

Shallow *Sleep*

VII. Down, down, down





Thanks for letting me crash here tonight, Leo!

I can't believe I missed the last train...

It's not a big deal...

You helped
me out by
staying longer
despite your
shift being
over, so...

WELL!

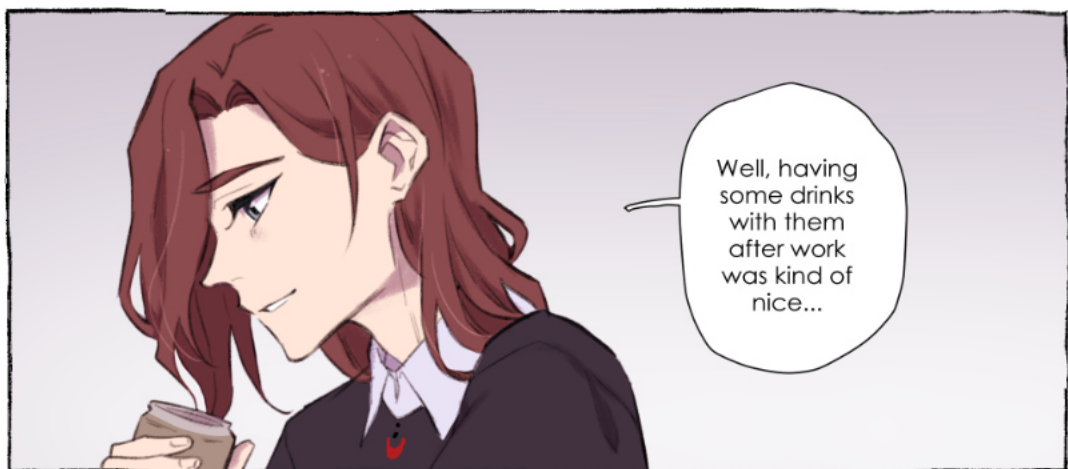
I couldn't
just leave
you alone
with all
those
people!!!

Who knew
Gero would
show up with
all his homies
and hang
at the store
for 4 hours!

Right.

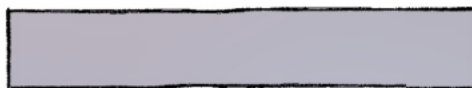
You definitely
didn't stick
around to
flirt with every
single one of
Gero's friends.

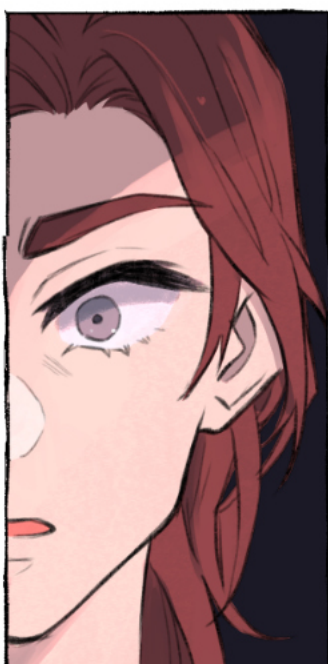
Lies and
slander!!



















You
okay?

Look,

I don't
know what
this is about,

or what's
going on
with you
in general,
really.

But you know
you CAN talk
to me if you
need to, right?

That's what
friends are
for after all.





I don't
...



I don't
have
friends.



I see.

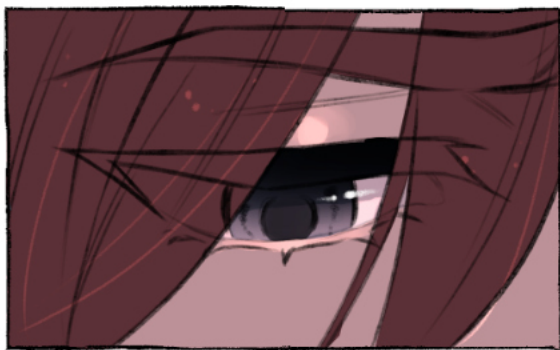
It gets old
at some
point, you
know.

If you keep
saying things
like that

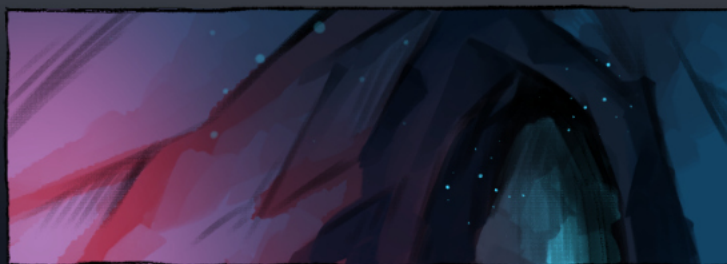
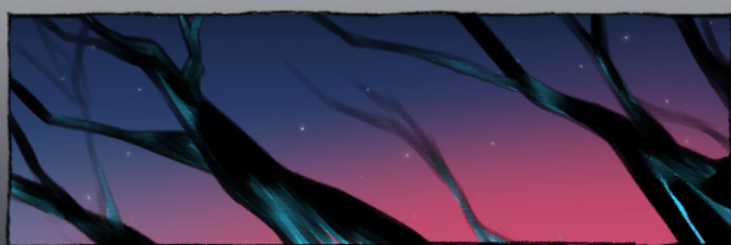
you'll get
your wish
one day.

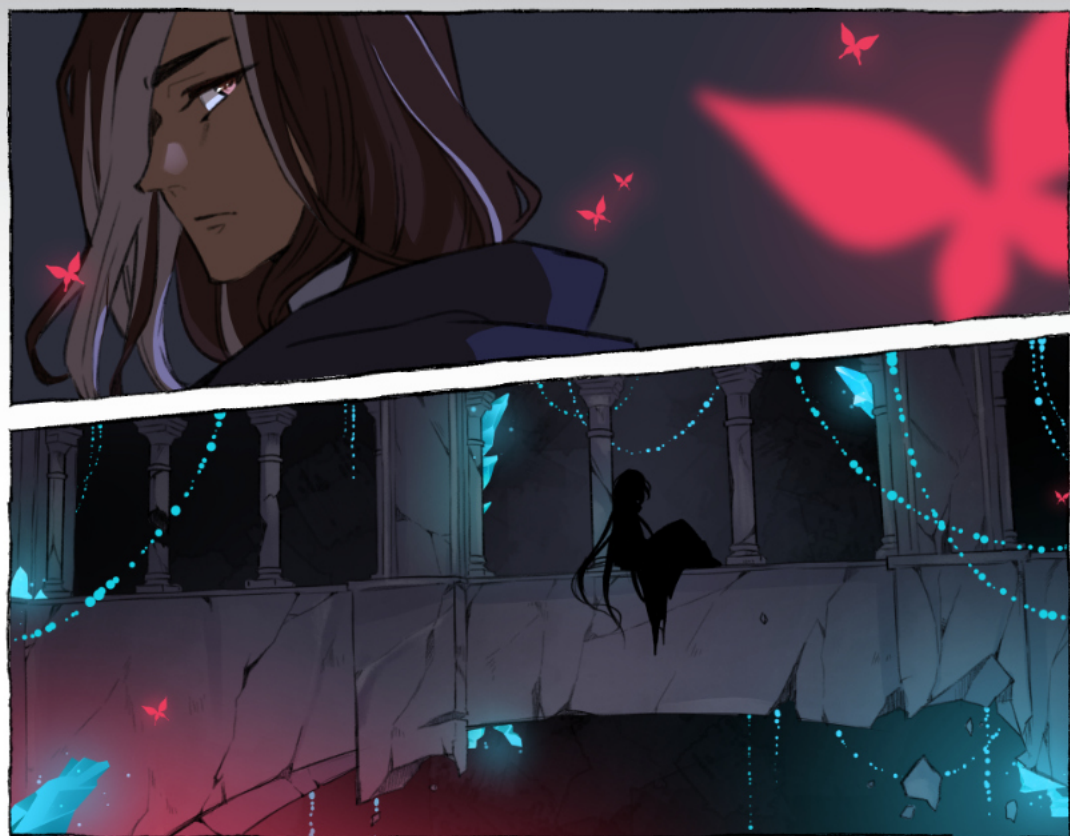
There'll
be no one
around to
listen to it
anymore.

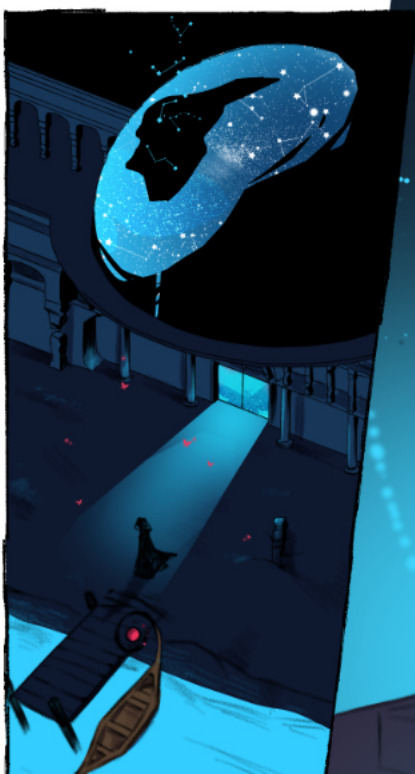
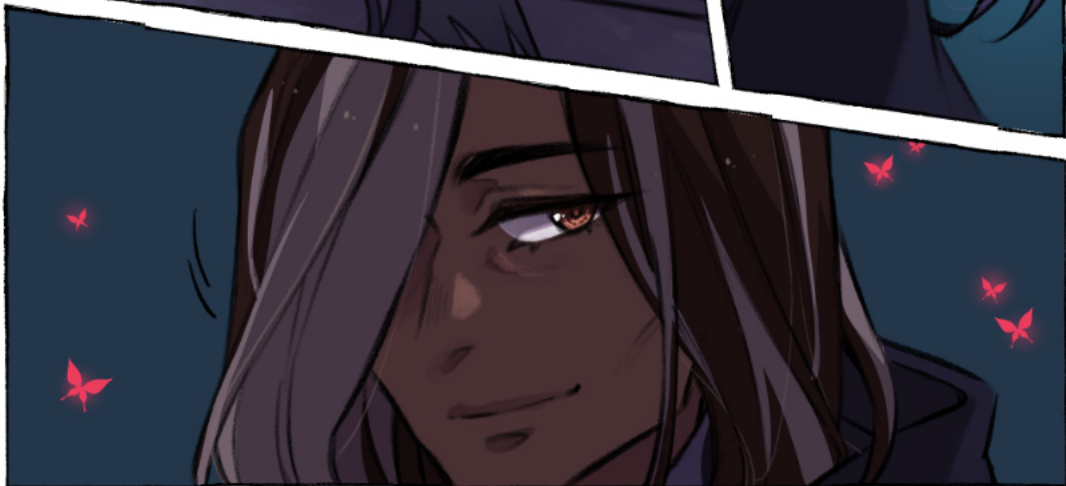
I'm going
to the
bathroom.











The first
thing I
remember





is waking
up in the
dark, so
long ago.

Empty.

A husk
with no
purpose.



Like a moth
being drawn
to the light,

I mindlessly
followed
the river,

led by a faint,
gentle melody
that I could
hear all around
me.

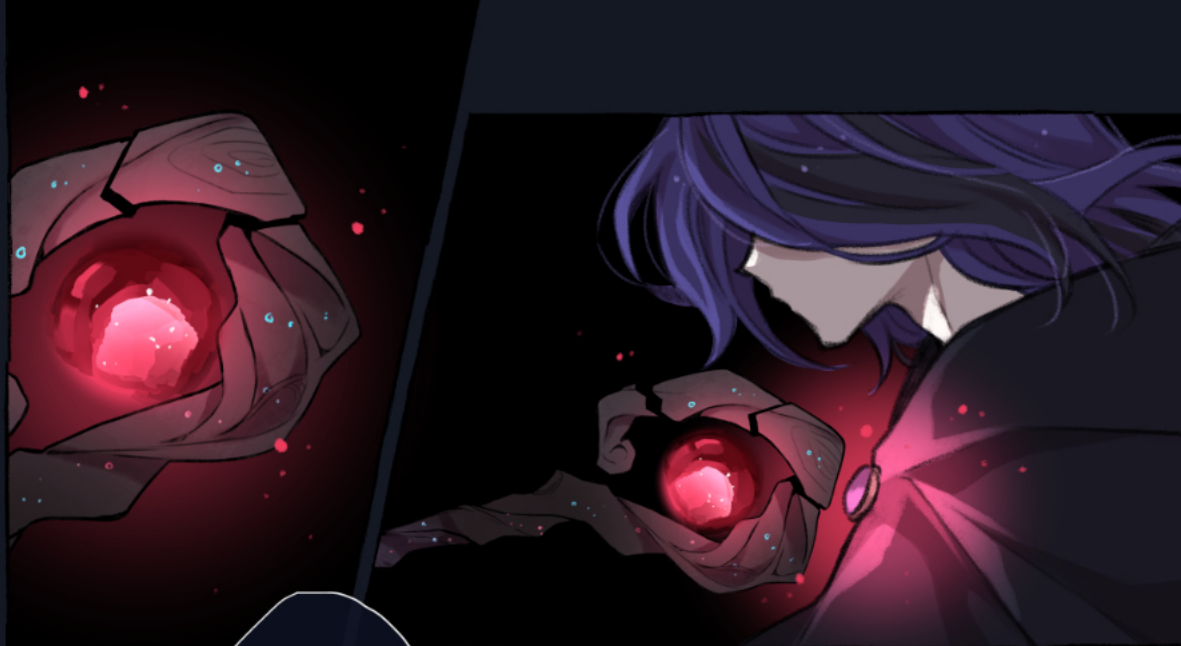
Until I arrived
at the caves,
where my
mentor was
already waiting
for me.



*He greeted
me, his deep
gentle voice
reverberating
in my head,*



*and as he put
this gem onto
my chest,*



*I felt
this empty
vessel fill up
and slowly
becoming...*

me.





*He gave me
my name,
Charon,
without ever
telling me his,*

*and began
teaching me
about our
purpose.*





I never asked for explanations. I knew I would not get any.



My mentor didn't have answers to the questions I knew we both had.



As did the many Keepers who came before us.



All we had to rely on were the old archives and the journals from our predecessors.



None of whom seemed to have any memory of times before waking up here and becoming Keepers.



Where we
came from,

who was
the first,

why
we were
chosen
for this
task...



none of
us know.



Still,
we do
our duty,
because
it's all we
know.



And our
reward will
be peace,
and rest.



*We look like
the humans
we are meant
to serve.*

*Yet we don't
know if we
look like them
to make their
souls feel more
comfortable
when we care
for them, or if,
somehow,*

*we were
once human,
too.*



*We do know
that we are
NOT like them,
however.*

*And that we
have to keep
our distance.*



*It has always
made sense
to me,
somehow.*



Don't touch.

Stay away.

*But
now...*

*after
meeting
Leo...*



*something
has changed.*



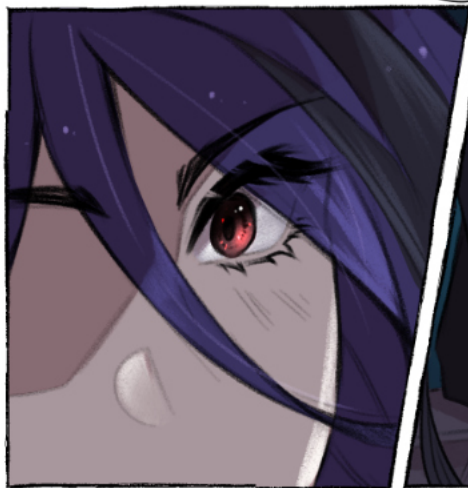
*For the
first time*

*I feel
longing.*



Charon.

You're
back.

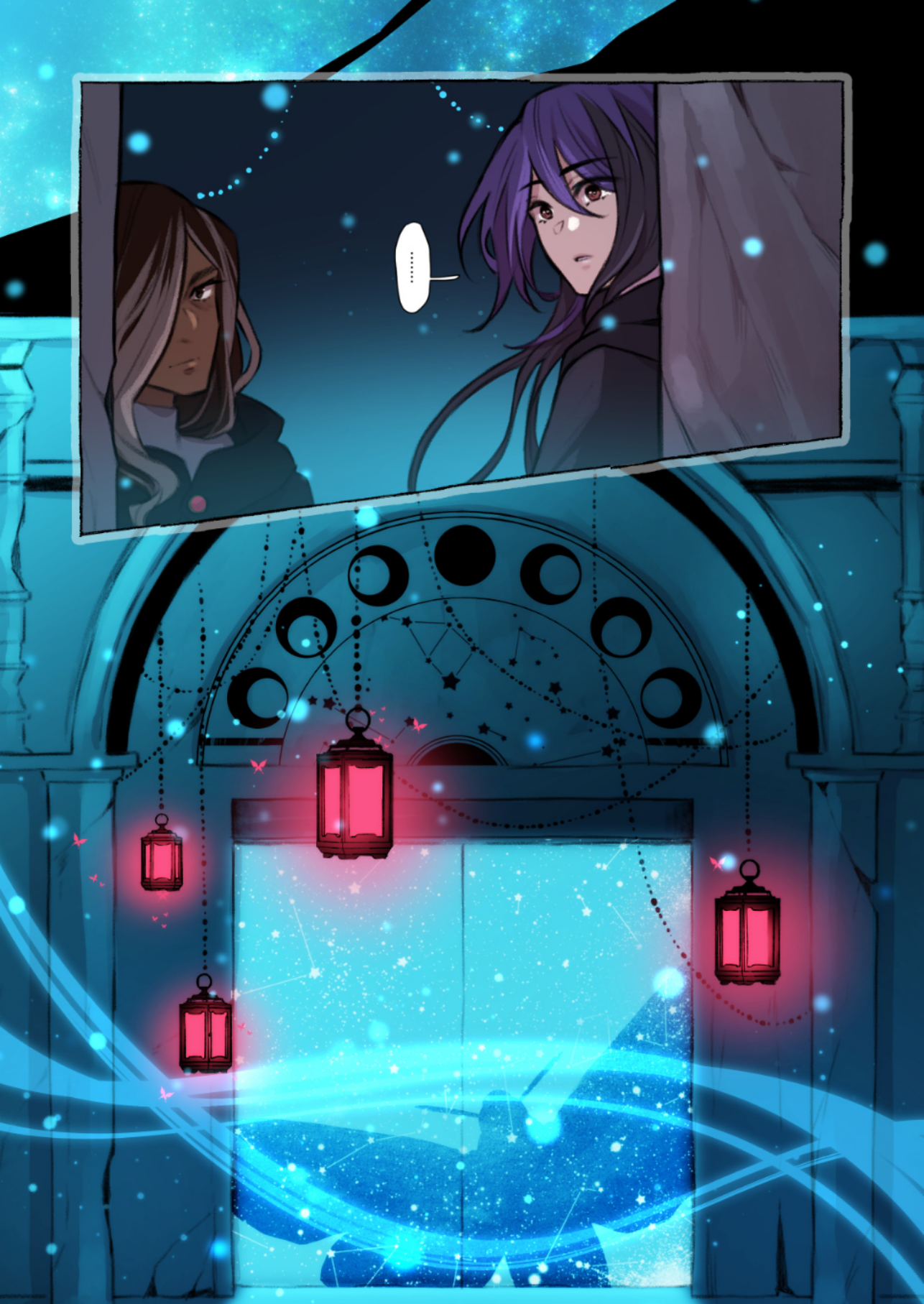
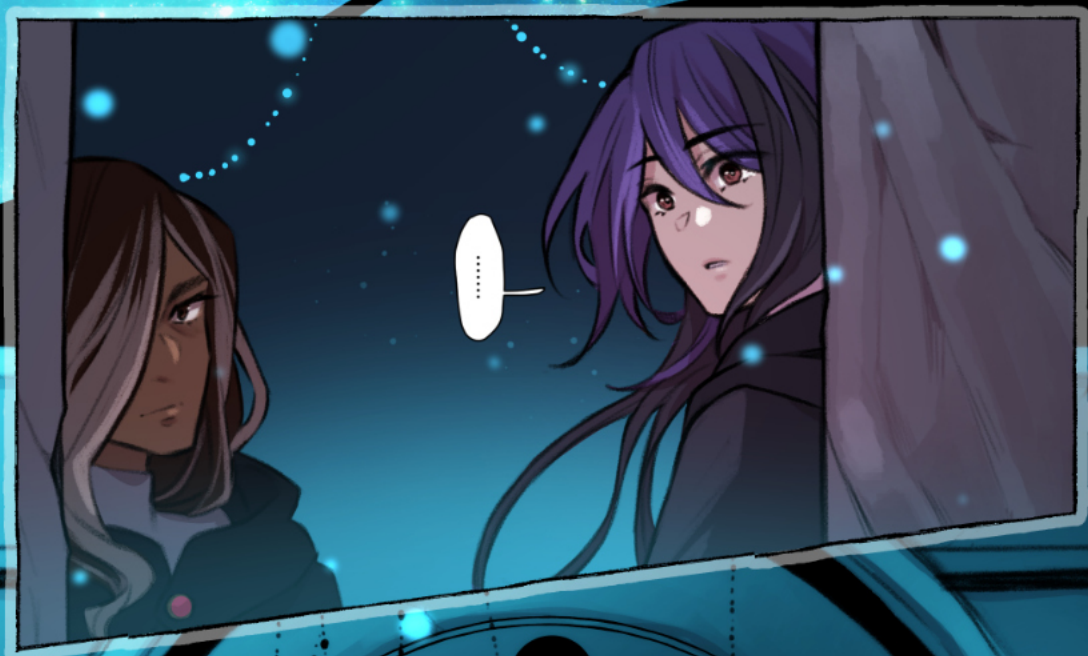






The souls in
the Endless
Sea

are awaiting
their new
Keeper.







If you keep
saying things
like that...



one day
...





there'll be
no one around
to listen to it
anymore.