

QUARANTINE



WORDS AND
PICTURES BY
TOM REYNOLDS



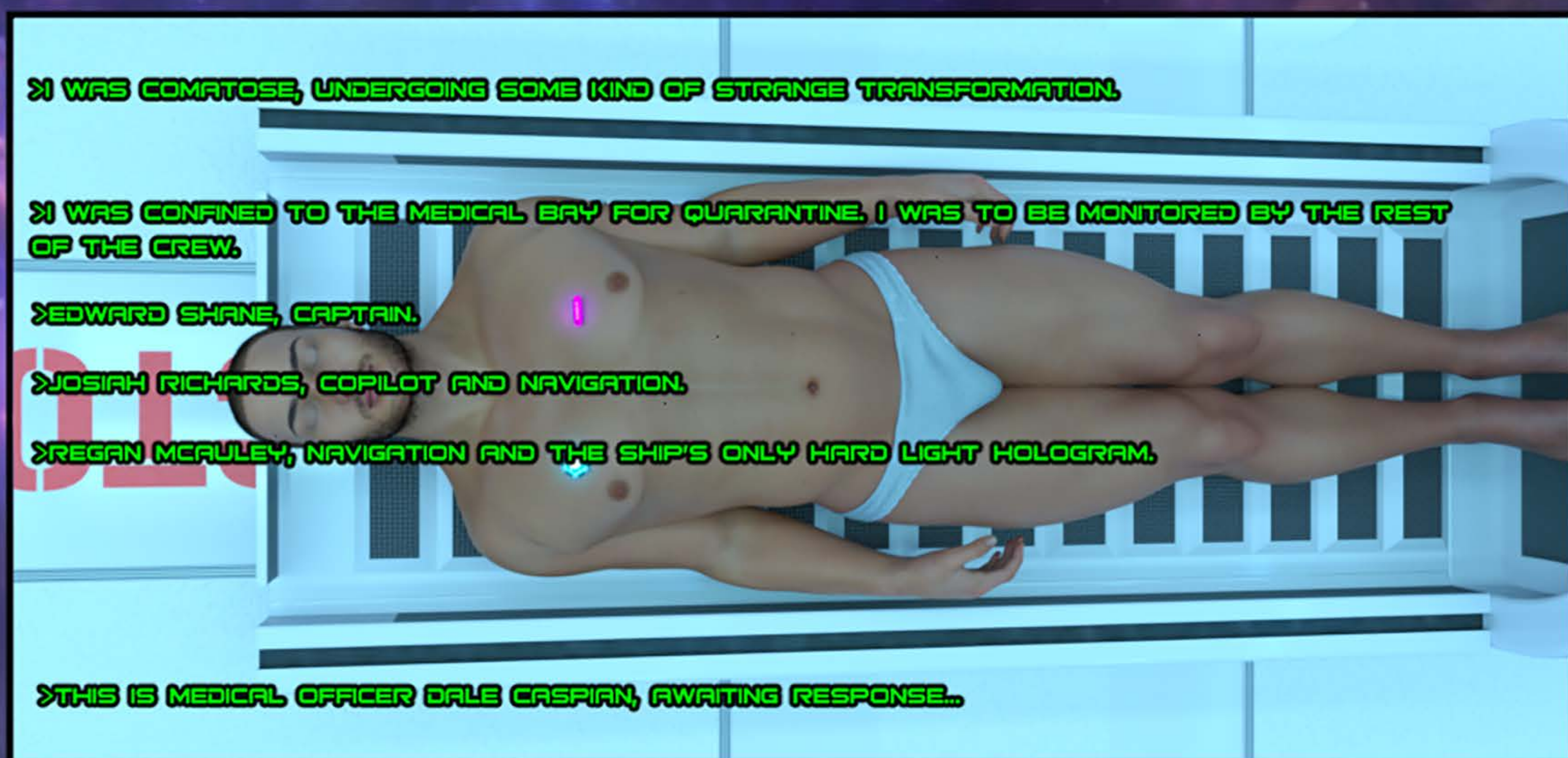
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CHAPTER 1



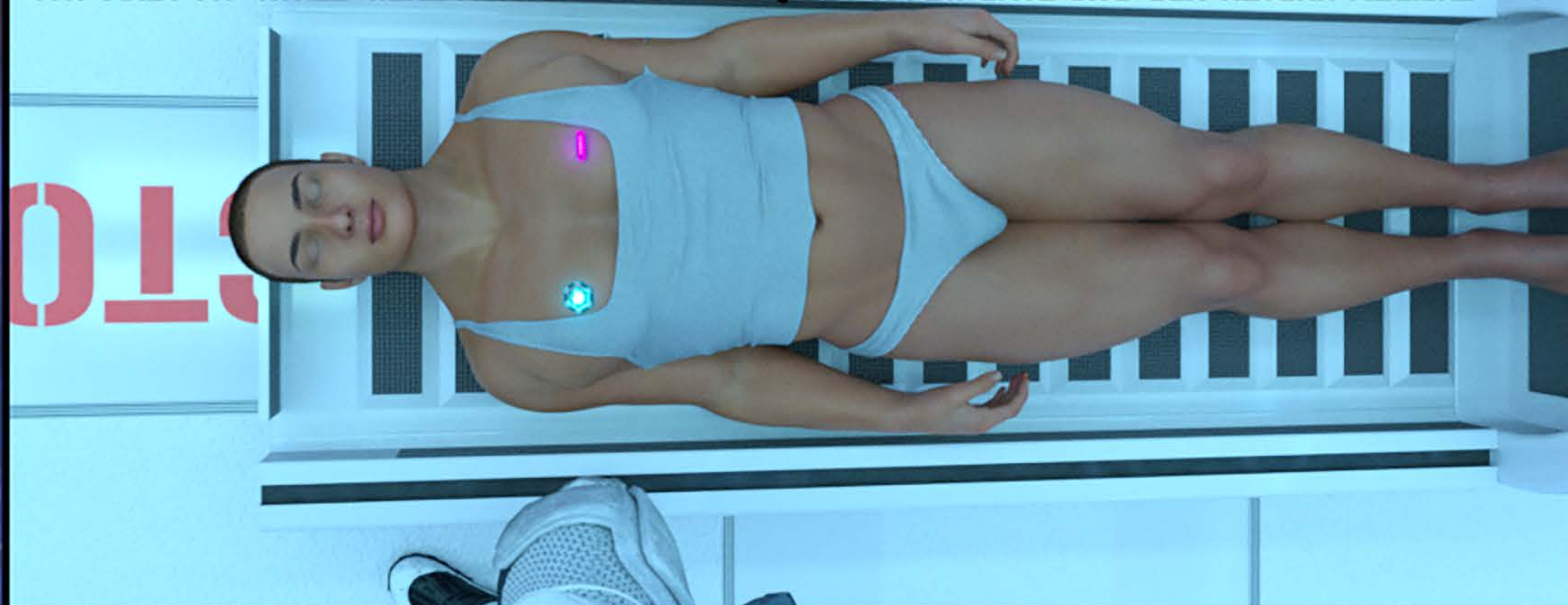
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>SOMETHING HAPPENED DURING MY STASIS...

>AT FIRST MY VITALS WERE MONITORED NORMALLY, BUT A FEW DAYS INTO OUR RETURN MISSION...



>THE CREW DISAPPEARED.

>THE MANIFEST IS NO LONGER UPDATED AND WE BEGAN TO DRIFT FROM THE COMMERCIAL SHIPPING LANES.



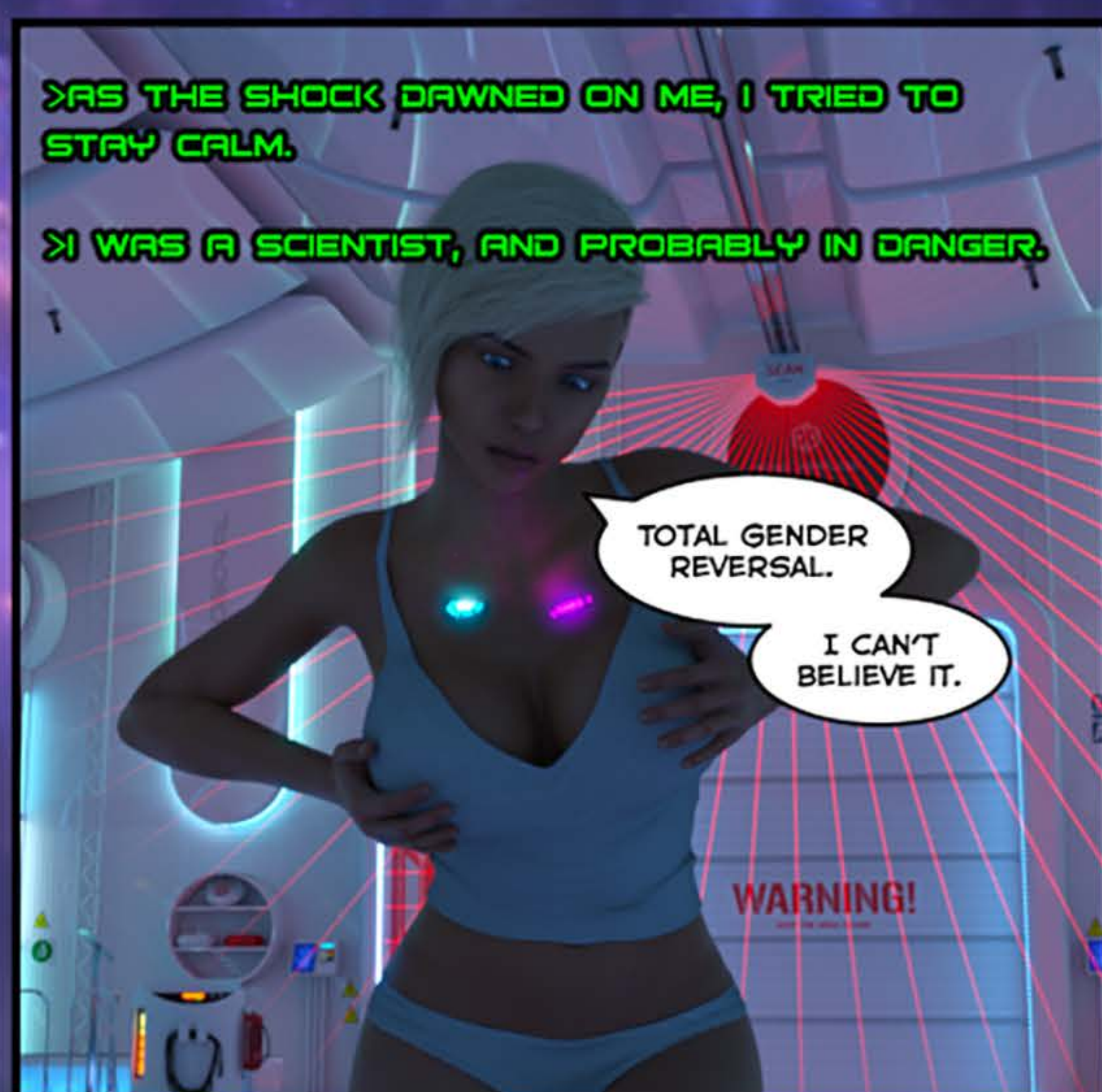
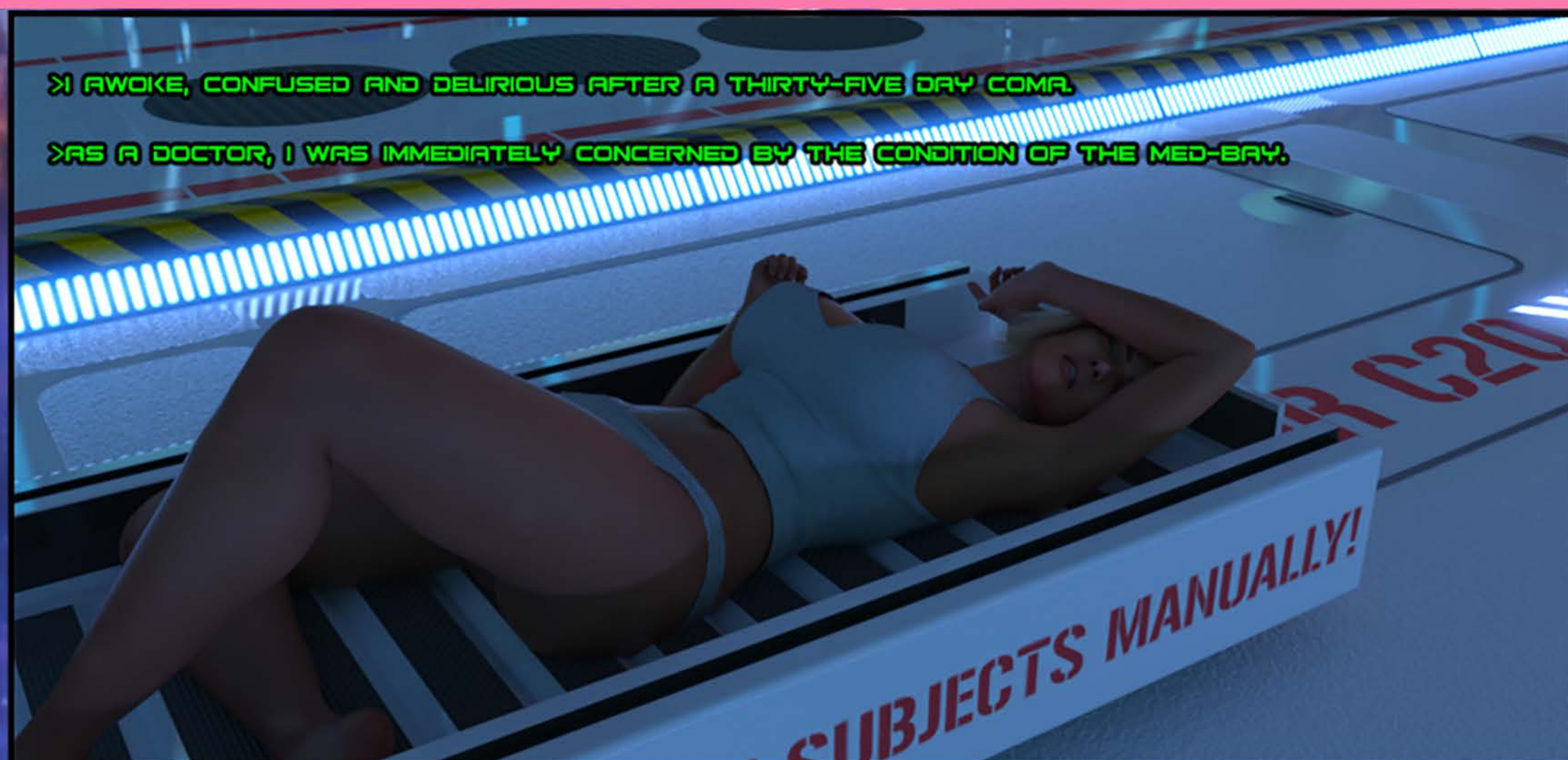
>BY THE TIME I AWOKE, I WAS COMPLETELY ALONE.

>WE WERE AMONG THE CORE SYSTEMS, WITH NO SCANNING, NO COMMS AND SEEMINGLY NO POWER.

>DEAD IN THE WATER.



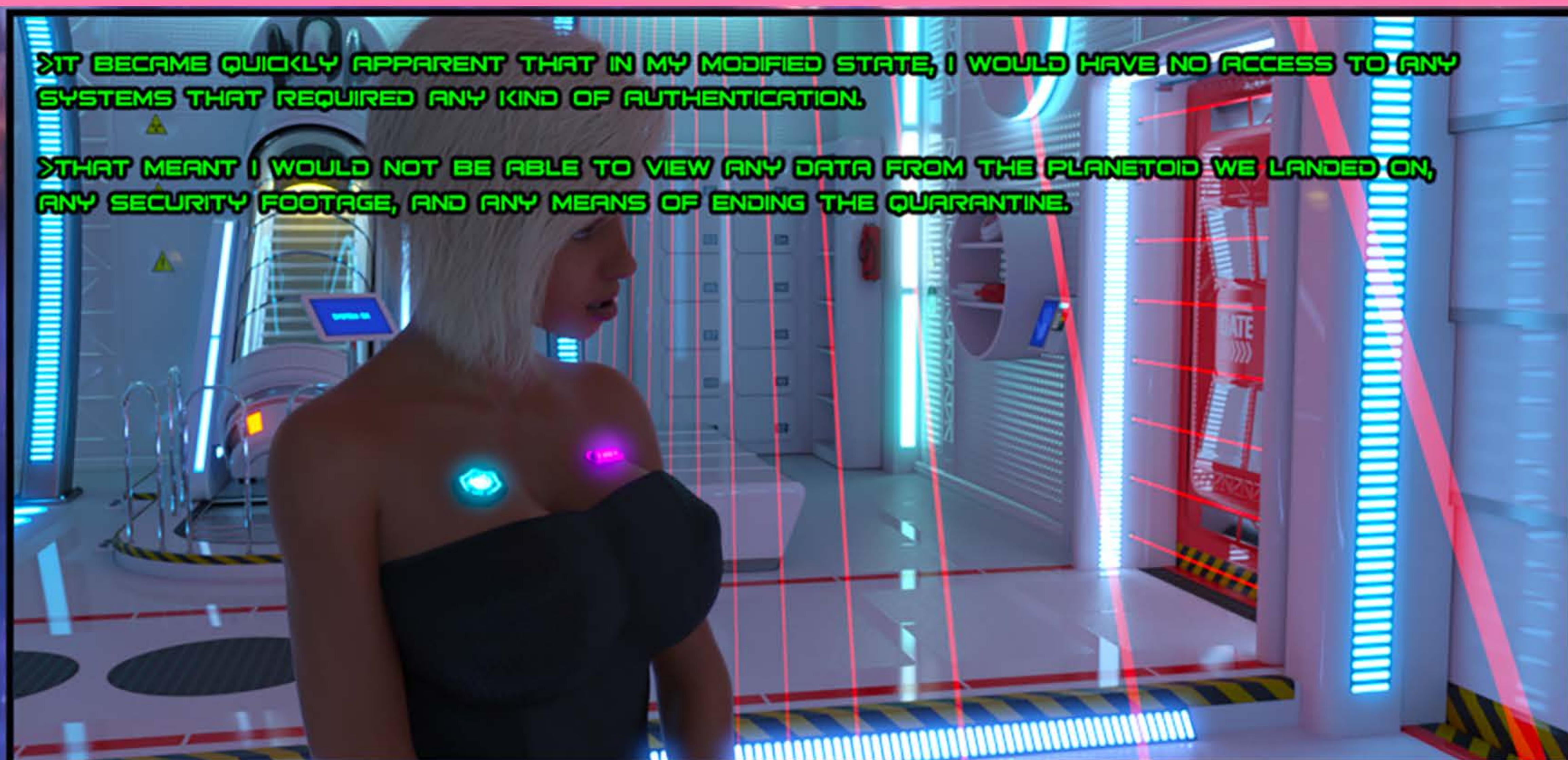
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>MY MEMORY OF THE INCIDENT WAS SCANT AT BEST.

>WE FOUND A ROGUE PLANETOID WITH A FEW SIGNS OF DEVELOPED MINERAL CONTENT.

>WE EXPECTED NO LIFE FORMS.

>SOMETHING HAPPENED.

>PERHAPS I WAS BETTER OFF IN QUARANTINE.

>I HAD ONLY A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE TIME LOCK WOULD RELEASE AUTOMATICALLY, SO I WAS PREPARED TO RIGHT THE SHIP AS SOON AS I WAS ABLE.

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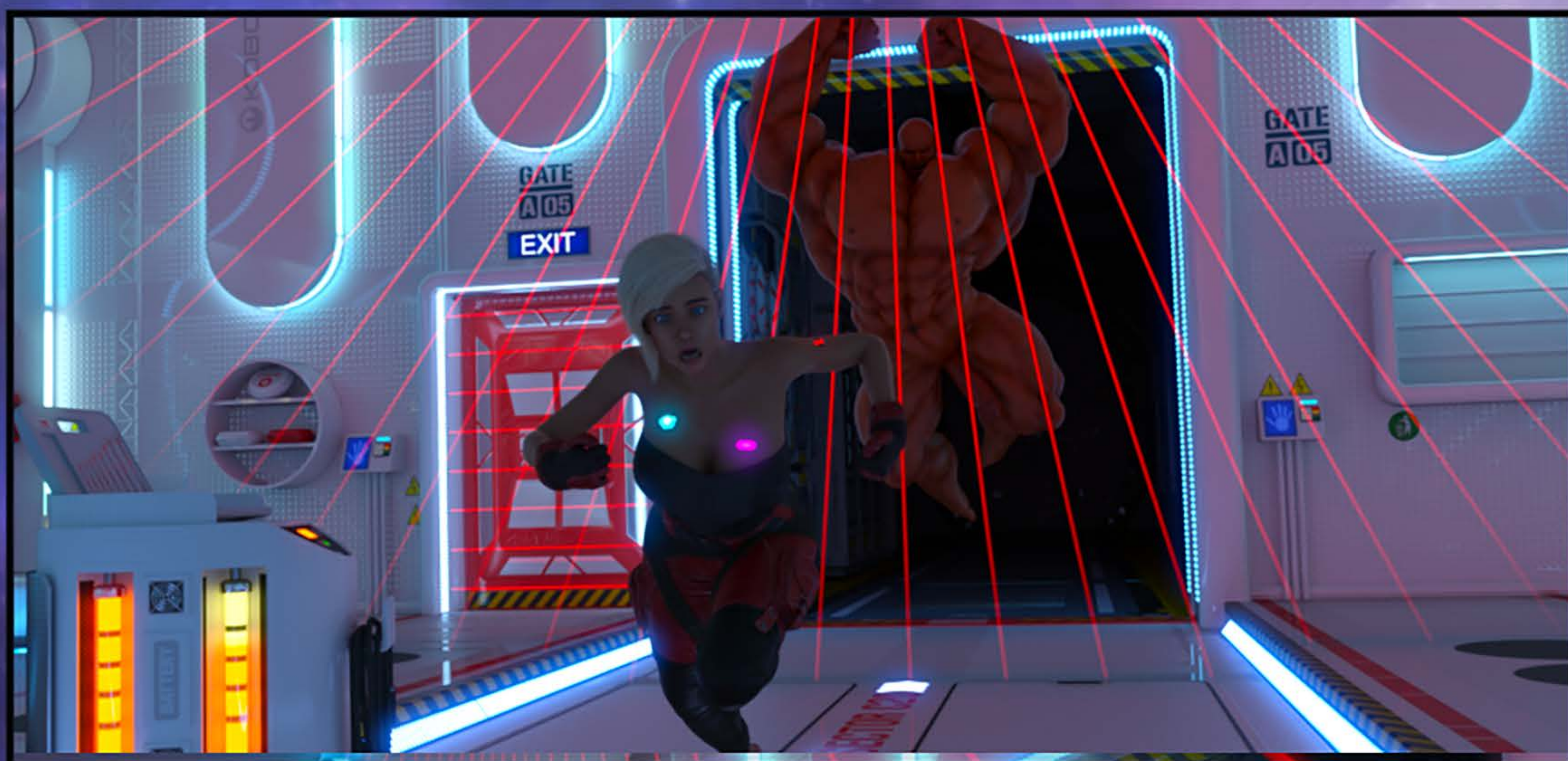
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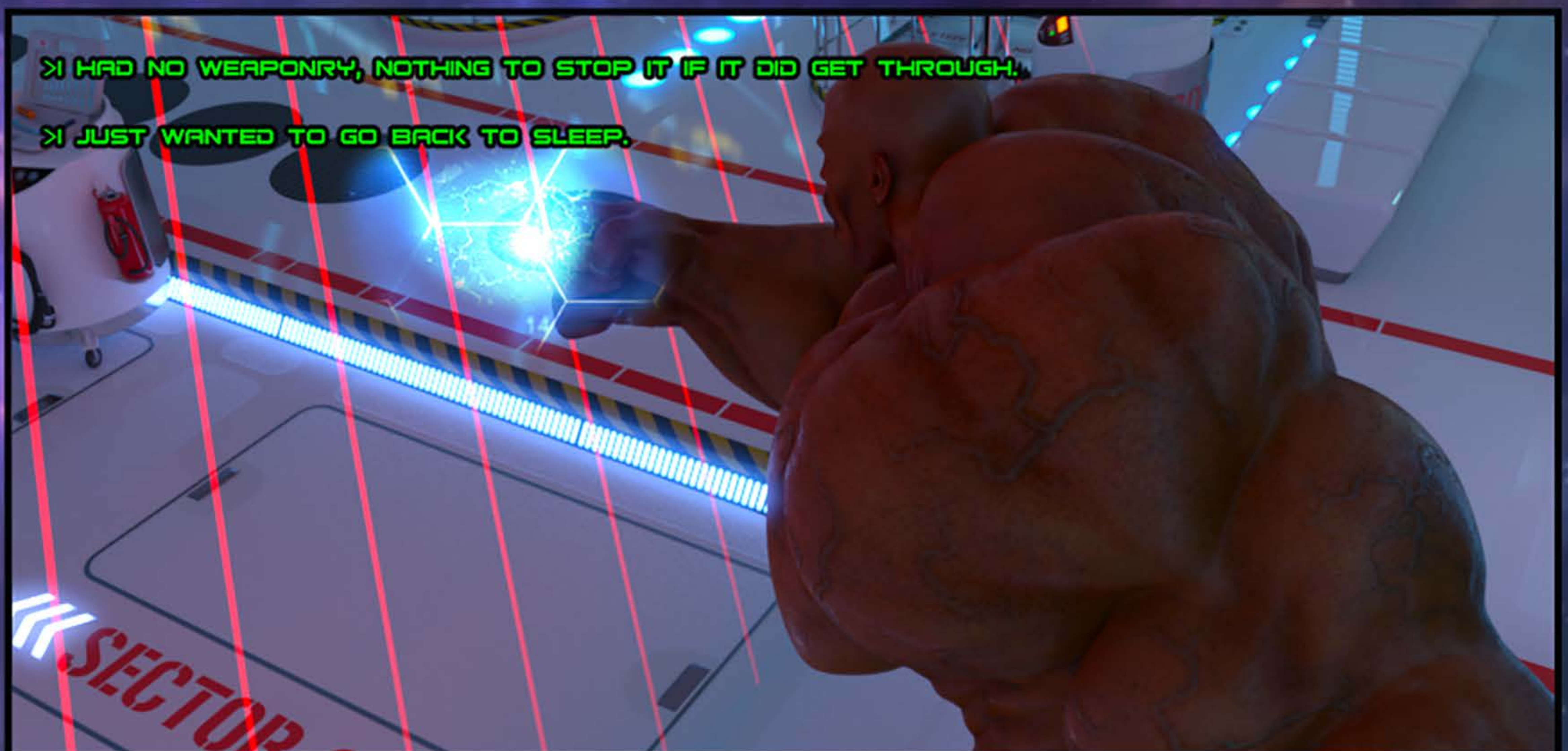
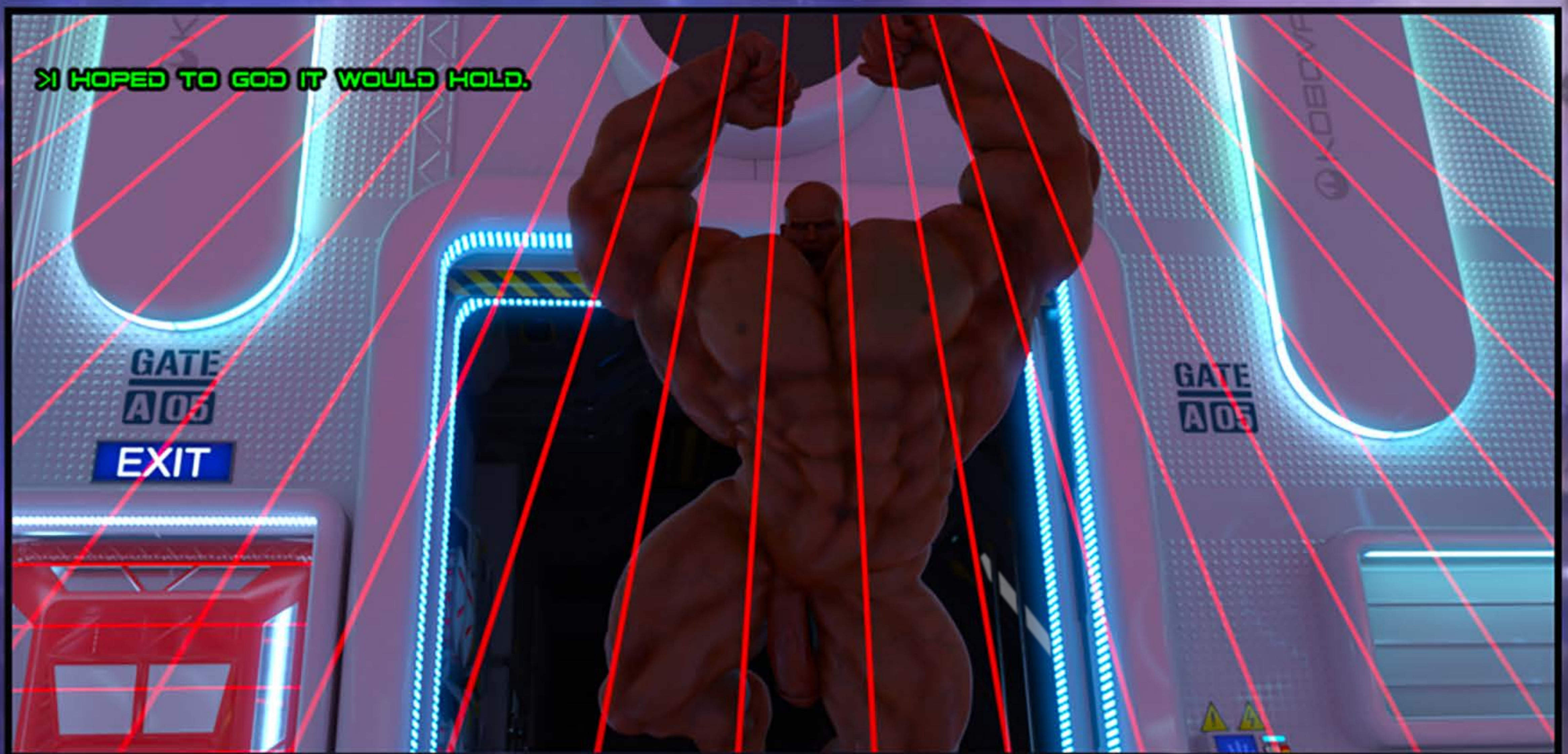
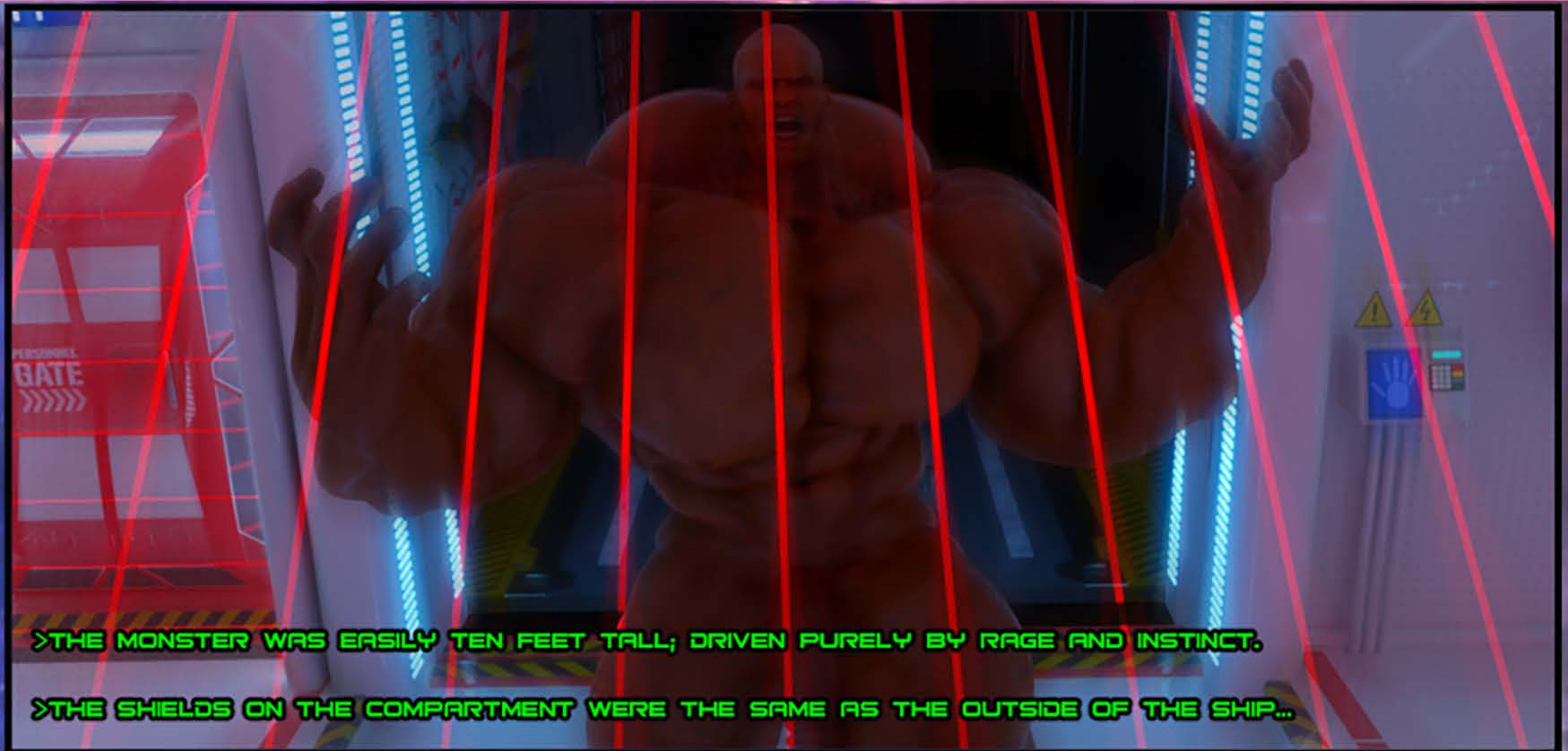
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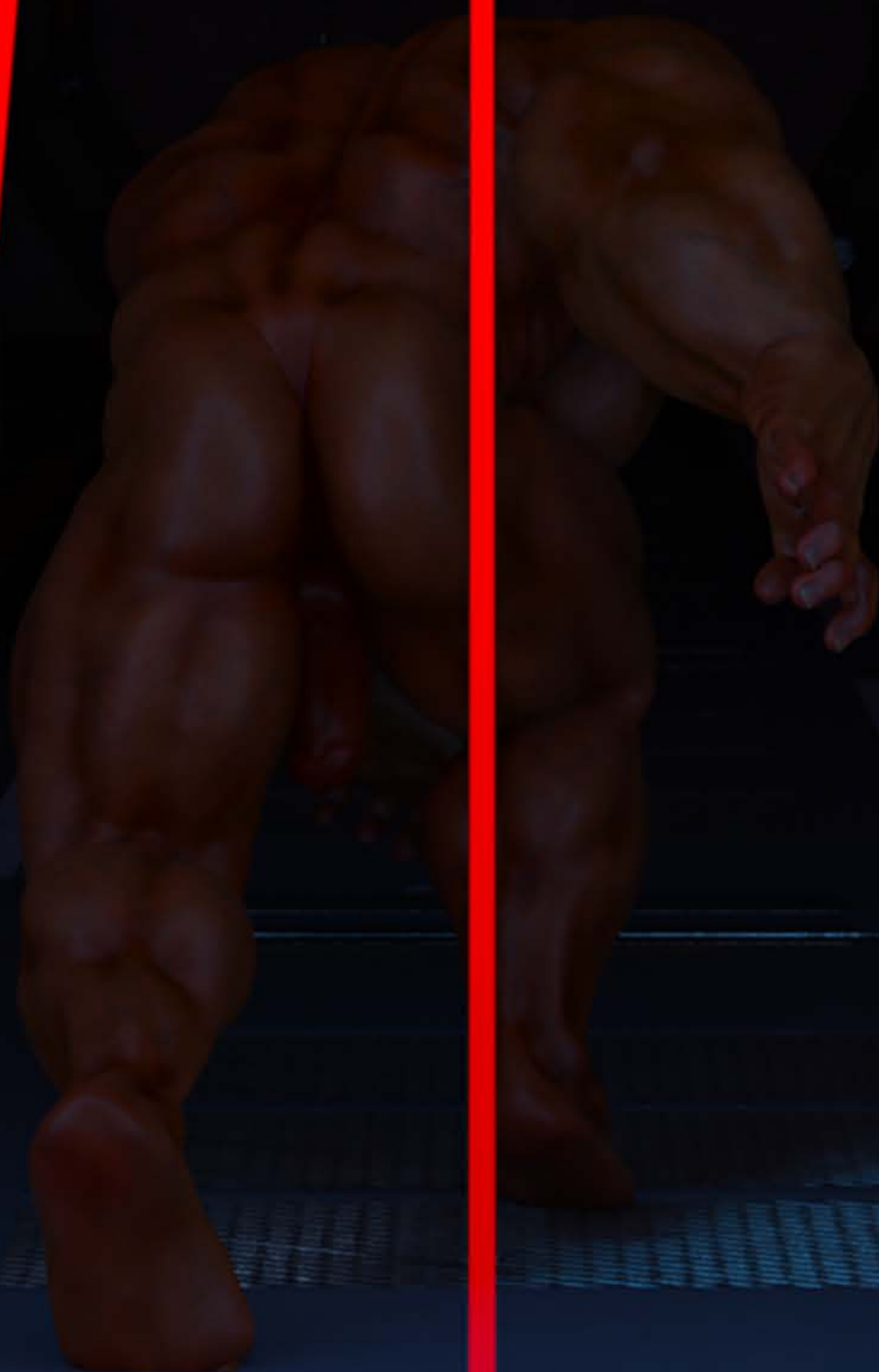
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>I HOPED TO GOD THAT THE OTHERS GOT AWAY.

>I COULDN'T BEAR THE THOUGHT THEY WOULD MEET THEIR END AT THE HANDS OF SOMETHING SO AWFUL.

>I REFUSED TO CONFRONT THE LIKELY SCENARIO THAT THE MONSTER WAS ONE OF MY FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES.

>IF I HAD TRANSFORMED, THEN ONE OF THEM LIKELY HAD ALSO...



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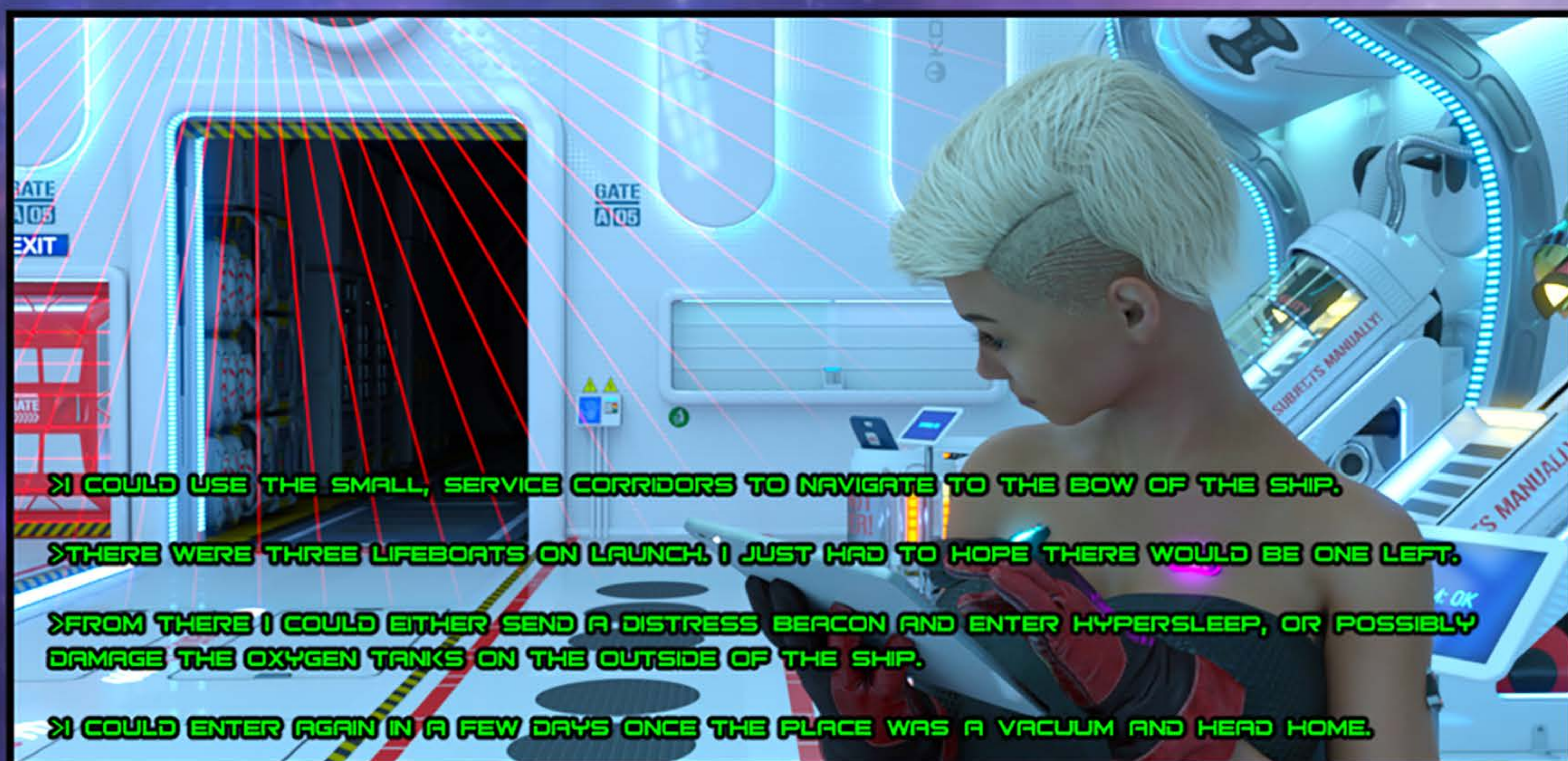


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>AFTER A FEW LITTLE VICTORIES AGAINST THE COMPUTER, I HAD MY PLAN.

YES!



>I COULD USE THE SMALL, SERVICE CORRIDORS TO NAVIGATE TO THE BOW OF THE SHIP.

>THERE WERE THREE LIFEBOATS ON LAUNCH. I JUST HAD TO HOPE THERE WOULD BE ONE LEFT.

>FROM THERE I COULD EITHER SEND A DISTRESS BEACON AND ENTER HYPERSLEEP, OR POSSIBLY DAMAGE THE OXYGEN TANKS ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE SHIP.

>I COULD ENTER AGAIN IN A FEW DAYS ONCE THE PLACE WAS A VACUUM AND HEAD HOME.



>MY MAIN CHALLENGE WOULD BE THE TWO LARGER CORRIDORS THAT THE MONSTER WOULD BE ABLE TO ENTER.

>THERE WAS A MAIN CORRIDOR RUNNING DOWN THE SPINE OF THE SHIP, FOLLOWED BY ANOTHER LARGE SHAFT NEAR THE END OF THE ROUTE.

>THERE I WOULD BE THE MOST VULNERABLE.

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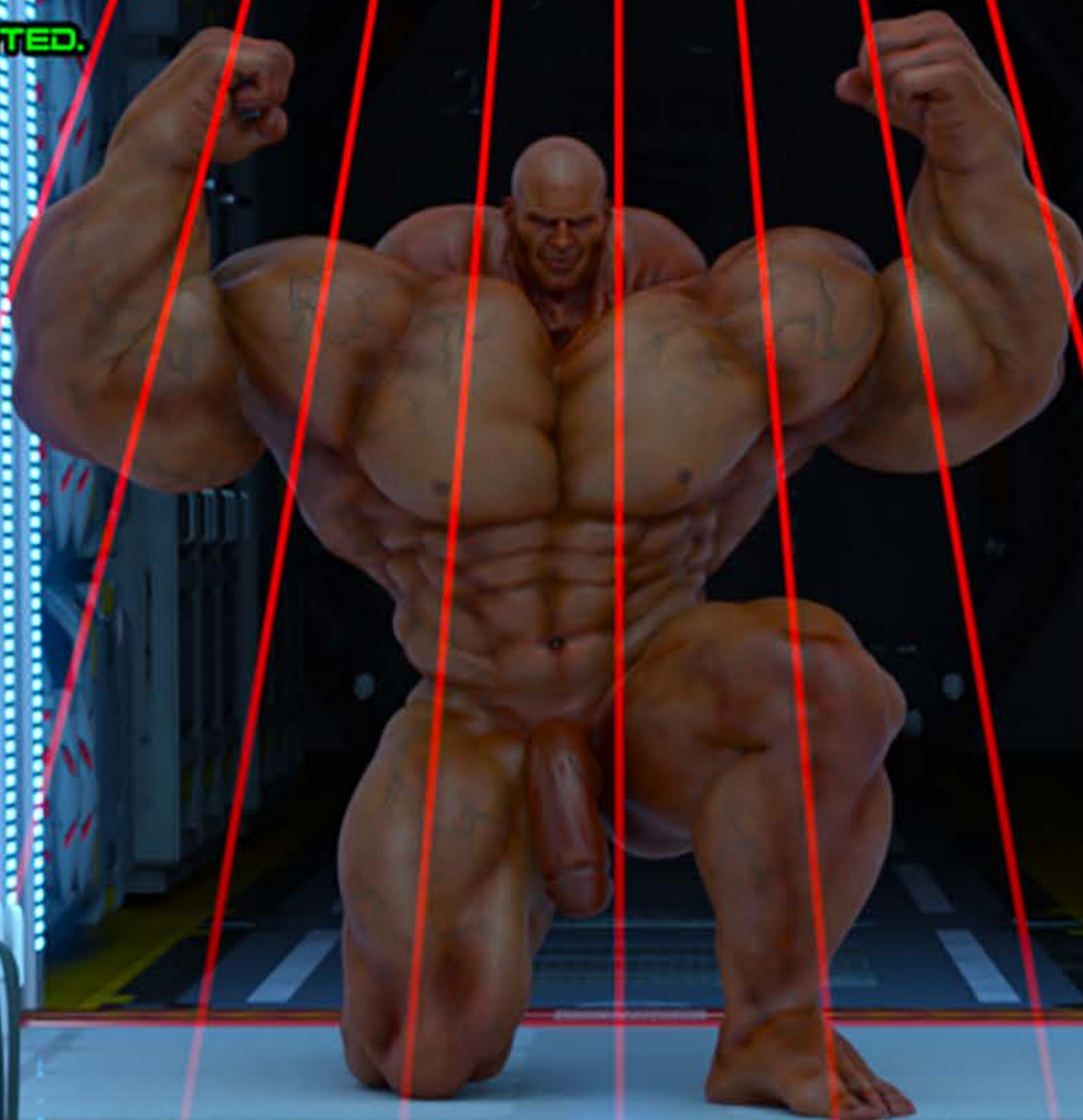
>THE MONSTER RETURNED OCCASIONALLY, WITH NO PATTERN TO ITS APPEARANCES.

>IT WOULD HANG AROUND FOR AN HOUR OR SO, TESTING THE DEFENCES, BEFORE IT WOULD SLINK BACK INTO THE DARKNESS.

>I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT THE COMBINATION OF BEING UNACCUSTOMED TO MY NEW BODY, AS WELL AS IT PRODUCING A POWERFUL PHEROMONE LED ME TO SOME CONFUSING EMOTIONS.

T>SOMETHING TOLD ME THAT I WASN'T BEING HUNTED...

>I WAS BEING COURTED.



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>MY LAST RECOURSE WAS THE MOST DISTASTEFUL.

>THE MONSTER HAD MADE A VISIBLE SHOW OF ATTRACTION TOWARD ME.



>DESPITE THE CHANGES, EVERYTHING I WAS GOING THROUGH, I WAS GOING TO HAVE TO BE REALISTIC.

>MY BEST AND MOST LIKELY METHOD OF SURVIVAL WAS GOING TO BE STIMULATING HIM IN SOME FORM OF ANOTHER.

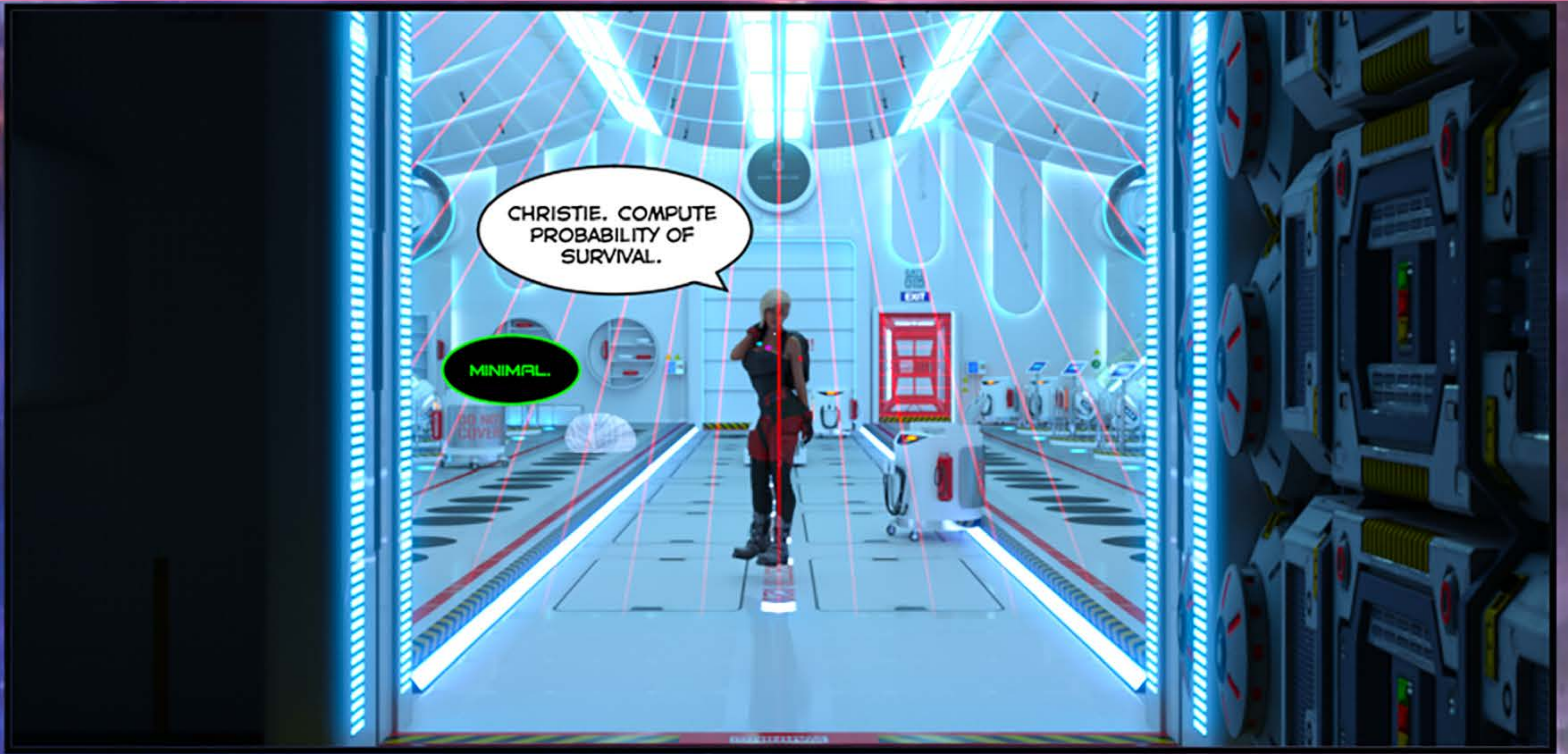


>EVEN A SECOND OF DISTRACTION WOULD ALLOW ME BACK INTO THE CORRIDOR SYSTEM.



>PLAN FOR THE WORST, HOPE FOR THE BEST.

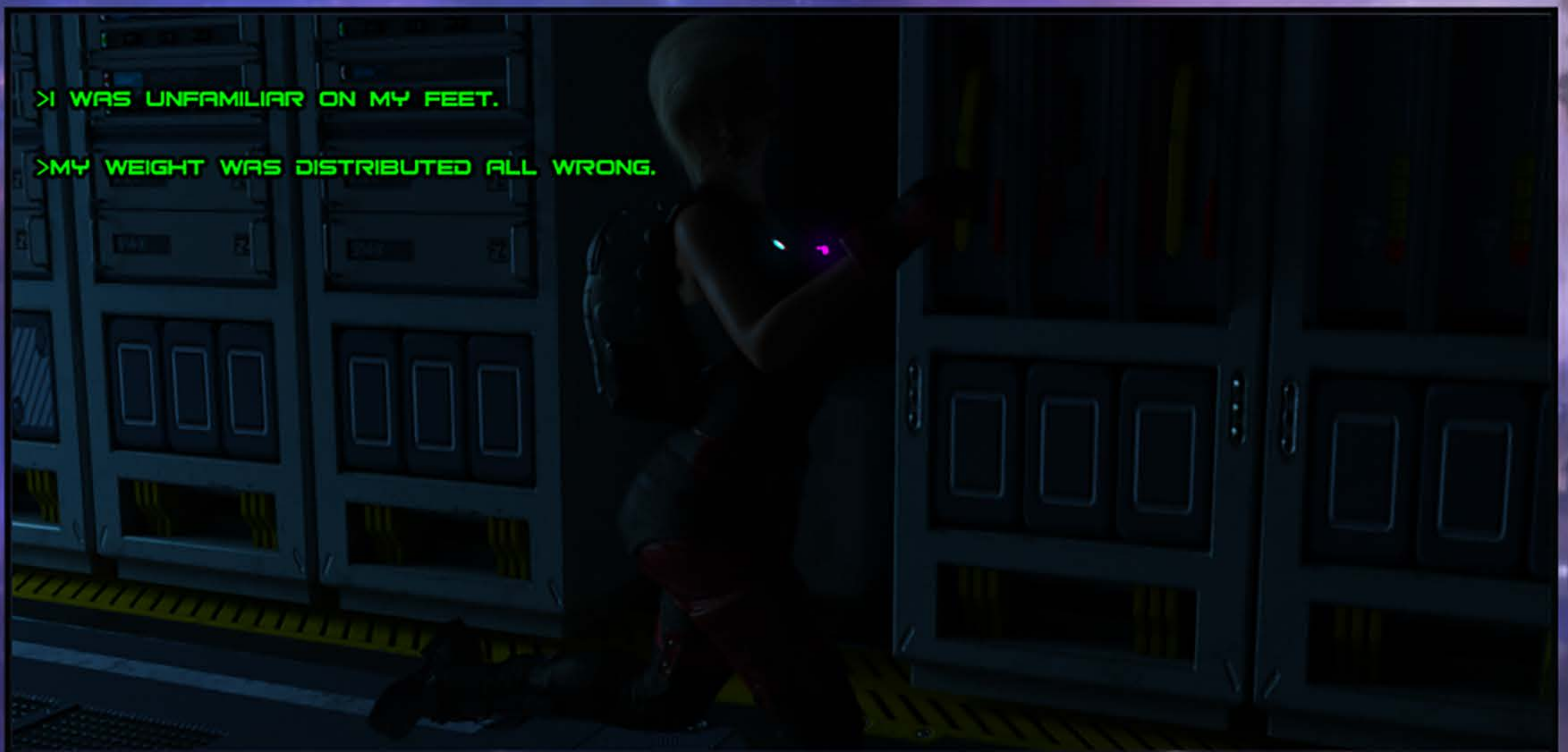
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>I WAS SOMEWHERE IN A SERVICE CORRIDOR.

>MAYBE 10% OF THE WAY TO THE LIFEBOATS.



>I COULD HEAR HIM TRYING TO GET THROUGH THE BULKHEADS, BUT HE WOULD TEAR THE SHIP APART BEFORE HE GOT IN.



>AT LEAST IT WOULD ALL BE OVER.



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CHAPTER 2

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>I WAS SOMEWHERE IN A SERVICE CORRIDOR.

>MAYBE 10% OF THE WAY TO THE LIFEBOATS.



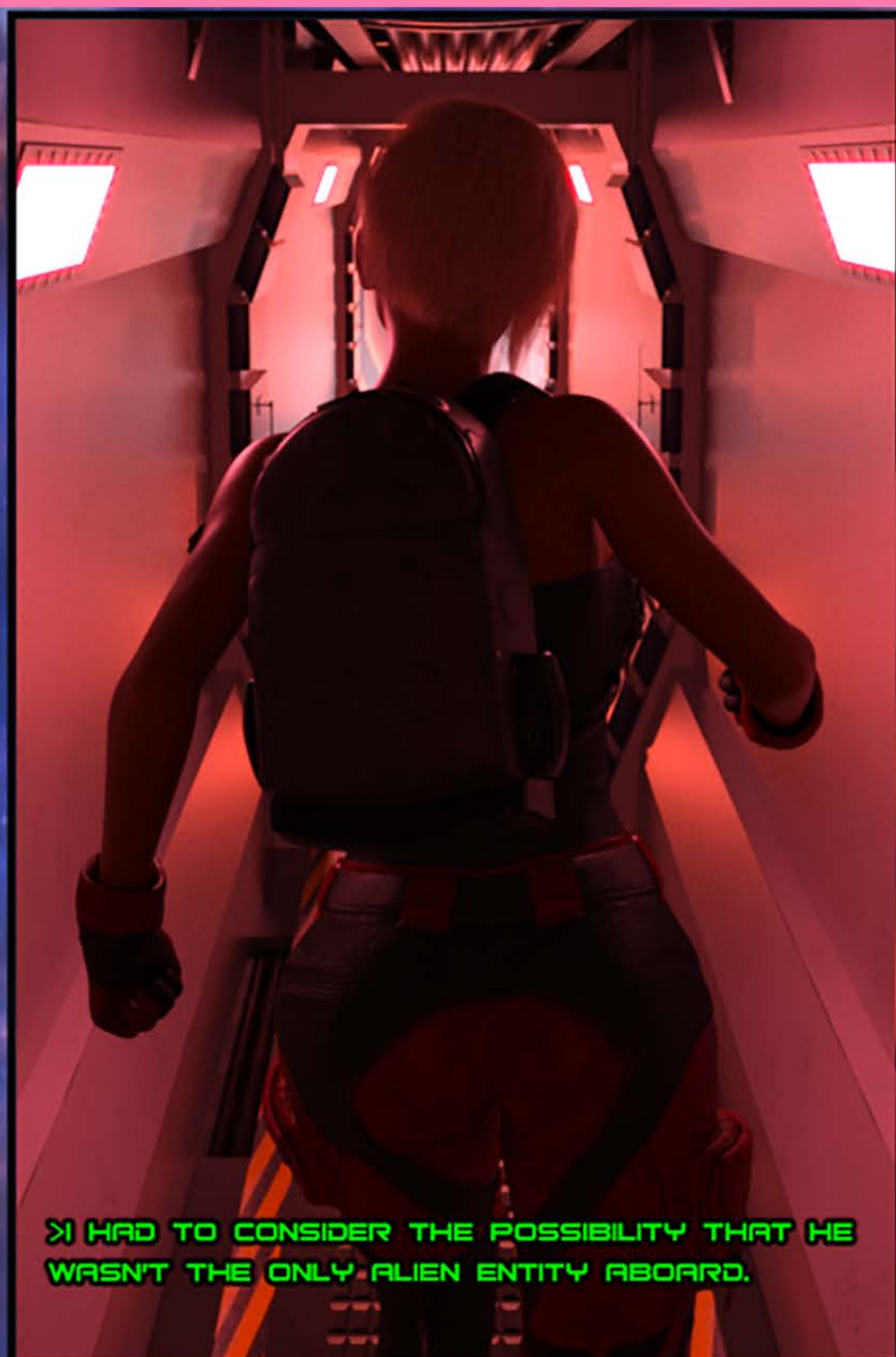
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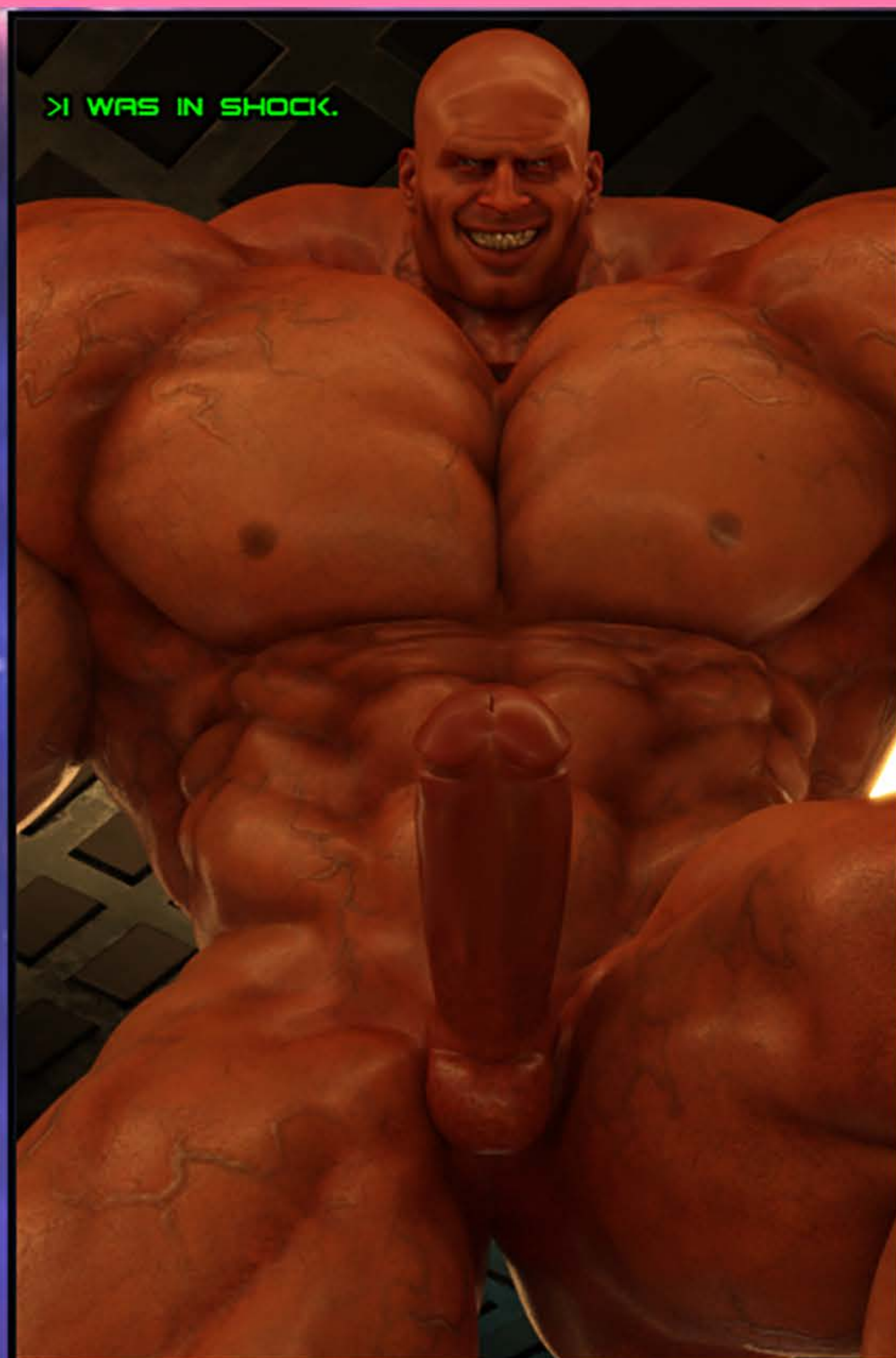
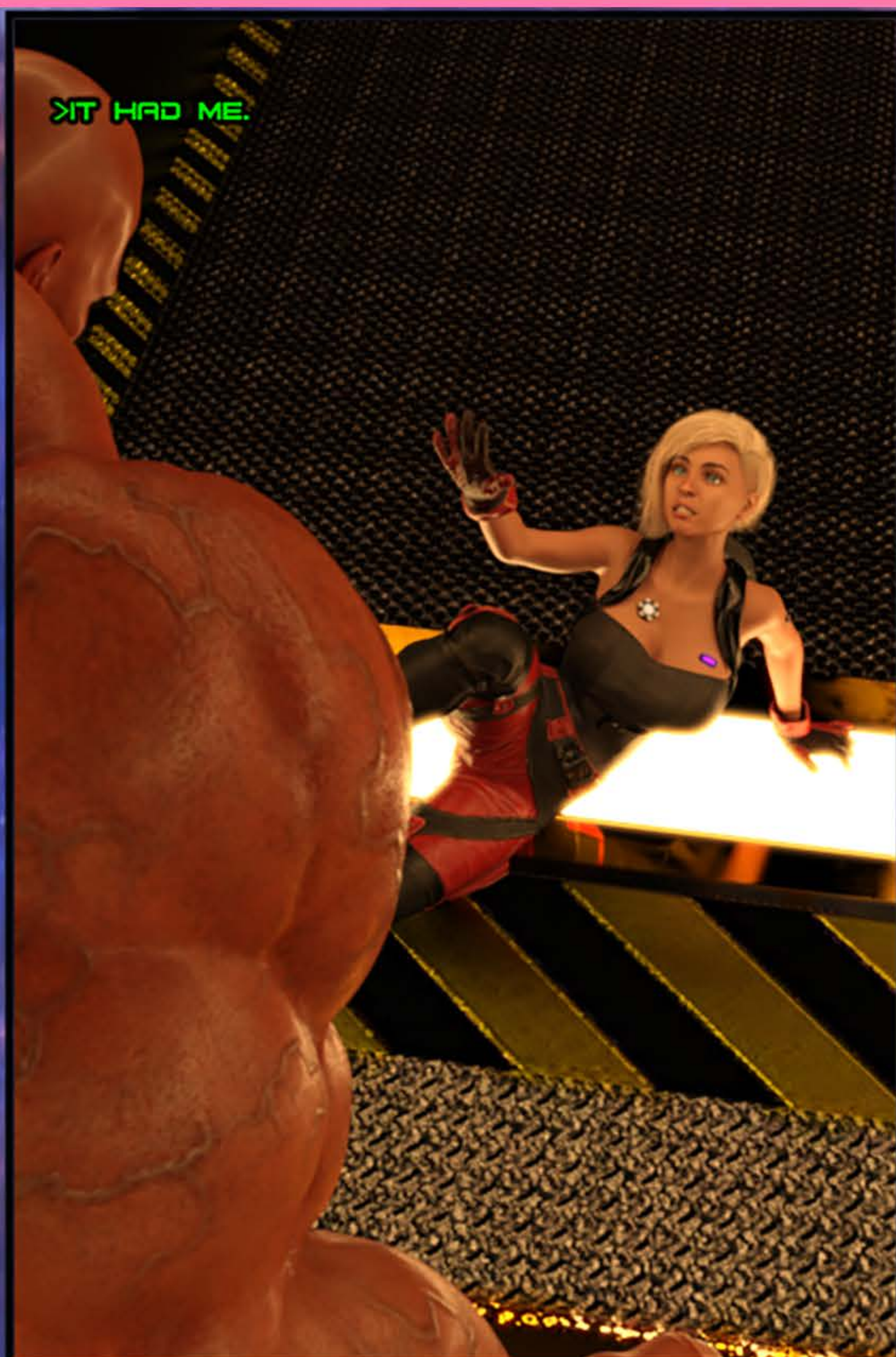
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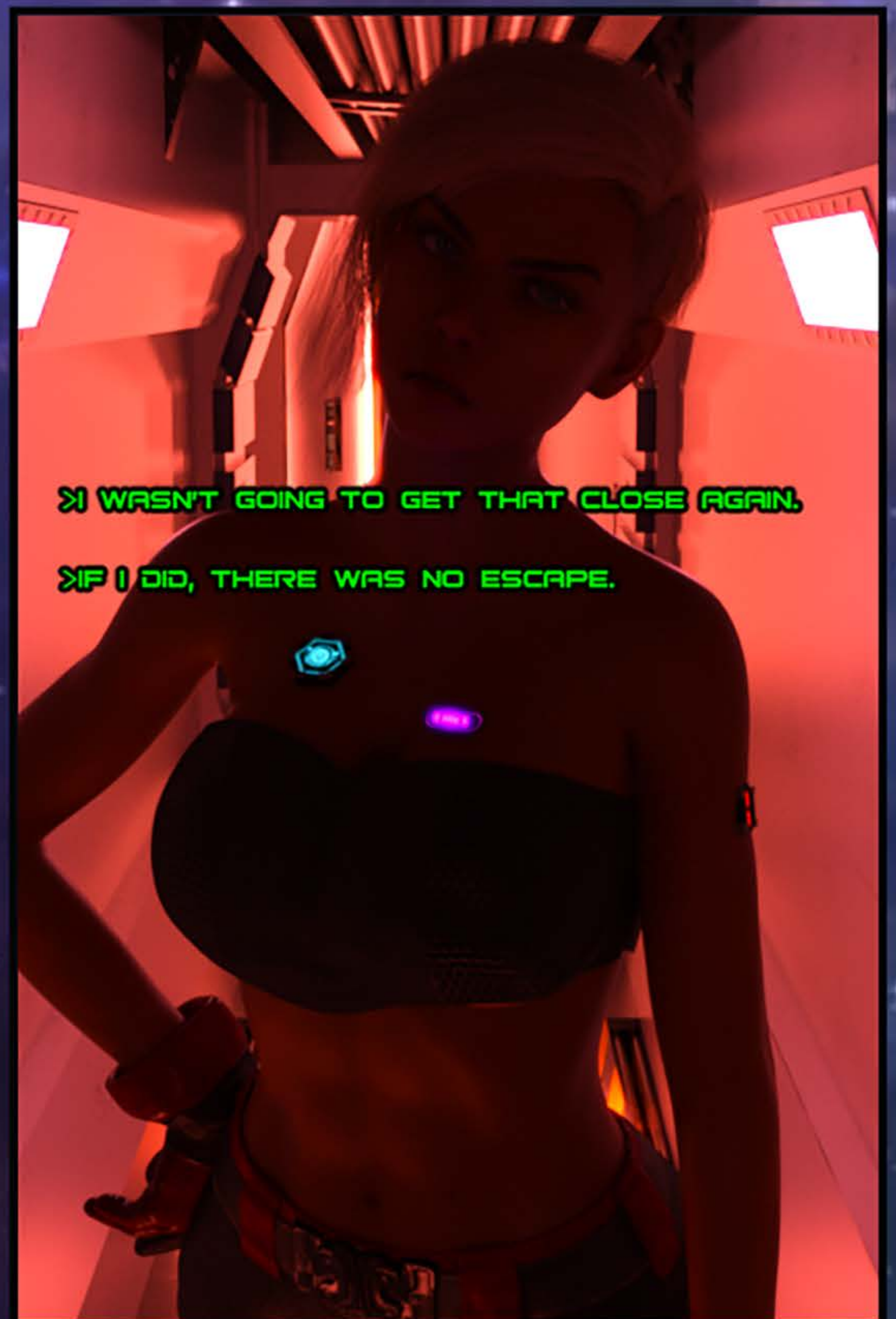
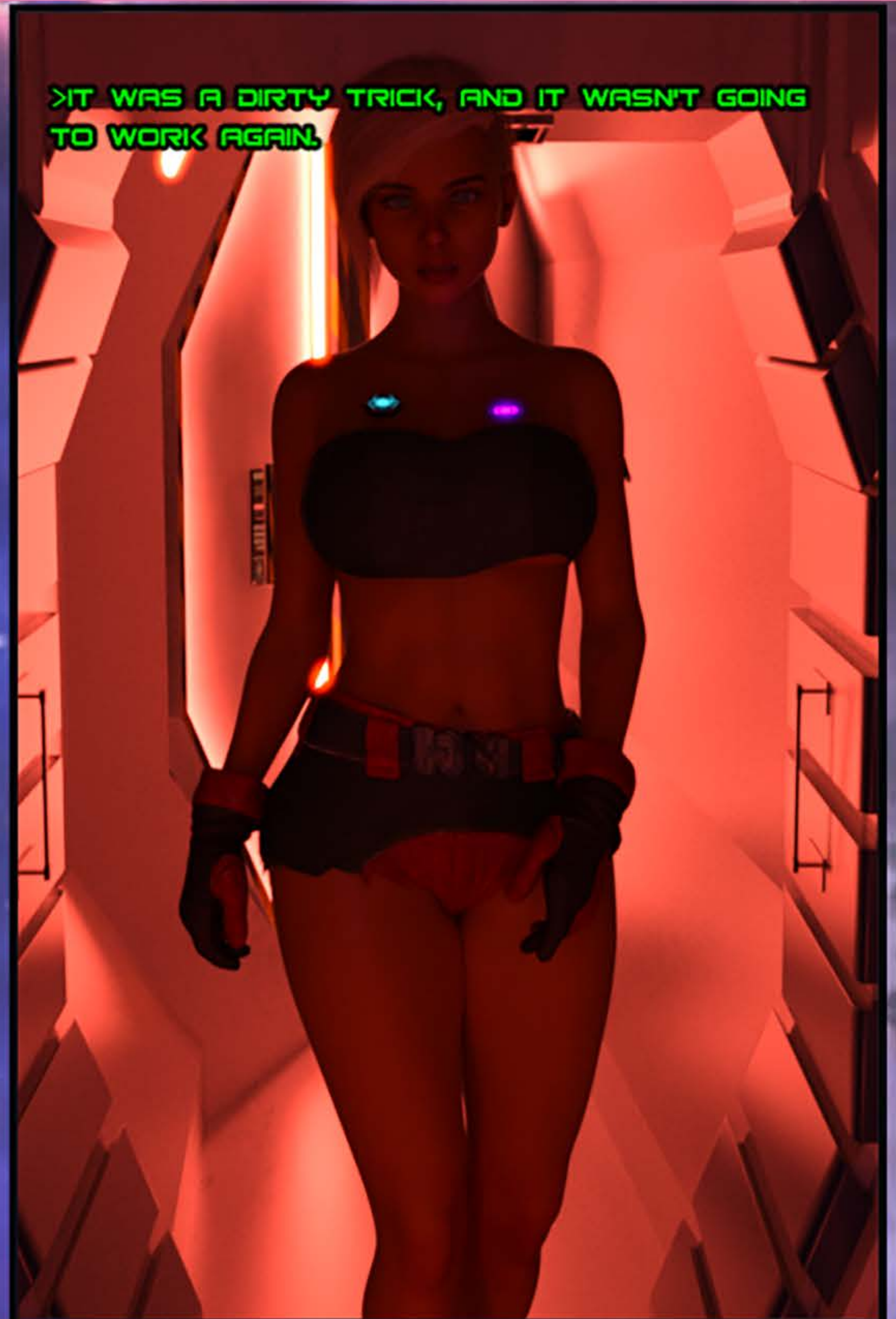
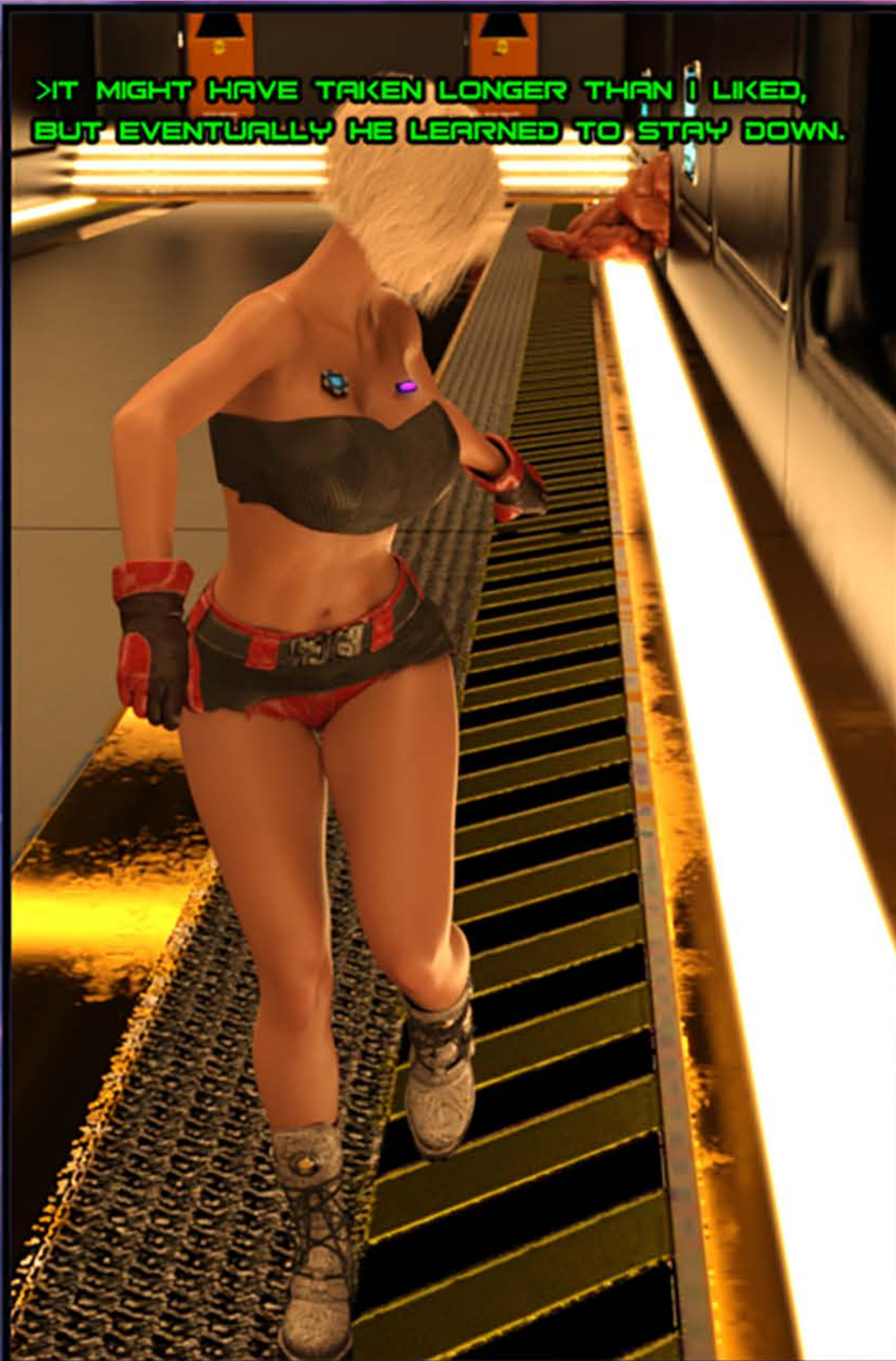
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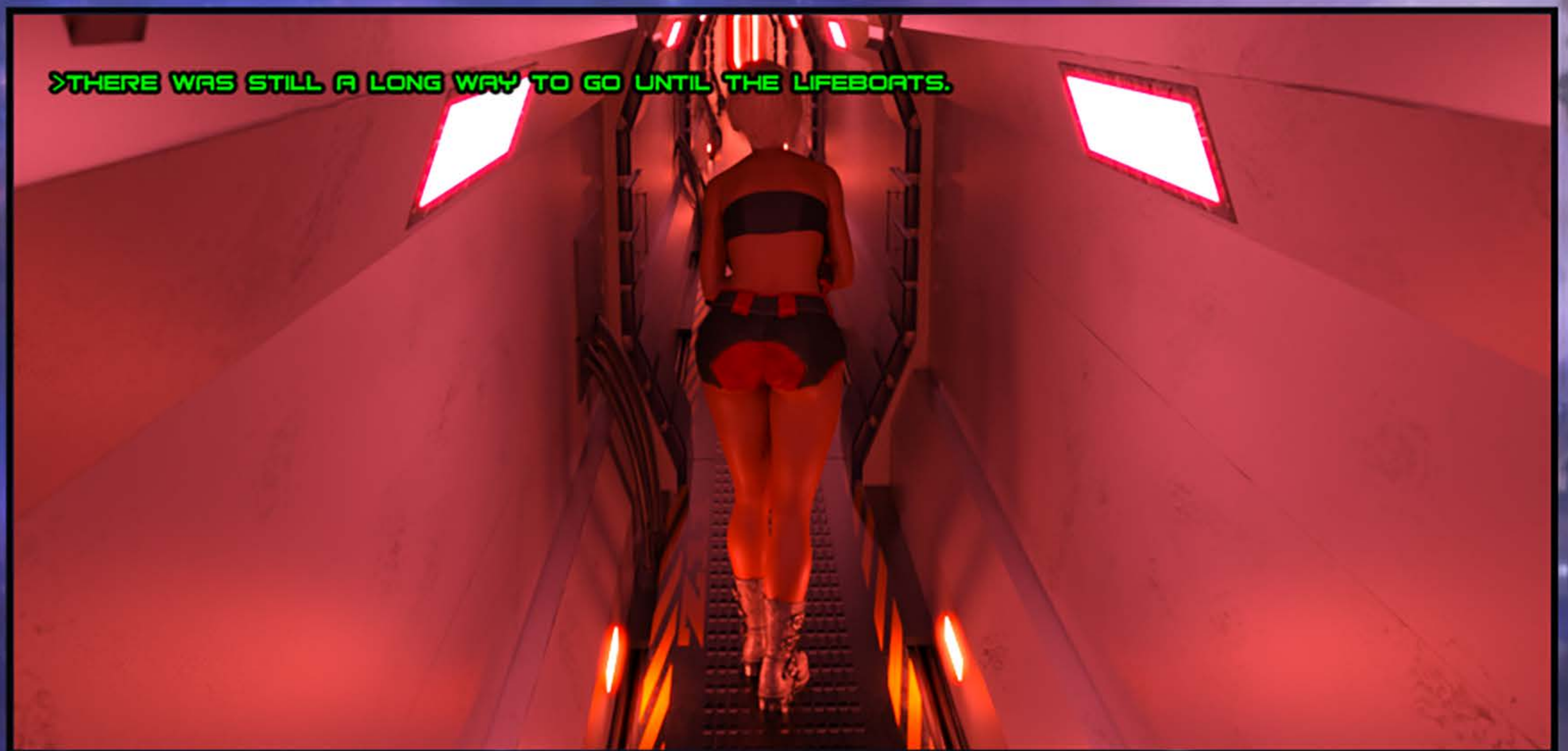
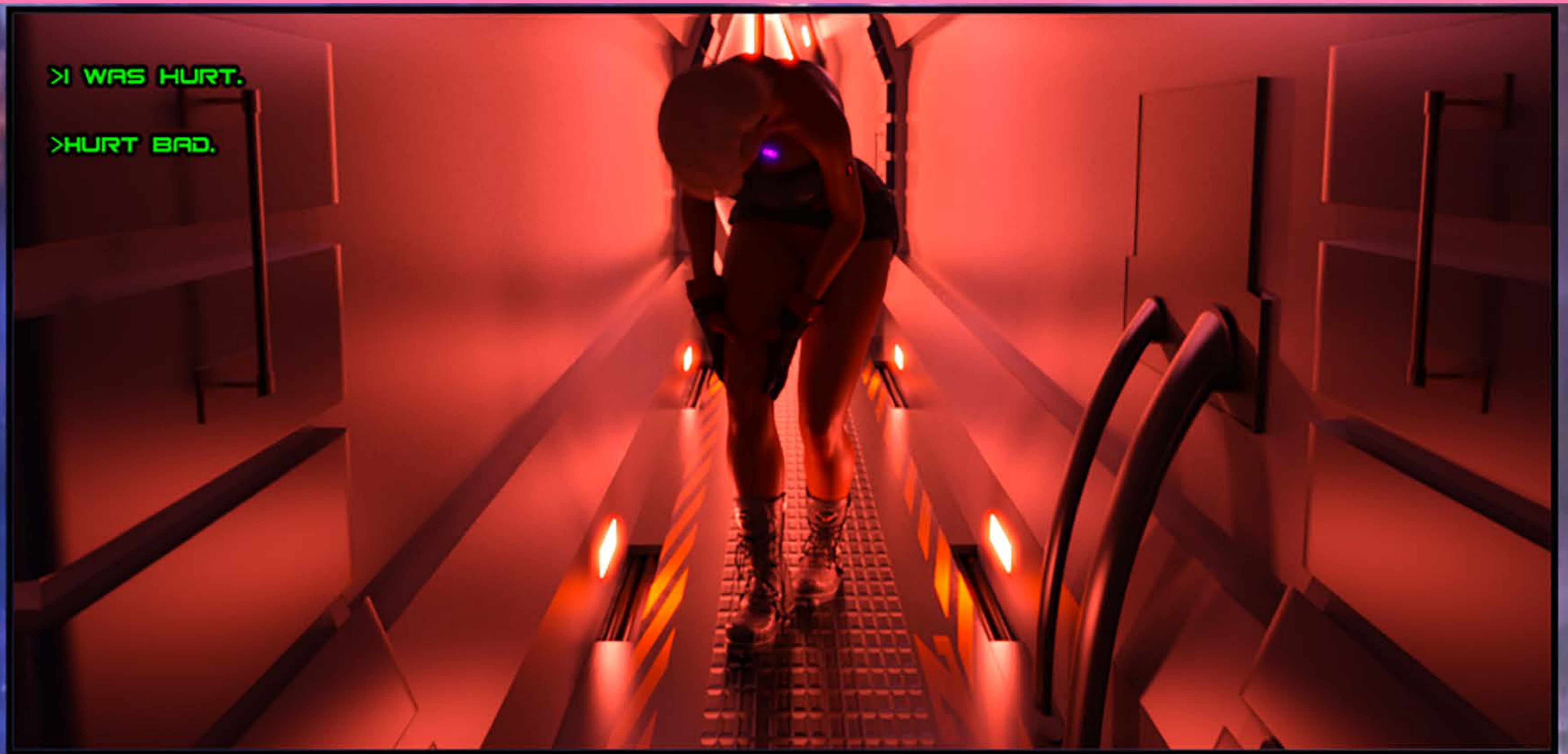
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>MCAULEY HAD HOLED UP IN THE SCIENCE QUARTERS.

>HIS HARD LIGHT FORM HAD TAKEN A BEATING, AND THE BROADCAST CHIP WAS AT HALF POWER.

TRUST YOU
TO FIND A COMFIER
PLACE THAN ME
TO HIDE.

IT'S WHY I'M
IN SCIENCE AND
YOU'RE IN SAWING
BONES.

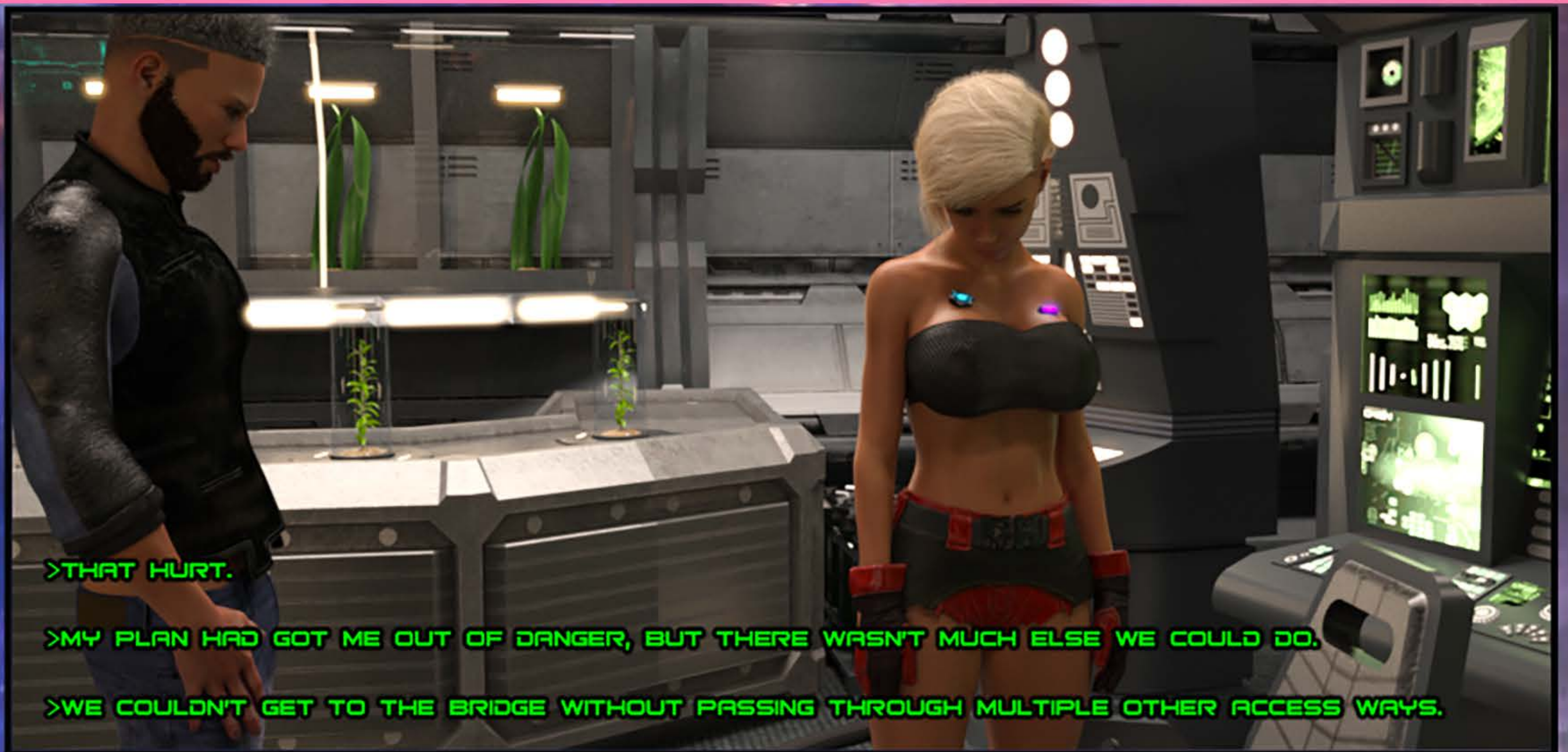
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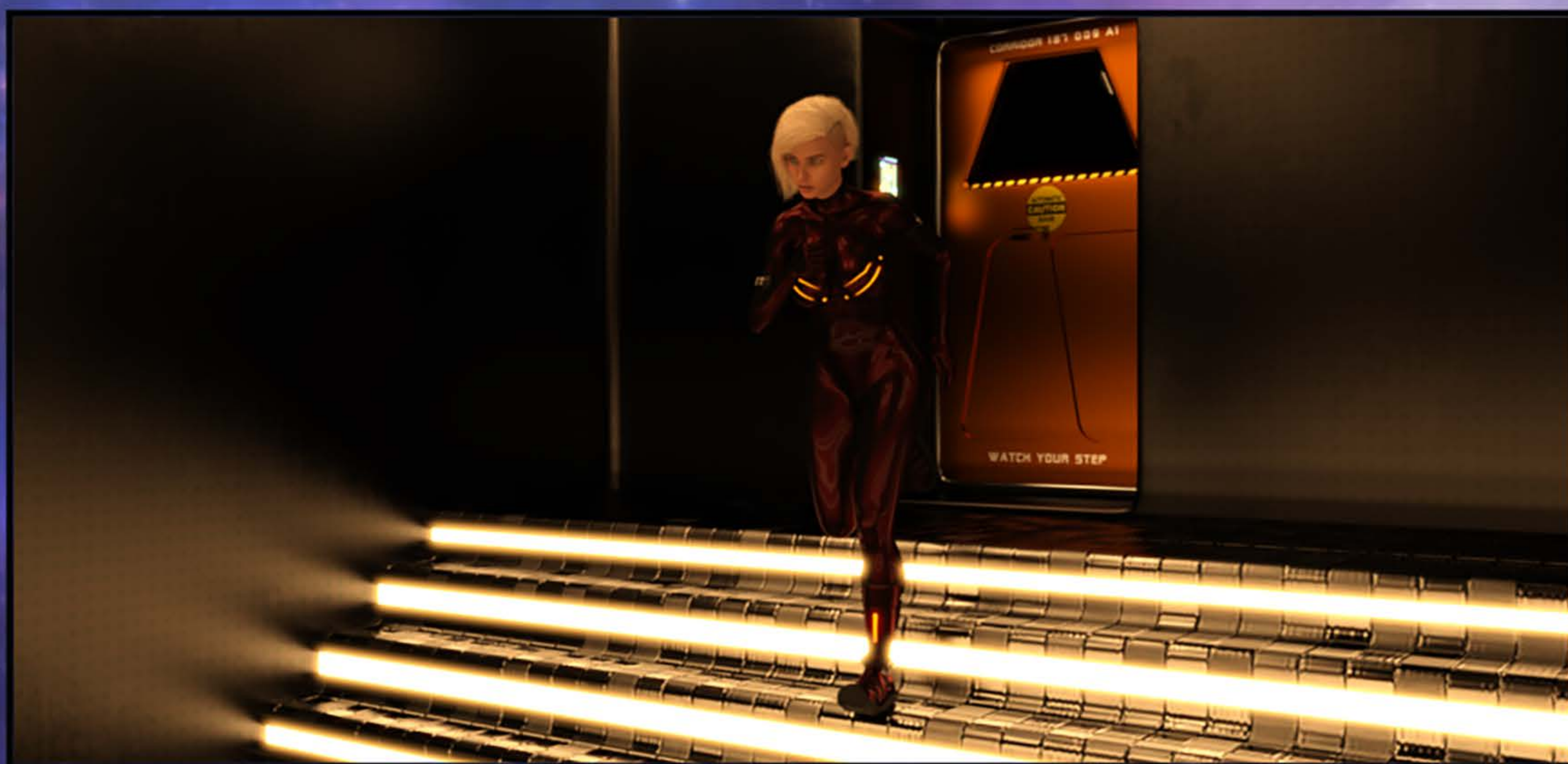
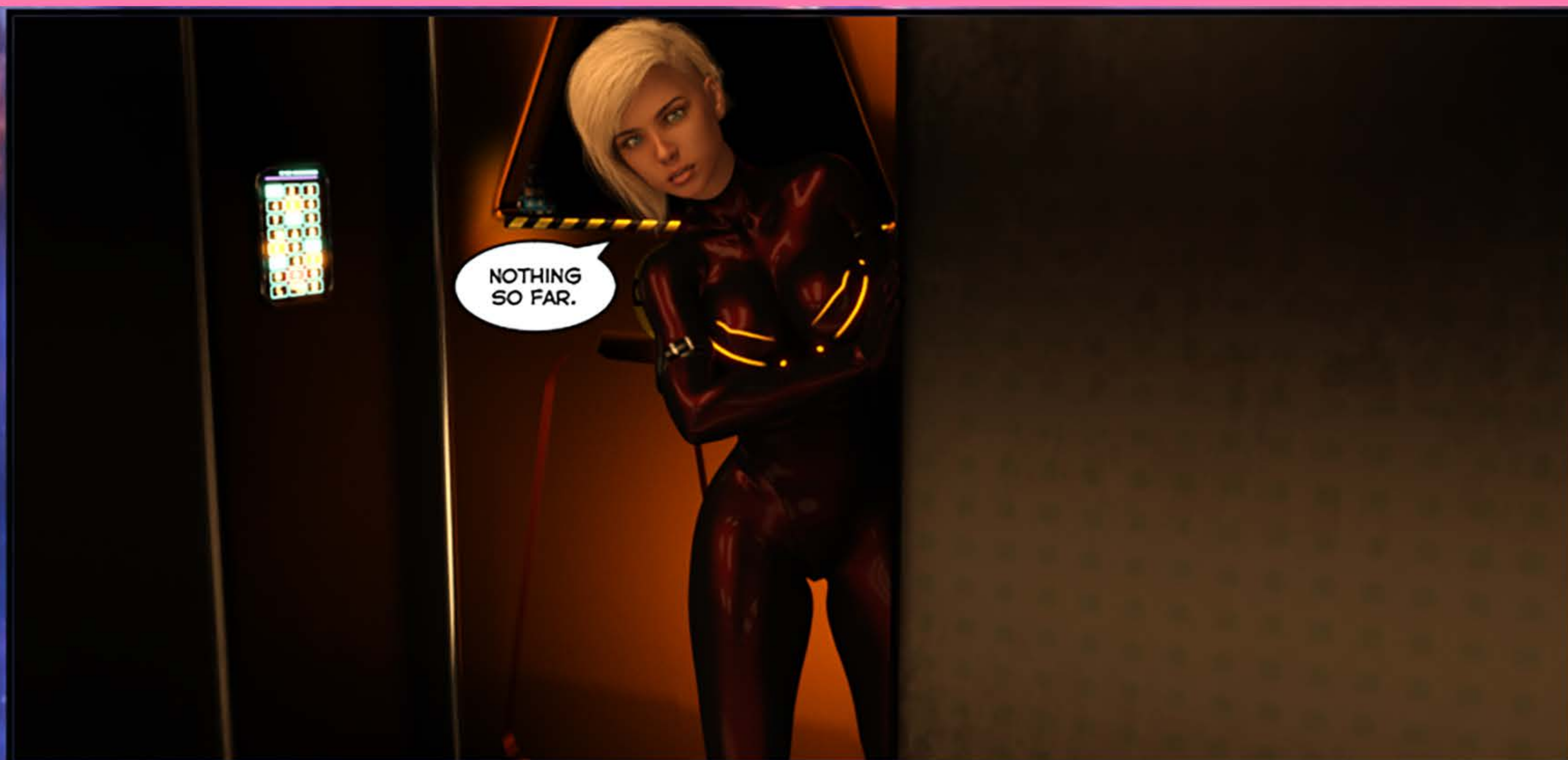
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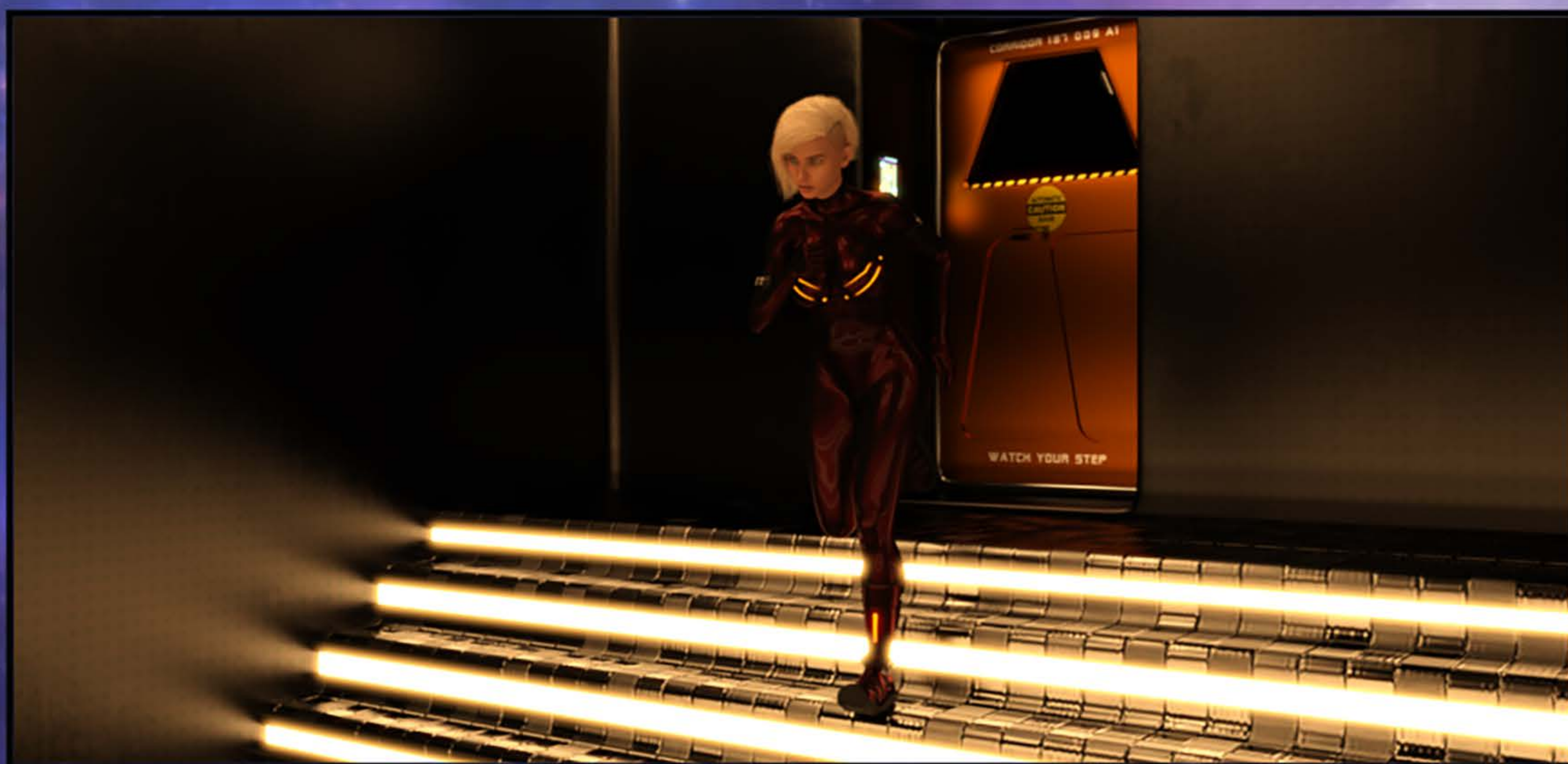
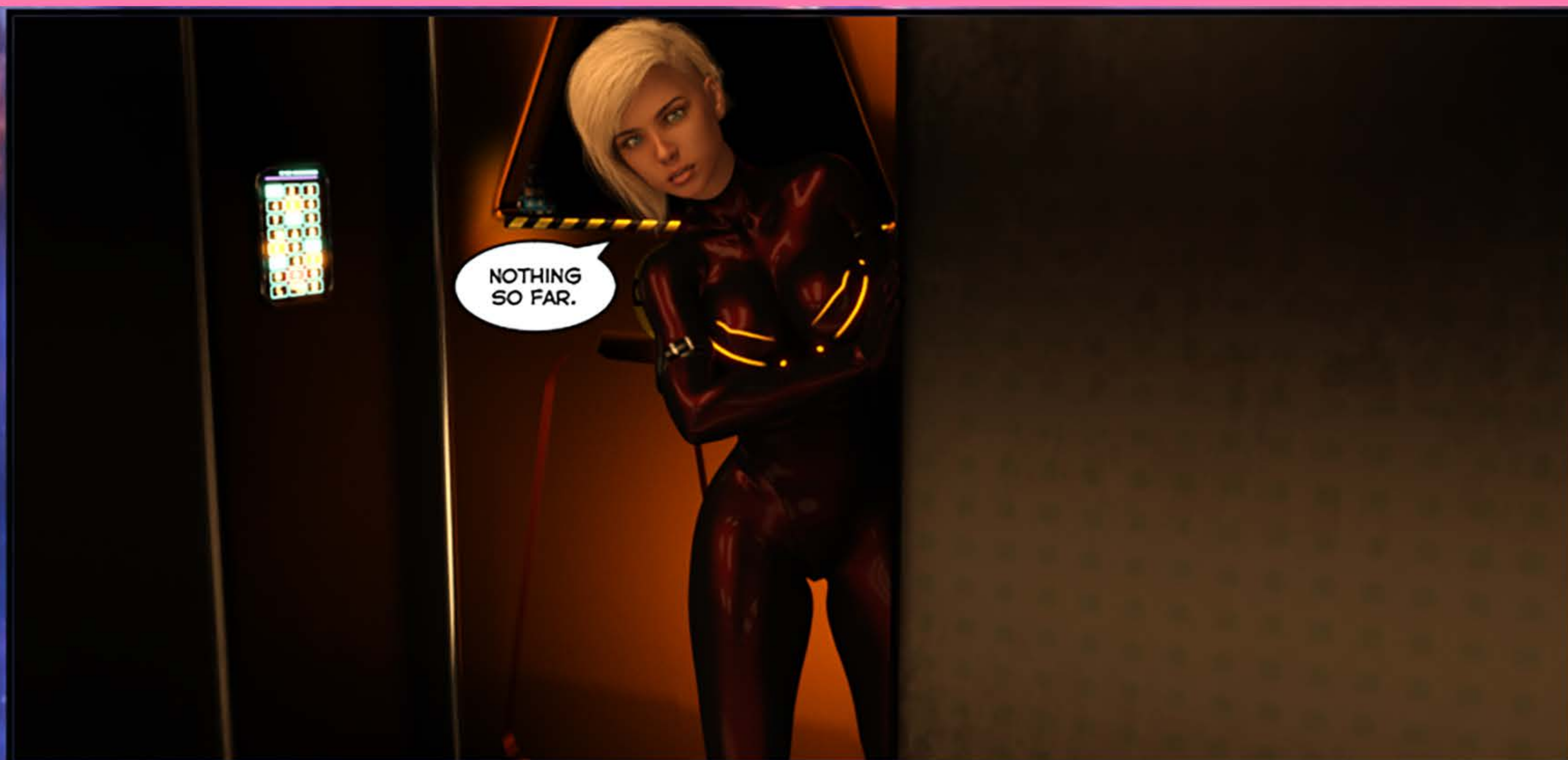
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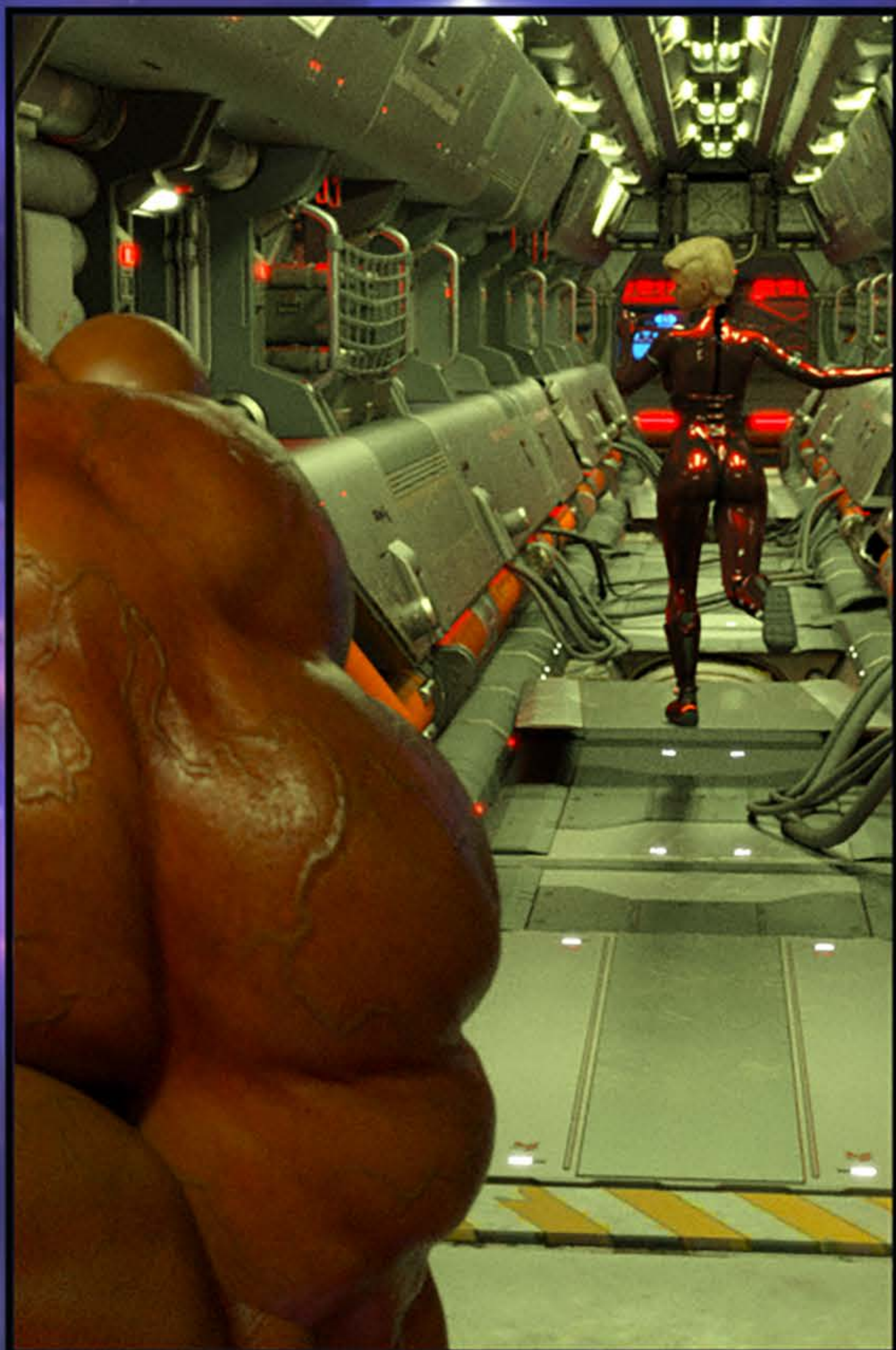


CHAPTER 3

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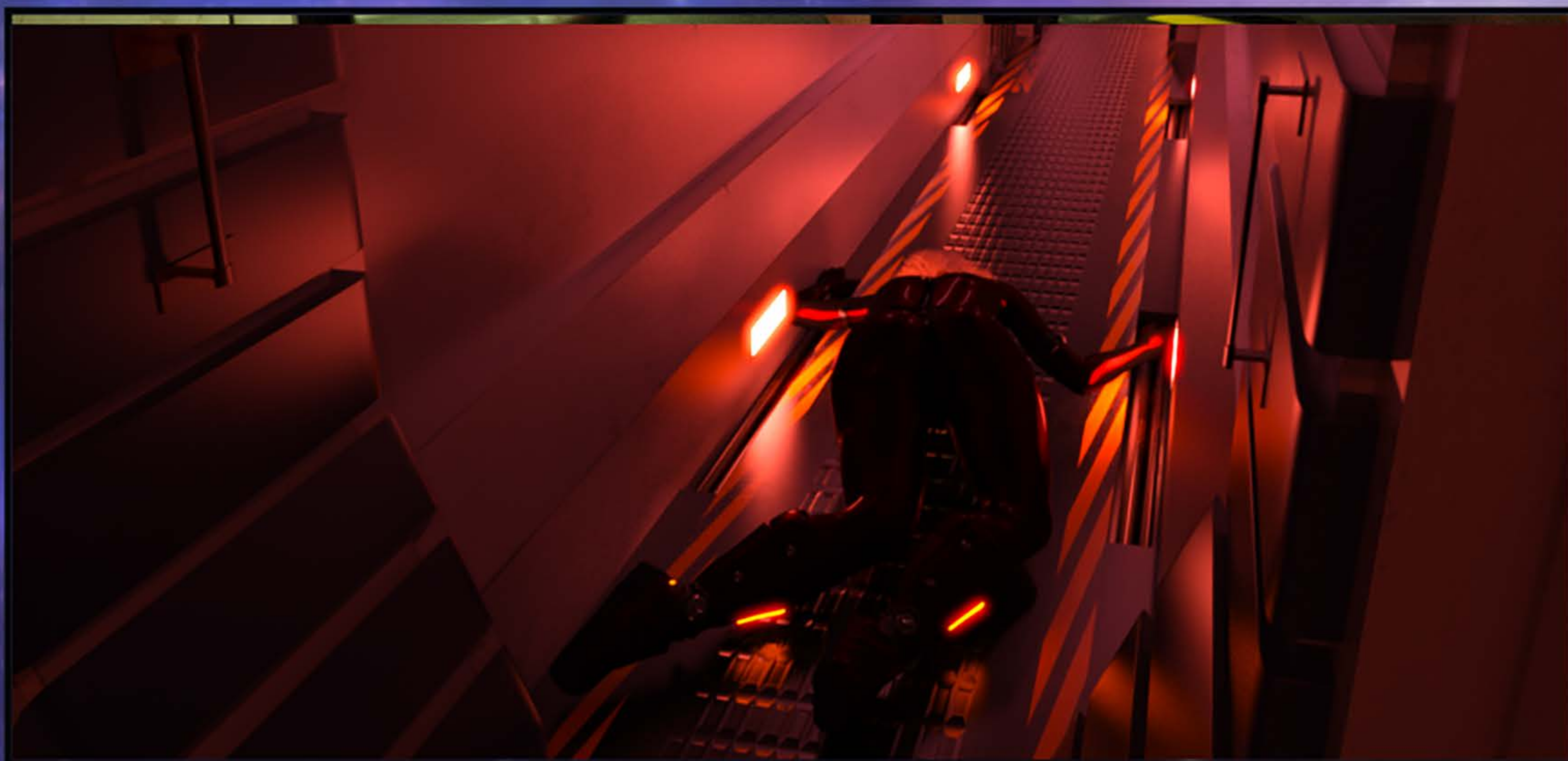
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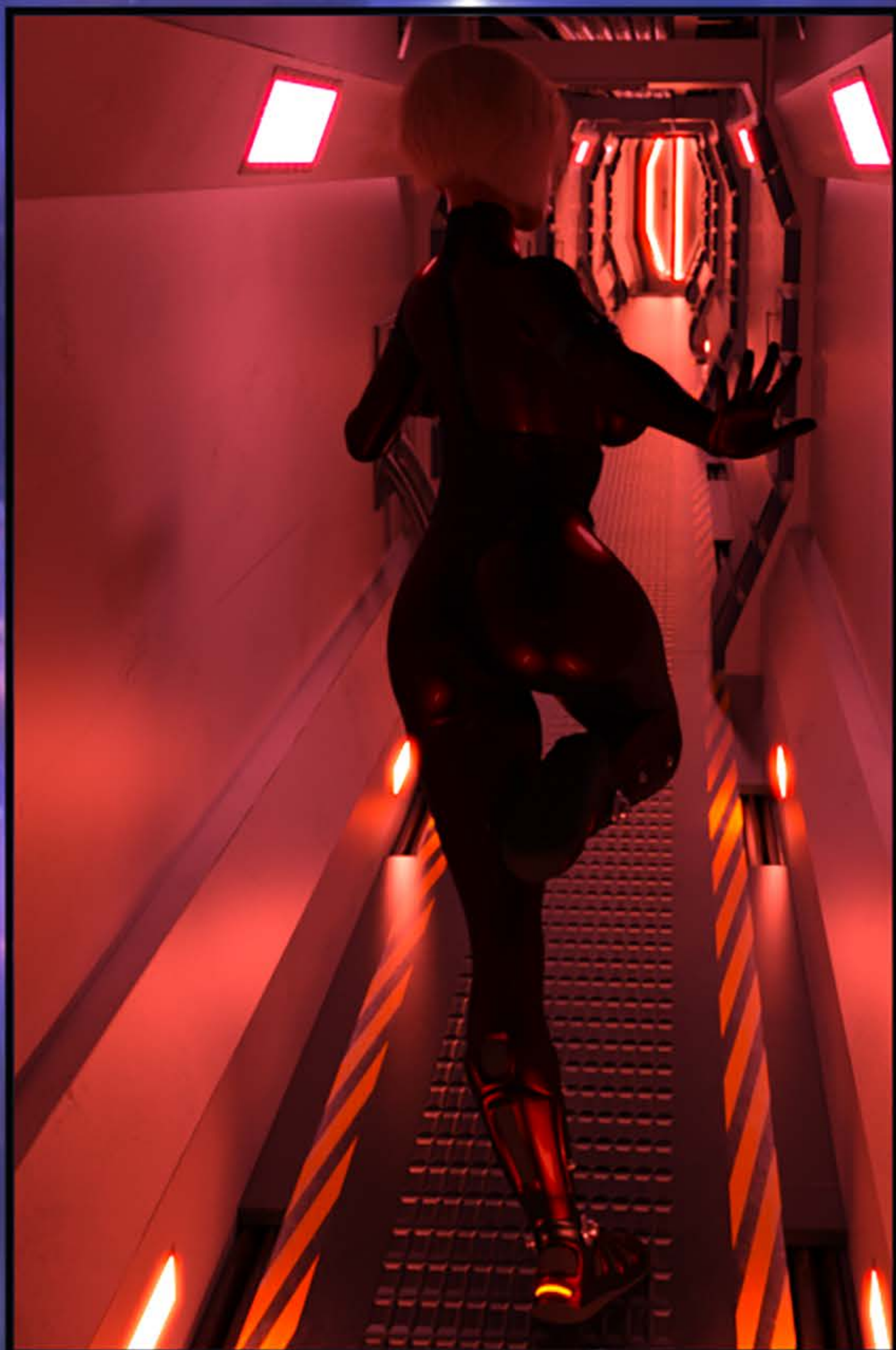
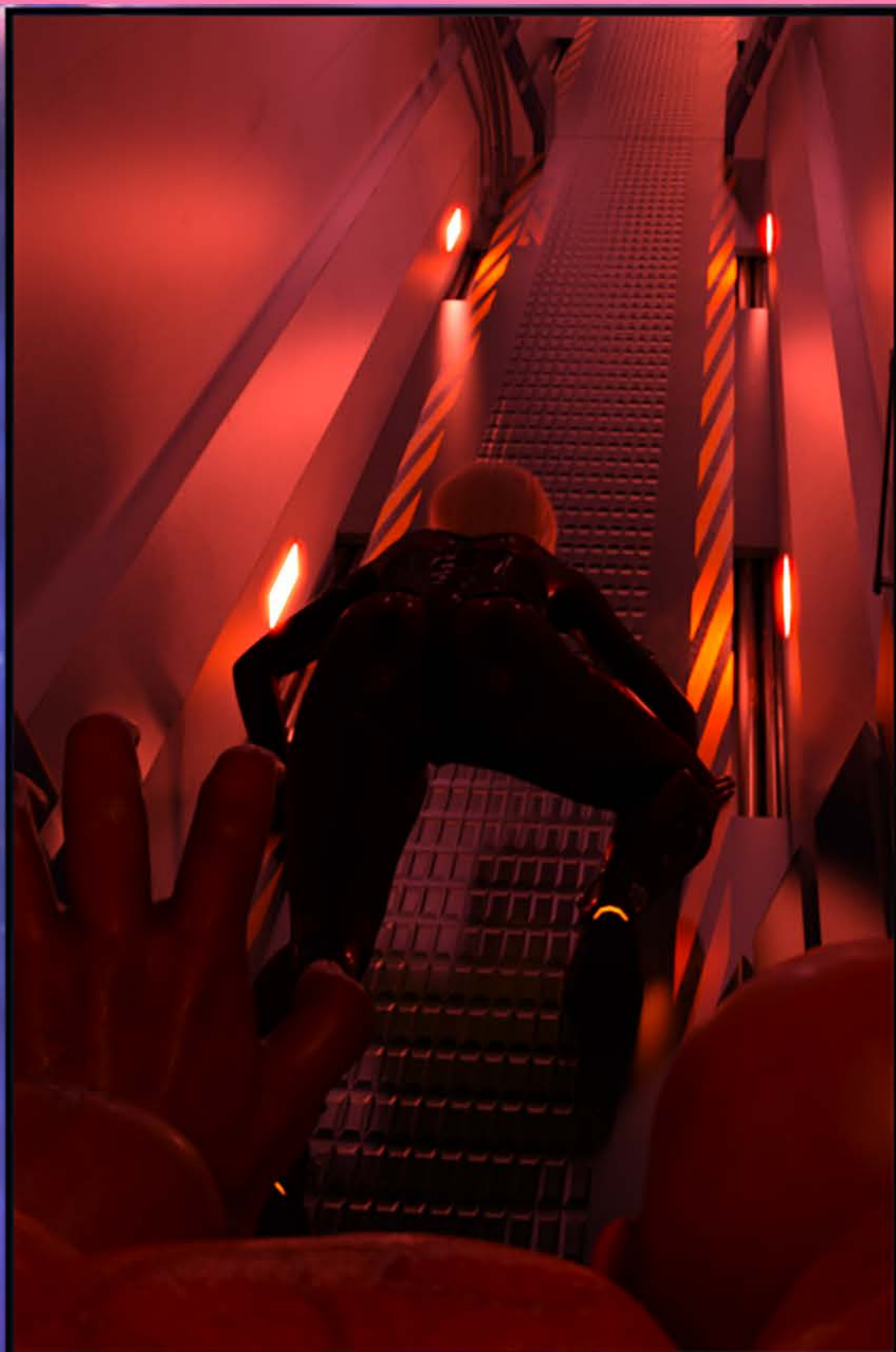
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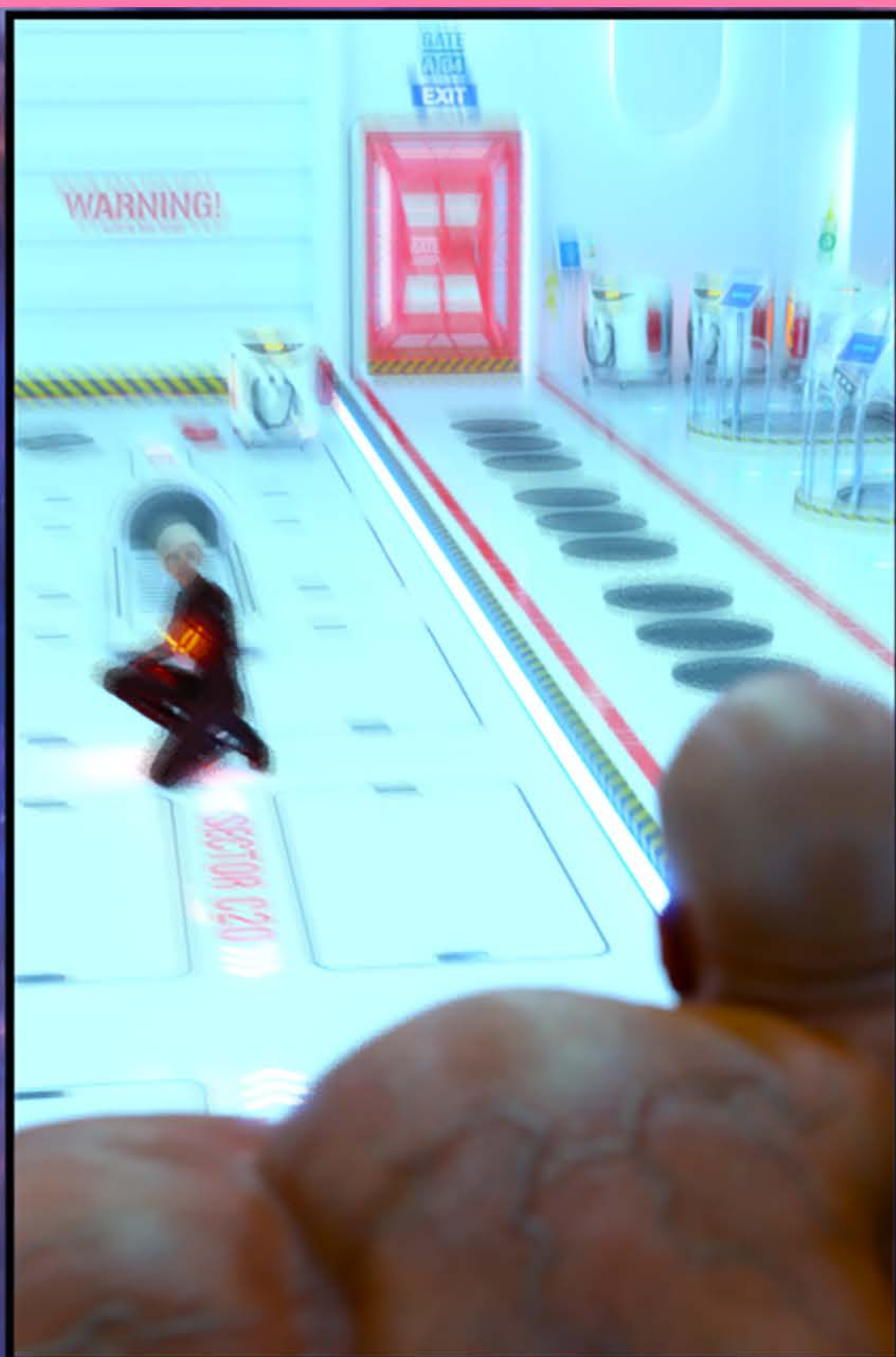
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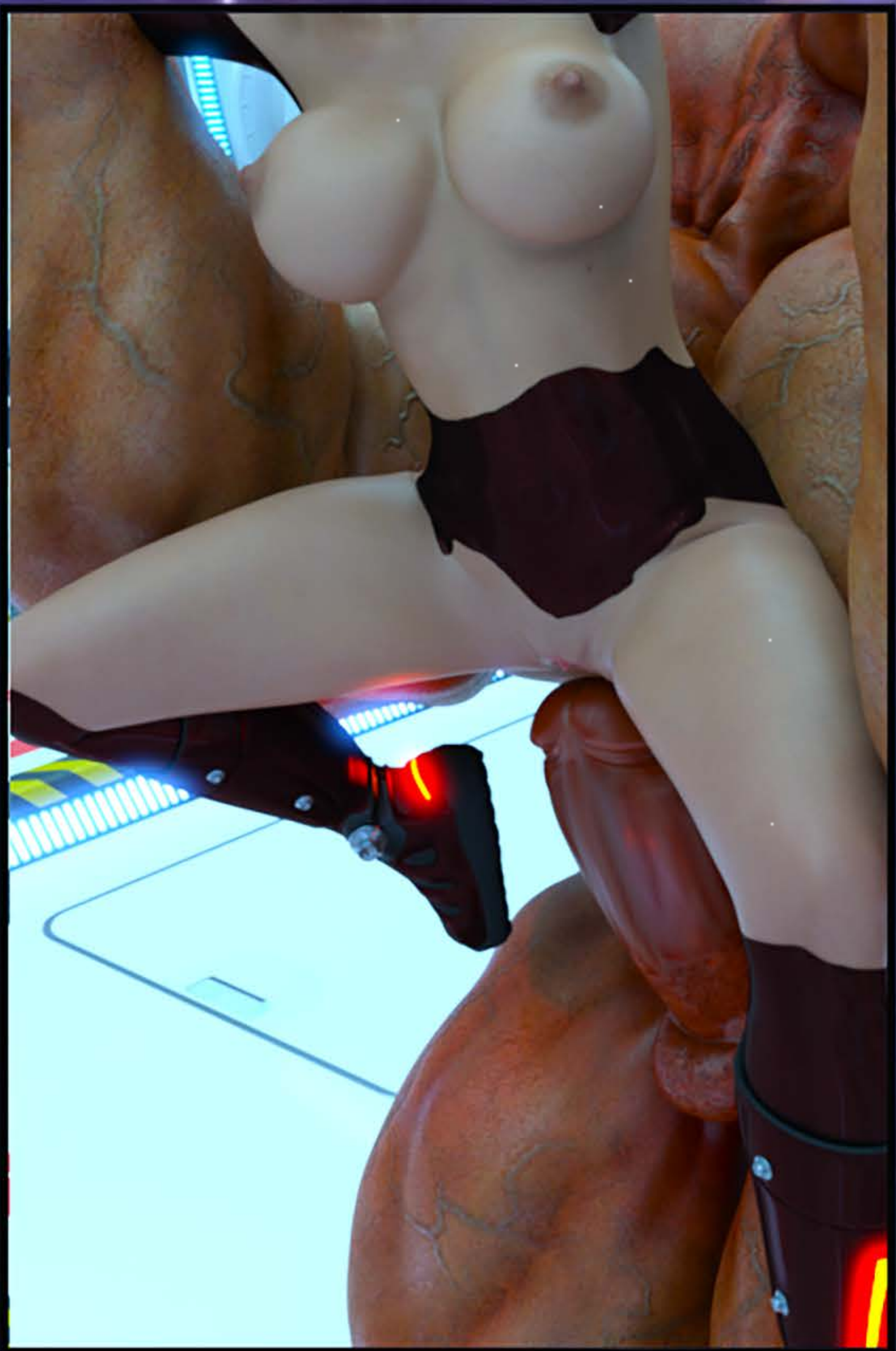
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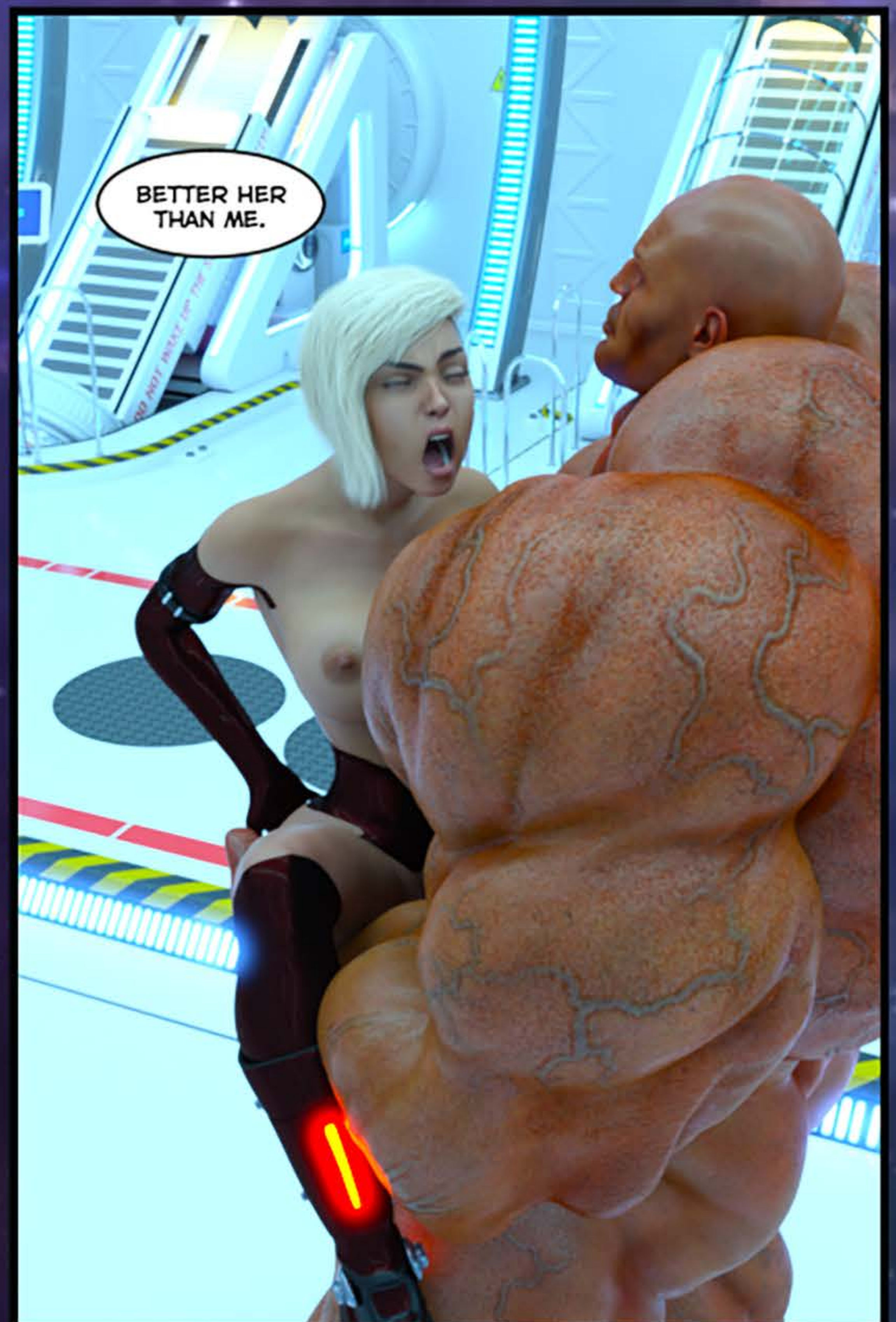
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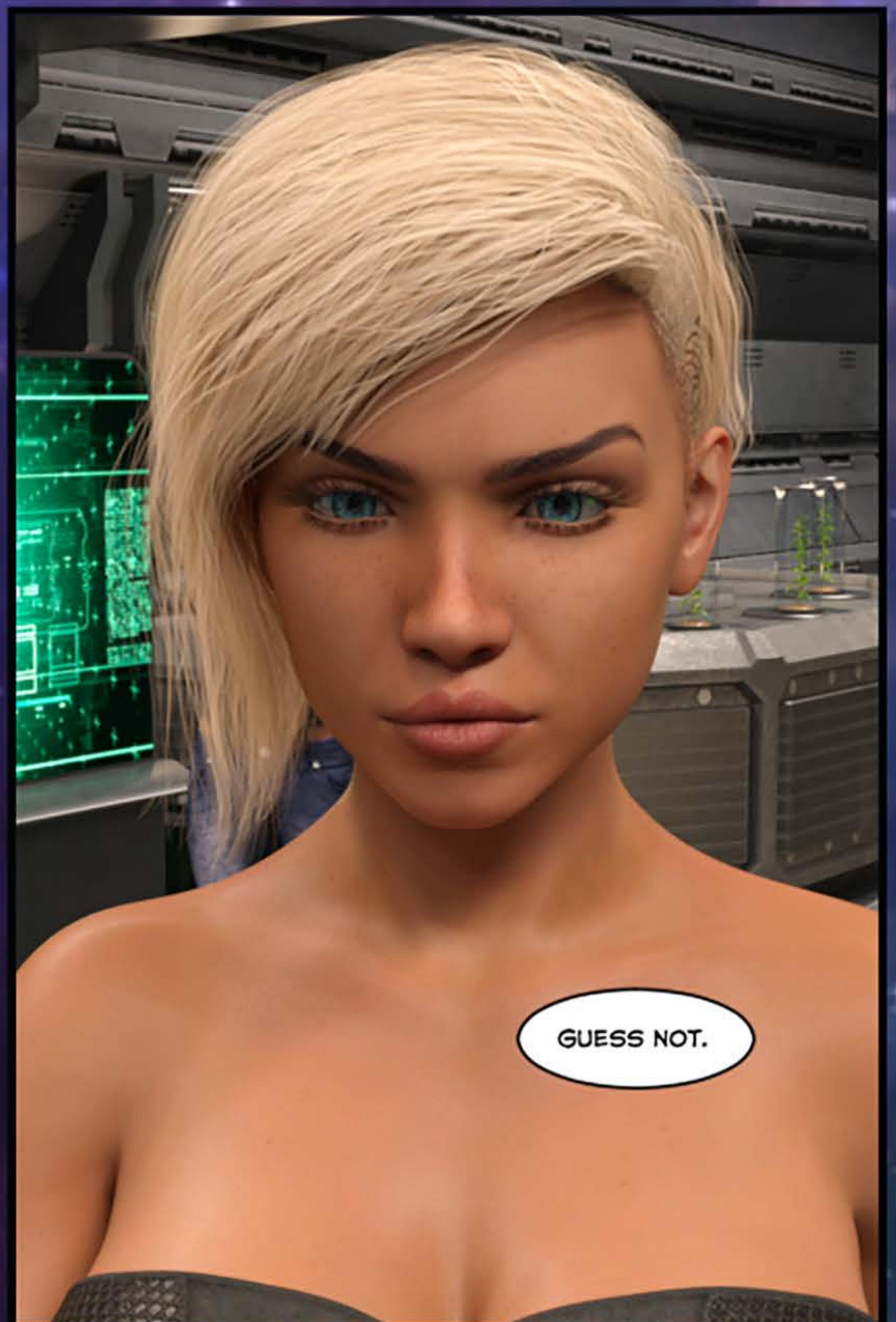
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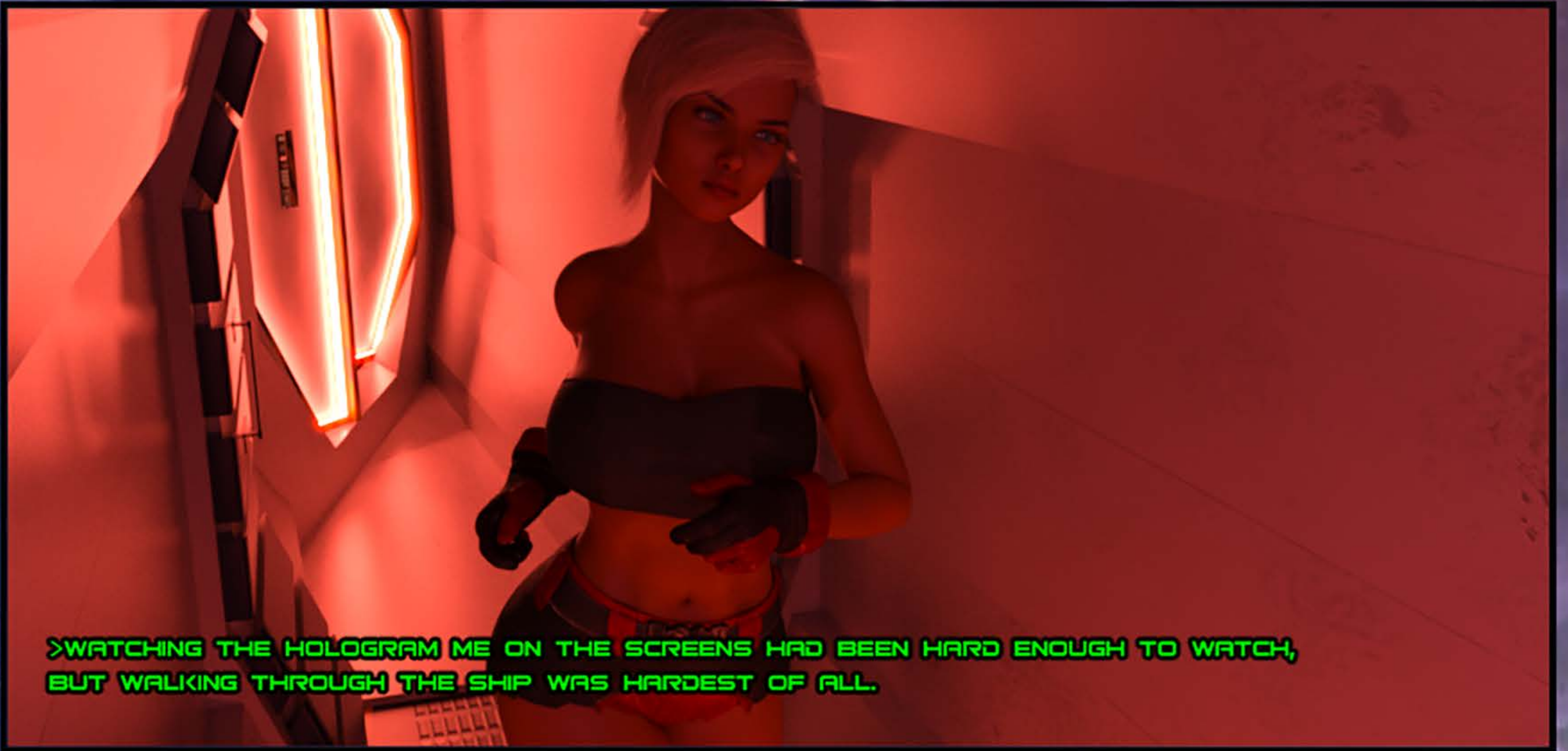
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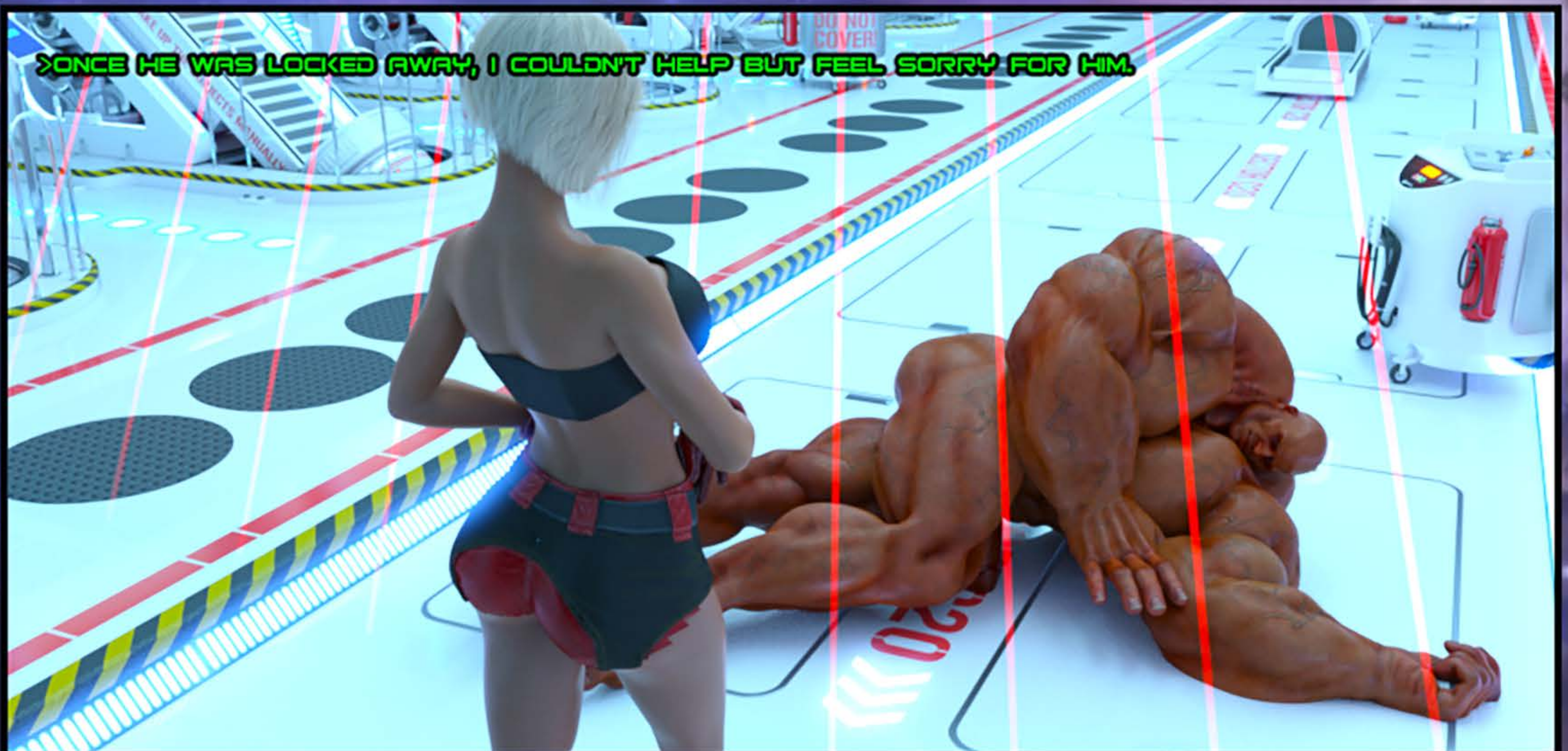


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ZZAP!!!

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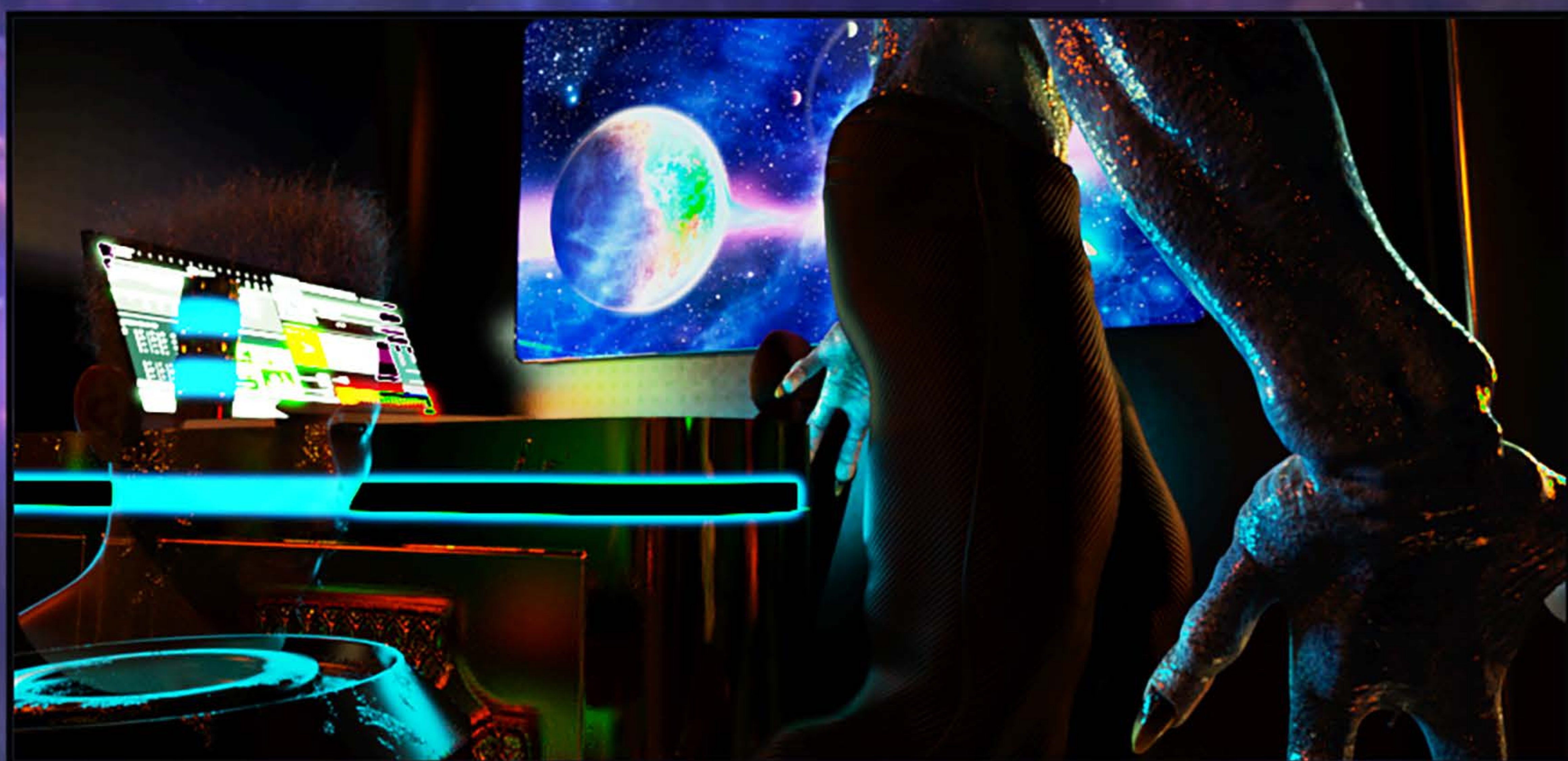
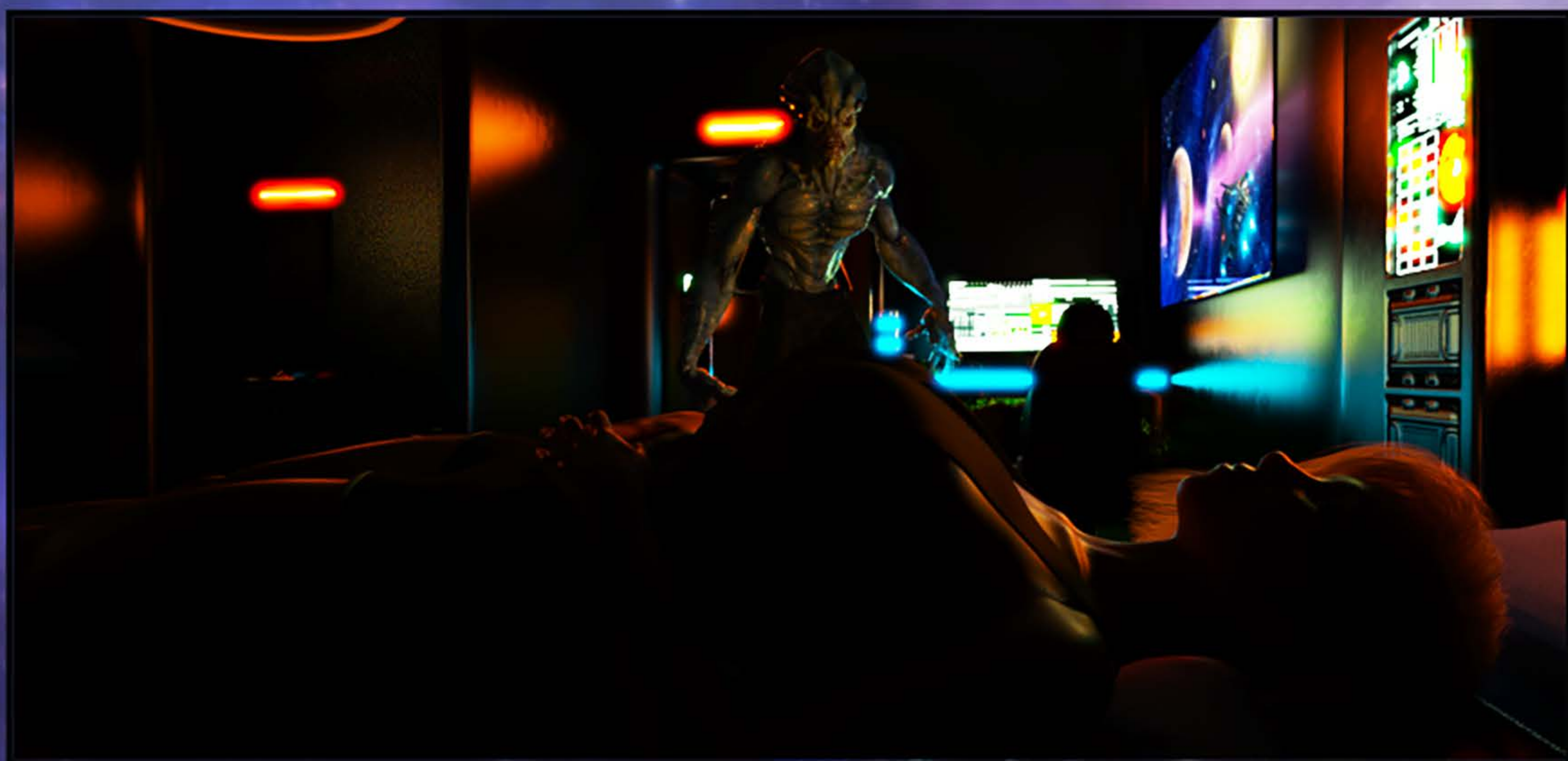
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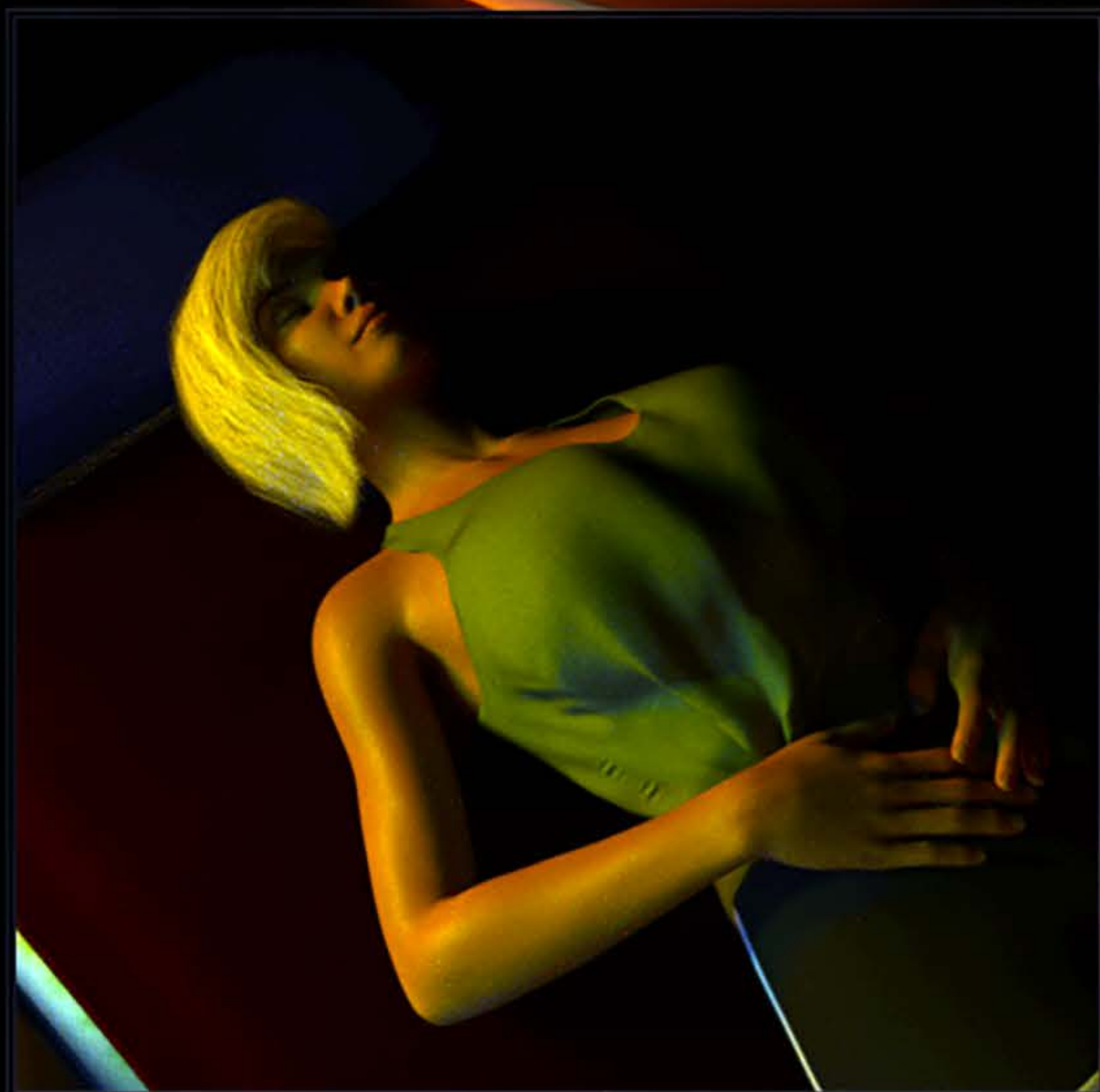
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YES. ALL
WILL BECOME
CLEAR.