

MONSTERS OF THE LAKE

A dark, atmospheric image of a lake at night. The water is dark and textured, with ripples and reflections. A large, dark, textured object, possibly a monster, is partially submerged in the water, with its head and upper body visible. The object has a rough, scaly texture and a mouth with visible teeth. The overall mood is mysterious and eerie.

COMPS



THE MIST - 2007
Horror, Sci-fi, Thriller



NOPE - 2022
Horror, Mystery, Sci-fi

TONE & SETTING

Set between the present-day and the memories of the main character, this is a disturbing nostalgia that reveals the unrevealed story of Gongsun's hit webcomic series.

Years ago, two students faced a massive anomaly—an eldritch creature manifesting as the university's beloved lake.

This is a college duo's plunge into the unknown, balancing life and schoolwork in the face of impending natural catastrophe, with the influences of a modernized Lovecraft.

Genres explored are Horror and Mystery.



GONGSUN

the civil servant turned webcomic artist

Known for her webcomic series, "The Monster of the Lake," Gongsun returns to visit her old university. There, she is welcomed warmly by students and fans of her work.

The memories of her college years prove that her successful webcomics have more behind them than just fantasy...



SEHA

the aimless college student

Seha, an underclassman student, works with Gongsun to take down the lake monster.

He takes on a clingy “young brother” type of role towards Gongsun, each refusing to let the other give up on saving the world. Working together with Gongsun, Seba decides not to let the otherworldly lake monster prevent him from living out what he most wants to do: make friends, hike, and find a girlfriend.



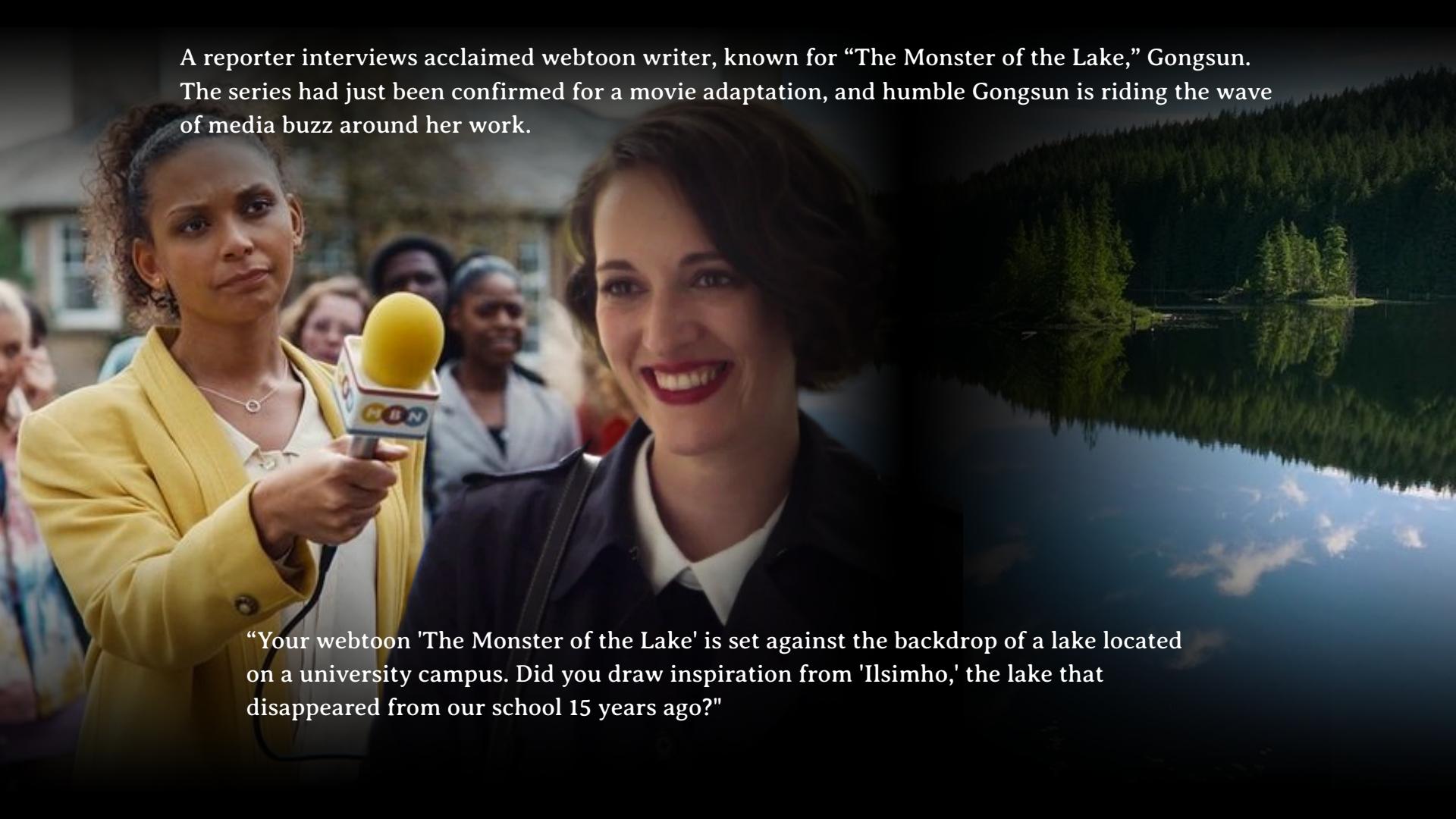
SHIN-YOUNG

Shin-young leads the school's official lake club, suitably named the "Lake People" by other students. Despite being an official club, the members have a reputation for being cultish and unsettlingly devoted to the lake...

Gongsun and Seha begrudgingly work with Shin-young by utilizing his blind faith to help take down the lake monster.

the "cult" leader

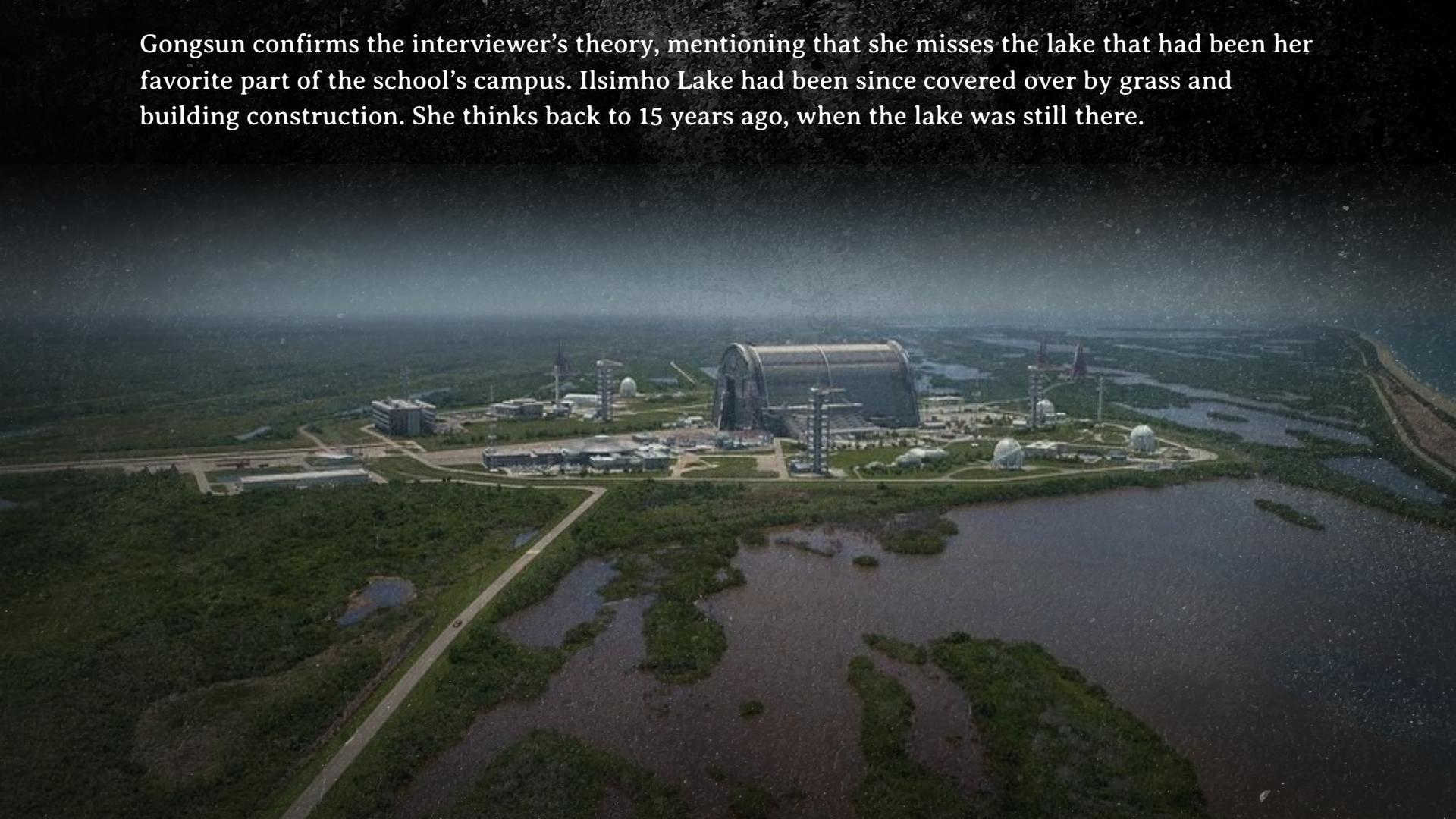


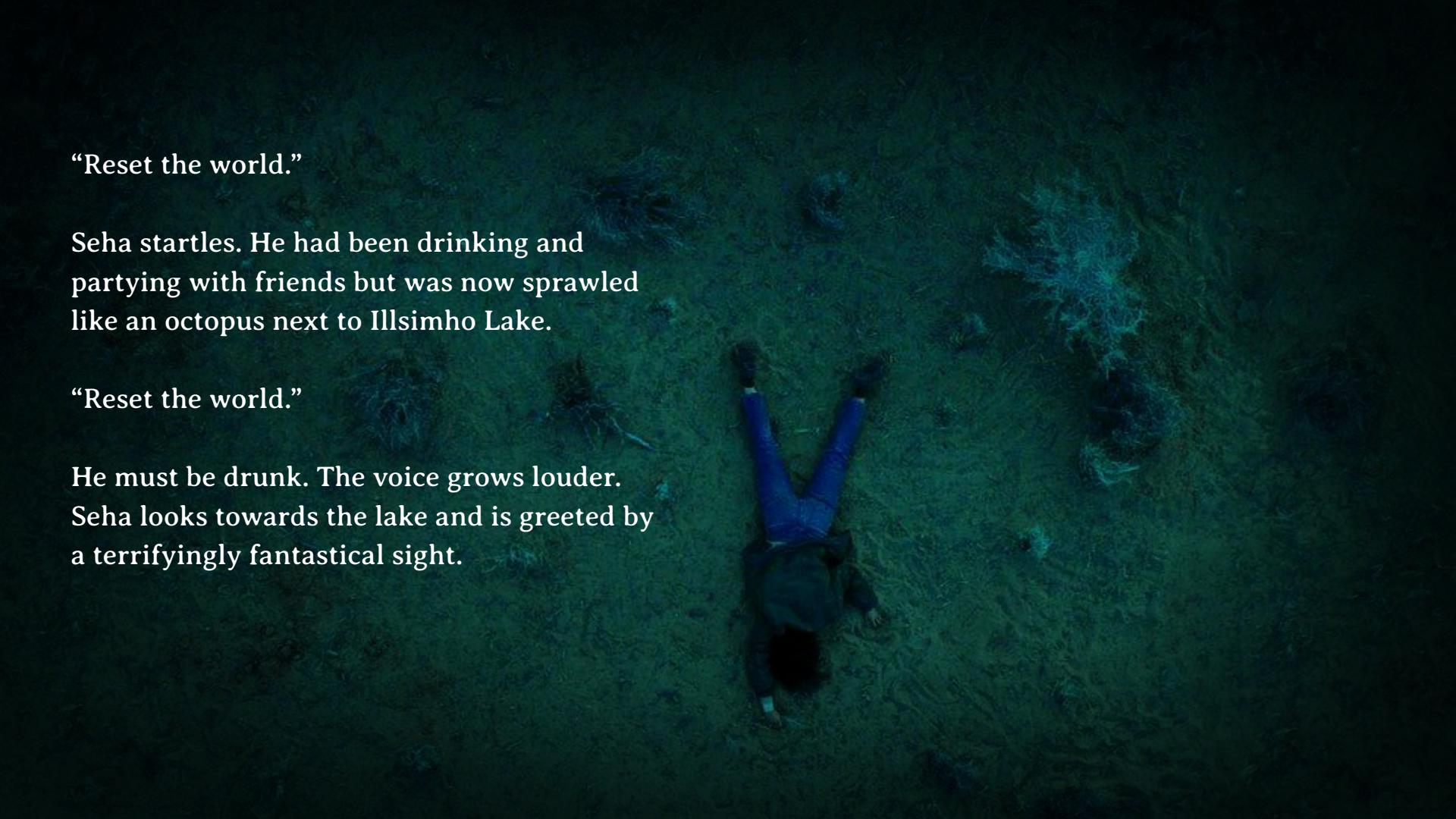


A reporter interviews acclaimed webtoon writer, known for “The Monster of the Lake,” Gongsun. The series had just been confirmed for a movie adaptation, and humble Gongsun is riding the wave of media buzz around her work.

“Your webtoon 'The Monster of the Lake' is set against the backdrop of a lake located on a university campus. Did you draw inspiration from 'Ilsimho,' the lake that disappeared from our school 15 years ago?”

Gongsun confirms the interviewer's theory, mentioning that she misses the lake that had been her favorite part of the school's campus. Ilsimho Lake had been since covered over by grass and building construction. She thinks back to 15 years ago, when the lake was still there.





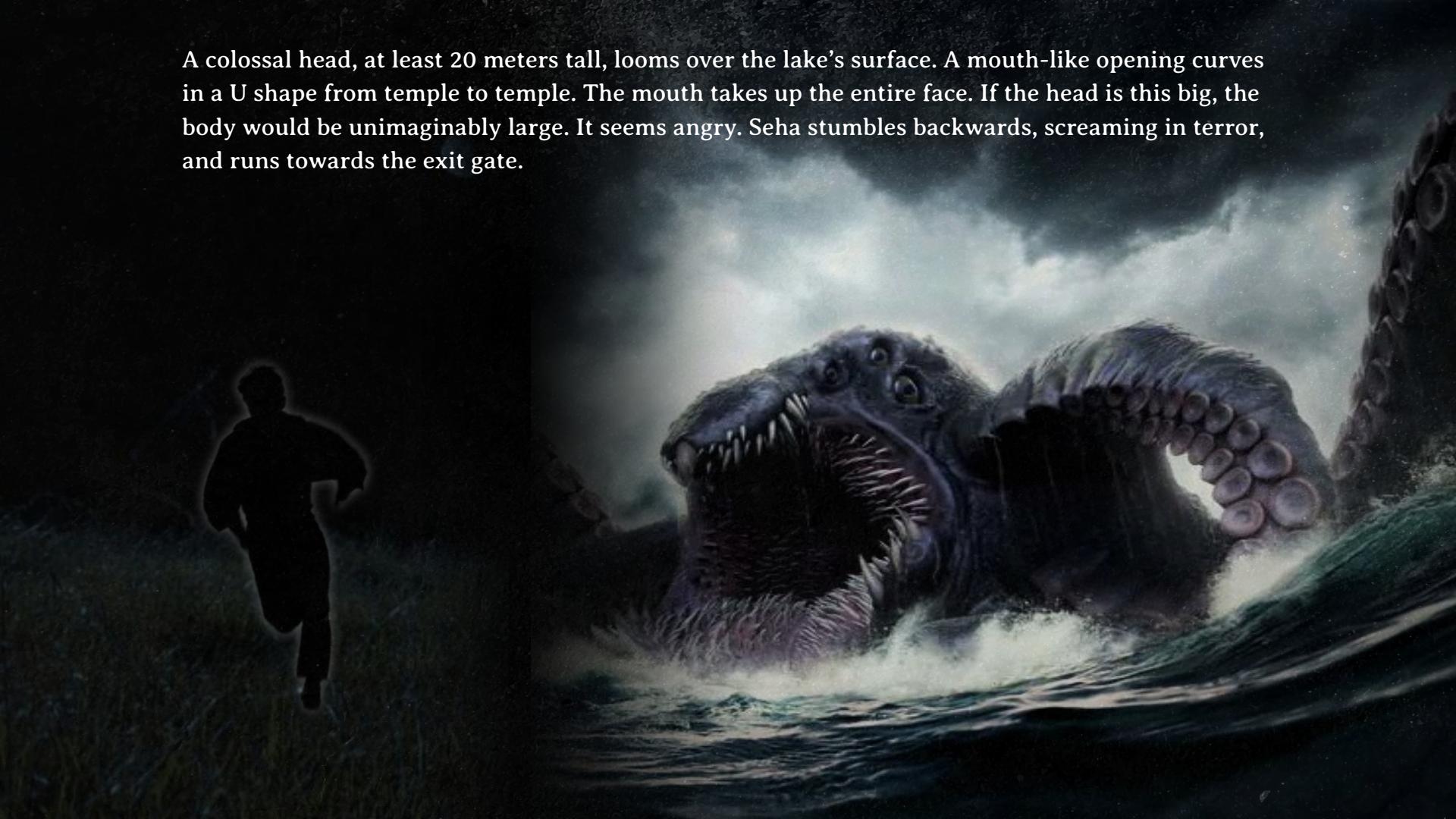
“Reset the world.”

Seha startles. He had been drinking and partying with friends but was now sprawled like an octopus next to Illsimho Lake.

“Reset the world.”

He must be drunk. The voice grows louder. Seha looks towards the lake and is greeted by a terrifyingly fantastical sight.

A colossal head, at least 20 meters tall, looms over the lake's surface. A mouth-like opening curves in a U shape from temple to temple. The mouth takes up the entire face. If the head is this big, the body would be unimaginably large. It seems angry. Seha stumbles backwards, screaming in terror, and runs towards the exit gate.



"I'm telling you, last night at Iksimho Lake, a huge head popped out and said 'reset the world'!"
Seha fruitlessly tries to convince his friend. His friend calls Seha a drunkard and mocks him for the absurd claims. Instead of believing Seha, he invites him to play pool after school.



Seha can't stop thinking about the lake. After class, he is approached by a college-age Gongsun, who asks Seha about his conversation with his friend. Gongsun too, had been at the lake last night. The pair had both seen the giant, talking head. Gongsun realizes the scream she heard was Seha's. Nobody other than Gongsun and Seha had noticed the giant head, even if they were present at the scene.



Gongsun-noona and Seha launch a friendly relationship. They decide to meet up at the lake again, to see if the head was still there. Neither is sure what "Reset the world" truly means, but it is clear that the talking head is not a benevolent monster.

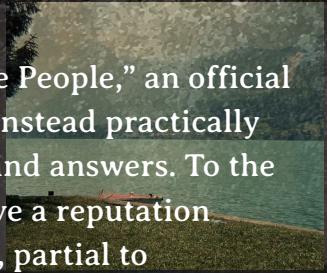
That night, at 11:30 like before, the monster returns. The giant head emerges from the water's surface, this time, up to the chin. Gongsun observes that the monster is slowly rising up from the lake, night by night. After repeating the same ominous phrase ten times, the head vanishes, and the night is silent again.



“Did you ever actually witness a monster at the lake yourself?” The reporter continues to press Gongsun, who doesn’t falter and simply answers with a question: “Do you think *Lake Monster* is based on a true story?” The reporter denies this, he was just impressed at the detailed rendition of the monster in the webtoon. Aware that the interview would be posted on the school newspaper, thanks the school’s education for helping her get to where she is now.



Gongsun and Seha decide to visit the “Lake People,” an official school club made to promote the lake but instead practically worships the sanctity of Ilsimho Lake, to find answers. To the students of the school, the Lake People have a reputation likened to that of a mystical cult. Gongsun, partial to associating with such people but running out of options, goes to the Lake People to find answers.



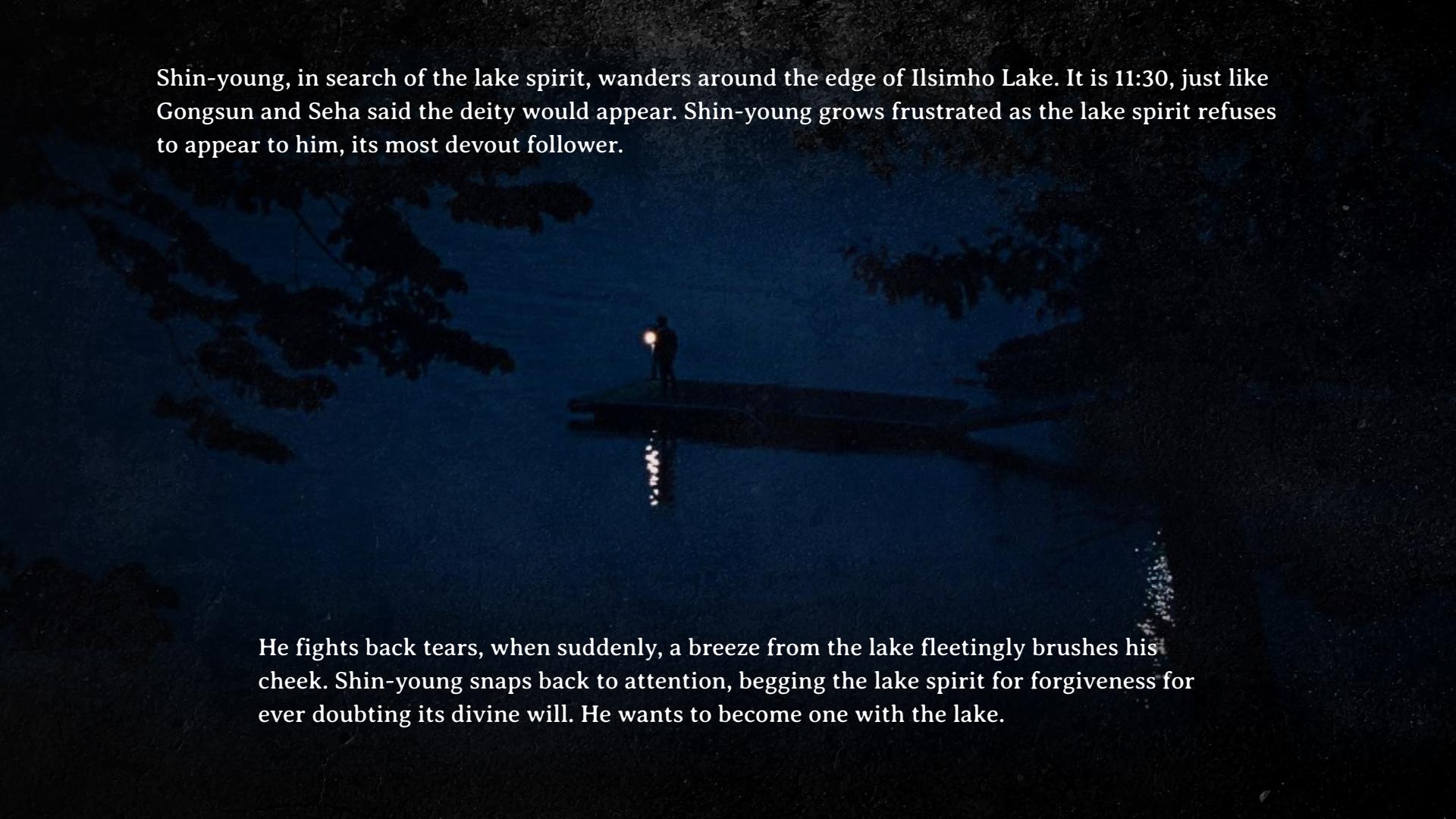
The pair explains what happened at the lake to the Lake People, who are offended by Seha’s calling the monster a monster. Nevertheless, the Lake People present them with their bible, a flimsy manuscript detailing the miracles of the lake.

Despite Gongsun and Seha's pleas for help, the Lake People continue to praise the lake's blessings and rattle off about the many miracles granted by the lake, from the somewhat important to the very arbitrary. Gongsun becomes fed up by the club's blind loyalty to the lake monster and argues that the monster's chanting is a threat and not a blessing.

Unwavering, the Lake People's leader, Shin-young, responds that even if the monster had destructive intentions, that the damage would probably be for a good cause. Gongsun gives up the argument and walks away with Seha, determined to face the monster themselves.



Shin-young, in search of the lake spirit, wanders around the edge of Ilsimho Lake. It is 11:30, just like Gongsun and Seha said the deity would appear. Shin-young grows frustrated as the lake spirit refuses to appear to him, its most devout follower.



He fights back tears, when suddenly, a breeze from the lake fleetingly brushes his cheek. Shin-young snaps back to attention, begging the lake spirit for forgiveness for ever doubting its divine will. He wants to become one with the lake.

Gongsun and Seha discuss plans for the future. Gongsun nervously thinks about the civil service exam coming up, and Seha wants to find a community of friends who share common interests. There are so many things that the young pair look forward to, but the looming words of the lake monster linger in their minds.



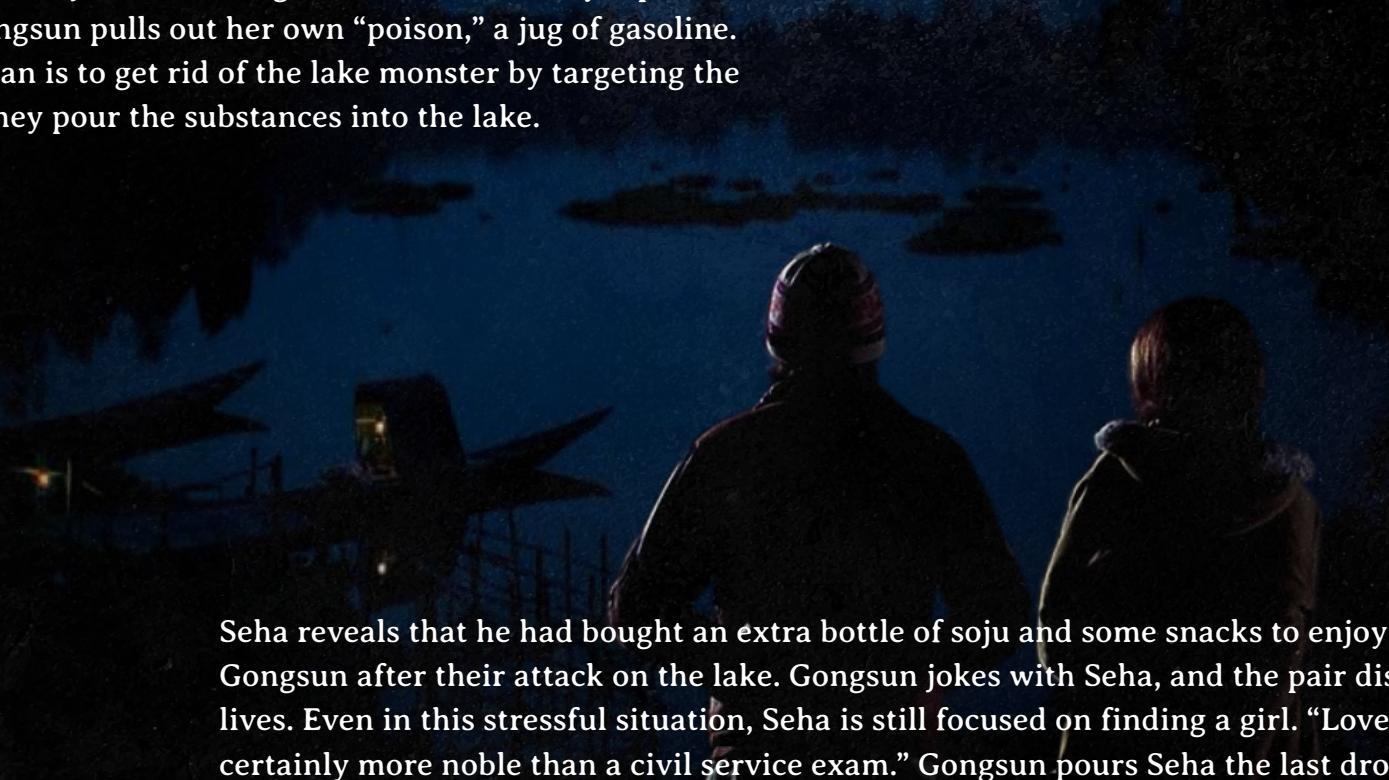
The reporter asks Gongsun if she remembers the cultish school club known as the “Lake People” who mysteriously vanished 15 years ago. Gongsun, uncomfortable but composed, responds that she had only known about the club through pamphlets and secondary accounts but had never met them in person. Regardless, they had been an inspiration for the cult in her webtoon, the “Lake Shrine Society”.

Gongsun approaches a group of Lake People handing out flyers. Shin-young is noticeably absent. Hoping to find more information about Ilsimho Lake, she flips through the flyer, but it's full of what is basically word-for-word Shin-young's sermon from the day before.

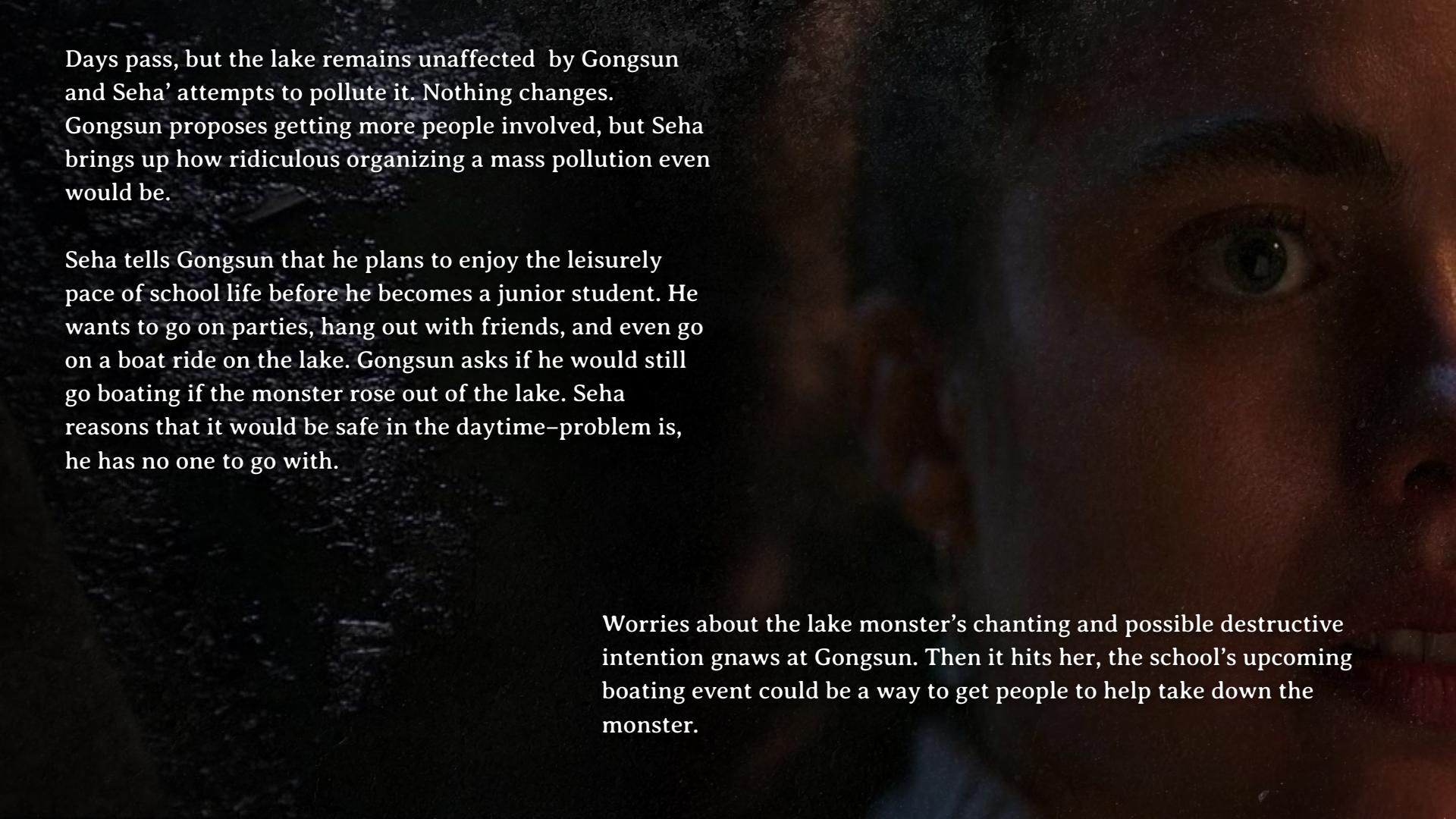


Gongsun's eyes freeze on one line: "The lake itself is a mystical being with life." Perhaps the monster *is* the lake?

Gongsun meets Seha next to the lake again, and Seha pulls out eight bottles of soju. Good enough, it's still technically liquid "poison". Gongsun pulls out her own "poison," a jug of gasoline. Gongsun's plan is to get rid of the lake monster by targeting the lake itself. They pour the substances into the lake.



Seha reveals that he had bought an extra bottle of soju and some snacks to enjoy with Gongsun after their attack on the lake. Gongsun jokes with Seha, and the pair discuss their lives. Even in this stressful situation, Seha is still focused on finding a girl. "Love is certainly more noble than a civil service exam." Gongsun pours Seha the last drops of soju.

A dark, moody background featuring a close-up of a person's eye. The eye is a deep, dark brown or black, looking directly at the viewer with a serious, intense expression. The lighting is low, with a warm glow around the eye, creating a dramatic and somewhat mysterious atmosphere.

Days pass, but the lake remains unaffected by Gongsun and Seha's attempts to pollute it. Nothing changes.

Gongsun proposes getting more people involved, but Seha brings up how ridiculous organizing a mass pollution even would be.

Seha tells Gongsun that he plans to enjoy the leisurely pace of school life before he becomes a junior student. He wants to go on parties, hang out with friends, and even go on a boat ride on the lake. Gongsun asks if he would still go boating if the monster rose out of the lake. Seha reasons that it would be safe in the daytime—problem is, he has no one to go with.

Worries about the lake monster's chanting and possible destructive intention gnaws at Gongsun. Then it hits her, the school's upcoming boating event could be a way to get people to help take down the monster.

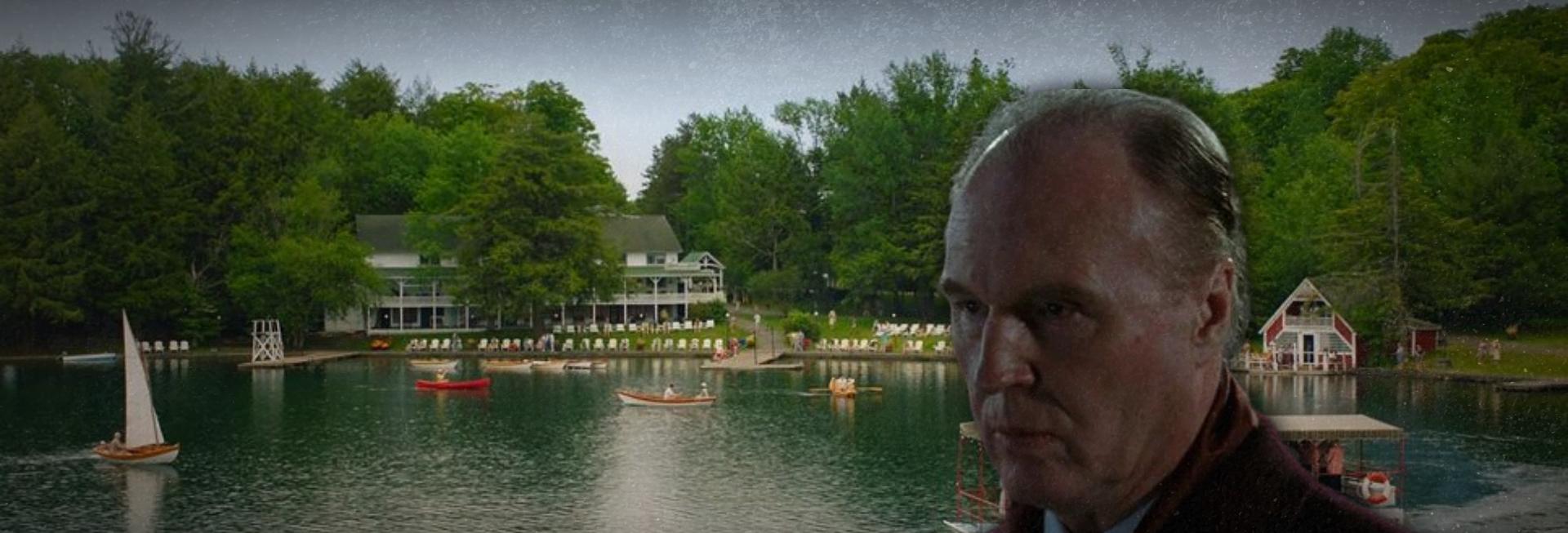
Meanwhile, the school's president and the chairman are discussing a construction project that would require land near the school. The president is staunch on constructing a new engineering building on the lake. "How so?" the chairman asks. "By filling in the lake with dirt," responds the president. However, this move would put the school's reputation at stake, as well as anger environmental groups around campus. The pair decide to put the argument at rest, for now.



Gongsun tries to appeal to her friend, Sehun, the student council president. She pitches an idea to make the annual boating event into a competition, in which couples would race on the lake. Sehun seems divided on the idea, however, Gongun argues that a well organized event such as the lake race could help boost Sehun's image as student council leader.



The lake race is a massive success, the first boat race in the 85-year history of the school. Gongsun beams, near certain that this attempt would be the one that defeats the lake monster.



Meanwhile, the school's president is still intent on securing the lake territory to build on. Even with the school chairman's resistance, the president doesn't falter. He hopes that something drastic would happen so that he could buy the land and make a deal quickly...

For two days after the lake competition, and an overloading of pollutants and human interference, the lake monster did not appear. Gongsun and Seha are triumphant! However the victory is short lived. The monster reappears on the third day, up to its waist, swinging its arms around, undoubtedly angrier than before. “The world will be reset. The world will be reset.”



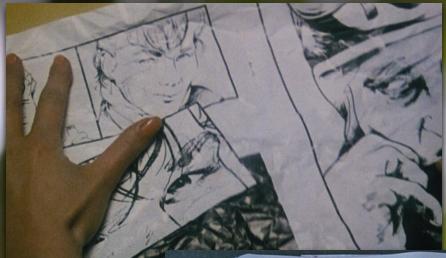
Gongsun and Seha were, once again, screwed.

Elsewhere at the lake, Shin-young pushes a dead heron into the water's edge. Shin-young begs the lake to accept the offering and cease its outrage, but is disappointed as the trees and plants around the lake start to shrivel and die.



Time is running out, the greenery around the lake sheds their leaves, wilting, unnatural for the middle of May. Seha gets an idea—one that may not work but would be their last resort—to get rid of the lake completely. Gongsun questions how they would go about doing this, in the limited time they have. Seha leans in to whisper in her ear...

Back in the interview, the reporter asks Gongsun what the thematic message of her webtoon is. Gongsun credits the bulk of the theme to one key word: “conviction.” The story is about conviction and how essential it was to defeat the monster regardless of the necessary sacrifices. The protagonists of “The Monster of the Lake” had conviction.

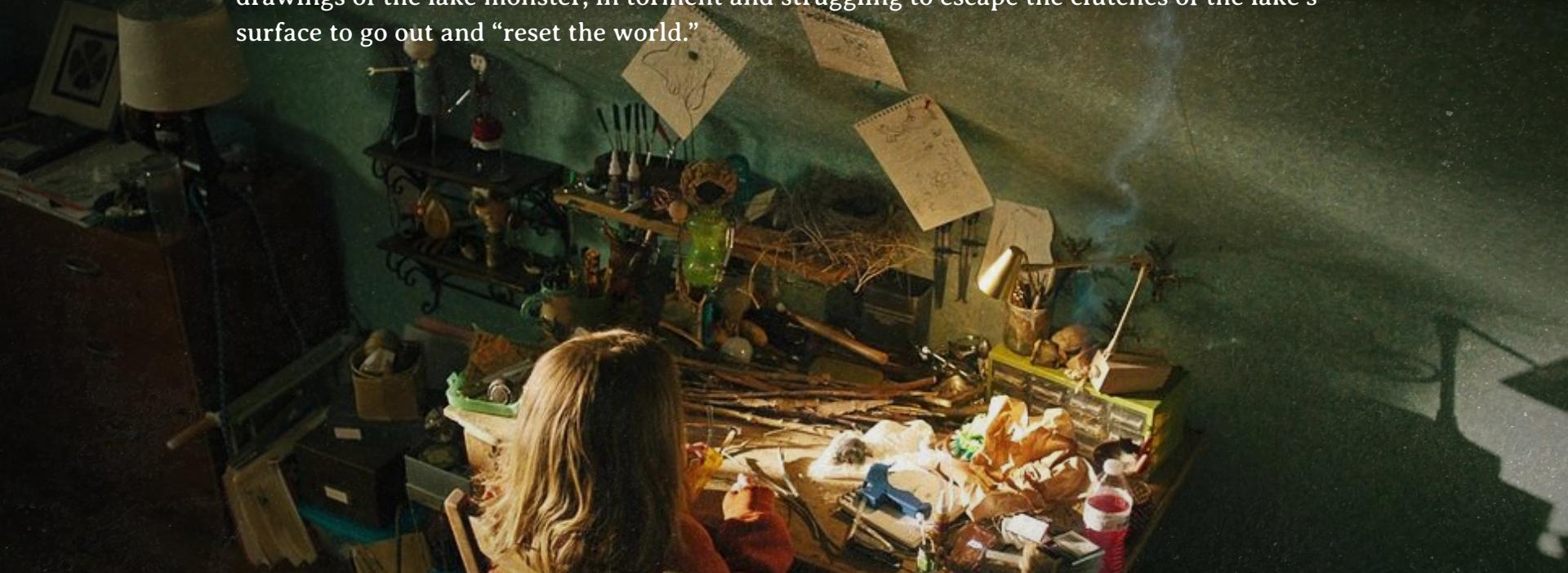


Human sacrifice. That is Seha's proposal. It would be an incident so vile that the school would be forced to cover up the lake. The lake would forever be attributed to the accident. Gongsun is immediately aware that this would be a crime, and she would be the assisting murderer. Seha brings up Shin-young, who would be a prime candidate for the sacrifice, as he seems to be the most susceptible to giving his life to the lake.



Gongsun begrudgingly gives in to Seha's idea. After all, if they didn't stop the monster now, they would all die, including Shin-young and including Gongsun, with civil servant exams only two months away, who would be cheated out of a comfortable life as a civil servant. Convincing Shin-young to sacrifice himself would save seven billion people.

Gongsun rushes to her room and starts sketching. She produces alarmingly detailed drawings of the lake monster, in torment and struggling to escape the clutches of the lake's surface to go out and "reset the world."



Along with Seha, she weaves the intricate story to Shin-young, who believes that the monster needs more power in order to fulfill its divine will. They lie to Shin-young that the monster's chants had recently changed to include a plea for help, from a certain someone.

As a final test, Shin-young goes to Iksimho Lake and waits for a sign. He is confident in his ability to “read” the lake based on its ripples. The lake is silent, even the rippling waves do not provide an answer.



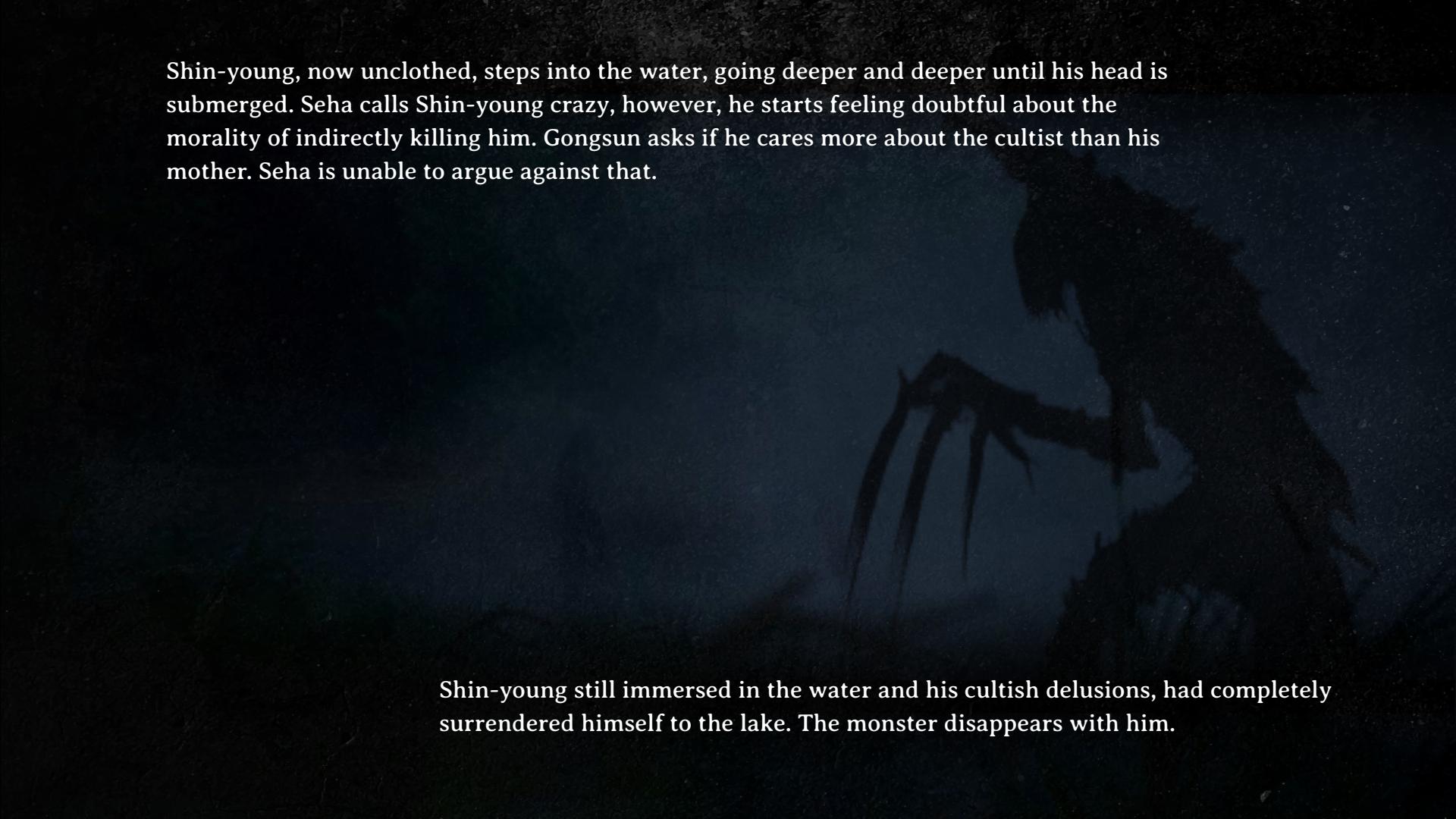
Then suddenly, a fish leaps out from the water. Perfect timing. The water that had been trickling down Shin-young’s forehead merges with his tears. He takes the fish as a sign.

Gongsun and Seha are waiting for Shin-young on the lake shore. It's been 6 days, and Seha is unsure if the lake fanatic would actually show up, but he does. Shin-young lingers on the edge of the lake and starts to undress, alarming Gongsun and Seha.

At exactly 11:30, the lake monster appears. "Initializing the world," it chants. The monster is now up to its thighs, and it jerks violently.



Shin-young, now unclothed, steps into the water, going deeper and deeper until his head is submerged. Seha calls Shin-young crazy, however, he starts feeling doubtful about the morality of indirectly killing him. Gongsun asks if he cares more about the cultist than his mother. Seha is unable to argue against that.

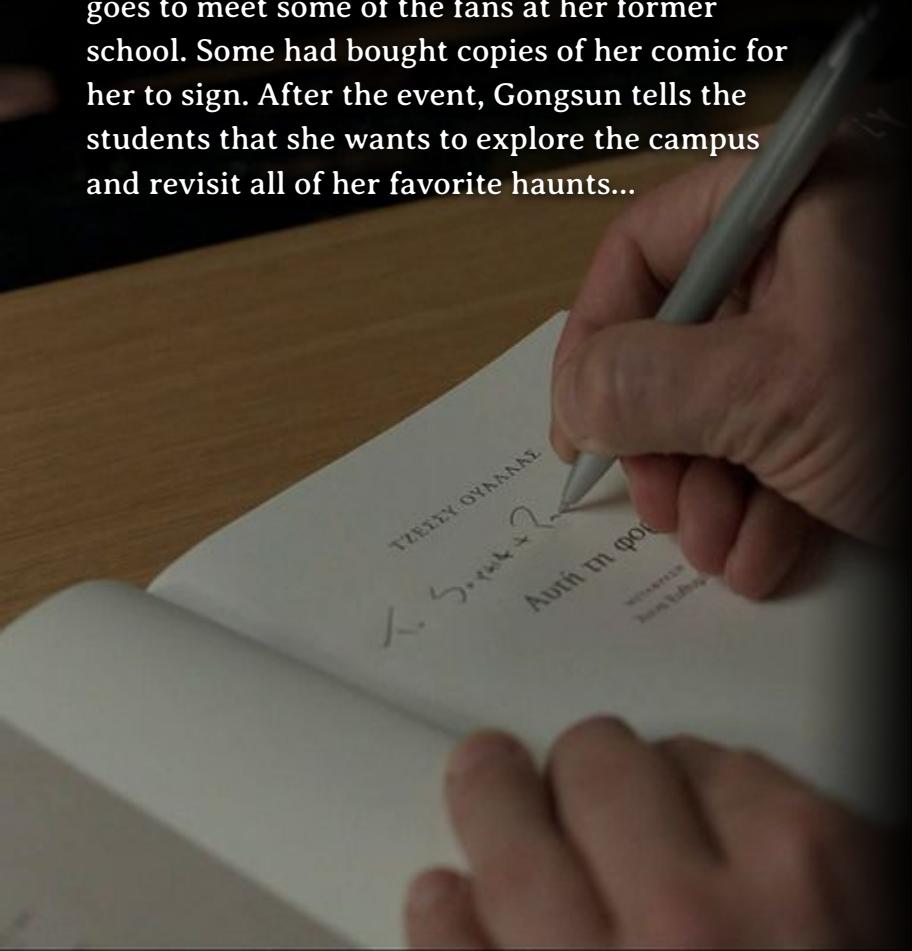


Shin-young still immersed in the water and his cultish delusions, had completely surrendered himself to the lake. The monster disappears with him.

Back at the chairman's office, the president and chairman reach a deal. Due to a student drowning at Ilsimho Lake, it is now considered a liability to student safety. With the lake closing down, they could easily commence construction.



Gongsun bids farewell to the interviewer and goes to meet some of the fans at her former school. Some had bought copies of her comic for her to sign. After the event, Gongsun tells the students that she wants to explore the campus and revisit all of her favorite haunts...



Seha sits on a bench by what used to be Ilsimho Lake, now covered in dirt and new buildings. After his mandatory military service, he had traveled to Europe and was able to go on backpacking trips with his friends.

A monument, depicting the late Shin-young, the cultist who had sacrificed himself to the lake, looms over the former lake. The statue had been taken by nature, shrouded by leaves and undergrowth. Seha watches a mysterious figure leaving flowers in front of the monument. This is the other monster--or rather, the hero.





MONSTERS OF THE LAKE

Stories worth the binge

Manta