

On a foggy November evening, in a city park somewhere in Massachusetts....

Molly - legally Monica Black - until today a senior manager at Jörgson & Sons, was fired for her newly changed look and behavior. Fresh from a party, she takes a shortcut through the park.

OHhh  
MY GOSH, LIKE,  
WHAT A DAY!

LIKE, SOOO UNFAIR -  
FIRED? FOR REAL? UGH,  
HOW RUDE.

"MRS. BLACK,  
YOUR CONDUCT AND  
PRESEN...UMM... TATION ARE ..."  
BLAH BLAH - WHATEVER,  
YOU FOSSIL.

ANYWAY,  
I HAD, LIKE, THE  
HOTTEST PARTY NIGHT  
AT... UMM -

WAIT, THOSE  
BOYS - SO CUTE - WHAT  
WERE THEIR NAMES AGAIN?  
LIKE, THE TWINS? OR SHINY-HAIR  
GUY? UGH, BRAIN, FOCUS -  
WHERE WAS I?

UMMM...  
RIIIGHT?! OHhh MY  
GOSH, LIKE, WHAT FOR  
A PARTY!

She doesn't yet sense the hunter approaching, gliding on silent wings...

I am the hunter. Allow me to introduce myself: Alaric de Noctebrume. Once, I was a knight at the court of King Philip I of France - earning not only honor and renown, but a reputation for charm that traveled far beyond our borders.

That allure drew the hunger of an ancient evil: the vampire Sire Morcant of Vespermont, of the Nosferatu clan. It happened on a night like this - fog-choked, moon-pale -

...when a hooded figure challenged me to a duel, and I received the Kiss. Since that hour, I have been Alaric de Noctebrume, Nosferatu-born.

Seeing promise in the New World, I claimed a domain on the Atlantic coast, settling in the deep woods of Harrow's Cove, where I raised my house in secrecy.

In 1602, during one of my "Midnight Salons," a favored courtier betrayed me. I lost nearly everything. I fled to my sanctum and, grievously weakened, surrendered to safe torpor.

Only days ago—or so I believed—I still slept. I did not know the forest had vanished, replaced by a suburb. Explorers found the catacombs of my ruined estate... and a single drop of sweet nectar was enough to rouse me.

Those researchers now serve as convenient daylight ghouls, restoring my residence stone by stone. Meanwhile, I chose to slake my thirst - and encountered this curious, ever-bubbling woman. An... easy snack.

Now, if you'll excuse me?

OHUUH, I'M, LIKE, ALMOST HOME 'N STUFF!

MMM4, HOT BATH... A LIL' QUALITY TIME WITH MR. BIIIIIIE...

TEEHEE - SOUNDS, LIKE, SOOO PERFECT - WAIT, WHAT WAS I - OH! RUBBLES. FOCUS, MOLLY, FOCUS...

And so the hunter of the night, Lord Alaric takes his first meal in centuries...

Ah - such  
nectar... though it carries  
a curious aftertaste.

OH -  
OOPSIE!

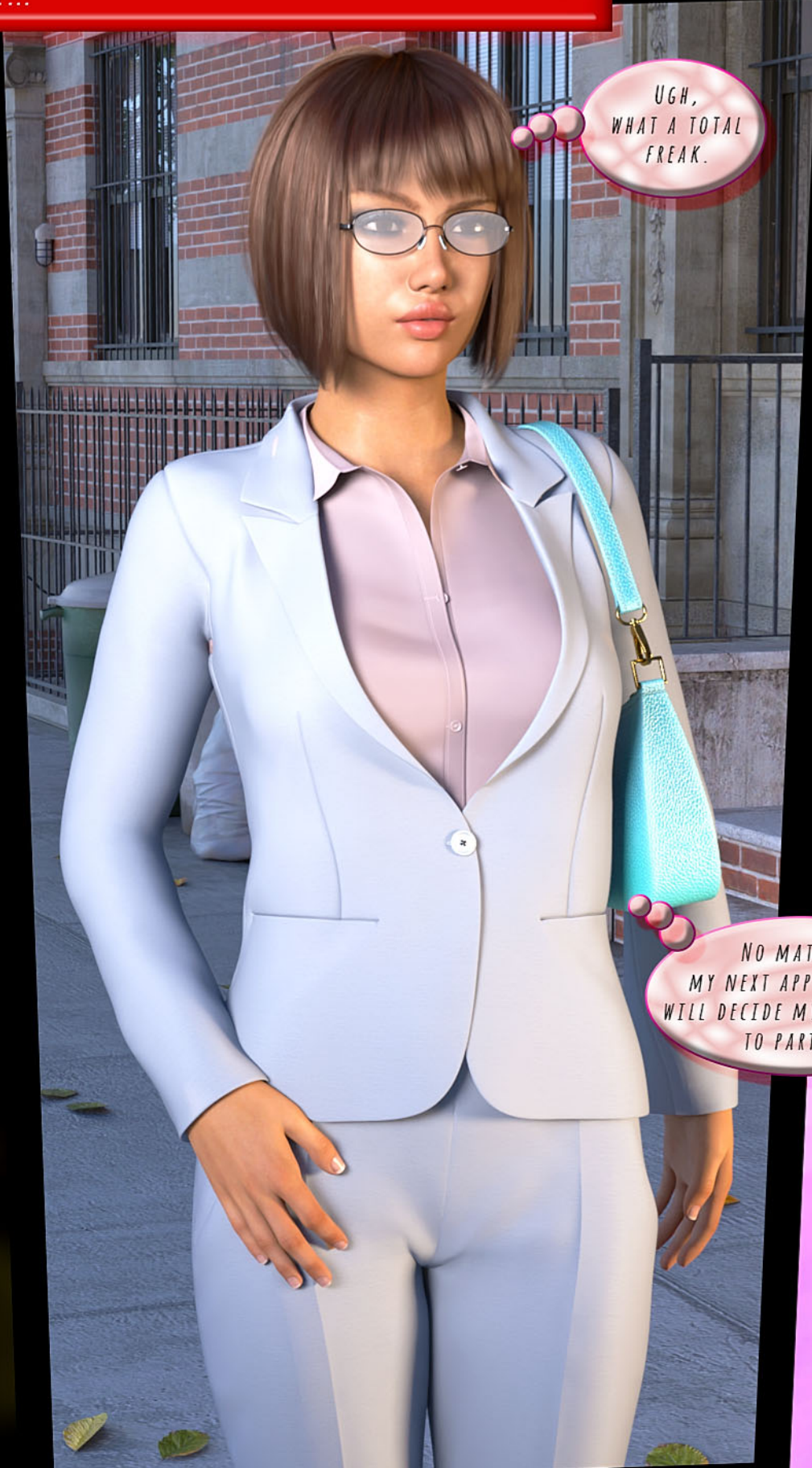
Never in  
my unlife have I beheld  
a woman thus: curves so ripe,  
and yet a waist so narrow.

At  
her years - and with such  
childbearing hips - by rights  
she ought to be beneath the  
couvre-chef...

WAAAAAAAAA!!!

...yet the blood of this fair maid, Molly, is not without its... complications.

Behold: this was Monica Black, just two days earlier. On that day, however, she insulted the wrong woman over a bus seat...



UGH,  
WHAT A TOTAL  
FREAK.

NO MATTER—  
MY NEXT APPOINTMENT  
WILL DECIDE MY PROMOTION  
TO PARTNER.

...and thus Monica Black became simply Molly - a distorted reflection of her former self.



\*stretch\*

YOU  
GOTTA BE  
KIDDING ME...  
RIGHT?

\*plump\*

...and that woman laid a curse upon her.



OH MY...  
MY HEAD FEELS, LIKE,  
SOOO WEIRD RIGHT  
NOW...

...a curse that has now worked freely for forty-eight hours...



OHHH,  
LIKE-SOOO  
SHINY...

\*GIGGLE\*  
\*GIGGLE\*

\*grow\*

Know this:  
blood is life. Yet  
it also carries...  
information.



Mon Dieu...  
and the moment her  
blood touched my tongue,  
I sensed the curse - yet  
by then its workings  
were already coursing  
through me...

The effect came swiftly. Even as I drank her blood, the curse upon her began to weaken... and the process reversed itself.



What I did not yet realize... was that the curse had passed on to me.

These are strange times... so many impressions flooding into my mind at once.

But I must leave - the dawn rise.

...and tomorrow night, I shall begin planning my vengeance on those who once betrayed me... or their descendants.

But on that night, I remained unaware of it. That would change soon enough...

WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?

I FELT LIKE... LIKE I WAS TRAPPED INSIDE MY OWN DREAM...

...FORCED TO WATCH MY MIND AND BODY TWIST OUT OF CONTROL!

CURSES EXIST? WHAT THE -

I NEED HELP. FAST.

BUT WHO THE HELL DO I EVEN TURN TO?

AND I NEED REAL CLOTHES... THESE ARE WAY TOO CLICHÉ- AND CHEAP!

I'M NOT SOME KIND OF... FLOOZY!

Every vampire keeps a sanctum - a sacred resting place known simply as a haven.

Most of the old estate lies in ruins, but the tower still stands. And inside, Johann, Alaric's ghoul, awaits his lord with a carefully prepared surprise.

Johann had been the lead researcher supervising a team of four archaeologists when they uncovered the decayed manor - and the vampire lying in torpor within its crypt. It was his carelessness that allowed a few drops of blood to fall upon Alaric's lips...

That was one week ago. After feeding well on the blood of the researchers, he chose to bind them as his ghouls - humans tied to the ancient vampire by his blood. For even a Nosferatu can make good use of loyal servants to watch over the day.

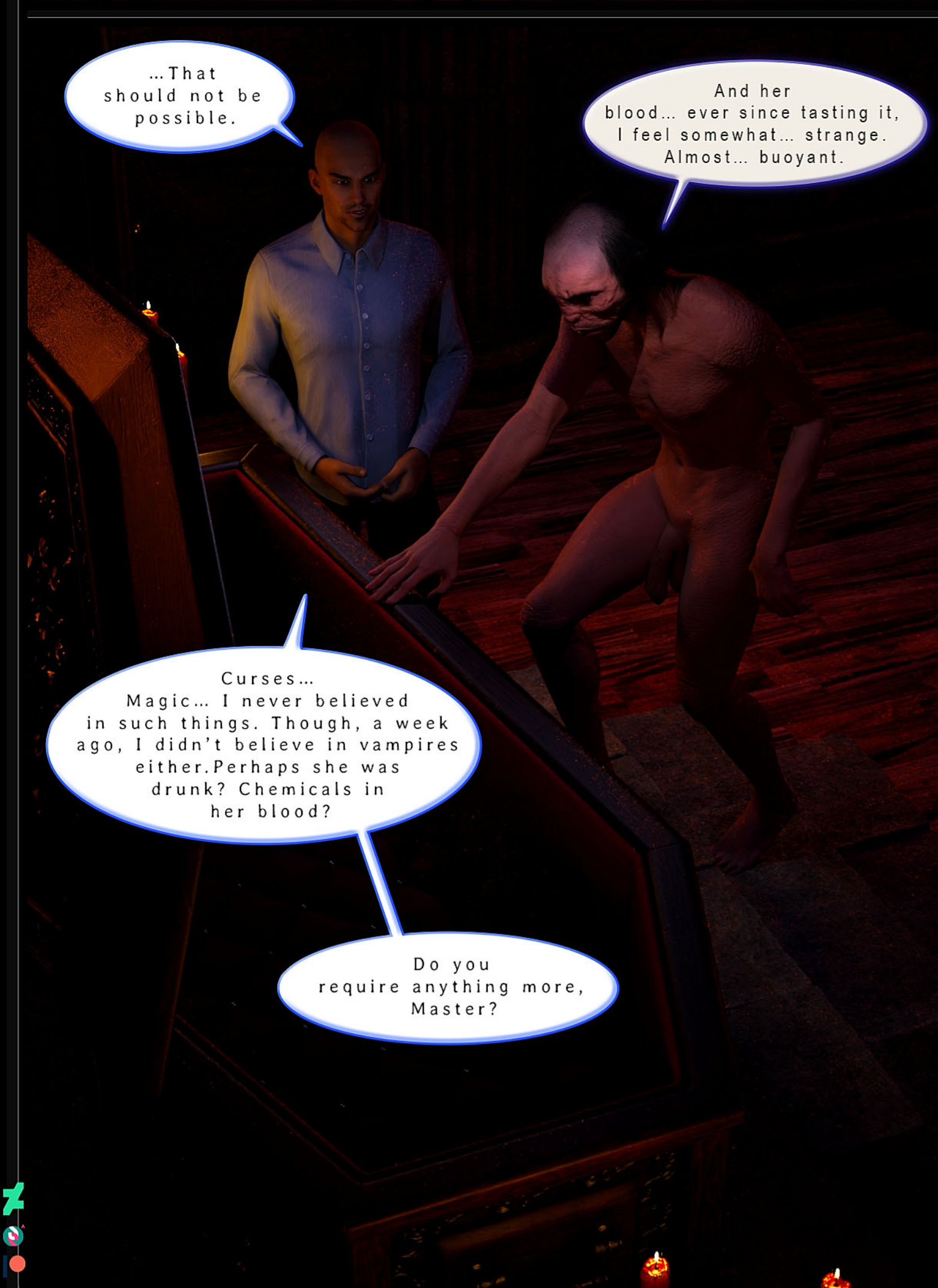
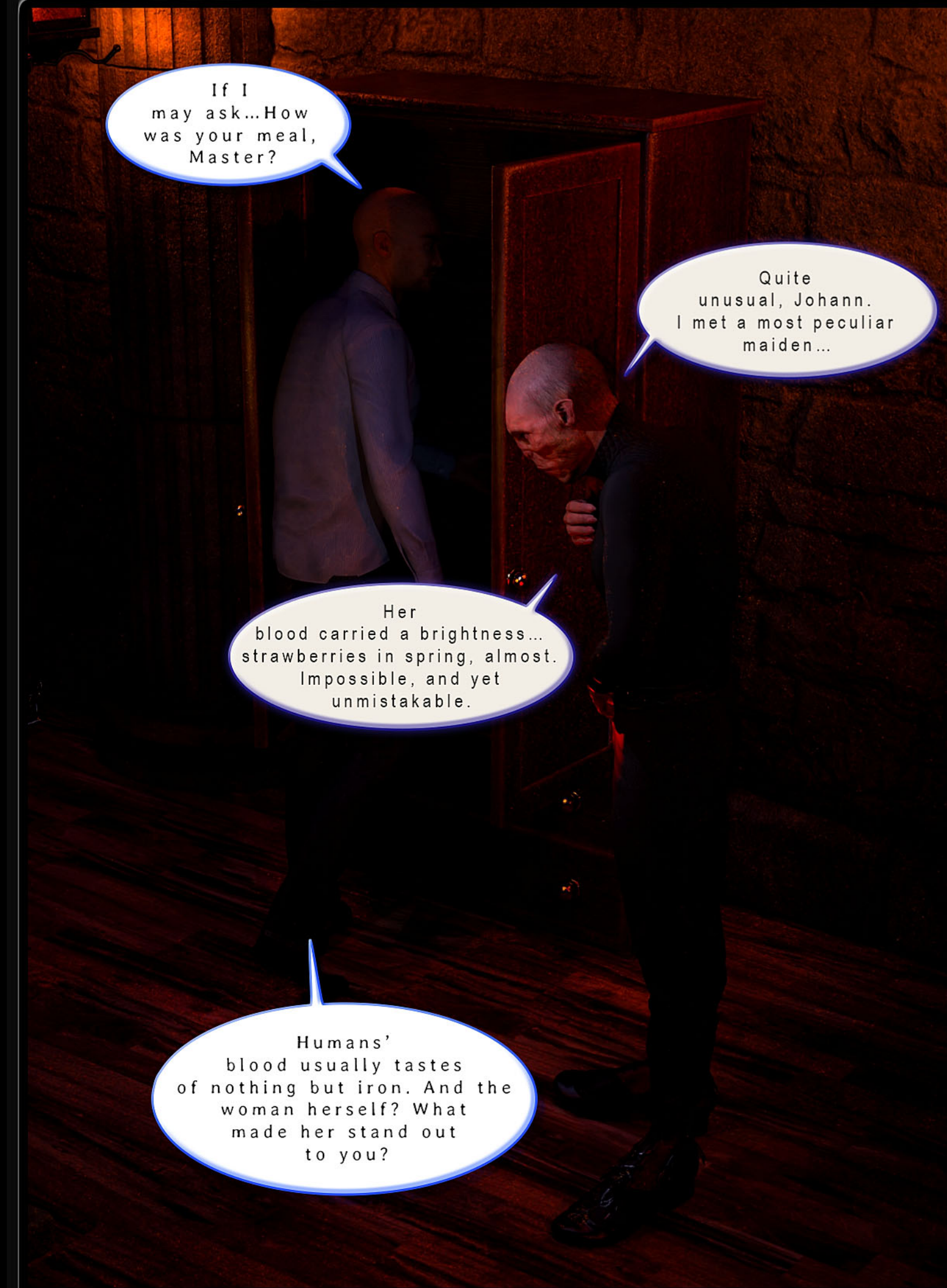
Master, welcome back. Behold what we have prepared for your magnificence...

Thank you, Johann... a fine coffin on a fitting pedestal.

Now then, Johann - assist me in undressing.

Quickly now; dawn draws near.

Of course, Master. While the house is being restored, you may rest here in perfect safety, shielded from any intrusion.



With the first rooster's cry - heard only faintly now in a suburb like Harrow's Cove—Lord Alaric rests safely within his coffin.

Meanwhile, Johann prepares everything for the upcoming restoration work. The ancient vampire's tale has already faded into the background... just another piece of strange small talk.

What a ridiculous story... must be some eccentric habit of ancient beings.

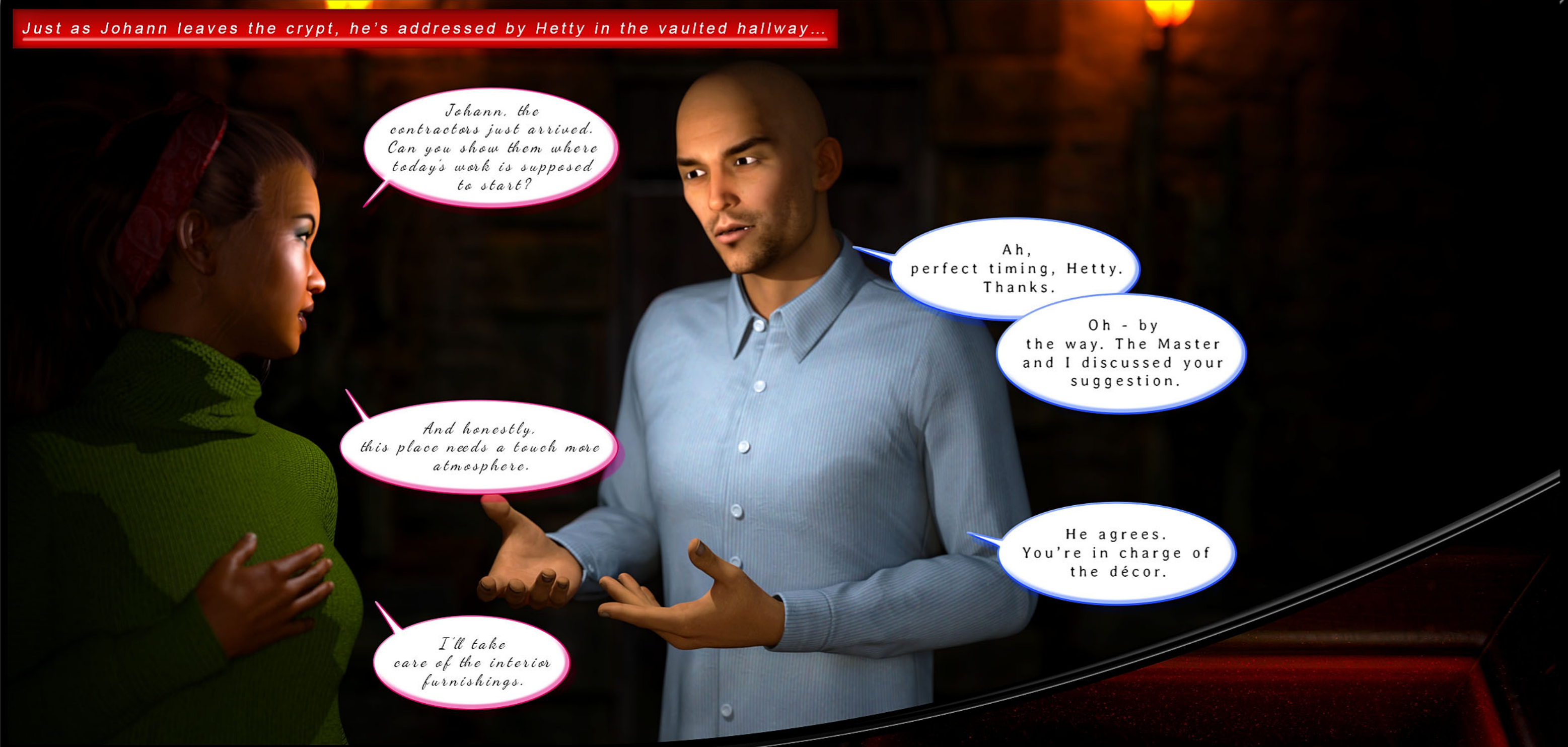
Still, there's more important work to do. The contractors arrive at eight, and the team needs instructions.

And we have to hide the Master's vitae bottles from any curious eyes... can't risk questions.

Hetty has a talent for decor. I'll send her to handle the interior design shopping.

We're making good progress. Another week or two, and the house should be fully restored... and we can sleep in proper beds again.

Just as Johann leaves the crypt, he's addressed by Hetty in the vaulted hallway...



Johann, the contractors just arrived. Can you show them where today's work is supposed to start?

Ah, perfect timing, Hetty. Thanks.

Oh - by the way. The Master and I discussed your suggestion.

And honestly, this place needs a touch more atmosphere.

He agrees. You're in charge of the décor.

I'll take care of the interior furnishings.

...and while the day moves on and everyone tends to their mundane tasks...



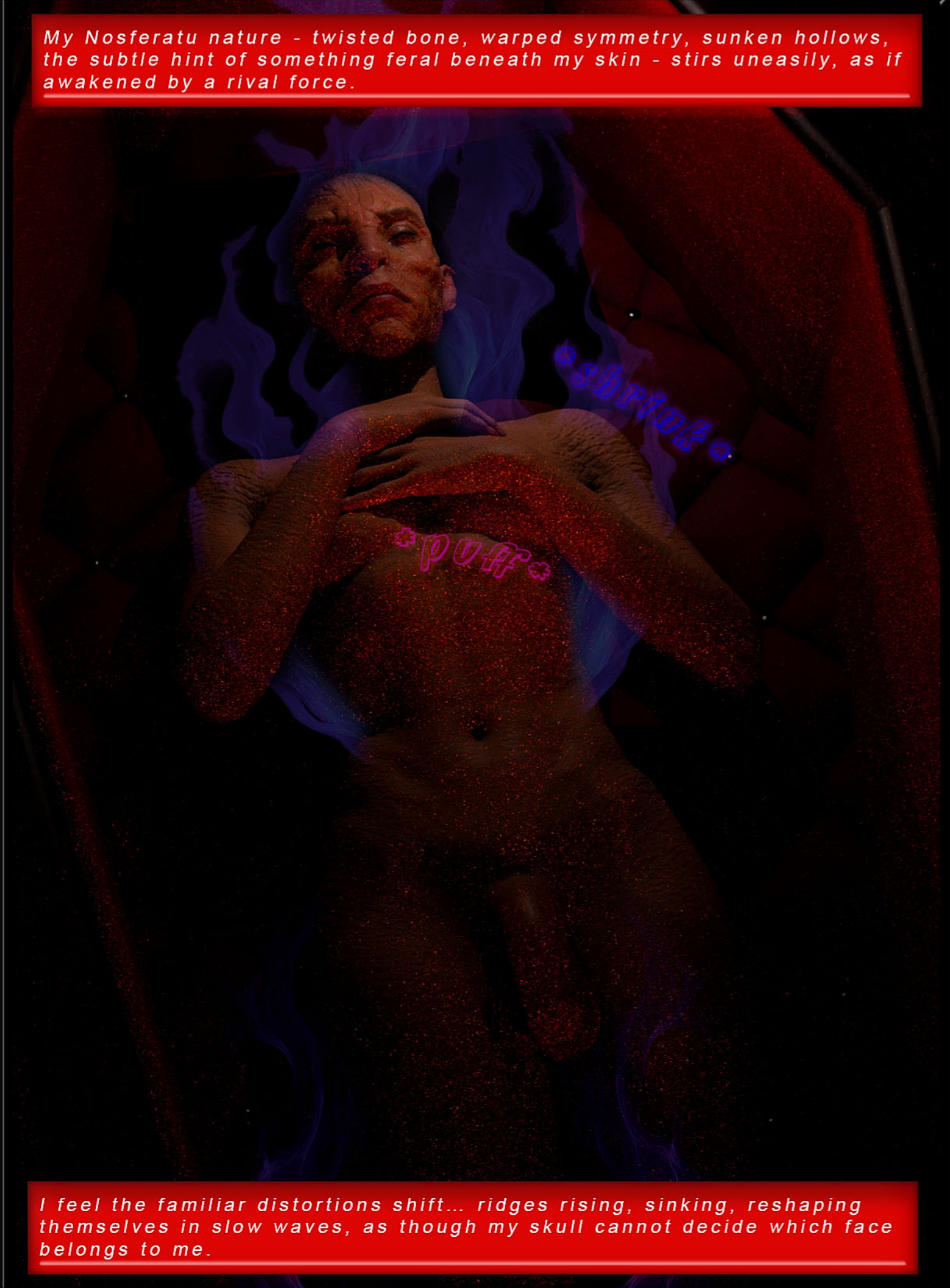
...things are stirring inside the vampire's coffin as well. Let us take a look.

The first traces of change surfaced the moment I fed on Molly's blood...



...but now, in the depth of my daylight slumber, the curse that slipped into me begins to press harder against my flesh.

My Nosferatu nature - twisted bone, warped symmetry, sunken hollows, the subtle hint of something feral beneath my skin - stirs uneasily, as if awakened by a rival force.



I feel the familiar distortions shift... ridges rising, sinking, reshaping themselves in slow waves, as though my skull cannot decide which face belongs to me.

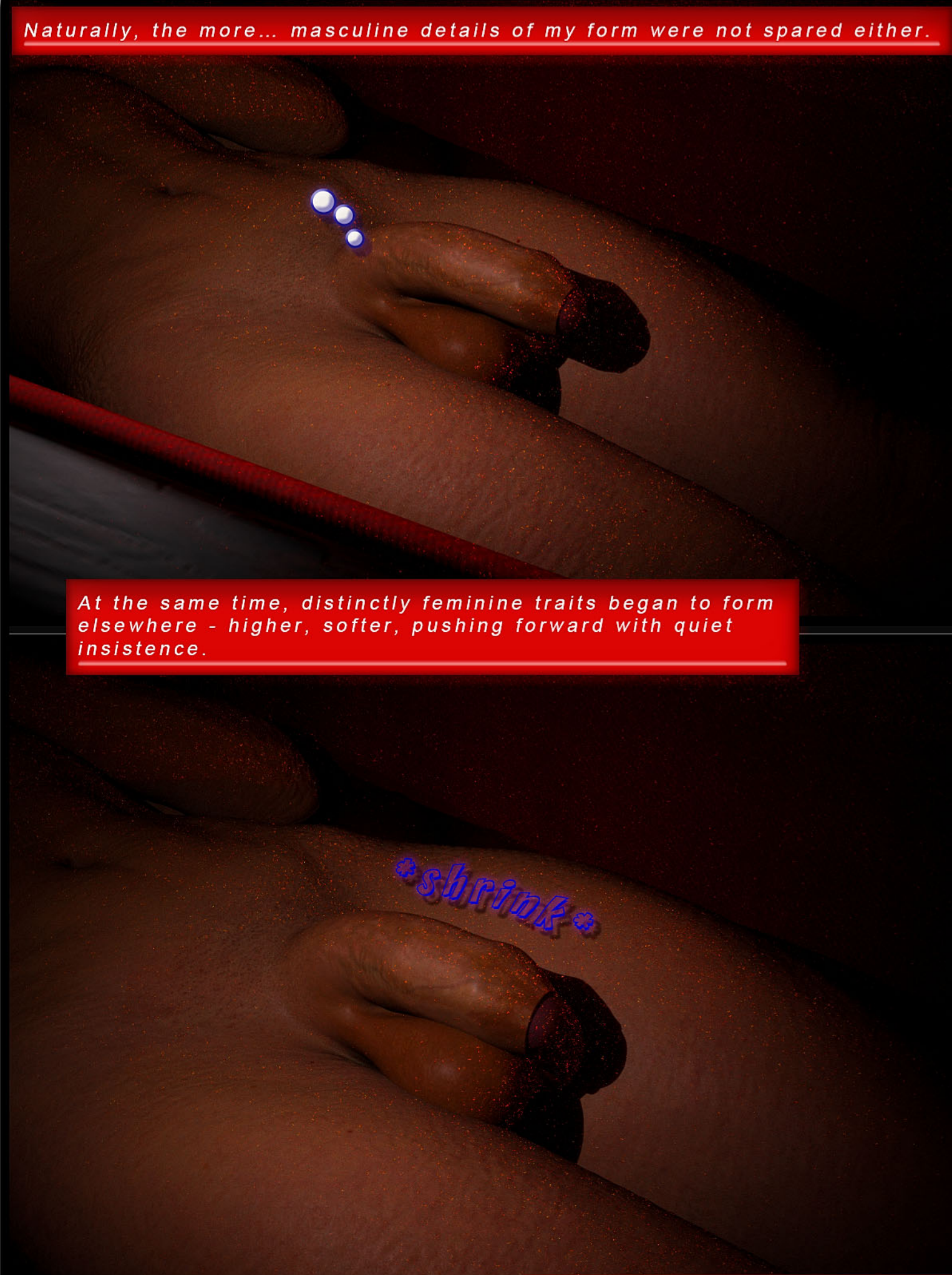
Yet instead of growing more grotesque, the curse tempers the beast.

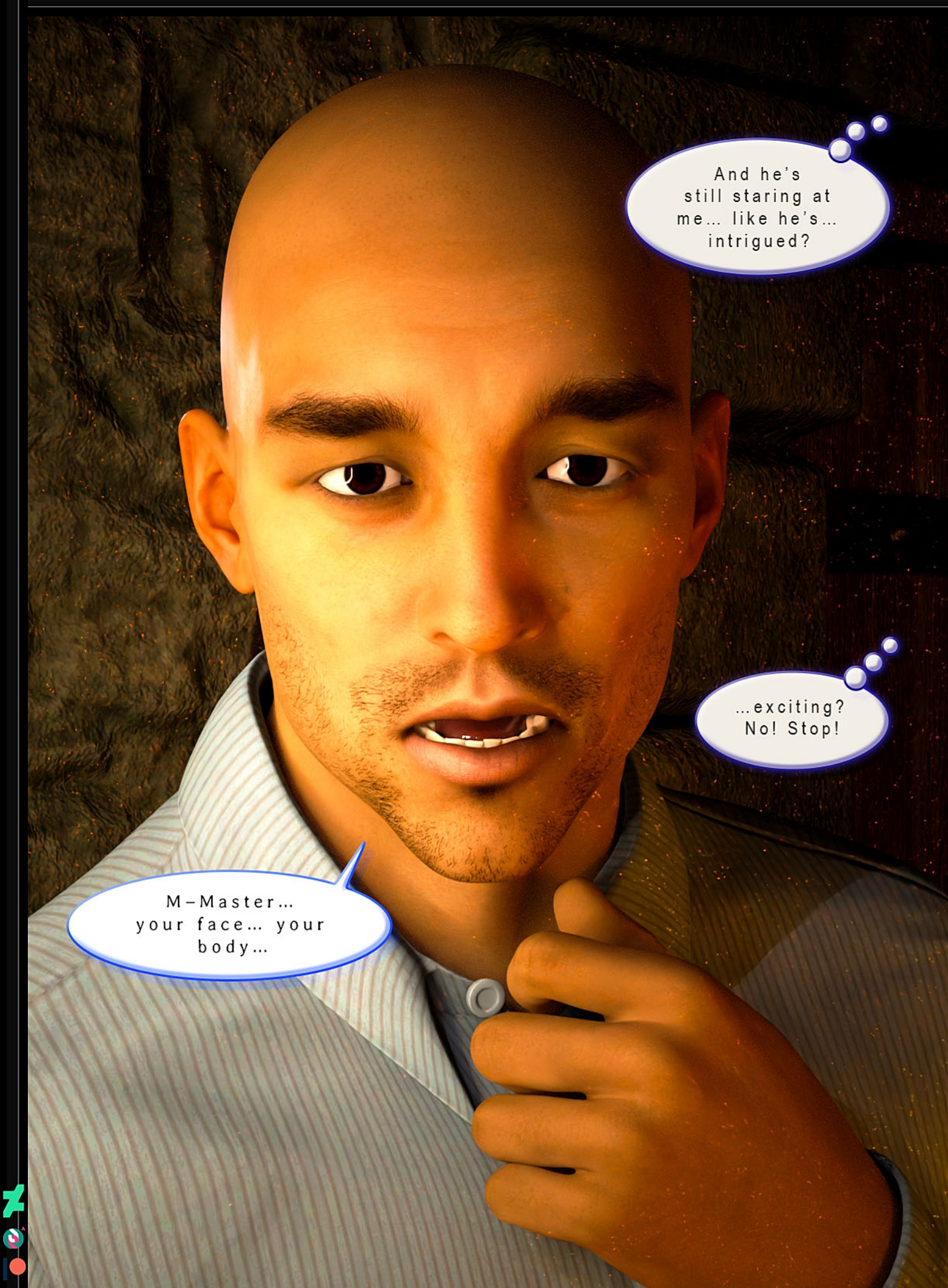


Angles soften. Asymmetry evens. The monstrous bends toward something unnervingly androgynous—neither wholly masculine nor entirely feminine, but a strange, unnatural harmony between both.

My face becomes the battleground on which clan and curse wrestle for dominance... and even in sleep, I sense that neither intends to yield.







How does one explain a transformation to a creature who casts no reflection?

Johann, ever the pragmatist... chooses the most direct method imaginable. And that is how -

Master!  
This is... a budding  
breast. Your  
breast.

It seems  
to have developed  
during the day, while  
you slept.

Your face  
has changed as well.  
The old distortions are  
almost gone...

You look  
nearly human  
again - though...  
androgynous.

I cannot  
imagine that,  
as a knight, you  
ever looked more  
like a maid than  
a man.

Have  
you entirely lost  
your mind?!

What  
the -?!

EEK!

JOHANN!

