

THE ARCHMAGE RETURNS AFTER 4000 YEARS

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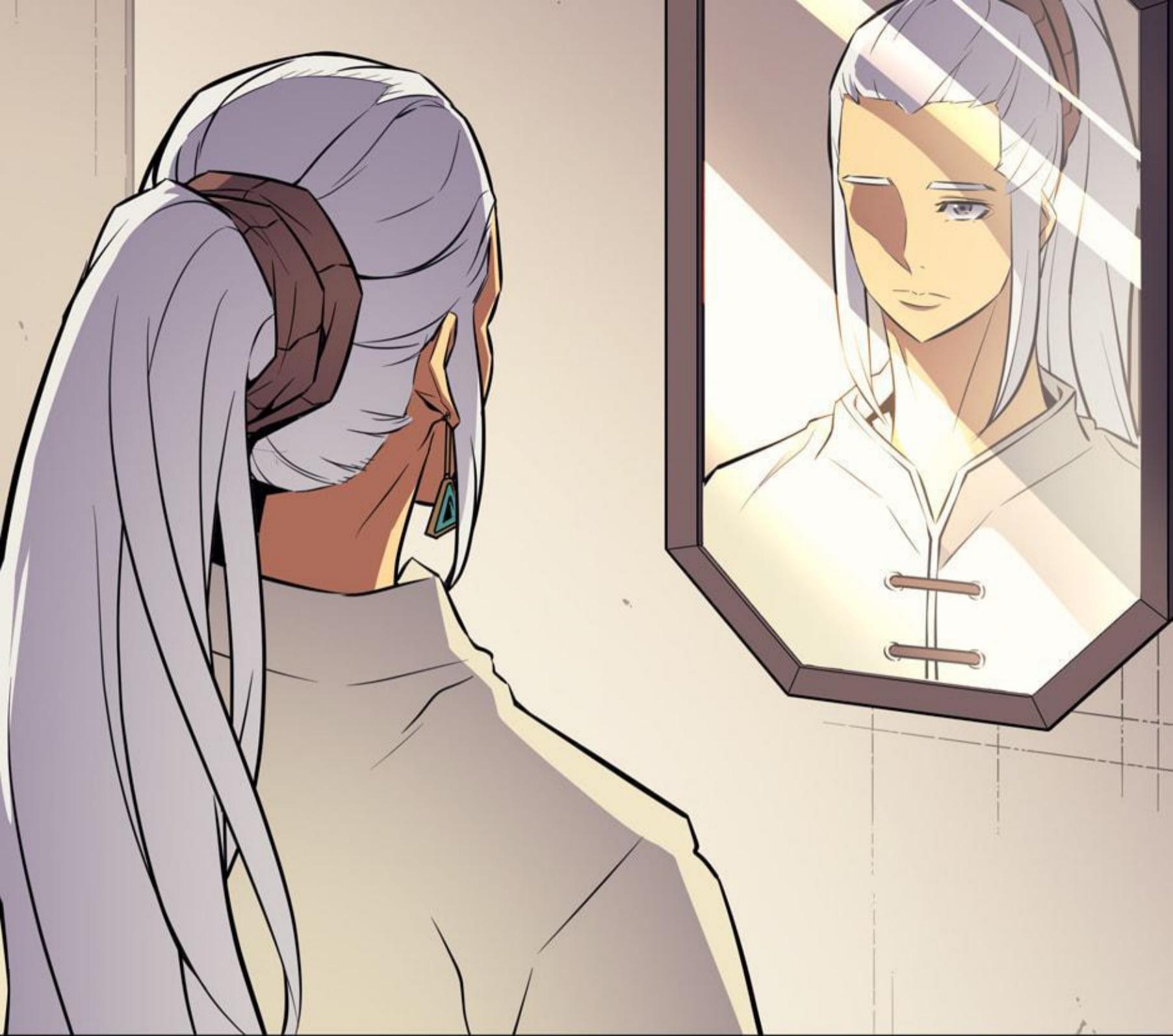
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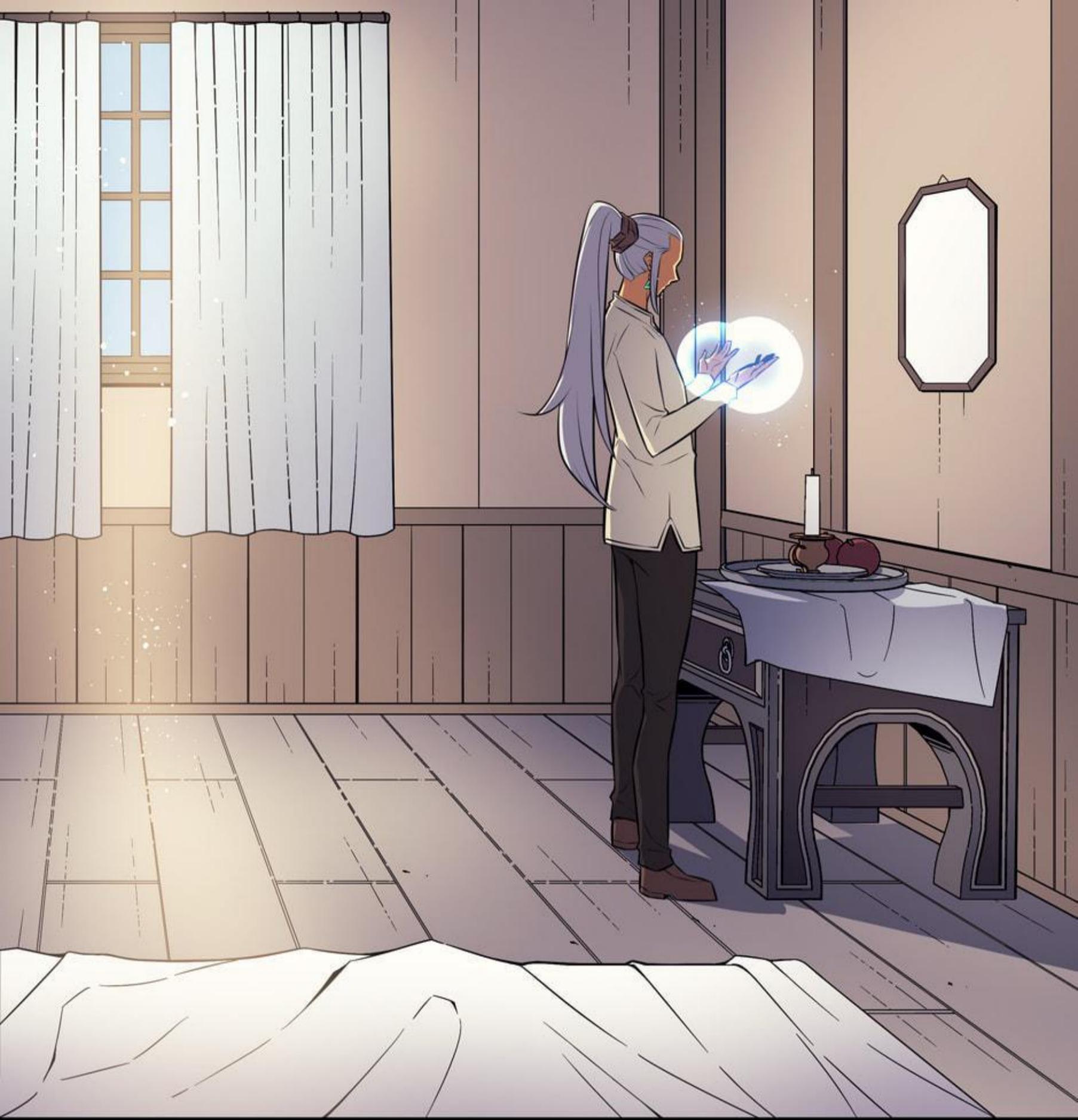
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GROAD CITY





CCCS







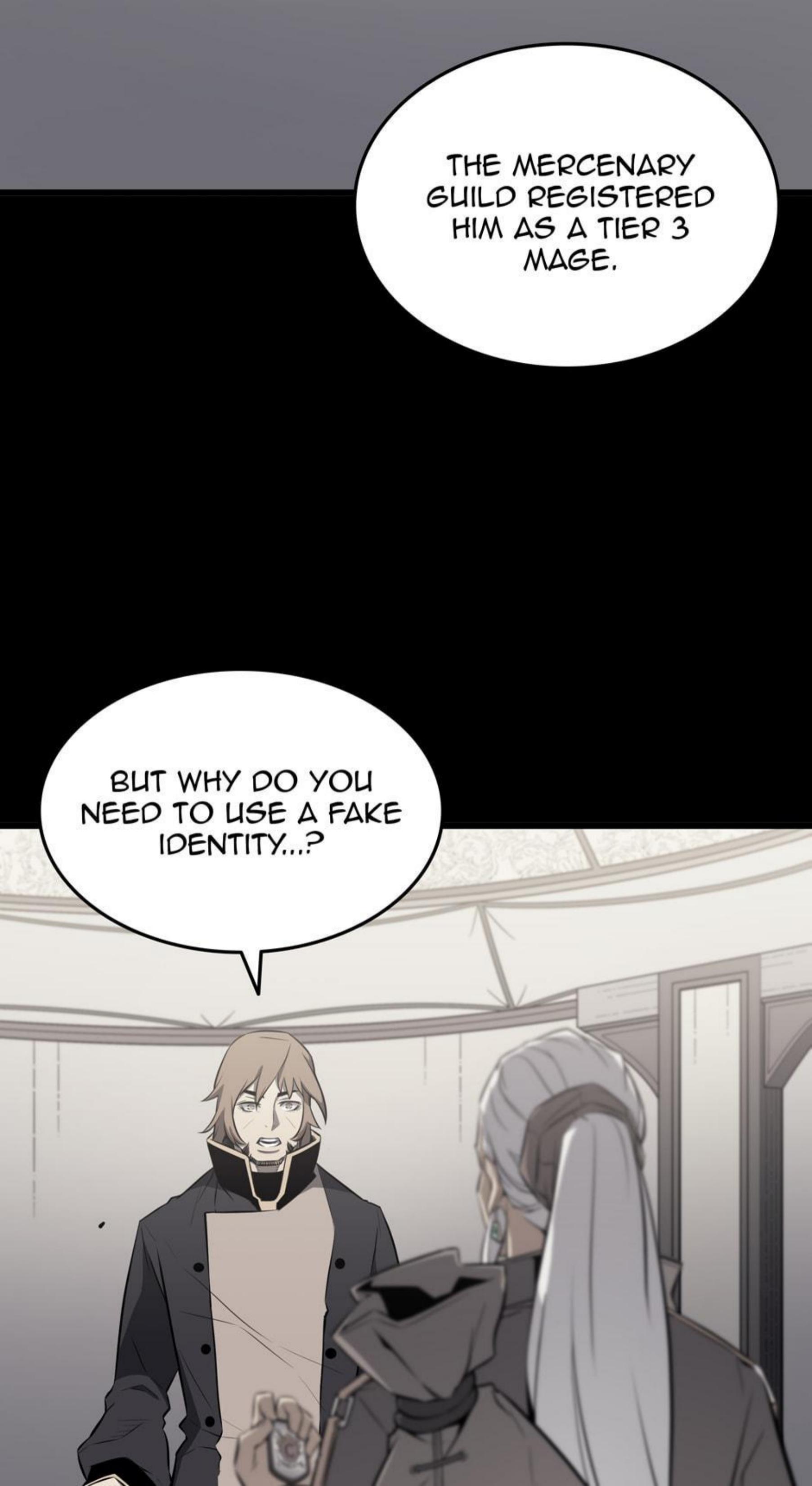
HELLO, MY
NAME IS CAIN
RICKSTONE.

I'M A DASHING
C-RANK MERCENARY
FOR HIRE.



HE'S CURRENTLY
26 YEARS OLD, AND
HIS HOME LIES IN THE
SOUTHERNMOST CITY
OF TEMIGO.



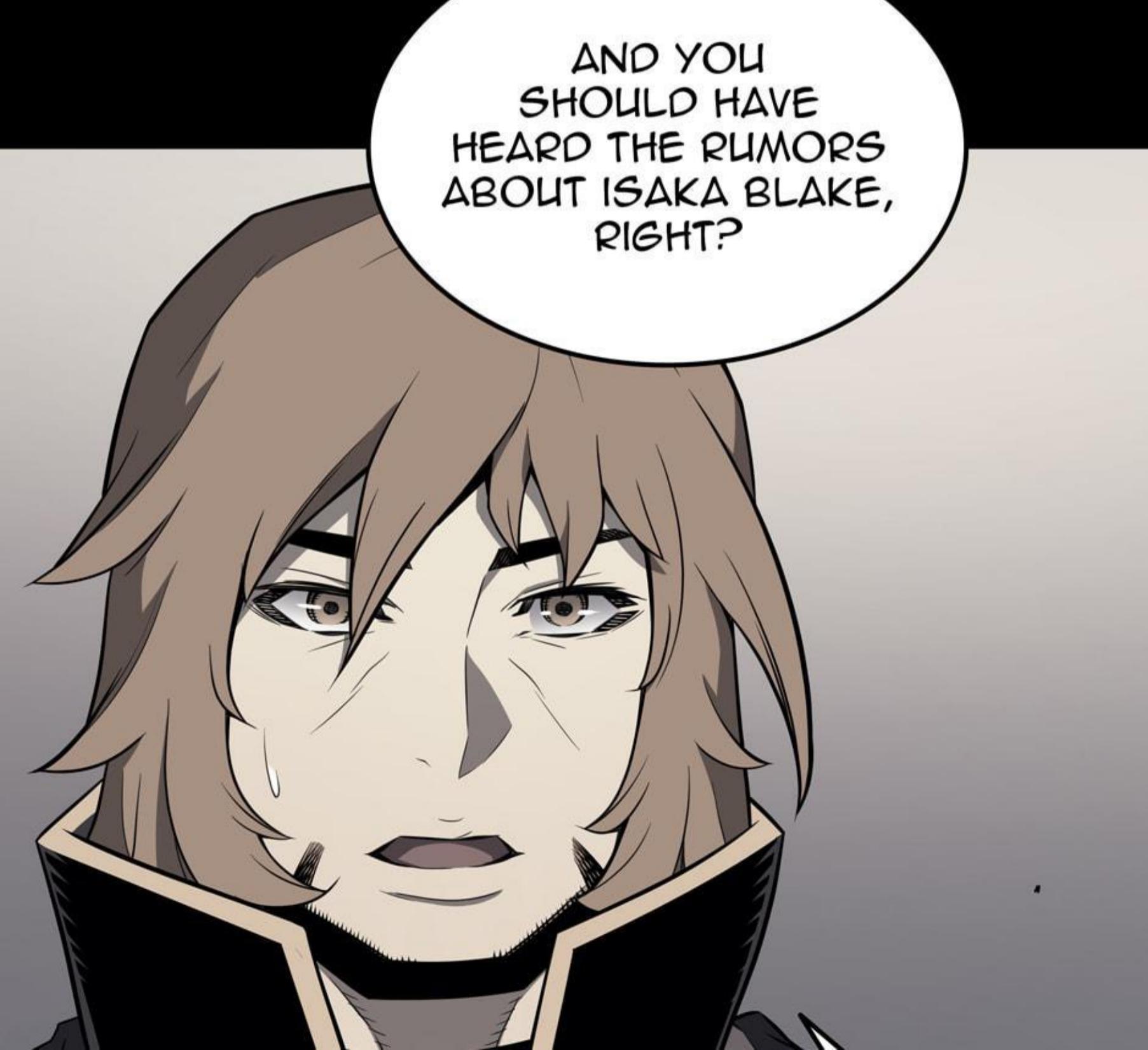


THE MERCENARY
GUILD REGISTERED
HIM AS A TIER 3
MAGE.

BUT WHY DO YOU
NEED TO USE A FAKE
IDENTITY...?



PILAT IS
GOVERNED BY
MY FAMILY.



AND YOU
SHOULD HAVE
HEARD THE RUMORS
ABOUT ISAKA BLAKE,
RIGHT?

....!

YOU SPEAK OF
THE RUMORS THAT HE
MIGHT HAVE A CLOSE
CONNECTION WITH
THE DEMIGODS?

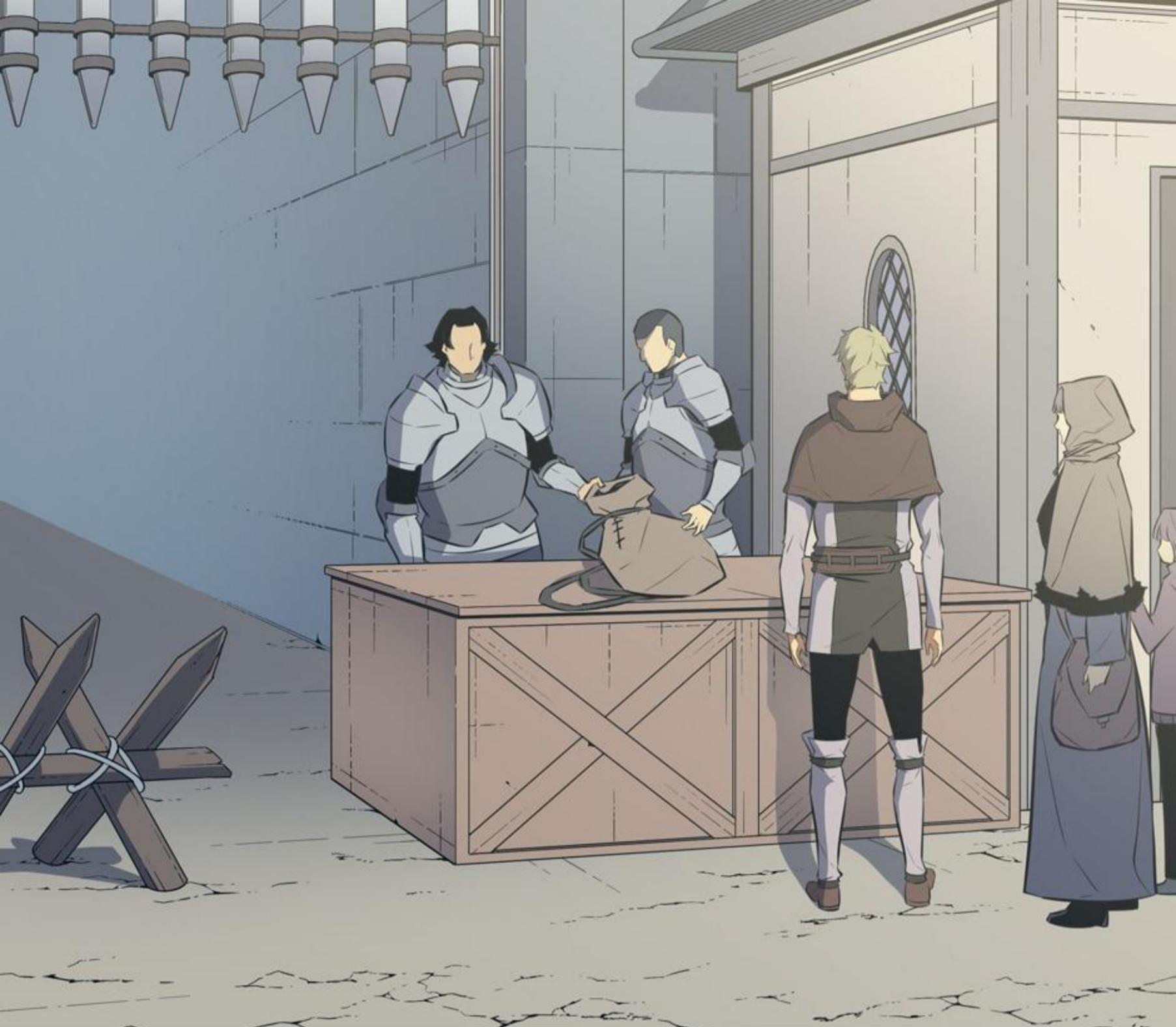
THAT'S RIGHT.

IT'S TRUE THAT
WE WILL NEED TO DEAL
WITH THE BLAKE HOUSE
EVENTUALLY, BUT...

**THIS ISN'T THE RIGHT
TIME TO CONFRONT THEM.**

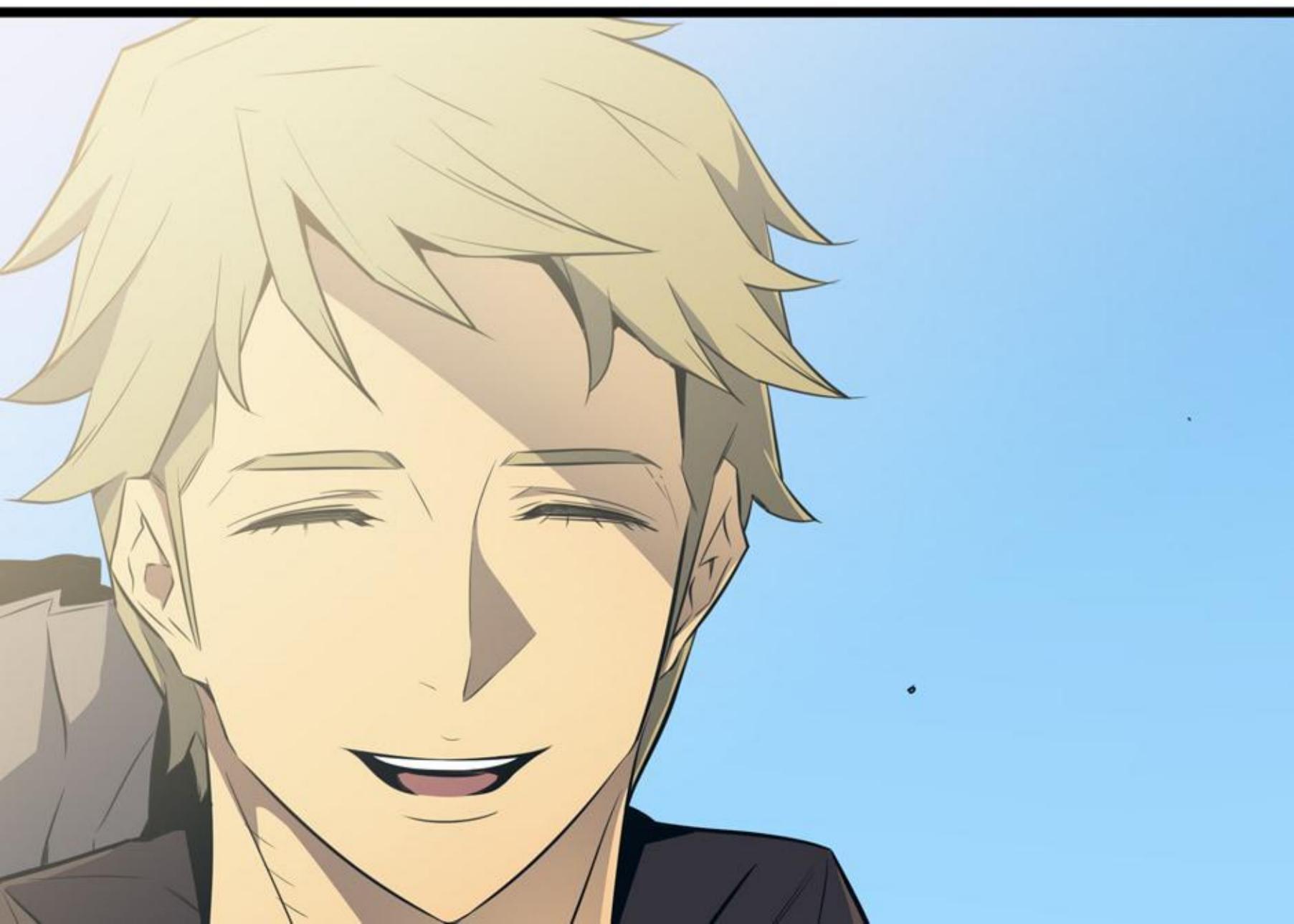






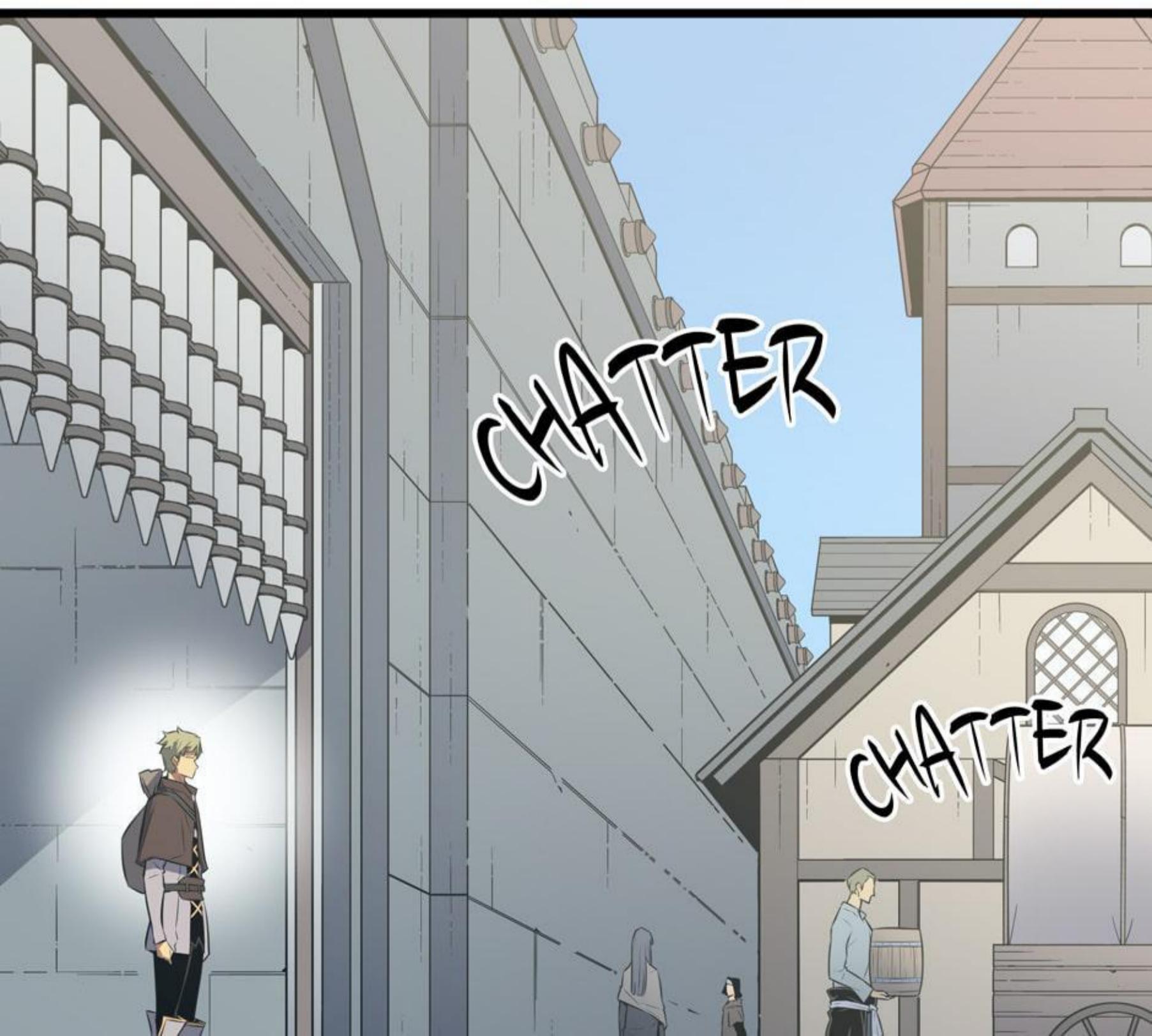
CAIN RICKSTONE...

YOUR IDENTITY
CHECKS OUT.





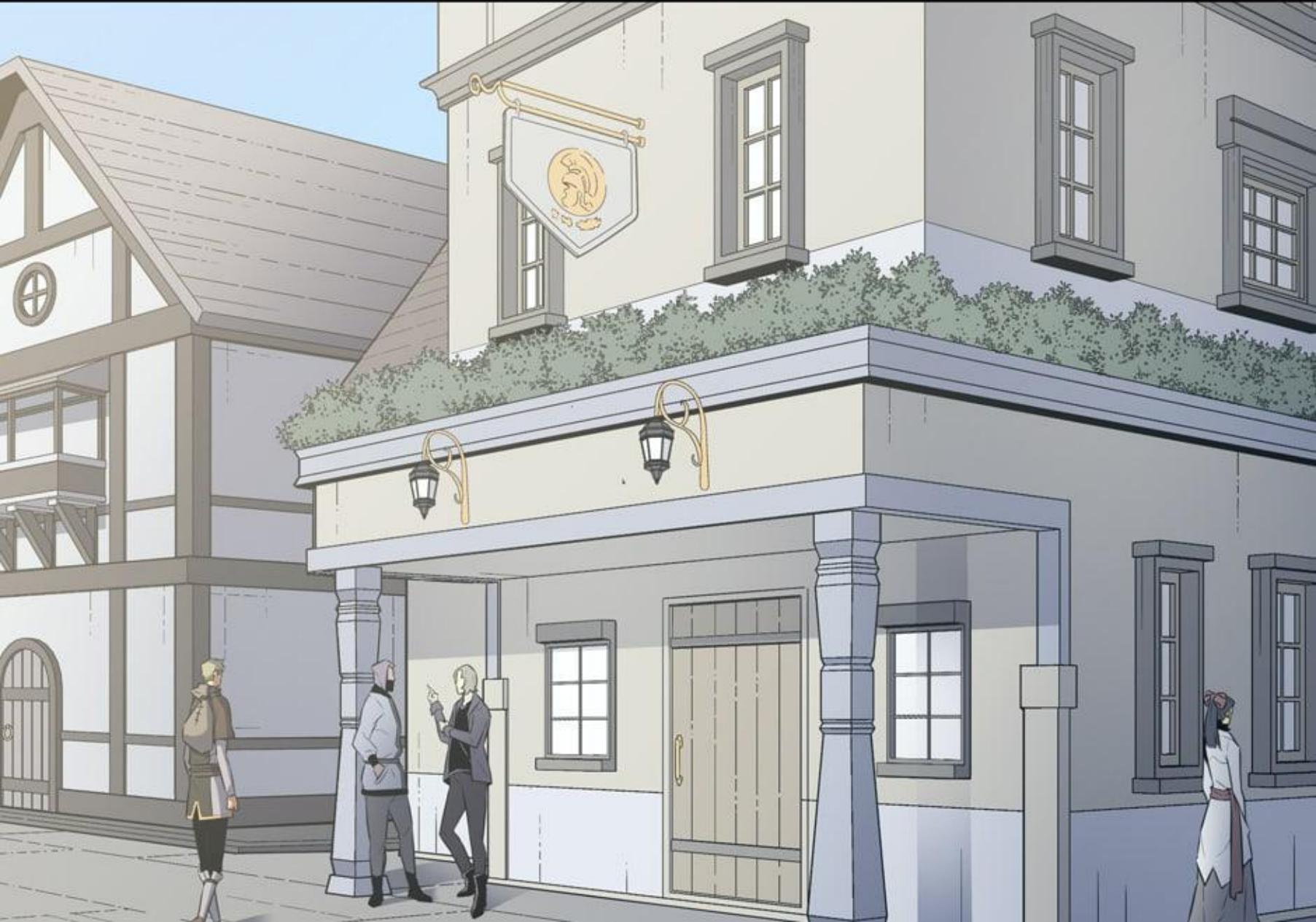
THANK YOU.





**FREI'S
HOMETOWN,
PILAT...**

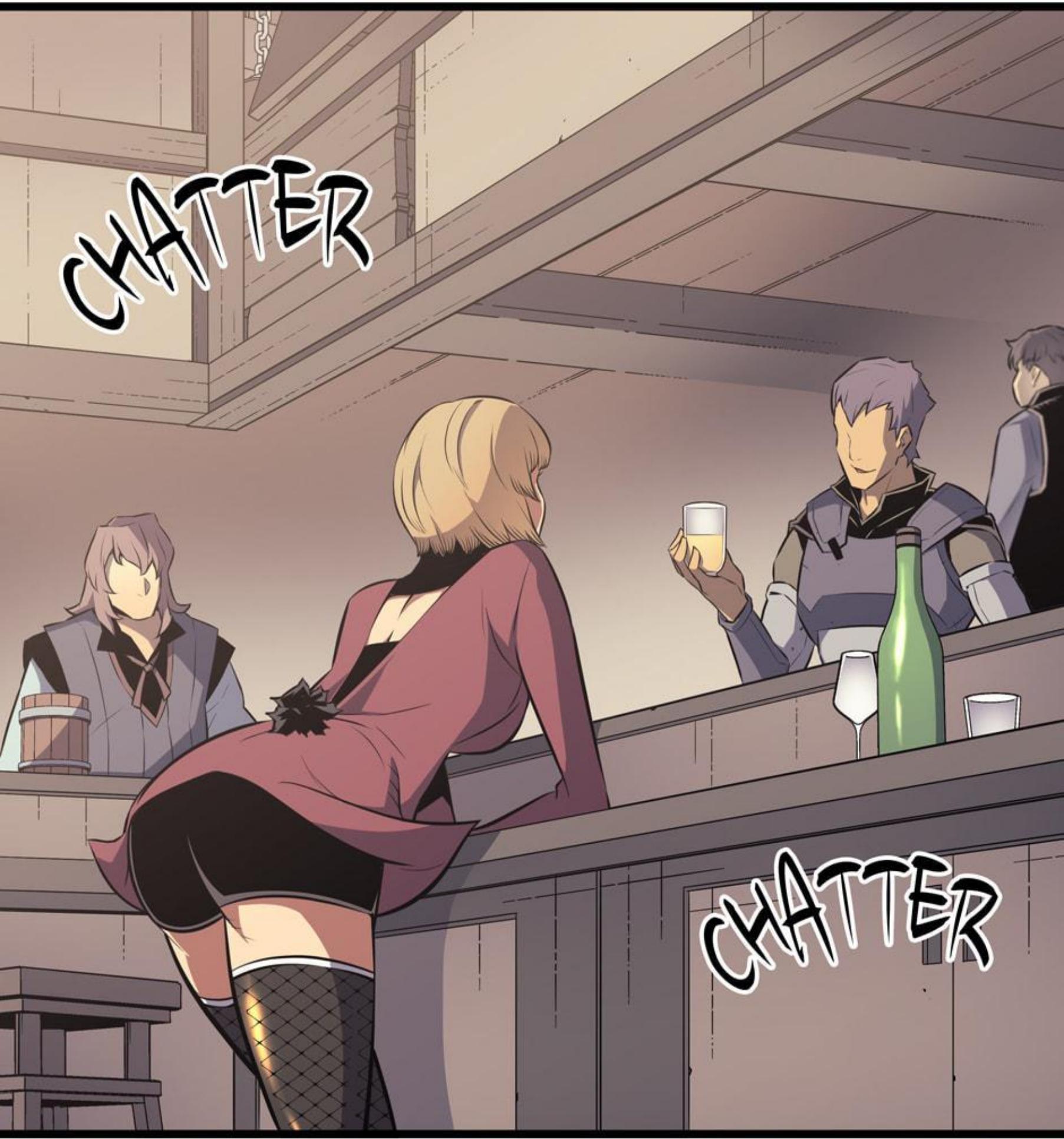
**IT FEELS FAMILIAR
TO ME EVEN THOUGH IT'S
MY FIRST TIME HERE. IS FREI
RESPONDING FROM WITHIN
MY CONSCIOUSNESS...?**

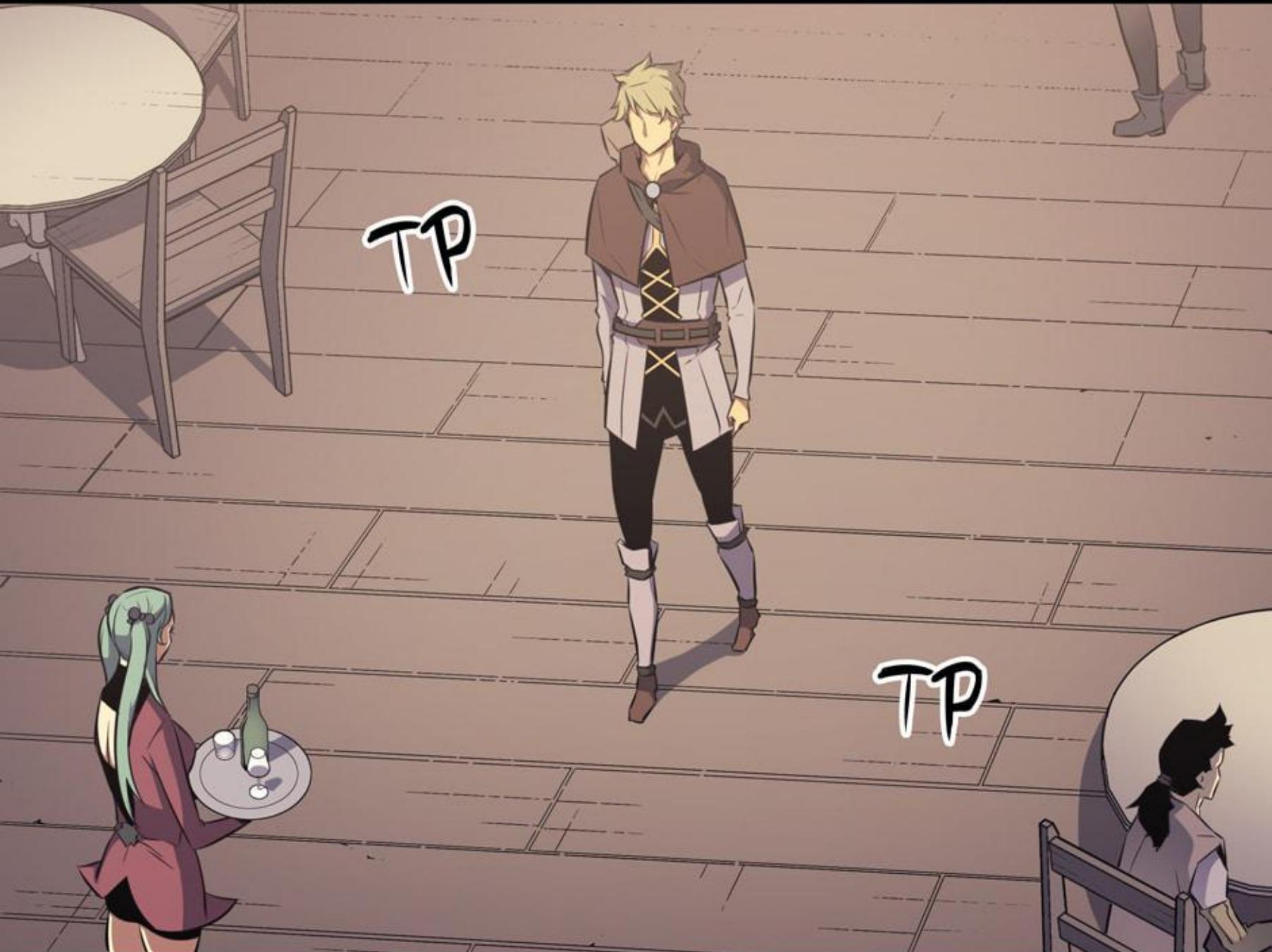


BWAHAA

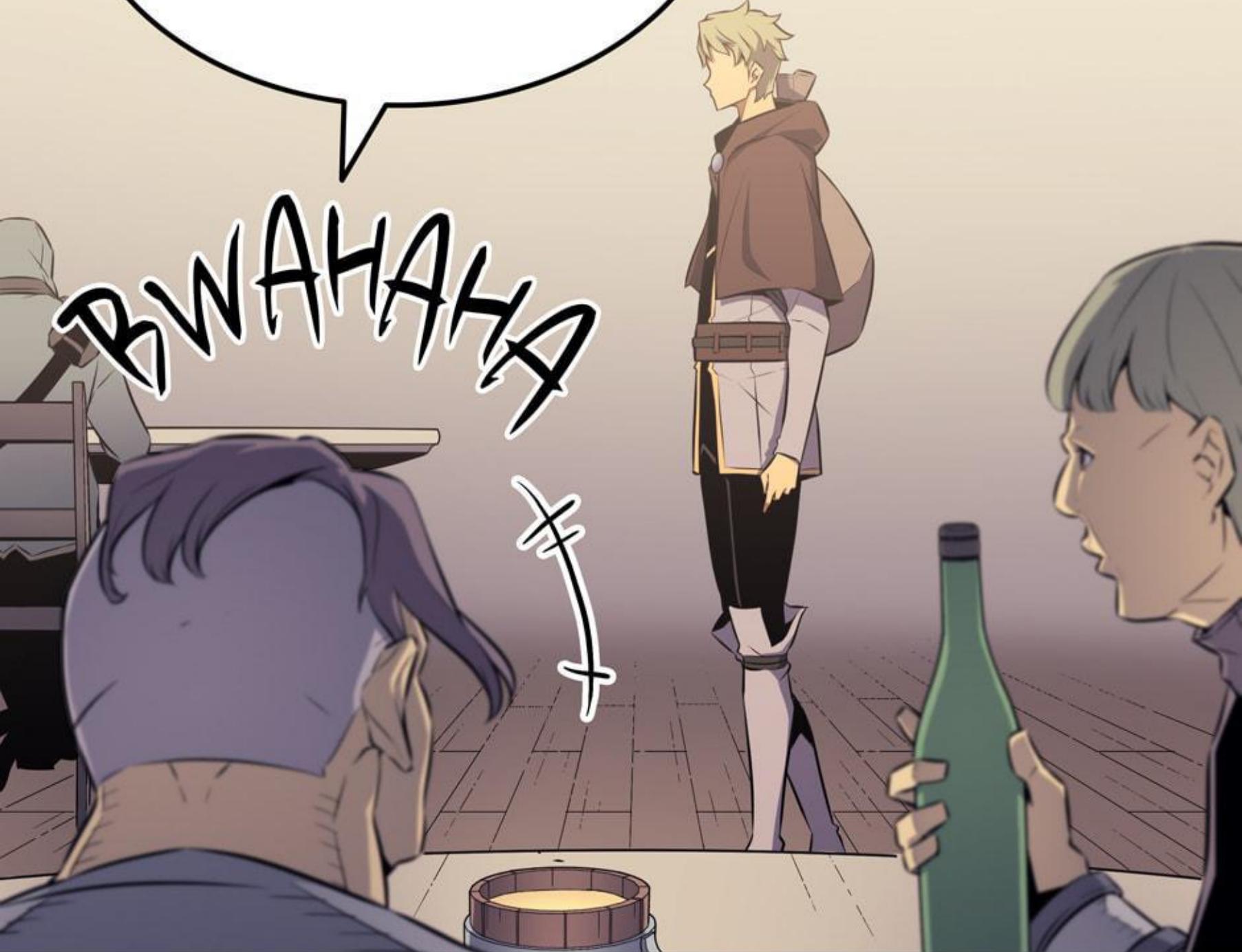


CHATTER





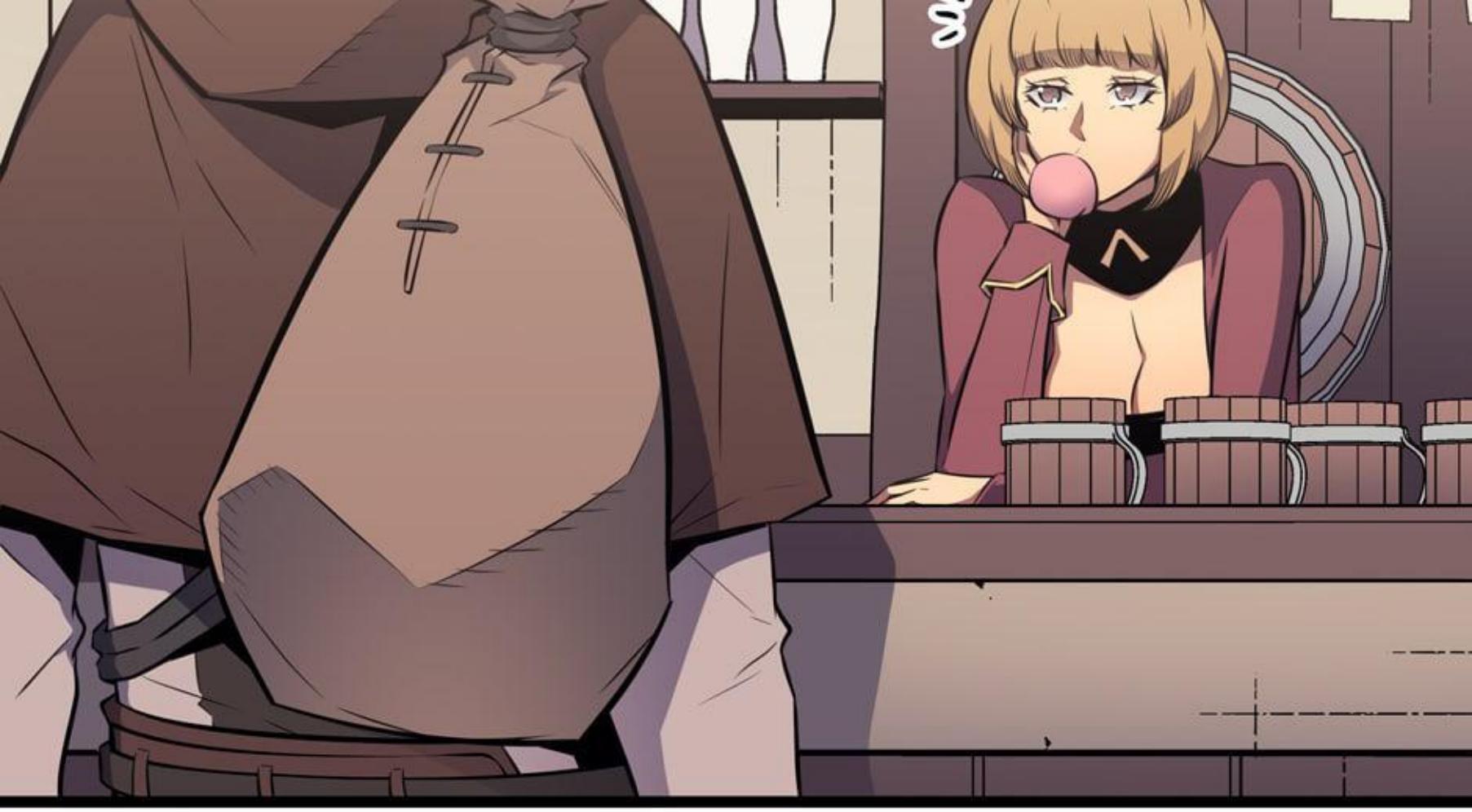
OH? SEEMS
LIKE AN HONORABLE
MAGE HAS GRACED
OUR SHABBY
TAVERN.



LOOKS LIKE WE'VE
BECOME A BIT MORE
REPUTABLE!

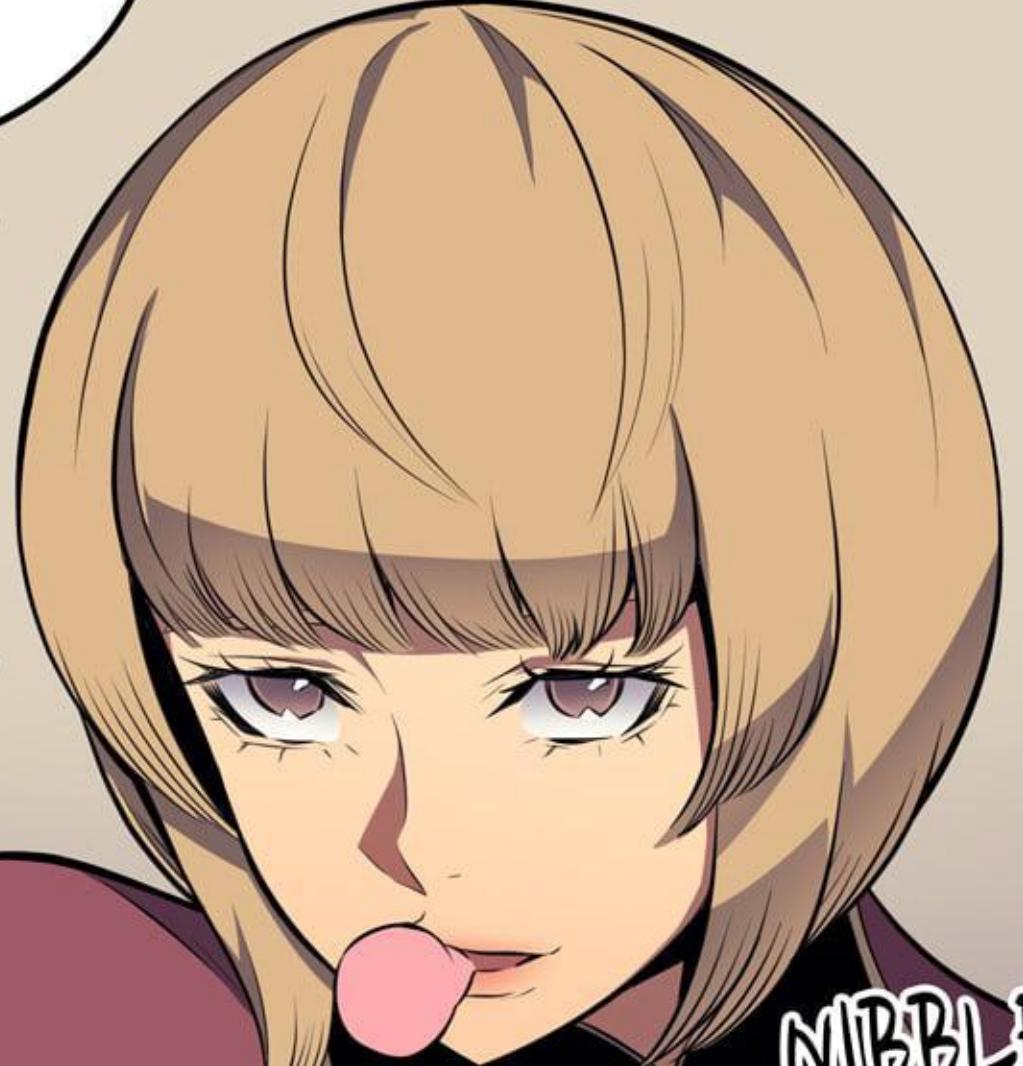
REPUTABLE:

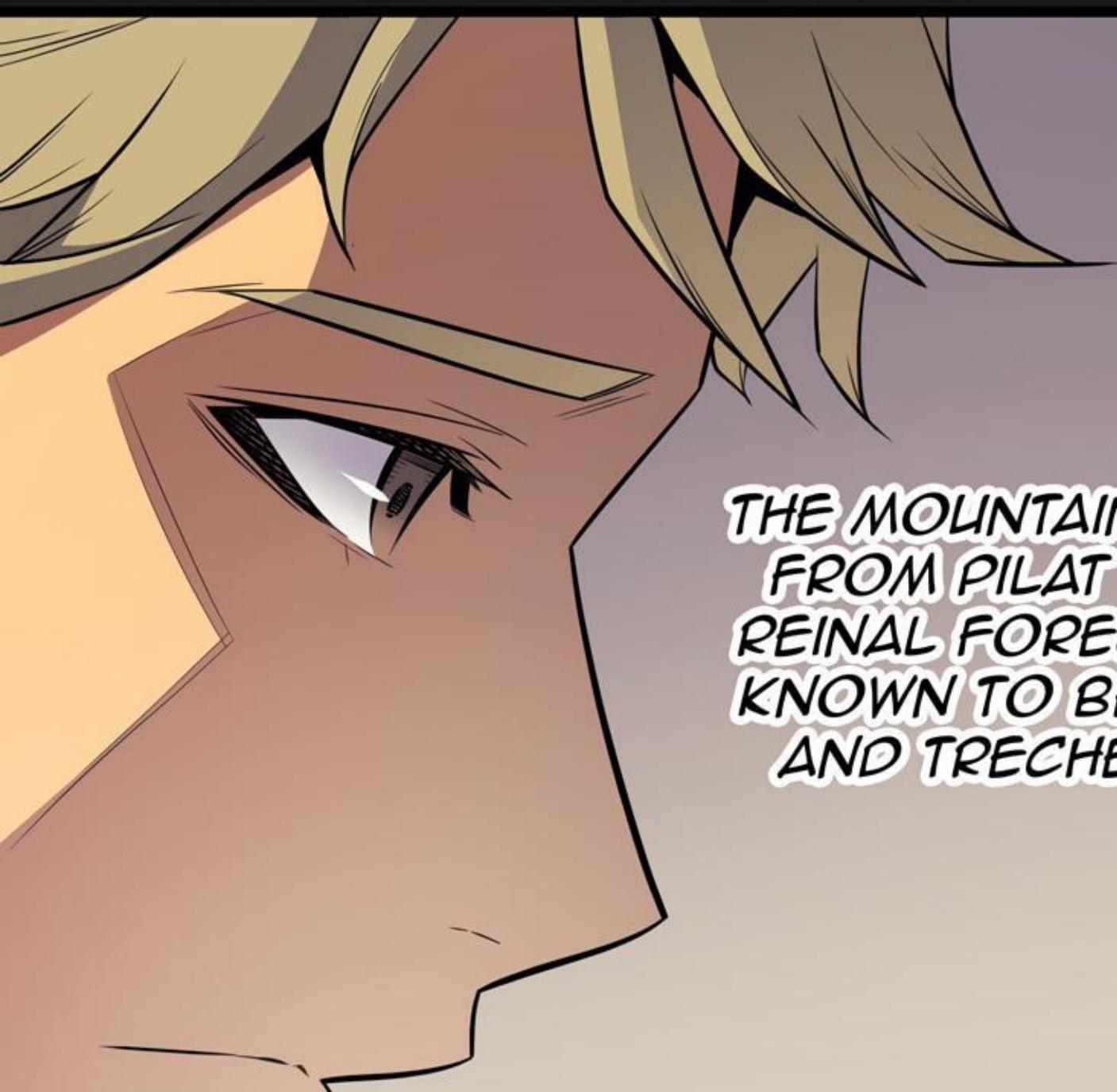
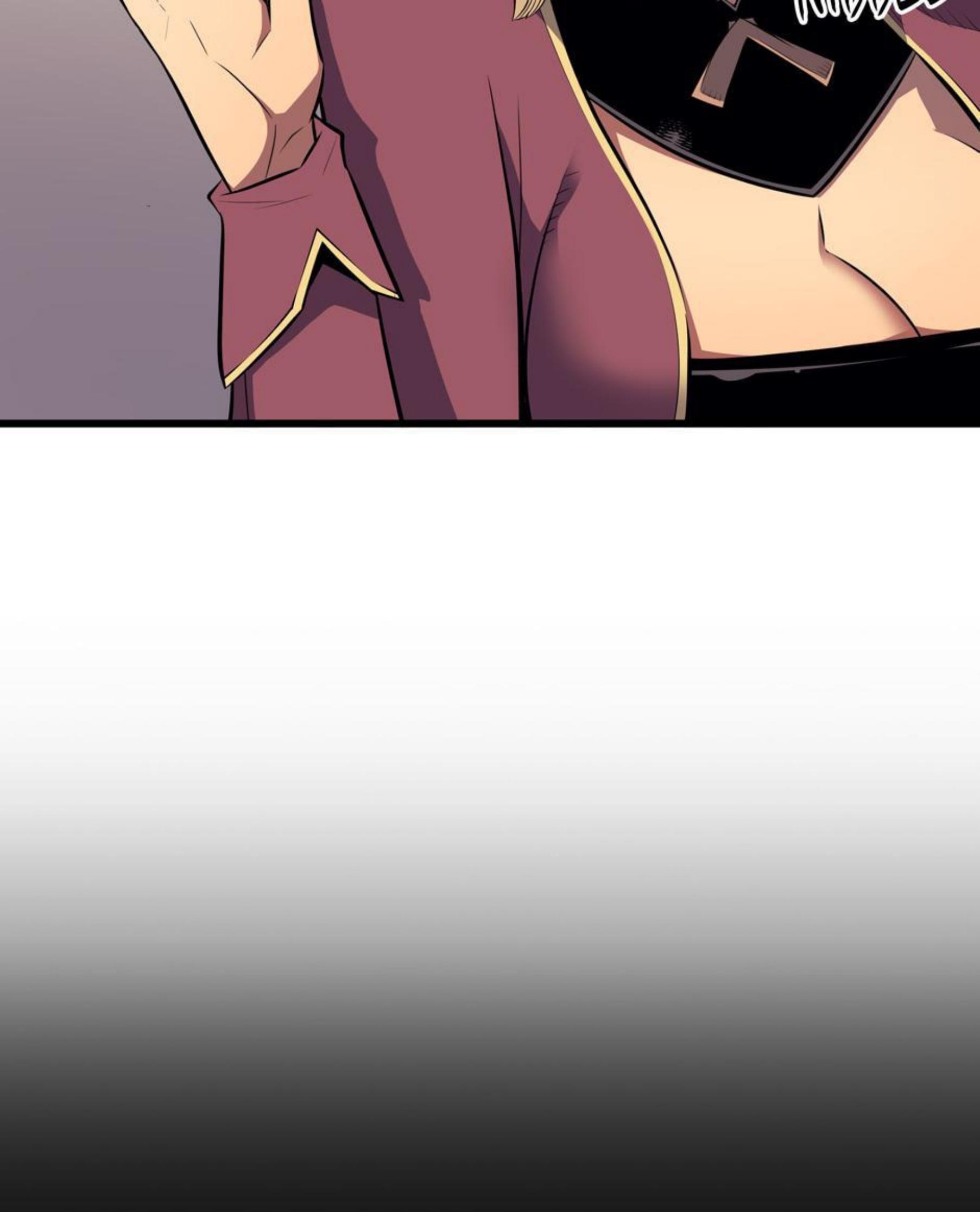




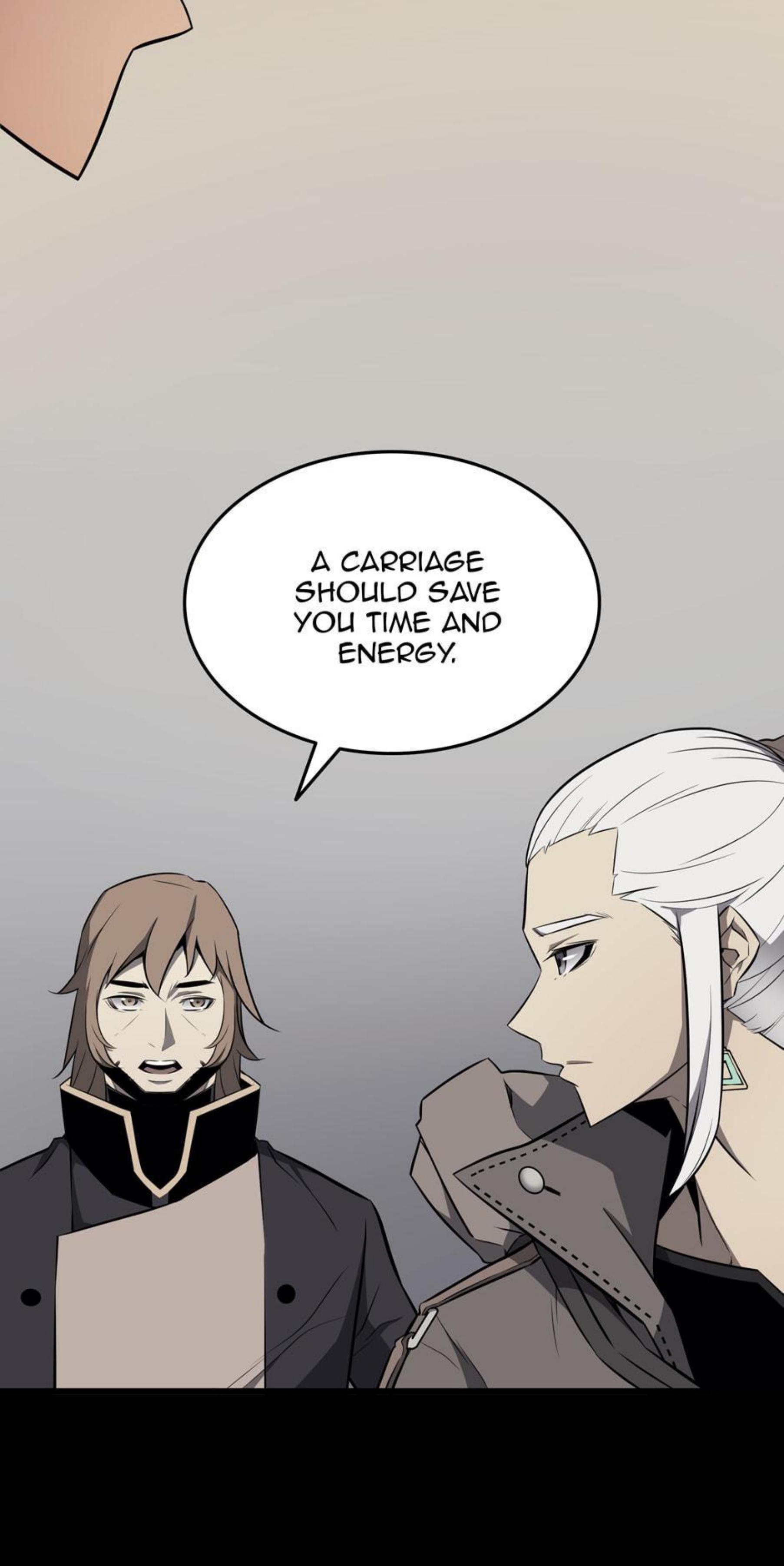
WHAT'LL IT
BE, SUGAR?

NIBBLE

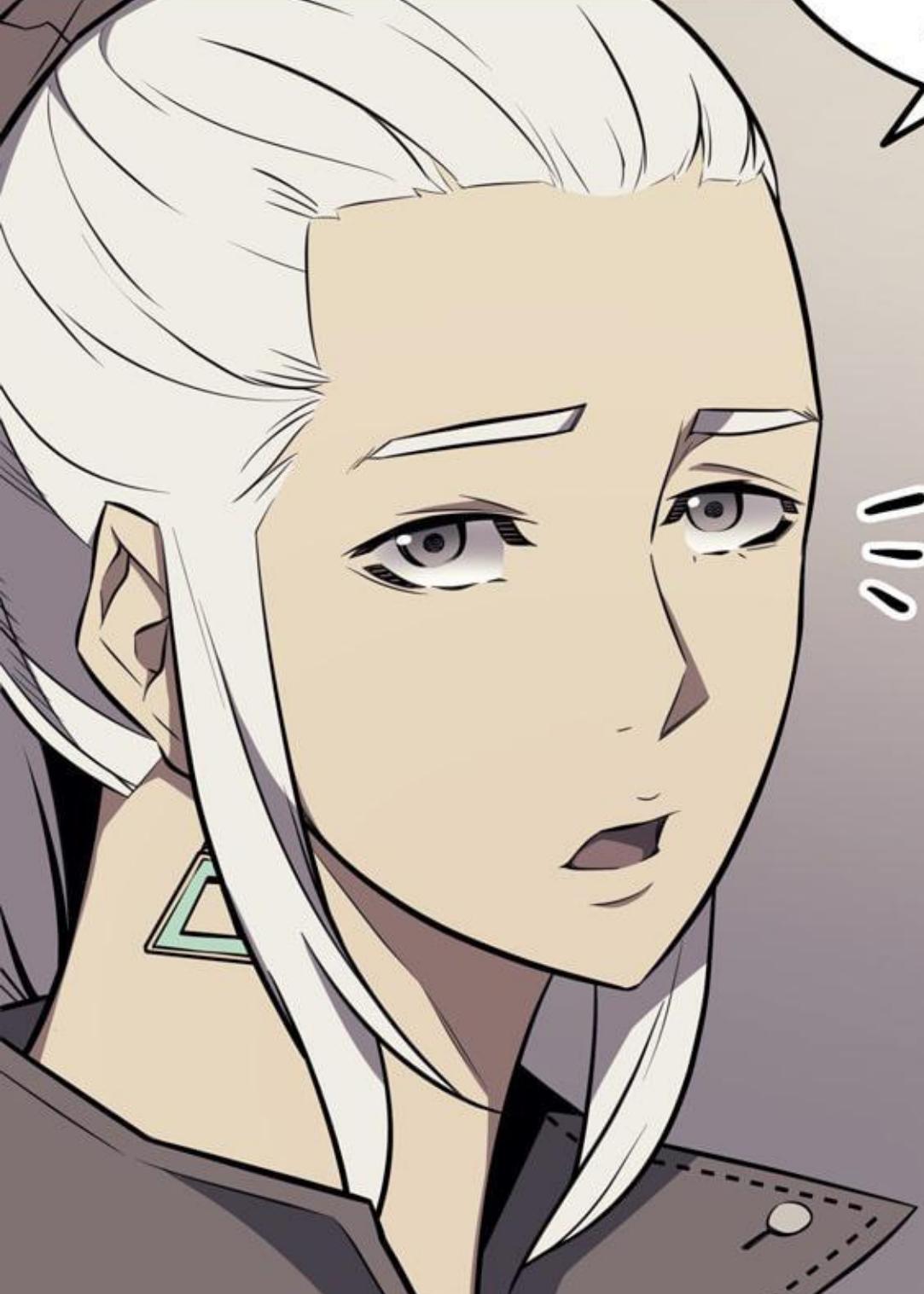




THE MOUNTAIN ROADS
FROM PILAT TO THE
REINAL FORESTS ARE
KNOWN TO BE HARSH
AND TREACHEROUS.



A CARRIAGE
SHOULD SAVE
YOU TIME AND
ENERGY.



A CARRIAGE?
ARE YOU SURE
THERE ARE ANY
CARRIAGES THAT RUN
THROUGH THOSE
MOUNTAINS?

THERE ARE A
GROUP OF PEDDLERS
THAT ACTIVELY TRADE
WITH THE ELVES ON A
MONTHLY BASIS.

THAT'S THE
REASON WHY I'VE
CHOSEN A MERCENARY
AS YOUR FAKE
IDENTITY.

YOU SHOULD
TAKE A JOB AS
A MERCENARY TO
ESCORT THOSE
PEDDLERS.

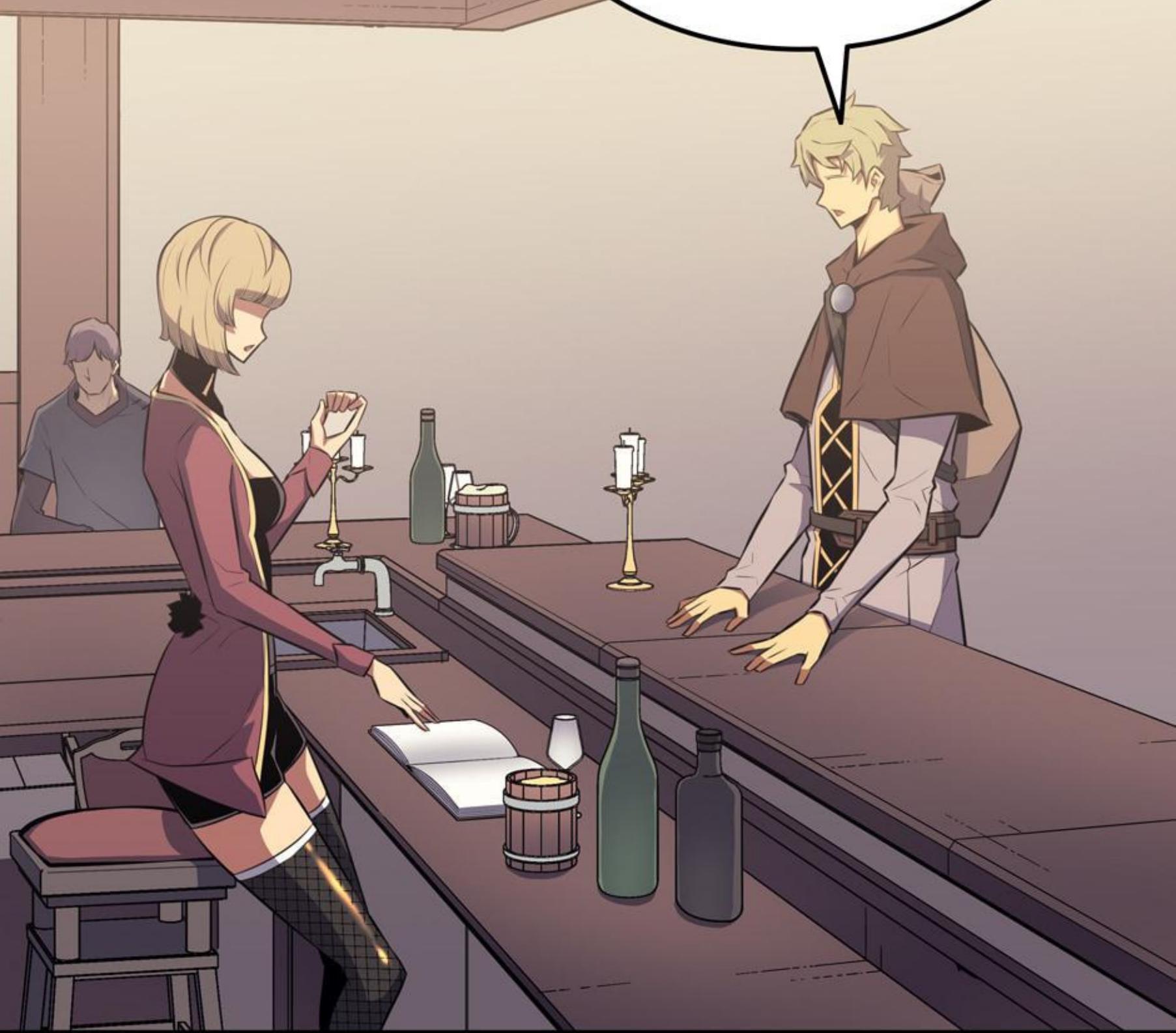
TAP

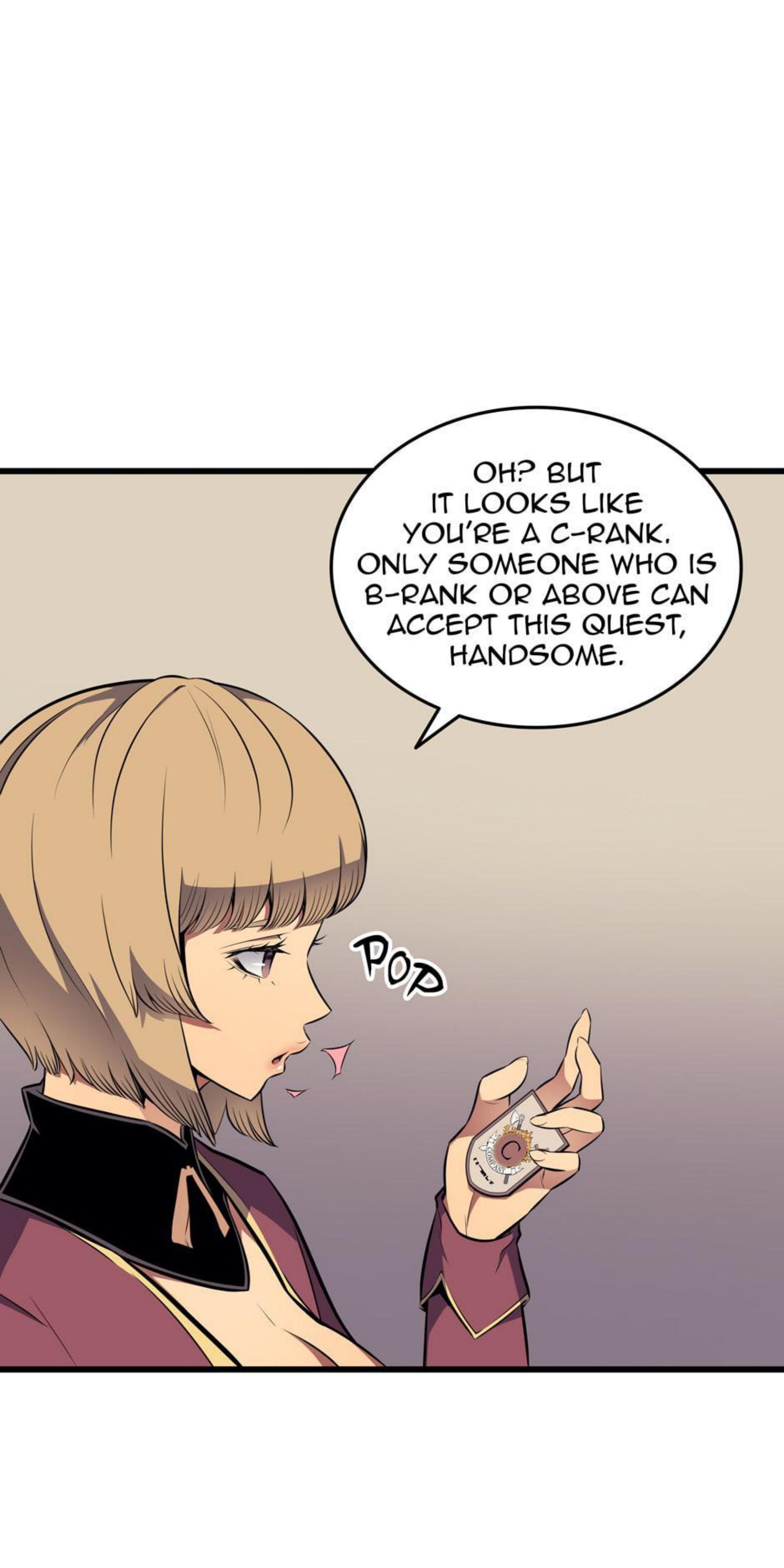


I'M HERE
TO ACCEPT A
QUEST.

ANYTHING
IN PARTICULAR
YOU'RE AFTER?

I'D LIKE
TO ESCORT THE
PEDDLERS WHO WILL
BE TRAVELLING TO
THE REINALS
FOREST.





OH? BUT
IT LOOKS LIKE
YOU'RE A C-RANK.
ONLY SOMEONE WHO IS
B-RANK OR ABOVE CAN
ACCEPT THIS QUEST,
HANDSOME.

POP





IN THAT
CASE, I'D LIKE
TO APPLY FOR THE
ADVANCEMENT
EXAM.

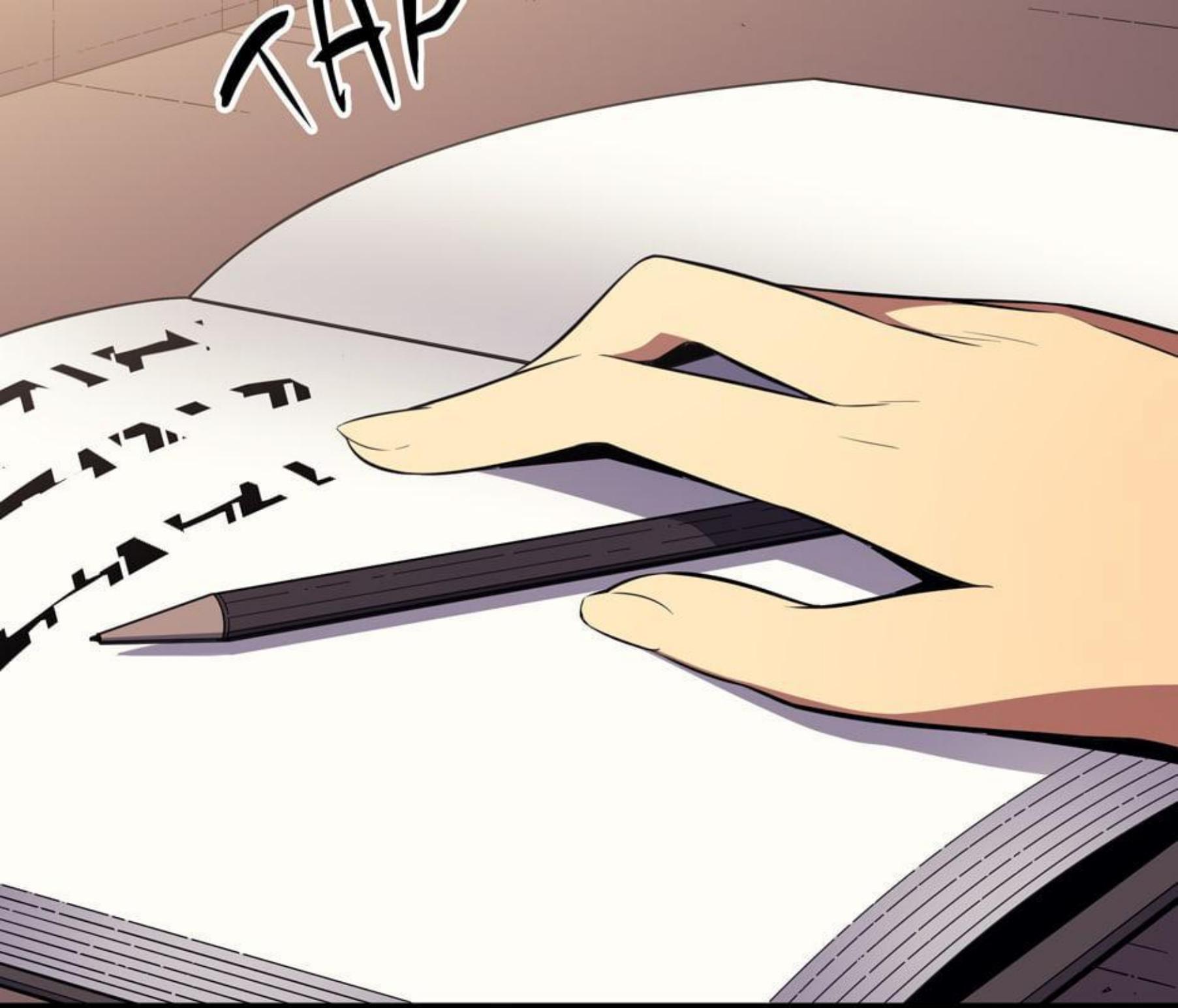


WHEN WOULD
YOU LIKE TO BOOK

YOUR EXAM?

RIGHT NOW.

RAP



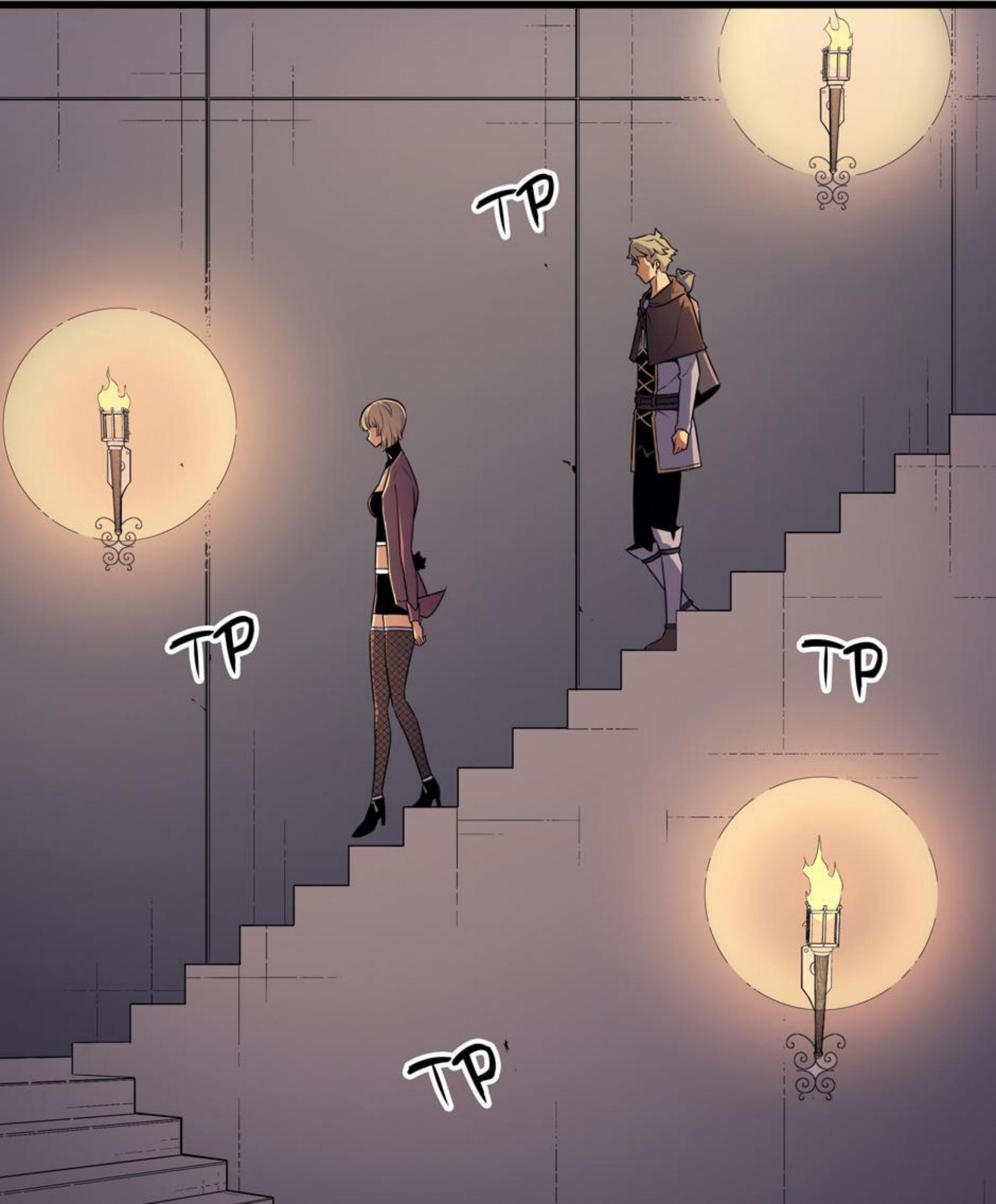
COME WITH
ME. THAT'LL BE
TEN SILVER, BY
THE WAY.

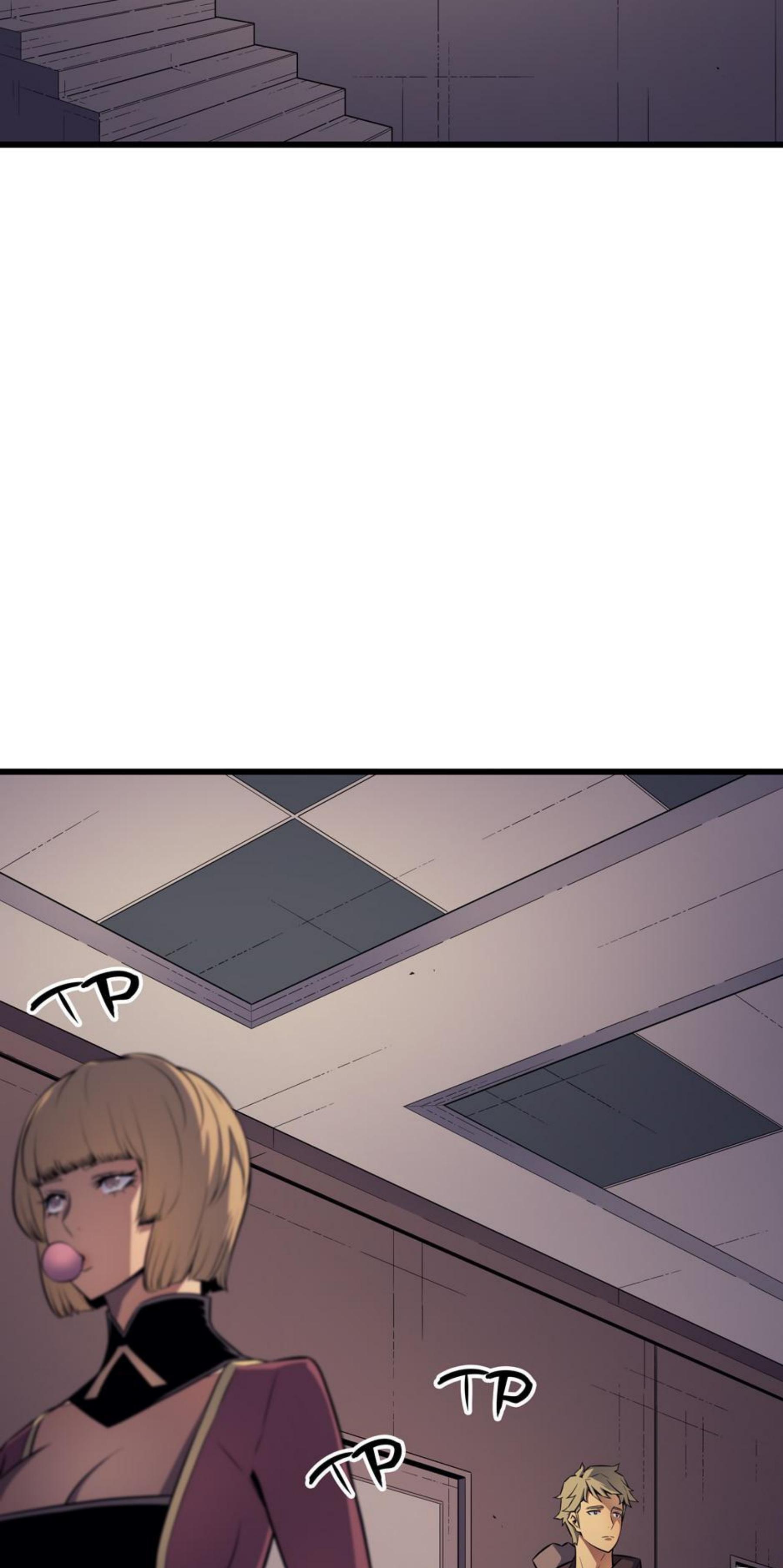


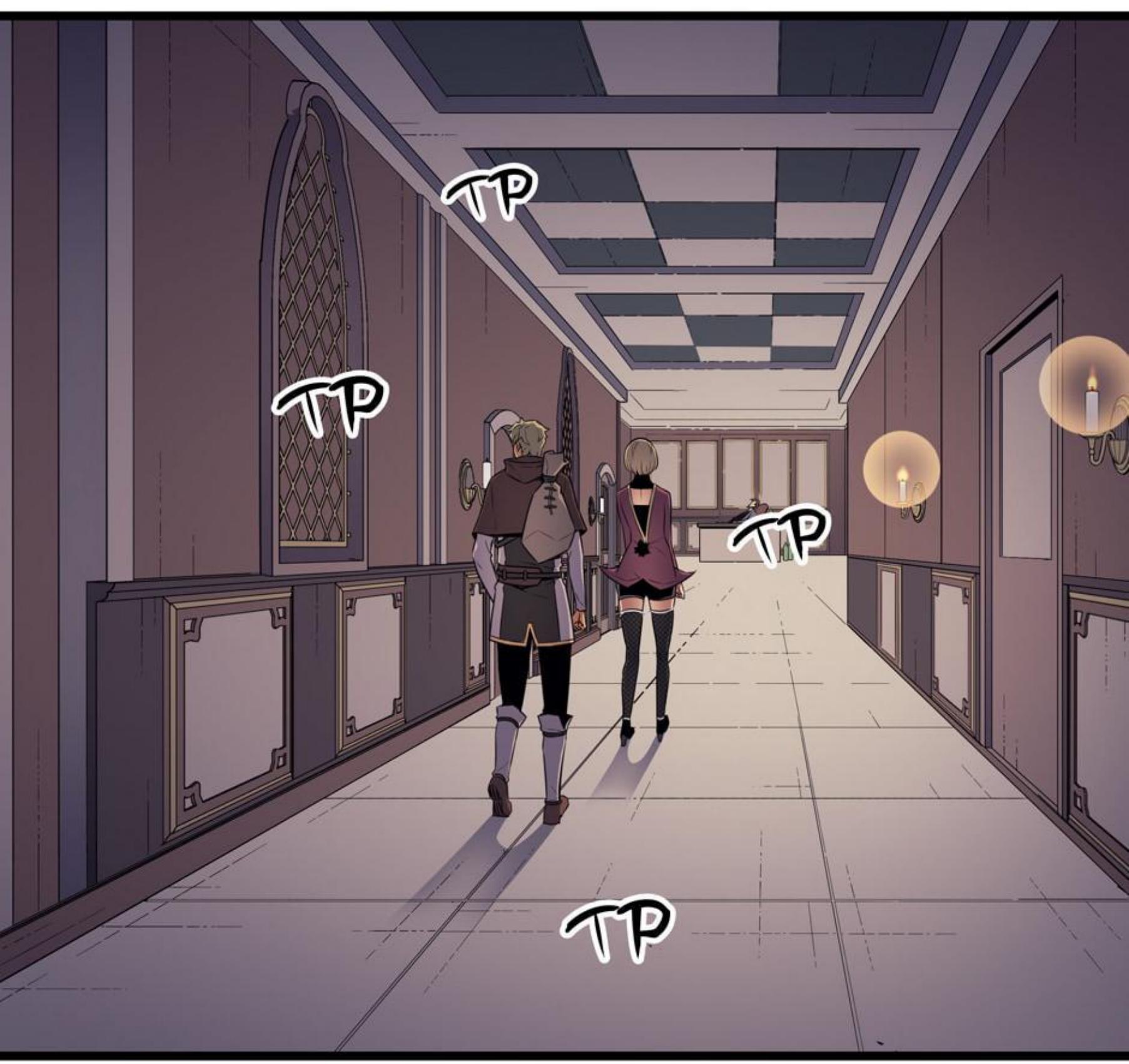
FLICK

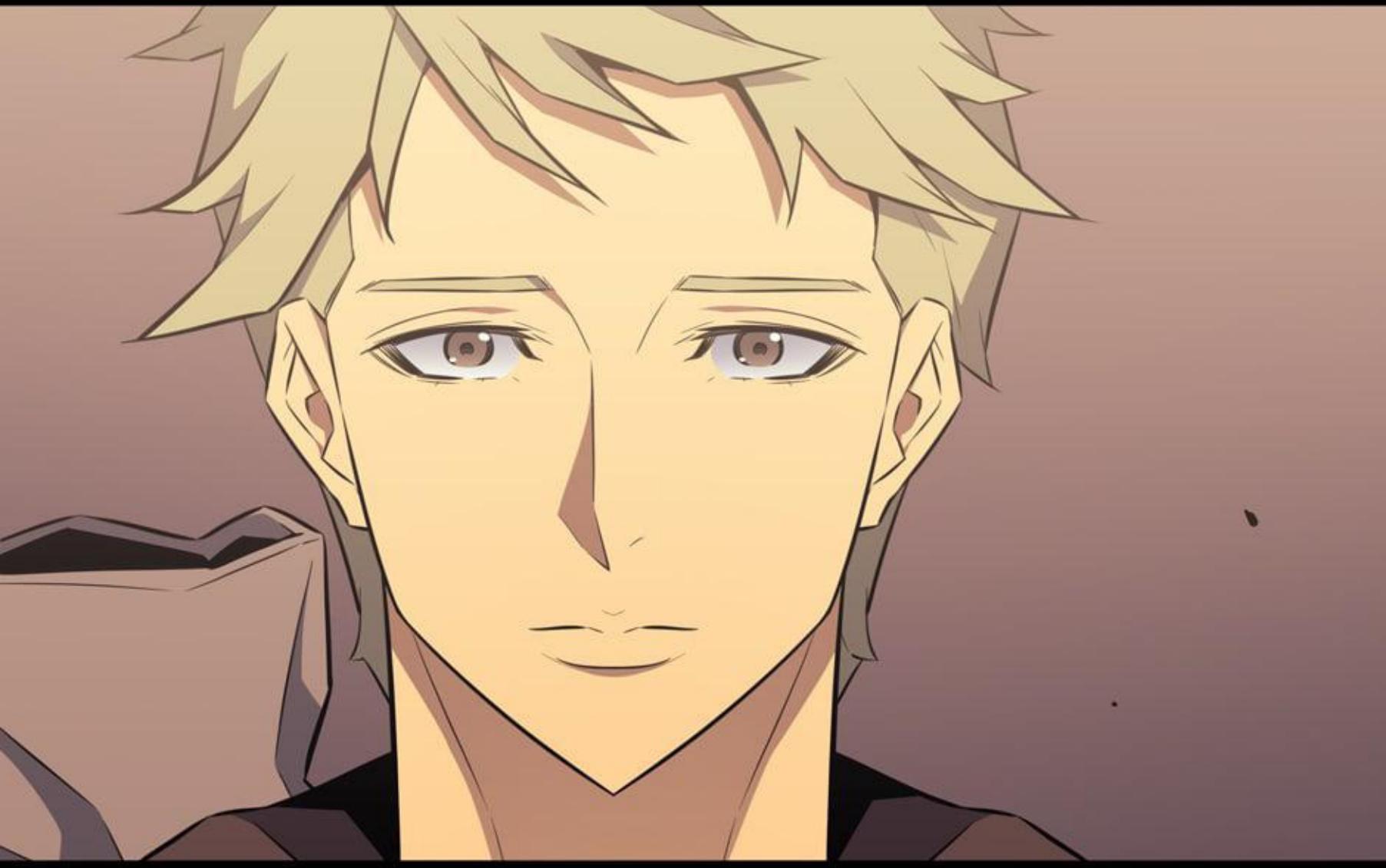
FLICK

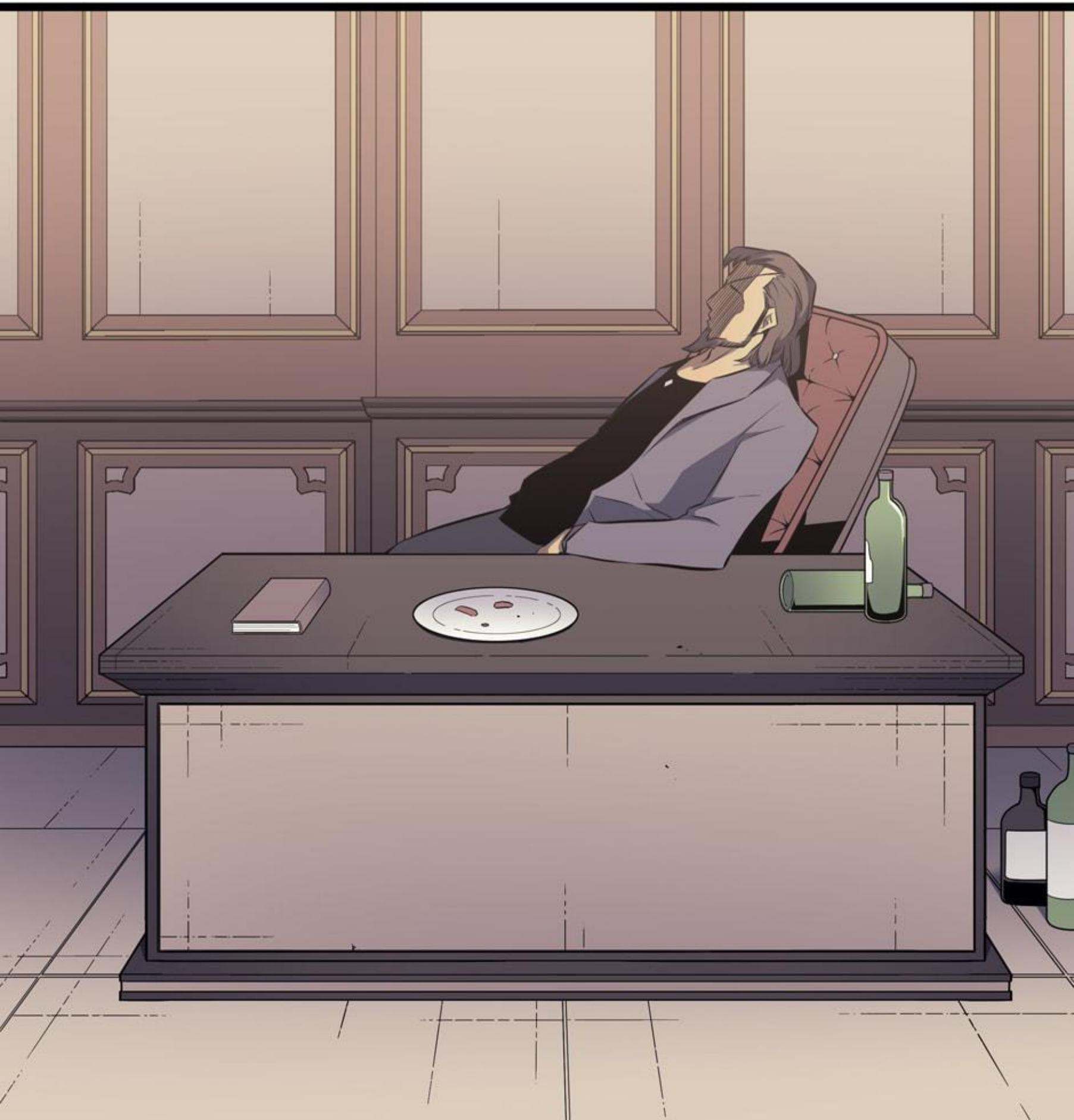














WHAT'S THIS?

A NEW
APPLICANT FOR AN
ADVANCEMENT EXAM,
GUILDMaster.

...

WAVES

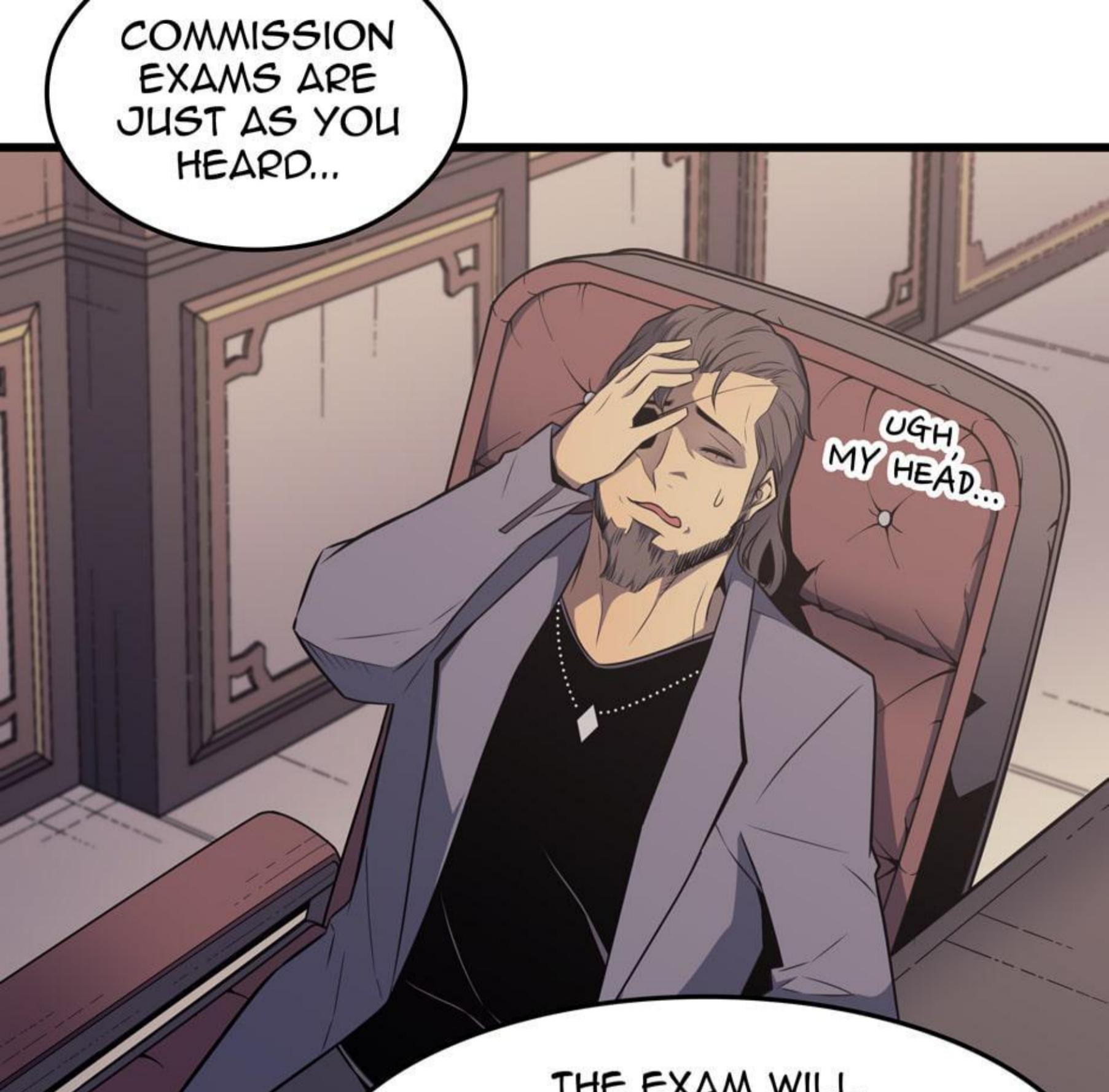
JUST DEAL
WITH IT IN YOUR
USUAL WAY,
IRENE.

MY HEAD
FEELS LIKE
IT'S ON THE VERGE
OF CRACKING OPEN
FROM THIS MASSIVE
HANGOVER...

SO THERE
ARE TWO TYPES
OF ADVANCEMENT
EXAMS. ONE OF WHICH
IS A COMMISSION AND
THE OTHER BEING
PROOF.



COMMISSION
EXAMS ARE
JUST AS YOU
HEARD...



UGH,
MY HEAD...

THE EXAM WILL
TEST YOUR ABILITY TO
CARRY OUT A COMMISSION
AND EVALUATE YOUR STRENGTH
AND ABILITIES BY OBSERVING
YOUR PROGRESS.

THE OTHER
IS PROOF AND

IS PROOF AND
THAT'S BASICALLY
SHOWING US YOUR
ABILITIES BEFORE
AN EXAMINER...



BUT TRUTH
BE TOLD, NOBODY
HAS ADVANCED THEIR
RANKS USING THIS
METHOD IN THE PAST
TEN YEARS.



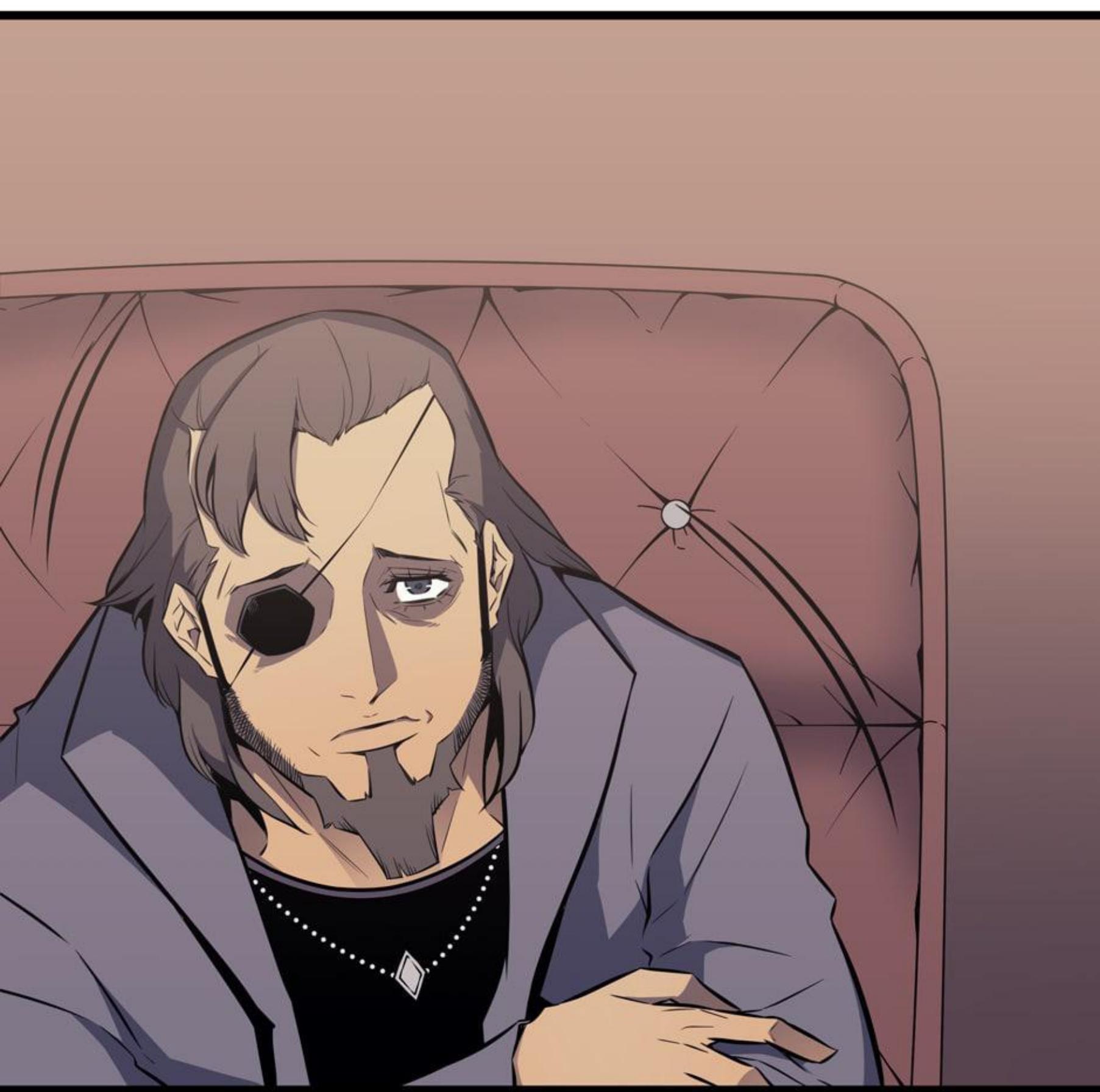
WE MIGHT
NOT LOOK IT, BUT
WE'RE VERY PICKY
WHEN IT COMES
TO EVALUATING
TALENTS.

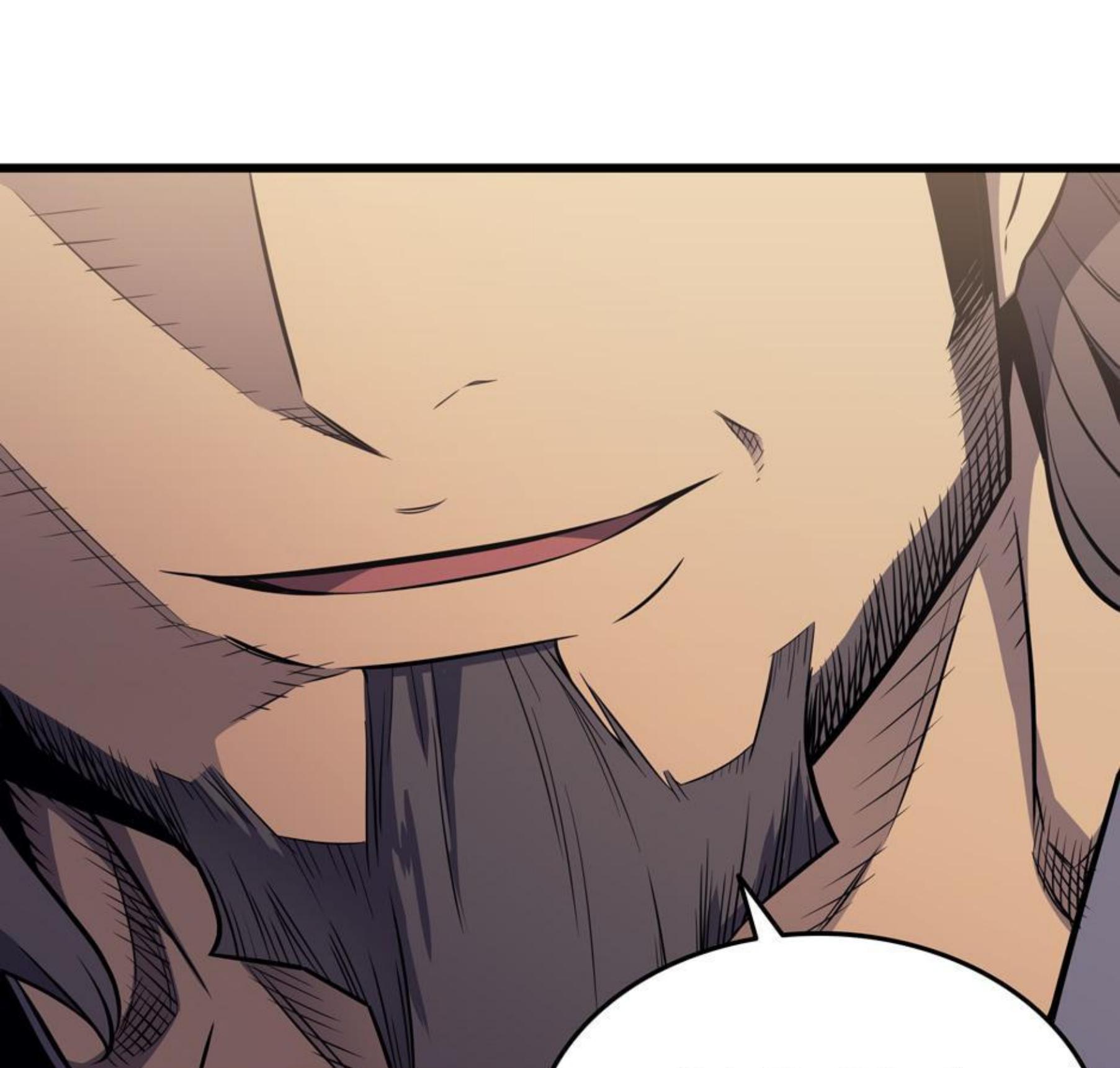
SO WHAT'LL IT
BE? EVEN THOUGH
IT TAKES LONGER,
IT'S PROBABLY BEST
IF YOU TOOK THE
TIME TO...

ONE EXAM,
PLEASE!

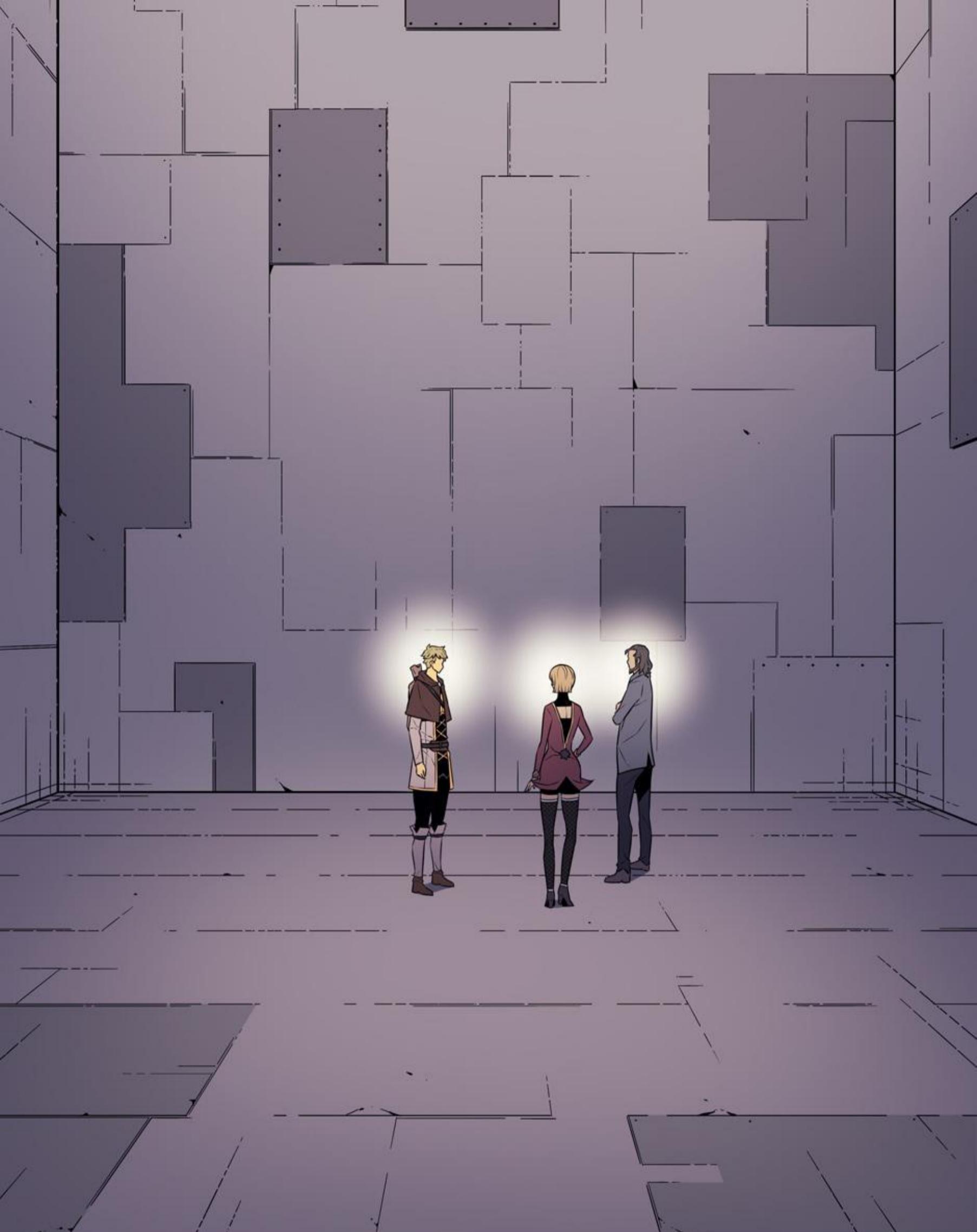


I DON'T HAVE
TIME TO WASTE, SO
LET'S GET RIGHT
DOWN TO IT.





OH...? LOOKS
LIKE AN INTERESTING
NUT HAS CRAWLED IN
HERE FOR ONCE.





SO WHAT
DO I DO?

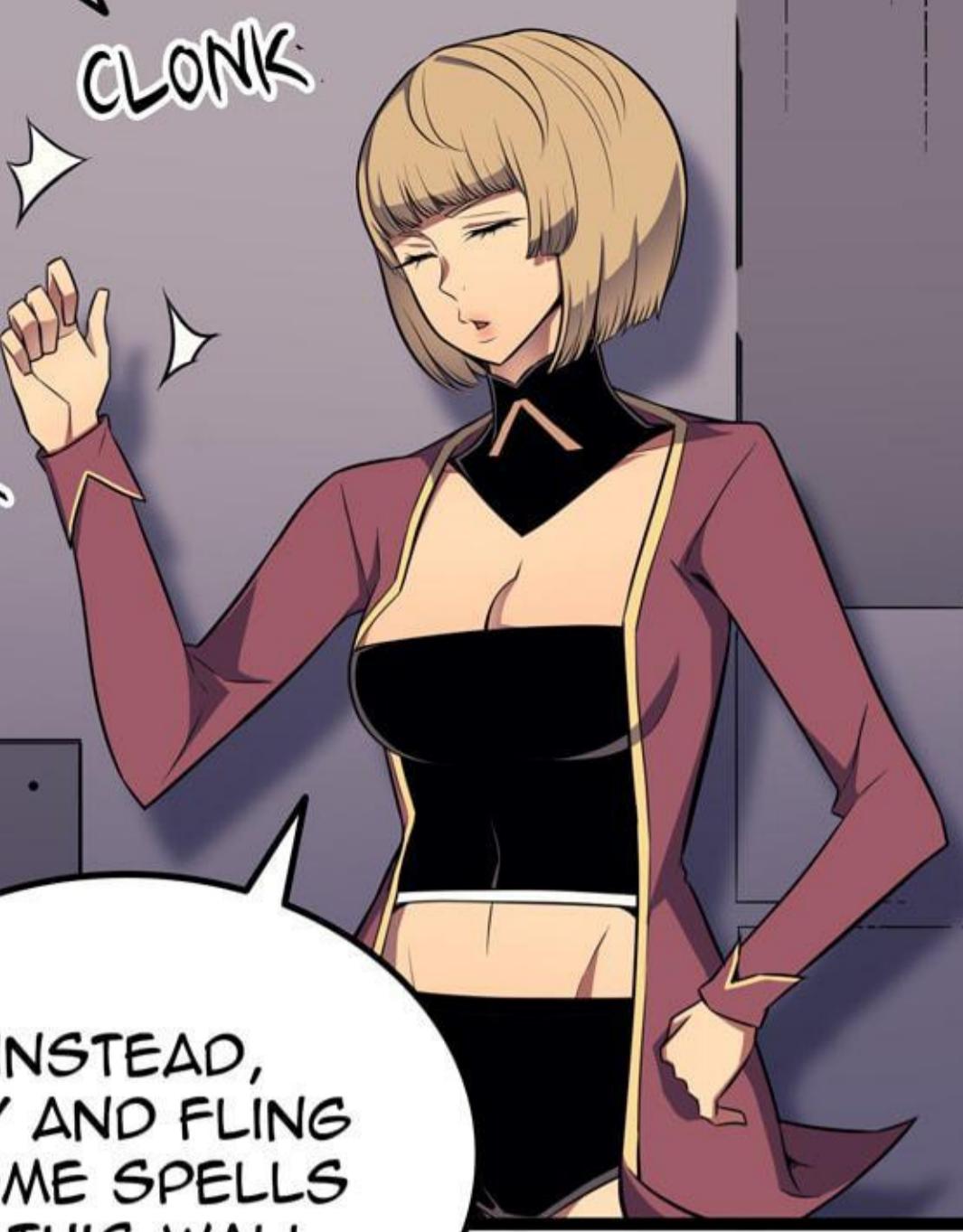
DO I JUST
BEAT YOU UP?

OH, COME
ON NOW.

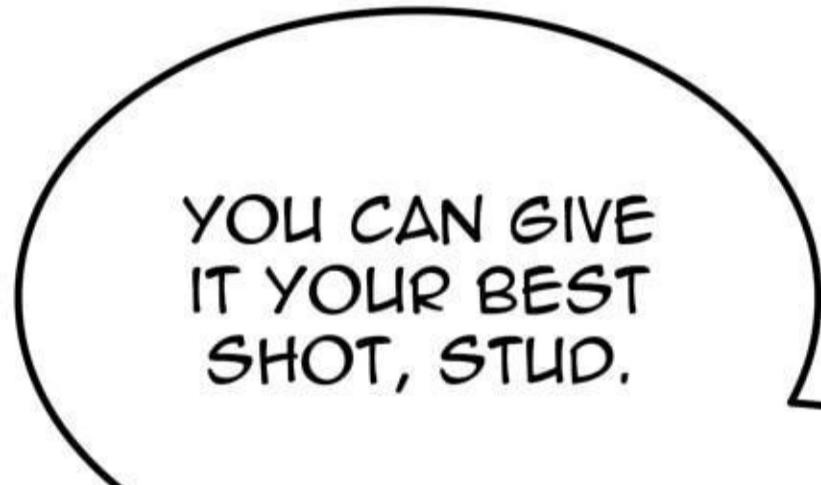
I'D RATHER NOT
WASTE MY ENERGY
ON NEEDLESS
BATTLES.

CLONK

CLONK



INSTEAD,
TRY AND FLING
SOME SPELLS
AT THIS WALL.



YOU CAN GIVE
IT YOUR BEST
SHOT, STUD.



OUR ONE AND ONLY
HOT-SHOT TIER 5 MAGE
CAST SEVERAL LAYERS
OF PROTECTION MAGIC
ON THIS BABY.



NOT EVEN
THIS DRUNKARD'S
SWORD SWINGS WOULD
DENT THAT THING IF HE
WENT FULL STRENGTH
AT IT.

W-WHAT DID
YOU CALL ME?!
YOU REALIZE I'M
THE GUILDMAS—
UGH, MY DAMN
HEAD...!





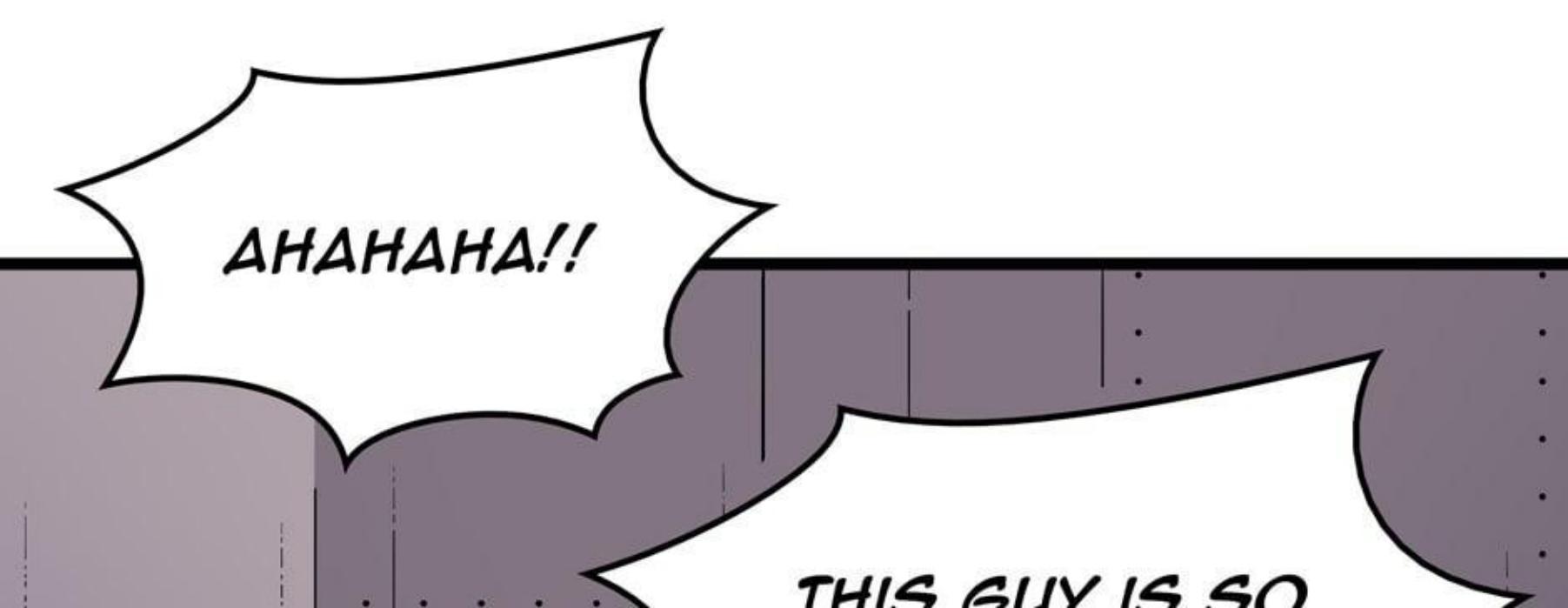
GUILDMaster,
I TAKE IT YOU'RE
AN A-RANK
THEN...?

THAT'S
RIGHT.

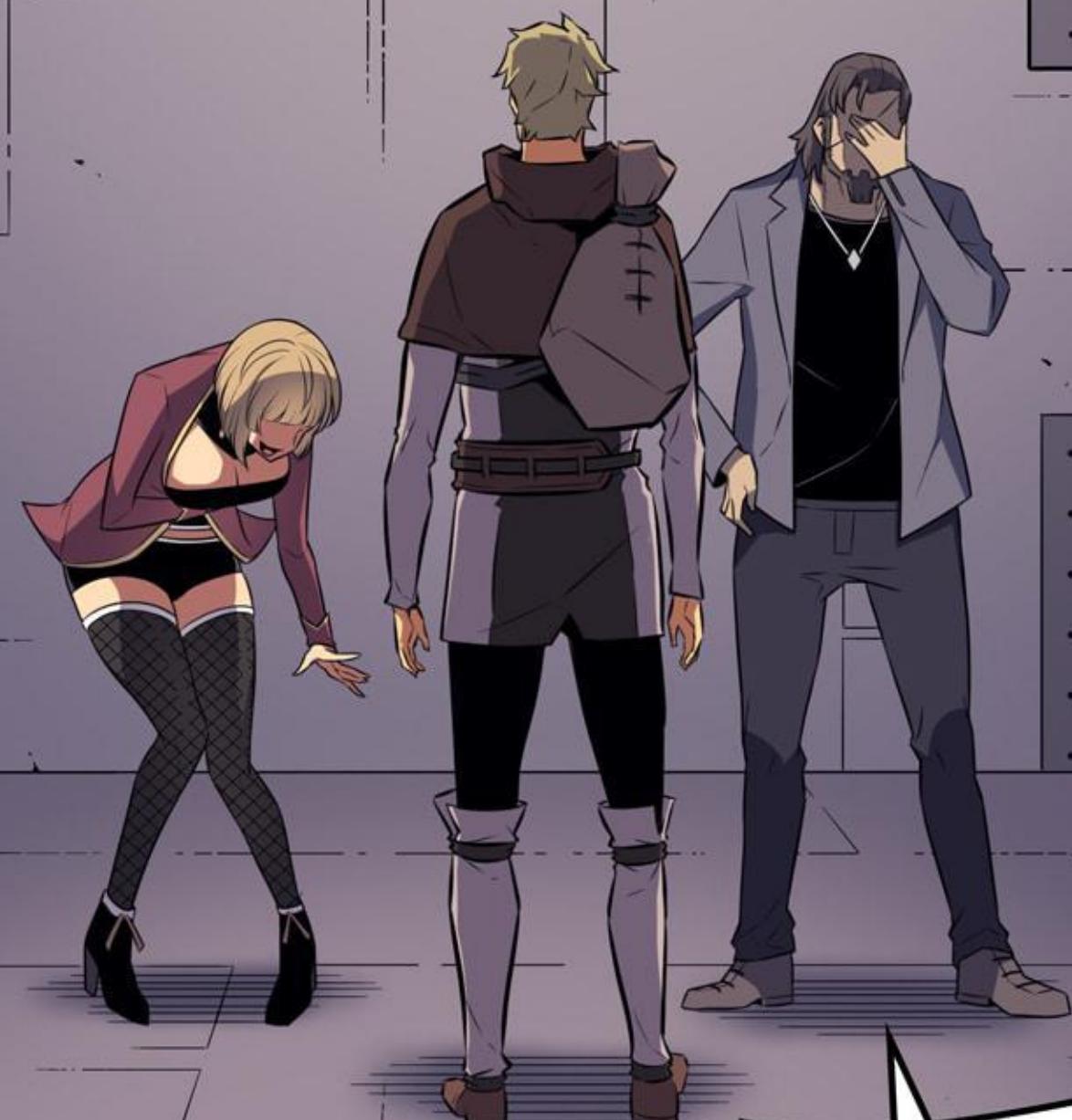


SO IF I
SMASH THIS WALL
TO PIECES...

THAT MEANS
I'M AROUND
A-RANK
TOO?

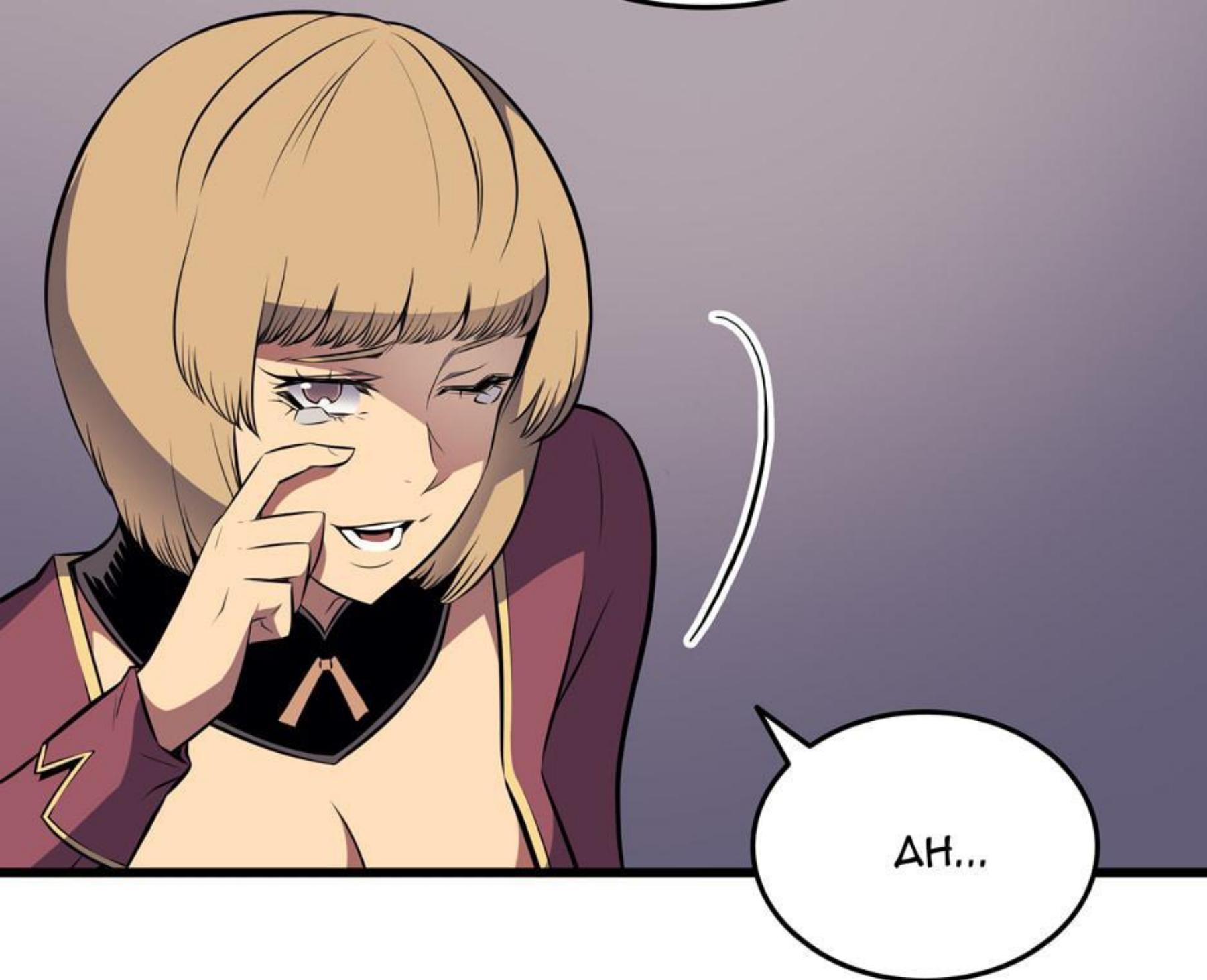


THIS CAT IS SO
CUTE, ISN'T HE,
MASTER?

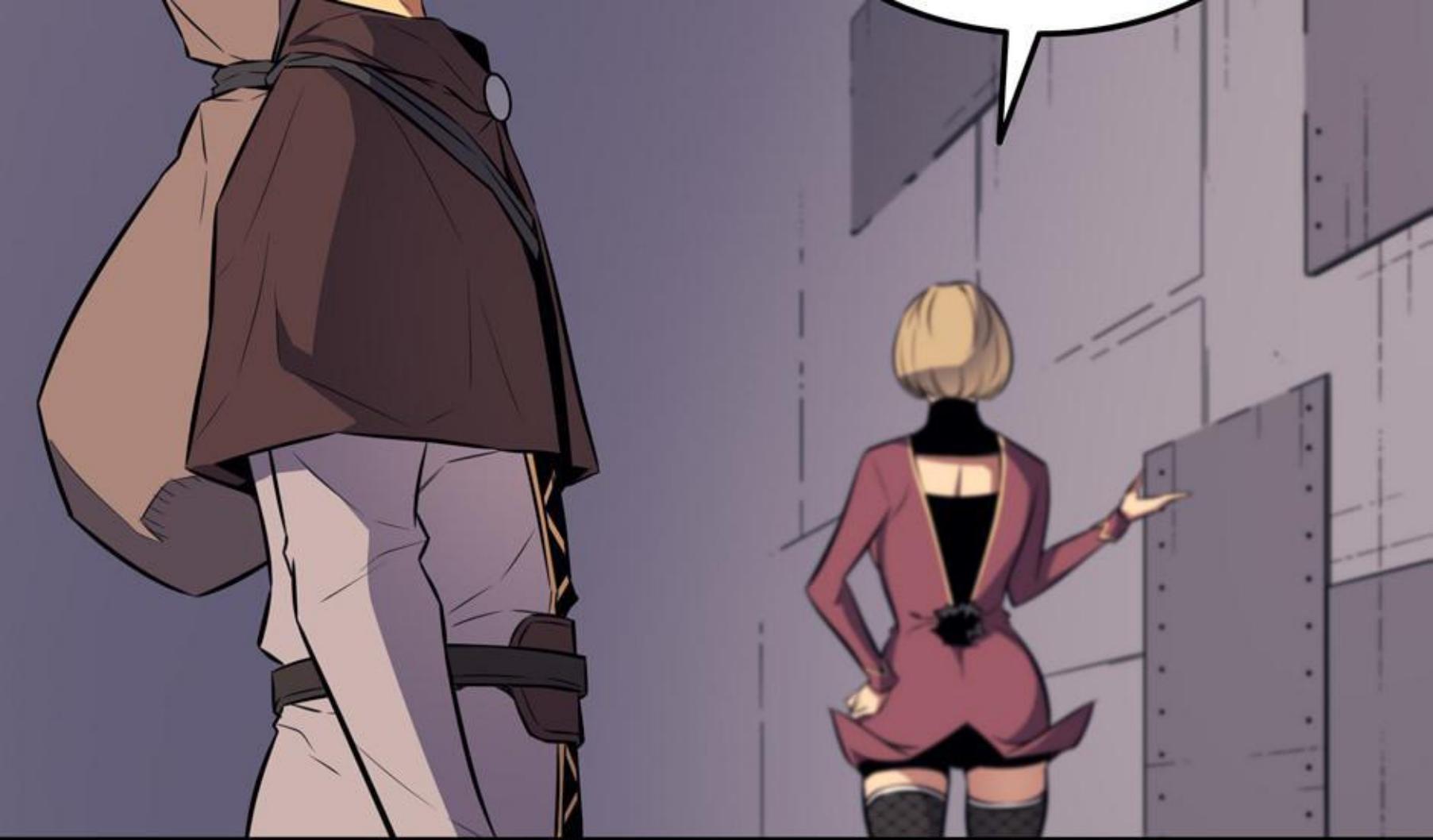


BWAHAHA!

IF YOU'RE
DONE LAUGHING,
I STRONGLY
SUGGEST YOU
STEP ASIDE.



ALRIGHT,
GIVE IT YOUR
BEST SHOT,
STUD!





W-WAIT, WHAT...?
FLAME BALL!?



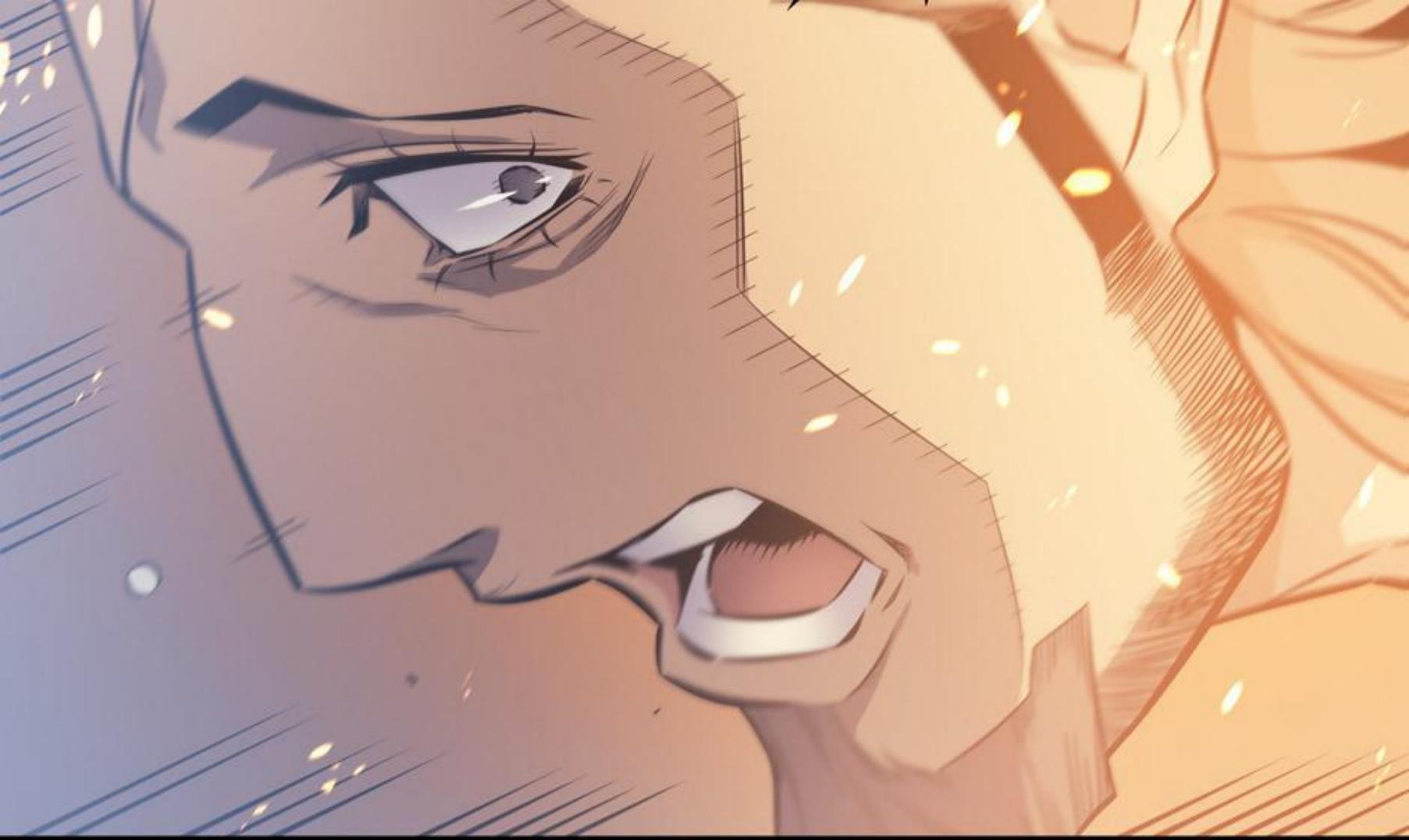
ISN'T THAT
A TIER 5
SPELL...?

CRACKLE





**IRENE!
TAKE COVER!!**



SHOW



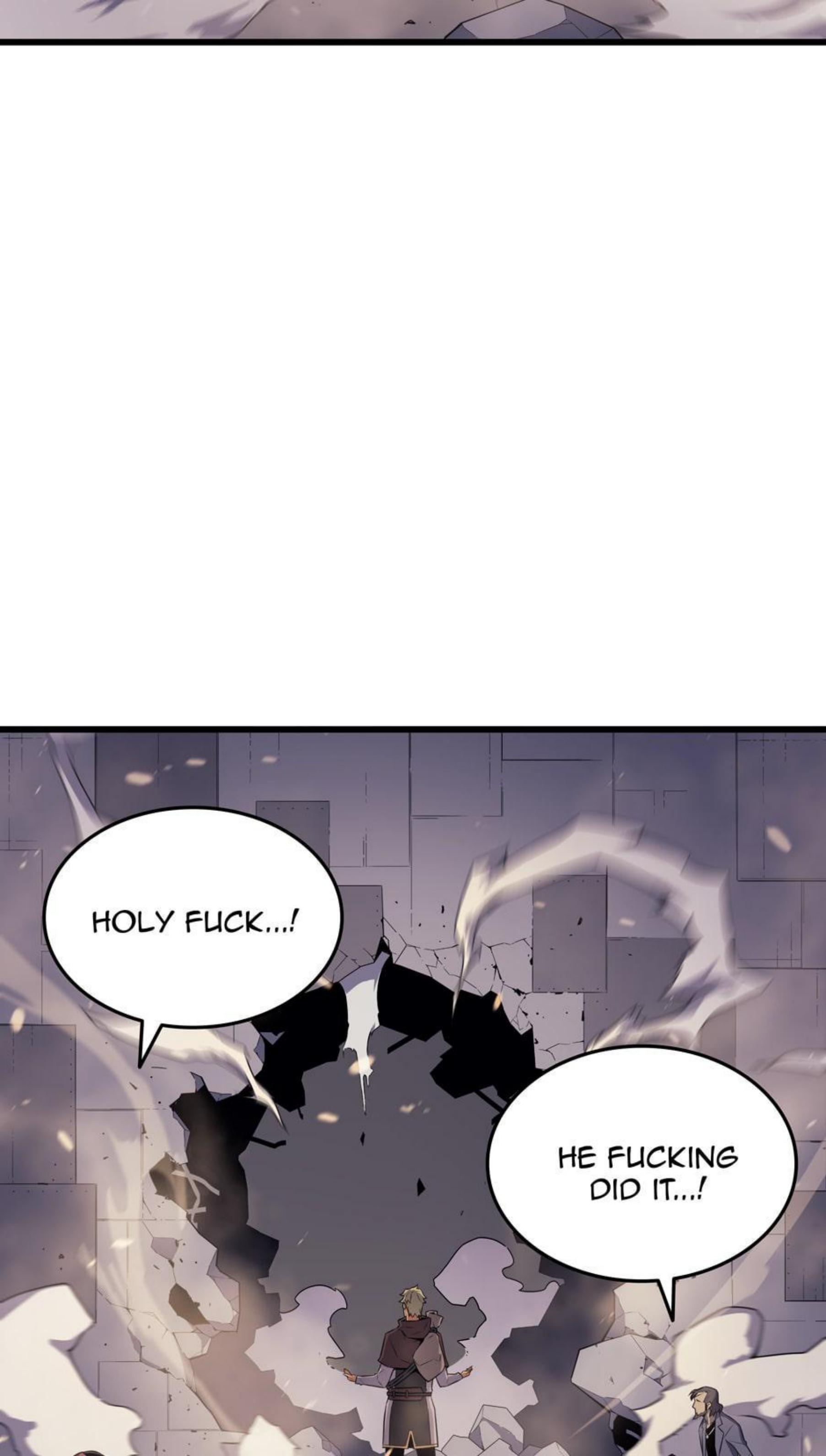
FWSSSH



Woooh

A dynamic, purple-toned illustration of a hand reaching out, with motion lines and small gold particles, set against a white background.





HOLY FUCK...!

HE FUCKING
DID IT...!



**WELL, CONGRATS.
YOU'RE AN A-RANK
MERC NOW!**



