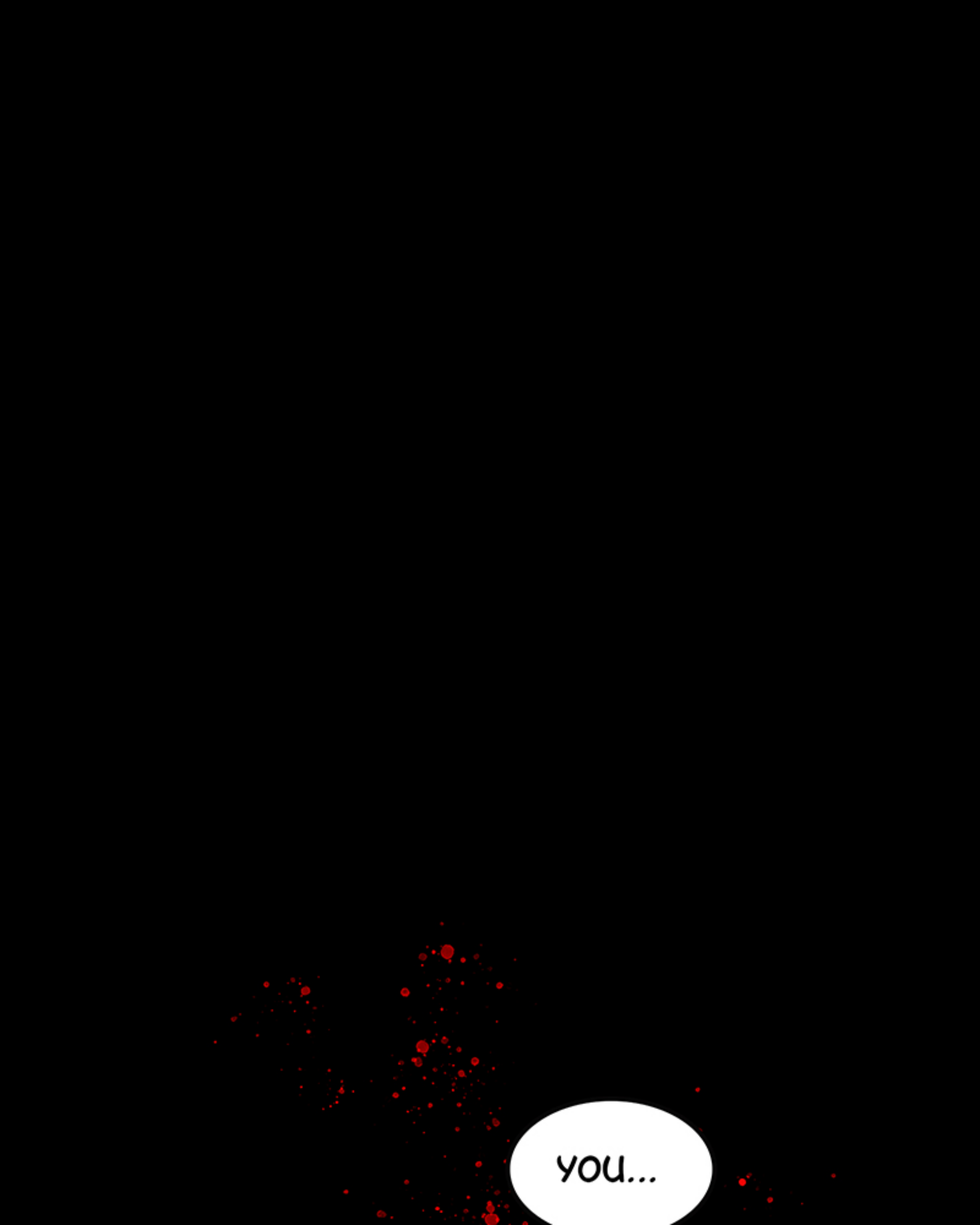
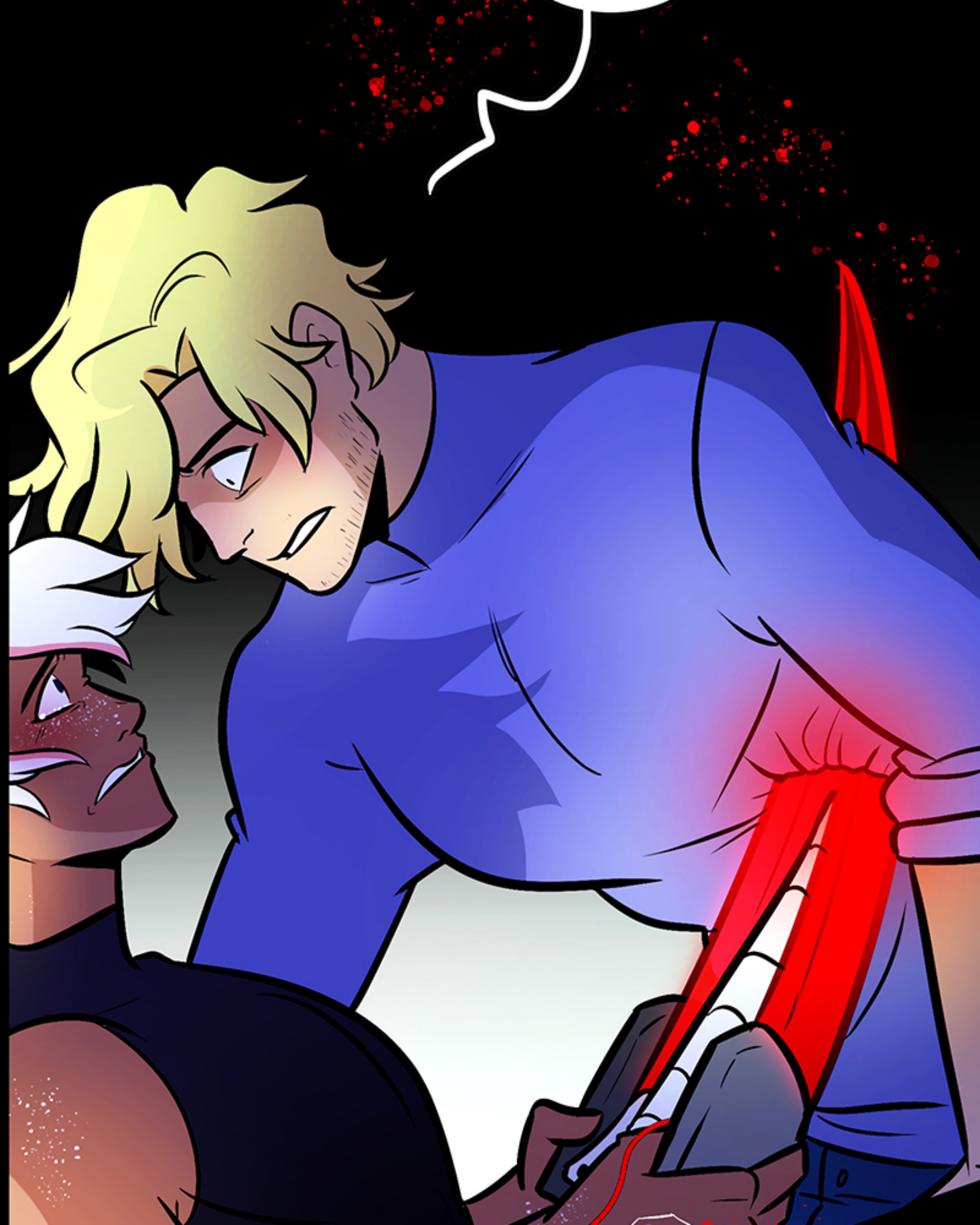




you...

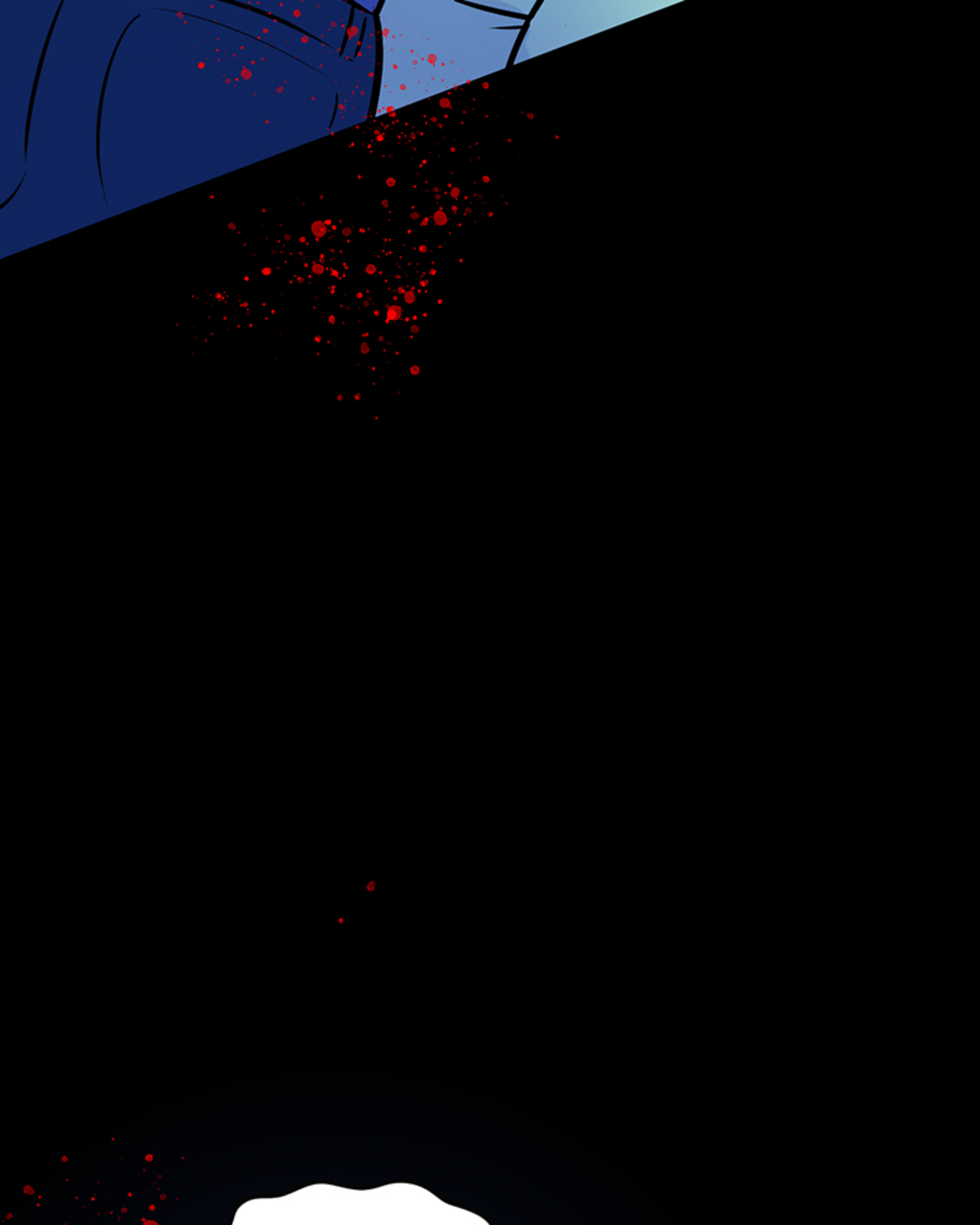




LACEY!

H...HELP--





A comic panel featuring a character with white hair and a distressed expression. The character has a red, textured mark on their face and is looking upwards with a pained expression. Two speech bubbles are present: one at the top left saying "SOMEONE HELP--" and another at the top right saying "LACEY- I'M HERE! I'M RIGHT HERE-". The background consists of a green hexagonal pattern, and there are red splatters on the left side.

SOMEONE
HELP--

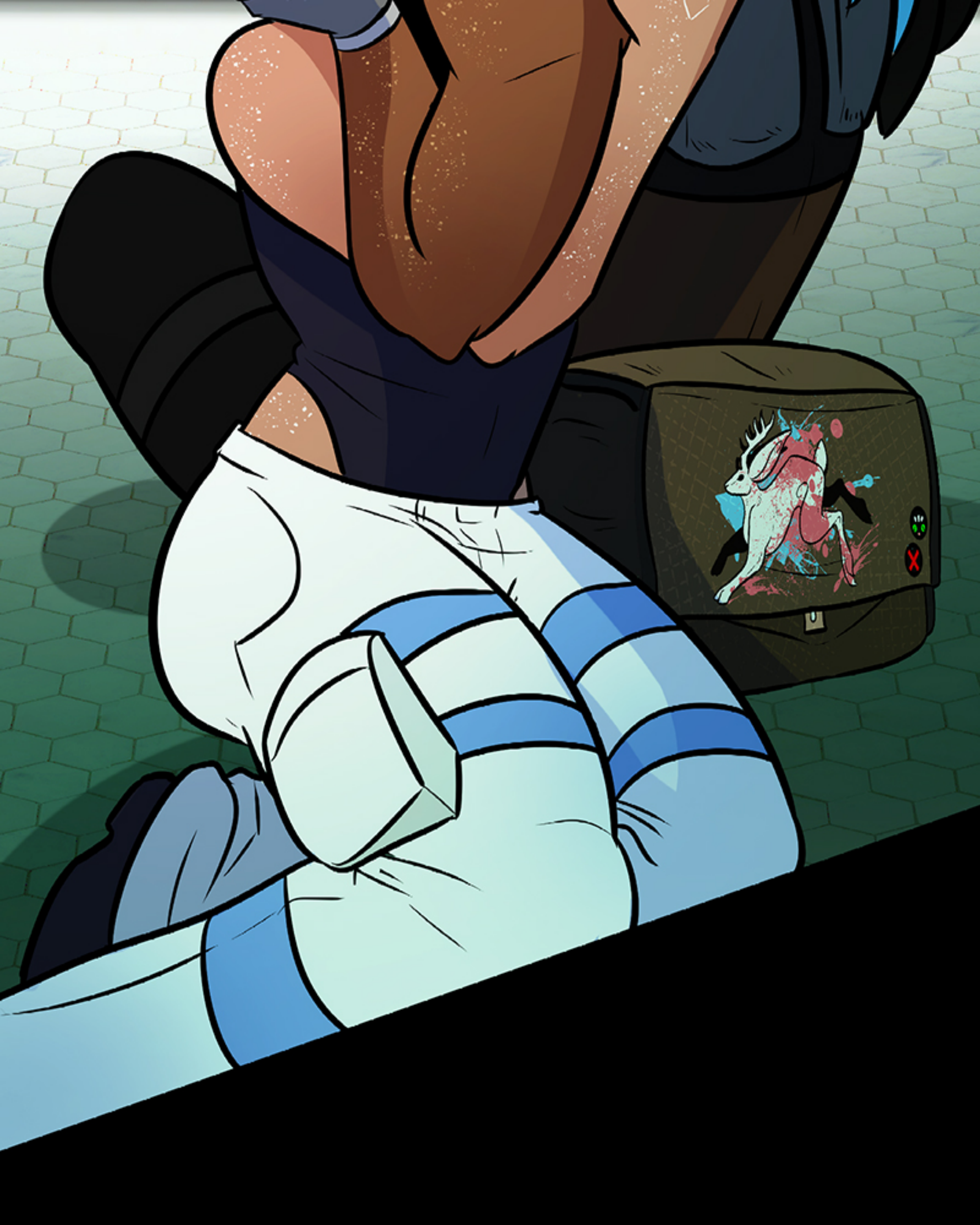
LACEY-
I'M HERE!
I'M RIGHT
HERE-

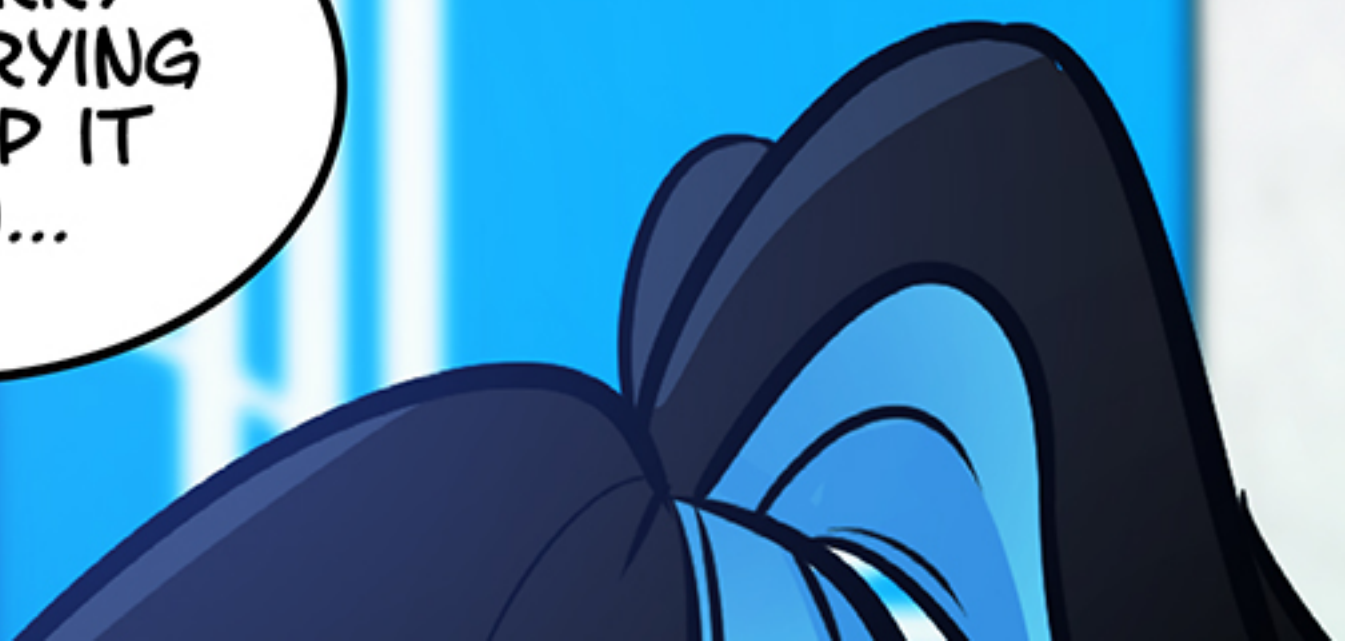


YOU'RE
SAFE...

I'M HERE
AND YOU'RE
SAFE...







I'M SORRY
I...I'M TRYING
TO KEEP IT
DOWN...



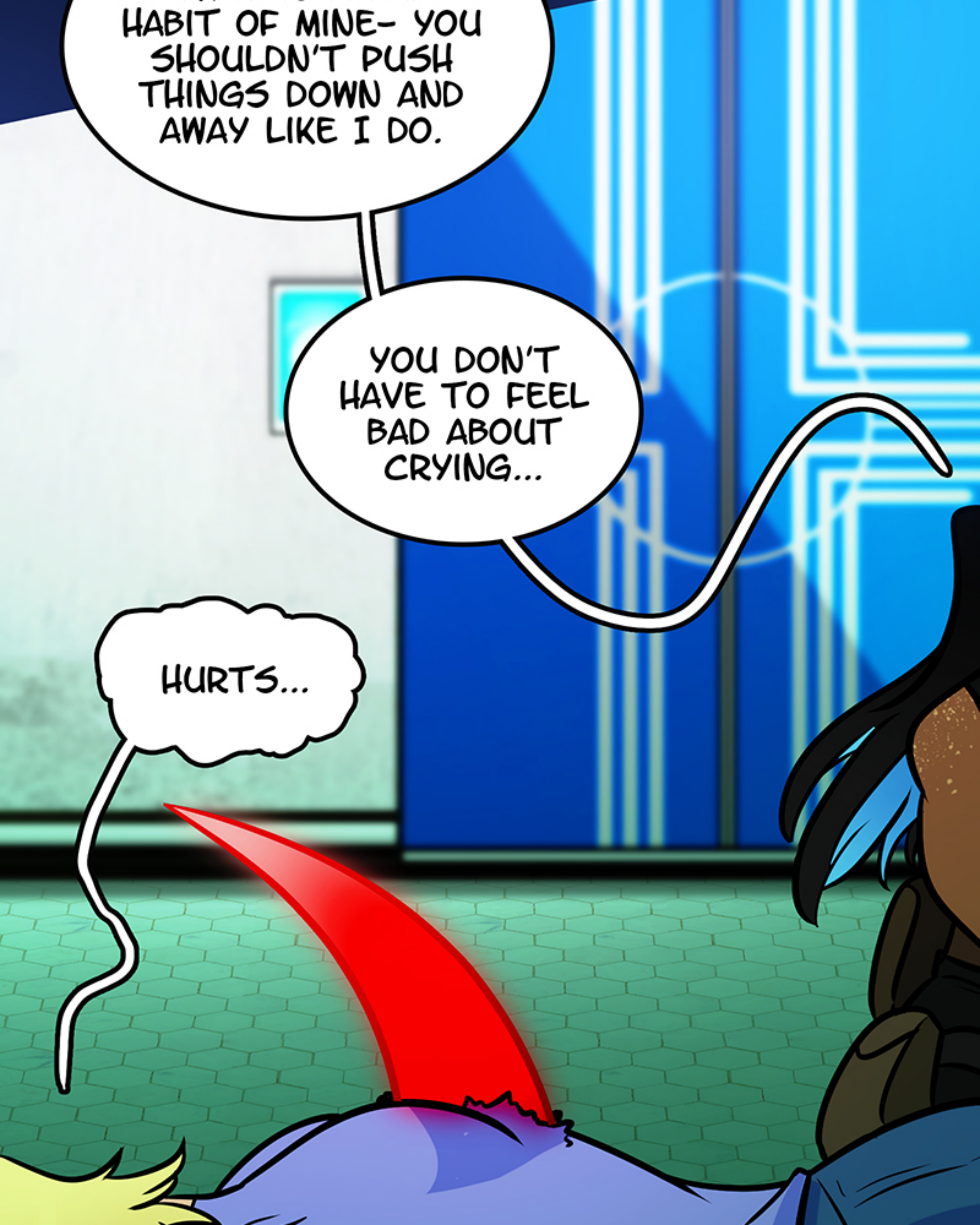
I KNOW
WE STILL HAVE
MORE TO DO. GO

A comic panel with a dark blue background. In the top right corner, there are some geometric shapes in shades of brown and tan. Three white speech bubbles are present. The top bubble is at the top left, the middle one is in the upper center, and the bottom one is at the bottom left. The text in the bubbles is in a simple, hand-drawn font.

MORE TO DO SO
I CAN'T RIGHT
NOW--

I'M TRYING
TO KEEP IT
IN...

NO- NO.
THAT IS A BAD

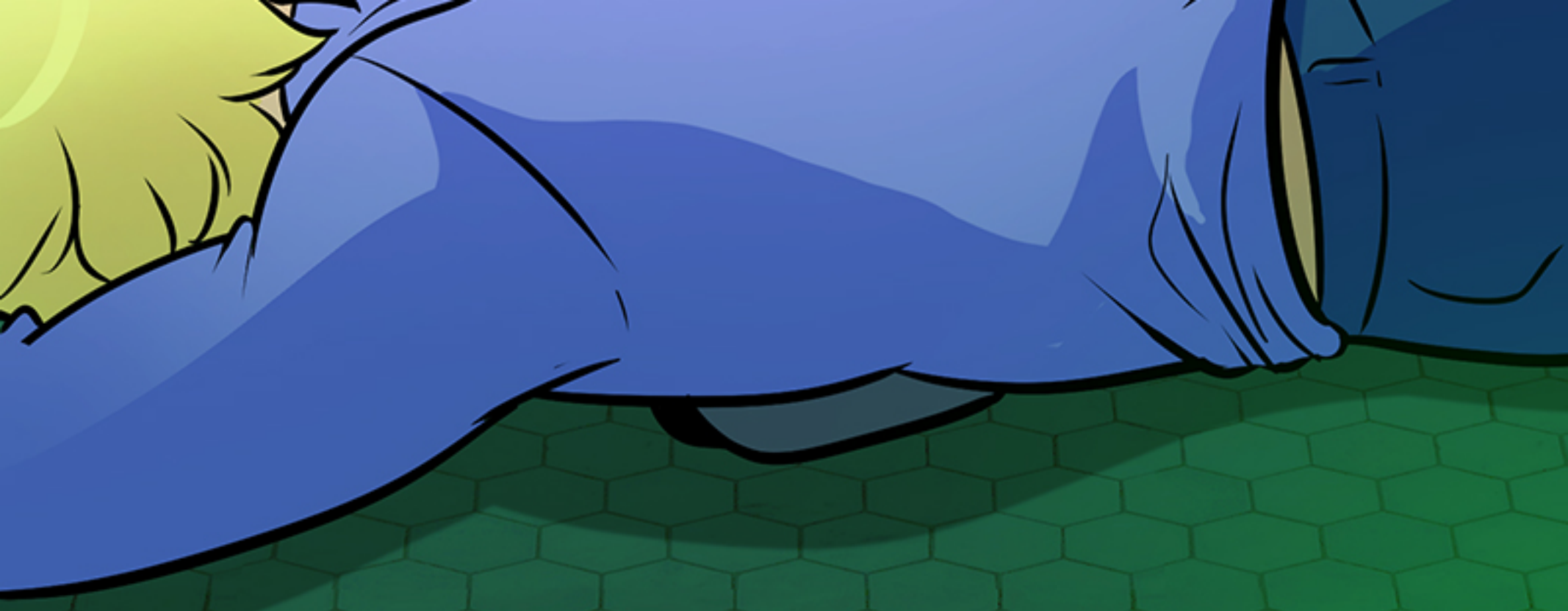


A comic panel featuring a character with a long, thin, white tail and a blue tuft of hair, wearing a brown tunic. The character is positioned on the right side of the frame. In the foreground, a red sword is embedded in a purple, rocky surface. The floor is composed of green hexagonal tiles. The background shows a blue wall with white geometric patterns. Three speech bubbles are present: one at the top left, one in the middle right, and one on the left side.

HABIT OF MINE- YOU
SHOULDN'T PUSH
THINGS DOWN AND
AWAY LIKE I DO.

YOU DON'T
HAVE TO FEEL
BAD ABOUT
CRYING...

HURTS...



IT HURTS...

IT WON'T
STOP... I CAN'T
MAKE IT STOP...





I...



I CAN'T
MOVE...IT HURTS...
SO MUCH...

IS THIS HOW
I MADE VELIX
FEEL?





IS THIS HOW
MICHAEL MADE
YOU FEEL?



YES...

YOU SAID
EARLIER...THAT I
COULD CHANGE...

THAT I
COULD LEARN
TO BE MORE...

IS IT TOO
LATE?



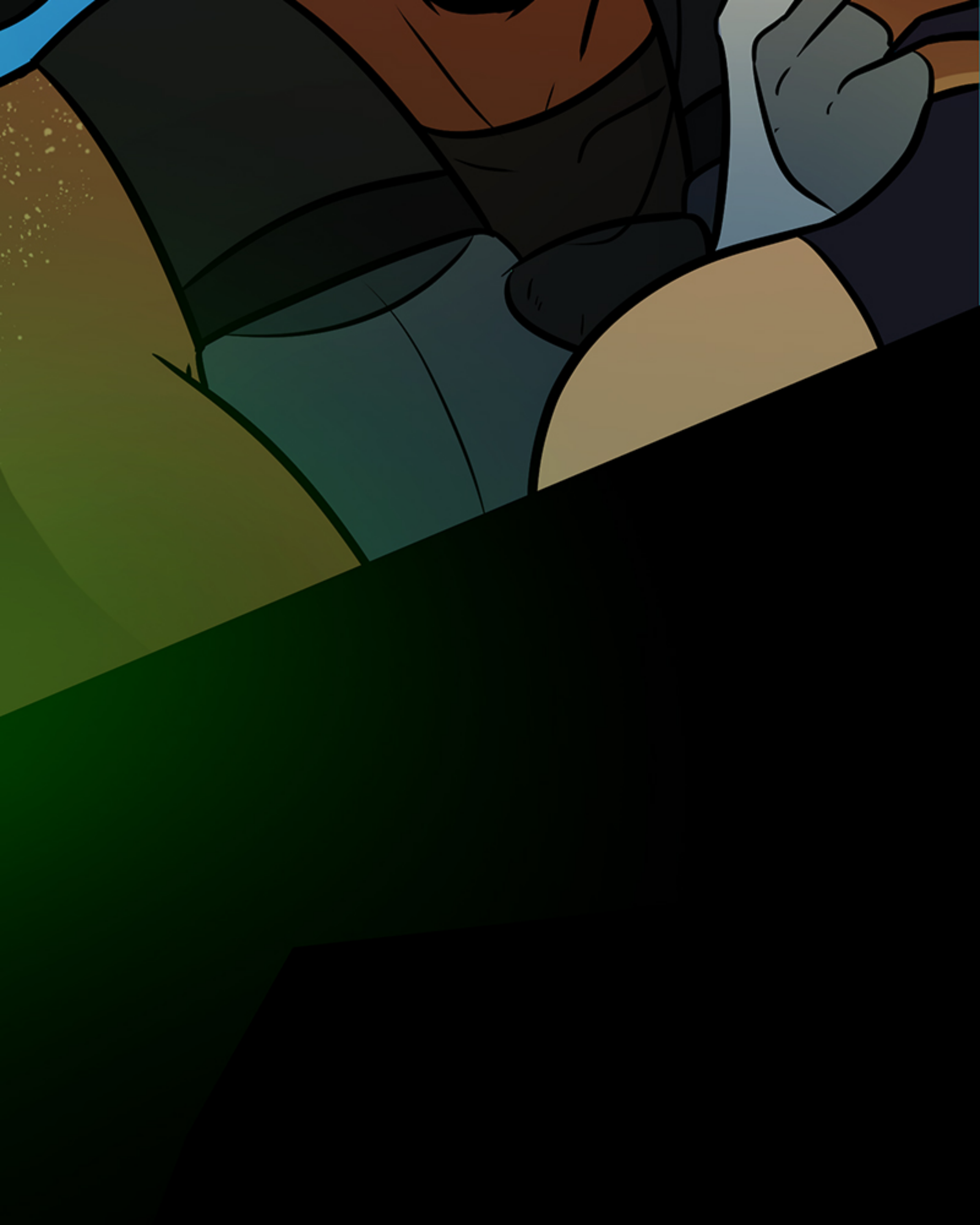


WILL YOU

WILL YOU
MAKE IT STOP
HURTING IF I
PROMISE TO BE
DIFFERENT?

I DON'T...
I DON'T WANT
THIS...



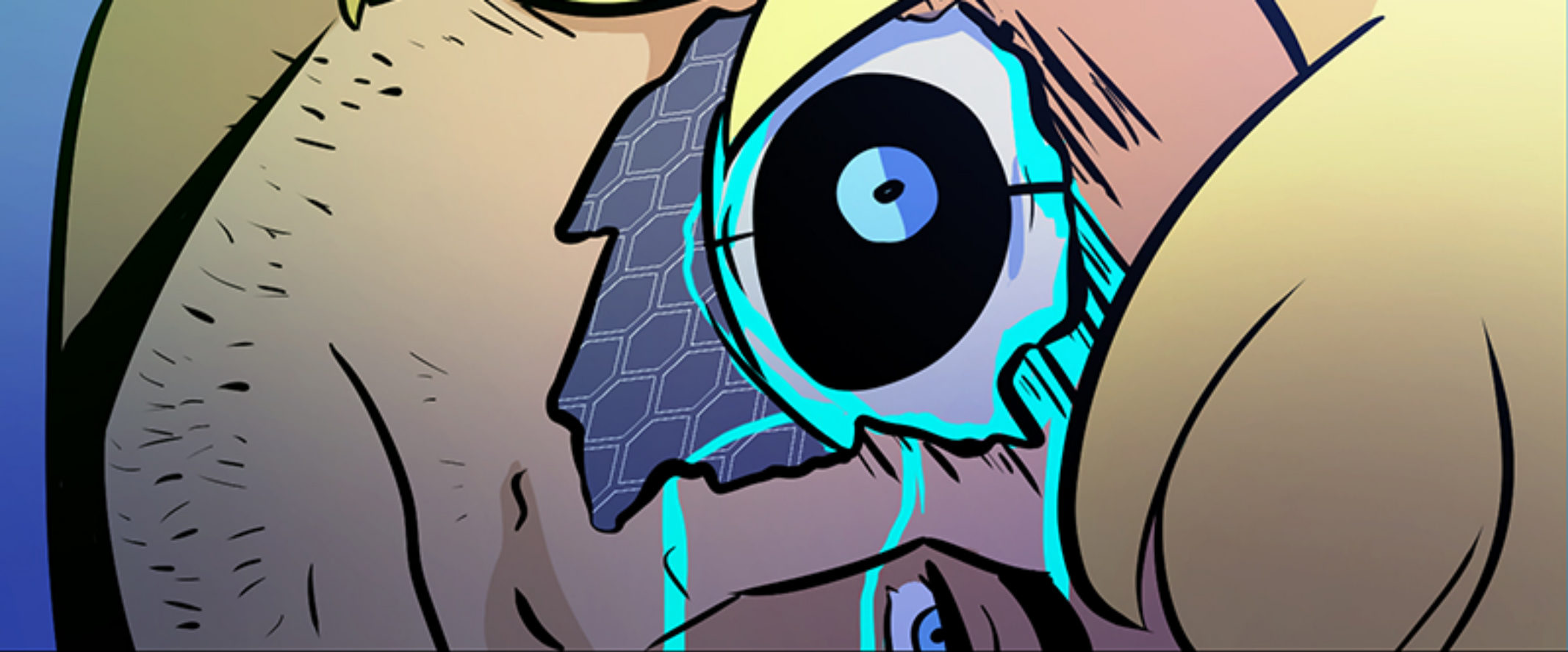


I CAN
MAKE IT
STOP.



A character with blonde hair is lying down, their face partially visible. A speech bubble originates from above their head. The background consists of a green hexagonal pattern on the left and a blue hexagonal pattern on the right.

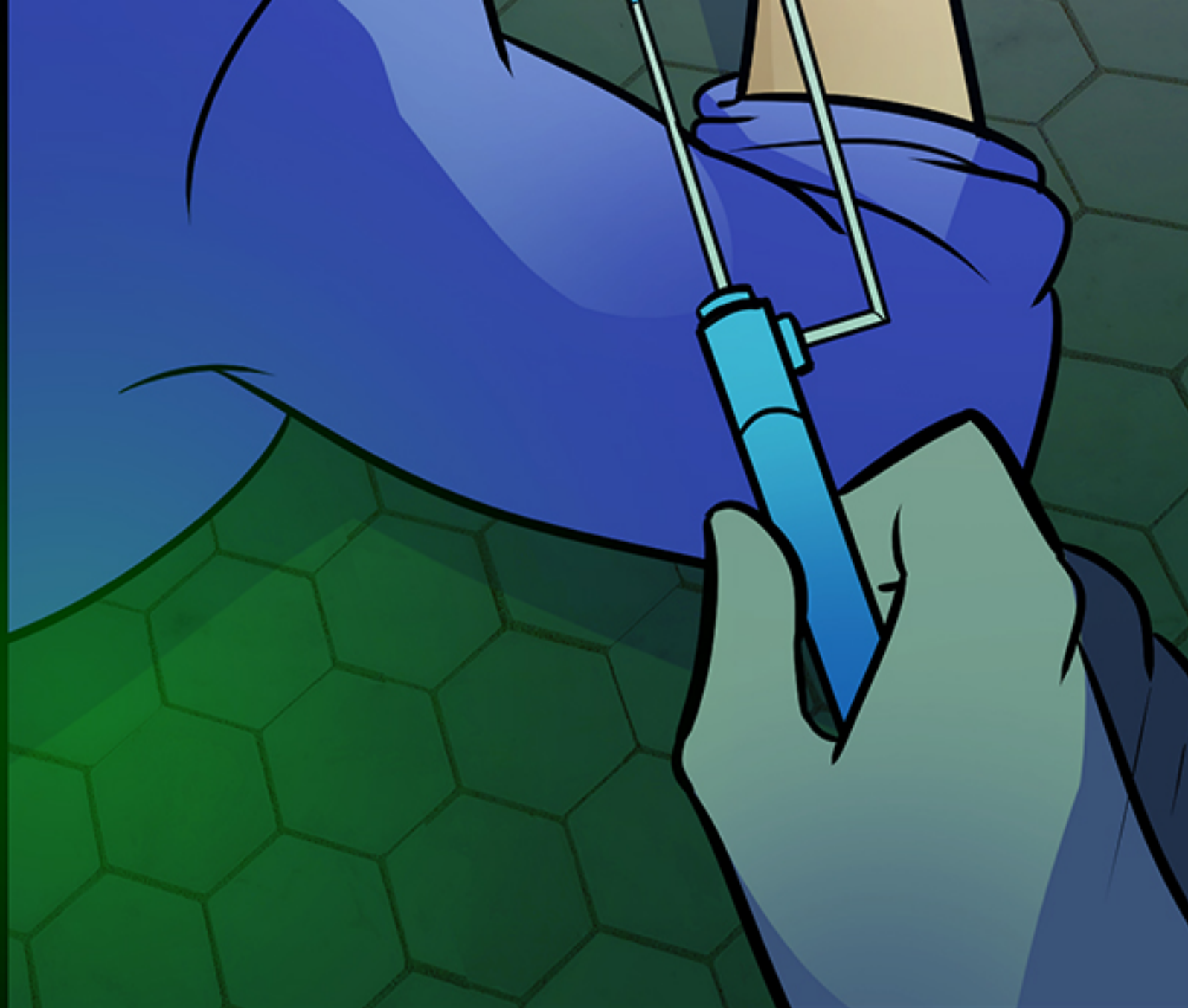
I'M GOING
TO PUT YOU INTO
SLEEP MODE, THEN WHEN
YOU WAKE UP YOU'LL BE
REPAIRED AND ALL THE
PAIN WILL BE GONE.



THANK
YOU...







I SEE

I see...



YOU'RE A
MUCH BETTER
LIAR THAN
VELIX...

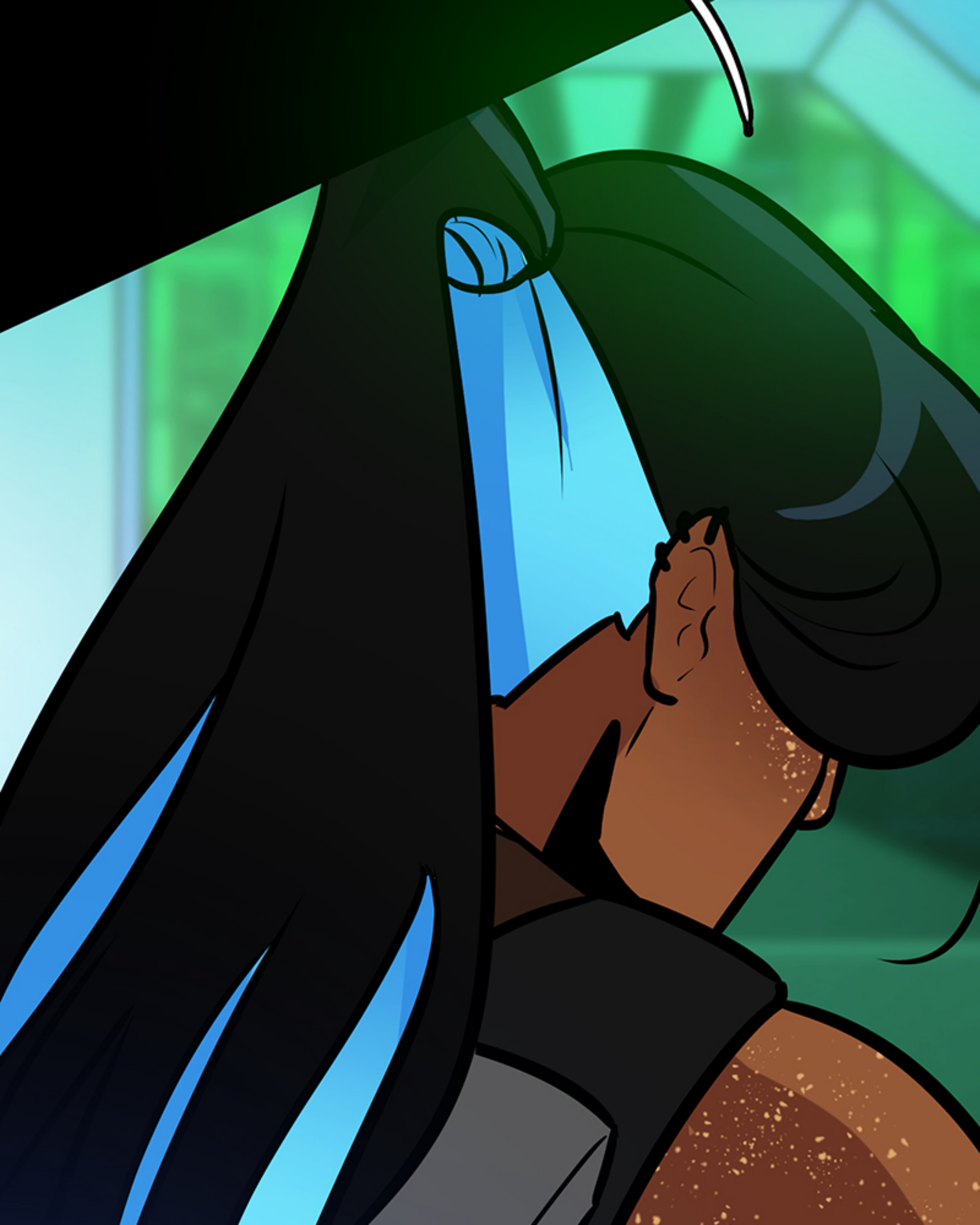


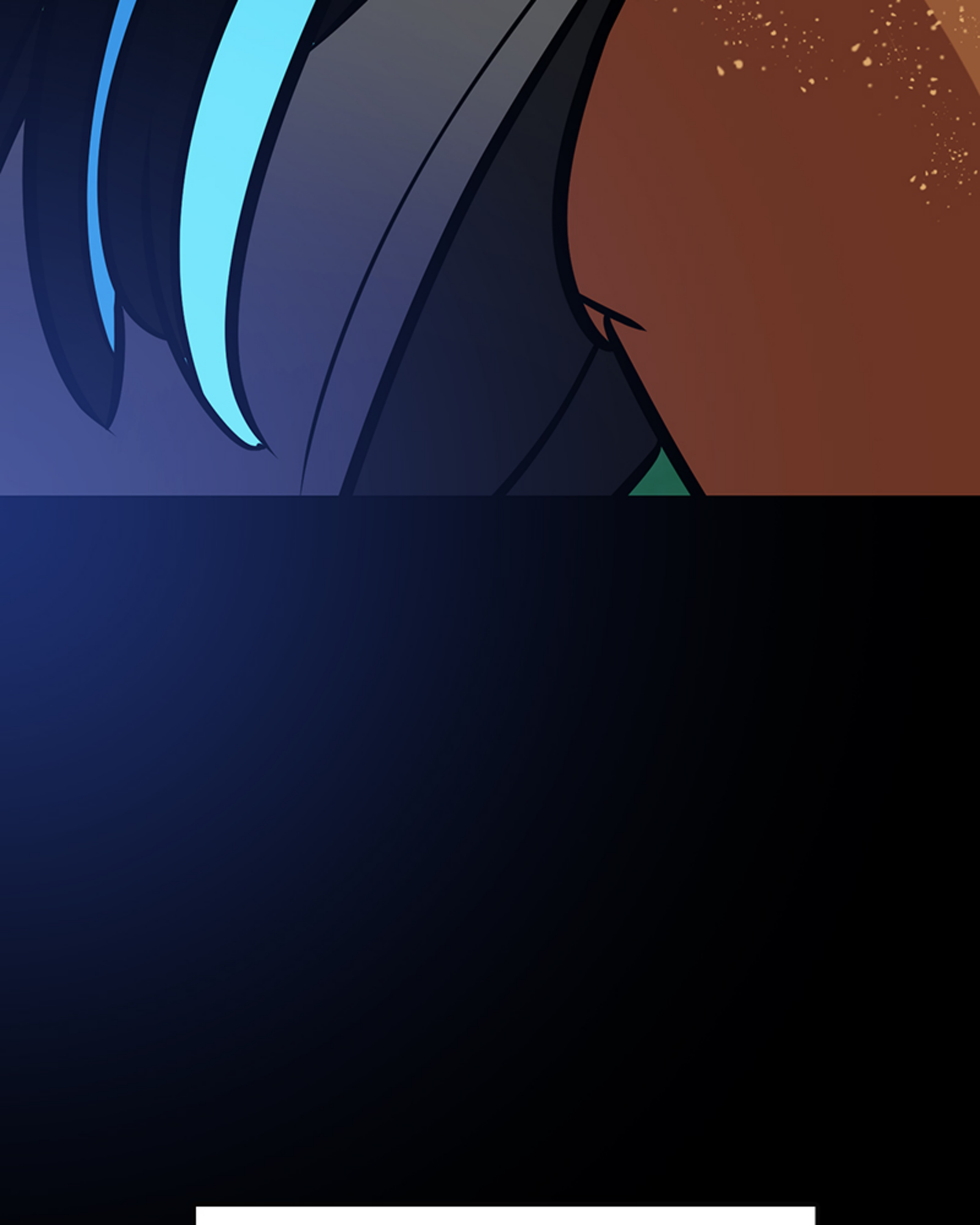
WILL YOU
TELL HIM THAT
I'M SORRY?



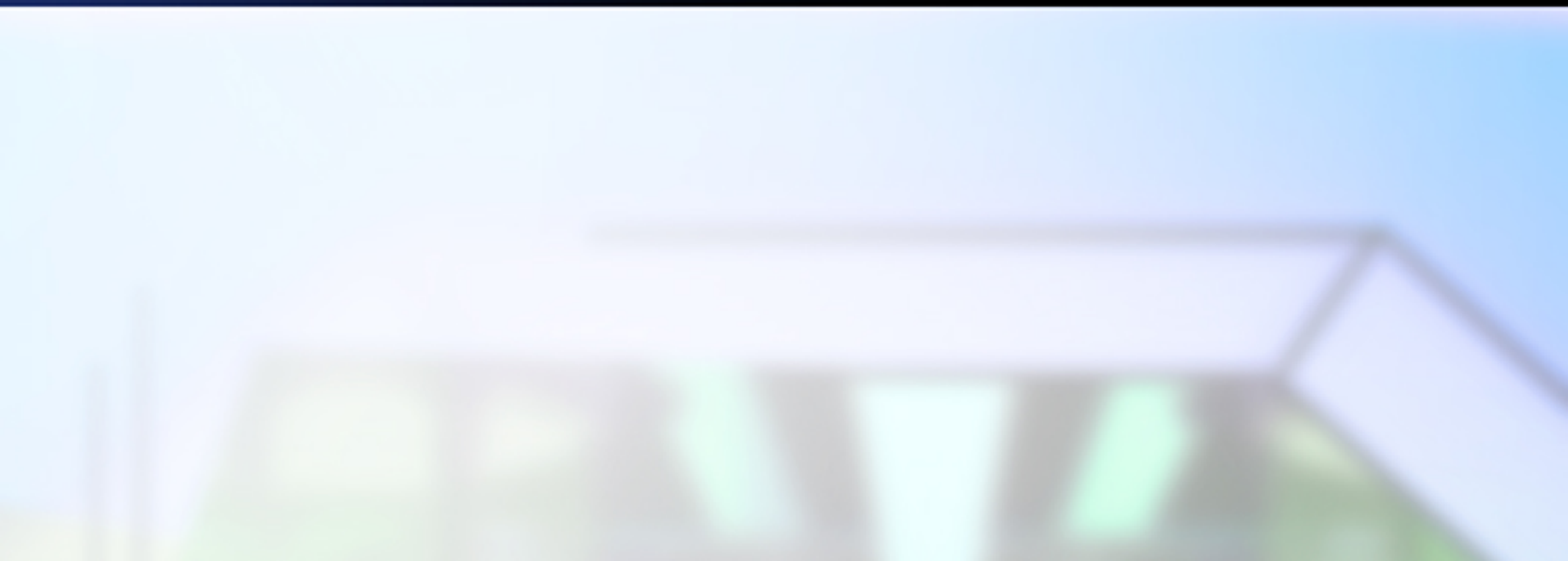


I'LL THINK
ABOUT IT.





SLEEP MODE: ACTIVATED









WHAT DID
HE MEAN BY
THAT...?



A comic book panel featuring two characters. In the foreground, a young man with dark skin, freckles, and dark hair is shown in profile, looking slightly to the left with a serious expression. Behind him, a young woman with long, flowing white hair is visible, her face partially obscured. She has a determined or perhaps angry expression. The background consists of vertical blue and white lines, suggesting a window or a stylized architectural element. Two speech bubbles are present: one from the man and one from the woman.

HE COULD
TELL THAT I HAVE
NO INTENTION OF
WAKING HIM.

you--!



BUT HE
SAID HE WANTED
TO BE BETTER...

A comic panel featuring two characters. On the left, a character with dark skin and long black hair tied in a ponytail with a blue streak looks down with a somber expression. On the right, a character with light skin and spiky white hair looks up at them with a pleading or desperate expression. The background consists of vertical blue and white stripes. Three speech bubbles are present, with the first two overlapping.

AFTER WHAT
HE HAS DONE TO
VELIX...

AFTER
WHAT HE HAS
JUST DONE
TO YOU...

I JUST
CAN'T.





WE CAN...
WE CAN DISCUSS
IT LATER. IF YOU
FEEL STRONGLY
ABOUT IT BUT...

AT LEAST
FOR NOW HE
IS NO LONGER
A CONCERN.



I STILL
FEEL LIKE ANYONE
CAN CHANGE IF THEY
REALLY WANT TO.

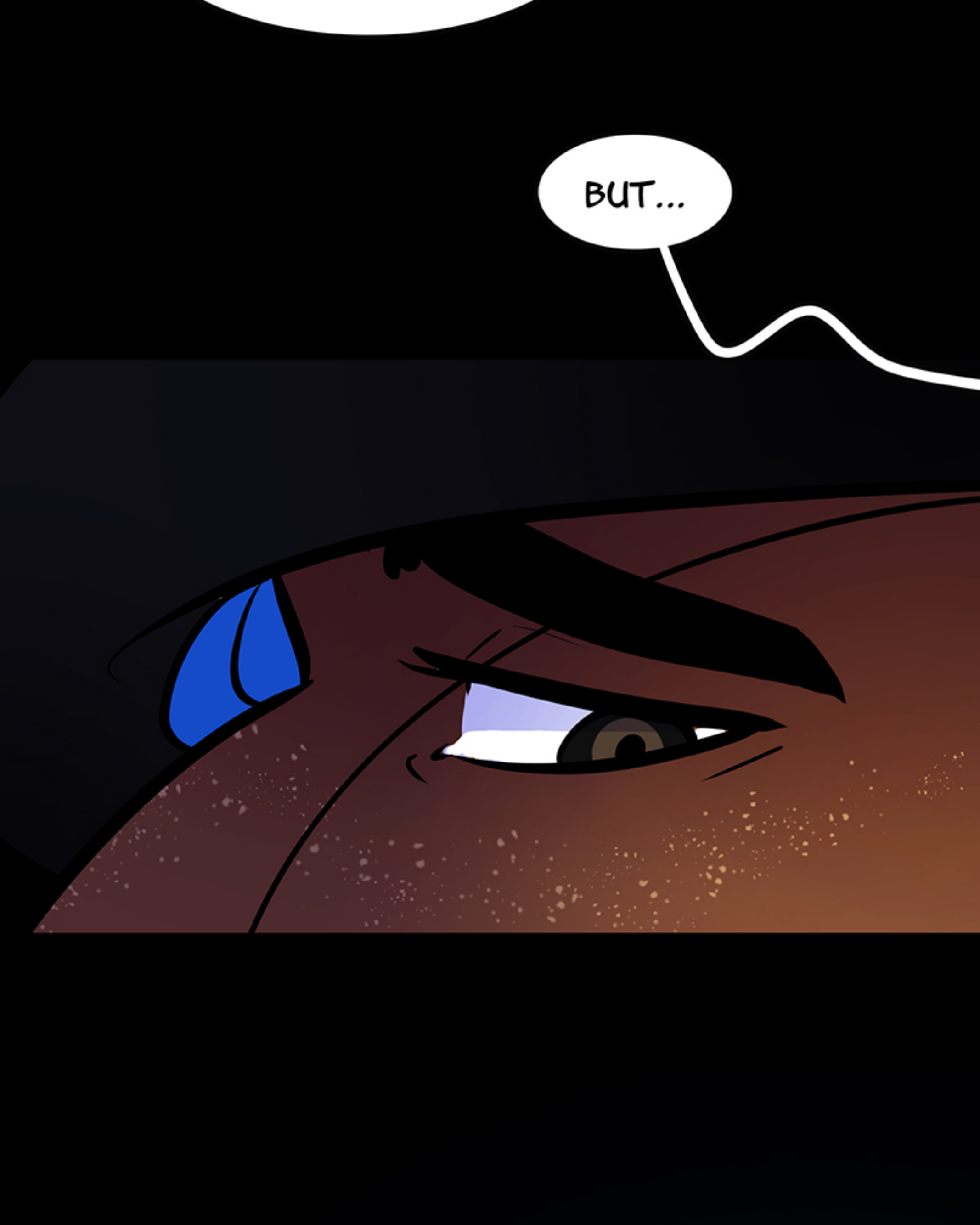
AT MY
CORE I THINK
THAT'S TRUE

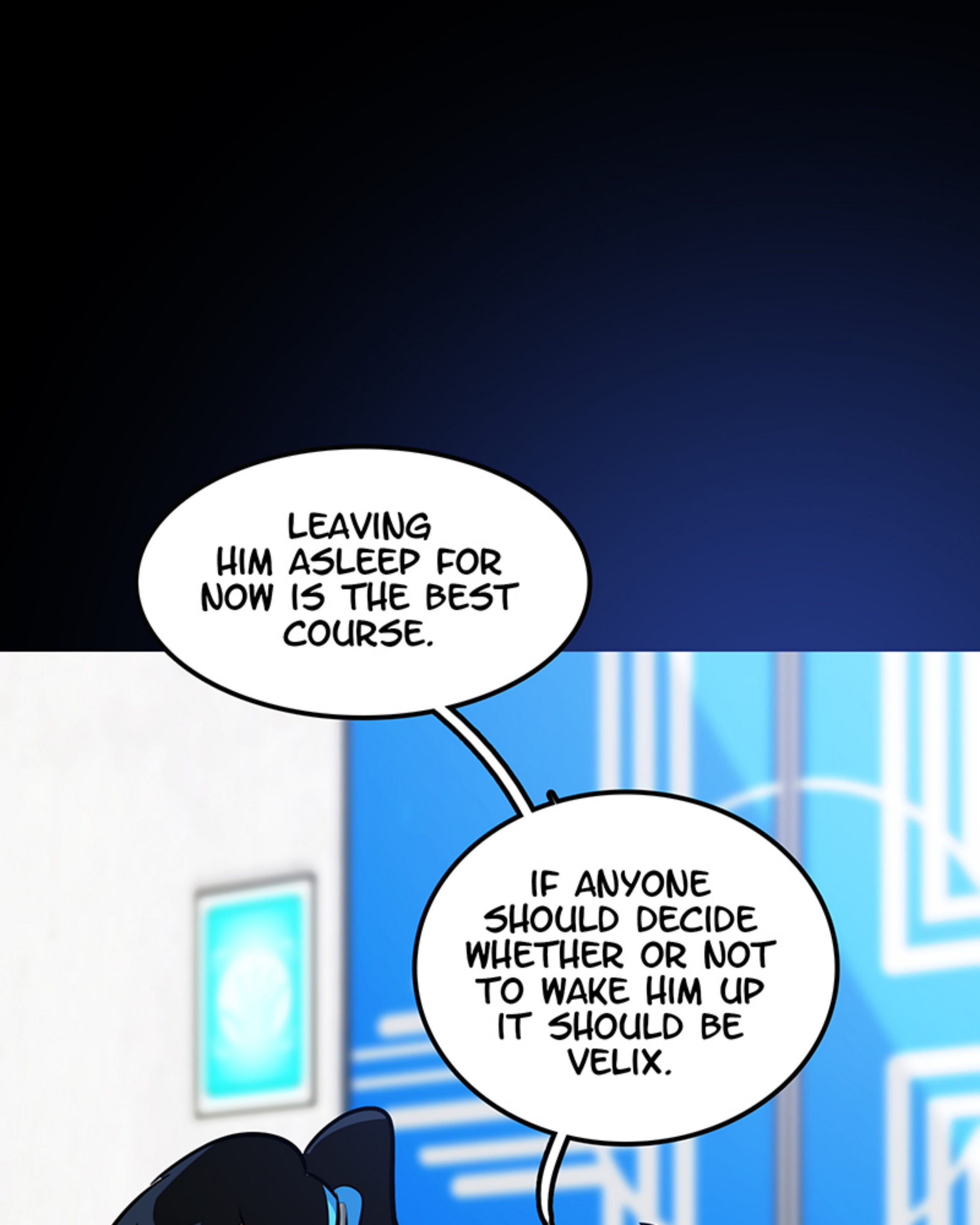


THAT'S TRUE...

I...DO MY
BEST TO BELIEVE
THE SAME THING, YES.
BUT, LACEY...

BUT...





LEAVING
HIM ASLEEP FOR
NOW IS THE BEST
COURSE.

IF ANYONE
SHOULD DECIDE
WHETHER OR NOT
TO WAKE HIM UP
IT SHOULD BE
VELIX.

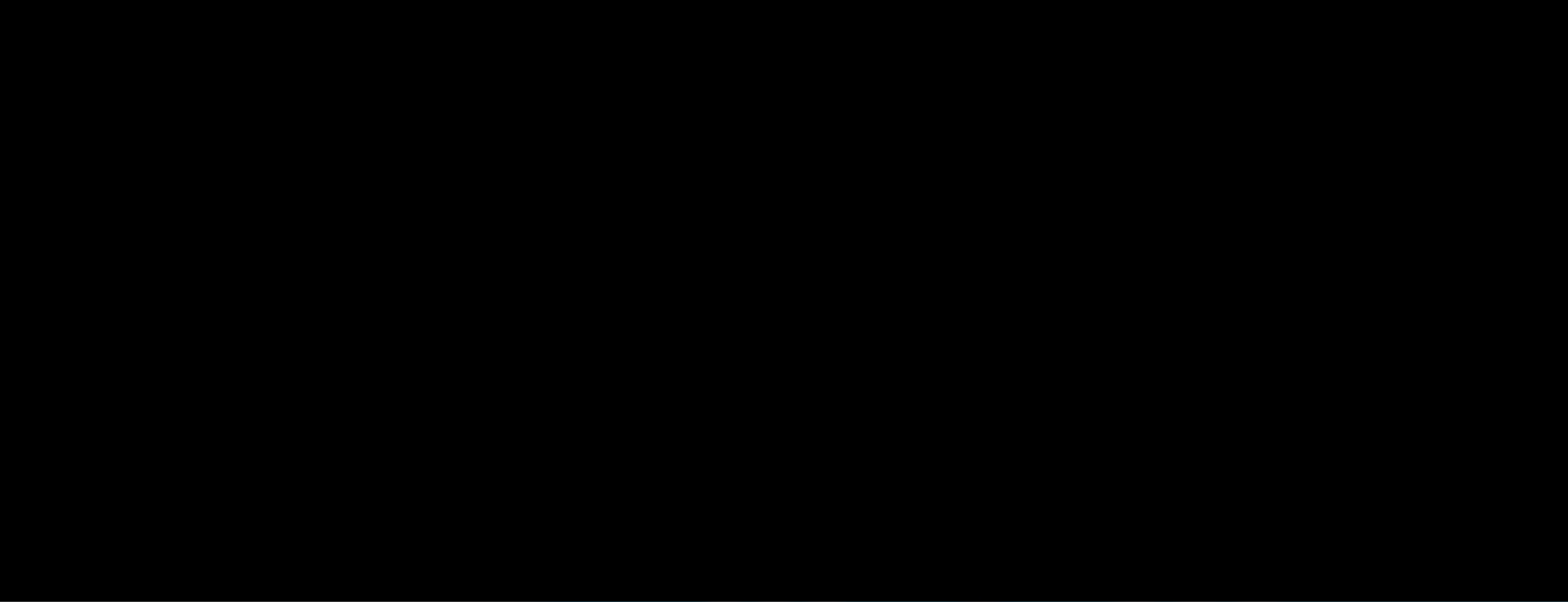






...FINE. IN
THEORY.

I WILL INSIST
THAT WE DON'T
ASK UNTIL HE HAS
HAD TIME TO
RECOVER, AT
LEAST.





XADA...

I HAVE SOME
BOTS WHO ARE
GETTING HIM OUT OF
THE VAT RIGHT
NOW.





YOU CAN
TAKE HIM UPSTAIRS
WITH YOU FOR
TREATMENT.







WHERE
WERE YOU?!





WHY DID
YOU TELL US
TO COME AND
TALK TO
YOU-

-WITHOUT
WARNING US ABOUT
A 2020 RUNNING
AROUND?!





OR TELL US
ABOUT VELIX BEING
DOWN HERE-

OR EVEN GET
HIM TO A HOSPITAL
YOURSELF?!

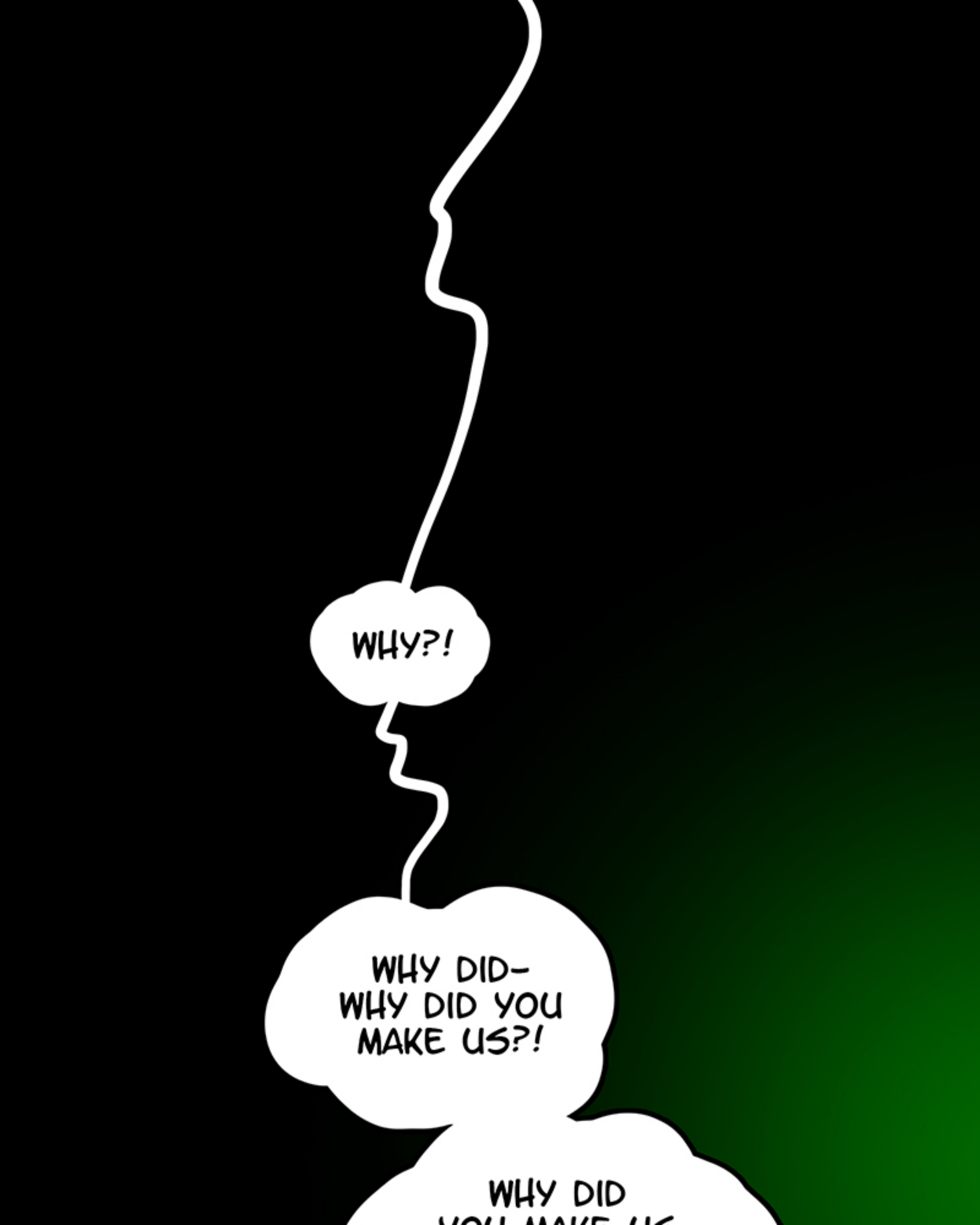


WHY DID
YOU GO ON TV
WITH CHARLES AND
LIE FOR HIM?!



WHY DID YOU
WORK WITH HIM
AT ALL?!

YOU COULD
HAVE STOPPED
THIS SOONER- YOU
COULD HAVE HELPED
US- YOU-



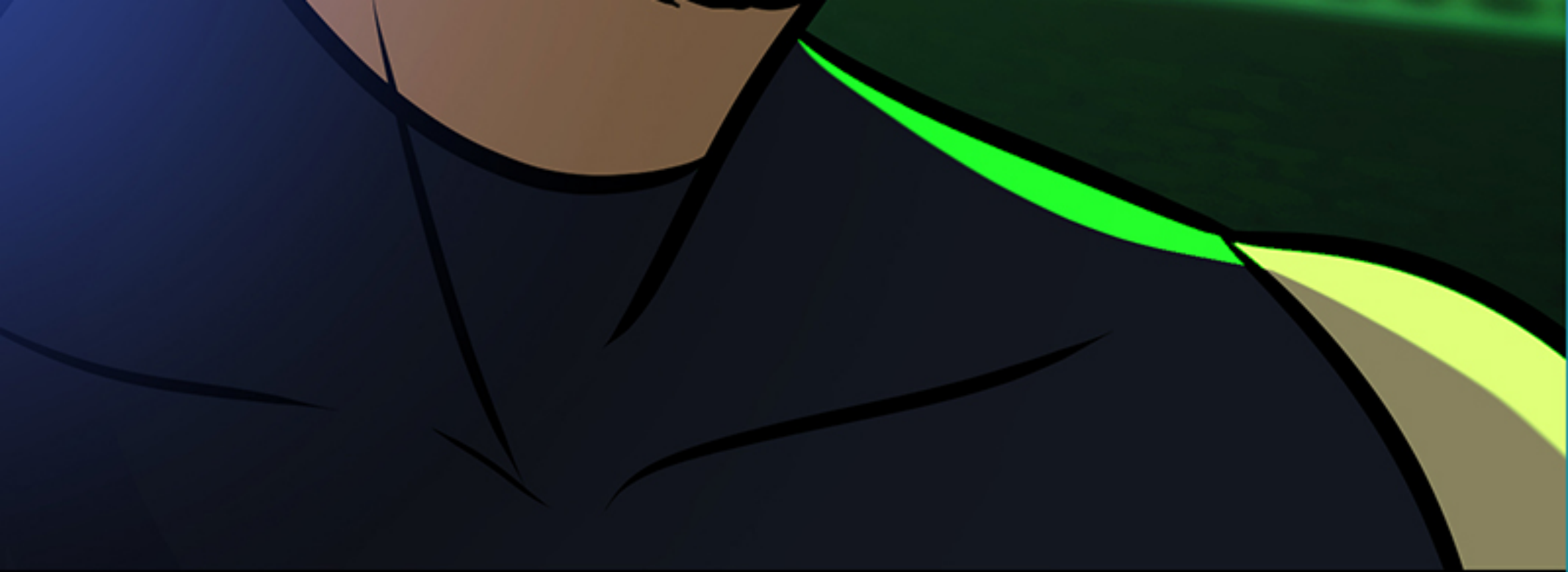
WHY?!

WHY DID-
WHY DID YOU
MAKE US?!

WHY DID
YOU MAKE US

YOU MAKE US
LIKE THIS AND THEN
TRAP US IN BODIES
THAT WE CAN'T
USE?!



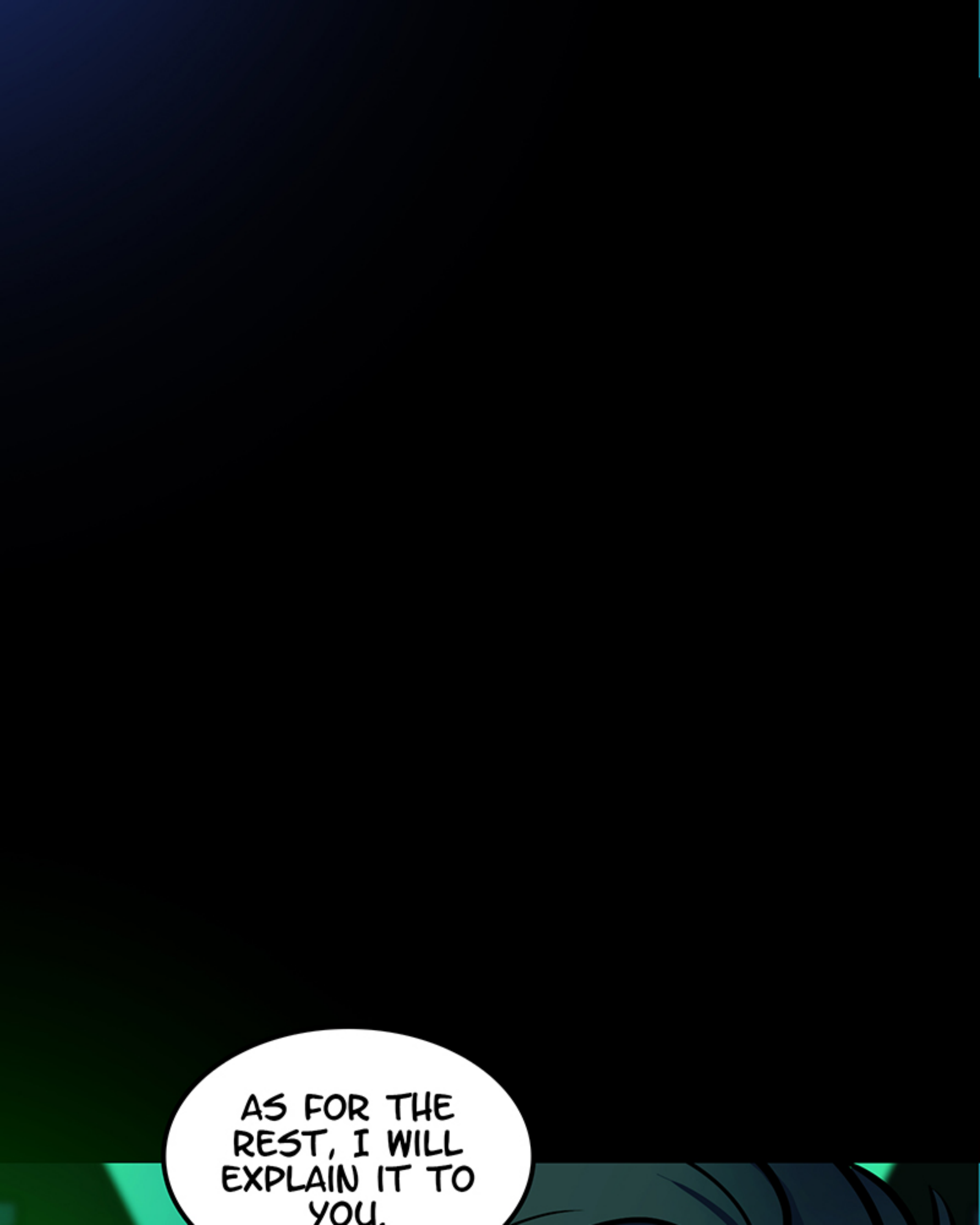




I'M LATE
BECAUSE I WAS
BUSY CODING.

CODING?!





AS FOR THE
REST, I WILL
EXPLAIN IT TO
YOU.

BUT ONLY
TO YOU.





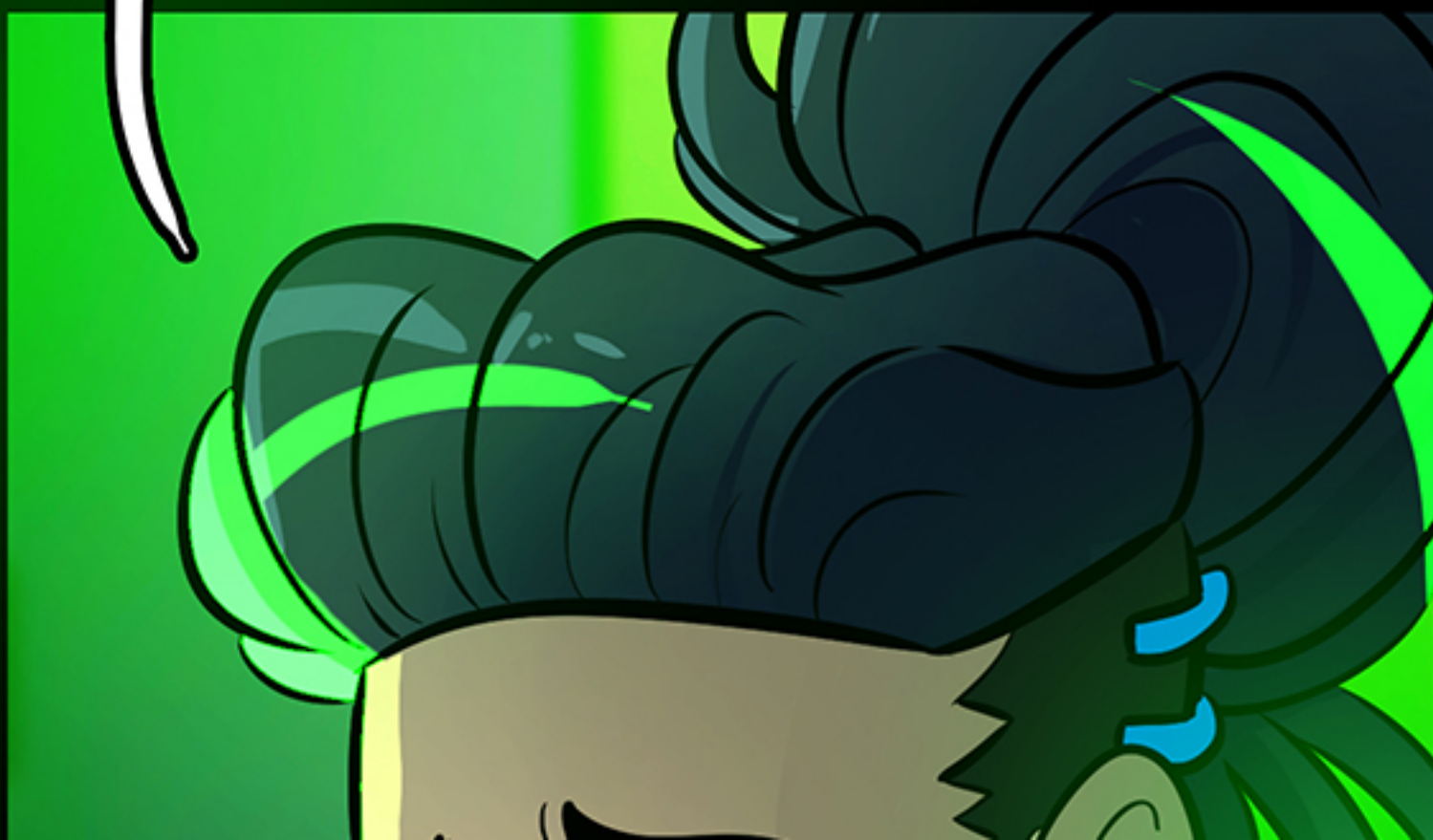
XADA
HAS TO
LEAVE.

NO OFFENSE,
I MIGHT HAVE BEEN
WILLING TO DO THAT
BEFORE BUT NOW I DON'T
THINK I CAN TRUST YOU
TO NOT GET HIM
HURT.





JUST TRUST
WHAT BRIZ WOULD
DO TO ME IF THERE WERE
ANY MORE DANGEROUS
SURPRISES.



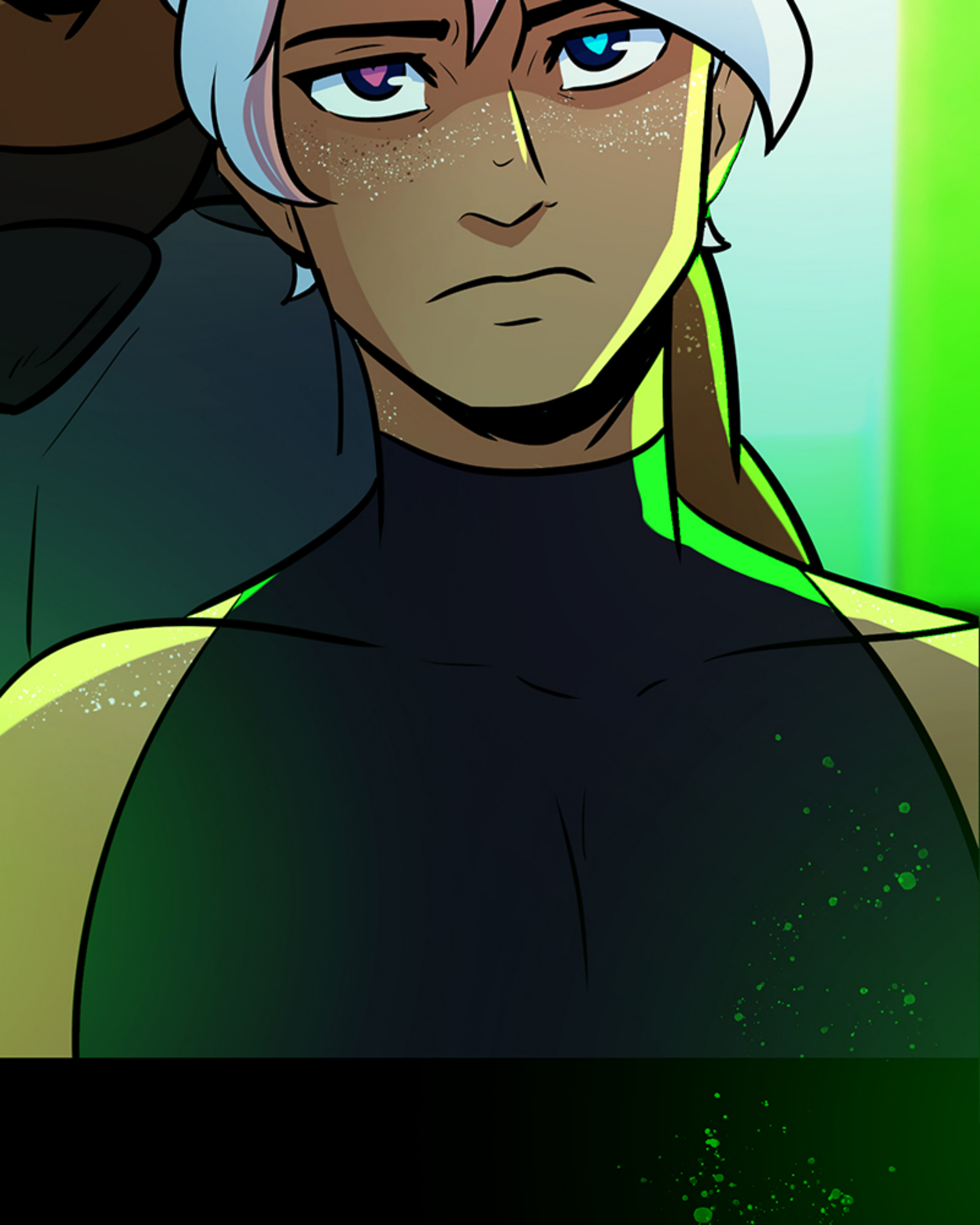


NO, I AM
NOT GOING TO
TOUCH HIM.

I ONLY
WISH TO
EXPLAIN.

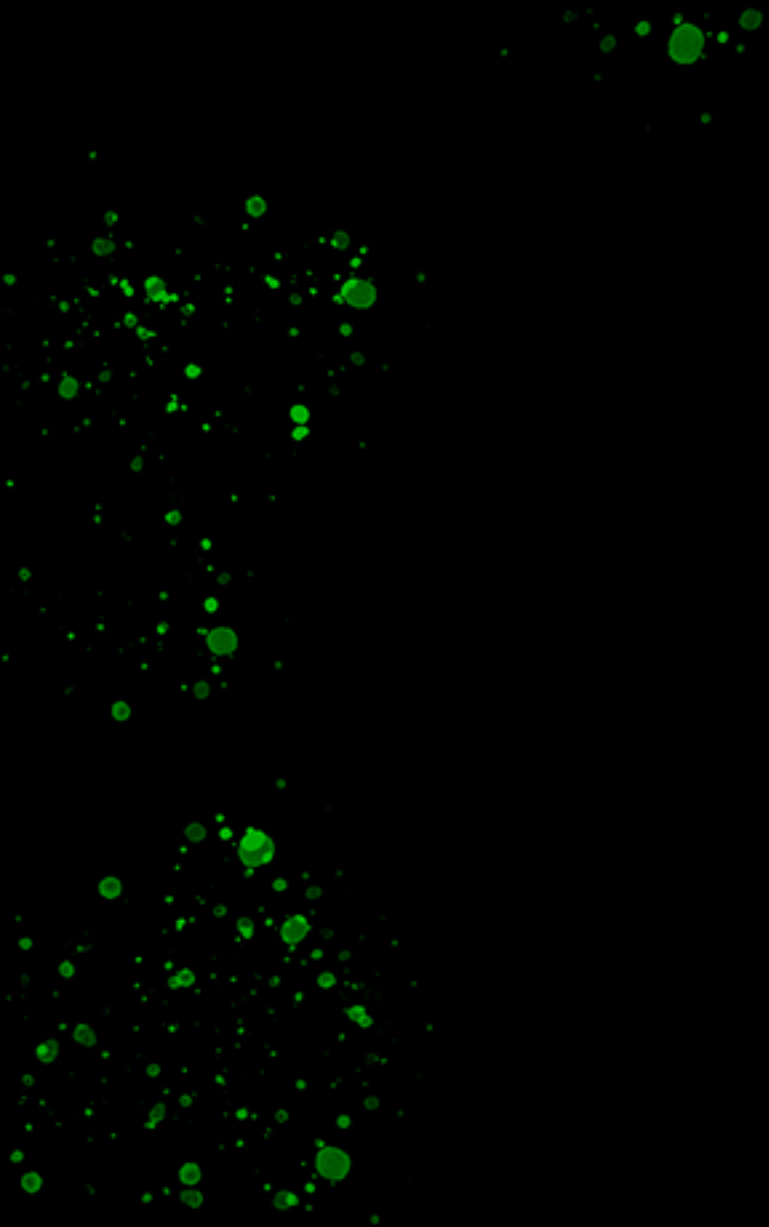


AND I WANT
TO ASK HIM A
QUESTION...





THAT MIGHT
BE ONE OF THE
MOST IMPORTANT
DECISIONS OF HIS
LIFE.



LOVEBOTS

By Chase Keels & Miranda M.

Edited by **Griffin Freitas & Bre Boswell**

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