

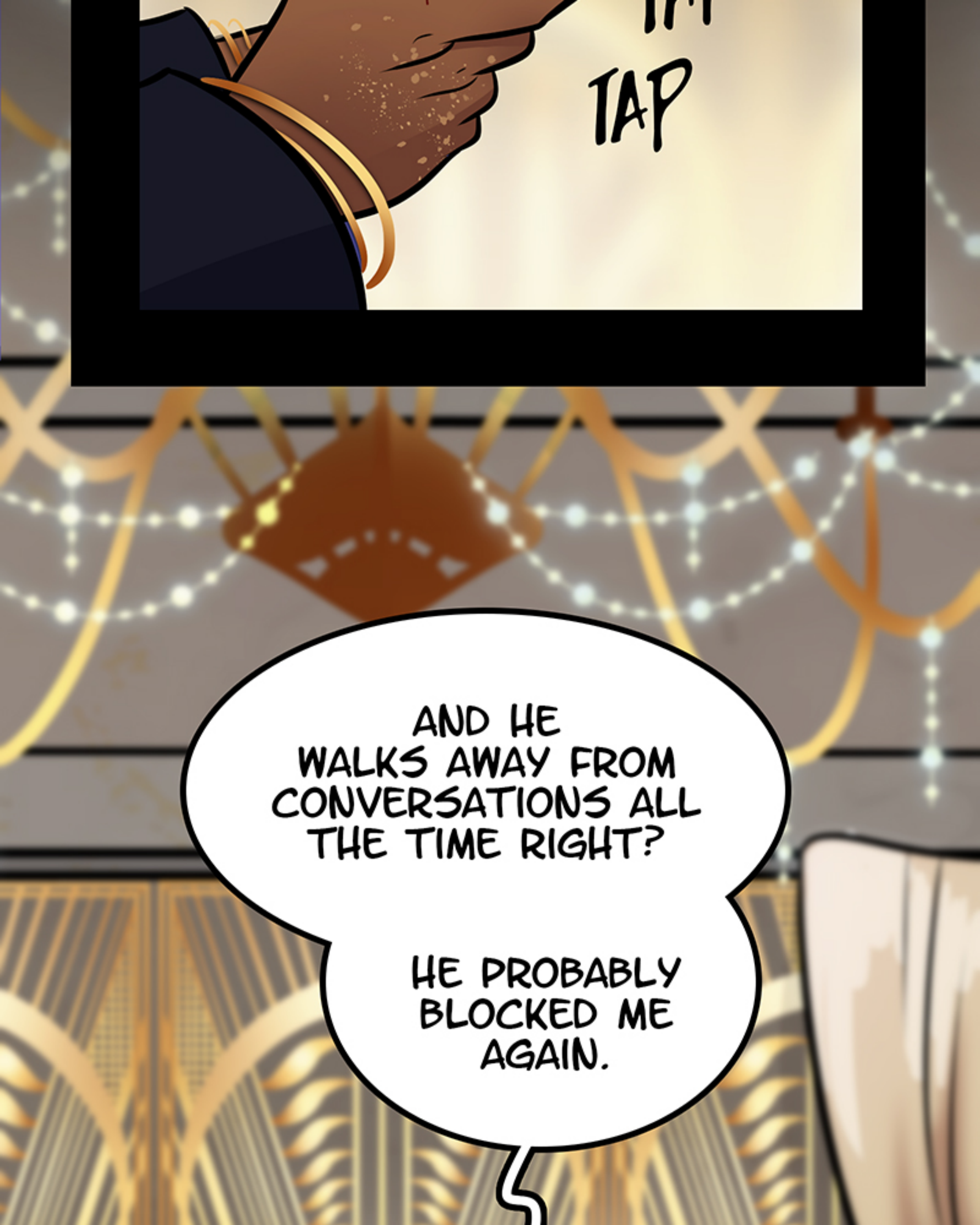
XADA - I'M
SURE THAT IT'S
NOTHING.

TAP
TAP



A close-up illustration of a hand with a dark skin tone, wearing a dark blue sleeve, tapping a light-colored surface. The hand is positioned with the index finger extended, and the motion is indicated by small dots and a curved line. The background is a soft, out-of-focus yellow and white.

IM
TAP

The background of the entire page is a festive, out-of-focus scene. It features warm, golden-yellow lights, possibly from a Christmas tree or string lights, and a person wearing a brown, pointed hat or headpiece. The overall atmosphere is cozy and celebratory.

AND HE
WALKS AWAY FROM
CONVERSATIONS ALL
THE TIME RIGHT?

HE PROBABLY
BLOCKED ME
AGAIN.



A comic panel with a dark background. At the bottom, the back of a character's head with brown hair is visible. A speech bubble points from the character towards the center of the panel. The background features a bright, hazy light source at the top, creating a lens flare effect.

I'M SORRY-
I SHOULDN'T HAVE
MENTIONED IT -



OR AT LEAST
NOT UNTIL AFTER
THIS - SINCE WE'RE
SURROUNDED BY
A BUNCH OF
PEOPLE.



!?

SORRY??





WELL YEAH -
I DON'T WANT TO
STRESS YOU
OUT-





IT MGIHT
BE NOTHING! YOU
KNOW HIM BETTER
RIGHT? SO YOU
WOULD KNOW IF
HE-

NO-
HEY-



YOU
DON'T HAVE TO
APOLGIZE FOR

APOLOGIZE FOR
ANYTHING.

I'M GLAD
YOU TOLD
ME.



A comic panel featuring two characters from the chest up. The character on the left has brown hair, and the character on the right has dark hair. They are positioned against a background of a dark blue upper half and a lower half with a yellow and grey geometric pattern. Two speech bubbles are present: a larger one from the right character and a smaller one from the left character.

WE'RE BOTH
JUST WORRIED
ABOUT HIM,
YEAH?

YEAH...



AND
IT'S PROBABLY
LATE IN SEATTLE,
RIGHT? HE MIGHT
HAVE JUST GONE
TO BED...





TAKE A
DEEP BREATH,
ERIK.

INHALE



HAHAHA

GOD...

I WASN'T
EXPECTING HIM
TO ACTUALLY CALL
ME...



A comic book panel featuring a character with dark hair and a blue jacket. The character is shown from the chest up, with their head tilted slightly. The background is a dark blue gradient with a large, bright yellow and white radiating light effect emanating from behind the character. A speech bubble is positioned above the character's head.

LET ALONE
THAT HE'D
BE SO...



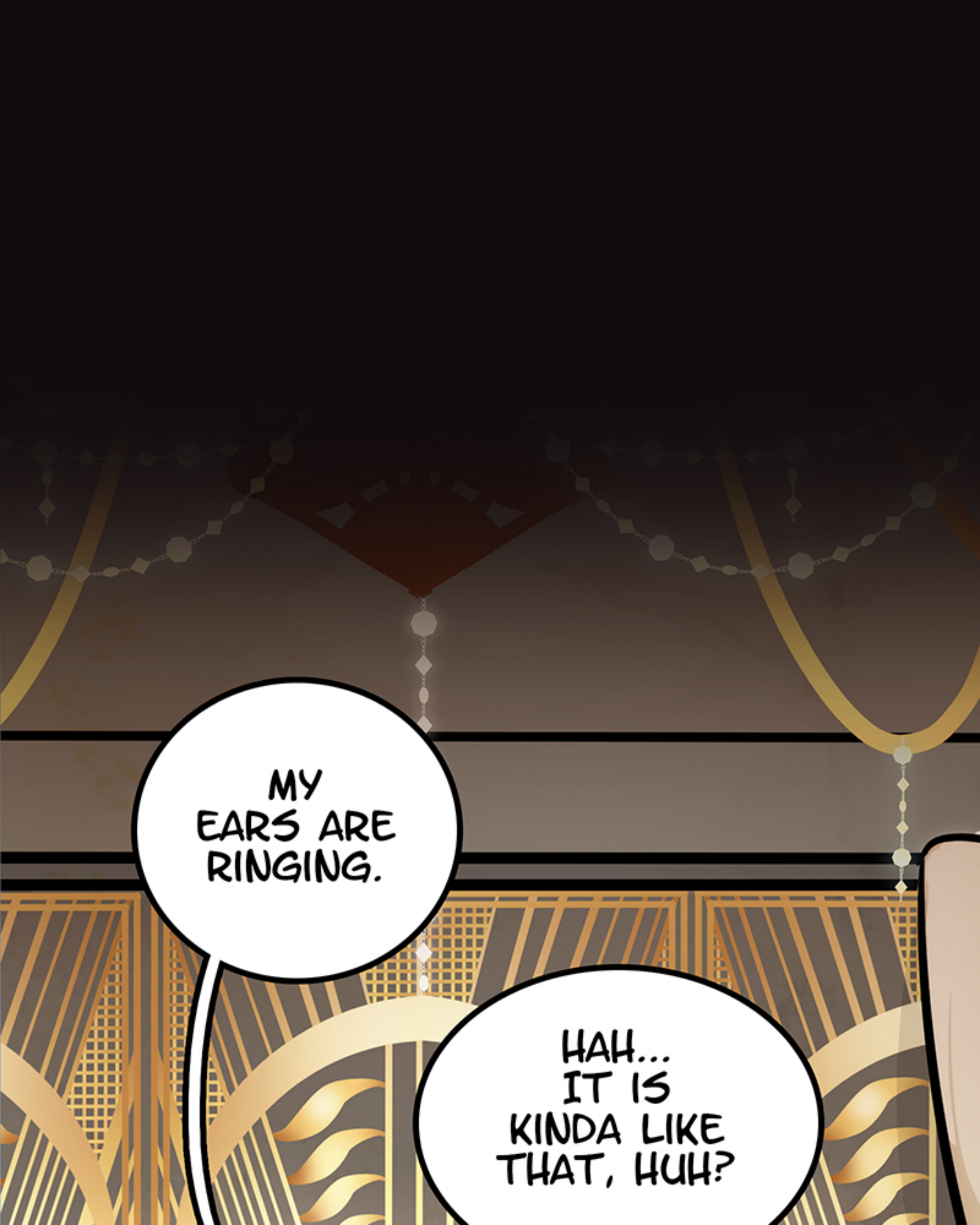
HE'S
INTENSE,
YEAH.

INTENSE??
XADA I'M A DOCTOR-
I UNDERSTAND INTENSITY
AND HIGH PRESSURE
SITUATIONS BUT...

THIS WAS LIKE
A FLASH GRENADE OF
EMOTIONS THEN HE
WAS GONE.



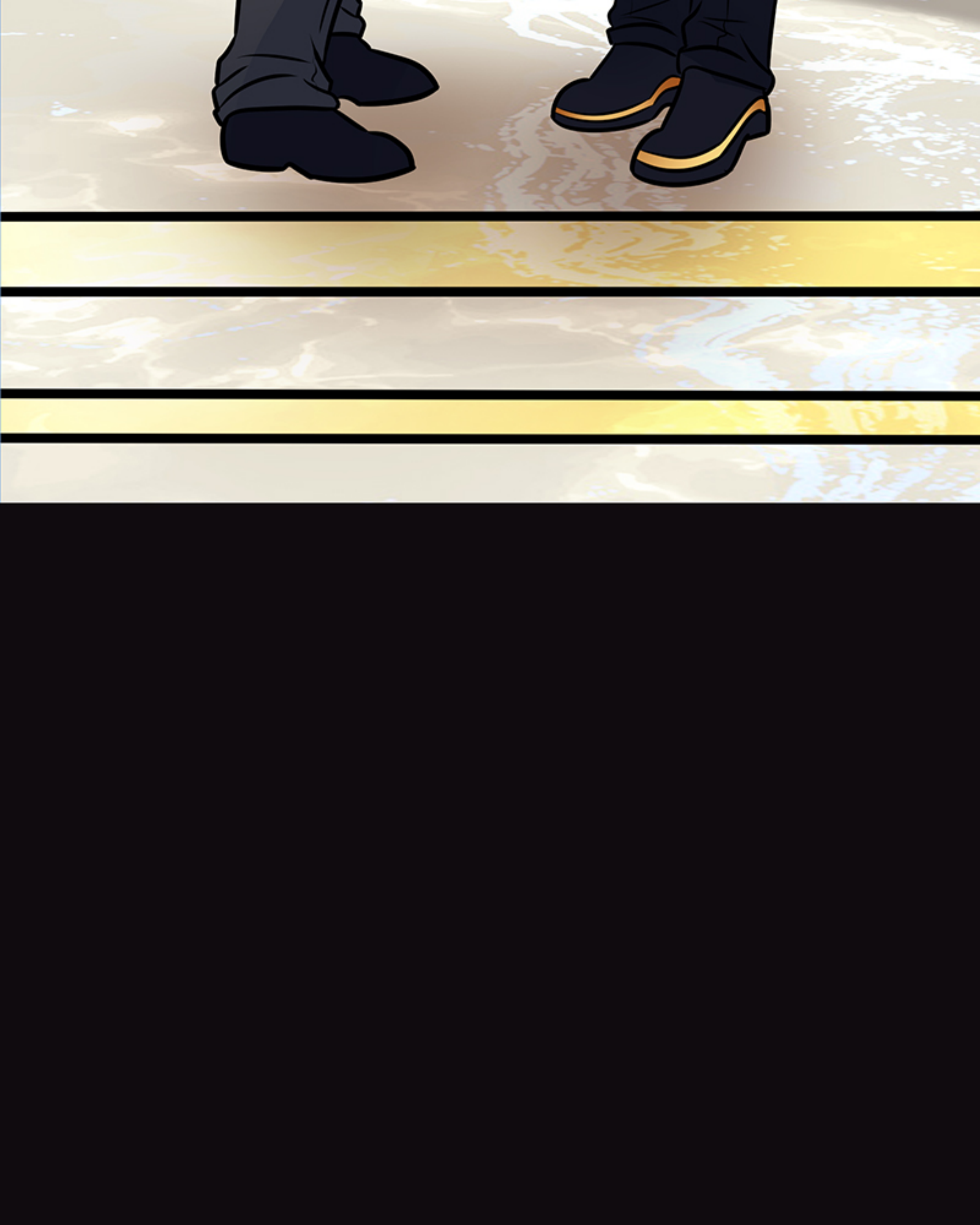




MY
EARS ARE
RINGING.

HAH...
IT IS
KINDA LIKE
THAT, HUH?





YOU'VE
LIVED WITH THIS
FEELING FOR
10 YEARS??





I - I DON'T

I... I DON'T
KNOW. I DON'T
THINK SO...?

THERE WERE
MOMENTS, OBVIOUSLY,
AND HE'S ALWAYS
BEEN DRAMATIC
AND...





I DON'T
KNOW. I FEEL
LIKE EVERYONE WANTS
ME TO SAY THAT HE'S
A BAD PERSON...

BUT I
DON'T THINK
THAT HE IS.

I THINK
HE NEEDS A LOT OF

HELP THAT I CAN'T
GIVE HIM.



A comic book style illustration featuring two speech bubbles. The background is split: the top half shows a close-up of green, leafy plants, and the bottom half is a solid dark brown or black. Two white speech bubbles with black outlines are connected by lines. The top bubble is positioned over the plants, and the bottom bubble is positioned over the dark area.

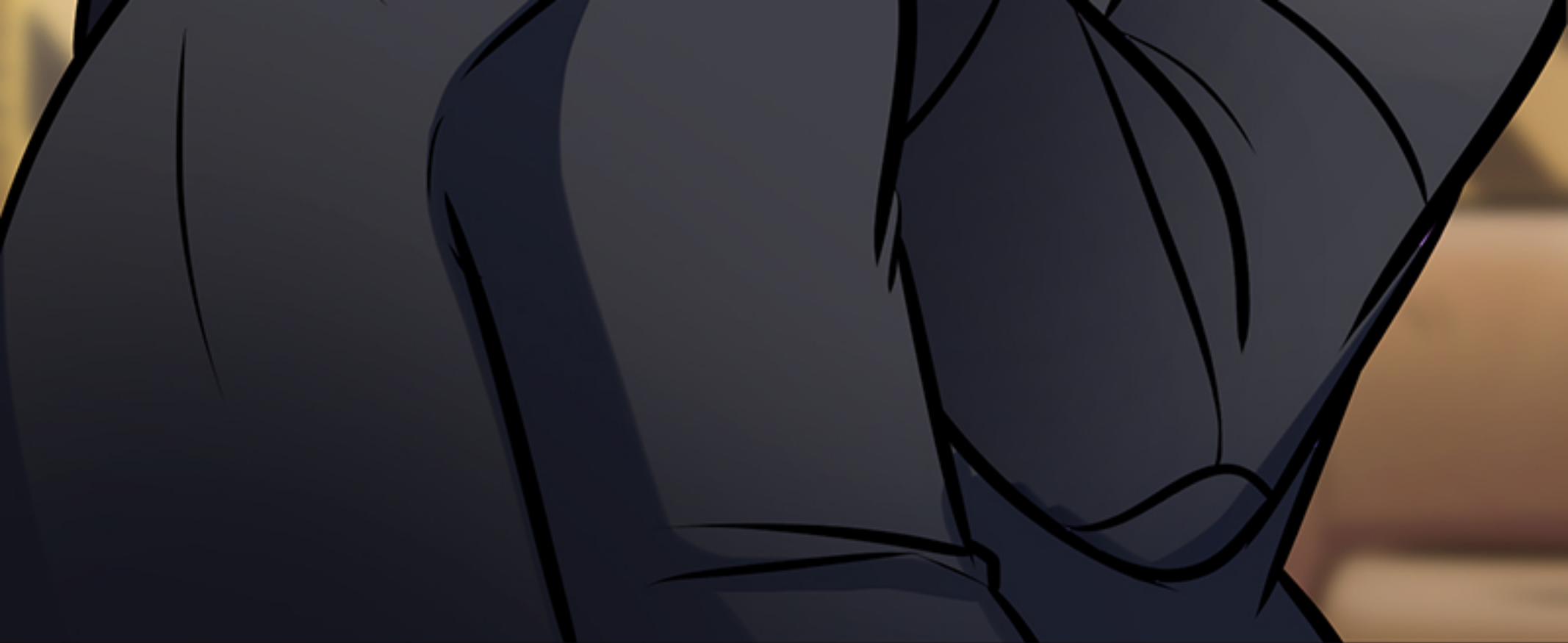
AND I NEED
TO UNDERSTAND
MORE ABOUT MY
LIMITS AND ACTUALLY
COMMUNICATE
THEM.

BUT... I'LL
TELL YOU WHAT
LACEY TOLD
ME...

YOU DON'T
NEED TO FEEL
RESPONSIBLE
FOR HIS ACTIONS,
OKAY??

IT MEANS
A LOT THAT YOU
TRIED TO HELP.





MAYBE AFTER MY
SPEECH WE ALL DIP
RIGHT AWAY??

WE'LL TRY
TO SORT THIS OUT
AND GET AHOLD OF HIM
WITHOUT CHARLES
BREATHING DOWN



BREATHING DOWN
OUR NECKS...

I THINK
THAT'S A GOOD
IDEA

IDEA.

ALRIGHT.



The background of the comic panel depicts a grand, futuristic interior. A large, ornate chandelier with multiple tiers of gold-colored rings and white crystal-like droplets hangs from a ceiling that features a glowing blue and yellow grid pattern. The walls are decorated with vertical gold-colored lines and circular motifs. At the bottom of the panel, there are three rectangular displays. The central display shows the word "\$ci" in a large, stylized font, with a blue "\$" and a yellow "ci". The two side displays show the year "2049" in a glowing yellow font. The overall color palette is dominated by gold, blue, and yellow.

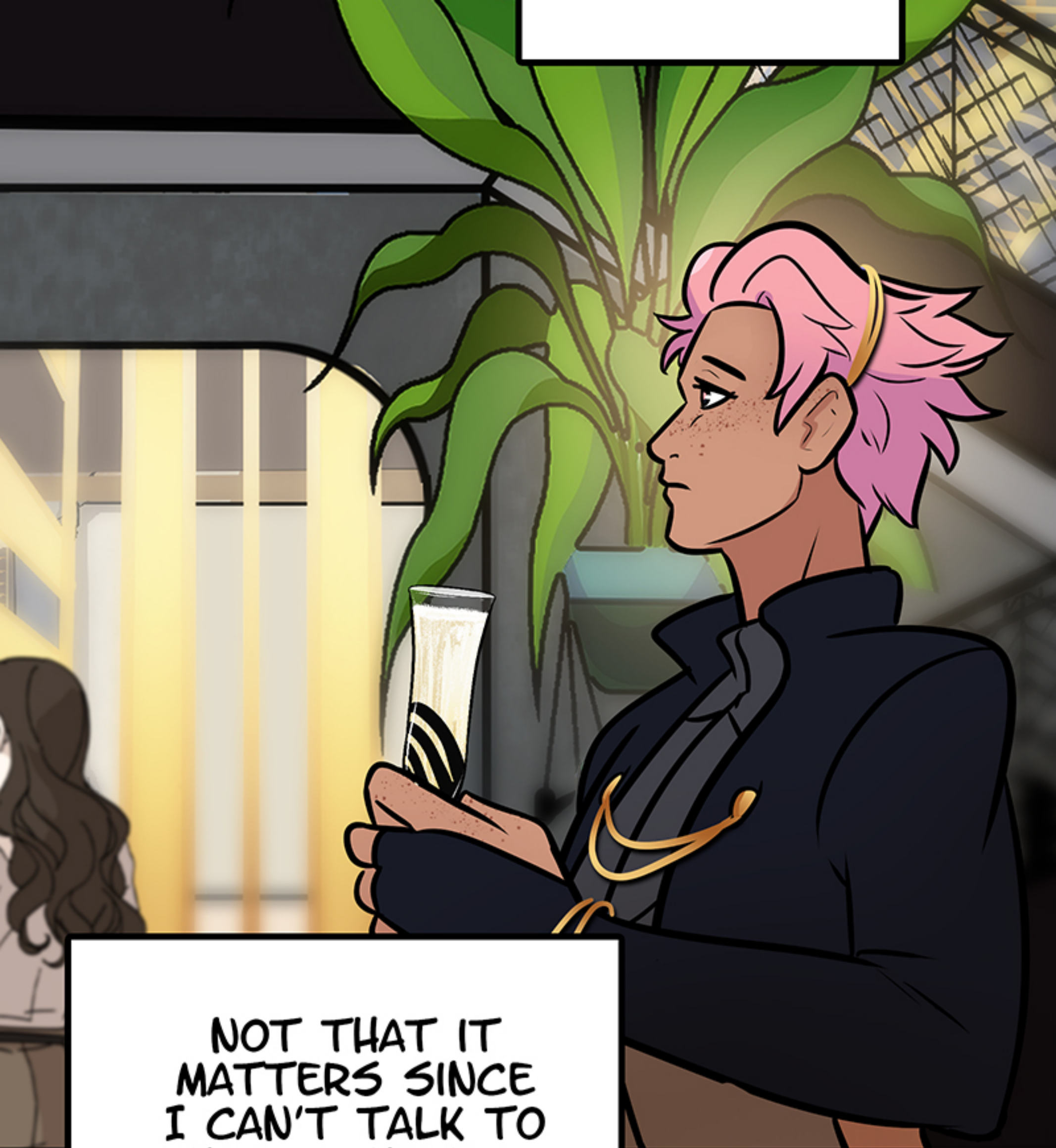
I'LL MESSAGE
LACEY AND TELL
HIM WE'RE LEAVING
EARLY...

EVERYTHING
ELSE SHOULD GO
BY QUICKLY.





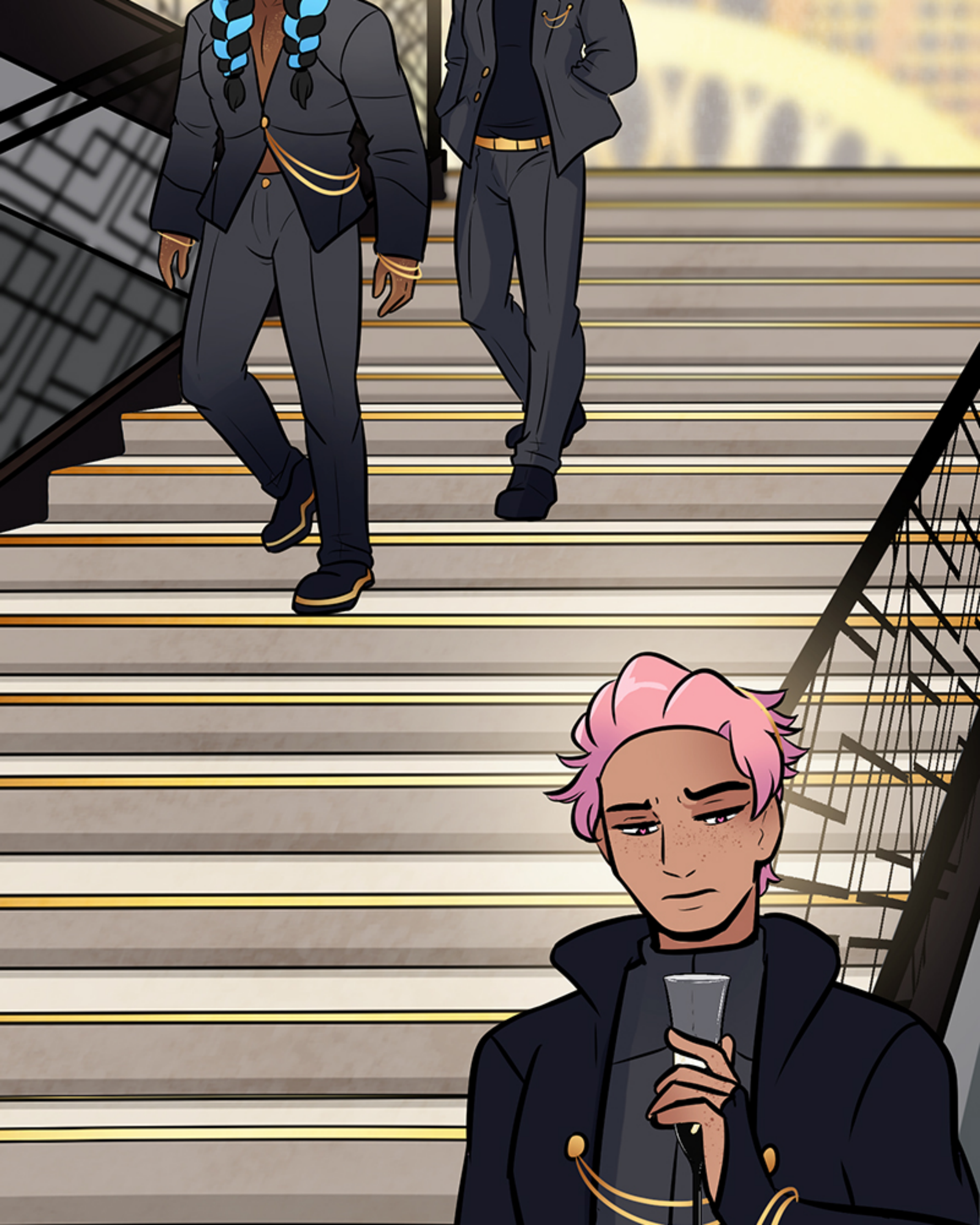
AH, THERE
THEY ARE...



NOT THAT IT
MATTERS SINCE
I CAN'T TALK TO
THEM RIGHT NOW.

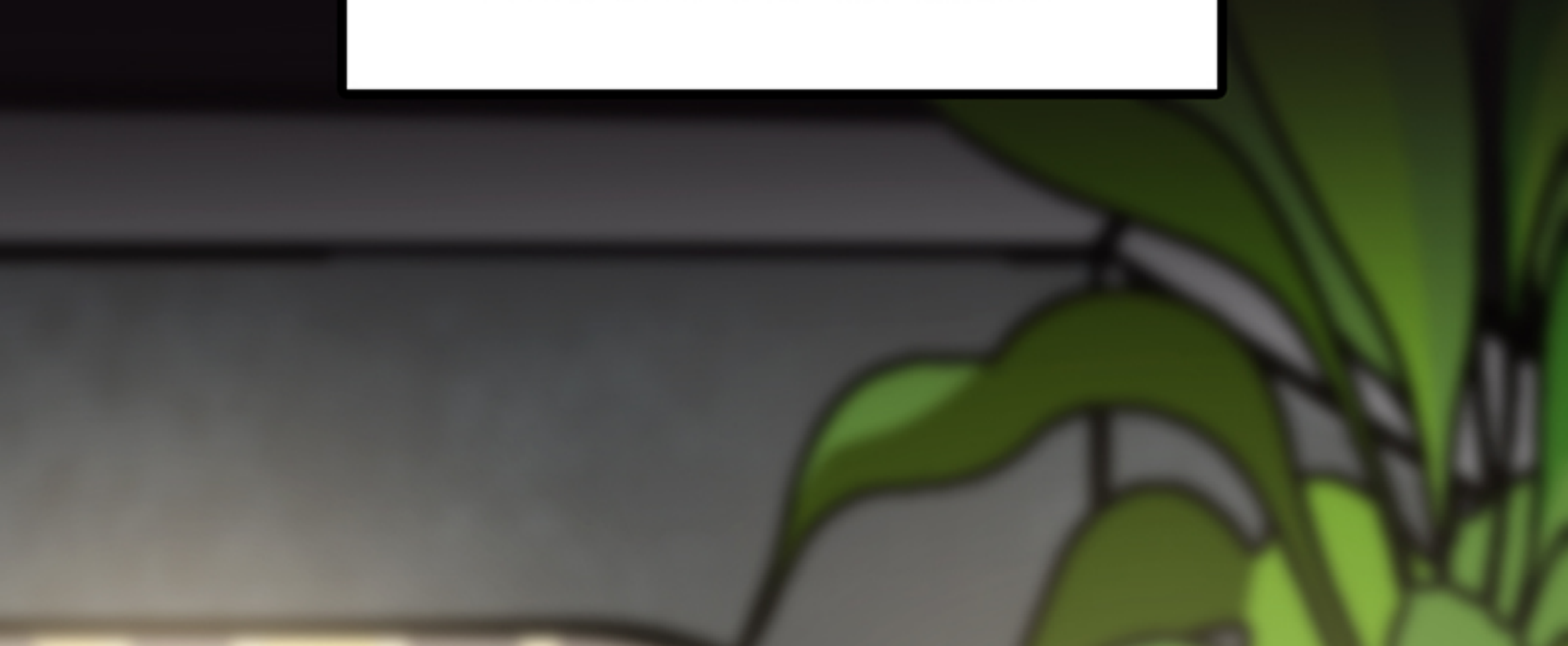
WHO'S
BRIGHT IDEA WAS
THAT, HUH?







"ACT LIKE YOU
DON'T KNOW ME" I
SAID... AND I STILL
THINK THAT WAS
THE RIGHT CALL...





BUT THIS
SUCKS...







I WISH THERE
WAS A WAY THAT
WE COULD ENJOY
THIS TOGETHER.



I'M TIRED
OF HIDING...





NEW MESSAGE:



How's it going?

I'm straddling off

I'm standing on
to the side like a
potted plant.

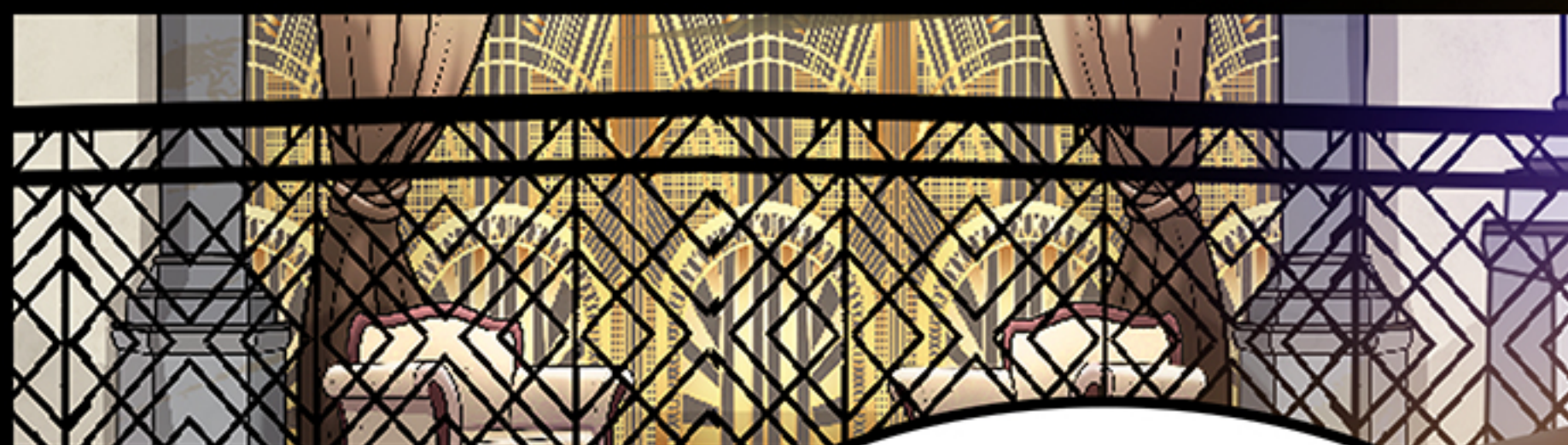


Aren't you supposed
to be William DeLacey
tonight? Would he be
a wallflower? Go be
annoyingly human.



FAIR
ENOUGH...





XADA!
THERE YOU
ARE, I WAS HOPING

...AND I'M HERE
TO CATCH YOU...





IT'S
SO GOOD TO
SEE YOU!

CONGRATULATIONS!

A comic book illustration of a Black woman with a large, elaborate feathered headdress. She is sitting in a wheelchair, looking towards the right with a smile. She has a large, multi-layered headdress made of orange and yellow feathers. She is wearing a white dress with a blue sash and a gold chain. The background shows an outdoor setting with a wooden table and chairs. A speech bubble from the right contains the text "AH! VULA, THANK YOU!".

AH! VULA,
THANK YOU!



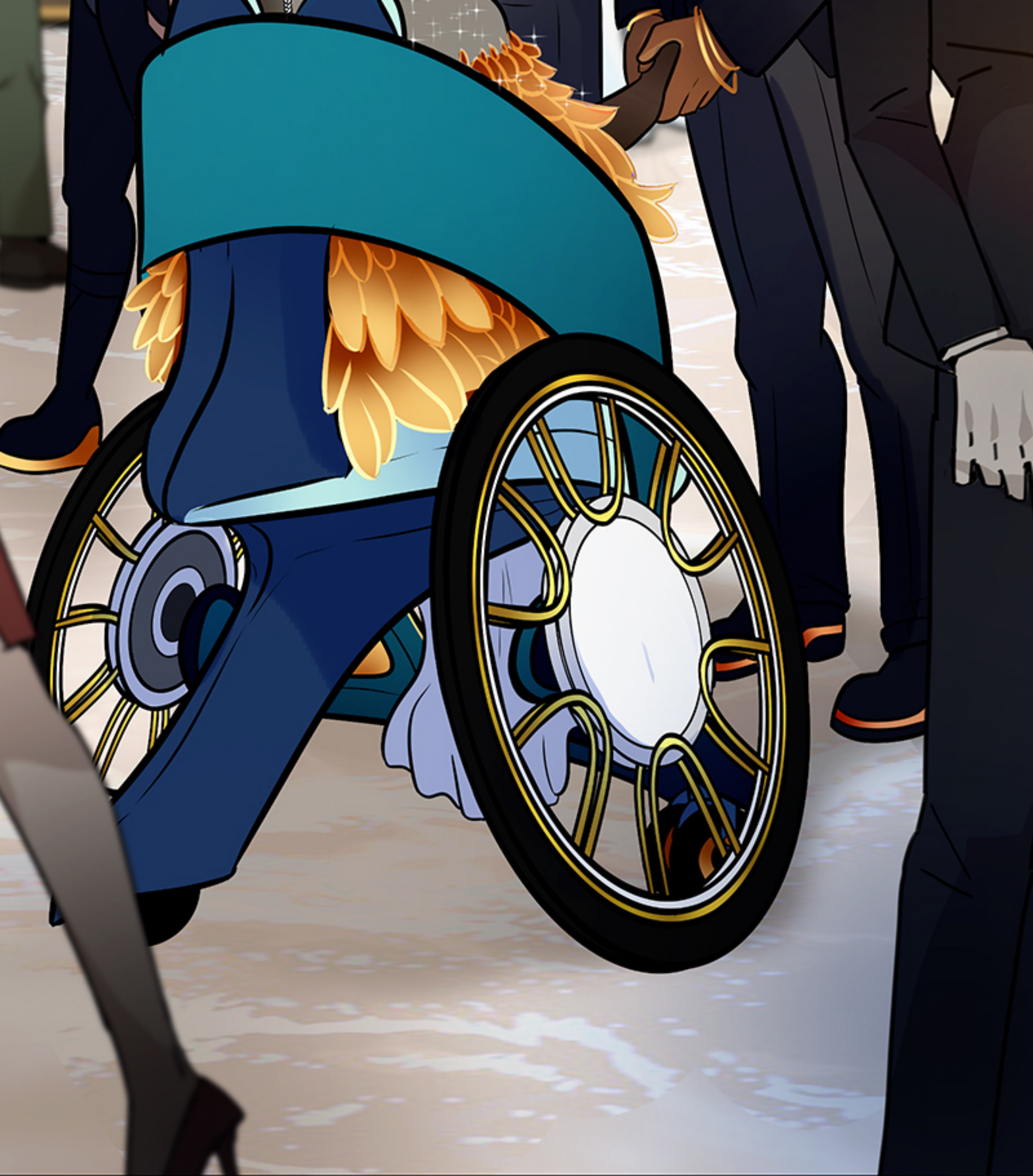
look at
how tall you've

how can I
gotten!!

SEEMS LIKE
JUST YESTERDAY
YOU WERE BREAKING
INTO THE LABS TO BUILD
YOUR LITTLE PROJECTS...
I ALWAYS SAID IT'D
PAY OFF.

HAH!







YOU STILL
GETTING INTO
ANY TROUBLE
THESE DAYS?

HAHAH...
WELL... YA KNOW...
UH -

**DOCTOR
ERIK HERNANDEZ!**
ERIK- THIS IS VULA,
PRESIDENT OF A.E.
HEADQUARTERS.



SHE WAS
ALSO THE MOON
COLONY SUPERVISOR
WHILE MY PARENTS WERE
WORKING ON EARTH'S
REVITALIZATION.

she made living
up there alone
tolerable.

IT'S AN
HONOR!

HONOR!

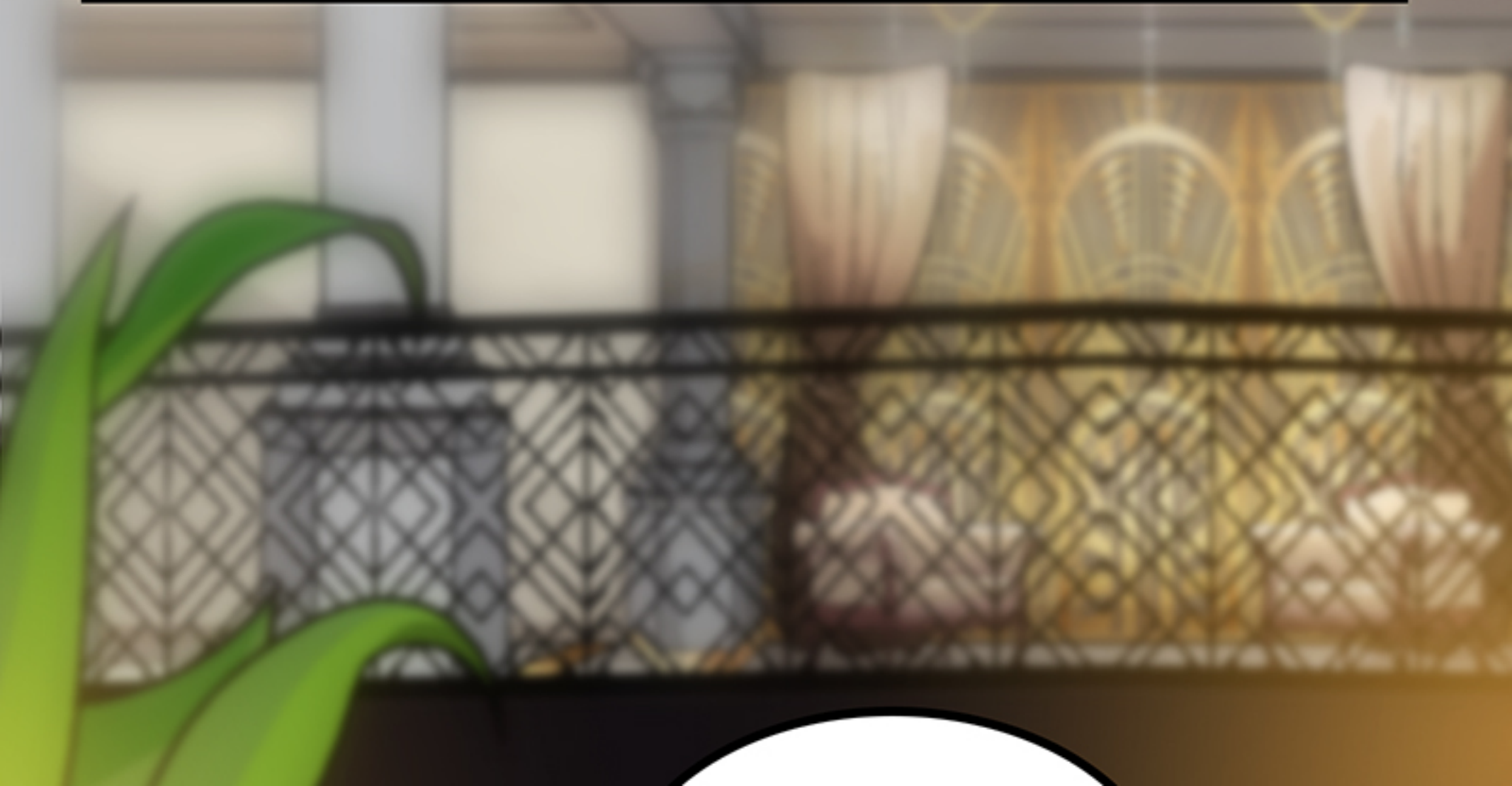
DOCTOR!
YOU'RE WORKING
WITH XADA TO
FACILITATE HIS
STUDIES THROUGH
YOUR HOSPITAL,
CORRECT?

Y-YES,
MA'AM!

WELL I-
IT'S NOT MY
HOSPITAL, LIKE I
DON'T OWN IT,
BUT YES-

**BULL
BULL**







MMMMM
BE RIGHT
BACK!!

A comic panel depicting a scene in a city. A woman with long dark hair and blue braids, wearing a dark suit and a blue scarf, stands on the right. She is holding a small object in her left hand and pointing her right index finger towards a man on the left. The man has short brown hair, wears glasses, a dark jacket, and a white turban. He is looking at the woman with a slightly annoyed or determined expression. In the foreground, the back of a person's head with a blue hood and orange feathers is visible. The background shows a city street with buildings and a palm tree.

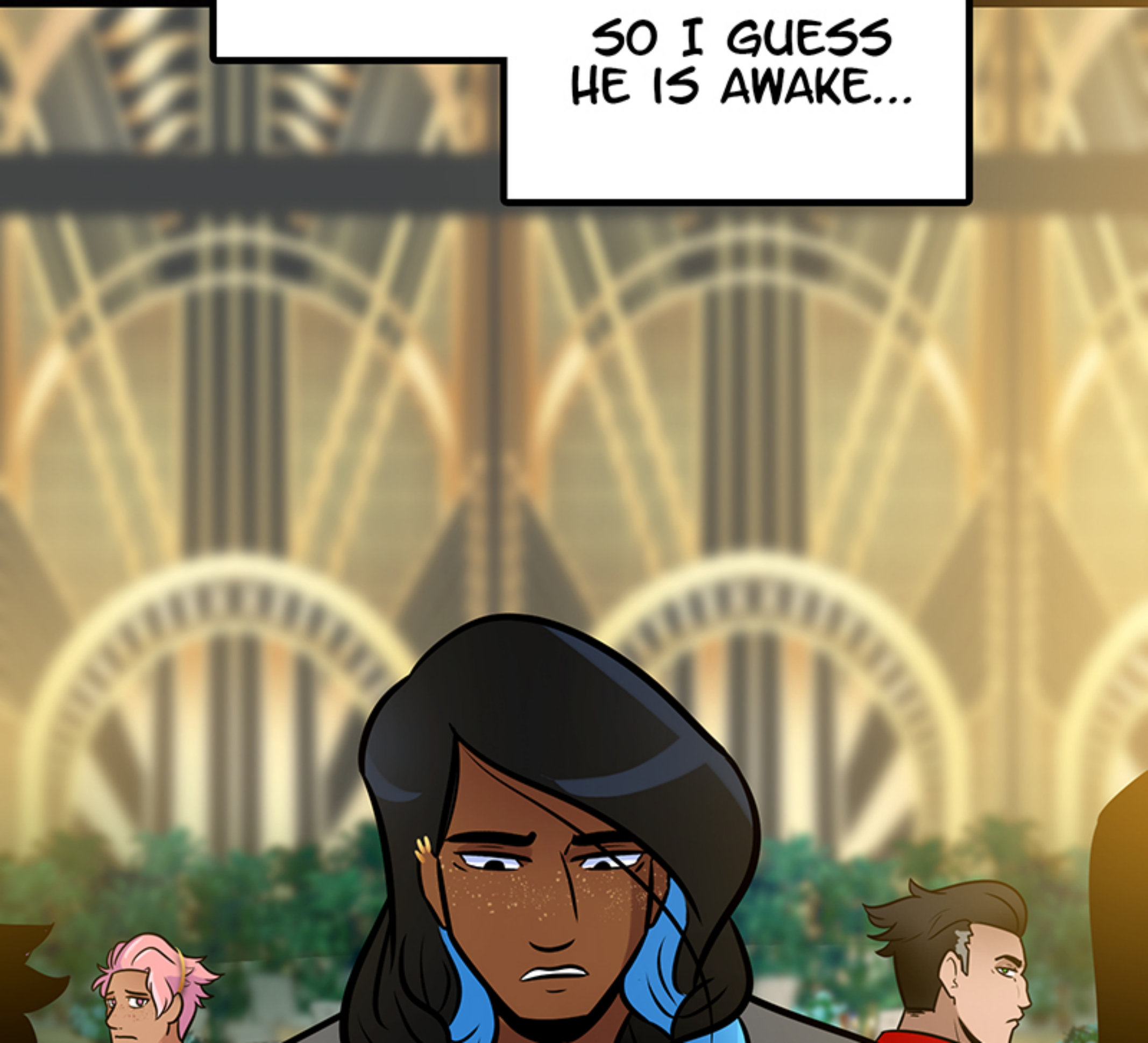
XADA-

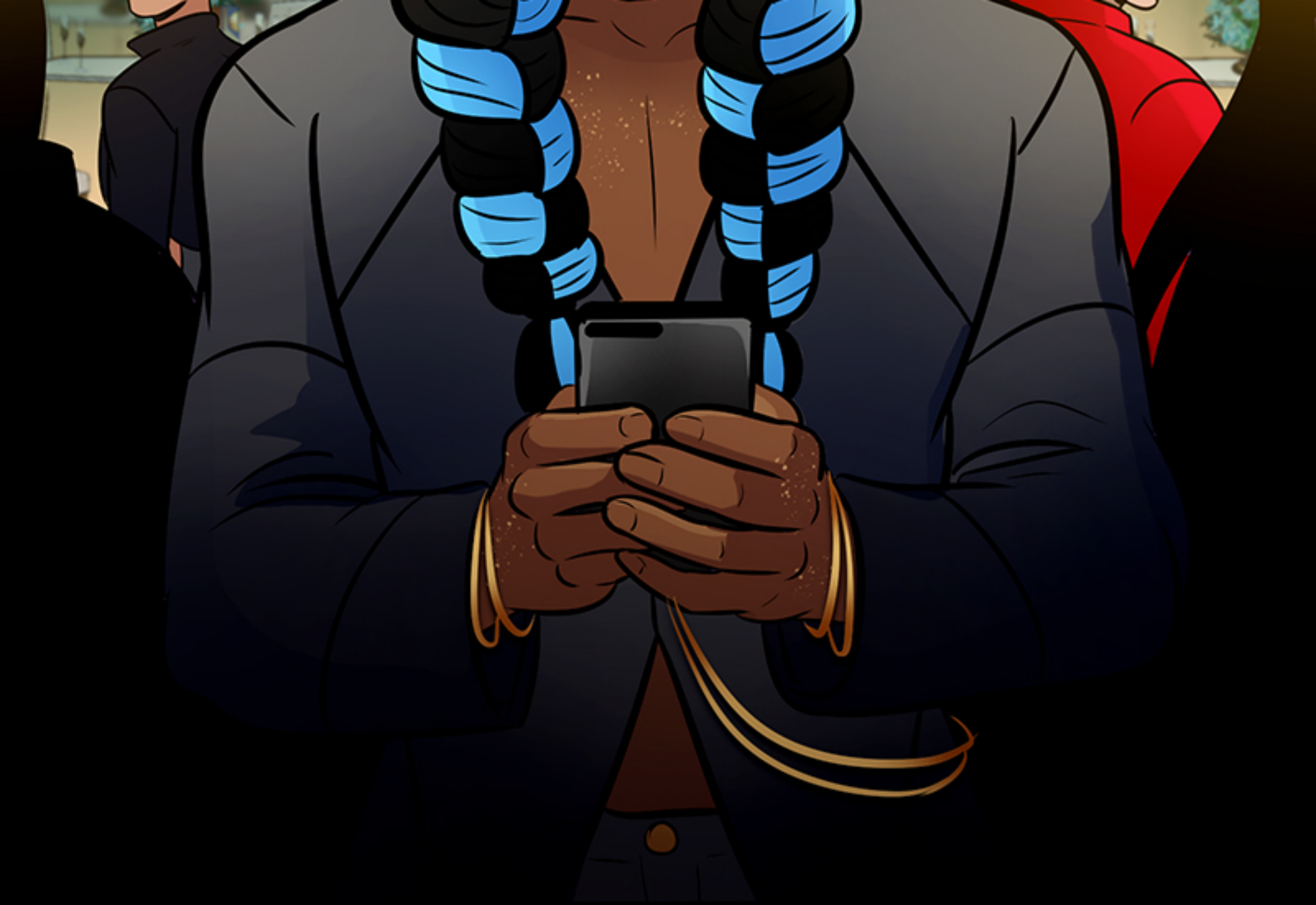
OF
COURSE!



VELIX RESPONDED
TO MY TEXT...

SO I GUESS
HE IS AWAKE...









WHAT...?!
WHAT DOES THAT
MEAN?!





21/11



BUZZ
BUZZ

EXCUSE ME
FOR ONE MOMENT,
PLEASE.

LOVEBOTS

By Chase Keels & Miranda M.

Edited by **Griffin Freitas & Bre Boswell**

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