MARVEL

EXCLUSIVE

INFINITY COMICS

GHOST RIDER KUSHALA

006

CHAPTER 6: RETURN TO WHENCE WE CAME

T+

TONGVA LAND, 1974.

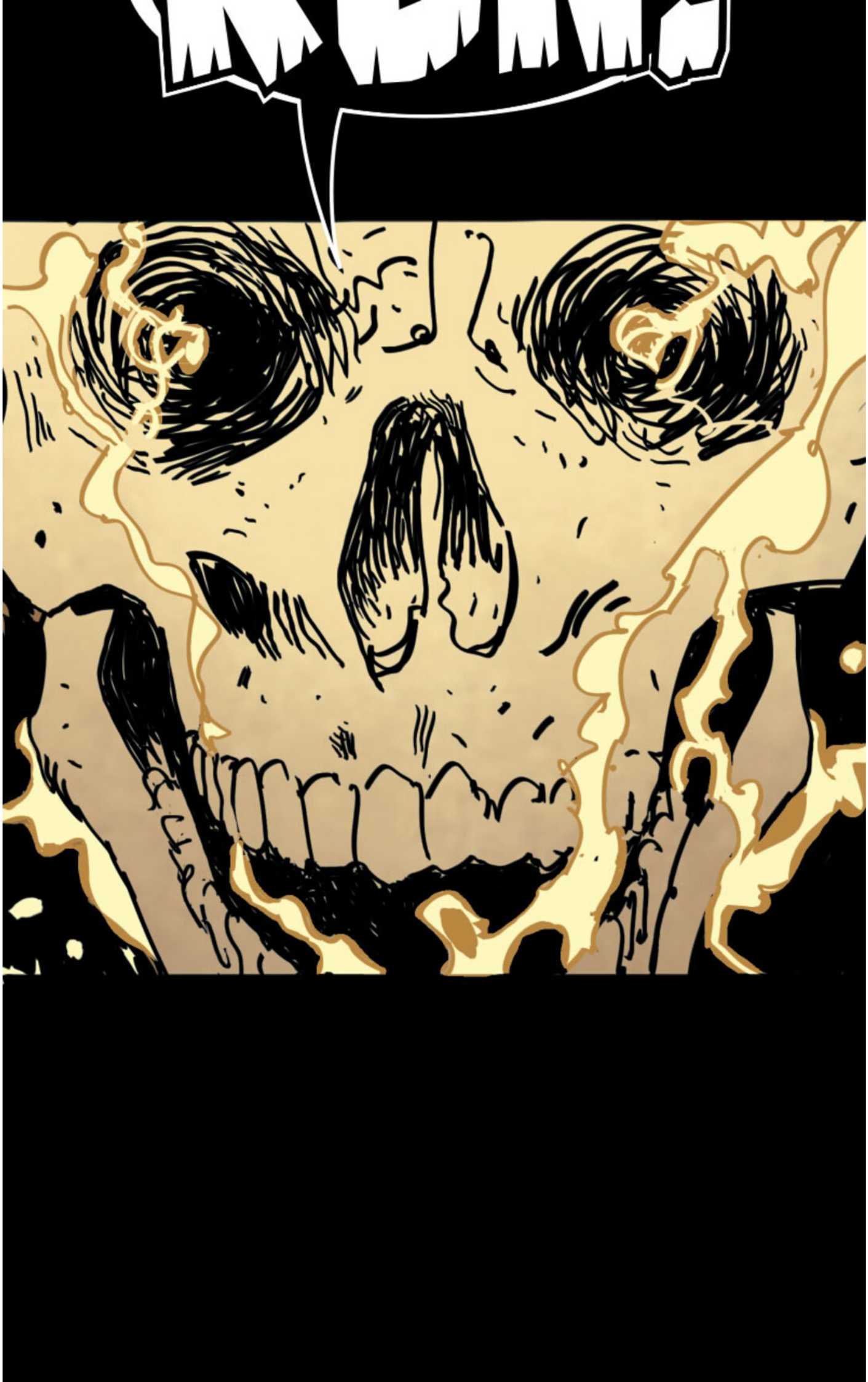
I HAVE A FEELING WE ARE DEFINITELY NOT COOL.

MAYBE YOU SHOULD CHILL OUT THEN, SIS.
FLICK

LET'S ALL BE COOL... YOU CAN HAVE MY CAR... JUST DON'T HURT THAT GIRL. PLEASE.
FWOOOM
THANKS, UNCLE EDGAR, BUT I CAN HANDLE THIS.

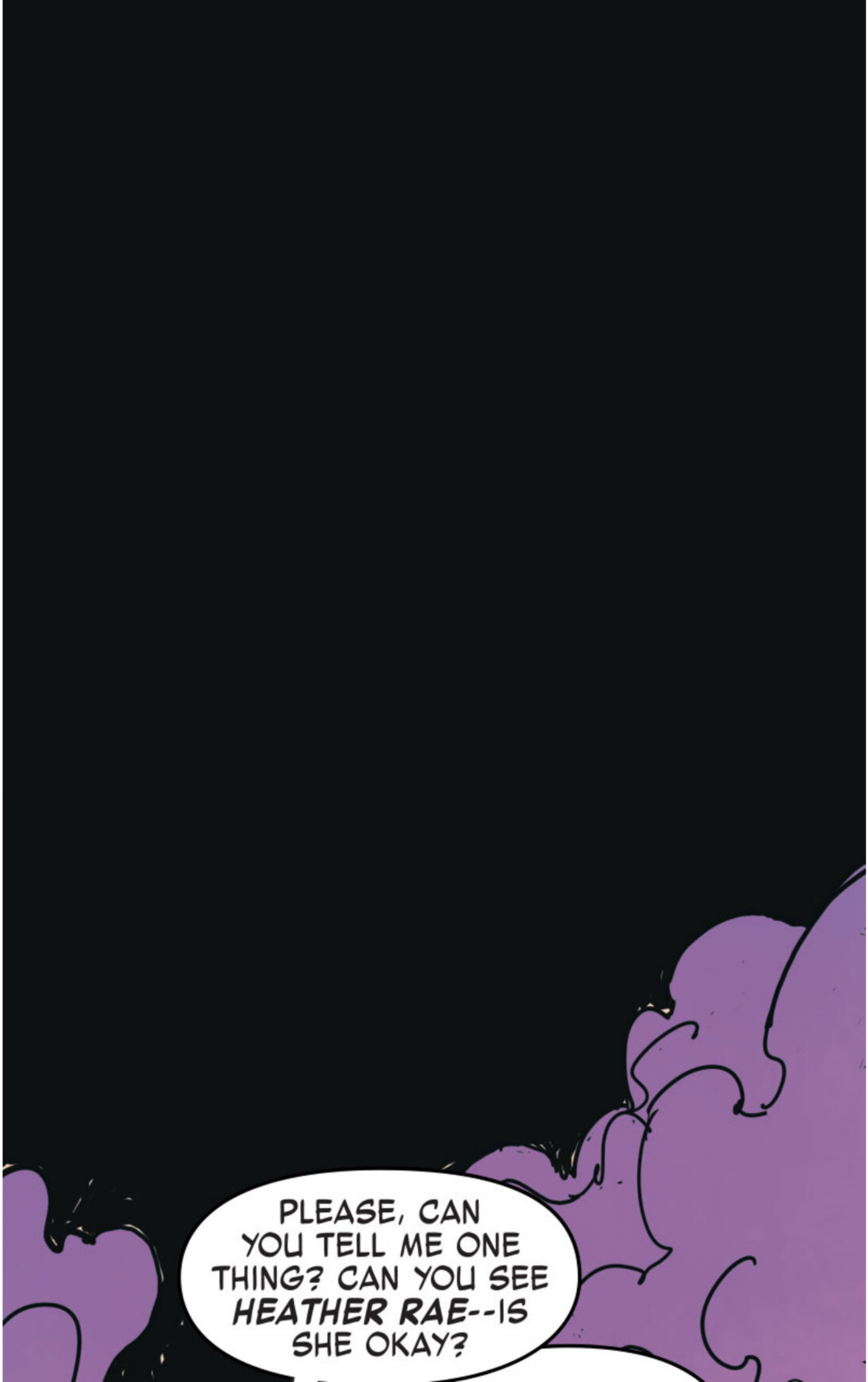
AND YOU FOUR... I HAVE ONLY ONE THING TO SAY TO YOU LOSERS...

HOLY...
RUN



GO, GO, GO!
I AM NEVER MESSING WITH AN INDIAN AGAIN, I SWEAR.
HELLO, GRANDSON.

I KNOW, MY DEAR. BUT THERE *IS* ONE PERFECT OUTCOME...
...ONE THAT IS COMPLETELY *IN TUNE* FOR THE BOTH OF YOU.
WE WILL HELP YOU FIND THE WAY.


PLEASE, CAN YOU TELL ME ONE THING? CAN YOU SEE HEATHER RAE--IS SHE OKAY?

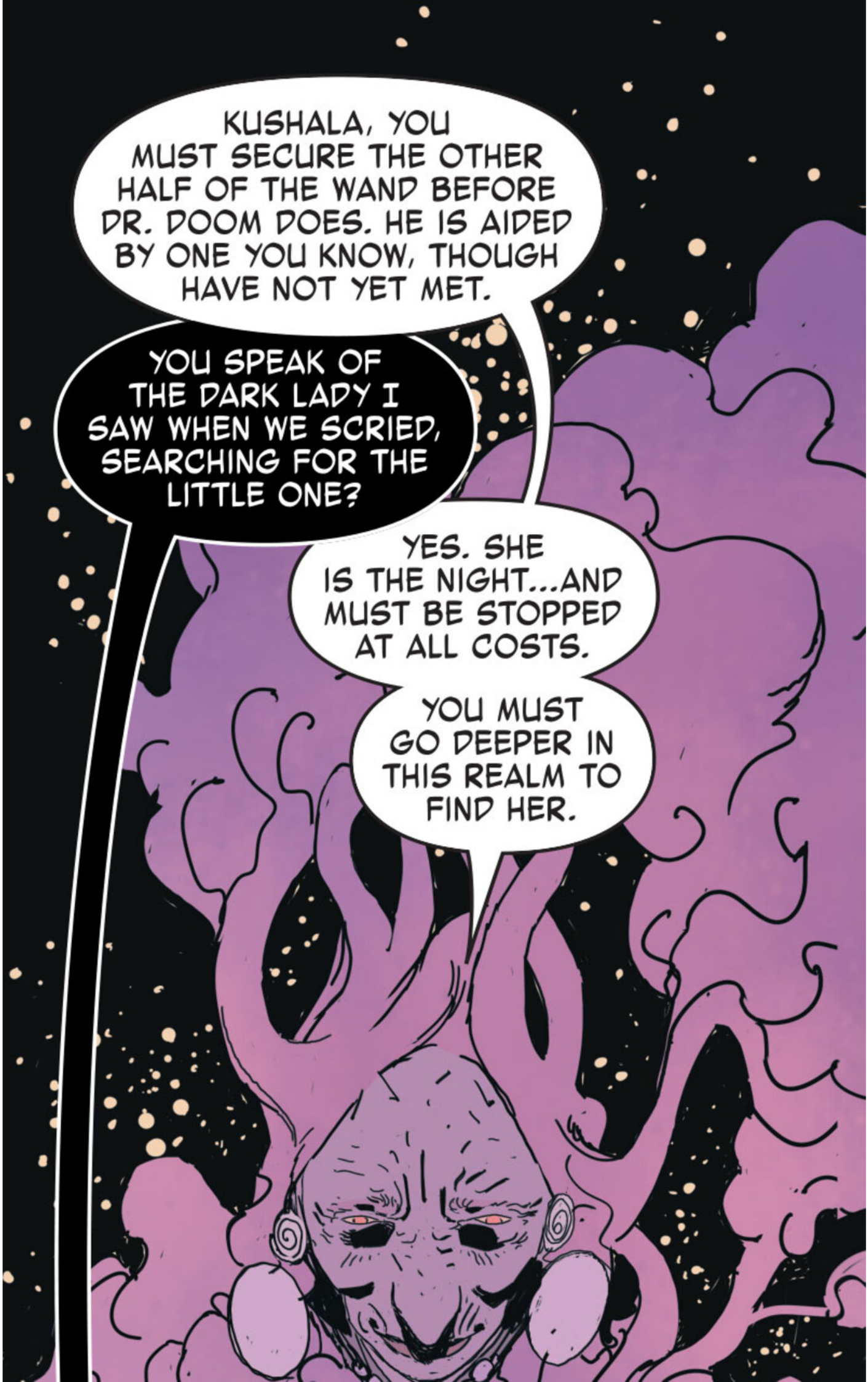
THAT I DO NOT KNOW. I ONLY KNOW THAT SHE IS NOT WHERE SHE *SHOULD* BE.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT? WHERE SHOULD SHE BE?

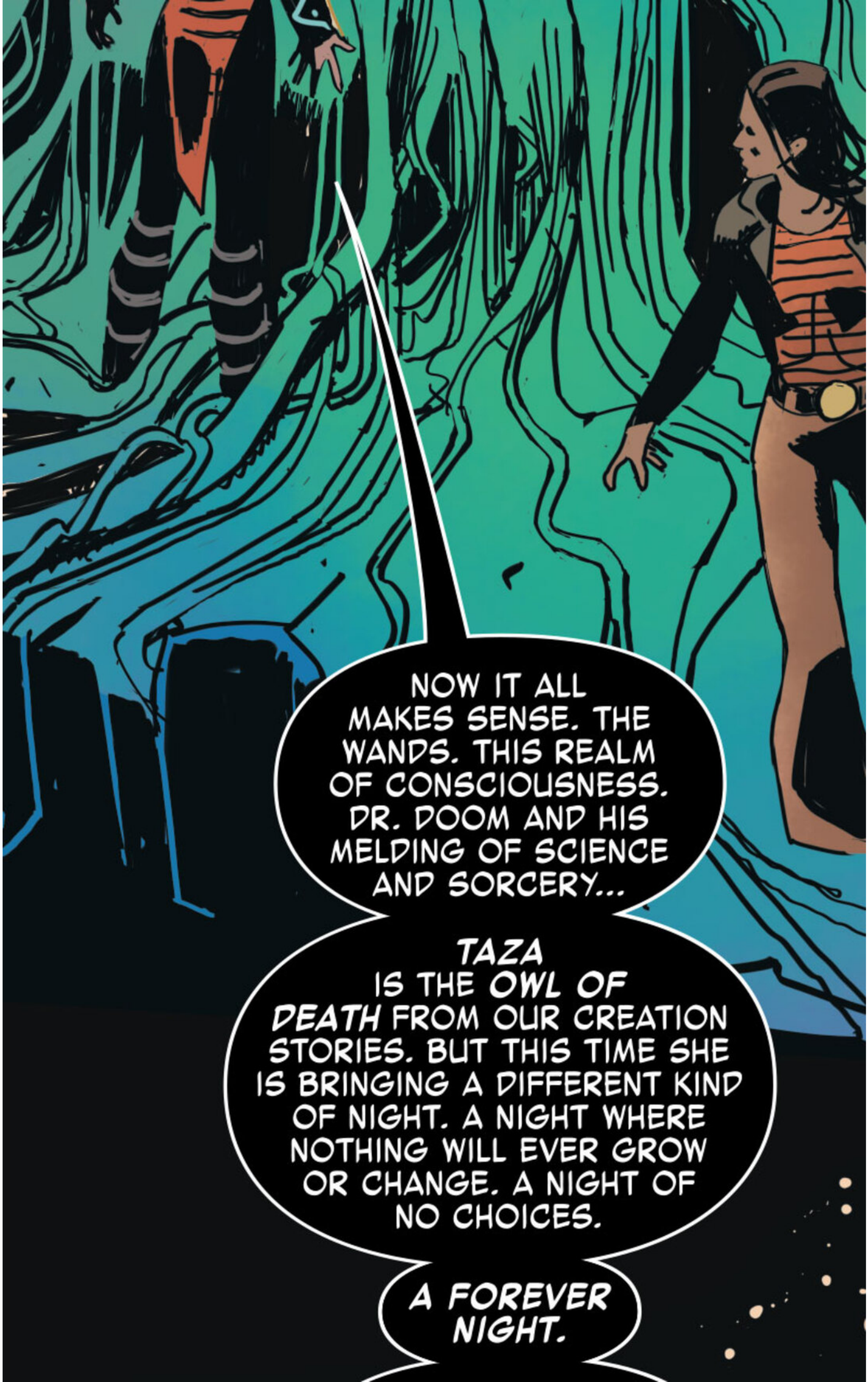
THINK OF YOUR BODY AS A MACHINE THAT RUNS SOFTWARE THAT CONNECTS BACK TO A "*CONSCIOUSNESS.*"

THAT "CONSCIOUSNESS" IS MADE UP OF IDEAS AND CHOICES RELATED TO EXPERIENCES, PATHWAYS THAT BRANCH FROM ONE DECISION TO THE NEXT.
THIS IS WHERE THE "CONSCIOUSNESS," OR SPIRIT, LIVES SO THAT IT CAN CONTINUE TO EXPERIENCE AND COME BACK AS IT FINE-TUNES ITS CHOICES, LEARNING FROM ITS MISTAKES AND SUCCESSES.
AS PEOPLE OF BOTH THE STARS AND THE LAND, WE HAVE MORE ACCESS TO THIS SPACE THAN MOST. WE KNOW OUR SPIRITS WELL.
BUT YOUR DAUGHTER'S CONSCIOUSNESS IS A BLACK HOLE. WE CANNOT SENSE HER ANYWHERE.

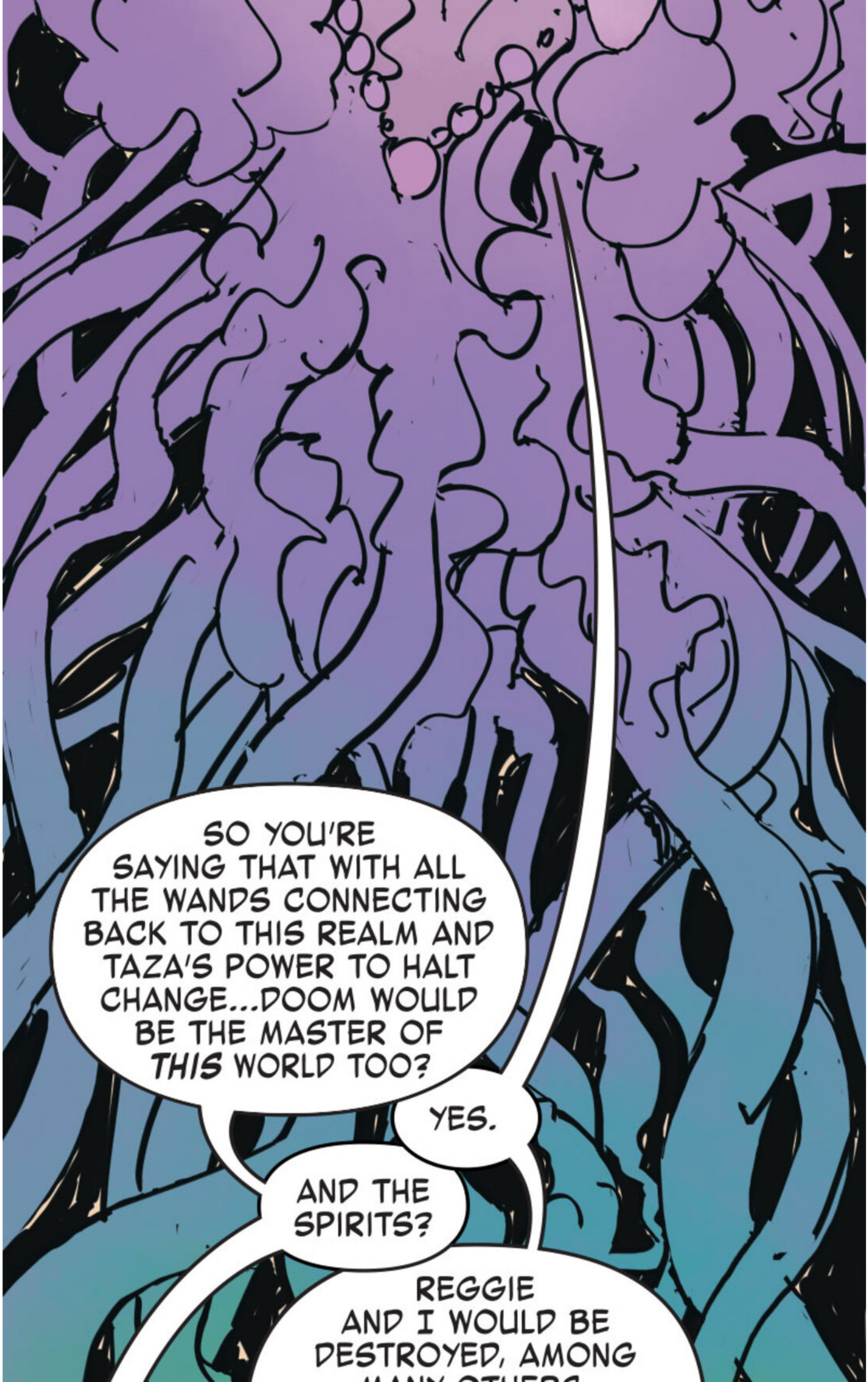
YOU HAVE TO FIND HER, MY LOVE.
NOTHING WILL STOP ME FROM GETTING OUR DAUGHTER BACK.
I KNOW. THAT'S WHAT I LOVE ABOUT YOU--YOU'RE FEARLESS AND RELENTLESS.
IT'S NOT MY SENSE OF HUMOR AND RIDICULOUSLY GOOD LOOKS?
HA! YOU'RE ONE OF A KIND, POOKY BEAR. I FRIKKIN' LOVE YOU.

KUSHALA? I THOUGHT YOU WERE A FAMILY LEGEND.


KUSHALA, YOU MUST SECURE THE OTHER HALF OF THE WAND BEFORE DR. DOOM DOES. HE IS AIDED BY ONE YOU KNOW, THOUGH HAVE NOT YET MET.
YOU SPEAK OF THE DARK LADY I SAW WHEN WE SCRIED, SEARCHING FOR THE LITTLE ONE?
YES. SHE IS THE NIGHT...AND MUST BE STOPPED AT ALL COSTS.
YOU MUST GO DEEPER IN THIS REALM TO FIND HER.


NOW IT ALL MAKES SENSE. THE WANDS. THIS REALM OF CONSCIOUSNESS. DR. DOOM AND HIS MELDING OF SCIENCE AND SORCERY...
TAZA IS THE OWL OF DEATH FROM OUR CREATION STORIES. BUT THIS TIME SHE IS BRINGING A DIFFERENT KIND OF NIGHT. A NIGHT WHERE NOTHING WILL EVER GROW OR CHANGE. A NIGHT OF NO CHOICES.
A FOREVER NIGHT.

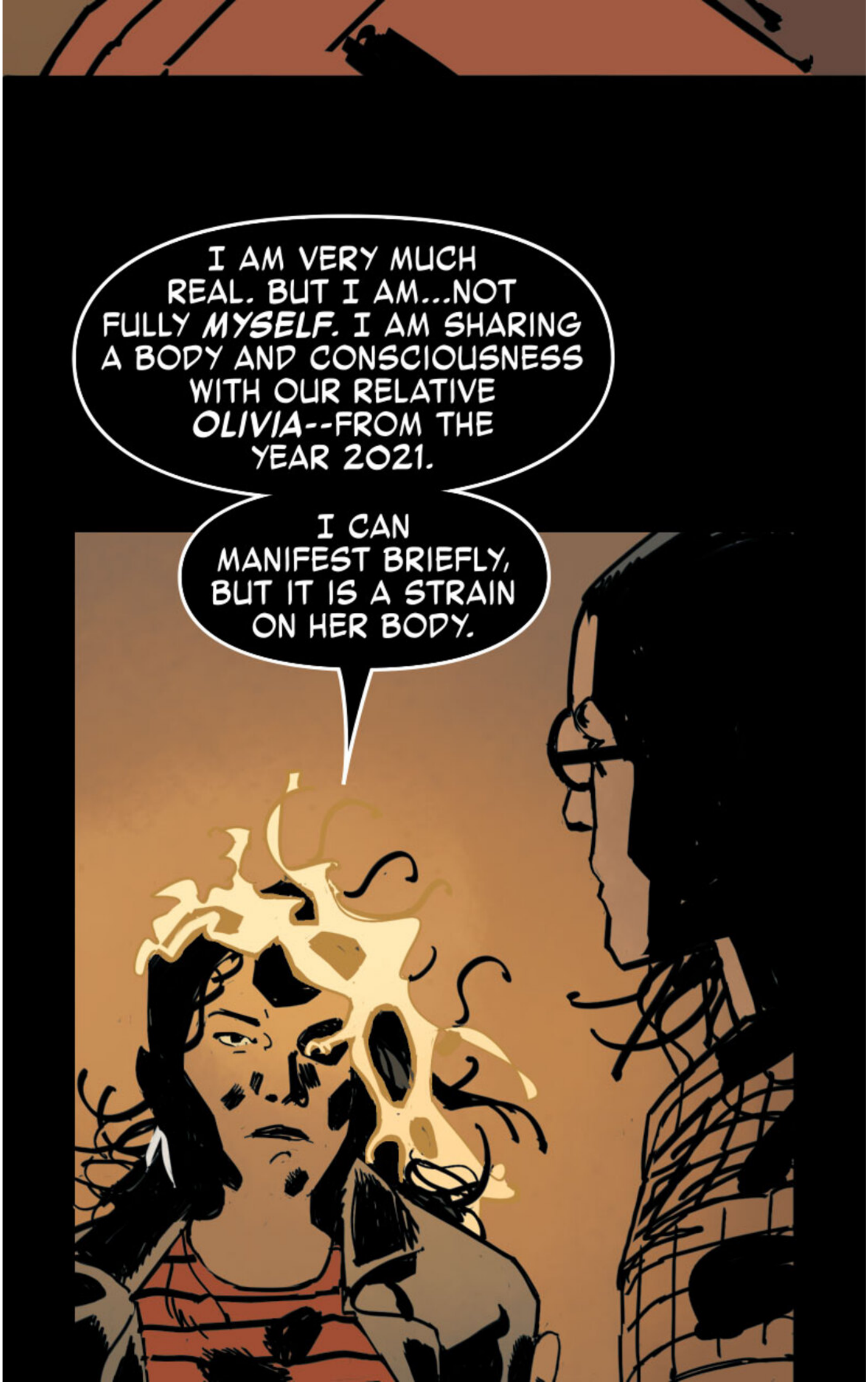
AND WHO BETTER TO TASK THIS WITH BUT ONE WHO ONCE WAS A GOD OF HIS OWN SMALL BATTLEWORLD?
YOU HAVE IT, MY GIRL.


SO YOU'RE SAYING THAT WITH ALL THE WANDS CONNECTING BACK TO THIS REALM AND TAZA'S POWER TO HALT CHANGE...DOOM WOULD BE THE MASTER OF *THIS* WORLD TOO?
YES.
AND THE SPIRITS?
REGGIE AND I WOULD BE DESTROYED, AMONG

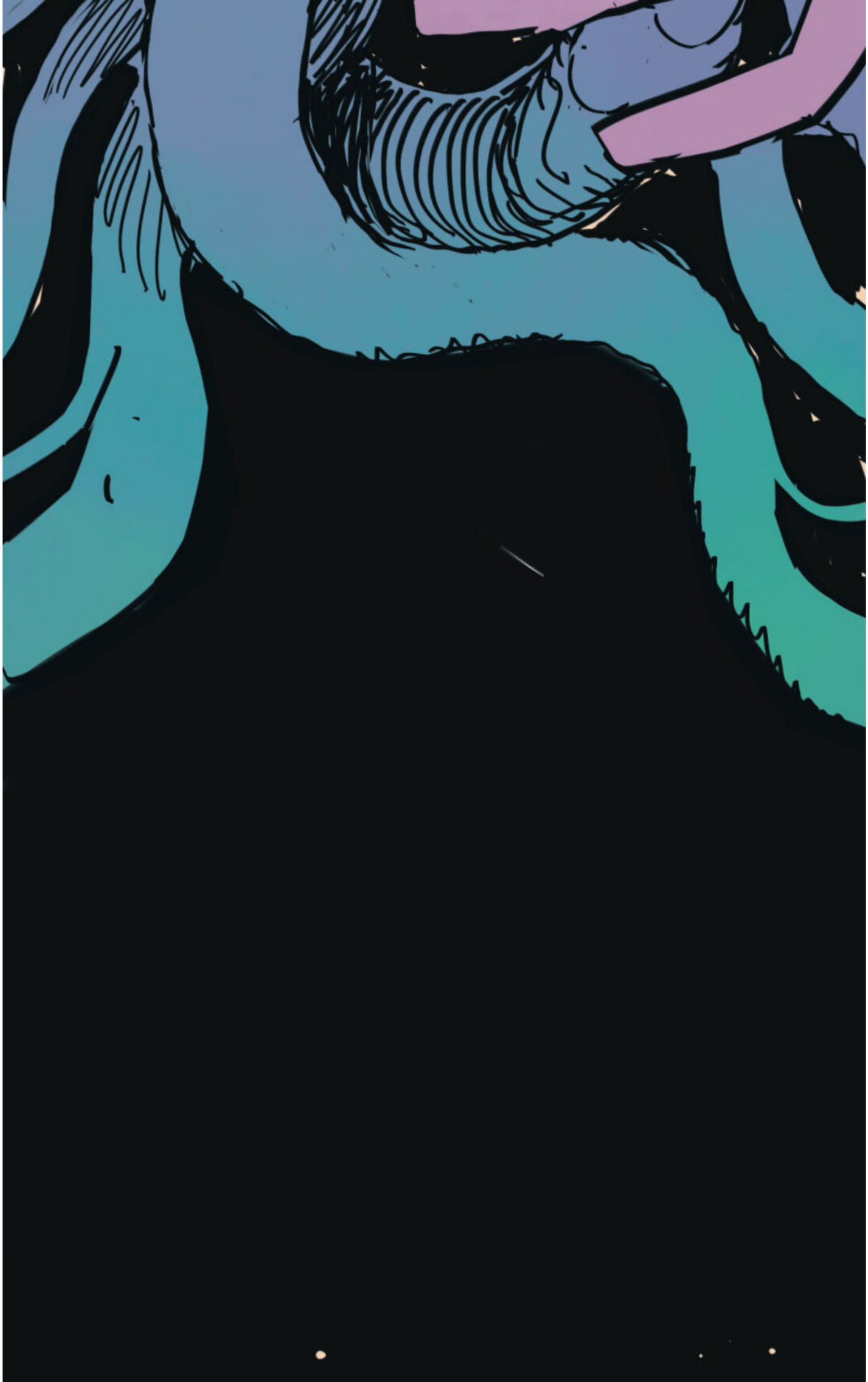
MANY OTHERS. CONSCIOUSNESSES THAT HAVE REACHED PERFECT HARMONY WOULD POSE A THREAT TO DOOM.

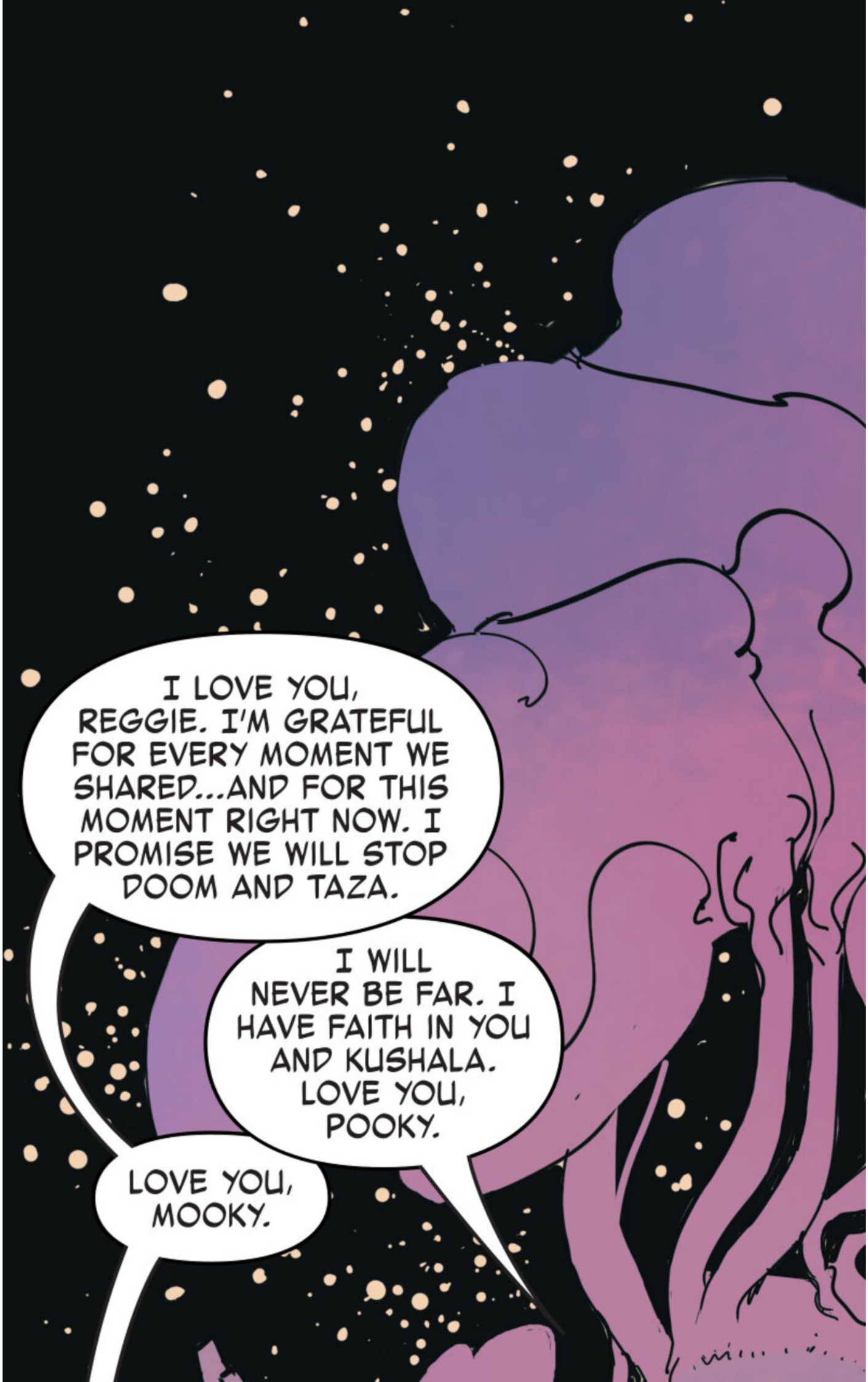
SOUNDS LIKE A DICTATORSHIP RULED BY A TYRANT...

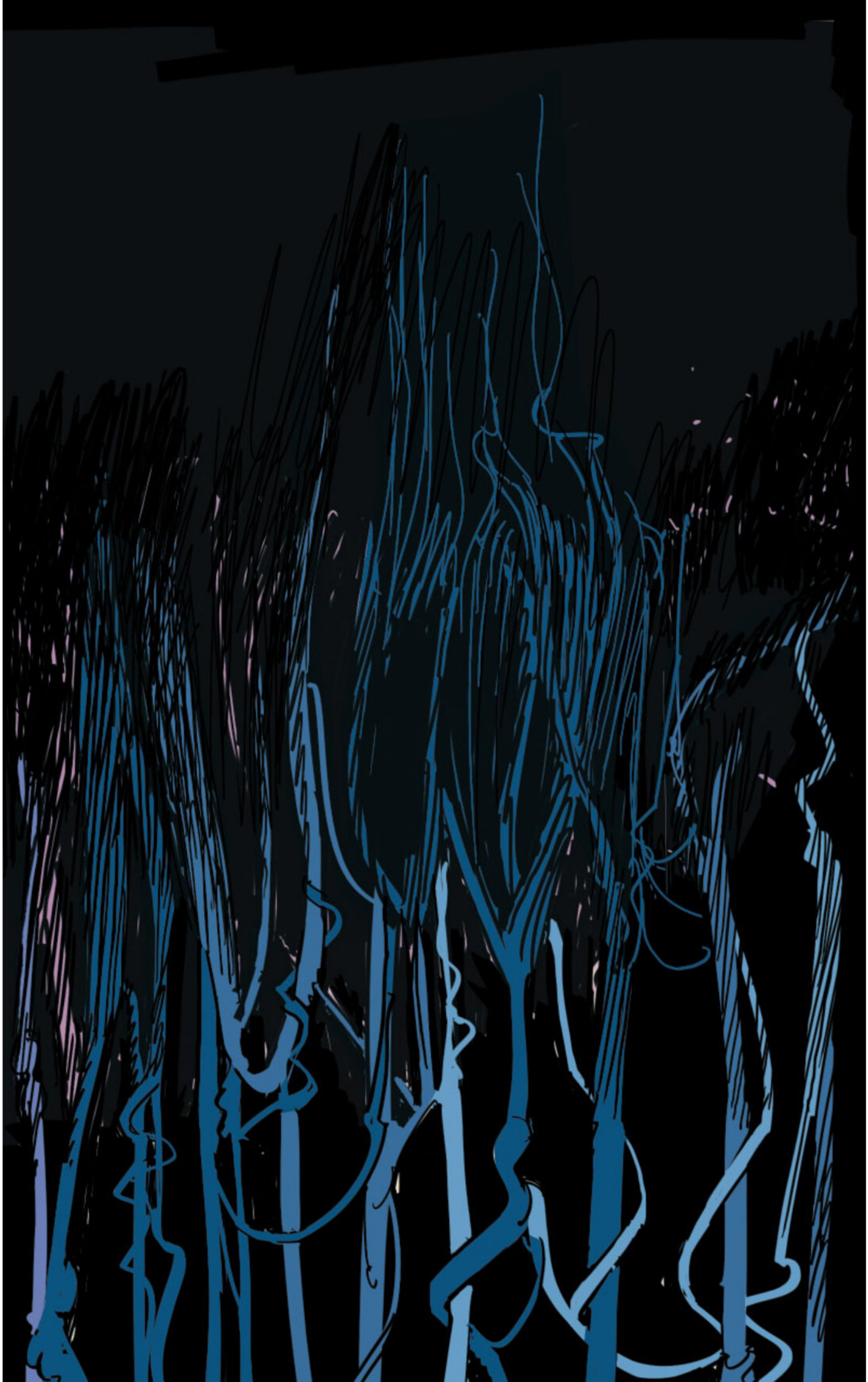
THE MULTIVERSE NEEDS BALANCE AND CHANGE. THE OWL ESCAPED HER POST AND PROJECTED HERSELF DOWN TO EARTH TO STEAL THE SUN AND BRING FOREVER NIGHT.

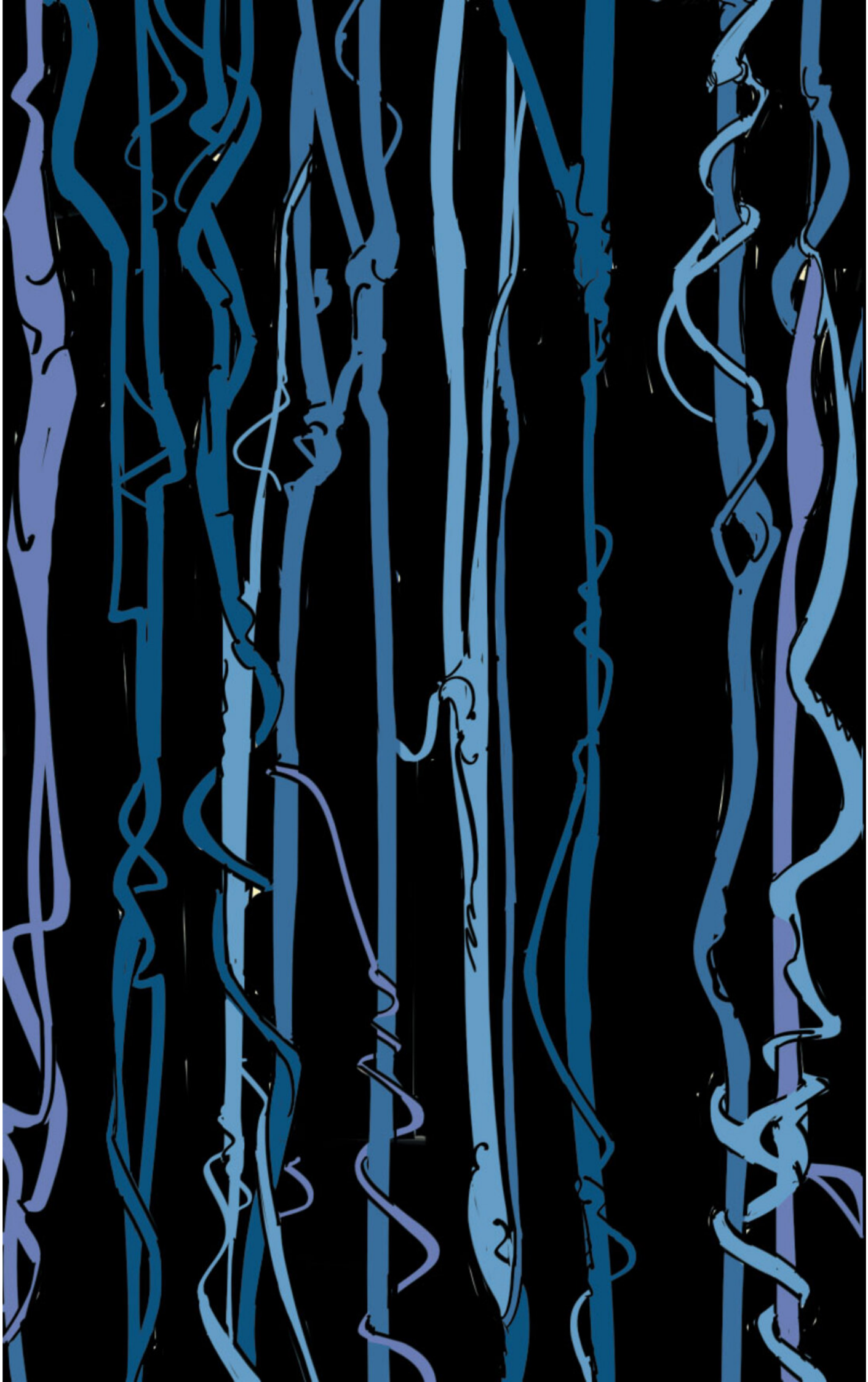

I AM VERY MUCH REAL. BUT I AM...NOT FULLY *MYSELF.* I AM SHARING A BODY AND CONSCIOUSNESS WITH OUR RELATIVE *OLIVIA*--FROM THE YEAR 2021.
I CAN MANIFEST BRIEFLY, BUT IT IS A STRAIN ON HER BODY.

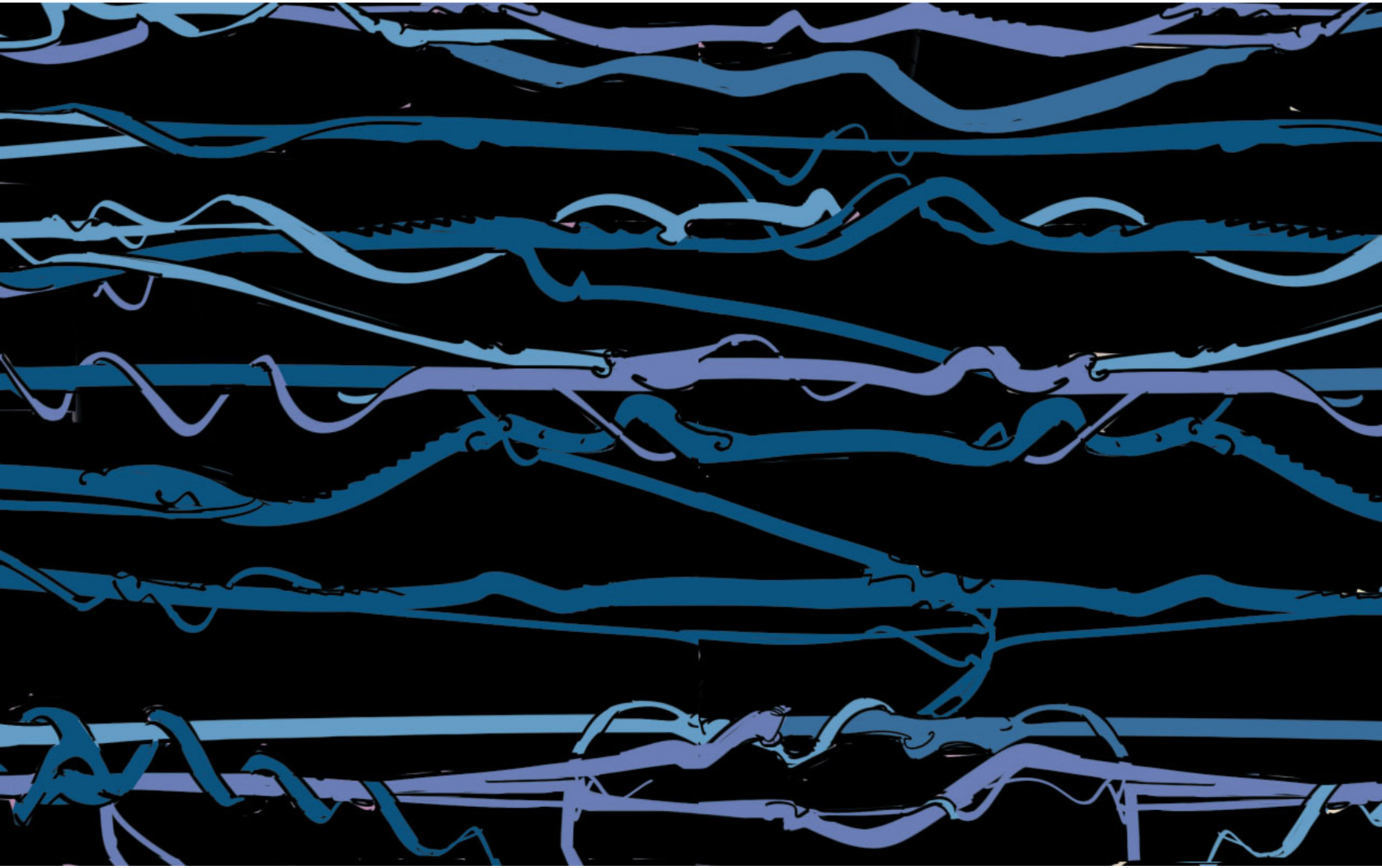
YOU MUST STOP HER AND DR. DOOM...AND RECONNECT HEATHER RAE'S SPIRIT. HERS IS THE *SEVENTH GENERATION* THAT WILL HEAL THE HOOP. ONLY THEN CAN WE BEGIN THE NEXT CYCLE.
ENTER INTO THE TREE OF LIFE AND FOLLOW THE *ROOTS.* THEY WILL GUIDE YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY.

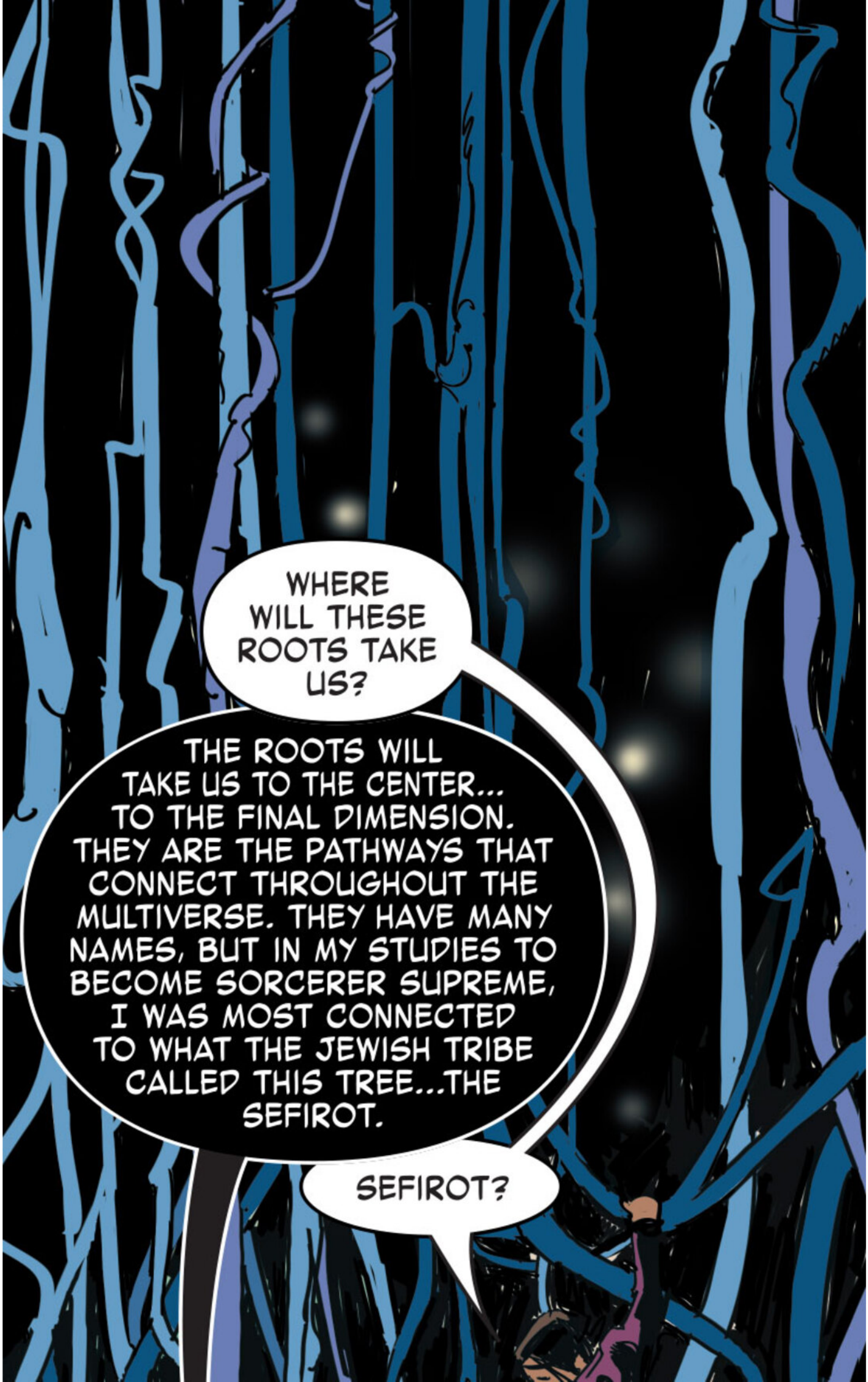



I LOVE YOU, REGGIE. I'M GRATEFUL FOR EVERY MOMENT WE SHARED...AND FOR THIS MOMENT RIGHT NOW. I PROMISE WE WILL STOP DOOM AND TAZA.
I WILL NEVER BE FAR. I HAVE FAITH IN YOU AND KUSHALA. LOVE YOU, POOKY.
LOVE YOU, MOOKY.

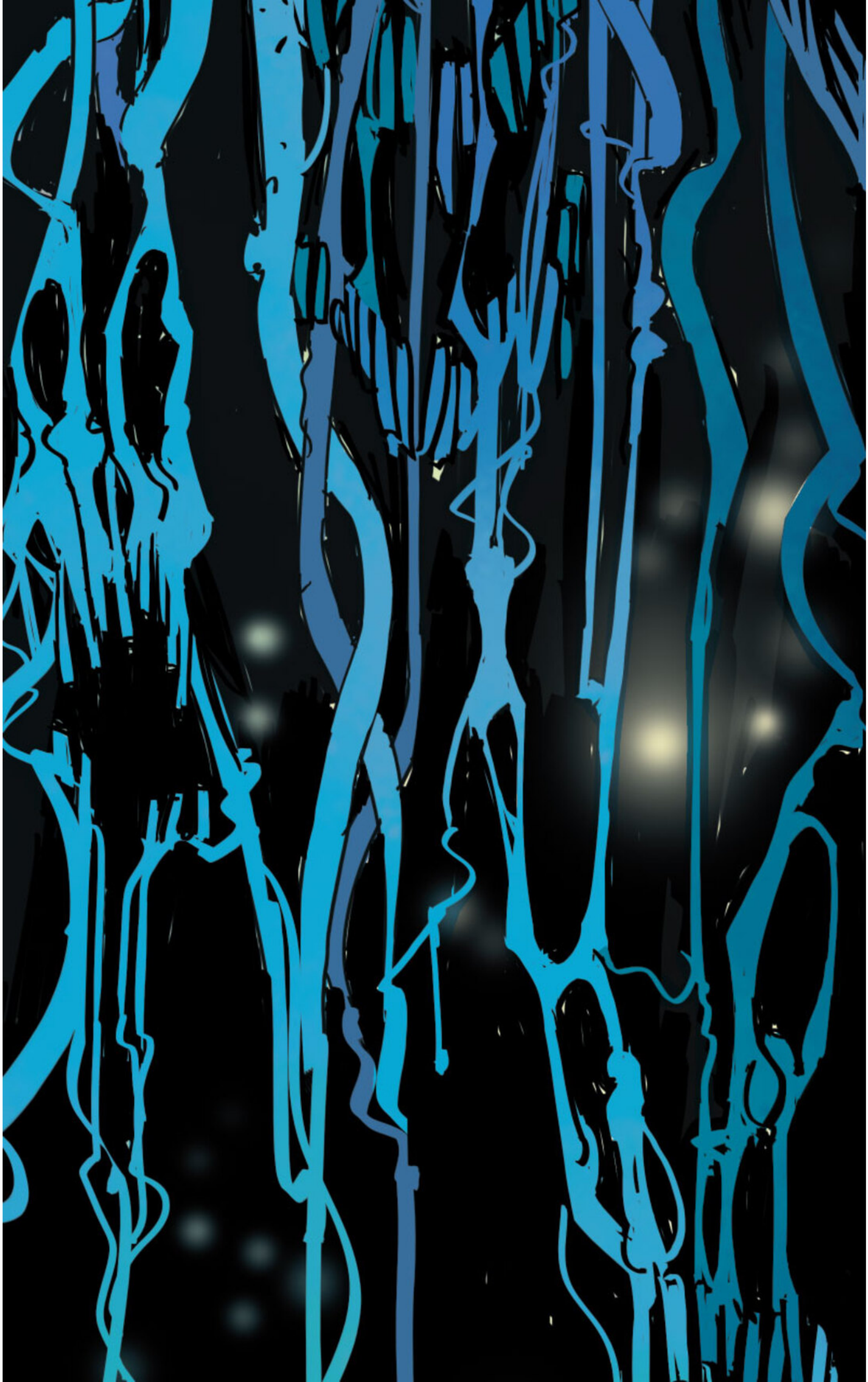


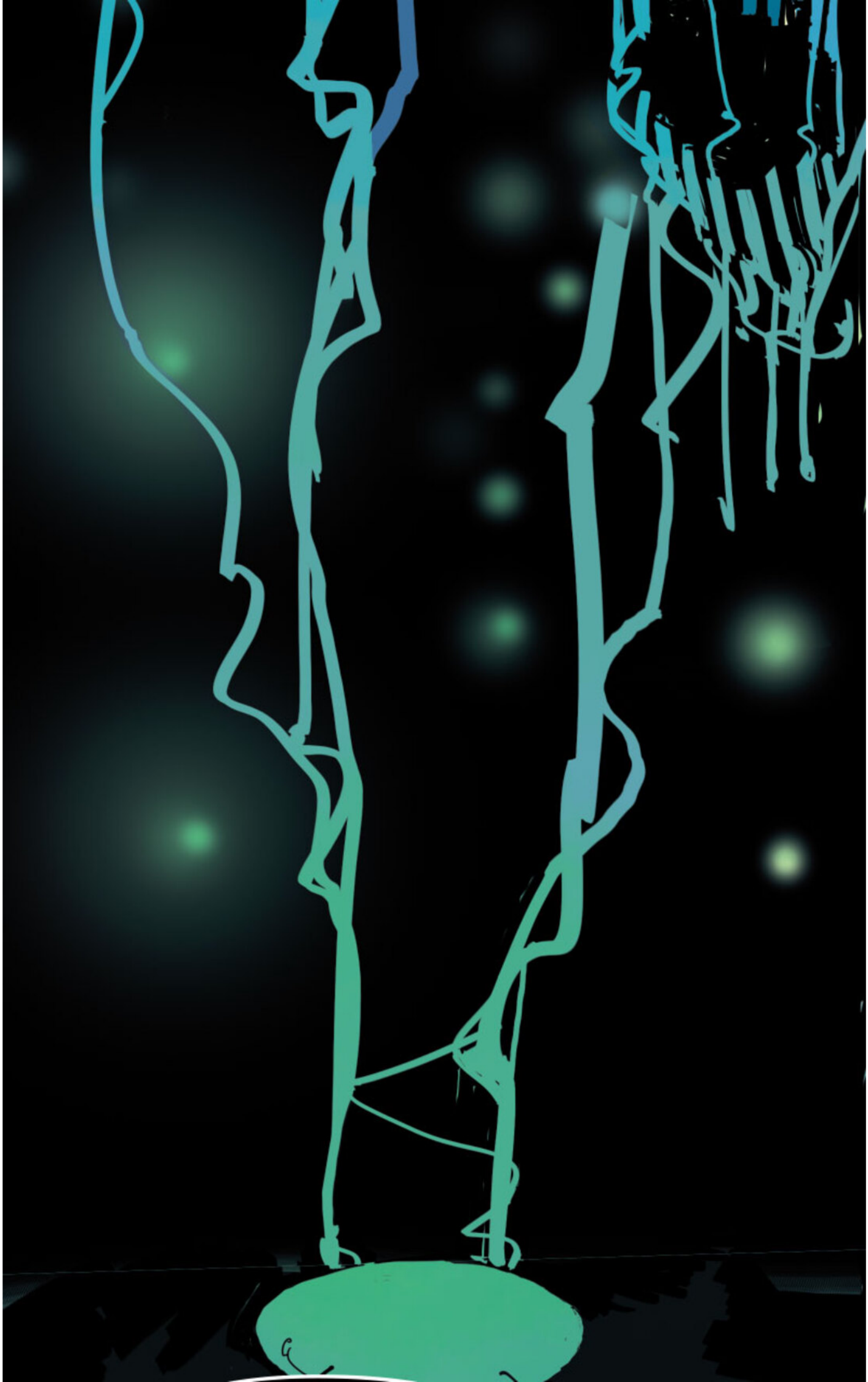




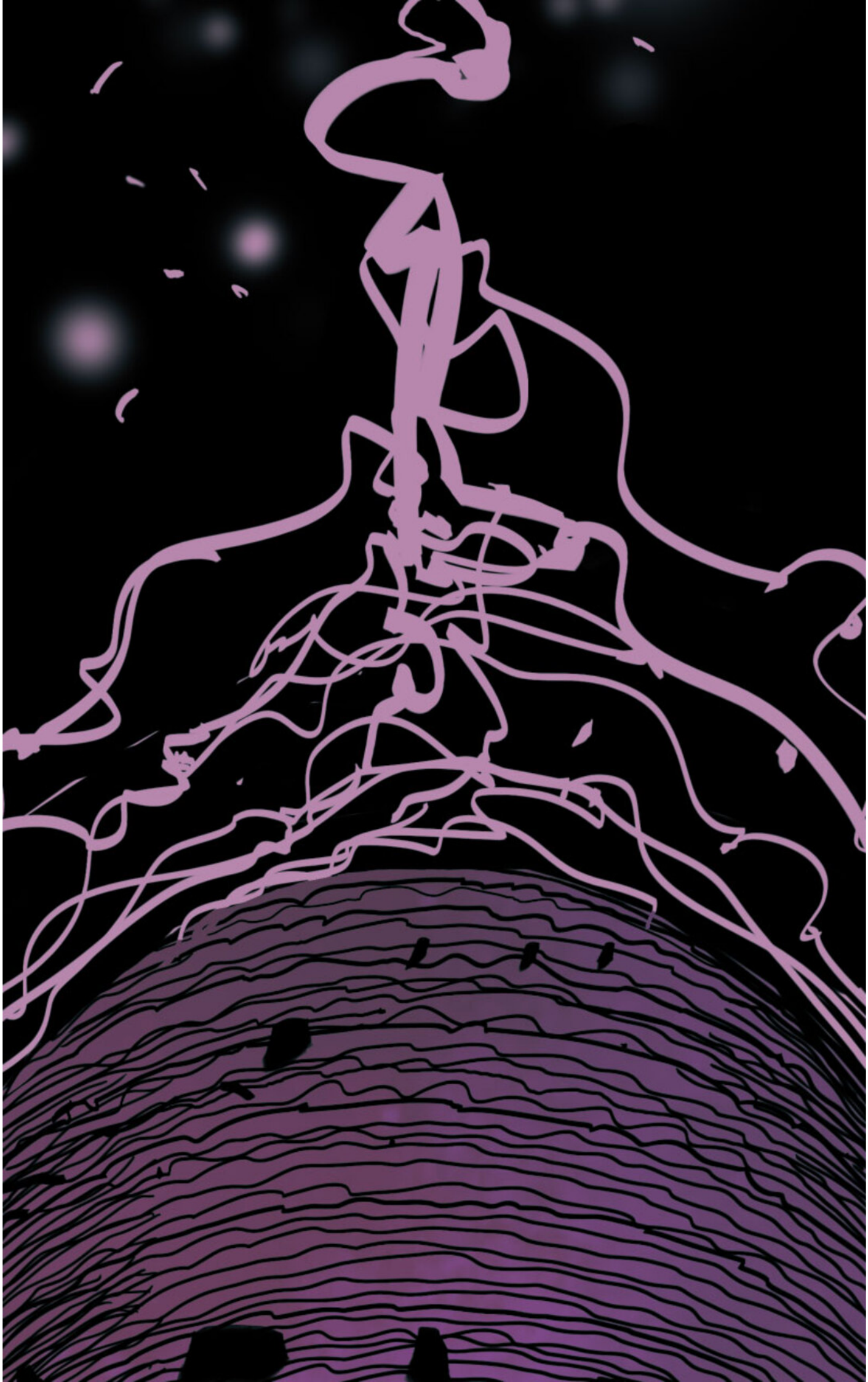

WHERE WILL THESE ROOTS TAKE US?
THE ROOTS WILL TAKE US TO THE CENTER... TO THE FINAL DIMENSION. THEY ARE THE PATHWAYS THAT CONNECT THROUGHOUT THE MULTIVERSE. THEY HAVE MANY NAMES, BUT IN MY STUDIES TO BECOME SORCERER SUPREME, I WAS MOST CONNECTED TO WHAT THE JEWISH TRIBE CALLED THIS TREE...THE SEFIROT.
SEFIROT?

FASCINATING! BUT WHY'VE YOU COME TO ME?
WE NEED YOUR HELP, EDGAR. OUR FAMILY IS IN GRAVE DANGER...AND THE FATE OF THE MULTIVERSE HANGS IN THE BALANCE.
I'M JUST A STUDENT OF THE STARS.





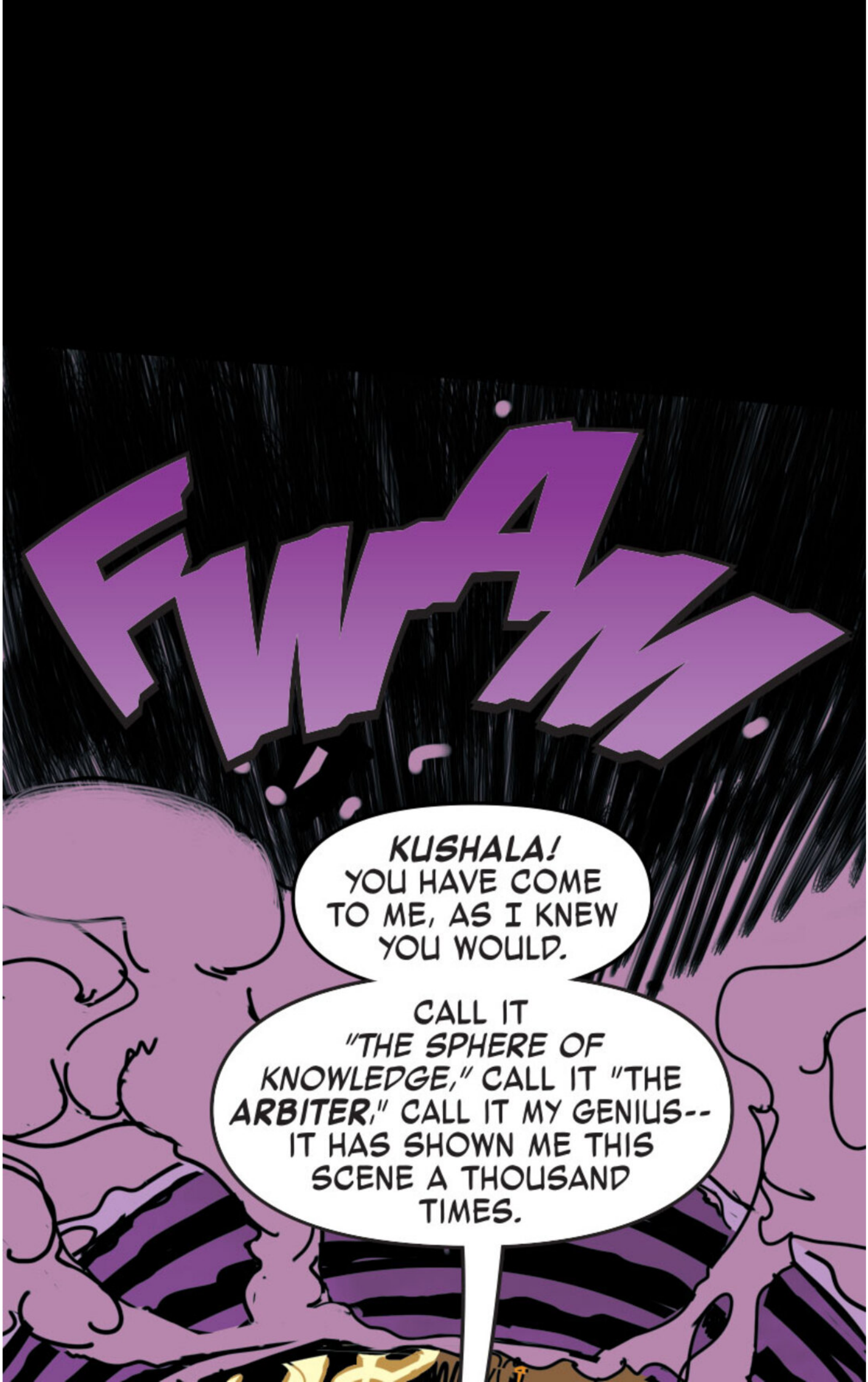
IN THE JEWISH KABBALAH, THE SEFIROT ARE COLLECTIVELY KNOWN AS THE TREE OF LIFE. IT HAS TEN SPHERES. I BELIEVE THAT NINE OF THE SPHERES CONTAIN THE ITERATIONS OF THE SOULS, AND THE TENTH IS THE PROJECTION INTO THE MULTIVERSE WHERE TIME AND SPACE CONJOIN TO CREATE REALITY.
SO WHERE WILL WE FIND THE WAND?

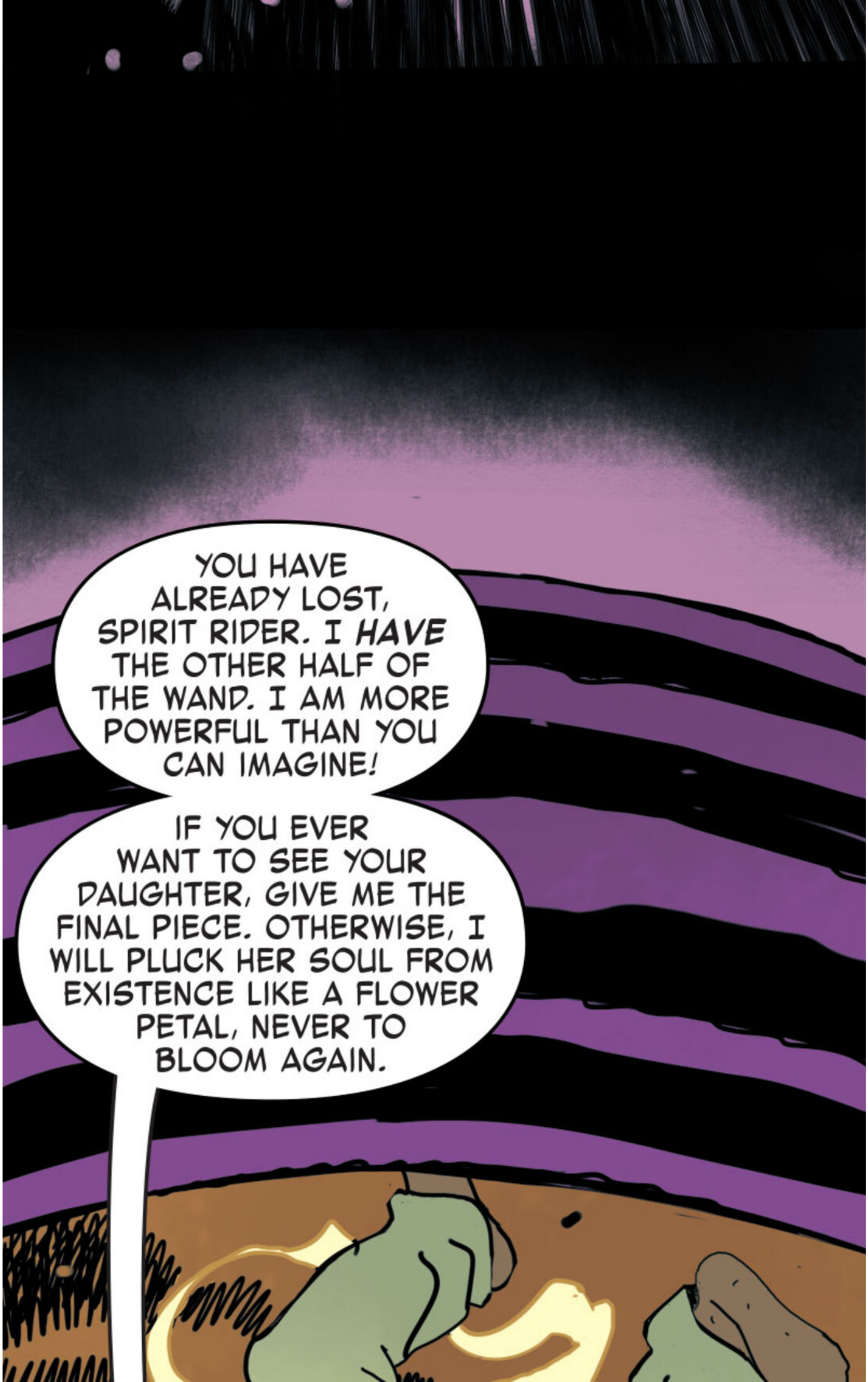


GIVEN DOOM'S OBSESSIONS, I'M GUESSING DA'AT--THE SPHERE WHERE ALL SEFIROT ARE UNITED AS ONE.
...OH.

WE HAVE FOUND THE SPHERE...BUT WHERE IS THE OTHER HALF OF THE WAND?

THAT IS EXACTLY WHY WE HAVE COME TO YOU. WE ARE LOOKING FOR AN ARTIFACT BURIED IN THE STARS.
WE HAVE A MAP, BUT WE DON'T RECOGNIZE THE CONSTELLATIONS-- AND WE HAD A FEELING YOU MIGHT.
INCREDIBLE.
YOU KNOW THIS PART OF THE SKY?


FWAM!
KUSHALA! YOU HAVE COME TO ME, AS I KNEW YOU WOULD.
CALL IT "THE SPHERE OF KNOWLEDGE," CALL IT "THE ARBITER," CALL IT MY GENIUS-- IT HAS SHOWN ME THIS SCENE A THOUSAND TIMES.


YOU HAVE ALREADY LOST, SPIRIT RIDER. I *HAVE* THE OTHER HALF OF THE WAND. I AM MORE POWERFUL THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE!
IF YOU EVER WANT TO SEE YOUR DAUGHTER, GIVE ME THE FINAL PIECE. OTHERWISE, I WILL PLUCK HER SOUL FROM EXISTENCE LIKE A FLOWER PETAL, NEVER TO BLOOM AGAIN.

HEATHER

TO BE CONTINUED!

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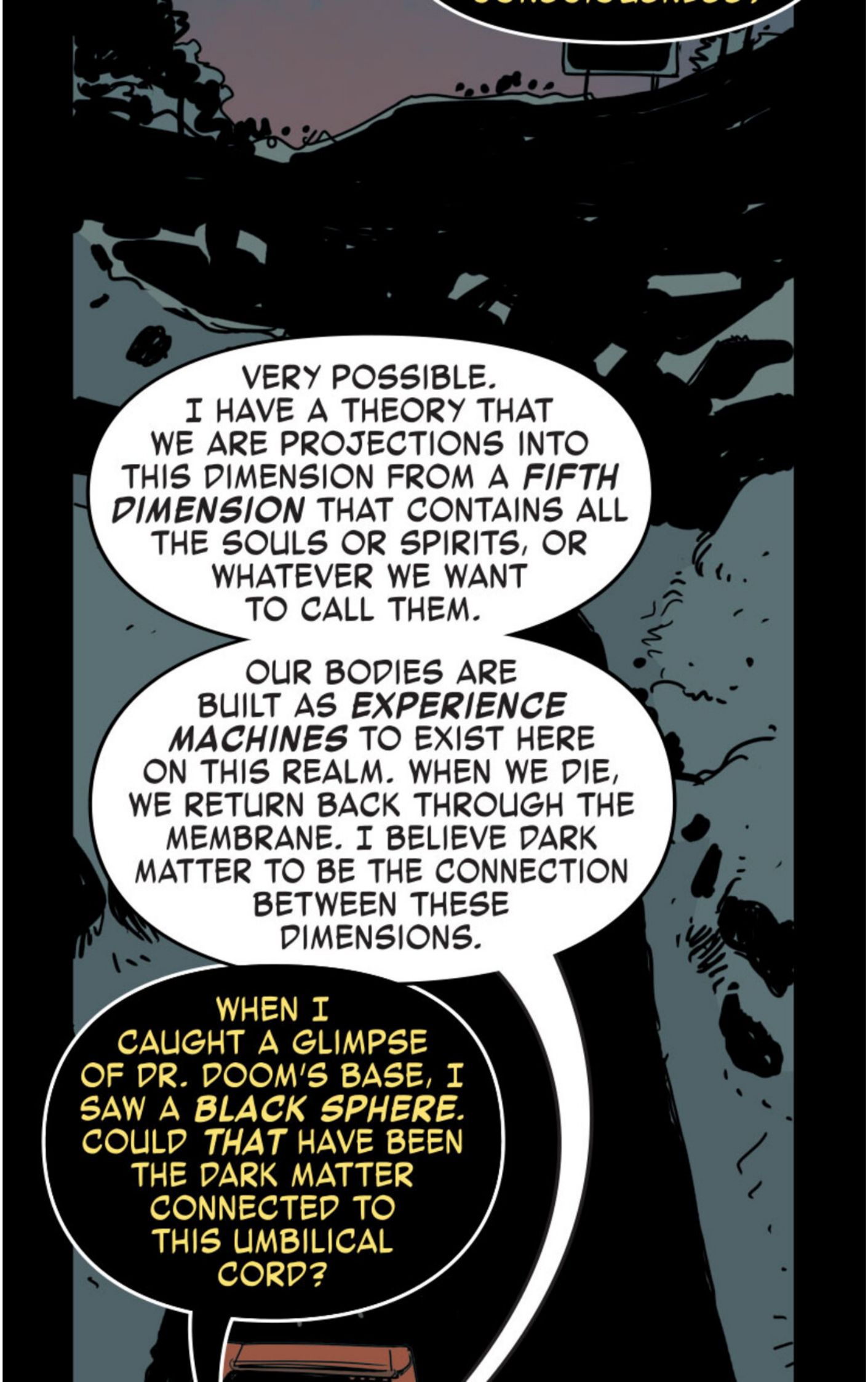
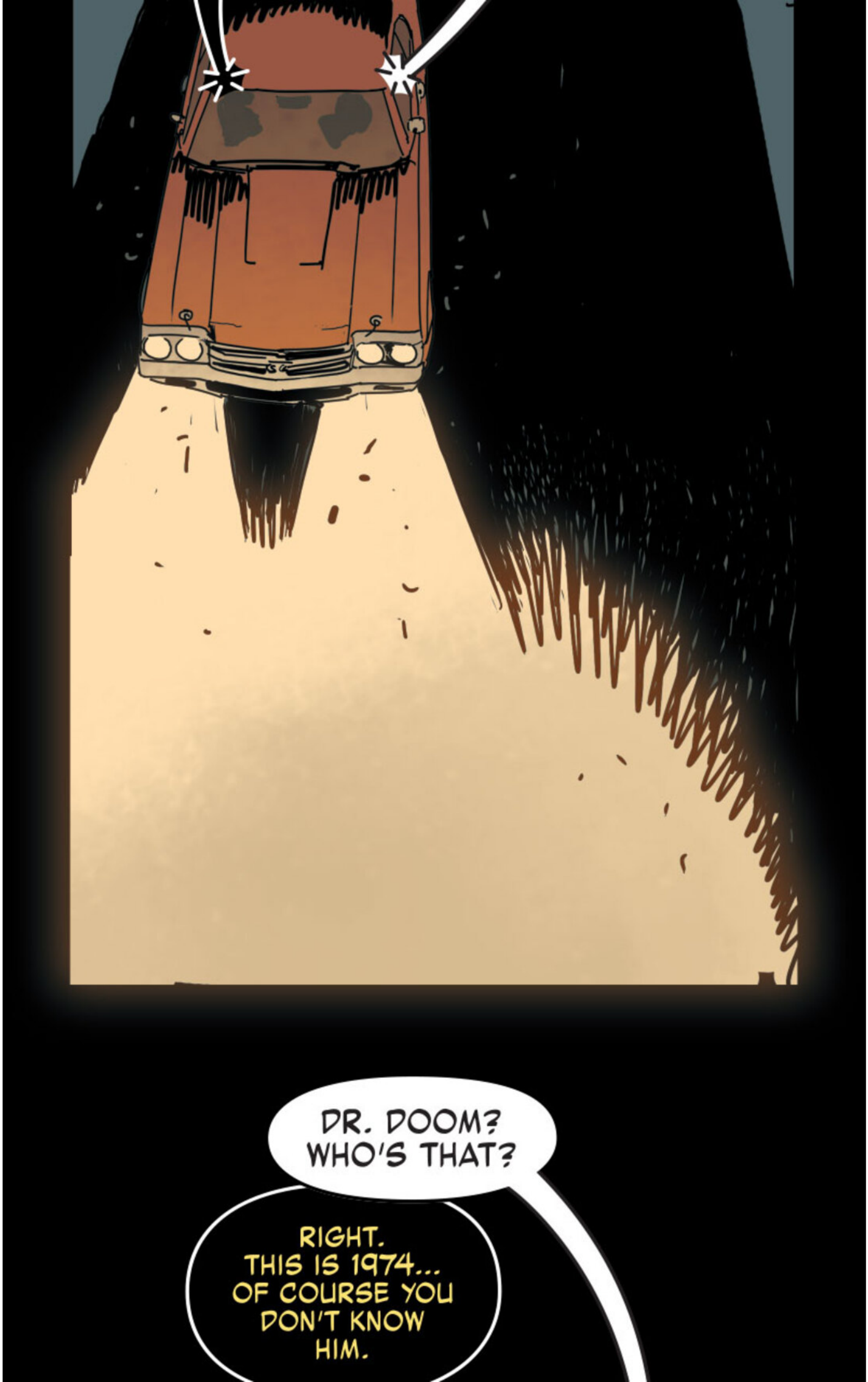
YES. I'VE BEEN STUDYING IT FOR MY GRAD THESIS. I HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THERE IS A COSMIC WORMHOLE MADE OF DARK MATTER EXACTLY IN THAT SPOT.
A COSMIC WORMHOLE TO WHERE?
LET'S GO TO MT. WILSON. I'VE GOT KEYS TO THE OBSERVATORY SINCE I'M WORKING THERE PART-TIME...WHICH I GUESS YOU ALREADY KNOW SINCE YOU'RE FROM THE FUTURE... TRIPPY.
ANYWAY, I BELIEVE THAT ALL OF TIME AND SPACE CONNECTS, PAST AND PRESENT, INTO THE FUTURE... AND THE DARK MATTER IS WHERE IT ALL BEGAN.

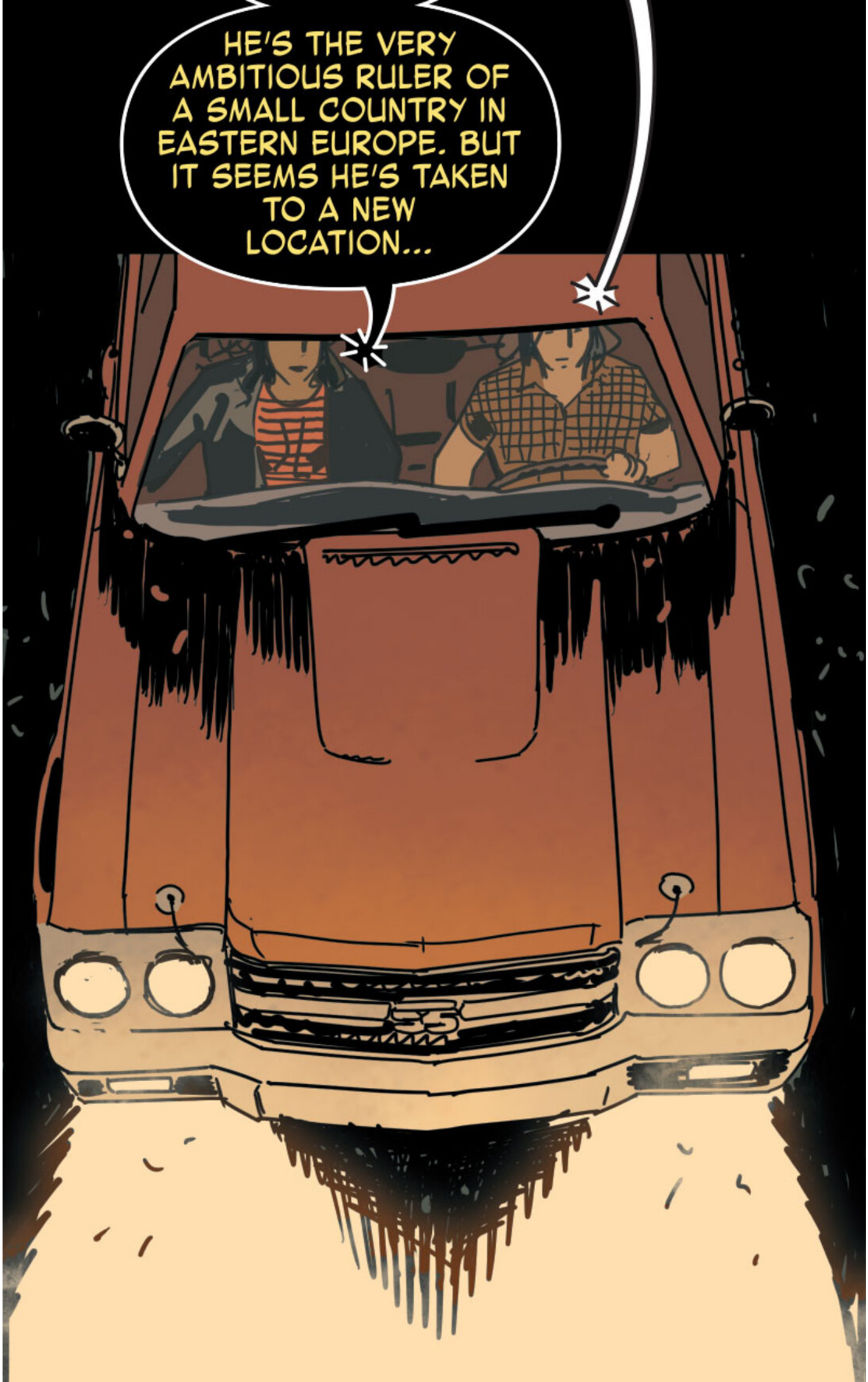
I'VE BEEN FASCINATED BY DARK MATTER FOR YEARS. TURNS OUT THAT MORE THAN 80 PERCENT OF OUR UNIVERSE IS MADE OF THE STUFF. I REALLY BELIEVE IT TO BE THE LINK TO OTHER DIMENSIONS AND MULTIVERSES.
AND THE AREA YOU'VE SHOWN ME HAS BEEN OF *PARTICULAR* INTEREST.

WHY'S THAT?

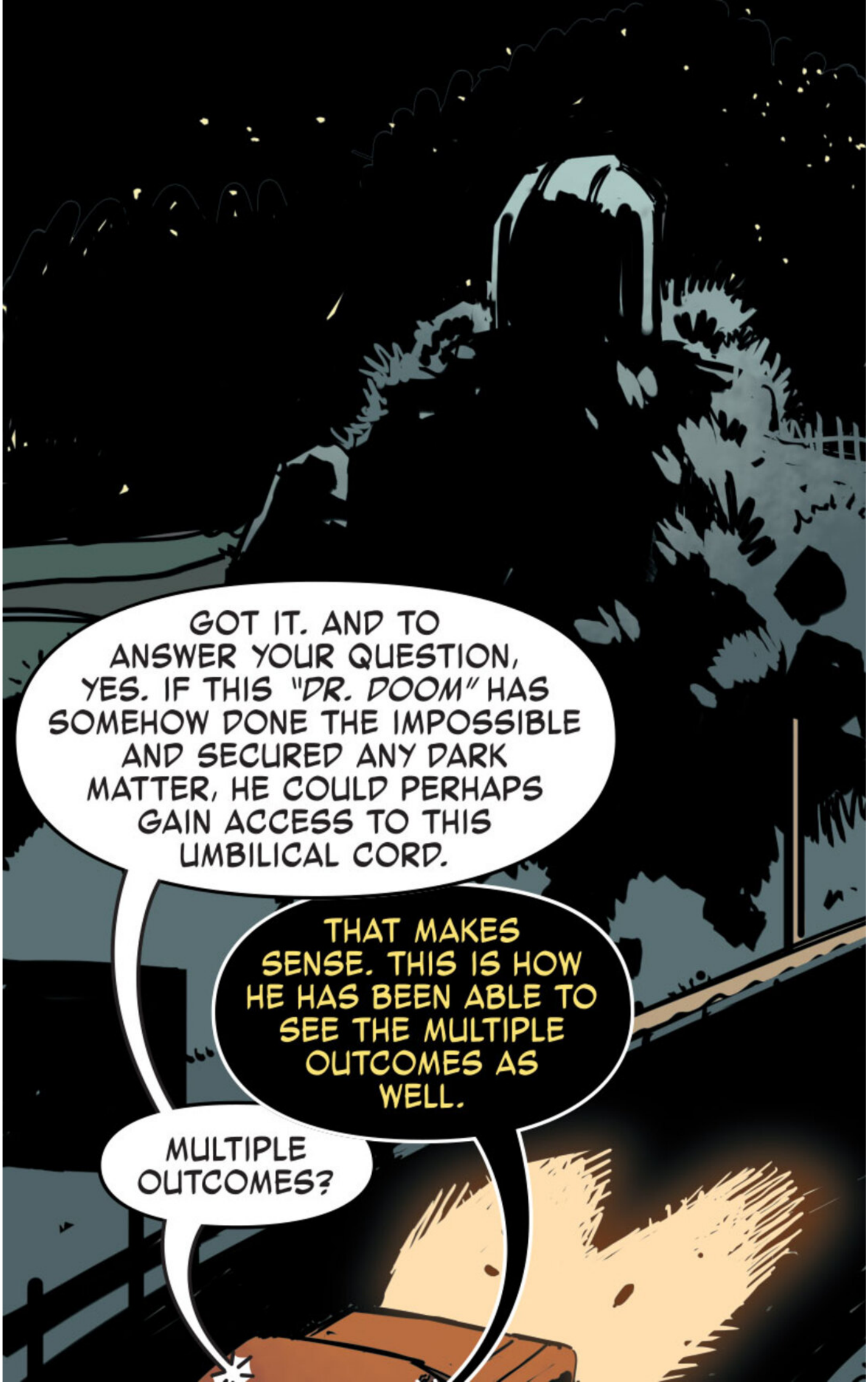
AT FIRST I BELIEVED IT TO BE A M.A.C.H.O.--A MASSIVE ASTROPHYSICAL COMPACT HALO OBJECT. BUT NOW I THINK IT IS ONE OF THE VERY FIRST WORMHOLES EVER CREATED IN THIS UNIVERSE. A LINK TO WHERE WE WERE BIRTHED...ALMOST LIKE AN UMBILICAL CORD.
INTERESTING. PERHAPS THIS IS WHERE THE LEVIATHAN-- AND THE WAND OF WATOOMB THAT CREATED IT-- ENTERED OUR UNIVERSE.
SO...THAT UMBILICAL CORD LEADS TO WHERE *EVERYTHING* IS BORN, INCLUDING OUR COLLECTIVE SENTIENT CONSCIOUSNESS?


VERY POSSIBLE. I HAVE A THEORY THAT WE ARE PROJECTIONS INTO THIS DIMENSION FROM A *FIFTH DIMENSION* THAT CONTAINS ALL THE SOULS OR SPIRITS, OR WHATEVER WE WANT TO CALL THEM.
OUR BODIES ARE BUILT AS *EXPERIENCE MACHINES* TO EXIST HERE ON THIS REALM. WHEN WE DIE, WE RETURN BACK THROUGH THE MEMBRANE. I BELIEVE DARK MATTER TO BE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THESE DIMENSIONS.
WHEN I CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF DR. DOOM'S BASE, I SAW A *BLACK SPHERE.* COULD *THAT* HAVE BEEN THE DARK MATTER CONNECTED TO THIS UMBILICAL CORD?


DR. DOOM? WHO'S THAT?
RIGHT. THIS IS 1974... OF COURSE YOU DON'T KNOW HIM.


HE'S THE VERY AMBITIOUS RULER OF A SMALL COUNTRY IN EASTERN EUROPE. BUT IT SEEMS HE'S TAKEN TO A NEW LOCATION...

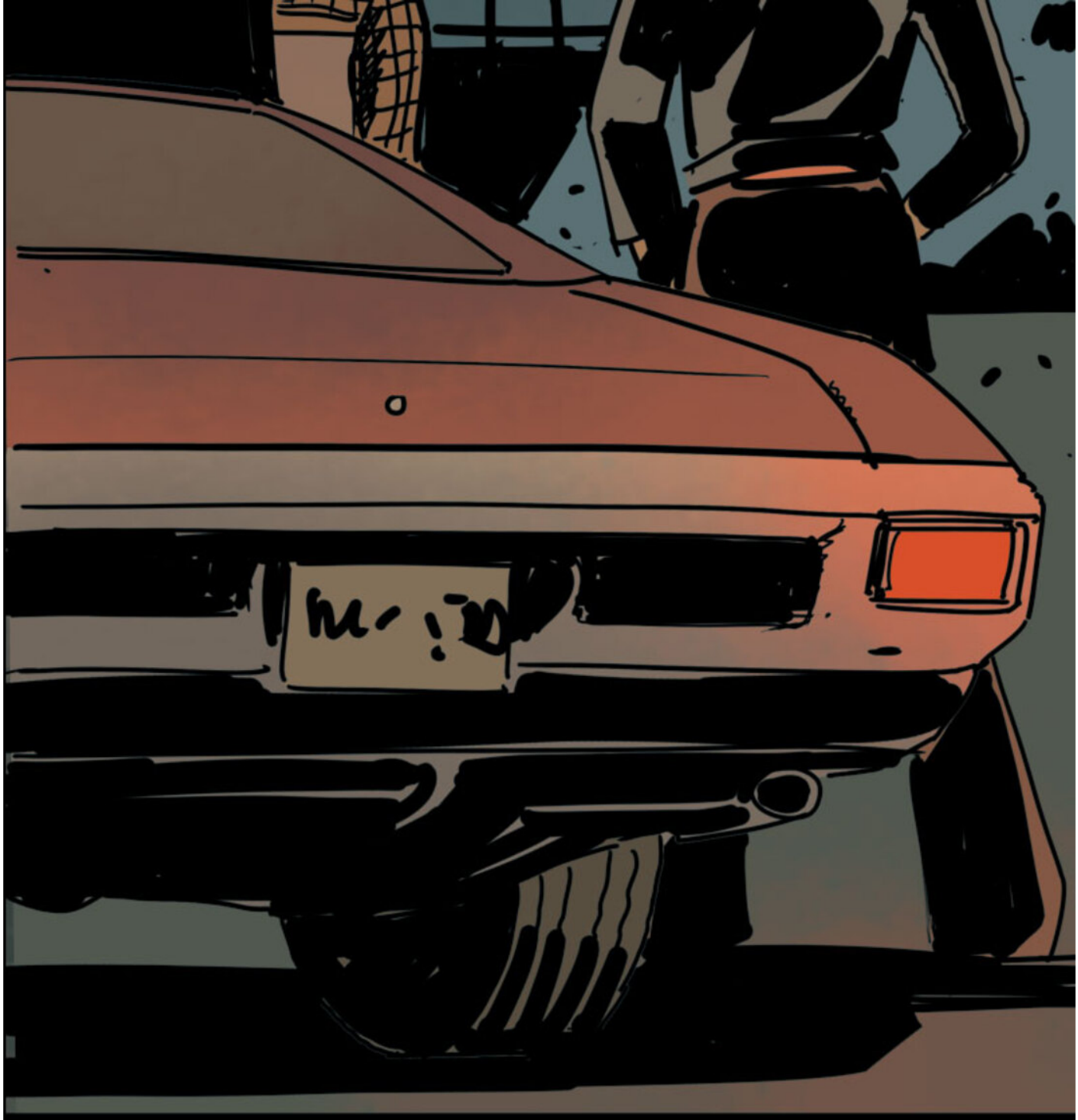
"...WHERE I SAW HIM WAS DEFINITELY NOT LATVERIA."


GOT IT. AND TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION, YES. IF THIS "DR. DOOM" HAS SOMEHOW DONE THE IMPOSSIBLE AND SECURED ANY DARK MATTER, HE COULD PERHAPS GAIN ACCESS TO THIS UMBILICAL CORD.
THAT MAKES SENSE. THIS IS HOW HE HAS BEEN ABLE TO SEE THE MULTIPLE OUTCOMES AS WELL.
MULTIPLE OUTCOMES?

"YES. THOSE WHO TRAVEL THROUGH TIME ARE NOT ABLE TO EXACTLY SEE ***WHERE*** IN THE WHEN THEY ARE GOING.

"IT IS LIKE A TREE WITH INFINITE BRANCHES--EACH BRANCH BIRTHS A DIFFERENT OUTCOME."

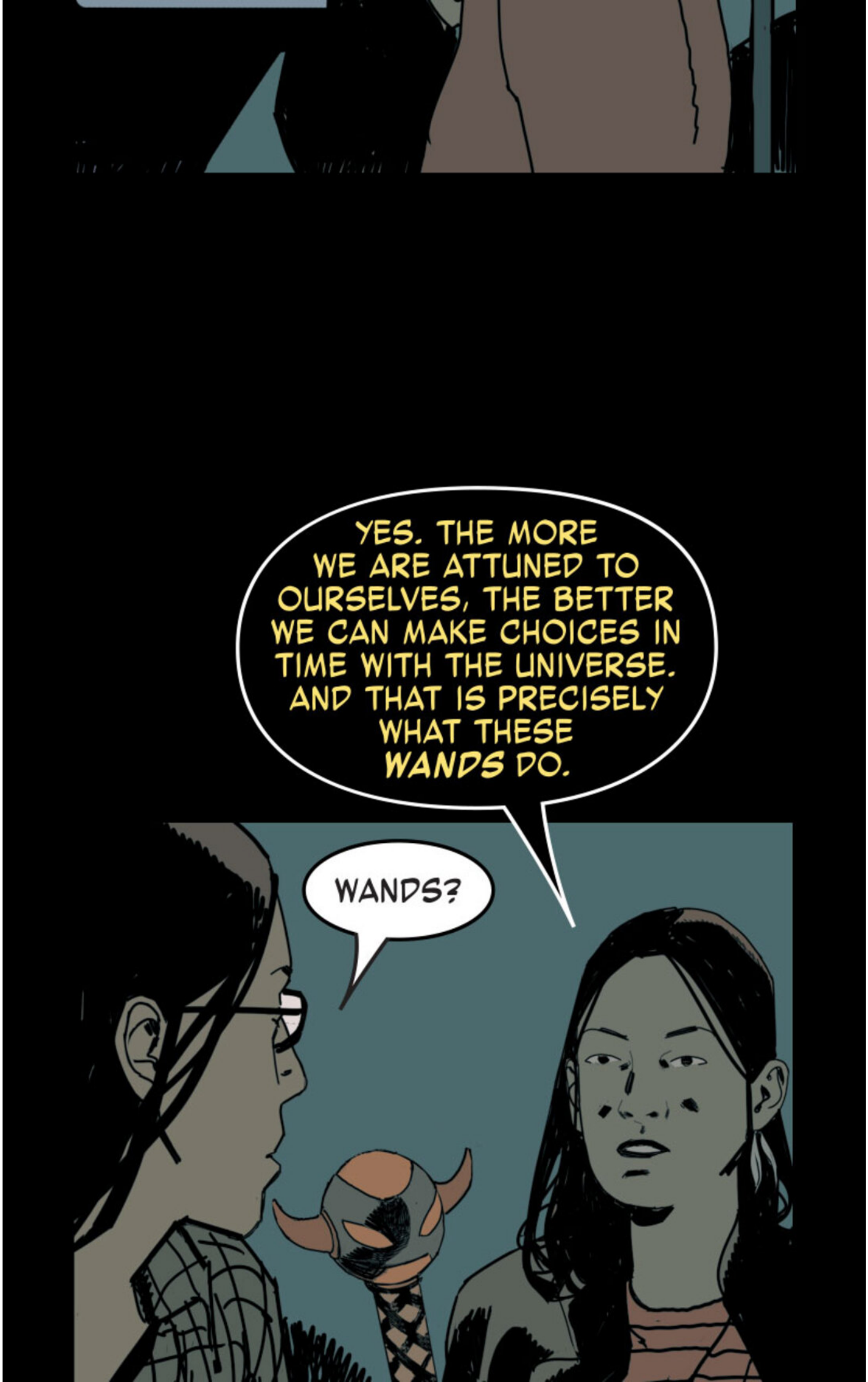
IF DOOM CAN SEE ALL THE CHOICES, HE'S PLAYING CHESS BACKWARD AGAINST AN OPPONENT PLAYING IT FORWARD.

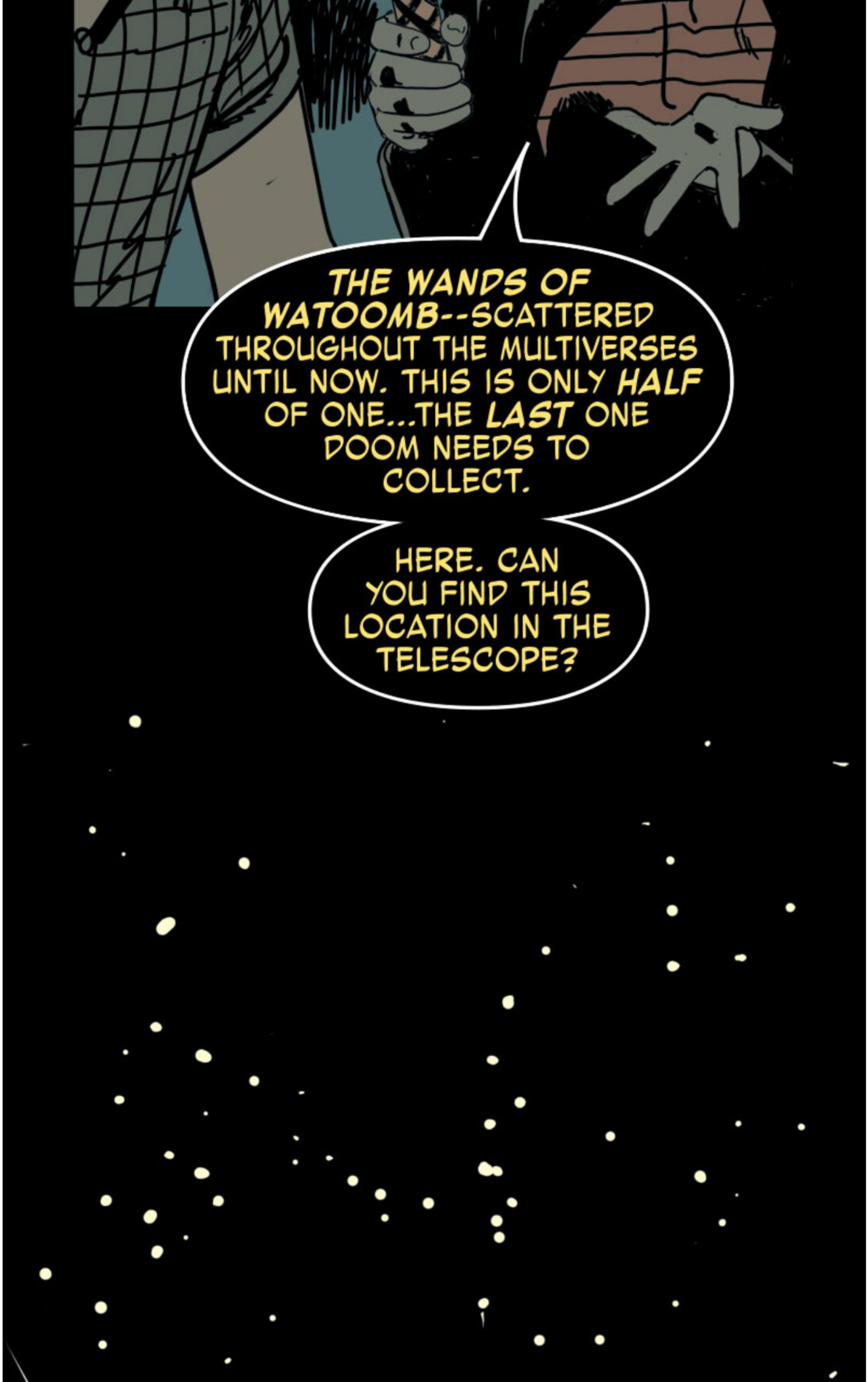


SO THIS
RR. ROOM CAN

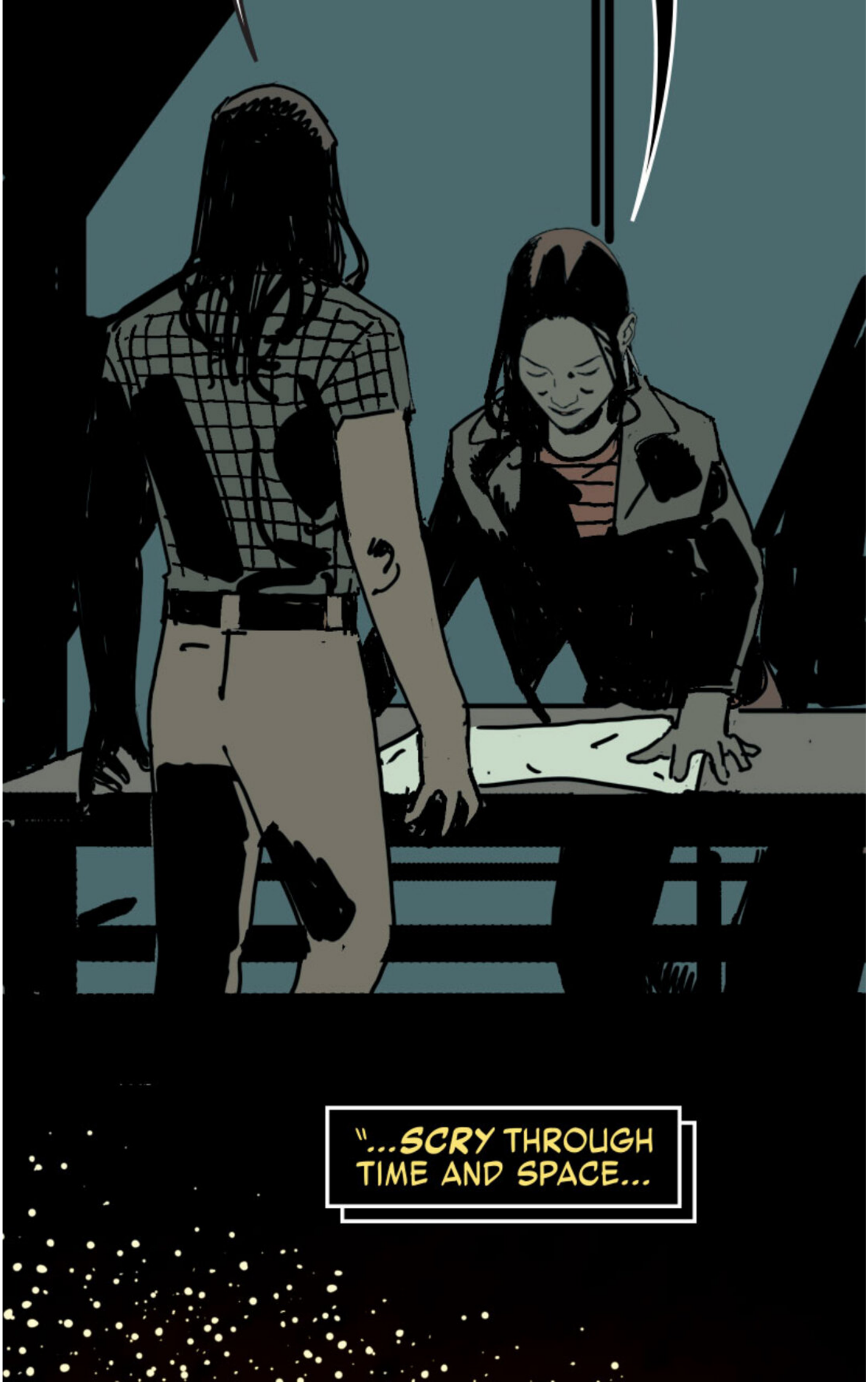
DR. DOOM CAN SEE THE OUTCOME AND PLAY AGAINST IT?
YES.
HOW DO WE WIN?

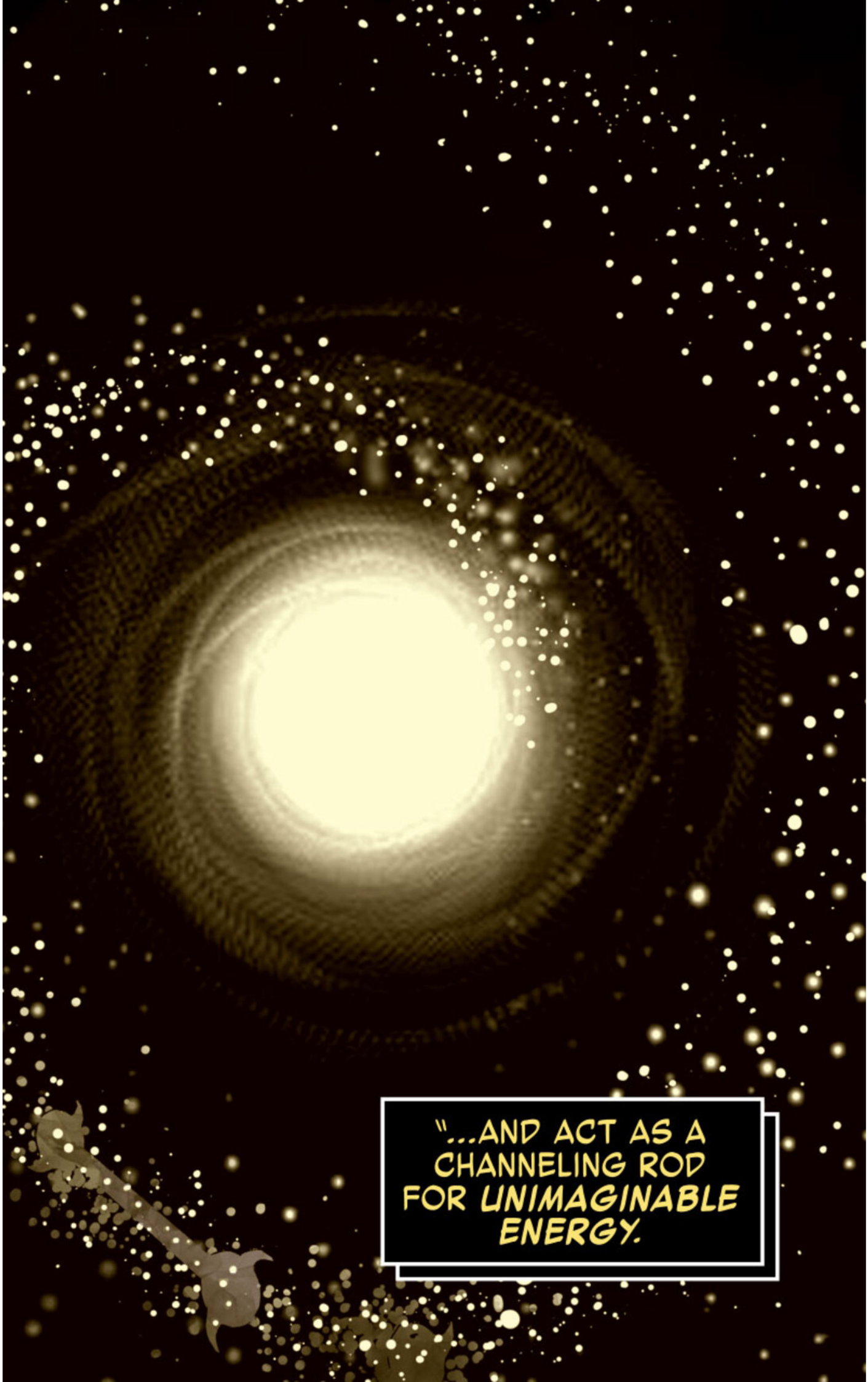
WE THINK WITH NO THOUGHT AND PLAY LIKE THE WATER FLOWS.
...YOU'RE SAYING WE TRUST OUR INSTINCTS?


YES. THE MORE WE ARE ATTUNED TO OURSELVES, THE BETTER WE CAN MAKE CHOICES IN TIME WITH THE UNIVERSE. AND THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT THESE WANDS DO.
WANDS?


THE WANDS OF WATOOMB--SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE MULTIVERSES UNTIL NOW. THIS IS ONLY HALF OF ONE...THE LAST ONE DOOM NEEDS TO COLLECT.
HERE. CAN YOU FIND THIS LOCATION IN THE TELESCOPE?

FOUND IT!
THERE ARE YOUR SIX WANDS!
INCREDIBLE! IT MAKES SENSE NOW.
WHAT'S THAT?
EACH OF THESE WANDS HAS GREAT POWER. THEY CAN MANIPULATE REALITIES...


"...SCRY THROUGH TIME AND SPACE...


"...AND ACT AS A CHANNELING ROD FOR UNIMAGINABLE ENERGY.

"THEY ARE LIKE TUNING FORKS WITH NOTHING TO ATTUNE TO WHEN THEY ARE ALONE.

"BUT WHEN ALL SIX ARE *TOGETHER*, THEY CAN TUNE INTO EVERYTHING THAT COMES THROUGH THAT DARK MATTER UMBILICAL CORD INTO

THIS UNIVERSE..."
...AND ALL THE UNIVERSES THAT ARE CONNECTED TO THIS PARTICULAR TIME AND SPACE.
I'M NOT SURE I FOLLOW?

WHOMEVER HOLDS ALL SIX WANDS IS ABLE TO CONNECT THEM BACK TO THE *SOURCE*. THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO CONTROL EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE WITHOUT US EVER KNOWING.

FREE WILL WOULD CEASE TO EXIST.

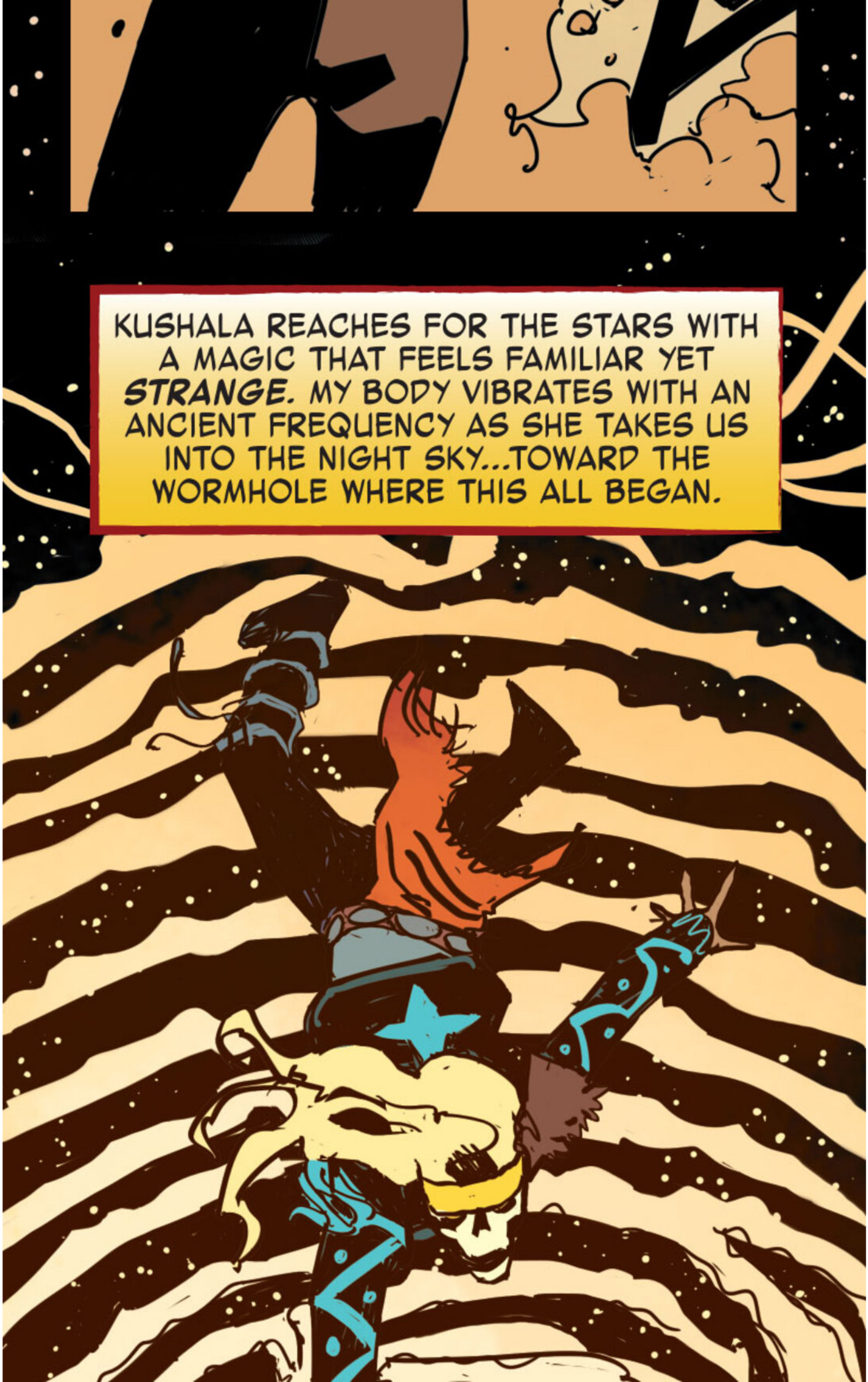
NOW THAT I KNOW WHERE AND WHEN TO GO, THE WAND CAN TRANSPORT ME TO ITS SIBLING.
WHOA!

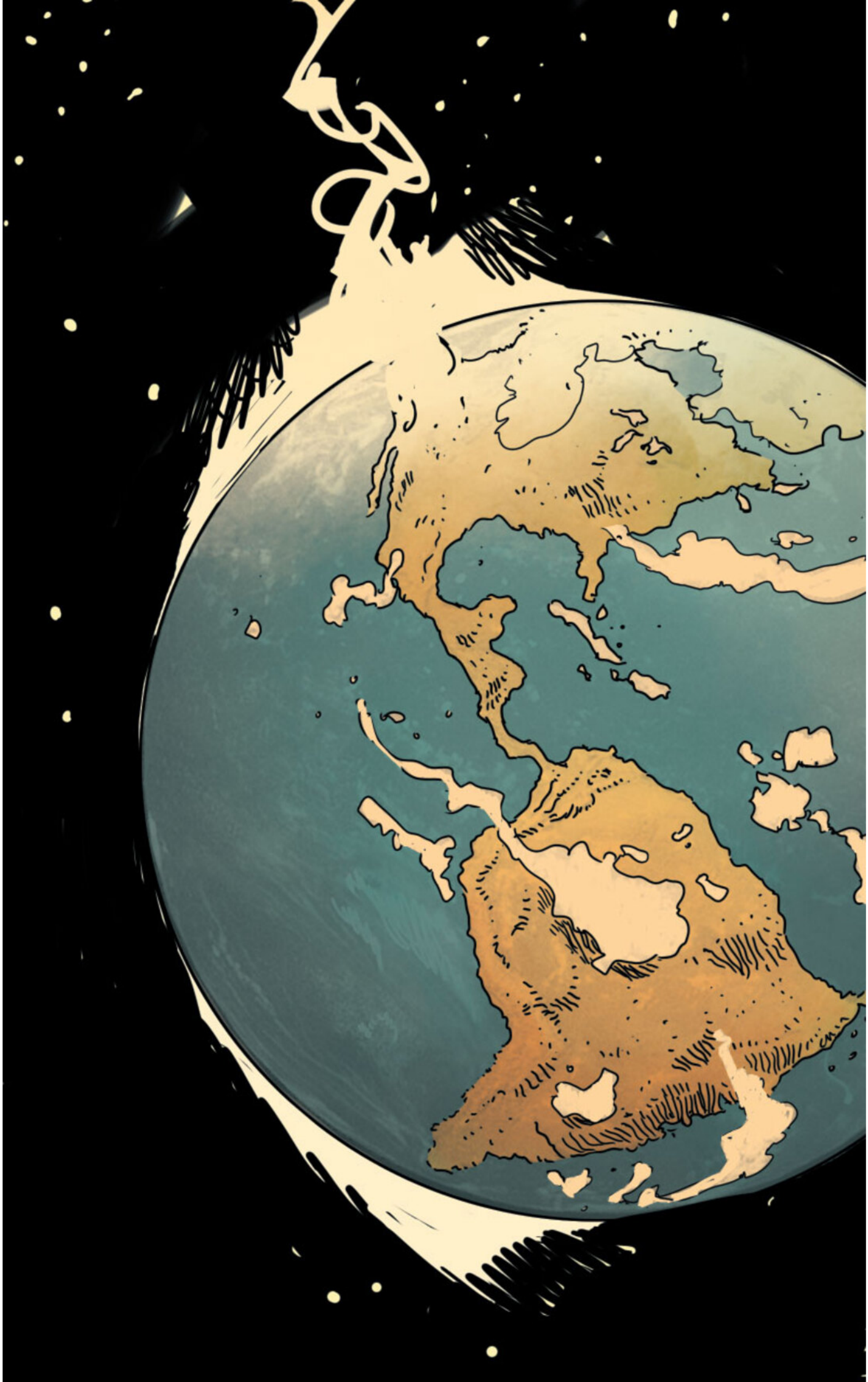
THESE JOURNALS WILL PLAY THEIR PART IN THE FUTURE AND HELP TRIGGER THE EVENTS THAT LEAD US TO THIS MOMENT. KEEP THEM SAFE--*OLIVIA* WILL SOMEDAY NEED THEM.

IT WAS AN HONOR TO MEET YOU, KUSHALA, AND I AM PROUD TO BE YOUR RELATIVE.
I WILL PLAY MY PART AND CONTINUE MY STUDIES, ADDING WHAT I DISCOVER INTO THE NOTEBOOKS.

THANK YOU, EDGAR. YOU ARE A CRUCIAL PIECE TO THIS COSMIC PUZZLE.
I WILL SEE YOU AGAIN, GRANDSON.

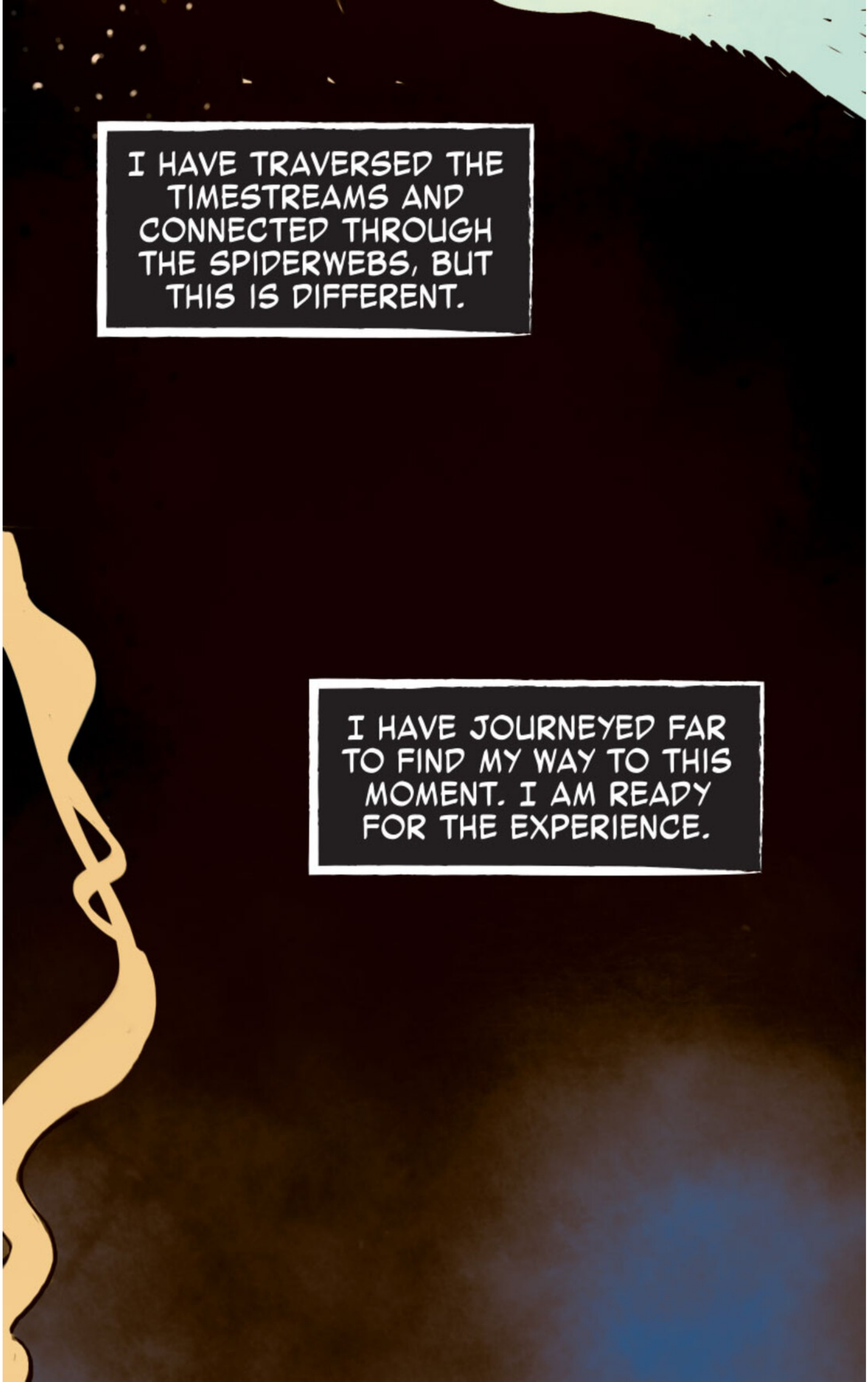
UNTIL THEN, GRANDMOTHER.


KUSHALA REACHES FOR THE STARS WITH A MAGIC THAT FEELS FAMILIAR YET *STRANGE.* MY BODY VIBRATES WITH AN ANCIENT FREQUENCY AS SHE TAKES US INTO THE NIGHT SKY...TOWARD THE WORMHOLE WHERE THIS ALL BEGAN.



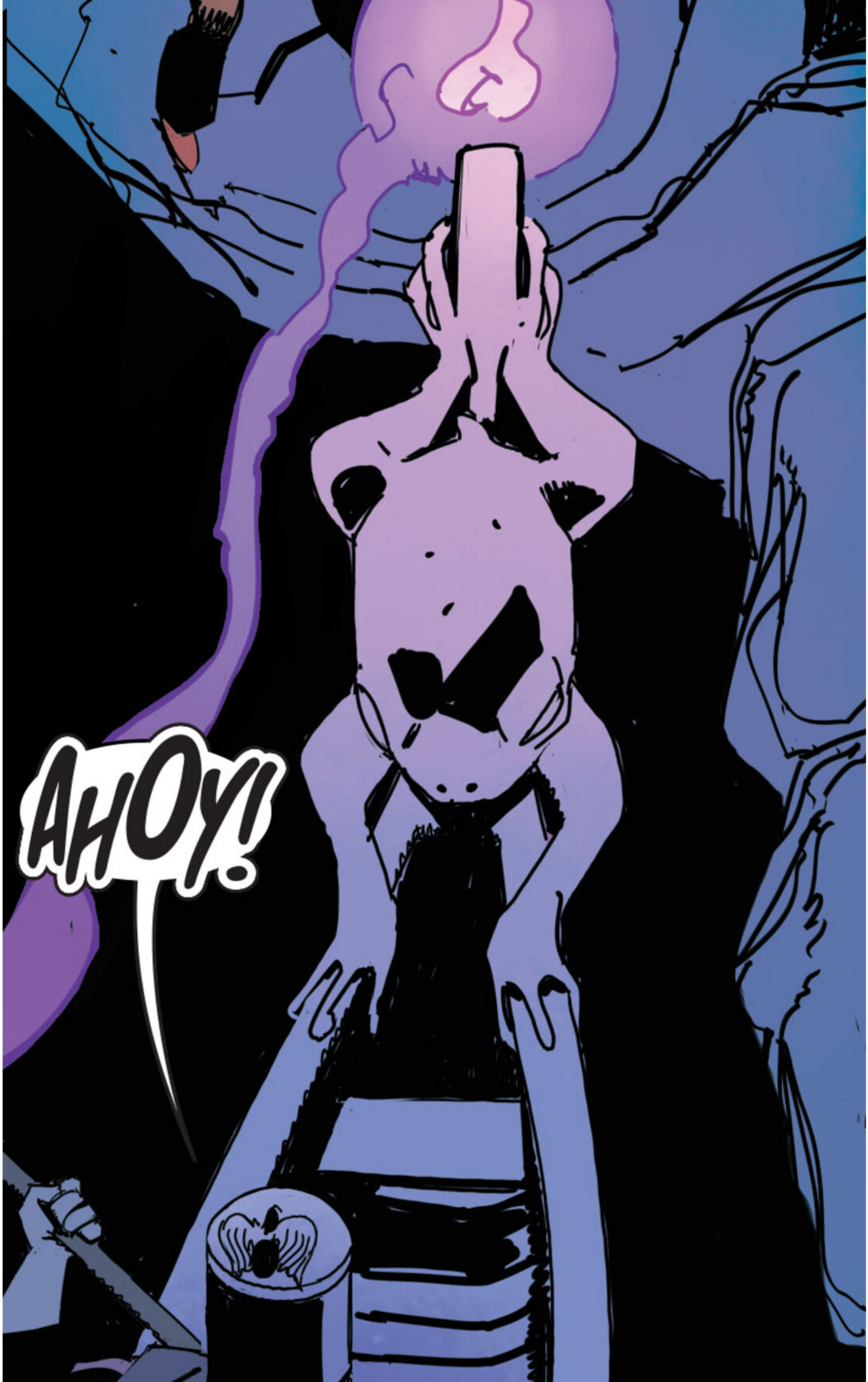
HAS IT BEEN A DAY? TWO DAYS? I'M NOT SURE. MAYBE MORE? IT FEELS LIKE I'VE ALWAYS HAD KUSHALA INSIDE ME. NOW WE--
--ARE BEING PULLED APART.
AND IT'S LIKE A PIECE OF MY SOUL IS BEING RIPPED AWAY.

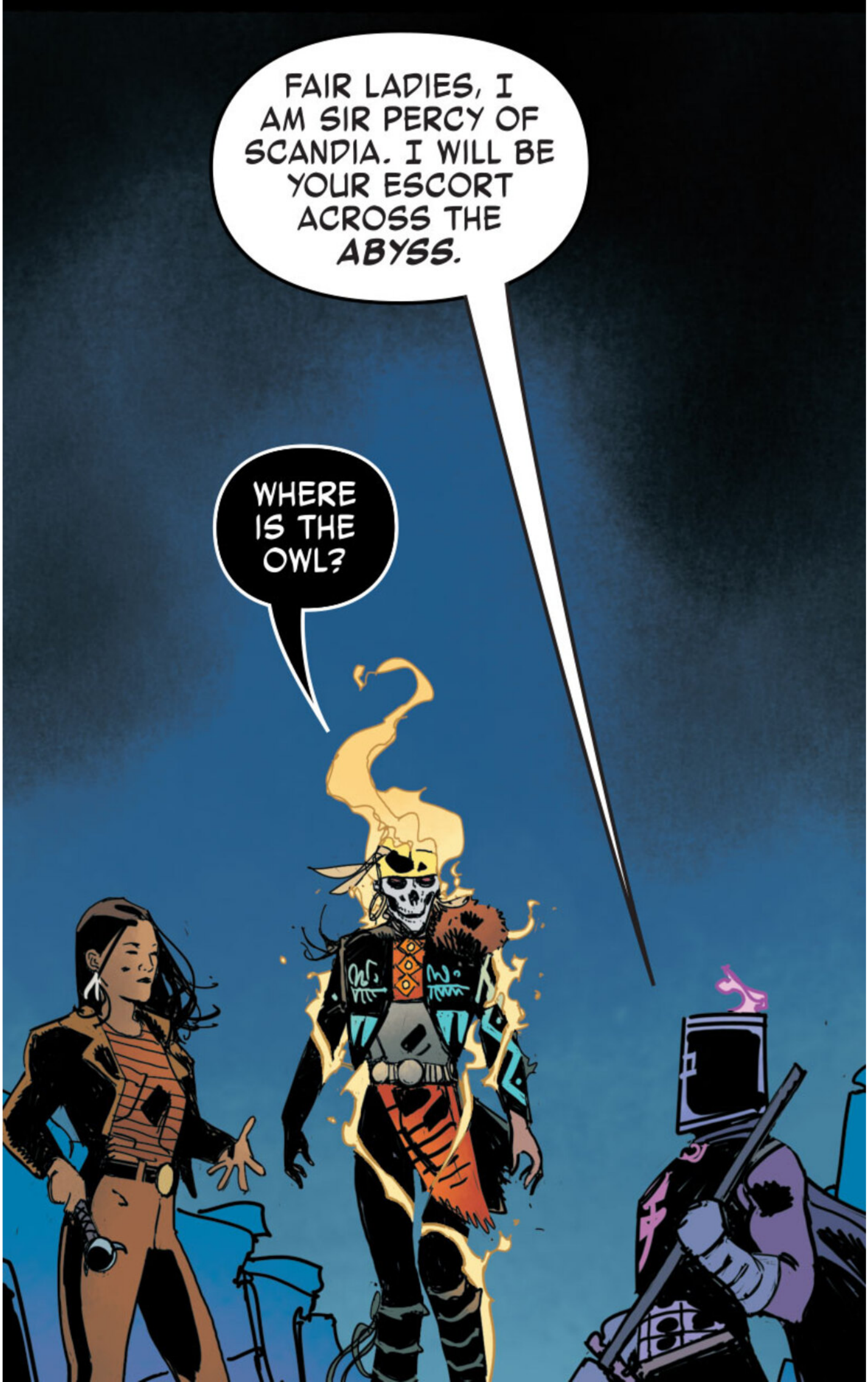
THIS FEELING IS NEW. A FEELING THAT RINGS OF A RETURN TO THE WOMB.

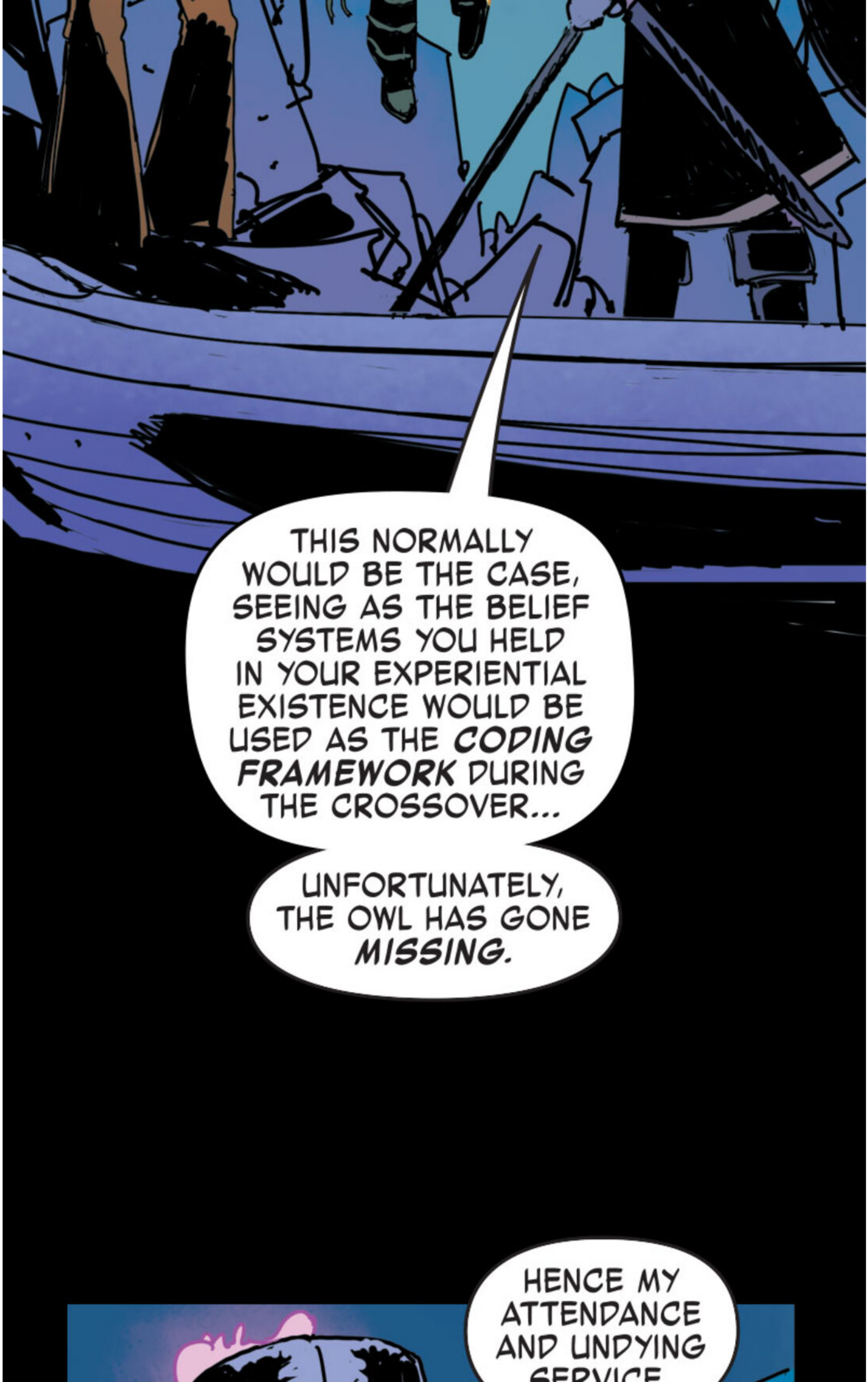

I HAVE TRAVERSED THE TIMESTREAMS AND CONNECTED THROUGH THE SPIDERWEBS, BUT THIS IS DIFFERENT.
I HAVE JOURNEYED FAR TO FIND MY WAY TO THIS MOMENT. I AM READY FOR THE EXPERIENCE.

WOW. SO THE AFTERLIFE THING WAS LITERAL, HUH?
I THINK THIS IS OUR PERCEPTION OF IT--EDGAR'S FIFTH DIMENSION.

YOU SAID "OUR PERCEPTION," BUT THE RIVER STYX, A MEDIEVAL BOATMAN... THESE AREN'T OUR STORIES.
NO... WE WOULD EXPECT TO SEE THE OWL, WHO WOULD FLY US TO THE OTHER SIDE.


AHOY!


FAIR LADIES, I AM SIR PERCY OF SCANDIA. I WILL BE YOUR ESCORT ACROSS THE ABYSS.
WHERE IS THE OWL?


THIS NORMALLY WOULD BE THE CASE, SEEING AS THE BELIEF SYSTEMS YOU HELD IN YOUR EXPERIENTIAL EXISTENCE WOULD BE USED AS THE *CODING FRAMEWORK* DURING THE CROSSOVER...
UNFORTUNATELY, THE OWL HAS GONE *MISSING.*
HENCE MY ATTENDANCE AND UNDYING SERVICE

SERVICE.

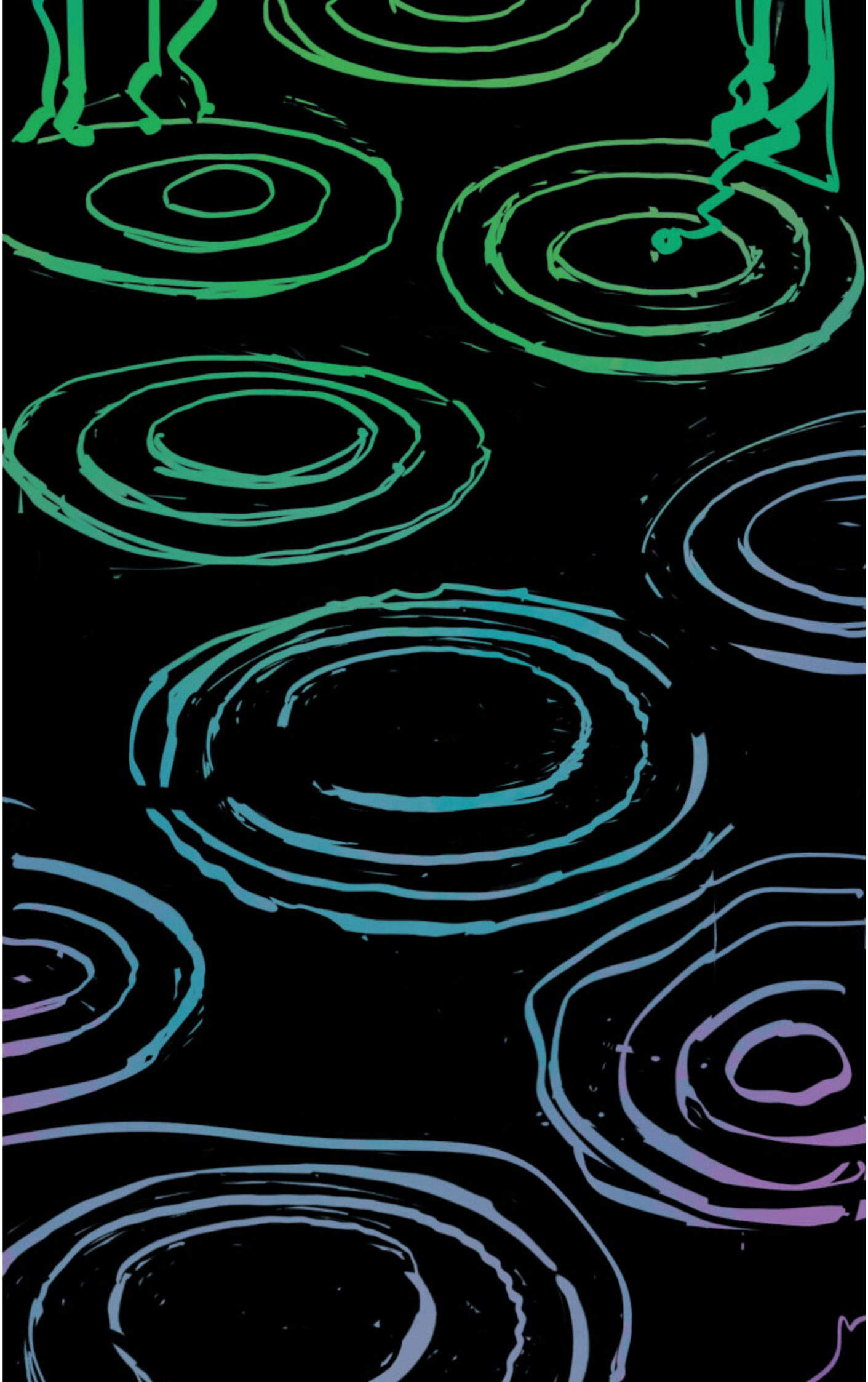
WHERE DO THESE DIFFERENT PATHS GO?
TO THE *NINE CIRCLES.*
IS THIS SOME SORT OF JUDEO-CHRISTIAN VERSION OF HELL? LIKE DANTE'S *INFERNO?*

NO.
THEN... IS IT THE NINE DIMENSIONS OF SPACE THAT CONNECT TO *STRING THEORY?*
"WHAT YOUR SCIENCE ATTEMPTS TO ACHIEVE THROUGH REASON IS LIKE OBSERVING ONE SIDE OF A *CUBE* AND CALLING IT A *SQUARE.*

"THERE IS LIMITED SCOPE IN WHAT *HUMAN SENSES* CAN PERCEIVE IN ORDER TO INTERPRET AND UNDERSTAND.

"THIS JOURNEY WILL HELP...

"...BUT AS WITH ANY ENDING TO A CYCLE COMES THE BEGINNING OF A NEW PHASE, FILLED WITH NEW QUESTIONS AND POSSIBILITIES."

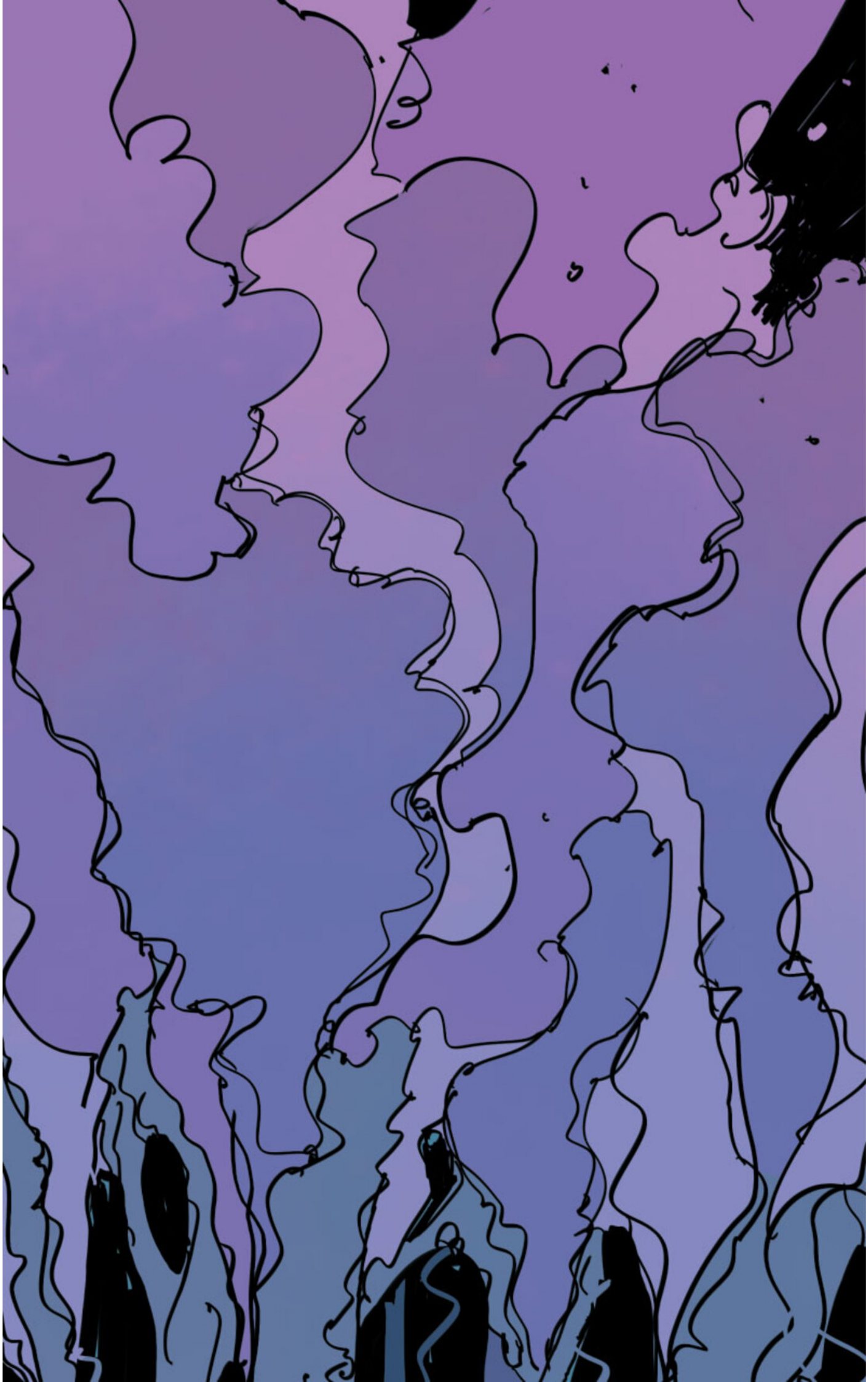


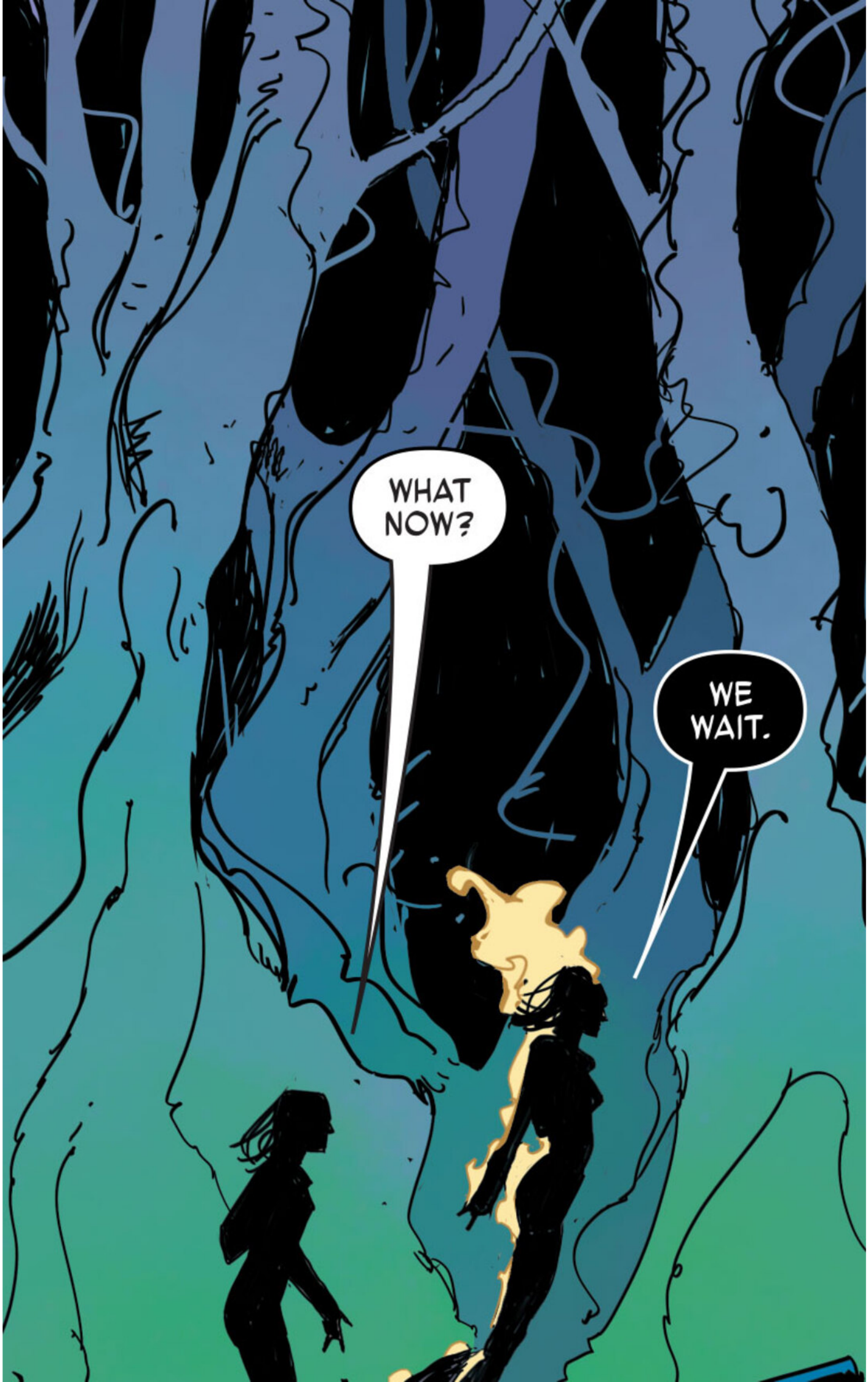
WE HAVE ARRIVED. WATCH YOUR STEP AS YOU EXIT, M'LADIES.

YOUR SERVICE IS APPRECIATED, SIR PERCY OF SCANDIA. AHEE-IH-YEH.
YOU ARE QUITE WELCOME, LADY KUSHALA.

INA-GO-DZIH-TEH, BLACK KNIGHT.
INA-GO-DZIH-TEH, LADY KUSHALA AND LADY OLIVIA!

INA-GO-DZIH-TEH, BLACK KNIGHT.




WHAT NOW?
WE WAIT.

CREEEEAK

MY LITTLE FIREBIRD.
MY POOKY BEAR.

AUNTIE JESSA?!
REGGIEEEE!!!

OLIVIA, MY LOVE.
IS THAT REALLY YOU?
IT'S EXACTLY THE "ME" AS YOU KNOW ME...AND KNEW "ME." THE "ME" YOU HOLD IN YOUR HEART. THE "ME" YOU SEE IN OUR DAUGHTER. I AM THE LOVE THAT MAKES US WHOLE.
I LOVE YOU SO MUCH...AND I MISS YOU BEYOND WORDS. OUR DAUGHTER NEEDS OUR HELP, BABE.

AUNTIE JESSA, I STILL SEE YOU IN MY DREAMS.
I LOVE TO VISIT YOU, KUSHALA. YOU MAKE US ALL SO PROUD.
AUNTIE, I'M AFRAID... THERE ARE SO MANY VERSIONS OF THIS STORY WHERE I LOSE--EITHER BY FAILING TO DEFEAT DOOM, OR DESTROYING EVERYTHING I LOVE IN MY PATH TO HIM.