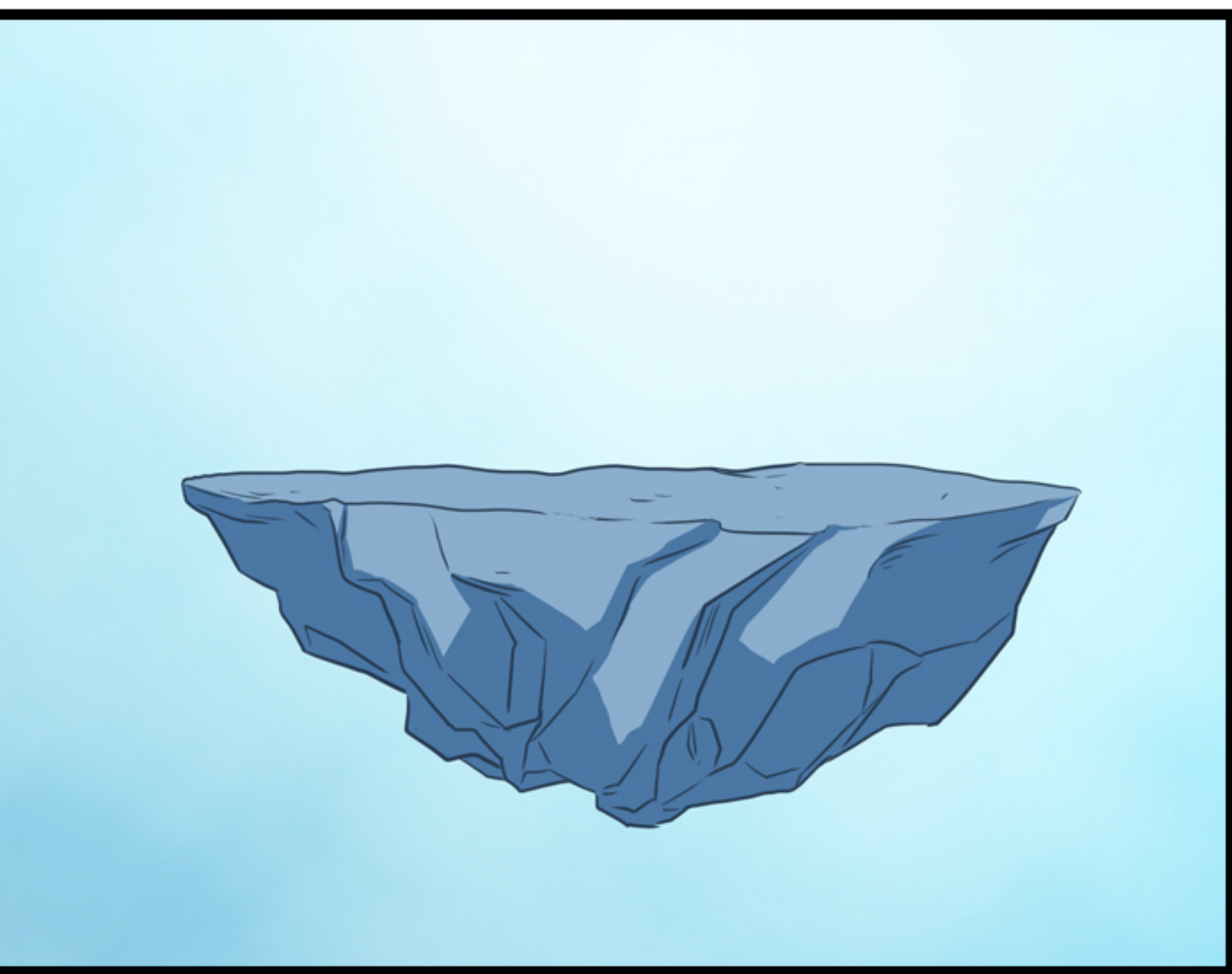
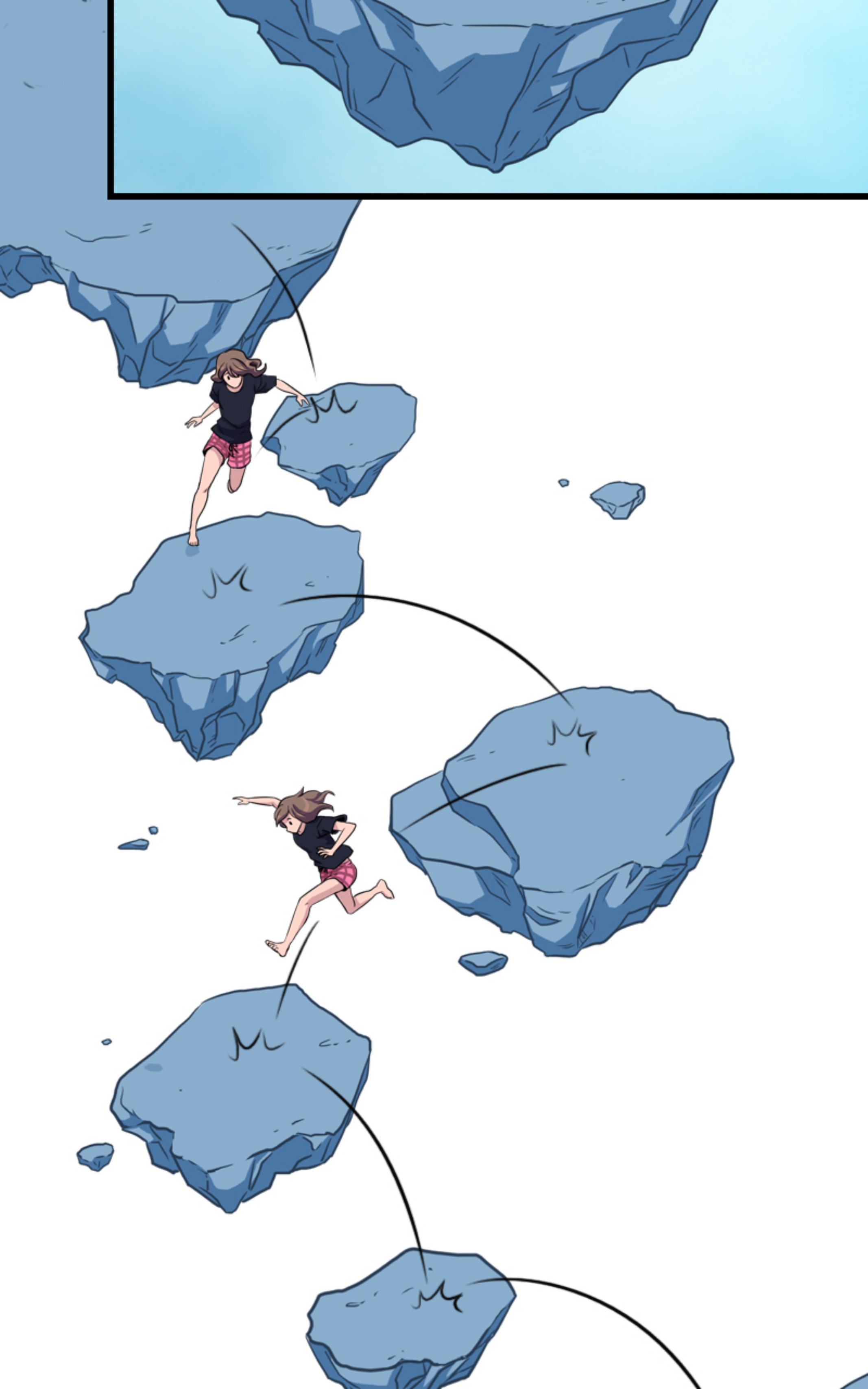
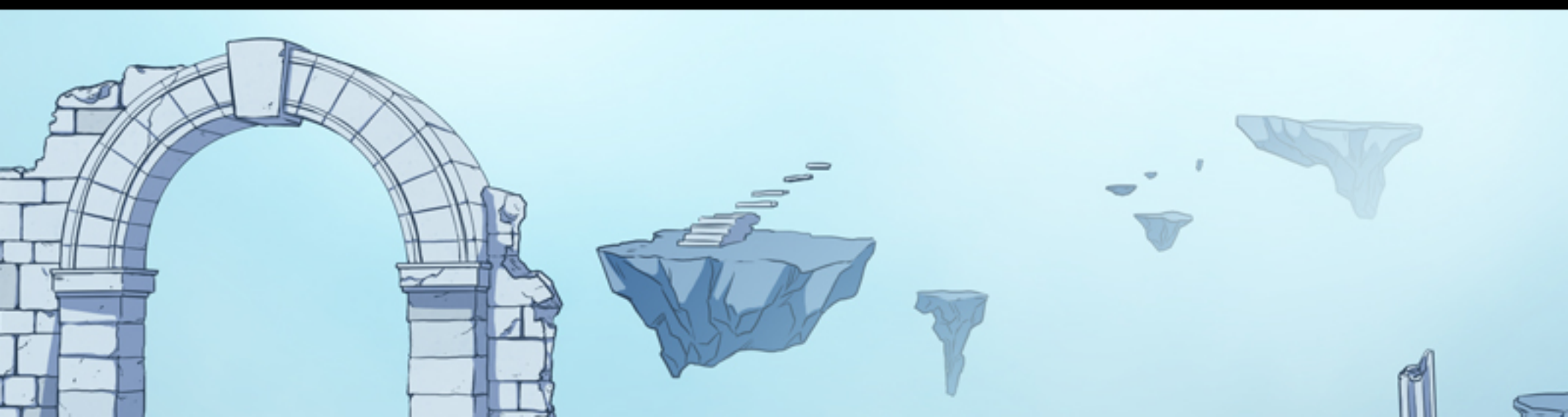
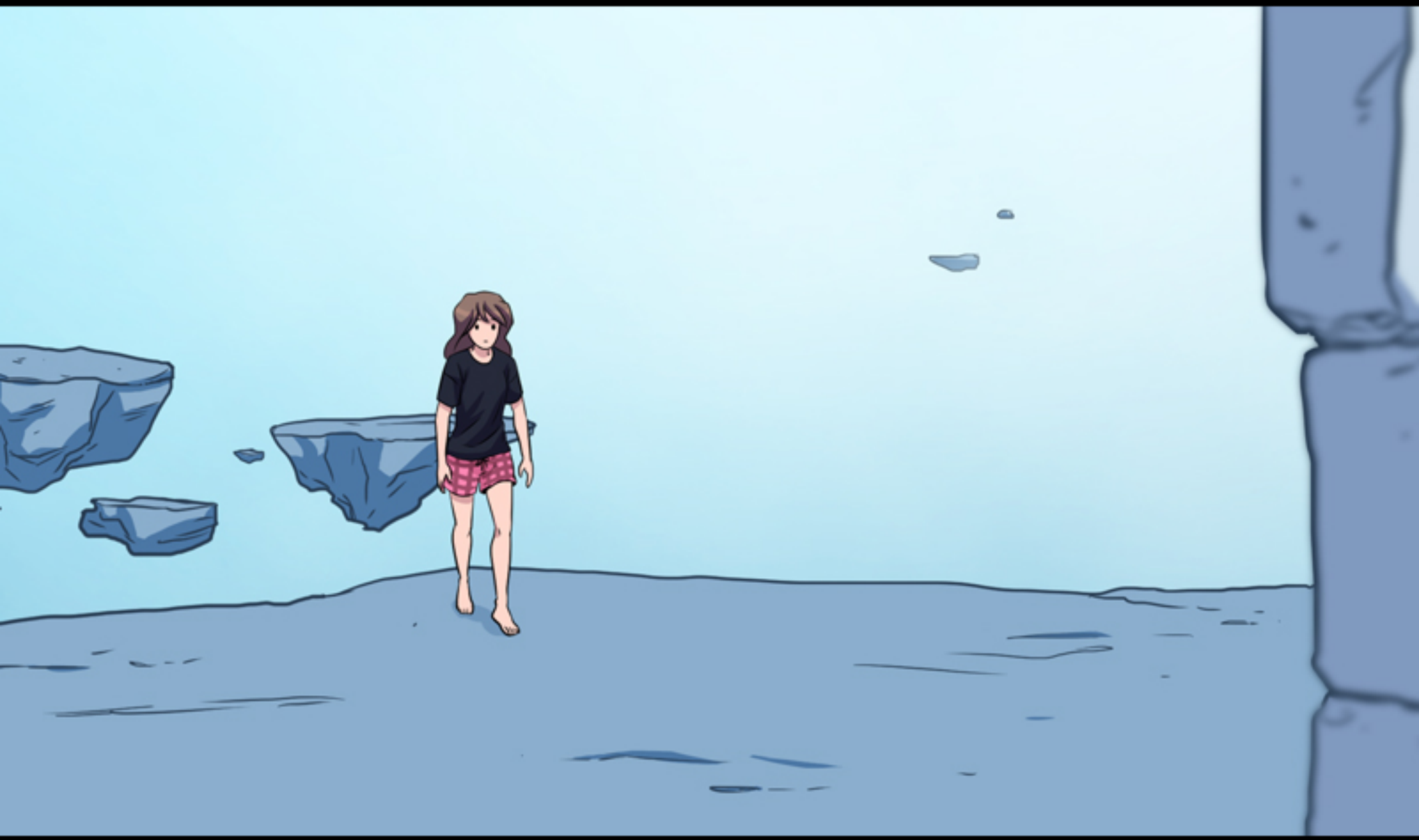
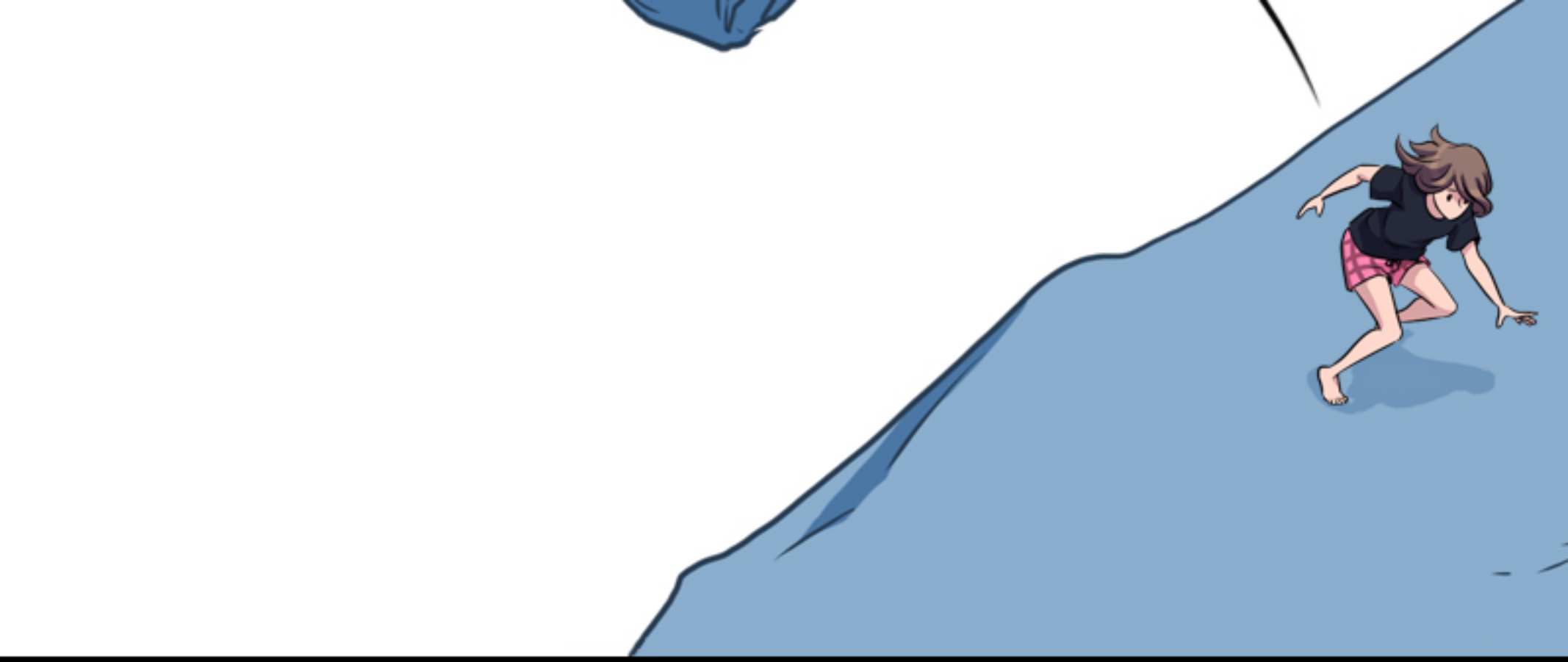
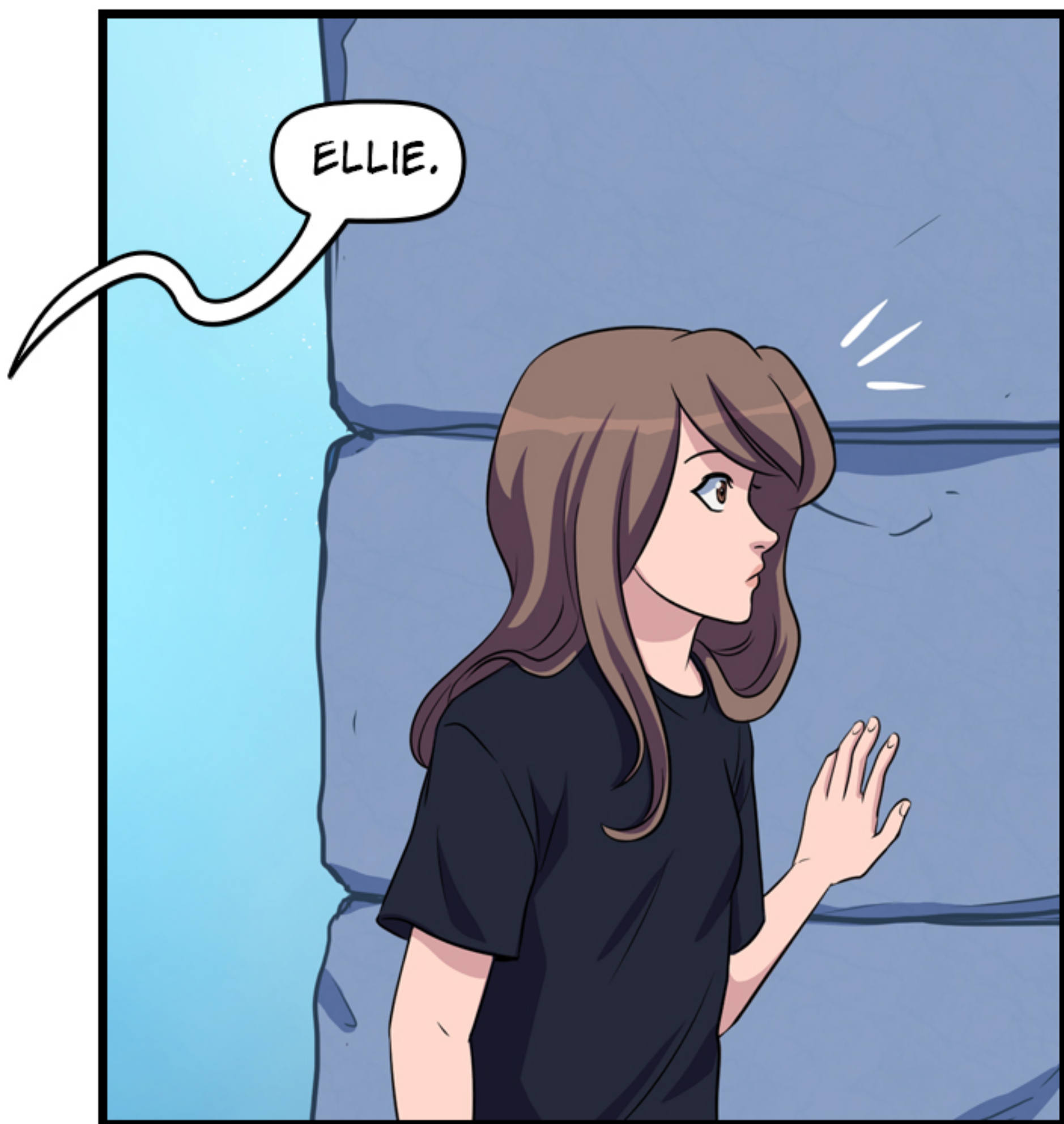


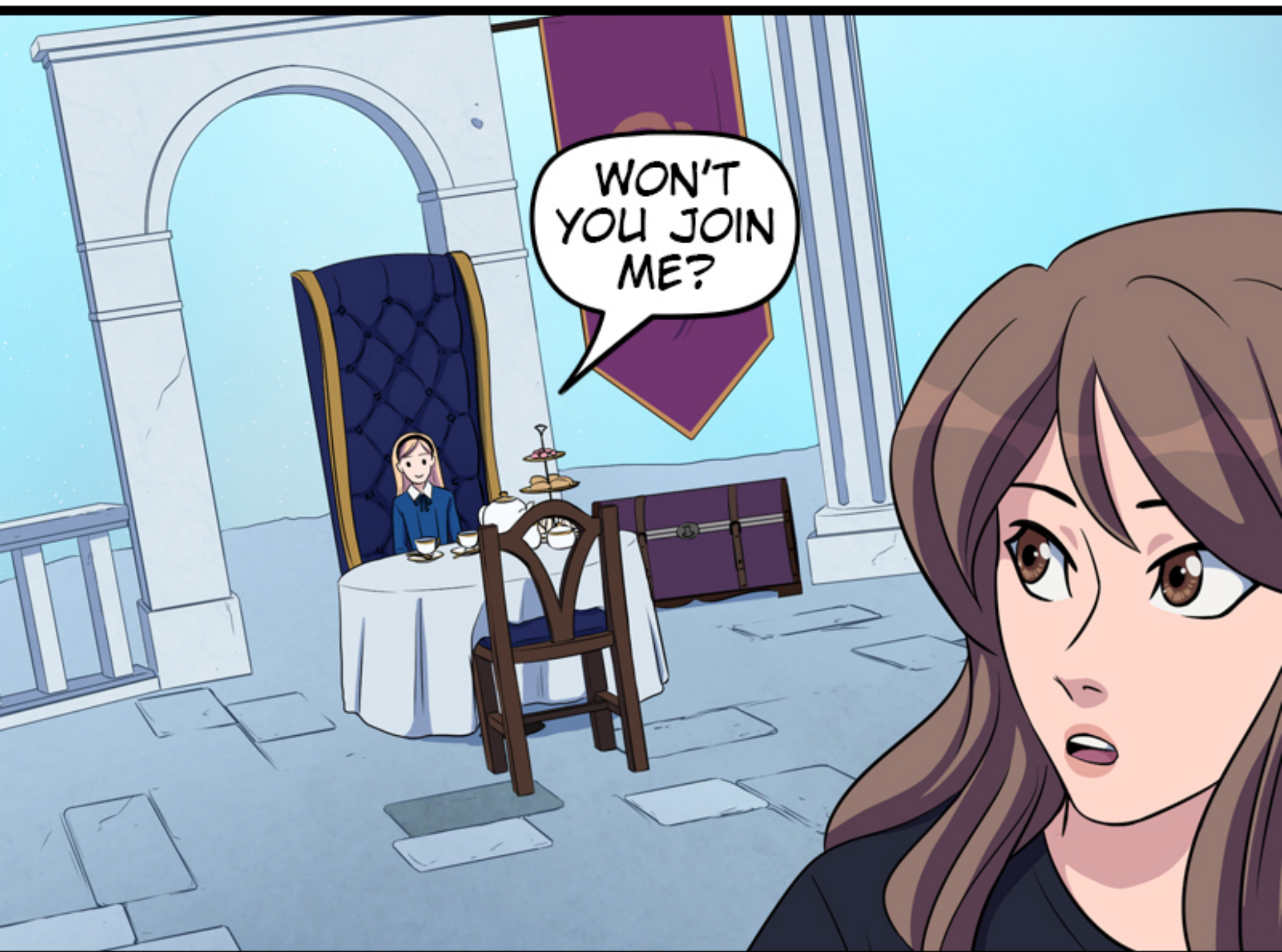
PART 5
THE BEETLE AND
THE BRAND

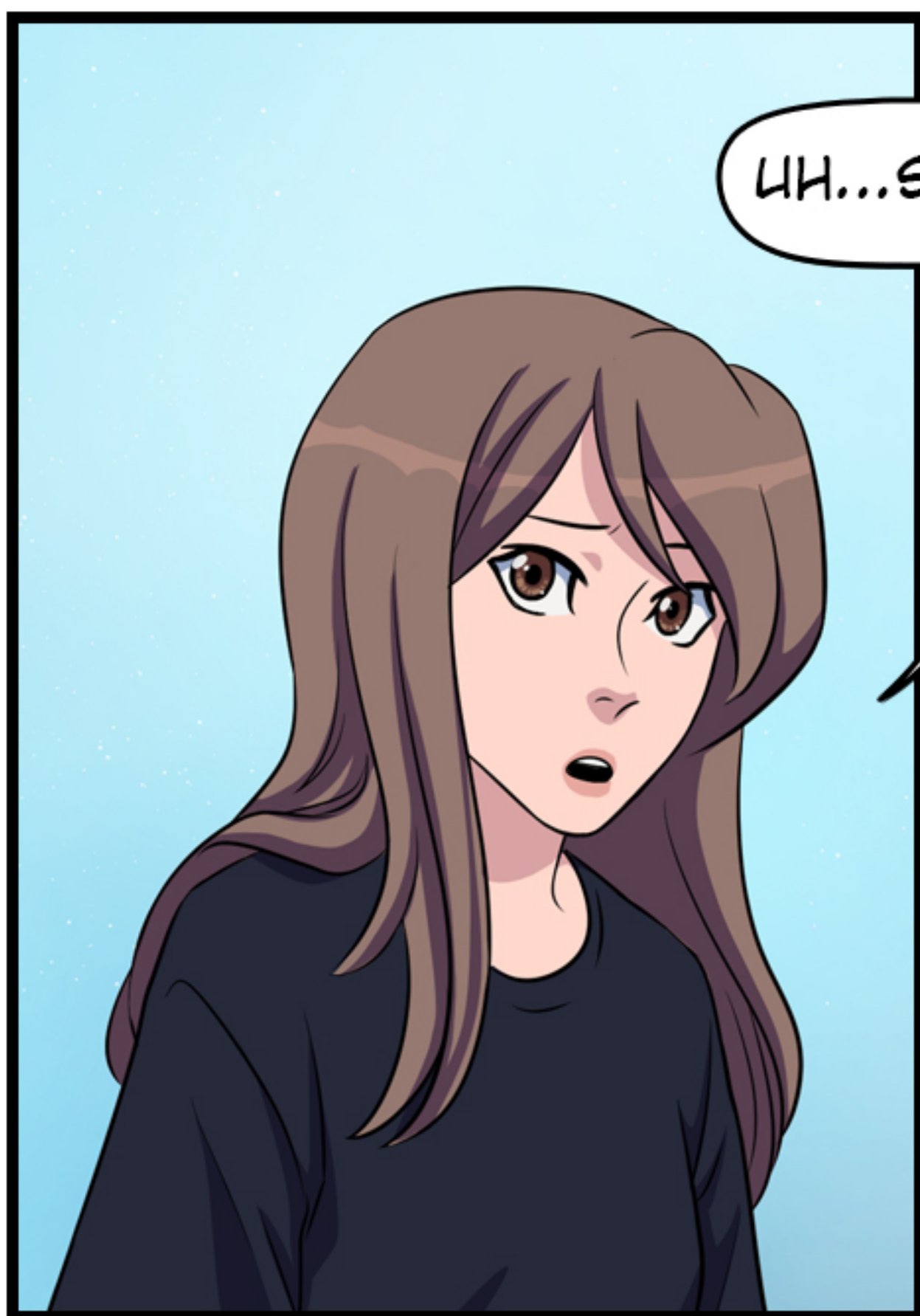








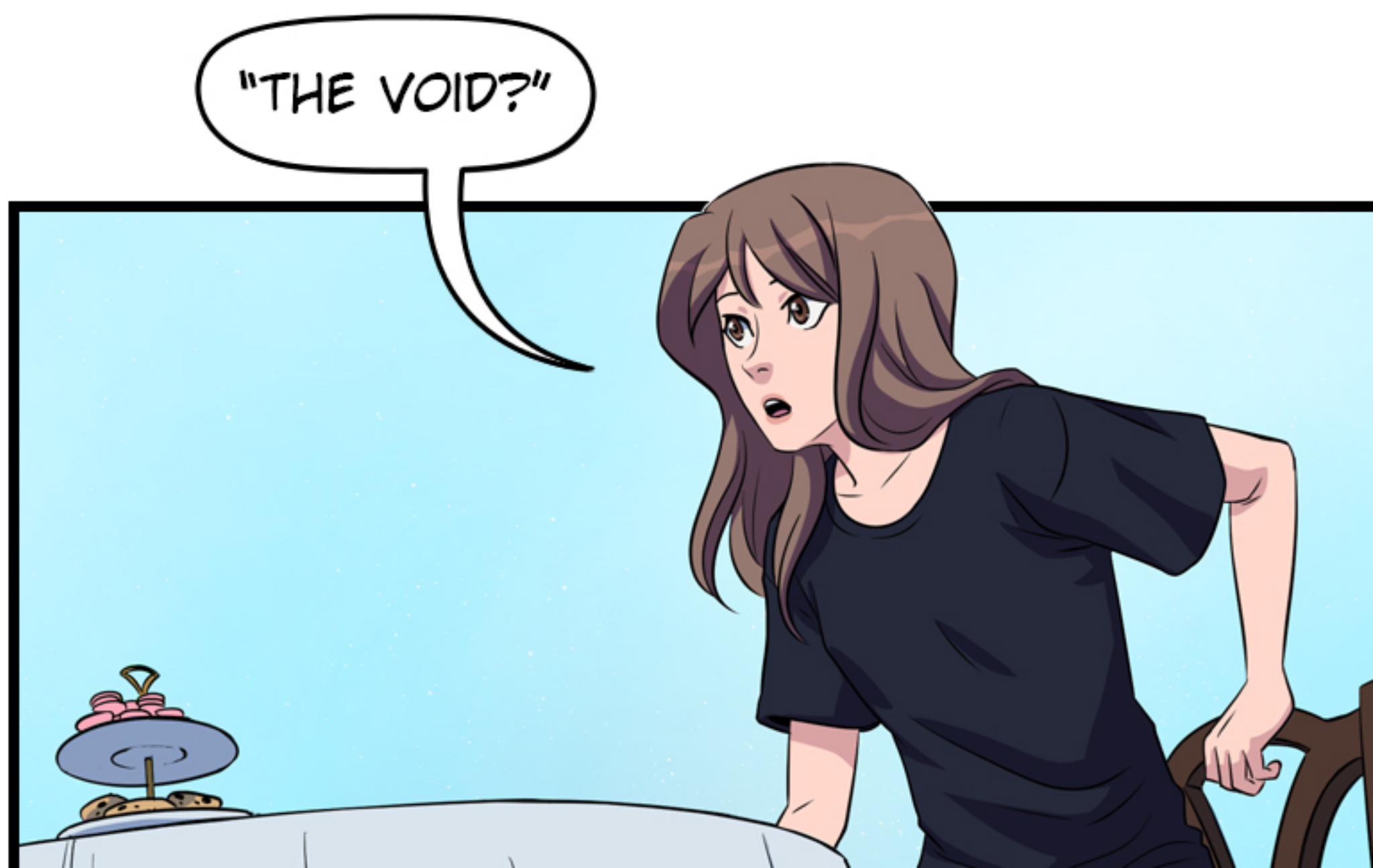
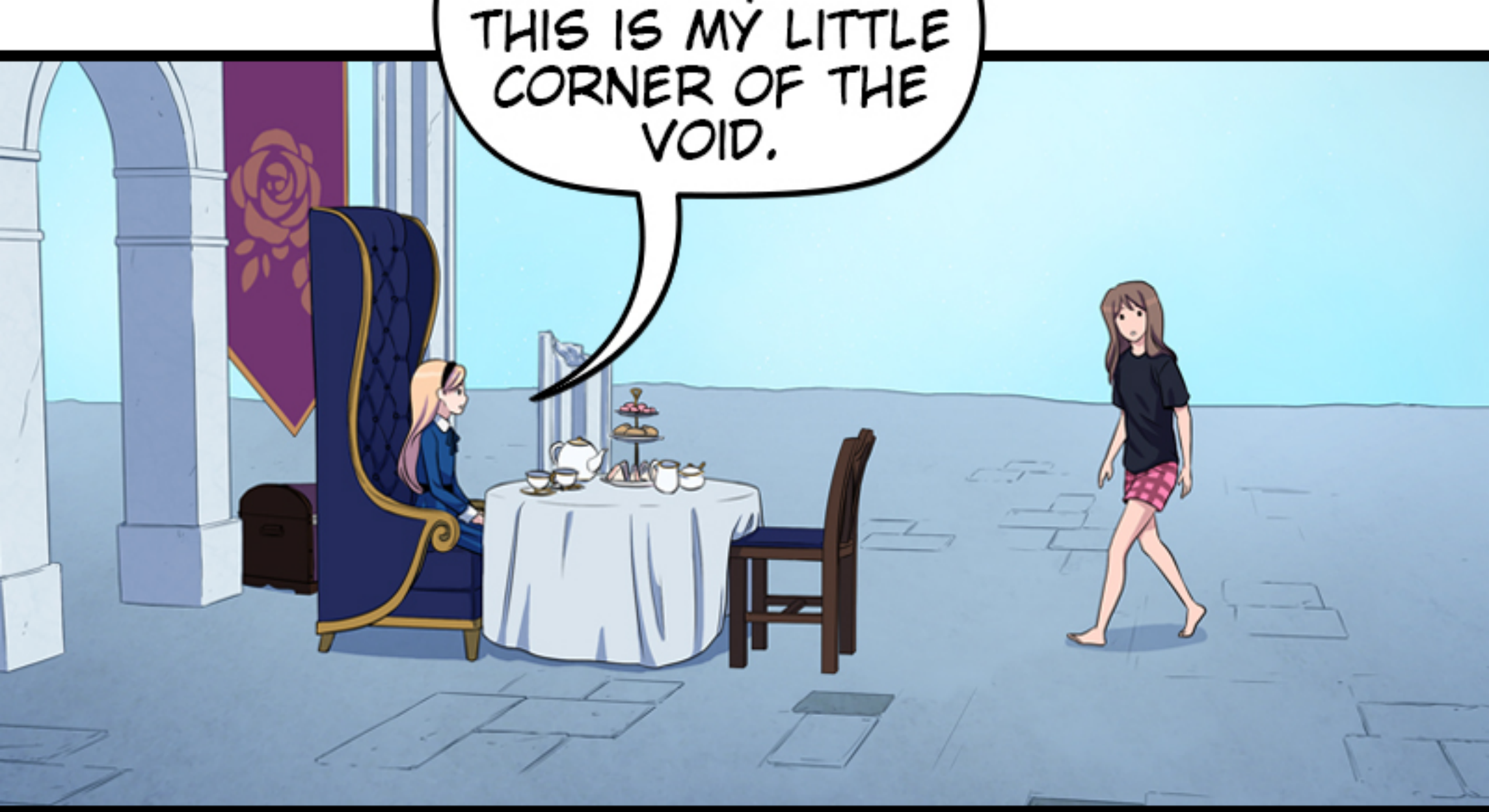


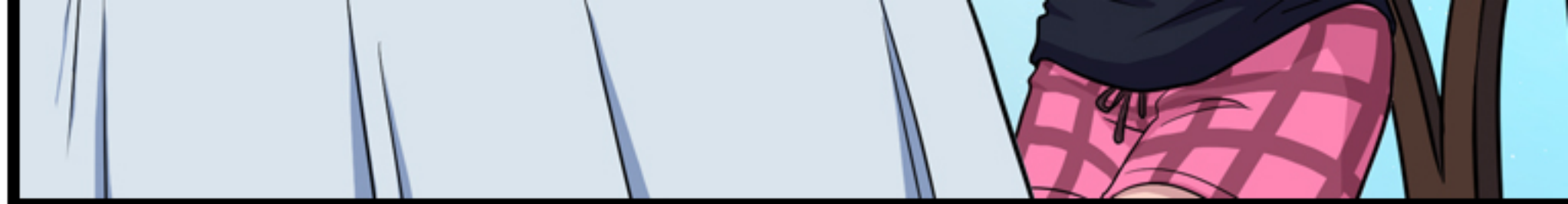


UH...SURE.

IT'S NICE TO
FINALLY MEET
YOU.

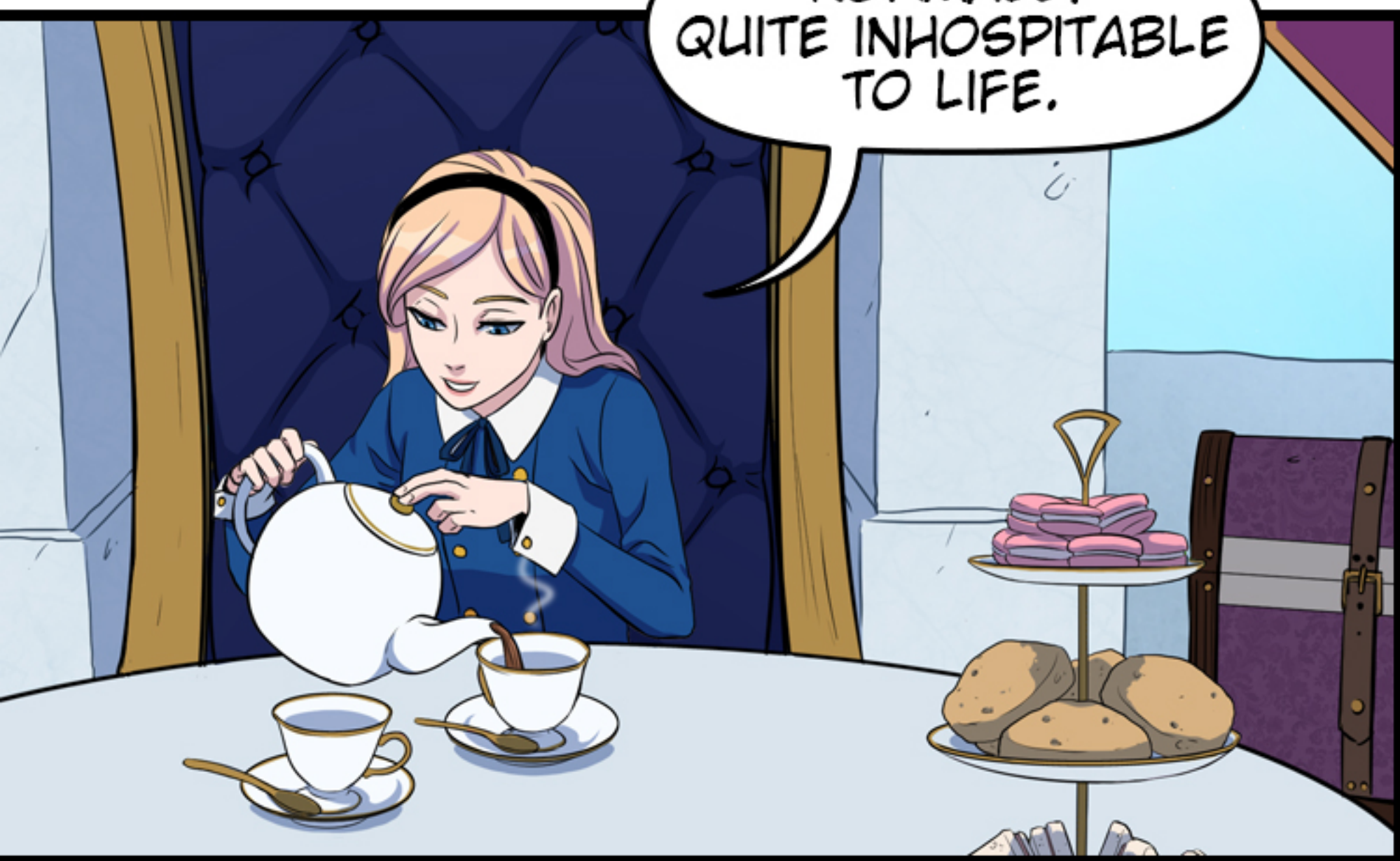
MY NAME
IS ALICE, AND

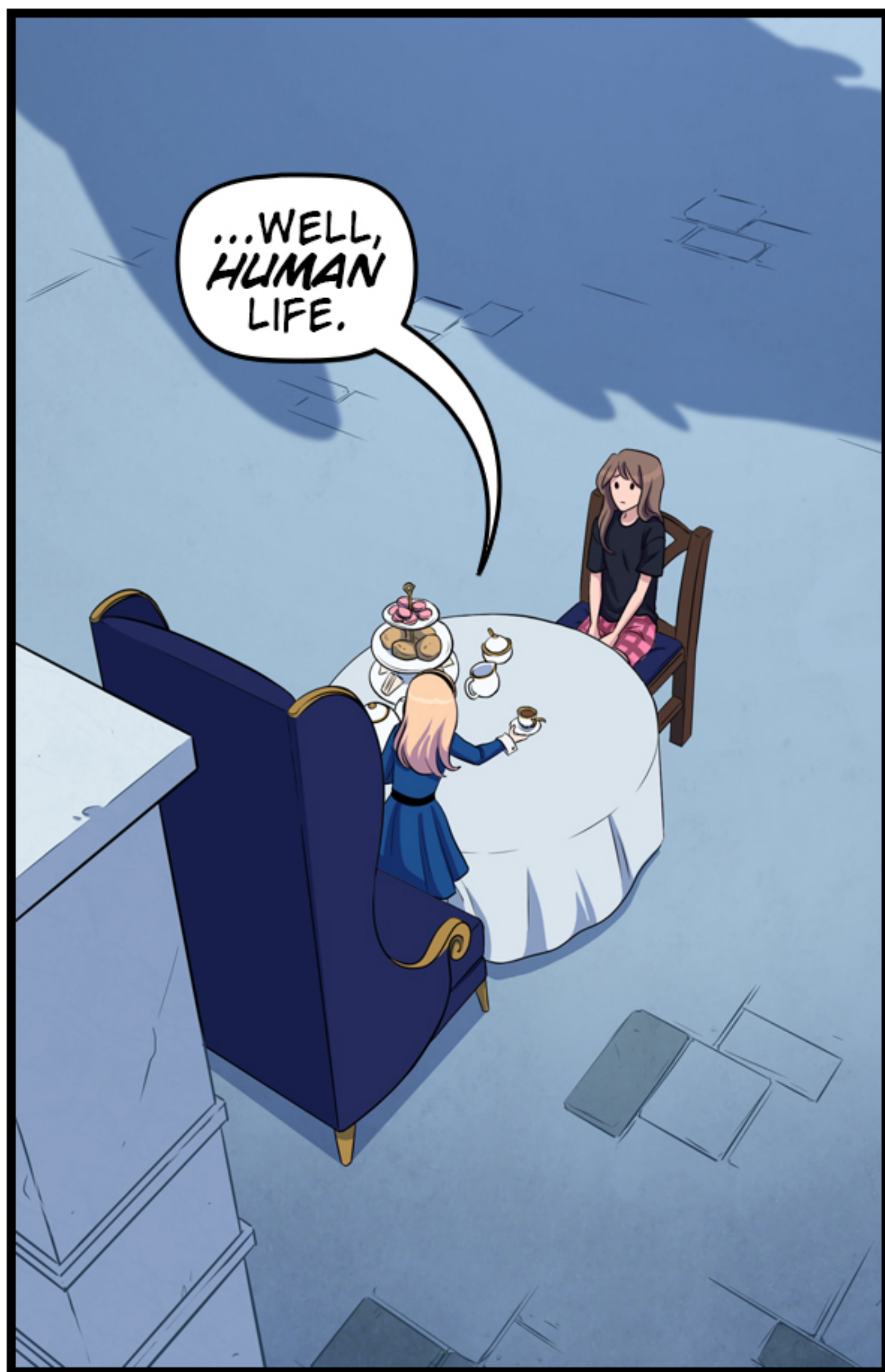




OH YES,
IT'S A FASCINATING
PLACE.

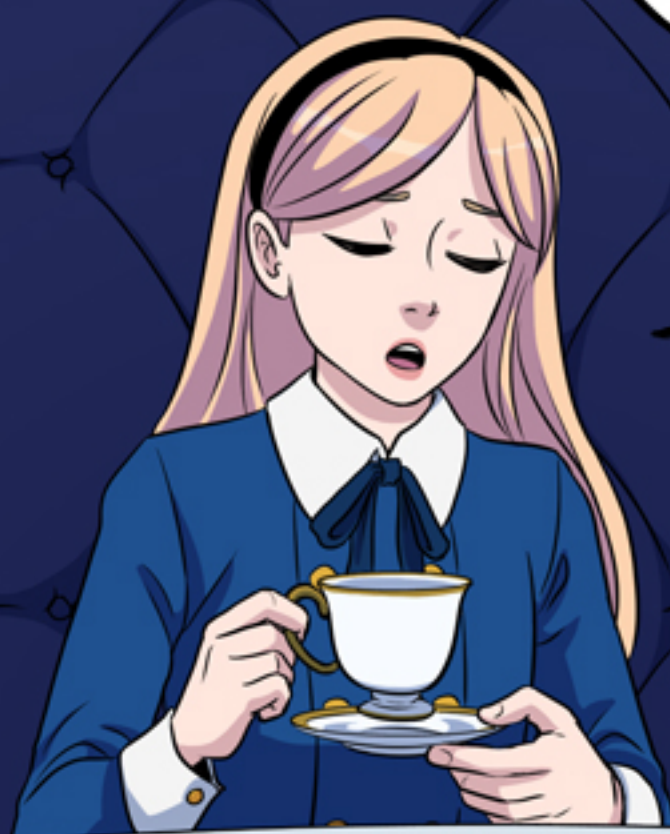
NORMALLY
QUITE INHOSPITABLE
TO LIFE.





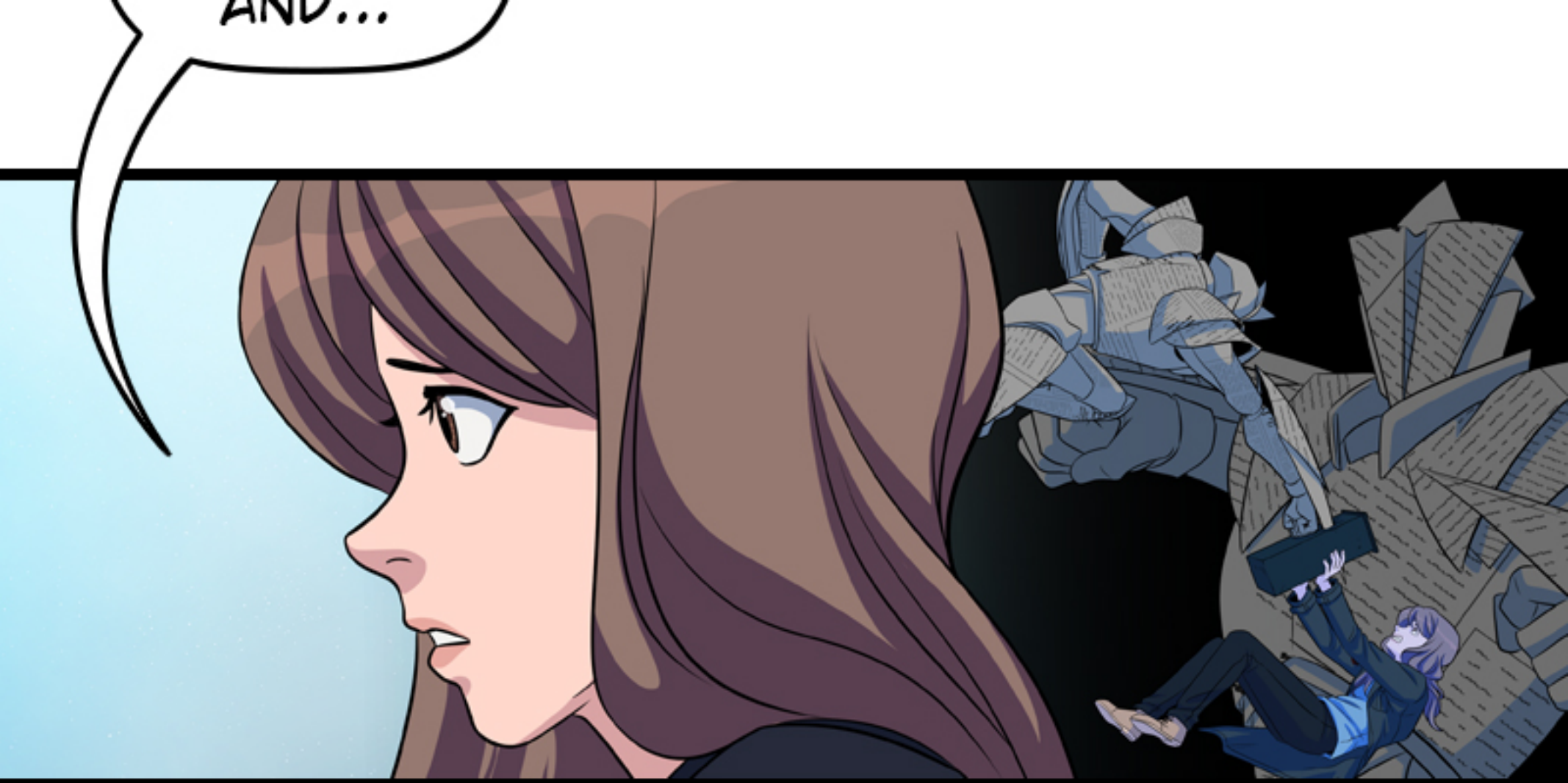
BUT I'M AFRAID
WE DON'T HAVE TIME
TO DISCUSS SUCH
THINGS.

YOU SEE,
I'VE BROUGHT
YOU HERE BECAUSE
OF LAST NIGHT'S
ACTIVITIES.



YOU MEAN
WHAT HAPPENED AT
THE HOSPITAL.

THE PAPER
GUARDIAN
AND



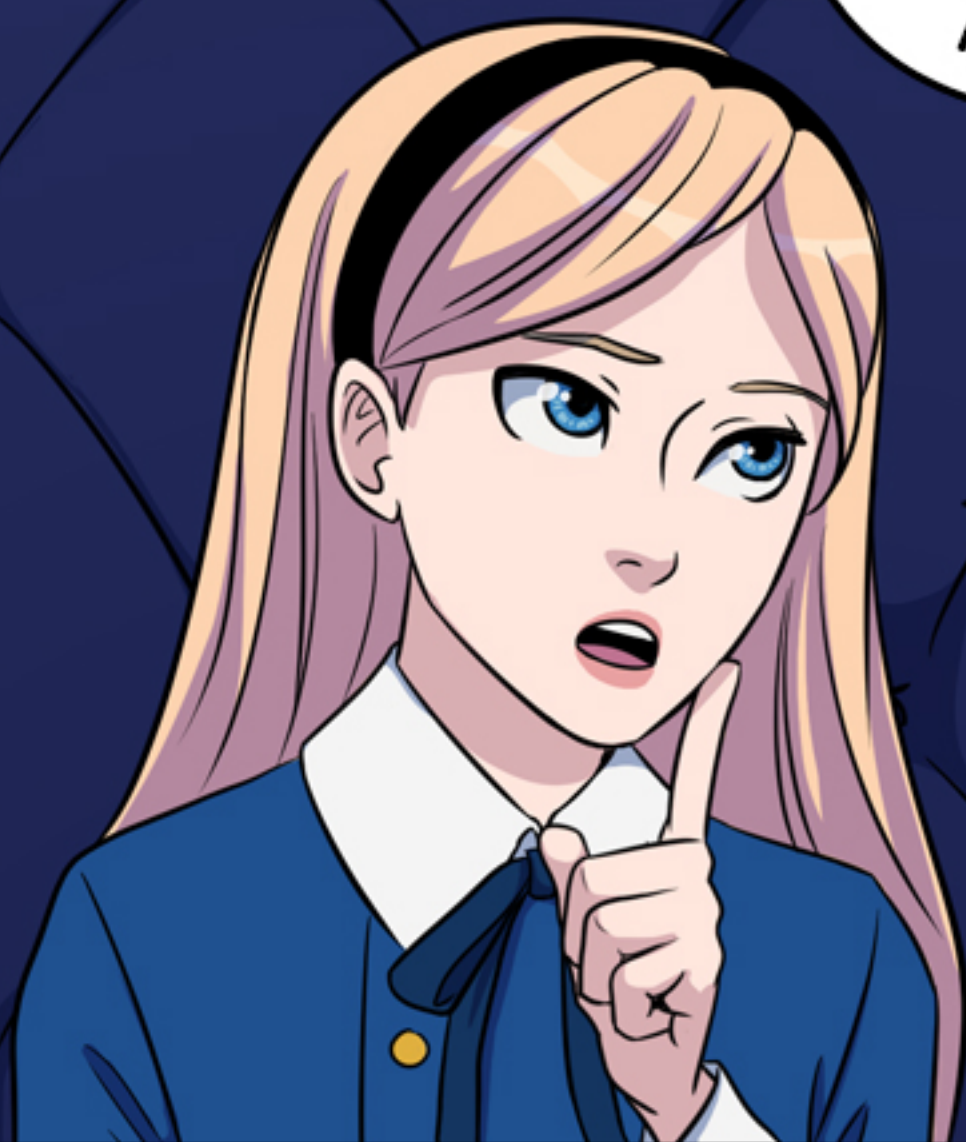


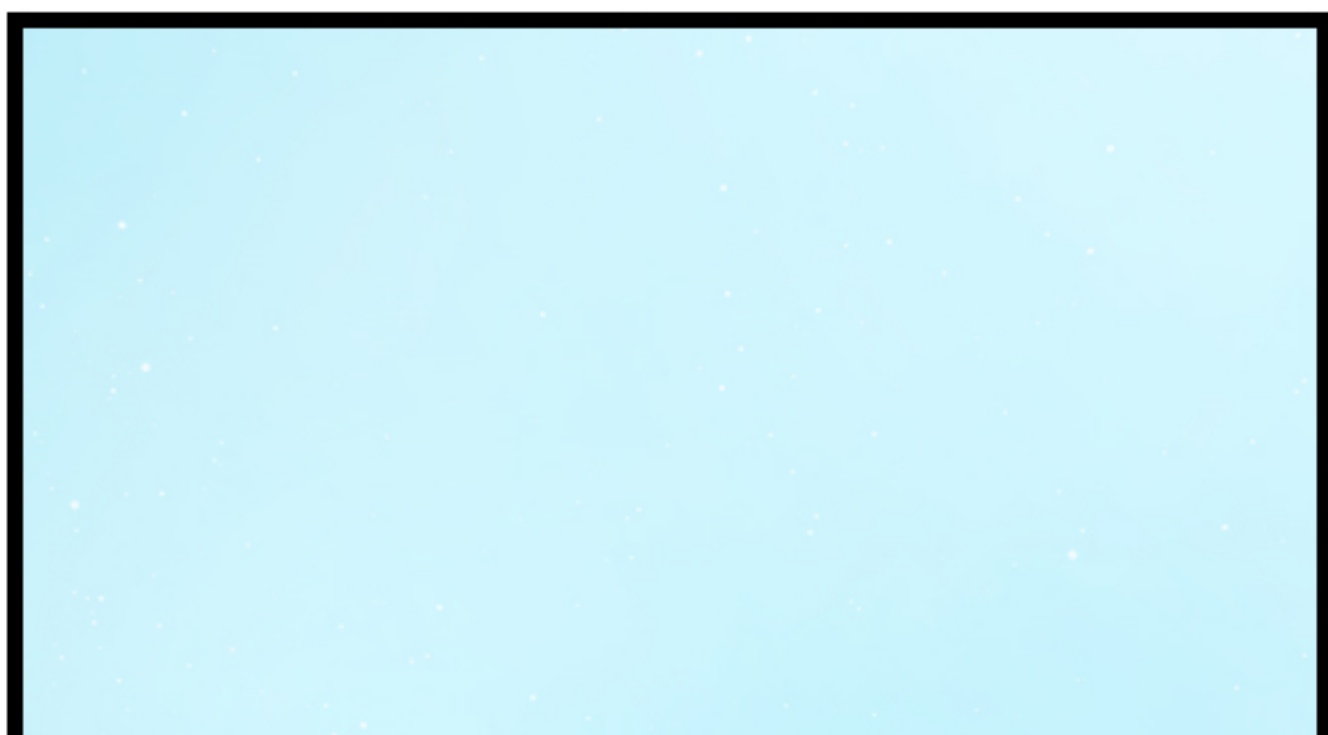
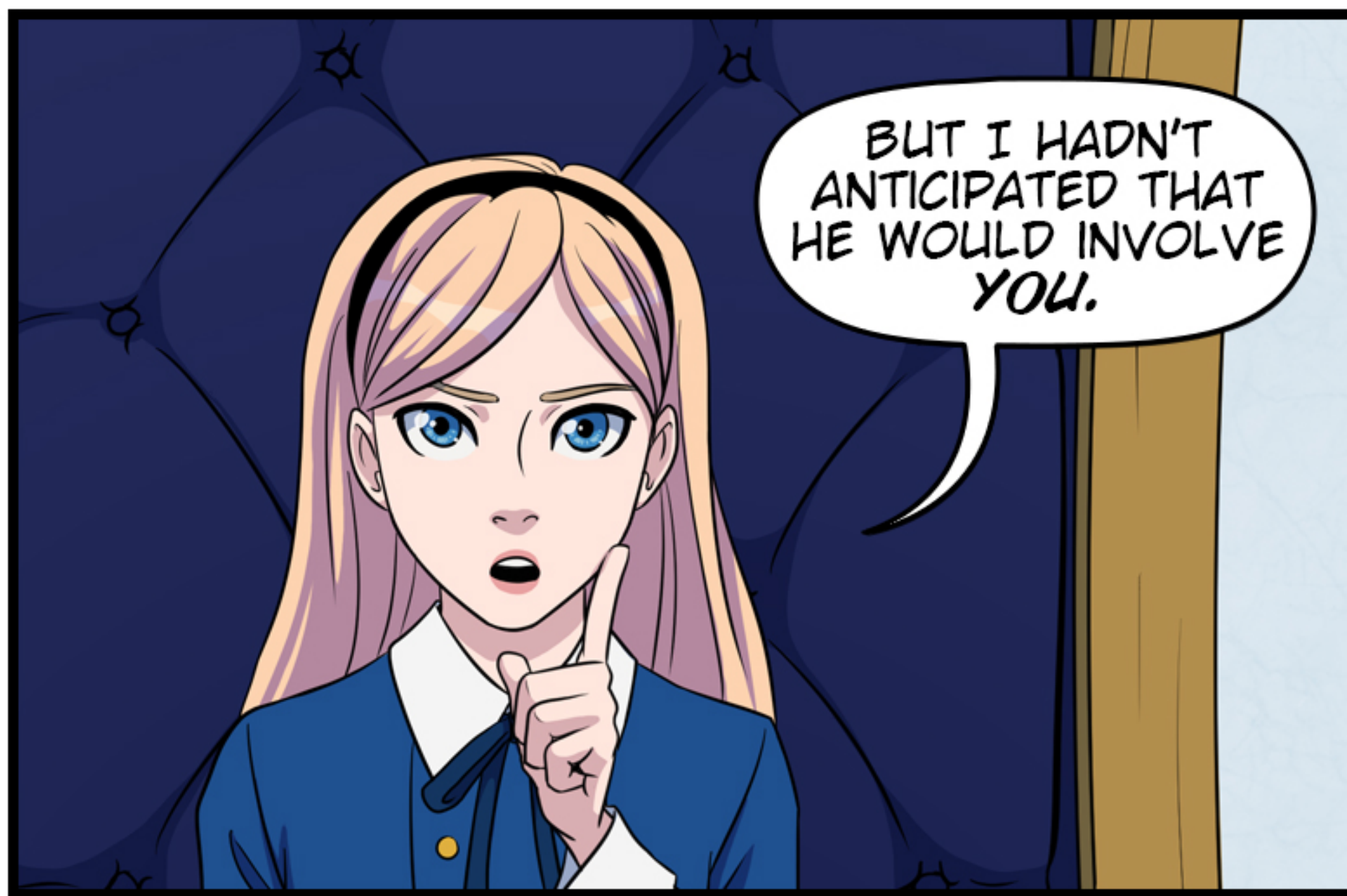
A comic book panel featuring a woman with long brown hair and bangs, wearing a black t-shirt, sitting in a wooden chair. She has a shocked expression with wide brown eyes and a slightly open mouth. Behind her, a man with grey skin, a single green eye, and a sharp white fang is smiling. A speech bubble from the man contains the word "OBERON." The background is dark with vertical green and black stripes.

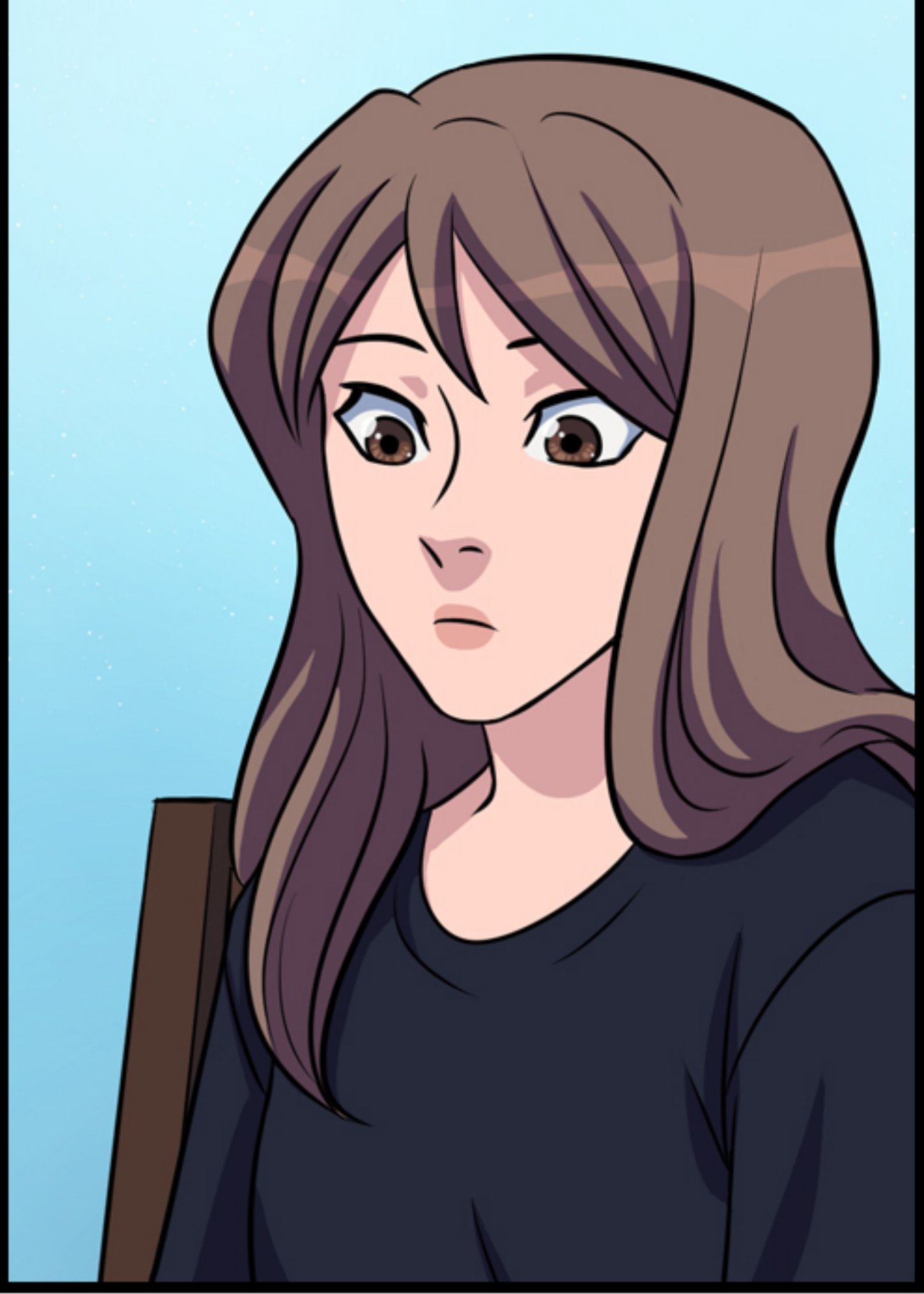
OBERON.

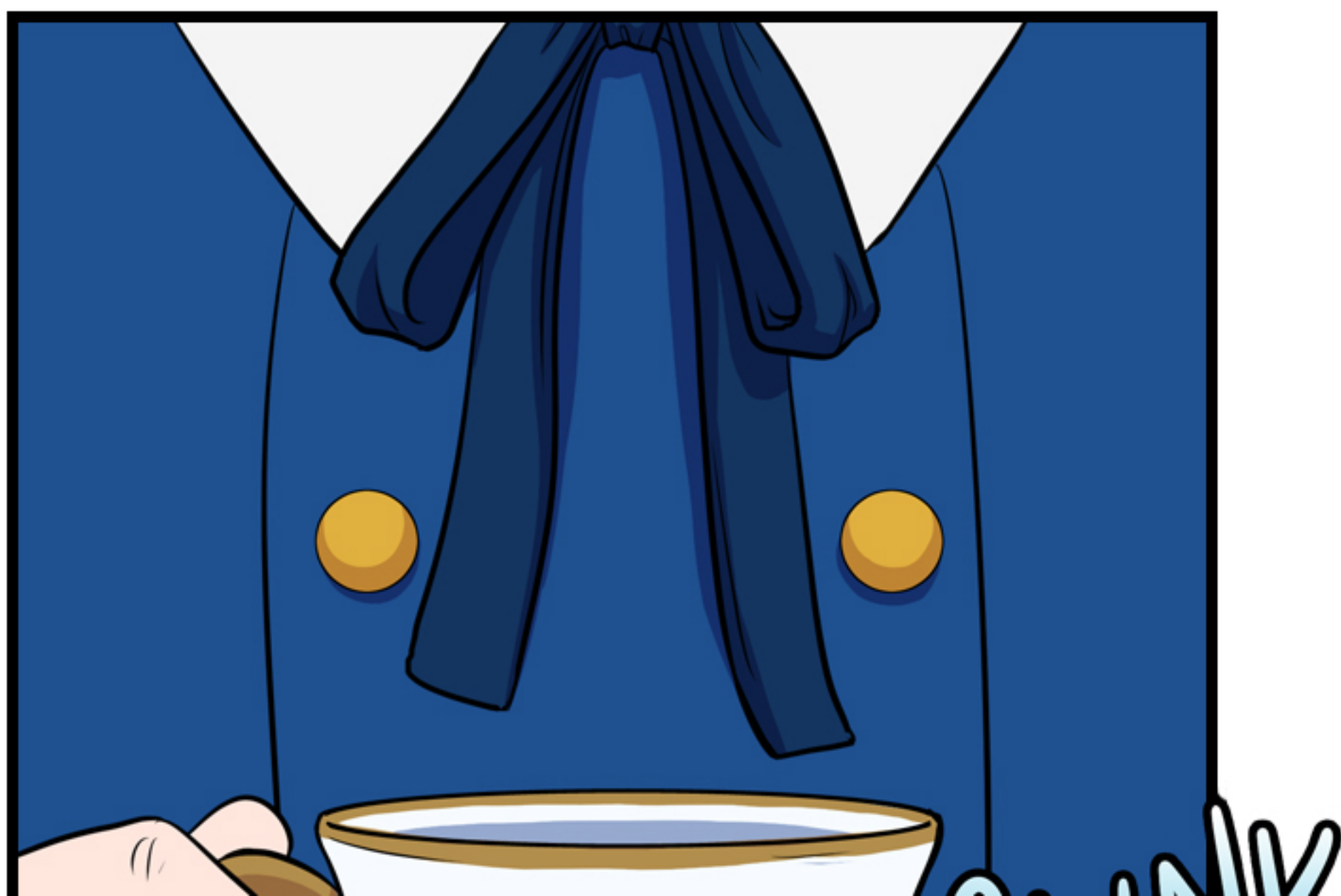
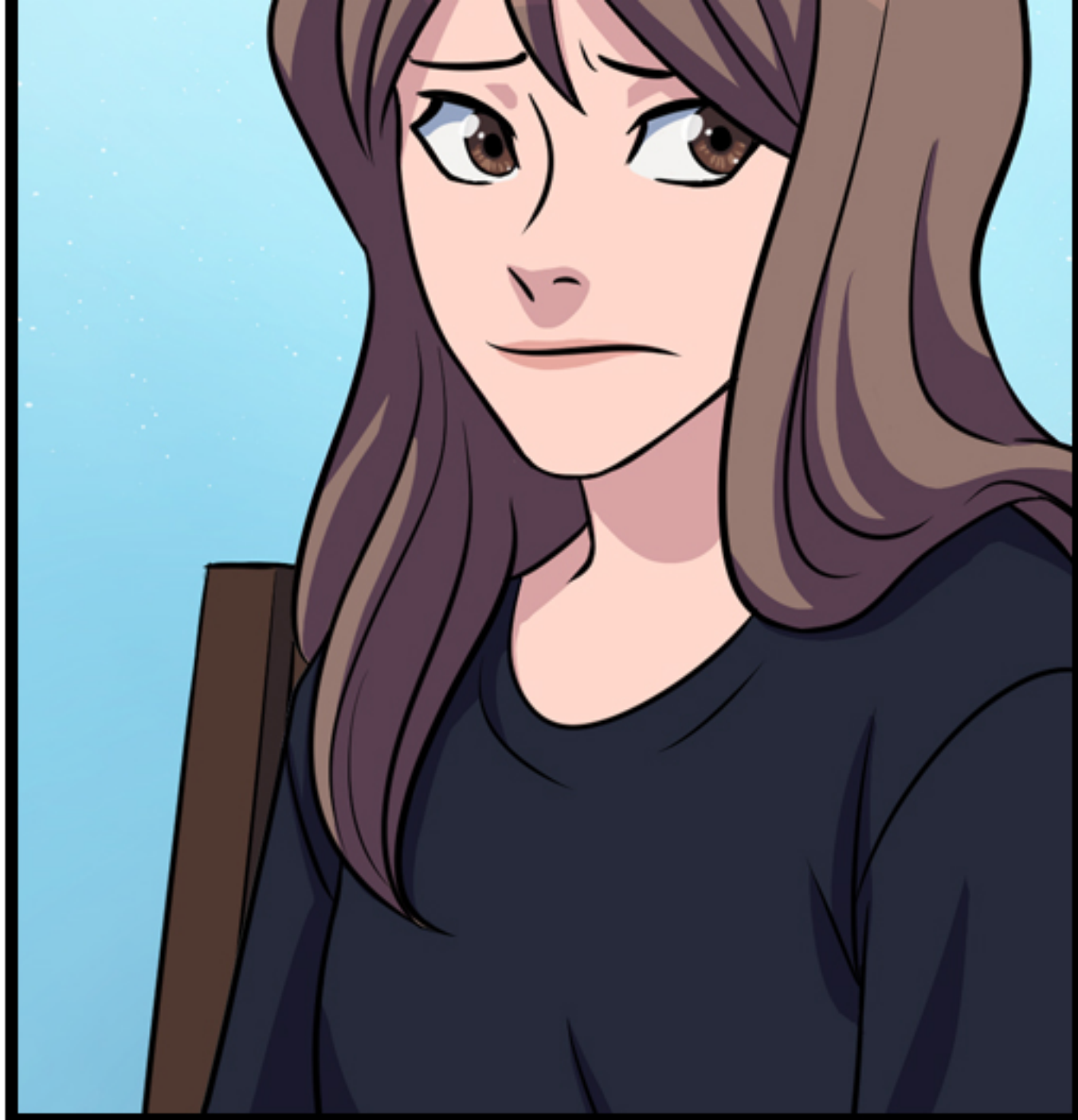
YES. QUITE A
TROUBLESOME DEMON,
BUT IN HIS OWN WAY,
PREDICTABLE.

I KNEW HE
WOULD COME FOR
THE RING SOONER OR
LATER, AND I MADE
CERTAIN HE'D NEVER
BE ABLE TO LAY
A HAND ON IT.





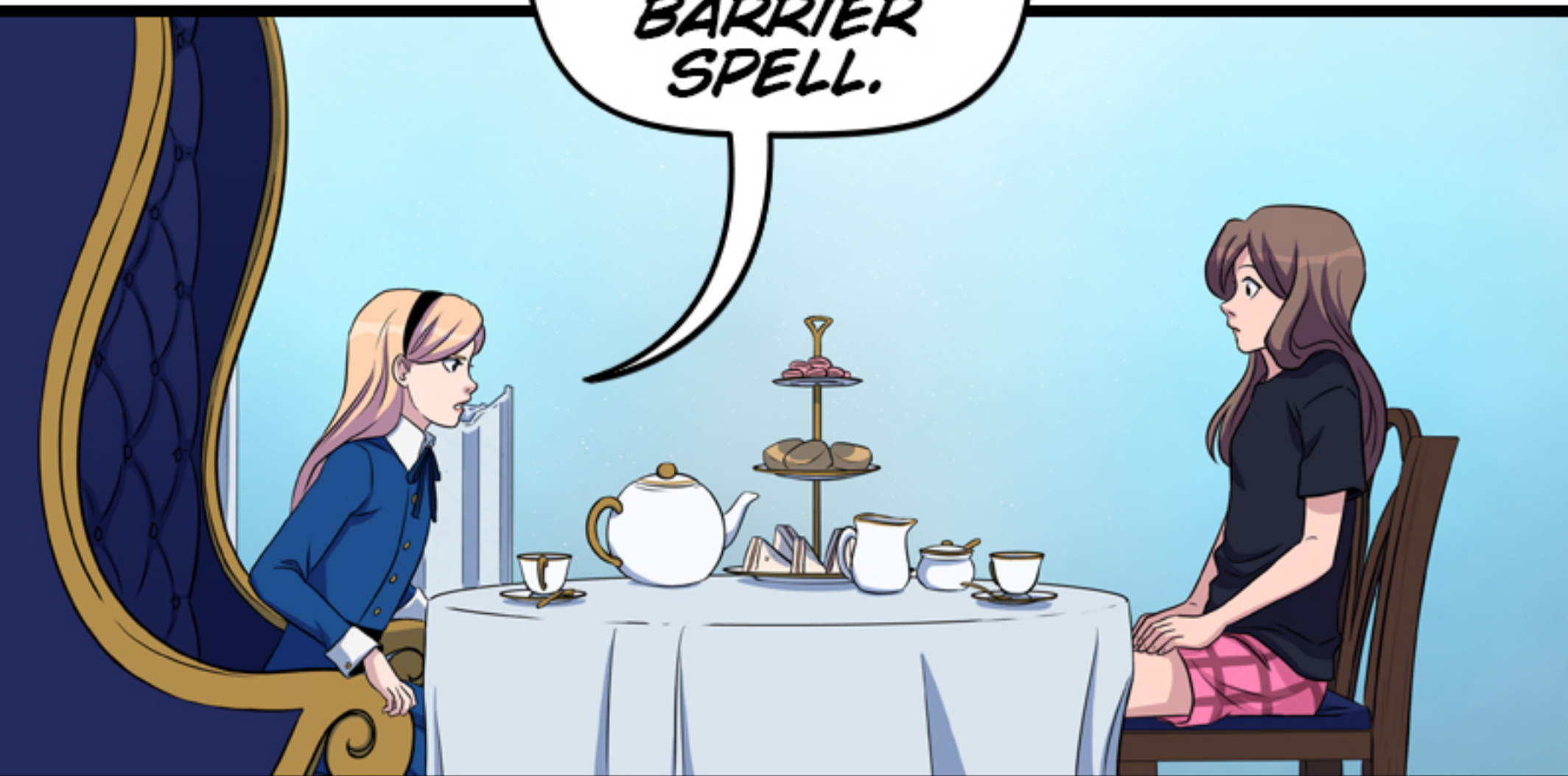


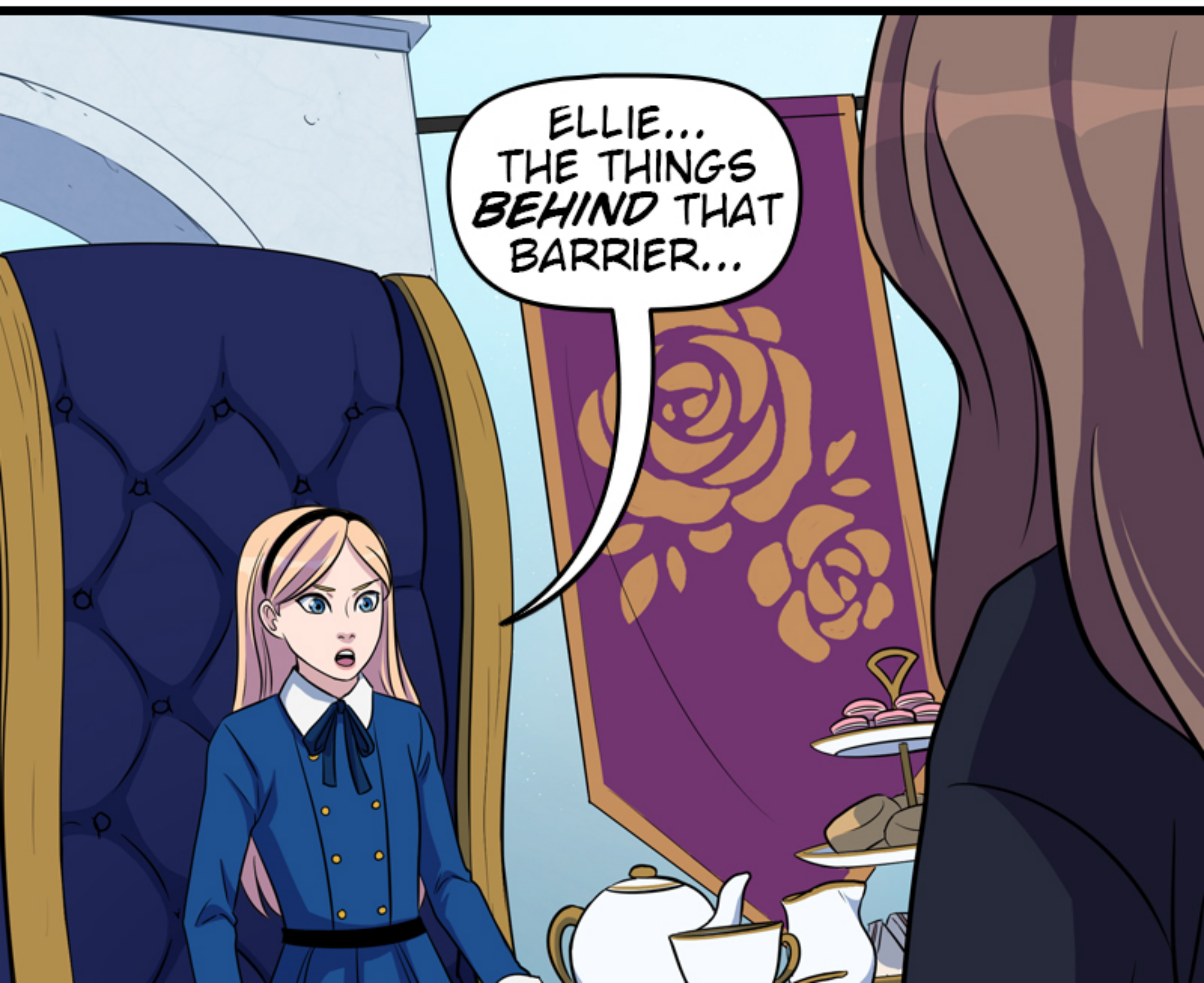




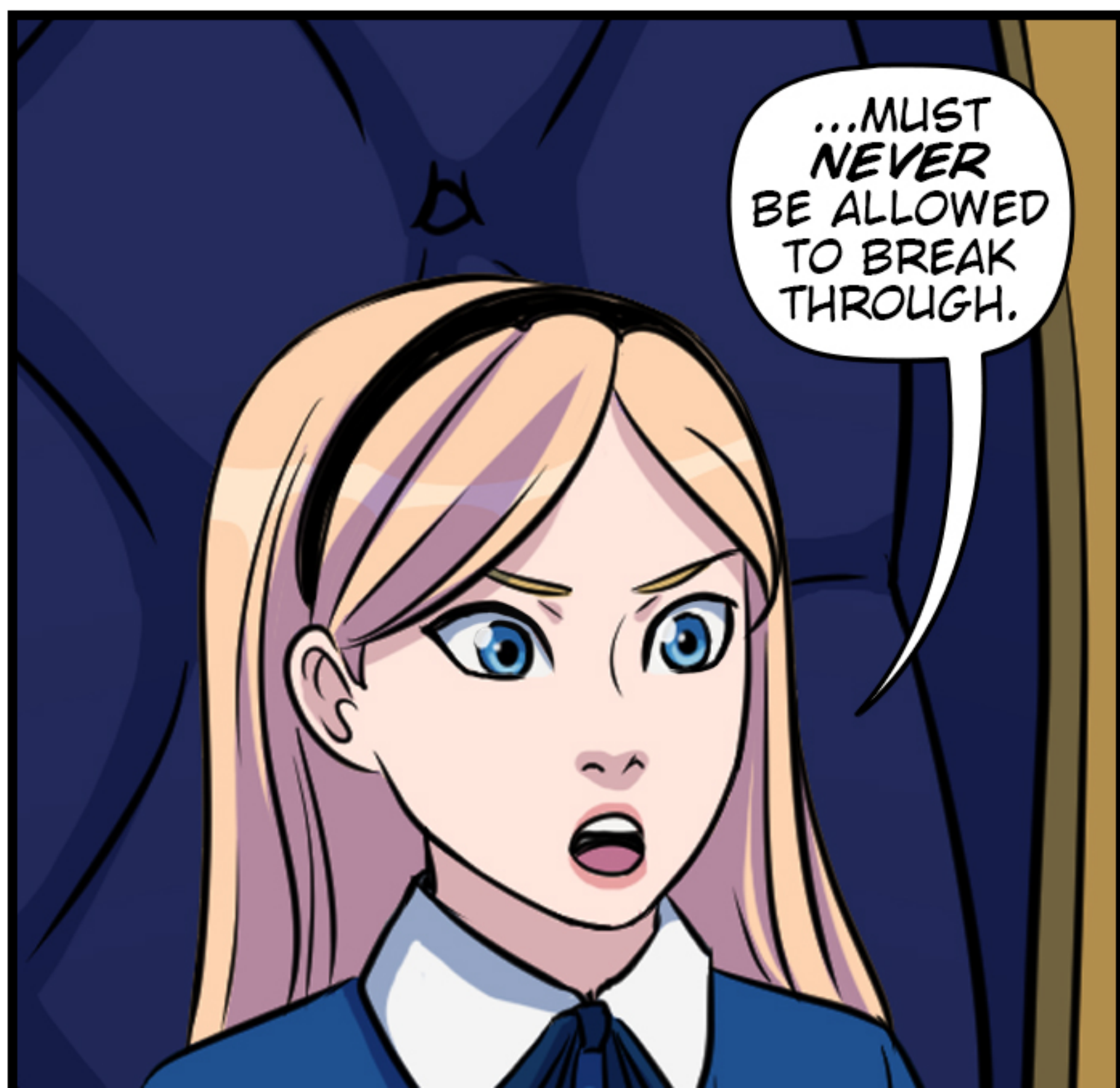
I DON'T
THINK YOU
REALIZE HOW
SERIOUS
THIS IS.

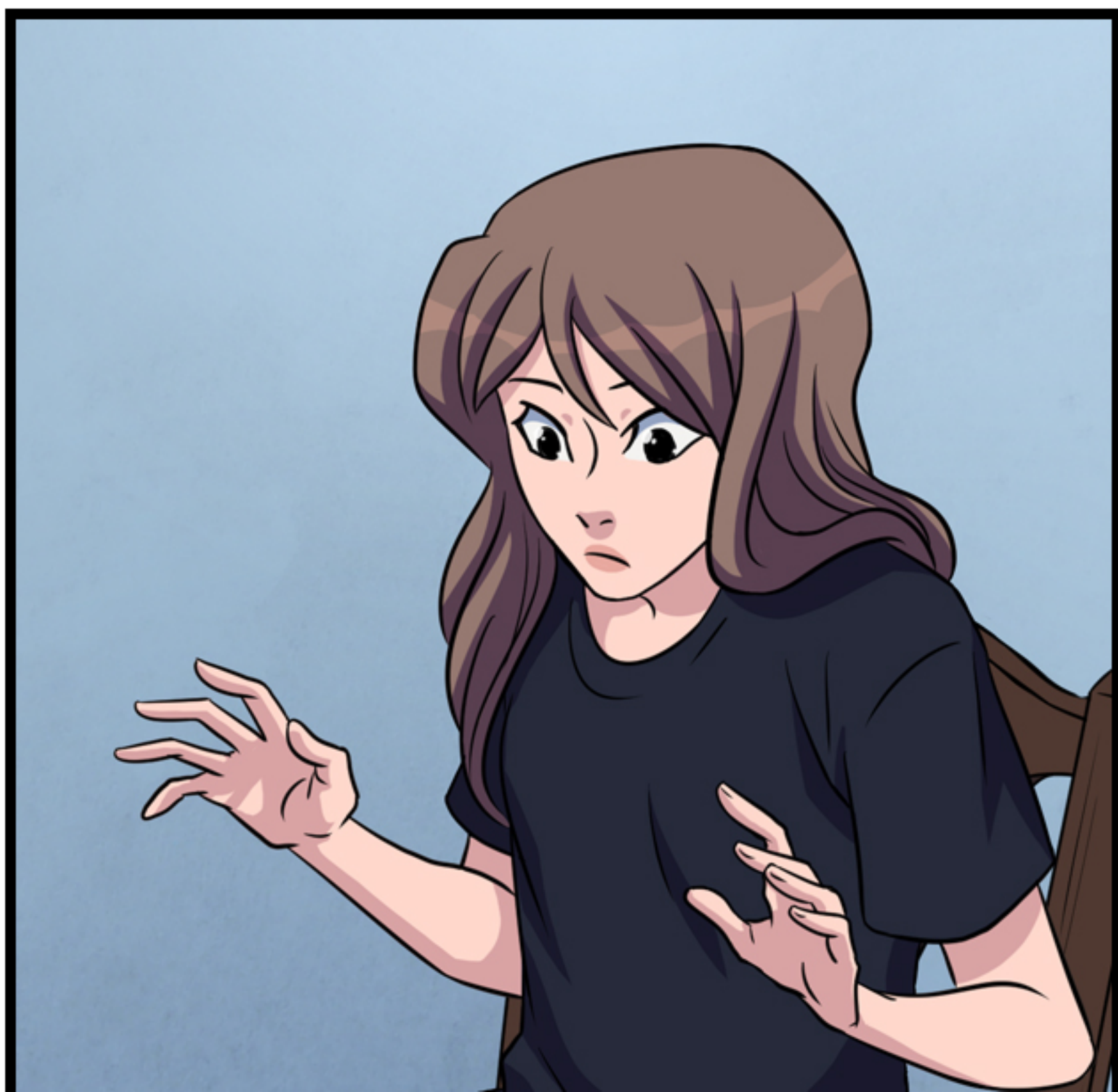
THAT RING
WAS A CRUCIAL
NODE IN MY
BARRIER
SPELL.

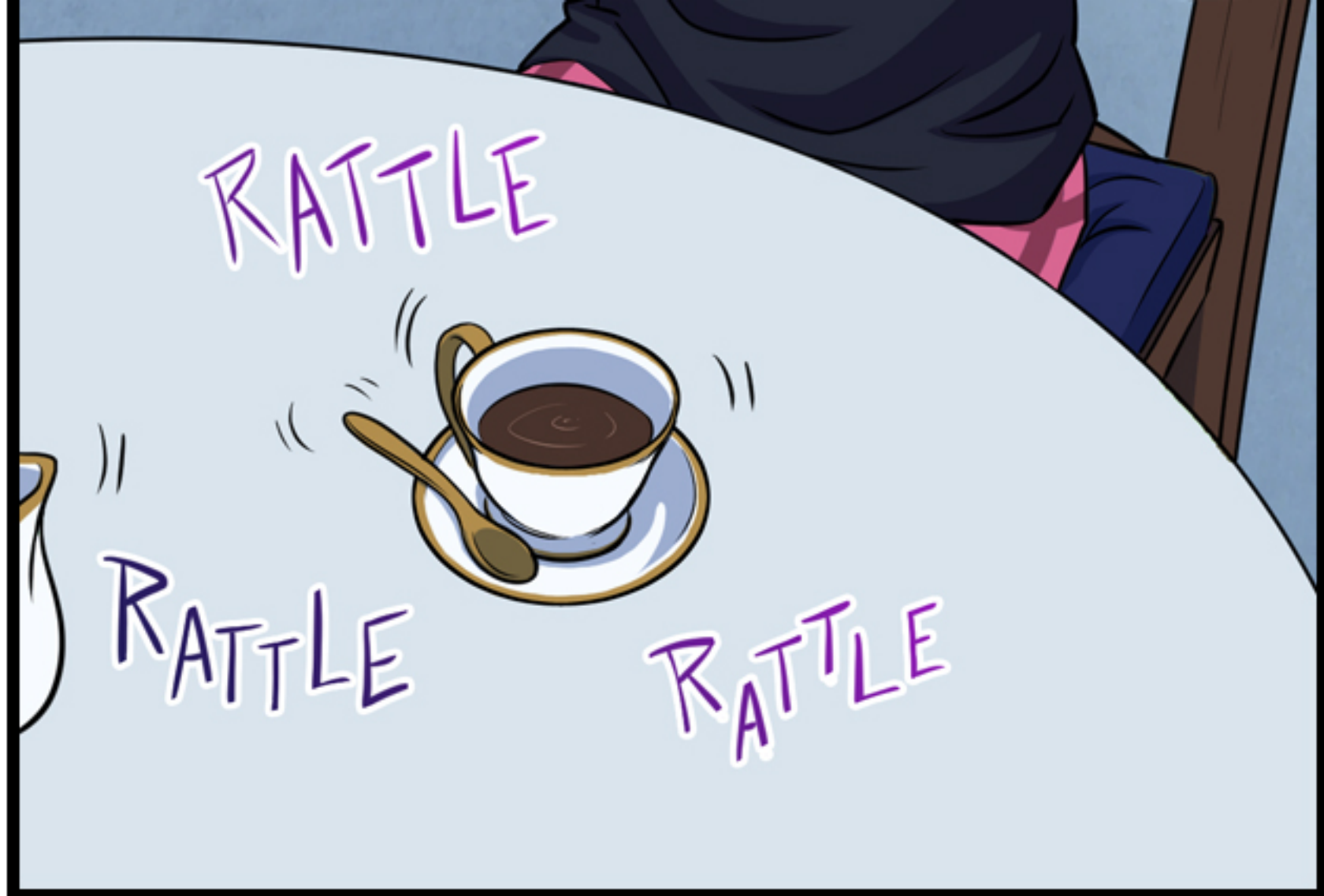




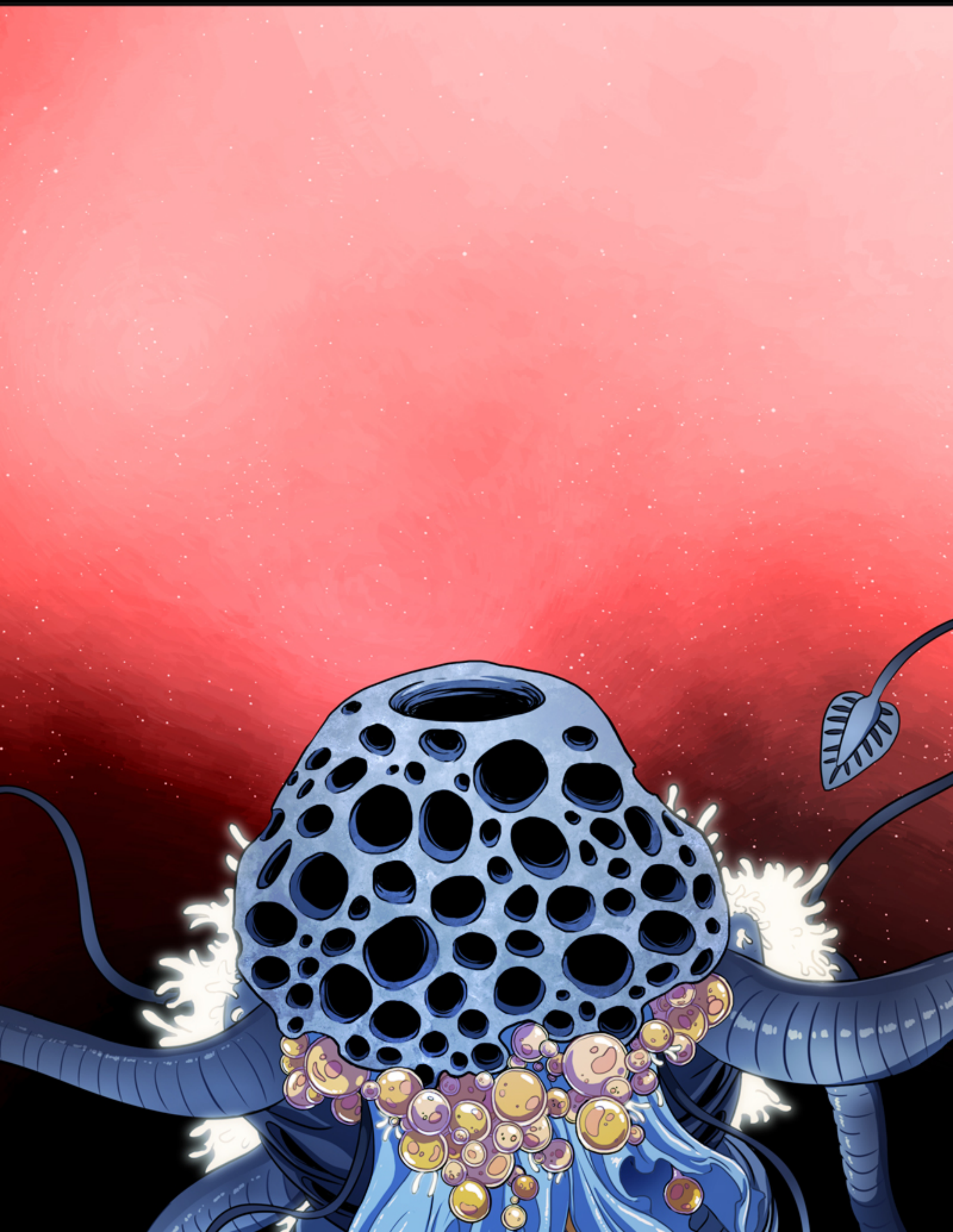
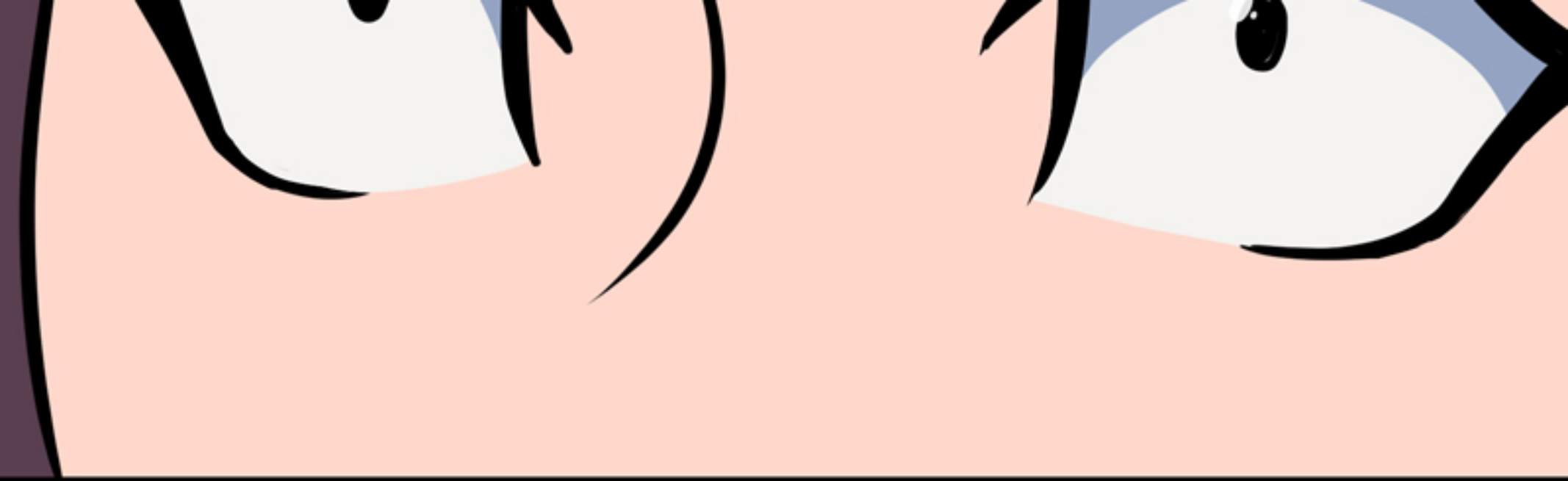
ELLIE...
THE THINGS
BEHIND THAT
BARRIER...





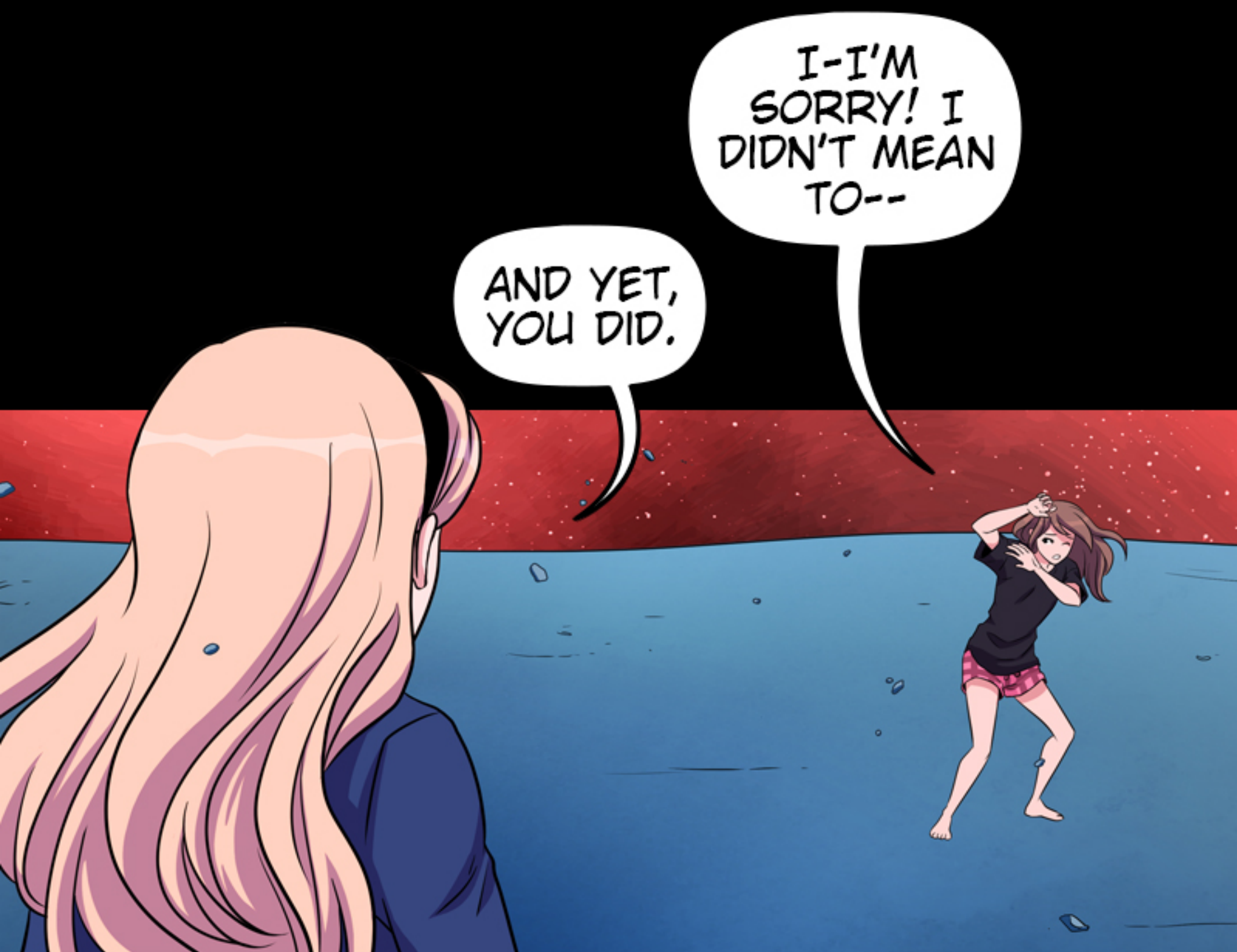
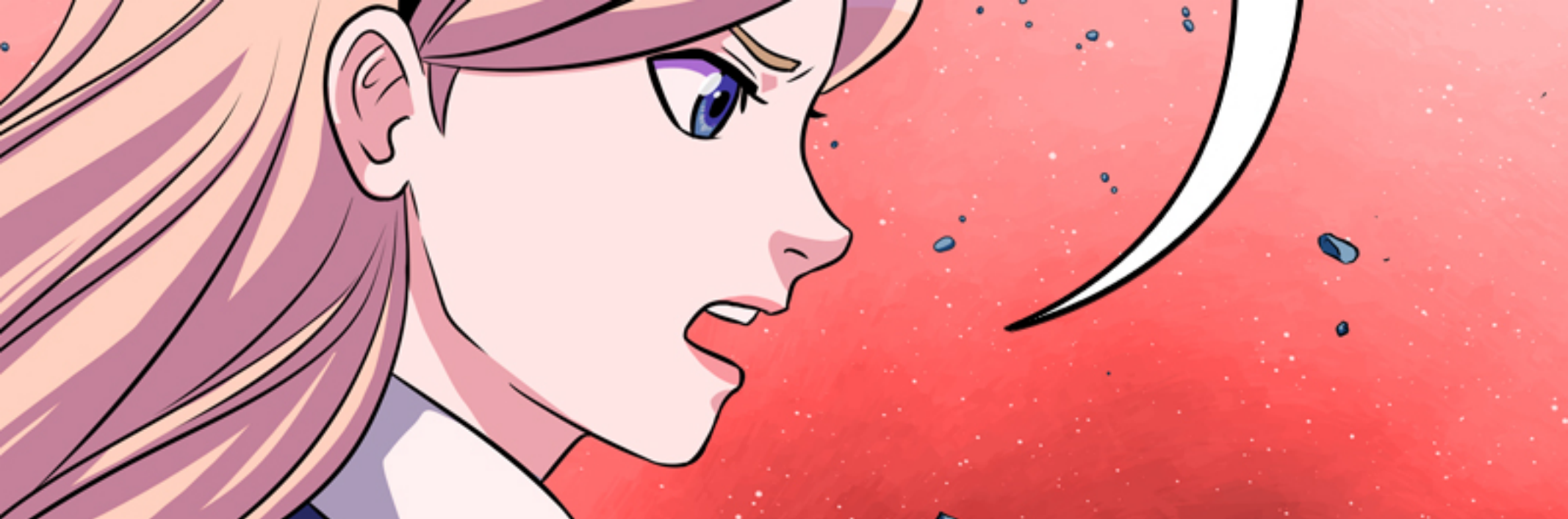






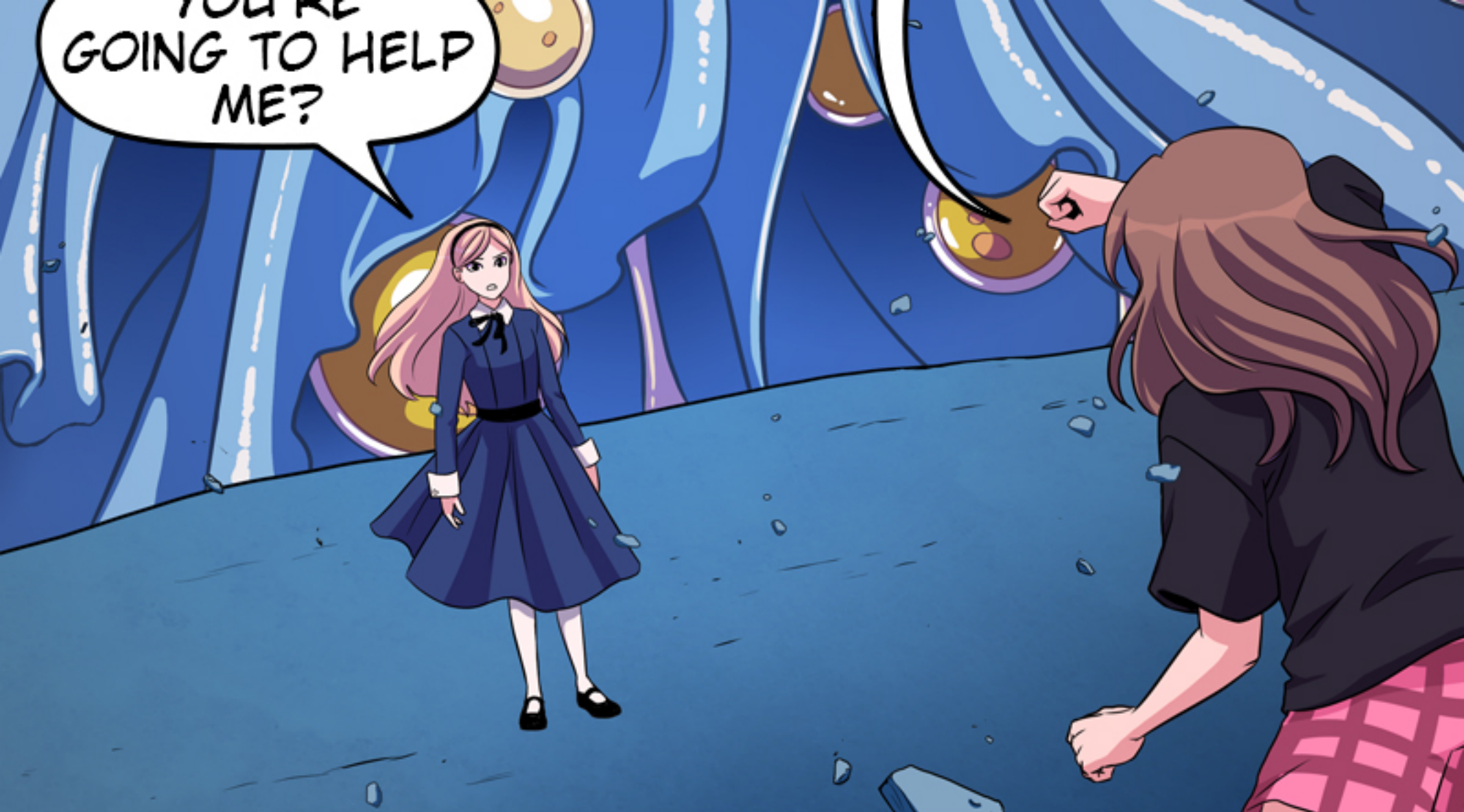


THAT SPELL HAS
STOOD FOR *DECADES*,
BUT YOUR ACTIONS LAST
NIGHT HAVE WEAKENED
IT AND PUT US *ALL*
IN TERRIBLE
DANGER.

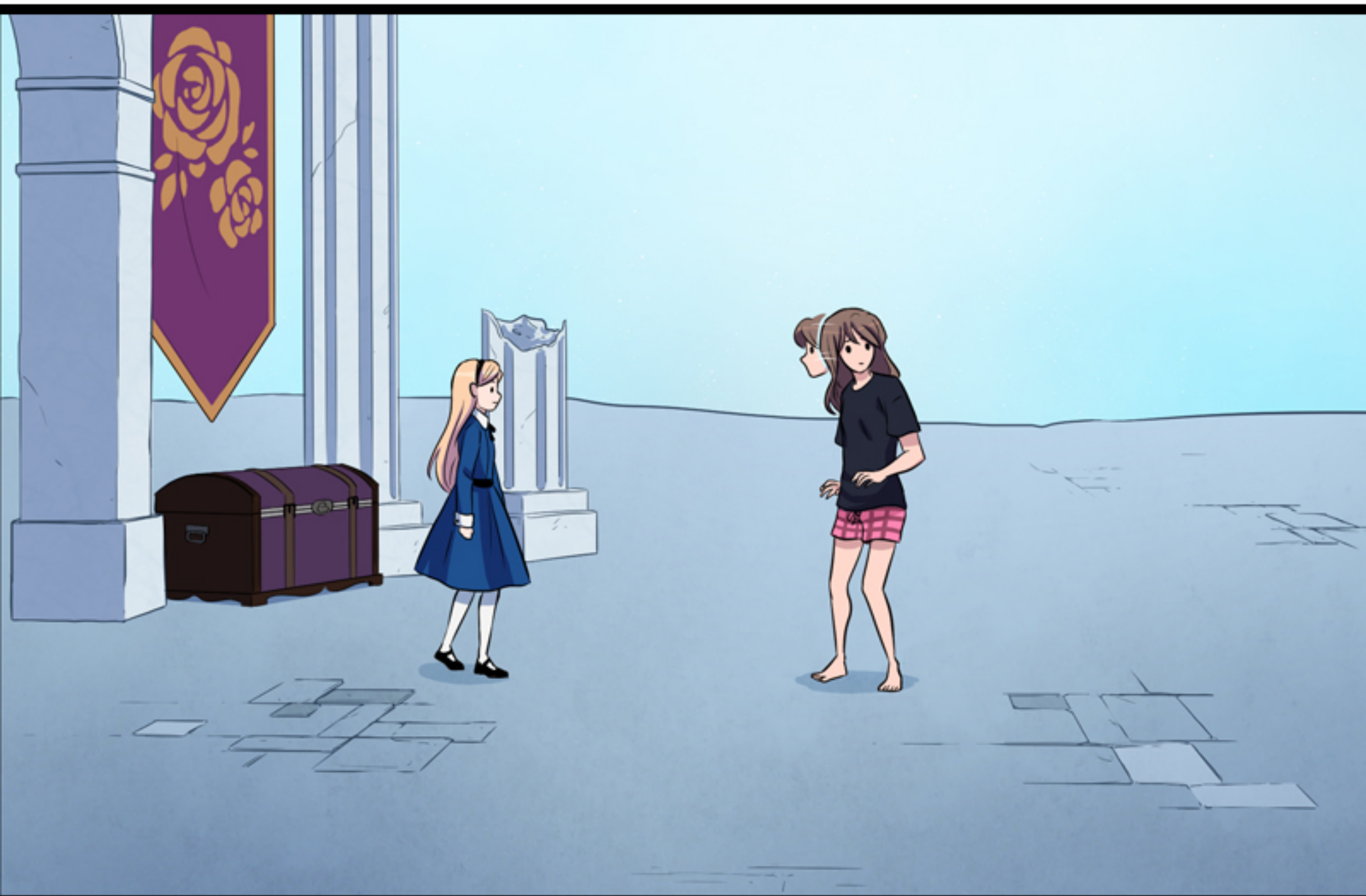


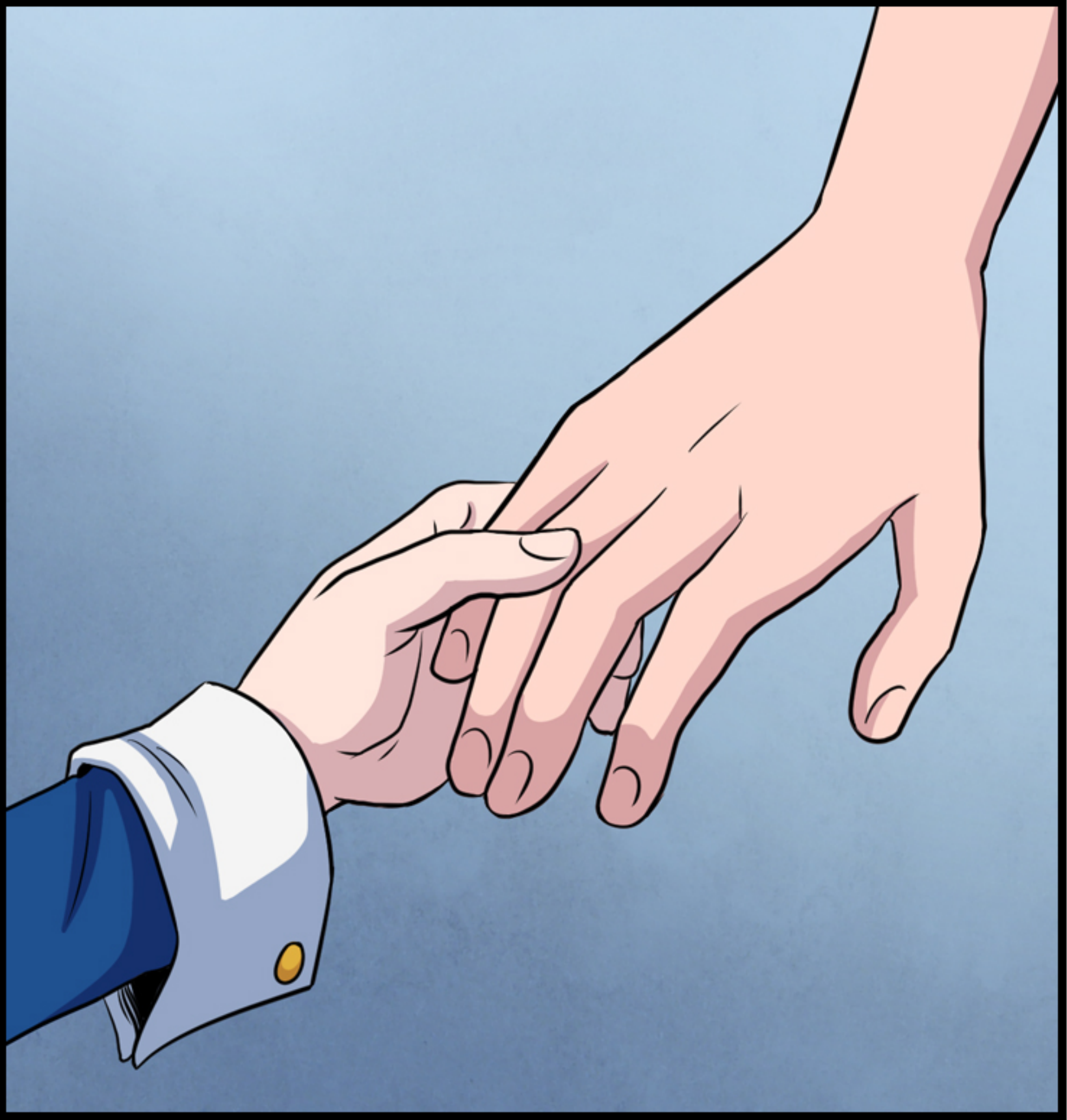
I CAN FIX THIS!
JUST TELL ME WHAT I
NEED TO DO!

YOU'DE

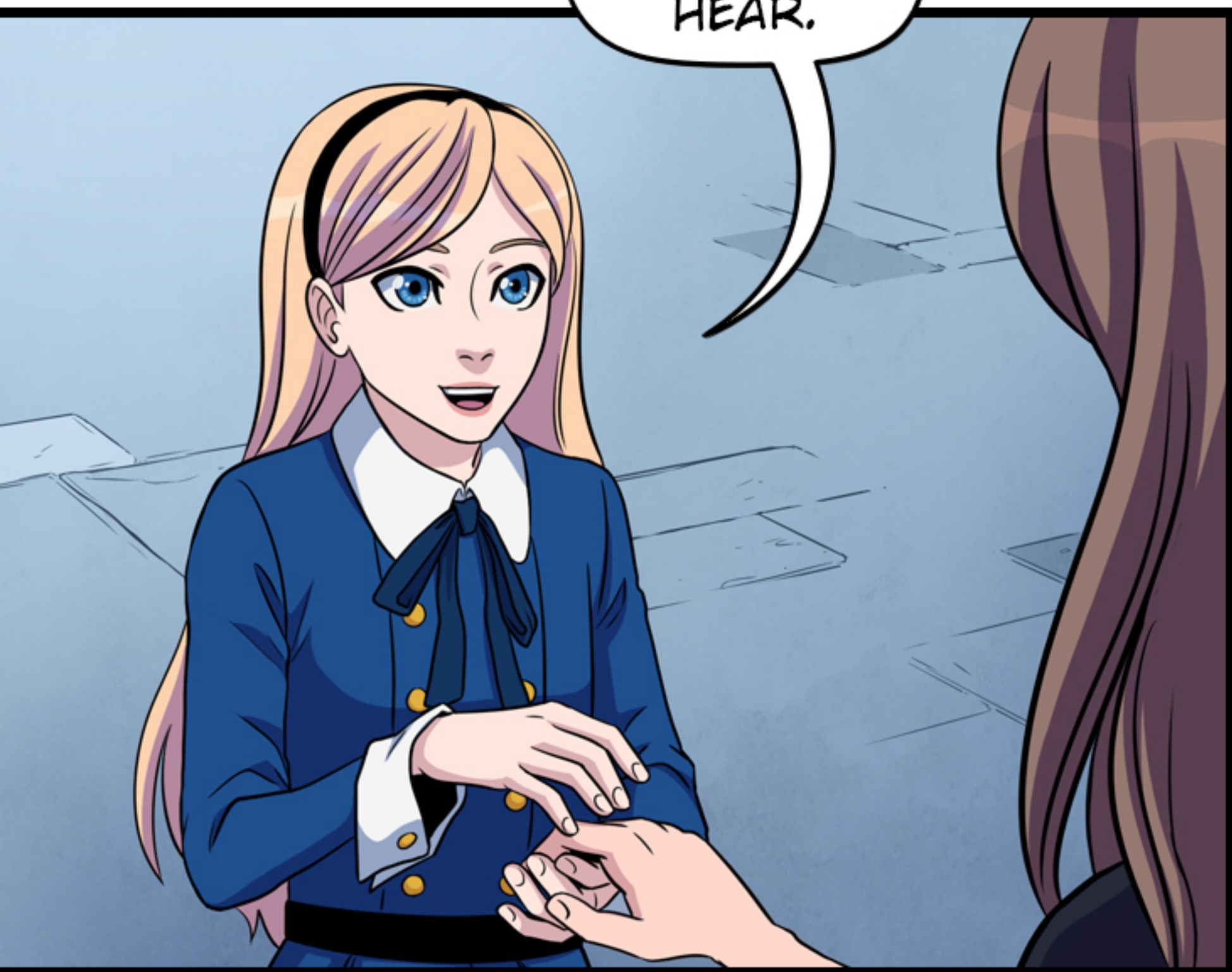








THAT'S ALL
I NEEDED TO
HEAR.





ssssssss

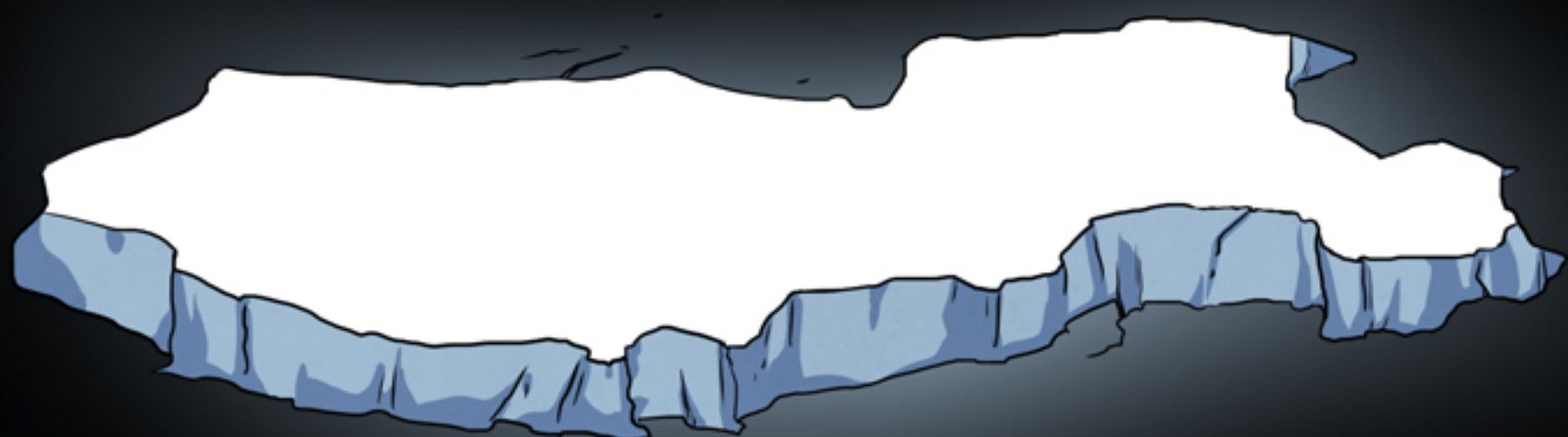
AAAAHHH!!







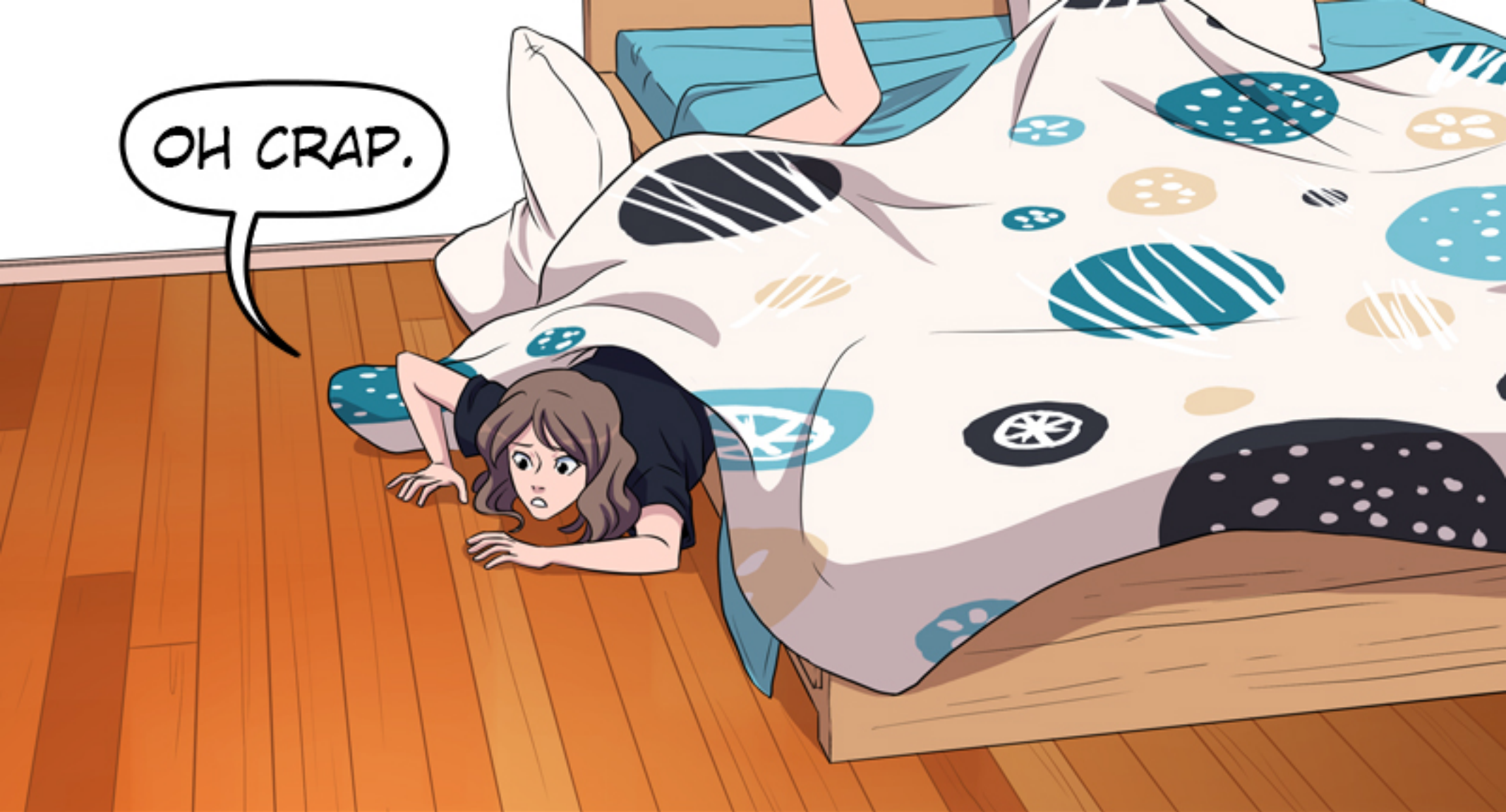
CRACK

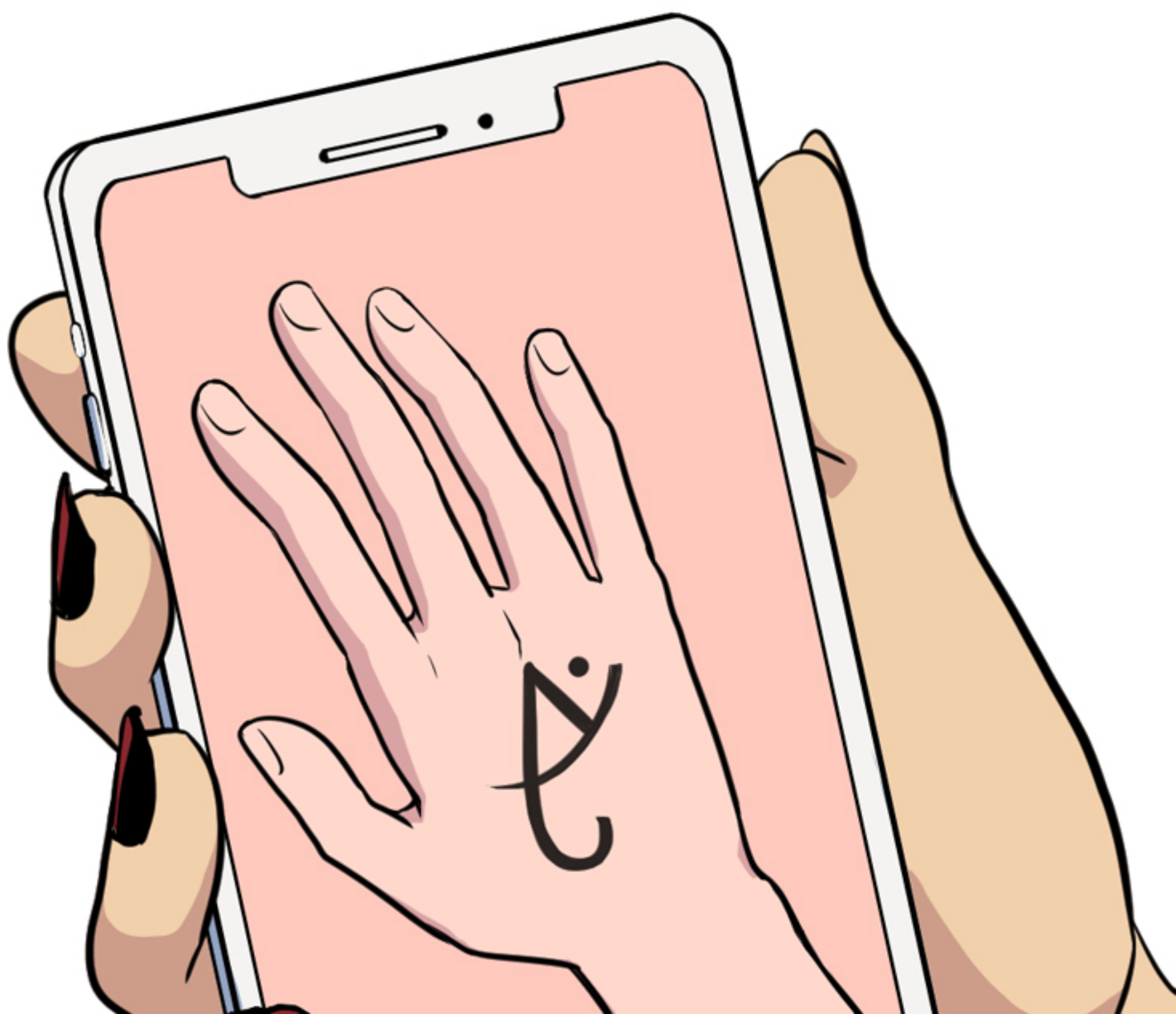




WUMP









SO IT JUST
APPEARED?

YEAH, RIGHT
AFTER THAT GIRL
GRABBED MY
HAND IN THE
DREAM.

AND YOU'RE
SURE IT'S NOT
A TATTOO.



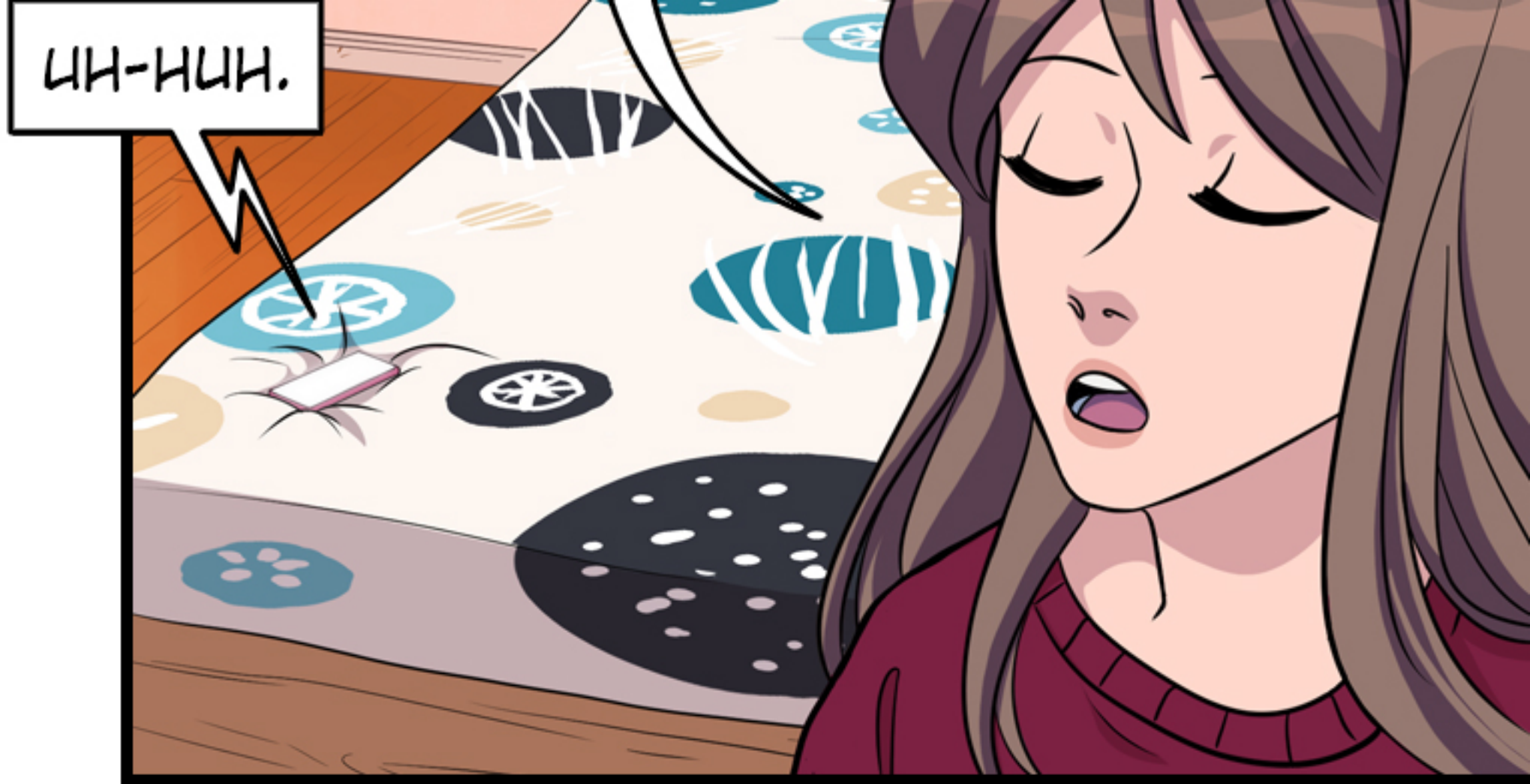


POSITIVE.
WHY WOULD I GET
A TATTOO OF SOME
RANDOM SYMBOL
ANYWAY?

WELL, IT'S NICER
THAN THAT WEIRD
LITTLE HORSE YOU
WANTED.



IT'S A
SHETLAND PONY
AND HE IS BRAVE
AND ADORABLE.



STILL, THAT'S
PRETTY WEIRD.
WHAT DOES ICHABOD
THINK?

I, UH,
HAVEN'T TOLD
HIM YET.

BUT YOU'RE
GOING TO,
RIGHT?





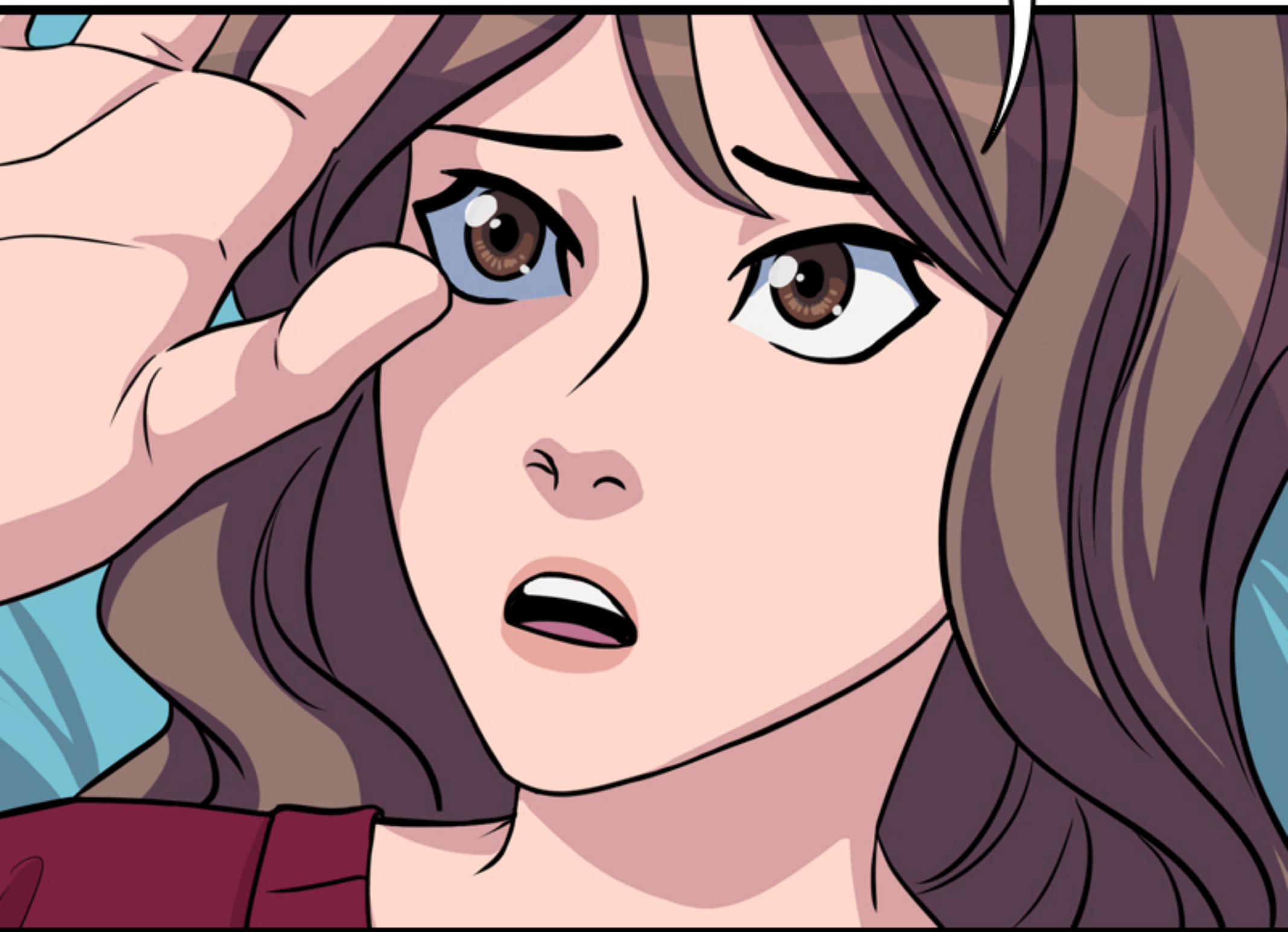
...I GUESS.



DUDE, THIS IS
SOME CREEPY SHIT.
YOU **NEED** TO LET
HIM KNOW WHAT
HAPPENED.

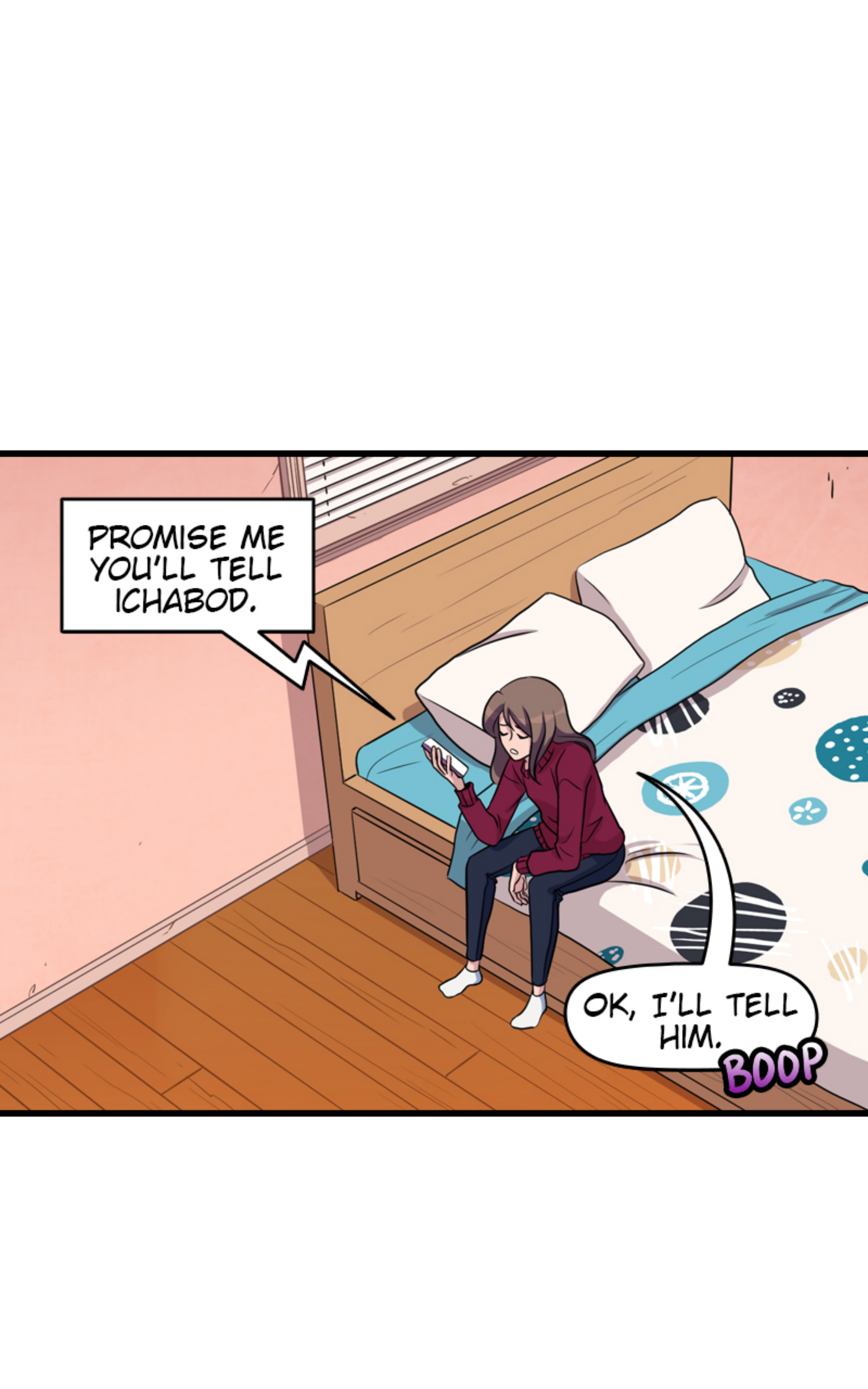


I *KNOW*, BUT...





GWEN, I
GOTTA GET
GOING.

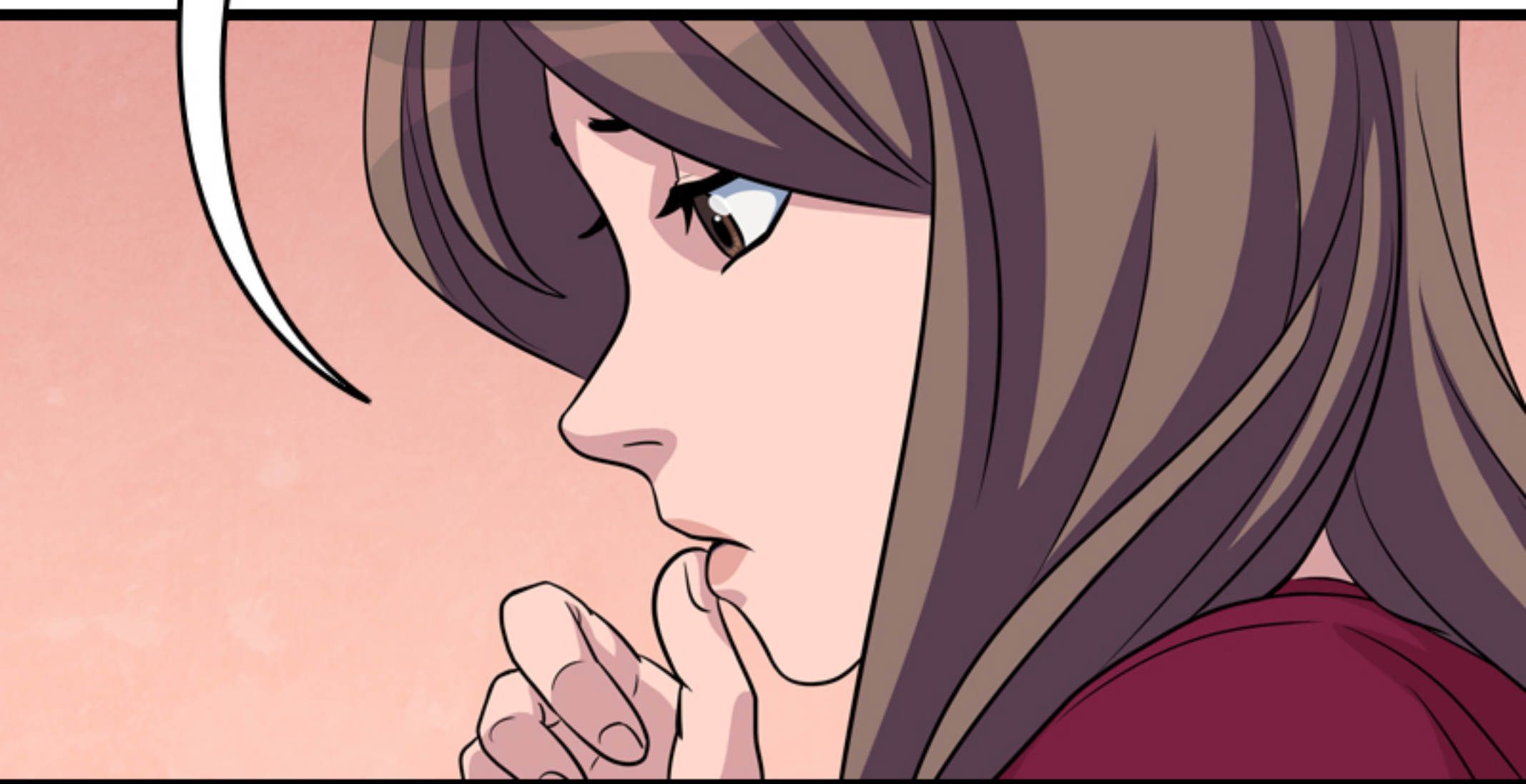


PROMISE ME
YOU'LL TELL
ICHABOD.

OK, I'LL TELL
HIM.

BOOP

...I JUST
HAVE TO
FIGURE OUT
HOW.





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