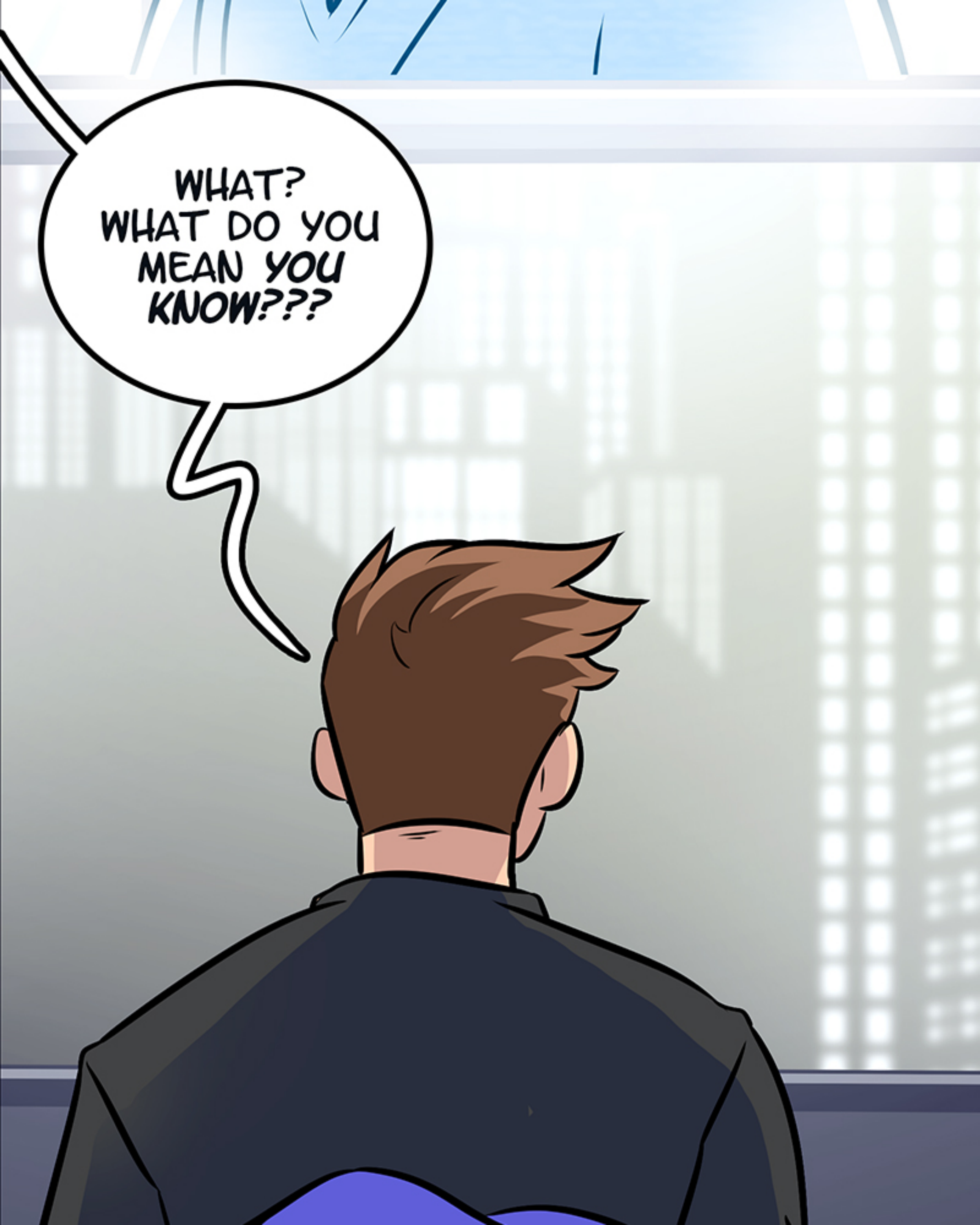




HAVE
YOU SEEN
THE NEWS??

I KNOW.



A man with brown hair, seen from the back, is looking out a large window. The window shows a city skyline with many buildings. The man is wearing a dark blue jacket. A speech bubble is coming from him.

WHAT?
WHAT DO YOU
MEAN YOU
KNOW???

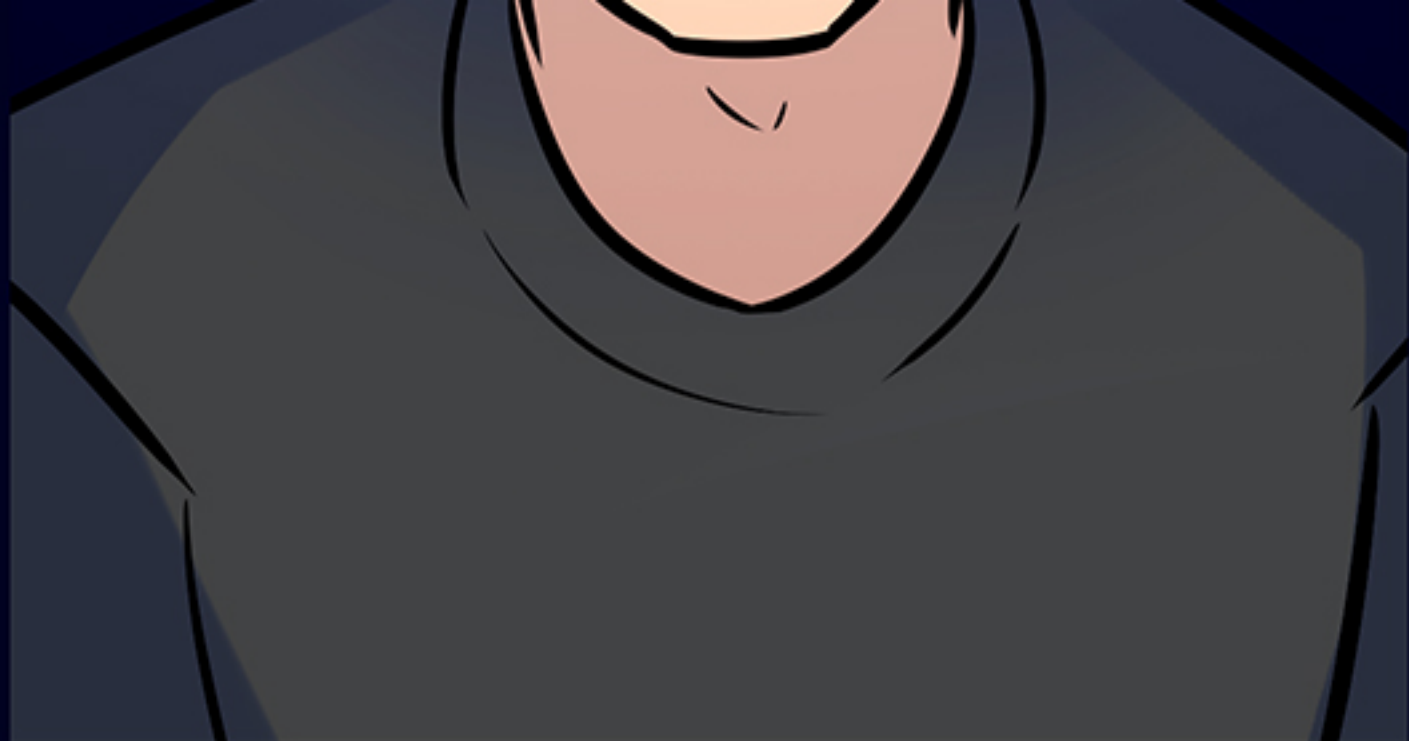


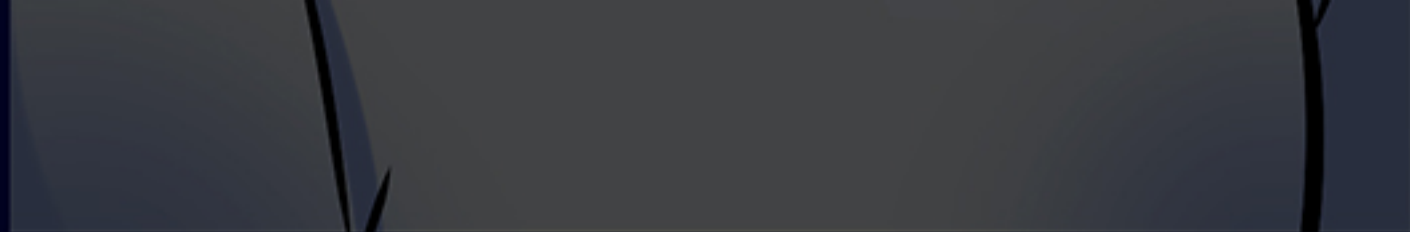
I MET LACEY AT
THE HOSPITAL WHEN
XADA CAME THE
OTHER DAY.



I'VE TALKED TO
XADA ABOUT IT
SINCE, TOO.







WH...WHY
WOULD HE
TELL YOU??





YOU...
UGH.

THIS
SITUATION IS
DANGEROUS, BUT
LACEY IS NOT THE
DANGEROUS PART
OF IT.





HOW??
HOW IS HE NOT
DANGEROUS?

XADA'S
RISKING HIS
LIFE HAVING HIM
AROUND!





A comic panel background featuring a dark blue upper half and a light blue lower half. On the left, there are stylized brown tree trunks. At the bottom, a brown, rounded shape, possibly a character's head or a rock, is partially visible.

EXACTLY-
BECAUSE A.E.
WANTS HIM
BACK.

AKA YOUR
BOSS WANTS
HIM BACK.



THAT'S JUST
BUSINESS! I DON'T
WANT XADA'S NAME
ATTACHED TO THIS AT
ALL FOR THE SAKE OF
HIS CAREER-

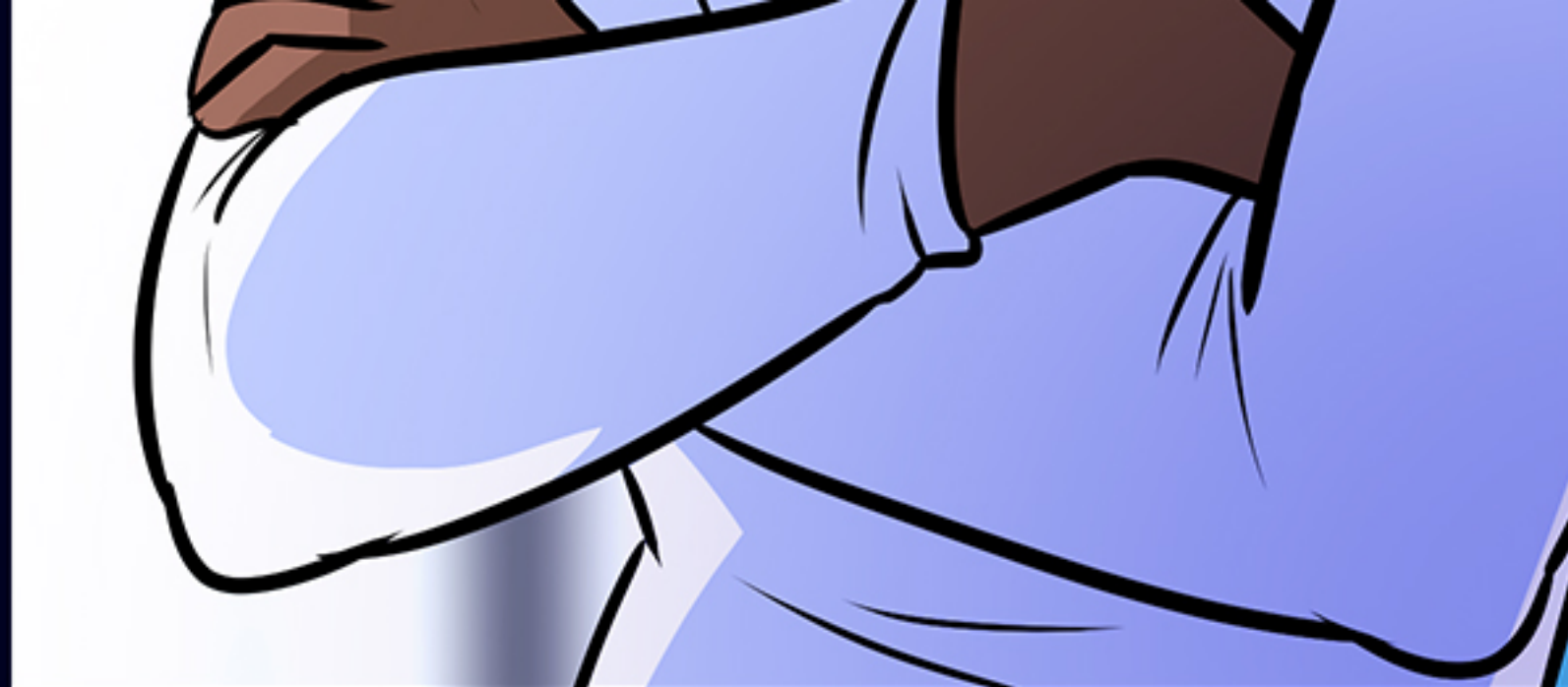
BUT CHARLES
WOULD NEVER
ACTUALLY HURT
HIM OVER IT!





YOU'RE AWFULLY
CONFIDENT ABOUT
THAT...

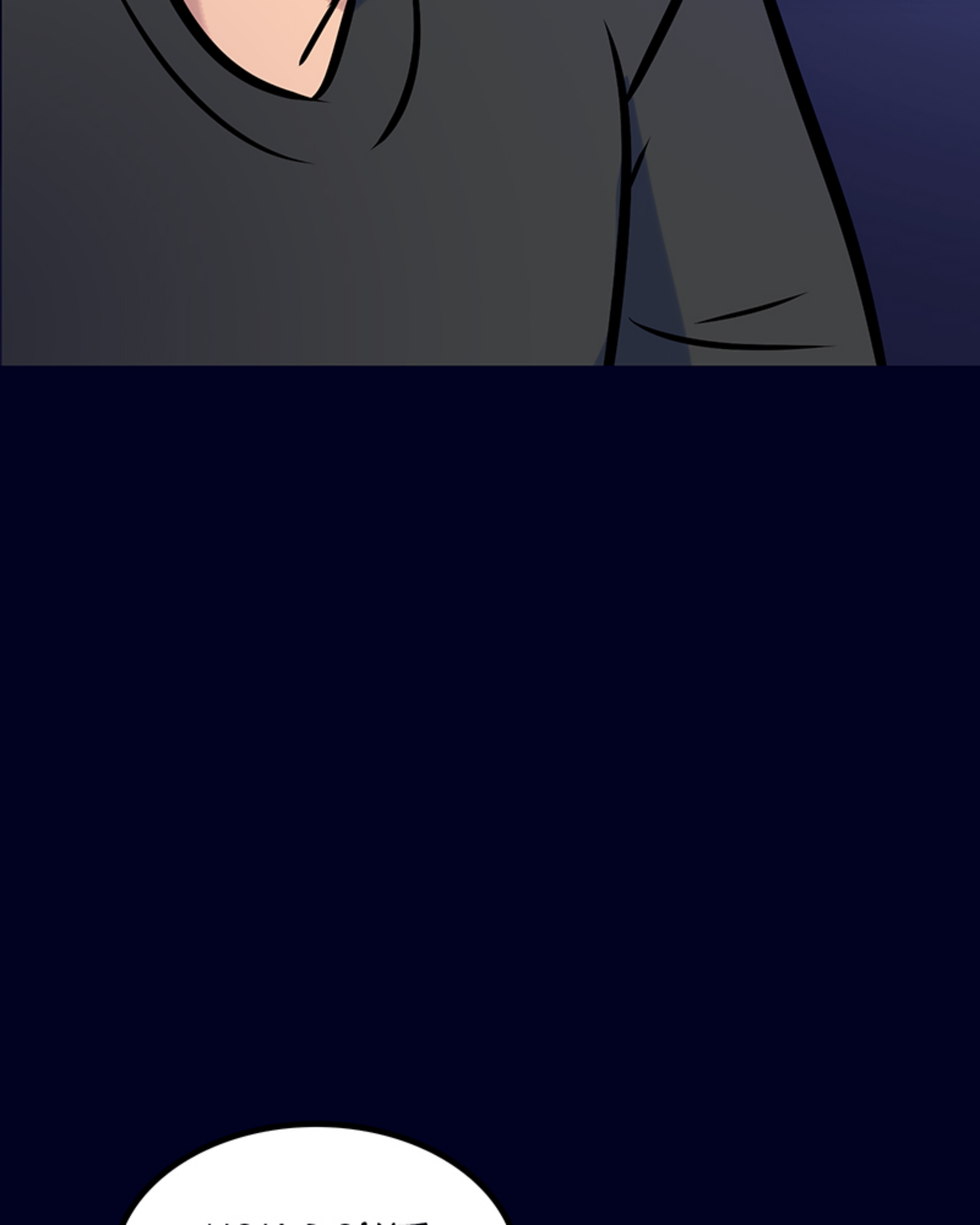




OF
COURSE I
AM!

I CAN TELL
WHEN SOMEONE
IS DANGEROUS
OR NOT!





YOU DON'T
KNOW SHIT,
VELIX.





NEITHER
DO YOU!!
UGGHH!!!





I'M JUST
TRYING TO
PROTECT
XADA!

WHY CAN
NONE OF YOU
FUCKING
UNDERSTAND
THAT!?



**DON'T
WE HAVE THE
SAME GOAL!?**

JUST TAKE
LACEY AND GIVE HIM
TO DR. EVA OR
SOMETHING-

THAT WAY
THIS CAN ALL BE
OVER WITH FOR
REAL-







-AND THINGS
CAN GO BACK
TO NORMAL.



"NORMAL"?



YES! -
HOW THEY ARE
SUPPOSED TO
BE!







"OH AND
UH... YEAH IF...
VELIX DOES REACH
OUT TO YOU JUST...
BE... GENTLE?"





"WE'VE NEVER
HAD A FIGHT
THIS BAD..."

I JUST KNOW
HE'LL BE IN A
ROUGH SPOT FOR
A WHILE..."

SIGH...

VELIX...





I KNOW
YOU DON'T HAVE
MANY OTHER
FRIENDS...

BUT I
THINK YOUR
ATTACHMENT TO
XADA ISN'T
HEALTHY-

EXCUSE
ME??



FOR EITHER
OF YOU.

YOU
CLEARLY CARE
ABOUT HIM VERY
DEEPLY.

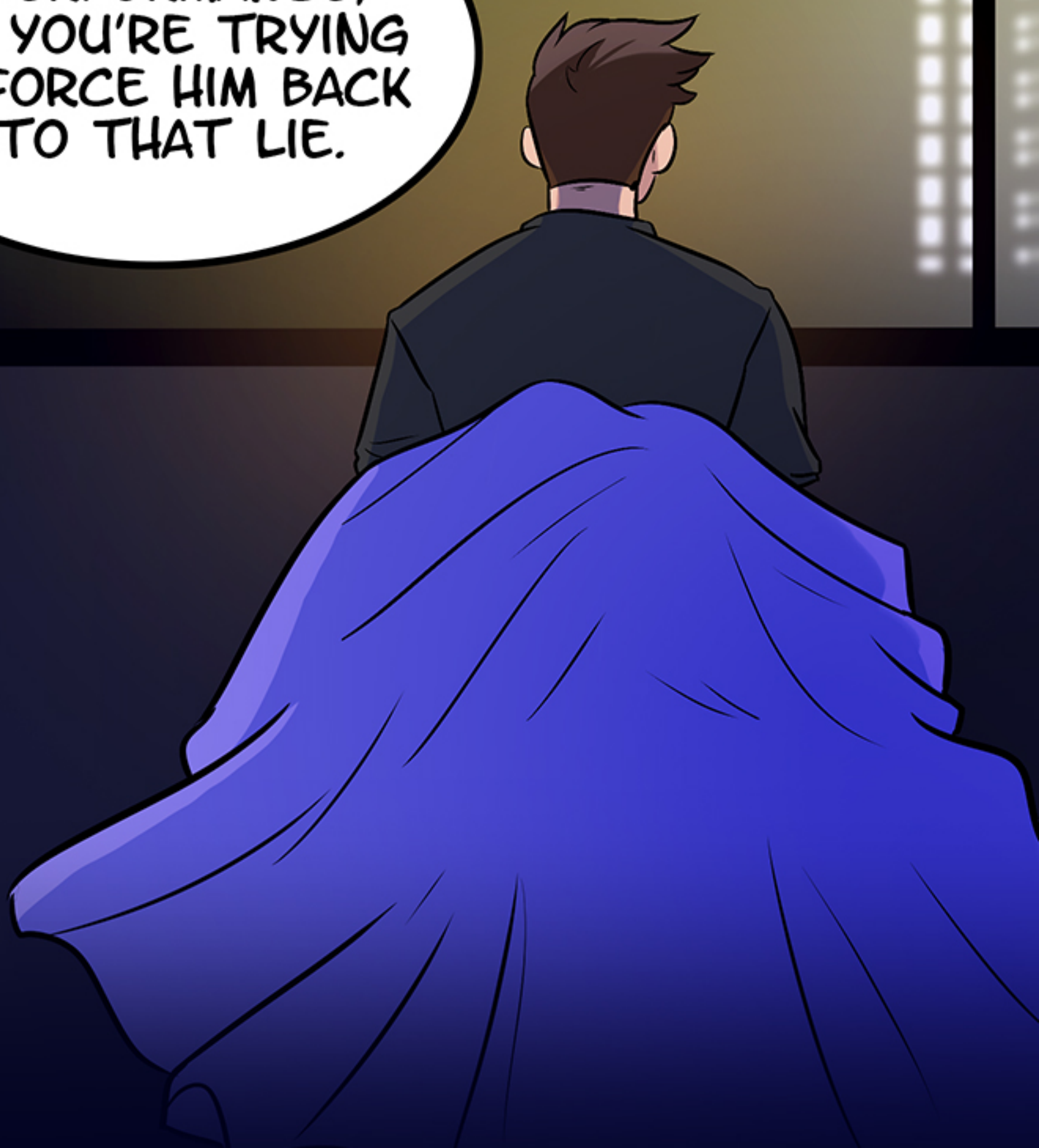


BUT RIGHT
NOW YOU JUST
HAVE AN IDEA
OF HIM IN YOUR
HEAD.

THE (NORMAL)

THE 'NORMAL'
YOU ARE USED TO
IS FAKE-

IT'S
A PERFORMANCE,
AND YOU'RE TRYING
TO FORCE HIM BACK
INTO THAT LIE.



YOU CAN'T
KEEP ACTING LIKE
EVERYTHING WAS FINE
BEFORE WHEN IT
WASN'T.





**YES IT
WAS!!**

**IT ONLY SEEMED
NORMAL BECAUSE XADA
HAD TO HIDE SO MUCH
OF HIMSELF JUST TO
BE AROUND YOU!**



AND YOU
CAN BE MAD AT HIM
FOR NOT GIVING YOU
A REAL CHANCE TO

THINK CHANGED TO
CHANGE BEFORE-

BUT WOULD
YOU HAVE
LISTENED??



ALL LACEY
DID WAS
SPEED UP THE
INEVITABLE.

... I'M SORRY.

... I'M SORRY.
LOOK-

YOU'VE
KNOWN EACH OTHER
FOR OVER 10 YEARS...
THIS IS YOUR FIRST
REAL FIGHT.





YOU
MIGHT STILL BE
ABLE TO TURN
THINGS AROUND
WITH HIM-

NOW
THAT THIS IS ALL
OUT IN THE OPEN,
MAYBE YOU CAN
ACTUALLY
LIKE...

TALK ABOUT
IT *HONESTLY* AND
YOU CAN MAYBE HAVE
THE FRIENDSHIP THAT
YOU *USED TO*
HAVE.





**CURRENTLY
HAVE-**

**-THE
FRIENDSHIP
WE HAVE
NOW.**

**THE FRIENDSHIP
THAT LACEY AND
PEOPLE LIKE YOU ARE
TRYING TO BREAK
APART!**

APART!

VELIX-
NO.

**BUT IT'S
NOT GOING TO
WORK!**



YOU THINK
YOU'RE SO SMART,
DOCTOR.





BUT YOU
DON'T UNDERSTAND
US AT ALL - *WHAT*
WE HAVE.

VELIX,
I'M *BEGGING* YOU
TO HAVE A *MOMENT*
OF INTROSPECTION
THAT ACTUALLY
STICKS. YOU'RE
NOT-

FUCK
YOU!!!





HE'S THE ONLY
PERSON I LOVE IN
THIS WHOLE STUPID
FUCKING UNIVERSE.

AND HE'S THE
FIRST PERSON
WHO EVER TRULY
CARED-



C-CARED
ABOUT-

A-AND
H-HE'S ALWAYS
RUNNING OFF AND DOING
ALL THESE S-SILLY
THINGS...

HE JUST
DOESN'T UNDERSTAND
HOW MUCH MORE
DANGEROUS IT IS
T-THIS TIME...



HE JUST- HE

A comic panel with a dark blue background and a light blue ground area. Three speech bubbles are present. The top bubble is from a character whose head is partially visible at the top left. The middle bubble is from a character whose head is partially visible at the bottom right. The bottom bubble is from a character whose head is partially visible at the bottom left.

DOESN'T SEE HOW
MUCH HE N-NEEDS
ME!!

VELIX...
HEY... LET'S
TAKE A STEP
BACK-

BUT THERE
IS STILL TIME-
BEFORE HE GETS
HURT-

I CAN
FIX IT.



VELIX-
LOOK AT ME!
TAKE A DEEP
BREATH-

LET'S
START OVER-

START OVER

IT WAS
STUPID OF ME
TO ASK YOU
FOR HELP.



A comic book panel with a dark blue background. At the top, a character's face is partially visible, showing purple skin and a dark, open mouth. A large, white, oval-shaped speech bubble with a black outline is positioned in the upper center. Inside the bubble, text is written in a bold, black, hand-drawn font. The text reads: "AND WHEN THAT THING FUCKING SNAPS AND ATTACKS HIM - IT WILL BE YOUR FAULT FOR NOT LISTENING TO ME!".

AND WHEN
THAT THING FUCKING
SNAPS AND ATTACKS
HIM - IT WILL BE YOUR
FAULT FOR NOT
LISTENING TO
ME!

CALL ENDED



VELIX!!



Velix
incoming call



IS THERE
A PROBLEM?





NO.
JUST A
SMALL WORK
THING.





I'LL TAKE
CARE OF IT WHEN
WE'RE DONE
HERE.

LOVEBOT

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